



Strengthening Transdisciplinary Teams through Developmental Evaluation: Learnings from a Multi-year, multi-project initiative



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Background

Complex problems require a deep understanding and a collaborative approach to find sustainable solutions. Cancer disparities are complex and must be understood from a broad set of perspectives across academic research (basic science to policy) and non-academic sources (community members, community-based organizations, and policymakers).

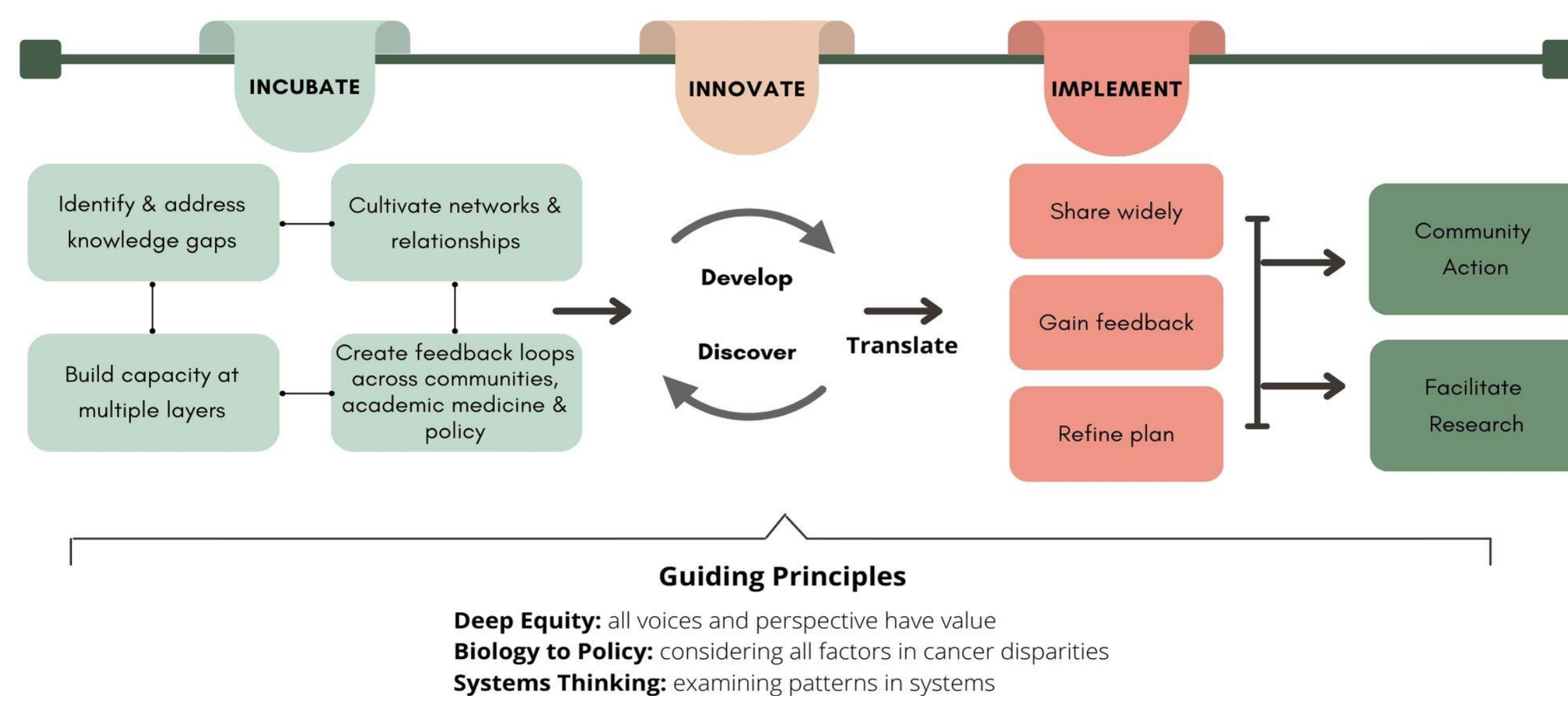
The **Community and Cancer Science Network (CCSN)** is a transdisciplinary network focused on addressing statewide cancer disparities through authentic and sustainable collaborations between academia and community in Wisconsin.

Our approach leverages academic and community expertise and is grounded in the principles of **deep equity**, **systems-change**, and the **integration of biology to policy**.

We bring diverse perspectives together through a three-phase model:

- 1) Incubate** - co-learn among team members to build trust and knowledge, integrate diverse perspectives and create a shared vocabulary;
- 2) Innovate** - use learnings to develop, prototype and pilot potential solutions;
- 3) Implement** - execute scalable and sustainable solutions.

CCSN Theory of Change Framework

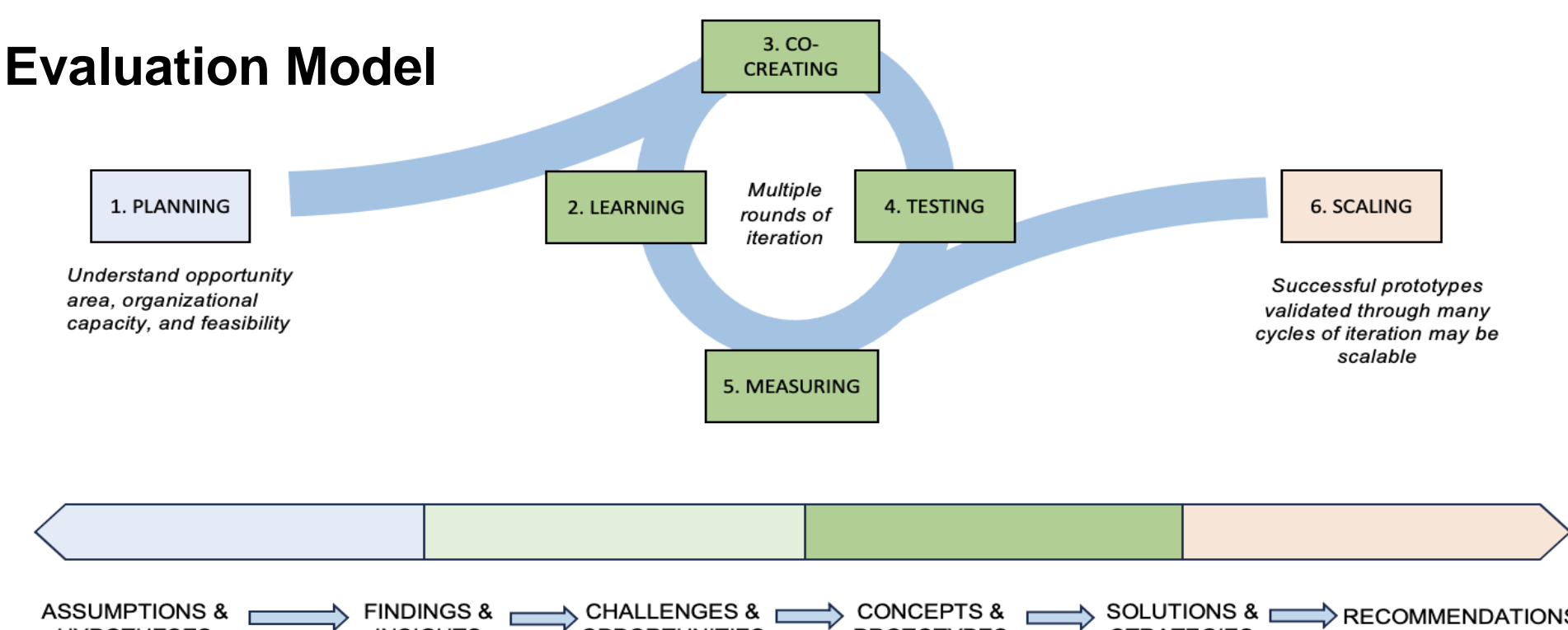


CCSN uses **developmental evaluation (DE)** to blend research and community perspectives and promote equitable partnerships. This evaluation approach:

- enables **timely data-based decision-making**,
- supports **innovation** (e.g., new projects, org. changes, policy reforms, system change.)
- guides **adaptation to emergent and dynamic realities in complex environments, and**
- promotes **cross-sector learning**

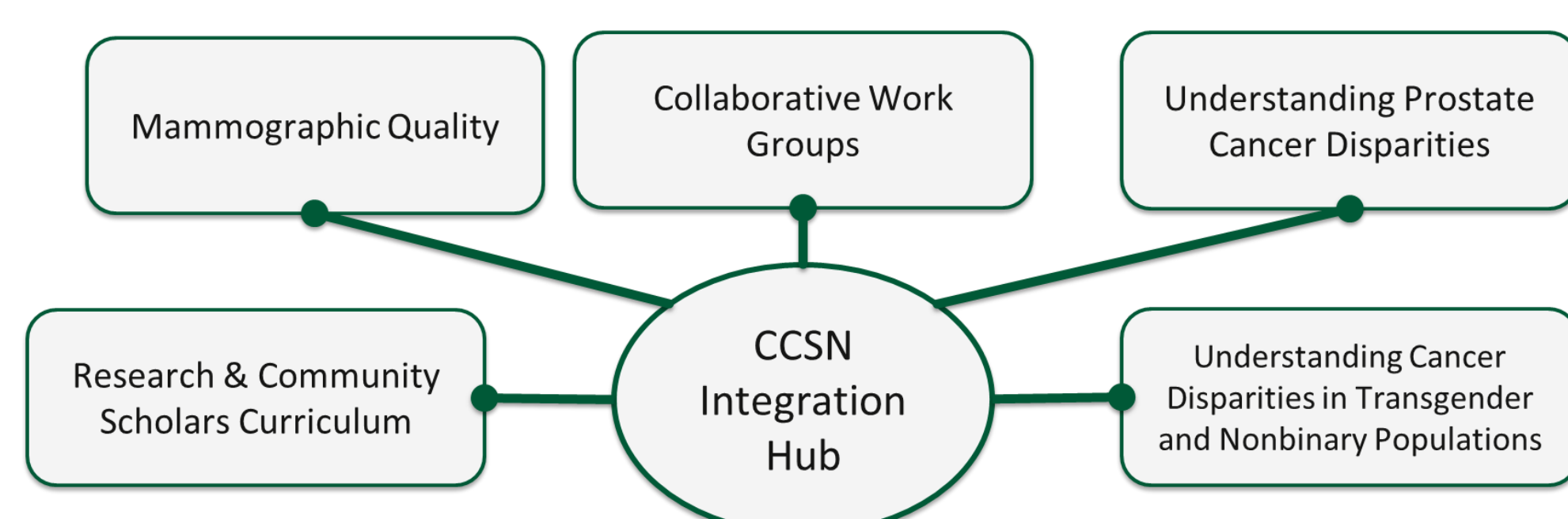
DE embeds an evaluation partner at the leadership table, to facilitate intentional data gathering and interpreting, surfacing issues, and assumptions, and testing the theory of change.

Developmental Evaluation Model



CCSN:

- 5 transdisciplinary team projects guided by a core structure (Integration Hub).
- developed and led by community and academic co-leaders,
- supported by a facilitator and evaluator.
- integrates learning in real-time



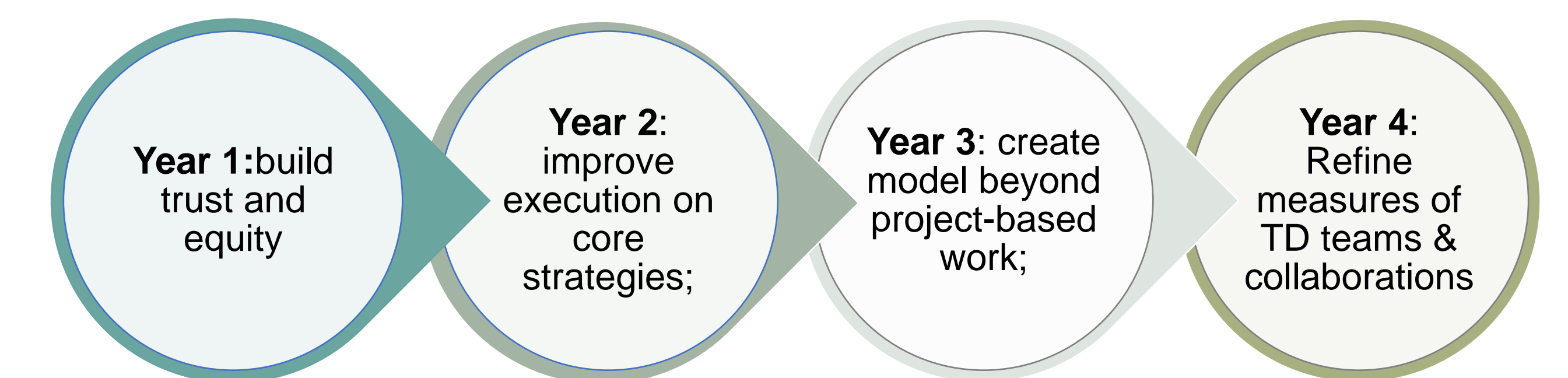
METHODS: CCSN DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION - Outcome Dimensions, Measures, Results, Action

Now in its fourth year, CCSN used DE to guide development of its Theory of Change and shape the approach to accomplish its primary outcomes: 1) high functioning network of community and academic partners, 2) strong transdisciplinary collaborations, and 3) equitable, sustainable solutions. We adapted multiple tools from diverse disciplines to assess progress and refine approach.

Annual Learning Agenda & DE Tools

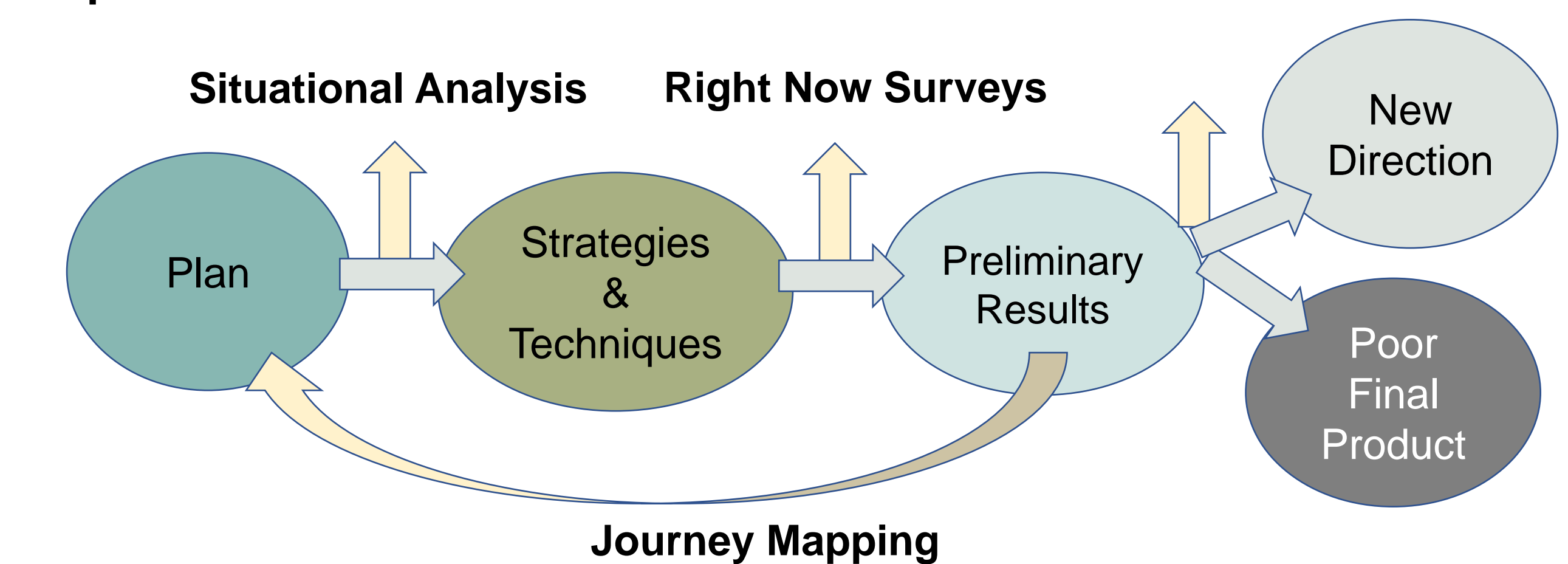
DE uses cycles of learning to advance work. These cycles are known as **Learning Agendas**.³ Learning agendas are supported by other tools and activities.

CCSN sets an annual Learning Agenda and adjusts throughout the year to accommodate new knowledge, changes in the environment, and overall progress. CCSN's Learning Agendas contributed to strengthening teams and the overall network, a sharpening of direction, and growth in the network.



Tool	Purpose	How we used
Journey Mapping	Visual depiction of process that person goes through; elucidates facilitators & barriers	We used this tool in the early days of network to understand sticking points and how to help teams work through challenges. The data contributed to development of framework
Situational Analysis	A process that considers the internal and external factors contributing to how a team or organization is functioning at a given point in time	We used this tool to begin to plan for future, understanding external opportunities and pressures
Reflective Practice	This involves critical examination about an action thought or experience and leads people to consider the underlying factors including assumptions	These tools were helpful in preparing for critical moments and conversations including changes in leadership and how we could create a more supportive environment for teams.
Right Now Surveys	Surveys that provide near-immediate feedback with 3 simple questions: 1) Right now the greatest opportunity for success are...; 2) Right now, I am most concerned with...; 3) Right now, I most need help with...	This tool offered on-going interactions with network members and provided data to adjust approaches or make other improvements.
One-on-One Interviews	Discussions between the developmental evaluator and individual to provide more in-depth data and allow for greater understanding	This tool provided us with data to improve trust building and improve strategy execution

Sample DE Process

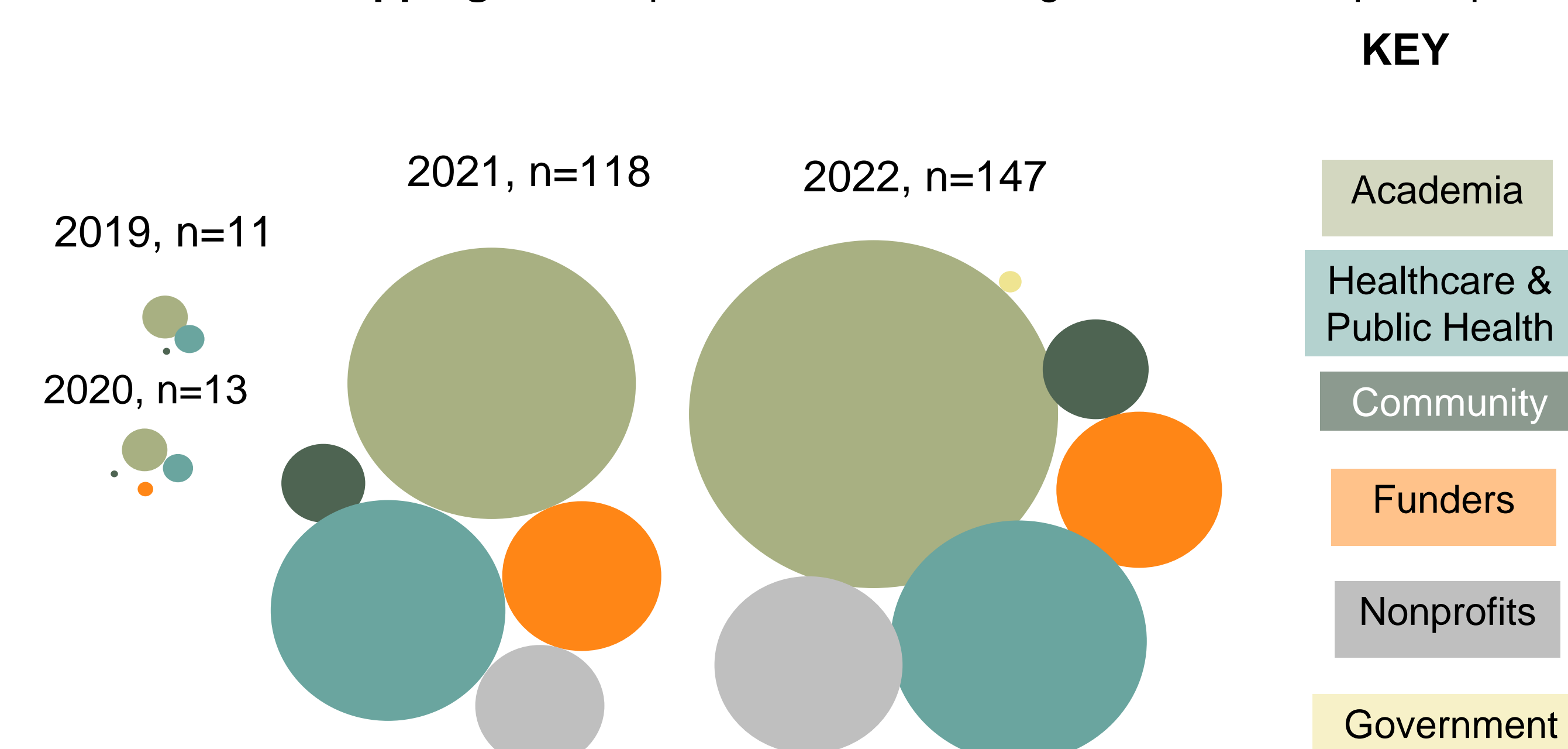


Developmental Evaluation tools can be used at any point in the process. Tools are used to meet the needs of the group. By engaging a developmental evaluator in the leadership, they can help determine which tools can be used and/or adapted to meet the current opportunity or challenges.

CCSN Growth, Measures and Results

DE provided CCSN with data to make strategic choices about the network and understand and address barriers to participation. By responding and adapting, we have witnessed significant growth and evidence of strong partnerships. DE processes have also helped CCSN determine appropriate measures to determine the strength of transdisciplinary teams, collaboration and adherence to principles.

CCSN Network Mapping: Visual process of describing the reach and participation in CCSN



Network Survey Transdisciplinary Collaboration Practice Tenants^{1,2}

We adapted several tools to assess transdisciplinary orientation and collaboration among Network members including the *Harvard Business Review's* (HBR) Learning Organization Assessment and the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory. Also, we developed measures to assess fidelity to our principles (i.e., deep equity). Surveys are conducted annually, and network members must be engaged for at least 6 months before completing assessment. Sample scores from HBR are listed below.

HBR Learning Organization Assessment TD Collaboration Practice Tenants Scores	CCSN Score (n=48)	Median Score	Third quartile range	Top quartile range
Supportive Learning Environment				
Psychological Safety	90	76	77-86	87-100
Appreciation of differences	90	64	65-79	80-100
Openness to new ideas	95	90	91-95	96-100
Concrete Learning Practices				
Experimentation	86	71	72-82	83-100
Information Collection	91	80	81-89	90-100
Analysis	80	71	72-86	87-100
Information Transfer	89	71	72-84	85-100
Leadership That Reinforces Learning				
Leadership Composite	94	76	77-82	83-100

Conclusion:

- Transdisciplinary Collaboration involving community and academic partners offer great promise for innovative approaches to cancer disparities.
- Developmental Evaluation positively impacted CCSN's ability to engage community and academic partners in authentic transdisciplinary collaborations over a four-year, and multi-project effort.
- CCSN sees high value in embedding evaluation into the development of cancer disparities research and social action agendas

Sources:

1. Gavin, D.A., Edmondson, A.C., Gino, F. Is yours a learning organization? *Harvard Business Review*. 2008 Mar.
 2. Wells, R., Yates, L., Morgan, I. et al. Using the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory to Strengthen Collaborations for Improving Maternal and Child Health. *Matern Child Health J* 25, 377-384 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-020-03091-2>