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Building a theory-based approach to evaluation of small development NGOs: A case study from Canada

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Outline

1. Background
2. Research Objectives
3. Case Study: H2O 4 ALL
4. Methodology
5. Findings
 - a. Evaluability Assessment
 - b. Process Evaluation
6. Conclusion and Next Steps

Affordable access to WaSH is a public health issue

- 663 million worldwide lack access to safe drinking water, the majority of whom live in rural areas in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) (WHO/UNICEF, 2015)
- 2.4 billion are without access to improved sanitation facilities (WHO/UNICEF, 2015)

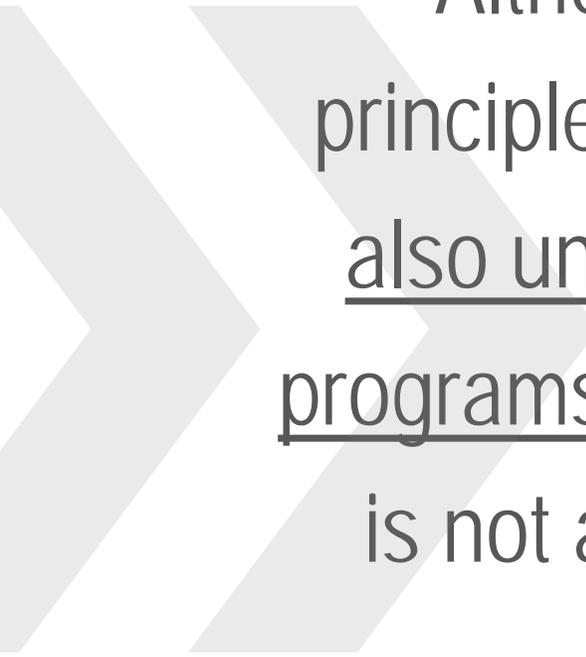
Small development NGOs are positioned to make lasting change...but do they?

Strengths

- Adapt to meet identified needs in view of different local community and policy contexts (Carrard et al., 2009)
- Draw from international experiences within networks to exchange ideas (Visscher et al., 2006)

Challenges

- Pressure to be non-political and accountable to donors (Banks et al., 2015)
- No means to support development evaluation activities
- Projects are time and budget sensitive



“Although evaluation should identify and celebrate principled behavior and effective interventions, it should also uncover and disseminate knowledge about failed programs, incompetent practices, and faulty policies. This is not a popular thing to do. But it needs to be done.”

– Robert Picciotto (2007, p. 521)

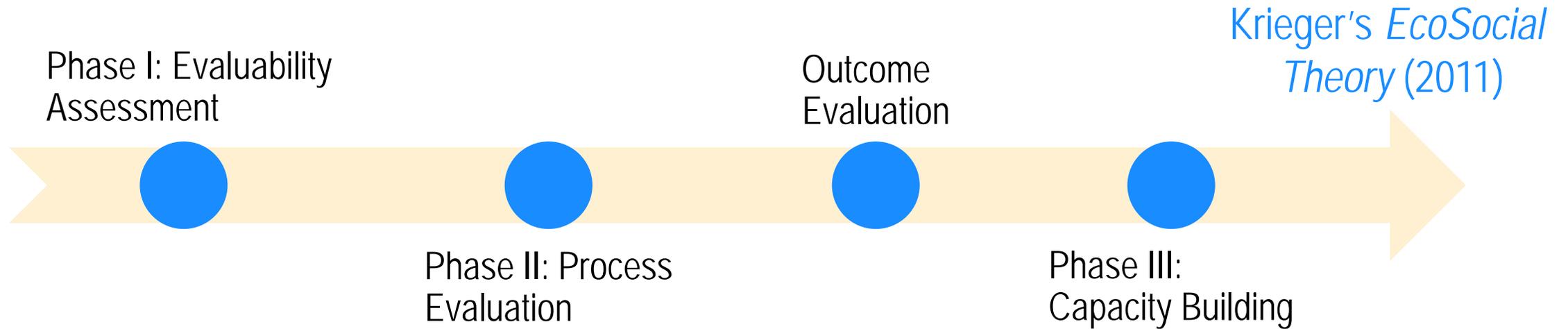
Research Objectives

1. To examine facilitators and barriers to conducting evaluation of small NGOs undertaking water-based development projects in LMICs using theory-based approaches
2. To develop cost-effective evaluation tools that can be adapted and applied by small NGOs with little or no formal evaluation training

Case Study: H2O 4 ALL



Theory-Based Approach



Methods

Phase I: Evaluability Assessment

- Environmental scan
- Document review
- In-depth interviews with Board of Directors

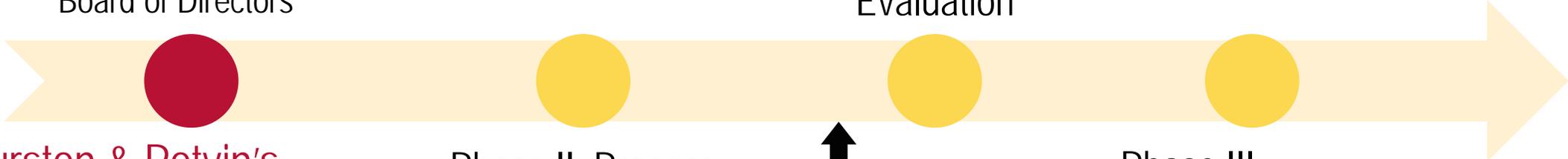
Thurston & Potvin's
Evaluability Assessment Framework (2003)

Phase II: Process Evaluation

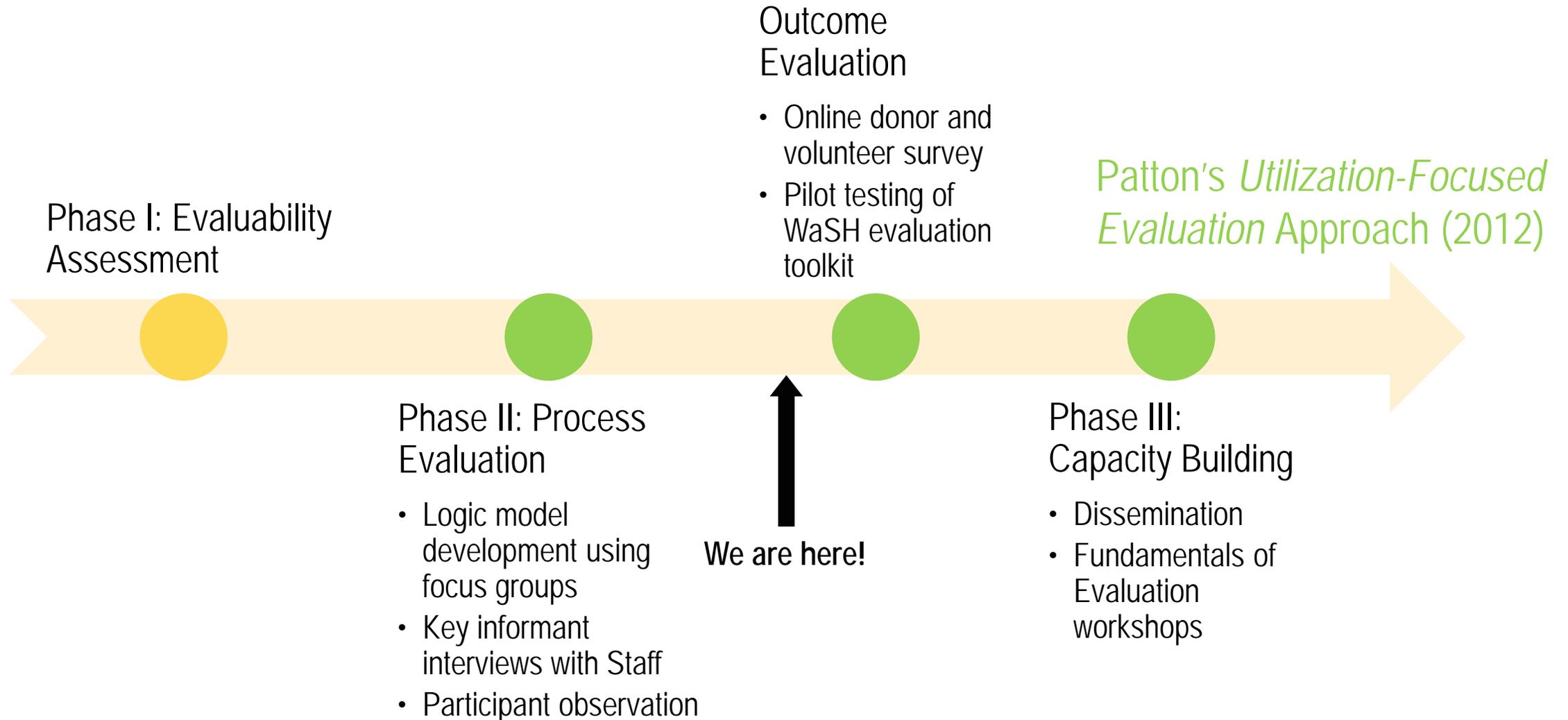
Outcome Evaluation

Phase III: Capacity Building

We are here!



Methods



Analysis

- Qualitative data has been analyzed in *NVivo* using three phases for integrating theory: pre-coding, conceptual and thematic categorization, and theoretical categorization (Meyer & Ward, 2014)
- Contribution analysis has been used to develop H2O 4 ALL's performance story (Mayne, 2001)

Evaluability Assessment Findings

- **Environmental scan showed how H2O 4 ALL fits within the WaSH sector**
 - Based on its website, H2O 4 ALL uses similar approaches to other WaSH NGOs in North America
 - It is unique, however, in its: a) evidence-based approach to work, b) use of innovative technology, and c) partnership model
- **Document review provided history of H2O 4 ALL's growth and evolution**
 - Parsing their vision and mission statement into 7 themes allowed linkages to be made with concrete examples that have been formally documented

Evaluability Assessment Findings

- **In-depth interviews captured the essence of H2O 4 ALL—its people**
 - Challenges: “Growing pains” as an organization still in its developmental phase, concerns with project-based funding, and the need for greater transparency and more efficient administration
 - Rewards: Experiences abroad, working with passionate people, and witnessing personal growth in their role

Recommendation: The organization should proceed with process evaluation in view of moving towards an outcome evaluation

Process Evaluation Findings

- **KI interviews, observation, and logic model development revealed extent of similarity between planned and actual activity**
 - Planned: Even distribution of effort into developing sustainable, innovative WaSH technology, fundraising, and building partnerships
 - Actual: Planning fundraisers took most effort and time

Recommendation: Use developed logic model to create action plan to turn “wishes” to “must-haves” with measurable indicators

The provision of safe water in our project communities by identifying, developing, and implementing sustainable projects through local engagement, collaboration, mutual education, creative design, and appropriate technology

In one drop – local people know best what they need, we listen and help

IMPACT

Short Term (1-3 years)
 ↑ access to safe water in project communities via evidence-based projects
 ↑ donor base and diversity of funding sources
 ↑ international reputation for ability to work well with local partners in an appropriate and sustainable manner, determined by # of NGOs that wish to partner with H2O4All

Long Term (4-6 years)
 ↑ population health, quality of life, economic activity, and gender equity in project communities

OUTCOMES

annual report and ↑ documented newsletter activities
 # dashboard of ↑ evaluation KPIs activities

Board Members in Canada and U.S.
 # part- and full-time staff
 # co-op students
 # active volunteers

initiated, ongoing, and completed WaSH projects
 # engaged partners

↑ press coverage
 ↑ SEO of website
 ↑ social media presence

fundraisers # grants awarded
 # corporate sponsors ↑ project funding
 # monthly donors ↑ operational funding
 # one-time donors

OUTPUTS

Documentation and Record Keeping
 -bylaws
 -plans and reports
 -case for support
 -value proposition
 -measurable growth strategy

Monitoring and Evaluation
 -KPIs
 -organizational-level evaluation
 -dissemination of findings

Board and Staff Development
 -job descriptions
 -sub-committee descriptions
 -networking
 -Board bootcamp
 -letters of incorporation (U.S.)

Sustainable, Innovative WaSH Projects
 -assess need (with NGO partners and RRA)
 -develop (with university partners)
 -implement (with volunteers)
 -maintain (with community members)

Mutual Education and Communication
 -build networks and partnerships
 -recruit skilled co-op students and staff
 -local outreach
 -strategic marketing
 -website development
 -social media presence

Fundraising
 -donor stewardship
 -organize community events
 -secure research and project grants
 -seek corporate sponsorship

Financial Management
 -tracking donations
 -donor tax receipts
 -project budgeting
 -staff payment
 -expense reports
 -publicly available financial statements and reports

ACTIVITIES

Committed Personnel

Collaborative Partnerships

Marketing and PR

Strong Financial Profile

Equipment and Space

INPUTS

Strategic Planning and Governance

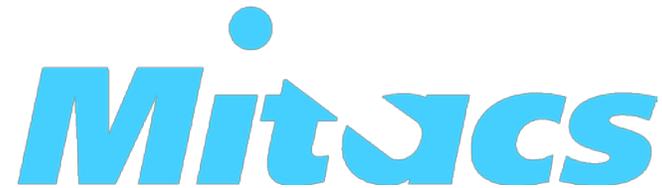
Conclusion and Next Steps

- Lack of evaluative thinking inhibits small NGOs from finding their niche, raising funds, and thereby expanding reach
- Without measurable outcomes to guide development, the impact of WaSH interventions could be negligible
- Theory-based approaches to evaluation are well worth the investment for small NGOs

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Thank You



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