

Assessment 101

Center for Analytics, Research and Data (CARD)
United Church of Christ



Assessment: An interactive and ongoing process of purposeful reflection and planning, where one systematically evaluates a program, course, or activity in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement and then uses the results from the evaluation as data to inform decision making.

Assessment = Evaluation

http://sacs.utdallas.edu/sacs_glossary

Working Definitions

Two Types of Assessment / Evaluation

- **Formative Evaluation:** Conducted during the development or improvement of a program or course.
- **Summative Evaluation:** Involves making judgments about the efficacy of a program or course at its conclusion.

Most evaluations are summative evaluations, but this is not the best way to measure or assess the impact of programs and projects!

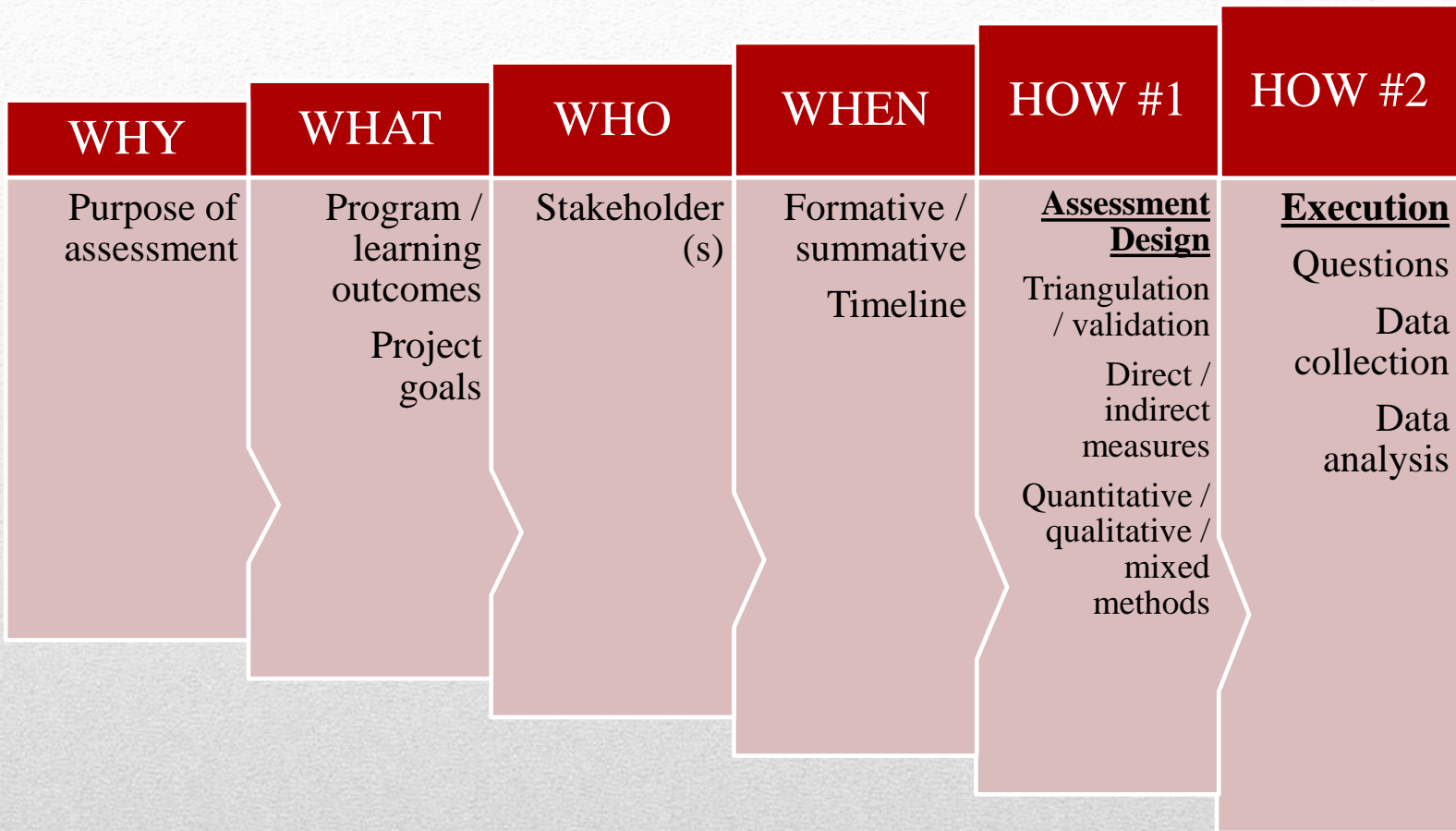
Working Definitions

Outcomes: The knowledge, skills, abilities, tasks, etc., that individuals / groups should be able to demonstrate / possess upon completion of the program / activity.

- The outcomes need to be *specific* and *measurable*.

Think about your own projects or programs. What are the stated, intended outcomes for them? Are they (easily) measurable? Are they specific enough? If not, you may want to revise them.

Working Definitions



Assessment Process

Determine the Answers to the Four “W”s: Why, What, Who, When

- **WHY:** Why is this assessment important? What is the overall purpose?
 - Be honest with yourself. If the intent is to prove how great the program or project is, you may need to rethink your reasons for the assessment. If you genuinely want to know the impact of the program, you will have a better chance of crafting the right protocol and questions to capture valid data.
 - Be as specific as possible.

Assessment: Step 1

Determine the Answers to the Four “W”s: Why, What, Who, When (cont.)

- **WHAT:** What do you want to know? What outcomes, experiences, processes are you measuring?
 - The “what” you are measuring should align with the intended purpose of the program or project.
 - Don’t jump to creating specific evaluation questions just yet! That will come in a later step.

Assessment: Step 1

Determine the Answers to the Four “W”s: Why, What, Who, When (cont.)

- **WHO**: Who are the stakeholders that you need to gather information from?
 - It is always best, when possible, to gather information from as many different types of individuals or groups as possible—this increases the validity of the data.
- **WHEN**: In what time frame should the measurement/assessment take place? Will you evaluate before, during, and/or after the program/course/etc.?
 - Summative vs. formative evaluation
 - Be strategic about when you will contact stakeholders for feedback—will it be one month after the program, one year, or both? This will affect the content and quality of the feedback you’ll receive.

Assessment: Step 1

HOW:

Assessment Design—What is your plan/process for assessment?

- **Triangulation:** A method used by researchers to check and establish validity in their studies by analyzing a program or project from multiple perspectives. *Triangulation is a necessary part of any assessment design.*
 - Types of triangulation:
 - Data triangulation
 - Investigator triangulation
 - Theory triangulation
 - Methodological triangulation
 - Environmental triangulation

Source: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy394>

Assessment: Step 2

HOW (cont.):

- Measurement Methods and Types
 - **Direct measures** are actual results of a program/project or demonstrations of one's learning/skills.
 - Educational examples: Exams, project artifacts, artistic work products, capstone experiences, performances, oral presentations, papers, and portfolios
 - UCC examples: Dollars earned in a fundraising campaign, voters registered from an advocacy campaign, numbers and dollars for sales of a product, plans of action created by a training program

Assessment: Step 2

HOW (cont.):

- Measurement Methods and Types (cont.)
 - **Indirect measures** gather perceptions of how project goals or outcomes have been achieved
 - Educational/UCC examples: Surveys, exit or focus group interviews, enrollment and retention data, and job placement data
 - Indirect measures complement the data collected from direct measures but cannot stand alone as a sole measure of performance and success.

Most people use indirect measures to demonstrate the impact of a program or project!

Assessment: Step 2

HOW (cont.):

- Assessment Design / Measurement Methods and Types (cont.)
 - **Quantitative data** has numerical significance and can be measured.
 - Exam scores, course grades, enrollment and retention data, ministry placement and longevity data, etc.
 - **Qualitative data** has descriptive significance and can be observed not measured.
 - *Surveys*, focus groups, participant observation, interviews, course descriptions, course evaluations, etc.
 - **Mixed methods** utilize both qualitative and quantitative data.

Assessment: Step 2

HOW (cont.):

Execution / Implementation

- Developing Evaluation Questions
 - Questions should specifically address outcomes and goals, but also allow space for “unexpected” information to be shared.
 - Helpful resources for crafting good questions:
 - <http://www.mad.state.mn.us/survey-guide>
 - <http://www.qualtrics.com/blog/writing-survey-questions/>
 - <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/559/06/>

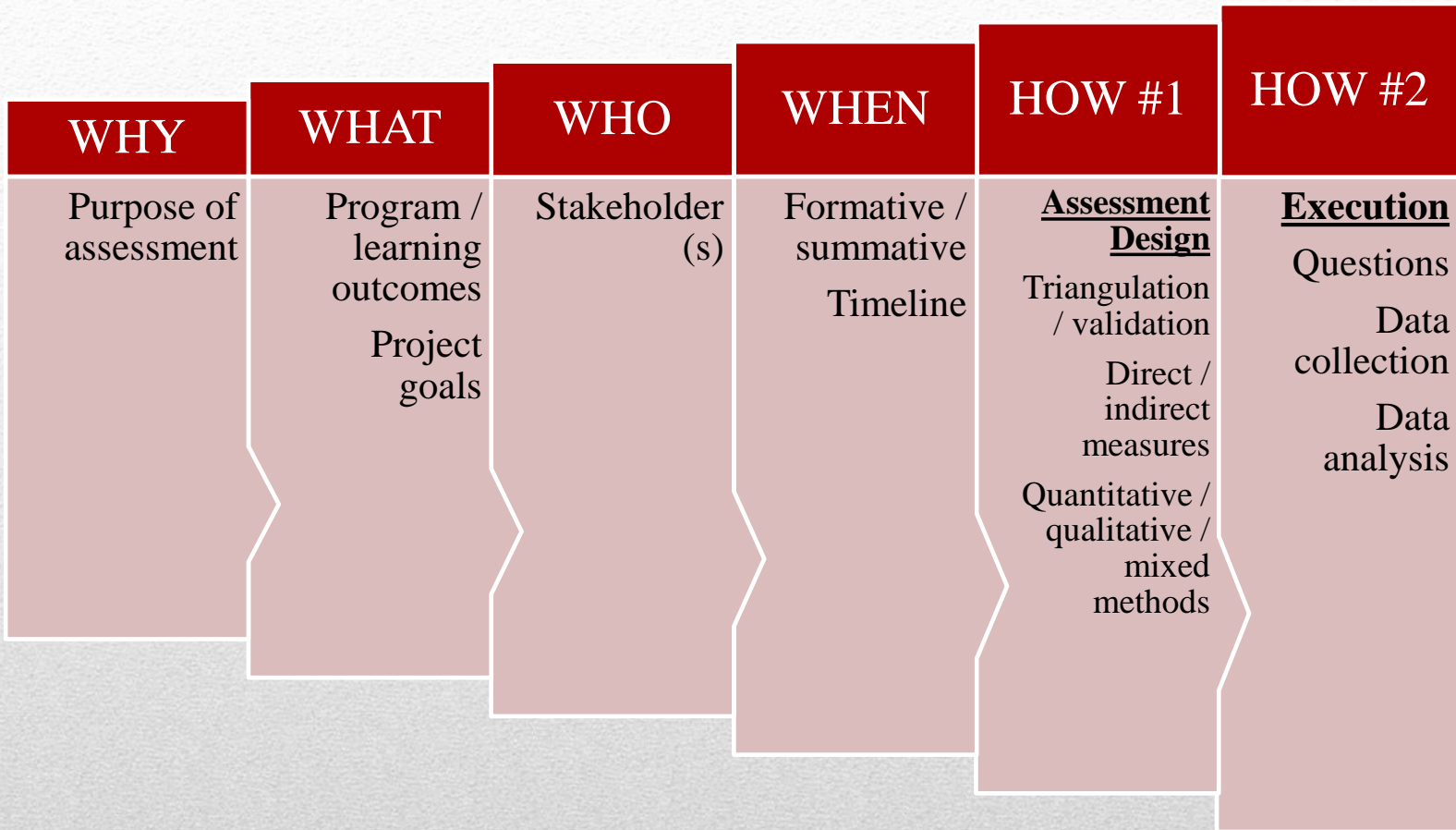
Assessment: Step 3

HOW (cont.):

Execution / Implementation

- Collecting the Data
 - Notes / recordings
 - Paper / forms
 - Email / internet surveys
 - Reports
 - Others?
- Analyzing the Data
 - Themes, patterns
 - Inconsistencies, areas of concern

Assessment: Step 3



Assessment Process

Examples?



Practical Application

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