



CAUSAL
PATHWAYS

VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM 2023

DISCOVERING HOW, WHY, AND
WHEN OUR STRATEGIES MATTER

Structure of this session

1

Introduction to process tracing and how it helps evidence causal pathways

2

Practical exercise to determine the strength of evidence

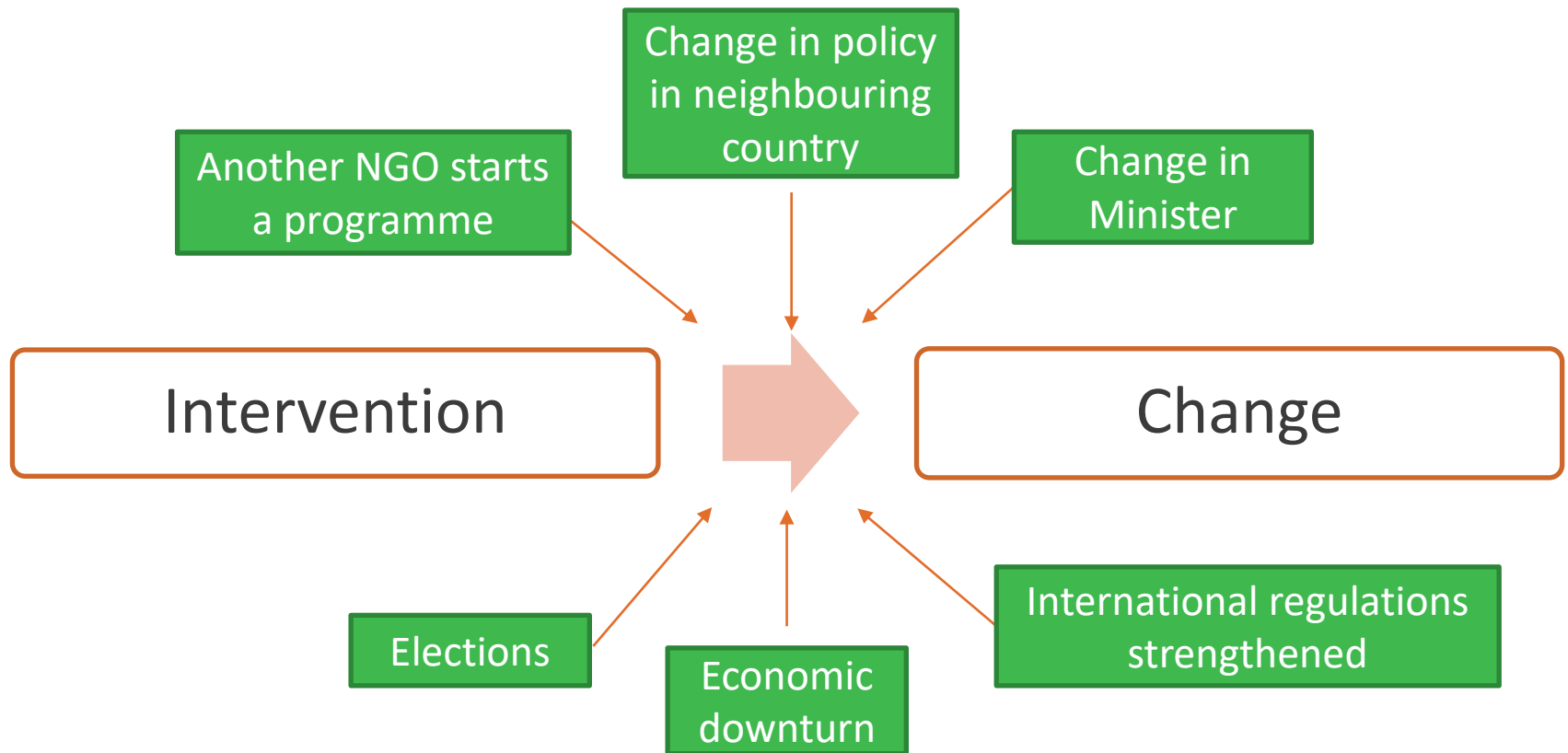
3

Challenges and value of process tracing

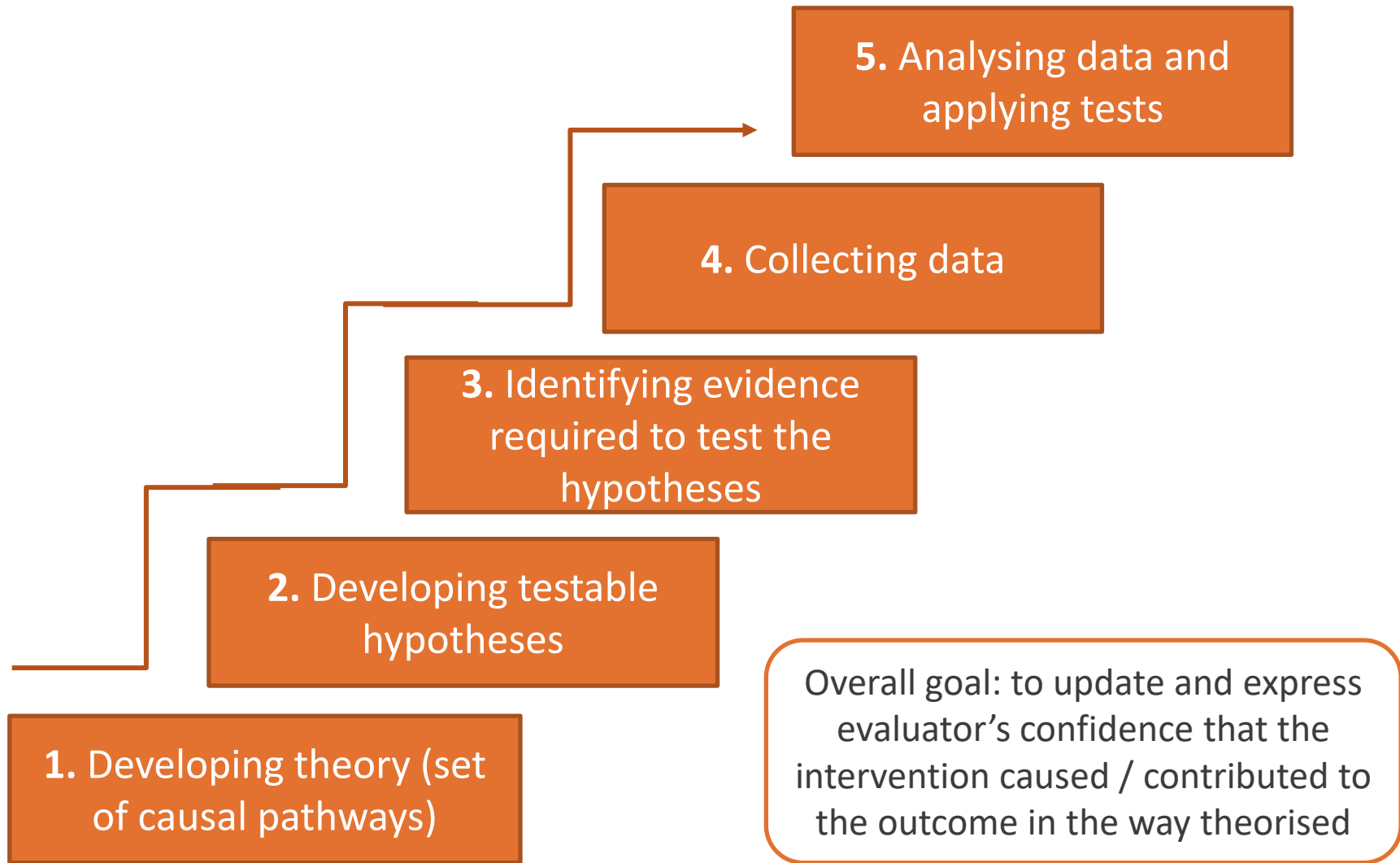
4

Q&A and wrap up





What is Process Tracing and why do we use it?



What does process tracing involve?



Process Tracing 'tests' (for Steps 3 and 5)

	Can confirm hypothesis?	Can disprove hypothesis?
Smoking Gun 	✓ If we see it, we have proven the hypothesis beyond reasonable doubt.	✗ If we don't find it, it doesn't mean the hypothesis false.
Hoop test 	✗ If we see it, it does not prove the hypothesis.	✓ If we don't see it, the hypothesis can be discarded.
Straw in the Wind 	↑ If we see it, it doesn't prove the hypothesis. Several examples may increase confidence in H.	✗ If we don't find it, it doesn't disprove hypothesis.
Double Decisive 	✓ If we find it, we have proven the hypothesis.	✓ If we don't find it, we have disproven the hypothesis.

Activity: Practise assessing strength of evidence

“Technical support and influencing from staff from Programme XX contributed to policy YY being adopted.”

- E1.** The policy reflects some of the key objectives and recommendations of Programme XX.
- E2.** Programme XX staff member claims in an interview that he/she influenced the policy.
- E3.** A paragraph in the policy document is identical to the wording and statistics provided in a report written by the staff from Programme XX for the relevant policy-makers.
- E4.** A senior civil servant involved in developing the policy confirmed that the staff from Programme XX played a key role in pushing for and shaping it.
- E5.** A civil society partner (receiving funding from Programme XX) who had also worked to influence the policy felt Programme XX was influential in the policy formulation process.

Activity: Practise assessing strength of evidence

“Technical support and influencing from staff from Programme XX contributed to policy YY being adopted.”

E4. A senior civil servant involved in developing the policy confirmed that the staff from Programme XX played a key role in pushing for and shaping it.

E3. A paragraph in the policy document is identical to the wording and statistics provided in a report written by the staff from Programme XX for the relevant policy-makers.

E1. The policy reflects some of the key objectives and recommendations of Programme XX.

E5. A civil society partner (receiving funding from Programme XX) who had also worked to influence the policy felt Programme XX was influential in the policy formulation process.

E2. Programme XX staff member claims in an interview that he/she influenced the policy.



Reflecting on using Process Tracing: Challenges and added value

Challenges

1. Keeping on top of the **number of hypotheses** that we had under consideration

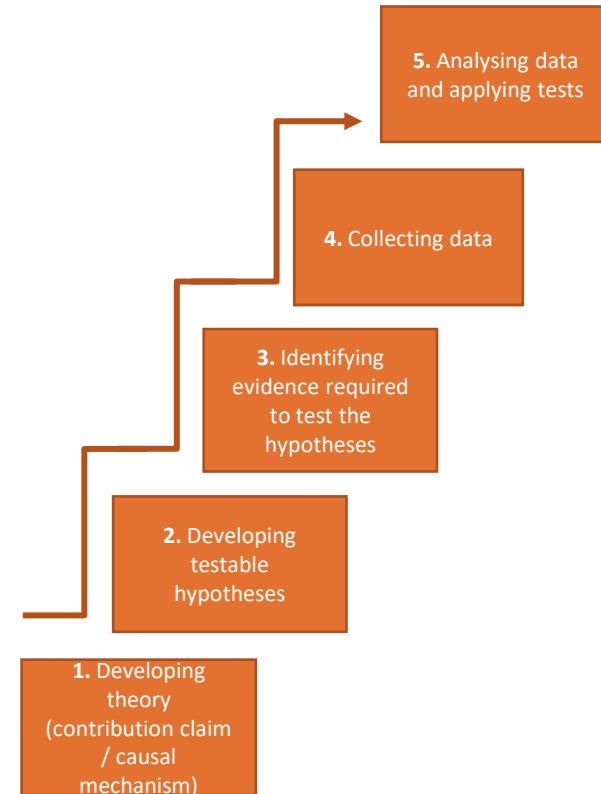
Solution: **analysis workshops** at regular intervals; selecting it for a limited set of causal pathways

2. Resourcing: ensure **enough time** available from the **right people**

Solution: consider the level of sector-specific knowledge of team members before deciding upon PT

Added Value

- Clear focus on the **strength of evidence** at all stages of the case study
- **Systematic approach** to considering **alternative** causal explanations



Questions and Answers

Key sources

Beach, D. and Pedersen, R.B. (2013) *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*, Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287260232_Process-Tracing_Methods_Foundations_and_Guidelines

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Punton, M. and Welle, K. (2015) 'CDI Practice Paper: Straws-in-the-wind, Hoops and Smoking Guns: What can Process Tracing Offer to Impact Evaluation?' <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/5997>

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Thank you for listening

Contact

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