



# Practical theory & evaluation practice

Reflecting on Lifeline Australia's experience in developing an  
evaluation strategy for its 13 11 14 crisis line service

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connect with someone who cares

## Overview

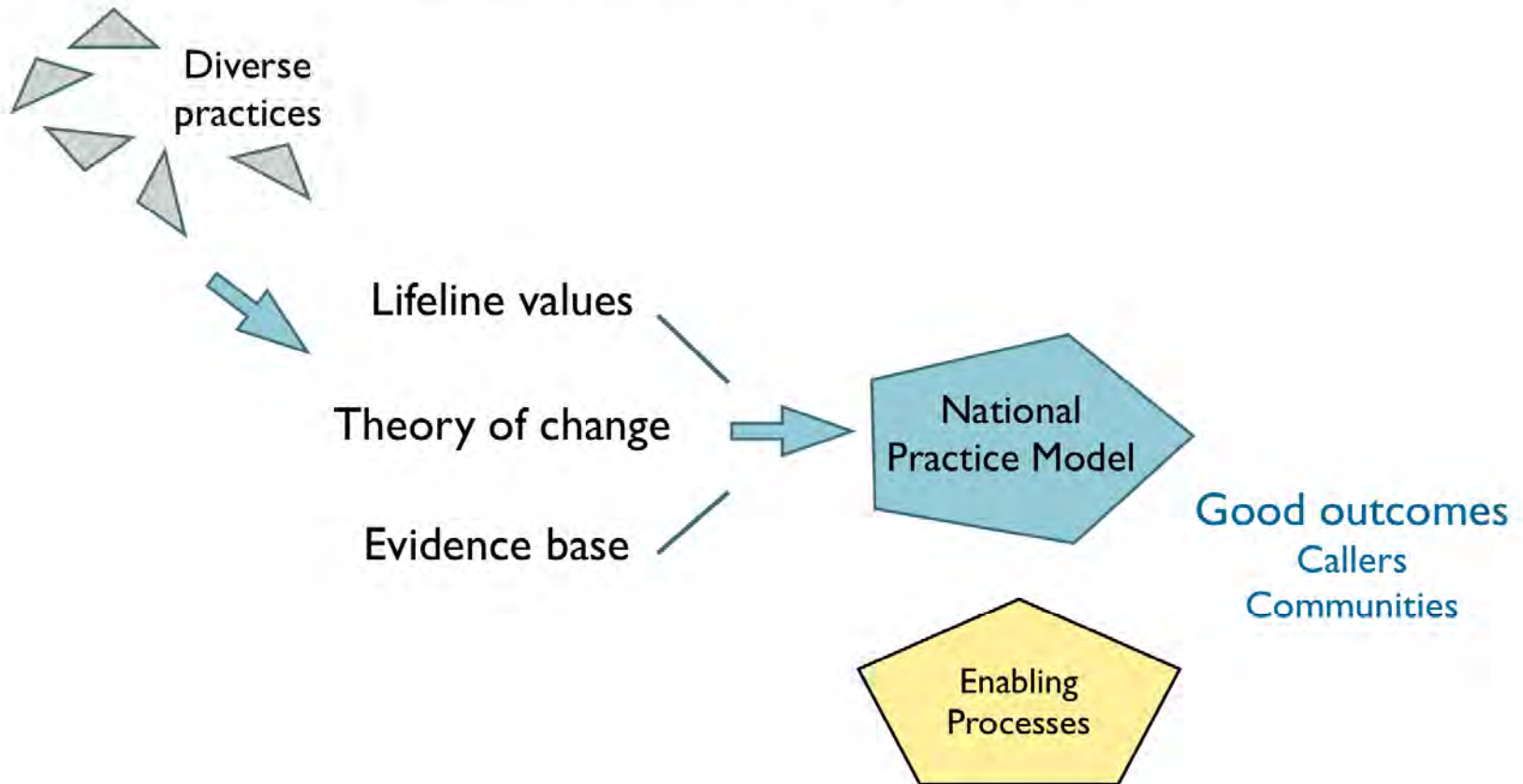
- ❑ Lifeline's evaluation challenge
- ❑ Starting points ~ end in mind
- ❑ Theory of change : evidence-informed practice
- ❑ Framing the evaluation inquiry – program logic
- ❑ Methods and measures
- ❑ Reflections – lessons learned, task ahead

## The program – Lifeline Australia's 13 11 14 service

- ❑ Service promise – accessible, time-limited
  - ❑ crisis support
  - ❑ suicide prevention
  - ❑ mental health support
- ❑ Nationally integrated network and service framework
- ❑ Community-based providers in > 40 locations
- ❑ Professionally supported trained volunteers

# Foundations & Frameworks

## Toward a cohesive service framework



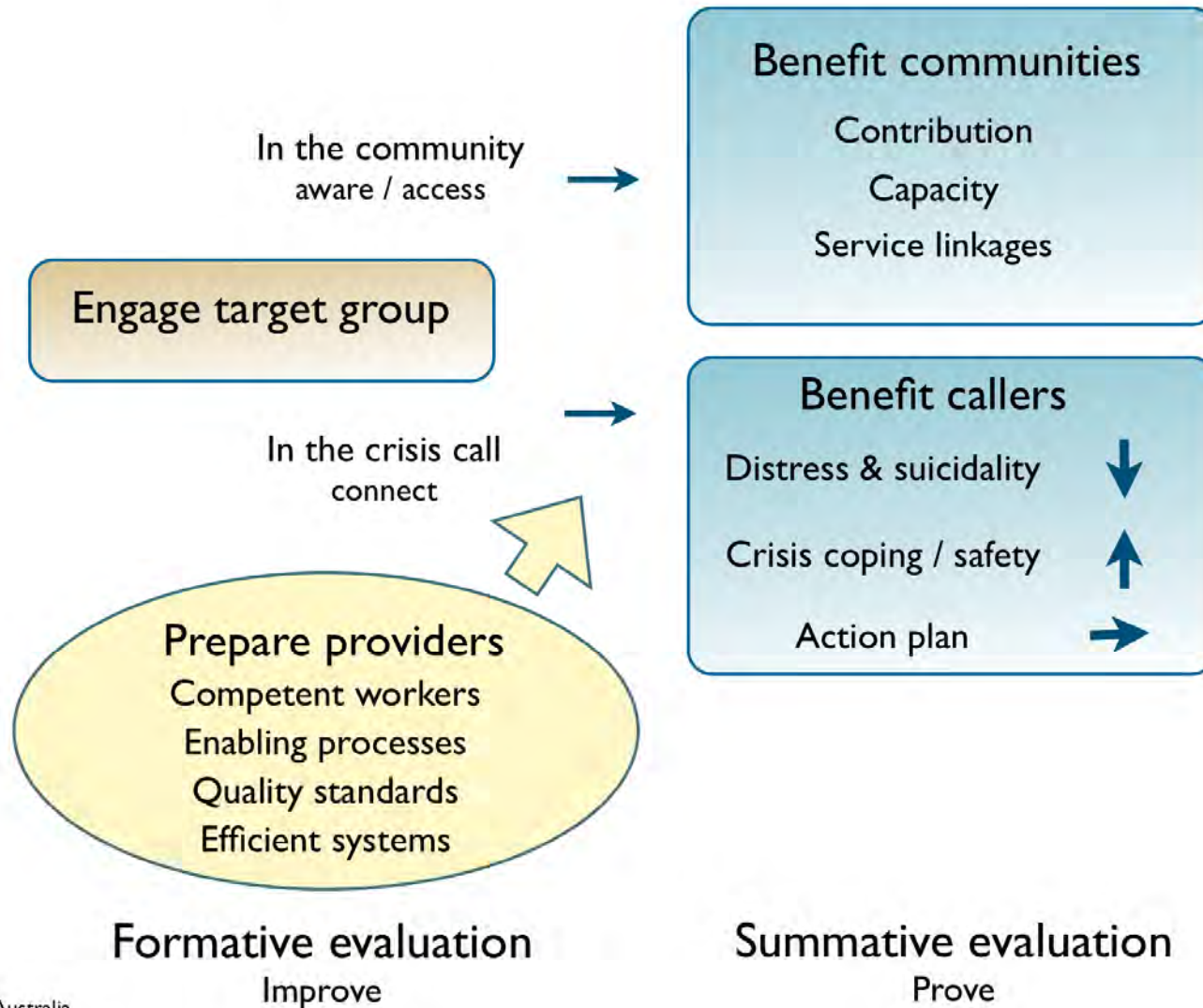
“Nothing is as practical as a good theory”

Kurt Lewin

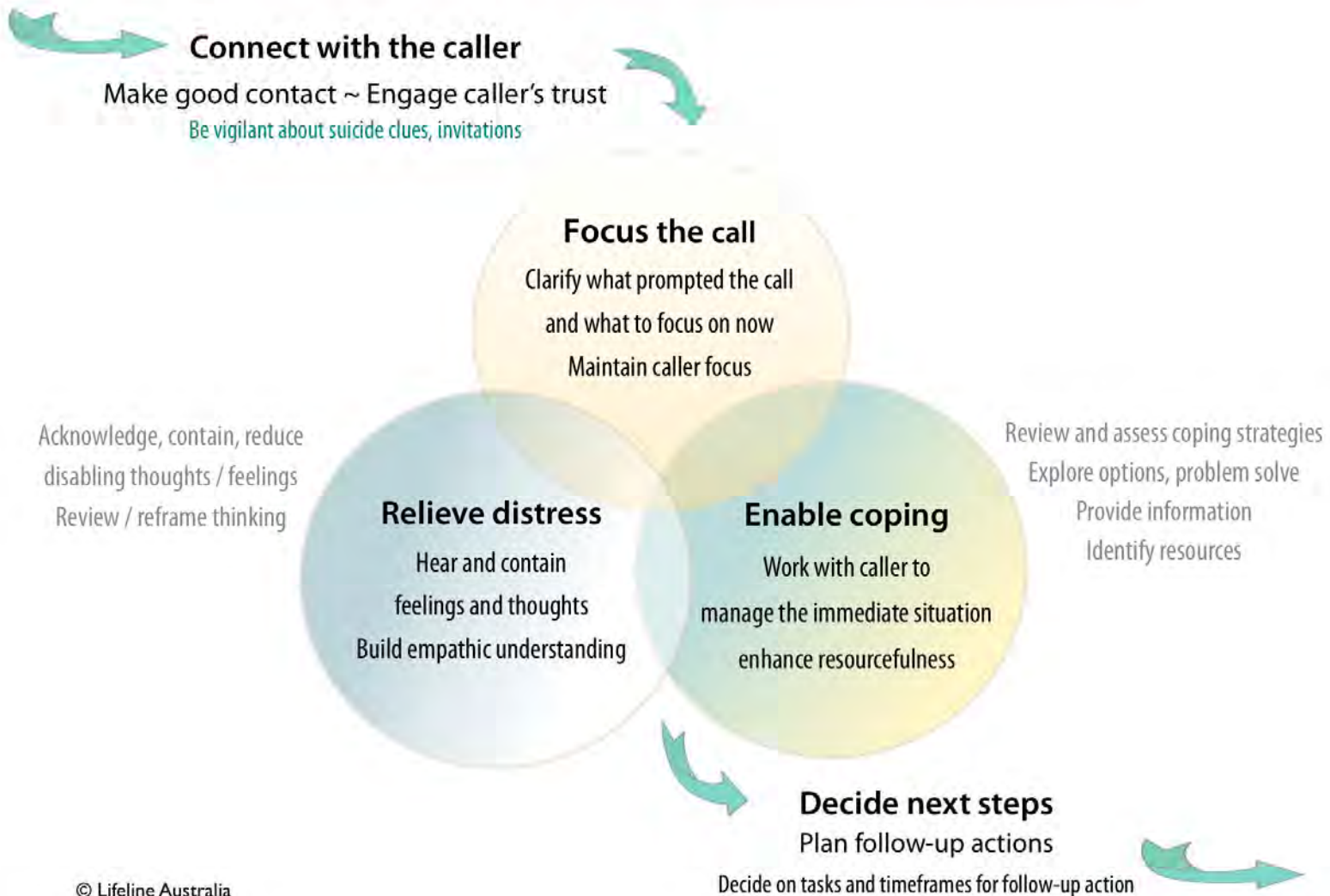
## Lifeline’s theory of change

“Accessible timely, time-limited phone support  
from trained volunteers  
can enhance people’s ability to  
manage crises and increase suicide safety”

# Key Elements in the Theory of Change



# Lifeline Australia's Telephone Crisis Support Practice Model



# Seven Projects

## Caller outcomes

1. Service impact – immediate & intermediate benefits

## Performance enabling service delivery processes

2. Process evaluation – apply practice model : consistent / competent
3. Training & supervision – fidelity in transfer of learning

## Service operations

4. Benchmarking service delivery operations – performance targets

## Consumer & community engagement

5. Service access & reach – service utilisation
6. Service profile – service awareness
7. Lifeline's community engagement



# Program Logic for Lifeline 13 11 14 Service

## Mission

Make short-term crisis support, suicide intervention and community services more accessible to anyone, anytime

### Long term Outcomes

**Australian population benefits**  
Community capacity building ~ Personal crisis management / suicide safety

### Intermediate Outcome

**Caller benefits continue after call**  
What benefits / for how long?

**Increased community capacity**  
for crisis support and suicide intervention

### IMPACT

### Immediate Outcome

**Caller benefits during the call**  
Congruent with service promise

**Other Influences**  
Communications technology  
Economic conditions  
Other programs services

### REACH

**People access the service**

Deliver

**Service effectively implemented**  
Consistent with practice model standards  
targets met ~ satisfied callers

### AWARENESS

**Consumers aware**      **Organisations refer**

Train

**Crisis line workers are competent**  
Trained / supervised to standards  
Transfer of learning fidelity

### INPUTS

Infrastructure, resources, activities

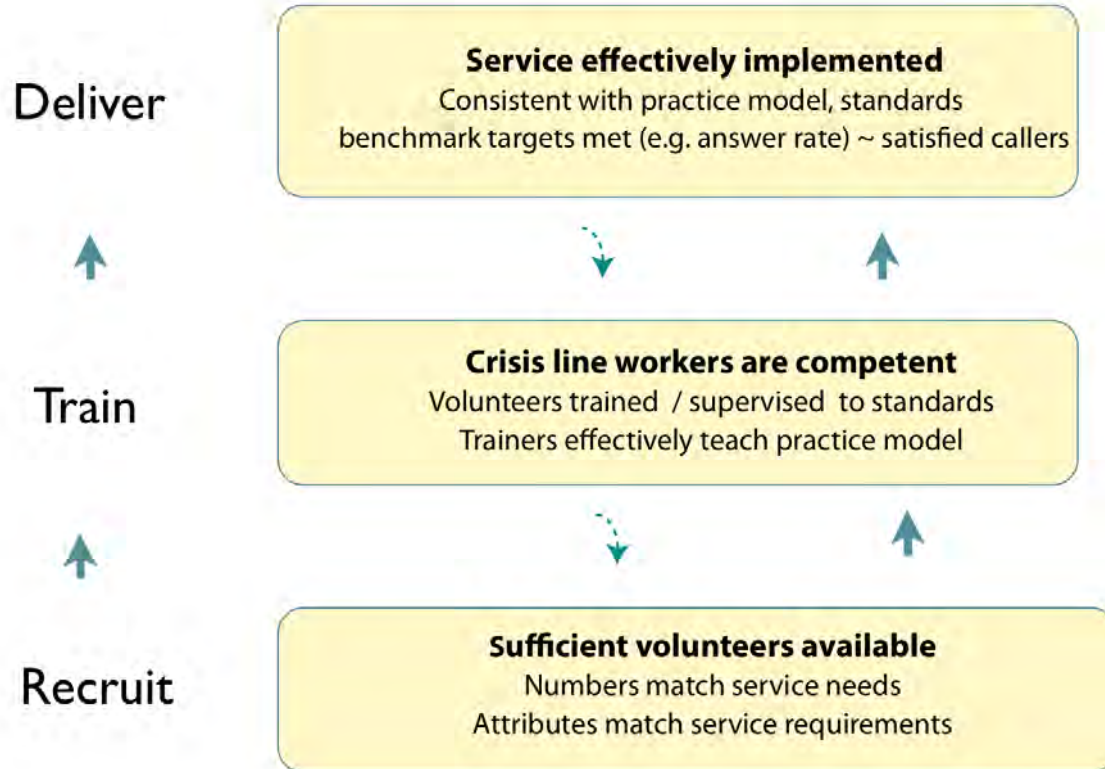
**Service design & capacity in place**

Recruit

**Volunteers available**  
Match service needs and requirements

# Projects 2-4 Capacity Building

## Competent crisis line workers - Efficient systems



# Projects 5-6 Engagement

## Service preparation, profile, access

**REACH**  
*(Access)*

**People access the service**  
when in crisis or suicidal  
Callers match need profile / service purpose

**AWARENESS**  
*(Profile)*

**People aware of service**  
know the service offer,  
how to access

**Organisations refer**  
know service role  
confident to refer

**INPUTS**  
*Infrastructure,  
resources,  
activities*

**Appropriate service designed and established**  
(intervention model, infrastructure and technology)  
Resources, partnerships, performance data in place

# Projects 1 & 7 Results

## Impact and Outcomes

### Long term Outcomes

#### Australian population benefits

Communities better equipped to promote suicide safety, crisis support, mental health  
People in crisis have more internal and external resources for coping, keeping safe

### Intermediate Outcome

#### Caller benefits continue after call (Suicidal & non suicidal callers)

- Distress and /or suicidality reduced
- Callers follow action plan, find resourceful pathways
- Better able to manage crises, keep safe

#### Increased community capacity

for crisis support & suicide intervention  
(e.g. skills, help-seeking, responsibility  
can apply training in everyday situations)

### IMPACT

### Immediate Outcome

#### Caller benefits during the call

(Managing crises / increased suicide safety)

- Support - less alone, more connected to care
- Reduced distress
- Increased coping options
- Current safety plan based on risk review
- Pathways to further care as needed

Service  
Delivery

## Focus of Performance Evaluation

Project	Units of observation
Service impact	Callers
Process evaluation (Model)	Crisis line workers
Transfer of learning	Trainers & supervisors
Operational benchmarks	Lifeline systems / centres
Access & reach	Utilisation patterns
Service profile / awareness	Potential consumers / funders
Community engagement	Consumers / supporters / volunteers

## Performance Measures

Project	Illustrative Measures
Service impact	Self-report, observer ratings, call monitoring, follow-up
Process evaluation (Model)	Self-report, observer ratings, call monitoring
Transfer of learning	Online surveys, video monitoring, participant surveys
Operational benchmarks	Data-analysis, qualitative surveys, case studies
Access & reach	Call data and telecommunications analysis
Service profile / awareness	Community surveys, focus group feedback
Community engagement	Community case studies (urban, regional, rural)

## Lessons Learned – (1) Purpose and Preparation

- ❑ Clarify the purpose – what is the service promise?
  - ❑ Who benefits, in what ways, by which means?
- ❑ Articulate the theory of change
  - ❑ Integrate theoretical foundations and evidence-informed practice
- ❑ Standardise the preparation and delivery process
- ❑ Frame the evaluation inquiry
- ❑ Integrate formative & summative evaluation elements

## Lessons Learned – (2) Results

- ❑ Describe and assess results against purpose & change theory
  - ❑ What does theory predict should be happening?
  - ❑ What does evaluation tell us is actually happening?
  - ❑ How do results build the evidence-base for practice?
- ❑ Assess effectiveness of evaluation tools, methods and processes
- ❑ Frame options for future evaluation inquiry



## Lessons Learned – (3) Development Implications

- ❑ Identify implications for service improvement & development
  - ❑ Which service processes and preparations were most effective?
  - ❑ Which areas needed most improvement?
  - ❑ What recommendations about service improvement were indicated?
- ❑ Identify implications for theory development
  - ❑ How well did evaluation results support the theory of change?
  - ❑ Were there any implications for refinement of the theory / knowledge creation?
  - ❑ What additional elements of the theory might we want to test in future?