

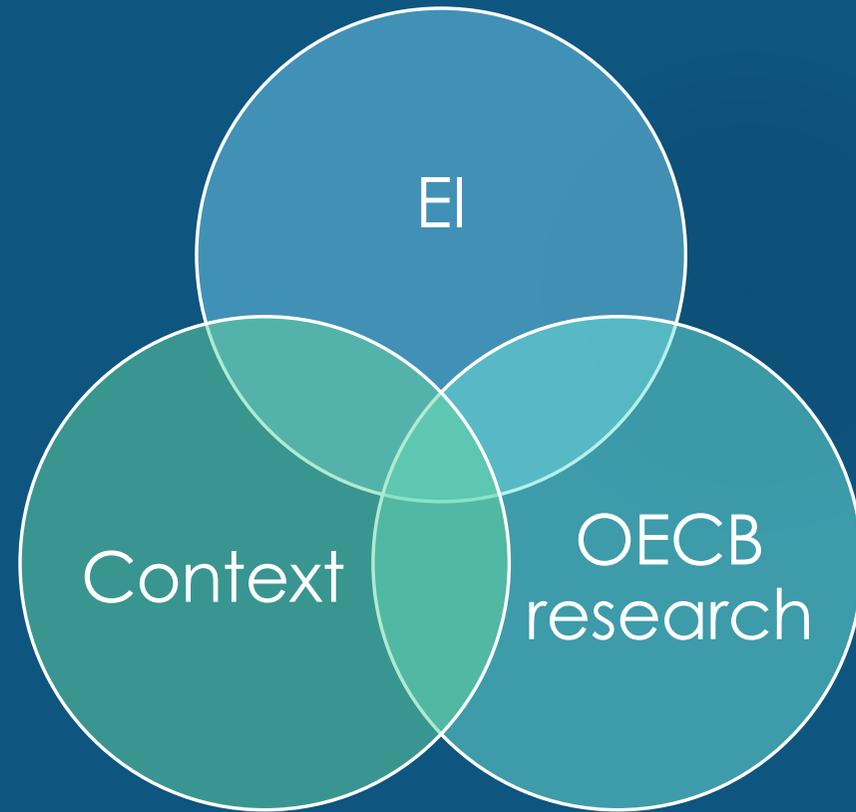
Visionary, maybe, but how viable?

Top management leaders' thinking about evaluation mainstreaming within child & family welfare

Amanda Jones

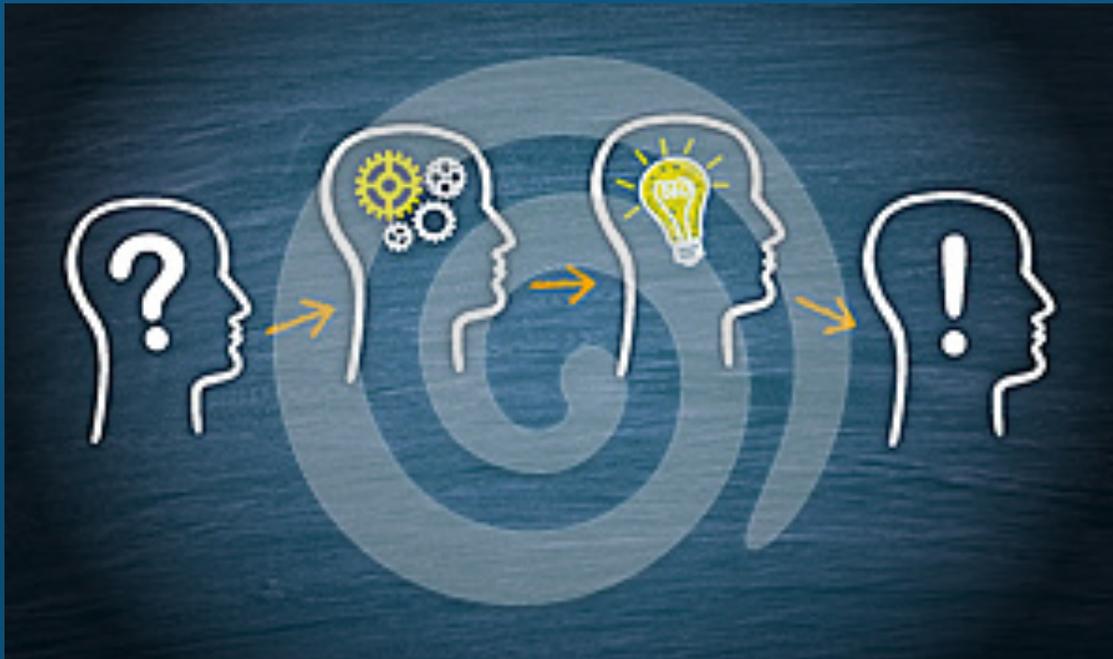


# Rationale for study



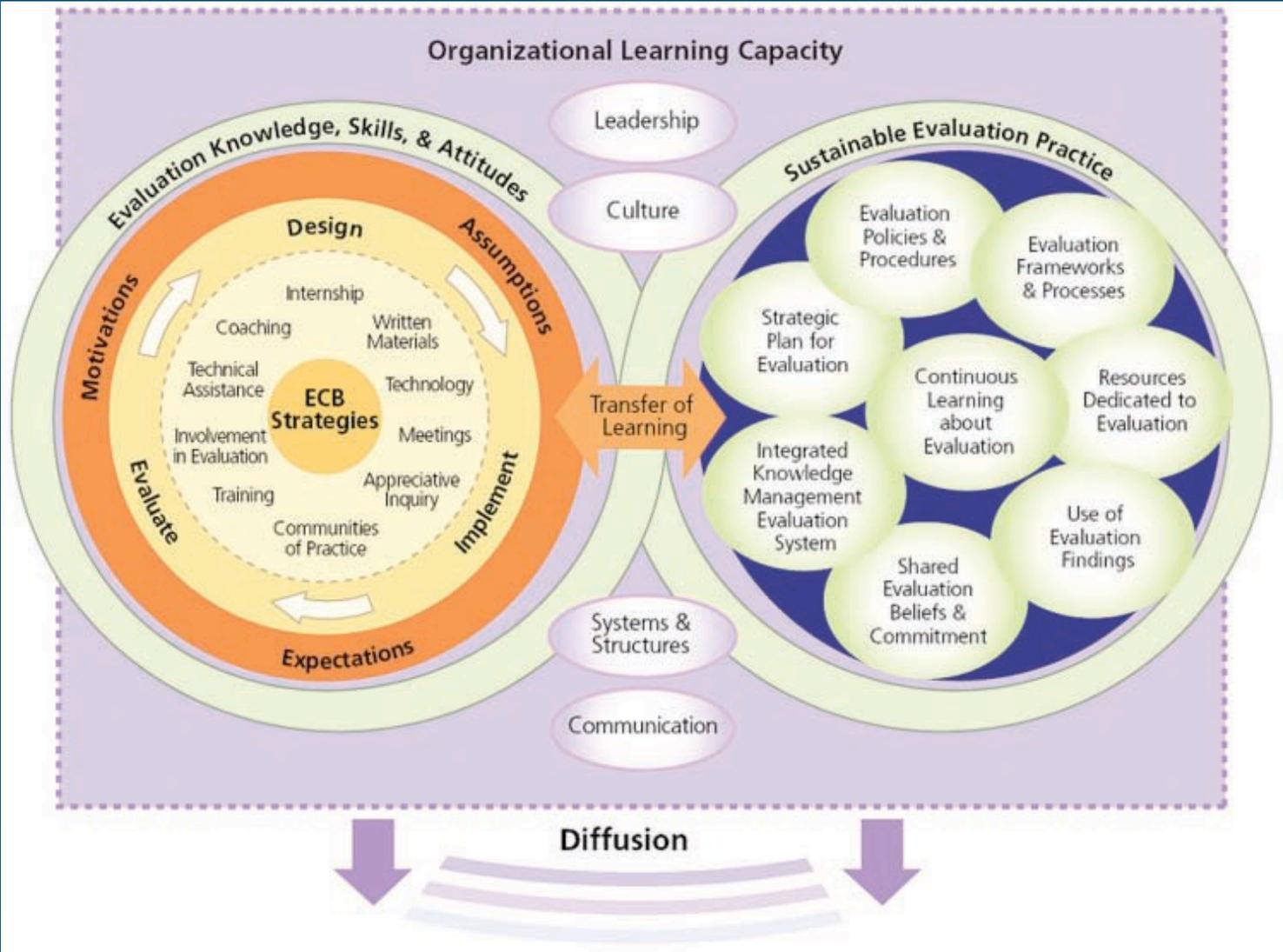


# Context



**Evaluative inquiry:  
a solution for this  
sector?**

# OECB literature

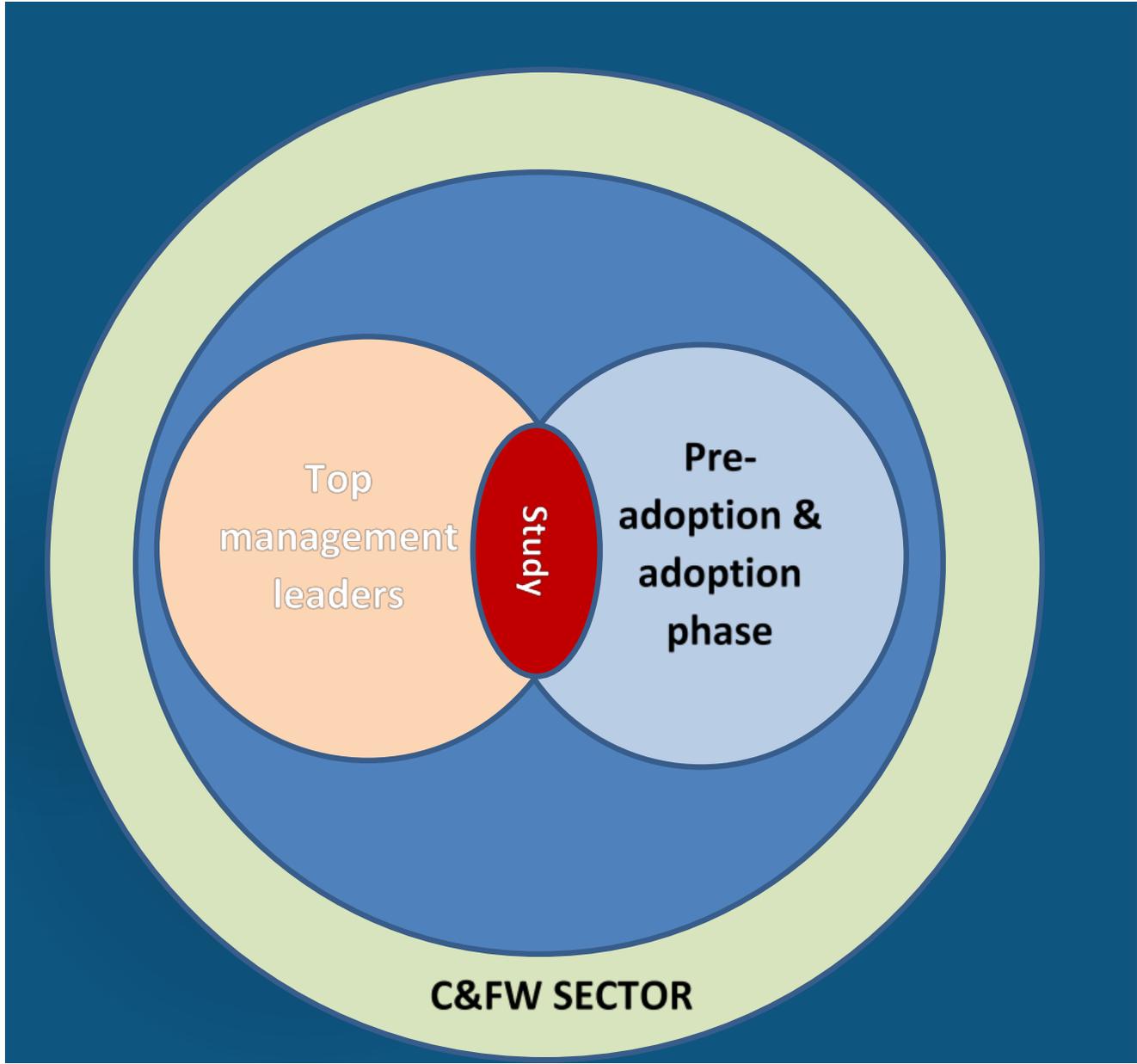


# ECB readiness tools & ECB checklists

- accent on perceived *current* evaluation capacity
- ECB often initiative-based, rather than whole organisation based
- no instruments re readiness to adopt & commit to leading a significant EI change/innovation agenda

➡ OECB field's understanding underdeveloped:

- ▶ what TMLs might think about EI
- ▶ features of TML thinking that might distinguish readiness/non-readiness
- ▶ factors that might predispose them attitudinally towards/against EI
- ▶ how this disposition might be favourably influenced



# Purpose of study

# Research questions

1<sup>st</sup>  
interview

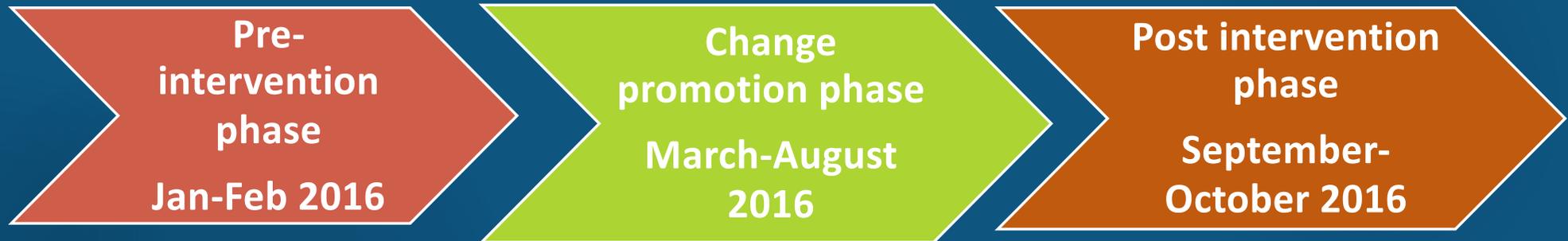
**RQ1: What do TMLs think about EI in prospect?**

2<sup>nd</sup>  
interview

- **RQ2: Does thinking change with a formal strategic planning decision about EI, and why?**
- **RQ3: How do TMLs construct their role in EL, & readiness to perform role?**

# Study design

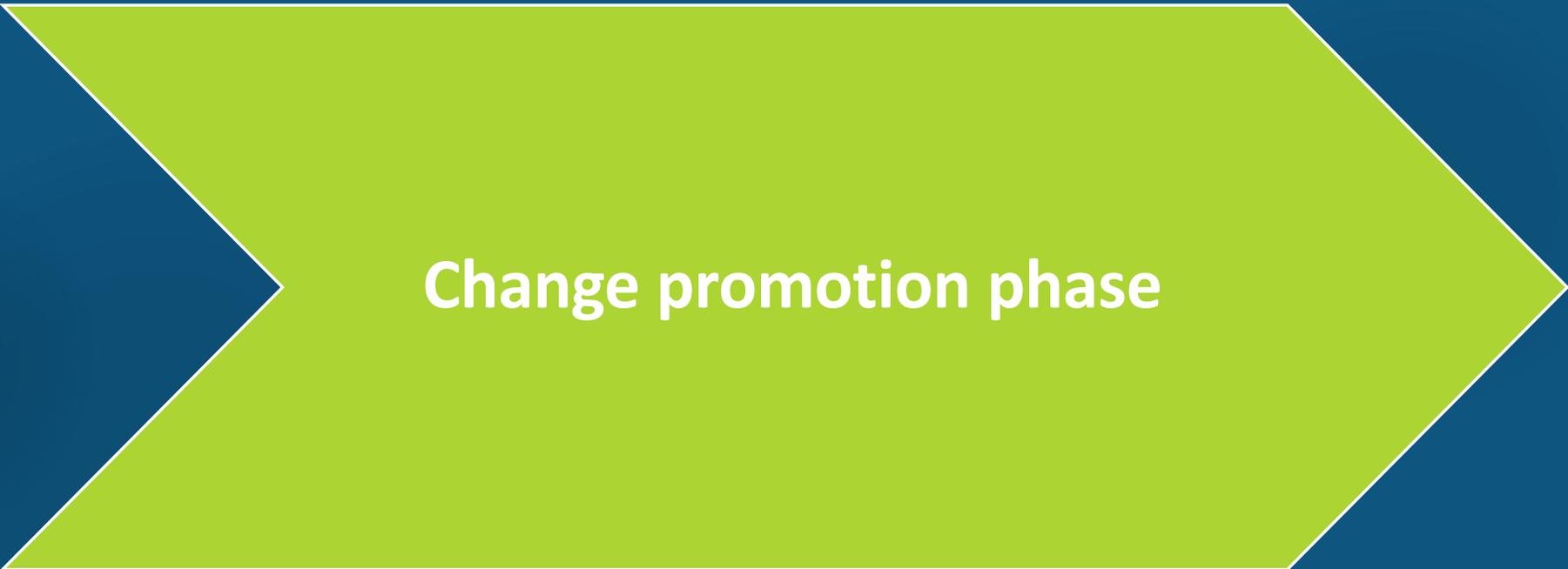
## SENIOR MANAGER - EVALUATION



## 'INSIDER RESEARCHER'



# Study design



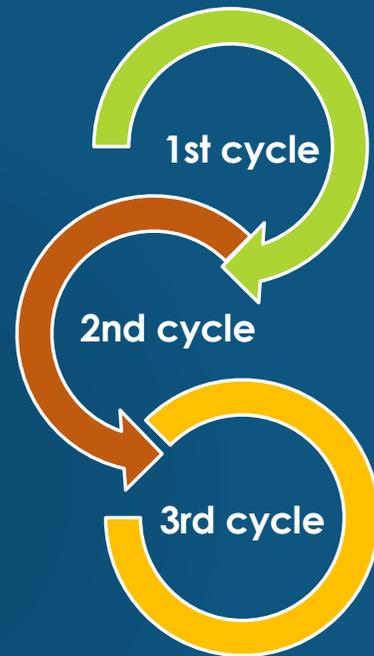
**Change promotion phase**

<b>Research question</b>	<b>Interview topics</b>
<b>RQ1: What do executives think about EI in prospect?</b>	<b>Initial thoughts about concept of EI</b>
	<b>Attractions of EI</b>
	<b>Challenges/ problems with EI</b>
	<b>Value propositions for EI</b>
	<b>Language to describe EI</b>
	<b>Facilitators/key enablers of EI in this context</b>
	<b>Hallmarks of current EI in organisation</b>
	<b>Hallmarks of future mature EI in organisation</b>
	<b>Assumptions underpinning EI</b>
	<b>Opportunity costs of doing or not doing EI</b>
<b>Gaining executive endorsement and support for EI</b>	

Research question	Interview topics
<p><b>RQ2: Does that thinking change with a formal strategic planning decision about EI, and why?</b></p>	<p><b>Current understanding of EI</b></p>
	<p><b>Change in understanding and why</b></p>
	<p><b>Comparing strategic plan content – ‘outcome measurement’ versus ‘EI’</b></p>
	<p><b>Attitude toward EI now</b></p>
	<p><b>Attitude toward EI then</b></p>
	<p><b>Explanation of attitude ratings</b></p>
	<p><b>Perception of peer attitude toward EI now</b></p>
	<p><b>Perception of peer attitude toward EI then</b></p>
	<p><b>Explanation of peer attitude ratings</b></p>
	<p><b>Final reaction to EI now that EI is adopted/adapted/rejected</b></p>

Research question	Interview topics
<b>RQ3: How do executives construct their role in EI, and readiness to perform that role?</b>	<b>The role you envisage playing over the 5 year scenario described</b>
	<b>Whether this role represents a shift for you</b>
	<b>The role you envisage your peers will play over the 5 year scenario</b>
	<b>Whether you consider this role represents a shift for them</b>
	<b>Preparation or support you think would be helpful to you in performing your own anticipated role</b>
	<b>Preparation or support you think would be helpful to your peers in performing the role you ascribe to them</b>

# Data analysis



Challenges	Executive member													No
	E3	E5	E6	E7	E8	E2	E1	E4	E9	E10	E11	E12	E13	
Learning climate – compliance burden leaves no time for reflection/evaluative activities, especially in statutory programs	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11
Capability – EI will be technically difficult for workforce	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	9
Implementation climate – poor organisational track record of executing & sustaining practice change & consequent disengagement			✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	7
Resourcing – lack of good data collection system	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓				✓	6
Compatibility – relationship-centred practice valued, not data-informed practice		✓	✓			✓						✓	✓	5
Internal accountability – central versus regional office tension/disconnect will lead to poor leadership accountability for EI			✓		✓	✓	✓							4
Resourcing – significant cost of EI in context of tight program funding				✓	✓			✓					✓	4
Complexity – ambivalence & uncertainty about measuring outcomes given ‘wicked’ problems/complex needs			✓			✓						✓		3
Practitioner cultural norm – belief our work inherently ‘good’						✓				✓			✓	3
Practitioner cultural norm – ‘story-run’/oral-based culture						✓			✓			✓		3

# Summary of RQ1 findings

## Desirability

- ▶ Overall, unanimously in favour of EI as a hypothetical proposition
- ▶ Extrinsic driver of increasing government reform focus on evidence
- ▶ Other attractions:
  - ▶ foster a learning organisation
  - ▶ support need to evidence progress and outcomes

# Summary of RQ1 findings

## Desirability

- ▶ Executives, projecting themselves into an EI-mature future, imagined :
  - ▶ use of data for decision making at every leadership level
  - ▶ capacity to evidence outcomes
  - ▶ team self-evaluation as a cultural norm
  - ▶ development of the organisation as a leader/mentor in EI in the field
- ▶ Most EDs regarded the opportunity costs of not doing EI as significantly greater than doing it

# Summary of RQ1 findings

## Feasibility ??

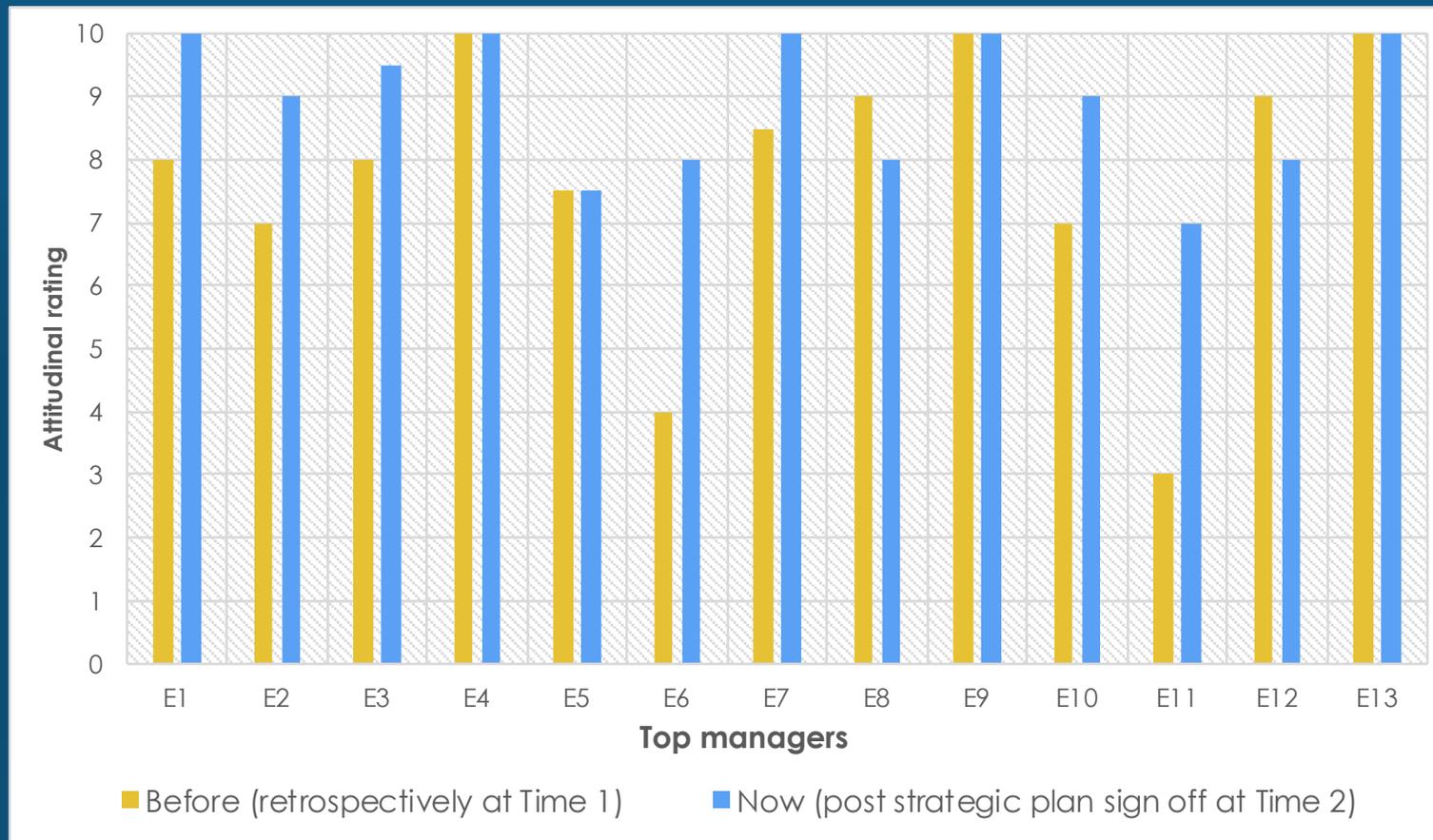
- ▶ Most expressed strong reservations about feasibility: 'utopian', 'massive' culture change
- Dominant challenges:
  - compliance burden of statutory programs
  - technical complexity of EM given workforce
  - organisation's poor implementation track record
  - lack of good data collection system
  - privileging of relationship-centred practice over data-oriented practice
  - organisational tension between 'head office' & regional operations
  - cost of EI in the context of resource scarcity

# Summary of RQ1 findings

## Buy-in?

- ▶ To increase buy-in, EDs wanted:
  - ▶ more info on which to judge implementation cost
  - ▶ More info on pros and cons of EI compared to other possible options for OECB
  - ▶ evidence of other CSO's that had pursued EI or other like approaches successfully
- ▶ Thus, three 'intervention characteristics' of EI not yet sufficiently obvious or convincing

# Summary of RQ2 findings



# Summary of RQ2 findings





‘There’s a lot of rhetoric about an organisational evaluative stance but there’s mixed genuine prioritisation. So some people on the executive would probably put a lot more effort into achieving it than others would, whereas others, I think, would say it’s a good thing, a bit like peace on earth, but it’s not actually what they’re going to spend their time and effort on today, tomorrow or next week’. (E7)

# Summary of RQ3 findings

## ▶ Imagined leadership roles

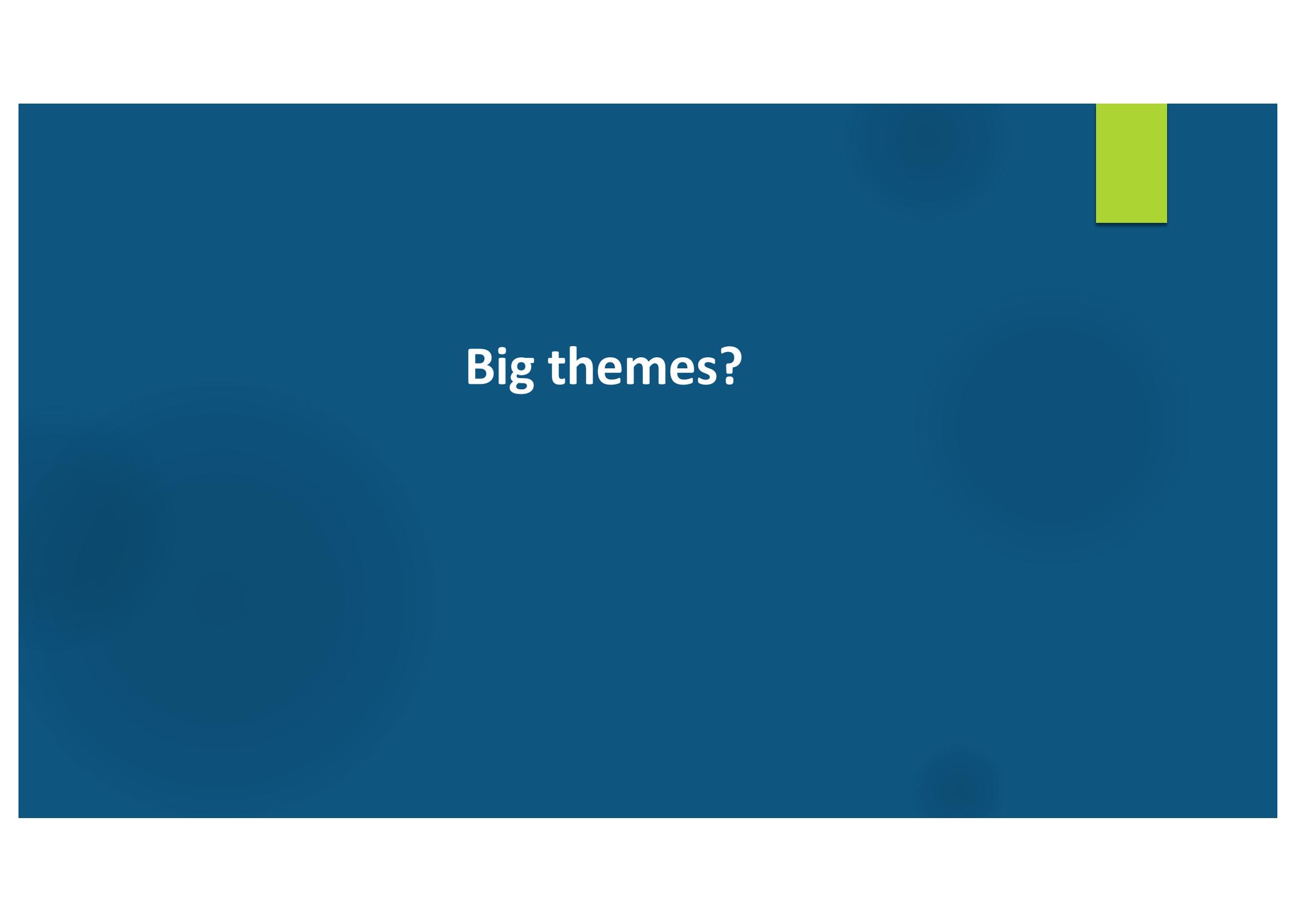
### ▶ Role shift?

▶ for me

▶ For my peers

# Summary of RQ3 findings

- ▶ **Support & preparation**
  - ▶ for self
  - ▶ for peers



**Big themes?**

# Particularity of C&FW

Complexity/wicked problems

Ambivalence about 'evidence'

Limited practitioner time/compliance burden

Digital infrastructure lag

Resource-constrained

Relationship-centred & oral-based knowledge over data-informed

Day to day crisis-driven nature of statutory practice

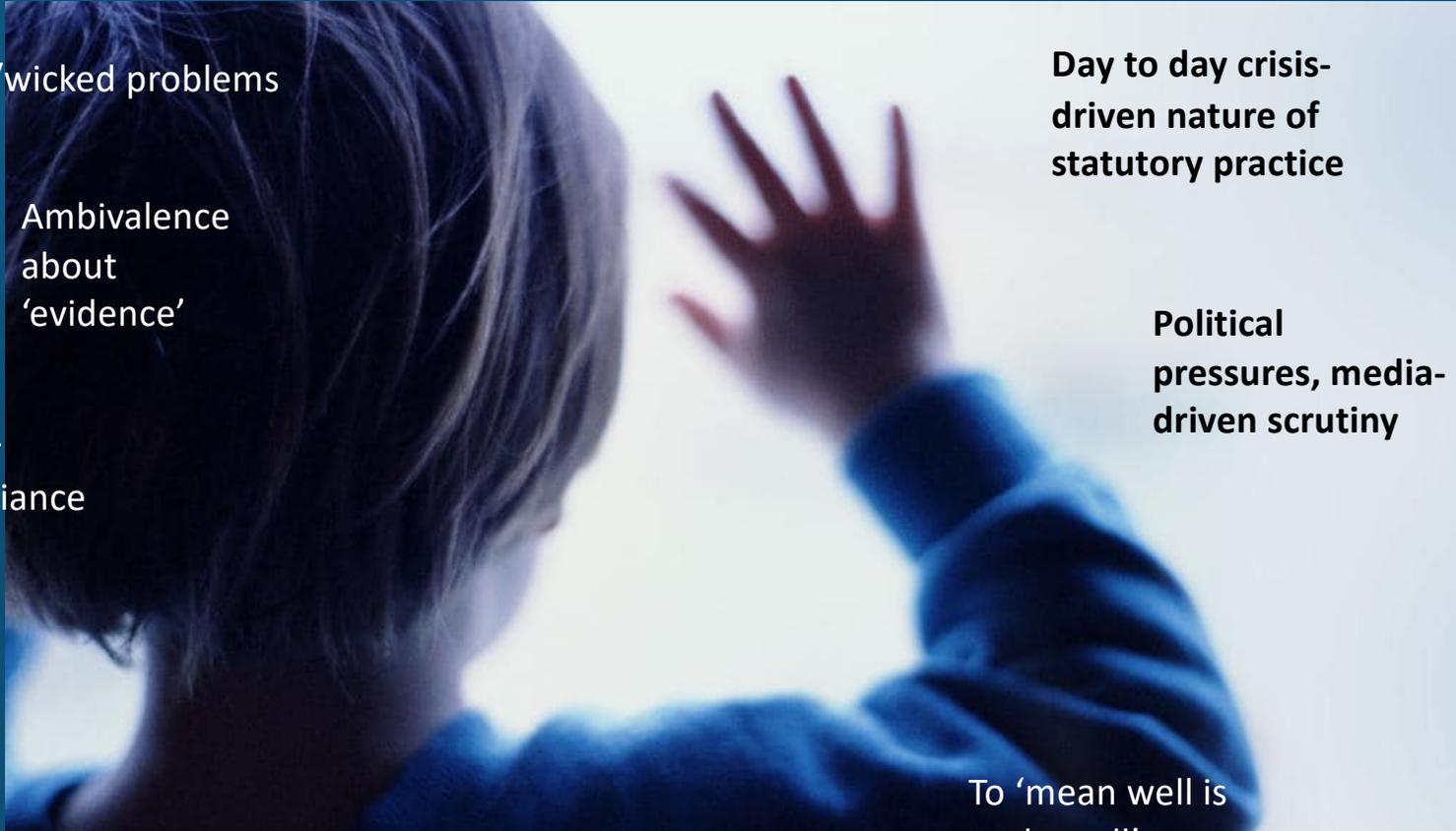
Political pressures, media-driven scrutiny

To 'mean well is to do well'

Volume of compliance-based work

Workforce training and skills in evidence use

Professional autonomy



**Brilliant. You're dreaming': resistance to change**



# Brilliant. You're dreaming': resistance to change



Change  
commitment

Change efficacy

# The evidence-practice cultural gap

Language for  
communication

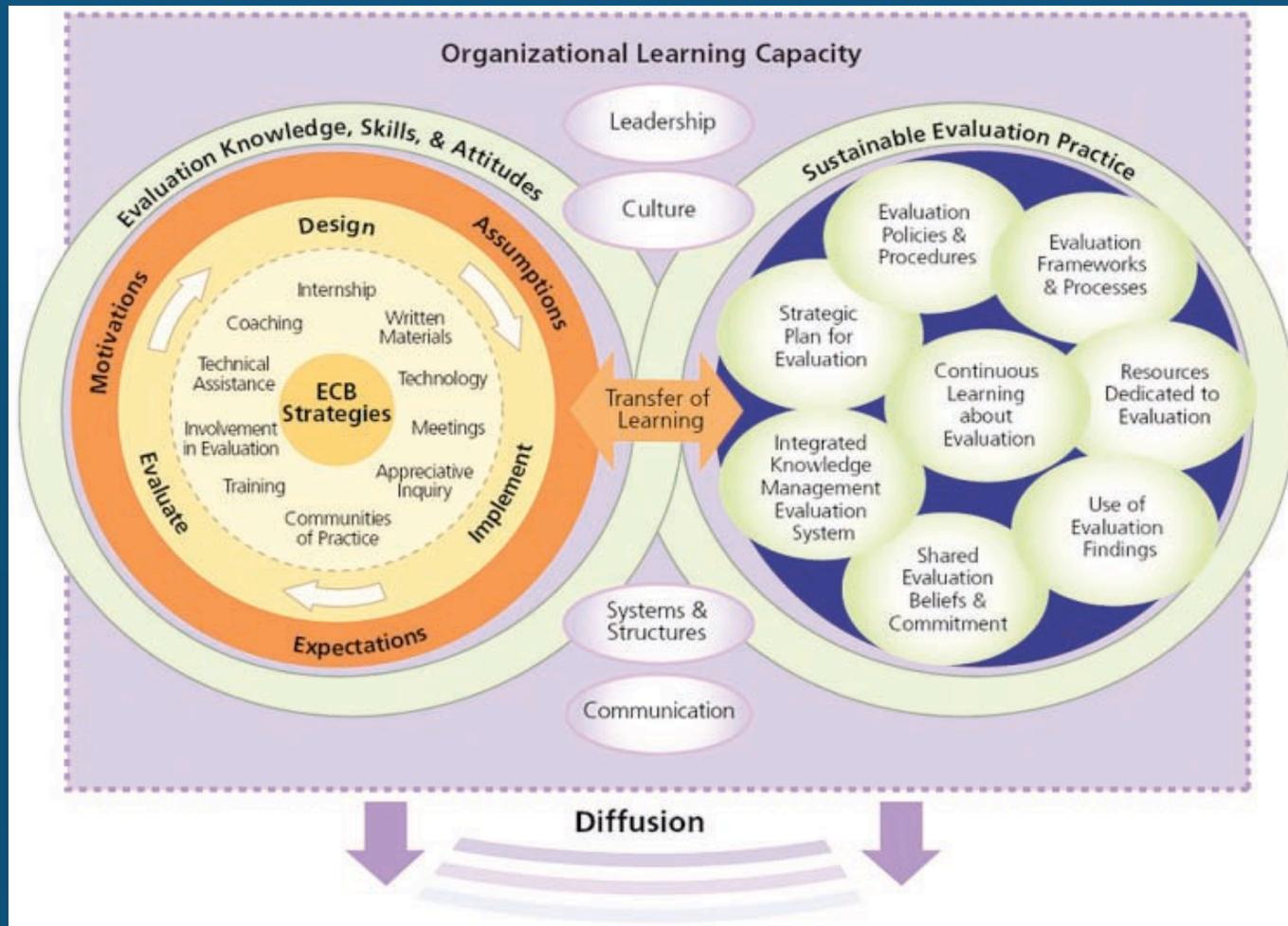
Priorities for  
knowledge

Work environment

Timeframes for  
getting results



# Implications: current theory



# Implications: technical applications



# Implications: professional practice



# Implications: professional practice



# Conclusion: capability & mindsets



- We need a more integrative approach drawing on related fields of organisational change & innovation adoption
  - better equipped to conceptualise leadership readiness of EM
  - enabling better identification of features of precursor thinking
  - could inform development of individual & group TML readiness 'diagnostic' tool
  - determining if timing is right for promoting EM & designing responses



# Theoretical framework

## EI and innovation

- ▶ Weiner et al (2009) innovation theory - determinants of effective implementation of complex innovations in organisations
- ▶ applicable for studying innovations where:
  - (i) organisational members cannot adopt innovation until primary adoption decision has occurred at a higher level of authority
  - (ii) implementation requires specialised training, resource allocation & support
  - (i) active, coordinated innovation use by many organisational members necessary for innovation to generate benefits for adopting organisation

# Theoretical framework

## Leadership and culture

- ▶ leadership & culture a close pairing according to Schein (1992):
  - ▶ cultures begin with leaders who impose own values & assumptions on group
  - ▶ if group successful + assumptions taken for granted → culture defines acceptable leadership
  - ▶ with adaptive difficulties → some assumptions no longer valid
  - ▶ leadership now = ability to step outside culture that created leader & start adaptive evolutionary change processes

# Theoretical framework

## El and leverage

- ▶ Senge (1990) introduced concept of *leverage*:
  - ▶ by virtue of position as group of most influential leaders in organisation, TMLs have leverage to effect change in long term behaviour of organisational system
  - ▶ help shift focus:
    - from events & patterns of behaviour (symptoms of problems)
    - to
    - systemic structure & underlying mental models (values, beliefs and assumptions)

# Theoretical framework

## Organisational readiness for change

- ▶ Weiner (2009)'s conceptual definition:
  - ▶ change commitment and change efficacy
  - ▶ emphasises shared notion of organisational readiness that is:

*best suited for examining organisational changes where collective behaviour is necessary in order to effectively implement the change*

# Theoretical framework

## Stages of change

- ▶ Implementation of change occurs in distinct sequential stages (Fixen et al., 2005):
  - ▶ Exploration & adoption
  - ▶ Program installation
  - ▶ Initial implementation
  - ▶ Full operation
  - ▶ Innovation
  - ▶ Sustainability

# Some quick context

- ▶ Largest independent CSO:
  - ▶ budget > \$100 million
  - ▶ 1200 employees
  - ▶ 31 regional & metro offices across Vic
- ▶ Range of C&FW services:
  - ▶ 57% = statutory out of home care
- ▶ State government funding: 79%
- ▶ Prior to commencement of study some progress towards building evaluation capacity



<b>Construct</b>	
<b>1. Intervention characteristics</b>	<b>2. Outer Setting</b>
<b>Intervention source</b>	<b>Client needs &amp; resources</b>
<b>Evidence strength &amp; quality</b>	<b>Cosmopolitanism</b>
<b>Relative advantage</b>	<b>Peer pressure</b>
<b>Adaptability</b>	<b>External policy &amp; incentives</b>
<b>Trialability</b>	
<b>Complexity</b>	
<b>Design quality &amp; packaging</b>	
<b>Cost</b>	
<b>Observability</b>	

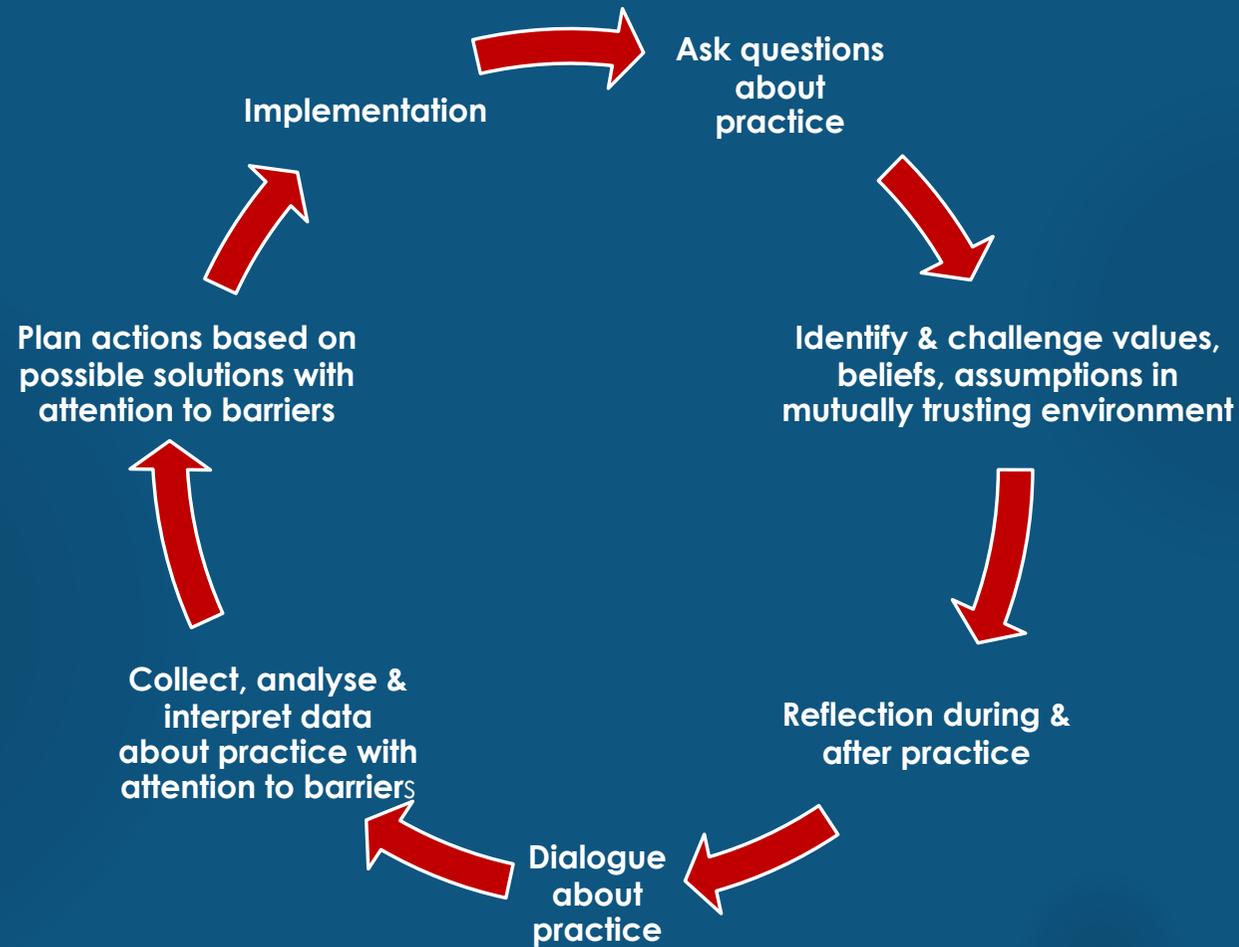
## Construct

### 3. Inner setting

<b>Structural characteristics</b>	<b>Goals and feedback</b>
<b>Networks &amp; communications</b>	<b>Learning climate</b>
<b>Culture</b>	<b>Readiness for implementation</b>
<b>Implementation climate</b>	<b>Leadership engagement</b>
<b>Tensions for change</b>	<b>Available resources</b>
<b>Compatibility</b>	<b>Access to knowledge &amp; information</b>
<b>Relative priority</b>	
<b>Organizational incentives &amp; rewards</b>	

<b>Construct</b>	
<b>4. Characteristics of individuals</b>	<b>5. Process</b>
<b>Knowledge &amp; beliefs about the intervention</b>	<b>Planning</b>
<b>Self-efficacy</b>	<b>Engaging</b>
<b>Individual state of change</b>	<b>Opinion leaders</b>
<b>Individual identification with organization</b>	<b>Formally appointed internal implementation leaders</b>
<b>Other personal attributes</b>	<b>Champions</b>
	<b>External change agents</b>
	<b>Executing</b>
	<b>Reflecting &amp; evaluating</b>

# Evaluative inquiry in organisations



# Limitations

- ▶ **Non-generalisability**
- ▶ **Social desirability bias**
- ▶ **Single researcher**

# Intended contribution



- ▶ A description of TMLs' thinking about EI upon first exposure & following exploratory stage, in real org setting;
- ▶ A delineation of factors that influenced thinking & expressed intentions;
- ▶ Identification of common & unique themes & influencing factors
- ▶ A process & instruments for eliciting information