Relationships Australia
NEW SOUTH WALES

Using collaborative theory based evaluation design methods

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A little about me

- Visitor on Turrbal and Jagera country – live and work on Ngunnawal country
- Social scientist – PhD in Environmental Justice
- Relationships Australia NSW senior evaluator
- Responsible for evaluation of 40-50 services!
- Deep care of social good or work, primacy of participant knowledges and expertises, power sharing, supporting needs of practitioners and clients.

Presentation aims

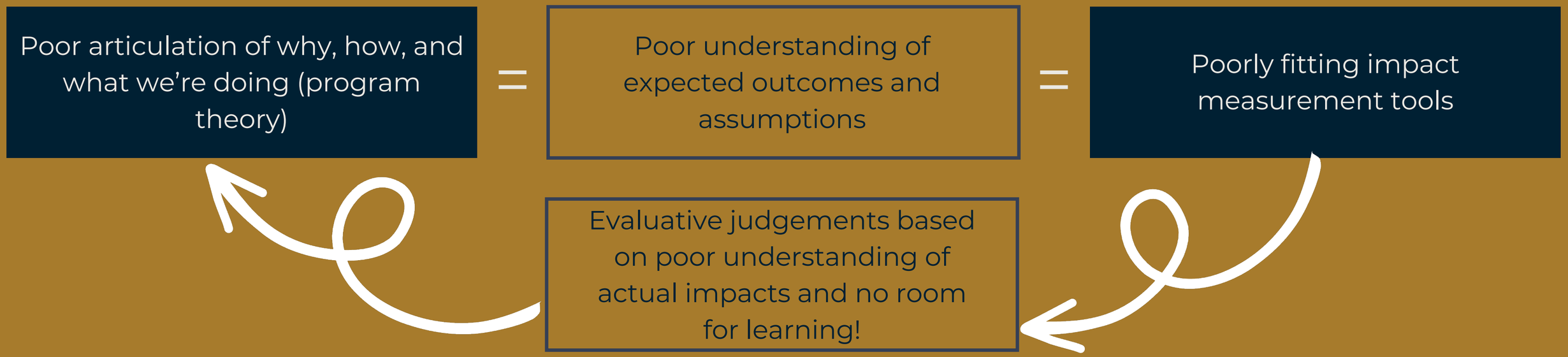
- Highlight benefits of collaborative theory of change design methods in program evaluation
- Emphasis on building evaluation instruments and improving evaluation literacy
- Share a real world example of how I do this in my work
- Get into trouble with my peers for making bold, normative claims 🤗 (not really)

What is an intervention?
A different take....

Intervention (program) = Theory = Knowledge + Action + Outcomes

e.g. Men's Behaviour Change = Feminist theory + Empirical evidence + Group based delivery + reduced DFV

Problem 1: Evaluation



Theory of change

- Produce a clear articulation of Knowledge, Actions, Outcomes! (I call this telling the story of the service we're providing)
- Tangible documentation and visual guide of why and how we expect the program to work. Lots of uses - including evaluation
- Custom evaluation measurement tools tailored to capture what is relevant, and test assumptions.
- Evaluation not about evaluative judgements, but as a learning **THEORY REFINEMENT** process, that aims to unpack **CONTEXT** (when, why, for whom etc.) and improve service design.

Problem 2: Missing voices

“Evaluation expert” led theory and evaluation designs miss out on:	Collaborative approaches benefit from:
⊗ learning from practice and lived experience experts	✓ building positive relationships with stakeholders
⊗ capturing assumptions for how things are expected to work	✓ Sharing power, knowledge, responsibility
⊗ improving stakeholder evaluation literacy and buy in	✓ Providing mutual benefits

Step by step implementation

Real world example: Let’s Talk

Elder abuse mediation intervention

Implementation

Document analysis

- Literature review
- Program manual
- Other materials, such as contract

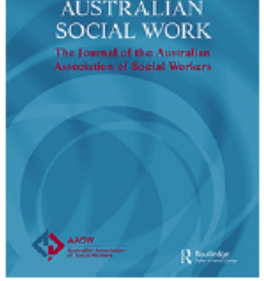
Theory of change

- Workshop
- Draft
- Review
- Finalise

Evaluate and Learn

- Impact evaluation instrument
- Data collection
- Report (in progress)
- Review (in progress)
- Revise program design (in progress)

Document analysis



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Taking Control: Putting Older I of Elder Abuse Response Strat

John Chesterman

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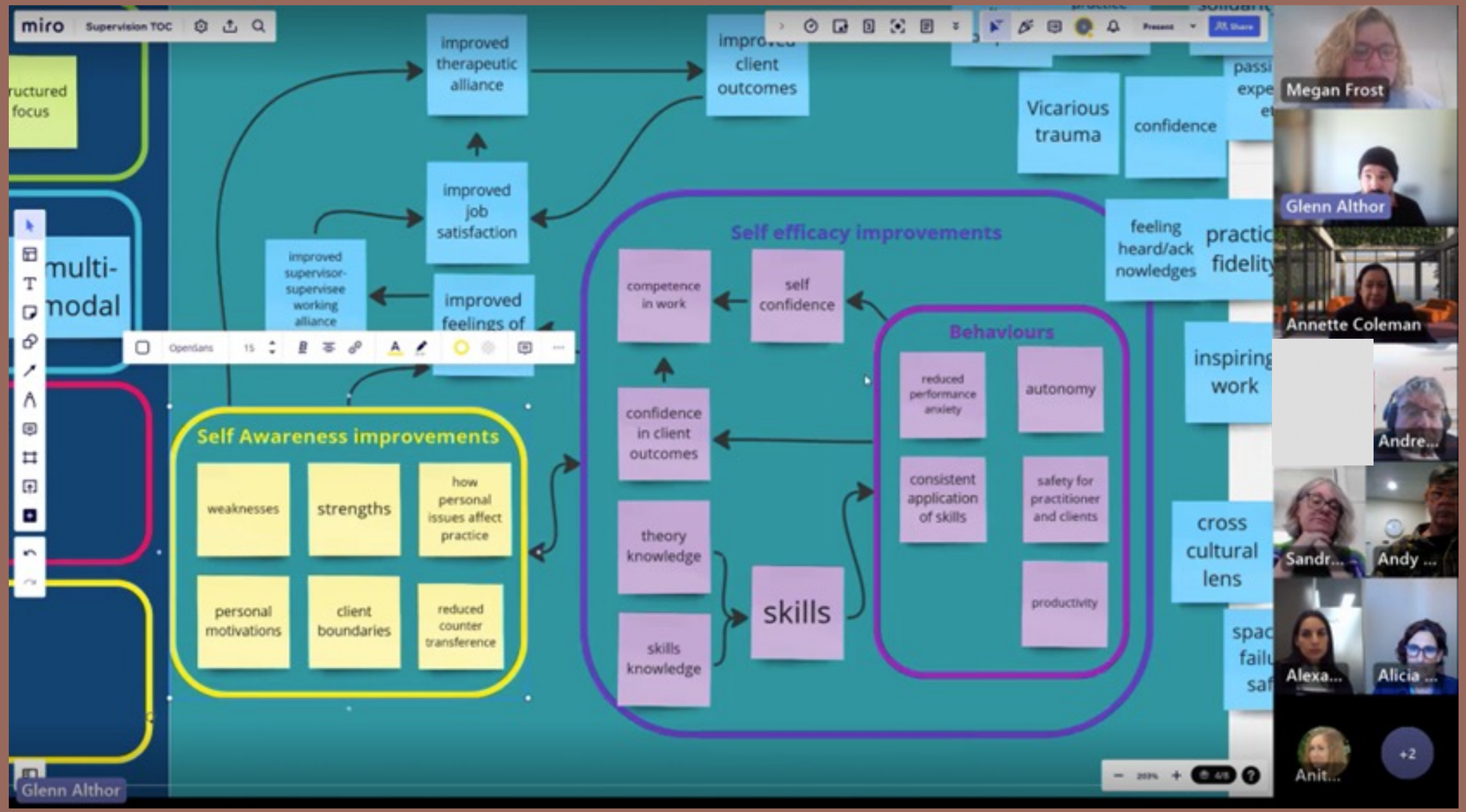
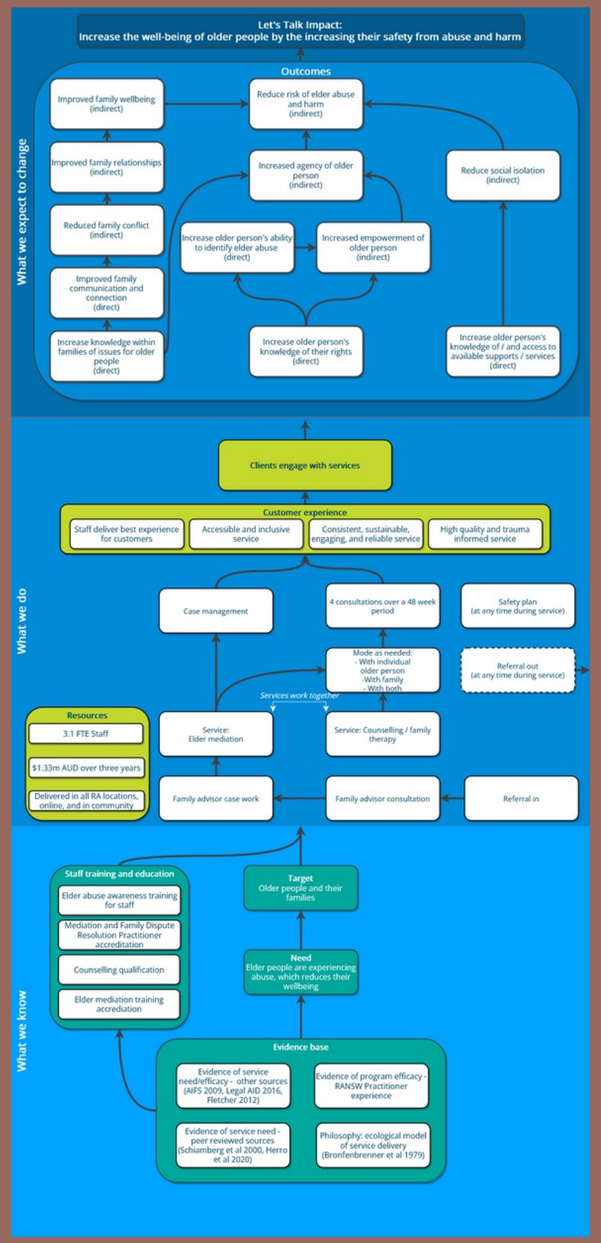
- Program manuals
- Peer-reviewed literature - theory and empirical evidence
- Other: Funding contracts, Government reports and statistics etc.

Theory of change



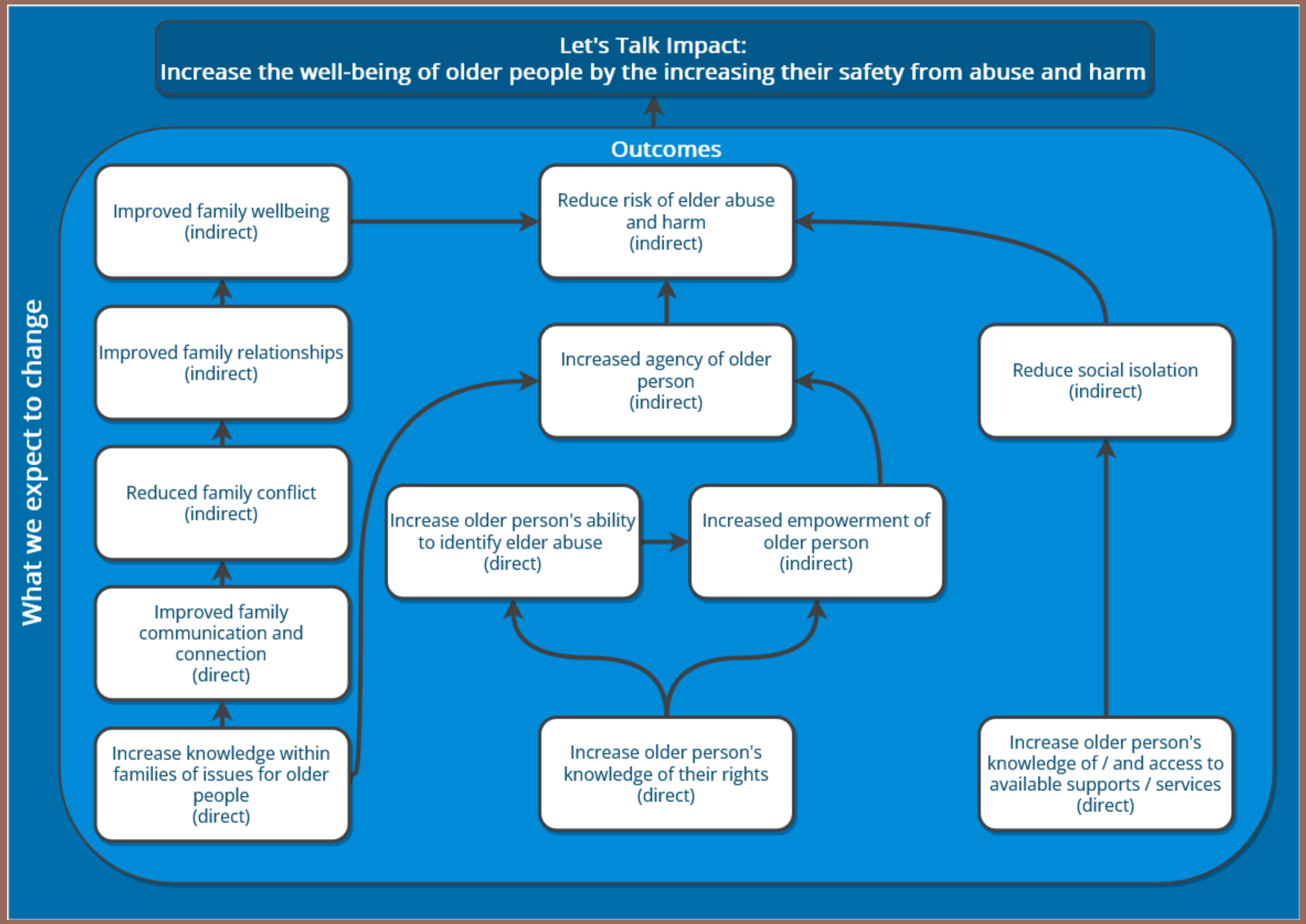
Online theory of change workshop

Theory of change



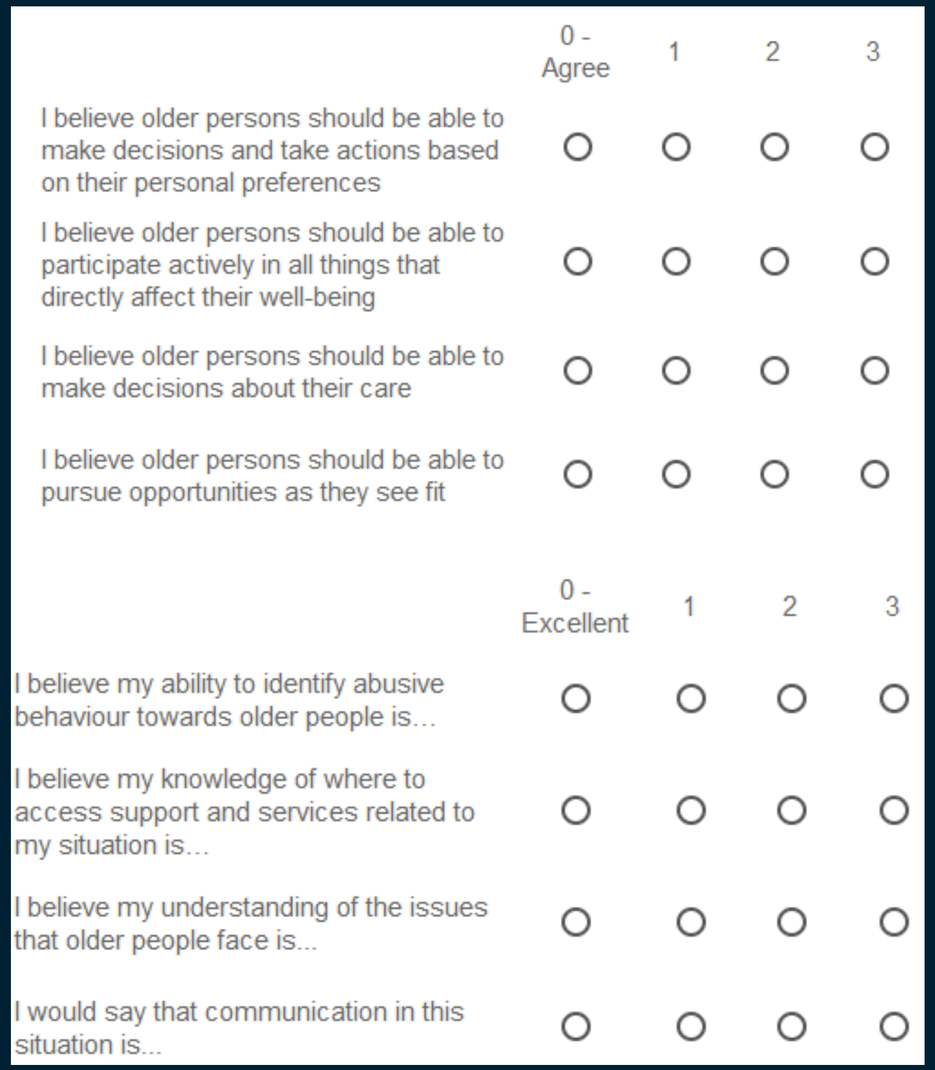
Refined Let's Talk Theory of Change - Figure and Documentation (~7 pp)

Theory of change



Let’s Talk Theory of Change - Outcomes

Evaluation



	0 - Agree	1	2	3
I believe older persons should be able to make decisions and take actions based on their personal preferences	○	○	○	○
I believe older persons should be able to participate actively in all things that directly affect their well-being	○	○	○	○
I believe older persons should be able to make decisions about their care	○	○	○	○
I believe older persons should be able to pursue opportunities as they see fit	○	○	○	○

	0 - Excellent	1	2	3
I believe my ability to identify abusive behaviour towards older people is...	○	○	○	○
I believe my knowledge of where to access support and services related to my situation is...	○	○	○	○
I believe my understanding of the issues that older people face is...	○	○	○	○
I would say that communication in this situation is...	○	○	○	○

- Theory of change outcomes are directly mapped to measurements
- Results will be used to test and refine the intervention theory
- Updated theory can be used to redevelop the intervention
- Start cycle again - new measurements (if required), new learnings, new theory!

Pros and Cons

Cons

- Resource intensive
- Requires high research and workshop facilitation skills
- Not everyone wants their assumptions challenged!
- No ‘end goal’ or judgement.

Pros

- Scalable
- Stakeholder ownership
  - Buy in an excitement
  - not seen as making judgements
- program improvement focus
- learn from wins and losses
- produce outputs useful in other settings
  - funding applications (program logic models)
  - staff induction and training
  - presentations
  - publications
  - comms including to clients

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Thank you

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