Assessment 101: The Basics

Assessment Workshops
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Session Outcomes

- Understand what "assessment" means and why we are doing it.
- Define two characteristics of assessment.
- Distinguish among the four types of data variables.
- Explain at least two statistical terms in concise and accurate language.
- Identify three elements of a comprehensive assessment model.

Focused Listing Exercise

- **What does the term "assessment" mean to you?**
  - What synonyms come to mind when you hear the term "assessment"?

Assessment definition

- . . .the **systematic** collection, review, and use of information about programs/services undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development. (adapted from Palomba & Banta, 1999)

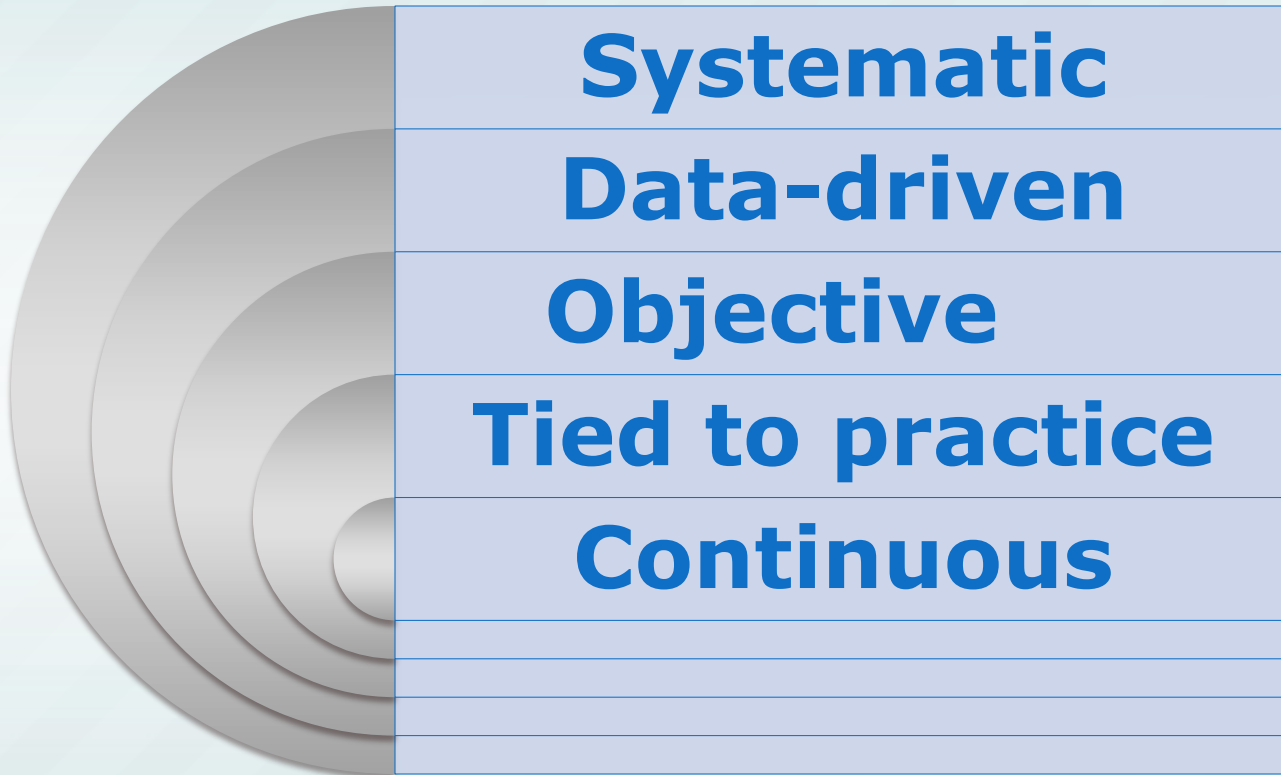# Definitions of Assessment
Schuh & Upcraft (2001)

- Assessment is any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret **evidence** which describes institutional, divisional, (program,) or agency effectiveness
- It includes...
  - assessment of student learning outcomes
  - assessment of cost effectiveness
  - assessment of "client" satisfaction
  - assessment of compliance with professional standards
  - assessment of comparisons to other institutions
- It is *not* restricted to assessment of students, but includes assessment of faculty, staff, administrators, parents, employers, graduates ….

Definitions of Assessment
(AAHE, 1995)

- **Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving *student learning***
- It involves …
  - making expectations RE learning explicit and public;
  - setting appropriate **criteria and high standards** for learning quality;
  - systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and
  - **using the results** to document, explain, and improve learning and performance

Characteristics of Assessment

- Systematic
- Data-driven
- Objective
- Tied to practice
- Continuous

Limitations
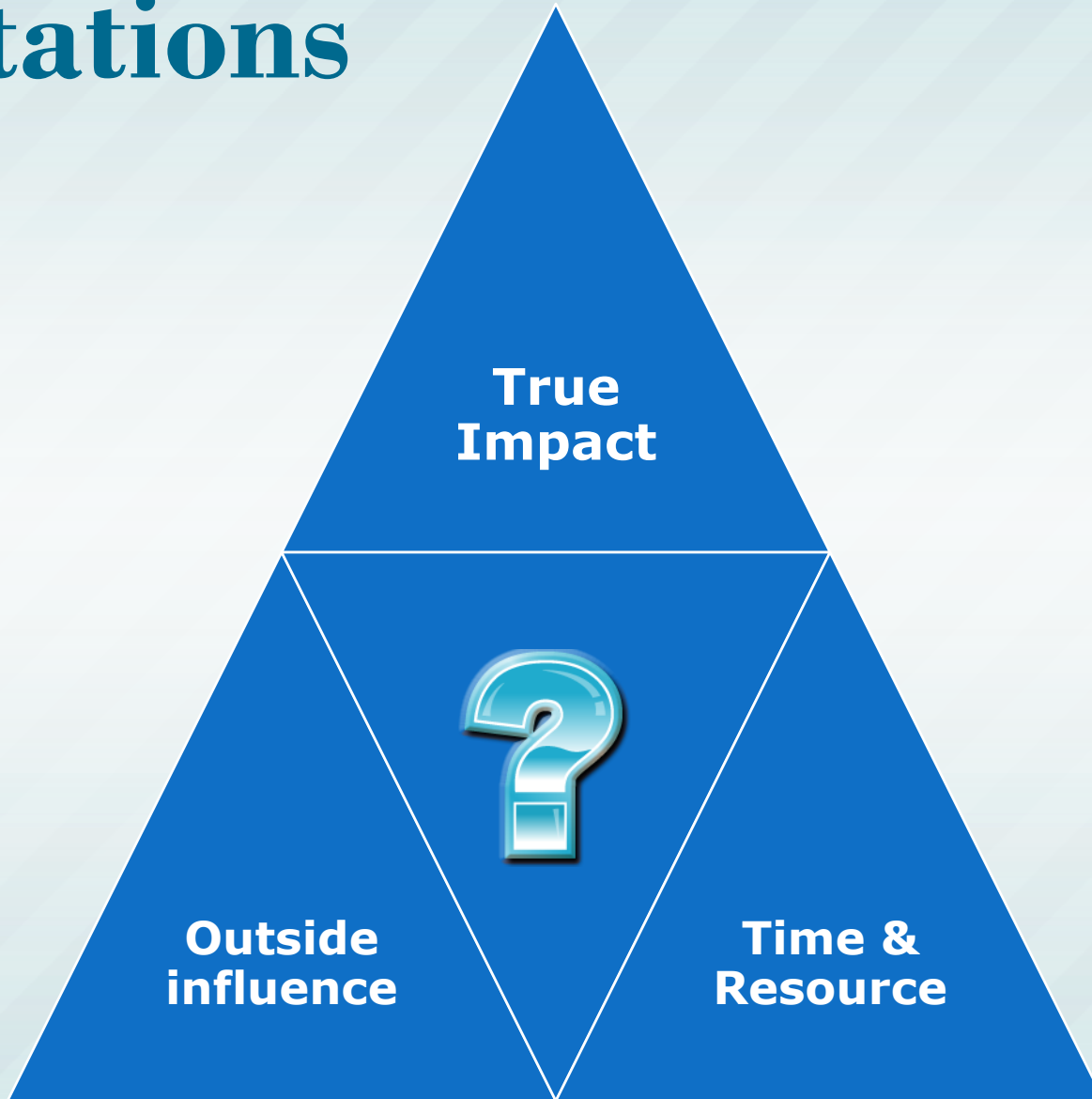
Components of Assessment

- **What you want to know**

- **Who/what do you want to know about**

- **How to measure what you need to know**
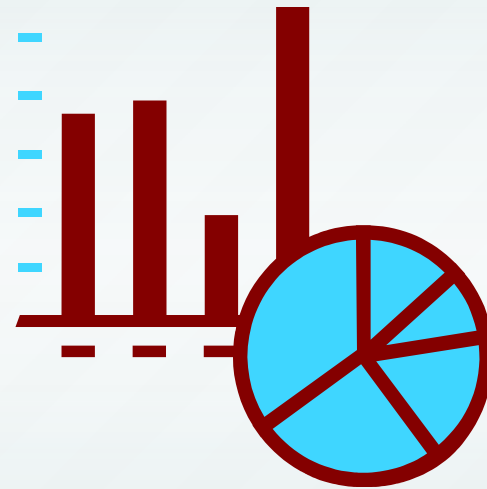
What you want to know

- **Needs**
- **Satisfaction**
- **Program and/or Learning Outcomes**

Who/what do you want to know about?

- **Population**
  - **Examples?**
- **Sample**
  - **Examples?**

How to measure what you need

- **Operationalize variables**
- **Determine method**
- **Develop instrument**
- **Analyze data**

Developing instruments

STEM + **RESPONSE** = **DATA**

DATA

Data types (NOIR)
- **Nominal (Male/Female)**
- **Ordinal (Likert Scale)**
- **Interval (Dates)**
- **Ratio (Length of Service, Age)**

Tips

- **Order (logical, flow, easy first, less important last, intersperse open-ended)**
- **Do not use "emotional language" or leading questions.**
- **Avoid negatives - especially double negatives.**
- **Consider ahead of time how to handle missing data.**
- **Minimum number of open-ended questions.**
- **Avoid asking more than one question at a time ('double barreled' question).**
- **Clear questions: reflect what you are asking and how you want answered.**
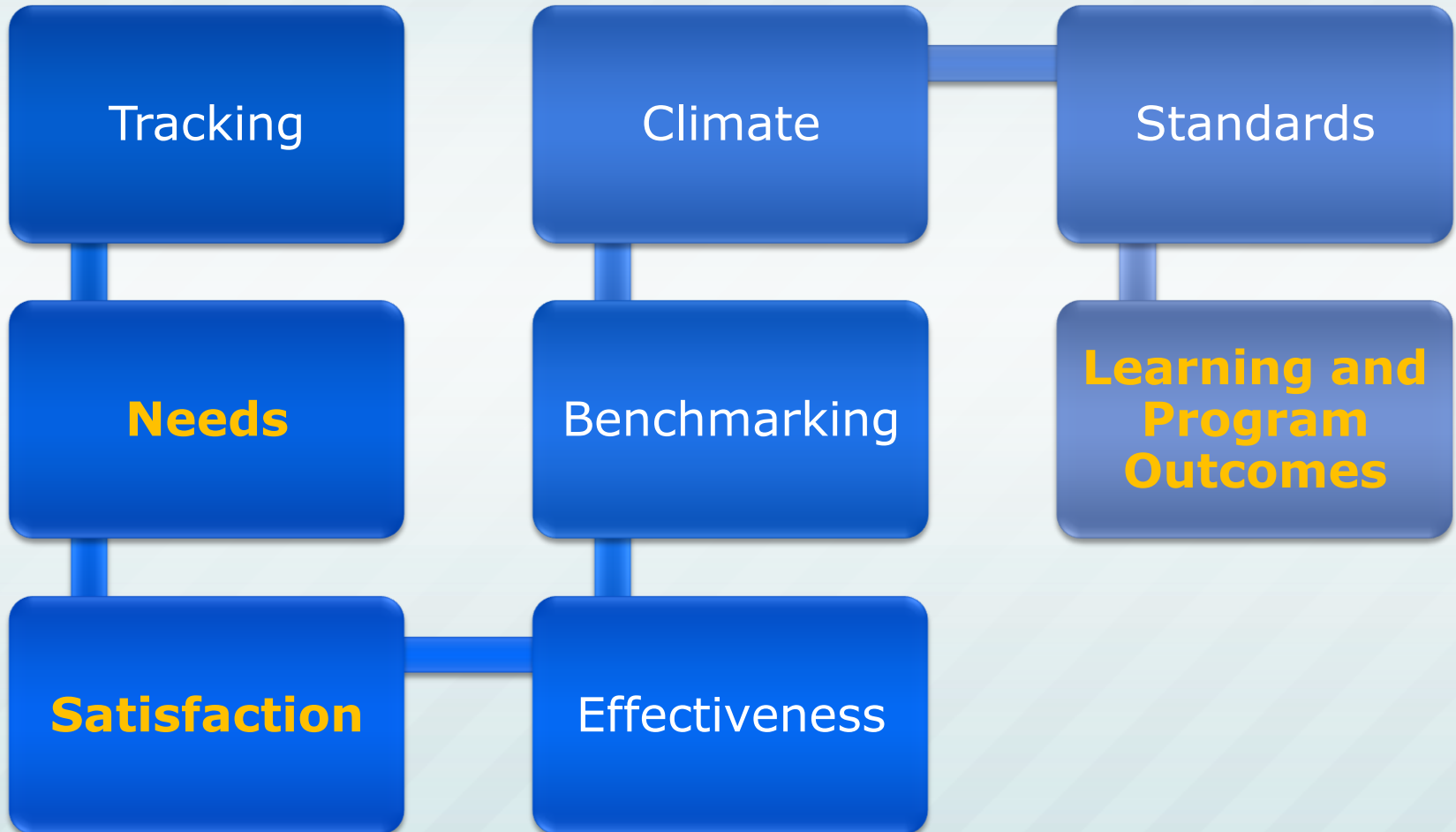
Data Analysis

- **Descriptives:**
  - Mean, Median, Mode,
  - Percentages
  - "Top Two" and "Bottom Two"

- **Tests of significance**
  - P-values

- **Correlation:**
  - Correlation does not imply causation
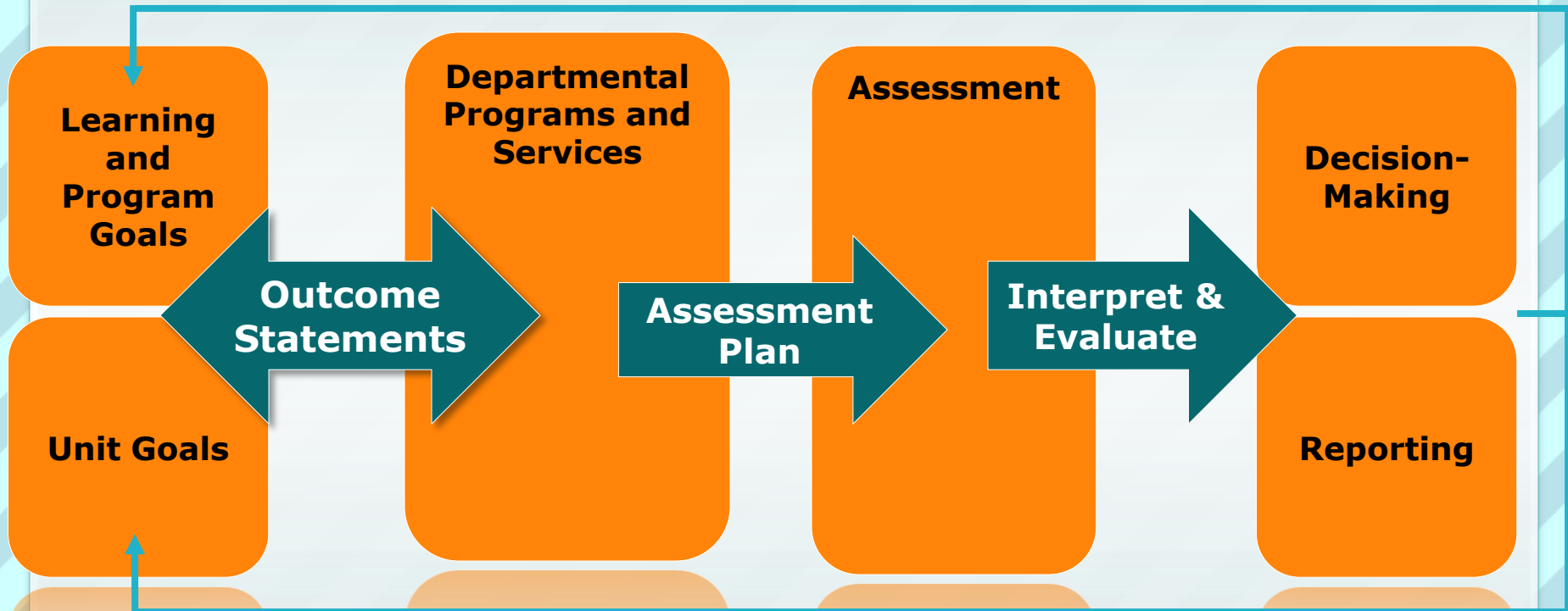 - Strength of relationship

Example

- **What topic are you interested in?**
- **What would you like to know about your topic? (Questions)**
- **How can you answer your questions? (Variables, Method, Data)**
- **What did your data tell you? (analysis)**
- How does that inform practice? (implications)
- What is the next question? (feedback loop)

A Comprehensive Model of Assessment Includes...

Tracking

Climate

Standards

Needs

Benchmarking

Learning and Program Outcomes

Satisfaction

Effectiveness

Questions or Comments?