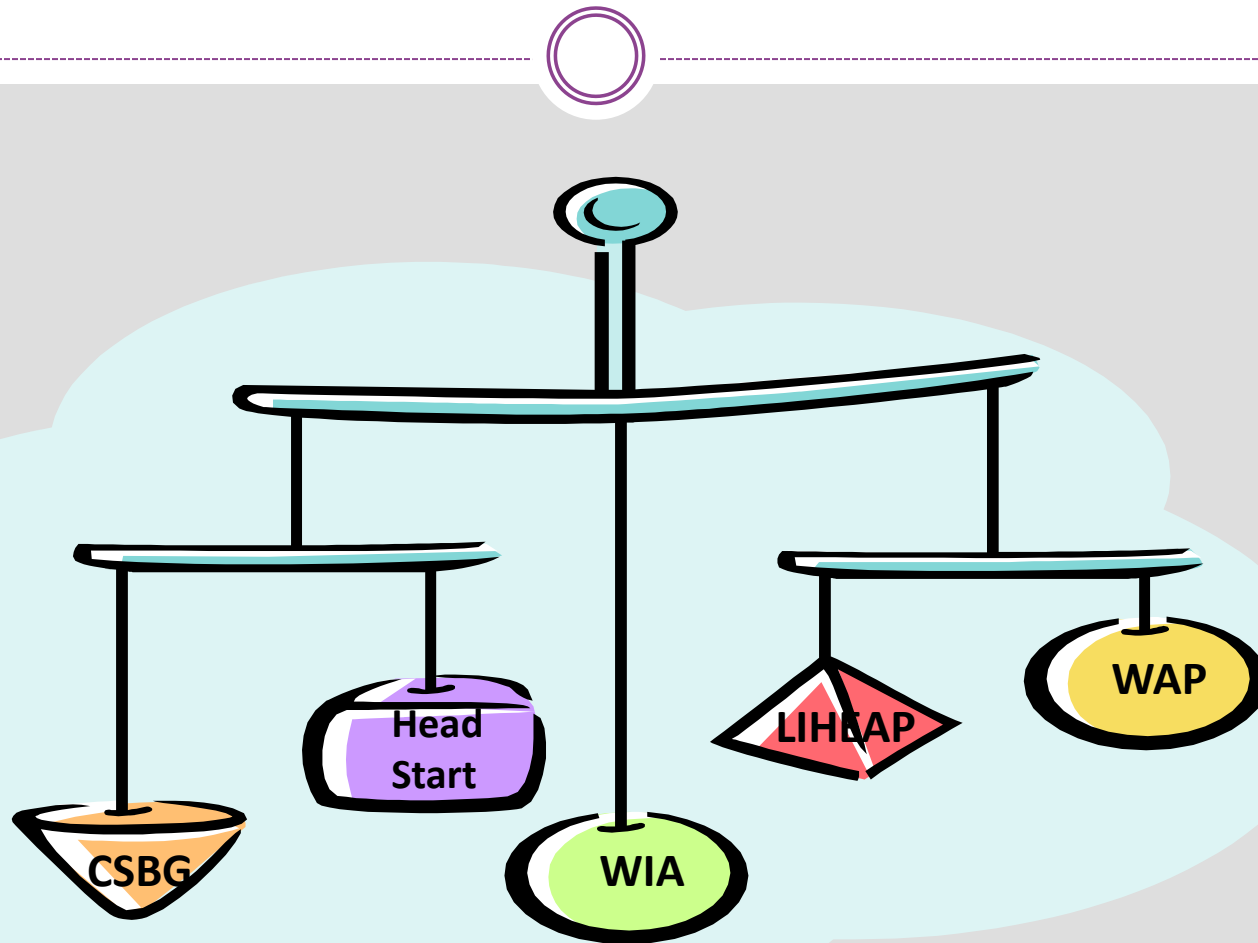


# A System's Approach to Monitoring



# What is a System?



“An organized collection of parts (or subsystems) that are highly integrated to accomplish an overall goal.”

✦ Carter McNamara

# Systems Thinking



BROAD perspective of overall:

- Structures
- Patterns
- Cycles

# Systems Thinking:

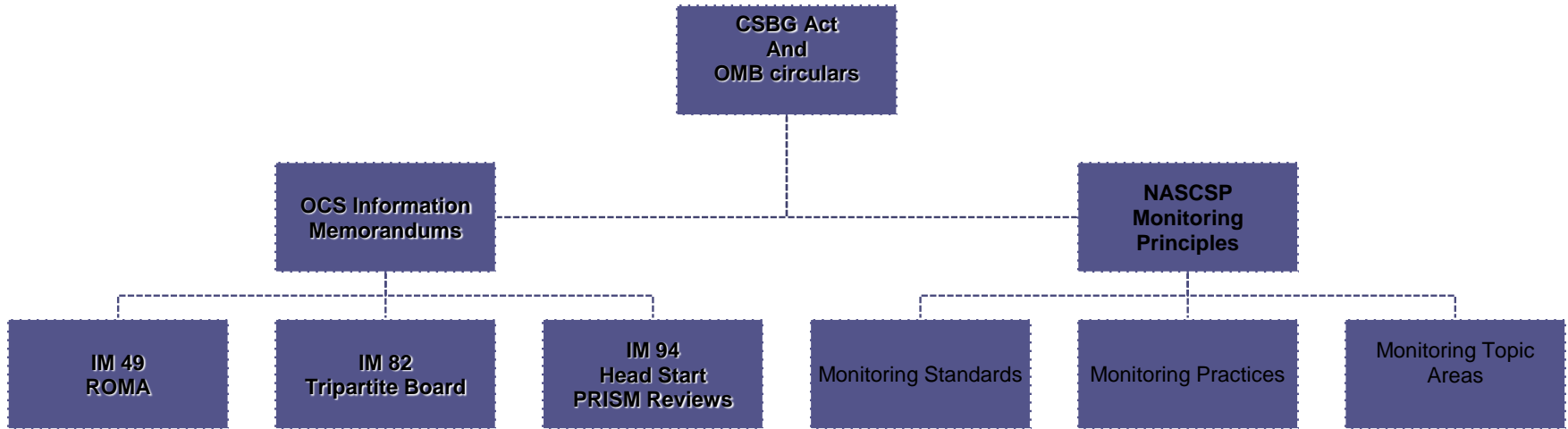


- “Systems thinking is a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools...to make the full patterns clearer, and to help us see how to change them effectively.”
  - Peter M. Senge, ‘The Fifth Discipline’



**To discern an overall pattern  
from a mass of detail**

# Monitoring Principles and Practices



## IM 49



“Recognizing that CSBG does not succeed as an individual program...Special attention will be paid to State capabilities to identify the...needs among eligible entities, particularly those related to strengthening OVERALL program administration, fiscal management,...”

## IM 49, cont.



“...State...officials ...(should) reinforce the importance of effective management SYSTEMS...”

“...As part of ...oversight, we should implement on-going...SYSTEM-WIDE actions...to assure continued administrative and fiscal integrity, program effectiveness, and accountability among ALL PROGRAMS administered by CAAs.”

## IM 49, cont.



“...Most areas needing improvement are often linked to major SYSTEMS...”

“...State ...officials (should) ...reinforce the importance of effective management SYSTEMS...”

## IM 49, cont.



“...Agencies in the past have often focused their energies on ‘preparing for the monitoring test’ instead of implementing on-going SYSTEMS that identify areas needing improvement...”

## IM 49, cont.



“...Agencies that choose to operate each of their programs separately without a coordinated strategy to address the multi-faceted causes and conditions of poverty...are meeting neither the letter nor the spirit of the CSBG act.”

“...Community Action is one agency with one mission.”

## IM 82



‘State CSBG officials should meet routinely with boards as part of their overall monitoring of local agencies to determine the extent to which the boards are aware of, and are carrying out, their responsibilities’

## IM 94



‘State CSBG Lead Agencies ...should ... ensure ...that agency Head Start programs have ongoing systems of oversight and monitoring.’

‘It is important to stress that quick fixes to identified problems typically result in a reoccurrence of the problems. Most areas needing improvement are often linked to major systems that often require thoughtful planning and time to implement needed changes.’

## IM 94, cont.



‘...the Community Services Network must continue to focus its efforts on strengthening overall agency governance and administration, fiscal control, program effectiveness and accountability to assure capacity to comply with all program requirements of the various programs administered by the agency.’

# NASCSP's

## Standard Monitoring Principles and Practices for CSBG



“...State CSBG offices should monitor grantees in...the areas listed below...

- Governance
- Planning
- Evaluation
- Partnerships
- Admin. SYSTEMS and procedures
- Fiscal Procedures”

## NASCSP's

# Standard Monitoring Principles and Practices for CSBG



“State monitors should conduct an agency-wide financial assessment...”

“State monitors should review monitoring reports from other funding sources.”

# NASCSP's Standard Monitoring Principles and Practices for CSBG

“...State monitors should look at more than compliance with program rules and regulations.”

“...State monitors need to take a SYSTEMS view of each CAA...”

# ABC Community Action



Board of Directors

Executive Director

CSBG

Head Start

Weatherization

LIHEAP

Housing

Finance

CSBG Staff

Head Start Staff

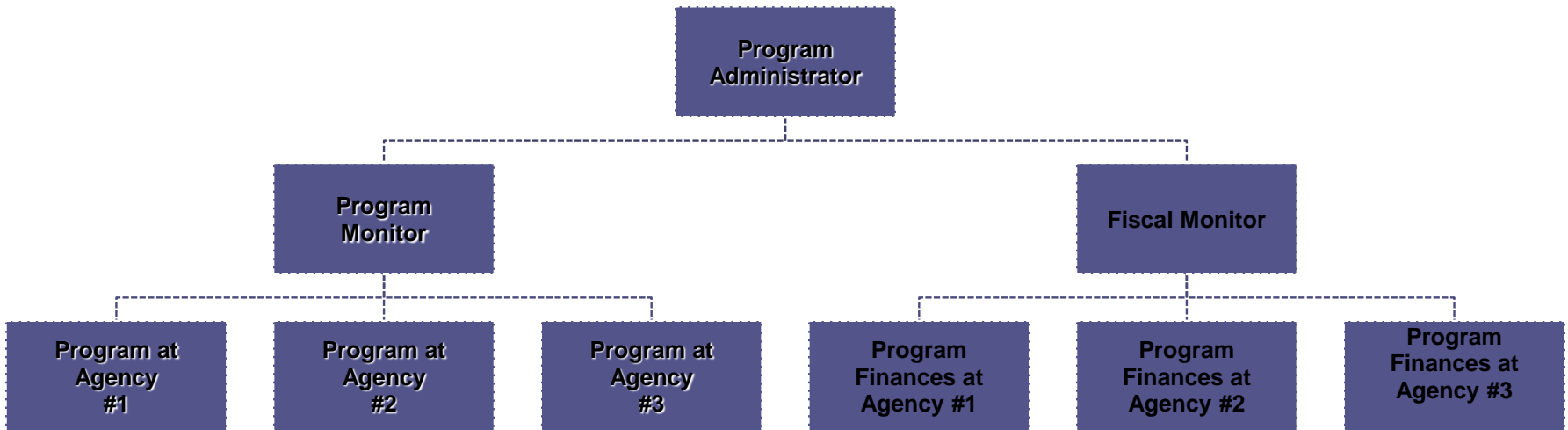
Weatherization Staff

LIHEAP Staff

Housing Staff

Finance Staff

# Any State Monitoring Structure





# NASCSP Monitoring Principles and Practices

Congress Calls For More Accountability

Monitoring Tool

Monitoring Principles

Monitoring Practices

Mutual Respect

Joint Problem Solving

Open Communications

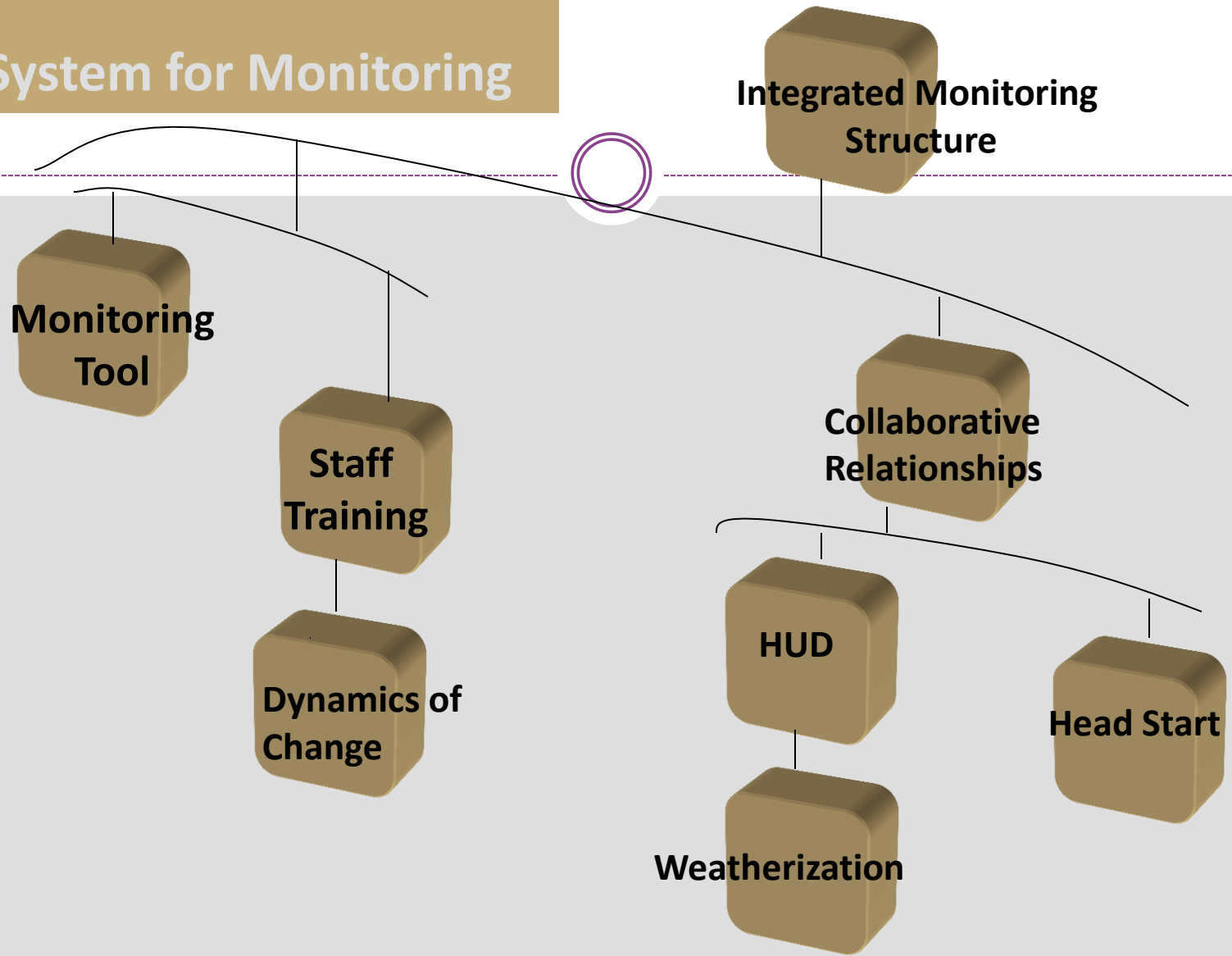
More than Compliance

Systems to Inform & Follow Up

Board Effectiveness

Administrative Capacity

# A System for Monitoring



# ABC Community Action

**Governance**

**Fiscal Policies & Procedures**

**Admin. Systems & Procedures**

**Programs**

**Planning: Mission & Planning**

**Evaluation**

**Outcomes**

**Partnerships**

# High Functioning Systems



- Continually exchange feedback among the various parts to ensure that they are aligned
- When weakened or misaligned, the system needs to make necessary adjustments to achieve its goals

# Assessing Your State's Monitoring System:



1. Is the internal structure of your CSBG office and monitoring responsibilities clear and integrated?
2. Do you have collaborative relationships with other CAA funders (Head Start, HUD, Dept. of Energy, others?)
3. Does your monitoring tool look at the WHOLE agency, or just 'CSBG programs'?
4. How are staff trained to take a systems approach to monitoring?

# Assessing Your State's Monitoring System:

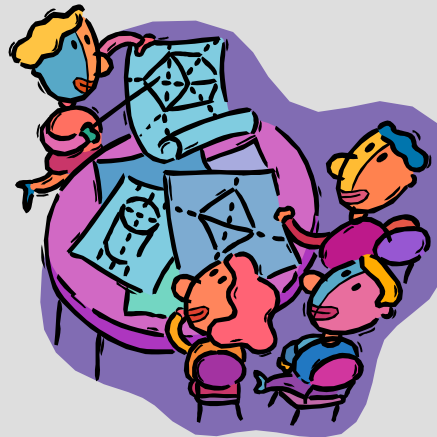
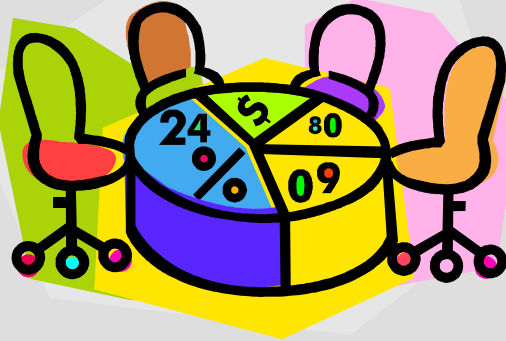
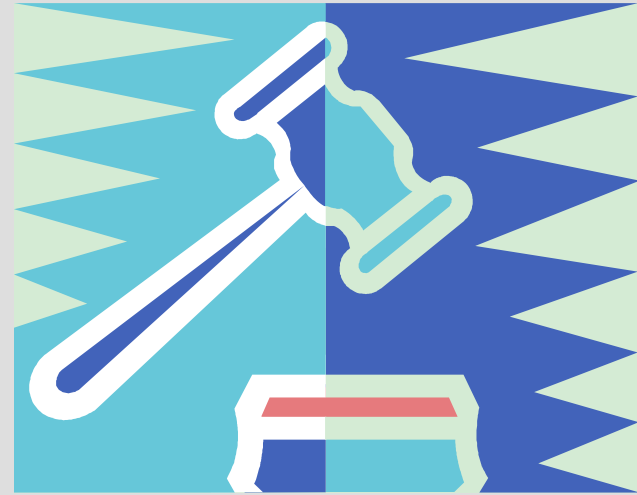


5. How does the CSBG office keep up with the changing CAA environment (NASCS Monitoring Practices; OCS IM releases, Head Start, & other funding requirements, etc?)
6. What are your systems for ensuring adequate and timely follow-up to the results of monitoring?
7. How do you use monitoring results to identify and provide system-wide training and technical support to CAA's?

# Pulling It All Together: Designing a Process That Works



# Monitoring Process





# **Discernment and Leadership for Monitoring**

# Sample Monitor Job Description



- **Skills:**
  - Interviewing
  - Conflict management
  - Facilitating
  
- **Abilities:**
  - Establish rapport with wide range of people
  - Voice agreements and alternate views respectfully
  - Coach individuals and train groups

# Sample Monitor Job Description



- **Problem Solving and Creativity**
  - Analyze and interpret data
  - Interpret and evaluate grantees planned activities versus actual
  - Propose or require changes to local program implementation

# Characteristics of Effective Leaders



- Integrity
- A deep understanding of the work
- Consistency
- Ability to listen
- Willingness to admit a mistake
- Decisive

# As a Monitor



- It is important to:
  - Know your own tendencies and weaknesses so that you can take them into account
  - Ask appropriate questions (refusing to accept conclusions without basis)
  - Carefully consider the validity and sufficiency of information
  - Evaluate evidence – is it reasonable? What are the ramifications if it is true?

# Discernment



The ability to analyze information with insight and judgment.



**To discern an overall pattern from a mass of detail**

# Discernment



- **Developing the art of discernment:**
  - Knowledge base which provides basis for discernment
  - Experience
  - Confidence in yourself and your judgments
  - Guidance and feedback from an in-state mentor or out-of-state colleague

# Monitoring Process is Ongoing



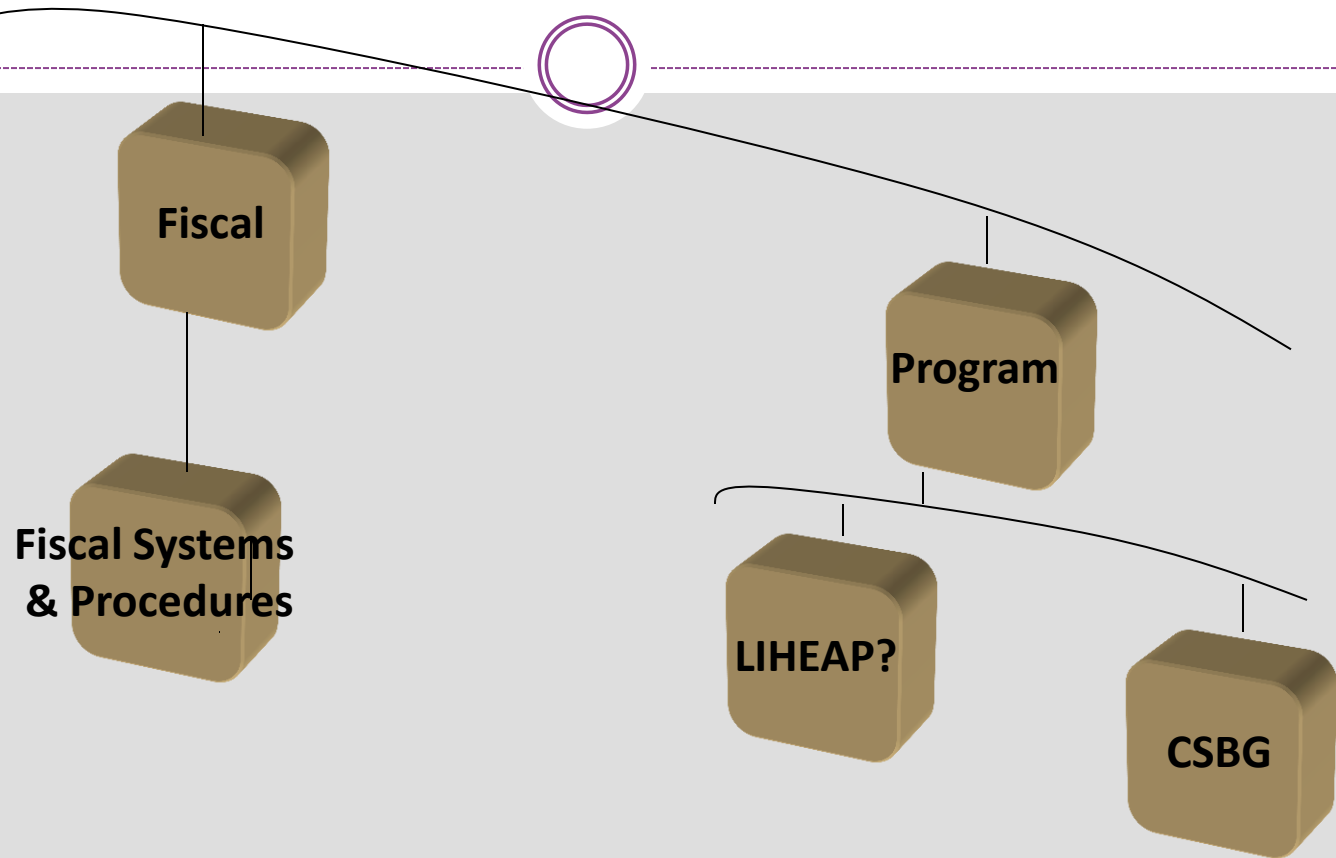
# On-Site Monitoring Preparation



## Scheduling

- Develop a three year, or whatever your monitoring frequency is, monitoring calendar
- Notify agency three – six months ahead to determine specific dates for on-site visit; select a mutually convenient time
- Enough time on-site ~ three – five days depending on size of agency and available staff
- At a time when board meeting is scheduled

# State Monitoring Team Make-up



# Preparations



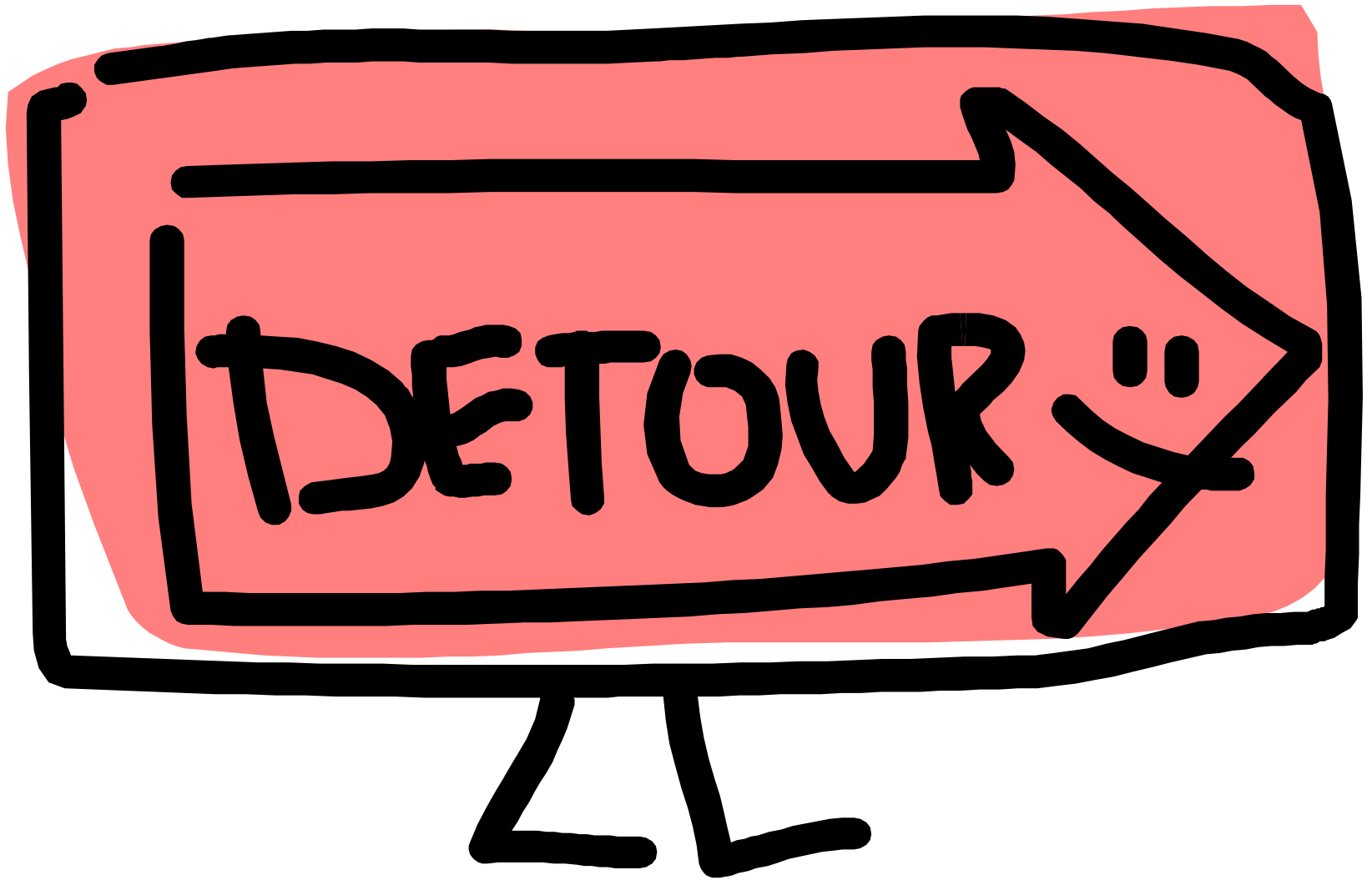
- 8 - 10 weeks prior to monitoring, send letter to agency:
  - Describe monitoring process
  - Request information for parts of the monitoring that can be done ahead – by-laws, policies and procedures, etc.,
  - Outline agenda for the monitoring
- Review anything that can be reviewed ahead (board meeting minutes, ROMA data/outcomes, financial reports, etc.)
- Three weeks prior, schedule Board of Director interviews
- Copy forms
- Identify areas to explore further while onsite

# On-Site Monitoring Process



## Day One:

- Meeting with the Executive Director
- Entrance Meeting/Agency Presentation
- Schedule and conduct interviews



# Interviews



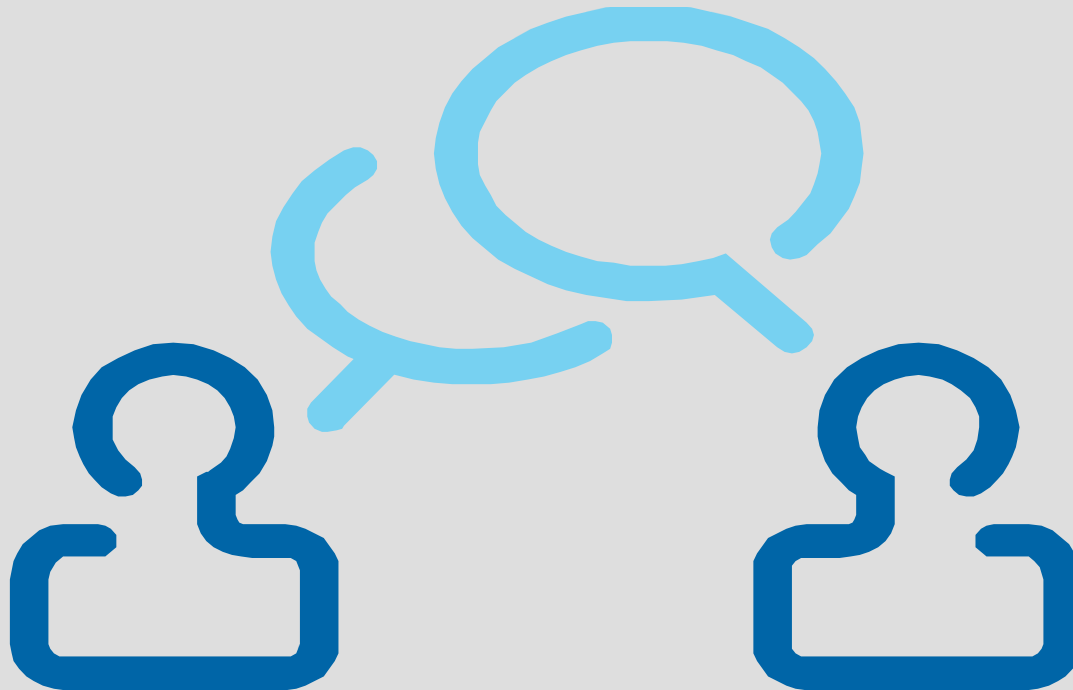
## Interviews – think systems:

- Staff from all programs and at all levels
- Customers
- Community Partners

# Interviewing Skills



**What makes you open up with someone with whom you are not familiar or are unsure of?**



# Interviewing Skills



- **Be flexible in interview time and location – when is a convenient time for you?**
- **Choose a setting with little distraction**
- **Explain the purpose of the interview**
- **Address terms of confidentiality**
  - Looking for themes
  - If they say something that could be traced back to them, let me know so that I can use the content, but not the specifics
  - Will share information and notes with the team

# Interviewing Skills



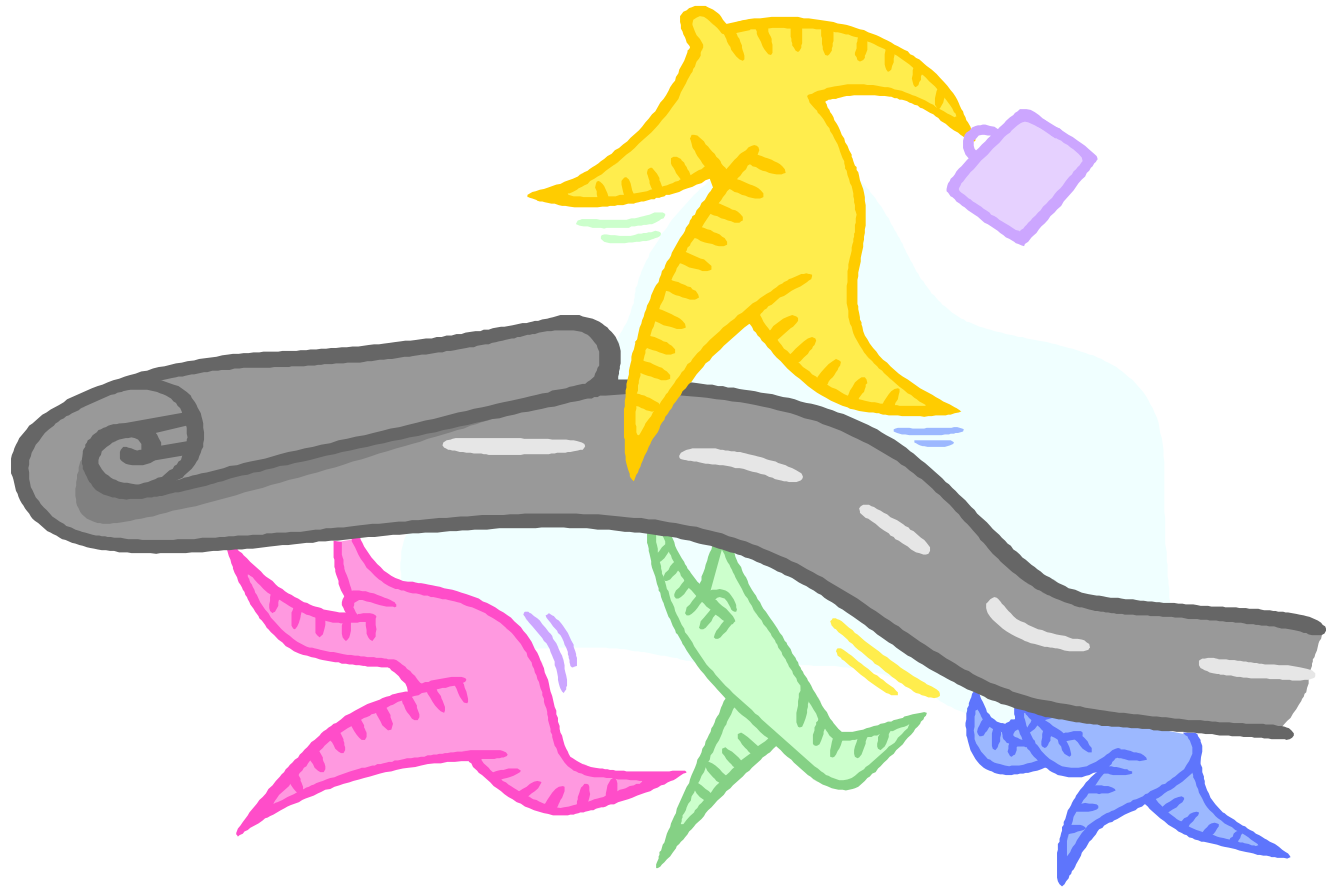
- **Have set questions, but...it is ok to reword the questions to be more open ended, neutral**
- **Get the respondents involved in the interview as soon as possible – have a conversation**
- **Be responsive, acknowledge that you are listening**
- **Attempt to remain as neutral as possible**
- **Be careful about the appearance when note taking**
- **The last questions might be to allow respondents to provide any other information they prefer to add**



# Interview Questions



- What process is used to safeguard client confidentiality?
- Is there a centralized intake system, or does each program have its own?
- Does new employee orientation include the mission of the agency and the agency strategic plan?
- What is the morale of the staff in the organization?

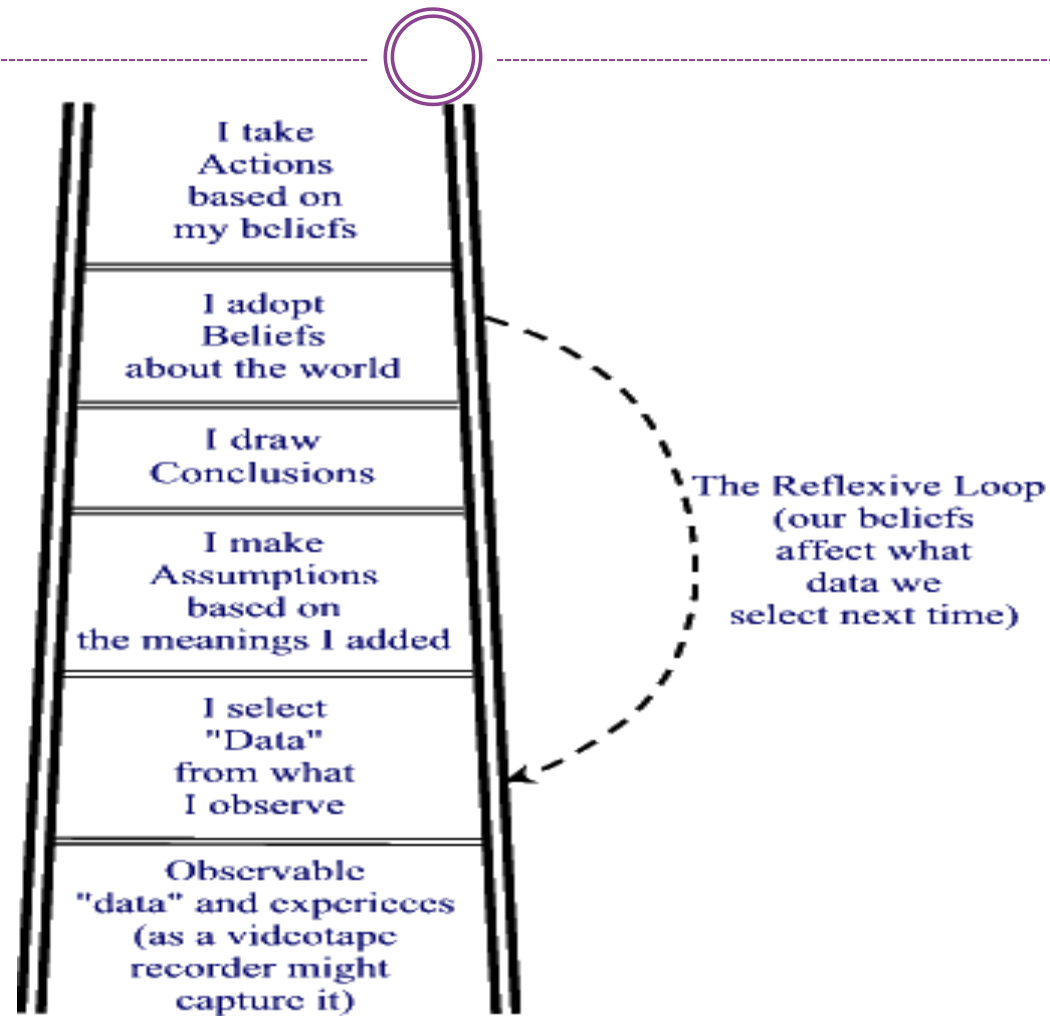


# Daily Team Debrief



- Entire team: fiscal, program
- At conclusion of each day
- Recap what was learned
- Compare information
- Develop agenda for next day

# Ladder of Inference



# Monitoring Process



## Day Two:

- Check-in with the Executive Director
- Continue document review
- Continue Interviews

# Daily Team Debrief



- Entire team: fiscal, program
- At conclusion of each day
- Recap what was learned
- Compare information
- Develop agenda for next day

# Monitoring Process



## Day Three and Four??

- Review status of interviews, chart reviews, etc. and develop plan to collect remaining data
- Begin to review the data and prepare feedback for exit conference

# Daily Team Debrief



- Entire team: fiscal, program
- At conclusion of each day
- Recap what was learned
- Compare information
- Develop agenda for next day



# Daily Debrief Topics



A staff person presented you with the following list:

- Board Member is a landlord who has his tenants go to the agency to get money in order to pay their rent.
- Executive Director brings her daughter in to get emergency assistance.
- Executive Director borrows money from staff.
- There is nepotism in the agency. Human Resources Director is the Executive Director's brother-in-law – he is a contract employee.
- Sexual harassment charges against one male never get substantiated – he might be a relative of the Executive Director?

# Monitoring Process



## Last Day:

- Completion of all data collection
- Complete Exit Conference preparations
- Meet with the Executive Director
- Exit Conference

# Feedback to the Agency



## Exit Conference

- Who should attend?
- What is going well, progress, changes, best practices, great ideas, etc?
- The 'findings'
- 'What needs to be done to correct, process, paperwork, etc?

# Feedback to the Agency



## Exit Conference

- Offering of Training and Technical Assistance
- Questions from the group
- Wrap-up summary – including when to expect report

# Feedback to the Agency



## Written Report

- Report Format
- What should be included in the report?
- What is the time frame for getting the report out to the agency?
- What is the follow-up process?

# Monitoring Process is Ongoing



# What Else Works?

