Evaluating Systems Change Using the Most Significant Change Method

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF EVALUATORS
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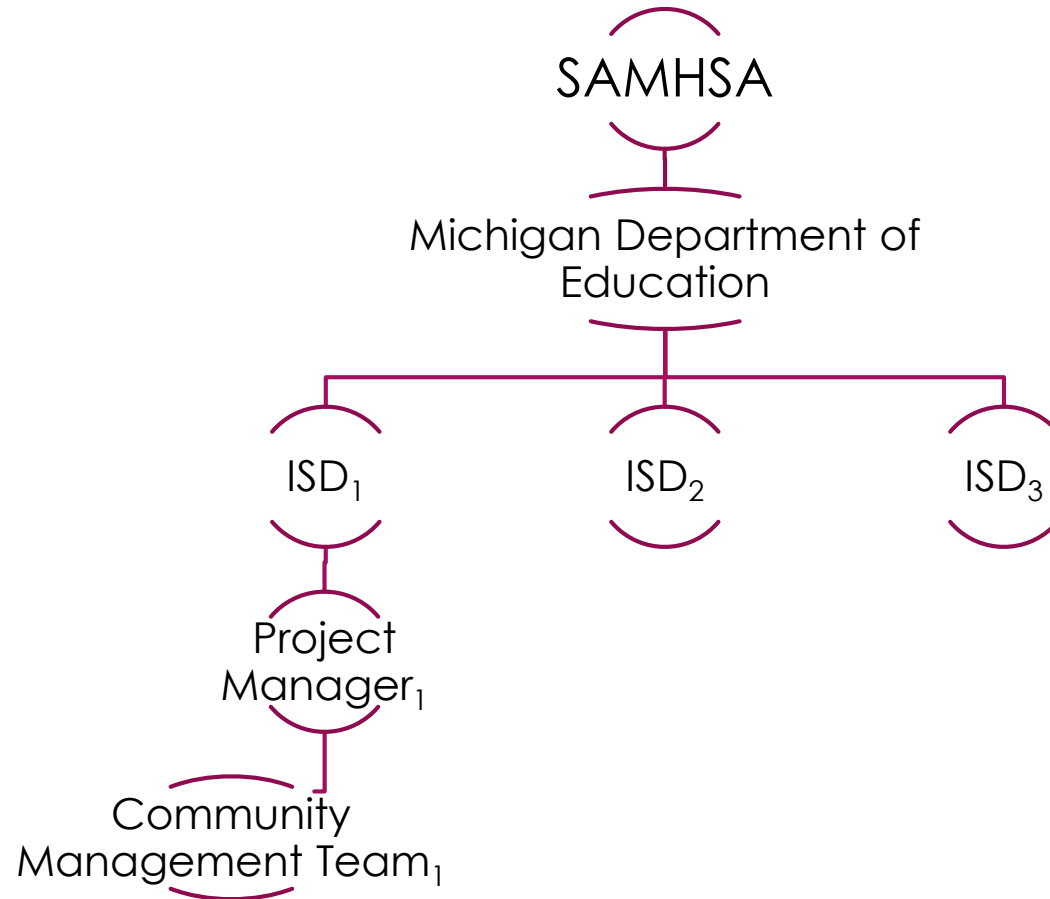Trevor Strzyzykowski
Danielle Haggerty

Project AWARE
Advancing Wellness And Resiliency in Education

- Two key components:

  - **Youth Mental Health First Aid** training

  - Connecting children, youth, and families to appropriate mental health services through the schools and communities (**systems change**)

Project AWARE
Advancing Wellness And Resiliency in Education

SAMHSA

Michigan Department of Education

ISD_1 ISD_2 ISD_3

Project Manager$_1$

Community Management Team$_1$

Why We Chose Most Significant Change

▶ Casts a wider net than predetermined measures

▶ Captures both expected and unexpected outcomes

▶ Retrospective method for gathering outcomes through storytelling

Dart, J., & Davies, R. (2003). A dialogical, story-based evaluation tool: The most significant change technique. *American Journal of Evaluation*, *24*(2), 137-155.

Step 2.
Define Domains of Systems Change

▶ Needed a framework to capture broad systems changes

▶ Framework informed by **Coffman** and **Foster-Fishman**

▶ Defined **systems change indicators** with stakeholders

- ▶ 7 domains of systems change
- ▶ 44 indicators of systems change

Systems Change Framework
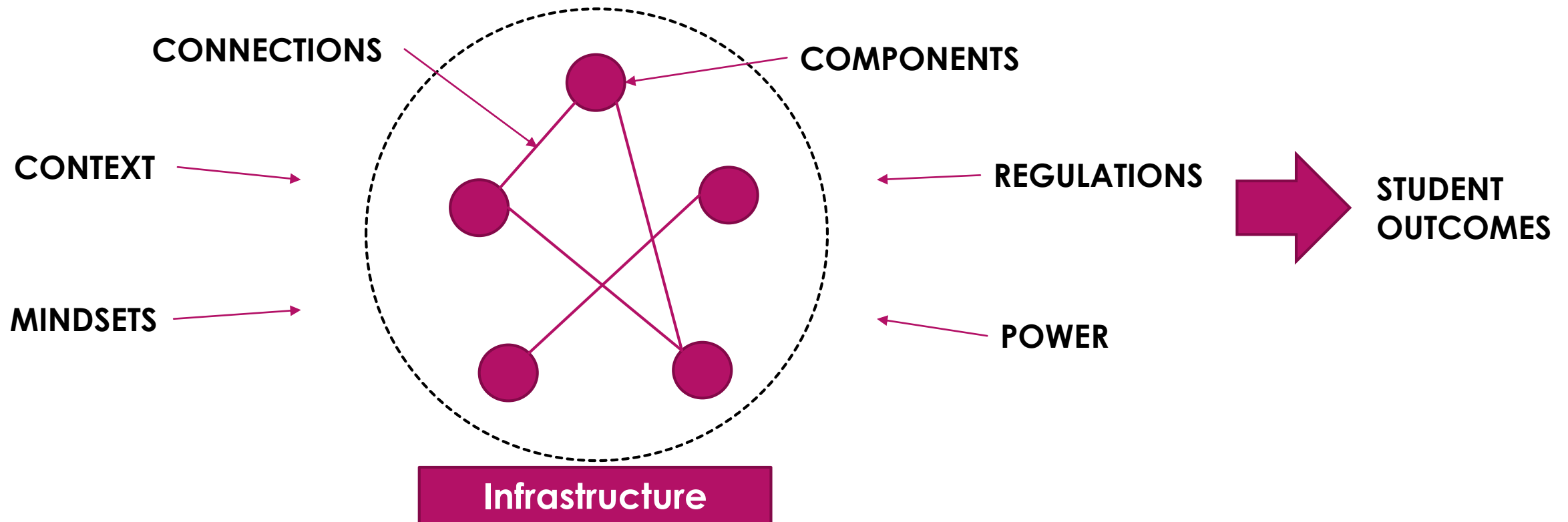
Step 4.
Prepare for Data Collection

▶ Most Significant Change events were scheduled at each ISD

▶ Project managers selected stakeholders to participate

　　▶ Core groups who attended Community Management Team meetings

▶ Participants included representatives from:

　　▶ ISDs

　　▶ Schools

　　▶ Community agencies

Step 4.
Develop Five Focus Questions

Questions sent two weeks prior to each event:

1. What significant change has there been in your districts/ISD/ communities as a result of **Project AWARE**?

2. Why is this change significant?

3. How do you know this change has occurred?

4. How did **Project AWARE** contribute to this change?

5. What else has happened as a result of this change?

Step 4.
Hold Event to Collect Significant Change Stories

- 8:00-8:30 am   Pre-meeting coffee and find your table
- 8:30-8:45 am   Introduction to program
- **8:45-9:15 am   Individual writing time**
- 9:15-9:45 am   Group time to share and select
- 9:45-10:00 am   Break
- 10:00-11:00 am   Presentation by each group
- 11:00-11:30 am   Whole group discussion and wrap up

Step 5.
Select Most Significant Stories

▶ 8:00-8:30 am   Pre-meeting coffee and find your table

▶ 8:30-8:45 am   Introduction to program

▶ 8:45-9:15 am   Individual writing time

▶ **9:15-9:45 am**   **Group time to share and select**

▶ 9:45-10:00 am   Break

▶ 10:00-11:00 am   Presentation by each group

▶ 11:00-11:30 am   Whole group discussion and wrap up

Step 6.
Share Most Significant Change Stories

- 8:00-8:30 am   Pre-meeting coffee and find your table
- 8:30-8:45 am   Introduction to program
- 8:45-9:15 am   Individual writing time
- 9:15-9:45 am   Group time to share and select
- 9:45-10:00 am   Break
- **10:00-11:00 am   Presentation by each group**
- 11:00-11:30 am   Whole group discussion and wrap up
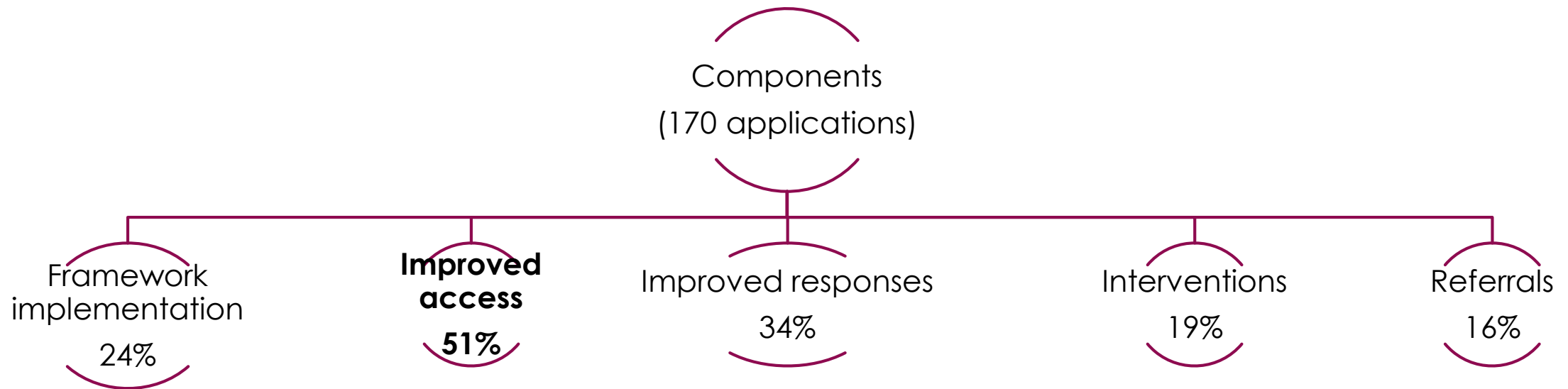
Step 7.
Quantify Stories: Content Coding

- Transcribed and quality checked

- Imported to Dedoose

- Thematic analysis using a consensus approach
  - Two coders independently read and applied codes
  - Discussed disagreements, revised iteratively
  - Lead evaluator settled discrepancies

Results: Indications of Systems Change

	Total applications	Applications per story
Components	**170**	**2.33**
Connections	137	1.88
Infrastructure	131	1.79
Mindsets	107	1.47
Context	50	0.68
Power	18	0.25
Regulations	14	0.19

Results: Components
Presence and Characteristics of Programs and Supports

Components
(170 applications)

Framework implementation
24%

Improved access
51%

Improved responses
34%

Interventions
19%

Referrals
16%

"Students and families have access to services, and someone who can help them navigate an often times confusing system."

Community Agency on Improved Access

Step 8.
Verify Results

- Compared results with predicted results
  - Systems change indicators
  - Theory of Change
- Checked for consistency across multiple data sources
- Member checking
  - Project managers
  - Local representatives

Conclusion

Coupled with our systems change framework, the **Most Significant Change** method was an effective and manageable approach to capture both expected and unexpected changes in youth mental health systems.

Contact Information

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