

An illustration of a landscape featuring a black arch bridge with vehicles (a red car, an orange bus, a yellow car, and a green truck) crossing it. The background includes green rolling hills, a large green mountain with a white snow cap, a bright yellow sun with rays, and white clouds. The foreground has dark green bushes and trees.

# Bridges Forward: Crossing Barriers to Improved IDD and Behavioral Health Systems in Washington

A graphic consisting of three curved segments in yellow, green, and red, with a red arrow pointing upwards and to the right.

**Bridge***Forward*



## Need

If the need for the conference exists because of:



- Lack of plan to address workforce shortages.
- Lack of plan to address long waitlists for HCBS waivers & lack of crisis supports in rural areas.
- Lack of opportunity for cross agency/system dialog and planning.
- Service fragmentations between IDD & MH/BH systems.
- Disparities for underserved groups.
- Limited culturally competent and person-centered supports.
- Lack of opportunity and access for people with lived experience to engage in system change efforts.

## Inputs

And we invest in the following:



- Advisory Committee (self-advocates, families, providers, advocates, legislators).
- Council resources & partnerships (funding, staff capacity, communications).
- Prior research findings to ground topics in evidence.
- Accessibility resources (captioning, ASL, translations into Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Korean, Russian).
- Partnerships with cross-system providers and advocates (e.g., NAMI, Arc, Dev Dis Ombuds).

## Activities

To engage in the following actions:



- The intentional steps taken to design and deliver the conference:
- Speaker selection balancing national experts and Washington-specific leaders.
  - Topic framing around the three themes (Community Living, Systems of Support, Lifespan).
  - Accessibility planning.
  - Coordinating logistics.
  - Applying values framework ensuring inclusion, equity, and person-centered focus.
  - Engagement tools such as Think Labs for co-creation of solutions.

## Outputs

That will produce the following:



- Conference sessions: 4 keynotes, 12 breakouts/Think Labs, 4 reflection spaces, 2 planning sessions.
- Materials & recordings (translated and shared).
- Resourced Resources & Toolkits.
- Participant engagement: families, self-advocates, policymakers, providers, researchers.

## Outcomes

Then participants and the community should demonstrate:

### Short-Term:

- Increased knowledge of gaps, resources, and best practices.
- Increased collaboration among diverse stakeholder groups.
- Raised awareness about underserved groups' unique barriers.
- Increased Momentum for solutions through planning sessions.


### Long-Term:

- Sustained System changes such as expanded community-based crisis services, improved training, and deinstitutionalization commitments.
- Stronger Cross-System partnerships (IDD + behavioral health, schools, justice, healthcare).
- Policy influence: legislative action to reduce waitlists, fund workforce training, expand telehealth, and invest in rural service capacity.
- Equitable outcomes: improved access, quality, and satisfaction for underserved populations.



## The Destination: The Vision of a Better System

Accessible



Quality



Equitable

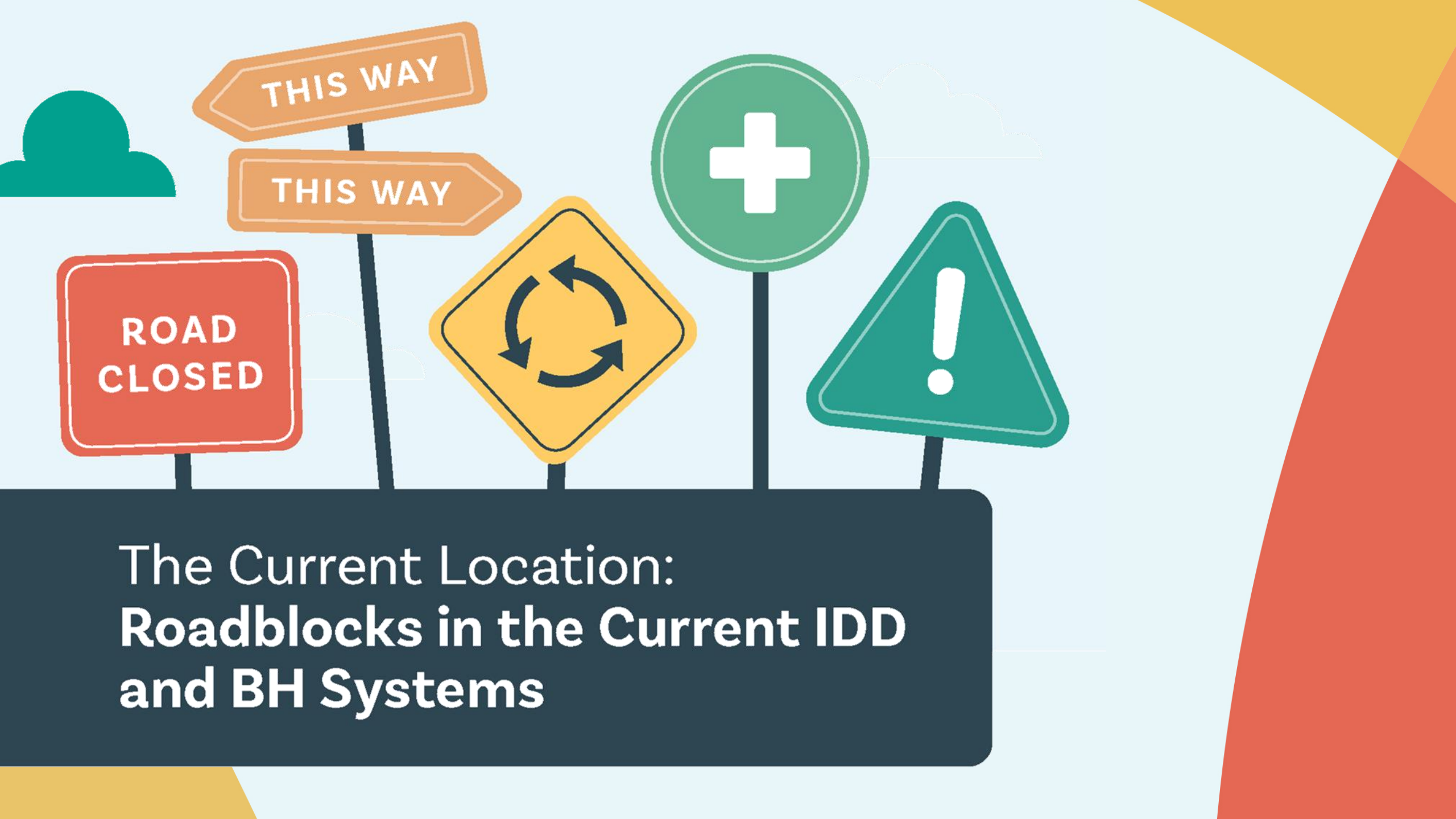


Responsive



Sustainable





## The Current Location: Roadblocks in the Current IDD and BH Systems

# Service Availability and Accessibility



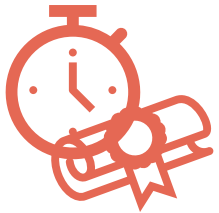
Bureaucratic Challenges



Location Challenges



Technological Challenges



Lack of Qualified Professionals



Resource Availability Challenges

**ROAD  
CLOSED**

“

“People spend weeks in emergency rooms restrained and scared waiting for psychiatric beds that might never open up.”



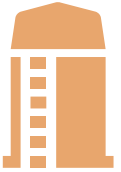
# System Navigation



Process Challenges



Financial Challenges



Lack of Cross-Systems Collaboration



Overextended & Undertrained Professionals



Lack of Assistance & Guidance



**“Mental health care is more than therapy. Mental health supports involve having an increase in employment, volunteer, or educational opportunities, or even recreational. It involves housing support, better access to relationships and just better access to the community in general.”**

# Quality Services



Lack of Appropriate Services



Service Experience Challenges



IDD and BH Workforce Challenges



Crisis Professionals Undertrained in IDD and BH Needs



“

“We need less emergency room visits. Less involvement with first responders, PD, fire department, ambulance.”

“The treatment options are often not good or don’t work for some people with IDD. We need better treatment options for people with co-occurring BH/IDD support needs.”

# Quality Professionals



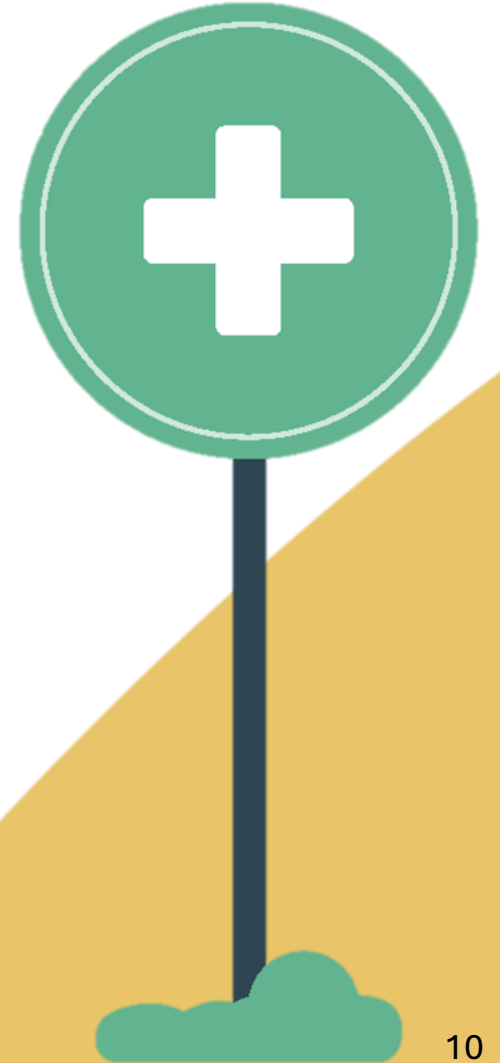
IDD and BH Workforce Challenges



Lack of Training Across IDD and BH Fields



Mismatches between IDD and BH professionals and the people they support





# Stigma and Unawareness



Poor Symptom Recognition



Lack of Awareness



Stigma & Discrimination



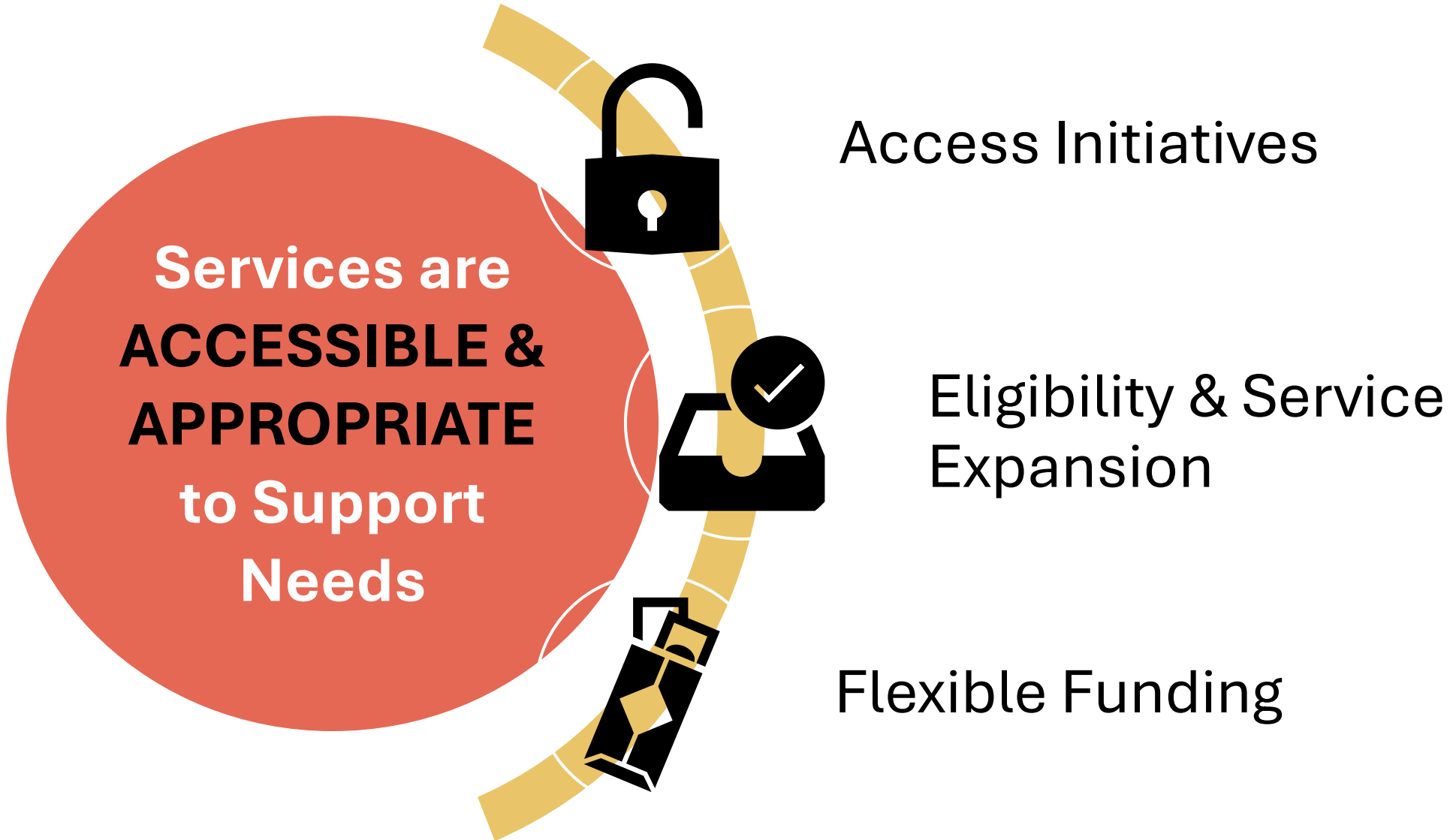
“

“There are services that already exist. Counseling, one-on-one therapies, substance use disorder therapy programs etc. and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are discriminated against. They’re told ‘we think you cannot benefit from these services.’”



**Bridges Forward:  
Ways to Improve the IDD and BH  
Systems and Cross-System  
Coordination**

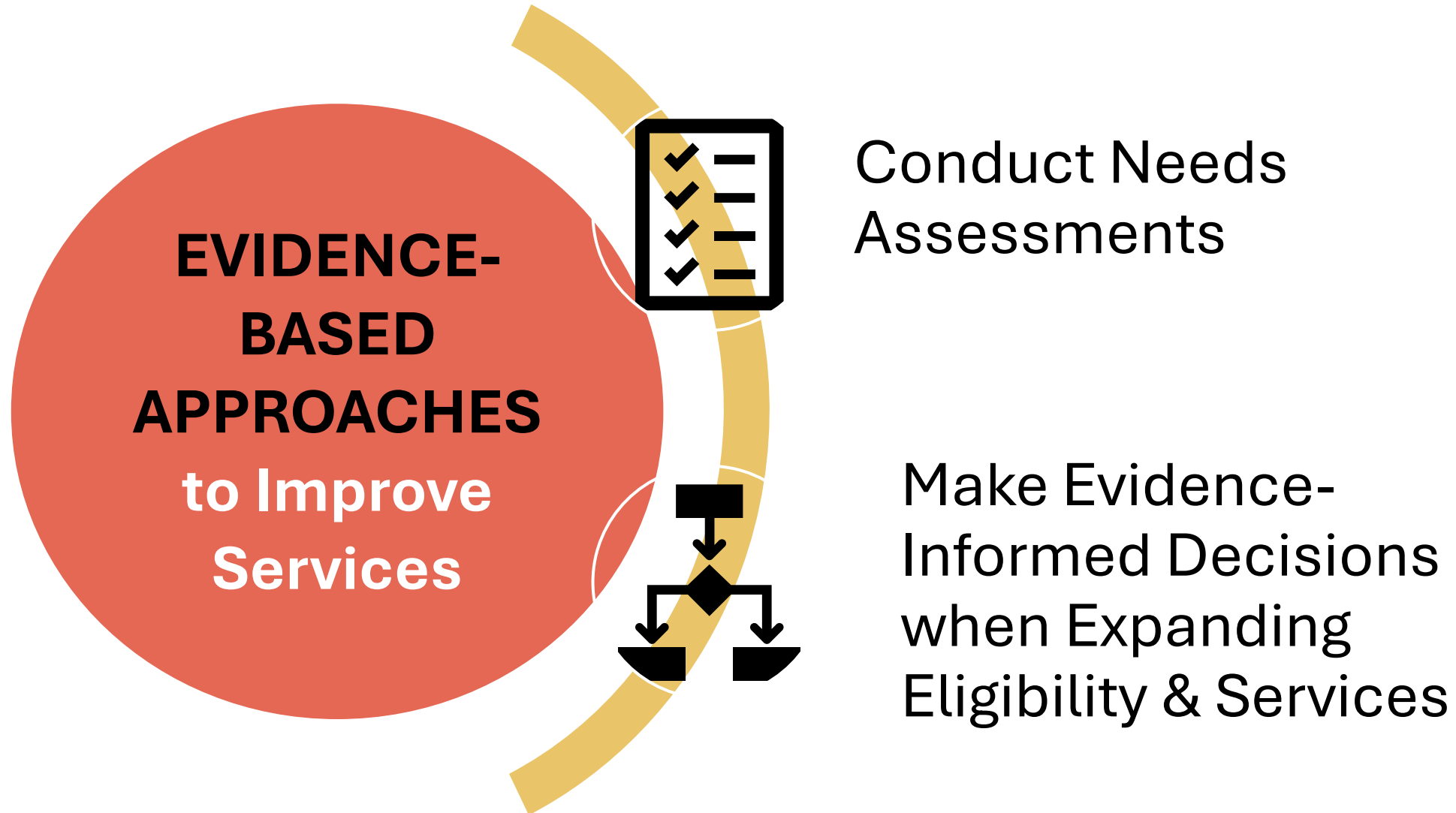
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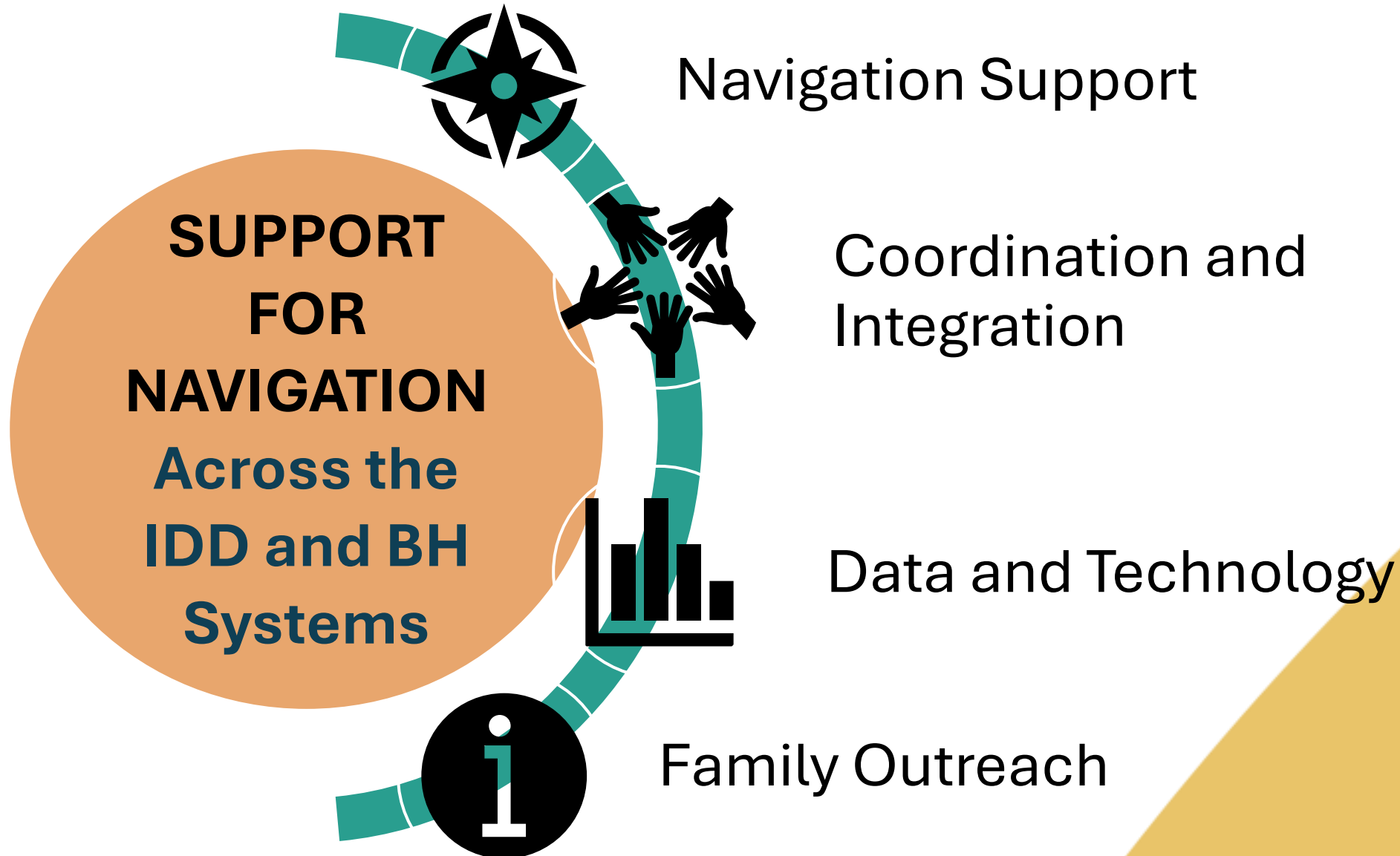
# Service Availability and Accessibility



# Service Availability and Accessibility



# System Navigation

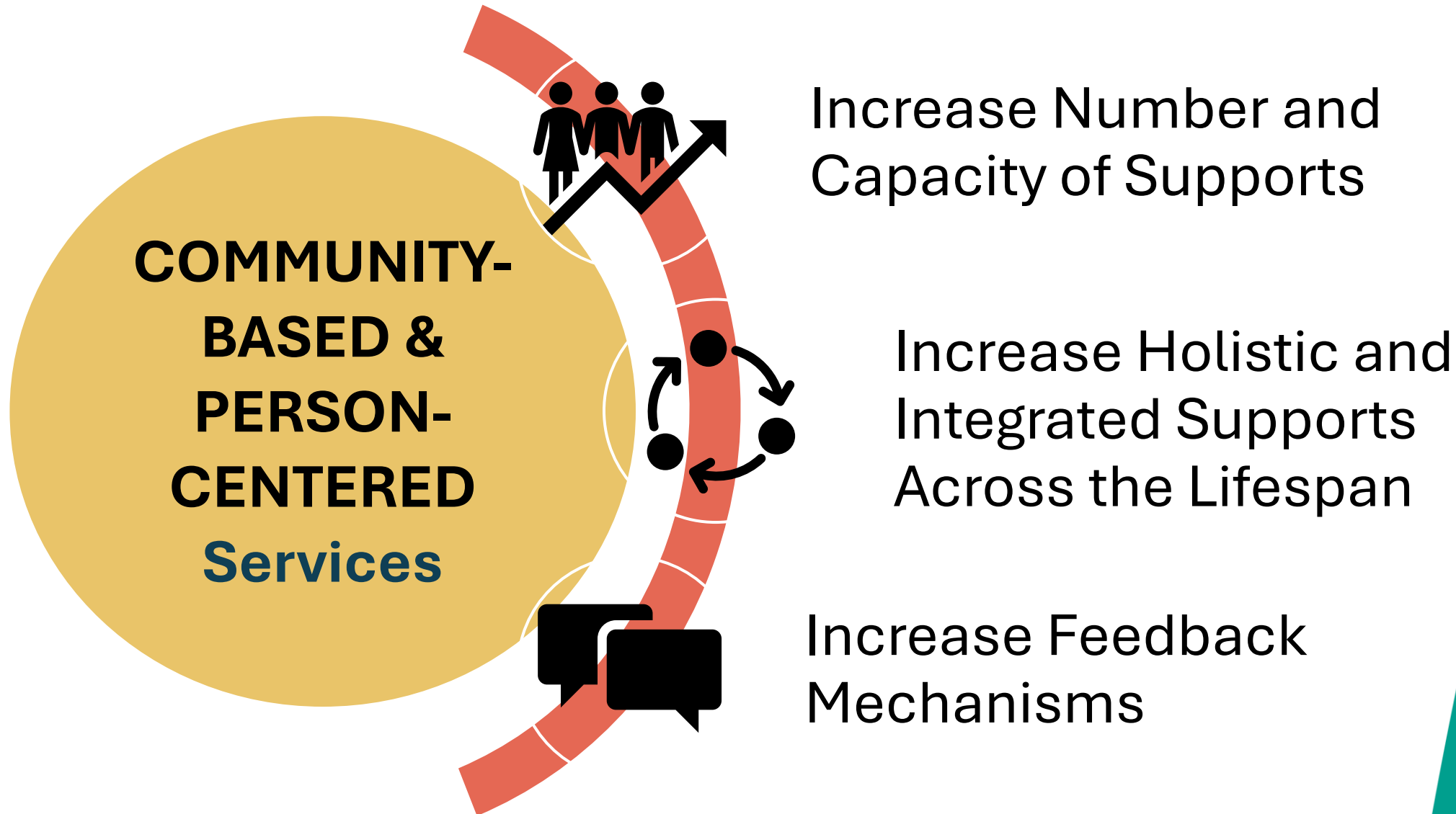




# Quality Services



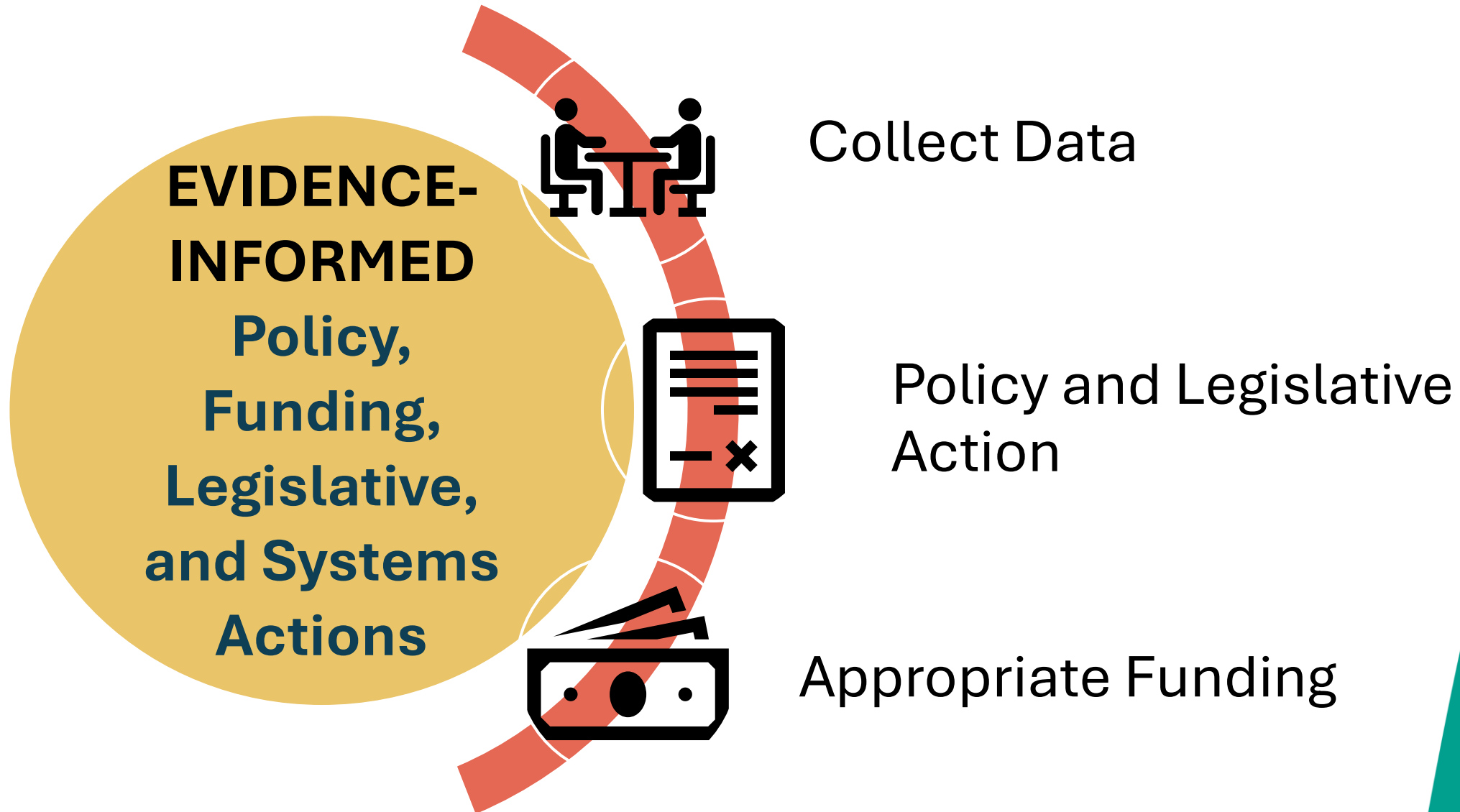
# Quality Services



# Quality Services

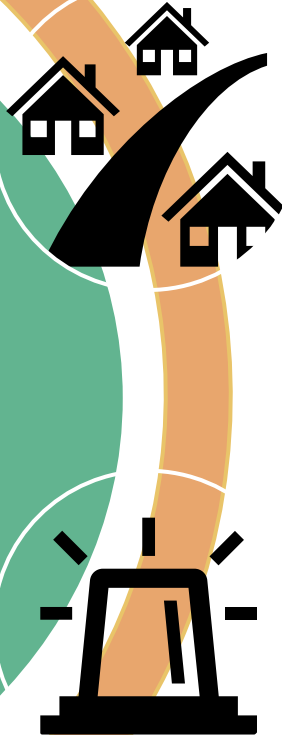


# Quality Services



# Quality Professionals


**BUILD SYSTEMS  
INFRASTRUCTURE**  
for Quality  
Professionals



Community-Based  
Specialized Expertise

Increase Crisis  
Prevention


# Quality Professionals



Increase Workforce  
Development and Training  
Opportunities



Enhance Recruitment  
& Retention



Encourage  
Professionalization of  
DSP Role



Increase Cross-System and  
Specialized Training

**ENHANCED  
INVESTMENT**  
in a Robust,  
Quality  
Workforce



# Reducing Stigma and Raising Awareness

## COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION, & ADVOCACY

Between People  
with IDD/BH  
Needs, Families, &  
Systems



Public Education &  
Resources



Opportunities for  
Family Connection  
& Collaboration



Training, Education, &  
Support in Best  
Practices



Build Leadership and Advocacy  
in People with IDD & BH Needs

Want to Learn More?

**Visit:** <https://www.ddc.wa.gov/bridge-forward/bridge-forward-conference>

**Email:** [wabridgeforwardconference@gmail.com](mailto:wabridgeforwardconference@gmail.com)

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