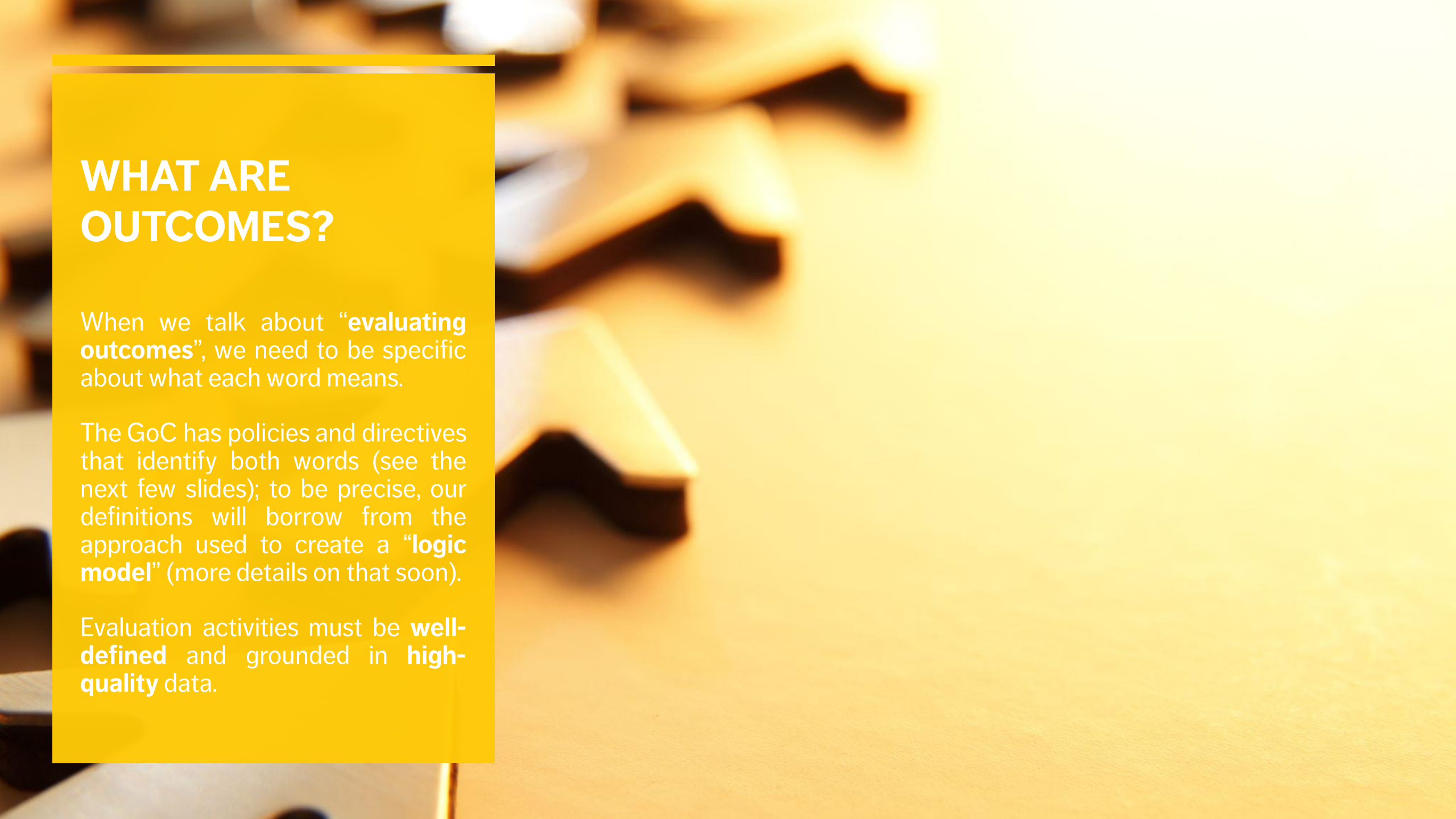
MODULE 4: DECISION-MAKING AND EVALUATION

CT ACADEMY | DATA ACTION LAB

11. EVALUATING OUTCOMES

DECISION-MAKING AND EVALUATION



WHAT ARE OUTCOMES?

When we talk about "**evaluating outcomes**", we need to be specific about what each word means.

The GoC has policies and directives that identify both words (see the next few slides); to be precise, our definitions will borrow from the approach used to create a "**logic model**" (more details on that soon).

Evaluation activities must be **well-defined** and grounded in **high-quality** data.

DATA STRATEGY REFRESH – MEASURING OUTCOMES

Specific high-level desired outcomes are identified in the GoC 2023-2026 Data Strategy Refresh:

- effective, equitable, ethical, and inclusive services, programs, and policy
- trusted and accountable government
- greater public value from data
- enhanced evidence-informed decision-making
- support for Indigenous data sovereignty

Lesson: outcomes from initiatives on which we are working should align with one or more of the items above.

OUTCOME MANAGEMENT GUIDE & POLICY ON RESULTS

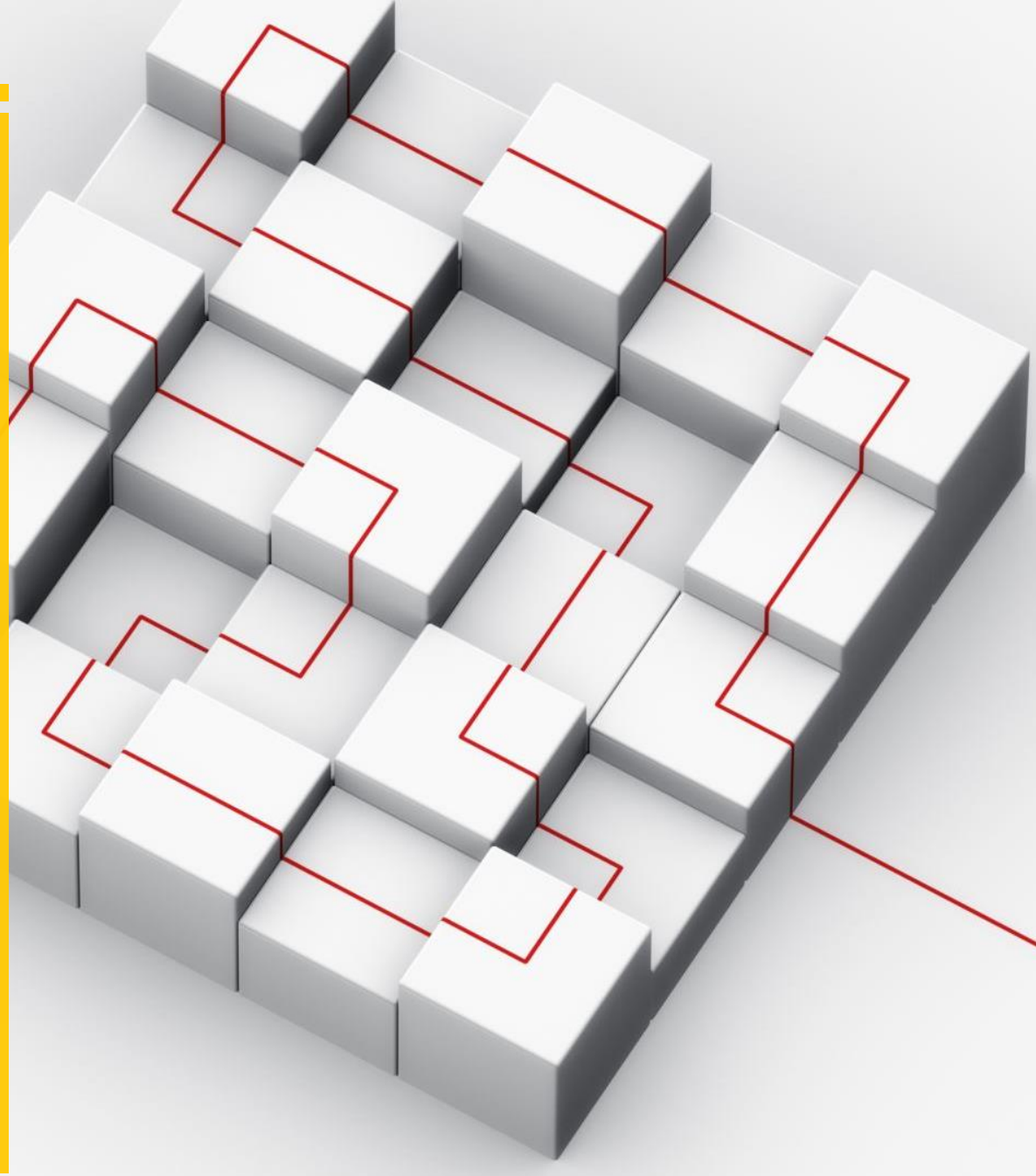
TBS's "Outcome Management" guide is aimed specifically at **projects** and **portfolio management**. Good guidelines are referenced in the document, including the use of **logic models**.

The GoC also has a "Policy on Results", which includes the "Departmental Results Framework". The purpose of this document and program is to provide departments with guidance on how to **best measure the success** of **programs**, **initiatives**, **projects**, and **ongoing operations**.

LOGIC MODEL

These references don't really provide us with a sensible way of defining outcomes for our own use, however.

It is easier to use an approach called a **logic model**, which provides a framework to logically think though various aspects of our work and to lay out a series of sensible **connected evaluations**.



LOGIC MODEL

A **logic model** (LM) is a graphical representation that outlines the sequence of **actions**, **resources**, and **intended outcomes** of a program, demonstrating how activities are **connected** to the results they are supposed to achieve.

The key components of a logic model are:

- **inputs:** resources, contributions, and investments that go into the program, e.g., time, money, staff, volunteers, equipment;
- **activities:** what the program does with the inputs to fulfill its mission, e.g., services provided, programs conducted, products developed;
- **outputs:** the direct products of program activities, e.g., number of workshops held, participants served;
- **outcomes:** the specific changes in program participants' behavior, knowledge, skills, status, and level of functioning, e.g., increased knowledge of a subject, improved skills, and
- **impact:** the broader changes that occur as a result of the program, e.g., long-term effects on the community or system.

LOGIC MODEL

In such a model, outcomes need to be **measurable** and quantitively "**link**" outputs to impacts.

What does this look like in a financial context? For example, a health program might invest funds into public education to stop smoking.

In this case we would have:

- **outputs:** program smoking cessation advertising in print and online;
- **outcomes:** a measurable % of a city population reading the advertising, and
- **impact:** a measurable decrease in smoking (measured through surveys & cigarette sales).

LOGIC MODEL

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
▪ $500k ▪ 2 FTE ▪ Project oversight	▪ Advert design ▪ Liaise with retail ▪ Website and design ▪ Campaign design	▪ Print adverts ▪ Online adverts (delivered through Google advertising)	▪ Retail establishments putting up print adverts ▪ Adverts delivered online to relevant search criteria	▪ Fewer people smoking within city boundaries

EXERCISE

For one of your organization's programs, identify outputs, outcomes, and impacts (as in the logic model).

You may consider the following: as a finance professional, what things are you able to measure and what data would you need to use to measure them? Is financial data part of an outcome or is it always an input into the program itself?

WHAT IS EVALUATION?

Evaluation is the **systematic process** of assessing the **effectiveness** of an activity. With the LM as a **reference point**, we see that evaluation means **different things at different stages** of the process.

Logic Model Stage	Example of Evaluation
inputs	Do we have all the required inputs? Are the inputs of sufficient quality?
activities	Are we able to initiate activities with the inputs that have been defined? Are the activities able to transform the inputs effectively into outputs?
outputs	Have we produced enough of the outputs with sufficient quality?
outcomes	Have we induced the appropriate level of positive change in the stakeholder behaviour, knowledge, skills or in an environments level of functioning?
impact	Have we made long-term positive impacts on the community or system?

WHAT IS EVALUATION?

In the smoking cessation example, we could have the following evaluation.

Logic Model Stage	Example of Evaluation
inputs	$500k and 2 FTE budget to work with service providers. Once work was performed, actuals came in at $498k and 1.5 FTE. Inputs were evaluated as “effective”.
activities	Activities (ad design for print and online) were completed but took longer than expected (1 month over schedule). Activities were evaluated as “partially effective”.
outputs	The ads were designed to specifications and passed all quality control checks (5 out of 5). Outputs were evaluated as “effective”.
outcomes	Outcomes were measured over time (number of posters put up on retail walls and number of on-line ads interacted with). The targets for both (50% of retail establishments and 10% click rate on website) were met but took longer than anticipated (by 3 months). Outcomes were evaluated as “partially effective”.
impact	Over the course of 1 year, a statistically significant drop in cigarette sales was measured within the city boundaries and all surveys (150) contained interview data that identified that between 15% and 20% of respondents had at least attempted smoking cessation. Impacts were evaluated as “effective”.

WHAT IS EVALUATION?

Note that in the previous example:

- a **methodology** was defined for evaluation (reduction in sales, survey results);
- data was **available** to perform the evaluations at each step ($ and FTE budget);
- the evaluation steps were **related** through defining logical statements and assumptions (the higher the quality of the ads, the more likely it was to be engaging with the target audience, etc.).

In the last point, "**correlation does not imply causation**". We CAN conduct causal analyses (very carefully), but they require fair amount of forethought (and need to be modified on a case-by-case basis).

EXERCISE

Define evaluations for each step in a logic model for one of the initiatives on which you are working: define

- a methodology (e.g., it will take X amount of time to complete an activity),
- measurements (e.g., compare actual $ spent to budget), and
- an evaluation criteria (e.g., complete in schedule is “effective”, up to 1 month over is “partially effective” and more than 1 month over is “not effective”).