



C A M B I A R E

H I G H L I G H T S O F
E V A L U A T I N G S E N T E N C I N G
G U I D E L I N E S S Y S T E M S

N A S C

A U G U S T 1 4 , 2 0 1 8

WHAT IS EVALUATION?

- Employing objective methods for collecting information regarding programs/policies/initiatives in order to determine:
 - What are the goals and objectives of the policy?
 - Is the policy being implemented as planned?
 - Is the policy meeting its stated goals and objectives? If not, why not?
 - What observed changes can be attributed to the policy (as opposed to other factors)?

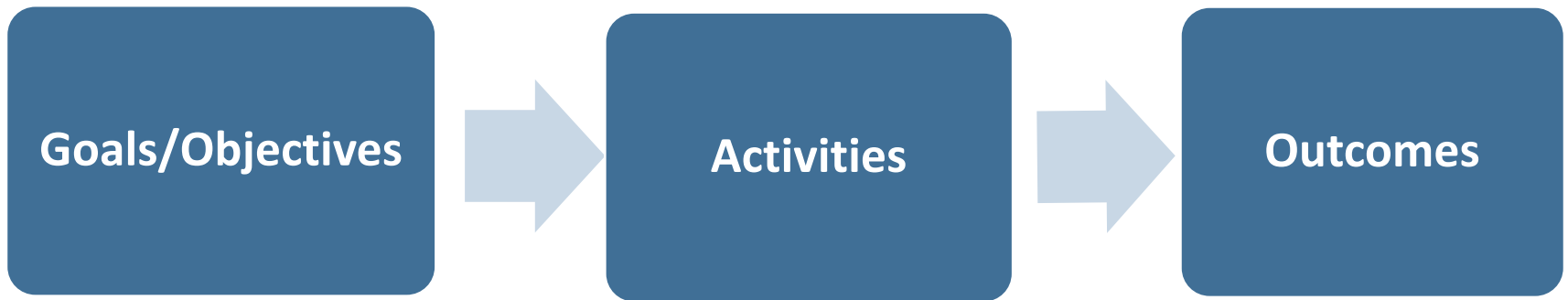


LOGIC MODELS

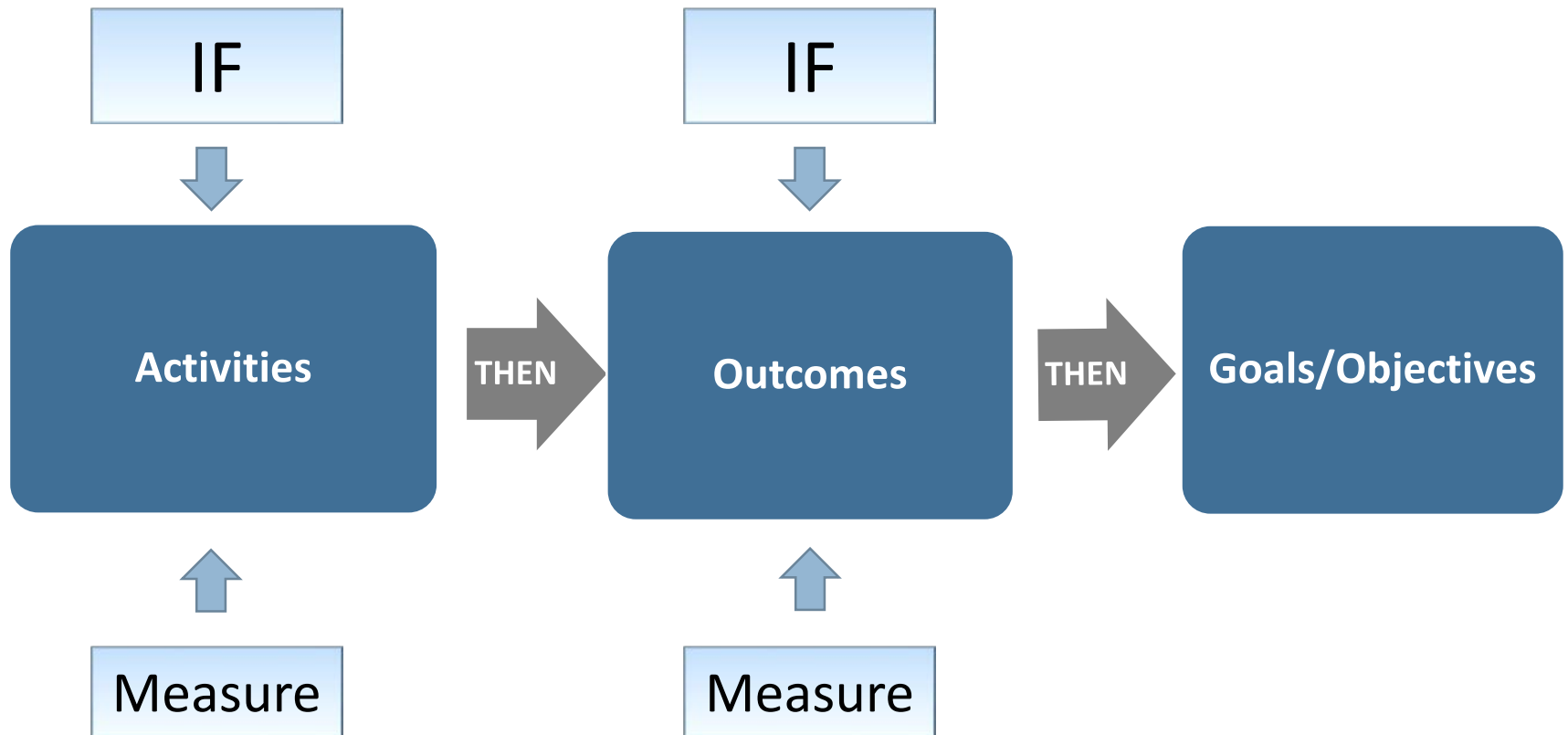
- A visual representation of goals, objectives, activities, and outcomes
 - Shows how these elements are logically connected
 - Indicates how they will be measured



SIMPLE LOGIC MODEL



THE LOGIC



SENTENCING COMMISSION/COUNCIL GOALS

- Public Safety (8)
- Equity/Fairness (8)
- Consistency/Uniformity (7)
- Effectiveness (7)
- Reduce Disparity (5)
- Proportionality (5)
- Correctional Resources (4)
- Transparency (3)



WHAT ARE WE EVALUATING?

- Sentencing Guidelines System
- Sentencing Commission/Council



HOW WILL GOALS BE ACHIEVED?

- Implement:
 - Grids
 - Guidelines
 - Risk Assessment
- Assess effectiveness of guidelines
- Recommend policy/statutory changes



COMMISSION/COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

- Develop/implement/revise guidelines
- Provide training on guidelines
- Assess effectiveness of guidelines

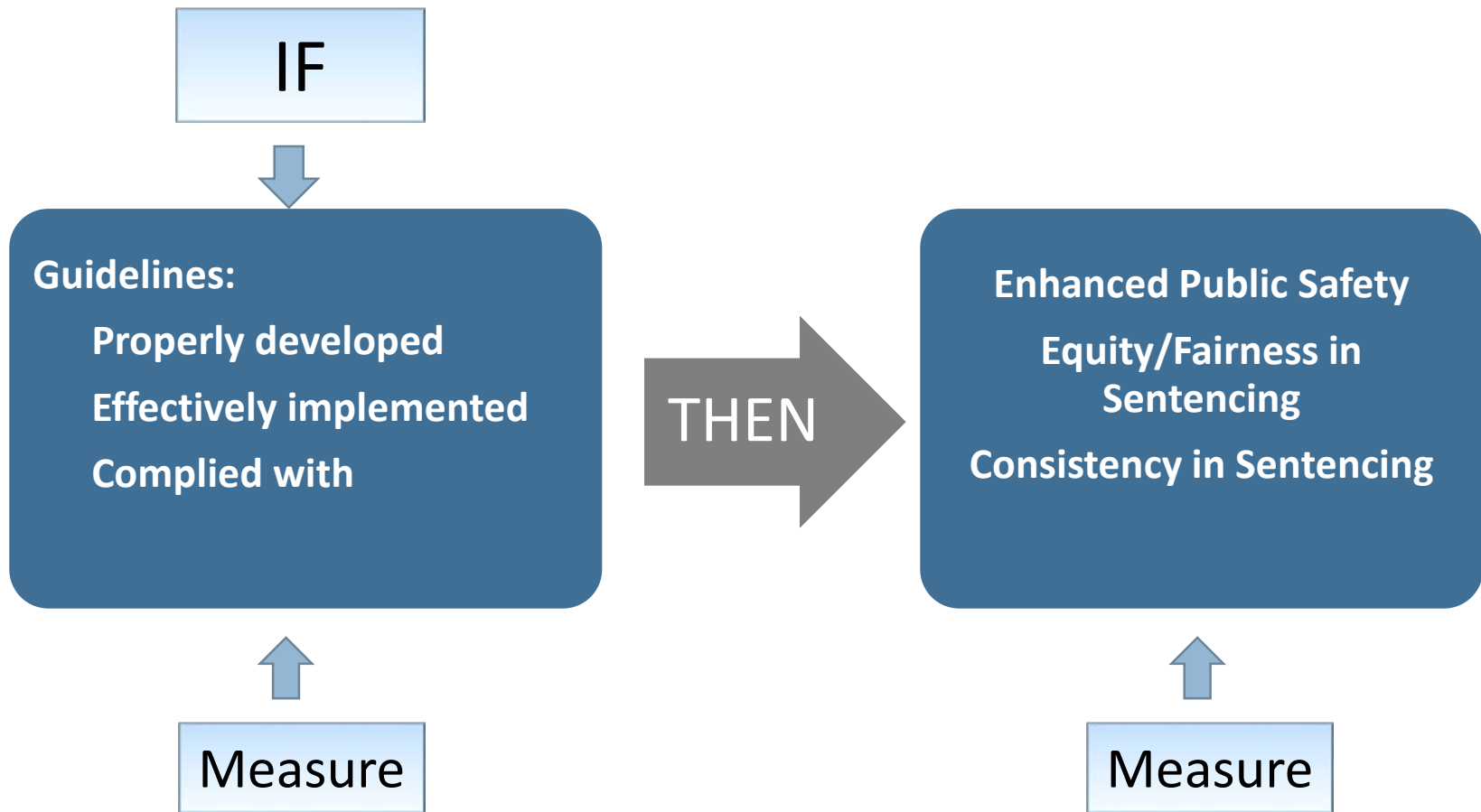


COMMISSION/COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

- Sentencing
 - Within the framework set forth by the Commission/legislature
- The Commission is being evaluated based on the actions of other actors (i.e., judges)
- These actions are not under the control of the Commission



GUIDELINES LOGIC



PROCESS EVALUATION

- Are judges sentencing within the framework set forth by the Commission/legislature?
- Process evaluation = compliance analysis
- Compliance includes:
 - Providing sentencing data to the Commission
 - Determining extent to which sentences comply with guidelines

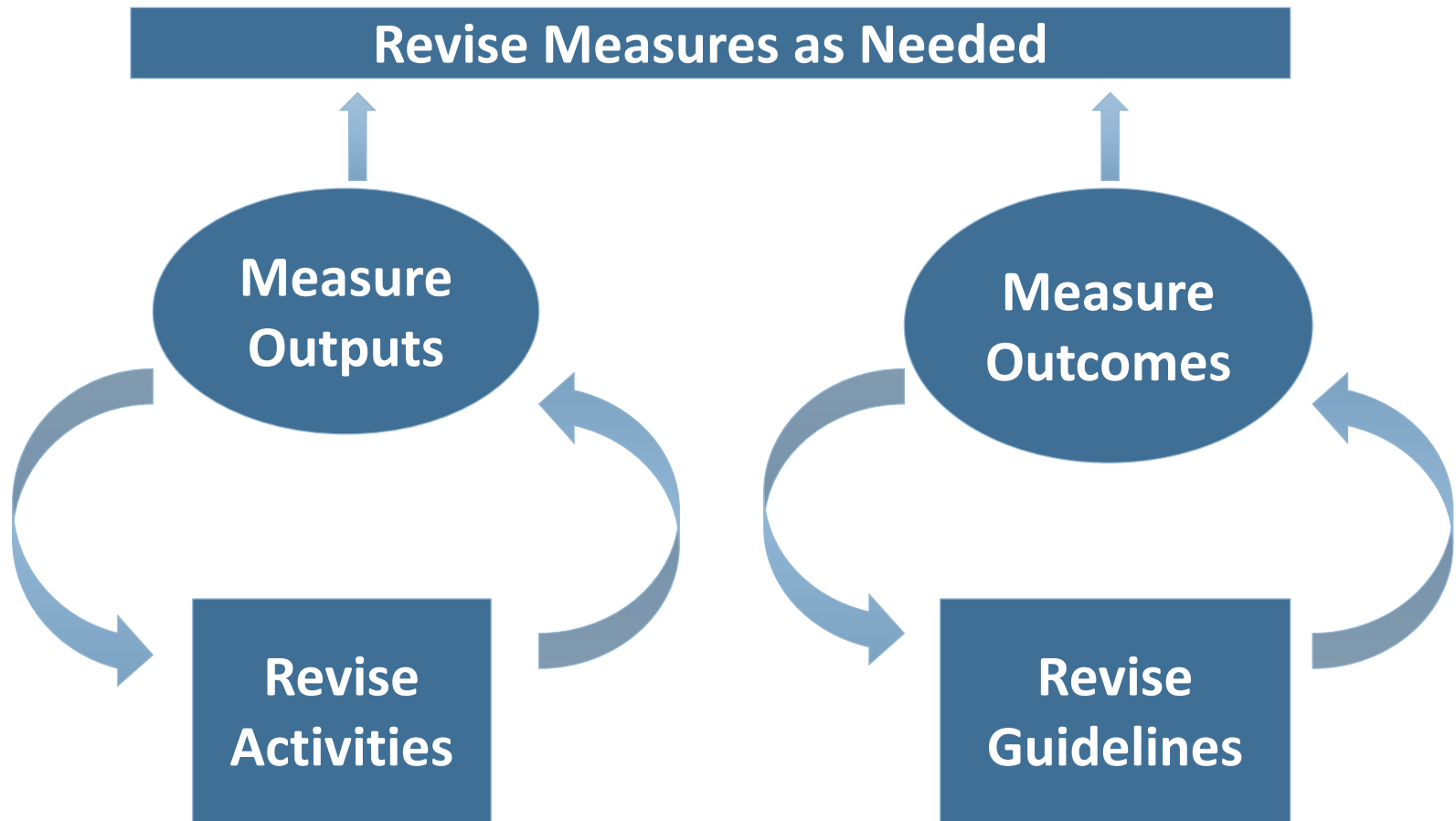


OUTCOME EVALUATION

- Are we achieving our goals/objectives (public safety, fairness, consistency, etc.)?



PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT FEEDBACK LOOP



Although the Sentencing Guidelines are mandated by statute to achieve the goals of consistency, certainty, and adequacy of punishment in sentencing outcomes, there may not be a consensus about what the specific terminology means or how these goals should be measured.

- DC Sentencing Commission



WHAT THE SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY MEANS

Conceptualization:

- How do we define what is meant by constructs like fairness, consistency, and disparity?
- May be different for different states depending on legislation, consensus, etc.



EVALUATING SENTENCING COMMISSIONS/COUNCILS: ISSUES

- What proportion of “public safety” is accounted for by sentencing?
- For what can commissions/councils be held responsible?
 - May recommend, but not make, policy
 - Do not do the actual sentencing
 - May have limited ability to influence key actors/decision-makers (e.g., judges)
- Political considerations
 - Are the various goals compatible, or are they in conflict?
 - Are the various goals all equally important? Are we willing to sacrifice some for others?
 - What are the limitations on the “fixes” for issues that may be uncovered by the evaluation?





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