CECAN Webinar: Navigating System Change Evaluation: reflections on how to know you are making progress in shifting systems

Thursday 2nd May 2024, 13:00 – 14:00 BST

Presenters: Madeline Goldie & Jessica Davies, Social Finance

Welcome to our **CECAN Webinar.**

All participants are muted. Only the Presenters & CECAN Host can speak. The webinar will start at **13:00 BST.**

Madeline & Jessica will speak for around 45 minutes and will answer questions at the end.

Please submit your questions at any point during the webinar via the Q&A box in the Zoom webinar control panel.

Today's webinar will be recorded and made available on the CECAN website.

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SOCIAL FINANCE

Navigating system change evaluation

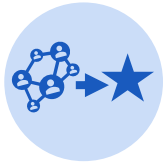
Reflections and insights

May 2024

Systems change work faces challenges when it comes to evaluation

Systems don’t change fast

Causal relationships are foggy in complex systems



System outcomes are emergent

The nature of the intervention is dynamic

Multiple perspectives on what constitutes the system and success

Evaluation needs to adapt to accommodate system change, but some things should remain the same

‘Old world’
What we’re used to

“changing things along the way is moving the goal posts”

“know your full theory of change from the start”

“push for experimental methods”

‘New world’
Everything looks different

“don’t try to decide what you’re aiming for before you start”

“give up on cause & effect”

“it’s good enough just to be learning”

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“push for experimental methods”

- ✓ Respect the ‘black box’
- ✓ Embrace embedded evaluation
- ✓ Orient the work in the wider movement
- ✓ Consider the quality of ‘inputs’

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- ✓ Standards for rigorous inquiry
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Principle	Conventionally looks like…	In Systems Change contexts, looks like…
Transparency of reasoning	Fully articulated set of hypotheses Clear & complete evaluation scope, held constant over time	Clear ‘system view’ incl. hypothesis of change within the system (poss partial) Updated over time - evaluation scope evolves
Rigorous methods	Experimental preferred, highest levels of certainty sought Other methods sometimes distrusted	Wide range of appropriate methods Experimental methods used in targeted ways
Reflexivity and limiting bias	Independent evaluators separate from project team Confidence in getting truly objective findings	Embedded evaluation partner ‘checks and challenges’ in real-time Awareness of bias & surfaces different perspectives but shapes shared interpretive space
Causal reasoning	Experimental methods elevated Seeking attribution	Causal thinking - sharpen and refine hypotheses based on data but respect the ‘black box Contribution rather than attribution
Fallibility	Establishing clear, compelling and testable counterfactual only way to test hypothesis	Willing to be wrong, seeking the ‘undesired truth’

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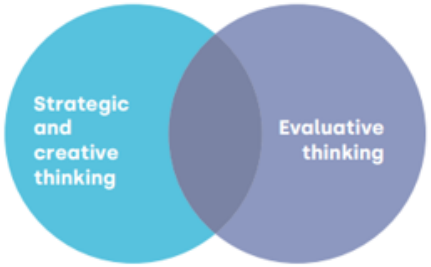
5 things evaluation should do to support system change efforts



Embed evaluative thinking into your strategic planning

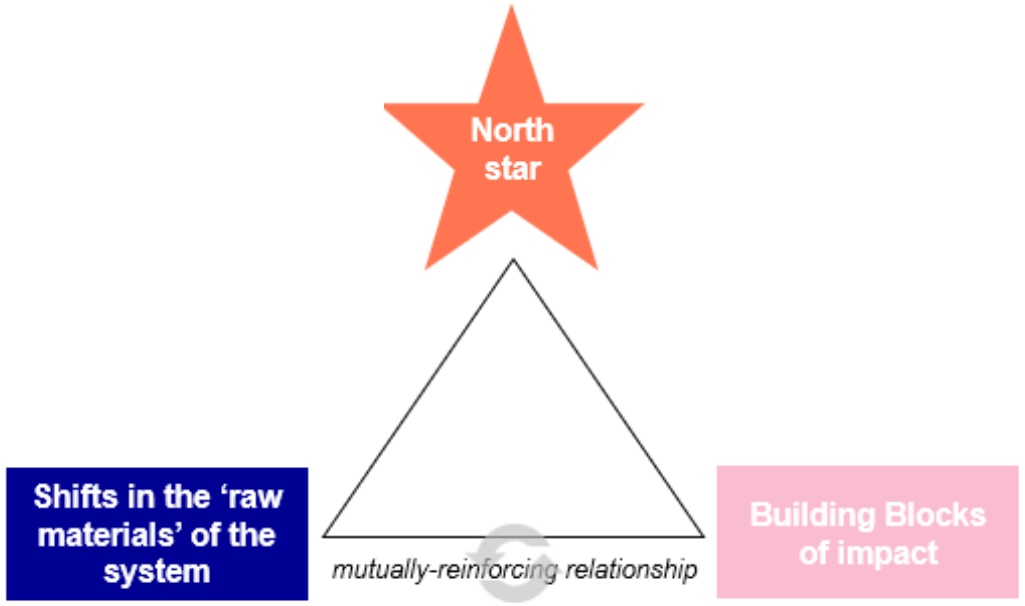
Plan for iteration, but don't lose your north star

Check for impact regularly, but put it in (system) context

Retain rigorous causal thinking, but be sensitive to emergent outcomes

Treat your strategy as a hypothesis and constantly learn and adapt

Types of impact to look for to know you're changing the system



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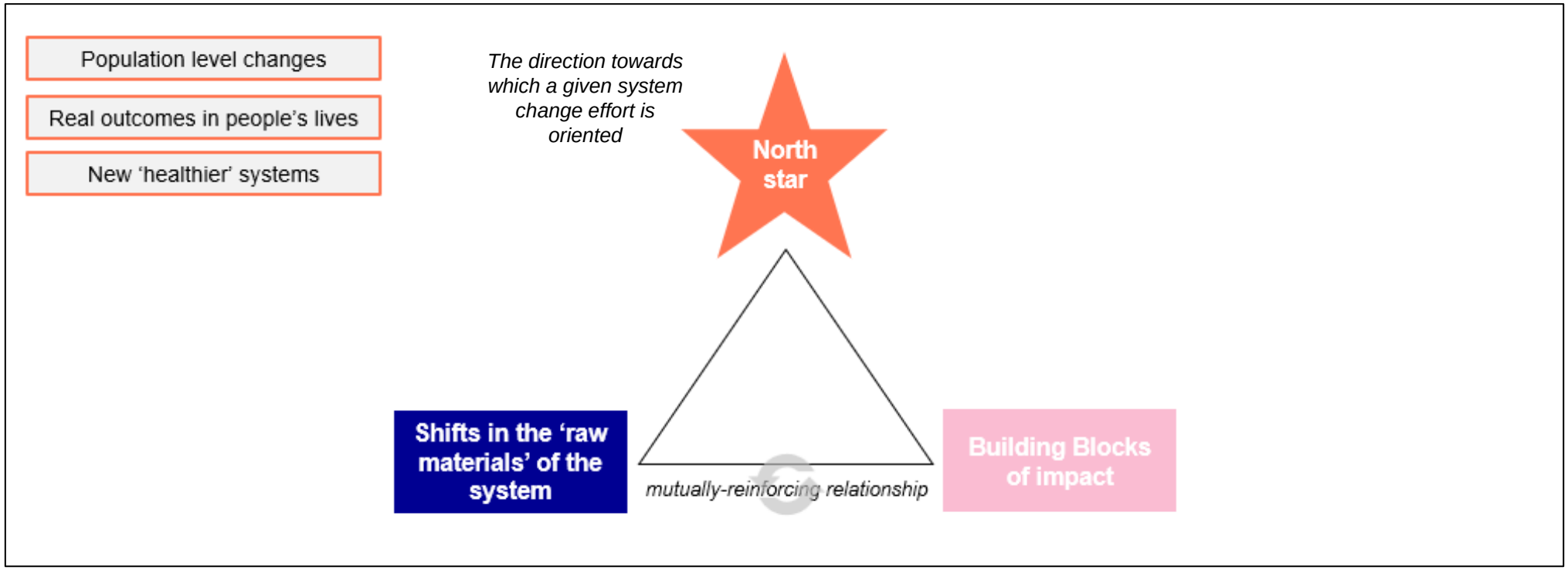

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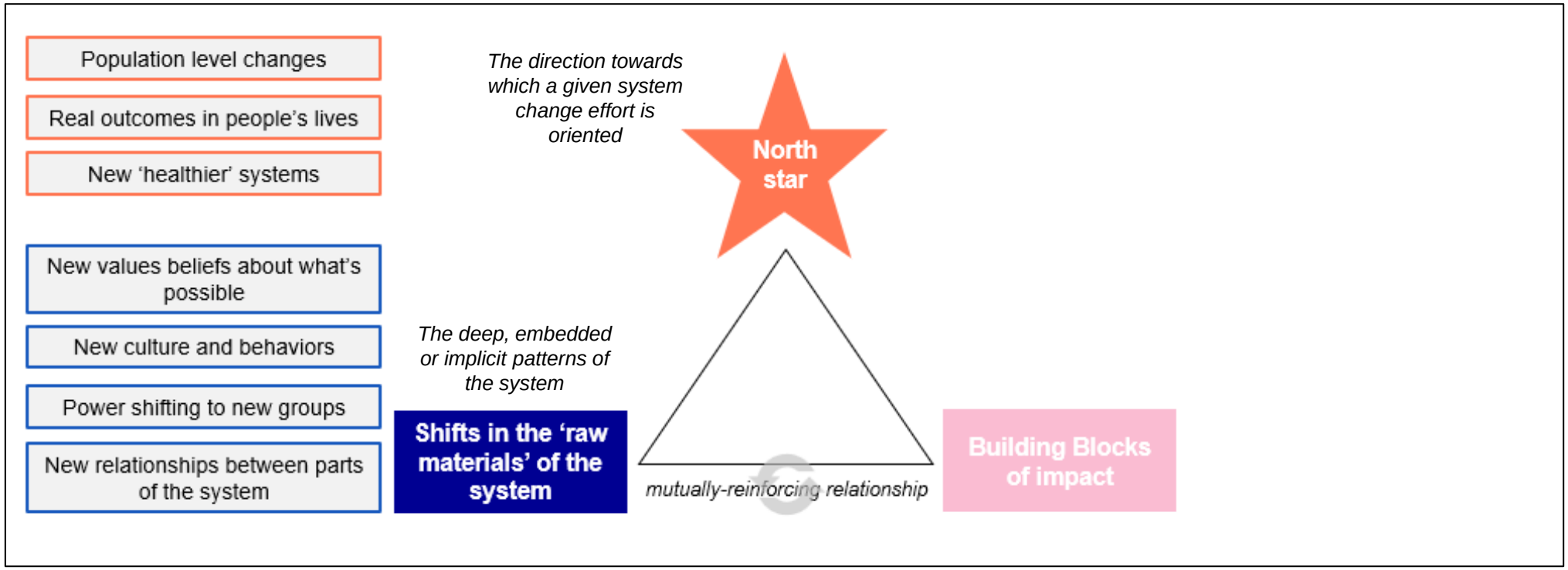

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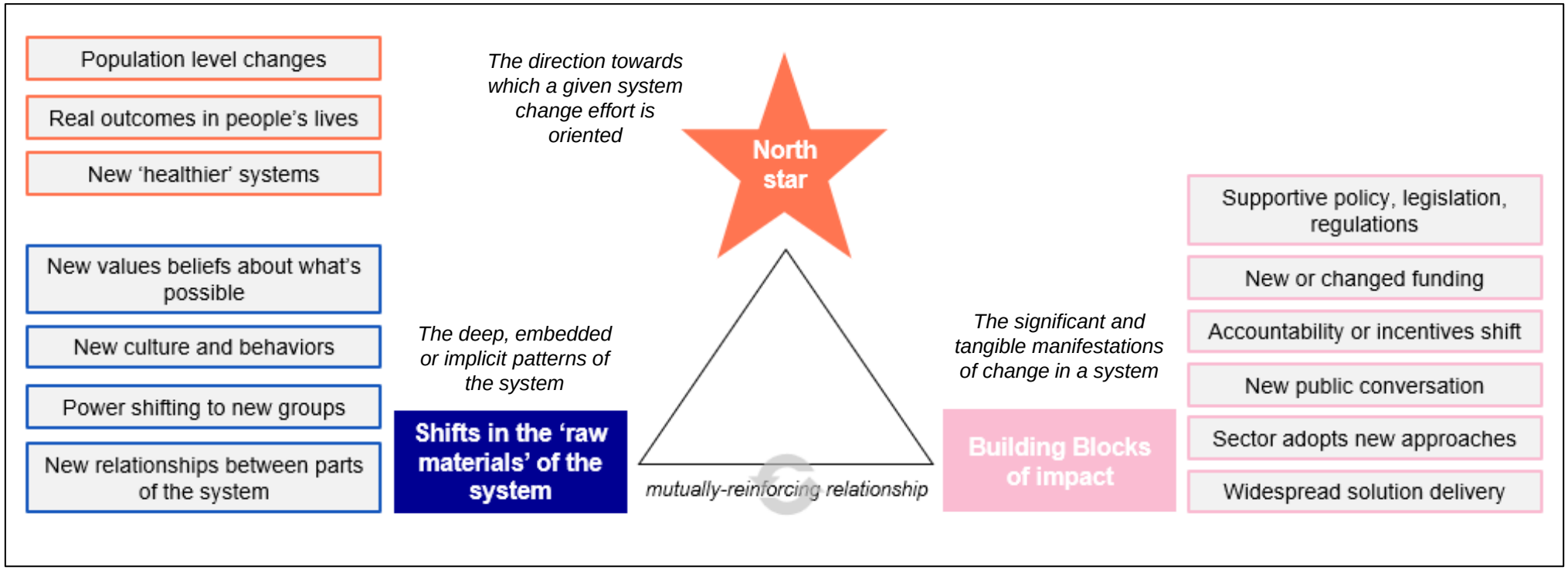

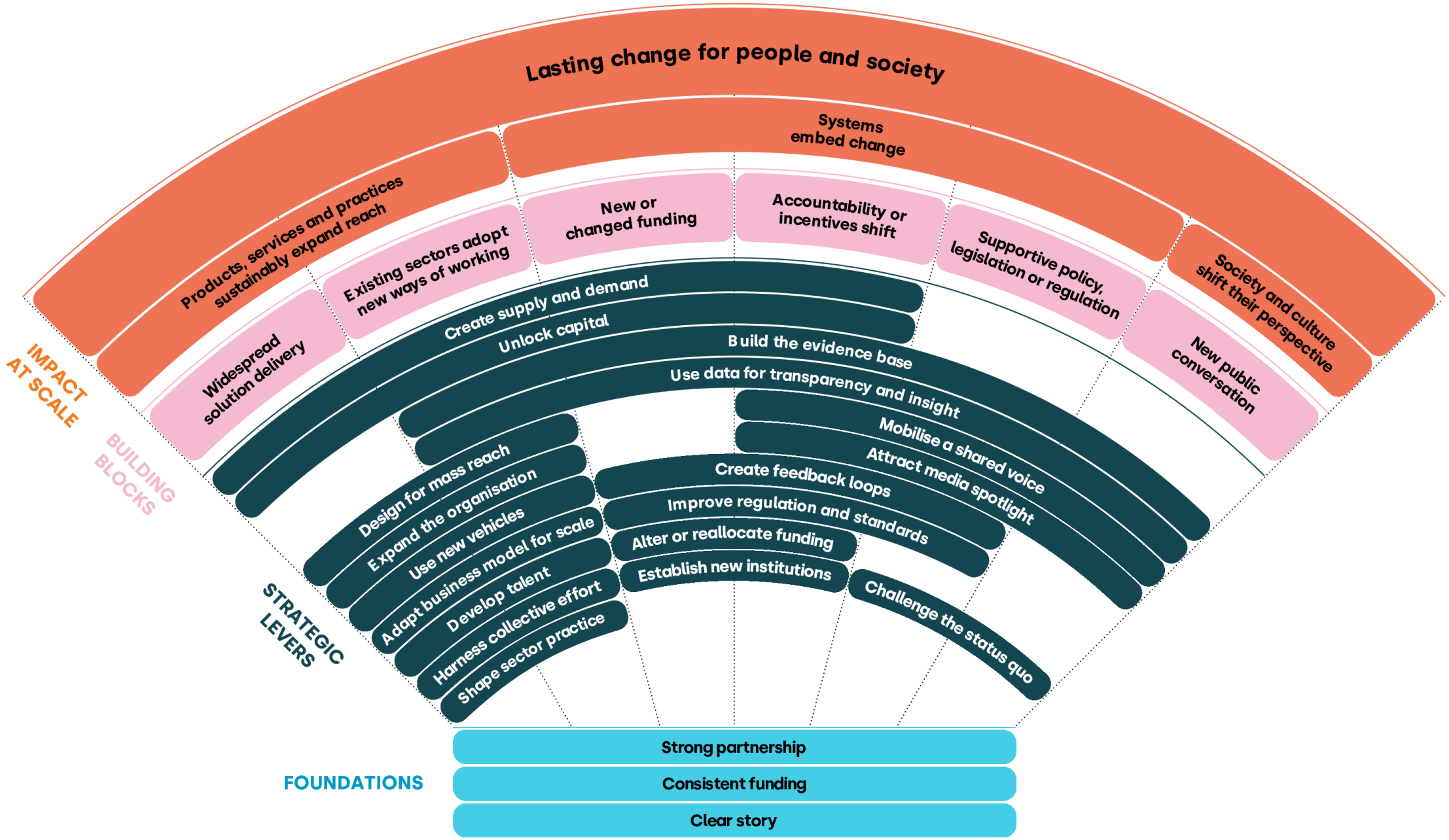
Lasting change for people and society
Systems embed change
Products, services and practices sustainably expand reach
Existing sectors adopt new ways of working
New or changed funding
Accountability or incentives shift
Supportive policy, legislation or regulation
Society and culture shift their perspective
Widespread solution delivery
New public conversation
IMPACT AT SCALE
BUILDING BLOCKS
Create supply and demand
Unlock capital
Build the evidence base
Use data for transparency and insight
Mobilise a shared voice
Attract media spotlight
Create feedback loops
Improve regulation and standards
Alter or reallocate funding
Establish new institutions
Challenge the status quo
Design for mass reach
Expand the organisation
Use new vehicles
Adapt business model for scale
Develop talent
Harness collective effort
Shape sector practice
STRATEGIC LEVERS
FOUNDATIONS
Strong partnership
Consistent funding
Clear story