



# THE RESEARCH THE ROAD MAP



SAMEA and DPME  
Initiated DFID  
Funded  
August 2015

# Design and Purpose of the Research

- Aims to inform a roadmap that provides a way forward for professionalising evaluation in South Africa



# The Study

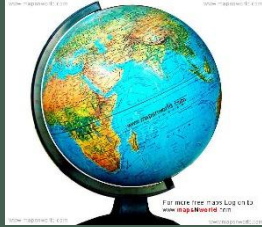
- Managed by DPME and SAMEA
- Funded by DFID
- General literature review, comparator/benchmarking lit review and semi-structured interviews with 10 countries, situational analysis lit review and semi-structured interviews (from a list of 20-30) interview to 73 (63) and a survey (101)
- Open forums (four), the evaluation café, electronic discussions with those members of the SAMEA list-serve
- Element of mentoring (two new/emerging evaluators on the team)

# Similarities with the Context



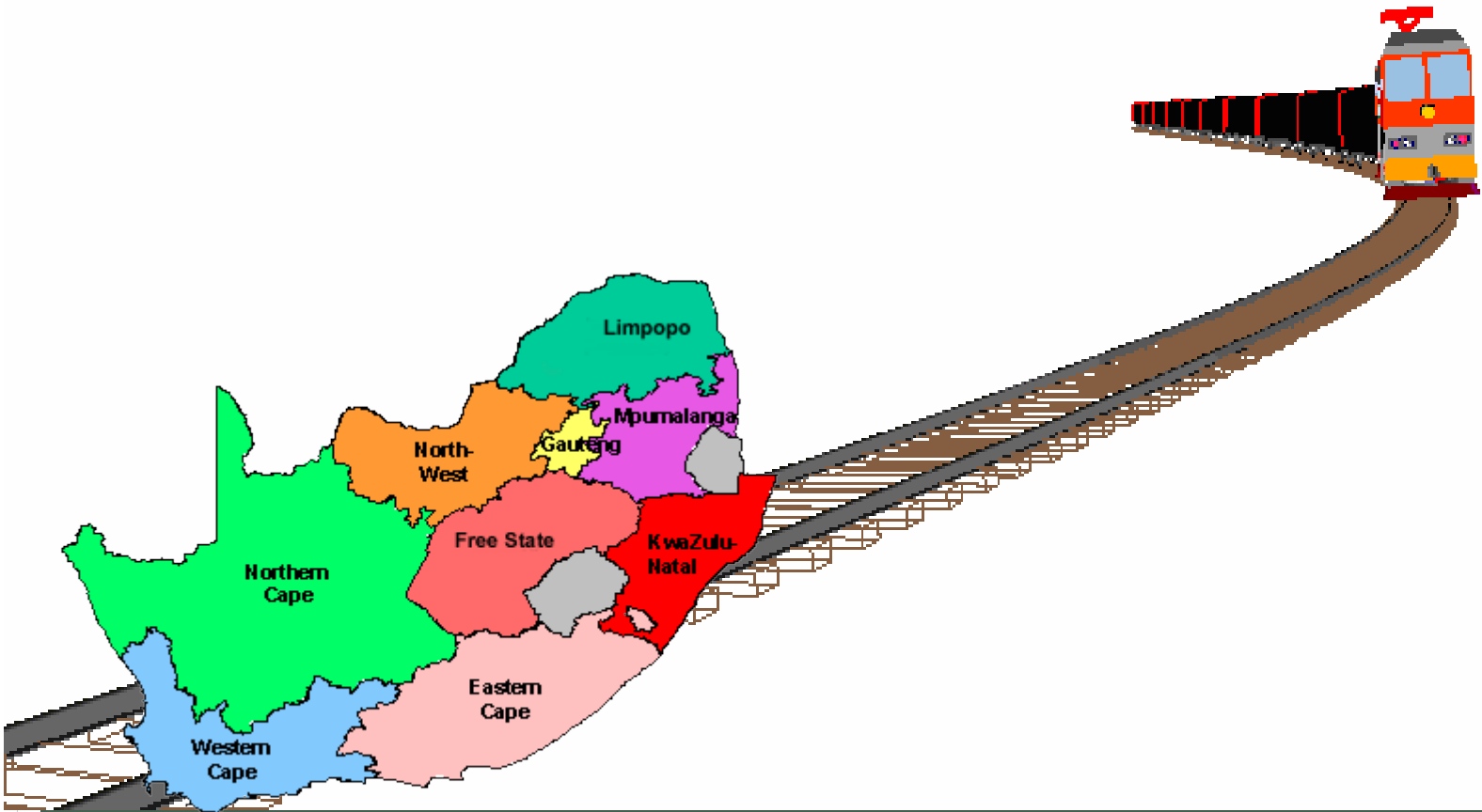
- Evaluation profession has developed as a field of practice rather than a traditional academic discipline (King et al, 2008).
- Evaluation professionals have a mixed history of educational and experiential backgrounds and this has led to various understandings of what is a 'competent' evaluator.

# The



# Context

- Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association (**anzea**)
- IDEAS
- UNAIDS
- Canada (CES)- **Credentialing**
- Japanese Evaluation Society (JES)- **Certification for education**
- South Africa (DPME) – **Selection and government focus**
- German Evaluation Society DEG EVAL
- EES and UKES (VEPR) --- **Development not designation**



# Professionalise-Professionalism

The definition used during the research focused on professionalism; this refers to the competence or skill expected of a professional

# Is Evaluation Moving Towards Being a Professionalisation in South Africa?

Some characteristics or  
criteria

Source: <http://ieg.worldbank.org/blog/professionalizing-evaluation>.

Posted by Kate McKegg on Wednesday, April 29, 2015 - 19:56).



- **A specialized and unique body of knowledge, theory and skills**

There needs to be access, for those wishing to gain entry to the profession, to high quality training and education; as well as exposure to practice, and the ability to gain mastery of techniques and skills in order to develop the requisite professional expertise to practice.

***Do evaluators have access to this in South Africa? Mostly***

- **A profession is also distinguished by having an ethical disposition**

It sees itself as having a wider responsibility and orientation towards the public interest; i.e., it is not simply there to protect and further its own interests.

***Is this evident in South Africa? No.***

- **A profession also has a high status credential**

At the very least a graduate degree from an accredited tertiary education organization; as well as some form of professional designation or licensing that requires the testing of performance.

***This is true in only a very few places in the world currently.***

***Should we aim for this?***

- **A profession has professional autonomy**

Control over the recruitment, training, admission, credentialing and licensing of its professionals. It also has control over the guidelines, ethical standards, administrative rules, quality assurance and disciplinary processes of those in the profession.

***This is not the case for evaluation.***

- **Those in a profession should also demonstrate a loyalty to the occupational group**

They are expected to dem. collegial behavior and occupational solidarity, as well as a visible and practical commitment to ongoing professional development as part of their responsibility for the quality of their work. The existence of a profess. assoc. representing these interests is also a key characteristic of a profession.

***Is this happening in South Africa? YES***

- **A profession has a relatively high degree of prestige and status**

There is demand for professional services; there are substantial monetary rewards, respectability and a recognized place in the upper regions of the occupational ladder for those in the profession.

***Is this happening in South Africa? To some extent***

# Key Findings

# Theory 1

- Poor evaluation -- evaluations not being usable, lacking a research methodology, lacking an evaluation approach, or all three.
- Anyone can call themselves an evaluator, for many commissioners it is not clear what constitutes a “good” evaluator, and there is “plenty of work”, all leading to very little incentive to strengthen evaluation knowledge and skills.

# Theory 2

- Poor evaluation -- evaluations not being usable, lacking a research methodology, lacking an evaluation approach, or all three.
- Anyone can call themselves an evaluator. This most often leads to “shoddy evaluation”, research masquerading as evaluation, and often the lack of a valuing framework; people just give their opinion. This leads to people not finding evaluation useful and lowering the credibility of evaluation, evaluative processes and ultimately those that refer to themselves as evaluators.

# Why Strengthen Evaluators---Why the Road to Professionalisation?

Many respondents stated that the likelihood of poor evaluations will increase.

As the demand side continues to grow, the likelihood of more people calling themselves evaluators to obtain contracts will increase.

# Why Strengthen Evaluators---Why the Road to Professionalisation?

For a country that is still developing, where service levels are often poor, and funding is finite, good evaluation can offer much needed empirical information and useful processes with which to make informed management decisions. Capable evaluators can fulfil an important societal role, while incompetent ones can be a detriment.

# Why Strengthen Evaluators---Why the Road to Professionalisation?

In 2015, South Africa faces two related challenges:

(1) poor quality evaluations and

(2) a dearth of quality evaluators.

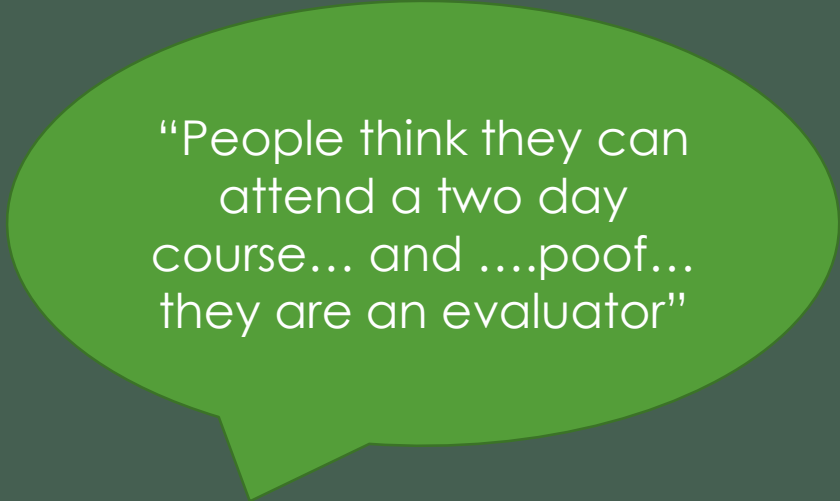


# What Should Evaluators Bring to an Evaluator Process

- Practicing evaluations listed three: (1) research skills, (2) evaluation methodology and (3) 'softer' skills.
- Writing skills, communication, political "savvy", working independently and contextual knowledge.
- These data also strongly indicate that reaching agreement on thematic areas for basic knowledge and skills necessary to be an evaluator, are close at hand.

# Opportunities to Improve Knowledge and Skills

- Opportunities exist – short, long, degree, internet, in person, conferences, books, journals...
- Challenge in South Africa? Short courses imply that evaluation is not difficult, and one can learn to be an evaluator in two days, or even two weeks.



“People think they can attend a two day course... and ....poof... they are an evaluator”

# Setting Standards/Criteria

“An evaluator should understand how to gather data and use that to make a finding and make a value judgement and then to develop a recommendation and I think being able to sustain that throughout the conceptual pathway is a rare talent...to make a judgement on something is a big ask.”

# Setting Standards or Criteria

## Have standards

- Min. level of knowledge, skills (and attitudes) and experience that any person practicing evaluation should have
- Agree to an ethical statement
- Min of Masters degree or RPL equivalent in a research

## Discussion Points

- What would KSA be based upon (competency crosswalk)
- Who would set this, and the levels, and who would assess this
- Those that will likely not meet min. standards will derail this process

# Some Arguments for Standards and Criteria

- Evaluation is highly complex and challenging, and the “bar should be set high.” Not everyone can be a doctor, professor or accountant---not everyone should be an evaluator
- Good evaluation has an important role to play in improving South Africa’s poor service delivery.
- Poorly implemented processes and products “eat away at the credibility of evaluators...and people do not value evaluations because they are not finding them valuable.”

# No Standards- Anyone Can Practice

“Do it in a way that people are not excluded...if people think they are excluded...there will be pushback...[we need a process where] everyone can enter and feel better about themselves”

# Not Setting Standards

## Do Not Have Standards

- Mentoring programme
- Internships
- Self Study – expert group identify gaps

## Discussion Points

- Who is doing the mentoring? Who qualifies? How is that paid? (Small core group-perpetuate elitism/privilege)
- Who identifies emerging evaluators and the more experienced ones? Who qualifies? Who sets what expectations? (Power and privilege)
- Who identifies experts? Who qualifies? How are they paid?

# Not Setting Standards

## Competency list

- Competency list for guidance to anyone that chooses to use it

## Discussion Points

- Challenge is in use—meant to be used by evaluator or academics
- Limit who is hired, could lower quality
- Boundaries on evaluation
- Who updates that list?



# The Irony?



What at first looks like the most inclusive process (no standards or criteria) is most likely the process that will support power and privilege

# Other Considerations for the Road Map

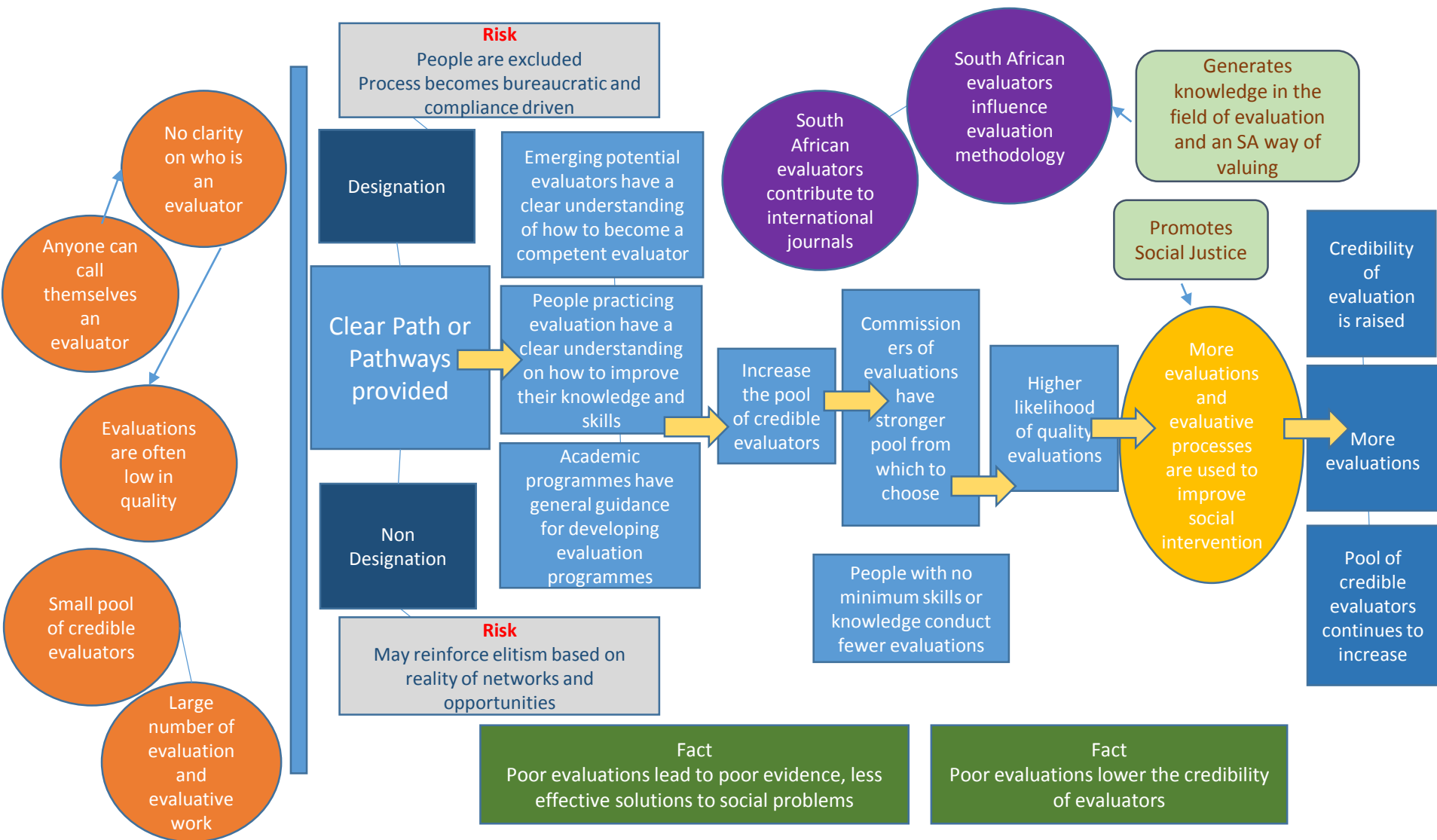
- Separate road maps/development for those that only monitor than those that only evaluate, and those that do both (SAMEA—what's in a name!)
- This process aims to strengthen evaluators, not public managers (though they benefit by having access to stronger evaluators)
- Having ethical standards as a next basic step

# Who Should Lead the Process?

Need to  
strengthen

The SAMEA  
Board is not  
constituted  
with  
evaluators

**S**AMEA



# Key Point



Poor quality evaluations bring poor quality evidence, and damage the field's credibility. There is a strong need for generating credible evidence to understand which social development programmes work, which do not, and how to improve them. Sub-standard evaluations (and evaluators) will not deliver this evidence.

# Key Point



The research identified the need for strengthening evaluators and evaluation. It will be foundational and incremental steps that embrace the realities of South Africa's context that will catapult South Africa forward.



# Key Point



Government will have approximately 200 evaluations in the next 5 years

Civil society—with over 200 000 NPOs—will at a minimum require evaluation services for (conservatively) 2000 in the next 5 years

# Key Point



- Not one respondent suggested that credentials, mentoring, or any other process would guarantee a 'good' evaluation. Contrarily, most respondents who engaged in this conversation clearly acknowledged that having minimum knowledge and skills (whether credentialed or self-applied) would help "root out the bottom feeders."
- Common sense however suggests that, for example, if one person has research skills and another person does not, the one with research skills is more likely to have empirical results.



# Key Point



South Africa is professionalising evaluation; we have an Association, biannual M&E conference, internet blogs on evaluation by South Africans, degrees in M&E, and SAMEA members that publish in evaluation journals and books.

There is a plethora of routes to learn about evaluation. For those that want to improve their evaluation knowledge, the opportunities exist. What is missing is an agreed upon understanding of what defines an evaluator in South Africa, and a process or pathway on how to become a more competent one.

# Key Point



- The Road Map **suggests** what South Africa is ready for now, and builds a foundation that will support professionalising evaluation; a robust SAMEA Board and Secretariat, and strong, knowledgeable, competent evaluators.
- The Road Map is rooted in empirical research and a belief that knowledgeable and passionate evaluators will form the core on which to ensure strong evaluation. It is these competent evaluators who can support a system that strengthens other emerging evaluators, and at the same time provide donors, foundations, nonprofits, civil society, and government with support to strengthen their own evaluation processes and systems.
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# Key Points

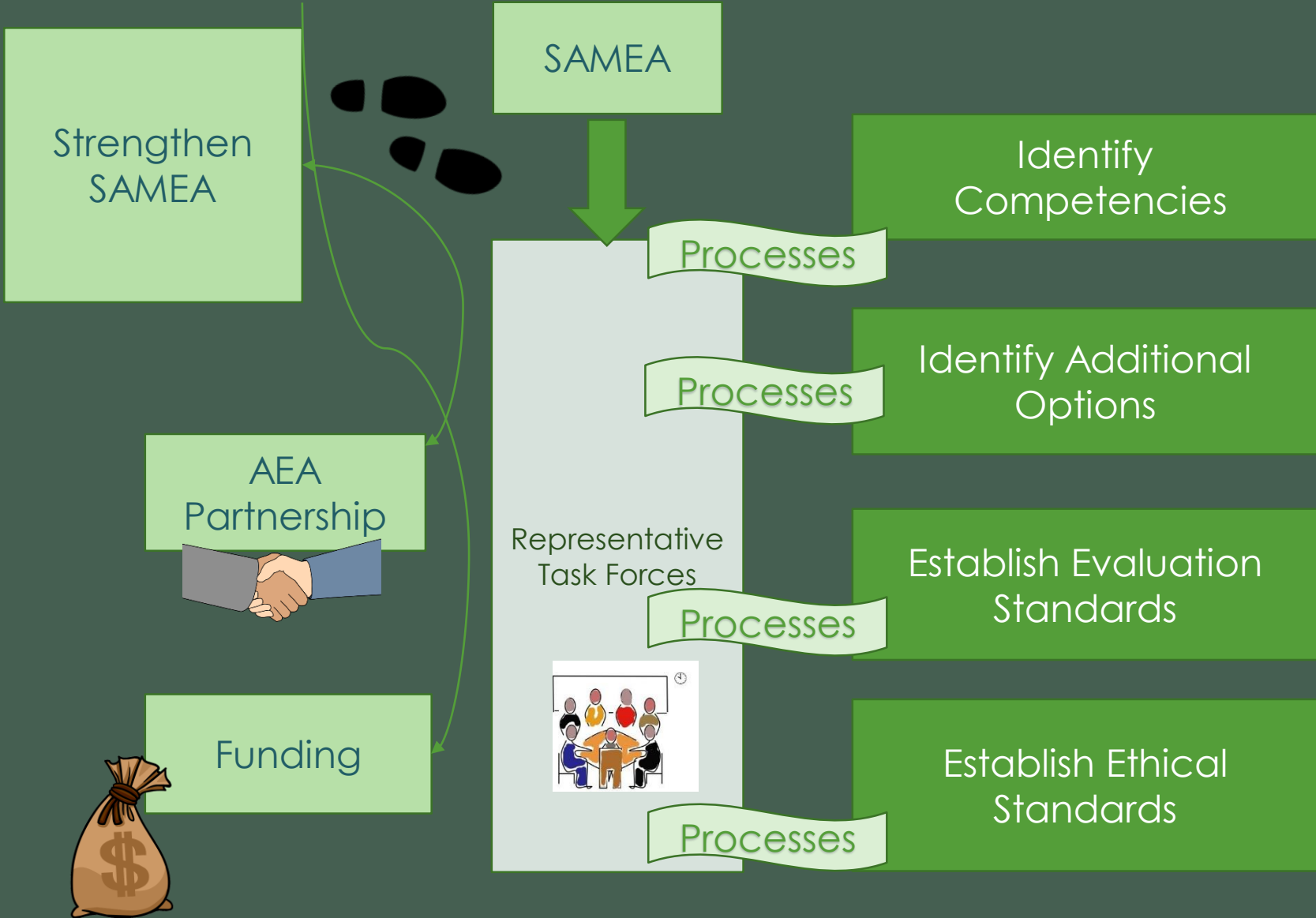
It is the beginning of a long and  
exhilarating road that leads to  
evaluations that bring  
about social justice.

**0-3**



# Last Thought

We used processes to ensure that we gave equal voice to those who were the loudest, to those who whispered, and to those who initially remained quiet.



# The Road to Professionalisation or...The Road not Taken?

Donna Podems

Cheryl Goldstone

Lungiswa Zibi

Liezel De Waal

Daleen Botha