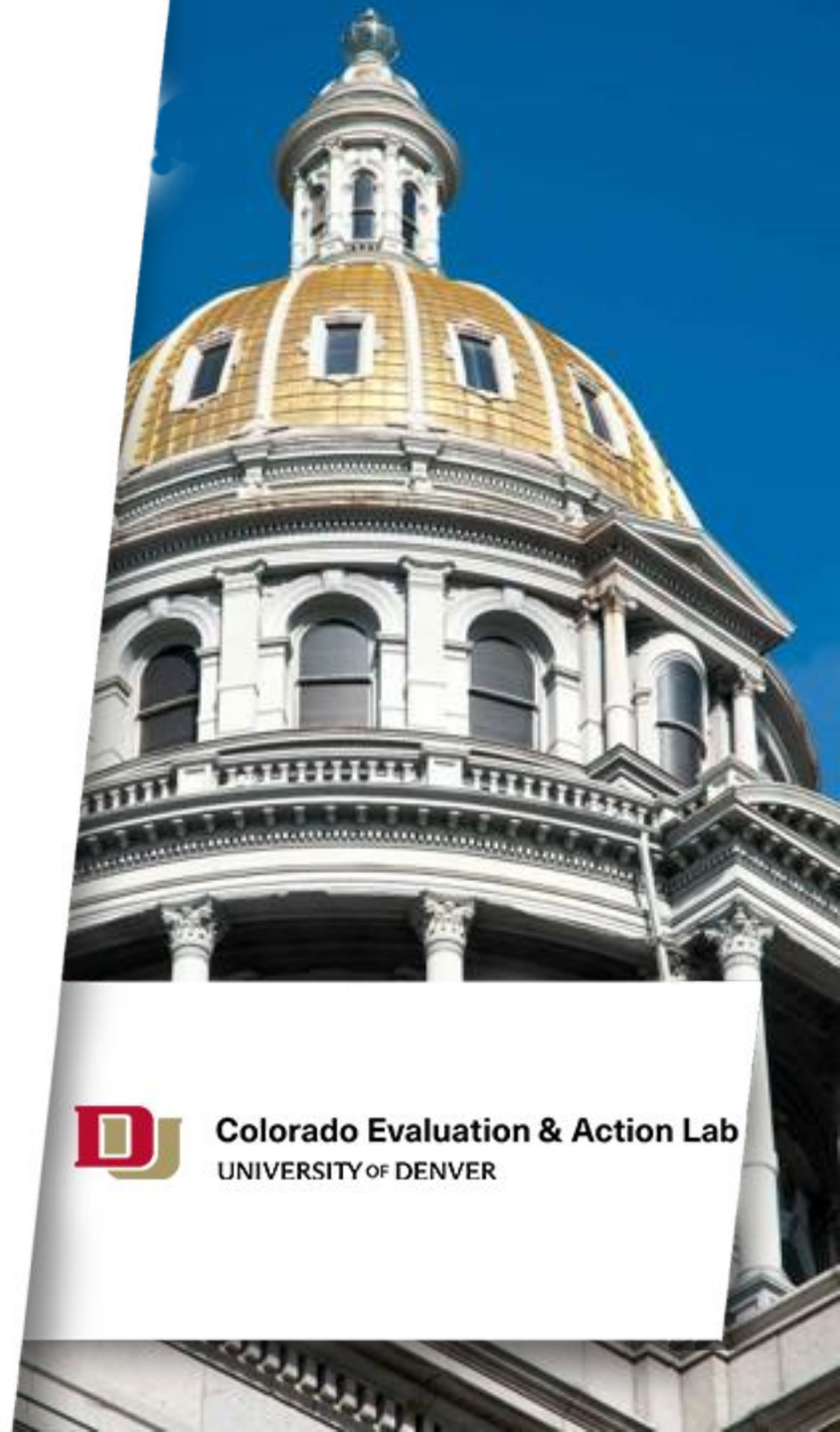


# Advancing Evidence-Based Decision Making in Colorado: A 5-Year Vision

Last updated: January 2026



Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab  
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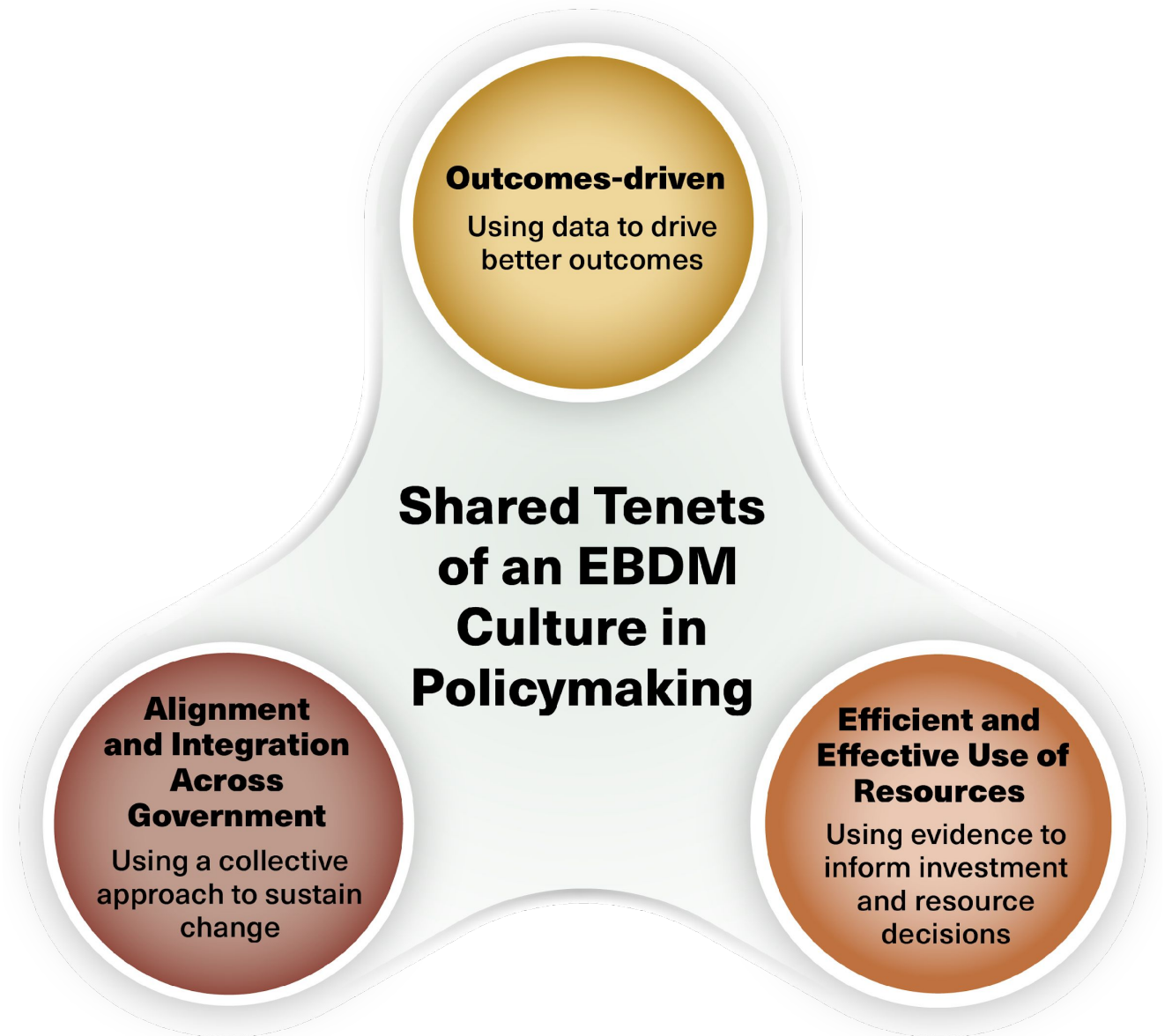
**Driving goal:** Understanding your role in Colorado's evolving Evidence-Based Decision Making (EBDM) culture.

### How we will achieve this:

- Review Colorado's 5-year vision for EBDM in state government
- Introduce the implementation strategy for bringing that vision to life

## Origins of the 5-Year Vision

- Accepted vision and framework for Colorado's approach to EBDM
- Build on state's strong foundation of evidence-based practice and policy
- Co-developed with executive and legislative branches as well as non-governmental partners



# Evidence-Based Decision Making (EBDM)



## Core Principles

- The better the research evidence, the more confident we are in our decisions
- Research evidence alone is never sufficient to make decisions

**EBDM is not the same as  
“evidence-based practice”**

**EBDM is informed by reach and access considerations.**



# Measuring Success

## Five Defining Features of an EBDM Culture

A **common understanding** of what EBDM is and how to achieve it.

**Commit to and consistently participate in** agreed-upon EBDM strategies.

Invest **resources, skills, and time** necessary to acquire, make meaning of, and apply the best available evidence.

**Systemic and robust** use of research evidence.

**Engage in an iterative process of using existing research evidence and generating new research evidence.**

## Our Conceptual Logic is:

**If**

Colorado builds a common understanding of EBDM in state government

**And**

EBDM-supportive processes and resources exist and are used locally *within* state agencies

**And**

EBDM-supporting structures are in place globally *across* state government

**Then**

Effective use and generation of research evidence can become widespread and sustained

**To Achieve**

Smart state investments and improved outcomes for Coloradans

# Four Strategic Goals



**1**

**Build a Shared Understanding of EBDM in State Government**



**2**

**Align and Accelerate EBDM in the State Budgeting Process**



**3**

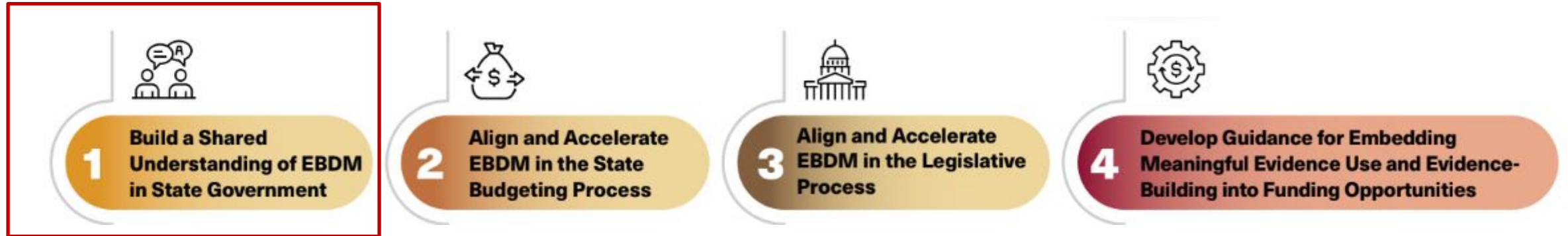
**Align and Accelerate EBDM in the Legislative Process**



**4**

**Develop Guidance for Embedding Meaningful Evidence Use and Evidence-Building into Funding Opportunities**

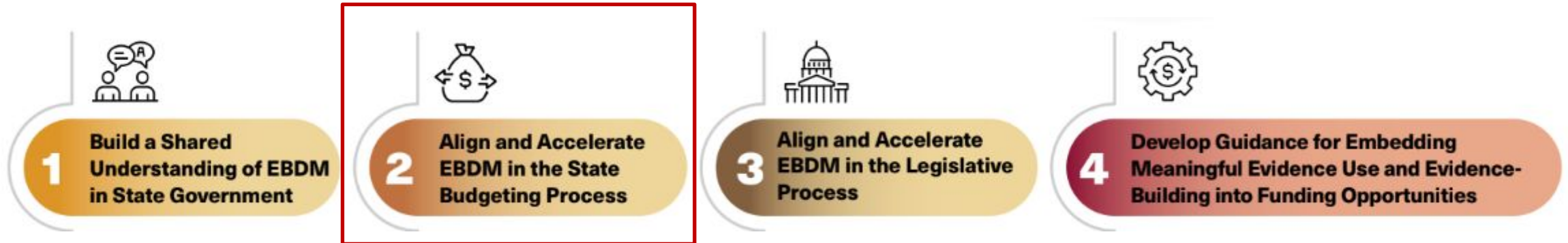
# Goal 1: Build a Shared Understanding of EBDM in State Government



Shared mental model for EBDM in state government.

- **EBDM Trainings** (like this one)
- [Glossary](#) of EBDM-related terms
- **EBDM Ambassadors**

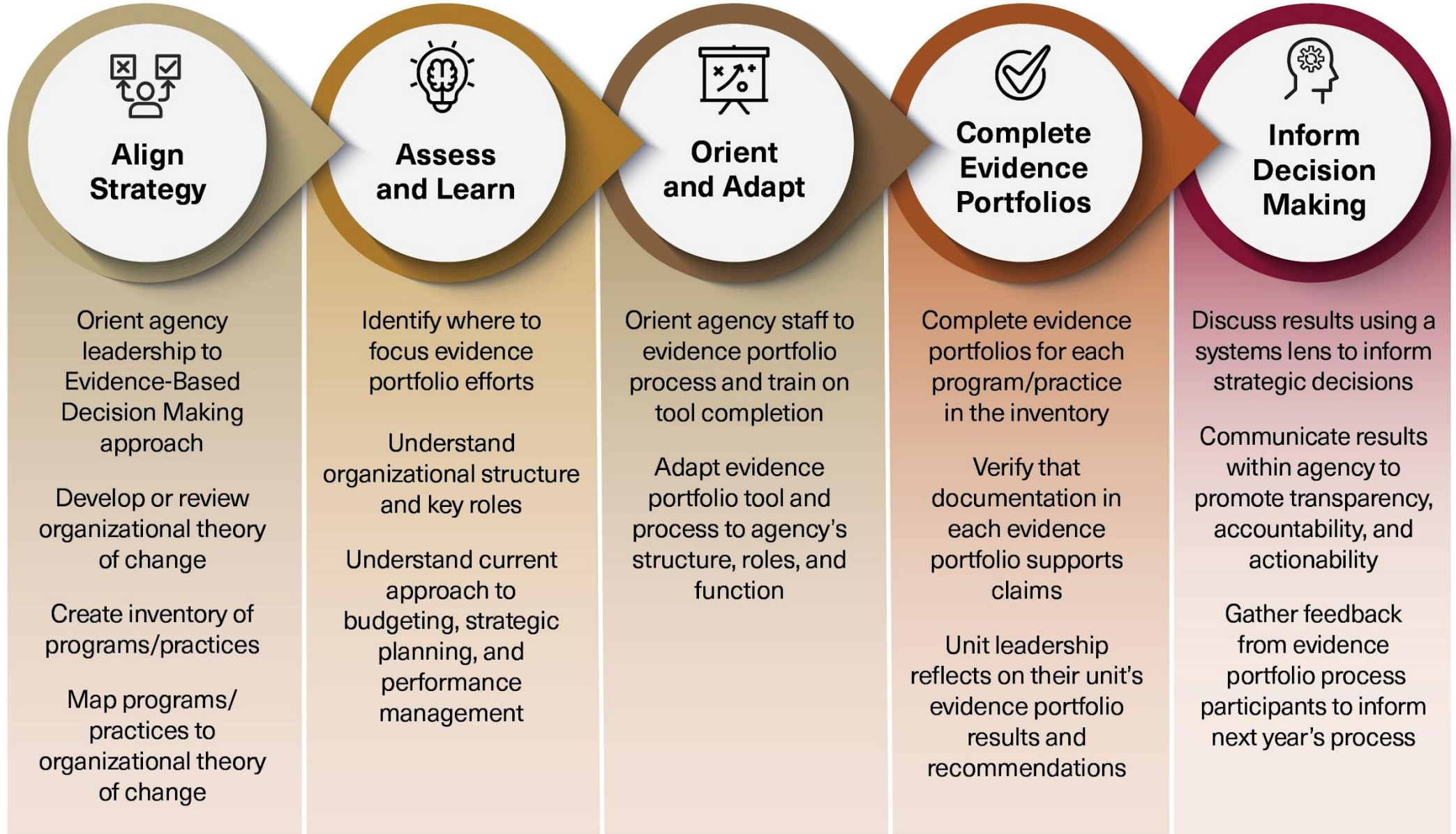
## Goal 2: Align and Accelerate EBDM in the State Budgeting Process



### Tools to bring EBDM into budgeting process

- [Evidence Portfolios](#) for State Agencies
- Align Evidence Portfolios with Budget Instructions
- Build on the Evidence Review Process of JBC Staff for [HB24-1428](#)

# Evidence Portfolio Process



## EBDM Domain: Best Available Research Evidence

Criteria	Documentation <i>Links and/or short narratives</i>	1 (Does not exist)	2 (Present, needs improvement)	3 (Present, adequate)	4 (Present, exemplary)
1. Has a clear theory of change (or conceptual framework) for driving change.  <b>Step 1.</b>					
2. Has materials to support basic delivery and replicability (i.e., expansion with fidelity to the model).  <b>Step 1.</b>					
3. Systems are in place for <u>routinely</u> collecting data on outputs and relevant outcomes.  <b>Step 2.</b>					
4. Processes are in place to leverage routinely collected output data to inform program improvement, fidelity, and learning.  <b>Step 2.</b>					

## EBDM Domain: Community Needs and Implementation Context

*This is about community/constituent needs and implementation context (external/outward facing).*

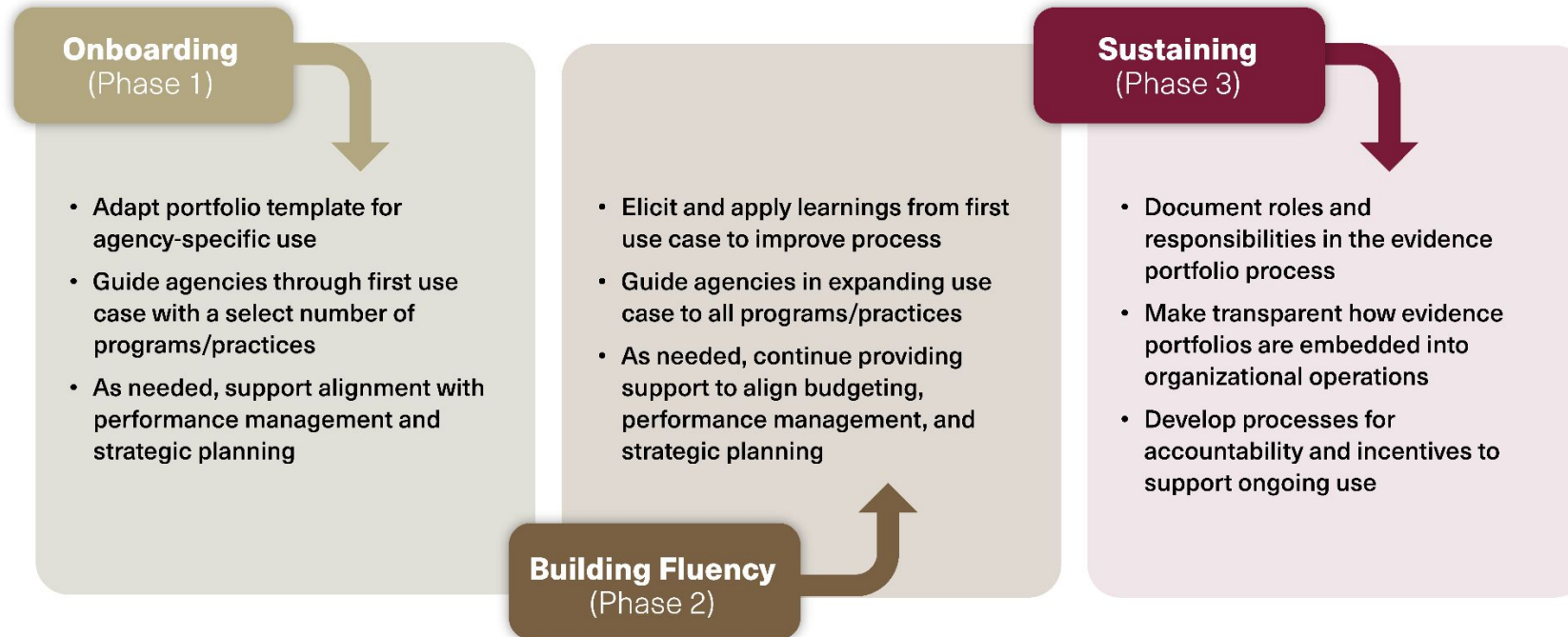
Criteria	Documentation <i>Links and/or short narratives</i>	1 (Does not exist)	2 (Present, needs improvement)	3 (Present, adequate)	4 (Present, exemplary )
1. <u>State-level staff</u> have the skills, resources, and desire to continue implementation (workforce). <b>AND</b> <u>Local-level implementation partners</u> have the skills, resources/systems, and desire to continue implementation (workforce).  <i>Note: need both to get to a 4.</i>					
2. Has a strong administrative system in place to support continued delivery (infrastructure) at: a) the state level; and b) the local level.  <i>Note: need both to get to a 4.</i>					
3. Is aligned with family needs and community-identified priorities.					

## EBDM Domain: Decision-Maker Expertise

*This is about professional viewpoints and perspectives (internal/inward facing)*

Criteria	Documentation <i>Links and/or short narratives</i>	1 (Does not exist)	2 (Present, needs improvement)	3 (Present, adequate)	4 (Present, exemplary)
1. Has internal agency leadership to champion the work into the future.					
2. The agency is uniquely situated to have ownership (i.e., another agency/organization could not absorb this).					
3. Is aligned with the organizational theory of change and division strategic goals. [insert link to strategic plan and organizational theory of change and make clear where it shows up]					
4. Is aligned with agency priorities and/or the agency's WIGs for the Governor's Office (Wildly Important Goals). [insert link to WIGs and make clear where it shows up]					

# Agency Pipeline for the Evidence Portfolio Process



## Goal 3: Align and Accelerate EBDM in the Legislative Process



Provide General Assembly with EBDM tools for the legislative process.

- [Cue Card](#) for SMART Act Hearings
- Legislative Hearing [Cue Card](#)
- Guidance for Legislators for [Program Evaluation](#)
- Guidance for Legislators for [State-Funded Grant Programs](#)

## Goal 4: Develop Guidance for Embedding Meaningful Evidence Use and Evidence Building into Funding Opportunities



Help philanthropic and state funders create expectations for using data in grant programs

- Funder-Grantee Partnership to use data for learning

# Establishing a Coordinating Entity for the EBDM Strategy

1. Holds the shared EBDM vision and strategy
2. Coordinates and prioritizes EBDM activities
3. Helps align roles to responsibilities to EBDM structure
4. Co-develops reusable tools and processes for EBDM implementation
5. Collaborates with external research partners to build rigorous research evidence
6. Promotes EBDM sustainability and cohesion across branches of government
7. Measures progress in developing and executing the EBDM vision over time



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Please reach out! We're here to help.

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