



# Fit for (Foster) Youth: Using Qualitative Research to Integrate Youth Priorities into Evaluation

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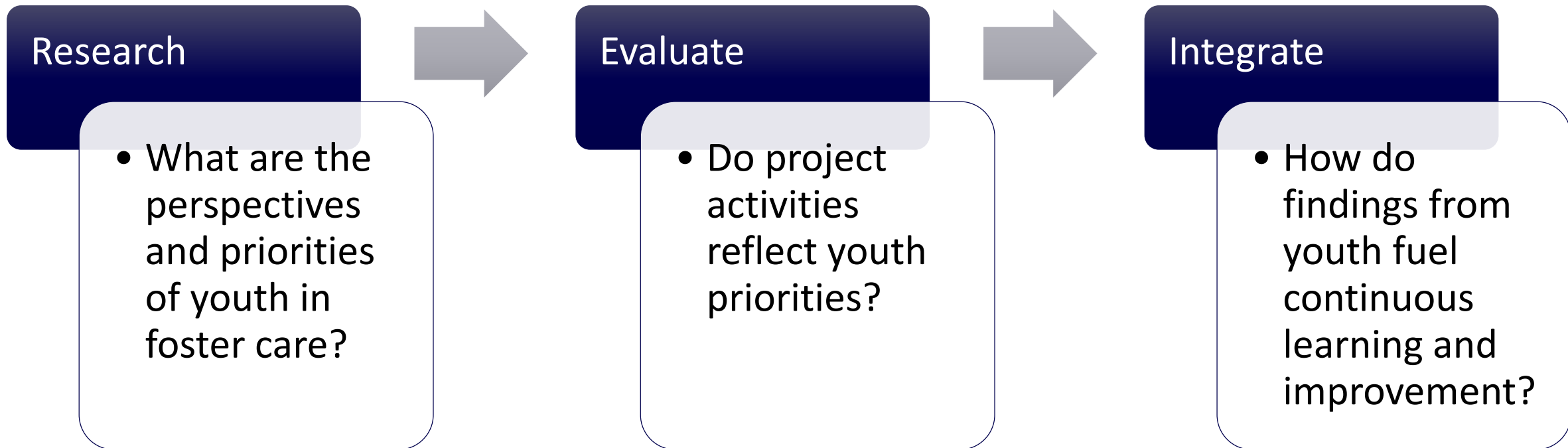


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## How can we ensure that evaluation reflects youth priorities?





## Breakout Session: Listening to youth

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- Please recall an “Oops” or “Aha!” moment that impacted how you integrate youth voice & priorities into your work.
- If you can’t think of a pivotal moment, please share a question you bring.
- Discuss:
  - **What challenges do we face in integrating youth priorities?**
  - **What opportunities does this integration present?**

## California Reproductive Health Equity Project (CA RHEP)

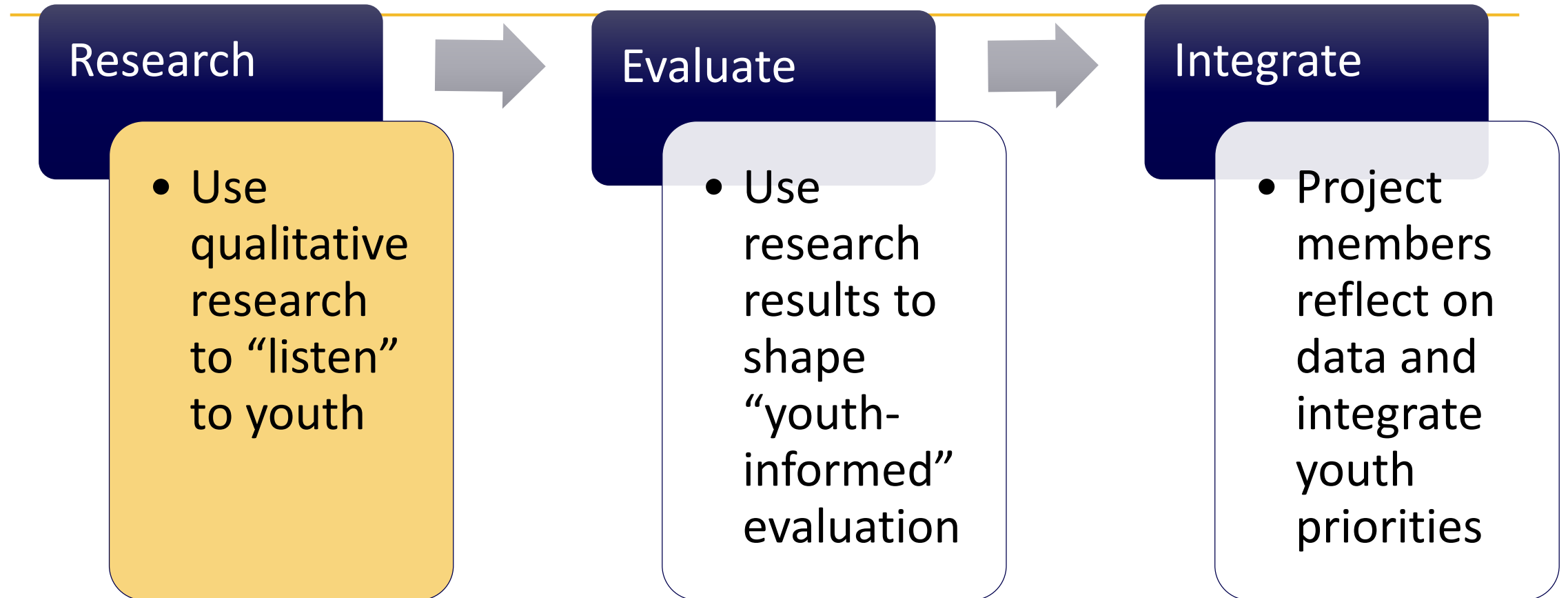
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- Improves RSH for youth in foster care in Los Angeles County
  - Largest foster care system in the US with over 20,000 children and youth
- Innovations in Online Sex Ed, Caregiver Support, Patient Navigation
- Strong Youth Advisory Board comprised of older youth in care (18-25 years old)
- Weak(ish) evidence base on youth in care (ages 12-18) and subsets of youth
- Rapid change in remote services—including youth access to Sex Ed & health services—prior to and during pandemic



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How do we know if  
innovations “fit” foster  
youth?





# Research with Youth in Care

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Process and Findings





## Our Process

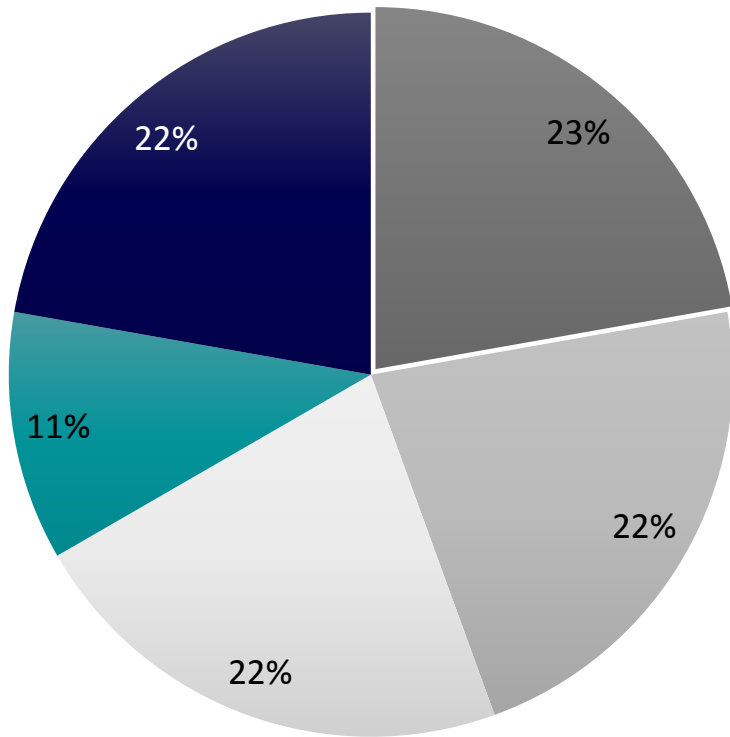
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- Designed a small scale qualitative study of youth in care (June 2021-Feb 2022)
- Adapted human-centered design activities + teamed with 3 Youth Researchers
- Invited LA County youth in foster care ages 13-18 for 90 minute interviews
- Included multiple steps to secure research and Court authorization
- 74 initial candidates, 9 interviewees, 3 key collaborators
- Follow-up survey sent to all initial candidates; 19 respondents

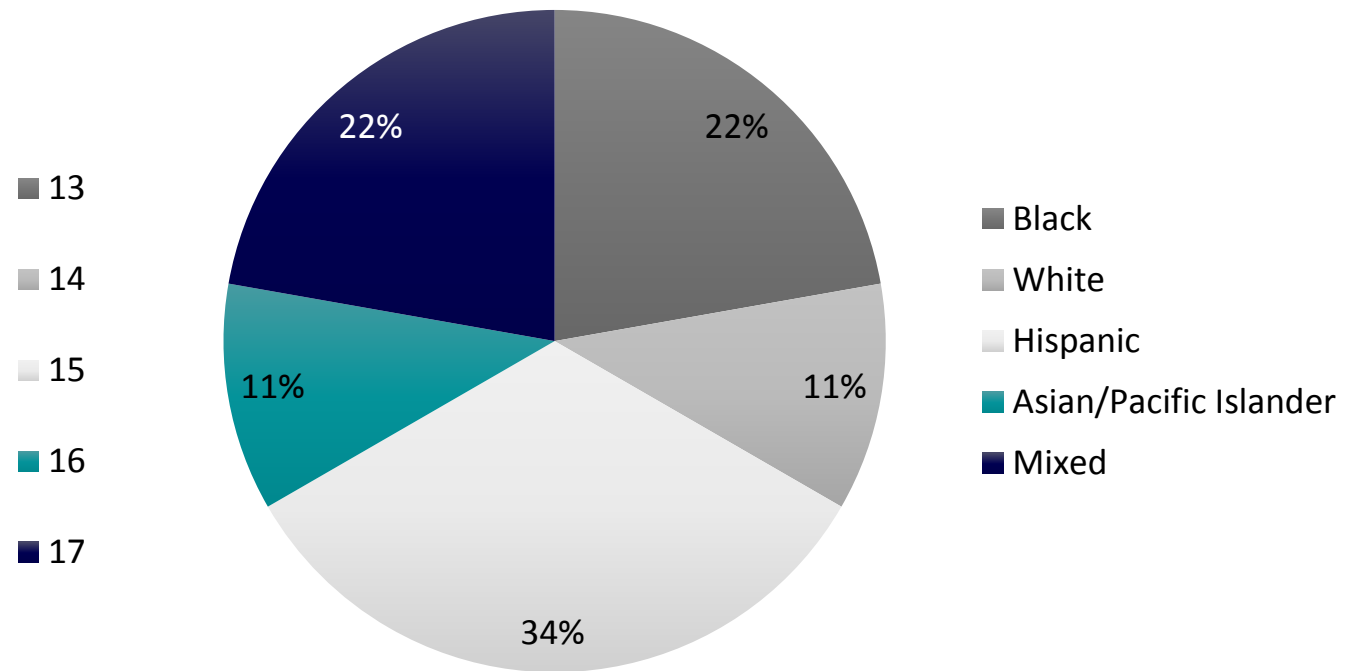




## Participant Age



## Ethnic or Racial Identification



## Top Challenges and Solutions

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### Top Challenges

- Younger youth had few experiences and were uncomfortable
- Reaching youth – consents, scheduling
- Data interpretation – small sample and wide-ranging themes

### Top Solutions

- Pivot to youth ages 15+
- Partnerships, using FOMO to sign up
- Pivot to mixed methods – 1) survey to rank top themes and 2) Youth Focus Group to review findings



## Findings: Three Themes Emerged

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### **Safety**

Options and Autonomy Matter

### **Vibe**

Relationships and Connection Matter

### **Effectiveness**

Getting What's Needed, When Needed



# Safety

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## Options and Autonomy Matter

Young people want to know adults will keep them safe. They want options and the time, space, and support to choose what is right for them. They want balanced perspectives on sex and their bodies so they can learn without fear.

“

I feel like Sex Ed kind of  
like scared me to death.

-15

”

“

You're safe, and making sure  
that the person is actually safe.

- 17

”

“  
There's a lot of girls who are very shy to talk about those things. So that just reassuring them that there's that it's okay, it's normal. To feel this way, it's normal to be scared, it's normal to have to go to the doctor and talk about your reproductive health.  
”

-17



# Vibe

## Relationships and Connection Matter

Positive vibe encompasses rapport and relationship-building. Vibe ensures youth comfort, normalizes youth inquiries and experiences, and results in youth sharing their experiences, questions, and concerns.

Positive vibe builds from safety to include comfort and connection. Several youth described "positive vibe" as a pre-requisite for youth to share their feelings or experience.

# Vibe

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“  
I feel like vibe energy. When you feel a person's vibe and energy, and you feel their vibe is bad or something, that's going to... make me not even want to talk... So I feel like it's all about vibe, energy, and connection.  
”

- 17

“  
She made me feel better. She didn't try to push me to talk about it. Like, she got to know me, you know? And, like, stuff I do.  
”

-15



# Vibe

“  
The adult could tell me about  
other foster youth who are  
going through the same thing as  
me.

-Survey Respondent  
”

“  
They're the ladies that are like,  
they're funny. They make things  
funny for like, oh, like so what are  
you doing? they'll be like, Oh, do  
you have a boyfriend? And like,  
they just make a joke...that makes  
it easier. And they'll share  
experiences with sex...

-17  
”



# Effectiveness

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## Getting what's needed, when needed

Youth identified "effectiveness" as receiving support to get services quickly and easily. Effectiveness encompasses timely access to services as well as resolution of problems or questions. Youth identified timing as key for sexual and reproductive health education. Many youth reported feeling like they learned about puberty after they started menstruating and sex before they became active.

# Effectiveness

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“  
Just being taken care of and have support. That's all. Because I feel like when a person feels supported and that they could talk to you about anything, then the experience would go by very smoothly and quick, and just easygoing.  
”

-15

“  
Because I felt like they did their job. They handled their business. They gave me my... They treated me for it and it was cool. [after STI treatment]  
”

-17

# Effectiveness

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“  
And she was noticing that I wasn't able to make certain appointments... I was like, I'm not able to make them because like, I don't have the ride. So she's like, oh, she's like, there's a service for that. And she got me connected to that service, like so quickly. So I would say yeah, like now that now that I'm doing it by myself, and like, I'm experiencing it, experiencing it on better terms.

-17

”



## Lessons Learned from Youth Research

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- Authorization processes to protect youth also limits their voice & our learning
- Time and labor intensive → if we knew then what we know now...
- Small sample limits our understanding of youth sub-groups
- Helps adult “check our assumptions” about youth priorities
- Illuminates how RSH service journey links (or not) to youths’ healing journey
- Helps evaluators understand project challenges (recruitment, availability, etc)

# Evaluate

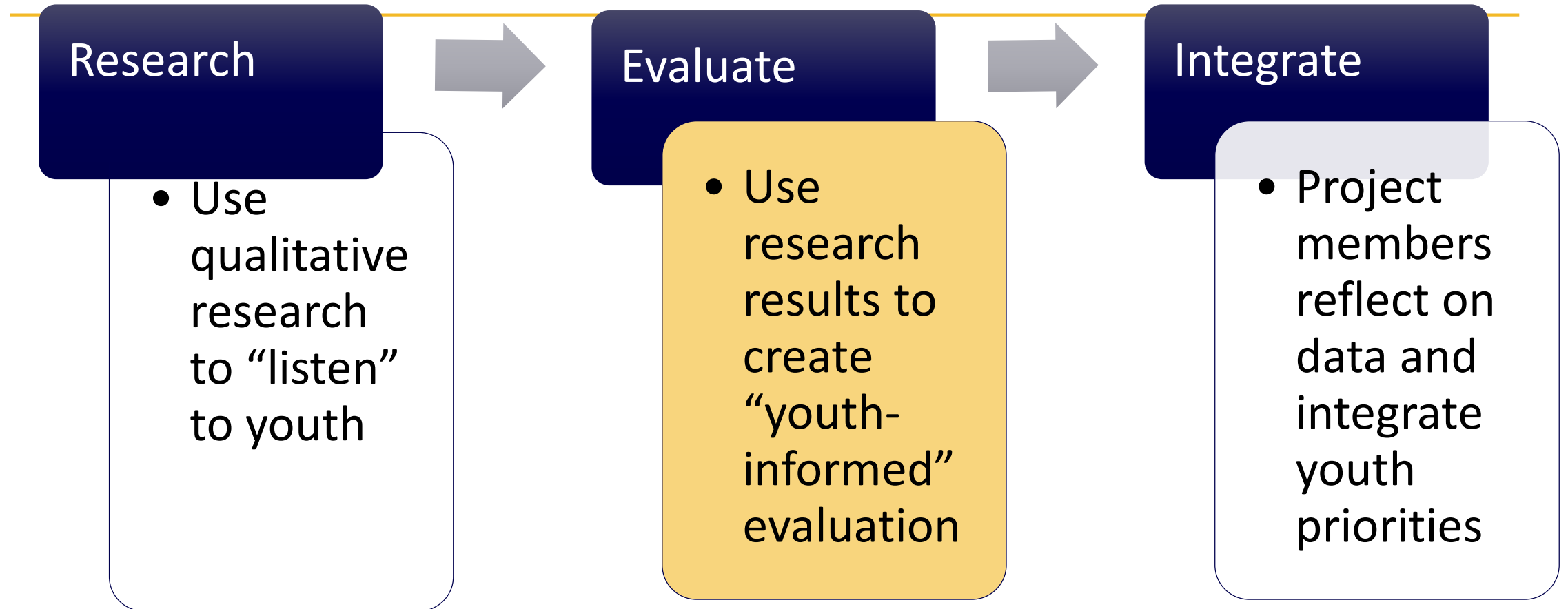
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Ensuring Evaluation Reflects Youth Priorities



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## Developed 2 Evaluation Tools Based on Research Findings

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- Annual Program “Fit for Youth” Self-Appraisal
  - Up to 5 participants from each partner organization
  - Participants score their organization’s innovation on 10 “Fit for Youth” Indicators
  - Participants provide evidence for their score
  - Team plans for improvement to increase score over next year
- “Fit for Youth” Youth Survey
  - Youth take 23 question survey about their experience with a project innovation
  - Rephrases Program “Fit for Youth” Indicators for simplicity and youth relevance



## Example: Partner Self-Appraisal (Safety)

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Indicator	Criteria	Evidence	Consolidated Score	Plan for Improvement
2. Does your organization create opportunities for youth to make suggestions or raise issues about the project or an adult within the project?				

## Partner Self-Appraisal – Sample response options

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Does your organization create opportunities for youth to make suggestions or raise issues about the project or an adult within the project?

### Program Self-Ratings

1.25 and 2.0

1= No mechanism exists for youth to provide feedback, raise suggestions, or make a complaint

2= Informal or ad hoc approaches to youth feedback (e.g. facilitator asks participants for suggestions for improvement)

3= As above plus organization creates and communicates to youth a process to solicit and respond to youth suggestion or complaint

4= As above and project-level mechanism for youth feedback or complaint with protocol and timelines for responding

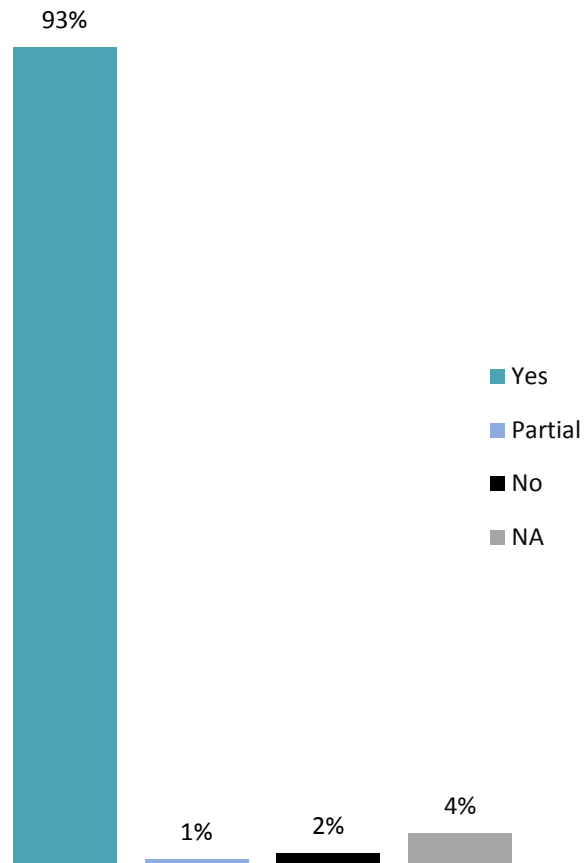


## Example: Youth Fit Survey (Safety)

Did this happen with the service/class you received?	Answer	Comments
The adult(s) explained how to raise an issue or complaint about an adult(s) I interact with through this project and/or the project itself.	Yes, No, Partial, N/A	
The adult(s) took steps to make sure I was safe.	Yes, No, Partial, N/A	

**Youth Ratings**  
22 of 22 Youth  
said "Yes"

## Fit-for-Foster Youth Survey Results



Twenty-two (22) youth from the last two pilots completed the Fit-for-Foster Youth Survey.

The vast majority of youth reported that the desired content and/or behavior was present. The average percentage of “Yes” responses that youth reported on their survey was 93%. There were only 3 “No” ratings for all items, across all youth raters.

## Fit-for-Foster Youth Survey Results

### SAFETY

They said everything shared stays with them and won't be talked more into unless we wanted to.

### VIBE

Zoe is super funny.

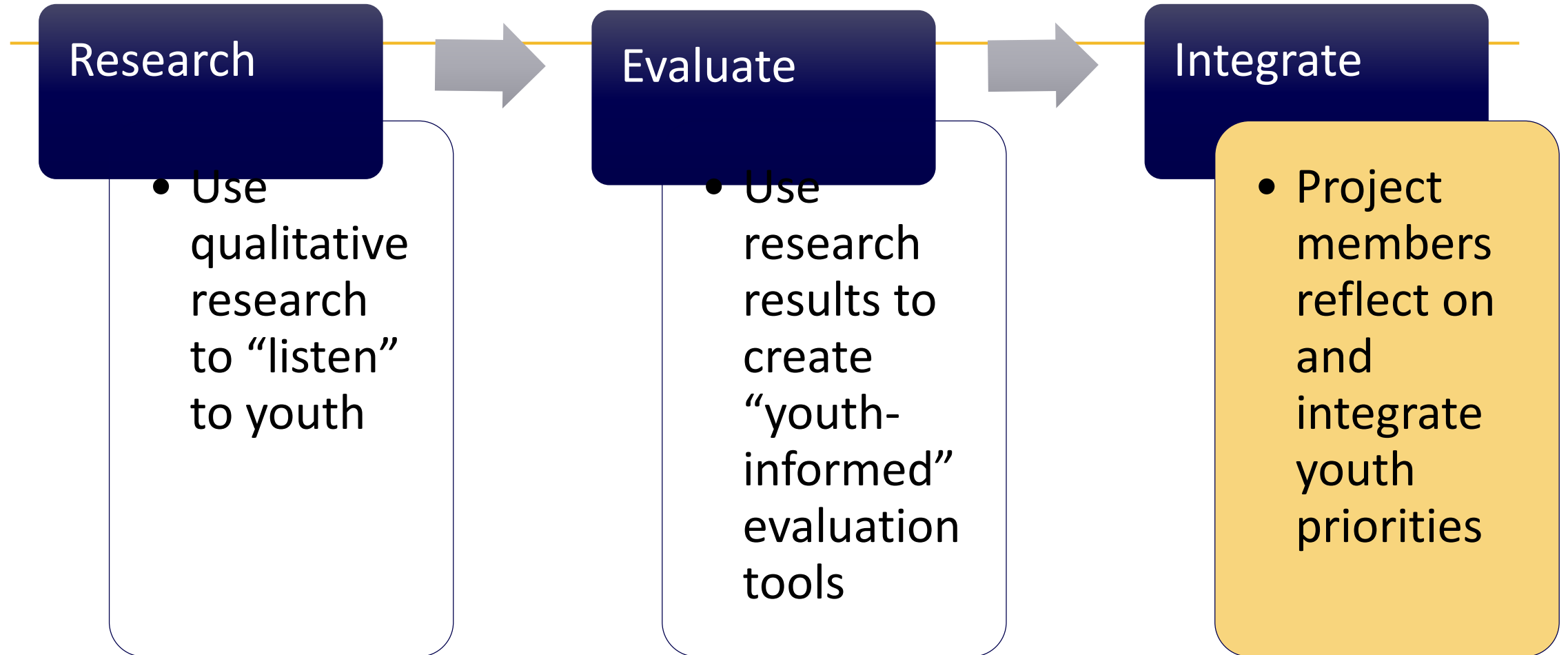
### EFFECTIVE

They told me everything I needed to learn.

## Lessons Learned from Evaluation

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- Innovations continue to evolve so tools must be flexible and generic
- Takes multiple people working across various versions to distill the questions
- Project members provided useful feedback
- Developing youth-survey tool was most challenging



# Integrate

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Embedding Youth Priorities within the Project



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## Embedding Youth Priorities into the Project

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- Project data + self-appraisal + youth survey= Youth-Centered Evaluation
- We listened deeply to youth to re-center our evaluation around their experience  
...but we're still on this journey!
- Youth experience is dynamic—rapid changes, particularly in online learning  
... we find “echoes” of our research results across project data
- Currently creating additional communication products to elevate research results



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## Questions, comments, suggestions?

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Thanks to the youth who participated in our research as well as our CA RHEP partners for their support, patience, and feedback.



## Youth Fit Themes – Ranking Survey

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Q1. What should adults who work with youth in foster care do when providing health and education services about sex, your body, puberty, and relationships?

Please rank from most to least important and add your own if we missed it.

- Be curious without making assumptions
- Create a positive “vibe”
- Make recommendations but don't push
- Help me get services easily and quickly
- Reassure me that what I’m going through is normal
- Tell me both the pros and cons about sex and relationships
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q2. You rated \_\_\_\_\_ as number #1 for what adults should know when they provide sex, body, puberty, relationship services or education.

Please give us an example so adults understand what that means to you. It could be a brief description of a situation you experienced or would like to experience. It could be something someone could do or say.