

Good Practice – Socio- economic Impact Significance Determination

Presented to MVEIRB EA Practitioners' Workshop
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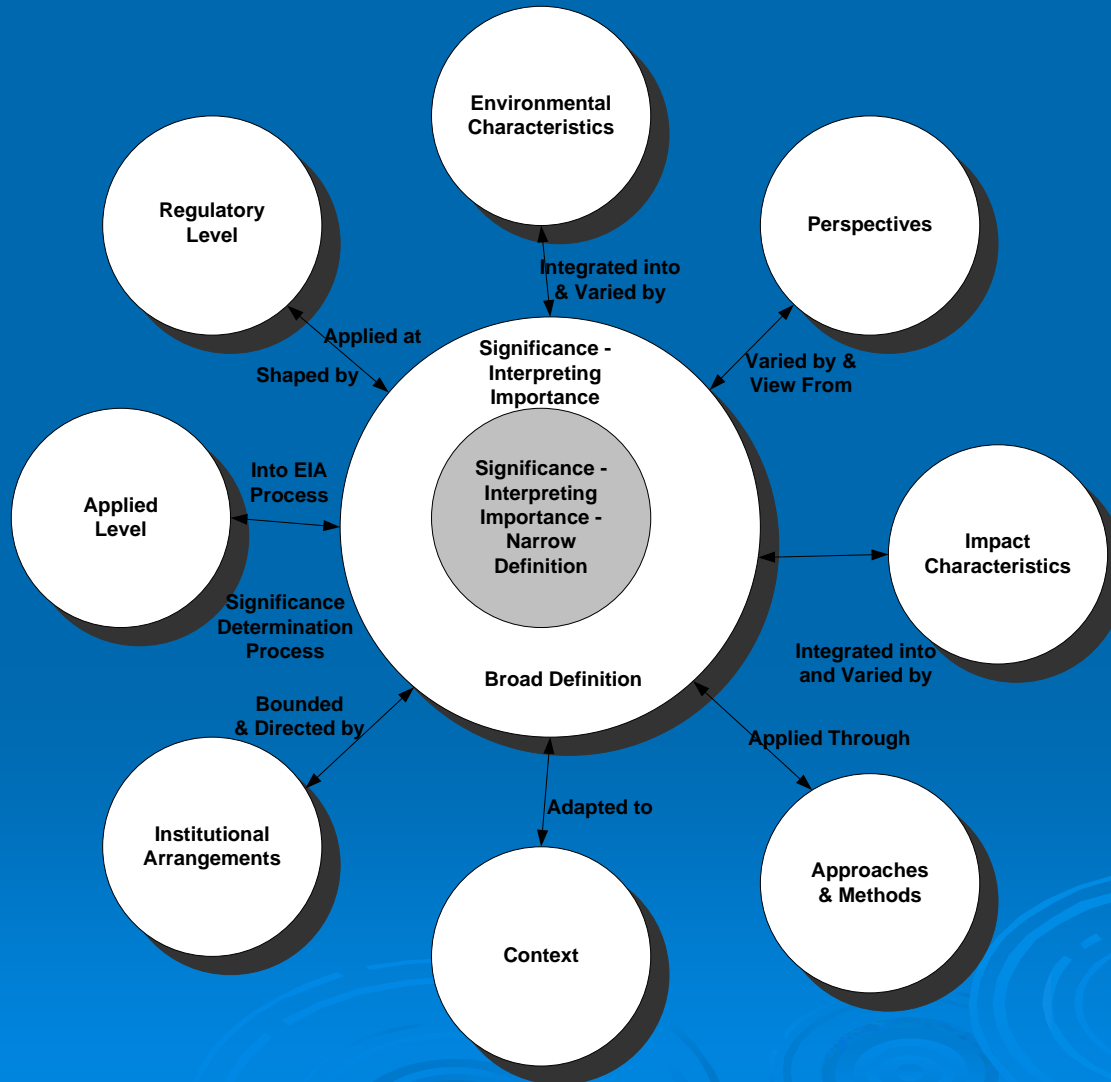
Presentation

- Definitions
- Objectives
- Significant Impacts
- Three Approaches for Determining Significance
- Good Practices
- The Link to Sustainability
- Status and Prospects

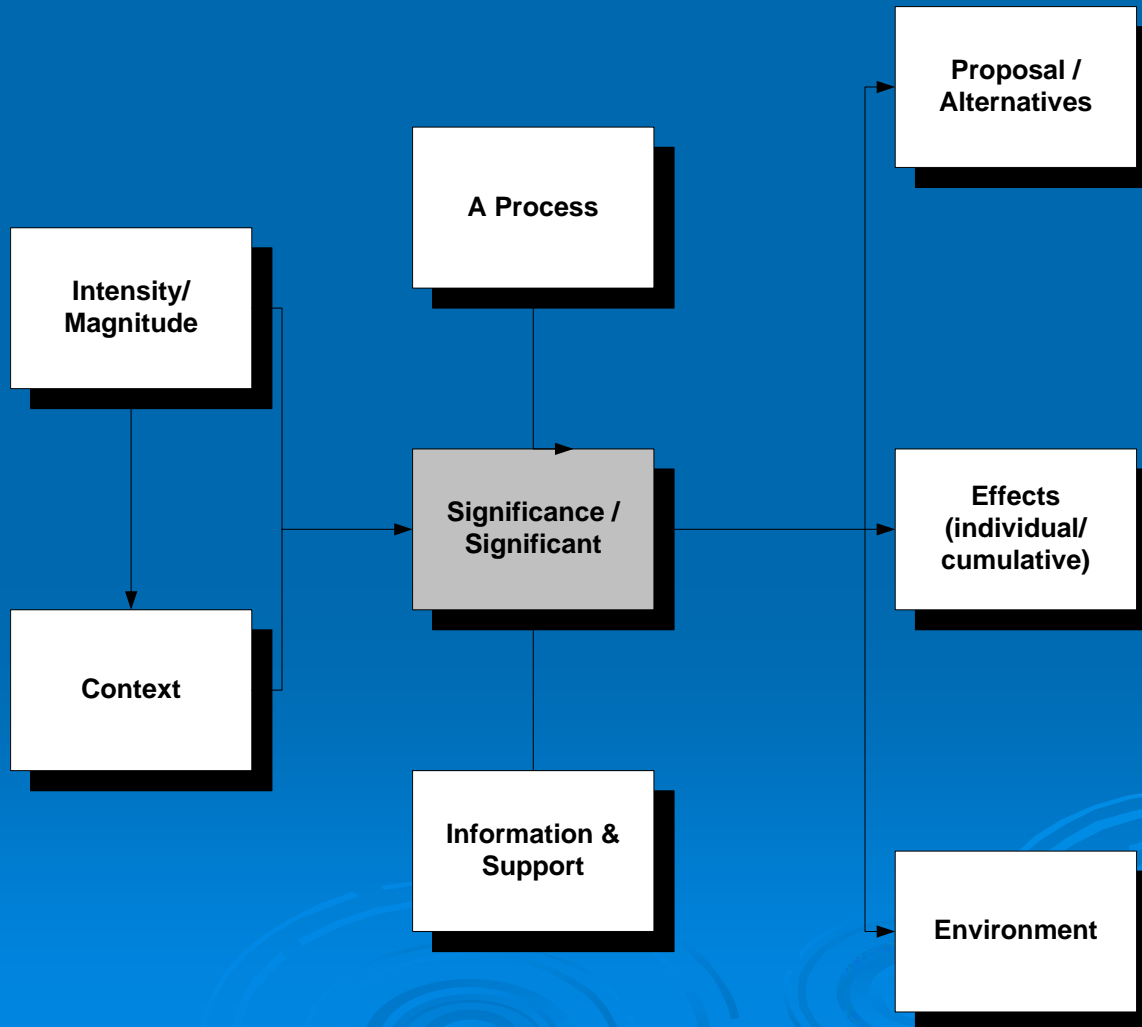
Defining Social & Economic

- Social effects – impacts on people & communities
- Economic effects – impacts on material well being & economic activities
- Should include: direct & indirect, positive & negative, real & perceived, social, cultural, heritage & economic effects on people, communities & society if effects significance is to be fully determined

Significance



Significance



Procedural Objectives

- Focused & efficient
- Explicit & clear
- Logical & substantiated
- Systematic & traceable
- Appropriate to context
- Open & inclusive
- Collective & collaborative
- Effective
- Adaptable

Substantive Objectives

- Compliance
- Minimize significant negative (with or without thresholds)
- Minimize all negative
- Net positive
- Public interest
- Greatest good for greatest number
- Greatest good for least advantaged
- Net regional benefits
- Issues resolution & management
- Consensus
- Net environmental benefits
- Sustainability
- Combinations

Good Practices - Objectives

- Consistent and early application of objectives
- Determine early in the EIA process
- Substantiate decisions regarding objectives
- Apply procedural objectives to evaluate practice
- Define substantive objectives broadly

Social & Economic Effects Most Likely to be Significant

- Health (especially low probability, severe, unique or unknown risks)
- Displacement – people, cultural, heritage & recreational uses & resources
- Composite impacts on individuals & communities (especially livelihood, quality of life, service access, value conflicts)
- Impact triggers – trigger multiple secondary & tertiary impacts

Social and Economic Effects Most Likely to be Significant

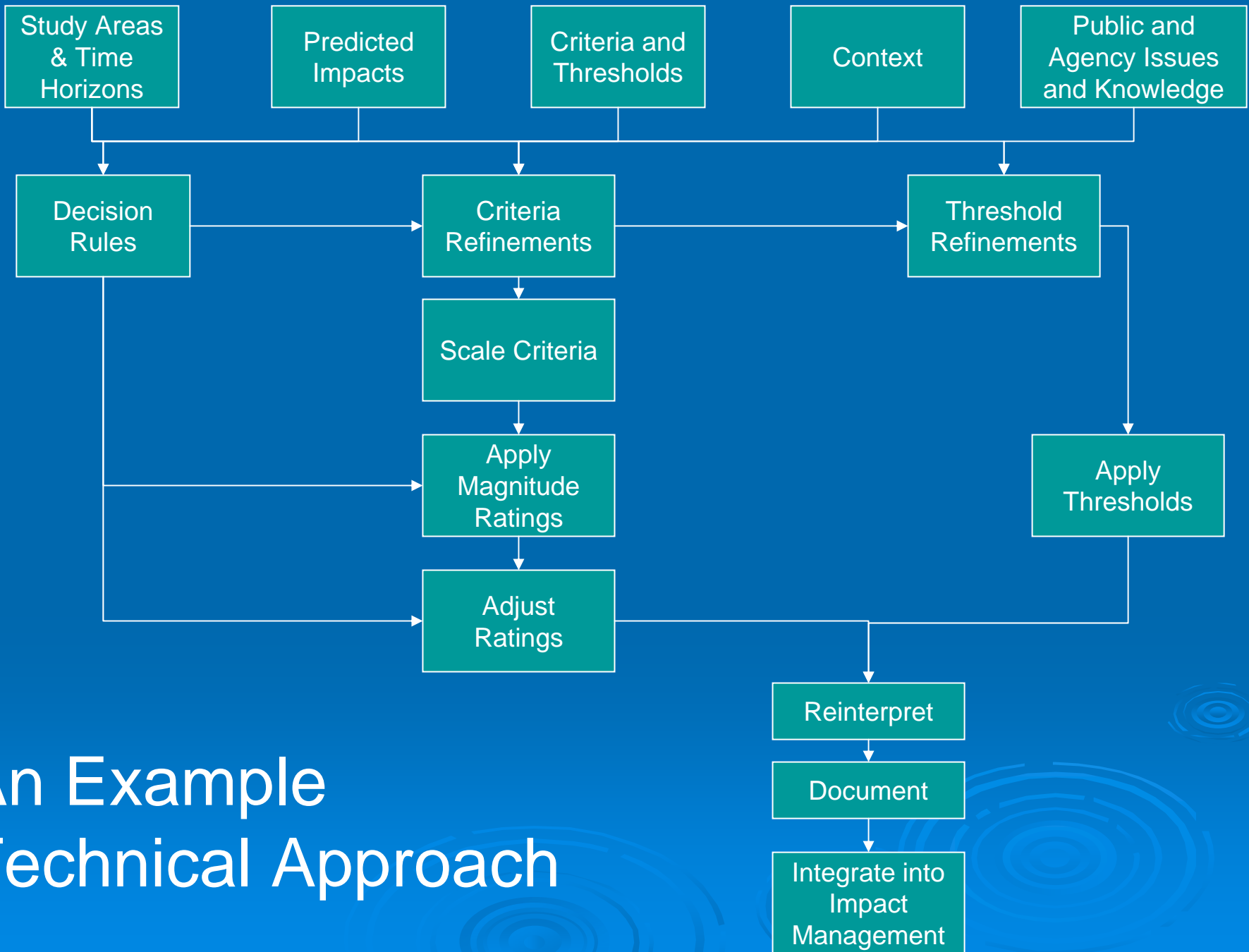
- Ability & willingness of communities to change
- Potential to build social capital & facilitate community empowerment & sustainability
- Adverse or disproportionate effects on disadvantaged, vulnerable & marginalized members & segments of society

Significance and Socio-economic Impact Assessment

- Impacts from project announcement
- Behaviour altered in anticipation of impacts
- Process & public participation alters impacts
- Significance varies among groups, communities & sectors
- Social phenomena complex, contentious, uncertain & subject to multiple interpretations
- Socially determined meaning; central role of dialogue
- Affected by SIA & social science limits

Implications for Significance Determination

- Give special consideration to most likely impacts
- Some potential for thresholds
- Quantitative aggregation methods helpful for interpreting economic, population, housing, service & financial effects
- Most other potentially significant impacts involve public reasoned judgments, in combination with collaborative consultation & with technical support



An Example Technical Approach

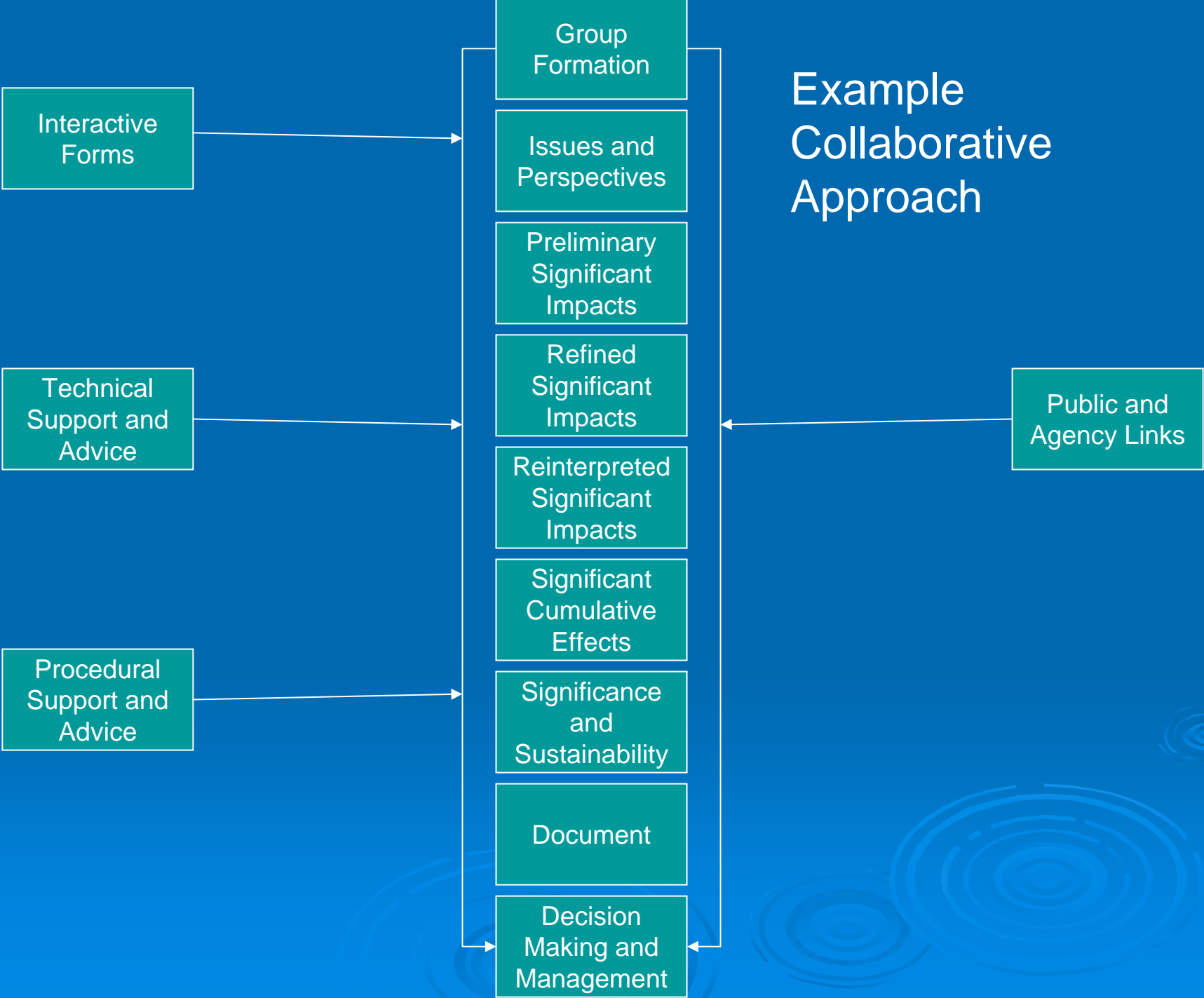
Technical Approach

- Significance broken down into constituent parts then combined using technical methods
- Aim sound technical & scientific decision-making basis
- Emphasis – consistency, transparency & ability to replicate
- Employs thresholds, criteria, scaling levels & decision rules
- Reliance on expert data, analysis & knowledge
- Uses qualitative & quantitative procedures (often favours latter)
- Tends to be expert-centred; with agency & public input

Technical Approach – Good Practices

- Integrate incrementally, explicitly & consistently all decision-making factors
- Ensure methods clearly defined, appropriate to context, fully substantiated, easily applicable & sensitive to discontinuities
- Adjust for differences in impact types (e.g., social), reliability of data & varying public and agency perspectives
- Allow for degrees of significance
- Consider implications of uncertainties & consequences of being wrong (e.g., precautionary)
- Reconsider after mitigation, as part of cumulative effects analysis & in terms of extend supports or undermines sustainability

Example Collaborative Approach

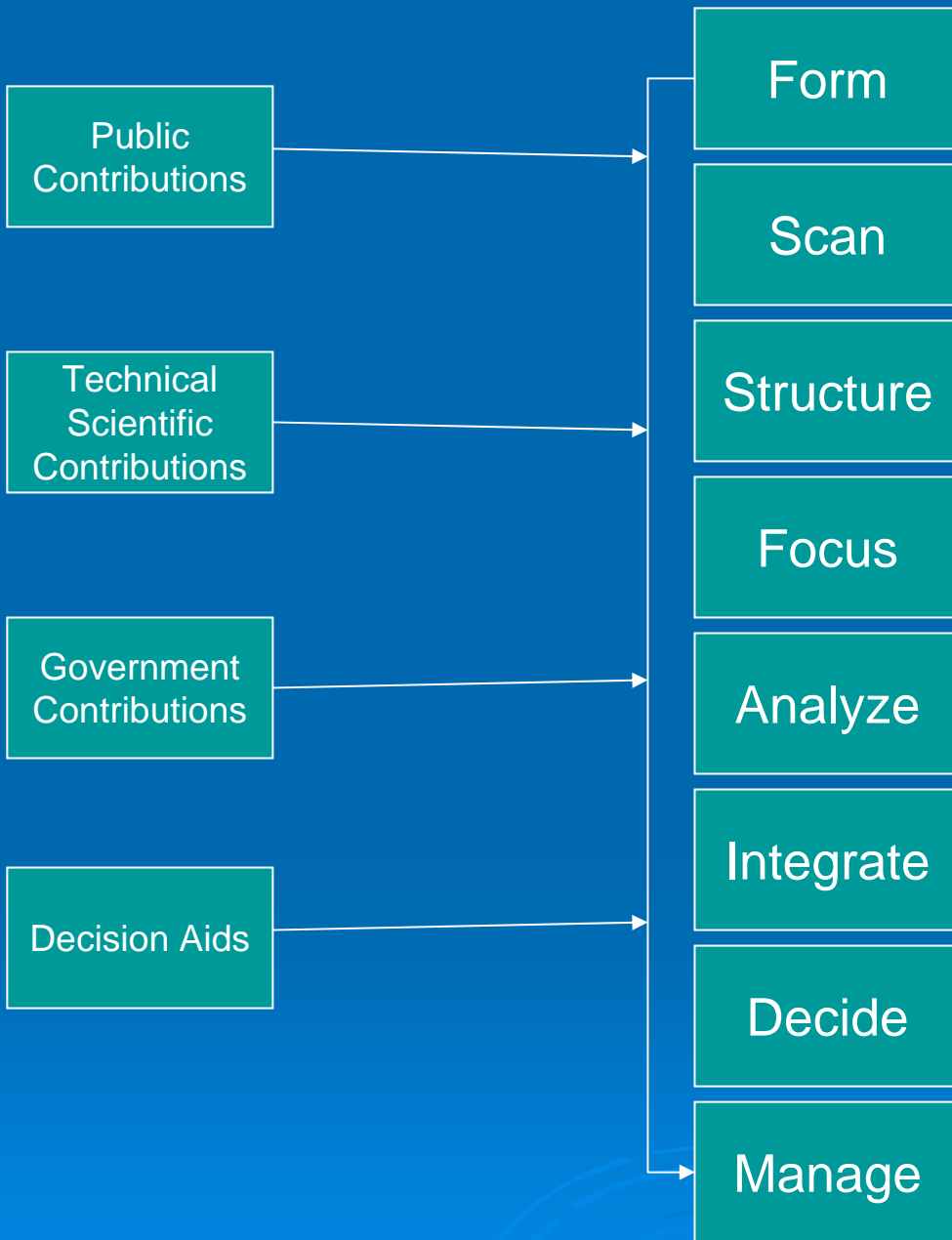


Collaborative Approach

- Interested & affected people jointly determine what is important, why & to what degree
- Undertaken in interactive forums
- Close connections to broader constituencies
- Substantiated through joint reasoning
- Supported by technical analysis & facilitators
- Bottom-up & inside-out decision-making
- Emphasis on communications, mutual learning & negotiations
- Numerous forms & methods
- Central role – public, politicians & local & regional perspectives; technical and scientific support

Collaborative Approach – Good Practices

- Focus on local & regional issues, tradeoffs & aspirations
- Seek to involve most directly affected & most vulnerable; offset procedural inequities
- Ensure membership in interactive forums representative
- Ensure effective links to broader publics
- Integrate community, technical & traditional knowledge
- View significance from multiple perspectives
- Ensure open, transparent & inclusive process
- Fully document rationale for interpretations



An Example Reasoned
Argumentation Approach

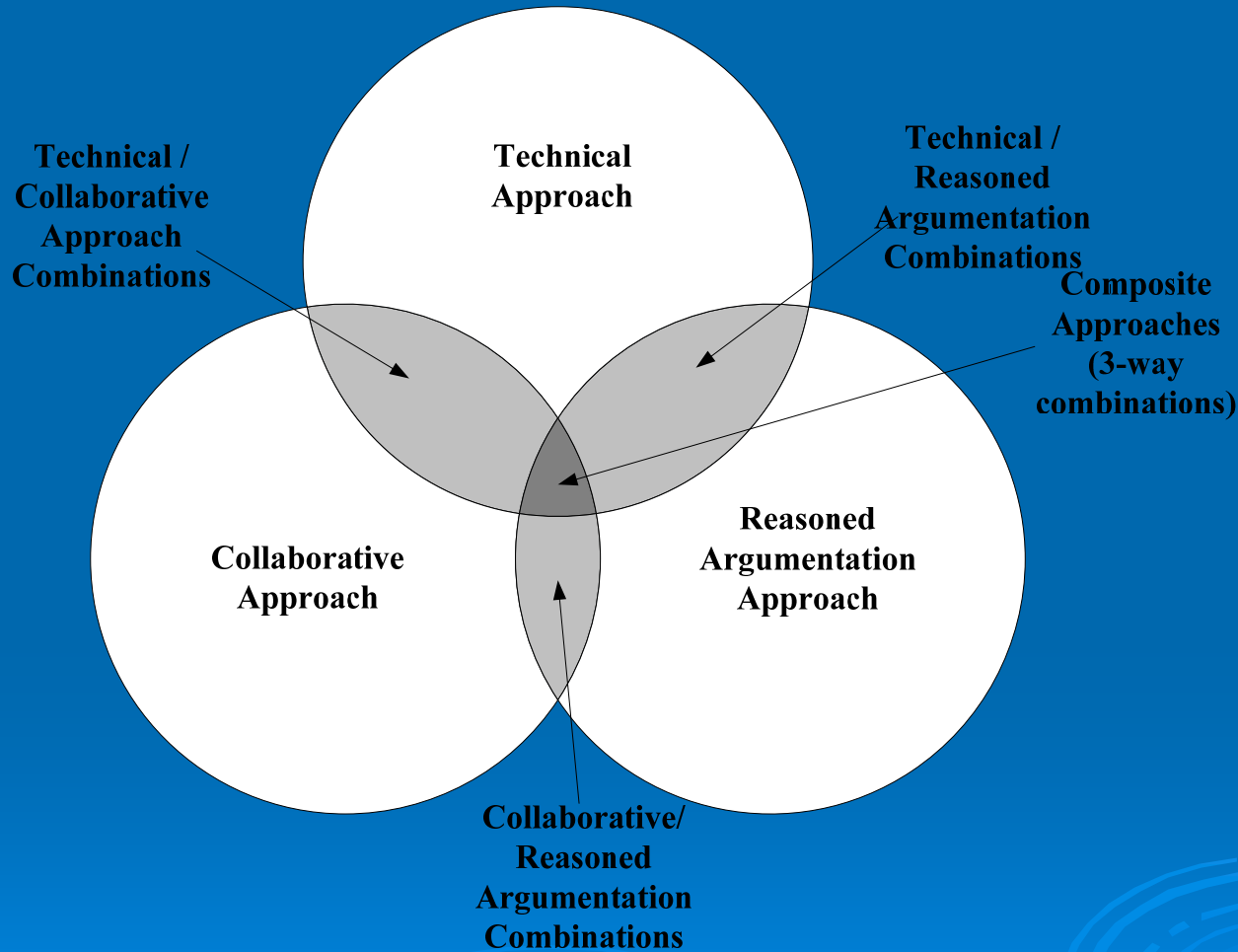
Reasoned Argumentation Approach

- Long legal & academic tradition
- Involves reasoned judgments supported by technical & non-technical knowledge & evidence
- Usually qualitative (some quantitative support)
- Integrates technical/community, facts/values, objective / subjective, multiple perspectives & qualitative/quantitative
- Incorporates oral & written arguments
- How analysis structured key
- Importance of sound knowledge base & full party participation
- Most evident in summary EIA documents & Panel decisions

Reasoned Argumentation – Good Practices

- Tie into procedural & substantive objectives
- Systematically integrate all forms of knowledge & data
- Incorporate relevant distinctions (e.g., choices, perspectives, study areas)
- Adapt to context
- View significance from multiple perspectives
- Guard against advocacy & bias
- Ensure rationale for significance determinations explicit, systematic & consistent

Combining Approaches



General and Composite Approaches

- Each approach – positive & negative tendencies, good & poor practices
- Can reinforce positive & offset negative
- Can blend 2 or 3 approaches
- Choices vary with context
- Composite approaches may be more or less than the sum of the parts
- Numerous support methods available
- Good general impact significance practices

Potentially Unacceptable Practices

- Significance determination without substantiation
- Demonstrable bias
- Serious factual inaccuracies in basis for significance determinations
- Major factors relevant to significance determinations not considered
- Failure to consider perspectives of major parties
- Approach clearly inconsistent with context
- Approach inconsistent with decision-making requirements
- Conclusions regarding acceptability of practice should be fully substantiated, with regulatory requirements links

Good Practices - General

- Recognize that inherently subjective & central to decision-making (what is important)
- Focus on community & regional issues, values, tradeoffs & valued socio-economic components
- Ensure basis for judgments & methods understandable, appropriate & fully substantiated
- Define broadly (e.g., positive, negative, direct, indirect, cumulative, biophysical, socioeconomic)

Good Practices - General

- Ensure procedures are consistent & explicit
- Ensure the direct, early and ongoing involvement of interested & affected parties
- Offset procedural inequities
- Ensure that significance determination culminates in decisions regarding impact & project acceptability

Significance and Sustainability

- Alternatives screened & compared for sustainability
- Shift from minimizing damage to maximizing gains & opportunities (e.g., proposed action as catalyst or impediment or as means for advancing community aspirations)
- Proposed actions assessed against likely & desired futures
- Use of sustainability thresholds & criteria
- More emphasis on human & resource resilience, the most vulnerable & links to broader sustainability initiatives

Status & Prospects

- Recognized as vital
- Highly variable at regulatory & applied levels
- Many procedures & methods
- No consensus – preferred approach or methods
- Much room for improvement
- Better practice can ameliorate
- Some perspective divisions & intractable problems remain
- Unequivocal good practice standards unlikely (value central, subjectivity, complexity, conflict, uncertain)
- Clear sense of direction (objectives), early & ongoing public and agency involvement and uncertainty management critical when assessing significance of socio-economic impacts