NYU Steinhardt

Field Experiments Training

Abu Dhabi
October 6-10

DAY FOUR
Defining and Measuring Outcomes

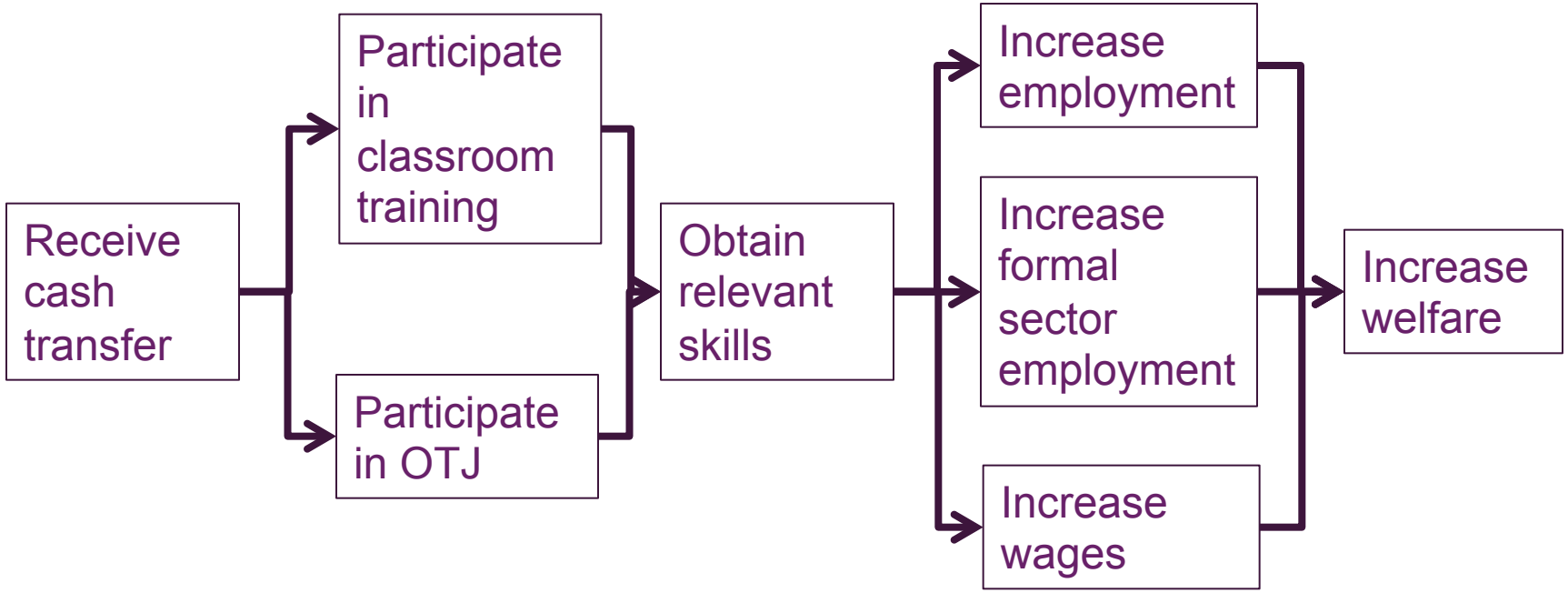
Overview

- Defining outcomes along the theory of change
- Measuring outcomes
- Data collection for measuring outcomes
  - Types and sources of data
  - Recommendations

How to commission an IE

- Identify the intervention of interest and obtain detailed project information.
- Based on the learning objectives, determine whether an IE is appropriate.
- Map out the theory of change.
- Determine the evaluation questions including outcomes.
- Consider possible identification strategies.
- Write the SOW and issue an RFP.

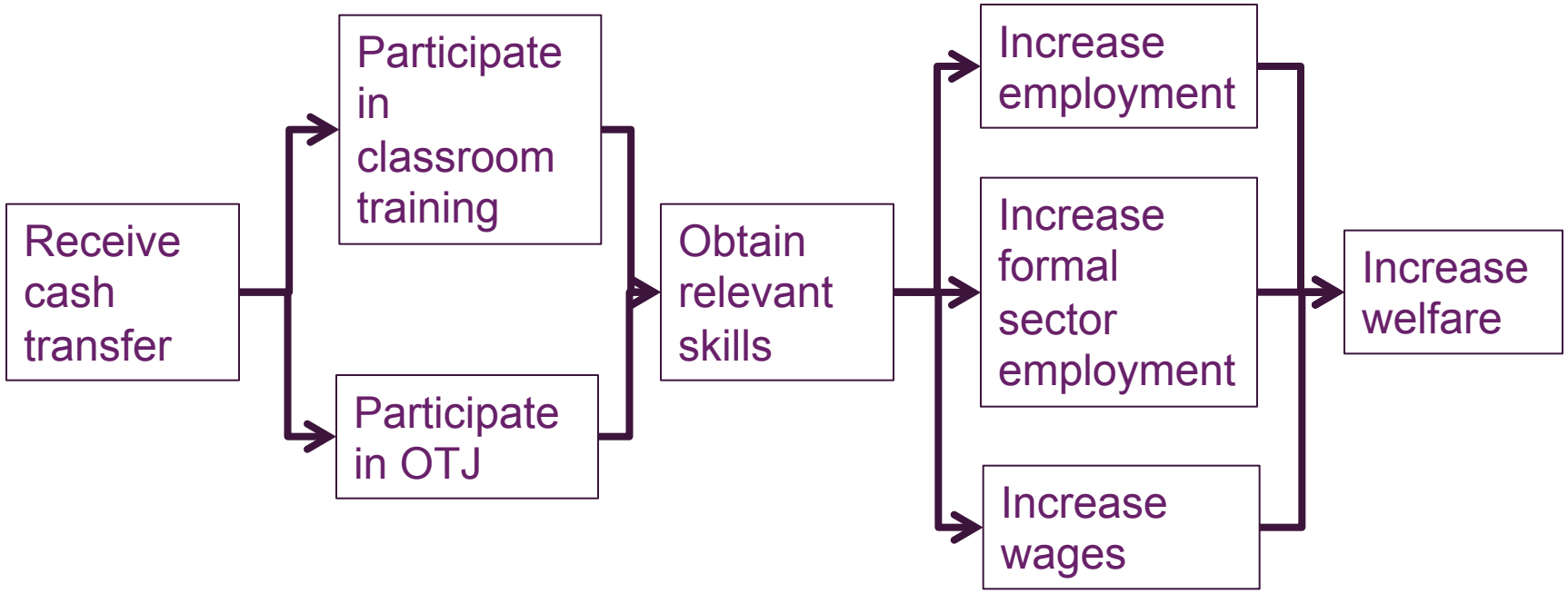
Vocational training theory of change



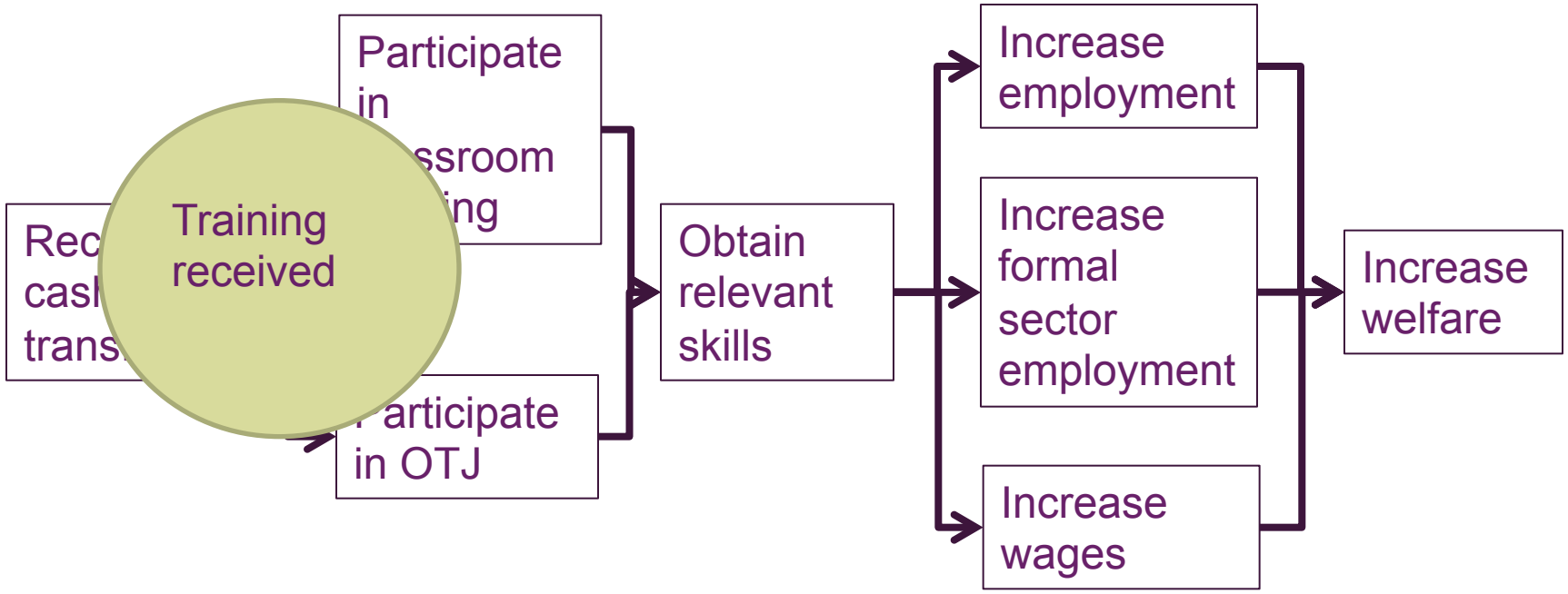
Defining outcomes

Just as the process of mapping the theory of change is similar to developing a “logical framework”, defining outcomes is analogous to writing results statements

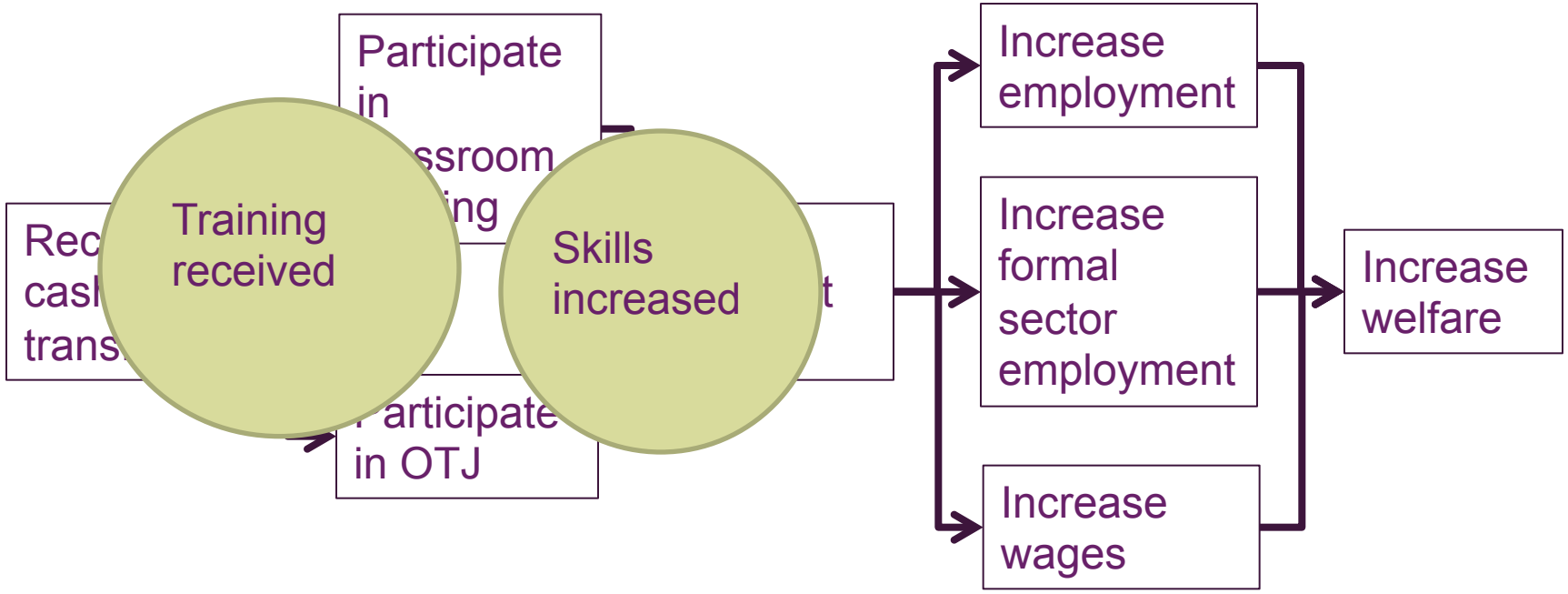
Vocational training outcomes



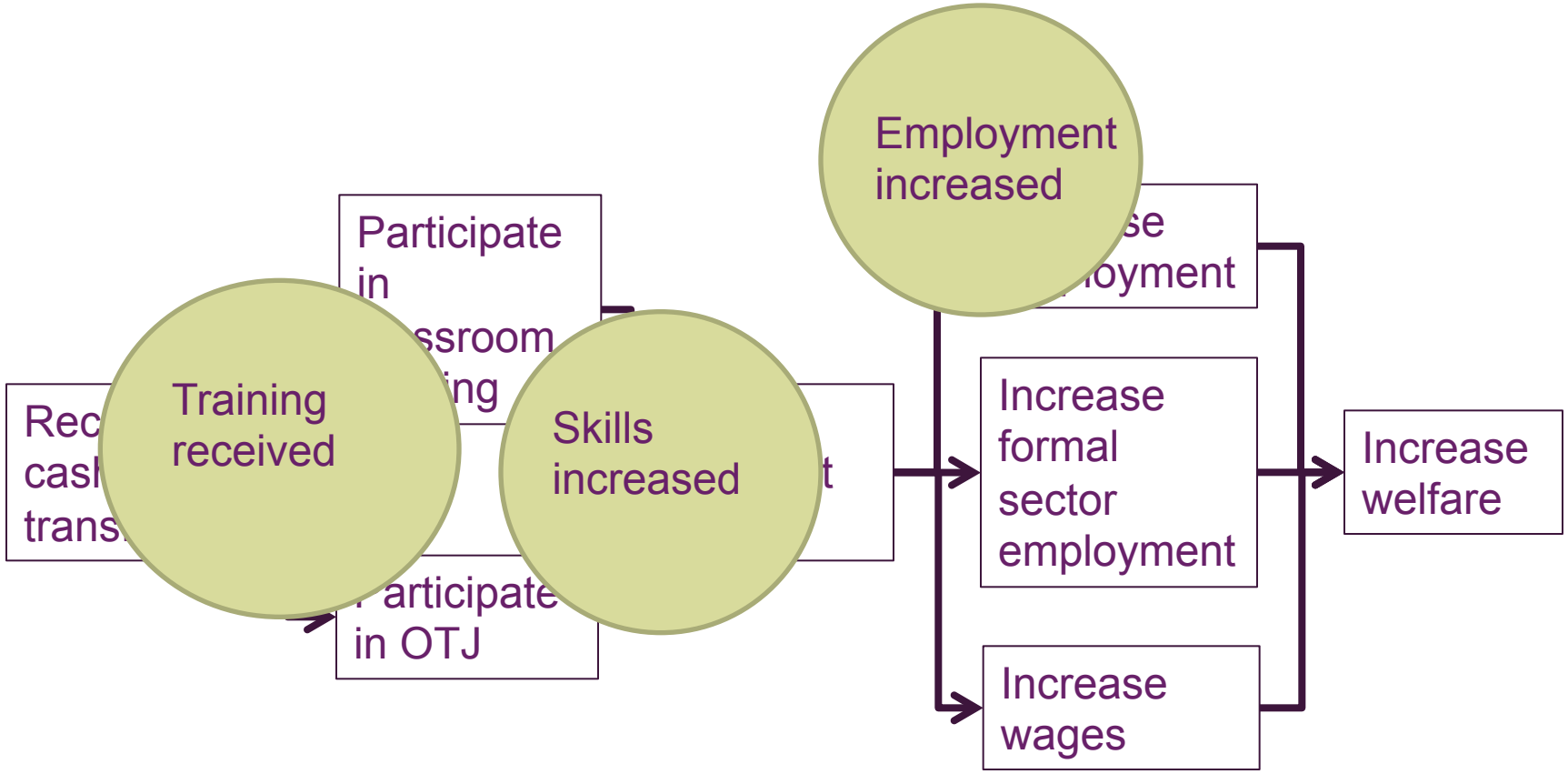
Vocational training outcomes



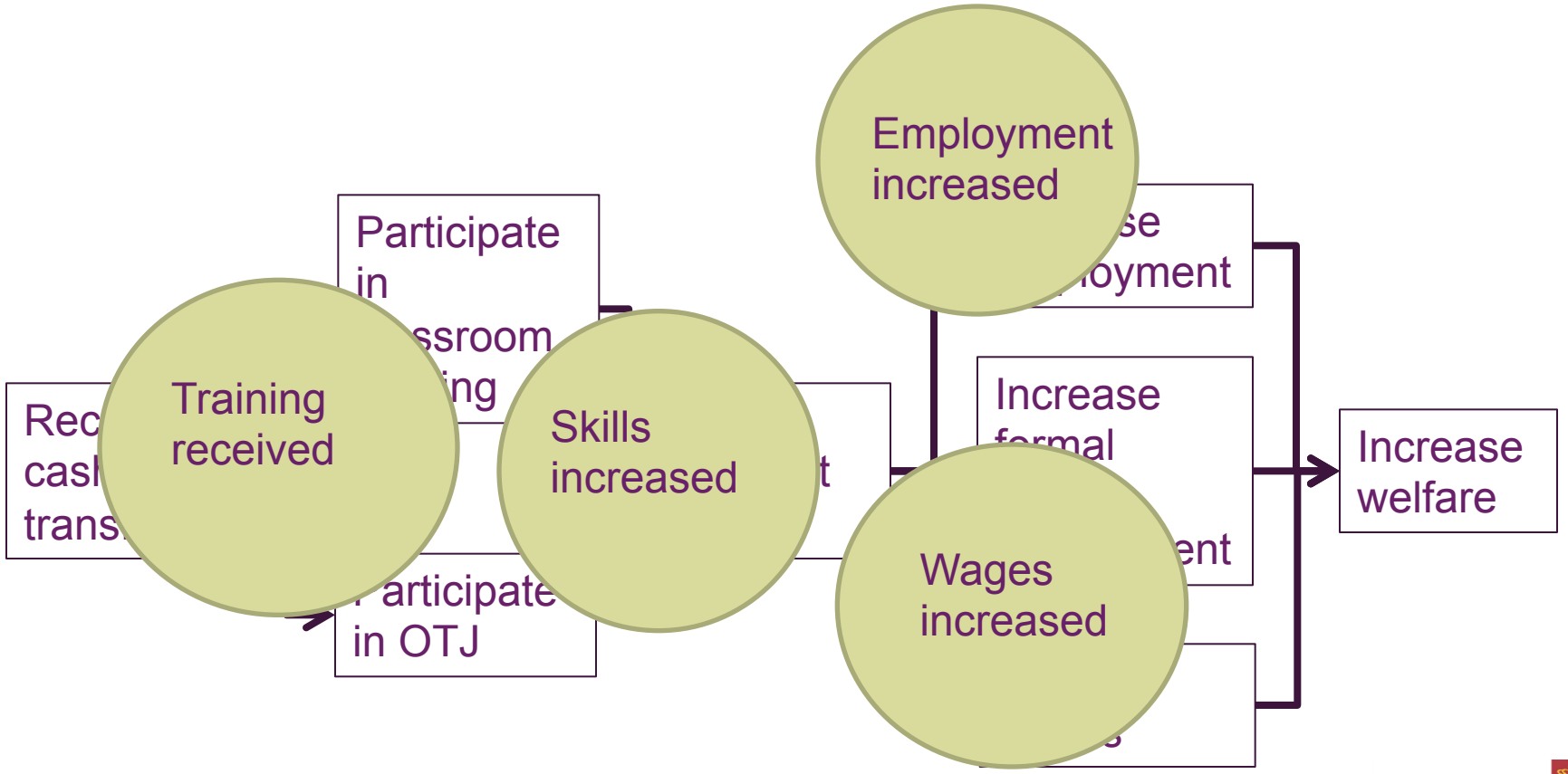
Vocational training outcomes



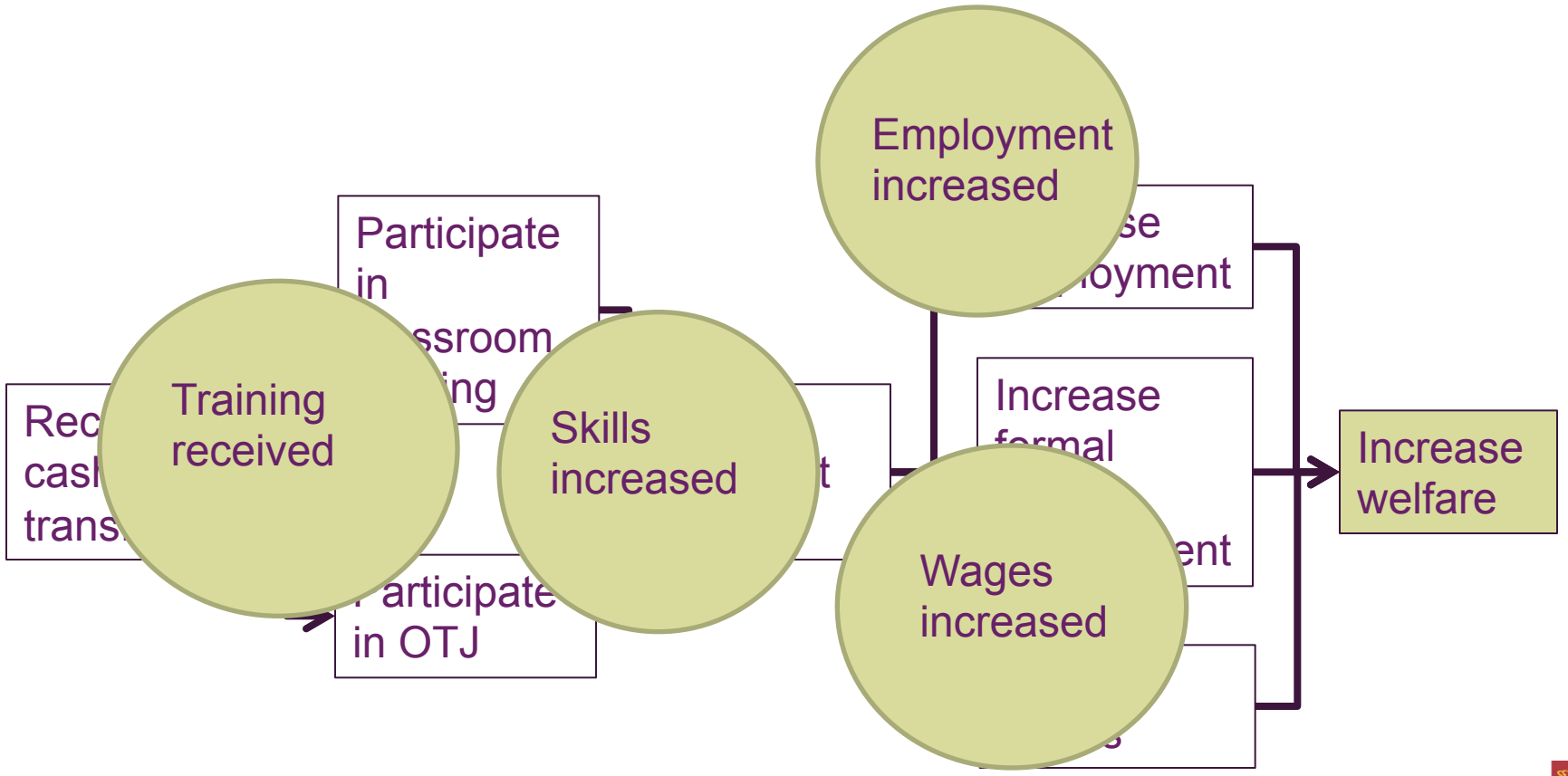
Vocational training outcomes



Vocational training outcomes



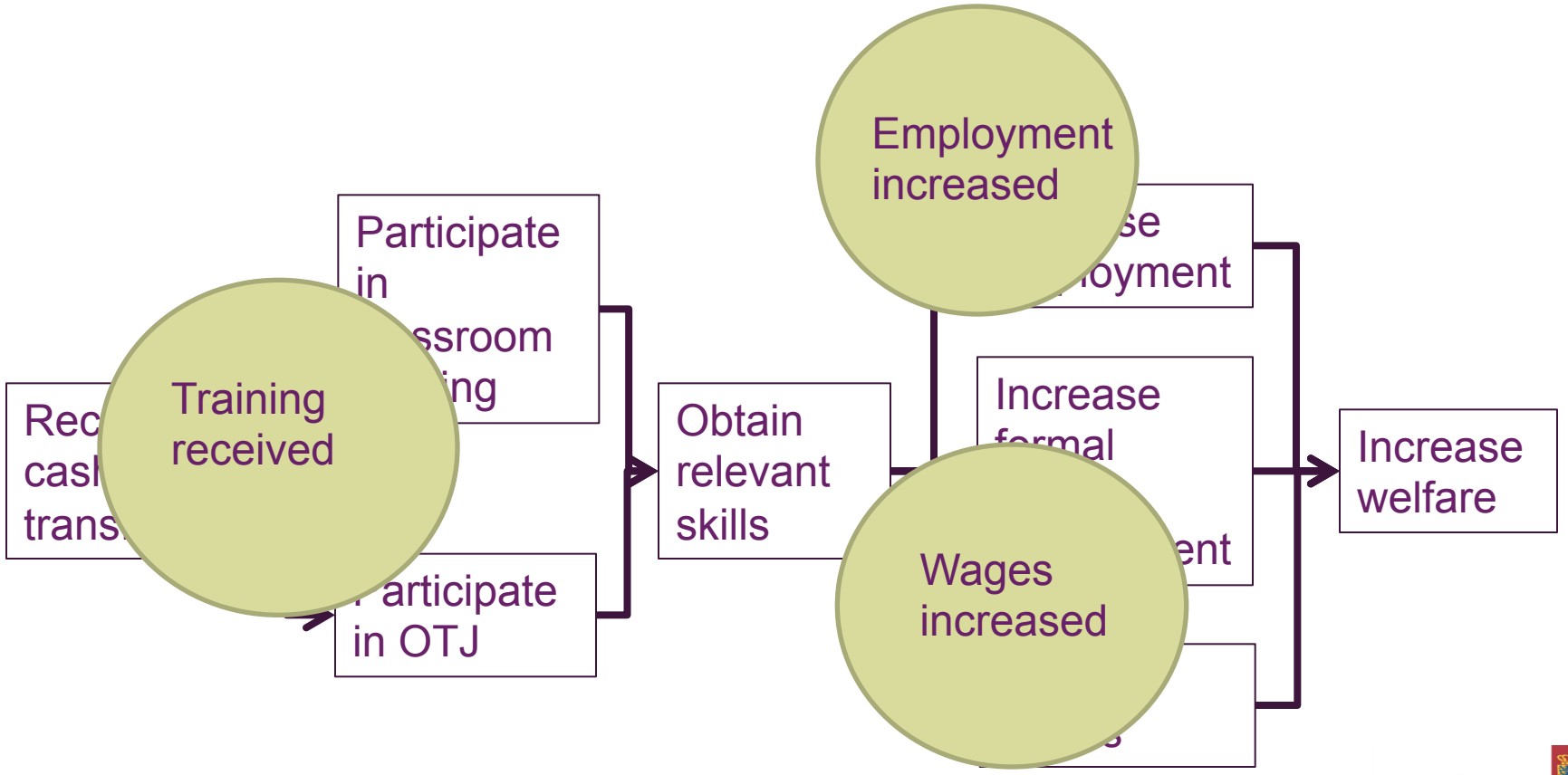
Vocational training outcomes



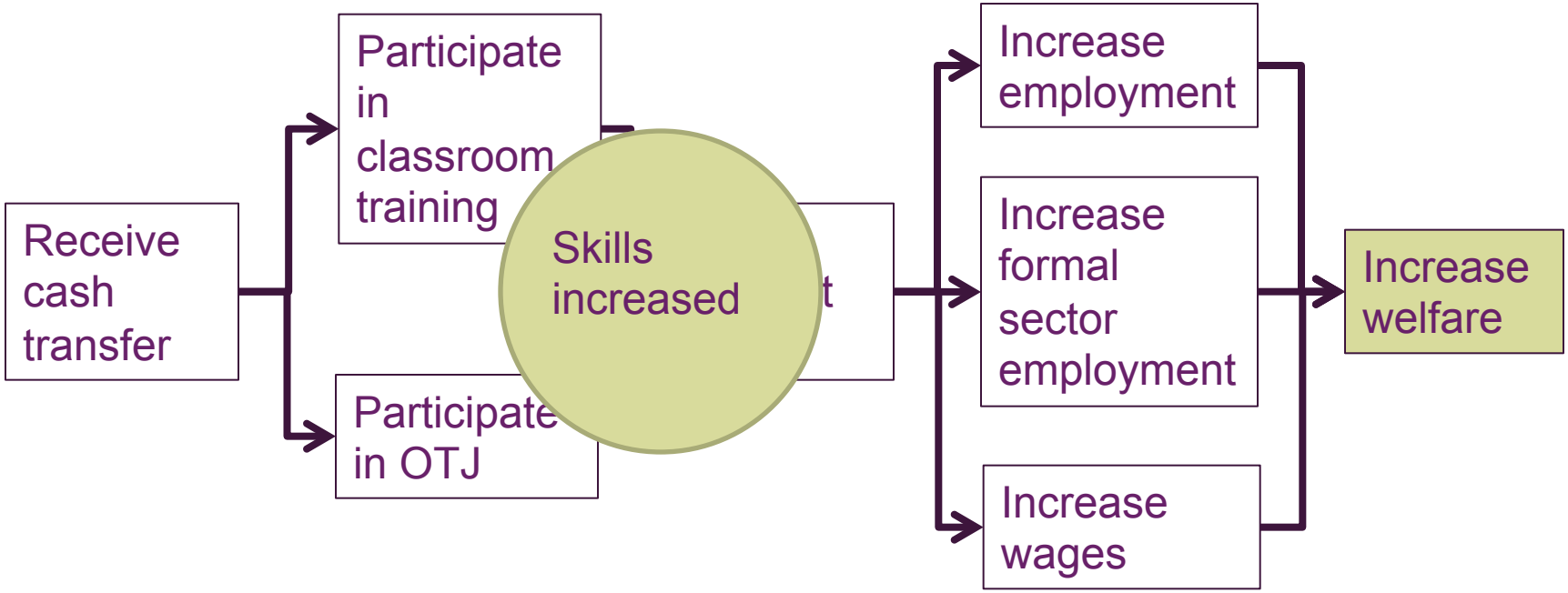
Measuring outcomes

- Defining outcomes is easy
- Measuring outcomes is hard
  - What is an indicator *really*?
- For example:
  - Outcome: “Welfare”
    - What are good indicators?
  - Indicator: “Increase skills”
    - What are good indicators?

Measuring is easy (indicators obvious)



Measuring is hard (indicators less obvious)



Measuring outcomes: choosing indicators

- Different types:
  - “Self reported” by subjects
  - “Direct observation”

Data collection: self-reported

- Knowledge
- Attitudes
  - Feelings (“*are women equally qualified to work at the same job you do?”)*
  - Normative beliefs (*“is it okay for employers to pay women less than men?”)*

Data collection: self-reported

- Private behavior
  - *"did you attend the training?" "did you vote?" "did you work for wages last week?"*
- Private thoughts
  - *"how much do you worry about theft in the night?"*

Self-reported data: biases

- Courtesy bias (respondents say what they think the surveyor wants to hear)
- Social acceptability bias (respondents say what they think is socially acceptable)
- Fundamental error of attribution bias (respondents over-estimate the role of individuals in relation to contextual factors)
- Self-serving bias (respondents take credit for good things and blame others for bad things)
- Self-importance bias (respondents overestimate their role in events)

Data collection: Direct observation

- Administrative data
  - Attendance records, standardized tests
- "Real world" observation
  - Satellite data example
- Creating situations that reveal outcomes
  - "GoBifo" study in Sierra Leone example

Recommendations

- Use a multidisciplinary approach to understand the theories of change and construct outcome measures.
- Triangulate different measures of same outcomes—self-reported vs. observed.
- Measure outcomes along the causal chain.
- Use standard measures where possible for comparability.

Activity

- Define indicators for each stage of the theory of change
- Identify whether the indicators are:
  - Direct measures
  - Self-report:
    - Knowledge
    - Attitudes
- What strengths, weaknesses and potential biases of your measurement strategy