

Indicators



**WHAT THEY ARE, WHY THEY ARE USEFUL
AND TIPS ON CHOOSING THEM**

What are Indicators?



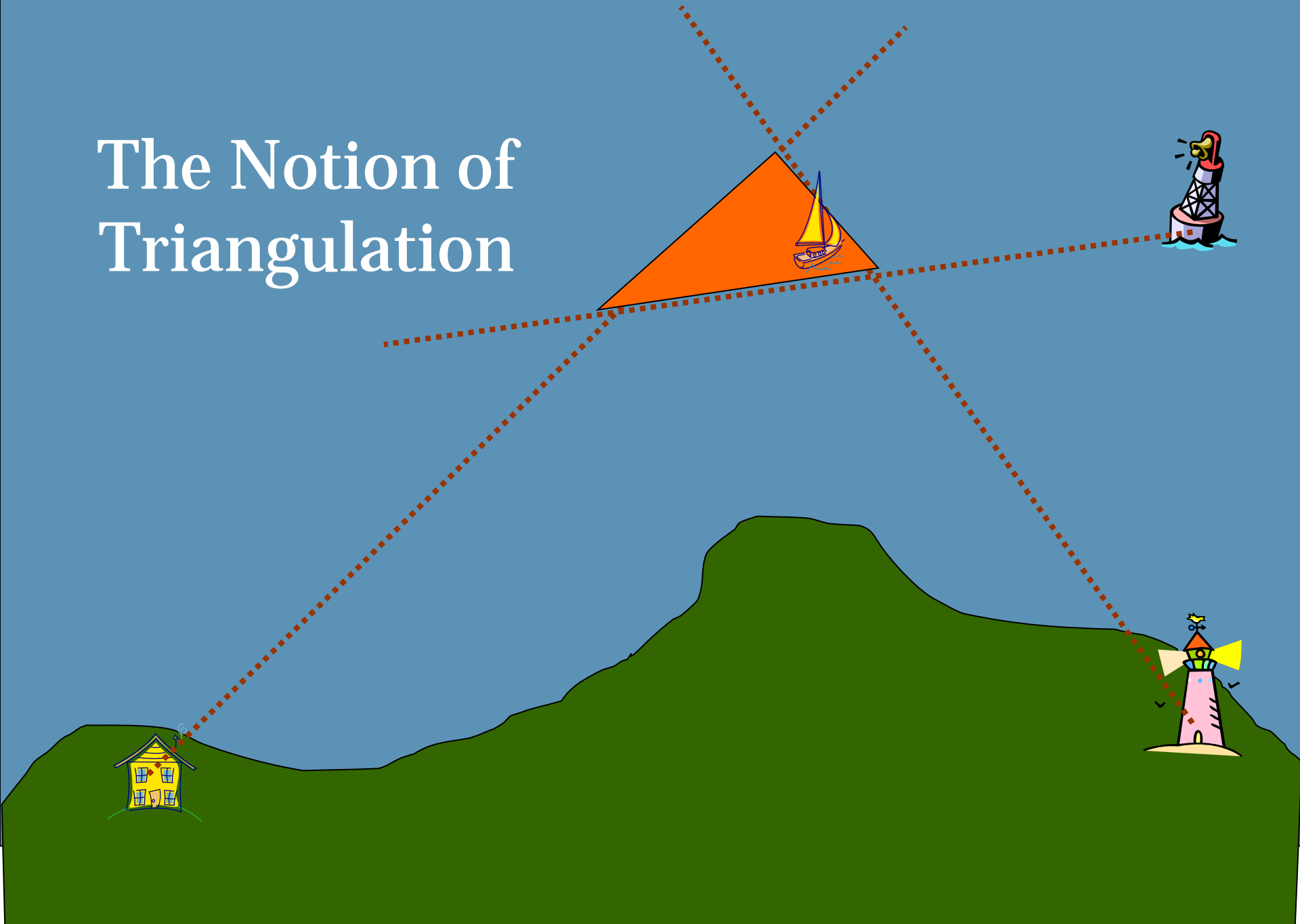
- Bits of information that provide part of the answer to one of your questions
- Things you can see or touch or hear – things that are observable in the world and don't involve 'interpretation'
- Are often numbers but can also be (e.g.) stories, quotations, examples, pictures

Indicators are a Useful Idea Because...



- They help to break down the complex task of “program evaluation” into manageable chunks
- They help others to understand what you mean in practical terms when you talk about a particular outcome
- They help you build up a strong evaluation plan by combining different kinds of information from several sources.

The Notion of Triangulation



Explaining the Analogy

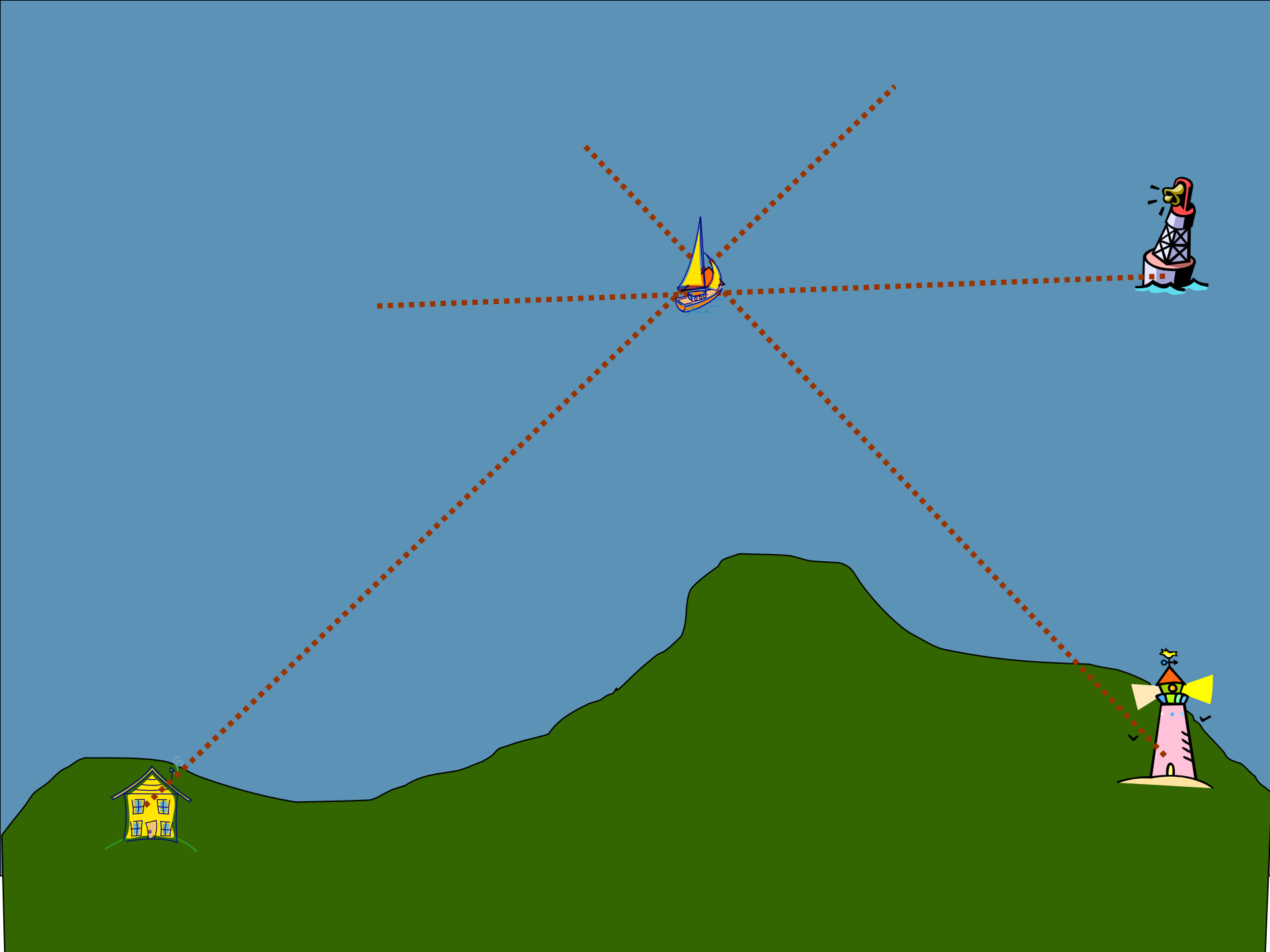


- When you ask an evaluation question, you're like a navigator on a ship asking "where am I?"
- Progress indicators are like the various compass bearings a navigator takes. The more "diverse" the readings, the better!
- If all the bearing suggest you're in the same spot, you know you've done a good job of measuring.

Explaining the Analogy



- No single indicator, regardless of how accurate, can tell you where you are!
- Even if the indicators don't converge or triangulate, you know more than you did and you know something about how much “error” is in your measurement technique.



Source of Indicators



- **Research literature**
- **Data already gathered for other purposes**
- **Observations**
- **Perceptions of key informants**
- **Standardized measurement tools**

A quick way to see if you've got the right kind of indicators (from Friedman, 2005)

Quantity	Quality
How much work did we do? # of people who attended the workshop # of handouts created # of workshops run #	How well did we do it? % of invited people who attended % % %
Is anybody better off? # % of participants who are better prepared to complete evaluation plans # % of evaluation plans that are useful # % of evaluation plans that are manageable and practical #	

Sample Indicators: Not so good, better and best



Short-term Outcomes	Indicators
Increased volunteerism among youth	<p>NOT SO GOOD: Participants often tell us how excited they are to be able to volunteer</p> <p>BETTER: 75% of graduates from our program had begun new volunteer positions by the time they finished the program</p> <p>EVEN BETTER: None of our 80 participants were volunteering before they started the program. 60 (75%) were still volunteering six weeks after completing our program.</p>