



Common pitfalls and how to avoid them





Pitfalls... at all stages!

TTx Project Roadmap





Design phase: problems

0 Vague objectives



Goals that are unmeasurable or unclear

0 Type mismatch



Exercise format does not fit objectives

0 Unrealistic scenarios



Scenarios too easy or impossible to resolve

0 Scope exceeds resources



Ambition beyond available time or staff

0 Poor role mapping

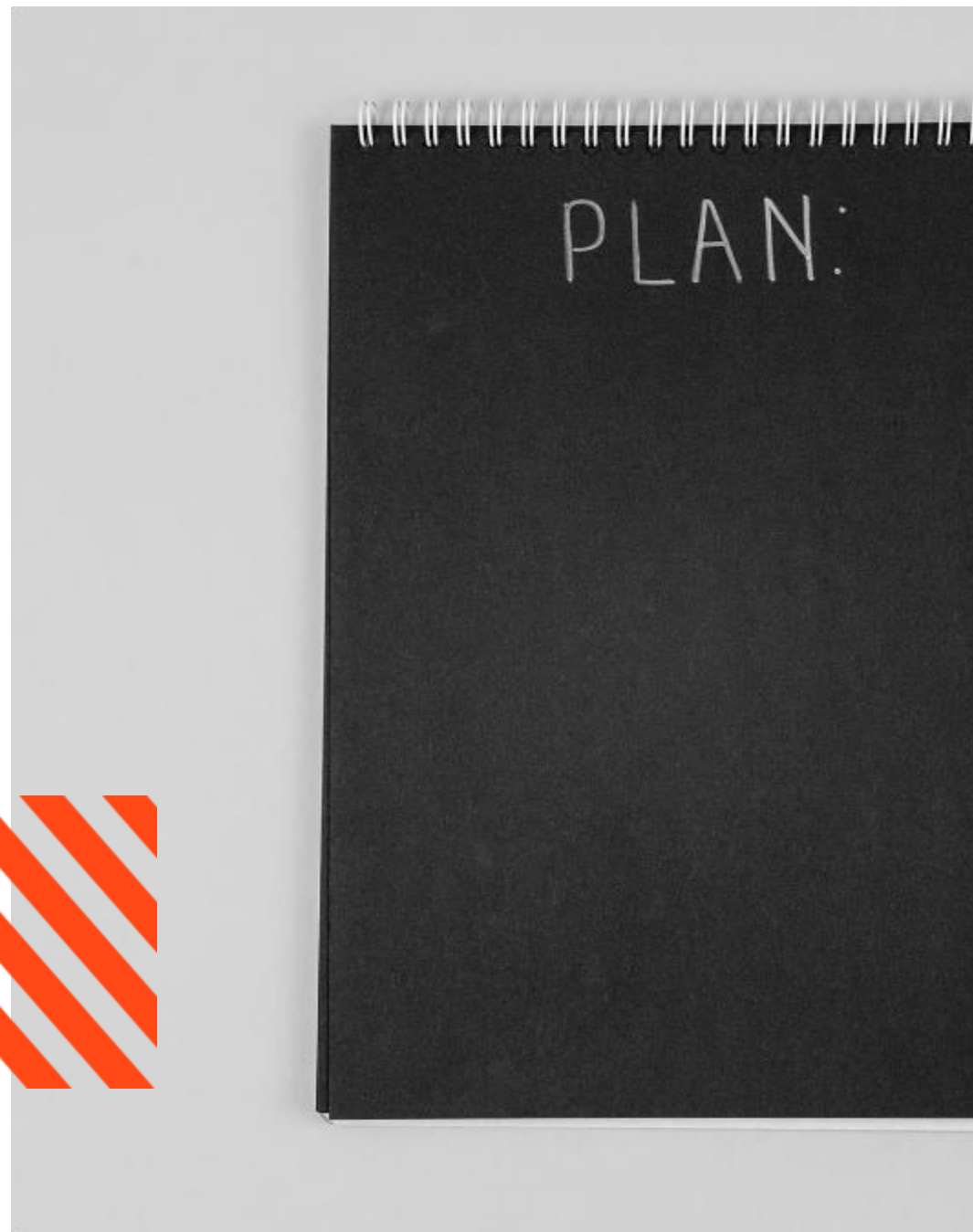


Participants and roles not aligned to tasks



Unclear objectives

- Limit goals and link each to capabilities with measurable success criteria



Problem: too many or non-measurable objectives



Cause: objectives not tied to capabilities



Remedy: set few specific capability-linked objectives



Match exercise scope/type to objective

- Review aims, objectives, existing capabilities and budgets/resources



TTX

- Purpose: validate plans, decision making, and SOP understanding
- When to use: early design, policy review, senior staff discussion
- Benefits: low cost, fast to run, safe for incomplete SOPs
- Limitations: does not test logistics, equipment, or field coordination
- Remedy: pilot when SOPs are incomplete; focus on scenario logic

Vs



FSX

- Purpose: test operational capability, procedures, and field execution
- When to use: SOPs mature, staff trained, and logistics ready
- Benefits: reveals procedural gaps, resource constraints, real-time coordination issues
- Limitations: high cost, complex to run, risky if SOPs are immature
- Remedy: avoid until participant readiness confirmed; run smaller pilots first



Prevent blind spots!

- Map stakeholders, assign roles, and brief participants

Essential groups

Public health
laboratories

Law enforcement

Environmental
agencies

Emergency
management

Regulatory
authorities

Private sector

Industry operators
and manufacturers

Clinical and
commercial
laboratories

Supply chain and
logistics providers

Consultants and
technical vendors

Role clarity actions

Map stakeholders
and contact points

Define roles,
authorities, and
communications

Run orientation briefs
for all participants

Document decision
pathways to avoid
blind spots





Implementation phase: common pitfalls



**Insufficient trained
controllers/evaluators**



Poor communication flow



**Exercises turning into
seminars**



**Over-reliance on
assumptions**



Unrealistic logistics

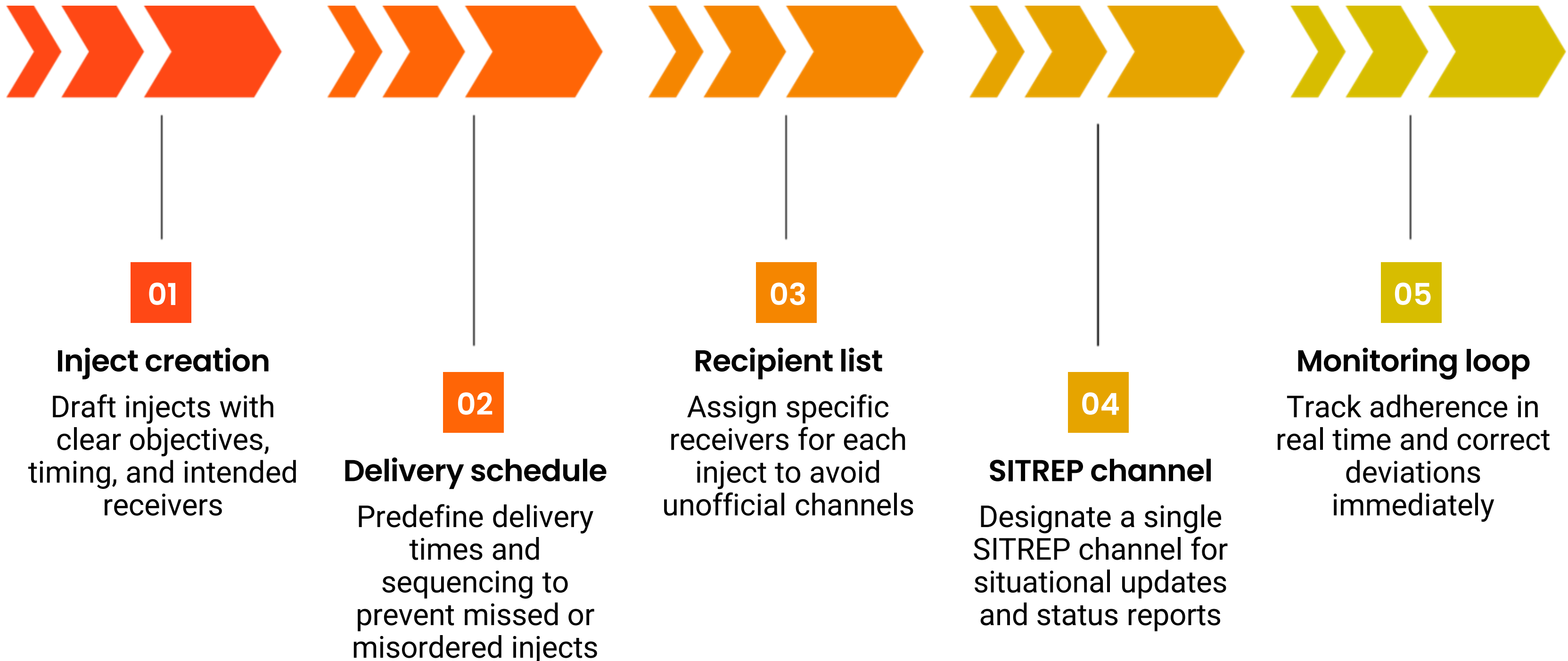


Improper controller injects



Preventing exercise communications problems

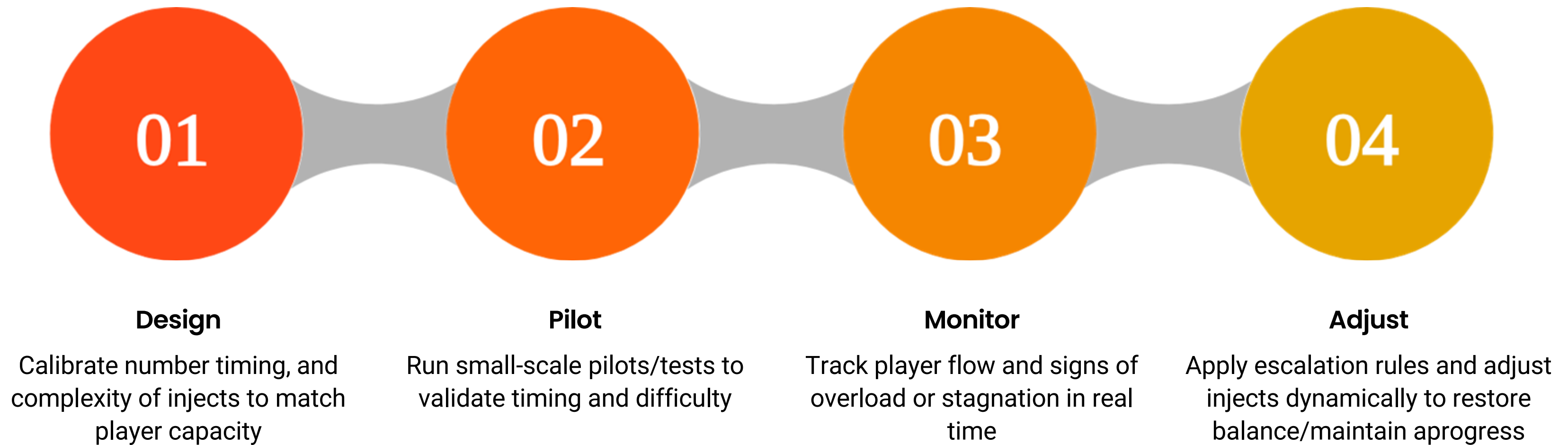
- Develop clear timelines, SMEL injects and protocols, define SITREP/comms channels, real-time adherence monitoring, problem planning (STOP/No DUFF)





Balance injects to ensure exercise flows

- Beware/prevent overload or stagnation with a tested inject lifecycle





Evaluation phase: reduced exercise value



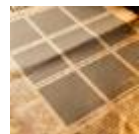
Missing structured tools for evaluation

- No templates or scoring inconsistent



Failure to capture key decision points

- Decisions not recorded, lessons lost



Overly positive After-Action Reviews and reports

- Bias hides real gaps



Vague or non-actionable recommendations

- Recommendations lack owners or "metrics"



No follow up or tracked improvement mechanism

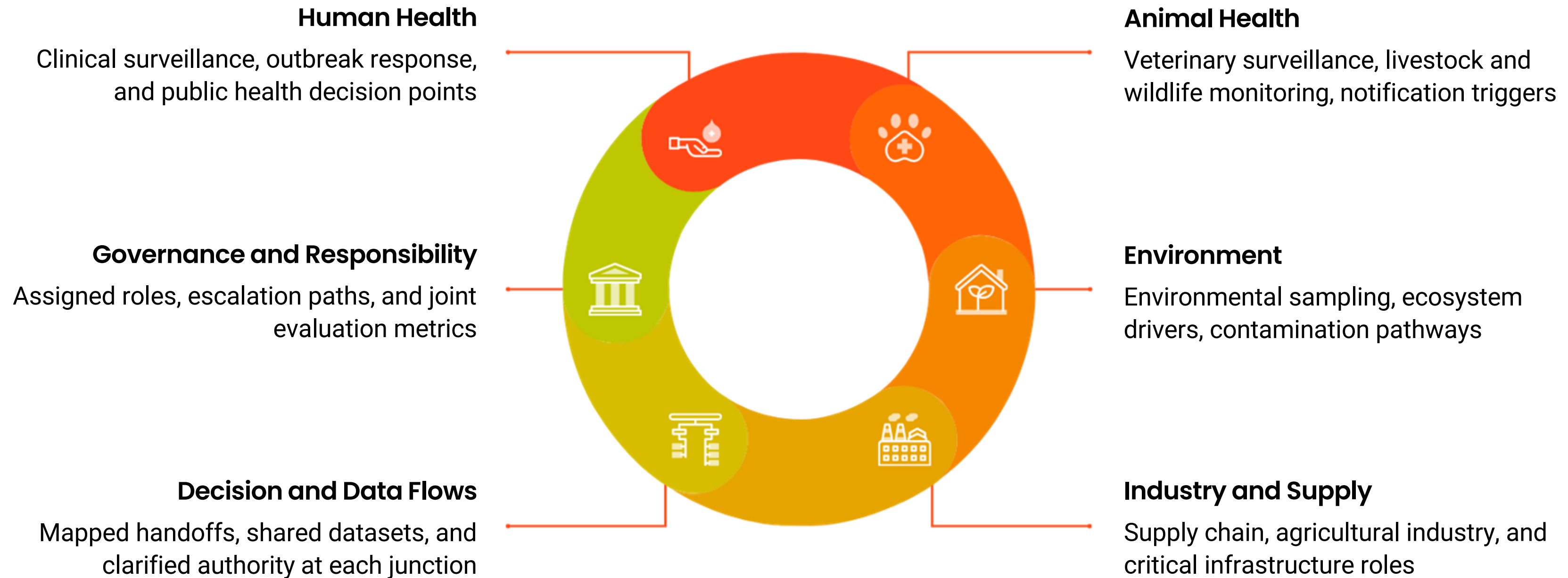
- No accountability or progress tracking





Cross-cutting issues: stakeholders

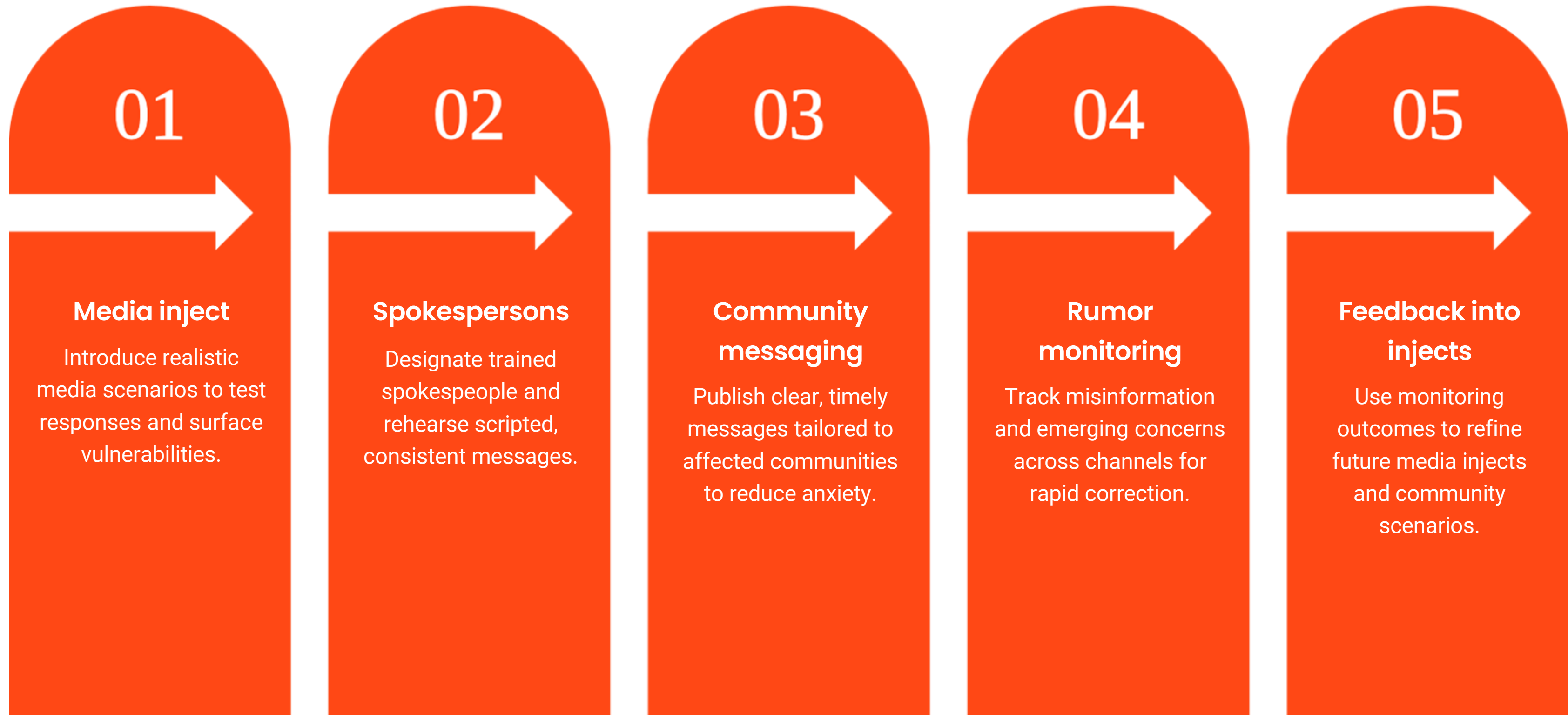
➤ Identify and engage stakeholders





Cross-cutting issues: political and communication risks

➤ Prepare politicians, spokespeople, media scripts, community messaging, and rumour control





Common pitfalls... a quick summary

Design phase pitfalls

1. Objectives that are vague, too many, or not measurable
2. Exercise type does not match the objective
3. Scenario unrealistically easy or impossibly difficult
4. Scope too wide for available resources and 'scope creep'
5. Inadequate mapping of participants and roles





Common pitfalls... a quick summary

Implementation phase pitfalls

6. Lack of trained controllers, evaluators, and facilitators
7. Poor communication flow during exercise
8. Exercise becomes a seminar instead of a simulation
9. Over-reliance on assumptions
10. Unrealistic resourcing and logistics
11. Controllers inject too much or too little information





Common pitfalls... a quick summary

Evaluation phase pitfalls

- 12. No structured evaluation tools
- 13. Failure to capture decision points and consequences
- 14. Soft or overly positive After-Action Reports
- 15. Lack of actionable recommendations
- 16. No follow-up mechanism





Common pitfalls... a quick summary

Cross-cutting pitfalls

- 17. Underestimating the importance of logistics
- 18. Inadequate preparation time
- 19. Ignoring One Health / intersectoral considerations
- 20. Overlooking political and community communication





Avoiding the most common mistakes...

➤ Develop a risk register with risk mitigations and responsibilities assigned!



Set a few measurable, capability-linked objectives with success criteria



Match exercise type to aims & objectives; develop exercise scenario/SMEL



Map stakeholders including One Health partners



Engage/train participants & train controllers and evaluators



Use structured evaluation tools for consistent data capture



Produce SMART recommendations with assigned owners and review dates



Thank you!