

Effective Vegan Advocacy and Animal Activism

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Overview

- Who, what and why?
- Definitions
- Ten factors to consider in order to maximise the effectiveness of our vegan advocacy and animal activism
 - But not necessarily the only ones!
- Link to this presentation, and additional resources
- Questions

Introduction

Who am I?

- Vegan for over 20 years
- Organiser – London Vegan Meetup (world's largest vegan social group)
- Secretary of Animal Rights / Welfare Special Interest Group – Mensa
- Campaign Manager (Brexit) – International Vegan Rights Alliance
- Previously:
 - Technical Director (consultant) – The Vegan Society
 - Chair – Vegan Campaigns' Vegan Pledge (the original vegan pledge)
 - Volunteer – The Vegan Society, Animal Aid, Animal Equality...

What are the aims of this talk?

- To give you some tools to help you...
 - evaluate and optimise your own advocacy and activism
 - evaluate others' advocacy and activism
 - evaluate others' training on advocacy and activism
- More questions than answers...
- But **NOT** to criticise any specific organisations or individuals

Why am I doing it?

- To maximise the effectiveness of vegan advocacy and animal activism (and thereby help the greatest number of nonhuman animals)
- To address concerns about rationale
- To challenge popular myths

Definitions

Effective, adjective

1. adequate to accomplish a purpose; producing the intended or expected result: *effective teaching methods; effective steps toward peace.*
2. actually in operation or in force; functioning: *The law becomes effective at midnight.*
3. producing a deep or vivid impression; striking: *an effective photograph.*
4. Military prepared and available for service, especially military service.

Dictionary.com (based on the Random House Dictionary, 2018)

Effective, adjective

1. adequate to accomplish a purpose; producing the intended or expected result: *effective teaching methods; effective steps toward peace.*
- With no goal, nothing *can* be 'effective' – by definition!
 - With over-ambitious goals, nothing *will* be 'effective'
 - With under-ambitious goals, *anything* will be 'effective'
 - With realistic goals, everything is relative... (it's not *just* a binary option!)

Pragmatic, adjective

1. of or pertaining to a practical point of view or practical considerations.
2. [Philosophy] of or pertaining to pragmatism (def. 2).
3. [Linguistics] of or pertaining to pragmatics (defs. 1, 2).
4. treating historical phenomena with special reference to their causes, antecedent conditions, and results.
5. of or pertaining to the affairs of state or community.

Dictionary.com (based on the Random House Dictionary, 2018)

Pragmatic, adjective

1. of or pertaining to a practical point of view or practical considerations.
- Promoting something less than veganism (i.e. endorsing ongoing animal exploitation)
 - Being less than vegan (e.g. eating non-vegan food with non-vegans)
 - Inconsistent (it weakens our arguments, and confuses caterers!)

Pragmatic, adjective

6. [Archaic.]

- busy; active.
- officious; meddlesome; interfering.
- dogmatic; opinionated.

Dictionary.com (based on the Random House Dictionary, 2018)

Veganism, noun

“A philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude — as far as is possible and practicable — all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals.”

The Vegan Society, 1979

Advocacy and activism

Advocacy, noun.

1. the act of pleading for, supporting, or recommending; active espousal: *He was known for his advocacy of states' rights.*

Dictionary.com (based on the Random House Dictionary, 2018)

Activism, noun.

1. the doctrine or practice of vigorous action or involvement as a means of achieving political or other goals, sometimes by demonstrations, protests, etc.

Dictionary.com (based on the Random House Dictionary, 2018)

Types of advocacy

- Effective Animal Advocacy
- Utilitarianism
- Peter Singer:
 - Animal Liberation
- Animal welfare
- Effective Vegan Advocacy
- Deontology
- Tom Regan:
 - The Case For Animal Rights
- Animal rights

Factor, noun

1. one of the elements contributing to a particular result or situation:
Poverty is only one of the factors in crime.
2. [Mathematics.] one of two or more numbers, algebraic expressions, or the like, that when multiplied together produce a given product; a divisor: 6 and 3 are factors of 18.
3. [Biochemistry.] any of certain substances necessary to a biochemical or physiological process, especially those whose exact nature and function are unknown.
4. ...

Dictionary.com (based on the Random House Dictionary, 2018)

Popular myths

True or false?

- “My advocacy or activism cannot be improved.”

FALSE: All advocacy and activism has room for improvement, so we must always be open to constructive criticism

- “We have to choose whether to promote reduction in a friendly, pragmatic way, or veganism in an angry, dogmatic way.”

FALSE: It’s quite possible to promote consistent, ethical veganism in a friendly, pragmatic way too!

True or false?

- “Shock tactics have the greatest impact.”

IT DEPENDS!

“Shock tactics can have limited impact. To be used **effectively** they need to be properly and **sensitively** integrated into an overall campaign.” *PR Week*

“Shock tactics don't always have the desired effect. The need to stand out must be balanced by the need to keep the public ‘on side’. Yet some end up offending the very people whose support they need.” *The Guardian*

“If an ad is too shocking, you run the risk of people deliberately avoiding what you say... Also, if you start adding unnecessary layers of drama, people see through it – they feel they're being manipulated.”

Paul Brazier, executive creative director, Abbott Mead Vickers BBDO

True or false?

- “All forms of advocacy and activism have their place.”

FALSE: We must be open to the idea that some forms of advocacy or activism may not be beneficial; or may do more harm than good

- “There is one type of advocacy or activism that is most effective.”

FALSE: We'll look at ten factors of effective advocacy and activism that will help determine the best approach **for the specific situation**

Ten factors for effective advocacy and activism



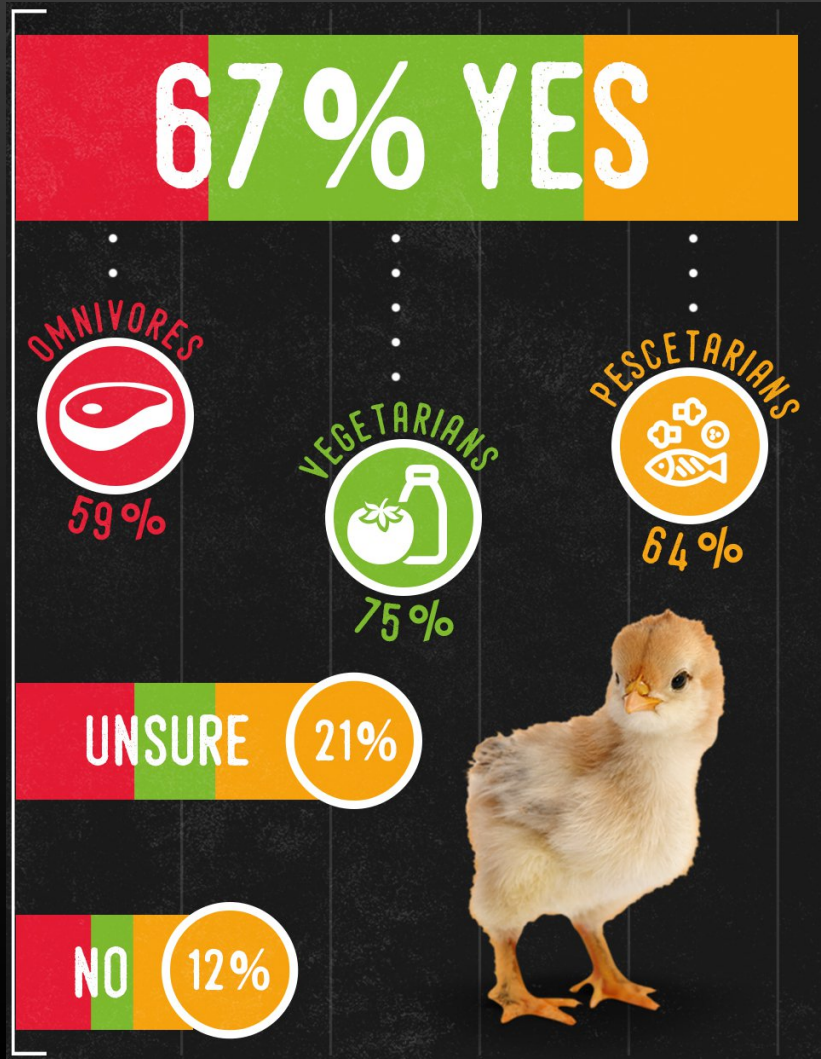
Factor 1: Goal

- Short term
 - Increasing the number of vegans
 - Reducing the number of animals eaten
 - Reducing the suffering that animals experience
- Long term
 - Ending animal exploitation
- Effective Altruism criteria: important, neglected, tractable
- SMART criteria: specific, measurable, assignable, realistic, time-bound

Reduction or veganism?

- Promoting Veg*nism: Struggles & Successes, Conference on Animal Rights in Europe (CARE) 2017 – Trent Grassian, Social Policy PhD
- “Largest study of meat reducers, etc. that’s been done, the largest study of these types of campaigns that’s been done...”
- Reduction
 - Friends of the Earth
 - Environmental concerns
 - Meat eaters → reducers
 - Non-vegans
- Veganism
 - Animal Aid
 - Animal rights
 - Reducers → vegans
 - Vegans

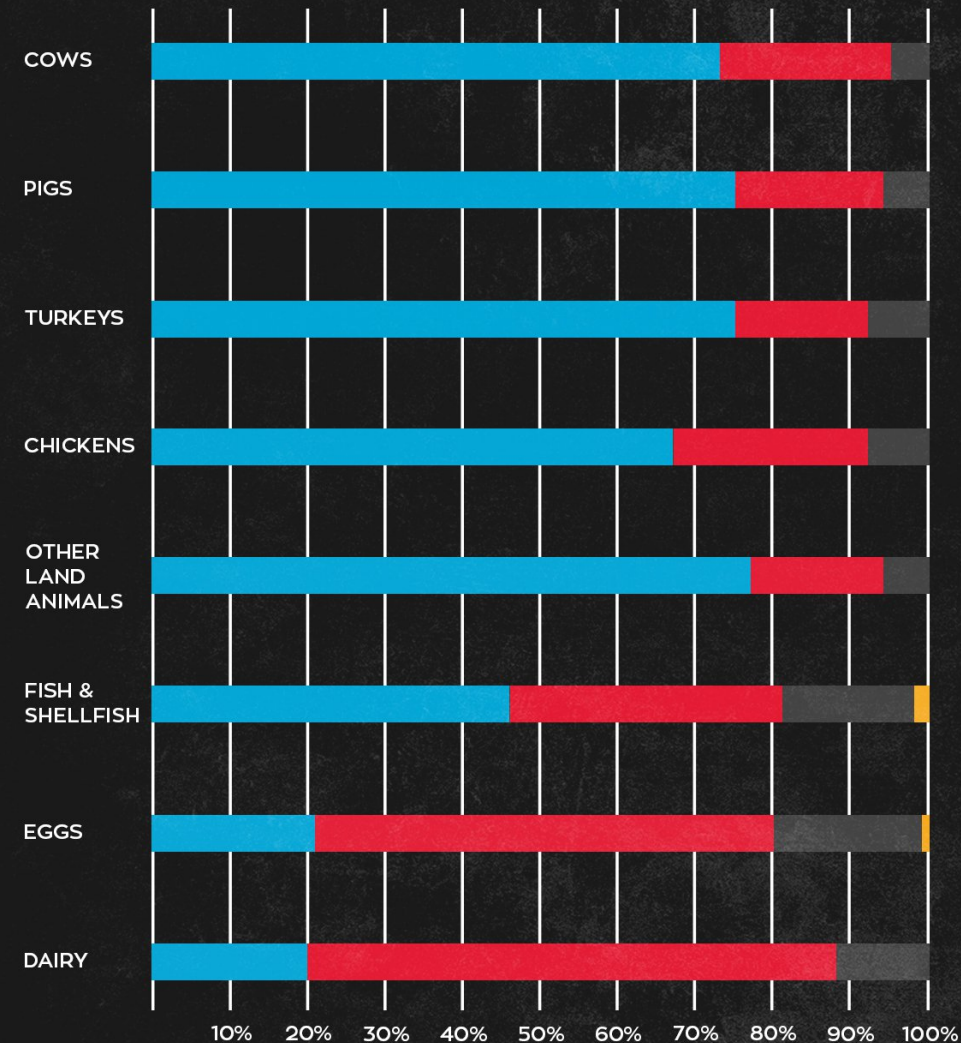
Veganuary 2017

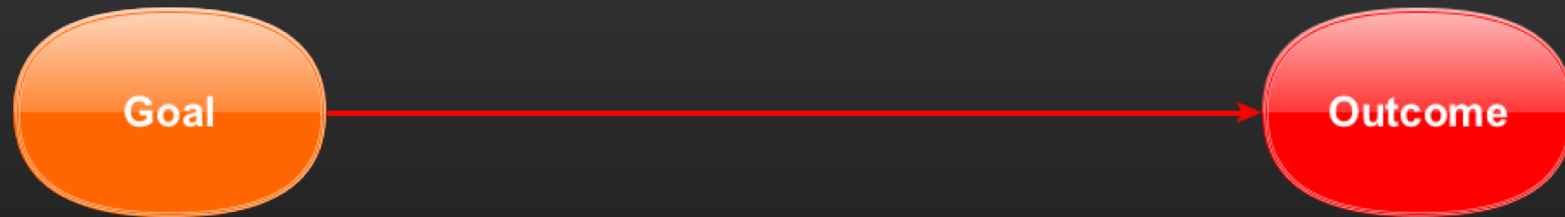


REDUCING CONSUMPTION?

(of those not continuing with a vegan diet)

● Stop Eating ● Reduce Consumption ● Eat Normally ● Increase Consumption





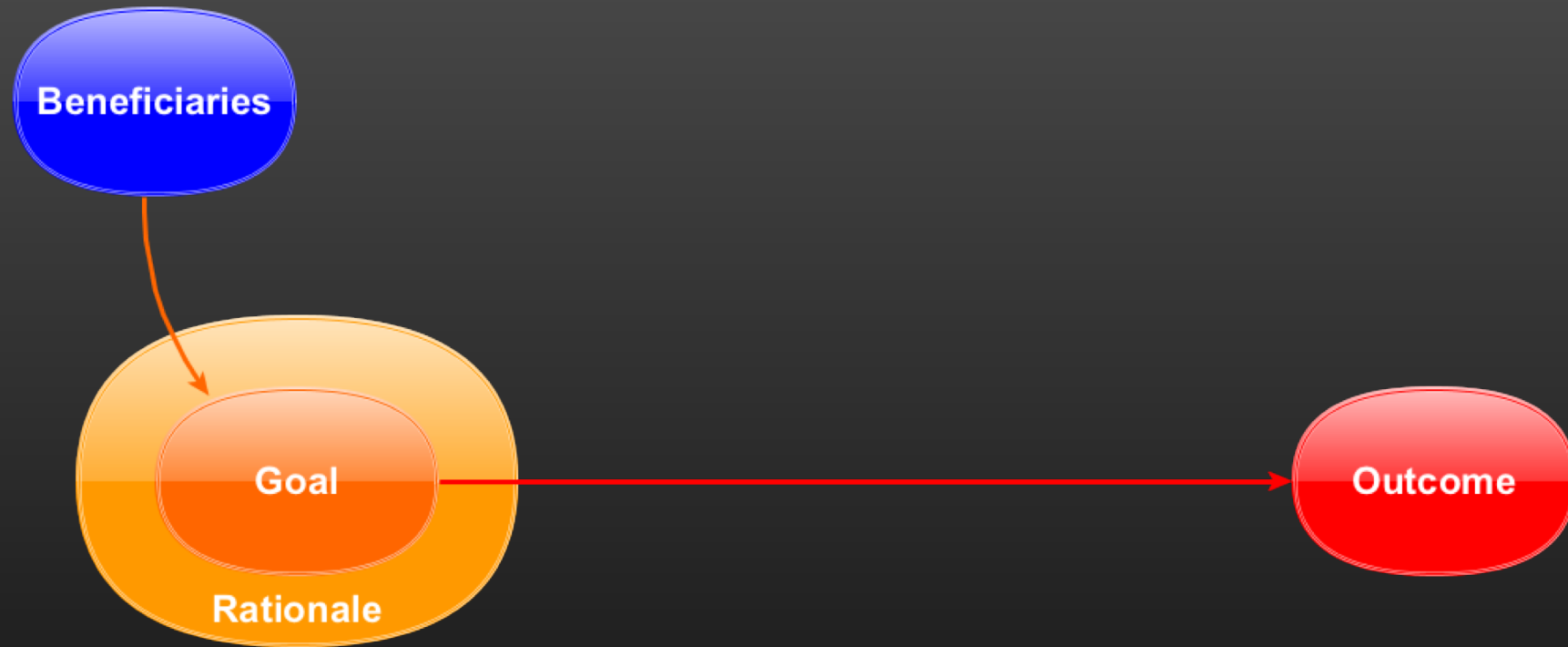
Factor 2: Outcome

- Short term and long term
 - Recidivism
- Side effects
 - Media coverage – positive or negative
 - Attitude change – positive or negative
 - Increased consumption of other animals, or other animal products



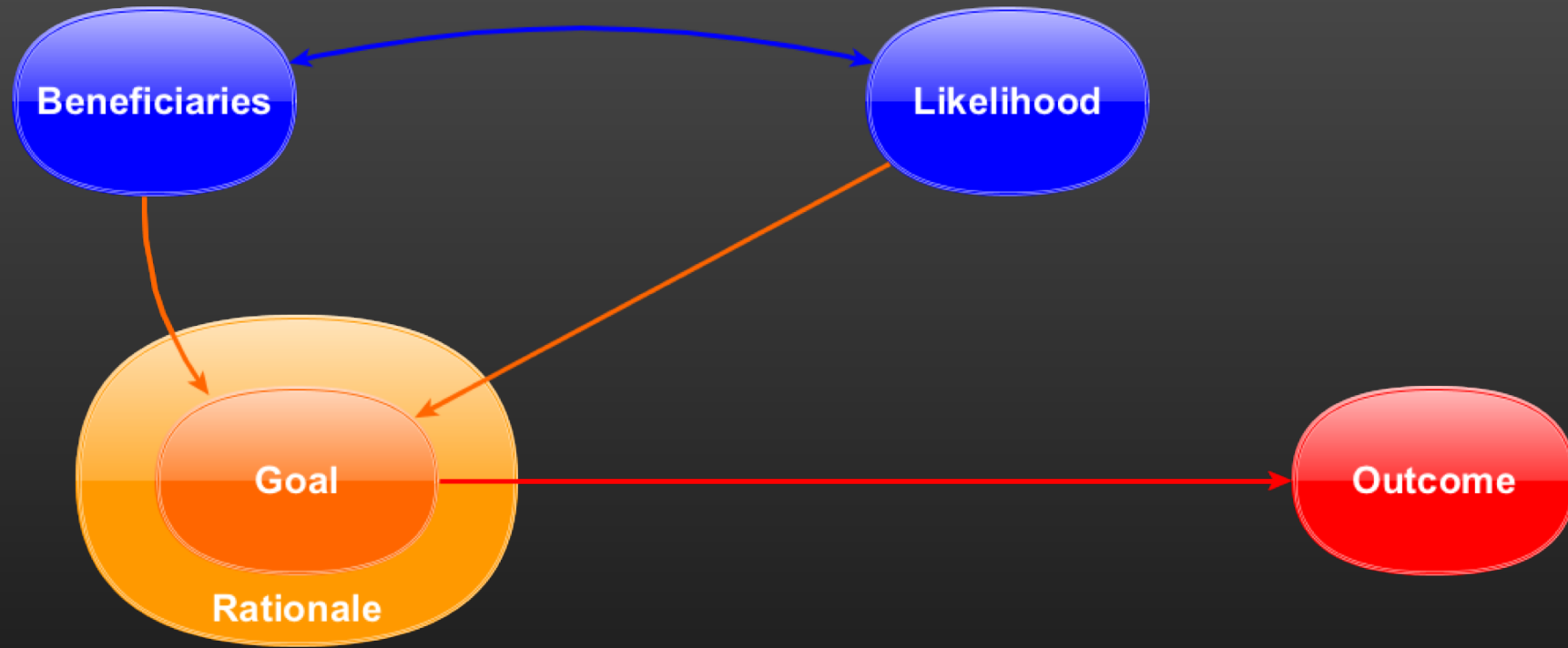
Factor 3: Rationale

- Nonhuman animals
- Money
 - Charitable / grassroots (not-for-profit) or commercial (for-profit)?
 - Costs? Attendance, membership, books, merchandise, etc.
 - Supporters' agendas? Philanthropists, corporate partners, etc.
- Social capital
- Convenience
- Status quo



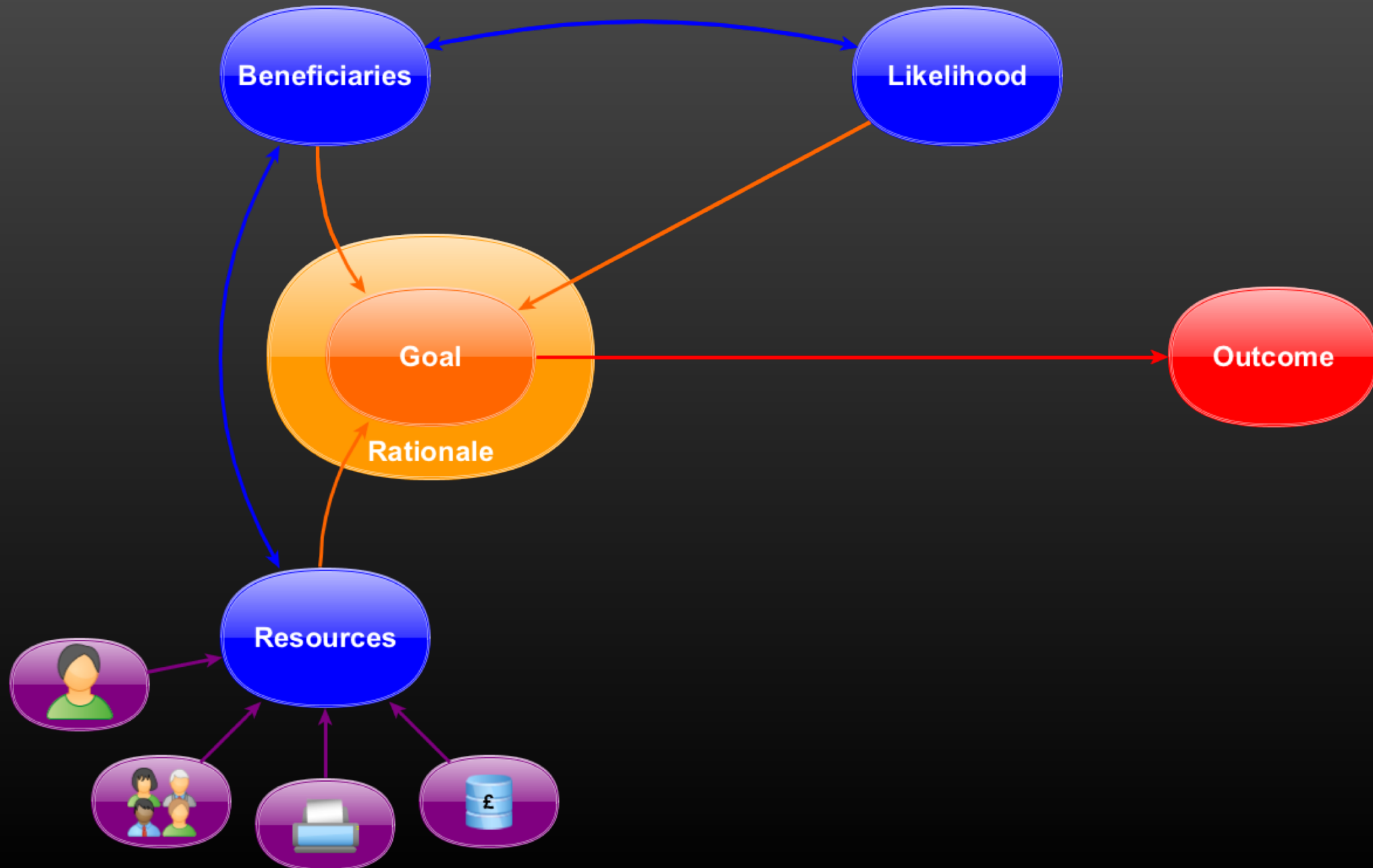
Factor 4: Beneficiaries

- Nonhuman animals
 - Exploited by humans, or suffering in other ways?
 - Farmed animals, domestic animals, wild animals?
 - Specific species?
- Speciesism (and Outcome)
- Important (Effective Altruism criteria)



Factor 5: Likelihood

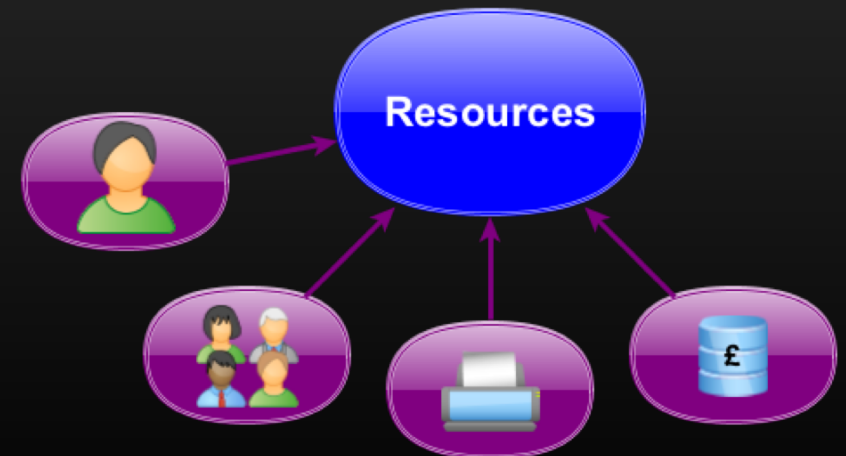
- Tractable (Effective Altruism criteria)
- Realistic (SMART criteria)
- The Overton Window
 - “The range of ideas the public is willing to consider and accept... This shifts over time, as it’s subject to the trends of social thought and norms. All social reform movements have to shift the Overton window to make progress.”
 - “Joseph Overton contended that pushing for extreme positions is more effective.”

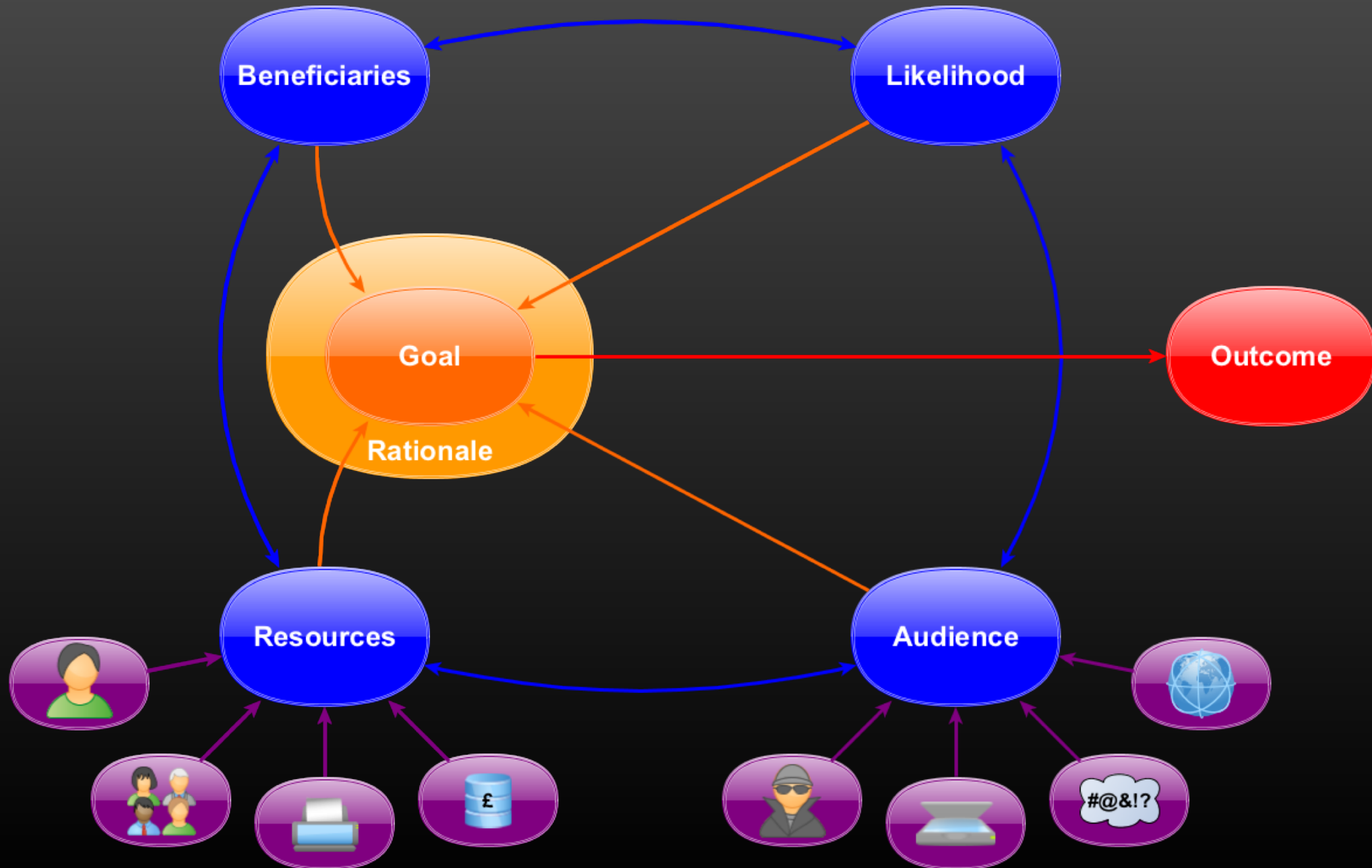


Factor 6: Resources

What resources are available to **you**?

- Personal
 - Time, energy, skills, confidence, enjoyment!
- Opportunities
 - Contacts
 - Community
- Facilities
- Money

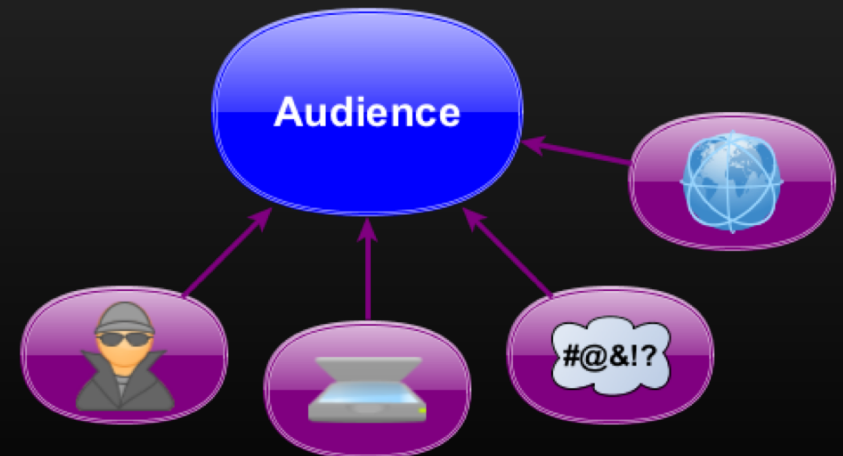




Factor 7: Audience

How will **they** perceive your message?

- Where are they – literally and metaphorically?
- Language
 - Tone
 - Inclusivity
- Imagery
- Presentation
 - Graphic design
 - Personal appearance ('Tribal' appeal)



Meeting people where they are

1. Pre-contemplation
2. Contemplation
3. Preparation
4. Action
5. Maintenance

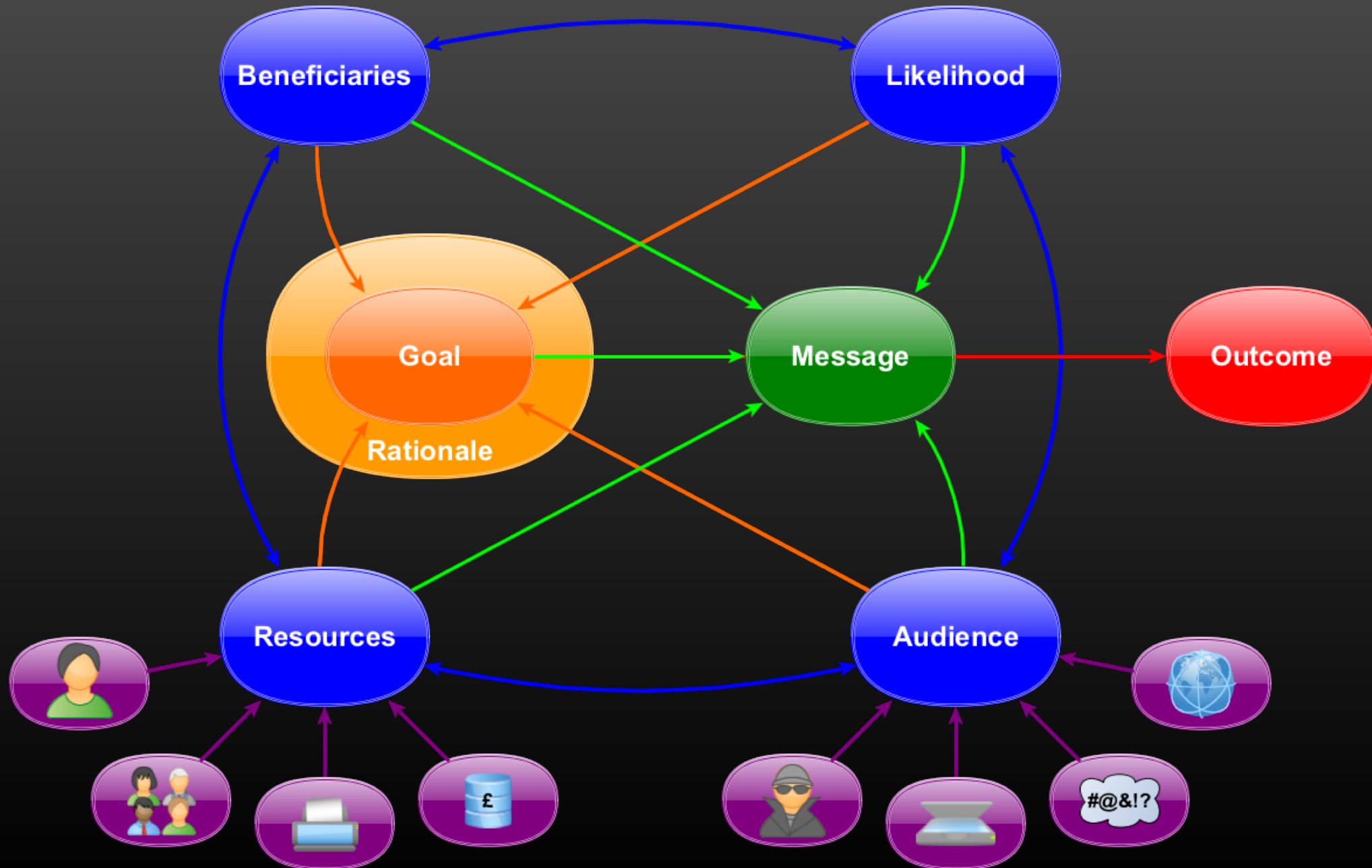
- Raise awareness
- Make the ethical case
- Provide assistance
- Support and encourage
- Support and encourage

Inclusivity

- “Our focus is on identifying the most effective ways to help animals... We believe it is necessary... to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion. We must fight against the systems of oppression that negatively affect human and nonhuman animals alike.” ***Animal Charity Evaluators***
- “We're not going to have a global animal rights movement if it's actively excluding so many people.” ***The Bearded Vegans***
- “To encourage the continued growth of veganism, we need to challenge the mainstream narrative that it's a white, middle-class pursuit, and make it more accessible to those from marginalised groups and disadvantaged backgrounds.” ***Me***

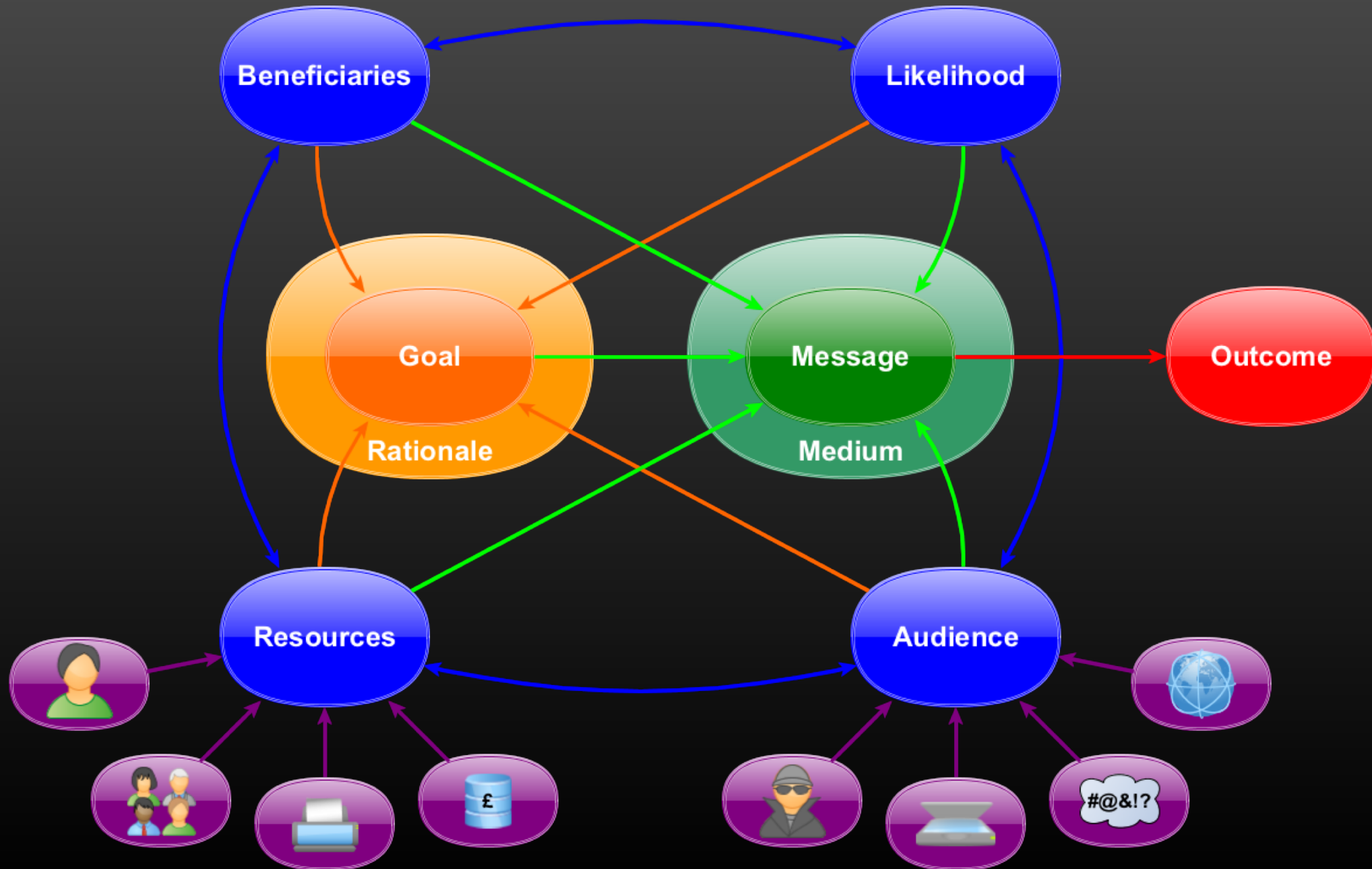
Inclusivity

- Don't give non-vegans an excuse to reject our message ("you vegans only care about animals, never humans...")
- Listen to people from marginalised groups and disadvantaged backgrounds (especially *non*-vegans – as they're our audience!)
- Avoid doing things that they tell us are oppressive, exclusive, offensive, or hurtful. (E.g. don't compare human and nonhuman victims or suffering.)
- Recognise that those who do *not* have an issue with such imagery or language do not speak for everyone. (Apply the precautionary principle.)
- Accept that we have a choice between causing harm, and not doing so – and take the latter. (This need not dilute our message!)
- Challenge others whose language and imagery alienates potential allies.



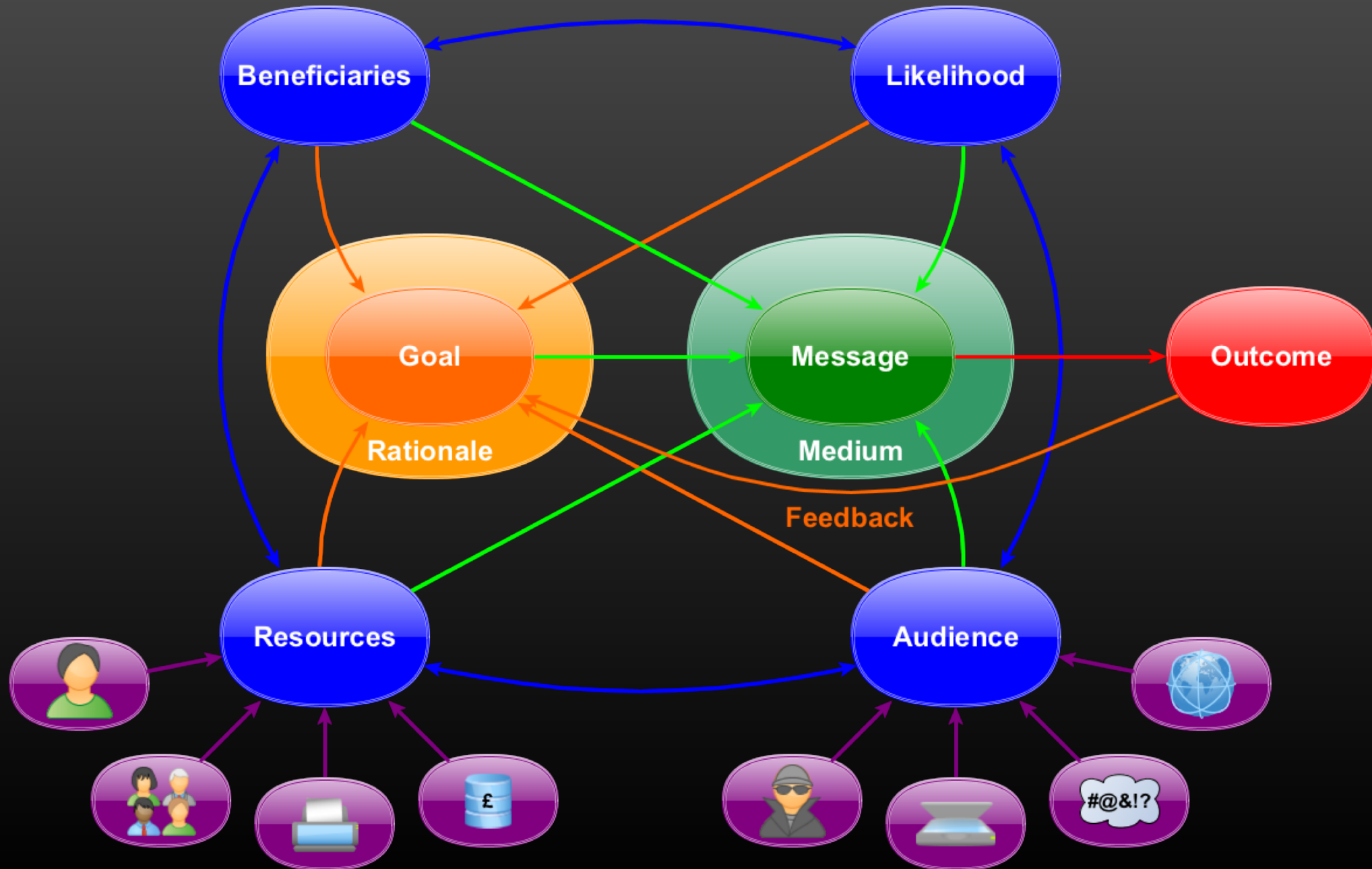
Factor 8: Message

- Consistency
 - Inconsistency weakens our arguments (and confuses caterers!)
- Evidence-based
 - Myths and pseudoscience are easy to discredit



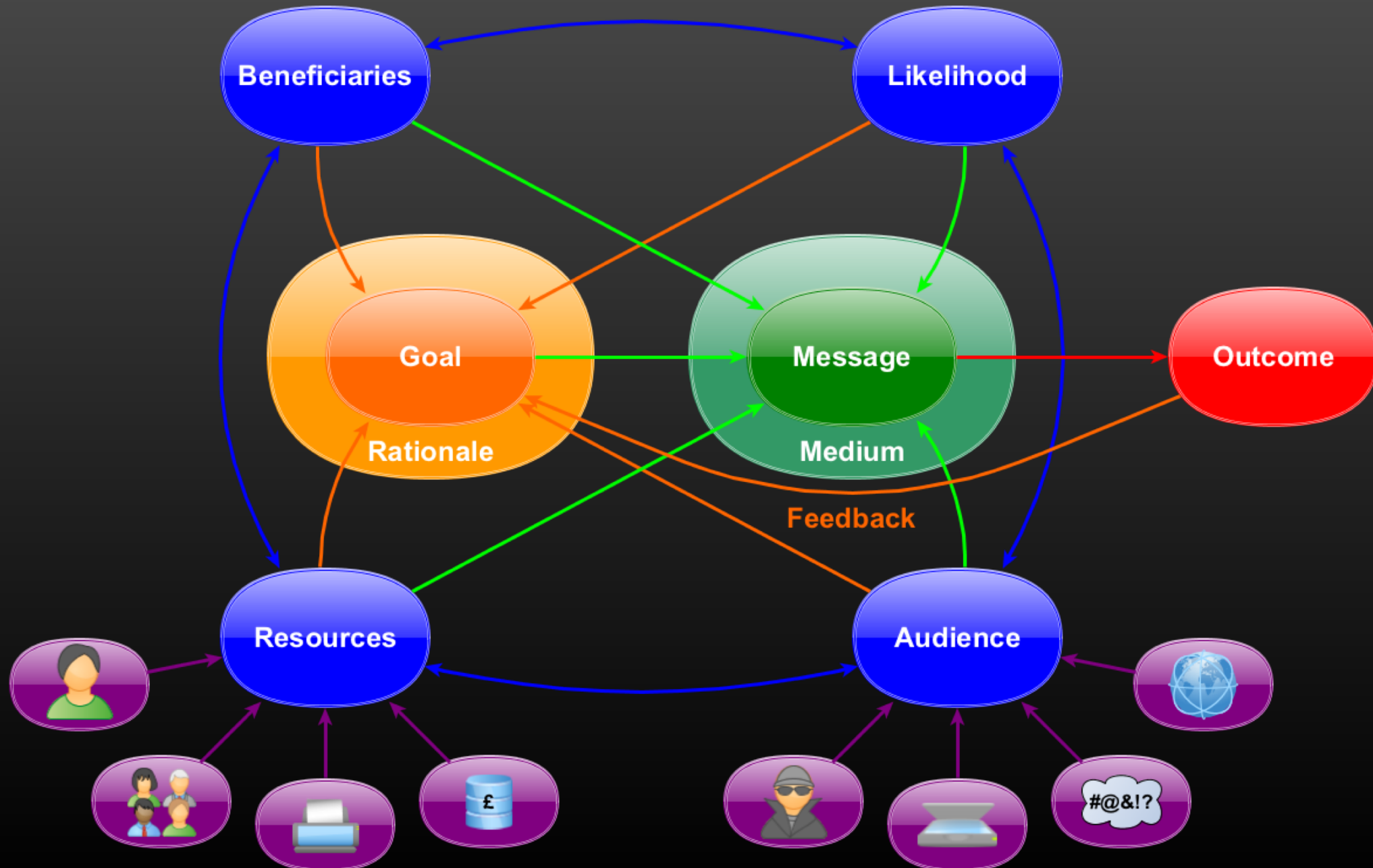
Factor 9: Medium (Action)

- Leaflets
- Stickers
- Posters
- Adverts (different media)
- Podcasts
- Online (Facebook, YouTube, etc.)
- Correspondence
- Chalktivism
- Merchandise (create or wear)
- Events (festivals, protests, etc.)



Factor 10: Feedback

- How effective was it, i.e. to what extent was the goal reached?
- What other outcomes were there – positive or negative?
- How could more beneficiaries be included?
- How could success be made more likely?
- How could resources be better used?
How could more resources be obtained?
- How could the audience be better engaged?
How could the audience be increased?



Problems

Problems with effectiveness

- **Flawed concepts of data:** “A hundred community members’ lived-experience recounted through anecdotes and other qualitative methods is dismissed, whereas a ‘white paper’ is accepted as valid.”
- **Short-term focused:** “The dominant view has a bias toward what is instantly measurable, so ‘effectiveness’ is about short-term impact.”
- **Risk averse:** “Effectiveness rewards nonprofits for not taking risks... without risks and failures and the sharing of key lessons gained through them, our field cannot advance.”

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Solutions to these problems

- “We must ground ‘effectiveness’ on race, equity, and social justice, and see representation as essential to effectiveness.”
- “We must trust the people most affected to define effectiveness.”
- “We must consider the entire sector when measuring effectiveness.”

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Conclusion

Additional resources

- The best vegans aren't vegan and other absurdities – Marla Rose
- Motivational Methods for Vegan Advocacy – Dr Casey Taft
- A Discussion of Strategy in Animal Advocacy – Dr Casey Taft and Tobias Leenaert
- Veganism in an Oppressive World – Julia Feliz Brueck
- Aphro-Ism – Aph Ko and Syl Ko
- ARZone podcasts (e.g. Saryta Rodriguez; Laura Schlieffer)
- Summary of Evidence for Foundational Questions in Effective Animal Advocacy – Sentience Institute
- Pathways to Veganism, The Vegan Society

Summary

- Set a realistic **goal** – supported by a valid **rationale**
- Maximise your **beneficiaries** – avoiding harm to others
- Maximise the **likelihood** of success – long-term as well as short-term
- Make the best use of your **resources** – including yourself!
- Tailor to your **audience** – with inclusive language and imagery
- Choose your **medium** and **message** to suit the above
- Assess the **outcome** to provide **feedback**

Questions and feedback

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Links and download

<http://robbmasters.com/eva>

(includes additional slides and other resources that we haven't had time to cover today)