

# INTERPRETER EDUCATION: HISTORY IS A RELENTLESS MASTER

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Street Leverage – Historical Reflections Presentation

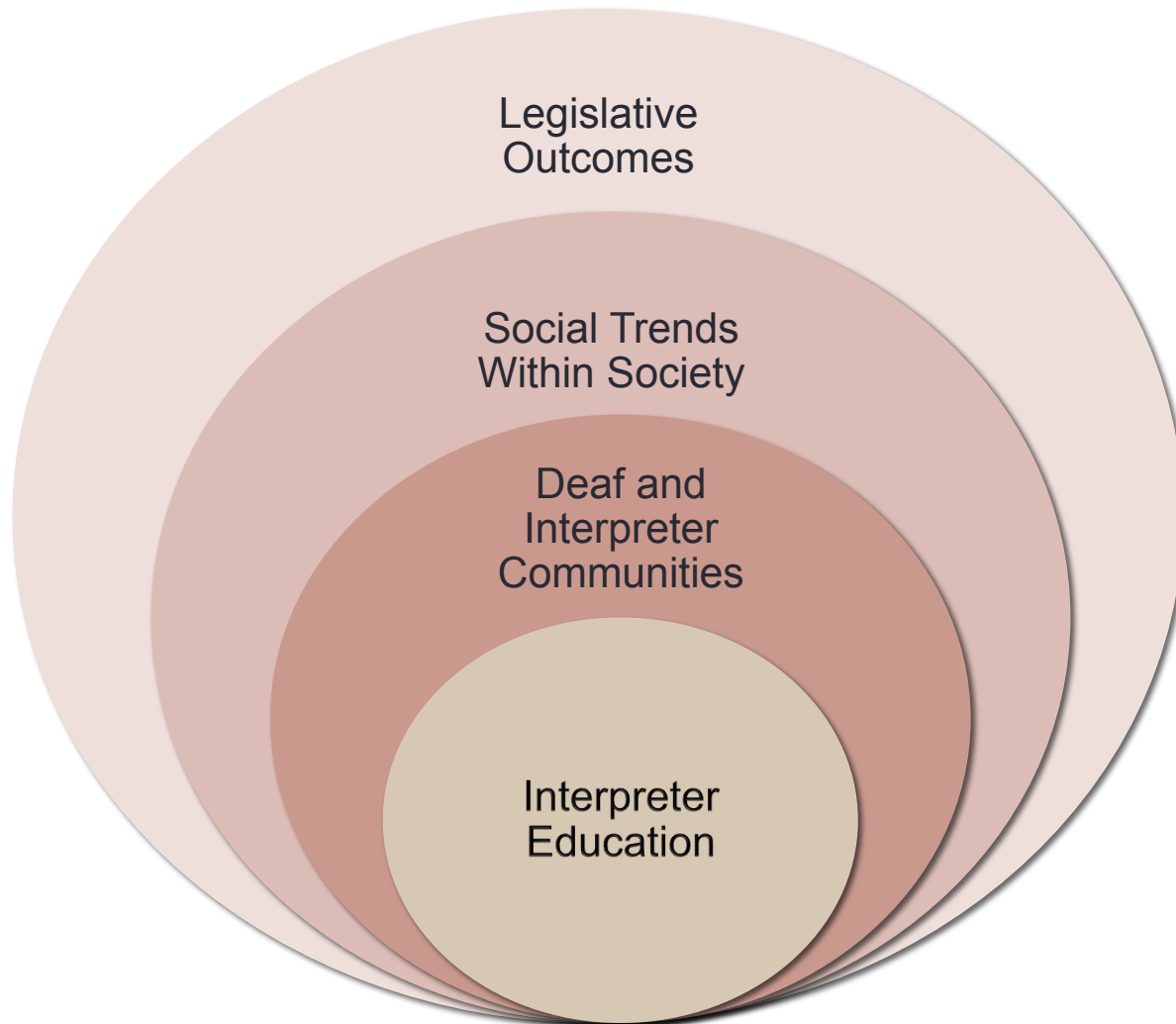
Wednesday, October 22, 2014

Dennis Cokely, Ph.D. and Anna Witter-Merithew, M.Ed.

# Webinar Goal and Objectives

- GOAL: Provide the historic context in which interpreter education exists and has developed.
- Objectives:
  - Discuss factors that impact the context of interpreter education
  - Discuss the contribution of federal funding to the growth and development of interpreter education
  - Identify reoccurring issues and lingering questions impacting interpreter education

# Socio-Political Context in Which Interpreter Education Exists



# Interpreter Education: Early Mindset

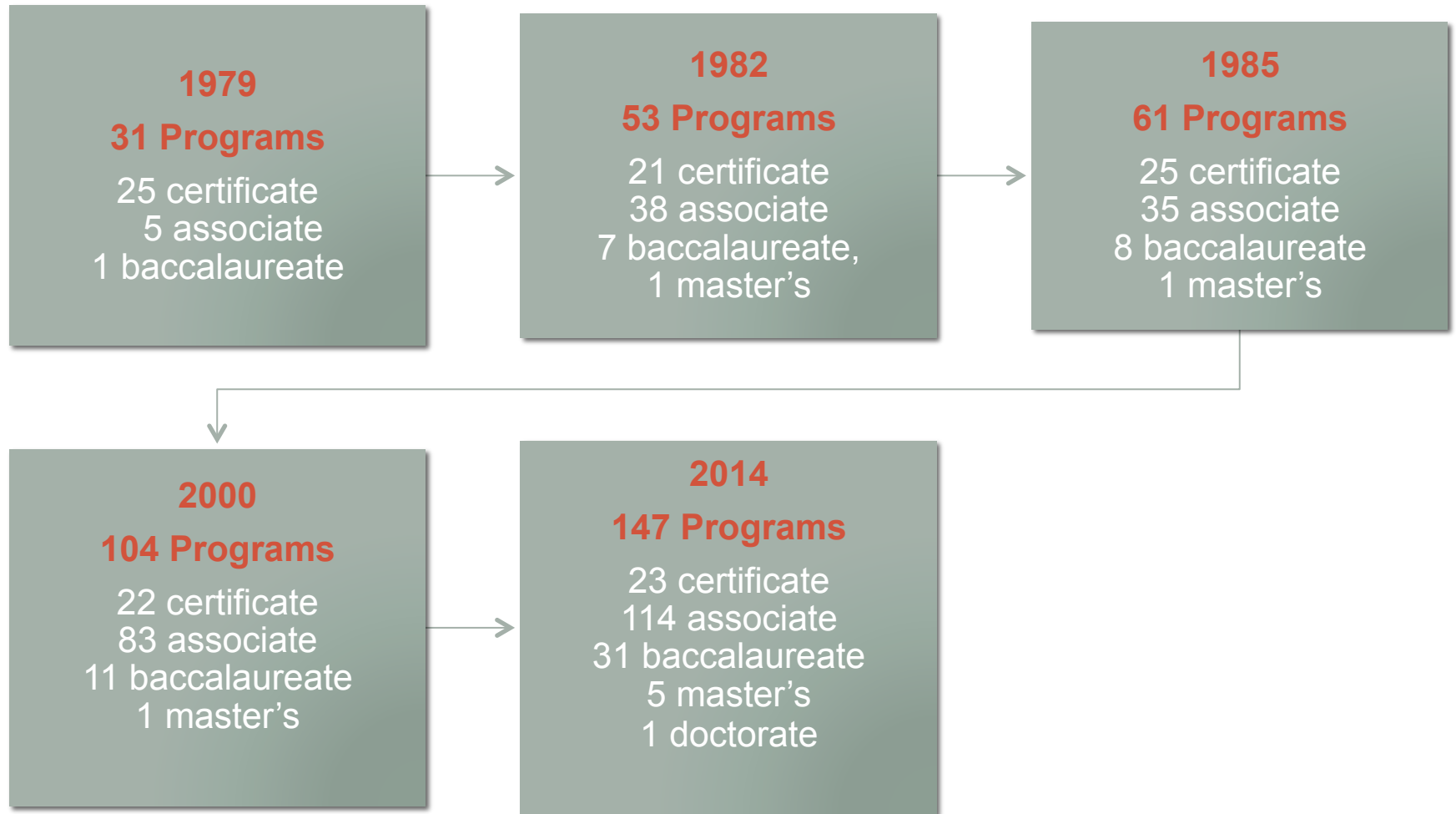
- “ We were eager to recruit, train and verify the competence of interpreters, but I do not believe we thought they would become full-time interpreters. It is my opinion that we perceived the new interpreters functioning much the same way as we had, that is holding full-time jobs and interpreting on the side. ...Critical to the development of a body of full-time interpreters would be the amount of work available and compensation.”
  - Lou Fant, Author of *Silver Threads: A Personal Look at the First Twenty-five Years of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf*, 1990.

# Early Recruitment

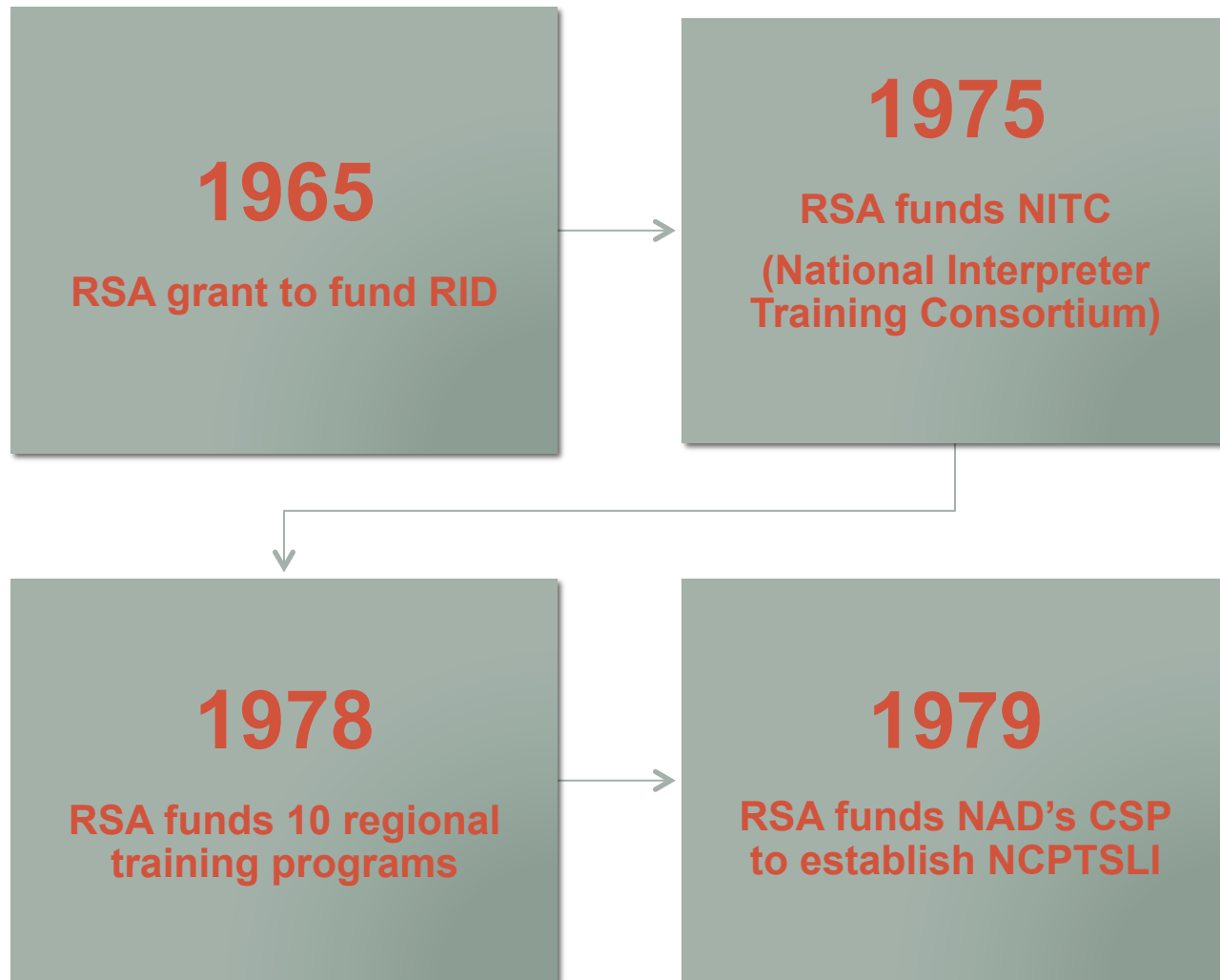
“What we envisioned was an upgrading of interpreters and recruiting of new interpreters, mostly from the ranks of good signers who showed potential.”

- Lou Fant, Author of *Silver Threads: A Personal Look at the First Twenty-five Years of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf*, 1990.

# Program Expansion



# Federal Funding for Interpreter Education



# Federal Funding for Interpreter Education

**1979**

meeting in Atlanta, GA results in  
publication of

*Interpreter Training: The State of  
the Art*

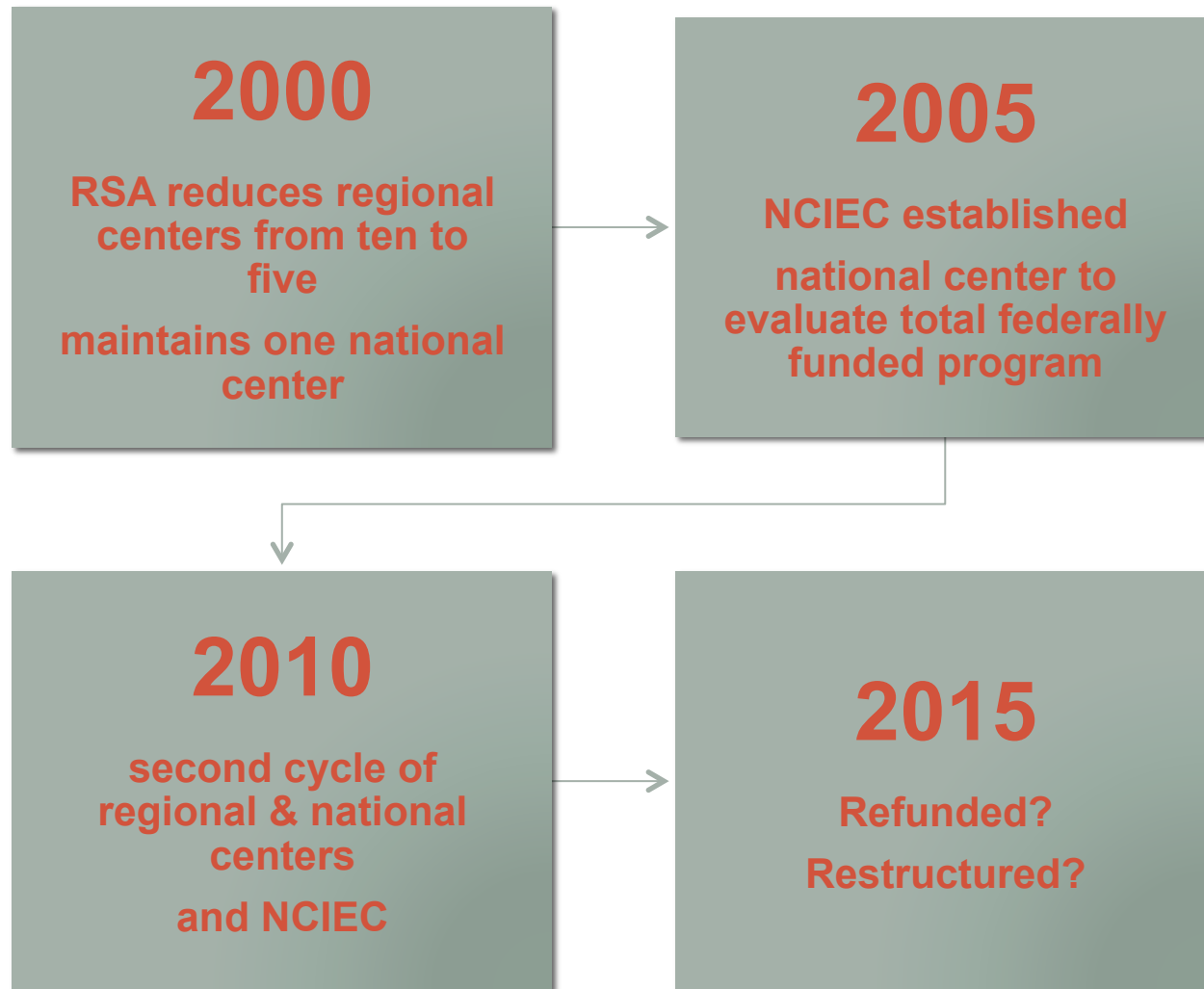


**1980**

meeting in Tucson, AZ  
100 questions needing answers  
request to RSA  
Request denied.



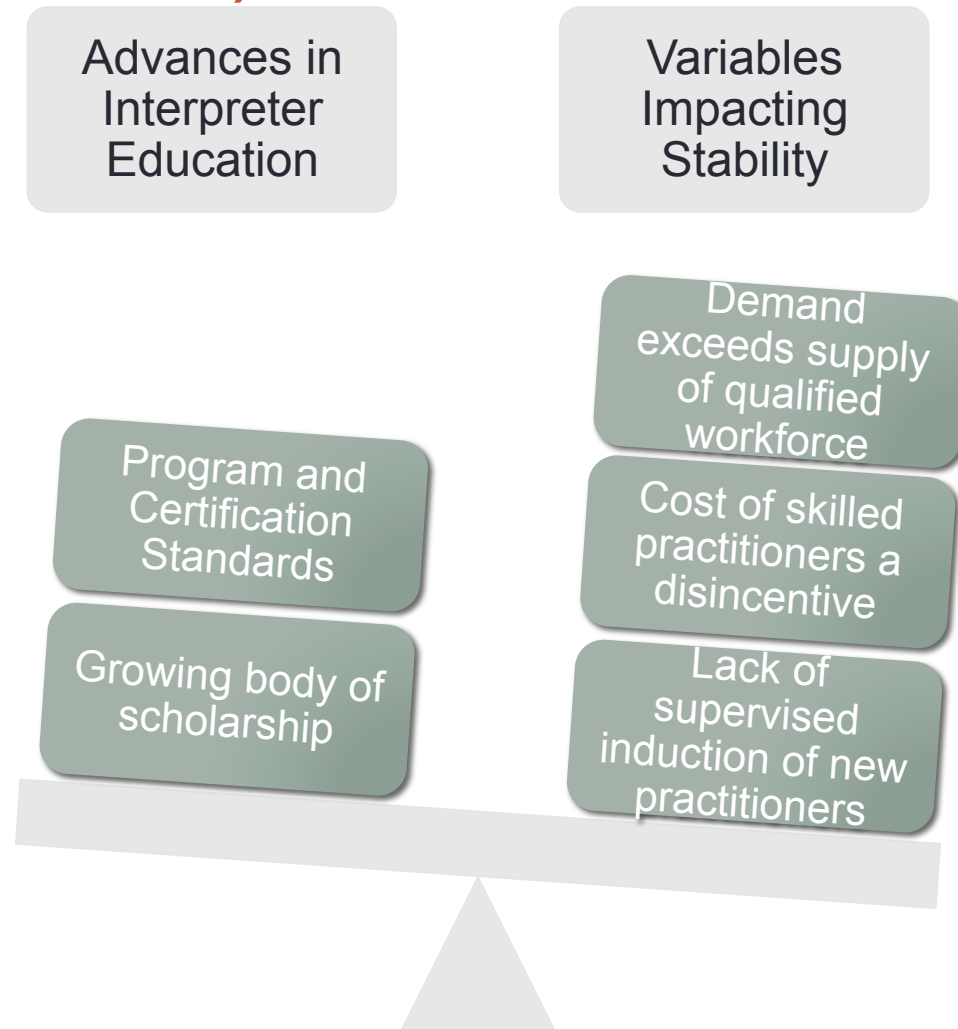
# Federal Funding for Interpreter Education



# Federal Funding for Interpreter Education

- Take Away points regarding federal funding:
  - Funding relatively constant for 30+ years (\$1 – 2 million per year)
  - Initial focus on short term training (e.g. workshops)
  - Assessment of trainings largely satisfaction surveys
  - No overall, coordinated plan (each applicant viewed independently)
  - No implementation or follow-up plans for products produced (e.g. Multi-Cultural curriculum, DeafBlind curriculum)
  - Until 2010 no overall program impact assessment
  - No ability to conduct basic research to inform instruction and assessment

# Market Disorder (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004)



# Behind the Eight Ball

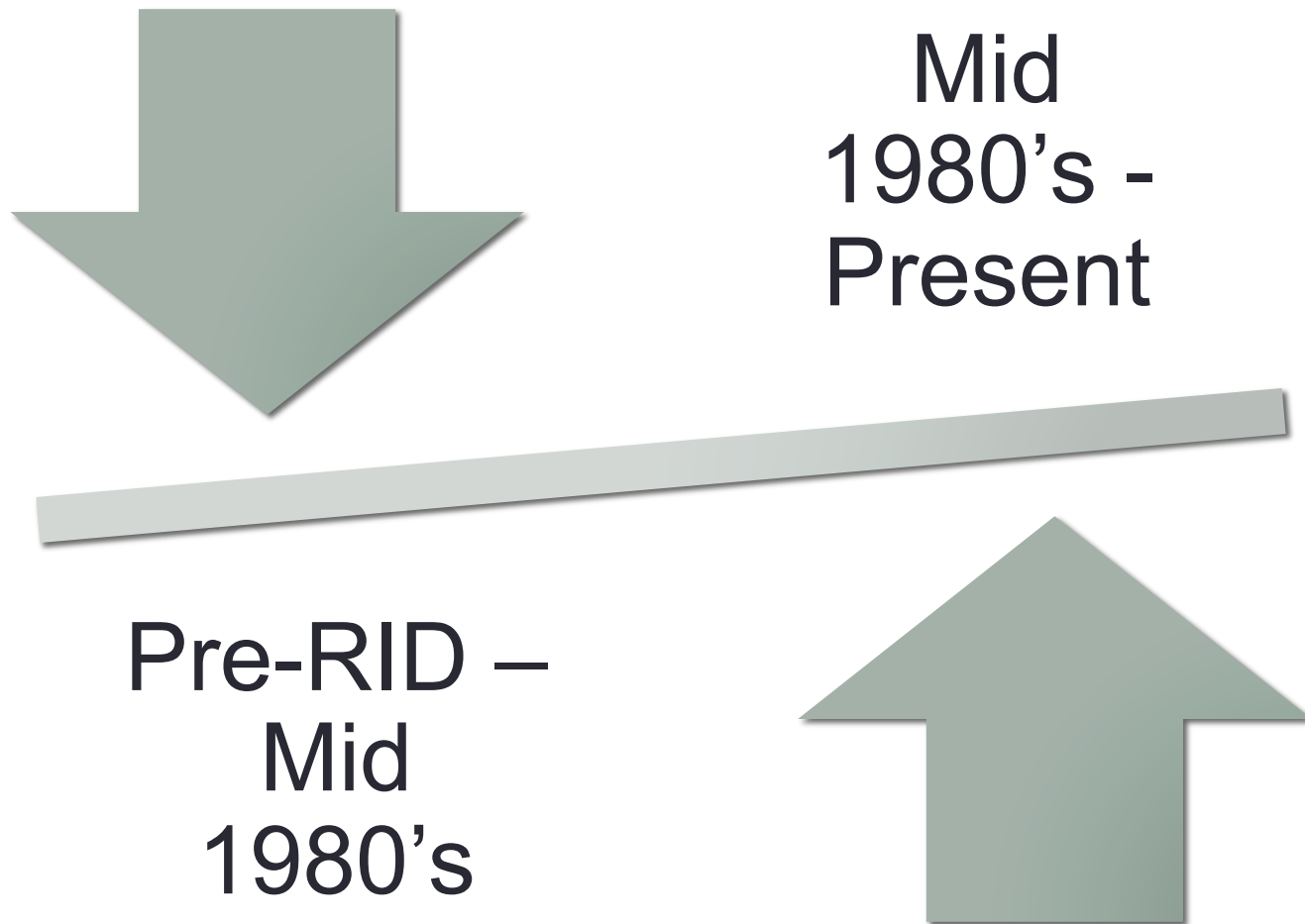
## Always Playing Catch-Up

- Not working in partnership with the socio-political systems that impact interpreter education. Frequently in a position of reacting to legislative trends/mandates versus helping to shape them from an informed perspective.

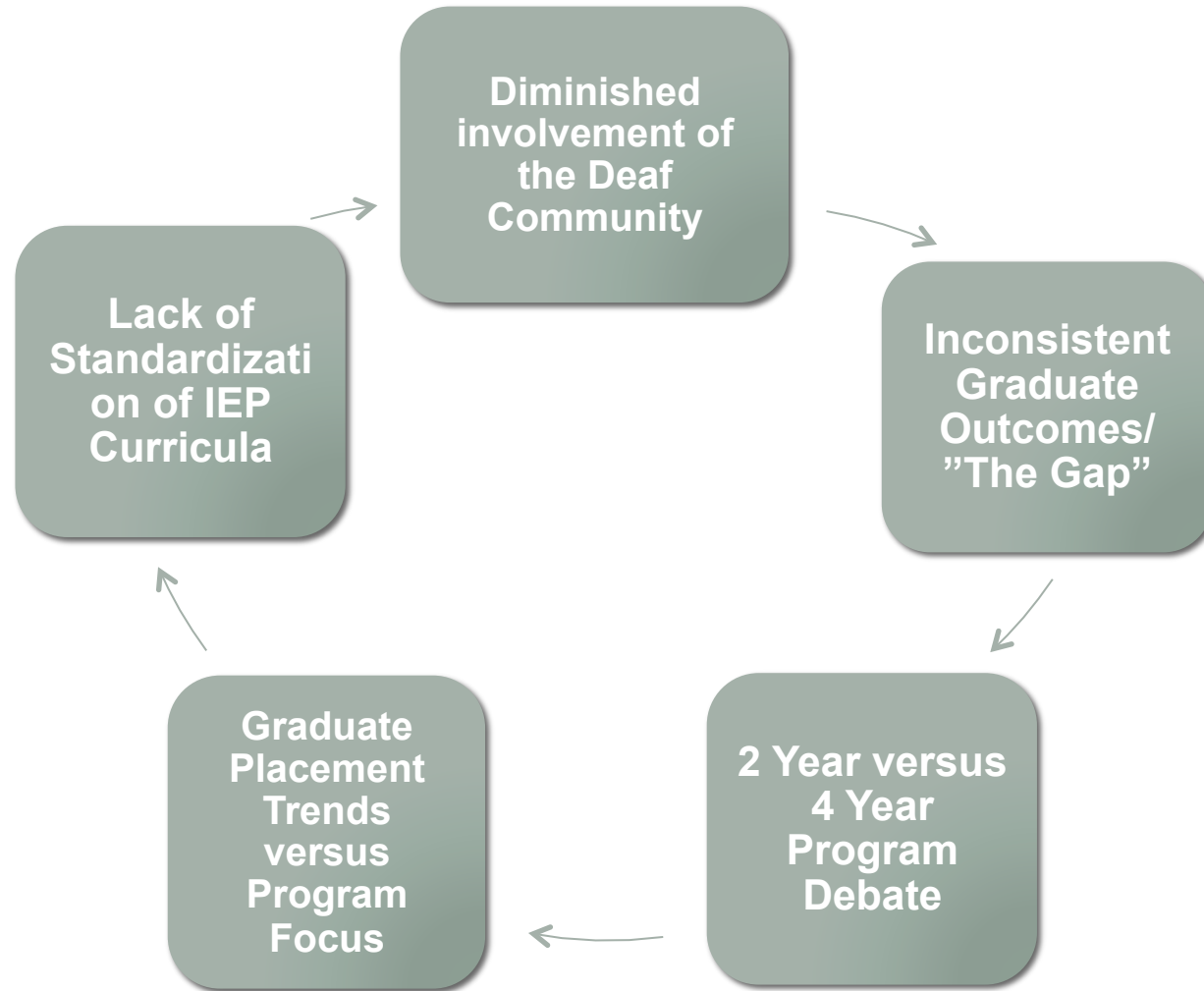
## Not Using What We Know

- We know the importance of students having bilingual competence BEFORE beginning the study/act of interpreting, but most of us continue to exist within an academic structure and scope and sequence of learning that doesn't fit this reality.

# Deaf Community Involvement in Interpreter Education



# Reoccurring Issues in Interpreter Education



# A few of the many questions to be answered

- What graduate outcomes are necessary to ensure a qualified workforce?
- How do interpreter education programs create meaningful partnership with members of the Deaf Community to ensure the role of gatekeeping that has been lost?
- How do we create incentive and momentum around transitioning interpreter education into the appropriate academic context?
- How do we create greater standardization within IEP curricula?

# Closing Thought/Call to Action

History can be a **relentless master** in its quest to ensure that critical lessons to be learned by any society will resurface time and again until they are deeply understood and internalized. As this pertains to interpreter education, **until we more fully understand our reoccurring issues, and find the creativity, courage and vision to tackle them, we will be unable to close “the gap” or resolve the ongoing dissatisfaction consumers have with their interpreted experiences.** This will only serve to seriously delay the full linguistic access that Deaf people have a right to and have worked hard to achieve.