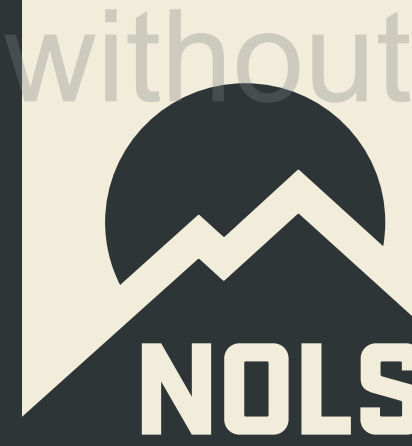


CRISIS MANAGEMENT

A PRE-PLAN IN ACTION



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METHOD

**OVERVIEW OF NOLS CRISIS RESPONSE AND
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

SCENARIO

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSE

FORUM FOR DISCUSSION

DEFINITIONS

- **Crisis:** An event that is, or has potential to be, a turning point in the organization. A crisis may overwhelm the organization's available staff and resources and impact its ability to operate.
- **Emergency:** An event that may require urgent response but is within the scope of the organization's resources and does not threaten its ability to operate.

NOLS CRISIS CASES

1989: Fatality, Wyoming, mountaineering

1992: Fatality, Wyoming, avalanche

1996: Fatality, Wyoming, river crossing

1999: Fatality, Alaska, glacier travel

2011: Multiple injury incident, Alaska, bear attack

2011: Fatality, India, backpacking

2018: Cardiac arrest, Wyoming, WEMT

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL

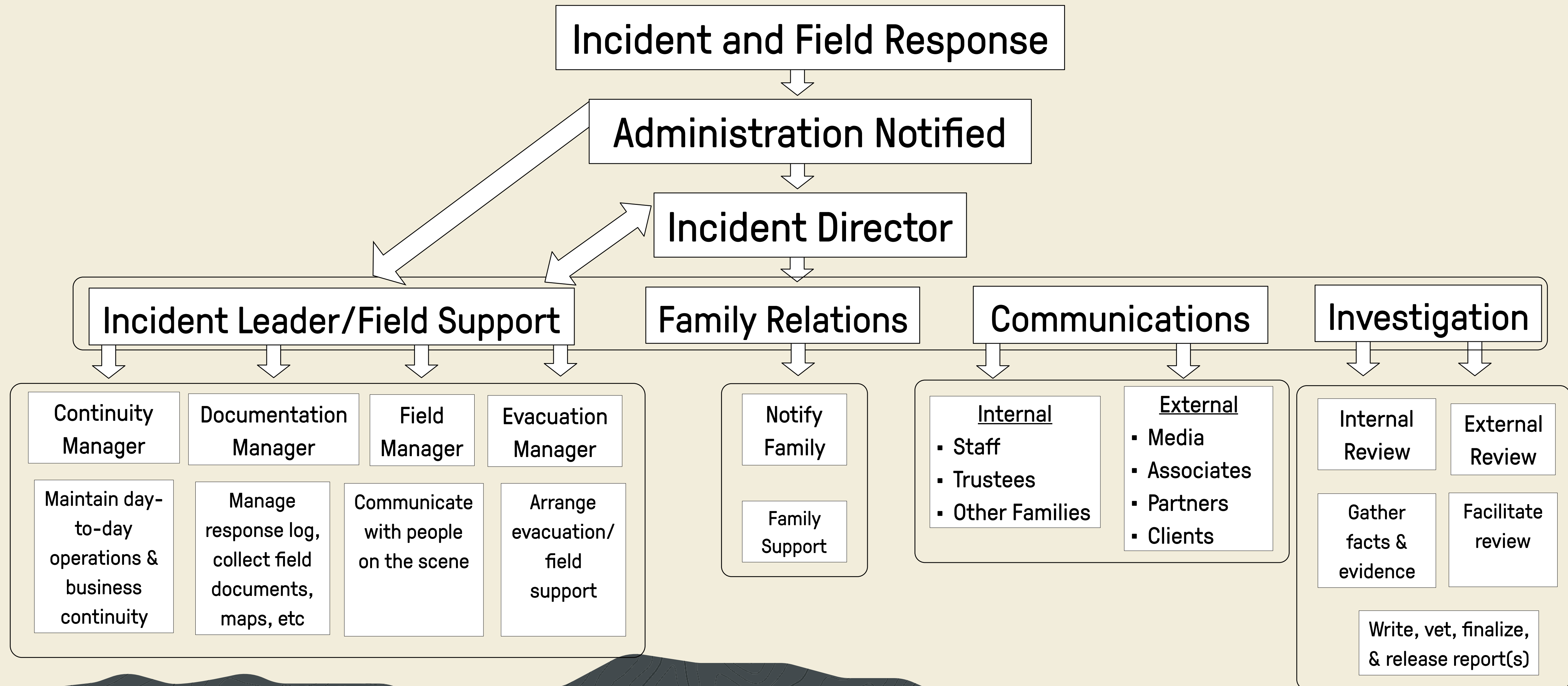
1. Provides guidance for your response and management

- Many things happen at once

2. Prioritize tasks and actions, and deploy resources

3. Pre-determine certain actions and decisions

NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC

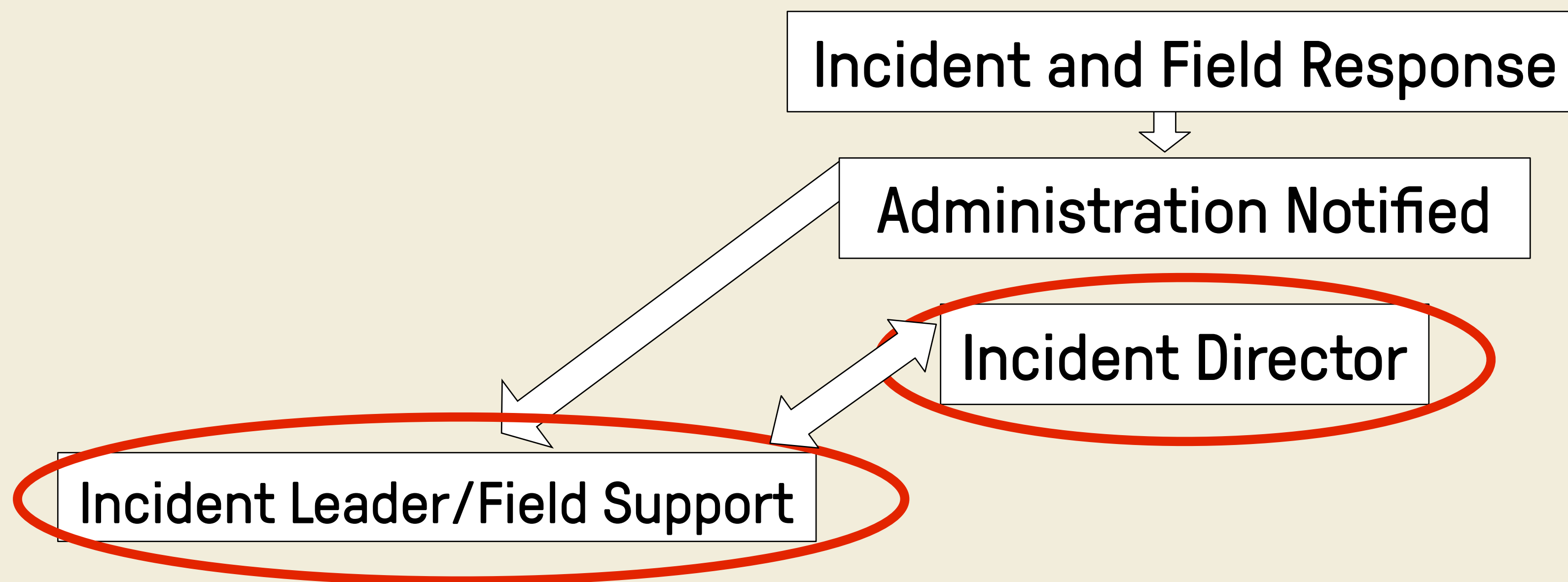


AN INCIDENT OCCURS

DAY ONE

- 6:30 PM, Friday, July 28
- The on-call emergency contact person receives an emergency satellite phone call from an instructor stating there has been a fatality on ABW 7/2 and she provides latitude and longitude coordinates.
- The connection is poor and suddenly cut off.
- **What happens next?**
- **What are the immediate first actions to take?**

NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC

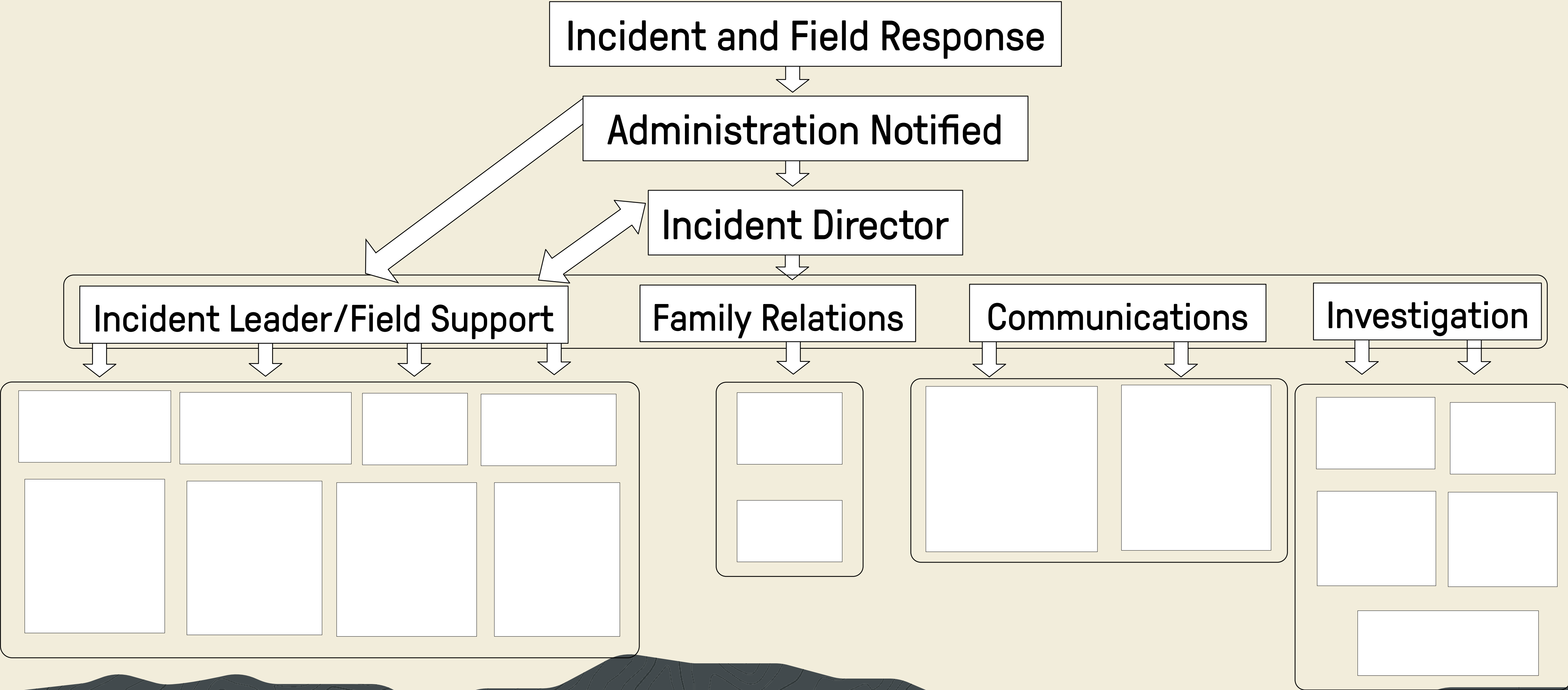


LEADERSHIP

INCIDENT DIRECTOR & LEADER

- ☒ Organize team structure
- ☒ Establish objectives and priorities
- ☒ Communicate among teams
- ☒ Develop contingencies
- ☒ Make/facilitate decisions
- ☒ Determine course continuation options
- ☒ Assemble personnel resources
- ☒ Assign roles and responsibilities
- ☒ Plan for long duration response
- ☒ Knowledge of law enforcement, SAR, investigation requirements
- ☒ Knowledge of land agency requirements

NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC



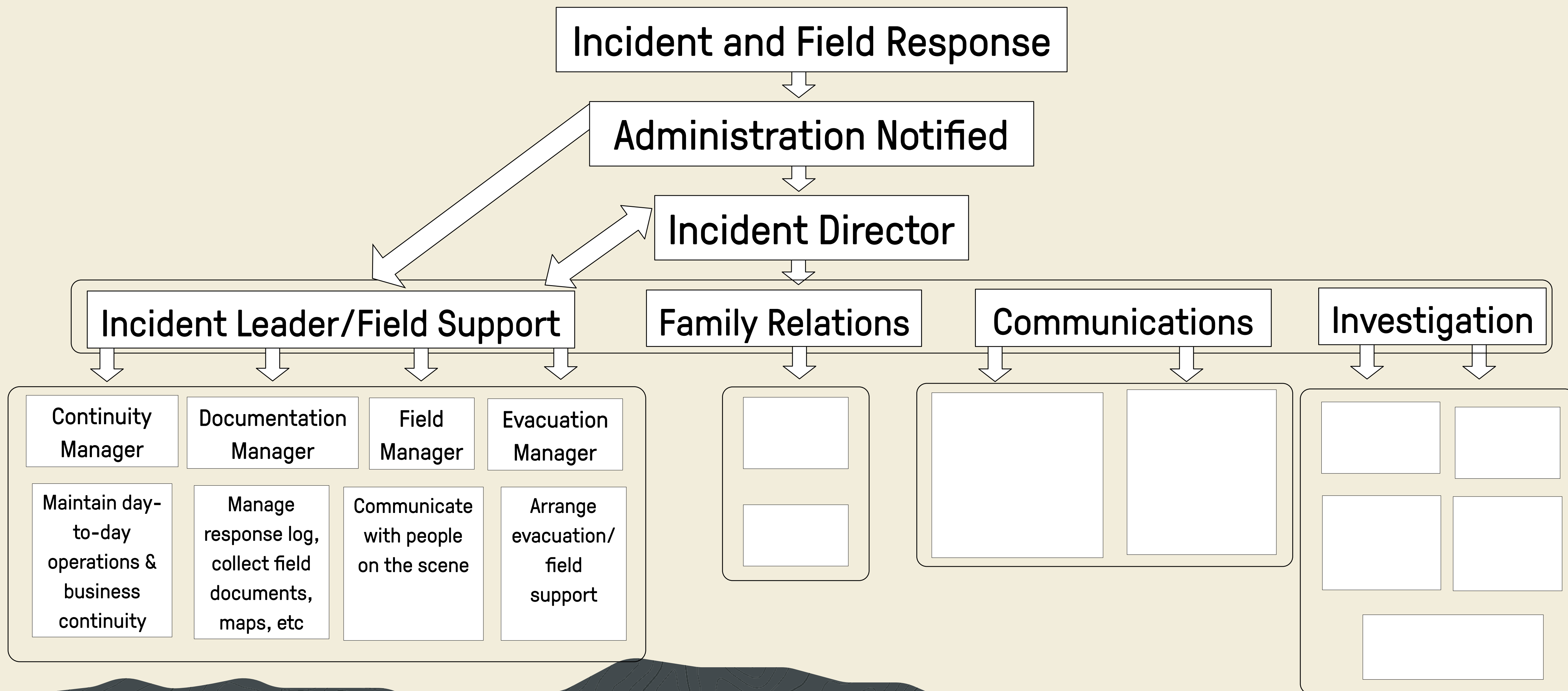
AN INCIDENT OCCURS

All we know is:

- Which group it is
- Their location
12 miles in wilderness in a river valley
- Immediate questions include:
 - Is the situation stable?
 - Who is the deceased?
 - What happened?
 - What support is needed?
 - How will we communicate?

• **What are your next steps?**

NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC



FIELD OPERATIONS

What we did:

- Established satellite phone contact
- We learn:
 - ▶ Her name
 - ▶ She died that morning during a river crossing
 - ▶ She was a member of a five person hiking group
 - ▶ Everyone else is OK
 - ▶ The group is now camped near the body
 - ▶ A runner party left earlier for a road head 12 miles away
 - ▶ Want to end the course early

FIELD OPERATIONS

What we did:

- Support
 - ▶ Began arrangements for a ground team to hike in
 - ▶ Organized additional supplies:
 - ▶ food
 - ▶ fuel
 - ▶ phones
 - ▶ batteries
- Evacuation
 - ▶ Notified the sheriff's office
 - ▶ Contacted a horse packer
 - ▶ Contacted four helicopter companies
 - ▶ Got permission to land in Wilderness

FIELD OPERATIONS

What we did:

- Helicopter arrived on scene that evening
- Body was taken to a town 250 miles away
- Sheriff's deputy to investigate scene in morning
- Prepared two staff to fly in and hike out with group
- Runner party arrived at road head in evening
 - ▶ Vehicle and driver waiting

FIELD OPERATIONS

What we did: Day Two

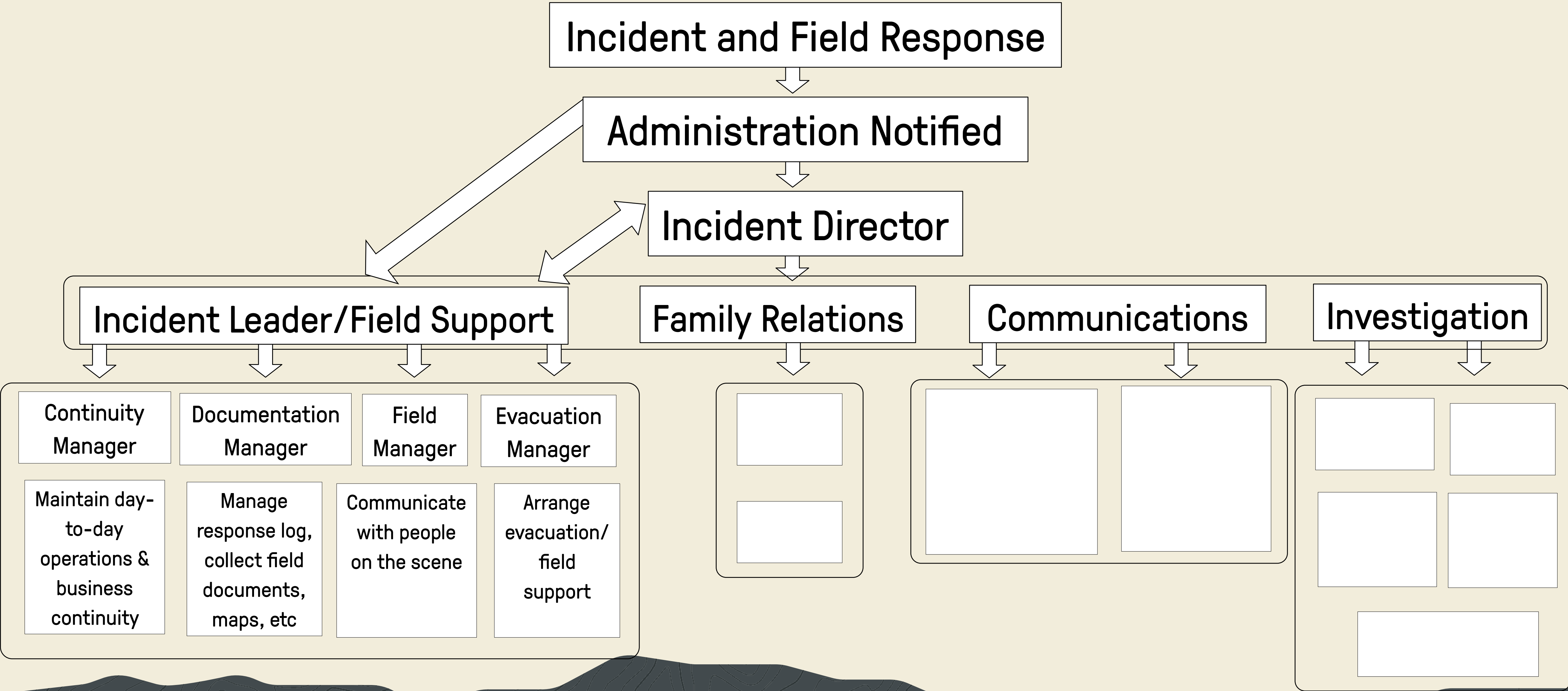
- Deputy sheriff and staff flew to the course
- Deputy returned and briefed crisis team on situation
- We continued to support other courses (about 25 at that location)

FIELD OPERATIONS

What we did: Days Three & Four

- Course came out late afternoon
- Psychological stress discussion next morning
- Counseling made available for students and staff
- Normal end-of-course tasks
- Group activities for students
- Instructors stayed involved with students

NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC



AN INCIDENT OCCURS

All we know is:

- Who the deceased is
- We need to notify the family
- **How is the family contacted?**
- **Who informs them?**
- **What factors are considered?**

FAMILY RELATIONS

What we did:

- President (or designee) telephoned family
- Organized, compassionate, and caring
- Sample script

Hello. Mr./Ms_____I am_____(title)_____from NOLS. _____(*name of student*)
was_____(*hit by rock/fell/in an accident*) while on their NOLS course. I am terribly
sorry to have to tell you that _____(*name*) (*died/was seriously injured*).

FAMILY RELATIONS

What we did:

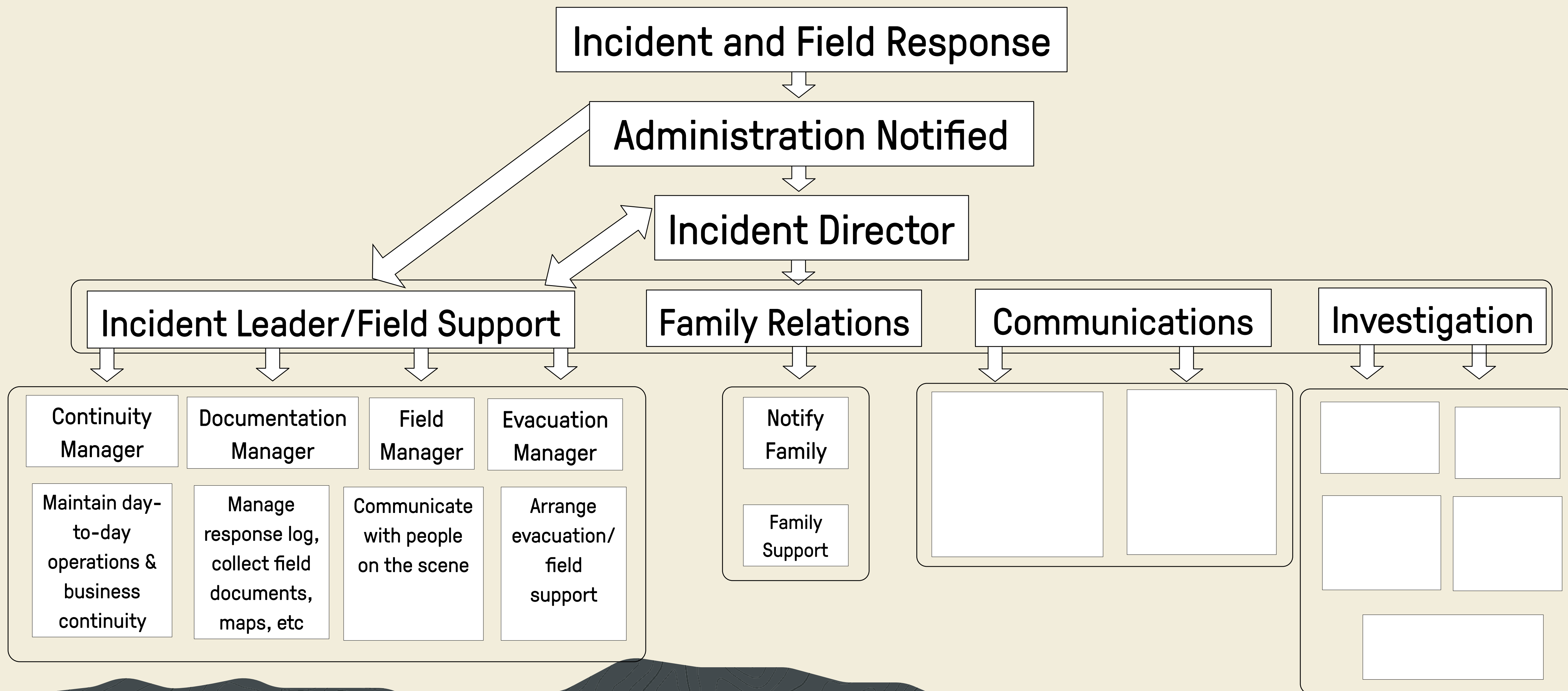
- Designated family liaison (consider divorced parents)
- The parents could not come to Lander
- Issues of family members at location
- Family interaction with students and staff
- Family members visit incident site
- Grief counselors, clergy, or therapists

FAMILY RELATIONS

What we did:

- Ask if organizational representative can attend funeral or memorial
- Stay in regular contact with family
- Stay in touch with other course members

NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC



AN INCIDENT OCCURS

- Word spreads fast
- Who needs to be informed?
- We only have basic information of what happened
- **Who are your audiences?**
- **How is communication managed?**
- **What do you need to watch out for?**

COMMUNICATION

What we did:

- Assign a communication leader/spokesperson

| Internal Audiences | | External Audiences | |
|----------------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Trustees | Directors | | |
| Insurance | Instructors | Media | Land agencies |
| Families of other students | Other staff | Law enforcement | Peer organizations |

- Communication coordinated with incident director

COMMUNICATION

What we did:

- Factual statement
 - Who, what, when, and where
- Basis for a press release
- Provided it to media
- Posted it on website
- Social media plan

COMMUNICATION-EXTERNAL

For immediate release

date
time

Contact:

person's name
phone #

NOLS Headquarters

Concise Descriptive Headline

LANDER, Wyo.—*One sentence with age, where from, how died/injured where incident occurred and date.*

Ed Wild, of (town, state) was on a 30-day backpacking trip with the National Outdoor Leadership School when he was (struck by rock or slipped and drowned or struck by lightning).

Provide a brief description of NOLS response including efforts to get the body out, NOLS emergency response system, evacuation method, how remote incident site was, authorities that helped or were contacted.

“We are deeply saddened by this tragedy,” said _____ (*name*), President of NOLS. “We do not know details at this point because the course has not come out of the field, but we’re working to find out all we can. Our thoughts and sympathy are with the family and we remain in close contact with them.”

NOLS was founded in 1965 by legendary mountaineer Paul Petzoldt. Since then, over 85,000 students have graduated from NOLS, which teaches leadership, teamwork, environmental ethics, and wilderness technical skills.

NOLS
284 Lincoln Street
Lander, WY 82520
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COMMUNICATION-EXTERNAL

What we did:

- Media
 - ▶ Internet/social media
 - ▶ Television
 - ▶ Print
 - ▶ Radio

COMMUNICATION-EXTERNAL

What we did:

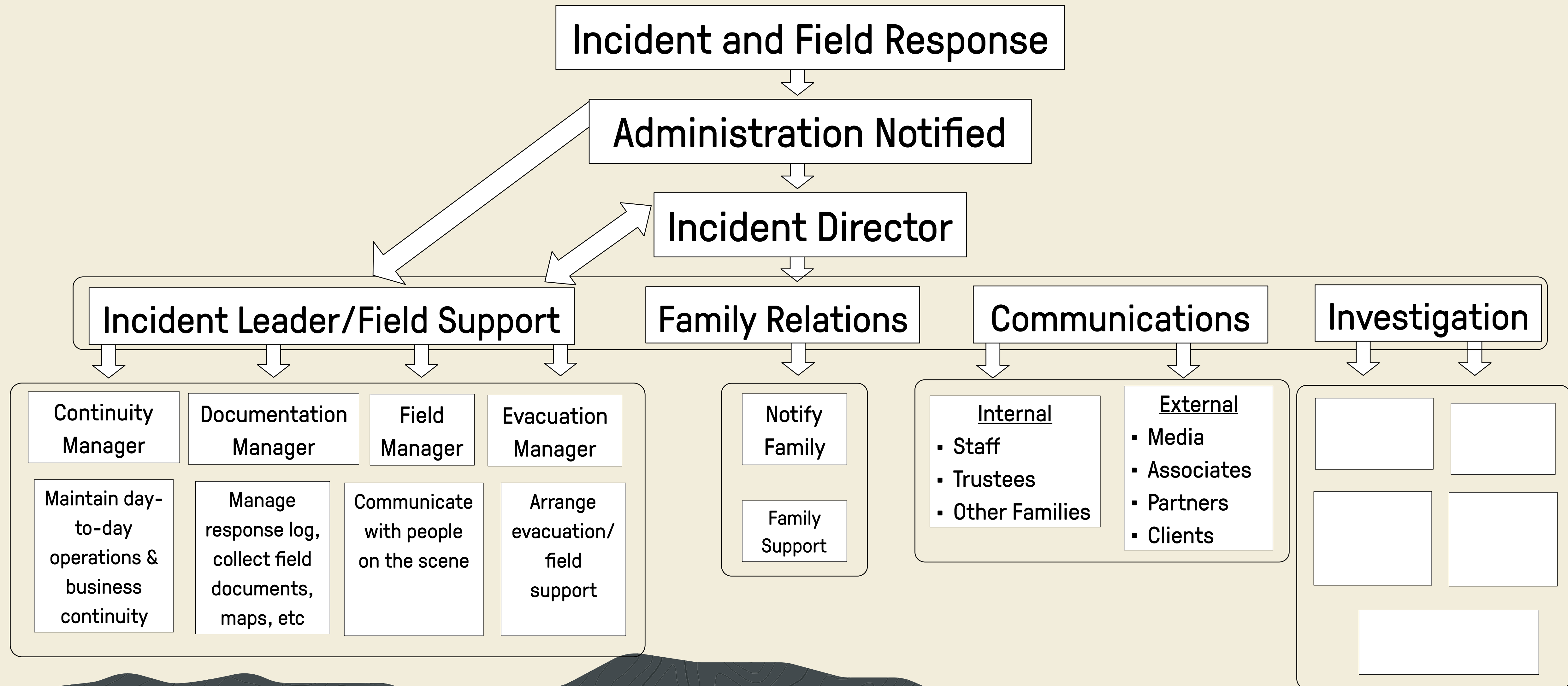
- Factually accurate story
- Short lived story
- Media interviews
 - ▶ On site
 - ▶ Skype
- Watched for erroneous information
- Kept records of all media stories

COMMUNICATION-INTERNAL

What we did:

- Limit use of email
- Informed all staff
 - ▶ Held all staff meeting at HQ
 - ▶ Inform other NOLS locations and staff in field
 - ▶ Watch for staff judging the incident
- Called each family of other course members

NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC



AN INCIDENT OCCURS

- We need more information
- Need facts to assess our legal exposure
- Need facts to prevent rumors
- We really want to understand what happened
- **How would you get additional information?**
- **How would you investigate the incident?**

INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

Three phases of investigation and documentation

1. Field
2. Administrative
3. Incident review

INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

What we did—field

- Witnesses
 - Just the facts (who, what, when, & where)
 - Written accounts by leaders
- Evidence, photos, sketches
- Site visit

INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

What we did—administrative

- Student factual interviews
- Staff factual interviews
- Course records
- Other information sources

INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

What we did—administrative

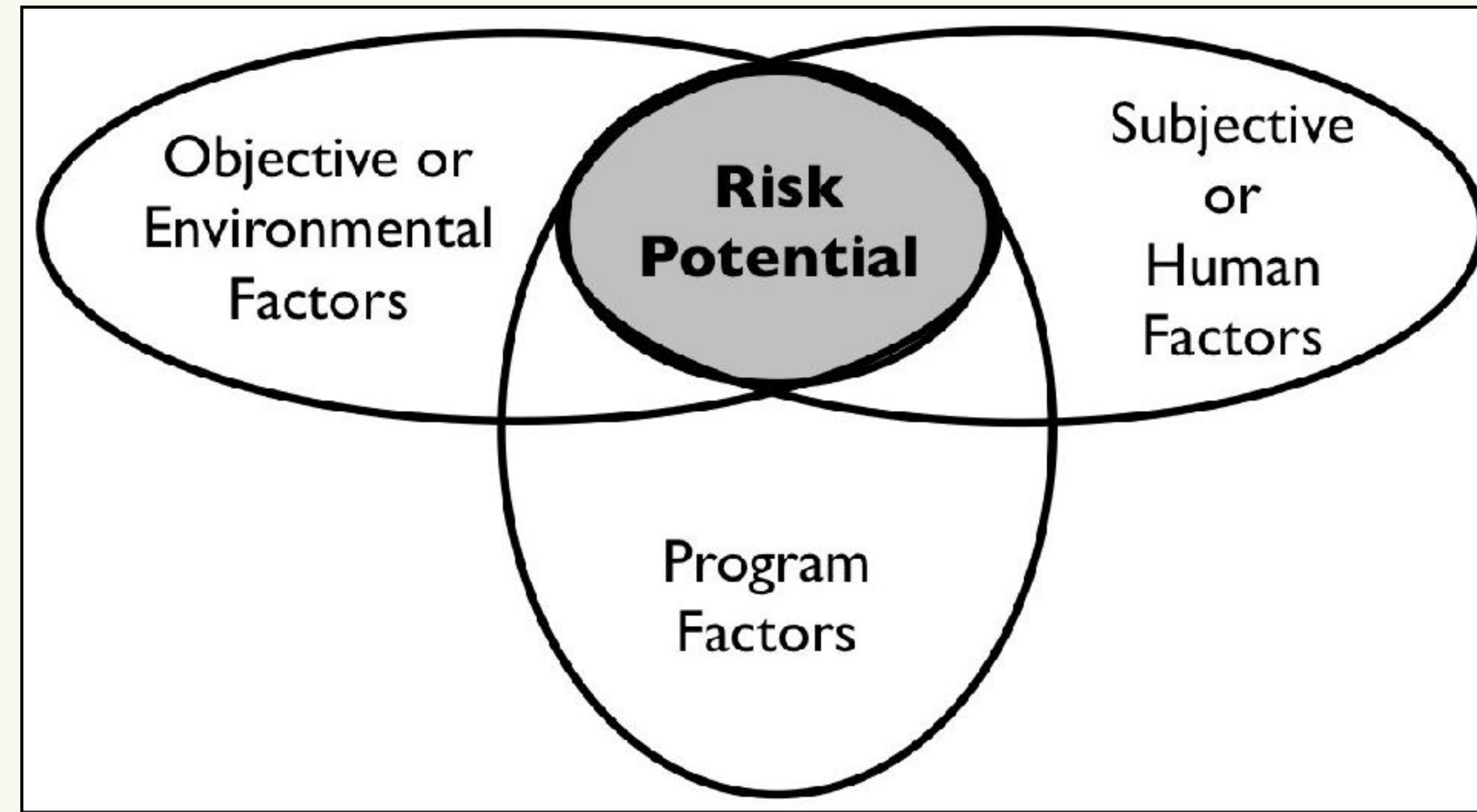
- ☒ Incident accounts
- ☒ Field evacuation report
- ☒ Weather reports/logs
- ☒ Maps & descriptions
- ☒ Student journals
- ☒ Travel plans
- ☒ Field safety report
- ☒ Course log(s)
- ☒ Instruction checklist
- ☒ Photos and diagrams
- ☒ Student file(s)
- ☒ Contact logs w/family
- ☒ Contact log w/media

INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

What we did—incident review

Internal review

- Captured the story
- Analysis
- Conclusion
- Recommendations for change (if any)



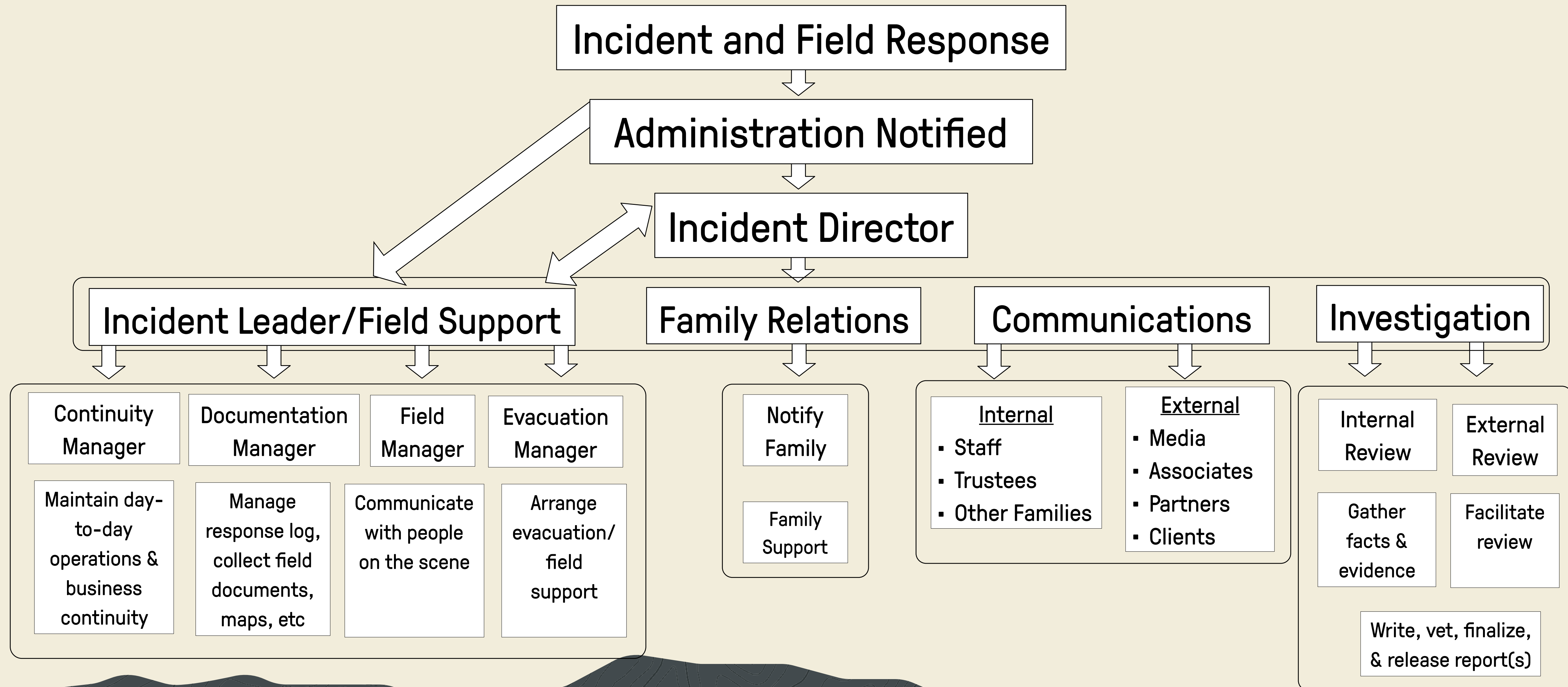
INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

What we did—incident review

External review

- Yes or no?
- Who arranges
- Plan soon after incident
- Specific charge to reviewers
- Release of review

NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC



SUMMARY

“Learn to be calm in the face of chaos.” Reinhold Messner

1. Have a thorough plan with clear and immediate action

2. Five components of effective crisis management

Leadership—Field Support—Family Relations
—Communication—Investigation

3. Know your resources

4. Be ready for the long haul

ACTION ITEMS

“Keep a cool head and a warm heart.” United Educators

1. Use the NOLS schematic as a guide to develop a crisis plan
2. Identify key players in your organization who will be involved with crisis management and assign roles and responsibilities
3. Practice your crisis plan. Run a drill to identify strengths and gaps.

“A crisis is a brutal audit of prepared plans.” Weick and Suttcliffe

Thanks

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A PDF of this presentation can be found at

www.nols.edu/wrmc