

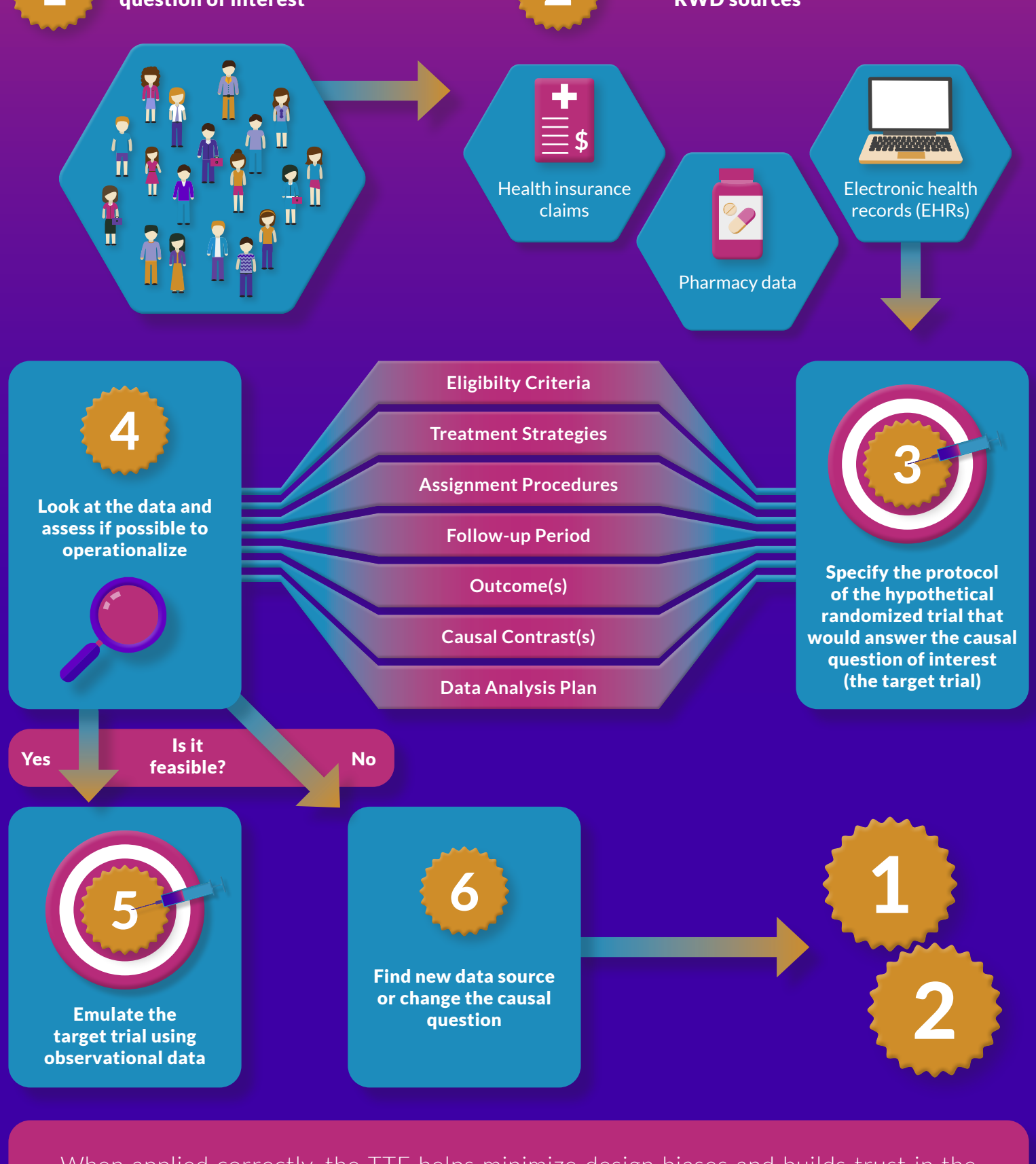
- Real-world evidence (RWE) is increasingly shaping healthcare decisions, but generating trustworthy findings for decision-makers requires treating RWE research as if it were an experimental design.
- The **target trial framework** (TTF) provides a structured approach to observational studies.
- The TTF applies the design principles from randomized trials to the analysis of observational data - helping frame the right causal question, pre-specify study design and its operationalization explicitly, and consequently produce evidence that meets clinical and regulatory standards<sup>1</sup>.



### What is the TTF?

A methodological framework for causal inference from observational data, which applies the design principles of randomized trials.

... the target trial is not an idealized randomized trial that the investigators would design and conduct in the absence of constraints. Rather, the target trial is a randomized trial that can be reasonably emulated with the available observational data<sup>2</sup>

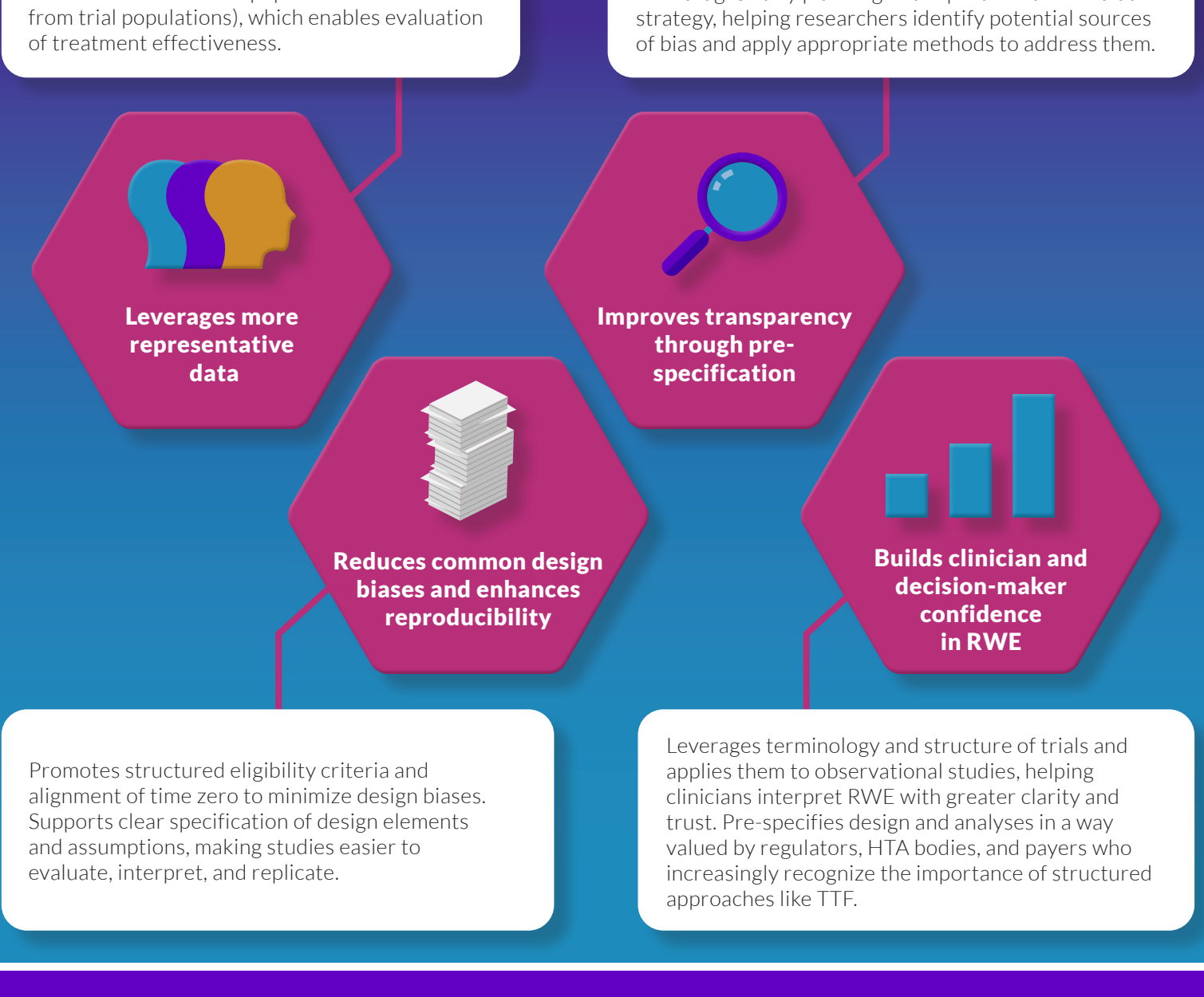


When applied correctly, the TTF helps minimize design biases and builds trust in the growing number of studies using observational data.

Transparent reporting of RWE research is critical and benefits from recently published guidelines. The **Transparent Reporting of Observational Studies Emulating a Target Trial (TARGET)** guideline provides structured recommendations to help authors report RWE studies transparently, strengthening peer review and supporting clinicians, researchers, and decision-makers in understanding and using the findings<sup>1</sup>.

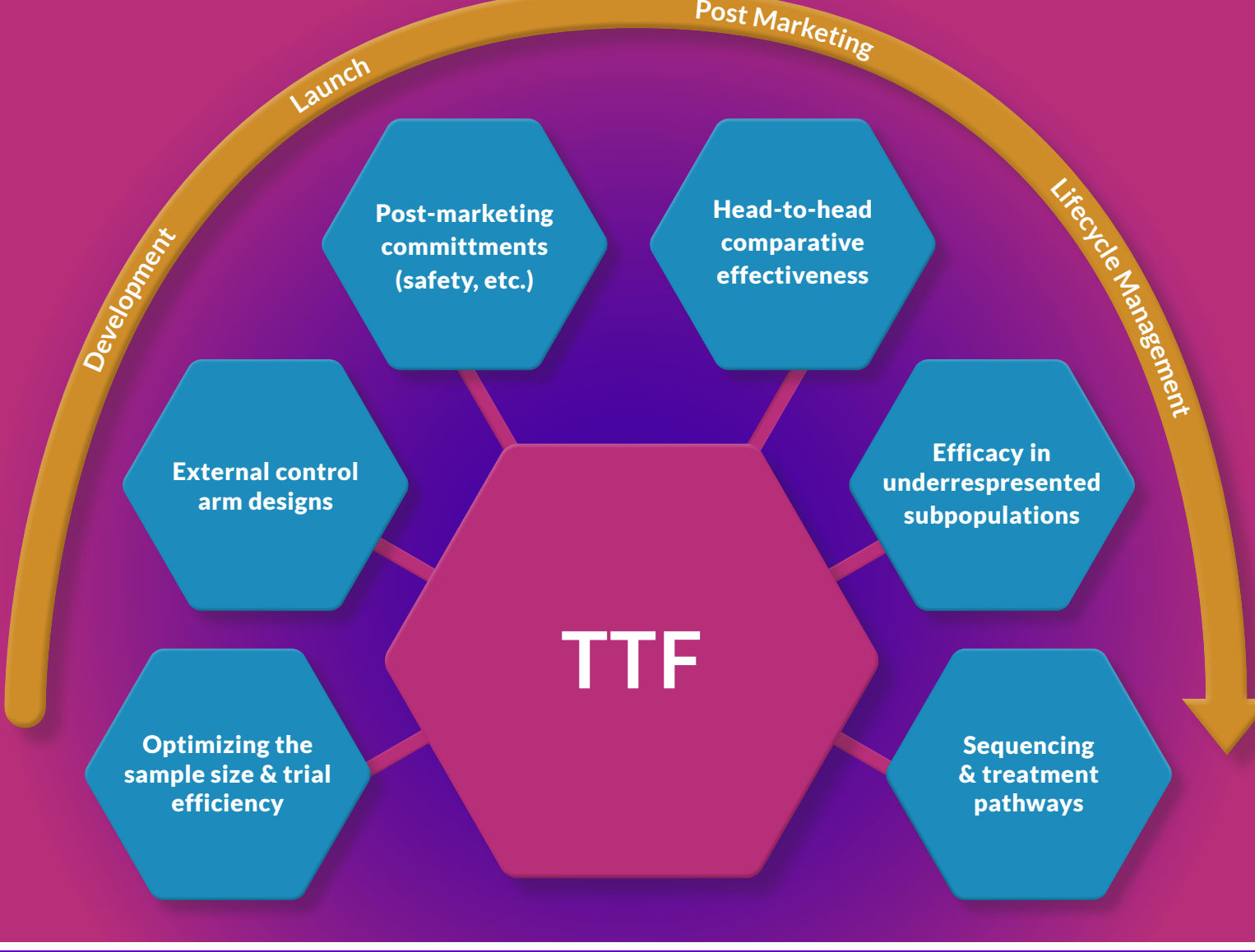
### Why use the TTF?

Supports causal questions that cannot be addressed through RCTs

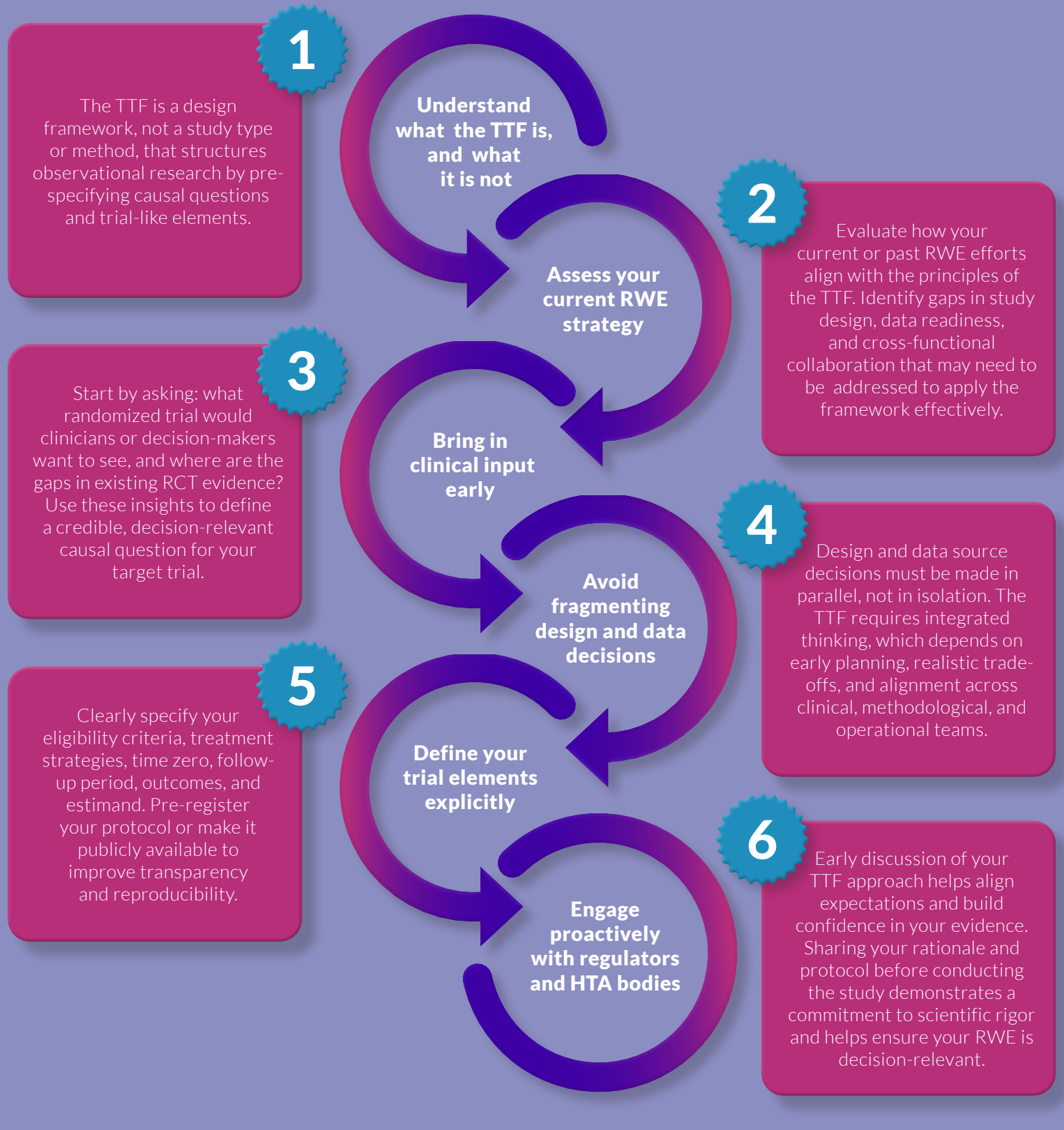


### How can the TTF support the use of RWD in product development?

The TTF supports evidence generation across the product lifecycle, from development to post-launch, with applications including informing single-arm trial design through external control groups, supporting post-marketing safety commitments using external comparators, and enabling comparative effectiveness analyses via indirect treatment comparisons.



### How to strategically apply the TTF



The most impactful contribution of the TTF is reducing the ambiguity of causal questions because we cannot provide valid answers if we do not know what the question is<sup>2</sup>.

#### References

1. Transparent Reporting of Observational Studies Emulating a Target Trial—The TARGET Statement <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2837724>
2. The target trial framework for causal inference from observational data: Why and when is it helpful? <https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/ANNALS-24-01871>
3. Development of the Transparent Reporting of Observational Studies Emulating a Target Trial (TARGET) guideline <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/13/9/e074626>