

# Problem Statement and Goals

## Agolearn

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Table 1: Revision History

Date	Developer(s)	Change
2024-01-15	Yiding Li	First Draft
2024-01-16	Yiding Li	Add and resolve TODO items <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Clarify inputs</li><li>2. Clarify goals</li><li>3. Refine stakeholders</li><li>4. Fix an erroneous figure and its caption</li><li>5. Resolve TODO item on adding references</li></ol>
2024-01-18	Yiding Li	Return <b>Motivation</b> to <b>Problem</b> : describe "what it does", not "what it is".

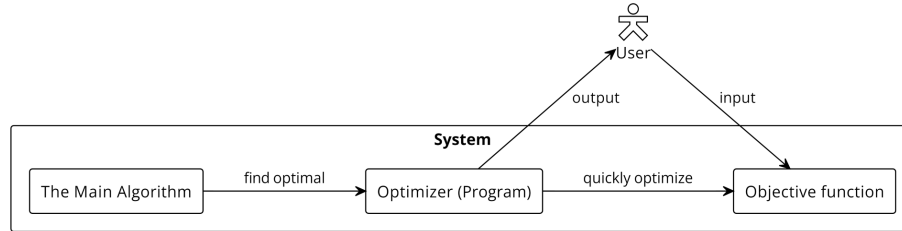
## 1 Problem Statement

### 1.1 Problem

This project seeks to implement an evolutionary optimizer for arbitrary real-valued functions and higher-ordered functions.

While [evolutionary algorithms](#) lack the efficiency of traditional optimization algorithms, they lend well to solving poorly understood, dynamic, or black-box problems. As such, usage of evolutionary algorithms is key to implementing this project. [Generic programming algorithms](#), in particular, make it possible to build functions that optimize higher-order functions.

Figure 1: Input and output of a genetic programming algorithm



## 1.2 Inputs and Outputs

### 1.2.1 Optimizing real-valued functions

**Input:**

1. A real-valued function.
2. Parameters that control the evolutionary process. Examples are: (a) choices of evolutionary operators, (b) number of episodes, and (c) the length of each episode or truncation conditions.

**Output:** A real vector that optimizes the given real-valued function.

### 1.2.2 Optimizing higher-ordered functions

**Input:**

1. A higher-order function.
2. Parameters that control how solutions are generated. Examples are: (a) node functions, (b) tree depth, and (c) node count.
3. Parameters that control the evolutionary process. Examples are: (a) choices of evolutionary operators, (b) number of episodes, and (c) the length of each episode or truncation conditions.

**Output:** A function that optimizes the given higher-order function.

## 1.3 Stakeholders

This project can be used by anyone who seeks to optimize an objective function. It should be especially suited for derivative-free functions.

## 2 Goals

- Optimize against real-valued functions
- Optimize against higher-order functions

### 3 Stretch Goals

- Implement multi-processing to speed up computation (in reference to frameworks such as [Deap](#))

## 4 Appendix

### 4.1 Evolutionary Algorithms

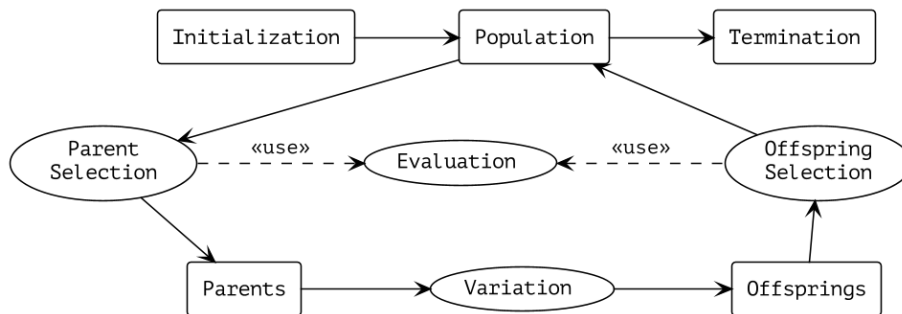
**Evolutionary algorithms (EA)** are optimization algorithms that draw on the evolutionary process. An EA begins with an initial population, then iteratively improves the population through generations by applying various [evolutionary operators](#).

### 4.2 Evolutionary Operators

**Evolutionary operators** divide into **parent selectors**, **variators**, and **survivor selectors**. These operators emulate events in an evolutionary process:

- **Parent selectors** select from the population to form the parent pool.
- **Variators** act on the parent pool to produce a pool of offsprings. An offspring may inherit traits from parents (by crossover) or possess novel traits (by mutation).
- **Survivor selectors** select from the offspring pool to form the population for the next generation.

Figure 2: Stages and operators in an evolutionary episode



### 4.3 Genetic Programming

**Genetic programming (GA)** algorithms are evolutionary algorithms that evolve with programs. That is, such algorithms evolve *functions* against an

higher-order objective function that takes functions as input. Genetic algorithms can evolve agents that behave well in a particular environment (e.g. [a bipedal walker](#)) or construct mathematical models (e.g. [symbolic regression](#))