

Working towards a collective impact approach for implementation of a provincial food and nutrition strategy

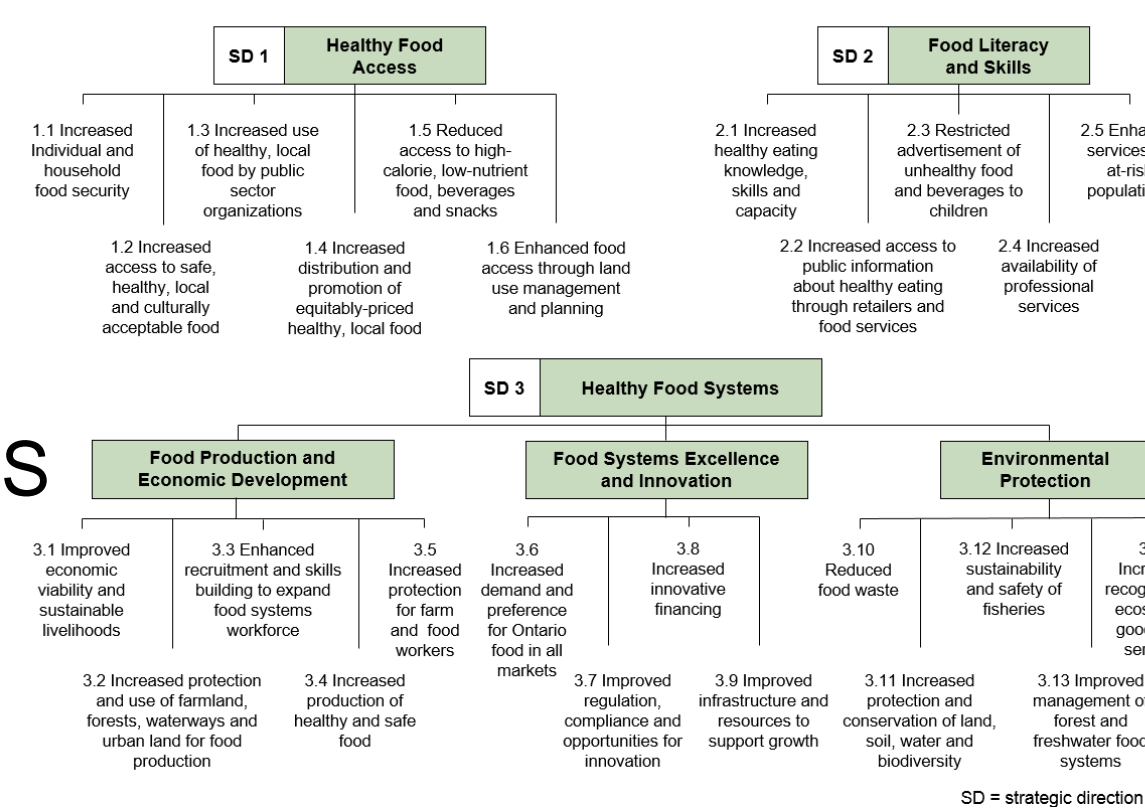
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Background

- Food systems components such as food production, processing, procurement and distribution, access and consumption are interconnected; a whole-system perspective is thus critical in efforts to create a healthy food and beverage environment.
- The Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy (OFNS) was developed in collaboration with numerous experts and stakeholders in agriculture, food, health and education sectors and others through consultations.
- The OFNS consists of 25 priority action areas under three strategic directions: healthy food access, food literacy and skills, and healthy food systems
- Collective impact is the result of the pledge of a group of key players from various sectors to a common approach for solving a complex social problem.¹

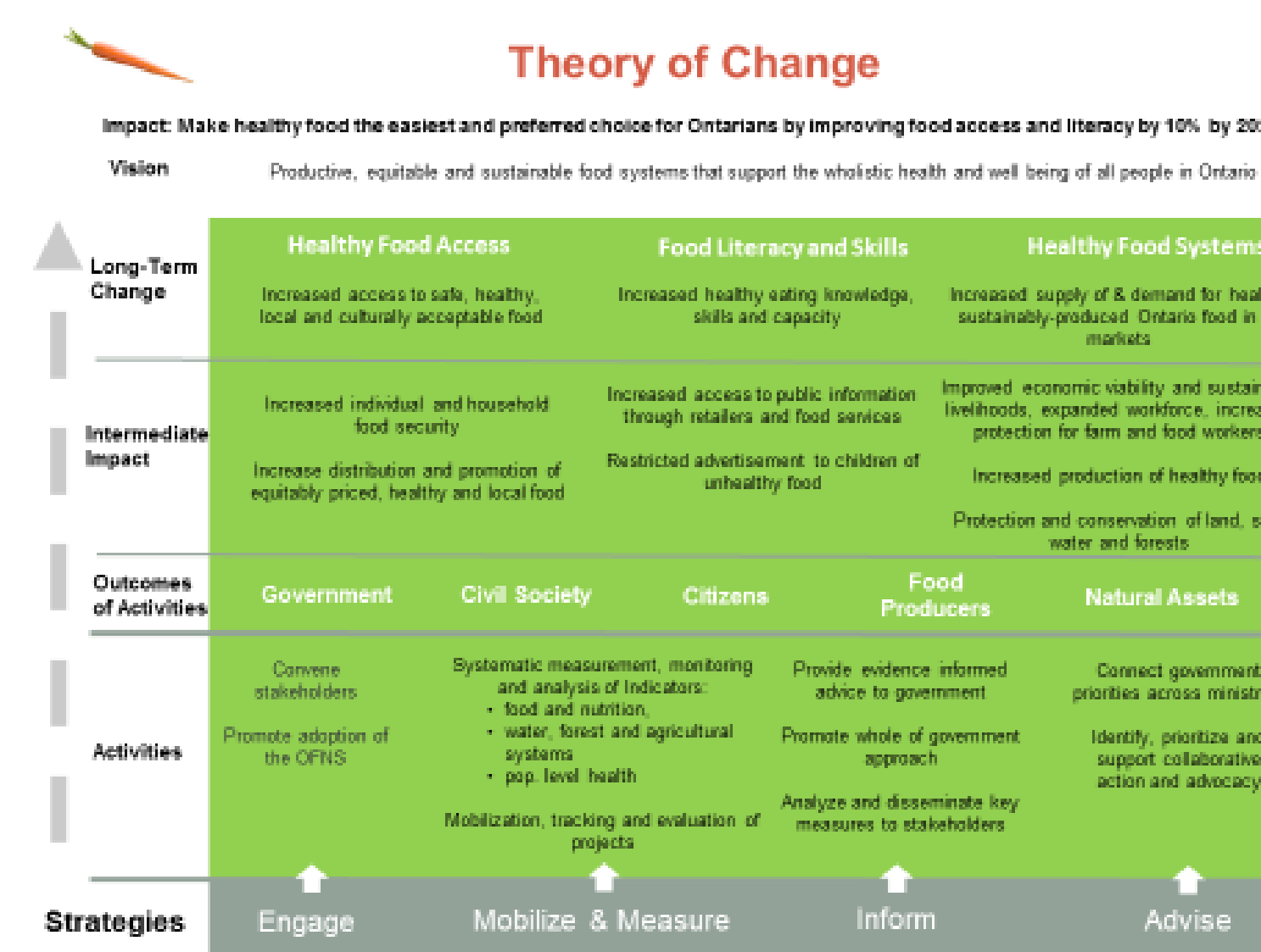
- OBJECTIVE:** To identify outcomes and gaps in governance and implementation of the OFNS using a collective impact approach.



Outputs & Results

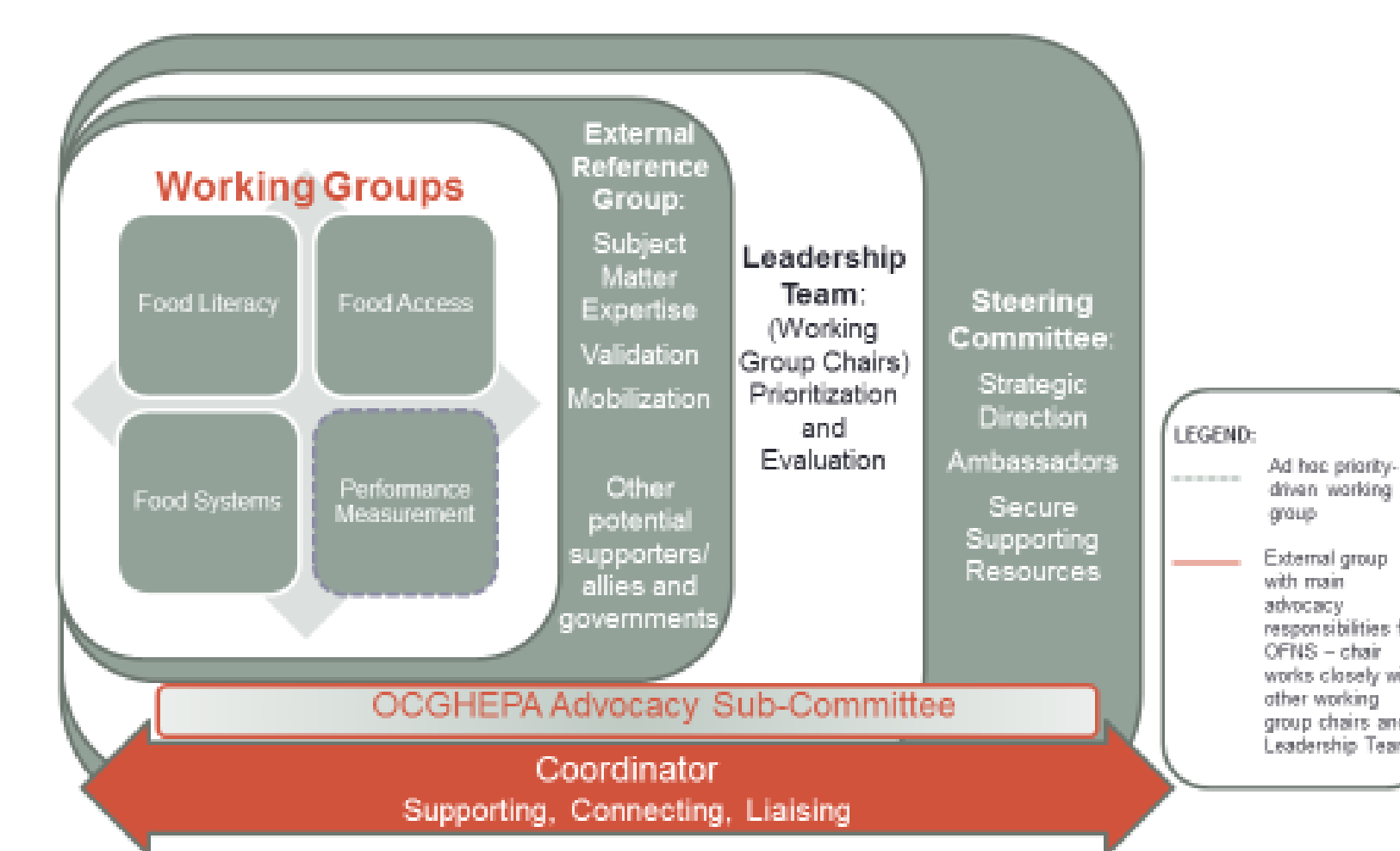
The OFNS Design team attended 2 collective impact workshops hosted by Innoweave (Sept 2013 and Feb 2014). Innoweave grant for coaching (Nov 2014 - May 2015) resulted in refined system level impact goals for the OFNS, a **theory of change**, mutually reinforcing activities and a **collaborative governance structure**.

- Development of a theory of change created a measurable goal for members to strive for: *make healthy food the preferred and easy choice for Ontarians by improving food access and food literacy by 10% by 2020.*
- Strategies, activities, outcomes of activities, intermediate impacts and long term change were identified in order to achieve the goal and support the common agenda.



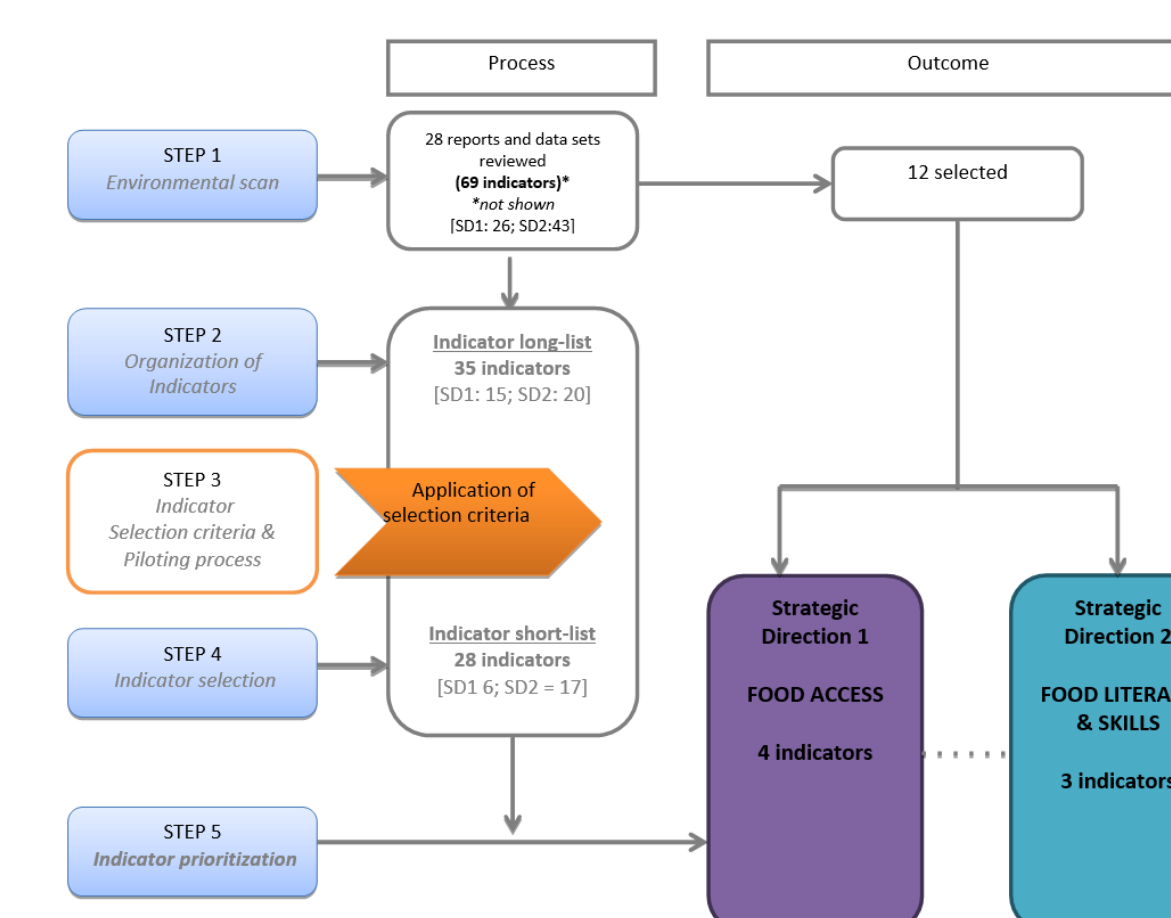
- The intent is for stakeholders to work together and for organizations strongly aligned with certain priorities in their work to take lead and support actions. Collaborative governance is required to achieve this and to ensure mutually reinforcing activities and continuous communication can be coordinated.
- Best and promising practices were reviewed prior to development of the proposed governance model.
- Central to governance is the need for a backbone coordinator.

Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy Governance and Management Structure



Indicator Identification

- Performance indicators were recognized as required in order to track progress of the OFNS. Healthy Food Access (SD1) and Food Literacy and Skills (SD2) were identified as a starting point.
- An OFNS Indicators Advisory Group made of experts in food access and food literacy identified 69 potential indicators.
- Selection criteria based on possibility and feasibility, validity and relevance were used to determine the best indicators.
- 4 indicators have been selected to measure SD1 and 3 indicators for SD2. Baseline measures will be taken to begin to measure common progress.



Current Position

Collective impact	OFNS comparison to collective impact conditions
1. Common Agenda	Created around common agenda; theory of change provides common goal
2. Shared Measurement Systems	Identification of indicators for SD1 & SD2; still required for SD3
3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities	Governance structure developed to support activities; missing backbone organization and coordinator
4. Continuous communication	Governance structure developed to support continuous communications; missing backbone organization and coordinator
5. Backbone Support Organization	Missing due to lack of funding

Overview & Approach

- Significant progress has been made on complex problems including global malnutrition and teenage substance abuse by organizations using a collective impact approach².
- OFNS collaborators have shifted to a collective impact model in effort to achieve success with the strategy.



Five conditions for collective success:¹

- Common Agenda:** Shared vision for change, a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it.
- Shared Measurement Systems:** Consistently collected data and measured results using key performance indicators.
- Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** Partners working together and undertaking a specific set of activities aligned with areas of expertise for coordinated results.
- Continuous Communication:** Regular, transparent communication to build trust between partners and facilitate meaningful decisions optimizing results for the common agenda.
- Backbone Support Organization:** Infrastructure of dedicated staff to support the initiative is needed to create and manage partner collaborations for collective impact.

Challenges

- A number of challenges with the collective impact approach have been identified.³
 - Limited engagement with grassroots organizations or people impacted by food systems issues.
 - Lack of indicators and data to measure system-level change making it difficult to demonstrate short term impact.
 - Lack of funding for collective impact work; OFNS yet to secure funds for implementation due to its comprehensiveness and long term outcomes.
- Collective impact is a requirement for several funding agencies but there is little research on its effectiveness^{3,4}.

Key Learnings

- Continuous open communication is needed to ensure all players have opportunities for input.
- Undertaking a collective impact approach does not guarantee sustainable funding.
- Comprehensive nature of food systems work paired with the long-term nature of strategy outcomes are a hard sell to funders.
- Despite challenges identified, the governance structure provides a mechanism to carry out collaborative inter-sectoral action that can lead to productive, equitable and sustainable food systems to support healthy and productive people, and a strengthened economy.

Next Steps

- OFNS Design Team continues to work collaboratively to relay the need for a comprehensive food and nutrition strategy for the province.
- A report grounding the OFNS in evidence to be released
- Work continues in the areas of engagement and indicator development.

References

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