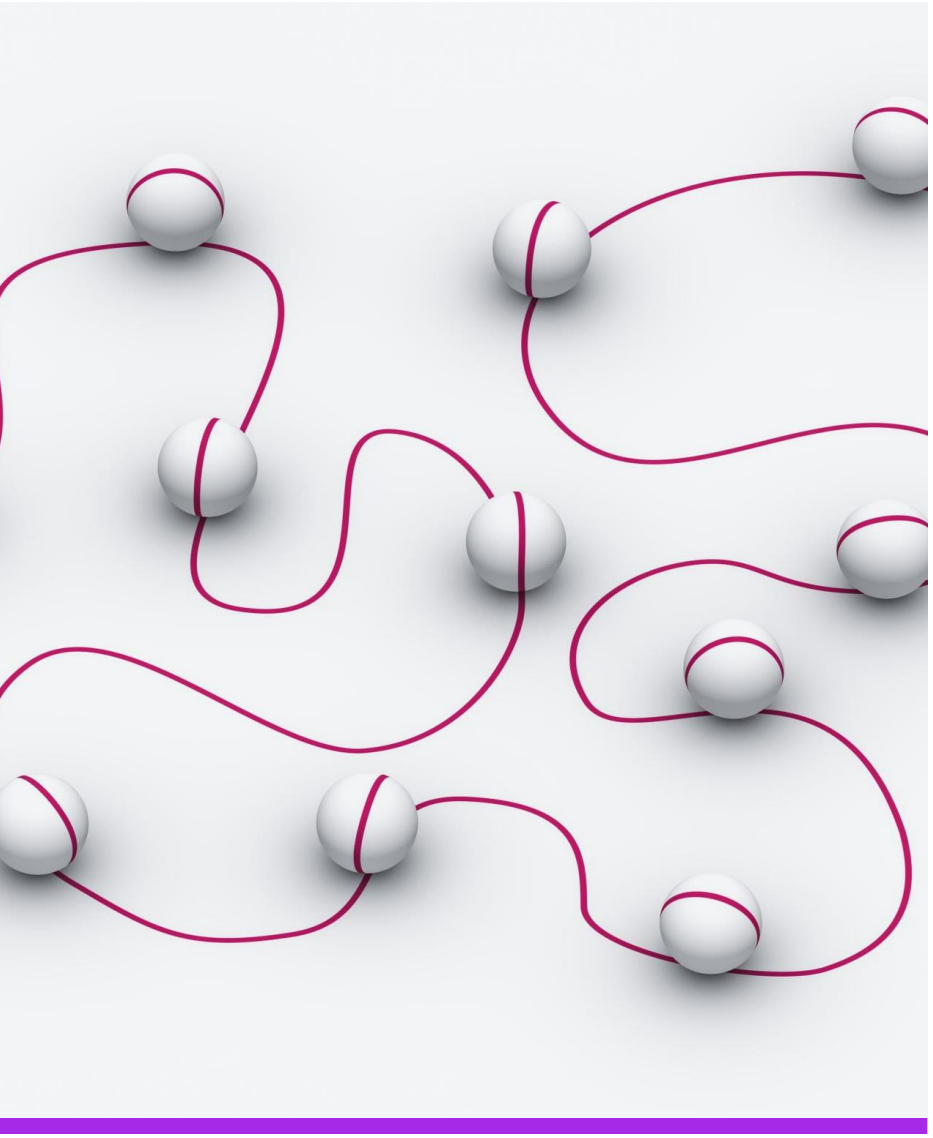
Theory of Change

MTT PROJECTS

KAREN DELFAU
MTT GEDSI ADVISOR

Theory of Change

- A Theory of Change is a model of a change process. It is a set of theories that describe and explain the multiple steps in a change process.
- A ToC is an **outcomes-based** approach which applies critical thinking to the design, implementation and evaluation of initiatives and programs intended to support change in their contexts – links to Outcome Mapping.
- Theories of change serve to create alignment between stakeholders on the long-term goals, short-term and long-term objectives, and underlying assumptions for a project or program.



Theory of Change

A Theory of Change takes a **wide perspective of a desired change**, carefully probing the assumptions behind each step in what may be a long and complex process.

Articulating a theory of change often entails

- thinking through all the steps along a path toward a desired change,
- identifying the preconditions that will enable (and possibly inhibit) each step,
- listing the activities that will produce those conditions, and
- explaining why those activities are likely to work.

It is often, but not always, presented as a flow chart.

What is a Theory of Change

A **visualization** exercise that enables us to focus our energy on specific future realities which are not only desirable, but possible and probable.

A set of assumptions and abstract projections regarding **how we believe reality could unfold in the immediate future**, based on

i) a realistic analysis of the current context,

ii) a self-assessment about our capabilities of process facilitation, and

iii) a critical and explicit review of our assumptions.

An informed, thoughtful, and **action-based approach that helps us to identify milestones and conditions** that have to occur on the path towards the change that we want to contribute to happen.

What is a Theory of Change

A multi-stakeholder and **collaborative experiential learning exercise** that encourages the development of the **flexible rationale** needed to analyze complex social change.

A semi-structured **change map** that links our strategic actions to specific process results that we want to contribute to happen in our immediate environment.

A process tool that helps us to **monitor**, consciously and critically, our **individual and also collective way of thinking and acting**.

5 elements of a Theory of Change

1) The **actors** (individuals or groups) who are trying to bring about change;

2) The **context or situation** that influences the actors, and which they are trying to change;

3) The **ideas or theories** on which the actors draw when 'looking at' a situation and deciding how best to act;

4) The **reflection and decision-making processes** that help actors to develop strategy, review success and failure and make improvements to both their ideas and their strategy; and

5) The **strategy** that gives the reasons and provides a framework for taking particular action.

Source: *Guijt, I and Retolaza, I 2012, Defining 'Theory of Change' E-Dialogue on Theory of Change. https://www.hivos.org/sites/default/files/e-dialogue_1_what_is_toc_thinking.pdf*

How is a theory of change developed?

A theory of change has a number of elements. Each of these elements is defined on the following pages, with guiding questions and a simple example.

The process of developing a theory of change should always start by being clear about the **scope**. To do this, you should answer three questions:

- **Audience:** who is it for? Who needs to act to create change?
- **Purpose:** why are we doing it?
- **Rigour:** how far do we need to go to get a meaningful answer?

Answering these questions will help you to be clear about:

- **Timeframe:** the timeframe your theory of change applies to
- **Development:** who you need to involve in the development of the reform
- **Refinement:** how often you need to refine the theory of change
- **Measurement:** how to define progress and ensure success
- **Presentation:** what format the theory of change needs to be presented in

Source: https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-11/Theory%20of%20Change%20Guidance%2020211123.pdf

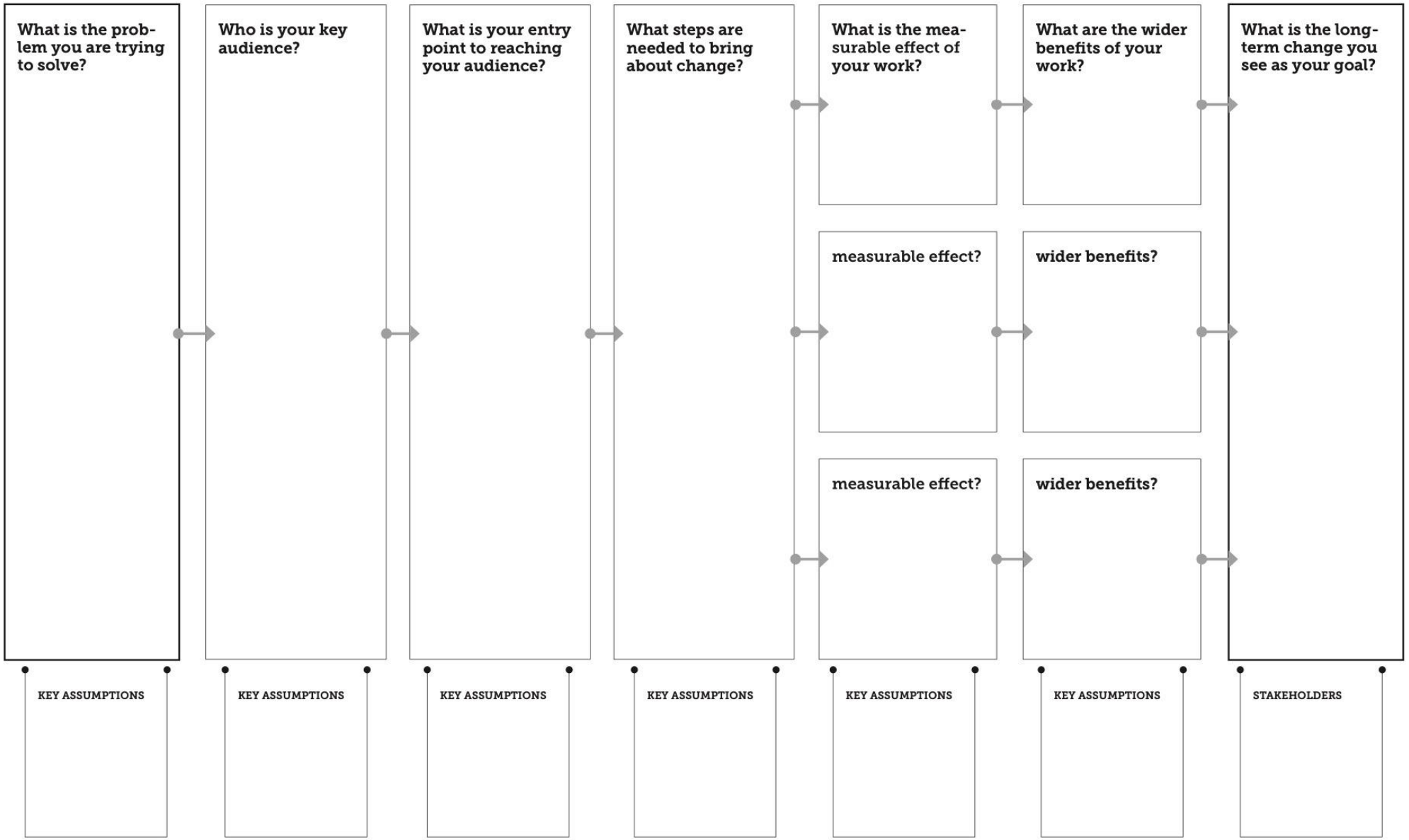
NESTA Toolkit

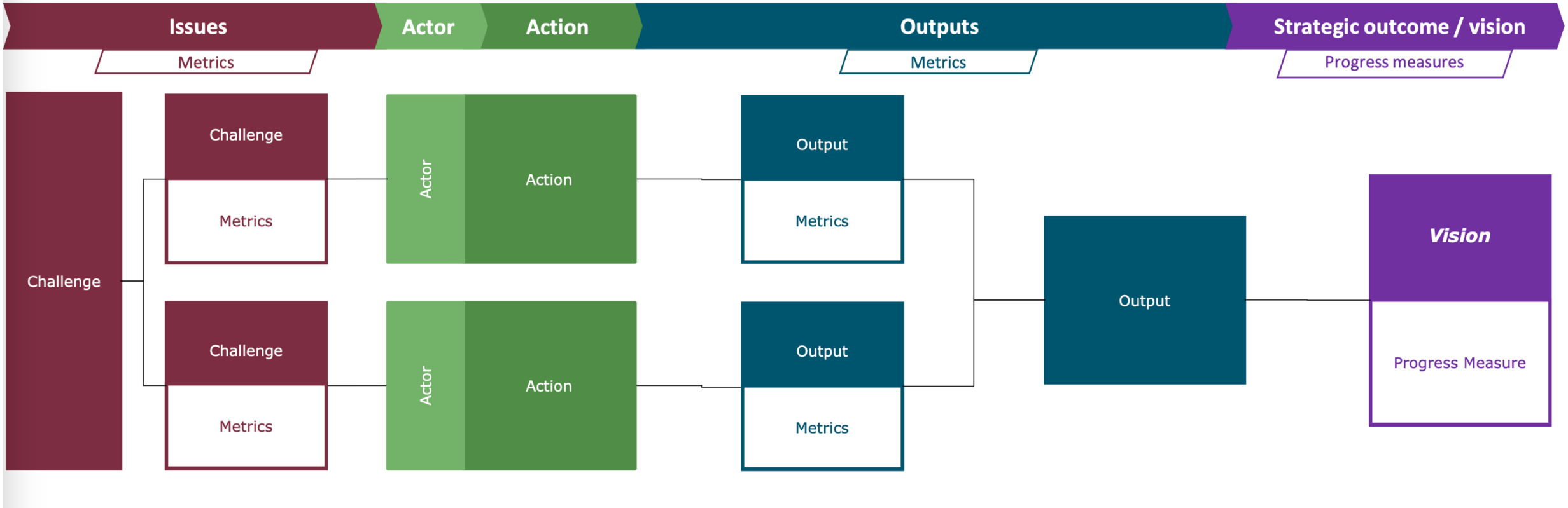
https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Resources_2017_version_09.pdf

DIY10

I want to clarify my priorities
by defining my goals and the path to reach them

THEORY OF CHANGE

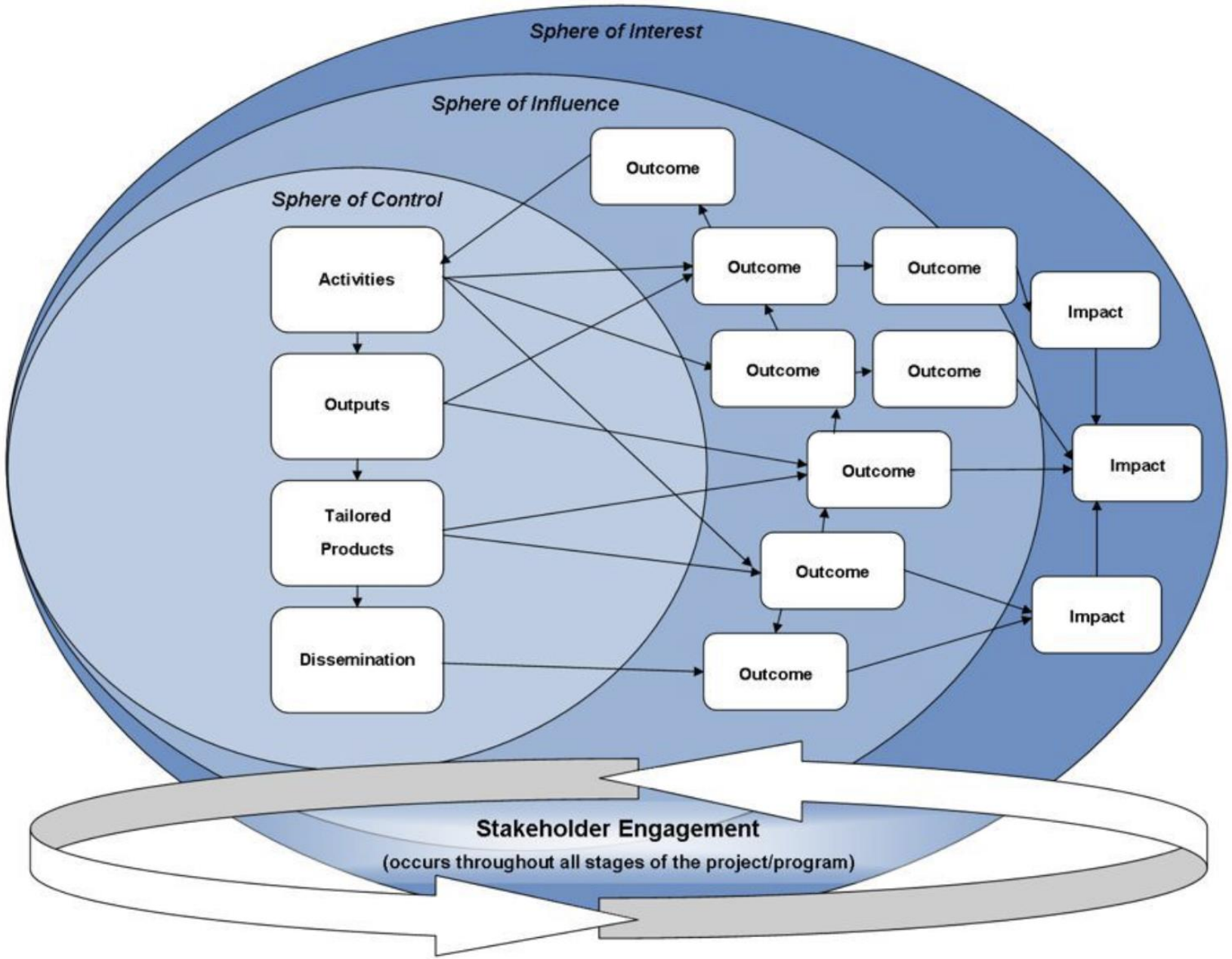




Outcomes: identifying, grouping and prioritising

Impact: what is the vision?

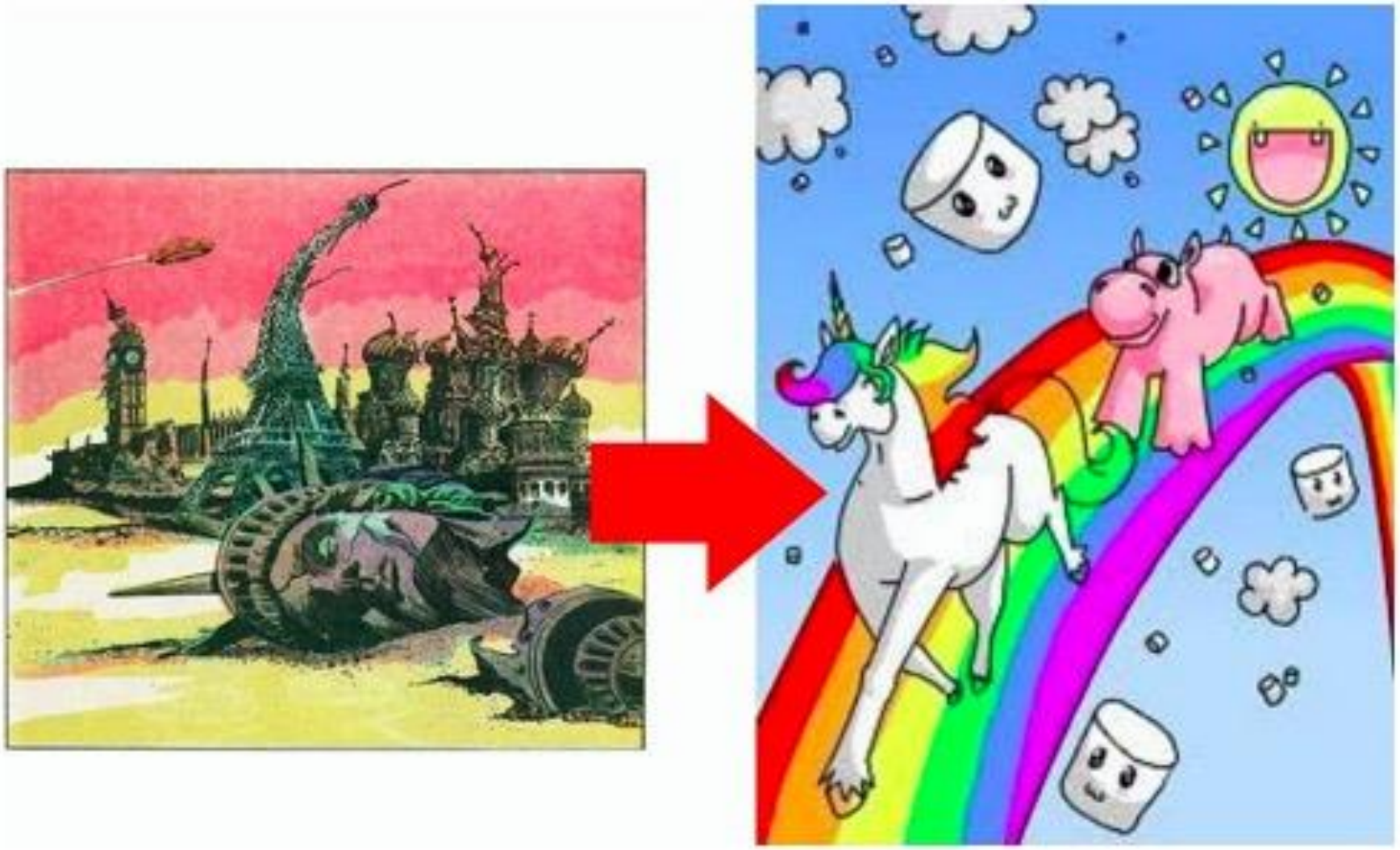
Source: https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-11/Theory%20of%20Change%20Guidance%2020211123.pdf



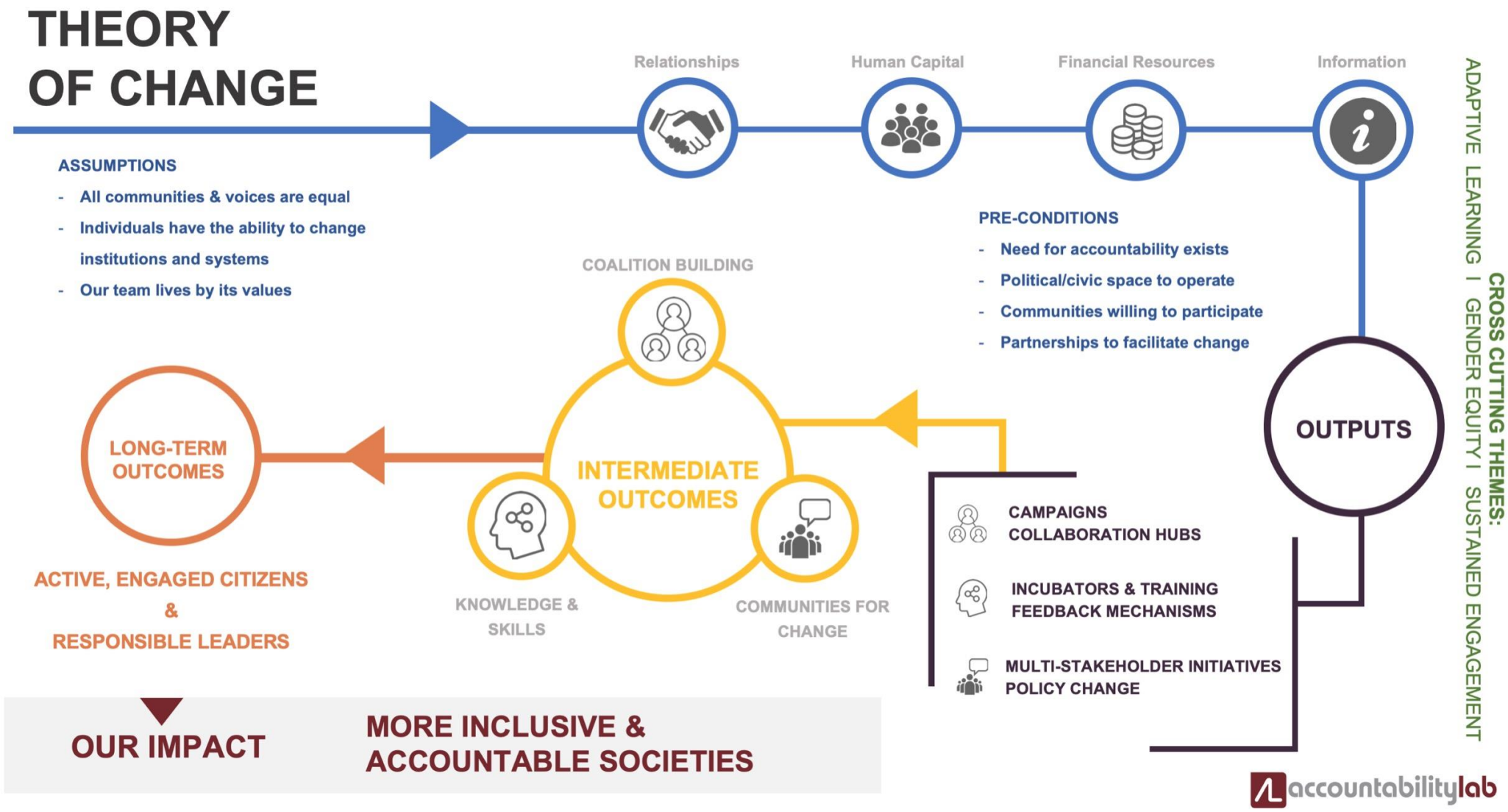
Source: https://naturwissenschaften.ch/co-producing-knowledge-explained/methods/td-net_toolbox/theory_of_change

Illustrating ToC

SOME EXAMPLES



SOURCE: USAID: HTTPS://USAIDLEARNINGLAB.ORG/LAB-NOTES/WHAT-THING-CALLED-THEORY-CHANGE



- Mission: Our mission is to make governance work for people through supporting active citizens, responsible leaders and accountable institutions.

WOCAN's Theory of Change

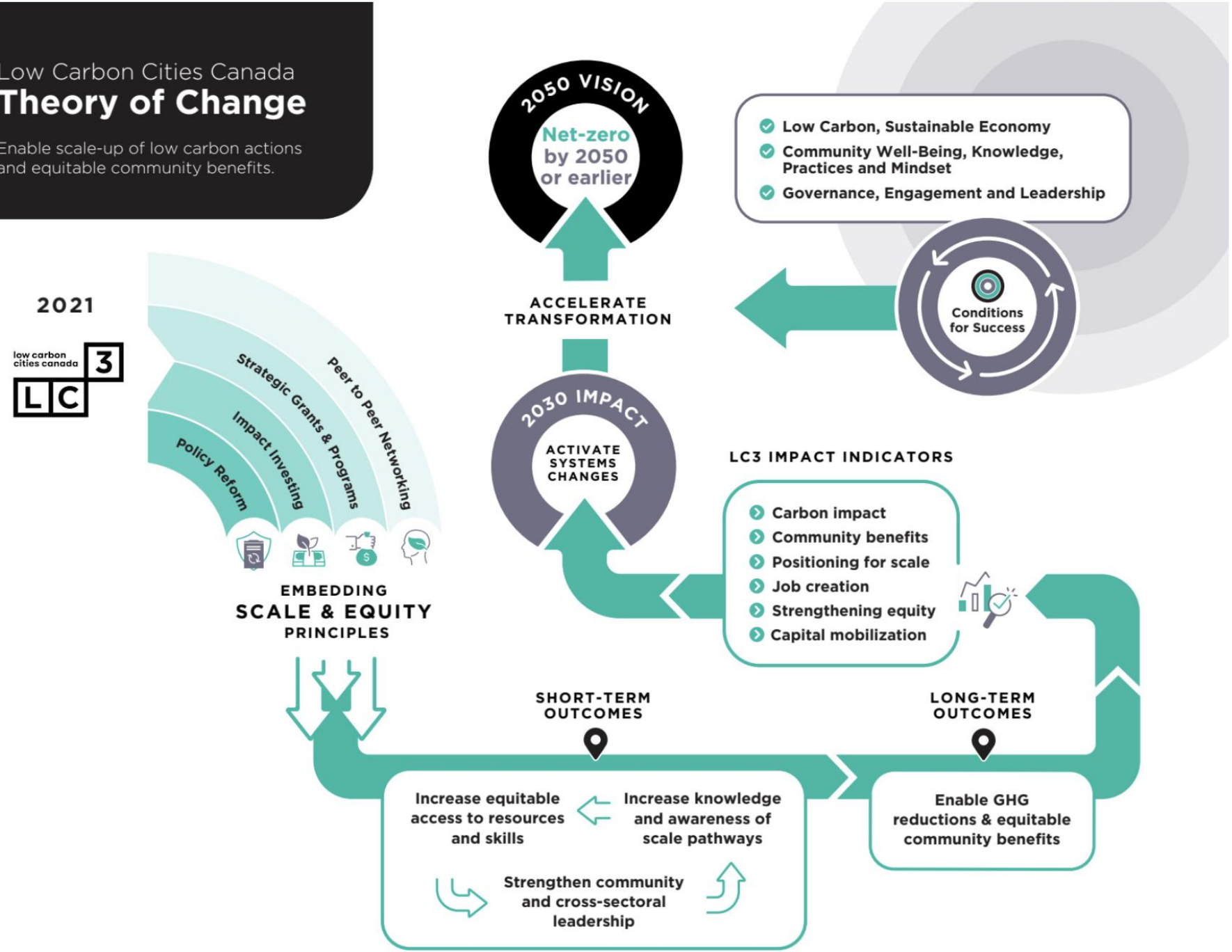
wocan
www.wocan.org

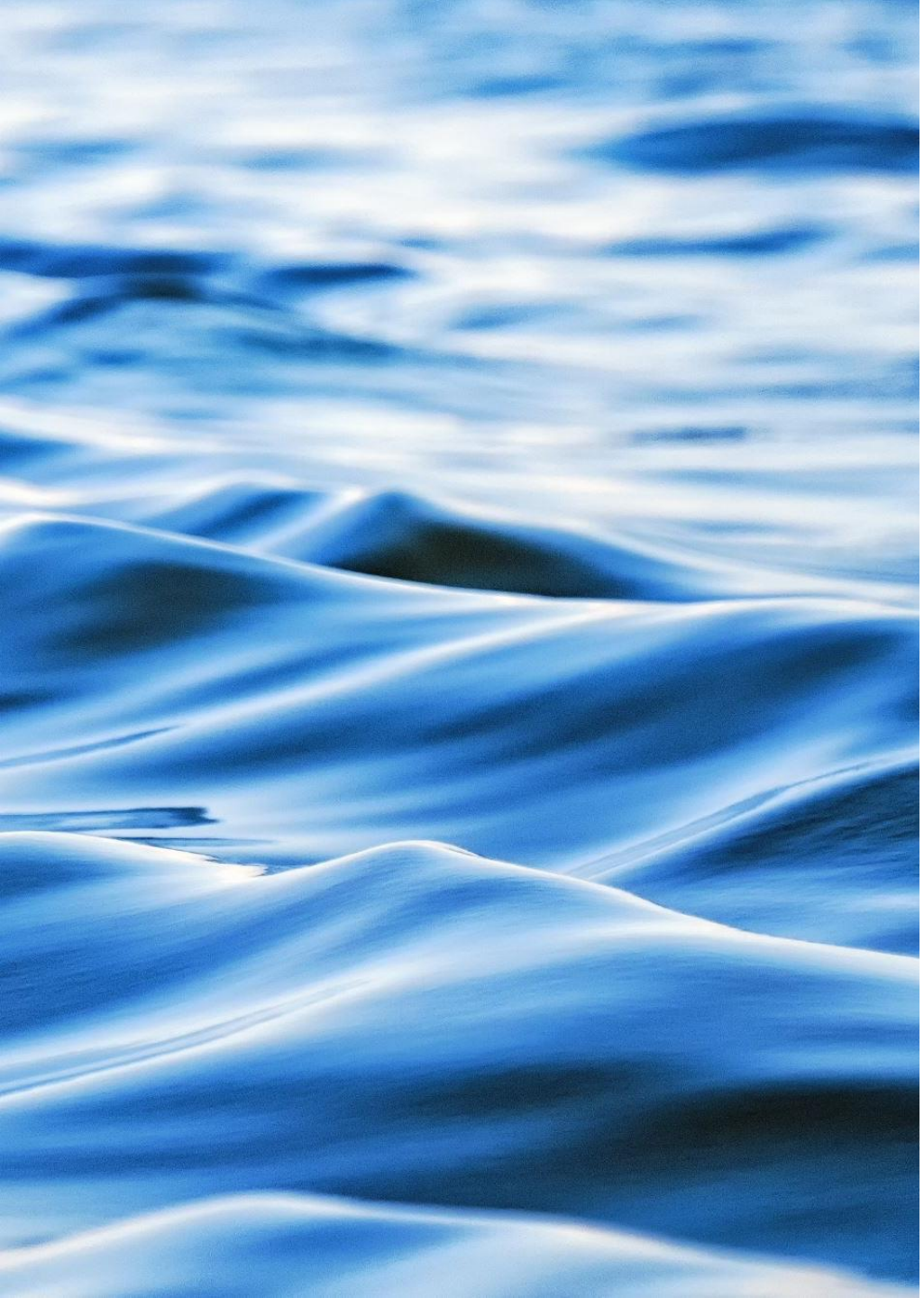
March 2016

Low Carbon Cities Canada

Theory of Change

Enable scale-up of low carbon actions and equitable community benefits.





Developing a ToC

Process example:

Water Stewardship Asia Pacific (2022-23)

What is the problem you are trying to solve?

Unsustainable Catchment Management

Related impacts: biodiversity, water quality, water scarcity, equity, WASH, issues related to climate resilience, livelihoods

Attitudes, behaviours, values

Who is your key audience?

Primary: Private sector / major water users

Secondary: Individuals (Ambassadors, Consultants, accredited individuals, auditors)

Secondary: NGOs (Collaborators)

Secondary: Public sector utilities, catchment managers (collaborators)

Financial sector

What is your entry point to reaching your audience?

Business to business - direct connections with key individuals

Driven by their business interests, Ambassadors for Water Stewardship / Internship program (future), auditor accreditation program, (future) consulting accreditation program (future)

Advocates want to see the benefits and outcomes of WS

Case-by-case with targeted NGOs

TNC

IWC

Earthwatch

Case by case

Sustainable finance managers

What steps are needed to bring about change?

Nailing the clear business case / value proposition for WS

Quantification of triple bottom line benefits to the business

Quantification of risk management to the business

The ability to scale up WSAP to meet demand, need strong advocates

Consultants and accredited individuals deliver the system

Education / Finance / Catchment outcomes and impacts (Model MoU for facilitating NGO partnerships?)

Changing attitudes, behaviours, and approaches - and eventually changing culture - to stakeholder inclusion and collaboration

Bringing green finance to water decision-making

hat is the mea- rable effect of ur work?

Understanding complex systems around water stewardship allows for businesses to address risk

Transformational change - beyond risk management

Visual representation of the 'elements' of water stewardship from a catchment and individual business perspective

Outcomes at the catchment level through uptake of WS: stakeholders understanding and responding to catchment challenges (water balance, water quality, social challenges, environmental challenges, WASH challenges, governance, etc.)

surable effect?

able effect?

As many utilities are privatised, they face both financial and resource (quality and quantity of water) risk

Risk reduction, improvement in ESG outcomes from investments

What are the wider benefits of your work?

Sustainable catchment management

wider ben

Private sector sees the role it should play as a part of polycentric governance and IWRM

Public sector engaged and incentivises private sector in IWRM process

wider ben

Number and complexities of water risks are better understood and addressed by private sector (beyond just water use efficiency)

What is the long-term change you see as your goal?

Thriving catchments = thriving businesses, ecosystems

KEY ASSUMPTIONS

These are the key stakeholders

KEY ASSUMPTIONS

WSSP allows for

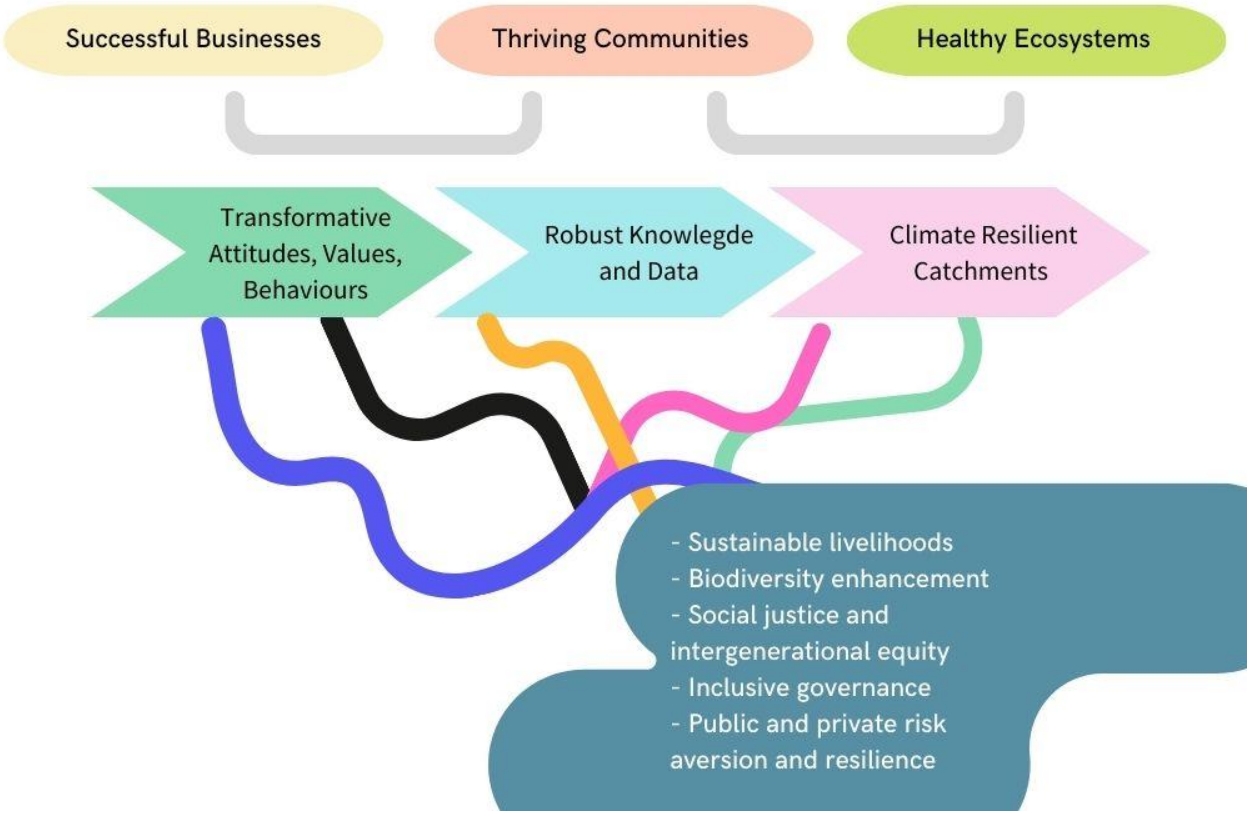
UMPTIONS

Change is

KEY ASSUMPTIONS

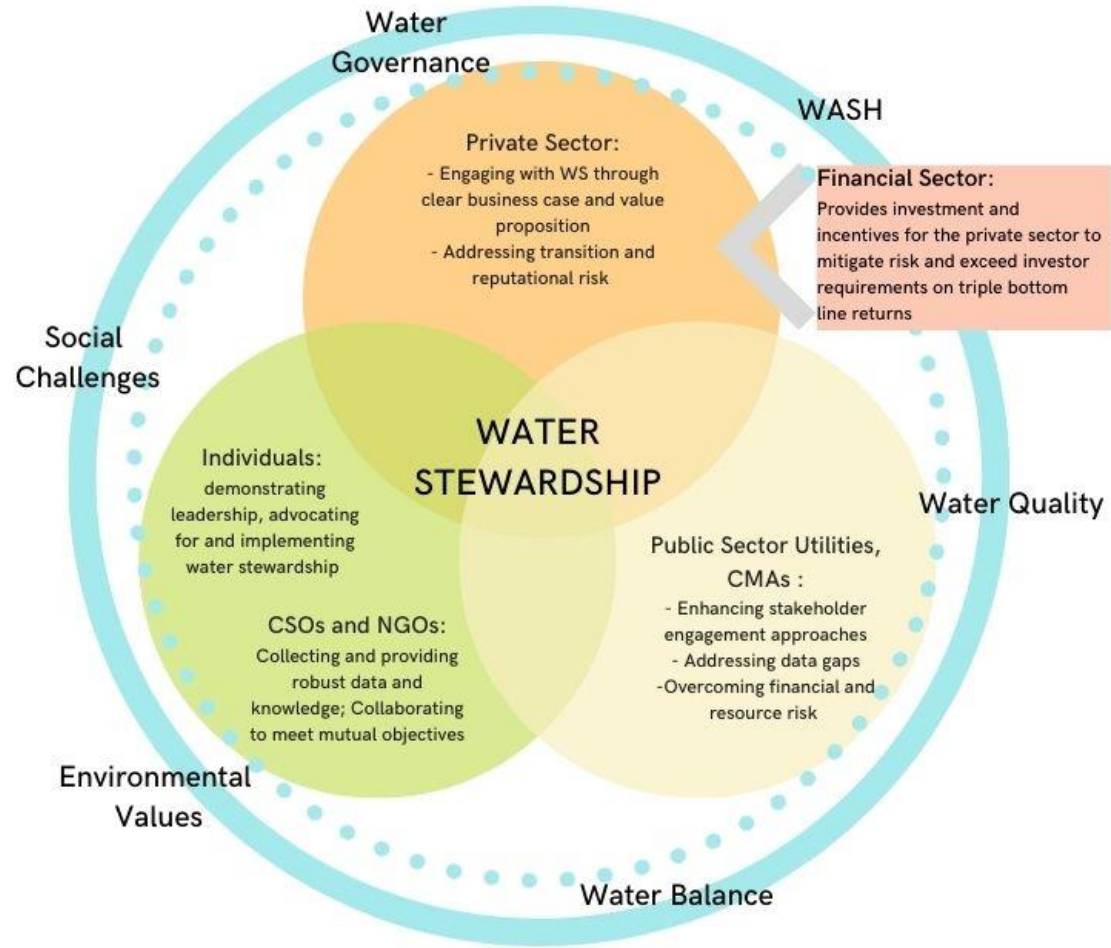
STAKEHOLDERS

WSAP Vision: Thriving Catchments



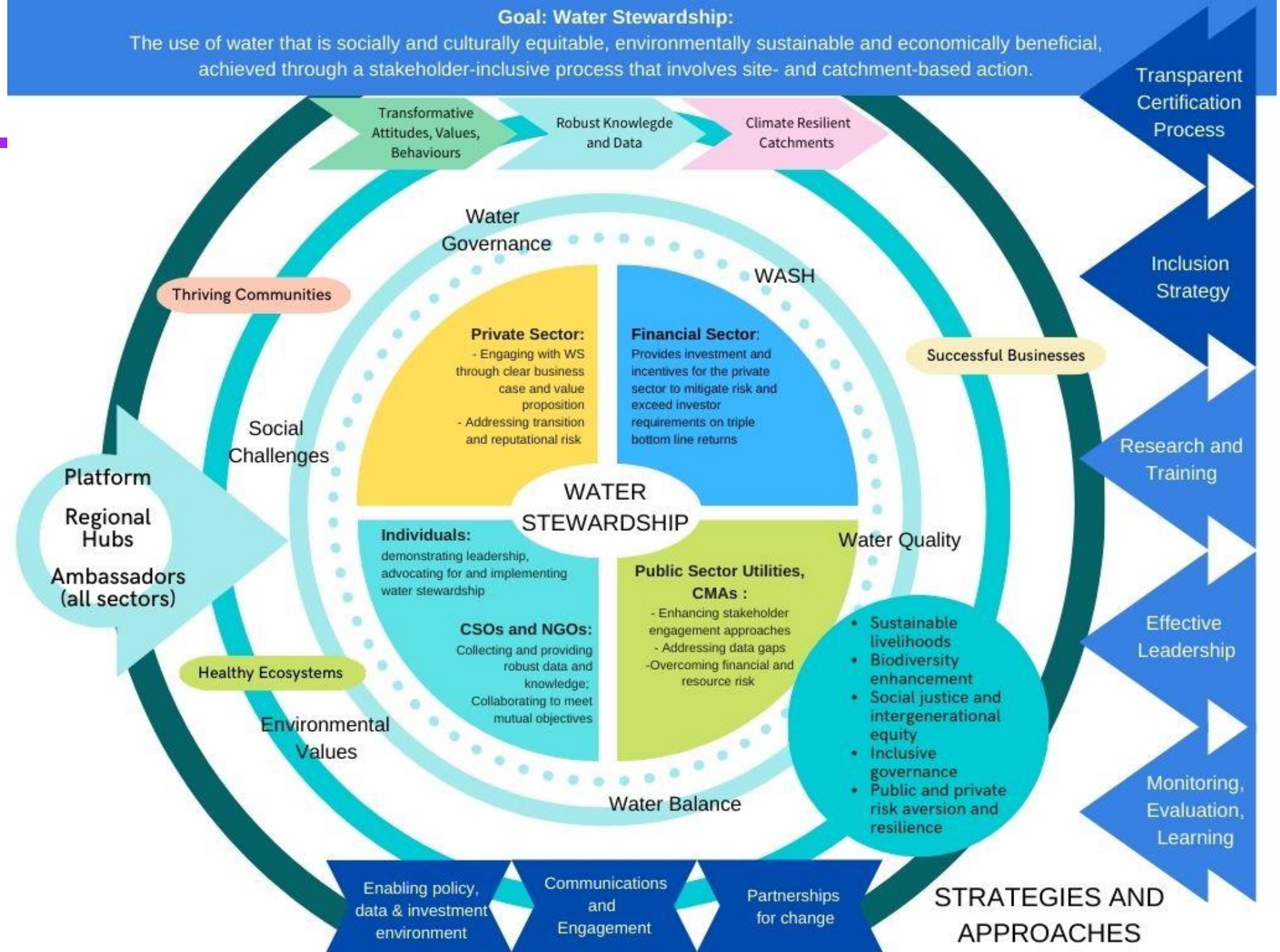
Goal: Water Stewardship:

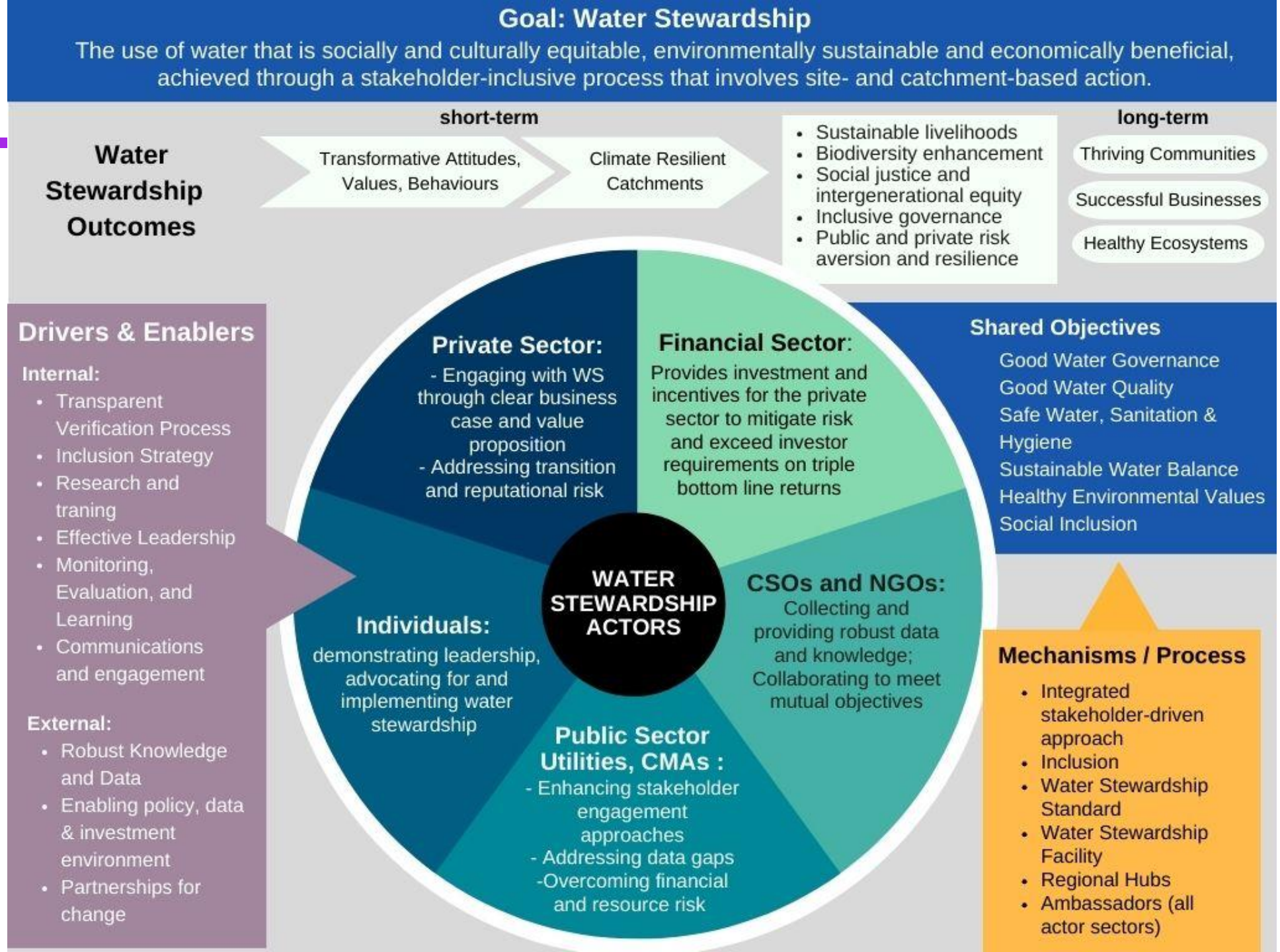
The use of water that is socially and culturally equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial, achieved through a stakeholder-inclusive process that involves site- and catchment-based action.



Strategic Priorities

Enablers


Goal: Water Stewardship:
The use of water that is socially and culturally equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial, achieved through a stakeholder-inclusive process that involves site- and catchment-based action.
Transformative Attitudes, Values, Behaviours
Robust Knowlegde and Data
Climate Resilient Catchments
Transparent Certification Process
Inclusion Strategy
Research and Training
Effective Leadership
Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning
Water Governance
WASH
Water Quality
Water Balance
Environmental Values
Social Challenges
Thriving Communities
Successful Businesses
Healthy Ecosystems
Private Sector:
- Engaging with WS through clear business case and value proposition
- Addressing transition and reputational risk
Financial Sector:
Provides investment and incentives for the private sector to mitigate risk and exceed investor requirements on triple bottom line returns
WATER STEWARDSHIP
Individuals:
demonstrating leadership, advocating for and implementing water stewardship
CSOs and NGOs:
Collecting and providing robust data and knowledge; Collaborating to meet mutual objectives
Public Sector Utilities, CMAs :
- Enhancing stakeholder engagement approaches
- Addressing data gaps
-Overcoming financial and resource risk
Platform
Regional Hubs
Ambassadors (all sectors)
• Sustainable livelihoods
• Biodiversity enhancement
• Social justice and intergenerational equity
• Inclusive governance
• Public and private risk aversion and resilience
Enabling policy, data & investment environment
Communications and Engagement
Partnerships for change
STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

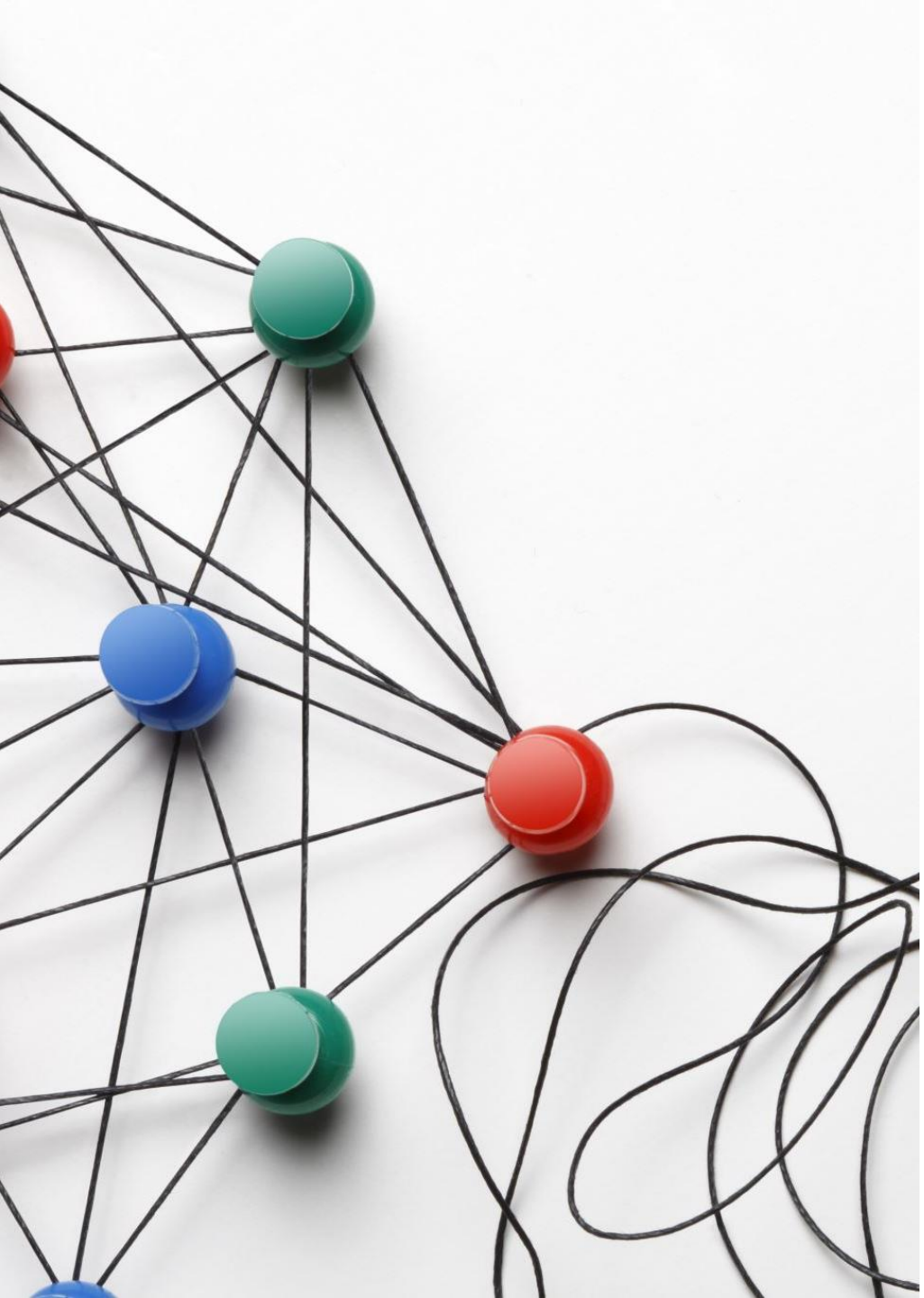

Goal: Water Stewardship
The use of water that is socially and culturally equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial, achieved through a stakeholder-inclusive process that involves site- and catchment-based action.
Water Stewardship Outcomes
short-term
Transformative Attitudes, Values, Behaviours
Climate Resilient Catchments
Sustainable livelihoods
Biodiversity enhancement
Social justice and intergenerational equity
Inclusive governance
Public and private risk aversion and resilience
long-term
Thriving Communities
Successful Businesses
Healthy Ecosystems
Drivers & Enablers
Internal:
Transparent Verification Process
Inclusion Strategy
Research and traning
Effective Leadership
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
Communications and engagement
External:
Robust Knowledge and Data
Enabling policy, data & investment environment
Partnerships for change
Private Sector:
- Engaging with WS through clear business case and value proposition
- Addressing transition and reputational risk
Financial Sector:
Provides investment and incentives for the private sector to mitigate risk and exceed investor requirements on triple bottom line returns
WATER STEWARDSHIP ACTORS
Individuals:
demonstrating leadership, advocating for and implementing water stewardship
CSOs and NGOs:
Collecting and providing robust data and knowledge; Collaborating to meet mutual objectives
Public Sector Utilities, CMAs :
- Enhancing stakeholder engagement approaches
- Addressing data gaps
-Overcoming financial and resource risk
Shared Objectives
Good Water Governance
Good Water Quality
Safe Water, Sanitation & Hygiene
Sustainable Water Balance
Healthy Environmental Values
Social Inclusion
Mechanisms / Process
Integrated stakeholder-driven approach
Inclusion
Water Stewardship Standard
Water Stewardship Facility
Regional Hubs
Ambassadors (all actor sectors)

1. In conclusion, what's the purpose and advantage of a Theory of Change? Share this on the learning portal.

2. Find a Theory of Change and share it on the learning portal with a sentence about what you like about it.

Project Frameworks

How to use them together, when to use what, differences and similarities



ToC vs LFA

•A logic model takes a more narrow practical approach at the relationship between inputs and results. It is often presented as a table listing the steps from inputs or resources through the achievement of a desired program goal.

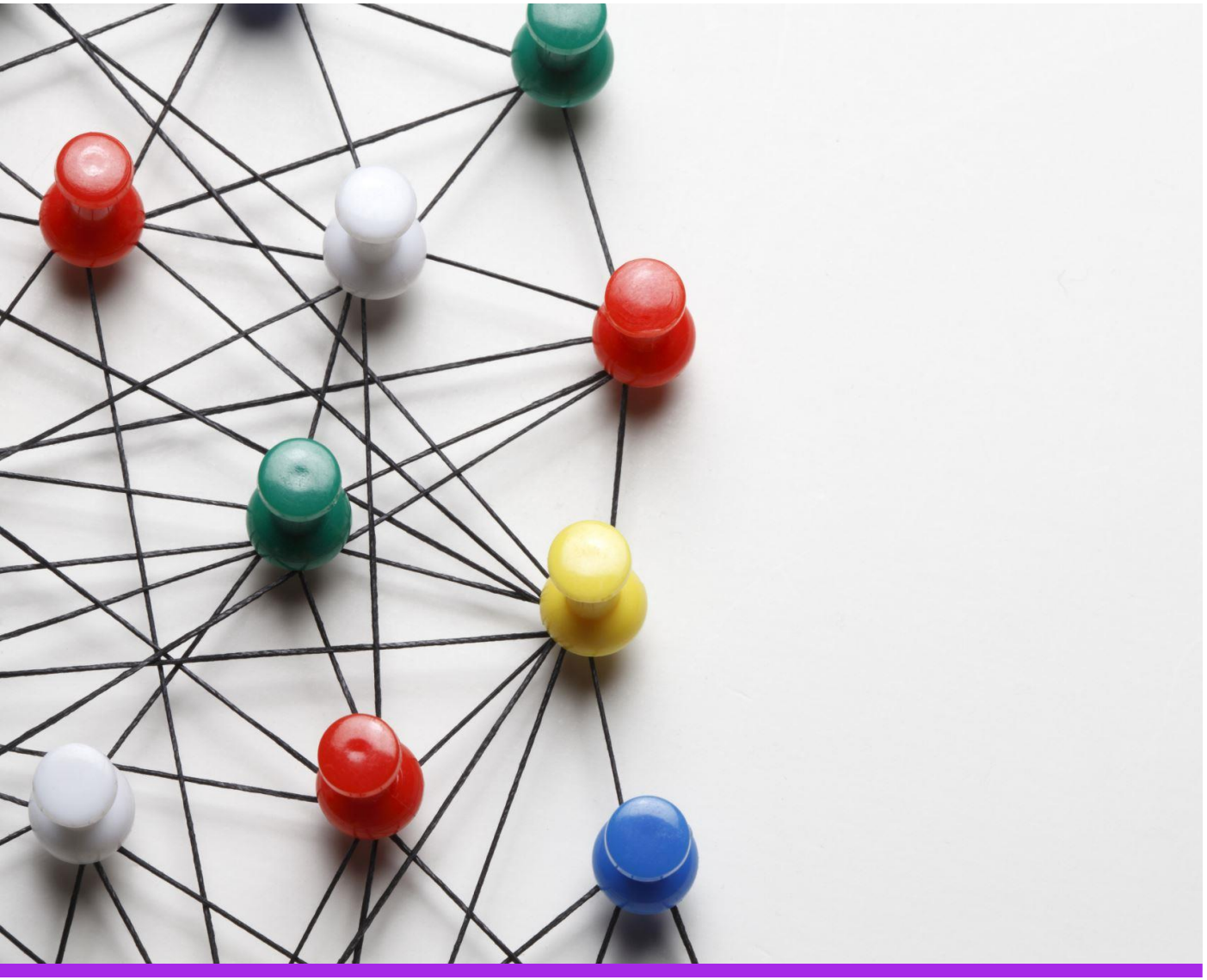
•Some grant makers use separate logic models to chart the implementation components of Theory of Change.

ToC vs LFA

- ToC “seeks to describe at each and every level of the theory chain why one outcome leads to the other and why one activity will lead to an intended outcome/ result.

- “In a theory of change approach the assumptions underlying the internal logic or causal links chain need to be examined and tested.”

- *Source: Walters, H 2007, Capacity Development, Institutional Change and Theory of Change: What do we mean and where are the linkages. p 11.*



Using LFA and ToC together

- It can be used together with a Logical Framework Approach in order to describe how and why an activity, output or outcome in the LFA leads to the other.

- In a theory of change approach the assumptions underlying the internal logic of the LFA need to be examined and tested.