



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
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Canada

HEALTH EQUITY

A VIEW FROM THE MIDSTREAM

Sparkling Solutions

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PROTECTING AND EMPOWERING CANADIANS
TO IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH



Purpose

- **Describe** how we developed criteria to identify equity-sensitive interventions, and show how they apply
- **Profile** a practice tool that emerged as a result of the criteria development process
- **Consider** "disruptive questions" about links between midstream-level interventions and population health outcomes



While we know social determinants influence health, we still lack evidence of

- how, and how much, they affect health outcomes
- how interventions can help improve health equity

Our challenges

- understanding how midstream-level interventions - those that act on *material, social* and *environmental* factors - interact and influence population health outcomes
- applying that knowledge to improve the equity-related impacts of population-based interventions

Disruptive Idea: How do we demonstrate a link between mid-stream interventions and health?

EXAMPLE: housing $\longleftrightarrow$ healthy weights?

For people who are housing insecure, costs / conditions can compete directly with healthy choices and/or behaviour

- *What is the strength of the association?*
- *What is the evidence of interactions among factors?*

What we did

Proposed core set of **screening criteria**

An equity-sensitive intervention must have

- **intended** to improve health outcomes for people living in conditions of disadvantage
- used intervention **approaches** that take underlying conditions of disadvantage into account, or target groups affected by them
- reported positive **health outcomes** for people living in conditions of disadvantage

Developed search strategy with **focus on mid-stream**

Tested, refined, **applied** screening criteria

- Identified relevant studies
- Appraised relevant studies (quality of evidence)

equity-sensitive intervention:
using $\longleftrightarrow$ **healthy weights**

“Moving to Opportunity”

WHAT: a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development intervention that influences housing, education, and employment for families with children living in conditions of disadvantage

HOW: by providing an opportunity to move from a high-poverty neighborhood to one with a lower level of poverty (supported by rental assistance and counseling)

SO WHAT: intervention was associated with reduced prevalence of extreme obesity and diabetes

Equity-sensitive intervention:

Built environment  **physical activity level**

“Partnership for an Active Community Environment (PACE)”

WHAT: Built environment interventions to increase physical activity in a low-income neighbourhood

HOW: by adding a new six-block walking path, and a new school playground.

SO WHAT: Observed moderate to vigorous physical activity was reported to have increased slightly in the area of the walking path, but not in the area of the playground.

Equity-sensitive intervention: Job search skills ↔ mental health

“The Jobs Program”

WHAT: A job-search skill enhancement workshop to reduce negative effects on mental health associated with unemployment while promoting high-quality reemployment.

HOW: by teaching effective strategies to find suitable employment and deal with setbacks while increasing self-esteem, sense of control, and job search self-efficacy.

SO WHAT: Results include enhanced self-esteem, and reduction of depressive symptoms associated with prolonged unemployment, particularly among those most vulnerable to mental health problems; positive effects on emotional functioning.

expected 'byproduct': a Practice Tool

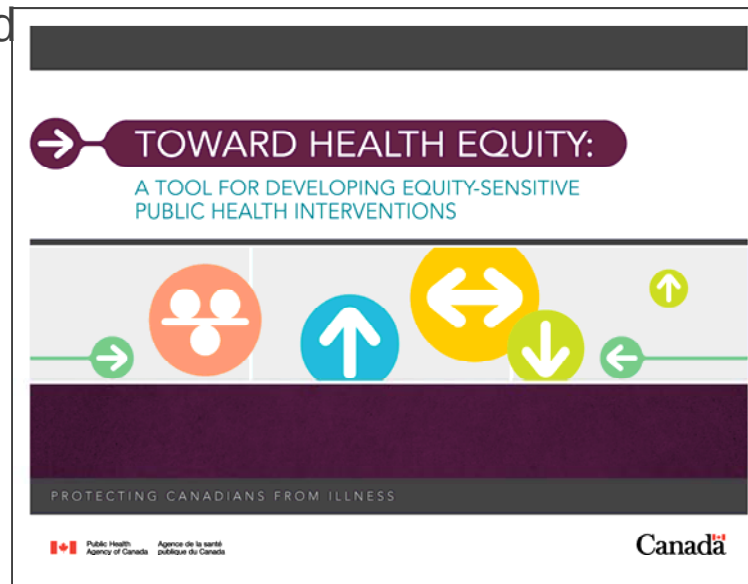
When developing criteria, need for a visual aid emerged

Working diagram was developed to help map and unpack the theory and evidence behind equity-sensitive interventions

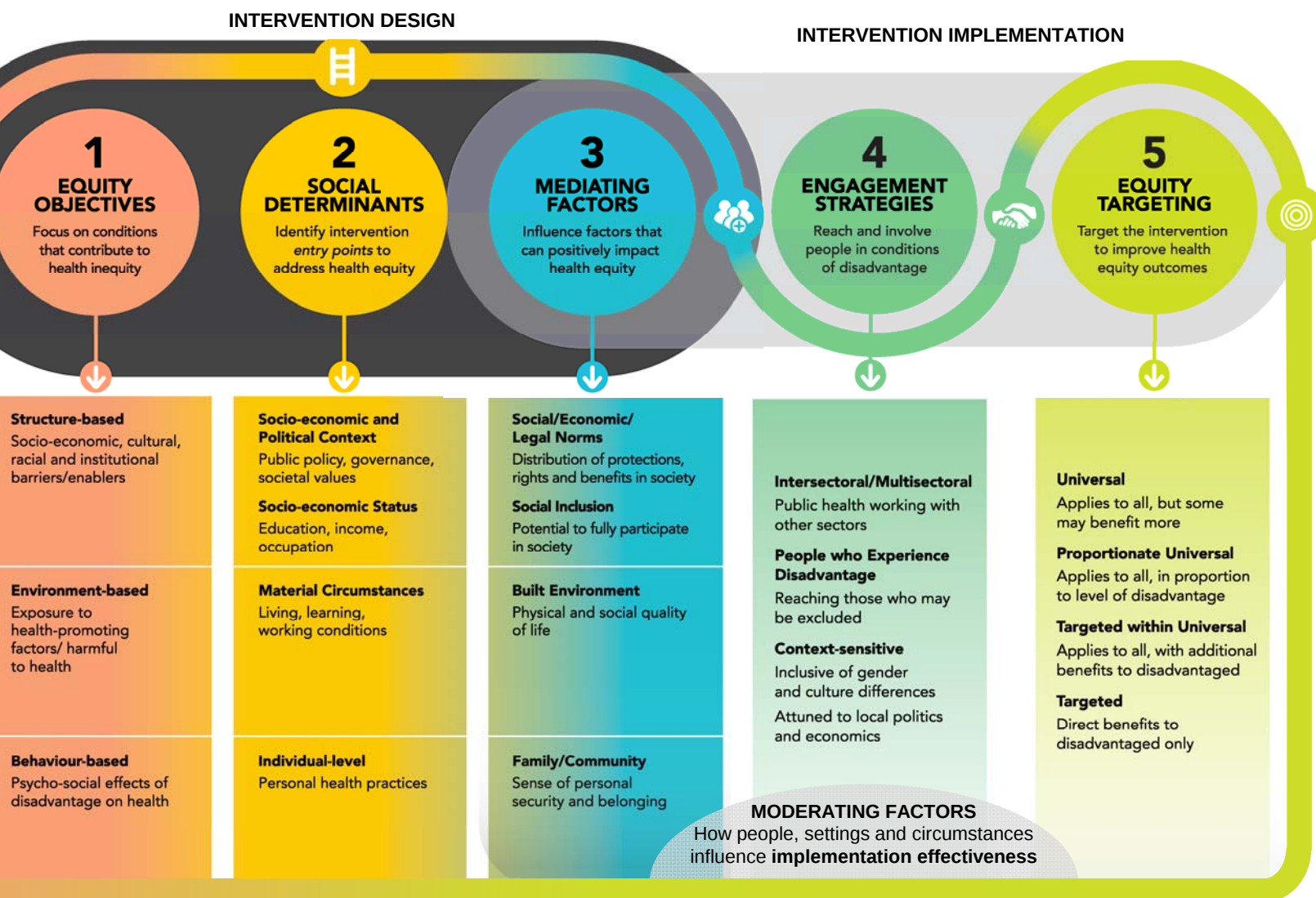
Decided to refine and share it online

- To **equip** practitioners to apply equity considerations to intervention design and implementation
- To **stimulate exploration of opportunities** for cross-disciplinary collaboration and research to monitor / measure health equity impacts

Resulted in ***TOWARD HEALTH EQUITY: A Practice Tool***



WARD HEALTH EQUITY: A Practice Tool (condensed)

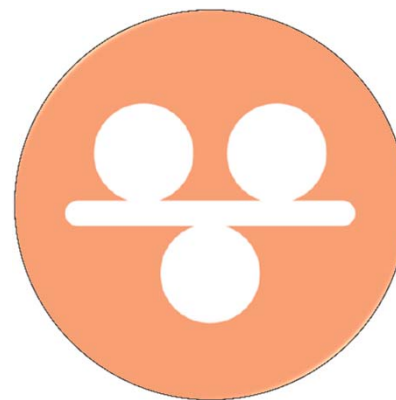


Reflection: links between mid-stream interventions and health - disruptive questions

How far along the **causal chain** can we reasonably go?

How to reconcile divergent views among public health experts about **what to measure**?

How can we strengthen '**evidence bridges**' between direct and proxy indicators of health?



Knowledgegements and Resources

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ARD HEALTH EQUITY: A Tool for Developing Equity-sensitive Public Health

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