CORE CONCEPTS for HEALTH PROMOTION:
Simple definitions to support intersectoral action
to promote health and wellbeing

January 15, 2025

The Project: Becoming a Network-of-Networks / Devenir un réseau national intersectoriel

This project was developed to leverage the *Health Promotion Canada* platform to create an intersectoral and interdisciplinary space for promoting collaborative action on the social determinants of health and wellbeing.

Health Promotion Canada (HPC), through a partnership with the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health (NCCDH) and the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA), has received funding from the *Intersectoral Action Fund* of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) to undertake this one year project (completion date April 2025). The organization Réseau francophone international pour la promotion de la santé (RÉFIPS), région des Amériques, joined the partnership to help ensure a fully bilingual network and reinforce the national intersectoral focus of the project.

The Challenge: Shared language

There is a lack of shared language across sectors and disciplines related to health promotion and wellbeing, intersectoral action and collaboration. This is a barrier to working together for large systems change.

We propose that the work of building a national intersectoral network-of-networks/*réseau national intersectoriel* starts with the development of simple language related to **core concepts**, that translate easily across sectors, disciplines and languages. We want to put shared health and wellbeing **outcomes** at the centre, and focus on actions (individual and collaborative) that contribute to **creating conditions** for health and wellbeing.

This Document

The definitions provided in this document are based on key concepts common to a range of frameworks across a diversity of sectors including health promotion, public health, primary care, Indigenous health, environmental health, community development and social change. They are presented in point-form and are intended to provide a starting place for exploring how different sectors and disciplines can work together to create the conditions for health and wellbeing of people and the planet.

A separate document with visuals from many of these frameworks can be accessed here:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FAEw4sFPw2-F_PPo67AD0oxTuvOV3nnt?usp=drive_link

Core Concepts

1. Health and Wellbeing Outcomes

Health
- Physical, mental, spiritual, emotional (people)
- Social, political, economic (living environment)
- Environmental, natural (planet)

Health Promotion
- Creating the conditions for positive health and wellbeing
- Actions which aim to improve health and reduce health inequities
- Actions that are empowering, participatory, holistic, intersectional, equitable, sustainable and multi-strategy in nature

Wellbeing Society
- 'Stewarding' for a flourishing future is a central principle
- Inclusive of both human and planetary health
- Creating is a political choice and requires a whole-of-society approach
- Integrates Indigenous knowledge as an essential component of this process

Flourishing
- Living systems that are able to fulfill their purpose
- Integrated socio-ecological wellbeing

2. Barriers and Supports

Social determinants
- Conditions of daily life (e.g. income, food security, safety, housing, education)
- Experienced by individuals and groups
- Operate across the lifespan

Environmental determinants
- Built environments (home, work, community)
- Exposure to environmental threats (heat, cold, pollution) or pathogens

Structural determinants
- The drivers of the conditions of daily life
- Written and unwritten social rules that create hierarchical patterns of advantage (e.g. racism, sexism)
- Operate collectively through social, political and economic power-based structures (e.g. neo-liberal ideology, capitalism)

Ecological determinants
- Processes and natural resources necessary for health
- Interdependent system

3. Actions/Actors

Sectors
- A way to categorize organizations and the core values that structure their approach
- Conceptualized as public (government), private (business) and civil society sectors
- Complicated by some organizations being 'hybrid' in nature (e.g. state-owned enterprises, not-for-profits and social enterprises)
- Some governance structures are not typically included in the public sector (e.g. Indigenous governments)

Disciplines
- A way to organize types of knowledge and different ways of understanding the world
- Often described as an area of study (e.g. health, community, economics, political science)

Collaboration
- Collaborative action means 'working together'
- Experienced on a continuum, from looser relationships (e.g., communicate, cooperate) to tighter relationships based on greater trust (e.g., coordinate, collaborate, integrate)

Networks
- A set of relationships, both formal and informal
- Individual and organizational levels
- Defined based on purpose, permanence, leadership and scope
- A network-of-networks describes the scale

Feedback

We would like to know what you think about these definitions and related frameworks. What resonates the most for you? What is confusing or missing? How could we simplify or improve the language? What resources can you share that might be helpful?

You can provide feedback via a short survey tool: https://forms.gle/WVZdeRGmm8qrPdCL7

You can also be in touch directly via the contact information below to email your comments and questions.

Thanks very much!
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