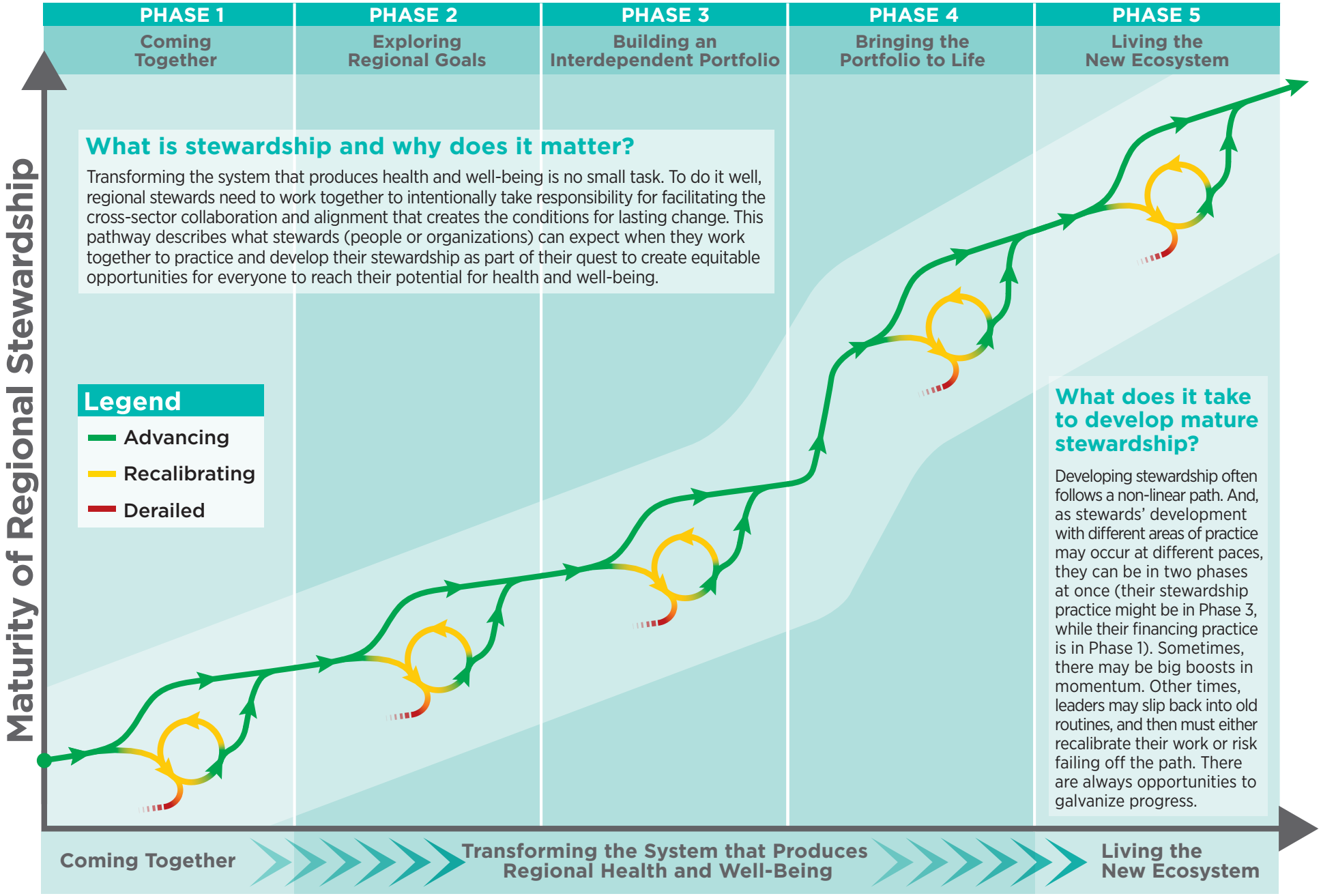
A Pathway for Transforming Health and Well-Being Through Regional Stewardship



What is stewardship and why does it matter?

Transforming the system that produces health and well-being is no small task. To do it well, regional stewards need to work together to intentionally take responsibility for facilitating the cross-sector collaboration and alignment that creates the conditions for lasting change. This pathway describes what stewards (people or organizations) can expect when they work together to practice and develop their stewardship as part of their quest to create equitable opportunities for everyone to reach their potential for health and well-being.

What does it take to develop mature stewardship?

Developing stewardship often follows a non-linear path. And, as stewards' development with different areas of practice may occur at different paces, they can be in two phases at once (their stewardship practice might be in Phase 3, while their financing practice is in Phase 1). Sometimes, there may be big boosts in momentum. Other times, leaders may slip back into old routines, and then must either recalibrate their work or risk failing off the path. There are always opportunities to galvanize progress.

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Version 412020

The State of Regional Stewardship In Each Pathway Phase

Maturity of Regional Stewardship

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5
Coming Together	**Exploring Regional Goals**	**Building an Interdependent Portfolio**	**Bringing the Portfolio to Life**	**Living the New Ecosystem**
Stewards focus on issue-specific activities to solve an identified problem or need, typically for a limited period of time. Their work together is transactional, with each contributor doing their part without changing old routines or adjusting their understanding of self-interests.	Stewards form wider and more routine working relationships. They begin to articulate a clear, compelling, and shared vision for producing equitable health and well-being in their region. They explore what it is like to share information and responsibility across multiple issues and initiatives, while still largely competing for resources to support their own part of the work.	Stewards work together routinely to pursue a clear, compelling, and shared vision for the entire region, including all of its people. That vision also guides investments and actions. They negotiate and begin to enact an interdependent portfolio of interventions, with multiple elements that are designed synergistically to yield both short- and long-term benefits.	In the most risky and rewarding phase of all, stewards abandon business as usual. They position their own work to align with a wider portfolio of interventions, which they have collectively designed to produce equitable health and well-being in the region. They act through new roles and new mindsets to bring their portfolio to life. Stewards commit themselves to new ways of doing business together. They embrace—and enforce—new norms because their vital interests now depend on it.	New institutions, markets, and accountability mechanisms have emerged through new patterns of working relationships among stewards. In the new ecosystem, the interactions among an extensive collection of organizations are in sync producing fair and just opportunities for health and well-being. The means for continuous monitoring and improvement are integrated into new system design, including the means for a new wave of transformation should it be necessary. Certain groups formed in prior phases may have been a temporary means to reach the current state, and may be disbanded if no longer necessary.
Application of system thinking: There is rarely a well-articulated theory of system change. Stewards often act on the belief that their specific, often singular interventions will yield systemic change for the region. They are not typically aware of interdependencies, tradeoffs, and unintended effects of their efforts on others. **Level of collaboration:** Stewards combine their expertise and perspectives to address issue-specific needs, but act independently and expect reciprocation. **Level of inclusiveness:** Primarily limited to well-established stewards who were already working on the issue before deciding to join forces. Residents and other potential contributors are rarely seen as having legitimate agency.	**Application of systems thinking:** Aware of the potential to use systems thinking to achieve their purposes, but applying it only on a limited basis. **Level of collaboration:** Combine expertise and perspectives to determine an approach to regional problem solving. **Level of inclusiveness:** Diverse stewards work together and increasingly reach out to others not yet involved to help assess options or make decisions.	**Application of systems thinking:** Stewards routinely think about the system that produces fair opportunities for health and well-being, what stands in the way, for whom, and where the leverage lies to generate better results. **Level of collaboration:** High levels of interdependency and low expectations for immediate reciprocation; knowledge, expertise, and contributions to the whole are as important as positional power. **Level of inclusiveness:** Highly inclusive and diverse; more and more stewards feel that they belong and can contribute.	**Application of systems thinking:** Using systems thinking consistently to develop transformative solutions. **Level of collaboration:** Increasingly high levels of interdependency and low expectations for immediate reciprocation have made collaborative relationships more common, and effective conflict resolution second-nature. **Level of inclusiveness:** Highly inclusive and diverse; stewards work collaboratively, developing a willingness to be transparent as well as an understanding about one another's vested interests.	

Coming Together → **Transforming the System that Produces Regional Health and Well-Being** → **Living the New Ecosystem**

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