



TURNING THE TIDE
AN INSPIRING COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

THE COMMUNITY SPEAKS: Turning the Tide Takes Action

A Community Update

OCTOBER 2021

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Report last updated October 20, 2021

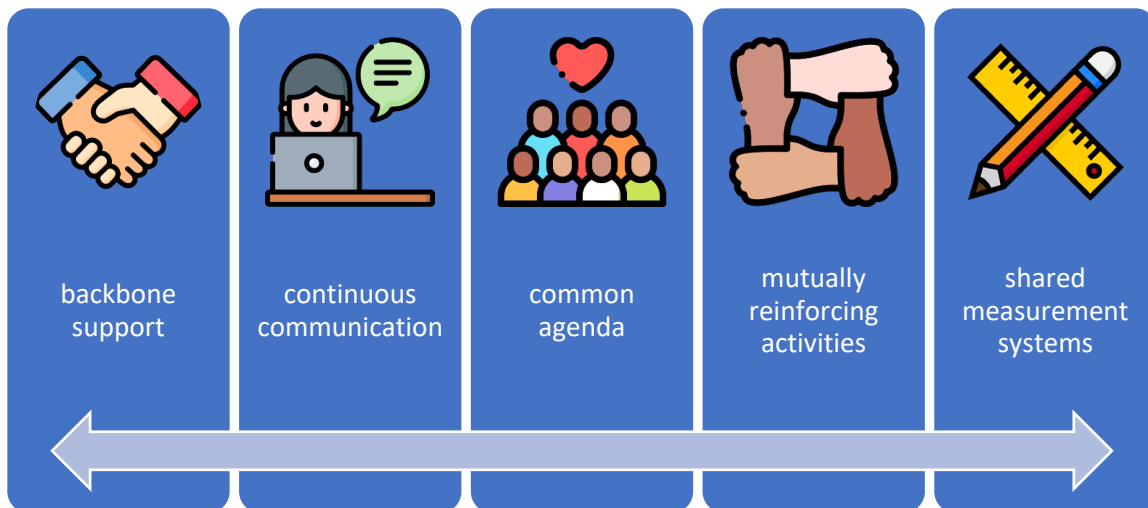


Figure 1: the Pillars of a Collective Impact Initiative, reflecting the key aspects of Turning the Tide’s role: stewards for the community, coalition culture cultivators, and developmental evaluators.

Introduction

This report provides an update on work of Turning the Tide for 2020-2021.

Serving Digby, the Islands, Bear River, Weymouth and surrounding areas, Turning the Tide is a collective impact initiative that was established in 2018 after data analysis revealed both complex social problems as well as the existence of extensive resources in the form of positive work already happening. Turning the Tide is made up of a Backbone Team, Advisory Committee, and group of Community Ambassadors.

The Backbone Team includes the Team Lead, Evaluation Lead, Community Coordinator and the Coordinator for Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF). Communities Building Youth Futures is described on page 6.

The Advisory Committee provides oversight, identifies other key stakeholders and supports the Backbone Team in moving the work forward. The Backbone Team ensures the implementation of collective impact plans, and they also provide information, research and an update of activities completed and future initiatives. The Community Ambassadors (CAs) help guide the work of Turning the Tide by providing critical information regarding specific constituencies within the Digby area, and areas of work for consideration.

Turning the Tide is one of three collective impact initiatives of [Inspiring Communities](#) (IC). Inspiring Communities is a non-profit organization working to build collaborative relationships for social change in Atlantic Canada. IC provides Turning the Tide with administrative, financial, human resources and evaluation support. *Collective Impact* is a practice that helps reimagine our approach to social change. Figure 1 shows the pillars of a collective impact initiative.

Background

In 2018, community consultation including interviews with government employees at all levels and discussions with community leaders and residents, led to the establishment of a cross-sectoral *Insight Team*. This team oversaw a survey of the community of over 800 residents about community strengths and issues. In 2019 Turning the Tide was selected as a name from community submissions.

Check *Appendix A* for diagrams showing the early work of the initiative.



Knowledge Translation: From Sense-Making into Themes

The 2018-2019 survey findings were discussed at a well-attended community forum. From these, three themes were distilled, and these form the focus of Turning the Tide's work through individual theme teams. The summary of findings related to these themes are linked below:

- [Employment & economy: underemployment and unemployment](#)
- [Health care](#)
- [Environment](#)

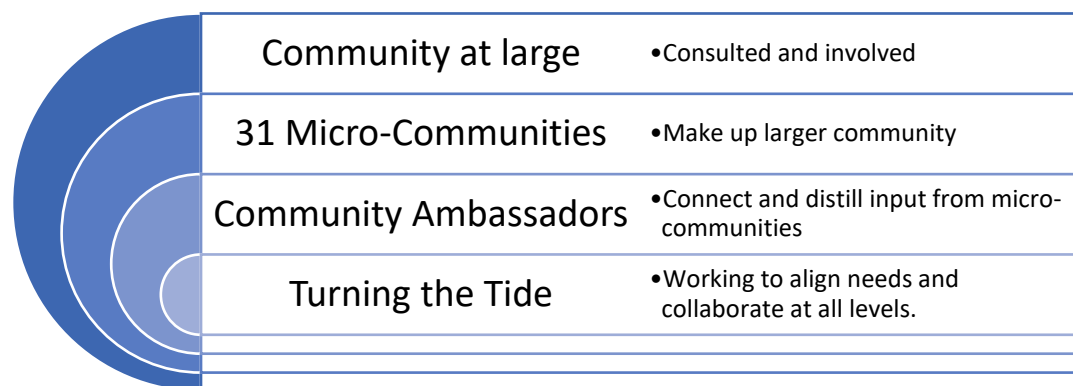
In addition to these three themes, the following concerns were identified through a separate survey of Digby youth:

- Forced to leave Digby to find work
- No doctors or mental health services
- Inadequate school curriculum, not preparing students for post-secondary education or training
- Increase and abuse of drugs
- Increase of crime
- More students dropping out of school

[Visit our website for more information about the survey data analysis and consultation process.](#)

Micro-communities and Community Ambassadors

Turning the Tide recognized that within the Digby area there are 31 micro-communities, or distinct demographically diverse communities they needed to consider. This enabled the initiative to focus on the needs and assets of specific demographics within the larger area, and to ensure the voices of the 31 micro-communities remain central to the work of Turning the Tide. Fourteen community members were identified and recruited to become Community Ambassadors (CAs) to direct and facilitate this work. CAs are volunteers from the different micro-communities who have their fingers on the pulse of their respective communities. They are critical to the work—they link the communities with Turning the Tide and ensure decisions, collaborative work and action plans are informed by the communities.



The Turning the Tide Backbone Team and Collaborative Framework

When Turning the Tide was first established as an initiative, the Insight Team, comprised of a cross-sector of social agents (community residents, leaders, government, and education representatives), guided the work. The Backbone Team developed the [*Collaborative Framework*](#), illustrated in Figure 2, which supported the Insight Team transitioning into an Advisory Group. The Framework articulates the work of the advisory and evaluation team, outlines the roles of the working groups, the theme teams and their respective mandates.

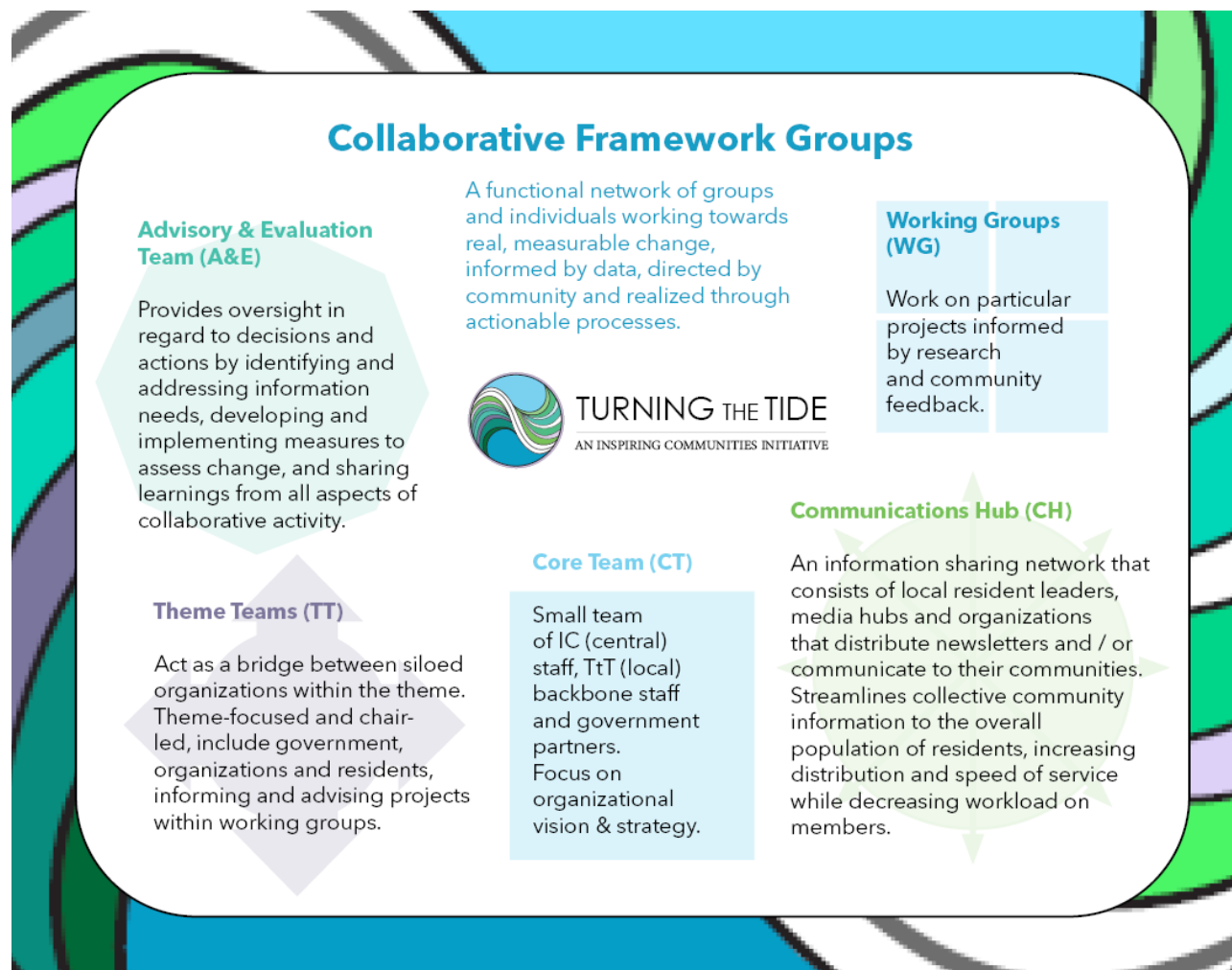


Figure 2 – the Collaborative Framework

Framework for Change

Community cohesiveness is measured through strengthened community engagement and connections, collaborative initiatives, and information sharing within communities and across communities. Given that the most necessary condition for the success of collective impact is trusting relationships, building these must begin within the communities and later across communities. Turning the Tide's [Framework for Change](#) describes the long-term vision that focuses on supporting the ability of community residents to work together collaboratively, organized around three prongs, described below.

Turning the Tide believes that if the collective impact model is to be successful then it requires providing the micro-communities with the resources to build upon and/or create cohesive communities embedded in community engagement and connections, information sharing and communities working collaboratively to achieve their respective goals. A key companion to the Framework for Change is an [evaluation plan](#), a way to measure whether trusting relationships are being achieved. Below are the three prongs of the Framework for Change, with the measures for achieving this vision:

- **Engaged and Connected:** Residents feel connected to their community and are encouraged and welcomed to be actively involved in community activities and shaping the future of the area.
- **Positive, Celebrating Successes:** Residents take pride in their community because they are aware of its assets, accomplishments, and successes. Residents feel confident and positive about the future of their community.
- **Sharing Resources:** The community has established a clear and transparent pathway for residents to access resources that meets their needs. Residents are aware of where to go and how to access needed resources and information.

Evaluation calls on sources including interviews, reflections, feedback forms, meeting records and check-ins to assess and to find the following signs of change or progress:

- Increased number of community and cross-community events, activities, and projects; enhanced engagement with these, including more / different people

- Community members able to discuss, reflect on, and learn from these, what worked well, what could have been done differently, and to plan for future collaborative efforts
- Community members meeting and learning more about and from other people from across the Digby area
- Indications of increasing trust among community members
- Improved means of information sharing about community events and activities,
- Positive stories about events, successes, and accomplishments in the area are in circulation
- Community serving organizations, groups, and government partners meet to exchange information on services, resources available in the area, and on eligibility and access requirements
- Identification of barriers to accessing current services/ resources, and gaps in needed services and resources, and planning for a navigation system to resources for the area.

Activities in 2020-2021

The following are the areas of activity undertaken in 2020 and 2021 by Turning the Tide linked to the three themes identified by the community (Employment & Economy, Health Care & Environment) and the concerns expressed by youth.

Lunch and Learn Program for Youth

The plans for this two-part series were in motion, and then—the pandemic happened. Turning the Tide jumped into action to redesign the Lunch and Learn Program from an in-person shared space to an online Zoom space. Each part consisted of several sessions. Since it was impossible to provide lunch, participants in the series were provided with a grocery gift card to purchase food items of their choice for each session they attended. The youth completed evaluations which were submitted anonymously after each session. The evaluation results suggested that the youth enjoyed the program and found it beneficial. From the evaluation responses, the grocery gift card provided an incentive for youth to attend and was partly attributable for the frequency of their attendance. In some instances, these grocery gift cards help supplement food items for their families. On average, 26 youth participated in each session. Figure 3 illustrates the workshop topics for this series.



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LUNCH & LEARN

SPRING SESSION

- Anxiety versus Worry
- Resume Building and Job Search
- Healthy Meals on a Budget
- Coping with Grief
- Coping with Uncertainty and Covid-19

SUMMER SESSION

- Basic Life Skills
- Moving Out 101
- Money Management and Taxes
- Keeping Healthy

Figure 3: Lunch and Learn Program (Two-Part Series)

Community Building Youth Futures

In 2019, the [Tamarack Institute](#) invited Turning the Tide to apply for funding regarding the [Community Building Youth Futures](#) Project (CBYF). CBYF is a five-year collective impact strategy designed with youth leadership and input to increase the graduation rates of high school students, to prepare youth for post-secondary education, employment, training, and to improve youth engagement.

For the second step in the process, representatives from Tamarack Institute and Employment and Social Development Canada (CBYF funder) arrived in Digby to conduct site visits, to meet with youth, service providers and community members. The two entities determined that Digby was ready for, and wanted, the CBYF project. Next, a delegation from Digby attended a National Gathering in Waterloo, Ontario in March 2020. Turning the Tide established a *Leadership Table* comprising youth, community



members and intersectional representation. In addition, a *Youth Connections Team* was established to ensure the work of CBYF was directed by the youth. The youth's mantra: *Nothing Done for Us Without Us*.

Tamarack facilitated three working sessions with the CBYF Leadership Team that focused on the collective impact pillar of the common agenda. From these working sessions, [A Plan on a Page](#) was ultimately developed. *A Plan on a Page* highlights Digby's aspirational vision, outlines the key priority areas, indicates where change needs to happen, and describes the research and analysis being undertaken. Find the plan in Appendix B.

Rural Youth Connections Project

As part of Turning the Tide's [CBYF Initiative](#), Turning the Tide applied for a *Rural Youth Connection Project* through the *Community Innovation Funds* also from Tamarack. Turning the Tide was approved for funds in the latter part of 2020. The Rural Youth Connections Project focuses on creating a social infrastructure for youth including programming activities and events to help create connections and build relationships with each other and with their communities. The project had earmarked funding to purchase electronic devices for youth to ensure that they had social connections and the ability to continue their studies online during the pandemic. When Digby schools provided Chrome devices to their students, the Youth Connections Team was formed and developed a proposal for a Youth Centre. Turning the Tide was allowed to reallocate funds to secure a recreational space for young people.

Youth Centre: Digby Area Youth Space (DAYS)

The youth survey had identified the need for a youth space. In 2021, with support from the Rural Youth Connections project, a Youth Centre was established at the Digby Area Recreation Centre. Schools were the natural place to present and share the word about the new centre, but when it opened, the pandemic was in full swing and schools were only accessible to students and staff. Turning the Tide was unable to provide planned information sessions about DAYS and the programs and services available to youth.

Despite the pandemic, DAYS is open and programming ongoing. DAYS has not yet seen the expected or hoped-for number of in-person drop-ins by youth, and it is likely this is due to the pandemic. Turning the Tide, the CBYF Leadership Table and the Youth Connections Team continue to provide services and programming as demanded by community. The CBYF staff is

continuously being innovative in seeking to find new ways to connect with youth and build awareness of DAYS. Using platforms such as TikTok, Facebook and other digital mediums, they are proactively reaching out to youth.


 TURNING THE TIDE <small>AN INSPIRING COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE</small>		DAYS Programs March – August 2021
In Person	Online	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit/Budgeting Workshop • Game Night • Local Job Search • Mental Health • Garden Club • Outdoor Movie • Outdoor Day with Schools plus on Brier Island • campfire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trivia • Taxes • Kahoot • Pictionary • Scavenger Hunt • Virtual Campfire • Surveys • Jeopardy • Bingo • Resume Building Workshops • University Prep sessions 	

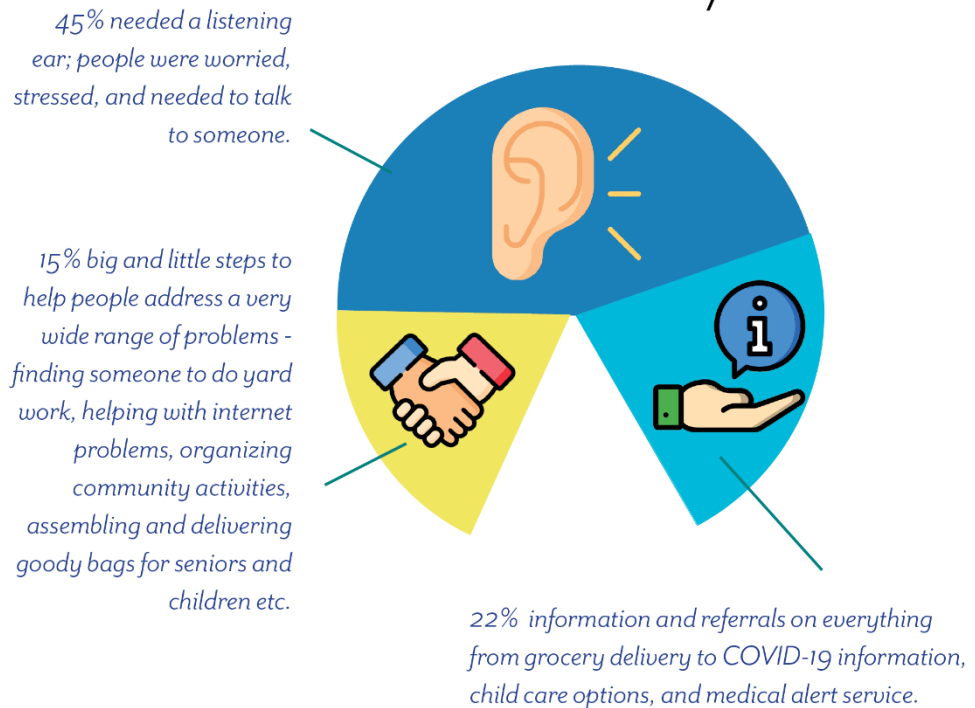
Figure 4: Programming and Services offered at the Digby Area Youth Space (DAYS)

Community Connections Project

During the pandemic, the Community Ambassadors became a support to community members requiring assistance and support and matched them with appropriate services. What began as an individual community member requesting assistance developed into a project. Seven CAs participated in this project. The CAs contacted community residents to find out how they were managing during the pandemic, and if they required assistance. During the first phase (April 2020), these CAs contacted 93 community residents. During the second phase, in May to June of the same year, the CAs contacted 101 residents, bringing the total number of residents contacted within a three-month period to 194 (see Figure 5 for a breakdown of the major ways Community Ambassadors helped).

Community Ambassadors

Figure 5:
Community
Ambassadors
Outreach



Community Connections Grants (CCGs)

Turning the Tide is leveraging seed funding to build trusting relationships and connections within and across communities in the form of small grants. Community organizations can apply for this project funding. The CCGs are being used within the communities to support Turning the Tide's *Framework for Change*, ensuring community members feel connected to their community, take pride in it, and feel confident and positive about its future.

Key Learnings

Using a developmental evaluation approach, Turning the Tide reflects regularly on key learnings about all aspects of its work. Key learnings identified in 2020/2021 include:

- Word-of-mouth is the most essential communication tool for information sharing within communities.
- Turning the Tide has the trust of the community and Inspiring Communities provides credibility to the work.

- Facilitating authenticity, empathy and being accountable to the community are cornerstones of our work
- Relationship building, networking, and building connections are an ongoing process and it takes patience, perseverance and time.
- Developing processes and strategic plans are critical to this work.
- Experimentation is part of the process, as is not being afraid to make mistakes along the learning pathways.
- Our greatest learning from the pandemic is just how motivated, innovative, and creative Turning the Tide has become in adapting our programs and services.
- The pandemic has affected the entire community and particularly connections with our teams and committees. Turning the Tide recognizes the need to re-ignite these relationships.
- We have learned it's okay that we cannot do everything and that there are many things that we do well.
- We are learning that re-grouping is necessary, rethinking is sometimes essential and rebuilding is a natural progress of growth.
- We have learned there are many things we need to learn in order to grow and understand the work, and that is what lifelong learning is about.
- We are learning that working with Tamarack reaffirms and deepens our understanding of the Collective Impact Model.
- Ownership of the work evolves and learning the tools to facilitate this process continues.
- It's okay to pat ourselves on the back to celebrate our successes.

The Backbone team learned:

- At times, too much learning within a short timeframe can be overwhelming for the team and does not allow for critical reflection. Pacing the work and learning is critical.
- We can muster incredible reserves of energy to continue the work through the pandemic.
- It's okay to be at times emotionally drained from the pandemic, from Zoom fatigue, and from the work itself when you are trying to motivate volunteers from all of the groups to continue the work.
- We are learning to care for ourselves and each other as a team.

Moving Forward: Key Focus Areas

Connection

The pandemic has affected the connections that Turning the Tide has developed with the community and all its working groups including the Advisory Committee. These connections are critical to the work; and as stewards of the collective impact initiative for Digby, Turning the Tide has prioritized re-igniting these connections. The following activities summarize the pathway forward:

- Ensure collaborative working relationships with the community and TtT's groups/teams.
- Identify current membership of all TtT's teams.
- Ensure inclusion of cultural groups and representation of the area: Black and Indigenous communities, 2SLGBTQIA+ and geographical representation.
- Develop a strategy plan for the three priority areas: employment, healthcare and environment
- Coordinate community consultations: results of the World Cafés.
- Circulate the newsletter and the blog posts to inform the community of the activities of TtT and provide continuous updates to the community.
- Continue data collection, evidence-based research, and ongoing evaluation of the work of TtT.
- Continue the work of developing a rural transportation prototype for the community.

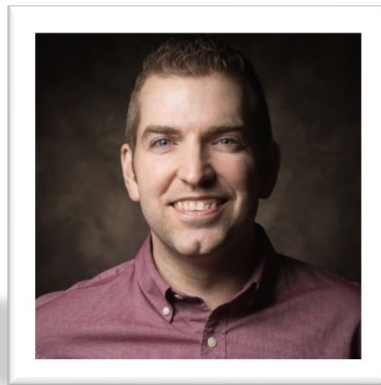
Contact Information

If you're wondering how to add your voice or want more information about the activities and resources available, please contact our Project Lead. Want to know what grants are available for the communities or want to volunteer? Please contact Michael Carty. To learn more about supports and programs for youth, contact Morgan Dunn.

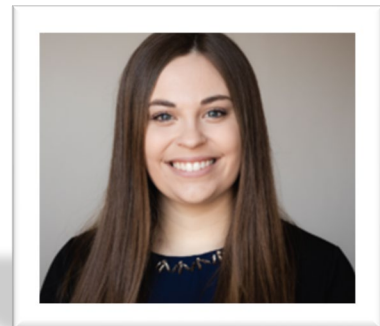
If you are between the ages of 15-30 years, there are programs for you. Contact Morgan Dunn.



**TBD,
Project Lead**



**Michael Carty,
Community Coordinator**



**Morgan Dunn,
Coordinator, CBYF**

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Appendices

Appendix A

Diagrams 1, 2, 3 and 4 illustrates the work that Turning the Tide has engaged in from its conception in 2018, to 2021.

Diagram 1 - Turning the Tide: Surfing the Wave (2018)

Turning the Tide is on the rise – surfing the wave. The following diagram illustrates the work Turning the Tide accomplished in 2018.

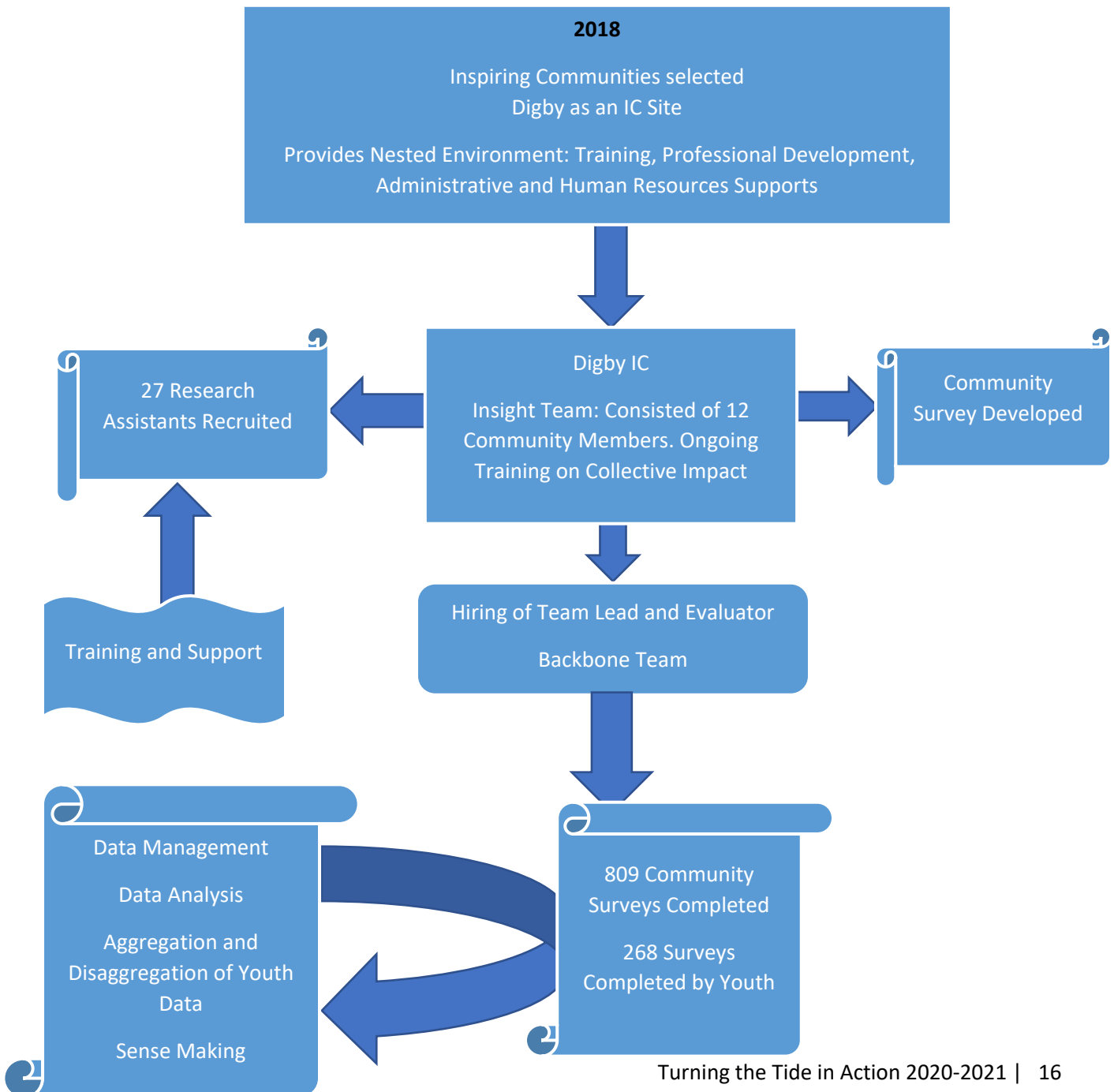


Diagram 2 – Transition Time (2019)

The diagram below provides an illustration of Digby IC and its transition into its distinct identity as an IC Site, and the transition of the Insight Team into an Advisory Committee.

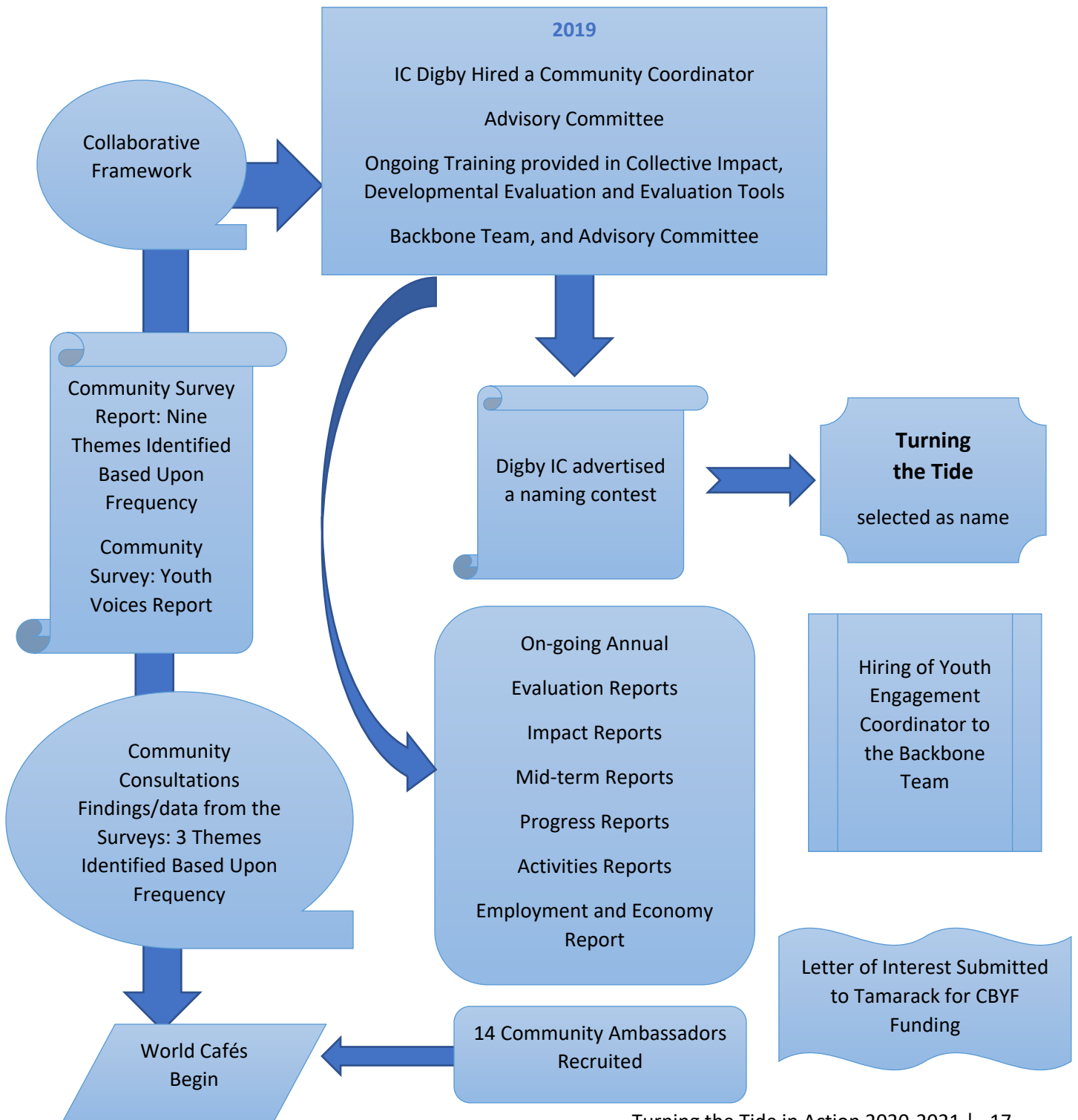


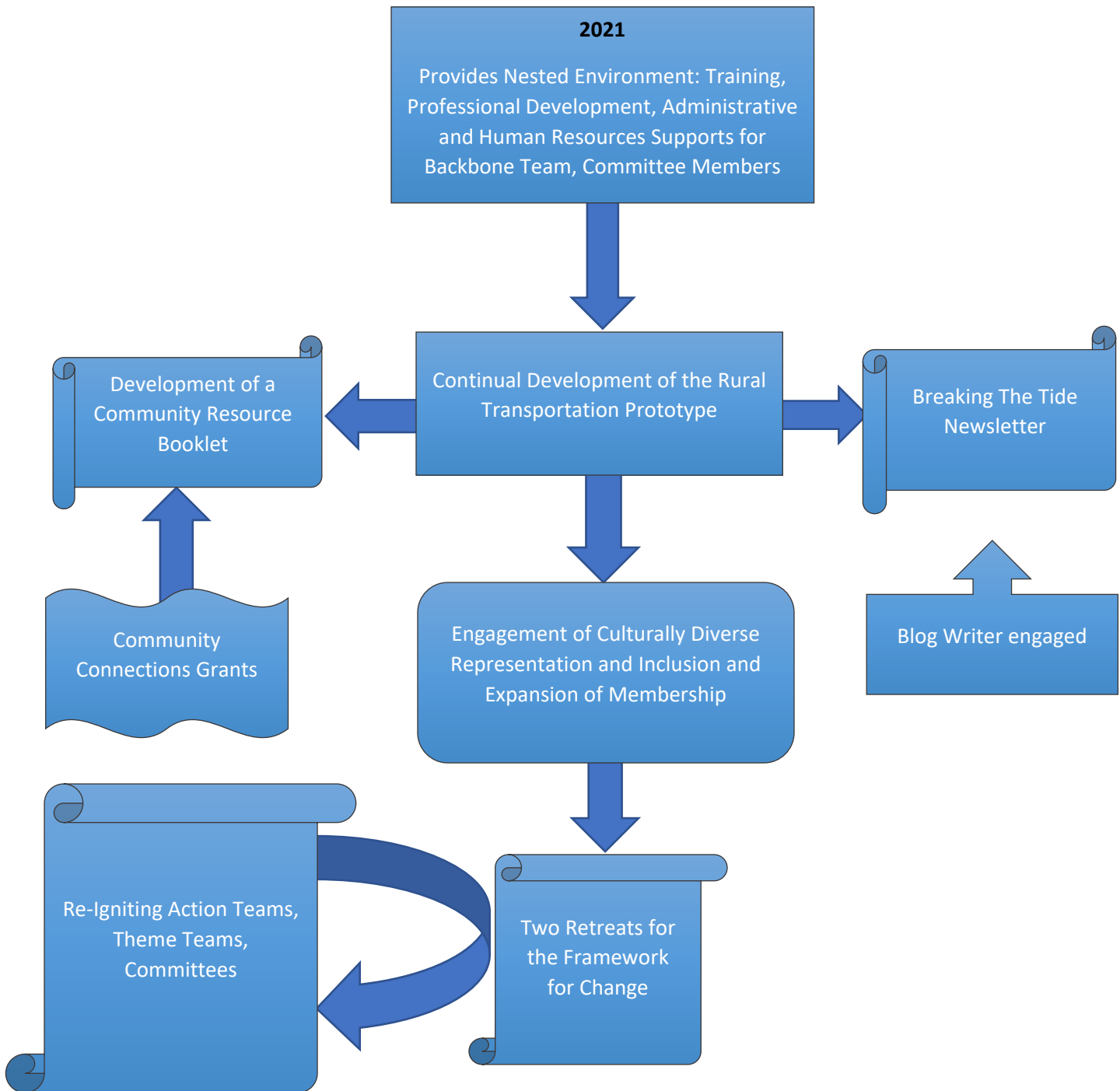
Diagram 3 – The Pandemic Hits (2020)

The following diagram represents the work of Turning the Tide in 2020



Diagram 4 – Growth and Development (2021)

This diagram illustrates the work Turning the Tide for 2021.




Appendix B - A Plan on a Page (CBYF)


Our Vision For The Future:

“The Digby Area is a place where youth belong and are valued. Youth have the opportunity to lead and participate meaningfully within this growing community in employment, leadership and decision-making roles.”


The Need for Change




One third of residents (15+) do not have a high school certificate, diploma or degree; youth are concerned about being prepared for life after high school



Two-thirds (66%) of youth and young adults (15-29) are worried about limited options for suitable employment in the area



Almost half (45%) of youth and young adults find the area lacks activities for youth, and safe, youth-friendly spaces



Both youth and service providers find the area lacks youth-friendly services and supports in areas such as mental health, shelter, and food security



Research and Analysis

- Youth Voices - Community Survey: 229 youth under 30
- Census Data for the Digby area
- Lunch and Learn Report and Feedback
- Youth Connection Team input
- Group Discussions with High School students



In Collaboration with

Digby SchoolsPlus, Nova Scotia Works, Rural Truth Matters, NSCC Digby Learning Centre, Digby Area Recreation Commission, Department of Community Services, Tri-County Regional Centre for Education, and youth and young adults from the Digby Area.

Education

- Improve the overall level of education and preparation for future employment or further education
- Increase the high school graduation rates
 - Help young people feel more prepared for life after high school (i.e. employment and financial readiness)
 - Increase awareness of and create opportunities for alternative ways of learning

Employment

- Improve employment options by creating education and training opportunities
- Increase awareness of employment options (existing and potential) in the area
 - Create supports to enable youth to become viable entrepreneurs and innovators



Supports and Services

- Work with service providers to make services and supports more youth friendly
- Increase awareness of services and how to access services
 - Identify and address factors that make it challenging for youth to access needed services

Activities and Spaces

- Improve access to youth-friendly spaces in the area
- Increase activities and spaces for youth; increase awareness of activities for youth
 - Reduce barriers (i.e. transportation) to accessing youth activities and spaces

Contact information:

Morgan Dunn, Communities Building Youth Futures Coordinator, at mdunn@inspiringcommunities.ca

For more information visit:

inspiringcommunities.ca/communities/turningthetide/
Find us on:

- Facebook @inspiringcommunitiesdigby
- Instagram @turningthetide



Our organization recognizes the support of Tamarack Institute and the Government of Canada.