Priority Setting in Developing Strategic Clinical Network™ Transformational Road Maps:
A Catalyst for Quality Improvement

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SETTING THE CONTEXT

Strategic Clinical Networks™ (SCN)

Strategic Clinical Networks are provincial in scope and include small leadership teams bringing together the experiences and expertise of front line healthcare professionals, researchers, government, communities, clinical and non-clinical leaders, patients and their families, to improve Alberta's healthcare system. There are currently 15 of these "Engines of Health Innovation", creating improvements within focused areas of health care.

Transformational Road Maps

Transformational Road Maps (TRM) are three year strategic frameworks outlining the actions that guide network activities to improve health outcomes for all Albertans. Thirteen SCNs have TRMs, and recently launched SCNs are in the process of development.

The Priority Setting Process

SCNs have been challenged to find new and innovative ways of delivering health care providing better quality, better health outcomes, and better value for every Albertan.

In the summer of 2012, processes and a toolkit to support priority setting were developed by Planning and Performance, and Strategic Clinical Network leadership. These tools were designed to help newly formed SCNs determine priorities.
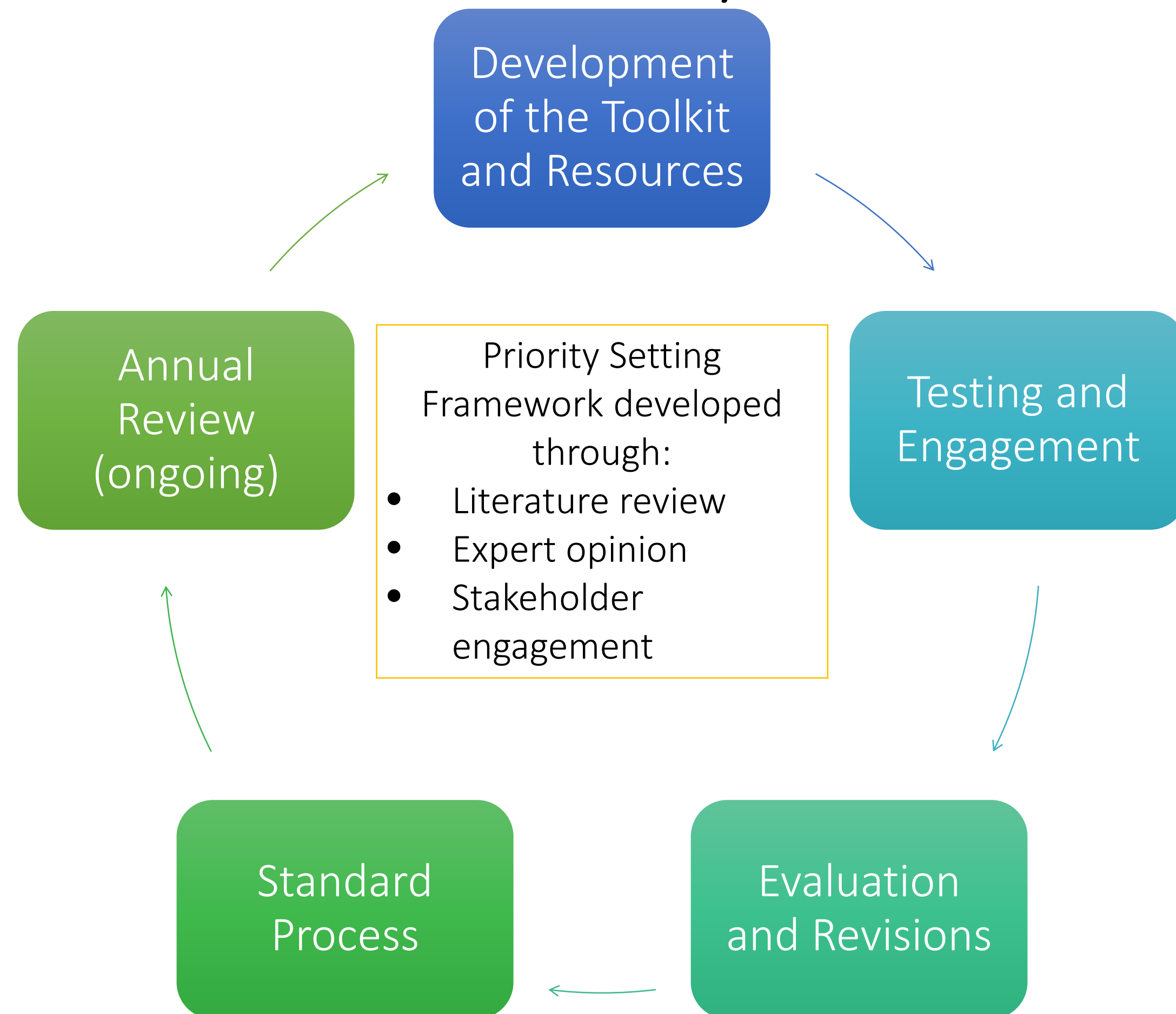
Priority setting is now an established process embedded within the development of the TRMs.

The Case for Priority Setting

- Builds a cycle for quality improvement
- Ensures limited resources are used efficiently and effectively
- Provides value for money
- Assists in building sustainability
- Considers organizational risks, context and emerging issues
- Uses an inclusive process where all players are engaged
- Leads to improvements in health outcomes

OUTLINING THE JOURNEY

The Journey

- Development of the Toolkit and Resources
- Testing and Engagement
- Evaluation and Revisions
- Standard Process
- Annual Review (ongoing)

Priority Setting Framework developed through:
- Literature review
- Expert opinion
- Stakeholder engagement

Decision Making Criteria

The priority setting tools facilitate decision making by assessing a potential initiative based on the following criteria:
- Evidence as it aligns to the Health Quality Council of Alberta's six dimensions of quality
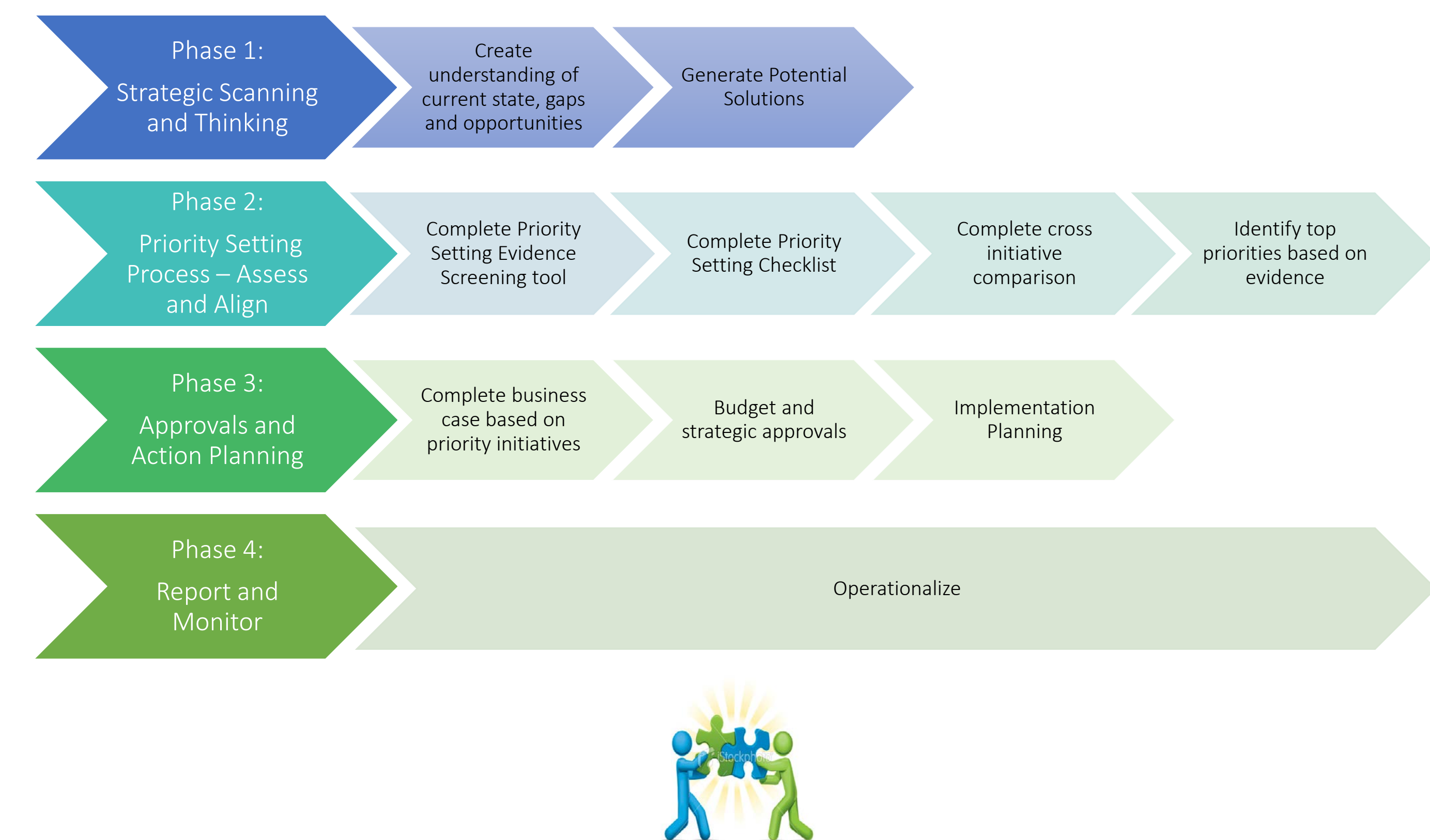- Feasibility
- Health equity
- Cost implication

Health Quality Council of Alberta's Six Dimensions of Quality

Priority Setting Toolkit includes:
- AHS Approach to Priority Setting Guidelines
- Evidence Template
- Feasibility Assessment Tool
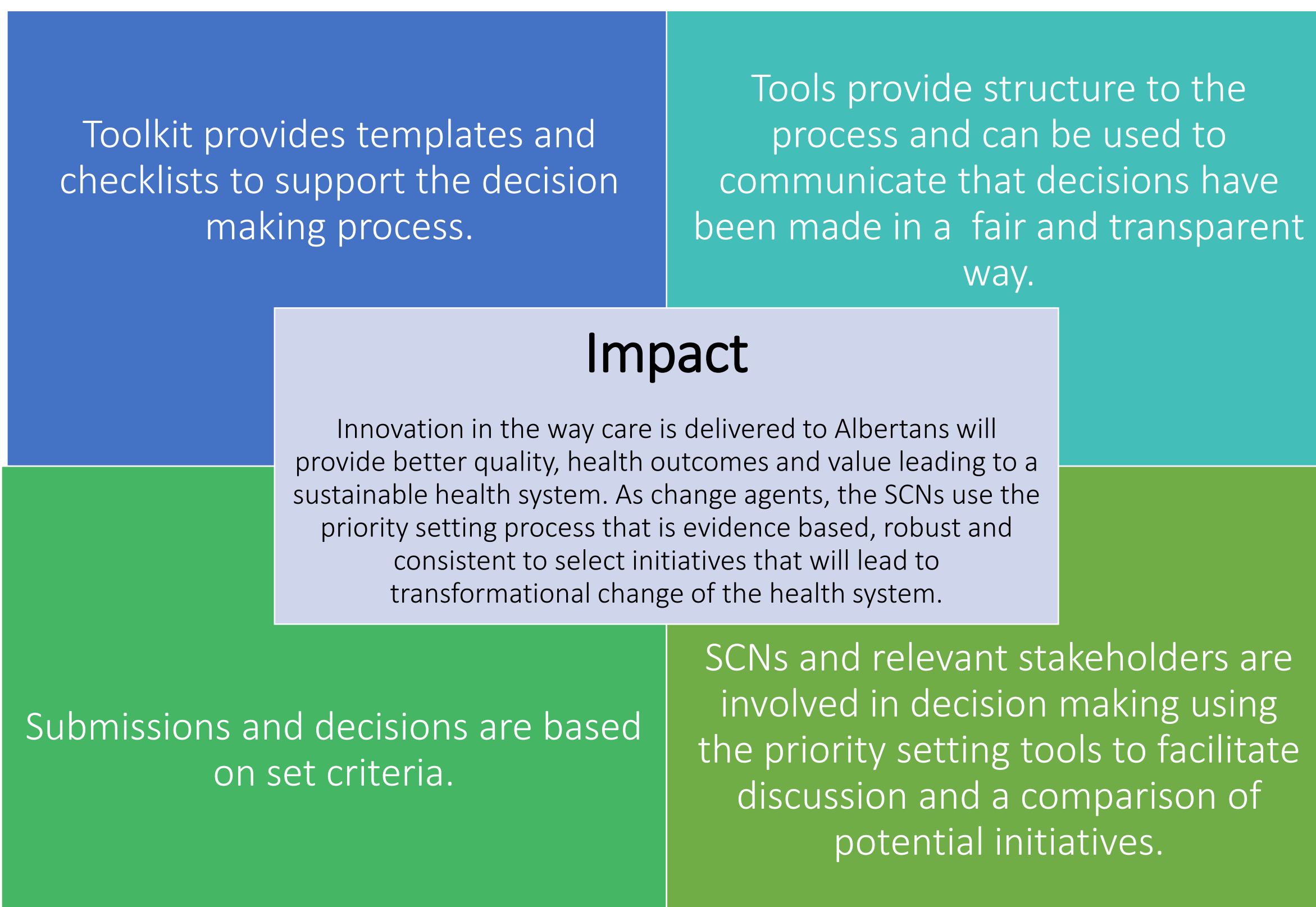- Priority Checklist
- Reassessment Ranking Tool

Priority Setting Process: Making it Work

Phase 1: Strategic Scanning and Thinking — Create understanding of current state, gaps and opportunities — Generate Potential Solutions

Phase 2: Priority Setting Process – Assess and Align — Complete Priority Setting Evidence Screening tool — Complete Priority Setting Checklist — Complete cross initiative comparison — Identify top priorities based on evidence

Phase 3: Approvals and Action Planning — Complete business case based on priority initiatives — Budget and strategic approvals — Implementation Planning

Phase 4: Report and Monitor — Operationalize

REVIEWING THE IMPACT

Toolkit provides templates and checklists to support the decision making process.

Tools provide structure to the process and can be used to communicate that decisions have been made in a fair and transparent way.

Impact

Innovation in the way care is delivered to Albertans will provide better quality, health outcomes and value leading to a sustainable health system. As change agents, the SCNs use the priority setting process that is evidence based, robust and consistent to select initiatives that will lead to transformational change of the health system.

Submissions and decisions are based on set criteria.

SCNs and relevant stakeholders are involved in decision making using the priority setting tools to facilitate discussion and a comparison of potential initiatives.

Lessons Learned
- Tools need to be simple yet able to capture enough information for decisions to be made.
- Further information was required to support the process, which resulted in the addition of support tools.
- Although there is consistency with the tools, how they are utilized requires a tailored approach to the specific needs of the SCN.
- The tools are consistently monitored for alignment with AHS strategic goals and objectives, as well as relevance to the SCNs.

First time process and tools used by SCNs

- Call for ideas: 60 submitted to SCNs.
- "Original" 6 SCNs used priority setting process and tools to determine priority initiatives to submit to a panel for review.
- Priority Setting Tools used to select 25 business cases.
- SCN Leadership used tools to provide Executive Leadership Team within AHS with the top 10 ideas.
- The tools assisted in avoiding a $17 million dollar investment in ideas that were either not ready, not feasible, or lacking evidence.