



# Baseline Impact Study

Summary Report



# The movement to revolutionize poverty-fighting

Slingshot Memphis is a poverty-fighting center of influence that's igniting a movement to revolutionize the way we fight poverty so all Memphians, regardless of circumstances, can have equitable opportunities for personal and economic success.

Unlike business, medicine, and other sectors that have objective methods for measuring outcomes, the poverty-fighting ecosystem simply doesn't—making it nearly impossible to know which programs are effective. Slingshot has addressed this by developing a new, standardized methodology to measure poverty-fighting effectiveness. By providing previously unavailable insights, Slingshot empowers decision makers with the evidence to make the most effective poverty-fighting decisions.

To accomplish this mission, Slingshot performs three primary functions:

- 1) Slingshot works alongside poverty-fighting organizations to study their effectiveness. The Slingshot Impact Study is conducted annually to measure performance across four dimensions: Benefit-Cost Ratio, Systems-Level Change, Use of Best Practices, and Measurement Infrastructure.
- 2) Slingshot identifies opportunities to enhance the outcomes that poverty-fighting organizations produce. Each impact study surfaces a selection of possible opportunities that an organization can review and prioritize. Slingshot provides ongoing thought partnership to support organizations' efforts to strengthen their poverty-fighting effectiveness.
- 3) Slingshot's Accelerate Impact Fund invests directly in poverty-fighting organizations to amplify effective programs and services. Slingshot raises funds from the community and invests 100% of these funds based on an organization's effectiveness, with significantly more invested in the most effective organizations.

Slingshot cannot achieve this mission on our own. Poverty is a complex combination of interconnected factors and we all have a role in creating an outcomes-driven approach to fighting poverty. We welcome your feedback and invite you to participate in this movement so we can maximize the poverty-fighting benefits for those in our community who are experiencing poverty.

# Executive Summary

A baseline impact study is a comprehensive evaluation of an organization's poverty-fighting effectiveness.

This summary report has two primary objectives:

- Provide impact results, and the basis for those results, across the four dimensions of Slingshot's impact study
- Share opportunities for greater impact that could further enhance poverty-fighting capabilities and impact

Behind this report is a wealth of evidence that is used to conclude an organization's impact results, including:

- More than 10 meetings with the leadership team and other team members of the organization
- Data from the organization about its programs, its participants, and the benefits its participants experience
- Extensive literature reviews and external research to validate best practices and the benefits produced
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis to monetize benefits and identify opportunities for greater impact

The following results for Knowledge Quest are based on its 2023 baseline impact study:

- **Benefit-Cost Ratio: Very Strong** – Estimated benefits substantially exceed costs
- **Systems-Level Change: Very Strong** – Evidence for the creation of significant systems-level change
- **Use of Best Practices: Very Strong** – Practices are most effective and consistently applied
- **Measurement Infrastructure: Very Strong** – Robust measurement infrastructure and use of data to understand and improve impact

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# Overview of the Slingshot Impact Study results

## Focus on capabilities and impact

- Dimension results summarize an organization's poverty-fighting capabilities and impact
- Slingshot's Impact Study has four dimensions: Benefit-Cost Ratio, Systems-Level Change, Use of Best Practices, and Measurement Infrastructure
- One of four results is assigned to a dimension: Weak, At Least Neutral, At Least Strong, or Very Strong





## Assigned based on evidence

- Results are based on the strength of evidence for an organization's poverty-fighting capabilities and impact
- Evidence of stronger poverty-fighting capabilities and impact leads to higher results
- Evidence of less effective poverty-fighting capabilities or impact, as well as a general lack of evidence, leads to lower results

## Updated annually

- The results provide an objective evaluation of an organization's current poverty-fighting effectiveness as measured over the previous year
- Slingshot updates an organization's impact study annually
- Results can change over time based on the evidence associated with adjustments

# Impact study results summary

Dimension	Weak	At Least Neutral	At Least Strong	Very Strong
 <p><b>Benefit-Cost Ratio</b></p>	<p>Costs exceed estimated benefits</p>	<p>Estimated benefits and costs similar</p>	<p>Estimated benefits exceed costs</p>	<p>Estimated benefits substantially exceed costs</p>
 <p><b>Systems-Level Change</b></p>	<p>Evidence for the creation of systems-level change does not exist</p>	<p>Evidence for the creation of limited systems-level change</p>	<p>Evidence for the creation of moderate systems-level change</p>	<p>Evidence for the creation of significant systems-level change</p>
 <p><b>Use of Best Practices</b></p>	<p>Few practices are effective or practices are inconsistently applied</p>	<p>Some practices are effective or inconsistently applied</p>	<p>Most practices are effective and consistently applied</p>	<p>Practices are most effective and consistently applied</p>
 <p><b>Measurement Infrastructure</b></p>	<p>Limited measurement infrastructure and use of data to understand and improve impact</p>	<p>Basic measurement infrastructure and use of data to understand and improve impact</p>	<p>Acceptable measurement infrastructure and use of data to understand and improve impact</p>	<p>Robust measurement infrastructure and use of data to understand and improve impact</p>

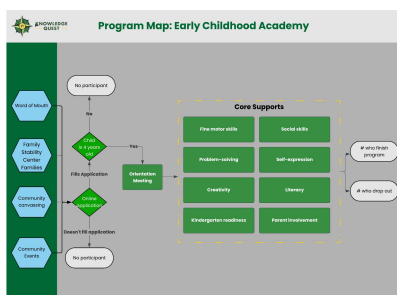
# Four dimensions of the Slingshot Impact Study

	Description	Influence on poverty-fighting
 <p><b>Benefit-Cost Ratio</b></p>	Estimates the benefits created by an organization for the people it serves relative to the cost of creating those benefits	Enhances the allocation of resources by understanding the poverty-fighting benefits created by programs and interventions
 <p><b>Systems-Level Change</b></p>	Assesses the magnitude of an organization's poverty-fighting change in the community beyond its core programs	Validates the most impactful types of partnerships and policy changes an organization is positioned to pursue
 <p><b>Use of Best Practices</b></p>	Determines the extent to which an organization adheres to best practices for its programs and staff performance management	Improves the magnitude of poverty-fighting outcomes achieved by using evidence-based interventions that have the greatest efficacy
 <p><b>Measurement Infrastructure</b></p>	Evaluates the effectiveness with which an organization collects, analyzes, and uses data to improve decision-making as it relates to fighting poverty	Provides the foundation for an evidence-based continuous improvement process that enables greater poverty-fighting impact

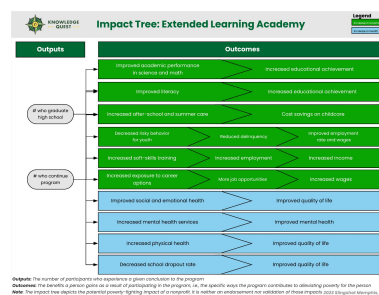
# Benefit-Cost Ratio dimension

Estimates the **benefits created** by an organization for the people it serves **relative to the cost** of creating those benefits

## Program Map



## Impact Tree



## Benefit-Cost Analysis

**The Slingshot Universal Algorithm**

**Beneficiaries impacted**  $[G \cdot (P_{outcome} - C_f outcome) \cdot \prod_{i=1}^n (1 + \Phi_i)]$

**Average value of impact**  $[M_{payoff} - C_f benefit]$

**Ecosystem discount**  $[(1 - C_{treatment}) \cdot I_c \cdot I_a \cdot D_c \cdot D_a]$

**Adjusted time horizon**  $\sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \frac{\prod_{i=0}^t (1 + g_A)}{\prod_{i=0}^t (1 + g_U)}$

- Identifies the various interventions participants receive by completing the program
- Outlines the range of outputs for the program
- Informs the appropriate baseline population based on the primary sources of program participants

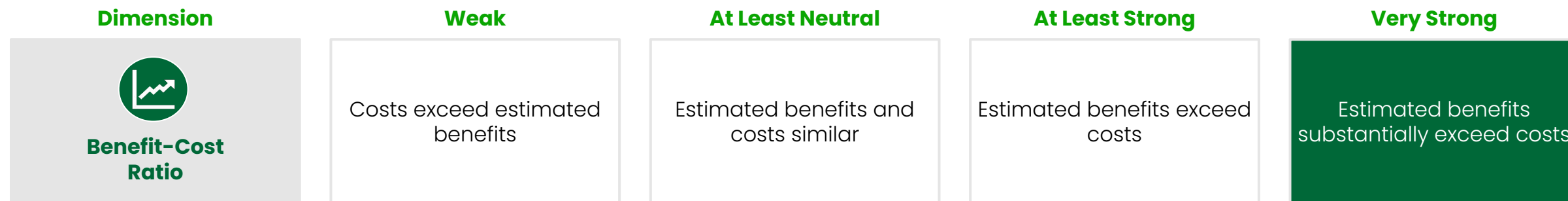
- Informs the data and research required to monetize the program benefits (outcomes)
- Identifies the potential poverty-fighting benefits created by the program interventions
- Slingshot defines poverty-fighting benefits as improvements in future earnings or health

- Collect data and perform research to validate which benefits can be monetized
- Monetize benefits for participants and their immediate families; societal benefits are not included
- Aggregate the value of all the monetized benefits and divide it by the organization's total costs



# Benefit–Cost Ratio results

Timeframe: July 2022 – June 2023



## Summary

- Knowledge Quest created over \$2.50 in estimated poverty-fighting benefits for each dollar it spent
- Most of the poverty-fighting benefits come from the academic and behavioral improvements experienced by the participants of the Extended Learning Academy
- The Family Stability Centers created benefits by providing mental health assistance, emergency assistance, job training, access to educational opportunities, and stabilization services
- Knowledge Quest also generates benefits through its Early Childhood Academy, by increasing kindergarten preparedness as well as providing parents with help and parent-related trainings
- The Green Leaf Learning Farm generates benefits by working with the other programs, such as providing educational opportunities to Extended Learning Academy students, or setting alternative therapy classes for adults in the Family Stability Centers
- Additionally the farm creates benefits by providing educational opportunities and produce to the community

## Explanation of Benefits

- The Extended Learning Academy generates 75 percent of total benefits mainly through the improvement in academic and behavioral outcomes of students. An additional benefit is that the after-school program gives parents the opportunity to work longer hours and/or spend less money on childcare
- The benefits created by the Family Stability Center represent 15 percent of total benefits with more than half of those benefits coming from the work and training programs, and the other from the mental health and stabilization services
- By preparing children for kindergarten, the Early Childhood Academy increases their likelihood of successful academic achievement, which is related to long-term increases in health and income. Additionally, there is a decrease in child abuse related to participating in early childcare. These programs account for 10 percent of total benefits
- As mentioned, most farm benefits are already considered as part of the other programs, however there are other benefits such as the value of providing nutritional educational opportunities to the community and selling nutritional food in the middle of a food desert

# Systems-Level Change dimension

Assesses the **magnitude of an organization's poverty-fighting change in the community** beyond its core programs. Slingshot considers changes in two broad categories: *pathways* and *policy*

## Pathways-level changes

- Poverty-fighting benefits created by interactions between organizations, i.e., pathways created from one organization to another
- Benefits are experienced by program participants or others in the community

## Policy-level changes

- Poverty-fighting benefits created when powerful institutions and individuals are influenced to alter economic, social, institutional, or political systems
- Benefits have the potential to impact a much greater number of beneficiaries

## Examples

A housing program creates a referral pathway with a job training program to provide its clients employment support

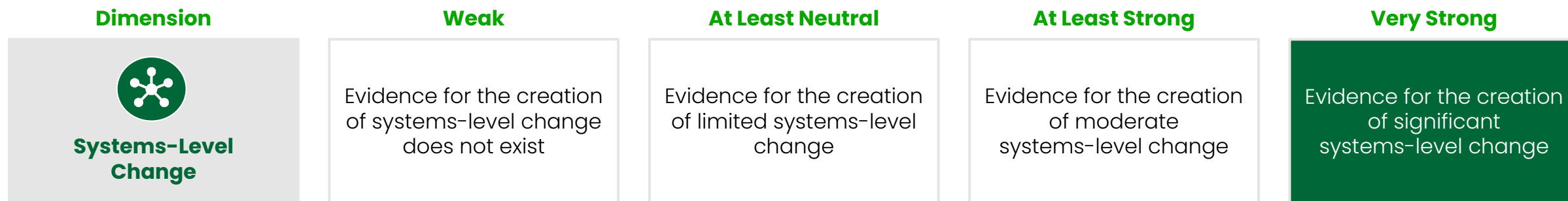
Multiple nonprofit and for profit organizations collaborate to host a neighborhood food distribution event

## Examples

An organization successfully advocates for legislation that increases funding for job training programs statewide

An organization influences a school district to adopt policies that increase supportive services for students experiencing poverty

# Systems-Level Change results



## Summary

- Knowledge Quest has eight examples of systems-level change that create poverty-fighting benefits outside of its core programs

## Pathways-level changes

- Knowledge Quest is a long-time partner of United Way’s Driving The Dream initiative to coordinate organizations to better support families
- Additionally, Knowledge Quest also has a group of referral partners including Advance Memphis, RISE, and HopeWorks
- Knowledge Quest is part of Seeding Success’ effort to improve outcomes for every child by improving the way institutions, community organizations, policies, and resources work together
- Knowledge Quest partners with Communities In Schools of Memphis, Compass Schools, MPLOY, MSWE, and LeMoyne-Owen College, which send volunteers to gain experience as instructors
- Knowledge Quest is working with Prosperity Now and The Kresge Foundation to change the way human service practitioners leverage resources to better advocate for their participants

- Two examples of the way Knowledge Quest uses its learnings to promote better practices in the community are the Strong African American Families (SAAF) program, and the work to promote Urban Farming practices
- The SAAF program is designed to support parents and youth with a specific emphasis on helping young people avoid risky and dangerous behaviors. Knowledge Quest provides opportunities for other organizations to engage and learn about how to use this program
- Knowledge Quest leverages the innovations from its Green Leaf Farm to lead discussions in many farming groups, such as the Organic Trade Association, AgLaunch, or the Black Growers Council
- As part of its Extended Learning Academy, Knowledge Quest partners with community organizations to bring the best educational resources available to the children
- Some programs to come out of this partnership include: the Best Buy Teen Tech Center, the Jay Uiberall Culinary Academy, and the Digital Inclusion Project with Urban Strategies; as well as partnerships with Stax, Ballet Memphis, Metal Museum, Brooks, the Symphony Orchestra, Crosstown Arts, and others

# Use of Best Practices dimension

Determines the extent to which an organization **adheres to best practices for its programs and staff performance management**

## Program design

Identify the models used to deliver programming

Research the models that evidence supports as the most effective

Validate the efficacy of the program models employed versus research verified best practices

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## Program implementation

Identify the processes used to help ensure program models are implemented as designed

Assess the consistency with which participants would experience a program model as designed

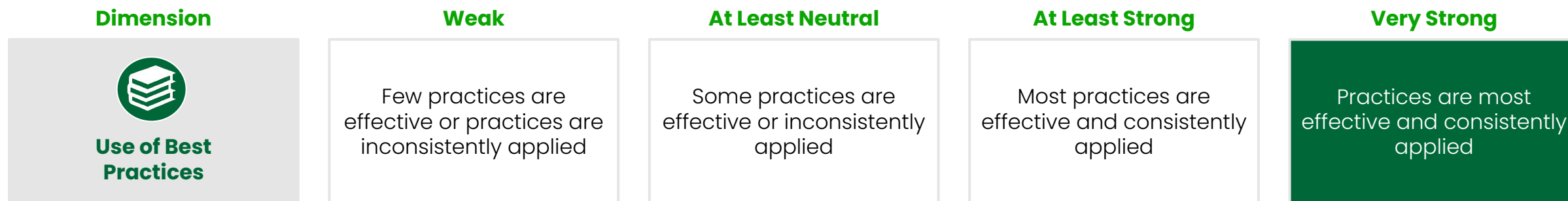
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## Staff performance management

Identify the existence of important practices that support staff performance in effectively administering programs

Validate the efficacy of these practices versus research-verified staff performance management best practices

# Use of Best Practices results



## Summary

- Knowledge Quest has four programs, each of them is validated by high-quality research and follows a detailed theory of change
  - Early Childhood Academy
  - Extended Learning Academy
  - Family Stability Centers
  - Green Leaf Learning Farm

## Program design

- Knowledge Quest has a holistic approach to community development, focusing on a 2Gen model where the children receive support first through early childcare, and then through an after-school program with a strong academic foundation
- Parents have access to economic stability services including job services, mental and wellbeing support, educational workshops, and social capital development
- Services are designed by the family and an appointed case manager

## Program implementation

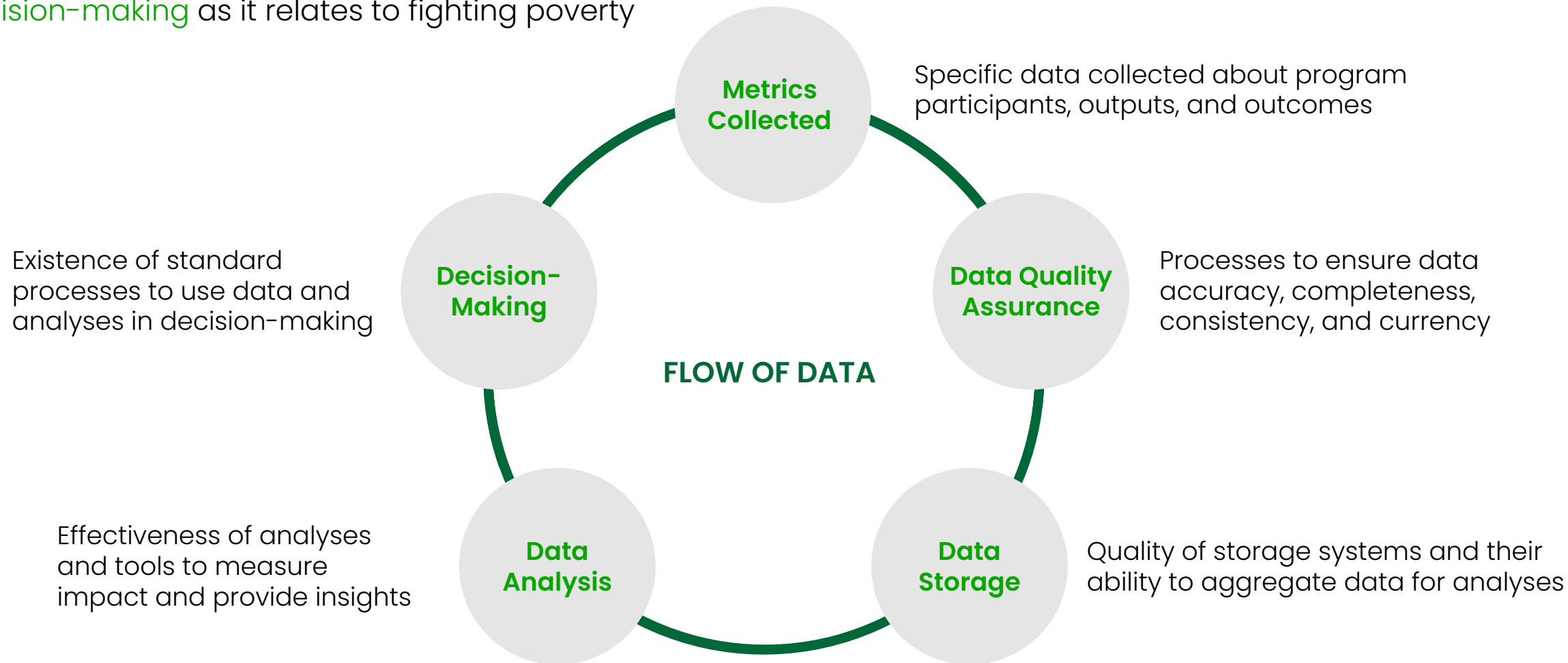
- All programs have clear, measurable program goals which allows Knowledge Quest to measure the effectiveness of their programming
- Knowledge Quest also has detailed monitoring metrics and benchmarks which allows them to detect issues in program implementation as soon as they arise
- Strong learning practices exist which help to continue improving programs after each iteration

## Staff performance management

- Staff goes through a three part performance evaluation which includes an initial planning and setting of expectations, progress review during the year, and an annual review containing a self-evaluation
- There are formal, ongoing opportunities for staff to get feedback
- Coaching occurs on a case-by-case basis
- Strength-based goal setting is an important component of the planning process and involves the program director

# Measurement Infrastructure dimension

Evaluates the effectiveness with which an organization **collects, analyzes, and uses data to improve decision-making** as it relates to fighting poverty



# Measurement Infrastructure results

## Dimension



### Measurement Infrastructure

## Weak

Limited measurement infrastructure and use of data to understand and improve impact

## At Least Neutral

Basic measurement infrastructure and use of data to understand and improve impact

## At Least Strong

Acceptable measurement infrastructure and use of data to understand and improve impact

## Very Strong

Robust measurement infrastructure and use of data to understand and improve impact

## Summary

- Decision-making, data storage, and analytics are the strongest components of Knowledge Quest's measurement infrastructure
- Knowledge Quest uses its non-mandated communications to detail the outcomes and achievements of the period, focusing on the benefits created for the community

## Metrics collected

- Knowledge Quest collects a comprehensive set of participant, program, and outcomes data that allows the organization to effectively measure its impact
- The baseline data on other schools and non-participants allows Knowledge Quest to put its benefits created into context

## Data quality assurance

- The quality assurance process at Knowledge Quest ensures the information it uses for analyses and reports is of the highest accuracy, currency, consistent, and completeness

## Data storage

- Governmental standards require Knowledge Quest to store the same data on two locations to maintain usability and records of all information while still retaining data interoperability

## Data analysis

- Knowledge Quest's production of output reports, year-at-glance documents, and quarterly reports equip stakeholders with the information they require
- The creation of additional reporting for meetings allow for more flexible and targeted analyses, which arms the leadership with better tools to deal with the demands of the organization

## Decision-making

- The decision-making processes at Knowledge Quest reduce biases and its use of professional expertise and research provides certainty that Knowledge Quest is choosing the best possible courses of action

# Overview of Opportunities for Greater Impact

## Intent of opportunities

- Slingshot identifies opportunities for greater impact to help organizations further enhance their poverty-fighting capabilities and impact
- These opportunities are not comprehensive and Slingshot acknowledges other opportunities could improve an organization's poverty-fighting impact
- Opportunities for greater impact are shared only as suggestions

## Basis for identifying

- Each of the four dimensions is comprised of numerous subdimensions with evidence collected for each subdimension and compared against a rubric
- Opportunities are surfaced at the subdimension-level by identifying the largest gaps between the collected evidence and the Very Strong result on the rubric
- Slingshot also identifies opportunities that cut across multiple dimensions

## Process to prioritize

- Preliminary opportunities are reviewed and refined in collaboration with the poverty-fighting organization
- Selected opportunities balance the magnitude of impact with the time required to execute, the feasibility to implement, and the fit with the organization's mission
- Slingshot provides ongoing thought partnership to help address opportunities for greater impact



# Opportunities for Greater Impact summary

- A** Develop job retention services to increase benefits from job acquisition and training
- B** Incorporate all metrics collected into a data dictionary
- C** Incorporate best practices and know-how into the Instructor's Handbook for Early Childhood Academy instructors

# Opportunity for Greater Impact A

## Develop job retention services to increase benefits from job acquisition and training

### Description

- Knowledge Quest could develop a retention and post-employment advancement strategy to complement its existing work support services
- The ability to retain a job is key in developing a successful career, and as such would be a natural extension of the services already being offered through the Family Stability Centers
- Knowledge Quest could provide incentives for participants to keep in touch and offer services designed to keep participants engaged with their current employers

### Poverty-fighting impact

- Post-employment retention and advancement services are meant to assist participants beyond the job acquisition stage, which can result in long-term increases in income
- The ability of Knowledge Quest to not only help participants find a job, but to give them the tools to be successful in the long-term, could be a key outcome in addressing poverty and accessing living wages

### Potential approach

- Conduct post-program surveys at several intervals after participants find jobs through Knowledge Quest to better understand the current job retention capacity of its participants
- Provide job-retention services (e.g., workplace counseling, crisis management, career planning, etc.) to Knowledge Quest's participants after they find a job
- Institute a retention rewards program where Knowledge Quest offers small incentives to participants who manage to retain their jobs. The program also helps to keep graduates involved with Knowledge Quest, which should aid the data collection initiative
- Set up a 90-day follow-up period after participants get a job where they can come up to Knowledge Quest for any questions/help on dealing with workplace issues
- Monitor the efficacy of new initiatives in order to make long-term improvements to the strategy

## Opportunity for Greater Impact B

### Incorporate all metrics collected into a data dictionary

#### Description

- Knowledge Quest collects a comprehensive set of metrics about its participants, programs, and outcomes, all of which help the organization understand the impact it creates in the community
- As an organization that compiles a lot of information and uses it consistently to communicate with the community and its stakeholders, having total control of what data is being collected, its format, its currency, and its source is key, because it allows the organization to better navigate its data choices and could help improve the way the organization collects, organizes, and uses data

#### Poverty-fighting impact

- A data dictionary is a foundational part of the measurement infrastructure that enhances the quality of data and analytics that can be used in evidence-based decision making
- It can also increase the quality of data collected and the quality of analyses, thereby enhancing its value in decision-making which leads to better outcomes for the participants in the community

#### Potential approach

- Designate a team to complete this project. The team should have familiarity with the different collections of information as well as data types, formats, etc.
- Identify all the sources of data and going one-by-one write down the metrics collected as well as some of the metadata that you would like to collect. Things to consider are: data type, data format, currency or point at which the information is collected, source, sensitivity, requirement, etc.
- Slingshot can provide a data dictionary template to help structure the workshops and simplify the work
- Establish rules within the data storage systems to help ensure the collected metrics comply with the data dictionary
- Update the data dictionary once per year to account for changes in metrics collected

## Opportunity for Greater Impact C

### Incorporate best practices and know-how into the Instructor's Handbook for Early Childhood Academy instructors

<b>Description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge Quest has documented policies and procedures for its Extended Learning Academy and Family Stability Center</li> <li>• These include protocols, checklists, assessment descriptions, reporting instructions, and other details to help staff implement the programming</li> <li>• The 2023 impact study uncovered that a similar manual does not yet exist for the Early Childhood Academy (ECA)</li> </ul>
<b>Poverty-fighting impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documenting all policies and procedures can improve poverty-fighting impact by ensuring that program policies are understood by clients and staff, which could help improve retention and produce better outcomes</li> <li>• Documentation can also help with program implementation by clearly stating how each aspect of Knowledge Quest's programs is intended to be conducted</li> </ul>
<b>Potential approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin by inventorying the contents of existing documentation accessible to ECA instructors</li> <li>• Identify gaps in the coverage and content of those documents</li> <li>• Develop a plan for creating documents to fill in those gaps and identify a point person to take action</li> <li>• Share completed documents with the full team for feedback</li> <li>• Ensure all policies and procedures necessary for ECA are complete and clear, as a tool for current instructors and as a training resource for future instructors</li> <li>• Add the manual to the shared drive and create a timeline to revisit and make refinements, making sure all revisions and additional processes are included</li> </ul>

# Program map methodology







## What is a program map?

A program map visually depicts the flow of participants through a poverty-fighting program. It shows the most significant interventions our ultimate stakeholders – our neighbors experiencing poverty – would experience by completing the program.

## How to read the program map?

Slingshot's program maps are intended to be read from left to right. The map starts with the main sources of program participants, shows the primary poverty-fighting interventions they experience, and concludes with the program outputs.

Below is an explanation of what each shape depicts:

-  a source of participants for the program
-  a decision point in the program
-  a potential end point for participants
-  a component or intervention of the program
-  a cluster of interventions or components
-  flow of participants through the program

## How does Slingshot use program maps?

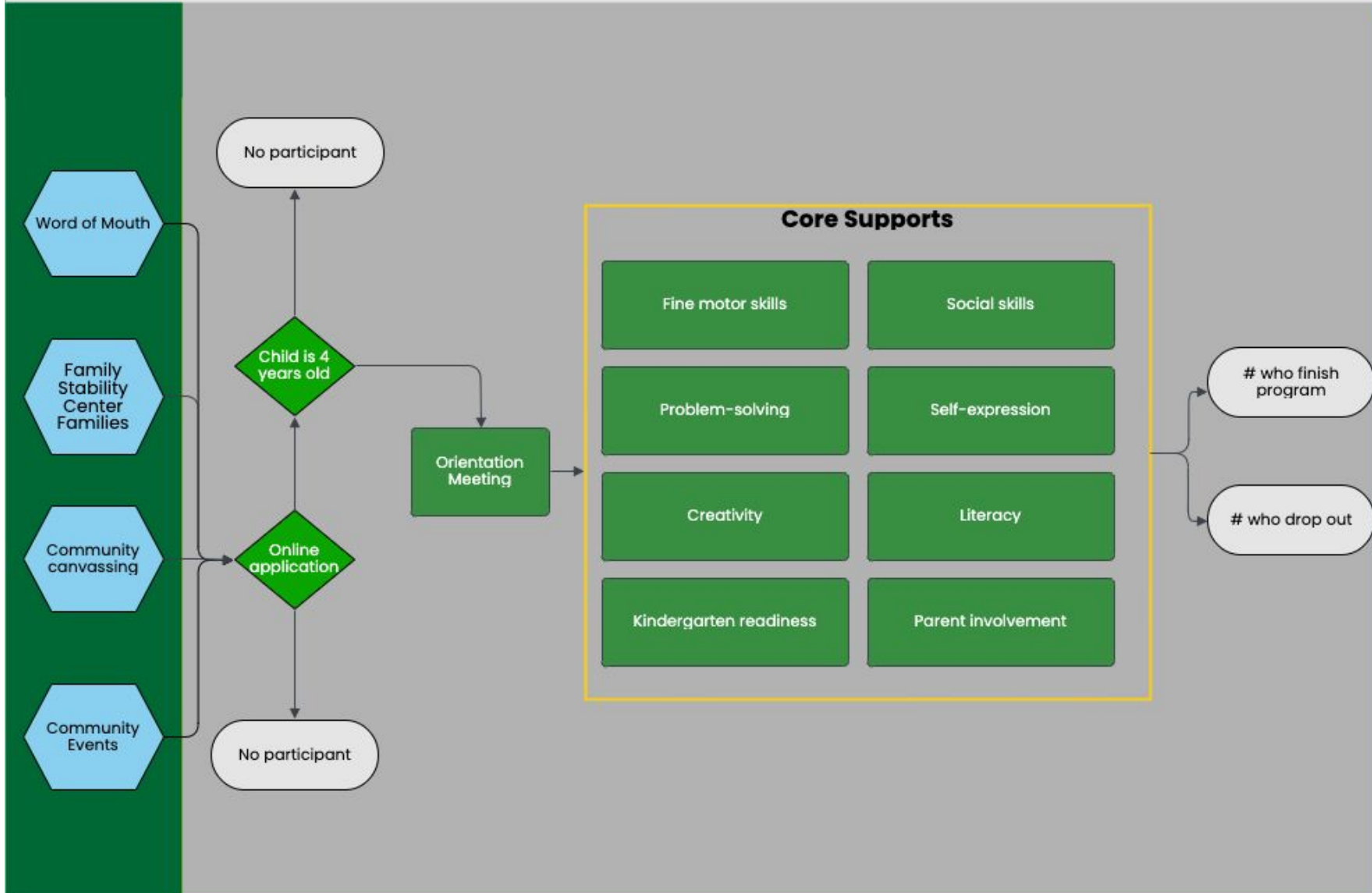
- Ensure accurate understanding of a program
- Help inform the baseline by understanding the primary sources of program participants
- Provide foundation for potential benefits experienced by participants by systematically identifying all interventions
- Identify program outputs as the first step in the benefit-cost analysis

## How can poverty-fighting organizations use program maps?

- **Comprehensive understanding:** Communicate to stakeholders how programs operate
- **Participant experience:** Enhance how programs are experienced by participants
- **Program structure:** Improve interventions and mitigate potential inefficiencies with the programs
- **Resource allocation/acquisition:** Apply resources to overcome bottlenecks and achieve the desired type and number of outputs

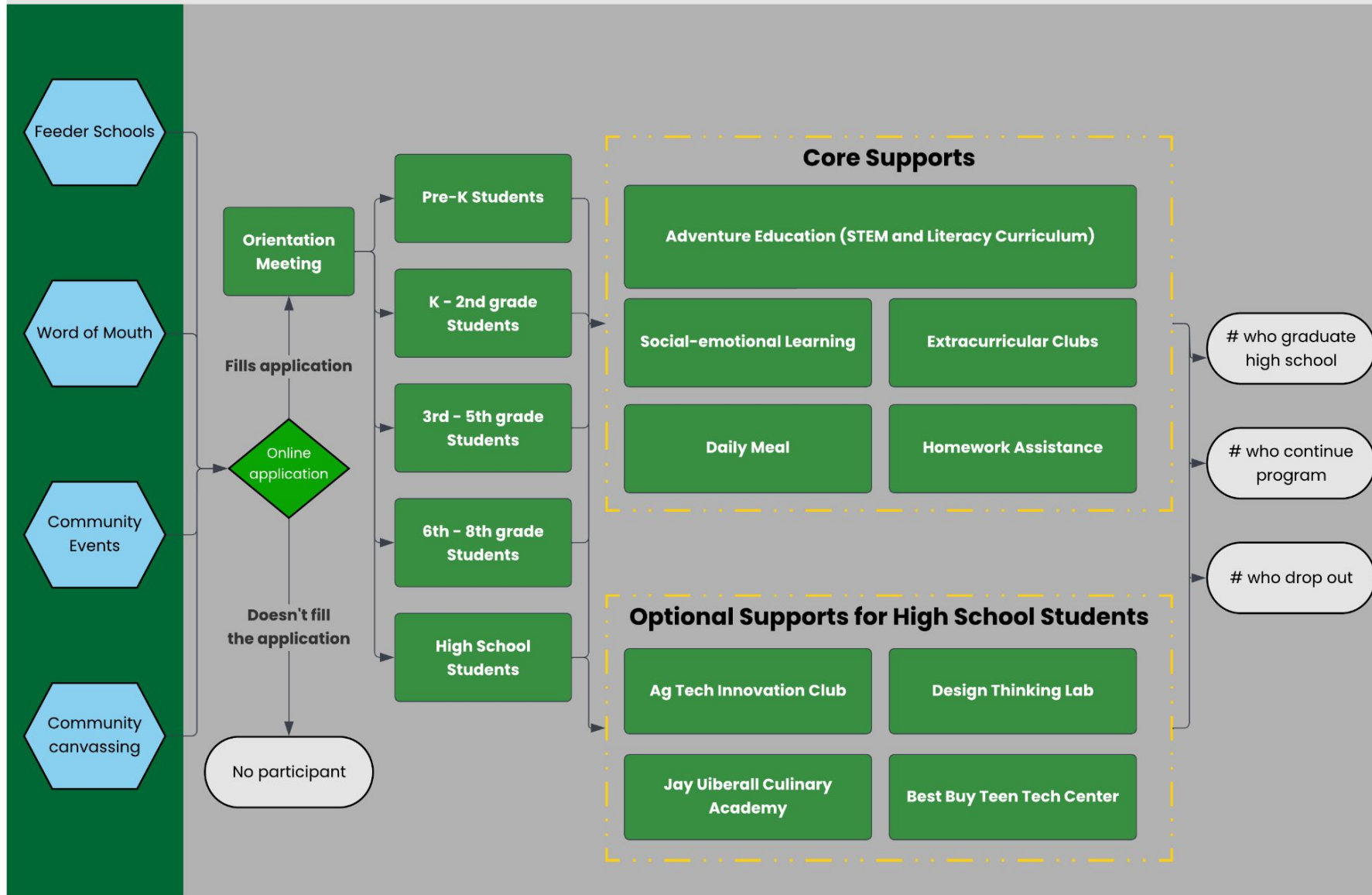


# Program Map: Early Childhood Academy



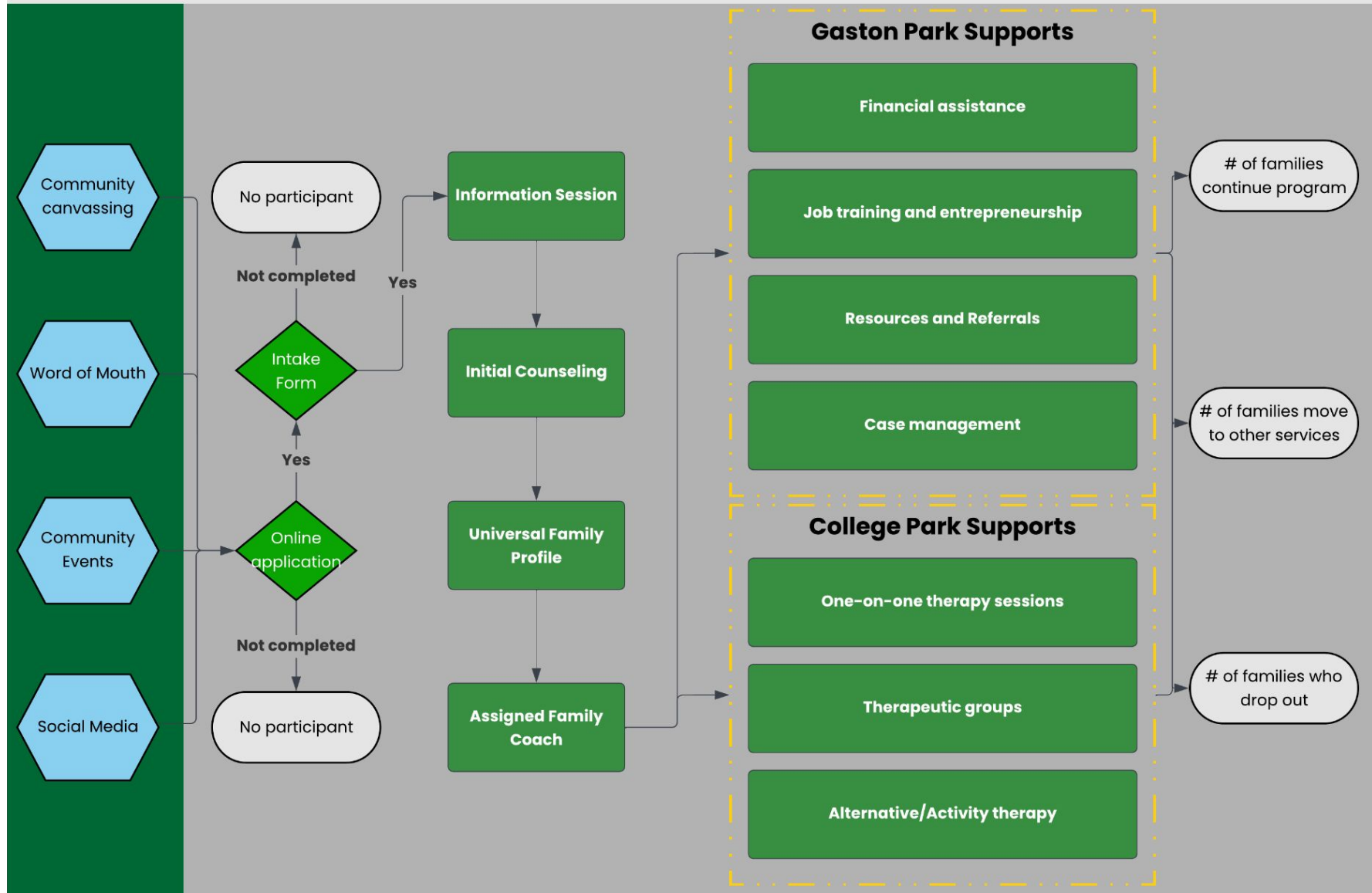


# Program Map: Extended Learning Academy





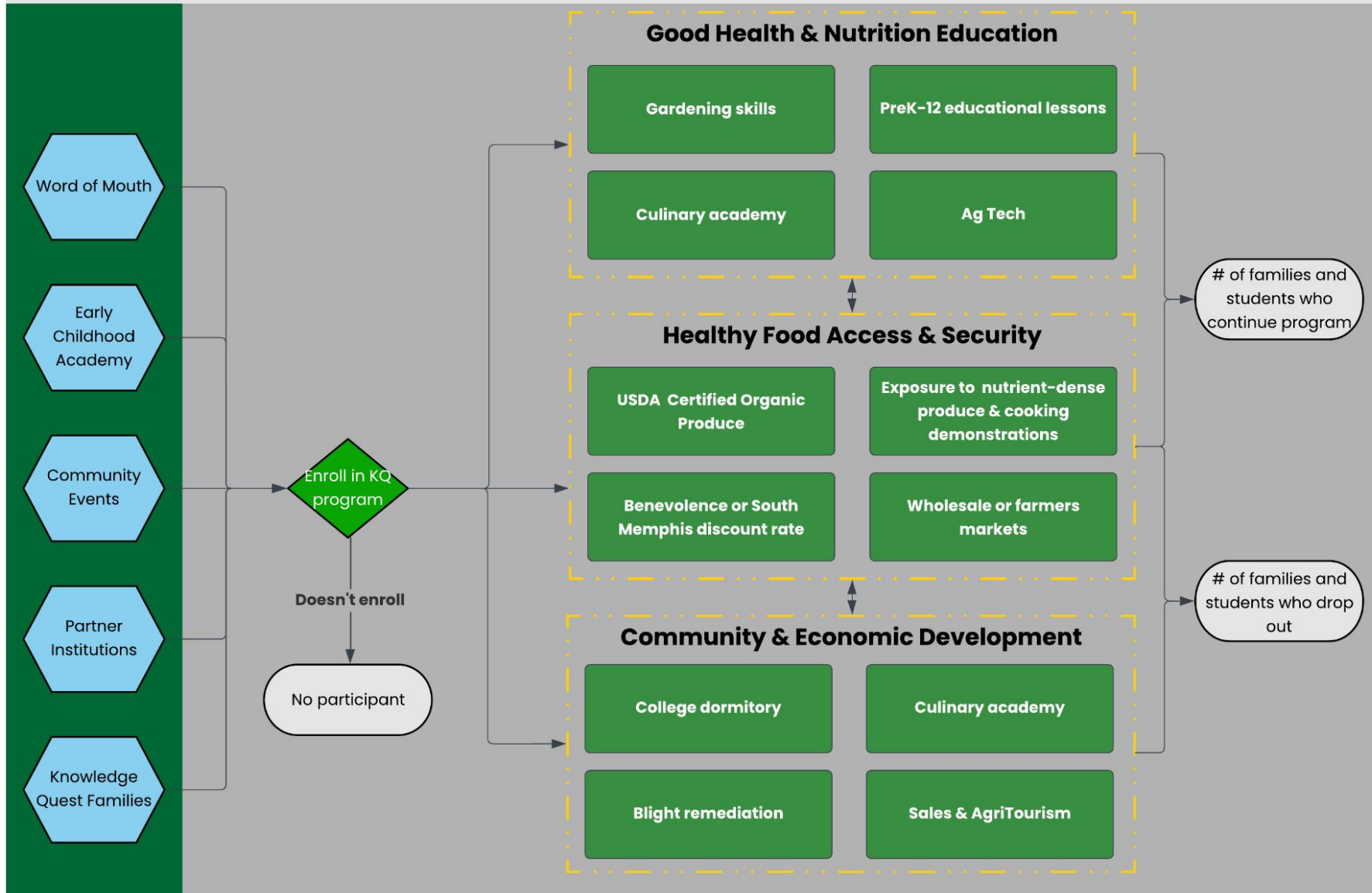
# Program Map: Family Stability Centers







# Program Map: Green Leaf Learning Program



# Impact Tree methodology

## What is an impact tree?

An impact tree visually depicts the potential poverty-fighting benefits participants would experience as a result of participating in a program. Poverty-fighting benefits are categorized as improvements in future earnings or health.

## How to read the impact tree?

Slingshot's impact trees are intended to be read from left to right. The tree starts with the program outputs identified in the program map and identifies the sequence of outcomes participants might experience.

Slingshot defines program outputs and program outcomes as follows:

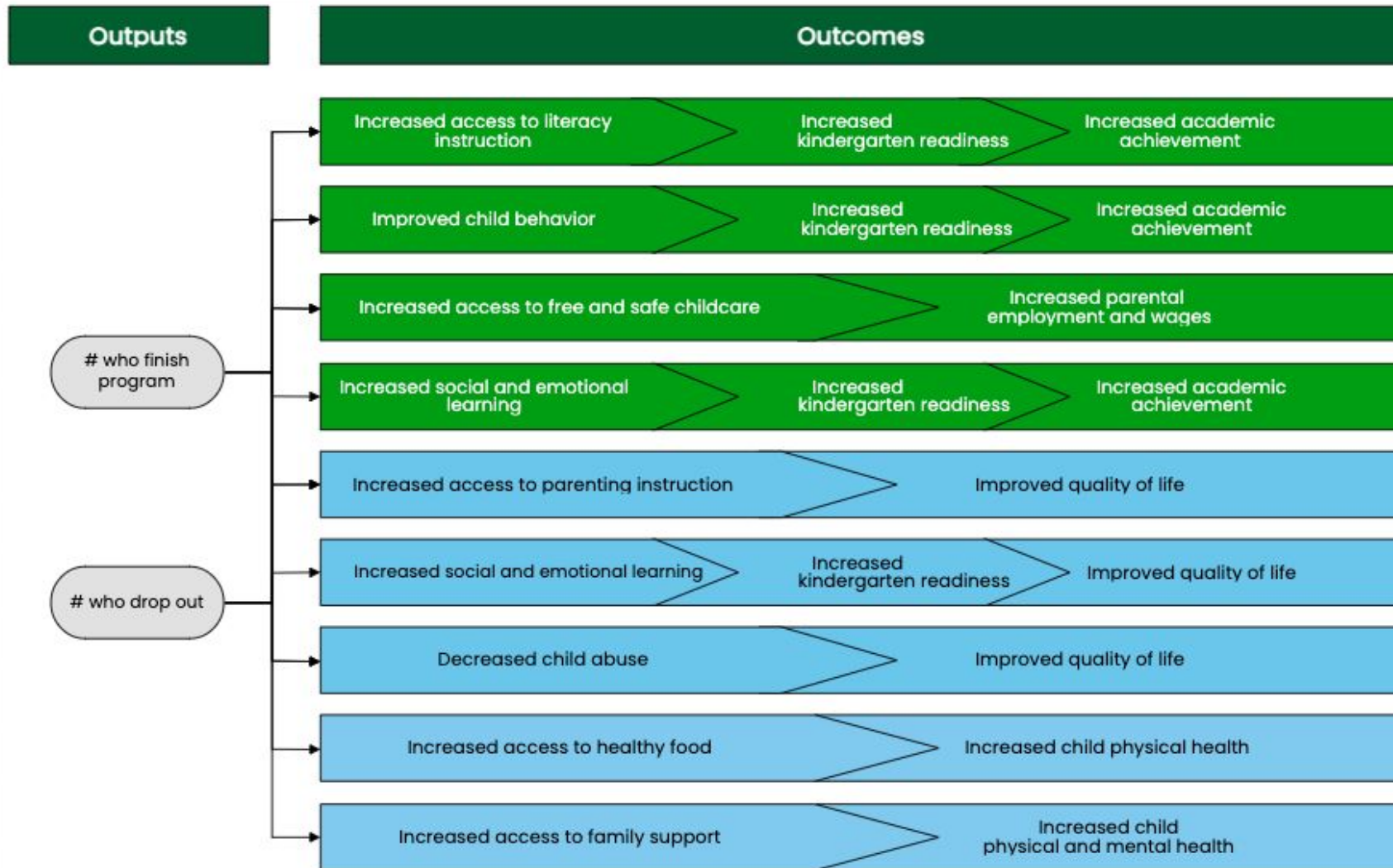
- **Program output:** The number of participants who complete and benefit from the program
- **Program outcome:** The benefits experienced as a result of participating in the program, i.e., the specific ways a program contributes to alleviating poverty for participants

## How does Slingshot use impact trees?

- Disaggregates desired outcomes into discrete benefits
- Develops a comprehensive set of potential income and health benefits created by a program
- Informs the data and research required to monetize the program outcomes
- Provides framework for the benefit-cost analysis

## How can poverty-fighting organizations use impact trees?

- **Comprehensive understanding:** Communicate the potential benefits its programs provide participants
- **Programs/interventions:** Modify or create new programs and interventions to ensure the desired benefits are experienced by participants
- **Measurement:** Enhance data collection and analyses to better support outcomes
- **Resource allocation/acquisition:** Better attract and allocate resources with greater understanding of the benefits created

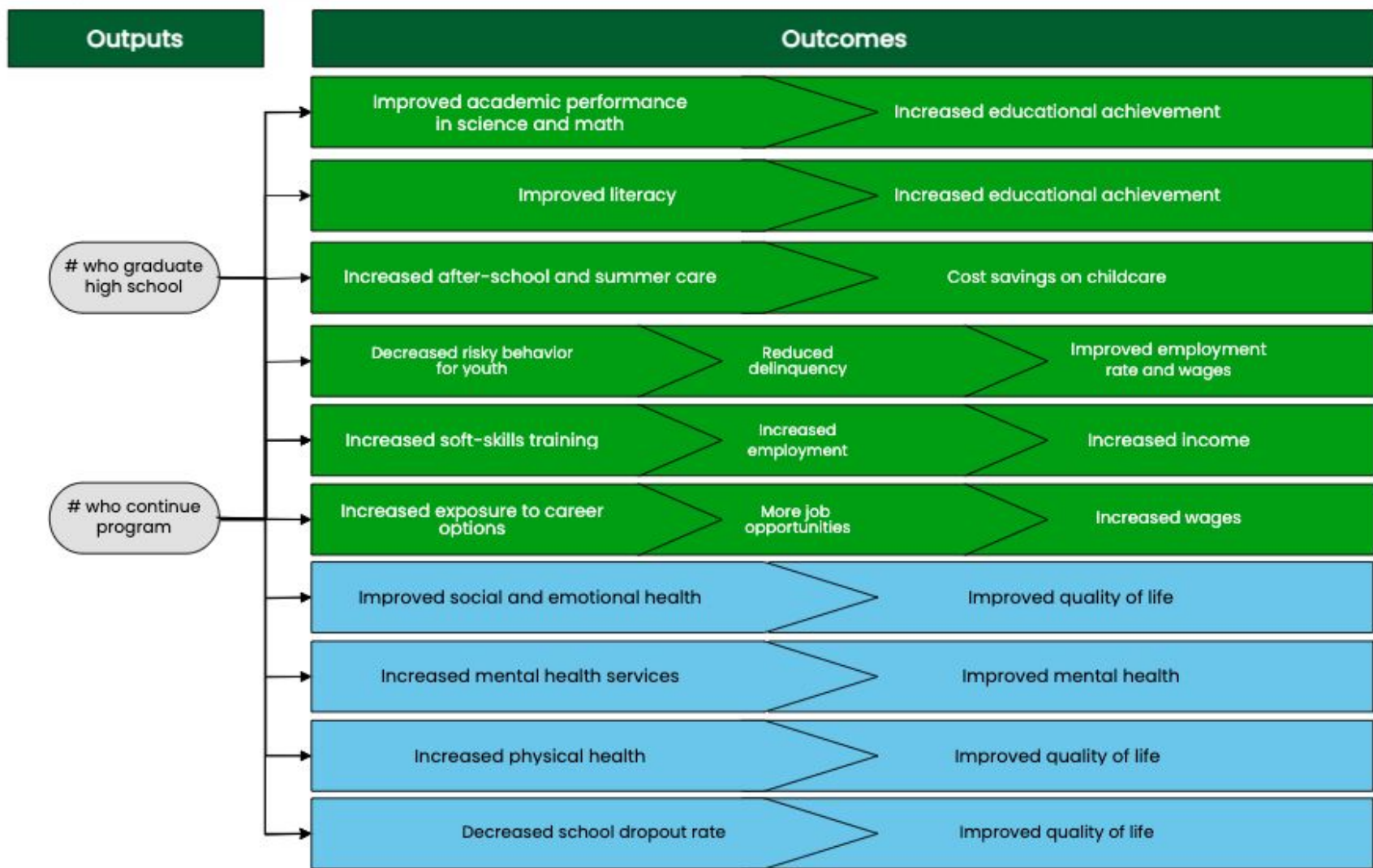


*Outputs: The number of participants who experience a given conclusion to the program*

*Outcomes: The benefits a person gains as a result of participating in the program, i.e., the specific ways the program contributes to alleviating poverty for the person*

*Note: The impact tree depicts the potential poverty-fighting impact of a nonprofit. It is neither an endorsement nor validation of those impacts*

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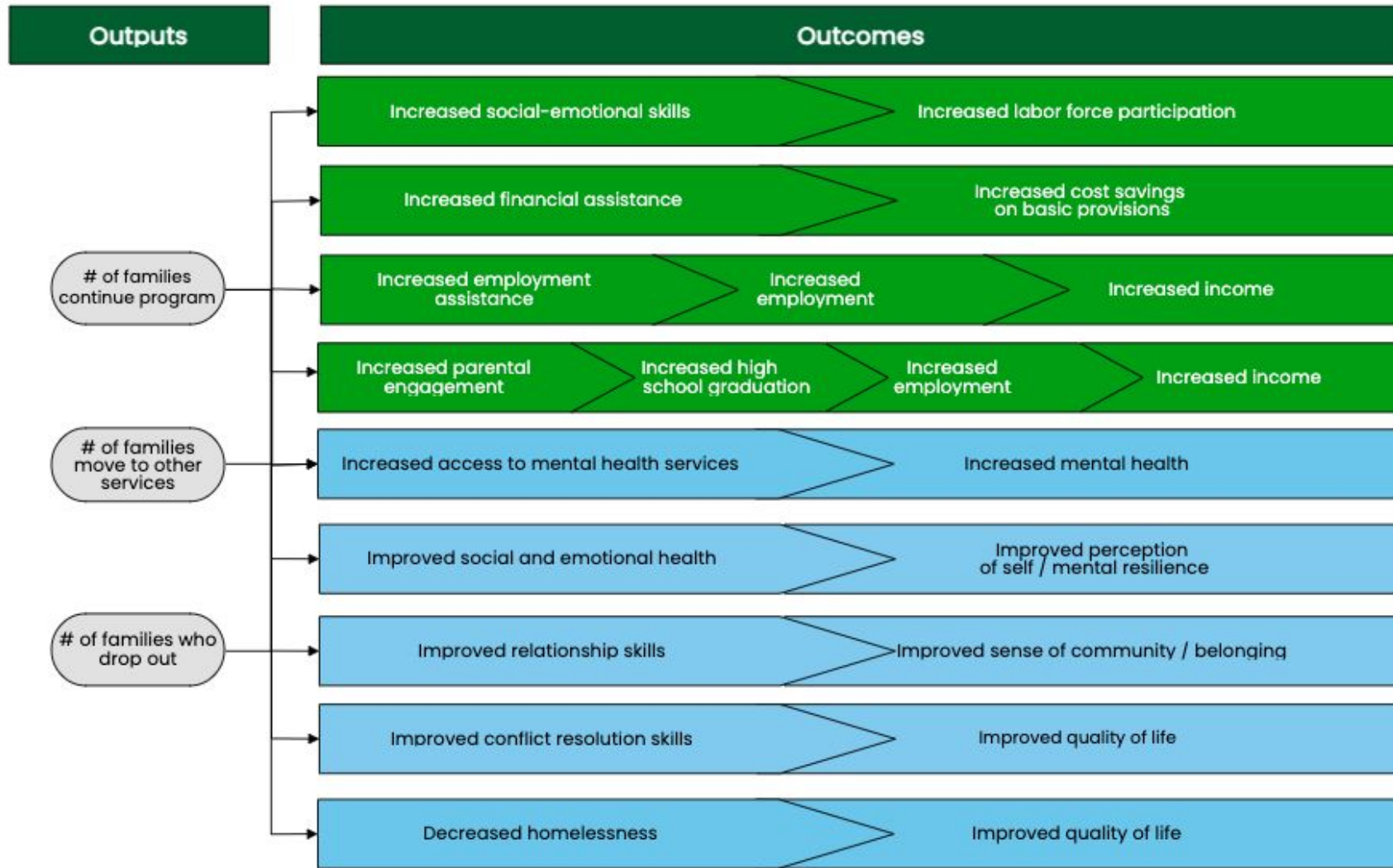


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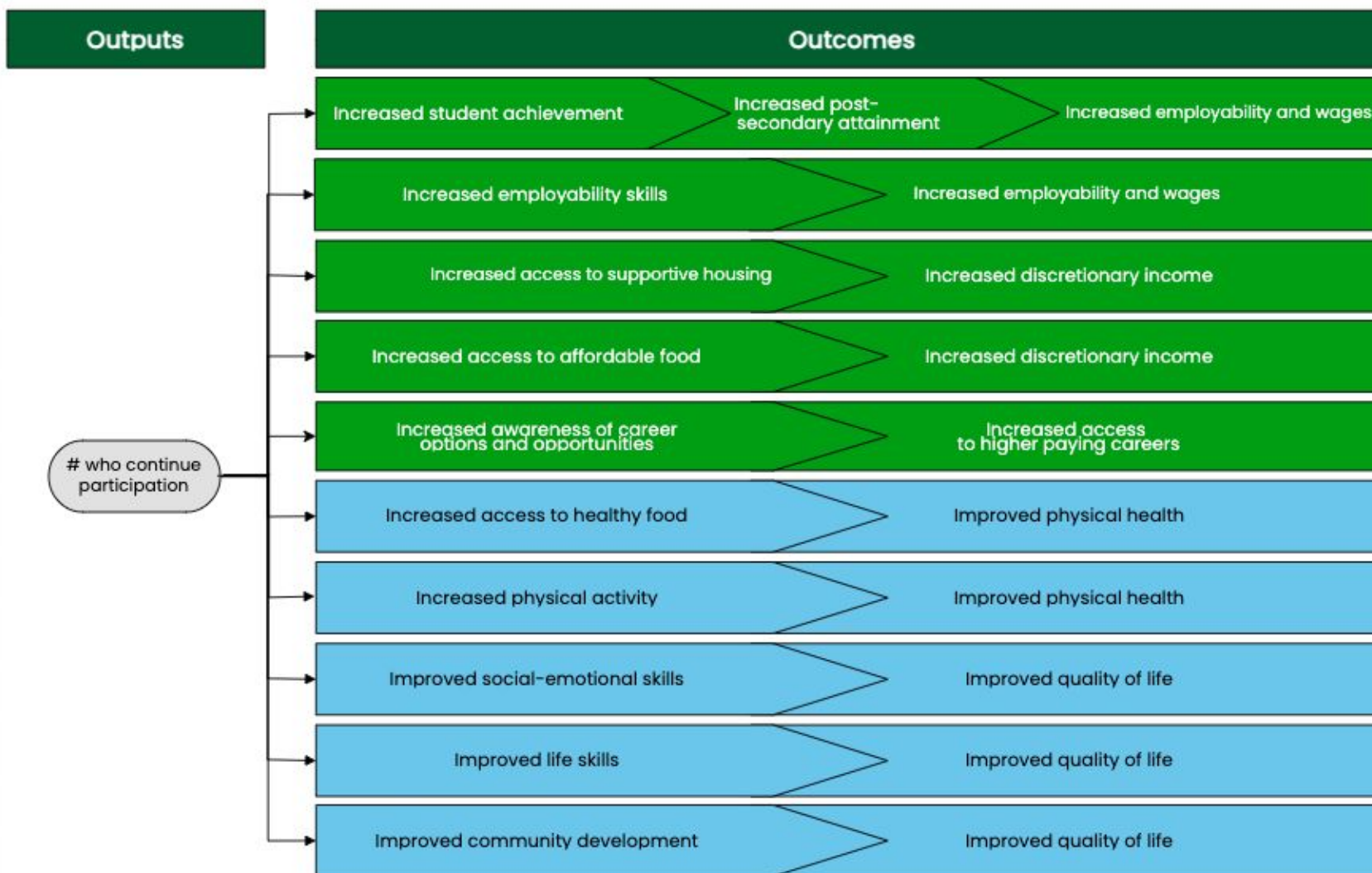


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