

Priorities for the 2022-23 Federal Budget

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Nutrition Australia interest in this consultation

Nutrition Australia is Australia's leading nutrition non-profit organisation, providing information, education, and business-to-business (B2B) consultation, and advisory services, to help Australians achieve optimal health through good nutrition. Established as a not-for-profit organisation more than 40 years ago, we improve the health of all Australians through public health nutrition, health promotion and large-scale education initiatives. Nutrition Australia delivers specialised nutrition advisory and support services with partners and clients ranging from large corporate multinationals and government departments to the food industry, hospitals, universities, schools, and early childhood education care services. Our unique offering combines scientific credibility with experience and independence, making our team of nutrition and dietary consultants the foremost advocates for public health nutrition in Australia.

The Nutrition Australia 2022 Federal Election Priority document brings together how the benefits of eating more vegetables positively contributes to the health, economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of Australians.

The priorities outlined in this document will positively impact the immediate and future health and wellbeing of Australians as well as positively boost parts of the economy to secure the next generation of jobs in our regional and rural communities.

These priorities have been developed through extensive consultation and collaboration with Nutrition Australia's divisions, expert public health nutritionists, accredited practicing dietitians, Fruit & Vegetable Consortium members, researchers, community not for profits, supporting organisations and the wider food supply chain, health, workforce/social, and environmental sectors.

This submission was prepared by Nutrition Australia and The Fruit & Vegetable Consortium.

Building a healthier Australia – increasing vegetable consumption:

The business case for federal investment in a national behavioural change program to increase daily vegetable consumption is compelling. This is informed by evidence drawn from a comprehensive review of Australian and international literature, extensive data analysis, input from the expert knowledge of the Fruit & Vegetable Consortium members and a vast network of organisations that spans public and preventive health, nutrition, vegetable growers and industry, food supply chain, strategic marketing and behaviour change, and community engagement.

Increasing vegetable consumption by as little as 1 serve a day is a critical issue for federal attention that will deliver a triple bottom line of benefits - significantly improving the health, economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of Australians:

1. **Thriving, healthy Aussie kids and families** – improves overall physical and mental health, addressing critical issues identified during the COVID-19 pandemic including the need for greater social connection, stronger population-level immunity, and resilience
2. **Fuels Australia's economic recovery** – reduces the primary health care cost burden by reducing incidence and intensity of medical care, chronic disease, and obesity/overweight; and provides substantial economic growth and GDP improvement for Aussie farmers right across the supply chain, and for the food sector
3. **Builds Sustainable communities and jobs creation** – investing to improve the diets of Australian families will have major positive impacts on social and community wellbeing, regional communities with jobs creation, and environmental sustainability

Context

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to compromise health and disrupt communities and economies, and challenge governments, the significance of good public health and health systems, and the impact of health and well-being on the prosperity of our nation, today and tomorrow is critical.

Australia has one of the lowest levels of preventive health investment as a proportion of total health system spending (1.7%). The National Preventive Health Strategy (NPHS) 2021-2030 sets a target of that “investment in preventive health will rise to be 5% of total health expenditure across Commonwealth, state and territory governments by 2030”.¹ Furthermore, the NPHS cites “improving access to and the consumption of a healthy diet” one of seven focus areas identified for urgent federal investment. Likewise, the draft National Obesity Prevention Strategy (NOPS) identifies supporting more people eating healthy food and drinks as a key investment area.²

The most pressing national diet issue remains the alarming low and falling consumption of vegetables amongst Australian children and adults.

The problem

Australia's 2017/18 National Health Survey (ABS 2018) indicated that only 7.5% of Australian adults and 6.3% of children consume the recommended daily serves of vegetables. Of the recommended 5 serves a day, men aged 18 years and over only consumed 2.3 serves of vegetables each day and women consumed an average of 2.5 serves.³ Total vegetable consumption – both fresh and processed has been steadily declining at 1.1% p.a. (5-year Compound Annual Growth Rate.), suggesting that Australians today consume 13 kilograms per year less vegetables per capita than they did in 2001.⁴

The cost of poor health due to low vegetable consumption is an ongoing burden on our public health system and taxpayers. Deloitte Access Economics estimated that there was approximately \$978.5 million of government health expenditure attributable to low consumption of vegetables in 2015-16 (federal government and state and territory governments pay for approximately \$594.6 million and \$383.9 million, respectively).⁵ Low vegetable consumption contributes 1.2% of the total disease burden in Australia⁶

Overweight/obesity remain major public health issues in Australia, affecting two-thirds of adults and one-quarter of children and adolescents. Overweight/obesity costs Australia an estimated \$8.3 to \$21 billion per year, with estimates that obesity will cost Australia a further \$87.7 billion by 2025.² Australia is now the 5th most obese country in the world, with the highest (and rising) rate of obesity ever.

What's most concerning is that it's our younger generation that are worst affected – Aussie kids, teens, and young adults. In 2011-12 less than 1% of children meet recommendations for average daily vegetable consumption across all age groups.⁷ The need for convenience has driven the meteoric rise of packaged, processed, and fast foods. This issue is made worse by the loss of intergenerational cooking skills, social isolation, low food literacy, and perceived affordability. Low vegetable consumption is a serious threat to the health and wellbeing of all Australians and requires an urgent long-term solution.

The Fruit & Vegetable Consortium members and supporters stand united and prepared to make a significant contribution to achieving the ambitious vegetable consumption targets stated both in the NPHS and draft NOSP, with the execution of a national behaviour change program that aligns and amplifies the efforts of government, health agencies and the horticultural industry.

Policy achievements for National Preventive Health Strategy (NPHS) 2021-2030:¹

- Maintain or increase adult and children (≥9 years) vegetable consumption to 5 serves per day by 2030
- Halt the rise and reverse the trend in the prevalence of obesity in adults by 2030
- Reduce overweight and obesity in children aged 5-17 years by 5% by 2030

Ambitions for National Obesity Prevention Strategy (NOPS) draft 2021:²

- All Australians live, learn, work, and play in supportive and healthy environments
- Australians are empowered and skilled to stay as healthy as they can be
- Australians have access to early intervention and primary health care

There now exists a clear national vision and strategy for an Australia that encourages and enables healthy weight and healthy eating for all. The Fruit & Vegetable Consortium (FVC) has the expertise, capability, agility and focus to deliver a population level increase in vegetable consumption.

Recommendations

1. Funding for a broad-reaching, national behaviour change program over 5 years, which will deliver a substantial and sustained increase in the daily vegetable consumption for Australian kids and adults.
2. The federal government vest responsibility in The Fruit & Vegetable Consortium (The FVC) to lead the strategy, operations, investment management, monitoring and evaluation of the National behaviour change program.

Cost

\$100m to develop and execute the national strategy and behaviour change program*

Addressing the range of interventions required across different cohorts to educate, inform, inspire, and empower Australians to consistently have positive eating experiences with vegetables.

* Behavioural change programs essentially 'stitch together' and coordinate the collective efforts of multiple interested parties around a common framework. The recommendation is for a behavioural change model, rather than a marketing program alone, as there are many factors constraining vegetable consumption, and these vary across cohorts, communities, and meal occasions. Hence, a wide range of targeted and nuanced interventions beyond advertising alone is required.

Benefits

The Fruit & Vegetable Consortium's national behaviour change program will deliver a significant lift in vegetable consumption – **an additional 1 serve of vegetables per day** and:

- +\$200 million reduction in health expenditure per annum (across state and federal governments)⁸
- Significant contribution to lower rates of chronic diseases including certain cancers, diabetes, heart disease, kidney diseases and contribution to halting the rise in obesity.^{9,10} *see Figure 1
- 14% reduction in disease burden if Australians who are overweight or obese maintained a 3kg weight loss¹⁰
- +\$1.3 billion increase in vegetable sales volume to Australian growers and food supply chain operators¹⁰
- +\$1.6 billion net economic benefit in farm income for vegetable growers¹⁰
- a \$10 return on investment every \$1 invested in a behaviour change program to increase vegetable consumption across all sectors of the community¹⁰
- an additional job in the regional economy for every new job created in the Australian food industry¹⁰

Figure 1: Normal Weight and Reduced Disease Burden

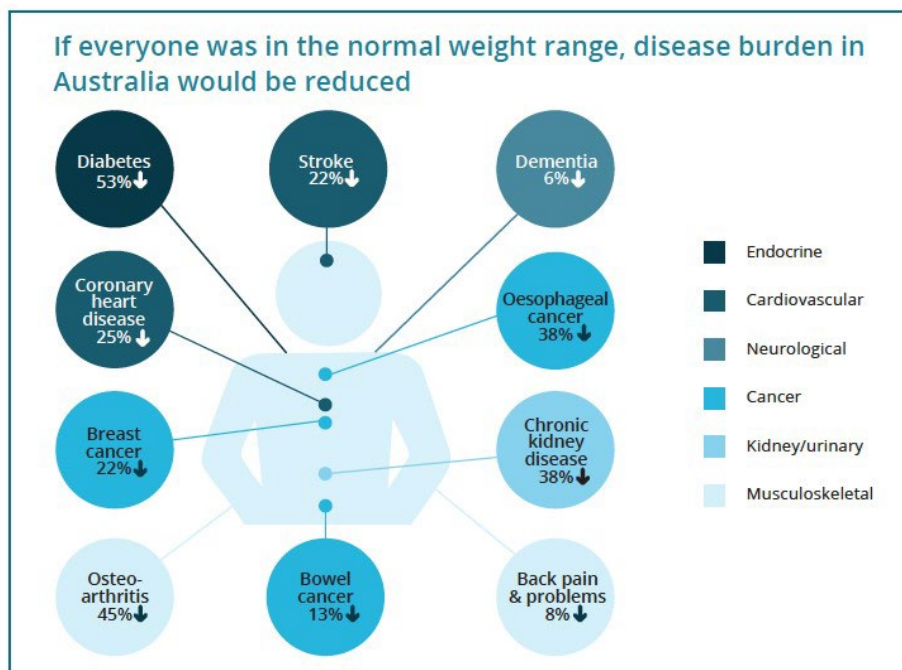


Figure 2: FVC Vegetable Behaviour Change Program Elements, Phasing & Budget Breakdown

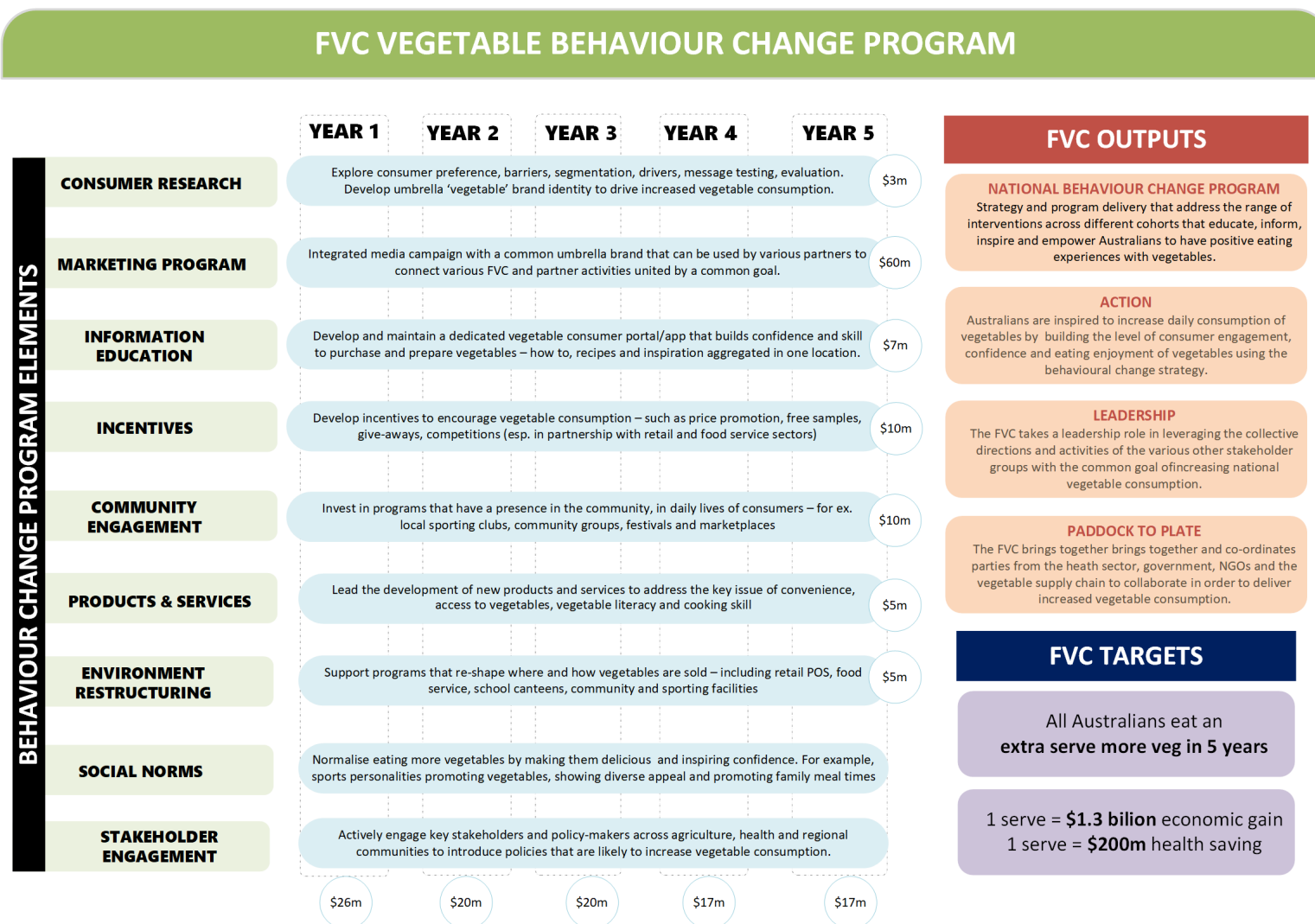


Figure 3: Year 1 Indicative Activities and Budget Breakdown

Intervention	Key Activities and Tasks	Year 1 Budget \$26M
Consumer Research	Consumer attitude and behaviour research to understand key occasion triggers and barriers to vegetable consumption in a COVID-affected world.	\$300k
	Understand consumer preference and new product innovation opportunities with quantitative modelling.	\$250k
	National vegetable brand research.	\$100k
	Campaign development and 'idea' testing.	\$150k
	Monitoring and evaluation with consumer sentiment and brand tracking (over 5 years).	\$200k
		Total \$1M
Marketing Program	Appoint behaviour change agency to develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National vegetable brand Brand and campaign assets Website/app Digital/social channel 	\$3M
	Advertising Media, PR and communications	\$13M
Information Education	Appoint digital agency to develop an information architecture and user experience. Detailed design and build. Content strategy and development.	\$3M
Incentives	Explore new ways to inspire vegetable consumption.	\$2M
	Develop consumer, grower and industry incentives to encourage vegetable consumption – ex. price promotion, free samples, giveaways, competitions (esp. in partnership with retail and food service sectors).	
Community Engagement	Invest in programs that have a presence in the community, in daily lives of consumers – across key settings such local sporting clubs, early learning and schools, community groups, festivals and marketplaces.	\$2M
Products services	Partner with vegetable growers, supply chain and food service to develop new products and services to address the key issue of convenience, meal occasions, access to vegetables, vegetable literacy and cooking skill.	\$1M
Environmental Restructuring	Support programs that re-shape where and how vegetables are sold – including retail POS, food service, school canteens, community and sporting facilities.	\$1M

The Fruit & Vegetable Consortium (The FVC):

The FVC is an independent collective of organisations co-led by Nutrition Australia and AUSVEG, and the only national standalone entity positioned to grow the vegetable intake of Australians. Membership of The FVC starts at the paddock with Australian farmers, and spans the entire fresh food supply chain, human health (primary and preventative), planetary health (environment and sustainability), and consumer interest sectors (demand and consumption) – with unparalleled expertise and the requisite capability to drive what's on the plate.

The purpose of The FVC is to drive a significant and sustained increase in the fruit and vegetable intake of Australians by taking an evidence and systems-based, collaborative approach to driving national behaviour change:

- The FVC is the only not-for-profit, NGO with national reach and the requisite structure, governance, expert advisory (agribusiness, consumer, food, and health), focus and agility to drive a significant and sustained increase in the vegetable consumption of Australians.
- The FVC is co-led by Nutrition Australia and AusVeg which brings together the commercial and shared interests of the vegetable industry, food supply chain, and consumer health/nutrition sector.
- The FVC has a dedicated Management Team responsible for strategic and operational leadership, a committed fee-paying national Executive Committee, and member-endorsed, skills-based Governance structure that offer paid and in-kind support across the agile, collaborative eco-system (see table).
- The FVC is supported by over 260 organisations across Australia and has achieved notable government, media and consumer attention since inception and seed funding from Vic Health in 2017.
- The FVC has developed a Positioning Statement, Business Case, robust Governance Model and Blueprint for Behaviour Change to substantiate and effectively guide this investment.
- The FVC Management Team have deep expertise in consumer demand-side investment management, marketing, and communications:
 - FVC Managing Director – Justine Coates
 - Co-chairs of the FVC Executive Committee:
 - Lucinda Hancock, CEO Nutrition Australia Vic, SA, TAS, WA – Public health Nutrition
 - Michael Coote, CEO AUSVEG – Australian Vegetable Growers and Industry

Operational Objectives

1. To inspire Australian families to increase their daily consumption of vegetables through building consumer engagement, literacy, health awareness (human and planetary), confidence, and enjoyment of vegetables
2. To integrate and reinforce the messaging already in the marketplace about the nutritional qualities and high integrity of Australian grown vegetables.
3. To take a leadership role in leveraging the collective directions and activities of the various other stakeholder groups with the common goal of increasing national vegetable consumption, e.g., National Preventative Health Strategy, National Obesity Strategy, Climate and Health, and/or collaborating with existing programs.

4. To engage with retailers to gain maximum impact and product pull through from the behavioural change/marketing program at the point-of-sale.
5. To improve the accessibility and convenience of vegetables for consumers by strategic R&D investment in new product formats and improved packaging and labelling.
6. To identify and develop programs to offer more vegetable options in food service outlets.

Figure 4: Co-Leadership and Management Team Responsibilities

Fruit & Vegetable Consortium Co-lead Functions	
<u>Nutrition Australia</u>	<u>AUSVEG</u>
FVC Executive Committee Co-Chair and Advisory	
Public Health and Healthy Eating Advocacy	Agriculture Industry Advocacy
Health and Food Sector Co-Investment (Public and Private)	Ag/Hort and Supply Chain Sponsorship and Commercial Co-Investment
Public Sector Stakeholder Engagement (Federal/State/LGA) Preventative and Primary Health, Community	Public Sector Stakeholder Engagement (Federal/State/LGA) Agriculture, Environment, Treasury, National Cabinet
FVC Marketing and Comms	FVC Public Relations
NPHS, NOS and related Health Committees	Ag \$100bn by 2030 and related Ag Committees
Public and Private Health Sector Stakeholder Engagement	Horticulture Growers and Industry Stakeholder Engagement
FVC Healthy Eating Research Advisory	FVC Ag/Hort-invested Org Advisory
Policy, Settings, Cohorts and Contexts – Health Programs	Policy, Levy Investments and Programs – Balanced Scorecard
FVC Management Team Operational Responsibilities	
Strategic Plan, Annual Plan and Operations	
Governance Model, Charter and Terms of Reference	
Membership Strategy and Recruitment - Funding and In-Kind/MOU	
Key Stakeholder Network Engagement and Consultation – B2G, B2B, B2C	
State and Federal Fund Pathways and Election Input	
Fund Raising Strategy, Pitch Development, and Execution	
Consumer Research - Attitude and Behaviour, Preference, Positioning	
Behaviour Change Program Strategy, Brand Development, Campaign and Media	
Investment and Contract Management, Procurement and Partner/Agency Management	
Consumer and Community Engagement	
Food Service, Wholesale Markets and Retailer Engagement	
Monitoring and Evaluation	

Behaviour change starts with Australian families

The FVC seeks to driving population level change for mainstream Australia, with a focus on families and children. In June 2021, there were 7.3 million families, an increase of 1 million (16.6%) since June 2011. Of these families:

- 6.1 million (83.4%) were couple families
- 1.1 million (15.0%) were one parent families with 79.8% of these being single mothers
- 3.3 million (45.5%) were families with dependents, of which 81.1% families with children under 15.¹¹

As of 30 June 2018, an estimated 4.7 million children aged 0–14 years lived in Australia.

National Behaviour Change Program

The FVC behavioural change program will employ both traditional marketing techniques as well as a range of behavioural interventions. The behaviour change program will essentially stitch together the

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collective efforts of multiple parties around a common framework that builds motivation and capability. This behavioural change strategy aims to educate, inform, inspire, and empower Australians to consistently have positive eating experiences with vegetables with secondary messages about health and nutrition.

The recommendation for a behaviour change strategy rather than a marketing program alone, is that there are a range of factors constraining vegetable consumption, which vary across different cohorts and meal occasions, therefore, a wide range of targeted and nuanced interventions is required beyond advertising alone. There exists numerous evidence-based interventions proven to increase vegetable intake across key cohorts and settings.^{12,13} This has been the focus of State and Territory public health investments, however, acknowledging the rise of overweight and obesity there is an urgent need for federal investment to drive consumer demand at the national population level.

The behaviour change model and intervention framework the FVC intends to apply have been developed in conjunction with Monash University's BehaviourWorks and have been designed to make the academic theory more accessible and relevant as practical tools in building comprehensive behaviour change programs. The models have been tried and tested and confirmed by other successful programs such as conservation of water (Victorian Government Our Water Our Future/Target 155), encouraging superannuation savings and the reduction of workplace injuries with WorkSafe.

Figure 5: Behaviour Change Model¹⁰

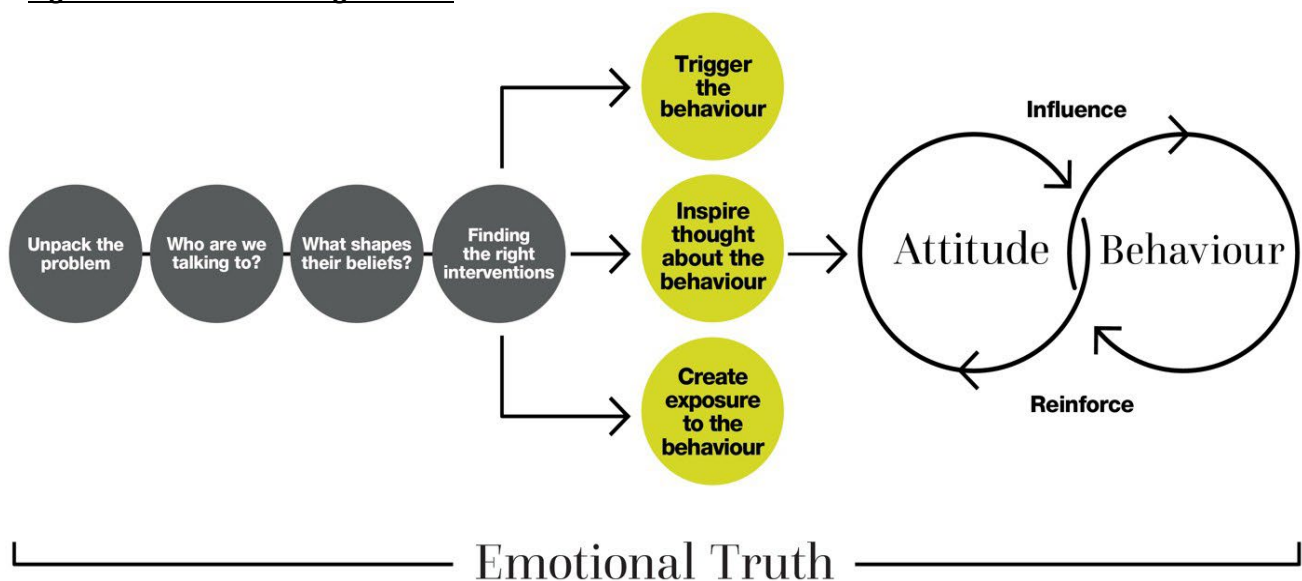


Figure 6: Intervention Framework Toolkit ¹⁰



The key enabler for behaviour change is activating a program of multiple interventions that are unified and coordinated within a central framework. The interventions must evolve over time through evaluation, partner requirements, and to effect change in sub-segments, specific cohorts, and key settings. Expert consumer understanding and continuous learning is required to ensure highly targeted, culturally relevant, and motivating messages/offers are being implemented to stimulate consumer demand.

Figure 7: Commercial and/or In-Kind Delivery Partner Contributions

Potential Partner	Commercial or In-Kind Partner Contributions
Vegetable growers and industry bodies	New product and packaging innovation to meet changing consumer needs, seasonal features, market research, farm tours (paddock to plate), education, sponsorship, product donations for advertising and promotions, industry spokespersons for promotional events.
Supermarkets	Consumer and shopper program alignment, innovative range/display and packaging, in-store education, POS materials, messaging in media advertising, meal solution ideas and convenience tips, value meal and 'what's in season' promotions, children-family programs.
Foodservice outlets	Increased and new offers, consumer education and inspiration, in-outlet activity, incentives, and vegetable menu promotions.
Wholesale markets	Promoting independent retailers, local and fresh produce features, weekly media on what's in season, supporting independent retailers with program branded point of sale materials.
Packaging Companies	Innovative, recyclable, and renewable packaging options that inspire consumption, reduce waste, and have lower carbon footprint. Support movement away from soft plastics and promote fresh as best. Explore role of packaging and how to improve food safety/integrity and shelf life through retail display innovation.
Kitchen appliance brands and retailers	Educational advertising on usage ideas, featuring hero-vegetable dishes. In-store promotions and cooking demonstrations.
Vegetable transport companies	Banner advertising on trailer curtains
Public Health and NGOs	<p>National health promotion to improve literacy, educate, build skills, and inspire greater intake via data bases, websites, app integration and social/new media. Endorsement through association with the program brand will provide a halo effect.</p> <p>Early learning, schools' education and farm tours/family programs that build connection to agriculture and environmental sustainability (planetary and human health).</p> <p>Inform and support government policy initiatives that improve vegetable literacy, availability, relative affordability and access to fresh produce, healthy eating, and sustainable food systems</p>
Media and Agency Partners	Broad and narrowcast media and PR actively involved in the program with value adds including innovation partnerships and program integration across food and cooking shows/features.
Researchers	Consumer behaviour, usage and attitude studies, consumer segmentation and preference, volumetric modelling of demand spaces, barriers and triggers, brand positioning and health, campaign and advertising tracking, measurement, and evaluation.

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