

# Community Health

# Impact

# Assessment

# *TOOL*

Includes

Facilitator's

*Guide*

**HEALTH**  
**in COMMON**

Strengthening connections for healthy sustainable communities

North of 53: Working Together to Build Vibrant Communities

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*Community-Driven Health Impact Assessment Training*

# WHAT'S INSIDE

The template for this Community Health Impact Assessment Tool was developed by the Antigonish Town & County Community Health Board in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Community Health Impact Assessment is a process developed by the People Assessing Their Health (PATH) Network in Nova Scotia, Canada.

The North of 53: Working Together to Build Vibrant Communities Community-Driven Health Impact Assessment training was facilitated by staff of Health in Common, Winnipeg, MB.  
– July 21, 2011 –

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This Community Health Impact Assessment tool was developed by the North of 53: Working Together to Build Vibrant Communities Community-Driven Health Impact Assessment training participants.

The following people participated in the creation of this Community Health Impact Assessment Tool (CHIAT):

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## OUR VISION OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Working together we can maintain and strengthen our healthy community with accountable governance by building and protecting our language and culture. A balanced lifestyle is achieved by empowering one another to utilize and create resources for spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally positive outcomes.

## THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY-HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Community health impact assessment is a way to bring the health concerns of the community forward in discussions of public policy.

- It allows us to estimate the effect that a particular activity (a policy, program, project or service) will have on the health of the community.
- It suggests things we can do to maximize the benefits (the positive effects) and minimize the harm (the negative effects) of that activity.

Community health impact assessment is not a substitute for decision-making but it is one tool we can use to guide thinking and discussion.

Most policies or programs have both positive and negative effects on a given population (a geographic community or a specific “community” of people within that geographic area). For this reason, community health impact assessment is not meant to determine if a policy is “right” or “wrong”. Rather, it helps to identify how a particular activity will enhance or diminish the many factors that the community considers to be important for its overall health.

This Community Health Impact Assessment Tool was developed by the North of 53: Working Together to Build Vibrant Communities CDHIA training participants held July 18 – 21, 2011 in Thompson, Manitoba.

“Health” in our community is broadly defined as being inclusive of physical, mental, social and spiritual well being. It is determined by many factors outside as well as inside the health care system.

## THE BROAD DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

There is growing evidence that the health of people – and the communities in which they live – is influenced by much more than the contribution of medicine and health care.

Health Canada has identified 12 key factors, known as the determinants of health, that are crucially important for a population to be healthy. Each of these factors is important in its own right. At the same time, the factors are interrelated.

North of 53: Working Together to Build Vibrant Communities Community-Driven Health Impact Assessment training participants used an exercise to identify as many determinants as they could. Here is their list:

- Culture
- Sense of purpose
- Employment
- Income
- Responsible resource use
- Access to health services
- Access to healthy foods

- Health protection knowledge
- Emergency Preparedness
- Age

- Education
- Water
- Housing
- Social connection
- Lifelong learning
- Physical health
- Mental health
- Spiritual health
- Natural environment
- Being active
- Access to recreation
- Community connection
- Family
- Social interaction
- Outdoors
- Prevention

## HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

### DETERMINE WHAT TO ASSESS

Community health impact assessment should be used to assess major policies, programs, projects or services that will have a significant effect on the overall health of the geographic community (or a particular “community” within the geographic area).

### INVOLVE THE RIGHT PEOPLE

This community health impact assessment tool is designed for group discussion, not as an individual activity.

It can be used by various decision-making groups, groups that represent people within the community, or groups that are composed of members of the community. Where possible, it is best to include those who will be most affected by the proposed policy or program that is being assessed.

### PREPARE FOR THE DISCUSSION

Gather all of the information available about the proposed activity.

Before you begin, please read the sections:

- Our Vision of a Healthy Community (page 3)
- The Purpose of Community Health Impact Assessment (page 4)
- The Broad Determinants of Health (page 5)

### GIVE YOURSELF TIME

It will take approximately 3 hours of group discussion to work through the factors in the Assessment Worksheet and to complete the Summary Worksheet. Be sure to set aside enough time so that all opinions are heard and valued.

### FACILITATE DISCUSSION

- Every factor in the Assessment Worksheet is important. Be sure to invite comment on each one of the factors.
- The impact on some of the factors will be negligible or not applicable. Simply check the “NO/NEUTRAL” column and move on.
- If the discussion gets bogged down on some of the factors, encourage the group to “flag” that issue and come back to it when completing the Summary Worksheet.
- Respect different opinions. If the group cannot agree on an impact, check the “NEED MORE INFO” box or make a notation in the “COMMENTS” column.

### KEEP IN MIND

This tool is designed to assess the impact of an activity on all of the factors affecting community health, not to determine if a proposed activity is “right” or “wrong”. Encourage people to make an honest and open-minded assessment.

# STEP 1: ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

## Everyone works together

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Dialogue is happening within the community					
• Community networks are integrated					
• Rapport is established between residents					
• Capacity is built within the community					
• Cooperative solutions are sought to address conflict					
• Harmony and cohesion between residents and elected officials					
• Diverse solutions and voices are considered in community decision making					
• Collaboration between community groups					
• Efforts are not duplicated					
• Gender diversity is embraced and respected within communities					

**Accountable governance**

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Increased voter participation					
• Involving community in decision making					
• Harmony and cohesion between elected officials					
• Regular reporting to the community					
• Research informed decision making about potential impacts on individuals					
• Research informed decision making about potential impact on the economy, environment and society					
• Government officials advocate for the community members					
• Local governments lobby provincial and federal governments					
• Recognition of community's needs					
• Elders are included in decision making					
• Youth are included in decision making					

***Building and protecting language and culture***

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• People work across language barriers					
• People work across cultural barriers					
• Cultural activities are supported					
• Traditional language is part of the curriculum					
• Traditional language is visible in the community					
• Staff are hired who speak traditional language					
• Media is available and accessible in traditional languages					
• Equal access to participation in cultural events					
• Elders are involved throughout programming					
• Culture and language are included in programming					
• Traditional foods are available in the community					
• Traditional language is encouraged throughout the community					
• Traditional recreation is provided (i.e. pow wows, cultural camps, hunting, fishing, beading)					
• Elders can be identified within the community					

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Traditional ways of healing are practiced, taught and valued</li></ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creative expression is respected and valued</li></ul>					

SAMPLE

**Balanced lifestyle**

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Access to healthy and nutritious food					
• People are physically active					
• Continuity of programming					
• Family programming is sustained					
• The environment is safe					
• People practice positive self-care					
• People have a sense of purpose and meaning					
• People work flexible hours					
• Social time for family					
• A variety of social supports are available					
• People can get appropriate mental wellness care when required					

***Empowering one another***

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Youth are mentored within the community					
• Community strengths are recognized					
• Training opportunities are available					
• Educational opportunities are accessible					
• Community leaders and volunteers are appreciated					
• People advocate for vulnerable people					
• Women are encouraged and supported to take on leadership roles					

**Utilize resources**

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Community resources are easily recognizable					
• Community resources are promoted					
• Local people are used as mentors and teachers					
• Local people are hired first					
• Natural resources are used responsibly					
• Natural resources are used for recreation					

**Create resources**

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Programming is focused on community needs					
• Funding is accessed for new facilities and infrastructure					
• New resources are culturally appropriate					
• Print resources reflect local realities and perspectives					
• Local facilitators are engaged to develop community					
• Local people's leadership skills are developed					

***Spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally positive outcomes***

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Places, spaces and tools exist for traditional spiritual practice					
• Community gatherings (i.e. feasts) happen often					
• Community awareness of spiritual healing practices and teachings					
• Diverse spiritual practices are valued and respected					
• Traditional and western spiritual practices are accessible					
• Participation and observation of traditional practices and customs					
• Transportation is available and accessible					
• Child care is available and accessible					
• Adequate housing is available and accessible					
• Clean and safe water is available and accessible					
• Healthy affordable food is available and accessible					
• People have access to an adequate income					

• People are financially stable					
• Opportunities for physical fitness exist in the community					
• Illness care is locally available					
• Health services are culturally relevant and sensitive					
• Traditional and western medicine practices complement one another					
• Local workers are skilled and competent					
• Mental well-being is understood and promoted					
• Efforts are made to reduce harm in all programming					
• Resources to promote mental well-being are available on an on-going basis					
• Solutions to community issue are sought across jurisdictions					

➤ **Next step:** **Summary Worksheet**

## STEP 2: SUMMARY WORKSHEET

Now that you have assessed the impact that the proposed activity will have on the many factors affecting the health of the community, it is time to develop a summary and identify the actions that need to be taken.

- ◆ Carefully consider the results of your reflections in each section of the *Assessment Worksheet*. Try to **develop a statement of the “overall impact”** for that section.

Keep in mind that this is not simply a “tally” of the results, since one or more negative (or positive) impacts may outweigh a number of positive (or negative) impacts. For example, your statement might be something like *“Generally positive but special attention needs to be paid to...”*.

- **Identify any actions** you need to take in order to complete the community health impact assessment. Some examples of actions include:
  - Seeking more information (from where? by when? etc.)
  - Consulting with other groups
  - Returning to particular points in the Assessment Worksheet at a later date

Page	CONSIDERATION	OVERALL IMPACT	ACTION REQUIRED
7	<i>Everyone works together</i>		
8	Accountable governance		
9	<i>Building and protecting language and culture</i>		
11	<i>Balanced lifestyle</i>		

Page	CONSIDERATION	OVERALL IMPACT	ACTION REQUIRED
12	<i>Empowering one another</i>		
13	<i>Utilize resources</i>		
14	<i>Create resources</i>		
15	<i>Spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally positive outcomes</i>		

SAMPLE

## NEXT STEPS

The community health impact assessment is not complete until you have developed a plan for the “next steps” that your group will take. You may wish to work on this section at a subsequent meeting.

Use this planning grid to help keep track of the various tasks and strategies that emerge from the group’s discussion.

Some of the “next steps” that can be included in the grid are:

- Seeking more information (from where? by when? etc.). This information can be extracted from the “Action Required” column of the Summary Worksheet.
- Presenting your concerns to another group or decision-making body (what group? how? etc.)
- Inviting further discussion that involves the affected groups

Next Step (What)	Who to Involve	When	Person Responsible	Report Back (by when)

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## Facilitator's Guide

Here are some additional ideas, suggestions and tips to assist you and your group in using the Community Health Impact Assessment Tool (CHIAT).

Since every group has its own style of discussion – and every facilitator has her/his own style of helping a group accomplish its task – you should feel free to adapt these suggestions to meet the needs of the people you are working with.

### How the CHIAT works

The CHIAT provides a systematic way to look at the effect (impact) that proposed policies or programs will have on the overall health and well-being of the community. It is based on a “Vision of a Healthy Community” (page 2) that reflects our community’s values and the broad determinants of health (page 4).

There are four basic steps in using the CHIAT:

**1. Choose what you want to assess.** Since we understand health to be inclusive of physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being, the policies/programs that can be assessed using the CHIAT are not limited to medical or “health services”.

Some of the things that can be assessed include:

- Government policies (municipal, provincial, or federal)

- Programs or services offered by governments, institutions; community organizations
- Major infrastructure projects

**2. Prepare for the meeting.** Both the group and the facilitator should do some advance preparation to ensure the smooth and efficient flow of the community health impact assessment.

**3. Facilitate the CHIAT discussion**

**3.1 Work through the Assessment Worksheet.**

Indicate whether or not the policy/program will have an impact on each of the factors that are listed. Will it be a positive or negative impact? Will it have no significant impact? Do you need more information in order to make an assessment? This is also where you will make notes of any special considerations that arise in the discussion.

**3.2 Complete the Summary Worksheet.** Develop a statement that captures the “overall impact” the policy/program will have on each section of the Assessment Worksheet. This is where you will begin to identify how to maximize the benefits (the positive impacts) and minimize the harm (the negative impacts) of the policy/program that you are assessing.

**4. Identify the “Next Steps” that you need to take.** What will you do with your impact assessment? How will it

affect your group’s decision-making? What further information or research is required?

Detailed suggestions are contained in the following pages.

**1. Choose what you want to assess**

**Choose the right issue:**

- **Big, not small.** Use the CHIAT for deliberations about **major** policies, programs or services that will have an impact on the community. The CHIAT is quite detailed and requires a discussion time of at least two hours so you will probably only use it once every year or two.
- **Specific, not general.** Assess the impact of something concrete – such as a specific policy or program – not a broad or general idea. For example:

General	Specific
Cutbacks to education funding	The proposed closure of a school
Improved services for youth	Creation of a youth centre
Restructuring of the health care system	Implementation of hospital user fees
Economic development	Proposal to build a call centre

**Choose the right time to do the assessment:**

The CHIAT can be used at any time during the planning, implementation or evaluation of a program or policy. However, it is most effective if it is used **before** an activity takes place.

Since the CHIAT allows us to identify both the positive and negative impacts that a policy or program will have, it is particularly useful in the *early planning stages* of an activity. This allows for changes to be made in the policy or project in order to *maximize the benefits* and *minimize the harm* that could be caused.

If the CHIAT is used **during** the implementation of a policy, program or service (usually something long-term), it can help to identify positive and negative impacts and encourage corrective action to be taken.

When the CHIAT is used **after** a project is completed, it can be used as a source of information to complement a formal evaluation.

**Formulate the question:**

This step should involve the whole group and take place *several weeks in advance* of the actual CHIAT discussion.

The Assessment Worksheet is built around the question: **Will \_\_\_ [the name of the policy/program] \_\_\_ have an impact on the following areas?** This is followed by a list of “factors” for consideration by the group.

Once you have chosen the policy or program you will assess, you need to put it in the form of the question above. The question should:

- Be short, clear and use plain language
- Name a concrete policy or program, not a general idea
- Be accepted and understood by the whole group

## 2. Prepare for the meeting

### **Group preparation:**

- **Background reading.** Once the group has agreed on what to assess, some background information on the particular program or policy should be provided so that people will come to the CHIAT discussion with some basic information and knowledge about the topic.

Be clear that the group members are not expected to be experts on the topic. They simply require some basic facts and familiarity with the issue that will be discussed.

- **Vision and purpose.** Provide each group member with a copy of *Our Vision of a Healthy Community* (page 2), the *Purpose of Community Health Impact Assessment* (page 3), and the *Broad Determinants of Health* (page 4). Invite them to reflect on these before the meeting.

### **Facilitator preparation:**

Here is checklist of some things the facilitator should do in advance of the meeting:

- **Read through the entire CHIAT** so that you are familiar with the contents and the flow of the material.
- Pay particular attention to the section *Our Vision of a Healthy Community* (page 2) so that you are able to explain it to others in the group.

- Assist the group in formulating the appropriate question for assessment (see page 18).
- See that the group has the necessary background material about the issue being assessed – and be sure to read the material yourself.
- Make sure that people are aware of the date, time and location of the meeting. Be clear that the discussion will take a *minimum* of two hours.
- Ensure that you have one copy of the CHIAT for each person in the group.

### **3. Facilitate the CHIAT discussion**

As facilitator of the community health impact assessment, your role is to guide the group through the various steps in the process. The following pages describe some tips and ideas for how to carry out your task.

#### ***Introduce the process:***

- Begin with a brief reminder of the purpose of community health impact assessment (page 3). Take a few minutes to answer questions and clarify expectations.
- Describe the process that will be followed: a detailed assessment of the policy/program, a summary and naming of actions required, and a discussion of next steps that need to be taken.
- Clarify important terms:

**Our Vision of a Healthy Community.** *Remind the group that the assessment is based on the Vision of a Healthy Community that was developed by the Community.*

Take 10 or 15 minutes to walk through the main points in the Vision and invite people to offer comments, questions and/or clarifications. Group members do not have to *agree* with every point but they should have a clear *understanding* of what is meant.

**Use of the term “community”.** Before the group begins, it is helpful to clarify how the term “community” is being defined *for the purpose of this assessment*. Depending on the nature of the group, “community” can refer to all of the people within a geographic location (e.g., a village, town, county, etc.); a specific group of people within a geographic location (e.g., youth, people with special needs, etc.); and so on.

It does not matter how the group defines “community” as long as the whole group shares a common understanding.

### **3.1 Work through the Assessment Worksheet**

The Assessment Worksheet presents a detailed list of “factors” that relate to the various parts of the Vision of a Healthy Community.

#### ***The basic process:***

- At the beginning of *each section* in the worksheet, group members fill in the blank space in the question “*Will \_\_\_\_\_ have an impact on ...?*” with the name of the policy or program that is being assessed.

- The facilitator then reads out each factor (pausing for discussion between each), beginning with the statement: “Will [the policy or program] have an impact on...[name the factor]?”
- The group is asked to offer an opinion about the impact the policy / program will have on that factor (**Yes** or **No/neutral**), checking the appropriate box. If the group does not have enough information to make an informed choice, they should check the box “**Need more information**”.
- If the group members feel that there will be an impact (**Yes**), they should then discuss whether or not the impact will be **Positive** or **Negative**.
- The “Comments” section should be used to note special considerations, things to pay attention to, specific questions that arise, and so on (see the sample Assessment Worksheet on page 23).
- The facilitator then moves the group on to consider the next factor, repeating the question “Will [the policy or program] have an impact on...[name the factor]?”

### **Facilitation suggestions:**

Here are some things to consider when working through the Assessment Worksheet.

- Before and during the assessment, the facilitator should remind the group members that they are assessing the impact that a **specific policy or program** will have on the community, not the impact of what “might” happen as a future result of the program or policy. For example, you should assess the impact of *introducing a bylaw banning smoking in*

*public places*, not the impact of people “possibly” quitting smoking as a result of such a bylaw.

- Try to keep the group focused on the particular factor under discussion at any given time.
- Ask for an indication of the main impact on each factor (e.g., “mostly positive”; “generally no impact”; “mainly negative”). The goal is to determine the overall impact on a given community. Exceptions and special considerations should be noted in the “Comments” section.
- If the group cannot agree on an impact (Yes or No, Positive or Negative), suggest that this is an example of something that requires more information. You can also suggest that the group move on and return to this point after considering other factors.
- In some cases, the factor listed is simply not applicable to the policy or program being assessed. Groups have a tendency to search for an impact even where one does not exist. If this happens, ask the group to check the *No/Neutral* box and move on.
- It may happen that a group finds both Positive and Negative impacts for the same factor. Take time for a bit of discussion to see if there is a **predominant** impact (and note the exceptions in the “Comments” section). If the group cannot agree, ask them to check the box *Need more information* and move on.
- Pay close attention to the time. It is important to complete the Assessment Worksheet in one session. If necessary, you can come back to the Summary Worksheet at another time (but do come back).

### 3.2 Complete the Summary Worksheet

It is **absolutely essential** that the group complete the Summary Worksheet as this is where you begin to identify how to maximize the benefits and minimize the harm that a policy or program is likely to have.

#### **Facilitation suggestions:**

- Invite the group to review the results of their reflections from each section of the Assessment Worksheet, paying particular attention to the notes they have made in the “Comments” column.
- Remind people that this is not simply a “tally” of the results, since one or more negative (or positive) impacts may outweigh a number of positive (or negative) impacts.
- For each “consideration” in the Summary Worksheet, the group should **develop a statement of the “overall impact”**.

The statement should include any of the special considerations that were noted in the “Comments” section of the Assessment Worksheet since this is where you begin to identify how to maximize the positive aspects of the program/policy and minimize the harm or negative effects. For example, the statement might be something like

*“Generally positive but special attention needs to be paid to...[e.g., the effect this will have on local businesses **or** the problems this will create for*

*people with limited transportation **or** the need for additional training for employees, etc.”*].

You may find it helpful to divide people into sub-groups to develop a statement that can be brought back to the whole group.

- Ask the group to **identify any actions** it needs to take such as seeking more information, consulting with other groups, and so on.

### 4. Identify the “Next Steps”

The community health impact assessment is not complete until the group has developed a plan for its “next steps”. You may wish to work on this section at a subsequent meeting.

Page 19 of the CHIAT offers a simple grid that the group can complete in order to organize follow-up activities.

Some of the “next steps” that can be included in the grid are:

- Seeking more information (from where? by when? etc.). This information can be extracted from the “Action Required” column of the Summary Worksheet.
- Presenting your concerns to another group or decision-making body (what group? how? etc.)

- Inviting further discussion that involves the affected groups

You have successfully completed a community health impact assessment.

***Congratulations on a job well done!***

SAMPLE