

Community Health

Impact

Assessment

TOOL

Includes

Facilitator's

Guide

HEALTH
in COMMON

Strengthening connections for healthy sustainable communities

Community-Driven Health Impact Assessment Training

August 2011, Winnipeg, MB

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.

Community-Driven Health Impact Assessment training was facilitated by Susan Eaton, People Assessing Their Health and hosted by Health in Common in Winnipeg, MB.
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OUR VISION OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Our vision of a healthy community is one that is sustainable, informed and forward thinking. It is inclusive, and it embraces individuals, families and the community as a whole. The people and the community are resilient, flexible and adaptable. People work together and every effort is made to ensure that healthy choices are easy choices.

People are encouraged to have a balanced use of their time. Our vision includes financial equity to ensure that everyone's needs are met. There is opportunity for fulfilling employment and education is a priority. The natural environment is important to everyone and there is support for all aspects of a smart built environment.

Our healthy community is safe. It has adequate, accessible transportation as well as appropriate and adequate social services that are available to everyone.

THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY-HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This Community Health Impact Assessment Tool was developed by participants at a CDHIA training held August 23 - 26, 2010 in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

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.

“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.

- Income and social status
- Social support networks
- Education and literacy
- Employment/working conditions
- Social environments
- Physical environments
- Personal health practices and coping skills
- Healthy child development
- Biology and genetic endowment
- Health services
- Gender
- Culture

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

A healthy community is sustainable, informed, and forward thinking

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Decisions are made with future generations in mind					
• Everyone is equally responsible for the health of the community					
• Community members are empowered to be active participants in decision making					
• Youth are mentored to be involved in community affairs and activities					
• People under forty years of age are part of organizing community events					
• There are places and spaces for living, working and playing					
• The community collectively identifies and addresses its own needs in an on-going way (e.g. pharmacies, food purchasing coops, child care rotation, etc.)					

The community is inclusive, and it embraces individuals, families and the community as a whole

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Differences between people are not noticed					
• New community members are welcomed					
• People help each other on a regular basis					
• The community comes together to help families and individuals when a catastrophe strikes					
• People talk to each other					
• People feel connected to one other					
• People contribute to community events					

The people and the community are resilient, flexible and adaptable

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People have the skills necessary to deal with stressful situations (e.g. grief, loss of dwellings through fire, etc.) 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community itself has the skills and resources to deal with stressful situations (e.g. loss of major employer, big accident, etc.) 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members are trained in crisis intervention 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency preparedness is in place and practiced 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community has emergency fund and a board to administer it 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community supports innovation 					

People work together

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• The input of all community members is valued in decision-making processes					
• Decision-making bodies reflect the diversity of the community					
• The non-profit sector, the business sector and government work collaboratively to address community identified concerns					
• People feel safe to voice their concerns					
• People support one another					
• People celebrate successes					
• People share best practices					

Healthy choices are easy choices

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• There is affordable, good quality food in corner stores					
• There are community gardens					
• Walking or biking is easier than driving					
• Healthy food options are available in schools					
• There is subsidized healthy food					
• Indoor space is available for free unstructured recreation opportunities					

A balanced use of time is encouraged

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• People can leave work for family illness or emergencies					
• People have the desire to volunteer					
• People engage in recreation and leisure activities					
• Professional development is available in the workplace					
• Unpaid work is valued					
• Physical activity is part of the workday (e.g. walking meetings)					

There is financial equity to ensure that needs are met

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• No one is living in poverty					
• Cost is not a barrier to accessing programs and services					
• Programs and services build capacity and support to allow for success in the community					
• Everyone receives a living wage					

There is opportunity for fulfilling employment

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• The community produces its own jobs					
• There are ways to contribute to the community through volunteering, etc.					
• Ensuring healthy work environment and employment standards					

Education is a priority

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• A variety of training and skills development is available (formal and non-formal)					
• Primary, secondary and post-secondary levels of schooling are available to everyone					
• Post-secondary education is affordable					
• Every student is taught to the level of their ability					
• The learning environment is free of bullying					

The natural environment is important

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• There is safe drinking water for everyone					
• Recreation water quality is adequate					
• There are no breathing problems due to poor air quality					
• People protect the natural environment					

There is support for a smart built environment

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Schools are used after 4 p.m.					
• There are multi-generational housing units					
• There are mixed income housing units					
• Existing roads include bike paths					

It is a safe community

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Neighbourhoods are well lit					
• People don't get hurt at work					
• People feel safe going out in their neighbourhood					
• Homes are free from abuse					

There is adequate and affordable housing

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• There is enough housing for everyone to live in					
• No housing needs repair					
• There are different homes for different income levels					

There is adequate, accessible transportation

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• There is a variety of options for transportation					
• People can get where they want, when they want, how they want					
• Bus fare (or other transportation cost) is based on income					

Appropriate and adequate social services are available

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO	NEED MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Child care is readily available for parents					
• There is structured and organized after school programming for youth					
• Existing social services are non-judgmental, transparent and accessible					

➤ ***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>A healthy community is sustainable, informed and forward thinking</i>		
8	<i>The community is inclusive, and it embraces individuals, families and the community as a whole</i>		
9	<i>The people and the community are resilient, flexible and adaptable</i>		
10	<i>People work together</i>		

Page	CONSIDERATION	OVERALL IMPACT	ACTION REQUIRED
11	<i>Healthy choices are easy choices</i>		
12	<i>A balanced use of time is encouraged</i>		
13	<i>There is financial equity to ensure that needs are met</i>		
13	<i>There is opportunity for fulfilling employment</i>		
14	<i>Education is a priority</i>		
14	<i>The natural environment is important</i>		
15	<i>There is support for a smart built environment</i>		
15	<i>It is a safe community</i>		
16	<i>There is adequate and affordable housing</i>		
16	<i>There is adequate, accessible transportation</i>		
17	<i>Appropriate and adequate social services are available</i>		

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)

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 3) that reflects our community’s values and the broad determinants of health (page 5).

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 3), the *Purpose of Community Health Impact Assessment* (page 4), and the *Broad Determinants of Health* (page 5). 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 3) 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 22).
- 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 4). 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 Next Steps worksheet on page 20).
- 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.

3.3 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!