

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

STEP 1: SCREENING

Objective

To decide whether a HIA is feasible, timely, and would add value to the decision-making process.

Essential Tasks

- Define the decision and its alternatives
- Decide who will be involved in screening
- Determine if potential partners are ready to work on a HIA
- Evaluate the project, plan, or policy based on screening criteria
- Make a decision about whether to conduct a HIA
- Notify stakeholders of your decision

Key Points

HIA is used to assess a defined project, plan, or policy. The purpose of HIA is to inform decision-makers before they make a decision. A HIA is most often carried out before a decision is made or the proposal is implemented.

Have sufficient information about the decision. Conducting a HIA requires sufficient information about the proposed policy or plan to evaluate health impacts. Vague plans or policy statements may provide too little substance for a HIA.

Establish the value of HIA. It is not possible or desirable to conduct a HIA on every public decision. Projects that benefit from HIA are those where such an analysis might significantly protect or promote the health of a population and where partners are engaged in the HIA process and will use the results.

Assess feasibility. Feasibility involves being able to conduct an informative HIA within the decision-making time frame and with available resources.

Understand timing. Conducting a HIA early in the design and decision-making process offers the best opportunity for influencing the design of the project, plan, or policy. If the HIA occurs too late in the process, it risks confronting a fixed design or closed positions.

Evaluate decision openness. For HIA to be most valuable, the decision-making process should be open to receiving and acting on new information.

Be inclusive. Have community groups, public agencies and other potential HIA collaborators participate in the screening process. Participation of stakeholders in the HIA process at the earliest possible stage can help to ensure buy-in, constructive dialogue, and openness to HIA findings and recommendations.

Avoid redundancy. A HIA may be less useful if health effects related to the decision are already well established, or if another impact assessment or analysis will serve to comprehensively analyze health impacts.

Tools

Example Screening Criteria

1. The project, plan or policy has been proposed, a final decision about whether to adopt the proposal has not been made, and there is sufficient time to conduct an analysis before the decision is made.
2. The decision has the potential to affect, positively or negatively, environmental or social determinants of health that impact health outcomes of a population - and those health impacts are not being or likely to be considered without the HIA.
3. Evidence, expertise, and/or research methods exist to analyze health impacts associated with the decision being considered.
4. The proposal being considered could potentially impact health inequities.
5. The proposal's impact on health outcomes is potentially significant. This can be measured in terms of the number of people impacted, the magnitude of impacts, and the breadth of the impacts.
6. The connections between the proposal and health outcomes are neither too obvious nor too indirect.
7. Decision-makers and/or those stakeholders who have the capacity to influence decision-makers are likely to use HIA findings and recommendations to inform or influence the decision-making process, whether through regulatory requirements or voluntarily.
8. The HIA could help lead to institutional and/or systemic changes that promote better health outcomes for all.
9. Partners are available to participate in the HIA process and use HIA findings and recommendations.
10. Resources (including funding, personnel, technical capacity, and leadership) are available to conduct the HIA.

Resources

- Human Impact Partners. 2009. Considerations for the Selection of Appropriate Policies, Plans, or Projects for Analysis using Health Impact Assessment. http://www.humanimpact.org/HIA_Screening_White_Paper.pdf
- Human Impact Partners. 2009. HIA Readiness Questions. http://www.humanimpact.org/HIA_ReadinessQuestions_1109.doc
- Taylor L. *et al.* 2003. Deciding if a Health Impact Assessment Is Required (Screening for HIA). NHS Health Development Agency. http://www.iaia.org/publicdocuments/pubs_ref_material/Screening%20for%20HIA%20pdf.pdf
- Health Impact Assessment: A Screening Tool for the Greater London Authority. 2001. http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/health_commission/reports/hia_draft_hia_screen.pdf
- Scott-Samuel A. *et al.* 2001. The Merseyside Guidelines for Health Impact Assessment. Second Edition. Published by the International Health Impact Assessment Consortium. http://www.liv.ac.uk/ihia/IMPACT_HIA_Reports.htm

STEP 2: SCOPING

Objective

To create a plan and timeline for conducting a HIA that defines priority issues, research questions and methods, and participant roles.

Essential Tasks

- Determine who will oversee the HIA process
- Set ground rules or principles of collaboration for working together, including participant roles
- Establish objectives of the HIA
- Develop research questions, workplan, and timeline
- Determine the format for the final HIA report, and how findings and recommendations will be communicated

Key Points

To set the scope, determine:

- Decision alternatives to be evaluated
- Potential health impacts of the decision and health issues to be considered in the HIA
- Populations to be evaluated, including vulnerable populations defined by place, income, race, gender, or age
- Research questions, data sources, and analytic methods
- Timelines
- Draft plans for reporting, monitoring, and evaluation
- Resources available
- Participant roles and responsibilities

Be inclusive. Include all stakeholders in scoping and other steps of the HIA. Stakeholders include community and advocacy groups, public health and other government agencies, project proponents, elected officials, and affected community members.

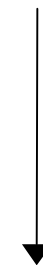
Use diverse outreach methods to solicit feedback and participation from a variety of stakeholders by hosting a public meeting, receiving public comments, interviewing stakeholders and experts, or inviting input from local health experts.

The scope should reflect resources available.

Begin with an understanding of the broad set of health determinants that could be impacted by the decision. Then, consider the resources needed to apply methodologies and tools to define a realistic workplan.

Resource requirements for HIA analysis methods:

Least resources

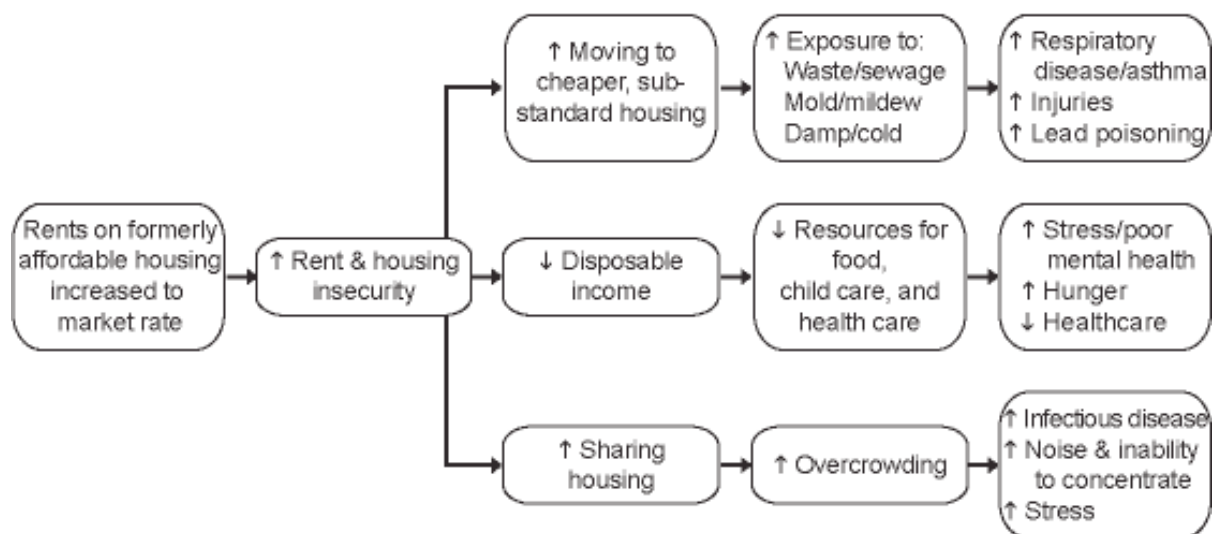


Most resources

Literature review
 Analysis and mapping of existing data
 Expert opinion
 Application of quantitative forecasting methods
 Interviews or focus groups
 New quantitative data collection and analysis

Key Points (cont'd)

Consider all pathways that link the proposed decision to health. Focus on impacts with greatest significance and greatest public concern. Use pathway diagrams:



Tools

Example Scoping Questions

- What are the goals for this HIA?
- What are potential health impacts of the proposed project or policy? Which of these will be included in the scope?
- What is known about existing health conditions of the populations that could be impacted? What are the specific populations (e.g., age, gender, race, income, place) that will be impacted?
- What research questions will the HIA answer?
- What research methods and data sources will be used?
- Who will oversee the HIA process?
- What roles will stakeholders and collaborators play?
- What is the workplan and timeline?

Resources

The tools page of HIP's website (www.humanimpact.org/Tools.html) has links to HIP's HIA Toolkit, which includes examples of a land use development project scope (Concord, CA Naval Weapons Station) and HIP's Principles of Collaboration.

STEP 3: ASSESSMENT



Objective

To provide a profile of existing conditions data, an evaluation of potential health impacts, and evidence-based recommendations to mitigate negative and maximize positive health impacts.

Essential Tasks

- **Profile Existing Conditions**
Research baseline conditions, including health outcomes and determinants of health disaggregated by income, race, gender, age, and place.
- **Evaluate Potential Health Impacts**
Use theory, baseline conditions, and population concerns. Consider evidence that supports and refutes health impacts. Assess affects by income, race, gender, age, and place. Include assessments of the certainty, significance, and equity of impacts. Justify the selection or exclusion of data/methods. Identify data gaps, uncertainties, and limitations. Allow stakeholders to critique findings.
- **Propose Evidence-based Recommendations**
gathered from experts and prioritized by HIA stakeholders.

Key Points

Gather existing data and collect primary data when necessary. Data sources include:

- empirical literature
- community expertise
- available social, economic, environmental, and health measures and surveys, often available from public health and planning agencies
- regulatory criteria, standards, checklists and benchmarks
- focus groups and community surveys
- neighborhood assessment tools

It is necessary to profile baseline conditions in order to predict future conditions if a project, plan, or policy is enacted.

Conduct a literature review. Clarify the question of interest and data needs, develop criteria for included studies, identify literature databases, identify studies and reviews, evaluate studies, and document your findings.

Include direction, magnitude and quality of evidence in impact predictions.

Don't start from scratch. Use tools and methods that already exist to assess health conditions and potential impacts.

Predicting health impacts with absolute certainty is not possible. Make informed judgments of effects based on available information, analysis, expertise, and experience. Be cautious with generalizations. Acknowledge assumptions and limitations.

It is not always necessary to quantify health impacts. Pathways between decisions and health effects are complex and quantification does not mean causal certainty. Assess a health impact by evaluating how a decision would affect environmental conditions known to be important to health.

Use qualitative analysis for issues that don't lend themselves to quantitative forecasting.

Different approaches used together can support better judgments. Use lay and expert knowledge and analysis using different methods (such as GIS mapping and surveys) collectively to draw conclusions.

Key Points (cont'd)

Answer the following questions for quantitative forecasting:

- Is there a causal relationship?
- Does data allow for quantitative predictions?
- Would prospective predictions be valid?
- Is there available time and resources?
- Would quantification support the needs of the decision-making process?

Methods for collecting new data include:

- Environmental measures (e.g., pedestrian quality, retail access)
- Modeling (e.g., air quality, noise)
- Surveys
- Forecasting tools (e.g., pedestrian injuries)
- Epidemiological studies

Recommendations include alternative ways to design a project, plan, or policy or management strategies to lessen adverse health effects.

Recommendations are not always appropriate. A HIA of a policy may simply state the potential benefits or harms without recommending changes.

Recommendations should be supported by evidence of feasibility, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and political acceptability. Communication with stakeholders can be used to gauge buy-in or feasibility.

Recommended mitigation measures may require skills and expertise from outside the HIA team, underscoring the need for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Potential impacts of recommendations and mitigation measures could also be assessed as part of the HIA.

Consider the following criteria for recommendations. They should be:

- Responsive to predicted impacts
- Specific and actionable
- Experience-based and effective
- Enforceable
- Can be monitored
- Technically feasible
- Politically feasible
- Economically efficient
- Do not introduce additional negative consequences

Resources

San Francisco Department of Public Health. Program on Health, Equity and Sustainability. Health Impact Assessment Tools. http://www.sfpbes.org/HIA_Tools.htm

San Francisco Department of Public Health. Program on Health, Equity and Sustainability. The Healthy Development Measurement Tool: Recommendations and Mitigations. Available at: www.thehdm.org

Human Impact Partners. A Review of the Evidence Base for Planning Projects. <http://www.humanimpact.org/EvidenceBase/com.psychrod.eb.EvidenceBase/EvidenceBase.html>

HIP's Toolkit has a list of HIA Data Sources for Baseline Profiles of Health

STEP 4: REPORTING



Objective

To develop the HIA report and communicate findings and recommendations.

Essential Tasks

Develop the HIA Report

- Develop a consensus among stakeholders regarding key findings and recommendations
- Determine the format and structure of the report
- Write the report

Communicate HIA Findings and Recommendations

- Develop a communication plan
- Prepare communication materials to suit the needs of all stakeholders in the decision-making process
- Send communication materials to stakeholders and decision-makers

Key Points

A HIA report summarizes key health issues the proposal could impact and provides recommendations to improve health outcomes and determinants.

When available, regulatory processes (e.g., Environmental Impact Assessment) can be used to report findings and recommendations.

The HIA report:

- **Identifies all HIA participants** and their contributions
- **Documents the process** for each of the HIA steps, including criteria for prioritizing recommendations
- **Details for health issues analyzed:** available scientific evidence, data sources and analytic methods and rationale, existing conditions, results, predicted health impacts and their significance, and corresponding recommendations for improving health
- **Should be made readily accessible for public review and comment**

Report formats include: formal structured written reports, comment letters on environmental impact reports, and presentations.

Summarize the full report into clear, succinct messages that allow all stakeholders to understand, evaluate, and respond to findings and recommendations.

Frame messages to help people relate to the information. Frames help people make sense of information by triggering familiar concepts.

Develop messages regarding overall magnitude of health benefits, benefits to vulnerable populations, feasibility of solutions, and public concerns.

Interest groups and media can support effective translation of results into action.

Methods of communication include:

- Letters to decision-makers
- Fact sheets
- Public testimony
- Presentations to key audiences
- Panel discussions
- Press conferences

Examples

Health Impact Assessment	Method of Communication
Humboldt County General Plan Update Health Impact Assessment http://www.humanimpact.org/HumboldtGPU.html	Newsletter; Powerpoint presentation to Supervisors
Concord Naval Weapons Station Reuse HIA, Executive & Chapter Summaries http://www.humanimpact.org/CNWS/	Briefing Paper
SFDPH Comment on the Scope of the Trinity Plaza Redevelopment Draft Environmental Impact Report http://www.sfphes.org/publications/comments/Comment_on_Trinity_DEIR_scope.pdf	Comment Letter
Bhatia R, Katz M. 2001. Estimation of Health Benefits from a Local Living Wage Ordinance. <i>American Journal of Public Health</i> . 91(9)1398-1402.	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article
Oregon Transportation Policy HIA http://www.upstreampublichealth.org/HIA_FactSheet_Trans_OR.pdf	Fact Sheet

Resources

For examples of reports and other communication materials, see HIP's website:

<http://www.humanimpact.org/Projects.html>

For information on framing and media see:

The California Endowment's Health Exchange Academy: Communicating for Change series

<http://www.calendow.org/Article.aspx?id=3904>

The Praxis Project:

<http://www.thepraxisproject.org/irc/media.html>

Berkeley Media Studies Group:

<http://www.bmsg.org>

The Frameworks Institute:

<http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/>

STEP 5: MONITORING

Objective

To track the impacts of the HIA on the decision-making process and the decision, the implementation of the decision, and the impacts of the decision on health determinants.

Essential Tasks

- **Track** recommendation adoption, discussion of findings in the decision-making process, and how the decision-making climate for health considerations, and HIA institutionalization, changed as a result of the HIA.
- **Monitor decision implementation** to track whether the policy was carried out in accordance with HIA recommendations or if the project was built with HIA mitigations.
- **Monitor health determinants and outcomes** to evaluate HIA predictions.

Key Points

The purposes of monitoring are to:

- Ensure the project, plan, or policy is implemented as designed
- Establish accountability by tracking how recommendations were received and acted upon
- Track and support compliance with implementation agreements, rules, and standards
- Build a better understanding of the value of HIA and demonstrate how HIA influenced decision-making
- Provide early warning of unexpected consequences
- Test the validity and precision of health impact predictions

Monitoring decision impacts on health outcomes is challenging.

Data sources for monitoring include:

- Media reports about the HIA or the decision-making process
- Accounts from public agencies on changes
- Planning department reports on a project
- Interviews with decision-makers and stakeholders

Consider whether useful routine monitoring information is already being collected by agencies or organizations.

Essential elements of a monitoring plan, include:

- Goals
- Resources to conduct, complete, and report monitoring activities
- Identification of the outcomes, impacts and indicators to monitor
- Process for collection of meaningful and relevant information (baseline, long-term)
- Defined roles for individuals or organizations
- Criteria or triggers for action, if agreed-upon mitigations or recommendations are not met
- Process for reporting monitoring methods and results and making them publicly available
- Process for learning, adaptation, and response to monitoring results
- Commitment to monitoring to encourage policy makers and planners to be more conscious of health

Key Points (cont'd)

Indicators that could be monitored include health outcomes (consider latency and specificity), behaviors, health determinants, and compliance process measures.

Monitoring evaluates the impact of the HIA on the decision-making process and the results of the decision on health determinants. HIA Evaluation is focused on the HIA *process*.

Tools

Examples of monitoring questions

Did the HIA influence the project/policy decision?

- Did the HIA inform a discussion of the trade-offs involved with a project/policy?
- Did the final project/policy decision change in a way that was consistent with the recommendations of the HIA?
- Did the HIA aid in securing funds for project mitigations?

Outcomes of HIA on decision-making processes and institutional practices:

- Did the HIA help to build consensus and buy-in for policy decisions and implementation?
- Were HIA findings and recommendations useful or influential to policy-makers?
- Were discussions of connections between the decision and health evident in the media, statements by public officials or stakeholders, public testimony, public documents, or policy statements?

- Did the HIA lead to interest from previously uninvolved groups?
- Did the HIA encourage public health agencies to participate in new roles in policy and planning efforts?
- Have requests for the study of health impacts on additional projects, plans, or policies in the same jurisdiction followed? Are there new efforts to institutionalize HIA or other forms of health analysis of public policy?
- Did the HIA lead to greater institutional support for consideration of health in formal decision-making processes?
- Has the HIA led to the development of new partnerships and coalitions focused on ensuring that health is considered in decision-making? Are stakeholders who participated in the HIA continuing to work together on other health-related initiatives?

Resources

Examples of monitoring from other fields:

- National Ambient Air Quality Standards monitoring and planning under the Clean Air Act
- Mitigation monitoring under the California Environmental Quality Act
- Inspection procedures for compliance of building standards
- Notification requirements for compliance of labor laws