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Preparing and Conducting Work Meetings Within the Context of the Health Impact Assessment Process

Practical Guide | December 2019



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for Healthy Public Policy

*Institut national
de santé publique*

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About the National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy

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Introduction

This document aims to support the reader in carrying out a health impact assessment (HIA). HIA is a structured approach through which decision makers can be informed about the potential effects of a project, program or policy on the health and well-being of populations. It breaks down into five successive steps: 1) screening, 2) scoping, 3) analysis, 4) recommendations, and 5) evaluation and monitoring. It is an intersectoral approach that entails a series of work meetings requiring the coordination of the various actors participating in the process.

This document is intended primarily for the team responsible for conducting an HIA,¹ whose role is to coordinate and complete the process. Its aim is to provide such a team with the elements required to properly plan the HIA process and to support them in preparing for and conducting meetings with the multidisciplinary and multisectoral working group.² This working group assists the team responsible for the HIA in carrying out the latter. The work sessions are organized by the team responsible for the HIA.

This document contains information that should help the team responsible for the HIA determine, for each of the work sessions:

- the tasks to be carried out in preparation for the meeting;
- the meeting's agenda;
- the support materials that might be required for the meeting;
- how much time to allocate for the meeting.

It also provides practical advice to ensure the meetings run smoothly.

We suggest that four meetings of the working group be held in the context of carrying out an HIA. **This is a template that can be adapted depending on the context and the scope of the HIA.** In reality, the number of work sessions will depend on the timeline for the proposal and on the type of HIA (rapid, intermediate, or comprehensive) to be conducted.

The proposed duration of the meetings is only an indication and may also be modified depending on the context and on the availability of the working group's members. To learn more about HIA visit the NCCHPP's website. See in particular:

- Free HIA online course: http://www.ncchpp.ca/639/Online_Courses.ccnpps?id_article=922
- Multiple HIA background documents, resources and tools: <http://www.ncchpp.ca/54/health-impact-assessment.ccnpps>

¹ The team responsible for conducting an HIA is a multidisciplinary team composed of experts in the various areas of concern to public health, such as promotion and prevention, community development, environmental health, health equity, etc. The composition of this team depends on the nature of the proposal to be assessed. The actors comprising the team generally belong to the same organization.

² The multidisciplinary and multisectoral working group comprises the proponents of the proposal under study; local decision makers or elected representatives; public health professionals and experts; professionals and experts from outside the health sector; representatives of the population or populations affected by the proposal; and representatives of the associations and partners involved in the proposal. The composition of this group depends on the nature of the proposal to be assessed. The multidisciplinary and multisectoral working group is also referred to as the local HIA committee, the support group or the technical committee.

1. Meeting 1: Launching the HIA process

1.1. Purpose of the meeting

Introduce or launch the process of carrying out the HIA.

1.2. Agenda

- Go around the table so that the participants can introduce themselves.
- Explain the concept of population health, with reference to its determinants.³ This introduction is important because not all the actors around the table are from the health sector or familiar with the determinants of health. In addition, one must consider the fact that HIA applies predominantly to policies, programs or projects (hereafter called “proposals”) put forth by non-health sectors.
- Describe the HIA approach (definition, objectives, principles and values, steps, etc.). Here is an example of a presentation that provides a general introduction to HIA designed by the NCCHPP which can serve as an inspiration: http://www.ncchpp.ca/133/publications.ccnpps?id_article=445.
- Provide examples of the application of HIA. This will give the members of the working group a sharper understanding of the tool and its potential results.
- Present to the members of the working group the proposal the HIA will assess. This step is important because not all the members have full knowledge of the proposal and its related issues. This presentation should be given by the proponent of the proposal.
- Define the responsibilities of the members of the multidisciplinary and multisectoral working group. Here is an example of the range of responsibilities undertaken by the working group:
 - Participate in carrying out the HIA by providing expertise related to the determinants of health considered;
 - Validate the different steps required to complete the HIA and the documents produced in the context of the assessment;
 - Participate in the collection of data and information deemed essential to proper completion of the assessment;
 - Assist in the formulation of recommendations;
 - Critically review the documents prepared during the course of the HIA by the team responsible for the HIA.

1.3. Support material

- A meeting agenda.
- A PowerPoint presentation on health, its determinants, and HIA.
- A detailed presentation on the proposal that is the focus of the HIA process.

³ See, for example, the web page of the Government of Canada entitled "What is Health?" at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/population-health-approach/what-is-health.html>

1.4. Suggested duration

The suggested duration for this meeting is two to three hours.

1.5. Practical advice

- During this first meeting, it is important to have those around the table introduce themselves, since it is the first time the multidisciplinary and multisectoral working group will be meeting to discuss the HIA process.
- It is advisable to choose, if possible, examples of HIAs that have had a positive impact to illustrate to the members of the working group how the tool is applied and its added value.
- Presentation of the proposal on which the HIA will focus should be entrusted to the proponent of the proposal or to someone with full knowledge of it. This person should be a member of the multidisciplinary and multisectoral working group.
- In the case of land use development projects, it would be wise to have on hand a map of the sector under study, for this meeting in particular, but also for subsequent ones.
- In order to best prepare for this meeting and subsequent ones, it would be advantageous for the team responsible for the HIA to thoroughly consult the documentation on the proposal, to meet with the proposal's proponents, if possible, and to identify HIAs that bear similarity to the one proposed.

2. Meeting 2: Screening

2.1. Purpose of the meeting

Carry out screening of the proposal under study (see **Module 2** of the online course on HIA at http://www.ncchpp.ca/274/Online_Course.ccnpps).

Note

The meetings for launching the HIA process and conducting the screening step can be combined into a single work meeting.

2.2. Objectives of screening

- Determine whether the proposal under study should be the subject of an HIA.
- Decide whether or not to go forward with the HIA process.

2.3. Agenda

- Share the meeting's objectives with the working group, the essential aim being to carry out screening.
- Describe the screening step to the working group in a little more detail than during the first meeting (objectives, important questions to raise during this step, methodological approach, etc.).
- Present the work screening the proposal under study that the team responsible for the HIA has carried out. This constitutes a preliminary effort that must be discussed and validated by the working group.
- Review with the working group the results of the screening work carried out; i.e. discuss the various elements contained in the screening grid.
- Based on this work, discuss whether or not it is necessary to proceed with the HIA process.

2.4. Support material

- A meeting agenda.
- The minutes of the previous meeting.
- A PowerPoint presentation on the screening work carried out by the team responsible for the HIA.
- A document presenting the proposal under study.

2.5. Suggested duration

The suggested duration for this meeting is two to three hours.

2.6. Practical advice

- In preparing for this meeting, the team responsible for the HIA should carry out preliminary work related to screening the proposal. The result of this work will be presented to the working group. To this end, the team responsible for the HIA should ask the person responsible for the proposal to send them a document with a detailed description of the proposal under study, if possible.
- To carry out the screening step, the team responsible for the HIA can make use of the screening grid developed by the NCCHPP and available at http://www.ncchpp.ca/133/publications.ccnpps?id_article=1215.
- It is very useful, particularly in the case of land use development projects, to visit the site before the screening work session, to collect information about site-specific issues, among others, and to take photos.
- The members of the working group should receive the result of the preliminary screening carried out by the team responsible for the HIA at least one week prior to the meeting so they can become acquainted with it and thus be able to formulate their comments during the work session.
- The work sessions should ideally be short, because the members of the multidisciplinary and multisectoral working group are not always available for a full day or longer.

3. Meeting 3: Scoping

3.1. Purpose of the meeting

If the decision is made to pursue the HIA process, a third work session will focus on scoping (see **Module 3** of the online course on HIA at http://www.ncchpp.ca/274/Online_Course.ccnpps).

3.2. Objectives of scoping

- Clarify the aims and objectives of the HIA.
- Plan all the logistics of the subsequent steps in the HIA.
- Establish plausible links between the proposal and health.

3.3. Agenda

- Indicate the objectives of the meeting, which essentially consist of process scoping⁴ and issues scoping⁵.
- Explain to the working group, in a little more detail than during the first work session, the scoping step (objectives, important questions to raise during this step, methodological approach, etc.).
- State the objective or objectives of the HIA⁶ of the selected proposal.
- Present the process scoping and issues scoping work carried out by the team responsible for the HIA, clearly indicating the population groups that will be affected by the proposal under study. This constitutes a preliminary effort that must be discussed and validated by the working group.
- Submit to the working group the preliminary version of the logic model developed by the team responsible for the HIA, placing particular emphasis on the choice of health determinants and the perspective from which the analyses should be carried out. This model will be enhanced through exchanges and discussion that take place during the meeting.
- Explain the primary health determinants targeted by the team responsible for the HIA, discuss and validate these with the working group, along with the hypotheses concerning how the proposal will influence health through its determinants. For land use development projects, the field visit and the photos taken during the latter will prove useful at this stage.
- Present the step-by-step plan for collecting data (information, basic data and evidence required for the analysis of potential health effects).
- Present the methods that will be used to determine the potential effects of the proposal on health. These may include a review of the scientific and grey literature.
- Determine if citizen participation is possible and relevant within the context of this HIA.
- Discuss the terms and conditions for the use of the results of the HIA and their dissemination to decision makers and actors concerned by the proposal.
- Establish the schedule for the subsequent steps in the HIA.

⁴ The aim here is to plan **all the logistics for each of the subsequent steps in the HIA process, so as to establish clear benchmarks.**

⁵ **The aim here is to establish, with the help of a logic model,** the links between the proposal under study and the health of the population.

⁶ This is to indicate the aim of this HIA.

3.4. Support material

- A meeting agenda.
- The minutes of the previous meeting.
- A PowerPoint presentation describing the scoping stage, the objective or objectives of the HIA of the proposal being assessed, the scoping work that has been carried out, the preliminary logic model, the methods for analyzing potential health effects and the schedule for the subsequent steps in the HIA.

3.5. Suggested duration

The suggested duration is approximately three hours.

3.6. Practical advice

- In preparing for this meeting, the team responsible for the HIA should carry out the preliminary work involved in process scoping and issues scoping (logic model). The results of this work will be presented to the working group. To this end, the team can make use of the process scoping tool developed by the NCCHPP and available at http://www.ncchpp.ca/133/publications.ccnpps?id_article=1215.
- For land use development projects, if a field visit was not carried out during preparation for the screening meeting, it will be very important to do so in preparation for the scoping meeting, to collect data that will be useful for the analysis of potential health effects.
- The members of the working group should receive the results of the process and issues scoping work carried out by the team responsible for the HIA at least one week prior to the meeting so they can become acquainted with it and thus be prepared to make comments during the work session.
- The team responsible for the HIA can use the blank logic model included in the *Resources* section of **Module 3** of the free online course on HIA (<http://www.ncchpp.ca/274/online-course.ccnpps>) to construct the preliminary version of the logic model that will be presented to the working group during this meeting.
- Depending on the time available, the screening and scoping meetings can be merged.

4. Meeting 4: Presentation of the preliminary results of the analysis of potential effects, the pathways for recommendations and the planned follow-up of the HIA process

4.1. Objectives of the meeting

- Communicate the preliminary results of the analysis step and discuss these with the working group (see **Module 4** of the online course on HIA at <http://www.ncchpp.ca/274/online-course.ccnpps>).
- Present pathways for recommendations and discuss the preliminary version of the final HIA report (see **Module 5** of the online course on HIA at <http://www.ncchpp.ca/274/online-course.ccnpps>).
- Present the strategy envisaged for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations and the proposed mechanism for evaluating the HIA process (see **Module 6** of the online course on HIA at <http://www.ncchpp.ca/274/online-course.ccnpps>).

4.2. Objectives of the analysis, recommendations, and evaluation and monitoring steps

4.2.1. ANALYSIS

- Determine the extent to which the proposal will affect health, the nature of its effects and the way in which population groups will be affected; that is, the social inequalities of health that will result.
- Characterize the potential positive or negative health impacts of the proposal.

4.2.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Propose measures to reduce the potential negative effects and strengthen the potential positive effects of the proposal under study on population health.
- Produce a synthetic report that describes the HIA performed, outlines the results of screening, scoping and analysis, and makes recommendations.

4.2.3. EVALUATION AND MONITORING

Monitor implementation of the recommendations and evaluate the HIA process and its impact.

4.3. Agenda

- State the objectives of the meeting, which will focus primarily on presentation of:
 - the preliminary results of analysis of the potential effects of the proposal on the population's health;
 - pathways for recommendations formulated by the team responsible for the HIA;
 - the preliminary version of the HIA's final report;
 - the proposed strategy for monitoring implementation of the recommendations and for evaluating the HIA process.

- Summarize the overall approach to analysis of the proposal's potential health effects. This may consist in: 1) an analysis of the initial status of each of the health determinants selected; 2) an analysis of the potential effects of the proposal's components or its planned interventions on each of these health determinants; and 3) a description of the potential effects on health and on social inequalities of health. Analysis of the initial status of each health determinant allows for the examination of the proposal in context and the identification of inequalities between population groups.
- Communicate the preliminary results of analysis of the proposal's potential health effects.
- Present pathways for proposed recommendations for reducing potential negative effects and strengthening potential positive effects, and discuss these with the working group; the recommendations may, if necessary, be reformulated prior to validation by the working group.
- Present the preliminary version of the HIA's final report and the important elements contained therein. Discuss this document with the working group.
- Validate the communication plan and the strategies for disseminating the HIA's results that are envisaged.
- Present the envisaged strategy for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations and the proposed mechanism for evaluating the HIA process.

4.4. Support material

- A meeting agenda.
- The minutes of the previous meeting.
- A PowerPoint presentation indicating:
 - the preliminary results of analysis of the proposal's potential effects on the health of the population;
 - pathways for recommendations;
 - the envisaged strategy for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations and for evaluating the HIA process.
- The preliminary version of the final report.

4.5. Suggested duration

The estimated time for this meeting is approximately three hours.

4.6. Practical advice

- The PowerPoint presentation could be structured so as to present the recommendation or recommendations for each of the proposal's potential health effects (positive or negative) directly following its identification.
- If possible, when presenting the preliminary results of the analysis of potential effects and the pathways for recommendations, pause after the presentation of each result and the associated recommendation to give the working group's members the opportunity to respond and, potentially, to formulate comments.

- Similarly, it may be useful to present a summary table of these preliminary results. This will provide the working group with an overview of the results of the HIA. This table should summarize the characterization of the proposal's potential health effects that emerged from the analysis step.
- The question of social inequalities of health should be given particular attention during the formulation of recommendations, because one impetus for the HIA is concern for the reduction of these inequalities.
- The team responsible for the HIA should submit to the working group the draft version of the final report and the PowerPoint file about ten days before the meeting so that members can become acquainted with these.
- The evaluation and monitoring step of the HIA process is quite often neglected. It would be advisable for the team responsible for the HIA to consider developing a plan for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations before this meeting to be able to benefit from the comments and suggestions of the working group. Reflection on this should begin as early as the scoping step.
- As regards evaluation, it is very important, especially for an initial experience, to draw lessons from the HIA process that has been carried out. To this end, the team responsible for the HIA could propose to the working group's members a plan for evaluating the HIA process as well as its results, in order to obtain their feedback. The evaluation should be carried out some time after the HIA has been completed.

Conclusion

Conducting an HIA requires, among other things, proper management of the network of actors involved in the process, including in particular the multidisciplinary and multisectoral working group. This document therefore aims to support the team responsible for an HIA in the organization of meetings of the working group. **The suggestions presented here should be adapted to the context and type of HIA to be carried out.** The choice of which type of HIA to conduct will depend on the nature and the timeline of the proposal under study and on the resources available.

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