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 process used to develop this CHIAT was facilitated
by members of the PATH Network
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OUR VISION OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

In a healthy community…

All people feel welcome and respected.

People have access to the appropriate resources to take responsibility for their own well-being.

The health and well-being of the community is a shared responsibility.

People, groups and organizations collaborate with one another

Policy development is community based and community capacity is increased.

People's educational needs are met

A healthy physical environment is maintained.

Poverty is eliminated.

Equality, and developing supportive networks, is the cornerstone of everything we do.

People who want to live here _can_ live here.

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.

In this community health impact assessment tool, two of the factors – *social support networks* and *social environments* – have been grouped together.

In order to assess the impact that a particular activity (a policy, program, project or service) will have on the overall health of the community, we need to look at **all** of the determinants of health as well as the various factors ***within*** those determinants that the community considers to be important.

- ♦ Income and social status

- ♦ Social environment and support networks

- ♦ Education

- ♦ Employment and working conditions

- ♦ Physical environments

- ♦ Personal health practices and coping skills

- ♦ Healthy child development

- ♦ Biology and genetic endowment

- ♦ Health services

- ♦ Gender

- ♦ Culture

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 <u>estimate the effect</u> 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 <u>maximize the benefits</u> (the positive effects) and <u>minimize the harm</u> (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* is designed to assist groups and organizations in thinking about what it takes to make and keep our community healthy.

The factors listed in the *Assessment Worksheet* (page 6) are based on the priorities identified by Pictou County participants who attended a 15-hour workshop held at Valley View Residence, Riverton, Pictou County, Nova Scotia on March 7, 16 and 30, 2006.

The *Vision of a Healthy Community* (page 2) reflects what we consider to be the fundamental principles against which various programs and policies can be "assessed".

> **"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.

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 <u>group discussion</u>, 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 2)
- *The Broad Determinants of Health* (page 3).
- *The Purpose of Community Health Impact Assessment* (page 4)

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.

All people feel welcome and respected.

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO or Neutral	Need MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• More people stay in the community					
• Community participation and social interaction from all generations and social/cultural backgrounds increases					
• New leadership and new perspectives emerge within the community					
• There is greater utilization of community resources					
• Cultural diversity is celebrated					
• Racial divides are eliminated					
• All families are recognized and respected (e.g., lone parent, same sex, etc.)					
• There is diversity and acceptance of forms of worship					
• Immigration is encouraged					
• Multicultural associations exist and are known					
• People feel they are listened to					
• There is increased participation and input from people whose voices are not normally heard					

People have access to appropriate resources to take responsibility for their own health care

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO *or* Neutral	Need MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• More people have annual physical checkups					
• People make healthy food choices					
• More people exercise on a regular basis					
• There is a decrease in sexually transmitted infections (STIs)					
• Fewer people require the use of mental health services, diabetic clinics, etc.					
• More people attend immunization clinics					
• More money is available for primary health care and prevention					
• People feel a greater sense of over-all satisfaction					
• People are better able to cope with stress					

The health and well-being of the community is a shared responsibility

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO *or* Neutral	Need MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• The well-being of the whole community is a major factor in the choices made by individuals and organizations					

The health and well-being of the community is a shared responsibility

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO or Neutral	Need MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Community members and agencies understand and support the need for consultation processes that help determine community needs					
• Actions to improve the improve health and well-being of the community focus on systemic (structural) changes not just lifestyle issues					

People, groups and organizations collaborate with one another

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO or Neutral	Need MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• There are more shared services					
• Professional and business policies reflect community interests					
• Duplication of services is eliminated					
• There is an efficient, effective, and appropriate use of resources					
• More organizations and groups develop partnerships and ways to collaborate					

Policy development is community-based

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO *or* Neutral	Need MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Policy-making bodies reflect the diversity of the community					
• There is more grassroots participation in policy development					
• Policies are more reflective of identified community needs					
• The majority of people are satisfied with policies					
• Local gaps in services are identified and eliminated/reduced					
• Agencies are more sensitive and receptive to community wisdom and its validity					
• Income assistance policies reflect the reality of families and communities					

Community capacity is increased

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO *or* Neutral	Need MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• People know how to access and use the community resources that they need.					
• Concrete solutions to community issues are developed					
• The community shares a common goal/vision about building a healthy community					
• The community builds on its assets in order to help itself					

Community capacity is increased

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO *or* Neutral	Need MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Weaknesses in the community are recognized and addressed					
• More citizens are involved in problem-solving					
• More citizens are involved in creating social change					

People's educational needs are met

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO *or* Neutral	Need MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Appropriate supports are provided for improving literacy					
• Appropriate resources are available in our schools for optimal learning					
• Supports are in place for high risk youth who are in danger of quitting school					
• Higher education is more accessible					
• Educated people stay in the community					

A healthy physical environment is maintained

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO *or* Neutral	Need MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• The amount of air, water and soil pollutants decreases					

A healthy physical environment is maintained					
• Environmental related illnesses decrease					
• Businesses support research and development that enhances the quality of the physical environment of the local community					
• The health of the environment is a marketing point for the tourism industry					

Poverty is eliminated					
Will _____ **have** **an impact on the following areas:**	**YES**		**NO** *or* **Neutral**	**Need MORE INFO**	*COMMENTS*
	Positive	**Negative**			
• The need for food banks is eliminated					
• Adequate, affordable, appropriate housing is available					
• There is an increase in people's self-sufficiency					
• The needs of homeless persons are recognized and met					
• Food security issues are recognized and met					
• Actions to eliminate poverty deal with the root causes					
• Supports are put in place to increase people's capacity (e.g., adequate childcare, transportation, education, disabilities, etc.)					

Equality is a cornerstone of everything we do

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO *or* Neutral	Need MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• The minimum wage is increased to allow people to be self-sufficient					
• Everyone who wants to participate has the resources and opportunities to participate					
• People are more socially and culturally aware					
• Municipal by-laws do not discriminate					
• There is equal pay for work of equal value					

Developing supportive networks is a cornerstone of everything we do

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO *or* Neutral	Need MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• A 2-1-1 operating system exists (information referral and gathering service)					
• Networks like childcare, neighbourhood supports, and eldercare exist					
• There is an increase in travel pooling					
• More people volunteer					
• Loneliness and social isolation decrease					
• Transportation is available for those who require it					

Developing supportive networks is a cornerstone of everything we do

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO *or* Neutral	Need MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• Community members are aware of resources available to them					

People who want to live here <u>can</u> live here

Will _____ have an impact on the following areas:	YES		NO *or* Neutral	Need MORE INFO	COMMENTS
	Positive	Negative			
• More jobs are available					
• There is more diversity of employment					
• There is an increase in the number of medium and higher paying jobs					
• People can support themselves financially and socially					
• Outmigration decreases					

➢ *Next step:*   **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
In a healthy community:			
6	**All people feel welcome and respected**		
7	**People have access to appropriate resources to take responsibility for their own health**		
7	**The health and well-being of the community is a shared responsibility**		

Page	CONSIDERATION	OVERALL IMPACT	ACTION REQUIRED
8	**People, groups and organizations collaborate with one another**		
9	**Policy development is community-based**		
9	**Community capacity is increased**		
10	**People's educational needs are met**		
10	**A healthy physical environment is maintained**		
11	**Poverty is eliminated**		
12	**Equality is a cornerstone of everything we do**		
12	**Developing supportive networks is a cornerstone of everything we do**		
13	**People who want to live here _can_ live here**		

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)

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 our understanding of the factors that determine health (page 2).

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	No new schools or no new teachers
Government improving infrastructure	Highway to be widened
Restructuring of the health care system	Implementation of hospital user fees
Economic development	SGSY scheme

Choose the <u>right time</u> 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 Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board.

  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 <u>will</u> 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

- 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 <u>focused</u> on the particular factor under discussion at any given time.

- Ask for an indication of the <u>main</u> 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 <u>cannot agree</u> 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 <u>not applicable</u> 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 <u>both *Positive* and *Negative*</u> 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.

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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 16 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*