



GREATER DETROIT AREA HEALTH COUNCIL

Social Impact Assessment for Community Health Greater Detroit Area Health Council

Executive Summary

Introduction

A Social Impact Assessment (SIA) can provide guidance on how specific activities or interventions are expected to change the social fabric and wellbeing of a community. The realization and acceptance that social conditions influence the health of both individuals and populations have increased the expectation that an SIA will be used to predict and monitor the social impact of community health improvement interventions.

The purpose of this Learning Guide is to provide a step-by-step framework to help an organization start planning community-level work and coordinate a process for conducting an SIA. The guide was developed with three audiences in mind:

1. Organizations with missions designed to address health-related concerns
2. Projects that are led by community health organizations
3. Community health improvement projects

Social Impact Analysis for Community Health Improvement Initiatives in Six Steps

Step 1: Situation Analysis and Priority Setting

Situation analysis is an assessment of the current health situation and is fundamental to designing and/or updating national policies, strategies, and plans to address the current state. The work done in this step will set the tone for the rest of the SIA and can significantly impact the potential success of the organization or project.

Step 2: Prioritize Actions and Identify Stakeholders

Conduct a gap analysis to help your organization prioritize issues and the actions to address them, as well as to identify the appropriate stakeholders needed for successful execution. It is also valuable to evaluate gaps in performance when assessing short-term goals, and may help explain why a project or organization is not performing to its potential.

Step 3: Formulate

Collective impact, a means to facilitate agreement on the project and its mission, objective, and deliverable, is highly recommended in the formulate phase and, indeed, would be very helpful as the project is being defined. Collective impact is challenging because this process expects and needs the stakeholders to really commit to working together and to suspend the competitive nature of their “home” organizations, as well as any and all hidden agendas in order to support the public, community good.

Step 4: Implement

After the project is approved (as appropriate), the key formulation activities completed, roles and responsibilities assigned, and agreement reached regarding the data needed to measure success, you have reached the implementation step. This is also the time to develop a project plan—a crucial element of the implementation step and a guide to project management and its execution.

Step 5: Measure and Monitor

During the measurement and monitoring step, which ideally is outlined within the project plan, the manager or evaluator should track and monitor performance related to the project targets. The purpose of this step is not only to measure and evaluate the end results, but also to control overall performance throughout the period between target-setting and evaluation.

Step 6: Evaluate and Report

Assess the impact and value of the work, whether the work represents a small organization taking steps towards its mission to improve the community, or is the result of a project team doing broader community-level work to address larger population health issues. The collection and evaluation of both quantitative and qualitative data can generate an understanding of both the numerical and anecdotal impact of the project as subtle impacts on community and individual wellbeing may be hard to quantify. For example, the project’s impact on people; social inclusion; level of beneficiary participation in the project design and implementation stages; project impact on the social and living conditions and/or economy; and project-specific mechanisms needed to mitigate potential adverse effects can be captured in narrative or qualitative forms. Using a mix of communication channels for dissemination will ensure that this impact is communicated to a variety of constituents.

Next Steps

Depending on the success of the intervention, next steps may include scaling (enlarging and extrapolating), recalibrating (adjusting or restarting), or terminating the project.

Conclusion

This Learning Guide provides a framework to ensure achievement of an organization or project’s mission and goals—and ultimately improve the health of participating communities. Community-level efforts require persistence and hard work, but the steps described in this guide to assessment, planning, and execution of a project with social impact can help ensure success.