

Health Equity Impact Review Guide



**Washington State Department of Health
Division of Prevention and Community Health
Office of Healthy Communities
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The Health Equity Impact Review Guide is a modification of the King County Equity and Social Justice Initiative's Equity Impact Review Toolkit. The Guide was created by members of the Health Equity Team at the Washington State Department of Health, Office of Healthy Communities. For additional information contact Gail Brandt, gail.brandt@doh.wa.gov.

Introduction

This guide will help you examine proposals and identify actions you may need to take to effectively reduce health disparities and increase health equity.

You will learn how to:

- **Identify** ways to modify proposed policies or projects to ensure they will reduce health disparities, not make them worse.
- **Better understand** the uneven impacts on various populations or communities.
- **Recommend** projects and policies that promote equity and ease adverse impacts.

Ideally, Equity Impact Reviews should be done in combination with a Health Impact Assessment (HIA). One does not replace the other, they complement each other. Data gathered during an HIA will help you identify potential and sometimes unintended effects of a policy or project. This information is a critical part of Stages 2 and 3 of the equity impact review process described in this guide. For more information on HIAs, see <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm>.

To improve the quality of information gathered during health impact assessments and equity impact reviews, work with members of affected communities. Gaining their perspective will help you to be more strategic, avoid unintended outcomes, and take advantage of unseen opportunities to succeed. Take time to develop trusting relationships with community members. Your ability to address health disparities will depend on the data you gather from community sources during the assessment and review processes.

What is the value of using this guide and the process it outlines?

You can use this guide to:

- Improve quality of your agency's interventions, policies, and projects
- Build relationships and collaborations
- Acknowledge experiences of community members
- Engage and empower communities
- Build consensus
- Document involvement

Key Definitions

- **Health Disparity** is a difference in health status between distinct segments of the population including differences that occur by age, sex, race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, education or income, disability, or geographic locale.
- **Health Inequity** is disparity in health or health care that is systemic and avoidable and, therefore, considered unfair or unjust.
- **Health Equity** means achieving the highest level of health for all people. Health equity calls for focused efforts to address avoidable inequalities by creating fair opportunities for optimal health for all groups, especially for those who have experienced socioeconomic disadvantage or historical injustices.
- **Determinants of Equity** are social, economic, geographical, political, and physical environment conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age that lead to the creation of a fair and just society.

Determinants of Equity

Healthy living conditions and community space

- **Food systems** that support local food production and provide access to affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate foods for all people
- **Housing** for all people that is safe, affordable, high quality, and healthy
- **Neighborhoods** that support all communities and individuals through strong social networks, trust among neighbors, and the ability to work together to achieve common goals for improving the quality of life for everyone in the neighborhood
- **Healthy built and natural environments** for all people that include mixes of land use supporting jobs, housing, amenities and services, trees and forest canopy, and clean air, water, and soil
- **Parks and natural resources** that provide access for all people and communities to safe, clean, and quality outdoor spaces, facilities, and activities

Fair opportunities in education, jobs and economic development

- **Early childhood development** that supports nurturing relationships, high-quality affordable child care, early learning opportunities, and school readiness for all children
- **Education** that provides high quality and culturally appropriate opportunities allowing each student to reach his or her full learning and career potential
- **Job training and jobs** that provide all residents with the knowledge and skills to compete in a diverse workforce and with the ability to make sufficient income for the purchase of basic necessities to support them and their families
- **Community economic development** that supports local ownership of assets, including homes and businesses, and assure fair access for all to business development and retention opportunities

Reliable public services and safety

- **Community and public safety** that includes services such as fire, police, emergency medical services, and code enforcement that are responsive to all residents so everyone feels safe to live, work and play in any neighborhood
- **Law and justice system** that provides equitable access and fair treatment for all
- **Transportation** that provides everyone with safe, efficient, affordable, convenient, and reliable mobility options, including public transit, walking, carpooling, and biking
- **Health and human services** that are high quality, affordable, and culturally appropriate, and support the optimal well-being of all people

Non-discriminatory practices in the agency

- **Equity in agency practices** that eliminates all forms of discrimination in agency activities in order to encourage participation, and provide fair treatment for all employees, contractors, clients, community partners, residents, and others

Overview

This guide offers a systematic approach to identify the ways a proposed policy, intervention, or project will impact health equity. It has five stages:

Stage 1: Summarize the proposed policy or project

In Stage 1, describe initial thinking about the project or policy that you want to develop or modify. You will also predict, based on your initial knowledge, which determinants of equity might be impacted by your proposal, and the level of impact it will have on those determinants. As you add your thoughts to the Stage 1 Worksheet, don't worry about whether it's correct or complete. Once you complete Stages 2–4, you will have opportunity to modify your proposal.

Stage 2: Identify and assess who will be affected

In Stage 2, learn about and describe the populations that will likely be affected by your proposal. You will consult with these groups during the process. They can help you identify how communities will benefit or be further burdened by the proposal. To do this, you will need to gather and analyze various sources of information to better understand the characteristics and locations of population groups that might be impacted by your proposal.

Stage 3: Describe positive and negative impacts

In Stage 3, identify potential positive and negative impacts of your proposal on specific population groups. The Stage 3 Worksheet provides a matrix to describe potential impacts (positive and negative) and actions you might take to strengthen or ease these impacts.

Stage 4: Analyze potential actions and prioritize

In Stage 4, use the list of actions from the Stage 3 Worksheet to assess the feasibility and resources needed to implement each action. You will use this information to prioritize actions and refine your proposal.

Stage 5: Modify proposal and plan evaluation

Stage 5 allows you to:

- Summarize your findings from Stages 1–4.
- Decide whether to move ahead with your proposal or modify it.
- Identify measures to evaluate the impact of your proposal on health equity.
- Record who was involved in the process.

Stage 1: Summarize the proposed policy or project

A: Summarize the key elements your proposal

Briefly describe the policy or project you want to do:

List expected outcomes of this policy or project:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Outline what the proposed work entails and how services will be delivered or changed:

Identify target audiences/populations:

Determine geographic locations:

B: Fill out Stage 1 Worksheet

Questions to consider:

- Will the project or policy change the population's relationship to any of the determinants of equity?
- Is more than one determinant impacted?
- In what ways are you evaluating the magnitude of the potential impacts?

C: List priorities

Select the determinants of equity that are most likely to be affected by your proposal and the outcomes you want to achieve.

Stage 1 Worksheet

Impact Levels

Identify the determinants of equity your project may impact.

- **High**—The proposal has a significant and **direct impact** on the determinant of equity. (It will affect community relationships, incomes, property values, safety, fairness, access.)
- **Medium**—The proposal has some **direct impact** on the determinant. (There will be an impact, but the effects will not be as broad or widespread.)
- **Low**—The proposal has an indirect impact on the determinant of equity.
- **N/A**—The impact is minimal, unforeseen, or the proposal is not applicable to this social determinant of equity.

Determinants of Equity Consider each determinant of equity	Impact Estimate the level of impact	Rationale for Impact Rating List what was considered in the rating
Healthy living conditions and community space		
Food systems that support local food production and provide access to affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate foods for all people		
Housing for all people that is safe, affordable, high quality and healthy		
Neighborhoods that support all communities and individuals through strong social networks, trust among neighbors, and the ability to work together to achieve common goals for improving the quality of life for everyone in the neighborhood		
Healthy built and natural environments for all people that include mixes of land use supporting jobs, housing, amenities and services, trees and forest canopy, and clean air, water, and soil		
Parks and natural resources that provide access for all people and communities to safe, clean, and quality outdoor spaces, facilities, and activities		
Fair opportunities in education, jobs and economic development		
Early childhood development that supports nurturing relationships, high-quality affordable child care, early learning opportunities, and school readiness for all children		
Education that provides high quality and culturally appropriate opportunities allowing each student to reach his or her full learning and career potential		

Job training and jobs that provide all residents with the knowledge and skills to compete in a diverse workforce and with the ability to make sufficient income for the purchase of basic necessities to support them and their families		
Community economic development that supports local ownership of assets, including homes and businesses, and assure fair access for all to business development and retention opportunities		
Reliable public services and safety		
Community and public safety that includes services such as fire, police, emergency medical services, and code enforcement that are responsive to all residents so everyone feels safe to live, work and play in any neighborhood		
Law and justice system that provides equitable access and fair treatment for all		
Transportation that provides everyone with safe, efficient, affordable, convenient, and reliable mobility options, including public transit, walking, carpooling, and biking		
Health and human services that are high quality, affordable, and culturally appropriate, and support the optimal well-being of all people		
Non-discriminatory practices in the agency		
Equity in agency practices that eliminates all forms of discrimination in agency activities in order to encourage participation, and provide fair treatment for all employees, contractors, clients, community partners, residents, and others		
Other (describe)		

Stage 2: Identify and assess who will be affected

This stage helps you identify populations that will likely be affected by the proposal. Complete Stage 2 in consultation with people from these populations. At the end of this stage you should be able to identify which communities will benefit and which communities will be burdened.

Questions to consider:

- Are the impacts greater for certain communities such as low income, racial and ethnic groups, or limited English proficiency communities?
- What has been the history of this issue in the community?
- Who is already working on this issue?
- Who else needs to be at the table?
- Who needs a voice or an advocate?
- What do the people affected by this proposal think the important issues are?
- How does this proposal fit with their priorities?

A: Gather data (quantitative and qualitative) related to the project and the populations that will be impacted

These sources may be helpful:

- 2010 Census data—population characteristics, demographics (income level, race/ethnicity, age, education, language)
- GIS maps
- Public health data (data your program or agency collects)
- Data on clients or consumers of services
- Data on community partners or contractors who provide services (they may also be a source of data)
- Relevant research or literature
- Health impact assessments

B: Have discussions with community members to gather information and insights

What's the value of engaging others in the process?

- Not leaving out people who will be affected
- Data, information, resources will be committed
- Building relationships and trust
- Potential capacity for advocacy in your work
- Empowerment opportunities for communities and individuals

C: Create maps and detailed descriptions of audiences potentially impacted

Using data gathered above, develop charts, tables or graphs to describe each audience.

D: Transfer the list of audiences your project is expected to impacted to the Stage 3 Worksheet

E: Continue to prioritize

Are there some populations that are more impacted or need special considerations?

Stage 3: Describe positive and negative impacts

Stage 3 uses all the prioritized information gathered from Stages 1 and 2. Use data and input from the community. For each population and determinant you have selected, you will describe beneficial and adverse impacts. Then you will consider actions that can enhance the positive impacts and ease negative impacts.

Use the Stage 3 Worksheet for the following:

A: Enter information about the populations you identified in Stage 2.

B: Describe the potential positive and negative impacts on each population. Think this through carefully. Consider how the proposal might change the population's relationship to others in the community and to services or systems.

C: Describe what you can do to:

- Strengthen positive impacts or ease negative impacts, particularly based on ideas gathered through community input.
- Identify actions needed to ensure the success of your proposal.
- Support existing partnerships and collaboration.

Stage 3 Worksheet

Proposed project/policy: (from Stage 1)

Determinants of Equity most affected by the proposal: (from Stage 1 Worksheet)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Population(s) Impacted	Positive/Beneficial Impacts		Negative/Adverse Impacts	
	Describe the impact	Actions to enhance impact	Describe the impact	Actions to ease impact
Community members and organizations consulted				

Stage 4: Analyze potential actions and prioritize

This stage will help you consider the feasibility of various actions to enhance positive or ease negative impacts. This stage should be done in consultation with the populations and communities involved in Stage 3. It may not be possible to address all potential impacts and carry out all actions identified. Your analysis will help you decide whether to modify or drop your original proposal.

In the Stage 4 Worksheet, you will analyze each of the actions you identified in the Stage 3 Worksheet.

Some criteria to prioritize potential actions:

- The action is necessary to make the proposal successful
- Resources (staff and money) are available to carry out the action
- Additional resources are needed
- Timing fits with the project or policy requirements
- The action is likely to succeed

Use Stage 4 Worksheet for the following:

A: Transfer the actions proposed in the Stage 3 Worksheet.

B: For each action, describe whether this action will be critical to the success of the proposal and why.

C: Describe what needs to happen to increase the feasibility of the action (funding, other resources, political support, community participation, etc.).

D: Brainstorm resources that might be needed to carry out each action.

E: Give a ranking or relative priority to each action.

Stage 4 Worksheet

Proposed project/policy: (from Stage 1)

Determinants of Equity most affected by the proposal: (from Stage 1 Worksheet)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What action is needed to enhance or ease impacts?	How critical is this action to the success of this intervention?	Is this feasible given politics, funding, etc.?	What resources and time are needed to implement?	What is the relative priority of these actions?

STAGE 5: Modify proposal and plan evaluation

A: Using information from the Stage 4 Worksheet, list the priority actions that you have identified for the success of your policy or project.

B: Describe how your original proposal needs to be adjusted, modified or dropped.

C: Identify measures you will use to evaluate the impact of your proposal on health equity.

D: List the names, titles, and organizations of those who participated in this equity impact review process.

Healthy Communities
Washington
Healthy people in healthy places

PUBLIC HEALTH
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND
HEALTHIER WASHINGTON

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