

IDENTIFY EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

Purpose:

The purpose of this stage is to determine the most effective public health strategies and/or interventions that could be used to address the identified public health issue in the population(s).



At this point in PLAN, the public health issue has been defined, quantified, and described using the *Pre-Planning* and *Situational Assessment* stage guides. The information gathered up to this point is about the “what” and “who” relating to the public health issue. This stage is about “how” to address the public health issue.

When identifying strategies, consider the range of strategies and interventions which can be used to address health inequities related to the determinants of health. Some of these include:

- Surveillance
- Advocacy
- Policy and legislation
- Environmental/public health inspection
- Modifying the built environment
- Social support
- Education/awareness and skill development
- Behaviour modification
- Immunization
- Screening

TOOLS

- *Scope of Work*
- *Project Request*
- *Work Plan*
- *Environmental Scan*
- *Knowledge Exchange Plan*
- *Evidence Summary*
- *Form 2: Applicability and Transferability worksheet*

There are many factors to consider when identifying possible strategies to address the identified public health issue. The steps below will help to better identify effective strategies.

Step 1: Mandate review

If an existing program is being reviewed, compare what is currently being done to what is required according to certain mandates. This is to outline what is required and how well the current program is meeting the mandated requirements. If there is not an existing program, review the public health issue by asking, what is public health required to do to address the public health issue? Review the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) (Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care (2018)) and Ministry of Health and Long-term Care (MOHLTC) protocols to identify what is required from the program area. Requirements may also include priority populations, health inequities, underserved populations or some combination of these written within the OPHS. For example, when considering the program outcomes specified in the OPHS for your particular area of

work, to what outcomes are your current programs and/or services contributing? What are the OPHS requirements to address the public health issue? Depending on the public health issue being investigated, a review of all related programs within the health unit may need to be conducted to get the whole picture of what programs are fulfilling what mandated requirements. Furthermore, any related organizational requirements, such as contributions towards the Strategic Plan may need to be considered.

Step 2: Environmental scan

Information collected from community organizations about their programs and services may have been conducted within the *Situational Assessment* stage guide under the “Community Assessment” heading using the **Environmental Scan** tool. The purpose of the environmental scan is to gather information about strategies other organizations are implementing. When asking stakeholders about how they are addressing the public health issue, it is important to ask what informed their decisions about the program/service’s delivery and evaluations. The process to engage stakeholders may include contacting experts such as researchers from a collaborative, academia, hospitals, and other health or non-health sector organizations.

Step 3: Literature and synthesis approaches

There are a number of different approaches to search and synthesize evidence from the literature: Background reading, Literature scan, Focused practice question, Rapid literature scan with expert consultation, or Rapid review of reviews. The right approach depends on the purpose. Before searching the literature, it is important to determine what kind of review will be conducted and what information is necessary to answer the key questions. In **Appendix A** (at the end of this stage guide) there is a table outlining the broad spectrum of literature review and synthesis approaches available, and the criteria for carrying out each approach. A Librarian can assist in determining what information sources are best and if additional support is needed. When reviewing the findings, determine their effectiveness in the context of the public health mandate.

Step 4: Reconsider the impacts on the priority population(s)

Once potential strategies have been identified to address the public health issue, reconsider how the strategies will impact the identified priority population(s). If the *Situational Assessment* stage guide was completed, the priority population (s) will have been identified. For this step, brainstorm the potential impacts on priority population(s) for each identified strategies by completing the Table 1. below.

Table 1. Unintended impacts on the priority population(s). Example adapted from Public Health Ontario. (2013)

| Priority Population(s) | Identified Effective Strategies | Unintended positive impacts (on Health Equity) | Unintended negative impacts (on Health Equity) | What additional information is needed? |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| E.g. Families living with low-income | Incorporate Food Safety Teaching into HBHC Family Home Visitors protocols | None identified | Not all families have access to recommended storage (refrigeration) and preparation (cookware) appliances. Also need to consider impacts of potential utility cut-offs. | Incidence and prevalence of foodborne illness in the priority population; Demographic composition of clients served by the HBHC program. |
| | | | | |

Guiding Questions

- How does the program affect health equity for the priority population(s)?
- Are there priority populations who may experience unintended results from the identified strategy?

Step 5: Recommendations for possible strategies

Develop the recommendations for possible strategies based on the mandated requirements, environmental scan, various literature and synthesis approaches, and by considering the priority population(s). Consider what type of approach to health equity the strategy would be, such as Universal, Targeted, Targeted with Universalism or Proportionate Universalism. Consider reviewing the *Health Equity* concept guide to learn more about these categories of strategies. When considering strategies to recommend, complete the **Applicability and Transferability Tool** to assess if they would work in the MLHU context. An overview of the findings can be organized within the **Evidence Summary** and the **Knowledge Exchange Plan** can be used to outline how the results will be communicated. Consider the following questions when drafting the recommendations.

Guiding Questions

- Is the evidence strong, credible, and consistent?
- How does the current approach differ from the evidence?
- Does the evidence suggest a change in approach?
- How are health equity values integrated into the recommendations?
 - Is it a universal, targeted, targeted with universalism, or a proportionate universalism strategy?

Identify Effective Strategies Stage Guide Checklist

Items relevant to staff are white with a dotted border:

Items relevant to the Program Manager are grey with a solid border:

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Complete a mandate review regarding what public health is required to do to address the public health issue. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Conduct an environmental scan of effective strategies happening in the community, if not previously completed. Use the Environmental Scan tool (within the <i>Situational Assessment</i> stage guide). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Choose what literature and synthesis approach is best for the public health issue and within the current context of MLHU (Appendix A). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Gather evidence based on the choice from Appendix A . |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Reconsider the identified priority populations. Answer questions regarding the unintended positive and negative impacts and whether there is a need for additional information. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Develop recommendations for effective strategies. Use the Applicability and Transferability Tool to assess the fit for the MLHU context. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Summarize the possible effective strategies based on evidence within the Evidence Summary tool and disseminate the information using the Knowledge Exchange tool. |

References

Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care. (2018). Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services, and Accountability. Retrieved from http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/docs/protocols_guidelines/Ontario_Public_Health_Standards_2018_en.pdf

Public Health Ontario. (2013). *Planning through an equity lens*. Retrieved from https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/LearningAndDevelopment/Events/Documents/Planning_through_an_Equity_Lens_2013.pdf

Appendix A: The Middlesex-London Health Unit Literature Review and Synthesis Approaches and Criteria (Adapted from Peel Region Public Health)

| | Rapid review of reviews | Rapid literature scan with expert consultation | Focused practice question | Literature scan | Background reading |
|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| Purpose | To summarize the best available evidence on a specific topic. | To summarize the best available evidence when 1) time is limited, and/or 2) synthesized literature is limited. | To inform a public health practice, a practice change, or key messaging. | To better understand the available research on a topic area. | To better understand general concepts. |
| Level of decision making | Major (in order to add, stop, change, refocus, or implement a new program). | Major (in order to add, stop, change, refocus, or implement a new program). | Moderate (i.e. when ensuring alignment to best practice guidelines). | Low to none | Low to none |
| Suitable topic area(s) | Topic area that has been extensively reviewed (i.e. where previous systematic reviews exist). | 1) Timelines do not allow for a more comprehensive review, and/or 2) topic area has not yet been extensively reviewed (e.g. new or emerging). | Topic area where key information may be available in sources other than research papers (e.g. experts, websites, books). | Any topic area. | Any topic area. |
| Types of evidence included | Previously synthesized literature (e.g. systematic reviews). | 1) Best available research literature available (e.g. guidance documents from reputable organizations, individual papers), and 2) expert opinion | May include more than research literature, e.g., grey literature, books, websites, etc. | May include more than research literature, e.g., grey literature, books, websites, etc. | May include more than research literature, e.g., grey literature, books, websites, etc. |
| Estimated timeframe (assuming sufficient allocation of FTEs) | 3–4 months | 2–8 weeks | 1–3 weeks | 3–6 hours | <3 hours |
| Initiation | Only undertaken with endorsement of Manager and Director. | Only undertaken with endorsement of Manager and Director. | Only undertaken with endorsement of Manager and/or Director. | As required by individuals. | As required by individuals. |
| Expected frequency | Low (2–4 year) | Low | Moderate | High | High (weekly/monthly) |
| Level of rigour (a more rigorous process will) | High (strict adherence to methodological approach) | Moderate to High (as systematic an approach as time allows; trade-off) | Moderate (sources searched and included should be documented) | Low (approach not expected to be reproducible) | Low (approach not expected to be reproducible) |

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|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| result in more trustworthy findings) | provides the highest level of confidence in results) | between timeliness and rigour) | | | |
| Output | Short report outlining methods (e.g. search, screening, critical appraisal, data extraction), findings and recommendations. | Short report outlining methods (e.g. search, screening, critical appraisal, data extraction), experts consulted, findings and recommendations. | 1-page report outlining sources searched (and included) and key messages. | No stand-alone product. May be used to better understand the extent, range and nature of research available on a topic, or to inform a more comprehensive review. | No stand-alone product. May be used to build personal understanding of a topic, clarify key concepts, or identify search terms for a more comprehensive review. |
| Who is involved | Specific staff | Specific staff | Specific staff | Anyone at MLHU | Anyone at MLHU |
| Senior Leadership Team | Required (to approve initiation if prioritized project) | Required (to approve initiation if prioritized project) | Optional | No | No |
| Manager/Director | Required (to assign staff, oversight and complete supervisor checklist) | Required (to assign staff, oversight and complete supervisor checklist) | Required (to assign staff, oversight and complete supervisor checklist) | Optional | Optional |
| Librarian | Required (to help develop and conduct search) | Required (to help develop and conduct search) | Required (to help develop and conduct search) | Optional | Optional |
| Program Evaluator or Epidemiologist | Required (to confirm protocol and as a reviewer 1) | Recommended (consult recommended for protocol) | Optional | Optional | Optional |
| Program staff (content expert) | Required (to inform protocol and as a reviewer 2) | Required (to inform protocol and as a reviewer) | Required (to inform practice decisions and key messaging) | Optional | Optional |
| Examples | Does peer support for breastfeeding mothers have an effect on initiation, duration or exclusivity of breastfeeding as compared to usual care? | Is chemoprophylaxis effective at preventing the spread of iGAS to close contacts in community outbreaks? | Pending consensus on the public health impacts of e-cigarettes, what public health messaging should be adopted? | What types of studies have been conducted investigating dance as a treatment option for adults with fibromyalgia? | What is the difference between a tobacco inhaler and an e-cigarette? |