Introduction to Health Impact Assessment

New Partners for Smart Growth Conference
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What is HIA?

The National Research Council defines HIA as "a *systematic process* that uses an array of *data sources and analytic methods*, and considers input from *stakeholders* to determine the *potential effects* of a proposed policy, plan, program, or project on the health of a population and the *distribution of those effects* within the population. HIA provides recommendations on monitoring and managing those effects"

National Research Council, *Improving Health in the United States, 2011*

Use of HIA in Current Practice

- Advocacy

- Some HIAs more academic, others are community-driven

- Timeliness and timing

- Specific policies are moving targets, making timing and scope of the HIA challenging

- Scope of the policy or project

- A rapid HIA with a smaller scope can sometimes be sufficient

Topics of HIAs

- Land Use
- Transportation
- Housing
- Education
- Energy
- Agriculture
- Economic Equity

Completed and In Progress HIAs 1999–2014 (N = 311)

LEGEND
- HIA
- Health Impact Project-Funded HIA
- Multiple HIAs

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What Values Underpin HIA?

Democracy - the right of people to participate in the formulation of policies that affect their life, both directly and through elected decision-makers. This means that the community plays a major role in HIA process

Equity - the reduction of inequity that results from avoidable and unjust differences in health status between different people. An HIA assesses the distribution of impacts from a proposed policy or project with a particular reference to how the proposed policy or project will affect vulnerable people (in terms of age, gender, ethnic background, and socio-economic status)

Increased awareness of health issues—When public health is brought into the discussion through an HIA, it tends to raise awareness of all health-related issues, not just those associated with one project

Scientific and robust practice - emphasizing that transparent, systematic and impartial processes are used, which utilize the best available evidence from different scientific disciplines and methodologies
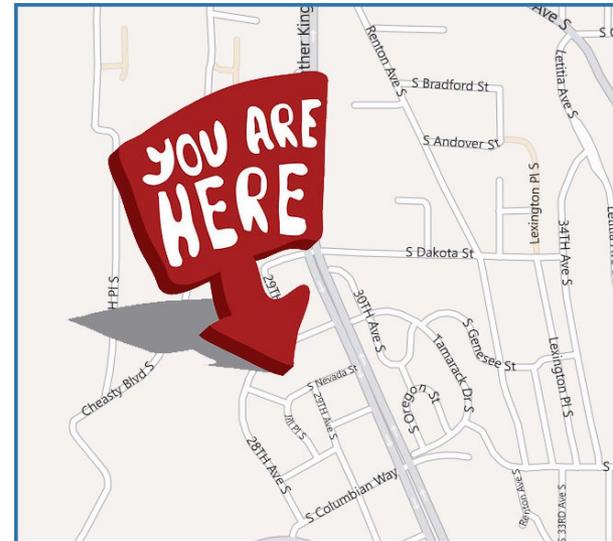
Phases of an HIA
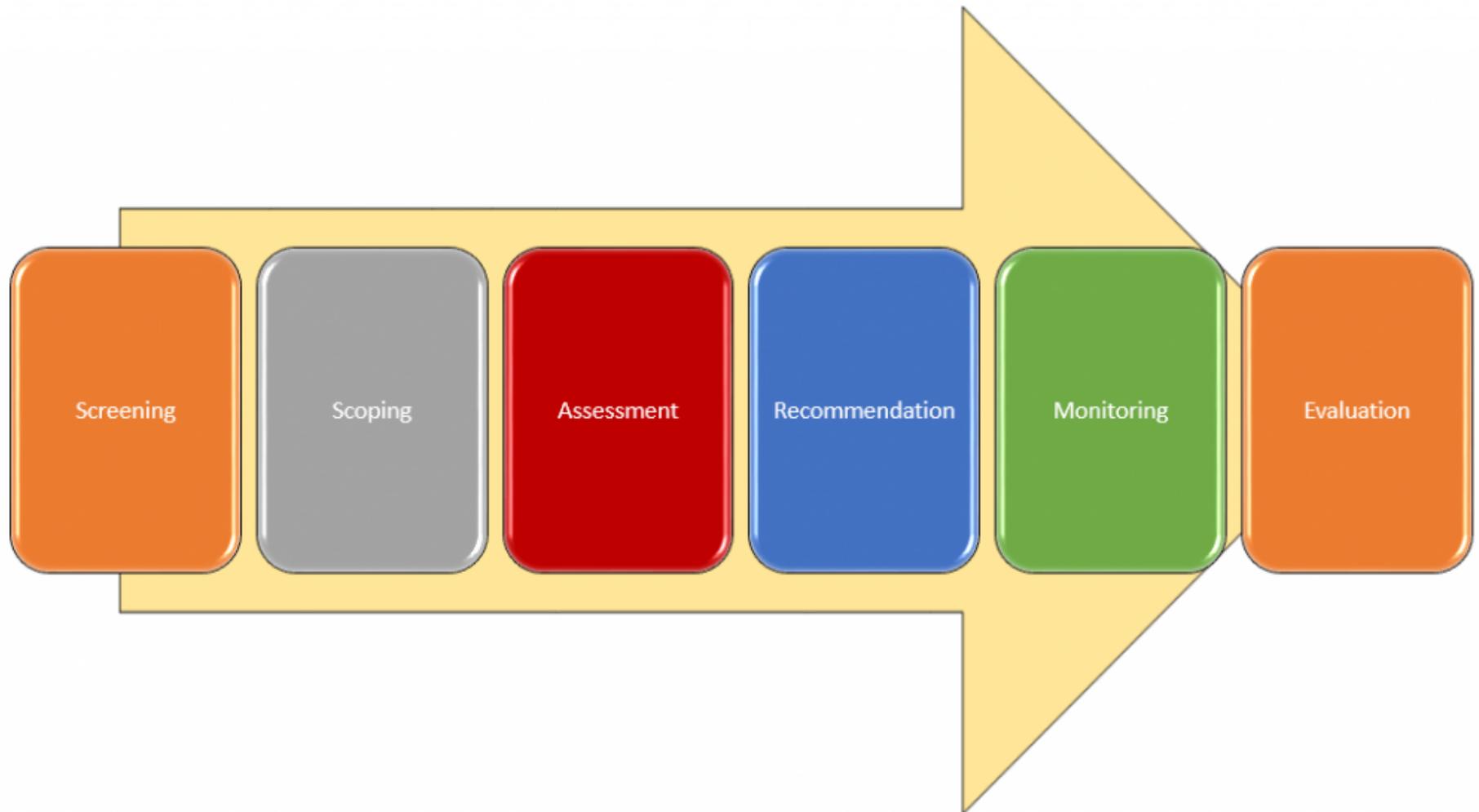
Screening

The purpose of screening is to "assess the value, feasibility and utility of the HIA in the decision making process," (Bhatia, 2011)

Scoping

- Define the HIA team, stakeholders and timeframes for the process

- Define the limits of the HIA:

  - Geographic
  - Demographic
  - Health outcomes

- Develop a workplan

Assessment

The Assessment phase is defined as:

"mobiliz(ing) evidence to characterize baseline health conditions, characterize expected health effects and evaluate uncertainty," (Bhatia, 2011)

Reporting Recommendations

Reporting is the phase where the findings of the HIA are communicated to the decision makers and stakeholders

The team provides evidence-based recommendations to mitigate the negative health outcomes and amplify the positive
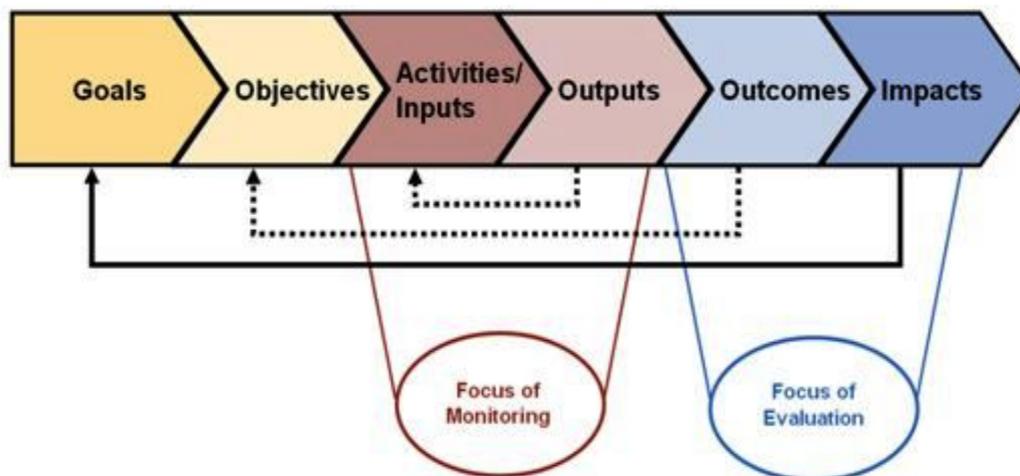
Evaluation and Monitoring

Evaluation

Process evaluation: assesses the effectiveness, transparency and rigor of the HIA process itself

Monitoring

Outcome evaluation: assesses changes in health status and health determinants as the decision is implemented

Summary

- HIA is a systematic process to predict and address the potential health impacts of a single policy, program or project

- HIA includes a broad range of stakeholders in the process to create shared values focusing on improving and protecting public health

- HIA is evidence-based and uses established analytic tools to demonstrate and communicate the risks associated with the decision under consideration

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