

All About Program Planning

By Tricia Wilkerson, Heart Health Resource Centre Consultant

Introduction

This edition of @ *a Glance* is a brief overview of Program Planning. It is intended to be a companion resource to the previous @ *a Glance* (Fall, 2007) that outlined the Strategic Planning process.

What is Program Planning?

Once the strategic planning decisions about “what should we do?” have been made, coalitions are ready to figure out “how will we do it?” through a program planning process. A program plan, or action plan, outlines the specific steps necessary to carry out the activities identified in your strategic plan. It is a clearly defined plan for achieving your goals, including:

- The activities that you will implement to accomplish your goals and objectives
- Programming, environmental and/or organizational capacity objectives
- Indicators or outputs
- Roles and responsibilities
- Time frames
- Budget

Who should be involved in Program Planning?

Similar to strategic planning, coalition partners representing a variety of channels and topic areas are involved in the program planning process. The program planning discussion may occur during the same session as strategic planning. Smaller sub groups may need to go away to further develop the details for the program plan.

A note about Planning Models

A Planning Model is a detailed, step-by-step process that describes the steps you should take in planning your program. Using a planning model ensures that you have completed all of the steps necessary to increase the likelihood of success. There are a wide variety of Planning Models that are commonly used in health promotion. Rather than

profiling one in the issue of @ *a glance*, we've listed a few in the Resources section. As certain models may be more applicable for your programs than others, you can become familiar with two or three of them, and then select the one that works best for you and your program.

Creating a Program Plan

While Strategic Plans usually span a 3 to 5 year period, a program or activity plan generally covers a one year period. Part of the program planning process should include critically assessing the success of the previous program plan, or even the program itself.

The following questions should be answered in the program planning process:

- ♦ Who will be served by the program?
- ♦ How will the program address gaps in our community?
- ♦ When will the program be delivered?
- ♦ Where will the program be delivered?
- ♦ Why is the program important (i.e., what difference will the program make?)

Inside this issue:

1. [All about Program Planning](#)
2. [Logic Models & Lingo](#)
3. [Program Planning Tips](#)
4. [Resources](#)



A note about Logic Models

The graphic to the left represents the sections of the OHHP - Taking Action for Healthy Living logic model. The programs, activities, programming objectives, environmental objectives and organizational capacity objectives are created through program planning. The OHHP-Taking Action For Healthy Living goal, vision, mission, strategies, intended population, and population objectives sections are created through strategic planning.

The Logic Model – A Program Planning Tool

THCU promotes logic models as a program planning tool. THCU notes “logic models contribute to effective program planning by:

- Demonstrating how a program’s strategies contribute to the achievement of intended goals and objectives;
- Identifying gaps and inconsistencies within a program, such as objectives that are not being met, or activities that are not contributing to specific objectives;
- Providing an effective communication tool that helps new stakeholders or potential sponsors to understand a program;
- Involving stakeholders in program planning (through the collective development of a logic model); and
- Building a common understanding of what a program is all about and how the parts fit together.” (THCU, 2001, p.1)¹

Program Planning Lingo^{2,3,4}

A **program** is a well-organized series of activities designed to facilitate change in a well-defined target group.

Several **activities** make up a program. Activities are usually time limited and task-oriented. For example, a walkable community advocacy program might involve the following activities: complete walkability assessment, conduct a community opinion survey, summarize and disseminate findings in communication materials, and present results to local government.

An **objective** is a brief statement specifying the desired impact, or effect, of a health promotion program (how much of what should happen to whom by when). Objectives should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-sensitive (SMART).

Programming objectives refer to the implementation of joint programs by community partnerships. Programming objectives also include estimates of audience participation (such as reach). An example would be to provide three presentations to 50% of local government representatives.

Environmental objectives refer to changes in social and physical environments that contribute to population objectives.

Organizational capacity objectives refer to changes in practices or beliefs of the community partnership.

A **situational assessment** examines the legal and political environment, stakeholders, the health needs of the population, the literature and previous evaluations, as well as the overall vision for the project. It encourages considering the strengths of and opportunities for individuals and communities. In a health promotion context, this also means looking at socio-environmental conditions and broader determinants of health.

Program Assessment Criteria

This list of questions is based on criteria originally developed by the University of Waterloo. Although you might not be able to answer all of them at present, considering these questions will help you to enhance the quality of existing programs as well as guide the development of new ones.

- How was the need for this program identified? What data were collected and when?
- Does it duplicate an existing community program?
- How might existing theories, evidence or conceptual frameworks be incorporated into the program?
- Does it have SMART objectives or a logic model?
- To what degree does it create physical and/or social environments that support healthy behaviours?
- To what degree does it address policy change?
- Is it organized to build on previous activities?
- Would other organizations be willing to partner or co-sponsor?
- How would the community be engaged in the planning, implementation and evaluation?
- Does it have potential to be incorporated into the community and be sustained?
- How can the program be promoted within the community? Is there a local champion?
- How is it evaluated through formative, process and outcome evaluations?
- How is the program documented?
- Which community-specific factors played a role in the program design?
- Is it cost-effective?

(Adapted from the Towards Evidence-Informed Practice Program Assessment Survey, 2006). See the Resources section for more information.

Program Planning Tips

- Contact the Heart Health Resource Centre for assistance in your program planning session. A neutral facilitator will guide the process so you can focus on contributing to the discussion.
- To increase the effectiveness of your program, use a planning model to guide you through program development, implementation and evaluation. See the Resources section for examples.
- Ensure that there are people who are familiar with the topic, channel and population of interest involved in the program planning decisions.
- Review the situational assessment information gathered about your target audience and your community. Identify opportunities and gaps.
- Look at your existing slate of programs and determine what programs you want to stop continue and enhance. Use the criteria listed above and best practice guidelines to make your decisions.
- As a part of the discussion about potential evidence-informed programs, check out the Evidence Informed Practice Project (TEIP) Compendium <http://teip.hhrc.net/tools/eipc/index.cfm> and the Public Health Agency of Canada's Best Practices Portal <http://cbpp-pcpe.phac-aspc.gc.ca/> for ideas of potential programs.
- During the program planning process, encourage partners to think about programs in which they can be involved. Each program should be a good fit with the work of at least two partners. Avoid "add on's" to programs.
- Create objectives for each of the programs. Articulate what will happen to whom and by when.
- After adding your programs into the logic model, check to make sure that the program will help your coalition achieve its vision, mission and objectives. Use the "if/then" test. If you do program X, then you can expect to meet these objectives.

Tricia's Tip

Build programs into your plan that enhance existing partner activities and fit with partner mandates and purposes. Ideally programming decisions build on the strengths and opportunities within your coalition to address the needs of your target audience.

Dianne's Tip

Program planning requires time in order to produce a good end product. Use your first session to discuss and agree upon your goals, objectives and major activities. Leave the word-smithing and detailed action plans for one or more follow-up sessions.

Pam's Tip

Outcome evaluation is often an after thought. Build it in from the outset of your planning process by ensuring that your program objectives provide specific, measurable targets. It is easier to develop your indicators of success if they match the intended objectives.

Andrea's Tip

How do you determine what programs your community partnership will implement? Ensure that your programs are a response to a clearly identified need. Resist the temptation to implement programs because you think your community need them, or because you are comfortable doing them. Use situational assessments, health status data and community feedback to make your decisions.

Helpful Resources

The Comprehensive Heart Health Planning Workbook developed by the HHRC in 1998 to guide newly created OHHP groups remains a relevant resource. The workbook and the facilitator's guide are available at the HHRC website (www.hhrc.net/skills/planning.cfm).

The Towards Evidence –Informed Practice (TEIP) project can help you improve existing or new health promotion programs. The Assessment protocol includes a survey, available on the TEIP web site at <http://teip.hhrc.net/tools/tools.cfm>. The Improving Health Promotion Programs Using Evidence-Informed Practice online resource provides detailed “walk through” of the Program Assessment Protocol. This can be found at <http://teip.hhrc.net/resource/learning/index.html>

Planning Models

THCU's Introduction to Health Promotion Planning Workbook available at www.thcu.ca/infoandresources/planning_resources.htm contains a detailed description of the steps to strategic and program planning. The workbook includes worksheets for each step to help guide the planning process.

The Population Health Template (www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/phdd/pdf/discussion_paper.pdf) describes an eight-step process to implement a population health approach.

The Integrated Health Promotion Resource Kit from the Victoria Government Department of Human Services in Australia provides a very clear three-step planning model which can be downloaded at http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthpromotion/downloads/ihp_section4.pdf. The complete kit can be found at http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthpromotion/resources_links/integrated.htm

The Program Management Guidelines were prepared by the Central Sydney Health Promotion Unit and the New South Wales Department of Health in Australia. The document is very detailed and quite lengthy, but clearly outlines program planning steps. http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/p/pdf/pmg_hp.pdf

THCU's Logic Model Workbook available at (www.thcu.ca/infoandresources/publications/logicmodel.wkbk.v6.1.full.aug27.pdf) walks readers through a four-step approach to developing logic models.

Green and Kreuter's PREDECE/PROCEED Planning Model is an extremely comprehensive one and often used in health promotion. The focus of the model is on identifying the quality of life, social, and environmental issues and the contexts that contribute to the health outcome that your program is aiming to achieve. Details of the model can be found at <http://www.lgreen.net/precede.htm>

References

¹The Health Communication Unit (2001). Logic Models Workbook Version 6.1 August 21, 2001. Toronto, Ontario. Available at www.thcu.ca/infoandresources/publications/logicmodel.wkbk.v6.1.full.aug27.pdf.

²Heart Health Resource Centre (2003). OHHP – Taking Action for Healthy Living: Reference Material. Toronto, Ontario.

³Ontario Ministry of Health & Long-term Care (2003). Ontario Heart Health Program: Taking Action for Healthy Living – Submission Package Phase II. Toronto, Ontario.

⁴The Health Communication Unit (2001). Introduction to Health Promotion Program Planning. Toronto, Ontario. p.29. Available at <http://www.thcu.ca/infoandresources/publications/Planning.wkbk.content.apr01.format.oct06.pdf>.

About the HHRC

The Heart Health Resource (HHRC) anticipates and meets the needs of public health agencies and their communities in chronic disease prevention.

The HHRC was established in 1993 to support five demonstration projects in Ontario. It currently works with 37 community partnerships of the OHHP-Taking Action for Healthy Living.

The HHRC is a project of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) and is funded through the Ministry of health Promotion. It is a member of the Ontario Health Promotion Resource System (OHPRS).

Heart Health Resource Centre

Phone: (416) 367-3313 ext.232 /

1-800-267-6817

Fax: (416) 367-2844

Email: heart@opha.on.ca

Web Site: <http://www.hhrc.net>



Heart Health Resource Centre
Centre de ressources - Coeur en santé
ONTARIO PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION POUR LA SANTÉ PUBLIQUE DE L'ONTARIO