Road Maps to Guide Change

Today our cities, towns, and rural areas are grappling with how to encourage healthy lifestyles and provide a good quality of life for everyone, young and old. How do we accomplish these goals while also preparing for the increasing numbers of older residents, including those with health problems or disabilities?

Policy makers, planners, and communities can use frameworks to guide successful change initiatives. Frameworks can serve as road maps to define problems and issues important to specific groups, such as older adults; identify the key stakeholders needed to design, approve, implement, and enforce solutions; weigh alternatives and trade-offs; and create sustainable solutions.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA), the Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE EH), and RE-AIM are frameworks for planning, decision-making, and evaluation. They can help identify assets and barriers and anticipate many of the challenges that communities face when implementing environmental and policy changes.

How Using Planning Tools Works

Consider transit-oriented development, a focus today in many communities, but an area where older adult needs are often not considered.

HIA supports good decisions by helping identify best locations and avoid potential problem areas for older adults or those with health conditions — for example, sites with poor air quality or safety issues, such as poorly planned pedestrian pathways, traffic control, or lighting that might cause problems.

RE-AIM helps ensure that older adults are taken into consideration and that their needs for services, shopping, and facilities such as benches and shade are factored into planning.
Practical Planning and Evaluation Frameworks

Three useful frameworks are used by public health and planning professionals.

The Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE EH) is a method to guide local communities in identifying and addressing environmental health priorities.

Health Impact Assessment is similar in some ways to environmental impact assessment. It provides a way to look at the effects of proposed actions on individual and community health outcomes.

RE-AIM can be used to understand the relative strengths and weaknesses of proposed actions.

Health Impact Assessment

HIA is a simple, systematic, five-step process to guide decision-making and help ensure that the health implications of decisions are given attention.

HIA steps

- **Screen.** Does the policy or project have health implications?
- **Scope.** Whose health will be affected; what are the key health issues and concerns?
- **Assess.** To what extent will the policy or project increase risks or benefit health once implemented?
- **Recommend.** What are the alternatives to reduce risk or increase benefits?
- **Evaluate and monitor.** How did the HIA process affect decision-making? What were the actual effects on health?

A decade ago, Wabasso, Florida, had a number of built environment problems including poor lighting, sidewalks in disrepair, and unsafe housing, along with high rates of poverty and drug-related violence.

Using the Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE), the community engaged in a systematic self-study process to establish priorities for action. Residents, planners, developers, public health, and public safety officials worked together to leverage limited start-up funds and create significant change over the decade.

Improvements in the community include new housing to replace unsafe homes, better pedestrian and recreational facilities, more street lighting, and increased opportunities for physical activity. Everyone benefited including, for example, an 81-year-old man who was able to live in a house again after sleeping in his car for three years.

The Wabasso experience demonstrates the potential of sound planning and public-private partnerships.

www.naccho.org/topics/environmental/CEHA/paceeh.cfm
RE-AIM

The RE-AIM framework has been successfully used to translate evidence-based health interventions to the community level. Using RE-AIM in planning and evaluation ensures that we consider important factors that may influence the success of projects.

RE-AIM dimensions

- **Reach.** Who are the people who will be affected? Does the program or policy address the needs of all or just some of those people?
- **Effectiveness.** What health and quality of life outcomes are anticipated? What unplanned outcomes, both positive and negative, might occur?
- **Adoption.** Are the people and agencies who approve, implement, or enforce the proposed solutions included in the decision-making process? Are sectors such as schools, businesses, healthcare, civic and social services, and public works included?
- **Implementation.** What factors, such as costs or staffing, will affect full implementation?
- **Maintenance.** What is the likelihood that outcomes can be maintained over time? What regulation, enforcement, or maintenance will be necessary?

When the New York City Department of Transportation learned that many of the pedestrian deaths on Queens Boulevard were older adults, it set out to understand why.

One problem it discovered was that the boulevard separated residences and shopping. Interviews of residents uncovered other problems, such as lack of time to cross the street and difficulty seeing the pedestrian signal.

Solutions the department put in place were clearer crosswalk markings, signals in the median, longer crossing times for signals, larger signs, and pedestrian education.

Subsequently, despite increases in traffic volume, the rate of pedestrian fatalities has decreased.

www.preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-261/127.html

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<th>Planning Steps</th>
<th>Questions to Ask</th>
<th>Methods</th>
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| Define Problem | • What? For example, inactivity and social isolation  
• Who? Target population, for example, seniors with mobility constraints  
• Why? For example, lack of transportation, unsafe sidewalks, traffic, incivilities (litter, graffiti), few public amenities, single-use zoning | Community outreach, town hall meetings, focus groups, and interviews |
| Identify Stakeholders | • Who has the authority, credibility, and know-how to champion, approve, and implement changes? For example, policy makers, planners, traffic engineers, police, neighborhood groups, area businesses, advocates, residents | Create a steering committee or advisory board that includes key stakeholders |
| Generate Solutions & Recommendations | • What can be done to address the problem in the short-term? For example, traffic calming (speed limits, cross-walks), friendly visitor programs, volunteer drivers  
• What can be done to address the problem in the longer-term? For example, improved pedestrian infrastructure and maintenance, multi-use zoning with desirable destinations | Rate solutions on potential to:  
• Reach the target population  
• Positively affect the problem  
• Be implemented  
• Be sustained |
| Implement | • Have you involved implementers in the planning process, for example, traffic engineers, police, business community?  
• Are modifications required? Any unanticipated barriers, for example, unforeseen costs, backlash? | Use consensus-building to design alternatives; solicit feedback from implementers on plans. |
| Evaluate & Monitor | • Process: To what extent were recommendations followed?  
• Intermediate Outcomes: Did the implemented solutions address the issue or problem? Any negative consequences?  
• Long-Term Outcomes: Are the desired outcomes and changes maintained? Is the policy enforced? | Use qualitative interviews, observation, photographic documentation, and existing data sources. Anticipate maintenance barriers (e.g., costs and enforcement). |
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<th>Projects That Could Benefit from a Planning and Evaluation Framework</th>
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<td><strong>Housing and Land Use</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Housing development and urban renewal projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Accessible, mixed-use development with services and retail that cater to older adults</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transportation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Public and senior transportation availability</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Smart Growth and Complete Streets</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Pedestrian infrastructure and safety improvements</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Legal and Financial</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Policies, legislation with implications for estate and financial planning, asset protection, health and end-of-life care</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Health and Fitness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Parks and recreational facility improvements</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Usage of public and private indoor spaces (e.g., shopping malls) for exercise, health services, and social activities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of Life</strong></td>
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<td>- Cultural, spiritual, and civic consideration of older adults</td>
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**Resources**

Aging Well in Communities Toolkit  
www.civicpartnerships.org/docs/services/CHCC/aging-well-toolkit.htm

Community Health Indicator System  
communityhealth.hhs.gov/homepage.aspx?j=1

Healthy Development Checklist  
www.walkable.org/assets/downloads/healthy_development_checklist.pdf

Healthy Development Measurement Tool  
www.thehdmt.org/tool.php

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)  
www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia; htm; www.who.int/hia/tools/en/

Northwest Health Foundation Community Changes Guidebook  
nwhf.org/images/files/NW_Community_Changes_Guidebook_2010.pdf

Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE EH)  
www.naccho.org/topics/environmental/CEHA/paceeh.cfm

RE-AIM  
www.re-aim.org

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- Optimal Living: Promising Strategies
- Optimal Living: Frameworks to Guide Change
- Optimal Living: Getting Around
- Optimal Living: Home Environments

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