

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITIES COMPLETING COMMUNITY PLAN ASSESSMENTS

This document is intended to provide guidelines to assist HRDC officers and community groups in understanding the rationale and requirements for Community Plan Assessments in the context of the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI).

Note: To be eligible for funding under the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), the COMMUNITY PLAN ASSESSMENT template MUST be completed and submitted electronically in a Word format. All categories of this template MUST be completed by communities. References to other source documents WILL NOT be accepted.

The guidelines are designed to respond to the following questions:

1. What is the Community Plan Assessment?
 2. Which activities should be assessed under the Community Plan Assessment?
 3. Why is it required?
 4. How does the Community Plan Assessment apply to UAS-Homelessness activities?
 5. When should communities undertake their Community Plan Assessment?
 6. Who is responsible for completing the Community Plan Assessment?
 7. How will Community Plan Assessments be used by the National Secretariat on Homelessness (NSH)?
 8. What kind of support will the NSH provide?
 9. Is financial support available?
 10. If the community has already completed an evaluation, are they still required to complete this Community Plan Assessment?
 11. What is the scope of the Community Plan Assessment?
 12. What is the format of the Community Plan Assessment?
 13. Will Community Plan Assessments require approval?
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1. What is the Community Plan Assessment?

The Community Plan Assessment is a progress report on the community's implementation of its Community Plan. Communities will assess their progress in addressing homelessness against the Community Homelessness Plan: whether priorities and objectives as outlined in the Community Plan have been achieved;

what impact this has had on the community and; how community projects and other activities carried out by the community entities and committees have contributed to the immediate outcomes of the NHI. Community Plan Assessments will assist communities in evaluating program delivery and articulating their results.

2. Which activities should be assessed under the Community Plan Assessment?

Community Plan Assessments are required to assess results of all completed projects as well as preliminary results of all uncompleted projects underway, provided that the minimum threshold of 33% of projects have been completed. The assessment should also cover results achieved from community homelessness activities outside of specific projects related, for example, to awareness raising, capacity development and partnership building.

3. Why is it required?

Communities are being asked to assess the degree of success they have achieved according to the plans they put into place. This information will form the basis for certain reporting accountabilities of both the NSH and the Federal Coordinator on Homelessness. It will also constitute the community's final report (excluding financial statements) to the NSH.

The assessment process will assist communities with the identification of gaps, highlighting areas for strengthening partnerships, as well as providing an opportunity for communities to explore and share best practices.

4. How does the Community Plan Assessment apply to UAS-Homelessness activities?

While an Aboriginal Community Plan was not required under UAS-H, an assessment is required to evaluate program delivery and articulate results where UAS-H funds have been used to address Aboriginal homelessness needs. Using the Community Plan Assessment template, a distinct assessment of UAS-H activities is required:

- 1) Where a Community Entity has a distinct Aboriginal Homelessness Community Plan.
- 2) Where an Aboriginal Community Entity exists in a community, whether or not a formal Aboriginal Homelessness Plan exists.

The assessment should clearly indicate that it relates to UAS-H activities.

5. When should communities undertake their Community Plan Assessment?

All communities in receipt of funding under SCPI are required to complete an assessment and forward it in hard copy and electronic form to the HRDC regional office. Before commencing the assessment communities must have: reached a minimum threshold: having committed 75% of their budget, spent 50% and completed 33% of their projects.

Once this threshold or June 30, 2003 is reached, communities must conduct an assessment. If this threshold is not attained by June 30, 2003, the assessment must clearly indicate that this is the case. The final deadline for completion of Community Plan Assessments is September 30, 2003.

6. Who is responsible for completing the Community Plan Assessment?

The Chairs of the Community Entities and/or Planning Committees will be responsible to endorse the assessment. A third party may be hired to undertake the assessment through a SCPI project proposal, but this is not a requirement of the assessment.

7. How will Community Plan Assessments be used by the NSH?

Community Plan Assessments will play an important part in determining the impact of the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) and how well the NHI has achieved its 9 immediate outcomes nationally. The Community Plan Assessments will provide valuable input on the effectiveness of our investments.

These Community Plan Assessments will be used by the NSH to acquire a better understanding of community needs, and will help to guide the development of future programs and initiatives. The results of these assessments will also assist the NSH to complete its results reporting obligations as set out in its accountability framework.

The content of the assessments in whole or in part may also be communicated to the general public.

8. What kind of support will the NSH provide?

- A template and guide for the preparation of a Community Plan Assessment report will be provided to communities.
- An analysis prepared by the NSH of investments against each priority in the Community Plan will be provided to each community upon request.
- A reference guide to assist communities in assessing their results against the 9 immediate outcomes of the NHI will be provided.

9. Is financial support available?

Where communities have not already set aside funds for Community Plan Assessments, they may request funding to a maximum of \$50,000 for their assessment from their regional office by developing a SCPI project proposal.

10. If the community has already completed an evaluation, are they still required to complete this Community Plan Assessment?

Yes. It is important that all communities report on the same set of questions. This will assist in the comparative analysis of data/information. Data from existing assessments may be used to complete this standardized assessment.

11. What is the scope of the Community Plan Assessment?

While communities may decide to address a number of issues in their community assessment, the NSH is requesting, at a minimum, that each community address the following according to the nine elements of their Community Plan:

- Element 1. Geographic Area:** An assessment of geographic area, its suitability, inclusiveness and effectiveness.
- Element 2. Objectives:** An assessment of progress in achieving objectives set in Community Plan with key examples of net results and measures.
- Element 3. Community Plan Development Process:** [NB Given that the community planning process has been evaluated by the NHI evaluation through extensive case studies in 20 communities and that communities have reported to the Minister on the planning process, communities will not be required to address this element in the Community Plan Assessment. Questions related to sustainability in element 6 however, do ask that you draw on your community planning experience.]
- Element 4. Assets and Gaps:** An assessment of gaps, whether they have been addressed (either partially or in full) or not.
- Element 5. Priorities:** A report of results achieved (whether through SCPI funded projects or other activities of the community entities or committees) in support of each priority identified in the Community Plan including an assessment of the impact of these results on the community and how these results have contributed to the 9 immediate outcomes of the NHI.

The 9 immediate outcomes of the NHI

1. Increased awareness of NHI and homelessness issues
2. More coordinated response between sectors to address homelessness
3. Increased local capacity to deal with homelessness
4. Enhanced access to information
5. Better information and data on the homeless population and homelessness issues
6. Better ways of researching and gathering information on homelessness issues in Canada
7. Increased inclusion of homelessness in policy options at all levels of government

8. Concrete actions by communities to improve services and facilities in order to alleviate the hardship of homeless people

9. Improved decision making around investments

- Element 1. Sustainability:** An assessment of whether communities have achieved their sustainability outcomes as described in the Community Plan, including specific reference to partnership development, capacity building and inclusion (challenges and strategies to address them).
- Element 2. Evaluation Strategy:** An assessment of the process and inclusiveness of the procedures employed in undertaking this Community Plan Assessment.
- Element 3. Communication Strategy:** An assessment of the results and impact of communication activities and progress against communication strategy goals.
- Element 4. Community's Financial Contribution:** Communities will not be required to report on the financial element of the Community Plan in this assessment.

12. What is the format of the Community Plan Assessment?

A template has been developed to guide communities through the preparation of a Community Plan Assessment report. The template sets out specific questions to assist communities in assessing each of the required elements in their Community Plans. A text box is also provided at the end of the assessment for any additional information, comments or questions that communities wish to add to the assessment. This standard format will ensure consistent data is collected, which will facilitate analysis and comparison.

The template will be sent to regions and communities electronically. The template will also be available on the NSH web site:

http://www.homelessness.gc.ca/partners/communityplanassessment/index_e.asp

13. Will Community Plan Assessments require approval?

The REH in each region will approve Community Plan Assessments. Approval is contingent on the community fulfilling requirements of each of the components in the Community Plan Assessment template.