



# Evidence 101



# Program Evidence Tool

Evidence  
101

## Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool

The ability to effectively apply evidence to inform health promotion programming is dependant on numerous factors including:

- Health system resources and supports
- Organizational and managerial resources and supports
- Practitioner skills and confidence

The *Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool* is designed to:

- Build awareness of the resources, supports and skills needed to effectively apply evidence in health promotion programming
- Assess organizational learning practices and stimulate dialogue regarding how your department or organization can enhance supports for evidence-informed practice

The intention is to assess to what extent your organization as a whole achieves each of the described practices, rather than to assess the achievement of individuals within the organization. Different staff from different levels of the organization will likely differ in their perspectives on some of these questions.

### Guidelines: Assessing Organizational Capacity

#### 1. Assemble a broad-based team including:

- Supervisors, managers, program developers, front-line staff and in-house information experts if available (*e.g. public health librarians*). Document the participants' names, roles and related departments on the worksheet.

#### 2. Collaboratively complete the *Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool*:

*Part One* looks at the resources, supports, people and training needed to promote evidence-informed practice.

*Part Two* looks at general organizational learning processes that promote the uptake and implementation of new practices across the organization.

- Discuss the five questions and document consensus opinion regarding:
  - Extent to which your organization achieves the evidence-related activities
  - Ideas/suggestions to enhance organizational, managerial and other supports

#### 3. Complete the Planning Guide:

- List top 5 - 10 ideas on chart provided
- Develop an action plan outlining which ideas/goals can be implemented in the short, medium and long term, the action steps and person(s) responsible



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## Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool

Participants' Name	Role	Department

### Part One: Capacity for Evidence-Informed Practice<sup>1</sup>

1. Do we have the <i>Resources</i> to access and apply relevant public health evidence?	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	Unsure	Comments <i>What improvements are needed? What organizational supports are needed?</i>
Our organization has access to recent electronic or hard copies of journals relevant to our field.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization has access to recent evidence syntheses relevant to our programming areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization uses knowledge management tools ( <i>i.e. worksheets and guidelines</i> ) to access, synthesize and apply evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Do we have the <i>Supports</i> to access and apply relevant public health evidence?	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	Unsure	Comments <i>What improvements are needed? What organizational supports are needed?</i>
Our organization gives us adequate time to access and apply evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization views accessing and applying evidence as part of our job description.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization rewards us for exemplary efforts to access and apply evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization motivates us to access and apply evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Canadian Health Services Research Foundation - *Is Research Working for You?*  
[http://www.chsrf.ca/other\\_documents/working\\_e.php](http://www.chsrf.ca/other_documents/working_e.php)



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3. Are the appropriate <i>People</i> involved in accessing and applying evidence?	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	Unsure	Comments <i>What improvements are needed? What organizational supports are needed?</i>
Our organization can access a <i>Content Advisor</i> to assist us.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization has access to a <i>Knowledge Broker</i> or public health librarian to assist us.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization facilitates intra and inter-organizational collaboration around evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Are we provided adequate <i>Training</i> for evidence-informed practice (EIP)?	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	Unsure	Comments <i>What improvements are needed? What organizational supports are needed?</i>
Our organization helps us to identify relevant and credible sources of evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization supports staff to learn EIP skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization supports staff to practice and improve EIP skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization has the skills to conduct a <i>systematic search</i> of relevant evidence sources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization has evidence <i>synthesis</i> skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization has the capacity to adapt and apply relevant evidence to strengthen programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization asks appropriate evaluation questions about our programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization prioritizes our evaluation questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



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## Part Two: Organizational Learning Practices<sup>2</sup>

5. Are we working in an organization which fosters ongoing learning and innovation?	Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree	Unsure	Comments & Suggestions <i>What improvements are needed? What organizational supports are needed?</i>
Our organization fosters a learning culture and climate. <i>(e.g. innovation and experimentation are encouraged)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization engages in inter-organizational learning. <i>(e.g. we share ideas and practices with other organizations to our mutual benefit)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization has accountability systems that help improve operations as they go along. <i>(e.g. we track implementation of new practices, provide feedback and coaching)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization rewards people for a variety of different and broad activities. <i>(e.g. people are rewarded for investing in new things)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our staff shares information willingly with each other.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization encourages self-development opportunities for staff. <i>(e.g. development and growth of careers/roles are encouraged)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Our organization allocates significant resources <i>(time, money, personnel)</i> for learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from: Indicators to Help with Capacity Building in Health Promotion. Australian Centre for Health Promotion. <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2000/pdf/capbuild.pdf>



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## Planning Guide

**A. From your comments and suggestions of the improvements you would like to see, pull out the top 5 to 10 ideas.**

Select those which seem most desirable and achievable over the short and long term, given organizational opportunities, constraints and resources.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

**B. Develop an action plan and a timeframe for each of the above ideas.**

Some ideas may be simple enough implement within 2 months. Others may require a longer-term action plan. In each case, identify the steps and the people who will be responsible.

Time Frame	Goal	Action Step(s)	Person(s) Responsible

## Step 1 - Define Evidence Question

### Checklist for Identifying and Resolving Unproductive Evidence Questions

There are situations in which you are unlikely to find useful information. How frustrating! One can often predict whether a particular evidence search may be unproductive. The table below lists common examples and potential solutions for locating the information you seek.

Unproductive Evidence Question	Alternative Approaches
Deals with a very new or emergent issue	Connect with <i>Informed Colleagues</i> Conduct a local study
There are several similar questions	Combine into a broader question
Question too specific and narrow in scope	Begin with a broader question and then narrow search
Relates to acceptability of an approach to local intended audience	Conduct a <i>formative evaluation</i> or <i>focus group</i>
Relates to fit of an approach for your community	Conduct a <i>focus group</i> or <i>pilot study</i>
You want to know will this work in my community?	
Relates to opportunity cost of an approach	Conduct a local consultation

The alternative approaches for obtaining information, as seen above, often involves obtaining locally available sources evidence.

### External vs. Local Evidence Sources

Generally, we think of evidence as something that exists outside of our local experience (*i.e. in publications and literature from sources external to our community*). Let's call this '*External Evidence*'. However, much of the information we need to guide programming decisions comes from local sources (*i.e. our own 'backyard'*).

- **External Evidence** - Information derived from research, expertise and informed practice from outside your community

- **Local Evidence** - Information derived from situational assessments conducted within your community (*i.e. community needs & preferences, contextual factors*) and local program evaluations

**External evidence** tells us what has worked elsewhere. **Local evidence** sheds light on the specific needs and resources within our local context.

In *Step 4* you will discuss whether the evidence you have collected is relevant to the needs and preferences of your intended audience and whether it fits the circumstances of your local context.

- Now is a good time to gather whatever **situational assessment** information is available and to consider whether you need to collect anything more.
- For more information about situational assessments see:  
[www.thcu.ca/resource\\_db/pubs/248699956.pdf](http://www.thcu.ca/resource_db/pubs/248699956.pdf)



## “Keep Your Ear to the Ground”

**Community members or individuals from your intended audiences are important *Content Advisors*.** They often know what programs or activities are needed, what problems and issues they are faced with, and what works within their community.

Methods to work with and to elicit important information include):

- Focus groups
- Needs Assessment
- Surveys
- Including a representative in your *Evidence Forum (Step 4)*

**More information on working with community members is available:**

- The Health Communication Unit - Conducting a Focus Group Workbook which can be found at [www.thcu.ca/resource\\_db/pubs/982989842.pdf](http://www.thcu.ca/resource_db/pubs/982989842.pdf)
- The Community Tool Box - Information on conducting surveys which can be found at [ctb.ku.edu/tools//sub\\_section\\_main\\_1048.htm](http://ctb.ku.edu/tools//sub_section_main_1048.htm)
- Iowa State University Extension - Information on conducting needs assessments which can be found at [www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/tools/assess/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/tools/assess/)

## Step 2 - Develop Search Strategy

### Categories of Evidence: Strengths & Weaknesses

The table below outlines the strengths and weaknesses of the four categories of evidence.



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Strengths	Weaknesses
<p><b>Academic / Research Literature</b>  <i>Peer reviewed publications published commercially and indexed by major public vendors (e.g. Health-Evidence.ca, Pubmed).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally viewed as credible &amp; reliable</li> <li>• Quality assessed evidence available</li> <li>• Relatively easy to locate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less timely (<i>2-3 years for journal article publication, 5-15 years for systematic review</i>)</li> <li>• Findings often lack implications for local practice</li> </ul>
<p><b>Content Advisor</b>  <i>A specialist in a subject matter, health strategy (e.g. physical activity, injury prevention), program type (e.g. health promotion, policy) or field of practice (e.g. research).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide guidance – where to find current evidence and recommends <i>academic or grey literature</i> articles</li> <li>• Critical perspective - assists with interpreting evidence and appraising evidence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding an appropriate and willing advisor</li> </ul>
<p><b>Grey Literature</b>  <i>Non commercial publications, not indexed by major database vendors and therefore not usually subject to peer review (e.g. government reports, policy analysis, and websites).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timely and more responsive</li> <li>• Issues not addressed through research</li> <li>• References can help you find names of <i>content advisors</i> and cited literature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time consuming to identify credible sites</li> <li>• Less straightforward to search for information of interest</li> </ul>
<p><b>Informed Colleagues / Practice Networks</b>  <i>Informed colleagues - individuals expected to have an interest in or expert knowledge about a specific issue or a specific community</i>  <i>Practice network - public health practitioners who meet on a regular basis to improve their knowledge in a specific content area</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aware of latest evidence</li> <li>• Have experience in the “what” and the “how”</li> <li>• More approachable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May or may not exist in your area</li> <li>• May be difficult to locate</li> </ul>

## Using Search Terms

Many web-based evidence sites allow you to enter search terms and to connect key words to broaden or narrow your search. If you are going to use search terms remember:

- Use synonyms (*i.e. teenager, youth, adolescent*)
- Use connectors, such as AND/OR/NOT to broaden or narrow your search
  - **AND** – both terms must be present
  - **OR** – either one or both terms must be present
  - **NOT** – one term but not the other term must be present

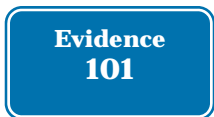
FYI - These connectors may be referred to as Boolean search operators

Documenting search terms prevents you from going around in circles and helps you to narrow down your search

## BASIC Critical Appraisal Skills

If you plan to use *Academic Literature* and/or systematic reviews that are not quality-rated, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this article relevant to my evidence question?
  - Do the results have an impact on my program?
  - Do the community/participants in the study have similar characteristics to my program's intended audience?
- Are the results valid?
  - Are the *indicators* used related to the outcomes?
  - Are the outcomes and conclusions justified?
  - Are the methods and the focus of the research clearly described and justified?



## Step 4 – Interpret & Adapt Evidence

### Guidelines for Program Adaptation

The following table provides a **Program Adaptation Checklist** which highlights factors to consider, from the perspective of the intended audience as well as the program's host organization, when adapting evidence for local use.



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## Program Adaptation Checklist\*

Issue	Intended Audience	Organization
<b>Goals &amp; Objectives</b>	Do they meet audiences' needs?	Are they consistent with the organization's strategy for this audience & issue?
<b>Approach</b> <i>(theories &amp; concepts)</i>	Do you think this approach can work with this audience in this community?	Does the organization agree with this approach for this issue & this audience?
<b>Content</b> <i>(educational level, depth of coverage &amp; comprehensibility)</i>	Is the content appropriate for your audience? How may it have to be adapted?	Does the organization have the resources to adapt content if required?
<b>Level of Understanding or Acceptance</b>	Given the values, beliefs & cultural influences of your audience, are there any aspects of the program which may not be acceptable?	N/A
<b>Fit with Available Resources</b>	Are activities realistic & achievable given community resources?	Is there sufficient: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Time to plan &amp; implement?</li> <li>▪ Trained personnel to deliver program?</li> <li>▪ Funds to implement &amp; sustain program?</li> </ul>
<b>Media &amp; Information Channels</b>	Is the message delivery system likely to be accessed by your audience?	Is there capacity <i>(expertise &amp; resources)</i> to modify the message delivery system to better fit the audience?
<b>Terminology</b>	Has program terminology been tested with audience representatives?	How will terminology be audience-tested & who will revise & retest as needed?
<b>Fit with Audience Culture</b>	Have program objectives & content been reviewed with audience representatives to ensure cultural fit?	How will cultural fit be tested & adjustments made, if necessary?
<b>Intended Actions</b>	Are desired/expected behavioural outcomes of the program consistent with needs of the intended audience?	Are desired/expected behavioural outcomes of the program consistent with organizational objectives?

\* Adapted from: NCI-SAMHSA-RTIPS "Guidelines for Choosing and Adapting Programs"  
[rtips.cancer.gov/rtips/reference/adaptation\\_guidelines.pdf](http://rtips.cancer.gov/rtips/reference/adaptation_guidelines.pdf)



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## Basic Guidelines for a SWOT Analysis

One way to assessing which recommended actions (i.e. approach) and evidence findings to adapt is to do a SWOT Analysis.

During the Evidence Forum ask yourselves the following questions for each approach you are thinking about implementing:<sup>3</sup>

- What does your organization/program team do well? What are your team's/organization's advantages? (*Strengths*)
- Where does your organization/program team need to improve to implement the recommended actions? Where do you need additional resources? (*Weaknesses*)
- What is currently happening within your community or organization that relates to your recommended action? Are there programs or resources that you can utilize? (*Opportunities*)
- What challenges/roadblocks do you face to the successful implementation of your recommended actions? What threats do your organization's/team's weaknesses expose you to? (*Threat*)

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<sup>3</sup> Disabled Peoples' International (2006) How to use SWOT Analysis.  
[www.icrpd.net/implementation/en/toolkit/section4-exercise1.htm](http://www.icrpd.net/implementation/en/toolkit/section4-exercise1.htm)