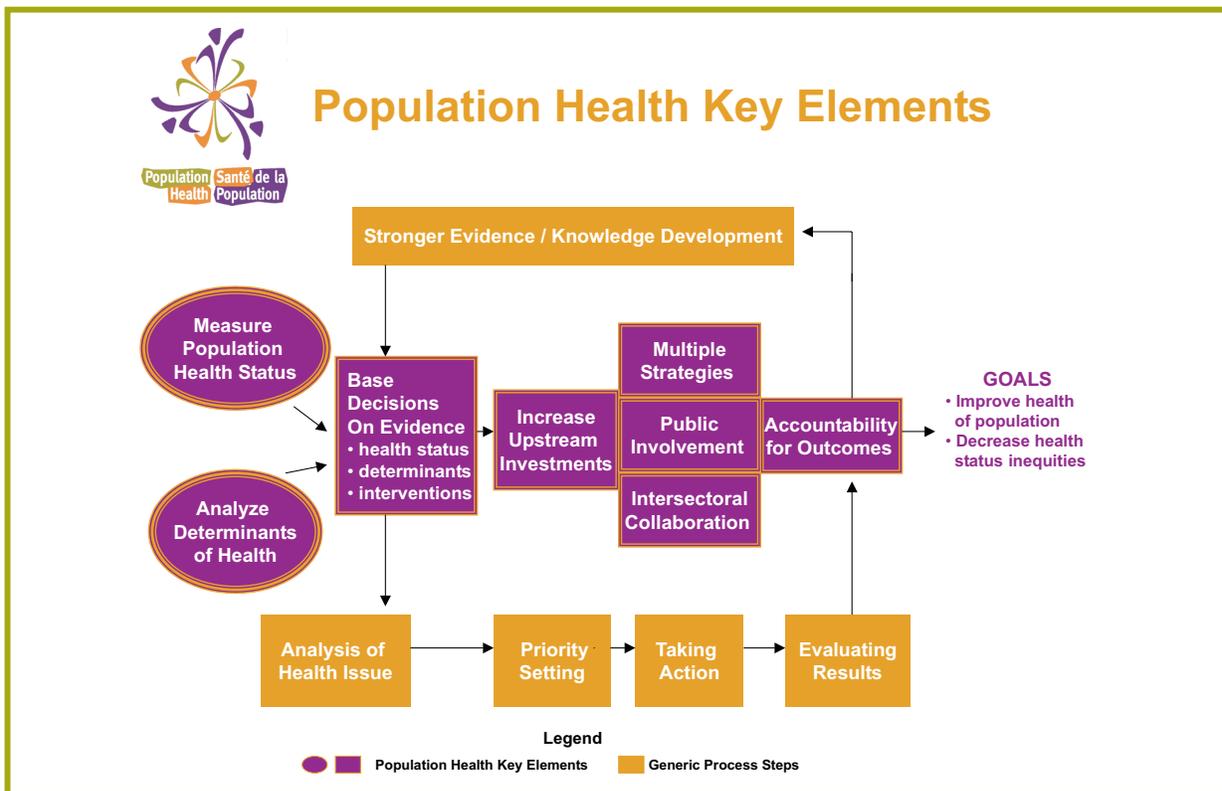




Population Health Santé de la Population

The Population Health Template Working Tool

The Population Health Template working tool organizes and consolidates current understandings of population health. Health Canada has identified population health as a key concept and approach for program and policy development aimed at improving the health of Canadians. The working tool outlines the procedures and processes required to implement a population health approach and provides guideposts that help to assess preparedness and capacity to implement population health initiatives.



The tool draws on the detailed and comprehensive discussion paper, *The Population Health Template: Key Elements and Actions that Define a Population Health Approach*. The Population Health Template can be used by multiple groups for various purposes:

- Policy makers and program planners, to guide and direct policy and program development so that initiatives reflect population health key elements;
- Health educators, to support development of training curriculum and materials that reinforce and promote population health approaches;

- Evaluators, to measure programs against population health key elements;
- Grant reviewers and writers, to assess the degree to which funding proposals align with population health concepts;
- Researchers and academics, to test for population-health related assumptions and hypotheses (and thereby, advance theory).

Background and Definition of the Population Health Approach

The population health approach builds on a long tradition of public health, community health and health promotion, and reflects the evolution of our thinking related to health. Health is understood to be a capacity or resource for everyday living, that enables us to pursue our goals, acquire skills and education, grow and satisfy our aspirations. The population health approach recognizes that many interrelated factors and conditions contribute to health.

As an approach to health, population health aims to maintain and improve the health of the entire population and to reduce inequities in health status among population groups. To reach these objectives, it considers the entire range of factors and conditions (commonly referred to as the determinants of health) – and their interactions – that have been shown to influence health over the life course. The resulting knowledge is used to develop and implement policies and actions that will achieve health gains.

The outcomes or benefits of a population health approach extend beyond improved health status outcomes. A healthier population makes more productive contributions to overall societal development, requires less support in the form of health care and social benefits, and is better able to support and sustain itself over the long term. Actions that result in good health also bring wider social, economic and environmental benefits for the population at large. These benefits include a sustainable and equitable health care system, strengthened social cohesion and citizen engagement, increased national growth and productivity and improved quality of life.

The Determinants of Health

The determinants of health include:

- ◆ social, economic and physical environments,
- ◆ early childhood development,
- ◆ personal health practices,
- ◆ individual capacity and coping skills,
- ◆ human biology, and
- ◆ health services.



Population Health Key Elements

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The *Population Health Template* working tool lays out the eight Key Elements of population health with suggested Actions for each. The eight Key Elements are all necessary for implementation of a population health approach. The accompanying list of Actions explain the steps required to implement a population health approach. Definitions and rationales for Key Elements and Actions are included in *The Population Health Template: Key Elements and Actions that Define a Population Health Approach* document. Note that it is not necessary for any one organization itself to carry out all the actions; actions may be taken by a variety of players.

Key

Element 1: *Focus on the Health of Populations*

Population health assesses health status and health status inequities over the lifespan at the population level.

This element introduces the issue or concern, explaining its connection to health and the population(s) primarily affected by it.

- 1.1 Determine indicators for measuring health status of the population addressed
- 1.2 Measure and analyse health status of the population to identify health issues
- 1.3 Assess contextual conditions, characteristics and trends

Key

Element 2: *Address the Determinants of Health and Their Interactions*

Population health measures and analyzes the full spectrum of factors — and their interactions — known to influence and contribute to health. Commonly referred to as the determinants of health, these factors include: social, economic and physical environments, early childhood development, personal health practices, individual capacity and coping skills, human biology, and health services.

This element “frames” the health issue in terms of how it came about — what factors or determinants contributed to its emergence or worsening and how far upstream are these located. This forms the basis for developing population health interventions.

- 2.1 Determine indicators for measuring the determinants of health
- 2.2 Measure and analyse the determinants of health and their interactions to link the health issues identified in Element 1 to their determinants

Key

Element 3: *Base Decisions on Evidence*

Population health uses “evidence-based decision making.” Evidence on health status, the determinants of health and the effectiveness of interventions is used to assess health, identify priorities and develop strategies to improve health.

This element defines evidence-based decision making and outlines the need to support findings and recommendations with systematic, empirical evidence and/or cogent argument. It includes information about the types of evidence available and their strength, relevance and possible weaknesses.

- 3.1 Use best evidence available at all stages of policy and program development
- 3.2 Explain criteria for including or excluding specific evidence
- 3.3 Draw on a variety of data
- 3.4 Generate data through mixed research methods
- 3.5 Identify and assess interventions for effectiveness
- 3.6 Disseminate research findings and facilitate policy uptake

Key

Element 4: *Increase Upstream Investments*

The potential for improved population health is maximized by directing increased efforts and investments “upstream” to maintain health and address the root causes of health and illness. This will help to create a more balanced and sustainable health system.

This element explains the options for intervention considered and how choices are made both in terms of addressing the more immediate causes, and at deeper levels (broad determinants) over the long term — for example, in upstream investments (protection, prevention, health promotion and action on the determinants of health) and downstream investments (treatment, rehabilitation).

- 4.1 Apply criteria to select priorities for investment, such as:
 - magnitude of the health issue(s)
 - status of current response
 - ability to effect change
 - readiness of key players
 - appropriateness for involvement
 - cost effectiveness
- 4.2 Balance short and long term investments
- 4.3 Influence investments in other sectors



Key Element 5: *Apply Multiple Strategies*

Population health integrates activities across the wide range of interventions that make up the health continuum: from health care to prevention, protection, health promotion and action on the determinants of health.

This element answers the question, “How much should we take on”? It then frames the selected actions / strategies and describes in what combinations, at which levels, by whom, at what sites, and over what time frame they will be implemented.

- 5.1 Identify scope of action for interventions
- 5.2 Take action on the determinants of health and their interactions
- 5.3 Implement strategies to reduce inequities in health status between population groups
- 5.4 Apply a comprehensive mix of interventions and strategies
- 5.5 Apply interventions that address health issues in an integrated way
- 5.6 Apply methods to improve health over the life span
- 5.7 Act in multiple settings
- 5.8 Establish a coordinating mechanism to guide interventions

Key Element 6: *Collaborate Across Sectors and Levels*

Population health calls for shared responsibility and accountability for health outcomes with multiple sectors and levels whose activities directly or indirectly impact on health or the factors known to influence it.

This element describes the partnership-building process and what it takes to make it work. It includes who is represented at the table and how they are contributing. It also explains how the group is structured and organized, and people’s roles, responsibilities and relationships. This includes leadership, management / coordination, processes, mechanisms, and communication modes.

- 6.1 Engage partners early on to establish shared values and alignment of purpose
- 6.2 Establish concrete objectives and focus on visible results
- 6.3 Identify and support a champion
- 6.4 Invest in the alliance building process
- 6.5 Generate political support and build on positive factors in the policy environment
- 6.6 Share leadership, accountability and rewards among partners

Key

Element 7: *Employ Mechanisms for Public Involvement*

Population health promotes citizen participation in health improvement. Citizens are provided opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the development of health priorities and strategies and the review of health-related outcomes.

This element outlines how the public is involved at different stages of the initiative (e.g., needs identification, planning, delivery, evaluation), including their roles (e.g., advisory committee members, peer helpers) and the processes by which they are engaged (e.g., surveys, focus groups, community forums).

- 7.1 Capture the public's interest
- 7.2 Contribute to health literacy
- 7.3 Apply public involvement strategies that link to overarching purpose

Key

Element 8: *Demonstrate Accountability for Health Outcomes*

Population health focuses on health outcomes and determining the degree of change that can actually be attributed to interventions.

This element identifies the accountability tools needed to capture and report on changes (both intended/actual and unintended) in the health status of populations and in the determinants of health.

- 8.1 Construct a results-based accountability framework
- 8.2 Ascertain baseline measures and set targets for health improvement
- 8.3 Institutionalize effective evaluation systems
- 8.4 Promote the use of health impact assessment tools
- 8.5 Publicly report results and facilitate knowledge uptake



More information is available at the
Population Health website at
www.population-health.com