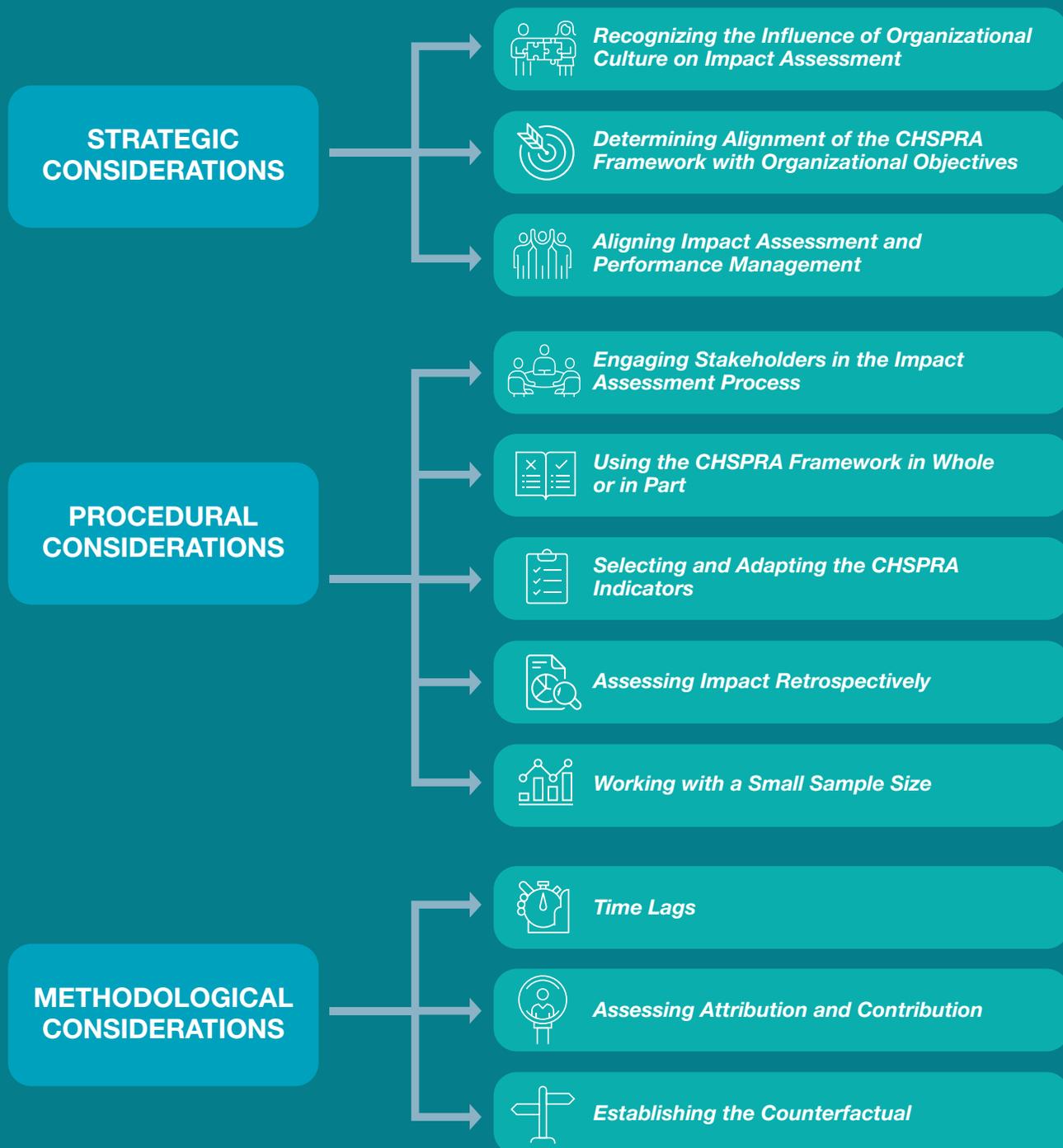


# Important Considerations for Implementing the CHSPRA Framework & Assessing Impact

## Quick Reference Guide

*From the CHSPRA Framework 'How-to' Guide*



# STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

Impact assessment can have aims and consequences at the strategic level of an organization. Below is a summary of the relevance and ways of addressing three overarching strategic considerations: culture, organizational objectives, and performance management.



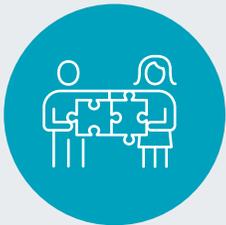
## Recognizing the Influence of Organizational Culture on Impact Assessment

Because culture plays a crucial role in shaping behaviour, introducing impact assessment or a new impact framework may stimulate changes to organizational practices and policies. This requires that leadership and staff are ready for change and that there is sufficient support available to implement assessments.

**Plan ahead and embed impact assessment into existing operations where possible** (e.g., understand leadership's mindset, scan organizational readiness, leverage existing evaluation capacity).

**Consider potential governance approaches and leverage external drivers** (e.g., engage people throughout the organization, consider a change management committee).

**Build capacity with education and training** (e.g., online and in-person training opportunities, learn by doing, presentations and briefings to leadership and staff).



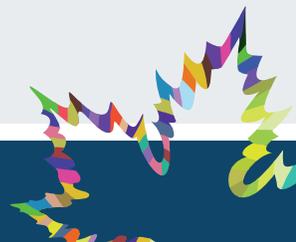
## Determining Alignment of the CHSPRA Framework with Organizational Objectives

Impact assessment should align with an organization's strategic objectives and business needs. This will have important implications for allocating time and financial and human resources for assessment.

Time and effort must be taken to **determine alignment of the CHSPRA Framework** to organizational and stakeholder needs.

Alignment can be determined by **linking or mapping the organization's strategic objectives and activities** to the CHSPRA Framework impact categories, pathways to impact, and theories of change.

**Operationalize the CHSPRA Framework on a small scale** (e.g., pilot on a program) to help determine alignment and aspects of the framework that need to be tailored.





## Aligning Impact Assessment and Performance Management

Impact assessment should be aligned with related activities such as performance management. Impact assessment takes a longer system-level view to assessing outcomes compared to performance management, which focuses on regular monitoring activities. Because impact assessment and performance management often draw on the same pool of resources (e.g., human and financial resources), it is in the organization’s interest to coordinate timelines and processes.

**Establish estimated timelines** for policy and practice objectives, and plan impact assessments accordingly.

Determine if **performance indicators** at the organizational level could also be used as impact indicators.

**Long-term, develop a plan for integrating impact assessment** alongside other organizational activities such as performance management, and outline reasonable timelines for integration.

Consider using **external consultants** to complete impact assessments to help limit the drain on human resources and provide focus and objectivity to the assessment.

## PROCEDURAL CONSIDERATIONS

*Important (and related) processes are involved in completing an impact assessment. The organizations who have implemented the CHSPRA Framework have identified five procedural considerations that those completing impact assessments should pay particular attention to: engaging stakeholders in the impact assessment process; using the CHSPRA Framework in whole or in part; selecting and adapting CHSPRA indicators; assessing impact retrospectively; and working with a small sample size. Below is a summary of and ways to address the considerations.*



## Engaging Stakeholders in the Impact Assessment Process

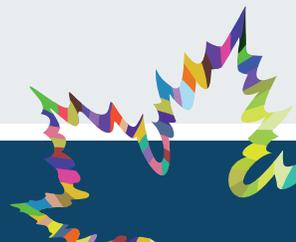
Program stakeholders are the subject matter experts and are excellent resources in the design of impact assessment. Furthermore, program stakeholders are the ones who will know what decisions need to be informed by research and their implications.

**Identify primary stakeholders** and how they are affected by or involved in the assessment.

**Engage with program stakeholders** as early as appropriate to determine what decisions the assessment findings will inform.

Use a **co-development model** to guide engagement. This approach helps integrate and optimize stakeholder engagement throughout the assessment process.

**Build additional time** into the project plan for stakeholder engagement, enabling authentic (versus tokenistic) engagement.





## Using the CHSPRA Framework in Whole or in Part

The CHSPRA Framework offers a comprehensive, non-linear representation of the complex system of change in the health sector. Seeing the process as ‘a whole’ is useful and can provide deeper insight into what and how impacts have occurred. However, using the CHSPRA Framework in this way may not be necessary or feasible. Keeping the impact assessment ‘manageable’ and matching capacity and expectations will help maintain focus on completing impact assessments.

Leverage the **CHSPRA Framework’s non-prescriptive nature** to be flexible when considering assessment needs and capacity.

**Being clear about the assessment’s purpose, objectives, and questions** will help determine what parts of the framework should be used.

**Provide a range of assessment options to leadership** with a rationale for each based on purpose, benefits to the organization, feasibility, and timelines to manage expectations and make the case for a particular approach.

Acknowledge your **organization’s current capacity** to do impact assessments. This may mean starting with a focus on a particular impact category.

If rapid results are needed, the assessment questions must be **specific and align with organizational decision-making priorities** to ensure relevance.



## Selecting and Adapting the CHSPRA Indicators

Indicators are an important part of impact assessment. They can provide evidence that program objectives have been achieved and can be used to inform organizational decisions. However, CHSPRA indicators, in their current form, may not be relevant or applicable in all organizations. Thankfully, indicators can be adapted to align with the organization’s context and objectives.

**Examine indicators relative to the organization’s reality.** Adaptations to indicators can then be made (if needed) relative to the organization’s context to ensure indicators can be operationalized.

**Leverage current organizational indicators.** The CHSPRA indicators can be used to help ‘shape’ or complement organizational indicators.

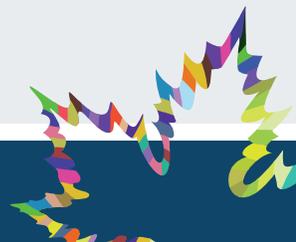
**Adapt and operationalize the indicator** relative to the appropriate unit of analysis.

**Ensure the adapted indicators reflect the CHSPRA Framework impact category.**

**Determine that targets for indicators, if set, are appropriate.** Targets will depend on how the indicator is defined and whether baseline data are available.

**Repurpose the organization’s historical data/information** to align with and help inform adaptations to the CHSPRA indicators.

**Document challenges for measuring the indicators,** such as issues with potential methods and availability of data and resources.





## Assessing Impact Retrospectively

Retrospective analysis is often done because organizations have not planned for impact assessment at the outset. Impact assessment can also be retrospective in nature, looking backwards in time to assess outcomes and uncover impact pathways that can be used to assess whether and how organizational objectives were met.

If possible, aim for **prospective data collection that is driven by assessment questions and impact categories.**

Use techniques that **reduce recall bias.**

Triangulate to reduce error. Use **multiple data sources** to increase the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

**Leverage existing performance measurement indicators.**

**Be transparent** about retrofitted data and its limitations.

**Ensure data privacy, access, and use policies are followed.**



## Working with a Small Sample Size

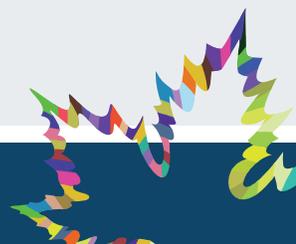
Small sample sizes may be unavoidable, the consequence of different factors such as the size of the organization/unit or the project/program being assessed. While it's true that small sample sizes can be a disadvantage for quantitative analysis, there are creative approaches that can be used to gather meaningful data on the impact of the organization or program's activities.

### **Collect rich qualitative data.**

Semi-structured interviews and open-ended survey questions can be used to supplement quantitative data, providing a full picture of the indicators.

**Leverage other similar or related data to 'tell the story'**, such as data from different organizations or historical data.

**Gather information over multiple points in time.** This is similar to a repeated measures design and will increase the number of data points available.



# METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

*There are common methodological challenges in impact assessment that vex organizations globally. The three challenges that the organizations implementing the CHSPRA Framework have experienced are: time lags, assessing attribution and contribution, and establishing the counterfactual. How these considerations are relevant and ways to address them in practice are summarized below.*



## Time Lags

Time lags, or the time that has elapsed between the start of the research process and its impact, are a reality of research impact assessment. Time lags could have positive (e.g., ensure safety of interventions) or negative (e.g., sacrifice patient benefit) consequences. Anticipating time lags improves impact assessment by helping plan and execute assessments (e.g., indicator and method selection) as well as identify what impacts are measurable at what point.

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**Set a clear focus** (e.g., purpose, questions) for the assessment to determine what will be assessed and the assessment timelines.

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**Use an impact framework**, such as the CHSPRA Framework, to address time lags by outlining which impacts are more likely to occur over short-, medium-, and long-terms.

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**Identify and monitor ‘signposts’** (e.g., indicators, targets, proxies) along the pathway to highlight progress to downstream impacts or lack thereof so adjustments can be made.

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**Explore designs that are congruent with the timeline for anticipated impact.** Different designs (e.g., case study, quasi-experimental, mixed method) can be used to capture various points in time along the pathway to impact.

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**Map out the chronological time to complete the assessment**, considering factors that will influence time lags in completing the assessment such as data availability.

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**Communicate with organizational leadership and stakeholders early on** about the timing of impacts (short-, medium-, and long-term) to manage expectations and illustrate progress.





## Assessing Attribution and Contribution

Establishing a causal link between an organization's activities and system-level change is challenging. An organization's impact assessment aspirations may not be realistic. Additionally, leadership and stakeholders may expect or assume impact assessments will result in attribution claims, where contribution is more likely. There is also risk with claiming attribution, especially if supporting evidence is absent. However, being clear about attribution aspirations may drive the organization's thinking and the need to establish its contribution to system-level change.

**Take a realistic perspective from the outset.** Demonstrating contribution to change rather than attribution is more viable and likely more accurate.

**Be clear about the assumptions** of what an impact assessment can achieve.

**Use impact frameworks** (e.g., CHSPRA Framework), multiple methods/triangulation of data sources, and validated tools for structure and evidence.

**Consider assessment of attribution with short-term impacts** that are within the organization's control.

**Engage partners and stakeholders** in developing and implementing impact assessments to keep the assessment honest.



## Establishing the Counterfactual

Counterfactuals can be used to determine whether there are alternate explanations for program outcomes.

Counterfactual analysis adds rigour to the assessment and is a common stakeholder consideration (i.e., "would these results have happened anyway"). However, implementing a counterfactual design in practice is challenging and may require taking advantage of real-world or naturally occurring comparisons.

**Counterfactuals should be driven by stakeholder needs** and stakeholders should be informed of the associated strengths, limitations, and costs.

**Choose the right program or project.** Counterfactual analysis may be better suited for programs with more tangible outcomes.

**Use different and multiple methods** to address feasibility challenges.

**Be realistic about causation.** Accepting correlations may be necessary, as well as ensuring triangulation of lines of evidence.

**Keep the entire impact pathway in mind.** The pathways to impact provide a big picture view of various ways that impact can occur, which can provide perspective if there is an urge to oversimplify.

