

IMPACT ASSESSMENT 101

What is Impact Assessment (IA)?

Impact Assessment (IA) is a process that helps evaluate the potential consequences—both positive and negative—of a proposed project before it moves forward. The goal is to make informed, evidence-based decisions that minimize harm and maximize positive outcomes. This includes proposing mitigation strategies and follow-up measures to ensure the project's impacts are managed effectively.

WHO PARTICIPATES IN IA?

IA is a collaborative process with input from multiple sectors:

Proponent: The organization proposing the project, which provides detailed information on the project and potential impacts.

Government Experts: Provide scientific and technical assessments on the environment, public health, and more.

Indigenous Peoples: Key participants offering insights on how the project might affect their rights, culture, and communities. Meaningful consultation with Indigenous groups is crucial.

Public: Local communities and stakeholders contribute their knowledge, concerns, and suggestions.

Consultants and Experts: Specialists in policy, economics, social impacts, etc., may also be involved.

Purpose: Assess the environmental, social, and economic effects of projects such as dams, roads, mines, and infrastructure developments.

Origins: The IA process started in the 1960s in the U.S. and later followed in Canada, aiming to identify and avoid negative impacts early in the planning stages.

Evidence-Based Decisions: The process incorporates Indigenous Knowledge (IK), community input, and scientific data to ensure projects contribute positively to society and the environment.

Goal of Impact Assessment
to reduce or avoid negative impacts and enhance the positive outcomes of projects

BENEFITS OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- Improved planning by identifying potential issues early.
- Minimized impacts through mitigation strategies.
- Enhanced community engagement, fostering trust and ensuring the project aligns with community needs and expectations.



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This project is funded by:
The Social Sciences and
Humanities Research Council
(892-2024-1048) and
The Manitoba Law Foundation





The Impact Assessment Process

The IA process follows a series of steps to ensure that all potential impacts are thoroughly evaluated:

- 1. Pre-Project Planning:** Early engagement with affected communities and stakeholders.
- 2. Project Description:** A detailed overview of the project and its potential alternatives.
- 3. Screening:** Determines if an IA is needed for the proposed project.
- 4. Scoping:** Identifies key issues, the project area, and the project timeline to be considered in the IA.
- 5. Baseline Assessment:** Establishes the current state of the environment, society, and economy to compare against potential impacts.
- 6. Impact Assessment:** Predicts the potential impacts of the project, both positive and negative.
- 7. Mitigation Strategies:** Identifies ways to avoid or reduce negative impacts.
- 8. Significance Determination:** Determines whether any adverse effects remain significant after mitigation.
- 9. Review and Decision:** Public and technical reviews lead to a decision on whether the project should proceed.
- 10. Implementation and Follow-up:** Ongoing monitoring ensures the project adheres to approved impacts and mitigation measures.

NEXT GENERATION IA

The future of IA focuses on promoting sustainability at all levels.

Key aspects include:

- Interjurisdictional cooperation for large-scale projects.
- Indigenous rights and knowledge should be integrated at every stage of the process with more focus on promoting Indigenous sovereignty and Reconciliation.
- Ongoing public engagement and learning from past projects to improve future decision-making.



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