



# NEEDS and IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

Responding to the different needs and priorities of  
individuals and communities

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Substantive Equality Unit

# Introduction

This document is a guide to carrying out a Needs and Impact Assessment as part of implementing the Policy Framework for Substantive Equality (*Policy Framework*) and accompanies the document 'Implementing the Policy Framework for Substantive Equality', (also known as the Implementation Guide). Portfolio officers at the Substantive Equality Unit at the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) are available to help and provide training on using this tool.

**Needs and Impact Assessments aim to ensure that public sector service delivery in WA is efficiently shaped to reflect the needs and priorities of its diverse population.**

When carried out effectively a Needs and Impact Assessment will help reveal a department's resources and skill requirements for appropriately meeting client need. In this respect Needs and Impact Assessments are a necessary element of departmental strategic planning and the identification of staff learning and development needs.

This Needs and Impact Assessment tool offers a department an opportunity to review its current practice for its operational efficiency and adequacy from the client's point of view, as well as to explore potential adverse impacts on different Indigenous and ethnic minority groups.

**The main aim of this tool is to help organisations understand the impact of their policies and service delivery practices<sup>1</sup> and procedures on different Indigenous and ethnic groups.**

How will this tool benefit your department?

We know that as generic policy is translated into specific practices, it may have unintended consequences. We know that the same policy may impact differently on different client groups. Consequently by carrying out assessments on policies as they are developed, and by assessing operational practice it will be possible to:

- Develop services that respond equitably and appropriately to the needs of different Indigenous peoples and ethnic minority groups

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<sup>1</sup> Practices can include specific initiatives and projects to achieve a specified objective including functions and events being carried out sporadically or regularly.

- Identify inequalities in service or benefits that may arise, directly or indirectly as a result of the policy or practice and identify ways of addressing these
- Identify issues relating to personnel or specific resources that may have been overlooked
- Improve the quality and cost effectiveness of services by addressing the priorities of distinct client populations
- Encourage greater public involvement in policy development
- Increase public confidence and satisfaction in the services provided
- Improve job satisfaction for staff.

## D e c i d i n g   w h a t   t o   a s s e s s

This Needs and Impact Assessment tool will be used in two main ways:

1. Assess all major initiatives, (including changes to or new policies, practices and procedures) before they are implemented, and
2. Assess policies, practices and procedures which are within the service area(s) as negotiated annually with the Commissioner for Equality Opportunity.

**For example, policies, practices and procedures may include a new computer program related to service delivery, or new or revised processes for recruitment.**

It is important to recognise not all policies, practices and procedures implemented by a department are generated within that department. However a department will generally have had some input into the development of such policies and may be expected to implement them as part of its strategic and operational planning. As a consequence, the department will be assessed on how the policy, practice or procedure affects its clients and will be responsible for developing strategies and setting objectives to address any adverse impact.

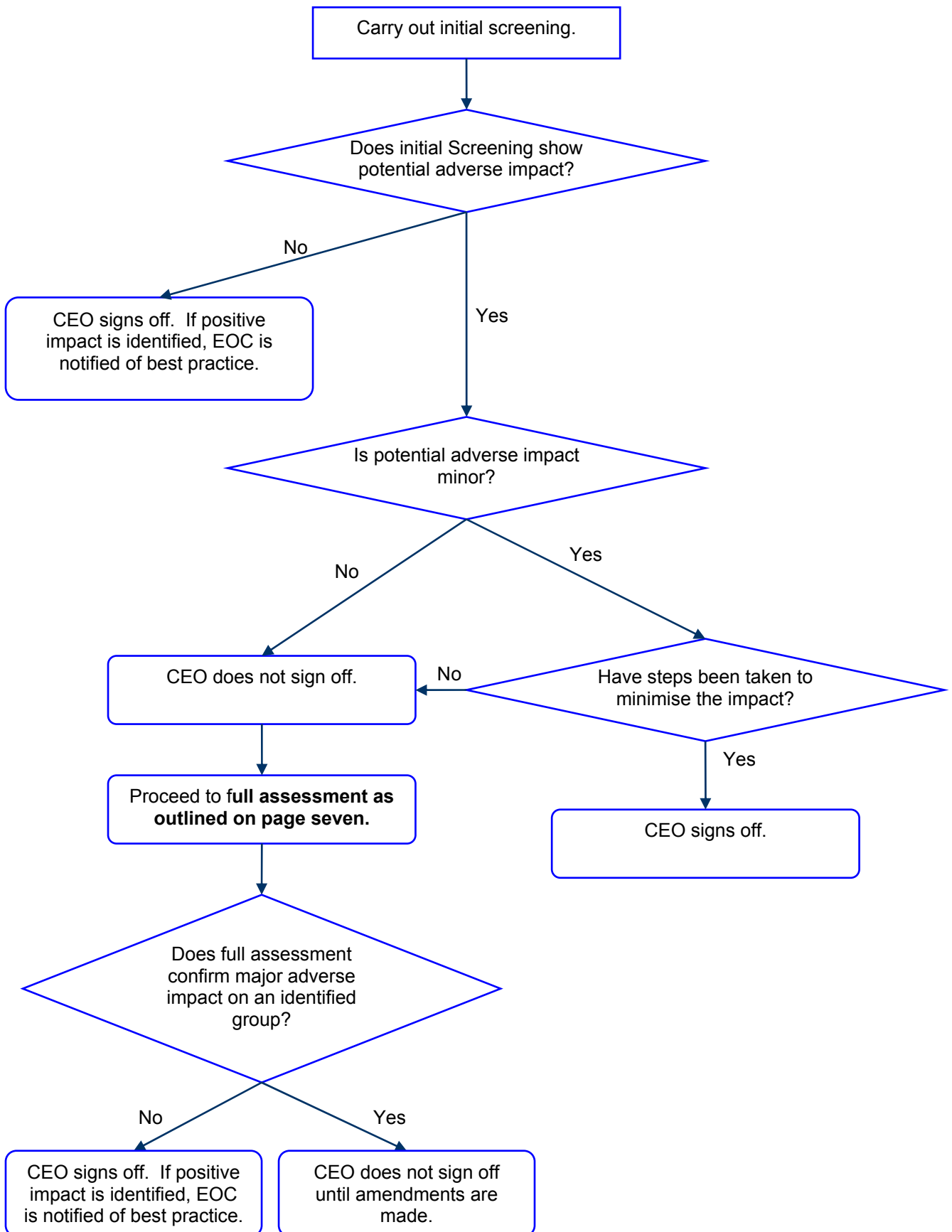
**Most policies, practices and procedures will have the potential to affect different groups of people in different ways. The Needs and Impact Assessment Tool will help identify any adverse impact.**

## Initial Screening for all major initiatives

Under the *Policy Framework* each department's existing process for adopting new policies, practices and procedures (including any major initiatives) should now include an initial screening for substantive equality. This process as outlined in the flowchart on page five, consists of an initial screening. If required this is followed by a full assessment. The CEO will sign off after the initial screening, when it is established there is no adverse impact on Indigenous and ethnic minority groups, or steps have been put in place to minimise the impact.

**If there is any doubt regarding the results of the screening process, please consult with the Equal Opportunity Commission.**

## Initial Screening for all new major initiatives, including policies, procedures and practices.

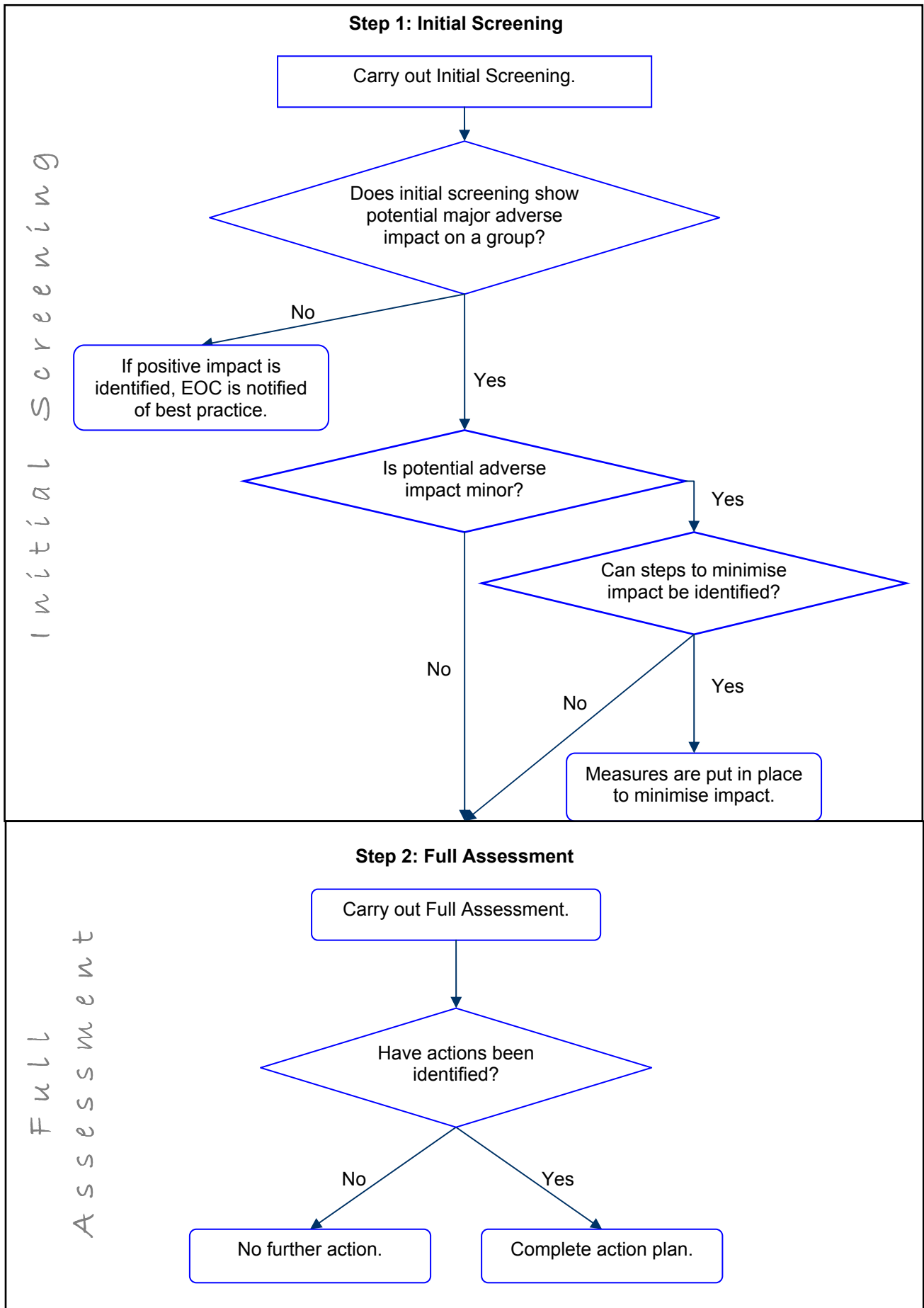


## The Needs and Impact Assessment Process

The flowchart on page five related to all new major initiatives within the department (including new policies, procedures and practices, and changes to existing policies, procedures and practices). The following flowchart relates to policies, practices and procedures within the service/divisional area nominated for implementation of the *Policy Framework*. The second stage of this flowchart - full assessment - also applies to all major initiatives within the department.

The first step of the needs and impact assessment process is an initial screening where the impact of the policy or practice on Indigenous and/or ethnic groups is assessed. The second step is a full assessment. This should only be used if the initial screening reveals a major adverse impact on a particular group(s). The flowchart on the next page outlines this two-step process.

## Assessment for service / divisional area



# The Needs and Impact Assessment Process

In carrying out a Needs and Impact Assessment, needs and impact are interrelated and you should consider if the needs of groups are being met when assessing whether a policy, practice or procedure may have an adverse impact.

The initial screening is intended to reveal if a policy, practice or procedure could impact adversely on different Indigenous or ethnic groups. Where a potential for major adverse impact is identified, the full assessment tool will help when planning to address the issues identified.

Remember to consider whether clients with particular characteristics are likely to be adversely impacted by the policy, practice or procedure and include this in the initial screening. In addition to 'race', particular characteristics as defined by the grounds of discrimination in the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* include age, pregnancy, family responsibility, religious conviction, family status, sex, impairment, spent convictions, marital status, sexual orientation, political conviction, and gender history.<sup>2</sup> An additional consideration is the regional impact for those living in a geographically isolated area.

## Where can you source information for your assessment?

1. The personnel involved in developing the policy, practice or procedure
2. The personnel who are anticipated to be / are actively involved in implementing the policy or carrying out the practice
3. Public sector personnel with specific Indigenous, ethnic or cultural expertise
4. The Equity Officer or other Equal Opportunity specialists within your department
5. Representatives of groups or agencies who are actively involved in promoting the interests of Indigenous peoples or people from different ethnic groups
6. Demographic analyses and census data
7. Internal data already collected on your client group
8. Relevant information from client complaints
9. Relevant academic and government analyses
10. Recent / relevant surveys or consultations
11. Recent audit or performance reviews
12. Reports of comparable innovations from other departments/governments/countries.

*These sources should also be utilised in more depth for a full assessment.*

<sup>2</sup> Additional information can be accessed at [www.eoc.wa.gov.au](http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au).

## Step One: Initial Screening

1. Prior to starting the screening process it is essential that:
  - a) The intended purpose of the policy, practice or procedure is clear.
  - b) Where this initiative originated is understood by asking the following questions:
    - Who generated it and on whose behalf?
    - Who has participated in its development?
    - Who is expected to implement it?
2. Using this background information, start the screening exercise through:
  - a) Succinctly stating what the key purpose of the policy, practice or procedure is (a good understanding of the policy, practice or procedure will enable you to briefly describe its purpose).
  - b) Identifying the intended beneficiaries of the policy, practice or procedure by asking the following questions.<sup>3</sup>
    - Who are the intended beneficiaries?
    - What specific needs are being addressed?
3. It is likely additional information will be needed before being able to assess whether the policy, practice or procedure can contribute to meeting different needs, or whether it has an unintended adverse impact on some groups. The information you require depends on the policy, practice or procedure under review.

The Step One: Initial Screening process is a means of making a preliminary judgement about the potential impact of a new policy, practice or procedure; or the actual impact of an existing policy, practice or procedure.

## Step Two: Full Assessment

1. Forming a judgment about whether there is a need to proceed to a full assessment will involve weighing up a number of issues, including any evidence that:
  - a) The policy, practice or procedure has or may have a major adverse impact on some Indigenous or ethnic minority groups.
  - b) Although the policy, practice or procedure does, or is likely to, achieve its stated aims, there is evidence some Indigenous or ethnic minority groups have different expectations of what such a policy, practice or procedure should achieve.
  - c) The implementation of the policy, practice or procedure has affected, or might adversely affect relations between different groups because for some this initiative is low on their priorities for resource allocation.

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<sup>3</sup> Given the commitment of this review to the achievement of substantive equality it is necessary to be actively sensitive to the ways in which the same need may be met through different preferred means in different groups. You should also be alert to the fact that different groups may not share the priorities of the person who initiated the policy, practice or procedure in how resources should be committed to different needs.

2. You can set the focus of the full assessment by referring back to the initial screening and asking the following questions:
  - What issues were raised about the potential adverse impact?
  - Has full consultation already taken place and what issues did it raise?
3. Consultation is essential for accurate needs assessment and an important part of the full assessment step. Refer to the 'Community Participation and Consultation Guide' which is attached to 'Implementing the Policy Framework for Substantive Equality', (Implementation Guide).
4. Reports and research may be useful in completing your assessment. Consider departmental reports, external research and other publications.

**It is important to put in place an action plan outlining steps to eradicate the anticipated adverse impact of the policy, practice or procedure.**

5. The action plan needs to clearly indicate the issues, proposed actions, the lead officer, priority, resource implications, timeframe and desired outcomes. As well as developing the action plan, it is important that:
  - a) Processes are put in place to monitor the implementation and outcomes.
  - b) Any best practice that emerges is captured and passed on to the Equal Opportunity Commission to inform and enhance the needs assessment process in other departments.

## Initial Screening - Impact Assessment Form

1. Name of policy, procedure or practice (including any major initiatives):

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2. What is its key purpose?  
(If specific needs are identified – note them here)

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3. Where did the initiative originate?  
(Who generated it on whose behalf? Who has participated in its development? Refer to the questions on page 9 and the list on page 8 for guidance.)

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4. Who do you need to speak with for the initial screening (refer to the list on page 8)?

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5. What are the main activities? Which departments are implementing them?

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6. Who was this policy, procedure or practice intended to benefit most?

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*Use the table on the next page to summarise your evaluation.*

## INITIAL SCREENING IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

<b>Group</b>	<b>Positive Impact</b> (i.e. it could benefit; based on the information sources outlined on p.8.)	<b>Adverse Impact</b> (i.e. it could disadvantage, based on the information sources outlined on p.8.)	<b>Other characteristics of group</b> (all 'grounds' in EO Act, e.g. age, gender, religion, impairment; and any regional impact)	<b>Reason</b>
<b>Indigenous – all</b> (All persons of Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander descent.)				
<b>Indigenous – specific</b> (Please indicate which specific community / people of Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander descent, e.g. Nyoongah.)				
<b>Ethnic minority – all</b> (All persons from ethnic minority groups.)				
<b>Ethnic minority – specific</b> (Please indicate which specific community / group and create as many categories as appropriate.)				

6. If you have reported that there is a potential adverse outcome from this policy, please indicate:

Is the adverse impact intended?

Yes  No

Is the extent of the adverse impact major or minor?

Major  Minor

7. Where the anticipated adverse impact is minor, can you identify any means to minimise or remove the impact? (If 'yes' and measures can be put in place to minimise impact, you may not need to proceed to a full assessment).

Yes

No

If yes specify how:

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8. Where you report a potentially positive impact for the policy, practice or procedure do you have any suggestions about how this outcome can be implemented in other service areas?

Yes

No

If yes please specify:

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**If in no. 6 above you have indicated that the policy, practice or procedure could have a major adverse impact you must proceed to a full assessment.**

## Full Assessment - Impact Assessment Form

1. Name of policy, practice, procedure (including any major initiatives):

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2. Referring back to the initial screening - identify the issues raised about the potential adverse impact of this initiative:

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3. Referring back to the initial screening - identify whether previous consultations have taken place. If there has already been full consultation, what does it indicate about the adverse impact of the policy, practice or procedure?

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4. From these issues, generate specific questions that you will need to answer in order to understand how the adverse impact is created, and what needs to be done for it to be corrected:

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5. Identify the stakeholders who should be consulted:<sup>4</sup>

*Client population*

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*Service providers*

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6. Identify the persons or organisations who should be consulted in order to generate the appropriate information regarding the process, resourcing and impact of the policy, practice or procedure. For example, if there are any gaps in the previous or planned consultation and research, are there any 'experts' or advisers who can be contacted to get additional information?

WHO?	WHAT INFORMATION?

<sup>4</sup> Refer to the Substantive Equality Unit's *Community Participation and Consultation Guide* for more information on consulting.

7. Identify other departmental reports, external research or studies that may have relevance for your assessment.

TITLE	HOW WILL IT BE SOURCED?

Name of officer completing this assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Completing Officer): \_\_\_\_\_

Signed date: \_\_\_\_\_

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT IMPACT TOOL – ACTION PLAN

Name of Policy, Practice, or Procedure (including major initiatives) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Identify the actions that have been agreed in order to eradicate the anticipated adverse impact of the policy, practice or procedure.

ISSUE	ACTIONS	LEAD OFFICER RESPONSIBLE	PRIORITY	RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS (if any)	TIMEFRAME	OUTCOMES

9. What measures have you started to identify against which this action plan can be monitored?

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10. Indicate the processes that have been put in place to monitor the implementation and outcomes of these remedies.

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**Specify the timeframe for this review.**

**Start date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Completion of data collection date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Completion of report date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of officer completing this assessment:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (Completing Officer):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Post Consultation and Review

11. Are there any insights / strategies that have emerged from this review process that have a wider relevance (for example to other government departments)? It will be useful to notify the Equal Opportunity Commission of these and of any best practice identified.

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