

## **UCLA Health Impact Decision Support Tool (DST)**

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### ***Description of the Health Impact DST***

The UCLA Health Impact Decision Support Tool (DST) is a graphical, spreadsheet-based tool designed to help decision-makers systematically synthesize, weigh and compare evidence specific to public health-relevant interventions and policies in a relatively short time frame. The explicit rating criteria and graphical interface of the DST supports a relatively quick, but systematic, assessment of available evidence to assess the potential value of public health interventions. It is not meant as a substitute for evidence-based reviews, but is rather intended as a support for decision-makers when time is critical and the relative merits of alternatives are mixed or ambiguous.

The DST allows comparison of up to five alternatives rated on 18 preset rating criteria encompassing four domains: feasibility, evidence of effectiveness, population impact and disparities reduction. Up to four additional user-specified criteria may be added. Users may also modify the preset rating criteria as needed. Given inherent uncertainties about the potential effects of alternatives, differing opinions and inconsistent evidence about the relative merits of alternatives in different domains, the DST does not aim to select an overall best alternative or to replace judgment about trade-offs and uncertainty, but rather it aims to support reasoned and transparent decision-making and to prompt questions that should be addressed before choosing an alternative.

### ***Rater procedures***

While the DST may be used by an individual, it is ideally suited for use by a small group that collectively evaluates and rates each specific alternative. DST users do not need to be experts, but they should have some general knowledge of concepts used in program evaluation, including efficacy, effectiveness and quality of evidence. Prior to or during the rating exercise, short summaries should be created of available evidence on the alternatives being discussed. Raters can then quickly refer to these summaries while rating alternatives. Preferably as a part of small group discussions, raters specify the importance and set the weight of each rating criteria for each alternative. Step-by-step instructions guide users on optimal use of the DST. These included on the first page of the spreadsheet.

### ***Viewing Results***

The DST displays the weighted scores for the alternatives in three different formats—table of numbers, table of icons (similar to *Consumer Reports*<sup>®</sup>), bar graphs and a scatterplot. By seeing the visual comparison of alternatives, users can quickly identify the relative strengths and weakness of each alternative, identify a preferred alternative and discuss options for improving on the selected alternative.