Meeting the Challenge: Conducting a Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Title I, Part C

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ACET Spring Conference
Austin, Texas
April 16, 2003

1. What is a comprehensive needs assessment?

2. What steps are involved in conducting a needs assessment?

3. What aspects of a needs assessment are important to its success?

4. How to move from results to accountability?
Why Conduct a Needs Assessment?
A “Needs Assessment” is a systematic approach that progresses through a defined series of phases.
Need is generally the discrepancy or gap between what is or the present state of affairs in regard to the group and what should be or desired state.
Needs Assessment

- seeks to determine such discrepancies;
- examine their nature and causes; and
- set priorities for future action.
Needs Assessment

- focuses on the *ends* rather than the *means*.
- gathers data by means of *established procedures and methods*.
- *sets priorities and determines criteria for solutions*.
- *sets criteria* for determining how to best allocate available money, people, facilities, and other resources.
- leads to *action* that will *improve* programs, services, organizational structure and operations, or a combination of these elements.
Purposes of a valid needs assessment:

• laying groundwork for designing a new/improved program;

• restructuring an organization in light of better understanding of its goals;

• setting criteria for hiring trained personnel; and

• determining possible solutions to a complex problem.
Needs assessment occurs best within an ongoing or cycled process of strategic planning, program implementation, and evaluation - formative and summative.
Needs assessment focuses on the people in the system – three levels of needs.
Level 1 - (primary) - service receivers: students, information users, clients
Level 2 - (secondary) service providers and policymakers: teachers, parents, social workers, librarians, administrators
Level 3 - (tertiary) - resources or solutions: buildings, facilities, equipment, supplies, technology, programs, salaries/benefits, working conditions
The people in Level 1 are those for whom the system ultimately exists. They are at the heart of the process.
A valid needs assessment is focused first of all on Level 1. It seeks to determine the needs of the people for whom the organization/system exists.
Many needs assessments are conducted at Level 2: determining pre-service training for counselors or determining the service needs of elementary teachers where a new math program is instituted.
A system is a regularly interacting or interdependent group of people forming a unified whole and organized for a common purpose.
An important characteristic of a system is that all parts are interdependent. Anything that affects one part of the system has consequences for the whole.
Three Phase Plan for Assessing Needs

Phase 1: Preassessment

Phase 2: Main Assessment

Phase 3: Postassessment
A Three-Phase Model of Needs Assessment

I Explore “What Is”

II Gather & Analyze Data

III Make Decisions
Preassessment:

- to investigate what is already known about the needs of the target group;

- to determine the focus and scope of the assessment; and

- to gain commitment for all stages of the assessment.
Phase 1
Preassessment
(exploration)

Set up management plan for NA

Define general purpose of the NA

Identify major need areas and/or issues

Identify existing information regarding need areas

Determine:
- Data to Collect
- Sources
- Methods
- Potential uses of data

Outcomes:

Preliminary plan for Phase 2 and 3, and plan for evaluation of the NA

Source: Witkin
Purpose: Success of Migrant Students in Reading Proficiency

Result: Success in Reading at 3rd grade

Concern: Children Ready for School

Indicators: Know numbers
Know Alphabet
Receptive Language in English
Expressive Language in English

Possible Data Sources: Pre school checklist
Diagnostic tools
Number of Books in the home
Family Background

Prioritize: Set priorities
Activity: Exploring “What Is” (continued)

• Ask the question, “Where could you get the data needed to create this indicator?”

• Suggestion: When doing this activity, set aside for the moment any inclinations to assume that the data cannot be collected. Focus on where or how you could obtain the information.
GOAL: (Result/outcome: What quality of life conditions do we want?)

Example: Graduation from High School
CONCERN:

Example: School Affiliation
### INDICATORS: (help quantify the achievement of the result)

**Examples:**

1. Percent of migrant children who perceive a connection with a caring teacher.
2. Percent of migrant children who participate in academic study groups.
3. Percent of migrant children who participate in nonacademic school activities (i.e., band, sports, clubs).

### SOURCES OF DATA:

**Examples:**

- * Survey of students
- * School records on extracurricular activities
Outcome Data

- Describe how a student or a group of students is doing at a particular moment in time
- Communicate the degree to which a student or a group of students has acquired specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes
- Are measurable and quantifiable
Perception Data

- Help us understand what students, parents, teachers, and others think about the learning environment.
- Can be gathered through questionnaires, interviews, and observations.
- Important to take into account since people act in congruence with what they believe.
Phase II: Assessment

The task is to document the status, the “what is” of the issues, to compare the status with the vision of “what should be” and to determine the magnitude of the needs and their causes.
Phase 2
Assessment
(data gathering)

- Determine context, scope, and boundaries of the NA
- Gather data on needs
- Set preliminary priorities on needs - Level 1
- Perform causal analyses at Levels 1, 2, and 3
- Analyze and synthesize all data

Outcomes:
- Criteria for action based on high-priority needs

Source: Witkin
To determine the priority of each need, examine both the difficulty of meeting it and its degree of criticality (in relation to goal attainment).

Review the ratings in light of the magnitude of the discrepancy between the present and desired states.

Use results to provide data for consideration in setting priorities and moving to solution strategies.
GOAL: _____________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEED</th>
<th>CAUSES</th>
<th>DIFFICULTY TO MEET NEED [low, medium, high]</th>
<th>CONSEQUENCES</th>
<th>CRITICALITY OF NEED 1 2 3 4 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### From What Works Ideas to a Public Square Strategy

Some Ideas on Sorting Criteria
(Not intended to take the place of hard thinking)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Works Ideas</th>
<th>Specificity</th>
<th>Leverage</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Reach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who, What, When, Where, How</td>
<td>To turn the curve</td>
<td>Community and Personal</td>
<td>Feasible Affordable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M-H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H = this year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M = next year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L = 2-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Coherence and the Public Square</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategy - Action Plan - Budget

Source: www.resultsaccountability.com
Types Of Needs Assessment Data

**Test Scores**

State Assessment Scores
Standardized Tests Scores
Norm-Reference Test Scores
Criterion Reference Test Scores
Cognitive Ability Test Scores
Language Proficiency Ratings
(English & Primary Language Other than English)
Portfolio Assessment Ratings
Teacher Survey of Basic Skill Needs
Early Childhood Development Test
Early Childhood Development Survey
Computer/Technology Literacy Skills
Types Of Needs Assessment Data

**School Involvement**

- Affiliation with teacher(s)
- Special Education (IEP)
- Free Lunch Participation
- Discipline Record
- Personal Relationships (i.e., friends)
- Enrollment/Placement in Other Programs (Title I, ESL, Bilingual, Even Start, Preschool, etc.)
- Gifted & Talented
- Interest in Adult Basic Education
- Interest in GED
- Interest in Enrollment in Public School System
- Interest in Job Training
Types Of Needs Assessment Data

**Family Background**

- Residency Data
- Homebase State/District
- Educational Attainment of Parents
- Educational Attainment of Siblings
- Language Spoken in the Home
- Language Proficiency of Parent
- Access to Transportation
- Level of Parental Involvement
- Mobility (Number of Moves)
- Family Income
Types Of Needs Assessment Data

**Family Background**

- Shelter/Food/Clothing
- Abuse/Neglect
- Family Conditions (e.g., foster care, married teen, guardian, etc.)
Types Of Needs Assessment Data

**Academic Progress**

- Age-Grade Discrepancy
- Grade Retention
- Attendance Record
- Number of Interruptions to Education During Regular School Year
- Number of TAAS Objectives Mastered
- Last Grade Completed
- Grades
- Credits Accrued for Graduation
- Number of Failed Courses
- Dropout Status
Types Of Needs Assessment Data

**Personal Characteristics**

- Self-Concept Rating
- Self-Esteem Rating
- Special Talents/Strengths
- Social Behavior Assessment
- Inventory Score
- Feelings, Attitudes, Behavior Scale Index
- Education Goals
- Career Goals
- Hours of Employment
- Library Card & Use
- Legal problem
- Recommendation for Counseling
Types Of Needs Assessment Data

**Health Indicators**

- Medical Screening Result
- Dental Screening Result
- Visual Screening Result
- Auditory Screening Result
- Immunizations
- Primary Health Care Access
- TB Test
- Most Recent Physical Exam
The main portion of the needs assessment occurs in Phase II. The needs assessment and NAC set the boundaries and focus of the needs assessment, identify needs, set preliminary priorities and perform causal analysis.
Phase III is the bridge from analysis to action.
Phase III is critical to the success of needs assessment. It answers important questions such as:

- What needs are the most critical?
- Why haven’t they been resolved before this?
- What are some possible solution strategies?
- How can we choose the best one(s)?
- The postassessment phase has been designed to help the organization answer such questions?
Phase 3
Postassessment
(utilization)

Set priorities on needs at all applicable levels
Consider alternative solutions
Develop action plan to implement solutions
Evaluate the NA
Communicate results

Outcomes:
Action plan(s), written and oral briefings, and reports

Source: Witkin
A needs assessment is planned, monitored, and evaluated.
Planning includes deciding on the objectives, focus, and scope of the assessment.
Monitoring consists of periodic checks to determine if the needs assessment is proceeding in a timely fashion and allows for corrective action if necessary.
Evaluation is designed with criteria to determine if stated goals were met, if goals were not met and reasons why.
PLANNING AND MANAGING THE NA Awareness of System or Community Needs

Figure 3.3. Needs Assessment in an Iterative Program Planning-Evaluation Cycle
Approaches to Budget Cuts

Traditional Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life Health and Safety</th>
<th>Mandated</th>
<th>Non-Mandated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Cut here (Usually prevention and infrastructure)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Keep here (Usually deep end services)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Approaches to Budget Cuts

**Traditional Approach**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maintenance/Infrastructure</th>
<th>Improving Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Essential (Cut here)</td>
<td>Not Working! (Cut here)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential (Keep Here)</td>
<td>Working (Keep here)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value based  
Fact based
Final Remarks and Reflections
Resources


www.resultsaccountabilty.com
www.quality.nist.gov