

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

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Materials adapted from "Planning and  
Conducting Needs Assessments: A Practical  
Guide" (1995)

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.

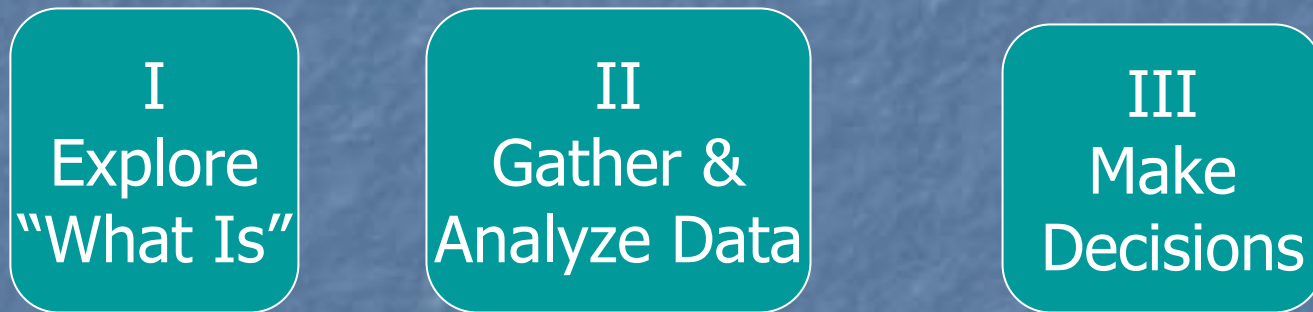
# Three Phase Plan for Assessing Needs

Phase 1: Preassessment

Phase 2: Main Assessment

Phase 3: Postassessment

# A Three-Phase Model of Needs Assessment



## 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

**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

\* 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

## Tool: Identifying & Analyzing Causes (Causes and Consequence Analysis)

- 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: \_\_\_\_\_

NEED	CAUSES	DIFFICULTY TO MEET NEED [low, medium, high]	CONSEQUENCES	CRITICALITY OF NEED 1 2 3 4 5
1.				
2.				

# From What Works Ideas to a Public Square Strategy

## Some Ideas on Sorting Criteria

(Not intended to take the place of hard thinking)

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

Strategy - Action Plan - Budget

# 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 *continued*

## 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

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

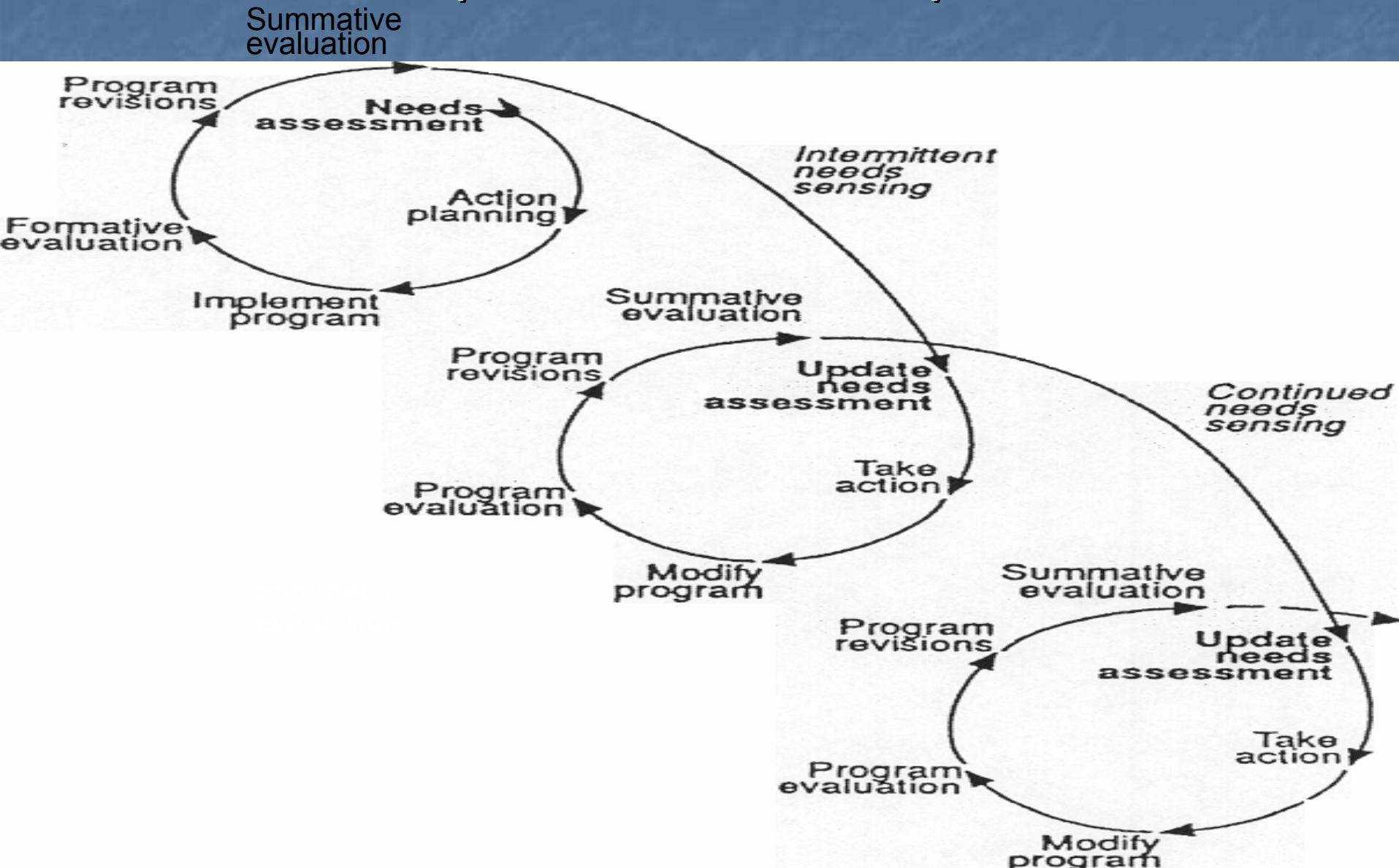


Figure 3.3. Needs Assessment in an Iterative Program Planning- Evaluation Cycle

# Approaches to Budget Cuts

## Traditional Approach

**Mandated**

**Non-Mandated**

Life Health and Safety

High Medium Low

	<b>Cut here</b> (Usually prevention and infrastructure)
<b>Keep here</b> (Usually deep end services)	

# Approaches to Budget Cuts

## Traditional Approach

**Maintenance/  
Infrastructure**

**Improving  
Results**

<b>Non-Essential</b> (Cut here)	<b>Not Working!</b> (Cut here)
<b>Essential</b> (Keep Here)	<b>Working</b> (Keep here)

Value based

Fact based

# Final Remarks and Reflections

# Resources

KAUFMAN, Roger., and Fenwick W. English. *Needs Assessment—Concept and Application*. 1979.

MCKILLIP, Jack. *Needs Analysis: Tools for the Human Services and Education*. 1987.

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WITKIN, Bell, R., and James W. Altschuld. *Planning and Conducting Needs Assessments: A Practical Guide*. 1995.

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