



Checklist for Needs Assessment (NA) Management, Planning and Implementation

This checklist provides overall guidance on the main elements to consider when managing, planning and implementing a needs assessment. This particular checklist is developed for teams who are involved with projects, programs, or policies. This checklist should be adapted to the nature of the needs assessment to be conducted (i.e., according to the assessment scale, purpose, timeline, etc.). While useful for determining and documenting plans, the checklist should be amended while the needs assessment is being conducted to reflect the current situation.

Focus of the NA:	
Name of Office/Organization Managing the NA process:	
Name(s) of checklist preparer(s):	
Date the NA will begin:	
Date of NA planned completion:	

ITEMS / QUESTIONS	Description / Comments	Responsible person or group	Completed by date
OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT			
Issue to be addressed. Describe the nature of the issue (e.g., problem, question, etc.) to be addressed through the NA.			
Purpose. What is expected to be learned from the NA? Why is the NA to be undertaken?			
Use. How will the NA findings be used? Who will use them?			
PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT			
Sponsor(s). Who is sponsoring the NA?			
Sponsor contributions to be expected. What are the types of sponsor contributions (e.g., money, employee involvement, supplying of data, etc.) expected?			
Client. Who requested that the NA be done? Who will determine if it was successful?			
Budget. What are the expenses required for consultants, travel, supplies, rentals, and related costs? (Provide details of each cost item for large scale needs assessments.)			
Time. How many days or weeks are expected of employee time for			

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involvement with the NA?			
Other resources. Explain other types and amounts of resources required.			
Period for conducting the NA. Over what period do we expect the NA to occur? When is the final NA report to be submitted?			
<p>Scope of Work / Terms of Reference Planning. What is the nature of work to be done? Typically these features are included in a larger scope NA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA purpose and major questions to be addressed • Overall management plan, timeline, and scope of work (including the hiring of any consultants, etc.) • Data requirements and data sources determination • Stakeholder / Informant determination • Data collection method and instrument development • Data collection implementation (e.g., focus groups, interviews, etc.) • Data entry, sorting and assembly (e.g., data entry, data organizing, etc.) • Data analysis – qualitative and quantitative (e.g., content analysis of qualitative data, quantitative analysis, assembling themes and patterns) • Assembling findings (e.g., constructing a story about the themes and patterns found, considering missing data and remediation approaches for handling missing information, clarifying the gaps, etc.) • Written Report preparation of the data (e.g., writing a report of the analysis, preparing tables with findings, etc.) • Reviews / Editing of Reports (e.g., internally, by peer or expert reviewers, etc.) • Oral Reporting of the findings (e.g., presentations on findings to internal and external audiences, community, etc.) • Information Dissemination (e.g., within team only, to external groups, etc.) • Follow-up action planning after completion of the NA 			
Responsible individual/team to carry out the NA. Who or which group(s)/office(s) will carry out the different steps of the needs assessment? Be sure to differentiate between those who will manage and those who will implement (e.g., carry out data collection, etc.) the work and how it will be divided.			
Internal, External, Other. Will the NA be done by an internal resource (e.g., employee(s) of the same agency for whom the NA			

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is being conducted), an external resource (e.g., independent consultants), or through another arrangement (e.g., some internal and some external resources)?			
Skills of the assessors. Are the skills of the assessors adequate and verified? Is additional training or support for them required? What is the previous experience? Is sample work available?			
Quality assurance. How will we ensure the NA is conducted in a quality manner?			
Conflicts. What are any potential conflicts related to the planning, implementation, and management?			
Products. What are the products (e.g., a report, a presentation, technical advice, etc.) expected from the NA process? What do the sponsors expect to see at the end of the process? When are the respective products to be delivered?			
Review process. What are the plans for the NA to be reviewed against different criteria – quality, appropriateness of information, etc.? Who will be reviewers and what is the justification for their selection?			
Process monitoring. What are the key benchmarks or deliverables to be monitored for progress in completing the NA?			
Internal communications. How will internal communications occur so all members of the NA team are aware of the important aspects of NA implementation?			
Risks or constraints. What are known (or possible) risks or constraints to the successful implementation of the NA?			
Credibility of the NA. How do we ensure that the NA is viewed internally and externally as valid – free from bias, etc?			
Costs-benefits of the approach taken in the NA. What are the provisions to weigh costs and benefits in the different aspects of the NA? How can costs, efficiencies and benefits be adequately addressed?			
DATA REQUIREMENTS & SOURCES			
Existing logic model review. Does a logic model (results chain) exist? What are the plans for review and verification that the logic model is properly reflective of the current situation? If it does not exist, could a logic model be constructed?			
Existing data. What data exists about the issue of inquiry? What do we know about any gaps between our current results and the results we want to achieve?			
Data quality, credibility and verification. What do we know about how data was collected? Is the data sufficiently – precise, reliable,			

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relevant, valid, etc.? How will we verify the quality?			
Data sources and access. What are the data sources (e.g., data systems, informants, reports, etc.)? Do we have access to them?			
Useful missing data. What information would be useful to know but is not available? How might we obtain it?			
Data costs. What might it cost us to obtain the data?			
Data security. What are the provisions for securing data and assuring protection of it and confidentiality (or anonymity) of sources?			
Sufficiency of data and sources. How will we know if our data are sufficient – appropriate, targeted, comprehensive, etc? How will we know when we enough data to guide decisions?			
Sampling. Will sampling be used? If so, how?			
STAKEHOLDERS & INFORMANTS			
Informants / Stakeholders. Who (individuals, groups, community, etc.) are possible informants for the NA?			
Primary informants. Who are primary informants? What information can they provide?			
Secondary informants. Who are secondary informants? What information can they provide?			
Other informants. Who are other informants? What information can they provide?			
Outreach and contact information of stakeholders/informants. How do we reach out to stakeholders or informants? Do we have contact information?			
Communications and protocols for contacting stakeholders/informants. What are the protocols (e.g., obtaining approvals for their participation, sending letters of invitation in advance, etc.) that we must observe in engaging with stakeholders/informants?			
Conflicts for stakeholders / informants. What are any potential conflicts that the different types of stakeholders / informants might have?			
Updating stakeholders. Who else should be kept informed on the progress of the needs assessment (e.g., groups potentially indirectly impacted by the results of the NA)?			
DATA COLLECTION METHOD & INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT			

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Data collection methods. What are the data collection methods planned? What are the criteria for selecting these methods?			
Data collection phasing and triangulation. How will the data collection methods be phased? How will the data be triangulated?			
Instrument protocol development. What topics should the instruments cover? How should the instruments be structured and formatted? Are sample instruments available? Who is to develop the instruments?			
Instrument testing and revisions. How will the instruments be tested? Who will be responsible for revisions and secondary testing?			
Incentives and compensation. Will any incentives or compensation be provided to informants (i.e., for their time and effort)?			
Administration of data collection. When will the data collection efforts occur? How will the efforts be divided and coordinated?			
Training of data collectors. How will data collectors be trained?			
DATA ANALYSIS PLANS			
Data system management. What is the system for managing data (e.g., a database)?			
Data entry. How will data be transcribed? How will data be entered into a database?			
Data entry instructions and coding. Are instructions being prepared for how to enter data? Is a “data dictionary” or explanation about how data are to be coded being prepared?			
Data entry training. Who is responsible for training data enterers? How and when will training occur?			
Data entry timing. What are the plans for monitoring the timing of data transcription and entry so as not to lose, in particular, the nuances of qualitative narrative data?			
Data verification. How will entered data be checked for errors?			
Quantitative data analysis. How will quantitative data be analyzed (e.g., Excel, SPSS, etc.)? What would sample data reports look like?			
Quantitative data analysis reviews. What is the review process for reviewing the correct interpretation and reporting of raw numerical data, statistical analyses, charts, etc.?			
Qualitative data analysis. <i>Note multiple items below</i>			
Interpreting data. Who is in charge of overseeing the			

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interpretation of qualitative data, providing guidance, etc.?			
Content analysis. How will content be analyzed?			
Categorization. How will categorization of themes occur? Who is responsible?			
Coding. What is the process for coding? Who is responsible?			
Data dictionary preparation. What is the process for developing and documenting the data dictionary?			
Inter-coder reliability. What are the provisions for multiple raters and cross-checking of coding/ratings?			
Data transfer. If consultants or independent groups are conducting the NA, how and in what form will collected data be transferred to the NA manager/team? How will respondent data remain confidential (where appropriate) and at the same time certain data be made available to the NA manager and/or sponsor?			
FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT (completed after the assessment is done)			
Existing strengths. Were existing strengths (i.e., what is working well) identified? What are the existing strengths?			
Gap. What is (are) the gap(s) in results? What is it that should be achieved, that is currently not being achieved?			
Current results. What are the current results being achieved?			
Desired results. What are the desired results to be achieved? <i>Indicate if there are stages of results (e.g., 1 year out, five years out, etc.) and different levels of results (if any).</i>			
Alignment. Is there alignment between gaps identified at the strategic, tactical, and operational levels?			
Prioritization of gaps. Were the gaps in results prioritized ? Based on what criteria ?			
Causal analysis. Were gaps analyzed for primary “causes”?			
Proposed solutions. Were activities (i.e., solutions) identified to address the “causes” of the gaps? How were the solutions prioritized?			
Logic model / results chain development. Was a logic model developed to illustrate the findings? Were indicators and measurements (and any targets and baselines) elaborated in the logic model?			
Capacity building. How can capacity be built within the organization to achieve desired results?			

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Final recommendations. What were the recommended actions of the NA?			
WRITTEN REPORTING OF THE DATA			
Expected content. What are the expected contents and sections of the report? Are existing reporting templates available?			
Format. What are the formats indicating how the reports (e.g., executive brief, full report, public information brief, etc.) should look?			
Graphics and charts. What is expected in terms of graphic and chart design? Will specialists in graphics and design be available for this work?			
Report timing. What are the timelines for drafts, revisions, and final versions of the reports?			
Audience. Who are the different audiences for the different reports? Should different audiences get different reports?			
Report availability and dissemination. How will reports be made available – hard copies, posted on websites, copies in public information or community centers?			
Language. In what language(s) will the report(s) be made available? Will report(s) be made available in the language of majority and minority stakeholders? What provisions will be made for those with low literacy skills?			
Feedback. What is the process for giving stakeholders an opportunity to provide feedback? Will stakeholders be able to provide feedback prior to the release of the report?			
REVIEWS / EDITING OF REPORTS			
Reviewers. Who are reviewers – internal, external, academic/expert, beneficiaries, etc.?			
Reviewer guidelines. What are the guidelines given to reviewers?			
Review schedule. When will reviews occur? What is the expected turn-around time for reviewers?			
Reviewer compensation. Will reviewers be compensated in some way? If so, which reviewers?			
ORAL REPORTING			
Expected content. What will be presented orally?			

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Format. What are the formats of oral reporting – community briefings, podcasts, radio, etc?			
Visual tools. What visual tools – e.g., posters, PowerPoint presentations, etc – will complement oral presentations?			
Report timing. What are the timelines for the oral reporting?			
Audience. Who are the different audiences for the different oral reports?			
Communications. How will stakeholders know about the oral presentation scheduling, who is presenting, and how to participate?			
Language. In what language(s) will the presentation(s) be made available? Will provisions be made available in the language of majority and minority stakeholders?			
Feedback. What is the process for giving stakeholders an opportunity to provide feedback?			
FOLLOW-UP ACTION PLANNING AFTER COMPLETION OF THE NA			
Decisions. What will the process be for decision-making? Who are decision-makers?			
Communication about decisions. How will decisions be communicated?			
Documenting decisions. What is the process for documenting the decision-making process and final decisions?			
Criticisms. What is the process for documenting and/or acting on criticisms of stakeholders?			
Formative Evaluation of NA. What is the process for evaluating and making recommendations for how to improve the NA process?			