

Assignment One Discussion

Online Learning:

OL 203 Designing and Funding Non Profit Projects. The Community Focus

Center for Sustainable Development: <https://nonprofit.csd-i.org/ol-203-designing-and-funding-non-profit-programs-3/>

Assignment One. Strengths and Weaknesses: Capacity, Assets and Vulnerabilities.

Four months ago in OL 201, we did a participatory needs assessment with members of the community that you serve. This was a fairly simple needs assessment but it gave us the information that we needed to begin designing a project and developing management and funding documents. So now you have a set of templates which can be quickly and easily edited.

This week we're going to start the process of going a little bit deeper into the needs assessment process. This will give us some new perspectives on the challenges that the community members had voiced. This will not only continue to build our relationship with community members and increase their ownership in the project, it will also allow us to fine tune our project design.

I have included a series of excellent documents at the bottom of this discussion that you can download that go into fairly great detail about how to conduct a participatory capacity, assets and vulnerability assessment—and also discuss the remarkable benefits of so doing. But here are a few quotes that I've copied from several those documents to get you started.

A needs assessment is an important part of nonprofit program planning. If you're thinking of starting a new program, a needs assessment to determine whether the program is necessary should be the first step you take. Among others, your needs assessment should evaluate the answers to the following questions:

- are other organizations providing the same service? Obviously, you don't want to duplicate services if another organization is already doing a good job.
- How many people might use your service?
- Can and will people pay for the service?

How to Conduct a Needs Assessment for Your Nonprofit Program. Stan Hutton and Francis Phillips

A well thought out plan will be helpful in program execution as well as well recruiting participants, creating promotional materials, soliciting donors and evaluating programmatic success.

A needs assessment is a systematic review of the existing capacity and needs for a given group. It asks what does this group have and what do they need? It should include information garnered from community members that will demonstrate gaps between current situations and more desirable outcomes.

Planning Steps. Community toolkit

A needs assessment determines if there is really a need in your community for the services you propose to offer. Is there another nonprofit providing the same services? Who is your audience? What is their demographic profile? Are they low income? Single mothers? Senior citizens? Where do they live? How many people are there who need your service?

What are the group's needs and desires? Conduct a simple survey of the sample group to find out what they are thinking. You may think they need one thing, but they may actually need and want something else. Using a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) commonly used in business, can be useful and provide an easy-to-follow format

What Is a Needs Assessment and Why Do I Need One for a Nonprofit. Joanne Fritz.

Program planning should involve potential clients as much as possible. One can embark on a wonderful program planning process with all the right parts but if key clients aren't involved to provide perspectives from the program user's point of view, the organization may build a beautiful ladder – but on the wrong roof. Therefore, involve clients as much as possible in the initial ideas for a program. Discuss with them your perceptions of their unmet needs. Try to verify if these needs actually exist and how they would like their needs to be met.

Understanding your programs target markets make it much easier for you to ensure that your program remains highly effective. If you've done a good job so far of strategic planning and program planning, then identifying the primary target markets should be fairly straightforward. However, it can also be very useful in determining several additional target markets. These additional markets are often where you should focus promotions and can mean additional sources of assistance and revenue. An example of this might be:

- target market one: dropouts from Minneapolis high schools
- target market two: counselors in Minneapolis high schools
- target market three: parents of dropouts from Minneapolis schools
- target market four: job placement services seeking to help people find jobs
- target market five: local businesses looking for employees

Basic Guide to Nonprofit Program Design and Marketing. Carter McNamara

In order to effectively serve the community, it is important to understand the community. This understanding can be achieved through a community assessment. The findings from an assessment will define the extent of the needs that exist in a community and the depth of the assets available within the community to address those needs. This understanding of needs and assets can be used to strategically plan and deliver relevant, successful, and timely services. Needs can be defined as the gap between what the situation is and what it should be.

Conducting a Community Needs Assessment. Strengthening Nonprofits. Compassion Capital Fund National Resource Center

At a very fundamental level, stakeholder involvement is critical for strengthening ownership and ensuring relevance to local priority needs.

Early engagement of relative stakeholders is critical to any project where a wealth of traditional knowledge provides a basis for project design. The key premise is that local populations are capable of making their own appraisals, plans, and needs analysis.

UNDP Designing Climate Change Adaptation Initiatives - Toolkit for Practitioners

This week we're going to plan the delivery of a workshop for next week which will help in exchanging knowledge with the community that we serve. We will learn from them many things that they already know about their community.

We will be using a handbook from the Rotary club called "Community Assessment Tools." It is a companion piece to "Communities in Action: a Guide to Effective Projects." These documents give us a good introduction to key concepts behind assessments and the handbook provides us with eight exercises designed to help us better understand how the community functions the areas where they're most vulnerable, and an idea of assets that may be available to them.

I'm also going to suggest that you read through the link to the document below called "Conducting a Community Assessment." It takes a more detailed approach and is very well done. Another good one to look at is the link called "Needs Assessment Ideas." It's a simple poster but it does indeed have some excellent ideas on needs assessments.

In the Rotary handbook, they offer eight different ways of assessing needs and assets with community members—each of which are only an hour or so long. I would suggest choosing the ones that are the most appropriate for your organization and the project you're hoping to do.

Some of them are fairly standard like surveys, focus groups and panel discussions—but others involve developing a community asset inventory, a community map, a daily activity schedule, and a seasonal calendar. These can be particularly effective in creating engagement with community members and in a learning process for yourself to find out in greater depth about the community and its different interactions.

For example, let's say that you want to start an afterschool teen drop-in center project. A map, developed with the help of some of the team participants can help determine practical things such as the location of schools, bus stops, and where the teens live so you can best plan the location for the center. A community asset inventory can help you discover assets such as existing facilities that you could piggyback on (like a church meeting room which isn't being used during the week) and important things such as basketball courts. A daily activity schedule and a seasonal calendar will help you plan a daily schedule for your center.

During our learning process, community members will also be able to see in visual terms where their vulnerabilities lie, and what their capacities are for filling gaps.

I'm going to provide a needs and assets workshop lesson plan for doing some of these exercises that you can modify and use.

I look forward to seeing your work this week—please move on to Assignment 1.

Sincerely,

Tim Magee

Copyright © Tim Magee

Downloadable Participatory Community Assessment Studies and Guides

Participatory Evaluation Essentials

Anita M. Baker, Ed.D., Kimberly J. Sabo, Ph. D.

The Bruner Foundation

<http://www.evaluativethinking.org/docs/EvaluationEssentials2010.pdf>

Developing a Plan for Assessing Local Needs and Resources

Community Tool Box

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/develop-a-plan/main>

Communities in Action: A Guide to Effective Projects

Rotary International

http://riifiles.com/files/resource/Communities_in_Action_605a_en.pdf

Community Assessment Tools

Rotary International

http://riifiles.com/files/resource/Comm_Assess_Tools.pdf

Urban Indian Voices: A Community-Based Participatory Research Health and Needs Assessment

Chad V. Johnson, PhD, Jami Bartgis, PhD, Jody A. Worley, PhD, Chan M. Hellman, PhD, and Russell Burkhart

http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/research/centers/CAIANH/journal/Documents/Volume%2017/17%281%29_Johnson_Urban_Indian_Voices_49-70.pdf

Needs Assessment Ideas

Craig Van Korlaar

Top Nonprofit

<https://topnonprofits.com/needs-assessment-ideas/>

How to Conduct a Needs Assessment for Your Nonprofit Program

Stan Hutton and Frances Phillips

Nonprofit Kit For Dummies, 4th Edition

<https://www.dummies.com/business/nonprofits/how-to-conduct-a-needs-assessment-for-your-nonprofit-program/>

Conducting a Community Assessment
Strengthening Nonprofits

<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/46609215/conducting-a-community-assessment-strengthening-nonprofits>

Field Guide to Nonprofit Program Design and Marketing
Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD, Authenticity Consulting, LLC

http://www.authenticityconsulting.com/pubs/PG_gdes/PG-toc.pdf

Needs Assessment Strategies for Community Groups and Organizations
Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

<https://rio.urban.uiowa.edu/smart-planning-toolbox/needs-assessment-strategies-for-community-groups-and-organizations>

Community Needs Assessments
Tracy Taylor

<https://www.learningtogive.org/resources/community-needs-assessments>