

WHAT IS A NEEDS ASSESSMENT?

A needs assessment is a systematic process for determining and addressing needs, or "gaps" between current and desired conditions. These discrepancies must be measured to accurately identify need.

It is important to correctly frame a needs assessment. This means being clear about the boundaries and expectations involved from the very beginning. Consider the following questions when starting to conceptualize a needs assessment. Refer to these questions throughout the process as well to ensure that the correct frame is still top of mind.

Why is this being done?	What are the broad questions it is trying to answer?
Who are the primary intended users?	Who are the stakeholders?
What are the expectations of the stakeholders?	What are the intended uses?
What are the variables that will be used to make judgments about whether it is good or bad, better or worse, successful or unsuccessful, getting better or getting worse, etc.?	
What does success look like?	What are the key evaluation questions?
Are there any anticipated challenges? If so, how will they be addressed?	How will the information be shared with others?

For further information, consider the following:

[Sue Hamann on Tips for Novice Needs Assessors](#)

[Ryan Watkins on Planning to Measure Needs](#)

[Bethany Laursen on How to Evaluate the Situation, Not Just the Program: It's Complex!](#)