

# 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.

<b>Why is this being done?</b>	<b>What are the broad questions it is trying to answer?</b>
<b>Who are the primary intended users?</b>	<b>Who are the stakeholders?</b>
<b>What are the expectations of the stakeholders?</b>	<b>What are the intended uses?</b>
<b>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.?</b>	
<b>What does success look like?</b>	<b>What are the key evaluation questions?</b>
<b>Are there any anticipated challenges? If so, how will they be addressed?</b>	<b>How will the information be shared with others?</b>

## 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!](#)