Conducting a Needs Assessment

Definitions:

- *Needs Assessment: A method for determining existing "gaps" between current state and desired state to help develop an action plan to reach that desired state or goal.*
- *Need*: the gap or discrepancy between a present state and a desired state.
- *Learning Need*: A gap between a learner's current level of knowledge/skills and the level required to perform a task or a set of tasks.

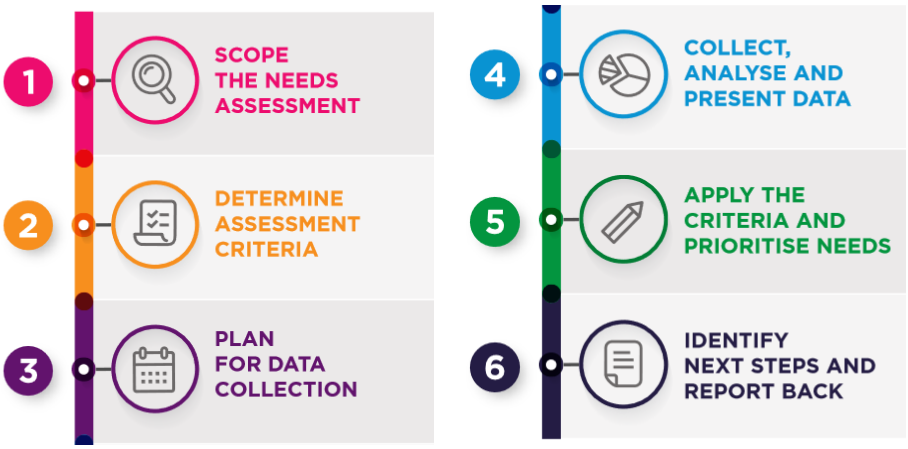
Types of needs:

- Perceived: "I know what I want and need to know"
- Unperceived: "I don't know what I don't know"
- Misperceived: "I think I know something I don't"
- Emergent: "Now that I have new information, I realize I want/ need to learn something instead of/ in addition to what I'm learning now"

Types of Models

Process	Mapping	Matrix
Pros: Linear process Generalizable,	***Pros***: Can identify relationships between different areas Process can be scaled	***Pros***: Identifies fields and areas for assessment
Cons: Need to identify specific fields requires prior knowledge	***Cons***: No sequence, set of inter-related tasks	***Cons***: No sequence model not as flexible
Use: Generalizable	***Use***: Upper management	***Use***: Middle Management

Smart's 6-step model:



1) Scope the needs Assessment:

- What is the purpose?
- Who will use the results?
- Who and what will be included/excluded from the process?
- What are the available resources?
- How will the community be involved?
- Who will be the decision-makers?
- What are the needs? (perceived/unperceived/misperceived/emergent)

2) Determine the Assessment Criteria

the Issue	Context and Community	Agency and Resources
Equity Long term impact Feasibility to change Severity Frequency Intersection with other issues	Other related work Public and political support Agency/ regional/ national goals and priorities	Staff expertise Managerial support Resources required Existing programs/ interventions

3) Plan for data collection and 4) Collect, analyze, and present data

- Informal discussions
- Focus groups interviews
- Surveys
- Chart audits
- Standardized patients
- Standardized testing

5) Apply the criteria and prioritize needs

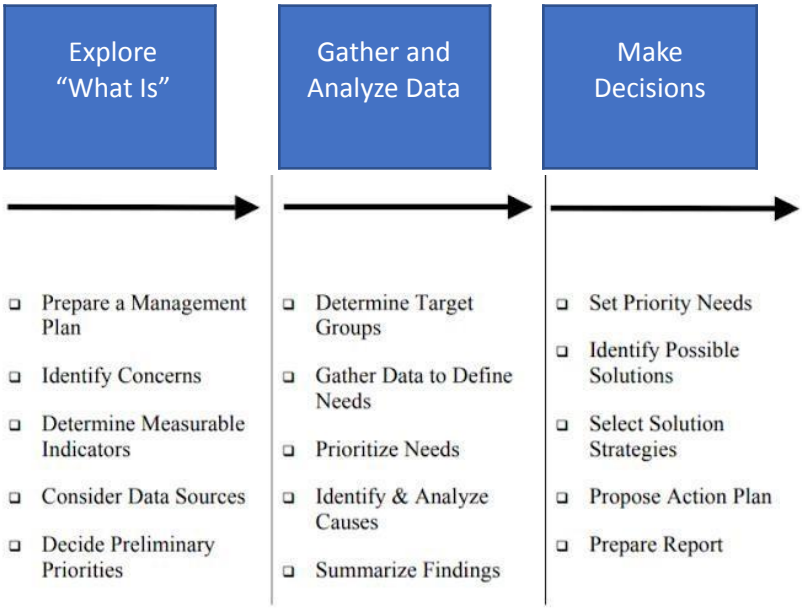
- **Meet with decision making group**
  - steering committee
  - stakeholders
- **Determine decision- making strategy**
  - rating and ranking
  - relative worth
  - forced ranking
  - delphi
  - hanlon
  - delbeq

Rating and ranking strategy
- review criteria (step 2)
- discuss issues
- rate issues (individually / small groups)
- discuss ratings as a group
- rank issues according to agreed criteria

6) Step 6 - Identify next steps and report back

- Aims to select interventions to address the issue
- Target interventions towards a group/population
- Communicate back to stakeholders as to why issues were prioritized

Quick Summary Guide:



References:

Smart J. Needs assessment: Families and Children Expert Panel practice resource. Australian Institute of Family Studies; 2019 Mar 29

Leigh D, Watkins R, Platt WA, Kaufman R. Alternate models of needs assessment: Selecting the right one for your organization (Links to an external site.). Human Resource Development Quarterly. 2000 Mar;11(1):87-93.