Fiscal Management

Grant Writing

Strategic Planning

Needs Assessment

Program Development

Technology Development

Human Resources

Volunteer Management

Surviving an Audit

Program Evaluation

Board Development

Faith-Based Leadership Development

Starting a Nonprofit

Leadership Development

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

NATIONAL MINORITY AIDS COUNCIL

Dear Colleague,

On behalf of the National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC), thank you for picking up this manual and taking a step toward increasing your capacity in this struggle. As we enter the third decade of HIV/AIDS, it is more important than ever to develop our skills and knowledge to better serve our communities and our constituents.

NMAC, established in 1987 as the premier national organization dedicated to developing leadership within communities of color to address the challenge of HIV/AIDS, works to proactively produce and provide skills-building tools to our community. One such tool is the manual that you hold in your hands.

The Technical Assistance and Training Division's mission to build the capacity and strength of community-based organizations (CBOs), Community Planning Groups for HIV Prevention (CPGs), and Health Departments throughout the United States and its territories is supported though a multi-faceted approach. This approach includes Individualized Capacity Building Assistance (ICBA), written information (manuals, publications, and information provided through NMAC's website and listserv), and interactive learning experiences (trainings). All components are integral to providing a comprehensive CBA experience, as opposed to offering isolated instances or random episodes of assistance.

After undergoing a revision of existing curricula and publications and an expansion of our current catalog of subject areas to include more organization infrastructure topics, NMAC is proud to present you with this new manual, Needs Assessment. One of 15 topic areas in which we provide capacity building assistance, this manual will provide you with detailed information, resources and the knowledge to enhance your capacity to provide much-needed services in your community.

Our hope is that this revised manual will give you the skills and knowledge to increase your capacity and serve your community at a greater level than ever before. Please feel free to contact us if you would like further information on other services we can provide to you and your community.

Yours in the struggle,

Paul Akio Kawata
Executive Director

Contents

Preface

Organizational Effectiveness

Successful community-based organizations (CBOs) can attribute their success to employing 15 key components that support organizational effectiveness. See the model below.

Ongoing learning and training in each of these areas will allow your organization to meet the needs of your constituents.

For information regarding training in any of these areas, contact the National Minority AIDS Council's Technical Assistance, Training and Treatment Division by telephone at (202) 234-5120 or by e-mail at ta_info@nmac.org.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS MODEL
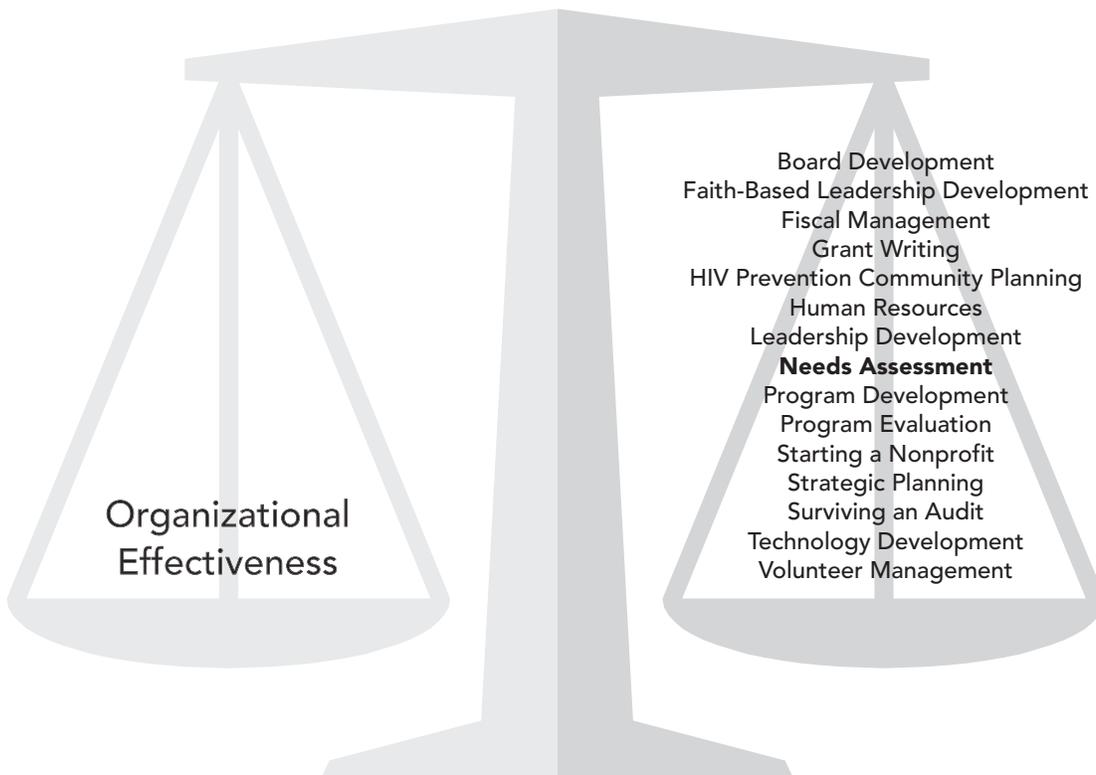
Board Development
Faith-Based Leadership Development
Fiscal Management
Grant Writing
HIV Prevention Community Planning
Human Resources
Leadership Development
Needs Assessment
Program Development
Program Evaluation
Starting a Nonprofit
Strategic Planning
Surviving an Audit
Technology Development
Volunteer Management

Organizational
Effectiveness

Introduction

Effective human services programs operate in the context of a well-managed and effectively administered organization and are supported by a solid fiscal management system. For nonprofit organizations (NPOs), the infrastructure encompasses a governing body, executive leadership, human resources systems, fiscal systems, management information systems, planning and program evaluation. Successful nonprofits constantly strive to improve their management systems.

The first purpose of this training manual is to present the techniques for completing an assessment of a nonprofit's needs. With a completed needs assessment, a nonprofit can then build its capacity and seek appropriate technical assistance from consultants, peers and funding sources.

The second purpose of this training manual is to present the steps and processes required in a community needs assessment, which looks externally and differs from the assessment of the organization's own needs, which looks internally. The community needs assessment is critical for planning services and for pursuing funds.

Purpose

The purpose of this training manual is to present the techniques for completing an assessment of a nonprofit organization. Learners who will benefit most include executive directors, operating officers, program directors and others responsible for major decisions.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this manual, learners will be able to:

✓ Identify the characteristics of a well-managed and effectively administered organization.
✓ Perform an assessment of their organization's needs.
✓ Establish priorities.
✓ Prepare an action plan.
✓ Conduct a community needs assessment.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The infrastructure of an NPO (nonprofit) encompasses its governing body, executive leadership, human resources systems, fiscal systems, management information systems, planning and program evaluation.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A systematic appraisal of the available services and/or gaps in services within a defined community at a particular point in time.

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A community needs assessment is a process for obtaining and analyzing information to determine the current status and service needs of a defined population or geographic area.

Pre-training Assessment

This Pre-training Assessment is a way to check your knowledge against the information pro-vided in this training manual. The correct responses to the assessment are on page 59.

We encourage you to use this resource as an opportunity to learn new information, to address challenges you may be experiencing and to develop a networking system.

Pre-training Assessment

Please circle either True or False for the following statements.

1. **True**   **False**   Good management is needed in both for-profit and nonprofit organizations (NPOs).

2. **True**   **False**   The executive director can complete a needs assessment.

3. **True**   **False**   The board of directors should be involved in conducting the needs assessment and preparing the action plan.

4. **True**   **False**   Fiscal systems should always be the first priority of management.

5. **True**   **False**   An NPO (nonprofit) that provides only one type of service does not need elaborate management infrastructure.

6. **True**   **False**   Relationships with other organizations affect the management infrastructure.

7. **True**   **False**   A community needs assessment is the same as an assessment of the organization's management infrastructure.

8. **True**   **False**   A community needs assessment entails focus groups and public forums.

9. **True**   **False**   The community needs assessment is external.

Check answers on page 59, after reading the manual thoroughly.

Check the Pulse

This "Check the Pulse" exercise helps you tailor this training exercise to meet your learning needs by developing your own objectives for each module. This exercise also encourages you to consider what information and expertise you already possess. Finally, you can use it to identify your most significant learning objectives and consider what would be beneficial to you and your organization.

Exercise 1: Check the Pulse

Directions:

✓ Review the learning objectives for each unit.
✓ Under the Checking the Pulse section, list your learning objectives. Think about what knowledge and skills you would like to acquire in this unit.
✓ List the experiences you could share with others.
✓ Repeat this process for each unit in this manual.
✓ Then go back and review your learning objectives for each unit. Identify the most important learning objectives.
✓ Write these objectives below:

My most important learning objectives:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

UNIT 1:

Characteristics of Organizations

Purpose:

This unit identifies characteristics of organizations that influence the infrastructure that is needed.

Learning Objective:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

✓ Identify organizational characteristics that affect management infrastructure.

I. Introduction

Effective human services programs operate in the context of a well-managed and effectively administered organization and are supported by a solid fiscal management system. While this is applicable to all organizations, not every organization has the same needs for infrastructure. What works for one nonprofit (NPO) may be too big or too complicated or not address a particular situation for another.

II. Factors that Affect Management Needs

What are some other factors that will affect management infrastructure? What kind of special management systems might these NPOs need? Some organizational characteristics for NPOs are identified below:

- ✓ Provides more than one type of service.
- ✓ Serves a small, densely populated or a large, sparsely populated geographic area.
- ✓ Has multiple funding sources.
- ✓ Has only one funding source.
- ✓ Must bill third party payers such as Medicaid and Medicare.
- ✓ Makes referrals to other organizations.
- ✓ Competes with other organizations located nearby.
- ✓ Serves a highly diverse population.
- ✓ Must ensure a high degree of cultural competency.
- ✓ Serves a population with special needs.
- ✓ Must produce a complex data analysis.
- ✓ Operates a continuous quality improvement (CQI) program.
- ✓ Operates an outcome-based program.

Learner Exercise

Think about the organizational characteristics listed on the previous page and identify others that affect infrastructure. Identify components of management that might be needed to accommodate these characteristics.

Infrastructure

Effective human services programs operate in the context of a well-managed and effectively administered organization and are supported by a solid fiscal management system. Collectively, the management and fiscal systems that are the foundation or basic structure of an organization are called the infrastructure.

In each of these two areas of the infrastructure there are a number of inputs that are considered important for an organization seeking to provide effective and efficient services in a manner that achieves high levels of customer satisfaction and successful outcomes. When these inputs are not present, when they are not aligned and when they are not coordinated many of the dimensions needed for system optimization are absent.

For each of these two domains, there are criteria that describe how each of several factors ensures the delivery of quality and effective services. No one factor guarantees quality and, conversely, the absence of any one factor does not indicate lack of quality. However, taken together, data gathered from nonprofits on these factors can assist in making judgments on the quality and effectiveness of the services being provided.

Management Factors	Criteria
Governance	✓ An active, well-trained and involved board of directors.
	✓ Policies established by the board of directors include fiscal and personnel policies.
	✓ Board of directors evaluates executive director's performance and sets compensation.
	✓ Board of directors membership reflects the diversity of the communities served by the organization.

Management Factors	Criteria
Administration	✓ A well-qualified management team that uses effective communication practices.
	✓ Conflict of interest policy applies to board members, staff and volunteers.
	✓ Personnel policies address employee evaluations, grievance procedures and confidentiality in addition to covering the basic elements of the employment relationship (e.g., working conditions, benefits, vacation and sick leave).
	✓ Periodic reviews of organization's compliance with existing legal, regulatory and financial reporting requirements.
Evaluation	✓ Procedures in place for evaluating programs and projects, both qualitatively and quantitatively.
Strategic Planning	✓ The strategic plan incorporates changing external needs, was developed with broad input and guides planning and decision-making.
Interagency Linkages	✓ Clearly defined, effective relationships with other agencies that secure access to additional services to meet client needs.
Cultural Competency	✓ A clearly defined program and trained staff who ensure that the program is culturally relevant for the clients being served.
Staffing	✓ Stable staff with appropriate credentials and ongoing plans and opportunities for their professional development.
Management Information Systems	✓ Data systems that meet reporting requirements and supply accurate, timely data for clinical and management operations.
Quality Assurance	✓ Structured quality assurance activities that monitor and analyze key data and incorporate findings into quality improvement efforts.

Fiscal Factors	Criteria
Planning and Budgeting	✓ Appropriate budget development and management including variance analysis, board review, revenue analysis and unit cost analysis.
Internal Control and Accounting System	✓ Written fiscal management policies, accounting system with appropriate separation of responsibilities and ability to allocate expenses to cost centers.
Status of Current Financial Position	✓ Appropriate levels of cash, carry-over and reserve funds.
Payroll	✓ Standards, procedures and verifications, timely payment of payroll taxes.
Documentation of Staff Time and Effort	✓ Procedures for time card completion and allocation of staff time to cost centers, policies and procedures for accrual management and payroll advances.
Revenue and Allocations	✓ Cost center budget for revenue and expenses, capacity for allocating overhead costs and operating costs, and allocating staff across multiple cost centers.
Reporting	✓ Capacity to provide standard reports at appropriate times to key audiences.
Audits	✓ Audit of financial statements and an A–133 audit conducted by an independent certified public accountant.
Tax and Other Required Reporting	✓ Submission of required IRS forms, availability of employee benefits plans.

Learner Exercise

Think about these criteria and identify additional criteria that affect infrastructure. Give examples of systems, controls, policies and procedures that organizations should have in place to meet those criteria.

UNIT 2:

Needs Assessment — When, Who & How

Purpose:

This unit discusses the circumstances under which a needs assessment should be conducted, i.e., the "when." This unit also discusses who conducts the needs assessment and how it is conducted.

Learning Objective:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

✓ Describe the process for conducting a needs assessment.

The processes used for conducting a needs assessment may be as varied as the different kinds of nonprofits that provide human services. It may be a self-assessment done internally by one or more key staff. It may be handled by an outside observer, for example, a professional services organization that provides technical assistance. Or, it may be done as a combination of self-assessment and assessment by an outside observer.

There are several indicators that it is time to conduct a needs assessment, including:

✓ When there is a significant change in leadership.
✓ When an audit, program evaluation, site visit report or other type of analysis indicates problems in the infrastructure.
✓ When there has been a significant increase or decrease in funding.
✓ When a program or service line is being added or dropped.
✓ When the organization will begin operating in a new geographical area.
✓ When the organization will close operations in a geographic area.
✓ When a major policy change that may affect critical management systems is contemplated.
✓ When the operating or legal environment changes.
✓ When customers or strategic partners complain that the organization is not responsive.
✓ When an opportunity for training or technical assistance or for funding to build capacity exists.
✓ When an opportunity exists.

Learner Exercise

Think about these indicators and identify specific examples of challenges that might be addressed in a needs assessment.

An individual or group — usually the executive director or a member of the senior staff — must initiate the needs assessment process. This might occur in any of the circumstances described by the indicators in the previous section. Then the question is, "Who should carry out the needs assessment?" The answer is, "It depends."

Most often, the executive director or another key employee will complete a self-assessment and then seek additional input — either by direct observation of management systems or interviews with employees.

The advantage of engaging other employees in the needs assessment process is that it can create a sense of ownership of both the assessment and the subsequent plans to address specific needs. Also, a dialogue with others can elicit a variety of perspectives and can even be the starting point for prioritization (discussed in a later section).

You can obtain input from employees using questionnaires, interviews with individuals or focus groups.

Focus groups, in essence, are small, temporary communities formed for the purpose of a collaborative enterprise of discovery and based on some interest shared by group members. Focus groups are also group interviews and participants' comments are data. Focus groups can be used to identify problems, to plan, to implement or to assess. Focus groups are not just supervisors asking staff questions or asking employees for status reports.

Successful focus groups are well-planned by clearly stating the purpose, selecting participants, formulating questions and appointing moderators. Data, i.e., input from the participants, are then analyzed. Usually, the moderator is an independent person who can encourage candid discussion.

Special Opportunities for Technical Assistance

Sometimes a nonprofit will have an opportunity to receive technical assistance. In these cases, the grantor or professional services organization that provides technical assistance will conduct the needs assessment by interviewing key staff and reviewing materials such as budgets, performance reports and audits. This allows the professional services organization to assist in decisions about the scope of the technical assistance, the deliverables, the priorities and the consultant(s) to be assigned to necessary tasks.

UNIT 3:

Conducting the Needs Assessment

Learning Objective:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

✓ Conduct a needs assessment.

This unit provides sample questions that nonprofits can use to construct their own needs assessment tool.

Name of Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP Code _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

E-Mail _____ Web Site _____

Name of Executive Director/Manager _____

Name of Contact Person _____

Geographical Location Served _____

Hours of Operation _____

Number of Employees _____

Divisions/Programs within Agency _____

_____

Incorporated ❏ Yes ❏ No   Tax-Exempt Status _____

Annual Budget _____

HIV/Prevention/Education Budget _____

– Continued –

CDC Funding ❏ Yes ❏ No   If Yes, Amount _____

List Other Funding Sources _____

_____

_____

_____

Type of Organization

❏ Social/Cultural ❏ HIV Prevention/Education ❏ AIDS Services ❏ Education/Political
❏ Clinical Services/Health ❏ Other, Please Describe: _____

_____

Target Population

Youth   ❏ Latino ❏ African-American ❏ Asian/Pacific Islander
           ❏ Native American ❏ Caucasian

Women   ❏ Latino ❏ African-American ❏ Asian/Pacific Islander
           ❏ Native American ❏ Caucasian

MSM   ❏ Latino ❏ African-American ❏ Asian/Pacific Islander
           ❏ Native American ❏ Caucasian

IDUS   ❏ Latino ❏ African-American ❏ Asian/Pacific Islander
           ❏ Native American ❏ Caucasian

Services Provided _____

_____

_____

Description of Request for Technical Assistance _____

_____

_____

_____

UNIT 4:

Prioritizing Organizational Needs

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

✓ Determine if the needs identified are real and worth addressing.

✓ Specify the importance and urgency of the needs identified in view of other organizational needs and requirements.

By comparing the results of the needs assessment questions to the characteristics of an ideal management infrastructure, you can identify the areas in the organization's management infrastructure needing improvement. This step may produce a long list of needs — for new systems, more staff, staff training and new technology. Now you must examine these in view of their importance to your organization's goals, realities and constraints, decide if the identified needs are real and worth addressing, and specify their importance or urgency in view of other organizational needs and requirements.

Some questions to ask:

✓ How does the cost of the problem compare to the cost of implementing the solution?
✓ Are there laws requiring a solution?
✓ Is there an executive mandate for a solution?
✓ Are many people involved?
✓ How do customer specifications and expectations influence the decision?
✓ What are the consequences of leaving the problem alone?

It may be necessary to build consensus among participants toward resolving the priorities or problems identified. Consensus-building is a process of seeking agreement. It involves a good-faith effort to meet the interests of all stakeholders. You've reached consensus when everyone agrees they can live with what is proposed after every effort has been made to meet the interests of all parties. Thus, consensus-building requires that someone frame a proposal after listening carefully to everyone's concerns. Participants in a consensus-building process have the right to expect that no one will ask them to undermine their interest and the responsibility to propose solutions that will meet everyone's else's interests as well as their own. It may be necessary to use facilitation to help the group reach consensus. Most dispute resolution professionals believe that groups should seek unanimity but settle for overwhelming agreement that goes as far as possible toward meeting the interests of all stakeholders.

Setting priorities can be difficult. If technical assistance or expert advice is available, the input from an outside observer may help your organization set priorities or develop a plan that will address its problems in incremental steps over time.

Learner Exercise

Review the case studies below and identify the top priorities. Think about which problems should be addressed first and why.

Case Studies

Blue Inc. is a nonprofit organization that provides counseling and testing for HIV/AIDS patients. The current budget is $150,000, coming mostly from Medicaid billing, private donations and community agencies. The facility is small but it is available rent-free under an arrangement with a church. Staff work for very low wages or are volunteers. The director is a nurse practitioner; the staff includes one other nurse, several nursing aides and case managers. Two physicians see patients once a week. The director's husband serves as a volunteer business manager and development officer. The board of directors includes community leaders, the pastor of the church and a few consumers. Blue Inc. has just been awarded a federal grant of $350,000 for counseling and testing for HIV/AIDS patients. The new grant budget includes funds for administrative and program costs.

Red Inc. is a nonprofit organization providing outpatient substance abuse services. The previous Executive Director was terminated eight months ago after several problems were discovered with unusually high wages and bonuses paid to herself and certain other employees. Almost all the agency's cash was depleted by these drains on the payroll. During the past eight months, the board president, a retired electrical engineer, has acted as the unpaid interim director. During this time, he has relied heavily on the administrative assistant for the day-to-day operations. The board president feels that the expansion of the parking lot is a top priority and has assigned the administrative assistant to explore the costs of purchasing the vacant lot next door and to obtain bids from contractors to complete the work, using funds from a line of credit. The clinical director accepted the position of executive director. The outside accountant, who reports directly to the board, is now handling the payroll. The employees who received inappropriate raises and bonuses are still working for the organization and are still being paid at the wages established by the previous executive director. There are no personnel policies or salary scales.

Green Inc. is a nonprofit organization providing primary health care services in a medium sized city. The organization's budget is $8 million, with 20 percent from Medicaid billings, 25 percent from state and local grants, 50 percent from various federal grants and the remaining 5 percent from donations and fundraising. About 4 percent of the agency's budget is spent on administrative costs. The organization has $1 million in reserves. Green Inc. has an ambitious strategic plan that entails expansion to new sites and the addition of new programs. Several of the senior staff are apprehensive about their ability to manage the new initiatives in addition to the workloads they currently have.

UNIT 5:

Preparing the Action Plan

Learning Objective:

This unit discusses preparation of the action plan based on the needs assessment.

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

✓ Prepare an action plan.

After the problems and gaps are identified and prioritized, it is time to make plans for the solutions. Again, input can be extremely helpful. Key staff should be engaged in making recommendations for solutions. Also, you should explore seeking technical assistance or other helpful resources. The executive director or leader of the needs assessment process may look to an outside party for assistance in proposing solutions.

Create an action plan after you identify the problems. The first step in an action plan usually entails exploring solutions. Ideally, action plans specify steps to be taken, who is responsible for each step and completion deadlines. Actions plans are often presented in table format.

ACTION PLAN

The action plan specifies steps to be taken, responsible parties for each step and deadlines for work. Action plans are often presented in a table format.

Learner Exercise

Assume that a nonprofit has identified these problems: uneven treatment of employees, differences in education and experience among employees doing the same jobs and disparities in wages. A committee of organization staff has recommended to the executive director that you establish personnel policies, write job descriptions and create a salary scale. This committee will be responsible for implementing the solution. Construct an action plan using the format shown on the next page. The first few action steps are completed to help you get started.

Action	Person Responsible	Deadline
Appoint committee to recommend solution(s) to problems of uneven treatment of employees, differences in education and experience among employees doing the same jobs, and disparities in wages.	Executive Director	July 1
Committee submits recommended solutions.	Committee Chairperson	August 1
Approve recommendations of committee.	Executive Director	August 12
Assign tasks to committee members or to a subcommittee.	Committee Chairperson	August 15
Review Internet resources on personnel policies.		
Contact professional associations or other nonprofits to request examples of their personnel policies.		

UNIT 6:

Community Needs Assessment

Learning Objectives:

This unit defines the community needs assessment and explains how it differs from, but is congruent with, the needs assessment of the organization's infrastructure. Also, this unit discusses the context of the community needs assessment and explains how it is used.

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

✓ Define a community needs assessment and distinguish it from the organization's internal needs assessment.

✓ Describe the context of the community needs assessment.

✓ Explain why a community needs assessment is useful.

✓ List the major components of a community needs assessment.

While a needs assessment of your organization's infrastructure may be regarded as an internal exercise, a community needs assessment looks externally, i.e., it entails a review of the needs of a particular population or geographic area.

A community needs assessment is a process for obtaining and analyzing information to determine the current status and service needs of a defined population or geographic area. This process requires obtaining information about current conditions and the resources and approaches that are being used to address the needs of the population or area served. This information is reviewed and analyzed to determine met and unmet service needs among specific target populations as well as for the geographic area. The resulting analysis may be used to establish priorities and develop strategies for addressing them.

An external needs assessment is an essential component of community planning for health or human services. It is commonly used at county or state levels to address a broad range of service needs, including HIV/AIDS, mental health, use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, disabilities, cancer control, etc. Most grantors require a community needs assessment to demonstrate that the area meets criteria for high-priority funding or that potential grantees engage in a comprehensive, collaborative planning process. Also, most federal grantors require that a community needs assessment be evidence-based, i.e., grounded in epidemiological data, behavioral surveillance data, ongoing programmatic experience, program evaluation and other local data. For the purpose of this manual, we will use an HIV prevention community planning process as an example, although the principles described are applicable to a broad range of planning topics.

Community needs assessments should be performed in a collaborative manner, using a planning group or a committee of representatives from several organizations. The community needs assessment entails receiving input from stakeholders representing many perspectives. Usually, one organization that has a community-wide mandate, such as a health department, will initiate the process by calling the stakeholders together, forming the planning groups, etc.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identify these steps for the HIV prevention community planning process:

✓ Develop an epidemiological profile.
✓ Conduct a needs assessment.
✓ Assemble a resource inventory.
✓ Conduct a gap analysis.
✓ Identify potential strategies and interventions.
✓ Assess priority to populations and interventions.
✓ Develop a plan.
✓ Evaluate the planning process.
✓ Update the plan.

Of these nine steps, three are essential to determining unmet community needs:

✓ **Conduct a needs assessment:** Perform an assessment of the HIV prevention needs for populations identified as being at high risk for HIV infection.

✓ **Assemble a resource inventory:** Assess existing community resources for HIV prevention to determine the community's ability to respond to the epidemic; include resources that are directly HIV-related and other efforts and activities that may foster HIV risk reduction.

✓ **Conduct a gap analysis:** Identify met and unmet HIV-prevention needs within the high risk populations defined in the epidemiological profile, comparing findings from the needs assessment regarding high-risk populations with findings from the resource inventory about existing services.

Why Conduct a Community Needs Assessment?

As noted above, most grantors require that a community needs assessment demonstrate that the area meets criteria for high-priority funding or that potential grantees engage in a comprehensive, collaborative planning process. Also, most federal grantors require that community needs assessments be evidence-based. The mere process of doing a community needs assessment tends to foster collaborative relationships among organizations and a sense of ownership and commitment. In addition, the community needs assessment can be used by an organization that is considering expanding its services or serving new geographic areas.

Components of a Community Needs Assessment

Linking the Needs Assessment with the Epidemiologic Profile

The epidemiologic profile, which is usually prepared by the health department with input from planning groups or other stakeholders, provides the first step in identifying the needs for HIV prevention. The profile precedes the needs assessment and helps guide it by identifying populations at risk for HIV infections that should be targeted in the assessment. Epidemiologic data help to focus on specific populations based on such factors as race or ethnicity, gender, age, risk behavior, prevalence rates, and geographical distribution of cases. The needs assessment targets these populations. The resource inventory is a compilation of resources being used to reach target groups. The gap analysis identifies service gaps — or needs — for the target population(s).

Assessment of the HIV Prevention Needs of High-Risk Populations

The first major component of an HIV-prevention needs assessment is an analysis of the prevention needs of the target population(s) identified in the epidemiologic profile. These populations are chosen because of high or increased numbers, high proportions, or other

estimates of the impact of HIV and may be defined in many different ways. Target populations often reflect a combination of race or ethnicity, gender, age, or risk behavior. The needs assessment should investigate both the met and unmet needs of these populations and identify barriers to reaching them and engaging in prevention activities.

A "met need" is a requirement for HIV-prevention services within a specific target population that is currently being addressed through existing HIV-prevention resources that are available to, appropriate for and accessible to that population.

An "unmet need" is a requirement for HIV-prevention services within a specific target population that is not currently being addressed through existing HIV-prevention services and activities, either because no services are available or because available services are inappropriate for and/or inaccessible to the target population.

Learner Exercise:

Think of examples of met and unmet needs in your community.

Resource Inventory

The second major component of the community needs assessment is the resource inventory. The resource inventory provides a comprehensive picture of the resources currently available for HIV prevention in the geographic area. Resources include programs and services, personnel, and funding. For each provider, the resource inventory should describe: the types of HIV-prevention services that are available by geographic area, the target populations and number of clients served, funding levels and sources, and types of strategies or interventions provided. Information about accessibility and cultural competence is also helpful.

Gap Analysis

The third essential component of a community needs assessment is the gap analysis. The gap analysis uses information about the proportions of specific target populations. It also compares the availability of existing HIV-prevention resources identified in the resource inventory to the assessment of needs for the target population.

The gap analysis identifies met and unmet needs for identified target populations. The more specific the information from the needs assessment, the more precise the analysis of service gaps will be. Ideally, the gap analysis identifies and describes the level and types of unmet needs that exist for each of the target populations. The gap analysis does not estimate the number of people who are in need of services. Rather, it identifies unmet service needs for specific populations and indicates the relative size of the service gap for the various populations.

RESOURCE INVENTORY

A resource inventory is a major means of determining and describing existing resources and should include:

✓ Name, address and contact information

✓ Resources, e.g., amount of funding, type of funding, number of staff and volunteers

✓ Program focus, e.g., HIV prevention, substance abuse prevention, etc.

✓ Geographic area in which services are provided

✓ Target populations served

✓ Service capacity

✓ Strategies or interventions

✓ Information on accessibility, cultural competence

Learner Exercise:

What are some examples of gaps in services in your community? How would you estimate the relative size of the service gap? How would you present this information in a gap analysis?

UNIT 7:

Planning and Designing the Community Needs Assessment

Learning Objective:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

✓ Explain the steps for planning and designing a community needs assessment.

A successful approach to designing a community needs assessment involves the ability to see the big picture while simultaneously keeping an eye on the details. Planning groups undertaking the community needs assessment process should determine:

The Purpose and Objectives of the Community Needs Assessment

The purpose of the community needs assessment is to collect useful information for priority-setting and decision-making. The scope of the community needs assessment is determined by the desired outcomes of the process and the time horizon. These questions may help frame the purpose and objectives:

- ✓ Will this be a comprehensive needs assessment or an update of some part of an existing community needs assessment?
- ✓ Whose needs are being assessed, and what information will be sought regarding each of these populations?

Availability of Resources

Conducting a community needs assessment is a resource-intensive process. The planning group should identify what resources are available, what will be needed and how to obtain the needed resources.

Collaborative Relationships

In many communities, certain groups or organizations have the lead responsibility for addressing particular health or human services needs or geographic areas, e.g., Ryan White CARE Act planning bodies, mental health advisory committees and core service agencies. As part of a community needs assessment, it is advisable to identify areas of common interest with other planning activities and develop a plan for collaboration that ensures that all perspectives are addressed.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Planning Committee, the Health Department or Other Government Agencies and Any Other Parties

Conducting a community needs assessment in an organized manner means assigning responsibility for planning, implementing and monitoring the process. Many groups have found that a well-run needs assessment committee is essential to ensuring an effective process. For larger projects, you might choose to use a steering committee that receives

reports from smaller committees working on specific subject areas. The process requires extensive communication and cooperation among the committee members, the staff and other stakeholders.

Development of Research Questions

The design of the needs assessment includes the research questions and the methodology for collecting information. All data needs should be identified. The research questions flow directly from the desired outcomes of the community needs assessment. Basic questions for each target population are likely to include the following:

✓ What are the HIV-related risk behaviors of the target population?
✓ To what extent is the target population receiving prevention services?
✓ What barriers to access do members of the target population experience or perceive?
✓ What strategies or interventions work best with the target population?

Methodology for Collecting Information

In selecting methodology, consider the resources available and the scope of the needs assessment activities. Ideally, multiple data collection methods should be used, e.g., focus groups, reviews of existing studies and surveys.

Decisions on Specific Activities

Although a community needs assessment is a continuous process, logical starting and stopping points should be established. A realistic timeline and work plan are crucial for organizing activities. The development of the work plan and timeline includes these steps:

✓ List major tasks, e.g., conduct focus groups, complete resource inventory.
✓ Decide on the duration of the effort from start to completion.
✓ Identify specific activities and deliverables for each task.
✓ Determine deadlines for specific tasks.

UNIT 8:

Assessing Needs of High-Risk Populations

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

✓ Identify primary and secondary sources for data.

✓ Identify methods for collecting data.

Pre-existing Data

Secondary source data (pre-existing data) provide a context for the information collected specifically for the community needs assessment. Evaluation data and programmatic research offer insights into the suitability and effectiveness of certain interventions with specific populations. Behavioral science studies regarding attitudes, lifestyles and risk behavior are also helpful. For example, the planning group may seek data on:

✓ STD rates
✓ Teen pregnancy rates
✓ Substance abuse data for youth

Learner Exercise:

Identify other data that may be relevant for a community needs assessment.

Primary Source Data Collection Methods

Original data collected in a community needs assessment process, e.g., data from a youth focus group, are referred to as primary source data. Typically, community needs assessments require both review and analysis of secondary source and data and the collection of primary source data. Data for the needs assessment may take different forums and can come from many sources.

Both qualitative and quantitative data are needed in a community needs assessment. Qualitative and quantitative research complement each other by describing, clarifying and expanding on the results.

Quantitative research methods produce data that can be expressed numerically. For example, a survey of a group of students can indicate the percentage of Latino students, the percentage of those who have ever injected drugs and what types of prevention services they have received.

Qualitative research methods, such as focus groups and key informant interviews, produce information that will not be expressed numerically. For example, young gay men in a focus group could discuss motivations for using condoms and why certain outreach strategies are effective.

Focus Groups

A focus group is a carefully planned discussion among a small group of people (typically 8–12) with similar characteristics whose interaction is facilitated by a trained moderator. The facilitator or moderator uses a predetermined outline to guide the discussion and ensure that the group addresses desired topics and questions. Focus groups are commonly used as a source of qualitative information about people's met and unmet needs, satisfaction with current services, service barriers and access issues.

Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews are used to obtain qualitative information from knowledgeable individuals about such matters as perceived needs, gaps and barriers. A small number of knowledgeable individuals are selected for in-depth interviews using an interview guide or checklist that specifies major topics and issues to be covered. Qualitative information about an intervention or population that results from key informant interviews will typically need to be supplemented with other information gained from surveys, focus groups or other methods.

Community Forums and Public Meetings

Another method of collecting information is the community forum or public meeting. It is carefully orchestrated but less formal than a focus group. It often includes a larger group of participants than a focus group but is more interactive than a formal event such as a public hearing. The community forum often involves a mixed group of individuals. Open discussion is difficult to manage if the group is too large. Discussion may be time-limited. Community forums may be used for assessing needs and priorities of specific populations, identifying service barriers and obtaining feedback concerning the adequacy of current services.

Surveys

Surveys are a data collection method in which structured questionnaires are used to obtain consistent information from a sample group of people. Responses are then tabulated and analyzed to provide statistical information about a particular group. Surveys usually include short-answer questions or questions in which the respondent can choose from a list of pre-determined responses. Every participant in the sample is asked the same questions. Surveys can be conducted in person, by telephone or be self-administered.

UNIT 9:

Assembling a Resource Inventory

Learning Objective:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

✓ Identify the steps in assembling a resource inventory.

A resource inventory is more than a list of programs. Because it is a major means of determining and describing existing resources, it should furnish as much information as possible, including:

✓ Name, address and contact information
✓ Resources, e.g., amount of funding, type of funding, number of staff and volunteers
✓ Program focus, e.g., HIV prevention, substance-abuse prevention
✓ Geographic area in which services are provided
✓ Target populations served
✓ Service capacity
✓ Strategies or interventions
✓ Information on accessibility, cultural competence

Information Sources

Resource inventory information usually comes from representatives of the entities that provide the services, other providers, consumers and secondary data in the form of evaluations. Finding the information needed for the resource inventory involves such activities as:

✓ Identifying the HIV projects and activities that are not funded or represented in the planning group.
✓ Identifying non-HIV specific activities and resources that may contribute to reducing risky behavior.
✓ Locating primary or secondary data about service quality or suitability of interventions for particular target populations.

Learner Exercise:

What are some strategies to identify HIV-prevention and related activities and providers?

Developing the Inventory

Once you have identified the services and entities, take the following steps to obtain the information and compile an inventory:

✓ Develop a concise survey instrument.
✓ Decide how to summarize and present the resource inventory.
✓ Determine a plan for obtaining information, e.g., mail, fax, e-mail, personal interviews.
✓ Update the inventory regularly.
✓ Share the inventory as a directory.

Resource Inventory and the Community Needs Assessment

The resource inventory is an important part of the needs assessment because it provides an understanding of current community resources and capacity. Once you have collected and analyzed the needs assessment data, you can compare it with the inventory. This comparison is called the gap analysis. To be useful for the gap analysis, the resource inventory must provide specific information regarding:

✓ **Service capacity:** The number of individuals being served and resource levels.
✓ **Target populations:** What populations are being served and to what extent the services are considered accessible and appropriate for the population.
✓ **Geographic target areas:** The places where efforts are focused.

UNIT 10:

Preparing a Gap Analysis

Learning Objective:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

✓ Explain the steps for analyzing data and preparing a gap analysis.

Once the information collection is complete, the data are ordered and analyzed so that met and unmet needs for specific populations can be determined. This analysis of needs — a gap analysis — helps to organize and analyze the epidemiologic profile and needs assessment information and present it in formats useful for setting priorities.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data from surveys and interviews that use multiple-choice and other short-response or closed-ended questions are aggregated and analyzed using statistical methods. At a minimum, statistical analysis requires:

✓ Reviewing completed instruments to ensure that there is no missing information.
✓ Coding open-ended or other responses that were not pre-coded.
✓ Entering the information into databases.
✓ Preparing frequency distributions (a tally of the number of times each score or response occurs) that present the number and percentage of respondents giving each possible response, both overall and by population categories. The total number of respondents in each population category should also be disclosed.

Where appropriate, determine whether findings are statistically significant. No minimum sample size exists for such tests, but they are most meaningful for large samples of 100 or more.

Qualitative Analysis

Non-statistical information from focus groups, face-to-face and phone interviews, community meetings, and other data collection methods often require additional analysis, including:

✓ Identification and ordering of information related to each topic from each data collection method.
✓ Identification of the most frequent response or most common responses within and across groups of respondents, and differences reported within and across groups of respondents.
✓ Summary of information and comparison of responses by type of respondents and population group.
✓ Comparison and contrast of qualitative information about the same topic across sources
✓ Comparison of qualitative findings with quantitative findings on the same questions, topic and population groups.

Identifying Met and Unmet Needs

A gap analysis identifies met and unmet needs and, where possible, quantifies met and unmet needs by target population. It calls for integrating the following types of information:

✓ Data about specific target populations for the epidemiologic profile.
✓ Findings regarding the met and unmet needs of these target populations from the needs assessment.
✓ Information about existing resources, how they are funded and the extent to which they are reaching and serving specific target populations.
✓ Where available, secondary source data about the extent to which existing services are available, accessible and appropriate for target populations.

The steps in conducting a gap analysis are to:

✓ List and review each target population identified through the epidemiologic profile.
✓ Estimate the total need for each target population.
✓ Indicate major differences between need and demand for services for each target population.
✓ Identify barriers to services for each target population.
✓ Assess the suitability of available services for each target population.
✓ Estimate met need for each target population.
✓ Estimate unmet need for each target population.

UNIT 11:

Using the Needs Assessment Findings

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

✓ Explain techniques for writing the needs assessment report.

✓ Use the report to establish priorities.

The results of the community needs assessment provide the basis for establishing priorities among needs by populations and in terms of specific strategies. Results enable the planning group to estimate the effectiveness of strategies, guide development of an overall plan and furnish baseline data for evaluating services.

Writing the Needs Assessment Report

The needs assessment report should combine varied types of information from a wide range of sources into a usable report containing narrative, charts and tables. One consideration is whether the needs assessment is a part of an overall plan or a stand-alone report. In selecting the format and contents for a needs assessment report, the following questions should be considered:

✓ What level of detail is required to set priorities and make other decisions?
✓ What other groups are most likely to use the report?
✓ For what purpose will the report be used?
✓ What is the level of research knowledge among users of the report?

The utility of the needs assessment data for priority setting and planning depends on the way the results are presented. The analysis should present, compare and contrast information obtained from all areas of the needs assessment. The following steps will help ensure that the needs assessment results are presented in useful formats:

✓ Consider the uses to be made of the needs assessment results.
✓ Present gap analysis by target population.
✓ Organize other needs assessment data by target population and topic.
✓ Choose formats that are easy to understand and that are designed to support the decision-making process.

The report should include these sections:

✓ Executive summary
✓ Introduction
✓ Methodology
✓ Resource inventory
✓ Findings
✓ Gap analysis
✓ Conclusions and recommendations
✓ Appendices

Using the Results to Establish Priorities

Needs assessment results can provide the factual foundation for establishing priorities. The following are typical inputs to the priority-setting process:

✓ Current priorities — a summary of the current year's priorities, if available
✓ Epidemiologic data
✓ Summary data on target populations
✓ Resource inventory matrix
✓ Data on strategies and interventions
✓ Gap analysis summary

Post-training Assessment

Answers to the Pre-training Assessment

The following answers to the Pre-training Assessment are designed to provide a brief recapitulation of the material presented in this training manual.

1. **(True)** **False**   Good management is needed in both for-profit and nonprofit organizations (NPOs).
2. **(True)** **False**   The executive director can complete the needs assessment.
3. **(True)** **False**   The board of directors should be involved in conducting the needs assessment and preparing the action plan.
4. **True** **(False)**   Fiscal systems should always be the first priority of management.
5. **True** **(False)**   An NPO that provides only one type of service does not need elaborate management infrastructure.
6. **(True)** **False**   Relationships with other organizations affect the management infrastructure.
7. **True** **(False)**   A community needs assessment is the same as an assessment of the organization's management infrastructure.
8. **True** **(False)**   A community needs assessment entails focus groups and public forums.
9. **True** **(False)**   The community needs assessment is external.

APPENDIX A
Glossary

Action plan: The action plan specifies steps to be taken, responsible parties for each step and timelines. Action plans are often presented in a table format.

Community needs assessment: A process for obtaining and analyzing information to determine the current status and service needs of a defined population or geographic area.

Focus group: A carefully planned discussion among a small group of people (typically 8–12) with similar characteristics whose interaction is facilitated by a trained moderator.

Gap Analysis: Identification and quantification of met and unmet needs.

Infrastructure: The infrastructure of an NPO (nonprofit organization) encompasses its governing body, executive leadership, human resources systems, fiscal systems, management information systems, planning and program evaluation.

Needs Assessment: A systematic appraisal of the available services and/or gaps in services within a defined community at a particular point in time.

Resource inventory: A major means of determining and describing existing resources. It should include:

✓ Name, address and contact information
✓ Resources, e.g., amount of funding, type of funding, number of staff and volunteers
✓ Program focus, e.g., HIV prevention, substance abuse prevention, etc.
✓ Geographic area in which services are provided
✓ Target populations served
✓ Service capacity
✓ Strategies or interventions
✓ Information on accessibility, cultural competence

Technical Assistance: Support that is provided free of charge to community-based organizations, HIV-prevention community planning groups, community coalition development projects and health departments to increase their ability to carry out HIV prevention activities.

APPENDIX B
Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is a needs assessment?**
   A needs assessment is a systematic exploration of organizational performance and identification of areas needing improvement.

2. **Who conducts the needs assessment?**
   Most often, the executive director or another key employee will complete a self assessment and then seek additional input. Additional input may be obtained by direct observation of management systems or interviews with employees.

3. **When should a needs assessment be done?**
   NPOs can benefit from conducting a needs assessment at these times:

   - ✓ When there is a significant change in leadership.
   - ✓ When an audit, program evaluation, site visit report or other analysis indicates problems in the infrastructure.
   - ✓ When there has been significant growth or decrease in funding.
   - ✓ When a program or service line is being added or dropped.
   - ✓ When the organization will begin operating in a new geographical area.
   - ✓ When the organization will close operations in a geographic area.
   - ✓ When a major policy change is contemplated that may affect critical management systems.
   - ✓ When the operating or legal environment changes.
   - ✓ When customers or strategic partners complain that the organization is not responsive.
   - ✓ When an opportunity for training or technical assistance or for funding to build capacity exists.

4. **What is a community needs assessment?**
   A community needs assessment is a process for obtaining and analyzing information to determine the current status and service needs of a defined population or geographic area. This process requires obtaining information about current conditions and the resources and approaches that are being used to address the needs. This information is reviewed and analyzed to determine met and unmet service needs among specific target populations and for the geographic area. The resulting analysis may be used to establish priorities and develop strategies for addressing them.

5. **How does the needs assessment conducted by the organization differ from the community needs assessment?**
    While the needs assessment of the organization's infrastructure may be regarded as an internal exercise, a community needs assessment is external, i.e., it entails a review of the needs of a population or a geographic area.

6. **What are the major steps in determining unmet community needs?**
    ✓ Conduct a needs assessment: Perform an assessment of the HIV prevention needs of the populations identified by the epidemiologic profile as being at high risk for HIV infection.
    ✓ Assemble a resource inventory: Assess existing community resources for HIV prevention to determine the community's ability to respond to the epidemic; include both resources that are directly HIV-related and other efforts and activities that may favor HIV risk reduction.
    ✓ Conduct a gap analysis: Identify met and unmet HIV-prevention needs within the high-risk populations defined in the epidemiological profile, comparing findings from the needs assessment regarding high-risk populations with findings from the resource inventory about existing services.

7. **Why conduct a community needs assessment?**
    Most grantors require a community needs assessment to demonstrate that the area meets criteria for high-priority funding or that potential grantees engage in a comprehensive, collaborative planning process. Also, most federal grantors require that a community needs assessment be evidence-based. The mere process of doing a community needs assessment tends to foster collaborative relationships among organizations and a sense of ownership and commitment. In addition, the community needs assessment can be used by an organization that is considering expansion of services or expanding into more geographic areas.

APPENDIX C

Annotated Resources

Assessing the Need for HIV Prevention Services: A Guide for Community Planning Groups. Academy for Educational Development Center for Community-Based Health Strategies. (For copies of this publication, contact the National Prevention Information Network at 1-800-458-4231, identification # D153.)

Drucker Foundation Self-Assessment Tool. The Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management. (www.drucker.org or telephone (212) 224-1174.)

National Minority AIDS Council
Technical Assistance, Training and Treatment Division
1624 U Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 234-5120
www.nmac.org