

## ***Importance of Conducting Needs Assessment*** **Steps for Conducting Needs Assessment**

### ***Needs Assessments***

The most effective method to determine whom to target and to discover their needs and wants is by conducting a **Needs Assessment** within your community, facility, and/or classroom. Because needs differ from community to community, and internal customers' needs differ from external customers' needs, adult education program planning should include these Needs Assessments as a major component of program planning.

We have developed three specific Needs Assessments from which to choose depending on your need and target population.

They are:

- [Community Needs Assessment](#)  
Used within the community(ies) i.e. stores, fairs, local activities, etc.
- [Agency Needs Assessment](#)  
Used within local businesses, organizations and/or facilities to determine a need for an adult education program for employees or participants.
- [Student Needs Assessment](#)  
Used within the classroom to assist in program planning.

**Note:** It is also important to remember that, because needs and goals change, it is imperative to conduct Needs Assessments periodically during the semester, fiscal/program year, or when economic crises occur within the community. This will assure your program continues to effectively serve its target population.

***What Needs Assessment is NOT:***

- It is not expensive.
- It is not a one-time study.
- It does not take up time—it replaces time that has been wasted or underutilized.

***What Needs Assessment IS:***

- It is customer oriented.
- It is low cost.
- It involves some or all of your staff in some way.
- It is ongoing.
- It is practical.
- It costs less than not doing a Needs Assessment.

***What Needs Assessment determines:***

- Target audience(s)
- Characteristics of audience(s) i.e. age, sex, ethnicity, location
- Needs and interest of audience(s)
- Best location, day, and time in which to serve audience(s)
- Medium or technique most likely to reach audience(s) i.e. newspaper, radio, TV, poster, mailer, billboard, table tent

- Success/effectiveness of program
- Which students are “falling through the cracks”
- The root cause of the retention problems
- How to revise curriculum to meet the needs of the target population
- Goals to meet state and federal requirements, i.e. attainment of goals

***Steps in conducting Needs Assessments:***

1. Determine the purpose:
  - Why are you conducting a Needs Assessment?
  - What will you do with the results of the information you collected?
  - Who will be responsible for the remaining steps as outlined below.
2. Identify the target population:
  - Community
  - Potential and existing students
  - Agencies/businesses
3. Determine the best way to conduct the Needs Assessment, and which assessment to use:
  - Set up a booth at county, city, state fairs, or local events. (*Community*)
  - Ask for permission to set up outside the local supermarket, Kmart, Wal-Mart, Dollar General Store, etc. (*Community*)
  - Make an appointment with local businesses, organizations, and/or facilities to conduct needs assessment for employees or participants. (*Agency*)
  - Conduct door-to-door surveys within housing developments, specific target population communities, etc. (*Community, Student*)
  - Conduct periodic surveys within your classroom to determine if your program continues to meet the needs and wants of your students. (*Student/Student Interim*)
4. Compile data:
 

Separate the data via category:

  - Needs and wants
  - Demographics
  - Topics preferred, etc.
5. Analyze data:
 

How can I change my program to meet these results?

  - Do I move to another location? Change the date and time?
  - Do I adjust my curriculum?
  - What *can* I do to meet the needs of the target population?
6. Utilize data:
  - Develop a plan
    - What are the steps involved?
7. Develop a time-line:
  - Do I begin now?
  - Can I risk waiting until after the holidays?
  - Can I risk waiting until next year?