

Conducting a needs assessment should be the first step in your program planning process.

A needs assessment helps your organization understand:

- 🎯 Your target population
- 🌐 The way the target population understands their own needs (the perceived difference between what the target group wants their outcomes to be and what their outcomes actually are)
- 🌐 The ways in which your target populations' outcomes differ from accepted standards in the field

Suggestions for Conducting a Needs Assessment

Step 1: Define Your Target Population

Tip: Don't forget about gender!

- 👤 Are you including girls, women, non-binary individuals, and other minority groups in your target population? It is likely that these individuals have different needs than the majority or privileged groups.
- 🌐 Do not assume that because certain individuals share some identities that their needs will necessarily be the same. Try to conduct your needs assessment with a population as similar to your target group as possible.

Step 2: Define Your Topic/Need

Tip: Focus on areas of expertise, experience, and scope

- 🎯 If your organization is a healthcare organization, it makes sense to do a needs assessment focused on your target population's healthcare needs.
- 👤 If your organization only has a budget of \$2,000 a year for your target population, don't perform a needs assessment on surgical needs of a target population with 100,000 people.

Step 3: Create a Needs Assessment Plan

Tip: Focus on category of need first.

-  Think about the needs you will be able to address in your time frame.
-  Next, identify the indicators that match your category of need. Here you can do some research on commonly used indicators that match your needs. The indicators will determine your data collection method.
-  If the data already exists internally or is publicly accessible, there is no reason to collect the data first hand again, unless the current data is outdated .
-  Be sure to keep in mind the time and monetary cost of conducting the needs assessment based on your plan.
-  Try to steer towards cheaper, more available methods of data collection if you're on a tight budget such as published databases online, small focus groups with target population, and recent research done at your organization.

Example chart: This is part of a healthcare organization 's needs assessment that will be conducted on food security and related health indicators among a population in rural India.

Category of Need	Indicators to be Measured	Method for Data Collection	Where is this Data Located?	Who do you need to talk to/work with?
Status/ Nutrition	Anemia Vitamin Deficiencies Stunting & Wasting Obesity	Quantitative: blood tests, height & weight	Health records, WHO	Patients
Knowledge	Understanding of nutrition topics	Qualitative: surveys	Individuals	Patients
Behavior	Dietary diversity scales, medication/supplement adherence	Qualitative/Quantitative: surveys with individuals	Individuals	Patients

Step 4: Put Together Your Needs Assessment Tool

Tip: Use your needs assessment plan to determine what your needs assessment tool(s) will look like.

-  Make sure to add instructions to your tool so that standards will be upheld such as consent forms.
-  Try to assess the objective needs of the population and the populations' perceived need.
-  Triangulate data where possible. This means: ask the same questions in slightly different ways and try to confirm your qualitative data with quantitative data where possible.



Number of children (under 18) in your family _____

1) What is your family's yearly household income? (livestock, land, jobs, enough food, transport?)

- Poor
- Middle
- Rich

2) Where do you get your food?

- produced by family (livestock, grains, vegetables, fruits)
- bought from a local market
- bought from a vendor
- bought from a store
- borrowed from a neighbor, family, or friend
- gifted to me from a neighbor, family, or friend
- received at a fair price shop

3) How much do you spend on food per month?

4) How much do you specifically spend on fresh vegetables per week?

5) How many meals does everyone in your family eat in one day?

6) What did you eat for the past three meals? Please check any foods they have eaten in the past 24 hours

<input type="checkbox"/> Chai	<input type="checkbox"/> Spinach	<input type="checkbox"/> Green Beans
<input type="checkbox"/> Poha	<input type="checkbox"/> Methi	<input type="checkbox"/> Potato
<input type="checkbox"/> Upma	<input type="checkbox"/> Dill/ Sepu	<input type="checkbox"/> Chili
<input type="checkbox"/> Kicheri	<input type="checkbox"/> Eggplant	<input type="checkbox"/> Carrots
<input type="checkbox"/> Chapati	<input type="checkbox"/> Tomato	<input type="checkbox"/> Cauliflower
<input type="checkbox"/> Bhakri	<input type="checkbox"/> Garlic	<input type="checkbox"/> Onion
<input type="checkbox"/> Eggs/ Omelet	<input type="checkbox"/> Bottle Gourd	<input type="checkbox"/> Cucumber
<input type="checkbox"/> Oil	<input type="checkbox"/> Ground Nuts	<input type="checkbox"/> Peas
<input type="checkbox"/> Black Beans	<input type="checkbox"/> drumstick	<input type="checkbox"/> Bell Pepper
<input type="checkbox"/> white beans	<input type="checkbox"/> Jack fruit	<input type="checkbox"/> Fenugreek
<input type="checkbox"/> Mushrooms	<input type="checkbox"/> Beet	<input type="checkbox"/> Okra
<input type="checkbox"/> Limbu pani	<input type="checkbox"/> Cabbage	<input type="checkbox"/> Parsnip
<input type="checkbox"/> Soda	<input type="checkbox"/> Corn	<input type="checkbox"/> Zucchini
<input type="checkbox"/> Milk	<input type="checkbox"/> Bitter Gourd	<input type="checkbox"/> Lassi
<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/> Chaat	<input type="checkbox"/> Pani Puri
<input type="checkbox"/> Fruit Juice	<input type="checkbox"/> Wadapow	<input type="checkbox"/> Pakora

Your needs assessment tool may look a lot like a baseline survey.

Example:
This example comes from a needs assessment created to understand food security and dietary diversity among a population in rural India.

Step 5: Implement Your Needs Assessment

Tip: Do not spend time collecting extraneous data.

- ⚙️ Keep your needs assessment as lean and efficient as possible while still collecting the data necessary.
- ⚙️ Have one person responsible for the needs assessment that can monitor the progress to make changes if necessary to the needs assessment tool itself or its implementation.



Step 6: Program Design



Move on to the next steps of your program design: your problem analysis, problem statement, and best practice research (Module 3).