

Needs Assessment Example: Clientele with Physical Disabilities in Extension

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Phase I

1. Get organized

Employees and administrators perceive a problem with the way they accommodate clientele with physical disabilities, so the administrators call for a needs assessment. The individuals they ask to conduct the needs assessment meet with a few administrators and employees to learn more about the issue. The needs assessors learn that there is anecdotal evidence that some clientele with special needs show up for programs and employees don't have the equipment or ability to accommodate them. They also learn that serving these clientele are a high priority for the organization. No one in the organization has looked at this problem before on an organization-wide scale, but the suspicion is that the organization simply hasn't established a system to support and accommodate clientele with physical disabilities.

The needs assessors determine that they will examine the gap between the number of people with physical disabilities being served by Extension and the number of people with physical disabilities Extension should be serving.

2. Form a Needs Assessment Committee

An NAC is formed of 8 people, including administrators who have been presented with the issue by employees, employees who have worked with clientele with physical disabilities, and clientele with physical disabilities who have a history with the organization and have a desire to see the organization succeed. The NAC has been sanctioned by the organizational administration and reports to them on a regular basis.

3. Learn as much as possible about what should be and what is from existing data sources

The NAC and faculty assigned to the needs assessment ask Program Leaders if they have information about the clientele in their areas that have had physical disabilities. The needs assessment group also looks for data from the US Census Bureau on the prevalence of people with physical disabilities in Oregon, as well as any additional information about people with physical disabilities in the state.

It turns out that a few of the program areas have gathered some information about clientele with physical disabilities, but it is spotty and somewhat dated. Census Bureau data is available, however.

4. Synthesize the data and decide which phase to move on to

The NAC and faculty assigned to the needs assessment now know the total number of people with physical disabilities in the state, but it is still unclear how many people with physical disabilities the whole of Extension is serving. Also, it is not clear what the targeted number of people with physical disabilities to be served by Extension really is.

After discussing these findings, the NAC decides to move on to Phase II, in order to learn more about how Extension is serving clientele with physical disabilities and what the goal is for serving this population.

Phase II

1. Quantitative Data Collection

Because there are no records of the number of people with physical disabilities Extension is serving, the NAC decides to implement a survey of Extension employees to get their estimates on the number being served. The NAC also wants to understand how these clientele are being served, if any get turned away because of limited capacity, how employees wish to serve this audience, how many should be served, and how they should be served. The survey is designed to answer these questions, and pre-tested among a small number of Extension faculty.

The survey is delivered via SurveyMonkey™ to all Extension employees who have delivered programming (pure administrators need not respond). The survey is in the field for 3 weeks.

2. Qualitative Data Collection

It is clear that some program areas have been handling more clientele with physical disabilities than others. The NAC decides to conduct a focus group to learn more about the strategies that these program areas have implemented to serve this audience.

Three focus groups of about 8 people from each of the three program areas are conducted. The focus group is facilitated by a member of the NAC who is neutral and has conducted focus groups before. The guiding questions for the focus group are:

- What strategies have you used to accommodate people with disabilities?
- Which have worked the best?
- Which have worked the least?
- What problems have you encountered implementing these strategies?
- How have you resolved these problems?

The FG is recorded with an audio recorder and someone takes notes during the meeting.

Then the NAC conducts focus groups with three types of physically impaired clientele. These are people who have used Extension service and some who have not.

There are FGs of people who use wheelchairs, separated into the groups who have used Extension and those who have not. Then FGs among visually impaired, and then another set among the hearing impaired. The purpose of these FGs is to understand how these groups of people access materials.

The focus group findings are combined with the survey findings so that the NAC has a more complete picture of how many people with physical disabilities are being served, how many are being turned away, what the consequences of turning them away have been, and what some possible solution strategies are. They are ready for Phase III.

Phase III

1. Prioritize needs

The NAC decides to choose the following criteria to prioritize the need areas:

- Accommodating people with wheelchairs
- Accommodating people with hearing impairments
- Accommodating people with vision impairments

- Number of people affected
- Size of need (gap)
- Ease of resolution
- Risk to organization if need was ignored

Each member of NAC ranks the need area on a scale of 1 to 5 for each criterion.

The scores are tallied to reveal that accommodating people with vision impairments and those with wheelchairs are the highest priority.

2. Identify causes of high priority needs

The NAC then identifies the causes of those 2 needs. They consider the underlying reason why people with vision impairments and wheelchairs have difficulty accessing Extension service programs. How difficult these things are to correct, and how critical it is to resolve these underlying reasons to fix the problem.

They identify causes like:

- Programs being conducted in the field, in non ADA locations
- Websites not being screen-reader friendly
- Many resources not being available in Braille

3. Convert causes into solutions

Conduct programs in ADA locations
Make websites screen-reader friendly
Translate most materials into Braille

4. Prioritize solutions

The NAC prioritizes these solutions based on their:

- Ability to positively address multiple needs
- Ability to really reduce the need

- Amount of resources required
- Sustainability
- Fit with current trends in organization

The following solutions rise to the top:

- Making websites screen-reader friendly
- Conducting non-field based programs in ADA locations only

5. Propose solutions to organization

The NAC prepares a concise report for the Program Council to consider and presents it at one of their meetings. Because the Extension leadership is committed to addressing the issue, an action team is assembled to implement these plans.