



## Instrument ESSENTIALS for Needs Assessments

### TOPIC

The aim of conducting needs assessments is for projects to find out the priorities, needs and the current use of resources/services of those they serve. Before spending time and resources to develop/offer new products or services, it's a good idea to find out whether those you seek to reach are actually using existing resources and what they still might need in addition.

Tobacco control projects work to address this need by conducting some sort of needs assessment and then using the data to prioritize the development or release of new products and services.

### TERMINOLOGY

- × Community Assets: Entities that provide public good in the community such as sources of funding, information or services e.g., health care centers, school lunch programs, training, etc.
- × Service Gaps or Deserts: Areas in the community without sufficient service coverage (e.g., of fresh produce or groceries, health care, safe outdoor spaces).
- × Skills Inventory: A self-assessment process of cataloguing existing expertise an individual or an organization has already. Matched against a list of important capabilities, this can help identify and prioritize the need for additional team members, training opportunities or life experience.

### USES OF EVALUATION

**Community Asset Mapping or SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)** activities may involve existing data (e.g., US Census, lists of businesses or organizations, health disparity data, etc.) as well as **Observation** data that your team goes out to collect. Such processes are used to:

- a. Learn more about the community, population of interest, or problem to be addressed
- b. Identify existing assets as well as gaps in resources and services
- c. Map proximity of services to areas of need; service coverage vs. service deserts
- d. Identify opportunities for intervention

#### Measures

- Existing community skills/services/resources (strengths)
- Weaknesses and unmet needs (opportunities)
- Demographics of the population in the area
- Potential barriers to obtaining/maintaining/utilizing services (threats)

**Needs Assessment Surveys** are used to:

- a. Measure user satisfaction with existing resources or services
- b. Quantify use and type of existing services or resources
- c. Identify unmet needs
- d. Identify user preferences and priorities

Measures

- Frequency of use of existing services or resources
- Satisfaction with existing services or resources
- Recommendations for improvements
- Likelihood of recommending services or resources
- Unmet need (desired services or resources)
- Topics they are working on (ranked priorities)

**Focus Groups** are used to:

- a. Assess use and satisfaction with existing services or resources
- b. Identify user needs and suggestions
- c. Find out where they turn to for assistance or resources on the topic

Measures

- Familiarity with existing services/resources
- Frequency of use of existing services or resources
- Most used services or resources
- Satisfaction with existing services or resources
- Recommendations for improvements
- Unmet need (desired services or resources)
- Topics they are working on (ranked priorities)
- Likelihood of recommending services or resources

**Key Informant Interviews with Organizations that Serve Key Populations** are used to:

- a. Understand needs and priorities of key populations
- b. Identify potential barriers that prevent key populations from accessing/using services and resources
- c. Get recommendations for improving services and resources

Measures

- Unmet need (desired services or resources)
- Topics they are working on (ranked priorities)
- Familiarity with existing services/resources
- Satisfaction with existing services or resources
- Recommendations for improvements
- Potential barriers that hinder key populations from accessing/using services and resources