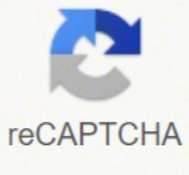




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What is the purpose of a community needs assessment quizlet

by Tracy Taylor and Mackenzie Brunson Definition Community Needs Assessments seek to gather accurate information representative of the needs of a community. Assessments are performed prior to taking action and are used to determine current situations and identify issues for action. Needs assessments establish the essential foundation for vital planning. A Needs Assessment is an extension of the strategic planning process. Strategic planning does the following: confirms, transforms or develops a new mission and vision; characterizes the nature of the business; furnishes a sense of direction for the organization; identifies the goals necessary to achieve the mission; develops specific plans to carry out each goal; and identifies the essential resources such as: people, property, time, money, and technology to attain the goals. After the goals and the required resources have been determined, the needs assessment process becomes straightforward. A needs assessment will: Identify the essential resources that are already available within the organization. Identify the essential resources to be acquired. Determine how to use, develop, or obtain those resources. "If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do, and how to do it." - Abraham Lincoln "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." - Benjamin Franklin "Plans are nothing; planning is everything." - Dwight D. Eisenhower Historic Roots Strategy is a term that comes from the Greek strategia, meaning "generalship." The concept of strategy has been borrowed from the military and adapted for use in business. A review of what noted writers have to say about business strategy suggests that adopting the concept was easy because the adaptation required has been modest. In business, as in the military, strategy bridges the gap between policy and tactics. Together, strategy and tactics bridge the gap between ends and means (Nickols 2019). The Art of War, about Chinese strategy, was written 2500 years ago by Sun Tzu and has become a standard reference for military strategy. Most strategic planners are familiar with the teachings of Sun Tzu who wrote of the strategic foundations of victory (Fisher 2019). Formalized strategic planning was a popular trend in the mid-1960s. There is an abundance of literature on modern strategic planning. From the late 1960s to the present, many scholars and business elitists wrote about strategy and strategic planning. In 1979, George Steiner wrote the book Strategic Planning, which became one of the most popular resources for strategic planning in the business world. Communities, governments and businesses have utilized the many resources now available about strategic planning. Needs assessments are an extension of strategic planning. Therefore, the historical roots of needs assessments mirror those of the formalized strategic planning popular in the mid-1960s. Nonprofits have begun taking advantage of strategic planning and needs assessment processes. These processes, together with outcome evaluations, allow nonprofit organizations to behave in a more strategic fashion. Importance Needs assessment require an unhappiness with the current situation and a desire for change. (Royce 2009) All communities are in a continual state of change. (Sleezer 2014) For instance, there may be major shifts in the average age of the population, the ethnic composition, or unemployment rate. Other contributing factors are the social, cultural, and economic changes which alter the character or attitude of a community. Policies and programs that once may have been suitable are later viewed as inappropriate or obsolete for the area. Needs assessments are typically geared towards: Solving a problem; Avoiding a past or current problem; Creating or taking advantage of a future opportunity; Providing learning, development, or growth. (Sleezer 2014) Effective planning and action require accurate and up-to-date information about the needs of the community. A needs assessment frames the problems or opportunities and builds relationships with the people and groups who have a stake in the issue. It provides the foundation for planning and action to improve learning, training, development, and performance. A needs assessment aligns resources with strategy, builds relationships among those who have a stake in the situation, clarifies problems or opportunities, sets goals for future action, and provides data, insights, or justification for decision making. (Sleezer 2014) The same arguments apply to government and business (profit or nonprofit). Their environments are in a continual state of change by demographic shifts, economic fluctuations, technological advances and social and cultural changes. Instead of the term citizens, the terms clients, customers, patrons, consumers, students or families would apply, depending on the type of business. Instead of the term community, the terms target population, customer base, service area, district or region would apply, depending on the type of business. Like community needs assessments, businesses and governments can adapt the needs assessment process to involve their stakeholders in solving problems and developing goals. As stated above, people are reluctant to change, so engagement in the process allows their involvement and contribution to the outcome(s). Ties to the Philanthropic Sector The basic premise of a nonprofit organization is to serve the public. The best way to serve the public is by fulfilling the needs of the community. Performing a community needs assessment is an effective way to determine community needs. Needs assessments are an extension of strategic planning. Only in recent years have nonprofits taken advantage of strategic planning and needs assessment processes. These processes, together with outcome evaluations, are recent tools for use by nonprofit organizations. Strategic planning and conducting a needs assessment are important steps in determining an effective course of action. As competition increases within the nonprofit sector and the private sector, it has become increasingly important for nonprofits to effectively plan for their futures. Strategic planning and needs assessments will help accomplish this difficult task. Key Terms and Ideas Evaluations are the counterpart to needs assessments. Needs assessments are completed before evaluations. Evaluations assess the relevance, adequacy and appropriateness of current individual programs, activities and events. They measure the relevance, satisfaction and effectiveness of an existing activity. A Focus Group is an informal technique used to help assess the needs and feelings of participants on particular subjects. Participants engage in informal discussions about the particular study area(s). Focus groups are typically small in size and usually range between six to twenty participants. They are commonly used during the needs assessment process. Forums are public meetings for invited people to express opinions about problems and needs. Forums are commonly used during the needs assessment process. Organizational Planning involves creating a "to do" list for an organization. It lists the plan of work, programs and organizational growth over a period of time. Plans are created relatively easily; writing an organizational plan includes crafting a list of the work for action, identifying the work tasks, assigning staff or members to the tasks and projecting calendar dates the work will be accomplished. Program Evaluation carefully collects information about a program or an aspect of a program in order to make necessary decisions about the program. Program evaluation can include any or a variety of at least 35 different types of evaluation, such as needs assessments, accreditation, cost/benefit analysis, effectiveness, efficiency, formative, goal-based, process, outcomes, etc. The type of evaluation you undertake to improve your programs depends on what you want to learn about the program" (McNamara 2019). Strategic Planning "is a systematic process through which an organization agrees on - and builds commitment among key stakeholders to - priorities which are essential to its mission and responsive to the operating environment" (Allison 1997). Surveys are a particular form of data collection utilized during the needs assessment process. Types of surveys commonly applied are person-to-person interviews, drop-off and pick-up questionnaires, mail questionnaires and telephone interviews. SWOT Analysis evaluates the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of an organization. "SWOT analysis is a broad overview of the most important internal Strengths and Weaknesses and the most important external Opportunities and Threats" (Allison 1997). It is a function performed during the strategic planning process. Important People Related to the Topic James W. Altschuld, PhD, is Professor Emeritus at The Ohio State University where he taught program evaluation, needs assessment, and research methods. He has authored and co-authored several books in the field of evaluation particularly with needs assessment. His published books include: Bridging the Gap Between Asset/Capacity Building and Needs Assessment: Concepts and Practical Applications (2014), The Needs Assessment Kit (2010), From Needs Assessment to Action (1999), and Planning and Conducting Needs Assessments (1995). Catherine M. Sleezer, Ph.D., was a professor at Oklahoma State University before moving to the corporate world as a consultant. She was the resident consultant for the University of Tulsa's Center for Executive and Professional Development. Her co-authored books on the topic of needs assessment include A Practical Guide to Needs Assessment, 3rd Edition (2014). John M. Bryson, the McKnight Presidential Professor of Planning and Public Affairs at the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, is considered an expert in the field of strategic planning. He has authored and co-authored several books on the topic including Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations, 5th Edition (2018). Related Nonprofit Organizations YMCA's regularly conduct community needs assessments. YMCA national provides its local chapters with tools to conduct their own community needs assessments called the Community Healthy Living Index. The CHLI assessments are to be used in "six key community settings: afterschool child care sites, early childhood programs, neighborhoods, schools, work sites and the community at large. Each assessment contains questions about policies and practices that support healthy lifestyles. Each question provides a "best practice" or improvement idea for sites to implement." The toolkit for conducting assessments can be found here: Local United Way agencies often use community needs assessment. The United Way of Northern Shenandoah Valley "evaluates the overall health, education, demographic and financial stability status of the Shenandoah Valley region, identifying the most pressing needs of the community, and helping UWNSV prioritize program funding relating to such needs. For the 2017-2020 assessment, findings were compiled through forums with industry experts, partner non-profits data contributions, analysis from government agency data, community partnerships studies completed by Valley Health Systems as well as a multitude of additional sources from national organizations and the U.S. Census. Using this information, UWNSV has prepared a set of Health, Education, Financial Stability and Demographic-related priorities and key findings." Key findings can be found here: Other Online Resources The Community Tool Box is a service of the Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas. They have a Community Needs Assessment toolkit: Needsassessment.org is a comprehensive resource site related to needs and needs assessments. The resources found on the site will help students, researchers, practitioners and others on the topic of Needs Assessment. Visit the website at . Reflection Questions What elements contribute to a healthy community? What are the greatest areas of concern in your community? What should be considered before beginning a community needs assessment to solve the greatest areas of concern in your community? Bibliography Allison, Michael J., Jude Kaye. (1997). Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations:A Practical Guide and Workbook. New York: John Wiley & Sons. Fisher, Art. The Evolution of Strategic Planning. Accessed 4 November 2019. McNamara, Carter. Basic Guide to Program Evaluation (Including Outcomes Evaluation). Accessed 4 November 2019. Needsassessment.org. Home. Accessed 4 November 2019. Nickols, Fred. Strategy Definitions and Meaning. 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