

OFFICE OF STUDENT WELLNESS

NH Department of Education

THE BASICS OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN, AND GAPS ANALYSIS PLANNING TOOL

What are a Need Assessment, an Environmental Scan, and a Gaps Analysis?

A Needs Assessment (NA), an Environmental Scan (ES), and a Gaps Analysis (GA) are the important first steps in a comprehensive planning process that encompasses a school, district and community. Through the completion of these documents, your team will: Identify the characteristics and needs of your community and its children, youth, families, and schools; Identify existing resources, services, systems, and programs at the school, district, and community level; and Identify and analyze gaps in the services, resources, or infrastructure. The process can be conducted in one or more of the five focus areas within the Office of Student Wellness Framework: Early Learning, Mental Health Promotion, Family and Youth Engagement, Prevention, and School Culture and Climate.

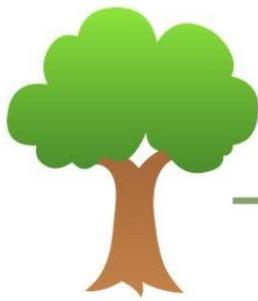
Why is it important to conduct a Need Assessment, Environmental Scan, and Gaps Analysis?

This process provides an opportunity for thoughtful, intentional, and data driven planning which is critical for successful implementation and evaluation of programs and services. It also provides an opportunity for schools and districts to communicate with important stakeholders in their community. Engagement in this process can;

1. Improve the alignment, integration, and effectiveness of systems level issues;
2. Identify gaps in existing services and assess resource capacity;
3. Identify risk and protective factors;
4. Strengthen existing partnerships and identify new opportunities and opportunities for expansion within local and state-level organization partnerships;
5. Build support between program partners and other public and private sector partners;
6. Engage key stakeholders, including families and youth who reflect the diversity of populations within your community;
7. Provide baseline data for effective evaluation , future programming and service planning;
8. Provide accurate and current data to inform stakeholders and gain support and “buy-in”.

Who should participate in conducting the Needs Assessment, Environmental Scan, and Gaps Analysis?

Participation by a diverse range of stakeholders throughout the needs assessment and environmental scan process, including the Community Management Team, will ensure that there is broad representation of community systems which encompass project initiatives. In most cases the data that will be gathered already exists, engaging stakeholders in this process ensures efficiency and accuracy. In a few instances focus groups or surveys may need to be conducted to gather data that does not otherwise exist. Specific stakeholder selection will depend on which focus areas will be included in this process. Supporting tools are available to assist in the selection of focus areas as well as the data collection process.



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How do I begin this process and what tools do I need to conduct this?

Conducting a Needs Assessment, Environmental Scan, and Gaps Analysis is the first step in the comprehensive planning process. It is important to take the necessary time to conduct it thoroughly before moving on. It is essential that you have your Community Management Team in place and have educated stakeholders about project goals prior to beginning this process. It is also helpful to share the preliminary school and community data that is driving your initiative. The following steps are recommended to begin this process:

	STEPS	RECOMMENDED TOOLS
1	Educate your CMT about the NA, ES, GA process and its importance	NA, ES, GA Power Point - OSW
2	Select the focus areas from OSW Framework	OSW Framework Overview; OSW Framework Planning Checklist
3	Review Planning templates for each selected focus area	NA, ES, GA Template
4	Break into workgroups by focus area and select lead	N/A
5	Workgroups identify initial data to be gathered using planning template and organization/individual who may have the data	NA, ES, GA Template and Guidance Document (for each element)
6	Use template for action planning and identify workgroup members responsibility for data collection (NA, ES) including timeline	N/A
7	Determine method for sharing data and inputting into shared document	Google Drive, Smart Sheets, other
8	Each work group updates the entire CMT about initial data to be collected, organizations/individuals who may have this data	N/A
9	Identify data that does not exist and methods for gathering data such as surveys, focus groups etc.	Focus Group and Survey Guidance and Resources
10	Analyze the data and identify the gaps in resources, infrastructure, programs and services in the school and community	
11	Summary of findings report to be presented to CMT and other stakeholders such as School Board or other community organizations such as CMHC	Summary of GA, ES, GA Findings Report Template; and Power Point Template

Adapted from Safe Schools / Healthy Students Needs Assessment & Environmental Scan Guidance-SAMHSA 2013

