Oregon State University Extension Service

Enhancing Community Engagement through Needs Assessment

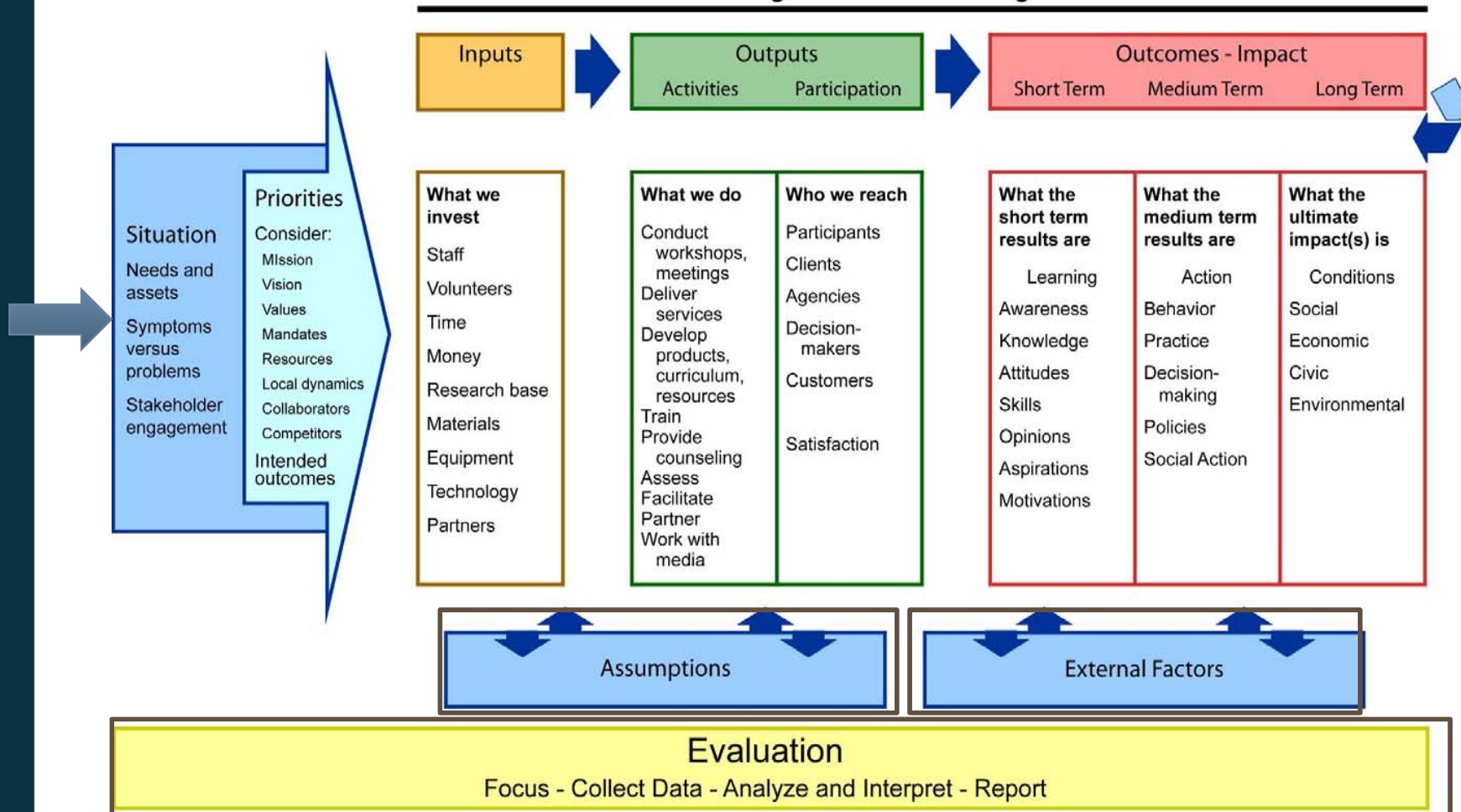ESC Conference – October, 2013 – Sam Angima & Lena Etuk

Community Engagement

- Requirements of engagement:
  - Mutual benefit
  - Mutual respect
  - Mutual understanding

- Many of us already do engagement, but sometimes it's outside of our institutional norms
  - How can we fit it in, and still reap the benefits?

> Start with engaged research at the very beginning…

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Program Action - Logic Model

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes - Impact		
	Activities	Participation	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term

Situation

Needs and assets

Symptoms versus problems

Stakeholder engagement

Priorities

Consider:
- Mission
- Vision
- Values
- Mandates
- Resources
- Local dynamics
- Collaborators
- Competitors

Intended outcomes

What we invest	What we do	Who we reach	What the short term results are	What the medium term results are	What the ultimate impact(s) is
Staff	Conduct workshops, meetings	Participants	Learning	Action	Conditions
Volunteers	Deliver services	Clients	Awareness	Behavior	Social
Time	Develop products, curriculum, resources	Agencies	Knowledge	Practice	Economic
Money		Decision-makers	Attitudes	Decision-making	Civic
Research base	Train	Customers	Skills	Policies	Environmental
Materials	Provide counseling		Opinions	Social Action	
Equipment	Assess	Satisfaction	Aspirations		
Technology	Facilitate		Motivations		
Partners	Partner Work with media				

Assumptions

External Factors

Evaluation

Focus - Collect Data - Analyze and Interpret - Report

Fully detailed logic model

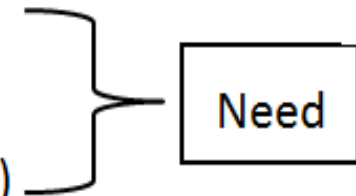**EXTENSION** UW

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Definition

What is a need?

- Measurable gap between what is and what should be

What is (current state, situation, or condition) and

What should be (preferred or desired state, condition, or situation) } Need

- Has **consequences** for not being addressed
- Needs assessment requires **taking action** to resolve need

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Example of a Need

Weed infested pasture

Weed free pasture

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Needs vs. Solutions

Needs, not solutions, should be the main focus/concern of needs assessment

Unless the need is clearly identified, solutions might not work

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Example

Need statement: Students in 2nd grade need more time and drill in math to achieve higher scores on their proficiency tests

"more time and drill in math".

Implied gap…

Solution strategy
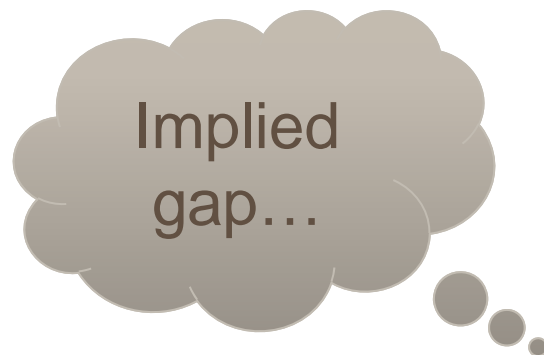
- "to achieve higher scores on their proficiency tests"
- But, other strategies may improve scores more!

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Defining the "What Should Be" Condition

- The goal we strive to reach
- Sometimes easy to define
  - Blood pressure, heart rate, speed limit
- More often, difficult to define:
  - Minimally acceptable?
  - Ideal situation?
  - What is likely to be?
  - What is feasible?
- Should reflect core values as an institution, institutional mandate and normative standing

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Whose needs matter?

Level 1: Community

Level 2: University faculty & staff

Level 3: Administrators

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Conducting Needs Assessment

- To carry out needs assessment, you need to:
    - Identify needs
    - Prioritize these needs
    - Identify causes
    - Make needs-based decisions about solution strategies
    - Allocate resources
    - Implement actions to resolve the identified problem

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Conducting Needs Assessment

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┌─────────────────────┐         ┌─────────────────────┐
│     Phase I         │  ────►  │                     │
│  Pre-Assessment     │         │   Identify needs    │
└─────────────────────┘         └─────────────────────┘
                                           │
        ┌──────────────────────────────────┘
        ▼
┌─────────────────────┐         ┌─────────────────────┐
│     Phase II        │  ────►  │                     │
│   Assessment        │         │ Further identify    │
│    (optional)       │         │      needs          │
└─────────────────────┘         └─────────────────────┘
                                           │
        ┌──────────────────────────────────┘
        ▼
┌─────────────────────┐         ┌─────────────────────┐
│    Phase III        │  ────►  │     Prioritize      │
│      Post-          │         │  Make decisions     │
│   Assessment        │         │ Allocate resources  │
│                     │         │     Implement       │
└─────────────────────┘         └─────────────────────┘
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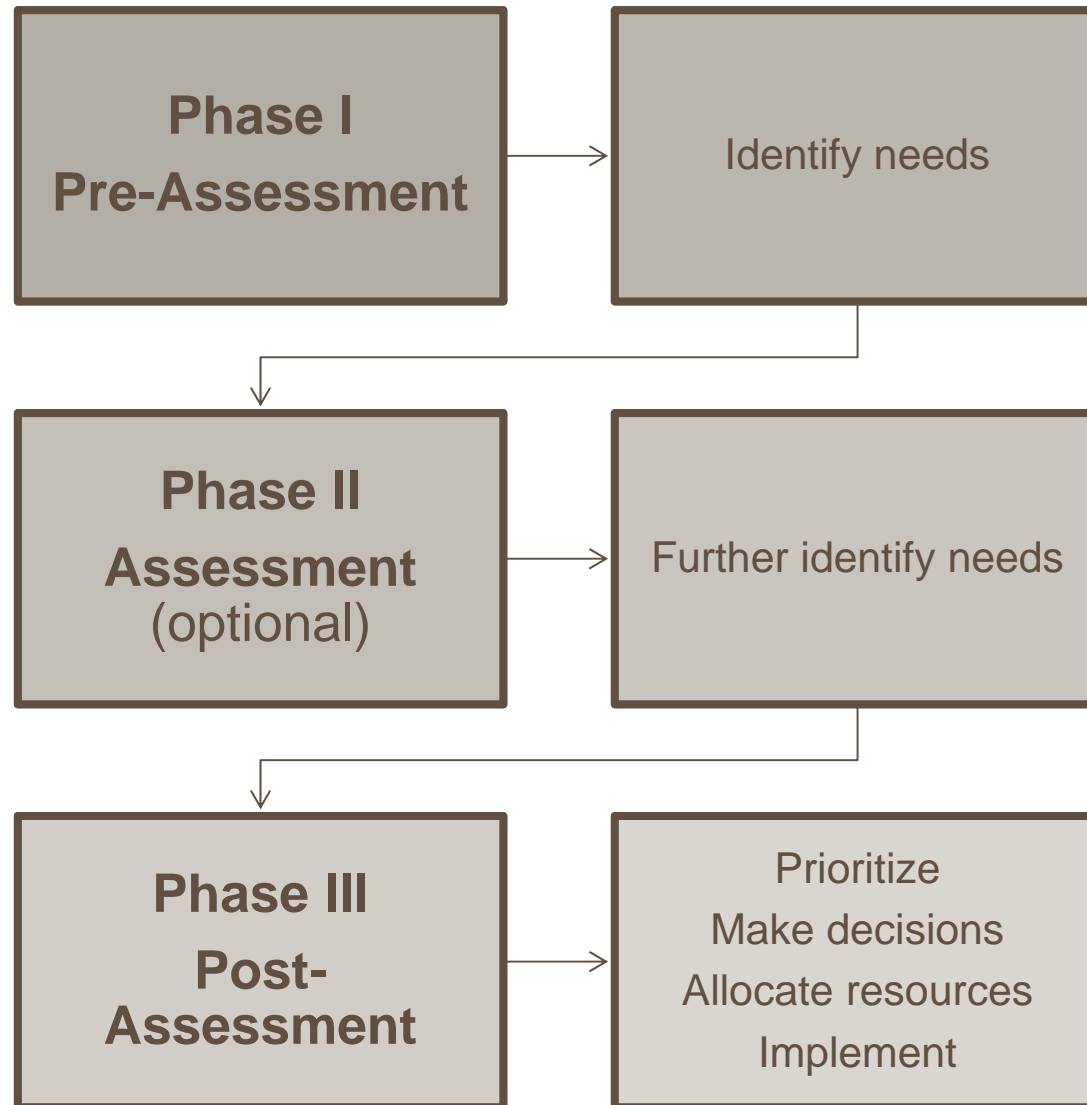
Key Needs Assessment Questions

- What is the current situation for the community?

- What should the situation be?

- If there is a gap between what is and what should be:

  - What are the consequences?

  - What is causing the gap?

  - What are some possible solution strategies?

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Phase I: Pre-assessment

1. Get organized

2. Form a Needs Assessment Committee (NAC)
   - Include a cross section of stakeholders/clientele/partners
   - Avoid very strong personalities or excessive talkers
   - Make deliberate choices
   - One member should have data analysis skills if the needs assessment leader does not
   - Include power brokers and coalition makers
   - Include stakeholders with vested interests in the outcomes of study
   - Ideally fewer than 10 people, but if larger, divide into sub-committees

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Phase I: Pre-assessment (continued)

3. Find out what is already known or available from existing data sources
   - "what is"
   - "what should be"
   - Consequences for not changing the current situation
   - Causes

4. Synthesize the data and decide to move to Phase II or Phase III
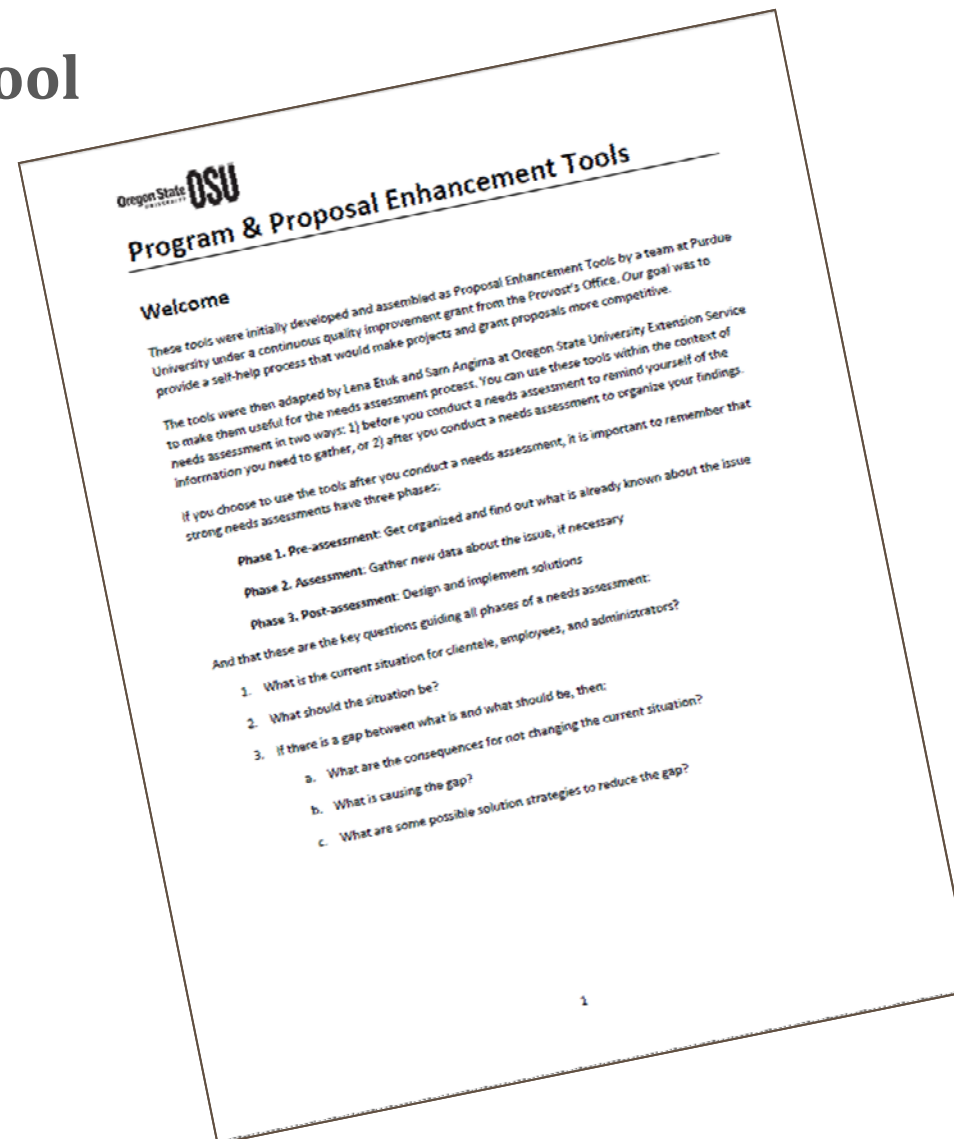
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Phase II: Assessment

1. Collect in-depth new information if key Needs Assessment questions not answered in Phase I
   - "what is"
   - "what should be"
   - Consequences for not changing the current situation
   - Causes

2. May require extensive investment in time and resources for collecting new data

3. Analyze new information in conjunction with Phase I information

15

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Phase III: Post-assessment

1. Prioritize needs

2. Deliberate and articulate causes of high-priority needs

3. Convert causes into solution strategies

4. Prioritize solutions based on feasibility and other criteria

5. Write up your proposed solutions

      Use the Program & Proposal Enhancement Tools worksheet

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Take-home tool

17

http://extension.oregonstate.edu/employees/
employee-resources/evaluation/needs

Phase III: Post-assessment (Solution Implementation)

6. Propose one or more solutions to decision makers (in community and organization)

7. Develop action plans for these solutions and communicate plans to stakeholders

8. Implement and monitor these plans

9. Evaluate effectiveness of program

10. Report outcomes to policy makers and stakeholders

11. Evaluate the Needs Assessment process

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Common Needs Assessment Mistakes

- Failing to engage
  - Wrong people on the Needs Assessment Committee
  - Doing the needs assessment by yourself
  - Relying on a limited number of usual suspects to identify what they want
  - Relying on input from too few people

- Jumping the gun
  - Jumping right into Phase II (gathering new information)
  - Equating needs assessment to conducting a survey
  - Focusing on solutions too early

- Timing the process poorly
  - Taking too long or moving too quickly on a needs assessment
  - Waiting too long between needs assessments

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Example (if needed)

COMMUNITY-ENGAGED OBESITY PREVENTION

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Questions?

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Session Evaluation

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