# EAB

# Community Needs Assessment Planning Guide

## Economic Development and Recovery

# Community Needs Assessment Planning Guide

The community needs assessment (CNA) is one process to understand and unpack community needs, resources, concerns, and gaps. Higher education institutions are well positioned to take the lead on this process not only given their access to research and talent but also because of their unique role in the community as thought partners and leaders.

A community needs assessment is composed of four steps: create assessment plan, conduct assessment, analyze data, and develop action plan.

This planning guide helps institutional leaders begin planning a community needs assessment and focuses on the first and last steps of conducting a CNA: create assessment plan and develop action plan. While the final step, create action plan, cannot be completed until the first three steps are finished, this guide will help leaders prepare for prioritizing needs in an efficient and equitable manner.

For more information on the process and to review case studies from exemplar institutions, read EAB's Community Needs Assessment User Guide.

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## Institutional Information

Institution Name:

Planning Guide Completed by:

Date:

# Create Assessment Plan

## Step One: Define Parameters

The first step of the CNA planning process is to define the parameters, including the scope and the objectives and goals.

## Determine Scope

When determining scope, identify both the sector and the relevant components of that sector to assess as well as the population. Sectors are broad topic areas while components are more specific areas of interest within that sector. When selecting population, consider both location and demographic.

Answer the following questions to define the CNA parameters.

1. What sector will the CNA review? Select all that apply.

- ❑ Community health/wellness
- ❑ Community conditions
- ❑ K12 education/youth wellness
- ❑ Senior citizen services
- ❑ Racial justice
- ❑ Employment opportunities/needs

- ❑ Local business needs
- ❑ Income management
- ❑ Housing access and affordability
- ❑ Emergency services
- ❑ Other:

2. What component(s) of the sector will the CNA use as metrics?

Common options include: nutrition, substance abuse, healthcare access, self-sufficiency, after-school support, services for youth with disabilities, family support in caretaking, safety and law enforcement, public transportation, LGBTQ+ health and wellness, food access, access to public outdoor space.

3. What is the relevant population or demographic? Please select one and add any relevant information.

- o Certain community within a specified location:
- o All community members within a specified location:
- o Other:

4. List any other relevant information about population, including relevant characteristics.

# Create Assessment Plan

## Step One: Define Parameters Cont.

### Clarify Objectives and Goals

After determining the scope, confirm the objective and goal(s) of the CNA. There are three main objectives or outcomes of a CNA: policy change, systems change, or environmental change. For more information on each, read the Clarify objectives and goals section of EAB's CNA User Guide. Common CNA goals include: identify needs, identify barriers, create programs, assess programs, inform community or internal stakeholders, or make recommendations.

5. What is the objective of the CNA? Choose one.

- o Policy change: advocate for changes in law, regulations, protocols, or procedures

- o Systems change: advocate for adjustments at organizational, institutional, or system level

- o Environmental change: advocate for physical, social, or economic changes to influence individuals' behaviors

6. What is the goal(s) of the CNA? Choose all that apply.

- ❑ Identify needs within a certain community

- ❑ Identify barriers to access or success

- ❑ Inform community members or internal stakeholders

- ❑ Make recommendations to an external group

- ❑ Create impactful programming

- ❑ Assess current programming

- ❑ Pursue grant funding

- ❑ Other:

7. Add any other relevant information about objective or goals.

# Create Assessment Plan

## Step Two: Identify Diverse Team and Assign Responsibilities

The next step of the CNA planning phase is to organize internal and external stakeholders into a core team. External stakeholder engagement is often necessary, particularly if the CNA is exploring community assets, programming gaps, or specific needs. Community members can help build trust, acting as trusted messengers and change agents within the community. You may also want to include institutional leadership like certain boards, cabinets, or committees as additional oversight.

Additionally, choose a team leader who will make final decisions, based on feedback from the team and any institutional leadership entities.

8. Which internal office(s) are involved? Select all that apply and write in office details.

- ❑ Extension office
- ❑ Academic college
- ❑ Research center or institute
- ❑ Economic development office
- ❑ Community engagement office
- ❑ Government relations office
- ❑ Other:

9. Do any other internal stakeholders or institutional leadership entities, like boards, cabinets, or committees, have oversight responsibility? If so, who?

10. Which organizations do the external team members represent? Select all that apply and write in office organization details.

- ❑ Local hospital(s)
- ❑ Non-profit organization(s)
- ❑ External institute or foundation(s)
- ❑ Government entity
- ❑ Other:

11. Who is the team lead and what office do they represent?

12. Write all individual team members, both internal and external.

# Create Assessment Plan

## Step Three: Create Data Collection Plan

Once the parameters and team members are confirmed, brainstorm community or institutional assets and needs. Identify existing data sets and research on the topics to identify gaps and create a data wish list. This process helps the team choose the necessary approaches to new data collection. With this information, create a data collection plan.

The most successful data collection plans are mixed-method, utilizing various forms of qualitative and quantitative collection methods to create inclusive data sets.

13. List any relevant institutional data assets.

14. From where will you collect existing external data? Select all that apply and write or link the specific data set if possible.

- ❑ U.S. Census Bureau
- ❑ U.S. or Local Chamber of Commerce
- ❑ U.S. or local health department
- ❑ Employment Security Commission
- ❑ Law enforcement agency
- ❑ Other local or federal government entity
- ❑ Research center or institute
- ❑ Other institutional entity
- ❑ Non-profit entity or community organization
- ❑ Faith-based group(s)
- ❑ Hospital or other healthcare provider
- ❑ Local employer(s)
- ❑ Public school system
- ❑ Literature review of existing reports
- ❑ Other: write in
- ❑ N/A

15. What kind of data needs to be collected as part of the CNA? If the team needs time to review existing data first, come back to this question later.

# Create Assessment Plan

16. How will the net new data be collected? Select all that apply.

☐ Survey(s)

☐ Focus group(s)

☐ Public forums(s)

☐ Key informant interviews

☐ Topic poll(s)

☐ Other:

17. Where are the data collection sites?

Important considerations include: representation of urban and rural areas and various neighborhoods or counties, and data collection site types like extension offices, campus buildings, community centers, health clinics, or government buildings.

18. Write any information about the kind of questions you know need to be asked as of now.

19. Who will write the interview or survey questions and create the interview guides for key informant interviews, focus groups, or community forums?

20. Who will conduct the interviews?

21. If you need volunteers to help conduct interviews, from where will you ask for help? Select all that apply.

☐ Graduate or undergraduate students

☐ Extension directors or employees

☐ External partners

☐ Internal staff

☐ Other:

☐ N/A

# Create Assessment Plan

## Step Four: Secure Funding

23. How will the CNA be funded? Select all that apply and write in any additional information.

- ❑ External stakeholders
- ❑ Government grant
- ❑ Institutional center or institute
- ❑ Institutional foundation
- ❑ Another institutional office or college
- ❑ Other:

24. Add any other relevant information about the funder(s) and amount or percentage of funding from each entity.

## Step Five: Determine Timeline

Timelines are very dependent on CNA parameters, objectives, and funding. Institutional CNAs range from three months for narrowly scoped assessments to two years for more comprehensive ones.

Answer the questions below with specific start and end dates or a general phase, e.g., two to three months. For more information on each stage, return to EAB's CNA User Guide.

25. When will the planning phase occur?

26. When will the data collection take place?

27. When will the data analysis occur?

28. When will the CNA report be prepared?

29. When will action planning take place?

# Develop Action Plan

Once the CNA is conducted and the data is analyzed, the team will prepare a community profile and a report with a summary of the CNA process, relevant findings, and any recommendations. After the report is presented to stakeholders and community members for feedback, the team can begin prioritizing needs and developing action steps based on the findings of the CNA.

It is likely the CNA will surface more needs or priorities than the stakeholders can realistically tackle. It is important to set this expectation from the beginning of the process so the necessity for ranking priorities is clear.

Once priorities are ranked, the team can create action steps to make progress on these goals. In some cases, the institution may simply provide the report to external stakeholders who will take the lead creating action steps.

30. What process will the team use to rank priorities identified through data analysis and community feedback?
    For more information, see the Prioritize Need and Relevant Action Steps section of EAB's CNA User Guide.
    Select all that apply.

    ❑   Team consensus

    ❑   Nominal group process

    ❑   Prioritization matrix

    ❑   Force field analysis

    ❑   Paired comparison technique

    ❑   Interrelationship diagram

    ❑   Other:

31. Which of the following questions should the team consider when ranking priorities? Select all that apply.

    ❑   Is there sufficient capacity to address this need?

    ❑   What has been tried previously to address this need?

    ❑   Are there any existing programs that address this issue?

    ❑   Who should take the lead on addressing this priority?

    ❑   Are there any social, political, racial, or socioeconomic considerations affecting this issue?

        How will they affect how we address the issue?

    ❑   Other:

# Notes