Needs and Assets Assessment

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1933 - 1965

Present
What Is a Needs Assessment?

– Process of identifying needs and inventorying assets to move toward workable solutions that cause improvement
  • Use appropriate assessment tools to identify those solutions
  • Move toward planning; create goals/objectives from data gathered
– A method of formulating a plan for desired outcome
Why Do a Needs Assessment?

– To figure out how to serve your patrons and community better by making educated, positive changes to your library’s services

• Outcome: Become a more important, relevant part of your community which can lead to increased funding, support, and local influence

• Outcome: Attract more patrons
Types of Library Needs Assessments

– Facility
  • Do we need a new facility?
  • Where, how big, how much, and when?
  • How much capital is already in place?

– Staffing
  • Do we have adequate staff to handle the demands of the community?

– Furniture and equipment
  • What do we need to serve the physical needs of our current and potential patrons (i.e., special needs populations)?
  • What do we have? How long will it last?
Types of Library Needs Assessments

– Collection
  • What do users expect with regards to quality of the holdings?

– Services
  • What services, features, and programs are integral to success?
  • What services are already in place or in progress?
  • What could we do better?

– Public Access Computing
  • Do we need computers, Internet connections, or space?
  • Do we need training to better educate and assist our patrons?

– Outreach
  • Who do we need to partner with to make it happen?
Needs Assessment Tools

- Interviews
- Assessing yourself against professional standards
- Analysis of statistics and records
- Suggestion box
- Information gathered from open meetings, forums, reports, and newsletters
- Surveys and questionnaires
- Continued quality control processes
How Do You Develop a Needs Assessment?
Think about What Libraries Already Do to Measure Needs

– Librarians do a lot to measure the needs of their community whether they know it or not
  • Examples: Suggestion box, community meetings, casual conversations with library patrons, etc…
Needs Assessment Process

– Understand the process
  • Who will conduct the study?
  • What kinds of information will be collected?
    – Historical development data
    – Geographic and transportation data
    – Demographic data
    – Economic data
    – Social, educational, cultural, and recreational data
    – Library service and user data
Needs Assessment Process

• How will the information be collected?
  – Key informants
  – Community meetings
  – Public records
  – Surveys

• How will the information be used?

• Learn about needs assessments standards from your state
Needs Assessment Process

– Determine whether you need a community profile
  • Local government
  • Geographic and demographic information
  • Socioeconomic climate
  • Education
  • Information systems
  • Recreational and cultural activities
  • Community service groups
Needs assessment process

– Get help from online and community resources
  • New Mexico state library templates
  • Academic library examples
  • Library association materials
  • Public library examples
  • Workshop resource section
Case Study #1: New Facilities Needs Assessment

– Problem: Current Aztec Library building was inadequate, and we needed to determine community needs for the new facility
Case Study #1: New Facilities Needs Assessment

- Designed survey to collect demographic and library user data

- Partnered with the utility department to include survey in utility bills, put survey in *Aztec Local News*, and made survey available to patrons in library
Case Study #1: New Facilities Needs Assessment

– Needs assessment survey asked:
  • Is the library an essential service? Does the library add to your quality of life?
  • Do you use the library?
  • If yes, how?
  • If no, why?
  • How often do you visit?
  • What services would you like the library to provide or improve?
  • Do we need a new library? Where?
  • Would you support a user fee?
Case Study #1: New Facilities
Needs Assessment

Key results:

– A vast majority of respondents said:
  • They considered the library to be an essential city service like fire and police protection or street maintenance
  • They saw the library as an essential part of the quality of life of the city

– Reference, children’s books, and pleasure reading were the services most used

– Reference, services for children, business and community services, and meeting rooms were the most requested new services

– More than 75 percent of respondents thought a new library was needed, and over half were willing to support a user fee to keep or add new services
Case Study #1: New Facilities Needs Assessment

How the results were used:

– Compiled and presented to the City Commission as a leveraging tool to spur action on acquiring the funding for the proposed new library
– Used to push for a local election on the town’s gross receipts tax to pay for the new construction and move (a $2.3 million project)
– Built new facility together with a family service center, a Boys & Girls Club, a junior college, and an alternative high school, including a technology center that serves these organizations and the rest of the community
  • Built community partnerships and positioned the library as a source of community and economic development opportunities to increase funding streams
  • Went from 2,300 square feet to 9,400 in the new facility
Case Study #2: Teen Needs Assessment

– Problem: Wanted to attract more teens to the library to increase number of patrons and serve an underserved audience
Case Study #2: Teen Needs Assessment

- Designed survey to collect demographic and library use data from teens
- Partnered with local junior high school to survey teens while they were in school to get a “captured” audience
Case Study #2: Teen Needs Assessment

Teen needs assessment survey asked:

• What do you typically do after school?
• Why do you do this?
• What could the library offer you and your friends to make it a place you would want to come to more often?
• Are there things at the library that you don’t like?
• Do you use the computers at the library? Who do you ask for help with computers?
• Where do you do homework?
• How could the library be a place for volunteering/doing good things for the community?
• What skills would teens learn from those experiences?
Case Study #2: Teen Needs Assessment

Key results:
• 95 percent need transportation to get to the library
• 85 percent said they want to use computers at the library or need help using computers
• 85 percent want snacks to be available at the library
• Most need the library to be open later since they work or play sports after school, and need a place to do homework later in the evening
• 97 percent wanted better reading materials and computer gaming programs
• Most said they would come more often if it was a place they could be with their friends
• 98 percent want to help others at the library by being a tutor or other volunteer
Case Study #2:
Teen Needs Assessment

How the results were used:

• Created a teen space in the new library facility, and developed collections and programming that are relevant to teens
  – Added four new teen magazine titles and a once a month teen program that incorporates food, which has been well attended
• Added 11 new PAC terminals to the seven original ones, which led to an increase in teen library use
Case Study #3: Technology Needs Assessment

– Aztec Public Library’s original technology program was supported by E-rate, Aztec Consortium, and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

– After initial investment in technology was made, Aztec Library did needs assessments through community meetings and surveys to see what the community needed
Case Study #3: Technology Needs Assessment

We found what the community needed and built technology programs to meet those needs:

- Computer classes for general public and special populations such as elderly, and teens
- Human resources connected to public access computers in the library = trainers
- General need for more free access computers
- Technology for public agency partners to use at the library, for example: job skills trainings, assistive technologies for people with disabilities
- Business incubation resources for private business development
Case Study #3: Technology Needs Assessment

Results spurred partnerships with:

• Local partners
  – Aztec Schools, Vista Nueva Alternative High
  – San Juan College
  – Local businesses and community organizations

• State partners
  – UNM Digital Pueblo/Media Arts Lab
  – University of New Mexico’s digital arts lab
  – Lodestar Astronomy Center

• Federal Partners
  – New Mexico congressional delegation
  – National Park Service
Case Study #3: Technology Needs Assessment

Lasting benefits of programs built from the needs assessments:

• Aztec Library technology program will become a driver of economic development and tourism and can help support and promote the library further

• The small technology program blossomed into a comprehensive technology program with partnerships that are significantly helping to sustain the whole library
Main Lessons Learned for Take Away

– Networking is essential. Get involved in your community and learn about their needs. Include a broad spectrum of people – not just current users.

– If you are providing what your community needs, your patrons can become your best champions.

– Get started: If it is to be, it’s up to me!
  • Process – Why
  • Examples and templates – How
  • Resources – Help