# Curriculum Design Course

# Unit B1

# Training Needs Analysis

(Participant Workbook)

**Training Needs Analysis**

**Aim:**

The Aim of this unit is to provide an understanding of the component parts of training needs analysis and to assist the participants in the planning and implementation of training needs analysis

**Objectives:**

At the end of this unit you will be able to:

1. List and define the four terms associated with training needs assessment
2. List the eight terms steps associated with needs assessment planning
3. List the methods by which training needs analysis can be conducted
4. Identify the method most suitable to collect data for a training need
5. Produce a needs assessment plan
6. Conduct a training needs survey

**Introduction**

Before you embark on any new training enterprise you should consider whether there is a need for that training to take place. If the answer is yes, even an unqualified yes, then it may be necessary for you to carry out a training needs analysis to determine the type and level of training needed to enhance the knowledge and skills of the identified personnel.

**Questions to be asked prior to conducting training needs analysis:**

However, in order to reach a conclusion that there may be a need for a specific training programme, you must identify and answer these questions:

1. Does current training support the organisations business plan
2. Does the job environment and organisational practices reinforce training solutions?
3. Are training practices effective and efficient?

If the answers to your questions are, NO, then there are a number of data collection methods which may be used to enable you to identify where shortcomings exist in the working practices of the organisation and of individual members within the organisation. It will enable you to identify the type and degree of training that is required and at what organisational level.

There are also a number of terms that you need to become familiar with in order to understand what a training needs analysis is and what they mean in relation to training needs analysis. They are:

**Need:**

A performance gap (force field analysis) between what people know, do or feel and what they ***should*** know, do or feel in order to perform competently.

(Analytical tools and techniques: Force Field Analysis)

A need should be linked to essential knowledge skills and attitudes that an individual must possess in order to perform work competently and accomplish performance standards and objectives

**Needs assessment:**

An evaluation of the training needs to identify the gaps between what is happening and what should be happening and to prioritise the order in which the gaps are closed.

This is usually the starting point for and training design projects.

**Needs assessment planning:**

This is the process of developing a plan for collecting needs assessment information.

During the planning process you will need to conduct an initial performance analysis.

Because it is essential to create ownership among the stakeholders, you will need to consult and participate with stakeholders (management, etc), during the needs assessment planning process.

**Needs assessment plan:**

A plan for collecting information about training needs.

The needs assessment plan is the result of needs assessment planning

**There are eight steps carried out in needs assessment planning*:***

1. Clarify what is known about the problem
2. Establish the objectives of the needs assessment
3. Identify the target audience
4. Establish sampling procedures
5. Determine the data selection strategy and tactic
6. Specify the instrument to be used and the rules governing the data collection process.
7. Determine the methods to be used to analyse the data
8. Assess the practicality of the needs assessment plan

**Step 1: <u>Clarify what is already known about the problem</u>**

If you have looked at the problem and performed an analysis, this step can be done quickly and easily. It will serve as a 'quality-check' to help you to be sure that you know what the problem is and that a training programme is the right solutions. What would the consequences be of *mis-diagnosing* the performance problem be for you and your department?

In some instances, you as the training designer may not be the person who does the needs analysis. You will have to depend on someone else's analysis of the problem. In these circumstances, it is even more important that you review what is already known.

1. You can clarify what is already known by asking the following questions:

   - What is currently happening?
   - How are officers presently performing?
   - What results are now being achieved?

2. What should be happening?

   - What are the existing performance standards and learning objectives?
   - What relationship exists, if any, between the departments strategic plan and officer performance?
   - How do police supervisors want the officers to perform?
   - What results should the officers be achieving?
   - To what extent are police managers committed to closing the gap between what is happening and what should be happening?

3. How wide is the performance gap?

- Can the gap be measured?
- Is the gap increasing or decreasing?

4. How important is the gap?

- Are the effects of the gap evident in department performance?
- How does the gap affect the officers who will receive the training?
- How does the gap affect officers who will not receive the training?

5. How much of the gap is caused by deficiencies in knowledge, skills or attitudes?

- Can the problem be broken down into smaller parts?
- Are some of the problems sub-problems caused by deficiencies in knowledge and skills and others caused by deficiencies in the environment?

6. Which possible solutions are cost effective and feasible?

- How should sub-problems caused by deficiencies in the environment be resolved?

7. Could corrective action result in any unintended side effects?

- Will efforts to investigate problems or sub-problems change them because people will change their behaviour while the problem is being investigated?

- Will collecting data about the problem result in an expectation that the management will take action that it had not intended to take?

- Will decision makers accept the data and the conclusions that are reached from the data, or will they reinterpret the data to meet their own needs?

**Step 2: <u>Establishing the objectives of the needs assessment</u>**

The objectives state what you, as the training designer, wish to accomplish by conducting a needs assessment. They serve as a "guide" that helps to prevent you from studying issues that may be interesting but are not related to the performance problem being studied.

The objectives also clarify why the performance problem is worth solving and the results that you can be expected from solving it.

Establishing needs assessment objectives will determine what results you hope to achieve by conducting the needs assessment. Results can be thought of in several ways and achieve a number of things:

- Agreement among stakeholders about the outcome of the needs assessment and the resulting training
- An understanding of what the participants in subsequent courses must know, do

or feel to overcome the performance problem.

- A clear understanding of what the final needs assessment must look like.

By thinking about the objectives, you are beginning to plan how to present the results of the needs assessment to the department's key stakeholders. Should the results of the needs assessment be presented in a:

- A long, formal report?
- A short memorandum?
- An oral report?
- Some other combination of the above

**Step 3:** **<u>Identifying target audiences</u>**

There are two target audiences whose needs must be addressed by the assessment: the **performers** and the **decision makers**.

The performers are the individuals whose training needs will be identified by the needs assessment.

- They are the officers for whom the training is being designed and who will eventually participate in the training.
- The needs assessment must identify who is affected by the performance problem, the extent to which they are affected by the performance problem and where they are located, both geographically and organisationally.

The decision makers are those individuals whose support is needed to carry out the needs assessment plan. Decision makers include:

- Others training designers who will use the results of the needs assessment
- Supervisors of the employees who will receive the training
- Training managers whose approval is needed to implement the needs assessment plan

It is important to know who will receive the results of the needs assessment, because that individual's personal values and beliefs can affect how the assessment will be interpreted.

**Step 4:** **<u>Establishing sampling procedures</u>**

Before discussing how to establish a sampling procedure you will need to know a few more terms:

**Sample:** A small representative group that is selected from a larger group.

**Sampling:** The process of identifying smaller groups for examination. It is used to reduce the time and costs of gathering information.

**Sampling error:** The deviation which occurs between the **true** nature of the population and the sample from which it is drawn.

**Sample procedure:** The method used to select a sample.

**Sampling procedures**

There are four types of sampling procedures generally used by training designers:

1. Convenience sampling
2. Random sampling
3. Stratified sampling
4. Systematic sampling

In determining which type of sampling procedure to use, you should consider:

- the objectives of the needs assessment
- degree of certainty needed willingness of the department officials to allow the collection of information
- resources available

**Convenience sampling:** This is the most popular and most frequently used form of sampling. It is a form of "non-probability sampling" because the subjects to be sampled are chosen based on convenience rather than how well they represent the population.

Although it is fast and inexpensive, it may yield biased results. To conduct convenience sampling, the training designer gathers a number of representative cases or subjects based upon how many are available and how easy it is to gain access to them. The training designer then makes an educated guess on how many to include in the sample.

**Random sampling:** This is a form of "probability sampling" in which each subject in the population being studied has an equal chance of being selected for the study. This form of sampling is best used when the population is large and it does not matter which individuals are included in the sample.

To conduct random sampling the procedure to be followed:

- Clarify the nature of the problem
- List the population
- Assign some form of identification number to each member of the population
- Select the sample using a procedure such as a table of random numbers drawn from a hat

**Stratified sampling:** Is a more sophisticated method of sampling and it is best used when the population is composed of subgroups that differ in several key respects. For example, the sub-groups may include individuals who are in different job roles, rank structures or geographical locations. It can also include individuals of different ethnic backgrounds. Stratified sampling ensures that each subgroup of the population is proportionally represented in the sample.

To conduct stratified sampling the procedure to be followed:

- Clarify the boundaries of the population
- Identify relevant subgroups within the population
- List the members of each subgroup
- Assign number to each member of each subgroup
- Determine what percentage of the entire population is made up of members of each subgroup
- Select the sample using a random method

Systematic sampling: Is a simple alternative to other sampling methods.

Ton conduct a systematic sampling use these procedures

- make a list of everyone in the organisation
- divide the total number of persons on the list by 10%
- select every tenth name on the list

***If the names are listed in random order, the resulting sample will be as good as a simple random sampling. However, if there is any order at all to the list, the resulting sample may be biased as a result of that order.***

**Determining the size of the sample**

When considering how large to make the sample, you should consider the following:

- The level of confidence in your sample that you will be comfortable with. If you want to be 100% confident, you will have to sample the entire population. Depending on the size of the population, this may not be easily done. If a lower degree of confidence is acceptable, you may reduce the sample size.
- Consider the maximum allowable error and do not exceed this number.
- Consider the standard deviation. This is a measure of central tendency.

**<u>Step 5: Determining data selection strategy and tactics</u>**

There are a number of ways in which you may collect data during a training needs analysis:

a. Direct observation
b. Questionnaires
c. Consultation with personnel in key positions
d. Review of relevant literature
e. Interviews
f. Focus groups
g. Tests
h. Records and report studies
i. Work samples

**Direct observation**

Direct observation simply means that you watch a person or group of people, working and record what they do and how they do it. If you understand the process or concept, you may be able to gather valuable data by observing the process, with the findings being measured against national or organisational standards for that process or task.

**Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are an effective way of gathering large amounts of data from target groups of people, on the subject or issues being researched. The advantages of using questionnaires as a data collection method are that large numbers of people can be questioned and with a properly constructed questionnaire, objective and valid information can be obtained.

The disadvantages of using questionnaires are that they are time consuming to construct and subsequently analyse. A percentage of the target group will not respond or the questionnaires will be spoiled. Questions must be constructed in such a way as to avoid bias (wittingly or unwittingly directing the respondent to a particular answer).

**Consultation with personnel in key positions**

Consultation with personnel in key positions may reveal shortcomings in working practices. For example, consultation with a state prosecutor may identify that the quality of evidence provided for the prosecution of offenders is often flawed due to lack of care, knowledge or an understanding of the rules of evidence, etc. Crime scene investigators may have their work frustrated by the failure of first officers at the scene to adequately protect the scene from contamination or disruption. Exhibits may be contaminated by inappropriate handling and thereby rendered useless.

**Review of relevant literature**

Relevant literature such as: Standing Operating Procedures, training manuals, manuals of guidance may be out of date, not relevant to the current situation, or may not exist or be readily available for practitioners to use and refer to.

**Interviews**

Interviews with practitioners may reveal inappropriate supervision and a lack of resources. Supervisors and managers may lack the necessary qualities for effective leadership. They may be working with a team that lacks the knowledge and skills, which through lack of adequate and appropriate training prevents them from operating efficiently and effectively. Members of the public (customers) may be able to identify, from their perspective, problems and shortcomings not apparent to, or recognised by the organisation; it's workforce and leadership. Interviews may also be conducted with 'focus groups'. That is, interviews conducted with representative groups of people, whose opinions are sought on the relevant issues

**Tests**

Tests, examinations and contrived scenarios, can be produced which test the knowledge, understanding and skill levels of practitioners. Such tests will help to determine whether individual knowledge, understanding and skill levels are at an acceptable level and will help to identify where training or retraining is necessary.

**Records and report studies**

Records and report studies will help you to establish the accuracy and quality of written reports and whether they adequately satisfy the needs of the organisation and those of other parties involved in the process and outcomes (refer back to consultation with key personnel).

**Step 6: <u>Specifying instruments to be used and the rules governing the data collection</u>**

**Determining the instrument:**

In this step of the needs assessment plan, you will be concerned with selecting the type of instrument that you will use to collect your data. There are two choices, you can either buy a commercially available questionnaire or you can develop your own.

The advantages of commercially produced questionnaires are that they save development time. There will be a level of professional expertise in the construction of the questionnaire that you or your organisation may not possess.

The disadvantages are that they are very expensive and you would have to buy a questionnaire for each person to be surveyed.

The advantages of producing your own questionnaires are that they are much cheaper to produce and can be tailored to meet the unique needs of your organisation.

The disadvantages are that they are time consuming to produce. The person tasked with developing the questionnaire may not have the necessary competence to produce one that fulfils the need for balance and objectivity and avoiding bias.

**Determining the rules (also known as protocol)**

The rules must conform to your department's or organisation's policies, and procedures, both written and unwritten.

In planning protocol you should consider the following questions:

- Who will be surveyed?
- How many people will be surveyed?
- How can this be done with the minimum of interference in the work place?
- What supervisors need to be contacted?
- Who will approve the needs assessment?
- Who will receive the results of the needs assessment?
- Who needs to be kept informed about the progress of the needs assessment?
- What is the best format to use to deliver the results of the assessment?
- By what date do the needs assessment need to be completed?

You should remember that how you carry out your needs assessment could influence both the results of your needs assessment and the willingness of your department to continue with it.

**Step 7: Determining the methods you will use to analyse your data**

- In this step you determine how the results of your needs assessment will be analysed. This is very important and frequently overlooked.

- You need to know how you will analyse the data before collecting it, to ensure that you collect the right types of data.

- There are many different analytical tools and techniques for analysing data. The most commonly used in law enforcement agencies are historical/case study and descriptive methods

**Historical/case study**

With these methods you either reviews past conditions in the organisation (historical studies) or present conditions (case study).

Analysis often expressed in a narrative form, and often includes a study of an actual event that either was successful or unsuccessful. For example, a hostage situation may be reviewed as a case study to determine organisational training needs.

Although case studies of exceptional events have a large degree of persuasive appeal, they may not represent typical situations or conditions.

**Descriptive methods**

Descriptive methods include interviews, questionnaires, and document reviews.

Data may be presented either qualitatively in narrative form or quantitatively through simple frequencies (See Analytical Tools and Techniques).

**Step 8: Assessing the practicality of the needs assessment plan**

Before you finalise your needs assessment plan you should ask yourself three more questions and a series of related sub-questions:

1. Can the plan be done with the resources that are available?

    - It makes little sense to prepare a plan that you know cannot be carried out due to lack of resources.
    - Will you have people, equipment, tools and budget that you need to carry out the plan?
    - Is there enough time available to carry out the plan?

2. Will the plan work in your department?

    - Given your organisations culture, will the plan be carried out?
    - Will you have the support of the people who have the power to approve the plan and its implementation?
    - Whose opinions are the most important and does the plan take their opinions

into account?
- How does your organisation feel about performance analysis and needs assessment?

3. Has all unnecessary information been eliminated from the plan?

- Will the plan result in a report that is clear and easy to understand?
- How do the decision makers in your organisation like to receive their reports?
- Will the report be too long or too technical for them?
- Will the report include an executive summary

Remember, decision makers don't have the time to read lengthy and complex reports. Keep your final report simple and to the point.

**Information coming out of training needs analysis:**

- Current knowledge and skill levels
- Skills necessary for specific jobs and tasks
- Missing knowledge and skill levels
- Need for action to remedy shortcomings identified at 3 above
- Whether or not the existing training addresses the core competencies of the organisation?
- Whether there is a need to spend time, money and effort on training?

**Summary**

Review of learning objectives:

1. List and define the four terms associated with training needs assessment
2. List the eight terms steps associated with needs assessment planning
3. List the methods by which training needs analysis can be conducted
4. Identify the method most suitable to collect data for a training need
5. Produce a needs assessment plan
6. Conduct a training needs survey

Review the following the terms:

- Need
- Needs assessment
- Needs assessment planning
- Needs assessment plan

List the eight steps that are to be followed when developing a needs assessment plan.

Discuss in your own words each of the four types of sampling procedures and when each of them should be used in the development of a needs assessment plan.

**Transition**

In the next unit you will examine Unit B2: Analysing Learners.