



Learning Objective: The student will understand the concept of a training needs assessment.

A training needs assessment is the process to determine the difference between the current situation and an intended situation, resulting in the identification of performance gaps. Assessments will aid an organization in determining solutions to resolve performance gaps and guide that organization's effort to meet its critical mission requirement through the development of a strategy to close existing gaps.

While training is not the only solution that may be identified in the process, training might be appropriate when the performance issue is a "can't do" issue, such as

- Poor performance (resulting from a knowledge or skill deficiency).
- Lack of basic skills (reading, writing, technology, math skills).
- Legislation or policies requiring new knowledge or skills.
- New technology.
- Higher performance standards.

The assessment process is an organized method to explore the causes and reasons for the gap and methods for closing or eliminating the gap. Those methods include training development, policy changes, or organizational modification to existing procedures.

There are three levels of a training needs assessment:

1. Organizational assessment evaluates the level of organizational performance. An assessment of this type will determine what knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) an organization needs. Organizational assessment takes into consideration various additional factors, including changing demographics, political trends, technology and the economy.
2. Occupational assessment examines the KSAs required for affected occupational groups. Occupational assessment identifies how and which occupational discrepancies or gaps exist.
3. Individual assessment analyzes how well an individual employee is doing a job and determines the individual's capacity to do new or different work. Individual assessment provides information on which employees need training and what kind of training they need.

The results of the needs assessment allow the organization to set the training objectives by answering two very basic questions: What needs to be done? And why is it not being done now?

Then, it is more likely an accurate identification of who, if anyone, needs training and what training is needed.

Sometimes training is not the best solution, and it is virtually never the only solution. Some performance gaps can be reduced or eliminated through other management solutions, such as communicating expectations, providing a supportive work environment, and checking job fit. These interventions are also needed if training is to result in sustained new behaviors, which are required for an individual, an occupation, or an entire organization to achieve new performance levels.