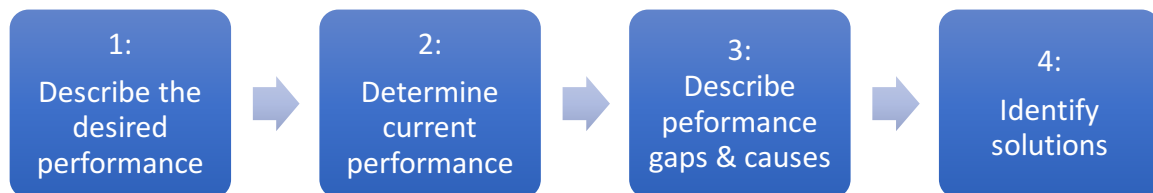# Needs Analysis Process

A needs analysis is a systematic set of procedures used to determine the gap or discrepancy between a present state (what is) and a desired state (what should be). The "Need" is the gap between what "should be" and "what is." The purpose is to determine if there is a gap in performance, determine factors that cause the gap, and identify possible solutions.

It is practiced as a four-phase process:

1: Describe the desired performance	→	2: Determine current performance	→	3: Describe peformance gaps & causes	→	4: Identify solutions

1: Describe Desired Performance

The starting point is to clearly describe the desired state of performance (optimals). In short it is to determine "what are the skills, knowledge and behaviors needed to perform task or job effectively?"

STEP 1: Describe the target group (supervisors, activity leads, HVAC technicians, etc)

STEP 2: Describe the desired performance/behaviors (use actionable terms)

STEP 3: Describe regulatory requirements that determine "Need"

STEP 4: Describe program or business expectations for performance

2: Describe Current performance (current state)

Once your team has described the desired performance (and you have concurrence from management, key stakeholders), the next step is to determine what the actual performance is (in the workplace). This can be achieved by performing one or more of the following based on judgement of group.

➢ Interviewing subject matter experts to determine current performance levels

➢ Interviewing supervisors to determine current performance levels

➢ Interviewing and observing work (or work outputs) of representatives of target audience

➢ Reviewing procedures and regulations to determine performance expectations

➢ Reviewing relevant Self-Assessments, Reports, lessons learned, near misses, etc, for evidence of performance

3: Describe performance gaps and causes

Now that your team has a clear picture of the performance expectations and the current state of performance it's time to describe the gaps and causes as well as the consequence of poor performance, the difficulty to correct and criticality.

The following table provides an example for this process:

Performance expectation	Gap (Need)	Causes	Consequence	Difficulty to correct [low, medium, high]	Criticality 1 2 3 4 5
List a performance expectation	List the gap in performance	List causes (what inhibits desired performance)	List the consequence for not performing at desired level	Rate the difficulty to correct	Enter a rating, on a scale of 1 to 5, of the degree of criticality of the need if it is not met, with 5 being the most critical.

NOTE: When determining causes, it is important to split these into categories:

- Lack of knowledge or skill ("don't know how")
- Lack of information or feedback?
- Lack of will motivation (don't "wanna")?
- Unclear expectations or direction, supervision?
- Work environment factors (workplace culture factors)?

4: Prioritize solutions

At this stage, the team needs to form a bridge from analysis to action. This step determines "what needs are most critical" and "what are possible solutions." The outcome is a Needs Analysis report that management can use to decide on a course of action.

STEP 1: Identify possible solutions
Identify and describe possible solutions: At a minimum, proposed solutions should meet the criteria of **effect on causes, acceptability**, and **feasibility** (includes resources).

- ➢ Evaluate and rate each solution separately
- ➢ Evaluate the cost / effort to implement
  - o Is it a one-time cost or ongoing
  - o Who absorbs the cost and how is it determined
- ➢ Evaluate the effectiveness
  - o How effective are the solutions presented?
- ➢ Evaluate how sustainable the solution will be
  - o Is there adequate buy-in to resource the solution over (life cycle)?
  - o Does it require management involvement (buy in).

STEP 2: Select solutions:
On the basis of all the information, select one or more solutions. The following table is just to represent options based on the cause/need.

Cause	Solution type
Lack of knowledge / skill	Training, job-performance aid
Lack of information / feedback	What type of feedback and method to provide
Lack of will / motivation	What type of rewards, consequences
Unclear expectations	What process will best communicate expectations
Work environment factors	

STEP 3: Propose an action plan (Recommendations)
Plan should include description of the solutions recommended, rationale, proposed timelines and resource requirements.

STEP 4: Prepare a report:
Produce a written report that includes:
- ➢ Description of the needs analysis process
- ➢ Major outcomes identified
- ➢ Prioritized needs (and criteria used)
- ➢ Action plan recommendations