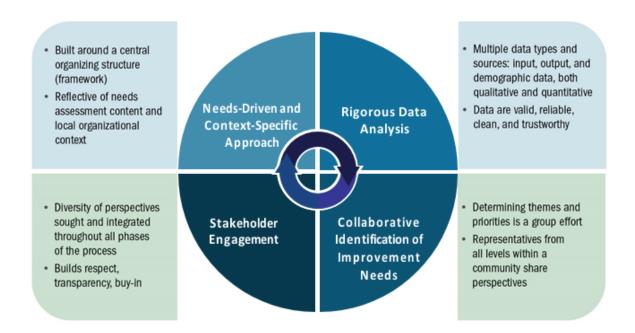


## Conducting a Needs Assessment: Quick Reference Guide

Needs assessment is, first and foremost, a *process*—a process that can help education leaders successfully address education challenges. An effective needs assessment process helps local stakeholders and system leaders understand how the pieces of a complex educational system interact, uncovering strengths and challenges that will inform growth and improvement. This appendix provides a two-page *Quick Reference Guide* to summarize the main elements of the framework for the overall guidebook.

## **Elements of a Successful Needs Assessment**

The process of conducting a needs assessment can help articulate successes, challenges, and priorities for improvement, knowledge that supports the successful selection, and implementation of strategies that will help all students succeed. A successful needs assessment will accomplish three critical objectives: be reflective of research, meaningfully engage stakeholders, and emphasize the *process* as much as the end *product*. The *Needs Assessment Guidebook* examines what research and State Support Network experience working with states suggest are essential to a successful needs assessment and organizes those core concepts into four elements:



## Phases of Implementation

The elements of a successful needs assessment provide a structure for what a needs assessment should include. The theory presented in the elements is made actionable through five distinct implementation phases of the needs assessment process, as illustrated below.

PLAN

- Why are we engaging in the needs assessment? What are we hoping the impact will be at the classroom, building, and system levels?
- What content should be addressed, and which data should be utilized?
- Who are the key stakeholders that need to be engaged, and at what points in the process?

COLLECT AND ORGANIZE DATA

- What data sources aligned with the guiding questions are readily available from existing sources (state databases, etc.)?
- What additional data are needed to fully explore the guiding questions, and how can those data best be collected (survey, focus group, interview, etc.)?
- How can data be presented in a way that is easily understood?

INTERPRET INFORMATION

- What do the various data sources say about the guiding questions that the needs assessment is trying to answer?
- Can input, output, and demographic data be triangulated to build strong themes?
- Are there places in which the data sources disagree with each other or present a perspective different from your own? How can the underlying causes of these differences be explored?

DETERMINE PRIORITIES

- What findings or themes emerged that, if addressed, will have the greatest potential for impact on student outcomes?
- Do additional voices or sources need to be considered to make informed decisions about priorities and capacity for implementation?

CONNECT TO IMPLEMENTATION

- How will the needs assessment results be used to drive meaningful, long-term change?
- What additional information is needed about the needs assessment results or their underlying causes to create meaningful, long-term change?