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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Forward:** Our value proposition

**Introduction**

**Section One:** Needs Assessment  
 - Frequently Asked Questions

**Section Two:** Needs Assessment  
 - Steps to Success

**Section Three:** Tools and  
 Techniques

*Data Collection Tools and  
 Techniques*

*Decision Making Tools and  
 Techniques*

**Appendix:** Implementation  
 Guides and Checklists

**Recommended Readings**

# A Guide to Assessing Needs

*Essential Tools for Collecting Information, Making Decisions, and Achieving Development Results*

By Ryan Watkins, Maurya West Meiers, and Yusra Visser

The earliest decisions that lead to development projects are among the most critical in determining long-term success. This phase of project development transforms exciting ideas into project proposals, setting the stage for a variety of actions that will eventually lead (if all goes well) to desirable results. From deciding to propose a sanitation project in South Asia to selecting approaches that strengthen school management in South America, these decisions are the starting place of development. This book is your guide to having assessing needs and then making essential decisions about what to do next.

Needs assessments support this early phase of project development with proven approaches for gathering information and making justifiable decisions. Filled with practical strategies, tools, and guides, you will find that this book covers both large-scale formal needs assessments, as well as less-formal assessments that guide daily decisions. Included in the book is a blend of rigorous methods and realistic tools that can help you make informed and reasoned decisions. Use the tools featured in the book to conduct focus groups, develop surveys, prioritize needs, and lead group decision-making; developing a comprehensive, yet realistic, approach to identifying needs and selecting among alternative ways forward.

*"An essential resource for anyone who conducts needs assessments."*

- James Altschuld,

author of the *Needs Assessment Kit*, Professor Emeritus from the Ohio State University

*"A Guide to Assessing Needs offers a much broader perspective than many texts on project management or evaluation. The authors bring together tools and techniques from diverse disciplines so that even experienced professionals are likely to find many new approaches for collecting information and guiding decisions."*

-Michael Bamberger,

co-author of *Real World Evaluation: Working under Budget, Time, Data and Political Constraints* and *How to Design and Implement Equity-Focused Evaluations*

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