PLANNING A TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT: A FRAMEWORK APPLIED TO THE CALIFORNIA BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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B.A., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2005

THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

SPRING
2011
PLANNING A TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT: A FRAMEWORK APPLIED TO THE CALIFORNIA BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

of

PLANNING A TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT: A FRAMEWORK APPLIED TO THE CALIFORNIA BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

by

Anna Lee Dykstra

Currently, federal agencies are facing multiple issues that can affect their ability to meet their mission. The agency’s workforce plays a vital role in their ability to meet their mission. However, federal agencies are encountering workforce vacancies and high turnover rates that affect the organizations’ ability to meet their missions. These workforce vacancies are largely due to workforce retirements and these positions being left vacant due to budget cuts that prohibit hiring or new, untrained employees filling in. In order for federal agencies to fulfill their mission during these uncertain times, agencies need methods to assess whether or not they are meeting the mission and identify solutions to enable its existing workforce to better meet these goals. If the agency is not meeting its goals, training and development of the employees that remain is critical in ensuring that the workforce is successful and capable of carrying out the agency’s mission. A training needs assessment is one method agencies can use in order to assess these issues.

The careful planning of a training needs assessment is an important task prior to conducting the assessment. Guidance when planning a training needs assessment benefits all agencies, especially those that have not done this previously. This thesis
develops a framework for planning a training needs assessment based on evidence from the literature and strategies that other agencies have found effective. The framework developed in this thesis will assist agencies in conducting a training needs assessment and aligning their training and development programs with the mission and strategic goals of the agency.

I then apply this framework to the California Bureau of Land Management. As a result of this project, the California Bureau of Land Management can use the information to proceed with conducting a training needs assessment in order to develop a workforce capable of carrying out its mission and strategically align their Training and Development program with the mission of the agency.

_______________________, Committee Chair
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Date
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

As the baby boomer generation is reaching retirement age, organizations need to prepare for many employees to be leaving the workforce and determine how they are going to develop their workforce to replace those employees. The federal government is no exception. In a report published in 2008, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) predicted that 60% of the federal workforce (using the number of 2006 non-seasonal full time employees) will retire by 2016 (OPM, 2008, p. 2). As these employees leave the federal government, they are also taking with them an abundance of skills and knowledge that they have acquired during their careers. The federal government needs to prepare to replace these skilled employees to continue operating successfully. The people filling these positions will need the tools and resources to help them develop in order to successfully perform their jobs and replace the aging workforce. In order to do this, the employees will likely need training in certain areas to fill the gap of knowledge that will develop as employees retire.

An organization’s training and development program is essential when determining where training is needed in order to produce a workforce capable of meeting the agency’s mission. According to the Federal Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Training and Development Policy website (n.d.), employee training and development programs are important to every professional organization in ensuring that the workforce is successful. OPM also mentions that training and development is a critical aspect when considering performance management, workforce planning, and strategic planning (OPM
Accordingly, federal agencies can look to training and development to address the turnover of employees from retirement.

An agency develops a successful training and development program based on the needs of the organization and the level of performance of its employees (J. Brown, 2002, p. 569). In order to determine the needs of the organization, an agency can conduct a Training Needs Assessment. According to OPM’s website (n.d.), “the purpose of a training needs assessment is to identify performance requirements and the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by an agency's workforce to achieve the requirements. An effective training needs assessment will help direct resources to areas of greatest demand” (Introduction section, para. 1).

Another reason for conducting a training needs assessment (TNA) is that federal policy requires agencies to evaluate their training programs periodically. The policy states that agencies are to “evaluate, on a regular basis, its training programs and plans with respect to the accomplishment of its specific performance plans and strategic goals, and modify its training plans and programs as needed to accomplish the agency's performance plans and strategic goals” (Federal Register, 2009, para. 1). This assessment will allow agencies to modify their training program to meet the needs of new employees and current employees moving into new positions due to the agency’s expected losses.

TNAs are also a method the agency can use to determine how and if their training program is meeting the strategic goals and mission of the organization. Without thoughtful planning, training and development programs may not be aligned with the strategic goals of the organization or may not be based on the needs of the organization.
Training and development programs are sometimes delivered without the knowledge of the current competencies of the work force and, therefore, without knowing where to focus resources for training and development.

As the current federal workforce is filling positions through promotions and by bringing in new employees to fill the gap from retirees, now is an ideal time to conduct a TNA for any organization that has not done so recently. Agencies should conduct a TNA as it fulfills the policy requirement and because of the many benefits from conducting a TNA. This will ensure that employees are receiving the training they need for the organization to be successful. It will also give the agency the opportunity to assess the current training program to align it with the strategic goals of the organization.

*Purpose and Goal of This Research*

A needs assessment can be beneficial for any organization in order to determine how best to allocate resources regarding training. The current budget and pending retirements of the federal government make needs assessments even more beneficial. Many agencies are facing budget cuts and they need to know how best to use the minimal resources they are given. A needs assessment may take time and resources initially, but in the end a TNA can greatly benefit the organization and possibly save many wasted resources on unneeded training. It allows agencies to identify certain areas that need improvement and focus on those areas that they then know need improvement, instead of assuming that a training course will fix the problem.
The first goal of this project is to develop a framework to plan a TNA. The agency can use many approaches and methods to conduct a TNA. According to the Office of Personnel Management, there are three phases to the TNA process: determine the agency benefits of the assessment, plan the assessment, and conduct the TNA (n.d., para. 2-4). The focus of this project is on the planning of the TNA. The planning process for a TNA can be daunting, especially for those agencies that have not done this in the past. There is also a lack of guidance on how agencies should go about planning a TNA, and what information the agency needs prior to starting the assessment.

The second goal of this research is to apply the planning framework developed to the California Bureau of Land Management (CA BLM). Once this research is complete, I will use the findings to conduct a TNA for the Bureau. The California Bureau of Land Management is a federal agency within the Department of the Interior that consists of approximately 900 employees (CA BLM website, n.d.). Currently, the California Bureau of Land Management does not have any plan in place to address the possible loss in knowledge from employees retiring. Training is mainly focused on the mandatory training that employees must complete such as ethics or diversity training. Also, the agency has not conducted an assessment specifically regarding the training needs for the California Bureau of Land Management employees, so the organization has no way to evaluate if the training program is meeting its goals. A TNA would benefit the organization in multiple ways. It would help the organization identify what, if any, training the organization needs to fill the gap of knowledge caused by employees leaving the organization. Conducting a TNA will also allow the organization to evaluate the
current training program to align it with the strategic goals and mission, as the agency has not done this previously.

Another reason I chose to use CA BLM for this project is that Management for CA BLM currently would like to make the training and development program more strategic. My current position with CA BLM is a Human Resource Specialist trainee for the Training and Development program. In this capacity, it is my responsibility to administer the program to meet management’s goals. A TNA for the Bureau will benefit the agency by helping me to identify training needs, fulfill policy requirements, and reach Agency goals for the training and development program.

The next section of this paper is a literature review that will address the relevant research regarding TNAs. The literature review focuses on the different types of assessments the agency can use as well as methods appropriate to use for data gathering when conducting a TNA. The third section is the methodology section. This section develops the framework for planning a TNA. The fourth section applies the framework from the third chapter to CA BLM and discusses the findings from applying the framework. The final chapter summarizes my findings and identifies areas of further research that will benefit agencies planning a TNA.
Chapter 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a wealth of existing literature regarding all aspects of TNAs. The literature I chose to focus on discusses the purposes of conducting a needs assessment, types of needs assessments along with correlating methods to use, and effective strategies for conducting a TNA. I chose to focus on these types of literature because the purpose of this project is to develop a plan for conducting a TNA, as previously mentioned, and these aspects of conducting a TNA are important in the planning phase. They will provide background and other relevant information needed to conduct a TNA. I will use the information gathered in this literature review to help develop a framework for planning a TNA.

*purposes of training needs assessments*

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) states that, “the purpose of a TNA is to identify performance requirements and the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by an agency's workforce to achieve the requirements” (OPM website, n.d., para. 1). However, there are many purposes for a TNA depending on the agency’s goal of the assessment. A TNA is an important step to undertake prior to implementing a training and development plan as it determines what sort of need for training exists, what type of training the organization needs, and the resources needed to implement the findings of the TNA (Cekada, 2010). Without knowing what is required of the workforce to be successful, a training program may be focusing resources on the wrong areas. The most
common purposes of a TNA include aligning training with the organization’s strategic goals and mission, evaluating training programs, and identifying performance gaps within an organization.

Brown (2010) points out that the organization should align training with the agency’s workforce planning. The agency should align the workforce plan and training with the purpose of the organization to ensure that the agency has a workforce that is capable of meeting the agency’s mission. For instance, the agency should develop the goals for the training program with workforce planning in mind in order to ensure current and future employees have the tools they need to perform their jobs. Aligning training with strategic planning for the organization makes certain that the agency is making efforts in all departments and levels of the organization to meet the agency’s mission. The agency can use the TNA as a tool to meet these goals.

As well as to align training with strategic workforce planning, agencies can conduct TNAs for various other reasons, too. They can use them to evaluate a training program, obtain baseline data when implementing a training program, and to ensure that the agency is effectively using resources (Miller, 1996). TNAs can be used to evaluate a training program by comparing the data gathered through the assessment against the goals of the agency and verify that they correlate. Miller (1996) also mentions that a needs assessment can be used to assist with the following: competencies and performance of work teams; problem solving or productivity issues; the need to prepare for and respond to future changes in the organization or job duties.
Miller (1996) Brown (2010), and OPM (n.d.) all agree that the TNAs are used to identify gaps in what performance level is expected and the actual performance of the agency. A TNA will reveal any discrepancies between desired performance and outcomes and actual performance and outcomes by identifying what level of performance is needed to accomplish the agency’s mission and what the agency’s actual level of performance is. Identifying if a gap exists will allow the agency to focus resources in that direction and narrow the scope for types of training needed to address the gap.

In summary, the literature identifies the following main purposes for conducting a TNA:

- Align training with organization’s mission and strategic goals
- Evaluate a training program
- Obtain baseline data to implement a training plan; Identify performance requirements/identify gaps in current performance and what performance is needed

However, the organization determines the purpose of a TNA based on what the organization seeks to accomplish through the assessment. Once the specific purpose (or purposes) of the TNA is determined, then the agency can analyze what level of assessment is most appropriate as described below. An organization can have multiple purposes for conducting a TNA, though, as with CA BLM discussed in the introduction. This information also lays the foundation for determining the type of TNA to conduct as well as what specific TNA methodologies or tools to use.
**Types of Training Needs Assessments and Methodologies**

The general purpose of a TNA is to identify the training needs of the organization in order to better meet the mission of the agency (OPM website, n.d.). However, the literature states that an organization can conduct a TNA on three different levels depending on the purpose of the assessment. The three levels of assessments are an organizational analysis, an operations (or task) analysis, and an individual analysis (Moore and Dutton, 1978; Arthur et al, 2003; Miller, 1996; Cekada, 2010).

An organizational analysis “focuses on the entire business enterprise and consists of organizational objectives, human resources analysis, analysis of efficiency indices, and analysis of organizational climate” (Moore and Dutton, 1978 p. 533). The organizational analysis focuses on the big picture of the organization. The goal of the organizational analysis is to determine if the organization is meeting its mission and goals as a whole.

The purpose of an operations/task analysis according to Moore and Dutton “is to determine what an employee should be taught to perform the job at the desired level. It includes standards of performance, how the tasks are to be performed to meet the standards, and the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary” (1978 p. 533). The operations analysis or the task analysis as other authors refer to it focuses more on the skills that the job requires in order to perform it successfully. This type of analysis reveals if the specific job requirements are meeting the mission and goals of the organization, not necessarily how well the individual is performing those tasks.

According to Moore and Dutton (1978), the objective of the individual analysis, “is to find out how well each employee is performing the tasks that make up his or her
job” (p. 533). The individual analysis assesses each individual and if the individual is meeting the performance expectations of their job. The focus of the individual analysis is more on the individual employee’s performance and if they are performing successfully according to the requirements of the position.

A thorough TNA incorporates all three of these levels. However, organizations may focus on specific levels depending on the goals of their TNA. An agency can broaden or narrow the scope of their TNA based on the purpose of the analysis. If the agency were seeking to assess if they are meeting the goals of their mission, then an organizational analysis would be more appropriate. If the agency finds that it is not meeting the goals of the mission, they can then change the scope of the TNA to include an operations or individual analysis.

Once the agency determines the level of assessment to conduct, they can then select the method to collect and analyze data. Both the level of analysis conducted and the previously defined goals of the assessment determine the data collection method. However, there are many suggested methods for collecting and analyzing information depending on the level of assessment.

Miller (1996) discusses the methods to use to gather and analyze data for the three levels of assessment. For an organizational analysis, Miller states that the agency can obtain information from strategic plans, mission goals, staffing needs and inventory, cost efficiency indices including cost of labor and quality of products, among others. Suggested methods to gather information regarding a task analysis include job descriptions, performance standards, knowledge, skills and abilities required by the job,
etc. Miller suggests obtaining information for individual or person analysis through performance evaluations, individual interviews or questionnaires, and work samples. The table below provides an overview of the information gathering techniques from Miller that the agency can use for each level of analysis.

Table 2.1 Methods used for Levels of Training Needs Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Analysis</th>
<th>Methods Used to Gather Information</th>
</tr>
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| Organizational Analysis| • Organizational goals and objectives, mission statements, strategic plans.  
                          • Staffing inventory, succession planning, long and short term staffing needs.  
                          • Skills inventory: both currently available and short and long term needs, organizational climate indices: labor/management relationships, grievances, turnover rates, absenteeism, suggestions, productivity, accidents, short term sickness, observations of employee behavior, attitude surveys, customer complaints.  
                          • Analysis of efficiency indices: costs of labor, costs of materials, quality of products, equipment utilization, production rates, costs of distribution, waste, down time, late deliveries, repairs.  
                          • Changes in equipment, technology or automation.  
                          • Annual report.  
                          • Plans for reorganization or job restructuring.  
                          • Audit exceptions; reward systems.  
                          • Planning systems.  
                          • Delegation and control systems.  
                          • Employee attitudes and satisfaction. |
| Task Analysis           | • Job description-- A narrative statement of the major activities involved in performing the job and the conditions under which these activities are performed. If an accurate job description is not available or is out of date, one should be prepared using job analysis techniques.  
                          • KSA analysis-- A more detailed list of specified tasks for each job including Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes and Abilities required of incumbents.  
                          • Performance standards-- Objectives of the tasks of the job and the standards by which they will be judged. This is needed to identify performance discrepancies.  
                          • Observe the job/sample the work.  
                          • Perform the job.  
                          • Job inventory questionnaire-- Evaluate tasks in terms of...
importance and time spent performing.
- Review literature about the job-- Research the "best practices" from other companies, review professional journals.
- Ask questions about the job-- Of the incumbents, of the supervisor, of upper management.
- Analysis of operating problems-- Down time, waste, repairs, late deliveries, quality control

| Individual/Person Analysis | • Performance evaluation -- Identifies weaknesses and areas of improvement.  
|                            | • Performance problems -- Productivity, absenteeism or tardiness, accidents, grievances, waste, product quality, down time, repairs, equipment utilization, customer complaints.  
|                            | • Observation -- Observe both behavior and the results of the behavior.  
|                            | • Work samples -- Observe products generated.  
|                            | • Interviews -- Talk to manager, supervisor and employee. Ask employee about what he/she believes he/she needs to learn.  
|                            | • Questionnaires -- Written form of the interview, tests, must measure job-related qualities such as job knowledge and skills.  
|                            | • Attitude surveys -- Measures morale, motivation, satisfaction.  
|                            | • Checklists or training progress charts -- Up-to-date listing of current skills.  

(Miller, 1996)

Among the above-mentioned methods for gathering and analyzing data discussed by Miller, there are also other assessment methods that can be used to gather and analyze data but that are not specifically tied to a level of analysis. For example, Grant (2002) provides the following methodology to conduct a TNA: gap or discretionary analysis; reflection on action and reflection in action; self-assessment by diaries, journals, etc.; peer review; observation; critical incident review and significant event auditing; and practice review. Grant, however, does not clarify for which levels of analysis these methods are most appropriately used. Comparatively though, they are similar to some of the methods used by authors for an individual or task analysis.
Judith Brown (n.d.) also suggests some other methodology in collecting data and information when conducting TNAs. These methods include surveys/questionnaires, interviews, performance appraisals, observations, tests, assessment centers, focus groups, document reviews, and advisory committees. Again, there is no discussion about which level of assessment these methods would be most appropriate, but depending on the goals of the assessment, they can be applied to multiple levels of analysis.

Using specific methods like the ones suggested by both Grant and Brown, can have certain benefits in conducting a TNA as long as the agency is aware of the possible criticisms of those methods. For example, McEnery (1987) argues that self-assessments of training needs can be very beneficial in determining what the employee thinks they need or are lacking in skill and may also help with performance appraisals. Self-assessments allow input directly from the employee, which helps them to feel that their opinions matter. However, McEnery also argues that self-assessments can be problematic because employees and their supervisors may not agree on the skills of the employee. They can also be problematic if the supervisor does not acknowledge the employee’s input and ignores the self-assessment all together. However, when used correctly by both the employee and supervisor, self-assessments can be a very valuable tool in assessing training needs.

Another criticism is using performance appraisals as a tool to assess training needs. Celeveland (1989) argues that using performance appraisals for employee development when they are also used in pay administration is conflicting. Cleveland conducted a survey to find out the purpose of a performance appraisal and found that
most employers use them for considerations in promotions and pay administration. When using performance appraisals for pay administration and promotions, generally a comparison across employees is being made (Cleveland, 1989, p. 130). For employee development and training purposes, performance appraisals are used to do a comparison just of the individual employee’s skill level (or an internal comparison). Cleveland claims that using one tool for multiple purposes can be problematic because they may not properly assess either purpose (p. 131).

While there are many benefits to conducting a TNA, the agency needs to be aware of the potential problems with certain TNA tools as the ones mentioned above. Choosing the right tool when conducting a TNA depends on the goals of the assessment as well as the level of assessment. Regardless of the level of analysis or TNA tool being used though, there are also overall processes that the literature discusses that lead to successful TNAs. The following section highlights some of these effective processes to keep in mind when conducting a TNA.

*Effective Processes in Conducting a Training Needs Assessment*

As well as specific tools to use depending on the level of analysis, the literature also offers suggestions for successful practices to follow when conducting a TNA. Multiple authors agree that planning is one of the most important aspects of conducting a TNA (Grant, 2002 and OPM website, n.d.). Prior to conducting any sort of assessment, the organization should determine the benefits of the TNA and the goals of the assessment. In addition, the agency should involve anyone that has a vested interested in
the outcome of the project, such as managers and executives of the agency. Identifying and conducting outreach to the stakeholders early on is necessary to not only inform stakeholders of the process but also to engage them in the process. In order to effectively conduct the needs assessment, one must obtain the support of the management and the executives of the organization (OPM website, n.d. and Kirkpatrick, 2009-2010). Having the support of both management and executives reinforces the importance of the assessment and helps to get employees on board with the process.

As Kirkpatrick (2009-2010) discusses, another suggested practice for a successful TNA is to start with the end in mind (p. 57). As other authors have also suggested, when conducting a TNA, it is beneficial to have clear goals for the assessment. Conducting an assessment solely for the purpose of conducting an assessment is no better than conducting training without knowing where training is actually needed. Clear goals for conducting a TNA keeps the focus of the assessment and ensures that the agency is not wasting resources while conducting the TNA.

Another effective method that Kirkpatrick mentions involves conducting a timely assessment and delivering timely results based on the assessment (p. 57). To ensure that the TNA maintains a timely schedule, Kirkpatrick suggests that agencies keep assessments short and focus on the strategic goals and mission of the agency (p. 57). Kirkpatrick also suggests that if assessments must be lengthy, then they should at least be made convenient (such as adding a “save” feature to allow employees to come back to the assessment when it is convenient for them) (p. 57).
While researching the literature concerning TNAs, I also searched for any case studies about federal agencies that had conducted TNAs to take any suggestions these studies had regarding planning or conducting TNAs. Analyzing case studies from the federal sector specifically gives me insight into the processes and reasons behind those methods that other federal agencies have already gone through. In this search, I came across a report by the United States General Accounting Office documenting lessons learned from multiple federal agencies when designing training and development programs. This report, titled *Selected Agencies' Experiences and Lessons Learned in Designing Training and Development Programs*, specifically addresses issues federal agencies had in regards to assessing training needs. Below is a summary of the findings and suggestions from this report when identifying training needs, designing training and development plans, and evaluating training programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.2 GAO Report - Lessons Learned</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lessons learned in regards to identifying training needs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Involve key stakeholders and benchmark with other organizations when identifying skills and competencies to help ensure that training and development programs are aligned with current and emerging needs and business practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analyze existing agency data on employees’ skills and competencies and information from performance appraisals to help identify skills and competencies that need to be addressed throughout the agency as well as on an individual basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Link the agency’s workforce planning efforts with TNAs to ensure consistency and enhance strategic alignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consider the training needs of staff from other organizations that will likely use the agency’s training programs or facilities to effectively leverage training investments and meet diverse needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lessons learned in designing training and development plans</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plan early when developing integrated solutions that complement other planned and ongoing strategies to improve performance so that when implemented the strategies work effectively and are aligned to help achieve agency goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Plan for the direct participation of senior agency leaders and
experienced staff in the delivery of training and development programs to increase buy-in and build support for organizational change.

| Lessons learned in regards to evaluating training programs | • Incorporate appropriate aspects of the evaluation approach when designing training and development programs by specifying what results are expected to better ensure the availability and use of quality performance data.  
• Consider new approaches for collecting and analyzing performance data with the aim of increasing the quality and quantity of training evaluation feedback.  
• Plan for the use of multiple data types and sources to provide a balanced approach in assessing the effectiveness of training and development programs.  
• Take into account all relevant factors for determining the costs of a training and development program to better ascertain whether it is cost effective in relation to benefits achieved. |

This report is a compilation of case studies from federal agencies. The report summarizes the lessons learned by the agencies when identifying training needs, designing training and development programs and evaluating training programs. This report is valuable because of the fact that the agencies used in this study were federal agencies (including a DOI agency). Therefore the information is more applicable and beneficial than if it came from non-federal agencies, as they must follow the same policies and regulations that other federal civil service agencies must follow. This report contains a lot of valuable information for planning and conducting a TNA including to analyze existing data regarding the performance of the current workforce, to link workforce planning with the needs assessment, and to use multiple types of data and sources to accurately assess needs.

(GAO Report, 2004, pg. 3-5)
Summary

Overall, the literature gives specific purposes for TNAs such as aligning training with the mission of the organization, evaluating training and development programs, and identifying performance gaps. The literature also suggests the three types of TNA that can be conducted depending on the agency’s goals for the assessment: organizational analysis, task analysis, or an individual analysis. The level of assessment that is conducted depends on what the agency is trying to achieve with the assessment and the strategic goals of the training program. The literature furthermore suggests methodology depending on the level of analysis, and references some effective techniques in conducting an assessment as well as some case studies and best practices regarding TNAs. For instance, the literature states that gaining buy in from management and maintaining timeliness in the assessment are key components to a successful assessment. Therefore, the following section, Methodology, incorporates information from the literature review and from OPM in order to develop a framework for planning a TNA that ideally any agency (federal agencies in particular) can use. The methodology section also explains the rationale and logic behind the framework and also clarifies how each of the steps of the framework was developed.
Chapter 3

GENERALIZED TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

While there is a lot of existing information regarding TNAs, I was unable to locate anything specifically that guided agencies through the planning process of a TNA. Therefore, I developed a systematic framework for federal agencies to use when planning a TNA. To create a generalized framework for an organization to use for their TNA, I analyze a set of components identified by OPM as necessary in the planning phase and incorporate information from the literature review to create a framework for conducting a TNA. First, I identify factors that OPM suggests to consider when conducting a TNA and discuss why these factors are important. Then, I develop a framework according to OPM’s guidance and suggestions from the literature.

Why OPM?

I chose to use OPM to help guide my framework because OPM is “the central human resources agency for the Federal Government” (OPM AFR, 2010, pg. 5). OPM also has regulatory authority over federal agencies and can review human resource management programs as it chooses (5 CFR Part 10.3, 2011). OPM is additionally responsible for ensuring agencies compliance and accountability for federal laws and regulations along with advising and assisting agencies with strategic human resource management (OPM AFR, 2010, pg. 5). As it is OPM’s responsibility to assist and advise agencies with strategic human resource management, it is implied that OPM has knowledge and experience with federal human resource strategic management practices.
Federal human resource management is also very different from human resource management in the private or even non-profit sectors due the number of laws and regulations federal agencies must follow that other sectors may not have to follow. Federal human resource management programs should also be held to a higher standard than other sectors as federal agencies because they are serving the public and are funded through taxpayers. Therefore, they are accountable to the public. Having a regulatory agency oversee federal organizations helps enforce this accountability and higher standards. As a regulatory and advisory agency, OPM’s guidance is beneficial. In order to assist federal agencies with adhering to laws and regulations, it is reasonable to use guidance from OPM as they are the agency most knowledgeable about those laws and regulations.

Components to Planning a Training Needs Assessment by OPM

According OPM’s website, the following are components to consider when planning a TNA:

- Set goals/objectives for the needs assessment
- Evaluate organizational (agency) readiness and identify key roles
- Evaluate prior/other needs assessments
- Prepare project plan
- Inventory the capacity of staff and technology to conduct a meaningful training skills assessment and analysis
- Clarify success measures and program milestones
Framework for Planning a TNA

This section lays out the framework I created to plan a TNA as well as important questions the agency should consider when applying the framework. I used the components identified by OPM and incorporated the information from the literature review to structure the planning process for conducting a TNA and created the following framework:

Step 1: Analyze strategic plans for Agency and Department
Step 2: Analyze performance reports for Agency and Department
Step 3: Evaluate prior/other needs assessments
Step 4: Set goals and objectives for the assessment
Step 5: Identify level of assessment to conduct
Step 6: Evaluate organizational readiness, identify key roles and resources needed to conduct assessment
Step 7: Define success measures and program milestones with timeline for completion

Step 1: Analyze strategic plans for Agency and Department

Analyzing the strategic plans for the agency and the department are the first step for planning a TNA because the literature suggested that the assessment and training goals should be aligned with the mission and strategic goals of the organization. Therefore, the mission and strategic goals of the organization need to be understood prior to anything else when planning TNAs. This information is also beneficial to have from
the beginning of the process as a reference point throughout the planning phase as the agency should frame the remaining steps around this information. If strategic plans are not available, this information can often be inferred from other sources such as websites, annual reports, or any other source that indicates what the agency intends to accomplish in the future.

*What is the purpose of the agency?* The purpose of the agency can be found through mission statements, websites, or strategic plans. This provides a base understanding of the responsibilities of the organization and what the organization is striving to achieve. Without understanding why the organization exists and what they are supposed to achieve, one cannot analyze what the agency can do to improve.

*What are the strategic goals of the agency?* The strategic goals can be found in strategic plans, workforce plans or other planning documents. Reviewing long and short-term planning documents are beneficial because they will reveal what are the immediate goals of the agency as well as the direction they are looking toward in the future.

*Are the workforce plans aligned with these goals?* If workforce plans exist, or any strategic staffing or human capital plans, they should be analyzed to ensure that these plans are aligned with the strategic goals and missions of the agency. Having these plans aligned with each other, ensures that the agency is focused on the purpose of the agency and that all programs have the same goal of meeting the purpose of the organization. If these plans are not aligned with each other, this could indicate that the agency should conduct an organizational assessment, as one of the purposes of this type of assessment is to align these plans.
Step 2: Analyze performance reports for Agency and Department

The second step, analyzing performing reports, is next because analyzing these reports gives insight into how the agency is currently performing. If current performance reports exist, this eliminates a lot of the work that would need to be done to understand how the agency’s programs are performing.

*Where are the organizations current weaknesses?* As the literature review suggested, performance reports identify areas where the agency is currently not meeting their mission. Therefore, the focus of the TNA can be directed to these areas from the beginning rather than having to research to find these weaknesses. However, if performance reports are unavailable, the agency can look to individual performance ratings as the GAO report in the literature review suggested. Reviewing these ratings can also be done in addition to reviewing performance reports for the agency, as it will reveal individual weaknesses in performance. A combination of performance reports for programs and individuals provides a comprehensive overview of where problems in the organization may be. Another benefit to analyzing performance reports second is that the program areas identified, even if they are performing acceptably, can be analyzed against the mission and goal of the organization to see if they are necessary program areas for the agency.

*Is there a trend in performance?* When analyzing performance reports, it is important to notice if there are any trends in performance. If performance is consistently decreasing, this may signal a training need. It is difficult to analyze performance from one only point in time, as there is nothing to compare it to.
Step 3: Evaluate prior/other needs assessments

The third step, evaluating prior needs assessments, allows the organization to learn from other needs assessments that have been conducted.

*Has the agency ever conducted a TNA?* Agency records or personnel can assist in locating files if the agency has previously conducted a TNA. The agency can draw on the results of previous TNAs for best practices and any lessons learned from the previous assessments. Depending on the timing of the assessment and if the assessment was done by the same agency, the agency may be able to expand on the conclusions drawn from the previous TNAs and integrate them into their current assessment.

*If so, what were the findings and were they implemented?* The findings from any previous assessments can be used to make a comparison with the performance reports to evaluate whether or not there were any improvements for the agency. Reviewing this information also reveals any struggles the agency may have had in implementing findings from the TNA in order to learn from their struggles and improve on the process.

*Was the TNA successful?* If this information is available, it is beneficial to see what changes or findings that were implemented actually worked and what did not, so as not to repeat the same mistakes.

Step 4: Set goals and objectives for the assessment.

*Define objectives based on previous steps and agency’s purpose in conducting TNA.* After the above steps are completed, the agency can then make an informed determination about the objectives of the assessment and the level of assessment to
conduct. The objectives of a TNA are unique to the agency depending on the problems the agency is having and their reasons for conducting a TNA. Objectives of the assessment often include: identifying performance gaps in certain areas, aligning training with the strategic goals, and obtaining baseline data regarding training needs. The agency may also have multiple objectives for their TNA, which may indicate different levels of assessments.

Step 5: Identify level of assessment to conduct

Based on the evaluation of the above steps and the objectives, should the agency conduct an organizational assessment, task assessment, or individual assessment?

- Organizational assessment: focuses on overall needs of the organization. This level of assessment can be used to align training with workforce planning, strategic goals and to identify if a performance problem exists. This level of assessment will not reveal where specific performance problems are, though. In these cases a task or individual analysis should be used.

- Task assessment: focuses on the positions and position descriptions within the organization and if the requirements of these positions meet the goals of the agency. This type of assessment can be used to identify if the performance requirements required by the positions in the agency need to be changed in order to better meet the agency’s goals. This level can be used when the previous steps reveal policy changes, changes in the organizational structure, or any other factors that would affect successful performance.
• Individual assessment: focuses on an individual’s performance and if he/she is meeting performance standards. This level of assessment is very specific and therefore should be conducted if it is known that performance problems exist.

Step 6: Evaluate organizational readiness, identify key roles and resources needed to conduct assessment.

Based on the level of assessment and the goals/objectives of the assessment as determined in the fourth step, the agency can then move on to the fifth step, determining agency readiness, resources, and key roles to the assessment. This is the fifth step as the level of assessment and objectives drives this step. As stated in the literature review, there are suggested methods to use for a TNA depending on the level of analysis. The level of assessment the agency chooses will limit the methodologies to use and resources to seek as described in table 2.1.

**Does the agency have the capacity to proceed with TNA?** Considerations for deciding if you have the capacity include: having management’s support, staff available to analyze and gather data, technology needed for assessment, such as computer programs for analysis of data (depending on methods used), and the agency’s ability to implement findings and suggestions.

**Who needs to be involved and what resources are required to conduct TNA?** The people who need to be involved depend on the level of assessment. An individual assessment would require that the individual employees and their supervisors be involved, especially to implement any type of training to improve performance. For a
task assessment, the Human Resources office (or whoever is responsible for classifying positions) and supervisors, will most likely need to be involved, as they are the ones responsible for describing job duties. Regardless of the level of assessment, management will need to be involved in the assessment. As the literature indicated, their support is critical in conducting a TNA. Resources needed to conduct the assessment are identified by the methodologies chosen to collect and analyze data. However, many of the methodologies listed in table 2.1 do not require resources that the agency does not already have. It should be noted that if the agency does not have the staff capable of conducting a TNA, they might need to seek outside sources, such as a consultant, which will require funding resources. Depending on how the agency is going to analyze the data, computer software may be needed, but this is not necessary for many of the methodologies listed.

- How to determine who should be involved: based on methods; however, management will almost always need to be involved at some point.
- How to determine the resources required: amount of staff time needed to complete project, any technology needed, etc.

Step 7: Define success measures and program milestones with timeline for completion.

The final step in planning a TNA is to prepare a timeline for the plan with the information identified in previous steps and to develop milestones and success measures for the process.
What defines the TNA as being successful? The measures of success indicate if the TNA was successful in meeting the goals and objectives laid out for the assessment. Measures of success are also important because they allow the agency to evaluate how the process went and how to improve it in the future. Agencies define success measures based on their objectives of the assessment. Did the agency accomplish what it sought to do through the TNA?

What can be expected during the process? Providing a timeline holds the agency accountable for completing the project in a timely manner. As mentioned in the literature review regarding effective processes, following the plan and timeline allows stakeholders, employees, and anyone else interested in the process to engage and stay informed of the process. Milestones allow the agency to periodically assess whether the agency is meeting the criteria for success throughout the TNA and also allows the agency to provide a timeframe for conducting the TNA. If the agency is not meeting these milestones, they have the opportunity to reassess the process and identify what needs to be changed in order to still meet their goals.

How to determine milestones? Milestones are determined by the agency as any major phase throughout the TNA process. Milestones are based on when the agency plans to complete these phases of the assessment such as beginning the TNA, completion of data collection, expected conclusion of TNA, and implementation of suggestions from findings.

When will milestones be completed? Agencies should be able to make a reasonable estimation about when milestones will be completed. Agencies should be
sure to give enough time to correct for errors throughout the process. Therefore, agencies should err on the side of longer rather than shorter when estimating timelines.

Remember to reassess throughout process to ensure agency’s goals and mission are being met. When taking on a large project, it is easy to get caught up and lose focus on the purpose of the project. The agency should periodically step back and make sure that they are still assessing what they intended to assess.

Summary

A complete, detailed plan not only lays out the guidelines for the agency to follow, it also provides employees and stakeholders the necessary information as to the purpose of the project to engage them throughout the process. Having a prepared plan also allows the agency to adjust the plan if any unknown circumstances arise. The agency can build adaptive management practices into their plan so that if anything unexpected comes up, the agency can amend the plan to stay on track. Adaptive management practices give some flexibility so that the agency can ensure it is meeting the success measures and milestones in a timely manner.

This framework is developed to assist agencies with planning a TNA. However, it should be used as guidance and agencies can add information or take information out as it fits them. For convenience, I created a one-page summary of this framework that can be used as a quick reference for agencies in the planning process that is attached in Appendix A. The goal of this framework is to link workforce planning when conducting a TNA. Therefore, throughout the planning process, agencies should keep the focus of
the first step, the strategic goals and mission of the agency, and constantly circle back to
this step to ensure that the TNA is measuring what it should.
Chapter 4

APPLICATION OF FRAMEWORK TO THE CALIFORNIA BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

This analysis section applies the framework developed from the methodology chapter to the California Bureau of Land Management. This includes a review of the strategic goals and mission of the agency, analysis and review of any current or past performance reports, and a review of any current or past training assessments. This information will help determine the level of analysis and what types of assessment tools the agency can use according to the literature review. Then I will be able to proceed in determining the key roles that need to be involved in the assessment, the capacity of the agency to conduct the assessment, and define success measures and milestones for a TNA.

Step 1: Analyze Strategic Plans for the Agency and Department

In order to ensure that the results of the assessment are aligned with the strategic goals and mission of the organization, I added a component to the planning phase to modify the steps defined by OPM. The first step of planning is to identify the purpose of the agency and strategic goals of the agency. This provides a fundamental base for understanding what the agency does, how they are performing, and any programs the agency identifies as a priority to meet its mission. Therefore, I first reviewed and analyzed the Strategic Plan for the Department of the Interior.

According to the Department of the Interior’s (DOI) 2011-2016 Strategic Plan, the mission of the agency states that, “DOI protects and manages the Nation’s natural
resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated island communities” (2011-2016 DOI Strategic Plan, 2011, pg. 3). DOI’s Strategic Plan also describes responsibilities for the Bureau of Land Management and states how these responsibilities support DOI’s mission. The following are BLM’s responsibilities as derived from legislation according to the Strategic Plan:

(BLM) Manages and conserves resources for multiple use and sustained yield on approximately 253 million acres of public land, including the following:

- Renewable and conventional energy and mineral development
- Forestry management, timber, and biomass production
- Wild Horse and Burro management
- Domestic livestock grazing
- Recreation and resource protection at sites of natural, scenic, scientific, and historical value, including the National Landscape Conservation System

These responsibilities and priorities identified in the Strategic Plan describe where resources should be directed in terms of program areas as well as training and development to meet the needs of these programs. They also provide information regarding the purpose of the organization. Knowing and understanding these priorities and responsibilities of the agency allows me to analyze training priorities and align them with the strategic plan.
I searched for any strategic plans by the national Bureau of Land Management and also for the California Bureau of Land Management. However, I was unable to find anything available to the public. Therefore, in order to determine the priorities for CA BLM, I searched their website for any information describing goals or priorities for the region.

The general mission of the CA BLM, as stated by their website, is “to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations” (CA BLM website, n.d.). Another aspect of CA BLM that is important to understand when conducting a TNA from information I obtained from their website, was that they are a multi-use agency and have many different program areas such as fire management, horse and burro programs, mining claims, renewable energy programs, and many others. The website did seem to stress that there is a current push for renewable energy projects on CA BLM land, which I inferred from the recent reports posted on their website pertaining to renewable energy projects. The diversity of CA BLM programs indicates that training needs will likely be diverse as well.

Step 2: Analyze Performance Reports for Agency and Department

The next search I did was for any performance reports in regards to DOI programs or for CA BLM programs. The Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 requires every agency to prepare annual performance reports. These performance reports identified whether or not programs were meeting performance standards. Analyzing these performance reports for the past few years revealed weaknesses in program areas,
which may indicate areas in need of training, and also showed which programs were performing well. Performance reports were available for the past two fiscal years but included data from two years prior. However, the most important information regarding performance is recent trends in performance issues.

Performance reports were available were for fiscal year 2009 and fiscal year 2010. I compared the results of these two performance reports to see where performance was increasing or decreasing. The performance reports are DOI wide but they also indicate how specific Bureaus are performing and contributing to the overall performance. With this information, I was able to see in what program areas in particular BLM’s performance had dropped over the past few years, as well as where BLM was not performing as well as other agencies. The performance reports from 2009 and 2010 included information dating back to 2007 and projected performance results for 2011. When comparing performance over the years, the programs I focused on were programs where performance dropped more than 10% from 2008 to 2010 with an overall performance rating under 75% as well as programs that had performance ratings significantly lower than the overall DOI performance (more than 10% in 2009 and 2010). Another area I chose to include were BLM programs consistently performing under 40%, as these programs signal a red flag performance wise. The following table is a summary of the information obtained from the performance reports.
Table 4.1 Summary of Performance Reports Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (2011 is projected)</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acres in Desired Condition</td>
<td>BLM</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOI Overall</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Wild Horse and Burro Areas Managed at Appropriate Levels</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grazing Permits Processed (out of total applications received)</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Pending Cases of Permits and Lease Applications Processed (non-energy minerals)</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights of way issues resolved</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from DOI 2009 and 2010 Fiscal Year Performance Reports (Percentages are for BLM only unless otherwise indicated) (N/A indicates that no data was given)

Also included in the 2010 Performance report were high priority items for the Department of the Interior (pg. 57-59). These high priority items included:

- Renewable energy resources
- Water conservation
- Safe Indian communities
- Youth stewardship and engagement
- Climate Change

According to the responsibilities of the Bureau, almost all of these high priority areas affect BLM (except, possibly, for water conservation issues). And as these are priorities for the Department, they are also priorities for CA BLM. It is also noted that these
priorities extend for at least the next two years (pg. 57). Therefore, the agency needs to consider these priorities when conducting the TNA in the near future to ensure that these programs in particular are meeting the strategic goals and mission of the organization as well as meeting performance standards.

Step 3: Evaluate Prior/Other Needs Assessments

The next step I took was to search for any prior TNA that CA BLM has conducted. I did this in order to adapt any practices they found that worked and evaluate how the agency determined the scope of their TNA. However, I learned that CA BLM has not conducted a TNA. The Training and Development program has been focused on the required training employees must complete and has not been focused on strategically developing the performance of the organization.

Step 4: Set Goals and Objectives of Assessment

Ultimately, the goal of this TNA is to develop a workforce that is capable of meeting the agency’s mission. Another goal is to align the training and development program with the strategic goals of the agency. Through this framework, I have also identified certain program areas where the agency is not performing well. Therefore, another goal of the assessment is to identify what is needed in order to improve performance in those areas.
Step 5: Identify Level of Assessment

The three levels of assessments are previously defined in the literature review chapter. Based on those definitions and the findings from the previous steps, CA BLM should begin by conducting an organizational analysis. This is because the performance reports showed that certain program areas are not performing as well as they should be to meet the organization's mission and goals. The performance reports, however, did not reveal any specific reasons as to why these programs are not performing. Thus, an organizational analysis is the place to start as it looks at the big picture. The organizational analysis is best suited for this TNA because it will assess the program as a whole to identify what issues within the program are causing the problem; issues from the structure of the program to staffing of the program. Another reason for conducting an organizational analysis is that management’s overall goal for the Training and Development program is to make it more strategic. As this goal focuses on the organization as a whole rather than individual performance or job requirements, an organizational analysis makes more sense to meet these goals. If there are performance issues, an organization analysis will also help to identify if the performance problems are stemming from the requirements of the positions within the program or from the performance of the individuals in those positions. The agency may not need to focus on all programs to conduct an organizational assessment. As the performance reports indicated, many programs are performing at acceptable levels. Therefore, CA BLM will focus only on those programs that are not performing at acceptable levels to save time and resources during this period of financial difficulty.
As the level of analysis is now determined, the methods to use to conduct that level of assessment can be narrowed down. Based on the literature review, when conducting an organization analysis the methods that can be used according to Miller (1996) are:

• Staffing inventory, succession planning, long and short-term staffing needs.

• Skills inventory: both currently available and short and long term needs, organizational climate indices: labor/management relationships, grievances, turnover rates, absenteeism, suggestions, productivity, accidents, short-term sickness, and observations of employee behavior, attitude surveys, and customer complaints.

• Analysis of efficiency indices: costs of labor, costs of materials, quality of products, equipment utilization, production rates, costs of distribution, waste, down time, late deliveries, and repairs.

• Changes in equipment, technology or automation.

• Annual report.

• Plans for reorganization or job restructuring.

• Planning systems.

• Delegation and control systems.

• Employee attitudes and satisfaction.

When I conduct the organizational analysis, I will work with supervisors and managers for these programs to assist me in getting any information listed above that is relevant to the program. A discussion with management and supervisors will also be
beneficial in identifying if any of the above suggestions are issues within the program, as they are the most familiar with their program areas. The Human Resources office maintains a lot of this information and will therefore be easily accessible for analysis. Attempting to assess employee attitudes and satisfaction may prove to be difficult because employees may be hesitant to give negative responses. In an effort to receive honest feedback, employee anonymity will be maintained.

It is also worth noting that even though the initial assessment for the CA BLM will be an organization analysis, if the organizational analysis reveals deeper issues, the analysis can be expanded. If issues such as individual employee performance problems surface through the organizational analysis, then the assessment will be expanded to include a task or individual analysis.

**Step 6: Evaluate Organizational Readiness and Identify Key Roles, and Resources Needed to Conduct Assessment**

As far as organizational readiness to conduct the TNA, the organization as a whole is ready to move forward with this project as soon as management affirms their support in the plan for the project. Management has previously indicated that they would like to make the Training and Development program more strategic and there is no expected financial burden to the agency for conducting this TNA. I plan to utilize resources the agency already has and conducting this TNA will allow the agency align workforce planning with the agency’s mission. Therefore, once management supports the plan for the project, the agency is ready to proceed.
In order to conduct an organization analysis for CA BLM, key roles include myself as the coordinator for the assessment, the Human Resources Officer to offer guidance and support throughout the process, the State Director to show that the agency is committed to the project, as well as managers and supervisors throughout the organization. Managers and supervisors throughout the agency are identified as key roles because their support is necessary in completing this project. I will need their support in encouraging employees to offer information honestly and share the benefits of the project as well as implementing the results of the project. However, as the project progresses, these people might change or other people might need to be involved depending on the technical aspects of the assessment.

As far as resources needed for the assessment, I will focus on resources that the agency already has instead of seeking new resources (such as new software or using a contractor). This will be done as a cost savings measure because of the current financial status of the agency. Funding for new equipment or resources would be difficult to ascertain and one of the goals of this assessment is to save on resources in the long term and not find other ways to spend resources that are already constrained.

**Step 7: Define Success Measures and Program Milestones with Timeline for Completion**

With the goals, objectives, and needed resources of the TNA defined, I can then define the measures of success and identify milestones of the TNA. An adaptive management approach will be taken when conducting the TNA to allow for any changes that need to be made along the way to better meet the goals of the assessment.
An adaptive management approach will best suit the agency for initially conducting the TNA as the TNA process is new to the agency and there will be a learning curve as the project goes forward. Monitoring the progress and making adjustments to the process as it goes along will greatly benefit the agency to make this TNA successful.

In order to determine if the agency is successful in meeting its goals of developing a workforce capable of meeting the agency’s mission and to aligning training with its mission, the agency will need to periodically evaluate the solutions that are implemented as well as the training program overall. This will confirm that the agency implemented the correct changes to meet these goals.

As this TNA is an organizational analysis centered around programs that are not performing well, the key measure of success is to improve the overall performance in these program areas over a two year period. I chose to measure the success of the TNA over a two-year period because the performance reports showed that the performance levels can fluctuate from year to year. One-year increments are not enough to determine whether or not performance is improving. Therefore, if the performance increases each year over the two years, the goals of the assessment will be met, as this will show a steady increase in performance levels. However, if the TNA is expanded to include other assessment levels, as discussed previously, the success measures will need to be expanded upon as well. As the agency redefines the assessment throughout the process, the agency will also redefine the success measures and program milestones. Based on the initial organizational assessment though, the program milestones are as follows:

- Present plan and solicit support to supervisors and managers (1 month)
• Begin collecting and analyzing data (4-6 months)
• Prepare report with analysis of data and recommendations for solutions (2 months)
• Implementation of solutions (within 3 months after completion of TNA, then ongoing)
• Assess progress of improvement (ongoing)

The amount of time expected to complete each milestone is in parentheses. These dates are estimates and the agency should be prepared to be flexible with how long it will take to reach the next milestone in case anything unexpected arises throughout the process.

Summary

Applying the six steps of the framework to the California Bureau of Land Management provides information about the organization necessary to understand prior to conducting a TNA. Through the framework developed in the previous chapter, I accomplished the following: identified the strategic goals of the agency; noted certain program areas that have had performance issues in recent years; found a lack of prior needs assessments for the organization; identified the level of assessment to conduct; identified key roles that need to be involved in the TNA process; and defined program milestones and success measures. This information makes it possible to conduct a TNA that will align training strategically with the mission and goals of the organization. Based on the information, the agency can proceed with conducting an organizational
assessment. As management gives the green light to proceed, I will continue with the
timeline listed above and soliciting supervisors support throughout the field offices.
Once I feel that the supervisors are engaged in the process and employees are onboard
with the project, I will begin collecting and analyzing data. At the conclusion of
analyzing data, I will prepare a report with my findings and suggestions for areas of
training and the types of trainings that would benefit these areas.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to compose a generalized framework to plan a TNA and apply this framework to the California Bureau of Land Management. I developed this framework because planning was identified as a critical aspect to conducting a TNA, but had difficulty finding guidance on how to actually plan one. I reviewed relevant literature regarding the purposes of conducting TNAs, the types of assessments to use, as well as effective processes suggested for agencies when conducting a TNA. Based on the information presented in the literature review section, I developed a framework that agencies can use in preparation for conducting a TNA. I then used this framework to plan a TNA for CA BLM. This section sums up the conclusions from this project and identifies areas of further research.

The framework developed for planning a TNA was designed to assist federal agencies in making their training and development program strategically aligned with the agency’s mission by focusing on the goals of the organizations throughout the process and identifying where training needs exist. Following the framework will help eliminate any unnecessary work and narrow the scope of an assessment. By following these steps, agencies will have a solid grasp on what their agency currently does as well as what they should be doing. Agencies should be able to develop a detailed plan for conducting a TNA by following the steps in this framework.

Another product of this research is a plan for the California Bureau of Land Management to conduct a training needs assessment. I identified the strategic goals of
the agency, analyzed performance reports for the Bureau, searched for prior assessments by the Bureau, and identified the level of assessment to conduct. With this information, I then identified key roles needing to be involved in the assessment as well as program milestones and success measures for conducting a TNA. By applying the steps of the framework to the CA BLM, I have created a solid foundation for the agency to proceed in conducting a TNA. Another result of this project is that the training and development program will be more strategically aligned with the agency’s mission and goals.

There are many benefits to regularly assessing the organization’s training needs. These benefits include constant assurance that the Training and Development program is creating a workforce that can meet the agency’s mission and goals. This research however, did not address aspects of actually conducting the TNA as well as implementing solutions from the findings of a TNA. While it was out of the scope of this research, it is important information to understand prior to carrying out a TNA. Therefore, before any agency begins a TNA, further research should be done to understand what should be done throughout the actual assessment as well as how to ensure that the findings are turned into solutions and implemented.
How to Plan a Training Needs Assessment
A Seven-Step Guide to Assist Federal Agencies

Step 1: Analyze strategic plans for Agency and Department
- What is the purpose of the agency?
- What are the strategic goals of the agency?
- Are the workforce plans aligned with these goals?

Step 2: Analyze performance reports for Agency and Department
- Where are the organizations current weaknesses?
- Is there a trend in performance?

Step 3: Evaluate prior/other needs assessments
- Has the agency ever conducted a TNA?
- If so, what were the findings and were they implemented?
- Was the TNA successful?

Step 4: Set goals and objectives for the assessment
- Define objectives based on previous steps and agency’s purpose in conducting TNA

Step 5: Identify level of assessment to conduct
- Based on the evaluation of the above steps and the objectives, should the agency conduct an organizational assessment, task assessment, or individual assessment?
  - Organizational assessment: focuses on the big picture – consists of organizational objectives, human resource analysis
  - Task assessment: focuses on position descriptions and job requirements
  - Individual assessment: focuses on performance levels of individuals in a position and their capacity to perform duties

Step 6: Evaluate organizational readiness, identify key roles and resources needed to conduct assessment
- Does the agency have the capacity to proceed with TNA?
  - Considerations for deciding if you have the capacity include: management’s support, available staff and resources
- Who needs to be involved and what resources are required to conduct TNA?
  - How to determine who should be involved: depending on assessment level; management, employees, HR,
- How to determine the resources required: staff time required, technology required, based on methodology used

Step 7: Define success measures and program milestones with timeline for completion
- What defines the TNA as being successful?
- What can be expected during the process?
- How to determine milestones?
- When will milestones be completed?
- When will the process be finished and when will the suggestions from the results be implemented?
- Remember to reassess throughout process to ensure agency’s goals and mission are being met
WORKS CITED


