



COP NEEDS ANALYSIS

WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT NEEDED

In building up a community to start a social innovation regarding healthy lifestyle, one of the first steps is to see what needs and assets in the specified context are already articulated or what still can be worthy to explore. For it, a needs analysis should be conducted.

WHAT IS A NEEDS ANALYSIS?

A needs analysis is the process of identifying stakeholders' (e.g. end-users, policy makers, private partners) needs and challenges and define the 'gap' between what is needed and what already exists.

Understanding the needs and challenges of the end-users, local authorities, and companies, etc. provides the foundation for successfully developing and implementing a new product or service.

But even more importantly, it established the process of how to work towards that overarching Healthy Lifestyle goal, the shared goal is of utmost importance.

A needs analysis can encompass many different aspects and perspectives, and as such it can be very complex. In its most simple form, however, a needs analysis is simply a methodical examination of an organization and/or its environment and the end-users, with the goal to identify areas that hold the potential for improvement, as well as identifying available resources or assets in the community, and separate the 'need to do' from the 'want to do'.

WHY SHOULD ALL STAKEHOLDERS BE INVOLVED?

Apart from increasing ones knowledge about the entirety of the current situation and the end users' needs, a thorough needs analysis has the added benefit of creating a feeling of ownership concerning the new initiative or a change across sectors, professions, and end-users.

When people have helped to identify the problem and the need(s), and had opportunities to express what they want, this early involvement helps create a sense of collective ownership towards any programme covering this given need(s).

However, as a social innovation – and therefore working and learning in a community of practice – is a dynamic and iterative process, it is unlikely that all key participants (and all challenges and opportunities) are already identified at the start of the innovation process. Furthermore, it is very likely that the importance of various stakeholders will change during the process.

RECOMMENDED READING: *Stufflebeam DL, McCormick CH, Brinkerhoff RO, Cheryl O., and Nelson CO (1985): Conducting Educational Needs Assessments. Springer Netherlands.*

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