The BEST Assessment and Planning Guide

An Agency Guide for Building Effective Substance Abuse Treatment Organizations

Mary Anne Lahey, Ph.D.
Andrea S. Burling, Ph.D.
Karen K. Shore, Ph.D.
Jenny-Rebecca Schmitt, M.S.

American Institutes for Research

A GUIDE MADE POSSIBLE BY

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Obtaining Additional Copies of Publication

Copies of this publication may be obtained by writing the Schwab Foundation at the following address:

Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation, Substance Abuse Program
1650 S. Amphlett Blvd., Suite 300, San Mateo, CA 94402-2516

Electronic Access to Publication

This publication may be accessed electronically through the Internet address listed below: www.schwabfoundation.org.

Greetings!

The Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation (the Schwab Foundation) is pleased to provide you with an assessment and planning guide related to our Building Effective Substance Abuse Treatment (BEST) Initiative, which is helping to develop more effective non-profit, community-based substance abuse treatment organizations. Developed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) with funding from the Schwab Foundation, the *Guide* is designed to help substance abuse treatment providers enhance their organizational strengths and make improvements in areas of need.

In the *BEST Assessment and Planning Guide* you will find:

1. Information on the Schwab Foundation (including our Substance Abuse Program and the BEST Initiative);
2. Information on the purpose and use of the *Guide*;
3. Worksheets that will help your agency evaluate itself in eight organizational system areas (e.g., governance and leadership, clinical care and quality improvement); and
4. Guidance in effectively using the information you gather during the assessment process to develop a specific organizational capacity-building project, improve agency planning and decision-making, and provide a benchmark for future evaluations.

If you have any questions as you work through this *Guide*, please feel free to contact me at ecarlson@schwabfoundation.org or via phone at 650-655-2283. We look forward to hearing about your use of our *BEST Assessment and Planning Guide* and hope it will help to improve substance abuse treatment in our communities.

Sincerely yours,

Edward C. Carlson, M.A., M.F.T.
Substance Abuse Program Officer
Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation

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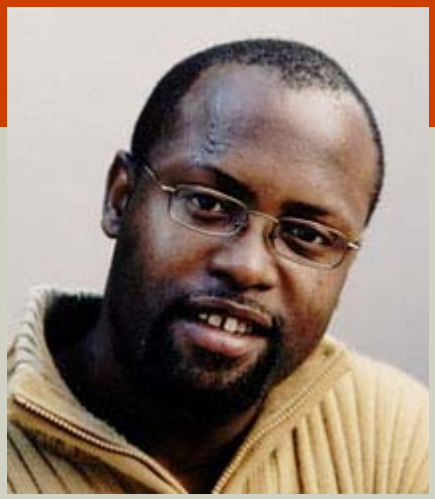


The Schwab Foundation and the BEST Initiative

Building partnerships to improve lives...in a meaningful, lasting way and work collaboratively to inform philanthropic practices.

The Schwab Foundation and the BEST Initiative

The Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation

The Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation (the Schwab Foundation) was formed in 2001 from the merger of the Schwab Foundation for Learning and the Schwab Family Foundation. The Schwab Foundation's work is structured within four program areas that reflect critical social problems with clear points of intersection. Its programs in Substance Abuse, Homelessness, and Poverty Prevention develop partnership initiatives to address issues that severely affect communities, contributing funding and other key resources. Its program in Learning Disabilities (Schwab Learning) develops and disseminates resources for children with learning and attention problems and their families. For more information on the Schwab Foundation, please visit www.schwabfoundation.org.

The Schwab Foundation's Substance Abuse Program

The Schwab Foundation's funding and initiatives in substance abuse focus on providers and communities in the San Francisco Bay Area, with the long-term objective of understanding the most effective approaches to treatment and sharing this knowledge to inform the field. Through established partnerships – with treatment providers, government, non-profit agencies, and other foundations – the Schwab Foundation hopes to act and impact locally, and to inform and influence nationally.

The Schwab Foundation's interests in the substance abuse area are in promoting access to quality treatment and significantly enhancing the ability of treatment providers to serve their clients. Initiatives in this area support programs and policies designed to build capacity of treatment providers and ensure that youth suffering from addiction have immediate support and treatment that is age-appropriate and within the community where they live. In addition, the Schwab Foundation hopes to serve as a source of information in the substance abuse field, while working to dispel the stigma of treatment through policy and system changes on local, state, and national levels.

The Building Effective Substance Abuse Treatment (BEST) Initiative

The Schwab Foundation's Substance Abuse Program has established a multi-year, multi-million dollar initiative entitled "Building Effective Substance Abuse Treatment." This

The Schwab Foundation and the BEST Initiative

initiative concerns organizational capacity building and is designed to develop more effective substance abuse treatment provider organizations by investing in infrastructure, organizational practice, and systems-level change. To date, there have been two phases to the BEST Initiative.

In BEST I, which began in 2002, a cohort of 12 non-profit treatment providers in San Mateo County, California, became involved in a three-year commitment with the Schwab Foundation. Participating agencies completed an assessment and planning process (see below) and are now receiving two years of funding for a specific organizational capacity-building project. BEST I agencies also are involved in a learning community in which they are sharing their challenges and successes with other providers in the cohort, and they are participating in a formal evaluation of the initiative. In BEST II, which began in 2003, six non-profit substance abuse treatment providers located throughout the San Francisco Bay Area are participating. These agencies are completing an assessment and planning process and will receive one year of funding for a capacity-building project. They are not participating in a learning community or a formal evaluation of the initiative. BEST II is expected to continue in future years with additional providers.

The first step of both BEST I and BEST II has involved a comprehensive process of organizational assessment led by a consulting team from the American Institutes for Research (AIR). The AIR consulting team conducted the BEST Assessment and Planning Process by working with each of the participating providers over a period of several months to help them (1) identify their organizational strengths, challenges or problems, and areas for improvement; and (2) identify their organizational priorities and articulate a capacity-building project they wanted to undertake with BEST funds.

Each provider was assessed in eight organizational system areas: Purpose and Goal Attainment, Governance and Leadership, Structure and Communication, Clinical Care and Quality Improvement, Staff Development

The Schwab Foundation and the BEST Initiative

and Human Resources, Business Operations, Infrastructure, and Community Context and Connectedness. The assessment and planning process was a collaborative endeavor that included (1) an assessment by the AIR consulting team (this primarily involved site visits consisting of a variety of individual and group interviews with Board members, managers, and staff, as well as a review of agency documents); and (2) an agency self-assessment (completed using a protocol AIR provided). The AIR consulting team prepared individualized reports for each agency based on both of these assessments. The reports identified agency strengths, challenges or problems, and areas for improvement, and made recommendations regarding capacity-building projects that would benefit the agency. After completing the assessment and planning process, each participating agency prepared and submitted a proposal to the Schwab Foundation for funding of a specific project.

This *Guide* contains a set of tools and information designed to enable substance abuse treatment providers to engage in a self-guided assessment and planning process that is based on the one developed by the AIR consulting team for the BEST Initiative.

Overview of the BEST Assessment and Planning Guide

The lead focus of our Initiative is to examine organizational capacity in order to enhance treatment capacity.

Overview of the BEST Assessment and Planning Guide

The Purpose of the BEST Assessment and Planning Guide

The effectiveness of a substance abuse treatment agency can be measured not only in its success in treating clients, but also in the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization itself. Many non-profit organizations, however, find it challenging to define and assess their organizational functioning, and to effectively plan and improve organizational capacity. Based on the BEST assessment and planning work conducted by AIR, with funding from the Schwab Foundation, this *Guide* is designed to assist agency management in their organizational capacity-building efforts.

The *Guide* outlines a process for evaluating an agency's strengths, problems or challenges, and areas for improvement, and it provides worksheets to assist agencies in conducting this assessment. The *Guide* also outlines a process for effectively using the information gathered during the assessment to develop a specific organizational capacity-building project, improve or inform agency planning and decision-making, and provide a benchmark for future evaluations.

The BEST Framework for Assessment and Planning

The *BEST Assessment and Planning Guide* focuses on the eight areas of organizational functioning used in the Schwab Foundation's BEST Initiative. Through systematic review of these eight areas, agency managers can determine where best to apply resources and energy to improve the organization.

Purpose and Goal Attainment

This area evaluates the extent to which an agency's "aspirations" (mission or purpose, vision for the future, goals and objectives) are clear, consistent, and shared by key stakeholders. This area also assesses the agency's ability to effectively and efficiently make decisions, set goals, and make and implement plans that enable it to achieve its aspirations.

Governance and Leadership

This area assesses the quality of oversight and guidance provided by an agency's Board of Directors, as well as the quality of management provided by its senior management team. It examines the composition of the Board and senior management team, their commitment to the agency, their contributions to its functioning, and their effectiveness.

Overview of the BEST Assessment and Planning Guide

Structure and Communication

This area examines the degree to which (1) roles and responsibilities among different individuals and parts of the agency are clear and complementary, and (2) systems are in place to facilitate needed interactions. It also assesses how well different entities within the organization communicate and collaborate with one another, including their ability to resolve conflicts.

Clinical Care and Quality Improvement

This area evaluates the substance abuse treatment provided by the agency, including the extent to which clinical services match client needs, high-quality services are provided, and the treatment environment is positive. It also assesses the agency's systems for monitoring service delivery and service effectiveness, and its use of data to inform improvements in clinical practice.

Staff Development and Human Resources

This area assesses how well the agency's staffing matches the services it provides. It also assesses the extent to which the agency supports and develops its staff through compensation, supervision, training, and ongoing performance feedback. Finally, this area considers the quality of the agency's overall work environment.

Business Operations

This area examines whether the agency has enough stable funding from diversified sources, and whether the agency has appropriate fiscal and legal/liability management systems in place.

Infrastructure

This area determines if the agency has information technology resources and facility resources (including space, furniture, equipment, and supplies) that adequately support its work.

Community Context and Connectedness

This area looks at the agency's integration into the community in which it resides and the community it serves. The assessment includes public perception of the agency, as well as the agency's efforts to connect to and have positive relationships with other individuals and organizations in the larger community.

Overview of the BEST Assessment and Planning Guide

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

The *Guide* provides eight worksheets that will help you assess each of the organizational areas listed above. Each provides you with guidance for completing the worksheet, including suggestions for resources you may need. The people who complete each worksheet will be asked to assess the organizational area by rating aspects of the agency's functioning, identifying particular strengths and challenges in the area, and listing initial thoughts about solutions to identified problems. Once the worksheets are completed, the agency will have a better and more reflective view of its organizational strengths and areas for improvement.

Agency Planning

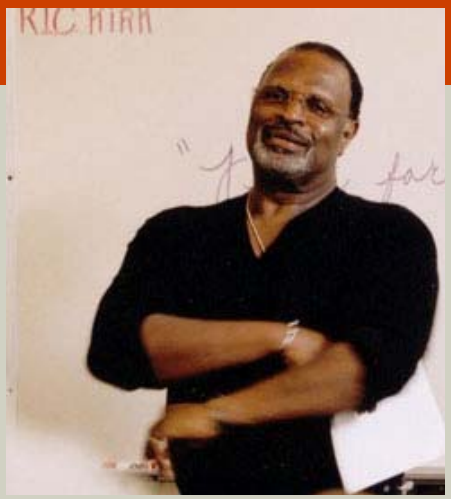
Next, the agency will move on to the planning phase of the BEST assessment and planning process. Through completion of the assessment worksheets and discussions among staff and key stakeholders, you will have identified problems or challenges the agency faces. In the planning phase, you will look at the scope of the challenges and needs facing the agency across all eight organizational areas, and use this knowledge to improve the health and functioning of the agency. Typically, there are three ways that agencies use assessment results in planning:

A. To identify a specific organizational capacity-building project.

B. To improve or inform organizational decision-making and operations.

C. To create a benchmark for future evaluations.

For each option, the *Guide* provides you with information about how to proceed. It suggests how to review the assessment results, prioritize problems or challenges, identify solutions, make plans, and then sustain changes over time. It also provides sample tools and systems for completing the planning process. The results of your assessment and the work initiated in the planning phase will improve your organization in a focused way and thereby enhance its ability to serve the community.



Conducting the BEST Assessment and Planning Process

Effective organizations are not born, but nurtured through a combination of supportive engagement, capacity building grants, leadership development and active reflection.

Conducting the BEST Assessment and Planning Process

Prepare for the Process

Before you begin the BEST assessment and planning process, one of the most important things you can do is simply to prepare. Before initiating the process, the agency should consider three key points:

Timing: The agency should be relatively stable, such that there are no major crises that will interrupt the assessment and planning process. If there are any issues that are threatening the organization's survival, the agency should address those first. Once any crises have been resolved, the agency can devote the necessary time and attention to the assessment and planning process.

Effort: To complete the assessment and determine how to use the results takes time and attention. Participants in the process must have a desire to complete the steps involved and commit to work together to improve the agency.

Leadership: For the assessment and planning process to be meaningful, there should be a clear sense of purpose and a commitment on the part of management to use the results for organizational improvement.

Establish an Assessment and Planning Team

With eight organizational areas to review and the need to create a comprehensive and accurate reflection of the agency, a team of people will need to be involved in the assessment and planning process. The size of the agency, the scope of services provided, and the number of staff may influence how you complete the process. Regardless of these factors, however, the agency should first establish a Steering Committee:

Steering Committee: A committee of six to eight people who are involved with every step of the process, from determining the timeline, to ensuring that the worksheets are completed, to deciding how best to use the information in planning. The members of this committee should include top-level management or their designated representatives. The active support of top-level management is critical to the overall success of the assessment and planning process.

Once the Steering Committee has been established, there are several potential options for completing the worksheets that form the core of the assessment process:

Conducting the BEST Assessment and Planning Process

Steering Committee: In this option, the Steering Committee itself would review all eight organizational system areas, seeking input from others as needed.

Organizational Area Teams: Teams of Board members, managers, and staff with expertise in the organizational area being assessed would be established. For example, a team consisting of the Chair of the Board's Finance Committee, the agency's Finance and Fund Development Directors, and a staff accountant might be established to review the Business Operations area. Organizational area teams could be asked to review one area within the assessment framework or multiple areas.

Cross-Organizational Area Teams: Teams that are less focused on specific expertise within organizational areas and consist of people from across the agency would be established. These teams could review one area within the assessment framework or multiple areas. For example, two teams might be established, each consisting of a Board member, a senior manager, a mid-level manager, and a line staff person; each team could review four of the framework areas.

Individual Review: In this option, one person takes on the review of a single organizational area, gathering input from others as needed, but completing the worksheet by him/herself. For example, the Executive Director might complete the Purpose and Goal Attainment worksheet, the Clinical Director might complete the Clinical Care and Quality Improvement worksheet, the Finance Director might complete the Business Operations worksheet, and so on. It should be noted that the other options are more desirable than this one because the BEST Initiative experience shows that better results are obtained with input from multiple people.

Teams may have a small core of working members and receive input from others, or they may consist of a larger number of working members. Before creating teams, it is important to consider if Board members or stakeholders from outside the agency will provide input only or will be working members

Conducting the BEST Assessment and Planning Process

of the teams you create. The presence of Board members and outside stakeholders may be valuable to the assessment, but they may not have time to dedicate to the process. In creating your teams, also consider whether potential team members could dominate a particular assessment and bias the results (e.g., if a supervisor and supervisee are both on the Staff Development and Human Resources team, which includes views on the adequacy of supervision).

Involve Key Stakeholders

It is vital to gather opinions from many sources. Based on the defined areas of the framework, the Steering Committee will benefit from identifying stakeholders whose input may be most relevant to each area. These may be internal stakeholders, such as Board members, senior managers, mid-level managers, and line staff. You also may choose to include external stakeholders such as funders, referral sources, local civic leaders, volunteers, clients, and community members. The Steering Committee should review each organizational area, and before beginning the assessment, identify the individuals who can best offer a perspective on the issues contained in the worksheets. For example, in the Structure and Communication area, it may be helpful to have input from a Board member, a senior manager, a mid-level manager, a line staff member, and a volunteer. Each would offer a unique and important perspective to consider. The Steering Committee may want to hold an initial meeting with all of the key stakeholders to review the process, goals, and timeline of the BEST assessment and planning process.

Identify Available Resources

Each worksheet lists documents that may assist you in defining organizational strengths and opportunities for improvement in that organizational area. Your agency may or may not have all the documents listed for the section. You should use those documents you have already developed, note what documents you do not have, and move on to the assessment.

Determine a Timeline

The timeframe required to complete the BEST assessment and planning process depends on the size of your agency and the number of programs and services offered. We expect that the entire process outlined in the *Guide* will take 1-3 months to complete, and that the assessment worksheets themselves will take 2-6 weeks to complete. In deciding how long your agency's timeline should be, keep in mind that you want it to be long enough to enable you to give each of the eight framework areas a proper assessment and determine the real strengths and challenges for the agency. Also,

Conducting the BEST Assessment and Planning Process

you do not want to overload the participants in the process. At the same time, you do not want to make the timeline so long that the process loses momentum, or you end up trying to make plans based on outdated assessment information.

STEP 1: Preparation

- ✓ Read through the entire *BEST Assessment and Planning Guide*
- ✓ Decide who will provide overall oversight for the process and convene an Assessment and Planning Steering Committee
- ✓ Determine whether your purpose for conducting the assessment and planning process is to:
  - **A.** Identify a specific organizational capacity-building project,
  - **B.** Improve or inform organizational decision-making, or
  - **C.** Create a benchmark for future evaluations (See Guide chapter "Agency Planning")
- ✓ Identify the option you will use for completing the assessment worksheets (Organizational Area teams, Cross-Organizational Area teams, etc.)
- ✓ If you have selected an option involving teams, designate team leaders and team members
- ✓ If you have teams, also determine the approach they will use to summarize their assessments onto worksheets (see below)
- ✓ Conduct a meeting with all team leaders and team members to explain the purpose and process of the assessment and review the overall timeline

STEP 2: Assessment of Organizational Areas

- ✓ The teams read through the *BEST Assessment and Planning Guide* and the worksheet(s) for their organizational area(s)
- ✓ The teams gather documents and items needed
- ✓ The teams identify who else to involve in their assessment efforts
- ✓ The teams conduct interviews with staff, clients, and outside parties as needed

Conducting the BEST Assessment and Planning Process

- ✓ The team members complete worksheets individually, including their personal observations and any points for group discussion
- ✓ Conduct team meetings to share findings and determine whether more information is needed
- ✓ The teams summarize information onto worksheets
  - Consensus – Report group agreement on ratings and issues
  - Collective – Report averages of ratings and counts of issues
  - Individual – Report each rating and issue

STEP 3: Agency Planning

- ✓ Hold a meeting of the Assessment and Planning Steering Committee, with participation from at least one reviewer (preferably the team leader) from each organizational area
- ✓ Review the findings from each of the eight organizational areas
- ✓ Implement the appropriate next steps for using the assessment information for agency planning, based on the purpose for conducting the assessment and planning process that was determined in Step 1
- ✓ If the agency makes changes, establish plans to ensure that they are sustained over time

Sustain Change in the Agency

Making change within an agency – even when it is needed for the very survival of the agency – can be a challenge. Sustaining these changes can be even more difficult. By completing the process described in this *Guide*, your agency will have invested significant time and resources in identifying organizational strengths and opportunities for improvement, and will have demonstrated a commitment to improving its core organizational systems. To ensure that all of the hard work your agency completes as part of its assessment and planning process has a lasting impact on the agency, it is important to make plans to conduct systematic reviews in the future to assess progress in making and sustaining changes. By committing to periodic reviews, the agency will be able to make sure that it is still on track toward achieving its aspirations. It also will be able to share its progress with outside stakeholders such as funders, local politicians, health care organizations, and other groups that are invested in the organization.

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Through intensive communication and the responsiveness it permitted, we were able to clarify issues and implement strategies.

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

The following eight worksheets combine to make up the core assessments in the BEST assessment and planning process. These worksheets are designed as tools to focus and capture the thinking of the Board members, agency managers, staff, and other key stakeholders who conduct the assessment of each of the eight organizational areas.

- Purpose and Goal Attainment
- Governance and Leadership
- Structure and Communication
- Clinical Care and Quality Improvement
- Staff Development and Human Resources
- Business Operations
- Infrastructure
- Community Context and Connectedness

To make sure this assessment process is as effective as possible, you should evaluate each area honestly and expect to use the responses to change and strengthen your agency.

Worksheet Structure

On each worksheet you are first asked to list the people involved in the review of that organizational area, along with a brief description of the approach used to conduct the assessment. Be as thorough as you need to be to help people who did not participate in the process understand how you gathered information in the organizational area.

Evaluation of Needs for Improvement: The worksheet then lists sample "indicators" that represent what is needed to have a healthy, well-managed agency in terms of the organizational area under review, and it asks for an evaluation of the agency's need for improvement in relation to each of these indicators. To help organize your thinking, each of the eight organizational areas are divided into subareas that address related issues. Please feel free to add any indicators that you believe are important to the area. You are asked to specify the amount of improvement that you think is needed for each indicator (none, some, or significant). This is your perception of the agency; there are no right or wrong answers.

Strengths: You are then asked to list your agency's top two or three strengths in the organizational area. These are things the

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

agency is doing well now. These should include things that you do not want to change (or lose), as well as those that you want to build on in the future (e.g., "We have a strong and involved Board of Directors.").

Challenges: Next, you should identify the top two to three challenges. These are the major problems within each organizational area and should reflect worksheet indicators that need improvement.

Possible Approaches: The next part of the worksheet asks you to make note of possible approaches to address the major problems you have identified. These could include specific policy or program changes (e.g., establish quality improvement teams), new initiatives (e.g., hold annual Board retreat), or changes in operational procedures (e.g., allow employees to work on a compressed work schedule) that you believe can help improve the overall capacity of the agency in the organizational area. Although you will focus on solutions to problems and planning in the last section of the *Guide*, it is likely that ideas for possible approaches will arise in the course of conducting the assessments and you want to make sure you capture these thoughts for later consideration.

Impact Rating: Finally, you are asked to evaluate the impact of the challenges in the organizational area under review on the overall functioning of the agency. This rating is used in the planning stage of the assessment and planning process to help identify those organizational areas that are most important for the agency to address.

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

WORKSHEET 1: Purpose and Goal Attainment

This area evaluates the extent to which an agency's "aspirations" (mission or purpose, vision for the future, goals and objectives) are clear, consistent, and shared by key stakeholders. This area also assesses the agency's ability to effectively and efficiently make decisions, set goals, and make and implement plans that enable it to achieve its aspirations.

What You'll Need

Gather the following documents prior to completing the *Purpose and Goal Attainment* section of the assessment.

- ✓ Mission statement
- ✓ Vision statement
- ✓ Strategic plan
- ✓ Operational goals for agency and programs

The Reviewers

Team Leader:

Team Members:

Additional input obtained from:

Notes on Approach

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Mission, Vision, and Goals: The agency's defined aspirations.

Mission – an agency's reason for existence (e.g., "Our mission is to decrease the personal and societal costs of drug/alcohol use by providing treatment services to adult males and females.")

Vision – what an agency hopes to become (e.g., "Our vision is to become the largest and best provider of adult substance abuse services in our county.")

Goals – specific things an agency hopes to achieve within specific timeframes (e.g., "One of our goals is to have 60 more residential treatment beds operational within three years.")

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
The agency has a clear mission statement that reflects its essential purpose, values, and people served.				
The agency has a clear vision statement that communicates its "future direction" and desired results.				
The mission and vision are consistent with and supportive of one another.				
The agency's mission is widely known, understood, and communicated by the Board and staff.				
The agency has a written, up-to-date strategic plan.				
The agency has concrete short-term goals that are achievable.				
The agency has concrete long-term goals that are achievable.				
The agency's goals are challenging.				
The agency's goals are known, understood, and agreed upon by the Board and staff.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Mission, Vision, and Goals (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Planning and Decision Making: The agency's efforts to establish and implement short-term and long-term goals, as well as its day-to-day decision-making.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
The mission and vision guide the decisions the agency makes and the actions it takes.				
The procedures for planning and decision-making involve participation from the right people inside and outside the agency.				
The agency has effective procedures for implementing its decisions and plans.				
The agency has effective procedures for monitoring or gathering information on progress toward achieving its goals.				
This information is used to inform decision-making and modify plans.				
The agency is flexible and able to respond to change when needed.				
The agency invites change and takes calculated risks when needed.				
The agency is able to respond to emergencies and unexpected occurrences effectively.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Planning and Decision-Making (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Agency Strengths: What key aspects of the agency's *Purpose and Goal Attainment* efforts are working well now and need to be preserved?

Problems or Challenges: What key aspects of the agency's *Purpose and Goal Attainment* efforts are not working well and need to be changed?

Possible Approaches: What initial ideas do you have for addressing problems or challenges related to the agency's *Purpose and Goal Attainment* efforts?

Impact on Organizational Effectiveness	Check one
Area must be addressed if the agency is to survive for the next five years.	
Addressing this area will significantly strengthen overall functioning and capacity for the future.	
Addressing this area will help overall functioning, but the impact will be minimal or will be long-term.	
The problems noted here do not significantly affect our overall functioning.	

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

WORKSHEET 2: Governance and Leadership

This area assesses the quality of oversight and guidance provided by an agency's Board of Directors, as well as the quality of management provided by its senior management team. It examines the composition of the Board and senior management team, their commitment to the agency, their contributions to its functioning, and their effectiveness.

What You'll Need

Gather the following documents prior to completing the *Governance and Leadership* section of the assessment.

- ✓ Board of Directors by-laws or rules
- ✓ Board of Directors Manual
- ✓ Minutes from recent Board meetings
- ✓ Report/notes from last Board retreat
- ✓ Minutes from recent senior management meetings

The Reviewers

Team Leader:

Team Members:

Additional input obtained from:

Notes on Approach

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Board of Directors: The composition, contributions, commitment, and effectiveness of the agency's Board of Directors.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
The agency periodically reviews the Board membership profile to identify areas of needed expertise and diversity.				
Board meetings are well attended.				
The roles of the Board are clearly stated and communicated to Board members, management, and staff.				
The turnover rate of Board members is reasonable.				
The agency's Board provides competent leadership and "fits" the needs of the agency.				
The Board has the knowledge, skills, abilities, and characteristics needed to lead effectively (e.g., they are knowledgeable, experienced, diverse, committed, active, passionate).				
The Board fulfills its roles/responsibilities and does not fulfill the roles/responsibilities of staff.				
The agency's Board works effectively with funders.				
The agency's Board works effectively with senior management.				
The agency's Board is appropriately independent from senior management.				
The Board is doing a good job of providing oversight to ensure that the agency fulfills its legal and financial requirements.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Board of Directors (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Senior Management: The composition, contributions, commitment, and effectiveness of the agency's senior management staff. These staff may include, but are not limited to, the Executive Director, Program Directors, and the Chief Financial Officer.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
The agency has enough senior management team members.				
The turnover rate among senior management is reasonable.				
Senior management has the knowledge, skills, abilities, and characteristics needed to lead effectively (e.g., they are knowledgeable, experienced, diverse, committed, active, passionate, compassionate).				
Senior management fulfills its defined roles and responsibilities.				
Senior management works effectively with funders.				
Senior management works effectively with the Board.				
The agency has a plan of succession for members of the senior management team.				
Senior management focuses on building the long-term capacity of the organization.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Senior Management (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Agency Strengths: What key aspects of the agency's *Governance and Leadership* efforts are working well now and need to be preserved?

Particular Problems or Challenges: What key aspects of the agency's *Governance and Leadership* efforts are not working well and need to be changed?

Possible Approaches: What initial ideas do you have for addressing problems or challenges related to the agency's *Governance and Leadership* efforts?

Impact on Organizational Effectiveness	Check one
Area must be addressed if the agency is to survive for the next five years.	
Addressing this area will significantly strengthen overall functioning and capacity for the future.	
Addressing this area will help overall functioning, but the impact will be minimal or will be long-term.	
The problems noted here do not significantly affect our overall functioning.	

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

WORKSHEET 3: Structure and Communication

This area examines the degree to which (1) roles and responsibilities among different individuals and parts of the agency are clear and complementary, and (2) systems are in place to facilitate needed interactions. It also assesses how well different entities within the organization communicate and collaborate with one another, including their ability to resolve conflicts.

What You'll Need

Gather the following documents prior to completing the *Structure and Communication* section of the assessment.

- ✓ Organizational chart
- ✓ Conflict resolution policy
- ✓ Examples of recent inter-departmental memos, announcements, newsletters, or other forms of agency-wide communications
- ✓ Examples of recent intra-departmental work group communications
- ✓ Notes from last staff retreat

The Reviewers

Team Leader:

Team Members:

Additional input obtained from:

Notes on Approach

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Agency Structure: The defined roles, responsibilities, and organization of individuals and divisions within the agency.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
There is an up-to-date organizational chart.				
The roles and responsibilities of various individuals and divisions within the agency are clearly defined and complementary.				
The agency's current organizational structure adequately supports its clinical programs and services.				
The structure of the agency enables staff to do their work effectively and efficiently.				
It is easy for staff to cross departmental lines or other agency divisions, particularly when collaboration would mean an improved outcome.				
Coordination of agency staff and programs is fostered and encouraged.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Agency Structure (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Internal Communication: The agency's mechanisms for and effectiveness in helping staff gain information needed to carry out their work and feel part of the agency's wider purpose.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
Management and staff at different levels of the agency communicate and coordinate effectively with one another.				
Communications across different parts of the agency (e.g., departments, program areas) are coordinated and effective.				
The agency values candor and openness among its employees.				
There are regular systems (e.g., newsletter, e-mail, meetings) for communicating key information and decisions across the agency.				
Line staff feel there is adequate, ongoing communication about the agency and its activities.				
Internal politics do not interfere with effective and efficient organizational functioning.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Internal Communication (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Conflict Resolution: The ability of agency staff and Board members to work through issues or challenges such as conflicting opinions, personalities, or work styles.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
There are clear and widely known procedures within the agency for resolving individual, group, or institutional conflicts.				
Individuals and groups within the agency are able to adequately resolve conflicts.				
There currently are no conflicts between individuals or groups in the agency that are interfering with the agency's ability to function effectively and efficiently.				
Board members are able to manage and resolve conflict among themselves and with agency staff.				
Senior staff members are able to manage and resolve conflict among themselves and with agency staff.				
The agency encourages staff to resolve conflicts in an effective and timely manner.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Conflict Resolution (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Agency Strengths: What key aspects of the agency's *Structure and Communication* efforts are working well now and need to be preserved?

Particular Problems or Challenges: What key aspects of the agency's *Structure and Communication* efforts are not working well and need to be changed?

Possible Approaches: What initial ideas do you have for addressing problems or challenges related to the agency's *Structure and Communication* efforts?

Impact on Organizational Effectiveness	Check one
Area must be addressed if the agency is to survive for the next five years.	
Addressing this area will significantly strengthen overall functioning and capacity for the future.	
Addressing this area will help overall functioning, but the impact will be minimal or will be long-term.	
The problems noted here do not significantly affect our overall functioning.	

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

WORKSHEET 4: Clinical Care and Quality Improvement

This area evaluates the substance abuse treatment provided by the agency, including the extent to which clinical services match client needs, high-quality services are provided, and the treatment environment is positive. It also assesses the agency's systems for monitoring service delivery and service effectiveness, and its use of data to inform improvements in clinical practice.

What You'll Need

Gather the following documents prior to completing the *Clinical Care and Quality Improvement* section of the assessment.

- ✓ Program description(s)
- ✓ Enrollment statistics or records
- ✓ Program policies and procedures manual(s)
- ✓ Program treatment manuals or curricula
- ✓ Summaries of quality assurance and program evaluation data
- ✓ Reports to funders

The Reviewers

Team Leader:

Team Members:

Additional input obtained from:

Notes on Approach

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Clinical Care: The adequacy of clinical services provided to the agency's clients.				
	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
The agency's programs and services are clearly defined and consistent with the agency mission statement.				
The agency's programs and services meet the needs of the surrounding community.				
The agency's treatment programs and services match the needs of its clients.				
The agency is able to provide all the services its clients need (directly or via referral).				
The internal pressures the agency faces in providing quality care to its clients are tolerable (e.g., financial pressures, staff turnover).				
The external pressures the agency faces in providing quality care to its clients are tolerable (e.g., political pressures, labor supply).				
Other:				

Comments Related to Clinical Care (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Clients and Treatment Environment: The adequacy of the agency's client base, as well as the nature of the treatment environment or climate.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
The agency has an adequate number of clients.				
The agency's clients are involved in their treatment, supportive of one another, and willing to discuss issues openly.				
The agency's clients are appropriately autonomous given their level of functioning.				
There is an adequate balance between staff and client control in the treatment environment given the agency's services and clients.				
Clinical programs are well organized and are clear to staff and clients.				
The agency has a positive treatment environment or climate.				
The agency's premature dropout rates are reasonable.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Clients and Treatment Environment (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Treatment Practices: The treatment approaches used and the ways in which services are provided by the agency.				
	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
Agency staff use state-of the-art treatment approaches or "best practices."				
Clinical record keeping is completed appropriately and in a timely manner.				
Clients are adequately screened and the concept of "fit" with the agency's programs and services is adequately considered in admitting or enrolling clients.				
Clients are adequately assessed upon admission and an initial treatment plan is developed that addresses their service needs.				
Clients are adequately assessed on an ongoing basis during treatment and treatment plans are updated accordingly.				
The agency provides high-quality clinical services to its clients.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Treatment Practices (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Quality Measurement and Improvement: The agency's procedures for measuring the effectiveness and value of its services, and how it uses quality improvement information.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
Procedures are in place to regularly measure and monitor treatment processes (e.g., treatment plan reviews ensure that needed services are provided, chart reviews ensure that record keeping is complete and timely).				
The agency has identified client outcomes (drug/alcohol use, living situation, employment, criminal justice recidivism, etc.) that are important to measure.				
Procedures are in place to regularly measure and monitor client outcomes that demonstrate the effectiveness of services.				
Board members, managers, staff, and funders recognize the value of measuring treatment processes and client outcomes.				
The agency collects client satisfaction data for its clinical programs.				
Treatment process and client outcome data are presented regularly to Board members, management, and staff in a clear and understandable form.				
Treatment process and client outcome data are used to show accountability for results to current and prospective funders and donors.				
Treatment process and client outcome data are used to make program improvements.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Quality Measurement and Improvement (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Agency Strengths: What key aspects of the agency's *Clinical Care and Quality Improvement* efforts are working well now and need to be preserved?

Particular Problems or Challenges: What key aspects of the agency's *Clinical Care and Quality Improvement* efforts are not working well and need to be changed?

Possible Approaches: What ideas do you have for addressing problems or challenges related to the agency's *Clinical Care and Quality Improvement* efforts?

Impact on Organizational Effectiveness	Check one
Area must be addressed if the agency is to survive for the next five years.	
Addressing this area will significantly strengthen overall functioning and capacity for the future.	
Addressing this area will help overall functioning, but the impact will be minimal or will be long-term.	
The problems noted here do not significantly affect our overall functioning.	

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

WORKSHEET 5: Staff Development and Human Resources

This area assesses how well the agency's staffing matches the services it provides. It also assesses the extent to which the agency supports and develops its staff through compensation, supervision, training, and ongoing performance feedback. Finally, this area considers the quality of the agency's overall work environment.

What You'll Need

Gather the following documents prior to completing the *Staff Development and Human Resources* section of the assessment.

- ✓ Staffing plan
- ✓ Human resource policies and procedures
- ✓ Performance review forms
- ✓ Job descriptions
- ✓ Use of volunteers policies and procedures

The Reviewers

Team Leader:

Team Members:

Additional input obtained from:

Notes on Approach

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Staff Effectiveness: The skills and talents of the agency's staff and their match to the agency's aspirations and needs. Consider "staff" to include only paid staff.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
Staffing levels are adequate for the services and programs provided.				
The concept of "fit" with the agency is adequately considered in filling staff positions.				
Staff have the knowledge, skills, abilities, and characteristics needed to work effectively (e.g., they are knowledgeable, experienced, diverse, committed, active, passionate, compassionate).				
The agency has a broad view of what clinical trainees (e.g., psychology, marriage and family therapy, drug/alcohol certificate interns) can do for the organization and the people it serves.				
The agency's use of clinical trainees is appropriate and adequate.				
The agency has a broad view of what volunteer participation can do for the organization and the people it serves.				
The agency's use of volunteers is appropriate and adequate.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Staff Effectiveness (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Staff Development: The agency's efforts to provide supervision and training, and offer developmental assignments to staff so they can effectively meet the needs of clients.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
Staff, volunteers, and trainees are adequately supervised (in terms of amount and quality, from the perspective of both supervisors and supervisees).				
Staff, volunteers, and trainees are provided with the training/development they need to do their work effectively and efficiently (e.g., in-house trainings, outside workshops).				
The agency provides opportunities for staff professional development and training within their job skill area.				
The agency provides opportunities for staff professional development and training in such areas as cultural sensitivity and time management.				
Work assignments are structured to assist staff in meeting their professional development goals.				
There are opportunities for advancement within the agency.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Staff Development (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Human Resource Systems: Agency systems related to personnel, including performance evaluations; salaries and benefits; and hiring, raises, and promotions.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
The agency has a written personnel handbook/ policy that is regularly reviewed and updated.				
The agency has written job descriptions and performance expectations for staff.				
The agency has a timely process for filling vacant positions to prevent interruption of program services or disruption to agency operations.				
Salaries and benefits are appropriate for the market and the types of programs and services provided by the agency.				
The processes for determining salaries, raises, and promotions are clear and considered fair by staff.				
Employee performance appraisals are conducted and documented at least annually.				
Participants (reviewers and reviewees) are satisfied with the performance appraisal process.				
The agency has a process for reviewing and responding to ideas, suggestions, and comments from staff.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Human Resource Systems (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Work Environment: How staff work within the agency, as well as the overall work climate.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
Staff are involved and cohesive.				
Staff feel supported by their supervisors.				
The agency fosters staff autonomy balanced with staff accountability.				
The agency encourages innovation by staff.				
Staff members are free of excessive work pressures.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Work Environment (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Agency Strengths: What key aspects of the agency's *Staff Development and Human Resources* efforts are working well now and need to be preserved?

Particular Problems or Challenges: What key aspects of the agency's *Staff Development and Human Resources* efforts are not working well and need to be changed?

Possible Approaches: What initial ideas do you have for addressing problems or challenges related to the agency's *Staff Development and Human Resources* efforts?

Impact on Organizational Effectiveness	Check one
Area must be addressed if the agency is to survive for the next five years.	
Addressing this area will significantly strengthen overall functioning and capacity for the future.	
Addressing this area will help overall functioning, but the impact will be minimal or will be long-term.	
The problems noted here do not significantly affect our overall functioning.	

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

WORKSHEET 6: Business Operations

This area examines whether the agency has enough stable funding from diversified sources, and whether the agency has appropriate fiscal and legal/liability management systems in place.

What You'll Need

Gather the following documents prior to completing the *Business Operations* section of the assessment.

- ✓ Business plan
- ✓ Agency annual report (most recent)
- ✓ Organizational policies and procedures manual(s)
- ✓ Purchasing plan and procedures
- ✓ Contract of legal representation or consultation
- ✓ External program audits or evaluations (most recent and previous year)
- ✓ External financial audits (most recent and previous year)
- ✓ Year-end cost report (most recent and previous year)
- ✓ Financial statements (most recent and previous year)

The Reviewers

Team Leader:

Team Members:

Additional input obtained from:

Notes on Approach

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Funding: The adequacy and stability of funding to run the agency and provide services.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
There is enough money to successfully run the agency.				
There is enough money to provide needed services.				
The agency's funding sources are stable.				
The agency's funding is diversified.				
The agency actively engages in revenue-generating activities.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Funding (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Financial Management: The agency's financial systems, financial management, and day-to-day financial practices.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
The agency develops an annual operating budget that includes all expenses (e.g., costs for all programs, management, and development/fundraising), and all revenues (i.e., all sources of funding).				
The agency's budget is reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors.				
The agency provides the Board and staff with appropriate information needed to make sound financial decisions.				
The agency follows accounting practices that conform to accepted standards.				
The agency has an external audit that is conducted annually.				
Government contracts, purchase of service agreements, and grant agreements are in writing and are regularly reviewed to monitor compliance.				
The agency has a set of internal control procedures that are written and followed, including procedures for the handling of cash and deposits, approval over spending, and disbursements.				
The agency has a policy identifying authorized check signers and the number of signatures required on checks for specified dollar amounts.				
The agency gets the best purchase prices possible when buying items (e.g., by leveraging group purchasing power across sites and agencies).				
Other:				

Comments Related to Financial Management (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Legal and Liability Management: The agency's understanding of and efforts related to legal and liability issues, including licensing and certification.				
	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
The agency has adequate risk management (e.g., liability, worker's compensation, bonding) policies and procedures.				
The agency has suitable insurance coverage that is periodically reviewed to ensure the appropriate levels and types of coverage are in place.				
The agency effectively manages *program* certification and licensure processes.				
The agency effectively manages *staff* certification and licensure processes.				
The agency adequately manages other legal and liability issues (e.g., compliance with corporate by-laws, regulatory agencies).				
The agency maintains an ongoing relationship with legal counsel (Board member, attorney on retainer, etc.) who can assist with legal issues.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Legal and Liability Management (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Agency Strengths: What key aspects of the agency's *Business Operations* efforts are working well now and need to be preserved?

Particular Problems or Challenges: What key aspects of the agency's *Business Operations* efforts are not working well and need to be changed?

Possible Approaches: What initial ideas do you have for addressing problems or challenges related to the agency's *Business Operations* efforts?

Impact on Organizational Effectiveness	Check one
Area must be addressed if the agency is to survive for the next five years.	
Addressing this area will significantly strengthen overall functioning and capacity for the future.	
Addressing this area will help overall functioning, but the impact will be minimal or will be long-term.	
The problems noted here do not significantly affect our overall functioning.	

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

WORKSHEET 7: Infrastructure

This area determines if the agency has information technology resources and facility resources (including space, furniture, equipment, and supplies) that adequately support its work.

What You'll Need

Gather the following documents prior to completing the *Infrastructure* section of the assessment.

- ✓ Facilities manual
- ✓ Policies and procedures related to security, privacy, use of equipment, emergencies, etc.
- ✓ Contract for technical services
- ✓ Technology plans
- ✓ Growth plans or lease considerations

The Reviewers

Team Leader:

Team Members:

Additional input obtained from:

Notes on Approach

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Information Technology and Management: The adequacy of information technology (computers, databases, etc.) to assist the agency in meeting its defined goals.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
The agency has the computers, software, Internet connectivity, intranet/network systems, and databases it needs.				
Staff have sufficient access to computers, software, Internet connectivity, intranet/network systems, and databases to perform their jobs well.				
The agency has the telephone system, voice mail, copiers and FAX machines it needs.				
The agency maintains a database of past and present clients.				
The agency maintains a database of past and present donors.				
Staff receive the training and support needed to use information technology resources efficiently and effectively.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Information Technology and Management (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Facilities: The physical environment of the agency and its facilities. If the agency has more than one site, you may wish to evaluate each site separately.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
The agency has adequate space (sufficient, safe, and secure) for its programs and employees.				
The agency has all the furniture it needs.				
The layout of space and furniture support working efficiently and effectively.				
The agency has enough private meeting space for its staff and clients.				
The agency has sufficient supplies (office supplies; clothes, food, and transportation for clients; etc.) to work effectively.				
The agency's facilities are accessible (e.g., handicap ramps, near public transit).				
Fire and other emergency procedures are posted appropriately.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Facilities (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Agency Strengths: What key aspects of the agency's *Infrastructure* efforts are working well now and need to be preserved?

Particular Problems or Challenges: What key aspects of the agency's *Infrastructure* efforts are not working well and need to be changed?

Possible Approaches: What initial ideas do you have for addressing problems or challenges related to the agency's *Infrastructure* efforts?

Impact on Organizational Effectiveness	Check one
Area must be addressed if the agency is to survive for the next five years.	
Addressing this area will significantly strengthen overall functioning and capacity for the future.	
Addressing this area will help overall functioning, but the impact will be minimal or will be long-term.	
The problems noted here do not significantly affect our overall functioning.	

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

WORKSHEET 8: Community Context and Connectedness

This area looks at the agency's integration into the community in which it resides and the community it serves. The assessment includes public perception of the agency, as well as the agency's efforts to connect to and have positive relationships with other individuals and organizations in the larger community.

What You'll Need

Gather the following documents prior to completing the *Community Context and Connectedness* section of the assessment.

- ✓ Community relations policies and procedures
- ✓ Notes from recent community meetings or community events
- ✓ Referral policies and procedures

The Reviewers

Team Leader:

Team Members:

Additional input obtained from:

Notes on Approach

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

External Stakeholders: The agency's relationships with key external entities that can provide organizational support, such as government agencies, court systems, local hospitals or clinics, political groups, foundations, and other funders.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
External stakeholders are adequately aware of the agency and its mission.				
The agency has strong relationships with key stakeholders.				
The agency has formal methods for regularly communicating with external stakeholders.				
At least one member of the Board represents a key external stakeholder group.				
Other:				

Comments Related to External Stakeholders (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Partnerships: The agency's relationships within the social services community, including the substance abuse treatment community.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
The agency is adequately connected to individuals and agencies in the substance abuse treatment community.				
Agency management regularly engages in networking with individuals and organizations within the substance abuse treatment community to exchange information or resources.				
Agency staff meet with staff from other substance abuse treatment organizations to share "best practices" and ideas.				
The agency has good relationships with other social service providers (e.g., housing agencies, job training programs, homeless shelters) that help meet the needs of the agency's clients.				
The agency is viewed positively by other social service organizations, including other substance abuse treatment providers.				
Other:				

Comments Related to Partnerships (attach any additional comments):

The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

The Community: The agency's relationship to the community in which it is based and the community it serves.

	Needs Improvement?			Does not apply
	None	Some	Significant	
The local community is adequately aware of the agency, and its mission and services.				
The community views the agency positively.				
The agency has methods for regularly communicating with the local community.				
The agency has volunteers from the local community.				
The agency has donors from the local community.				
There is a representative from the community on the agency's Board.				
The agency responds appropriately to community complaints or issues.				
The agency maintains positive relationships with the community (e.g., host neighborhoods, potential clients) through active involvement in community activities.				
Other:				

Comments Related to the Community (attach any additional comments):

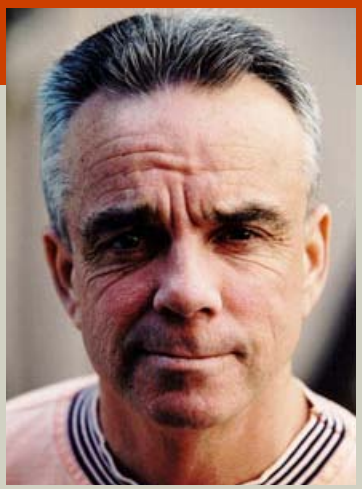
The Assessment and Planning Worksheets

Agency Strengths: What key aspects of the agency's *Community Context and Connectedness* efforts are working well now and need to be preserved?

Particular Problems or Challenges: What key aspects of the agency's *Community Context and Connectedness* efforts are not working well and need to be changed?

Possible Approaches: What initial ideas do you have for addressing problems or challenges related to the agency's *Community Context and Connectedness* efforts?

Impact on Organizational Effectiveness	Check one
Area must be addressed if the agency is to survive for the next five years.	
Addressing this area will significantly strengthen overall functioning and capacity for the future.	
Addressing this area will help overall functioning, but the impact will be minimal or will be long-term.	
The problems noted here do not significantly affect our overall functioning.	



Agency Planning

Our continued success

is contingent upon never

forgetting that every day

people are suffering

and need our help.

Agency Planning

You have now completed an assessment of your agency's effectiveness and efficiency in eight organizational areas. Through completion of the worksheets and discussions among staff and key stakeholders, you now have a better and more reflective view of the agency and the ways it can be improved. It is vital to acknowledge the work of the agency by applying the results of the assessment to a planning process that will improve the organization and thereby enhance its ability to serve the community.

The final step in the assessment and planning process is to look at the scope of the challenges and needs facing the agency across all eight organizational areas, and use this knowledge to improve the health and functioning of the agency. Typically, there are three options for using assessment results in planning:

A. To identify a specific organizational capacity-building project.

B. To improve or inform organizational decision-making and operations.

C. To create a benchmark for future evaluations.

The three sections of the *Guide* that follow provide guidance in accomplishing each of these planning options. Each planning option first suggests a process for having a team of people review all eight of the completed organizational area worksheets to create an overall "picture" of the agency's strengths and challenges. After completing the overall review, the team will prioritize challenges. This will allow the team to decide where to apply resources and create a plan to best meet agency goals. Next, each option provides guidance on generating solutions and making plans to implement changes related to the agency's most important challenges. Finally, each section provides suggestions for sustaining change within your agency over the upcoming year and beyond.

To be effective in the planning phase, it is important for the planning team to have varied representation from within the agency and outside the agency as appropriate. Each option carries a suggestion of who to place on the team, but you will need to decide what representation will be most beneficial. No matter the planning option selected, the members of the team must have an investment in the betterment of the agency and must have the ability to dedicate time to the planning process. Also, all planning team members should have a voice in determining how to use the assessment information, the solutions identified, and the best actions to take.

Agency Planning

OPTION A: Identify a Specific Organizational Capacity-Building Project

Agencies that engage in assessment and planning for this purpose are focused on selecting one specific solution or project that addresses challenges or problems deemed most critical to agency survival or improvement. This option typically involves a broad-based capacity-building project that requires resources above and beyond what the agency currently has available. In many cases the agency is seeking specific funding (e.g., a grant) that will allow them to implement the project or is responding to a specific funding opportunity (e.g., a request for proposals).

For this option, your planning team should consist of or include your Steering Committee. The planning committee may also benefit from adding members from within or outside the agency who have a stake in the chosen project. Having diverse representation offers broad-based input into the planning process and encourages buy-in to the change process.

Review

To begin, the planning team should examine the results of the assessments conducted in all eight organizational areas. Review the worksheet for each area, with an emphasis on the particular strengths and problems identified in each area, as well as the initial solutions and overall evaluation at the end of each worksheet. Discuss the importance of the issues raised to the agency's immediate and long-term functioning.

Prioritize Organizational Areas

Based on the issues identified in each organizational area, the team will need to determine a way to rank the areas in relation to the agency's health. That is, you will rank the areas based on the issues identified, and the strength and timing of their impact on the agency.

One of the simplest ways of ranking priorities is a "High, Medium, Low" system of importance. For example:

- Areas containing issues with the most immediate need or the largest potential impact are rated as "High" priorities.
- Areas containing issues with short-term need and significant impact are rated as "Medium" priorities.

Agency Planning

Organizational Area	High	Medium	Low
Purpose and Goal Attainment			
Governance and Leadership			
Structure and Communication			
Clinical Care and Quality Improvement			
Staff Development and Human Resources			
Business Operations			
Infrastructure			
Community Context and Connectedness			

- Areas containing issues that need to be addressed over the next 12+ months or that have minimal impact are rated as "Low" priorities.

Your chart may look similar to the one above.

Once the team has prioritized the areas, you are ready to look across the eight organizational areas and focus on the agency as a whole.

Identify Solutions

Organizational capacity-building solutions can include specific program changes (e.g., establish a teen substance abuse program), new initiatives (e.g., establish a capital campaign), or changes in operational procedures (e.g., establish an Internet system with e-mail capability) that you believe can help improve the overall capacity of the agency. When considering solutions, it is especially important to look across the eight organizational areas because the most effective solutions often have a positive impact on several organizational areas. By carefully choosing solutions and planning well, the agency will often see benefits in several of the organizational areas. For example, if you choose to implement a clinical staff-training program, it will primarily affect the area of Staff Development and Human Resources, but it also could address issues in the area of

Agency Planning

Clinical Care and Quality Improvement.

First, consider the initial solutions that were suggested in the assessment process (these are listed toward the end of each worksheet) and brainstorm additional ideas based on the issues in the high-priority organizational areas. Brainstorm solutions freely and do not evaluate them; just get them on paper. After you have spent time generating possible solutions, go back and begin to evaluate the pros and cons of different ideas, and discuss how and whether they might work. Each planning team member should have equal opportunity for input into evaluating the solutions. The planning team should reach consensus on the best solutions to pursue.

When selecting a specific project – especially if you have several organizational areas ranked as "High" – you may want to consider those ideas that will contribute most to agency survival or focus on a project that has multiple implications for the agency. Your team may also want to consider efforts that fit within the priorities of funding agencies.

Plan

Now that you have selected a specific project/solution, several decisions must be made before drafting a plan of action. Questions to address in your discussion include:

- What is the specific action that the agency wants to take?
- What is the specific result or goal of the action?
- What resources will be needed to implement the action?
- What are potential sources of funding?
- What staff will be involved in the active changes in this organizational area?
- What are the action steps for implementing this solution?
- What is the timeframe for action and completion?

With these questions considered, the team can create a specific and detailed plan of action with specific steps, responsibilities, and a dedicated timeline. Depending on the solution you select, you may need specific input

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Action Planning Tool				
Issue (Problem or Challenge):				
Solution:				
Anticipated Results or Goal:				
Due Date	Action Step	Individual(s) responsible	Date Completed	Updates/Comments

from different program or administrative areas in the agency. For example, if the agency will be making a specific grant request to implement the identified solution, it may be best to coordinate with the Director of Development or the person who completes all grant-writing projects. Similarly, if the solution involves specific program changes or enhancements, you may want to include program staff in the planning. Your action plan may look similar to the chart above.

Sustain the Change

It is important for the agency to review its progress in obtaining funding for and implementing the identified solution/project. If funding is obtained, but the solution does not achieve the desired results, the team may want to work to identify and fund alternative solutions. On the other hand, if the solution is appropriate, but the funding did not come through, the team may want to work to seek other sources of funding.

In addition to reviewing progress related to the specific solution/project chosen first, the agency could repeat the planning process outlined above and select or create other capacity-building initiatives. These may be implemented by seeking external funding or reallocating existing resources, and they

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may be incorporated into a strategic or business plan.

OPTION B: Improve Organizational Decision-Making and Operations

Agencies that engage in assessment and planning to improve decision-making and operations are typically interested in using the data from all organizational areas to influence or inform actions taken by the Board, management, and staff. The information gathered and actions identified are not directed at seeking funding for one specific project, but rather are directed toward efforts that can improve organizational functioning on many different fronts. With this option, the agency is usually interested in internal processes and the use of existing resources to strengthen organizational functioning. In addition to improved decision-making (e.g., deciding on Board expansion or staffing changes), this option is also meant to improve organizational operations (e.g., holding regular staff meetings to improve communications or reallocating existing resources to improve facility management).

For continuity, you will want your existing Steering Committee to be the planning team, or add Board members, senior managers, and mid-level managers from within the agency to the Steering Committee. Having top-management representation on the team and the involvement of leaders/managers at multiple levels in the agency facilitates buy-in for changes that are decided upon in relation to decision-making and operational processes. As with all planning options, it is important that every team member have the opportunity to express his or her views and have equal input into the process. In addition, everyone in the agency needs to participate, either directly or indirectly, in implementing and supporting changes.

Review

To begin, the planning team will review the eight assessment worksheets. It will be beneficial to provide the team with copies of the

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agency's current business plan, strategic plan, and financial plan. If such plans do not exist, copies of department, development, and program goals and plans, or any plans with strategic elements in them, may prove useful.

Then the team should schedule a retreat or series of meetings to review the assessment worksheets. It is important to have a scheduled time of significant duration to consider the strengths and problems or challenges identified in each of the eight organizational areas. For the benefit of the agency, your team should not be rushed in its review of these issues. Providing the team with the worksheets and other materials ahead of time will enable them to think about the issues raised and ideas suggested beforehand and bring their own notes for discussion.

Prioritize Issues

At the meetings/retreat, begin by reviewing and discussing the issues presented in each of the eight organizational areas. Based on the issues identified in each area, the team will need to determine a way to rank the areas in relation to the agency's health. That is, you will rank the areas based on the issues identified within each one, and the strength and timing of their impact on the agency.

One simple way of ranking priorities is a grid system. The grid has quadrants that compare two variables: importance and immediacy of need. Those areas that contain issues with high importance and that must be dealt with quickly are labeled a "1." Areas that contain issues with high importance but can be dealt with in the longer term are ranked a "2." Areas that contain issues that are of low importance but that can be dealt with quickly and easily are ranked a "3." Finally, areas containing issues that are low in importance and can be dealt with in the long term are ranked a "4." Your priority chart may look similar to the chart on the next page.

Once the team has prioritized the areas, it is time to work to identify solutions.

Identify Solutions

For each of the high-importance and high-immediacy areas (those rated "1"), review the initial solutions suggested by the assessment team at the end of the associated worksheet and brainstorm other ways to improve overall functioning in that area. These solutions should be specific actions (e.g., initiate monthly staff meetings), initiatives (e.g., create a Community Advisory Board), or programs (e.g., establish a staff training program) that management

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1 HIGH importance and HIGH immediacy	**2** HIGH importance and LOW immediacy
3 LOW importance and HIGH immediacy	**4** LOW importance and LOW immediacy

Organizational Area	1	2	3	4
Purpose and Goal Attainment				
Governance and Leadership				
Structure and Communication				
Clinical Care and Quality Improvement				
Staff Development and Human Resources				
Business Operations				
Infrastructure				
Community Context and Connectedness				

agrees can be implemented within the agency. It is essential at the meetings/retreat to identify solutions that can influence agency goals and decision-making by staff on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. It is important to focus on solutions that can be implemented within existing agency resources, although the team may also consider solutions that require additional funding.

One of the benefits of effective assessment and planning is that actions in one area often have a positive impact on other organizational areas. For example, if you choose to initiate a strategic planning process, it would primarily affect the area of Purpose and Goal Attainment, but would also address issues from many other areas based on the specific goals and objectives identified in the plan. Similarly, if you choose to implement an Internet and e-mail system, it would primarily address the area of Infrastructure, but could also address issues in areas such as Structure and Communication, Community Context and Connectedness, and Business Operations. For this reason, it is not important which organizational area you associate with any

particular solution. What is important is that the solutions are agreed upon and feasible.

Plan

Since the goal of this option is to improve or inform decision-making and operations, your level and type of planning may vary. Through the review, the team may identify challenges that have easy or low-cost solutions and that require no real planning. For example, the team may identify purchasing financial software, such as Quicken or Microsoft Money, as a potential solution to strengthen business operations and keep better track of finances. To the extent that this recommendation can be quickly and easily done by the business department, no further planning is needed.

Other solutions, however, may be more complex or involve multiple decision-makers across the organization. In these cases, more formal planning may be useful. Your team may wish to use a tool such as the chart below to help you make an action plan and monitor your progress in implementing it.

Sustain the Change

If this option is chosen, the agency must commit to making improvements in decision-making and operations, and to sustaining these changes.

Action Planning Tool

Issue (Problem or Challenge):

Solution:

Anticipated Results or Goal:

Due Date	Action Step	Team/Person responsible	Date Completed	Updates/Comments

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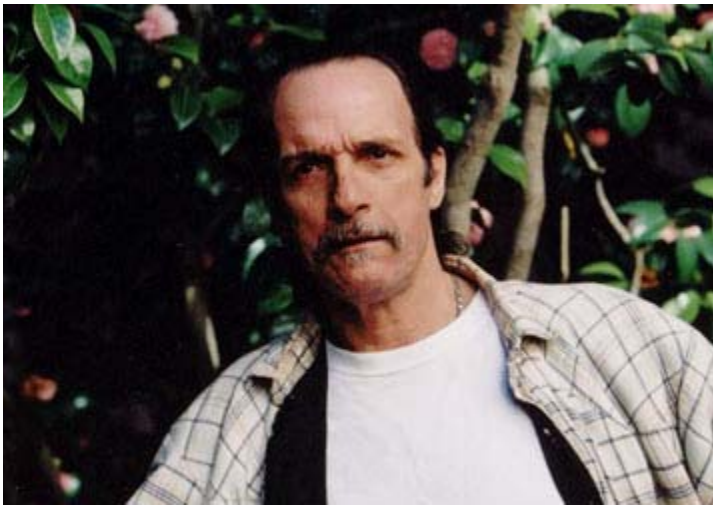

This message should be communicated to the planning team by senior management and should be repeated often to ensure overall organizational commitment to the solutions identified. To do this, you will want to discuss ways to keep the results of the assessment and planning process "top-of-mind" for decision-makers and to maintain improvements that are made. You should also take the time to schedule future meetings/retreats for the purpose of reviewing progress toward your organizational improvement goals.

Follow-up meetings should be held to review how the solutions you have implemented have influenced agency decisions and actions and what modifications to your solutions and plans may need to be made. By having dedicated times for review and finding ways to influence decisions on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis, the agency should see positive results over the course of the next year and beyond.

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OPTION C: Create a Benchmark for Evaluation

Agencies that engage in assessment and planning for benchmarking purposes are interested in using the information as a point of reference on the health of the agency. This option also is a useful way for the agency to show the community and funding sources that it is committed to organizational improvement and growth. Creating a benchmark allows the agency to establish a baseline for organizational functioning against which future comparisons can be made.

The team for this review should be your Steering Committee. Having top-level representation on the team allows this group to assess the status of the organizational areas and make strategic plans for future comparisons. Each member of the team should have the opportunity to express his or her views and have equal input into the process.

Review

First, review the eight assessment worksheets, noting the strengths, challenges, and solutions from each area. Discuss each area, making sure you allow enough time to review each one thoroughly, and making sure that all participants have input. The goal of this review is for the team to have a common understanding of the assessment results, ensure consistency in overall conclusions across the eight organizational areas, and consider possible directions for the agency.

Prioritize Issues

In this option, prioritization takes on a new meaning. Here, prioritization involves determining the overall level of efficiency and effectiveness of each organizational area. To begin, you will identify and create an initial benchmark and decide how to use it to benefit the agency over time.

While there are several ways to create a benchmark for measurement, one of the simplest ways to do this is to use a “grading” system. In the simplest of terms, your chart may appear

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something like the chart on the next page.

As you create your benchmarks, it may be helpful to list the issues identified in each organizational area and document your discussions of their impact on organizational strength and need.

Identify Solutions

Since you are only working to establish a benchmark in this option, identifying solutions does not apply.

Plan

The goal of this option — to create a benchmark for evaluation — may not require a significant level of planning by the team. The primary thing the team needs to do is determine at what intervals to reassess the eight organizational areas and compare the results to the benchmark to see if there has been advancement or decline. It is vital at this point to be very specific about when the agency assessment will be repeated and when progress against the benchmark will be reviewed. To do this, determine when future comparisons will be conducted (e.g., semi-annually, annually, or longer).

After the team finishes the brief planning phase, it may be beneficial to hold a general meeting with the Board, managers, and the entire staff. At this meeting, review the assessment results and the grades assigned to each organizational area. With the entire group, discuss what the benchmark means to current

	Organizational Area	Grade
A Excellent **B** Above Average **C** Satisfactory **D** Needs Some Improvement **F** Needs Significant Improvement	Purpose and Goal Attainment	
	Governance and Leadership	
	Structure and Communication	
	Clinical Care and Quality Improvement	
	Staff Development and Human Resources	
	Business Operations	
	Infrastructure	
	Community Context and Connectedness	

agency plans and allow input from individuals on the benchmark.

Sustain the Change

To make benchmarking and evaluation valuable, the agency must commit to assessment and planning on an ongoing basis. Using the worksheets that are provided, the agency needs to repeat the assessment at the predetermined time. Then the agency needs to re-grade itself, and compare the grades for each area to note improvement, maintenance, or deterioration. The agency also should review changes on important issues within areas, since an overall grade for an area may not change even though individual issues within the area have shown notable progress or decline. The results of the repeated assessments should be reviewed with Board members and staff as appropriate, and future actions that may be needed should be determined.

Long-Term Organizational Strength

Now we have a clear

roadmap and are collecting

compelling insights into

our progress.

Long-Term Organizational Strength

The agency has already taken the first steps to achieving long-term success. By completing the BEST assessment and planning process and determining how to use the information gathered, the agency has laid out a series of steps to maintain its strengths and address its challenges and opportunities.

As the agency moves forward with planning, resource allocation, and staffing, keep in mind the information learned through this assessment and planning process. Find ways or create ways to keep the information learned "top-of-mind" in all your planning and agency reviews. As issues arise, determine if working to strengthen a core organizational area may positively influence the problem or challenge the agency is facing. With any change, success often paves the way for future change. Through the BEST Initiative, organizations learn quite quickly that gains made in one area of the organization tend to have positive effects on other areas as well.

Through any improvement, no matter how small or large, your agency will become a stronger, more stable, and more valuable organization to those it serves. With sustained strength and growth in organizational areas, your agency is ensuring its ability to meet the short- and long-term needs of the community.

CHARLES AND HELEN

SCHWAB *foundation*