

Methods of Conducting a Needs Assessment

Assessment Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Focus Group	<p>Possible to elicit detailed answers. Discussions can provide additional useful information.</p> <p>Can be an opportunity to establish/improve community and stakeholder relations.</p> <p>Possible to include relatively large numbers of participants in one session.</p> <p>Less time-consuming than interviews.</p>	<p>Scheduling issues: arranging suitable time and date for all participants.</p> <p>Potential dominance of discussion.</p> <p>Costs involved: venue, refreshments, etc.</p> <p>Reliance on skills of the facilitator.</p> <p>Need to limit numbers participating.</p> <p>Difficult for learners with lower levels of spoken English to participate.</p> <p>May not have all key stakeholders at the table.</p>
Electronic or Written Survey	<p>Cost-effective way to contact stakeholders.</p> <p>Can be completed electronically.</p> <p>No scheduling necessary.</p> <p>No limit on number of stakeholders included.</p> <p>No reliance on a third party: comments are received "word for word" from stakeholders.</p>	<p>Designing an effective survey can be time-consuming and difficult.</p> <p>May receive limited numbers of replies.</p> <p>May have to follow up with phone calls to encourage responses.</p> <p>Answers may not be sufficiently detailed.</p> <p>May not be a good way of contacting learners.</p> <p>Requires knowledge of technology.</p>
Interview: Face-to-Face	<p>Possible to elicit detailed answers.</p> <p>Possible to follow up on and clarify responses.</p> <p>Often the most thorough way to collect information.</p> <p>Possible to use realia and visual aides.</p> <p>Possible to use an interpreter if necessary.</p>	<p>Scheduling issues for interviewer and interviewees.</p> <p>Time consuming: may mean limiting numbers of stakeholders contacted.</p> <p>Reliance on the skills of the interviewer.</p> <p>Potential costs: e.g. venue, participant travel expenses, use of interpreter, etc.</p>
Interview: Telephone	<p>Cost-effective way to contact stakeholders.</p> <p>Possible to elicit detailed answers.</p> <p>Possible to follow up on and clarify responses.</p>	<p>Scheduling issues.</p> <p>Time consuming: may mean limiting numbers of stakeholders contacted.</p> <p>Reliance on interviewer skills.</p> <p>Cannot use visual aides or realia; difficult to use an interpreter.</p> <p>Can be a challenge for language learners.</p>