



**Listening with Purpose:  
Practice Designing Needs  
Assessments that Strengthen  
Collegiate Recovery**

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# Introductions



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# Agenda

- Welcome + Framing the Conversation
- What is a Needs Assessment? (and what it isn't)
- Formal vs Informal Approaches
- When and Why to Use Needs Assessments
- Tools, Methods, and Engagement Strategies
- Turning Data into Action and Advocacy
- Aligning with SRCRA and Program Growth
- Key Takeaways + Reflection
- Q&A and Resources



# Why Needs Assessments Matter

- Needs assessments are not just about surveys
- They are about understanding your students + shaping your program
- They drive:
  - Programming decisions
  - Funding justification
  - Institutional support

**Helps align with our  
“why”: why do we  
exist on campus?**





# Poll

**Have you ever conducted a needs assessment?**

- Yes – within a CRP
- Yes – in another role
- No
- Not sure





# Learning Objectives

By the end, participants will:

- Understand what a needs assessment is (and isn't)
- Identify when and how to use one
- Learn practical ways to implement and analyze
- Connect needs assessments to SRCRA + advocacy



# What is a Needs Assessment?

- Ongoing process (not one-time)
- Identifies:
  - Gaps
  - Opportunities
  - Student needs
- Can be:
  - Formal (survey, structured tool)
  - Informal (conversations, observations)



# Formal vs. Informal

## Formal

- Surveys (Qualtrics, Google Forms)
- Standardized tools
- Quantitative data

## Informal

- Conversations
- Observations
- Focus groups
- Photovoice





**Where are you currently  
getting your information  
about student needs?**





# Before You Build Anything

## Who is your audience?

- Students in recovery accessing your program?
- Recovery-adjacent?
- Campus-wide?

All of these target audiences are important to collect data from, but the method by which you do so may differ.



# Cost Benefit Framing

- Retention = revenue
- Engagement = alumni giving
- CRPs = high-impact intervention
  
- **What is the financial impact of losing 10 students?**
- **If we *don't* use data-informed practices, what would be the impacts?**



# When to Do a Needs Assessment

- Before launching a CRP
- During program growth
- When something feels “off”
- For funding / reporting
- On a standardized schedule to identify gaps and supports needed (ensure new needs aren't left unknown)

**You don't always need a full survey.**



# Poll

**How often do you currently assess?**

- Never
- Every year
- Every semester or quarter
- As needed / inconsistently





# Needs Assessment vs. Evaluation

## Needs Assessment

- What do students need?

← **Pre-intervention**

## Evaluation

- What were the outcomes?



**Post-  
intervention**

## Feedback Survey

- How was the event?
- Changes that could be made?





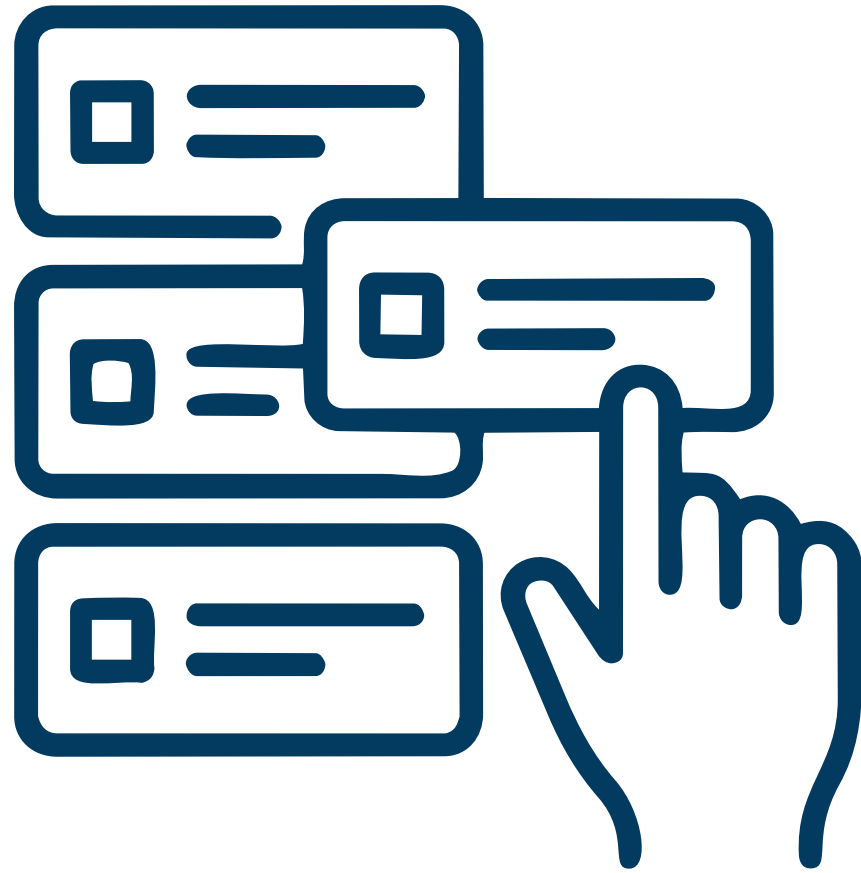
# Common Mistake

Assumption that a needs assessment is just asking students what they want or need and they will tell us.

Reality:

- Students don't always know what they need or what the options / possibilities might be to ask for
- Needs are often latent or unarticulated
- Need a balance of explicit and implicit needs

# Listening Model



**Present options**



**Discuss. Ask. Listen.**



**Feedback &  
New Ideas**



# What Are You Measuring?

- Attendance / participation
  - Membership vs drop in?
- Student involvement
  - Clubs, athletics, leadership, etc.
- Satisfaction
- Learning outcomes
- Recovery capital
- Beliefs / attitudes / behaviors
- **Engagement patterns**

**Look for  
latent  
needs or  
service  
gaps.**





# Types of Assessment Tools

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Observations
- Photovoice
- Recovery Capital Scale
  - Implement as part of programming

# Poll



## Which tools are you using?

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Observations
- Photovoice
- Recovery Capital Scale





# Qualitative vs. Quantitative

## Quantitative

- Numbers
- GPA, retention, participation
- Validated scales

## Qualitative

- Stories
- Experiences
- Impact Narratives

# Making Assessment Manageable



- Don't do everything
- Pick what matters
- Build over time
- Find ways to make it fun / engaging

**Assessment should not drain you.**

# From Assessment > Programming > Data Collection > Advocacy



Needs Assessment -> **What to Do**

Programming -> **Iterative implementation**

Data Collection -> **What's working and what's not**

Advocacy -> **Create sustainability**

Together, they help you tell the full story and make sure that student needs are being met.



# Using Data for Programming



**What  
Works?**

**Repeat It**

**What  
Doesn't  
Work?**

**Adjust It**

**What's  
Missing?**

**Build It**





# Using Data Collection

## When, Where, Why, & How?

### Why Data Matters in CRPs

- Supports funding
- Drives institutional buy-in
- Tells your story
- Increase resources
- Lead to sustainability of program





**What data do you already  
have that you're NOT using?**





# SRCRA Alignment

## Needs Assessment shows up in:

- Space design
- Programming
- Family engagement
- Affinity groups
- Professional development





# SRCRA Alignment

Needs Assessment shows up in:

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- Family engagement
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# Why?

# What are we really asking?



# SRCRA Alignment

## What is acceptable for SRCRA?

- Regularly scheduled assessment of need - whatever that looks like for you
- Meaningful data and understanding of what the students need
- Can clearly articulate engagement patterns and what works
- Understand gaps and areas of growth





**What would make YOUR  
students actually fill out a  
needs assessment?**





# Marketing and Communicating the Assessment

- Timing matters
- Messaging matters
- Incentives help (tangible vs intangible)
  - “Incentives” may include receiving additional services, increased CRP events, consideration of their needs, etc.
- Format (ie. QR code vs. paper survey)
- Reduce barriers (is there anything preventing the students from completing the survey?)

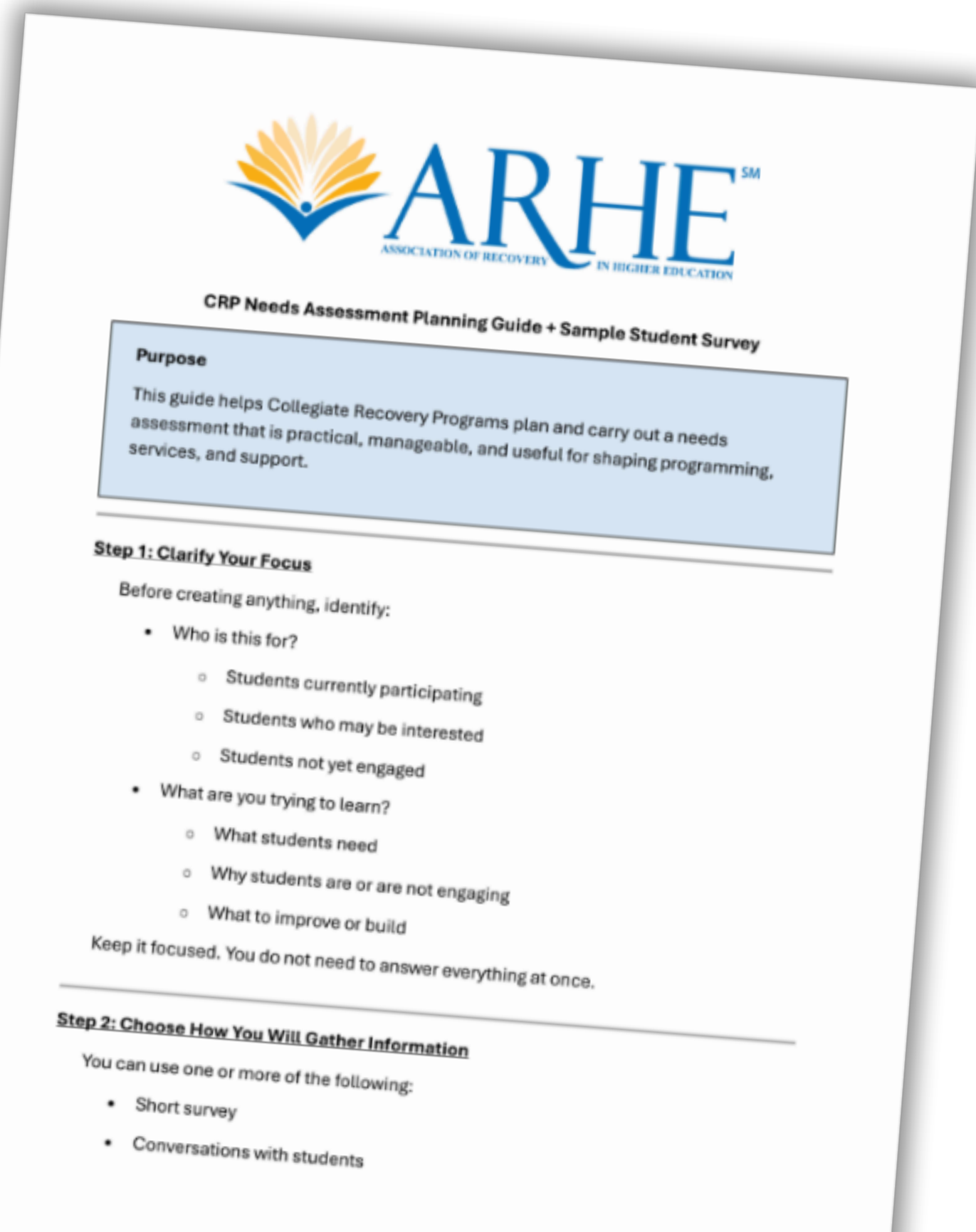
# Implementing the Assessment



## Example:

- CRP Needs Assessment Planning Guide & Sample Student Survey

**Actually ask people to fill it out!**



# Interpreting the needs assessment and using it to shape your program



- What the data is used for
  - Service planning
  - On-campus relationships and cross-department collaboration
  - Off-campus relationships and referrals
  - Events and programming
  - Grant and funding priorities
- What are the patterns?
- What are the gaps?
- What are the priorities?

**The purpose is to make changes - don't be afraid to try something, then re-evaluate!**





# Key Takeaways

- Needs assessments are ongoing
- Don't overthink it
- Designing programs based on demonstrated student need, **with student buy-in**, tend to have increased engagement
- Community comes first

Is there one takeaway that you took from this?



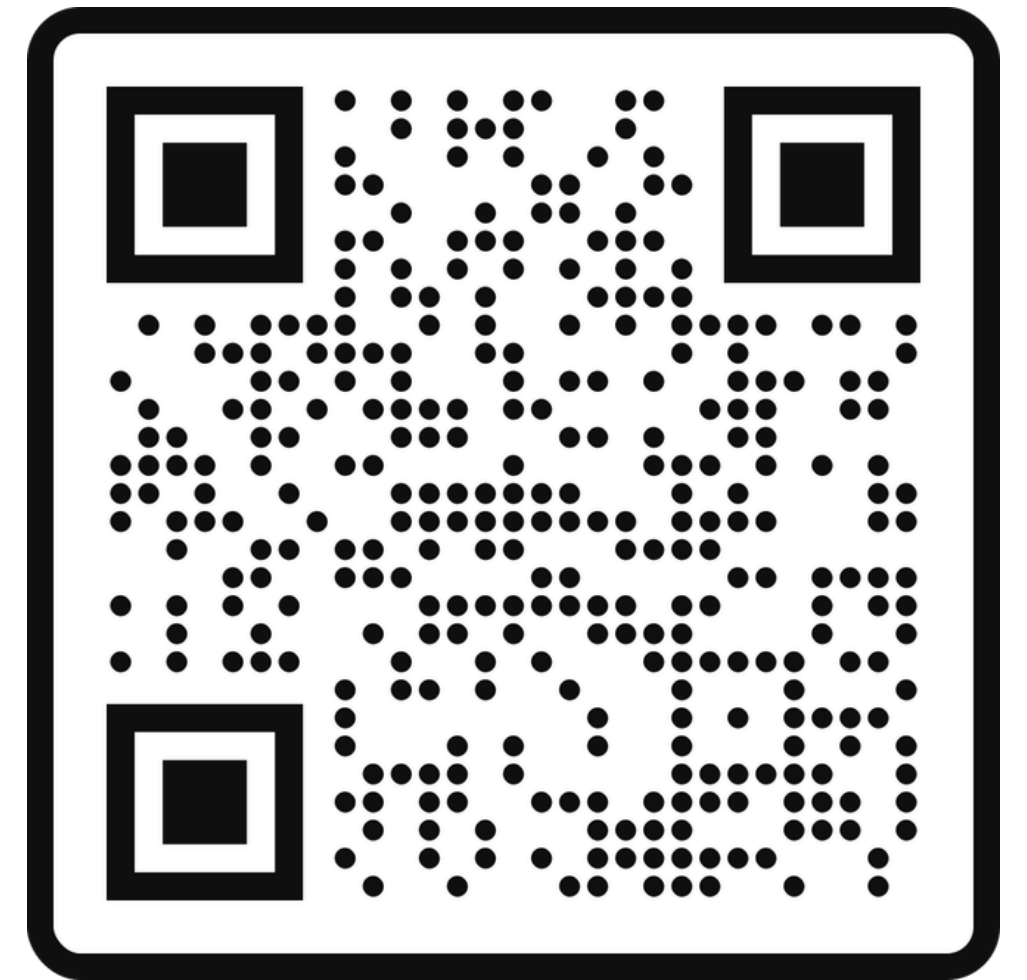
# Thank you!

## What remaining questions so you have?

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