

Local and State Planning

Professional development activities must be based upon the systematically identified needs of practitioners. That a needs assessment should be the foundation of all professional development activities cannot be overstated. An effective needs assessment instrument raises the level of individual and programmatic awareness concerning: (1) areas for improving instruction and program practices; (2) individual learning preferences; and (3) preferred approaches to professional development.

State-level needs assessments can help identify statewide professional development needs; local needs assessments can help practitioners gain insight into their needs and help local professional developers design responsive activities. By formatting practitioner standards into a needs assessment format, particularly through online surveys, you can gain valuable information that can help inform your professional development planning process.

While self-assessments are an important element in the local PD planning process, they are not the only factor to consider. A practitioner's *perception* of his/her needs may or may not be totally accurate. Performance records, classroom observations, and program-identified needs are other important considerations.

Overall planning of your professional development system requires ongoing input from practitioners. Some states use a Professional Development Taskforce or Advisory Workgroup, comprised of a representative sample of local providers, to provide guidance in the planning process.



Some states use individual professional development plans to help practitioners carefully reflect and plan for their professional growth. If you would like to view some examples of individual professional development plans, click [here](#).