
Performing a Program and Service Gap Analysis

Prepared by Carey Group for
the Pennsylvania Partnership
for Criminal Justice
Improvement

March 2023

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Step 1: Define the Focus.....	1
Step 2: Assess Current Needs.....	2
Step 3: Determine Available Programs/Services.....	3
Step 4: Identify Gaps.....	4
Step 5: Create a Plan.....	5
Conclusion.....	6
Appendix A: Sample Gap Analysis.....	7
Appendix B: Service Gap Analysis Survey.....	11

Introduction

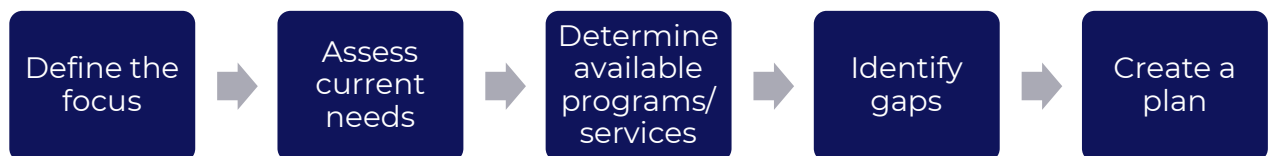
A gap analysis is a systematic method of assessing an organization's performance. Essentially, it answers three key questions:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to be?
3. How do we get there?

By answering these questions, an organization can determine areas for improvement, establish priorities, set goals and activities to reach those goals, identify and allocate needed resources, and measure progress.

There are many areas for which a justice system agency can conduct a gap analysis. For example, a community corrections agency can analyze its intake and assessment processes, case management policies and practices, programs and services, staffing, training, and culture change, among other areas. This paper focuses on conducting a program and service gap analysis—in other words, identifying the gap between the programs and service needs of people who are justice-involved and the programs and services that are available, and then determining a way to bridge that gap.

The research literature supports numerous models for conducting a gap analysis. The five-step model presented here aligns most closely with the needs of justice system agencies.



Results of the gap analysis can be recorded in a report or chart.¹ Regardless of the format, it should be considered a living document—one to revisit regularly to track progress and make any needed changes.

Step 1: Define the Focus

The first, and often overlooked, step is taking the time to clearly define the focus of the analysis and the desired outcomes. When it comes to programs and services, research has shown that they have the greatest impact on behavior change and recidivism reduction when they:

- are offered to the people most likely to benefit from them (i.e., people assessed as being at a moderate or high risk of recidivism)

¹ See appendix A for a partially completed sample gap analysis, presented as a chart.

- address people’s criminogenic needs (antisocial cognition, antisocial personality/temperament, antisocial associates, family/marital, substance abuse, employment, education, and leisure) and urgent stabilization needs (e.g., lack of housing, food instability)
- are evidence-based
- address people’s responsivity factors (e.g., language barriers, culture, gender, learning style, mental health, developmental age, motivation)
- contribute to the recommended dosage, or amount of programming and services, given a person’s risk level
- are implemented with fidelity

Identifying whether an agency offers a sufficient number of programs and services that meet these criteria then becomes the focus of the gap analysis.

Additionally, an agency must identify the population on which to focus (e.g., all people, people convicted of a certain offense); justice system stage (e.g., arrest, pretrial, incarceration, reentry, community supervision, post-release) for those agencies responsible for multiple stages; and the time frame for the analysis (e.g., a specific point in time, such as a specific month; a period of time, such as three consecutive months; or multiple time periods, such as month 1, month 4, and month 7, to account for fluctuations during different periods or seasons).

Finally, when clarifying the focus, an agency must evaluate what data will be needed to conduct the analysis and ensure that the data is available or can be collected. Data may be quantitative (e.g., number of people with a particular criminogenic need, number of programs/services that address each criminogenic need) or qualitative (e.g., whether programs and services are evidence-based).

Other Factors to Consider

Some agencies may wish to expand the focus of their gap analysis to include nonurgent stabilization needs (e.g., transportation, childcare, government ID), special conditions ordered by the court (e.g., community service, DUI/DWI classes), or other needs.

Step 2: Assess Current Needs

The goal of this step is to determine the agency’s current needs. This would involve gathering data to answer questions such as the following:

- How many people are we serving?
- What is the average number of people requiring programs/services (i.e., people at moderate or high risk of recidivism)?
- What criminogenic needs do we need to address? What is the average number of people requiring programs/services for each need? What types of programs/services would best meet their needs?
- What urgent stabilization needs do we need to address? What is the average number of people requiring programs/services for each need? What types of programs/services would best meet their needs?

- What responsivity factors are common among the people with whom we're working? What is the average number of people with each responsivity factor? What types of accommodations would be needed to address these factors (e.g., one-on-one services or group programming; gender-responsive and trauma-informed approaches; culturally sensitive programming; visual, auditory, written, kinesthetic, or multimodal learning approaches)?
- What are common court-ordered conditions that require partnerships with community-based agencies (e.g., links to community service agencies for people mandated to perform community service)? What is the average number of people who must abide by each condition? What types of partnerships do we have that would help them meet these conditions?

Data can be pulled from multiple sources, including assessment results, the case management system, and surveys of, or focus groups with, people on supervision and staff. Referrals to specific interventions may also be a source of information; however, agencies must be somewhat cautious of this data since it is based on the assumption that people were referred to appropriate programs and that the most appropriate programs were, in fact, available, which may not always be the case.

Step 3: Determine Available Programs/Services

The next step is to identify the current programs/services available to meet the needs identified in step 2. The following are examples of questions that agencies may wish to answer:

- What programs/services do we have in-house to address people's criminogenic needs? Urgent stabilization needs?
- What external programs/services do we have to address people's criminogenic needs? Urgent stabilization needs?
- Are the programs/services supported by research?
- How are responsivity factors addressed within programs/services?
- What is the target population of each program/service?
- Are there any exclusionary criteria?
- What is the capacity of each program/service?
- How many people are currently participating in each program/service?
- What is the referral process?
- What is the frequency of inappropriate referrals?
- What is the length of each program/service?
- What amount of dosage, or behavior-change intervention, does each program/service offer?
- Are certain programs/services underutilized? Overutilized (i.e., at capacity with a waiting list)?
- How is the program/service funded?
- Where are programs/services located? Are they geographically accessible to the people with whom we work?

Data can be gathered from multiple sources, including directories of programs/services offered in-house or by community-based providers to which people on supervision are referred; surveys² of, or meetings/interviews with, service providers; and direct observations of programs/services. Regardless of the strategy used to gather information, to maximize service provider buy-in, it is extremely important that corrections agencies clearly communicate the purpose of collecting the information and how it will be utilized.

Fidelity Assessments and SWOT Analyses

In addition to conducting a gap analysis, corrections agencies may wish to conduct a fidelity assessment and/or SWOT analysis—sometimes in conjunction with the gap analysis and sometimes separate from it. A fidelity assessment is a comprehensive evaluation of programs/services to determine if they are being delivered as intended (i.e., in a way that is consistent with the theory behind them). This assessment helps determine how interventions worked or why they did not.

A SWOT analysis identifies the **s**trengths, **w**eaknesses, **o**pportunities, and **t**hreats either to an agency as a whole or to an aspect of the agency, such as its programs and services. It is used to evaluate current and future potential. When conducted in conjunction with a gap analysis, it can be used to develop a plan to close the gap (step 5). An example of a SWOT analysis is shown here.

SWOT Example	
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are able to meet most needs. It appears that staff are making the right referrals. Several service providers are starting to offer more cognitive-behavioral programs.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are limited services that address anger management. The programs that exist are not using a standardized curriculum.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our mentor program currently can handle more people. Grant opportunities are available to train in-house staff to use cognitive-behavioral approaches.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The substance misuse program is reporting that they are financially struggling and may need to shut down.

Step 4: Identify Gaps

The next step is to identify the current gap in programs/services by matching the data collected in step 2 to the data collected in step 3. This, the crux of the data analysis, can be guided by questions such as the following:

- How many people are/are not receiving the programs/services they require?
- What needs are we able/not able to meet with program/services?

² A sample survey for service providers is provided in appendix B. Corrections agencies are encouraged to customize the survey to meet their needs. The survey can be administered by mail or email, electronically, or during a phone interview, videoconference, or in-person meeting.

- Which programs and services are/are not evidence-based?
- Which responsivity factors are/are not currently being accommodated by service providers?
- Are programs/services offering interventions that are dosage-eligible (i.e., focused on behavior change and recidivism reduction)?
- What trends do we notice?

At this stage, it is also important to explore possible reasons for a gap in programs/services. For example:

- a program/service may not, in fact, exist
- a program/service may be serving the wrong population
- there may be a lack of knowledge about available programs/services
- staff may not be effectively matching needs to programs/services
- staff or people who are justice-involved may have certain opinions about a specific program, service, or provider, which affects their willingness to engage in programming
- service providers may lack an understanding about a need and the best way to address it

Understanding why a gap exists helps determine which solutions might help bridge the gap (see step 5).

Step 5: Create a Plan

In this step, agencies keep in mind the possible reasons for the gap (see step 4) and identify adjustments that need to occur to bridge it. They can begin by discussing questions such as the following:

- Are there needs that can be addressed in-house by current staff?
- Can we hire additional in-house staff to help meet needs?
- Can a current provider expand existing programs/services?
- Can a current provider start a new program/service?
- Are additional programs/services available in the community?
- For rural areas with limited programs/services, what options are offered in surrounding counties or remotely?
- How can we increase staff's familiarity with available programs/services to improve the referral process?
- How can we ensure that programs/services are evidence-based?
- How can programs/services be adapted to address people's responsivity factors?
- What are current barriers to programs/services? How can we overcome them?

Next, agencies prioritize the changes they would like to make, and they create a plan to implement them and to measure the outcomes. This involves determining goals, performance objectives (so agencies know if their goals are being met), activities to help achieve the goals, and people responsible for each activity. All impacted stakeholders, including staff, service providers, and people who are justice-involved, should have input into the plan.

Example

Goal: Increase staff's familiarity with available programs and services.

Performance objective: 90% of staff will be able to identify programs and services to address each criminogenic and urgent stabilization need.

Activities (People Responsible):

- Train staff on evidence-based interventions that effectively address criminogenic and urgent stabilization needs. (Internal trainer)
 - Create a comprehensive resource manual that lists available programs and services by criminogenic and urgent stabilization need and that provides information such as referral process, criteria, length of program or service, and fees. (CQI supervisor)
-

Conclusion

Conducting a gap analysis is labor-intensive, and agencies vary significantly in size, resources, and workload; therefore, they must choose a breadth of analysis and level of intensity that matches their abilities and capacity. Regardless, once a gap analysis is completed, agencies will have a better understanding of what issues they're facing in terms of programs and services, why, and how to go about fixing them—all with the goal of enhancing community well-being and safety.

Appendix A: Sample Gap Analysis

Current Needs	Current Programs and Services	Gap Description	Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 people require programs/services to address antisocial cognition, antisocial personality/temperament, and antisocial associates. • Gender and trauma are significant responsivity factors for the people the agency is supervising. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are currently 40 openings for programs/services that address antisocial cognition, antisocial personality/temperament, and antisocial associates. • All programs/services are for mixed-gender groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for more cognitive-behavioral and other programs/services that address antisocial cognition, antisocial personality/temperament, and antisocial associates. • Some programs/services should be for women only and should be gender-responsive and trauma-informed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with current program/service providers whether they are able to expand existing programs/services or add new ones. • Research and partner with additional community-based agencies. • Explore the possibility of providing additional programs/services in-house. • Ensure some programs/services are gender-responsive and trauma-informed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 300 people require programs/services to address substance misuse and untreated mental illness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are currently 100 openings for programs/services that address substance misuse and mental health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for additional substance misuse and mental health services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with current service providers whether they might be able to add capacity. • Develop links to additional community-based service providers. • Explore services available through nonprofits and faith-based organizations. • Implement brief intervention strategies to triage needs while people are on waiting lists.

Current Needs	Current Programs and Services	Gap Description	Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200 people require training and employment opportunities, many of whom would benefit from a focus on “soft skills,” such as communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are currently 40 openings for programs/services that provide training and employment opportunities. • Programs/services focus on “hard skills.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for additional programs/services that provide training and employment opportunities. • People on supervision require opportunities to develop “soft” job skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with government agencies, community colleges, universities, businesses, and nonprofits to create training and employment opportunities. • Encourage staff at corrections agencies to help the people with whom they work improve their communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 people require housing, 20 of whom require supportive housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are currently 30 housing openings, 5 of which offer supportive services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for housing for people who were formerly justice-involved—particularly for those who require supportive services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with advocates and shelters to find temporary housing solutions while working toward more permanent solutions. • Discuss with outside agencies the possibility of increasing the supply of supportive housing for people who were justice-involved. • Discuss with landlords policies that may improve access to affordable housing.

Current Needs	Current Programs and Services	Gap Description	Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 people require programs/services in languages other than English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are currently 10 openings for Spanish programs/services and no openings for programs/services in other languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More programs/services are required for people who speak languages other than English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with current program/service providers whether they have staff who can offer programs/services in languages other than English. • Investigate the possibility of translation services. • Explore the option of virtual programs/services in languages other than English.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 people would benefit from culturally responsive programs/services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies have staff from diverse cultures but do not offer culturally responsive programs/services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for programs/services that use culturally appropriate strategies and materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak to agencies about whether they can develop culturally specific programs/services or incorporate culturally responsive strategies and materials into current programs/services. • Partner with cultural organizations that can consult on, or offer, culturally responsive programs/services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff's involvement with a program/service provider ends after they make a referral. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program/service providers work independently of the referring agency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of coordination and continuum of services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a multidisciplinary team approach to case planning and management.

Current Needs	Current Programs and Services	Gap Description	Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff refer people to programs/services with which they are most familiar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people in programs/services are misplaced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a mismatch between people's needs and the programs/services to which they are being referred. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote existing, successful programs. • Develop a resource manual that lists effective programs and the needs they address. • Train staff in best practices for referrals.

Appendix B:

Service Gap Analysis Survey

Instructions:

Please have the program director complete this survey for each program offered and return it by [date] to [email].

Any questions should be directed to [project leader] by phone [telephone number] or email at [email].

The survey is being used by [agency] to assess what service gaps exist and to determine how well services align with risk reduction research. Only include programs/services for adults who have been referred due to illegal activity.

There are no “right answers” to this survey as it is circumstantial, depending on the program/service purpose, funding and other constraints, and so on.

Agency name: _____ Program/service name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone #: _____

Website: _____

Program director's name: _____

Telephone #: _____

Email: _____

Person completing the survey: _____

Telephone #: _____

Email: _____

1. In what settings do you offer programs/services? (Check all that apply.)

Community services agency

Home

Community corrections agency

Jail or prison

Day reporting center

Medical facility

Halfway house

Residential

Other (please specify): _____

2. What populations do you serve? (Check all that apply.)

Noncriminal justice-involved

Incarcerated

Pretrial

Post-sentencing (probation & parole)

Diversion

Post-release

Other (please specify): _____

3. What areas do you address? (Check all that apply.)
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coping and problem-solving skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Leisure activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment | <input type="checkbox"/> Peer relationships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family/marital stresses | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance misuse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food insecurity | <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking patterns |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing instability | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ | |
4. When a person enters your program, are they formally screened or assessed? Yes/No/NA
Screenings or assessments used: _____
5. What types of programs/services do you offer? (Check all that apply.)
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger management | <input type="checkbox"/> Food pantry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Case management | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing assistance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive-behavioral programming | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal assistance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling: Group Individual
Family Couples | <input type="checkbox"/> Life skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crisis intervention | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical treatment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Detoxification | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drug testing and monitoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Screenings and assessments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family-related services (visitation,
childcare, reunification) | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance use relapse prevention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational and educational training |
6. What treatment models do you use to address these areas? (Check all that apply.)
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art therapy | <input type="checkbox"/> Disease or medical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior modification (incentives and
sanctions) | <input type="checkbox"/> Mindfulness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Client-centered | <input type="checkbox"/> Music therapy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive | <input type="checkbox"/> Peer support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive-behavioral | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deterrence | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual approaches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Therapeutic community |
7. Do you use a standardized curriculum? Yes/No/NA
If yes, which curriculum do you use? _____
8. Is the program/service considered to be evidence-based? Yes/No
9. Are adjustments made to programming/services to address cultural differences? Yes/No/NA
10. Are modifications made, or are people placed in different groups, based on age? Yes/No/NA

11. Current number of clients:
 Number of men: _____ Capacity: _____
 Number of women: _____ Capacity: _____
12. Are males and females assigned to separate groups? Yes/No/NA
13. Over how many weeks is the program/service designed to be delivered? _____
14. What is the average length of time it takes for someone to complete the program/service? _____
15. Is there currently a waiting list: Yes/No
 If yes, what is the average wait time?: _____
16. Is the program generally “open” (new clients are added to an ongoing group) or “closed” (once a group is formed, no new clients are added)? Open/Closed/NA
17. What exclusionary criteria are used for program admission/services? (Check all that apply.)
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Current substance use/misuse | <input type="checkbox"/> History of violence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gender | <input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> History of sexual offenses | <input type="checkbox"/> Untreated mental illness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> History of substance use/misuse | <input type="checkbox"/> Motivation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ | |
18. How is the program/service funded/what fees apply? _____
19. What other information would you like to share about the program/service?

