A Learning Needs Assessment is defined as “a systematic process of collecting and analyzing information by which educational needs are identified and ranked in order of importance” (Hauer & Quill, 2011).

Can be a formal or informal process.

Purpose of a Learning Needs Assessment:
- Identify a learning need or gap in Learner’s knowledge.
- Identify individual, organizational & environmental needs related to performance, organizational goals & national standards.
- Essential function of the Nursing Staff Development Specialist.
- First and most important step in the Educational Plan Design Process.
- Needs Assessment should have an established purpose, target audience, precise method and a plan to analyze and share results.

Past Formal Educational Needs Assessments were conducted by individual Unit-based Educators using various different formats of paper-based “surveys”.

Usually open-ended questions asking “What kind of topics would you like to have education on?”.

Typically resulted in long lists of topics with limited insight into educational priorities or correlation to Quality Improvement Directives.

Response rates were typically low, inconsistent and labor intensive to collect.

Limited buy-in from the Management and Administrative Teams on the usefulness of collected information.

With the formation of the APMC Clinical Education Team in 2014, a process was developed to formalize and standardize the annual Educational Needs Assessment into a single consolidated assessment.

15 assessment questions were compiled and refined from multiple past assessments and industry best practice information.

Anonymous information collected included demographics on specific job roles, department, unit and patient population.
- Allowed for detailed reporting of department information.
- Utilized the same assessment questions across all units & patient populations to allow for prioritizing of APMC and Department specific data and needs.
- Topics for each assessment question were customized for each patient population.
- Used online based survey tool to allow for multiple methods of delivery (email, QR Code, LMS) to reach the maximum number of participants.

Questions should be formulated based on leadership input, quality indicators & observed issues both documented or suspected.

Questions should be used year after year with little to no changes for data and result comparisons over time.

Limit use of open-ended questions; too much potential for obscure or unusable information.

Use closed-ended questions with pre-selected topics to acquire accurate and focused responses.

Include anonymous demographic information questions to allow for detailed reports.

Develop plan to report results to Team Members; instills confidence that their opinions are important.

Develop and share detailed Education Action Plan from results.