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**LDT 7850 Needs Assessment**

***Component A – Organization and Situational Description***

**March 15, 2020**

1. Organization Description. Clear and detailed description of the organization

Vollbrecht Planetarium has been in existence for fifty years. It is attached to Adler Elementary School and is associated with the Southfield Public Schools District. Although it is attached to the school, it is run by the Southfield Parks and Recreation Dept.

Because of funding issues the school system and the Parks and Recreation Dept. share the responsibility of maintaining the operations. The school system takes care of building maintenance. This includes utilizing school custodians to clean the floor and maintain the heating and lighting. The Parks and Recreation Department is in charge of programming issues. This includes payment of Vollbrecht Planetarium’s staff, publicizing programming through a seasonal calendar, and payment processing for the programs themselves.

The organization consists of two part time staff members who operate the planetarium. In addition to operating programming, they are also involved with administrative issues, maintaining the planetarium’s website, facilitating special events, fielding questions from patrons, organizing program content, representing the planetarium at organizational meetings, responding to Facebook inquiries, meeting with outside vendors, and collaborating with other organizations. They are also responsible for the day to day maintenance of the planetarium’s equipment.

The planetarium boasts a 1960’s Spitz planetarium star ball. It is one of the only planetariums in Michigan that utilizes the pinpoint system of stars. The planetarium’s dome is 50 feet in diameter. The planetarium’s floor seating and cove lighting was recently updated. The planetarium can accommodate 70 guests that sit in a V formation to look at the stars being projected on the dome ceiling.

The planetarium’s programming includes public shows, private shows, school shows and special events. The public shows run seasonally in the fall, winter and spring. They consist of eight 60 minute sessions that revolve around the eight planets and other astronomical subjects. School shows and private shows are customizable to the needs of the school or group. In addition, the planetarium runs special events and occasionally, weddings. One of its most popular events was the Solar Eclipse Open House which was attended by over 1,500 people from all over Michigan.

1. **Workplace Challenge or Opportunity**. Clear description of the current performance situation. What are the critical issues that you and/or your client have noticed require further investigation using a needs assessment process?

The staff at the planetarium has been tasked by the Parks and Recreation Dept. with creating programming to meet the expectations of engaging all visitors at the planetarium. The planetarium applied and was accepted to participate in a program created by NASA about the Hubble Space Telescope. The planetarium was told that they are one of a handful of planetariums from across the country that will be participating in the event.

Although, this is a huge honor for the planetarium, it is also a very daunting task. Staff at the planetarium have to make sure they are prepared for the potentially massive visitor engagement that they will receive the day of the program. People from all over the state will be coming to view the program. In addition, news stations, newspapers and other media will be viewing and reporting on the program. Prominent government officials and other state representatives are planning to attend. On top of that, the school and Parks and Recreation Departments will be sending representatives to make sure the program is running smoothly.

The planetarium staff is ready and willing to tackle the project. However, the staff of two has been stretched very thin. They are spending more time with administrative duties and less time focusing on programming. They are constantly asking administration for more resources for programs they are presenting, more resources for projects, more funding for those projects and increased patron participation.

The planetarium staff initially applied for this program through NASA’s application process. The hope was to form a partnership with other organizations so the planetarium would increase visitor attendances and gain more publicity for its other programs. Although the staff is already stretched thin, they need to deliver a quality program that engages the visitors in the community and helps provide society with an increased awareness of space related activities.

There are many other issues pertaining to the program that need to be solved to accurately deliver the program. The planetarium has a limited seating capacity and physically cannot handle a great influx of people. There are only two computers at the planetarium.

The computer systems that will be utilized with the program are older and may need to be updated. The staff have limited resources at the planetarium for program events. They do not have a copier on site for making program copies or mass mailings for the event. Because the planetarium is managed jointly by the school system and Parks and Recreation, the planetarium staff do not have much input on how to spend funding resources from the organizations. All additional resources have to be approved by the school and the Parks and Recreation budgeting department.

**3. Stakeholders**. Include who will be directly involved with this needs assessment plan and whether or not you have their buy-in – 2 points

The stakeholders involved in the needs assessment plan include: leadership from the school district, Parks and Recreation Department and the Vollbrecht Planetarium’s staff. The leadership at the Parks and Recreation Department would include the Parks and Recreation programming liaison and the head of the Parks and Recreation programming dept. At the school system, the stakeholders involved are the school principal, school board officials and the school public relations department.

The specific members of the school board would include: the president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and three trustees. They are generally responsible for providing school districts with input on the needs of the school and overseeing the running of the schools from the public’s point of view.

In this particular instance, the school board will be advised on the needs assessment process. Although they are not the individuals that will be conducting the needs assessment itself, they will be informed of what is taking place and how the process is progressing. They will also be asked to weigh in on strategic decisions dealing with the needs assessment process. The school board believes in the role that the planetarium plays within the school system and they want to help in any way they can.

The school staff are also key stakeholders in the project. The specific members include the school principal, teachers at the school, and the science department. The principal is invested in creating alternative experiences for the public that showcase the school’s unique positioning as a school attached to a planetarium.

Due to declining school enrollment within the district, parents and the community need to understand how important and unique it is for a school to have a planetarium that enhances student learning.

In addition, Parks and Recreation staff are important stakeholders in the needs assessment process. The director of Parks and Recreation and the programming liaison need to make sure that their interests in the planetarium are being represented. This would include making sure programming and staff concerns and needs are being met.

**4. Level of Needs Assessment and Alignment**. Using the information you’ve identified above, at what level will you conduct the needs assessment? (Mega, Macro, Micro, or Quasi) And, why? Identify the outcomes at each level. This can be identified in a table. Please see examples in our unit presentations.

The level of needs assessment is the quasi level. However it will also be connected to the mega, macro and micro levels. The reason I am conducting the needs assessment at this level is because it is a program that is being presented. The needs are to determine what specifically is needed for the program, where the gaps are in the program and how those gaps can be resolved.

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|  | Quasi | Micro | Macro | Mega |
| **Outcomes** | Presentation delivered on the Hubble Space telescope with 100% accuracy  Program materials are being effectivly utilize to help the public understand the Hubble program. | Organization’s Hubble Program delivered to 100% effectiveness | Hubble program has impacted 100% of visitiors in a positive way. | Increase societal understanding of spaces through public programming on Hubble Space program. |
| **Why** | To determine where gaps are in programming and program materials. | To connect the program to the organizational instituation’s interests | To connect the program to the community’s interests | To connect the program to the society’s interests |