Training Needs Analysis

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Scope of use

Indicative guidance and working templates to adapt to the organization's context.

Verification scope

Consistency of the published material, its links, edition information and limits of use. Consult the relevant specialist within the organization before adopting a procedure or professional decision.

The following pages retain the original English guide material and formatting. Review dates within that material refer to its original edition. Current edition controls appear here and on the guide webpage.

Current edition and contact

https://uhrda.net/en/organizations/guides/training-needs/

Comments and update requests: info@uhrda.net

Arab Union for Human Resources Development

Training Needs Analysis

Practical guide | October 2026

1. Starting point and outputs

A training need is a verified gap in the knowledge or skill required to perform specific work, rather than simply a wish to attend a course. The Arab Union for Human Resources Development proposes a practical approach to help organizations move from lists of course titles to learning plans linked to performance. Analysis begins with the required result, examines the causes of the gap, then identifies who should receive training, how its value will be tested, and how the skills will transfer to work.

Who benefits

- Training, human resources, and capability development directors.
- Line managers and performance and quality analysts.
- Program planning and training procurement teams.

What you will produce

- A needs map linking organizational objectives to roles and individuals.
- A gap register distinguishing training-related causes from organizational barriers.
- Justified training priorities and program briefs ready for commissioning and delivery.
- A plan for measuring learning and application, with line-manager follow-up.

Inputs to prepare

- Strategy, initiatives, new services, and the future skills associated with them.
- Job descriptions, work standards, and required competencies.
- Quality results, errors, complaints, and performance observations.
- Work samples, practical tests, and interviews with employees and managers.
- Available time, budget, and learning methods, and opportunities to apply learning after training.

2. Working methodology

Three levels of analysis

At the organizational level, ask which results must be achieved and what capabilities initiatives require. At the job level, analyze critical tasks, the conditions for performing them, and the knowledge and skills they need. At the individual level, verify who needs specific development and to what extent. Combine the levels in one register to avoid training everyone on the same subject and to reveal shared gaps without overlooking differences in roles and experience.

A decision gate: is training the solution?

Check whether employees can perform the task when clear instructions, a suitable tool, enough time, and adequate authority are available. If they know the method and can perform it in a test but cannot do so at work, look for a system, procedure, incentive, or workload barrier. If they struggle with knowledge or application despite the right conditions, a training need may exist. A problem may require a combined intervention; record each component and its owner rather than making training responsible for the entire problem.

Assessment is part of defining the need

Specify from the outset how you will demonstrate that a skill has been acquired and verify its use. Pre- and post-assessments show changes in learning, while reviewing a work sample after an opportunity to apply the skill shows transfer. Learner satisfaction informs improvements to the experience but is not sufficient evidence of competence. The indicators and thresholds suggested below are tools for the team to adapt, rather than an accreditation standard or a promise of a fixed improvement.

> This is an adaptable practical approach developed by the Union with reference to the sources below. Adjust steps, timeframes and measures to the organization and its data. It is not a certificate of compliance or accreditation by the referenced organizations.

3. Implementation steps

1 Define the purpose and scope of the analysis

Choose a priority service, initiative, or job family, and define the result to improve, the period, and the organizations included. Form a team comprising training staff, the relevant manager, and a task expert, and agree on the expected decision: developing a new capability, addressing a recurring error, or preparing for change. Identify who approves the need and who makes employees' time and data available, explaining why information is collected and the limits on its use.

Suggested owner
Training officer and initiative sponsor.

Required output
An analysis charter with specific questions and decisions.

Progression check
The scope is linked to a work result rather than a wish list of courses.

2 Describe required performance and critical tasks

Break the task into observable activities, such as reviewing a file, analyzing data, or preparing a recommendation. Define quality, timing, controls, and tools, then identify the knowledge and skills required. Ask a task expert to demonstrate correct performance and an example containing a common error. Write a clear standard distinguishing proficient from non-proficient performance, and avoid loose descriptions such as professional or excellent without verifiable behavior.

Suggested owner
Task expert and line manager.

Required output
A task and competency map with acceptance criteria.

Progression check
Two assessors can use the criteria and reach similar judgments.

3 Collect evidence of the current situation

Collect recent work samples and a practical test or direct observation, adding interviews or a survey to explain difficulties. Cover branches, experience levels, and important task types, and pilot the measurement tool on a small scale to check clarity. Use employee self-assessment as a starting point for discussion, then compare it with other evidence. Keep individual data within the authorized scope, and present aggregated findings to management when these are sufficient for the decision.

Suggested owner
Needs analyst and specialist assessors.

Required output
An evidence register and documented assessment results.

Progression check
Each judgment has evidence, a date, a tool, and a statement of sampling limitations.

4 Diagnose the gap and classify its causes

Compare current and required performance for each task. Discuss errors with the person performing the work to understand their cause, and check that instructions, tools, authority, and time are adequate. Classify the need as knowledge-related, skill-related, non-training, or mixed. For mixed cases, define a parallel action, such as updating a manual or providing system access, and name its owner. Do not approve a program before confirming that participants will have a realistic opportunity to use what they learn.

Suggested owner
Needs analyst, manager, and process expert.

Required output
A classified gap register with causes and interventions.

Progression check
There is an explicit justification for choosing training for every approved need.

5 Prioritize needs and group learners

Assess the gap by its effect on service or risk, its extent, the urgency of change, and workplace readiness for application. Define rating scores before use and discuss results with managers. Group employees with similar tasks and starting levels, and separate foundation learning from advanced specialization. Define program prerequisites and record deferred needs and reasons for deferral so they remain visible in follow-up.

Suggested owner
Training committee, managers, and budget approving authority.

Required output
A priority matrix and target groups.

Progression check
The reason for giving one need priority over another can be explained using consistent evidence.

6 Turn the need into a learning brief

Write an objective describing an action, a condition, and an acceptance criterion, such as preparing a report from supplied data using correct indicator definitions. Choose a method suited to the skill: a practical workshop, workplace coaching, simulation, or short learning followed by an assignment. Specify organizational examples, trainer requirements, expected time, assessment, and supporting materials. Do not start with the number of days; the skill may require spaced practice and support after the session.

Suggested owner
Learning designer and subject matter expert.

Required output
A program or learning pathway brief and an application task.

Progression check
Activities and tests align with the objective rather than simply the marketing title.

7 Agree on application and measurement

Define equivalent pre- and post-tests, a workplace application task, and a suitable review date after a real opportunity to apply the skill. Agree with the manager on support, such as practice time or review of the first report. Define evidence of success, who assesses it, and how non-achievement is addressed. If using a service indicator, record other changes that could affect it; do not automatically attribute every improvement to training.

Suggested owner
Training officer, line manager, and assessor.

Required output
An assessment, learning transfer, and support plan.

Progression check
Dates, evidence, and responsibilities are agreed before delivery begins.

8 Approve and update the plan

Combine briefs in a plan covering target groups, options, time, estimated cost, and dependencies, with a section for non-training actions. Run a pilot cohort where needed, then review what participants learned, what they applied, and why progress stalled. Adjust content, methods, or the environment based on findings. Update the needs register when tasks change or new data emerge, and do not treat the annual plan as fixed or attendance as automatic closure of a gap.

Suggested owner
Training director and development committee.

Required output
An approved plan and updated follow-up register.

Progression check
Every program is linked to a need, and every need to evidence for review or closure.

Guide and editable templates: https://uhrda.net/en/organizations/guides/training-needs/

4. Working templates

Review the illustrative row, then complete a copy of the blank row using your organization's information. Download each template as CSV or print it within the guide.

Performance gap analysis matrix

Suitable for a meeting with the manager and job expert; the first row is a hypothetical example and the second is ready to complete.

Task and standard	Current situation and evidence	Cause of the gap	Intervention	Target group
An indicator report using correct definitions	Four of ten reports contain a denominator error	Inconsistent understanding of the indicator and an outdated manual	Update the manual and provide practical training	Reporting analysts

Download CSV template

Need, program, and verification brief

Use when preparing a program or commissioning a training provider; approve acceptance criteria according to the task.

Application objective	Learners	Learning method	Evidence of learning	Evidence of application
Calculate four indicators without a definition error	New analysts with basic spreadsheet skills	Data workshop, exercise, and coaching	Pass an equivalent task against a predefined standard	A work report reviewed by the manager after an opportunity to apply learning

Download CSV template

5. Hypothetical example: an analytical need that a general course cannot address

A hypothetical department with twenty analysts noticed differences in indicator rates across branch reports. A practical test showed that only eight analysts applied the approved calculation definitions correctly, while a review found that some branches were using an outdated manual.

- The reference update problem was separated from the calculation skills gap.
- Definitions were standardized and a practical workshop using work examples was prepared for those who needed it.
- Participants completed a post-learning task, then the manager reviewed actual reports after a complete reporting cycle had been available.

Interpreting the result

In the hypothetical educational data, 18 of 20 mastered the post-learning task, and 15 of the 18 employees who had an opportunity to apply learning and were assessed demonstrated its use at work. Follow-up coverage is also reported as 18 of 20. The result cannot be attributed to training alone because the manual changed at the same time.

Learning from the case

A successful plan addresses the reference material, the skill, and the opportunity to apply it together, and discloses the denominator of every indicator.

6. Measures and follow-up

Agree each definition, data source, baseline, target and accountable owner before measurement. Targets require organizational approval. A zero denominator makes a ratio not calculable rather than zero.

Measure	Calculation	Source	Review frequency
Proportion of needs supported by evidence	Approved needs linked to a gap and a documented measurement tool ÷ all approved training needs × 100.	Needs register and assessment files.	When the plan is approved and reviewed.
Post-learning skill pass rate	Participants who met the predefined proficiency standard ÷ all participants completing the post-assessment × 100; show assessment coverage separately.	Practical tests and assessment register.	After each cohort.
Improvement in learning scores	Average of the differences between post- and pre-scores for the same individuals on the same scale; report in points, not as a percentage improvement unless separately defined.	Equivalent pre- and post-assessments linked by participant identifier.	After each cohort, stating the number of complete pairs.
Verified application rate	Employees who demonstrated application against the standard ÷ employees who had an opportunity to apply learning and were assessed × 100; report the number without an application opportunity and follow-up coverage.	Work samples and manager or assessor observation checklists.	After an appropriate work cycle; a suggested example is 30 to 90 days, depending on the skill.

7. Indicative implementation plan

The periods below are adaptable planning stages, not guaranteed delivery times.

Period	Action	Deliverable
Diagnosis: a suggested two to three weeks	Define tasks, collect evidence, and distinguish training-related causes.	A documented gap register.
Design: a suggested two weeks	Prioritize, formulate objectives and programs, and prepare the assessment plan.	An approved learning plan and commissioning briefs.
Application and follow-up: according to the skill cycle	Deliver learning, provide application opportunities, then assess them; durations are indicative and vary with group size and the nature of the work.	Learning and application evidence, and updated needs.

8. Common pitfalls

A survey that asks only: What course would you like?

First ask about difficult tasks, recurring errors, and performance evidence.

Addressing a technical fault or missing authority through training.

Test the cause and assign an owner to the non-training action.

Sending groups at different levels through the same content.

Define prerequisites and group learners by tasks and starting level.

Treating satisfaction and attendance as evidence of impact.

Use a performance task and subsequent verification of application.

Expecting skill application without time or tools.

Secure the manager's commitment to support before the program, and record barriers during follow-up.

9. Review checklist

- ☐ Required performance is defined and observable.
- ☐ Evidence goes beyond opinions and surveys alone.
- ☐ Training and non-training causes have been separated.
- ☐ Groups, priorities, and prerequisites are clear.
- ☐ Objectives are linked to suitable activities and tests.
- ☐ There is an application opportunity, a follow-up owner, and a closure criterion.

Use this checklist at the final review. Record observations, the decision owner, approval date and document version.

10. Further reading

Original practical material prepared for the Arab Union for Human Resources Development. Sources support the concepts and further reading; the illustrative models and cases belong to this guide. Reviewed: 16 October 2026.

1. OPM — Planning & Evaluating: Training Needs Assessment

   A reference for defining needs gaps and the organizational, job, and individual levels of analysis. The templates and timeline here are original practical developments.

2. CDC — Assess Training Needs: Conducting Needs Analysis

   A reference for first checking whether training is appropriate for addressing the gap, collecting evidence, and distinguishing performance causes.

3. CDC — Evaluate Training: Measuring Effectiveness

   A reference for distinguishing learning from learning transfer and the need to follow up on application. Using the reference does not mean the program is accredited by CDC.