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14. ABSTRACT Training needs assessment (TNA) is a highly important, yet underutilized process for creating alignment between organizational objectives and training design and measurement. In this case study, we present a TNA conducted for Naval Special Warfare (NSW) to identify and specify training requirements as part of a strategic initiative to develop and maintain organic foreign language capability for US Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEALs) and Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen (SWCCs). This effort was driven, in part, by strategic guidance within the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). Admiral Eric T. Olson, the former Commander of USSOCOM, outlined very specific language proficiency goals to increase the organic capability of Special Operations Forces (SOF) tactical elements (30 MAR 2009). NSW leaders developed a strategic response focused on training to address the language capability gap. This case study focuses on this initiative, the NSW Language & Cultural Training Curriculum Development Project, and provides details on three project phases: 1) training needs assessment (TNA), 2) translation of task and language-specific requirements into learning objectives and a curriculum plan, and 3) curriculum development.					
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Aligning Learning Capability with Strategy: A Training Needs Assessment (TNA) Case Study



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Aligning Learning and Capability with Strategy: A Training Needs Assessment (TNA) Case Study

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**NSW ATC &
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- **Definition:**
 - Systematic process
 - Applies work analysis techniques and procedures
 - Identifies and specifies training requirements that have been linked to deficiencies in individual, team, or organizational performance
 - Develop learning objectives to address deficiencies

Surface, 2012

- **Purpose:**
 - Guide design (or selection), delivery and evaluation of learning activities to close the “gaps” in underlying KSAOs or competencies related to deficiencies

Surface, 2012



- **Value:**

- Mechanism for aligning organizational capability with performance requirements to meet organizational objectives
- Specifies focused, relevant training requirements and objectives Drives training design, delivery and measurement
- Facilitates transfer of learning to the work environment

Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2011

Alvarez, Salas, & Garofano, 2004

- Organizational invention—TNA communicates priorities
- “The more alignment between learning, capability, performance, and context created throughout the system, the more likely individual, team, and organizational outcomes will be achieved.”

Surface, 2012



- **Evidence of Effectiveness:**

- Link between TNA comprehensiveness and organizational effectiveness

van Eerde, Tang, & Talbot, 2008

- **Current State of Research and Practice:**

- No agreed upon model
- Limited research

Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009
Surface, 2012

- Unclear; no comprehensive data on frequency and comprehensiveness of TNA activities
- *ASTD State of the Industry* reports do not include inform on TNA activities

Surface, 2012

- Recent meta-analysis – only 22 out of 397 studies reported conducting TNA

Arthur, Bennett, Edens, & Bell, 2003



- **Needs Assessment to TNA:**
 - TNA learning-focused implementation of Needs Assessment
 - General needs assessment focus allows analyst to consider drivers and solutions not related to learning before jumping to TNA
 - Flexibility: can be abbreviated, focused, and/or customized
 - Judgment is required: Don't necessarily need to do a TNA or complete one
- **Phases:**
 - Phase I: Needs Identification
 - Phase II: Needs Specification
 - Phase III: TNA
 - Includes selection or design and implementation of learning
 - Phase IV: TNA Evaluation

Surface, 2012



- **Phase I: Needs Identification**

- Triggering or initiating events

- Training evaluation, organizational surveys, changes in law, leader perceptions, new technology, equipment or process, etc.

TRADOC Pub No. 350-70
Surface, 2012

- Is there a need? Is it clearly identified?
 - Is there evidence or information? How valid?
 - Is there value for the organization in addressing?
 - *Are there risks to not addressing?*
 - *Is it a business or mission priority? **Make the case.***



- **Phase II: Needs Specification**

- Create an initial definition of the *need space* identified in the need identification phase
- ***Conduct a more thorough gap analysis refining the need space—difference between current and desired state***
- Analyze the nature of the gap and related need within context to identify key drivers and potential solutions
- ***Specify potential solutions within the constraints of the context, refining the need space***
- Evaluate potential solutions and determine if training is a viable component
- ***If training is determined to be part of the solution, then a TNA is needed; If not, address through other means***



- **Phase III: TNA**
 - Design and plan a customized TNA process
 - Traditional TNA
 - Which techniques/design?
 - Who do we ask?
 - Conduct the TNA implementation within the constraints of the context
 - ***Analyze the data and report the results at the appropriate level of detail for decisions—varies by stakeholder***
 - ***Make decisions and take action based on results***
 - ***Design and implement learning solution***
 - ***Evaluate and select learning solution***
 - ***Modify current learning solution***



Case Study

NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE (NSW)



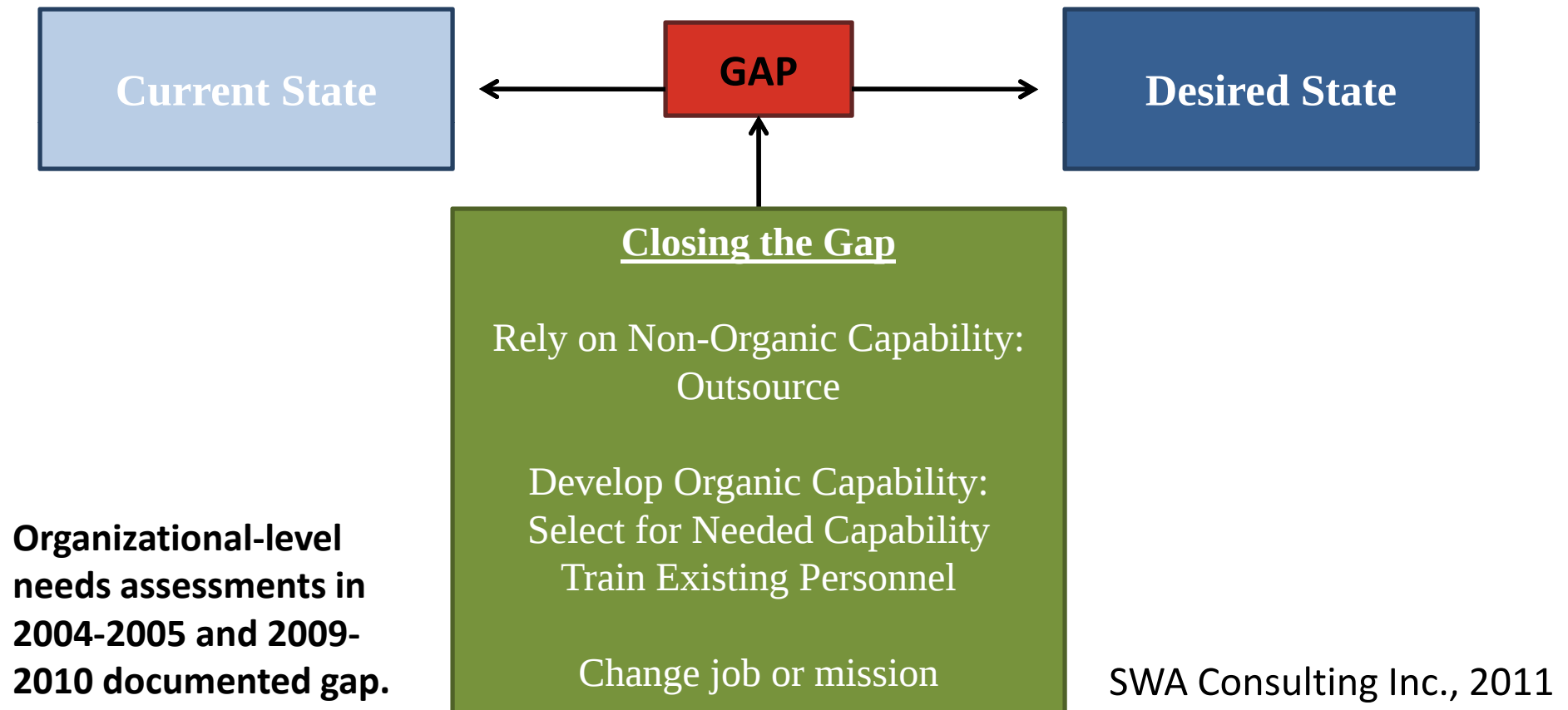
- **Population**
 - SEAL – Sea, Air, Land
 - SWCC – Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewman
- **Background:** Admiral Eric T. Olson's Memo, former Commander of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) specifies the need for:
 - "Ability to communicate directly with indigenous in our highest priority operating areas."
 - "Improved counterpart relations."
 - "Enhanced operational capability at the unit level resulting from a decreased dependence on interpretation/translation by non-SOF linguists."
 - "Increased level of cultural sensitive/knowledge that contributes to situational awareness, safety and security."

Olson Memo, 30 MAR 2009

Phases I and II: Needs Identification/Needs Specification



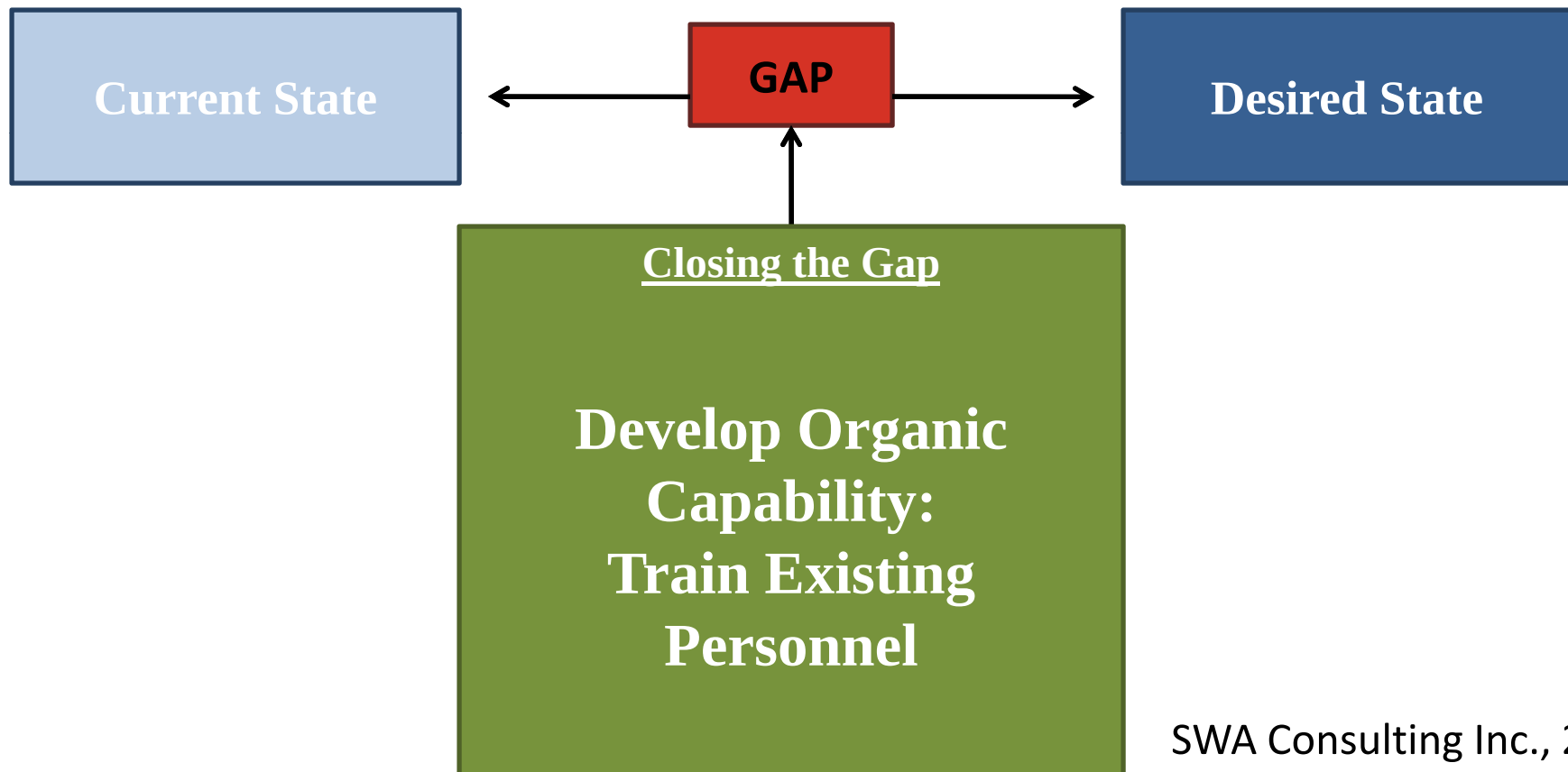
There is a GAP between the CURRENT and DESIRED states of language capability in the NSW Community.



Phases I and II: Needs Identification/Needs Specification



There is a GAP between the CURRENT and DESIRED states of language capability in the NSW Community.



SWA Consulting Inc., 2011



- **Problem:** A gap exists between desired and current language and culture capability to execute NSW and USSOCOM strategic objectives.
- **Outcome:** NSW SEALs and SWCCs who have the language and culture capability needed to effectively perform their missions.
- **Process:** Identify NSW language and culture needs and align policy, objectives, materials, and assessments to create needed capability.



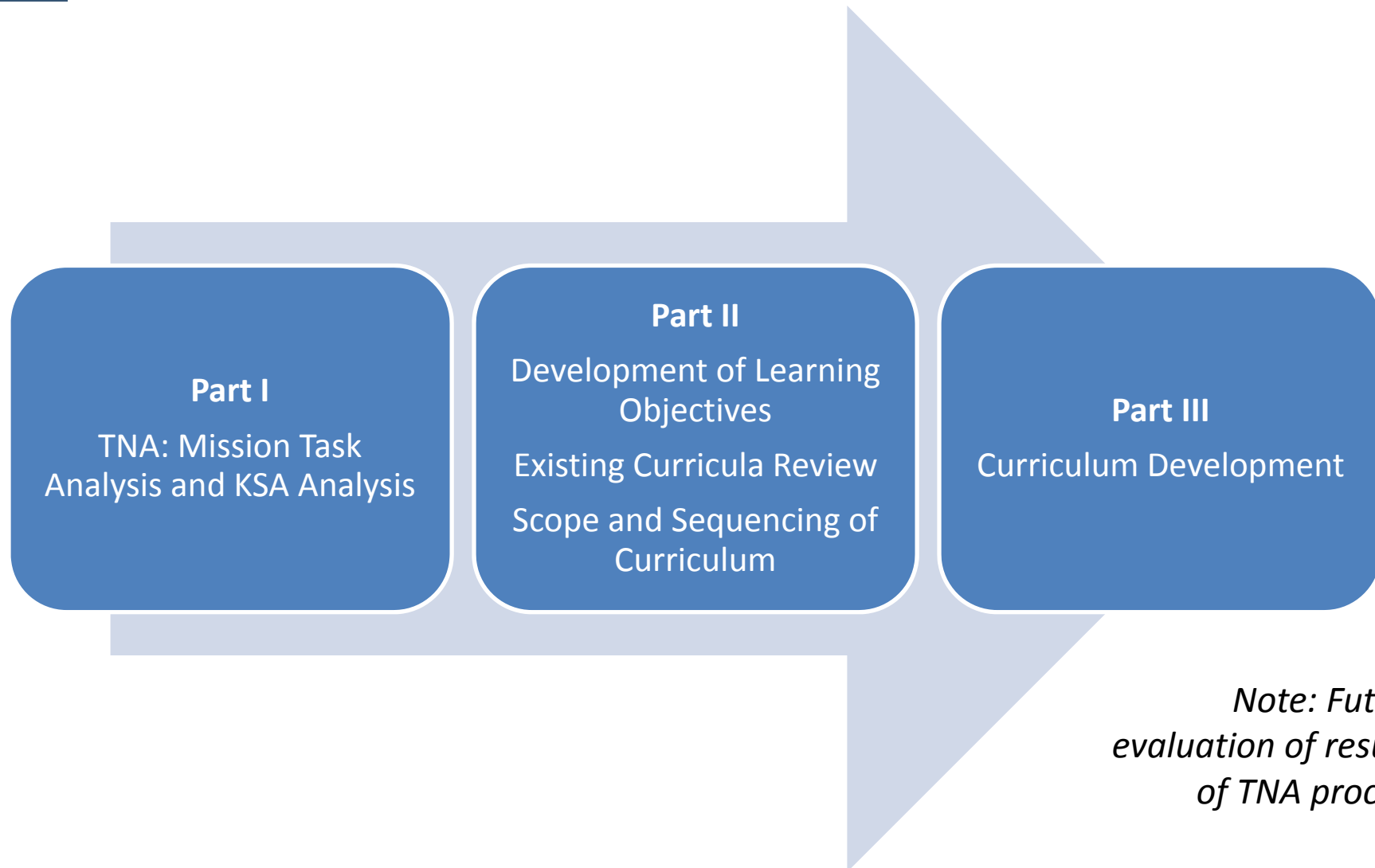
NSW Case Study

TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT



- **Goals:** To identify needs and develop a unique language and culture curriculum plan for NSW SEAL and SWCC personnel, which:
 - Produces the **capability** needed for **NSW jobs/missions**;
 - Is **learner relevant** and **mission-focused**;
 - Has **explicit** and **transparent** course and learning **objectives**;
 - Is **efficient**;
 - Is **flexible, adaptable**, and easily **updatable**; and
 - Allows **monitoring** and **accountability** of the curriculum developers, vendors, instructors, and students.

Phase III: Training Needs Assessment



*Note: Future
evaluation of results
of TNA process*



NSW Case Study: TNA

PART 1: MISSION TASK ANALYSIS AND KSA ANALYSIS

Process Overview



December 2010 | January 2011 | February 2011 | March 2011 | April 2011 | May 2011

Kick-Off and Team Formation

Core Group Meetings

Mission Task Analysis

KSA Analysis

Reporting/Briefings/Phase II Planning

Post-Deployment
Conference

Kick-Off and Team Formation

- Consolidate funding
- Identify NSW core group (6-10)
- Identify SWA team (5)



Core Group Meetings

- Identify critical task lists and future task validation
- Identify all resources and documentation related to mission tasks
- Planning



Mission Task Analysis

- Data collection with incumbent SMEs conducted by SWA
- Data collection in the form of focus groups and structured surveys
- Meeting with NLAP



KSA Analysis

- Data collection with language experts and incumbent SMEs



Reports/Briefings/Phase II Planning

- Admiral: Information Brief
- Post-deployment conference: Information Brief
- Final Phase I report
- Survey to NSW community



Part I: Mission Task Analysis and KSA Analysis



Step 1

4 Publications¹
834 tasks

Step 2

Mission Task Analysis
613 tasks

Step 3

KSA Meeting
211 tasks grouped
20 mission content domains

- **20 linguistic functions rated at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of conflict**
- **3 socio-cultural knowledge areas**
- **7 communicative modalities**

¹SEAL Occupational Standards, SWCC Occupational Standards, NWP 3-05, Universal Naval Task List

NSW Case Study: TNA

VALIDATION SURVEY



Started Survey:
593

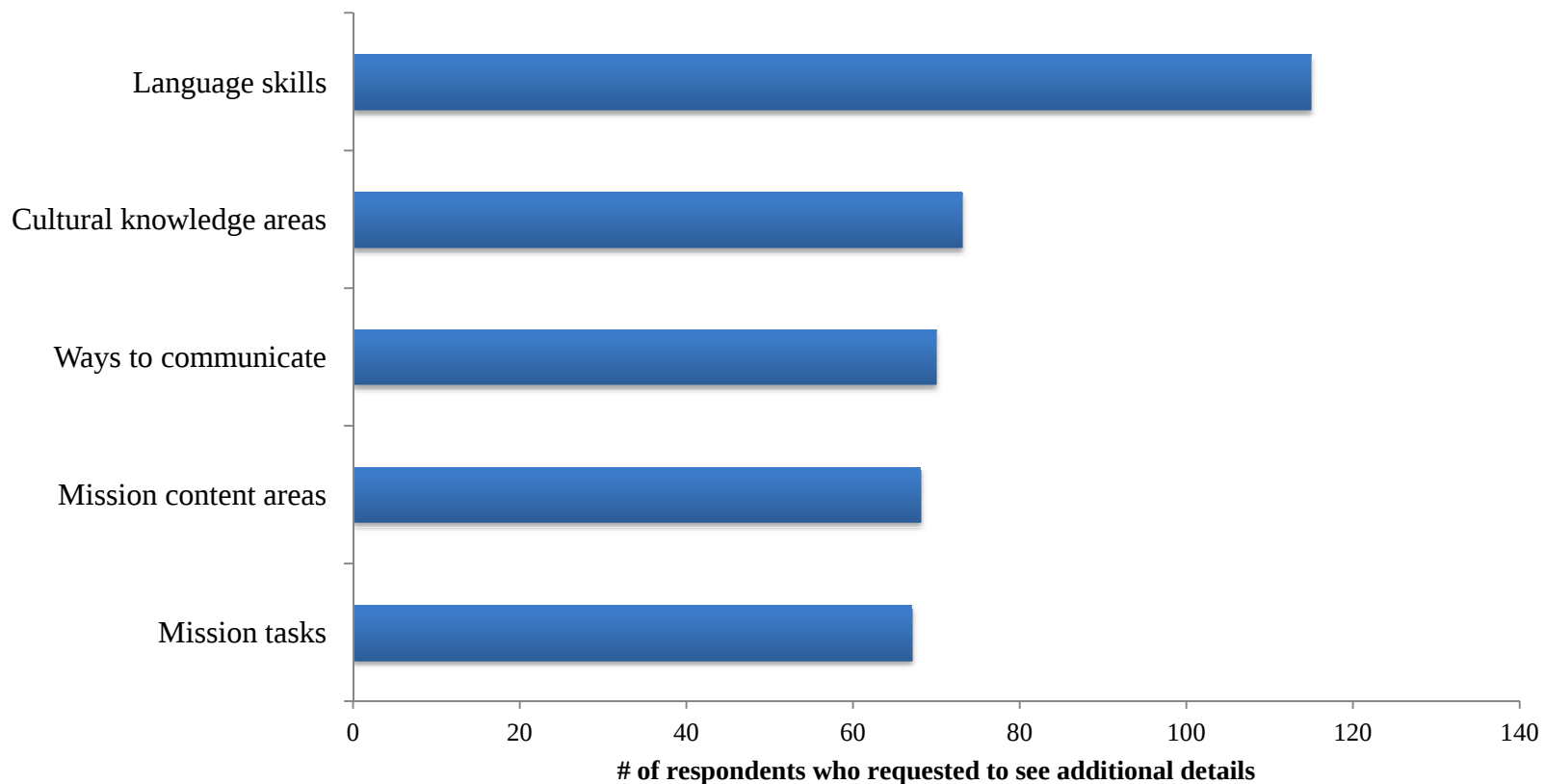
Viewed Results:
535; 90%

Completed
Survey: 482

SURVEY PAGE TOPIC	# who viewed page
Survey purpose, confidentiality statement, contact information	593
Illustration of need to increase NSW language capability	582
Phase I description and goals	567
Phase I timeline	559
Phase I results	535
Demographics	503



Number of Respondents who Requested to See Additional Details on the Following Topics:





NSW Case Study: TNA

PART 2: DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES



	Learning Design Objective	Learning Outcome Objective
General	General Learning Design Objective (GLDO)	General Learning Outcome Objective (GLOO)
Contextualized	Contextualized Learning Design Objective (CLDO)	Contextualized Learning Outcome Objective (CLOO)

In total, 255 general learning outcome objectives were approved for inclusion in the NSW ATC Language and Cultural Training Curriculum Plan.¹

¹See the *Phase II: Learning Objectives Meeting Summary Report* (Technical Report #2011010637).

Example Contextual Learning Outcome Objective



The NSW SEAL/SWCC personnel will **give commands** in order to **train others to conduct small arms qualifications as part of NSW Range Safety Operations** at the **tactical level of conflict** and **within a level 1 socio-cultural context** to an **emerging** standard of performance in relation to the targeted proficiency **ILR level 1** of the task as measured by [X,Y,Z].

Note: All learning objectives (and learning objectives) have unique codes that link them back to mission and job tasks.



- Curriculum Review:
 - Contacted 19 providers, 6 responded and provided materials
 - None of the programs submitted the requested documentation to show a rigorous bottom-up needs assessment had been conducted
 - None of the programs had learning objectives which met our standards (i.e., audience, criterion, conditions, and measurement)
 - None of the language programs that provided curricula materials met our criteria (i.e., needs assessment and salient learning objectives) for detailed review

Part 2: Curriculum Plan



- **Objective:** By the end of the course, NSW SEAL and SWCC personnel should be able to:
 - Use the target language/culture to perform their military missions;
 - Use the target language/culture to interact in general life domains in order to build rapport in the communities where they deploy.
- **Key features:**
 - Utilized a different organizing principal than typical language curricula used in military, etc.
 - Direct and explicit linking of every instructional and assessment activity to learning objectives and to mission tasks
 - Capability focused
 - General and Contextualized content from day one
 - Designed to facilitate rapid TNA-materials adaptations in future

Course Objectives



	CAT I/II		CAT III/IV	
	Duration	Proficiency Goal	Duration	Proficiency Goal
Initial Acquisition Training (IAT)	12 weeks ¹	ILR level 1	12 weeks ¹	ILR level 0+
Level II	12 weeks ¹	ILR level 2	24 weeks ²	ILR level 2

¹ 12 weeks of instruction include 360 contact hours and 140 independent learning hours.

² 24 weeks of instruction include 720 contact hours and 284 independent learning hours.



TNA LESSONS LEARNED



- **Gain organizational buy-in and acceptance:**
 - Early leadership support
 - Establishment of core advisory group
 - Tailor communication and the “value proposition” for each group of stakeholders
 - Careful selection and recruitment for the task and KSA SME groups
 - Briefings with key leadership and stakeholders
 - Validation survey designed to educate NSW community about project and communicate and validate the results
 - ***Clearly communicated the value of language and culture and the organization’s commitment to developing language and culture capability***



- **Orient KSAO experts on the process and organizational context**
- **Leverage technology to reduce time and increase effectiveness:**
 - Database allows for easy integration and review of SME data
 - Learning Objectives Generator
 - Learning Objective Editor
 - Curriculum Planning Tools and Reports
 - Curriculum Audit Tools
 - Database allows for easy access and linkage of learning objectives to task and KSA data profiles to help designers and content developers
- **Develop an organizing structure and coding system to ensure linkages throughout the process and implementation**
 - Learning Objective Codes
 - Learning Object Codes
 - Assessment Object Codes
 - **Facilitates alignment with capability needs**
 - **Facilitates integration of data with future project phases**



QUESTIONS?



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