HDFS MS Professional Project: Needs Assessment

Part I: Planning and Purpose
The purpose of Part I is to identify what is already known about the needs of the target group, detail the focus and scope of the needs assessment, and explain the use of the findings for program planning and implementation. Part I should include the following:

Social Service Organization: Describe the current social service organization that has an identified need. Explain how your proposed program or service fits into the mission or goals of this organization. Discuss resources that currently exist within the organization to meet this need. Who from the organization or community will be involved in the planning process?

Population: Define and describe the target population in enough detail that the reader understands the specific characteristics (e.g., demographics, dispersion, geographic information, socioeconomic status, language, etc.). Identify the major concerns of the target population and any indicators that those issues exist.

Current Service Status and Gaps: Describe the current status of service intervention or delivery, including program mission or objectives. How are services currently being accessed? Are the current services appropriately meeting identified needs? Identify and explain gaps in service that need to be met. What current resources are available within the community to meet the needs of the target population?

Need Identification: Describe the scope of the problem or social condition that your program will address. What are the key areas of the issue to be addressed? What is the extent of the issue?

Data Source and Analysis Plan: What kinds and sources of data about the issue already exist? How will you need to customize research or gather new data? Will you utilize quantitative, qualitative or a mixed methods approach to gathering data?

Part II: Gather and Analyze Data
The purpose of Part II is to document your analysis of the current status of the concerns and issues, to compare the current status with the vision of the ideal situation, and to determine the magnitude and causes of the needs. From this section, you will derive and report on a set of needs statements that are ordered in terms of priority based on the critical nature of the needs and their origins. Part II should include the following:

Data Gathering and Analysis: Explain the process by which you either 1) utilized existing data or 2) collected and analyzed new data.

Extent of the Problem: Gather and describe the nature and extent of the problem based on findings from quantitative and/or qualitative data. Provide estimates of the current condition and distribution of the issue. What are the rates of occurrence or main areas of concern that were identified by your analysis?

Outcomes: Describe key outcomes derived from your analysis.
Possible Solutions: Interpret your data findings and determine potential actions to take.

Recommendation of Needs: Using the results of your analysis outcomes and possible solutions, what do you recommend as a service intervention for the target population? Summarize each need and an explanation of its major causes. Lastly, formulate specific need statements ordered based on the criticality of each need. These statements should be based on the current identified discrepancies between current and desired outcomes.

Part III: Action Plan and Reporting
The purpose of Part III is to be the bridge from planning and analysis to action. A needs assessment is not complete without an informative practice plan. Part III should include the following:

Identification of Solutions: Generate and examine potential practical solutions for the issue, based on the current resources and feasibility of implementation for the social service organization. Review and document research and evaluation data that supports the merits of your solutions.

Action Plan: Finalize your action plan for the organization. This plan should include the solutions described above, as well as a rationale, proposed timelines, and resource requirements. This plan should be a stand-alone document to be presented to the organization for future implementation.