Needs Assessment Prioritization Criteria

Intervening variables are factors that have been identified through research as influencing substance use patterns in a community. We will be using the following four main criteria to prioritize the intervening variables included in the Needs Assessment Workbook:

1. **Magnitude** is addressed by the question **"How meaningful is the SIZE of this issue in your community?"** and it refers to how big or small the value is in your community data. It can be measured by considering the following questions: What percent of the community is impacted? Is the rate or percent high or low compared to other intervening variables in your community? Is the rate or percent high or low compared to the state average? If data are available for multiple points in time, has the rate or percent changed over time? To assess magnitude, use the data for each intervening variable included in your *Needs Assessment Workbook*.

2. **Political will** or **"How much do community leaders/members care about this issue?"** encompasses readiness, concern, and willingness to take action. For example, political will might include community willingness to raise taxes on alcohol, or readiness to take on the hospitality or alcohol industries. Readiness may include a number of dimensions, such as the community's recognition of substance use/abuse problems, the availability of needed resources, a plan for addressing substance use/abuse concerns, and leaders positioned to take action. To assess political will, use information from the *One-on-one Conversations*, *PCN Community Readiness Assessment*, and any other information you have about the perspectives of community members and leaders.

3. **Capacity** or **"What level of resources do you have available to address this issue?"** refers to your coalition or community's ability to implement programs, policies, and other changes designed to reduce the likelihood of substance abuse. Elements include: staff time, skills, experience, and expertise; training and technical assistance; organizational systems; communication systems; technology; fiscal resources; etc. To assess capacity and resources, use information from the *One-on-one Conversations*, *PCN Community Readiness Assessment*, *Fiscal Host Questionnaire*, and any other information you have about the resources in your coalition and community.

4. **Changeability** or **"How easy is it to change the value of the variable over the course of the grant?"** encompasses time frame, readiness, and capacity. Can your community make a change in a given intervening variable by the end of the project? To assess changeability, use data from the *Needs Assessment Workbook, One-on-one Conversations*, *PCN Community Readiness Assessment*, and any other information you have about the resources in your coalition and community.