

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)

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Overview

ABCD is a methodology or an approach towards the sustainable development of communities based on their strengths and potentials, rather than their needs. Empowerment is an important tenet of ABCD, and the driving principle behind the method is that solutions to community problems already exist within a community's own assets.

Some important ideas behind ABCD include:

1. Everyone has assets: each person in the community has something to contribute
2. Relationships build a community: people must be connected in order for sustainable community development to take place
3. Citizens as the driving force: citizens should be viewed as, and view themselves as, actors rather than recipients in development
4. Leaders involve others: community development is strongest when it involves a broad base of community action
5. People care: challenge notions of "apathy" by listening to people's interests
6. Listen: decisions should come from conversations where people are heard
7. Ask: asking for ideas is more sustainable than giving solutions

The goal of ABCD should be about identifying assets that can help, developing the leadership to mobilize residents, and building the capacity to act in the future.

What is Asset Mapping?

In simple terms, **asset mapping is the general process of identifying and providing information about a community's assets, or the status, condition, behavior, knowledge, or skills that a person, group, or entity possesses, which serves as a support, resource, or source of strength to one's self and others in the community.**

Assets, tangible and intangible and both of untold or unrecognized value, exist within communities. Whether it is within the individuals or in the relationships between them, within larger organizations, within the land and other physical resources, or within the local economy and culture, any community is full of assets. The importance lies in identifying and recognizing these assets which **allows communities to reconfirm their own capabilities and begin to mobilize themselves to build up and develop their own capacity and resources in a self-sustainable manner.**

Once the community knows its own full capacity, then it becomes much easier for them to address their concerns and issues without constantly having to rely on external funding or assistance. Even if they do at times require external resources, ABCD ensures that those will be most effectively leveraged if and when the community's assets are also leveraged at full capacity. When a problem arises, they know exactly which assets could be utilized in order to strive towards a solution. Thus, identifying and mapping assets in the form of inventorying becomes the first step in the ABCD process.

Asset Assessment of Individuals

Identifying the assets of individual members in the community is a process of affirmation and discovery that are often incredibly empowering. When individuals realize they themselves have the ability to effect community improvements, they are more willing to work collectively and share their assets.

1. Identify groups of individuals where asset identification might be helpful to the members and/or your programming goals.
2. Identify assets of these groups in a general way.
3. Consider how these assets link to your program goals.
4. Decide if more in-depth first-hand assessment of assets for some of these groups would be helpful and important. Will you use a structured questionnaire or open-ended questions? Decide on the method of asset identification, e.g. survey, interviews, group session, etc.
5. Start to think about how each asset can be taken advantage of collectively to bring about improvements in the community or problems that these assets will be helpful in solving.

The following tables on the next few pages provide a way to look at individuals according to various categories. Use it as a guideline, since there may be additional categories you may identify as being more relevant in your community.

	YOUTH		
What are the types of assets youth typically possess?	What assets do youth in our situation possess? (What assets should we try to develop in our youth?)	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessments of youth assets? If so, how could we do this?
Ideas, Creativity, Energy Dreams & Desires Peer Group Relationships Family Relationships Mentors of other youth Internet Skills Time Other_____			

	PARENTS		
What are the types of assets parents typically possess?	What assets do parents in our situation possess? (What assets should we try to develop?)	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessments of parents' assets? If so, how could we do this?
Concern for Youth			
Knowledge of Youth			
Concerns			
Family Customs			
Inter-generational Perspectives			
Home Places			
Spouse, Extended Family Relations			
Other _____			

	INDIVIDUALS IN	OCCUPATION GROUPS	
What are the types of assets these individuals typically possess?	What assets do these individuals in our situation possess? (What assets should we try to develop?)	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessments of their assets? If so, how could we do this?
Skills, Abilities & Experiences			
Special Occupational Knowledge			
Productivity			
Economic Resources			
Connections to Occupation Groups/Organizations			
Other _____			

	WOMEN		
What are the types of assets women typically possess?	What assets do women in our situation possess? (What assets should we try to develop?)	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessments of women's assets? If so, how could we do this?
Knowledge/Wisdom Relationship Skills Connection to Place Connection to Children Peer Group Relationships Family Relationships Practical Skills Other_____			

	MEN		
What are the types of assets men typically possess?	What assets do men in our situation possess? (What assets should we try to develop In men?)	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessments of men's assets? If so, how could we do this?
Leadership/Authority Knowledge/Wisdom Peer Group Relationships Productivity Practical Skills Economic Resources Education/Training Other_____			

	Other Groups		
What are the types of assets _____ usually possess?	What assets do _____ in our situation possess? (What assets do we want to develop?)	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in depth assessment of _____'s assets? If so, how could we do this?
Asset:			
Asset:			
Asset:			
Asset:			
Asset:			

	Other Groups		
What are the types of assets _____ usually possess?	What assets do _____ in our situation possess? (What assets do we want to develop?)	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in depth assessment of _____'s assets? If so, how could we do this?
Asset:			
Asset:			
Asset:			
Asset:			
Asset:			

Assets of Associations and Organizations/Institutions

Associations and organizations are essential in a community because they have the ability to bring people together for collective action. They are useful resource because they accumulate assets that can be tapped for larger community projects. To identify organizational/institutional assets, use the following guideline:

1. Generate a list of associations for the community. Associations are informal, voluntary groups that bring people together to pursue shared interests. Use a committee, community forum, bulletin to create this inventory.
2. Generate a list of organizations/institutions for the community. An organization/institution is a formal government, private/business or non-profit organization with paid staff. To identify organizations, start by polling the knowledge of your committee and then extend it by reviewing telephone or other directories.
3. Identify assets of associations and organizations.
4. Consider possible links between the assets of these associations or organizations and your specific program goals as you continue to create the list.
5. Consider the accessibility of these various assets and how access can be increased towards your programming initiatives.
6. Decide if more in-depth first-hand assessment of assets for some of these groups would be helpful and important. Will you use a structured questionnaire or open-ended questions? Decide on the method of asset identification, e.g. survey, interviews, group session, etc.

Potential Assets of Associations, Organizations/Institutions	
People with Time, Interests, Skills, etc. Expertise Space Facilities Materials	Equipment Programs Services Financial Resources Purchasing Power

Examples of Associations, Organizations/Institutions	
Associations	Organizations/Institutions
Artistic Groups: musical, theater, writing Business Groups: local chamber, local cooperatives Church/Religious Groups Elderly Groups Ethnic Associations Environment/Conservation Groups Local Media: newspaper, radio, TV Men's Groups: cultural, political, social, educational, vocational Political/Citizenship Groups Service Clubs Social Cause Groups: peace, civil rights, advocacy Sports Leagues Support/Self-Help Groups Study Groups Veteran Groups Women's Groups: cultural, political, social, civic, educational, vocational Youth Groups, School Groups	Agricultural Agencies Banks Businesses/Corporations Community Centers Community Development Corporations Conservation Agencies Cooperative Extension Elected Governmental Bodies Energy Utilities Fire Departments, Police Foundations Health Departments, Clinics Hospitals Libraries, Museums Newspapers Parks Public, Private Schools, Universities Radio/TV Social Service Agencies Trade/technical schools

Environmental Assets —Natural and Physical Resources

Every community possesses natural and human-made physical structures and resources. Some of them may become potential assets if their negative or neglected use is turned into a positive one. Some of these resources may already prove valuable if paid close attention to. Natural resources, for example, can serve both production and consumption functions. They can be the inputs into an extractive production process or amenities to support tourism-related activities. The first step is to inventory these assets using the following steps:

1. Consider the types of environmental assets listed in the table below.
2. Consider possible links between these assets and your program goals.
3. Identify the types of environmental assets to inventory.
4. Decide the method for mapping environmental assets.
 - Methods for identifying natural/physical features, include use of library, other published information and/or first-hand observation/documentation.
 - To identify how these resources are used, consider user or general surveys by site interview/observations or mail, telephone, etc. surveys and/or analysis of records.
 - The community development capacity of these resources can be identified by user, general population or steering committee survey, discussion or brainstorming.
5. Design instruments, as needed.
6. Conduct your inventory.
7. Identify the asset entities, e.g. spaces, structures.
8. Identify their community development capacities.
9. Organize your findings.
10. Mobilize environmental assets.

The following table identifies types of environmental assets and possible community development applications.

Environmental Assets	Possible Community Development Application
Water Resources: streams, lakes, groundwater, rainfall Vegetation Wildlife Soils, Minerals Seasons, Weather Open Space Habitats Aesthetic Resources Cultural, Historic Resources Terrain Features Transportation Infrastructure Vacant or Under-used Land, Buildings Waste Resources: food, toxic and non-toxic materials, landscaping	Community recreation Community businesses Economic Development Housing Community gardens Social events Community festivals, celebrations Aesthetic appreciation Nature appreciation Wildlife, habitat conservation Cultural centers, museums Education centers, events Energy conservation Recycling

Other Approaches of Identifying Community Assets

Some of these below may overlap with the results found through the inventorying methods discussed in previous sections, but will frame them in a different scope that may better suit your particular project.

1. Mapping Public Capital

This can include:

- Social gatherings that enable people to learn about what is happening in the community
- Organized spaces for interaction where people can learn about, discuss and act on community challenges
- Catalytic organizations that spur discussion on community challenges and bring together a community's resources to move towards an objective
- Safe haven for decision makers of the community to be able to meet for unofficial candid discussions

2. Cultural Mapping

This can consist of the documentation of things like long term customs, behaviors and activities that have meaning to individuals and to the community and promoting an awareness and understanding of these assets can help to conserve and perhaps even leverage traditions, customs, and resources for the development of the community as a whole.

3. Community Relationship Mapping

The **mapping of inter-organizational linkages** is a form of ecomapping designed to show the relationships that one organization has with other organizations within the community. Relationships with other organizations may relate to **funding, referrals, access to resources, joint service planning, collaborative projects with contributed staff or funds**, etc. Ecomapping may be undertaken to clarify the place of an organization in the community spectrum, to identify gaps in linkages, to indicate the multiple relationships between organizations, etc.

References

“Identifying, Mapping, and Mobilizing Our Assets” Boyd Rossing, Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies, School of Human Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2000

Kretzmann, J. and J. McKnight. 1993. Building Communities from the Inside Out—A

Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets. Chicago, Ill: ACTA Publications.