

Identifying, Mapping and Mobilizing Our Assets

Assets, often of untold value, lie within the citizens of our communities, within the groups we form, within our larger organizations, within our land and other physical resources, within our local economy and within organizations and projects that connect us. By recognizing these assets, we reconfirm our own capabilities. Also, we can discover possibilities for mobilizing to meet our interests and needs and fulfill our community aspirations.

These materials will help you recognize the asset base in your county and in the communities within your county. They can be used to generate a quick general picture of your assets, to consider possible applications of those assets to program directions and to prioritize where more in-depth asset identification will be useful.

Assets of Individuals—A Preliminary Assessment Tool

Inventorying the assets of individual members in our communities is a powerful process. The affirmation and discovery that occur are empowering. Individuals are more energized to work collectively and share their assets to effect some community improvements. There are four basic steps in mapping assets of individuals:

- Identify groups of individuals where asset identification might be helpful to the members and/or your programming goals.
- Identify assets of these groups in a general way.
- Consider how these assets link to your program goals.
- 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.

The following tables provide a way to look at individuals according to various categories that hint at some of their assets. You may identify additional categories. After considering assets at this general level, you will be in a better position to select some groups of individuals where first-hand asset mapping and engagement in program efforts is desirable.

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 assessment of youth assets? If so, how could we do this?
Ideas, Creativity & Energy Connection to Place Dreams & Desires Peer Group Relationships Family Relationships Credibility as Teachers of other Youth Time Other _____			

SENIOR CITIZENS			
What are the types of assets senior citizens typically possess?	What assets do senior citizens in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of senior citizen assets? If so, how could we do this?
Culture, Tradition & History Experience & Skills Peer Groups Economic Resources Time Other _____			

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (AND ABILITIES)			
What are the types of assets persons with disabilities typically possess?	What assets do persons with disabilities in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of assets? If so, which disability groups? How could we do this?
Skills Hospitality Compassion Friendship Resilience & Happiness Inspiration Other _____			

ETHNIC GROUPS			
What are the types of assets persons of ethnic groups typically possess?	What assets do persons of ethnic groups in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of assets of ethnic groups? If so, which ethnic groups? How could we do this?
Tradition & History Perspectives on Community Situations Cultural Customs & Pride Relations within Group Credibility within Group Resilience Other _____			

PARENTS			
What are the types of assets parents typically possess?	What assets do parents in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of assets of parents? 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 persons in occupation groups typically possess?	What assets do members of selected occupation groups in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of assets of occupation groups? If, so which occupations? How could we do this?
Skills, Abilities & Experiences Special Occupational Knowledge Productivity Economic Resources Connections to Occupation Groups/Organizations Other _____			

PERSONS OF LIMITED INCOME			
What are the types of assets persons of limited income typically possess?	What assets do persons of limited income in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of assets of those of limited income? If so, how could we do this?
Skills, Abilities, Experience Networking & Personal Relationships Desires, Dreams Creativity Resilience Energy & Enthusiasm Other _____			

CREATIVE, ARTISTIC PERSONS			
What are the types of assets creative, artistic persons typically possess?	What assets do creative, artistic persons in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of assets of those of creative/ artistic persons? If so, how could we do this?
Tradition Culture Skills Vision & Creativity Productivity Self-Expression & Self-Esteem Other _____			

OTHER GROUP _____			
What are the types of assets members of _____ typically possess?	What assets do members of _____ group in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of assets of _____? If so, how could we do this?
Asset: _____ Asset: _____ Asset: _____ Asset: _____ Asset: _____			

OTHER GROUP _____			
What are the types of assets members of _____ typically possess?	What assets do members of _____ group in our situation possess?	What assets could we link to our programming goals?	Do we need more in-depth assessment of assets of _____? If so, how could we do this?
Asset: _____ Asset: _____ Asset: _____ Asset: _____ Asset: _____			

Assets of Associations and Organizations/Institutions—A Planning Outline

Associations and organizations bring people together for group action. They typically accumulate assets that potentially can be tapped for larger community projects. To identify these assets use the following steps:

1. Generate a list of associations for your community or county. Associations are informal, voluntary groups that bring people together to pursue shared interests. An association inventory can be started by a steering committee using their knowledge and then extended by a community forum or by reviewing local newspapers, bulletins, etc.
2. Generate a list of organizations/institutions for your community or county. An organization/institution is a formal government, private/business or non-profit organization with paid staff. To identify organizations, you can start by polling the knowledge of your steering committee and extend it by reviewing telephone or other directories.
3. Identify assets of associations and of organizations in a general way.
4. Consider possible links between the assets of these associations or organizations and your program goals.
5. Consider how accessible the assets of various associations and organizations are to your programming initiatives and how such access could be increased.
6. Decide if more in depth first-hand assessment of assets for some of these associations or organizations 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 Charitable Groups, Drives Church Groups Civic Event Groups: fair, festivals Collector Groups: stamps, flowers Elderly Groups Ethnic Associations Environment/Conservation Groups Health & Fitness Groups: jogging, diet Interest Clubs: books, recycling Local Media: commercial newspaper, radio, cable TV Men's Groups: cultural, political, social, educational, vocational Neighborhood: crime watch, block clubs, neighborhood associations. Organization Support Groups: "friends" of Outdoor Groups: garden, nature watching Political/Citizenship Parties: Democrats, Republicans, League of Women Voters School Groups: PTA, playground Service Clubs: Kiwanis, Rotary Social Cause Groups: peace, civil rights, advocacy Sports Leagues Support/Self-Help Groups: Alcoholics Anonymous, La Leche League Study Groups: literary, Bible Veteran Groups Women's Groups: cultural, political, social, civic, educational, vocational Youth Groups: 4H clubs, Scouts	Agricultural Agencies Banks Businesses Corporations Community Centers Community Development Corporations Conservation Agencies Cooperative Extension Elected Governmental Bodies Energy Utilities Fire Departments Foundations Health Departments, Clinics Hospitals Libraries Museums Newspapers Parks Police Public, Private Schools Radio/TV Recreation Agencies Social Service Agencies Trade Schools UW Centers, Universities Vocational-Technical Schools

Economic Development Assets—A Planning Outline

A central concern in many communities is the challenge of strengthening the local economy. In a healthy local economy, dollars circulate and recirculate. The benefits produced by those dollars are retained within the community. This makes local people better off and makes economic growth possible. Many elements go into local economic development including local purchasing, local hiring, new business creation, development of human productive capacity, physical resource development, local investing, local credit provision and mobilizing external resources. A key to many of these efforts is recognizing local assets that can contribute to the economy. A set of potentially useful asset mapping approaches for economic development is summarized in the table on the next page.

Asset Mapping Approaches for Economic Development

Assess Marketable Individual Capacities	Mapping Consumer Spending	Mapping Local Business Assets
<p>Purpose: To identify skills, abilities and experiences of individuals who can own businesses, work for others, consume knowledgeably, invest locally and work together in community economic building efforts</p>	<p>Purpose: To identify local spending patterns and then to better connect local vendors and people for mutual local economic benefit</p>	<p>Purpose: To find out what businesses exist in your community and determine what capacities for economic development they possess</p>
Types of Capacities	Spending Pattern Information to Collect	Types of Economic Development Capacities
<p>General Skills Formal Work Experiences Entrepreneurial Experiences Training & Educational Experiences Civic or Community-Based Experiences Domestic Experiences</p>	<p>Consumer Patronage of Small Local Businesses Consumer Proximity Expectations Consumer Assessment of Needed Businesses Consumer Interest in Business or Cooperative Start-up Consumer Spending Patterns for Items Purchased on Regular Basis Consumer Spending Patterns for Larger, Less Frequent Expenditures</p>	<p>Local Hiring Local Purchasing Local Investment Local Community Involvement</p>
Steps	Steps	Steps
<p>Define Community Boundaries Target Individuals to Include Decide Asset Mapping Method Self-completed Group administration Individual interviews, face to face or telephone Design Your Instrument Conduct Your Inventory Organize Your Findings Mobilize Capacities</p>	<p>Define Community Boundaries Design Your Survey Instrument Decide Method of Conducting Survey Mail Group Administered Door to Door Telephone Conduct Your Inventory Organize Your Findings Mobilize Consumer Expenditure Capacities Educate local businesses Educate local consumers Promote new businesses</p>	<p>Define Community Boundaries Conduct Inventory of Existing Businesses Design Your Instrument Identify Business Type, Size, etc. Decide Method for Business Inventory Library records First-hand community reconnaissance Conduct Your Inventory Identify Economic Development Capacities of Selected Businesses Design Your Instrument Decide Method Visits to businesses Mail, telephone, survey Organize Your Findings Mobilize Untapped Business Capacities Foster connections for: Job creation & training Employee volunteering Local purchasing Local investment Project sponsorship</p>

Environmental Assets—Natural and Physical Resources

Every community possesses natural and human-made physical structures and resources. Some of these resources are valuable assets when we pay attention to them. Others are potential assets if we convert their neglected or negative use into a positive use. To inventory environmental assets use 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.
 - Identify the asset entities, e.g. spaces, structures.
 - Identify their community development capacities.
7. Organize your findings.
8. Mobilize environmental assets.

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

Environmental Assets	Possible Community Development Associations
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 Educational centers, events Energy conservation Recycling

Summary

Within your community lies a rich set of resources. In most cases communities have only partially realized and tapped the potential of these resources for creating a better community. Applying the simple ideas and methods presented here can help you unleash this potential.

References:

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