CONNECTIONS

Asset Mapping

Historically, many community development workers have employed a "needs-oriented approach" or a "deficiency model" to building communities. As an unintended result, communities can wind up viewing themselves as having overwhelming problems that can only be solved by *outside* experts and *external* resources.

An alternate approach, put forth by John L. McKnight and John Kertzmann from the Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research at Northwestern University, is to develop partnerships, programs and policies based on *"the capacities, skills and assets" of the people and their local communities.*

This "capacity-based" approach is important for three reasons:

1.   Significant community development only occurs when local people are actively involved, committing themselves and their resources in the effort.

2.   The community, rather than outside institutions, is best suited to help solve the problems of its citizens.

3.   It is futile to wait for significant, long-lasting assistance to arrive from outside the community.

Development and change must begin from within, building on the resources which the community members already control, while working to acquire those additional resources that are not yet available.

Why Map Assets?

- Community Asset Mapping is the identification of resources and connections -- talents, skills, communications, and capacities -- already available in the community and not what is missing or identified as a problem.

- The primary purpose of Community Asset Mapping is to maximize access to these resources and leverage the development of additional resources.

- Asset Mapping brings together individuals, industry, nonprofits, educational systems, faith-based groups, and coordinates them around a common goal/vision.

- Other?

Identifying Local Resources & Connections

Community resources can usually fall into five categories:

1. **Individuals:** local residents, special interest groups such as youth, seniors, artists, etc. and their communication networks as well as their values.

2. **Nonprofits:** community associations and civic groups.

3. **Faith-based Groups / Institutions:** churches, synagogues, mosques, and organizations and programs through the faith community.

4. **Publicly funded institutions:** schools, hospitals, parks, community colleges, libraries, government agencies, etc.

5. **Private organizations:** small businesses, business associations, and local branches of corporations.

Critical resources from these five sources within the community can be found at three levels:

Primary Resource Building Blocks
the most accessible resources are those that are located in the community and controlled by those who are members of that community.

Secondary Resource Building Blocks
the next most accessible resources are those that are located in the community but are controlled by individuals and/or organizations outside the community.

Potential Resource Building Blocks
the least accessible resources are those that are both located and controlled outside the community.

The first and more effective step, therefore, is to identify and map both individual and organizational assets located and controlled **within** the community. Once this map is developed, the community can begin to assemble its assets into new relationships, structures, sources of control, and opportunities.

Mapping Community Assets
Asset-based Approach vs. Needs-Based Approach

Review, discuss and add other features of each model.

Asset-Based	Needs-Based
Proactive	Reactive
Focuses on existing capacity and resources	Focused on an imposed standard and deficits
Views community members as assets/contributors	Views community members as group that has activities ʌdone toᴀ them
Maximizes and recycles community resources	Minimizes community resources
Sees community as expert	Sees community as in need of external experts

Asset Mapping: Who, What, How

WHO

Individuals

- individual skills
- individual contacts and relationships
- home-based enterprises
- informal networks and communications

Clubs/Special Interest Groups

- neighborhood organizations
- citizen associations
- faith-based groups
- youth organizations

Agencies/Organizations/Institution

- police departments
- hospitals
- parks
- libraries
- financial institutions
- public schools
- private schools
- faith-based institutions
- institutions of higher education
- businesses and business associations
- industries
- nonprofit organizations

WHAT

Often an *inventory* is used to map community assets. A database or recording document can be created to identify the skills, knowledge and capacity of the community.

Categories of **Individual** Capacity Inventory

- Skills Information
- Community Interaction Information
- Business Interests and Experiences
- Personal Information

Questions for **Clubs and Special Interest Group** Inventory

- What is your current goal?
- What skills do your members bring to the table?
- Who is your target market?
- How do you reach them?
- Are you willing to get involved in maximizing the resources of your community?
- How much time can you commit to this?
- What are you unwilling to do?

Questions for **Agency/Organization/Institution** Inventory

- What are your organizational goals?
- What are your internal resources?
- Who is your market?
- How do you reach your market?
- How do you use your market as an asset?
- What is your existing mechanism for community interaction and outreach?
- Who are your partners and what are their assets?

HOW

Different communities will develop different mapping strategies. The following three questions are basic requirements for the process:

1.   What organizations/agencies/institutions will organize the mapping activity?

2.   What is the best way to engage the community in a community-wide asset mapping activity?

3.   How can the community use the asset mapping findings to maximizing existing resources, attracting new resources, and addressing social concerns?

Asset Mapping Worksheet

*Use this worksheet to record the assets you identify in your walk around the community and identify the level of each asset by placing a check mark in the corresponding column: 1 = **PRIMARY** (located and controlled from within community), 2 = **SECONDARY** (located within the community and controlled from elsewhere), 3 = **POTENTIAL (**located and controlled outside the community).*

Assets	1	2	3

Asset Mapping: Resources

Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets, by John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight. Institute of Policy of Research, Northwestern University, 1993. http://www/northwestern.edu/ipr/publications/community/intord-building.html

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