



In response to difficulties, communities can pursue two divergent paths in pursuing solutions. The first is to focus on a community's needs, deficiencies or problems. A second approach begins with a clear commitment to discovering a community's capacities and assets. Viewing a community as an endless list of problems and needs can lead to disjointed efforts at problem solving. A comprehensive asset-based approach to community development is one that will engage a broad cross section of the community members in the process of renewal.

Each community boasts a unique combination of assets upon which to build its future.

A thorough map of those assets would begin with an inventory of gifts, skills and capacities of the community's residents.

## Community Assets

- Capacities and skills of individuals (skills, training, influence, knowledge)
- Local public and private Non-Governmental Organizations and institutions
- Physical Assets (Land, buildings, equipment, vehicles, roads, water, etc.)
- Leadership skills and personal networks
- Gifts from outside donors (Private and Public)

## THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION CONSISTS OF FIVE STEPS:

1. **MAPPING THE ASSETS** of the entire community assets engages us in a process of locating and making inventories of gifts and capacities of individuals and local institutions that are present in the community. The guiding question in this process is, "What resources do we have to solve this problem ourselves?"
2. **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING** for the purpose of problem solving makes a community stronger and more self-reliant. Every time local residents are linked with others to address pressing issues it builds ties within the community. A new set of expectations begin to take root and people believe in their capacities.
3. **MOBILIZING FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFORMATION SHARING** allows communities to identify possibilities to develop the local market by connecting existing institutions and activities. What goods and services might the community export?
4. Convening the Community to **DEVELOP A VISION AND A PLAN** helps to make the hard work of community renewal sustainable. Starting from the inventory of community assets,
5. **LEVERAGING OUTSIDE RESOURCES** to support locally driven development should be pursued only after steps one through four have been accomplished. A community that has mobilized its internal assets is no longer content with receiving charity but rather offers opportunities for partnership and investment.

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