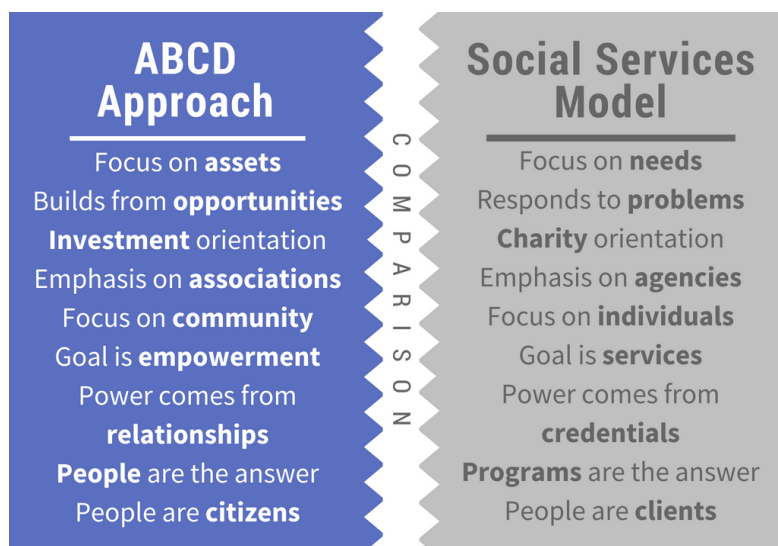


# Asset-Based Community Development

## The Fundamentals

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach to sustainable community-driven change. It insists that building and strengthening communities requires utilizing the current and potential assets of that community, rather than focusing on the needs and deficits. ABCD challenges traditional thought that assumes communities need to be fixed by outsiders. Instead, the approach considers local assets to be the primary building blocks for developing strong, sustainable communities. Residents often have the abilities and power to drive change themselves.

ABCD emphasizes linking micro-assets to the macro-environment. Using these connections, communities have the ability to drive change themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing, but often unrecognized assets. This approach requires intentional, collaborative identification of local resident skills, local association power, and local institutions support functions.



Developing, cultivating, and exploring relationships are imperative to the approach, and ABCD seeks participation and empowerment of residents throughout all stages of change. Asset-based strategies bring together and mobilize the local community through asset mapping, learning conversations, and capacity inventory processes. With localized assets driving the co-creation process sustainable change takes hold.

## Where ABCD Began

In 1988 the Asset-Based Community Development Institute was established by John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann, two colleagues at the Center for Urban Affairs at Northwestern University. The Center was an urban policy research group dedicated to social justice and urban change; the common view of neighborhoods at that time was that they were full of problems and victimized people. Like nearly all other universities, their work focused on policies that would alleviate poverty and discrimination, through government, health and social welfare agencies, and other large institutions.

McKnight and Kretzmann recognized that this academic and policy framework rarely included neighbors—fixing neighborhoods was considered a job for outsiders. McKnight and Kretzmann undertook research to make visible the multiple resources and capacities in neighborhoods. Over four years they gathered resident stories in several hundred neighborhoods answering, "What have residents in this neighborhood done together that made things better?" The answers were bountiful and pointed to the possibilities of a new, resident-centered, approach to community change.

Internationally recognized and implemented all over the world, ABCD brings together local community members to make change. Learn more about the ABCD Institute and find additional resources at [www.abcdinstitute.org](http://www.abcdinstitute.org).

## Training Highlights

ABCD trainings offer participants an interactive learning environment and practical tools to take back to their communities that include:

- Explore how ABCD approaches can enhance your work within the community.
- Strategically identify assets within your community and learn how to mobilize those assets.
- Discover how community members can be producers of the future.
- Learn practical tools that you can integrate within your projects or initiatives.

# Foundational Assets

## Community Assets

Most assets of a community can be found in one or more of the following six asset categories.



### Individuals

The first asset is the gifts of local residents, and this is the only asset that appears in every success story. Gifts are individuals. Every person has gifts to offer—skills, talents, cares, concerns, and passions. In community development you cannot build, or create change with people's needs, only their assets. ABCD values residents as citizens, as intended by the early democracies of Greece where people came together to determine and co-produce the future of their community. ABCD does not equate citizenship with paperwork or documentation.



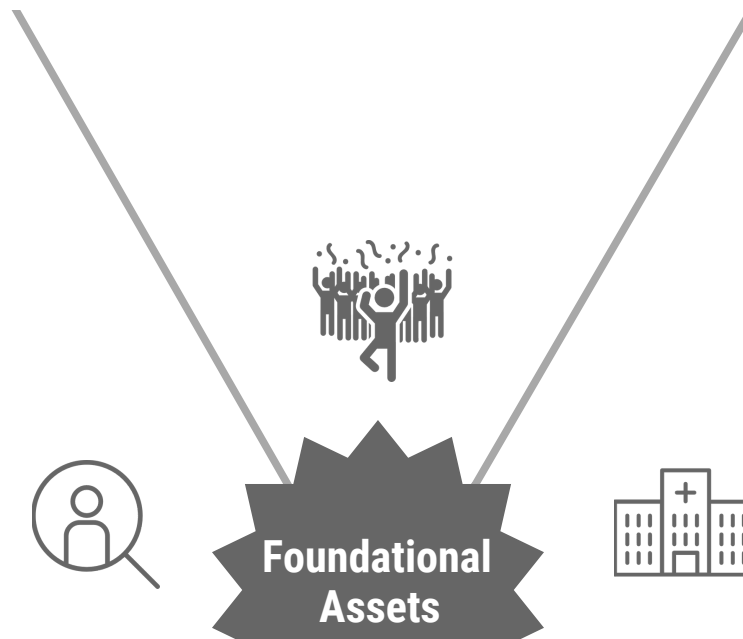
### Associations

The second asset is associations. These small informal groups of people, who gather and connect around a common interest are critical to community mobilization. While they don't control anything, they come together around common interests by their individual choice. Association power comes from the collaborative pooling and amplification of the individual gifts that people offer. Most of the work is done by unpaid members who create the vision and produce the outcomes.



### Institutions

The third asset is local institutions. There are three types of institutions: for profit, not-for-profit and governmental. Institutions are formally structured and made up of paid individuals and groups who are generally professionals with particular skills and expertise. Institutions work toward one set of repeatable goals and follow missions, rules, and procedures. Institutions often contain or have access to an abundance



# Supplemental Assets

## Community Assets

Most assets of our community can be found in one or more of the following six assets.



Physical

Physical assets are the spaces, places and things within the community. These assets include what is on and under the earth, both products of nature and humans.



Exchange

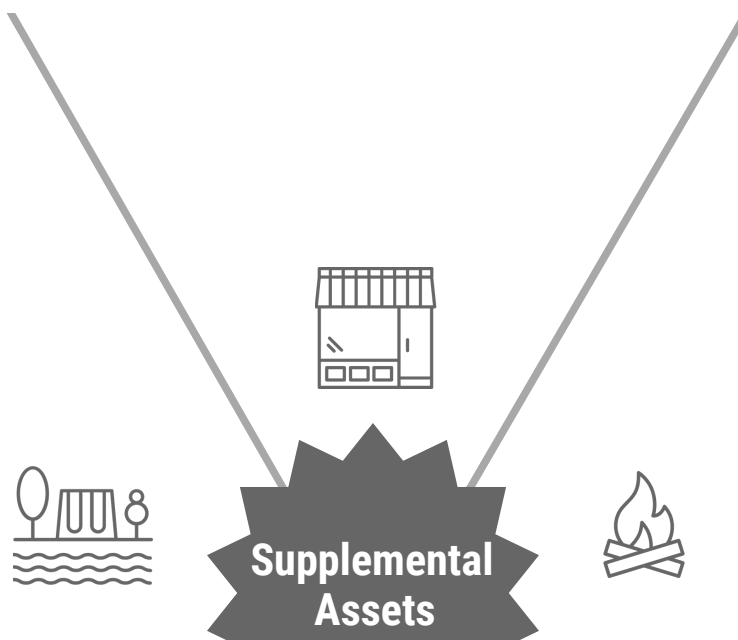
Exchange assets are the local community exchanges of gifts and productive work. Exchange assets include buying, selling, sharing, trading, and bartering. This asset is the local economy in its broadest form.



Culture

Culture assets are the practices, stories, values, traditions, and events that bring people together. These assets capture and remember when the community is or was at its best, and what is important to the people.

\*\*These categories guide identifying, exploring and connecting community assets--note that assets can fall into more than one category. How they are categorized is less important than their discovery. For example: a large business often functions more like an institution, whereas a small family-owned business might function more like an exchange asset.\*\*



# Sample Asset Map

## Community Assets

**Gifts, Skills, Capacities, Knowledge of:**  
**Youth – Older Adults – Artists – Service Recipients – People with Disabilities – Students – Parents – Entrepreneurs – Activists – Veterans**

Individuals



**Stories – Values – Events – Rituals – Food – Habits – Personal History – Stories of Resilience – Celebrations – Traditions – Heritage – Family Norms**

Culture



Exchange

**Cooperative Exchanges – Time Banking – Family Businesses – Side Hustles – Consumer Expenditures – Merchants – Community Grant Making – Institutional – Purchasing Power – Barter and Exchange – Tool Shares**

Associations



**Groups and clubs that care about:**  
**Animals – Crime Prevention – Books – Business – Charity – Education – Elderly – Environment – Family Support – Health Advocacy – Fitness – Heritage – Hobby – Men – Support – Neighborhood – Politics – Recreation – Religion – Sports – Service – Social – Unions – Veterans – Women – Youth**

Institutions



**Schools – Police & Fire Departments – Hospitals – Libraries – Social Service Agencies – Non Profits – Museums – Colleges – Corporations – Banks – Foundations**

Physical



**Gardens – Parks – Parking Lots – State Parks – Playgrounds – Parking Lots – Bike Paths – Walking Paths – Forests – Picnic Areas – Recreation – Waterway Skate Parks – Community Center**

# Asset Map

Community Assets



# Asset Map Alternative

Community Assets



# Discovering Individual Gifts

## Learning Conversations

ABCD reminds us that everyone in a community has gifts to offer and passions they care about. Community development is most impactful and sustainable when residents become involved and share their gifts, based on their passion. But how do we discover residents' gifts and passions and connect them so they can share their gifts?

## Goals

One of the most effective ways to unlock the power of the people in the neighborhood is through learning conversations. Learning conversations are purposeful conversations designed to discover a person's gifts and passions. These intentional one-on-one conversations have four goals:

Build  
Discover  
Explore  
Invite  
Connect

- Build trust. These conversations provide the opportunity to deepen existing relationships and build new ones.
- Discover gifts and passions. Everyone has something to offer and share with others.
- Explore mutual interests. As you learn more about the other person, you might realize ways to involve him or her.
- Invite engagement. When passions and gifts align or compliment our work, it's important to make the ask.
- Connect to others. Each conversation is an opportunity to be connected to others beyond the current conversation.

## Why Passions Matter

Understanding individual passions are critical because passions drive an individual's **motivations to act**. ABCD views passions as driven by concerns and hopes. Concerns include what someone is worried about or does not want to happen. Hopes include what someone is excited about or wants to see in the future. We intentionally explore passions because it directly impacts motivation.

Learning conversations help us learn what makes a person "tick." What do they care about so much they will act on it? Generally, most people are motivated by three things:

1. Hopes and dreams: What he wants to happen and sees in the future.
2. Concerns and fears: What she does not want to happen or fears will happen.
3. Gifts and talents: What she can contribute. What he can offer.



# Steps & Prompts

## Learning Conversations



## Prepare to Learn.

### 1. Set an appointment.

*This is an intentional discussion, and scheduling a time demonstrates the importance of the other person and the conversation.*

### 2. Revisit the connection.

*It's important to acknowledge the source of this meeting, it might be person referral or a follow up to an event you both attended.*

### 3. Be prepared to share.

*Learning conversations require both participants to offer honesty and engagement in the conversation. A learning conversation is not an interview to only get information about a person. It is a relationship building event.*

### 4. Stay on time.

*Be conscious to be prompt for the appointment, and end on time. If the conversation is taking longer schedule another time to meet. If the conversation ends early than planned, end the conversation.*

### 5. Record notes post meeting.

*Complete the learning conversation guide, after the meeting.*

## Know What to Ask.

### Gifts.

- What do your friends or family tell you that you're good at?
- What are your two-three favorite hobbies?
- What two gifts, talents, or skills do you have that make you a valuable family member and friend?
- What two skills make you especially good at your job?
- What talent do you have that not many people know about?
- What is something that you love to do and never get bored by?

### Passions.

- What do you care about?
- What are you concerned about?
- What do you want this community to look like in five years?
- What are your biggest concerns about what it could look like in five years?
- What should we do that you would work on?

### Issue Feedback.

- What ideas do you have about what we're working on?
- What hopes do you have for our [insert] work?
- What concerns do you have about our [insert] work?

### Associations.

- What groups or associations are you connected to?
- What groups or associations do you like?

### Possibilities.

- Which gifts or skills would you be willing to share with your community?
- Would you consider attending our next community meeting?
- What would your possible roles be?

### Connections.

- (Capture names and contact info at this stage.)
- Who else do you know we should learn more about?
- Who else can you think of who might care about this work?



# Notes

## Learning Conversations



Name:

Phone:

Email:

Occupation:

Date:

Referral:

Known Associations:

Interviewer:

---

**Gifts:**

**Passions:**

**Issue Feedback:**

**Associations:**

**Possibilities:**

**Connections:**

# Connecting Gifts

## Capacity Inventories

ABCD considers capacities to be the gifts, skills or personalized assets, of individuals. Capacity inventories supplement learning conversations, group discussion, and community asset mapping activities in identifying existing capacities that could contribute to successful community development efforts. Exploring community capacity involves asking community members questions about their gifts; responses can be collected via survey, online, or door to door canvassing.

## Goals

While the ultimate objective of sustainable asset-based community development is the unearthing of local skills and facilitation of local ownership, this does not discount the contribution of external agents. Institutions can play a valuable role in convening or supporting the identification and connection of local assets.

- Discover and reveal the gifts of the people in the community.
- Encourage and facilitate the connection of people based on their assets.
- Invite people to unleash their gifts for productive action.

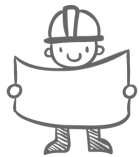


## Five Components of Capacity Inventories



### Gifts of the Head

Things I know something about and would enjoy talking about with others.



### Gifts of the Hands

Things or skills I know how to do or make and would like to share with others.



### Gifts of the Heart

Things I care deeply about. So much that it is part of who I am.



### Hopes for the Future

What I want for myself, my family and friends, and my community.



### Contact Info

Collect names and contact information for later invitations.

# Sample

## Capacity Inventory



Name:

Date:

Phone:

Phone:

Address:



### Gifts of the Head

I know about this.      I want to share this with others.      I want to learn about this.

I know about....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know about...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get excited learning more about...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get excited learning more about...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wish I knew more about...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wish I knew more about...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People have told that I know a lot about...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



### Gifts of the Hands

I can do this.      I want to share this with others.      I want to learn about this.

I know how to make, build, play, operate, or create....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how to make, build, play, operate, or create....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how to make, build, play, operate, or create....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get excited when I make, build, operate, or create...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get excited when I make, build, operate, or create...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wish I knew how to...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wish I knew how to...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People have told me that I'm good at...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Gifts of the Heart

I care about this.	I want to share this with others.	I want to learn about this.
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I deeply care about....

I deeply care about....

I'm passionate about....

I'm passionate about...



## Hopes for the Future

Things I hope for or dream about for myself...

Things I hope for or dream about for my family...

Things I hope for or dream about for my neighborhood...

Things I hope for or dream about for my communities...



**Did we miss anything?  
Please share any other  
thoughts or ideas here!**

# Starting List

## Capacity Inventories

- **TRADE SKILLS**
- Construction and repair
- Painting rooms
- House repairs
- Taking out walls
- Wall papering
- Furniture building or repairs
- Locksmith skills
- HVAC skills
- Residential electrical skills
- Building sheds
- Plumbing skills
- Insulation installation
- Masonry skills
- Drywall skills
- Welding skills
- Window installation skills
- Carpentry skills
- Roofing skills
- **HOUSEHOLD**
- Window washing
- Floor waxing or popping
- Carpet / floor cleaning
- Household cleaning
- Household organization
- Fixing leaky taps
- Mowing lawn
- Gardening
- Landscaping skills
- **HEALTH**
- Caring for seniors
- Helping people with mental health needs
- Caring for the sick
- Supporting people with disabilities
- Helping first time mothers
- Breast feeding support
- Preparing meals on special diets
- Leading group exercise
- Fashion advice
- Connecting with neighbors
- Calming others who are anxious
- **ADMINISTRATIVE**
- Coordinating schedules
- Typing
- Organizing
- Talking on the phone
- Responding to email
- Keeping track of inventory levels
- Bookkeeping
- Computer skills
- **CREATIVE**
- Website design
- Graphic design
- Content writing
- Marketing
- Blog writing
- Social media
- Fine arts
- Performing arts
- Floral design
- Catering
- Bartending
- Baking
- Cooking
- Operating commercial food equipment
- Serving / hosting others
- Mural painting
- Ceramics
- Graffiti art
- **TRANSPORTATION**
- Driving cars
- Driving vans
- Driving buses
- Driving tractor trailer
- CDL license
- Delivery driver
- Driving hilo
- Repairing vehicles
- **EARLY CHILDHOOD**
- Caring for infants
- Caring for toddlers
- Caring for 3-4 year olds
- Teaching preschool
- Supervising staff
- **EQUIPMENT**
- Operating equipment
- Machinery repair
- Electronics repair
- Computer repair
- Small appliance repair
- Kitchen appliance repair
- Washer/dryer repair
- **MUSIC**
- Music skills
- Voice skills
- Playing an instrument
- Currently in a band
- Instrument teacher
- Music DJ
- **SALES**
- Cash register
- Selling products
- Selling services
- Door to door selling
- **COMMUNITY**
- Boy/Girl Scouts leader
- Fundraising experience
- School volunteer
- Sports coach
- Party planner
- Community garden coordinator
- Block parties
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- 



# Asset Wheel

Community Assets

