

What is Asset-Based Community Development?

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is “a strategy for sustainable community-driven development.”¹ ABCD relies on the premise that community development is driven by the existing gifts of the community, which are often hidden and need to be uncovered. ABCD builds on the assets already found in the community and mobilizes people to come together to build on their gifts. Once the assets are identified, the second power of Asset Based Community Development becomes apparent: community networks emerge that help to drive the community development process and leverage additional assets.

What are the guiding principles of ABCD?

1. Everyone in a community has something to offer. There is no one we don’t need.
2. Everyone has gifts! People can and want to contribute.
3. Asking questions is more powerful than giving answers. Invite communities to address questions and find their answer.
4. Relationships build a community. An intentional effort to build and nourish relationships is the core of ABCD and all community building.
5. Institutions (Non-profits, Government, etc...) can not be successful without engaging the rest of the community in solutions.

What is an “asset”?

Assets (used interchangeably with gifts) are a foundational piece of community building. We gain more leverage when we focus on the gifts we bring and seek ways to capitalize on them. An asset can be identified by using the following guidelines:

1. Direct “influence is critical. Meaning if the asset is not yours to give, it should not be shared.
2. It must be “actionable.” Be clear on how the asset will be utilized.
3. Each participant must decide to share an asset.

How can Assets be organized?

Assets can be organized in many different ways. The following comes from the “Strategic Doing²” team:

1. *Physical & Natural* include things like buildings, parks, meeting spaces, natural resources, nutrition, and water.
2. *Skills & Knowledge* can depend on the context. A few possibilities include writing, design, public speaking, data analysis, lived experience, etc...
3. *Social Gifts* are individuals or groups of people with whom someone in your network is personally acquainted. These social gifts can be used to build capacity or offer other assets to your network.
4. *Capital Assets* are monetary and include grants, donations, and “in-kind” donations (like donated ad space or editorial space.)

¹<https://resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/resources/Documents/WhatIsAssetBasedCommunityDevelopment.pdf>

² <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Strategic+Doing:+Ten+Skills+for+Agile+Leadership-p-9781119578666>