

FROM THE GROUND UP | READINESS TOOL TO BUILD (NOT PROGRAM) COMMUNITY CONNECTORS

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WHY THIS TOOL

This readiness tool that was created by and for members of organizations and government looking to build community connectors in an authentic, ABCD-aligned way. It offers reflection questions, readiness prompts, and guiding principles to help you determine whether your organization is prepared to build natural community connectors without turning that work into a program.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Have you ever thought about whose role it is to build a community or to address the issues that arise? Is it the government, or maybe social service programs? Is it groups and associations?

Often, we are looking for a “superhero” who will come in and fix community problems. However, it’s the people in the community who best know and understand the solutions to the problem. Each person, association, and organization has gifts, skills, and knowledge, and it’s when these are brought together and organized that big changes can happen.

When an organization 'creates a program' to find connectors, it often:

- Turns something organic into a deliverable
- Builds dependency on staff or funding
- Misses the subtle gifts of natural connectors
- Starts with a focus on the needs of the community
- Prioritizes outcomes over relationships

WHY ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is about recognizing that people have important work to do: they have a purpose and function within their community. These functions can only happen when we uncover the assets that are discovered and activated by “natural connectors”.

These natural connectors create a catalog of potential actions that contribute and support people’s functions and ultimately improve their health and well-being. Connectors don’t have to – and don’t necessarily – know it all, but they do ‘know the people who know the people’ (and the services) to reach a desired solution.

This tool helps organizations and institutions understand, identify, and support natural connectors without formalizing or professionalizing their work, keeping the heart of ABCD at the centre.

Organizations can support without programming by:

- Observing before acting: Taking time to notice who is already connecting others
- Building relationships: Growing trust through genuine connection, not structured roles
- Creating space, not structure: Letting community leadership emerge naturally
- Resourcing lightly: Championing small supports can have big impacts
- Amplifying, not directing: Lifting up what is already working

ABCD READINESS ASSESSMENT

Ask yourself and your team: are we ready to work in an ABCD way?

Y/N	Are you willing to...	Way of working
	Start with gifts	Focusing on assets and strengths as the true building blocks of healthy communities
	Nurture community-led action	Supporting people to act together. This will demonstrate their own power and leadership to bring about positive change
	Lead by stepping back	Creating space for residents to make decisions and lead
	Build relationships for mutual support	Recognizing that relationships are the core of flourishing communities
	Work for equity and justice	Identifying and supporting people to use their gifts and assets to create change
	Include everyone	Focusing on who is missing. Instead of inviting people to the table, build a new table that creates belonging and inclusivity
	Value small	Honouring small, grassroots, resident-driven action. Using stories for learning, sharing, and inspiring change
	Believe in possibility	Starting with hope and focusing on what is possible. Using peoples' gifts to imagine ways to create change
	Give the time and resources to complete it	This work moves at the speed of relationships. Allocating time and resources to sustain the work

If you answer “no” to more than three areas, pause and reflect. Is this truly the right approach for your organization right now? Spend time working through your challenges and building support so that you can move forward. Don't move forward until you are ready.

The goal of ABCD is to enhance collective citizen visioning and action through a process that organizes people to identify assets that are connected to fulfill the functions (solutions) for community change. Below is a reflection worksheet to help organization get ready for ABCD.



PAUSE AND REFLECTION WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet with your team or partners to assess readiness and purpose. Take time to reflect deeply because the “why” will shape how you show up in community.

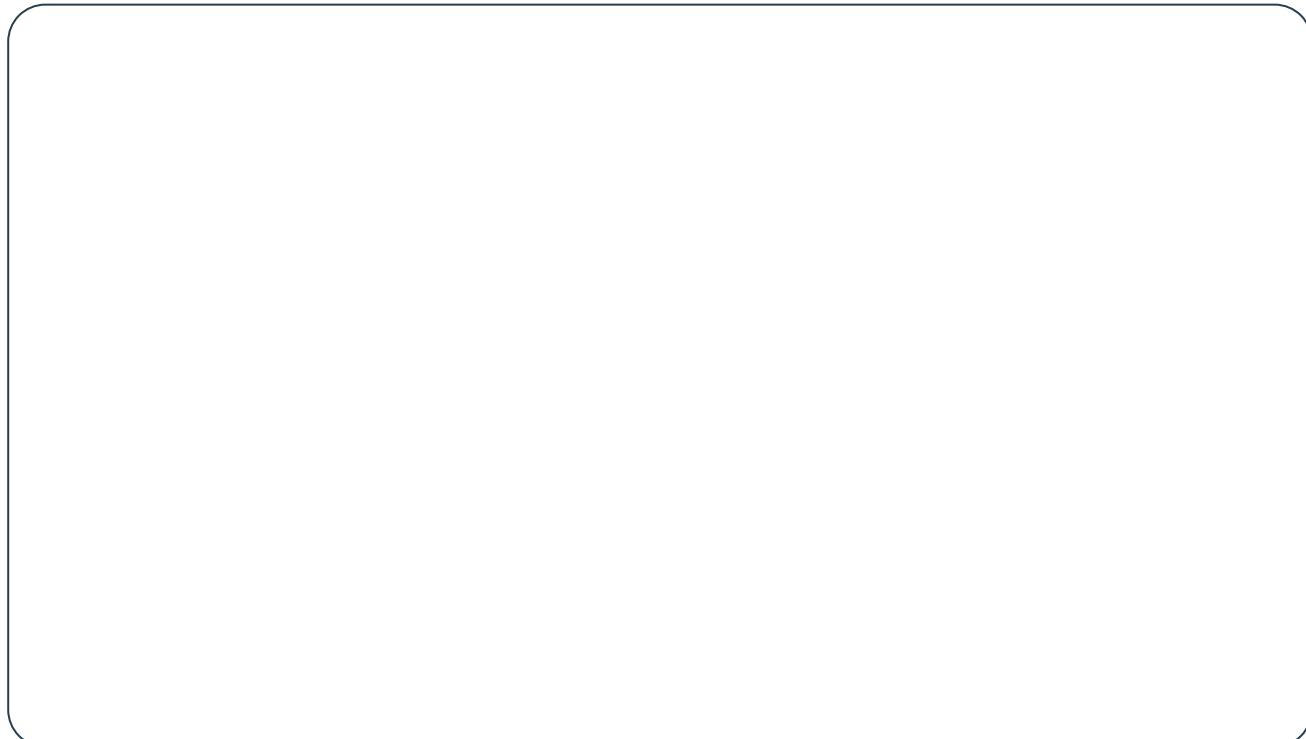
Reflection questions:

- What is your purpose and urgency for this work?
- What will bring people together to create change?
- What is your current relationship to the community and why?

You might want to:

- Help the community stay informed
- Gather feedback on your organization’s work
- Seek community perspectives on problems
- Encourage residents to work together on shared challenges
- Bring people together to plan, implement, and evaluate community action

Reflection: What is your purpose?

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for participants to write their responses to the reflection question.

REFLECT ON THE ROLE OF CONNECTORS

- What roles will the connectors play in your community work?
- How will you recognize and honour their natural contributions?
- What will it look like to step back and let community leadership emerge?

This table is from the community engagement spectrum. It shows how community can be involved.

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Helping the community to know what is happening	Getting feedback from the community on your work	Helping with problems, and getting community ideas	Supporting the community to work together and solve the problem	Bringing the community together to plan, implement and evaluate action

Reflection

READINESS AND CAPACITY

This is going to move at the speed of trust and relies on consistent relationship, resources, and capacity. Ask yourself and your team:

Questions	Reflections
Do you have the time to do this well?	
Do you have the resources and supports to asset map?	
Is leadership committed to working in an ABCD way?	
What internal policies and procedures support and/or hinder this work?	

FINAL REFLECTION: WHAT IS YOUR WAY?

Take time to reflect deeply and understand that the 'why' will help shape 'how' you show up in community. Supporting connectors is not about creating new roles; it is about seeing, trusting, and resourcing the existing strengths within community life.

This tool is a shared contribution to community building practice by the BC Centre for Palliative Care and the Tamarack Institute, rooted in the belief that communities thrive when people connect, contribute, and care together.