TOOL | ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AT A GLANCE

WHAT IS ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?

“Asset Based Community Development” or ABCD looks for and starts from people’s gifts and strengths (assets). These assets equip people to create local opportunities and respond to needs and challenges in their neighbourhoods. ABCD goes beyond any individual’s gifts or particular group’s strengths to consider how these may come together to create broader changes for the common good within a community.

Where a deficit-based approach starts by identifying needs, asset-based community development identifies and builds upon community strengths. ABCD empowers individuals and groups to come together, with institutions in support when required, to develop their strengths, working together to build on the identified assets of all involved!
VALUES BEHIND ABCD

- **Starts with Gifts:** *Assets and Strengths, not deficits and needs*
- **Nurture Community Led Action:** When people in a community act together, they demonstrate their own power and leadership and can bring about positive change.
- **Build Relationships for Mutual Support:** ABCD believes that relationships are the core of flourishing communities.
- **Include Everyone:** ABCD does not just invite people to the table but builds a new table where everyone has a true place.
- **Lead by Stepping Back:** ABCD shines a light on residents' power to contribute to and make decisions in their communities.
- **Value Small:** ABCD values small, grassroots, resident-driven approaches that use stories as the basis for learning, sharing and acting for change.
- **Believe in Possibility:** ABCD is rooted in hope. People in communities, even in extreme situations, can use their gifts to imagine ways to create change.

HOW IS ABCD DIFFERENT FROM OTHER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT METHODS?

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<tr>
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<th>Deficit Based</th>
<th>Asset-Based</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Changing community through increased services</td>
<td>Changing community through citizen involvement</td>
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<td><strong>Accountability</strong></td>
<td>Leaders are professionals and staff, accountable to institutional stakeholders</td>
<td>Leaders are widening circles of volunteer citizens who are accountable to the community</td>
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<td><strong>Role of Assets</strong></td>
<td>Assets are system inputs. Asset mapping is data collection.</td>
<td>Assets are relationships to be discovered and connected. Asset-mapping is self-realization and leadership development.</td>
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<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td>Money is the key resource. Falls apart without money.</td>
<td>Relationships are the key resource. Falls apart when money becomes the focus.</td>
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<td><strong>Operating Challenge</strong></td>
<td>How do we get people involved?</td>
<td>How do we channel and build on people participation?</td>
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<td><strong>System Dynamic</strong></td>
<td>Tends to spread itself thinner over time.</td>
<td>Tends to gain momentum over time.</td>
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<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Success is service outcomes, measured mostly by institutional stakeholders.</td>
<td>Success is capacity, measured mostly by relationships.</td>
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*Source: Dan Duncan, ABCD Institute Faculty*
WHY IS ABCD THE RIGHT CHOICE IN TODAY’S WORLD?

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<td>![Image] provided to community <em>(People as recipients)</em></td>
<td>![Image] provided for the community <em>(People as information source)</em></td>
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<td><em>Role: “Gapper”</em></td>
<td><em>Role: “Animator”</em></td>
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<td>![Image] provided with the community <em>(People as Advisors)</em></td>
<td>![Image] provided by the community <em>(ABCD)</em></td>
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THE ABCD JOURNEY

1. Connectors
Connectors are those people in our communities who discover people, assets, and weave them together to perform functions in their communities. Assets are the resources that we have ourselves to fulfill the nine functions of a community.

2. Collecting Assets
Gaining the knowledge of assets is often done through a process called asset mapping. The asset mapping process is usually led and conducted by the residents that call the community home.

   - Individual Gifts
   - Groups & Clubs
   - Organizations
   - Exchanges
   - Land & Place
   - Cultures & Stories

3. Connecting Assets
Once assets are collected it’s important to connect them. Find the people who like the same things, people who have skills to teach, and others who want to learn things and connect them together. There are five ways to connect assets:

   - Matching one-to-one
   - Matching a person to a group of same interests
   - Identifying people to do events/activities
   - Matching different gifts that reinforce each other
   - Identifying new connectors

4. Weaving Assets
Weaving is about connecting the assets to fulfill the core functions of a community. This results in a community feeling empowered, where more people are included, where more people feel autonomy, more ability to act, and it results in activities that are more sustainable.

   - What can we achieve by using our own assets?
   - What can we achieve with our own assets plus some outside help?
   - What can’t we do with our assets alone that must be done by an external group (gov, org, business)?

When these four elements are features of your community-building effort, it can be said to be an Asset-Based Community Development process. To dive deeper into these four elements, see: *The Four Essential Elements of an ABCD Process*