

Building on Community Strengths using ABCD Tools

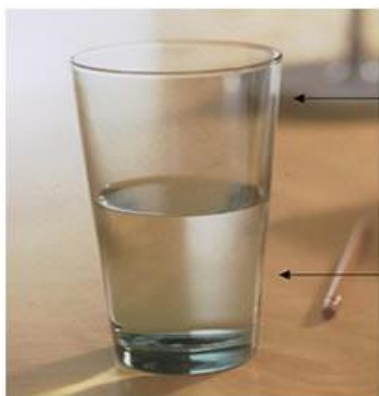
An introduction to Asset Based Community Development

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Workbook

Contents:



Communities
have
deficiencies
and needs.

Communities
and citizens
have capacities
and assets.

The training provides an introduction to Asset Based Community Development as a perspective that builds on capacities rather than on needs to support long-term change at the local level.

The course:

- (1) introduces asset-based approaches – how to recognise local gifts, capacities, skills, knowledge and human connections
- (2) outlines some ABCD tools, generating ideas on putting them into practice
- (3) defines ‘connectors’ and ‘gappers’
- (4) explains how you can become part of the ABCD community.

At the end of the course you will be equipped with ABCD-informed ways of supporting local groups and organisations and building sustainable, resilient and healthy communities.

Suggested tool to start an event: ask individuals in a group to share:

- ✓ one gift of the head ('what you know')
- ✓ one of the heart ('what you are passionate about')
- ✓ one of the hands ('what you can do and can teach someone else to do')
- ✓ one human connection ('who are you connected to and how?')

Remember three questions:

- ✓ What can people/communities do *for themselves*?
- ✓ What could they do if they had some help?
- ✓ What do they really need someone else to do?

12 Guiding Principles for ABCD

(Source: <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/>, 'What is Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)', n.d.)

Most communities address social and economic problems with only a small amount of their total capacity. Much of the community capacity is not used and is needed! This is the challenge and opportunity of community engagement. Everyone in a community has something to offer. There is no one we don't need.

Everyone Has Gifts with rare exception; people can contribute and want to contribute. Gifts must be discovered.

Relationships Build a Community: See them, make them, and utilize them. An intentional effort to build and nourish relationships is the core of ABCD and of all community building.

Citizens at the Centre: It is essential to engage the wider community as actors (citizens) not just as recipients of services (clients).

Leaders Involve Others as Active Members of the Community. Leaders from the wider community of voluntary associations, congregations, neighbourhoods, and local business, can engage others from their sector. This "following" is based on trust, influence, and relationship.

People Care About Something. Agencies and neighbourhood groups often complain about apathy. Apathy is a sign of bad listening. People in communities are motivated to act. The challenge is to discover what their motivation is.

Motivation to Act must be identified. People act on certain themes they feel strongly about, such as; concerns to address, dreams to realize, and personal talents to contribute. Every community is filled with invisible "motivation for action". Listen for it.

Listening Conversation – one-on-one dialogue or small group conversations are ways of discovering motivation and invite participation. Forms, surveys and asset maps can be useful to guide intentional listening and relationship building.

Ask, Ask, Ask – asking and inviting are key community-building actions. "Join us. We need you." This is the song of community.

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Asking Questions Rather Than Giving Answers Invites Stronger Participation. People in communities are usually asked to follow outside expert's answers for their community problems. A more powerful way to engage people is to invite communities to address 'questions' and finding their own answer-- with agencies following up to help.

A Citizen-Centered "Inside-Out" Organization is the Key to Community Engagement. A "citizen-centered" organization is one where local people control the organization and set the organization's agenda.

Institutions Have Reached Their Limits in Problem-Solving: All institutions such as government, non-profits, and businesses are stretched thin in their ability to solve community problems. They cannot be successful without engaging the rest of the community in solutions.

Institutions as Servants: People are better than programs in engaging the wider community. Leaders in institutions have an essential role in community-building as they lead by "stepping back," creating opportunities for citizenship, care, and real democracy.

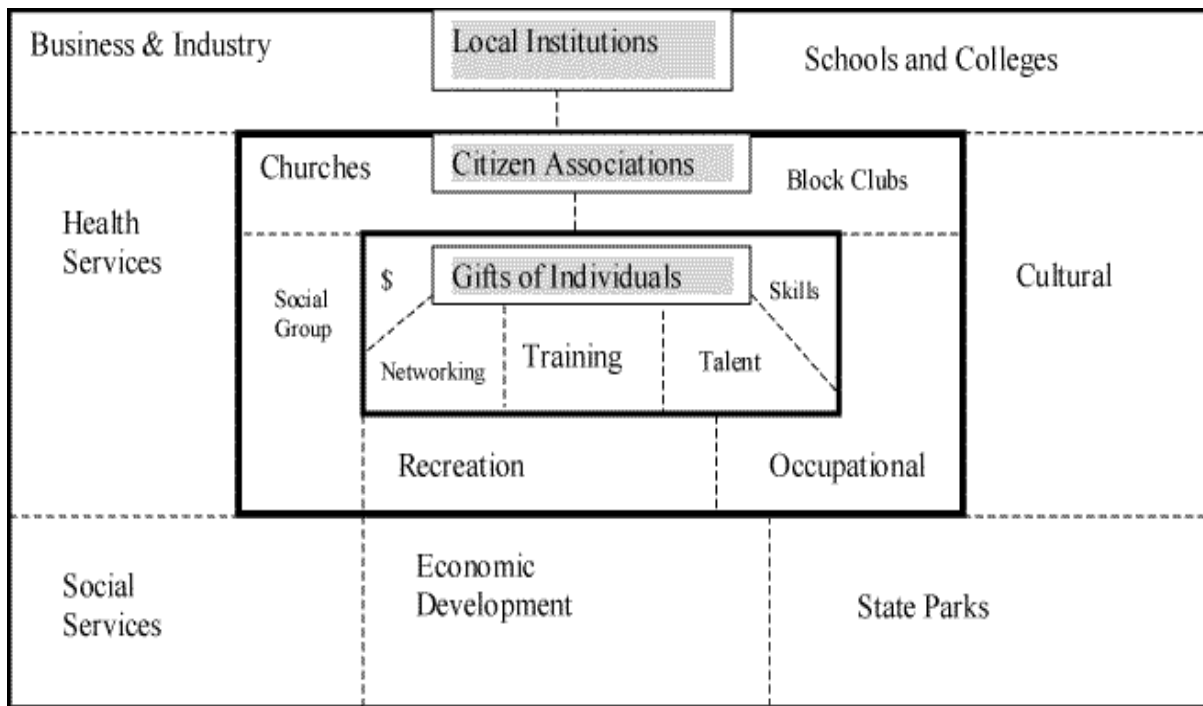


Image taken from: Kretzmann & McKnight (1993) *Building Communities from the Inside Out*

Five Key Assets in ABCD

(Source: <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/>, 'What is Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)', n.d.)

Communities can no longer be thought of as complex masses of needs and problems, but rather diverse and potent webs of gifts and assets. Each community has a unique set of skills and capacities to channel for community development. ABCD categorizes asset inventories into five groups:

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Individuals: At the centre of ABCD are residents of the community that have gifts and skills. Everyone has assets and gifts. Individual gifts and assets need to be recognized and identified. In community development you cannot do anything with people's needs, only their assets. Deficits or needs are only useful to institutions.

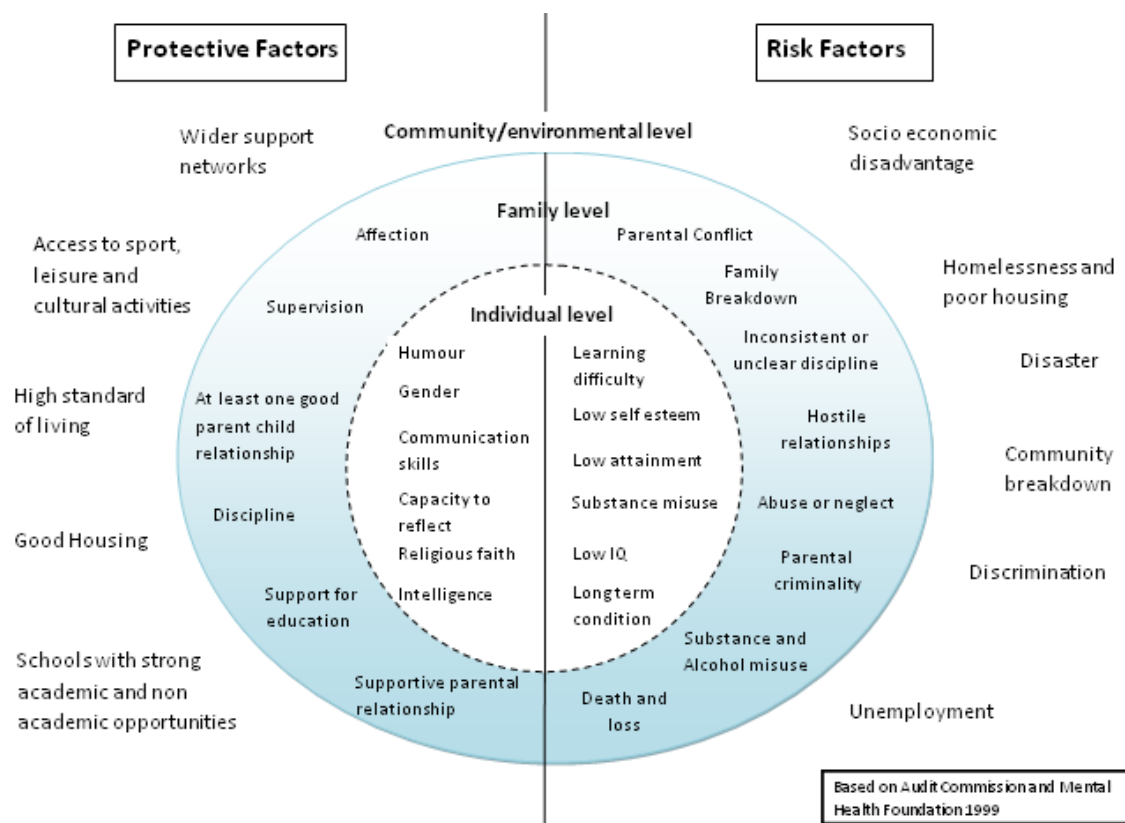
Associations: Small informal groups of people, such as clubs, working with a common interest as volunteers are called associations in ABCD and are critical to community mobilization. They don't control anything; they are just coming together around a common interest by their individual choice.

Institutions: Paid groups of people who generally are professionals who are structurally organized are called institutions. They include government agencies and private business, as well as schools, etc. They can all be valuable resources. The assets of these institutions help the community capture valuable resources and establish a sense of civic responsibility.

Physical Assets: Physical assets such as land, buildings, space, and funds are other assets that can be used.

Connections: There must be an exchange between people sharing their assets by bartering, etc. These connections are made by people who are connectors. It takes time to find out about individuals; this is normally done through building relationships with individual by individual.

What makes a healthy, happy individual?



Asset mapping and research

Why are you asking?

- What do you intend to do with the data?
- What do you hope it will achieve?
- How will it benefit the community/organisation?

Tip: think about what you will be doing with the data:

- ✓ Making links and connections
- ✓ Supporting collaboration
- ✓ Making better use of resources
- ✓ Providing opportunities around identified motivations
- ✓ Community exchange
- ✓ Showcasing the strengths of the community

! *Remember: don't asset map for asset-mapping sake*

What to ask? (Useful questions)

- 'What are your strengths and are you willing to share them?'
- 'What are you sufficiently motivated about that you will act upon?'
- 'What connections do you have or can you make to help what we are trying to achieve?'

How to ask?

- Door-to-door survey
- Events and meetings
- Online and social media
- Mail out
- Telephone

When to ask? Where to ask?

- ✓ Plan times around the community

- ✓ Creative use of space: think about your audience

Can information be gathered and owned by the community?

How to connect with the ABCD community?

- ✓ ABCD in Action <http://abcdinaction.org/> (*click and join the community*)
- ✓ The ABCD Institute, School of Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University, <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/>
- ✓ Nurture Development supports communities to “reduce institutionalisation and increase interdependency in community life”
<http://www.nurturedevelopment.org/abcd-institute/>

Items to read:

Kretzmann & McKnight (1993) *Building Communities from the Inside Out*

Cormac Russell (2015) *Asset Based Community Development (ABCD): Looking Back to Look Forward*: In conversation with John McKnight about the intellectual and practical heritage of ABCD and its place in the world today. (e-book), Kindle Edition

‘Working in the Gap’, Deb Wisniewski, Tom Mosgaller, Dan Duncan
March 24, 2015 at <http://www.abundantcommunity.com>

WLCVS website for ABCD resources <http://www.wlcvs.org/asset-based-community-development/>

Short films (from the ABCD Festival June 2015, Kirkham)

- ❖ John McKnight ‘What I Have Learned So Far’:

<https://youtu.be/evrrdDhOphw>

- ❖ John and the ‘The Worm Story’:

<https://youtu.be/veRV9bNSJaE>

- ❖ Cormac Russell, ‘Looking Inside Out: Our Way is the Community Way’:

<https://youtu.be/ti3u-eSmt6k>

- ❖ Peter Kenyon, ‘Rural Development around the World, through the lens of ABCD’:

<https://youtu.be/nUKGx4ORqOk>

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