



Pathways for Addressing Social Needs: Mapping Community Assets

Steps to Identify and Map the Resources in the
Community





Overview

- When one is trying to assess the needs that exist in the community, it is also important to identify what assets or resources also exist.
- By identifying community resources, one is able to use these assets to help address some of the needs that currently exist.
- A community asset (or community resource, a very similar term) is anything that can be used to improve the quality of community life.¹
- Examples of community assets include individuals (such as community stakeholders and residents), physical assets (such as community buildings, libraries, parks, etc.), community services, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, faith-based organizations, local businesses, government partners, health care organizations, and natural resources.



Approaches to Doing Asset Mapping

- There are three possible approaches to doing asset mapping that include the whole assets approach, the storytelling approach, and the heritage approach. ²
 - The **whole assets approach** factors in all of the resources that are part of the community and is a comprehensive way of trying to identify all the key assets of an area.
 - The **storytelling approach** makes use of stories where the group is able to discuss the resources that exist in the community and how it benefits when they join together.
 - The **heritage approach** is more visual and produces a picture (such as a map, drawings, or diagrams) that identifies the resources that make the community special.



Steps in Identifying Community Assets

1. Clearly define the community based on geographic or other criteria.
2. Decide how you are going to utilize and share the information collected on the community.
3. Understand what assets or resources you are trying to identify through the assessment.
4. Determine if an asset or resource assessment of the area has already been completed and review what information was collected.
5. Create a plan to conduct your assessment including the methods you will use, who will be responsible for collecting and data, and the timeframe for when you need the information.



Steps in Identifying Community Assets

6. Gather information on the community assets/resources including opportunities that exist with the assets, threats that could hinder or reduce the assets, support that exists for the assets, and sustainability of the assets.
7. Visually display the assets/resources, such as using a map or other diagram, to show the assets and how some are connected.
8. Evaluate the results of your work and try to update the information as assets/resources change or new ones are present in the community.

Steps in Mapping Community Assets



- Determine how the community is defined and identify its boundaries.
 - Include members of the partnership and residents from the community in defining the boundaries of the community.
- Bring people together to create the asset map, including those with the knowledge and expertise in doing mapping (i.e. university partners).
- Decide on which assets will be included in the mapping project.
- Identify the assets of organizations/groups to include on the map.
 - Include key information such as the address/phone/email, key contact, type of organization (e.g. public vs. private), hours of operation, key services/programs provided, and the populations served.



Steps in Mapping Community Assets

- Determine if you will include individuals on the asset maps and what key resources they offer to the community.
 - Key community stakeholders may include individuals who have influence in the community or have knowledge and familiarity with the defined area.
 - Information to track on individuals may include their name, key contact information, their position/role in the community, and key resources/benefits they bring to the community.
- Visually map the resource information compiled utilizing mapping software to provide a graphical/visual representation of the community's assets.
 - Some free online mapping tools include <https://mapline.com> , <https://www.google.com/maps/d/?hl=en> , and <https://www.digitalinclusion.org/asset-mapping/>



Benefits of Doing Community Asset Mapping

- Asset mapping is reframing towards a fresh perspective moving away from ‘what is wrong’ to the identification of opportunities and strengths.³
 - This approach does not only focus on needs or issues, but uses a positive approach that focuses on the possibilities that exist within the community.
- Asset mapping allows the group to build a common agenda that begins to build trust among participants and develops broader thinking in the community on partnerships to achieve the goals.
- Identifying community assets helps to focus on what residents know, what actions they can take, and what is important to them.
 - Asset recognition done well will be undertaken and owned by community members and should take into account the community context.”



Benefits of Doing Community Asset Mapping

- Asset mapping helps to build and strengthen relationships and make connections that allow communities to begin to mobilize resources.
 - As relationships are developed and resources are mobilized, communities can celebrate the achievements they have made.
- Once assets are identified, they can be mobilized, connected, and used to positively benefit the community.



Challenges of Doing Asset Mapping

- Sometimes collecting data on community assets may be challenging and using the right mapping tools can be difficult.
 - If proprietary mapping software is being used, it can be expensive to acquire.
- If the community assets being identified don't have a physical address, then it will be challenging to try and map them.
- In order to maintain an updated list of community resources/assets, ongoing community collaboration and support will be needed.



Conclusion

- Identifying community assets or resources in an important exercise when focusing on the unmet needs of a defined area.
 - Identification of a community's assets helps to match the resources available to key needs that require attention.
- This document provides a resource to identify the main approaches to doing community asset mapping; the steps involved in identifying community assets; how one goes about mapping community assets; and the benefits and challenges of doing asset mapping.
- Online resources are provided for further guidance and assistance in identifying community resources and mapping the assets..



Online Resources on Community Asset Mapping

- Here are some online resources to assist with community resource/asset mapping.
 - UCLA Center for Health Policy Research
https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/2023-08/democ_data_assetmap.pdf
 - National Digital Inclusion Alliance
<https://www.digitalinclusion.org/asset-mapping/>
 - HealthyCity a program of the Advancement Project
<https://communityscience.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AssetMappingToolkit.pdf>



Reference Notes

¹ Bill Berkowitz and Eric Wadud, *Community Tool Box*, Chapter 3, Section 8, “Identifying Community Assets and Resources” (Kansas: University of Kansas, 2024), [Chapter 3. Assessing Community Needs and Resources | Section 8. Identifying Community Assets and Resources | Main Section | Community Tool Box \(ku.edu\)](#) (accessed September 16, 2024).

² National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, *Community Asset Mapping: Meeting Engagement Tool* (Washington D.C. U.S. Department of Commerce – Office for Coastal Management, 2018), <https://coast.noaa.gov/data/digitalcoast/pdf/met-activities-community.pdf> (accessed September 16, 2024).

³ Foot, Jane and Hopkins, Trevor, *A Glass Half Full: How an Asset Approach can Improve Community Health and Wellbeing* (London: IDeA, 2010), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10024477/#CIT0011> (accessed October 5, 2024).

⁴ Kretzmann, John and McKnight, John, “Assets-based Community Development,” *National Civic Review*, no. 85 (1986): 23-29.