

Maximizing the Assets of a Diverse Community

Every community is made up of many components, two of these being the needs a community may have and the assets needed to address those needs.



The needs of a given community are typically identified through needs assessments. Extension educators then take the information gained from the needs assessments, prioritize, and then build programs to address these key needs. However, when building these programs, it is important to not only look at the needs of a diverse community, but also the assets. Assets are defined as the strengths, skills talents, and capabilities within a community that can be utilized to enhance the quality of life in the community.

Every community has individuals and organizations with talents and abilities. Good Extension programming connects the abilities and talents found within the community. Connecting these abilities and talents can make Utah communities better off. Let's start thinking about some of the assets found in our diverse county/community.



Asset mapping focuses on identifying, recording, and charting the skills, talents, interests, and resources already present in a community. Asset mapping helps build on the positive resources already established in a community. How can we identify these assets in our community?

We can identify these assets through conversations with individuals, using surveys, or in group discussions.

Do you/we have a formal asset map for this community? If not, what might this asset map look like? An asset map identifies three types of assets found in our community: *Individual, community organizations, and formal institutions.*



Assessing Individual Assets

Individual asset assessment is based on the premises that (1) everyone has talents, skills, and gifts relevant to community activities; (2) each time a person uses his/her talents the community is stronger and the person is more empowered; (3) strong communities value and use the skills that members possess; and (4) following this approach contributes to the development of the community.



Let's consider developing an *individual asset map* for an Extension Advisory council in your county. Identify the council to be used. [FCS, 4-H, Horticultural, Agricultural Councils, etc]

Consider identifying and listing: [see- Individual Asset Form]

- Knowledge and abilities of each individual member based on a specific community/program need
- Community activities and skills the individual has participated in
- Enterprising interests/ experiences that could be used to launch a small business, or trade/vocational skills

How can these individual assets be utilized to further meet the needs of this community or program? Will the individual be willing to share their talents identified by this process? How can you engage them to strengthen the community from within? Will the diversity found in this council assist Extension in developing programs to meet the needs of the larger community?



Assessing Community Organization Assets

When used with community associations, groups, and organizations, the asset assessment is based on the idea that every community has people who work together to pursue common goals. These groups may be formal or informal, and usually function by carrying out three key roles:

- deciding to address an issue/problem of common interest;
- developing a plan (formal or informal) to address the issue; and,
 - carrying out the plan to resolve the problem.



Select one community organization, group, or association and identify the key assets of this organization. How might these assets help the Extension organization to address and meet the needs of a diverse community?

[see -Assessing Community Organizations Asset Form]



Assessing Formal Institution Assets

Formal institutions, whether public, private and not-for-profit, carry out their activities to meet basic social needs of the community at large. To assess the assets of formal institutions follow these five steps:

1. Recognize that the local institutions represent important assets to the community.
2. Perform an inventory of existing institutions in the community.
3. Identify their activities.

4. Explore the links that can be built between institutions, individuals, and information organizations.
 5. Seek the assistance of these organizations as conduits to reach for resources beyond the local community.
[see -Assessing Formal Institutions Asset Form]
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What are some ways that formal institutions can help the at large community meet needs?
[*through purchasing locally, hiring locally, training local residents, developing human resources, sharing meeting space, mobilizing resources and sharing resources*]



It is imperative that Extension develop programs that meet the needs of a diverse community. Fortunately, every community has assets as well as needs and implementing these assets into Extension programs can help create greater success for these programs. Look at how these assets can work together. By reviewing community assets, we may discover new ways for people and groups to work together and gain a greater understanding of why some groups have been unable to work together in the past. Bringing community assets together aids in solving community problems, meeting community needs, and helps insure *all reasonable effort* in working with diverse communities.