



Overview

THEME	TIME	MATERIALS	SETUP
 US	45 MINUTES	HANDOUT, PAPER	 FLEXIBLE

Topic: Deliberately using an asset-based approach as a strategy for change.

Audience: Adolescents or adults getting to know each other or preparing to embark on shared work or action.

Conceptual Objective: Participants will understand that we all have both strengths and areas for improvement. Treating others with a focus on their assets is not blindly optimistic, but rather an effective organizing strategy. Everything that has ever been accomplished has been done by imperfect people who chose to build on their strengths.

Experiential Objective: Participants will experience the impact of asset or deficit framing on the way they perceive and treat others, themselves, and situations. They will become more familiar with their own and others' assets.

Facilitator Prep: Consider your assets and deficits and be prepared to share one or two of each. The group is most likely to engage in the activity if the facilitator makes themselves somewhat vulnerable by self-disclosing a genuine deficit. Highlighting the varied types of assets and deficits through your examples is also helpful.

Related Content: This activity is a good warm up and framing for a longer day of shared work. For example, it could be followed by the Action Star Framework and/or Social Change Wheel workshops.

Materials: Handout, poster paper, and sticky notes or index cards.

Procedure

OPENING (1 MIN)

- There are many ways we could introduce this group. In many meetings it is typical to provide our names and titles. Today we'll talk about ourselves another way. We all have both strengths and areas for improvement. How we choose to present ourselves — and how we choose to view others — matters a lot.

INTRODUCING OUR ASSETS AND DEFICITS (10 MIN)

- Ask participants to generate a list of their assets or strengths. Assets include skills, knowledge, relationships, networks, passions and interests, whether usually considered professional or not. Offer one of your own to start, then write a list the group generates (popcorn style sharing or round robin can work). You can make encouraging comments (e.g., calling them modest if they're quiet, noting the types of assets they're sharing and inviting others, acknowledging that boundaries are blurry — persistence could also be seen as stubbornness).
- Next ask the group to generate a list of their deficits/areas for improvement. Again, start by offering one of your own. Write the list as they generate it, and reflect back on what they're sharing, especially those deficits that could be reframed as assets (e.g., someone bad at visioning might be great at getting things done). If people are slow to speak, invite them to share strengths they appreciate in others and don't have themselves.
- Say: if someone walked in the room, I could say this group is (read off the assets list). If that person's twin came in a few minutes later, I could say the group is (read off the deficits list). Which person would want to work with you? Which one would you want to work with? Which list do you want to be treated based on? Which list is more true? (They're equally true—we're all human.)

DEBRIEF (5-10 MIN)

- Invite discussion. How do we tend to present ourselves? How do we — and how do our organizations — view and treat other people? What impact do those choices that have?
- If there are groups we tend to define primarily as "needy," "at-risk," etc., we must look critically at the systemic factors that shape their circumstances, while also deliberately focusing and building on every community's and person's assets.

- ❑ Treating others with a focus on the glass as half-full is not blindly optimistic, but rather an organizing strategy. Everything that has ever been accomplished has been done by imperfect people who chose to build on their strengths.
- ❑ This also has parallels in communities and groups – just like individuals, communities can be approached through their assets or deficits.

ORGANIZING OUR ASSETS (20 min)

- ❑ Give each participant 5 sticky notes or index cards. Ask them to write five of their assets. (Remind everyone that this includes their networks, non-professional skills, values, etc.)
- ❑ Number off into small groups of 4-5. Have small groups review their collective assets, then determine what they could accomplish together, using as many of their assets as possible. Note that they could plan something social, artistic, entrepreneurial, or change oriented (unless you prefer to give them a particular focus/goal).
- ❑ After 15 minutes for small groups to plan, invite them to report out.

REFLECT IN PAIRS OR FULL GROUP (20 MIN)

- ❑ What was the experience like for you?
- ❑ What was different from other group work or planning experiences you've had?
- ❑ How could you see this translating to your daily life (or the work your group is engaged in together)?

CLOSING (5 MIN)

- ❑ Ask each participant to share one word about a feeling, thought, or intention for action they're leaving with.

RESOURCES

- ❑ Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University, founded by John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann, co-authors of *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, offers many good resources at <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/> — for good asset mapping and facilitating tools, see <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/toolkit/>
- ❑ Gallup Strengths Center, creator of the StrengthsFinder assessments, has some related research and publications, though not grounded as much in community change work, <https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/>
- ❑ *The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts*, by Luther K. Snow (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004)
- ❑ Building the Field of Community Engagement, a collaborative initiative by six Twin Cities organizations, defines community engagement as building on community assets and requiring attention to relationships, power, healing, identity, and culture/spirituality, <http://www.buildthefield.org/>

The "Assets and Deficits" workshop is adapted by Minnesota Campus Compact staff based on work by John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann, Cormac Russell, and Dan Duncan. The Agreements in this workshop have been adapted from Glen Singleton's *Courageous Conversations*.

We welcome your suggestions for improving this guide further for future trainings. We also welcome you to use it and adapt it for your own trainings, subject to the terms below.

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The New Paradigm for Effective Community Impact – Asset-Based

	Needs/Deficit-Based	Asset-Based
Purpose	Changing community through increased services	Changing community through citizen involvement
Method	Institutional reform = better programs	Citizen-centered production = more interdependence
Accountability	Leaders are professional staff, accountable to institutional stakeholders	Leaders are widening circles of citizens engaged in civic action and participation, accountable to the community (their neighbors and friends)
Significance of assets	Assets are system inputs Asset mapping is data collection	Assets are anything that builds community relationships—between people, their ecology and the local economy—to be discovered and connected Asset mapping is collective-realization and relational stewardship development, making the invisible visible within the commons
Production resource	Money is the key resource Falls apart without money	Relationships are the key resource Falls apart when money becomes the focus
Operating challenge	How do we get citizens involved in our programs/initiatives/priorities?	How do we, the local community, channel and build on all this citizen participation? Having mobilized our local assets, how can we leverage in appropriate matching support from outside?
System dynamic	Tends to spread itself thinner over time, going to scale, top-down	Tends to snowball over time, proliferation bottom-up
Evaluation	Success is service outcomes, measured mostly by institutional stakeholders	Success is collective efficacy/ associational power, measured mostly by civic relationships and their ability to mobilize internal capacities and leverage external resources that respect indigenous living
Development	Money, programs (high-cost inputs) are invested with the expectation that development outputs will emerge	Community building enables appropriate external investment

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/asset-based-community-development-alternative-services-cormac-russell>



Survey for "Assets and Deficits" Workshop

Thank you for taking time to attend this Civic Agency workshop. We are very interested in receiving your feedback. (Alternatively, you may also complete this survey online at http://augsburg.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_06aoPbGJyJ717oF)

If you have participants complete evaluations on paper, please scan them and send them to info@mncampuscompact.org.

Your information

Primary Role: Student, Faculty, Staff, Administrator, Community Organization Staff, AmeriCorps/VISTA

Institution (College, University, Organization):

Date:

Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following about your experience with the Civic Agency workshop you participated in	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I felt welcomed and included.					
I learned about one or more leadership tools or resources.					
The tools and exercises I learned about are valuable.					
I feel capable of using the tools and exercises I learned about.					
I intend to use at least one thing I learned here.					
Other participants in the workshop helped me see things from a different perspective.					
I developed new or deeper connections with others.					

Is there anything you would like to tell us about the workshop?