

ASSET-BASED FRAMEWORK

Identifying And Cultivating The Strengths Of Others

ESTIMATED TIME REQUIRED



90 minutes

OVERVIEW

This session will continue to build upon the previous session of identifying and developing your service year corps members' strengths. In this session, your corps members will learn to recognize and cultivate the strengths of others. Your corps members will work together to identify assets that various members bring to the group and they will consider the importance of individuals using their strengths when working toward a common goal.

LEARNING OUTCOMES



By the end of this session, your corps members will be able to:

- Identify strengths of their fellow corps members and members of the communities they serve
- Understand their own biases and blindspots that prevent them from seeing the strengths of others
- Understand how to cultivate strengths in others using the "Look-Tell-Use" model during the service year

TRAINING SESSION RESOURCES

Before getting started with this training session, you should review the Preparation section below as well as familiarize yourself with this guide's Session Script. This session should be presented directly to corps members using this downloadable presentation:

- [Downloadable Presentation: A4: Training Session: Identifying And Cultivating The Strengths Of Others](#)

The downloadable presentation includes speaker notes for program staff who are facilitating this session directly to corps members, making it easy for staff to walk through the presentations efficiently and effectively.

PREPARATION

Trainer Expectations

Throughout this training session, trainers will be asked to facilitate the group through small group discussions and full group discussions. Some of the topics may feel challenging for your corps members to engage with, and they may not want to engage in conversations on these topics at first. Part of fostering a belonging environment is making the space equal with corps members and program staff. Therefore, we recommend you, as the facilitator, prepare responses to the questions posed to the corps members throughout the session as a strategy to help spark conversation if needed. Before beginning this session, review the Session Outline & Script below and ensure familiarity with the content to be prepared to facilitate activities and answer potential questions from corps members. You'll notice in the Session Outline there are resources linked to provide background on the subject matters included in this training.

	TIME ESTIMATE
	LEARNING OUTCOMES
	VIRTUAL MODIFICATION
	ACTIVITY
	HELPFUL TIP

HELPFUL TIP



For many younger populations, this may be their first experience assessing their existing strengths, skills, and talents. You will want to provide examples and discuss some of your personal strengths, skills, and talents to help them feel comfortable sharing their own assets.

Necessary Materials

- Paper and pens for "Support Networks" activity
- One printed copy for each corps member:
 - Each corps member should bring their [A2: Asset-Based Growth Assessment Tool](#) with the Pre-Service portion filled out and their [B0: Resource: DEI Formative Self-Assessment](#)
 - [A0: Resource: Glossary](#)



Virtual Modifications

If you plan to facilitate the training session in a virtual environment, we recommend the following modifications:

- Use a whiteboard that can be displayed on camera or share your screen and work in a word or google document
- Don't forget to send an email with any necessary handouts in advance of your remote session
- You should share an electronic completed version of your corps members' [A2: Asset-Based Growth Assessment Tool](#) and the [B0: Resource: DEI Formative Self-Assessment](#) with their corps members in advance of the session.

HELPFUL TIP



Your service year corps members will use the Asset-Based Growth Assessment Tool resource throughout the program year. Encourage them to keep it in a safe place or collect it each time they use it.

SESSION OUTLINE

The following outline walks you through what to expect throughout this session and how to prepare. Even if you are planning to utilize the recorded webinar version of this training, we recommend you still use this Session Outline to prepare for the session.

I. Activity

Icebreaker - small group discussion

II. Identifying and Cultivating the Strengths of Others

In this section you will introduce the core principles of an asset-based framework, understand what prevents us from seeing others' strengths, and learn how to identify and cultivate strengths in others.

ACTIVITY: What keeps us from seeing others' strengths? - full group discussion 

ACTIVITY: Identifying Team Assets 

Prep needed: make sure corps members have completed the pre-assessment component of the A2: Asset-Based Growth Assessment Tool

Necessary materials: On a dry erase board/chalkboard/poster: Write these categories (Education, Experience, Skills, Motivation, Support Network) on the board. You will have corps members write their assets beneath each of the categories.

ACTIVITY: Reflecting on Team Dynamics - full group 

ACTIVITY: Reflecting on DEI Formative Assessment - full group 

Prep needed: make sure corps members have completed this assessment prior to the start of the session.

III. Next steps

Looking for Assets - In preparation for the next session on community asset mapping, ask corps members to practice looking for and naming others' assets.

ACTIVITY: Looking for Assets - journaling 

SESSION SCRIPT

The following script should be used for presenting this session directly to your corps members. It is recommended that you review this script before beginning the session. Italicized prompts are intended to be guidance for you as the trainer rather than part of the script you will communicate to your corps members.

Slide #1

Hello, and welcome! In this session, we will discuss how to identify and cultivate the strengths of others – how to see the best in people and help them to reach their potential.

Slide #2

Here is an agenda for this session. We will begin with an icebreaker. Then, we will discuss how to identify and cultivate others' strengths. We will pause for reflection before completing an activity focused on team assets and team dynamics. At the end of the session, we will explore the DEI Formative Self-Assessment that you completed at the beginning of your service year, and then we will wrap up and discuss next steps.

To get us warmed up, take a few minutes and reflect on this prompt: Name something about yourself that you would like to be the first thing that comes to mind for people to know or remember you by. Share your answer with the people sitting around you.

Slide #3

Let's start by reviewing the definition of asset. An asset is a valuable quality, skill, experience, or capacity possessed by a person or group. It is a strength – something that makes you special.

Assets are interesting because, although we all possess them, sometimes we don't see them unless we are looking for them. By this point in the service year, you have hopefully identified and used some of your own assets. Now it's time to learn how to apply what you've learned to identify and develop assets in other people. How can you learn to look for others' assets in the same way you've learned to look for your own?

Slide #4

Each person sees the world through a unique lens. Our experiences, values, biases, motivations, and personality all influence how we perceive reality, whether we are aware of how these factors shape us or not. As we begin to grow and develop, we become more aware of our lens and develop the capacity to see in new ways.

It may be helpful to think about asset-based thinking as a new pair of glasses. When you put on your "asset glasses" you see yourself and others differently. Instead of defining people by their needs and challenges, you define them by their strengths, aspirations, and the value they bring to society. For example, your "asset glasses" may enable you to see that someone who is homeless is also resilient, kind, and resourceful. Rather than defining him by his homelessness, you see the positive qualities that they also possess. When people feel valued, they begin to see themselves as agents in their own growth and develop greater capacity to reach their potential.

Slide #5

These 6 principles are central to an asset-based approach like the one we are discussing:

First, we all have strengths. No matter who you are, where you come from, or how many mistakes you've made, you have strengths.

Second, all strengths are valuable. Although some strengths may be more valuable in particular situations, it is important to recognize that all strengths have worth.

Third, strong teams and communities are made up of individuals who have been empowered to use their strengths.

Fourth, effective leaders are aware of their own strengths and are intentional about using them. They also help to cultivate the strengths of others.

Fifth, we all have capacity for growth. Even the most highly educated and experienced individuals have room for further development. Personal and professional growth is a process that never ends! And last, growth is not a one-size-fits-all process. Because people have different stories, experiences, and goals, growth looks different for different people. We cannot assess our growth based on how it stacks up against another person's growth.

Slide #6

Even if we wear "asset glasses," it can sometimes be difficult to see others' strengths. Our values, biases, privilege, motivations, emotions, and personality can keep us from seeing the strengths and potential that are right in front of us! In the following slides, we'll explore these factors and discuss how we can overcome them to see others' strengths more clearly.

Slide #7

The first factor that may keep us from seeing others' strengths is values.

Values are the basic fundamental beliefs that guide our attitudes and actions. They help us determine what is important to us as we grow and develop.

It is good to have values, and we all have beliefs that guide us. However, these values can differ widely and sometimes our judgment and lack of awareness about others' values may prevent us from seeing their strengths. For example, if I value punctuality and you don't, I may be annoyed by your tardiness and choose to define you by that one trait. In doing so, I may fail to notice that you are often tardy because you are helping others. In an asset-based approach, I would choose to define you by your selfless giving rather than your tardiness.

Next up is bias, which means having strong favor for or against an individual, group, idea or thing. It is related to implicit bias, which refers to the unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that shape our responses to certain groups especially around race, class, and language.

Bias, especially implicit bias, can cloud our vision so that we miss others' strengths. Rather than seeing someone's assets, we only see what we think we know about them. For example, if I believe (perhaps unconsciously) that young people are not capable of effective leadership, I may fail to notice all of the outstanding leadership qualities a young person possesses.

Also relevant here is the concept of privilege, which is a right, immunity, or benefit enjoyed by a particular person or a restricted group of people beyond the advantages of most. In some cases, one's privilege may keep them from seeing others' strengths. For example, if I – and everyone else in my family – attended college, I may assume that someone without a college degree is "missing something." Though I may not express this view outwardly, or even be conscious of it, it may prevent me from seeing the assets of someone who has not obtained a college degree.

Slide #8

There are other factors that may prevent us from seeing strengths. One's own personal challenges, emotional state, or mood can influence how they see another person, as can basic personality differences.

Though we may never completely overcome these challenges, there are steps we can take to recognize and cultivate others' strengths.

HELPFUL TIP



Sharing personal examples will help to illustrate and normalize the challenges of seeing others' strengths. Have you ever judged someone unfairly because you were having a bad day or dealing with something difficult in your personal life? Consider sharing an example here.

Slide #9

First, we can try to learn as much as we can about ourselves. What are our values? Biases? Personal challenges? Personality characteristics? And how do these things influence how we see the world?

Second, we can practice curiosity, and work to eagerly learn about ourselves, other people, and our communities.

Third, we can acknowledge others' strengths when we see them in action. A few affirming words go a long way, so next time you see someone doing something well, tell them!

And last, we can empower others to use their strengths by affirming them, and also by creating opportunities for them to shine. Rather than trying to tackle a project alone, invite someone with complementary assets to join you. Your project may turn out better, and you've given someone else a chance to use and develop their strengths!

Slide #10

So what do you think keeps you from seeing others' strengths? Can you give a specific example?

Pause and give corps members time to reflect on this question. It is usually a good idea to give individuals a minute to reflect silently before asking them to share with the group, and corps members should not be forced to share if they don't want to. Giving corps members space to choose what they share is an important part of building a culture of belonging at your organization.

Slide #11

Learning to identify and cultivate others' strengths is important because teams and communities are stronger when individuals are empowered to use their strengths. The next activity will give you an opportunity to consider how your individual strengths fit together and affect team dynamics.

Slide #12

In a moment, you will have an opportunity to share some of the assets you identified on the Growth Assessment Tool with others on your team.

What are your assets in each of these areas: Education, Experience, Skills, Motivation, and Support Network?

Write the categories listed on the Slide – Education, Experience, Skills, Motivation, Support Network – across the top of a whiteboard and invite corps members to list their assets under each of the categories. If a corps member's asset has already been written by someone else, the corps member can add a tally mark instead of writing it again.



If meeting virtually, program staff will need to write corps members' assets on a whiteboard that all participants can see or use a shared document that all can access (e.g. Google Docs).

Slide #13

Now let's take a few minutes to discuss how your individual assets affect team dynamics.

Pause for discussion.

Here are some questions to prompt the conversation: What assets are shared by multiple corps members? What assets are unique to one individual? How do individual assets affect team dynamics? How could the team better utilize the strengths of all members?



Ask corps members to come off mute and share.

Slide #14



Now we will reflect on the DEI Formative Self-Assessment that you completed prior to this session.

Take a look at your responses. Review the questions marked “emerging” – these are potential areas of growth for you and/or the organization. Please note: your responses to the self-assessment are private and will not be shared unless you choose to share them.

Once you’ve had a chance to review your own responses, let’s try and answer this question: How can your team work together to increase a sense of belonging for all corps members?

Pause here to discuss reflection prompt: How can we work together to increase a sense of belonging for all corps members?

Slide #15

Fred Rogers from *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, once said, “As human beings, our job in life is to help people realize how rare and valuable each one of us really is, that each of us has something that no one else has – or ever will have – something inside that is unique to all time. It’s our job to encourage each other to discover that uniqueness and to provide ways of developing its expression.”

What do you think about this quote?

If time allows, pause to discuss this quotation.

Slide #16

Here are some strategies for cultivating others’ strengths:

First, practice looking for others’ assets. Put on your “asset glasses” and pay attention to the skills, strengths, and talents that others possess.

When you see someone using their assets, make sure you tell them. For example: “Betty, I really appreciate your attention to detail!” or “Juan, thank you for your positive attitude.”

Once you have learned to see and recognize others’ strengths, you can begin to encourage others to use their strengths by matching assets with specific tasks. If a project requires great communication skills, assign the project to someone who possesses that strength and give them a chance to shine!

HELPFUL TIP



It is critical that you model this behavior for your team members. You may want to share examples that are relevant to your team and organization if you have time. You may also ask corps members to share which strengths they think are best suited to particular tasks at your organization.

Slide #17

This final activity will give you an opportunity to practice identifying others' strengths.

Make a list of 5 people you interact with on a regular basis in your journal. They can be friends, family, fellow corps members, or anyone else who you will have an opportunity to observe over the next month. Before the next group session, observe each of these people and make a list of their assets. You get bonus points if you acknowledge or encourage their strengths in some way. This may be as simple as saying, "Thank you for your leadership on this project!" or "I'm impressed with this well-written email."

Be prepared to discuss this activity at the beginning of our next session.

Slide #18

In this example, I have chosen to observe Natasha, one of my co-workers. In observing Natasha, I have noticed that she is confident, good with computers, an excellent listener, a hard worker, and always willing to help.

Of course, your list will be different because each person has their own unique strengths. Remember, all people have strengths – it just may be more difficult to identify some strengths than others. The more you practice, the better you will become!

HELPFUL TIP

If you have time remaining during this session, you can give corps members time to begin working on their lists. Note that our next training session begins with a discussion about this final activity, so corps members will need to complete the activity prior to that session. If you are not using the A5 Training Session, make plans to discuss this activity at another time and clearly communicate plans for follow up to corps members.