



ASSET-BASED FRAMEWORK

Leveraging Community Assets For Social Change

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:

- Define different types of communities
- Understand the differences between asset-based and deficit-based approaches to community development
- Describe a community using an asset-based approach
- Create a community asset map that includes individuals, organizations, and institutions

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: A5: Training Session: Leveraging Community Assets For Social Change**](#)

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
- Dry erase board or flip chart & markers
- Different colored pens or markers

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

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: "Looking for Assets" - group discussion

Prep needed: If your corps members completed the "Looking for Assets" activity at the end of Training Session A4, you should begin this session with a discussion about that activity. If corps members did not complete the "Looking for Assets" activity, choose another icebreaker activity to begin the session

II. Looking for Assets in Your Community

You will first define community, then corps members will describe the community they are serving and assess if there are positive or negative descriptors.

ACTIVITY: Describing Your Community - individual & small group work 

Necessary materials: corps members will need paper and pens. If everyone in the group is serving the same community, you can compile one list on the board.

III. Asset-Based vs. Deficit-Based Approaches to Community Development

In this section your corps members will create an asset map, which is a tool that will help you to identify the resources available within your community.

ACTIVITY: Create a Community Asset Map - individual & small group work 

Necessary materials: your corps members will need different colored markers and pens to create their asset maps. They can also create these on a computer, if that's an available tool for them.

IV. Next Steps

You will prompt your corps members to reflect on what they learned today, how the community asset map can affect the way they view and serve their community, and identify one action to better utilize the strengths of their community.

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

Welcome! Today we will be discussing how to leverage the assets of your community to create positive social change.

Slide #2

Here is the agenda for today's session. We will begin with an icebreaker and then spend some time defining community and describing the communities in which you serve. We will explore the differences between asset-based and deficit-based approaches to community development and then complete an asset mapping activity. We will wrap up with a discussion about next steps.

If your corps members completed the "Looking for Assets" activity at the end of Training Session A4, you should begin this session with a discussion about that activity.

As a reminder, we ended our last session with an activity called "Looking for Assets." In the activity, you were asked to make a list of 5 people you interact with on a regular basis. You were to observe them and make a list of their assets – and there were "bonus points" if you acknowledge or encourage their strengths in some way.

I'm excited to hear about how it went. To start, what was it like to observe others and identify their assets?

Pause & prompt.

Would anyone like to share something that they observed? What is something new you learned about yourself or others?

Pause & prompt.

Slide #3

During your service year, you have had the opportunity to identify, use, and develop your strengths as well as the strengths of others. This session will help you expand your knowledge about strengths, or assets, in the communities in which you serve.

Slide #4

First, let's define community. A community is a group of people who have something in common.

Slide #5

There are many different types of communities. A community may have a shared location, like people who live in the same city, or it may have a shared identity, belief, experience, or interest.

Think about the communities to which you belong. First, consider your location. In what neighborhood, city, state, or country do you live? This is your physical, or geographical community. Now consider the identities and beliefs that you share with other people: race, gender, and socioeconomic status. These communities typically do not have clear geographical boundaries. For example, if you practice a specific religion, you may feel connected to people around the world even though you have never met them. You may also experience solidarity with others who are a part of your racial or ethnic group, or have a similar gender identity.

Lastly, think about how shared experiences or interests have created communities to which you belong. Perhaps you belong to an alumni community for your high school or college. Or maybe you are a part of a fan community for a particular sports team or music group.

If time allows, ask corps members to describe some of the communities they belong to. Feel free to share some of your communities as examples.

Slide #6

Now that you have identified the communities to which you belong, let's think about the community or communities in which you are currently serving as a corps member.

How would you define the community you are serving? Is it based in a location? Identity? Belief? Experience? Interest? Or some combination of these categories?

It may be easy to define your community – for example, “low income families in Jackson County.” Or, it may be more challenging, especially if the focus of your service is something like conservation or climate change. The mission statement for your organization may give you a clue about the community that you serve.

After you have defined the community you are serving, think about how you would describe it. Write down 5 characteristics of your community now. If everyone in your group is serving the same community, you can create a list together.

Pause to give corps members time to define and describe the communities in which they serve. If everyone in your group is serving the same community, you can complete the activity together. Otherwise, corps members should complete the activity individually. When finished, invite corps members to share their lists with a partner, small group, or the entire group.



Invite corps members to come off mute and share with the entire group.

Slide #7

Now that you have made a list, go through and mark each characteristic as positive (plus sign), negative (negative sign), or neutral (asterisk). There are some helpful examples on the slide to guide you.

Did you have more positive or negative descriptors listed?

Pause and prompt.

Slide #8

You may remember learning about “asset glasses” in a previous session. When we choose to wear these glasses, we can see assets more clearly – both our own strengths and the strengths of others. In this session, you will learn how to view your community through the same lens.

Slide #9

An asset-based framework focuses on the strengths of individuals and communities. Individuals are encouraged to look for possibilities rather than problems, and all individuals are invited to share their skills, abilities, interests, and experiences for the sake of the common good.

In contrast, a deficit-based framework is focused primarily on needs and what is wrong or missing. Instead of asking “what’s right” with an individual or community, a deficit-based approach looks for “what’s wrong” and focuses energy and attention there. Defining an individual by something negative that stigmatizes them can cause further injury, reinforce mistrust, and create a lack of understanding.

A deficit-based approach tends to be the “default” in our society. For example, when a child is acting out in school, administrators tend to focus on the bad behavior and what’s “wrong” or “missing.” When a community’s high school graduation rate is low, we wonder what’s wrong with the schools and students.

Implementing an asset-based framework requires commitment and practice. What if, instead of asking what was wrong in the community with low graduation rates, we asked, “How can we utilize the strengths of students, teachers, administrators, and community members to overcome this challenge?”

As you can see in this example, an asset-based approach does not ignore or deny the challenges that individuals and communities face. The challenges are real, but so are the individuals’ capacities to solve them.

If time allows, pause here to ask corps members to respond to this reflection prompt: Why is it important that we don’t only talk about the problems that exist in a community?

Slide #10



Go back and look at the list of characteristics you chose to describe your community. Can you add at least 2 assets, or positive characteristics, to your list? Remember, deficit-based thinking is our “default” mode so it’s often easier to think that way. Identifying assets may require a little more effort.

Pause to give corps members time to add assets to their list.

Slide #11

Although an asset-based approach focuses on positive attributes, it is important that we don't avoid or ignore the real challenges and problems that individuals and communities face. The goal is to recognize needs and problems without allowing those challenges to define individuals and communities. An asset-based approach empowers people by asking, "How can we use the assets that individuals and communities possess to overcome challenges, meet needs, and solve problems?"

Slide #12

In order to use community assets to solve problems and meet needs, we first have to know what assets are present. Asset mapping is a tool that will help you to identify the resources available within your community. Individuals, organizations, and institutions can all be helpful resources in a community.

Individual assets include the skills, talents, and capacities that people possess. Harnessing the strengths of individuals in a community helps to make the community stronger and ensures that all voices are heard.

Organizations like nonprofits and assistance programs are also important resources in a community. Rather than trying to devise a new solution to the problems that exist, we should first identify the organizations that are already working towards a solution.

Finally, institutions like schools, hospitals, churches, and libraries can also serve as important resources, providing support and infrastructure within communities.

Slide #13

Today you will have the opportunity to create an asset map of your community. You already defined and described the community you are serving earlier in this session. The questions listed on this slide may help you to think of assets and challenges in your community that you did not consider previously.

Take a few minutes now to consider these questions:

- What do you think people enjoy most about being part of the community?
- What key resources, assets, etc. exist to support people in this community?
- What are some challenges in this community and how could they be addressed using the resources you have identified?

Pause to give corps members an opportunity to reflect on the questions listed on the slide. If everyone in your group is serving in the same community, you can reflect on the questions together. If not, allow time for corps members to reflect individually and then share with the group.

Slide #14

Now, we're going to create a visual representation of the resources, assets, and challenges you just identified. As shown in the following examples, you may use one color to label assets/resources and another color to label challenges.

HELPFUL TIP

Since asset mapping is new to most corps members, it is important to share the examples provided on slides 15-17 before asking corps members to complete the activity. Let corps members know that asset mapping can be done in many different ways, so they don't have to follow any of the examples exactly.

Slide #15

Here is an example of a community asset map. It was created in Google Slides but a similar map could also be drawn on a piece of paper. Notice that assets are labeled in red and challenges are in blue.

In this community, assets include abundant natural resources, good schools, a hospital, high voter turnout, and a small group of committed local leaders.

Challenges include insufficient jobs, high crime rate, social division, and businesses struggling to stay open. Remember, the goal of an asset-based approach is to use community assets to overcome challenges, so it is important to name both the assets and challenges present with the community.

HELPFUL TIP

Some corps members may be unfamiliar with the computer programs used to create these examples. Encourage corps members to create maps in a format that is comfortable for them; pen and paper may be easier. The purpose of the activity is to understand and create an asset map, not to learn new technology.

Slide #16

Here is another example of an asset map. In this representation, a map is used to show where in the community the challenges and assets are present. Again, challenges are listed in blue while assets are shown in orange. Of course this type of map works best for geographical, location-based communities versus communities formed around shared identity or belief.

This image was downloaded from Google Maps but you could also draw a map of your community.

Slide #17

Here is a third example of a community asset map. This map shows assets and challenges within each of the categories we discussed previously: Individuals, Organizations, Institutions, and Other. This diagram was created in Google Slide but could also be drawn on a piece of paper.

Now, it's your turn! Using whatever format you choose, create an asset map of the community you are serving. Remember to label assets and challenges in different colors. You will have 25 minutes to work on your asset maps. Then we will break into small groups to share them.

Pause at this slide to give corps members time to create asset maps of their communities. Set a timer for 25 minutes and then break them into small groups. Remain available to answer questions as corps members are working. Remember, this is a new concept for many and some will need additional clarification to create their maps.

Slide #18

Once you have created your asset maps, take a moment to reflect on these questions with others in your small group:

- What did you learn from today's session?
- How will the community asset map you created affect the way you view and serve your community?
- What is one action you can take to better utilize the strengths of your community?

Pause at this slide to facilitate discussion about the reflection prompts listed on the slide. Encourage corps members to practice what they have learned during this session as they serve their communities.