

A Facilitator's Guide to Community Asset Mapping



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How can Community Asset Mapping help our community?

Asset¹ (or Strengths) Mapping has been identified as a key foundation for working with communities in strategic planning and development of social and economic initiatives ². It provides communities with an opportunity to recognize and acknowledge their strengths (or assets), while also learning from other participants about diverse perspectives of the community, and gaining a greater understanding of the community's potential to grow from within itself. Identifying the community's assets or strengths is the first step towards building a supportive network that may lead towards addressing needs and gaps in services and creating opportunities for social innovation.



¹ The terms 'assets' and 'strengths' are used interchangeably throughout this guide because we have found over years of using this technique that people respond differently to the two words, and we want to be as inclusive as possible. For example, sometimes 'assets' are identified only in economic terms, while 'strengths' are sometimes seen as 'soft' assets, and not inclusive of factors such as natural resources.

² McKnight, John and Kretzmann, John (1996). Mapping Community Capacity. See: <http://www.abcdinstitute.org> for a detailed outline of the concept.

Resources Required:

- **Facilitator and Note-taker**
- **Flip Chart Paper and adhesive**
- **Post-it Notes**
- **Coffee, tea, juice**



Mapping Community Assets and Strengths

1. BRING TOGETHER A DIVERSE GROUP (or groups) in your community for an expected 1.5 – 2 hour session. Ideal size is 7 – 10 people, but smaller and larger groups are fine, although you will need to allow for a shorter – or longer – period of time, depending on the size of the group.

2. INTRODUCTIONS

- a. Introduce yourself and the asset mapping process.

Here is an example of a project introduction:

“We are conducting this asset-mapping session today to determine what you feel this community's strengths are, for the purpose of identifying opportunities to make our community a better place to live. We want to know what strengths or assets you see in the community, so that we can better understand the opportunities to strengthen and build an even better community than what we have today.”

- b. Ask each person to introduce themselves. A good ‘ice-breaker’ for this exercise, is to divide the group into pairs, and give them 5 minutes to identify the following from each other: name & affiliation (if any) to a community organization; one strength that they feel they bring to the community. Then each partner in the pair introduces the other.
- c. Review the agenda (Agenda should be posted on a flip chart so that participants may review as needed).

Here is an example of a sample Agenda:

1	Introductions
2	Introduction to the Project
3	Confidentiality and Consent
4	Agreement for Conduct of Focus Group
5	Focus Group Process
6	Closing

3. CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONDUCT OF THE GROUP

The information generated within the focus group will be kept confidential by the facilitator(s) and will be anonymous. No one's name will be identified with any of the information. At the conclusion of all the focus groups, interviews and community events, the facilitator(s) shall prepare a report which will be given to each participant (and/or the organization sponsoring the asset-mapping). No one will be identified in the report.



4. PARTICIPATION IN THE FOCUS GROUP

Participation is voluntary, anyone may leave at any time, if you feel uncomfortable, you may withdraw your information from the group.

Facilitators will request the following:



Participants are respectful of one another's views and opinions.



One person speaks at a time.



There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers – this is about sharing personal experience. The individual sharing is the person who best knows their own experience.

? **Are there other 'rules' that you would like included in this 'code of conduct'?**

5. FACILITATE THE ASSET MAPPING

Resources Checklist:

- Facilitator and note-taker**
- Flip chart paper – affixed to wall with tape or adhesive**
- Several post-it notes for each participant**
- Fine-tipped markers (black preferred) – one for each participant**
- Hand out post-it-notes and markers to each focus group participant**

Ask the questions:

Each person should be asked to write down ALL the strengths/assets that they feel the community has, putting ONLY ONE asset/strength per post-it note. Allow 10- 15 minutes for this individual activity until everyone has completed writing.

Advise them that this is an individual activity, and that they will have a chance to share their ideas with others later (reduce/eliminate speaking/sharing during this part of the activity).

Share assets/strengths

Then ask participants to share their ideas, one at a time, by placing their post-it notes on a piece of flip-chart paper on the wall, and speak to each item as they do so.

Review Assets/strengths

Once all the post-it notes are placed on the flip-chart paper, ask the participants if they have any other assets/strengths to add that the exercise may have stimulated.

Analysis of strengths/assets (if there is time to do this)

Do some of these assets/strengths support each other?

(These can be placed together in one section of the flip-chart paper, but only if everyone is agreeable).

Are there any assets/strengths that are at risk?

Conclude Asset Mapping Focus Group

Once all input has been obtained, thank them for their participation, and advise/remind them of next steps.

6. CLOSING COMMENTS

At conclusion, take a few minutes to go around the circle of participants asking the question:

“ Do you have any final comments/thoughts? ”

(this sometimes provides extremely important information, so the recorder should ensure that these comments are noted).

7. ASSEMBLING THE COMMUNITY ASSET MAP

- a. The Facilitator and Notetaker work together to assemble a final ‘map’ for the community. The ‘map’ may include an actual physical map which illustrates the physical location of some of the natural and built assets that have been identified, or it may simply be a representation of the groupings of strengths as identified in the activities outlined in #5 above.

If participants did not have time to group the strengths, then the facilitator and notetaker will need to do that. Questions to ask during the grouping include: what strengths have an affinity with one another (for example, arts and cultural development, or programs for youth)? Are there people and physical assets that support one another? Are any of these assets at risk?

Sample: Arts and Culture



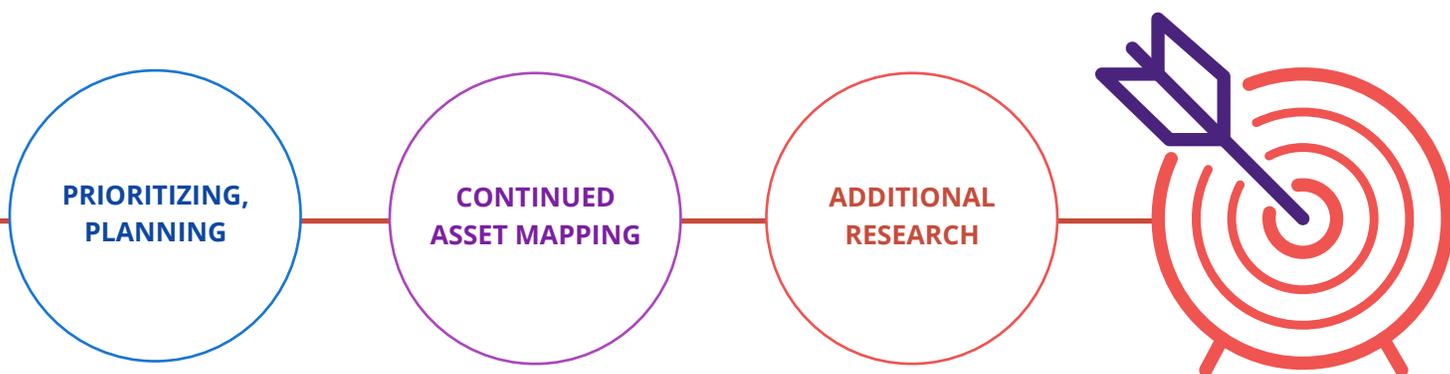
b. In a second section of the report, identify where there may be 'clusters' of assets that could support one another sufficiently to support further development. Do some of these 'clusters' suggest networks that could support social innovation/further development? For example festivals that attract visitors might be linked with other organizations/events to attract larger crowds, or bring more tourism to the area.

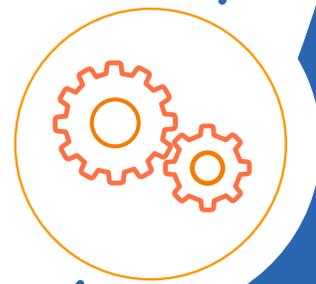
This analysis can be done in a chart form to have a stronger visual impact (if not using geographic mapping).

Assets Analysis: Housing

HOUSING		
IDENTIFIED ASSETS	OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECO-SYSTEM	OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacant buildings • Many single story buildings with potential for second story • Land for room to grow • Hotels and Motels • Shelters • Social Services • Social Housing • Housing Corporation • Community Foundations • Coops & non-profit housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a network for organizations that is inclusive of housing organizations and employers experiencing a shortage of housing for employees • Establish a cooperative governance structure and nominate an organization to lead • Empower housing organizations to move forward on initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Cooperative(s) and/or non-profits • Co-letting home • Shared employee accommodation

c. A concluding section of the report suggests next steps that the community might take to develop social enterprises. For example, bringing the group together to do some prioritizing and planning; conducting more asset-mapping to bring greater diversity/engage more people in planning; doing some additional research on the strengths identified to help with priority-setting.





What is SEE?

SEE (Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship) Northern Region Partnership initiative is a collaborative project across Northern Ontario. The catchment area stretches throughout Northern Ontario from Parry Sound to the Manitoba border and all areas in between. The goal of the project is to support further development of social enterprises and social entrepreneurs across the region.

SEE is a partnership between NORDIK Institute, PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise, YouLaunch On Campus Entrepreneurial Activities Program, Timmins Community Development Corporation, and Northwest Innovation Centre.



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For more resources, visit:

seethechange.ca

or: realiserlechangement.ca