



Community Asset Mapping: A Critical Strategy for Service

Part 1/3

The Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum

BWBR Description: *Bonner Curriculum workshop teaches participants how to view a community from its assets, not deficits. Students learn how to find assets within their partner communities and incorporate them into service work.*

Overview: Community asset mapping—the process of intentionally identifying the human, material, financial, entrepreneurial and other resources in a community—is an important process for community projects of all kinds. Whether you are tutoring a child in a neighborhood school, starting your own new initiative, or mobilizing a campaign for a policy change, knowing and using the many assets within a community (including those of the university or college) provide a foundation for effectiveness. This intensive training, designed over a series of activities most suitable for at least three days, provides guidance on how to uncover community assets and create a canvass or map of them. It relies on the framework of viewing a community from its assets, rather than deficits, in order to utilize and manifest existing resources of all kinds.

Category Community context and engagement; community asset mapping; impact; research

Level: Participants may be all levels; facilitator should be highly experienced

Recommended

Bonner Sequence: This three-session training is recommended for Bonner students during their first and second year in the program. The concept of Asset Mapping (and the activities of day one of this guide) could be introduced during the first semester, perhaps beginning during Orientation. The activities of day two could be introduced a bit later (perhaps mid-way through the semester or mid-year). The activities of day three could follow right after that, or be introduced later, perhaps in preparation for sophomore year service.

Learning Outcomes:

- Session One activities focuses on introducing participants to the concept of assets and asset mapping and gets participants out in some community to do asset mapping, with structured guidance on what to find out.
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Materials

- Raggedy Anne doll (or equivalent toy)
- Ball of yarn
- Flip Charts
- Markers
- Copies of Handouts

How to Prepare:

Review the entire guide and the extensive handouts. Determine days for the series of activities. Collect materials. Prepare logistics related for community immersions (mapping, interviewing, etc.) Make flip charts.

Review the facilitation workshops to get a sense of tools and techniques to use. Prepare your own notes about facilitating discussions, debriefs, in-community activities, etc.

Brief Outline:

Below is the first of a three part series. Participants will need to do the actual work of asset mapping between Sessions 1 and 2. Review the entire guide and activities in order to determine your configuration of activities.

Session One (full day including community walks/explorations)

1) Web of Life

suggested time 10 minutes

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|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2) IOU'S Presentation and Discussion | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 3) Locate the Community | suggested time 5 minutes |
| 4) Review Sources to Collect | suggested time 5 minutes |
| 5) Review Process and Content | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 6) Group Leaves to Conduct Mapping | rest of day/week |

Part 1) Warm Up: Web of Life

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Have the participants stand in a large circle, shoulder to shoulder.

Start with the quote: "It takes a village to raise a child."

Ask, "What does that mean to you?" and have a few people respond.

Then note something like: "A healthy individual life relies on the health of our communities. We live in a variety of separate and combined communities: on- or off-campus, academic, extra-curricular, religious and spiritual, athletic, political, culinary, and more. All communities share certain qualities that maintain their health. All individuals have a stake in making sure these qualities remain strong."

Then, have participants shout out answers to this question: "What makes a community healthy?"

Third, introduce the following quote, reading it aloud:

"You must teach your children...that all things are connected like the blood, that unites one family. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of Earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."

— Chief Seattle

Ask for the group's cooperation in respecting their peers with a listening ear.

The Toss:

Hand the ball of yarn to one person. Have them hold the ball in one hand, and the end of the yarn in the other. This person should share their name and who in the group they feel most connected to in the circle, and a reason or two for that connection. Then, holding on tightly to the end of yarn, the speaker should toss the ball to that person. The person who receives the ball should do the same, holding the strand tight

and tossing the ball to the person with whom he or she feels most connected. The process should continue until everyone in the circle has been tossed the ball and is holding onto a piece of yarn. (NOTE: People may receive the yarn more than once.) A web should form in the middle of the circle.

You might illustrate the importance of mutual relationships by tossing a Raggedy Anne doll (or similar toy) onto the center of the web. Tell everyone to notice how the community supports the doll as it is falling. Call on several individuals—about one third of the group—to let go of their yarn, and have everyone else step back until the slack has been taken in. Toss the doll again, and note how it falls through the web. (Variation: different effects can be reached by specifying which third of the group should let go of the yarn – E.g.: “Those people who feel they have the least to say about others in the group,” or “those people who spoke more than twice....”)

Ask the group to invite those who had let go of the yarn to rejoin the circle. Ask them to stand shoulder to shoulder.

Reflection:

- Ask the group to take a moment and reflect on what their fellow members in the circle community said about the other people in the circle.
- Ask them to contemplate the following question: “When involved in service, which do you focus on—the strands of community, or the air in between the strands and the fact that sometimes the doll falls through?”

This is an important transitional question between the Web of Life activity and a discussion of approaching community building and project planning from an asset-based approach. The facilitator may ask the group to sit down, place the yarn on the ground in front of them and let go, so that the web remains during the discussion. Regardless of the means, it is important to make sure the transition into the discussion is seamless (illustrating the point-of-view on assets).

Part 2) IOU’S Presentation and Discussion

Suggested time: 20 minutes

During the following discussion, pass out a sheet of paper and pencil to everyone in the group.

Start the discussion by asking why it might be important to focus on the Web, the individual Strands, of Community, rather than the space between the strands?

- Ask what are some ways service programs might NOT focus on the Web?
- Bring up census surveys—deficiencies—statistics such as illiteracy and school dropout rates, etc. Ask what are some reasons these negative perceptions are so widespread?
- Ask why it might be important that people know the problems of their community.
- Ask what the dangers are of focusing on the problems.

Then, introduce the asset-based approach:

- *Often people think you have to state problems in order to adequately address them. In reality, though, recognition of a problem is only the first step of the long process of improvement. You might get clues about how to solve a problem by studying it, but you'll never actually solve it if the problem is all you focus on.*
- *Imagine: What would it be like if everyone was as familiar with the solution to a problem as they are with a problem?*
- *The purpose of these activities are to approach problems from a Community Web perspective, using an **"Asset-Based strategy"** rather than a **"Deficiency-laden approach."** We have lots of resources out there to approach community based on deficiencies. This series of workshops focuses on a set of strategies and tools designed to develop a more complete picture of a community, one that takes into account its many assets (not simply deficits).*

Then, present and lead the group in a discussion of the four tenants of this strategy (called IOU'S), in order to better understand the rationale behind it.

IOU's—is the acronym for our approach, a helpful mnemonic. But it also reminds us that we must always give back, like an iou, to the community that gives and nurtures us.

I-IDENTIFY

Recognize both the deficiencies and the assets. The deficiencies will provide fodder for a tenable goal. The assets will provide vision, a plan, energy to accomplish, empowerment and results. The assets will ensure that your approach

is community-based, and “loves” the community in the way that it intentionally identifies its strengths in terms of resources, people, programs, and leadership.

O-ORGANIZE

Assets are property of the community. In order to utilize the assets and achieve goals, the community has to be willing to contribute their assets. The best way to ensure this is through organizing them. Organizing means reaching out, building relationships, establishing connections, developing systems and structures and so on. Successful activities are organized in a way that makes everyone feel

Interested, Included and Invaluable.

The **BIG THREE** to remember:

- 1) Appeal to peoples’ interests
- 2) Make sure everyone understands and agrees on the big picture
- 3) Make sure everyone has a role to play and knows each others’ roles

U-UTILIZE

Note that this step is not called “Implementation.” Ask the group why they think that is?

According to the American Heritage Dictionary, Third Edition:

Implement—v. “To put into effect”

Utilize—v. “To put to use”

Why might the terminology be important here?

Ask the group if anyone would like to share an example of a program that does not quite fit the needs of the people with whom it was designed to work.

Through discussion, flesh out the idea that strong communities focus on putting their assets to use. A community’s assets are the basis for effective programs and plans—you *utilize assets in order to implement plans*. The term “Utilize” is one of empowerment: use what you have for positive gain. As long as you focus on utilizing assets, you will not lose sight of the true Web of Community.

S-SUSTAIN

What is sustain? Sustain has several meanings including:

- Support (as in carry or hold up)
- Support (as in supply)
- Nourish
- Confirm

Endure (as in last long)

Sustain focuses us on the idea of giving back or nourishing that community, providing resources, and creating long-lasting change. Sustain may mean that the project can live on, or that the impact of the project can continue (even after the project is no longer needed).

Discuss with the group: Are you part of the community where you serve? How well do you understand it? How well do you contribute to its welfare—emphasize quality of work, not quantity volunteers or hours. If you are not part of the community, what happens after you leave? Why is the notion of sustaining important?

Summarize:

The IOU'S strategy is community-based approach. The stronger your ties with the community, the better your program will be. It has four major components: identifying assets, plugging them in, spreading them, and being an asset.

The basis for the IOU'S strategy is Assets. Success depends on your ability to recognize and harness them. The next activities (designed over several days) will guide participants to create a comprehensive understanding of the community, and its assets.

Part 3) Locate the Community

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Pass out the attached handout, a multiple page guide to asset mapping. Today, the rest of the workshop will be out in the community. You need to have made preparations for the participants' travel (whether by foot or vehicle). Note them here.

After passing out the guide, work through the first step with participants — LOCATE THE COMMUNITY:

Use a large map (or drawing) of the neighborhood and/or city. Using brightly colored markers, map out the area where you intend to focus. Then, create a verbal definition, based on streets and landmarks. Keep in mind that this is an area that you and your group will literally visit — walking and mapping what's there.

Example:

*North to Washington Street
South to Bourbon Road*

West to Capital Avenue
East to Smith Street
Approximately 14 square miles

Restate the community's boundaries for the purposes of the asset mapping exercise.

Part 4) Review Sources to Collect

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Then, review the second page of the guide, which asks people to collect certain sources during the course of their community canvassing. You may have a few of these (below) on hand to get the group on their way:

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Telephone Book and Yellow Pages. You can also use the Internet. <http://www.superpages.com> is a great online phone book.
- ☐ Chamber of Commerce Directory. Other business directories, such as the minority-owned business directory, women-owned business directory, and specific community/neighborhood directories can also be helpful.
- ☐ Statewide Business Council Publication
- ☐ State Economic Development Agency phone number or web address
- ☐ Census Data (available on the web at U.S. Department of Commerce – <http://www.census.gov/>). You can also try searching your school library's government documents section or public library's reference desk to help you find this kind of data.
- ☐ County-level economic analysis data (try on the web at <http://www.bea.doc.gov/>)
- ☐ Information from your city's website, if it has one, or from local newspaper's and publication's websites
- ☐ Location and hours of public or college libraries
- ☐ School system data
- ☐ County development authority data
- ☐ Data and info regarding public and private social service agencies

Part 5) Review Process and Content

Suggested time: 20 minutes

1. Next, review page 3 of the Community Canvassing Guide.

Explain that today participants will begin completing the elements of part 1 — a Community Canvass and a Community Profile.

They will be expected to return to the next part of the session (another day, either tomorrow or at a given time, within a week if possible) with a completed canvass and profile.

Later, they will do steps 2 and 3 – an Individual Asset Bank and a Campus Profile. Note dates if possible.

What	How	Day
1) Developing a Community Profile and Canvass, which paints a broad picture about the many assets in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Canvassing• Community Profile	1
1) Developing an Individual Asset Bank, made up of people who may be assets to the project/ initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual Asset Bank research• Key Interviews	2
1) Developing a campus profile, which help you to identify the assets that may be leveraged for the project(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Campus Inventory• Meetings with key campus leaders	3

2. Then, briefly present and review the types of assets that participants will be looking for (also page 3):

Individual Assets Individuals and their <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills • Talents • Experiences Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional • Personal • Resources • Leadership • Networks 	Institutional Assets Churches Colleges and Universities Elderly Care Facilities Fire Department Hospitals and clinics Mental health facilities Libraries Police Department Schools Utilities Transportation	Organizational Assets Community Centers Radio/TV stations Small businesses Large businesses Home-based enterprises Religious organizations Nonprofit organizations Clubs Citizen groups Business associations Cable and phone companies
Governmental (State and Federal) Assets City Government State Capital Bureau of land management Economic Development Dept. Forest Service Military facilities School Service Center Small Business Administration State Education Agency Telecommunications agency	Physical and Land Assets Agriculture Energy resources Forest Industrial areas Lakes, ponds, streams Mining Natural resources/landmarks Parks/recreation areas Vacant land Waste resources	Cultural Assets Historic/Arts groups Ethnic/Racial diversity Heritage Crafts, skills Cultural traditions

3. Then, review the subsequent pages (4 pages of questions and a 1-page Community Profile). This is what people should have completed when they reconvene.

Highlight particular questions that are of most relevance to your project.

Part 6) Participants leave to conduct community canvassing

Suggested time: Rest of Day/Week

Again, review any logistics about canvassing (e.g. travel details, meeting spots, check in times, subway fares, lunch, etc.).

You may want to utilize small group leaders for the canvassing, breaking up the designated area into smaller chunks.

Also, make sure you feel comfortable in trusting the group to do this work on their own. If you don't, add extra structures of supervision.

Restate the expectations about the next meeting time, place, and what groups should come with.

END OF SESSION 1

Community Canvassing

Your Assignment: Spend the day canvassing the community in order to develop a comprehensive asset map. Use this guide and its steps.

- **Locate the Community. Define geographic boundaries for the purposes of your community canvassing.**

Suggested guide:

Get a large map of the neighborhood and/or city. Using brightly colored markers, map out the area where you intend to focus. Then, create a verbal definition, based on streets and landmarks. Keep in mind that this is an area that you and your group will literally visit — walking and mapping what's there.

Example:

*North to Washington Street
South to Bourbon Road
West to Capital Avenue
East to Smith Street
Approximately 14 square miles*

Your community's boundaries (and map, attached):

- ❑ **Before and during your community asset hunt, collect the written information and sources that you will need to truly complete a comprehensive canvas.**

You will need this information to make your profile rigorous. Sources include:

- ❑ *Maps*
- ❑ *Telephone Book and Yellow Pages. You can also use the Internet. <http://www.superpages.com> is a great online phone book.*
- ❑ *Chamber of Commerce Directory. Other business directories, such as the minority-owned business directory, women-owned business directory, and specific community/neighborhood directories can also be helpful.*
- ❑ *Statewide Business Council Publication*
- ❑ *State Economic Development Agency phone number or web address*
- ❑ *Census Data (available on the web at U.S. Department of Commerce – <http://www.census.gov/>). You can also try searching your school library's government documents section or public library's reference desk to help you find this kind of data.*
- ❑ *County-level economic analysis data (try on the web at <http://www.bea.doc.gov/>)*
- ❑ *Information from your city's website, if it has one, or from local newspaper's and publication's websites*
- ❑ *Location and hours of public or college libraries*
- ❑ *School system data*
- ❑ *County development authority data*
- ❑ *Data and info regarding public and private social service agencies*

Other sources you find:

□ Understand the assets you are looking for.

In learning about a community, it's important to develop a sense of the many assets and capacities that a community already possesses, even those that are under-utilized. This approach will help you to then connect and utilize those assets in addressing problems and issues, providing a more solid foundation for a long-lasting solution.

You will be undertaking several approaches to identify assets including:

What	How
I) Developing a Community Profile and Canvass, which paints a broad picture about the many assets in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Canvassing • Community Profile
I) Developing an Individual Asset Bank, made up of people who may be assets to the project/initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Asset Bank research • Key Interviews
I) Developing a campus profile, which help you to identify the assets that may be leveraged for the project(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campus Inventory • Meetings with key campus leaders

What Are Assets?

Individual Assets	Institutional Assets	Organizational Assets
Individuals and their <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills • Talents • Experiences Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional • Personal • Resources • Leadership • Networks 	Churches Colleges and Universities Elderly Care Facilities Fire Department Hospitals and clinics Mental health facilities Libraries Police Department Schools Utilities Transportation	Community Centers Radio/TV stations Small businesses Large businesses Home-based enterprises Religious organizations Nonprofit organizations Clubs Citizen groups Business associations Cable and phone companies

Governmental (State and Federal) Assets	Physical and Land Assets	Cultural Assets
City Government State Capital Bureau of land management Economic Development Dept. Forest Service Military facilities School Service Center Small Business Administration State Education Agency Telecommunications agency	Agriculture Energy resources Forest Industrial areas Lakes, ponds, streams Mining Natural resources/landmarks Parks/recreation areas Vacant land Waste resources	Historic/Arts groups Ethnic/Racial diversity Heritage Crafts, skills Cultural traditions

Community Mapping

- ❑ **Spend several hours (or even days) doing a comprehensive community map. You can start with a brief “windshield survey” – using a car or taking local buses to canvass the whole area. Then, get on foot and dig deeper.**

Use the questions below to guide your search for visible and hidden community assets. You may also further tailor the questions or have additional ones related to the purpose and project you have in mind.

People in the neighborhoods and communities

1. What are the demographics of people that live in the community?
2. What occupations do they hold? What are some of the skills associated with the main occupations?
3. What are the patterns of residence based on income?
4. What are the patterns of residence based on race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality?
5. What are the most popular places to congregate or meet?
6. What are the most traveled routes?
7. What are the migration patterns, e.g., has the population changed much in the past few decades and in what ways? Has the population been there a long time or short time?

Housing

8. What is the type of housing?
9. What is the age of housing?
10. What is the condition of housing? Are there patterns evident in the type, age, condition by income, race, ethnicity, etc.?
11. What is the median cost for a home (e.g., 2-bedroom)? What is the median cost for an apartment?
12. Is there affordable housing? How is it subsidized? How is it allocated?
13. Is there new housing being constructed?

Institutional Assets

Education and schools

14. How many schools are there including preschool, elementary, high school, college, graduate programs, and vocational education? Map them.
15. Are there any unique or special attributes of the schools in the area (such as charter, magnet schools, privately funded, etc.)?
16. Are there known associations supporting or working on education, such as PTAs, parental associations, teacher associations, nonprofits?

Health and Human Services

17. Are there clinics and hospitals in the area?
18. What about physicians' or dentists' offices?
19. Are there mental health, drug rehabilitation, or other similar facilities?
20. Are there organizations that provide health education, AIDS/HIV education, or other similar services?
21. Are there shelters, meal services, or other residential care facilities for the homeless, victims of domestic violence or abuse?
22. What city, county or governmental agencies actively provide health and human services and where are they located?

Transportation

23. What is the condition of road and bridges?

24. What is the condition of public transportation (subways, buses, bus lines, bus stops)? Does it vary by area?
25. What are the patterns and types of traffic? Are there any hazards for children, students, or commuters?
26. What is the average commute time for work? How easy or hard is travel in the area?

Organizational Assets

Business, Economy and Employment

27. What kinds of businesses are there? Consider for-profit and nonprofit businesses that provide jobs and employment opportunities.
28. What kinds of businesses are missing or absent, especially considering the basic needs of families?
29. What kinds of work, service, internship, and other opportunities are there for students and young people?
30. What is the balance of businesses owned/operated by people living in the community and people who don't live in the community?
31. What kinds of partnerships exist, if any, between small and large businesses and nonprofits, social service agencies, and other voluntary groups?
32. What types of training and education agencies or entrepreneurial programs related to business and employment exist (such as occupational training/employment centers)?
33. What are the major nonprofit organizations in the area? Are they locally focused or otherwise? What are their funding streams and/or funding focus areas?
34. What is the prevalence and role of tourism in the community?

Media

35. What newspapers and publications, including small, independently operated ones, are in the community? Or, where are these newspapers located?
36. What are the media sources most read by community members?
37. Where do radio and t.v. stations/service originate?

Technology

38. Are there public access points or channels? What kind of coverage do they do?
39. Where are the points of public (free) access to computers, the Internet, etc. (if any)?
40. Are there facilities where the public or community members can get training in technology?
41. How is the Internet or technology being used for small or large business?
42. How comfortable/knowledgeable do you find community residents to be in using computers/the Internet? How does this vary by age or other factors?

Government

1. What local government offices are located in the community?
2. What country government offices are located in the community?
3. What federal government offices are located in the community?
4. What law enforcement offices are located in the community? What are the relationships between law enforcement and citizen groups? Are there community policing efforts or neighborhood watch associations?
5. Are there service, campaign, or internship opportunities available for students with government agencies?
6. What coordinating governmental bodies or groups are there (e.g., to make accessing government services easier?)

Physical and Land Assets

43. What type of terrain is there?
44. Are there pieces of land owned by government agencies? Are there large pieces of land owned by private companies? Who owns the land?
45. Is there land that appears not to be in use?
46. Is there evidence of mining or taking natural resources from the land, now or in the past?

- 47. Are there vacant buildings? Who owns them? Do they appear safe or serviceable?
- 48. How would you describe the physical space (e.g., densely populated, open, sparsely populated, highly developed, undeveloped, etc.)?
- 49. Are there key physical landmarks, resources or attributes that could be assets in your program?

Historical and Cultural Features

- 50. What historical or cultural sites are there in the community? Make sure to consider both commercial and non-commercial places.
- 51. Are there historical buildings or architectural features?
- 52. Are there resident artists, musicians, craftspeople, and others involved in historical or cultural preservation/ expression?
- 53. Are there museums?
- 54. Are there community festivals, celebrations, events, functions, and so on? Who sponsors them? Who attends them?
- 55. Are there nonprofit or community organizations noted for their work on historical or cultural issues?

Community Profile

Using the information gathered in your collection of materials and community canvass, complete a Community Profile, which gives you a good snapshot of the community overall.

Population	
Major Ethnic, Racial, Cultural Groups	
Household Type/ Presence and Age of Children and Youth	
Educational Attainment	
Median Household Income	
Unemployment Rate	
Key Industries	
Biggest Employers	
Major Occupations	
Main Civic and Nonprofit Organizations	
Churches/Religious Organizations	
Social Service Agencies	
Technology Use in the Community	
Schools and Educational Resources	

Recreational and Leisure Time	
Cultural Highlights	