

## Points for Consideration

### Asset-Based Approach to Needs Assessment and Prioritization of Needs

#### Overview:

Traditional needs assessment approaches look at what is missing in a community. We use the asset/capacity building approach (also known as asset-based needs assessment) to identify what is available or potentially available to a group/community. This approach helps to identify the organizational, agency, community, fiscal, and individual people skills available. The approach is used to apply and build upon what has been identified to improve a community/group in a positive way.

The asset-based approach to needs assessment is a useful tool when we don't know enough about both assets and needs in a community. It is used to gather in-depth information on both assets and needs to improve the situation in a community.

#### The Process:

- 1) Identify participants (Extension users, non-Extension users, community leaders, etc.).

#### **Have worksheets for each discussion group**

- 2) Have participants work in two different discussion groups:

##### Assets discussion group

- a) Participants are individually guided to identify assets, capacities, and strengths.
- b) Each individual clusters the identified assets into groups (e.g., educational assets, infrastructure, organizations, etc.) and assigns a letter to each cluster (e.g., A, B, C, etc.).
- c) Individuals are asked to name the clusters and how they might learn about them (their location, their nature, etc.).
- d) Meet as an assets discussion group to compare and contrast what was individually generated.
- e) Combine the lists and discuss options to learn about each cluster and how to leverage assets.

##### Issues/concerns discussion group

- a) Participants individually guided to identify community issues, and concerns.
- b) Each individual clusters the issues/concerns into groups (e.g., education, health, transportation, organizations, etc.) and assigns a letter to each cluster (e.g., A, B, C, etc.).
- c) Individuals are asked to name the clusters and how they might learn about them.
- d) Meet as a needs discussion group to compare and contrast what was individually generated.
- e) Combine the lists and discuss options to learn about each cluster.



- 3) Exchange group discussion lists:
- a) Groups exchange lists of identified concerns/issues and assets and are guided to add what they think is missing to the list. (e.g. the group that identified assets will look at the concerns/issues list and add what they think is missing, and the group that identified concerns/issues will look at the assets list and add what they think is missing.)
  - b) Questions for the assets groups:
    1. Which of the issues/concerns surprised you?
    2. What issues/concerns seem to be missing?
  - c) Questions for the concerns/issues groups:
    1. Which of the assets/strengths surprised you?
    2. What assets/strengths seem to be missing?
- 4) Combine the two groups and discuss:  
At this stage, the two groups come together (issues/concerns group and assets group) and discuss what each group has added to each of the lists.

**Have 3x5 notecards for voting; at least five per participant**

- 5) Prioritizing issues/concerns  
The purpose of the voting is to prioritize the issues/concerns (only the issues/concerns, no prioritization for the assets). Make sure the complete list of the issues/concerns clusters have been clearly named and labeled with a letter.
- a) Encourage all participants to vote (even if they didn't share ideas).
  - b) Each person selects the five most important issues/concerns (from the issues/concerns list ONLY) and writes one in the center of each card. If less than five issues/concerns are identified, determine appropriate final number of items to rank.
  - c) Write the item letter of the issue/concern in the upper left hand corner of the card.
  - d) After five have been selected, announce that rank ordering will begin. Tell your participants to:
    - Spread them out in front of you, and decide which is the MOST important, write "5" in the lower right corner of that card and underline it three times, and turn it over;
    - Next, select the LEAST important item of the four remaining in front of you and write a "1" in the lower right corner of that card and underline it three times and then turn the card over;
    - Then rate your next **most** important item as a "4" and turn the card over
    - Next, your next **least** important a "2" and
    - Finally write a "3" on the remaining card.
  - e) MAKE SURE ALL RANKINGS ARE UNDERLINED!!!!!!
  - f) Collect all cards and shuffle
  - g) Have a tally sheet made (e.g. item "L" received a "3", etc.) and record the points received for each item. The item that receives the most points is the top priority and so forth.
  - h) To break a tie, have a discussion on the items that are tied or revote (on the tied items only). Remember to hold individual votes confidential.

6) Discussion

- a) The two groups remain together after prioritizing the issues
- b) Discuss the identified assets and issues/concerns. Pose the following prompt: *“Discuss innovative opportunities to combine identified assets/resources that will help to either resolve concerns or help discover interesting ways to move ahead.”*

**References:**

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Evaluation Research Team. (2006). Gaining Consensus Among Stakeholders Through the Nominal Group Technique. Department of Health and Human Services. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Evaluation Briefs, (7)*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/evaluation/pdf/brief7.pdf>

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