

From Problem Solving to Solution-Creation: Evolutionary Responses to Commonly Encountered Challenges in Food Systems Organizing

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Presenter

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Summary and Highlights

This was a hands-on session to help attendees develop effectiveness in community food systems organizing. Presenter Keecha Harris covered the following topics:

- Identify Stages of Organizing
- Why use an asset-based approach?
- What is asset mapping?
- Develop an asset-based partnership list
- Develop a skeletal strategic plan

Common stages of organizing, according to Tuckerman's Theory of Organization Development:

- Forming
 - Participants are on their best behavior
 - Important to name a leader during this phase
- Storming
 - Ideas begin to conflict
 - This stage is necessary for growth
- Norming
 - Creativity begins to ebb
 - Agendas and values become known
- Performing
- Adjourning/Transforming
 - Ready to launch your project

Why Use an Asset Based Approach?

- Allows you to document community resources
- Allows you to view the community as a place with assets to be valued, documented and preserved rather than a community with deficits to be remedied

What is Asset Mapping?

A process which –

- Recognizes social capital
- Draws upon appreciative inquiry

- Encourages participatory approaches based on empowerment and ownership
- Creates collaborative development models with priorities on best use of community's resource base
- Strengthens society by engaging people as "citizens" rather than "clients"

Characteristics of Successful Community Building

- Resident-led
- Asset-based
- Relationship-driven
- Internally-focused
- Comprehensive
- Generative

Building Blocks for Communities

- Individuals
Examples of Individual Assets: talents, skills, creativity, culture, sense of history, time, enthusiasm, networks, income
 1. Primary building blocks for community
 2. EVERYONE has gifts
 3. All Individuals have assets
- Associations
Examples: Civic clubs, sororities, fraternities, churches, book clubs, neighborhood associations, arts organizations, business associations
 1. Secondary building block equals formal & informal associations of individuals
 2. Decisions usually made by consensus
 3. People are valued as producers
 4. Organized around an issue or community situation
 5. Place where Individuals give their gifts to community
 6. Powerful community change engine
- Local Institutions
Examples: Schools, colleges, libraries, hospitals, banks, parks, churches, police and fire departments, social service agencies
 1. Third community building block
 2. Decision making is usually top-down
 3. People are seen as clients or consumers
 4. Usually control most of available resources for community development

ABCD Approach – Asset Based Community Development

- Identifies and mobilizes assets
- Builds relationships
- Community-based

Basic Components of Strategic Planning

- Mission
- Vision
- Goals & Objectives

- Values
- Target Audience
- Timeline
- Communications – What are key messages?
- Evaluation – What are benchmarks to examine outcomes?
- Policy – How do we inform decision makers on key issues?

Further Resources

ABCD Institute - <http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html>