



Asset-Mapping in Religious Fundraising

Part Two

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January 2015

In my [last column](#), I suggested that faith communities might reflect on their fundraising and stewardship by taking a page from Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) models that focus on assets over needs. According to Dr. John McKnight, “you don’t know what you need until you know what you have.” Taking time to map our organization’s assets may give us a fresh lens through which to see our work - deepening relationships, creating new partnerships, and developing our organization’s mission and vision.

How might those entrusted with raising resources for faith-based organizations begin to map the assets of their communities? First, put your organization at the center. Write down the assets that come to mind. In our first attempts, material assets most often come to mind: budgets, buildings, endowments.... But if we take a second look, how many of these assets are non-material? Along with financial capital, what other assets do our organizations have in terms of human capital (knowledge, skills, resources, commitment, and values)? What about social capital (community networks, partnerships, traditions)?

Asset-mapping allows us to uncover what is already there but often overlooked in our organizations. For many of our communities, some of our richest resources are stories. Maybe it is the story of your organization’s founding. Maybe they are stories of organizational transition and transformation. Or maybe they are stories of transformed individuals or communities. Our vision and mission are also assets that keep us fixed on our goals and enable us to avoid wandering off course.

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YOU HAVE.”

If you have taken the time to put you and your organization at the center and map the assets that you can see, then you might next enlist others to help and ask what they see in you. Asking both those that know you well and those who have less connection give you a valuable look at your organization with fresh eyes. What do they notice that you were unable to see?

As your organization considers its assets, you are bound to see that many of them may be connected to you, but they are not ones that you control. Consider how you are connected. Are you in the same family - literally blood relatives, or of the same theological tradition, or a part of the same institutional umbrella? Maybe you share geography - you are in the same community even if you address different issues. Maybe you share a similar mission - you are in different geographical locations, but are both working toward ending childhood hunger, homelessness, or sex trafficking.



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In addition to the assets under our control such as staff, budgets, and buildings, we have an abundance of resources with which we are in relationship. In your mapping, you might consider what level of engagement you have with these other assets.

- How are you connected?
- Why?
- How might we engage these assets in a deeper and mutually beneficial partnership around our shared purpose?

In places where we may have assumed we only had deficiencies, maybe we had simply not considered those under-developed assets and relationships around us. Perhaps a sense of competition could lead to cooperation. Moving from asset-mapping to action steps is never simple, but taking stock of the assets in our organizations is the first step.

Recommended resources:

Faith & Leadership. "John McKnight: Low-income communities are not needy – they have assets." <http://www.faithandleadership.com/qa/john-mcknight-low-income-communities-are-not-needy-they-have-assets>

The Asset-Based Community Development Institute Website:
<http://www.abcdinstitute.org/publications/downloadable/>

Kretzmann, J. and McKnight, J. (2002). "Asset-Based Strategies for Faith Communities." Online:
<http://www.abcdinstitute.org/docs/Asset-Based%20Strategies%20for%20Faith%20Communities-1.pdf>

Dorfman, D. (1998). "Mapping Community Assets Workbook." Online:
<http://www.abcdinstitute.org/docs/Diane%20Dorfman-Mapping-Community-Assets-WorkBook%281%29-1.pdf>



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