



Executive Memo

To: Jessica Sotelo, Executive Director, Partners for Prosperity
From: Judy McClanahan, Community Resource and Referral Specialist,
Partners for Prosperity
Date: March 15, 2005
Re: Asset Mapping

In Partners for Prosperity's (P4Ps) strategic plan, community strengths and resources were examined using an "asset mapping" approach. Asset mapping emphasizes resources that are available in a community to address issues and concerns rather than looking at community needs. It is a strength-based approach and focuses on existing resources, both formal and informal, that can be enhanced.

Asset mapping is a community-based approach to issues and concerns. Community members become co-learners and co-creators of the entire process, from identifying and defining the issue, to identifying the assets available and discovering, designing and implementing the solutions. From a community development perspective, it helps to think of our communities in terms of their wealth — the people, things, services, and resources that they possess. Communities are built on the individual capacities and the focus and the mobilization of the people in the community, not on outside ideas about who they are and what they should be. The focus should be on the strengths and abilities rather than on the deficiencies of the people.

Recommendations

Therefore, it is recommended that P4P continue to map organizations in the regional and sub-regional communities to identify groups and individuals who are currently working to reduce poverty. In addition, P4P should map organizations that could potentially reduce poverty through partnerships and innovative approaches. Asset mapping is an effective way of getting a clear picture of what is happening in the region and it will allow P4P to work more strategically through partnership formations.

P4P should inventory the strengths and gifts of the people in each community. Communities should be asked what they have to offer thereby beginning a process of building and developing consensus; of bringing knowledge, skills, and capacities which are inherent in the community, out into the open, where those assets can work together to everyone's benefit. As the list of assets grows, so does the power and potential for the community.

Once the assets are identified and accessible, a variety of new ideas about directions for community building will follow. As more people come into the process bringing their ideas as well as skills and resources, new approaches to old problems will evolve. Asset mapping reveals the assets of the entire community and highlights the interconnections among them, which in turn reveals how to access those assets.



It is also recommended that P4P work to involve schools in community building. If involved, schools could play a big part in building connections within their communities, helping students know more about where they live and see the value in their community. Students could learn biology at the local canal, or history from interviewing senior citizens who may have participated in the founding of their town, and about migrations to the region. By participating in community projects, students see important roles for themselves within their communities and pride is the result. To thrive, a community must have an identity, economic vitality, and sustainability. By getting kids to identify with a place can make them feel more connected to it and they have more reasons to stay there which helps the community achieve sustainable change.

For Year 2 it is recommended that P4P conduct asset mapping in two Eastern Idaho Counties such as Bear Lake and Caribou. This would enable the staff to conduct and generate a thorough map in including organizations and individuals. In addition, P4P should pursue the option of utilizing Idaho Careline and 211 data and forms.