

Building Community with Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Engagement

ABCD is an approach that catalyzes change and development based on utilizing the existing gifts and capacities of people and their communities.

The ABCD model discourages development brought in from an outside source but rather energizes change and development from within. For truly sustainable development, it's important to focus on a community's strengths rather than solely its needs. The important factor is finding the area where local assets meet local needs.

How We Use ABCD

Our programmatic philosophy recognizes that genuine, sustainable change happens only when it comes from within an individual and a community. This recognition motivates us to strategize in a way that promotes healing, empowerment and a thriving community.

Through a more intentional application of asset-focused principles, Episcopal Relief & Development seeks to transform how we view ourselves and, in turn, connect with colleagues, partners, communities and constituencies. In order to easily identify assets — or gifts — we've categorized them into seven groups (with a few examples of each):

For truly sustainable development, it's important to focus on a community's strengths versus solely its needs. The important factor is finding the area where local assets meet local needs.

Human: people and their skills, knowledge, experiences, personalities, ideas

Natural: land, water, forests, wildlife, sun

Physical: fixed, structural or man-made buildings, homes, churches

Social: relationships, friendships, networks, traditions, cultures

Economic: cash, capital, savings, wages, pensions

Temporal: time, daylight, seasons, age

Spiritual: faith, hope and love, prayer, worship

Building Community with ABCD Engagement: Worksheet

Episcopal Relief & Development implements ABCD engagement successfully across all priorities. This includes being intentional about cultivating not just the people doing the work but also the essential work of connecting groups and agencies and building strong and long-lasting networks for change.

Individually or with your team, use this worksheet to brainstorm the many assets in and around your faith community. Prepare to be surprised, to need to add lots more space in each column and to be inspired to start making connections right away.

Here are questions to consider as you fill this out:

- Who are the people in our faith community? How are they connected to each other and our neighborhood?
- What are they passionate about?
- Are there artists, teachers, workers, listeners, dreamers?
- Do they represent a variety of cultures?
- What is the ecology of our space? Do we have a field? Meeting rooms? Gathering spaces? A rain or vegetable garden? A scary/cool bell tower or undercroft for exploring during a fellowship event?
- How frequent and welcoming are our community prayer and worship observances and do we directly invite neighbors to participate?

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