Many counties in Minnesota are actively recruiting new residents to fill job vacancies and grow their communities. Counties may be looking to invest in community development projects to build and expand the public infrastructure to accommodate new residents. Historically, most community development is needs-based. The community is assessed, needs are identified, and the gaps are filled through funding, policy, or government intervention. However, there is another approach to community development that can be coupled with a needs-based approach.

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) bases development on the existing resources in the county. Capitalizing on the strength of the community that already exists, counties index existing resources, markets them, and helps build and strengthen connections.

Counties may utilize this approach to recruit or retain residents. ABCD is not a substitute for investments to build needed resources, but shows the existing strengths of a community.

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is a strategy that utilizes the resources already within a community for development. These resources can include:

- Community members and businesses
- Public or private institutions
- Community programs
- Physical assets
- Existing infrastructure

ABCD is done through a series of steps:

- Asset mapping of what/who is already in the community.
- Highlighting where existing assets can complement county initiatives.
- Identifying potential new relationships and making connections.
- Marketing existing assets to retain and recruit county residents.
EXAMPLES

Asset Mapping

In 2014, the United Way of 1000 Lakes and UMN’s Center for Urban and Regional Affairs mapped youth out-of-school resources and family economic resources for Itasca County. They identified area resources, created an instruction manual for organizations, and sent formal requests for the organization to add themselves to the map. Once completed, the interactive map and a spreadsheet of the resources was shared with the Itasca Area Schools Collaborative, a joint power of school districts. The resources were then shared with families in need.

View the map: Map of Youth and Economic Resources within the Itasca Area
View the guide: Itasca Area Community Asset Mapping Project

ABCD in Action

After MnDOT identified a shared need for public transit outside of city centers, Blue Earth, Nicollet, and Le Sueur counties were mandated to make public transit accessible to more residents. A large transit system was infeasible for the area of service. Thankfully, an area nonprofit, VINE Faith in Action, offered limited transportation services at the time. With additional funding from MnDOT, Vine was able to expand services to residents across the counties. TRUE (Town Rural Urban Express) Transit is now staffed by volunteer drivers and residents make a reservation for a $5 ride in a handicap accessible van, with fares subsidized by MnDOT. Read more: TRUE Transit

August 2023