



The following exercise is taken from a British Council community leadership programme. It is designed to be undertaken with a group of people from a geographic community to begin to think about the types of asset in their community, with a view to taking steps to address certain local issues.

If you wish to run this activity with your staff team or Board you can adapt it and ask people to draw the map and focus on different themes. For example instead of looking at problem areas in a community, you could simply use the map to identify different groups of stakeholders with whom you or your social enterprise may wish to work. This activity can then be followed up with a “stakeholder mapping” concentric circles activity as outlined on the Sustainability Programme.

Community asset mapping (2 hours)

Learning outcomes

- Improved ability to identify the challenges, strengths and assets within the community
- Recognising that each community has a unique selection of assets upon which to build it’s future – ‘if the problems in the community the solutions are in the community’
- Improved understanding of the systems and relationships which have an impact on the community

Summary

Participants create a shared visual map of their local community, including positives and areas of concern, with broader community engagement if possible. The aim is to help them think more deeply about the community and their connection with it. The three different areas they will explore are the relationships and *potential* relationships between:

- Social **issues** in the community and their social enterprise
- The **assets** (used and unused) of the community
- Potential **markets or customers** in the community

Preparation and Materials

Paper and lots of coloured pens, sets of printed images, and two examples of community maps.

Approach

1. Share with the group: the task is to make a giant map of their locality on the large sheet of paper. If the group have come from a number of localities, split them into smaller groups based on where they come from. It is important that this exercise is a mapping out of a location that is familiar to them.
2. Show an example to the group from your own community. Ask each group to draw in pencil (with the help of the rest of the group) a very rough map of the geography: roads, towns, hills, borders: whatever is right for the scale of the area you are working in. Stress again that it doesn't have to be accurate or detailed.
3. Give out the icons and explain that people can use to represent different features of the community as we develop the map.
4. Ask everyone to use the coloured pens to trace out the geography and then add landmarks which they feel are important. If possible, use different colours for different types of organisation (e.g. green for factories and shops, red for housing, blue for government buildings etc).
5. Ask the group to identify some of the 'assets' (resources) locally:
 - What services and facilities does the community have?
 - What skills does the community have?
6. Now ask the participants to write down on post-it notes some of the emotions or feelings they have for different parts of the area, as well as for the different buildings and facilities they have placed on the map. These can be positive or negative. They should place these post-it notes on the map.
7. Ask the group to identify some of the places that they feel unsafe and any no-go areas in their community
8. Identify issues or concerns in the community and mark them on the map.
9. Identify where there are gaps in knowledge or understanding.

Icons which can be used in community map

Positive places



Issue or place of concern



Decision making power



No access



Unknowns



Place of learning / arts / leisure



Negative places



Debrief

- Bring people together into one group and explore together some of the reasons why people hold particular feelings about the community
- Explore the assumptions and the issues underlying their attitudes and why different people might have different perceptions e.g. 'We have different feelings about our communities. There are underlying tensions'.
- What are some of the key themes which have emerged? Especially those connected with social issues, for example transport, drainage, health, freedom, space, drugs, margins, jobs...

Ask the group to review their maps again and talk to each other:

- What is the social issue or need that their social enterprise is helping to address in this community?
- Having identified a range of community assets – which of these do they draw on, have links with or use well in their role as a social enterprise leader? i.e. What are some of the well used 'assets' (resources) locally?
- Looking at the map - what un-used assets are there? How could they draw on these more? For example – Disused buildings? Unused land? People that are under-valued? Where could they be making better links or drawing on the community assets that they are currently not drawing on?
- Are some of the people, institutions or organizations potential customers that they had not thought of before?

Debrief:

- How did they find the process?
- Were there any surprises in the extra information on assets, customers etc. that they were able to identify?

The facilitator could capture any of the key information about assets on a flipchart – see example below. The facilitator can also encourage participants to question:

- Are these features of the community a problem, or could they be put to other use?
- Who is in control of those assets?
- Are the assets being used well for the benefit of the community? Or are they being used to benefit a limited few, or people outside the local community?

It may be useful capture ideas in a separate grid – drawn out on flipchart page

<p>Individual Assets</p> <p><i>Individuals and their:</i></p> <p><i>Skills</i></p> <p><i>Talents</i></p> <p><i>Experiences</i></p> <p><i>Consider:</i></p> <p><i>Professional</i></p> <p><i>Personal</i></p> <p><i>Resources</i></p> <p><i>Leadership</i></p>	<p>Institutional Assets</p> <p><i>Churches</i></p> <p><i>Colleges and Universities</i></p> <p><i>Elderly Care Facilities</i></p> <p><i>Fire Department</i></p> <p><i>Hospitals and clinics</i></p> <p><i>Mental health facilities</i></p> <p><i>Libraries</i></p> <p><i>Police Department</i></p> <p><i>Schools</i></p> <p><i>Utilities</i></p>	<p>Organisational Assets</p> <p><i>Community Centers</i></p> <p><i>Radio/TV stations</i></p> <p><i>Small businesses</i></p> <p><i>Large businesses</i></p> <p><i>Home-based enterprises</i></p> <p><i>Religious organizations</i></p> <p><i>Non-profit organizations</i></p> <p><i>Clubs</i></p> <p><i>Citizen groups</i></p> <p><i>Business associations</i></p>
<p>Governmental (State and Federal) Assets</p> <p><i>City Government</i></p> <p><i>State Capital</i></p> <p><i>Bureau of land management</i></p> <p><i>Economic Development Dept.</i></p> <p><i>Forest Service</i></p> <p><i>Military facilities</i></p> <p><i>School Service Center</i></p> <p><i>Small Business Administration</i></p> <p><i>State Education Agency</i></p>	<p>Physical and Land Assets</p> <p><i>Agriculture</i></p> <p><i>Energy resources</i></p> <p><i>Forest</i></p> <p><i>Industrial areas</i></p> <p><i>Lakes, ponds, streams</i></p> <p><i>Mining</i></p> <p><i>Natural resources/landmarks</i></p> <p><i>Parks/recreation areas</i></p> <p><i>Vacant land</i></p> <p><i>Waste resource</i></p>	<p>Cultural Assets</p> <p><i>Historic/Arts groups</i></p> <p><i>Ethnic/Racial diversity</i></p> <p><i>Heritage</i></p> <p><i>Crafts, skills</i></p> <p><i>Cultural traditions</i></p>

Example!

