

Asset-based Approaches

Introduction (30 minutes)

Set

- *We'd like to spend a few minutes talking about an approach to understanding and working with individuals and communities.*
- *Recall three frameworks and the idea that the framework from which you view achievement and the gap informs your approaches to working with individuals and communities.*
- *If you think about the concepts of deficits and assets, which framework would start from the point of identifying Darius' deficits; which his assets?*
- *Paying attention to assets opens us to new understandings of people, power, and change.*

Labels and Deficits

- Begin by thinking about how others' assumptions about/labels for us can shape the way they interact with us. As you think about meeting with your community partner and the people they work with, jot down names/labels/phrases they might use to describe you and assumptions that they might make about you.
- Share some – capture and ask: If these are others' labels/assumptions for us, how might this affect their willingness to work with us, their expectations, their sense of our commitment. How might their labels/perceptions affect your willingness to work them?
- Labels blind us to gifts and tend to marginalize us
- Youth
 - Time – it is often an unutilized asset
 - Peer group relationships – gangs (negative); connect in positive way instead
 - Connection to place – confined to neighborhoods and generally know more about what's going on than anyone else
 - Gardening (space, energy, interests, being outside, make money)

Assets

- We'd like to explore a different way of framing others.
- Everyone has capacities, abilities, and gifts, but our tendency is not to start there. If we start with needs/deficits, our assumption is that others must help us.
- Living the “good life” depends on whether those capacities can be used, abilities expressed, gifts given
- For example, how do you feel when you are able to serve, help, be of assistance? How would you feel if the assumption was you weren't able to serve, but that you always had to be served?
- The critical step is making these assets known (e.g., a carpenter lost his leg in an accident. Deficiency – lost his leg; asset – he is a woodworker)

Categories of Assets

- Individual – skills, talents, perspectives, interests (what do you know about, care about, know how to do, etc.) – things you could teach others, what do you do best...
- Physical
- Economic
- Associational/Institutional

2 minutes/station

Observation/Processing

- What do you observe; what did you learn?
- In what ways, if any, do you view your classmates differently?
- Did you see any possible connections among the assets? Groupings?
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- How might it impact on how they think about community? What assumptions might you be having about them??

Problems don't go away, but it is about what gets foregrounded

The most powerful communities are those that can identify gifts of those people at the margins and pull them into community life.