



Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: Asset-Based Development: An Approach to Poverty in the U.S.

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Article: <https://ced.sog.unc.edu/asset-based-development-an-approach-to-poverty-in-the-u-s/>

This entry was posted on December 29, 2011 and is filed under Built Assets & Housing, Community Development, Economic Development, Financial Assets, Human & Cultural Assets, Natural Assets, Program Work, Regional & Collaborative Approaches, Report On Asset-Building Strategies, Social & Civic Assets, Sustainable Development



With politicians and the media focusing so much attention on the gap between the rich and

the poor, some community leaders are asking what they can do to assist communities and households on the economic margin. One approach that deserves serious examination is known as “asset-based development.” This approach involves taking an inventory of existing individual and community assets—such as a viable community bank, determined entrepreneurs, an economic development opportunity, or leaders capable of cooperating on development efforts—and using them to enhance the community’s assets or to create new assets.

A wide array of asset-building tactics have been employed around the country, ranging from individual development accounts for low-income households, to offering banking services to the unbanked, to eliminating food deserts. The sheer number of programs makes it challenging for community leaders to learn about the options and to select the best ones for their communities. What programs have been established? Which asset-building activities would be most suitable for a specific community? Who has undertaken such programs in the past? Some of the answers to these questions can be found in a **School of Government web-based guide on asset-building strategies** in rural areas.

The web guide, titled *Building Assets for the Rural Future: A Guide to Promising Asset-Building Programs for Communities and Individuals on the Economic Margin*, offers more than eighty examples of asset-based development programs. In the guide, these programs are arranged into the following four broad categories in an easy-to-navigate format:

Financial Assets

Natural Resources and Features

Built Assets and Infrastructure

Human, Social, and Cultural Assets

(click a link to go directly to the web guide to see programs in that category)

Over the coming year, the programs described in the web guide will be highlighted in this blog. Let us know which asset-building programs you have tried and how they worked.