

ASSESSING LOCAL COMMUNITY ASSETS: FINDING OPPORTUNITIES, MAKING CONNECTIONS

As U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) mentoring programs begin to transition off their three-year grant cycle, they often focus on replacing their grant funds with another large-scale award. Many pursue the substantial grant funds provided by other federal mentoring initiatives, such as the Department of Health and Human Services' Children of Prisoners mentoring initiative, or those offered by large grant-making private foundations. While mentoring programs should always have the capacity to compete for "big ticket" funding streams when they are available, they also need to remember to cultivate the smaller, more localized funding opportunities right in their backyard.

All communities, from the largest urban areas to the most remote rural settings, have assets that can support a mentoring program. While the concept of "asset mapping" has been applied to many different community development and educational planning processes, mentoring programs should define assets as those organizations, institutions, and groups that could provide support in any form. These assets range from local government agencies to civic organizations, from hometown businesses to other youth-serving nonprofits. The challenge for mentoring programs is in identifying these assets and assessing the amounts and type of support that each could offer. This training supplement explores strategies for assessing the potential sources of support in your community.

General Principles for Effective Asset Mapping

Organization and effort are key to any sustainability-related task, and the process of investigating your community's assets is no exception. Effectively researching these can be time-con-

Common Community Assets and Funding Sources

Corporations and businesses

Individual donors

Foundations (local, or with a local focus):

- Community
- Corporate
- Private

United Way

AmeriCorps/VISTA/Senior Corps

Civic groups (Kiwanis, Junior League, etc.)

Local government grants

Public agencies that need your services

suming and a little daunting. But it is a process well worth doing because local support is the lifeblood of most mentoring programs in the United States. Those large federal grants are rare commodities, and the odds are that your program will have to diversify its funding—and quickly—if it is to maintain services.

The following general principles can enhance your efforts to investigate the resources in your community. Tips for researching specific funding sources and some simple tools for organizing your results follow later in this training supplement.

1. Know your program needs before beginning your research. This bit of common sense is often overlooked by programs as their grant winds down and they rush to find new funds. Obviously, you know the total amount of the grant that you need to replace, but is that really the amount it takes to keep your program running? Could your program

operate on a reduced amount if you made a few changes and got creative about partnerships? If you cannot replace the full amount of the grant, what are the critical pieces needed to keep the program going? Setting a range of financial goals—from full grant replacement to bare-bones operation—will help you be more strategic about what to seek from funding sources.

And don't limit your "needs" to just dollars: in-kind donations of goods and services can also be an important source of support. You may find that getting donations such as office space, volunteer staff time, technology support, and free or discounted access for your matches to community recreation and educational activities can be just as important to your program's future as a grant.

Take some time to map out your program's financial and in-kind requirements. This focuses your search and keeps your program from slipping into "mission drift," which occurs when programs take on funding or add new components that are not a good fit. Your program may change some once your grant cycle has ended, but make sure those changes are driven by what's best for the youth you serve (your mission), not by desperation.

(MRC Fact Sheet #12, *Preparing for Tomorrow Today: Reinventing Partnerships to Sustain Your OSDFS Mentoring Program*, offers more advice on creating scenarios based on your program's future financial and in-kind needs: <http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/factsheet12.pdf>)

2. Assessing community resources takes a group effort. This is particularly true in large urban settings, but regardless of where your program is located, it will take more than one person to pull all the information you need together. Making this a group effort is especially important in light of the restrictions regarding using OSDFS grant dollars on fundraising activities. You may find that much of the "legwork" of investigating various community resources is best done by board members, parents, and

other program partners who do not have restrictions on their activities.

Most programs choose to form a committee for this type of planning and research, with individuals assuming responsibility for investigating one piece of the funding puzzle, such as community foundations or civic organizations. Frequent meetings then provide an opportunity to share information with others and build the various resources you are pursuing into a coherent sustainability plan.

3. It's all about "who you know." Another great reason to involve many others in mapping your community assets is that no one person has all the inside knowledge, connections, or access to the various funding sources you will be investigating. Among the groups that should be involved in your mapping of community assets:

- ❖ *Board members.* Whether your program has a formal board of directors or a more informal advisory board, this group is vital to any good assessment of community resources and your access to them. Board members often have ties to other youth-serving organizations (or entities that fund them) and bring considerable knowledge of the community and the specific funding sources mentioned above. Perhaps most important, board members can provide an "in" through personal connections and long-standing relationships with other organizations, giving you access or inside information that other seeking funds may not have.
- ❖ *Staff members.* Chances are your staff members also have ties to other organizations or government agencies. Be sure to tap into their personal connections and knowledge of the community.
- ❖ *Volunteers and parents.* Involving these groups really broadens your insight into the community beyond what your board and staff bring to the table. Volunteers and par-

ents can provide insight into financial or in-kind support that may be available through their employers. They might be involved with other youth-serving organizations that you could partner with, or have personal or family connections that they can leverage. A mentor whose employer gives generously to the community or a parent whose best friend sits on the school board can be a tremendous asset to a mentoring program.

- ❖ *Your current partners.* The schools, community agencies, and other program partners you are working with all have connections and insight into community assets of which you may not be aware. Make sure they are involved in your community asset mapping. After all, they have a vested interest in seeing the program continue and should be willing to help you explore new funding options and new forms of support.

Tools You Can Use

Some simple tools for fundraising—including mapping “who you know” (including your partners) and the community contacts they have—can be found at the end of this training supplement.

4. Use a variety of assessment techniques.

Programs sometimes feel like this type of community asset mapping will involve an endless series of phone calls to potential funders or hours spent looking through foundation directories. While those more labor-intensive techniques may come into play from time to time, you will be best served by employing a variety of information gathering techniques:

- ❖ *Pay attention to your local media.* Want to know who is funding educational and youth-centered initiatives in your area? Read the paper! Local newspapers, television and radio newscasts, and community-themed

blogs and Web sites always contain announcements of new or successful programs. Pay attention to any information about who is funding the effort. You may not be able to get in on the funding you’re reading about today, but you can put that funding source on your list of potential leads for the future. Even paying attention to the logos that appear on ads and billboards for other youth service providers can provide tremendous insight into the foundations, businesses, and civic organizations that may be interested in funding a mentoring program. So pay attention to the media clues that can lead you to sources of funds.

- ❖ *Use search engines and databases to narrow your search.* This concept was explored in greater detail in the first training supplement (*Hunting and Gathering: Tips for Using the Web To Find Funding Sources*, http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/supplement1_technology.pdf). Today’s foundation directories and government funding search tools have become quite sophisticated in their ability to let you narrow your search. You can quickly generate a list of potential foundations or government grants based on geographic location, amounts of awards, types of programs funded, who is eligible to apply, and a host of other relevant criteria. The days of searching for a needle in a haystack are gone. Be sure to see what foundation directories and other funding search engines your local public library offers for free. This can save considerable expense over a fee-based search service. The reference librarian can explain what subscription-based tools are available both online and in CD-ROM format and can help identify government or foundation Web pages where you can search for funding opportunities.
- ❖ *Network, network, network . . .* A great way to learn more about your community’s assets is to participate in community government and other planning processes. Go to city council meetings when youth or educa-

tional issues are on the agenda. Follow the actions and agendas of your local school board. If your community has “roundtables” or “coalitions” for social services or educational initiatives, go to their public meetings. Even if you never say a word, you can learn a lot from the discussions taking place and learning how services go from planning to reality in your community. You are also likely to find other youth workers and potential partners attending these meetings. So get involved with your community’s planning process, network with other youth development stakeholders, and add your voice to the chorus of those making decisions about how to best serve young people.

- ❖ *Play detective.* Finding detailed information about community funding sources can often involve lots of personal conversations and phone calls. For example, it may take several attempts to find the specific employee who manages a corporation’s community philanthropy work, or which city official can give you the details about an upcoming parks and recreation grant. Foundations are also notorious for having widely differing requirements for applying for funds. You may find yourself making lots of calls, scheduling a lot of meetings, and doing a good amount of digging to get the information you need out of the assets you identify. Do not get discouraged if finding information becomes difficult. Every person you talk to is a potential mentor, a potential supporter, someone who will know about your program who did not before. So even if you do hit some dead ends, remember that you are still doing positive outreach into the community.

5. Keep organized! Remember that the ultimate goal for doing all this mapping is to get a good understanding of potential sources of support so that you can plan effectively and begin the process of actively pursuing funds. This is unlikely to happen unless you are diligent about tracking and organizing the information your team gathers. You may want to create a simple

database that keeps track of funding opportunities, timelines, key contacts, and potential in-kind donations. Even charting out your activities and progress on a white board or poster can keep everyone organized. Some simple worksheets you can use to detail personal connections, organize your mapping results, and turn the most promising community assets you identify into concrete sustainability goals, can be found at the end of this resource.

The recent MRC publication *Building a Sustainable Mentoring Program: A Framework for Resource Development Planning* provides further information about how to develop a comprehensive sustainability plan based on your assessment of internal and community assets: <http://www.edmentoring.org/pubs/sustainability.pdf>.

Information To Collect When “Mapping”

With these principles in mind, it’s time to determine exactly what information you need to learn about each of your community assets. Whether you are focusing on civic organizations and private foundations or looking to form strategic partnerships with other youth service providers to pursue a new grant, there are several key pieces of information that you will want to collect as part of your mapping activities:

- ❖ *What type of potential support can they provide?* Some of your assets may be able to provide direct financial support, helping pay for staff salaries and program expenses. Others may be able to provide in-kind goods and services, volunteers, or some combination of all these. Knowing what a source can potentially provide, and at what amount, helps considerably when making your full sustainability plan and prioritizing which sources to pursue.
- ❖ *The pros and cons of pursuing each funding option.* This includes not only the mitigating

factors of receiving funds from a particular entity (for example, a foundation may have stipulations or regulations that would make a grant from them less desirable), but also the pros and cons of the process of applying. What is the likelihood of receiving support from an asset? Is the amount of support meaningful? If a funding stream may involve a lot of staff time and effort for little financial reward, you may choose other options.

- ❖ *Who are the key contacts?* Who in an organization will be your “in?” Who are the decisionmakers that can influence whether you get funding or not? Who do you need to get to know better to pursue a specific funding source? Who can answer your questions when applying for funds? This is critical information and your program will find increased success if you can build ongoing relationships (or at least program familiarity) with these key contacts.
- ❖ *How do we follow through?* Detail the steps necessary to effectively pursue support from the assets you identify. Once you start actively applying for funds and creating new partnerships there will be many little details to track. Knowing all the steps you need to cover will help keep you organized and make it easier to distribute specific tasks among your team members.

A simple worksheet for collecting information you gather during mapping can be found at the end of this training supplement.

Strategies for Assessing Specific Community Assets

Corporations and businesses

Any business in your community, no matter how large or small, has the potential for lending support to your mentoring program. According to the Giving Institute, U.S. corporations gave away nearly 14 billion dollars in 2005 (and this figure doesn't include corporate foundations,

which are tracked separately).¹ But there are significant differences between a large, nationally known corporation and a small, locally owned business, both in terms of what they can offer and how you will approach them.

Larger corporations usually have some kind of formal giving program. They may have established a separate nonprofit foundation, or they may administer their giving program through a community relations or other department within the company. Sometimes a corporation will have both a foundation and an in-house giving program, with different priorities and purposes for each.

Corporate giving programs often focus their giving on specific areas of interest that are tied to their company mission, such as a natural foods chain that focuses on environmental issues or hunger relief. They also tend to serve communities where the company has significant business or where a home office is located. For example, the Limited Stores gives millions of dollars to charitable groups, but only in four communities in the country where their home offices are located. On the other hand, 3M supports projects in many states because they include any community where 3M has a plant.

Locally owned and operated businesses may be more informal in their giving strategies, especially if they are quite small. These businesses often enjoy working closely with a charitable group by offering volunteers, sponsoring events or other kinds of fundraisers, and donating in-kind goods or services. They are especially eager to get recognition for their help, as it may turn into additional business for them (such as a donation of an auction item that would encourage new customers to come to their store). Though you may not get a large cash donation from a small business owner, their long-term support as an active partner in your efforts can go a long way toward helping your program thrive.

¹ Giving USA Foundation. *Giving USA 2006* Downloaded November 9, 2006, from http://www.givinginstitute.org/about_aafrc/index.cfm?pg=chart1.cfm&ID=xgusa1

Start by making a list of corporations that are either based in your area or who do business there. Use your fundraising committee, advisory board, board of directors, or a combination of these people to brainstorm an initial list. Try setting up a special, one-time meeting and include some special guests like your local bank representative or a member of the chamber of commerce. Be sure to capture as much information as possible during your brainstorm sessions, including any details about size, previous giving, and contact people.

Once you have a list going, do some online research to discover more about the larger businesses and corporations you've identified. The company Web site should provide you with an overview of their giving program, priorities, geographic areas served, and how to request assistance (this may take a few clicks to find). You can also research some of your state's top corporate giving programs at the Grantsmanship Center Web site: <http://www.tgci.com/funding.shtml>. The online version of *Business Week* has a section devoted to philanthropy, including an interactive chart of top corporate donors that shows cash and in-kind gifts, percent of gross revenue and net profits, and general giving priorities (<http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/philanthropy/index.html>).

Smaller, local businesses may not have a Web presence. As mentioned previously, local newspapers, business journals, magazines, and even billboards will be important resources for learning about the giving priorities of these companies. Look for such items as press releases, human interest stories, advertisements, event announcements, and brochures or newsletters from other agencies to help inform your search for businesses that care about kids. Ask your board members and other supporters to talk to business owners they know to learn more about how they prioritize their charitable giving. Consider joining a local business or community association (such as a small business association), and be sure to find out if any of your board members belong to the Kiwanis Club or Chamber of Commerce.

Reading the business section of the newspaper can also help you learn about which companies are doing well, new businesses moving to your community, and other information. Check the "society page" to see what charities are holding events and who is sponsoring them.

Individual donors

Individual giving is the largest category of support for charities in the United States, comprising nearly 75 percent of all giving in 2005, according to the Giving USA Foundation. Yet, building an individual donor base can feel overwhelming and can be a full-time activity in itself. It takes commitment and passion, not only from you, but also from your board of directors and committees, and your agency leadership.

Decide upfront how much time and energy you and your board or "mapping team" can invest in developing an individual donor program. There are a variety of ways you could proceed, so make some decisions about what you want to accomplish and how. You may want to start off by simply identifying anyone and everyone you can think of and send out a simple appeal letter. Or you may decide that you want to invite these people to a mentor recognition luncheon so they will get to know your work. Some agencies develop regular "informational meetings" that give invited guests a chance to learn about your work *before* you ask them for money. Investigate various approaches and talk with someone who has experience with donor programs before you get too far along.

To build your list of potential donors, begin by determining who you and your supporters already know. An asset mapping process like the one described earlier in this article can turn up unexpected connections and opportunities for further exploration. Remember, you are not just looking for "the rich people," but rather for people in your community who will connect with your work and are interested in making a difference for kids, no matter what their income level. Nearly nine out of 10 American families give to

charities, so your job will mainly be convincing them that your mentoring program is one of the causes they want to support.

Finding a few wealthy donors helps, too, of course, so you can supplement your asset mapping activity by looking at the same local media sources described above for more information. Whose name appears regularly on lists of attendees at major charity events? Who serves on the boards of other charitable organizations? Who recently got promoted to be the head of a successful business? Who serves on the board of your local United Way or other local boards and committees? Divide up some of these research activities among your team members and be sure they keep track of what they learn (preferably in a database, spreadsheet, or other accessible electronic document.)

Your list of potential donors should include how you identified them, who knows them, and what you might ask of them in a solicitation. Develop a clear plan for how you will begin to let these people know about the great work you are doing and get them interested in helping you. Finding individual supporters is often very aptly called “friend-raising” and is, in many ways, similar to the work you do while courting potential mentors. Be respectful of their time, interests, and abilities, be proud to share your program’s good work with them, and be sure to let them know what you are asking them for. Most people won’t contribute if they are never asked!

See the chapter on individual giving in the National Mentoring Center publication, *Sustainability Planning and Resource Development for Youth Mentoring Programs* for more information on how to best implement these types of campaigns (available at: <http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/sustainability.pdf>).

Local foundations

If you are planning to raise funds through grant applications to foundations, starting with those in your own backyard is a good idea. Smaller

family foundations, local corporate foundations, and community foundations are likely to be receptive to providing funding for your mentoring program, especially those whose interests include children, youth, education, human services, and similar issues. Most foundations do not provide ongoing support over many years, are not usually interested in funding operating costs, and may have limits to the number of times you can receive funding within a period of time. On the other hand, smaller foundation grants are also relatively easy to apply for (once you have a boilerplate and know what you are asking for), are fairly flexible in how you spend the money, and are genuinely interested in helping you make your project successful. Community foundations, which typically manage many diverse funds with multiple funding priorities, have professional staff who can help you through their funding process.

Definition: “Boilerplate”

Boilerplate is text that can be used repeatedly as-is or easily adapted for different purposes. Organizations that apply for many funding streams develop boilerplate that can be modified as needed to meet the information requirements of their funding sources. Your program may want to consider creating several types of boilerplate: a lengthy version that details every aspect of your organization’s history, capacity, and outcomes, and shorter versions that focus on specific aspects of your services or particular funding needs.

Of special interest to OSDfS mentoring grantees are **local education foundations** (LEFs), which can be a valuable potential source of funding, especially for those programs with close ties to school services. Although these foundations are often small, they are a growing

resource in many communities. Ask your school partner if your community has a local education foundation or visit the Web site of the National School Foundation Association (<http://www.schoolfoundations.org/index.cfm>), where you can find information about school foundations by state. (If your community doesn't have one, you might hint to your board members and other influential contacts that it could be beneficial to local schools and mentoring programs alike if one got started in your community.)

A few tips for researching and applying for foundation grants:

- ❖ Before you start looking into foundations, spend a little time thinking about what you want them to fund. Proposals that offer a foundation a set of specific outcomes that can be achieved within a certain timeframe are well suited to a foundation application process.
 - ❖ Do some initial Web or database research (see Training Supplement #1) to find foundations in your area that are a good match for your project ideas. Make a chart of all the foundations you research and include such details as their giving priorities, timelines, method of application, and key contact information. Some tools for collecting this information can be found at the end of this supplement.
 - ❖ Pick several of the most likely ones to start with and do a little more research on them. Who have they funded in the past? What is their funding range? Do you know anyone there personally?
 - ❖ Contact appropriate staff at each foundation to briefly explain your project and make sure they think it's something worth pursuing (they will usually be very honest about this!). This initial contact is your chance to get them interested in seeing your proposal, so make the most of this. If you can make an appointment to speak to someone in person, so much the better.
- ❖ Develop a “boilerplate” proposal and budget that you can use and adapt to different foundations, and gather all the supplemental information you may need such as your tax exempt letter, last audit, agency budget, and letters of support.
 - ❖ Make your final proposal perfect! Proofread, get others to proofread—make sure your numbers add up and that any reader could understand your goals, activities, and outcomes.

More tips on writing a successful grant can be found on numerous Web sites and in a wide variety of print publications. A listing of some of the best resources on grantwriting will be compiled in the final training supplement in this series. The Foundation Center has some free resources that are especially useful: <http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/learnabout/proposalwriting.html>.

Local government funding

Local government funding can be a great source of support for your mentoring program, so learn all you can about how resources for human services needs are distributed in your community. Finding these government funding opportunities may start with Web research (see Training Supplement #1) but usually requires some personal contact as well. Making a few phone calls to your city or county governments may save you some time in the long run, since these resources are not always easy to find on a local government Web site. If you are not sure which department to contact, try calling a general information line or the office of your mayor or board of county commissioners to ask such questions as:

Where can I find out about public funding opportunities for children and youth?

What departments provide such funding?

What is the process for getting these funds?



Is there someone there I can talk to about how my program fits in with the city's/county's goals and funding criteria?

You will probably be referred to more than one person before you get the answers. You may save yourself time by making an appointment to speak with the head of your local human services department or an executive director of a larger nonprofit organization who is willing to take some time to explain the funding streams available in your area. You will also learn a lot by sitting in on city council or county commission meetings where human service or educational needs are on the agenda, by participating in one-time community meetings where budgets for human services or education are being discussed, and by reading your local newspapers.

Once you have a general understanding of what services are locally funded and how the funding process works, research which direct service providers are key recipients of this funding. If a large human services organization that works with high-risk families is receiving significant local government funding, make an appointment to talk with them about how your mentoring program could make their work easier and more effective.

United Way resources

Across the country, local United Way agencies are rethinking their traditional roles of supporting a set number of organizations year after year. United Way organizations consider themselves “partners in change” and often are involved in helping local communities plan how best to meet local needs. They also act as volunteer clearinghouses in many communities and have other resources available to local programs. In terms of funding, while some United Ways are still dedicating the bulk of their resources to a specific set of agencies, more and more have special grant opportunities available, including both short-term “seed” money and funding for multi-year projects. So it's worth checking out your own United Way organization. You can

read more about United Way's national priorities and use its zip code search to find your local organization at: <http://national.unitedway.org/>.

Civic groups, clubs, and associations

Chances are your mentoring program is already familiar with local civic groups and associations through your volunteer recruitment work. Some examples include the Kiwanis, Junior League of America, Soroptimist and Optimist Clubs chapters, Elks and other fraternal organizations, and Rotary Clubs. Many of these are great places to recruit potential volunteers and meet local business and civic leaders. A few also have regular giving programs in some communities that offer annual or one-time funding for special activities in addition to providing volunteer support. Don't overlook smaller, special interest organizations such as classic car or garden clubs that might want to get their name on your brochure or event T-shirt. Many also have meeting spaces and facilities that your program may be able to use for special events and activities.

If you have volunteers, staff, or board members who are involved in any of these organizations, ask them to help you learn about their priorities for service in your community. Watch your local media for stories that involve any of these civic groups. Attend a meeting and talk to members about their activities, and think creatively about how you might be able to develop an ongoing relationship with *them*. Be sure to think about what you can offer them before you go. How would a partnership with your mentoring program help them achieve their goals? These groups are unlikely to provide major cash support to your mentoring program, but they could help you recruit mentors, offer administrative support, sponsor a special event or fundraiser, or advertise your program in the community.

National and Community Service resources

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), while not a source of cash funding for your program, can provide you with



volunteers who can help with both direct mentoring services and with strengthening program structures. CNCS assets make it possible for you to enhance your work in the community, develop new partnerships, improve existing services, and carry out a host of other “staff-intensive” activities to support your work.

AmeriCorps volunteers, known as “members,” serve in a wide array of programs, each with its own mission to help communities. The two AmeriCorps programs that have direct relevancy for mentoring programs are:

- ❖ **AmeriCorps*State and National.** These AmeriCorps members most often focus on direct service projects, and when placed with your agency can serve as mentors, volunteer recruiters and managers, program developers, trainers, community partnership liaisons, or supplemental tutors.
- ❖ **AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America).** Rather than providing direct service, VISTAs are charged with developing permanent infrastructure and building the capacity of local agencies to meet specific community needs. They can be great asset mappers themselves or can help your program follow through on sources you identify. VISTA members are involved in a wide variety of community improvement activities and work with many different kinds of community organizations. A VISTA can be instrumental in improving systems, building new partnerships, and improving your community outreach.

AmeriCorps members are supported by the Corporation, which provides training, development opportunities, and dedicated resources and assistance for many programming areas. For example, members who work in the tutoring and mentoring field receive no-cost support from the LEARNS project, a Corporation-sponsored program that provides training and technical assistance to projects focused on literacy, education, mentoring, and out-of-school time (more

info at: <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/sites/learns/>).

AmeriCorps volunteers receive a modest living allowance, health care, and money for college in exchange for their service. If you use them, you may be obligated to pay some share of these expenses. But compared to what a full-time staff person costs, these members are a tremendous bargain.

There are also two **SeniorCorps programs** that can help your mentoring services:

- ❖ **Foster Grandparents (FGP)** connects volunteers age 60 and over with children and young people with exceptional needs. FGP volunteers work directly with youth, up to 20 hours per week, providing emotional support, tutoring, mentoring, and other “hands-on” help. They must meet certain income eligibility criteria and receive a modest stipend for their efforts, paid by Senior Corps. These volunteers can make excellent mentors.
- ❖ **RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program)** volunteers do both direct and indirect service, from tutoring children in reading and math to helping community organizations operate more efficiently. RSVP offers both short-term and long-term service, offering maximum flexibility to mentoring programs. A relatively new initiative of SeniorCorps is focused on attracting Baby Boomers to serve in RSVP, using their professional skills to help programs and communities build capacity in such areas as volunteer recruitment, sustainability, and technology capacity.

Contacting the Corporation’s office in your state is a good starting point for finding out how SeniorCorps and AmeriCorps resources could meet your needs. For contact information first go to <http://www.americorps.org/about/contact/index.asp>. Once you’re there, click on “Contact your Corporation State Office” for SeniorCorps



and AmeriCorps*VISTA. For contact information for AmeriCorps*State and National, click on “Contact your State Service Commission.” The state commissions can help you decide which program will best meet your needs and could also let you know who else in your community is using these programs so you can talk to them about their experiences.

These strategies should help your program get a firm grasp on the resources and potential funding sources available to you in your community. Remember that your community’s assets are constantly changing and that you should regularly engage in asset mapping to stay current on all the opportunities available to you.

While this training supplement has examined how to undertake a broad investigation of community resources, the next supplement focuses on how to maximize business support through **direct sponsorship** and **special fundraising events**.



Worksheet #1

Assessing Your Current Program Needs and Circumstances

These questions can help guide your assessment of your program at this point in time. By understanding your current strengths and challenges, knowing what is in place and what needs work, you will have a better sense of your agency's readiness for sustainability planning. You can adapt this list to include additional questions of your own or limit your focus to several key issues.

1. What is your agency's mission and vision?
2. What are the primary goals and objectives of your mentoring program (from your grant or other document)?
3. Who are the youth you serve and why?
4. What are your outcomes to date? Use your most recent evaluation or program data, as well as anecdotal success stories.
5. What do you do best? What do you need to improve?
6. What is your total budget? What resources do you have, including both financial and in-kind?
7. When will your primary funding sources end?
8. How is your organization structured and administered? Who's in charge?
9. What is staff capacity for participating in sustainability activities?—skills, hidden talents, job responsibilities, and availability?
10. What are the strengths and limitations of your board of directors and/or advisory board?
11. What else do you need to know about the internal workings of your program?

As you work on this review, gather together documents that can provide the information you need. Try to gather as many of these as you can and check them off this list:

- Your Department of Education grant application
- Agency and program budgets detailing all sources of funding
- Your most recent annual report
- Board of directors roster, their skills and connections in the community
- Policy and procedure manuals
- Data on program outcomes
- Your organization's long-range plan, if available



Worksheet #2

Assessing Your Current Partnerships

1. Who are your partners? List every agency or business you can think of who is currently involved with your program, starting with your formal partners and working out from there.
2. What is their mission and how does it resemble your own?
3. What population(s) do they serve?
4. What strengths do they bring to the partnership? Include both agreed-upon benefits and unanticipated ones.
5. What limitations or challenges do they bring? How do these impact your plan for sustainability?
6. How do they benefit from your partnership—what's in it for them?
7. What potential is there for strengthening the partnership for mutual benefit?
8. What connections to the community or other sources of support can they offer your program?

Gather and review such information as:

- Memoranda of understanding, contracts, your grant proposal, and other formal documents that describe your formal relationship with partners
- Rosters of the Boards of Directors of your partners
- Brochures or other marketing materials



Worksheet #4 Information Gathered on Community Assets

Name of Asset:

Type of Asset:

(business, foundation, civic group, educational agency, local government, individual, CNCS, United Way, potential partner, other)

Type(s) of Potential Financial Support	Potential In-Kind Goods and Services	Pros and Cons of Their Support	Timeline for Action	Key Contacts	Next Steps

Person Responsible for Follow-Up:



Worksheet #5 Fundraising Goals and Activities

This worksheet can help translate promising assets you identify into concrete plans of action. For example, you may state a goal of “raising \$50,000 from community foundations,” with specific financial objectives related to each of the foundations you have identified. For each of these, you can designate the specific activities and timelines you identified during your asset mapping.

Objective 1	Activities To Reach Objective	Timeline	Key Staff Involved

Objective 2	Activities To Reach Objective	Timeline	Key Staff Involved



Worksheet #5 (continued)

Objective 4	Activities To Reach Objective	Timeline	Key Staff Involved

Objective 5	Activities To Reach Objective	Timeline	Key Staff Involved