

# **Scale Up & Engage Community Partners**



## Time to Scale Up

Once you understand how the risk factors and protective factors work together and how you can help the at-risk youth you are in a better situation to educate the community. Professor Dominguez calls this “scaling up.” Here are some helpful tips on how to scale up our community intervention and prevention through Community Lawyering.

## Getting Started in Your Community

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One of the exciting, though challenging, aspects of launching a healthy community initiative is that asset building is not just another chorus in a well-known tune. Asset building challenges assumptions and the ways communities typically work. Keeping the following principles in mind will help guide a local effort toward its vision.

### **1. Engage people from throughout the community**

Because the asset-building vision calls for community-wide responsibility for youth, involving many different stakeholders is important from the outset. A mixture of motivated citizens and their leaders provides an important balance. Many communities have developed “vision teams” with representatives from all sectors (schools, government, law enforcement, congregations, service agencies, business, health care) along with young people, parents, and other residents, including senior persons and people from various racial/ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

### **2. Start with a positive vision**

The typical community-wide effort is initiated because of a crisis. Too often, however, these initiatives deal with the immediate crisis but do not have the energy or vision to sustain them. A positive vision can energize a community for the long term. It can also help groups lay aside political and ideological agendas to work together because of their shared commitment to the well-being of children and adolescents.

### **3. Build on quality information.**

Many communities find that a survey of young people can be an important catalyst for creative and sustained action. Quality information gives people a shared reference point for reflecting on the needs, realities, and resources in the community as they shape their vision for the future. Otherwise, you risk shaping a vision and agenda that do not adequately capture the needs, issues, and possibilities in the community for children and adolescents.

### **4. Resist the temptation to create new programs**

Because most responses to youth issues in recent decades have been programmatic, intentional energy will be needed to avoid simply developing another program to respond to a specific need. The most important tasks for the “vision bearers” for asset building are to keep the vision of a

healthy community alive and prompt individuals and institutions to discover ways that they can integrate asset building into their own mission and commitments.

### **5. Take time to motivate and educate**

Because asset building represents a new way of thinking about communities and youth, it is important not to assume that everyone automatically understands the framework and its implications. Unless people internalize the many dimensions of the asset framework, asset building risks becoming a shallow campaign to “be nice to kids.” Repeating key messages about assets lays a foundation for a more thoughtful, well-rounded response.

### **6. Celebrate commitments and successes**

Asset building is a long-term vision, not a quick fix. But as communities embark on this journey, it is important to notice, celebrate, and talk about the landmarks along the way—the new awareness of young people, the shifts in conversations, the shared enthusiasm and commitments. These stories renew energy and refocus commitment.

### **7. Embrace innovations from the community**

Once people are aligned with the vision of asset building, their creativity in finding ways to nurture assets can be startling. Encouraging this innovation is key to breaking out of old patterns and discovering fresh approaches to rebuilding community for kids.

### **8. Network with other communities**

While many communities have begun asset-building initiatives, the vision is only in its infancy. No one knows all the answers, and no one knows how everything will work. But each community is learning something new each day. Network with others. Share stories and ideas. Explore challenges. Together, we will learn what works—and doesn't work—to bring the vision closer to reality.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.search-institute.org/getting-started-your-community>

# Principles for Asset-Building Communities

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Just as each jazz band interprets a musical piece its own way, asset building looks a little different in each community. However, there are some underlying themes that make “the tune” recognizable across communities. Though no community fully embodies these ideals, the vision can inspire communities to break out of current habits to try something new.

- 1. Assets are nurtured in all young people.* Rather than focusing primarily on specific groups of young people for intervention (for example, those “at risk”), asset-building communities embrace and intentionally seek to nourish all young people.
- 2. Relationships are key.* Rather than defining themselves primarily in terms of programs, asset-building communities view themselves more in terms of relationships. Initially, programs may be developed to help create connections in neighborhoods, schools, businesses, congregations, and other settings across all generations. But programs become less central as “natural” relationships, networks, and activities emerge to care for youth.
- 3. Everyone contributes to the vision.* In an asset-building community, caring for young people is not the sole responsibility of families or schools or professional care providers. All residents—parents, neighbors, young people, educators, business people, senior citizens, congregation members, and others—see themselves as guardians of the community’s young people.
- 4. Asset building never stops.* Asset building begins before birth (equipping parents-to-be with skills) and continues at least until young people become independent adults. At each developmental stage, the community emphasizes different assets that respond to the young person’s needs. Furthermore, the community explores how to nurture the assets that adults need.
- 5. The community is filled with consistent messages.* If you spend time in an asset-building community, you quickly sense harmony in the messages that young people hear. One way communities and institutions are beginning to develop consistent messages is simply by using the language of asset building in describing relationships, activities, and programs. In this way, people consistently hear that young people are a priority in the community.
- 6. Duplication and repetition are valued.* Just as marketers have learned that people need to hear a message several times before they fully grasp and act on it, the asset-building community knows that young people need to experience many expressions of care, guidance, and opportunities in all areas of community life. Rather than delegating one part of asset building to a particular segment of the community, the whole community recognizes its responsibility in strengthening the whole asset foundation.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> <http://www.search-institute.org/key-themes-asset-building-communities>

# Five Action Strategies for Transforming Communities

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## Creating Positive Change through Community Initiatives

After years of studying community change and learning alongside communities committed to making change happen, Search Institute has named five Action Strategies that new and ongoing initiatives can use to guide the work they do in their own towns, cities, or regions.

### Using the Five Action Strategies

Community initiatives based on the Developmental Assets work thoughtfully to determine how people in all spheres of life can be involved. What keeps an initiative vibrant is the relationships that develop between the adults and young people in each sphere and in the networks of adults formed across those spheres.

#### Download the Five Action Strategies

The five Action Strategies provide a practical approach to identifying, encouraging, and linking all the important people, places, activities, and programs necessary for a powerful collective effort. With a focused initiative, you can intensify your efforts to:

- **Engage adults** from all walks of life to develop sustained, strength-building relationships with children and adolescents, both within families and in neighborhoods.
- **Mobilize young people** to use their power as asset builders and change agents. This means listening to their input and including them in decision making.
- **Activate sectors** of the community—such as schools, congregations, businesses, and youth, human service, and health-care organizations—to create an asset-building culture and to contribute fully to young people’s healthy development.
- **Invigorate programs** to become more asset rich and to be available to and accessed by all children and youth.
- **Influence civic decisions** by influencing decision makers and opinion leaders to leverage financial, media, and policy resources in support of this positive transformation of communities and society.

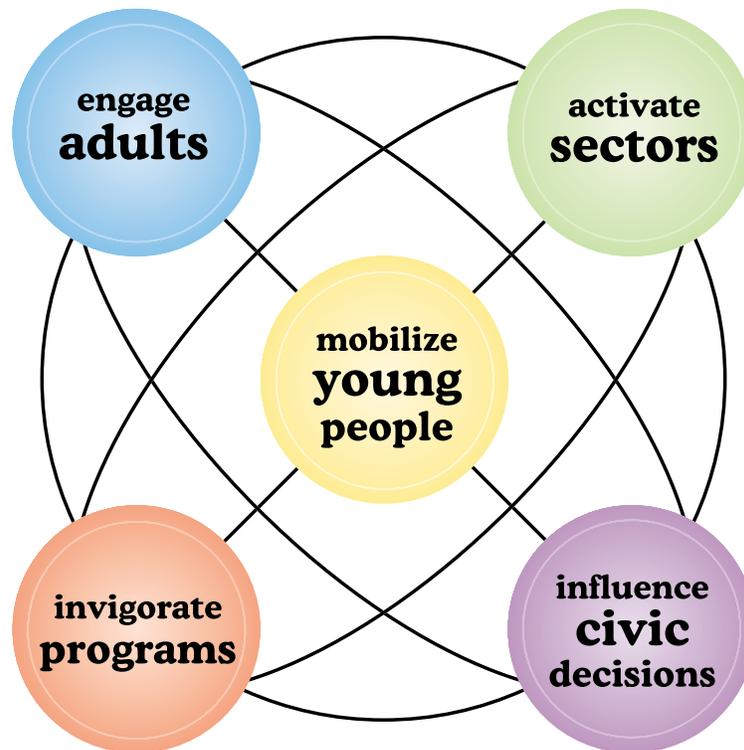
As you think about these five Action Strategies, you will notice that they are not tasks to complete one by one in sequence. Instead, as you strengthen relationships within and between these spheres of influence across the community, you will build a web of interconnected efforts that support one another. Long-lasting success happens by merging the asset-building capacities of all community members—in all the settings where the lives of adults and youth intersect. It takes the combination of all five Action Strategies to make lasting positive change.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.search-institute.org/content/five-action-strategies-transforming-communities>

# the Five Action Strategies

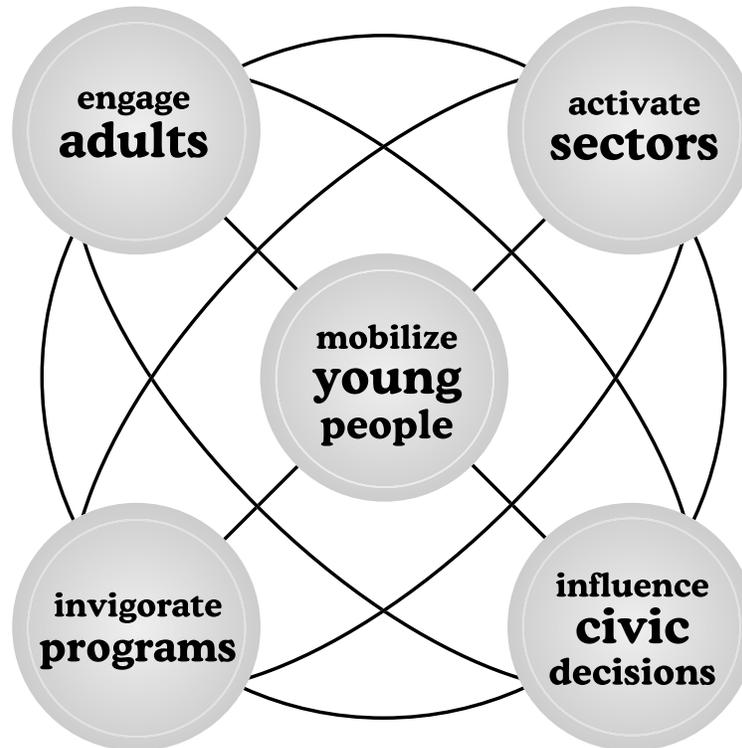
## Five Action Strategies for Transforming Communities and Society: Creating a World Where All Young People Are Valued and Thrive



- **Engage Adults** — Engage adults from all walks of life to develop sustained, strength-building relationships with children and adolescents, both within families and in neighborhoods.
- **Mobilize Young People** — Mobilize young people to use their power as asset builders and change agents.
- **Activate Sectors** — Activate all sectors of the community—such as schools, congregations, youth, businesses, human services, and health-care organizations—to create an asset-building culture and to contribute fully to young people’s healthy development.
- **Invigorate Programs** — Invigorate, expand, and enhance programs to become more asset rich and to be available to and accessed by all children and youth.
- **Influence Civic Decisions** — Influence decision makers and opinion leaders to leverage financial, media, and policy resources in support of this positive transformation of communities and society.

# the Five Action Strategies

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## An asset approach to positive community change

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As I said in my opening letter: “Then after you have read this resource handbook I hope you will consider the following questions as a springboard to taking this project farther so we as Community Lawyers can extend the reach of our influence.”

- What is your vision for Community Lawyering/asset building in your community?
- Which of these elements are already in place in your community to support that vision? How can they be strengthened and linked?
- Where do you see gaps? What community resources could fill those gaps?
- How will you balance or emphasize each of the overall strategies? (Many initiatives focus on one area at a time, knowing that there are others to address over the long term.)
- How will you be intentional about revisiting your vision, strategies, and approaches to ensure that they still make sense as time passes and realities shift?<sup>47</sup>

Those and other questions come from the following article.

<http://www.search-institute.org/system/files/AACommChange.pdf>

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