

Developing Community Connections with Asset Mapping

WIDENING THE CIRCLE BRIDGING FOR SUPPORT BECOMING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

Widening the Circle, Bridging for Support, and Becoming Collaborative Partners are Steps 5, 6 and 7 in an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) process that helps people connect their strengths to create new opportunities for living well where periodic wildland fires are expected. (See the Series Overview for an introduction to the seven-step process.) In Steps 1 and 2, Situation Assessment and Asset Mapping with Connectors, you got familiar with the community's strengths; found people who are well-connected within the community's civic life; and set out with them on a process of systematically "mapping" individual, organizational and institutional assets related to wildland fire. In Steps 3

and 4, Facilitating Local Visioning and Identifying Action Steps, you co-created a community-based vision for a better fire future and started to take right-sized actions that mobilize community strengths in moving into that future. Now, in Steps 5 and 6, you can build on your initial success by bringing in more parts of your community and by developing more ambitious projects that may call for advanced technical expertise and new funding sources. This active, community-based foundation you have been developing then allows you, in Step 7, to contribute local knowledge, experience and initiative to collaborative opportunities with agencies and organizations that have wildland fire-related responsibilities.

Step 5: Widening the Circle

Your inspiring vision and small-but-powerful (and fun!) action steps are likely to draw interest and ideas from more people.



For now, keep the focus internal to your local community. Plan new activities that are inclusive of other residents, and you will probably find people who have different life experiences but share basic values of community well-being. Include them in additional rounds of asset-mapping and asset-based project development to enrich and strengthen the vision of your fire future and to discover new opportunities for action.



Exchange fire-related learning with other knowledgeable residents as you meet them, expanding your community's capacity through networking.



There are fun ways to be inclusive. Share your fire adapted community vision widely, using your asset-mapping group's personal contacts within the community. Ask for suggestions from neighbors, co-workers, family, and friends and integrate their helpful contributions and ideas. (For sample questions, see Step 3.) Also share the vision with the broader community, wherever people gather—at a table in a park or shopping center, at the farmers' market, or as part of a public library display.



Always integrate the responses you get and then share the new version to show people that their contribution is valued and their ongoing participation is desired. Facilitate the emergence of new action ideas through one-on-one conversations and small groups (see Step 4).



As your home-grown vision of fire adaptation develops, make sure you consult with credentialed fire professionals to ensure that your planned community activities are safe and legal.



If an increasing amount of time and attention becomes available among community members wanting to participate in advancing the goals of your fire adapted community vision, you may want to consider more ambitious action steps. You also may need to seek outside resources to support them.

Step 6: Bridging for Support



Previous asset-mapping steps in this series have emphasized bonding within the community—identifying, using, affirming and developing relationships among community members based on shared interests and hopes. Bridging—linking the local community to outside entities and their resources—is also important. The key is to initiate bridging at the right time, when the community is ready. For example, many fire safety programs have community outreach materials that can be an important resource when developing your vision. But if you use these materials as the sole template for community-based action without developing a homegrown vision based on existing community assets, you are likely to marginalize residents' opportunities to contribute to fire adaptation according to their strengths and interests. Similarly, if you decide that it's easier and quicker to adopt the set-up of a particular funding program instead of developing action steps according to the unique prospects readily available within the community, you may short-circuit the self-defining, strengths-based chance to build local self-reliance and resilience. A better time to bridge is when members of a community that is continuously developing its capacity by using its strengths in service to a shared vision decide that they need outside resources to expand or improve their existing capacity to realize that vision. This is a good time to seek professional expertise, technical advice, funding, equipment and other resources beyond the community.



If the community asset map does not include leads to outside resources through known individuals and organizations, this is a great time to do some more mapping (see Step 1).

Government emergency services and fire response agencies, university extension staff, and state and federal natural resource agencies are good places to start. Although there are many good resources on the web, locally available experts can help tailor the information to local conditions and also alert you to opportunities that appear through their professional networks. They are likely to appreciate your initiative to become more fire-adapted!

Step 7: Becoming Collaborative Partners in Fire Adaptation

Over time, a community that becomes more and more internally engaged, active and inclusive in adapting itself to periodic wildfire develops knowledge and expertise, building its capacity. The process of community-based asset mapping is also a naturally collaborative practice.

Communities that have wildfire-resilience and collaborative capacity have members who can effectively interact with agencies and organizations that need local perspectives to fulfill their fire-related mandates. Your opportunities to engage in agency-community collaboration for wildfire adaptation and resiliency can include:

- ▶ Drafting or updating your Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)
- ▶ Establishing fire-breaks involving multiple landowners, and the long-term agreements to maintain them
- ▶ Developing legal measures to hold absentee landowners responsible for reducing fire hazards
- ▶ Managing protection of culturally sensitive areas during wildfire response
- ▶ Developing large-scale vegetation management projects with local economic benefits
- ▶ Preparing prescribed burn projects with smoke management plans to protect sensitive groups
- ▶ Setting up multi-agency practice events for wildfire response and evacuation
- ▶ Community-based fire planning



Finally, remember that the community work of becoming resilient to wildfire is an ongoing process. You will want to continue to engage new community members, who bring different concerns and new ideas to the effort. Celebrate even the smallest of your successes—and look ahead together to future challenges and opportunities.

This is part of a series of guides that will familiarize FAC practitioners with the hows and whys of the community-led asset mapping process. Together they lay out some best practices and lessons learned by communities as they use this process to become better adapted to fire. Find links to all the documents in this series at <http://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationPractices/FireLandscapes/FireLearningNetwork/NetworkProducts/Pages/ABCD.aspx>

For more information about community-based asset mapping, please contact Jana Carp at (510) 851-2836 or jana@communityfire.org.



The Fire Learning Network and Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network are part of *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together*, a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. For more information about PERFACT, contact Marek Smith: marek_smith@tnc.org or (919) 794-4374. *An equal opportunity provider*