

Gifts, Assets, or Liabilities

What are they and who decides?

Goal to create a common language and understanding of the concepts of gifts, assets, and liabilities

Objectives: *Participants will be able ...*

- to describe why the concept of people's gifts is important for participation in community associations
- to explain how the value of a person's gift is relative to the perception of the receiver and the context in which it is given
- to identify strategies for supporting people as they take the initiative to offer their gifts in the community

Materials:

- ✂ Shrek DVD
- ✂ Paper, pens, 3x5 cards, newsprint, markers, envelopes

Time: 1 ½ hours

Concepts:

- ◆ With Asset Based Community Development, we are trying to find ways for people to join community associations based on the contributions they can make.
- ◆ "Bad" behavior (as well as gifts) are defined by culture, perception, context, environment, situation, mental model, as well as the individual who observes them.
- ◆ Belonging is key to one's ability to learn and grow – Social Capital with its Bonding & Bridging relationships is an example.
- ◆ Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs: Self-Actualization, Self-Esteem (mastery), Belonging & Love, Safety & Freedom from Fear, Physiological
- ◆ Need v. Contribution: Institutions depend on people's needs; Associations depend on their contributions

Objective I

After a brief discussion, participants will be able to describe why the concept of people's gifts is important for participation in community associations

Ask people to recall some of the reasons that a focus on gifts and abilities is important in Asset Based Community Development. Review that the major distinction between institutions and associations is that institutions depend upon the needs of others and associations depend upon the gifts of others. Point out that we are preparing for John

McKnight's visit and that time spent on thinking about gifts will help us when we get to the implementation of ABCD.

Objective II

After a video clip and a discussion, participants will be able to explain how the value of a person's gift is relative to the perception of the receiver and the context in which it is given

Procedure

Point out that it is often a person's disability that gets in the way of people seeing and appreciating the gifts they have to offer. We usually wonder how we can get other people to look past the person's disabilities. Or we may ask how we can support people to "showcase" their gifts. But perhaps asking "how?" is the wrong approach. It suggests that we have to get others to change. Maybe there is a different way to address the issue.

Think about someone you support or know with a disability (or anyone you know who is on the road to self-determination). Make a two-column list about them. One column should list their needs, the other their assets. Make both lists as long and complete as possible.

Now have each person talk with a partner and compare lists. Without naming the person, what are some similarities or differences about your lists? Share some samples with the whole group.

Give an example of how a need in one context can be an asset in another (Arthur Kelley, Dave's friend who swears) and challenge people to move as many items from the need column to the asset column.

Let's see what insight we can gain by observing someone with some socially inappropriate behavior.

Play some scenes from the movie Shrek then have a discussion.

Show these scenes from Shrek:

Talking Flying Donkey & Ogres have Layers: Why doesn't Donkey have any friends? Why doesn't Shrek like Donkey?

Ask people to make a list answering the two questions above. Help them be specific. If they say Donkey is irritating, have them identify why. Post the list on a flip chart.

Show this scene from Shrek:

Dragon's Keep: What does Donkey do to get out of trouble? Again, make a list answering the question then have a discussion.

Discussion:

- ◆ What are Donkey's characteristics that are annoying? [*Write them on the board*] (talks too much, doesn't pick up on social cues, is a flatterer, is opportunistic, is self serving,)
- ◆ Why are the first two scenes amusing to us? (We view them as outsiders)
- ◆ What would your reaction be to Donkey? Would you take him into your home?
- ◆ What are the qualities of Donkey that keep him from being eaten by the dragon? [*Write them on the board*]
- ◆ How do you explain the fact that so many of Donkey's qualities are listed as being both negative and positive?
- ◆ What are the factors that determine whether a personal quality is seen as a need/deficit or an asset/gift? (context, culture, people who are present, our own attitudes, perceptions, judgments, length of time with the person, mental models)
- ◆ What other examples can you think of that are similar to Donkey?
- ◆ How is Donkey's example the same or different for people with disabilities?
- ◆ How do we tell others about the gifts that we see in them?
- ◆ What is the effect when we learn of one of our own gifts? (On our self-esteem, ability to use the gift appropriately, likelihood of using the gift, ability to see our other gifts, etc.)

Now ask people to return to the list of assets and needs about a person they know that they made earlier. What is one need that person has that might be seen as a gift if presented to the right person or if seen in the right situation?

List the things you can do to help the person's needs be seen as assets or to help them connect with others who might want their assets.

Objective III

After playing ENVELOPES, participants will be able to identify strategies for supporting people as they take the initiative to offer their gifts in the community

Procedure:

If you have a large group, make five envelopes each with one of the questions below printed on it. (If your group is small, simply choose a few of the questions and have a discussion about them.)

ENVELOPES Questions:

- ◆ Considering the relative nature of gifts, what are some implications for the people we support?
- ◆ What are some specific things we can be doing to help people offer their gifts?
- ◆ What are the barriers that prevent us from seeing liabilities as gifts?
- ◆ What are the action steps for turning a liability into a gift?
- ◆ What is the role of institutions in helping people become involved in associations?

Divide your participants into small groups and give each an envelope. Have them work on the question for 5 minutes writing their answer on a sheet of paper. At the end of that time, have them put the paper with their response into the envelope and pass it to the next group. With the new envelope, answer this question on a separate paper without looking at the contents of the envelope. Pass the envelopes two more times. On the fifth pass, have the groups empty their latest envelope and examine its contents. Ask them to look for ways to synthesize or enhance the work of the previous groups. Ask them to give a report about their envelope to the whole group.

Save all the envelopes and data. Share it with Brian Remer, brian@mds-nh.org. We'll post it on our website for everyone's benefit!

Thanks!