TIP SHEET

Mapping community assets

This tip sheet provides advice for mapping helpful community resources.

ACT

Additional demographic information can be used to look at what is working well in your community. A focus on existing community resources, or assets, is a strengths-based approach that can help to bring about positive change in the community.

What are community assets?

Community assets can be anything that is rich and good about the community.

Assets can include:

- people and organisations and their skills, knowledge, strengths, talents and capacity (e.g. local leaders, elders, volunteers)
- services (e.g. maternal and child health services, early childhood education and care, cultural support services)
- physical and environmental resources (e.g. parks, open spaces, waterways and infrastructure, public transport)
- networks and relationships between people (e.g. community partnership groups, parent groups)
- community-building projects (e.g. Best Start)
- culture, identity and spirituality (e.g. cultural traditions, ethnic and racial diversity).

How to map a community's assets

Just like planning community mapping, community assets can also be viewed through the lens of the Ecological model of child development (see Figure 1).

Try using the following questions to guide your thinking:

- What questions can we ask people to find 'assets' within each circle?
- Who do we ask?
- What assets exist?
- What is the benefit or impact of those assets?
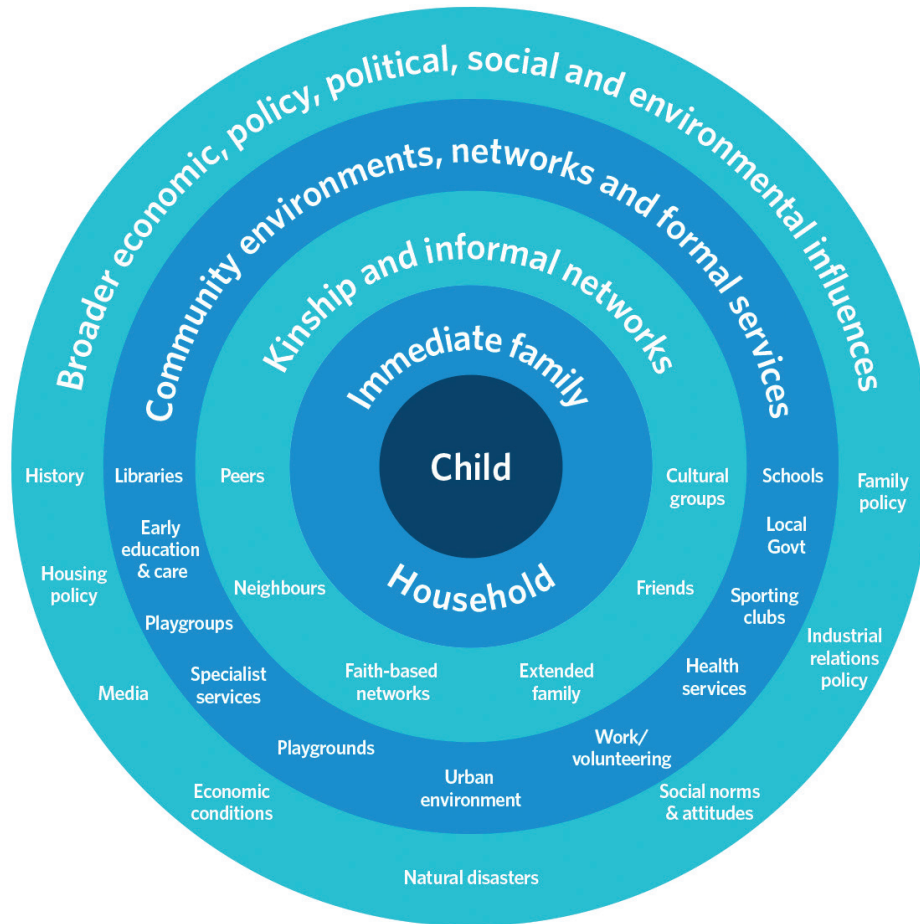
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Figure 1. Ecological Model of Child Development (Centre for Community Child Health, adapted from Bronfenbrenner et al., 1979)

Tips for putting together a good asset map

When community assets have been identified they can be mapped to provide a visual snapshot of the capacities, skills and assets that exist in the community.

Here are five tips for developing a good asset map in your community or group:
Explain to the group why you are developing the map and what will happen with the information you gather.

- Try not to limit what people think of as assets, all assets are equally important.
- Make the map large and visually striking, where people can add their ideas.
- Find a place to display your map so it's accessible to the community or group.
- Make time to revisit the map and add to it over time.

Asset mapping success stories

Success story one

"*We were asking them – what have you got in your community and what are you proud of? It was a good exercise for them – it worked well. In all the community planning sessions we started with 'What have you got in this community?', and it can be the clean air they breathe. I did this at a community planning night. I had three pieces of orange card and I picked one up and put it on the wall and said 'Let's start looking at the assets. What have we got in this community? Absolutely everything, list them'. We filled a page and I picked up another blank sheet and we filled it and we did it for three. They were dumbfounded because they didn't think they had anything. It is good if you can get them focused on what they have got, it just blew them away.*"

Success story two

"A Community Resource Audit was chosen as the best way to develop a database of skills to match people with future community strengthening initiatives and find out what people thought about their community. A diverse group of 16 volunteers from the community were trained to run workshops and interview people from their own networks to gather required information. Data was obtained from 22 workshops and a number of individual interviews, which involved 300 interviewees from the community."

The success stories are derived from: Department for Victorian Communities (2004). *Getting to Know Your Community: A Guide to Gathering Qualitative Information*, Office of Community Building, Victoria.

For more Platforms information, resources and support visit: **www.rch.org.au/ccch/platforms**
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