A new year is always a good time to reflect on the past and make plans for the future. Many of us have made resolutions: lose weight, exercise more. Or we have set goals: write a book, run a marathon. Within our organizations, we are making resolutions and setting goals too. For many non-profits and faith communities, once those receipts postmarked by December 31st are counted, we turn in earnest toward making plans for 2015.

Most often these plans are needs-based. What do we need to do better to overcome deficiencies and succeed as an organization or how much money do we need to raise in order to make our annual budget? But what if a needs-based approach is wrong? According to social policy expert Dr. John McKnight, “you don’t know what you need until you know what you have.” McKnight and his colleague John Kretzmann have been the leading advocates in a shift toward Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). For years, city officials and institutional leaders have started by looking at what was wrong, what was missing, and what was problematic in a community. After mapping all the needs in a community (things like broken streets, broken homes, broken schools), it was easy to conclude that a community needed help to fix all their problems. Needs are easy to spot partly because we always find what we are looking for. Our questions shape the answers we find.

McKnight, Kretzmann, and others have suggested flipping the script from a need-based to an asset-based approach. Instead of asking what we lack, we might map the assets of a community. There are institutions, and natural resources, as well as gifts, talents, and enthusiasms of the people in any community. If we start with assets over needs, we see a very different picture of a community, and we work alongside those in communities to capitalize on these assets to work for change.

I want to suggest that an asset map of our faith communities might also serve as a fresh approach in our fundraising. Of course fundraisers already recognize their donors, board, and staff as assets, but the assets of faith-based fundraising are not simply the potential and size of one’s financial gift. What other gifts, talents, enthusiasms are a part of our organizations that might lead to growth in our communities:

- Are there peer organizations that we can rely on for best practices?
- Do the people in our networks feel comfortable speaking about money and giving?
- Are those inside and outside our organizations passionate for developing a shared mission?
There are an abundance of tools to help one map the assets in their organizations or communities.\(^2\) We will return to the specifics of asset-mapping our communities as religious fundraisers in a later Insights, but as we start the year, I would encourage you to take stock of assets over needs in your organization. In many ways, an asset-based approach seems to fit perfectly with a biblical concept of stewardship.


2. The Asset-Based Community Development Institute Website: [http://www.abcdinstitute.org/publications/downloadable/](http://www.abcdinstitute.org/publications/downloadable/)

**Additional recommended resources:**