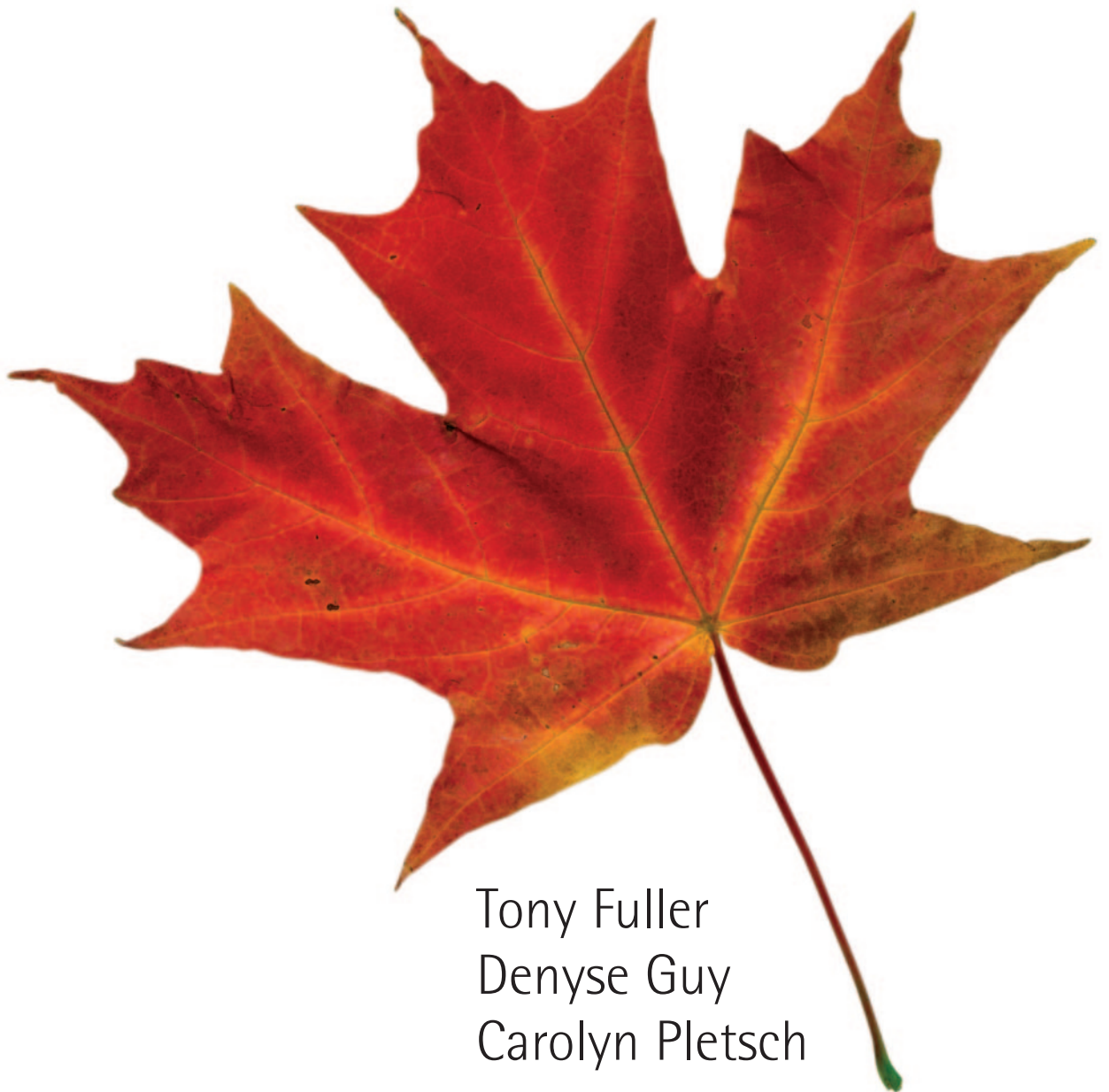


# Asset Mapping

## A Handbook



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(Canada wordmark  
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# Preface

The theme of the National Rural Conference 2002 is Community Capacity Building, which is about helping communities to help themselves. Community Capacity Building supports a way of thinking that will add value to the social, economic, and human resources that exist in the community. Key objectives of this conference include providing participants with tools and skills needed to stimulate development in their communities. This handbook is one of those tools.

This handbook is about asset mapping. It outlines three practical approaches that community leaders can use to engage people in shaping the future of their community. Asset mapping can be used as a starting place for community-based initiatives such as community development, strategic planning, and organizational development.

The idea for asset thinking and asset building came from Professor Tony Fuller and Lee Ann Small of the University of Guelph and their experience of applying the concept of Sustainable Livelihoods to rural development in Ontario. A group of partners lead by The Ontario Rural Council, and later facilitated by the Ontario Agricultural Training Institute, undertook to organize a “rural dialogue” for the Rural Secretariat and Rural Team Ontario in 2001. All regions in Canada undertook a “Rural Dialogue” in 2001, although Ontario was the only region to adopt a full-scale “assets” approach.

The resultant “dialogue” proved to be a positive experience. As a result, the idea to test the process for policy thinking and to adapt it for community asset mapping was confirmed at the North Bay, Ontario Rural Conference. Sponsored by the Secretary of State, this conference was the culminating part of the Ontario Rural Dialogue, 2001.



# Introduction



## WHAT ARE ASSETS?

The focus of this handbook is community asset mapping, a useful tool in rural community development. In the rural context, assets are popularly recognized attributes of communities. They are considered essential for the maintenance of rural life and vital for the sustainability of the economy, society and environment in rural Canada.

## WHAT IS ASSET MAPPING?

Asset mapping is a positive and enjoyable approach to learning about your community. It enables you to think positively about the place in which you live and work. It also challenges you to recognize how other people see and experience the same community. When people in your rural area map community assets you will collect:

- 🍁 an inventory of all the good things about your community
- 🍁 a ranking of the most valued aspects of your community
- 🍁 the reasons why people place high value on assets in your community

Once you have this map of the valued aspects of your community, you can collectively strategize about how **to build** on the assets in order **to sustain and enhance** them for future generations to enjoy. The process of asset mapping provides a critical element of community development, which is the engagement of people in the shaping of their community.

**This technique can be used in organizations as well as in communities but in this handbook we will focus on the community approaches.**

**Assets are what we want to keep, build upon, and sustain for future generations.**

Assets can be physical, concrete things like buildings, the local swimming pool, and the 150 year old tree in the town square, but can also be intangible like the work that volunteer groups do to beautify the main street or raise funds for the food bank.

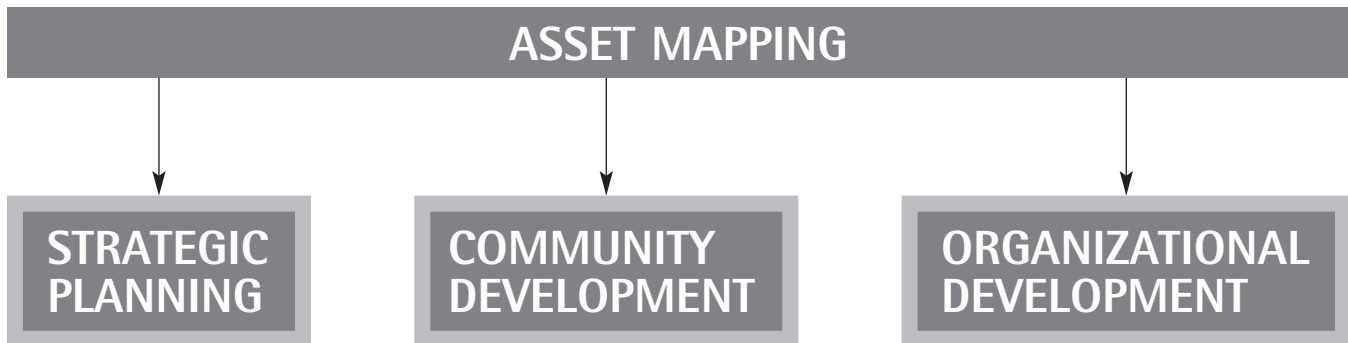


### ASSET MAPPING: WHY BOTHER?

Long-term rural residents may feel they know what is good about their community and will ask, why bother? The main benefit of asset mapping is to get a **common view** of what is important, to affirm or broaden what you think, and to hear and appreciate the values of others. You can be fairly sure that although people may have very different backgrounds, they readily come together about what they see as important assets in rural life.

**From Needs to Assets:  
needs divide while  
assets provide.**

This coming together around common assets changes the way we think about our communities, because it unites people around a positive identity and a collective cause. We stop thinking about our needs. Although we have been brought up to consider development in terms of needs, this approach to change has major limitations. Needs approaches tend to divide people and communities. Articulating needs often becomes a competitive process in many cases and often pits communities and organizations against each other. The needs approach fragments communities rather than combines them. Government is becoming less inclined to react to needs approaches. In response, asset mapping as a process has the potential to be inclusive of all community dimensions and interests. Asset mapping can be a starting point for various initiatives, as illustrated in the diagram below.



*T. Fuller, 2002*

### THE RURAL ADVANTAGE

Asset mapping is a process that works in both rural and small town Canada. Rural areas are very diverse and have assets that vary widely across the country and its regions. The various techniques of asset mapping that will be outlined in this handbook allow for different asset combinations to emerge, and, as a result, permit the “unique features and special character” of rural



places to be recognized. The result is that **asset mapping celebrates differences rather than homogeneity.**

Recognition of differences is also critical for all population groups that reside in rural Canada – aboriginal peoples, the elderly, farm families and ex-urban residents. Each has a story to tell and different ways of appreciating and bringing strength to rural communities. Asset mapping can differentiate the assets of individual groups as well as the combined community assets. Recognizing the assets that are important to different populations and interest groups is critical when acting on the key issue of selecting which strategies are necessary to sustain the assets.

Asset mapping provides the information and energy for individual and combined asset mobilization at the community level.

Asset mapping as a process has the potential to be inclusive of all community dimensions, features and interests.

Assets in rural areas are generally “all spread out” (Snow, 2001). Rural people and communities already know a lot about how to deal with distance between places, services and amenities. Asset mapping can lead to positive rural development, as communities already know about mobilizing their assets. Identifying rural assets shows us the best assets to mobilize.

## ASSET MAPPING SUMMARY

Here are some key points to remember about asset mapping:

- 🍁 Asset mapping is a **positive approach** to rural community development.
- 🍁 Asset mapping combines **community interests** and creates “common cause.”
- 🍁 Asset mapping is **easy and fun** to do.

Asset mapping has several other advantages:

- 🍁 It is **realistic**; asset mapping starts with what you have rather than with what you don’t have.





**Assets are what we want to keep, build upon and sustain for future generations.**

The three approaches outlined in this handbook are:

- 🌿 The Whole Assets Approach**
- 🌿 The Storytelling Approach**
- 🌿 The Heritage Approach**

- 🌿 It is a form of discovery; there are far more assets in the community than most people realize and this is a very positive way to start a dialogue.**
- 🌿 It is inclusive; assets can include both public, community, and private assets.**
- 🌿 Rural assets have relevance in both rural and urban areas.**

In the next section of this handbook we will present three different ways to map assets in your community. Select the one that suits you.

## THREE APPROACHES TO ASSET MAPPING

Although there are many ways to approach asset mapping, three approaches are described in the following pages. You can make your choice based on the nature of the group doing the asset mapping (is your group community-wide, a single organization, or a special interest group?) and on the interests of the community being mapped.

The three approaches include one general approach and two variations. In this case all three approaches merge into the same set of possibilities for exploring how to sustain and build upon the assets identified, as illustrated by the diagram on page 10. How we sustain assets is wide open, and invites the invention and creativity of rural groups, community organizations and individuals.

All three approaches produce what can be called a kind of map of assets, as identified by the people intimately involved in the landscape. This map may look like a real map, an assets chart or wheel, or simply a list of assets. Whatever the format, assets identification is the first stage of positive community development. Choices then abound as to what strategies to adopt to ensure that the assets identified can be sustained well into the future.

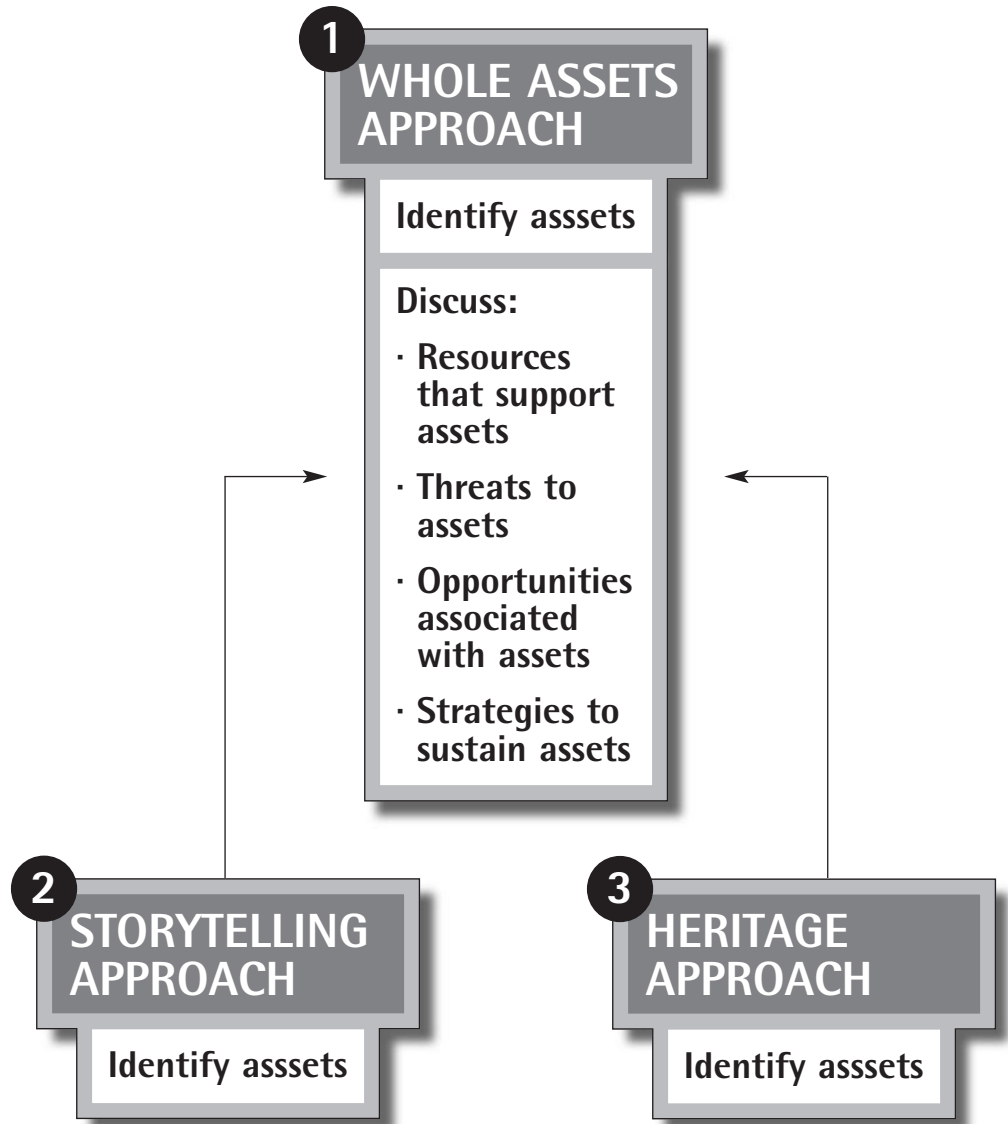


**The Whole Assets Approach** takes into account all the assets that are part of people's view of their immediate community as well as the surrounding rural world. It is a systematic and balanced way to assess all the community assets from natural, social, economic, and service components of the community system. Because communities are not islands unto themselves, it means going outside the community to see what is important about the surrounding and interconnected areas. Whole asset mapping is comprehensive and although it takes longer, can provide a complete map of the community and its support system.

**The Storytelling Approach** produces pieces of social history that reveal assets in the community. It identifies how assets that are often hidden or dormant can be put together with other assets to produce additional assets. Often a story will be about human capacity and the people who made it happen – people with vision, a mission, leadership, energy, and community interests at heart. These stories generally have a happy ending.

**The Heritage Approach** produces a picture (map or list) of those physical features, natural or built, that make the community a special place. Assets include natural heritage features such as rivers, sugarbush, park or beach, as well as built features such as an old bridge, defunct steamboat, historic building, a long-time favorite coffee shop. Almost anything on the landscape can be part of a community's heritage, if the people who live and work there feel it is significant to them.

The key steps in these three approaches are graphically represented on the following page.



Fuller et al, 2002



## GENERAL FACILITATION NOTES

### Who should come to the session?

Invite a cross-section of community members. Some examples of potential participants are members of Business Improvement Associations, Chambers of Commerce, Community Futures Development Corporations, Business Centres, banks, credit unions, representatives from festivals, other cultural groups, churches, co-operatives, libraries, environmental groups, youth groups, non-profit organizations, and any other active community groups.

Focus on getting a group of 15-30 people for these sessions. The exercise is also useful with smaller groups and, in each community, the numbers will vary. Try to get people from different cultures and with varying perspectives, including diversity in age and working experience.

### Where and when should the session be?

Make sure the time, date, and location are publicized in good time. We recommend that you start to invite participants at least four weeks in advance. Make sure that any prerequisite reading material is circulated and sent with the invitations. This material will help participants begin to think about and then identify their community assets. You will save time during the session and have a more productive meeting if participants have had an opportunity to read the information before the meeting.

You will need to have a space that is accessible and can accommodate the size of the group. It is important that the walls of the room can hold flip-chart paper. You will need to have certain equipment such as office supplies, flip chart stands, and an overhead projector.

Make sure that the space you have reserved is comfortable for the size of group you are planning. All of these approaches require that there be both large and small groups during the process. Make sure there is lots of room to move chairs and talk without bothering the groups seated next to each other. Refreshments are great if you can afford it.

**Try for a diverse group – the more varied the better!**

### Why are we doing these sessions?

Remember the goals of these sessions are to:

- 🍁 Get to know the assets within communities
- 🍁 Share an appreciation for the value of these assets
- 🍁 Understand how we can build and/or sustain these assets



## How to Read the Step-by-Step Facilitation Notes

As we mentioned in previous pages, this handbook was written for community leaders. We assume that meetings organized for the purpose of asset mapping will be a community effort, managed by a committee of leaders. Each committee member will have a different role to play, each role will be critical to the facilitation of a successful asset mapping event.

Given multiple roles and limited space, the facilitation notes are written for both the committee organizing the event and the facilitator. The notes include specific instruction to the facilitator. These directions generally begin with “The facilitator will...” The notes also include general discussion and advise as well as some options for delivery written for both the facilitator and organizing committee. They are distributed throughout the specific instructions to the facilitator, and frequently use the pronoun “you.” From time to time we have also given some insight into our thinking and expectations about how the process will unfold. In those cases “we” refers to the writers.

The time-lines and break-times are simply guidelines. Feel free to change them as appropriate.



# Approach 1: Whole Assets

**The Whole Assets Approach** is a broad approach to asset mapping. It identifies assets across a whole spectrum of possibilities. The Whole Assets Approach allows community people to value social, economic, and physical aspects of the rural environment. It then goes on to show how the most important assets can be supported by strategies that aim to moderate threats and resolve weaknesses that were identified in the asset mapping process.

The Whole Assets Approach includes all the possible assets that are normally found in rural areas. These are bundled into groups and named for the purpose of this process: **natural** (such as environment and water), **built** (physical things we build including infrastructure), **social** (the social aspect of living in the community), **economic** (jobs and a varied economy that people and communities draw on for their livelihoods), and **service** (such as health and educational services). The diagram in the margin illustrates the bundles.



This approach to asset mapping is most appropriate when representatives of the whole community can be involved. The objective is to learn what the most important assets are in general. It is critical to have a broad spectrum of the community in attendance and every effort should be made to bring out young people and the elderly. Participants should also include people with different economic means, occupations, languages, and ethnic identities. Just getting these people to meet together and eventually agree on the top assets in their community is a worthwhile endeavour. It is also a major step in establishing common cause. Mixed representation at the meetings is vital for strategies and action plans that require cross-community support. When people discover what they value in common, they are usually able to devise ways and means for going forward. The Whole Assets Approach creates goodwill among participants.

This session is based on the assumption that all Canadians should have an equal opportunity to access assets wealth. The purpose of the session then is to identify assets that are important to the participants of the group. The process will summarize the many items that we cherish and are positive for the community.



### Materials List

Large diagram made up of flip-chart paper that uses the following categories:

- NATURAL
- SERVICE
- BUILT
- SOCIAL
- ECONOMIC





A illustration of this diagram is contained in the appendix and can be photocopied onto transparencies and used to describe the Whole Assets Approach.

- Markers, two boxes multi-colour
- Masking tape or blue gum
- 3" x 5" file cards, at least 100
- Two flip charts
- Large coloured sticker dots
- Overhead projector, transparencies and markers

### Human Resources

- Facilitator
- Assistant who will help to post flip charts and be a runner and recorder when needed.

The Objectives of this session are to:

-  Identify **important rural assets**.
-  Build an understanding of the group's **appreciation** of these assets.
-  Identify the **threats** to these assets.
-  Plan how the group can sustain and build upon the **collective value** of these community assets.



## STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO WHOLE ASSETS APPROACH, FACILITATORS NOTES (5 HOURS)

### 1. Welcome and Introduction (15 min.)

**Outcome:** Group members to get to know each other.

The facilitator will welcome the group. Ask participants to introduce themselves briefly.

Participants share what they see as the greatest asset in their life.

### 2. Set the Context (10 min.)

**Outcome:** To understand the objectives of the session.

The facilitator will review the objectives and agenda of the session. The facilitator will share with the group the Whole Assets Approach by discussing and defining the categories: built, social, service, natural, and economic. The diagrams included in the appendix can be used as visual aids. The focus of this session is to share what we value in our communities. The facilitator will explain the agenda and time-line of the session.

### 3. Reflection (10 min.)

**Outcome:** Each participant will brainstorm six assets and record on cards three key assets.

Each participant will brainstorm what s/he sees as the top six assets in the community. Participants will then select the three most important assets and record each one on a separate card. If the group is more than 25, use only two cards for each person.

### 4. Share your Asset (30 min.)

**Outcome:** Participants will match their key assets with one of the identified asset areas.

Ask each community member to share what s/he see as the top three assets in the community. The facilitator will ask each participant to come to the front and place the asset on the large diagram in the category that it falls into:

BUILT	SOCIAL	SERVICE	NATURAL	ECONOMIC
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## 5. Break (10 min.)

## 6. Large Group Discussion (45 min.)

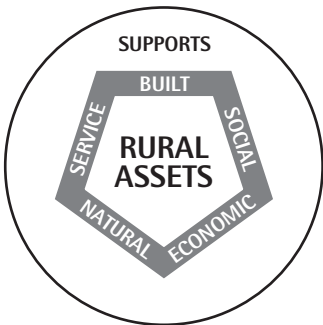
**Outcome:** The large group will discuss why this list of assets is important.

The facilitator will have a flip chart for each asset category: **Built, Social, Service, Natural, and Economic.** Each of these flip charts will be positioned in different spots in the room but close enough so that all of the charts are clearly visible.

During the group discussion the facilitator will record on the flip charts the key assets identified and posted before the break. Ask the following questions:

- 🍄 Why did we decide that these assets are important?
- 🍄 Are there any surprises?
- 🍄 What do the surprises mean?

This discussion gives participants an opportunity to think about their own and others' choices, and may well change minds. The facilitator should be upbeat and positive.



## 7. Confirming Individual Work on Asset of Choice (45 min.)

**Outcome:** Participants will choose the most important asset in each category and break into small groups for discussion.

Give each participant five large coloured sticker dots and ask them to identify the one most important asset in each asset category from the original diagram. This process is called the dot democracy. Count the number of dots on each asset to find out which is the most important asset/s attributed to each asset category.

The facilitator should ask each participant to decide which asset category they would like to work in. There should be one group per asset category. Each group should have five to seven members.



## 8. Small Group-Identification of Supports to Sustain Assets and Threats to Our Assets (60 min.)

**Outcome:** Each group will discuss supports and threats to the asset/s in the chosen asset grouping. The diagram on page 16 can be used to illustrate the point.

- 🌿 Introduction – Give name and explain why this asset category is important to you.
- 🌿 Select a presenter for the group to record, prepare a transparency and present the group’s findings.
- 🌿 Discuss – are these assets sustainable? If so, what supports their sustainability? What are the opportunities associated with these assets?
- 🌿 If these assets are not sustainable, please identify the threats.
- 🌿 If you have time, begin to plan how your group can preserve and increase the collective value of these community assets.

## 9. Presentation (45 min.)

**Outcome:** Each presenter will share the group’s summaries.

The facilitator will ask each presenter to summarize the key points of the group discussion.

The presenter will summarize by giving a brief overview of the threats, supporting resources, and opportunities associated with this asset.

## 10. Wrap-Up and Evaluation (30 min.)

**Outcome:** Participants will evaluate the session and discuss what could be the next steps.

The facilitator will give a brief summary of the morning activities. The facilitator will thank the group for their sharing and enthusiasm and encourage the group to continue to use this process in other group work. Asset mapping is a useful tool to identify and value assets within a community.





# Approach 2: Storytelling

**The Storytelling Approach** to asset mapping is a creative way to identify assets in the community. In this approach, the assets that emerge will tend to focus on the human qualities rather than the physical assets of the heritage approach discussed later. Asset storytelling reveals the positive activities of a time and place in which one or more assets are used to form a positive outcome. A good facilitator will draw out of these stories the key element (assets) involved, the resources used, and the critical parts of the story. Comparison of these elements across stories will reveal that there are common assets, both human and physical. Assets are primary ingredients in making good things happen at the community level.

Stories are a part of rural life and can be very entertaining as well as informative. Storytelling is a good way for newcomers to appreciate both the recent and distant past of their new community. They will hear these stories through the voices of locals who were there or who were told the stories themselves. The strength of this approach is that stories will revolve around local places and real people. This strength helps to root asset mapping in a local reality. Most asset stories are about people and what they did to make community life better.

**The purpose** of the Storytelling Approach is to share with the group how a particular event was a creative and positive process for the community. These stories will identify how groups can solve problems while maximizing opportunities. They will reflect how an individual or a group can turn adversity into an advantage which builds the assets of a community.

**Assets are what we want to keep, build upon, and sustain for future generations.**

Assets can be physical, concrete things like buildings, the local swimming pool, and the 150 year old tree in the town square, but can also be intangible like the work that volunteer groups do to beautify the main street or raise funds for the food bank.



### Materials List

- Markers, two boxes multi-colour
- Masking tape or blue gum
- Two flip charts
- Large coloured sticker dots
- Overhead projector, prepared transparencies and markers
- 3" x 5" file cards, at least 100 total

### Human Resources

- Facilitator
- Assistant who will help to post flip charts and be a runner and recorder when needed.

Objectives of this session are to:

- 🍁 Share many **great stories** about your community and collect written versions.
- 🍁 Understand how these stories illustrate that combining resources, both human and physical, can develop a successful project. These stories will illustrate **best practices**.
- 🍁 A synthesis of the stories will identify **common assets** across stories.
- 🍁 Build an **understanding** of the group's appreciation of these assets by **linking them**.
- 🍁 Create a **network** that will continue to work together at building on the assets of their community.



## STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO STORYTELLING APPROACH, FACILITATOR'S NOTES (3 HOURS)

### 1. Welcome and Introduction (10 min.)

**Outcome: Group members to get to know each other.**

The facilitator will welcome the group. Ask participants to introduce themselves briefly.

Ask participants to share who has been the best storyteller in their lives.

### 2. Set the Context (10 min.)

**Outcome: Participants to understand the objectives of the session.**

Facilitator will review the objectives of the session listed earlier. The focus of the session is to develop a rich tapestry of stories that reveal how community members have transformed existing assets to sustain or make new assets. The facilitator will explain the agenda and time-line.

### 3. Reflection and Sharing of Stories (70 min.)

**Outcome: Participants to share their stories that will identify some of the best practices of community building.**

Some participants may already have identified their stories while some will need more time. Make sure to give everyone a few moments at the beginning to collect thoughts. Make sure that you are clear about the time each participant has to tell a story. Divide the 70 minutes for this activity by the number of participants. If there are more than 15 people at the session, you may decide not to have everyone tell their story or alternatively you may also decide to expand the amount of time dedicated to this activity.

The facilitator will begin the storytelling session, making sure that participants are aware of the time-line. The facilitator will help participants make sense of the stories by asking the questions outlined on the following page. Ask each community member to share a story about a successful project. The story should portray how and why people come together to develop their community. We hope it will illustrate how two or more assets came together to make a third asset. We expect that the third asset is supported by the personal assets of those involved. It may

#### Story Examples:

##### Village

Abandoned stone historic school + group of artists buy building = international art school

##### Trail

Abandoned trails + sponsorships = trail for hiking, bicycling,

##### River

Polluted river + people cleaned river + stocked it with trout = North American best for fly fishing

##### Local Grocery Store

Throws out their food + soup kitchen uses discarded food = meals for homeless



be useful for the participants to hear the story examples listed in the sidebar for further clarification.

Ask the participants to write key words on cards that summarize their story. Try asking participants to illustrate their story in the form of an equation. This will help to identify the specific assets that were involved in this story. The facilitator will ask each participant to hand in their card.

Remember that these stories can portray both real and intangible assets. They can also portray hidden or less well known community assets.

The facilitator will attempt to find key words from each story that symbolize the strengths or assets illustrated in the story. The facilitator will record these key words on the flip chart. The list will continue to grow until everyone has shared a story and will reflect what the group sees as the key assets of their community.

Questions to ask when participants tell their stories:

- 🍁 What were the key assets in your story?
- 🍁 What kind (human and physical) of assets were involved?
- 🍁 How did relationships develop?
- 🍁 What were key learnings?

### 3. Break (10 min.)

### 4. Group Discussion and Analysis (20 min.)

**Outcome: A review and summary of the key assets groupings.**

The facilitator will comment on common themes of assets. Some assets will be the same across stories. The facilitator should emphasize the richness of these stories.

These stories can form the basis of a great collection of human interest stories. They can be used in many other ways such as in a display, as material for a newspaper articles, a book, and even a theatre performance. Don't try to group them together if they don't fit together. If there are no commonalities between the identified assets, that's okay.



## 5. Small Group Discussion and Analysis (30 min.)

**Outcome:** Participants will further analyze, in smaller groups, their own stories. This will pinpoint key players, time involved, barriers, and achievements.

The facilitator will number off each participant in order to form smaller groups. The small group will choose one or two stories to analyze further.

The facilitator will review the following questions with the participants before they break into smaller groups.

- 🍂 Who became involved?
- 🍂 How long did the process take?
- 🍂 What were the biggest barriers?
- 🍂 What were the most important achievements?

## 7. Large Group Discussion (15 min.)

**Outcome:** To have a few participants share what they learned in their small group discussions. To have a list of community assets.

The facilitator will ask for feedback on the session as a whole from five participants. This discussion should reveal how problems were turned into opportunities.

## 8. Wrap-Up and Evaluation (15 min.)

**Outcome:** Participants will evaluate the session and will discuss what opportunities there are for next steps in asset mapping.

The facilitator should thank the group for their contributions and encourage them to continue to use this process in other group work. Now that you have a clear list of community assets you can challenge the group to support the assets and build upon them.

The group may decide that they want to continue the process. Please refer to the Next Steps section of this handbook for suggestions of how to take this work further. The facilitator could at this point assist the group in deciding what to do next, as well as who will do it. Some groups will want to continue working together while others will be satisfied with the current product of recorded stories about the community.







# Approach 3: Heritage

**The Heritage Approach** has a narrower focus and can be done in less time than the Whole Assets Approach. It is also more conventional in the sense that it concentrates on the built environment. In most provinces, there are programs that could support plans that occur as a result of this approach. Understanding what features on the landscape the community believes are significant is another community building approach that uses assets in the positive sense.

Heritage is the literal asset mapping approach. Maps can actually be used to locate items of value and group significance as illustrated in this handbook. Buildings, rivers, natural features, and landmarks evoke strong symbols of community for many people and identifying these symbols is a sound way to bring people and organizations together for positive discussions about sustaining their community.

The Heritage approach develops a strong sense of community identity and is ideal for strategic plans that may be devoted to projects such as tourism development and community beautification. It is also a powerful marketing tool for promoting the community as a potential location for business, business retention, and other community economic development initiatives.

**The purpose** of the community heritage approach is to identify key assets within the participant's immediate environment. It validates the most important features of the community and surrounding environment. This process will facilitate an understanding of what these features mean to individuals and how they impact each other. The group will gain some insight into the real value of community assets to the participating community members. This approach works best when many people are involved.





### Materials List

- One large map of your local community. This map should be sketched prior to the meeting by someone who can draw a representation of the community in question. Not much detail is required. We recommend that the map be drawn on six to eight flip chart sheets (about 5 x 7 ft).
- Small copies of the maps for participants to take away.
- Markers, two boxes multi-colour
- Masking tape or blue gum
- 3" x 5" file cards, at least 100
- Two flip charts
- Large coloured sticker dots
- Overhead projector, prepared transparencies and markers

### Human Resources

- Facilitator
- Assistant who will help to post flip charts and be a runner and recorder when needed.

Objectives of this session are to:

-  Develop a clear sense of what each member feels are the **physical attributes** of the community. A map showing key areas – community assets – will be produced as a result of this session.
-  Build an understanding of the group's appreciation of these specific attributes and assets.



## STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO HERITAGE APPROACH, FACILITATOR'S NOTES (3 HOURS)

### 1. Welcome and Introduction (15 min.)

**Outcome: Group members will get acquainted.**

The facilitator will welcome the group and ask participants to introduce themselves briefly by doing one of the following:

- i) Participants share how long they have lived in the community.
- ii) Participants share how long they have been involved in their own organization.

### 2. Set the Context (10 min.)

**Outcome: Participants will understand the objectives of the session.**

The facilitator will review the objectives and agenda of the session. The focus of the session is to develop a map that reveals important and strategic points of interest (assets) for the participants. The facilitator will explain the agenda and time-line of the session.

### 3. Group Reflection (15 min.)

**Outcome: Participants will identify two important physical assets of their community.**

The facilitator will ask each member to think about and identify the most important features of their physical environment in their community. These may include such things as built structures (library, theatre, arena, a homestead, streetscape, etc.) or they may be part of the natural environment, such as the river, the big tree in the middle of the town square, or the local conservation park. Other examples may include such items as physical infrastructure such as roads or bridges.

Participants may have a difficult time selecting. The facilitator should explain the importance of focusing on only a few assets.

Distribute two file cards to each participant. On the file cards, with the coloured markers distributed, each group member will draw a picture of the two community assets they identified as most important. There will be duplications of identified assets. Duplication of cards highlight key community assets.



Make sure that participants understand that the items identified reside in, or are unique to, their community. We are not talking about rivers in general; we are talking about a specific river or part of a river.

Ask the following questions:

- ♣ What physical asset do you really cherish in your community?
- ♣ What have you always thought of as the best feature of your community?

#### 4. Group Sharing (40 min.)

**Outcome:** Each member shares with the group the two community assets that s/he values and a map of these assets is created.

The facilitator will ask each participant to stand up, bring cards to the front, and discuss identified assets with the group. We hope that this exercise will produce an explosion of ideas.

Ask the following question:

- ♣ Why do you value the asset?

The facilitator and assistant, if required, will post the pictures on the map at the front of the room. The facilitator will keep track of the number of times each asset has been identified.

You may need to make piles of the cards which do not fit on the map. It is important that the piles are visible and associated with the asset on the map. Make sure the total number of cards for each asset is clearly counted and posted. This will illustrate to the group which assets are the most important.

#### 5. Break (10 min.)

#### 6. Group Discussion (35 min.)

**Outcome:** To review the map with identified assets.

This next part of the session is analysis. At this point the group will share the importance of these key assets, as well as their importance to the community.



Ask the following questions:

- ♣ What assets are recognized in this picture?
- ♣ Why are the cards located where they are?
- ♣ Do we like this map? Why or why not?

The facilitator must remember to thank participants for their contribution as they participate in the discussion.

## 7. Reflection: Building the Assets Map (40 min.)

**Outcome: To determine the key assets of the community.**

The facilitator will ask the participants to choose their top two community assets by using the “dot democracy” process. Each participant has two choices (two dots). The facilitator will ask each participant to place their dots on the images representing their personal asset(s) of choice.

The facilitator and assistant will total the dots for each asset and number them. Finally they will identify the top five assets to the group.

The facilitator will confirm with the group that these are indeed the top five heritage assets.

Ask the following questions:

- ♣ Do we think that these top five assets are the most important to you as a group?
- ♣ If so, why?
- ♣ If not, why not?

## 8. Wrap-Up and Evaluation (15 min.)

**Outcome: Participants will evaluate the session and will discuss what opportunities there are for next steps in asset mapping.**

The facilitator will then thank the group for their sharing and insights. A quick summary of the day’s agenda is appropriate. The facilitator will summarize the next steps and discuss who will take the information from the session and what they plan to do with it. The facilitator will encourage the group to continue to use this process in future group work. The facilitator will confirm that this process is a useful tool to identify, sustain, and build on assets within the community.



The group may decide that they want to continue the process. Please refer to the Next Steps section for future work in asset mapping. The facilitator could assist the group deciding what to do next and who will do it. Some groups will want to continue working together while others will be satisfied with the current product.

# Next Steps



## OPTIONAL NEXT STEPS FOR APPROACHES 2 AND 3

In approaches two and three, Storytelling and Heritage, there may be an additional opportunity for each group to discuss further or to work on their approaches, ultimately developing action plans for sustainability. To accomplish these next steps would require an additional two hours and would allow the group to discuss the future, particularly focussing on:

- 🍁 Identifying threats to our assets
- 🍁 Developing plans for supporting and building to increase the collective value of assets.

### 1. Small Group Discussion (50 min.):

**Outcome: To discuss in small groups what the threats to these community assets are, and to develop an action plan for supporting the assets.**

The large group will be divided into five working groups. Each of the assets identified as the most important in the previous processes will become the topic of a working group. The participants will select which working group they would like to be part of.

The groups should discuss some variation of the following:

- 🍁 Introduction - Give name and explain why this asset grouping is important to you.
- 🍁 Identify threats to this community asset.
- 🍁 Plan how your group can support and build to increase the collective value of these community assets.

Record answers on the overhead transparencies and each group will select a presenter to report the results to the full group.





## 2. Break (10 min)

## 3. Large Group Presentation (45 min.)

**Outcome:** Each group to present summaries of their discussions.

Each group will present their summaries. Try to do this in five minutes per group. The facilitator will summarize key ideas from each group presentation.

## 4. Wrap-Up and Evaluation (15 min.)

**Outcome:** Participants will evaluate the session and will discuss what would be the next steps in putting the action plan into effect.

The facilitator will give a brief summary. The facilitator will thank the group for their sharing and enthusiasm.



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

As we mentioned in the introduction, the theme of the conference is Community Capacity Building, which is about helping communities to help themselves. Community Capacity Building supports a way of thinking that will add value to the social, economic, and human resources that exist in the community. Key objectives of this conference include providing participants with tools and skills to stimulate development in their communities.

Asset mapping is a positive enjoyable approach to learning about community. It challenges us to see different points of view and to collectively strategize about how to build on assets in order to support and enhance them for future generations to enjoy.

This handbook is a tool that can be used as a starting point for a number of initiatives including strategic planning, organizational development and community development. Anyone who is involved in engaging people in the shaping of the future of their community will find numerous opportunities to practice asset mapping. The use of the process is limited only by our ability to imagine.

**"Imagine a community where...!"**



### FURTHER REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the work of the Asset Based Community Development Institute at Northwest University, and particularly the work of Luther Snow who was a guest speaker at the Ontario Rural Conference 2001 and the author of **The Organization of Hope** as cited below.

The following references may also be helpful.

- 🌿 **A Guide to Capacity Inventories: Mobilizing the Community Skills of Local Residents** (1997) ABCD Workbooks, ACTA Publications
- 🌿 **A Guide to Evaluating Asset-Based Community Development: Lessons, Challenges, and Opportunities** (1997) ABCD Workbooks, ACTA Publications
- 🌿 **The Organization of Hope: A Workbook for Rural Asset-Based Community Development** (2001) ABCD Workbooks, ACTA Publications
- 🌿 Also try the following Web address: [www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html)

Leanne Small and Tony Fuller have an article that is currently in-press, addressing the use of asset mapping as a tool in the examination of sustainable livelihoods in rural communities. The title is **Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural North America: Introducing an Assets Approach**. A copy of this article can be obtained by contacting the School of Rural Planning and Development at the University of Guelph **519-824-4120 x 6783**.

Many thanks to those individuals who so generously contributed of their time in testing and validating the handbook. The project benefited greatly from their comments. Financial support for this project was provided by the Rural Secretariat.

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# Introduction

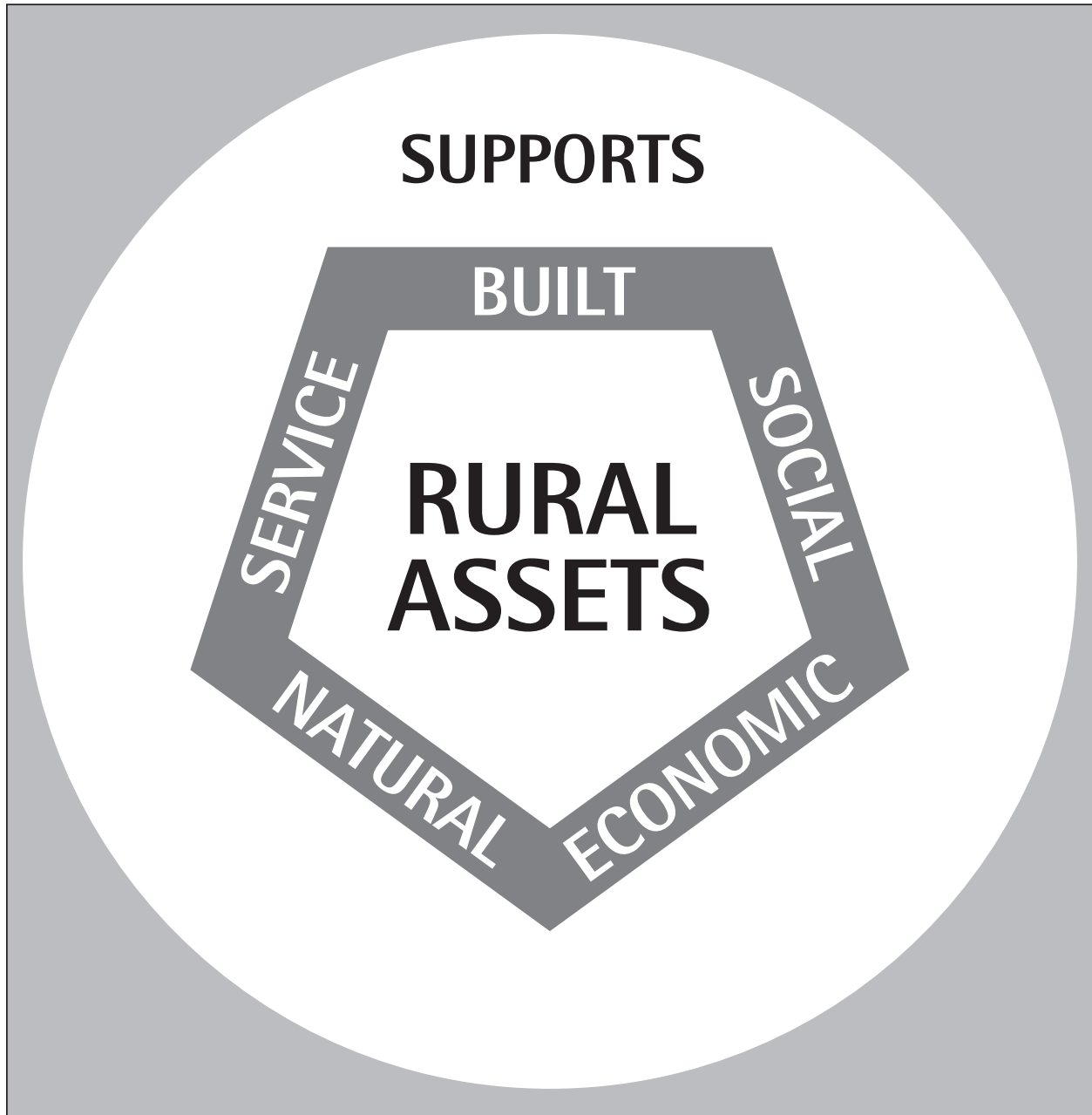
## CONCEPTUALIZING RURAL ASSETS



### Overhead 1 – Whole Assets Approach



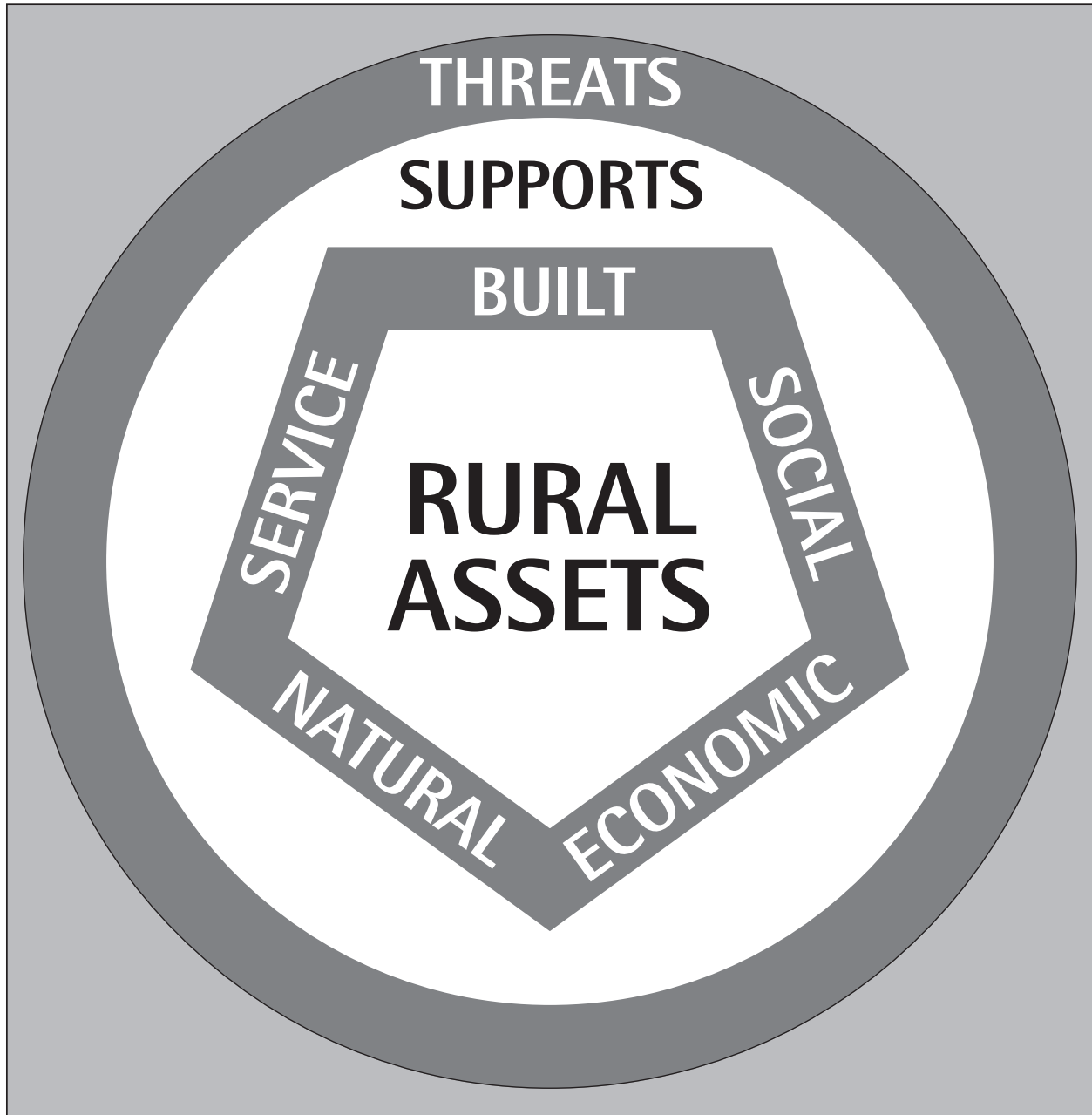
## CONCEPTUALIZING RURAL ASSETS



Overhead 2 – Whole Assets Approach



## CONCEPTUALIZING RURAL ASSETS



Overhead 3 – Whole Assets Approach