

6 - COMMUNITY ASSETS

Nutshell

In this lesson, students describe their community's assets, stakeholders, and critical issues. Students use an economic flow diagram to understand the relationships between people and valuable resources. They work as a group to identify assets and stakeholders in their local community. Students organize a community forum in which they interview local leaders to identify important issues and the actions being taken. They work individually to map community assets in the context of a specific issue. In conclusion, students reflect on their experience and identify opportunities to learn more and become involved.

Big Ideas

Wisconsin's forests have multiple economic values including forest products, recreation, tourism, and jobs. Forests provide a variety of raw materials for many industries. (subconcept 26)

Forests can shape the economic, social, and cultural composition of local communities. (subconcept 27)

Wisconsin's forests are under private (e.g., industrial non-industrial private forests), public (e.g., county, state, national forests), and tribal ownership; each may have different objectives. (subconcept 31)

A citizen, acting individually or as part of a group, can make lifestyle decision and take a variety of actions to ensure the sustainable use of our forests. (subconcept 54)

Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define the term "community"
- Explain the economic relationships and assets that define their local community
- Identify local stakeholders that have influence over community assets
- Use research findings to identify critical issues in the local community
- Diagram the relationship between community stakeholders and assets in the context of a critical issue

Subject Areas

Environmental Education, Social Studies

LEAF 9-12 Lesson Guide Connections

Lesson 5 – Forest Science and Technology

- Provides students with an understanding of the issues in forest management and wood use and guides them through a process of solution building.

Lesson/Activity Time

Total Lesson Time: 170 minutes

Time Breakdown:

Introduction – Defining Community (20 minutes)

Activity 1 – Community Assets (15 minutes)

Activity 2 – Community Stakeholders (15 minutes)

Activity 3 – Community Forum (60 minutes)

Activity 4 – Community Asset Maps (30 minutes)

Conclusion – Group Reflection (30 minutes)

Teaching Site

Classroom and local community

Vocabulary

Asset – Resources, skills, knowledge, and capacities of the individuals, associations, and institutions in a community.

Community – People who live in the same area or share the same interests.

Community Asset Map – Diagram showing the relationship between community assets and stakeholders.

Stakeholders – All persons, agencies and organizations with an investment or 'stake' in the health of a community.

Materials List

For each student

- Copy of Student Page  1, *Community Assets*
- Copy of Student Page  4, *Community Asset Map*

For each student pair

- Copy of Student Page  3, *Sample Interview Letter and Questions*

For each group of 3-4 students

- Copy of Student Page  2, *Community Stakeholders*

For the teacher

- Whiteboard/Meeting board and markers

Teacher Preparation

- Review Activity 1 from Lesson 5 of the LEAF 9-12 Lesson Guide. If you have not covered this material with your class, prepare materials necessary to explain the circular flow diagram in steps 1 through 3.
- Develop a method to record and save student lists of community assets, community stakeholders, and critical issues.
- Plan a time for stakeholder interviews inside or outside of class time.

Background Information

See Lesson 5 from the LEAF 9-12 Forestry Lesson Guide

Procedure

Introduction – Defining Community (20 minutes)

1. Ask students to describe what the word “community” means to them. Lead a brainstorm and create a list of descriptive terms on the board. The list may include: friends, family, cities, downtown, houses, parks, businesses, churches, events, sports, etc.

Tell the class that a community is often defined as “people who live in the same area or share the same interests.” Towns and cities are all examples of communities of people who live in the same area. Though many of the residents may have different religious, cultural, political, and economic interests, they have common interest in the town’s resources such as roads, waterways, schools, and parks. They also have common interest in the local history, cultural events, ethnic diversity, and the development of local knowledge and skills.

Tell the class that all of the resources, knowledge, skills, and capacities that a community has are called assets. Community assets are vital for a community to build wealth and provide for their residents.


2. Have the students imagine what their ideal community looks like. What assets does it have? How does the community accumulate and share resources? What events does it hold? What types of people live there? For what is the community renowned?

Have students share their ideas with the rest of the class. Encourage students to ask each other questions about how their ideas community would work. Who would pay for the community infrastructure? How? How would individuals accumulate wealth? How would community decisions be made?

Tell the class that to accurately describe a community, we need to define two fundamental components: 1) The economic system that influences the relationships between community members and valuable resources, and 2) the community assets.

3. A circular flow diagram will help your class understand how people in their community produce and use valuable resources. If you haven’t done so already, go to Lesson 5 of the LEAF 9-12 Lesson Guide and conduct steps 1 through 3 in Activity 1 – Circular Flow Diagram. If you have already covered this material with your class, review the concepts and move on.
4. Tell students that during the next few class periods they will work together to describe their community’s assets and identify ways that they can become involved to help the community and its forest resources. To do this, they will need to complete three tasks:
 - Identify community assets
 - Identify influential community members (stakeholders)
 - Describe how stakeholders perceive forest resource issues (i.e. what are the issues and what needs to be done?).

Activity 1 – Community Assets (15 minutes)

5. Hand each student a copy of Student Page  1, *Community Assets*. Allow each student about 10 minutes to answer the questions. While they are working, prepare the whiteboard with headings for each question on the handout. The questions are as follows:


- What are the different cultures in the community?
- What public resources exist in and around the community?
- What are the local enterprises that promote economic growth?
- What are the local community organizations?
- What celebrations take place in the community?
- What local talents exist in the community?
- What are the local stories (histories, legends, myths, etc.)?
- Who are the most influential people (or groups of people) in the community?

Once the students have finished, proceed question by question and have students share their ideas with the class. Write their ideas under the appropriate heading. Have the class fill in their worksheets with the ideas of other students. Add your own observations to help complete each question. Once the class is out of answers, have the students review the list of assets and add any assets that are missing.

6. When the discussion is exhausted, tell the class that they have just brainstormed a list of their community's assets. The list should represent the resources, knowledge, and skills that the community has to offer its residents. It is, in essence, the wealth of the community.

The next step to understanding their community is identifying the individuals and organizations that control or influence the community's assets. These individuals and groups of individuals are the community's stakeholders.

Activity 2 – Community Stakeholders (15 minutes)

7. Have students get into small groups of 3 to 4 and hand each group a copy of Student Page  2, *Community Stakeholders*. Allow them 10 to 15 minutes to identify stakeholders in each of the three columns. Remind them that they are trying to think of people or groups of people that have influence over the community's assets.

Move around the room and help groups think of answers. Encourage the sharing of ideas from group to group. Try to ensure that each group has a complete list of stakeholders, representing the ideas of all of the groups.

8. Once the ideas are exhausted, tell the class that have just created a list of people that know about the issues facing the community and are making decisions that affect everyone. For the students to understand the issues and participate in solutions, they will need to find out what the stakeholders think and what they are doing.

Activity 3 – Community Forum (60 minutes)

9. Tell the class that they need to find out 2 primary things about their community: 1) What are the issues that the community is concerned about, and 2) what is being done to solve the issues.


Ask the class to come up with a strategy for gathering the information. Conduct a large group brainstorm to solicit and discuss ideas from students. Student ideas may include conducting phone interviews, inviting stakeholders to a community meeting, conducting personal interviews, mailing out surveys, etc.

Have the class discuss the pros and cons of each option. Considerations should include the following:

- How long will the process take?
- How effective will it be (i.e. How accurate will the results be? How many people will respond?)
- How much will it cost?
- How much help will we need?
- How much publicity, support, and/or recognition can we get from it?

Note: Organizing a community forum with the presence of the local media may be the most effective way to get community leaders involved. Getting a group of community members together at the same time also reduces the time required for students to request and receive information. It may also generate welcome publicity for you, your students, and your school.

10. Once the class has decided on a format, have them discuss the type of information that they need and how they will compile and analyze it. Lead the brainstorm to identify 1) how to communicate with stakeholders, 2) how to develop the interview/survey, 3) how to record information, and 4) how to share the results with the rest of the class.

If your class is having a difficult time developing the interview, they can use Student Page  3, *Sample Interview Questions* as a guideline. Students should contact the interview subjects by phone, email, or letter (this may require your formal assistance). If you are inviting stakeholders to a forum or personal interview, you may wish to send the interview questions beforehand. If conducting interviews, students can record them using a handheld voice recorder or by writing the answers down.

11. Once the information has been collected, student pairs should present or otherwise submit their results to the rest of the class. This can be as simple as a transcript and oral presentation or as involved as creating a multimedia presentation with a picture and profile of the stakeholder and explanations of their perceptions and roles in the community.

The class should use the results to expand on their assets and stakeholders lists, identify critical issues in the community, and identify actions being taken to solve the issues. In the next activity, students will use a critical issue as a starting point to develop a community asset map.

Activity 4 – Community Asset Maps (30 minutes)

12. Review the list of critical issues that the students developed. Have the class discuss which issues they feel are most important to them and why. Tell the class that they can

use their knowledge of community assets, stakeholders, and issues to begin developing solutions.

13. Choose an issue from the list the students feel is important. Ask the class to identify community assets that are affected by the issue or that can be used as part of a solution. Once students have a few assets identified, ask them to identify the stakeholders that have influence over the assets. Have students brainstorm how the stakeholders can use the assets to solve the problem.

Tell the class that they have just described a community asset map. Hand each student a copy of Student Page 4, *Community Asset Map*. Review the example and point out the symbols and information used in the diagram to represent stakeholders and assets.

14. Have students work individually to create an asset map. Have them choose an issue, identify the assets associated with it, identify stakeholders that have influence over the assets, and diagram the asset map accordingly.

Conclusion – Group Reflection (30 minutes)

15. Have a few students present their asset maps to the class. Allow the class to ask questions and present their ideas as well.
16. Lead the class in a discussion to reflect on what they learned about their community during the lesson. Have the class discuss the following questions:
 - What did you learn about some of the people and groups in your community?
 - Were there any ideas or activities that surprised you? Which ones?
 - What ideas and actions did you agree with? What didn't you agree with?
 - What unexpected patterns and relationships did you observe?
 - What opportunities and resources exist to develop solutions?
 - What opportunities exist to learn more about our community and community issues?

Summative Assessment

Have students work in groups to create community asset maps for forest resource issues in their community. Have them focus on their school forest as an asset and explain how they can use their school forest as part of a solution.

Extension

Invite a subject matter expert (SME) to come to your class and talk about community development and/or critical issues and actions in your local community. SMEs could include, but are not limited to:

- Mayor
- Local community activist
- A professor of geography
- Agent from UW Extension Community, Natural Resource, and Economic Development Program
- County Executive

Recommended Resources

Buck Institute for Education. 2003. Project-based Learning Handbook 2nd Ed.

LEAF Program. 2006. 9-12 Forestry Lesson Guide.

Web Resources

Community Capitals: A Tool for Evaluating Strategic Interventions and Projects

<http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu/projects/commcap/7-capitalshandout.pdf>

UW-Extension Sustainable Community Development

www.uwex.edu/ces/ag/sus/

Sustainable Communities Network

www.sustainable.org/

Laboratory of Community Economic Development

www.communitydevelopment.uiuc.edu/toolbox/

Vision to Action

www.ag.iastate.edu/centers/rdev/pubs/contents/182.htm

Logical Framework Approach

www.gdrc.org/ngo/logical-fa.pdf

Model Academic Standards

AGRICULTURE EDUCATION A.12.1

Global Agricultural Systems

Identify how political policies and issues shape and influence food and fiber systems (see SS D.12.4, D.12.8, D.12.13)

- analyze environmental issues that influence the food and fiber system in Wisconsin, the nation, and the world
- understand how a country's infrastructure affects food and fiber distribution
- be aware of the involvement and influence of government agencies on marketing of food and fiber commodities

Students interview local residents and create community asset maps to identify and understand issues and define how assets and stakeholders influence them.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION A.12.1

Question and Analysis

Identify questions that require skilled investigation* to solve current problems* cited in literature, media, or observed through personal observations (see *LA Research*)

Students use their understanding of local community assets and stakeholders to develop questions that will help them understand issues of importance to their community and help them identify opportunities to learn more.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION A.12.5

Question and Analysis

Communicate the results of their investigations* to groups concerned with the issue* (see *LA Oral Language*)

Student groups present their interview results to the rest of the class and discuss opportunities to become involved.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION D.12.7

Citizen Action Skills

Analyze political, educational, economic, and governmental influences on environmental issues,* and identify the role of citizens* in policy formation (see SS Political Science and Citizenship: Power, Authority, Governance, and Responsibility)

Student create community asset map that describe the influence that stakeholders have on community assets.

SOCIAL STUDIES C.12.8

Political Science and Citizenship

Locate, organize, analyze, and use information from various sources to understand an issue of public concern, take a position, and communicate the position

Students identify local stakeholders and develop and conduct interviews to discern issues of importance to them. They present their results and work as a class to create community asset maps and determine opportunities to become involved.

SOCIAL STUDIES C.12.9

Political Science and Citizenship

Identify and evaluate the means through which advocates influence public policy

Student create community asset map that describe the influence that stakeholders have on community assets.

SOCIAL STUDIES C.12.10

Political Science and Citizenship

Identify ways people may participate effectively in community affairs and the political process

Students conduct interviews with local leaders to determine issues of importance and how they can become involved.

SOCIAL STUDIES E.12.14

The Behavioral Sciences

Use the research procedures and skills of the behavioral sciences (such as gathering, organizing, and interpreting data from several sources) to develop an informed position on an issue

Students identify local stakeholders and develop and conduct interviews to discern issues of importance to them. They present their results and work as a class to create community asset maps and determine opportunities to become involved.

Multiple Intelligences

Verbal-Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Interpersonal

Student Page , *Community Assets*

What are the different cultures in the community?	What public resources exist in and around the community?
What are the local enterprises that promote economic growth?	What are the local community organizations?
What celebrations take place in the community?	What local talents exist in the community?
What are the local stories (histories, legends, myths, etc.)?	Who are the most influential people (or groups of people) in the community?

Student Page *2*, Community Stakeholders

Government Create a list of government agencies that influence the way that people use community assets.	Businesses Create a list of businesses that supply valuable resources to your community.	Households Create a list of local residents and active groups of people that are working to solve critical issues in your community.

DRAFT

Student Page , *Sample Interview Questions*

1. How long have you lived in this community?
2. Why did you choose to live/stay here?
3. What are your professional interests?
4. When thinking of our community, what is most important to you?
5. What social and environmental issues are important to you?
6. What education issues are most important to you?
7. What trends do you see as positive for the community?
8. What trends do you see as negative?
9. What are the most critical issues facing our community?
10. What are the biggest challenges facing our forests and local forest economy?
11. Who are the important community members involved in these issues?
12. What are the important relationships and partnerships needed to find solutions?
13. What citizen actions are taking place around a critical issue?
14. What are the youth-led projects in the community?
15. What should be done that is not being done?
16. How can people become involved?

Student Page 3, Community Asset Maps

- **Community:** Stevens Point, Wisconsin
- **Critical Issue:** Children spend less time outdoors and have less contact with nature
- **Community Assets:** The Green Circle Bike Trail, the Schmeckle Reserve Visitor Center, and Boston School Forest
- **Stakeholders:** The Green Circle Foundation, private landowners, city of Stevens Point, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, K12 teachers, local school board, residents of Stevens Point, the University Foundation

