



Frequently Asked Questions about the Asset Framework

Search Institute has found that some questions about the asset framework come up again and again. Here are answers to a number of them.

1. I don't have kids, and I don't work with kids—can I build assets?

Yes! One of the most important messages of asset building is that everyone plays a role, not just families, youth workers, and teachers. The assets offer ways everyone can provide the positive relationships and experiences young people need. For some, it may be as simple as smiling and saying hello to young people encountered during daily activities. For others, it could mean developing a significant relationship with a young person. Even using the asset framework to assess candidates for public office can be a way of supporting asset building.

2. Are resources on the assets available in any other language?

Yes, we have several resources in Spanish, including the list of 40 assets. When distributing the list, we suggest you use English on one side and Spanish on the other.

3. Do younger children need the same assets as teenagers?

Search Institute has developed frameworks of assets for infants and toddlers (birth to age 2), preschoolers (3 to 5), and elementary-age children (6 to 11). While these frameworks have not been tested through surveys by Search Institute, they are based on research on child development. For more information see *Starting Out Right: Developmental Assets for Children* (published by Search Institute in 1997).

4. How important is it that I focus on each individual asset?

While each individual asset is critical to development, it's more important (and easier!) to pay attention to the eight categories of assets and the broader concepts of external assets and internal assets.

5. What's the best way to develop an understanding of the assets?

Share your ideas, questions, suggestions, stories, and frustrations with others. Talk about how the 40 assets work in your own experience, and how they connect to your own values and ideals.

6. Once a young person has a particular asset, does he or she have it forever?

No. Assets can come and go, based on current relationships and experiences. They need to be built throughout a person's life.



7. Is it important for asset-building initiatives to find ways to exemplify the asset focus in our structure, meetings, and planning?

Yes! This is a great way to reinforce people's understanding of the assets, and it can also lead to stronger teams and organizations. For example, some organizations use the eight categories of assets to look at how they work together, asking questions like: How can we support each other? What should be our boundaries and expectations for meetings? and so on.

8. Are some assets more important than others?

Don't pick and choose assets—the power of this framework lies in how they work together. Young people need as many of the assets as they can get. If you want to focus specific attention on one or two assets at a time, do so with the reminder that they are only part of the larger framework.

9. Is it OK to focus on just the assets that seem most critical for our kids?

Yes, you can use the asset framework to help set priorities in your community. For example, some communities have looked at the framework and realized they haven't done much to address issues of boundaries. Others have found that there are few opportunities for young people to be involved in constructive activities.

10. A lot of activities are “asset building,” but few people have heard of the concept. How can we get other “asset builders” on board?

Celebrate, affirm, and honor the ways people already build assets (even if they don't call it that). A good way to first get people excited is to have them go through the list and mark what they're already doing. People and organizations who build assets can also be acknowledged and featured in your community newspaper or other public forum.

11. Does having more assets just reduce risk behaviors?

No. The assets also promote positive outcomes and positive behavior.

12. Do we have to create a new program based on asset building?

No, you can use the asset framework to help evaluate and improve existing programs and opportunities for young people. For example: How can a focus on assets improve meetings? How can it enhance what's happening in a 4-H group? How can it impact a community-wide celebration?

13. Can a single action help to build more than one of the assets?

Certainly! For example, a caring relationship with an adult (asset #3) can lead to many of the other assets, including community values youth (asset #7), positive adult role models (asset #14), and self-esteem (asset #38).