

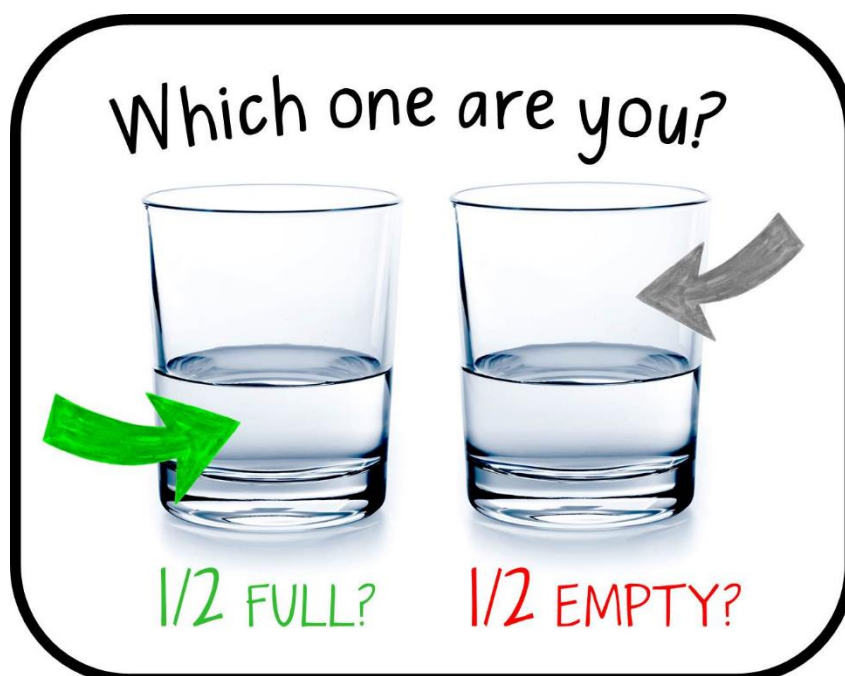
## Not what's wrong but what's strong

### Introduction

Knowing and understanding our communities well enables stronger partnerships and greater mission impact. Good community analysis takes time, and is essential for wise resource use and planning. A framework for a team / corps planning community analysis and building healthy communities (suggested two one-hour meetings) is provided below.

#### 1. Read the following together (5-10 min)

Asset-based community development (ABCD) is a glass-half-full strategy that starts with a focus on a **community's strengths rather than its needs**. It takes seriously the gifts and talents of the people in the area, and the resources available across the community. Before looking at the 'needs' of the wider community, this approach encourages us to begin by looking at the strengths and resources of our Salvos community in the area and those with whom we already partner.



How do you see your community? Half glass full or half glass empty?  
What's wrong or what's strong?

The Salvos community and the people in the local area have existing strengths, capabilities, passions, skills, resources and community connections. The initial step in community analysis and building community is to identify the community strengths and to build on them to fulfill our mission in the area. The model incorporates the following steps:

1. **Identify and mobilise the capabilities, skills and resources of the community.** God is already at work in the world – in our Salvos community and in the wider community. Action step: Map the strengths of our Salvo community and then look at the wider community. What are the existing resources in these communities?
2. **Look for resources and solutions to come from within the community,** not from the outside. God is at work and our people are gifted with abilities and passions. Before we look for external funding or people, look at the existing people and organisations in the community.
3. **Seek to build relationships** among local individuals, churches, businesses, schools, government departments. God seeks restored relationships and interdependence. Explore: What are positive relationships or partnerships with existing organisations in the area? How can we build relationships between our own Salvation Army expressions in the area – and then with other partners in the area?
4. **Bring in outside resources when local resources are insufficient to solve pressing needs.** If we look for outside resources too quickly, we may undermine local capacity or initiative. Collaboration includes bringing in resources to train and equip our community.

With the depth and scope of human need so vast, Robert Lupton, in a book called *Toxic Charity*, suggests that 'need' does not constitute 'a call'. Again, there is no simple or immediate way to discern the right response without a relationship and so we **start where the people are and where we have existing relationships**.

## What's different about ABCD?

From	To
Deficit thinking	Abundance mentality
Passive and disengaged clients	Active and mobilised community
Professional services to a client	Engaging the person and family
Community as the problem	Community as part of the solution
Doing 'to' or 'for' the community	Doing 'with' the community
Transactional	Transformational

## 2. Discussion (50 min)

ABCD suggests the best response is to **follow the energy** in the community – the Salvos community and the wider community. In small groups, spend some time asking team or corps members to talk about the following:

*Why are you part of The Salvation Army?*

*What do like about being part of The Salvation Army community?*

*What would you like / love to see happen here?*

*What gifts, abilities, knowledge and skills do you bring?*

*What are your hopes and dreams for the area?*

Share your findings as a larger group and record your findings. What does this process tell us about where the energy or the Spirit of God is at work here?

After looking at our own strengths, the next step is to engage with the community members that are engaged with our different mission expressions – and **listen** to them. Ask your team or corps members to have a coffee with a community member and ask them:

*What do you like about The Salvation Army community in the area?*

*What would you like / love to see happen here?*

*What are your hopes or dreams for the area?*

*How could you contribute to making those dreams a reality?*

At the next meeting together, share your findings.

## Next meeting

Ask the team or corps members to share their findings. What does this indicate about where the energy or Spirit of God is here?

- How does this compare with the findings from the team or corps members?
- Are there different views? Celebrate them and see what we can learn from one another.

## 3. Discussion (50-60 min)

In groups of 6-8, discuss the appreciative inquiry questions below and write key ideas on a whiteboard or butchers paper:

### Discover:

- What are we already doing and see working well?
- What do we already know about our community? We work and live in it.
- What human and physical resources do we already have in our Salvos community?
- Spend time mapping our resources and capabilities and share these with the team.
- What are the significant events celebrated or acknowledged in the community that we could strengthen and support - especially consistent with our mission and services? (e.g. NAIDOC Week; Homeless Persons Week; RUOK Day; Clean Up Australia Day; Anti-Poverty Week).
- What are our next steps to better understand the communities in which we serve?

### Dream:

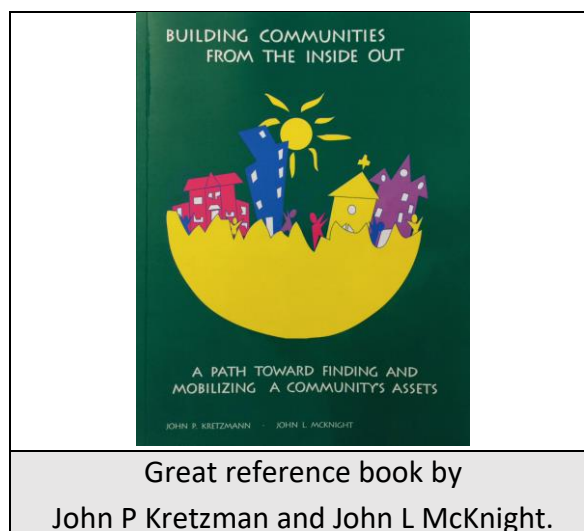
- What would we like our influence in the area to look like in 18 months if we were working really well together?
- List these as a group and share these with the team.

### Design:

- What steps do we need to make to bring this about?

### Deliver:

- What is our timeline to achieve these steps?



## Community analysis: asset-based community development

