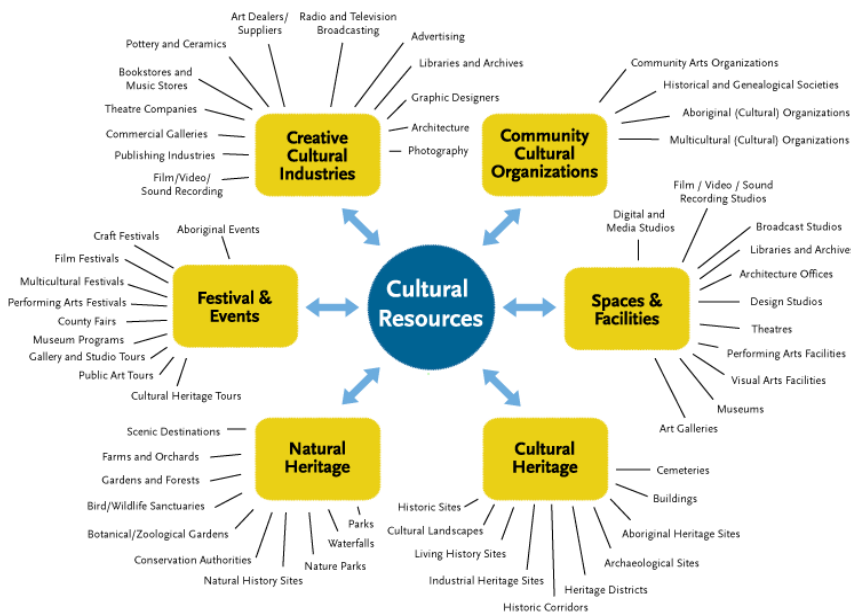


# Overview of Creating an Asset Map

Asset mapping is a process where individuals identify and describe assets in the community and often present them geographically on a map (California Department of Social Services, 2024). There is not a “one size fits all” list of assets, as communities can vary in terms of locally available assets; location and context matter. Asset mapping is a strategy used across disciplines such as public health (Luo et al., 2023), community development (Ordoñez-Jasis & Myck-Wayne, 2012), and education (Morgan et al., 2022) to help leaders and community members understand local strengths. Asset maps document existing resources, and people can use these maps to identify resources to meet their needs, leverage strengths in the community to achieve goals, and build community partnerships (Keys, n.d.; National Center for Farmworker Health, 2021). For examples of asset maps, refer to figures 1 and 2. This handout outlines a six-step approach to support school staff to identify their community’s assets.

Figure 1. Asset map example 1

*Framing question:* What cultural resources are available to community members?  
*Community:* South Georgian Bay residents

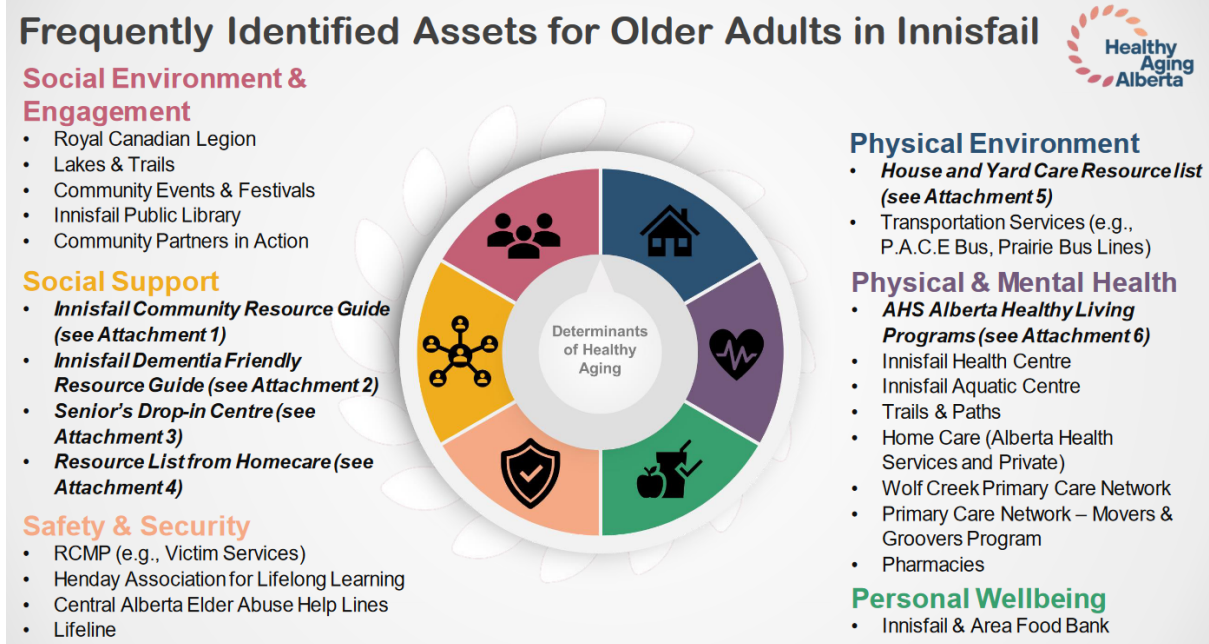


Source: Nourishing Ontario, 2012.

Figure 2. Asset map example 2

*Framing question:* What programs, services, and resources can we connect older adults in our community to?

Community: Older adults in Innisfail, Canada



Source: Healthy Aging Alberta, n.d.

## Step 1: Define your “community”

While we often think of a community as a group of people who live close together, a community can be a group of people who have something in common, such as shared experiences or interests. When defining your community, consider multiple factors such as geographic locations, a specific group or groups of people, and participation in organizations or systems (UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2023; University of Kansas, 2024; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2018). For an example of how to define the community, see figure 3. Note that you do not need to include all these elements when defining your community.

Figure 3. Example of defining the community

**Geographic location:**  
Carter County, Kentucky

**Specific groups of people:**  
Kinship caregivers and grandfamilies

**Organizations or systems:**  
Local school district

*Community: Kinship caregivers and grandfamilies in a local school district in Carter County, Kentucky.*

## Step 2: Develop your framing question

A framing question sets the direction for the mapping activity and can help elicit relevant and constructive contributions to the map (Burns et al., 2012; Spencer & Williams, 2017). When developing your framing question, ask yourself:

- What needs are driving the decision to create an asset map?
- What issue or project are you working on?
- Are there particular types of community assets that you are most interested in capturing?

See figure 4 for an example of how to move from identifying the community to creating a framing question to guide the mapping activity.

Figure 4. Example of a framing question

*Community: Kinship caregivers and grandfamilies in a local school district in Carter County, Kentucky.*

**Needs:**  
What supports are available for these caregivers?

**Issue:**  
Improve students' academic outcomes

*Framing question: What supports are available to help kinship caregivers and grandfamilies improve their students' academic outcomes?*

## Step 3: Identify partners to help create the asset map

Identify a team of people who are willing to work together to create the asset map. One option is to recruit and convene staff within your organization, district, or school. Another option is to convene a small group of partners who work across multiple types of local organizations, such as schools, healthcare, law enforcement, faith-based organizations, and social services, for example. Look for people with diverse experiences whenever possible, such as community leaders, families, business owners, local representatives, and youth program staff (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.; UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2023). When identifying partners, you might want to consider using the following guiding questions:

- Who do you currently partner with?
- Who are the key people and organizations interested in the focus area?
- What knowledge or expertise is needed?
- Have you identified individuals with different knowledge and information about the community?

## Step 4. Determine the categories of assets to include

Determine the categories, or types, of assets to include (National Center for Farmworker Health, 2021; UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2023). While not an exhaustive list, consider including categories such as:

- Local businesses and industry (e.g., restaurants)
- Community-based organizations (e.g., religious organizations)
- Families, elders, and community leaders (e.g., councils)
- Health and human services organizations (e.g., hospitals)
- Educational institutions (e.g., community colleges)
- Municipal institutions (e.g., libraries)

See figure 5 for a framework for indicating the categories of interest to include as well as examples.

Figure 5. Example categories of assets to include on a map



## Step 5: Generate a list of asset subcategories for each category

There are multiple ways you can generate subcategories for each category of assets. Some examples include drawing on your knowledge, conducting an internet search, reading local papers, attending group meetings, and engaging in conversations with community members (Burns et al., 2012; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2012; UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2023). In adding subcategories of assets, you may consider moving away from the bubble graphic shown in step 5 to a table for organizational purposes. For an example of a partially completed table by asset categories and subcategories, see figure 6.

Figure 6. Example asset map with categories and subcategories

Asset Categories	Asset subcategories
<i>Community-based organizations</i>	Nonprofit afterschool providers
<i>Educational institutions</i>	Community colleges
<i>Families, elders, community leaders</i>	School board members
<i>Health and human services organizations</i>	Food banks

## Step 6: Include specific examples with contact information for each type of asset

Include specific examples with contact information for each type of asset (National Center for Farmworker Health, 2021; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2012). Adding in specific examples and contact information will make the resource user-friendly for kinship caregivers and grandfamilies, reducing burden on them and connecting them with resources faster. See figure 7 for an example of a partially completed table by asset categories and subcategories, including specific examples and contact information.

Figure 7. Example asset table with specific examples and contact information

Asset Categories	Asset Subcategories	Specific Examples	Contact Information
<i>Community-based organizations</i>	Nonprofit afterschool providers	Bob Burdette Center	<a href="https://bobburdettecenter.org/">https://bobburdettecenter.org/</a> 304-342-1158 1401 Washington Street West Charleston, WV 25387
<i>Educational institutions</i>	Community colleges	Blue Ridge Community College Dual Enrollment Program	<a href="https://www.brcc.edu/admissions/high-school-students/">https://www.brcc.edu/admissions/high-school-students/</a> 540-234-9261

Asset Categories	Asset Subcategories	Specific Examples	Contact Information
<i>Families, elders, community leaders</i>	School board members	Smithville school board Chair Pat Jones*	<a href="mailto:boardchair@schooldistrict.edu">boardchair@schooldistrict.edu</a>
<i>Health and human services organizations</i>	Food banks	Second Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Tennessee	<a href="https://netfoodbank.org/food-pantry/">https://netfoodbank.org/food-pantry/</a> 1020 Jericho Drive Kingsport, TN 37663

\* Fictitious name and email provided as an example.

## Optional map enhancement

Individuals and organizations can also complete the following steps to create an asset map that better meets their specific needs.

- Create a geographic map.** Providing a visual representation helps identify areas with a concentration of assets as well as areas with potentially unmet needs (National Center for Farmworker Health, 2021; UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 2023). You can find more information about the process in this [Community Asset Mapping Guide](#) and in this resource on [Asset Map Creation Using Google Maps](#).
- Organize assets according to the needs they meet.** Assets will not always meet every single need of a community. Therefore, identify the specific needs of the community of focus and organize the identified assets under the needs they meet. For example, an asset may support kinship caregivers and grandfamilies with childcare and family functioning, but it may not provide mental or physical health support. Organizing assets by needs they address can help kinship caregivers and grandfamilies easily identify assets in the areas they need the most support.

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