

Empowerment and Person-centredness



4ST PLAYBOOK

A self-help guide with concrete steps, examples and ideas to explore and achieve desired 4ST outcomes

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OUTCOMES:

Thrust 1



The ecosystem leverages the assets of individuals, families, and communities to solve social challenges

EMPOWERMENT AND PERSON-CENTREDNESS

Thrust 1 Outcome:



The ecosystem leverages the assets of individuals, families, and communities to solve social challenges

Guiding questions

- What are the strengths and assets that could be mobilised in a community?
- How might we identify and mobilise the strengths and assets within a community?
- How might we facilitate the sustained contributions of these strengths and assets?

What does this mean?

- Shifting from a deficit-based approach to an asset-based one in supporting individuals, families, and communities.
- Recognising that individuals, families, and communities can be contributors and change agents rather than just recipients of services.
- Closely linked to outcome: **Practices and solutions in the sector become more person-centred.**

What are the strengths and assets that can be mobilised in a community?

Personal assets

- Knowledge, skills, talents, and aspirations of individuals.
- Examples: Individual with IT skills, individual recovering from a mental health condition who can share his/her lived experience.

Associations

- Individuals with a common interest coming together in a small and informal setting, by their own choice, multiplying the individual assets that they all have.
- Examples: A youth volunteer group, a group of individuals recovering from mental health condition, ground-up movements.

Institutions

- Formally structured entities made up of professionals that can offer resources to the community.
- Examples: Government agencies, private businesses (such as shops in neighbourhoods), schools.

Place-based assets

- Spaces that can be used for interactions and connections amongst members in the community.
- Examples: Spaces in community centres, HDB void decks, libraries, parks, virtual networks.

Social assets

- Exchanges between individuals sharing their assets create connections, social networks.
- Connections take time and are built from the basis of trust and understanding of one another.
- Examples: Peer networks, relationships with family and friends.

Steps you can take

For social purpose entities (SPEs):

	When working with individuals and their families	Organisational level practices	When working with others across the sector
Starting out in this area...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with and encourage individuals and families to identify their strengths and assets, looking beyond deficits. • Identify areas of opportunities/ needs that can be met by the strengths and assets offered by the individuals and families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inculcate a strengths-based mindset and culture within the organisation. • Send staff for training to equip them with the skills and knowledge to implement the practices. • Design and conduct programme evaluation to review and improve the programme effectiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map out a landscape of the partners (including donors and funders) in the community and identify the assets they bring. • Invest time, resources, and effort to build relationships and foster trust with partners in the community.
Tried some things and is interested to grow further in this area...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve individuals as active members in decision making. • Connect/match the community assets to meet the needs of individuals and families. • Use technology and data to customise, deliver and provide integrated, seamless service and user experience across multiple touchpoints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help leaders adopt and model the strengths-based approach in their leadership style. • Share and learn best practices and failures with one another through networks or learning platforms. • Build strong community partnership to widen outreach and collaboration with other players in the sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene conversations across SPEs and other partners to identify and mobilise the assets within the community to address gaps (e.g., through asset mapping exercise). • Share data readily with partners to ensure care and support for individuals and families are coordinated and person-centred

Steps you can take

For social purpose entities (SPEs):

	When working with individuals and their families	Organisational level practices	When working with others across the sector
Experienced and wants to strengthen this area...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In networks where individuals come together to support one another: Establish common goals to work towards, identify roles and opportunities for members in the network to contribute (e.g., share their lived experience, skillsets) and create safe spaces to hold such conversations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and train Community Developers (individuals who may not have a formal title, but play a role in steering the community in the desired direction, based on the community's vision and purpose) to work with individuals, their families, and communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish regular communications among the different community partners. Set up structures to harness collective assets at the community level on a sustained basis (e.g., through the support of Collective Impact model¹).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish service standards to ensure that quality and principles of empowerment are upheld in service delivery. Evaluate outcomes attained by the individuals and families over a sustained period, and share the information with other partners in the ecosystem. Engage a pool of experienced service providers to share their experiences, as well as coach others with less experience. Develop an online repository to assist matching of individuals' assets and strengths to opportunities/needs in the community . 		

¹ The collective impact approach recognises the importance of representation and commitment from a group of stakeholders across different backgrounds, experiences, and expertise in addressing a social issue. Informed by data and facilitated by a backbone infrastructure, all participating representatives create a shared vision and embark on various activities that are mutually reinforcing to achieve the goal.

Steps you can take

For partners in the ecosystem:

Structures and funding support

- Be involved in the networks and contribute assets in other ways beyond monetary efforts (e.g., provide knowledge, contribute skills, donate existing items they no longer use).
- Incentivise or fund models that demonstrate such principles.
- Set up and fund structures (e.g., backbone structure) and headcounts (e.g., community developers, coordinators) that can facilitate such community development efforts.

Data and outcomes management

- Aggregate, centralise and share data to facilitate mapping and mobilisation of assets.
- Recognise that such efforts may be more “organic” and takes time to achieve desired outcomes.

Resources available

Guides/Tools

Community Journey Journals (Developers, Members)

NVPC collated and pooled together resources that aim to nurture and bridge communities together. These insight pieces aim to inspire individuals with fresh perspective while providing examples on how others can nurture their communities.

<https://cityofgood.sg/community-matters/community-journey-journals/>

Service Standards Framework

The NCSS Service Standards aims to support agencies in attaining higher standards of service delivery across nine mutually reinforcing domains and develop better procedures to improve user outcomes. The set of standards also incorporates the principles of person-centredness, service user empowerment and collaboration.

<https://www.ncss.gov.sg/social-service-agencies/capability-building/consultancy-support/ncss-standards-framework/service-standards-requirements>

Sector Evaluation Framework

NCSS developed the Sector Evaluation Framework, which aims to provide a common language to consider progress and impact across NCSS-funded programmes, while allowing for flexibility at the programme level. The Framework is one which all stakeholders can use as a consistent set of measures for evaluation.

<https://www.ncss.gov.sg/our-work/translational-social-research>

Case examples

Peer Support Specialist Programme

Involving persons with lived experience to support others in similar journeys

The Peer Support Specialist Programme was launched in 2016 by NCSS, with strong support from the Institute of Mental Health and mental health organisations. It is Singapore's first national training programme to prepare individuals for the role of Peer Support Specialists. The formal and structured training equips persons with mental health conditions with peer support skills to leverage their lived experience to support others on their recovery journeys.

Friendzone

Facilitating conversations and interactions between individuals to create new connections

Friendzone was set up in 2018 to help young people establish new connections and communities around them, including in their neighbourhoods and workplaces.

Friendzone provides both online and offline opportunities for meaningful conversations. These include facilitating small groups with conversation cards to prompt participants to share meaningful experiences, doing activities to map community assets, brainstorming actionable ideas for communities to follow up, and creating Telegram social media chats for the community to connect.

Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centre (AMKFSC)

Leveraging existing community assets to build a resilient and self-sustaining community

AMKFSC leverages a range of assets in its various programmes to ensure a more self-reliant and sustaining community. Two illustrations are provided below:

- **Personal and place-based assets:** *414 Community Hub* was created as a space for residents living around Ang Mo Kio to gather and share their gifts and assets to support other residents in their neighbourhood. There are various platforms for residents to contribute their gifts and assets. One specific platform is the Goodwill Sharing, where residents can share their skills and knowledge ranging from cooking, art and craft and IT with others in the neighbourhood. In addition, a Gift and Take shop is also a platform where residents can gift and share their pre-loved items with others who may need them. Through the process of gifting and receiving, the residents also forged connections with one another.
- **Place-based assets:** *Bakery Hearts* – AMKFSC set up a kitchen at Ang Mo Kio for women from low-income families to learn baking skills and earn supplementary income. These women can also interact and connect with one another, thereby creating their own networks of support

Marsiling Community Link (ComLink)

Unlocking multiple assets and working across multiple partners to support vulnerable families

Launched by MSF in 2020, Marsiling Community Link (ComLink) was implemented to support disadvantaged families with complex needs. MSF partnered with various Government agencies, community, and corporate partners to transform and strengthen the support for these families.

The various partners offer different types of assets to help the families living in rental housing.

- **Associations:** ComLink partners with student volunteers from various Institutes of Higher Learning to engage families living in the area to further understand the families' needs, aspirations, and interests.
- **Place-based assets:** Creation of a ComLink programme space in Marsiling for families to access various programmes in one place such as preschool support, sports activities for students, skills upgrading and job matching services for adults.
- **Institutions:** Community partners such as Bringing Love to Every Single Soul (BLESS) and Mendaki were brought in to provide reading and numeracy programmes for preschool children.

ComLink makes use of multiple existing partners and their skills to support vulnerable families to build a strong self-sustaining community.

Community Fridge (Free Food for All)

Providing opportunities for individuals to actively give back to their community

Free Food for All provides opportunities for the community to provide food aid for those who needed it. Their Community Fridge project, organised together with Chong Pang CC Division and supported by Darul Makmur Mosque, encourages residents to store excess or unsold food in fridges placed in the community that are open 24 hours, so that the food can be taken by those who needed it. This not only helps to reduce food wastage but also supports those in the community.

This programme bridges the gap between the residents in the community and makes it easier for residents to help one another. It also makes use of the current assets in the community, including physical space as well as excess food.

Ideas for exploration

Investing in individuals living in undervalued communities

United States: UpTogether

What is it?

UpTogether adopts a strengths-based approach to link individuals and families living at or below the poverty line with community support and resources so that they could increase or sustain their economic and social mobility.

Potential benefits

- Cash offers will help individuals and families to meet basic needs such as rent, food and healthcare.
- Leverage the strengths of individuals and families to support one another in the community, thereby reducing reliance on formal support services.
- Encourage “pay it forward” in the community where individuals who have benefited would support others in future.

How does it work?

The signature platform, UpTogether Community, is an online platform where individuals and families can form their social networks, share connections, stories and support each other to achieve their financial and personal goals, so that they could move up together.

UpTogether members can also receive cash offers and they are trusted to decide how best to use the money, without having to pay back. Such offers are not guaranteed and depend on the availability of funds and the families' household income.

Food for thought

How might we create platforms with resources to encourage individuals and families to support one another in the community?

Time banking: Exchanging services for time credits, rather than money

Japan: Fureai Kippu

What is it?

The system of Fureai Kippu, or “caring-relationship tickets” was established in Japan as a response to their ageing population, and a decline in traditional caregiving support. Rather than goods, the tickets/eco money could only be exchanged for services.

Potential benefits

- Leverage the assets in the community to support those in need.
- Facilitate mindset shifts that even the elderly can be contributors too.
- Encourage volunteering and caring behaviour in the community and individuals to “pay it forward”.

How does it work?

The system allowed individuals to earn caring credits by caring for an elderly or those in need. These credits, which were deposited in the number of hours, could be exchanged to receive caring services by others. Individuals could decide whether to save their credits for their future when they may need help or transfer to someone else who currently needs help.

It was an agreement within the community to use time as a medium of payment. At the same time, it encouraged individuals to volunteer their time, as they could also benefit from the volunteering experience.

Food for thought

How might we mobilise the assets in the community to support one another, and at the same time not dampening the spirit of altruism?

Annex - References:

Asset-based Community Development

- <https://www.nurtureddevelopment.org/asset-based-community-development/>
- <https://cityofgood.sg/articles/asset-based-community-development/>
- <https://cityofgood.sg/community-matters/developer-roles/>

Collective Impact

- https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact

Peer Support Specialist Programme

- <https://www.ncss.gov.sg/our-initiatives/peer-support-specialist-programme>

Friendzone

- <https://friendzone.sg/>
- <https://friendzone.sg/events/#fz-fridays>
- <https://friendzone.sg/elements>

AMKFSC Programmes

- <https://www.amkfsc.org.sg/central-cluster-programmes>
- <https://www.amkfsc.org.sg/news-events/event-highlights/181-official-opening-of-bakery-hearts-kitchen>
- <https://www.amkfsc.org.sg/stories/289-bake-it-forward-radiah>

ComLink

- <https://www.msf.gov.sg/media-room/Pages/Enhancing-Support-for-Disadvantaged-Families-by-Strengthening-Community-Partnerships.aspx>
- <https://www.facebook.com/MSFSingapore/posts/check-out-the-new-marsiling-community-link-programme-space-a-one-stop-location-f/3012517668781331/>

Free Food for All

- <https://www.freefood.org.sg/>
- <https://www.freefood.org.sg/community-fridge>

UpTogether

- <https://www.uptogether.org/approach/>

Fureai Kippu

- <http://gratisbasis.com/?p=498>
- <https://atlasofthefuture.org/project/fureai-kippu-currency/>
- <https://ijccr.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/ijccr-2012-hayashi.pdf>