

## Sample Grant Proposal

### Proposal Title

Strengthening the Sustainability of Rural Community Asset-Building Initiatives: A Joint Proposal from the Communities of:

- X
- Y
- Z

### Project Overview

In times of scarce resources, broad-based community initiatives that focus on building assets for and with their young people face a triple challenge:

*(Pick three—or pick two and add one specific to your setting.)*

- Their work spans multiple sectors of the community, so no single sector “owns” or funds the work.
- They typically focus on mobilizing and engaging all adults and youth across the community in countless acts of asset building, so they are not viewed as a group of professionals with an easy-to-see agenda.
- They often do not focus on running programs, although they may encourage the infusion of asset building into existing programs and identify gaps in community infrastructure as part of their work.
- Because they are not “a program,” they face challenges when trying to measure the progress they are making.

In fact, the more effective they are in infusing asset building throughout existing networks, programs, and systems in their communities, and encouraging everyone to “own” the idea of being responsible for the well-being of their young people, the more invisible the role of the initiative can become.

When this is coupled with the current scarcity of resources in general, and in rural communities in particular, sustainability becomes a very real challenge.

This project has grown out of the willingness of three asset-building community initiatives to collaborate in order to hold down costs and maximize learning and knowledge diffusion across our communities as we take the next step on our journey toward stronger communities and healthier young people.

### Background Information

*(Select all or some of the following, based on funder’s familiarity with Search Institute, the Developmental Assets, and your initiative.)*

The framework of Developmental Assets and research on their powerful impact on youth was first released by Search Institute in 1989 in the publication *The Troubled Journey: A Portrait of 6th through 12th Grade Youth*. That same year, Search Institute began to focus planning efforts around the concepts of positive youth development and the creation of healthy communities for children and adolescents. It presented research findings in refereed journals and at conferences across the United States.

On one level, the 40 Developmental Assets represent everyday wisdom about positive experiences and opportunities for young people. Search Institute’s research indicates that these assets powerfully influence adolescent behavior—both by protecting young people from risky, problem behaviors and by promoting positive attitudes and choices. This power reaches across all cultural and socioeconomic groups of youth, and additional research suggests that assets have similar implications for younger children.

Unfortunately many young people experience too few of these important building blocks. Surveys of more than 200,000 students in grades 6 through 12 in the 1999–2000 school year reveal that young people experience only an average of 19.3 of the 40 assets. Overall, 56 percent of young people surveyed experience 20 or fewer of the assets. In short, our research shows that young people from all walks of life have too few assets.

Ongoing research from Search Institute and by others continues to increase our understanding of the role Developmental Assets plays in the lives of youth.

*(Web pages you can include in the appendix and reference as needed):*

What are Developmental Assets?

- [www.search-institute.org/assets/](http://www.search-institute.org/assets/)

Importance of assets in young people’s lives:

- [www.search-institute.org/assets/importance.html](http://www.search-institute.org/assets/importance.html)

Asset lists:

- [www.search-institute.org/assets/assetlists.html](http://www.search-institute.org/assets/assetlists.html)

Links to research on the Developmental Assets:

- [www.search-institute.org/research/assets/](http://www.search-institute.org/research/assets/)

The linkages between assets and academic achievement and linkages between assets and race:

- [www.search-institute.org/research/Insights/](http://www.search-institute.org/research/Insights/)

Grading Grown-ups: A national study of adult attitudes and behaviors:

- [www.search-institute.org/norms/](http://www.search-institute.org/norms/)

In 1992, the first community group approached Search Institute to explore how it could create a com-

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munity that would be intentional about delivering Developmental Assets. Group members recognized that too few youth had enough of these Developmental Assets in their lives and too few adults felt responsible for and knew how they could support the youth of their community.

Since that time, nearly 600 communities in 44 states and several Canadian provinces have started similar asset-building initiatives to guide broad diffusion of an understanding of the importance of Developmental Assets in the lives of youth. These initiatives exist in urban neighborhoods, suburbs, counties, school catchments, and rural communities. While their geography varies widely, they share three characteristics:

- They use the framework of Developmental Assets as a focus for their work;
- They are made up of representatives from at least three sectors of the community; and
- Youth are active partners in the work of the initiative.

A newer body of research relates to how community initiatives can play a strategic part in creating a community-wide consensus about the roles all adults and young people have in this work, and in developing opportunities for sectors and organizations to infuse their work with an asset-building approach.

Search Institute identifies five action strategies that asset-building initiatives undertake:

- **Engage adults** from all walks of life to develop sustained, strength-building relationships with children and adolescents, both within families and in neighborhoods.
- **Mobilize young people** to use their power as asset builders and change agents.
- **Activate sectors** of the community—such as schools, congregations, youth, businesses, human services, and health care organizations—to create an asset-building culture and to contribute fully to young people’s healthy development.
- **Invigorate programs**—expanding and enhancing programs to become more asset rich and to be available to and accessed by all children and youth.
- **Influence civic decisions** by working with decision makers and opinion leaders to leverage financial, media, and policy resources in support of this positive transformation of communities and society.

*(You may choose to include examples of your initiative successes in any of these five areas to illustrate work done to date.)*

### Project Detail

#### Goals and Objectives

*(May include any but probably not all of the following):*

- Engage in a self-study process to assess progress to date and identify new opportunities to expand the work and strengthen local initiatives.
- Build deeper expertise in local initiatives.
- Connect regularly with Search Institute resources and expertise.
- Host Training of Trainers, as appropriate.
- Mobilize and equip new sectors in three local communities, in order to broaden shared ownership of the work and expand capacity.
  - Connect
  - Train
  - Identify subsequent activities and opportunities within and between communities.
- Engage youth at a deeper level—or engage a larger number of youth.
  - Youth adult training
  - New strategies for engagement
- Deepen focus on intentional work.
- Evaluate progress toward goals.
- Celebrate successes.

#### Target Audience

While each of our initiatives is trying to reach everyone in our community, for the purposes of this grant each of us will identify sub-audiences we are trying to reach through this three-year process, and will identify target outcomes for those groups.

#### Methods

The project will begin with a day spent listening deeply to representatives from each community to hear the perceptions, wisdom, and strengths that each community possesses. This is also an opportunity to discuss the challenges that each community faces in becoming more intentional in the shared task of raising youth and the work the community has already accomplished to date.

From the synthesis of data across all communities involved, the initiative coordinators, in conversation with staff from Search Institute, will identify shared needs and opportunities to take their community building work further and develop a three-year work plan. Search Institute staff will draw on knowledge of the nearly 600 communities engaged in this kind of effort, to maximize the information that can infuse the work plan.

The work plan will include steps each individual initiative will be taking, as well as any joint trainings and

projects identified that will enhance the work of all the initiatives. One primary goal will be to identify new sectors or organizations that can be brought into the work or existing partners that can be trained to go deeper with their asset-building efforts.

Each initiative will have a small resource account with which to purchase Search Institute materials that will help with its work.

Search Institute staff will visit the communities twice each year. Search Institute staff will manage a linking function using e-mail and conference calls once a month to provide ongoing technical support. Search Institute will provide feedback on and synthesis of each monthly meeting.

Initiatives will each send four representatives (two youth and two adults) to the national Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth conference at least once during this three-year grant.

*(Add any other specific agendas that your initiatives have agreed upon in entering into this joint process.)*

#### **Staff/Administration**

Eight hours of staff time per month will be committed by each initiative to participation in this project, including time to recruit target audiences for trainings and gather key players for meetings and for the HC • HY conference. Ten hours per month of Search Institute staff time will be purchased to provide technical assistance and consultation by phone, by e-mail, and in person to support this project.

#### *Available Resources*

- Each initiative agrees to provide staff time to this project at no cost.
- Meeting space?

#### *Needed Resources and Personnel*

- Resource account for each community to use to purchase resources from Search Institute.
- Meeting space that will accommodate joint trainings (one per year).
- Trainings from Vision Training Associates and trainer expenses (one per year).
- Ten hours per month of Search Institute staff time.

#### *Needed Facilities*

*(Determine whether someone in the participating communities has access to meeting space at no cost—if so, include under “available resources”; if not, include meeting room rental here.)*

#### *Needed Equipment/Supplies/Communications*

- Cost per participant for meals/refreshments for any all-day trainings included. *(Contact Search Institute for assistance in estimating attendance to generate this number.)*
- Flip charts and a screen for trainings. *(Include under “available resources” if you have these available. Trainers/SI typically can provide a computer and multimedia projector for trainings. Other training materials are built into the training fee.)*
- Postage for two or three mailings per year. Most communication between sites and Search Institute will be through e-mail.
- Funding for six conference calls between the three coordinators and Search Institute staff each year.
- Mileage/travel expenses for two visits per year by Search Institute staff person.
- Hotel costs for Search Institute staff person (three nights for the deep listening sessions in each community plus one night for each of the remaining five visits over the three-year period, assuming arrival the day before an event and availability of a flight out the night of the event.)

#### **Budget**

For sample budget, contact Search Institute.

#### **Appendices**

##### *Timeline*

##### *Year 1*

- Phone conference call and e-mails between Search Institute and sites to establish working relationship, agree on dates for events, and prepare Search Institute staff for first visit.
- Deep listening sessions *(one day in each participating community)*.
- E-mails and conference call to debrief the listening sessions and begin identifying target audiences and tasks—including evaluation strategies.
- Collect baseline data if needed.
- Generations Connected training or small on-site planning session depending on emerging needs.
- Updating by e-mail and bimonthly conference calls.
- Targeted work in each community.

##### *Year 2*

- Schedule a training *(include any trainings that you have already agreed upon)*.
- Continue bimonthly conference calls and e-mail communication.
- Two visits by Search Institute staff (one may coincide with training).
- Meetings and work will continue in each community.

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- Review/carry out any evaluation steps identified in the plan.

### *Year 3*

- Schedule a training (*include any trainings that you have already agreed upon*).
- Continue monthly conference calls and e-mail communication.
- Two visits by Search Institute staff (one may coincide with training).
- Meetings and work will continue in each community.
- Complete evaluation of project.
- Complete final report to funder.
- Celebrate successes.

### **Letters of Support and/or Cooperation**

*(These should come from the participating initiatives and Search Institute.)*

### **Evaluation Plan**

*(To be developed in conjunction with the work plan and taking into account funder requirements. Depending on its complexity, this might require additional funding, or might be something each initiative could carry out on its own.)*