

GUIDESHEET

Community Builders



What is an ABCD Community Builder?

An ABCD Community Builder is someone who is focused on engaging the skills, knowledge and talents of every community member, as well as the institutional, associational, physical, economic and cultural resources that are part of every community to a greater or lesser extent. They are very comfortable both encouraging and gently (and sometimes firmly) challenging community leaders and professionals to keep reaching out to bring in the assets and energies of people, and resources who/that are often left out. The core qualities of an ABCD Community Builder are outlined below.

The ABCD Community Builder's main concern is how to empower a wider, equal partnership between residents and the clubs, groups and social networks of their community and the institutions that serve them. They are community weavers, intent on weaving the community together relationship by relationship, strength by strength.

They understand that most communities are places overflowing with strengths, and that their job is to issue an invitation to citizens to enter into conversations that matter, with each other. These conversations matter because they deepen relationships and lead to actionable change; they focus on what is 'strong' not what is 'wrong'.

What do ABCD Community Builders actually do?

An ABCD Community Builder spends most of their time out in their community, NOT sat at a desk – usually an 80/20 split. They spend their time getting to know every aspect of their community and the people in it:

- ⇒ Building strong relationships across the community that are independent of agendas other than one that supports community building
- ⇒ Identifying and recruiting Community Connectors (see **FACTSHEET: Community Connectors**)
- ⇒ Creating spaces where interested community members can come together to share their gifts, ideas and build their own relationships

- ⇒ Convene community members (including local associations and institutions) who are interested in making change happen, and supporting them to do so.

How do you find them / recruit Community Builders?

Recruiting the right person for the job is one of the most important parts of any community building programme. Nurture Development has created a Community Builder Recruitment Pack that can be tailored to each community and to the particular requirements of partner organisations. Recruitment is usually carried out by the Sponsorship Group (see **FACTSHEET: Sponsorship Groups**).

Are Community Builders paid?

In most circumstances, yes.

What are the tools that every Community Builder needs?

1. Asset mapping
2. Connection
3. Learning conversations
4. Appreciative inquiry
5. Story telling

What support does a Community Builder need?

Community Builders will receive mentoring, training and coaching from the Nurture Development Project Guides (as required). In addition, they should be supported on a day to day basis by their Sponsorship Group around:

- ⇒ HR requirements in line with Sponsorship Group policy
- ⇒ Line management and/or supervision
- ⇒ In line with safe working practices, a dependable point of contact within the Sponsorship Group during the hours they are working in the community
- ⇒ The opportunity to gain peer support from other Community Builders in their area or at another Nurture Development Learning Site

Core qualities of a Community Builder

Relationship builder: they are natural easy going connectors. Before an interview for a job as a Community Builder, the person you'll want to rate highly will be the one who will remember the person at reception, and may even know them by name. More than likely the receptionists will remember them also.

Peace builder: they are not invested in a conflict or control model of change, they believe in building change from inside out, and see power not as a finite resource but an infinite resource that grows the more people you bring into relationships to build community.

Not the classic leader: they are excellent motivators, they understand how to motivate people to act on their own terms, and from their own personal agency. They are not controlling or domineering. Theirs is a quiet confidence.

Teacher: they are comfortable teaching practical community building skills, have a good presentation style, and have a convincing public voice, without being loud or brash. Theirs is a quiet confidence, but they are always ready to give up their place to a citizen voice since they know the citizen voice matters most. They will never attend a meeting or speak on behalf of the community; they always attend meetings and events with citizens and promote citizen voice.

Critical thinker: they are not mindlessly positive, they understand that life is not always fair and that people are not always as they seem and they factor that in to how they support people to work to their respective strengths. That said they will never stop encouraging people to seek out the assets and resources in communities.

Focused self-starters: they always hold themselves to account, and accountable to the community. They are organised and systematic in their approach to work, but this is balanced with huge creativity and flexibility.

Collaborative yet discerning: they do not try to impose collaboration on those who are not ready.

Challenging and supportive: they are powerful communicators who value listening above all else, and see themselves as the bringers of 'questions' not 'answers'.



Empowering: they actively work to build agency and understand deeply how dependency builds up, they will never do for another, what that person can do for themselves.

Reflective: they are deep learners, constantly reflecting on their own practice and will therefore need a learning circle of thoughtful residents and fellow community builders through which they can unpack their learning and seek on-going feedback and support.

Results: they care about results but are not obsessive about targets, instead they are faithful to the principles of Community Building and so keep a watchful eye to ensure that greater numbers of citizens are participating and creating in civic space. They are also watchful of the numbers of labelled people who are contributing their gifts, if those numbers are not increasing they will want to understand why and figure out with their initiating group of residents how to improve on those results.