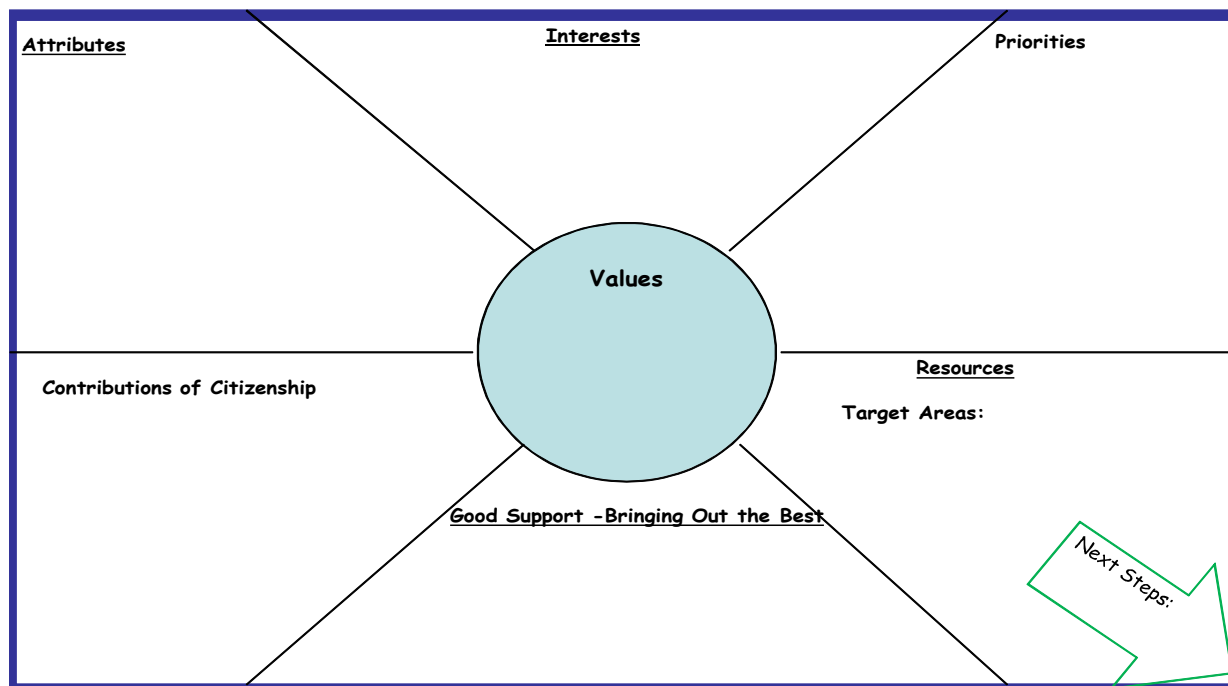


Theory-to-Practice: Using a Framework for Planning to Support Person-Centered Transition

Note: this guide was developed as a training resource for transition planning professionals. The process, however, works for anyone interested in defining a path forward in their life...from consumer to contributor.

Purpose:**A FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING revised**

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The original 2006 version of the Framework can be found in Conversations on Citizenship & Person-Centered Planning (O'Brien and Blessing, 2011) available at www.inclusion.com

A Framework for Planning, like most person-centered processes, is simply a container to hold information that comes from good listening. Asking people what matters to them and listening with what our mentor and friend Beth Mount calls the “eyes and the ears of the heart” is at the core of good person-centered planning. This is only a tool... a vehicle for gathering information.

The Framework process borrows heavily from and stands on the shoulders of the original person-centered thought leaders: Marsha Forrest, Judith Snow, Herb Lovett, Beth Mount, John O'Brien, Jack Pearpoint and others. We are deeply indebted to them for sharing their wisdom and their circle with us.

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Orientation to the Framework for Planning Tool

The Framework template is divided in sections. These sections are a combination of stand alone information (aka data) and an essential part of an integrated whole (aka comprehensive assessment).

The categories provide planners opportunity for reflection, exploration and discovery, and taking action.

Here we have them identified by number to help convey the intention behind the category as well as to inform the sequence for populating the template during a planning session.

- 1 Purpose section- sets the context for the session. It answers the question: “why are we here?”
- 2 Attributes section and Interest section – provide a foundation for strengths, capacity and giftedness, usually described by positive adjectives. They offer a look into the person’s history, experience and areas of competence. They shape our early awareness of understanding the question “who are you?”
- 3 Priorities section – shapes our understanding of the elements that are important to attend to in meeting the demands of the Purpose in real time. It answers the question “what needs to be understood and included as we work toward our Purpose?”
- 4 Values section – can also be thought of as “higher purpose” or “calling.” This section deepens our understanding, awareness and appreciation of the strong, positive traits and tendencies that the person was born with. This is the deeper “voice” that wants to find expression and answers the question “who are you called to be?”
- 5 Contributions section- embraces the ideal that all people have a right to equal access to opportunities that support the productive, mutually meaningful exchange of gifts in everyday community life. This section shines the spotlight on potential and possibility by asking the question “who can you become through the expression of your “voice” and the contribution of your gifts?”
- 6 Good support – Bringing out the Best section – explores the kind of assistance that is necessary to address the impairment(s) that potentially create obstacles to full participation in community. The question here is “how do we use our resources (time, money, imagination, talent, networks, space, etc) to maximize moving toward meeting our Purpose?” as well as, “what are the characteristics and conditions that bring out the best in this person?”
- 7 Target Areas and Resources section – narrows the range of options that surfaced in the Contributions to the top two or three that have “gravitational pull” for the person and for the context of the Purpose that seem both positive and possible. Simultaneously it asks the question “who are the anchors, allies, associations and assistors that can help move us forward in this target area?”
- 8 Next Step section – becomes the first steps for taking action for each of the identified target areas identified. “Who will do What by When?” is the core question that must be answered before the planning session comes to a close.

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Theory Behind the Framework for Planning

Core Person-Centered Theory: People gain more from experience when they are actively involved. This is vitally important for youth as they move from student status to adult status. Putting young people in the driver's seat of their own future often leads to:

- Clearer sense of direction and motivation to pursue goals
- An awareness of what being self-determined means
- Greater family/social network investment and involvement
- Improved social status in the community (as college student; employee; volunteer vs. client/consumer)
- Increased competence and self-esteem
- Enhanced perception, recognition and acceptance of capacities, strengths and potential
- Strengthened skill and experience as contributing members of society
- Broader job/continuing education choices, and therefore better job/post-secondary education fit
- Better overall transition planning outcomes

Planning on **Purpose** is the first step of the FFP process.

Filling in Section 1 of the FFP

1. The ***purpose*** section of the FFP provides planners a point of reference for engaging in the process in the first place. The purpose must be established based on what the focus person (student) is interested in pursuing and/or learning with respect to transition planning.
 - a. Remember that transition planning must address all aspects of living, learning and earning as they relate to post-secondary outcomes
 - b. The purpose also serves as a grounding for the group so that the information that is being sought and the action that ultimately gets identified serve the purpose.
 - c. The purpose must be positive and possible and should reflect a broadly stated goal, i.e. "to find direction for the kind of job that I am really interested in learning about or trying"
 - d. The best way to determine the purpose for planning is to involve the student and their family early on. Share information about the Framework process, transition planning and their relationship before any formal planning meeting.

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e. Perhaps most important is understanding the role that we play personally in the person-centered process. Being self-aware and intentional about facilitating a person-centered process is key. Here are a few common facilitator errors that derail the process:

- Having our own “agenda” and inadvertently or directly using it to drive the session/meeting (aka the collateral damage of good intentions)
- Having more answers than questions (aka leading the witness syndrome)
- Filtered listening (aka hearing what we want to hear, despite it not being said)
- Half listening (aka knowing how the story is going to end anyway)

The Power of Developing Good Questions**Filling in Sections 2 – 4 of the FFP**

Questions are the best way to gain deeper insights and develop more innovative solutions. The questions we ask move us from one direction to another. Asking questions is the single most important habit for innovative thinkers. And innovation is the primary criteria for supporting people with significant barriers to social inclusion find their way as contributing, productive members of society.

The core of person-centered planning centers around this inquiry: *What questions, if explored, could provide an opening into understanding this person in new and different ways? And how can this understanding serve to create a bridge to citizenship and contribution?*

Behind effective questioning is the ability to listen to the answer and to suspend judgement. It is important to wait for, rather than to provide the answer. Questioning and active listening go hand in hand. Beth Mount says that in order to deeply hear someone we must “listen with the eyes and the ears of the heart.”

Some questions may skim the surface like a skipping stone while others plunge deep below the surface.

Level 1 questions are the kind of question that may skim the surface. They are looking for a spot to land or something to catch. Level 1 questions tend to move in linear fashion, either from topic to topic or from one point to another within a topic. They may more often than not be close-ended type of questions.

From topic to topic: “What is your favorite color?” “Do you like to read?” “How many people are in your family?” “What did you do this weekend?”

From point to point within a topic: “Do you like to read?” “What kind of reading do you like to do?” “Who is your favorite writer?” “What is your favorite story?” “Do you read the same thing over and over again or just one time?”

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Level 2 questions move deeper along a topic line. They might take on more of a branching quality, using the main topic as the “trunk” while exploring related “limbs” along the way. They might be questions like: “When you are reading, does time fly by?” “How often do you read each week?” “How does reading make you feel?” “What do you think about that?”

Level 3 questions, when appropriate, allow us to really get inside with a person. It is the richest kind of information that we can hope to have the privilege of receiving. Questions that may help to take us to this depth might look like: “How does reading help you to think about life?” “If you were to write about this yourself, what would your message be?”

Another way to think of questions is that questions are developed with three parts in mind:

1. Construction – this is the actual architecture of a question: is it open-ended or yes/no or multiple choice in nature?
2. Scope – this is the breadth of the question: the narrower the question the narrower the scope. For example: “what is the biggest problem facing kids in transition?” is a narrower question than “what would excellent transition planning look like for our kids?”
3. Assumptions – this aspect of a question is tricky because for us, it is double-edged. On one hand, what questions we ask may in fact carry our own assumptions deep within it – “would you feel more comfortable to have the staff come with you to that (event) or go on your own?” On the other hand, we need to suspend our own assumptions, belief and value base enough to listen deep within the person’s story to try to recognize and surface *their* underlying beliefs, values and assumptions. This is where the art of person-centered planning really happens. “Your story about working with your dad on cars and other things you’ve been sharing with us really show us that you like to be around people that are glad to have your help. How important is it that you get to help other people? Would you like to help people all the time, sometimes or just once in a while? Why is helping others important to you?”

Assess the Strength of Questions in Serving the Purpose

For each question that you intend to ask, you can assess its strength by reviewing the against the following questions (hint: you want the answer to be “yes” except for the third bullet):

- Is the question relevant to the real life of the person or the real work of the group?
- Is the question genuine- do we really want to know this?
- What work do we want this question to do? What is this question trying to help us to get at?
- Is this question likely to generate connection, interest, hope, imagination and possibility?
- Does this question leave room for new and different questions to be raised as the initial question is explored?

Theory-to-Practice: Using a Framework for Planning to Support Person-Centered Transition**The Value of Story**

There once was a Harley Davidson ad that carried a wonderful quote: *“When writing the story of your life, don’t let anyone else hold the pen.”*

This just might be the most important thing we can remember when we do planning with people who are vulnerable because of significant intellectual and cognitive impairment.

Stories are authentic. They tell us about who this person is, what they stand for. Stories tell the world about what matters to us. Since the beginning of time, stories have helped teach, influence and bind people together. Stories foster understanding – of self, of others and of life- which is vital to progress. They share the essence of who we are. Story is the heart of language.

Stories are one way to open up our awareness and appreciation of another person – especially when all we have known about the person’s story had to do with disability. Stories can lift us beyond our current borders or boundaries about how we “know” another person.

In person-centered work, inviting story telling from those who gather together because they care about the person and want to contribute to the development and experience of a good life is one way of including everyone. Questions can open up the avenue for storytelling. For example:

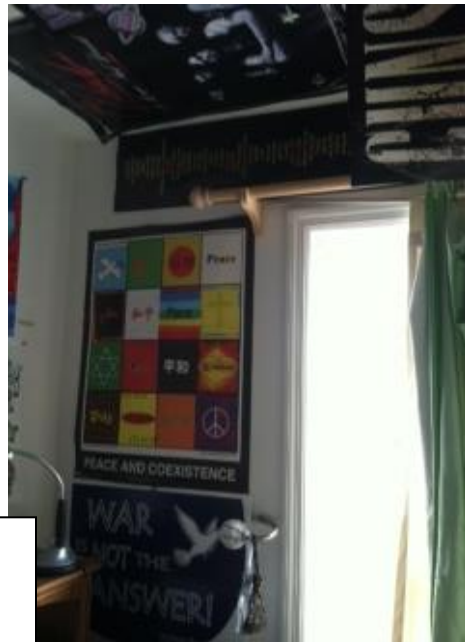
- Think of a time when ____ surprised you with an act of kindness. What did they do? How did this impact you? What did it tell you about ____?
- As long as you’ve known _____, what would you say is one of the most consistent positive qualities that s/he has? Tell me a story about a time when this quality really showed itself.
- What do you admire about _____? Give us an example of how ____ carries this out in her/his life.

Joining Threads to Create Themes

One of the higher order skills of facilitating the FFP is being able to identify and surface the **themes** that are emerging as a result of good questions and deep listening. Themes are the meaning or purpose that

becomes evident about the person as we progress through the Framework process. Themes are important because when we understand and include them in our planning with people, we do a much better job of bringing the whole person forward, make better connections and increase the likelihood for finding others who care similarly.

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What would you say are dominant themes drawn from this combined series of images?



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From Discovery to Action

Filling in Sections 5 - 8 of the FFP

Connecting people with disabilities to community is the intentional intersection between who a person is (their gifts and higher purpose) and where they can experience a sense of belonging and contribution in meaningful and reciprocal ways. This is both a right and a responsibility of every citizen. John O'Brien tells us that citizens are people who can say, "I belong to this place and its people and I am able and willing to act from responsibility for my belonging" (p. 110 Conversations book). Person-centered work aims to improve the social status of people who have been identified only as "disabled."

Step 5 of the Framework, Contributions of Citizenship invites planners to create a brainstorm that takes all of the information that has been gathered about the person up to this point and imagine she or he bringing their talents, passions, gifts and interest to parts of the community that would likely appreciate the offering.

One simple tool for doing this brainstorm is a basic community mapping process. Community mapping can be done in a number of ways. One of most efficient and effective approaches is to identify a specific geographic area in which the person is interested in finding connections. Around where the person lives is a great place to start so that when she or he is making their contribution through work, volunteerism, and associational life, people in the immediate neighborhood will come to recognize and get to know the person. This is important for enhancing and expanding the person's existing social network.

In the Framework process, John McKnight's theory of Asset-Based Community Development, or ABCD, (www.abcdinstitute.org) plays a very strong role. ABCD holds the belief that every human being present in a place is a potential asset to that place. ABCD also believes that every physical place that makes up the thing called community also has assets and holds an abundance of opportunities for individual assets to be contributed to make the community stronger and better.

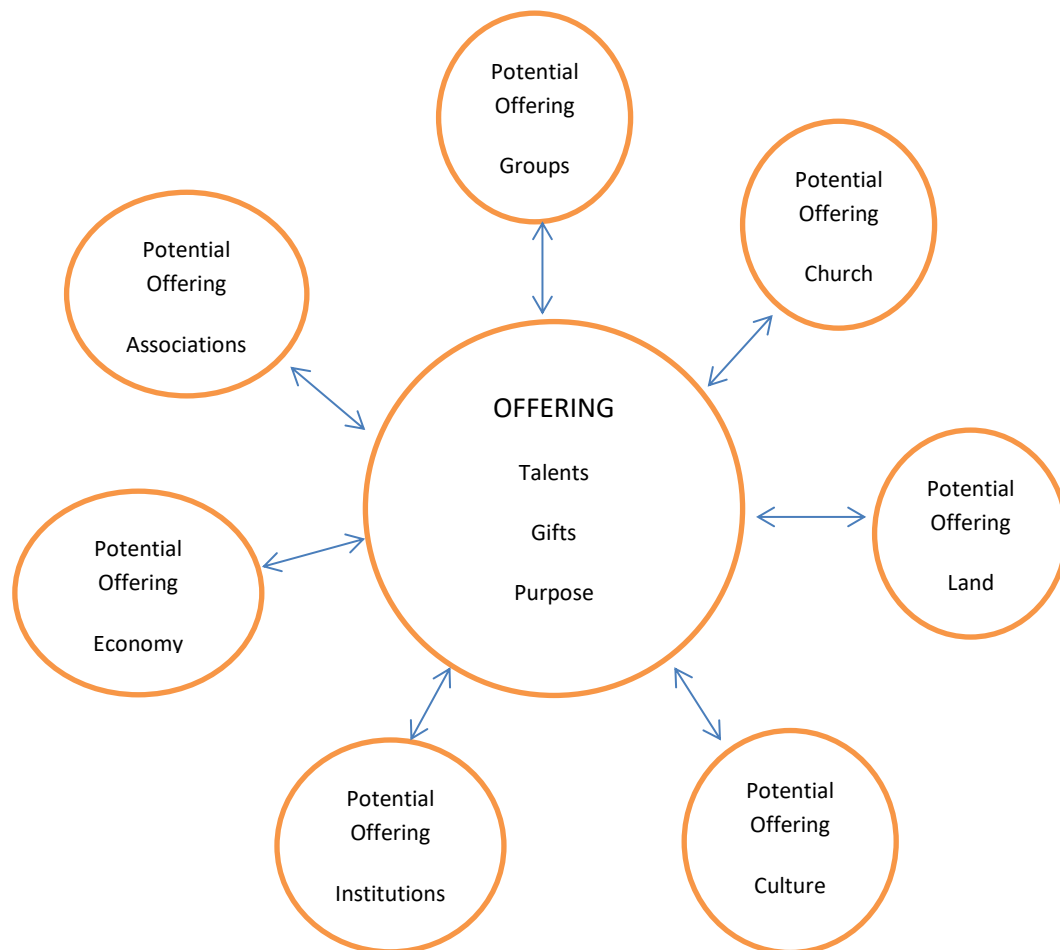
Asset-Based Community Development is a matter of finding assets, connecting assets and making assets productive. Community mapping is an intentional practice for making assets between people and places visible. It is especially helpful to have completed a community mapping in advance of the planning session.

There are six core areas in every community that are a source of assets. ABCD calls these the building blocks of community:

- Individuals and their gifts and capacities
- Voluntary associations, congregations & groups
- Institutions, government and non-profit, schools, libraries, parks, community centers, human services
- The local economy, the buying, selling, hiring and investing that flows through a community
- The physical world, both built and natural
- Cultural identity, the history of the place, the values, customs and vision of the people

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List the themes, or essence or core purpose/calling for the person in the center of the template. For each community area, brainstorm 5 or 6 possible ways this person's talents, interests and gifts could be offered to that place in ways that would likely be appreciated and welcomed.



Potential offering = the intersection between the capacity of the person and the potential for meaningful contribution in the context of place. Who is the person? What does s/he have to offer?

Places should be real places with real names. Where would this offering be well-received?

The arrows between the person and the place are the potential valued roles that the person can own. How can this person show up in meaningful, productive ways?

Planning groups should get creative during this brainstorm session to generate as many possible connections imaginable.

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- There are no dumb ideas
- Do not criticize other people's ideas
- Build on ideas
- Quantity is the goal
- Don't believe everything you think

Once the brainstorming has been completed and the planning group has come up with a rich list of potential roles, contributions and places it is time to prioritize the list. The person identifies which roles and places are most attractive and crosses out those that are not at all of interest. Hang on to this list as we will be coming back to it in Step 7. Now the group is ready to move on to **Step 6** of the Framework: Good Support – Bringing Out the Best.

Research tells us that people with significant needs (and those close to them) are supported best when a range of individually tailored person-centered support is provided (Gridley, K., et al. Social Policy Research Unit NIHR School for Social Care Research). Good support requires that the allocation of staff time and the flexible use of service resources should be allocated to address and more than adequately meet the person's specific needs and preferences. Good support provides the level and type of assistance that is necessary to keep the impact of impairment from becoming a barrier to the person's ability to participate and contribute in normal activities in typical settings.

Support should be holistic and attend to the physical, emotional and social support assistance that is required for the person to successfully engage in life. The difference between support and good support is qualitative. It is one thing to get the job done and quite another to get the job done in ways that promote bringing out the best in the person and in the situation.

The website www.inclusion.com offers a range of person-centered tools that are useful in customizing individualized support with people and their families/significant others. Here are a few important areas that planners must understand about the person from their perspective in order to provide optimal assistance and support:

- Learning style and preferences
- Personality types that are best
- Decision-making/autonomy
- Mobility
- Effective communication
- Tolerance for stress
- Issues of health and safety
- Environmental considerations/conditions
- Other?

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Step 7 Resources and Target areas brings us back to the prioritized list from Step 5. The person determines which 2-3 areas (aka “targets”) s/he wants to take action on in the immediate future. Each one of these areas is a separate target and should be dealt with distinctly.

It is helpful to overlay another tool to think through how to move forward for each identified target. We have developed a tool for this purpose adapted from an essay written by John O’Brien and Connie Lyle O’Brien called *Five Commitments that Build Community* (see Members of Each Other, www.inclusion.com).



Agenda – this is really our target area; the identified place in community or potential for contribution

Anchors – this is about the people who are in the person’s life for the long haul; who share the dream

Allies – are the people who understand & are willing to contribute to the journey toward the target

Associations – are the places and groups that already exist that have something in common with the agenda

Assistance – is a combination of the good support that is necessary and the allocation and access of resources that will be leveraged to move in the direction of the target

Action – we like to add an action step as a sixth commitment. Making explicit immediate and next steps is important to moving from planning to implementation. A plan without action is a wish.

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Now we are in the position to move from planning to concrete action steps. **Step 8** Next Steps is the natural extension of Step 7. We have targeted particular places to explore in which the person's contribution might be welcomed and appreciated. We have surfaced meaning ways in which the person might "show up" to share their talent, skill and other offerings. We have also identified people who may be willing and able to support our moving from point A to point B. All that is left is to determine what the first step is for each of the target areas, how that step needs to be taken; who can help us to take that step and by when.

The last step of the planning process is the first step for doing the real work.

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ACTION PLAN

Target Connection Area	First/Next Step	How	Who	When

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How will you use the Framework for Planning© to move from theory to practice in assisting people with disabilities find their rightful place in valued roles as contributing members of society? Let us know if you have any questions or if you are interested in receiving training in facilitation of this and other person-centered planning processes!