

Building Shared Vision

The Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum

BWBR Description: *Bonner Curriculum workshop guides participants to create a shared vision for a site, team, or project. It teaches more complex collaboration and facilitation skills.*

Overview:

This shared visioning exercise provides a useful framework for a team to consider and develop a coherent, shared set of conceptualizations, goals, and values for a given project or work. By providing an opportunity for each team member to articulate and shape hopes and expectations for a project, a shared vision helps create a culture that values the full and effective participation of all of its members, regardless of personal identity, experience, or background.

This workshop, drawn from *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* (Jossey Bass 1994) fits well with a personal visioning session of some kind. This workshop alone is NOT enough to develop shared vision amongst a group, but it can provide a great starting point. The ideas articulated during this exercise can ideally be used to form the basis of a group's mission statement, set of goals, guideposts and team values.

Category:

Reflection, interpersonal skills, diversity, visioning, project planning

Level:

Advanced; required experienced facilitator who is knowledgeable about facilitating group processes; suitable for students who are in a leadership or management role, or for a student leader/administrator to do with a team of newer students to begin to get them to think from this approach



**great for
juniors
and
seniors**

Learning Outcomes:

- Provide a team with an opportunity to formally consider and integrate their own ideas and visions for a given project, organization, or work.
- Give each person the opportunity to articulate ideas, images, or feelings for what they consider the “success” of their work.

Materials:

- Questions for shared vision on handout or flip chart
- Something to write with and on

How to Prepare:

Read the activity. Become familiar with how to present the exercise. Determine a process that you will use for facilitating the proposed activities. If you need to, consult other guides or resources for facilitation techniques. Set aside the proper time and space. Prepare any materials that you will need.

How to Do/Brief Outline:

This 60 minute outline has been created with the following parts (modify to cover number):

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Vision for the Future: Shared Brainstorming | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 2. Getting There From Here | suggested time 30 minutes |
| 3. What Will We Do Next | suggested time 10 minutes |

This approach is ideal for a longer planning / visioning retreat. This can be done for a class meeting or project, like Second Year Exchange. Here is how the outline might look with more time at 90 minutes:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Vision for the Future: Shared Brainstorming | suggested time 40 minutes |
| <i>a. Take questions slower and one by one</i> | |
| 2. Getting There From Here | suggested time 30 minutes |
| 3. What Will We Do Next | suggested time 20 minutes |

Part 1) A Vision for the Future: Shared Brainstorming

Suggested time: 20 minutes

Formulating an imagine statement and an accompanying set of surrounding questions is the primary purpose of this exercise. Modify the statement and the questions according to your project and timeline, but keep the breadth of questions.

When facilitating the exercise, try to remain focused on the primary objective of formulating an imagine statement and spend time only with the questions that are meaningful for your team. Alter the questions as you like. This process should have ample time set aside for it, and your role should be that of an objective facilitator whose goal is to help the group get out their best thinking and work with those ideas. If you need assistance in understanding how to facilitate, see the other trainings (such as *Roles of Facilitators* or *Facilitation Guidelines and Techniques*).

You should set aside ample time for this first part, either in one setting such as a retreat or long session (half to full day) or over multiple sessions.

Sample imagine statements:

1. *General:* It is — (you choose the time frame) from today's date and your Bonner Program (or site or whatever) has, outrageously enough, created the project and program you most wanted to create and achieved the things you most desired. Now it is your job, as a team, to describe this work as if you are able to see it, realistically, around you at this present moment.
2. *Service/Project Team:* It is graduation and you have, marvelously enough, created the service project and team experience you most wanted to create and achieved the things you most desired. Now it is your job, as a team, to describe this work as if you are able to see it, realistically, around you at this present moment.
3. *Staff/Sustainability Related:* It is five years from today's date and you have, marvelously enough, created the program/organization you most wanted to create and achieved the things you most desired. Now it is your job, as a team, to describe this work as if you are able to see it, realistically, around you at this present moment.

Note to Facilitators: Ask people at this point to begin to jot down ideas. Then introduce the following questions. Consider using a flip chart that everyone can see and visualize.

- Who is affected by our work and who affects the direction of our work?
- Who are our leaders and collaborators?
- What is our image in our own minds? Campus? Community?
- What is our program/organization's role in our communities?
- Who are our communities?
- What is our unique contribution to the world around us? In the short-term? In the long-term?
- What are our values? How do people treat each other? How are people recognized?
- What goals and objectives can we set to move us toward fulfilling this vision?

You can consider these questions one by one or determine some other process and order. You may want to allow people to work alone and quietly first, on each question or a set of questions, then take ideas from the group's members for a later process of discussion and synthesis.

You should make sure everyone has an opportunity to comment on each of the questions or simply focus on a few. Your main purpose is to create a safe, participatory atmosphere where each team member has the opportunity to contribute to shaping a common vision.

Part 2) Getting There from Here: Assessing Where We Are

Suggested time: 20 minutes

The second part of the activity requires engaging people in honestly discussion of where the group/project/team/etc. is right now, in relation to the shared vision that they have begun to articulate. Below are a number of suggested questions to spark discussion. Again, as facilitator you need to ensure that all participants involve themselves and that a comfortable environment is established in which everyone feels safe sharing their thoughts and ideas.

Sample questions:

1. What is our group's role in creating this vision? What is our role in the context that we work (e.g. our start-up, our organization, our community)?
2. What forces are currently affecting our work and our team, inside and outside? What changes are we going through as a team? As an idea? As an organization?
3. What aspects of our teams functioning empower people? What aspects of our team's (or group's or system's or organization's) functioning disempower people?
4. What do we know (that we need to know)? What don't we know (that we need to know)? What don't we know, period?

Note to facilitators: Provide people with the opportunity to tackle questions and share responses. Use skillful facilitation to pull out common themes and elements. If you want, synthesize elements of the discussion, possibly by turning the group's attention toward agreeing on a simple statement that captures their visions and purposes.

Part 3) What Will We Do Next

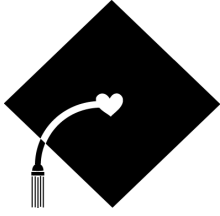
Suggested time: 10 minutes

Finally, you want to pull all your work so far together and move forward. You may do that by having the group work on and agree to a vision or mission statement of some kind that represents the points that are most salient to them.

Then, you can pull the most relevant ideas from the group's assessment of what it will take to get them into a series of practical goals and actions.

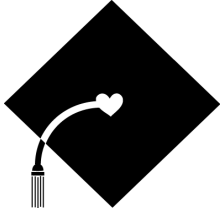
Integrate this process with whatever is the standard process and activities of the group that your work with. Utilize program calendars, expectations, meeting plans, etc. Again, this is a great activity to start the shared visioning for a project (like First Year Trip, Second Year Exchange, Capstones, etc.).

With the group, agree to a few (1-3) concrete next steps for action and get those written down.



Shared Visioning Questions

- Who is affected by our work and who affects the direction of our work?
- Who are our leaders and collaborators?
- What is our image in our own minds? Campus? Community?
- What is our program/organization's role in our communities?
- Who are our communities?
- What is our unique contribution to the world around us? In the short-term? In the long-term?
- What are our values? How do people treat each other? How are people recognized?
- What goals and objectives can we set to move us toward fulfilling this vision?



Achieving the Vision: where are we right now?

- What is our groups' role in creating this vision? What is our role in the context that we work (e.g. our start-up, our program, our organization, our community)?
- What forces are currently affecting our work and our team, inside and outside? What changes are we going through as a team? As an idea? As a program/campus/group?
- What aspects of our teams functioning empower people? What aspects of our team's (or group's or system's or organization's) functioning disempower people?
- What do we know (that we need to know)? What don't we know (that we need to know)? What don't we know, period?