

## Age-Friendly Communities Conference Appreciative Inquiry Exercise

***In this exercise, you will be asked to reflect and share a story about a positive leadership experience with which you have been involved in your current collective impact effort or another type of collaborative / coalition / partnership.***

1. **Peak Experience:** Leadership is about change and bringing out the best in people. We are all born with some leadership ability; communities that prosper the most are the ones that bring out the leadership abilities within each citizen. Outstanding communities empower and challenge people to go after things they believe are possible and even things they might think are impossible.

In your service to the community, no doubt, there have been high points and low points, struggles and successes. Recall a high point for you; a time when your leadership and efforts in your community helped make things better. Describe what happened.

- Who was there?
- What were you doing?
- What were others doing?
- What were the tangible benefits and specific outcomes?

2. **Three Wishes:** If you had three wishes that would facilitate more of the types of positive experiences you just described, what would they be?

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### Appreciative Inquiry Exercise Steps:

1. Reflect on your own story and 3 wishes. Use the worksheet on the next page (or your own notebook) to write down some of the key points to help you tell your story to your partner (2 minutes)
2. Pair up with one person at your table and share your story and 3 wishes. As you listen to your partner's story, and their wishes, take notes. In a bit you will be asked to relate your partner's stories to others (8 minutes)
3. Form small groups of eight (4 pairs – should be your entire table). Each individual should tell their partner's story to the others (2 minutes per story). Then, as a group, discuss the common themes you see across people's stories, and identify the notable factors of leadership in the stories (20 minutes)
4. As a total group, we'll do report outs, and then discuss common themes (10 minutes)

*Use the following page to take notes.*

*Pages 2 & 3 are for you to take notes on your story, your partner's story and themes that arise at your table.*

1. Notes on your story:

2. Notes on your three wishes:

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3. Notes on your pair share colleague's story:

4. Notes on your pair share colleague's three wishes:

5. Notes on the groups' reflections regarding common themes you see across people's stories, particularly with respect to core factors that enabled positive leadership experiences

## Age-friendly specific example for “Step 2: Imagine”:

Imagine it is 2027. Your community has become a model age-friendly community that other cities, towns, and counties respect and admire. You are amazed and excited by what you see. As predicted, your town’s aging population has grown – but this population is vibrant, energized, and supported by an age-friendly, inter-generational community. Older residents are able to stay in their homes, but receive services and stay connected to the community. For those that wish to move, affordable housing options are available that are connected to local amenities such as parks, stores, and public transportation. All residents, regardless of age, feel respected in the community, participate in cultural events, and are civically engaged. Community information and referral services are easy to access and navigate.

As a member of the team leading this change, you’ve been invited to annual Grantmakers in Aging Conference to share what is happening in your town.

*Fast forward to the event...* the audience is filled with your peers from across the country, working to establish age-friendly communities in their towns. They are eager to hear you speak. You are up on stage and audience members approach the microphone, with questions to better understand your town’s approach to creating an age-friendly community, including:

- What were the critical changes that enabled your town to achieve its age-friendly vision?
- What does collaboration look like in “2027” among the various agencies and organizations involved in the age-friendly movement in your town? How has the way that people work together changed?
- What structures and processes helped the collaborative achieve this success and maintain momentum?