Aspirations
Turning Outward to Lead Change in Your Community

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About The Harwood Institute

• A nonpartisan, independent nonprofit that teaches, coaches and inspires people and organizations to solve pressing problems and change how communities work together
• Proven 25-year track record
• Thousands of U.S. communities
• Pulled into 40 countries
Our Approach

Turning Outward – an orientation and practice

If you turn outward and make more intentional judgments and choices in creating change, you will produce greater impact and relevance in your community.
What We Do

- Public innovators
- Organizations
- Networks
- Communities
Harwood Aspirations Exercise

• Aspirations: What people will “go to bat” for

• The tool can be used for any definition of community

• For today’s session: Define community as the place where you live
ASPIRATIONS

Talk about aspirations and find common ground for working with others:

Take a moment to focus on your community aspirations and to identify next steps you want in creating change. Add your aspirations, challenges, and the new conditions to create in the spaces provided below. Use this on your own and then try it in a group setting — check out the Aspirations Facilitator’s Guide to help in leading an aspirations conversation.

ASPIRATIONS

My aspirations for my community are:

CHALLENGES

The challenges we face in reaching these aspirations are:

NEW CONDITIONS

The changes needed in my community to reach our aspirations are:

ASPIRATIONS

Create a story for your community. Describe the key insights from the first page as a single word or phrase. Write down that word or phrase in the corresponding sentence below to create your story. Use this story as a reminder of your goals and share it with others.

My community aspirations

My hope is to live in a community where __________________________ (aspirations).

However, right now we face __________________________ (challenges).

In order to get there as a community, we need to __________________________ (new conditions, change).

HOW TO MAKE IT WORK

1. Post this at work or at home. Remind yourself to refer back to it. Ask yourself: Am I focused on my aspirations?

2. Share this exercise with others to find common ground—with your co-workers, at your place of worship, with friends, your PTA, your board, etc. Ask: How can our efforts reflect these shared aspirations?

3. Use these questions with others to begin finding shared community aspirations. Check out the Aspirations Facilitator’s Guide for instructions on how to lead the conversation.
ASPIRATIONS FACILITATOR’S GUIDE

Instructions for leading a conversation about aspirations

Take a moment to focus on your community aspirations and to identify next steps you want in creating change. Add your aspirations, challenges, and the new conditions to create in the spaces provided below. Use this on your own and then try it in a group setting.

- For this exercise, you’ll be asking the three questions shown below and helping to identify patterns or themes from the answers given.
- Make sure everyone has a copy of the Aspirations questions.
- Give your participants ten minutes to read and write down their answers to these three questions.
- Go through the questions in order and for each, record their answers on a flip chart and identify any patterns or themes that emerge from their answers.

1. WHAT ARE YOUR ASPIRATIONS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY?
Record your participant’s answers on the flip chart. Capture the key words they use. Ask the group:
- What patterns do you see?
- Are there any themes emerging? Name some of these themes.
Make sure that you’ve captured the essence of their thoughts and responses.

2. WHAT CHALLENGES DO WE FACE IN REACHING THESE ASPIRATIONS?
Record your participant’s answers on the flip chart. Capture the key words they use. Ask the group:
- What patterns do you see?
- Are there any themes emerging? Name some of these themes.
Make sure that you’ve captured the essence of their thoughts and responses.

3. WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE IN THE COMMUNITY TO REACH OUR ASPIRATIONS?
Record your participants’ answers on the flip chart. Capture the key words they use. Ask the group:
- What patterns do you see?
- Are there any themes emerging? Name some of these themes.
Make sure that you’ve captured the essence of their thoughts and responses.

HOW TO SUMMARIZE:
Once the three questions have been answered and the responses recorded, summarize what your participants have said by telling a story.

We began by saying that we wanted a community where ____________ (aspirations) but we face ____________ (challenges). So if we want to reach our aspirations, we need to create ____________, (new conditions/change).

HOW TO MAKE IT WORK
1. Record the themes and post them where people will frequently see them. Ask: If this story about our shared aspirations is true, then what does that mean for our work together?
2. Share this exercise with others—with your co-workers, at your place of worship, with friends, your PTA, your board, etc. Ask: What are the implications for our work? What other groups could use this exercise for their own work?
Thank You!

For Tools, Reports, and More Information on The Harwood Institute, Please Visit: www.theharwoodInstitute.org

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#turnoutward