



Champaign County, OH

Futures Institute @ Urbana University

Institute Framework (draft 1)

Key Ideas and Methodology

The following are suggested key ideas, methodologies and considerations to serve as a foundation for a six session Futures Institute:

- 1) Those involved should self-select or be recruited specifically for their interest in new leadership concepts, methods and techniques important to rural areas.
- 2) The concept of community transformation should be the core concept of this leadership development experience. A sound understanding of the difference between reforming and transforming change should be used. Ideas such as self-organizing, initial conditions, parallel processes, futures generative dialogue and connective thinking should be at the heart of the Institute.
- 3) A multiple methodology of learning experiences should be used to move beyond traditional educational concepts both practically and symbolically.....e.g. self-directed study; full group dialogue; breakout groups; self-assessments
- 4) A workbook should be created that explains in more depth concepts, methods and techniques, and, at the same time, organizes the material for the Institute in a way consistent with the idea of “connective thinking.”
- 5) The use of teleconferencing and *tele-centers* should be demonstrated with other COTF Global Rural Network communities.

- 6) **A Game of the Future should be utilized as a way to introduce the participants to trends of the future in a fun and group oriented way.**
- 7) **Several new self-assessment methods should be designed within the context of the leadership needs and within the context of rural transformation.**
- 8) **Breakout groups working with community and transformative assessment issues should be connected with individuals in other areas of the country that are participants of the COTF Global Rural Network Project.**
- 9) **Create a “connective thinking” diagram that can be used in conjunction with Internet research.**
- 10) **Have groups develop a framework for creating capacities to develop a “rural culture for a Creative Knowledge Economy.”**
- 11) **Successive seminars will have the advantage of the learning experiences and feedback from preceding sessions. The idea of evaluation needs to be shifted from a traditional approach and a new methodology of evaluation established. In transformational work, those initially involved do not know what they need....obviating a basic premise of traditional evaluation.**
- 12) **The COTF System of Community Transformation offers the opportunity to provide an overall framework of ideas, concepts, capacities, skills, behaviors, and strategies consistent with an evolving and constantly changing society.**

Suggested Framework

The following outlines one approach (and there are more) that would be appropriate for the Futures Institute both in design and content. Individuals who develop a passion for this type of leadership should be networked by the Futures Institute and linked to coaches who could work with them on specific transformative processes to develop these type of capacities in their local rural areas.

The sessions as designed will be facilitated by Rick Smyre, Dave Faulkner, and others in a manner consistent with the concept of true collaboration. Those attending will observe and sense deeper connections as a result of watching how the team of facilitators works together in mutual support.

As each time segment is outlined, the following four elements are described:

- 1) Goal of the Segment
- 2) Main facilitator
- 3) Methods Suggested
- 4) Materials Required

Session One

11:30 AM – 1:30 PM Lunch, Introduction to Community Transformation and Invitation to join the Futures Institute

Session Two

8 - 10 AM Introductions and Interactive Futures Game

Goal: To have participants get to know each other and be introduced to an experiential context of the future

Main Facilitator: Dave Faulkner

Methods Suggested: Game of the Future that requires group involvement and “duo introduction.” The game would provide a context for the session, a basic introduction to trends, and individual connections that would provide a basis for mutual introduction (emphasis on fun and energy....which will be balanced during the three days with positive tension and mental struggle).

Materials Required: Game of the Future and new rural leader self-assessment brochure.

10 – 10:15 AM Break

10:15 – 12:30 PM Introduction of Community Transformation Tool Box

Goal: To introduce the overall group to key concepts of “community transformation” in an experiential way which emphasizes the idea of 21st century innovation.

Main Facilitator: Rick Smyre

Methods Suggested: Develop a three page story which embeds “weak signals” and new assumptions related to various concepts of innovation that are aligned with the ideas of community transformation. Develop a template that can be used to extract key ideas that, when connected, create a framework of different ways of thinking about future community needs. Design a “map of access points” which will help the leadership of any community cope with the positive tensions of community transformation. The main focus of this session is to insure that various breakout groups experience multiple ways to think about innovation. Have each group design a concept of community innovation that connects with some weak signal and introduce how the innovation would be utilized to prepare a local community for the impact of the weak signal.

Materials Required: Have four sets of diverse “connectives for innovation.” Make sure each method is different in concept and scope. For example have 1) plastic interlocking blocks 2) computer graphics 3) multiple colored modeling clay and 4) erector sets.

Session Three

8 – 10 AM Futures Generative Dialogue

Goal: To introduce the group to a key technique of “process leadership” and “community transformation.”

Main Facilitator: Rick Smyre

Suggested Methods: Begin with dialogue about the last session. Have three or four groups self-organize around key ideas important to rural areas in the future that were identified in that session. Have the groups work with the ideas and spend time with the question, “what are appropriate questions if we want our rural areas to begin to think about these challenges for the future?” Have the group report and have other groups connect the other group’s questions to their own questions. Have each group think about the future trends, issues identified and questions asked to develop a “futures

context” for thinking about how rural areas will approach the challenges of the future. Introduce the concept of how to see value in what the other person is saying through the use of “connective listening.”

Materials Required: Article, Worm Hole of Generative Dialogue.
Exercise work sheets. Methods and techniques of Futures Generative Dialogue.

10 - 10:15 Break

10:15 – 11:15 PM Dual Wandering for Transformational Thinking and sharing ideas from dual wandering

Goal: To integrate the capacity of one on one dialogue with the ideas presented the previous in earlier session....experiencing interactive connective thinking.

Facilitator: Rick Smyre sets the stage within the context of the idea of community transformation.... then the duets self-organize.

Suggested Methods: Have individuals pair with someone not in their group. Let each pair determine about what they want to talk. The only ground rule is that each person must “hitch-hike” on the partners last comment, either through the use of a question or a comment that asks for the other’s opinion. Two statements in a row are not allowed.

Materials Required: Whatever each pair requests of the coaches.

(one of the ideas for this part of the experience is to see what each group talks about and when brought back together, see if someone asks for a report from previous session work)

11:15 – 11:30 AM Break

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Goal: To have pairs or groups bring up information and questions that occurred at either of the previous sessions. This is to have those involved experience non-linear processes and see who is comfortable and who is not.

Facilitator: Rick Smyre

Suggested Methods: Ask the assembled, overall group what they would like to talk about. Have the facilitator move back and forth with the use of questions among the following multiple needs:

- 1) The fact that there have been two exercises since the overall group has been together.
- 2) The need to reinforce the concept of thinking systemically and seeing connections.
- 3) The need to see the difference between linear and non-linear processes and planning.
- 4) The need to have each individual become comfortable with ambiguity.
- 5) The potential to understand the methods and techniques of “futures generative dialogue.”
- 6) An understanding that there is value in talking about ideas without the need for an outcome.
- 7) The ability to see value in what someone else is saying at all times.
- 8) The capacity to take risk and be creative.
- 9) Other

Material Required: Provide the Advanced Leadership COTF System Workbook at the end of this session.

Session Four

8 - 10 AM **Parallel Processes, Networking and *Transformative Thinking Skills of Community Transformation***

Goal: To have participants learn and experience key mechanisms and techniques for building capacities for transformation *in more depth*.

Main Facilitator: Rick Smyre

Suggested Methods: Go over pre-reads about these three key concepts of Community Transformation. Make sure that the basic elements of each of the capacities are understood and utilize a series of individualized one page “connecting pieces” to have each participant experience the underlying ideas of each of the three concepts. Break up into several groups. Have a one-two page case study based on COTF experiences, with one question in each of the three categories for each group.

Materials required: Pre-read on these three “techniques of transformation.”

10 – 10:15 PM Break

10:30 – 12:30 PM COTF System of Community Transformation

Goal: To introduce the overall COTF System of Community Transformation

Methods Suggested: 1) *Explanation of COTF System and how it is organized and functions*

2) *Have it prearranged for one person from a Global Rural Network Project area (PA, MT & NC) to be in dialogue with the overall group and set it up to use the Internet with a See Me See You interactive technology. Smyre will set the stage and facilitate the introductions. Have individuals in the group ask questions. Integrate key ideas of the COTF System into the questions.*

Materials Required: Provide the individuals with a one page context for each graphical circle and offer one or two key points for each area. Use Internet technology as well as collaborators in each of the three states.

Session Five

8 – 10 AM COTF Case Studies

Goal: To utilize COTF Case Studies to help participants gain a deeper understanding of key community transformational issues based on the experience of COTF capacity building projects and processes.

Main Facilitator: Rick Smyre

Suggested Methods: Break into small groups and have each group select two case studies. Have them read each case study and choose one on which to work. Each group will answer the questions, tell why they selected the particular case study and then tell how this case study is important to their local communities.

Materials Required: Packets of twelve case studies. Work sheet to connect key ideas in each cases study to existing community needs.

10 – 10:15 AM Break

10:15 – 12:30 Framing Ecological Planning (Building Capacities for Transformation)

Goal: To have each individuals and small groups begin to bring together the various concepts, methods and techniques of advanced leadership for the purpose of applying the ideas, methods and techniques in processes of ecological planning.

Facilitator: Smyre & Faulkner

Suggested Methods: The session is to be spent in two ways:

- 1) *analyzing and asking questions leading to an idea thinking about what will be needed to develop the capacities for the community to be able to seed and introduce the idea(s) .***
- 2) each group will be given the opportunity to decide whether to connect their project to the Global Rural Network Project or limit it to local communities in Ohio.**

Materials Required: All the materials provided previously can be utilized. The one new set of material will be COTF sheets of questions and concepts when thinking about framing processes for community transformation “process projects.”

Session Six

8 – 10 AM Creating a Context of Transformation

Goal: To take the work from the session before and build a set of process strategies that would seed the local area for the idea which had been identified and framed.

Facilitator: Smyre & Faulkner

Suggested Methods: Have the groups from the previous sessions stay together. Provide additional COTF sheets that would help identify important concerns in developing processes for building “capacities for transformation.” Have each group use the Internet, cell phones and all material to develop a “process strategy.” Ask for an evaluation methodology to see what each group develops.

Materials Required: Use all the materials previously provided.

10 – 10:15 AM Break

10:15 – 12:30 PM Building a Matrix of Connections

Goal: To have the overall group listen to each other and help each other find ways to make the idea successful.

Facilitator: Smyre & Faulkner

Suggested Methods: Have each group select someone to present the *group’s* idea. Have members of other groups suggest ways to help make the idea work. Have prizes (to be determined) given to any group (other than the one presenting) that comes up with the most number of 1) helpful hints and 2) new ideas.

Materials Required: Provide COTF System “think” sheets for the other groups to be able to show connections that relate to the idea being presented or a new concept or approach that has been spawned by hearing the group’s idea.

1:30 – 4 PM Every Session Mentoring & Coaching Connections

This time will be utilized for any of the participants that would like to have thirty minute sessions with one of the facilitators to work with them on a particular question or idea, and to talk about establishing “coaching” relationships in order to help them develop strategies to lay seeds for transformative capacity building when they return. In addition, the UU Futures Institute will be the clearing house for any OH connections to build networks of individuals interested in mutual support. Rick Smyre will coordinate any interested in being a part of the Global Rural Network Project.

Epilogue

No evaluation sheets will be provided because that method is meaningless for this type of learning experience. Announce that evaluation will be based on the extent to which new ideas are introduced and facilitated in local areas as a result of the experience with the Futures Institute. A key part of this new type of evaluation is that the coaches will be available to those who take any idea and seed it in their community. This will not only offer a continuation of the relationship in a mutually collaborative way; it would give the *Futures Institute* a way to build a momentum for these ideas in the future; and it would redefine evaluation in a connective, collaborative, mutually responsible way. A traditional type of evaluation causes division when there is disagreement. In developing “process leaders” and “capacities for transformation” there is always positive tension and it is important to make sure that diverse people learn how to bridge such “tension gaps”that would be one of the roles of continuous coaching, to make sure that individual leadership growth continues and is reinforced in a mutually responsible way. It is one approach to get conservatives and liberals to see this type of leadership as important for the future because of this focus on different types of responsibility.