

**Using  
Foresight to  
Bridge**

**Personal &  
Community  
Flourishing**

By: Mia George

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## ABSTRACT

This research project explores the use of personal futures tools to enhance and bridge both individual and collective flourishing. The study employed a literature review, surveys, the development of a personal futures workbook, and piloting of community-oriented workshops to better understand this connection. The study reveals how a structured approach to personal futures and its incorporation into community engagement initiatives may lead to collective transformation.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# DEDICATION

To William and Leah – my reasons for flourishing.

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# 01

## INTRODUCTION

This research project explores the intersection between strategic foresight, community engagement, and personal development, aiming to discover how personal futures tools can support both individual and collective flourishing.

Personal futures tools are used to help individuals envision their path, set meaningful goals, and tackle challenges with the help of foresight and strategic planning. These tools are often offered for personal growth to help individuals craft their own visions of success. But what if we can harness the power of personal futures tools to uplift communities? What if the key to a flourishing community starts with your individual growth? This project explores how personal futures tools may bridge personal and community development and be adapted to foster flourishing for all.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question guiding this study is:

*“How might personal futures tools create a positive connection between individual and community flourishing, if at all?”*

At the same time, it tackles the related questions of:

1. How might individuals pursue personal flourishing using personal futures tools?; and
2. How might personal futures tools be integrated into community engagement activities to support community flourishing?

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the use of personal futures tools while expanding it to encompass how they may be adapted to support positive community outcomes, too. Key contributions, shared in detail in Chapter 4, include tools for individuals and communities who may want to incorporate personal futures into their practice. These tools are designed to be accessible and impactful, promoting personal development, community engagement and, most importantly, flourishing for all.



# HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

This report contains five chapters, each building on the previous one to share detailed research findings and their implications.

- **Chapter 1: Introduction** - You are here! This chapter provides an overview of the study.
- **Chapter 2: Context** provides an overview of personal futures and community engagement, defines flourishing, and explores the parameters in which this research operates, from definitions of well-being and community engagement to perceptions of personal futures tools. This chapter positions the research within a broader academic and public discourse, providing the nuances needed to understand the rest of the journey.
- **Chapter 3: Methodology** explains how a mixed-methods approach was used to answer the research questions. These methods included a literature review, surveys, the development and use of a personal futures workbook, community-oriented workshops, and interviews.
- **Chapter 4: Findings** provides an overview of the findings from the research, divided into two parts: insights and outputs. Insights share what the research uncovered around personal and community flourishing and the bridge created between the two using personal futures tools. Outputs include materials developed that can be used to build and strengthen bridges between personal and community flourishing.
- **Chapter 5: Conclusion** brings it all together - the issues explored, contributions made, and next steps to look forward to. The work ends with a recognition that this report is only the beginning of a personal journey of understanding about individual and collective flourishing. It ends with the knowledge that the bridge from the personal to the collective has never been a one-way street – rather, it is a back and forth between two points for the betterment of all.

Curious to know how the secret to a flourishing community may lie in your hands? Read on to find out.

## 02

# CONTEXT

This chapter sets the stage for the journey this research takes – one that begins with individuals and considers the communities in which they belong. Personal reflection and community engagement are often treated as separate efforts, but this story explores how they might be brought together using foresight to support shared flourishing. To understand how to meaningfully build that bridge, this chapter first looks at how individuals and communities are shaped and how current systems often keep them apart. It then explores the tools and practices that help people reflect on their personal futures alongside common approaches to community engagement and the limitations they often carry. Finally, it introduces the conditions this research hopes to produce: greater individual and collective well-being framed through the lens of flourishing. By explaining the starting point, aspirations, and context of this study, this chapter lays the groundwork for why bridging individuals and communities using foresight matters.

## UNDERSTANDING POINT A & POINT B: INDIVIDUALS & COMMUNITIES

To understand the journey this research is taking, it is important to first understand the connection the research is seeking to make – the one between **individuals** and **communities**.

In *Designs for the Pluriverse* (2018), Arturo Escobar critiques modernity's Westernized individualism in which people view themselves as discrete entities, separate and distinct from the communities in which they exist. He states,

*“humans learn to operate like individuals by  
construing themselves as raw materials for  
endless improvement*

(Escobar, 2018)

Rather than existing as discrete entities, however, Escobar argues individuals are formed through ongoing interactions with their environment and others, shaping and being shaped by the worlds they inhabit.

Meanwhile, communities in Escobar's perspective are emergent formations produced through interaction and shared practice. Communities are constantly designing themselves through social relations, environmental practices, and modes of governance, yet modern institutions often disrupt this autonomy, imposing external forms of knowledge and control.

Personal reflection is essential for people to rethink how to navigate their future, not as separate actors but as participants in relational, co-created realities. By centering this view of individuals and communities, it becomes possible to understand the significance and value of the bridge created by combining personal futures tools and community engagement to connect the two towards flourishing.

# UNDERSTANDING THE BRIDGE FROM POINT A TO POINT B: PERSONAL FUTURES & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Personal futures tools** invite individuals to take a proactive approach to their lives, aligning aspirations with clear, structured actions. The personal futuring process is defined as “practicing the same methods and techniques that futurists have applied successfully for large organizations over the past several decades” (Wheelwright, 2012). Personal futures tools facilitate reflection, goal setting, and the creation of actionable pathways toward desired outcomes.

Personal futures tools have a long history. While Verne Wheelwright is often credited with popularizing the concept in the early 2000s (Hines, 2014; Wheelwright, 2012), the term “personal futures” has actually been in use since at least the 1970s. As early as 1976, futures methodologies were adapted to create personal futures tools for career guidance counseling (Miller, 1976). Shortly after that, it emerged within the disability community as part of Person-Centered Planning using similar concepts of personal visioning and agency present in modern-day personal futures tools (O’Brien and O’Brien, 2000). These earlier tools share significant similarities with the personal futures methods proposed by Wheelwright, highlighting a long-standing tradition of using foresight methods to help individuals envision and plan for their futures.

Despite its merits, current personal futures methodologies are often rooted in Western culture and anchor into an individualistic worldview. They reinforce the fallacy, mentioned earlier, of individuals perceiving themselves as “raw materials for endless improvement” (Escobar, 2018). Furthermore, they mainly focus on the individual with little mention of how this individual’s futuring actions may impact communities. Rather, when communities are mentioned, they are mentioned in the context of how one can better understand their community connections and relationships as it may impact their personal futures. The dominant approach to personal futures tools in the 2000s often emphasizes individualism over collective interdependence - an ironic twist considering personal futures tools’ early use in community building and social support for disabled individuals (O’Brien and O’Brien, 2000).

Another important part of the bridge this research is building is **community engagement**. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) outlines a spectrum of public participation. This spectrum ranges from informing to empowering stakeholders and the community – two terms which IAP2 mentions interchangeably to refer to any individual or group that may be impacted or interested in a decision (International Association for Public Participation). While the spectrum offers an aspirational framework, studies have shown that in the public sector, for example, practical applications of community engagement often remain limited to merely informing the public (Castillo et al., 2023). Process-heavy, bureaucratic approaches to community engagement are barriers that reinforce public doubt that input received would have any impact or influence on decisions (Modise, 2023). Several recent studies have noted rising levels of public mistrust both nationally in Canada and across the globe (Steinburg, 2024), with many Canadians stating they do not believe they have any real influence on the political decisions that affect them (Angus Reid Institute, 2022).

Engagement methods that are perceived to be “tokenistic” in nature fail to capture the richness of lived experiences (Attree et al., 2011). Such engagements appear to lack genuine interest in what participants share and do not “treat their knowledge with the same respect that they give to professional knowledge” (Branfield & Beresford, 2006) – evidence of what Escobar (2018) noted of modern governance imposing external forms of knowledge and control. Thankfully, literature shows there are growing efforts to integrate stronger participation models over the past couple of decades (Ebrahim, 2015; Brownill and Parker, 2010). This research study seeks to add to this call for improved community engagement, exploring how anchoring into experiential, participatory approaches can bridge the gap between individual and community flourishing. The study recognizes the potential for the understanding of personal lived experiences in relation to community efforts to create meaningful change.

Whether undertaken by an individual, encouraged through community activism, or incorporated into organization-led engagement processes, understanding personal futures can help move people and communities towards meaningful participation and encourage flourishing. However these personal futures are engaged with, the final aim and outcome is the same: creating a bridge between individuals and communities; enhancing flourishing for all.

## UNDERSTANDING THE DESIRED OUTCOME: FLOURISHING

It is all well and good to build a bridge between individuals and communities, but to what end? Ultimately this research aims to build this bridge to improve, not just well-being, but **flourishing** for all. The study's anchor into flourishing as an extension of improved well-being is one that is taken mindfully; the concept of well-being has varied applications and definitions. In the Province of Ontario, for example, community well-being is defined in the Community Safety and Well-Being Planning Framework as having achieved sustainable communities where “everyone is safe, has a sense of belonging, opportunities to participate, and where individuals and families are able to meet their needs for education, health care, food, housing, income, and social and cultural expression” (King's Printer for Ontario, 2021). However, this framework lacks standardized indicators of well-being, leaving municipalities to define their own metrics to determine if progress is being made towards improved well-being or not. Furthermore, while encouraging a focus on upstream social development initiatives, the framework itself is written with a predominant focus on risk prevention within the context of the Police Services Act instead (King's Printer for Ontario, 2021).

In contrast, Martin Seligman's framework of flourishing (2012), grounded in positive psychology, provides a measurable definition of well-being. Seligman's PERMA model identifies five dimensions of flourishing: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (Figure 1). Many definitions of well-being, like Ontario's definition cited above, often lack clarity and measurable indicators. By adopting Seligman's definition of flourishing, this research study seeks to anchor into a robust and actionable framework for understanding well-being. Seligman's framework has been well-researched, with tested measurements for flourishing developed to support it, such as Butler and Kern's PERMA Profiler (2016). As a result, the PERMA model provides actionable ways for this study to analyze both individual and community flourishing.

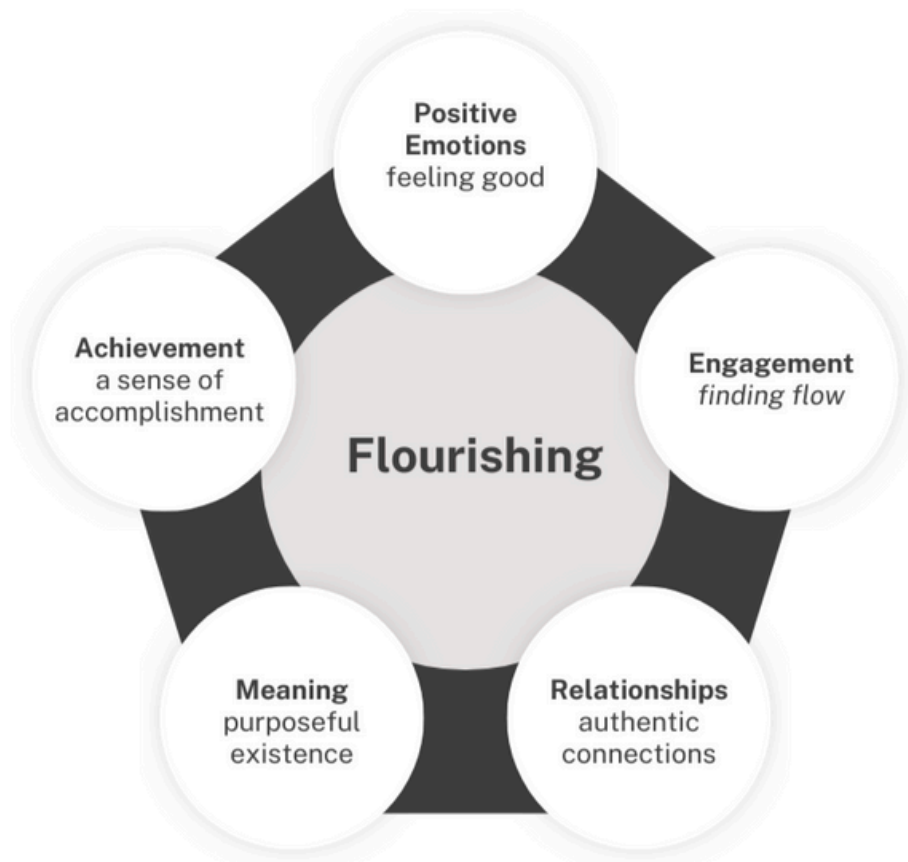


Figure 1: A visualization of Martin Seligman's PERMA Model for Flourishing

In short, this research journey aspires to develop tools and recommendations that emphasize a strong sense of personal understanding and community engagement that ultimately leads to flourishing for all.

# 03

## METHODOLOGY

To address the primary research question of **“How might personal futures tools create a positive connection between individual and community flourishing, if at all?”**, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were used. At the same time, these methods sought to answer the related questions of:

1. How might individuals pursue personal flourishing using personal futures tools?; and
2. How might personal futures tools be integrated into community engagement activities to support community flourishing?

Each method was selected for their specific contribution to different aspects of the research, centered flourishing, and emphasized self-reflection.



People, places and materials were carefully selected for this research:

- **Participants:** Individuals participating in the study needed to be at least 18 years old, be able to access online collaboration platforms like Miro, and have some familiarity with foresight methods. They must also have been interested in exploring personal futures tools and be a changemaker or active participant in a community which they could apply foresight methods to in a workshop format, whether the community was one defined by location such as a neighbourhood or one of shared interests or goals such as a professional group. All participants ended up coming from the Strategic Foresight and Innovation program at OCAD University. They were active in the foresight space through their studies and had communities in mind that they were researching or supporting that were covered under Research and Ethics Board approvals.
- **Literature:** Peer-reviewed articles, professional literature such as those shared in professional association publications, and gray literature not found in traditional journals were selected based on their relevance to personal futures, self-development, community engagement, and well-being. Sources that encompassed many of these topics at once were prioritized. Existing personal futures tools and workbooks were also used to inform the development of study outputs.
- **Places:** For ease of access, a virtual setting was chosen for workshops and interviews to ensure factors such as location, building accessibility, and commute time were not barriers for participation.

Table 1 introduces the research methods used in this study in chronological order. The table describes the action taken, the purpose behind using each method, and the study question it was designed to address. Following the table, each method is elaborated upon with more detail about the process used, what worked and did not work well, lessons learned, and adjustments that could be made to improve upon the method for this research in future.

Method	Action (What Was Done?)	Purpose (Why Was It Done?)	Mapped Questions
Literature Review	Reviewed existing literature on personal futures, community well-being, and community engagement	To identify existing frameworks, inform study framing and scope, and surface research gaps this study could address	All
Surveys	Gathered measurable data on shifts in participants' perceptions of their personal and community flourishing	To assess the impact of fieldwork on participants' personal flourishing and perceptions of the tools' effectiveness to improve individual and community flourishing	All
Fieldwork (Personal Futures Workbook)	Facilitated individual engagement with personal futures tools	To explore how individuals perceive personal development and flourishing using personal futures tools	Secondary Question #1
Fieldwork (Community-Oriented Workshops)	Conducted community-oriented workshops with participants using foresight tools	To understand how personal futures tools can be integrated into, and potentially enhance, community engagement activities	Primary Question Secondary Question #2
Interviews	Conducted reflective interviews with workshop participants	To deepen understanding of participant experiences and how personal futures tools could shape flourishing	All

Table 1: Summary of Research Methods Used

# LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review was foundational to identifying existing frameworks and findings related to personal futures, community well-being, and community engagement. It was also undertaken to understand existing gaps in current research, providing context as to where this study could contribute and be situated within the broader body of personal futures work.

## PROCESS

A scoping literature review was conducted using OCAD University's Omni database. Search terms included personal futures, personal development, community well-being, and community engagement, and included peer-reviewed journals, professional literature, and gray literature. The focus was on identifying personal futures applications, including instances where bridges were researched or created between personal development and community initiatives.

## WHAT WORKED WELL?

The literature review...

- Revealed a strong historical foundation for personal futures tools, uncovering their origins in the 1970s and 1980s, from which time a shift has since occurred in application from community-based approaches to more individualistic uses.
- Helped contextualize contemporary personal futures methodologies within broader historical and disciplinary trends.

## WHAT DIDN'T WORK WELL & WHY?

- As the review conducted for this study was not a systematic literature review, gaps may still exist in the results. The field of community engagement and personal development is vast, and there are several other avenues in these fields that would be interesting to explore, time permitting.
- Based on the changing context of personal futures, it was challenging to track the full evolution of these tools. Many early frameworks were not formally published or widely documented. Due to time constraints of the research project, this history was not explored as fully to prioritize fieldwork and subsequent analysis.

## FUTURE ADJUSTMENTS & LESSONS LEARNED

- Future research could incorporate archival analysis or interviews with early practitioners to fill in knowledge gaps.
- A broader interdisciplinary review may provide additional insights into historical applications of personal futures and contemporary movements in the community engagement field.

## SURVEYS

Surveys were designed based on positive psychology frameworks, particularly Seligman’s framework for flourishing (2012), to measure participants’ perceptions of personal and community flourishing both before and after fieldwork and measure the effectiveness of the tools used.

## PROCESS

Pre- and post-workbook and workshop surveys were administered to participants – three surveys in total. In addition to qualitative, open-ended questions to support the development of the tools, the first and last surveys included questions on individual well-being from the PERMA Profiler developed by Butler and Kern (2016). The PERMA Profiler questions were used in this study as they have already been tested for “reliability, cross-time stability, and evidence for convergent and divergent validity” (Butler & Kern, 2016). Data from these surveys helped assess the impact of the field work on participants’ sense of flourishing. Survey questions may be found in Appendix A.

## WHAT WORKED WELL?

Surveys...

- Provided an efficient way of gathering participant feedback.
- Allowed for benchmarking of personal flourishing as a metric of the study’s impact.
- Enabled engagement with participants who had limited time and energy for deeper involvement.

## WHAT DIDN'T WORK WELL & WHY?

Many participants completed surveys quickly (in five minutes or less), suggesting limited depth of reflection. Participant schedules and time capacity proved challenging to navigate throughout the study (See “A Note on Sample Size” below), and participants may have potentially prioritized survey completion over in-depth contemplation.

## FUTURE ADJUSTMENTS & LESSONS LEARNED

Future iterations of this study should explore additional reflection prompts, follow-up surveys, or adjustments to survey length and/or format to deepen engagement.

# PERSONAL FUTURES WORKBOOK

The personal futures workbook (Figure 2) was designed to support individuals in using personal futures tools in a confidential and reflective way, giving participants an opportunity to reflect on their future goals and aspirations. Appendix C includes a larger sample from the workbook.



Figure 2: The cover and first pages of the personal futures workbook

## PROCESS

The personal futures workbook, titled *Destiny by Design*, was created after research and testing on existing personal futures tools (Wheelwright, 2012; Draudt & West, 2016) and other personal development tools that may not have been identified or marketed as personal futures tools, but which had a similar focus (Brown, 2022; Hyatt & Harkavy, 2016; Burnett & Evans, 2016). Tools were selected and adapted based on ease of use, accessibility, insight generation, and alignment with the PERMA model of flourishing.

Participants were given the option of using a digital or printed copy of the workbook and given time to complete the exercises. The completed contents of the workbook were entirely confidential. Participants were not expected nor asked to share the answers to the workbook with the researcher, as the study was focused on the participants' experience of the workbook and tools therein, not on the answers themselves.

The workbook contained milestone and stakeholder mapping exercises, values activities, Causal Layered Analysis, scenarios development, the Futures Wheel, and Three Horizons to help participants identify their values, possible and preferred futures, and strategies towards achieving them. Significant consideration was given to the design and language of the workbook with the aim of balancing the explanation of how these foresight tools are traditionally used in an organizational context with the goal of adapting them for a more personal, reflective purpose. Appendix B details activities in the workbook, the foresight tools these activities were based upon, and any existing sources that served as inspiration.

## WHAT WORKED WELL?

The workbook...

- Became a key output of this research. It served both as a research tool and a practical resource for participants.
- Provided a structured way to communicate and contextualize research insights.
- Enhanced participant engagement and reflection, especially when offered as a physical artifact.

## WHAT DIDN'T WORK WELL & WHY?

- Participants who received digital versions of the workbook found the experience less engaging, lacking the same level of usability and ease of annotation.
- Some participants noted some exercises in the workbook were difficult to complete without further resources or support.

## FUTURE ADJUSTMENTS & LESSONS LEARNED

- Future versions of the workbook should prioritize print distribution while ensuring digital formats are interactive and user-friendly.
- Hybrid approaches, such as guided digital experiences, may enhance accessibility.
- Introducing online resources such as a website or video guide to support participants as they navigate the workbook would be helpful

# COMMUNITY-ORIENTED WORKSHOPS

Community-oriented workshops aimed to assess how futures tools were experienced in collective settings after participants had engaged with the tools at a personal level.

## PROCESS

The workshops were held with the same participants who used the workbook. They were designed to encourage participants to reflect on their communities' ecosystems and futures, set goals, and explore ways to enhance community flourishing.

The workshops were hosted virtually using Microsoft Teams and Miro and were two hours long. Almost all participants workshoped different communities and interests, though sessions were run on one Miro board. Figure 3 shows the Miro Board template, with larger images contained in Appendix D. Each tool was introduced with an example of how to use it before participants moved to a copy of the tool to use on their own community.

Tools used were:

- The Actor's Map: A tool to represent relationships between stakeholders (Jones & Van Ael, 2022)
- Causal Layered Analysis: A tool to expose hidden assumptions (Krishnan et al., 2022); and
- Three Horizons: A tool to explore transition processes that connect the future to the present (Krishnan et al., 2022).

A facilitator guide was developed to support the process, including ongoing prompts to encourage participants to consider the bridge between their personal futures insights and that of the communities they were workshopping. Participants were encouraged to write down their reflections about their personal connections on a separate piece of paper if they wished, but were not asked to include any personal information on the boards, allowing their workbook content to remain confidential.

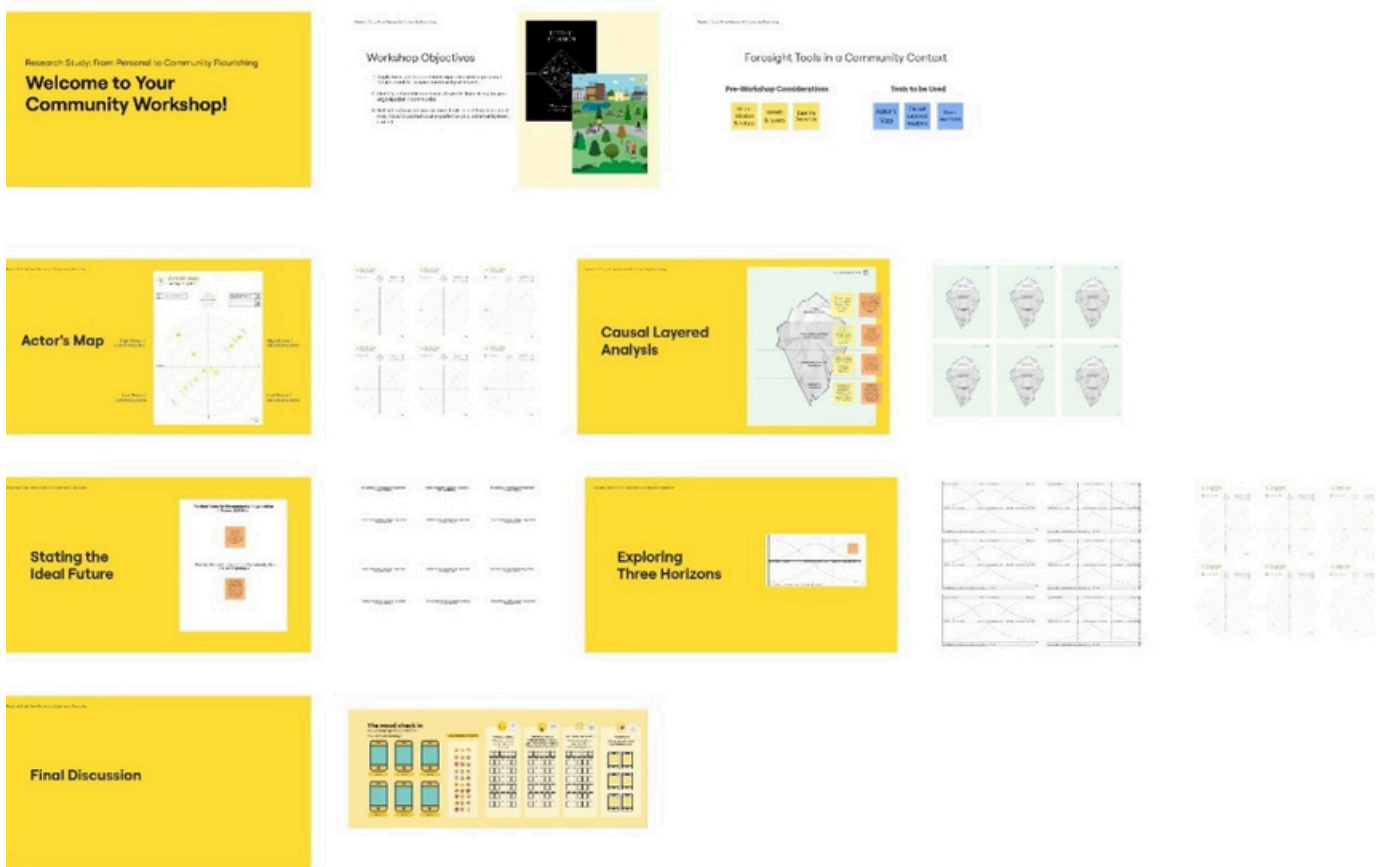


Figure 3: A screenshot of the Community Workshop Miro Template



## WHAT WORKED WELL?

The workshops...

- Offered participants dedicated time to apply different foresight tools to their community work, thereby generating new insights about their communities.
- Provided an opportunity for individuals to find connections between themselves and their communities, particularly by encouraging participants to consider their positionality in their chosen community.
- Allowed real-time observation of how participants engaged with the tools in a social setting. The Actor's Map was particularly helpful in creating this bridge. Participants were first asked to complete an Actor's Map for their community and consider where they may show up in the space. After strategies and tactics for community flourishing were identified using Three Horizons, participants were then invited to map these actions against the Actor's Map previously developed. Participants found this exercise useful to anchor actions in the community space while considering their positionality.
- Benefited from facilitation that prompted considerations of how personal and community futures and flourishing could be bridged for deeper insights, though participants felt more targeted exercises could strengthen this bridge.

## WHAT DIDN'T WORK WELL & WHY?

- Because most participants represented several different communities, two of three workshops hosted had to be designed to accommodate participants' independent reflection on their separate communities rather than workshopping a single community all together. The open-ended nature of community selection introduced additional complexity in facilitation as participants arrived with different scopes of work and frames of reference depending on their communities.
- The prototype workshop format limited depth of discussion and application. Time constraints led to a condensed experience, making it difficult to fit all content in meaningfully. Many participants noted more time could have led to deeper engagement and stronger insights, particularly when using tools designed to elicit deeper reflection such as the Causal Layered Analysis and Three Horizons.

## FUTURE ADJUSTMENTS & LESSONS LEARNED

- Future workshops should consider thematic grouping of participants to streamline facilitation or be used to workshop one community or organization at a time.
- Longer or multi-session workshops will allow for deeper engagement with the materials, enhance discussion, and provide more opportunities for insight.
- In addition to existing verbal prompts, more tools specific to connecting individuals to their communities and a final reflection period at the end would be beneficial to better bridge personal and community flourishing

## PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted to better understand participants' experiences and perceptions of the personal futures workbook, community-oriented workshop, and their impact on personal and community flourishing. They provided qualitative data that complemented quantitative survey results, offering deeper insights into the subjective impact of fieldwork.

## PROCESS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants, focusing on their perceptions of personal and community well-being before and after fieldwork. Questions explored how personal futures tools influenced their sense of flourishing, connection to community, and sought to identify gaps and areas of improvement for the study.

## WHAT WORKED WELL?

The interviews...

- Helped participants clarify and articulate why they may have struggled to bridge personal and community flourishing.
- Provided an opportunity for participants to receive further context behind their pre- and post-study flourishing scores from the PERMA Profiler and gauge whether participants felt it was representative of their experience.
- Allowed for open-ended exploration that surveys could not capture, offering nuanced perspectives and allowing for greater emotional depth. Due to the personal nature of the research study, this final connection in the form of a person-to-person conversation felt like an important conclusion to a process that felt relatively rushed and task-oriented due to project constraints.

## WHAT DIDN'T WORK WELL & WHY?

- Due to time constraints, some interviews could only occur later in the evening after long work or study days. Such interviews resulted in shorter and less detailed responses.
- For similar reasons to the above, the turnaround time between when participants received their PERMA Profiler scores and pre-interview questions for consideration prior to the actual interviews themselves were negligible. Oftentimes this negated the value of sharing the scores and questions in advance as participants did not have enough time to consider them in advance of the discussion.

## FUTURE ADJUSTMENTS & LESSONS LEARNED

- With more time, a variety of follow-up options and flexibility of scheduling would give participants greater opportunities for reflection, better insight generation, and readiness for the discussion.
- Where appropriate, such as in instances where individuals are workshopping the same community, organization, or themes, small group or paired interviews could encourage more dynamic discussion and collective meaning making.

## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THIS METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

A key design feature of this study was the intentional adaptation of personal futures tools into a community context. While personal development tools are typically individualistic in nature, this study explored how such tools could be reimagined to support both personal and community flourishing through a two-part approach to field work.

These adaptations included special consideration when developing and deploying the methods mentioned above. These special considerations were:

- **Collaborative visioning:** Fieldwork was designed so that the workshop moved beyond individual goal setting to community-focused outcomes. Participants were encouraged to consider themselves as part of a whole, where the individual could explore personal aspirations while advancing community goals. The design intended to reinforce the idea that individual and community visioning and flourishing are interdependent.
- **Experiential inquiry:** Methods emphasized the importance of lived experiences and reflection as a source of insight. Prompts in community-oriented workshops emphasized the value of process over outcome, encouraging participants to use tools for idea generation and shared meaning making.
- **Feedback loops:** The sequencing of individuals engaging with their personal futures first before community-oriented workshops was done intentionally to create opportunities for feedback loops. Participants were encouraged to revisit their personal futures thinking during community-focused conversations and vice versa. This interplay was designed to explore the connection between personal development and community engagement.

While foresight tools have been applied in both personal and community contexts, they are rarely used with the same participants in sequence. This methodological choice allows for a comparative exploration of how personal futures tools influence both individual development and community engagement, offering a new perspective on how personal and community flourishing can be connected through futures work.

## A NOTE ON SAMPLE SIZE

This study began with an initial cohort of 10 participants; however, engagement declined at each phase of the research process. Of the 10 individuals who signed up to participate in the study, eight completed the pre-workbook survey and received the personal futures workbook, six completed the workbook and post-workbook survey, five participated in the workshop and completed the post-workshop survey, and four completed the final participant interview.

The primary reason cited for attrition was participant capacity, particularly ability to dedicate time to the study's needs. The study's sample population likely had a significant impact on this outcome. As all participants were existing SFI students in the midst of their own major research projects, this study was conducted at a time of significant work load pressure and deadlines for all participants.

Given the small sample size, the findings of this study should be considered exploratory rather than conclusive. While the results provide valuable insights into the application of personal futures tools and their impact on individual and community flourishing, they are best understood as a pilot study. Further research with a larger and more diverse participant base is needed to validate and refine these findings.

## METHODOLOGY: SUMMARIZED

The mixed-methods approach of this study was designed to explore the relationship between personal and community flourishing using foresight tools. Qualitative depth was sought in addition to quantitative insights through the combination of workbook completion, workshops, surveys, and interviews. The study was designed to be adaptable and responsive to emerging insights. It was structured in a staged and phased way, with surveys conducted before and after each major personal and community activity. This chapter has detailed the rationale behind each method, the process undertaken, and the special considerations applied to method design and deployment. It also acknowledges, however, the limitations of the small sample size and the need for further research. These reflections offer a foundation for future work, ensuring that lessons learned inform both academic and commercially viable applications of personal futures tools and their broadened use in community settings. The next chapter will outline the findings of this work.

## 04 FINDINGS

This chapter presents research findings and outputs and is divided into two parts: the first part addresses the research questions, while the second explores the outputs resulting from the study.

### PART 1: ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sought to answer the primary research question of:  
**How might personal futures tools create a positive connection between individual and community flourishing, if at all?**

In the process of answering this question, the study's secondary research questions were addressed of "How might individuals pursue personal flourishing using personal futures tools?" and "How might personal futures tools be integrated into community engagement activities to support community flourishing?"

Ultimately, the study found that personal futures tools...

- Could enhance individual flourishing (using answers to Secondary Research Question #1)
- Could enhance community flourishing (using answers to Secondary Research Question #2); and
- Could ultimately bridge individual and community flourishing (the answer to the study's Primary Research Question).

## FLOURISHING FOR INDIVIDUALS: USING PERSONAL FUTURES TOOLS

The study began with a focus on the individual. Fieldwork began with participants using the personal futures workbook mentioned in Chapter 3 (Methodology), which was designed to provide structure around personal visioning and goal setting. This initial phase of fieldwork enabled the investigation into how personal futures tools to influence individual flourishing.

Surveys showed that, after using the workbook, most participants felt better equipped to make positive changes in Seligman's (2012) flourishing domains of Positive Emotions, Engagement, Meaning, and Accomplishment. After the community-oriented workshop, which included prompts for participants to consider insights they may have gleaned from the workbook, most participants felt better equipped to make positive changes in the domains of Positive Emotions and Relationships. Table 2 shows which domains of flourishing at least 80% of participants felt were supported by the workbook and by the workshop. It highlights how both activities together helped most participants feel better equipped to make positive changes across all domains of the PERMA model.

PERMA Domain	Workbook	Workshop
Positive Emotions	✓	✓
Engagement	✓	
Relationships		✓
Meaning	✓	
Accomplishments	✓	

Table 2: Participant-Reported Perceptions of Fieldwork's Positive Impact



PERMA Profiler results showed 80% of participants saw an increase across all domains of flourishing except for Accomplishments. The PERMA Profiler provided another lens through which this work could be validated. Figure 4 shows the average PERMA Profiler scores of participants prior to fieldwork beginning and after their completion of the study.

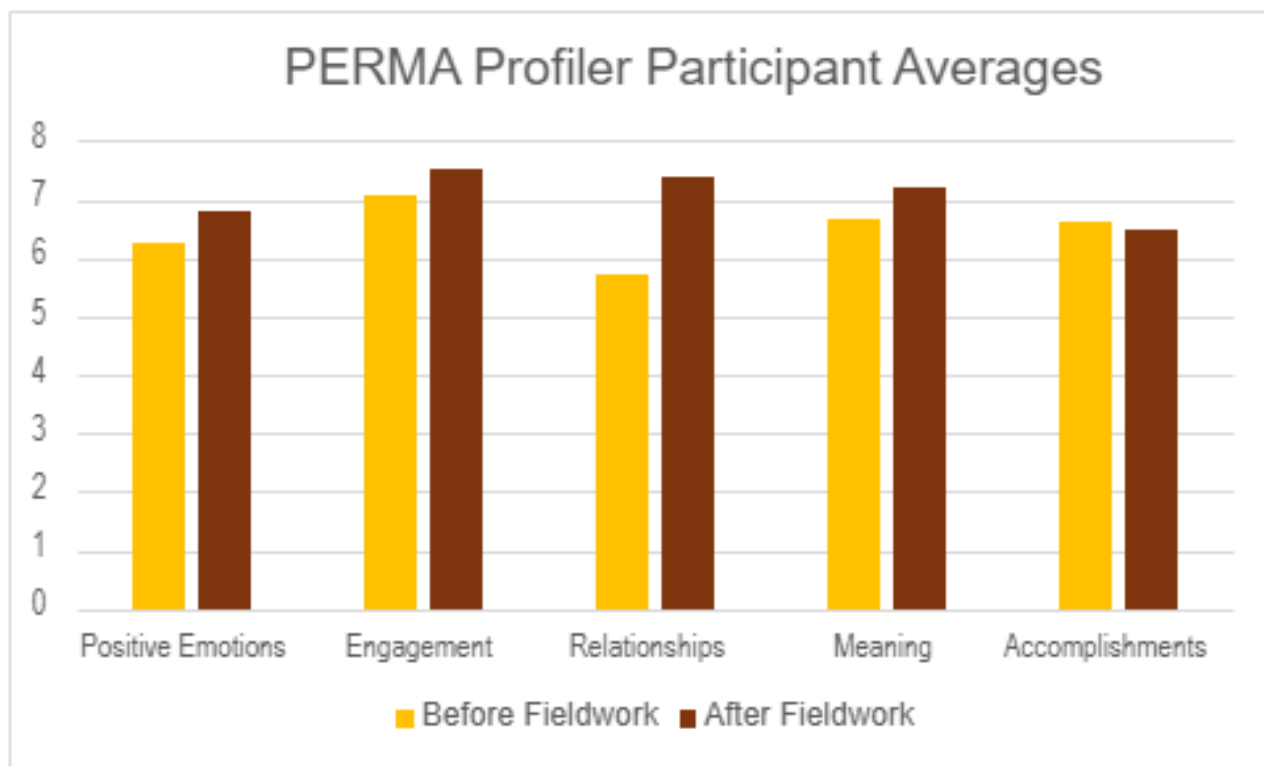


Figure 4: PERMA Profiler Participant Averages Before and After Fieldwork

Taken together, participants' responses to whether they found the workbook and community-oriented workshop would better equip them to make positive changes in the domains of flourishing alongside the results of the PERMA Profiler before and after fieldwork show a positive correlation between this study's work and a personal sense of flourishing.

Thematic analysis of feedback obtained through surveys and interviews was conducted to better understand the reasons behind these results. One insight that most often came up around the use of personal futures tools for individual flourishing was that **participants most valued the self-reflective nature of the work**. Several participants noted that engaging with personal futures tools felt therapeutic in the way it provided them with dedicated time and space to think about their lives in a new way. Participants expressed appreciation for how the tools helped contextualize their thoughts, giving them structured processes of visioning and self-reflection. For example, one participant mentioned that using the workbook enabled them to unbox a major challenge they were facing, while a few others noted an increased sense of agency to be able to affect positive change in their lives. Several participants mentioned that the tools helped them consider how their personal meaning intersected with the greater community and helped them better understand their positionality moving into the community workshop.

Thematic analysis revealed three key ways to improve the use of personal futures tools for flourishing:

## **1 Most participants noted that they could see value in personal futures tools being revisited regularly.**

The value of revisiting these tools was particularly noted for personal development purposes on a biannual or annual basis, enabling regular check-ins on values, goals, and life direction to help individuals track personal and community shifts more effectively.

## **2 Accessibility and format must be considered and expanded to reach a wider audience.**

Suggestions from participants included offering the workbook in different formats, modularizing the tools, and providing additional resources to support the use of the workbook to expand its potential reach. Further consideration should be given to how different individuals may want to interact with the workbook, with adaptations made for different audiences. For example, some participants noted that they enjoyed writing their responses to the workbook questions, while others found it challenging to do so and would have preferred drawing, doodling, or recording voice note responses instead.

Feedback surveys and interviews also revealed differences in levels of engagement depending on if a participant had a printed or digital copy of the workbook. When participants had a physical copy of the workbook, they described the act of personal futuring as therapeutic as noted above. When using a digital copy of the workbook, participants described it more akin to work. The ability to write notes in the margins or sketch ideas was frequently mentioned in participant interviews as a contributing factor to engagement.

Language and tone were other important considerations. The potentially jarring nature of applying tools that are typically used in a corporate setting was noted by several participants. While some felt the workbook presented a more personalized tone that helped make the experience less jarring, others mentioned that using tools usually aligned with corporate thinking made certain exercises feel impersonal. Such feedback highlighted the need for further testing of workbook tools to see which ones may be most helpful with a wider audience.

### **3 Individual readiness was an important consideration before engaging with personal futures tools.**

Some participants noted that using personal futures tools and thinking far into the future felt overwhelming based on current life circumstances. This feedback was especially noted when participants encountered the “Anticipate Milestones” activity in the workbook, which prompted the individual to write down future years, ages, and milestones for themselves and their loved ones. The workbook provided up to 21 rows for participants to fill in if they wished. Other activities, such as one titled “Articulate Your Path,” encouraged individuals to think of future scenarios 10 years into the future. Figure 5 shows samples of these activities for illustrative purposes, while Appendix C provides a larger sample of these exercises for greater context. Such feedback suggests personal futures tools may require a certain level of emotional or psychological readiness to be effective, particularly when applied in transitional or uncertain life periods.

During the study, participants' time capacity was also frequently noted as a barrier to further engagement. This suggests the need for flexible engagement strategies to accommodate differing levels of availability and readiness if this work is to be most accessible and have meaningful impact.

**ANTICIPATE MILESTONES**

The people in your life play a big role in shaping your future. In business and everyday life, many key individuals or groups are often called **stakeholders**. In this workbook, we use the term **loved ones** instead, recognizing people like family, friends, or close partners often have the greatest influence and interest in your life. These are the people you share deep connections with, whose well-being is closely tied to yours, and whose decisions will impact yours too. Just as you will impact them.

Who will be part of your life ten years from now? What important milestones are coming up for you and for them? How might they shape your future along the way?

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Put in the table below with the year on the left-hand column and the names of your loved ones along the top row. Fill in after age and the ages of important people in your life in the corresponding row for each future year. Make a note of the year it is a milestone for any individual identified and what the milestone is.

YEAR	AGES & MILESTONES					
	YOU	LOVED ONE #1	LOVED ONE #2	LOVED ONE #3	LOVED ONE #4	LOVED ONE #5
20...						
21...						
22...						
23...						
24...						
25...						
26...						
27...						
28...						
29...						
30...						

**ARTICULATE YOUR PATH**

If your current trajectory in life continued as is, what would your life look like in ten years?

We all have ideas about what our future might look like, whether we've put them into words or not. These ideas are often shaped by assumptions about how our lives will unfold. These assumptions tend to go unexamined, yet they form the foundation of how we move forward in life. By bringing them to light, we can better understand the direction we're heading and evaluate whether it aligns with what we truly want.

This tool is an organizational context to reflect a **baseline scenario**. Organizations use baseline scenarios to project what the future may look like if current trends, resources, and capacities remain unchanged. Similar to what we are doing in this workbook, it helps to examine, question assumptions shaping their strategies and identify potential blind spots.

By examining your assumptions about the future, you can identify if the trajectory you're on aligns with your anticipated future. Align with the reality you actually want to design.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Answer the following questions to assess your anticipated future. Answer in the "Anticipate Milestones" section on p. 2 and if it is needed to estimate your scenario on key milestones that may be happening in your life or the life of your loved ones in the next 10 years.

In 10 years, I will be ... years old.

I will be living in

My main activities will be

The greatest changes in my life are

How, exactly, will I achieve

What must stay the same for this future to be true?

Figure 5: Samples of the "Anticipate Milestones" and "Articulate Your Path" sections of the Workbook

Considering Escobar's (2018) view of the individual's role within, and impact on, community cited in Chapter 2 above, improved flourishing of an individual in any way bodes well for the flourishing of a community. However, such responses only addressed one side of flourishing that this study hoped to address – that of the individual.

## **FLOURISHING FOR COMMUNITIES: INTEGRATING PERSONAL FUTURES TOOLS INTO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

The other side of flourishing this research sought to study is that of communities. It is important to note that workshops were held with participants as individual changemakers in communities rather than workshops conducted with communities as a whole or even representative samples of communities. With that said, it was not possible to conduct a PERMA Profiler activity on representative samples of the communities being workshopped, nor was it possible to implement workshop insights to gauge outcomes within the scope of this study. However, the study still sought to understand if communities could potentially experience flourishing through this work. To do so, thematic analysis was conducted on feedback from surveys, workshop retrospectives, and interviews related to the workshop experience since the workshops were community oriented. Themes were then reviewed and categorized based on relevancy to the PERMA domains of flourishing. This analysis revealed ways the workshop as it was designed could aid in increasing a community's sense of flourishing:

### **1 Creativity and fun in the workshop enhanced positive emotions.**

Participants noted they enjoyed the workshop's design. Many mentioned they found it creative and fun. Feedback suggests personal futures tools could be successfully integrated into community engagements using creativity and play - areas of positive emotion.

### **2 Workshops could enhance engagement and meaning making, giving participants a sense of accomplishment from the experience.**

Participants noted the brainstorming through the workshop was an area of positive engagement. Workshops also helped participants frame a sense of meaning or purpose for their work and communities.

Many participants noted the workshop helped them to take a step back, assess, and frame their activities within the community. As one participant said,

*“As much as our work [with the community] is engaging and immersive... the workshop was a good step back in the process. It helped create the right amount of distance to assess and frame the overall experience.”*

Workshops provided a sense of accomplishment when participants gained insights from the experience. Participants shared that they valued the workshops' tools, structure, and design to help them generate insights for their communities.

### **3 Interpersonal elements and a call to collaboration encouraged relationship building.**

The value of interpersonal elements in the workshop was often noted. One participant also noted how the workshop was eye opening in terms of how collaboration could happen in the community to achieve positive outcomes. Several participants noted other audiences that could benefit from the workshop.

Thematic analysis also revealed key areas of improvement when integrating personal futures into community engagements for flourishing:

## **1 Acknowledge, address, and reframe negative emotions that may arise from personal futures work.**

Some negative emotions were noted in workshops – particularly that of worry around personal assumptions and bias impacting workshop outcomes. It was interesting to note that this concern arose from a greater awareness of personal bias and positionality after completing the workbook. For this work to be effective in fostering flourishing, negative emotions will need to be addressed, mitigated, or reframed, and positive emotions enhanced.

## **2 Appropriate timing, pacing, and space are necessary.**

The condensed nature of the workshop was flagged as jarring and a barrier to deeper engagement. One participant also warned that people may hesitate to share personal experiences in a community setting – another potential barrier to engagement. A greater amount of time dedicated for each workshop and reassurances that sharing personal experiences are not required to participate could help increase engagement and positive impact.

## **3 Grounding in community context is essential for community outcomes.**

The study revealed the importance of contextualizing and grounding within a specific community prior to engaging in personal futures work if seeking, first and foremost, to identify community actions. Since the study was conducted with a personal lens first, it began to open up varying perspectives and questions around what constituted a community and what communities participants wanted to belong to. While these questions are valuable, they could be distracting if the aim of the community engagement is contemplation of strategies and tactics for a specific community to flourish. In this instance, anchoring strongly into the specific community first is therefore an essential frame to generate insights for a particular community or organization.

While future research could prioritize a larger participant pool with representative PERMA profiling of community members, preliminary analysis suggests communities undertaking these workshops could experience positive changes to their flourishing through this work.

Although the study's scope did not allow for a full assessment of long-term community outcomes, the thematic insights suggest that integrating personal futures tools into community engagement activities holds promise for addressing some of the barriers identified in the literature review: the need for meaningful participation, respect for individual perspectives, and the cultivation of trust and agency in communities. These findings relate to the broader context of community engagement challenges mentioned earlier in this study (Chapter 2). While community engagements run the risk of seeming tokenistic or procedural (Attree et al., 2011; Modise, 2023), the participatory design of this study's workshops demonstrate a different model – one that values lived experience, fosters reflection, builds relationships, and therefore supports flourishing through the incorporation of personal futures considerations.

The workshop's design is one that is captured in a Facilitation Guide – one of the study's outputs that are mentioned later in this chapter. This Facilitation Guide is a contribution of the study that further addresses the secondary research question of how personal futures tools might be integrated into community engagement activities. In this way, the research offers a contribution to the growing field of participatory and experiential engagement practices.

## **BRIDGING FLOURISHING: A CONNECTION BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL & COMMUNITY FLOURISHING**

The primary focus of this research was to discover if personal and community flourishing could be connected through this work and, if so, what that connection could look like. Thematic analysis of post-workshop survey responses and interviews showed connections were made and could be even further strengthened in future iterations of this work with some adjustments.



Thematic analysis revealed three key insights into successfully bridging individual and community flourishing using personal futures tools:

## **1 The use of personal futures tools is both grounding and framing for community work.**

Personal futures tools made participants more acutely aware of their own biases, positionality, and the multifaceted nature of their personalities as they relate to their community.

## **2 This work could be especially valuable for certain target audiences.**

Futures practitioners interested in community work, businesses of all sizes, and families undergoing significant change were all mentioned as individuals or groups that could particularly benefit from this work.

## **3 Intentional design and facilitation of workshops is important to build the bridge.**

Workshops were designed to use many of the same tools that were initially experienced by participants through the personal futures workbook first. This design was intentional to encourage connections in reflection between personal and community insights. Certain tools were noted by participants as more valuable than others in connecting individuals with community contexts, such as the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA). For example, during one of the community-oriented workshops, a participant noted that the myths shaping their community matched ones they explored through their personal futures work. This observation aligned with what Inayatullah (2004) explained about this deepest layer of the CLA: that it extends beyond the individual and often reflects shared stories and cultural patterns that can span generations. These deep stories often go unnoticed but help shape how people see the world and make decisions. This was the very reason the CLA was selected for both the workbook and workshop, and was proven to be a good choice based on participants' ability to perceive and better understand the larger myths mirrored in both their personal and community experiences.

Prompts were also important in encouraging reflections on personal and community connections – connections that may not have been made had the facilitator not encouraged their consideration.

Thematic analysis also revealed three key improvements to strengthen the bridge between personal and community flourishing through this work:

## **1 Additional tools can help to directly connect personal and community contexts.**

The success and resonance of tools used like the CLA showed how effective certain techniques could be above and beyond others. Continued research and testing could help uncover other impactful tools to use.

## **2 Time and space are necessary for this work to be most effective.**

As mentioned in the individual and community flourishing finding sections above, time was a recurring factor for greater insight generation. Many participants mentioned the value of revisiting the personal futures tools over time and noted the condensed nature of the prototype workshop was a barrier for deeper engagement. Considering the reflective nature of the work, more time for both individual and community exploration would be valuable. For community-oriented workshops, this can be built in either with a longer workshop or a series of workshops that build upon each other.

## **3 Alternating back and forth between the personal and community contexts deepen insights.**

Participant feedback suggested personal futures tools could be more effectively integrated into community initiatives by using a back-and-forth approach between personal and community perspectives to achieve deeper insights, recognizing that the individual and the communities they exist within are not mutually exclusive. Participants expressed a strong preference to use futures tools iteratively between personal and community applications rather than treating them as distinct exercises. They highlighted the importance of refining and revisiting insights over time, recognizing collective and personal futures alike are not static.

Key Insights	Personal Flourishing	Community Flourishing	Bridging Flourishing
<b>What Worked Well?</b>	<p>Opportunities for self-reflection enhance flourishing, giving participants a space to contextualize their thoughts, understand their own agency, and consider meaning in their lives</p>	<p>Workshop creativity and fun enhance positive emotions</p> <p>Self-reflection helps to increase engagement and generate meaningful insights</p> <p>Interpersonal elements and collaboration help build positive relationships</p>	<p>Personal futures tools help frame community work</p> <p>Certain target audiences may particularly benefit from this work</p> <p>Intentional design and facilitation are necessary in building bridges</p>
<b>How Could This Work Be Improved?</b>	<p>Encourage regular and continued use of personal futures tools</p> <p>Enhance accessibility through design</p> <p>Be considerate of readiness to engage with tools</p>	<p>Address negative emotions that may arise from the work</p> <p>Ensure appropriate pacing and space</p> <p>Ground in community context for targeted community insights</p>	<p>Explore more tools to bridge personal and community flourishing</p> <p>Build in more time for this work</p> <p>Alternate between personal and community contexts for deeper insights</p>

Table 3: Summary of Findings

## PART 2: OUTPUTS

In addition to the findings, this study produced practical outputs designed to support the use of personal futures tools for flourishing. These outputs reflect the iterative and applied nature of this study, drawing on literature, participant feedback, and researcher reflection to translate insights into tangible resources.

### A PERSONAL FUTURES WORKBOOK

The personal futures workbook, titled *Destiny by Design*, is a tangible output of this project created through an iterative research process. As part of the literature review, precedent tools were reviewed and used. Tools that seemed to elicit the most insights and reflections around the PERMA domains of flourishing were selected and adapted for inclusion in the workbook. A great deal of research and editing was undertaken to develop and design the workbook, and the workbook itself went through several proof processes prior to being shared with participants. After this study is completed and findings are further incorporated into the workbook's design, it can continue to serve as a practical resource for individuals and communities, whether used independently by individuals for personal development purposes or as part of community engagement efforts. Appendix C provides samples from the workbook, illustrating the time and care placed into its development.

### TOOLS FOR COMMUNITY-ORIENTED WORKSHOPS INCORPORATING A PERSONAL FUTURES PERSPECTIVE

Another output of this project is a community workshop template and corresponding facilitation guide that incorporates futures tools to enhance the connection between personal and community flourishing (Figure 6). This workshop, designed to complement the workbook, incorporates tools explored in the workbook and a script with prompts for participants to consider the connection between the work they conducted for their personal futures and the work they could be doing in community. While designed with the personal and community bridge in mind, it is ultimately meant to support communities with visioning and strategic planning activities. It can be used together with the workbook for optimal effect or it can be used independently and still generate insights for the community.

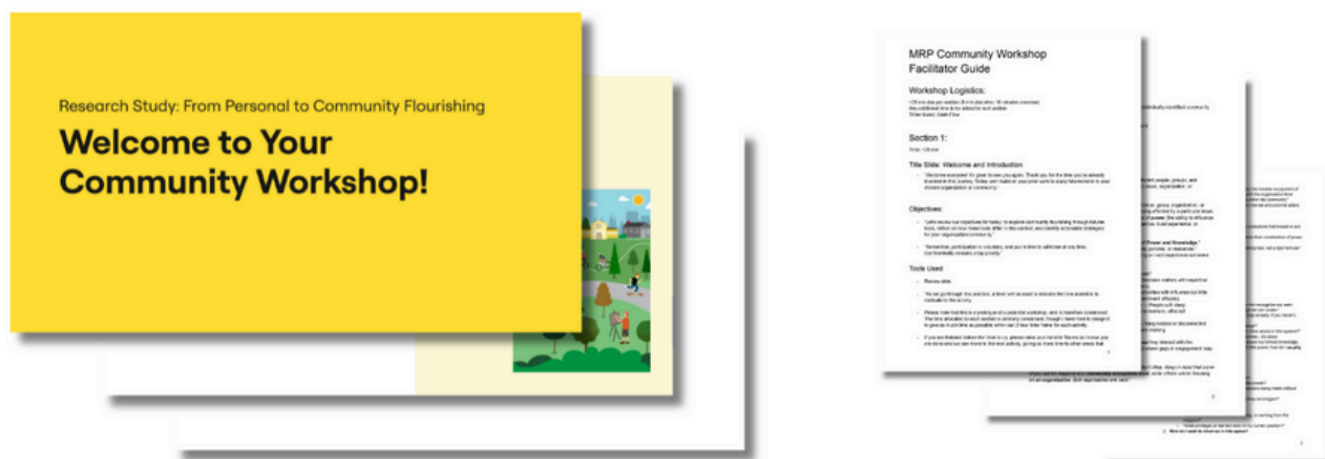


Figure 6: Samples from the Community Workshop and facilitation guide

## A BRIDGE BETWEEN PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY FLOURISHING USING FUTURES TOOLS (AND HOW TO USE IT)

This project established a researched connection between personal futures tools as a means for personal flourishing and their potential to foster community flourishing. It offered insights into how such efforts could be used by individuals alone or integrated into community engagement efforts (Table 3). Considering these findings, communities may choose to integrate personal futures tools with facilitated support using the materials developed through this study or use the tools independently to support their own engagement efforts.

By focusing on both individual and collective flourishing and the bridge between the two, this project aimed to uncover an approach to flourishing that can be applied in many different contexts to ultimately enhance the lives of people and the communities in which they belong.

## 05 CONCLUSION

This research project set out to explore the intersection between individual and community flourishing using personal futures tools. Often viewed as methods for individual goal-setting and self-improvement, personal futures tools have largely been applied in the 21st century in ways that center individual agency rather than collective impact. But what if we stepped outside of an individualistic mindset towards that of flourishing for all? It sought to answer the question of:

*“How might personal futures tools create a positive connection between individual and community flourishing, if at all?”*

This report’s **Introduction** framed the research question and provided context for understanding the significance of connecting personal and community well-being.

**Context** revealed the historical development of personal futures tools, definitions of well-being, and frameworks for community engagement, highlighting the limitations of existing approaches that emphasize individual agency over collective interdependence.

**Methodology** outlined the mixed-methods research approach used to test futures tools in both individual and community settings and evaluate their impact. This included the literature review that framed the study, surveys to gather insights on participants’ perceptions on flourishing, field work that included personal and community-oriented futures activities, and interviews for more in-depth discussions.

Finally, **Findings** were revealed, including key insights and outputs of the study. It was revealed that personal futures tools can support both personal and community flourishing while bridging both.

This journey confirmed what was initially suspected: that personal futures tools are not just about individual self-improvement – they can be catalysts for deeper connections, meaningful community participation, and greater flourishing for all.

## THE CONTRIBUTION

This research contributes to the fields of strategic foresight and community engagement by demonstrating how personal futures tools can bridge personal and collective flourishing. The study's key contributions include:

- **Exploring the link between personal and community flourishing, including insights uncovered in the process:**  
One of the most significant insights from this study is that strategic foresight, when thoughtfully applied at the individual level, can have ripple effects that extend into the community. While personal futures tools are often applied individualistically, this research offers evidence that they can foster a deeper connection to community. By engaging with personal futures tools, individuals gain clarity on their values, aspirations, and role within a broader social context. However, they can also be integrated into community engagement activities, moving beyond individualistic approaches and supporting collaborative visioning and planning.
- **Practical Tools for Integration:** Through the creation and testing of a personal futures workbook, community workshop templates, and a corresponding facilitation guide, this research offered new tools to add to the existing collection of personal futures work, such as that of Wheelwright and Draudt and West. These new tools were designed to apply and bridge futures methods between individuals and communities.

Based on the research findings, **individuals** can benefit from incorporating personal futures tools into their practices by...

- Utilizing these tools to clarify their values, set long-term goals, and cultivate a sense of purpose.
- Engaging in both personal reflection and community-based discussions to connect their individual aspirations with collective needs.
- Prioritizing tangible approaches (such as physical workbooks and guided exercises) to deepen personal reflection.

**Communities and organizations** can benefit from incorporating personal futures tools into their practice by...

- Integrating personal futures tools into community engagement processes to foster deeper connections between individual aspirations and collective goals.
- Designing engagements that alternate between individual reflection and collaborative visioning to connect personal interests with collective action.
- Using personal futures tools as a means of participatory engagement, ensuring that community members have the opportunity to co-create their desired futures.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

While this study provides a foundation for how personal futures tools can bridge individual and community flourishing, further research can help deepen understanding and expand applicability. Further research could include:

- **Longitudinal Studies and Comparative Analysis of Tools:** Future studies could track participants over an extended period of time to assess the sustained impact of personal futures tools on both personal and community flourishing. In the meantime, testing different foresight tools could help determine which approaches are most effective for fostering flourishing.
- **Broader Applications:** Research could explore how these tools function in diverse community settings, including marginalized or underrepresented groups, to ensure accessibility and inclusivity. Feedback from participants often noted possible extended applications, including for career development and relationship building for couples and families. Given the feedback on engagement with physical materials, research could also examine how digital or hybrid versions of personal futures tools impact user experience and outcomes.

Now that there is a clearer connection between personal and community flourishing using personal futures tools, it is time to spread the word. Moving forward, further developments, iterations, and productions of the personal futures workbook are planned to bring this work to the wider public, including consumers and organizations. Production would ideally occur in various formats, such as physical workbooks for individuals, couples, and families, and more affordable, bite-sized options for wider distribution. There is also the potential to create a more detailed and structured framework to link personal and community flourishing through these tools.

~~THE END~~

## THE BEGINNING

At its core, research findings suggest flourishing is not an individual pursuit - it is a shared experience. Futures tools, when designed and implemented with both individual and community flourishing in mind, have the potential to transform not only personal trajectories but also the collective well-being of communities.

By embracing foresight as a means of fostering both personal and community growth, individuals and organizations can move beyond isolated goal setting toward a future that is co-created, intentional, and deeply connected.

The question posed at the start of this research paper remains relevant: *What if the key to a flourishing community starts with your individual growth?*

The findings suggest that it does and that, by integrating personal futures tools into community activities, we can cultivate futures that are not only personally fulfilling but also collectively transformative.

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# APPENDIX A: RESEARCH STUDY SURVEYS

Pre- and post-workbook and workshop surveys were administered to participants – three surveys in total. In addition to qualitative, open-ended questions to support the development of the workbook and workshops, the first and last surveys included questions on individual flourishing from the PERMA Profiler developed by Butler and Kern (2016). Data from these surveys helped assess the impact of the fieldwork on participants' sense of flourishing.

## SURVEY 1: PRE-WORKBOOK SURVEY

**Distributed:** December 2024 – to be completed prior to the workbook being shared with participants

### **General Information Questions:**

- Name and Email
- Gender
- Age

**Flourishing Questions:**

Questions from Butler & Kern's PERMA Profiler (2016)

- A1 = How much of the time do you feel you are making progress towards accomplishing your goals?
- E1 = How often do you become absorbed in what you're doing?
- P1 = In general, how often do you feel joyful?
- A2 = How often do you achieve the important goals you have set for yourself?
- M1 = In general, to what extent do you lead a purposeful and meaningful life?
- R1 = To what extent do you receive help and support from others when you need it?
- M2 = In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do in your life is valuable and worthwhile?
- E2 = In general, to what extent do you feel excited and interested in things?
- P2 = In general, how often do you feel positive?
- A3 = How often are you able to handle your responsibilities?
- E3 = How often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?
- R2 = To what extent do you feel loved?
- M3 = To what extent do you generally feel you have a sense of direction in your life?
- R3 = How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?
- P3 = In general, to what extent do you feel contented?

**Personal Futures Tools Questions:**

- How familiar are you with personal futures tools?
- (Select one: Very familiar, Somewhat Familiar; Not familiar at all)
- Have you ever used any personal development tools and/or engaged in any personal development practices before? If yes, please specify.
- Are there specific aspects of personal futures tools you are particularly interested in?
- Anything you would like the researcher to be aware of prior to the workshop?



## SURVEY 2:

# POST-WORKBOOK SURVEY

**Distributed:** February 2025 – to be completed after participants finished using the workbook

### General Information Question:

- Name

### Workbook Questions:

- How would you rate your overall experience with the workbook? (Select One: Excellent; Good; Fair/Average; Poor) Please explain why you provided the rating above.
- Which part of the workbook did you find the most valuable and why?
- Which part of the workbook did you find the least valuable and why?
- What new insights did you gain about your personal development from engaging with the personal futures workbook, if any?
- Anything else you would like the researcher to be aware of following your completion of the workbook?

### Community Engagement Questions:

Community engagement is defined as a “process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people, whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest or affiliation to identify and address issues affecting their well-being” (Source: PennState).

- How familiar are you with the use of foresight tools / methodologies within organizational and/or community contexts?
- (Select One: Very familiar; Somewhat familiar; Not familiar at all)
- If “Very familiar” or “Somewhat familiar,” please note which tools / approaches you have used.
- How familiar are you with community engagement practices?
- (Select One: Very familiar; Somewhat familiar; Not familiar at all)
- Have you ever participated in community engagement initiatives before? If yes, please describe your role(s) / experience(s) and any frameworks that may have been used.

**Pre-Workshop Questions**

- Which community group would you like to explore in the upcoming workshop?
- Note: The community group or organization must be one that you are actively engaged with, researching, or supporting through change. In order to participate fully in the upcoming workshop, you must be familiar with the selected group / organization and relevant issues and trends that may impact it (either positively or negatively).
- What do you hope to gain from this workshop?
- Anything you would like the researcher to be aware of prior to the workshop?

## **SURVEY 3:**

### **POST-WORKSHOP SURVEY**

Distributed: March 2025 – to be completed after participants attended the community-oriented workshop

**General Information Question:**

- Name

**Flourishing Questions:**

Questions from Butler & Kern's PERMA Profiler (2016)

- A1 = How much of the time do you feel you are making progress towards accomplishing your goals?
- E1 = How often do you become absorbed in what you're doing?
- P1 = In general, how often do you feel joyful?
- A2 = How often do you achieve the important goals you have set for yourself?
- M1 = In general, to what extent do you lead a purposeful and meaningful life?
- R1 = To what extent do you receive help and support from others when you need it?
- M2 = In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do in your life is valuable and worthwhile?
- E2 = In general, to what extent do you feel excited and interested in things?
- P2 = In general, how often do you feel positive?
- A3 = How often are you able to handle your responsibilities?
- E3 = How often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?
- R2 = To what extent do you feel loved?

- M3 = To what extent do you generally feel you have a sense of direction in your life?
- R3 = How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?
- P3 = In general, to what extent do you feel contented?

### Anticipated Flourishing Questions:

- After completing the **personal futures workbook**, do you feel better equipped or informed to make positive changes in the following areas? For each area below, participants are prompted to select one from the following list of options: I feel significantly worse off when thinking about this area of my life; I feel less equipped/more confused about what to do in this area of my life; No change at all; I feel moderately equipped/informed on how to approach this area of my life; I feel well equipped/better informed about how to approach this area of my life
  - Positive Emotions (e.g. joy, contentment, life satisfaction)
  - Engagement/Interest in Life
  - Positive Relationships
  - Life Meaning, Purpose
  - Accomplishment
- After completing the **community workshop**, do you feel better equipped or informed to make positive changes in the following areas? For each area below, participants are prompted to select one from the following list of options: I feel significantly worse off when thinking about this area of my life; I feel less equipped/more confused about what to do in this area of my life; No change at all; I feel moderately equipped/informed on how to approach this area of my life; I feel well equipped/better informed about how to approach this area of my life
  - Positive Emotions (e.g. joy, contentment, life satisfaction)
  - Engagement/Interest in Life
  - Positive Relationships
  - Life Meaning, Purpose
  - Accomplishment
- How effective did you find the two together (the personal futures workbook and the community workshop) in supporting/enhancing your experience and understanding of flourishing (either at a personal level, a community level, or both)? Please explain.

**Workshop Questions:**

- How would you rate your overall experience in the workshop?
- (Select One: Excellent; Good; Average; Poor)
- Which part of the workshop did you find the most valuable?
- Which part of the workshop did you find the least valuable?
- Has your understanding of foresight tools/methodologies within community contexts changed after attending this workshop and/or have you garnered any insights around foresight tools/methodologies within community contexts through this workshop?
- Has your understanding of community engagement practices changed after attending this workshop and/or have you garnered any insights around community engagement practices through this workshop?
- Has your understanding of community flourishing changed after attending this workshop and/or have you garnered any insights around community flourishing through this workshop?
- After completing both the personal futures workbook and the community-oriented workshop, do you believe there is any value in integrating personal futures tools with community engagement practices? Please explain.
- Anything else you would like the researcher to be aware of following the workshop?

## **APPENDIX B: PERSONAL FUTURES WORKBOOK ACTIVITIES**

The workbook produced as part of this study included several personal futures tools that were selected and adapted after a significant amount of research. Tools were selected and ordered keeping in mind ease of use, accessibility, insight generation, and alignment with the PERMA model of flourishing (Seligman, 2012). Table 4 details each activity in the workbook in the order in which they appeared, outlines the foresight tool the activity was based upon, and notes any existing personal futures or personal development sources that inspired its inclusion or adaptation.

Table 4: Activities from the Personal Futures Workbook

Workbook Activity	Underlying Foresight Tool	Source(s) of Inspiration
Anticipate Milestones: Identify upcoming ages and milestones for yourself and your loved ones for the next several years	Stakeholder Mapping: Identifying and analyzing individuals and groups who have an interest in a particular issue or decision (UN Global Pulse, 2023)	Hyatt & Harkavy, 2016 Wheelwright, 2012
Commemorate Yourself: Imagine your life from a future perspective	Visioning: Outlining a vision for the future (Krishnan et al., 2022)	Draudt & West, 2016 Hyatt & Harkavy, 2016
Identify Your Values: Understand your values and how they manifest in your life	Values Identification: Recognizing and articulating the core beliefs, priorities and ethical principles that guide an organization (Krishnan et al., 2022)	Brown, 2022 Draudt & West, 2016
Scan the Horizon: Identify trends occurring at a global, national and/or local scale and understand how they may personally impact you	Driver Mapping: Identifying significant forces of change in a system (Krishnan et al., 2022)	Wheelwright, 2012
Articulate Your Path: Uncover assumptions about your current direction in life	Baseline Scenario / Baseline Future: Identifying a scenario in which actual policies only marginally change; a probable or expected future (Canada, 2024)	Draudt & West, 2016
Find Another Future: Uncover other possible futures in your life	Causal Layered Analysis: Exposing hidden assumptions to create a narrative to facilitate change (Krishnan et al., 2022)	

Workbook Activity	Underlying Foresight Tool	Inspiration Source
Define Your Destiny: Define your desired destiny	Visioning: Outlining a vision for the future (Krishnan et al., 2022)	
Anticipate the Waves: Uncover unanticipated consequences that may arise in pursuit of your desired destiny	Futures Wheel: Brainstorming that helps participants visualize the impact and/or consequences of specific events (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2023)	Draudt & West, 2016
Design Your Destiny: Identify the things we need to do to work towards our desired destiny and a create timeline for these actions	Three Horizons: Exploring emerging changes and transition processes to connect the present to the future (Krishnan et al., 2022)  Backcasting: Imagining a future where goals and strategic objectives have been met and tracing the steps to get there (Krishnan et al., 2022)  Strategic Planning: Defining an organization's direction, priorities and actions towards long-term success (Balanced Scorecard Institute, 2025)	
Find Another Future: Uncover other possible futures in your life	Causal Layered Analysis: Exposing hidden assumptions to create a narrative to facilitate change (Krishnan et al., 2022)	

## APPENDIX C: SAMPLES FROM THE PERSONAL FUTURES WORKBOOK

The following figures show larger samples from the workbook, titled *Destiny by Design*, developed for this research study, illustrating the time and care placed into the work. Participants had the option of receiving a professionally printed and bound copy of the book to use, or a digital PDF version.

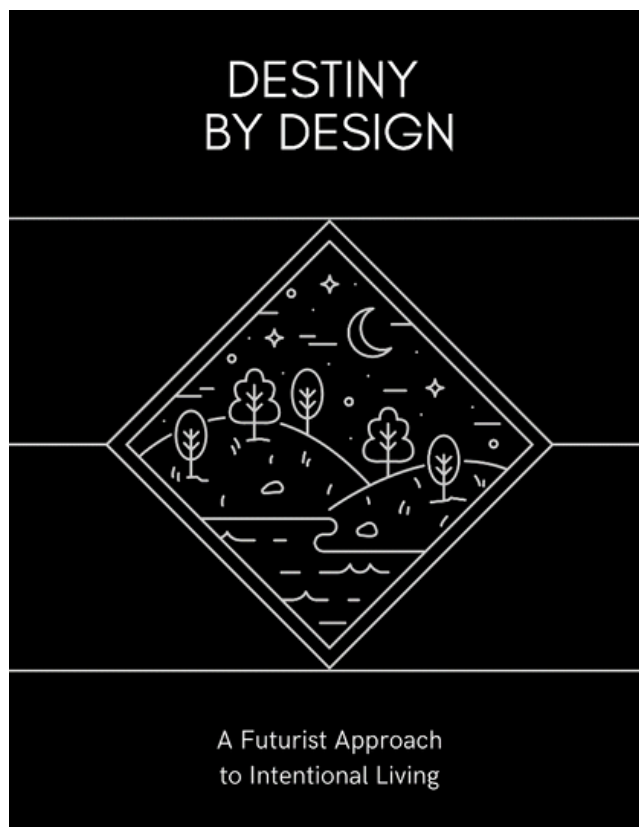


Figure 7: Front Cover of Workbook





This workbook is the result of extensive research, thoughtful design, and a commitment to helping individuals create flourishing futures. Drawing on methods from the fields of strategic foresight and personal development, this workbook blends academic rigor with practical application. Tools have been adapted from methodologies often used by organizations and leaders to navigate uncertainty and craft strategies for long-term success. Here, they are tailored for your unique journey.

The purpose of this workbook is to guide you through a process of self-reflection and intentional planning. By engaging with these exercises, you'll uncover your values, challenge the assumptions shaping your current path, and explore possibilities that might otherwise remain hidden. Whether you're seeking clarity for a major life decision or simply want to ensure your everyday actions align with your aspirations, this workbook provides the structure and tools to support you.

The benefit? A clearer sense of direction and the confidence that comes from knowing your choices are aligned with the self you truly want to become. By the end of this journey, you'll have a roadmap designed by you, for you—a compass to guide your next steps and a vision to inspire you along the way.

Before we begin, remember: there are no right or wrong answers. The purpose of this workbook is to stretch your thinking and challenge your assumptions as you go.

Let's begin the process to help you find and reach your destiny by design.

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03	Anticipate Milestones	
	Identify your age and the ages of your loved ones at future milestones	
05	Commemorate Yourself	
	Think about what you hope to have accomplished and what you want to be most known for in the future	
06	Identify Your Values	
	Get crystal clear about your values and consider the role they play in your life	
10	Scan the Horizon	
	Identify trends impacting your future	
12	Articulate Your Path	
	Recognize the future you're currently working towards	
16	Find Another Future	
	Use elements of your past and present to develop a different vision of the future	
21	Define Your Destiny	
	Crystallize your desired future	
22	Anticipate the Waves	
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24	Design Your Destiny	
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28	What's Next?	
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29	References	
	Learn more about the resources informing this workbook	

Figure 8: Workbook Introduction and Table of Contents

### ANTICIPATE MILESTONES

The people in your life play a big role in shaping your future. In business and foresight, these key individuals or groups are often called **stakeholders**. In this workbook, we use the term **loved ones** instead, recognizing people like family, friends, or close partners often have the greatest influence and interest in your life. These are the people you share deep connections with, whose well-being is closely tied to yours, and whose decisions will impact your life, just as yours will impact theirs.

Who will be part of your life ten years from now? What important milestones are coming up for you and for them? How might they shape your future along the way?

*INSTRUCTIONS: Fill in the table below with the year on the left-hand column and the names of your loved ones along the top row. Fill in your age and the ages of important people in your life in the corresponding rows for each future year. Make a note if the year is a milestone one for any individual identified and what the milestone is.*

YEAR	AGES & MILESTONES					
	YOU	LOVED ONE #1	LOVED ONE #2	LOVED ONE #3	LOVED ONE #4	LOVED ONE #5
20__						
20__						
20__						
20__						
20__						
20__						

YEARS (CONT'D)	AGES & MILESTONES					
	YOU	LOVED ONE #1	LOVED ONE #2	LOVED ONE #3	LOVED ONE #4	LOVED ONE #5
20__						
20__						
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03

Inspired by Verne Wheelwright's *It's YOUR Future* and Alida Drauth and Julia Rose West's *What the Foresight*

Figure 9: "Anticipate Milestones" Activity in the Workbook

# ARTICULATE YOUR PATH

If your current trajectory in life continued as is, what would your life look like in ten years?

We all have ideas about what our future might hold, whether we've put them into words or not. These ideas are often shaped by assumptions about how our lives will unfold. These assumptions tend to go unnoticed, yet they form the foundation of how we move forward in life. By bringing them to light, we can better understand the direction we're heading and evaluate whether it aligns with what we truly want.

This tool in an organizational context is called a **baseline scenario**. Organizations use baseline scenarios to project what the future may look like if current trends, decisions, and dynamics remain unchanged. Similar to what we are doing in this workbook, it helps to uncover unspoken assumptions shaping their strategies and identify potential blind spots.

By uncovering your assumptions about the future, you can clarify if the trajectory you're on - your unquestioned, unspoken future - aligns with the destiny you actually want to design.

*INSTRUCTIONS: Answer the following questions to uncover your unquestioned future. Refer to the "Anticipate Milestones" exercise on p. 3 and 4 if needed to refresh your memory on key milestones that may be happening in your life or the life of your loved ones in the next 10 years.*

In 10 years, I will be \_\_\_ years old.

I will be living in:

12

Adapted from Aida Draudi and Julia Rose West's  
What the Foresight

My main activities will be:

The greatest changes in my life are:

Now, unpack this future.

What must **stay the same** for this future to be true?

13

What must **change** for it to be true?

Complete the following sentences about this future:

I am **worried** that the following might happen in the future:

I **want** the following to happen in the future:

14

I **expect** the following to happen in the future:

How does your expected future **align with your core values** identified on p.8? Are there any adjustments you need to make, either to your values or your expected future, when you consider the two together?

15

Figure 10: "Articulate Your Path" Activity in the Workbook

66

### DESIGN YOUR DESTINY

The **Three Horizons framework** is a simple, intuitive way to unpack challenges in the present, more clearly define aspirations for the future, and identify the things we need to address both at the same time (*International Futures Forum*).

Review the diagram below, going from letters (a) to (e), to understand the various components of the Three Horizons framework.

You will be answering each question in this order on the following page.

What specific tools and/or actions do you need in order to bring (c) into your desired future?

Note any insurmountable barriers to be overcome here. You must understand and address these.

What is your desired future?

What *don't* you like about your present? What are your biggest issues right now?

What in your present connects to (b) your desired future?

What in your present do you want to carry unchanged into your future?

TODAY TIME FUTURE

Let's start climbing...

What *don't* you like about your present? What are your biggest issues right now?

What is your desired future? Insights from p. 21 may be helpful to consider here.

What in your present connects you to (b) your desired future?

What specific tools / actions do you need in order to bring (c) into your desired future? Also note any insurmountable barriers to be overcome here. You must understand and address these.

What in your present do you want to bring into your future unchanged?

25

Let's strategize...

While it's important to remember the final peak you want to climb, it's equally important to remember the other mountains you scaled. To move forward, you will need to focus on those actions and tools you identified in (d) - that middle mountain - to travel from one horizon to the next. These are your strategies - the actionable steps in your destiny by design.

Now that you know what tools and strategies you need to get to your desired future, let's map them out more tangibly.

In foresight, **backcasting** is a tool to work backwards from a desirable future to identify the actions needed to achieve it. In business, **strategic planning** is a process to develop a plan towards a desired future. While one works from the future back, the other works from the present to the future.

Like all the tools in this book, there isn't necessarily one tool better than another. The whole point of this workbook is to find the tools that work best for you.

Whether you like to work from the future or from the present, use the following page to consider the tools and strategies you identified earlier and map them along a clear path to your destiny.

start here

or start here

What do you need to do in the next **three to six months**?

YEAR: 20\_\_  
YOUR AGE: \_\_

What do you need to do within the **next year**?

YEAR: 20\_\_  
YOUR AGE: \_\_

What do you need to do **two years** from now?

YEAR: 20\_\_  
YOUR AGE: \_\_

What do you need to do **three years** from now?

YEAR: 20\_\_  
YOUR AGE: \_\_

What do you need to do **four years** from now?

YEAR: 20\_\_  
YOUR AGE: \_\_

What do you need to do **five years** from now?

YEAR: 20\_\_  
YOUR AGE: \_\_

What do you need to do **six to ten years** from now?

YEARS: 20\_\_ TO 20\_\_  
YOUR AGES: \_\_ TO \_\_

Write your desired future here:

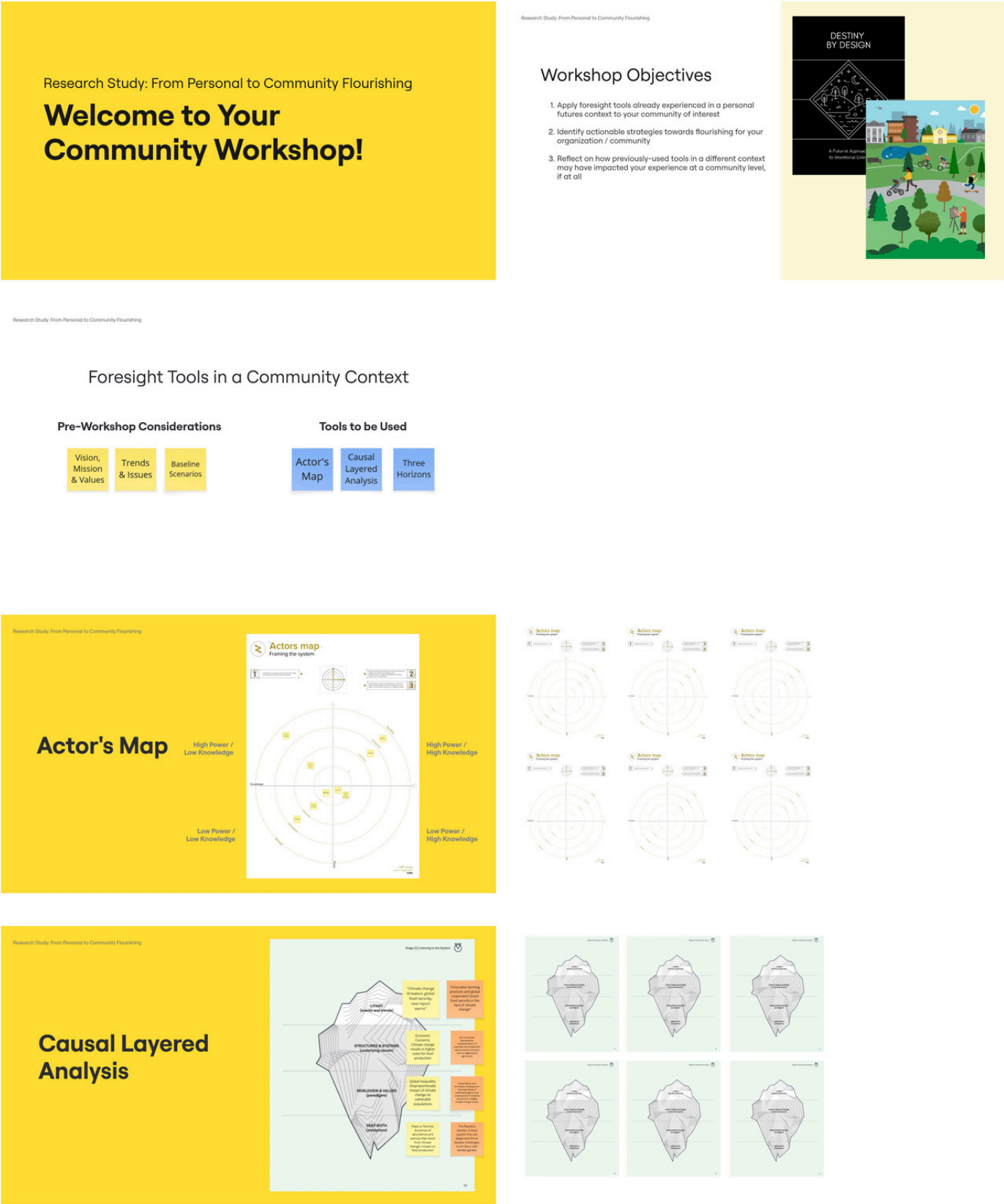
27

Figure 11: "Design Your Destiny" Activity in the Workbook

## **APPENDIX D: COMMUNITY WORKSHOP TEMPLATE**

The following images share a closer view of the community workshop template developed in Miro. During the workshop, each tool was introduced with an example of how to use it before participants moved to a copy of the tool to use on their own community.

Figure 12: Images of the Community Workshop Template in Miro



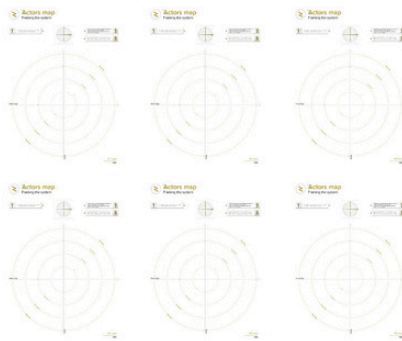
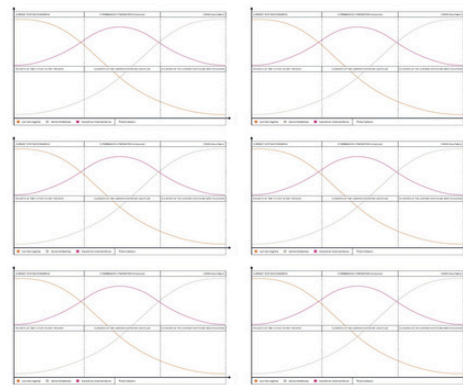
## Stating the Ideal Future

The ideal future for this community / organization  
in 5 years (2030) is...

The ideal future for this community / organization  
in 10 years (2035) is...



## Exploring Three Horizons



## Final Discussion

