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Designing a Roadmap for Building Effective Positive Interventions

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Keywords
positive psychology, appreciative inquiry, resilience, positive interventions, well-being, social work, burnout, job crafting, PERMA

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Designing a Roadmap for Building Effective Positive Interventions

Elizabeth Jennings, BJ Jones, Faisal Khan, Shivane Sen

University of Pennsylvania

A Positive Psychology Service Learning Project Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for MAPP 702: Applied Positive Interventions

Master of Applied Positive Psychology

May 1, 2017
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Service Learning Project
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# Table of Contents

**Introduction** .......................................................................................................................... 5  
**Situation Analysis** .................................................................................................................... 5  
  - Sector Overview ...................................................................................................................... 5  
  - LCC Background ..................................................................................................................... 6  
  - Organization Outlook .............................................................................................................. 8  
**Literature Review** ...................................................................................................................... 9  
  - Summary ................................................................................................................................. 9  
  - Positive Interventions ............................................................................................................ 9  
  - Character Strengths ............................................................................................................... 10  
  - Resilience ............................................................................................................................ 10  
  - Prosocial Motivation and Impact ........................................................................................ 11  
  - Job Crafting .......................................................................................................................... 12  
  - Work and Practical Wisdom ............................................................................................... 13  
  - Appreciative Inquiry .......................................................................................................... 13  
  - Design Thinking .................................................................................................................. 14  
  - Employee Engagement / Buy-in ......................................................................................... 15  
**Application Plan** ..................................................................................................................... 16  
  - Process Overview ................................................................................................................. 16
Introduction

The Green Capes partnered with Liberty Community Connections (LCC) to develop an application of positive psychology for their organization as part of the MAPP 702 service-learning program. The Green Capes worked with LCC to learn about their organization and then conducted a review of applicable positive psychology research to inform what might best fit LCC’s needs. This resulted in the creation of an Application Development Roadmap to help guide LCC in the creation and implementation of positive interventions that best meet LCC’s present and future needs. To both test and demonstrate how the roadmap works, the Green Capes conducted a pilot based on resilience. This paper provides an overview of each of the major components of this effort, including the situation analysis, literature review, and the proposed application plan.

Situation Analysis

Sector Overview

LCC is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit that provides a range of Medicaid-funded Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) to seniors and individuals with disabilities in 22 counties in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. LCC identifies as a Service Coordination agency. According to Pennsylvania’s Department of Human Services Guidelines, “Service Coordination identifies, coordinates, and assists participants to gain access to needed medical, social, housing, educational, and other services and supports” (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2016, p. 5).

LCC’s clients, who are referred to as “consumers,” are not a homogenous group and their lives are often complicated by complex disabilities. Many do not have family or friends for support. LCC Support Coordinators play a critical role in the lives of the individuals they help; they are a lifeline to services, to support, and, for many, a meaningful relationship (L. Thul & D.
LCC is on the precipice of a sector-wide transformation in Pennsylvania. In July of 2018, HCBS Waiver services and other long-term services and supports provided by the state of Pennsylvania will come under three Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) (L. Thul & D. Torrance, personal communication, January 24, 2017). LCC anticipates that, as a subcontractor to one of these organizations, they will have an influx of referrals, which will require an increase in staff. New staff are trained through the LCC training institute, which will need to be operating at peak performance to ensure incoming and veteran staff have the robust skills necessary to complete their required duties, meet the unique (and often) complex needs of the individuals they serve, remain engaged, and thwart burn-out (L. Thul & D. Torrance, personal communication, January 24, 2017).

**LCC Background**

LCC started in 1980 as Liberty Resources, Inc. (LRI), which provided Philadelphia's first Center for Independent Living. Through an expansion of services, LRI repositioned itself, establishing an independent non-profit known as LCC (Liberty Community Connections, n.d.). This transition included a reorganization, which resulted in the layoffs of 143 staff. However, LCC operations have since stabilized. The organization is now on solid financial ground and continues to hire and expand rapidly (L. Thul & D. Torrance, personal communication, January 24, 2017).

LCC runs its operations through two offices, one in Philadelphia and one in Allentown. The organization serves over 3,200 consumers annually (L. Thul & D. Torrance, personal communication, January 24, 2017). LCC currently has 13 managers who oversee a staff of 70 Support Coordinators (SCs) who work in teams of up to six. The SCs are the staff on the front
lines who provide the bulk of services, typically managing caseloads of 50-60 consumers each. In addition to their official service coordination responsibilities, the SCs also help with housing, utility assistance, and socialization activities (L. Thul & D. Torrance, personal communication, January 24, 2017). An SC’s typical day involves one or two homes visits, updating service plans, checking and responding to voicemails, updating paperwork, faxing/calling providers, and monitoring services to ensure consumers’ needs are being met (D. Torrance, personal communication, January 29, 2017).

Overall, LCC wants to provide excellent support services, which requires that they recruit and retain a talented, resilient, and engaged workforce (L. Thul & D. Torrance, personal communication, January 24, 2017). Employee wellbeing is a key component, as the staff engage with people in difficult situations on a regular basis. For many of LCC’s consumers, the SCs are their sole provider of support, which places a large burden on them (L. Thul & D. Torrance, personal communication, January 24, 2017). In addition, LCC wants to invest in its staff to improve retention. LCC estimates a cost of approximately $40,000 each time an employee leaves. Thus, self-care programs for staff are vital (L. Thul & D. Torrance, personal communication, January 24, 2017).

With these goals in mind, LCC has invested in the development of a robust training institute. The institute has the following four areas of focus: recruitment, social work education, training, and engagement and development. LCC views its training institute as the key differentiator that sets it apart from similar organizations. The recruitment arm has streamlined the hiring process and is developing partnerships with universities to establish a social work field placement program. The social work education arm identifies and prepares potential employees through internships that offer valuable experience and can lead to permanent positions within the
organization. LCC’s training arm provides a robust two-month curriculum that new staff follow in cohorts, learning foundational skills and how to apply them in order to be better prepared for SC casework. Finally, the engagement and development arm creates trainings to help SCs build personal and professional skills to increase morale, engagement, and retention (L. Thul & D. Torrance, personal communication, January 24, 2017).

LCC’s efforts are already yielding objective results. The most recent staff survey (Liberty Community Connections, 2016) shows significant improvements since 2013 regarding supervision (“I value my relationship with my supervisor” increased from 86% to 100%), recognition and praise (“My supervisor gives recognition and praise” increased from 89% to 100%), and training and communication (“I have enough resources and support to do my job” increased from 75% to 94%).

**Organization Outlook**

LCC is looking to streamline coordination between its training institute’s four arms so that the process of hiring, training, and engaging new staff becomes stronger and more seamless. LCC believes that this will take the training institute to the next level, which will be very useful when they are more rapidly expanding and hiring new staff in preparation of the 2018 shift to managed care and pending influx of clients. LCC ultimately envisions a training institute that recruits and produces employees who are well trained and engaged in what they do -- ready to embrace a challenge, and committed to high quality work (L. Thul & D. Torrance, personal communication, January 24, 2017). They also want to train a high volume of people, perhaps some remotely, without sacrificing quality. They are eager to further leverage positive psychology as part of this effort to foster the flourishing of LCC’s staff while they, in turn, cultivate wellbeing for their consumers. Eventually, LCC would like their training institute to
become a national model (L. Thul & D. Torrance, personal communication, January 24, 2017).

**Literature Review**

**Summary**

The Green Capes conducted a literature review to identify research that can best inform how to develop applications that will help LCC meet its goals, while still being sensitive to the staff’s already full schedules. Positive psychology provides a wealth of information that can be used throughout their hiring, training, and engagement activities. The Green Capes focused on the following nine areas:

|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|

Highlights of this research are summarized in the following sections.

**Positive Interventions**

Positive interventions are “treatment methods or intentional activities aimed at cultivating positive feelings, behaviors, and cognitions” (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009, p. 467). According to Pawelski’s (2016) “Eudaimonic Profile,” positive interventions can be either directly or indirectly positive. If they are directly positive, they either increase what is preferred (promotion) or maintain what is preferred (preservation). If they are indirectly positive, they either decrease the dispreferred (mitigation) or avoid the dispreferred (prevention). Pawelski (n.d.) has also broken positive interventions down into their constituent elements: the desired outcome (the desired purpose or life effect), the target system (the psychological, physiological, or social system in which change occurs), the target change (the intended shift in the target system), the
active ingredient (the change agent), and the activity itself (the intentional action recommended). This framework, which we’ve incorporated into the Application Development Roadmap, can help LLC determine whether an intervention needs to be directly or indirectly positive, and then mix and match components of the above-described elements of positive interventions to create relevant and specific high-impact interventions.

**Character Strengths**

Character strengths are “capacities humans have for thinking, feeling, and behaving. Specifically, they are the psychological ingredients for displaying virtues or human goodness” (VIA Institute, 2017). A review of strengths interventions studies found that a range of interventions, individual and group, of varying intensity, time, and frequency have been used with some improvement in well-being (Quinlan, Swain, & Vella-Brodrick, 2012). At work, the use of one’s strengths lends to greater vocational satisfaction, greater well-being, and a more meaningful experience in work and in life (Littman-Ovadia & Steger, 2010).

Research suggests that the use of character strengths may improve several areas of well-being at work because the individual is able to leverage who they are at their core, which increases engagement (Crabb, 2011). A recent review of character strength interventions highlights an important consideration for LCC - to ensure successful use of character strength interventions, the organization must define a compelling reason to participate, create engaging activities, and provide support toward sustained use (Quinlan, et al., 2012).

**Resilience**

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity and to grow and thrive in the face of challenges (Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011). It is comprised of these seven key abilities: emotion regulation, impulse control, empathy, optimism, causal analysis, self-efficacy, and
reaching out (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). These abilities are important for social workers, who are often stressed due to high workloads and regular interactions with high-need, distressed clients (Collins, 2008). Even though resilience has personality and genetic pre-determinants (Klohn, 1996), social workers can build resilience through learning how to be more self-aware, self-regulated, optimistic, and mentally agile; and by understanding and using their character strengths, and building strong relationships and support networks (Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011).

For social workers specifically, the most common response to their occupational stress is to internalize their difficulties and then disengage and distance themselves from their clients. This is a signature feature of burnout (Collins, 2008). To overcome this, social support networks within the workplace are vital. Collins (2008) asserts that they allow for both emotion-focused coping (more common to women) and problem-focused coping (more common to men). Social workers are able to come together to do everything from brainstorming solutions to practical work problems to vocalizing and discussing their emotions, which allows them to integrate and resolve stressful experiences. However, it is important to note that overuse of ventilation and sympathy seeking for long periods can impede adjustment to an unchanging reality (Collins, 2008). Thus, it is important for organizations like LCC to create formal support mechanisms that promote building positive affect as a coping mechanism.

**Prosocial Motivation and Impact**

Research on prosocial motivation and impact informs how LCC can leverage its connections with the community it serves to facilitate engagement at work while being mindful of some of the pitfalls. Grant (2008) asserts that beneficiary contact plays an important role in motivating employees whose jobs have a prosocial purpose. He conducted a study showing that,
when exposed to a person who explained how their work made a difference in his life, employees in a prosocial organization increased their productivity. This demonstrates that those in public service are often less concerned with financial rewards and more with making a difference in society as compared to private sector employees (Grant, 2008). Therefore, it is important that people working in an organization in which they are helping others see and understand the impact that they are having.

Grant (2016) cautions, however, against taking a simplistic view on the benefits of prosocial motivation and impact. For example, he asserts that prosocial motivation is stronger when coupled with intrinsic motivation. Otherwise, it risks having a negative effect because employees can feel pressured to help or not feel an adequate sense of support from one’s organization.

**Job Crafting**

Job crafting can serve as a means to help people redefine their jobs to align more closely with their values, strengths, and passions, which can improve their work experiences and thus increase their engagement and productivity (Wrzesniewski, Berg, & Dutton, 2010). Finding more meaning in work is contingent on how we relate to what we do, rather than the work itself (Wrzesniewski, 2003). Though individuals have the potential to change their own perspectives, organizations can also be influential depending on the extent to which they embrace job crafting. This may be of benefit to LCC staff, as job crafting has been shown to increase employee engagement and job satisfaction in a range of organizations, including non-profits (Wrzeniewski et al., 2010).

It should be noted, however, that the overall organizational context for job crafting is important. Tims, Bakker, and Derks (2015) note that jobs are rarely done in isolation, and thus an
individual’s modification of his or her role can affect a colleague. They specifically looked at the impact of reducing hindering job demands through job crafting in this context. They found that individuals who decreased their job demands were more likely to have partners that experienced higher workloads, exhaustion, and disengagement (Tims et al., 2015). They advocate for taking a team approach to job crafting and to have individuals share their job-crafting experiences in order to mitigate potential conflict.

**Work and Practical Wisdom**

Schwartz (2015) asserts that discretion, engagement, and meaning are vital to workers in order to feel that what they do is more than just a job. Discretion is important because, as Schwartz and Sharpe (2010) argue, it fosters both the will and the skill to do right. They advocate for supporting “practical wisdom” in the workplace -- being able to figure out the right thing to do at the right time, taking into consideration the context and people. Research in this area speaks to the need for managers, including those at LCC, to foster environments where employees feel they have the ability to use their best judgment rather than having to rely solely on prescriptive guidelines and instructions.

Rath and Harter (2010) are also proponents of managers and leaders stepping up to create environments that foster well-being. Not doing so, they argue, can come at great cost -- hindering an organization’s ability to grow and diminishing respect that employees feel for their managers. Their research found that employees who feel that their boss cares about them as a person are more likely to be top performers, do better work, and are less likely to leave their job (Rath & Harter, 2010).

**Appreciative Inquiry**

Cooperrider (2012) asserts that human organizations bring out their best when people
collectively experience the whole of the system. The approach he suggests for such collaboration between the whole system is by way of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 2012). This process is grounded in what is best about the organization and then builds out from its positive core. One of the fundamental components is utilizing appreciative questions with a range of stakeholders to uncover what works well and to foster innovation (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008). There are several factors which contribute to the success of such an effort: focusing 80 percent of effort on what is right as opposed to deficit-based problem solving; positively reframing the mission for the inquiry; including a comprehensive and diverse group of internal and external stakeholders; and creating a system where design is inspired from everywhere (Cooperrider, 2012). The combined effect of the above results in a concentration effect of strengths. When designing a new process for LCC, the above considerations are important to ensure that the strengths of the whole organization are represented.

One of the ways in which new processes can be designed and rolled out in the organization is to use AI’s 4-D cycle (Cooperrider et al., 2008). The four D’s represent Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny, which we will discuss further in the Application Plan section of this paper. Krattenmaker (2001) identifies the following five principles for an effective AI process: Make the focus of the inquiry positive; elicit positive stories; locate themes that appear in the stories; create shared images for the future; and find innovative ways to create the future. Engaging key players in the organization to help design the process and the interventions that the process will deliver will help gain buy-in with stakeholders at LCC.

**Design Thinking**

Brown and Katz (2011), proponents of design thinking, mention the following three areas that should be considered when innovating: inspiration, the opportunity that drives the search for
solutions; ideation, the process of generating and testing ideas; and implementation, the path that leads to the development of the opportunity. Design thinking, by its nature, involves a mix of subject matter experts and designers, and similar to AI, it is an inclusive process. LCC and its aim to bridge all four functional arms, through this process, could involve stakeholders from each arm in determining the opportunities and ideating the design.

According to Nadler and Tushman (2010), the new design for an organization is best delivered through the interaction of four key elements: tasks to operationalize the strategy; people who will work on those tasks; the structure that the people will follow in order to complete the tasks; and lastly, the culture of the organization. The more congruent these four elements are, the better the performance of the organization. For LCC, this could be a diagnostic tool to determine which interventions it would like to roll out using the new process.

**Employee Engagement / Buy-in**

As noted, LCC is committed to the professional development of staff through the training institute. Sankey and Machin (2014) identify three motivational states that lend to self-initiated participation in professional development: can do (it’s my choice); reason to (it’s important because…); and energized to (I want to). Buy-in (it’s my choice), through participatory decision making (influence in decisions), has positive outcomes on learning, morale, commitment, and accountability (Bess, Perkins, Cooper, & Jones, 2011). Participatory decision-making is more effective when it is provided consistently across the workforce and departments (i.e. training. HR, quality control, etc.). Benefits are experienced at the individual level, the organizational level, and in relation to community change.
Application Plan

Process Overview

Informed by LCC’s background and interests and the literature review, the Green Capes have developed an Application Development Roadmap (Exhibit 1) for LCC that is influenced heavily by the five main components of the Appreciative Inquiry process: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny (Cooperrider, 2012). Our proposed roadmap is also informed by a breakdown of the components of positive interventions, which include desired outcome, target system, target change, active ingredient, and activity (Pawelski, n.d.). Combined, this model creates a framework for LCC to construct any number of interventions without external input.

The five steps of the appreciative inquiry process anchor the Roadmap, with key appreciative questions and process considerations identified under each step. Each of these steps is coupled with the appropriate positive intervention element that must be identified in order to create an appropriate application. Finally, a deliverable for each step of the process is identified to help ensure that progress is being achieved.

Exhibit 1 - Application Development Roadmap

To help solidify this model and demonstrate how this works, the Green Capes piloted the
Roadmap with a range of LCC stakeholders to help develop an intervention related to resilience. The following sections further describe the Roadmap components, along with a summary of the piloting experience. Appendix 7 presents the Roadmap toolkit developed for LCC.

**Define**

When the LCC Training Institute staff (the training team) design programs and training, the most crucial question must be, “What are we hoping to achieve?” This is akin to the “outcome” element of positive interventions (Pawelski, n.d.), which asks, “What is the positive difference we want to make?” It is important that this question is framed as an opportunity for growth instead of a problem that needs to be solved. This is because “no change initiative outperforms its ‘return on attention,’ whether we are studying deficiencies or the best in life” (Cooperrider, 2012, pp.108); a positive programmatic focus will be more motivating and inspiring, as compared to one in which stakeholders feel as if they need to be “fixed.”

The second aspect of the “define” phase is to identify the stakeholders who need to be included in the design of the intervention(s). While the training team may not conduct an entire Appreciative Inquiry Summit for every potential program, it is important to consciously seek the counsel of the people directly impacted by their endeavors. We would posit that through the power of collective brainstorming, “improbable configurations can combine strengths to create magic” (Cooperrider, 2012, pp.111).

To model this stage of the process, the Green Capes conducted a meeting with seven members of the LCC leadership (from both the Allentown and Philadelphia offices). After a very productive conversation, the LCC leadership chose resilience as the focus for an intervention. This was driven largely by LCC’s concerns about staff burnout. To help prepare for the next stages of the Roadmap, LCC leadership then identified a variety of stakeholders, representing
different roles, office locations, and viewpoints, to participate in the pilot.

**Discover**

The Discovery phase focuses on what the organization is doing right regarding the chosen topic. This is critical, as one of the tenets of Appreciative Inquiry is that the manner in which we inquire and ask questions sets the tone for the type of solutions that we create (Stavros, Godwin, & Cooperrider, 2016). An additional advantage of starting with what is right is that the expertise in the room is acknowledged. People feel that a process is being created by the participation of the entire team and their input is valued, which also engenders a collaborative environment. One opening question that can be asked is, “What is it about your present work that you find most meaningful, challenging, or exciting?” (Stavros et al., 2016, p. 108). This could have the effect of inducing positive emotions and broadening the possibility of collaboration (Fredrickson, 2009). Then, open-ended questions related to the topic under discussion can be asked, such as, “Can you describe a time when you exhibited this characteristic?” or “How have you seen others apply this strength to their work?”

During the workshop, after introducing our model and providing a brief description of resilience (Appendix 5), we informed the participants, “We are here to learn from you.” We started the Discovery phase by asking the question, “What examples of resilience can you give us based on your experiences working here?” We received a flood of answers, which we documented on a whiteboard (Appendix 4). The answers touched on many aspects of Affect, Will, Cognition, Relationships, and Organizations, which overlap with Pawelski’s (n.d.) system dimension of a positive intervention. They also showcased how LCC staff demonstrates resilience during times of work pressure and stress. This primed the staff for the next phase, Dream.
Dream

The Dream phase focuses on what is possible by envisioning the future and building on the positive core established during Discovery (Stavros et al., 2016). Participants are encouraged to think big during this step. This creates a future orientation and the process becomes a generative one, unleashing potential within the organization. Some questions that could be asked during this phase are as follows: “What, in an ideal world, would the process under discussion look like?” or “What, in your opinion, is the best case scenario?” or “What would allow you to achieve the best case scenario?” (Stavros, et al., 2016). This method can be used to help inform what change should be targeted by the eventual intervention, such as an increased belief in one’s self, more intrinsic motivation, a change in focus, greater optimism, enhanced sensitivity to others, and/or enhanced teamwork (Pawelski, n.d.).

During our pilot, we combined this approach with that of idealized design and asked the question (Ackoff, Magidson, & Addison, 2006), “If you had all the resources, what would you want that would make you and the organization more resilient?” We informed the participants that our goal was to generate ideas leading to pragmatic solutions in the Design phase. The participants did not hold back from sharing their dreams; it appeared the Dream phase helped build trust in the room. The discussion was rich and resulted in 10 ideas (Appendix 4) from which to draw in the Design phase. Two areas seemed to align most to changes that could be targeted in an intervention. First, a shift in focus from billing and units to consumer support and second, an increase in teamwork and connections with one another.

Design

The Design phase of the 4-D cycle is orchestrated to capture two important components: brainstorming and prototyping (Stavros et al., 2016). Creativity and innovation can influence and
encourage organizational transformation (Cooperrider and Godwin, 2011), so it is important that this step be leveraged to identify multiple potential applications for the organization. This part of the process can benefit from four key elements: tasks to operationalize the strategy, people who will work on those tasks, the structure that people will follow, and the culture of the organization (Nadler & Tushman, 2010). The goal is to leverage as much cross-organization input as possible to develop as specific an application(s) as possible. In doing so, LCC should foster the creation of actual mock-ups or models of interventions, rather than settling for descriptive words (Stavros et al., 2008). While proceeding through this stage, LCC should be mindful of what the active ingredient for the potential positive intervention is or, in other words, what can trigger the desired change (Pawelski, n.d.).

In the workshop with LCC staff, participants were asked what kind of mechanisms might be most effective for carrying out a resilience intervention or training. Many people felt that face-to-face interactions were important to facilitate a resilience application. One person also suggested having a point of contact available after the resilience training was conducted to provide on-call assistance and additional information as needed, which resonated with many of the participants. Everyone cautioned against using email, noting that it, in general, was an ineffective mode of communication. Importantly, a senior manager commented that whatever is done should be connected to the well-being of the consumers LCC serves in order for the intervention to really take hold. This point, connected with the face-to-face theme, speaks to the potential of ”relatedness” as the active ingredient (Pawelski, n.d.). In the future, LCC should carry out this phase with as much real-time input from as many stakeholders as possible, appreciating the best of what has worked in the past coupled with new ideas that will help push the boundaries of what’s possible (Stavros et al., 2016). See Appendix 4 for other responses.
Destiny

Our work with LCC has brought us to a Destiny phase, where the most salient question is, “How will we deliver on the designed vision?” (Stavros et al., 2016). The organization must consider delivery, application, measurement, and continuous improvement to ensure the image of the future that LCC stakeholders have defined (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003), guided by a set of *Mindful Implementation Considerations* that we developed to help ensure that LCC is taking additional execution factors into account. (Appendix 2). In addition, we provided a summary of learning modalities to help guide them on their delivery options (Appendix 3). During our pilot, this phase resulted in two important findings: 1) Staff work under billable eight to 15 minute intervals, which dictates that as much time as possible be spent in service to consumers; 2) Activities that improve SCs’ ability to meet the needs of their consumers will better align with both offices. Ongoing training opportunities should clearly define any impact on service unit goals, and the positive impact that activities will have on both SCs and their consumers. This will help provide alignment with Sankey and Machin’s (2014) motivational states that lend to self-initiated participation in professional development -- 1) can do (it’s my choice); 2) reason to (it’s important because …); and 3) energized to (I want to).

For the pilot, LCC and the Green capes took what was learned as a result of following the Application Development Roadmap to develop an initial resilience building intervention that focuses on key aspects of resilience such as optimism, causal analysis, self-efficacy, and building strong relationships and support networks, while offering a practical implementation approach (Reivich & Shatté, 2002; Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011). The intervention includes a “what went well” exercise for SCs to use with each other during existing meetings as well as -- and perhaps more importantly -- with their consumers to help foster resilience more broadly. It
also includes initiating regular group support calls for SCs, in which they discuss obstacles at work and paths to overcome them. A framework for this positive intervention can be found in Appendix 6.

To help LCC measure the effectiveness of this initiative, we also have recommended both a qualitative (data) and quantitative (feedback) approach to measuring success (detailed in Appendix 1). We recommend that LCC review feedback from staff to refine the intervention to better meet the reported needs of staff and to inform future activities.

**Conclusion**

LCC, though already very resilient in its own right, aspires to further strengthen and support its staff so they are able to serve their consumers as effectively as possible. The Green Capes have mined the positive psychology literature to identify research that helps inform how the organization can go about this. That research, along with the input of LCC, has led to our development of an Application Development Roadmap for LCC’s Training Institute to guide the organization in how to develop tools that foster wellbeing. In the application plan, we have outlined the Roadmap and described the small resilience-themed pilot that we conducted for LCC. Our goal was to show that LCC can use our model to design interventions that best fit its organization in the future. Additionally, we aimed to help achieve three outcomes that LCC leadership hold as important: increasing collaboration between the recruiting, training, and engagement arms of LCC’s Training Institute; enhancing the connection between the Allentown and Philadelphia offices in training endeavors; and equipping LCC with the tools to design their own positive interventions in the future. It has been a pleasure and a privilege working with this inspiring organization.
References


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http://www.lcconnections.org/history


Appendix 1 - Application Plan Assessment

In order to assess the effectiveness of the resilience intervention, we suggest LCC collect both qualitative (data) and quantitative (feedback) measures. Regarding quantitative data, we recommend that LCC use the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, known as CD-RISC, before and after the resilience intervention (Connor & Davidson, 2003). The CD-RISC is a 25-item scale that has been validated for adults and is sensitive to changes in resilience due to successful interventions. It is also reasonably inexpensive – LCC would have to pay $100 to use the CD-RISC for 200 employees (or twice for 100 employees). All information regarding purchasing the CD-RISC is available at http://www.connordavidson-resiliencescale.com/.

Regarding qualitative data, we suggest that LCC build questions into the surveys it already conducts. These include the following:

1. LCC conducts regular employee satisfaction/feedback surveys. We recommend that LCC ask its employees whether they feel more supported and more able to manage the stresses of their jobs.

2. LCC conducts surveys of its consumers. Given that we recommend that Support Coordinators use the resilience exercise with their consumers as well, LCC would do well to ask its consumers whether they feel supported by, and have positive interactions with, their Support Coordinators.

3. LCC is considering starting group calls that create a lateral support system, in which LCC employees can share their successes and problem-solving techniques. We suggest that LCC seek out informal feedback during these calls as a way to gauge how their staff is responding to the resilience intervention.
In addition to the effectiveness of the activity, the Application Development Roadmap and Mindful Implementation Considerations should be reviewed by the LCC leadership to determine if the intended outcome was achieved. The purpose of these tools are to provide a framework to guide the identification, development and implementation of positive psychology topics, strategies, and positive interventions for integration within the LCC Training Institute. Applying this lens, the tools are effective if they are adopted, regularly used, relatively easy to implement, addresses concerns/needs across departments and sites, increases engagement in positive psychology activities, incorporates feedback from a broader set of stakeholders, and, long-term, lends to LCC’s ultimate goal of being the premier service coordination organization in Pennsylvania.
Appendix 2 - Mindful Implementation Considerations

The purpose of the following process is to provide a framework to guide the identification, development and implementation of positive psychology topics, strategies, and positive interventions for integration within the LCC Training Institute, based on information obtained through the roadmap.

1. Topic/Strategy/Intervention

2. Benefits to LCC
   a. Staff
   b. Consumers
   c. Return on investment / Value

3. Cultural fit
   a. Alignment with one or more LCC values?
   b. Alignment with one or more LCC goals?
   c. Alignment with staff?

4. Current training institute approach (if any)
   a. What’s going well?
   b. What is the desired outcome?
   c. What is the integration strategy?
      - Across training arms
      - Within current activities

5. Moment of importance/timeline (i.e. application, onboarding, acclimating, sustaining)

6. Optimal training approach (review training modalities)

7. Follow up with staff (formal or informal)
8. Frequency / time spent
   a. Staff time
   b. Trainers time

9. Measurement of success
   ● Can we combine the measurement with pre-existing measures?
   ● How will LCC will use/act on the measurement data?

10. Cost

11. Monitor for Quality

12. Refine / Scale
## Appendix 3 - Training Modalities

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<td>Live or archived training provided through a web platform</td>
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</table>
Appendix 4 - Comments from Staff Roadmap Session

A. DISCOVER

Examples of Resilience at LCC:

1. Continuing to be in the workforce (despite not knowing the long-term plan, changes, new protocols)

2. Sharing, Caring, Heart (Meaning)

3. Collaborative approach to problem solve - Team effort, management support exists.
   Danny gets a lot of credit for this.

4. Different impacts created through different ways of interacting with each other e.g. lending an ear to someone. We fight for consumers

5. Put consumers first, best foot forward

6. Resourcefulness / Not giving up

7. We keep coming back after stressful situations

8. Able to take time-off

9. Remain calm under stressful interactions with consumers, acknowledging that they are going through a challenging time

10. Humor (People like Steve at the office help)

11. Don't be hard on yourself - Take a break, walk around the block, etc.

12. Positive Psychology journals help think about work and beyond

13. Diversity of backgrounds/personal affects help

14. Venting with managers - it is a safe space to be heard

15. Humility - we don't toot our own horns, we are equals

16. Work is not about us.
17. Self-efficacy

18. Perspective taking and seeking inspiration from consumers helps.

**B. DREAM**

1. Get rid of bureaucratic red tape

2. No more units (billing for consumers) - A unit is 15 minutes comprising of tasks, each task is 7.5 to 8 minutes. Without units, there will be less pressure on the job. We eat and breathe units.

3. Opportunities to craft job roles based on strengths and have constant opportunities to grow

4. Have enough resources for consumers

5. More money/vacations (conflict with units. We have to make up for lost units after vacation, so we have no peace of mind during vacations)

6. Have less caseload

7. Prorates PTO

8. Eliminate billing requirements so we can focus on job

9. Culture: Have more things for the staff to do together socially other than happy hour

10. Have the equivalent of the Be Happy Committee that Allentown office has.

**C. DESIGN**

1. Have more forums to discuss and check-in

2. Face to face communication is better than email

3. Webinars are not as effective.

4. Multimedia training is a good option for those that cannot attend face to face
5. Have a cross-site retreat between the Allentown and Philadelphia office

6. Role playing/scenario based training is a good option that allows in class practice - continue existing offerings as well.

7. Nurture specialties within the group so that there are champions that people can go to for help.

8. Encourage the use of new information.
Appendix 5 - LCC Define Session PowerPoint

3/15/2017

LCC AND MAPP
Fostering Even More Resilience
March 5, 2016

Today's Goal
1. Learn from you.

Agenda
- Introduction
- Resilience
- Application development process
- LCC at its best
- Imagining the LCC of the future
- Transforming
- Next steps

LCC Goal
"Be the premier support coordination agency in Pennsylvania"
Application Development Model

Resiliency

The ability to bounce back from adversity and to grow and thrive in the face of challenges (Drenth, 2017).

You are resilient!

Resilience factors

- Optimism
- Problem solving
- Faith
- Sense of meaning

- Self-efficacy
- Self-regulation
- Emotional awareness
- Close relationships
Hustle with joy and humor.

Building an Application

- Purpose - why
- People - who
- Process - how

Application Development Model

DISCOVER:
What are LCC examples of resilience?

- Organization
- Staff
- Consumers
DREAM: What will a resilient and thriving LCC look like?
- Culture
- Expectations
- Tasks
- Structure
- Impact

DESIGN: How can we cultivate resilience across LCC?
- Application
- Length
- Method
- Frequency
- Outcome

Next steps
- Review input
- Refer to applicable positive psychology research
- Identify an application
- Develop an implementation plan
- Obtain feedback and refine
- Launch

Questions or more ideas?
Email us at: ejennings@ndi-inc.org
Appendix 6 - What Went Well Intervention

**Background**

We recommended that LCC boost staff resilience by consciously creating processes to celebrate the good work and the ‘wins’ of the staff (small or big, personal or professional). This would involve starting staff meetings/calls with a quick round of everyone discussing ‘what went well’ for them that week. We recommend this for the following reasons:

1. **Gratitude, savoring (recollection of positive events) and positivity are motivating:** they can increase personal happiness and reduce depression (Schueller & Parks, 2014).
2. **An infusion of positive emotion would give people optimism that what they and LCC do makes a difference** (Fredrickson, 2009).
3. **Identifying what went well will foster a more accurate, balanced and appreciative perspective on their work and lives (as opposed to a constant problem-focused approach).** This is a core tenet of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 2012).
4. **The process of talking and asking follow-up questions about somebody’s positive event builds strong connections between people** (Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006). Such positive, high quality connections are vital for a thriving workplace (Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2011).

Overall, people become more resilient when they think more positively and accurately (Reivich & Shatte, 2002).

A second aspect of the ‘What Went Well’ exercise would be for LCC to start regular group support calls in which staff members discuss work problems they have recently successfully tackled. During such discussions, it would be beneficial for the facilitator to invite others to respond using Active Constructive Responding, if possible, which allows the speaker to
elaborate further on the event. This boosts positivity about the event and fosters a greater connection within the group (Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006). This will also function as a learning experience for other staff members struggling with similar problems.

As mentioned in the Literature Review in this paper, the single most predictive factor of social worker resilience is a supportive and informative network of colleagues (Collins, 2008). The calls should be specifically centered on positive problem-solving, because Collins (2008) warns that creating room for social workers to just vent emotionally without a constructive process to overcome those obstacles might impede their adjustment to an unchanging reality.

The third aspect of the ‘What Went Well’ exercise would be for Support Coordinators to start their calls/visits with consumers with this question. This will help consumers build resilience by engaging with the positives in their own lives, something that is vital for individuals with disabilities and other disadvantaged populations. Further, it will show Support Coordinators the direct applicability of LCC training interventions to their daily work, which the Support Coordinators requested as part of any intervention.

**Guidance**

During the ‘What Went Well’ exercise, savoring and gratitude will likely be employed. It is important that savoring be experiential and not analytical. The goal is to relive the moment (Lyubomirsky et al., 2006). Further, although being grateful can result in positive effects, it is important to make sure that one does not use gratitude as a way to avoid the negative things in life. Gratitude is not only about “big” things. Drinking a cup a coffee, staying calm in traffic, having a nice conversation, etc. are all examples of something that has gone well.

Sometimes people find it helpful to interpret the exercise as a way to put things into perspective: “People in Africa are dying, I should be grateful for this mail.” Gratitude is not
about (downward) comparison. Of course, things can always be worse, but this is not the essence of gratitude. It is possible to be grateful for something without making the comparison to people who are worse off (Emmons and McCullough, 2003). We encourage implementers of this exercise to remember, it doesn’t have to complicated to be meaningful.
Appendix 7 - Application Development Roadmap Toolkit

Positive Interventions, Trainings, and Practices

A Toolkit for Design and Implementation

CREATED FOR LIBERTY COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Author: Elizabeth Jennings, Benjamin Jones, Faisal Khan, Shivanee Sen
Masters of Applied Positive Psychology, 2017 Service Learning Cohort
University of Pennsylvania
April, 2017
Positive Interventions, Trainings, and Practices

A Toolkit for Design and Implementation

Introduction

Liberty Community Connections (LCC) has a goal to be the premier support coordination agency in Pennsylvania by providing excellent support services. This goal requires that LCC recruit and retain a talented, resilient, and engaged workforce. LCC has invested in the development of a robust training institute with four arms: recruitment, social work education, training, and engagement and development. LCC wishes to use positive psychology to seamlessly align these arms and to improve staff retention and resilience.

“Positive Psychology is the scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive. The field is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play.”

Drawing from research in positive psychology, this Toolkit was designed to help LCC develop a process that will serve as a roadmap for building effective interventions to achieve their goals and leverage their core values. The toolkit offers steps from the appreciative inquiry process to explore those positive psychology topics and positive interventions. Once a topic or goal is identified, a comprehensive checklist supports a review of the topics alignment with other LCC activities and the design of an implementation strategy.

LCC partnered with the University of Pennsylvania, Masters of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) program for the creation of this toolkit and a pilot execution of the designed process as part of the MAPP 2017 Service Learning Project. Our thanks to LCC for their active participation in the completion of this project, and for their dedication to cultivating the well-being of the LCC staff who dedicate their time and talents to improving lives of people with disabilities.

1 L. Thul & D. Torrance, personal communication, January 24, 2017

http://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/
Process Overview

The Application Development Roadmap (Exhibit 1) is influenced heavily by the five main components of the appreciative inquiry process: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny.

“Appreciative inquiry is about the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them.”

This process is grounded in what is best about the organization and then builds out from its positive core. One of the fundamental components is utilizing appreciative questions with a range of stakeholders to uncover what works well and to foster innovation. The roadmap is also informed by a breakdown of the components of positive interventions, which include desired outcome, target system, target change, active ingredient, and activity. Combined, these models create a framework to construct any number of interventions without external input.

The five steps of the appreciative inquiry process anchor the roadmap, with key appreciative questions and process considerations. Each of these steps is coupled with the coordinating positive intervention element that must be identified in order to create an appropriate application. Finally, a deliverable (output) for each step of the process is identified to help ensure that progress is being achieved.

Exhibit 1: Application Development Roadmap

Follow the process outlined in this Toolkit and use the Mindful Implementation Considerations checklist (page 8) and Training Modalities (page 9) to strategically identify positive psychology topics and design activities and implementation strategies for use throughout the organization.

[References]

Cooperider, 2012
Cooperider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2007
Pawelski, 2007
Define
When the LCC Training Institute staff (the training team) sit down to design programs and training, it is vital that goals are defined. The most crucial questions to be asked are:

“What are we hoping to achieve?”
“What is the positive difference we want to make?”

At this time, it is important that the training team frames this question as an opportunity for growth instead of a pressing problem that needs to be solved. This is because “no change initiative outperforms its ‘return on attention,’ whether we are studying deficiencies or the best in life.” Importantly, a positive programmatic focus will be more motivating and inspiring, as compared to one in which stakeholders feel as if they need to be ‘fixed’.

The second aspect of the ‘Define’ phase is to identify the stakeholders who need to be included in the design of the intervention(s). While the training team may not conduct an Appreciative Inquiry meeting for every potential program, it is important to consciously seek the counsel of the people who will be directly impacted. Through the power of collective brainstorming - “improbable configurations can combine strengths to create magic.”

Core Considerations for the Define Phase
As part of the positive reframing of the need to be addressed, strive to keep the outcome in mind. Ask the group, and yourself, the following questions:

1. What do we want?
2. Why?
3. Who should we include?

Output of the Define Phase
The output of the Define phase is a deeper understanding of the purpose or intended outcome of the intervention/training, who will benefit, and who will be involved in its development.

Tip: Include as many people in your list of ‘who to include’ as possible. Think about people from both offices who represent LCC’s diversity of roles, experience, personality types, and backgrounds (including disability).

3 Cooperrider, 2012, pp.108
4 Cooperrider, 2012, pp.111
Discover
The Discover phase focuses on what the organization is doing right regarding the chosen topic. The intention is that, by focusing on what is best in the organization, a positive foundation is set to build upon. One of the tenets of Appreciative Inquiry is that the manner in which we inquire and ask questions sets the tone for the type of solutions that we create. An additional advantage of starting with what is right is that the expertise in the room is acknowledged. People feel that a process is being created by the participation of the entire team and their input is valued, which also engenders a collaborative environment. One opening question that can be asked is, “What is it about your present work that you find most meaningful, challenging, or exciting?”

This could have the effect of inducing positive emotions and broadening the possibility of collaboration. Then, open-ended questions related to the topic under discussion can be asked, such questions also help avoid negativity bias:

1. “Can you describe a time when you exhibited the topic?”
2. “How have you seen others apply this topic to their work?”
3. “What is going well when it comes to the topic?” or
4. “What are you most proud of here?”

Core Considerations for the Discover Phase
As part of the positive reframing of the need to be addressed, strive to keep the outcome in mind. Ask the group, and yourself, the following questions:

1. What are examples of LCC at its best?
2. What strategies and behaviors help?
3. What do you find meaningful, exciting, or challenging?

Output of the Discover Phase
The Discover phase helps us to understand the current status of the system being explored, with a focus on its current strengths. The questions should be crafted to focus in on the topic, system, organizational component, etc. being explored.

Tip: Support the conversation to explore as many aspects of a topic or of LCC as possible. For example, consider multiple aspects of LCC - the organization, the staff, consumers, etc.

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9 Stavros, Godwin, and Cooperrider, 2016
10 Stavros et al., 2016, p. 108
11 Fredrickson, 2009
**Dream**

The Dream phase focuses on what might be by envisioning the future and building on the positive core established during Discovery\(^{12}\). Participants are encouraged to think big during this step. This creates a future orientation and the process becomes a generative one, unleashing potential within the organization.

Some questions that could be asked during this phase are\(^{13}\):

1. “What, in an ideal world, would the process under discussion look like?”
2. “What, in your opinion, is the best case scenario?”
3. “What would allow you to achieve the best case scenario?”

This method can be used to help inform what change should be targeted by the eventual intervention, such as an increased belief in one’s self, more intrinsic motivation, a change in focus, greater optimism, enhanced sensitivity to others, and/or enhanced teamwork\(^{14}\).

Combining the above approach with that of idealized design one key question that could be asked is\(^{15}\), “If you had all the resources, what would you want that would make you and the organization more resilient?” Inform participants that the goal is to generate ideas that can lead to pragmatic solutions in the Design phase.

**Core Considerations for the Dream Phase**

The Dream phase is a visioning activity. Ask the group, and yourself, the following questions:

1. What in an ideal world would the process look like?
2. What is the best case scenario?
3. If you had all the resources necessary, what would you do?

**Output of the Dream Phase**

The Dream phase will result in a vision for a thriving LCC, including the culture, expectations, tasks, structure, and impact. The Dream phase may generate multiple visions so capturing the diversity of ‘what might be’ is critical.

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\(^{12}\) Stavros et al., 2016

\(^{13}\) Stavros et al., 2016

\(^{14}\) Pawelski, n.d.

\(^{15}\) Ackoff, Magidson, & Addison, 2006
Design
The Design phase is orchestrated to capture two important components:\footnote{Stavros et al., 2016}:

- brainstorming and prototyping.

Creativity and innovation can influence and encourage organizational transformation\footnote{Cooperrider and Godwin, 2011}, so it is important that this step be leveraged to identify a number of possible applications that could work for the organization.

This part of the process can benefit from four key elements:

1. tasks to operationalize the strategy,
2. people who will work on those tasks,
3. the structure that people will follow, and
4. the culture of the organization\footnote{Nadler & Tushman, 2010}.

One of the goals of the Design phase is to leverage as much cross-organization input as possible to develop as specific an application(s) as possible. In doing so, LCC can foster the creation of actual mock-ups or models of interventions, rather than settling for descriptive words. While proceeding through this stage, be mindful of what the active ingredient for the potential positive intervention is or, in other words, what can trigger the desired change\footnote{Pawelski, n.d.}.

This phase should be carried out with as much real-time input from as many stakeholders as possible, appreciating the best of what has worked in the past coupled with new ideas that will help push the boundaries of what’s possible.

Core Considerations for the Design Phase
During the Design phase, additional components for consideration are facilitated brainstorming, rapid prototyping, and core elements of design and implementation.

Output of the Design Phase
The Design phase will result in a short-list of pragmatic suggestions that have the potential for being implemented in the organization.

Tip: Use the Mindful Implementation Considerations checklist (page 8) to walk through several aspects of activity design.
Destiny
In the Destiny phase, the most salient question is:

“How will we deliver on the designed vision?”

The organization must consider delivery, application, measurement, and continuous improvement to ensure the image of the future that LCC stakeholders have defined. The approach to delivery (application) should use the findings of the appreciative inquiry to define the actual activity that will be used for the positive interventions.

Ongoing training opportunities should clearly define any impact on service unit goals, and the positive impact activities will have on both Support Coordinators and their consumers to align with motivational states that lend to self-initiated participation in professional development. You can do (it’s my choice), 2) reason to (it’s important because), and 3) energized to (I want to).22

Core Considerations for the Destiny Phase
The core consideration of the Destiny Phase is, “how will we deliver on the dream?” As there are multiple components to consider, use the Mindful Implementation Considerations checklist (page 8) and Training Modalities (page 9).

One component is measuring success. We suggest using both qualitative (data) and quantitative (feedback), identified and customized for the chosen topic. We recommend that LCC review feedback from staff to refine the activity (continuous improvement) to better meet the reported needs of staff and to inform future activities.

Output of the Destiny Phase
The Destiny phase will result in the application to be implemented. Complete an exploration of the applicable items in the Mindful Implementation Considerations checklist (page 8) and Training Modalities (page 9) to ensure a comprehensive implementation approach.

Tip: The use of the Mindful Implementation Considerations checklist (page 8) and Training Modalities (page 9) is not a one-time event. Revisit these tools to review, refine, and scale the designed positive interventions.

---

22 Stavros et al., 2016
21 Whitney & Tiosten-Bloom, 2003
23 Sankey & Machin, 2014
Mindful-Implementation-Considerations-Checklist

The purpose of the following process is to provide a framework to guide the implementation of identified positive psychology topics, strategies, and positive interventions.

- Topic/Strategy/Intervention
- Benefits to LCC
  - Staff
  - Consumers
  - Return on investment/Value
- Cultural fit
  - Alignment with one or more LCC values?
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- Current Training Institute approach (if any)
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- Measurement of success
  - Can we combine the measurement with pre-existing measures?
  - How will LCC will use/act on the measurement data?
- Cost
- Monitor for Quality
- Refine/Scale
## Training Modalities

The following chart offers examples of training modalities that may be utilized to offer one or more positive interventions, trainings and/or practices. Depending on the topic and the implementation strategy, training modalities may be used as a single or multi-modal approach.

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