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# Cultivating Connections at Philabundance

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## Abstract

Philabundance is a Philadelphia-based food bank, serving the food insecure in nine counties in Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey. Owing to its ambitious goal of not just relieving hunger, but ending it, a dispersed and diverse team working out of multiple sites and leadership turnover, issues with silos, morale and productivity have developed over recent years. Based on a situational analysis and a review of potentially applicable positive psychology research, Team Black believes that the organization could benefit from the positive psychology theories and research relating to (1) positive emotions and positivity resonance, (2) character strengths, and (3) meaning and mattering. Team Black has suggested a menu of positive interventions that would serve to bring these theories to life at Philabundance, to be introduced based on a timing that will depend on operational feasibility, particularly given the Covid-19 crisis. It is hoped that these interventions, all cultivating more connections at the organization, will not only help Philabundance to weather the crisis, but to cultivate connections among individuals, team and the organization as a whole, and ultimately increase well-being for all.

## Keywords

food bank, positive emotions, positivity resonance, micromoments, character strengths, meaning, mattering, appreciative inquiry, whole system approach

## Disciplines

Industrial and Organizational Psychology | Nonprofit Administration and Management | Social Psychology | Training and Development

**Cultivating Connections at Philabundance**



**Service Learning Project**

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Master of Applied Positive Psychology

**May 19, 2020**

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**Table of Contents**

**Service Learning Project - Philabundance**

**Introduction**

Team Black has been working with Philabundance, a Philadelphia-based food bank, since January. Over the past three months, we have had numerous exchanges with our service partner contact, reviewed relevant documents concerning the organization, conducted research into the food bank sector, participated in a dozen interviews with multiple stakeholders, volunteered at its site, engaged in extensive research on how positive psychology might be useful and applicable to the organization, and exchanged with our assistant instructor and classmates about our approach.

Based on these findings, we are setting forth below our situational analysis of Philabundance (**Section I**), the results of our literature review concerning what we believed were the most relevant positive psychology theories that could address the issues Philabundance faces (**Section II**) and our proposed action plan with positive psychology interventions that we feel would be most tailored to the organization's needs at this time (**Section III**).  We address means of measurement in **Section IV**, and timing and limitations in **Section V**.  As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the further stresses that the organization will undoubtedly undergo as a result, we are proposing the most immediate series of interventions that could be introduced in **Appendix A,** some appropriate immediately while social distancing is in place, others when the current restrictions are relaxed (**Phase 1**), with the larger-scale interventions set forth in **Appendices B** and **C** that would be more appropriate when the current crisis has truly subsided (**Phase 2**).

We undertook the research and crafted our interventions based on what we perceived to be the greatest need at Philabundance, namely opportunities to reinforce ***connection***, in three ways: (1) connection among people and departments, (2) connection with Philabundance's

strengths, and (3) connection with the underlying mission and promise of the organization.  We also felt that our proposed interventions should be geared to the *whole* of the organization, favoring cross-department interactions, as there are already various initiatives within certain teams, but not *across* Philabundance.  We have also taken into account the fact that while our service partner contact was positive about availability of some resources to devote to any interventions, she also indicated a need for guidance and ideas which would fit with the organization's needs at this time, particularly in the context of Covid-19.

## I.    Philabundance: Situational Analysis

### A.  Activity

Philabundance is a non-profit organization that distributes food to people experiencing food insecurity.  Food banks source food from a variety of sources including for-profit, state, and federal programs, as well as food retailers, farmers, and manufacturers.  Philabundance operates using a warehouse model, meaning they supply food to agencies, like soup kitchens, shelters, and food pantries, which then re-distribute to those experiencing food insecurity or struggling with hunger.

### B.  Sector challenges

All food banks face challenges in terms of addressing local need, managing the state of food (perishables, undesirable, or expired foods), concerns about waste, misallocations (potatoes to Idaho!), matching foods (hot dog rolls with no hot dogs, or *vice versa*), storage, refrigeration, transportation, etc., and Philabundance is no exception.  Current plans to restrict support under the federal food stamp program known as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), which serves over 36 million people in the U.S. (USDA, 2019), will add to those challenges (although some of those restrictions have been put on hold because of the Covid-19 crisis and its

inevitable impact on the food insecure).  With approximately 1 in 8 adults and 1 in 6 children in

Pennsylvania struggling with hunger, and the fact that in 2019, $2.5 billion in SNAP benefits

were necessary to address the food needs (Feeding America, n.d.),[1] Philabundance, like other

food banks in the region, will undoubtedly be called on to step up their role in providing for

people who are food insecure in the coming years.  The Covid-19 crisis will only add to that

need.

C.  **Organization overview**

Philabundance is currently the largest food bank in the Greater Philadelphia area,

providing 25 million pounds of food annually to feed 90,000 people each week across nine

counties in Pennsylvania and New Jersey (Philabundance, n.d.).  It has a budget of $54 million,

including $40 million in food distributed (Philabundance, n.d.).

The Philabundance team sources food from farmers, grocery stores, restaurants and

corporate and individual donors.  The organization manages transportation of the food to its

warehouses where it is checked, sorted, and repacked by a team of volunteers.  Then food is then

transported to one of its 350 agency partners, who distribute directly to individuals and families

in need (Philabundance, n.d.).  The Food Flow team (divided into Food Acquisition, Inventory

Control, Transport, Repack, Warehouse, Sustainability and Agency Relations departments), is

responsible for all of the logistical aspects of this process.  The Administrative team (consisting

of Development, Communications, Finance, HR, IT and Government Affairs), supports the

organization's work.  There is also a related initiative, Philabundance Community Kitchen

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[1] The statistics are available on a state-wide basis and accordingly these figures are limited to the state of
Pennsylvania, although Philabundance's activities also cover parts of New Jersey.

(PCK), which provides catering services and trains underserved individuals to work in the food service industry (Philabundance, n.d.).

In 2014, the organization launched a 10-year strategic initiative and refocused its mission from "Relieving Hunger" to "Ending Hunger. For Good."  This effort is aimed at doubling the food it currently distributes to 50 million pounds annually by 2023, and expanding services to the community to address some of the root causes of hunger, such as through the PCK initiative (Philabundance, n.d.).

D.  **Current organizational challenges**

Philabundance is facing tension among its various departments, especially those that do not regularly interact.  Leadership believes a silo mindset contributes to reduced productivity, morale, and innovation (C. Loesch, personal communication, January 13, 2020).  For example, as part of the 2023 goal, an experiment dubbed "Open The Taps" (OTT) took place in February 2020 during which the organization accepted all food donations to test the limits of Philabundance's current infrastructure and their agency partners' capacity to manage larger quantities of food.  Some employees couldn't understand why it was taking place or expressed concern as to how it would affect their jobs or their departments, which gave rise to frustrations. (C. Loesch, personal communication, January 13, 2020).[2]

Through our research, we also surfaced other potential intervention areas:

1.  **Mission alignment**

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[2] As we knew that any interventions we proposed would be too late for the OTT February experiment, we noted during our exchanges with our Philabundance contact that while the experiment seemed to be well-thought out, its framing, communicated as an effort to find "breaking points", may have contributed to the mixed reception, and we suggested more resilience-building language, such as testing for "solutions" and "strength-stretching".

While employees find the immediate work of the organization, feeding those in need, to be meaningful, doubts about the achievability of the longer-term goal, ending hunger for good, were expressed (Anonymous, personal communications, January 23-28, 2020).

## 2. Internal communication & employee relations

There is a general feeling among interviewed employees that internal communication, both from the top and across departments, could be improved (Anonymous, personal communications, January 23-28, 2020).  Employee surveys (Philabundance, 2018, 2019) and the employee interviews we conducted (Anonymous, personal communications, January 23-28, 2020) highlighted confusion around current strategic priorities and frustration that input from employees was not asked for or considered when making decisions.  Other recurring themes of areas for improvement were around employee relations, from failure to recognize employee contributions and celebrate successes, to clarity and fairness regarding employee compensation (Philabundance, 2018, 2019).  The absence of a Human Resources Director for some time was emphasized by many, although we have been told that this position has since been filled (C. Loesch, personal communication, March 9, 2020).

## 3. Conflicting priorities, perspectives, and morale issues

The staggering logistics of moving 500,000 pounds of food each week and the impact of decisions or last-minute changes from one group to another can cause friction and frustration among teams (Anonymous, personal communication, January 23, 2020).  There seems also to be a cultural divide between the perceived "white collar" Administrative employees and the "blue collar" Food Flow team.  The various geographic locations of Philabundance's 150 or so employees (divided between two different warehouse sites and the transportation team that is on the road) reduce opportunities for personal connection.  Tensions between long-time employees

and newer employees and an absence of diversity in the senior leadership were also noted as contributing to the perceived silos in the organization, as were a variety of management styles and levels of management training (Anonymous, personal communications, January 23-28, 2020).

## II.    Positive Psychology Theories

Given the foregoing, Team Black saw several possible applications of positive psychology theories to achieve the goals leadership has shared with us, grouped into three main areas of focus, themed around *connection*:  increasing connection through positive, intentional interactions, improving people management by focusing on character strengths, and developing meaning and mattering across the organization using an 'appreciative inquiry' approach.

### A.  Increasing connection through positive interactions

The first theory that we found most applicable to the issues at Philabundance concerns positive emotions and positivity resonance.  Positive emotions arise from 'micromoments' of appraisal – when an event happens and an individual's systems detect this change and register the prospects to be good, positive emotions like joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe and love are generated (Fredrickson, 2013).

The 'broaden-and-build' theory developed by Fredrickson (2001) posits that positive emotions broadens awareness, and this awareness enables resources to be built, facilitating easier social relations (Sekerka & Fredrickson, 2008).  Because positive emotions broaden attention, individuals become more open and creative, and differences between the self and others become less strict (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006).  Positive emotions are linked to lower cynicism and higher psychological capital, i.e. individuals have higher levels of hope, resilience, optimism,

and efficacy, which in turn encourages more positive behavior in the workplace and may even affect positive organizational change (Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008).

In the workplace, positive emotions help individuals find meaning in their jobs and, when shared, help form social bonds (Tijhuis, 2015; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001).  The benefit of creating collective positive emotions at work can be explained through positivity resonance, the micromoments of connection that happen between people (Fredrickson, 2013).  When individuals experience positivity resonance, their whole system lights up to be more open, creative, and connected (Fredrickson, 2013).  Visual perception, creativity, and overall perspective expand, building more positive emotions and creating an upward spiral.  This upward spiral can improve relationships, creating a resource bank that can be drawn upon during hard times (Fredrickson, 2009).  For Philabundance, nurturing an environment for positive emotions and positivity resonance can broaden awareness beyond one's own teams and build meaningful bonds for cross-functional cooperation, resourcefulness, and bonding.

Bringing more mindfulness to micromoments in the present creates opportunity for more openness and positivity resonance (Fredrickson, 2009).  Mindfulness, the practice of bringing the mind's attention to the present moment (Bishop et al., 2004), is shown to reduce stress and improve vagal tone (Kok et al., 2013), which in turn eases our fight-or-flight reactions (Ratey & Manning, 2014) and manages how we connect (Fredrickson, 2013).  Mindfulness meditation facilitates attention regulation, whole-body awareness, emotion regulation, and changes in perspective on the self (Holzel, Lazar, Gard, Schuman-Olivier, Vago, & Ott, 2011).  Meditation also affects changes in parts of the brain that govern attention, cognition, regulation, and more (Holzel et al., 2011).  For Philabundance, reducing stress while building awareness can lead to

more positive emotion and connectivity with each other, thus fostering connection and building bonds across teams.

When positivity resonance occurs as a collective, team resilience and high-quality connections are built, leading to higher resilience to buffer against challenging times (Heaphy and Dutton, 2008) and increased levels of performance (Meneghel, Salanova, & Martınez, 2014; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003).   High-quality connections allow for a higher emotional carrying capacity, the ability to withstand a wider range of emotions and the strain of hard times (Carmeli, Brueller, & Dutton, 2009).  Relationships are especially important in the context of organizations going through change, as social relationships are found to be connected to readiness for change and even organizational commitment (Madsen, Miller, & John, 2005).  For Philabundance, once the organization can return to some semblance of normalcy post-crisis, as they expand their organization to align with the goal of "Ending Hunger.  For Good," resilience built from high-quality connections and micromoments of positivity resonance will play an important role in managing growth and change processes.  By curating psychological safety and positivity resonance, Philabundance can build both high-quality connections and resources for the future (Fredrickson, 2009).

An application plan for increasing positive emotions at Philabundance through a menu of proposed micromoments of positivity resonance is set forth in **Appendix A**.  We believe that some of these interventions could be instituted immediately with relative ease, even with social distancing, and others are more likely to be suitable for adoption once the organization is operating in more normal circumstances, as part of a new beginning post Covid-19.  Indeed, we believe that all of these strategies would serve to improve resilience and productivity as the organization recovers from the immediate impact of the Covid-19 emergency measures and

impact, in addition to addressing the challenges described in **Section I** - the organization can determine the operational feasibility of when and if to put the various proposed interventions into place depending on the evolving circumstances during Phase 1 referred to in the Introduction.

## B. Focusing on positive character strengths and autonomy

The second theory of positive psychology that we believe will be most relevant at Philabundance is a focus on character strengths. Character strengths represent the best of human nature (Niemiec, 2017). They are examples of what is good in each of us, and each of us possesses all of them to some degree. The twenty-four strengths catalogued in the VIA model are a result of a multi-year research project to identify character strengths that are universally valued across cultures and languages (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The VIA Character Strengths are meant to be the foundation for a common language that can be used to recognize, explore, and apply what is best in each of us (Niemiec, 2017).

Use of character strengths at work has been associated with increased performance and prosocial behavior, as well as decreased negative behavior (Littman-Ovadia, Lavy, Boiman-Meshita, 2017). Focusing on strengths development can provide better results than addressing employees' deficits, and research indicates that a culture of strength development is linked to better work performance (van Woerkom & Meyers, 2015). In fact, managers who have a strengths-based approach are almost two times more likely to have a high-performing team (Clifton & Harter, 2003). Manager recognition of strengths has been shown to increase job satisfaction and retention (Niemiec, 2017). Employees who use their strengths at work are eighteen times more likely to be thriving and six times more likely to be engaged with their organization (Niemiec, 2017). This can only be a win-win for Philabundance.

In an effort to support a more unified approach to development and feedback, and, in turn, connection among teams, we propose a character strengths evaluation and workshop that we believe will impact the entire company.  However, in terms of timing, this workshop could be scheduled once the Covid-19 crisis has subsided and teams can interact normally at Philabundance (Phase 2 referred to in the Introduction).

To be most effective, a strengths-based approach should be integrated into the overall mindset of an organization (Biswas-Diener et al., 2017).  While we are proposing an initial training for managers, this should be seen as a first step towards a broader shift in the collective philosophy and practice of management at Philabundance.  Keeping this in mind, our initial training will help managers understand how to approach, identify, and develop the strengths of their teams using a common framework, in the manner described in **Appendix B**.

C.  **Aligning meaning and enhancing mattering**

Attending to both the constructs of meaning and mattering is the third main area of positive psychology that we found relevant to the issues currently faced at Philabundance, issues which have undoubtedly been exacerbated by the challenges of the pandemic.

The notion of ***meaning*** at work is generally defined as work that an employee subjectively experiences as significant, provides opportunity for personal growth, and contributes to something greater than the self (Steger et al., 2012).  Employees who experience meaningful work show greater commitment to organizations and greater organizational citizenship while also demonstrating reduced absenteeism and turnover intentions (Steger et al., 2012).  Finding meaning in the workplace not only contributes to a worker's overall sense of well-being, but also correlates with a number of positive workplace outcomes including employee engagement, job satisfaction, and improved performance (Lysova et al., 2019).  By some estimates, every dollar

invested in employee well-being returns three dollars in revenue (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017), making the creation of a positive work environment a strong fiscal investment for any business. Given Philabundance's ambitious mission to double its operations by 2023, investing in meaning and well-being should enable its teams to improve productivity *and* collective flourishing.

*Mattering* is the essential need for all humans to feel that they make a difference to others and to the world (Elliott, Kao & Grant, 2004), or, that they are valued and that they add value (Prilleltensky, 2019).[3]  Originally a construct that grew out of family and community psychology (Rosenberg and McCullough, 1981; Rosenberg, 1985; Davidson & Cotter, 1991), today mattering is very much in the forefront of positive psychology (Prilleltensky, 2016, 2019; Reece et al., 2019), and is increasingly drawing the attention of popular culture, from Oprah Winfrey to the bestseller *Hillbilly Elegy*.

Whether applied to communities, organizations, families or individuals, the construct of mattering reflects the human need for inclusion and belonging, or, at the very least, the *perception* of inclusion and belonging (Elliot, Kao, & Grant, 2014).  This perception can be viewed from two perspectives.  First, individual mattering to a specific group, also referred to as "belongingness", is a powerful, fundamental, and extremely pervasive motivation to form and maintain strong interpersonal relationships, which requires both frequent pleasant interactions and a framework of affective concern for the other (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).  Second, mattering represents how individuals feel they are making a difference to society in the broader sense (Rosenberg, 1985).  This is related to the construct of meaning addressed above, and

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[3] Mattering also finds strong underpinnings in philosophy, in its grounding in the notion of *caring* about something, which is beyond having a meaningful experience (O'Brien, 1996).

indeed has been determined, together with coherence and purpose, to be the greatest precursor to finding meaning in life (Costin & Vignoles, 2019).

Based on the Situational Analysis in **Section I** above, both mattering branches are deeply relevant to Philabundance. The belonging issue arises at the organization because of the silos among activities, sites, and perhaps some social and/or racial divisions. The broader mattering-as-meaning issues are reflected in the divide between the mission of addressing food insecurity in the region today, and the more ambitious one of ending hunger altogether.

The meaning and mattering research has contributed to the menu of micromoments interventions set forth in **Appendix A** that can be acted on in the shorter term, either immediately or when the organization resumes more normal operations post-social distancing, depending on the nature of the intervention (Phase 1). For a longer-term intervention, we propose that Philabundance engage in an "Appreciative Inquiry" (AI)[4] summit, as further developed in **Appendix C**. AI is a means for organizations to work as a team to seek out their potential and inspire a co-constructed future (Cooperrider, 2017), thus exploring both meaning and the second branch of mattering described above.

AI summits usually involve questioning and dialogue with a 'whole-system approach', which means that the exercise will include not just members of all levels of the organization, but also a variety of external stakeholders, in order to generate a fuller, deeper experience and engage a diversity of points of view (Cooperrider, 2012). This inclusive approach makes it easier to open up the opportunity to all to participate (no issues over who to invite!) and it

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[4] The term Appreciate Inquiry comes from the verb "appreciate", which means to value, and "inquire", which means to study through questioning. AI is therefore a search to study through questioning the strengths and value of an organization, and, in so doing, develop the greatest opportunities for the future (Cooperider, Witney, & Stavros, 2004).

leverages a larger power than a leadership team or smaller group of representatives (Cooperrider, 2012).

There is a long history of highly successful AI summits that can demonstrate their effectiveness in not only significantly improving employee relations and communication, but also in having a transformative impact on the organization (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2015). From the examples of a for-profit company like Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, which leveraged an AI summit to transform its activity and dramatically increased its market valuation, to international organizations like the United Nations, which grew its Business for Good initiative following an AI process, there is a unique positive outflow from AI that can truly make a difference for an organization's future (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2015).

We believe that an AI summit will permit Philabundance and all members of its team to connect with each other and connect with the meaning of the organization, developing both meaning and mattering.  Moreover, the data supports the positive impact of mattering on well-being and social relationships, which can benefit the individual team members, the relationships between them (Davidson & Cotter, 1991; Diener, Oishi & Tay, 2018; Prilleltensky, 2019), and the functioning of the organization as a whole (Reece et al., 2019).

Our detailed proposal for an AI summit is set forth in **Appendix C**.

III.    **Testing the Application Plan**

To assess the impact of the interventions proposed in **Appendix A** in Phase 1, and then when things have truly stabilized and if the interventions proposed in **Appendices B** and **C** are performed in Phase 2, it will be necessary to conduct surveys of the Philabundance employees both before and after such interventions.

Fortunately, Philabundance has a regular practice of engaging in employee surveys with questions relevant to connection, strengths, meaning, and mattering (C. Loesch, personal communication, January 20, 2020; Philabundance, 2018, 2019).  These surveys measure agreement with a series of statements such as "At our food bank, my opinion seems to count" (Philabundance, 2018, p. 1) and "Our culture supports my health and wellbeing" (Philabundance, 2018, p.2).  Therefore, baseline measures already exist and comparison to previous results should be straightforward.  It should be relatively easy to conduct another survey later this year that asks the same questions in order to measure any change following the Phase 1 **Appendix A** intervention(s).  We recommend this take place three months following the implementation of those interventions and that Philabundance focus especially on the Communication and Resources, Individual Needs, Feeling Valued, Personal Engagement, and Team Dynamics sections of the survey (Philabundance, 2018).  For the interventions set forth in **Appendices B** and **C**, which will take place when operations are hopefully back to normal in Phase 2, we also recommend a survey three months following implementation.  For these interventions, Philabundance should focus on the Mission/Vision, Manager Effectiveness, Team Dynamics, and Feeling Valued sections of the survey (Philabundance, 2018).

The results of these follow-up surveys could be compared to the earlier surveys (Philabundance, 2018 and 2019) to determine the impact of the interventions on employees' sense of trust, receiving adequate information, level of motivation and well-being generally over time (updated, perhaps, to inquire also about the foregoing in the context of the crisis). Philabundance should use the appropriate measures to determine if there has been a statistically significant change.  These survey results could also be supplemented by in-person qualitative

interviews conducted throughout the organization, perhaps by the new HR Director, which would give more depth to the survey data.

This being said, given the current Covid-19 crisis, which in addition to the work challenges for the team will continue to grow the demand for Philabundance's services as food insecurity increases and, most likely, see a decrease in volunteers (or environments permitting volunteers to engage in the manner they did previously), the challenges posed to Philabundance will be high.  So, while we recommend that the new HR Director and Philabundance's senior leaders maintain their existing consistent framework of surveys in all events to be able to continue to maintain an understanding of employee engagement through this critical time to the extent possible, we also understand the need to put safety of the staff and operations at the top of the priority list at this time.

**IV.      Timing, leadership task force and limitations**

While we are confident that the theories that we have developed and the applications proposed in the Appendices will have a positive, and perhaps transformative, impact on the organization, we feel it is important to mention possible limitations for each.  Before turning to the specifics of these limitations, we would once again highlight our recommendation that the timing of these interventions should be addressed in light of the Covid-19 circumstances.  We also recommend that there be a designated team that leads the reflection and then implementation of these interventions.

As a general matter and as indicated above, in terms of *timing*, we believe that some of the micromoments proposed in **Appendix A** for Phase 1 can be put in place immediately in order to increase positive emotions and positivity resonance in this highly stressful time, to the extent possible in a social distancing circumstance.  Others that require in-person contact and/or that

might simply be seen as inappropriate at this time might only be commenced once the teams

return to their place of work.  And, as also indicated, we believe that the larger interventions

proposed in **Appendices B** and **C** only be considered in Phase 2, once the organization is truly

back to some sense of normalcy.  Accordingly, everything that we propose should take that

timing into account.[5]

We also believe that these recommendations will need to be spearheaded by a cross-

departmental *task force*, made up of people in the organization who bring to this team both an

interest in well-being and/or knowledge of the organization.  The task force should probably be

led by the new HR Director, but that person will undoubtedly already have a huge amount on

their plate in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis, attending to compliance and the many unattended

HR matters of the past year.  They will also need the support and guidance of such task force in

order to make organization/team-appropriate recommendations, create excitement and achieve

buy-in across the organization.

Our views on the *limitations* with respect to the interventions more specifically are as

follows.

Regarding the *micromoments and mindfulness training* proposed in **Appendix A,** no

matter what we propose, the physical layout of the operations at Philabundance may make it

difficult to truly facilitate the micromoments suggested.  We are also sensitive to the fact that the

concept of mindfulness meditation may seem very foreign to some of the members of the

Philabundance team.  We may need to modify the vocabulary used to draw people in who might

otherwise find the ideas off-putting, or propose a menu of options that fulfill the mindfulness

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[5] This being said, there may be elements of proposals for the character strengths workshop and the AI summit as set forth in **Appendices B** and **C** that can find more immediate or partial application in the months ahead; once again, the objective here is for Philabundance to be able to have available a variety of possible interventions to be used and/or adjusted to the circumstances as it deems appropriate.

purpose.  Language and examples can be modified to fit the various levels of experience and

expectation among staff members.

In terms of the *strengths-based management training* proposed in **Appendix B**, we

believe from our discussions with our contact that there should be sufficient resources in normal

times to undertake the training (Loesch, personal communication, March 9, 2020).   That said, as

professional development undoubtedly falls under the purview of the new HR Director, this

initiative's success will depend on her support and capacity.  As mentioned, a long-term

commitment to integrating a strengths-based management approach will be critical to the success

of the efforts.  The initial training has been designed as an evergreen initiative that can be

undertaken at the appropriate time, and so it can be introduced in Phase 2 and the HR Director

has had time to integrate the organization.

We also see several possible limitations regarding the *AI summit* proposed in **Appendix

C**.  First, Philabundance may simply not see the need to embrace an exercise that is so geared to

a true change agenda.  Second, the challenges of addressing the needs of today's food insecure

particularly in the current environment may make taking a full day off for an AI summit seem

too great a price for the community they serve (even if the hope is that ultimately this

intervention would make the organization more effective going forwards).  Third, the large

diversity among the people who would attend a whole system AI Summit will have to be handled

with sensitivity.  People who are not comfortable in a story-telling or public speaking role may

find themselves intimidated by the process, and this lack of psychological safety (safety being

indispensable for positivity resonance to occur, Fredrickson, 2001) could entrench pre-Summit

perceived differences.  There would also have to be a sufficient budget to hire a consultant to

assist in designing and managing the AI summit, and to cover the costs of the logistics of such an event.

Finally, we are also aware of Philabundance's focus on its stated values (trust, respect, impact, innovation and collaboration), and would want to be certain that there is not confusion among those values, the strengths that emerge from the strengths training, and anything that would emerge from the AI summit.  In our experience, taking on too many organizational concepts at once can be overwhelming, and therefore less likely to be effective.  The ability to present and explain the importance of these various positive psychology interventions, and the fact that these interventions are evidence-based, will be key to the success of the interventions that we propose.

**Conclusion**

The  goal of our remarks about timing, leadership and limitations is to call attention to the factors to be kept in mind in explaining and applying the interventions, to give them every chance of really fitting with the organization's needs.  They do not reduce our confidence in their success.  We believe that the interventions described above and in the Appendices hereto should provide numerous opportunities for Philabundance to build on its strengths, support its mission-driven work *and* improve connection and well-being at the individual, team, and organization levels.

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**Appendix A – Micromoments for Positivity Resonance**

What is a micromoment?  A micromoment is exactly as it sounds: a snippet of awareness during which one notices a positive emotion or a moment of connection with another.  Positive emotions broaden and build; Barbara Fredrickson's (2013) work shows that when we experience micromoments of connection with each other, we light up our whole system to be more open, creative, and connected with others.  This is particularly important for Philabundance, where the nature of their work requires that a vast amount of time is dedicated within separate teams.  Moreover, as the organization continues its trajectory of growth with a view to doubling its annual food distribution to 50 million pounds by 2023, teams have become more siloed and individuals more isolated (Anonymous, personal communications, January 23-28, 2020).  Without any interventions, the need for tight operational efficiency to reach their ambitious goal to "End Hunger.  For Good." (Philabundance, n.d.), risks further deepening these divisions and increasing isolation.

In these circumstances, creating micromoments between colleagues across teams that can be operationalized to help the organization connect, and flourish, should be feasible from a time and resource perspective.  These micromoments also give rise to the opportunity to cultivate deeper relationships and develop a resource bank that the team members can draw upon during hard times (Fredrickson, 2009).  When we examine how we spend our downtime at the water cooler or exchanging before a meeting through the lens of micromoments and connection, actions start to have deeper implications.

How can Philabundance create micromoments to develop positive emotion and enhance connection?  A menu of options is set forth below to cultivate micromoments of (a) connection

through positivity resonance, and (b) mindfulness training to help curate such micromoments of connection.

In terms of *time*, micromoments can be cultivated every day, multiple times a day.

In terms of *participants*, this means inviting all members of the organization to participate across all teams and levels, and potentially expanding to partner donation agencies and even beneficiaries.

In terms of *beginning* the culture of micromoment cultivation, the menu of options in this **Appendix A** can serve as a guide to be shared through company meetings and communications. A "community" or "culture" team may be assembled through identifying those with a deep passion and desire for the organization to help spread and personalize micromoments.

In terms of *resources,* our intention is to make the menu of options as feasible as possible, offering varying levels of engagement. One of the menu options is a mindfulness intervention. Mindfulness meditations may be operationalized through offering a subscription service to a subset of employees across teams (which could be paid for by the organization), gathering employees in the break room or starting team meetings with a five minute meditation led by someone in the organization who is familiar with the practice, or bringing in a facilitator for a weekly class. As another example, monthly "lunch roulettes" or weekly "coffee walks" are proposed to bring individuals together for bonding and connection in Phase 2 when social distancing norms are lifted (with perhaps the cost borne by the organization to encourage participation, as we discussed with our service partner contact). Offering this menu of possibilities will make Philabundance able to respect the range of interests and openness to the proposed micromoments and mindfulness meditation interventions, reflecting the diversity of

background, interest and familiarity with some of these ideas that are undoubtedly present in varying degrees in the organization today.

Notwithstanding this diversity, we are confident that some mix of micromoments and exposure to mindfulness will have a positive impact at Philabundance.  People with more positive resonance tend to have more vagal tone, the strength of the physical part of the body that manages how we connect (Fredrickson, 2013) and eases our fight-or-flight reactions (Ratey & Manning, 2014).  People who feel love and more positivity resonance tend to have more positive emotions to broaden and build (Fredrickson, 2009) to affect others.  Thus, by curating positivity resonance through the present moment in a manner that makes sense at the organization, Philabundance can build resources for the future while allowing for more savoring, connection, and even calm today (Fredrickson, 2009).

## A Menu of Micromoments

> *Micromoments can be cultivated throughout the day, through individual moments of awareness or collective acts that may ripple out to affect others.  Below is a menu of options that individuals, teams, and leaders can select from based on their operational feasibility, in Phase 1 and Phase 2, as appropriate.*

### Individuals

- **Let employees set boundaries** for focus and mental health.  Block time during breaks to do what they need to center and focus and recommend a break from the news.

- **Take a few deep breaths.**  As little as 3 minutes of deep belly breathing can help calm the body's stress response (Baime, 2019).  As an alternative, take 10 breaths.  Deep inhale in for four counts; exhale out for eight.  As you inhale, let the air expand down your throat, center, ribcage, and belly.  As you exhale, feel your feet ground down to lift up, letting your belly and lungs compressing to let the air out.  Repeat ten times.

- **Practice mindfulness.** Mindfulness is simply the nonjudgmental awareness of what you're experiencing in the moment. Cultivation of mindfulness regulates stress, awareness, and emotion (Holzel, et al., 2011). For example, in the breath exercise, with each inhale, follow the breath and watch it curiously expand to regularly unnoticed parts of your body. With each exhale, let each centimeter of your vertebrae space out in equanimity.
  - If thoughts come into your mind—planning, sounds, a thought—watch the movie play and gently bring yourself back to the breath.

- **Find excuses to move.** Take a walk during breaks or at the end of lunch, jumping jacks, or go outdoors and stretch. Exercise activates good neurochemicals in the brain to help creativity, learning, and manage stress. Move with others (while social distancing!) and you generate positive resonance and collective joy (Ehrenreich, 2006; Faulkner, Hefferon & Mutrie, 2015; Fredrickson, 2009; Haidt et al., 2008; Ratey, 2008; Ratey & Manning, 2014).

- **Set up an after-work ritual.** For employees working remotely, how they transition as boundaries are blurred can give the brain a break. Some ideas: Listen to music, read a magazine, and call a loved one.

## With Others

- **Build real-time sensory connection.** Make eye contact; say hello to someone you've never met (e.g. during breaks or at the beginning of a meeting), and finding ways to laugh can also act as a bridge.

- **Reach out:** With a colleague every day for 7 days, ask: What will you be grateful for? What will you be proud of? What are you excited about?

- **Schedule virtual lunches or physically distanced coffee breaks:** High quality connections foster respect, trust, and vitality.

- **Say thank you: Write a note once a week or month via text or email to a colleague, partner, or volunteer.** Appreciation and gratitude notes are shown to build positive emotion, increase connection, and build social bonds (Williams & Bartlett, 2015). Send a personal note when someone has done something that helped you, brought joy, or showed effort. Even if it seems small it can be meaningful.

- **Recognize individuals:** Ask a partner to send a note once a month recognizing a team or individual for the work they've done or a story of how they've impacted somebody's life. Post their notes on the company intranet.

## Across Teams

- **Create a space for safety in conversations and try to create a "we're all in this together" feeling.** Psychological safety can bolster feelings of trust, connection, and positive emotion and buffer against anxiety and stress. Bring teams together to show that employees' well-being physically and mentally are of utmost importance.

- **Company meetings:** Facilitate fireside chats where leaders and individual contributors across teams speak about what they do to stay resilient and positive in this time, and give them a chance to highlight their teams, strengths, what drives them, and why they feel connected to Philabundance's mission.

- Company-wide **Lunch roulette:** Every month, send a list of randomly selected individuals arranged in groups of 3-4 across teams, and sponsor lunch.

- **Virtually connecting / Shadowing:** Where possible, arrange for individuals to pair up (in person or virtually as appropriate) and connect or shadow someone on a different team for half a day. This can increase communication and connectivity between the warehouse, partnership teams, and leadership, for example.

- **Onboarding / reboarding:** Every quarter, host a pizza party for new hires who have joined the company and invite a leader or veteran in the company to meet the new hires. The same may apply for employees, e.g. when someone has a five-year anniversary, host a happy hour or pizza party where icebreakers/team building, intros (team, careers paths, fun fact, strengths), and drinks or games are involved.

- **[Virtual] Lunch and learn:** Bring in individuals across teams to speak about their work, tell stories about the individuals and cross-functional teams they work with and are impacting. If possible, share how they are garnering safety and trust, as well as appreciation for the staff and highlight teams and individuals who have contributed.[6]

- **Celebrate specific individuals and wins:** Where possible, promote visibility in common areas, slide shows, company communications, etc., to recognize individuals and celebrate wins (e.g. gather notes of appreciation or impact from partners).


## Across Partners

- **Consider ways to give back**: Much of Philabundance's mission and pride is in the work they do with their community and partners. To help employees feel connected to the mission, offer one day per month or quarter where they can take on volunteer opportunities with partner agencies, potentially remotely during Covid-19 and in-person at a later time.

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[6] This initiative was already well-advanced prior to the confinement/social distancing measures (C. Loesch, personal communication, March 9, 2020).

- **Client connection with partners:** Bring in partner agency clients (virtually or in person) to speak about their work, tell stories about the individuals they are impacting, and for the staff to meet the fruits of their work.  If possible, have partner agencies share appreciation for the staff and highlight teams and individuals who have contributed.
  - Alternatively, develop a webpage or email address where partners and clients can send in testimonies, emails, stories, and notes of appreciation that are featured in a slide show at company meetings, on the intranet, or on a bulletin board in the break rooms.

## Program & Recommendations

Additionally, below is a menu of recommended programs and practices that will physiologically shift energy, boost brainpower, and garner more productivity.  In the current world, Philabundance may have employees choose between a 1-month free membership to apps like Headspace (mindfulness app), Glo (yoga and mindfulness), Peloton (workout), etc., subsidized up to e.g. $20 per month.  For those who sign up, individuals may be divided into cohorts and may choose activities at the same time to garner connection, with a check-in after. For example:

- Weekly:
  - Mindful Mondays: 60-minute yoga class
  - Wellness Wednesdays: 30/60-minute yoga/meditation before work
  - Fit Fridays: 60-minute cycling or cardio class before/after work
- Daily:
  - Meditation offerings: 10-20-minute recordings available on-demand.  Cohorts may choose a specific time, e.g. at 8:30 AM / 11:30 / 3:30 PM during break times in a quiet and physically distanced space to do a meditation and check in at the end of the week.
  - Afternoon energizer: 10 breaths / Walk with coworkers in a physically distanced manner as required by social distancing (Bonus: to a park.  Ratey and Manning (2014) show that nature can reduce anxiety, depression, and stress.)
- Throughout the day: Have standing meetings and walking one-on-one (walk and talk) meetings, potentially virtually.

**Appendix B – Character Strengths Workshop**

Our second intervention is a training session for all managers at Philabundance in strengths-based leadership.  This is particularly timely at the organization as we learned that management styles vary widely across the organization (C. Loesch, personal communication, March 9, 2020).  In addition, although the annual performance review is standardized across the organization, different factors are emphasized for different teams, and while there has been a recent suggestion that evaluations be conducted through the lens of Philabundance's values, this has led to some confusion (C. Loesch, personal communication, March 9, 2020).

Based on our knowledge of the current demands on the resources at Philabundance, the proposed training will take place over four hours and focus on three elements of strengths-based leadership – attitude, identification, and development (Biswas-Diener et al., 2017).  Before the training, managers will take the VIA Strengths Assessment and receive a report of their top strengths, known as signature strengths (Niemiec, 2017).  The first section of the training will focus on growth mindset, the idea that strengths are malleable and can be developed over time (Dweck, 2008).  The second section will review ways to identify strengths in others, known as strength spotting (Niemiec, 2017).  The third section will cover ways to help employees use and develop their own strengths on the job.

Set forth below is a workshop outline designed to establish a common language with which to discuss strengths, as well as provide foundational knowledge and skills on strengths-based management.  As Philabundance works to integrate a strengths-based approach into the full organization, we recognize the importance of keeping cultural context and individual differences in mind.  Each organization and individual employee is different, and there is no 'one size fits all' method of implementation (Biswas-Diener et al., 2017).  Because of this, it will be

important to focus on culturally appropriate examples of strengths spotting and strength use to

ensure accessibility and relevance for all involved.

## Pre-Training Assignment

· Complete VIA Strengths Survey (viacharacter.org) and review Signature Strengths

· Prepare a *positive introduction*, a story of a time when you used a signature strength to accomplish something personally meaningful

## Training Schedule

· **Introduction to Character Strengths** (15 mins)

· **Positive Introductions**

  o Breakout groups share (30 mins)
  o Whole group recap (15 mins)

· **Strength Spotting**

  o Breakout - Strengths Spotting Positive Introductions (30 mins)
  o Whole group recap (15 mins)

· **Growth Mindset Overview** (15 mins)

**(Break – 15 mins)**

· **Developing Strengths**

  o Recognition of Strengths – Example Scenarios at Philabundance (15 mins)
  o Breakout - Reframing tasks to focus on strengths use (30 mins)
  o Whole group recap (15 mins)

· **Creating a Culture of Strengths**

  o Strategies for integrating into day to day work (15 mins)
  o Strengths + Annual Performance Review (15 mins)
  o Next steps and accountability partners (15 mins)

## **Post-Training**

· All employees complete VIA Strengths Survey (viacharacter.org) and review Signature Strengths with respective managers; managers create and share team strengths profile

· Managers engage in weekly strengths spotting and communication with reports

· Managers incorporate strengths approach into annual performance reviews (for example, when setting annual goals, managers should specifically discuss what strengths employees will be developing and how employees will use those strengths to achieve their goals)

**Appendix C – Materials for an Appreciative Inquiry Summit at Philabundance**

An AI summit is often designed around a "four D" process: ***Discovery***, during which the participants exchange about their positive experiences of the organization; ***Dream***, during which they imagine a best possible outcomes for the organization; ***Design***, during which they imagine a prototype to achieve the Dream; and ***Deployment*** (or Deliverable or Destiny) during which they construct both the principles and then the initiatives to make such outcomes happen (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2004).

In terms of ***participants***, this means inviting the entire organization and external stakeholders, from representatives of the donation agencies to beneficiaries, to representatives of Feeding America, other community actors, and others (based on our understanding that the organization currently has some 150 employees, this could mean represent some 170 people).

In terms of ***timing***, given the work urgency of Philabundance's work and the size of the organization, it is hoped that the AI summit could take place in one day, presumably a day which makes sense in the food flow schedule in the year (and, given the current circumstances, in Phase 2, when the new HR Director has been integrated). It should be noted that we suggest that the "3 D" process described above be tightened for Philabundance into more of a "3 D" process (with a combined Discovery/Dream phase, then the Design and the Destiny phases), in the interests of time.

As for ***venue***, the AI summit should take place in one geographical location (probably a rented space), set up with round tables that each can seat 10 people (the maximum number of participants for stimulating debate in AI contexts, Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2004), each with a microphone, flip chart, and materials setting forth the agenda, questions and the like.

In terms of *managing* the AI process, there would have to be an AI team supported by an outside consultant who would help in the framing of the issues/dreams, and design the exact program.

In terms of the *actual AI process*, each table would be self-moderated among those present, with the table leader trained to call attention to questions drafted to drive creative thinking and discovery of unexplored strengths and opportunities, possibly leading to transformational new directions (Cooperrider, 2012).  Ideally, the other participants at the table will assume one or more roles of recorder, time-keeper, and reporter back to the larger group, but the table leader may have to step in if there is hesitation.  Each of the questions and subjects addressed during an AI summit should be based on Philabundance's strengths (probably something about its positive and worthwhile mission, the devotion of all stakeholders to that mission), and not its perceived weaknesses (silos, failures of communication, etc.), the idea being that focusing on the positive and aligning strengths will make weaknesses irrelevant.

Finally, the *goal* of Philabundance's AI summit will be to emerge from the summit with a view of the future that has focused on high points and designed to leverage the best of the organization and make an impact that is innovative, dream-inspired and co-created by all present. However, the opportunity to engage in this manner will also leverage high-quality connections and generate positive emotions, which in turn, as developed in **Section II.A**, will give rise to positivity resonance triggering the benefits of Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build theory and other benefits.

A possible program for this session is set forth below (some of which inspired by models in Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2004, but modified to take into account what we believe to be appropriate the context at Philabundance).

**Part 1(a) – Prepare pre-Summit Logistics and Positive Frame**

> *All successful events need careful preparation, even if the idea is for the event to give rise to unplanned ideas and innovation. Here are some of the basic steps that should be initiated at least six weeks prior to an AI Summit.*

1. Determine AI Summit organization task force and budget

2. Engage experienced AI outside consultant to assist with AI Summit

3. Choose a date (one day) that makes would be the least disruptive for Philabundance's operations (maybe a Friday to allow the ideas to sink in over the weekend)

4. Organize logistics (rent suitable space, arrange for tables of ten, whiteboards and microphones at each table, coffee, tea and snacks)

5. Decide which external stakeholders to invite (from members of the Board to agencies, community representatives, beneficiaries and more?)

6. Establish a positive (re)frame for the purpose of the Summit. The choice of topic will impact the whole exercise. The focus should be on what Philabundance wants to create and/or where it wants to go, not what problems it wants to solve (silos, lack of communication, etc.).

   Some examples of reframing from other companies:

   | **Original theme** | **Positively reframed theme** |
   |---|---|
   | *Customer complaints* | *Delivery delight* |
   | *Pre-bankruptcy* | *Preparing for era of phenomenal growth* |
   | *Excessive baggage loss (for an airline)* | *Outstanding arrival experience* |
   | *The mistake on the lake* | *Green city on a blue lake* |

7. Extend invitation to entire organization and chosen external stakeholders (drafting of invitation to reflect positive topic and generally notion of positive change, co-elevation and innovation)

8. Choose and train table leaders (from all level of the organization) to moderate at each table

9. Prepare questions and methodology in advance

**Part 1(b) – Prepare the AI Summit Agenda**

*An agenda for a full-day AI Summit might look like this.*

| Time frame | Activity |
| --- | --- |
| 8:30 – 9:00 | Coffee and assembling at round tables |
| 9:00 – 9:30 | Welcome and opening address<br>● Topic and objectives<br>● Notion of whole organization participating<br>● Overview of AI Summit methodology<br>● Guidelines for participants |
| 9:30 – 11:00 | Round table "Discovery/Dream" discussion to identify positive moments and themes |
| 11:00 – 11:30 | Break |
| 11:30 – 12:45 | Feedback by each table leader of top 2-3 positive ideas that came out of "Discovery/Dream" discussion in front of whole group |
| 12:45 – 2:00 | Lunch |
| 2:00 – 3:30 | Round table "Design" brainstorming discussion to design a positive future for Philabundance |
| 3:30 – 3:45 | Break |
| 3:45 – 4:30 | Round table "Destiny" brainstorming to imagine implementation strategies for positive future Design ideas. |
| 4:30 – 5:00 | "Destiny" intention vote with whole group participation |
| 5:00 – 5:15 | Moderator wrap-up, commitment to live the AI Destiny and next steps. |

**Part 2 – Discovery/Dream Round Table Worksheet and Whole Group Consolidation**

*Key questions to be asked to each participant at each table*

1. What has been the best experience for you at or with Philabundance?  This would be an experience when you felt the most alive and engaged.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. What is it that you most value about yourself, your job and the organization?

Yourself_____
_____

Job_____
_____

Organization_____
_____

3. What are the fundamental components of Philabundance that give it life, that make it work, without which it would not exist?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. What three dreams do you have for Philabundance to make it the most impactful and effective food bank in the United States?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

*Table leaders encourage brainstorming of ideas that were generated through this exercise, and guide the table to agree on two or three of the best ideas to share with the group.  A volunteer (or table leader) acts as the rapporteur on such three ideas to the whole group.*

**Part 3 – Design**

> *Brainstorm together around each table the ideas that emerged*
> *from the Discovery/Dream exercise, in particular the two or three*
> *dreams for the future, and then prototype the most promising ones*
> *(i.e., what would that dream look like). Table leaders manage the*
> *discussion and explain the rules and ensure they are followed.*
> *Ideally they will be assisted by a volunteer to be a time-keeper and*
> *a rapporteur who will then share the table's best two or three ideas*
> *with the whole group.*

1. Moderator invites the Summit participants to go back to their table discussions and design their future through the strengths agreed during the whole group consolidation discussion through a table brainstorming.

2. Table leader submits this question to the table for brainstorming: "*If anything imaginable were possible for the future of Philabundance, what might that be and how might we make it happen....?*"

3. Brainstorming rules:

   ● Don't dismiss any ideas for now.
   ● Encourage wild ideas.
   ● Encourage quantity as much as quality of ideas.
   ● Use the whiteboard, feel free to list ideas, or even draw the idea.
   ● Build on the ideas of others.
   ● Make sure everyone speaks, and have one conversation at a time.

4. Take a (well-deserved) break.

5. Table to regroup and choose – together – two or three Design ideas from the table to present to the whole group. Ask for a volunteer to be the rapporteur for this purpose. In capturing the ideas to be presented to the whole group, look for:

   ● Design ideas that elevate or inspire emotions such as hope, inspiration and interest
   ● Vivid language
   ● Positive and uplifting messages.

6. Rapporteur/Table leader to share the table's top two or three Design ideas with the whole group.

**Part 4 – Destiny**

> *The Destiny phase of an AI Summit involves several steps, some of which will happen at the AI Summit, some of which afterwards – but the intention to commit to the future will be expressed at the AI Summit.*

### *During the AI Summit*

1. Ask each table to propose a way of putting whatever AI Design initiatives were discussed into action. The question put to each table can be something like "*What would you propose to implement the initiatives – and the learnings – of this AI Summit?*". Each participant's answers can be shared through post-its and then narrowed down by the table as a group or the table leader or in whatever other way the table leader feels appropriate. The answers can be

   - Targets
   - Goals
   - Strategies
   - Organizational changes or
   - Other action items

2. The table leaders can share the table's top two proposals with the whole group, with a goal to create a mandate for a Destiny statement to be crafted and shared in the coming month.

3. Take a vote in front of the whole room on a table-by-table basis to evaluate (and hopefully endorse) the Destiny implementation proposals presented.

4. The question put to the vote should be framed as: "*Do you endorse moving forward with this AI initiative?*", and each table should be given time (time as appears necessary) to discuss.

### *After the AI Summit*

5. Table leaders or the people mandated at the AI Summit to meet over the ensuing month and draft a Philabundance Destiny statement that includes the ideas from the AI Summit and proposes an implementation plan and any pilots for learning.

6. Share the Destiny statement with the whole organization.

7. Make it live in the organization through management, operations, communications, messaging, inter- and intra-department ways of working and HR (objectives, evaluations and remuneration).

8. Commit to an annual management report on the objectives chosen at the AI Summit, and generate both dialogue around and accountability for those objectives.