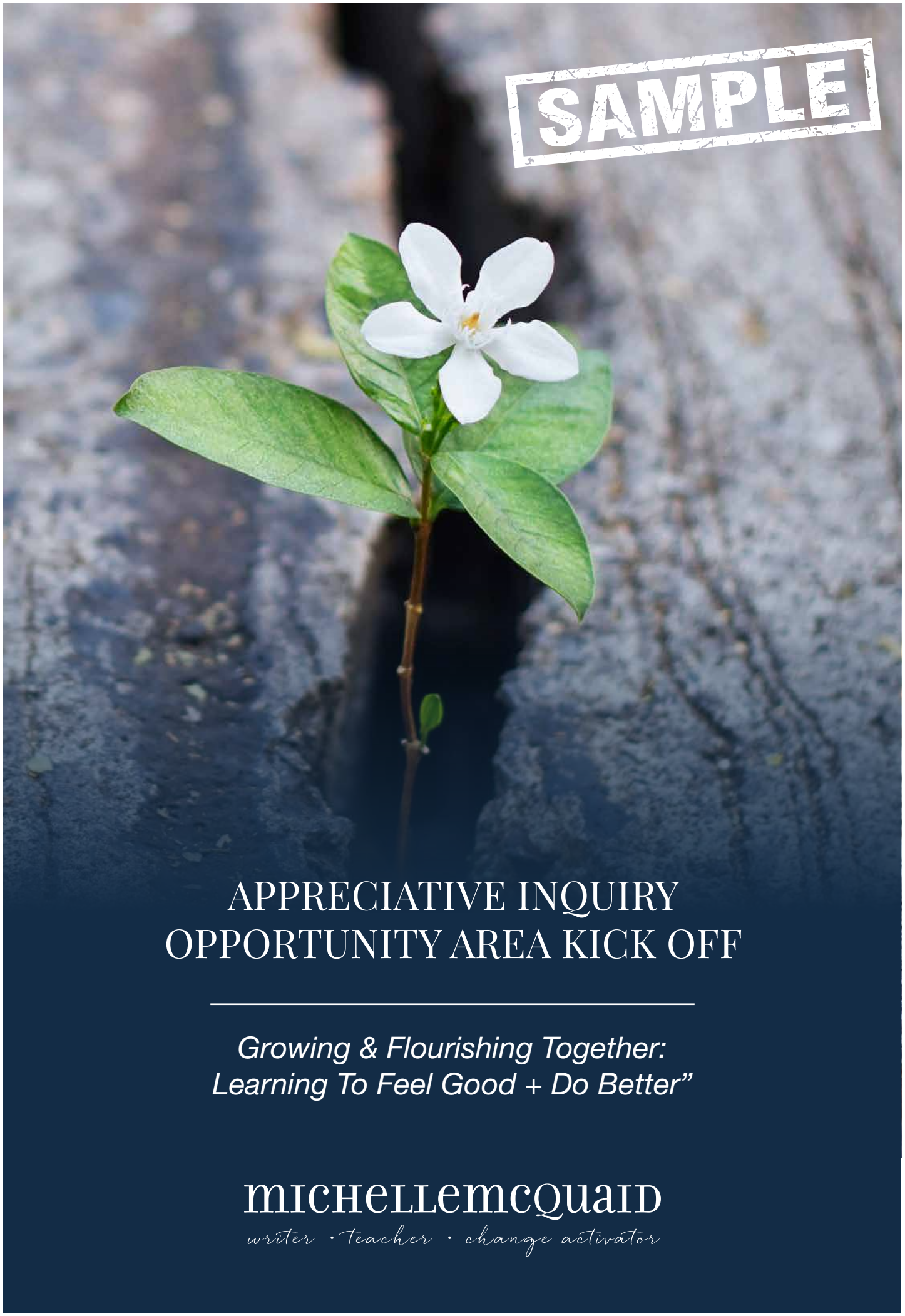


APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY OPPORTUNITY AREA KICK OFF

Growing & Flourishing Together:
Learning To Feel Good + Do Better"

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YOUR INVITATION

Welcome and thank you for helping to make our shared AI Summit dreams of growing and flourishing together a reality. We're so glad you're here.

Just as the AI Summit wasn't your typical workshop, as we come together to deliver on our shared hopes, these will not be your typical meetings. We want to help you take your ability to grow and flourish – individually and collectively – as you work on this initiative to a new level so that you can do the best work of your life. And we want to give you the knowledge, skills, and support to be able to take what you learn through this process and use it with other teams across our school.

Thus, your primary goal in coming together is discovering how to bring out the best in yourself and others – approach these meetings as a living lab. As you figure this out and fine-tune your ways of working together, your secondary goal of delivering on the initiative for which you volunteered will be realized more easily, effectively, and joyfully (yes, even in the most challenging moments) than any work you've ever done before. Don't worry, there is a growing body of evidence that backs this likelihood up, and we're going to provide you with everything you'll need to make this possible.

Think of this as the ultimate experiment in learning how to work smarter, rather than harder.

Now, let's get started.

YOUR CHALLENGE

How do you help a team and the people within it to grow and flourish? The first thing to remember is that flourishing is not a static state, but a reflection of the energy we have to engage with the world around us. In order to maintain this energy so that we can show up and discover our true potential, we need to be part of an environment that supports our wellbeing and we need to take responsibility for prioritizing the small daily actions that help us to feel good and function effectively – no matter how busy we are.

We understand that right now, no matter how good your intentions are, that might feel like a BIG request. It's no wonder when the number one thing we've found that immediately improves most people's wellbeing at work is to simply make the time to get up from their desks so they can stop working – even for just ten minutes - and eat lunch each day. We really do understand how busy you are, but we also know that to some degree we are each busy with the things that we choose to prioritize. And the good news is that if you're ready to work smarter rather than harder, we can show you how to make small choices that will make it easier to flourish at work.

But you have to be willing to experiment, which is what these meetings are for.

The problem is that many of us still show up to work each day with a very Newtonian view of the world. We think that like a closed, clockwork system we can press a button to make an action happen and a steady, consistent, and reasoned pace of work will emerge. And by chance this doesn't occur, then simply locating the source of the problem and fixing it will ensure that normal service returns.

The challenge is that people and schools are living – not closed - systems.

Living system don't tick, they pulse. Just put your hands on your heart and you'll discover this to be the truth. Now imagine something really exciting has just happened in the room you're in – perhaps someone you haven't seen for ages has just walked through the door and you've jumped to your feet and rushed over to greet them. What happens to your heart in this moment? Your pulse changes.

Be it one person or an entire school, living systems are shaped not simply by what happens within, but by what is happening around them. We are in a constant dynamic dance that results in the exchange of energy between ourselves and our environment. And as a result we are constantly changing, growing, and emerging, which is what enables us to flourish.

The goal of a living system is never long periods of stability, it is learning to be curious, to be connected, to be creative, to be conscious and to seek coherence so that it can grow, even when it surrounded by chaos. For people to do this, however, Professors Edward Deci and Richard Ryan have found that we need our environment to be supportive of our universal and basic psychological needs. This means we need opportunities to:

- Build **competence** in the skills we intrinsically value so that we have the energy for learning. This means being part of an environment that provides us with new challenges that stretch us, and provide us with the kind of feedback that helps us to grow.
- Feel **relatedness** so we can freely and authentically show others that we care and know that others accept us for who we are and genuinely care about us. This means being part of an environment that creates space for us to belong, and where we treat each other with respect, generosity, and compassion.
- Have the freedom to act with **autonomy** and ensure our behaviors are authentically aligned with our interests and values. This means being part of an environment that encourages us to self-organize, and provides the support we need for order to emerge.

This is why an AI Summit works. This is what we want to help you create together.

While this may sound a little frightening if stability, not growth is our goal, let us reassure you that living systems change in order to preserve themselves and their environments. As much as are wired with a drive for differentiation so that we can be true to ourselves, we are also wired with a drive for coherence so that our choices ensure we belong to something bigger than just each of us alone. It is by understanding and supporting this dynamic dance of independence and interdependence that we create new possibilities not previously imagined and are able to flourish together.

In the same way that we approach a lot of our work, post-AI Summit efforts always run the risk of becoming task focused, at the expense of our relationships. The current nature of the way we work together takes over and moves us into a space of rigid deadlines and resource management, both important in their own way, but to maintain the magic and value of the AI process we need to keep creating space as we meet for living systems to flourish.

We must not confuse control with order.

This is why your goal is not to simply deliver on your chosen opportunity area. Instead, your goal is to experiment with new ways of thinking, learning, communicating, creating, and delivering together so that appreciative approaches can become part of the way work is done in the future in our school.

How can you make this your reality?

YOUR TOOLS

You may find tackling this challenge easier if you draw upon the tools Professor Martin Seligman and others have found can help to improve your wellbeing so that you can feel good and function effectively. Here are some PERMAH inspired practices to help shape the way you meet and work together:

- **Mood matters** – Dr. Daniel Goleman suggests 20 – 30% of performance in a team is determined by people's mood. This makes sense given Professor Barbara Fredrickson has found that positive emotions help to broaden our minds and build our resources, while negative emotions narrow us in to focus on what's right in front of us. We're not saying that one is better than the other, just that they do different things neurologically that shape how you show up in meetings. If you're coming together to be curious, creative and collaborative we recommend starting your meetings with some positivity. Try asking: "What's working well?" or "Why is being here important to you today?" Take turns to share a funny story, a favourite short clip, or cartoon. Give people a chance to connect and feel safe with each other.
- **Develop people's strengths** – Gallup researchers have found that when we have a chance to do what we do best, we're up to six times more engaged in what we're doing. Do you know what each other's strengths are (there is a chart at the back of this guide if you want to map them and keep this handy using the free, ten minute VIA Survey)? How can you create opportunities for people to use their strengths when you come together? How can you give each other strengths-based feedback?
- **Be effective givers** – Professor Adam Grant suggests that when teams prioritize a culture of giving – where people are willing to help each other without expecting anything in return – they are more efficient at solving problems, are more cohesive and coordinated and establish environments and are more productive. Who have you helped lately? Are you finding ways to grow the pie for everybody and that make the best use of people's strengths? Have you asked for help recently? Do you have the courage to talk to each other about behaviors that undermine your willingness to be generous with each other?
- **Make it count** – Professor Michael Steger has found that people feel happier, more motivated, more committed, and more satisfied when they feel what they do has meaning and purpose. Studies suggest the single strongest predictor of meaningfulness is knowing that what we are doing will have a positive impact on others. What can you do to make it easy to remember, each time, why coming together matters? How will you know that what you're doing is of service for people in our school - even if initially this is just for each other? How will you savor and celebrate the difference you are making?

- **Show up** – Professor Carol Dweck suggests that more important than believing in your abilities, is the belief that you can improve upon them. She also notes that in order to avoid stupid grit and sticking with things that no longer benefit you or others, that you want to practice a growth mindset with a healthy dose of self-compassion. What learning goals have you set for your team and are these pushing you far enough outside your comfort zone without overwhelming you entirely? How are you self-compassionately sharing your screw ups and using these opportunities for growth? What feedback are you seeking about the work you're doing and how you're showing up so that you can continue to improve at what you love?
- **Take your pulse** – Tony Schwartz point outs that energy, not time, is our most precious resource. Because we pulse, rather than run like machines, respectfully managing our energy by honoring our needs for regular movement, good food, deep sleep, and restful recovery is the basic foundation of maintaining our energy. It is the kind thing to do for ourselves and for the others who depend on us. Can you take a walking meeting and do it standing? Do people need to eat, and if yes, what good food can you share? Is this project respecting people's need for rest and recovery and setting deadlines accordingly?

How might this work practically? Here is a suggested template for meeting agendas that you can steal with pride, adapt, or throw out as needed by your group.

1. WHAT'S WORKING WELL?

   Set the mood

   A quick check-in either round the table or with the person next to you.

2. HOW CAN WE BEST BE OF SERVICE TODAY?

   Make it count + Take your pulse

   Table items for the meeting (these can be pre-circulated and sanity checked now) or you can let the group self-organize each time it comes together. Check if this might work for a walking meeting or there are sections you want to stand for. Have people got food and water if needed? Again these may be items you want to have pre-agreed upon to make the most of your time together, but it is always worth checking in on the day to honor people's needs.

3. WHO IS BEST SUITED TO LEAD?

Develop people's strengths

Based on the agreed agenda and people's strengths, passions, and willingness to take responsibility, who will lead each item (this can be pre-suggested if the agenda has been pre-circulated but it is always worth checking)?

4. HOW DO WE WANT TO SHOW UP?

Be effective givers + Show up

Dive into the agenda and work through the agreed items with your growth mindsets, generosity, and strengths in place. Remember if things are going to plan, to reach for self-compassion as needed so you can activate your self-awareness and caregiving systems.

5. WHAT DID WE LEARN TOGETHER?

Show up + Mood matters

Make sure you have ten minutes at the end of your meeting to check in on what people have gained from this conversation. You might encourage people to share a-ha moments, their key takeaways for action or a moment of gratitude and/or strengths feedback for each other. This can be with the person next to them or open to the group. Be in no doubt that endings matter so don't run over! Think about how you want to send the team back out into the world so they feel engaged, energized, and motivated to act on the conversation you've had.

As you play through today's workshop, think about the small ways you might embed the PERMAH practices into the way you want to work together.

YOUR GUIDELINES

Let's figure out together how we can bring out the best in your team. Use this guide in your first meeting to help your team create an environment in which you are most likely to flourish – individually and collectively. This conversation is designed to be a quick, mini-version of your AI Summit experience, which you are free to steal with pride for other teams.

We suggest you allocate your time as follows:

0.00 mins **Welcome + Review Agenda + Our Goal**

0.05 mins **Discovery:** Activity 1 - Know your strengths
5 minutes personal reflection.
5 minutes team sharing of what works.
Write up the insights if you can.

0.15 mins **Dream:** Activity 2 - Share your hopes
5 minutes personal reflection.
5 minutes team sharing

0.25 mins **Design:** Activity 3 – Agree on a way forward
4 minutes personal reflection
6 minutes partner reflections (3 minutes per person)
5 minutes personal consolidation and posting
5 minutes voting

0.45 mins **Deploy:** Activity 4 – Taking responsibility
15 minutes group conversation (5 minutes per question)*
*If your team can meet for 90 minutes we suggest adding extra time here as needed

1.00 mins **Next Steps:** Lightning round team check-in

1.10 mins **Close**

1 | KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS

You already know how to make this work. Just think back to the best experiences you've had of working with others on something that really mattered to you. It might have been when you were a child, when you were studying, or at work. It might have been a big project or a small conversation. It might be one clear memory or a collection of different moments.

When have you really felt heard and been truly willing to listen? When have you really felt seen and valued for the strengths that you bring? When you really felt energized, engaged, and excited by what you were working on with others? When have you really felt like you were making a positive difference? What made these experiences possible? What were you able to achieve as a result?

Write down your reflections below:

Please circle in your notes the beliefs, the behaviors, the ways that you connected with others that made these experiences so memorable and effective.

2 | SHARE YOUR HOPES

If you were to build on these strengths as this team works together, what might be possible when you look at the How Might We Template and Prototype Pitch Template you created together in the AI Summit? If you fast forward to our last meeting together and we're savoring and celebrating what we've been able to achieve, reminiscing about the experiences we've had, and shaking our heads in wonder at the difference we've made for others, what would you feel proud of achieving?

What have we delivered together? What did we do that made it possible for us to flourish – collectively and individually – throughout this experience (remember what we've learned about living systems and PERMAH)? What actions did we choose to prioritize to make our prototype a reality? What difference have we really made for others?

Write down your hopes below:

Please circle in your notes the hopes about which you feel so passionate you are willing to take responsibility for helping the team realize these outcomes.

3 | AGREE ON A WAY FORWARD

What do your shared hopes mean for how we will practically work together now? Systems flourish when they have a clear sense of:

- Who they want to be - what difference do we want our efforts to make for others?
- How they value working – what are our guiding principles to help us flourish as we work together?
- What they intend to achieve – what are our priorities/steps to deliver on our prototype?

Please choose one of these questions to answer below. Tip: You spoke at the AI Summit about the difference you want to make for others, if this has not really changed, we suggest you pick an alternative question to help your group move forward.

Write down the question just as it appears. Then using your circled hopes for inspiration, and what we've learned helps living systems to flourish, quickly and clearly write down (so others can easily read and understand what you're proposing) how you'd most like us to answer the question together. (You can write them directly on this guide or use post-it notes)

Then make sure your name is on your notes and pass them to another team member.

Look at what the person has written as a possible answer to their chosen question about how we can bring out the best in each other in this team. Try to expand on and enhance these ideas based on your own experiences and hopes about what might help our team to flourish.

Then pass all of these notes to another team member.

First look at what the person has written as a possible answer to their chosen question about how we can bring out the best in each other on this team. Then look at how the last person expanded and enhanced these ideas, and now add your thoughts to expand and enhance what is being proposed based on your own experiences and hopes about what might help our team to flourish.

Please return all of these notes to the original author.

Remember that living systems flourish by learning to be curious, to be connected, to be creative, to be conscious, and to seek coherence so that they can grow, even when surrounded by chaos. With this in mind, look at the way your original answer has been expanded and enhanced, and see how you can take these suggestions and strengthen your idea.

TIP: The best answers to these questions are the ones people can easily remember so they can guide everyone's behaviors. Look for meaningful, simple, and brief ways to capture these ideas for each other.

Write down your name and your final recommendation – just your best idea - on a post-it note and place it on the wall under your chosen question so it can be shared with others. Make sure you are only recommending ways of working together about which you feel so passionate you are willing to take responsibility and help lead this effort.

Review everyone's answers to their chosen questions. Place a tick and your initials next to any of the answers you are willing to support. There is no limit to how many ticks you allocate – you just have to support the approach enough that you are genuinely willing to put your energy behind it.

Please note, the kind thing to do for your team in this moment so you don't drain your team's energy, is to not place ticks against actions you have no real intention of following through with. It's ok if an idea has no ticks, it just means that right now we don't have a shared energy for this approach. It doesn't mean that you think the idea, or the person who suggested it, is not worthy of our support.

4 | TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

As a group see if you can now answer each question by reviewing how people have voted and what you are willing to take responsibility for delivering together. Assign a discussion leader, a recorder, and a timekeeper to keep your conversation on track. We suggest you stand for this exercise if possible to keep your energy levels high and your conversation focused.

Discussion leader: Please help everyone's voice to be heard as you find coherence in the way you want to work together by converging your answers to discover as a team:

- Who do you want to be - what difference do we want our efforts to make for others?
- How do you value working – what guiding principles will help us flourish as we work together?
- What do you intend to achieve – what are our priorities/steps to deliver on our prototype?

TIP: Remember the best answers to these questions are the ones people can easily remember so they can easily guide everyone's behaviors.

Recorder: Please capture the answers using the Flourishing Team template (at the end of your guide) so these can easily be shared with all team members and your post-Summit coordinator after this meeting.

Timekeeper: Please have the team agree at the outset how much time you want to allocate to this discussion and nudge as needed to keep people on track.

Please note: When people are passionate about diverse ideas, it's natural to experience conflict. Don't be put off by this. In great teams people don't always agree. The divergence of ideas is what surfaces new possibilities.

The generous and kind thing to do when you disagree, is to respect and value others enough that you are willing to let them know if something isn't working for you – otherwise you rob them of the chance for learning and growth. Ask clearly for what you need, make your case as factually as possible, and listen and be open to how others respond.

What great teams do differently, is engage in these practices in ways that ensure people always feel safe, respected, and valued for their differences, and are never judged or isolated. They leave their need to be right at the door, and use their curiosity and compassion to create something together that can truly be of service to others.

It's a messy but loving process that allows us to grow together.

5 | PLAN YOUR NEXT STEPS

As you wrap up please complete this lightning round of questions so you are clear about what happens next:

- Who would like to take the next step to be part of realizing the hopes we've furthered today? (Show of hands – please make sure the names of team members are recorded that are going forward on the Flourishing Team Template).
- What is the smallest thing you could do before we next meet to make our shared hopes a reality?
- What are you most looking forward to figuring out or creating next time we meet? (Note these for possible agenda items).
- When will we next meet? (Please note on the Flourishing Team Template).
- Who would like to lead our next conversation? (Please note on the Flourishing Team Template).
- Who will send the notes from this conversation and when? (Please make the notes using the Flourishing Team template provided go to the Post-Summit coordinator).
- If there was one sentence of thanks to the team or an individual for the positive difference they have made for you today, what would you like to say? (optional for those moved to share).*

*Alternatively, if you have a short funny story, poem, video, or cartoon you'd like to share to leave the session on a positive note please do this instead.

FLOURISHING TEAM TEMPLATE

Please record your initiative/team name:

What difference do we want our efforts to make for others?

What are our chosen guiding principles to help us flourish as we work together?

What are our chosen priorities/steps to deliver on our how might we ideas and prototype?

Who are our team members going forward?

When we will next meet and where?

What do we want to cover next time?

Who will lead this meeting?