



**American  
Public Gardens  
Association**

Creating a More Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Garden

SAMPLE PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

# Workshop Agenda

## Morning Session

### 9am – 12:00pm

- Sign-in and Finding Your Assigned Table
- Welcome and Introductions
- Overview of Workshop & Group Contracting
- Discovering Our Strengths
- Discovering the Strengths of Our Community
- Visions of an Ideal Future
- Dreaming with Our Feet on the Ground

## Working Lunch

### 12:00pm – 12:45pm

- Tour the “Gallery” of High Points, Strengths, and Ideal Futures
- Reflection on Expanding Sense of Possibility
- Insights from the Morning

## Afternoon Session

### 12:45pm-4pm

- Considering Areas of Opportunity
- Identifying Strong Strategic Opportunities
- Designing Rapid Prototypes
- Action Planning
- Presentation of Commitments for the Future
- Reflection on the Day and Planning Next Steps



## Part 1: Discovering Our Strengths

### Activity 1. High Point Story

Reflect on your experience within your career and community. As you think over your many experiences, there have obviously been ups and downs, peaks and valleys, high points and low. For this exercise, we would like you to reflect on one of the most memorable high point moments when you felt you could be your authentic self.

Think about a time that stands out as a high point for you because you were able to be your authentic self. A time when you felt *appreciated, supported, or welcome* either at work or while visiting a public garden or cultural institution (ex: museum). This experience does not need to be related to the Garden, but it could if you like. If you are getting stuck, refer to the box below.

Now tell the story. What happened? What were your feelings? What allowed you to express yourself authentically? Were there any challenges? How were they overcome? Any other insights?

#### What do you mean by “authentic”?

Being able to express yourself authentically means that you feel you can offer your ideas without judgement. This might mean you are able to share an important personal experience from your life. You were not afraid to ask questions or make a mistake.

If you have never felt this way, think about another positive experience either at work. Why does it stick out as positive in your mind? What do you wish had happened differently? How could the experience have been more positive? What could other people have done to make you feel more included, open, or involved?



## Activity 2. Sharing Your High Point Story

You will ask your partner two questions and then switch roles. As you listen to your partner's high point story, take notes on what stands out to you as key details. While listening, use thoughtful questions and body language to encourage your partner to share fully and go deeper into what might be the strengths, attributes, values, or guiding principles that enabled this high point to occur.

1. First, ask your partner:  
**What would you describe as being a personal high-point experience when you felt you could be your authentic self?**
  
2. Then, ask your partner:  
**What do you value most about your work and yourself?**
  
3. Together, answer the following question regarding both of your high point stories:  
**What can you see as the key strengths, values, qualities, ways of working, or best practices that enabled these high point stories to occur?**
  
4. Finally, together, consider these questions:  
**What are three core factors that give the Garden life?**  
**How is authenticity promoted at the Garden right now?**



## Part 2: Discovering the Strengths of Our Community

**Purpose:** To welcome and appreciate each other, to learn about significant experiences, strengths, capabilities, and resources people bring to the workshop.

**Group Roles:** Each table will manage its own discussion, data, time, and reports. Here are useful roles for managing this activity. All roles can be rotated over the course of the day.

- **Discussion Leader** ensures that each person who wants to speak is heard within the time available. Keeps group on track to finish on time.
- **Time Keeper** keeps the group aware of time left. Monitors report-out and signals time remaining to person talking.
- **Recorder** organizes sticky notes, writes group's output on flipcharts or sticky notes using the speaker's actual words, asks people to restate long ideas briefly.
- **Reporter** delivers report to large group in time allotted.

Regardless of group roles, each person at the table can make important contributions and can offer fresh perspective to the conversation. Encourage participation from all so we can benefit from voices of the whole Garden.

### Guidelines:

1. Select a discussion leader, timekeeper, recorder, and reporter.
2. Go around and introduce your interview partner in one minute by sharing a few details of personal background and a couple of highlights or exciting details as related to their high-point story
  - Individuals can use Worksheet 1 for their notes
3. Once everyone has shared, the Recorder will summarize the highlights and key factors described on flipchart paper.
4. As a group, consider the question: **“What can you see as the key strengths, values, qualities, ways of working, or best practices that enabled these high point stories to occur?”**
  - Everyone may share additional stories and observations not covered in the initial introductions.
  - Listen for patterns and themes. The Recorder should reorganize the sticky notes to cluster common ideas.
5. In reviewing the stories that the group has shared, consider the questions: **“What are three core factors that give the Garden life? How is authenticity promoted at the Garden right now?”**
  - As a group, determine the Top Three Core Factors your group agrees bring life to the Garden – elements that should keep no matter what the future brings.
  - Individuals can use Worksheet 2 for their notes



## Worksheet 1: High Point Stories

<b>Stories from Each Group Member</b>	<b>What Factors Allowed People to Authentically Collaborate with Others</b>

## Worksheet 2: Things the Garden Should Keep

### Best Practices of the Garden & Stories That Demonstrate Excellence

**As a group, name and describe three strengths, qualities, or values that the Garden should keep no matter how much it changes in the future.**

1.

2.

3.



## Part 3: Visions of an Ideal Future

**Purpose:** To imagine a future you want to work towards – a future where all people feel welcome and included at the Garden.

### Guidelines:

1. Take a few minutes to individually read and consider the following prompt. Use the space below to note your immediate thoughts.
  - Let's assume tonight you fall into a sound sleep...a deep sleep that last five years. When you wake up, it's 2024. During those five years, many positive innovations and changes have happened throughout the Garden. The Garden has become the organization and community member you most want it to be. It is exciting to see and be a part of it. The Garden connects with a diverse array of visitors, staff, and volunteers. Through its practices, the Garden is inclusive of all people, regardless of difference. During those five years, some miracles even happened, allowing your wildest dreams to come true.

Consider what you see happening—things that are new, different, or the same but even better.

2. Go around the table and have each participant share their thoughts on the prompt.
  - The Recorder should make note of each response. As more people share, begin to group similar thoughts and ideas.
3. Once everyone has shared their Vision of an Ideal Future, you will begin to create your group's shared vision of 2024.
  - Identify common ideas, shared values, and similar ideas. What elements of this ideal future are most important to your group?
  - Consider the ideas that were unique or not common among group members. What are the core elements of these ideas? What strategic value do they provide? How can we incorporate this into our shared vision?
  - Are there ideas that are in conflict with one another? What goals does each idea seek to achieve? How are these ideas similar or different from the shared vision? How can we incorporate this idea into our shared vision so all perspectives and experiences are valued?
  - What elements, ideas, and values stand out the strongest to all of us? What is the core of our group's shared vision of 2024?
4. When your group has completed sharing Ideal Futures, identified commonalities, and considered unique and conflicting ideas, move on to the next activity.





## Part 4: Dreaming With Our Feet on the Ground

**Purpose:** Transform your group's Vision of an Ideal Future into an imaginary newspaper headline that captures every member's perspective and will be shared with the group to provide insight into every participant's experience regarding diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility.

### Guidelines:

1. Consider the similar and strongest elements of your group's ideal future from the previous activity. Visualize the Garden you really want as if it exists now and consider the question:
  - What is happening that is new, different, or better as it relates to deepening connections and creating welcoming environments for all communities?
  - Spend enough time to concretely imagine the Garden in terms of operations, key relationships, and support that are needed to make it happen. Be bold. This is an exercise in dreaming and imagination for a world where this ideal future can be possible.
2. As this Future Garden materializes, consider the Garden in the current year and what would need to be done to make the Future Garden a reality.
  - What is the smallest step we could take today that might have the largest impact to become the future Garden you want?
  - What is one big and bolder strategic step we might consider, even something we've never thought of before?
3. Now, create the front page of a 2023 edition of the *Major City News* with a cover page dedicated to the Garden. This should include a headline and sub-headline, as well as bullet points about what would be written in the article. Groups are encouraged to draw accompanying pictures, as well.

Make sure to include information about:

- What are the key elements and the heart of the story?
  - What are the concrete steps and actions that have been taken to get there
  - What connections and relationships have been fundamental to success?
4. Each table will display their front pages on flipcharts. Time permitting, the Reporter will share a three-minute summary of the cover story with the whole group.



## Key Takeaways from Our Visions of an Ideal Future

*Over lunch, take time to tour the other groups' flipcharts and take notes on the following areas. Towards the end of lunch, connect with your partner about key insights and areas where you feel an expanded sense of possibility.*

<b>Elements of the Visions I Find Most Important or Exciting (What)</b>	<b>Opportunities and Possibilities for Action I Find Most Exciting (How)</b>



## Part 5: Considering Areas of Opportunity

**Purpose:** To brainstorm as many ideas as possible related to your group’s area of opportunity—ideas that can move the Garden in the direction of our visions and dreams for the future.

### Guidelines:

1. Connect with your original partner from Part 1. One partner will share their key insights and takeaways from the presentations. The other partner should take notes as the partner speaks. Then, switch.
2. In two minutes total, each table member will share what elements of all the visions stood out to them.
  - The Recorder record these ideas on sticky notes, so they can be easily moved around for future activities. Continue to reorganize and arrange as more people share stories.
3. The Discussion Leader will read aloud the group’s “Area of Opportunity.”
4. Together, consider:
  - Assuming anything imaginable is possible, *what are the strongest ways we could achieve diversity and inclusion as it relates to our area of opportunity?*
  - In reviewing all of the thoughts shared in Step 2, are there elements could be applied directly to your area of opportunity?

\* The Discussion Leader should encourage all participants to share ideas regarding the group’s Area of Opportunity. At this stage, the group should be aiming for a large amount of ideas (quantity) instead of fully developed or realistic ideas (quality).



## Part 6: Identifying Strong Strategic Opportunities

**Purpose:** To identify the strongest ideas related to your group’s area of opportunity – ideas that can have the biggest impact on moving the Garden in the direction of our visions and dreams for the future.

1. Look at all of the ideas on the flipchart more broadly and consider how they might have commonalities or could be clustered together.
2. Now, shift from surfacing many ideas to deciding which are the strongest, aiming to develop your “Top 3 Strategic Opportunities.”
  - Which ideas do you, as a group, see as the most crucial for creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive Garden?
  - These strategic opportunities could include: an area where the Garden already thrives and could invest more; an area where the Garden currently struggles, but has the power and resources/strengths to turn things around; an area where the Garden needs to do more work and develop new capacity
3. The Recorder will transcribe the group’s decisions of the Top 3 Strategic Opportunities to a flipchart sheet.



## Part 7: Designing Rapid Prototypes

**Purpose:** To focus on the most promising ideas from the brainstorming session and design “prototypes” that can help us realize our vision of a more diverse and inclusive Garden. The goal is to begin prototyping initiatives that have strategic value for the organization and broader communities.

### Guidelines:

1. Do a quick read of the promising ideas or combination of ideas that your group brainstormed. Think about ideas that can be designed into something that is tangible – an initiative that creates real, practicable value. It might be a new structure or service, a redesign of a program, a training manual or session, a new communication program, tools for efficiency, new process design, a partnership within the community... the possibilities are endless.

As you discuss these ideas further, consider:

- Have we gone far enough in terms of thinking about resources, initiatives, and innovation if our community or the public garden sector?
  - Is it clear how these ideas are connected and how they support the Garden’s mission, as well as diversity and inclusion efforts?
  - Are there additional assets with the Garden that could be leveraged to support these ideas? What else can we offer to support these ideas or move these initiatives forward?
2. Narrow and prioritize the brainstormed list of “prototypes” through discussion or group vote.
    - The Reporter should prepare to give a two-minute report for the whole group, of a few of your strongest prototypes, as well as sufficient detail to explain each idea.



## Part 8: Action Planning

**Purpose:** To begin to create action plans, personal commitments, and collaborations that will move us closer to our vision of an ideal future of a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and accessible Garden.

### Guidelines:

1. As a group, discuss and build the Action Plan for the initiative you began to prototype
  - The Recorder will create a final copy of the Action Plan.
  - Reporter should prepare to give a two-minute report to the larger group. Be sure to include the most persuasive and actionable content, including how this fits into the Garden's greater mission and resources/commitments that can be leveraged now to make this strategic opportunity happen.

### Things to Consider:

- Shift from “problem-solving” to “opportunity-solving.”
- Instead of trying to poke holes in ideas, use your skills and knowledge to offer potential scenarios where your group might still need to convince someone. Ask “How can we frame this so \_\_\_\_\_ would also be convinced?”



## Our Group Action Plan

Name of Strategic Initiative:

### Design Team

Names and email addresses of the group members who will support this initiative

### Vision of the Initiative

What are the aims or mission? What are the big goals you are trying to achieve?

### Course of Action, Assets to Be Leveraged, and Commitments of Support

Include what will be done to support this vision. Include what assets or strengths of the Garden will need to be activated to make this a success. Also, share what your group is willing to dedicate in order to make this initiative happen (See chart on Page 20).



## Key Success Factors & Milestones

Be as specific as possible in terms of how you will measure outcomes. Also include short-term (first three weeks), moderate-term (first three months), and longer-term (one year) milestones, goals, and targets.

## Other Stakeholders

Name the groups, organizations, and individuals you want to include in this initiative and how you will take steps to include them.





## Communications

How will you maintain contact and forge connections within this group to help this strategic initiative succeed?

## Final Recommendations

Summarize the above, showcase strength and relevance of initiative, and get the audience excited about this potential of this strategic initiative.



### Our Group Action Plan Commitments

What Will Be Done	Person Responsible	Completion Date	Help Needed from Others



## Wrap Up: Reflection on the Day & Next Steps for Action

*With your original interview partner, discuss the following*

1. Name the three most important things that happened at this workshop:

One key area of learning for me was:

One high point of the workshop for me was:

In my view, one of the most important outcomes was:

2. What one message of innovation or inspiration will I communicate to others to further the success of the workshop's objectives?

3. What are my personal commitments going forward after the workshop?

4. How would I like to be involved in continuing to work on my initiative or on other projects that come out of this workshop?

