



**OCCUPY  
THE PRESENT,  
CHANGE  
THE FUTURE**



# Occupy the Present, Change the Future

## COLLECTIVE VISIONING GUIDE

***This is the moment we've been waiting for!*** Over the past two months, we have claimed our collective power to gather peacefully, to protest and to raise national and international awareness about some of the most pressing issues facing humanity and our planet. The time is ripe for us to take bold new steps. Letting people know **what we want** instead of just what we are against will open the doors for more people to join us and build a powerful and winning movement!

As we enter the third month of the Occupy movement and the holiday season, we at Spirit in Action invite all people who are dedicated to social transformation to join us in a process of Collective Visioning. We believe that visioning is the best gift we can give ourselves, our communities and our world because it enables us to name what we are standing for as we learn to replace the broken system that is failing us.

Collective Visioning involves intentionally bringing people together across divides and generating a positive vision that is long-term, expansive and solutions-driven. Collective Visioning is also about action planning so that we are prepared to actively work towards what we envision.

We offer this guide to support people who are aligned with the Occupy movement to plan and lead a Collective Visioning session. Ideally, folks will meet in diverse, small groups (preferably 20-40 participants) to spend at least three hours together moving through the steps outlined below. We encourage you to innovate and bring your own culture, language and experience to this process. After your group has completed its vision, we hope you'll share it on our **Collective Visioning Tumblr page** so people all over the world can witness a new world taking shape through what we create together!

### GROUNDWORK:

#### PREPARING FOR COLLECTIVE VISIONING

The key to Collective Visioning is ensuring that the process includes a diverse group of people who are committed to generating solutions together. So as you begin your outreach, keep in mind that there's more to it than just sending out an email, posting a flyer or making an announcement. Do the extra work needed to **involve the people who care about or are most affected by the social, economic and environmental challenges facing us and are able to participate fully in a collaborative process.** You might choose to focus your Collective Visioning session on a particular issue, such as funding for public education, or you may want to have a broad topic, such as sustainable local economies. Please see below for a brief step-by-step guide that will help you to convene a powerfully diverse group.

#### ***Be strategic.***

Identify people who are willing to look toward the future and ready to move in a positive direction. You want to invite people willing to work together, despite differences, to develop a collective vision and plan.

### ***Reach out to the margins.***

Begin by setting a goal that will inform your outreach. For instance, strive to include people of color, women, poor and working class communities, folks who identify as LGBTQ, immigrants, etc. Ask yourself whose perspective has been least heard or understood in recent meetings, assemblies or direct actions in which you've participated. What would it take to bring the most impacted communities into the Collective Visioning process? How can you reach out to them? Sometimes sitting down with key leaders from a particular community is an important first step. The more diverse your visioning group is -- the more connected to the grassroots it is -- the more likely it is to express the best wisdom of the whole movement.

### ***Know who is going to be "in the room."***

Make an effort to understand the fears, concerns and expectations that participants have when they come into the process. Also, try to know your participants' cultures, language and background as much as possible. Be aware that some people may have experienced failed attempts to build multi-racial, multi-class collaborations. As a result, they may have a lot of anger and hurt; others may have attended meetings during which so many questions or concerns were raised that the meeting agenda was abandoned and the goals were never accomplished. You'll need to talk with participants to address their hopes and fears before the session starts so that they can fully participate.

### ***Gather your materials and find a meeting space.***

You'll need a few things to make this process work well: large sheets of paper, markers, crayons and/or sidewalk chalk. Also, make sure to arrange for a meeting location where there will be no interruptions or distractions and people can comfortably sit in a circle.

## ***FACILITATING A COLLECTIVE VISIONING PROCESS***

### **1. CREATE A WELCOMING SPACE THAT BUILDS TRUST**

You've received commitments from a diverse group of people and know that they will be attending the Collective Visioning session. Now what? When you begin the Collective Visioning session, is it important to **build trust and identify shared agreements**. We have experienced the most transformation when we choose to **go slow to go fast**. We live in a culture that tells us to always move fast, fast, faster! As we begin to envision change, we must also be willing to redirect our behavior and patterns. It is important to understand that we all come from different cultures and/or experiences. This is the joy and power of working together in a diverse group. In Collective Visioning, it is critical to have many perspectives included from the beginning. Please see below for a brief step-by-step process that will help you to create a welcoming space and build trust.

#### ***Create a Beautiful Space.***

Arrange seating in a circle so that everyone can see each other and feel connected as a group. Having a low table in the center with flowers and a candle adds a nice touch. This is a great opportunity to engage participants to co-create the space. For instance, you can ask participants to bring something that is meaningful to them personally or from their culture to place in the center or around the space. Get creative and have fun with this!

## ***Have an Intentional Opening.***

How you open the Collective Visioning process is key to its success. An opening has the potential to set the right tone and get participants grounded -- in head, heart, body and spirit. There are numerous ways to open, and this is another opportunity to get creative. We have included a suggested opening below. Feel free to use it and make it your own, or come up with something entirely new. For instance, if there is a singer or poet in the group, take advantage of that and include a song or poem as part of your opening. If there is an opening more suited to your group culture, use that.

Sample Opening: Take a few deep breaths together and imagine your hearts being connected. Think about your connection to the earth and all living things. Go around the circle and ask people to name what inspires them -- whether it's their ancestors, nature, music, poetry or friends -- anything that feeds their hearts and souls. For more sample openings, check out our online Tool Box.

## ***Invite Everyone to Check In.***

After the opening, ask a question or give participants a prompt. This will help to bring everyone's voice into the room and allow them to "show up" by stating what is on their mind and in their hearts. Below is one suggested question and a prompt. Again, feel free to be creative and make up your own!

1. Can you share a seed of hope that you have taken from the Occupy movement?
2. I am inspired to vision a new future because....

## ***Generate Group Agreements.***

By now, participants are beginning to open up, which is great because it allows everyone to feel like they have an equal voice. Creating a set of shared group agreements at this point will ensure that everyone continues to honor the space and each other. Depending on how much time you have, you can lead a generative process where everyone could contribute to creating agreements together or you can jot down some recommended agreements in advance and ask participants to add to it. Some of our favorites are:

1. Be yourself
2. Bring your whole self
3. Stretch yourself
4. Step up / step back (practice active listening as much as active speaking)
5. One mic (one person speaks at a time)
6. Check yourself (W.A.I.T. -- Why am I talking?)
7. Seek to understand (ask questions, don't make assumptions)
8. Expect unfinished business
9. Trust the process

Facilitation Note: If someone becomes disruptive, bring the group's attention back to the agreements and ask everyone to recommit to following them. Create a new agreement if one is needed. As a last resort, ask the disruptive person to leave if they can't abide by the agreements and allow the group to move forward.

## 2. FACILITATE A GUIDED VISUALIZATION

The guided visualization is the part of the process when people in your group will let their imaginations run free...when you will help them become aware of what is possible in our best future. Guided visualizations work well if the facilitator speaks slowly and pauses for at least 20 seconds between each prompt in the script. It's also wonderful to have sound effects for the time machine and soft background music for the visualization.

**Below is a possible script for the guided visualization  
(feel free to make it your own)**

*We will be taking the next few minutes to imagine the world that you want to live in, that you want children to grow up in. You will be invited to picture what it looks like and feels like. You may see actual images or you may get other kinds of information. For now, I encourage you to set aside your fears and doubts and give yourself permission to dream. Think about a seed of hope from this current time that you would like to see grow into fruition in the future.*

- *Let's take 3 deep breaths together. Get comfortable where you are sitting. I invite you to close your eyes.*
- *Now, imagine stepping into a time machine and turning the dial to the year 2036.*
- *As you speed through time, know you are headed to a place that is the future of your greatest and most hopeful dreams. As you step out of the time machine, you are aware that we have made tremendous changes and that the seeds you helped plant years ago have now become a reality.*
- *Imagine stepping out into your community and beginning to walk around without any concern about your safety and security. What would that feel like?*
- *Begin to move through your community. What do you notice?*
- *How have human interactions changed? How are the values of fairness, honesty and justice expressed? What do you notice that is different as you walk around, into the food market, in the park and on the street? Where are people living?*
- *Now you pass a group of children learning together and you realize that every child has free, quality education. Approach a child and ask them to describe what they like best about their education.*
- *Imagine every adult earns a good living doing meaningful work. What work do you see people doing? What kinds of businesses are there? How do people pay for things? How are everyone's needs provided for?*
- *Notice the quality of the air and water and soil. How is energy produced? How is food grown? You know the earth is well cared for. What does it feel like? Smell like? What made a healthy environment possible?*
- *Before returning to the present, look around and find one gift, symbol or memory that you can bring back to 2011. Sit in silence for a few minutes to complete your visit to the future. (Pay attention to when several people start getting restless and move to the next prompt.)*
- *As people who have witnessed the future, you return now as **ambassadors from the future**. You know what the future can look like and it is your job to help make that positive future a reality.*
- *As you step back into the time machine, turning the dial back to 2011, think about your experience and what you want to tell people on your return.*

After a few moments, ask people to come back to the present. We usually ask adults to sit for a few moments in silence, journaling or jotting down things they want to remember, before starting the collective drawing.

### **3. COLLECTIVE IMAGE MAKING**

After the guided meditation, folks will have an opportunity to create a collective picture of what they saw, heard and felt. This is a magical process where everyone grabs some crayons, markers or pencils and engages in free drawing. Each participant's drawing flows together to create a visual representation of the group's collective vision -- what they saw when they were transported into the future. See below for a step-by-step process, including facilitator's notes.

#### **Set up a Canvas.**

Whether you use butcher paper or a bed sheet, you'll need a surface that is big enough for participants to draw on together. If you have appropriate space, use three-foot rolls of paper. Roll out on the floor or tape to the wall and give people crayons and markers to draw their vision. You may also use a king-sized sheet you can put on the floor and give people markers (non-bleeding) to draw their visions on the sheet. If you are in a city or park with concrete, you can use sidewalks, concrete areas and walls to draw your visions with sidewalk chalk.

Facilitation Note: In large groups of 50+ you may want to ask them to get in small groups of four to five people and draw on smaller sheets of paper. These can then be combined at the end. [Click here](#) for an online source for three-foot rolls of paper, or better yet, find a local community store to purchase it.

#### **Release Inhibitions.**

People who may not be inclined towards visual arts can sometimes freeze up when they hear that the group will be drawing. So, as you introduce this part of the process, explain that the point is not to create perfect art, it's to explore what we envisioned. Help people to release their inhibitions and to express themselves. Sometimes it also helps to let people know that they can write what they saw, heard and felt on the canvas or on sticky notes and paste it onto the canvas. Encourage people to help each other, add to each other's drawings and tell their inner art critics to keep quiet....this is a playful, creative experience!

#### **Document the Process.**

Make sure to document the process (taking pictures, film clips, etc.) to share with others afterwards. Take a picture at the end of the vision to share on the Collective Visioning Tumblr page <http://collectivevisioning.tumblr.com>. Take a little time to capture the main headlines of your vision to document and share. If participants are willing, take a group photo in front of their Collective Vision!

### **4. GROUP DISCUSSION**

As the drawing activity winds down, move into a discussion. Looking at the drawing, ask each person to say a few words about what they drew and what they notice about the collective image. Once everyone has had a chance to speak, sit together in a circle again to explore the following questions (we suggest that someone in the group take notes on this discussion):

- What are the similarities, connections and themes that arise in our Collective Vision?
- Are there opposing ideas?
- How do you feel seeing and hearing about this future world?
- What have you learned?
- How would we describe our Collective Vision to someone who isn't here?



## 5. ACTION PLANNING

Every great vision requires a great plan to make it real. This is the step when participants begin to roll up their sleeves and create an action plan that will put them on a path to actualizing their vision. After all, this is why you've brought this group together: co-creating and living into new possibilities. Action planning will continue beyond this initial visioning session, so you should plan to stay connected with your group participants. It will take community to build your vision! Get contact information from everyone and encourage folks to stay connected.

Below are a few questions that you all should address in your initial action plan. Please refer to our **online tool kit** for worksheets that will support more detailed planning. We will be updating the site regularly with new tools.

1. **What can I do personally to start living into the collective vision we co-created?** (i.e., divesting from Bank of America, using local banking, bartering with neighbors, supporting small businesses, etc.) Identify at least three things you can do and set a time frame for doing the groundwork and taking your first steps. Consider asking someone to be your buddy from the group so you can check in with each other to make sure you are sticking to your plan.
2. **What can we as a group do together?** Identify two to three things that the entire group can do collectively to live into your shared vision (i.e., start a community garden or food co-op, create a timebank, etc.)
3. **Who else are we connected to (organizations, groups, institutions) to help us move forward?** Do a quick mapping activity to identify the connections in the room and generate a list. This will help the group to plug into existing work and to receive resources to move a larger agenda forward.
4. **What can I do in the next 48 hours to take a step toward creating our Collective Vision?** Taking that first step is critically important in any major change effort, and it can often be the most difficult thing. So, name that critical first step for yourself and commit to doing it within 48 hours. Be sure to share it with your buddy and ask him/her to check up on you.
5. **Share contact info with each other and agree on a way to be in touch.** Will you make a Facebook page or a listserv? When will you meet again and where?

## 6. SHARE YOUR COLLECTIVE VISION WITH THE WORLD

Now that you've generated an amazing, transformative vision, why keep it to yourselves? We've set up a Tumblr Page for groups to share their vision with each other for inspiration and to notice the points of unity among communities across the country <http://collectivevisioning.tumblr.com>. In addition to Tumblr, consider sharing your collective vision with friends, family and your community.

## 7. CLOSING

It's time to celebrate what you've accomplished together! Make sure to spend a few minutes acknowledging each other and concluding your session. We recommend inviting each person to say what they are taking away with them. As with the opening, a poem, song or simple ritual is a great way to end.

## RESOURCES

1. **Coaching Webinars.** We will be offer a series of webinars to provide training and additional information on facilitating a Collective Visioning process, to answer any questions that folks may have about groundwork and facilitating the process. Below are dates for the first three webinars. If you are interested, please send an email to [info@spiritinaction.net](mailto:info@spiritinaction.net) to register (indicate 'Webinar Registration for Collective Visioning' in the subject line).
  - December 8 from 3-4:30 p.m. (EST)
  - December 10 from noon-1:30 p.m. (EST)
  - December 17 from noon-1:30 p.m. (EST)
2. ***Collective Visioning: How Groups Can Work Together for a Just and Sustainable Future.*** Get a copy of Linda Stout's book for a more in-depth description and tools for Collective Visioning. For more information on the book, visit <http://lindastout.org/>
3. Check out the **TOOL KIT** section on our website: <http://www.powerupnetworks.org/>
4. Check out the step-by-step process for posting photos/video and text on the **Tumblr page**: <http://collectivevisioning.tumblr.com/submit>
5. If you need anything else or have questions, please do not hesitate to be in touch with us:

Spirit in Action  
274 North Street  
Belchertown, MA 01007

Phone: 413-256-4612  
Fax: 413-256-4613  
E-mail: [admin@spiritinaction.net](mailto:admin@spiritinaction.net)

<http://spiritinaction.net/>  
<http://www.powerupnetworks.org/>