AVANTI ACADEMY IN PRACTICE

Start With What's Strong

Community development in practice

Workbook

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How to use this workbook

Each part of Start With What's Strong includes a short Try it activity. When the narration invites you to pause, turn to the matching sheet here and take ten minutes or so to work through it for your own role. There are no right answers. The point is to leave with something you will actually do. Keep your completed sheets: they make a useful record for supervision, appraisal or your personal development plan.

Part 1 · Getting to Know a Community

My community map

Sketch a simple map of the communities your work touches. Note what is already known, who people turn to, and where they gather. Then plan three short listening visits, each with one open question, and a date to go back and report what you heard.

The communities of place, interest and identity my work touches are:
What my team, partners and frontline colleagues already know, and one question the data cannot answer:
The groups and people others turn to, and the ones I have never spoken to:
Three places where people already gather, and the open question I will ask at each:
The date I will go back to report what I heard:

To reflect on: *Which community in your patch do you know least about, and where do its members already gather that you could visit?*

Mapping one street or group

Choose one street, block or group where you have a way in. Plan a handful of strengths conversations, record the skills, groups and spaces you hear about, share the map back with residents, and make one introduction between two people who could help each other.

The street, block or group I will map, and how I have a way in:
The open questions I will ask about skills, groups and spaces:
What I heard, in people's own words:
How I will share the map back, and who will keep it current:
One connection I will make, and when I will follow it up:

To reflect on: *If you described your patch only by its strengths, what would you write first, and who could tell you what you are missing?*

My engagement promise

Take one real decision your team will make soon. Rate its impact on people's lives and the genuine scope for influence, choose an honest level, write a short engagement promise, test it as a sceptical resident would, and book the date you will report back.

The decision, who it affects most and what it changes for them:
How much it affects lives, how much is genuinely open, and the level I choose:
What is open, what is fixed, who decides and when:
Any phrase in our invitation I could not defend in a year's time:
The date we will report back, who will write it, and what did not change:

To reflect on: *Think of the last invitation your team sent. What level did it promise, and what level did people actually get?*

One ambition on one page

Choose one ambition a community has shared with you. Write it in residents' words, then name the owner and first step, list the assets and any small grant or help in kind needed, set a review date, and note honestly what would happen if funding stopped.

The ambition, in residents' words, and who it is for:
The owner, the first step and the date:
The skills, spaces and relationships we can draw on:
Any small grant or help in kind that would unlock the first step:
Our review date, and what happens if the funding stops:

To reflect on: *Which community idea in your patch has energy but no named owner, and who might be ready to take the first step?*

Who people turn to

Map the leadership in your patch: the role holders you rely on, the people residents actually trust, and the connectors who link groups together. Then plan one conversation with a trusted person you have never met, on their ground, and note one small promise you will keep.

The people with formal roles I usually work through:
The people residents actually go to when something goes wrong:
The connectors, and anyone who stepped forward in a recent local crisis:
One trusted person I will meet, where and when:
One small promise I will make and keep:

To reflect on: *Who do residents in your patch actually go to when something goes wrong, and have you ever spoken to them?*

My community development plan

Draft a one-page plan for one patch, group or neighbourhood. Cover who your communities are, the assets and trusted people you will work with, one decision you can open honestly, a few owned priorities with first steps, and how you will keep promises, measure progress and step back.

Know: my communities, who is quiet, and where people gather:
Build: the assets I will map, the people others turn to, and one connection:
Share: one decision I can open, the honest level, and my promise:
Act: a few owned priorities, each with a first step and a date:
Sustain: my measure, my review date, and how I will step back:

To reflect on: *If someone read your last year of community work as a case, what would the five questions reveal?*

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