Working on Purpose: Six Steps to Employment and a Framework for Planning Toolkit

> *"This is but a tiny step toward making a difference. But isn't it always the first rumble that starts the avalanche? Let us be disrupters and agents of change and bring true meaning to diversity in the work force."*
> *~ Lisa Yang*

The Framework for Planning© templates and activities provided in this resource were developed by the Blessing Consulting Group and are used with permission for inclusion in this tool kit.

The format for the toolkit provides a section-by-section explanation of the intention for each distinct area and offers suggestions for engaging in their completion. It should in no way be considered a prescription for completing the Framework, rather a springboard for inspiring new ways for listening, exploration and discovery with people. As a means for organization, the sections for the Framework have been structured with tasks for initiating and inviting information forward that is particular to the section. Feel free to adapt and add other creative means for populating the sections. Keep in mind that the ultimate purpose for using any person-centered planning tool is to understand the gifts, capacities, strengths, and potential that a person has to offer and contribute in community through valued social roles and citizenship.

Too often the type of planning that happens with people is derived from a standardized assessment that results in a checklist of needs. From here "goals" for that person are developed and objectives defined. Most objectives that form the plan around people with disabilities tend to be based on what others think the individual needs to know or do. They have answers to the problem. They are problem-centered plans, not person-centered plans.

The Framework for Planning is an invitation to embrace planning through the art of dynamic conversation: story-telling, art, creative curiosity, appreciative inquiry – any means through which the individual at the center of the planning becomes understood and known by others in positive and meaningful ways. Inquiry born of curiosity asks questions to which the answer is not already known. It is about building a relationship that is empowering to the other person. This takes authentic intention which, in turn, takes courage. Edgar Schein, in his marvelous book *Humble Inquiry the gentle art of asking instead of telling* (2013), says this:
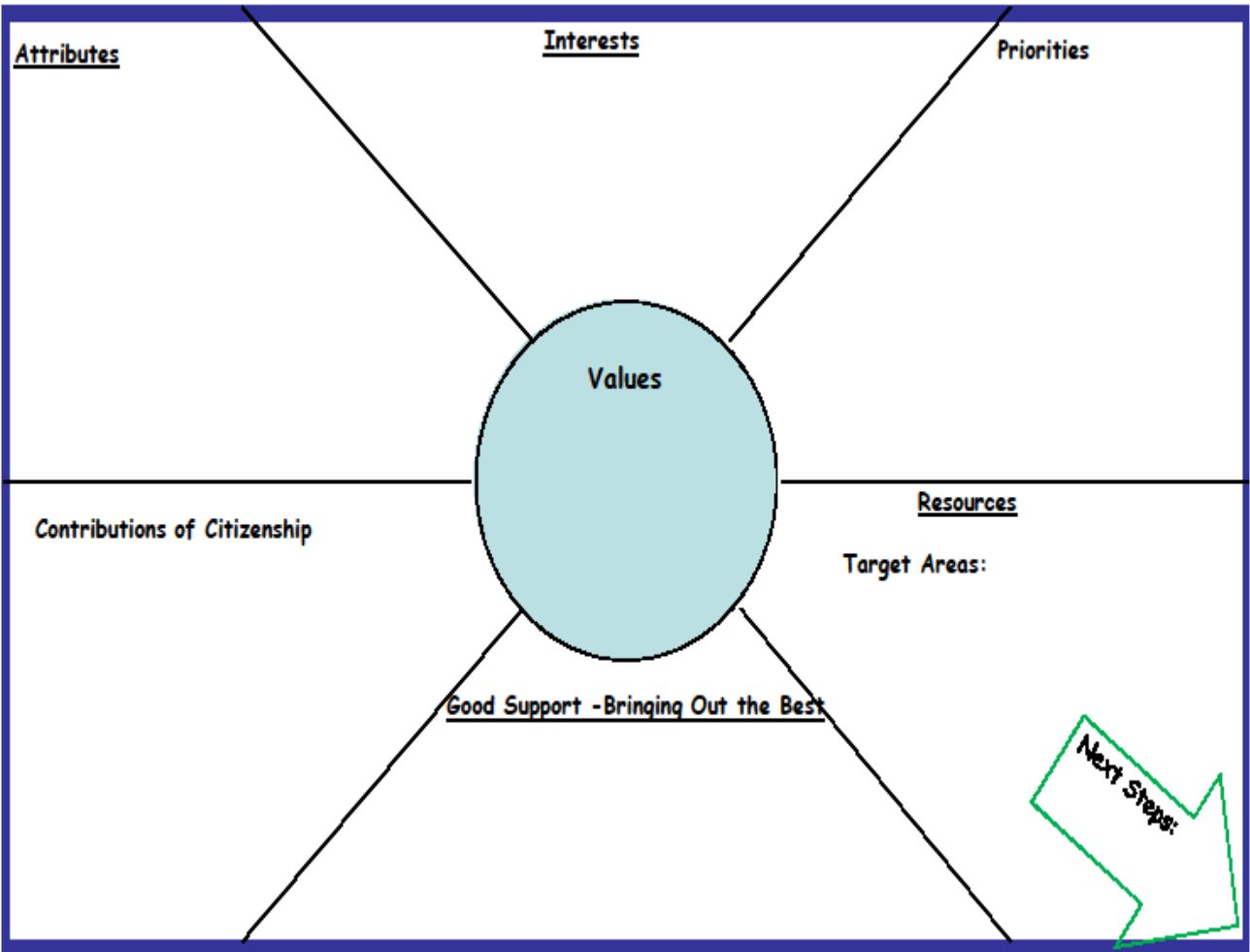
> *"Things and people are what we call them, because in the simplest terms, we are what we say, and others are what we say about them."*

When people are supported toward exploring, discovering and offering their gifts and potential, they are invited to express their purpose in life– maybe a calling to higher purpose. This is what true person-centered planning has ever been about. The Working on Purpose: Six Steps to Employment Framework for Planning toolkit offers an opportunity to begin to imagine possibilities in the lives of people with disabilities that shift the social perception and the social status of people with disabilities forever.

Framework for Planning Templates

Purpose:

Attributes

Interests

Priorities

Values

Contributions of Citizenship

Resources

Target Areas:

Good Support -Bringing Out the Best

Next Steps:

A FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING revised
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Framework for Planning©2012   **ACTION PLAN**

Target Connection Area	First/Next Step	How	Who	When

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Task 1: Purpose

There must be a reason to get involved in any person-centered planning process. Once the reason for planning is established, it is easier to select the best tool for getting the job done. Not all person-centered planning tools work for every situation. It is important to know a variety of tools and approaches so that planning can be customized to the person, not the other way around. As with any person-centered tool, the purpose must be positive and possible.

The Framework for Planning is a good choice when any of the following reasons for planning are identified:

To find direction for the future

To develop a positive profile

To identify themes that point to a calling or purpose in life

To prioritize planning and action around the specific purpose statement
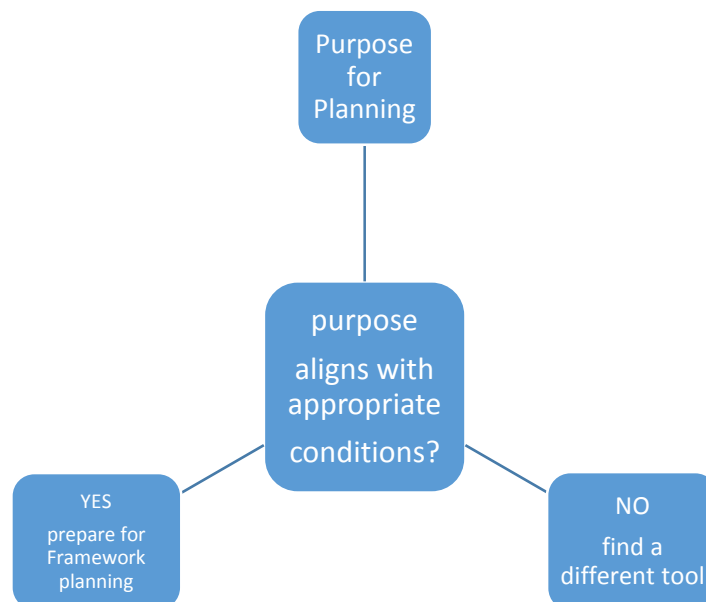
To create a list of opportunities for connecting to community

To brainstorm ideas for contribution to community:
        Paid employment
        Unpaid employment (volunteering)
        Membership in groups/clubs

Task 2: Attributes: Six Steps to Employment Step 1 – Develop a positive profile

An attribute is a characteristic or a quality given to a person. In this case, the focus is on discovering the positive attributes that people who are knowledgeable about the Framework planner (focus person) ascribe to the planner based on their observation and experience. These can be explored through a wide variety of activities. Do not be limited by the few examples here.

Suggested Activity: Popcorn Attributes

This activity is done with a group of people who know the focus person. The focus person has been prepped in advance about this exercise and has agreed to it. The facilitator begins by reminding the group:

- that they are here because they have agreed to help (focus person) identify the important positive qualities he or she brings to the world
- the information must be true, based upon their observation/experience

The facilitator asks the group to think about (focus person) and recall a particular story about (focus person) that stands out in their mind. While remembering that story, notice the qualities, traits or characteristics that (focus person) brought to life in the story that made it memorable. What were they? After about a minute the facilitator then asks the group to share a one or two word positive adjective out loud and records these words on the Framework template.

Like popping corn, the group will likely start out slowly with a few words. Then as the activity heats up the words will start to come faster, as people build off each other's contribution. There will be a high point where keeping up with recording the words fast enough will be a challenge. This is great! Then, just as it started, the energy of the activity will begin to ebb, and the words will slow down. This is the time that the facilitator will transition to the next section of the template, reminding the group that the section can be added to at any point along the process.

Suggested Activity: Fill In the Blank

The facilitator provides participants with a short page of fill in the blank statements and gives them five minutes to think about and write responses for each of them. Participants then take turns sharing their responses while the facilitator records them on the Framework template. Repetition in words is absolutely fine since this indicates a strong trait. Note: this activity can also be conducted via distance (telephone interview, email, mail) for those who are not able to be in the planning session.

I can depend on (focus person) to always _____

My favorite quality about (focus person) is his/her ability to _____

My top three words that I believe describe (focus person) really well are _____, _____, and _____

I am impressed by (focus person)'s unique ability to _____
What I like/admire most about (focus person) is _____

Task 3: Interests: Six Steps to Employment Step 1 – Develop a positive profile

Interests are those things which hold a person's attention. A person does not have to have a natural talent for things in which they are interested. For example, they may love to dance but are not particularly good at it. It doesn't matter. What matters is that there is a draw to dancing and so dancing would be identified as an interest.

When helping the planner to identify his or her interests it is useful to try to be as specific as possible. For example someone may say that they have an interest in music. This is good, but better would be to know what kind of music, the role music plays in the course of a day in the person's life, etc. Often, clear information about interests give insight into additional attributes, characteristics and traits.

When facilitating the Framework with a group of supporters, it is helpful to gather input from them regarding what they notice that the focus person prefers to spend time doing, since they may recognize interests that the focus person doesn't or can't identify for themselves.

Suggested Activity: Show and Tell

This activity is done outside of a group. It is a relationship building activity between the facilitator and the focus person. The information that the facilitator gathers from the activity, however, may be used when populating this key section on the Framework template either during or in advance of the Framework planning session.

The facilitator and the Framework planner (focus person) each agree to bring in one to three items from home which represents areas of interest. They show the items and share what they like about them.

The facilitator should use this as an opportunity to practice good listening techniques to catch "nuggets" of information that allow for deeper exploration; insights and finding mutual or common ground.

Suggested Activity: What If…?

The facilitator uses a series of open-ended questions to invite the Framework planner (focus person) to day dream a bit about an imaginable future.

What if…
- ….you could write a book about anything that you wanted. What would you write about? What would the title of the book be?
- ….you could spend one whole day doing anything that you wanted to do, what would you do? Who would you want to do it with?
- ….you could go on the best trip ever. Where would you go? Why?
- ….you could have any job in the world. What would it be? Why?

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Task 4: Priorities: Six Steps to Employment Step 2 – Define purpose for seeking employment

Priorities in the Framework for Planning process are in direct relationship to the context set by Key 1: Purpose. For example, the focus person indicated that their purpose for engaging in the process is to find direction for a job when they get out of school. What are the immediate priorities for finding direction RIGHT NOW that are important to the planner? The more specific this is, the better.

Angela, a student getting ready to leave school, identified finding a job as the purpose for planning. Her support network saw her on a career pathway leading to working with little children in a school system. Angela was interested in one day finding work in this profession. However, when the priorities section was facilitated, it became apparent that Angela needed a part-time job working evenings and weekends and that paid at or above minimum wage. And she needed it NOW in order to support her single mom in keeping food on the table and the electricity on.

Should Angela abandoned her dream to one day work with kids? Absolutely not. Her priorities, however, superseded her wish. Good Framework planners will ensure that preferences around the priority are understood as well. While Angela needed a job now, her preference was to meet her priorities by working in a job that put her near if not in the ballpark of working with kids later on down the road. Take caution: this section is not intended for others to decide what the focus person's priorities ought to be.

Suggested Activity: (Focus Person)'s Top Three List

Facilitator works with the Framework planner (focus person) to define the three, five or ten things that are MOST important to them in the context of the Framework purpose.

Ian, 18 years old, was getting ready to leave prison after a five year term. He identified his purpose as being able to find direction for going back to the community and being productive. Among his top three, he identified his priority around this as "learning how to make friends." Ian had always been shy, insecure and did what others told him to do. He felt that he needed to build awareness and skill on how to build real relationships with people who could become true friends.

(Focus Person)'s Top 3 List of Importance:

1. Most important to me about (purpose) right now

2. Really important to me about (purpose) right now

3. Pretty important to me about (purpose) right now

Task 5: Values

The Values key sets the Framework a part from other person-centered planning tools in that it is intentionally focused on noticing the positive themes that are emerging from completing the other sections. These themes can be considered innate high order gifts that the person is born with. Pulling together threads from the stories that have been told about the focus person during the planning session weaves a sense of purpose that the person has. For example, someone whose stories carry the thread of concern for others, being helpful and caring may hint at the Gift of Compassion as a core value the person operates from.

Core values are constants in a person's life. They will always find a way forward, even in the worst of conditions or situations. Think of Nelson Mandela sitting in a prison for decades in cruel, unthinkable conditions. Yet his Gift of Compassion and his Gift of Forgiveness never ceased to serve him and inspire others.

Take care when completing this section of the Framework. Quite frequently well-intended supporters will try to overlay their own values or super-impose the values that they believe should fill the center of the template. "Family" will often be a default value that people will want to insert in the circle. While family may very well be a value to the person, it likely will not be their calling to higher purpose. The Gift of Nurturing however, may well be.

Suggested Activity: Common Threads

The facilitator asks the planning group and focus person to look at the Framework template as it has been completed to this point, and to notice any patterns, themes and/or relationships between sections and to share these with the group.

The facilitator charts these observations on a separate wall chart – perhaps drawn with individual blank squares to resemble a quilt.   As the "quilt" gets filled in, the facilitator assists the group in pulling common threads or themes.   When a few solid themes emerge, the facilitator will test their validity by reframing the themes in statements that the focus person (and secondarily, the supporters) agrees or rejects as feeling true to them.

Jen was convinced that she had no values or ideals about the world. She simply could not come up with anything that she felt she "stood for" when she was asked. The facilitator asked her then when thinking about things that happen in the outside world what made her boiling mad – so mad she wanted to scream – she answered: "when people are mean for no good reason." Digging deeper into this, Jen revealed a strong value of social justice and fair treatment.

Task 6: Contributions: Six Steps to Employment Step 3 – Explore the field of opportunity

Contribution is what happens when gifts are given in places where they are welcomed, appreciated and the possibility for reciprocation arises. This key is interested in looking for the connections that can be made between the gifts that the person has to offer and the communities in which they can be well received.
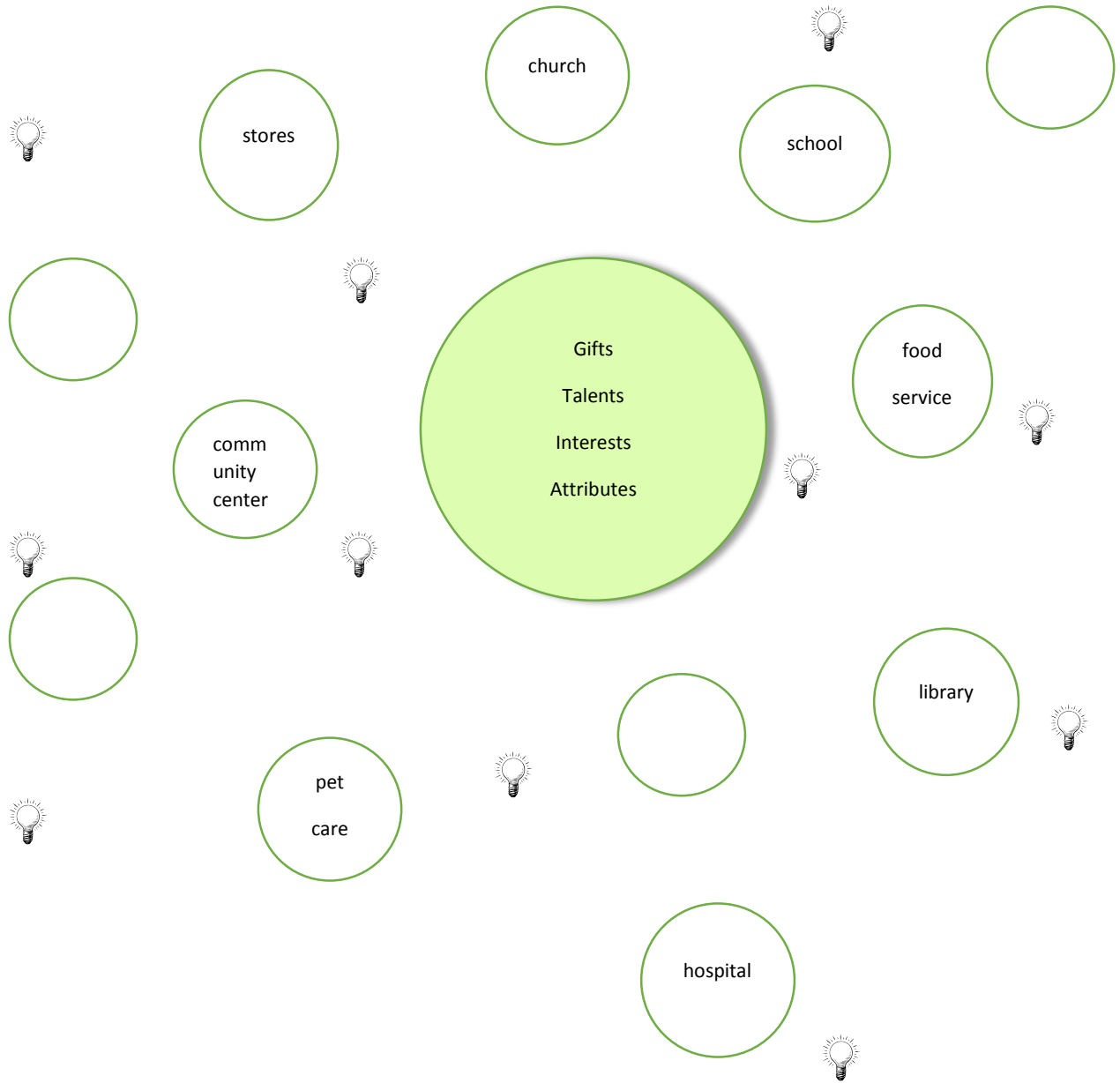
Suggested Activity: Community Connections

Synthesize prevalent themes, gifts, attributes of the Framework planning in the center circle. Identify 6 – 10 or more common places known by planners in the community around where the focus person lives. Brainstorm at least 5 valued roles (consumer or client is not an option) that utilize the person's strengths and gifts that people can "see" the person engaging in **within each** of the community places. Have the focus person circle all of the ideas that are interesting to them. List these on the Framework template.

When possible, use real names of real places within the community. For example, instead of "hospitals" use "Samaritan Hospital."   This will make planning the action around this later much easier.

This key, again in the context of the purpose for planning, begins to sharpen the focus for moving from planning to action. When this step is completed, planners should have a much better idea for where they are headed and what it will take to move forward. The next three keys are designed to do organize thinking and planning for doing this.

church

stores

school

Gifts

Talents

Interests

Attributes

food

service

comm unity center

library

pet

care

hospital

Task 7: Good Support: Six Steps to Employment Step 4 – Define the best approach to supporting employment

The key to good support is finding the right combination between the supporter and the supported. This should be a mutual agreement that is put within the context of moving toward the ideas that emerged during the Key 6 activity. This should never be used as a continuum for taking action, i.e. "before you can move into a role in the community you must first be able to prove your ability to shower and wear clean clothes every day." The question that is on the table for this key is "what assistance will be needed to support the impact of this person's disability while promoting access and opportunities for the giving of their gifts? Fill this information in on the Framework template.

Suggested Activity: Bring out Your Best

The facilitator asks the focus person and the planning team to list the kind of support that brings out the best in the person across three distinct areas:

1. **Characteristics of people in support roles**

   MUST HAVE or BE

   SHOULD HAVE

   WOULD BE NICE, BUT NOT NECESSARY

2. **Learning style**

   MUST HAVE or BE

   SHOULD HAVE

   WOULD BE NICE, BUT NOT NECESSARY

3. **Type of assistance preferred and/or required to ensure safety**

   MUST HAVE or BE

   SHOULD HAVE

   WOULD BE NICE, BUT NOT NECESSARY

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Task 8: Target Areas and Resources: Six Steps to Employment Step 5 – Identify personal and professional networks

This key further refines the focus for taking action by asking the Framework planner (focus person) to pick the top five ideas that they circled in Key 7 and put them in priority order. The facilitator lists the top five roles on the Framework template using the following scheme (or something comparable), completing the "Top Priority Role" section first; the "Where in Community" area next and finally the "Who Do We Know" section.

The object of this activity is for the focus person to bring targeted focus for serving the purpose for engaging in the process. The first priority role should be the one that holds the most interest or excitement with the person, and so on.

Once the priority list is established the facilitator may want to have the group brainstorm additional places in the community in which the role makes sense, would be an asset and/or a natural part of a given environment. This area could and should have several possible places that would support the role.

The last step for this section is to pull from the group's current network resource the names of people who are either directly or indirectly connected to the list of community places. Who knows somebody who knows somebody...?

	Top Priority Role?	Where in Community?	Who Do We Know?
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Task 9: Next Step: Six Steps to Employment Step 6 Take action

The last step of the Framework for Planning process is the first step in taking action. The facilitator and planners should move directly to the Framework for Action Planning template:

Framework for Planning©2012   **ACTION PLAN**

Target Connection Area	First/Next Step	How	Who	When

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Put the date the action plan was completed on the template and schedule a follow up session to turn the learning wheel!