Module #8. Reflecting Insights

After preparing a report on your results, as described in Module #7, Reporting, you are ready to share your findings with other stakeholders for their feedback and insight. Think of this step as a complement to convergence, described in Module #6. Rather than approaching stakeholders to confirm the accuracy of your results, as you did with convergence, you now seek their expertise, experience, and insight to move forward from your findings. What do they think are the implications for your school design?

In this module, we outline the steps and skills involved in drawing insight from your stakeholders:

1. Determine who to approach for insight
2. Plan a facilitated session
3. Reflect on feedback and consider implications for your work

1. DETERMINE WHO TO APPROACH FOR INSIGHT

KEY INFORMATION

Who should you bring together to reflect on your results? You will likely have already considered these questions in the previous module, Reporting, when you determined the audience for your report. Recall that this step aligns closely to the Carnegie design principle of positive youth development, which encourages engaging student voice, encouraging family participation, and integrating community input. In many cases it makes sense to invite members of your group of interest, as well as other stakeholders you considered approaching during the convergence process, such as:

- ❑ Students
- ❑ Youth in other settings (e.g., out-of-school youth)
- ❑ Parents
- ❑ Teachers
- ❑ Guidance counselors or youth development staff
- ❑ School leaders
- ❑ Community members

As you consider whom to approach, ask yourself three questions:

- ❑ Who has experience with your group of interest and the focus of your research?
- ❑ Who will likely have insight into what these conclusions mean for your school design?
- ❑ Who do you want to feel invested and involved in the design of your school?

Finally, you want to consider the implications of having a group together to discuss your school:

- ❑ How will it benefit others in the group to hear each other's thoughts and insights?
- ❑ Are there groups that will feel less "safe" talking with another group in the room? For instance, students may feel intimidated by certain groups of adults.
- ❑ Are there groups that will be able to help you think through conclusions more later if they hear from others involved now?

APPLICATION TO EXAMPLE

The Lucretia Mott design team is exploring the elements of positive counseling relationships, focusing in particular on the importance of gender-matching in these relationships. They decide to present their results to two groups: students and counselors. They think it will be valuable to hear from both parties whether their conclusions align with students' and counselors' perceptions of the making of successful counseling relationships. They also invite two community members who have shown an active interest in school design and may be able to contribute ideas later.

2. PLAN A FACILITATED SESSION

KEY INFORMATION

Plan an agenda including introductions, presentation, discussion, and synthesis. After identifying whom you will ask for feedback on your conclusions, the next step is to plan a facilitated session in which you will gather insights on your ideas. The structure of this session will vary based on who you are able to bring together and for how long. However, the basic structure will likely be:

1. Introduction
2. Warm-up activity
3. Presentation of findings
4. Discussion of findings using protocol
5. Synthesis activity to find consensus around discussion, if appropriate

You may note that this step looks similar to the focus group protocol described in Module #2. This is because you are again conducting a sort of focus group; your process has come full circle.

Introduction: Introduce yourself and your objectives

Similar to the introduction you prepared for focus groups (see Module #2 for more detail), when you develop an introduction for your session, you want to both ensure participants feel comfortable speaking out, and also understand the purpose of the group. With this in mind, your introduction should make clear:

- Who you are;
- The purpose of the session, with an emphasis on the participants as partners in thinking about and interpreting your research results;
- Why you approached the participants for their input; and
- Whether participants' comments will be confidential and/or anonymous.

Warm-up activity: Build familiarity with your group

Just as in the case of focus groups (see Module 2 for more detail), warm-ups should be brief—no more than five to ten minutes—and allow participants to share their name and some thoughts on the presentation topic with the group. Oftentimes, it is beneficial to structure these activities as "think-pair-shares," in which participants take a moment to reflect, share their response with a partner, and then share with the whole group. Participants may feel more comfortable speaking to the whole group after sharing with a partner.

If you have a mixed group—for example, students and parents, or staff and community members—think of a "low-risk" introductory question (or a choice of two or three questions) that everyone can answer with similar ease, with particular emphasis on making students feel comfortable talking. In addition, in the warm-up before a presentation, it is helpful to emphasize that everyone will soon have ample time to respond to a presentation, but that this is first an opportunity for introductions.

Presentation of findings: Share your data and conclusions
Using the presentation you created in the previous module, share your findings with the group. The presentation should not last longer than thirty minutes, and ideally be closer to ten. Remember to pause after every slide to check if participants have questions.

During the presentation, as long as it will not represent a breach of confidentiality or trust, a valuable way to garner insight after seeing data analysis is to share the names of individual students who comprise different groups represented in the data. For instance, if you are gaining insight from teachers about data collected about their students, you may share a list of students who gave a similar set of answers.

This approach—sharing individual information couched in broader data analysis—will likely be out of the question for most school design work because you are conducting research with students, families and community members with whom you do not work on a regular basis. However, when it is possible, this approach can yield unique and valuable insights both about the actual meaning of the data and of possible next steps. Once your school is operating, we strongly recommend adopting this approach when analyzing student data with teachers.

Discussion of findings using protocol: Gather insight from your participants
To ensure you are garnering all the insight possible from your participants, use a protocol to structure conversation. You may wish to use a protocol that encourages participants to first reflect on what they notice, and then offer ideas and critiques. Such a protocol might pose a scaffolded series of questions:

Noticings
- ❑ What do you notice about the results presented?

Reflecting on noticings
- ❑ What questions do you have for clarification?
- ❑ What stands out to you about the results? Why?
- ❑ What elements of the results do you find most interesting? Why?

Reflecting on ideas and critiques
- ❑ What ideas does this give you about the school we are opening?
- ❑ What questions does this raise for you?
- ❑ What conclusions do you draw from the data?

During the discussion, take visual notes on people's ideas, grouping together similar feedback and perspectives. These notes will be useful in the final synthesis activity.

Contending with questions about the accuracy of your data

As you engage participants, there will inevitably be questions about the accuracy of the data presented. It is important to recognize and dignify these points. No data is 100% accurate, and your data is no exception. However, unless you become truly *convinced that your data is so inaccurate as to be misleading, it is up to you to give time for people to voice concerns about accuracy. You can then ask, given the broader findings or areas in which there is significant enough information to outweigh smaller inaccuracies, what insights can be gleaned. Alternatively, if there is significant dispute over the accuracy of the data presented, you can switch modes and treat this session as part of convergence, described in Module #6, rather than insight.*

Synthesis activity: Find consensus

At the end of the discussion, you will want to spend some time consolidating feedback and identifying the perspectives participants feel most strongly about. To achieve this synthesis, dot-voting can be helpful. Here is how it works: participants have a certain number of dot stickers that they can place next to ideas they like. Instead of simply indicating a yes or no (place one dot or none), an approach that tends to harden positions, people can express preference by placing as many dots as they like, an approach that tends to paint a more accurate picture of preferences.

- Start by placing notes from the previous activity on the walls. Throughout the room, post the top pieces of feedback or ideas that participants will vote on.
- Complete individual reflection for 3 minutes. Allow participants a few minutes to identify individual priorities. Provide some guidance, such as: Which of these items are most important for us to think about in the design of our school?
- Use dot stickers to gather perspective. Participants should be given 1/4 to 1/3 as many dot stickers as items. For example, if your notes have about 20 bullet pointed items, each participant should be given about 5-7 dots. Prompt participants to place dot stickers on the items based on their preferences. Count the number of each dot on each piece of chart paper to filter through and gauge where there is the most agreement with important and urgent priorities.

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3. REFLECT ON FEEDBACK SESSION AND CONSIDER IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUR WORK

KEY INFORMATION

What does their feedback mean for your design? The final step in this process is to reflect on the feedback you got at the facilitated session and on its implications for your school design. After your feedback session, ask yourself:

- ❑ What new perspectives did I gain on my research based on participants' feedback?
- ❑ What questions do I have based on participants' feedback?
- ❑ Would I reconsider any of my conclusions based on their feedback?
- ❑ What implications does their feedback have for my school design?

These questions are posed in a worksheet in the tools appendix.