



Introducing Future Search & Future Search Network (FSN)

What is Future Search?

Future Search is a proven planning method enabling people to cooperate in complex situations of high conflict and uncertainty. It was created for the express purpose of helping people go beyond problem-solving to make systemic improvements in their communities and organizations. It has been employed with virtually all social, technological and economic issues in North and South America, Africa, Australia, Europe, India and South Asia. People achieve four outputs from a single meeting--shared values, a plan for the future, concrete goals, and an implementation strategy.

Future Search relies on tested principles for helping people collaborate despite differences of culture, class, gender, age, race, ethnicity, language, and education. The method works equally well with communities, schools, hospitals, churches, government agencies, foundations and NGO's. Because Future Search is culture free, requiring only that participants share their experiences, it has helped thousands of people carry out action plans once considered impossible.

What is Future Search Network (FSN)?

FSN has 350 dedicated members on every continent. We are united by our motivation to serve society while cooperating and learning together. Our mission is making the world a better place—more open, whole, and sustainable—for everyone. We act from a common framework of techniques grounded in “getting the whole system in the room,” building on everybody’s perceptions, and inviting people to accept responsibility. Backed by 60 years of precedent, FSN members maintain high standards through ongoing dialogue, research, and shared case studies. We manage Future Searches world wide in any language and culture for whatever people can afford.

Five Brief Future Search Case Studies

1. Creating a future for the children of southern Sudan.
2. Reducing infant mortality in Milwaukee, WI.
3. Healing a racially torn community and enabling integrated economic development in Berrien County, MI.
4. Reconnecting the struggling members of the rural community of Ko'olau Loa, Hawaii, to their healthy traditional values.
5. Looking beyond welfare reform to find joint solutions for employers and job-seekers in Ramsey County, MN.

1. A Future for the Children of Southern Sudan: “I Dream of Peace”

Context

A 17-year war in Southern Sudan had devastated a generation of children when, in 1999, UNICEF invited 40 Sudanese children and 64 adults to a Future Search to address this crisis. This was the first time that Sudanese adults AND children were brought together to think about the future of the children outside of the context of political differences. (Video/DVD and reports are available.)

Future Search participants

Sudanese Villagers, Tribal Chiefs, Service Providers, NGO's, Teachers, Community Workers, Sudanese émigrés from the UK, Africa, and Europe, and Children.

Outcomes

- More than 50 schools, including two boarding schools for girls, were established. Girls' enrollment has tripled since and more qualified Sudanese citizens have been enlisted to teach the children.
- Sudanese expatriates developed curriculum material and delivered textbooks to villages.
- New training courses for agriculturists and farmers were established.
- In June 2000, UNICEF sponsored a Future Search training for its Sudanese field staff from North and South alike. A week later, trainees managed their own Future Search in Rumbek, South Sudan, to demobilize child soldiers. Stakeholders included Sudanese People's Liberation Army leaders (rebel army), village chiefs, children, teachers and NGO's. As a result, twenty-five hundred young boys were officially demobilized and reintegrated back into their villages. By 2002, demobilized child soldiers numbered 11,000.

Further Impact

In 2002, Sharad Sapra, Director of Operation Lifeline Sudan/UNICEF, wrote:

“Remember in our first Future Search in Nairobi in 1999 the kids talked about peace through education and dreamed of peace in 2005? Well it is only 2002 and the beginning of a peace agreement framework has been signed between the Government of Sudan in Khartoum and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (rebel government of the South). The children dreamed it and the adults are listening.”

In January, 2005, Sapra, now UNICEF's Director of Division of Communications, added:

"Yesterday the final Protocol was signed. The formal ceremony is on 9th January. Future Search Network deserves the credit for enabling them to create and follow through on the vision for the Children of Southern Sudan."

In February 2005, Gillian Wilcox, formerly with Operation Lifeline Sudan, had become UNICEF's Programme Coordinator in Azerbaijan. Wanting to make a difference for the children there, she sent the message below:

"Future Search Network had an impact on the future of the children of southern Sudan. I am now in Azerbaijan. Another area of intractable conflict, but with a different set of issues. UNICEF is supporting the Government of Azerbaijan in preparing a Ten Year Human Development Programme. We want your help in facilitating the voices of the children and young people in a series of regional FS workshops, culminating in a national FS conference. The intention is to generate a vision of children and youth and to priorities actions of Government and others to achieve the vision and get this incorporated in the Ten Year Programme."

We connected her with Future Search Network members who speak Russian and Turkish.

2. Milwaukee Common Ground Future Search: Reducing Infant Mortality in Milwaukee, WI

Context

A crisis in infant health in the black community of Milwaukee stirred a diverse group of health professionals, families and foundations to look for new solutions to infant mortality. They called themselves Milwaukee Common Ground (MCG). In a series of Future Searches over six years, they built family-centered and culturally competent strategies for addressing infant mortality.

Future Search Participants

City Hospitals, Public Health, Managed Care, Foundations, Education, Clergy, Community Leaders, Government Officials, Welfare Reform and Families.

Outcomes

- African-American infant mortality rate in Wisconsin declined from 19.3 infant deaths per 1,000 live births during 1979-1981 to 16.9 in the years following the Future Search (Kvale et al. *Wisconsin Medical Journal*, 2004). However, the striking disparity between the rates of black and white infant deaths in Wisconsin have increased.

“The black infant mortality problem is complex and requires an intense multifaceted approach, of which Future Search must be a part. We are up against decades of economic, racial and ethnic disparity and have been able to tap into the true richness of Milwaukee’s residents, but the actions have not reached the point of shaking the IM rate. We know that Future Search has already has equipped about 200 people with the tools to address not just infant mortality, but also a wide array of other public health issues.

--Richard Aronson, M.D., Chief Medical Officer for Family and Community Health, Wisconsin Division of Public Health

- Common Ground became a key forum in which people felt relatively safe in discussing sensitive and divisive issues. Successive meetings included youth, the public school system and Hispanic and Hmong communities.
- High involvement of families of color and community members trained to facilitate meetings--a vital component in a strategy for reducing health disparities among communities of color.
- Milwaukee Fetal Infant Mortality Review Program (FIMR) has created a community-rooted approach to the review of fetal and infant deaths.
- “Families Helping Families and Infants through Healthy Start Projects” program was developed 1999, grounded in Future Search principles.

- The Milwaukee Healthy Beginnings Project, a Federal Healthy Start Program housed in the Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin, offered funding and staff support for the third Future Search conference in 2000.
- Milwaukee Common Ground fostered the conditions that made it possible for community-rooted organizations such as the Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin to receive the Federal Healthy Start funding. The Coalition was a key collaborating partner and leader in Future Search.
- “Future Search conferences are very positive in getting institutions to open their minds to the fact that affected communities have answers as well as needs. Most of the health care and other institutions have been very receptive to becoming active members of the Milwaukee Healthy Beginnings Project and have provided resources to us. This would have not been possible without a number of these same institutions attending the conferences.”

--Patricia McManus, Executive Director, Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin

Further Impact

“I believe that Future Search was the womb and birth place for many of the progressive ways that services are delivered to families.

-- Mary Musk, mother of four (two of whom have special needs), Vice-Chair of the State MCH Program Advisory Committee, previous chair of HealthWatch and founding MCG member.

“FIMR would not have been possible without the first Future Search. That meeting led to an airing of many sensitive concerns and a great respect for finding models and approaches for combating infant death.”

--Jennifer Hammel, Project Coordinator, Fetal Infant Mortality Review Project.

“Milwaukee has multiple problems around racial disharmony and many of our problems are related to our lack of interaction with different cultures. Future Search is the place where we left titles, differences, fears, superiority and denial at the door. It helped us achieve cultural education, cultural values and common sense.”

--Jestene McCord, Director of Urban Affairs for Aurora HealthCare.

The Medicaid Managed Care Program in Wisconsin involved Common Ground participants in a process to make access into the HMO system simpler and more responsive to the unique needs of women, children and families.

PrimeCare, the largest HMO in Wisconsin, has engaged in outreach efforts in partnership with community-based organizations. “My experience was very, very positive in that it opened up significant new channels of communication among people and enabled me to be part of several outreach efforts, one example being Milwaukee Healthy Women and Infants Program.”

--Larry Rambo, CEO of PrimeCare, the largest HMO in Wisconsin.

3. Future of the Berrien County, MI: Creating Interdependent World-Class Communities that Value Diversity and Inclusion and Leave No One Behind

Context

St. Joseph's, a primarily white, upper-middle class, privileged community, and Benton Harbor, a primarily black, disadvantaged, underdeveloped community, are two southwestern Michigan towns of 11,000 each, separated by a narrow river. In 2001, David Whitwam, CEO of Whirlpool, a multi-national corporation headquartered in Benton Harbor, challenged citizens of both towns to overcome severe racial tension and disparity and become a "world class set of interdependent communities." Whitwam's commitment to changing the status quo included the caveat that if the communities could not come together he would move Whirlpool's headquarters to an area more welcoming to his company's increasingly diverse staff. His goals were two: to bring the two communities together and to increase opportunities in disadvantaged Benton Harbor. Financed by the Whirlpool Foundation, local citizens formed a non-profit called The Council for World Class Communities (CWCC). In 2002, CWCC invited Future Search Network to help mobilize citizen action across racial and class lines.

Future Search Participants

Future Search Network members, working in teams of four, ran eight conferences. Each was planned with community residents, who chose the participants. The first, with a cross-section of leaders from "both sides of the river," created an overarching vision for action. Future Searches followed within weeks for Business, Communities of Faith, Community Outreach, Economic Development, Education and Learning, Healthcare, and Government. In every conference, citizens from across the county were involved in the meeting and in organizing their own action initiatives.

Outcomes

- Residents from both St. Joseph's and Benton Harbor are involved in many projects listed below. Interdependence is becoming a way of life for many people.
- A residential community along the Benton Harbor riverfront is being developed to create a much-needed local tax base. This \$500 million dollar undertaking is jointly owned by The Whirlpool Foundation and two community organizations—The Alliance for World Class Communities, and the Cornerstone Alliance.
- The Alliance for World Class Communities, a new entity, brought together four community organizations working on Economic Development, Educational Reform and Leadership Development, and Inclusion. The organizations are: Cornerstone Alliance; Community Partnerships for

Lifelong Learning; CWCC (Council for World Class Communities); and Citizens for Progressive Change.

- Youth and Young Adults from all of Berrien County (including St. Josephs and Benton Harbor) planned and co-led their own Future Search,
- CWCC now implements the following programs:
 1. Bridges to Digital Excellence – computer training for children, using computers donated by community members.
 2. Diversity Training—Community-wide and internally with the Law Enforcement Community.
 3. SMART (Southwest Michigan Arts for Real World Training), a program connecting arts and skills training.
 4. Leadership Development for adults in Benton Harbor.

Note: Community Partnerships for Lifelong Learning, Citizens for Progressive Change, and the CWCC were initiatives either conceived or developed during the initial Future Searches.

Further Impact

David Whitwam, who retired as Whirlpool’s CEO in 2004, remained active in community affairs. In 2005 he said this of his CWCC experience:

“When Future Search Network came and ran the Future Searches, it was the first time ever, literally, that large groups of very diverse citizens in our communities came together to talk. You created a safe environment for all of us to deal with some very emotional matters. That was so important.

“Future Search brought us together and then all of a sudden we had a platform to continue. If we’d have started the work that we did without Future Search, I don’t think - actually, I know - we would not have had the dialogue and come through the discord to move an agenda forward. We had about 400 black citizens and 600 white citizens involved. This was the first time they discovered they could work together.

“The other thing was that great ideas came out of the Future Search that have been executed. The Partnership for Life Long Learning was one of many. Also, the fact that the youth and young adults of both communities wanted to have their own Future Search a year later was very meaningful. It broke down many barriers that they had growing up. Without the Future Searches, I can’t imagine where we’d be. We wouldn’t be where we are today, so, would we do it again? Absolutely. It was an integral part of the big process.”

Mark Mitchell, Director of CWCC, and in 2005 the President of The Alliance for World Class Communities, added:

“For three years, we have been working to build world-class communities. We have been able to establish countless relationships with businesses, organizations and individuals in our region. And it is these collaborations that have furthered our efforts to build an inclusive community that leaves no one behind.”

4. A Community Effort to Restore Community Values:

Ho'opono Koalau Loa

Context

For centuries, the Hawaiian Islands, relatively isolated from the rest of the world, maintained their traditional way of life. During the 19th century life in Hawaii changed drastically. Missionaries and traders brought foreign diseases to which the islanders had no immunity. Hawaiians died in staggering numbers. By mid-century the native population had fallen 90 percent, from an estimated 500,000 to about 50,000.

To save her people from extinction, Queen Emma started The Queen's Medical Center, now Hawaii's largest health facility. When she died in 1885, Queen Emma left vast land holdings to support healthcare for Hawaii's people. Over the years the Hawaiian way of life altered dramatically as Western values of competition, individualism, and power clashed with Hawaiian values of harmony and cooperation.

More than a century later, the legacy of Westernization was evident in continuing social and medical problems. According to Queen Emma Foundation statistics, ethnic Hawaiians, 12.5 percent of the state's population, accounted for 50 percent of teen pregnancies and 44 percent of asthmatics under age 18. They had the highest diabetes rate for those 35 years and older (44 percent); 42 percent were overweight; and 40 percent were acute or chronic drinkers. Their young people had a juvenile arrest rate 33 percent higher than other citizens.

The heaviest concentration of ethnic Hawaiians lived in Ko'olau Loa on Oahu's north shore. In 1996 the Queen Emma Foundation staff held town meetings and found that in addition to medical care, education and jobs, people wanted their communities to better reflect traditional values that had eroded over the decades. The Foundation funded a Future Search to help people reconnect with traditional values of community wholeness and cooperation in all areas of local life.

Future Search Participants

High School Students, Teachers, Native Hawaiian healers, Western Healers, Clergy, Community Associations, Social and Cultural Agencies, Business People, Activists, and Residents of all ethnicities.

Outcomes

- The planning committee from the 1996 Future Search became a 501(c)3 nonprofit, to address grass roots issues. In 2005 they had been meeting monthly for nine years and called themselves Malama Ohana ("caring extended family").
- Projects included organizing annual community get-togethers, improving signage and awareness of highway safety on the road, reducing traffic deaths from more than eight per year to two, addressing literacy and drug abuse problems, and helping to sustain the monthly health fair on the hospital grounds, that was now in its 8th year. They were connected to the

Hawaiian culture programs in the high school and at Brigham Young University-Hawaii (see below).

- “Hawaiians have a very poor health record. We are among the highest of all ethnic groups in cancer, AIDS, high blood pressure, diabetes - all the diseases that kill. It's very grim. But things are now moving in a positive direction. The network is spreading. We are experiencing more concentration on health and a greater willingness to get involved.”
--Gladys Pu'aloa-Ahuna, member of Malama Ohana
- “We are changing our nursing curriculum to emphasize patients and families as partners. The Ko'olau Loa experience was the turning point. It's a whole new mindset.”
--Laura Armstrong, Chief of the Community Health Nursing Division in the State Department of Health
- Hawaiian values and practices are integrated with the Western medical model. Kahuku Hospital, Ko'olau Loa's main medical center, runs a community-wide effort to focus on prevention and good health practice, including a monthly Health Fair/Farmer's Market where they screen for diseases and teach Hawaiian healing.
- *A New Day-Care Center* - Maxine Kahaulelio, a local mother and cook at Hau'ula Elementary School, had fought for six months to keep the Kamehameha Preschool Program alive after it lost its funding. Applying what she learned at the Future Search about citizen involvement, she called a parents' meeting. Adding educators, health professionals and funders, she built a Board that got a \$40,000 grant from the John A. Burns Foundation. They named themselves the Ko'olau Loa Early Education Program (KEEP). A few months later, Na Kamalei KEEP opened with 30 preschoolers, a full-time teacher, and two aides. "We started with nothing, and now we have a school going," said John Kaina, a Board member.
- Lea Albert, principal of Kahuku High School, ran a Future Search, three months after the community Future Search. There, 140 parents, teachers, students, business people, and staff considered the implications, for public education, of the common ground identified in the earlier conference. As a result, Kahuku High added many community-based themes to its curriculum, such as healthcare as a future local industry, the integration of Western and traditional medicine, protection of the environment, agriculture, eco-tourism, water and waste management, and housing.
- Students began attending neighborhood association meetings. Christian Palmer, a Kahuku High senior said, "We want to offer a youth point of view. The Ho'opono Ko'olau Loa conference was an eye opener. My friends and I realized our community's future is determined by the people who are active and interested."

- Two years after the Future Search, Brigham Young University-Hawaii opened the Center for Hawaiian Language and Cultural Studies, recognizing the experience of indigenous Hawaiians as a legitimate area of scholarship.

Further Impact

Still thriving in 2005, Na Kamalei provides play activities, excursions, language instruction in English and Hawaiian, music, storytelling, creative arts, and parenting skills education. Na Kamalei has a staff of 11, a board of seven, two federal grants, a literacy project, a new agricultural operation and numerous collaborations. Starting with 30 children, this vibrant, community-supported day care program is now triple in size.

Kahuku Hospital, the local hospital and only facility for emergencies and births within a one and one-half hour drive, held a Future Search in 2002 to decide whether to close. They reorganized and kept open and running.

Na Kamalei allied with three other child development programs -- Malama Na Wahine Hapai provides prenatal care, Healthy Start visits mothers of infants and toddlers at home, and Healthy and Ready To Learn works with families to teach good health practices.

"We want our students to live here after graduation, buy homes here, and make career choices that relate to the economic future of the region. This is one of the most beautiful places on earth and our youngsters can help in managing the resources that keep it that way."

--Lea Albert, former principal of Kahuku High School, current Windward Oahu District Superintendent

"There's an old Hawaiian saying that 'you don't grow taro in six weeks.' The seeds that were planted at the conference are sprouting in unexpected areas. We are no longer strangers to each other. We are a much warmer community, and that is critical."

--Eric Shumway, President of BYU-Hawaii and 1996 Future Search participant.

5. Beyond Welfare Reform in Ramsey County, MN: Creating Workable Solutions for Families and Employers

Context

In 1997, seventy people from Ramsey County met in a Future Search to discover ways to implement the Federal Welfare Reform Act of 1996 and help impoverished families move from welfare into employment.

Future Search Participants

Employers, AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) Families, County Officials, Elected Supervisors, Family and Children's Services Specialists, Informal Community Leaders, and Training and Employment Experts.

Outcomes

- Jean Hammink, an employee on loan from the County, formed the Community Employment Partnership (CEP). CEP created 10 Neighborhood Work-Resource Hubs that provided decentralized services to job seekers. The Board members represented the county, city, non-profits, chamber of commerce, school district and welfare recipients.
- CEP built a central database with decentralized access for storing lists of job openings and other employment related resources. It also provided consumer support including an expanded Sister-to-Sister operation, children care and transportation services for welfare families, and an employer task force that integrated employer concerns into the overall system. Throughout, welfare clients and the business community continued to be involved in the governance.
- “It is very likely that Future Search was able to redefine and broaden the problem domain because half of its participants were not part of the traditional service delivery systems. For example, the very direct and tense discussion among job seekers and employers at the conference was an event that stayed in the memory of people who attended the Future Search and unleashed creative energy to broaden their thinking.”
--Jean Hammink, Director, Community Employment Partnership

Sustained for Five Years (A report detailing the 5 year project is available.)

“What came out of the Future Search was a plan to change the system and system change takes time. Five years later, we hit a wall. The County reacted to the Welfare Reform Legislation requirements. Welfare Reform was asking for faster results. The County started second guessing the process and eventually pulled back their support.”

--Jean Hammink