

# Bringing the Learner Voice Framework to Life at Your Institution




## AN ACTION GUIDE

Wherever you sit within in the Postsecondary Education ecosystem, you can develop practices centered on Learners' needs, motivations, and past experiences.

By focusing on Learner Voice, leaders can deliver more transformative outcomes for Learners, enhance the value of time and resources invested in programs, and remove barriers to help all Learners unlock their potential.

### How you'll use this Guide:

- Move through this series of exercises to incorporate new Learner Voice practices.
- Hone in on one idea to test.
- Identify barriers to experimentation and gaps in your knowledge.
- Determine bite-size first steps to test your idea in your institution.

-  **GOAL** Generate multiple ideas and identify at least one idea to test within your institution.
-  **DURATION** 60 minutes [minimum]
-  **GET READY**
- ▶ In advance, review the [Learner Voice toolkit](#) to get familiar with the framework.
  - ▶ Gather your ideation tools. Depending on what works best for you, that could include: post-its, poster paper, markers, or a virtual collaboration tool like [Mural](#).
  - ▶ Where possible, create a quiet space to work through this exercise uninterrupted.
  - ▶ If working as a team, identify a timekeeper to help keep you on track.

## REFRESHER

### 6 Practices For Incorporating Learner Voice



A demonstrated commitment to Learner Voice



# Part I — Generate

RECOMMEND: 10 MINUTES

## Tips for Idea Generation

- Embrace the fast pace. Lean into the speed and don't overthink the choices you're making.
- Aim for volume. The spark of an idea could come from anywhere. You will be able to narrow down and refine ideas down the road.
- Suspend reality. Don't worry about what feels "realistic" right now. There will be time for that later. For now, free yourself from constraints and see what emerges.

### 2 MIN Which of the following Learner Voice practices would you like to explore?

Reflect on your organization's goals for the year ahead. Where might Learner Voice practices naturally fit? Pick one of the six Learner Voice practices to explore in this exercise. You can always go back and generate ideas for others later.

- How might we co-create more decisions with Learners?
- How might we celebrate Learner stories?
- How might we reward Learner-centric culture?
- How might we build long-term relationships with Learners and communities?
- How might we acknowledge and question assumptions about Learners?
- How might we better measure Learner outcomes & satisfaction?

### 4 MIN How might we bring that practice to life?

Take 30 seconds with each prompt below to generate as many ideas as you can for the practice you chose above. Use a timer on your phone or watch to help you stay on track.

To help us _____ at our institution, we might:	(Practice)
#1: Something that would be a big leap from what I am doing today	<i>Ex. Reward grantmaking processes that build in listening to Learner Voice</i>
#2: Something that seems like an impossible idea	<i>Ex. Set up long-term learner advisory panels to inform funding strategy</i>
#3: Something I'd do if I had unlimited time, money and influence	<i>Ex. Run a longitudinal research study with our Learners around long-term outcomes from our liberal arts programs</i>
#4: Something that I could do today	<i>Ex. Feature learner stories in public-facing materials, such as impact reports and presentations</i>

### 2 MIN Which idea most jumps out at you?

Circle 1 idea that stands out to you that you'd like to explore with your team. This is a chance to play around with ideas that intrigue you. Don't worry about them being fully baked.

### 2 MIN Did you notice any knowledge gaps?

What do you wish you knew about your idea that would help you move forward? Make a note to look into those later.

# Part II — Select

RECOMMEND: 20 MINUTES

## 1 MIN Write down your starter idea.

Drop in the idea that you came up with in Part I that you want to focus on in Part II.

## 9 MIN Refine your idea.

If working as a team, pair up with a colleague and take turns sharing & reacting to each other's ideas. If working independently, find an internal or external peer, or reflect individually on the following. These questions can help you get started.

- A. What appeals to you about your colleagues' ideas?
- B. What assumptions are being made about why the idea(s) will or won't work? What information is missing?
- C. How might you expand upon the idea?
- D. Complete this sentence: "Your idea is making me think about...[person / institution / solution]."

Take notes here.

## 10 MIN Hone in on your first idea to test.

Take time to hone in on one idea to test first. You can always come back to other ideas. You may not be ready to make a decision in the moment so gather input and come back when you've made a choice. Here's one way to approach that process live:

1. Gather the team's "stand out" ideas in one document or virtual collaboration tool.
2. Complete a "gallery walk" - read through each other's ideas, ask questions where needed.
3. Vote for up to 2 ideas that are most interesting to each individual. Use "dots" or markers and let the votes speak for themselves.

## 5 MIN Craft your Learner Voice Action Statement.

You are ready to start planning your first test.

To help us \_\_\_\_\_ at our institution, we are going to test

(Practice)

\_\_\_\_\_.

(Idea)

### Action Statements from Real-Life Practitioners

- **From a University President:** To help us co-create decisions with Learners, we are inviting a representative selection of Learners to join our next Board meeting and share their experiences & ideas alongside our Board members.
- **From a Nonprofit CEO:** To help us acknowledge and question assumptions about our program, we are conducting interviews with Learners to map their education-to-career journeys.

# Part III — Plan

RECOMMEND: 30 MINUTES

## 20 MIN What might stand in your way of implementing your new idea?

Explore what might keep you from implementing your idea at your organization by reflecting on the following prompts. Get all of the barriers you anticipate into one document. Some might feel more urgent. Some might feel less in your control.

- E. What internal and external barriers exist for these ideas to be successfully implemented?
- F. What kind of support and resources would you or your organization need to address these barriers?
- G. Of these barriers standing in the way of implementing your idea, which can be addressed in 3 months? 6 months? 12 months?

### Most common barriers identified by Postsecondary Education Leaders.

#### Process

- Entrenched program development processes that don't focus on learner needs
- Challenges recruiting diverse learners
- Breakthrough insights siloed within individual projects

#### Metrics + Measurement

- Lack of quantitative or qualitative metrics for learner voice
- Insufficient proof points and high perceived cost, leading to low perceived ROI

#### Culture + Relationships

- Competing priorities (e.g., putting employer needs first)
- Low power sharing
- Lack of respect for learners

Drop your barriers in here. **Circle the 1-2 barriers that you most anticipate will stand in the way.**

## 10 MIN What first step can you take to test your idea?

Start small and see what emerges. Your idea will evolve as you test it in the real world. Your first step may be to remove the barrier you identified. Or maybe follow up on your knowledge gaps.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Congratulations! You're on your way to building stronger Learner Voice practices within your organization. We're here to work with you.**

At The Charles Koch Foundation, we believe that society's challenges are best addressed by social entrepreneurs — *faculty, learners, administrators, and nonprofit leaders* — who have first-hand knowledge of a problem, a vision for solving it, and a passion for working with others to drive lasting change. **Do you have an idea that you'd like to share with CKF?** Get in touch and explore how we could partner.



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