

MOVING **THE OD FIELD** FORWARD

DEVELOPED BY THE OD GATHERING



Our ask of you . . .

We hope to receive your support for the frameworks we have created so we all can stand on common ground as we teach and practice Organization Development (OD). Our request is that you read through what follows, consider how it might impact you and the work you do in the world, and respond to us with your feedback as follows:

Responses

- 1** I agree with the spirit of the definitions, and am willing to use the content and share them with organizations I am a part of and/or consulting with and have them begin to use these frameworks too.
- 2** I support the frameworks in principle and will share with you/the OD Gathering any modifications I might have.
- 3** I cannot support the frameworks, not even in principle.
- 4** I cannot support the frameworks and will share with you/the OD Gathering some of my thoughts.

Of course, we hope you will find a way to endorse and support what has been created and/or in the spirit of consensus agree that you can live with the frameworks. Please note that we see the frameworks that the OD Gathering created as a foundation on which practitioners and academics will build and modify, that is, create your own variation on the themes. Our hope is that, as hundreds and hundreds of us who are practicing or teaching OD adopt and adapt these frameworks, the effort of the OD Gathering will create common ground.

We welcome your messages of agreement and/or comments at founderstothefuture@gmail.com.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS . . .

When Fred [Miller] and Matt [Minahan] and a gang of both dear and unknown OD types invited my participation in this process, I thought, “Oh, great . . . Another navel-gazing group of OD people wandering around and wondering What is OD?” Since my very first ‘OD project’ in 1978, I have had the good fortune to be engaged in many large and small OD initiatives in many countries, which, I hope gives me the right to render judgment on a venture like this. Here it is: **OMG! What an extraordinary piece of work! Simply stunning. . . In my opinion, this report, which integrates the delicate polarities existing between rigorous research methodology and hands-in-the-dirt praxis, is one of the most useful, provocative and yet surprisingly grounding things I have ever read in our field. At the end they say “This is our 95% solution.” In my estimation, it’s a lot closer to 100% of what we need to guide our field and our own practices for years to come . . .**

—**JOHN J. SCHERER**, LHD, FOUNDING DIRECTOR, SCHERER LEADERSHIP CENTER, POLAND

 **IN THEIR OWN WORDS . . .**

A diverse group of almost 300 people over 3 years, addressing questions about the future of organizations, work, and OD. That's The Gathering. Bringing together voices from across race and culture, engaging new and aspiring practitioners in conversation with authors, academics, and long-experienced consultants. Integrating the perspectives of coaches, diversity practitioners, team builders, strat planners, graphic facilitators, org designers, internals with externals, across the generations. Starting with the truths from our Founders and turning toward the Future, building common ground around who we are, what we do, and what the world needs from the unique gifts that OD is. And maybe most importantly, turning the leadership of these themes over to a new generation, readied for a world that none of us can predict. That's The Gathering for me . . . the privilege and experience of a lifetime.

— **MATT MINAHAN**, PRESIDENT, THE MINAHAN GROUP, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
OD's Vision	7
Definition of OD	9
Essence of OD	11
OD Values	13
Six OD Capabilities	21
Our OD Imperative	27
Appreciations	29
Appendix I: Our Story	33
Appendix II: Attendees	39
Appendix III: Graphic Recordings from Gatherings	57
Appendix IV: In Their Own Words...	69

INTRODUCTION

Where it all began — an account from Frederick A. Miller¹

As I was sitting in a plenary session at an OD meeting in 2016, I became aware that the change example being presented was much more of an HR process implementation than an OD intervention. It was well presented and the audience enjoyed the presentation. The organization where it was being deployed was going to be different, but in my way of thinking, the change strategy was not an OD intervention. I thought maybe OD had moved, or HR and OD had merged, or what I thought was OD was too narrow, or perhaps the field of OD as I understood it was no more, and possibly what I was experiencing was the *new OD*.

If OD was to have a future, it needed greater clarity. I did know that the window for that clarity was closing and if greater clarity was not achieved in the next few years, the possibility of it emerging became more and more difficult.

What was clear as I left that room was that it was getting close to the time for the next generation to take over. I began a quest to ask some people to discuss the state of OD today and how it needed to be going forward. I hoped its future would be grounded in the facets of OD that made it have such an impact on so many individuals, pairings, groups, and systems. I wondered if there were people willing to spend time thinking about this with me, knowing that any group convened would be just one of many having the conversation around the world.

I asked Matt Minahan to join me because I was clear that his thinking and network were critical for success. Then I invited Bob Marshak, Judith Katz, Ilene Wasserman, Bridget O'Brien, and Norm Jones into the conversation. We joined hands and started down a path to raise questions, gather people, and see if 100 or more of us could develop something that we as a field could review and discuss as it relates to what OD is and what is core to the practice and teaching. They said, “yes!”

WOW!!! Something was going to happen!!! And we would all learn!

¹**Frederick A. Miller** is CEO and Lead Strategist of The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc. A pioneering change agent and thought leader in the field of organization development, he has led transformative change interventions in Fortune 50 corporations, large not-for-profit organizations, and government agencies throughout the United States, Europe, Australia, and Asia. Fred has been working in the field since the 1970's.

Joining us as the years went on were Karen Parker Thompson, Yasmeen Burns, Keith Earley, Sandra Janoff, and Alicia Simmons.

We, the Planning Group, started having calls to think about first steps. We decided to invite people to attend one meeting a year for three years. Judith suggested that we call the event the OD Gathering.

We wanted to ensure that we had many communities represented, including:

- a range of ages, social identity groups, and experiences,
- attendees from around the world,
- internal and external consultants,
- corporate, community, and societal change agents,
- the academic community,
- people new to the field and old timers,
- people from many of the OD-related organizations,
- senior leaders of organizations, and
- others thinking about the world that is and the world that might be.

The Planning Group met frequently, thinking about how to create the OD Gathering.

The plan was to invite a group of no more than 125 people to come together to think about and create a 95% answer to “*What world do we want to create together and what is the future of OD in that world?*” with the hope that others (the world) would find it helpful and join us in using it as some of the grounding for each of us to grow our OD practice, teaching, and theory creation.

I am very grateful to the above practitioners, scholars, and ODN Lifetime Achievement and other award recipients for giving their time, love, thinking, and friendship to this journey we have been on for the last four years.





Our process

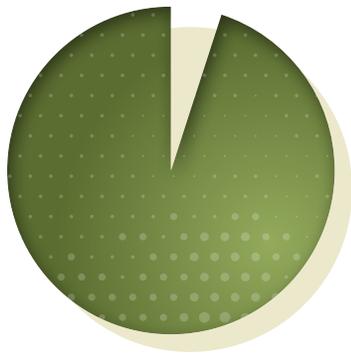
Over three years, “From the Founders to the Future — A Gathering to Build OD for Tomorrow’s World” was held at the Kimpton Hotel Monaco in downtown Baltimore during the first week of December. The purpose was to come together in a community to discuss, learn about, and share current thinking and reflections about OD theory, values, practice, learning, accomplishments, challenges, and joys and to think forward to imagine what the world and work might be in the future, and what that will require of OD.

The full story, history, and list of participants can be found in the Appendix on Page 33.

How we see this effort: establishing some shared understanding about OD

The image that many of us carry is an open field without a fence around it. People wander into and out of the field without constraint or requirement, which creates challenges for us and others to know who we are in this field, what we do, why we do it, and how. The three-year Gathering effort was and is an attempt to put a small, flexible fence around that field with gates that allow for easy entry and exit and some signposts for those currently inside the fence in the field and those who would like to join. What follows are the signposts at all of the entrance gates so that all who enter have clarity about what and who is in the field ahead and all who want to remain inside can be clear about the core commitments we all are making to the world, the field, and to each other.

We hope those inside the field will recognize what follows and will find enough in common to agree. We also hope those who desire to enter the field will find these frameworks allow for some clarity about the field they are entering and the fluidity to find their own footing in the field. We hope that all find the following a way to connect with our OD roots and to offer new thinking, providing a grounded connection to the founders of the field and the creativity and innovation needed for the future.



95% answers

What follows is the result of input from almost 300 people and our attempts to represent the central beliefs and practices of the field of Organization Development, with grounding in the work of the Founders while also looking toward the future.

Our proposals for definition, capabilities, values, and vision represent the “95% answers” from the work of the OD Gathering and Circles of Work. We call this 95% since we know we will need to continue to build on these frameworks as we gather additional perspectives from around the world.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS . . .

What an inspiring piece of work! The report clearly expresses the essence of the OD field. Imagine an active OD community built around these central tenets. Imagine what we could do together linked to these tenets and answering questions like these . . .

- **How by joining together might we influence the world of work?**
- **How could we better shape organization systems toward an enlightened use of human talent?**
- **What could our concerted effort yield in individual fulfillment and workplace achievement?**
- **How might we step into the unique opportunities of this moment?**

Our work world is crying out for answers to these questions. In OD, we have been pursuing answers more individually than collectively, and our aspirations are far from met. This report could provide the fulcrum for moving the OD community forward together.

— **GEOFF BELLMAN**, CONSULTANT AND AUTHOR OF *THE CONSULTANT'S CALLING: BRINGING WHO YOU ARE TO WHAT YOU DO, GETTING THINGS DONE WHEN YOU ARE NOT IN CHARGE, AND EXTRAORDINARY GROUPS: HOW ORDINARY TEAMS ACHIEVE AMAZING RESULTS*, WASHINGTON, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OD'S VISION

In an ever-changing, increasingly complex and diverse world, all organizations, communities, and individuals are adaptable, resilient, and thriving. People create and lead healthy, meaningful lives through effective, sustainable human and organizational systems. Effective leaders boldly and intentionally foster inclusive environments in which people connect with one another, see themselves and their organizations in new ways, and co-create their shared future.



Our thinking

In this context, we take “Vision” as a desired future state which an individual or a group aspires to achieve². The vision here is focused primarily on OD’s potential impact on individuals, organizations, and human systems.



Our process

Our Vision Circle of Work was tasked with defining the Vision, Essence, and Critical Needs for the future of the field of OD. The work was focused on (1) the vision for OD’s potential impact on individuals, organizations, and human systems, (2) the essence of organization development, and (3) the critical needs and opportunities in the world which OD is well-placed to address.

This Circle included 21 OD scholars and practitioners who used the outputs from the 2018 OD Gathering as its starting point to leverage the wisdom of the broader community. The Circle defined each concept for the purpose of its work, and then developed its outputs through iterative cycles of brainstorming, discussion, and synthesis.

²Henry, Anthony E. (2011). *Understanding Strategic Management* (Second Edition). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS . . .

Garnering support throughout an organization for transformational OD work can be challenging: there is often quite a bit of skepticism about the process and significant budget constraints to boot. The widespread embrace of these definitions offers clarity and consistency around what OD actually is and what it can actually accomplish. They represent a significant milestone in the growth of the field.

**— DANIEL M LEVINE, PHD, CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, LARGE
NON-PROFIT, TEXAS, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

DEFINITION OF OD

Organization Development (OD) refers to the disciplinary field of scholars and practitioners who work collaboratively with organizations and communities to develop their system-wide capacity for effectiveness and vitality. OD is grounded in the organizational and social sciences.

The Vision in the previous section created a wide and inviting field for the work of OD practitioners. However, there is an equally important need to have some boundaries to the field and what it does. The 17 members of the Definitions Circle of Work began their work in 2018 with a literature review, collecting 38 definitions from the literature. The Circle members had written another dozen themselves. Considering all, the Definitions Circle of Work agreed on the definition above.

Our thinking

The above definition of OD was the result of months of research, thinking, and consideration. We were quite intentional in deciding that “OD is a field” and not simply an approach or a discipline, nor does it meet the criteria to be a profession. The second question revolved around the roots of the field. The natural default language has been “applied behavioral science,” but the group agreed that phrase was well worn, still opaque, and lacks currency in the real world.

The next challenge was the verb. What exactly does OD do in and with organizations and communities? The Circle tried “lead, design, facilitate, support, engage” and several other verbs. At the final Gathering meeting, after considerable additional input and deliberation, Circle members adopted “work collaboratively with” to reflect the interactive nature of OD work.

The next question was, with whom does OD work? The Circle considered humans, people, groups, organizations, and communities. The final agreement was that OD works with both organizations and communities, especially since many OD practitioners are now involved with global movements and communities on issues such as diversity, inclusion, equity, and climate change. Whether organizations or communities, the Circle agreed that OD practitioners focus on the system as a whole and on the individuals or members in the system.



Our process

The Definitions Circle of Work was comprised of 17 members, including OD practitioners, scholars, and students who were tasked with developing/updating a definition of OD. We identified and studied 38 unique definitions from a number of sources, including both published and non-published sources. Definitions were collected from those participating in the 2018 Gathering. Some definitions had been crafted and published by members of the Circle doing this work, others were submitted by scholars and practitioners who heard about this effort. Those who had published definitions were able to agree through dialogue on elements to include and elements to leave out, including in some cases, their own ideas. Editions of the definition were tested with clients and colleagues of those in the Circle, and additional ideas were contributed during a town hall meeting with invitees from the larger Gathering community.

ESSENCE OF OD

The definition of OD is inextricably linked with the essence of OD. “Essence” is the intrinsic nature or indispensable quality of something, especially something abstract, which determines its character.³ Essence is something’s timeless core—its soul. The Vision and Essence Circle determined that the essence of OD exists at the intersection of three equally important lines of thinking: the *Why*, the *What*, and the *How*.

Why: people who practice and study OD aim to elevate humanity.

What: through OD, we provide a presence to human systems. As a result, those systems are better able to:

- function effectively and optimally,
- grow and adapt intentionally to shifting circumstances,
- live and thrive through all types of change (e.g., planned, emergent),
- collaborate and make decisions,
- foster contact, understanding, and shared perspective across differences,
- cultivate and benefit from effective, aware and intentional leaders,
- unlock creativity and innovation,
- overcome challenges which, to the people in the system, might seem impossible, and
- work in ways that are sustainable and healthy for the system, its people and society.

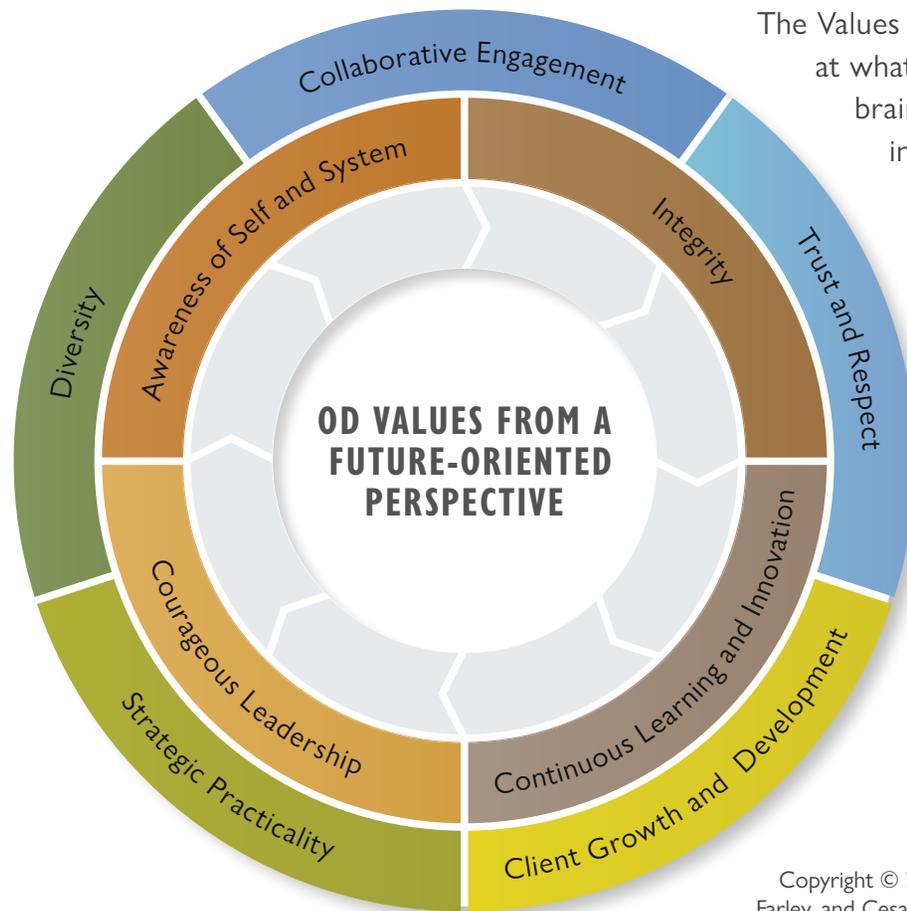
³<https://www.lexico.com/definition/essence>

How: In our OD-related work, we recognize that *How* we go about our work is just as important as *What* we do. We pursue the *Why* and the *What* by:

- being and acting in service of the systems we support, even in challenging moments,
- supporting and elevating the human element in everything we do,
- bringing intentionality, discernment, and patience to whether, when, and how we engage,
- navigating the complexity of being both in the system and maintaining boundaries,
- consciously using our full selves and our presence and showing up as whole humans (e.g., with emotion, feeling, values),
- building equal partnerships with the people and systems we support,
- co-creating and discovering with people in the system,
- advocating for both diversity and inclusion and justice and fairness,
- bringing the courage to hold up the mirror and help people in the system see the whole system and themselves in new ways to better move forward,
- mutually learning and developing with the people in the system, and
- developing and enhancing capabilities within the system so we leave it better than when we arrived.

OD scholars and practitioners also must consistently align with the values and ethics of the field and continually develop, grow, and model the capabilities required in the field.

OD VALUES



The Values Circle of Work conducted a Delphi process in order to arrive at what follows. They began their work at the 2018 Gathering with a brainstormed, unfiltered list of OD values needed for the future outlined in the vision, definition, and essence of OD. They organized and shared the results in three successive Delphi rounds, using statistical measures and qualitative analysis to reorganize, refine, reword, and relabel. The result is a set of 9 values needed for OD to be effective in a future oriented perspective as represented below.

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The 9 values are further explained and defined here:

Courageous Leadership

To exemplify bold and effective conduct when necessary. It involves voicing truth directly to power and challenging the status quo.

Awareness of Self and System

To be conscious of all levels of a system. It involves recognizing the self and the client from a systems perspective while treating each human system as a whole.

Integrity

To align actions with ethical codes, relevant cultures, and guiding principles and theories. It involves managing conflicts of interest and encouraging justice.

Continuous Learning and Innovation

To seek knowledge; acquire new skills; and use new approaches, methods, and techniques. It involves taking a data-driven approach.

Diversity

To accept and promote the unique presence and contributions of everyone. It involves emphasizing the importance of marginalized perspectives and identities.

Collaborative Engagement

To champion the inclusion and empowerment of all stakeholders, both internal and external. It involves encouraging and fostering open participation across the system(s).

Trust and Respect

To create a psychologically safe environment through demonstrating empathy. It involves exhibiting deep admiration for all humans and understanding their emotions and situations.

Client Growth and Development

To develop the capacity of our clients to maintain and continue the work on their own. It involves recognizing

stages of development and fostering the ability of a human system to continually progress.

Strategic Practicality

To enable clients to identify and achieve the desired outcomes. It involves recognizing that identified solutions need to support the needs of the organization as well as the individuals. It also involves adapting to changing situations, identifying alternatives, and thinking strategically.

Our thinking

As our participants were asked for their perspectives in the Delphi survey, the following guided our own perspectives on the work:

- We are identifying values for the future.
- OD values should guide how we practice OD. We are identifying professional values for the OD field, not personal values of OD practitioners.
- OD values should encompass instrumental (how we function) and terminal values (what we pursue).
- OD values can distinguish OD from other practices.
- OD value labels should be clear and easily understood by OD professionals as well as the clients.



Our process

The Circle of Work committee working on OD values collected and analyzed data from OD participants across 58 countries, on 5 continents, who varied by gender, age, ethnicity, and educational background. They recorded the above values along with the behavioral indicators they represent.

This work was performed by the Circle of Work leaders. It has been published in *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*:

Yoon, H. J., Farley, S. B., & Padilla, C. (2020). Organization development values from a future oriented perspective: An international Delphi study. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886320957351>



IN THEIR OWN WORDS . . .

You have done very amazing work for society and individuals. I agree with the spirit of the definitions and will share them with organizations.

— CHENGXIN “HANS” HUANG, XTALENT CONSULTING CO., LTD, CHINA





IN THEIR OWN WORDS . . .

This work honors the development of OD, while also establishing a well-informed common ground for the advancement of OD practice, scholarship, and education. The framework is a constructive bricolage that reflects the durable and multifaceted-dimensions of OD — and will inspire actions that transform individuals, organizations, and systems.

— MONIQUE L. SNOWDEN, PHD, PROVOST & SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, FIELDING GRADUATE UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



IN THEIR OWN WORDS . . .

“Moving the OD Field Forward” should be viewed as the penultimate source towards defining the characteristics and ‘Essence’ of OD. The answers revealed through the work of the OD Gathering and Circles of Work are essential in developing the framework surrounding the OD field.

— **MAYA HU-CHAN**, AUTHOR OF *SAVING FACE: HOW TO PRESERVE DIGNITY AND BUILD TRUST*, PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATES, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



SIX OD CAPABILITIES

The Capabilities Circle of Work team was comprised of Circle Leaders, plus 8 working members, representing academia, scholar practitioners (internal and external), activists, writers, and researchers from the corporate, non-profit, global, and local communities. They were primarily based in North America.

The Circle took capabilities to mean topics that OD practitioners need to know and be able to act on. The 6 are represented in the following graphic and further defined on pages 22 through 23.





1 SELF-AWARENESS

“The conscious use of one’s whole being is in the intentional execution of one’s role for effectiveness . . .”⁴

Behavioral indicator example: able to identify own emotions and use them as a source of information and motivation.



2 INCLUSION AND EQUITY

Engages in the creation of opportunities and the overcoming of systems of bias and inequality to support the development of all individuals and social groups.

Behavioral indicator example: understands and intervenes on challenges and opportunities rooted in and related to diverse identities and perspectives.



3 SYSTEMS THINKING

Supports organizational efforts to maximize competitive advantage and value creation while fostering a climate of continuous assessment and adaptation to change.

Behavioral indicator example: ability to assess and intervene strategically regarding the relationships among the whole, its parts, and their interactions to effect change.

⁴Managing Use of Self for Masterful Professional Practice. Jamieson, Auron and Schectman, 2010, p. 5



4 SKILLFUL INTERVENTION

Capacity to strategically design, support, facilitate, influence, and lead efforts focused on system transformation, change, and development.

Behavioral indicator example: makes appropriate use of the system's context and content to enhance interactions and support change.



5 THEORY BASED

Has the knowledge and ability to apply existing and emergent theories, concepts, and methods from relevant disciplines and fields.

Behavioral indicator example: knows the difference between sound and pseudo research practices and can appropriately implement them.



6 FUTURE FOCUSED

Stays current on and understands the impact of external trends. Continuously adopts and integrates new tools and technologies to increase the effectiveness of one's practice.

Behavioral indicator example: attends to, understands, and integrates changing demographics, communication processes, climate impacts, and advanced technologies such as AI, robotics, blockchain, IoT, Big Data.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS . . .

This is one of the bravest attempts to define OD, values, and the competencies. It will bring some order in the chaos that exists at present. It's very futuristic.

— **SUSHMA SHARMA**, FOUNDER AND CEO, RESONATE CONSULTING AND PAST PRESIDENT OF ISABS, INDIA



Our process

The team based the capabilities on current research and identification of mega trends including emerging technologies, power shifts, sustainability of organizations, social and natural systems, individual and organizational risk, and security. We held a townhall to provide input to the Circle team. The draft capabilities, authored by the Circle Team, were presented at the 2019 OD Gathering.



Our thinking

In addition to capabilities, we thought it was important to identify the critical needs of OD (as generated by the Essence, Vision, and Critical Needs Circle). As an OD community, we exist in a cycle of continuous learning and growth based on research, practice, and experience. Below are needs and opportunities that OD can help address to have a positive impact:

- **Navigate the increasing rapidity of change,**
- **Explore, identify, and enact principles, purpose, and values,**
- **Foster learning and development,**
- **Connect with and adapt to advances in technology,**
- **Maintain individual and/or group identity amid change,**
- **Support and promote sustainability,**
- **Adapt to and influence shifting power dynamics, and**
- **Align mission, vision, and strategy.**





IN THEIR OWN WORDS . . .

This definition and work provides a great foundation to guide the much-needed transformation of work. Day & Zimmermann, just like many others, has been profoundly impacted by the seismic shifts of 2020. We now have an opportunity to rethink our future and organizational development will play a critical role in that work.

**— HAL YOH, CEO, DAY & ZIMMERMANN,
PENNSYLVANIA, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

OUR OD IMPERATIVE

The world, organizations, and the individuals who inhabit them are all evolving rapidly, creating a diverse range of critical needs and opportunities for OD scholars and practitioners to have a positive impact. A “critical need” is generally described as an extremely important motivating force that compels action for its satisfaction. These needs and opportunities are our imperative in OD; they are the call to which we as people who practice and study OD must respond.

- **Maintaining or increasing health and agility at all levels of system,**
- **Navigating the increasing rapidity of change**
- **Exploring, identifying, and living into principles, values, and culture,**
- **Maintaining individual and/or group identity amid change,**
- **Fostering knowledge management and learning and development,**
- **Supporting and promoting sustainability,**
- **Connecting with and adapting to advances in technology,**
- **Adapting to and influencing shifting power dynamics,**
- **Evolving and aligning operating model(s), and**
- **Maintaining legal and regulatory compliance.**

This list is by no means exhaustive, but it does have implications at all levels of system, from society (at a global or national level) through organization and group to two-person systems and the individual. For example, “adapting to and influencing shifting power dynamics” could emerge at the societal level by addressing inequality, genderism, and racism in pursuit of social justice. At the organization level, mergers and acquisitions or rapid growth or decline in an organization might amplify and alter existing power dynamics. At a group or a two-person level, a critical need could manifest during restructuring or consolidation or in changing roles and responsibilities. Finally, at the individual level, the need could occur during any transition with perceived status implications.

A beginning, not an ending

The different sections throughout this document have provided the threads which, when woven together, yield the tapestry which is the field of OD. The Vision outlines the desired future which we aspire to make a reality for ourselves and those we serve. The Definition and the Essence help shape what we do and how we go about doing it. The Values offer a framework which serves as a series of guideposts for all scholars and practitioners. The Capabilities describe the most critical elements to which we need to attend to carry out our work in alignment with our values. And the Critical Needs provide our imperative; they are the call to which we as people who practice and study OD must respond.

This is our 95% solution. We believe it is well grounded in an open and participative process by a widely diverse group of over 300 OD practitioners, scholars, academics, coaches, and students.

Responses

- 1** I agree with the spirit of the definitions, and am willing to use the content and share them with organizations I am a part of and/or consulting with and have them begin to use these frameworks too.
- 2** I support the frameworks in principle and will share with you/the OD Gathering any modifications I might have.
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- 4** I cannot support the frameworks and will share with you/the OD Gathering some of my thoughts.

We welcome your messages of agreement and/or comments at founderstothefuture@gmail.com.

APPRECIATIONS

Finally, many thanks to the hundreds of participants in the OD Gatherings, the several hundred who answered surveys and participated in focus groups, the dozen leaders of the Circles of Work, and finally to the organizers and planners who helped bring to life “From the Founders to the Future: A Gathering to Build OD for Tomorrow’s World.”

It takes a village . . .

Thank you!

The preceding work could not have been accomplished without many people working diligently for three years. The list below is not complete — there were many more people who touched this process some for a moment and others for months or years. Every thought made a difference. We thank all who shared an idea, held this process in their thoughts, answered a question, or asked a question. We thank you and we thank the following people:

Founders and Planning Partners

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Bridget A. O’Brien, PhD, ACC, O’Brien & Associates Consulting, LLC

Frederick A. Miller, CEO, The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc.

Ilene C. Wasserman, PhD, President, ICW Consulting Group

Judith H. Katz, EdD, Emeritus Executive Vice President, The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc.

Karen Parker Thompson, MSOD, Founder, Engaging by Design

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Yabome Gilpin-Jackson, PhD (Definitions), Founder & Principal — SLD, Supporting Learning & Development Consulting Inc. & Executive Leader in Organization Development

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A special thank you to all the members of **The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc.** who worked tirelessly to coordinate, publicize, and organize each of the gatherings: Amadi Turner-Tarver, Bemí Otulaja, Jenna Keary, Katelyn Dory, Mark Freedman, Melissa Núñez, Ratna Randive, and Tara Whittle, and especially Alison VanDerVolgen for shepherding us all through this whole process.

Thank you to the Kimpton Hotel Monaco Baltimore for all their support and accommodations for each of the Gatherings.

A thank you to everyone who attended the Gatherings and to those who gave input to the Circles. And, a special thank you to colleagues around the world who joined us in this endeavor.

Finally, a special thank you to **The Clearing** for their generous support in preparing and publishing this document.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS . . .

The outcome of The Gathering is a well-balanced integration and description of what the field of Organization Development is and aspires to be. I hope it gets widely disseminated and used.

— **GERVASE BUSHE, PHD**, PROFESSOR OF LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT,
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APPENDIX I: OUR STORY



2017 Group Photo

2017 Gathering

The first Gathering was held on 5, 6, and 7 December 2017, discussing the state of OD, along with theories of both the past and present.

The first day was designed to build community and lay the foundation for the work ahead. There was a focus on a panel that discussed the founders of OD and the roots of the field.

On the second day, futurists Gervase Bushe and Jens Hanson presented propositions about the future of work and the future of OD. After hearing their provocative ideas, the group started to think about new directions for OD and the implications for the role, identity, and impact it may have in the future.

This first Gathering concluded its final day discussing aspirations for the field. We took a group photo, as we have done every year. At the conclusion of the meeting, we asked for a one-word summary of the event and generated a word cloud of people's feelings.

Note: See a graphic recording from each Gathering in the appendices, beginning on page 57.

(Graphic recording is a well-known tool in Organization Development practice.)



2017 Word Cloud



2018 Group Photo

2018 Gathering

The 2018 Gathering was held on 4, 5, and 6 December 2018.

The event started with a rich group discussion about the reasons participants decided to practice OD and the challenges and opportunities people experience within the field. We also began to think about the field in the future.

The Generation X group formed in 2017 and worked over the year to find their voice together and began the 2018 Gathering with their own statement about the present situation and the future of the field.

The second day featured thinking from futurist Margaret Regan, who brought her own personal robot to fully demonstrate that the future is here now, with only more disruption ahead from automation, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality and their impact on the future of work and organizations. The 2018 Gathering concluded with people volunteering for four “Circles of Work” that would advance the thinking to be presented at the 2019 Gathering.

Circle of Work process

From the 2018 Gathering, 4 Circles of Work were formed to advance the thinking on their topic in preparation for the 2019 Gathering:

- **Vision, Essence, and Critical Needs of OD in the Future**
- **Definitions of OD for the Future**
- **Values for the Future of OD**
- **Capabilities of OD for the Future**

These groups volunteered their time. The Circles were led by practitioners and academics who facilitated the work of each Circle from January-December of 2019. Each group had its own process, described in sections prior. They met with their groups, included others who had not attended the Gatherings, used outside resources, researched, and gathered together to meet. These groups did tremendous work to move our thinking forward.

Each Circle presented their work in October and November to the OD Gathering community by Zoom to get feedback and thinking. They then incorporated that feedback and came to the 2019 Gathering with a presentation that represented the 90% answer.

For more specific information or further explanation of the work done to create the frameworks, please contact the Circle Leaders directly by email. Their contact information is listed in Appendix II, beginning on page 39 of this document.



2019 Gathering

At the 2019 Gathering, the four Circles of Work shared their 90% solutions and tapped into the thinking of the attendees. During the Gathering, held 3, 4, and 5 December 2019, each Circle took several hours to share and get feedback. The entire Gathering community gave meaningful and constructive feedback which the Circles considered and integrated into their work.

After the 2019 Gathering, the Circles took everything they had heard and learned and incorporated it into the information you see in this document to create the 95% solutions.

Additional consultations

During 2020, the Circles of Work reviewed the feedback from the 2019 Gathering participants. They also presented their work at the 2020 Academy of Management and at several local OD Network meetings and received strong positive feedback.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS . . .

The definitions that are the outcome of this endeavor prove OD is a critical field of study and is critical to the times ahead.

**— MICHAEL ALI, PHD, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER,
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APPENDIX II: ATTENDEES

Legend

○ Founding Member

○ Planning Partner

OD Circle Leaders:

○ OD Competencies
for the Future Circle

○ Definitions of OD
for the Future Circle

○ Vision, Essence, and Critical
Needs of OD in the Future Circle

○ OD Values for the Future Circle



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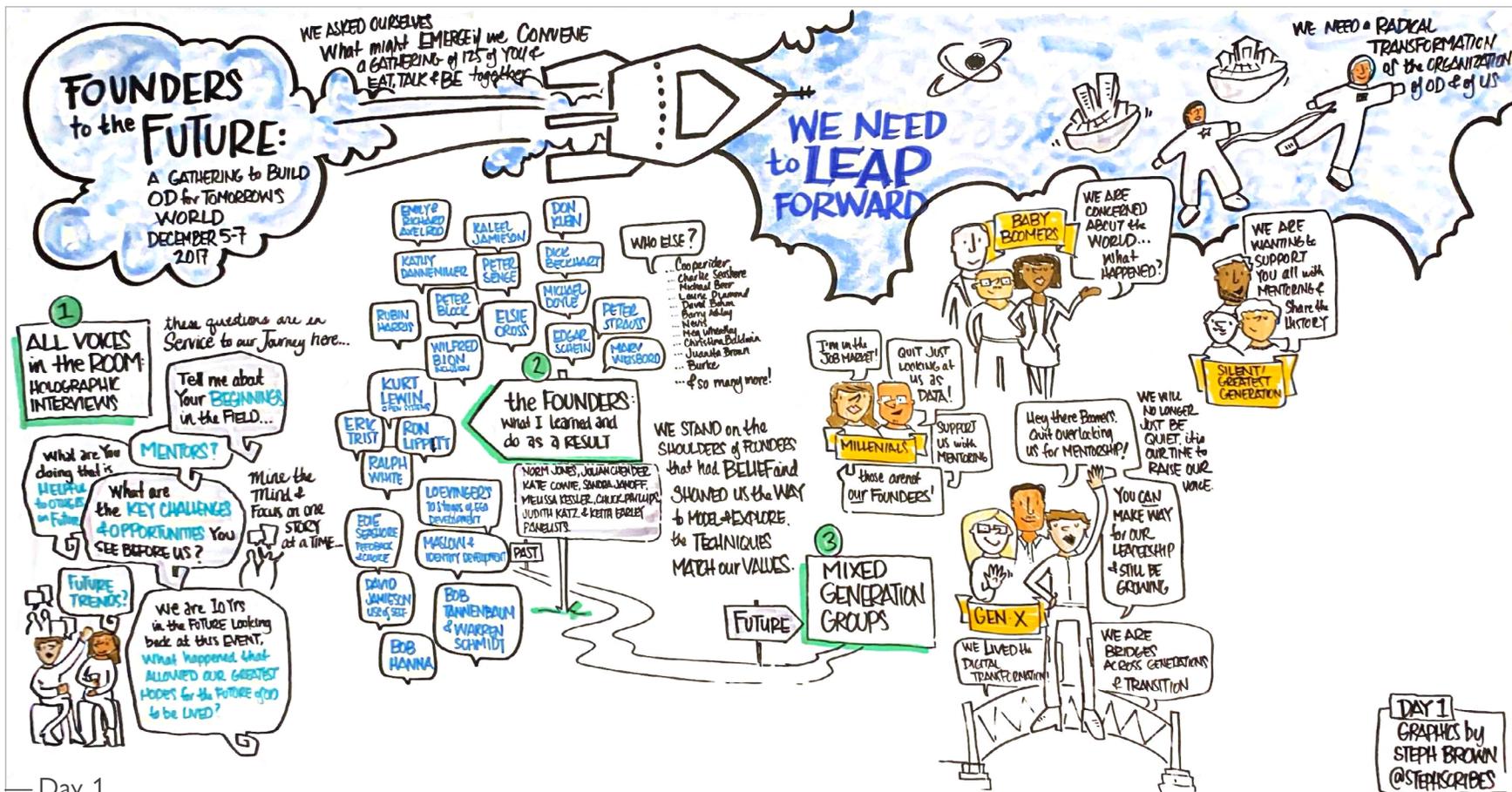
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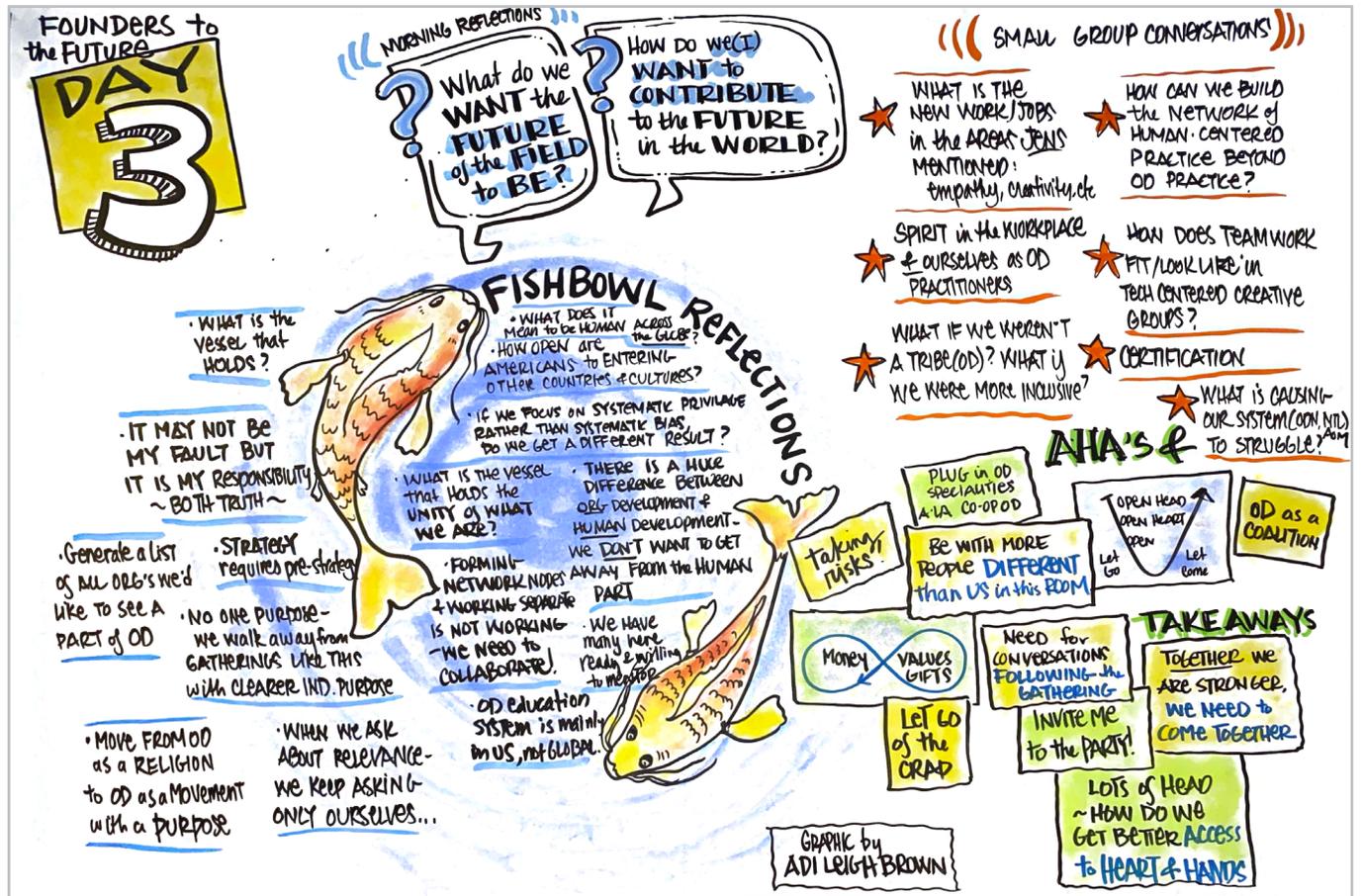
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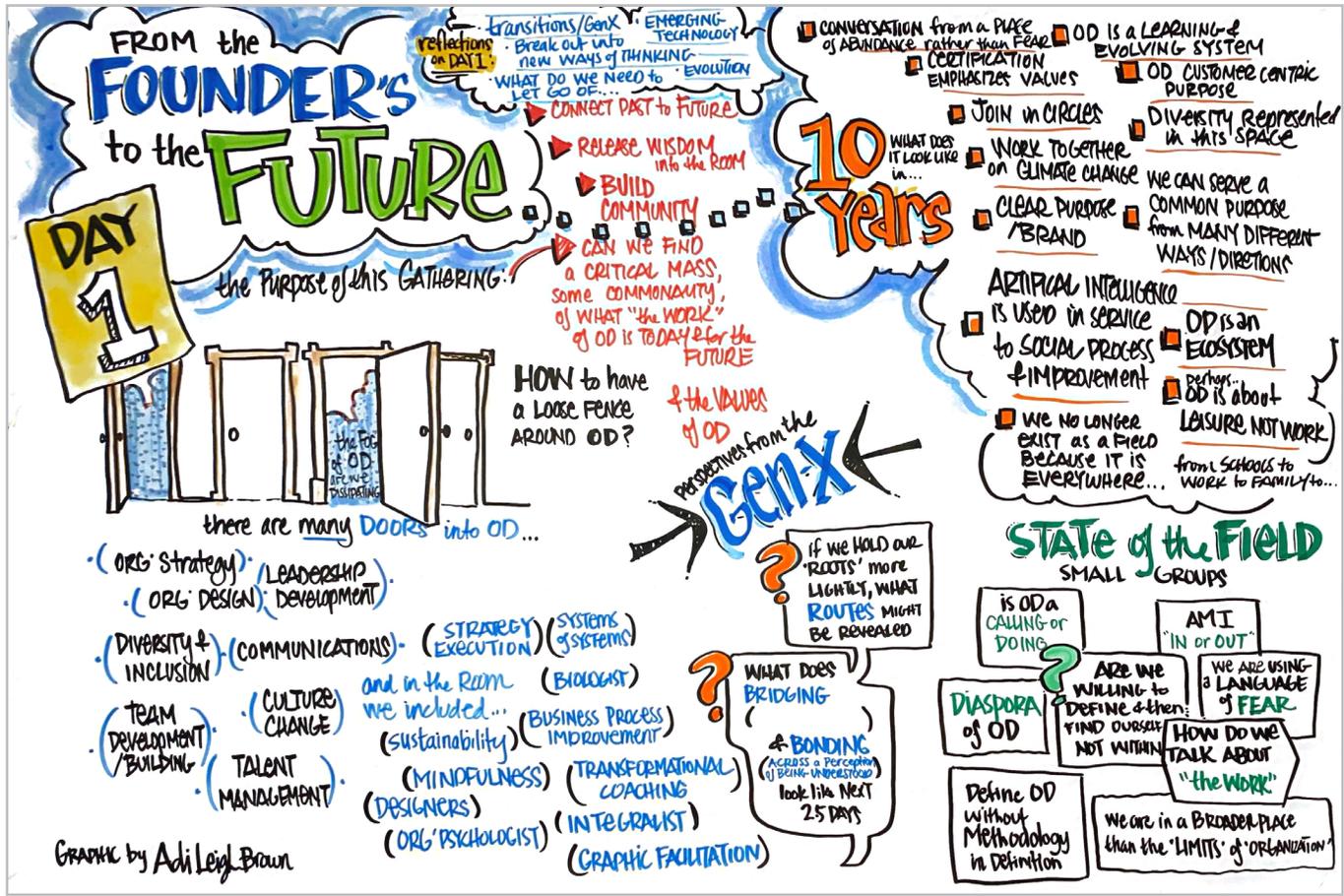
APPENDIX III: GRAPHIC RECORDINGS FROM GATHERINGS



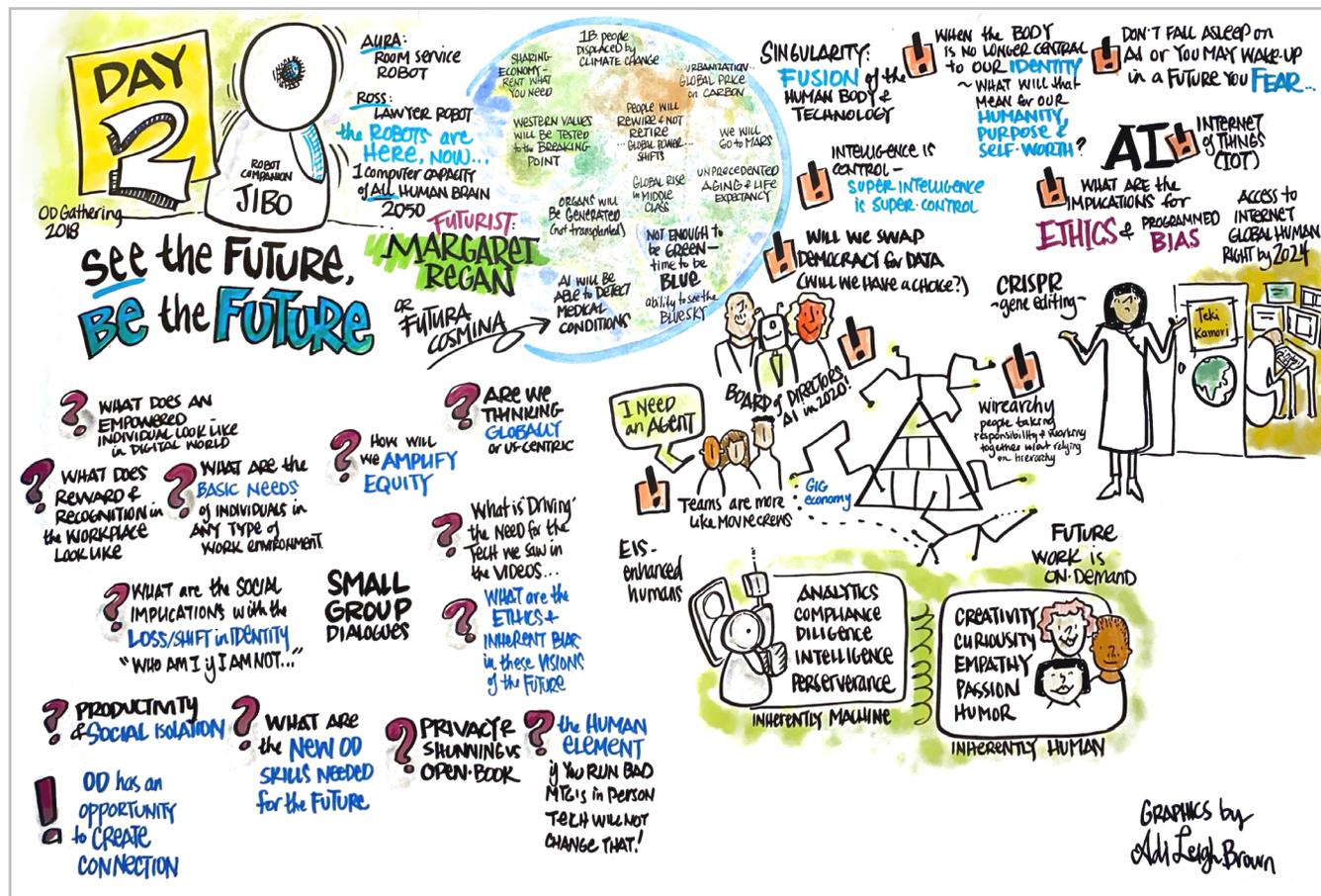
2017 — Day 1



2017 — Day 3



Graphic by Adi Leigh Brown



2018 — Day 2 (am)



FOUNDERS to the FUTURE
OD GATHERING
DEC. 2018

NEED to INCLUDE COMMUNITY

CRITICAL Needs

- IDENTITY HELP Ours, COMM, PEOPLE, IN OURS AND Ours TOGETHER
- SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY
- SHARE & APPLY KNOWLEDGE WITH GREATER AGILITY/MORE QUICKLY
- CONNECTIVITY
- EMPLOYEE NEED for MEANINGFUL WORK
- GLOBALIZATION & POWER SHIFTS

FOR SYSTEMS & PEOPLE to CHANGE MORE QUICKLY AS THE WORLD CHANGES

WE AS PEOPLE NEED to LEARN & APPLY MORE QUICKLY i.e. use of FOLKING

WHO & WHAT COMPOSES the SYSTEMS ARE SHIFTING

RESEARCH & LEARNING CYCLE

ACADEMIC ↔ PRACTICE INTERACTION

- HOW is RESEARCH a part of a THRIVING OD?
- HOW do we MAKE the RESEARCH ACCESSIBLE/AVAILABLE to ALL?
- CRITICAL THEORY as a WAY we MOVE FORWARD with UNITY
- is the TYPICAL DISSERTATION APPLICABLE?
- WHAT DOES IMPACT MEAN?
- VALUE of ACTION RESEARCH
- WHAT MODELS DO we NEED to USE to be TAKEN SERIOUSLY?

HOW do we BRING in DISTINCTION of SCHOLARSHIP?

WHY CAN we NOT FOLLOW MEDICAL MODEL?

VISION

Help INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS & FORMS of SOCIAL SYSTEMS to FLOURISH & THRIVE



CAN we HAVE a WORD?

FEELS LIKE a MISSION NOT a COMPELLING VISION

COMMUNITIES & ORGANIZED SYSTEMS ARE FLOURISHING & THRIVING with OUR SUPPORT

TENT BECAUSE WANT BOUNDARIES & PERMEABILITY

VALUES

HOW we DO & WHAT we PURSUE

OVERNIGHT REFLECTION QUESTION for DAY 3...

WHAT is the COMPELLING, GENERATIVE IMAGE that can result /invite us into a NEW WAY of BEING

ESSENCE

if YOU BOILED DOWN WHAT we DO, WHAT WOULD BE LEFT?

OUR PRESENCE may NOT CHANGE the OUTCOME but it CAN CHANGE the QUALITY of the OUTCOME

- SEEING the WHOLE SYSTEM & SUPPORTING the SYSTEM in SEEING ITSELF
- BUILD in SYSTEM a CAPACITY, that the SYSTEM MAY NOT HAVE for ITSELF
- PARTNERSHIP to DISCOVER, to BRING HUMANITY into SYSTEM, CONSCIOUSNESS
- IT'S A WAY of BEING... PRESENCE INTENTIONALITY LOVE

COMPETENCIES

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ABILITIES
TECH SAVVY & ETHICS ACROSS ALL

- STRATEGIC ACUMEN
- EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL & CULTURAL FLENCY
- SKILLED FACILITATION
- ENHANCED USE of SELF
- INTEGRATED x-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH

GROUP SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

KNOWLEDGE of THEORY

SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE

TRUSTED ADVISOR

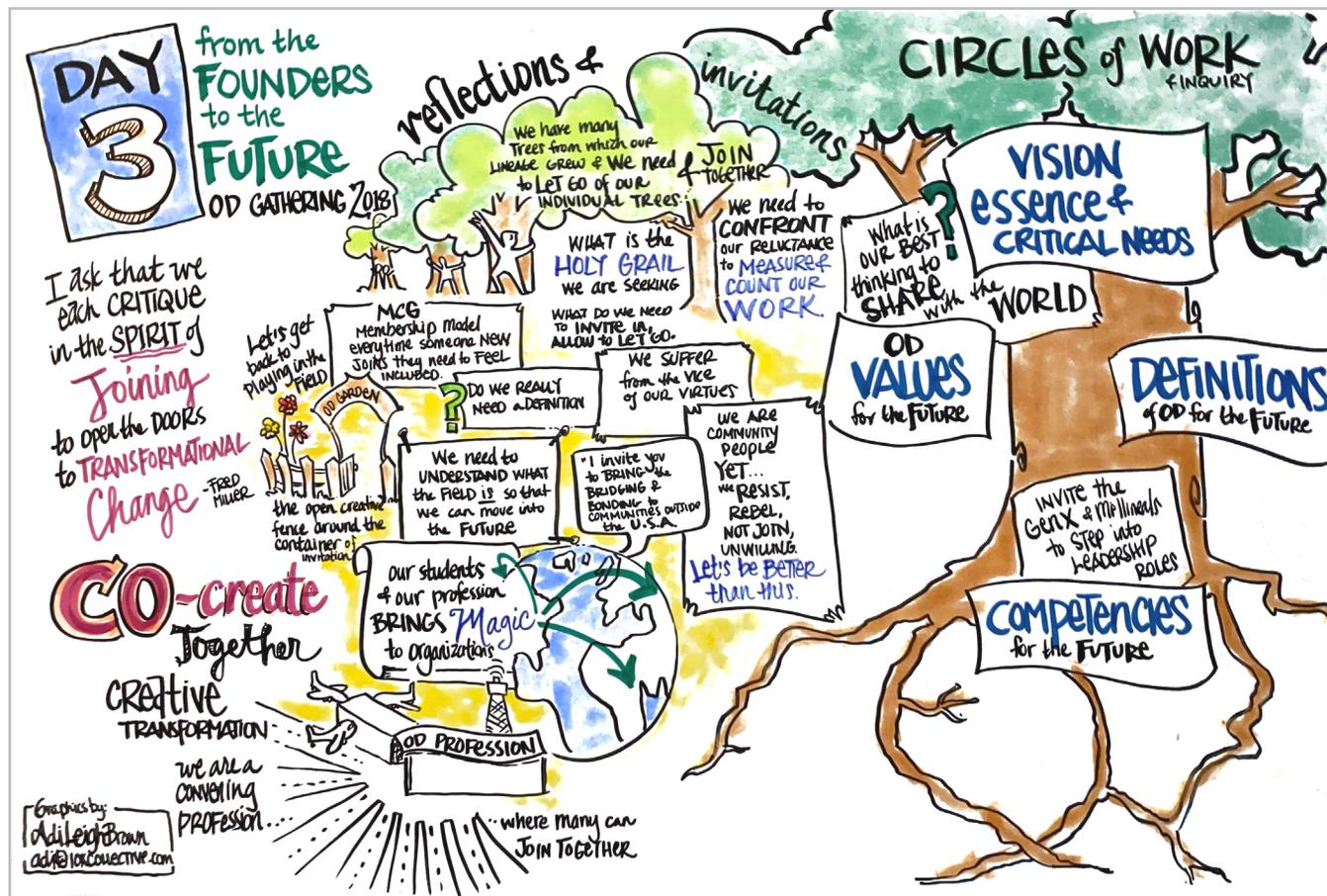
- GROWTH
- INTEGRITY
- CONSCIOUSNESS
- EMPOWERMENT
- INNOVATION

SPIRITUALITY & RELIGION

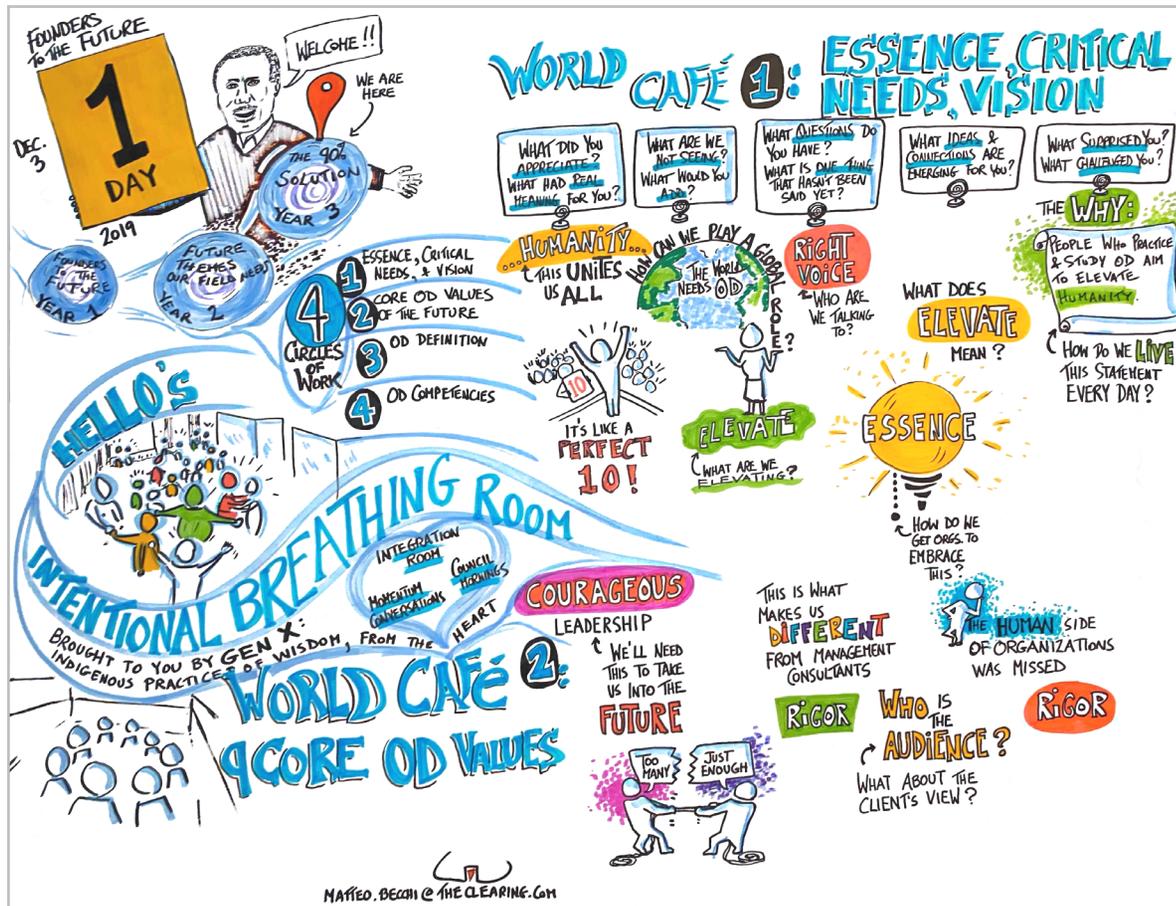
SOCIAL JUSTICE DIVERSITY, INCLUSION EQUALITY

RESPECT

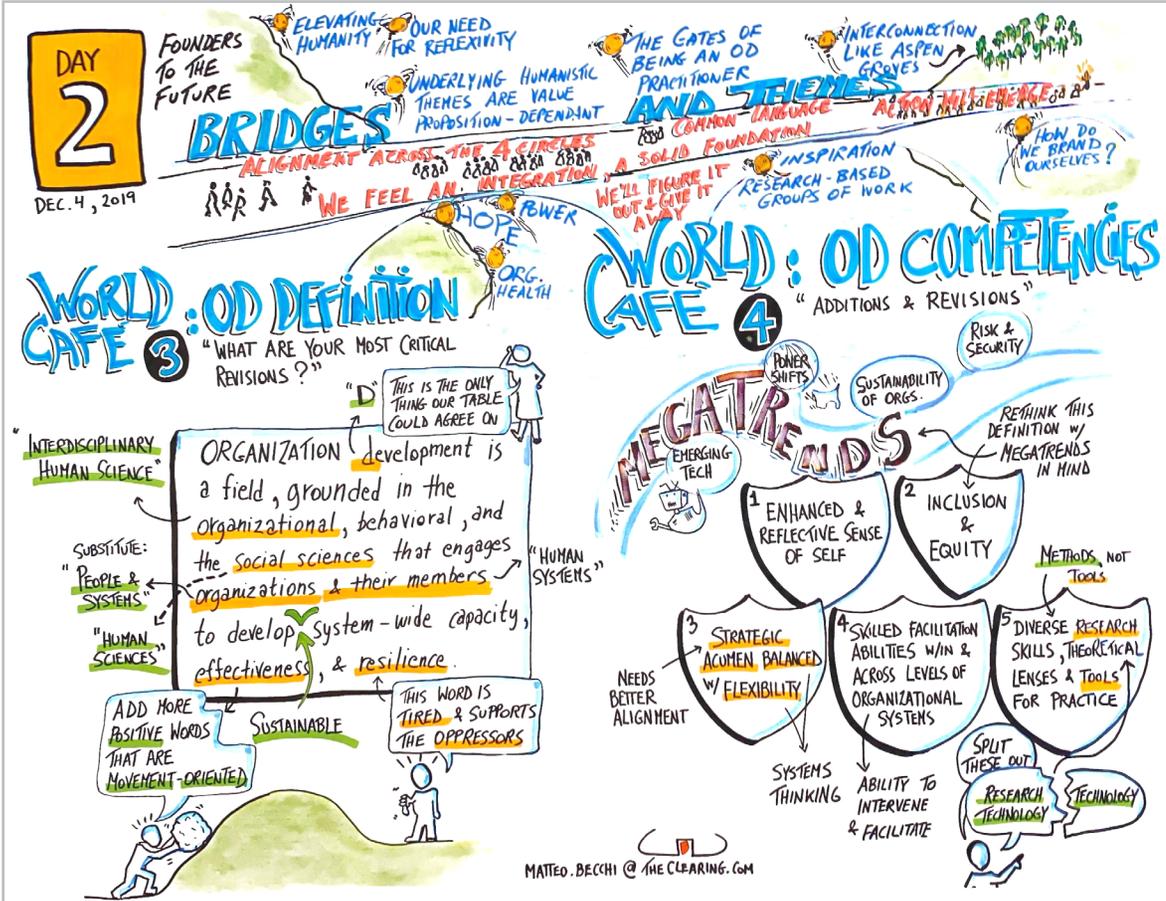
GRAPHICS by
Aldi Leigh Brown
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2018 — Day 3



2019 — Day 1



2019 — Day 2



2019 — Day 3

 **IN THEIR OWN WORDS . . .**

The work performed over the course of the OD Gathering has provided a forward-looking path essential to the practice of OD in today’s hyper-dynamic environment. In a world of continual and discontinuous change, the work of the OD Gathering approximates a 95% grounding of vision, values, essence, and capabilities upon which we can agree while simultaneously building and celebrating our unique professional styles, innovations, and approaches in OD practice, research, and pedagogy.

— **ANTON SHUFUTINSKY, PHD**, DHSC, FACULTY OF OD AT CABRINI UNIVERSITY, CO-FOUNDER, INSTITUTE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY LEADERSHIP EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT (I-ILEAD), PENNSYLVANIA, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

APPENDIX IV: IN THEIR OWN WORDS...



A behavioral sciences discipline that began more than three quarters of a century by challenging the status quo and promoting social justice is more important today than ever. The courage and creativity of early theorists of OD are still the benchmarks to emulate today to create organizations based on equity, diversity, and inclusion. “Moving the OD field forward” is full of uplifting ideas and an invitation to be bold and take ownership for facilitating change at organizational and societal levels.

— **Tojo Thatchenkery, PhD**, co-author of *Appreciative Intelligence: Seeing the Mighty Oak in the Acorn* and founding director of the organization development and knowledge management graduate program at George Mason University, Virginia, United States of America



Our field of OD has split and fragmented too much over our history, leaving the world wondering “What is OD?” much too often. The critical opportunity created by some of our greats, with the *OD Gathering*, brought a nice mix of generations, experience levels, and perspectives together in dialogue, debate and influence. The role played by many newer, younger members during these gatherings was outstanding.

As a result, this document (and the articles published in the *OD Review vol 53, 1 in 2021*) captures the integrated and consensual thinking of hundreds of people who care deeply about our field. It provides a kick-start for continuing conversation. You don’t have to like everything that came out, but we all need to consider how this respects our foundations and offers new thinking and priorities as we develop the field further into the different future we are experiencing.

— **David W. Jamieson, PhD**, Editor in Chief, *Organization Development Review*, President, Jamieson Consulting Group, Inc., Minnesota, United States of America



Everyone who has participated in attempts to define the field of OD and identify a set of values to guide the practice will appreciate this product produced by the OD Gathering to move the field forward. This grand experiment sets the ground for the next phase of OD attempting to answer the three fundamental questions we have struggled with for 50 years. Who Are We? What Do We Want? How Will We Get What We Want? Answering these three questions is not a problem to be solved, it is a dilemma to be managed. The output from the OD Gathering has the potential to support contact between professionals in the field and others to engage each other in ways that change our individual and collective frames of reference in the direction of being both self and whole serving at the same time. This shift in thinking and behavior will lead to OD professionals making a significant difference in the world with their presence. Organizations will become healthier places to live and work. Our contact with each other will be grounded in compassion, joy, and kindness.

—**John D. Carter, PhD**, CEO, and founder of Gestalt Organization & Systems Development Center, Author of *Making A Difference with Your Presence: Use of Self and Self Mastery*, Ohio, United States of America



I believe OD has never been more relevant than today. Elevating humanity, embracing the human experience, holding on to our essence and keep being connected to each other should become the central themes for humankind for the decades and centuries ahead of us. The outputs - and for those of us attending the memories — of the Baltimore OD Gatherings strengthen this noble mission. Reading, absorbing, and sharing this material will — I am sure — help us act in a globally aligned, healthy and meaningful way.

—**Peter Kalmar**, Founding and Managing Partner, FLOW International, Former President of IODA, The International OD Association, Hungary



This is a great and significant piece of collective work from those who have dedicated themselves all their lives to maintain and advance the field of OD as they know the criticalness the field of OD has in maintaining and building civil society and healthy organisation, not to mention facilitating those flourishing conditions that will led to human growth and connection in society, community, and organisation. I wholeheartedly will teach and disseminate the work from the OD Gathering.

— **L. Mee-Yan Cheung-Judge, PhD**, Quality-Equality, Ltd., United Kingdom



It was a wonderful time participating the OD gathering to reconnect with the global OD colleagues, reflect on our roots and rethink the future. I will surely share this with my OD community in China, and hopefully contribute to advancing OD with the Eastern perspectives in the journey to follow.

— **Jane Feng, PhD**, ISI Fellow, Fielding Graduate University, China



The OD Gathering community has created a valuable product. It serves as an artifact that establishes shared perspective across the landscape of audiences that may face the question, “What exactly is OD?” This piece enables a new baseline for dialogue. I look forward to expanding our dialogue and resources related to the ways OD can address the changing landscape of risk in our world. Consciously responding to risk and threat is essential to the future of our practice. Thank you for giving us a launch point from which we can advance and evolve our craft.

— **Tara Carcillo**, President and Chief Executive Officer, The Clearing, District of Columbia, United States of America



I have a great deal of respect for the people who participated in the creation of this point of view, which captures the essence of what it is we do and believe. I know them to be both intelligent and deeply committed to their beliefs. From my own experience over the years, the truly amazing thing is that through a series of gatherings and working groups, they were able to cut through different interests and beliefs to get to a few simple and powerful statements that reflect where we have been and point toward where we need to go. For new entrants to the field and experienced practitioners, there is now a reference point from which to begin the next step of the OD's journey.

— **Bill Pasmore, PhD**, Professor of Practice, Columbia University, New York, United States of America



This document is a wonderful summary of the OD Gathering — and of the latest, most up-to-date thinking in the field of Organization Development. Anyone who aspires to stay current in the OD field should read this! It is a masterful summary that builds excitement for a wonderful future.

— **William J. Rothwell, PhD**, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, CPLP Fellow, Professor, Penn State University, Co-editor of Practicing OD, Faculty Lead for the Penn State MPS in Organization Development and Change, Pennsylvania, United States of America



As an internal OD practitioner operating within traditional HR frameworks across numerous industries for many years, I'm delighted to have a clear set of guidelines and language to help distinguish and advocate for my approach to the work.

— **Holly Brittingham**, SVP/Global Lead, Organizational Learning & Development, FCB, New York, United States of America



I have to say, as I read through the booklet, it brought a great smile to my face. You and your colleagues really have done a great job of it. Very much the ‘simplicity on the far side of complexity’. No mean feat. Congratulations on this inspiring distillation of what OD is all about. By mapping the ground on which we stand with such clarity you have done all of us who work in the field a great service.

— **Martin Saville**, Director of Mayvin Ltd, United Kingdom



Through defining OD with a common foundation and vision for the future, it helps leaders, individuals and organizations intentionally grow and adapt to our ever-changing world.

— **Kate Manley**, President of Rensselaer County Regional Chamber of Commerce, New York, United States of America



This thoughtful and impressive document examines crucial questions such as: What can and should tomorrow look like? What roles can OD and its partners/colleagues play in achieving these visions?

— **Bruce Rosenstein**, Managing Editor, *Leader to Leader*; author, *Create Your Future the Peter Drucker Way*, Maryland, United States of America



The clarity of the vision, definition, values, and capabilities, that both scholars and practitioners can embrace, provides a vivid description of the work we do and how we walk through life to serve organizations of all kinds. It was powerful for Generation X to give voice to our leadership for today and in the future while continuing to offer an invitation for those that follow.

— **Christine J. Young**, Founder, Momentum Consulting, Founder and Managing Consultant, New York, United States of America



This document represents an enormous amount of deep, collaborative deliberation in service of elucidating the heart and soul of the field of OD. I applaud the efforts of the myriad folks who have given their time and talents to this important task of articulating the vision, values, definition, and capabilities of OD. I would also like to call out the “OD Imperative” that obliges all of us in the field to work toward the creation of more equitable, sustainable, and humane systems of organizing. As an OD educator and scholar-practitioner, I will gladly share this document in answer to the question of “Why OD”? You have provided a most compelling answer.

— **Deborah A. O’Neil, MSOD, PhD**, Professor and Director of the Executive Master of Organization Development (EMOD) Program, Bowling Green State University, Ohio, United States of America



To its credit, organization development (OD) has long encouraged challenges to its status quo, debates about its essential nature, and open discussions on sensitive issues and topics. Such transparency is a healthy tradition that keeps OD vibrant and moving forward. This report reflects that spirit and provides an important perspective on the field’s current status.

— **Chris Worley, PhD**, Research Professor of Management, Pepperdine Graziadio School of Business, California, United States of America



IN THEIR OWN WORDS . . .

I appreciate the clarity and yet broadband description expressed within the six OD capabilities which exemplify the baselines areas of expertise that supports operating is a helpful tool. Even at the highest level one can conduct a self assessment on depth and breadth of proficiency in any of the areas supporting the potential to develop and implement a development plan. It also can be used to corroborate one's ability, capability to take on specific work.

I will be adapting and applying the capabilities within my team initially as an assessment tool to gauge our individual and collective strengths and to identify/ address areas of growth opportunities. Am glad this framework was added to this work as it will help me to review my teams' current competencies vis a vis our transformation work for our organisation and the communities we serve.

— **GRACE PADONOU ADDY**, HEAD OF LEARNING & OD & CHARTERED MCIPD, UNITED KINGDOM

