

My GRAND VISION



Grand Vision Makers Handbook

Grand Vision Makers - Your Grand Vision

Introduction

First, **thank you** for wanting to play a part in helping this region realize the Grand Vision, created by more than 12,000 participants in the Grand Traverse region. We are moving forward on many fronts to make our communities better places to live, work, play, raise our children, and retire.

Grand Vision Makers is a loosely structured process designed to create stories that power the eventual grassroots implementation of Grand Vision core values, guiding principles, and goals.

The process works outside normal confines of status quo decision-making. It thrives in the living rooms, pubs, restaurants, and on the front lawns of homes around the region. It cannot be successful in spaces that look or feel like “business as usual.” No bureaucracy governs the meetings. No bureaucrats do the convening. These, along with true grassroots participation, are key tenets and metrics of success for the program.

This simple notion recognizes that the Grand Vision process was a resounding success in northwest Michigan specifically because it sought and used the input of individuals from every corner of the region. The Grand Vision now offers this tool kit to help continue and strengthen citizen-led participation and action. The **Grand Vision Makers Handbook** provides a set of tools that interested citizens use to host community conversations aimed at asking one key question of those present: ***“What can you do in your community to help move the Grand Vision forward?”***



Who Are Grand Vision Makers?

Grand Vision Makers are individual community members trained to be conveners and facilitators of small-scale community meetings about the Grand Vision. They work on their own, but have the support of the Grand Vision CORE group as needed. **You are a Grand Vision Maker!**

Purpose

The purpose of **Grand Vision Makers** is to provide community members at large a low point of entry to participate in conversations about the Grand Vision with strong emphasis on grassroots actions aimed at short-term and long-term community outcomes.

Process

Grand Vision Makers convene informal gatherings of people in their own homes, businesses, or other places with a casual atmosphere. These hosts are provided with a set of tools and resources to ensure a successful conversation. These tools include basic Grand Vision publications, Grand Vision working group updates, access to the latest Grand Vision presentations, a list of volunteers who can provide detailed instructions if necessary, and basic forms to help run, and keep track of the conversations. Hosts will also be provided with information to help encourage others to become hosts and continue the dialogue further.

Training is available to hosts through this handbook, and use of online and in-person resources designed by the **Grand Vision Maker** team.



Payoff

Successful **Grand Vision Maker** sessions result in many more people throughout the region feeling connected to the Grand Vision. Participants leave with real ideas for how to begin implementing actions in support of Grand Vision Core Values and Guiding Principles in their home communities. They learn to identify existing projects and initiatives that fit within Grand Vision goals. A hallmark trait of **Grand Vision Maker** sessions is that these ideas come from friends and acquaintances, not from some central bureaucracy. In so doing the level of buy-in to ongoing Grand Vision activities, and the public's level of ongoing participation increases greatly.

Intended Outcomes from **Grand Vision Maker** Conversations:

- * A core group of individuals is engaged to spark local conversations about the Grand Vision.
- * Trained conveners for Grand Vision conversations who, by example, through simple role modeling, train others to convene conversations.
- * Individuals are provided with opportunities to participate in the Grand Vision discussions in their communities and in the region.
- * Pathways are created for local governments and constituents to dialogue about local growth and development as it relates to the Grand Vision.
- * Obstacles for citizens to participate with Grand Vision working groups are minimized.
- * Citizens are clearly informed about the Grand Vision.
- * Citizens are empowered to accomplish Grand Vision goals within their own communities with few formalities or roadblocks.
- * Individuals begin to understand impacts their work can have on long term Grand Vision goals, and on fulfilling some more immediate goals from the Grand Vision Five Year Strategy.



"Vision becomes alive when people truly feel they can shape their experience." Peter Senge

Grand Vision Maker Training

Thank you for your interest in being a **Grand Vision Maker** and hosting a **Grand Vision Conversation!**

You are participating in a larger regional effort to move the Grand Vision forward by putting our conversations about the future of our region to work. Hosting a Grand Vision Conversation is easy, this guide will help you set the stage for this important community dialogue and offer ideas on how to keep the conversations going.

The road to action is through conversation. When we engage in conversation we can explore ideas and think together to create new ideas and possibilities. You may be thinking – *"what can a small group of individuals matter as we plan and build our future?"* It matters a great deal. People who engage others in conversation are setting the stage for citizen action to create an alternate future. The more citizens that are engaged in the Grand Vision conversation, the more likely it is that our Vision will be realized.

The Grand Vision process differs greatly from how we have engaged in planning in the past. With nearly 15,000 participants in six counties, the Grand Vision engaged in one of the nation's largest community input conversations to date. We want to keep that conversation going, because we believe that we are all responsible for the design and planning of this region. And because, as we have shown in our enthusiastic response to create a vision, when we think and act together, we can do great things to build our future together. We are all designers and planners because the future of community is ours to create – through citizen action.

This guide is not intended to be proscriptive, but offers suggestions on how to set the stage for a great conversation. **Grand Vision Maker** Conversations do not require an experienced facilitator; the only thing you need is someone (you?) to agree to follow a few basic steps, and find someone else to be a note taker to capture the main ideas and insights of the conversation.

"Grand Vision Maker Conversations shouldn't look like other business meetings. They should be casual, intimate, and very likely fun!"

Hosting Tips

* Have Fun! (This is the Grand Vision Maker PRIME DIRECTIVE!)

Let's face it, planning for change can be seriously difficult work. There is strong evidence to suggest people are much more likely to stay engaged in a process that has a lighthearted quality. Having fun, both for you the facilitator and for other participants, is critical to the success of these conversations. We're not saying that you have to have a party or wear a clown costume, just be careful not to let the conversation drift into the deep recesses of serious strategy work. Provide space to breathe, and a place to relax once in a while. This is one reason the location you pick to host the conversation is so important.

* Pick the Right Place

It's worth reiterating a couple sentences from our introductory page regarding the process: *It thrives in the living rooms, pubs, restaurants, and on the front lawns of homes around the region. It cannot be successful in spaces that look or feel like "business as usual." No bureaucracy governs the meetings. No bureaucrats do the convening.* Only you know the right space for your meeting. That will depend on many variables including who it is you invite. Just remember that the place you choose has a lot to do with how successful you'll be with the Prime Directive.

* Keep it Small

We recommend that you keep each Grand Vision Maker Conversation to a manageable size to facilitate. Intimacy is key. The larger the group, the more difficult it is to have every voice heard and the more likely people will talk "at" you instead of "with" you. There are a few different types of conversations we envision:

1. In someone's home. (5 - 10 people) This is the best-case scenario.
2. At some local casual establishment. (A restaurant perhaps. Number dependent on location.)
3. A school classroom or meeting room. (Certainly not an auditorium.)

Experience suggests that one facilitator can easily manage a conversation with up to twelve people or so. Any more may require additional support. We urge you to make small, manageable, conversations your priority.

Grand Vision Maker PRIME DIRECTIVES continued:

* Invite People You Know

The vision for this process suggests creating small, intimate, conversations among community members. Pick people you want to talk to. Pick people you might actually want to be in your home. This is a good starting point for selecting participants.

You should also consider mixing it up a bit. While still following the above suggestion, try to include people from different perspectives. Preaching to the choir has limited reach. For conversations to be truly relevant, they should involve a diversity of opinions. But that's up to you.

* Prepare Well

Grand Vision Maker Conversations should be loosely structured so as not to scare people away, but they should have some familiar substance. We suggest you go to www.thegrandvision.org and read up on current happenings for Grand Vision Working Groups of interest to you and your guests. You can also find other resources such as up-to-date support materials and presentations.

* Provide Context

The Grand Vision website has a great deal of information for you to use to help inform the conversation you are hosting. The appendix of this handbook also has sample session agendas for you to reference.

* Provide Structure that Supports, but Doesn't Hinder

The main goal of **Grand Vision Maker Conversations** is to engage more people in the community to work in their own communities towards Grand Vision goals. To achieve this, the Grand Vision Makers Team wants to keep barriers to entry for participants very low. In short, we do not want these sessions to look too much like work!

Our suggested agenda looks like this:

- 1.) Start with a relaxed personal update from the group - ease into the business.
- 2.) Provide a quick review of Grand Vision core values, key principles, and goals. (See "Prepare Well" above for ideas.)
- 3.) Spend the bulk of the conversation on answering the question ***"What can you do in your community to help move the Grand Vision forward?"*** (See ***"Explore Questions the Matter"*** below.)
- 4.) Agree on some actions that can come from the conversation.
- 5.) Fill out the attached sheet to provide some record of the conversation and get it back to the Grand Vision Maker Team. (You can also simply go to the this webpage and fill out the form. (www.GVMakerForm.com))

* Explore Questions that Matter

While we hope that all **Grand Vision Maker Conversations** set out to answer the core question, ***“What can you do in your community to help move the Grand Vision forward?”*** we also recognize that the conversations will naturally shift and reshape themselves. The important thing is to remind yourself and participants why you're there. Keep bringing the conversation back around, perhaps gently, to that starting point. Here are some other strong questions that can help you guide the conversation:

- What opportunities can we see with the Grand Vision?
- What seed can we plant today that would make a difference for the future?
- What conversation, if started today, could make a difference within our community and with the Grand Vision?
- What is possible with the Grand Vision and who cares about it?
- What unique contribution can we each make?
- What can I do to contribute to the success of the Grand Vision?
- What one thing could make the biggest difference to the future of the Grand Vision?
- What is worthy of our best effort?

As a facilitator, you should constantly ask yourself what we'll call a centering question: **“Is what is happening in the conversation helping to serve the reasons we are here?”** We suggest you go to www.thegrandvision.org and read up on current happenings for Grand Vision Working Groups of interest to you and your guests. You can also find other resources such as up-to-date support materials, presentations, and a volunteer list.

* Culminate with Commitment to Action

Remember, the point of these sessions is not only to talk. We are seeking commitment from community members. One of the most difficult challenges of a such a broad and all-encompassing vision is that it seems overwhelming. The Grand Vision Five Year Strategy provides a set of impacts, outcomes, and goals designed to create real movement that we can measure by 2015. Use this as a reference for conversations about action. It will help amplify the impacts of work being done on all fronts.

You might ask them what they will commit to as a group, then follow it up with individual commitments. The action may simply be to plan your next meeting, or it may be to draft a recommendation to your local township planning board. The point is to not let people out of the room without some type of commitment. This is how the core values, key principles and goals of the Grand Vision will move forward, and be realized

* Ask if Others want to be Grand Vision Makers

Another important aspect of Grand Vision Makers is the viral nature of continued participation. We want others to take this concept into their own living rooms too. Our job is to make that point of entry as easy and attractive as possible. Encourage your guests to take the Grand Vision in their own hands too. Make sure that your participants sign up for the Grand Vision mailing list. Have them go to www.thegrandvision.org and sign up for the email newsletter. If they don't have access to, or would rather not use technology, just forward their contact information to the Grand Vision Maker Team, and we'll make sure they get updated through other means.

* Report Back to the Grand Vision Maker Team

Use the attached form to provide us with a brief overview of how things went, who was there (if its OK to share), what was discussed, and what action/commitments came from the session. The form also provides space for you to give us feedback. What more can we provide you in the future? Do you think the process is working? What can we learn from your experience?

What Makes a Good Conversation?

Conversations that Matter

We have all had a good conversation before, one that has a life of its own. The Grand Vision Maker Conversation is not a debate but a chance to understand and explore different ideas and points of view related to the Grand Vision. Try to think of the best conversations you ever had. What was the recipe? We'd like to bet that most great conversations start with small gatherings of people, and that the "greatness" often comes from the synergy of those present. While we cannot hope to make each of these conversations meet that criteria, we would like to give you the basic tools to create that opportunity.

Transformational Conversations versus Problem-solving Conversations

Trading problems for possibilities...

When we ask each other questions and engage in dialogue, that activity can open doors to a new way of seeing things, to new ideas, and possibilities about what we can create together. That is a transformational conversation. It is different from the more familiar problem-solving conversations where we assess the situation or issue and discuss or debate the alternatives. Problem-solving conversations may lead to specific ideas or decisions about improvements, but rarely lead to a new ways of thinking or doing.

The Grand Vision does require a new way of thinking, building a future that is distinct from the past. It is clear from the input received, that people would like us to change course, to move away from the current trend toward something completely different, something transformational. There is a saying, "what got you here, won't get you there." That is true for the Grand Vision.

Grand Vision conversations are not intended to be debates about right and wrong ways to do things or gripe sessions about what's not fixed, but are conversations to engage our friends and neighbors to think together about the future of our region. Thinking together involves suspending our judgment or a set point of view, to open ourselves up to explore new ideas with others. Thinking together means listening to understand and balancing voicing an opinion with inquiry into other viewpoints.

If you walk away from a conversation with ideas or thoughts that weren't imagined before you started – that's transformational.

Some Pointers for Facilitating Conversations

- ✓ As a facilitator, you may need to act a bit selflessly. It requires a balance between voicing your own thoughts and exploring the thoughts of others. Learn to truly listen.
- ✓ Clearly identify why you're in the room. Make sure everyone understands why they've been invited.
- ✓ Make the intended outcomes obvious at the outset, such as: "Our goal is to leave with something we can commit to in this community to serve Grand Vision principles."
- ✓ Transparent thinking – explaining the thinking behind your point of view and helping to clarify others.
- ✓ Not becoming overly attached to a position or point of view but be interested in exploring new ideas together.
- ✓ Active listening – listen to understand and not be resistant to hearing what is said especially if you don't agree.
- ✓ Allowing the conversation to go in directions that open up new possibilities and insights. Have a beginner's mind – open to different and creative thinking.
- ✓ Not minimizing the above point, it is also critical to keep the conversation moving and not to let it get mired exploring one specific direction if there are others to cover.
- ✓ Watch for "sniping" behaviors. This is evident when people pounce on the ideas of others, but don't contribute much of their own.
- ✓ Allow clarifying questions, but not critical ones.

Grand Vision Maker Resources

SECTION ONE

What is the Grand Vision?

The Grand Vision is a process that utilized the passion and effort of more than 12,000 citizens from a six county region in Northwest Michigan to create a shared vision for the future. It started as the natural outgrowth of a land use and transportation discussion originally convened by the Traverse City Transportation And Land Use Study group (TC TALUS). As discussion ensued other interested counties signed on: Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, and Wexford counties, making this one of the largest planning processes in the country. Through a series of public input processes, and a major survey, a document was created that articulates a vision for the six counties in question. This vision goes well beyond land use and transportation, providing a set of core values that communities share, guiding principles to follow, and a set of goals to help realize the vision.

Who is the Grand Vision?

Simply stated, the Grand Vision is all of us. We mention this because we understand that any vision is useless without a community of people who clearly understand it and buy-in to its tenets.

The Grand Vision is supported by a large consortium of government, nonprofit, and business organizations. This group, known as the Grand Vision CORE, helps to set the stage for individuals, governments, nonprofits and businesses to implement Grand Vision goals, follow its guiding principles, and adhere to its core values. The CORE group convenes meetings, provides resources, and acts as a central database of information for all Grand Vision related efforts.

What are the results so far?

Currently six Grand Vision Working Groups exist to segment the ambitious work of implementing the vision. These include: Food & Farming, Growth & Investment, Housing, Energy, Transportation, and Natural Resources. Each of these working groups has frequent meetings to initiate their own actions and projects towards serving Grand Vision values, guiding principles, and goals. You may find out more by visiting TheGrandVision.Org and looking for the "Working Groups" tab.

Who is responsible for implementing the Grand Vision?

All of us! There is no single entity that bears the responsibility of implementing it, except for citizens themselves. The Grand Vision was created from citizen input and requires citizen engagement with each other, with local units of government and other groups considering our future growth and development.

What ISN'T the Grand Vision?

- The Grand Vision is not AN organization. It is a collaboration of many groups.
- The Grand Vision is not a philosophy. It is a vision for the future of this six county region.
- The Grand Vision is not a funding source. Only individual collaborating groups have funding to implement and achieve GV goals.
- The Grand Vision is not an endorsing body. It provides information and resources, and convenes conversations designed to explore issues related to its values, guiding principles and goals. Individuals, groups, and organizations choose to attribute their own projects as fitting within the Grand Vision.
- It is not the only group responsible for attaining the Grand Vision. Every citizen in the six county region can and should play a role. The Grand Vision assists citizens to collaborate in creating projects that address the values, core principles, goals of the Grand Vision itself.

You're Almost There

So this is it. We don't have much more to tell you. Maybe one thing. Go out and do it yourself! Spread the word. If you need any assistance, please contact the volunteers on the **Grand Vision Maker** Team directly. We're here to assist you.

Grand Vision Maker Team

Jim Moore - Disability Network

Tom Emling - MSU Research Station

Bill Palladino - Krios Consulting