Overview of the Trajectory Principle:

Life is a journey for everyone. In each stage of life we are paving a path that leads towards a vision for the future. Your path or trajectory will have ups and downs where you will need to stop and consider what you want to do next. The Trajectory Principle and Tool will help you define your vision and how your past experiences have helped or hindered you in meeting your goals. You will be able to set goals and list out what may get in your way. The higher your expectations, the more opportunities and experiences you will have and the closer you will get to achieving your goals and dreams.

Who Should Use it and Why?
The Trajectory Tool is a visual aid to guide and help a person explore and plan things in their life. It can be used by anyone at any stage or age of life, for short-term or long-term goals or even problem-solving day-to-day life. It can be used as a self-exploration tool to reflect on their own life and organize their next steps or by support teams for developing person centered plans to guide services and supports. It is flexible and easy to use so that you can use it any time you want to explore the next steps in your journey.

Important Things to Remember about the Trajectory:

- The Trajectory Tool is designed to help you think about your life. It can also be used to promote discussion, self-awareness, shared knowledge and facilitate planning with people on your support team.

- It is important to think about the future, no matter what age you are. For some people, this may be hard to think about or describe. If this happens, start with the things you don’t want for the future. Thinking about your fears, dislikes or concerns can sometimes help you identify what you DO want. It might also be helpful to consider all the different life domains.

- Each one of us has our own unique life trajectory shaped by our beliefs, cultures, and experiences. Some of these are happy and some of them we want to forget. It is important to be sensitive to asking people about their past life experiences because it might bring back memories that are hard to talk about.

- Be mindful that asking someone about their life can be very personal and sensitive. It can also be hard for family members to think about the future or to consider what might happened if they are no longer able to provide support. It is important to recognize and be responsive to the diversity of experiences, situations and reactions when planning.

- Completing the trajectory for the sake of completing the form, should never be the goal. The tool is designed to help you have interactive conversations and visually organize your thoughts.

How the Tool is Organized:
The trajectory is a visual tool organized in two major sections, Vision and Experiences. The Vision section, on the right hand side, is further broken down into what is wanted and what is NOT wanted. The Experiences boxes on the left and middle are organized by “past experiences” and “moving forward”. This easy to use format organizes the information in a way that enables discussion or review of your current and future trajectory. There is no “right” or “wrong” answer or order to follow when completing the tool. The focus should be on your goals, wishes, and desired outcomes.
Suggestions for How to Complete and Use the Trajectory:

Decide the Purpose:
The Trajectory tool will help you begin planning for achieving your vision or goals. Before getting started, decide the the time frame that you are thinking about. Are you considering more short term goals (something you can achieve in the next month or year), or a longer-term vision (something that takes longer and is further away, like five or ten years, when you turn a certain age or after you move into your new house)? When developing a formal person-centered plan for services, think about the goals that you would want to accomplish in the next year and reflect on the last year. There is a circle in the middle of the page for you to put your age or it could be used to put the date or name of the person.

Explore Each Part of the Trajectory:
You can start anywhere on this tool. We recommend starting with the Vision boxes because what you list here will keep you focused on your vision or remind you of exactly what you don’t want. Next, think about the things in your past that helped you or stood in the way of achieving your vision. What worked or didn’t work? List those in the Past Life Experience column. If you are thinking long-term, you might want to think back many years or if you are planning for the current year, you might only look back to the past year. Now it’s time to think about the goals and activities that will move you forward to your goals. This column should list the activities to work on right now, and in the lower box list the things that could stop you from achieving your vision. Be sure to read through the entire tool again and add information that you might have missed the first time. When you’re done, think about what you have learned while completing the tool and how to keep using this information to help you achieve your vision.

On-going Use of the Trajectory:
The trajectory is designed to be used over and over again, and updated to reflect your growth and new goals. It can be repeated for each new situation that needs to be addressed. It is designed to become a problem-solving, planning, or progress tracking process, not a form to be completed and filed away. You can use the tool to plan on your own or with a group of people. It can help you prepare for a meeting or be used during a meeting to help the team stay focused on what is important to you. Your trajectory can be shared with others or kept to yourself to use as notes or to help you communicate.

Betty’s Trajectory

Betty is 83 years old and still lives in the home she shared with her husband who passed away last year. Betty is close with her 2 adult children and spends lots of time with her 5 grandchildren. Lately her family has noticed its getting harder for her to get around the house and she has started to forget more things. They are concerned about her living alone. She wants her family to know what she wants for her life in case something happens to her. Betty completed a trajectory with her adult son and plans on using it to talk to the rest of the family about her wishes and is going to share it with her care coordinator from her local aging center so they can identify services and supports so she can stay at home.