FOUNDATIONS

A PROJECT BY
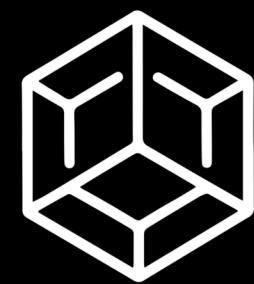
TESSERACT

Pages of
Contents

This playbook is for **anyone** seeking to cultivate better connection and increase free flow of communication in their work environment.

It includes a collection of resources designed to enhance team culture and foster a sense of belonging in your unit.

What is
Foundations?

Foundations is a micro-survey (or pulse survey) program that aims to modify the way feedback is given and received in our units. Feedback is the driving force behind understanding and addressing team issues, from operational needs to workplace culture. As it stands, we have few effective means of gathering accurate feedback from our teams.

Foundations is different from other survey programs. Instead of an annual survey, Foundations surveys users at a much more frequent rate (weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.). It deploys targeted questions to users to get after focus areas like: psychological safety, dependability, meaning/impact of work, and many others.
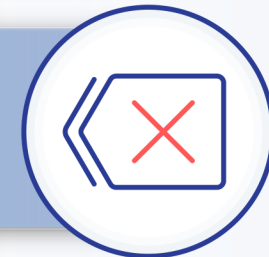
Additionally, Foundations allows users to access these results in real time, allowing a more streamlined approach to addressing team feedback.
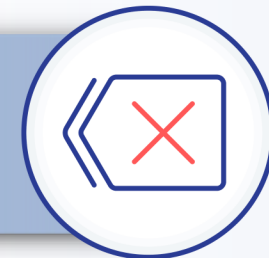
What Foundations
IS NOT

Easy to administer
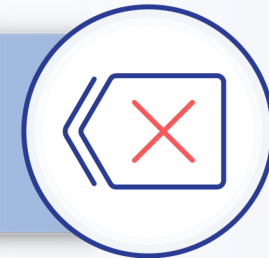
A plug and play set of instructions

A solution to unit problems and deficiencies

What Foundations **IS**

A tool that highlights successes and strength areas

An individualized approach to your unit, tailored by unit users

A tool that identifies areas of concern and growth opportunities

How Foundations **Is Different**

Survey Features	Foundations	Formal Feedback Sessions	DEOCS
Provide the safety to share raw, necessary feedback	✓	✗	✓
Agile enough to enable leaders to address feedback in a timely manner	✓	✗	✗
A tool to collect end user feedback anonymously, allowing members to share exactly how they feel without fear of reprisal	✓	✗	✓
Considerate of user time, recommending more frequent surveys that take less than 5 minutes to complete per survey on average	✓	✗	✗

FOUNDATIONS

7

Where Does Foundations Come From?

Foundations is a Tesseract program inspired by an effort at Google, known as Project Aristotle, designed to identify key traits and behaviors of high performing teams.

Through studying many teams, Google's Researchers concluded that performance was more dependent on the team's operations and how they work together than the individual members' skills and talents.

1 **Psychological Safety**
Team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other.

2 **Dependability**
Team members get things done on time and meet Google's high bar for excellence.

3 **Structure & Clarity**
Team members have clear roles, plans, and goals.

4 **Meaning**
Work is personally important to team members.

5 **Impact**
Team members think their work matters and creates change.

re:Work

In order of importance, these 5 traits were identified as the critical indicators that high performing teams exhibit.

Foundations seeks to leverage surveys to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement in these key focus areas within your organization and team.

With the ultimate goal of increasing individual health/welfare and team performance.

Where to Start

Foundations is a concept designed to be **flexible** enough to meet the needs of a diverse array of teams and organizations throughout the Air Force. Units of all types, from teams who work on the flightline to those who are typically working from the office, are able to tailor Foundations to meet their needs.

Can be delivered physically or digitally, and can be deployed at any desired cadence	
Weekly	Monthly
Quarterly	Whatever fits your team is the best

Has been employed by a variety of differing units	
Staff Offices	Maintenance Groups
Amn/NCO Councils	And many Others

Custom approach to implementation based on	
Team Size	Access to computers
And multitude of other factors	

What are my **Options?**

OPTIONS	PROS	CONS
PEN AND PAPER	FREE/Easy	Fewer Responses
GOOGLE FORMS	FREE/Personal Cell Use	No NIPR Capability
SURVEY MONKEY	FREE Base Package/Flexible/NIPR	$1200 a year for pro version
SMALL GROUPS	Best Reach/Connection	Time Consuming + Need Facilitator

How often do I **push a survey?**

Survey frequency is a user-driven decision. The Tesseract team has seen success with surveys deployed bi-weekly, monthly, and quarterly by different units. Based on prior results, the following survey deployment cadence is Tesseract's recommendation:

Sections, Flights, or Small Teams:

Bi-Weekly or monthly

Squadrons or organizations with larger populations:

Monthly or quarterly

Groups, Wings, and beyond:

Quarterly

What should my Survey look like?

Surveys should be composed with an individualized approach. Tesseract has built a "baseline" survey for units to get an initial temperature check prior to building their own surveys.

The baseline is designed to

Give the Foundations program manager in the unit a good starting point to work with going forward, highlighting current strengths and opportunities for growth.

The results of the baseline and known, existing cultural factors

Should be considered when structuring future surveys. If your unit specifically highlights a growth area in a specific area, that is something that should be continually gauged and tracked through future surveys.
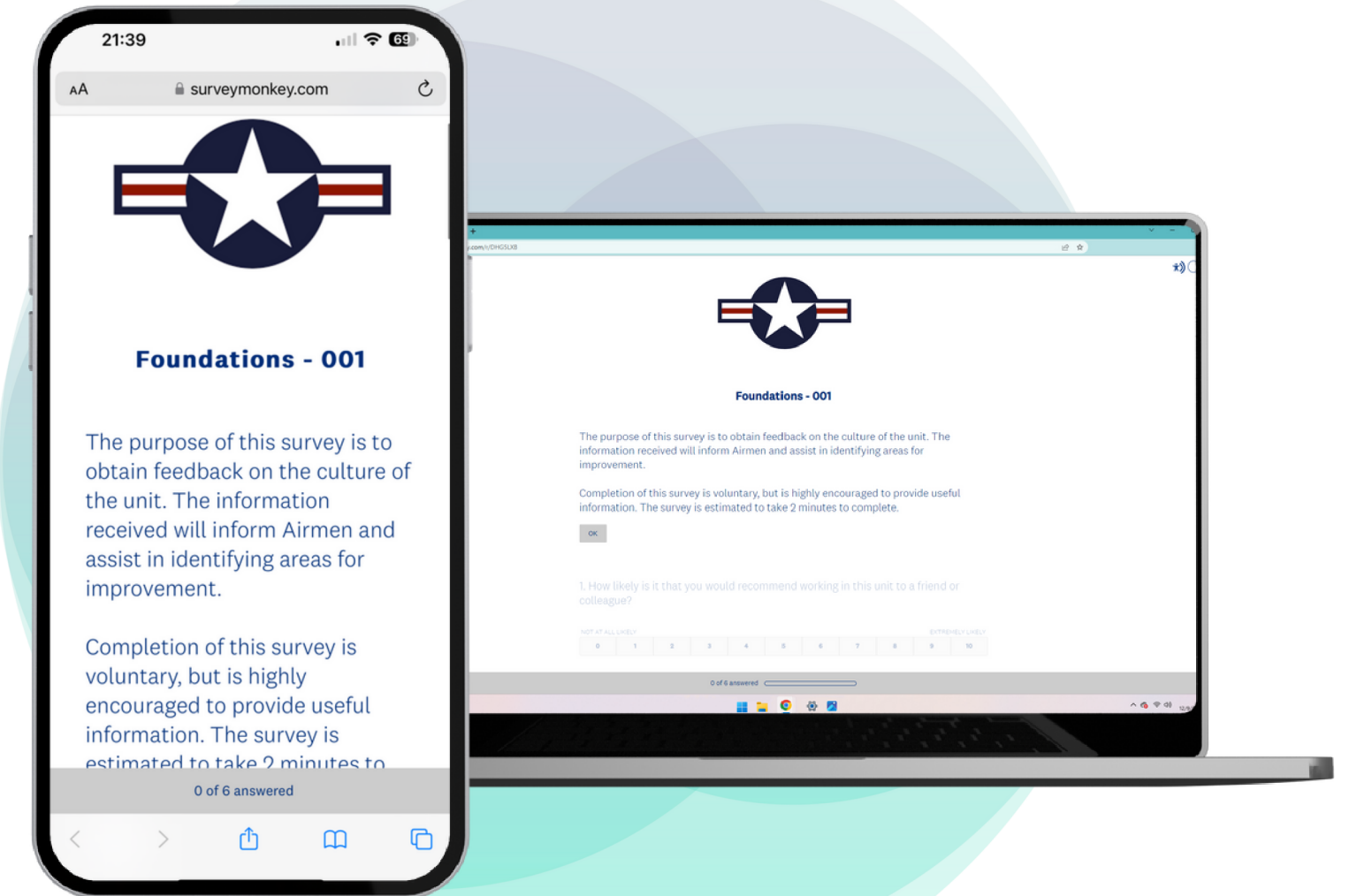
Based on our findings, we recommend that surveys are **5-10 questions only**, as this has shown to minimally impact responders' valuable time and limit survey fatigue.

What Questions Do I Ask?

Asking the right questions can help identify strengths and areas for improvement. Understanding critical indicators can lead to increasing individual health/welfare and team performance.

Questions to gauge

Psychological Safety

1. No one on this team would deliberately act in ways that undermine my efforts.

2. In my opinion, when my leadership screws up they own up to their mistake.

3. I feel comfortable challenging the status quo in group conversations in my shop.

4. The people in my unit value each others' unique skills and talents.

Questions to gauge

Dependability

1. When my teammates say they'll do something, they do it.

2. My teammates proactively communicate with each other about delays and assume responsibility.

3. My team has visibility into project priorities or progress.

4. My leader can be relied upon to do the right thing even when it's challenging or difficult.

Questions to gauge

Structure & Clarity

1. We have a team or project goal we are working towards and know how to get there.

2. My leader provides autonomy, flexibility and control in deciding how I can make decisions and do my work.

3. My leader shares timely information and knowledge freely and openly.

4. I understand how my job fits in with everyone else's.

Questions to gauge

Meaning of Work

1. My work gives me a sense of personal and professional fulfillment.

2. Our work is matched to team members based on both skills/ability and interest.

3. My leader does not notice and demonstrate appreciation for my progress and the effort it takes to get things done well.

4. I am assigned work based on individual development and interests.

Questions to gauge

Impact of Work

1. In my opinion, my work creates change for the better.

2. My team's work matters for the squadron and base to reach its goals.

3. I feel like I am just treading water when I come to work.

4. Our current team processes affect my well-being/burnout.

What do I do with Results?

Foundations, as a concept, is a tool to reveal strengths and weaknesses in leadership and culture.

Although the questions are carefully crafted to solicit accurate results, the responsibility for making change on your team is in the hands of your team members and leaders.

The results given by Foundations are a starting point, but cannot be used as an action plan. Leaders and supervisors must take action to address the assessment of organizational culture and effectiveness provided by Foundations.

Some educational resources for leaders are available in the following pages to help inform what steps can be taken to address results.

Ready to get Started?

We at Tesseract have assisted more than 40 units around the Air Force and would love to help your team! To get started contact us through our website at: www.tesseract.af.mil

For more information please reach out to Tesseract Foundations POC, 1st Lt Tanner Holcomb, to schedule a 30-minute onboarding session, where we will share lessons learned, best practices, and address any questions you have about implementation at your unit.

Our team will also be available for consultation as you employ Foundations if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.
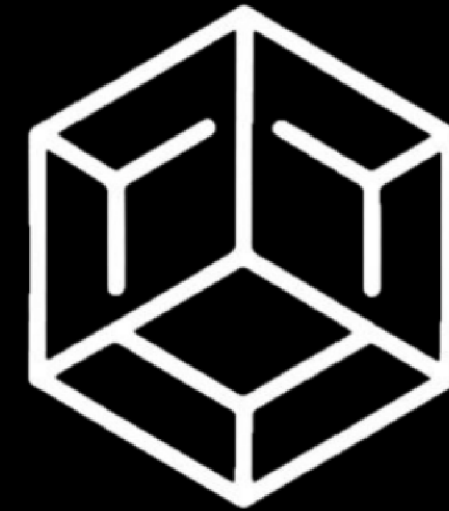
1st Lt Tanner Holcomb

Concept Integration Program Manager
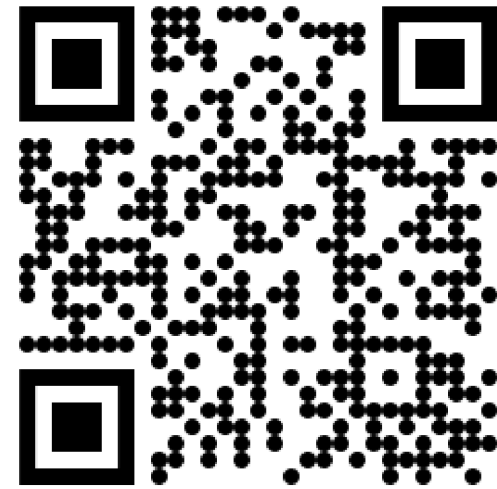
tanner.holcomb.4@us.af.mil

Resources

Where do these
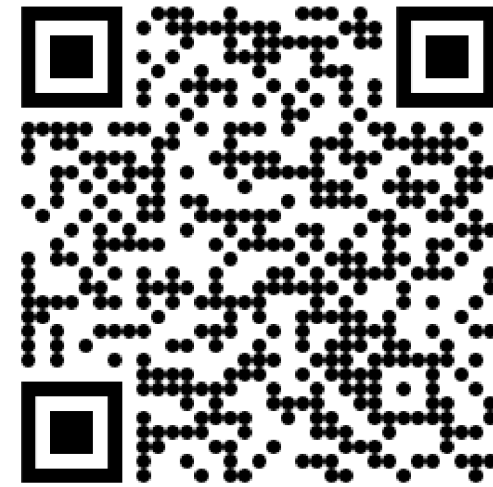Questions come from?

Tips for developing a high performing team

Build A
Unified Culture

Be A Curious
Leader

Setting Goals

Psychological
Safety