Welcome to the fourteenth annual Civic Life Institute, *Connecting People to Public Issues*, a gathering of West Virginians and colleagues from other states who are interested in using public deliberation to address public issues.

During our two days together, we will have the opportunity to learn from one another's experiences, gaining insights from both the diversity and the commonality of our backgrounds.

It is our hope that when you leave the Institute, you will have experienced practical processes of citizen engagement that you can use in your communities, your schools, and your organizations to build public capacity to work together on public issues.

--The 2010 Civic Life Institute Faculty

Jean Ambrose
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Introduction

We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

-Abraham Lincoln

Community engagement is the cornerstone of our democracy. It is also the key to making our communities better places to live.

Democracy is by definition a form of *self*-government – government "of the people, by the people, for the people."

We often think of politics as the responsibility of government officials and our elected representatives. However, at its best, politics should embrace *every* citizen as the primary driving force behind the decision-making process. Public policy should reflect the collective will of the people. Politicians should not only invite public participation; they should expect it and rely on it. Democracy requires the *active participation* of its citizens in order to function properly.

While some people choose to perform acts of community service and engage in grassroots volunteerism, few people choose to engage *one another* in meaningful dialogue about matters of public policy. Many people express dissatisfaction and disillusionment with their role in the political process. Those individuals who do attempt to impact "the system" often feel frustrated and powerless to affect real change. Limited resources, power struggles, and the divisiveness they engender, are leading causes of this frustration.

> **Democracy requires the active participation of citizens to function properly.**

A recent report developed by the Kettering Foundation on the current state of community politics nationwide offers this observation:

> "The role of citizens in making decisions and shaping priorities about the direction of their communities has been usurped…Although citizens are routinely invited to comment in public hearings, *few communities involve citizens in the day-to-day process of setting priorities or solving problems*."

We the people must reclaim our place in democratic society and accept our responsibility to address those local, state, and national issues that most significantly affect our lives.

One of the most effective way for us to dialogue, to set priorities, and to make difficult choices is through a process known as ***democratic deliberation*** (also called deliberative democracy).

1. The Case for Dialogue and Deliberation

*Great discoveries invariably involve
the cooperation of many minds.*

-Alexander Graham Bell

Coming to Public Judgment: How Public Opinion Really Works

According to much social science research, the public's thinking on issues progresses through seven predictable stages. Public opinion is in fact less like a physical process than a biological one, evolving in seven stages. Unless one knows opinion's stage of development on an issue, poll numbers will usually mislead. Public opinion on any issue develops slowly over a long period -- at least ten years for a complex issue.

PHASE ONE – **CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING**

      Stage 1:   Dawning Awareness
                    People begin to become aware of an issue.

      Stage 2:   Greater Urgency
                    People develop a sense of urgency about the issue.

PHASE TWO – **WORKING THROUGH**

      Stage 3:   Discovering the Choices
                    People start to explore the choices for dealing with the issue.

      Stage 4:   Wishful Thinking
                    Resistance to facing costs and trade-offs kicks in, producing wishful thinking.

      Stage 5:   Weighing the Choices
                    People weigh the pros and cons of alternatives.

PHASE THREE – **RESOLUTION**

      Stage 6:   Taking a Stand
                    People take a stand intellectually.

      Stage 7:   Making a Responsible Judgment
                    People make a responsible judgment morally and emotionally.

Democratic Dialogue and Deliberation

Public dialogue is a process that allows people, usually in small groups, to share their perspectives and experiences with one another about difficult issues. Dialogue is not about winning an argument or coming to an agreement, but about understanding and learning. Dialogue can dispel stereotypes, build trust and enable people to be open to perspectives that are very different from their own. Dialogue can, and often does, lead to both personal and collaborative action.

In the words of Harold Saunders, who has worked around the world with communities deeply divided by ethnic and racial conflict, "Dialogue is a process of genuine interaction through which human beings listen to each other deeply enough to be changed by what they learn. Each makes a serious effort to take others' concerns into her or his own picture, even when disagreement persists. No participant gives up her or his identity, but each recognizes enough of the other's valid human claims that he or she will act differently toward the other." Public dialogue often lays the groundwork for public deliberation, a closely related process with a different emphasis.

Public deliberation is a process whereby participants--

- ❖ Identify multiple approaches to a central issue.
- ❖ Weigh the costs and consequences of each approach.
- ❖ Determine community values.
- ❖ Develop a common ground for collaborative action.
- ❖ Decide on what kind of future the community desires for itself.

❖ **Identify multiple approaches to a central issue**
Most public issues are complex problems. They affect a wide-range of individuals and impact many different aspects of community life. Issues such as how to stimulate economic growth or provide comprehensive healthcare seldom have simple solutions; they require a range of responses resulting from multiple approaches to the issue.

❖ **Weigh the costs and consequences of each approach**
Since decisions about community issues will affect such a diversity of people, deliberation encourages participants to fully examine the implications of each approach. Each approach has pros and cons. Each approach has benefits and drawbacks. Each approach has costs and consequences that citizens may or may not have considered.

Upon reflection, a community may realize that it is unwilling to accept the consequences of an approach it once highly favored. On the other hand, a community may determine that the benefits of a particular approach outweigh the costs and the drawbacks associated with it. For example, a community may decide that restrictions on gun purchasing and ownership are acceptable limitations on the right to bear arms if they also serve to reduce

the number and frequency of gun-related crimes. Ultimately, how individuals weigh the costs and consequences of each approach depends largely upon what they value most.

❖ **Determine community values**

The underlying values held by decision-makers significantly affect which approaches they choose to take in order to address a particular concern. What a person holds most valuable impacts what costs and consequences one is willing or unwilling to accept. Yet, even the most opinionated and outspoken person may not truly recognize the values and the emotions that influence her perspective. The process of deliberation therefore enables people to identify what they value and why. People who have a deeper understanding of how they think and feel about an issue are better situated to make sound decisions.

Moreover, individuals who participate in deliberation gain a deeper understanding of and appreciation for how other people view the same concern. While people may not change their view of the issue, they undoubtedly will change their perception of one another. The community begins to define itself based on commonalities rather than differences. Members of the community identify with one another, and people gravitate toward a common purpose. They cultivate a sense of shared values.

❖ **Develop a common ground for collaborative action**

Behind every approach to an issue lies a range of concerns, values, emotions, and personal experiences that influence the choices people make. Even individuals who share similar concerns may experience conflict when asked to deal with the costs and consequences of a particular approach. People must confront the complexities of the issue and work through the tensions that exist. As people identify their personal values, as they focus around a common purpose, and as they struggle with the difficult processes of deliberation and coming to public judgment, individuals establish a foundation of mutual understanding, respect and trust.

It is important to recognize that individuals may not develop consensus; they may not come to full and complete agreement. However, because deliberation strengthens ties among people who hold similar views and bridges the divide between people with differing perspectives, collaboration becomes a true reality. Deliberation builds strong relationships. It promotes a shared sense of direction and develops the common ground necessary for community action.

❖ **Decide what kind of future the community desires for itself**

Deliberation opens people up to new ways of thinking about community issues. It creates new opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. Deliberation helps people to see new possibilities. When people see new possibilities, they can see steps to take together that can transform their community's future. This process of getting citizens together to talk about what's important to them, assessing community capacities and assets, and making and working a plan of action is a roadmap for community development that any concerned group of citizens can use. The model on the next page shows the cycle of community development. If people can't understand each other enough to work together, they won't be able to improve their community.

Development Model for West Virginia

Adopted by the Community Development Gathering – August 31, 2006

Development Model

Continuously Improving West Virginia Communities

What Results Come from
Dialogue-to-Change programs?

Kind of change	How does it happen?	Example
Changes in individual behavior and attitudes	Participants develop a deeper understanding of the issues and of each other, and see that others in the community care about making a difference.	A participant in a community-wide program on racism decides never again to let racist remarks go by without a comment. After participating in dialogue circles on violence, senior citizens begin to volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club.
New relationships and networks	Trust and understanding develop between participants in the dialogue.	Following dialogue circles on community-police relationships, young people and police officers in the neighborhood set up regular weekly meetings.
New working collaborations	Individuals and organizations develop new relationships and new ideas for solutions.	After dialogue circles on neighborhood issues, residents, police officers, and mental health advocates create an emergency team to help mentally ill people who wander the streets.
Changes in public policy	Public officials play a part in the dialogue circle organizing, and make a commitment to work with citizens in implementing the outcomes. OR Public officials take part in the organizing *and* dialogue process. Through their participation, they gain new insights that have an impact on their policymaking. OR Information from the dialogue circles is collected and reported to people making decisions or developing policy.	After a round of dialogue circles on education, a diverse group of participants develop a plan for the county schools to close the achievement gap between the races. The school board—a leading organizer of the circles—decides to fund the plan and work with the community in implementing it. After participating in dialogue circles, a school superintendent creates new policies to empower parental involvement in the district's schools. A report from the dialogue circles in a large community examining growth and sprawl is presented to the planning board. The planning board, in turn, uses this information to help shape its ten-year comprehensive plan.
Institutional changes	Leaders or members of an institution participate in the dialogue circles. Because of the insights they gain, they decide to make changes within their institution that have an impact on the larger community.	After participating in dialogue circles on racism and race relations, leaders of several banks decide to work with other members of the community to improve banking services to the city's communities of color.
Changes in community dynamics	Over several years, hundreds of people participate in dialogue circles, creating a critical mass of people involved in community work.	After several years of community-wide dialogue on race relations and racism, democratic and inclusive principles and behaviors begin to emerge in all kinds of settings—public meetings, schools, and workplaces. Throughout the community, people note a heightened sense of being part of a real community. People or groups who usually oppose one another are finding it possible to work together.

Source: Everyday Democracy (everydaydemocracy.org)

Deliberation and Debate – *Not* One or the Other

Deliberation is different from debate. Both processes serve distinct purposes. Debate is useful primarily to resolve the polarized conflict that exists between *two well-defined technical* options. However, community issues are complex problems that require us to investigate multiple approaches, foster community relationships and develop a common ground for action.

While debate can settle where to build a bridge, for example, deliberation determines whether a bridge should be built in the first place and for what reasons. It stimulates community engagement concerning the issue and gives a broad range of citizens ownership in the decision-making process.

DEBATE	DELIBERATION
Searches for weaknesses in another position	Searches for strengths in another position
Searches for glaring differences	Searches for shared concerns
Is oppositional and seeks to prove the other person wrong	Is collaborative and seeks common understanding
Listens to find flaws and counterarguments	Listens to understand and find meaning in agreement
Calls for investing wholeheartedly in a certain set of beliefs	Temporarily suspends belief
Defends initial solutions	Opens the possibility of better solutions
Defends assumptions as truth	Reveals assumptions for reevaluation
Counters someone else's position at the expense of the relationship	Assumes that many people have pieces of an answer to a workable solution
The goal of debate is winning – often only for a short term advantage.	The goal of deliberation is common ground for action, which is the basis for consistent policy.
In debate, a person submits his best thinking and defends its rightness.	In deliberation, a person submits her best thinking in order to improve it.

Significant Findings from Studies of Public Deliberation

For fifteen years, the Kettering Foundation has studied public deliberation. Their studies, conducted through a variety of research methods, have found that public deliberation makes a meaningful difference.

Highlights of their findings include:

- ❖ Those who take part in deliberations come from every part of society.

- ❖ Virtually everyone is capable of deliberating about important public issues. For example, educational level is not a barrier.

- ❖ Participants reconsider their own opinions and judgments.

- ❖ Participants approach issues more realistically and are willing to consider costs, consequences, and trade-offs.

- ❖ Participants become more interested in political and social issues.

- ❖ People consider the views of others and develop a greater understanding of those viewpoints.

- ❖ People define their self-interests more broadly.

- ❖ Deliberations in a community enhance communication among groups.

- ❖ Deliberations lead many participants to feel a greater sense of confidence in what they can do politically. That is, people become more inclined to see themselves as political actors capable of making a difference.

Overview of a Dialogue-to-Change Process

When getting started, it's often helpful to think about programs in three phases:

- **Comprehensive community organizing** (team development, planning, recruitment)

- **Dialogue** (sometimes called deliberative forums or study circles)

- **Action** (personal, collective, and policy-level change)
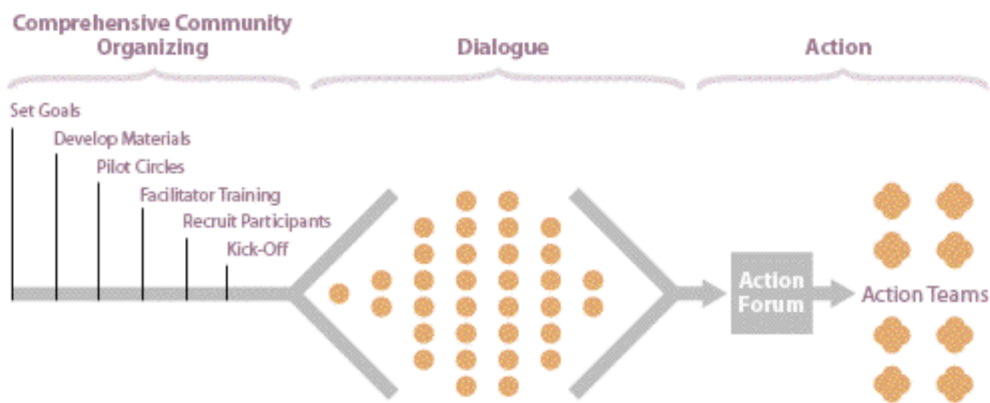
This is a diagram of the three phases in a "round": organizing, dialogue, and action. A diverse group of organizers sets goals and plans for a round. Then, many circles take place simultaneously across the community. When the small groups complete the dialogue, everyone comes together in a large meeting to share their experiences and their ideas for change. Large programs lead to a range of outcomes—from changing people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, to new projects and collaborations, and to institutional and policy change.

No single organization or person can create an effective program without help. To ensure diverse, large-scale participation, the program organizing must be driven by a group of community leaders and organizations who mirror the diversity of the whole community.

Source: Everyday Democracy, www.everyday-democracy.org

Public Forums – Why Are They Important?

1. Improves communication among community members

2. Participants understand other opinions more thoroughly

3. Establishes a connection among people as a starting point for working together

4. Offers your organization community exposure

5. Allows people to address public issues that affect them

6. Participants gain a deeper understanding of the issue

7. Participants reconsider their own opinions, values, and judgments

8. Participants feel validated and more empowered to act collaboratively

9. Community attitudes about the issue are revealed

10. All participants are given a seat at the decision-making table

2. Exploring Public Deliberation

*We have to face the fact that either
all of us are going to die together, or
we are going to learn to live together
and if we are going to live together,
we will have to talk!*

-Eleanor Roosevelt

A Guide to Deliberation

M aking decisions about how to deal with community issues is difficult because different people favor different approaches, and the options for action may contradict or conflict with one another. Certainly any strategy for action will have costs that people must take into consideration and consequences that people should anticipate, as best as they can. However, behind each approach lies a range of concerns and values that, while common for many people, nonetheless pulls them in different directions, creating tension, and influencing how they weigh costs and consequences. People therefore must work through these conflicts and deal with the trade-offs until they develop a shared sense of direction. While people may not reach full and complete agreement about what course of action they should take to address a community issue, they have a better grasp of what they are and are not willing to do to solve the problem. This mutual understanding paves the way for cooperation and collaboration.

The goals of coming to public judgment and inspiring community action require a particular kind of dialogue and a process of reasoning together that is called deliberation.

Interestingly enough, we deliberate all the time in our daily lives. When we have a difficult decision to make about an important matter and have to weigh several approaches carefully, that, in a nutshell, is deliberation. Deliberation is the process of weighing carefully various approaches to a situation, examining the pros and cons of each option, and reflecting upon the views of others about what should be done. Deliberation provides the opportunity to explore, to test ideas, and to look at ambiguities or gray areas rather than seeing only the stark black and white of polar opposites.

What follows are a few simple recommendations for bringing the kind of deliberating we all do privately into a public setting – where we have to dialogue, not just with friends and family members, but with people we scarcely know.

Establishing guidelines

Effective deliberation is more likely to occur if certain guidelines are outlined at the beginning. Establishing such guidelines ahead of time may help prevent difficulties later.

- The purpose of deliberation is to work toward a decision.

- Everyone is encouraged to participate. No one should dominate.

- Listening is as important as speaking.

- Participants should address one another, not just the moderator.

- Participants may intervene occasionally to keep the dialogue on track or to remind participants to stick with the current approach under consideration.

- Participants should consider fairly each approach and examine fully all the tradeoffs involved in an approach. A diversity of perspectives is essential. Even if no one in the group seems to favor a certain option, someone should raise the question, "What would someone who favors this approach say about it?"

Key questions

Four basic questions are asked in forums to prompt deliberation.

1. ***What is valuable to us?*** This question gets at the reason that making public choices is so difficult, namely, that all the approaches are rooted in things about which people care very deeply. This key question can take many different forms.

   To uncover deeper concerns, people may ask one another how each came to hold the views he or she has. Talking about personal experiences, rather than simply reciting facts or stating rational, impersonal arguments, promotes a more meaningful dialogue.

   - How has this issue affected us personally?

   - When we think about this issue, what concerns us?

   - What is appealing about the first option or approach?

   - What makes this approach acceptable – or unacceptable?

2. ***What are the consequences, costs, benefits and trade-offs associated with the various approaches?*** Variations of this question should prompt people to think about the relationship that exists between each approach and the values people have. Because deliberation requires the evaluation of pros and cons, it is important to ensure that both aspects are fully considered. Questions to promote a fair and balanced examination of all potential implications include:

   - What would be the consequences of doing what we are suggesting?

   - What would be an argument against the approach we like best? Is there a downside to this course of action?

   - Can anyone think of something constructive that might come from the approach that is receiving so much criticism?

3. ***What are the inherent conflicts that we have to work through?*** As a forum progresses, participants should consider the following:

- What do we see as the tension between the approaches?

- What are the "gray areas"?

- Where is there ambiguity?

- Why is reaching a decision on this issue so difficult?

4. ***Can we detect any shared sense of direction or common ground for action?*** After saying during the first few minutes of a forum that the objective is to work toward a decision, the moderator or someone else may continue to intervene from time to time with questions that move the deliberation toward a choice, always stopping short of pressing for consensus or agreement on a particular solution. Then, as the tensions become evident, as people see how what they consider valuable pulls them in different directions, the moderator an test to see where the group is going by asking such questions as:

- Which direction seems best?

- Where do we want this policy to take us?

- What tradeoffs are we willing and unwilling to accept?

- If the policy we seem to favor had the negative consequences some fear, would we still favor it?

- What are we willing and unwilling to do as individuals or as a community in order to solve this problem?

At the heart of deliberation is the question of whether we are willing to accept the consequences of our choices.

Stages of a Large Group Forum

Welcome	The convener or moderator introduces the program.
Questionnaire	Participants may be asked to complete a pre-forum questionnaire before discussion begins.
Guidelines	Participants review desired outcomes of the forum.
Starter Activity	A starter video may be used to set the tone for dialogue, as well as a small sketch.
Personal Stake	As an icebreaker, participants share personal experiences related to the issue.
Deliberation	Participants examine all the approaches.
Reflection	Hearing a public voice. Going from my voice to our voice.
Questionnaire	Participants may be asked to complete post-forum questionnaires.

Questions with a Purpose

Perhaps one of the most important jobs of a moderator is to ask good questions. Questions like, "What do you think?" or "Do you agree with this statement?" do not encourage people to think *deeply* about their own opinions and the impacts they might have on others. Instead, questions should serve specific, intended purposes. Consider the following types of questions and the examples provided.

Questions that connect the policy issue to the lives and concerns of real people

> ❑ Could you illustrate how this issue is touching the lives of most of us in the community?
>
> ❑ What makes this issue real for us?
>
> ❑ What evidence do you see that this is something that is important to all of us?

Questions that ask participants to weigh the costs and consequences of each approach

> ❑ What might be the effects of your approach on others?
>
> ❑ Could you identify those things that are important to us that seem to be clashing?
>
> ❑ In a positive light, what seems to be most important to those who are attracted to this approach?
>
> ❑ Also, for those think negatively about this approach, what seems to be their concern?

Questions to ensure a fair and balanced examination of all potential effects

[NOTE: "Balanced" does not necessarily mean listing an equal number of advantages and disadvantages for each approach. An approach could have many disadvantages but still have greater value because of one or two accompanying advantages.]

> ❑ What would be the consequences of doing what you are suggesting?
> ❑ What would be an argument against the choice you like best?
> ❑ Is there a downside to this course of action?
> ❑ Can anyone think of something constructive that might come from this approach, which is receiving so much criticism?

Questions that ask participants to weigh the costs they are willing to accept in order to achieve the results they want

> ❑ Can you live with the consequences?
>
> ❑ Would you give up _____ in order to achieve _____?
>
> ❑ What costs are at stake and can we live with them?
>
> ❑ What do you see as the tension among the approaches?
>
> ❑ What are the gray areas? Where is there ambiguity?
>
> ❑ Why is this issue so difficult to decide?

Questions that probe each participant's statement until others can understand what he or she believes should be done and why he or she thinks it should be done

> ❑ What does that mean to you?
>
> ❑ Why does that choice appeal to you?
>
> ❑ What is important about taking this direction?
>
> ❑ Can you give an example of how that might work out?

Questions that encourage the speaker to make a connection between the actions he or she would advocate and what is important to him or her

> ❑ Could you live with the actions being considered?
>
> ❑ Would you be willing to have that action apply to everyone?
>
> ❑ What is most valuable to you or to those who support that action?
>
> ❑ If we did what you have suggested, could you explain how that might impact your life?

Questions that promote interaction among participants instead of just between the moderator and the participants

> ❑ Does that bring up anything for anyone?
>
> ❑ That gets us started, so how do you respond?
>
> ❑ Could someone give an example to illustrate what was just said?
>
> ❑ Allow silence. Someone will respond.
>
> ❑ Move back out of the circle.

Questions that give the participants an opportunity to identify what they have heard, to recognize a shared understanding of the issue, and/or to acknowledge a common ground for action

> - ❑ What actions did you hear that you think we could not accept or live with?
>
> - ❑ What trade-offs are you unwilling to accept?
>
> - ❑ What seemed important to all of us?
>
> - ❑ Suppose we cannot have everything. What are we willing and unwilling to do as individuals or as a community in order to solve this problem?
>
> - ❑ Is there some action we could all live with?
>
> - ❑ Have we come to some common ground to support certain actions? What are those actions?
>
> - ❑ Which direction seems best?
>
> - ❑ Where do we want this policy to take us?

3. The Roles of Moderator and Recorder

People don't get along because they fear each other.
People fear each other because they don't know each other.
They don't know each other because they have not
properly communicated with each other.

-Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Basic Principles of Moderating

An effective moderator:

_ **Remains neutral about the subject of the forum.** Avoid expressing your own opinion or evaluating the comments of the participants.

_ **Does not take on an "expert" role with the subject matter.** Your role is not to teach the participants about the issue - even if it is a subject you know very well.

_ **Keeps the deliberation focused on the approaches.** When comments go astray, bring participants back to the issue book framework. Make sure that each approach receives equal consideration.

_ **Listens for values that motivate a participant's comments.** In deliberation, the participant's values and motives are just as important, if not more so, than their opinion. Sometimes people with different opinions share the same motive or value, and that similarity can form the basis for common ground.

_ **Intervenes as necessary.** If the conversation begins to focus on personalities rather than issues, gently remind the group of guidelines or refocus the dialogue back to the issue.

_ **Asks clarifying questions, if necessary.** If you are not sure what a participant means, chances are good that others are unclear also. You may ask participants to clarify what they are trying to say and ask if you have understood correctly [if absolutely, but be aware that people can get the impression that they are not being articulate.]

_ **Encourages everyone to join in the conversation.** Be careful. Comments like "that's a good idea" may make the speaker feel welcome in the conversation, but participants who disagree may think you are being biased.

_ **Asks thoughtful and probing questions to surface costs and consequences.** Make sure that the participants have considered the potential outcome of their comments. Help draw out what people are willing to accept and are not willing to accept.

_ **Helps participants find common ground.** Participants will not always agree and may sometimes be in direct conflict with each other. Recognize it and seek to focus on "What can we do together even if we don't fully agree?"

_ **Encourages deeper reflection.** Ask participants to share what is important to them about the issue or why they feel a particular approach is valuable.

Key Moderating Skills

• Reflecting & Clarifying
• Summarizing
• Shifting Focus
• Asking Probing or Follow-Up Questions
• Managing Conflict
• Using Silence
• Using Non-Verbal Signals (Body Language)

Reflecting and Clarifying—feeding back or restating an idea or thought to make it clearer.

> "Let me see if I'm hearing you correctly…."
> "What I believe you are saying is…."

Summarizing—briefly stating the main thoughts.

> "It sounds to me as if we have been talking about a few major themes…."

Shifting Focus—moving from one speaker or topic to another.

> "Thank you, John. Do you have anything to add, Jane?"
> "We've been focusing on views 1 and 2. Does anyone have strong feelings about the other views?"

Asking Probing or Follow-Up Questions—using questions to help people explore disagreements, understand multiple perspectives, and uncover common ground.

> "What are the key points here?"

> "What would someone with a different point of view say?"

Managing Conflict—helping conflict and disagreement to be productive.

> "Let's refer to our ground rules."
> "What seems to be at the heart of this issue?"
> "What do others think?"

Using Silence—allowing time and space for reflection by pausing between comments.

Using Non-Verbal Signals (Body Language)—recognizing and understanding how people communicate without using words.

> "What signals am I sending with my body?"
> "What signals am I reading from others?"
> "How do I signal encouragement?"
> "How do I invite others to participate?"

Source: *A Guide for Training Public Dialogue Facilitators*, Everyday Democracy
www.everyday-democracy.org

Good Signs	Signs the moderator should make a move	Tips to get back on track
People listen to what others are saying.	People are just waiting their turn to "have their say."	
People are talking to each other, asking questions of each other.	All comments are directed to the moderator.	
Everyone is listening with respect; no one is dominating.	There are "sidebar" conversations or interruptions.	
Alternate viewpoints get aired.	The group mainly concurs on each approach.	
Consequences of each approach are addressed.	The pro arguments have no negative consequences.	
People share personal experiences.	People speak theoretically or analytically.	
People express emotion around what is important to them.	The forum is cerebral and lacks feeling.	
The dialogue builds on any prior work by the group.	Comments ignore prior considerations.	

Forum Recording

Purpose of Recording

- To remind forum participants of their comments, agreements, and action items

- To serve as a reference document for future forums

- To inform stakeholders, or a wider audience, of dialogue, decisions, and actions

Qualities of Effective Recording

- Brief
- Clear
- Legible
- Accurate
- Well organized
- Uses active verbs
- Reports the appropriate amount of information
- Captures the tensions, trade-offs and common ground for action
- Notes are distributed soon after the forum

Tips for Organizing Information at the End of a Forum

- Remove group memory from walls.

- Put sheets in order and number the pages.

- Review each page to check titles and section headings.

- Make sure writing is legible and sentences make sense.

- Roll up group memory pages.

- Label outside with group name and date

- Deliver to person responsible for producing minutes

Checklist for Moderators, Recorders, Feedback Leaders

MODERATOR
- ➢ Set a tone for participation.
- ➢ Clarify your role at the start of the forum.
- ➢ Be an active listener.
- ➢ Stay neutral.
- ➢ Help the group explore the deeper dimensions of the issue, including trade-offs and consequences.
- ➢ Allow pauses and silences.
- ➢ Do not allow the group to get stuck on "facts" or assertions that cannot be proven.
- ➢ Move the discussion along so that all major points are considered.

RECORDER
- ➢ Capture the key points that are appealing and not appealing about each approach.
- ➢ Ask for clarification when necessary.
- ➢ Be brief.
- ➢ Be careful to use words that clearly communicate the intended meaning. (Will your notes be understood days after the forum?)
- ➢ Avoid trying to write everything - some comments are discussions of prior points.
- ➢ Write legibly in large letters with a dark marker.
- ➢ Label pages clearly in consecutive order.

FEEDBACK LEADER
- ➢ Lead feedback for each section, asking moderator and recorder first for their own reflections on how they did.
- ➢ Provide constructive feedback to the moderator, recorder, and participants about the effect of their individual and group efforts to focus on deliberation.
- ➢ Did the moderator remain neutral?
- ➢ Did the moderator ask questions that encouraged the participants to deliberate?
- ➢ Did the participants take responsibility for coming to terms with the key issues?
- ➢ Did the recorder capture the essence of key points addressed by the deliberation?

Tips for Forum Participants

Listen carefully to others. Make sure everyone has a chance to speak. Don't interrupt people. When you show respect for other people, it helps them show respect for you.

Keep an open mind. This is a chance for you to explore ideas that you have rejected or didn't consider in the past.

Do your best to understand other points of view. It is important to understand what other people think and why they feel the way they do. This will help you find solutions that work for everyone.

Help keep the discussion on track. Make sure your remarks relate to the discussion.

Speak your mind freely, but don't take over the discussion. If you tend to talk a lot in groups, leave room for quieter people. Being a good listener shows respect for others. This makes it easier for quiet people to speak up.

Talk to the group rather than to the facilitator. Try to look around the group when you talk. That will show others that they are part of the conversation.

Talk to individuals in the group. The dialogue should feel like a natural conversation. Try to involve everyone. If you feel someone has something to say, draw them out. Ask them questions about their ideas.

Tell the facilitator what you need. The leader guides the discussion, sums up key ideas, and helps to make things clear. If something is not clear, say so. Others might have the same concern.

Value your life stories and opinions. Everyone in the group, including you, is unique. All our lives have been different. This is what makes this process interesting. Make sure your voice is heard. Your wisdom and ideas are important.

It's OK to disagree. Even when we all come from the same group or culture, we are still different. These differences keep the group lively. If you do not agree with an idea, ask questions, but don't get carried away. Be respectful.

Remember that humor and a pleasant manner will help. When you keep your sense of humor, people will like listening to you. You can disagree with someone without making a personal attack.

Body language is important. When you talk, your body "talks," too. Pay attention to your "body language," and the messages you are sending.

4. Preparing to Practice Moderating

Democracy begins in human conversation.
A democratic conversation does not require elaborate
rules of procedure or utopian notions of perfect
consensus. What it does require is a spirit of mutual
respect—people conversing critically with one another
in an atmosphere of honesty and shared regard.

-William Greider, *Who Will Tell the People*

Suggested Guidelines for Deliberative Forums

➢ The purpose of the forum is to work toward a decision on an important issue.

➢ Everyone is encouraged to participate and to listen to one another.

➢ All the major approaches on the issues are considered fairly.

➢ There is a careful examination of the costs and consequences of each option.

➢ The moderator, who will remain neutral, will open up the forum, lead discussion, and ask for outcomes at the end.

➢ Plus other guidelines agreed upon by the group.

Preparing to Practice Moderating

Approach:

_____

1. What is the problem?

2. What is the main argument of this approach?

3. What are some key facts?

4. What are some actions or opinions in this approach?

Preparing to Practice Moderating

5. What do proponents say? What do they value?

6. What do critics say? What do they value?

7/ What are the risks or trade-offs?

An Exercise in Crafting Questions

Directions: In the balloons, write questions that, if used during a deliberation, would do one or several of the following things:

1. Connect the issue to the lives and concerns of real people
2. Make clear the reason someone supports a position
3. Cause participants to make a positive case for each position
4. Bring out the cons of the position
5. Identify the tensions within a position
6. Ensure all positions are heard
7. Encourage participants to deal with trade-offs
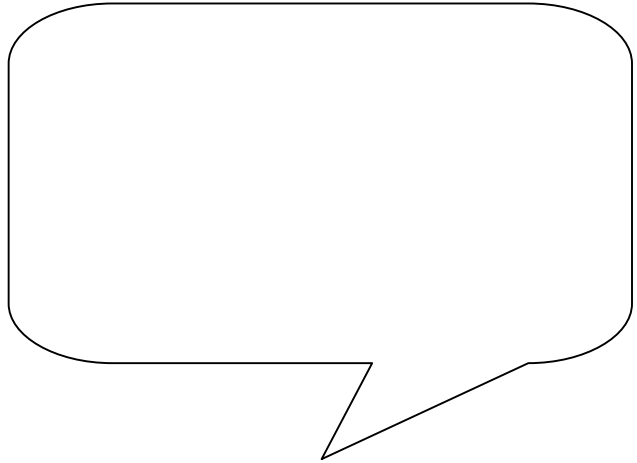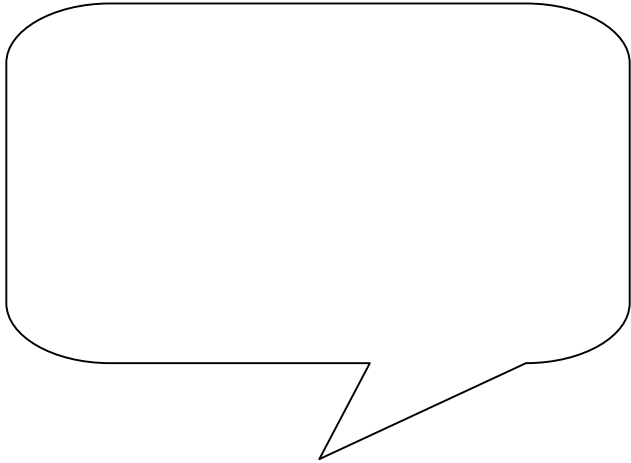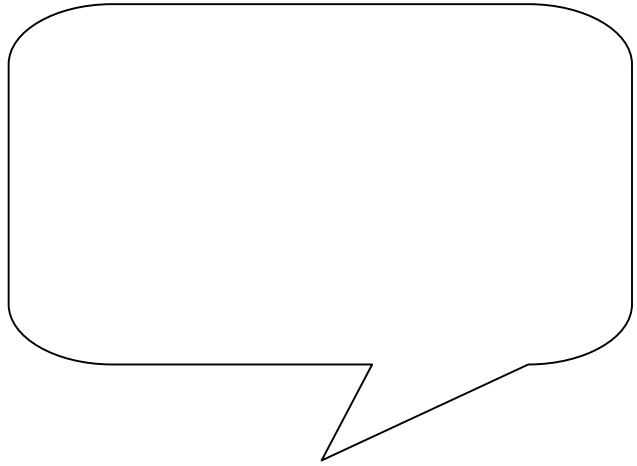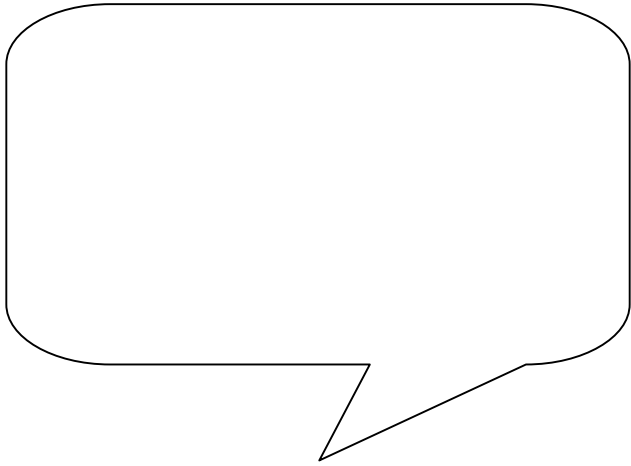
Questions to Stimulate Deliberation

- Could you share a story to illustrate that point?

- I understand you do not like that position, but what do you think people who favor it deeply care about?

- How would someone make a case against what you said?

- What is there about this approach that you just cannot accept?

- How may your ideas affect other people?

- Can someone suggest areas that we seem to have in common?

- Would someone identify the values that seem to be clashing? What is really happening here?

- Who should we include in this dialogue that is not already represented?

- If we followed this course of action, what would be the effects on your life?

- What values might people hold who support this position?

- Can anyone envision how their life would change if this approach became national policy?

- What are the consequences of what you said? Do they make a difference?

- How might your concerns differ if you were (poor/wealthy)?

- How do you separate what is a private matter from a public matter in this issue?

Reflections on Our Forum

The moderator asks the group to consider a range of questions after a full examination of each approach.

What did we accomplish?

Individual Reflections

- How has your thinking about the issue changed?

- How has your thinking about other people and their views changed?

Group Reflections

- Can we detect any shared sense of direction or any common ground for action?

- What did you hear the group saying about tensions in the issue?

- What trade-offs were the group willing or not willing to make?

Next Step Reflections

- What do we still need to talk about?

- How can we use what we now know?

Handling Moderator Challenges

Dealing with participants who dominate the discussion

- What do others think about this approach?

- What ideas have not been expressed?

- How would anyone else in the group respond to the concerns just expressed?

- Could someone tell us a story to illustrate that point?

- For those who hold that position, what do they care deeply about?

Dealing with a difficult participant

- Gradually escalate your response.

- Use body language (move close to the person)

- Gradually use more assertive verbal techniques such as interrupting to capture the points stated so far.

- Refer to the guidelines (everyone participates - no monopolizes conversation)

- Redirect the conversation by saying "Thank you. What do others think about that?" or "Let's create some space for those of you who have been quieter. Someone else?"

Handling misinformation from a participant

- Does anyone have a different perspective on that?

- Use the issue book. Point out that "on page xx it states..." How does that fit with the information you just gave us?

- What meaning does that information have to you?

- Would you give us an example?

	MODERATOR	RECORDER	FEEDBACK LEADER
Opening			
Approach 1			
Approach 2			
Approach 3			
Reflections			

Tips for Moderating Public Forums

1. **Come Prepared**
   - Read over the discussion guide to get a feel for the content and approaches.
   - Prepare yourself for how people may respond to the issue.
   - Have an idea of your event's timetable.

2. **Give an Overview / Set Guidelines for Deliberation**
   - Give the participants an overview of the issue and the structure of the discussion.
   - Review the guidelines.
   - Set a positive tone for equal participation.

3. **Provide Introductions and Transitions into the Next Area of Deliberation**
   - Identify opportunities to transition. Smooth transitions between approaches make the dialogue more productive.

4. **Ask Open-ended Questions that Encourage a Deliberation of All Sides**
   - Prepare a list of open-ended questions for each approach that would be important to ask.
   - Keep the dialogue moving so all major points are considered and the deep dimensions of the issue are examined.

5. **Ask Follow-up Questions**
   - Always be prepared to ask follow-up questions to stimulate further dialogue about the ideas and comments.
   - Why do you value that idea?
   - What would be the consequences to what you're suggesting?
   - Does anyone have a different perspective?
   - Responsiveness builds trust.

6. **Avoid Dominating**
   - The moderator facilitates the deliberation but should not let herself or anyone else dominate the meeting.
   - Encourage the equal participation of all.

7. **Always Remain NEUTRAL**
   - Moderators should avoid showing any bias.
   - Respond to clarify - avoid giving your own opinion.

8. **Wrap-up**
   - Reflect on the deliberation.
   - Begin to address next steps.
   - Complete questionnaires, record notes, and close the meeting.

5. Dialogue and Deliberation Processes

"The really good idea is always traceable back quite a long way, often to a not very good idea which sparked off another idea that was only slightly better, which somebody else misunderstood in such a way that they then said something which was really rather interesting."

John Cleese

Dialogue and Deliberation Processes

There are many dialogue and deliberation processes that can be helpful, depending on the stage of the community work, the audience, and the goals an organization or community wishes to achieve. The Center for Civic Life has experience working with a number of these processes and has extensive contacts across the state and the country with many others who have hands-on expertise with these tools.

21st Century Town Meeting

AmericaSpeaks - www.americaspeaks.org

Promoting the founding belief that every citizen has a right to impact the decisions of government, AmericaSpeaks serves as a neutral convener of large-scale public participation forums. Through close consultation with leaders, citizens, the media and others, AmericaSpeaks designs and facilitates deliberative meetings for 500 to 5,000 participants. Its partners have included regional planning groups, local, state, and national government bodies, and national organizations. Issues have ranged from Social Security reform to redevelopment of ground zero in New York.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry Commons - www.appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu

AI Commons is devoted to the sharing of academic resources and practical tools on Appreciative Inquiry and the rapidly growing discipline of positive change. The site is hosted by Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management. Appreciative Inquiry is the search for the best in people, their organizations and the relevant world around them.

Citizens Juries

The Jefferson Center - www.jefferson-center.org

Since 1974, the Jefferson Center has conducted Citizen Juries at the local, state and national levels. In a Citizens Jury, a randomly selected, demographically representative panel of citizens, which serve as a microcosm of the public, meet to carefully examine an issue of public significance. At the end of their moderated hearings, the members present their recommendations to the public. The Citizens Jury process is a comprehensive tool that allows decision makers to hear thoughtful citizen input. Juries have addressed topics including national health care reform, budget priorities, environmental issues and local school district facility needs.

Conversation Café

Conversation Café – www.conversationcafe.org

Vicki Robin, a pioneer in the voluntary simplicity movement, came up with the idea of using the "conversation café" model in attempts to take her ideas of simpler living to a higher level. Her organization has more than 60 trained café hosts and has spread internationally after a tremendous start in Seattle.

Deliberative Polling

The Center for Deliberative Democracy - http://cdd.stanford.edu/

Housed in the Department of Communication at Stanford University and established in 2003, the Center for Deliberative Democracy is devoted to research about democracy and public opinion obtained through Deliberative Polling. Developed by Professor James Fishkin, Deliberative Polling is a technique which combines deliberation in small group discussions with scientific random sampling to provide public consultation for public policy and for electoral issues.

Future Search

Future Search Network – www.futuresearch.net

The Future Search Network initiates future search conferences, innovative planning conferences used world-wide by hundreds of communities and organizations. The conferences meet two goals at the same time: helping large diverse groups discover values, purposes and projects they hold in common; and enabling people to create a desired future together and start implementing right away.

National Issues Forums

National Issues Forum – www.nifi.org

NIF forums are deliberative discussions, led by neutral moderators, using nonpartisan issue frameworks for addressing public issues. Participants examine and weigh several possible ways to address the problem, analyzing arguments for and against each. Moderators encourage participants to think not only as individuals but as members of a community as they consider directions for community action.

Open Space Technology

Open Space Institute - U.S. – www.openspaceworld.org

The Open Space Institute - US is one of many Open Space Institutes worldwide, all born and raised by the efforts of volunteer members. The Institute is an inclusive learning community that provides access to resources on Open Space and connects individuals and groups to inform, inspire, mentor, and sustain each other in opening and holding space. Open Space Technology is one way to enable all kinds of people, in any kind of organization, to create inspired, self-organized meetings and events. In Open Space meetings, events and organizations, participants create and manage their own agenda of parallel working sessions around a central theme of strategic importance.

Public Conversations Project Dialogue

Public Conversations Project – www.publicconversations.org

In addition to their groundbreaking grassroots dialogue work, PCP provides trainings, presentations, and workshops on such things as the power of dialogue, inquiry as intervention,

and the architecture of dialogue. PCP's website offers a variety of great tools and downloadable resources to help you organize and facilitate a dialogue.

Study Circles

Everyday Democracy – www.everydaydemocracy.org

Everyday Democracy (formerly the Study Circles Resource Center) promotes and supports the creation of democratic, peer-led deliberative dialogues that lead to organized action on important social and political issues. Their website provides downloadable copies of many of their top-notch dialogue guides and other resources.

Sustained Dialogue

The International Institute for Sustained Dialogue - www.sustaineddialogue.org

Directed by Harold Saunders and formed in collaboration with the Kettering Foundation, the Institute promotes the process of sustained dialogue for transforming racial and ethnic conflicts around the world. Sustained dialogue (SD) is a systematic, interactive, open-ended political process to transform conflictual relationships over time. SD focuses on the dynamics of the relationships that underlie conflict and block its resolution.

Web Lab's Small Group Dialogue

Web Lab - www.weblab.org

This non-profit organization is dedicated to developing innovative Web-based projects that bring fresh perspectives and new voices to the discussion of public issues. The goal of the organization is to use the Web as a positive, transformative force in people's lives and in society at large.

Wisdom Circle

Wisdom Circles - www.wisdomcircle.org

Cindy Spring and Charles Garfield created this website to provide further support and resources to readers of their 1998 book "Wisdom Circles: A Guide to Self Discovery and Community Building in Small Groups." According to their website, they offer the wisdom circle format to any person or organization, free of charge.

World Café

World Café - www.theworldcafe.com

Juanita Brown and David Isaacs from Whole Systems Associates use the model of the café setting to create a warm, inviting environment in which people can converse. Participants gather informally at small tables and are encouraged to map out the ideas generated from conversation onto the paper tablecloths covering the tables.

Resources for Promoting Public Dialogue and Deliberation

West Virginia Center for Civic Life   *www.wvciviclife.org*
The West Virginia Center for Civic Life is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that promotes deliberative discussions of issues that affect West Virginia and the nation. Working in partnership with educational, civic, and community organizations, the Center's work focuses on increasing the public's capacity to work together on common problems.

National Issues Forums   *www.nifi.org*
National Issues Forums is a network of civic, educational, and other organizations and individuals whose common interest is to promote public deliberation in America. NIF does not advocate specific solutions or points of view but provides citizens the opportunity to consider a broad range of choices, weigh the pros and cons of those choices, and meet with each other in a public dialogue to identify the concerns they hold in common.

National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation   *www.thataway.org*
The dialogue and deliberation community is a loose-knit network of practitioners, researchers, activists, artists, students, and others who are committed to giving people a voice and making sure that voice counts. The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation provides the infrastructure needed in this community for working together to increase both individual and collective impact.

Kettering Foundation   *www.kettering.org*
The Kettering Foundation is an independent, nonpartisan research organization rooted in the American tradition of cooperative research. Everything Kettering researches relates to one central question: what does it take for democracy to work as it should? Or put another way: What does it take for citizens to shape their collective future?

Everyday Democracy   *www.everyday-democracy.org*
Everyday Democracy, is a national organization that helps communities find ways for people to think, talk, and work together to address community issues.

Public Agenda Foundation   *www.publicagenda.org*
Public Agenda provides unbiased research that bridges the gap between American leaders and what the public really thinks about issues ranging from education to foreign policy to immigration to religion and civility in American life.

Campus Compact   *www.compact.org*
Campus Compact is higher education association dedicated to campus-based civic engagement. Campus Compact promotes public and community service that develops students' citizenship skills, helps campuses forge effective community partnerships, and provides resources and training for faculty seeking to integrate civic and community-based learning into the curriculum.

CIRCLE   *www.civicyouth.org*
CIRCLE (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) conducts research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25.

6. Moving from Deliberation to Action

"The act of collaboration must start with dialogue. You cannot build relationships without having an understanding of your potential partners, and you cannot achieve that understanding without a special form of communication that goes beyond ordinary conversation."

-Daniel Yankelovich, *The Magic of Dialogue*

The Community Organizes Itself:
Different approaches, different processes

Dialogue-to-change organizers usually approach their work with the following principles in mind:

• The most effective efforts are led by a cross-sector group of leaders who come from all parts of the community and hold a range of viewpoints.
• These organizers include "traditional" leaders/decision makers, who are part of the power structure, and non-traditional or grassroots leaders.
• Measurable action and change is more likely to happen when key leaders are onboard from the beginning, and work in partnership with citizens to solve problems.

Dialogue-to-change initiatives can be structured in a variety of ways:

Single forum: A community forum is held to introduce the issue and gauge the community's interest in a dialogue-to-change initiative.

Two step forum-to-action: A community forum on an issue is followed by an action forum scheduled soon after to define priorities for action and recruit action work groups.

Multiple session dialogue circles: In this approach, the one session forum is extended into 2-4 dialogue circles that build relationships for action through more time to share personal connections to the issue, understand the strategic facts, explore the options, and identify common ground for action.

Community-wide dialogue series: Many forums and/or dialogue circles happen simultaneously in the community, everyone talking about the same issue at the same time. A large group meeting follows a 6 -8 week deliberation time frame, bringing all participants together to share ideas for change. This meeting launches new activity for a range of action efforts. This approach can result in heightened awareness and can make a significant impact in the community. It is also labor intensive.

Summits or other one-day events: Small-group, facilitated dialogues or forums are included in day-long events, along with large-group activities, such as panel discussions, data presentation, and planning for action. These events generate excitement and energy, and raise public awareness. This option, on the other hand, means less chance to form real relationships, less time for thoughtful reflection, and less commitment to meaningful follow through.

Source: Everyday Democracy

Developing Action Ideas:
Helping Participants Prepare to Move from Dialogue to Action

During the first several sessions, participants in deliberative forums or dialogue circles use dialogue as a way to examine an issue from different points of view. Then, they explore what's at the root of the problem. By the last session each group is developing ideas for action.

The following questions will help people come up with effective action ideas.

Issue—Will the action address the key concerns the group has been discussing?

Doable—Is the action practical?

Effectiveness—Will the action create a desirable change?

Assets—Are resources available to help implement the action?

Situation—Does the action make sense in our community?

Here is an example:

Concern
Our neighborhood is unsafe.

Broad action idea
W e need to make our neighborhood safe.

Specific Actions
1. Meet with the police department.
2. Request regular neighborhood patrols.
3. Start a neighborhood watch program.

Ideally, action ideas should grow out of a discussion about approaches to change. However, sometimes people suggest large, abstract ideas for change, rather than specific "doable" actions. The moderator or facilitator can help the group focus by using the questions above.[1]

Source: *A Guide for Training Public Dialogue Facilitators*, Everyday Democracy   www.everyday-democracy.org

Moving From Deliberation to Action: What Can We Do?

This is an agenda to use after participants have considered the approaches to the issue and established the beginnings of a common ground for action. This may have happened in one community forum or in several sessions over a period of weeks.

The purpose of this session is to move to action. First, we will look at the assets we have; next, we will brainstorm action ideas; we will then connect our action ideas with our assets; and, finally, we will set priorities for action.

Part One: Community Assets Brainstorm

Every town or city has strengths or assets. Assets can be people, places, or organizations—whatever makes our community a better place is an asset.

"Brainstorming" is a creative way for a group to come up with lots of ideas in a short amount of time. Build on one another's ideas. All ideas are OK. Don't stop to discuss or judge them. The facilitator will write down every idea. You can use these headings for **Community Assets**:

| **People** | **Places** | **Institutions/ Organizations** | **Funding sources** | **Other** |

Use these questions to help people start the brainstorm:
- ➢ Who has talents and skills that they might offer?
- ➢ What groups in the community can help use out.
- ➢ What sources of funding do we have in our community/
- ➢ What groups do you belong to? How can they help?
- ➢ Can you think of anything else?

Part Two: Brainstorm Action Ideas

Remember the approaches that were discussed in the prior session or sessions. Try to come up with specific actions that fit with these approaches. How many different ideas can we come up with?

Make a list of ideas in the following categories:

- ➢ Things that you can do on your own
- ➢ Things you can do with other small groups of people
- ➢ Things organizations can do: new partnerships, collaborations, or projects
- ➢ Community-wide actions: new policies, institutional change including individuals, organization and public officials working together

Part Three: Connect Action Ideas with Assets

Post the list of action ideas beside the assets, and talk about which ones can be linked. Keep these connections in mind as we prioritize our action ideas.

Part Four: Set Priorities for Action

Look at your list of ideas for action. These questions will help you set priorities for action:

  ➢ Which ideas are the easiest to get done?
  ➢ Who would work with us on these ideas?
  ➢ Which ideas might do the most good?
  ➢ Which ideas might have a long-term impact?

As a group, choose two or three ideas that are important and doable. Then, consider the following questions:

  ➢ What would it take to make this happen?
  ➢ Who can step forward to lead which parts?
  ➢ What community assets could we use to move this idea forward?

This agenda may lead directly to working groups around the priorities that are established, or, if a number of forums or dialogue circles has been held, may be presented at a large group action forum where ideas from many deliberations are presented and organized for action.

The Action Forum:
Structuring the Action Forum to Meet Your Community's Goals

Community-based dialogue-to-change initiatives rely on a mixture of community forums, small, facilitated dialogues and large group meetings. The large group meeting following a series of forums or dialogue circles, often called an Action Forum, is the time to consolidate ideas and experiences from a number of groups and make plans for follow-up action.

Effective Action Forums include a number of elements. The event can be modified to emphasize and support the program goals and the kinds of outcomes anticipated. Here are some tips:

For initiatives focused on action at the individual level—changes in attitudes, behaviors and beliefs
• Build in ample time for individual groups to report out on their experiences.
• Ask for individual testimonials.
• Invite participants to sign a personal pledge to adopt new kinds of behaviors.
• Celebrate!

For initiatives focused on shared action or institutional change
• Invite interested organizations to send representatives to the Forum.
• Provide time and space to showcase organizations and initiatives (include display tables and booths).
• Save time for leaders to "pitch" their work to the group.
• Recruit leaders and facilitators to convene and work with new action groups.
• Allow time for new action groups and new collaborating organizations to meet and start their work.
• Develop processes to keep track of action groups, and provide support when they need it.

For initiatives focused on input to decision makers and policy outcomes
• Working with the policy makers, develop protocols for recorders to collect meaningful, useable information from the circles.
• Set clear expectations. Describe the kind of input policy makers are looking for, and how the information from the dialogue circles will be collected and used.
• Set aside time for the circles to report major recommendations to policy makers. Allow time for questions and answers.
• Capture the information in a summary report, and plan wide distribution through media, web sites, public libraries and other venues.

Sample Action Forum Agenda

1. Snacks, social time, music or poetry, and time to read summaries from each circle posted around the room

2. Welcome and Introductions

   • Review agenda.
   • Talk about the forum/study circle effort in the community.
   • Thank facilitators and other key volunteers.

3. Reports from the Forums, Study Circles

   • Ask one person from each circle to make a brief report about action ideas from their group
   • Or, when the group is large (more than 60 people), post summaries from each group where everyone can see them. Invite a few people to report out on their group.

4. Overview of Community Assets

   • A person from the organizing group reviews key community assets. These assets will help the community move action ideas forward.

5. Moving to Action

   • The MC (Master of Ceremonies) identifies the main ideas from all the groups.
   • People sign up for an action group or task force.
   • Action groups meet and begin their work. (Ideally, a leader will have already been identified as part of identifying community assets.)They also set a date for their next meeting.

6. Closing remarks

   • Closing remarks. (Including how the action efforts will be tracked and tied to further organizing.)
   • Next steps. (Include plans for another round of circles, celebration, or check-in meeting.)
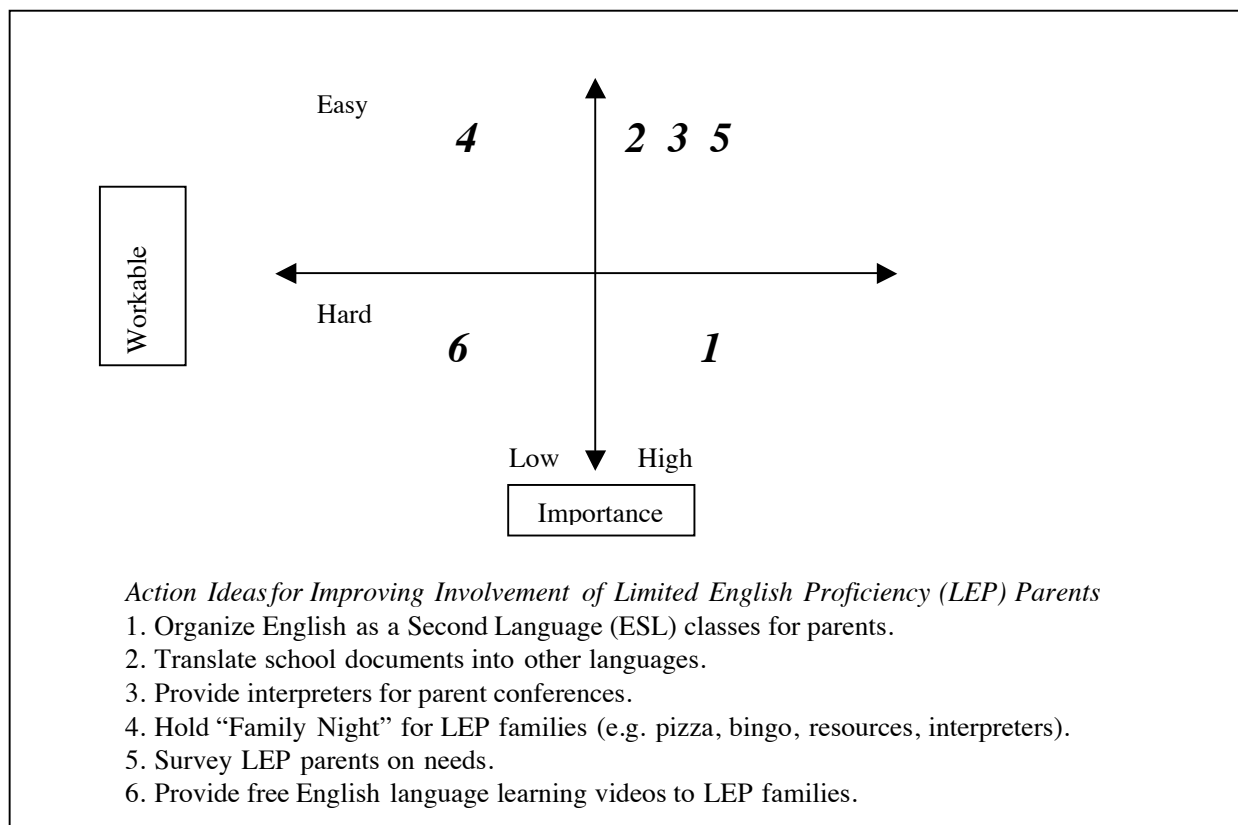   • Thanks to all.

Setting Priorities for Action:
Helping a Group Decide Which Ideas to Work On

This exercise might be useful to a newly formed action group.

1. On a flip chart or blackboard, draw a horizontal line and a vertical line, resultingin a cross with 4 quadrants. See example, below.
2. On the left side, running vertically, from top to bottom, write the word "Workable." Across the bottom, running left to right, write the word "Important."
3. Label the top 2 quadrants above the horizontal line "Easy." Label the bottom 2 quadrants below the horizontal line "Hard."
4. At the base of the left-hand column, write "Low." At the base of the right-hand column, write "High."
5. Take the list of action ideas, and assign them to the appropriate quadrant. Put them on Post-it notes, in case they need to be moved around.
6. Ideas in the upper right quadrant (which are both "Easy" and "Important") might be a good place to begin.

Example:
The numbers in the graphic correspond to the numbered items at the bottom of the box.

Action Ideas for Improving Involvement of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Parents
1. Organize English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for parents.
2. Translate school documents into other languages.
3. Provide interpreters for parent conferences.
4. Hold "Family Night" for LEP families (e.g. pizza, bingo, resources, interpreters).
5. Survey LEP parents on needs.
6. Provide free English language learning videos to LEP families.

7. Planning Resources

Give me six hours to chop down a tree
and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.

-Abraham Lincoln

Framing Public Issues

1) **Identifying the Public Issue**
   - Find an issue that needs to be worked on in your community
     - An issue of broad concern within a community
     - An issue on which choices have to be made, but there are no clear right or wrong answers
     - An issue where a range of people and groups must act in order for the community to effectively move forward
     - Not something that already has a specific solution and just needs a public "rubber stamp"
     - Not a problem that needs an immediate response or can be answered by a yes or no answer, requires a highly technical solution, or is only relevant to a narrow interest group

2) **Organizing Your Framing Team**
   - Working in a team is necessary because of the need to bring in as many voices into the discussion as possible and the amount of work that must be accomplished
     - Identify and invite social networkers, writers, and researchers

3) **Developing Interview Questions & Pulling Together a Research Package**
   - The research package combined with the public interviews is a tool for the framing team to understand the issue better
     - Factual information - both local & national
     - Political and public rhetoric that has taken place on the issue gathered from newspapers, magazines and other resources
     - Latest theories on how to attack the problems
     - Polling results, when available
   - Develop questions on the issue that allow different people to connect with the issue, note how people respond to proposed solutions, and determine how informed people really are about the problem

4) **Conducting Public Interviews**
   - The interview process allows many different perspectives to become a part of the issue-framing process, which is essential to framing a "public" issue
   - Members of the framing team conduct several interviews with citizens from different walks of life revealing how the public connects with this issue
   - Brainstorm members of the public needed to interview and make sure the interview is carried out
     - Interview people who are affected by the issue on a day-to-day basis
     - Interview people who are particularly interested in, knowledgeable about, and active in working on the problem
     - Interview regular citizens who have no great stake in the issue
     - Interview people who range in age, education level, work experience, where they live
   - Make sure interviews cover a range of views and levels of expertise

5) Issue-Framing Seminar – Grouping like concerns and identifying approaches
- An intensive work session with experience in qualitative data analysis, usually lasting a couple of days reviewing research and public interviews to gain understanding of what the problem really is
- A key part of issue-framing is understanding the motivations behind the public's concerns. This unveils the broad, yet distinct values, the public associates with the issue and how to solve its problems

6) Writing the Issue Framework – Problem statement and approaches with pros, cons, and actions
- The framework is formed by choices or different approaches to discuss the issue. These come out of this issue-framing seminar and the discussion of the public's broad concern and value areas
- The framework must be written based on how people view the issue and the choices or approaches should directly address what people value – write in public terms that citizens can relate to
- The approaches should be written to represent truly distinctive approaches to the problem relying on different actions. There must be both positive and negative outcomes coming out of each choice

7) Testing the Issue Framework
- Revisit the list of people who are affected by the issue. The framework should reach the concerns of a variety of the stakeholders identified
- Schedule test public forums to view how the public interprets the framework. Identify any problems or anything your framework is missing and revise
  - Welcome, Ground Rules, Starter Activity, Personal Stake, Deliberation, Reflection, Questionnaire, Next Steps
- Finalizing the framework is not always easy, but after thorough testing and revising work it is time to put the finishing touches on it

8) Developing Moderator Guide, Starter Video, & Post-Forum Questionnaire
- It is beneficial for your framing team to develop materials that add to the forum project
  - A Moderator Guide gives forum moderators and potential forum moderators an introduction to the issue, instructions on how to carry out the forum meeting, and moderating tips
  - A Starter Video introduces the forum participants to the topic and to the discussion framework - giving them a picture of the issue and what is expected of them as participants
  - A Post-Forum Questionnaire is passed out to responding participants at the end of forum discussions. Participants give their opinions on how they feel after they have participated in the discussion. Collected questionnaires can be tabulated and aid the reporting process

9) Holding Public Forums
- Moderators, recorders, and conveners facilitate public forums based on the issue-framework
- Invite a wide variety of people who need to be in the discussion and also invite the general public

- Hold forums in areas of communities where all community members would feel comfortable participating and sharing their views
- Collect the public's perspectives by taking notes at the forum and passing out the post-forum questionnaire at the conclusion

10) Reporting on Public Forums
- Reporting on public forums can have a number of different strategies depending on the focus
    - Reporting back to a group that participated in a forum by summarizing the forum notes. This gives people a formal document of the discussion and allows them to reflect
    - Putting together a report after a number of forums can show the great depth of discussion. If a large number of people participated then it could attract the interest of policymakers and media
    - Reports offer information and insight into next steps

Planning Public Forums

When planning to convene a public forum, consider the following elements:

- *Goals*
- *Participation*
- *Forum size*
- *Publicity*

Goals – What do we want to accomplish with this forum?

Build "public knowledge" about an issue?
Have the public reach some decision about an issue?

Participation – Who should attend the forum?

Having a committee that represents different interests in the community can help you meet one of the most important goals for the forum—to have a diversity of voices deliberating an issue.

Form a committee to help you to determine 1) who should participate, 2) how to reach them, and 3) how to get them to attend.

Called a "steering" committee, this group helps you build a broad base of support to reach many segments of a community and to spread the workload! Your steering committee should include primary contacts in the community. They will work with others to network and get their job done.

Here are some helpful things to consider when forming the steering committee:

- Invite steering committee members at the earliest stage of the planning. Communicate clearly why you need them to work with you and discuss what they think the benefits are that they will receive.

- Be inclusive. Invite people who have different points of view on the issue. Go beyond those organizations which you normally work with in the community. Successful forums represent a diversity of interests and perspectives.

- Clearly define the roles for steering committee members.

    o   Be clear on what skills and resources they bring to the table
    o   Delegate tasks that best serve their needs and interests
    o   Determine the kind of involvement in time and resources the member will provide
    o   Establish a timetable to complete the assignment
    o   Be sure to recognize their contribution in any announcements, brochures or other media you use to promote the forum.

Should it be open to the public?

Should it be a combination open-to-public and invitation forum?

Sometimes, a deliberative forum open to the public does not have the diversity of viewpoints necessary.

If you want to build a civic infrastructure for deliberative forums that will become an important way people talk about issues in the community, a broad outreach is necessary.

Otherwise, people will think only select groups get to participate and will feel excluded.

Successful forums extend their influence of civic dialogue and deliberation to schools, banks, service organizations, businesses, religious organizations, elected officials, and citizens. Inviting more members of the community to participate in and learn from the dialogue generated through the forum process strengthens the deliberative process and fosters its continuation.

Forum size – What is the ideal number of forum participants?

A group size of between twenty-five (25) and thirty (30) participants is often ideal, since it allows everyone the opportunity to voice their opinions and be heard. Larger forums, while possible, run the risk of excluding attendees from participation.

Publicity – How should you involve the media?

This will depend on the media available and your forum goals. If you hold a public meeting, the media might choose to attend. Here are some important things to consider:

- It would be good to ask the media not to attribute quotes to people's names unless they have their permission, although if some people want to be interviewed after the forum, then it's up to them to handle how and if they offer their names.

- Television equipment can be disruptive to a forum if reporters arrive in the middle of a discussion. Ask television reporters to arrive before the forum to set up cameras and other equipment.

- The best media coverage is provided by reporters who have adequate background information on the forum and **who are willing to stay for the entire discussion**. It is very difficult to capture the concerns, the insights, and the directions set by the forum participants by only hearing a small fragment of the conversation.

Tips for Organizing a Steering Committee

An active, broad-based steering committee can offer substantial support for a successful forum. They can foster the commitment of others, help to connect the forum to the wider community, and gather resources necessary to nurture and sustain a prosperous program.

What should you look for when setting up a steering committee?

- Start with people you know. Seek a group of active community representatives with a broad range of expertise, experience, and skills who can work together to develop quality community forums.

- Look for committee members who can strengthen the partnership between the organizations to which they belong and the forum event.

- Recruit volunteer candidates who can make a commitment to actively participate and contribute to the success of forum operations and growth – from making phone calls to fundraising.

- Identify the skills, interests and network connections of each committee member. Keep these attributes in mind when assigning roles and tasks. Be sure to include someone on the steering committee with access to the press, someone who can facilitate media coverage and involvement. Other subcommittee members might focus on such tasks as funding, site selection, moderator orientation and training, evaluation, and connectivity with policymakers.

- Be clear about the terms of commitment when recruiting steering committee members. Terms often range from two to three years with an average of ten to twelve meetings per year. Most steering committee members also serve on at least one task force and operations group subcommittee, from finance to [moderator] to press relations.

- Provide committee members with a current mission statement that reflects the goals and objectives of the local public issues forum, along with the requirements for steering committee service.

Tips for Creating Partnerships

Building a broad base of support for local public issues forums not only ensures participation from many different segments of the community, but also serves to distribute the workload and prevent burnout of committed volunteers. Starting small with one or two partnerships is often most effective for new forums. As membership grows and the forum's influence extends, adding more partnerships and increasing the diversity of the connections will further the growth and outreach of the public politics process.

Following are some guidelines for creating positive partnerships that will ensure the success of local National Issues Forums:

❖ Be inclusive. Look for partnerships including and beyond those organizations that already understand the importance of public deliberation. Successful forums represent a diversity of interests, resources, and perspectives.

❖ Invite partners to participate at the earliest stages of planning a forum. Give them ownership in the forum and the opportunity to contribute their special skills, resources, and points of view. They will be far more likely to fully participate if they are of the planning process as well as part of the forum implementation.

❖ Clearly define the roles for partners. What skills and resources do they bring to the table that will improve the capacity for public deliberation? Delegate tasks that best serve the partners' needs and interests, so that both parties feel rewarded for their efforts. Who is the partner's contact? What is their task? What kind of involvement in time and resources will the partner provide? What is the timetable to complete the assignment? How will their contribution be recognized?

❖ Make sure your partner(s) understands the mission and goals for the local public issues forum. Supply partners with a mission statement for your organization. Communicate clearly why the forum needs their participation. Ask the partner what their expectations are and how they hope to benefit. From this discussion you can build a mutually beneficial relationship that will be long lasting.

Recruiting for Public Dialogue

Purpose of Exercise

_   To establish recruitment goals (how many people, what kinds of people)

_   To develop a plan for inviting participants.

Thinking of your total pool of participants, estimate what proportion of the total should come from each constituency. **These are your recruitment goals.**

1. Talk about the kinds of people you are trying to reach. Use these questions to help your thinking.

- Who are the groups who have a stake in the issue?
- Who needs to be part of the solution?
- What important groups are usually left out of the public conversation?
- Who could be barriers to success, if they are not a part of the process?

2. Think about the total number of people you are hoping to involve. Note: If you are planning small-group dialogues, base your estimates on 10 people per group. Large group meetings may vary in size, from 50 to 500 or more. Keep your goals realistic, given your resources, timing and space limitations.

3. On a flip chart, make a list of the groups or constituencies you are trying to reach in a column on the left-hand side. Next to that, make a second column listing a pathway for reaching the group. In a third column, put the number of people you hope to reach in that category (think of it as a percentage of the total). Finally, in the right-hand column, assign a person to be responsible for reaching that group. (Turn page to see example.)

4. Talk about a variety of methods to use in your recruiting, remembering that a face-to-face invitation is the most effective.

EXAMPLE

Topic: School reform
Target number of participants: 100

Group/constituency*	Recruitment Pathways (*organizations or individuals who can reach the group*)	Number of people in this category (% of total)	Who is responsible?
Students	Other students, student clubs, teachers, coaches	30	John
Teachers	Teachers, school principals, PTO	15	Mary
School Administrators	Superintendents, principals	5	Gwen
Parents	PTO, teachers	20	Bob
Community members	Faith-based groups, social service agencies, businesses, town government	15	Maria
Business Owners	Business Associations, Chamber of Commerce, Service clubs	8	George
Public Officials	Town government, School administrators	7	Owen

Don't forget to consider gender, ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic background.

Communications Planning Tool

1. **State your project goals.**
   What are the overarching goals for your project? Examples:
   - o Unite the community to tackle racism head on.
   - o Remove racial barriers to community services.
   - o Help the community embrace its diversity.

   Briefly state three goals:
   - **1.** _____
   - **2.** _____
   - **3.** _____

2. **State your communication goals.**
   What are your communication goals for each of the project goals stated above? It might help to think of the communication goals in terms of problems. What problems are keeping you from accomplishing each of the project goals above? Example:
   - o *Problem:* Not everyone realizes that there are racial tensions in the community.
   - o *Restate problem as a communication goal:* Build awareness of racial tensions in the community.

   State a communication goal for each of the above project goals:

   _____
   _____
   _____

3. **State your audience.**
   Who can help you accomplish these communication goals? Think about the people who would help solve the problem if you could influence them through your communication. Make sure to define your audiences specifically and narrowly. Examples:
   - o The Mayor's office
   - o Families who are new to the community
   - o Customers of Marge's Kitchen, a "hot spot" for locals.

   List in priority order
   Communication goal #1: _____
   Communication goal #2: _____
   Communication goal #3: _____

4. **State your messages.**
   What can you say that would persuade your audiences to help meet your goal? State your messages in your own terms, as though one of your audience members was sitting in front of you. What would you say? For each of the three audiences, answer these questions:

1. What is the initiative?
2. **What will the initiative accomplish?**
3. Why does it matter to this audience? Think about these questions first:
    o What does your audience know about you?
    o What do they know about the issue?
    o Do they care about the issue right now?
    o What would motivate them to get involved in your program?
    o What could they do about the issue?

4. What can they do about it?

5. **What is the main thing you want each audience to do? (State each in 20 words or less)**

   _____

   _____

   _____

6. **List five ways you can get your messages to this audience. Examples:**

__ Direct mailings: letters, postcards
__ Newsletters
__ Other people's newsletters
__ Annual report
__ Workshops
__ Web site (your own and links
   from others)
__ Blog
__ Online social networks
   (Myspace, Facebook,
   instant messaging)
__ Emails to a list you develop
__ Email newsletters
__ Brochures distributed at
   _____ location
__ Displays at events
__ Speakers bureau

__ Meetings
__ Luncheons: one-on-one or groups
__ Internal communications to staff,
   board and volunteers
__ Posters, fliers, table tents, bulletin
   boards, etc.
__ Conferences and conventions
__ Fundraising events
__ Paycheck stuffers
__ Workplace presentations
__ PowerPoint road trips to local groups
__ White papers, research studies
__ Voicemails (automated)
__ Polling
__ Partnerships with other agencies or
   businesses

7. **Getting it done.**
   State the most immediate next steps for advancing your plan.

   _____

   _____

   _____

Communications Planning Tool Tips

Tips for #3 (developing messages)

- Be concrete
- Be short
- Be simple
- Be memorable
- Be sincere

Keep this in mind: The more you say, the less they'll remember.

Tips for # 5 and 6 (tactics and timing)

- Choose items that are doable, not time-consuming and expensive
- Think about how people like to get information.
    - What do they read?
    - What do they watch?
    - What do they listen to?
    - Who do they talk with?
- Don't limit yourselves to words—remember that a picture can be worth a 1,000 words.
- People need to get information, many times and in many ways in order to remember it—Repetition, repetition, repetition.

About the Media
The list of tools in #5 omits the media, because in most cases you can do better using these other tools first.

Tips for storytelling

Why tell stories?

- Stories make it real.
- They tug at the heart strings.
- They put a face and picture to the messages.
- Stories are more memorable than facts and figures
- They can convey humor.

Source: Everyday Democracy, www.everyday-democracy.org

Convening the Forum – A Checklist

Moderators, Recorders, Observers

_ Who will *moderate*? How many people will moderate?

_ Who will *record*? How many people will moderate?

_ Will you utilize *observers*?

➢ Observers can be of two types:

   o **To help keep track of the forum**, eliminating the need for two recorders (May take notes as a "silent" recorder)

   o **To listen, watch, and evaluate see what happens during a forum** (This type does not usually take notes to help record the forum process.)

   o The number of observers should be kept to a minimum so as not to detract from the forum participants. Observers are silent and do not participate in the deliberation process at all. They are usually seated behind the forum participants.

_ Have the moderators, recorders and observers met?

_ Do they have an agreement amongst themselves as to how they will interact? (For example, will recorders interrupt if they are not sure what a participant said?)

Logistics

_ What date and timeframe will work best?

_ Where will the forum be held?

_ Are facilities handicapped accessible?

_ Is public transportation to the site available? If not, how will people without transportation get there?

_ Is the meeting space large enough to accommodate all participants?

_ Consider the seating arrangement.

   o U-shaped / circled?
   o With / without tables?

Logistics (continued)

‐   Room details, e.g., location of toilets

‐   Equipment

  o   Microphones (**Note**: Try to avoid using microphones unless it is difficult for people to hear. With 25-30 people you might not need them.)

  o   Easels with flip charts

  o   Markers

  o   VCR and TV

  o   Extension cords

  o   Extra issue books

‐   Sign-in Sheet

‐   Will you provide refreshments?

‐   Will you provide child care?

Other details

‐   Do you intend for people to complete a registration process?

‐   Who will handle registration?

‐   Who is responsible for designing promotional materials?

‐   Who is responsible for copying and distributing promotional materials?

‐   Who is responsible for securing discussion guides?

8. Reflecting On Our Work Together

It is not the answers that show us the way,
but the questions.

-Rainer Maria Rilke

Ten Mindsets of Highly Effective Communities

MINDSETS	POSSIBLE INDICATORS
The world is interconnected, and people are interdependent.	"Boundary spanning" associations and structures that create opportunities to link different segments and sectors of the community
Effective political decision-making is open and inclusive.	Widespread public forums for open exploration and weighing of possible outcomes and consequences
People have some control over what happens to them.	Members of the community take part in the collective responsibility for social concerns
Problems are ongoing.	Strategies that are long-term and evolving focus on underlying causes and consider the well-being of the whole community
Solutions come from the people.	Widespread participation in common problem solving and decision-making
Problems present opportunities for learning.	People continually embrace challenges and learn from past successes and failures.
Leadership is the responsibility of everyone.	Many kinds of leadership skills are recognized and valued.
Effective action involves communication and respect among members of the community.	Action is deliberate, ongoing and collaborative.
Evaluation is an integral part of effective problem solving and decision-making.	Judging is intentional and part of the ongoing practice of community.
Process is as important as outcomes.	Community recognition by "public" institution like newspapers, foundations, and universities, of the importance of the process and participation in it

Core Principles for Public Engagement

Over the past several months, practitioners in public dialogue and collaborative decision-making have been working together to develop seven "Core Principles for Public Engagement," a process facilitated by the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation. The West Virginia Center for Civic Life endorses these seven common beliefs and understandings.

1. **Careful Planning and Preparation**
   Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure that the design, organization, and convening of the process serve both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants.

2. **Inclusion and Demographic Diversity**
   Equitably incorporate diverse people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy.

3. **Collaboration and Shared Purpose**
   Support and encourage participants, government and community institutions, and others to work together to advance the common good.

4. **Openness and Learning**
   Help all involved listen to each other, explore new ideas unconstrained by predetermined outcomes, learn and apply information in ways that generate new options, and rigorously evaluate public engagement activities for effectiveness.

5. **Transparency and Trust**
   Be clear and open about the process, and provide a public record of the organizers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed.

6. **Impact and Action**
   Ensure each participatory effort has real potential to make a difference, and that participants are aware of that potential.

7. **Sustained Engagement and Participatory Culture**
   Promote a culture of participation with programs and institutions that support ongoing quality public engagement.

Spring, 2009

Civic Life Institute 2010 Reflections

1. Was participating in this training valuable to you?
  ☐ very valuable   ☐ somewhat valuable   ☐ not valuable

2. Did the training meet your specific expectations? Please explain your answers.
  ☐ Yes
Reason: _____
  ☐ No
Reason:_____

3. Before attending the Civic Life Institute, had you ever participated in this kind of deliberation and dialogue?
  ☐ Yes   No ☐   If yes, how? _____

4. How well do you understand the ideas behind this process?
  ☐ very well   ☐ fairly well   ☐ not well at all

5. Do you feel ready to facilitate a public dialogue?

  ☐ Ready! I can't wait to get started.

  ☐ I need to practice, but I'll be ready soon.

  ☐ No, I do not feel ready.

Reason:_____

Please use the back of this page if you need more space for your responses.

7. What was the most rewarding part of this Institute? Why?

8. How can the Institute be improved?

9. Other comments?

Name (optional**)**_____