



**Colorado  
State  
University**

## **CENTER FOR PUBLIC DELIBERATION**



**Center for Public Deliberation  
Student Associate Training Workbook  
Fall 2013**

“ The goal behind deliberation is not merely to draw a crowd and fill a room with opinionated people. The purpose is much bigger and more powerful. When citizens deliberate about an issue and when a community has a habit of asking citizens to make choices, the directions that are chosen often are better and they have a legitimacy that simply doesn’t exist otherwise. ***Citizens take ownership of problems. They talk about what they can do, not what others ought to do. They act out of a sense of mission and passion. Communities in a democracy are healthier when citizens are doing the work of citizens.***<sup>1</sup> ”

The materials contained in this workbook were originally created by members of the National Issues Forums network and the International Deliberative Democracy Workshop Faculty and reflect over two decades of research and practice. The base of the material was originally developed from workbooks used by the West Virginia Center for Public Life, Texas Forums, and University of Missouri Extension, with additional original material developed by Martín Carcasson and Leah Sprain with the CSU Center for Public Deliberation. The presenters are grateful to the citizen practitioners who have labored long and hard to promote the NIF motto: A Different Kind of Talk, Another Way to Act in communities across this country and even abroad through the international work of the Kettering Foundation. The presenters are also grateful to the Kettering Foundation and the National Issues Forums Institute for support of this program. For more information about NIF, visit [www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org), or contact Martín Carcasson at 970-491-5628 or [mcarcas@colostate.edu](mailto:mcarcas@colostate.edu)

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<sup>1</sup> *Framing Issues for Public Deliberation*, Kettering Foundation, 2002.

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## PART 1: THE BIG PICTURE: WHAT IS PUBLIC DELIBERATION?

### How do we best address public problems in a diverse democracy?

This question is the focus of the work of the Center for Public Deliberation. Our work seeks to provide critical support to help our community make the best possible decisions concerning difficult issues. To do that, we take a particular communication-focused perspective. We do so because we believe that high-quality communication is a critical means to the ends of high quality public decision-making, one that unfortunately is currently woefully lacking. In order to clearly lay out the scope of our work, we first must define what we understand as **the ideal democratic decision-making process**:

*Ideally, decision-making in a democracy or community involves a representative group of informed, engaged people who come together, utilize good information, uncover common ground, work through their differences and the tough choices involved in the issue, and come to a reasoned judgment for action that cultivates shared responsibility .*

The word “**ideal**” is critical here, because democratic decision-making inherently involves striving for an ideal that will never be fully realized, but the very effort to move closer to the ideal represents the essence of democracy and can lead to valuable changes. Other key terms in the definition warrant a brief explanation, but will be covered much more throughout the rest of this workbook. “**Representativeness**” is a critical aspect if democratic decision-making is going to be seen as legitimate. It also represents one of the main reasons democratic decision-making is always striving for but not reaching the ideal (i.e. you can never have the “perfectly representative” room). “**Informed people**” and “**good information**” are not easy to define, but the basic point is that high-quality decision-making must be supported by good data. As will become clear, good data is not *sufficient* for high-quality decision-making—the problems we face are not technical in nature and will ultimately require **judgment**, not simply knowledge—but it is nonetheless a critical requirement. Next, high-quality decision-making involves the need to discover and nurture **common ground** while also discovering and **working through the differences** that will be inherent to any complex issue. “**Tough choices**” will be a key phrase in our work, and places focus on the fact that the heart of democratic decision-making involves the inherent need to make choices together.

Now that our elusive target is set, the rest of this workbook is focused on improving our ability to get as close as possible to that goal. In particular, we focus on how high-quality communication and engagement methods can be critical means to improve our democratic decision-making. In a diverse democracy, **high quality communication** can be defined as *communication that is supported by good information, is inclusive and respectful of a broad range of perspectives, and fosters mutual understanding across those perspectives (particularly about both common ground and key differences)*. As should be evident from the definitions, in the end, high quality communication supports improved democratic decision-making. Such communication, however, does not occur naturally and is difficult to sustain, which is precisely why organizations like the CPD and the techniques the CPD utilizes are so critical to our communities.

### Three Basic Forms of “Politics” as Democratic Decision-making

In order to situate the sort of communication and engagement processes the CPD focuses on, we will begin by comparing it to the two more dominant forms of engagement: adversarial and expert politics. We use the term “politics” here very broadly to represent the art of public decision-making, not simply formalized politics in terms of Democrats, Republicans, legislatures, and elections:

**Adversarial politics** is a perspective on politics/public decision-making that relies on having opposing sides competitively make arguments and appeals, either to a broader audience or to institutional decision-makers, in support of their particular points of view. The key players in adversarial politics are politicians, activists, lobbyists, and other professional persuaders. Adversarial politics is the primary form of politics used within partisan politics (Democrats v. Republicans), protest politics, interest group politics, and direct democracy (the use of referendum and propositions during elections that allow the people to directly vote on policies). It is assumed that within adversarial politics, people have particular preferences or interests that are stable (i.e. people may negotiate or compromise, but preferences don’t change often, politics is about competing interests working themselves out).

**Expert politics** is a perspective on politics that focuses on experts deciding how best to make decisions and solve problems. It assumes that there usually are technical answers to difficult questions; therefore public decisions should be made by experts based on rigorous empirical research and analysis. Key players are thus engineers, policy researchers and analysts, city managers, and scientists. Often the “public” is considered either too uninformed, or too uninterested to be involved in decision-making. City governments and school boards are often set up with both politicians elected by the public (the city councils or school boards that will be more or less adversarial) as well as an administrative side (headed by experts such as city managers and school superintendents).

**Deliberative politics** is deliberation is an approach to politics in which citizens, not just experts or politicians, are deeply involved in public decision making. Often working with facilitators or process experts who utilize a variety of deliberative techniques, citizens come together and consider relevant facts and values from multiple points of view; listen to one another in order to think critically about the various options before them; consider the underlying tensions, tough choices, and varied consequences inherent to addressing public problems; are willing to refine and adapt their opinions and interests; and ultimately seek to come to some conclusion for action based on a reasoned public judgment.

**All three styles have their own pros and cons**, and all three are somewhat present in any decision-making process. Currently, politics is dominated by adversarial or administrative politics, though the deliberative perspective is certainly growing. *The view of the CPD is not that all politics should be deliberative, but simply that deliberative politics should be relied on more often in our communities.* Deliberative politics, however, rely on outside “impartial” resources for support, which don’t develop naturally. The CPD is an organization focused on developing the resources for supporting deliberative processes in northern Colorado.

### **How the Three Forms of Politics Work Together in Fort Collins**

Many city governments, including Fort Collins, have a city council/city manager form of government. The mayor and city council are popularly elected, and represent the “people” as politicians. Their background could be anything (currently we have a retired businessman, a physics prof, a homemaker, a nurse, etc.). The city manager, on the other hand, is an administrative expert hired to run the city government. They tend to have a specific background and training in public administration. As issues arise, the city manager and the city staff of experts are called by the city council to study the issue and make expert recommendations to the city council, who have the decision-making power. Decisions, therefore, may be based heavily on expert analysis (which would represent administrative politics). Public input does come in at various points. The staff may host a public process, plus the public is invited to comment after the city staff has presented the options and/or their preferred solution, and of course city councilmembers get plenty of emails and phone calls from their constituents. Those constituents likely rely on adversarial politics (fighting for their perspective, mobilizing people to show up at city council, emailing the council members, or writing letters to the editor in support of their position).

The degree to which city decisions represent deliberative politics depends on the issue. At times, discussions could certainly be deliberative. City council meetings, like meetings of any legislative body, are designed to be deliberative, but often are not. Congress is supposed to be a place where representatives come together, listen to each other, work through the issue, and make a decision. To the extent that happens, it’s deliberative. Too often, however, positions are set and decisions are made far before any meeting takes place, and the meeting simply involves representatives advocating or justifying their particular positions, which means the process is much more adversarial than deliberative.

The same thing can be said for public meetings. Do the citizens show up to listen to each other and make a decision on the issue, or do they show up with a particular perspective already in mind, intent on convincing or pressuring others to think like them? More often, it’s likely the latter, thus more adversarial than deliberative.

City decisions, therefore, are some sort of mix between administrative, adversarial, and deliberative politics, with the deliberative not exactly the strongest impulse these days. Traditionally, however, in the city council/city manager form of government, the focus has been based much more on the expert side than on the public side. The form of government was actually created in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century during the Progressive Era, and was designed to reduce the power of adversarial politics—the “political machines” in city government—and increase the importance of good data and research. So in some ways, the experts decide, and then try to “sell” the decision to the public (this has been called the “DAD” method of public policymaking: decide, announce, defend). Think about this: the city manager in Fort Collins makes something like \$150,000 a year. The mayor? \$9,000, and the other city council members make \$6,000 each. So in one way, the experts seem much more valued than the politicians. However, the politicians have the decision-making power, and the city manager is technically their employee. This administrative v. adversarial tension is also changing somewhat, as public administration programs that train city managers are realizing that they need to work with the public in more productive ways, partly because “selling” tough decisions to the public can be very difficult, and

the problems cities face often allude technical solutions. So in important ways local governments are becoming more deliberative.

One last example to help clarify things. School districts are also local decision-making bodies, and they also typically have both popularly elected officials and experts. The “school board” has the ultimate decision-making power, but they are all elected volunteers. They get paid nothing. The school superintendent, however, is paid very well, and has a specific expert background focused on school administration, and he has a staff of experts to help him run the district. So just like city government, we have decision-makers and experts working together, and the public more or less engaged as well (particularly at election time, at school board meetings, and through emails, phone calls, and the newspaper when controversial issues arise).

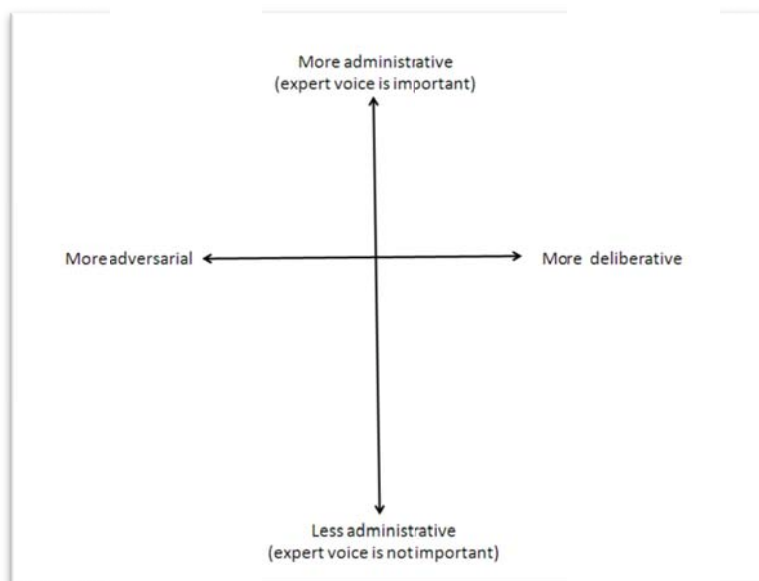
**Adversarial and deliberative politics are in some ways opposite ends of a spectrum.** Politics are rarely purely adversarial or deliberative, but rather are more or less so. Both have advantages and disadvantages, and work better or worse in different contexts and with different issues. One of the assumptions of this course, however, is that in general our politics are often *too adversarial* (we have drifted too far to that end of the spectrum), and that making our politics more deliberative will generally have positive consequences, if done well. This is a particularly important role for communication students because we can play a critical role in fostering more deliberative, high-quality communication and improve the decision-making processes in our communities and organizations. In sum, this course we will not argue that *all* politics should be deliberative—there simply isn’t enough time or resources—but rather that in many cases our politics should be *more* deliberative.

Expert politics adds a separate dimension. Both adversarial and deliberative politics can be more or less expert focused. Generally, the more important “hard data,” research, and “impartial” experts are, the more administrative the politics. Of course, some argue that research has now become politicized—we now have a whole range of “think tanks” producing research that supports particular political ideologies—which complicates matters and makes it much more important to consider your sources (more on that when we talk about research skills). We would argue that a political discussion can be both too administrative or not administrative enough. The expert voice can be too important, and the public gets shut out so their values and emotions tend not to be considered properly; conversely, deliberation relies on strong information and a lack of information can constrain a process from moving forward. In some ways the ideal is somewhere in the middle along this dimension. The three forms of politics can be visually shown in two dimensions (Figure 1) on the next page.

Politics (as public decision-making) inherently will combine to some degree three groups of key players: decision-makers, experts, and the public. These groups will more or less utilize three different perspectives on politics: adversarial, administrative, or deliberative. Democratic societies, in particular, must effectively combine all three to function well. Later on in the workbook (see venn diagram on page 30), we will discuss how “deliberative practitioners” work at the nexus of all three groups, trying to facilitate higher quality communication practices among the groups to hopefully lead to better decisions and problem-solving processes.



So what does all that have to do with this course? In this course, we will be studying some of the different processes that lead to better public decision-making and problem-solving. We will focus on the top half in the graph above, exploring ways to better practice both administrative-deliberative politics and administrative-adversarial politics.. We will equip you with a skill set that will enable you to positively contribute to your community or organization by finding a better balance between



**Figure 2:** Forms of Politics across Two Dimensions

adversarial and deliberative politics, as well as overly administrative versus hardly administrative politics. **The three particular tools we will focus on are inquiry, debate, and deliberation.** Inquiry focuses on researching issues, whereas both debate and deliberation are interactive communication processes that bring people together for specific reasons to learn from their interactions.

### Adversarial v. Deliberative Politics

Supporters of deliberative politics believe that our politics need to become more deliberative partly because of the flaws they see in adversarial politics. They argue, for example:

- Adversarial politics don't always work well to solve problems because people may be **more focused on winning rather than solving problems**. Adversarial politics also make it difficult to even focus on key problems. Issues are often chosen for their political benefit, and non-issues often get significant attention. Both sides often have certain issues that have more political benefit *as problems* to focus on to gain votes rather than problems they want solutions to (wedge issues like illegal immigration and abortion are examples). Other important issues are avoided, like the federal deficit, because they don't benefit political parties. In party politics, the ends (getting back in power) often justify means that make problem solving more difficult in the short run.
- Adversarial politics is essentially “**zero-sum**,” making anything “good” that one side does into a bad thing for the other side. This is particularly relevant in a two-party system. This is one of the reasons why good ideas that solve problems can get killed because neither side wants the other to get credit for the good idea. So when one side “wins” (gets 51% of the vote to push their ideas), the other side may work to make implementation difficult. The failure of a policy or idea is often considered good for the opposing side, if even that means a problem continues or worsens. So in some ways, Democrats were somewhat happy Bin Laden wasn't found during Bush's term in office,

and Republicans may be somewhat happy if Obama's stimulus package fails. One party's loss is the other party's gain.

- Adversarial politics often **rewards bad communication** (exaggeration, demonization, misrepresentation of motives, simplification of issues, devil figures, magic bullets, focus on blaming others, etc.) Consider the recent history of naming key pieces of legislation. Names like the DREAM Act, No Child Left Behind, and the Patriot Act eschew nuance or focus on policy in favor of polarizing symbols that no reasonable person would want to vote against. Basically, the incentive process is skewed. Political consultants that come up with a politically useful strategy often trump the policy analysts that come up with a good solution based on evidence. They often cherry-pick specific points of evidence out of context to make their appeals (again, consider most political ads). As a result, public discussion doesn't focus on the hard choices necessary in a diverse democracy. People attack positions nobody holds, and conflict is significantly increased due to misconceptions and misunderstanding.
- Adversarial politics has **negative side effects for democracy** (it increases polarization, cynicism, and apathy). Adversarial politics tends to focus much more on placing blame rather than taking accountability. As a result, it tends to decrease social capital.
- Adversarial politics **worsens the natural human impulse of egoism** (focusing on the best of your views and the worst of opposing views). Without reason to consider opposing viewpoints, people focus on convincing others of their fixed viewpoint rather than listening or understanding. This mode of persuasion sometimes responds to a straw person version of the opposition argument rather than engaging it in a meaningful way.
- Adversarial politics tends to have **a narrow role for citizens**. Citizens are simply voters or customers, or perhaps foot soldiers in the political battles. Citizens are not expected to play an active role on governance unless they are unhappy about a particular issue.

**According to its proponents, therefore, deliberative politics is better because:**

- Deliberative politics **serve as an antidote** to the negative incentives and consequences of adversarial politics. Deliberative politics tend to have many of the opposite effects of adversarial politics. They have positive effects on democratic skills and attitudes. It builds social capital. It works to develop accountability rather than placing blame. "*They need to fix the problems*" becomes "*we need to fix the problem.*"
- Deliberative politics tends to **spark collaboration** by focusing on common ground and building up. In deliberative politics, people work together to generate new ideas as they talk through the advantages and disadvantages of different perspectives. Ideally, these ideas consider the interests of multiple parties rather than just one side.
- Deliberative politics is designed to focus on the **tough choices** and dilemmas of democratic politics, and provides the tools for communities to try to work through them.
- Deliberative politics fits and encourages the growing perspective of "**democratic governance**," the assumption that the problems we face can't be solved just by government, but also can't be solved without government. Problems require a broad response that involves individuals, groups, nonprofits, agencies, the private sector, and

government from various levels. Adversarial politics tend to focus on either individual solutions (“pull yourself up by your bootstraps”) or government solutions.

- Deliberative politics can help **create new, high quality solutions**. As people from diverse backgrounds get together to discuss a common problem, new ideas emerge that can be very useful, and can go beyond what experts can come up with. And since they came up with the idea, they are much more likely to take ownership of it.
- Deliberative politics has both normative and pragmatic support. Normatively, decisions in a democracy are supposed to be based somewhat on the **consent of the governed**, and that consent should be derived from processes that are **inclusive and equal**. So deliberative politics are more legitimately democratic. Pragmatically, decisions made through deliberation usually involve a broader range of people, so they can be of a higher **quality** and are **easier to implement** (the opponents are usually not as dead set against them if they were part of the process, and the supporters usually take ownership)
- Deliberative politics **expects and supports a broader role for citizens**. Citizens are seen as collaborative problem solvers, not just voters or customers. This feature can be framed as a positive and a negative, considering deliberative politics has high expectations for citizens, and many citizens may not have the time or the interest to meet this high expectation.
- Deliberative politics works to **balance the need for experts and the need to include the public**. It balances the positivistic assumption that science will solve problems with the nihilistic assumption that no common decisions can be ethically made. It presents a “third way” between these perspectives.

### Summary of Problems with Adversarial Politics and the Deliberative Response

Issue with Adversarial Politics	Deliberative Response
Focuses on winning first, solving problems second	Focuses on problems regardless of political advantage
Most critical issues may be avoided if not politically useful	Is more free to take on toughest problems
Zero-sum nature negatively impacts the quality of arguments and makes it difficult to take on tough issues	Gets away from zero-sum frameworks to consider mutually-beneficial outcomes that serve multiple interests
Often focuses on blaming rather than taking accountability	Can move more from “them” to “us” in terms of responsibilities for solving problems
Caters to the extremes	Focused on people in the middle
Often rewards bad communication	Specifically seeks to improve the quality of public arguments and reduce the power of these negative tactics
Bad communication creates misunderstandings and polarization that makes it more difficult to address problems collaboratively	By nurturing better communication, misunderstanding and polarization decrease, and potential for collaboration increases
Avoids tough choices	Focused on tough choices
Has negative side effects for democracy and decreases social capital (increases polarization, cynicism, and apathy)	Tends to build community and a sense of empowerment
Takes advantage of/worsens the natural human impulses of <b>egoism</b> and <b>selective listening</b>	Seeks to build habits like listening and thoughtful consideration to overcome these natural impulses
A narrow role for citizens.	Has a much broader role and higher expectations for citizens

## **The Opposing View: The Case for Adversarial Politics Against Deliberative Politics**

Despite all the cons to adversarial politics and the pros to deliberative politics, there are lots of reasons why our politics are primarily adversarial.

Supporters of adversarial politics respond with a number of arguments:

### **Key Arguments against the Deliberative Perspective / for the Adversarial Perspective**

- Deliberation expects too much out of citizens (unrealistic, impractical in terms of time and level of participation).
- Adversarial politics are more interesting, and can get people more engaged.
- Most of the political structures we have are built for the adversarial model. Change would be difficult.
- Competition inspires people to work harder and be innovative.
- Certain issues also call for more adversarial politics, especially when one of the sides has very little merit but considerable power. “Civil” discussion simply supports the current ideology. In the context of gender, race, or class inequity, calls for civil discussion might simply be a means of disciplining already marginalized groups and maintaining dominate forms of communication.
- Deliberation is unnatural, while debate is natural. We all inherently seem to know how to defend our perspective and attack opposing ones.
- Deliberation is very time consuming, and requires significant resources that are not inherent to communities.
- Too often deliberation is “just talk” when action is needed.
- It is difficult to attract a broad audience to attend events, and when a broad audience is attracted, it is difficult to insure that the dominant voices don’t dominate.
- Deliberative politics requires the impartial “third party” to play important roles, such as framing and analyzing the issue fairly, facilitating the discussion, and reporting on the discussions in a productive, impartial manner. Of course, we don’t have many of those “impartial” resources, and it is difficult for people to truly be impartial, particularly within such a partisan environment. Most people in the field actually self-identify as progressive. Thus deliberation has a political bias inherent within certain processes.
- Deliberation cannot be taken to scale. It may work locally, but not likely to work on a national level due to the number of citizens that would need to be engaged. This is why we have representatives who are accountable to local districts.
- Deliberative perspectives have significant difficulty in engaging fundamentally opposed views (such as those connected to religious issues).

Above all, perhaps, supporters of adversarial politics simply argue that adversarial politics are the only realistic option. They say deliberative politics sound good but just won’t happen for a variety of reasons. They say politics will always be about competing interests, and to think otherwise is too idealistic and naïve.

**As a result, deliberative politics in some ways is an ideal that will never be fully reached, but we can certainly make our politics *more* deliberative in many ways.** The CPD, therefore, is dedicated to increasing our community’s capacity (and appetite) for high quality deliberation. As we engage with deliberative theory, we realize that we have not always have a perfectly inclusive or equitable process. We won’t get a perfectly representative room (there is unlikely to even be such a thing), or have the perfectly framed material or perfectly designed process. Nonetheless, these key values are guideposts that help us refine and improve our processes so that we can improve actually existing democracy, even if it falls short of normative ideals.

## The Age of Wicked Problems

Another way to explain the communication processes we need in our current political climate is to consider that our communities face “**wicked problems**.” A 1973 article by engineers Rittel and Webber introduced the term, which they contrasted to tame problems.<sup>2</sup> The authors argued that their engineering education was very well suited to help them handle tame problems, but they were being asked more and more to address wicked problems, which to them seemed to require a completely different skill set.

Tame problems are problems that may very well be extremely complicated and difficult to solve, but are nonetheless solvable. Getting to the moon and splitting the atom are examples. As experts work on tame problems, even in isolation, their perspectives tend to converge. Tame problems can also often be split into component parts, with teams studying each part, and then coming together to engineer a solution. Tame problems are particularly data dependent and essentially can be solved by experts armed with good data. The primary criterion to judge various solutions to tame problems is efficiency. The fewer resources utilized to solve the problem, the better. The goal becomes clear, and the only question is what are the best means to achieve the desired outcome.

Wicked problems, on the other hand, have several characteristics that distinguish them from tame problems, which make them call for a completely different process to engage them. Some of the key characteristics include:

- Wicked problems require systems-level thinking (everything is inter-connected), and cannot be split into component parts to be studied separately.
- Any solution to a wicked problem tends to create new problems. In the pursuit of a technical solution to one aspect of the problem, other aspects will be made much worse.
- The more different people study wicked problems, the more divergent their opinions on the best solution typically become. The ends, in other words, are not clear, because there are multiple ends, and many of them work against each other.
- Given this complexity, wicked problems inherently involve competing underlying values, paradoxes, and tradeoffs that can be informed by, but not resolved, by science. The more different people study wicked problems, the more divergent their opinions on the best solution typically become. Instead of finding technical solutions to pieces of the problem, people find themselves needing to make choices between different trade-offs (which part of this problem is more important, this or that). These tradeoffs can not be determined by science alone. Instead, they rely on values.
- Wicked problems often require **adaptive changes** rather than technical ones. Solutions cannot be handed down from on high, but rather must be developed and owned by those impacted. A broad range of stakeholders must be a part of any solution for it to have any long-term sustainability. Said differently, cultural change cannot be legislated, just like it's very difficult for doctors to simply dictate new behavior in patients. The patient has to

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<sup>2</sup> Rittel, Horst W.J., & Melvin M. Webber. (1973). Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences*, 4, 155-169

be part of the process to expect them to own the solution and continue to refine it as the problem itself changes.

- Addressing wicked problems necessitates effective collaboration and communication across multiple perspectives. Because of the tradeoffs inherent to wicked problems, poor communication that narrows thinking to any particular value are particularly damaging to the difficult thinking, shared understanding, and collaboration wicked problems require.
- Wicked problems often require creativity, innovation, and imagination. They can't be solved through the accumulation and application of knowledge, but rather are addressed or "tackled" through the cultivation of collective wisdom and application of sound judgment.

*In sum, wicked problems cannot be "solved."* The tensions inherent to wicked problems can certainly be balanced in better or worse ways, and in some cases the tensions can be transcended, but wicked problems will in many ways always be with us. They represent a basic reality of diverse democracies that attempt to involve a broad range of people and perspectives in decision-making, and constantly must address problems that are value laden (we will talk more about the basics of values soon).

A couple examples may help clarify the concept. Here in Northern Colorado, we are faced with the wicked problem of water scarcity. Fort Collins and the surrounding communities are essentially in a semi-arid region, getting less than 16 inches of rain a year. Our water needs are primarily met by the Poudre River, which is fed by water coming from the nearby Rocky Mountains, particularly during the snowmelt months of May and June. Due to the Poudre and an elaborate network of ditches, reservoirs, and additional water transfers from other basins, a rich agricultural community has developed in Northern Colorado over the past 100 years that relies on irrigation. As the region has grown in population and environmentalists have learned more about the health of rivers, tensions have arisen, and a wicked problem has formed. Most people in Northern Colorado respect the river, and are particularly fond of protecting nature and open space. They also would prefer rather cheap water for their homes and for their non-native "Kentucky Bluegrass" lawns. They also respect the agricultural heritage of the area, and enjoy the local food economy and the open spaces the farms and ranches provide. The farms have also been there so long that they have changed the ecosystem, and now birds and animals rely on the irrigated land as habitat to survive. The problem, of course, is that we cannot have it all. There are inherent tensions between these values, which will only be strained more and more as the population continues to increase. River advocates from groups like Save the Poudre argue that the river is already far too overworked, and that we need to start leaving more water in rather than taking more water out. Advocates for a new reservoir, designed to provide water to the new homes that will be built as the population explodes around Fort Collins in the coming decades, argue that we need to capture more of the snowmelt before it flows on down to Kansas. Both sides argue that they are on the side of agriculture, which currently uses about 85% of the water, but as the price of water goes up with growth, farms may be sold and dried up so developers can have access to their water rights (resulting in less open space and a weaker local food economy). Some argue we simply need to stop or slow growth—that the Northern Colorado eco-system is reaching capacity—but others say stopping growth is unrealistic, or that it would negatively impact the local economy and the cost of living. We want a healthy river, cheap water, local farms and open space, and economic growth, but pursuing one of these tends to go against the

others. More fundamentally, there are not technical solutions that can solve this problem. Science alone cannot resolve the problem because the science would necessarily select certain values over others. Science can build better water storage, but the river flow is likely to go down. Addressing certain aspects of the problem feed make other aspects worse.

Notice how the wicked problem can be framed in a way that each side has positive values. No one is actually *against* the river, farms, open space, a good economy, or providing reasonably priced water for households, just like no one is really against more access, quality, or low costs. The problem is not people with “bad values,” but the inherent competing values in the situation, and the fact that barring improbable innovation, the community cannot have more of one value without sacrificing another. In sum, tackling wicked problems requires a much different process of problem solving and decision making. Unfortunately, few communities or organizations have the resources or skill set for the type of communication called for to address wicked problems. *The CPD is focused on providing our community the capacity to address these sorts of problems more productively.*

## Water in Northern Colorado as a Wicked Problem

Some things we care about:

Healthy river with healthy ecosystems	Recreational opportunities	Economic vitality
Water for homes & lawns	Open space and wildlife habitat	Freedom of choice of where to live
Water for local farms	Local food economy	Low cost of living

Which is most important to us?

Image courtesy of Rose Brinks



## Identifying and Balancing Competing Values: The Heart of the Deliberative Perspective

One of the most important concepts to understand about public deliberation is how to analyze, uncover, and talk about values. Too often in our culture, we assume values are personal and thus shouldn't be a part of public discourse. However, talking about our values and working through inevitable value conflicts actually represents the essence of democratic decision making. In order to understand how values work within deliberation, let's dive into a different way of thinking about values and value arguments.

By definition, a value is “a principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable.”

**The First Rule of Values:** *When considered abstractly and one at a time, values are universally supported.* In other words, no one is against “freedom,” “compassion,” or “equality” when we just focus on the word or concept.

- Consequently, persuaders—especially politicians and advertisers—take advantage of the first rule of values and often frame issues as if only one value is relevant. By doing so, they make it appear as if the choice is between honoring a value or dishonoring it.
  - I am for families (they aren't).
  - I am for working Americans (they aren't).
  - I value freedom (they don't).
  - I want efficient government (they don't).
  - We stand for quality (they don't).

In other words, there is no real choice. These are known as “valence issues.” No one is against them as framed.

- Such values claims work deductively, serving as “**premises for persuasion**”
  - Basic Rule:* Security is valued
  - Specific Application of Rule:* Wire taps lead to more security
  - Conclusion:* Wire taps should be valued.

Like most deductive arguments, the basic rule is often unstated. As long as persuaders can place the focus on one value, the deductive logic works automatically.

- The problem is there are rarely issues in which only one value is relevant.
  - Basic Rule:* (Security is valued)
  - Specific Application of Rule:* Wire taps lead to more security
  - Conclusion:* Wire taps should be valued.
  - Basic Rule:* (Individual freedom is valued)
  - Specific Application of Rule:* Wire taps lead to less freedom
  - Conclusion:* Wire taps should not be valued.



- So, the essential question shouldn't be what values people hold, accept, or express, but rather:

1. *How values are ranked relative to each other abstractly (the “value hierarchy”)*
2. *How they are invoked and compete in specific situations (“value dilemmas”)*

“Value hierarchies are, no doubt, more important to the structure of an argument than the actual values. Most values are indeed shared by a great number of audiences, and a particular audience is characterized less by which values it accepts than by the way it grades them. . . . The reason why one feels obliged to order values in a hierarchy, regardless of the result, is that *simultaneous pursuit of these values leads to incompatibilities, [and] obliges one to make choices.*”

Chaim Perelman, *The New Rhetoric*

### Value Survey

To get a sense of the difficulty of identifying your own value hierarchy, rank the top 3 and bottom 3 values, with 1 being the most important and 17 being the least

- |                                 |                         |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| _____ A comfortable life        | _____ An exciting life  |
| _____ A sense of accomplishment | _____ A world at peace  |
| _____ A world of beauty         | _____ Equality          |
| _____ Family security           | _____ Freedom           |
| _____ Happiness                 | _____ Justice           |
| _____ Mature love               | _____ National security |
| _____ Pleasure                  | _____ Self-respect      |
| _____ Social recognition        | _____ True friendship   |
| _____ Wisdom                    |                         |

In the abstract, it can be difficult to rank order different values. Value hierarchies can become particularly difficult when two different values at the top of your hierarchy come into conflict on a particular issue. When upholding justice means sacrificing equality, as it can in the case of affirmative action, people who might otherwise believe in equality become deeply suspicious of those making equality arguments. This is a classic value dilemma.

**Value dilemmas pinpoint the important questions in life.** Most value appeals, however, seek to *hide* the dilemmas, rather than deal with them. Critical thinkers (*and deliberators*) dig deeper. They uncover the complex value dilemmas that are the real heart of the issue and try to deal with them. In the end, we must try to balance all the different values, exercise “prudence,” and find what Aristotle called the “ideal mean.” As critical thinkers, we realize that both freedom and security matter, so the issue becomes: how do we best balance these two important values? Which value should guide our decisions in this case and why? Critical thinkers may not have the answers, but they ask better questions, and ultimately contribute to better decisions.

As Michael Briand argues in *Practical Politics*: “Because the things human beings consider good are various and qualitatively distinct; because conflicts between such good things have no absolute, predetermined solution; and because to know what is best requires considering the views of others, we need to engage each other in the sort of exchange that will enable us to form sound personal and public judgments. This process of coming to a public judgment and choosing—together, as a public—is the essence of democratic politics” (42).

In summary, one of the key consequences of deliberation is that participants uncover the underlying values (and value dilemmas) inherent in public issues, and thus often learn more about the issue, themselves, and, in particular, people who think differently than them. Once people realize that the people who think differently than they do have reasons for doing so, such as focusing on an opposing value, then the conversation changes. It isn’t whether or not someone values security or individual freedom, but rather how a community can best decide to balance the important values. Such a conversation is much more difficult, but it also much more rewarding and realistic.

Values dilemmas essentially create “**tough choices**” that diverse communities must address. These tough choices can be framed and uncovered in a variety of ways. They tend to come in one of four forms:

- **We can’t have more of something we want without also having more of something we don’t want.** (like more democracy without more inefficiency, or more access to health care without higher costs)
- **We can’t have more of something we want without also having less of something we like.** (like more economic equality without less economic freedom, or more access to health care without lower quality and convenience)
- **We can’t have less of something we don’t want without also having more of something we don’t want.** (like less fraud and abuse without more monitoring of behavior, or less denying of claims based on pre-existing conditions without higher premiums for all)
- **We can’t have less of something we don’t want without also having less of something we like.** (like less bureaucracy or government costs without less oversight, assessment, and information, or less costs of drugs without less money for research and development for new drugs)

Going back to adversarial, administrative, and deliberative politics, one of the most important differences between the three is how they address value dilemmas/tough choices. Administrative/expert politics often avoid them altogether because they don’t fit the expert model that is dominated by empirical concerns. You can’t see or count values. Adversarial politics often discusses values, but often does so in ways that simplifies issues and misrepresents opposing views. They avoid value conflicts, and make things seem like there is no actual tension.

Deliberative politics, on the other hand, is particularly focused on uncovering, understanding, and sparking productive discussion about tough choices and value dilemmas. To further explain this process, we’ll turn to Daniel Yankelovich’s work on public judgment.

## **Deliberation and Public Judgment: Helping Communities “Work Through” Tough Issues**

In the “Key Aspects” reading, you heard about the concept of public judgment. Since it is so important to understanding the mission of the CPD, and clearly tied to identifying and balancing competing values, we’ll expand on it a bit here. Daniel Yankelovich’s work focuses on public opinion. He is particularly focused on distinguishing “good” vs “bad” public opinion, and why public opinion seemed to change so easily on certain issues but not with others. From that research, he developed the distinction between basic **public opinion (PO)** and **public judgment (PJ)**, and the process that is necessary to move from to the other. PO is generally of low quality, primarily because it represents a simplistic surface opinion that doesn’t fully consider opposing views, underlying values, possible alternatives or potential consequences. Due to these factors, PO tends to be rather inconsistent. If questions are asked a different way or at a later time, answers often change. All most public opinion polls do is discover and pass on this low quality PO (“Do you support Proposal X? Yes or No”).

Public judgment, on the other hand, represents a form of public opinion that is much more refined and reliable. **PJ is a refined form of PO after people have considered opposing views, underlying values, possible alternatives, and potential consequences.** As a result, PJ doesn’t tend to change if people ask the question in different ways or at different times. Yankelovich’s major concern was that we have great difficulty, both as individuals and a society, moving from PO to PJ, for a number of reasons:

- (1) Moving from PO to PJ requires us to “work through” tough choices, which we naturally seek to avoid (again, we like things to be easy)
- (2) Our society relies heavily on experts and technical solutions, which make it easier for us to avoid working through. Instead of making sacrifices or tough choices, we believe/expect/hope/wait for experts to figure it out.
- (3) Our public institutions (the media, education, and political system), do not do a good job of helping us work through issues, and often make it much harder to do so.

Yankelovich explained that moving from PO to PJ is a process that moves through three broad stages as shown on the next page (Figure 2).

The problem is that we tend to do stage one, skip stage two, and then focus on stage three, which contributes to the low quality of stage 3. Our media naturally does a good job with Stage 1, bringing various issues into our consciousness, whether through newspaper editorials, *20/20* or *Nightline* reports, mass-forwarded emails, the *Drudge Report*, or very special episodes of *Dawson’s Creek*. We also have plenty of institutions, people, and organizations that serve as advocates that believe they are right, that function primarily at Stage 3 (they believe they have “worked through” the issue and thus focus on expressing their resolved opinion and convincing others of its rightness). Our many primary modes of communication—television, internet, email, social marketing, bumper stickers, etc.—work very well for Stages 1 and 3, because all you really need for Stages 1 and 3 is one-way communication, from one to the masses. You don’t need interaction.



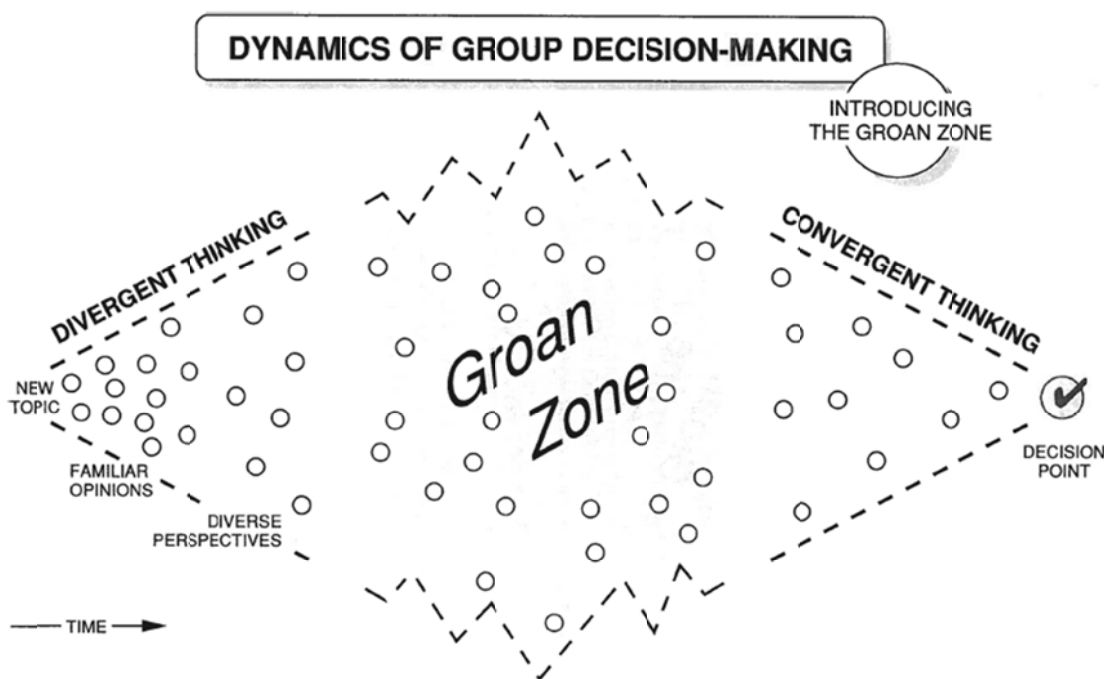
Figure 2: Moving from Public Opinion to Public Judgment

Stage 2, however, requires **interaction**. People need to learn from each other, especially in situations when they are working from a strong base of good information. They need to struggle with the issue and the underlying conflicting values. Experts can't work through for us, because again there are no technical solutions they can offer (they can, however, obviously be helpful during the process). As you've probably gathered at this point, public deliberation is particularly focused on Stage 2, and a critical component to helping people work through issues is identifying the tough choices and sparking productive conversations about them, which is at the heart of the work of the CPD.

## Kaner's Diamond of Participatory Decision-Making

Same Kaner's Diamond of Participatory Decision-Making is a useful concept to think about a wide range of issues relevant to deliberative problem solving. Kaner's book, *The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* is one of the best basic facilitations book available. He sets up the book arguing for the importance of changing the way groups make decisions, particularly in terms of shifting from "conventional" to "participatory" groups. He argues that at their best, groups are critical to good decision-making and problem solving, but unfortunately, groups are rarely at their best. Left to typical group actions, groups often avoid necessary conflict and provoke unnecessary conflict, spur exaggerations, nurture misinformation, shut out voices, spark group think, and ultimately lead to poor decisions with weak ownership and accountability.

Kaner's diamond helps us think about what needs to be done to insure better group decisions, as well as helping us realizing getting the best out of groups isn't easy. Good process and high quality facilitation becomes critical at multiple points on the diamond. He developed the diamond for organizational decision-making, but it maps very well onto deliberative democracy, particularly Yankelovich's ideas of moving from public opinion to public judgment.



Kaner's model essentially has three stages, culminating in a decision-point. Each stage essentially requires a different set of processes to help groups moves through the stage as well as possible.

**Stage 1 -- Divergent Thinking:** Early on, processes need to focus on sparking divergent opinions. Far too often, voices are shut down too early, or only the articulate and confident are heard. Many, many very good ideas die or are never heard simply because the person that came up with them were either quiet, intimidated, or inarticulate. Good facilitation overcomes these barriers with good process and interventions that help get multiple voices out, ensures a safe

environment, and helps people to articulate their ideas. Ideas should be judged by the quality of the idea, not the presentation skills of the person. Indeed, most groups do not have enough divergent thinking, because as soon as people start diverging, they are cut off. People want the meeting to end, so a false consensus may arise as people don't want to share their thoughts because it goes against the seemingly unanimous consensus. Of course, later when the idea fails miserably, everyone suddenly speaks up and explains that they knew it was a bad idea, but everyone else seemed to like it so they kept quiet. A number of techniques help support divergent thinking, such as brainstorming, the use of writing before talking, breaking up into smaller groups, the use of anonymity, etc.

**Stage 2 -- The Groan Zone:** With good divergent thinking comes the difficulty of managing numerous ideas and opinions, which often places groups in the “groan zone.” So you’ve passed the barrier of false consensus, but now are in the danger zone of false polarization if you don’t handle the discussion well at this stage. Good deliberative framing that lays out tradeoffs and tensions can help, as well as good facilitation that helps create shared understanding and integration of new ideas that get people past the frustration. Getting past the groan zone can take time, however, and moving too quickly to resolution or simply ending early can be very problematic.

**Stage 3 – Convergent thinking** – If you have done a good job with divergent thinking and made it through the groan zone, then you need processes that help the group begin to move toward a decision. That means clarifying, consolidating, refining, and prioritizing. Without quality convergent thinking, groups get stuck in the groan zone (i.e. paralysis by analysis). Various process points help with these issues, such as voting mechanism through dots or “clickers,” developing and applying various criteria to judge different ideas, etc.

**Stage 4 – Decision point** – Many processes may be primarily about educating participants or gathering a sense of the way people talk about the issue, therefore decision points may not be necessary. But in other situations, decisions are necessary. Such decision may be made by some sort of authority after some consideration of the discussion, or may be made by the group through a variety of decision rules such as consensus, supermajority, majority rule, etc. Being clear from the beginning of a process of what the end purpose and procedure is a critical aspect of any decision-making process.

Unfortunately, much of our political communication is focused on divergent opinion and decision points, providing little support for working through the groan zone or convergent thinking. Adversarial politics in particular may lead to a robust divergence of opinions as multiple voices are heard and a vibrant marketplace of ideas develop, but it does not provide mechanisms for all those various voices to interact in productive ways. Said differently, our engagement systems right now offer many ways for people to express their opinions (speaking at city council meetings, letters to the editor, Facebook posts, bumper stickers, etc.) and very few ways to talk to other people or to work together to prioritize, clarify, refine, etc. Our politicians in particular get to clarify their positions, then vote. There is no opportunity for real learning or engagement before the vote, and the fact that the vote is so consequential and a zero-sum exercise, there are significant incentives for miscommunication and the avoidance of genuine interaction before the vote. As a result, the decision point is reached prematurely, and decisions are perceived to be unsustainable or illegitimate.

## The Deliberative Democracy “Movement”

Deliberative democracy has become an international “grassroots phenomenon.” The National Coalition of Dialogue and Deliberation, an umbrella organization for practitioners within the movement, now boasts hundreds of affiliated organizations, and hosts a website visited by 1,200 people each day. Local organizations throughout the world are all bringing communities together and hosting forums utilizing a variety of techniques, often working closely with lawmakers in the process. Perhaps most importantly, the deliberative turn has seemingly reached the institutional level. As evidenced by new publications and programs by organizations such as the League of Cities, the National Civic League, National Conference of State Legislatures, the School Board Association, and the Institute of Local Government, local and state lawmakers have begun to not only consider the potential of deliberative initiatives, but have actually in some cases taken the lead in calling for them (see the resources page at the end of the workbook for examples). This institutional push has particularly been strong outside of the United States, culminating with the publication of the *Democratic Dialogue – A Handbook for Practitioners*, a handbook published jointly by the United Nations Development Programme, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Organization of American States, and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) to assist governments, social organizations, institutions and other local actors.

The “movement” began and thrives outside of academia—see Part 6 of this book for some of the organizations involved and resources available, but is now becoming more and more a topic of interest across traditional interdisciplinary lines in our universities. The chart below shows the different ways universities have begun to interact with the broader movement:

**Deliberation in the disciplines**



## Deliberative Practice Goes by Many Names

The field, like many interdisciplinary fields, has a bit of an issue with terminology. Different fields tend to use different words for deliberative work, but all have a common core tied to improving communication processes, engaging broad audiences, and facilitating better interactions between the public, experts, and decision-makers in order to solve problems better. Some of the terms that are used include:

- Deliberation
- Public Deliberation
- Deliberative democracy
- Collaborative problem-solving
- Community problem-solving
- Participatory democracy
- Participatory decision-making
- Multi-stakeholder dispute resolution
- Public participation
- Democratic governance
- Collaborative governance
- Organic or community politics
- Consensus building processes

Some of the terms focus more on how governments can work better with the public, and some focus on how the public can work better on its own, but, again, all deal in some way with the various intersections between the public, experts, and decision-makers.

## Additional Views of Deliberation

Small group communication scholar John Gastil explains that deliberation occurs when people carefully examine a problem and arrive at a well-reasoned solution after a period of inclusive, respectful consideration of diverse points of view.

As outlined by Gastil in his *Political Communication and Deliberation*, the deliberative perspective includes both analytical and social aspects. Analytical aspects focus on the process itself, while the social aspects focus on broader normative values tied to deep commitments to democracy and inclusion, which have both philosophical and pragmatic support.

<b>Analytic Process of Deliberation</b>
Create a solid information base
Prioritize the key values at stake
Identify a broad range of solutions
Weigh the pros, cons, and tradeoffs among solutions
Make the best decision possible
<b>Social Process of Deliberation</b>
Adequately distribute speaking opportunities
Ensure mutual comprehension
Consider other ideas and experiences
Respect other participants

All the various techniques related to the deliberative perspective seek to incorporate these aspects in some ways. Some may involve the public in all the various steps of the analytic process, and some may address some of the steps on their own beforehand and bring the public in at later steps (particularly for the weighing of pros, cons, and tradeoffs among solutions).



## **Additional Views of Deliberation (continued)**

**Michael Briand's definition** (*Practical Politics*) - Deliberation is the process of identifying, assessing, and weighing different motivating beliefs and the reasons that support them in order to rank those beliefs. The transformation of (individual) opinions into a shared (public) judgment through (collective) deliberation.

### **Definition from the West Virginia Center for Public Life:**

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. Instead, such situations require a range of responses resulting from multiple approaches to the issue.

### **Weigh the costs and consequences of each approach**

Because decisions about community issues will affect such a diversity of people, deliberation encourages participants to fully examine the implications of any given approach. Every approach has pros and cons. Every approach has benefits and drawbacks. Every 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 and increased understanding of the values, stories and perspectives of other participants. 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.

## Deliberation is Distinct from Debate

Debate is one of the primary communication tools used by individuals and communities to deal with public policy issues. Our political system relies primarily on debate. Our media system tends to focus on debate. Competitive debate has enjoyed a long tradition in academia, both in high schools and universities. Debate is natural to humans.

Debate can also be very valuable to a community when used well. Debate can clarify positions, help identify which arguments have strong support and which do not, and can increase understanding of difficult issues. Unfortunately, however, debate can also have negative consequences when used poorly, and, in our modern political climate, political advocates often use debate not to shed light on perspectives, but gain political advantages and manipulate audiences. Modern “debaters” rarely truly interact with each other, but rather are targeting particular audiences with one-way message. The chart below shows some of the key distinctions between debate and deliberation, and the chart on the follow page adds additional distinctions, as well as adding “dialogue” to the fray.

DEBATE	DELIBERATION
Seeks to expose weaknesses in another position	Searches for strengths in another position
Tries to highlight differences and distinguish positions	Searches for shared concerns and genuine tensions
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	Expects a willingness to change opinion
Defends initial solutions	Open to the possibility of better solutions and innovative ideas
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.

## Characteristics of Debate, Dialogue, and Deliberation

Debate	Dialogue	Deliberation
Contest Compete Argue Promote opinion Seek majority Persuade Dig in Tightly structured Express Usually fast Clarifies Majoritarian	Explore Exchange Discuss Build relationships Understand all Seek understanding Reach across Loosely structured Listen Usually slow Clarifies Nondecisive / non-decisional	Choose Weigh Decide Make decisions Seek overlap Seek wisdom/judgment Framed to make choices Listen Usually slow Clarifies Complementary

Differences between deliberation and dialogue or polite conversations may be difficult to see. The crucial difference is that dialogue is conversation focused on increasing understanding. Deliberation may include dialogue, but it goes further. Deliberation is conversation to make a **choice** about how to **act** together. Often, however, audiences are not ready to deliberate because there is a fundamental lack of understanding and trust. In such cases, dialogue would be more productive. The critical point is to understand which problem situations are best addressed by debate, which are best addressed by dialogue, and which are ready for deliberation.

## The Need for Deliberation: Improving the Conversation

**The issue:** We live in a (at least somewhat) democratic society during a time when individualism and diversity are championed, polarization and apathy are rampant, and serious problems exist. The current system, for a variety of reasons, does not seem up to the task. The current system has too often left us with a polarized politics that can cripple democracy:

Polarized Politics			
The Left According to the Right	The Left According to the Left	The Right According to the Right	The Right According to the Left
Apologists and bleeding hearts	Blame racism and structure of society	Blame individual behavior and culture pathologies	Racists
Tax and spend money wasters	Progressive agenda (education, labor, human capital)	Anti-taxes, Balance Budget	Cater to rich, anti-progressive, anti-education
Anti-religious Relativists, pagans, secular humanists bent on destroying the world	Pro-Multiculturalism Pluralism, Inclusion, open-minded	Pro-Religion Family Values	Pro-Dogma Anti-minority, Racists, Exclusion, Patriarchal
Anti-business, Eco-Nazis	Pro-Environment	Pro-Business	Anti-environment
Anti-responsibility, anti-work, blame anyone but the victim	Pro-welfare state, Compassion, Equality	Anti-welfare, Pro-work	Anti-poor, racist, blame the victim oppressors
Identity politics, entitlement-seekers, reverse discriminators	Anti-racial inequality Pro-affirmative action	Justice, color-blind Anti-affirmative action	Racist, anti-minority
Pro-abortion baby killers	Pro-Choice	Pro-Life, Anti-abortion	Pro-government regulation of female body
Relativists	Inclusion (pro-homosexual rights)	Don't ask don't tell (anti-homosexual rights)	Homophobic
Femi-Nazis, anti-family	Pro-feminism	Family values	Anti-female chauvinists

Too often, our adversarial-based political system causes—some would say purposefully—misunderstandings and misperceptions about opposing perspectives. They do so because strategically such tactics can be effective in terms of winning votes, securing financial backing, and gaining support for policies. As a result, opposing perspectives often exist on the outer columns in the chart above.

Deliberative politics, as well as more dialogue focused processes, works to increase understanding between opposing perspectives so that they are dealing with actual differences, not caricatures of each other. If done well, dialogue and deliberation can help those with opposing perspective to exist within the middle two columns, where their differences are still significant, but are much more manageable and realistic.

Early theoretical discussions of deliberation often focused on the need to find or develop consensus, and assumed such a consensus could be developed or even was already there and just needed to be discovered. Deliberative practitioners tend not to focus on consensus, particularly because seeking consensus can often hide important differences and silence minority voices. Rather than consensus, deliberative practitioners tend to use words like collaboration, confluence, and convergence.

## No Easy Road - Barriers to the Deliberative Model

**Human psychology** – we want things simple, we don't want to deal with tough choices

**Group norms** – left to their own, groups tends toward the extreme

**Political institutions** – our two-party system supports a zero-sum nature to political decision-making, making deliberative perspectives a tough fit

**Lack of time** – deliberation takes time to do well

**Lack of citizen interest** – deliberation requires citizens to be involved and engaged

**Lack of true communities** – people move often now, and geographic communities are not as important as they used to be

**Rampant cynicism and apathy** – which creates lack of understanding and trust between perspectives

**Inability to find consensus, compromise** – difficult issues are tough, so even with deliberation, some sort of vote or leap is likely necessary

**Inherent unequal power relationships** – deliberation needs equality of voice, but access to info, media, and time is significantly unequal

**Issues too complicated** – often even good conversations can get bogged down in details and lead to “paralysis by analysis”

**Lack of practice talking to people with whom we disagree** – we really are often teaching people a whole new skill

**Lack of public places to come together to deliberate** – communities are much more spread out now, without natural locations for citizens to gather together

**Lack of interest from decision-makers** – some react well, but many are programmed to avoid citizen engagement (to them, citizen engagement = listening to angry complaints or unrealistic expectations)

## The good news

- There are a growing number of examples of “communities that work”
- There are a growing number of people and organizations devoted to deliberation
- Many individuals are ready for something different (apathy can be overcome)
- Evidence is showing it is working and has value
- Deliberation is self-reinforcing and habit forming. The more people do it, the better they become and the more they want their communities to use it more often.

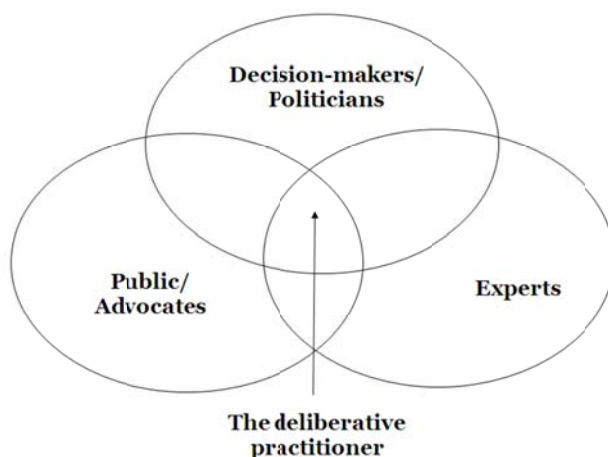
“Deliberation requires *safe places* for citizens to come together, *good and fair information* to help structure the conversation, and *skilled facilitators* to guide the deliberative process. The Center is dedicated to providing these three key ingredients to Northern Colorado.” - CPD Pamphlet

“What is needed at the outset is a workably small group of citizens who are – and whose fellow citizens will view them as – committed to the principles of inclusion, comprehension, deliberation, cooperation, and realism.” - Michael Briand, *Practical Politics*, p. 86

## The Deliberative Perspective and the Rhetorics of Public Policy

Another way of thinking about our work is as a process of inquiry focused on keeping the democratic conversation going and facilitating better decision making. Democracy, particularly a diverse democracy, requires high quality communication across multiple perspectives and types of stakeholders in order to function well. Unfortunately, by most accounts, our current political culture does not support such communication.

In particular, democracy requires productive interaction between three broad entities – the public, experts, and political decision-makers. Different forms of politics offer various perspectives on how these three groups interact, often favoring particular groups. Any perspective that doesn't have a significant role for each will be limited.



The deliberative perspective certainly favors increasing the role of the public, but nonetheless focuses more on the interactions between the three entities. Deliberative practitioners, therefore, operate in the intersection of the three groups, working in some ways as translators and mediators, so that the three groups can work together more productively and collaboratively.

The following pages explore these intersections more.

On the next three pages, the notion of deliberative inquiry is examined, which presents the various tasks that deliberative practitioners seek to accomplish as they work in between these three groups to improve the democratic conversation.

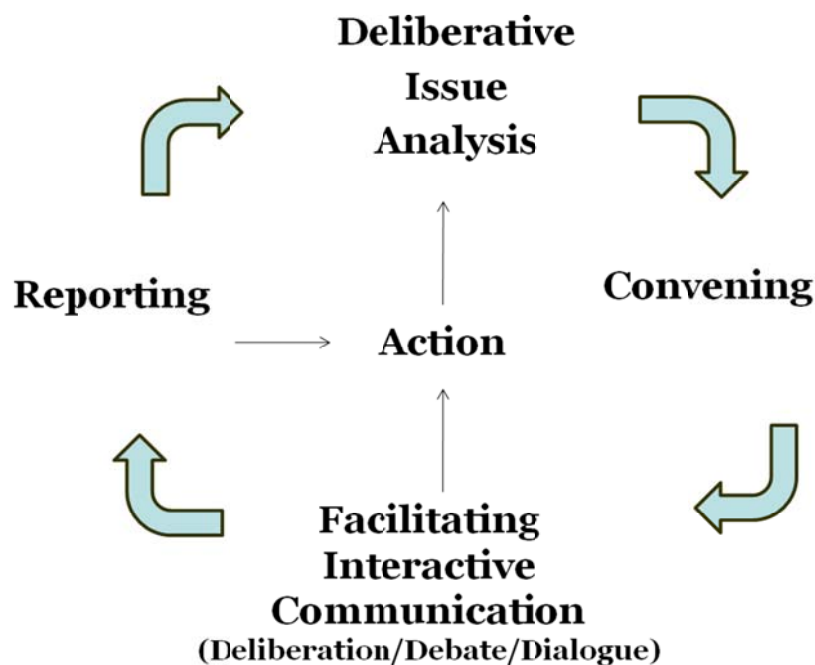
Page 34 then focuses on the relationship between the public and political decision-makers, comparing traditional notions of citizen involvement with those imagined by the deliberative perspective.

Page 35 then turns to the role of experts in public policy, and compare the traditional role of experts with those supported by deliberative practitioners.

## Deliberative Inquiry

High quality deliberation relies on a specific type of research or inquiry entitled “deliberative inquiry.” Overall, deliberative inquiry is focused on helping a community or organization make better decisions and solve problems more effectively and democratically. Deliberative inquirers seek to find as much relevant information from all different sides of an issue, and then present it all in a way that helps others work through that issue, consider their choices and their implications, and ultimately make better decisions. Deliberative inquiry thus combines multiple forms of information, including information from experts, community leaders, advocacy groups, everyday folks, politicians and powerholders, etc. As the cycle of deliberative inquiry shows, however, deliberative inquiry also goes beyond simply researching opposing views, and often incorporates engaging people interactively on the issues, above all the general public. Deliberative inquiry involves getting people together across perspectives to talk in innovative ways about the issue, and thus combines research-based inquiry (in terms of examining texts) with interactive inquiry that brings people together in particular, purposeful ways and captures those interactions. These interactions are critical because of the ability of the people to produce new public knowledge that often contributes to problem-solving.

### The Cycle of Deliberative Inquiry





## **The Cycle of Deliberative Inquiry: The Four Key Tasks of Deliberative Practice**

The cycle of deliberative inquiry highlights the four key tasks of deliberative practice. The overall idea here is that each time a full cycle is exercised well—i.e. high quality deliberation is practiced—the quality of a community’s conversation about a particular issue is improved. All four tasks are critical.

The word “inquiry” focuses on the notion of the quest for better information or wisdom. Too often, in our dominant political systems, information is used as ammunition rather than enlightenment. Too few are truly utilizing a process of inquiry and instead are “researching” for information that supports positions already held. Deliberative inquiry, on the other hand, focuses on asking good questions and gathering useful information to support better decision-making and problem-solving, regardless of the position(s) supported. The four tasks of deliberative inquiry are:

1. **Deliberative issue analysis:** Involves researching issues from an impartial perspective to better understand the issue and to ultimately provide the community with material to structure productive deliberation. Deliberative events often utilize a “backgrounder” or “discussion guide” that provides an overall structure to the event. NIF uses the terms “naming” and “framing” to describe the work often accomplished during this task.
2. **Convening:** High-quality deliberation relies on diverse audiences, thus one of the key skills of deliberative practitioners is to develop and attract broad audiences to events to be part of the discussion. Individual meetings may call for particular audiences (such as experts or specific stakeholders) or for more of a general public audience.
3. **Facilitating interactive communication:** Deliberative inquiry relies on key communication processes that can get the most out of a group of diverse participants coming together to discuss a key issue and move the discussion forward. “Interactive communication” here means communication that actually involves people going back and forth speaking and listening (unlike one-way communication which involves one side speaking and the other listening, such as through media, or at certain public meetings where participants can approach the microphone one at a time to express their opinion to an audience without much, if any, interaction). Debate, deliberation, and dialogue are all forms of interactive communication, and, depending on the situation, each has the potential to improve the conversation. Once again, skilled, impartial facilitators and notetakers are critical to achieving the potential of any interactive communication process.
4. **Reporting:** Lastly, deliberation needs skilled, impartial analysts to utilize the information captured at events to better inform the decision-making process, so that the hard work completed by the participants in the forum can be shared more broadly in the community. Those reports then feed back into the deliberative analysis, to improve the quality of any subsequent deliberative events on that topic.

## Basic Features of Scientific, Strategic, and Deliberative Inquiry

Unfortunately, most inquiry on public issues is not purposefully deliberative. Most inquiry is either scientific or strategic. **Scientific inquiry** is a particular sort of inquiry that focuses on rigorously discovering valid information about empirical (i.e. observable and generally quantifiable) issues. It is very useful, but limited in important ways because it tends to avoid values and emotions, since such things are not observable. **Strategic inquiry** is inquiry that focuses on developing evidence or arguments for a particular pre-set point of view, and thus politicizes the inquiry process. Deliberative inquiry seeks to avoid the problems and limitations of these other forms, while utilizing their best features.

	Scientific Inquiry	Strategic Inquiry	Deliberative Inquiry
Overall goal	Discovery of valid information	Supporting particular points of view, winning arguments	Improving public decision-making and problem solving, clarifying choices and their consequences
Primary Question	What is?	What evidence is available for my point of view? (or against the other side)	What should we do? What are our choices and their implications?
Primary method	Scientific observation	Strategic research or invention <sup>1</sup>	Open ended research and facilitation of interactive communication
Facts and fact questions	Focus of the work, seeking consensus	Utilized as ammunition in the broader debate	Used as a common base to start from, but focus is often more on values
Tough choices and tradeoffs	Often bracketed and avoided due to unscientific nature	Often avoided or framed strategically	Often the focus of the research (to uncover and assist communities to work through them)
Common ground	Scientifically valid facts are common ground	Utilized if useful, often ignored, misrepresented, or manufactured	Issues are framed to start at a common point, and process seeks to build additional broad support
Primary audience	Narrow, specific expertise is required to be a part of the conversation, at times targeted to government officials, rarely to the public	Strategic, audience often limited in terms of those that already agree or target audience in the middle, rarely seriously address opposing views	Broad, seeks to connect public, government, and expert sources in the conversation
Scope of involved stakeholders in the analysis and solutions	More descriptive than proscriptive, so may avoid specific suggestions for solutions. When offered, solutions may be narrowly defined in terms of policy changes privileging governmental solutions.	Often limited by strategic goals and use of blame game or "magic bullet" solutions. Often specifically seek to exclude particular audiences that are opposed.	Broad, based on the notion of democratic governance and inclusion, considers all sort of potential actors (individuals, nonprofits, businesses, groups, and governments at all levels)

<sup>1</sup> Invention is a term used by rhetorical scholars, and involves the development of arguments. It does not imply the fabrication of evidence, but rather the development of a broad range of arguments in support of a proposition. Aristotle, for example, distinguished between "artistic" proofs, which involved the use of tropes or commonplaces to create arguments (such as metaphors, examples, narratives, maxims, etc.), and inartistic proofs, which primarily involved the use of outside evidence such as testimony.

## Democratic Governance v. Traditional Citizen Involvement

As outlined in the “Key aspects” section, deliberative democracy not only relies on deliberation more than debate, but it also relies on a shift of perspective in terms of the role of government and the role of citizens. Folks from the National League of Cities Collaborative Governance panel, for example, focus on the differences between “traditional citizen involvement” and “democratic governance.”

	<b>Traditional citizen involvement</b>	<b>Democratic governance</b>
<b>Who is responsible for solving public problems?</b>	Governments	Whole community - governments, citizens, businesses, community organizations of all kinds.
<b>What are the criteria for “good government?”</b>	Openness and efficiency	Ability to work with the public - identifying priorities, marshalling a variety of resources, achieving tangible changes, and reporting on your progress.
<b>How should governments recruit citizens?</b>	Public officials call meetings, use media for outreach	Proactive, network-based recruitment by governments and other groups, reaching large numbers and different kinds of people
<b>How should issues be discussed?</b>	Public officials ‘sell’ the policy they support; citizens decide whether to buy	basic background information provided, range of views laid on the table; chance to connect personal experience to policy debate
<b>How should government treat citizen self-interest?</b>	Citizen self-interest is static; we can’t expect people to change their minds	Citizen interests are malleable, and can be changed through information, exposure to others with different views
<b>What is the civic duty of the average citizen?</b>	Stay informed, vote, and obey the law	Become more informed, take part in dialogue, make decisions, take action
<b>When should citizens be involved in public life?</b>	Whenever there is a big crisis, a big decision to be made, or some other specific reason	All the time – when there is a range of reasons to participate, people stay involved
<b>Who governs?</b>	Public officials, in the name of the electorate	Public officials, public employees, community organizations, citizens – all with roles and responsibilities that are distinct but complementary

Source: *Changing the Way We Govern: Building Democratic Governance in Your Community*, a publication of the National League of Cities. Available online at their website: [www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org)

**\*\* Kaner’s *Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* makes similar distinctions between “Participatory” and “Conventional” groups and between “Either/Or” and “Both/And” mindsets. See *Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*, 2007.**

## **The Traditional “Expert Information” Model Vs. The New Deliberative Model**

(developed from work by Daniel Yankelovich and Viewpoint Learning -- <http://www.viewpointlearning.com/>)

### **The Traditional “Expert Information” Model (i.e. expert politics)**

- Favored by experts, the government and the press
- Top-down and one-way
- The public is expected to learn, not contribute
- Focuses on information rather than values
- Focuses on creating awareness
- Assumes awareness leads to resolution
- Assumes that a *well-informed* public is the “Holy Grail” of democracy

### **A Nest of Flawed Assumptions**

The traditional model falsely assumes that...

- Information is the key to public learning
- People make up their minds once they receive relevant information
- The public interprets information in the same way that experts do
- Experts know what information the public needs and how to convey it
- Good data will overcome the polarized nature of our political culture
- Experts who debate their opposing views help the public to learn
- Technology can compensate for deficiencies in the model
- There is no need to base the model on how people actually make hard choices

**CONCLUSION: THE TRADITIONAL EXPERT MODEL WORKS ONLY WHEN THERE ARE NO HARD CHOICES TO MAKE AND ONE-WAY COMMUNICATION IS SUFFICIENT**

As we discussed earlier (p. 18-19), Yankelovich argued that good opinion formation requires an interactive, three-stage process. To facilitate that, he developed “**Choice-work**” **Dialogues** a technique similar to the NIF style forums we focus on:

- Choice-work dialogues are designed to help people work through the hard choices phase
- This is where issues typically bog down and strong feelings break out
- When possible, people avoid hard choices, preferring to take refuge in wishful thinking
- In this stage confront painful trade-offs and conflicting values
- Dialogue is the most efficient method for moving people through this stage
- Choice-work Dialogues attempt to compress into a single day a process that might otherwise stretch over months and years.

## What does deliberation do?

### Significant Findings from Studies of Public Deliberation

For 25 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.

Sam Kaner's work on participatory decision-making—which is similar to deliberative democracy but more focused on organizational decision-making rather than community decision-making—argues that **participatory processes result in stronger individuals, stronger groups, and stronger agreements**. Source: *Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*, 2007.

### The Goals and Consequences of Deliberation

There are many potential outcomes to deliberation, with each often feeding into others (see chart on following page). Working from the literature on the impacts of deliberation, the CPD has developed a set of key goals for deliberative practitioners to target in their projects. Conveners of deliberative events should think through which particular goals they hope to achieve, and then design the event so that those goals can be best achieved. All the goals feed into the final goal, which is to improve the community's capacity for problem-solving. Deliberative events, therefore, should always be considered in a dual form: with a focus on the specific issue being addressed, as well as the long term capacity of the community in general.

#### Issue Learning:

- Deliberators learn about different perspectives on the issue, which expands and enriches their own perspective, and decreases misconceptions across perspectives.

- Deliberators alter their attitudes about the issue—they see that it’s not as simple, straightforward, or clear-cut as they had thought, or, conversely, they may feel it’s less complicated and more resolvable than they had thought.
- Deliberators realize the underlying values and tensions to opposing positions, and therefore can identify common ground upon which they can begin shaping a solution, or upon which they can build a stronger working relationship with those with which they disagree.
- Deliberators realize that all potential solutions have pros and cons, and that we cannot simply wait for the perfect solution. In other words, criticizing solutions is not enough.

#### **Improved Democratic Attitudes:**

- Deliberators learn about other people, especially those with different backgrounds, outlooks, and perspectives. They discover that people who initially seem misguided or unreasonable usually mean well and have good reasons for their beliefs; they are neither irrational nor intent on making trouble. As a result, deliberators develop appreciation for and confidence in their fellow citizens, and thus polarization is reduced.
- Deliberators recognize that people’s individual lives and interests are connected, and thus often expand their sense of community, and find a better balance between their individual self-interest and the interests of others in the community.
- Deliberators develop a stronger sense of personal responsibility for contributing to the conduct of the public’s business, as well as a stronger sense that their contribution will be worthwhile and impactful (i.e. a sense of personal efficacy and empowerment).
- Deliberators often reduce their sense of apathy, cynicism, and frustration.

#### **Improved Democratic Skills and Knowledge:**

- Deliberators learn how to listen better, and how to ask good questions.
- By practicing key democratic/civic/political acts such as critical thinking, deep listening and comprehension, public speaking, forming public judgments, etc., deliberators sharpen the skills necessary for a vibrant democratic community.
- Deliberators develop collaborative skills to complement the mostly adversarial skills they learn in our political culture.
- The more citizens deliberate well, the higher the quality of their deliberations, and the more likely they are to turn to deliberation in the face of public problems. In other words, they develop deliberation as a civic habit.

#### **Community action**

- Deliberators may choose to act individually or in groups in ways that contribute to solving a problem or resolving an issue (“complementary action”). They may join a community organization working on the issue, begin a new community organization, or otherwise change their own behavior in response to their deliberative experience.
- Well-planned deliberative projects help bring community silos together on common issues, helping the community shift from focusing on symptoms of problems to focusing upon systemic change and sparking direct action, visions/strategies to bring about change.

- Deliberators may choose to continue expanding and developing their community's "public voice" (e.g., by meeting again, initiating new forums, etc.), in the process establishing new civic relationships and goodwill ("civic capital").
- Deliberators take more ownership of problems ("our" problems versus "their" problem or the government's responsibility)

### **Institutional decision-making**

- Deliberations may be tied directly into institutional decision-makers that take the results of the deliberations seriously in implementing or changing policies.
- Deliberators may be able to take direct action through their participation in the work of official bodies such as municipal councils, boards, and commissions.
- Information captured at deliberative events may be used by decision-makers to improve the quality of their decisions.
- Projects that involve getting citizen input through more deliberative processes are more likely to get beyond the usual suspects and "time worn solutions" to provide higher quality information to decision-makers.
- The information pulled from deliberative forums is generally of much higher quality than information from opinion polls or surveys. Rather than simply presenting surface opinions, reports from deliberative forums represent public views after they have worked through the issue with fellow citizens, and thus is much more valuable to decision-makers who inherently are faced with the tough choices.

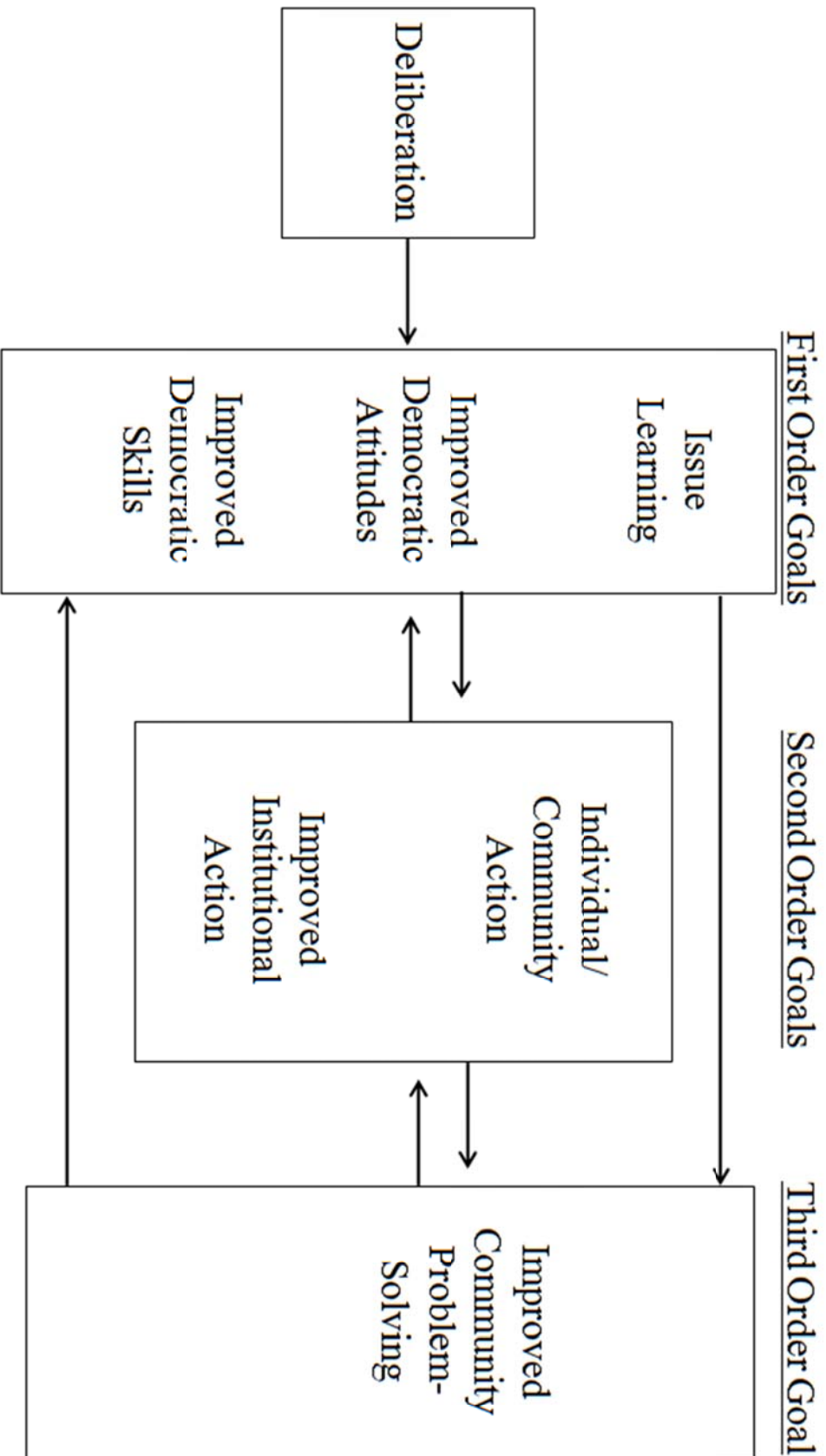
### **Improved community problem-solving**

- The ultimate goal of deliberation is to improve a community's capacity to solve problems. All the other goals flow toward this one.

## **The Negative Potential Consequences of Deliberation**

The consequences of deliberation are certainly not inherently positive, and deliberation clearly has the potential for positive or negative consequences. If not done well, deliberation can cause significant community harm. Deliberation can degenerate into a polarized dispute, and can actually lead to more cynicism and frustration. Deliberation can cause information overload, leading to more apathy and decreasing an individual's sense of efficacy. Bad deliberation can also cause or solidify negative false stereotypes rather than dispel them. Conveners of deliberative events thus have a heavy burden to plan, convene, perform, and report on their events in a way that maximizes the positive potentials and minimizes the negative potentials.

## The Goals of Deliberation





## PART 2: BASICS OF NIF-STYLE FORUMS

**Why such a focus on NIF?** There are multiple ways of actually sparking deliberation (see the NCDD Engagement Stream document as well as the sample deliberative techniques section at the end of this workbook). At the CPD, we utilize “NIF-style” forums as the base process model for our training program. Not all CPD events use this format—each project is different and calls for different formats—but the NIF model is a great starting place and a useful and flexible model that can be applied in a number of situations. We also utilize NIF discussion guides often for training and in classrooms, and occasionally for community events, but typically develop our own material.

### National Issues Forums -- An Overview

#### What is NIF?

National Issues Forums (NIF) is a nonpartisan, nationwide network of locally sponsored forums for the consideration of public policy issues. They are rooted in the simple notion that people need to come together to reason and talk – to deliberate about common problems. Indeed, democracy requires an ongoing deliberative dialogue.

#### How does it work?

Each year, major issues of concern are identified. Issue books, which provide an overview of the subject and present several choices, are prepared to frame the choice work. Forums are sponsored by thousands of organizations and institutions within many communities. They offer citizens the opportunity to join together to deliberate and to make choices with others about ways to approach difficult issues. Programs for NIF conveners and moderators are conducted each summer in Public Policy Institutes in more than a score of communities all across the country. They provide participants, both NIF newcomers and veterans, with a background on the program as well as skills for sponsoring, organizing and moderating forums.

#### Who participates?

Forums are organized by civic, service, and religious organizations as well as by libraries, colleges, universities and high schools, literacy and leadership programs, prisons, businesses, labor unions and senior groups. The network of convening institutions is both large and diverse. NIF participants vary considerably in age, race gender, economic status and geographic location. Studies of NIF deliberation tell us that every type of citizen seeks out and participates in these public forums. Each year, more than 20 Public Policy Institutes (PPIs) are held at institutions all across the country to train NIF moderators and conveners. PPI participants receive training and practice in moderating forums, become acquainted with NIF materials, discuss how to organize NIF programs in their communities, and learn to appreciate the importance of deliberation in identifying the public’s perspective on public policy issues.

#### So what?

Citizens cannot act together until they decide together. By making choices, the public defines what it considers to be in the public interest and finds common ground for action. By offering citizens a framework for deliberative forums, the NIF network helps the public take an active role in policy decision-making. And the health of this nation’s democratic enterprise depends on the active participation of responsible citizens who take the initiative to deliberate about public policy choices to set the public agenda.

For more information, contact:  
National Issues Forums Research  
100 Commons Road  
Dayton, OH 45459-2777  
800.433.7834 [www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org)

## Basic Features of and Theory Behind the NIF style (according to the CPD)

- Designed for one-time 2-3 hour meetings of small or medium sized groups (8-30 people).
- Works best when multiple similar meetings are held, and data is compared across the meetings.
- Issues are focused on a common problem most would agree is a problem (start from common ground). Now, people may certainly disagree about the nature and cause of the problem, but generally most would agree *something* needs to be done about that issue.
- Uses background material (discussion or issue guides) that establish the importance of the problem and explores at least 3 different **approaches** to addressing the problem.
- NIF publishes national issue books for use, but often local centers develop their own discussion guides. You can visit [www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org) for a list of all the NIF guides, as well as many booklets created by others using the NIF style. Public Agenda also creates similarly framed material (see [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org)).
- Discussion of the approaches is focused on having participants **explore the appreciations and concerns of each, with dedicated time to each approach**. The approaches are specifically set up with the realization that there is **no magic bullet or perfect solution**, every approach will have positive consequences along with difficult tradeoffs.
- The approaches are **not necessarily mutually exclusive**. Any community action would likely combine the choices in some manner. The “reflections” time at the end of a typical NIF forum is somewhat designed to combine and go beyond the approaches. In other words, the approaches are set up to insure a broad conversation and to insure dedicated focus on the different approach, but **participants are not asked to “pick your favorite.”**
- A particular strength of the NIF approach is it **supports broad discussion across multiple perspectives**. By having dedicated time to examine pros and cons along with a focus on listening, participants hear new aspects they haven’t considered before. By focusing on a common problem and multiple approaches, it inherently forces participants to get beyond simple pro-con views, as well as beyond the typical process of criticizing individual solutions. By providing a range of solutions, participants are faced with the tough choices and the realization that any solution will have tradeoffs that must be accepted. If we take solutions one by one, we can simply focus on what we don’t like. If we are faced with a range of solutions, we are more likely to realize we have to make a decision and act. Certain solutions also become much more viable when examined in conjunction with others, especially when perceived obvious solutions turn out to be not so obvious.
- Another strength is the **simplicity** for facilitators. Inexperienced facilitators can utilize a well-framed discussion guide and host a meeting with minimal training.
- The overall framing of a common problem with three or four potential approaches helps participants **move away from the blame game** concerning the problem, and more toward what they would like to see in the future, which is generally a more productive conversation. The approaches essentially provide a diverse set of entry points into the issue, helping assure a broad range of issues will be discussed.
- The approaches can often help participants **consider a broad range of actors** and their role in reacting to the problem. At times the approaches may even be particularly framed to focus on the various actors, with each approach essentially focused on a different primary stakeholder and what they could do.
- Two of the **key limits** of the NIF approach are: a short one-time meeting is difficult to transfer to action, and the approaches may actually limit discussion somewhat. As a result, the basic NIF model is often combined with other strategies.

## **The Overall NIF Process**

**(This material direct from NIF)**

### **1) Identifying the Public Issue**

- Find an issue that needs to be worked on in your community. Issues with the following characteristics best fit the NIF deliberation model:
  - 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
  - Not an issue that is currently so polarized that opposing sides would likely not be able to participate productively (such an issue may need more dialogue before deliberation)

### **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 this sounds fun and interesting

### **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 to understand 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
- 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 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

### NIF Job Descriptions

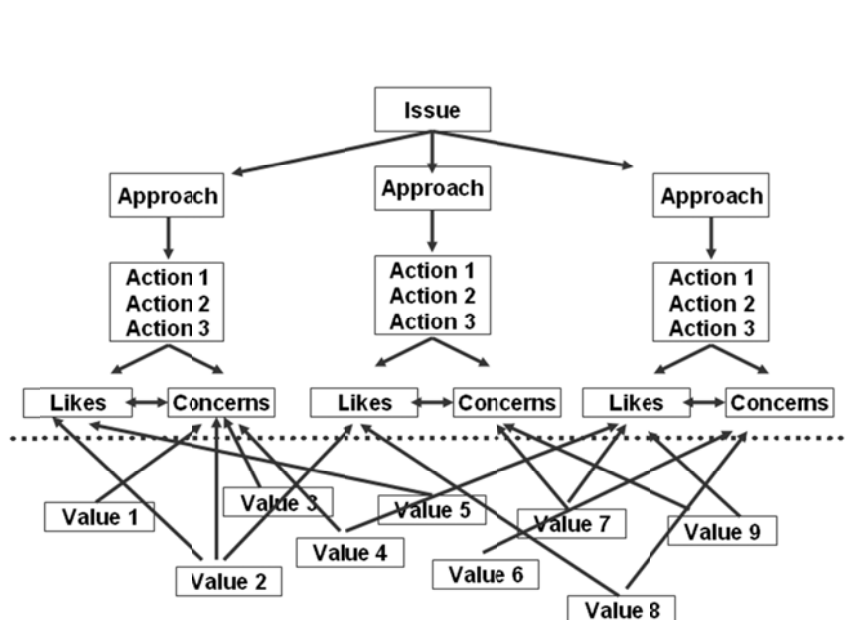
(CPD material)

There are a number of jobs to pull off a deliberative event. Ideally, a team is developed to handle all the duties, but if necessary one or two people could still essentially do all the jobs.

- The **moderator** or **facilitator** leads the deliberation, asking questions, choosing who speaks next, and handling the overall flow of the event.
- A **convener** is primarily responsible for publicizing the event and insuring a diverse audience.
- The **recorder** or **notetaker** works with the moderator to capture the discussion, often on easel paper that is posted around the room during the forum to show the progress of the conversation and to allow for participants to review the discussion.
- An **observer** sits outside the circle and takes more extensive notes of the forum, trying to capture the sense of the deliberation that can be used after the event to improve the report as well as help the moderators and recorders reflect on and improve their performances.
- A **reporter** is responsible for producing a report of the event. This is a relatively new phenomenon with NIF. The report may primarily be for the participants themselves, it may be for others that did not attend (such as decision-makers), or it may be for the convening organization in order to reflect on and improve their performances. An **“internal report”** is written for the benefit of the conveners/practitioners, while an **“external report”** is often posted online and sent to media and/or decision-makers. Moderators should clearly explain to participants what is being done with the information gathered at the event, and then follow through. Such follow through is critical to develop trust and sustain momentum.

## Why Use a NIF-style Issue Book/Discussion Guide/Backgrounder? (Material from NIF)

- 1. It is framed for deliberation rather than persuasion.** Framing is a very powerful tool, and often competing sides of an issue will frame the issue strategically to fit their perspective. When issues are framed for deliberation rather than persuasion, they open up new possibilities for constructive conversation.
- 2. It correctly identifies what is at issue.** Sometimes it is the elusive and intractable nature of the problem that is the point of contention, sometimes the dialogue centers on what to do about it. With wicked issues, of course, sometime the nature of the problem is the issue as well as the solution. I did not know until this point that NIF will take on issues where the problem itself is elusive to define.
- 3. It is authentic to people's experience** (which is not synonymous with fair and balanced): there are no false or artificially made-up approaches. The issue is framed through the lens of the public, not through the lens of politicians, academics, or journalists.
- 4. Approaches are not mutually exclusive.** The approaches must encompass a wide range of options that express commonly held positions.
- 5. There will always be elements of each approach that everyone will warm to** (if they are honest about their feelings.) This is possible because each approach grows out of a value we all share but in varying degrees of relative importance. Every approach is presented "best-foot-forward."
- 6. The choice requires that we work through tough choices and acknowledge trade-offs and consequences.** The choice leads to both intended and unintended consequences. We must confront the fact that we cannot have it all.
- 7. Within each approach, there are elements of the pro and con side that tug at us – difficult choices to be made.** The framing forces us to face our own ambiguity. We have to acknowledge difficult choices and accept consequences for our decisions, AND we have to pay with a currency that is precious to us – our values.
- 8. No approach is the direct opposite of the other.** It is not that easy. There is always a myriad of options and a simple "yes" or "no" vote would not force us to acknowledge the complexity of the issue.
- 9. The framing cuts across old arguments;** it doesn't let people retreat to their usual stance. A deliberative framing always includes more than two approaches.

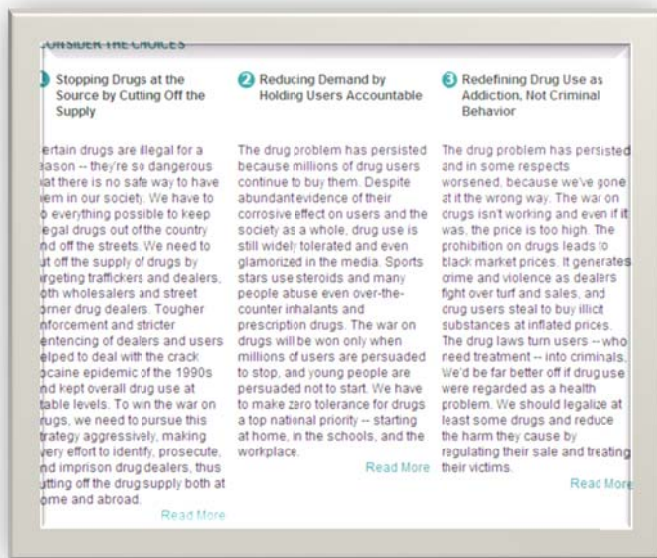


## Creating New NIF-Style Framings

The process of developing NIF books typically begins with asking the public what values they hold related to a particular issue. The approaches are then built up from those values, with a different value set underlying each approach. The books, then, facilitate discussion that identifies and helps people struggle with the values that will inherently conflict with any public decision. Consideration of these values goes into the development of background information, is a particular focus for facilitators during the forums themselves, and is again a focus for reporters when they examine the notes from forums.

There are many NIF-style framings available that can be used (see [www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org) for a list of their official issue books as well as PDFs of many additional framings that were created by affiliate organizations, and also see more similarly framed issues as well as an Issue Book Exchange at [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org)). The NIF framings are typically rather long (20-30 pages), whereas the Public Agenda framings are web-based and often shorter. NIF books typically have what is called a “placemat” in the back which can be copied onto one page (legal size may work best). In many situations, participants in an NIF-style deliberation would not have a chance to read the materials beforehand, and will only use the placemat during the actual deliberation. Indeed, the full NIF book is often simply used to help the facilitators develop an understanding of the issue and have a base of information from which to work. For locally framed issues, sometimes only the placemat is created. So if you plan to develop a framework on a unique issue for your community, you may only need to develop a placemat (see the next couple pages for examples of NIF placemats).

NIF-style issue book essentially follow a **problem-solution model**, with the problem framed *broadly* so that most people in the community would agree that it is a problem, and framed *fairly* so that it doesn't strongly advantage any perspective. Titles for NIF-style framings are thus normally phrased in some form of “What should we do about X?” Then **three or four approaches** are developed that provide a distinct answer to that question. The approaches need not be mutually exclusive, and you should avoid having approaches that are simply the opposite of each other. See the next page for ideas about how the approaches could be framed.



Like NIF, Public Agenda provides basic frameworks for deliberation based on a common problem with three approaches for addressing the problem.

**Different approaches could focus on:**

**Different primary actors for the action, particularly individuals, different groups, communities, or government.** For example, if the issue is improving school performance (“What should we do to improve school performance in Fort Collins?” separate approaches may focus on what *students* or *parents* or *teachers* or the *community* (community orgs and businesses) or the *school district* should do. This is one of the ways that deliberative analysis taps into the notion of democratic governance, and gets away from an overemphasis on government solutions and/or individual solutions.

or

Approaches can also simply be **different policy ideas**

*To deal with the energy problem, we should (a) exploit local carbon-based resources , (b) develop alternative fuels, (c) reduce our demand*

or

Approaches can focus on **different views of the source or cause the problem**, which inherently leads to different responses. For example, is the problem of high tuition caused by lack of public funding for higher education, wasteful and inefficient spending by universities, or simply a function of increasing costs. Each assumed cause would lead to different approaches to address the problem of the unaffordability of higher education. We should: (a) increase public funding for higher ed, (b) expect universities to be more efficient and careful with money, or (c) tuitions increase due to increasing costs, so we should focus on strengthening Pell Grants and loan programs to help make it more affordable for students.

or

Approaches can deal with **different degrees of response** (though guides framed as two extremes and one moderate view can be rather limiting and biased to the middle view).

*To deal with global warming, we should (a) Increase funding for science to better understand the issue before acting, (b) Focus on actions that are uncontroversial and clearly beneficial, like reducing consumption and increasing use of renewable fuels, (c) Impose significant limits and penalties to meet aggressive targets for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions now.*

or

Approaches can consider **distinctions between the “three E’s” education, engineering, or enforcement**. Education is based on educating people to stop the negative behavior or do more of a positive behavior. Typically rely on campaigns to change social norms (“Just say no,” “Don’t Mess with Texas,” “Turn off your lights”). Engineering involves using technology to stop or encourage the behavior (such as using breathalyzers to start a car, or metal detectors at schools, parental locks on channels on television, or public faucets that only let you use water 3 seconds at a time). Enforcement involves upping the penalties or rewards for behavior, such as increased fines or patrols for drunk driving, increases charges for energy use, or zero-tolerance policies for violence at school.



# >> Comparing Approaches

**A**MERICAN ENERGY POLICY IS NOTHING, if not short-sighted and self-indulgent," writes columnist Robert Samuelson. "The hallmark of U.S. energy policy is a steadfast refusal to confront choices." The underlying problem is that we don't agree on what the crux of the nation's energy problem is.

But it appears there is growing agreement that it is time to face some of those choices. Many signs now point to a crisis when it comes to energy. At the very least, there are decisions to be made, and made now. More than four hundred separate pieces of energy-related legislation were before Congress in June 2006. The United States Supreme Court is considering a case that would classify carbon dioxide as an air pollutant, subject to regulation. Many nuclear power generation facilities are nearing the end of their life expectancy, and we need to decide whether to build more.

Right now, more than half of our energy comes from fossil sources. Some say this is a strategic mistake—not all of these foreign sources of energy with us well. Many are in unstable parts of the world.

Others say that this reliance on foreign energy blinds us to other consequences of dependence on fossil fuel. They say that the signs of human-caused climate change are all around us, and accelerating.

Some say that new technologies will provide the answer, but experts say this is really just wishful thinking.

The choice we face is not as easy as asking what type of energy source we would like to use. The options involve significantly different futures, because they are rooted in different understandings of the problem. All of them mean that fundamental changes are in store. The real question is this: What is the most pressing issue when it comes to energy, both today and in the future?

This is a question on which there is little agreement. Most agree, though, that time is running out. "Everywhere we look, we can see signs of an exhausted system," writes Paul Roberts in *The End of Oil*, "giving way to something new." It is time to ask collectively what kind of future we want for our society and how we will sustain it. This can't be left to experts or political leaders alone. It's too important, and the answers will affect our daily lives too greatly—as well as those of our children and grandchildren. The public must have a voice in such a fundamental issue.

## Summary of NIF book: The Energy Problem

### APPROACH ONE

#### >> Reduce Our Dependence on Foreign Energy



The crux of this nation's energy problem is that we're dependent on energy resources from unstable, unreliable, and often hostile nations and regions. This is a threat to our national security, our way of life, and our independence. The energy crises in the 1970s, 1990s, and today resulted from hostile actions, of one kind or another, by nations who supply us. Meanwhile, there are tens of billions of barrels of oil here in the United States. It's time for us to reduce our dependence on foreign energy by relying more on domestic resources.

#### What Should Be Done?

- Explore and exploit domestic sources of petroleum, including some wilderness and offshore areas where there are known reserves.
- Explore and exploit domestic sources of other fossil fuels, such as natural gas and coal.
- Use more coal and natural gas in electric power generation.
- Produce more flexible-fuel vehicles that can run on ethanol and natural gas.
- Invest in liquefied coal.
- Build more domestic refining facilities.
- Sanitize clean air restrictions so all parts of the country have one set of standards.

#### Some Likely Trade-Offs:

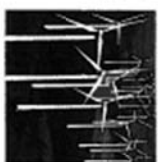
- Natural habitats may be affected, as may be the pristine views some backcountry property owners enjoy.
- If we expand our use of the nation's abundant coal reserves, the results of coal mining will be ugly and damaging to the landscape.
- To the extent that we retreat from these environmental goals, we set an environmental policy precedent that will be hard to change in later years.

#### In Opposition

- The environmental risks represented by large-scale oil and natural gas exploration are too extreme.
- Most of our oil does not come from unstable nations. In fact, it comes from our neighbors Canada and Mexico—heavily regimes of oppression or terrorist states.
- Overreliance on fossil fuels is already producing severe and lasting consequences. More domestic sources of oil and natural gas are the last thing we need.

### APPROACH TWO

#### >> Get Out of the Fossil-Fuel Predicament



According to this view, the real and increasingly threatening problem we have to face is that our long-term reliance on fossil fuels will result in severe damage to the environment. Only recently have we begun to understand how widespread and damaging the effects of carbon emissions are—and how serious a threat global warming poses. A new generation of alternative energy sources can lead to a real, long-term solution. But this nation has only taken baby steps in that direction. Until we develop clean energy sources to the point where they provide most of our needs, we'll never solve the problem.

#### What Should Be Done?

- Substantially increase direct government investment in alternative, renewable sources of energy.
- Sign and abide by the Kyoto Protocol.
- Build and use more nuclear power plants.
- Provide government support to encourage sales of alternative energy technology (such as wind power) by agreeing to purchase a certain amount.
- Seek out zero-emission alternatives in our personal lives, such as using an electric mower to cut grass, taking public transportation, or walking instead of driving.

#### Some Likely Trade-Offs:

- People will need to buy different products, some of which may be more expensive or less convenient than present choices.
- Certain new technologies, such as hydrogen fuel cells or high-efficiency solar power, will have to be supported by large amounts of government funding until they are thriving on their own and can give true competition to fossil fuels.
- We will need to find a place to dispose of nuclear waste safely.

#### In Opposition

- Renewable technologies, while promising, are not yet fully viable and ready for widespread use. Our energy appetite is so large that a few alternatives will not make a dent.
- There is still no adequate answer to what to do about nuclear waste and we should simply stop generating it.
- This approach ignores that there are real-world, simple and effective steps such as increasing energy efficiency that can be taken right now and that have been proven to work.

## COMPARING APPROACHES >>

### APPROACH THREE

#### >> Reduce Our Demand for Energy



Until we start cutting back on our use of energy, finding ways to get along with less of it, we'll never solve this problem. Using less energy, either by improving energy efficiency or through other means, is a sensible and prudent response that involves neither wishing the problem away nor destroying the countryside. But as a nation, we remain unwilling to accept restrictions on our freedom to continue our "big energy" lifestyle. Even though it will require major changes in how we live, we've got to curb our appetite and learn to live on less energy.

#### What Should Be Done?

- Create (and enhance) tax incentives for conservation and reduced use of fossil fuels.
- Significantly increase gasoline taxes to reduce demand.
- Give government agencies more efficiency (lower its estate certain levels of energy efficiency and conservation).
- Enhance and increase industry standards, such as the Energy Star program, and boost the CAFE standards for the auto industry.
- Pour much more money and effort into public awareness campaigns similar to the ones that have been mounted in opposition to smoking or drunk driving. Make energy consumption a moral issue.

#### Some Likely Trade-Offs:

- We would be obliged to live with new rules and regulations that require people to moderate their energy use—it can't be voluntary.
- Daily life would change as homes are cooled less in the summer, we make fewer trips to the store, and public places reduce their use of energy-intensive amenities.
- Some costs may go up, as new taxes designed to encourage lower consumption go into effect.

#### In Opposition

- Americans will not stand for the huge price increases that would be necessary to alter energy consumption.
- Any savings we may be able to eke out by turning down our thermostats will be far overshadowed by population growth.
- It is overly optimistic to think that such gains in energy efficiency as were experienced in the 1970s and 1980s are still possible. The easiest and lowest cost efficiency gains have already been achieved.



## Coping with the Cost of Health Care: How Do We Pay for What We Need?

### APPROACH ONE

#### >> Reduce the Threat of Financial Ruin

The costs of health care make people feel vulnerable, with no control over their futures. They worry that they may be wiped out by medical expenses. We should require that everyone has health insurance that covers at least major medical expenses and ensure that it is available to everyone.



#### What Should Be Done?

- Require all Americans to have some form of health-care coverage.
- Require employers to provide health insurance coverage to their employees or to pay into a fund that subsidizes individual coverage.
- Create new insurance plans with higher deductibles.
- Help people ineligible for current plans to buy health insurance.

#### Arguments in Favor

- The main problem is that too many people are financially vulnerable when it comes to health care.
- A number of states, such as Massachusetts, already have workable plans that include a requirement for major medical insurance and subsidies for getting more coverage to more people.
- People should be offered more choices about how to handle medical expenses.

#### Trade-Offs

- This approach depends in part on increasing subsidies for people who don't have health insurance. This money may have to come from increased taxes.
- Some people will still underinsure themselves.

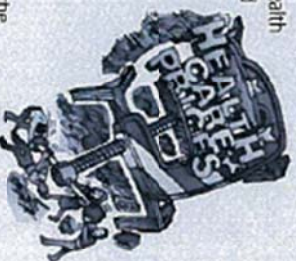
#### Opposing Voices

- Health insurance plans that have high deductibles will discourage people from getting early diagnosis and treatment.
- This will cost more than proponents say it will.
- This is an unsupportable expense, especially for small businesses.
- This approach will do nothing to contain ballooning prices.

### APPROACH TWO

#### >> Restrain Out-of-Control Costs

When faced with the bills for health insurance, medical services, and prescription drugs, people say they are being ripped off. Prices are out of control. They should be reduced directly through price controls and other means.



#### What Should Be Done?

- Use the regulatory power of the government to set prices on medical services and prescription drugs.
- Limit the increased premiums that insurers can charge for people with health problems.
- Allow individuals to purchase medicine from other countries where they are not as expensive, if they meet safety criteria.
- Place limits on the compensation levels of health insurance executives, doctors, and others.

#### Arguments in Favor

- Health-care prices are skyrocketing, way beyond what is reasonable.
- Too many are taking advantage of rising costs to unfairly enrich themselves.
- Direct price controls are necessary to bring the system under control.

#### Trade-Offs

- Lower insurance rates may lead to overcrowded facilities as providers try to cut costs.
- Caps on fees can lead to a decline in the availability of services.

#### Opposing Voices

- Cost controls may result in reluctance on the part of health-care providers to use expensive, but lifesaving, medical technologies.
- Government price controls distort the market. Competition is the best way to keep prices low.
- This will stifle innovation and advances in medical technology and pharmaceuticals.
- Medical providers are not paid too much. They charge what it costs them to provide needed services.

### APPROACH THREE

#### >> Provide Coverage as a Right

High costs mean that some Americans have to choose between eating and taking their medicine. In the wealthiest nation on Earth this is morally wrong and financially wasteful. The government should guarantee that all its citizens have access to good health care.



#### What Should Be Done?

- Provide health-care coverage to all as a public benefit.
- Budget what the nation will spend on health care each year.
- Use the negotiating power of the government to get reduced prices on prescription drugs and other medical materials.
- Ensure that all citizens have access to their choice of doctors and hospitals.

#### Arguments in Favor

- It's unconscionable that only those wealthy enough to afford it can have adequate health insurance.
- The current fragmented system is inefficient and wasteful.
- Most other nations provide health insurance for their citizens.

#### Trade-Offs

- This approach will result in more explicit rationing of health care. People with less serious conditions will need to wait while more urgent cases are handled.
- This approach will result in higher taxes to pay for health-care coverage.

#### Opposing Voices

- This calls for the federal government to take over the health insurance industry for all Americans and that will send taxes through the roof.
- The government will create penalties for "bad" health-related behavior.
- This will lead to yet more bureaucracy.
- Public confidence in the federal government is extremely low.

## The Choice Grid

Once the basic approaches are set up, understanding the WHY and HOW helps us put together a grid to construct the rest of the issue book. The grid below can be used to brainstorm (or research) the issue to provide the framework of the overall issue book or placemat. The grid can also be used to help facilitators analyze a completed book in order to prepare for facilitating.

<b>Question</b>	<b>Approach 1</b>	<b>Approach 2</b>	<b>Approach 3</b>
What is the problem behind the problem			
What should be done? The broad remedy			
What specific policy actions should be taken?			
What are the supporting comments and key facts?			
What underlying values motivate this approach?			
What are the potential consequences of this approach?			
What are the key arguments against this approach?			
What are the values behind the concerns people have about this approach?			

(See example on the following page)



## Elements of Choices — Examples

	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3
<b>Definition of the Problem</b>	Our health care system is the best in the world, and in need of only minor adjustments, primarily to reduce administrative and legal costs.	Our present health care system favors those who are able to pay, and is therefore inadequate to the needs of the nation as a whole, and antithetical to American values.	Covered neither by employers, nor by government programs, millions of working Americans without health insurance live in constant fear of illness, or unpayable medical bills.
<b>Broad Remedy</b>	Preserve the strengths of the existing system, by making it more efficient and more widely.	Institute a national government-administered system of comprehensive universal health care.	Current health-care system only encourages employers and government to provide medical coverage; it should require it.
<b>Specific Policy Options</b>	Standardize reimbursement procedures to save administrative costs. Through new laws, restrict awards patients can receive in malpractice suits. Make insurance more affordable by limiting coverage to basic medical services.	Provide universal coverage, administered by government. Emphasize preventive health care. Streamline handling of claims. Place legal limits on doctor and hospital fees.	Require all employers to either provide health care insurance to all workers (full and part-time) and their families or pay tax equal to 7% of their payroll to the government to fund health insurance. Provide an expanded version of Medicare to pay health care costs for the unemployed and the elderly.
<b>Facts</b>	Enormous strides in quality of life expectancy through 20th century medical advances Rapid development and availability of "miracle" medical technologies under the current system Increase in percentage of Americans covered, from 50% in 1950 to 66% in 1990 Majority of Americans very satisfied with the quality of care they receive Americans view access to quality care and freedom to choose their doctors as the most important aspects of health care.	Successful provision of cost-effective, universal health care under the Canadian system Survey data indicating that the vast majority of Americans believe that universal coverage is a basic right Increasing refusal of private insurance companies to make insurance available to those who pose a risk Survey data indicating that 43 million Americans have no regular system of health care.	Majority of those who lack medical coverage are the working poor and unemployed Seventy five percent of business executives want employers, not government, to be the chief providers of coverage Hawaii provides nearly universal coverage by mandating employer benefits and expanding existing public programs health care costs are lower for the 37 million Americans enrolled in HMOs Medicaid covers less than 50% of those it was originally meant to serve
<b>Values</b>	Freedom of Choice Competitiveness Market-Oriented Solutions	Equality Fairness Compassion Government's Duty to Secure Basic Rights	Market-Oriented Solutions Equity and Fairness Individual Freedom Government as a Rule-Setting, Rather than Administrative, Agency
<b>Cons</b>	Proposed measures do almost nothing to stop skyrocketing health care costs. Proposed measures will not guarantee that those now uninsured get insurance. Because reforms don't make health care a universal right, they prolong the costly reliance on emergency care. Our present system places too much emphasis on high-tech procedures	Proposed measure will not work to cut costs, as promised  Accustomed to state-of-the-art health care on demand, Americans will not accept shortages and long waits. Other government-run programs have been inefficient and costly; it is likely that this one would be also	Government-required coverage would significantly add to the cost of doing business, especially for small firms  The cost of paying for these benefits will be passed on to workers, whose real-wage increases will suffer  effective reform requires more radical surgery; mandated benefits system might prolong inefficiency without containing costs.

## Stages of an NIF forum

<b>Welcome</b>	The convener or moderator introduces the program. In some cases, pre-forum questionnaires may be used (either online or at the start of the event)
<b>Ground Rules and Goals</b>	Facilitator reviews ground rules for the discussion, as well as the desired outcomes of the forum. This discussion often allows the facilitator a chance to establish key aspects of the deliberative perspective as well as to create the necessary environment for the process.
<b>Introduce Framework</b>	A starter video may be used to set the tone for dialogue, or the moderator can introduce the choices themselves.
<b>Personal Stake</b>	As an icebreaker, participants share personal experiences related to the issue. This sets the stage, and also allows all participants to talk at least once, making it easier for them to talk later. (May be completed before the video, so that the participants do not simply react to the video in their comments).
<b>Deliberation</b>	NIF style forums are typically focused on a common problem, with 3-4 approaches to addressing that problem. Participants examine all the approaches, spending specific time focusing on each approach. Typically 15-20 minutes per approach if time allows. NIF-style discussions often focus on the <b>Appreciations</b> and <b>Concerns</b> with each approach, and notes are taken on easel pads focused on developing a list of the appreciations and concerns of each approach. Discussions often begin with appreciations (“What do you like about this approach?”) but then naturally shift to concerns during the discussion as participants respond to each other and facilitator prompts. Facilitators should insure that the participants have ample, but not necessarily equal, discussion of both, and if the discussion focuses primarily on one or the other, should ask specific questions to make sure the participants fully consider each (“We seem to be focusing primarily on concerns with this approach, does anyone have any particular appreciations? Why do people support this approach?”).
<b>Reflection</b>	Once each approach has been discussed, the remaining time can be used in a variety of ways, depending on the purpose of the event (see the Goals and Consequences information from earlier). Questions should be developed that allow the participants to build on the overall conversation and move toward accomplishing the purposes of the event. Time may also be used to allow the participants to look back over all the notes that had been captured during the discussion, as well as perhaps use “dot voting” to identify the key points they support in the discussion.
<b>Questionnaire</b>	Participants may be asked to complete post-forum questionnaires or surveys to gather additional data.

## PART 3: THE BASICS OF FACILITATING

### An Effective Facilitator:

#### An effective facilitator balances many responsibilities:

- **Remains impartial about the subject of the forum.** Avoid expressing your own opinion or evaluating the comments of the participants (be careful with saying “good point!”). However, moderators are not “neutral” or disengaged, and in fact they should be passionate about democracy and about the process itself.
- **Allows the participants to own the process and topic as much as possible.** Facilitators facilitate (i.e. help others achieve their goals more productively), they don’t control or dominate. Based on the other responsibilities, they must intervene as necessary, but should also realize that doing too much may be worse than not doing enough.
- **Manages the room well.** Facilitators must attend to both the task and relationship dimensions of the group’s work. Work with the participants so people know the order of speaking and do not get frustrated with procedural issues, seeking the right balance between having too much and too little structure to the conversation.
- **Models democratic attitudes and skills.** By exhibiting strong listening skills and asking good questions, you can model the behaviors you are hoping the participants will develop.
- **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. Moderators in particular need to think like non-experts in the room, and if jargon is used, ask for clarification.
- **Keeps the deliberation focused on the task.** When comments go too far astray, bring participants back to the process (though at times what seems to be a tangent may be useful).
- **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. Facilitators should train themselves to listen for the underlying values.
- **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.
- **Encourages everyone to join in the conversation.** Facilitators should be aware of who has spoken and who has not, and assure that all voices get heard if possible.
- **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 and identify and work through key tensions.** Participants will not always agree and may sometimes be in direct conflict with each other. Helping them identify both common ground and key tensions will help move the conversation forward in important ways.
- **Encourages deeper reflection.** Ask participants to share what is important to them about the issue or why they feel a particular approach is valuable.

## What are the responsibilities of a facilitator?

**Motivator** – From the rousing opening statement to the closing words of cheer, you must ignite a fire within the group, establish momentum, and keep the pace.

**Guide** – You must know the steps of the process the groups will execute from the beginning to the end. You can also help by holding up a mirror to them and their work and letting them know how they are doing and how far they have gotten and that particular parts are difficult sledding

**Questioner** – You must listen carefully to the discussion and be able to quickly analyze and compare comments and to formulate questions that help manage the group discussion.

**Bridge Builder** – You must create and maintain a safe and open environment for sharing ideas. Where other people see differences, you must find and use similarities to establish a foundation for building bridges to consensus, while also helping groups better understand their differences.

**Clairvoyant** – Throughout the session, you must watch carefully for signs of potential strain, weariness, aggravation, and disempowerment, and respond in advance to avoid dysfunctional behavior. Facilitators use social and emotional intelligence to sense the feelings in the room.

**Peacemaker** – Although it is almost always better to avoid a direct confrontation between participants, should such an event occur, you must quickly step in, reestablish order, and direct the group toward a constructive resolution.

**Taskmaster** - You are ultimately responsible for keeping the session on track; this entails tactfully cutting short irrelevant discussions, preventing detours, and maintaining a consistent level of detail throughout the session.

**Praise** – At every opportunity, you should praise participants for the effort they put forth, the progress they make, and the results they achieve. Praise well, praise often, praise specifically.

## What are the characteristics of the “Soul” of the Facilitator?

*Facilitators care about people.* They value people, their views, and their input. They want each person to walk away from a facilitated event feeling welcome, heard, and understood. They model positive affirmation and demonstrate their caring through their words and actions.

*Facilitations want to help.* The word *facilitator* comes from the Latin word *facil*, which means “to make easy.” Facilitators get great pleasure from being of assistance. They genuinely enjoy using their expertise to help others succeed.

*Facilitators put their egos aside.* Facilitators recognize that they are servants of the group. They understand that their presence is secondary, that their personal views are inconsequential, and that their value is defined by their ability to help the group define or achieve their objectives, not the facilitator’s. They don’t get upset with a participant’s difficult behaviors. They don’t take concerns personally. They are willing to play as little or as great a role as necessary to help the group be successful.

Source: Michael Wilkinson’s *The Secrets of Facilitation* (Josey-Bass, 2004), pp.24-26.

**A quick note about the terms “Facilitators” and “Moderators”:** NIF material tends to use the word “moderator,” while at the CPD we prefer “facilitator.” We use both interchangeably in this workbook.

## A Quick Starting Guide to Facilitating Forums

Facilitation is essentially about supporting a productive, respectful conversation that helps participants better understand the issue and each other. While there are many advanced facilitation skills that you can work on as you get more and more experience, the basics of deliberation are actually rather simple.

Deliberative conversations start with “**starting questions**,” which are open ended questions that get people talking about an issue. For NIF style forums, the starting question for each approach is often, “So does anyone have any particular things you like about this approach?” Once you ask an initial starting question, the deliberation begins when someone starts talking. As the facilitator, you must both listen carefully to what is being said, and plan your next move. Your next move will generally be one of the following:

### The Five Basic Facilitator Choices:

1. **Move on** to the next speaker by simply pointing to the next person in line or asking the group for additional comments. People like to talk, and in many cases, you will often have a line of people ready to talk (see the discussion of “stacking” on page 57) and can simply move from one to another (after insuring the previous comment has been captured by the notetakers).
2. **Paraphrase** what that person said in order to clarify the point, help the notetakers, and/or move the conversation to a deeper level. When paraphrasing, always do so in a way that makes it easy for the speaker to correct you (“So what I’m hearing is that...is that right?”) You would rarely do it for every speaker, but it likely will be used rather frequently during a discussion because of the many functions it serves (see page ??).
3. **Ask a “probing” or “follow up”** question to the same speaker to get clarification or dig deeper. (see page 59 and on for more info on questions)  
Ex. “Why is that important to you?” “What do you think the consequences of that perspective would be?” “Are there any drawbacks to that position?”
4. **Ask a “reaction”** question that seeks to have other people respond to the last speaker’s comments in some way.  
Ex. “Does anyone else have a different view?”  
“What do others think about that idea?”
5. **Ask a new starting question.** Depending on the design of the forum, you may have a set of questions you are supposed to ask, or you may have certain issues you want to discuss, that you may just jump in to take the conversation a different direction. Based on the responses, you may also develop a question that works to combine or compare opinions that were shared. A new starting question may be particularly important if the deliberation got off track and the participants need to be redirected to the issue.  
Ex. “Many argue that one of the key topics with this issue is X, what are your thoughts on its importance?”



## Primary Facilitating Styles

Facilitating is an art, not a science. Like deliberation itself, it involves trying to find the perfect balance between various, often competing, goals. For example, moderators seek to remain impartial, but must also insure all views are considered. Facilitators are charged with guiding the discussion and making sure the group stays on track time-wise, but also they do not want to dominate or force the discussion into too strict of a set structure.

The best facilitators are flexible yet consistent, another tricky balance. Overall, there seems to be at least four primary facilitating styles:

1. **The Referee** – Only interferes as necessary to enforce rules and time constraints. A good moderator from this perspective is barely noticed. They introduce a topic, and let the participants take over. They may only say “So what do you think?” and then step back until its time to consider a different approach.
2. **The Interviewer** – Prepares specific questions beforehand and pushes participants on particular issues. A good moderator from this perspective helps the participants dig deeper and do the hard work that the group may not naturally do on their own.
3. **The Devil’s Advocate** – Works to present views that are not represented in the forum. Can be particularly important if the room is not diverse, or if the deliberation is particularly one-sided. A good moderator from this perspective is able to introduce alternative voices without seeming to lose their impartiality.
4. **The Weaver** – Focused on helping participants identify and build upon common ground. A good moderator from this perspective is able to dig deeper into participant comments, identify underlying motives and values, and connect those values to others. May also focus more on strengthening the interpersonal relationships between participants.

No one style is “best.” It depends on the subject matter, the participants, and the goals of the deliberation. Good facilitators are likely able to play all four roles as necessary.

## Recognizing Deliberation

**A good facilitator also recognizes when deliberation is occurring, and nurtures it.**

- Discussion considers several points of view – a range of views.
- People are talking about what is valuable to them.
- The group recognizes that the issue is complex.
- People are talking about consequences and weighing the trade-offs.
- People are struggling within themselves and WITH each other.
- “I” becomes “we”.
- The discussion is civil, but also not simply polite. Disagreements are aired, but aired in a spirit of seeking increased understanding.

Again, while facilitators should be neutral as to the perspective, **they are not neutral about the process**. If a participant asks a good, clarifying question, it is ok to praise the question (whereas moderators should avoid praising points made about the topic in general).

## Basic Facilitator Techniques

Paraphrasing	Linking	Balancing
Summarizing	Intentional silence	Drawing people out
Stacking	Empathizing	Encouraging
Tracking	Validating	Making space for a quiet person
Listening for common ground	Acknowledging feelings	

These skills are detailed in the supplementary material from the *Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*, 2007.

**KEY SKILL:** “**Stacking**” but still encouraging interaction and productive disagreement

When moderating, facilitators need to make sure to allow space for disagreement, and actually encourage it in some ways. One of the best products of deliberation is clarification of key tensions/tradeoffs/tough choices (see pages 72-82 for more information), and you can only get those if you bring them out or allow them to surface. We've realized that a strict appreciations/concerns or pro/con format to a discussion can prevent useful interaction. If you are talking about appreciations, and 4 people have their hands up, people that want to respond/disagree to what the first person said can't really do it, because they would be fifth in line (or they may think that "we are talking about appreciations right now"). So this is what we suggest you do:

Do your stacking like normal (pointing out who is next), but after someone has talked, before you go to the next person in the stack, say something like this, "Ok, you are next (point to the person who is next), but before we go to the next topic, does anyone have a quick response to what was just said? Do you agree/disagree?"

This can get messy, but basically you want to allow time for people to talk to each other on that point before moving on to the next point, because otherwise all we are doing is gathering a laundry list of individual pros and cons.

So you allow some response, if there is some, on that point, and then be sure to return back to who was actually next in line. If there is a lot of commentary about the initial point, you may need to jump in at some point and say, "Ok, let's have one more comment on this issue, and then we will move to a new topic."

I think we can still take notes in terms of appreciations and concerns, and even have them on two separate easels, but notetakers will need to jump back and forth more. Moderators will have to manage the time on their own to ensure that some time is spent both on appreciations and concerns. At some point, you may need to specifically ask for concerns, but you may not if the responses to appreciations covered them on their own.

That being said, responding to appreciations may not bring out the main concerns, so at some point you should probably ask that question (Any additional concerns we haven't discussed yet).

## When to Intervene

The basic question facilitators constantly ask themselves is “should I intervene here?” Since the facilitator is technically not part of the group, any action that facilitator takes (asking a question, paraphrasing, making an observation, etc.), should be considered an intervention. Whereas the participants will have varied goals for the discussion, such as convincing others of their perspective, hearing alternative viewpoints, having their voice heard, etc., the facilitator’s focus is on helping the group actually deliberate well. This is the real value-added of the facilitator. They are typically the only person focused on the quality of the discussion and process. Generally, facilitators must consider how to best balance the various functions and responsibilities of facilitators as outlined on pages 53.

Some of the specific reasons to intervene are:

- **Opportunity for learning:** A question, paraphrase, or observation would likely help participants think deeper about an issue and/or develop more mutual understanding, particularly in terms of the consequences of certain actions, or the interplay between common ground and key tensions between perspectives on the issue.
- **Ground rules being violated:** Not any violation of a ground rule merits an intervention, but with high-emotion topics, it may be important for the facilitator to clearly enforce the rules to insure a safe environment for the discussion.
- **Lack of clarity and mutual understanding:** Facilitators should be particularly focused on making sure people understand each other, so when participants use a term or acronym others may not understand, or when others nonverbally communicate they are confused, they should step in to improve the level of understanding. Often, a term means different things to different people, so brief discussions about terminology can be important.
- **Adjusting pace/time management:** Another basic responsibility of the facilitator is keeping the group on time with the process. Being clear on the time and providing time warnings (“We have about 2 minutes left with this question”) can be important to the flow of a process.
- **Opportunity to improve group dynamics or honor democratic values** (i.e. equality and inclusion): Facilitators must consider both the task and relationship dimensions of group work. At times, interventions may be more focused on the relationship dimensions, such as helping address conflict between participants or the perception of disrespect. Other interventions may be more focused on getting new voices heard or supporting a participant who may have less of a sense of power in the group.

**The decision of when to intervene is a difficult one. It is basically a function of the following factors:**

- Importance of the issue
  - Potential positive/negative impact on task
  - Potential positive /negative impact on relationships/climate  
(the relationships between participants and between them and you)
- Potential for it to resolve or occur by itself
- Availability of time for the intervention
- Likelihood of success

## The Art of Asking Good Questions

“The quality of our lives is determined by the quality of our thinking. The quality of our thinking, in turn, is determined by the quality of our questions, for questions are the engine, the driving force behind thinking.”

Elder and Paul, *The Foundation for Critical Thinking*

The following five pages provide a variety of information concerning the kinds of questions facilitators can ask during forums. Asking good questions is a critical part of facilitating, as is knowing when *not* to ask questions. Forums can often progress pretty well without specific questions, all participants may need is some initial prodding to react to the background material. This fact makes it somewhat easier for novice facilitators, because they can learn on the job by simply letting things go on their own somewhat and picking and choosing when to intervene. If the participants are doing well on their own, the need for the facilitators and their questions is diminished, so don't feel the need to force questions.

### Some Overall Thoughts about Asking Questions

- Question asking will depend on the overall goal/purpose for the event
- Be careful of starting a forum with specific questions. People may have something pressing they want to share, and a specific question may not give them that chance. If you start with a detailed question about a specific topic, participants may not be prepared to answer it.
- Preparing questions beforehand can be helpful, but also be prepared NOT to use them
- At times there will be some questions you NEED to ask because you are gathering specific information on that question from all the groups. There is nonetheless an important tension here between too much and too little structure. Asking specific questions of all groups will provide good information on that question, but it is also somewhat forced. The topic did not necessarily come up naturally in all groups, it was introduced by the facilitator. A more open process may bring more interesting results because you will be able to observe what issues arise naturally in the groups. The tradeoff is that by allowing the natural process, you may not get feedback on a particularly important issue. All in all, you need to be careful when introducing specific discussion questions, and be transparent in the reporting of the data about what questions were asked. Impartiality can be questioned if questions are loaded or direct participants in particular ways.
- Most questions will be reactive clarification/follow up questions
- Asking too many questions can be as bad as asking too few
- Ideally, participants are asking each other good questions by the end of the forum

## NIF's "Four Key Questions of NIF Forums"

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?
  - What are you struggling with? What are you not sure about?
  - Why is reaching a decision (or moving forward) 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 tests 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**

## Types of Questions & Question Pitfalls

**Open questions:** expansive, only specifying a topic, allows the respondent considerable freedom in determining the amount and kind of information to provide

### **Highly open**

Reactions?  
What do you think about this approach?

### **Moderately open**

What do you like about this approach?  
What values might people have who support this position?  
How might your concerns differ if you were wealthy?  
What is there about this approach that you cannot accept?

Open questions are designed to generate longer responses that include more explanation. When you want people to explain their reasoning or offer examples, open-ended questions can help signal that you are looking for a longer response.

**Closed questions:** narrowly focused questions

**Bipolar questions:** Questions limited to two polar choices

Are you a conservative or a liberal?  
Do you agree or disagree with the President's position on same-sex marriage?  
Are you for or against the gun control bill?

**Yes/No Bipolar questions:** questions that ask for yes or no responses

Have you voted?  
Can anyone think of something constructive that might come from the approach that is receiving so much criticism?  
If we weren't in an economic crisis, would you prefer this approach?  
Could you share a story to illustrate that point?

Closed questions have a short answer. Sometimes you might want to get a quick reaction from people. For example, you may want to do a quick round to get everyone talking or see where everyone is at. A close-ended question can help signal that you want brief answers.

### **Categories of probing questions**

**Nudging probes:** a question that literally nudges someone to reply or continue

Yes?  
Go on.  
And?  
So?  
Uh-huh?

**Clearinghouse probes:** a toll for discovering if there is anything left unsaid (can also include new voices)

Before we move on to the next approach, is there anything else that someone wants to share?

What points of view haven't we discussed?

**Informational probes:** questions designed to get more explanation or information

Explain what you mean by efficient government.

For example?

**Restatement probes:** restating the original question if someone misses the purpose of a question or does not answer it (or some portion)

**Facilitator:** How do you feel about the proposed "new terrain" route for the I-69 extension compared to using I-70?

**Participant:** It is all pork barrel spending.

**Facilitator:** And how do you feel about the proposed routes for the I-69 extension?

**Challenge probe:** tries to get a participant to see another perspective, deal with a tension/trade-off

How might someone make the case against what you said?

Would you still support approach C even if you had to give up some of your personal freedoms?

If more funding was allocated to childcare programs, what other programs would alternatively suffer?

How would you address the concern that lower childcare costs might also lower the quality?

All of these different probes are ways that you can get someone to continue talking and nudge them in a particular direction. These questions aren't introducing a new topic as much as they are deepening or redirecting a specific speaker or topic of discussion.

### Potential Pitfalls

With all of these generic types of questions, there are particular types of pitfalls that facilitators can fall into. We'll introduce the general category of pitfall with examples before explaining why this pitfall is particularly problematic for a facilitator.

**Leading questions:** questions that suggest the answer expected or desired because the questioner leads the respondent to a particular answer

How do you feel about the ridiculous, politically correct school curriculum?

So you think that we should just build the bridge even if it destroys the nature preserve?

These extreme examples make it easy to see why leading questions violate the impartial stance of a facilitator. Leading questions often make participants feel as though they are being trapped or words are being put in their mouth. Deliberation aims to be a safe space where different

perspectives are honored and explored. Leading questions suggest that certain opinions are not worthy of consideration. This can silence certain voices. Sometimes facilitators do want to set up tensions or play the devil's advocate. The challenge is to do this without belittling another perspective or making it seem unreasonable.

**Binary trap:** when you ask a question designed to elicit a yes or no answer when you really want a detailed answer or specific information. (Hint: Avoid do, can, have, would, and will. Use what, why, how, explain, tell me about, and help me understand).

Could you illustrate how this issue is touching the lives of most of us in this community?

Is there a downside to this course of action?

Do you approve or disapprove of heightened security at the airport?

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

As mentioned above, not all closed questions are bad. Sometimes you want a yes or no answer. But if you are trying to solicit a longer explanation for WHY people think a particular, bipolar traps can solicit the wrong information. Sometimes people will respond to bi-polar traps with a longer explanation, but research shows that this phrasing is more likely to solicit short responses or even confusion.

**Open-to-closed switch:** When you ask an open question but before anyone can respond you rephrase it to a closed question

Tell me about your experiences as a single parent. Was it hard?

Sometimes when you ask a closed question people still provide long answers. But research shows that the way that you ask the question does influence the type of response that is offered. If you are looking for someone to provide a longer story, don't cut it off by asking a simple yes/no question.

**Double-barreled questions:** when you ask two or more questions at the same time instead of a single, precise question

Facilitators sometimes rephrase a question multiple ways in order to make sure that everyone understands the question and to give people a moment to think of an answer. Nonetheless, sometimes facilitators get nervous and start asking a series of different questions that would all take the conversation in a different direction. The problem is that participants don't know which question to answer. In turn, when someone starts to speak it can be confusing to know which question they are responding to. Rephrasing a question can be ok (e.g. what do you appreciate about this approach? What do you like about it?), but be careful not to offer more than one question (e.g. what do you appreciate about this approach? What do you dislike about this approach? What are your general reactions to this approach? What do you think needs to be changed?)



## 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 who 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? Can someone say what the common ground might be? Can someone take shot at summarizing any common ground we have? And the actions that are indicated from the common ground?
- ☐ Which direction seems best?
- ☐ Where do we want this policy to take us?

## **General Questions to Encourage Deliberation Cheat Sheet**

- 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?

Other favorites?

## Setting the Ground Rules

Deliberation is more likely to take place if some guidelines are laid out at the beginning; they can help prevent difficulties later on. Often these rules are posted somewhere in the room (perhaps on a flip chart and then displayed on a side wall). We tend to you Ground Rules, other processes may use guidelines, covenants, norms, protocols based on the desire to get away from “rules” which are perceived as imposed or they want to emphasize mutuality of the behavioral understandings, i.e. covenants. Ideally, the groups come up with the rules themselves through a process, but we often don’t have the time to do that. There is a very real tension about using these rules. We want to create a productive, safe environment, but we also do not want to cut off discussions, unduly suppress ideas, or unnecessarily favor particular communication styles.

Moderators find it useful to ask the group to ratify these rules verbally or by a show of hands rather than just announcing them. A wide variety of potential ground rules to deliberation exist (see the list of “ground rules” used by various deliberative techniques at the end ), thus individual moderators need to decide which rules to use and how to frame the rules before the forum. Some moderators also allow the audience to suggest additional rules to the discussion.

### **The CPD’s basic Ground Rules are:**

- **BE HONEST AND RESPECTFUL**
- **LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND**
- **ITS OK TO DISAGREE, BUT DO SO WITH CURIOSITY, NOT HOSTILITY**
- **BE BRIEF SO EVERYONE HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE**

When we go over these rules at the beginning of a forum, we use the time to help us explain the overall philosophy. For example, we talk about the importance of listening and the critical role of listening in deliberative politics as compared to adversarial politics.

Another function of ground rules is to essentially provide the participants with examples of norms and behaviors that hopefully they will find value in beyond the forum itself. The hope is that once they realize the higher quality of conversation that occurs under these conditions, that they become a habit for them that impacts their communication style in multiple settings.

## **Moderating the Welcome**

The manner in which any particular forum begins is an open question to be answered by those planning the forum. These are some potential elements that could be incorporated into the welcome portion of the forum.

Overall, the welcome should be rather short. Participants are there to talk to each other, not listen to the organizers. Provide enough background to explain the process and goals for the meeting, but otherwise move quickly into the process.

### **Potential components of a welcome:**

- Introduce your team
- Thank sponsors
- Thank participants
- Explain any logistics (bathrooms, refreshments, etc.)
- Explain Deliberation
  - Define
  - Compare “politics as usual” and deliberation
  - Compare debate and deliberation
- Address the “so what” question and the goals of the event.
- Explain what information will be captured and what will be done with the information.
- Preview structure of the forum
- Go over ground rules and garner buy in from participants (see p. 64)
- Explain the roles of the facilitator and notetakers
- Encourage and Answer questions

## **Moderating the “Reflections” Section of the Forum**

The reflections time at the end of the forum can often be the most productive time overall. This time is precious, and should be used wisely. How it is used depends heavily on the goals for the event overall. For example, if the goal was primarily learning about the issue, then the reflections time should focus on the issue itself and what people learned. If the goal was to improve relationships and democratic attitudes, then questions should be asked connected to that goals (such as asking them how their thinking has changed about other people, or what they learned about the other participants). If the goal was action, this time should be used to identify and gain some commitment on individual and group actions. The basic NIF format for reflections are below, but feel free to adjust these to your particular needs for your event.

**Overall question:** 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 key values we all hold seem to be in conflict?
- What trade-offs were the group willing or not willing to make?

### **Next Step Reflections**

- What do we still need to talk about?
- Who else needs to be here? What voices were missing that could have added to the discussion?
- How can we use what we now know?

One type of question we like to ask at the CPD, particularly if the report will be provided to decision-makers, is to ask the participants something along the lines of, “Now that you’ve had a chance to think about this issue from multiple perspectives and listen to your fellow community members, what is the one think you would tell [insert most relevant decision-maker here, such as “school superintendent,” “governor,” “city council,” etc.] if they were here right now?”

## **Ideally, after the forum everyone should be able to...**

- Identify the range of realistic alternatives and move toward a choice;
- Make a good case for those positions one dislikes as well as the position one likes, and consider choices one has not considered before;
- Understand others have reasons for their choices and that their reasons are very interesting—not dumb, unreasonable, or immoral;
- Realize one's own knowledge is not complete until one understands why others feel the way they do about the choices;
- Consider the underlying values of each choice; and leave the forum/study circle "thinking hard" over the choices.

## **Other Considerations about Ending a Forum**

If practitioners are planning on completing a report for the forum, they should consider the goals and audience of that report as they put together the forum, especially the reflections period. Particular questions that would be useful for the report could be asked then.

It may also be useful to include a written survey to be completed at the end of the forum to capture additional information. Most NIF books include post-forum questionnaires at the end of the book.

Lastly, it may be useful to use “dot” voting at the end of the forum. We often provide each participant with 5 dot stickers, and explain they can place the dots next to any statements they strongly agree with at the end of the forum. We allow them to put all dots on one if they prefer, or they can spread them out. That provides the reporter with additional information concerning the preferences of the group that can be helpful.



## PART 4: ADVANCED FACILITATOR SKILLS

### The Four Key Products of Deliberative Inquiry: Key issues to focus on before, during & after deliberative forums

At the CPD, we have begun to focus on four issues while running events that we feel are particularly important to our mission of improving political communication and enhancing community problem-solving. We believe that one of the key consequences of deliberation is clarification on four key elements of community decision-making and problem-solving that other methods of political communication often either ignore or obscure: (a) **The identification and attempted resolution of key obstacles to collaborative problem-solving**, (b) **identification of common ground**, (c) **identification and the struggle with key tensions or tough choices**, and (d) **the identification of and development of support for action from a broad and inclusive range of stakeholders**. When deliberative events are designed, run, and reported on, we believe particular attention should be paid to these elements.

**An important note to facilitators:** These key products are much more relevant for issue analysis and prepping for an event, or the more rigorous analysis completed after an event. However, advanced facilitators may also notice them during an event and want to take them on “on the fly.” Noticing and reacting to these issues are, however, clearly an *advanced* facilitator skill. So read through these pages, but don’t worry too much about being able to incorporate this into your facilitation repertoire just yet. They may, however, be important to think about as you reflect on the experience and help with any report. After a forum, you may want to specifically think about these four products and pass on any insights to whoever is doing the reporting.

#### 1. The identification and attempted resolution of key obstacles to collaborative problem-solving

This first product of deliberative inquiry is primarily focused on addressing a wide range of troublesome issues, many of which are the result of adversarial politics, that tend to make it more difficult for people to address issues productively. These issues can be grouped into three broad categories: issue simplifications, issue misconceptions, and researchable fact questions.

*Issue Simplifications:* One of the big problems with popular public discourse is that issues are greatly simplified, often as a strategic ploy. People inherently tend to rely on **wishful thinking** when faced with complex decisions, and many of the strategies used in adversarial politics tend to take advantage of this natural impulse. We want things to be easy, and they make them seem so. In many ways, deliberation involves complicating issues, because most issues are actually complicated. Going back to the discussion of value claims on page 14-17, most public issues involve numerous underlying value dilemmas that need to be identified and worked through in order to make good decisions. Within adversarial politics, people often avoid the value dilemmas by framing things in a way that make them seem simple and easy. So the first step to improve the conversation is to undo the damage done.

Some of the particular tactics to expose include **magic bullets** (assuming there is one solution to complex problems), **devil figures/scapegoats** (assuming the problem is caused by one individual or entity, and that simply removing that individual or entity would solve the problem), or **paradox splitting** (“resolving” a difficult issue by focusing one side of a paradox and ignoring or dismissing the other). For example, tax cuts, better parenting, and electing more Republicans or Democrats are often seen as magic bullets. Think about how often both parties go to the “elect me and I’ll fix Washington” argument. With health care, insurance companies are often constructed as devil figures, as are oil companies with the energy problem. This isn’t to say that insurance or oil companies are not important aspects of the problem (or that tax cuts, better parenting, or new representatives could be important parts of a solution), but to assume they are the only or primary cause/solution is too simplistic.

Paradox splitting is related to the discussion of value dilemmas earlier (page 15), and how advocates often only focus on one side of complex issues. Explaining paradox splitting will be much easier once we clearly describe the notion of tough choices, so we’ll return to them later.

*Issue misconceptions:* Another key problem with public discourse about difficult issues is basic misunderstandings or misinformation. Advocates who focus on persuading regardless of the truth of their claims or the manipulation they may cause may actively develop and support misinformation about issues that often have a pretty long life. Misconceptions may include simple factual errors, outright lies, misrepresented motivations, or situations where only part of the story is told or quotes are taken out of context. **Misrepresenting motivations** is a particularly common tactic that warrants some discussion. One of the easiest ways to misrepresent issues is to convince people that the motivations of key players are negative, misguided, or otherwise different than their supposed/stated motivations. Partisans utilize this tactic often, and reframe their opponent’s words or actions by offering alternative motives. For example, Democrats want gun control because they are intent on “taking away all our freedoms,” and Republicans are against welfare programs because “they hate poor people and minorities.” Obama wanted health care reform because “he is a socialist,” and Bush backed the war in Iraq because he wanted to make money for Halliburton. Indeed, a lot of public discussion involves each side attacking positions that no one actually holds (phantom opponents, phantom issues, stalking horses). Deliberative inquirers and critical thinkers dig deeper to get past these assumptions, and deliberative events are often set up so that people from various perspectives work together, so they get a chance to explain their own motivations, and can help undo any misconceptions.

*Researchable fact questions:* This last group of obstacles provides a clear link between strategic, scientific, and deliberative inquiry. It involves identifying key fact questions that at least theoretically could have an answer. Public discussions often get derailed because opposing sides operate with a different set of facts. Unfortunately, without productive interaction, such separate assumptions tend to live on and don’t get resolved. Deliberative inquiry, on the other hand, once again seeks out and tries to resolve such questions. Sometimes they can actually be resolved—an outside authority is identified that provides an undisputed answer to the question—or sometimes simply identifying the fact question as an open question can improve the discussion. If anything, advocates will no longer talk past each other using different facts and will attempt to resolve the question themselves.

Focusing on this product can also work to utilize the strength of scientific inquiry while addressing one of the weaknesses of strategic inquiry. Scientific inquiry, when focused and applied well, can develop a solid base of valid information that can be used in public decision-making. Strategic inquiry, on the other hand, often creates or supports misunderstandings if they are useful to their point of view (the ends justify the means, and at times the means involve creating or supporting bad assumptions). High quality deliberative inquiry should in part work to undo the misconceptions wrought by strategic inquiry, and develop new particularly important fact questions that perhaps scientists and experts could then go about answering.

Another way of thinking about the role of deliberative inquiry in identifying and potentially resolving key fact questions is that it helps the public focus on what is actually the issue. This point will be relevant when discussing tough choices as well, but generally much public discussion is unproductive because people simply focus on the wrong aspects of the issue, and get bogged down in minutiae or fact wars. The public may hold on to clear misconceptions that are easily corrected by substantive, credible data. “Facts” may begin to lose their power when they are used strategically so often, and seem to only represent ammunition for partisan battles. Deliberative practitioners can thus play important roles as “honest brokers of information” to rehabilitate the value of facts in our decision-making processes, while understanding their limitations.

This product is particularly difficult for facilitators to handle on the fly. Bringing them up may essentially require you to challenge a participant (“Actually, sir, that is an example of issue simplification and wishful thinking, you dolt!”). Facilitators must tread lightly here.

## **2. Identification of common ground**

As discussed above, opposing sides often hold misconceptions of their opponents (again, often by design, and helped by human psychology that wants to see things in good/evil dichotomies). Individuals that have 98% of their opinion in tandem will focus on the remaining 2% they disagree on and think they are worlds apart (see page 28). Freud termed this phenomenon the tyranny of minor difference. When individuals receive information about their “opponents” only from sources hostile to their opponent’s point of view, they develop a clearly slanted view of their opponent’s motives and belief system. Here once again deliberation can be a strong antidote to these misconceptions. Placed in the same room, and asked to be honest and to listen, the opposing sides often discover a much larger sense of common ground, and realize that many of their assumptions were greatly exaggerated. Review, for example, pages 14-17, about competing values. We all pretty much have the same values, we just order them differently and focus on different ones at different times. No one is anti-family, anti-compassion, anti-justice, anti-freedom, or anti-security. Few people are truly evil, at least from their point of view. People just see things from a different perspective that is misunderstood by others. Granted, there is still certainly plenty of genuine conflict (see the tensions discussion below), but there is normally significant common ground as well. Identifying this common ground in the room helps moves the conversation forward. Highlighting the common ground in the report to the broader community can also help dispel the caricatures many people hold of opposing views. In the Glade Reservoir discussion (pp. 13-14), it is easier for the environmentalists to assume the developers simply hate the environment and want to pave over the world for a buck, and it is easier for the developers to assume the environmentalists are insane bird lovers that have no

sense of economic realities and think we should go back to live pure with nature and destroy all of modern civilization. Clearly their actual positions are much different. The developers care about the environment—no one hates the environment—but they believe the damage to the river would be minimal and they rank the provision of water resources to communities higher than that minor damage. The environmentalists explained they weren't anti-growth and understood that the growing communities needed water, they just explained that this particular river was already too overworked and didn't feel it was the right source for the additional water (notice the "fact question" that arose in that discussion as well concerning the impact on the river, which will be answered, at least partly, by the Environmental Impact Statement). Both sides essentially agreed that protecting the river was important, and finding some resources for the growing communities was important. Both sides agreed increased conservation of resources is critical (though they disagreed on the extent to which conservation would be enough to meet growing demand). I'm not sure that event changed much—it was a debate not a deliberation—but it did nonetheless clearly establish significant common ground. If that was a project we were focused on, we could work to build on that common ground. We could help them work together to find the best solution that honors their various concerns.

Another quick example related to poverty. The poverty debate in this country is often very exaggerated. The Left assumes the Right hates the poor, and is racist, greedy, and indifferent to human suffering. The Right assumes that those on the Left are exploiting the poor for political advantage and are providing "handouts" in exchange for their political support, or perhaps that they have their hearts in the right place ("bleeding heart liberals"), but are simply ignorant about the poor themselves and the workings of government. The Right assumes many people that are poor brought it on themselves (and the pathologies of poverty provide them ready evidence), and that government programs not only do not help, but they actually make things worse by keeping people in poverty or attracting people to poverty, which again, they can find evidence for. They assume those on the Left support expanding wasteful, expensive programs that actually have the opposite effect that are intended to have. These differences dominate the discussion, and the nonpoor Right and the nonpoor Left bicker endlessly and nothing really gets done.

Viewed differently, there is plenty of common ground regardless of political affiliation. Whether or not you blame a parent for their poverty, very few people blame children for their poverty. A very high percentage of Americans in polls agree with the idea that if you work full time you shouldn't be poor. A very high percentage of Americans in polls believe that if you cannot work for reasons out of your control, you should be supported generously by your community. Almost everyone believes in the concept of equal opportunity, that everyone should have an equal chance to prosper in our society (though we differ on how close we are to that being a reality). A very high percentage of Americans believe in public education, and believe schools are a key factor in providing equal opportunity. These are significant points of common ground that can be relied on to build significant support for anti-poverty initiatives. Anti-poverty efforts are often seen as "progressive"—based on notions of compassion, social justice, and equality—but there are plenty of conservative connections to anti-poverty efforts. Religious social conservatives are a strong base of support, as clearly pretty much every major religion focuses in part on the importance of being compassionate to the poor. Economic conservatives would clearly be interested in turning individuals currently relying on government programs into self-sufficient consumers and taxpayers. Traditional conservatives believe very much in community, and the

need for communities to help their own, so they should support community efforts to address poverty. One of the reasons the CPD became involved in the Pathways Past Poverty project is because we thought we could help the community discover and act upon these points of common ground. For too long, we've focused on the aspects of the poverty debate that divide us, rather than the significant common ground that exists between us.

Key areas of common ground may be an important discussion item during a reflections time period of a forum. Asking the group to identify common ground or even specifically key values they all share can be useful. As a facilitator, mentioning a specific value or area of common ground you've noticed in the discussion and asking them if they agree could also be important.

### 3. Identifying and struggling with key tensions

The last element is perhaps the most important. We introduced tough choices earlier, but we need to return to the concept again with a little more detail.

Recall that a tension or tradeoff is basically a situation where:

- *We can't have more of something we want without also having more of something we don't want.* (like more democracy without more inefficiency)
- or
- *We can't have more of something we want without also having less of something we like.* (like more economic equality without less economic freedom)
- or
- *We can't have less of something we don't want without also having more of something we don't want.* (like less fraud and abuse without more monitoring of behavior)
- or
- *We can't have less of something we don't want without also having less of something we like.* (like less bureaucracy or government costs without less oversight, assessment, and information)

Going back to the Fort Collins reservoir, we have some tough choices to make about the competing interests of farmers, developers, recreationists, homeowners, and environmentalists. It's not that some of them have bad values, it's that their reasonable values may inherently conflict with the reasonable values of others. As mentioned earlier, strategic inquiry tends to avoid tough choices, and wants to frame things as if "their" side has good values and the "other" side has bad values. Scientific inquiry tends to avoid values and thus tough choices altogether. Deliberative inquiry, on the other hand, takes these value dilemmas and tough choices head on. Indeed, perhaps the primary purpose of deliberative inquiry is to identify and clarify the tough choices so the broader audience can struggle with them more effectively. In sum, how each form of inquiry deals with values and value dilemmas is a key distinction between the three forms, and the most important "value added" aspect of deliberative inquiry.

As we reviewed earlier (p. 15-18), Perelman argued that values were critical aspects of democratic decision-making that must be studied and understood. Overall, he argued that people tend to actually hold very similar values, so what makes us different, and what causes conflict, is how we rank our values (in what he called our "value hierarchies"), and how specific values may

conflict in particular situations (“value dilemmas”). These inherent value dilemmas oblige us to “make choices,” which is the essence of the deliberative perspective, and the focus of deliberative inquiry.

Perelman’s work helps to identify why both scientific and strategic inquiry often fall short. Scientific inquiry tends to avoid values, primarily because they cannot be observed, quantified, or even clearly defined. But values are inherent in any problem definition or policy proposal, so the “avoidance” of them is merely theoretical. The more significant problem concerning values and tradeoffs, however, come from strategic inquiry, which often makes the tough work of working through value dilemmas much more difficult. Again, Perelman argued that we tend to hold the same values. That fact can be used bring people together or can be abused as a strategic weapon. Value claims, he explained, can be made along a continuum from more or less abstract or concrete. Abstract value claims simply utilize the value without definition or application (i.e. the abstract idea of “freedom” rather than the specific freedom of a particular group to perform a specific action, like the KKK marching in a Jewish neighborhood). When used abstractly, value claims generally have universal support. Very few audiences would be against values like freedom, liberty, equality, compassion, prosperity, education, or security (though different audiences would certainly rank them differently). It is only when given substance, or when pitted against one another, that differences arise. This is what we described as “first rule of values”: when considered abstractly and one at a time, values are universally supported. Advocates often take advantage of the first rule of values and frame issues as if only one value is relevant. By doing so, they make it appear as if the “choice” is between honoring a common value or dishonoring it, with them firmly situated supporting the value, and opposing sides against it. This is what we meant earlier about **paradox splitting**. It is a tactic of framing a difficult issue in a way that you avoid one side of the issue rather than taking it on. Look back at the various examples of tough choices on the previous page. Paradox splitting occurs when advocates focus on only one side of each of those choices (i.e. focusing on the need for more access to health care without dealing with the inevitable increased costs, focusing on the need for more democracy without the inefficiency it will cause, focusing on the need for more equality without the violations of freedom that may cause, etc.). Arguments that rely on paradox splitting are not as much of a problem when opposing sides are able to interact (either through deliberation or productive debate), since the opposing side of the paradox is likely to be expressed by the opposing side. Once again, however, far too much of our public discourse is not interactive, and we are constantly bombarded by claims that only tell us one side of the story, and thus lead to polarization, misunderstanding, and bad decisions.

Unfortunately, however, such appeals tend to work, which is why marketers and political consultants suggest them. The problem, of course, is that they avoid or obscure the tough choices we are obliged to address, and they support unfair (and untrue) negative views of opposing perspectives. People begin to assume that opposing views support negative values (they are anti-family, anti-working Americans, anti-freedom, etc.), rather than realizing they perhaps have the similar values, but rank some other reasonable values higher.

Consider, for example, the value dilemma of national security and individual liberty. We would argue that few if any Americans are “anti-national security” or “anti-liberty.” The issue, of course, is that the values at times conflict, and actions that support national security may require

a curtailing of individual liberty (such as tapping phones, detaining suspects without clear evidence, or prohibiting toothpaste on planes). Proponents of national security often attempt to frame the issue in terms of their support for national security, and, consequently, their opponent's lack of support for it ("They hate America and support the terrorists"). Proponents of individual liberty do the same for liberty ("They are Fascists that want to take away all your liberties and control your behavior"). Such arguments are unfortunately persuasive, and encourage polarization and misunderstanding. In particular, they support misattributions of negative motives which are remarkably detrimental to the communication processes and collaborative efforts that democracy so desperately requires. Working with others that have the same values but rank them differently is challenging but doable; working with others you perceive as rejecting your values and you theirs, is exceedingly difficult. Granted, even the reframed value disputes may remain rather significant and fuel substantial legitimate conflict, but nonetheless are much more manageable than the false perceived conflicts that often dominate political disputes due to unnecessary polarization.

Another reason why such strategic framing is so detrimental is because it takes advantage of our basic human impulses to want to be right and avoid tough choices. As Yankelovich has written:

The single most important reason people have for failing to accept the consequences of their opinions is their difficulty in resolving their own conflicting values and ambivalences. The ability to resolve internal conflicts of values is the foundation of good-quality public opinion . . . Resolving conflicts of values takes time; it is painful work, and people avoid it as much and as long as they can.<sup>3</sup>

If a choice is framed as you are either for national security or against it, the decision is easy, and psychologically we are comforted knowing we are on the right side. If the choice is national security or individual liberty, two values we likely hold dear, we are much more conflicted and unsettled. When offered the choice between the two framings, we naturally prefer the former.

The problem, of course, is that the former framing is a false one. It is essentially wishful thinking to assume those that disagree with us hold negative values, and all we need to do to resolve the conflict is for them to become reasonable (or to be removed from the discussion). This human impulse to seek out comfort and easy solutions is made even easier in the 21st century due to communication technologies that allow us to interact only with the like-minded, which only works to reinforce the false assumptions concerning the values of opposing perspectives ("I can't believe they think that way!" "I know!").

So while scientific inquiry tends to avoid values and hence value dilemmas, and strategic inquiry tends to obscure or misrepresent them, deliberative inquiry is focused on uncovering them, putting them front and center, and helping participants work through them. This, we argue once again, is the defining feature of deliberative inquiry and deliberative practice. Diverse democracies and organizations will inherently be confronted with multiple value dilemmas, and they must develop the capacity to address them productively. Deliberative practitioners thus seek to uncover the complex value dilemmas that are the real heart of public issues and try to deal with them. In the end, we must try to exercise "prudence," balance all the different values as best

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<sup>3</sup> Yankelovich, *Coming to Public Judgment*, 30.

as possible at the time, and seek what Aristotle called the “ideal mean.” We recognize that we want both national security and individual liberty, but those tend to conflict, thus we seek ways to find the perfect balance between the two while also keeping the conversation going for future adjustments, or perhaps find ways to transcend the dilemma that allows us to honor both simultaneously.

Of course, Perelman is not the only philosopher that supports this perspective. Much writing and research has been done to help us think through how to deal with democracy’s inherent value dilemmas, the paradoxes that we must face as democratic publics, and the reasonable disagreement that will always persist. It is closely tied to the insights of Daniel Yankelovich about public opinion and public judgment (initially introduced on pages 18-19). Academic books such as Diane Stone’s *Policy Paradox*, Charles Lindblom’s *Inquiry and Change*, Frank Fischer’s *Reframing Public Policy*, and John Forester’s *The Deliberative Practitioner*, from different starting points all support the importance of developing capacity to deal productively with our differences and address inherent value dilemmas.

Overall, the advantage of surfacing and working through these tensions is that it gets to the heart of the issue, and people can normally realize that reasonable people can disagree when it is framed that way. Democracy in a diverse society requires tough choices, and we can only make those tough choices if we know what they are and are given the opportunity to work through them with our neighbors. Typical political communication doesn’t provide those opportunities, deliberation, *if done well*, can.

### **Ways of capturing / bringing out tensions/tough choices:**

- Tensions may come out within a particular approach, or between approaches. Tensions between opposing perspectives are most obvious, but it also very informative when people with similar opinions realize tensions within their own perspective.
- They may surface naturally during the conversation (one person offers a perspective, another response, “yeah, but if we do that...”). You may then want to respond with something like, “There seems to be a tradeoff here between x and y, do you agree?”
- You can help introduce them by asking for a response to someone’s opinion. “So what may be the consequences of that position?” or “Is there a downside to doing that?” Either the same individual or someone else may then introduce a tradeoff. One of Daniel Yankelovich’s primary arguments concerning the distinction between simple public opinion and reasoned public judgment is that public judgment takes seriously the various consequences of favored actions and policies, whereas simple public opinion normally would not. One of the reasons why facilitators ask participants to consider all the consequences of their policy suggestions is to surface the inherent tensions involved.
- You can introduce it yourself if necessary as a response to a point made. “Some people would argue, though, that if we did that, then X would also happen. How do you see the tradeoffs? The consequences?”
- Discussion questions that include an “EVEN IF” statement can be particularly useful. For example, “Would you be willing to support increased time in class to focus on exercise and nutrition EVEN IF that meant less time for other subjects?” “Would you be willing to



support increased FCC scrutiny on the portrayal of sex and violence on broadcast television  
EVEN if that meant more restrictions on artistic creativity and less choices for consumers?”

So think about these things as you study the issue, as you decide on reflections questions and survey questions. Keep them in mind during the event, and try to identify them or otherwise help them come to light. And when you are reporting on the event, try to highlight what the forum was able to produce in terms of these three key elements.

#### **4. The identification of and development of support for action from a broad and inclusive range of stakeholders**

The final key product of deliberative inquiry is based on the realization that the problems our communities face will require the involvement a very broad range of actors from multiple sectors, across private, public, and non-profit lines, both in terms of engagement in the process of inquiry—to be able to understand the issues from multiple perspectives—as well as in terms of action. Broad audiences are thus critical to deliberative inquiry.

Once again, scientific and strategic inquiry fall significantly short on both counts. Scientific inquiry tends to narrow its focus to particular actors, either at the individual level—see the volumes of research on the individual pathologies of poverty, for example—or more often at the governmental level, particularly the federal level. Scientific inquiry can also overemphasize the potential for technology to solve problems and save us, which also has the impact of taking responsibility away from broader audiences. Scientific inquiry, when focused on public policy, in other words, tends not to imagine broad possibilities for action, primarily because breadth does not fit well with rigor and validity.

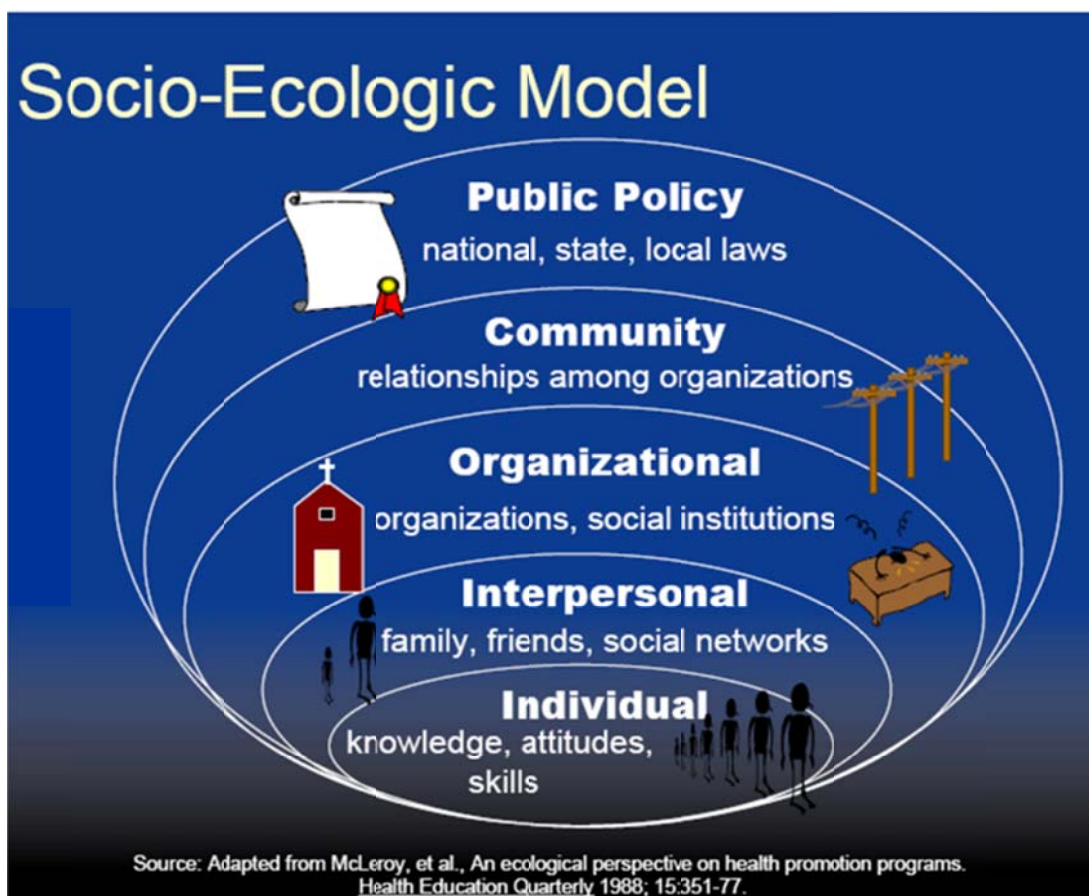
Strategic inquiry will focus on whatever range of actors is most beneficial to their point of view, which is often rather narrow as well. Since strategic inquiry is not particularly focused on convincing opposing sides—they tend again to preach to their own choirs or try to capture more middle ground—it rarely involves consulting them for their viewpoints. Advocates may frame particular actors as simple solutions (“elect me and I’ll solve the climate crisis”), or focus on the blame game, which also inherently narrows the scope of problem-solvers (“if we get rid of the evil oil companies, the climate crisis will be solved”). Blame based solutions typically ask very little of most, because they frame problems as caused by a few (often either victims or victors). Strategic inquiry also tends to support “magic bullet” solutions—because they tend to be persuasive—which work against developing a sense of responsibility among broad groups.

Deliberative inquiry, on the other hand, specifically seeks to engage broad audiences, particularly going beyond the usual suspects and empowering new audiences previously detached from “politics,” and then avoids narrow framings, blame games, and magic bullets concerning solutions. Deliberative inquiry begins with the notion that difficult problems will require a broad range of actors to understand and to address. It connects to developing notions of democratic governance and public acting. As explained by Harry Boyte:

Governance intimates a paradigm shift in the meaning of democracy and civic agency—that is, who is to address public problems and promote the general

welfare? The shift involves a move from citizens as simply voters, volunteers, and consumers to citizens as problem solvers and cocreators of public goods; from public leaders, such as public affairs professionals and politicians, as providers of services and solutions to partners, educators, and organizers of citizen action; and from democracy as elections to democratic society. Such a shift has the potential to address public problems that cannot be solved without governments, but that governments alone cannot solve, and to cultivate an appreciation for the commonwealth. Effecting this shift requires politicizing governance in nonpartisan, democratizing ways and deepening the civic, horizontal, pluralist, and productive dimensions of politics.<sup>4</sup>

A focus on broad range of potential actors, particularly citizens as problem-solvers and co-creators of public goods, develops somewhat naturally from a perspective that seeks to identify and work through tough choices and develop common ground. Such choices are not clarified unless a broad range is engaged, and then when citizens realize there are no easy solutions and that their “opponents” hold reasonable views, a shift to considering their collective role in solving problems often results. Deliberative inquiry thus seeks to spark and utilize conversations that shift from a focus on the causes of problems, to more productive and positive stories about potential futures.



<sup>4</sup> Harry C. Boyte, “Reframing Democracy: Governance, Civic Agency, and Politics.” *Public Administration Review* 65 (2005), 536.

During the process of deliberative inquiry, therefore, analysts should think broadly about who could be involved in the solution. For example, the **socio-ecologic model** developed by health education professionals calls for consideration of potential actors at five broad levels: individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and public policy. To reduce childhood obesity, for example, individuals need to change their eating and exercise habits. To do so, though, they probably need help from their interpersonal networks like friend and family (have you ever tried to diet when everyone else in the house isn't?). Organizations like schools, hospitals, and gyms also have a big role to play. Communities can also come together to help, by doing things like collaborating to create nutrition or exercise programs (Fort Collins, for example, has organizations like Live Well Colorado and Healthier Communities Coalition that work to bring various groups together to work on related issues). Lastly, government policies at the city, county, state, or national level could be changed (cities or counties could spend more tax dollars on building parks and bike paths or subsidize youth sports programs, or states or the federal government could tax junk food or provide tax breaks for gym membership).

Unfortunately, many of our problem-solving discussions tend to focus on governmental solutions, because that is the context where the conversations take place. The conversations therefore often become simplistic pro-con arguments pitting pro-government and anti-government solutions (with anti-government advocates often arguing for individualistic solutions). Once again, people take opposing sides and tend to talk past each other. Deliberative inquiry seeks to broaden the conversation.

**As you are facilitating**, look out for chances to get the participants thinking about who all should be involved in this issue. This product is often a useful subject for reflections questions in particular, and issues may even be specifically framed to get people thinking about the responsibilities of different groups. For example, if a group is mentioned, you may push further on that: “You mentioned faith-based institutions, what do people see as their potential role within this approach?”

## **Moving from Positions to Interests: An Important Way for Facilitators to Dig Deeper**

In their classic work, *Getting to Yes*, Roger Fisher and William Ury discussed the importance of moving participants from a focus on their positions to one that focused on their interests. This move was critical to the Harvard negotiation method that sought to discover “Win/Win” solutions to conflict rather than the typical “Win/Lose” nature of competition, or even the “Lose/Lose” nature of compromise and bargaining.

**Positions** are concrete proposals about specific plans of action, such as hiring more teachers, damming a river, banning cell phones in cars, or increasing the penalty for a crime.

**Interests** are the underlying needs, desires, concerns, and fears that lead people to support particular positions. Interests connected to the positions listed above may include the need for high quality education for one’s children, being proactive and adequately prepared for future growth, the safety of children, bicyclists, and other motorists, and the need to increase deterrence.

Fisher and Ury argued that interests define the problem, not positions, but most conflict focuses on position differences, and the underlying interests often remain hidden or misunderstood. “Behind opposed positions,” they explained, “lie shared and compatible interests as well as conflicting ones.” Similar to the points made concerning values on pp. 14-17, most people hold rather reasonable interests, and when those interests are surfaced and understood, the negotiation—or deliberation—is much easier.

Surfacing interests—both those that shared and competing—helps with the next task Fisher and Ury discuss in the book: Inventing options for mutual gain. Interests are much easier to combine, or find creative ways to satisfy, than positions.

### **Facilitator Tactics to Move from Positions to Interests:**

The easiest way to move from positions to interests is for facilitators to simply ask “Why” (or, at times, “Why not?”) The question must be framed or clarified so participants understand you are not belittling their position or simply asking for justification for their opinion, but that you are seeking better understanding of the needs, hopes, fears, or desires that it serves.

Another tactic that helps move from positions to interests is to have participants focus on what they want in the future (and why) rather than playing the blame game about what happened in the past.

Finally, facilitators can make the shift from positions to interests themselves, by paraphrasing a position statement made by a participant, and moving it to more of an interest statement (while, of course, giving the participant clear opportunity to disagree with the new framing).

Participant: We need to install additional speed bumps in our community!

Facilitator: Are you wanting to slow down traffic because of a concern for your children’s safety?

## Handling Moderator Challenges

Overall, it is important to consider that deliberation is difficult, and at times participants will struggle. Sam Kaner describes this as the “Groan Zone” that groups must go through as they work on difficult issues. So challenges are not failures or evidence of something going wrong, they may very well mean things are doing as they should. In many cases, when an individual is being difficult, the best remedy is not to focus on the individual, but the rest of the group. If one person is dominating, the rest of the group is not active enough, for example.

**Here are some specific facilitator techniques for dealing with difficult people or situations:**

- **Preview/pre-empt and prepare for your weaknesses** – If you know it is difficult for you to interrupt someone who dominates, explain that up front when you introduce yourself. It makes it much easier to intervene later (“you’re making me interrupt you...”). If based on experience you struggle with particular interventions, ask other facilitators how they handle such situations and prepare specifically for them.
- **The notes and process are your friend** – The need for good notes and to stay on time are two important tools for you to use to address difficult situations. If someone is rambling, intervene based on the need to have a clear summary of their point. If a conflict starts escalating, you can intervene to make sure you clearly understand each side for the notes. If time is short, jump in to establish that and the need to hear other people or to move on. Each of these interventions can be “blamed” on the need for notes or to stay on time, making it easier for you to pull them off without seeming heavy-handed.
- **Process adjustments** (rounds, writing, smaller groups) – If one or two people dominate, you may want to adjust the process to insure other voices are being heard. Do a round (asking everyone in the group to briefly reply to a question), ask everyone to write down an answer on a notecard or post-it note and then to share, or ask them to work in groups of 2 or 3 briefly and then report out.
- **Be honest/Ask the group** – For many difficult situations, there is no perfect technique to resolve it. The best move may be to be honest with your own struggle, and simply ask the group. This can be used if something does or doesn’t seem to be working or needs adjustment (“it seems to me we only have about 2-3 people doing most of the talking, do you think that is a problem?” or “this seems to be a bit of tangent, but I could be wrong. What do you all think?”). If a problem participant is requesting process adjustments, rather than deal simply with them, open it up to the group (“what do people think, should we move on now to action steps?”). Of course, it depends on the process and how much control you as a facilitator has to make adjustments, but asking the group can help you find the balance between letting the group own the process and achieving the task. If participants are “debbie downers” shooting down all ideas or pushing conspiracy theories, facilitators can simply ask the group (“so what do you think, is this exercise futile?”). It’s likely that people will think differently and defend the process, which tends to work better than you having to defend it.
- **Shifting from past to future** (“Imagine...”). If participants are stuck in conflicts or actions from the past, shift the discussion to the future. Rather than dwell on past transgressions, ask them how they would want to be treated in the future and what they would hope to happen
- **Moving from positions to interests** – See page 83.
- **Perspective taking.** If certain perspectives are dominating and it seems opposing views may be reluctant to speak up, make it easier for them by making room for alternative perspectives (“If \_\_\_\_ were here, what would they say?” or “Let’s think about the other key stakeholders or groups that care deeply about this topic that we haven’t heard from yet. What may they say if they were here?”)

## Dealing with Conflict

Facilitating deliberative practice has many connections to the field of conflict management. Conflicts are inherent to democracy, and communities need to learn how to deal with inherent conflicts more productively, rather than seek to resolve, or avoid, them). Entire courses can be taught in conflict management, but I'll just provide some quick thoughts here.

The first step to managing conflict is understanding the conflict, which can be an important function of deliberative practice. In particular, understanding at what level the conflict may reside is critical for facilitators to understand how to address them.

### One way to categorize conflicts uses a 4 level typology:

1. **Conflict based on different facts** – These conflicts are perhaps the most difficult to address in deliberative forums. If opposing views have fundamentally different facts they are working with, and there is no clear way to resolve those differences with the resources available during the forum, then at times the best the facilitator can do is bracket the discussion and have the participants simply agree to disagree, and perhaps seek out the answer—if there is one—after the forum for the report. Thankfully, well designed deliberative forums with high quality background material and framing should not get derailed by any particular factual conflicts.
2. **Conflict based on misunderstandings** – At times, what appear as differences in facts are actually misunderstandings. Here the process and the facilitator can help address the conflict by making sure the opposing sides have a clear opportunity to explain themselves and listen to each other. Our current political culture often relies on misunderstandings, so there is plenty of misunderstandings for deliberation to undo, and many conflicts dissipate when opposing sides truly understand each other.
3. **Conflict based on value differences** – Many conflicts are fueled by value differences. The process of clarifying those value differences, and having participants struggle with their *actual* value differences rather than false, perceived differences is very important (see pp. 15 on value dilemmas, as well as page 28 on polarized discourse). While serious differences may still exist, they are typically much more manageable when understood. The key to addressing these conflicts then is to isolate the values and help participants identify underlying values and work through the differences. If the conflict is particularly heated, it may be useful for the facilitator to lay out what they see as the conflict, or perhaps even ask a third participant to do so (“Would anyone want to try to characterize the differences between these two perspectives?”).
4. **Conflict based on outside issues** – Sometimes, conflict arises that are the result of personalities, past history, or other factors irrelevant to the issue (such as political goals). These conflicts are also difficult to address during the forums, and would often require a deeper interventions. The primary response for facilitators in these cases are to try to bring the group back to the issue at hand, in part by directing attention away from those participants.

Facilitators should also remember that in most deliberative settings, they do not need to resolve the conflict. Consensus is rarely necessary for a deliberative forum to be useful and successful. Once the conflict is clarified, and the opposing views clearly captured in the notes, it may simply be time to move on. Do not let a personal conflict dominate a discussion.

## The Art of Active Listening

The International Association of Public Participation training material includes useful information concerning the various behaviors that support active listening. Facilitators should both model these behaviors, as well as help participants adopt them themselves.

Behavior	Purpose	Tips	Examples
Encouraging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conveys interest</li> <li>Encourages the person to keep talking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't agree or disagree</li> <li>Use neutral words</li> <li>Face the speaker and nod as they speak</li> <li>Ask probing question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Can you tell me more?"</li> <li>"And then what happened?"</li> </ul>
Clarifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensures understanding</li> <li>Avoids confusion</li> <li>Obtains additional information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask questions</li> <li>Restate understanding</li> <li>Ask if interpretation is on track</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"When did this happen?"</li> <li>"By impacts you mean...?"</li> </ul>
Restating or Paraphrasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows you are listening and understanding what is being said</li> <li>Checks meaning and interpretation of message</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restate basic ideas in your understanding of what was said in your own words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"So you would like NGE to provide materials in Spanish. Is that right?"</li> <li>"You thought that this action was required at this time?"</li> </ul>
Reflecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diffuses difficult situations</li> <li>Shows understanding of feelings and emotions</li> <li>Helps the speaker evaluate his/her own feelings after hearing them reflected by someone else</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflect the speaker's basic feelings</li> <li>Listen to the tone of your voice</li> <li>Watch body language</li> <li>Guess their feelings and reflect them back</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"This has really been frustrating to you."</li> <li>"You sound disappointed..."</li> <li>"I hear anger in your voice..."</li> </ul>
Summarizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviews progress</li> <li>Pulls together ideas, facts, and feelings</li> <li>Establishes closure; allows people to move on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restate major ideas, thoughts, and feelings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"These seem to be the key ideas you have expressed..."</li> <li>"Your main priorities were..."</li> </ul>
Validating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledges the worthiness of the other person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledge the value of their issues and feelings</li> <li>Show appreciation for their efforts and actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"I appreciate your willingness to resolve this issue."</li> </ul>
Questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gathers information</li> <li>Focuses discussion</li> <li>Expands understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use open-ended questions starting with what, how, when, and where</li> <li>Seek specific details to help understand and clarify</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"How did that new road surprise you?"</li> <li>"What made you think that?"</li> </ul>

## **The Art of Paraphrasing**

### **Purposes of paraphrasing**

- Shows you are listening and thus shows them that what they are saying is important
- Helps solidify your role as impartial facilitator (so your paraphrases need to be fair and nonjudgmental)
- Checks meaning and interpretation of a message
- Helps people more clearly express themselves
- Helps equalize contributions (those that are more eloquent do not gain as much an advantage)
- Helps others understand each other better (your paraphrase may be the key to others getting what the original speaker meant)
- Gives them a chance to clarify their points (they realize they aren't explaining themselves well)
- Helps them evaluate their own feelings (your paraphrase may actually teach them about themselves – “yeah, I guess that is what I meant....”)
- Helps notetakers capture a summary
- Can help shift the discussion to a deeper level (move from positions to interests)
- Can help shift the discussion from a tense/emotional level to a more understanding level (especially when you paraphrase and take out “inflammatory statements”)
- Helps you keep present in the conversation and paying attention

### **Perils of Paraphrasing**

- You can easily get too caught up in paraphrasing everything, making it more about you than them.
- Paraphrasing encourages more back and forth between you and the speaker, rather than the speaker and the rest of the group.
- People may get the impression that you are implying you speak better than they do.
- You may only capture part of what they are trying to say
- You may miss the main point and they may not feel comfortable correcting you

Be sure to paraphrase in a manner that allows the participant to feel overly comfortable disagreeing with your paraphrase. Do not paraphrase matter-of-factly (“You mean that...”), always paraphrase with qualifiers (“What I am hearing is...is that right?”; “So do you mean that...”; “Would you say then that...”; etc.

Facilitators can also utilize the participant, the notetakers or the other members to help paraphrase, particularly by relying on the need to capture the thought well on the notes. You can ask the person to summarize for the notes (“How could we write that briefly and still capture your concerns?”) or ask others (“Could someone try to paraphrase that for me so we can get that down?”). If you as the facilitator are not following a comment—and you think it is important—be honest. Ask for help to make sure the comment is captured and appreciated.



## **Handling Moderator Challenges**

Overall, it is important to consider that deliberation is difficult, and at times participants will struggle. Sam Kaner describes this as the “Groan Zone” that groups must go through as they work on difficult issues. So challenges are not failures or evidence of something going wrong, they may very well mean things are doing as they should. In many cases, when an individual is being difficult, the best remedy is not to focus on the individual, but the rest of the group. If one person is dominating, the rest of the group is not active enough, for example. See Kaner’s suggestions on “Classic Facilitator Challenges” in your supplementary material.

### **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?

Often in a forum, participants themselves will call other participants on their behavior such as dominating the conversation or giving misinformation that others know is not correct.

## Dealing with Emotion

The first point to make here is to be clear that emotions are not detrimental to deliberation. Indeed, the lack of emotions is much more of a problem. Some early theorists of deliberation sought to create purely “rational” discussions that were devoid of emotion, but current deliberative practitioners understand that dealing with emotions is a critical aspect of high-quality deliberation. The surfacing of emotions represent an important teaching moment that facilitators should welcome.

One function of deliberation is to allow participants to express their emotions in a productive manner. Another is for participants from opposing perspectives to see the emotions present in others in a respectful, safe environment, so those emotions can contribute to increased understanding.

Facilitators can react to emotion in many different ways. Most often, you simply allow the participant a chance to vent (as long, of course, as no one feels threatened). The expression of emotion is often a clear opportunity to help participants move from positions to interests and reveal powerful underlying values and concerns. Paraphrasing may be particularly useful, especially for the other participants, who may get caught up the emotion and not be really listening to the message being sent. Restating an argument made by an emotional participant in a less emotionally-laden manner—taking out, for example, particularly inflammatory statements that may distract others—can be valuable technique. Overall, these ideas are connected to a key mediation idea; the power of acknowledging feelings and values. Without agreeing or assenting one can acknowledge how another is feeling thus recognizing their humanity.

Other suggestions for dealing with emotional participants from IAP2 include:

- Don't interrupt, be defensive, or argue
- Respect their opinion and their right to it
- Try not to take their anger or emotion personally
- Use active listening skills
- Ask questions to clarify the source of their anxiety, concern, fear, or anger
- Summarize what you have heard so they are sure they are being understood (often anger comes from repeated failed attempts to get their opinion across)
- Get their agreement on the summary, and be sure to have their concerns clear on the notes
- Ask them what they would like done to address their concerns (shift from past to future)
- Check to make sure that you have accurately recorded their comments and concerns

If they continue to interrupt:

- If there is more than one facilitator available, suggest that the person talk directly to the other facilitator in another room to allow the meeting to continue
- If you are the only facilitator, offer to talk to them during a break or after the meeting so that you can continue the meeting
- Alternatively, ask the person to write down their concerns, and commit to providing the comments as part of the meeting record

<b>Good Signs</b>	<b>Signs the moderator should make a move</b>	<b>Tips to get back on track</b>
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.	

## PART 5: NOTETAKING & REPORTING

### Forum Recording

#### Purpose of Recording

- To help establish that what the participants say is valued and being listened to
- To remind forum participants of their comments, agreements, and action items, particularly during the reflections time.
- To support the importance of equality and inclusion. Comments are captured regardless of the source, and the author is not identified.
- To serve as a reference document for future forums
- To facilitate the writing of the report that will inform a wider audience of the discussion, decisions, and actions

#### Qualities of Effective Recording

- Brief
- Legible
- Well organized
- Reports the appropriate amount of information
- Captures the tensions, trade-offs and common ground for action
- Notes are distributed soon after the forum
- Treat each person's contribution with equal respect. It is not your role to determine the value of a comment, but rather to capture the discussion.
- Clear
- Accurate
- Uses active verbs

#### Suggestions from Kaner's *Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*\*

- Print in capital letters 2 to 4" tall
- Make think-lined letters
- Write straight up and down
- Close your letters (don't leave gaps in B's and P's, for example)
- Use plain, block letters
- Practice makes perfect
- Alternate colors between speakers, but don't use too many colors on one page
- Don't crowd the bottom of the page

#### Additional suggestions

- Use key words they used as much as possible.
- If you plan on using "dot voting" at the end of the forum, be sure to leave some space for the dots. You may also want to draw lines between the separate comments
- Be sure to label and number the sheets before you take them down.
- Have a pen or pencil handy to write additional clarification comments if necessary. Have notetakers add comments to the sheets before they are taken down.
- Moderators and notetakers should discuss beforehand how they will work together, especially concerning how much the notetakers will interact with the participants.

## **Interactions between Facilitators and Notetakers**

This likely needs to be discussed beforehand, because different facilitators and notetakers have different styles, and those styles have different pros and cons.

Some interact frequently. Ultimately, the facilitator is in charge, and she/he should to some extent be “in charge” of the notetaking. They need to make sure that thoughts are being captured and captured well. Before moving on to the next speaker, a quick peek at the notes to doublecheck can be important. If the notetakers completely miss something and the facilitators move on, the participants may feel nobody thought it was important. We don’t make those judgments. It is the group’s memory, not our memory of what we thought was important.

Facilitators can certainly help the notetakers, particularly in paraphrasing and summarizing comments to make it easy for the notetakers.

Some notetakers are semi-facilitators. They may interact more with the participants, asking clarification questions or for the participants to sum up. Facilitators and notetakers don’t want to be competing or talking over each other, but both can work to insure that everything is being captured well.

As a facilitator, be careful about simply assuming that the notetakers are capturing everything well.

As a facilitator, make sure the participants feel comfortable correcting or helping notetakers. At the beginning when you explain your role and the role of the notetakers, mention to them to speak up if they feel their point was not clearly captured.

### **Tips for Organizing Information at the End of a Forum**

- At the CPD, we clearly mark all pages while they are on the wall, and then take digital photographs of each. It is much easier to type up the notes from photographs than handling the paper itself. We still keep the paper until the notes are typed, in case they are needed for clarification.
- 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 (which may be you!)

## **The Reporter/Observer**

The activities and characteristics listed below pertain to a forum observer who will collect information useful for creating a follow-up report:

- Is alert and attentive
- Arrives early and observes participants as they gather
- Observes participants' body language
- Listens carefully and takes legible notes
- Records a few key actual statements word for words that could be used in a report
- Keeps track of the context in which recorded statements are given
- Recognizes and notes group dynamics
- Notices and records shifts in direction, e.g., comments that signaled a shift away from agreement and toward conflict or comments that signaled a shift away from tension toward common ground.
- Identifies and lists what expressions or statements contributed to a breakdown, greater confusion, or a breakthrough to deeper understanding, even common ground
- May conduct brief post-forum interviews with a random sampling of five or six forum participants

## PART 6: CONVENING PUBLIC FORUMS

This section has some overall information on planning and convening the forums. The workshop itself will not focus on the material, but it is provided as a resource.

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

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

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

All public issues forums are useful in the sense that participants increase their awareness and knowledge of a particular issue and the perspectives other people have regarding the issue. However, deliberative forums serve other equally important purposes.

For example, while libraries may be more interested in sponsoring an “intellectual” deliberation and having a forum for solely educational purposes, other agencies may want to deliberate a highly charged issue in order to inspire public action or to provide information to institutional decision makers. Still other forums are held as demonstrations of the deliberative process and serve as only one component of a larger program or event. Determining the specific purposes and expectations one has for a forum will influence how one plans and prepares for the actual event (refer to “Goals and Consequences of Deliberation” on pages 36).

### **Partnerships – Who else would benefit from being involved in the planning process?**

Some organizations may wish to hold a public issues forum on their own because they have a specific purpose in mind, e.g. they want to reach a specific audience or they offer the forum as a component of a larger program. The organization also may have adequate resources to support the event.

For others, creating a partnership with another community agency, civic group, faith-based organization or other community entity may prove more effective. Partnerships provide opportunities to reach broader audiences. Partners are able to disseminate information among their respective networks and assist one another in defraying costs (for further information, see page 94 - Tips for Creating Partnerships).

### **Participation – Who should attend the forum?**

Should participation in the forum be open to the public? Should participation be limited by “invitation-only”? Should organizers invite a targeted audience while still keeping the event fully accessible to the general public? Remember that the purpose of the forum will affect the audience you intend to include, and cultivating partnerships that represent different interests in the community will better enable you to reach a wider cross-section of the community.

Other suggestions for identifying and engaging a target audience include:

- **Forming a steering committee.** When recruiting members for a forum steering committee, look for candidates who can offer strong partnerships through their professional or civic involvements. For example, to form connections with local schools, consider administrative staff or classroom teachers for committee appointments.
- **Seeking the involvement of local media** during the early stages of planning. By involving media representatives in the process, they may be more likely to provide effective publicity and coverage of the event.
- **Utilizing all opportunities for publicity.** Local leadership will be far more willing to champion a forum when they already view it as a success. Publicity is one of the best tools for building a successful image. Ask partners to include announcements in their organizational newsletters, websites, and other promotional materials.
- **Continuing to develop connections.** Generating support for your community engagement efforts and building a civic infrastructure for deliberative dialogues is an ongoing and evolving process. Always ask yourself: whose voice is still needs to be heard? How can we invite them to participate in the planning process? How else can we reach out to them effectively?

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

Group size is often a very open question. NIF suggests between 15 and 25 participants as 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. The CPD has at times utilized small group discussions around a large table, with 6-8 participants, and those can work well when the topic is engaging enough that conversation will flow well. Some participants may feel more comfortable speaking in a small group as well. With such smaller groups, however, the likelihood of differences arising between participants is reduced. Smaller groups afford more input, but perhaps less opportunities for engagement across differences.

#### **Publicity – How should you involve the media?**

Media coverage can be a very useful tool for promoting and reporting on a public issues forum. At the same time, organizers should be aware of the following considerations.

##### ***Television and print media***

- Ideally, if someone is reporting on a forum, they should be observers. There have been cases where reporters participated in a forum, but as citizens. They may write a story later on about their experience.
- If someone is at your forum as a reporter, encourage them to stay for the whole forum so they have a better sense of how a deliberative forum works.
- If they are unable to stay for the duration of the event, politely request that they come and go quietly – so as not to disrupt the forum.
- It would be good to communicate with the media ahead of time concerning the sensitivity of associating names with comments. If they intend to do so, forum participants should be made aware ahead of time that they may be quoted.



### ***Videotaping***

- Be clear about the final goal of the video. If you think there are possibilities to distribute the tape widely, as opposed to using it for one client or for internal purposes only, you will want to organize the project differently.
- Be sure participants sign any relevant release forms.
- Make sure the room is big enough to accommodate lighting and equipment and to allow videographers the option to move freely. Also be sure that there are plenty of electrical outlets.
- Give the video crew plenty of time before the forum to set up.

## **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 forum participation increases and support for your efforts grows, consider developing more partnerships and increasing the diversity of the connections, which will enhance the growth and outreach of the public deliberation process.

The following guidelines suggest important principles to remember when seeking to create positive partnerships:

- **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.** 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 participate fully if they are an integral part of the planning process as well as part of the implementation process.
- **Clearly define roles.** 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, time and resources will the partner provide? What is the timetable for completing the assignment? How will their contribution be recognized?
- **Ensure that partners understand 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 partners 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.

## **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 moderating 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.

## **Deliberation and Diversity**

### **Why is diversity so important in deliberative forums?**

- Lack of diversity leads to group think and diminishes the wisdom of crowds
- Diversity provides a greater potential for learning
- Diversity provides a potential for increased understanding/tolerance of others
- Diversity provides a greater potential for increased sense of efficacy/voice, especially for members of a community that have traditionally not been a part of such events.
- Diversity can increase the quality of the process and results, because often everyone has one small piece of the best solution.
- Diversity can increase the legitimacy of the process and results, because ideally in a democracy all voices are heard and represented in broad decisions.

### **What sort of diversity should be targeted?**

The primary goal should be to attract true diversity of thought. Such diversity includes but also goes beyond typical notions of diversity (race, gender, and ethnicity), and also incorporates diversity of age, geography, education level, occupation, political views, etc.

### **The Barriers of True Diverse Participation**

Insuring a representative room is critical to a successful, legitimate deliberation, but attendance does not guarantee participation and consideration. During the deliberation, those with minority views often will not feel comfortable speaking, may have language issues, or may not be taken as seriously by other participants. Indeed, finding the right balance between “impartiality” and “insuring minority views are heard and considered” is perhaps the most difficult challenge of moderating deliberative forums.

### **The “Diversity Dilemma”**

Clearly, considering the information above, attracting a diverse crowd can be critical to a successful and legitimate forum. On the other hand, the more diverse the audience, the more difficult the job of the moderator can be. If a deliberation degenerates into a polarized argument, deliberation can be much more harmful than beneficial, leading to participants leaving with a negative opinion of deliberation as well as hardened negative assumptions concerning those that think differently than them. The diversity dilemma, therefore, is that while a diverse room offers greater potential for positive consequences, at the same time it offers the opposite potential (said differently, a diverse audience offers high risk, high reward).

## Attracting a Diverse Audience

- **Plan early** – Brainstorm with multiple sources about who needs to attend the forum to insure major voices participate.

- **Learn and overcome the hurdles to participation**

Find out why certain segments tend not to attend public forums, and address that issue

- Do they not know about it? (publicity problem)
- Do they not have time or access? (convenience, money, need for child care, or transportation problem)
- Do they think they will not be taken seriously or listened to? (respect problem)
- Do they not believe the problem is important or relevant to them? (a motivation problem)
- Do they think the process is empty talk, not action? (legitimacy, efficacy problem)
- **Varied sponsorships** - connect with organizations that will increase the legitimacy of the event in the eyes of diverse audiences
- **Multiple meetings** - host meetings in different locations that will draw different audiences
- **Targeted recruiting** - send specific invitations to various communities and follow up
- **Assisted recruiting** - develop contacts within various communities that will recruit for you
- **Representing missing voices** - if the room is not diverse, moderators can ask for those attending to consider the missing voices, or could themselves introduce those voices

## Stakeholder/Audience Analysis

A useful tool to help a group think through audience issues is an audience/stakeholder analysis. The form below, developed by the Institute for Participatory Management and Planning, can help a group brainstorm possible aspects of a topic, as well as the various groups that may be impacted by those aspects of the issue. The list developed on the left hand side could then be used to consider an audience strategy.

IPMP: the Institute for Participatory Management & Planning, PO Box 1971, Monterey, CA 93942-1971 Tel (408) 373-4252 FAX: 373-6768. Contact us and we will train your key managers in Creative-Building methods and strategies, specifically, in SBAC (Systematic Development of Informed Cases), CPD (Citizen Participation by Design), CDD (Dealing with Extremists and Terrorists), COTAR (Communication / Staff Relations), Professional Ethics, and Crisis Management.

**Project Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Issues:**  
An "Issue" is an unambiguous statement.  
It can be:  
- a fact, - a fear, - a fancy,  
- an accusation, - a concern,  
- a myth ... etc.  
A good way to express an Issue unambiguously is to dare to

**PAIs:**  
Potentially Affected Interests  
to write today all the News-paper Headlines that, someday, will be written about those issues.  
Include:  
individuals, groups, corporations, institutions, other agencies, and other officials, ...  
... outside and inside your organization ...

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33
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## Convening the Forum – A Checklist

### Moderators, Recorders, Observers

- ☐ Who will *moderate*? How many people will moderate?
- ☐ Who will *record*? How many people will record?
- ☐ Will you utilize *observers*?
- ☐ 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? How flexible is the space? How many different groups could it hold?
- ☐ 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.
  - U-shaped / circled?
  - With / without tables?
  - Arrange the room so you have a good spot for easels, and to put the paper up
- ☐ Room details, e.g., location of bathrooms
- ☐ Equipment
  - Microphones (**Note:** Try to avoid using microphones unless it is difficult for people to hear. With 15-25 people you might not need them.)
  - Easels with flip charts
  - Markers
  - DVD/VCR and TV

- ☐ Extension cords
- ☐ Dot stickers
- ☐ Extra issue guidebooks
- ☐ 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?
- ☐ How will you handle late comers?
- ☐ Who is responsible for designing promotional materials?
- ☐ Who is responsible for copying and distributing promotional materials?
- ☐ Who is responsible for securing issue guides?
- ☐ Will you be using a survey? What demographic information would be useful for the report? What questions would be useful for the report?

## PART 7: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Useful Deliberation Links and Downloads

**The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation** ([www.ncdd.org](http://www.ncdd.org)) NCCD is a primary umbrella group organization that has information on hundreds of deliberative organizations and techniques. Their “resources” link on the top menu leads you to a very information packed search screen.

**The National Issues Forum** is one of the oldest and most respected deliberative organizations. They produce 3-4 national issue books each year, and host numerous trainings. Local NIF “Public Policy Institutes” also produce local issue books that may be useful. A few of the national books are available online as PDFs (others can be ordered), while most of the local books are free online. Main website: [www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org) The direct link to the list of local issue books is located at: [http://www.nifi.org/discussion\\_guides/guides.aspx?catID=15](http://www.nifi.org/discussion_guides/guides.aspx?catID=15)

**Kettering Foundation** (see page 104 for more information). [www.kettering.org](http://www.kettering.org)

**Public Agenda** – Wonderful resource with a number of NIF style issue books available. They also sponsor the Center for the Advancement of Public Engagement (CAPE), which has several useful free publications. [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org).

**Everyday Democracy (formerly the Study Circles Resource Center)** [www.everyday-democracy.org](http://www.everyday-democracy.org) Like NIF, Study Circles is a well respected national organization known for its high quality issue books and tested deliberative methods. Their books are also available free online (topics such as racism, diversity, poverty, and public education). They also maintain a “Issue Book Exchange” that provides book on a number of topics.

**AmericaSpeaks** [www.americaspeaks.org](http://www.americaspeaks.org) A national organization that focused on large scale democratic gathering that utilize technology to bring thousands together to deliberate. Many of their reports are available online.

**The EPA Public Involvement website** has a number of useful tools and information. <http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/>

**Democratic Dialogue: A Handbook for Practitioners** (free online download) The Handbook on Democratic Dialogue has been a joint effort of CIDA, International IDEA, OAS and UNDP, receiving valuable input from a wider network of organizations. This Handbook has been designed to reflect current practice in the field of dialogue and to draw on concrete experiences of practitioners in various regions and of various actors involved in these processes. <http://www.democraticdialoguenetwork.org/index.pl>

**Public Conversation’s Project** <http://www.publicconversations.org>. The Public Conversations Project (PCP) guides, trains, and inspires individuals, organizations, and communities to constructively address conflicts relating to values and worldviews.

**National League of Cities Democratic Governance Initiative** [http://www.nlc.org/resources\\_for\\_cities/programs\\_services/437.aspx](http://www.nlc.org/resources_for_cities/programs_services/437.aspx)

**The Weil Program on Collaborative Governance at Harvard University**. The program’s mission is to nurture a better understanding of the potential, limits, and proper realm of collaborative governance. <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/m-rcbg/wpcg/>



## Some Suggested Readings

### For Deliberative Democracy & Public Deliberation

Barber, Benjamin R. (1984). *Strong democracy: Participatory politics for a new age*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Briand, Michael K. (1999). *Practical politics: Five principles for a community that works*. Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Fischer, F. (2003). *Reframing public policy: Discursive politics and deliberative practices*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gastil, John. (2008). *Political communication and deliberation*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications

Gastil, John. & Levine, Peter. (Eds.). (2005). *The Deliberative democracy handbook: Strategies for effective civic engagement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. New York: Jossey-Bass.

Leighninger, Matt. (2006). *The next form of democracy: How expert rule is giving way to shared governance and why politics will never be the same*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Mathews, David (1999). *Politics for people: Finding a responsible public voice*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

National League of Cities. (2006). *Strengthening democratic governance. Changing the way we govern: Building democratic governance in your community*. (available free online through [www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org))

Stone, Deborah . (2002). *Policy paradox: The art of political decision making*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Yankelovich, Daniel. (1991). *Coming to public judgment: Making democracy work in a complex world*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Numerous free articles from *The Journal of Public Deliberation* (<http://services.bepress.com/jpd/>), the National Civic League Journal (<http://ncl.org/publications/ncr/index.html>) and the Center for the Advancement of Public Engagement (<http://www.publicagenda.org/cape>).

### For Facilitator Skills:

Kaner, Sam. *Facilitators guide to participatory decision-making*. 2d ed. San Francisco : John Wiley & Sons/Jossey-Bass, 2007

Schwarz, Roger M. (2002). *The skilled facilitator : a comprehensive resource for consultants, facilitators, managers, trainers, and coaches*. San Francisco : Jossey-Bass, c2002

## Kettering Foundation

The Kettering Foundation is an operating foundation rooted in the American tradition of inventive research. Its founder, Charles F. Kettering, holder of more than 200 patents is best known for his invention of the electric automobile self-starter. He was interested, above all, in seeking practical answers to “the problems behind the problems.”

Established in 1927, the foundation today continues in that tradition. The central question behind the foundation’s research now is this: What does it take to make democracy work as it should? Rather than look for ways to improve on politics as usual, we seek ways to make fundamental changes in how democratic politics are practiced.

Guiding our research are three hypotheses:

1. Democracy requires citizens who accept their responsibility and are able to make sound decisions about the public’s interest.
  2. Democracy requires healthy societies of citizens in communities.
  3. Democracy requires legitimate instructions that encourage healthy civil societies.
- The Foundation’s research focuses on finding ways to make democracy work better. Chartered as an operating, nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation, Kettering does not make grants.

### What Does Kettering Study?

Politics is not just about government. It is about all the ways that people solve their common problems. The Kettering Foundation is a research foundation that devises and tests strategies that will strengthen the role of citizens in governing themselves.

### What’s Wrong?

Democracy may be this country’s proudest achievement, but it is not doing well today. Evidence suggests it is not working as well as it should. Our political system, like all other political systems, has to change in order to meet the challenges of a new century.

So, we are trying to identify these challenges.

Americans are cynical and angry at a political system they say neither heeds them nor serves them. As foundation President David Matthews puts it, they feel as though they have been “forced out of politics by a hostile takeover.”

These feelings are often referred to as a lack of agency – the feeling that people no longer control their lives or futures. Many Americans see their fates being determined by megaliths: the economic system, the criminal justice system, the health care system, the education system, the political system.

Some problems just won’t go away, problems like the use of illegal drugs and the increase in violent crime among young people. Despite outmost promising programs, these problems are getting worse.

We find increasing evidence that people are estranged from the institutions that have been created to serve them – Congress, political parties, the media, even public schools.

### **Addressing the Problems**

The foundation's research is designed to address these problems through programs in six distinctive but interrelated, interdependent areas:

1. Citizens and Public Choice
2. Community Politics and Community Leadership
3. The Public and Public Schools
4. Institutions, Professionals, and the Public
5. The Public-Government Relationship
6. The International and the Civil

Kettering's research is carried out by a small permanent staff augmented by associates, research assistants, international fellows and scholar-in-residence. The foundation does not make grants, but often establishes joint ventures with other organizations whose interests are similar. Its work is largely supported by the \$265 million endowment. For more information about the Kettering Foundation, visit their web site at <http://www.kettering.org>.

## Sample Ground Rules for D&D Processes (from NCDD website)

### Summary:

Facilitators of dialogic and deliberative processes often develop their own standard set of ground rules which they suggest groups adopt or modify to meet their needs. Here are some samples of ground rules from organizations which represent various streams of online and face-to-face D&D practice. Use this list to get new ideas for ground rules or to show a variety of sets of ground rules to facilitators you are training.

### Common NIF “Ground Rules”

- Everyone is encouraged to participate.
- No one or two individuals dominate.
- Participants should speak to one another, not just to the moderator.
- The discussion will focus on the choices, and consider all major choices or positions.
- An atmosphere for discussion and analysis of the alternatives should be maintained.
- Listening is as important as speaking.
- Voices not present should be considered and introduced by both the moderator and participants

### The World Café

#### Café Etiquette

- Focus on what matters.
- Contribute your thinking and experience.
- Speak from the heart.
- Listen to understand.
- Link and connect ideas.
- Listen together for deeper themes, insights and questions.
- Play, Doodle, Draw - writing on the tablecloths is encouraged.

### The University of New Mexico - Education Outreach Online Training - Talking Circle Rules

The three main rules of the Talking Circle are:

- speak honestly and truthfully from the heart
- be brief
- listen attentively

Each Circle develops its own rules during the first meeting, and everyone in the group agrees to abide by them. Some typical rules are:

- One person talks at a time. Everyone listens to the person talking, without interrupting.
- Be supportive of each other and encourage each other.
- If you say you will do something, do it.
- Be willing to try things you have never tried before.

## **Study Circle Resource Center (SCRC)**

### Ground Rules

- Listen carefully and with respect.
- Each person gets a chance to talk.
- One person talks at a time. Don't cut people off.
- Speak for yourself, not as the representative of any group. Remember that others are speaking for themselves, too.
- If something someone says hurts or bothers you, say so, and say why.
- It's okay to disagree, but be sure to show respect for one another.
- Help the facilitator keep things on track.
- Some of the things we will say in the study circle will be private (personal). We will not tell these stories to other people, unless we all agree that it is okay.

## **Public Conversations Project (PCP)**

### Sample Agreements for Dialogue

- Speak personally, for yourself as an individual, not as a representative of an organization or position.
- Avoid assigning intentions, beliefs, or motives to others. (Ask others questions instead of stating untested assumptions about them.)
- Honor each person's right to 'pass' if he or she is not ready or willing to speak.
- Allow others to finish before you speak.
- Share 'air time.'
- Respect all confidentiality or anonymity requests that the group has agreed to honor.
- Stay on the topic.
- Call people and groups by the names that they prefer.

## **Conversation Café**

### Agreements/principles to guide the conversations

- Acceptance: Suspend judgment as best you can
- Listening: Respect one another
- Curiosity: Seek to understand rather than persuade
- Diversity: Invite and honor diversity of opinion
- Sincerity: Speak what has heart and meaning
- Brevity: Go for honesty and depth, but don't go on and on

## **Teaching Democracy**

### Online Deliberation Guidelines

These deliberation guidelines are being used in Democracy Lab online forums for students enrolled in participating courses. Topic announcements posted twice a week set the agenda for self-moderated groups of 15-20 students.

- Deliberative dialogue, not debate. Although you will often disagree, your dialogue should not be a debate. Debates tend to be about winning and losing, about knocking down your opponent's arguments. That is not the object here. We are not opponents but colleagues pursuing our disagreements in order to understand why we

see things so differently. This means asking each other questions and replying to these questions openly. It even means expressing your second thoughts about opinions you hold.

- Exploring agreements and disagreements, not searching for consensus. In some dialogues there is a tendency to push disagreements into the background in order to reach some sort of consensus. That should not happen here. Sure, areas of agreement need to be explored, but it will be the differences in perspective that help everyone learn - if the group works hard at finding the underlying reasons for those disagreements.
- Exploration, not knowing all the answers. No one has all the answers. All opinions are subject to change when faced with new evidence or with new ways of looking at things. Most participants entering this dialogue will feel very unsure about many aspects of the issue. Don't be defensive about feeling unsure. Instead, turn to the group for help by explaining why you are unsure, perhaps explaining how you feel pulled in different directions.
- Open, honest dialogue. You must be frank about your concerns and opinions. When you disagree with a colleague, do so openly and honestly, but with respect. Be considerate of each other even when faced with opinions that shock or anger you. When you are shocked or angered, say so. Then try to figure out how two people can come to such drastically different points of view.
- Participate actively and regularly. Try to be online at least 3-4 days per week -- to catch up on messages, to post some questions and comments and to respond to any questions others have asked you. Once you get involved, you will probably find yourself checking in almost every day. Don't just lurk; participate!

#### **From the Four Directions (Meg Wheatley's Program)**

Principles to emphasize before a formal conversation process begins

- We acknowledge one another as equals.
- We try to stay curious about each other.
- We recognize that we need each other's help to become better listeners.
- We slow down so we have time to think and reflect.
- We remember that conversation is the natural way humans think together.
- We expect it to be messy at times.

#### **University of Michigan Intergroup Dialogue Program**

Multicultural Ground Rules

- Our primary commitment is to learn from each other, from course materials and from our work. We acknowledge differences amongst us in backgrounds, skills, interests, values, scholarly orientations and experience.
- We acknowledge that sexism, classism, racism, heterosexism and other forms of discrimination (religion, age, ability, language, education, size, geographic location, etc.) exist and may surface from time to time.
- We acknowledge that one of the realities of sexism, classism, racism is that we have been systematically taught misinformation about our own group and members of devalued groups (this is true for both dominant and dominated group members). The same is true about elitism and other forms of prejudice or bias - we are taught misinformation about others and ourselves.
- We will try not to blame people for the misinformation we have learned, but we hold each other responsible for repeating misinformation or offensive behavior after we have learned otherwise.
- Victims should not be blamed for their oppression.
- We will assume that people are always doing the best they can, both to learn the material and to behave in non- biased and multiculturally productive ways.
- We will share information about our groups with other members of the class, and will not demean, devalue or put down people for their experiences or lack of experiences.

- We will actively pursue opportunities to learn about our own groups and those of other groups, yet not enter or invade others' privacy when unwanted.
- We have an obligation to actively combat the myths & stereotypes about our own groups & other groups so that we can break down the walls which prohibit individual development, group progress, cooperation & group gain.
- We want to create a safe atmosphere for open discussion. Members of the class may wish to make a comment verbally or in an assignment that they do not want repeated outside the classroom. Therefore, the instructor and participants will agree not to repeat the remarks outside the session that link a person with his/her identity.
- We will challenge the idea or the practice, but not the person. We will speak our discomfort.
- Are there other ground rules that the class would like to add?

### **National Issues Forums**

#### Ground Rules

- Everyone is encouraged to participate.
- No one or two individuals dominate.
- The discussion will focus on the choices.
- All the major choices or positions on the issue are considered.
- An atmosphere for discussion and analysis of the alternatives is maintained.
- We listen to each other.

## Sample Deliberative Techniques

### National Issues Forums **National Issues Forum** – [www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org)

NIF is a nationwide network of educational and community organizations that deliberate about national public issues. NIF publishes deliberation guides on such topics as “Racial and Ethnic Tensions: What Should We Do?”, “Money and Politics: Who Owns Democracy?” and “Violent Kids: Can We Change The Trend?”

### 21st Century Town Meeting **AmericaSpeaks** - [www.americaspeaks.org](http://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](http://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 coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations and the relevant world around them.

### Bohmian Dialogue **Dialogue: A Proposal** - [www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/bohm\\_dialogue.htm](http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/bohm_dialogue.htm)

David Bohm was a well-respected contemporary physicist whose contributions to science and philosophy include a kind of free-form, sustained dialogue. Bohm's introduction to dialogue is featured on this website.

### Citizen Choicework **Public Agenda** – [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org)

Founded in 1975 by social scientist Daniel Yankelovich and former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Public Agenda prepares educational materials that help explain policy to the public in a balanced and easily understood way. Citizens use this information to weigh various choices and make educated decisions. Public Agenda has addressed such issues as school and health care reform, national security, AIDS, crime, economic competitiveness and the environment.

### Citizens Juries **The Jefferson Center** - [www.jefferson-center.org](http://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.

### Consensus Conference **Resource on the CII website** - [www.co-intelligence.org/P-DanishTechPanels.html](http://www.co-intelligence.org/P-DanishTechPanels.html)

The Danish Board of Technology has used Consensus Conferences more than any other entity, in order to ensure that citizens of Denmark have a say in highly technical government decisions. There is no single organization or entity promoting this process, but this page on the website of the Co-Intelligence Institute provides a great overview and lists of resources for learning more.

### Conversation Café **Conversation Café** – [www.conversationcafe.org](http://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](http://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.



### **Intergroup Dialogue** **IDEA Center** - <http://depts.washington.edu/sswwweb/idea/>

The Intergroup Dialogue, Education and Action (IDEA) Center at the University of Washington School of Social Work was started in November 1996 as a response to the urgent challenges for social work educators to prepare competent practitioners who can work with an increasingly diverse clientele and embrace the profession's social justice mission. These challenges call for changes not only in the content of future practitioners' knowledge, but also in classroom pedagogies that can enhance their learning experiences while developing competencies to work in a multicultural society. The mission of the Institute has now expanded to supporting campus and community efforts geared toward addressing issues of oppression, empowerment, and alliance building for social justice.

### **The Program on Intergroup Relations (IGR)** - [www.umich.edu/~igr/](http://www.umich.edu/~igr/)

IGR is a social justice education program at the University of Michigan which works proactively to promote understanding of intergroup relations throughout the student community. It assists students as they explore models of intergroup understanding and cooperation while acknowledging differences between and within groups. A number of other universities have used IGR as a model for developing similar programs. On this site you will find information on academic and co-curricular initiatives, program history and philosophy, and resources related to social justice education.

### **Open Space Technology** **Open Space Institute - U.S.** – [www.openspaceworld.org](http://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](http://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** **Study Circles Resource Center** – [www.studycircles.org](http://www.studycircles.org)

SCRC promotes and supports study circles (small-group, democratic, peer-led deliberative dialogues on important social and political issues). Their website provides downloadable copies of many of their top-notch dialogue guides and other resources.

### **Wisdom Circle** **Wisdom Circles** - [www.wisdomcircle.org](http://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](http://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 table cloths covering the tables.