

Moderating the Deliberative Forum

Moderators in a deliberative forum have several responsibilities. This section is organized to help new moderators plan how they will lead the forum to help participants find common ground for action.

STAGES IN A NATIONAL ISSUES FORUM

Room set-up – Arrange chairs (no tables) in a circle or horseshoe, leaving room for the recorder to post flipchart recordings on the wall. Display the following posters: NIF, GUIDELINES/GROUND RULES, and REFLECTIONS. Place an empty chair in the middle of the circle.

Just before the forum starts – have participants complete the Pre-forum Questionnaire (issue guide may not have this questionnaire)

During the forum, the MODERATOR will do the following

Suggested length

I. Forum Opening: Welcome, Introductions, Purpose, etc.

25-30 minutes

- Welcome participants. Introduce yourself. Acknowledge the forum sponsor(s), including NIF and the Oklahoma Partnership for Public Deliberation.
- Make opening remarks about the purpose of the forum, deliberation, etc. Refer to the REFLECTIONS poster. Charge the participants to do choice work, that is, to look at the appeals and concerns, costs and consequences of each of the policy choices (5 minutes).
- Introduce the recorder(s) and explain that role.
- Explain the purpose of the empty chair.
- Describe how the work done in the forum will be reported to forum sponsors, OPPD and NIF. Explain that all comments will remain anonymous.
- Review the “GUIDELINES” poster. Ask if the group can agree to the ground rules.
- Show the starter video (if available) or briefly review the options to be deliberated (10-12 minutes).
- Do the “Personal Stake” activity - ask a question to connect the issue to people’s lives and concerns. Give 2-3 participants the opportunity to talk BRIEFLY about their personal experiences with the issue (3-4 minutes).

II. Deliberation

75-90 minutes

- Guide the discussion. For each option, start by asking about “appeals” and “concerns”.
- Make sure each choice receives equal attention and time.
- Use questions to stimulate discussion and ensure all choices get a fair hearing.

III. Reflections - Closing

30-40 minutes

- Have the recorder give a brief overview of the flipchart recordings (3-4 minutes).
- Encourage the group to reflect across all the comments that have been made. Use the questions on the “REFLECTIONS” poster to help the group engage in choice work, especially the “Group Reflections” and “Next-Step Reflections”.
- Have participants complete the Post-Forum Questionnaire (5 minutes).

Total 2 – 2½ hours

PURPOSE OF THE DELIBERATIVE FORUM

During the forum's introduction, moderators have a few minutes to explain what will happen during the deliberation. This is especially useful when participants are new to deliberative forums. Experienced moderators generally reference some or all of the following material in their opening remarks, as well as comments inspired by other sections of this notebook.

Making choices for dealing with community issues is difficult because different people favor different approaches to a problem, and the choices for action may contradict or conflict with one another. Certainly any strategy for action will have costs that have to be taken into consideration and consequences that have to be anticipated, as best we can. At the root of the questions of cost and consequence, and behind each approach, lies a range of concerns that, while common to many people, nonetheless pulls them in different directions both individually and collectively. People have to "work through" these tensions and deal with the trade-offs until they come to the point that they have a **shared sense of direction for moving ahead** or **common ground for acting together (i.e. getting to action after the forum)**. Deliberative forums can help people reach the stage of **public acting – securing commitment to work together**. That shared sense of direction will include some idea of what people are and are not willing to do to solve a problem. It is not necessarily a full and complete agreement.

This habit of decision making requires a particular practice of reasoning together that is often called deliberation. It occurred in Native American traditions. It occurred in America's earliest town meetings. It has occurred throughout our history.

Privately, we deliberate all the time, when we have a difficult decision to make about an important matter in our lives and have to weigh several options carefully. That, in a nutshell, is what deliberation is – weighing carefully the various approaches, the advantages and weaknesses of each choice, and the views of others about what should be done. A deliberative discussion is a way to move toward more effective action by exploring, by testing ideas, and looking at the ambiguities or gray areas rather than seeing only the stark black and white of polar opposites.

COMMON GROUND FOR ACTION: The Three C's

Compromise, consensus and **common ground** each have a role to play in our decision making activities. **Compromise** is most often associated with adversarial bargaining with a predetermined outcome (e.g., contract negotiations) while **consensus** is more frequently seen in ongoing working groups or teams where a decision with unanimous or near-unanimous agreement is important (e.g., the League of Women Voters has developed consensual decision making as an ongoing activity). Common ground, or **common ground for action**, however, is an essential foundation for public action -- action that unites diverse positions into a common direction, even if they do not agree on specifics.

The strength of **compromise** lies in its ability to create agreements between polarized parties. This is particularly true when an agreement must be constructed within a short period of time and when people can be held to the agreement by legal forces.

Consensus is most powerful with people who have a history of working together, or who are in an organization (e.g., League of Women Voters) with such a history. Consensus works best if there is time for people to work out differences of opinion and to convince each other of the correctness of one position or action.

Common ground (or common ground for action) draws its strength from the relationships among diverse actors (or groups) that emerge as people work through differences and come to understand each other and each other's values. We seek common ground for action when working through how to act together to address a shared problem involving fundamental values—e.g., when we must decide how to improve education or make our communities more livable.

COMPROMISE	CONSENSUS	COMMON GROUND
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal is mutual concessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal is mutual agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal is mutual understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both sides agree they got the best deal they could 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on actions even if not on values (on what to do, not on what's important) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on underlying values (or overlapping interests) even if disagree on which actions get us there
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start and end with what's best for me (or mine)...based on self-interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End with solidarity or conformity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End with stronger connections/community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads to individual, self-interested action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads to unified/single homogeneous action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May lead to public action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads to hardening of positions and continued opposition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads to group thinking which can discourage dissent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads to mutual understanding of differences and how we can act even with those differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is constructed – create agreements by mutual concessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is artificial – create solidarity in whatever way possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is organic – mutual understanding is uncovered or emerges as people explore what's important to them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success = when each person is satisfied with costs and benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success = there is general agreement on what to do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success = there is mutual understanding which creates possibilities for complementary action

BEFORE THE FORUM – PREPARING TO MODERATE

Preparation is critical. Preparation = relaxation. Moderators prepare to moderate a deliberative forum using their own method – there is no right or wrong way to prepare. What follows are helpful practices that have been shared by many experienced moderators of deliberative forums in years of research conducted by the Kettering Foundation. These practices help to bring the kind of deliberating we all do privately into a public setting where we have to talk, not just with friends and family members but with people we scarcely know.

1. **Keep in mind the moderator’s primary purpose** - to get the participants to **engage** with one another. The reason is that if the issue is truly systemic – that is, requiring citizens to **act together** in multiple ways over time – the essential **knowledge** required to deal with the issue is possessed by the participants. The knowledge is “facts plus” knowledge. We refer to it as **relational knowledge** because it consists not only of what we can **know** as facts (empirically) but how we individually and collectively relate to what we **know**. The “plus” is the relationships involved in making a choice together.
2. **Remember that the use of the choice framework is NOT to determine which of the approaches the group will select.** The moderator is **not asking the participants to vote** on approaches. Sometimes that focused sort of choice occurs, but more often the approaches serve their intended purpose as a framework for analysis that breaks away from rigid ideological preferences. Deliberation requires that the approaches be thoroughly explored. More often than not, possibilities for **acting together** emerge from the options/approaches rather than any agreement that participants favor one of the options over the others.
3. **Get to know the forum materials: issue book (or other format), moderator's guide (if available), starter video (if available), and post-forum questionnaire.** Study the issue book thoroughly. Read it at least twice – first skimming to get the feel for the issue and the options, then to highlight the key points.
4. **Identify the key elements of the issue framework.** The obvious points to understand are the following:
 - The options or approaches
 - The things held valuable in each approach and the strategic facts
 - The attractive and unattractive features of each approach
 - The courses of possible action for each approach, as well as possible costs/consequences
 - The potential trade-offs

More deeply, the **moderator should understand what is truly at issue and what the public needs to decide.** The title of an issue book does not always state what is at issue. A moderator must study what areas in the issue book are most apt to create situations in which participants will realize that no one has the complete answer and that they need everyone to develop **knowledge** about potential common ground for **acting together**. Intensive preparation is not to demonstrate great personal expertise to participants but to draw the “plus” **knowledge** out of the participants. We refer to that sort of understanding as public **knowledge**.

Some moderators find it helpful to write out the following elements of each approach in their own words on a sheet of paper or index cards for use during a forum.

- The problem behind the problem.
- The broad remedy.
- Specific policy actions.
- Key arguments and strategic facts for this approach.
- Underlying values that motivate this approach.
- Key arguments against this approach.

5. **Stage 1 (Opening) - Prepare opening remarks.** The “**Stages in a National Issues Forum**” agenda at the beginning of this section describes how the opening should flow, and it is recommended that new moderators follow it. New moderators typically use index cards, tablets or similar tools for help during moderating.

Introducing sponsors. Plan for how you will briefly acknowledge and thank the organizations sponsoring the forum, including NIF and Oklahoma Partnership for Public Deliberation.

Introducing the moderator(s). Prepare a brief introduction, such as: “*I’m Pat Smith, and I will be moderating today’s forum.*” If appropriate, include something like “*I’ve been involved with deliberative forums for the past five years.*”

Tip: Avoid stating the moderator’s credentials, such as professional and academic accomplishments. Forum participants with fewer credentials may find a moderator’s lengthy accomplishments intimidating and be reluctant to speak during the forum.

Setting the stage for deliberation. List key points about public deliberation and the purpose of the forum. Remember, this forum may be the first time some or all of the participants have participated in such a deliberation, and they are not sure what to expect. To prepare key points, review “**Purpose of Deliberative Forums**” found earlier in this section – many moderators use comments from that section in their opening remarks. The guidelines/ground rules and “Reflections” posters may also provide helpful language to describe what will happen in the forum – the work that needs to be done.

Introducing the recorder(s). Prepare a brief introduction, similar to the moderator’s introduction, and include a description of the recorder’s role in the deliberation. **The notebook section on Recording can help in preparing these statements.** Moderators generally say something like this:

“The flipchart recordings will remind us what we have discussed as well as what work we still need to do in the forum. Often when we think of recording, we think of a court reporter who is recording every word, but that is not the role of our recorder. Rather, he quietly go about his responsibility of listening carefully to what you say related to weighing the options we’re deliberating, and he will distill your comments to capture your key points.”

“If you notice that the recorder has mistakenly recorded your comment, feel free to bring that to our attention. Also, the recorder may occasionally ask if he has captured a comment accurately.”

Describing how the forum outcomes will be reported. Forum participants often want to know what will happen as a result of their participation. Moderators may address this in their earlier remarks on public deliberation and the purpose of the forum, but now is a good time in the forum opening to mention reporting after just talking about flipchart recording. To prepare a very brief comment on reporting, refer to the “Reporting” section of this notebook.

Reviewing the guidelines / ground rules poster. Prepare comments about the guidelines and their purpose. Deliberation is more likely to take place if some guidelines are laid out at the beginning - they can help prevent difficulties later on. By saying ahead of time that no one person should dominate, moderators find it easier to deal with anyone who is monopolizing the deliberation if that occurs. Moderators find it useful to:

- Display a “Guidelines” poster before starting the forum.
- Read the poster aloud during the opening, and ask the group to ratify these rules.
- Remind people to be tough on the issue, not on each other.
- Some moderators provide individual copies of the “Guidelines” to each forum participant.

Occasionally, a forum participant may ask to add a guideline, such as “*We will keep confidential whatever is said in this evening’s forum*”. It is virtually impossible for moderators and forum organizers to enforce that guideline, but use this as an opportunity to remind people that it is a **public forum** on a **public issue**. Encourage participants to use caution in sharing personal information.

The most basic ground rule of the forum is to work toward a decision, to try to make a choice about how to **act together**. Ground rules make it possible for people to do choice work. A list of guidelines suitable for enlarging to poster size is found later in this section. Free posters can be obtained via the www.nifi.org web site.

Preparing an icebreaker to close out the Opening and transition to Stage 2 - deliberation. People need a way to start deliberation that focuses them on the issue at hand. The “Personal Stake” or similar icebreaker helps participants connect to the issue personally. **Engagement** begins with this sort of personal conversation, and a sense of what people hold valuable is revealed. The icebreaker is often a form of naming a problem as participants understand it.

Moderators most commonly use the “Personal Stake” icebreaker by asking participants to comment on how the issue affects them, with a question such as the following:

- *How have you experienced this issue?*
- *How has this issue affected you personally or someone you know?*

Some moderators develop other ways to begin. For example, a moderator of a forum on the issue book, *Growing up at Risk*, asked participants to pair off quickly and share for a three minutes with one another about what kind of homes they would provide a prospective adopted child. Then the moderator asked a few volunteers to share their comments with the entire group. This approach quickly focused the group on what they held valuable in raising children.

A moderator can be creative about an icebreaker but should avoid being gimmicky. The icebreaker should contribute in a natural way to the purpose of deliberation on the issue. It should not call attention to itself.

6. **Stage 2 (Deliberation) – Prepare brief restatement of each option.** The moderator reviewed the issue guide in Stage 1 of the forum (either by video or verbally). Some time will pass, however, between that review and the start of each option’s deliberation. To remind participants about the option/approach to be deliberated, moderators generally make brief restatements about each option just before it is deliberated – about 1-2 minutes.
7. **Stage 2 (Deliberation) - Prepare questions to encourage forum participants to think and contribute in the deliberation.** A moderator’s role is to remain neutral and objective, not to teach or preach to the forum participants. Using effective questions and listening skills helps moderators perform the role successfully. The best forums take place when the moderator listens closely to the group and adjusts questions to best fit the situation.

Below is a list of the four elements that typically happen in Stage 2 of the forum and are concluded in the final portion of the forum – Stage 3. Also provided are examples of questions that the moderator can ask participants.

Identifying what is valuable to participants. This gets at the reason that making public choices is so difficult, namely, that the various actions people may want to take are rooted in things people care about very deeply. The question can take many forms. Experienced moderators usually have in mind (or in their notes) 2-3 different versions of the questions. Start the deliberation on each option by asking the following:

- *When you think about this option, what **appeals** to you?*
- *What **concerns** you about this option?*

Alternative versions of the above questions:

- *What is appealing (or troubling) about this option?*
- *What makes this approach a good one - or a bad one?*
- *It sounds like you strongly support this choice, but what troubles you about this option?*
- *It sounds like you strongly oppose this option, but what appeals to you about this choice?*
- *What is the strongest argument against (or in favor of) this option?*
- *For those who hold that position, what do they deeply care about?*
- *What ideas have not been expressed?*

Tip: If necessary during the deliberation, refer to the empty chair. Ask participants what voices are not present and what might they say about the option being deliberated.

To uncover deeper concerns, the moderator can ask people how they came to hold the views they have. This practice encourages talk about actual experiences, rather than just reciting facts or making rational arguments. When using this strategy, moderators are careful to keep participants on task.

Identifying the consequences, costs, and benefits associated with the various choices. This part of the deliberation can take any number of forms as long as it prompts people to think about how each option affects what is valuable to them. Because deliberation requires evaluating the advantages and weaknesses (appeals and concerns) of different options, it is important to be sure that both aspects are fully aired. Below are examples of questions to ensure a fair and balanced examination of all potential effects.

- *What could be the consequences of doing this option?*
- *What would be an argument against the option you like best? Is there a downside to this course of action?*
- *Can anyone think of something constructive that might come from this choice, which is receiving so much criticism?*

Finding the inherent conflicts/tensions that we have to understand. As the deliberation of each option progresses, the moderator helps participants identify the tensions or dilemmas that occur between conflicting values. It is these tensions/dilemmas that can make it so difficult to make choices. The moderator can point out what the participants have said they hold valuable by referring to the flipchart recordings (especially the “Appeals” and “Concerns” columns) to illustrate conflicting values. Then the moderator may ask one or more of the following questions until the participants seem to understand the tensions between the things they hold valuable.

- *What do you see as the tension among the choices?*
- *What are the gray areas? Where is there ambiguity?*
- *Why is this issue so difficult to decide?*

Tip: Review the piece entitled “About Tensions and Dilemmas in Deliberative Frameworks” in Section 3 of this notebook.

Detecting any shared sense of direction or common ground for action. Remember how the moderator stated during the forum opening that the objective of the forum is to work toward a decision about how to **act together**? Identifying common ground for action is essential to acting together. As the forum progresses, the moderator may intervene from time to time with questions that move the deliberation toward a choice. Experienced forum participants will often do this when conversations seem to drift. These interventions should always stop 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 can test to see where the group is going by asking such questions as:

- *Which direction seems best? Where do we want this policy to take us?*
- *What trade-offs are we willing and unwilling to accept?*
- *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. A moderator might ask, for example:

- *Would we still favor this policy if it had the negative consequences some fear?*

8. **Stage 3 (Reflections / Closing) – Prepare comments/questions for completing the deliberation.**

One-time forums may not have sufficient time to develop fully the possibility of common ground for action, but some do, especially when the participants are experienced in deliberation. Whether or not a forum is intended as part of a series, each deliberative experience should be reflected upon at the end. This reflection provides some closure to a discussion in the psychological sense. It also assesses what progress the group has made in producing **public knowledge** about how to **act together** more effectively.

Moderators often begin Stage 3 by having recorders give a **BRIEF** review of the flipchart recordings (2-3 minutes). The review reminds the group about what has been accomplished in the forum so far, and the moderator can point out what work remains to be done.

Many years of research have resulted in the end-of-forum questions on the “REFLECTIONS” poster. In asking these three categories of questions, the moderator must not let the forum reopen.

Individual Reflections. Letting people respond to the questions below assists personal assessment. The second question helps people think about how different relationships might create greater possibilities for **working together** on the issue. Depending on how much time is allowed for Stage 3, the moderator may elect to omit these questions or limit responses to only 2-3 participants.

- *How has your thinking about the issue changed?*
- *How has your thinking about other people’s views changed?*
- *How has your perspective changed as a result of what you heard in this forum?*

Group Reflections. Moderators always ask these three questions.

- *Can we identify any **shared sense of direction or common ground for acting together**? Do we detect any **possibilities**?*
- *What did you hear the group saying about **tensions** in the issue?*
- *What were the **trade-offs** the group was willing or not willing to make?*

Using the term **possibilities** for future direction helps avoid pressure on the moderator and the group to develop a false sense of agreement. Sometimes people define shared sense of purpose very broadly. Sometimes they define it very narrowly. Focusing on what might be possible in **acting together**

leaves room for development without premature closure. The Kettering Foundation's research has found that the idea of possibilities is an effective way to explore emerging areas of possible common ground for action. The trade-off question helps sharpen the range in which possibilities exist.

Next Step Reflections. The first of these questions helps people connect with the possibilities that may be emerging. It also gives them multiple possibilities for action -- both individually and with others. The second question is very important in building a deliberative habit beyond a one-time issue forum. Forum organizers need to be prepared to follow through on expressions of interest in additional opportunities to keep working on an issue together.

- *How can we use what we learned about ourselves in this forum?*
- *Do we want to meet again?*

9. **Get to know the community and potential participants in a forum**, insofar as possible. Sometimes, forum participants reframe slightly an issue book in their own terms. The moderator should pay close attention to the issue book design and use it effectively as a fundamental principle. S/he must also be alert to possibilities that participants may apply the issue discussion to local circumstances in ways that are not quite as the issue book has been written. If such occurs, staying with a choice-work approach is important. Avoid letting a conversation turn into a "bull session" or "chat room." That misdirection prevents progress toward **acting together**. Do be alert to nuances in an issue particular to a given locale.
10. **Coordinate with others well before the forum**. Communicate with the co-moderator (if used) and the recorder or listener/reporter so everyone has common expectations of roles, styles and techniques during the forum. This includes the forum organizers or conveners. A recorder or listener/reporter needs to know how the moderator will organize her or his line of attack to developing citizen **engagement** and working through the approaches in the issue guide.

CONDUCTING THE FORUM

“[Stages in a National Issues Forum](#)” on page 1 of this section describes how a deliberative forum should flow. It is recommended that new moderators follow it. Other suggestions include:

Checking Perception. Moderators use active listening and paraphrasing to make sure they accurately understand the participants, such as:

- *Let me make sure I'm hearing you correctly. You're saying ...*
- *These are the responses I'm hearing ... What do you wish to add?*

Dealing with a Difficult Participant. Moderators occasionally encounter difficult participants in their forums, such as someone who dominates the dialogue, addresses personalities rather than the issue, or frequently gets off topic. Several strategies have proven helpful in such situations.

- Gradually escalate your response and be tactful.
- Use body language (move close to the person).
- Use more assertive verbal techniques such as interrupting to capture the points stated thus far
- Refer to the ground rules (everyone participates, no monopolizing conversation)
- Redirect the conversation through comments such as:

“Thank you. What do others think about that?”

“Let's create some space for those of you who have been quieter. Someone else?”

MODERATOR BEHAVIORS

- **Remain neutral**; do not contribute ideas or evaluate others' ideas. Body language and facial expressions are important to neutrality. Demonstrate no bias regarding the subject matter.
- **Do not take on the expert role** with the subject matter.
- **Bring participants back to the options** when comments go astray.
- **Keep the discussion focused on issues**, not personalities.
- **Be courteous and fair**. Create an atmosphere of acceptance of all persons and ideas. These qualities are basic to dealing with potentially disruptive situations. Be supportive, but be careful about what seems to be innocent comments meant to be encouraging, such as “that's a good idea.” Another participant who disagrees with that idea may see it as a biased statement.
- **Manage time so that all choices receive equal consideration**. The measurement of equality is not always time alone. Participants often spend more time on a first choice, often because comments actually apply to the other choices. Having a timekeeper to assist is useful.
- **Be patient**. Do not interrupt. Do not complete participant sentences.
- **Listen carefully** to model that behavior.
- **Encourage everyone** to join the conversation.
- **Let the group make up its own mind**. Facilitate the group arriving at its public voice.
- **Avoid becoming the central reference point for comments**. Redirect questions to the group so that others can respond. Remember that your chief responsibility is to get participants **engaged** constructively with one another.
- **Use conflict productively**. Do not attempt to suppress conflict. Recognize it and seek to focus it on essential points in terms of what can we **do together** even though we do not fully agree. Civility is highly desired, but it is not an end in itself. Overemphasis on civility can suppress conversation that is needed to get at the heart of an issue. Passion generally reflects what a person holds valuable. Usually, the most effective way to produce deeper reflection on a strong emotion is to ask: “Why do you feel that way?” and “What is important to you about this matter?”
- **Zero in on the points at which participants must work through tension among things held valuable**. Use engagement of those points to probe trade-offs among things participants are willing to accept and not willing to accept. These are maximum opportunities for producing **public knowledge**.
- **Remember the guidelines for participants**. Invoke them as necessary. They are powerful in keeping disagreement from becoming unproductive. The way in which NIF issues are framed also contributes significantly to keeping discussions productive. Participants will often help norm group conduct. If someone is “hogging the floor,” a gentle reference to the guidelines and the work the group is seeking to do is often sufficient.
- **Communicate in advance and during the forum** with co-moderators (if any), recorder(s), and forum conveners/organizers.

Adapted and expanded from “*A Short Reference for Moderating for Deliberation*”, Kettering Foundation Public Policy Workshop, July 2002.

Suggested Moderator Questions for Deliberation

It is absolutely critical that the moderator remain neutral. Your task is to guide the deliberation. Some typical questions that promote deliberation are:

I understand you don't like that position, but for those who hold it, what do you think they deeply care about?

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

What might be the consequences of that choice for other citizens?

What motivates that choice?

If push come to shove, what would you do and why?

What might be the results of your ideas on others?

What is blocking the discussion?

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

What are the trade-offs you are, or are not, willing make?

What is most valuable to you or to those who support this choice?

How do you separate what is a private matter and a public matter on this issue?

Could you tell me a story to illustrate that?

Can you make the best case for the choice you least favor?

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

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

What are the negative aspects of the choice you favor?

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

Who should we all be talking with? Policymakers? Neighbors?

What were the consequences of what you said? Does that make a difference?

How might others see the issue?

Suppose you can't have everything, what would you choose?

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

How might your concerns differ if you were poor? Wealthy? A worker in an affected industry?

What is there about this choice that you just cannot live with?

Helping Moderators Stay on Track

Good signs	Signs that moderator should make a move	Tips to get back on track
People listen to what others are saying	People are just waiting their turn to “have their say”	
People are talking to each other; asking questions of each other	All comments are directed to the moderator	
Everyone is listening with respect; no one is dominating	There are “sidebar” conversations or interruptions	
Alternative viewpoints get aired	The group mainly concurs on each choice	
The consequences of each choice get addressed	The pro arguments have no negative consequences	
People share personal experiences	People speak theoretically/analytically	
People express emotion around what is important to them	The forum is cerebral and lacking feeling	
The conversation uses the group’s prior work	Comments ignore prior comments	

Adapted from: Susan S. Clark, *Reflecting on the Community Forum*.

Ways to Spot Deliberation

What does it look and sound like? Here are a few tips:

1. The discussion is taking into consideration several points of view — a range of views – not just a highly polarized debate.
2. People are talking about what is really valuable to them – what matters most – the underlying values.
3. The group is recognizing, acknowledging that the issue is complex.
4. People are talking about benefits and drawbacks of each approach, each “choice” – weighing the consequences and trade-offs.
5. People are struggling within themselves, as well as with each other.
6. People move from “I” to “We” when talking about what can be done.
7. The discussion is civil. (Remember this is not synonymous with polite or unemotional.)

Deliberation is a different kind of talk than debate. The result will almost never be unanimity (full consensus.)

If you listen carefully, however, you can often hear a sense of shared concerns and areas where people with conflicting values are willing to work cooperatively or in a complementary fashion. You will also learn the pathways and the actions that they are rejecting.

GUIDELINES FOR DELIBERATIVE FORUMS

The moderator guides deliberation yet remains neutral.

The moderator and participants make sure that:

- Everyone is encouraged to participate – no one should dominate.
- Discussion focuses on the issue, not personalities - be tough on the issue, not on each other.
- We direct our conversation to each other, not just the moderator.
- We manage time so all the options are considered.
- We have an atmosphere for dialogue and analysis of alternatives.
- We listen respectfully to each other. Listening is as important as speaking.
- All cell phones are turned off.

The purpose of the forum is to work toward a decision – common ground for acting together.

Observing a Forum / Listening for Deliberation

Listen For:	Participant Quotes	Moderator Questions That Helped Elicit Deliberation
1. What do people say that reveals why they care about the issue?		
2. What signs do you see of the moderators listening to the participants?		
3. What are the signs that people are genuinely listening to and considering each other's points of view?		
4. How is the recording contributing to the process?		
5. Are the appeals and concerns of each option getting covered?		
6. Are the actions and consequences of each option discussed?		
7. What is the moderator doing to make sure each option gets a fair hearing?		
8. When do people "dig deeper" and discover their underlying concerns?		

9. Where do tensions emerge and how do people talk about them?		
10. What quotes illuminate differing perspectives and the values that underlie those perspectives?		
11. What evidence is there that people are grappling with trade-offs?		
12. What about the conversations, if anything, is different than other public discussions?		
13. What trade-offs are people willing to accept?		
14. What trade-offs are people not willing to accept?		
15. Are there times during the forum when individuals show a shift in their thinking?		
16. What areas of agreement or common ground emerge?		
17. Where do people disagree and why?		
18. What other verbal and nonverbal signs of deliberation did you observe?		