
MODERATOR'S GUIDE

Drawing Straws: Working Together to Manage Oklahoma's Growing Demand for Water

By: Renée Daugherty



2009

If you're preparing to moderate a National Issues Forum (NIF, www.nifi.org), then you've become familiar with the structure of deliberative dialogue that NIF supports. Discussion guides, starter videos, and deliberative forums focus on **approaches**, sometimes also called *choices* in NIF material. And you know that each approach represents a distinctly different way of approaching an issue, with its own set of benefits, drawbacks, and trade-offs.

The NIF-style deliberative forum undergirds the basic premise of public deliberation — that citizens in a democracy have a responsibility, and need opportunities, to make choices about how they want to live together, how they want to act together, how they want their government to function.

[Note: NIF issue guides usually have a companion starter video to be shown during the opening of the forum. Because *Drawing Straws* is specific to Oklahoma, there is no NIF starter video on this issue.]

If this is your first experience as a moderator:

- ◆ **You don't have to be an expert on the issue.**
Read the issue book thoroughly. The critical part of preparation is considering questions that get to the heart of the issue and thinking through the essence of each approach.
- ◆ **Stay focused on what the forum is about — deliberation.**
Your natural curiosity and your interest in understanding diverse views will be your greatest assets; they're probably what got you here in the first place. Use them to ask questions that probe the underlying motivations of each approach, the trade-offs it might require, and the willingness of the participants to recognize them.
- ◆ **Keep the discussion moving and focused on the issue.**
No matter the level of experience, most moderators find timekeeping to be a challenge. National Issues Forums examine complicated issues worthy of deep discussion. It can be hard to move on to another approach with so much more that could be said, but in order to deliberate — to make progress on the issue — participants need the opportunity to weigh all the major approaches.
- ◆ **Reserve ample time for reflections on the forum.**
Between allowing time for participants to lay out their personal concerns about the issue at the beginning of the forum and the demanding work of deliberating in depth on each of the approaches, it's easy to find yourself with little time left at the end of the forum to reflect on what's been said. But, in many ways, this is the most important work the group will do. Explain clearly at the outset that it is important to reserve this time, and then enlist the participants' support in working with you to preserve it.

Sometimes, forum participants find the use of the word "choice" confusing, and assume that they are being asked to choose one of the approaches. Of course, they are not. Many moderators find it helpful to clarify at the beginning of the forum that the work of the forum is to weigh each approach, to "work through" consequences and trade-offs, and to form a shared sense of what's at stake in the issue. They make it clear that by developing shared directions for public action, forum participants are laying the foundation for making public choices together.

"There are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies, only permanent interests."

Your Role as a Moderator:

- Provide an overview of the process of deliberation – the rationale for the kind of work the participants are getting ready to do.
- Ask questions that probe deeply into what's at stake in the issue and in each choice.
- Encourage participants to direct their responses and questions toward one another.
- Remain neutral throughout the discussion, while encouraging participants to explore all facets of their own and others' opinions.
- Keep track of the time, so participants can move through a discussion of each of the major approaches and into an ending period of reflections.
- Complete the "Moderator's Response" form in this guide and return to the convener(s).

The Role of the Recorder:

- Support deliberation by reminding forum participants of their key concerns, the areas of greatest disagreement, and the benefits and tradeoffs their discussion highlighted.
- Serve as a written record of the group's work that might feed into future meetings of the group or additional forums.
- Help inform other members of the community about the outcomes of the deliberation.
- Capture the tensions, trade-offs, and common ground for action.
- Express main ideas in clearly written brief phrases.

The Role of the Convener(s):

Before the forum:

- Determine the purpose of the forum, typically to do one or more of the following:
 - ⇒ Build community capacity – to develop a habit of using deliberative forums to address difficult issues.
 - ⇒ Contribute to developing public policy.
 - ⇒ Help people address "hot button" issues.
 - ⇒ Contribute to self-rule.
 - ⇒ Help find resources to address a public issue.
- Select the topic, date/time, and accessible location for the forum.
- Secure a moderator and recorder for the forum.
- Determine how to promote the forum and recruit forum participants.
- Provide flip chart & easels, pens, markers, tape, and AV equipment, if needed.
- Refreshments and childcare, if needed.
- Distribute forum issue books in advance.

At the forum:

- Arrange the room for the forum with chairs in an open circle or horseshoe.
- Welcome/host forum participants.
- Provide name tags with first names only.

After the forum:

- Collect the flipchart recordings and Post-forum Questionnaires immediately after the forum.
- Receive the "Moderator's Response" form from the moderator within 1-2 days after the forum.
- Transcribe flipchart recordings.
- Tally Post-forum Questionnaires.
- Share forum outcomes with forum sponsors, participants and the public.

Communicating about Your Forums

- Another important role of the convener and/or moderator is to communicate with the NIF network about the forums you are conducting in your communities. Please post the dates and locations of your forums on:
 - ⇒ www.nifi.org.
 - ⇒ www.okdeliberates.org

Preparing for the Forum

In the week(s) before the forum:

- Read the issue book.
- Listen for news about water issues. Save 1-3 news articles for use during the opening if needed.
- Clarify the following with the forum convener and steering committee:
 - ◊ Purpose(s) of the forum.
 - ◊ Sponsors to be identified during the Welcome.
 - ◊ How they are recruiting participants and getting the issue books to them in time to be read.
 - ◊ Who is responsible for the flipcharts, markers and tape needed for recording.
- Talk with the forum recorder. Your Oklahoma Moderators & Recorders Academy notebook describes what to discuss and decide.
- Find a timekeeper who will attend the forum.

On the day of the forum:

- Arrive early.
- Coordinate with the recorder.
- Coordinate with the convener and steering committee.
- Coordinate with the timekeeper.
- Put up the posters: NIF, Guidelines, and Reflections.
- Set up the room.

Suggested Time Line for the Deliberative Forum

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Opening (25%) “Setting the stage”</p> | <p>Welcome — The convener or moderator introduces NIF program and sponsors. Purpose – The moderator explains what will happen in the forum. Ground Rules — Moderator and participants review desired outcomes of forum. Overview of the Issue — The moderator briefly describes the issue being deliberated. This sets the tone for the forum. Personal Stake — Moderator connects the issue to people’s lives and concerns.</p> |
| <p>Deliberation (45%)</p> | <p>The Deliberation — Participants examine all the approaches.</p> |
| <p>Reflections (30%)</p> | <p>Reflections / Decisions — Participants reflect on what has been accomplished. Questionnaire — Participants complete Post-Forum Questionnaire.</p> |

Suggested Format for an NIF Forum: Working toward a Shared Judgment

Total time – 2 hours 10 minutes

| OPEN THE FORUM (30 minutes) | Time | Notes |
|---|----------------|--------------|
| <p>Welcome the participants.</p> <p>Acknowledge the forum sponsors, including the National Issues Forums and Oklahoma Partnership for Public Deliberation. Stress the co-sponsorship if several organizations are involved.</p> | 2 min. | |
| <p>Introduce yourself as the moderator and describe your role.</p> <p>Introduce the recorder and describe the recorder’s role.</p> | 2 min. | |
| <p>Explain the purpose of the forum and how it will work.</p> <p>Our forum will be in three parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the opening (30 minutes) • the deliberation (60 minutes) • the reflections, which focuses on what we’ve accomplished, what we’ve learned, what we can do, and what we still need to examine (40 minutes) <p>A deliberative forum is <u>not a debate</u>. As the term “deliberative” suggests, it’s a process of weighing and choosing. We’re going to consider the arguments for and against three distinct approaches to managing Oklahoma’s growing demand for water. Together as a group, you’ll listen carefully to what people say, and, during the Reflections part of the forum, I’ll ask if you heard anything that might be a starting point for <u>common ground for action</u> – a conclusion that all of us can at least live with, or go along with.</p> <p>The three approaches we’re going to discuss <u>are not mutually exclusive</u>. As a state we <u>could</u> pursue them simultaneously, but what we might discover is that we can’t implement them all <u>fully</u> at the same time. In other words, it’s possible we won’t be able to do everything we want to do because we won’t have enough resources. On the other hand, we might be able to do something in connection with each of them.</p> | 3 min. | |
| <p>Introduce the issue.</p> <p>Suggestions for the moderator:</p> <p>Always do some brief review of the issue – don’t assume that forum participants read the issue guide prior to the forum.</p> <p>Because today’s issue is specific to Oklahoma, there is no NIF starter video, so briefly review the issue for the group. Refer forum participants to the “Introduction” section of the issue guide. Feel free to share 1-2 examples from recent news stories.</p> <p>The issue we’re deliberating today is complex and somewhat controversial. I’d like to do a brief review of the issue, so let’s start with the Introduction section of the issue book followed by the three approaches.</p> <p>Briefly review the Introduction and the three approaches.</p> | 10 min. | |

OPEN THE FORUM (Continued)

Time

Notes

Describe the work of deliberation.

3 min.

In our forum today, we're going to give each of the three approaches equal consideration in the sense that we're going to take a hard and thorough look at the "appeals" and "concerns" of each one. This is a proven method for helping us deliberate.

As we do this, you may find what we call tensions or dilemmas. Think about these as "*on the other hand*" statements. Tensions or dilemmas happen when our values conflict. For example, let's say that you read the framework we're using in today's forum, you felt strongly about the environment in managing Oklahoma's water resources, but *on the other hand*, you also felt strongly about using water to give Oklahoma an edge in economic development in its future. So you have a dilemma between two things that are valuable to you. Deliberative forum participants discover these tensions and dilemmas all the time.

When we've considered the costs and benefits of each approach—its advantages and disadvantages, probable consequences, both positive and negative—we'll talk about whether there is one of the three approaches we think Oklahomans ought to take, or whether we believe some other way of moving forward would be best.

You're here to do the work of making choices, **but I'm not going to ask you to vote for only one approach**. Rather, we're going to weigh each approach and work through the consequences and trade-offs to find a shared sense of what's at stake with this issue. Think about trade-offs as those "*even if*" statements that we face all the time. For example, it was important to you to participate in this forum today, *even if* it meant that you had to give up something else that you also wanted to do.

Each of you should bring to our task your personal perspective, experience, knowledge, values, thinking ability, and so forth. We need a broad diversity of views. But you have another hat to wear as well: You're not just an individual person, you're also a representative of Oklahoma as a whole. So you also need to look at what we're doing from the standpoint of what would be best for everyone who lives in Oklahoma. (Think of the fable of the blind men and the elephant.) This means we're going to have to work together as a group.

The empty chair in the middle of our circle is a reminder to us that our group doesn't represent all perspectives on this issue. Every so often look at that empty chair, consider whose voice is not represented at this forum, and speak up about that perspective.

Review the ground rules and your role as moderator.

5 min.

Here are some specific rules that we've found are conducive to a constructive, productive dialogue. I've posted an abbreviated form of them on the wall. (Point to the poster.)

- Don't monopolize the discussion. Let others talk.
- Listen carefully and patiently to what they say. Try to understand "where they're coming from." Try to see things from their point of view. Make an honest effort to appreciate what's legitimate or valid in what they say.
- When you talk, do so either to explain your own thinking better, or to help others clarify their thinking.
- Always be polite and well-mannered. Show respect for others even if you disagree with their views. Be tough on the problem, easy on fellow participants.
- Turn off your cell phones.

In a forum, moderators like to be sure the participants understand the ground rules and agree to follow them, so I'm going to ask you that now: are these ground rules something you can follow?

OPEN THE FORUM (Continued)

| | Time | Notes |
|---|--------|-------|
| <p>Personal stake.</p> <p>Very shortly, we'll begin deliberating the approaches. Before we do, though, it helps to connect the complex issue of managing Oklahoma's water to people's lives and concerns. This makes the issue genuine and human rather than abstract. Would three or four of you be willing to describe, very briefly, _____? <i>(see suggested questions below)</i></p> <p>Suggestions for the moderator:</p> <p>You'll probably only have time to ask one question and get three or four responses. Feel free to use a question from the list below or create one of your own.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has anyone had a personal experience that illustrates the problems associated with this issue? • What aspects of the issue are most important to you? • How does the issue affect people? | 5 min. | |

DELIBERATE THE THREE APPROACHES (60 minutes)

| | | |
|---|---------|--|
| <p>Open the deliberation.</p> <p>The first part of our work today is to weigh the three approaches for managing Oklahoma's water resources. We'll examine the reasons why each of the three approaches might – or might not – be the best way to ensure that we always have enough fresh water for all our needs. For purposes of today's forum, <u>we're going to assume that the three approaches are equally feasible</u>. That is, each one of them is doable and could be pursued if we thought it was desirable to do so.</p> | | |
| <p>Deliberate Approach 1.</p> <p>Please open your books to Approach 1.</p> <p>Suggestions for the moderator:</p> <p>Briefly introduce the approach in 2-3 minutes.</p> <p>Begin the deliberation by asking participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What "appeals" to you about this approach (about 5 minutes) -What "concerns" you about this approach (about 5 minutes) <p>During the time remaining on this approach, ask the participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What are the consequences (benefits and costs) associated with this approach? | 20 min. | |
| <p>Deliberate Approach 2.</p> <p>Same as above.</p> | 20 min. | |
| <p>Deliberate Approach 3.</p> <p>Same as above.</p> | 20 min. | |

REFLECT ON THE WORK WE'VE DONE (40 minutes)

Time

Notes

Flipchart review.

It's now time to review what we've deliberated and see if we can identify any common ground for action and any trade-offs, as well as the tensions or dilemmas that we're struggling with and what we may still need to do. This is a very important part of the forum. We'll start by asking the recorder to briefly review what's been captured on the flipcharts.

Suggestion for the moderator:

Allow no more than 5 minutes for the flipchart review.

Let's take a look at the Reflections poster, particularly the middle and bottom questions:

Common Ground for Action

- Is there any significant common ground among us? Are there particular strategies or strategic actions we all consider really important or highly desirable? (time: 5 min.)
- Are there items we could all at least "live with" or "go along" with?

Tensions/Dilemmas ("on the other hand" statements)

- What tensions/dilemmas are we struggling with?

Trade-offs ("even if" statements)

- Is there any significant disagreement among us? Are there things that are especially important to *some* of us in the group *but not to others*? (time: 5 min.)
- Do any of these strategies or strategic actions conflict? That is, if we favor pursuing one of them, would it be difficult to act on some other item we also consider desirable? Would we have to give up or forego something? Would there be a trade-off?
- Is there a way to resolve or minimize our differences?
- What could we do to help each other? What is each of us willing to give up?

Action / Summary Report

- What would we, *as a group*, like to say to the other groups that will be deliberating this issue? What can we report? What is the "sense" of our group?
- What actions are you ready to take after you leave this forum?

Still Need to Talk About

Is there anything that we still need to talk about?

Sometimes it helps deliberative forum participants to consider these questions:

- Approaches 1, 2, and 3 all have advantages and disadvantages as well as costs and benefits. "On balance" and "all things considered," which approach seems likely to produce the most benefits and the fewest costs?
- If right now we can't take *all* the actions we think are important, which ones should we start with?
 - ◊ What steps are the most doable in terms of time, resources, and public commitment?
 - ◊ Which actions are most likely to have the greatest positive impact?
- Starting now, what should we expect state and local government to do? What should we expect businesses to do? What should we expect ourselves—ordinary citizens—to do?

35 min.

Post-Forum Questionnaire

I'm distributing the post-forum questionnaire. Please complete both sides and hand it to me when you leave. Thank you so much for your participation in this forum.

5 min.

Drawing Straws: Working Together to Manage Oklahoma's Growing Demand for Water

Moderator's Response

After the forum, please complete this brief response sheet and return it with the questionnaires from the forum.

Moderator's Name _____ Daytime Phone _____

Email _____ Date/location of forum _____

Briefly describe the audience of your forum including city and state, diversity, age of participants, number of participants.

What elements of this issue seemed most difficult to the participants?

What common concerns were most apparent?

Were there trade-offs most participants would accept? Describe.

Were there trade-offs most participants would not accept? Describe.

Did the group identify common ground for action or a shared sense of direction? Describe.

Return this response form with questionnaires to:

Renée A. Daugherty / Oklahoma Partnership for Public Deliberation

233 Human Environmental Sciences Building, Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078-6122

renee.daugherty@okstate.edu