

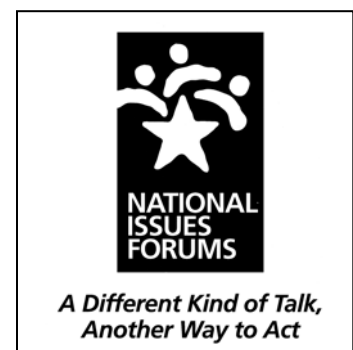


# *Discovering Common Ground*

## **Deliberation in Your Community: How to Convene and Moderate Local Public Forums Using Deliberative Decision-Making**



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## Special Thanks!

This manual is a compilation of diverse materials sent to me by people throughout the U.S. who teach deliberation skills to moderators in the National Issues Forum network. In an effort to have everything in electronic format so it could be shared more easily, I organized the materials and produced this manual. I hope you find this helpful and urge you to use whatever is relevant for your trainings. Many thanks to all of you who answered my request for materials.

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When community issues or important national issues come up, people may shrug and say “Why should I care? What difference does it make, I don't really have a voice.”

The fact is these issues can have a tremendous impact on our quality of life in our communities.

- When police officers are called to active duty and their positions cannot be filled, it will affect community security.
- Trade policies have significant effects at the local level. As goods are produced elsewhere, people lose jobs and the local economy suffers.
- Our beliefs in supporting democracy-building in other areas of the world can have tax implications because of the need to support the military.
- Local issues such as clean water and air, good schools, crime rates and violence affect us all everyday.

What can be done? How can we talk about them? People DO have a voice and CAN be heard. But what will it take to make that happen?

Public issue forums provide a place for people to be heard and they learn ways to address local and even national issues. Through public issue forums local community members have an opportunity to be a part of a community's voice and to share their thoughts, concerns and ideas with others and to impact policy..

This handbook is about deliberation and how to use it in public forums in your community or other places such as your office, neighborhood association or school board meetings, for example. The manual focuses on public forums—how to get started including ideas on developing local partnerships, a checklist for convening a forum, moderator tips and reporting on the forum and a number of other helpful suggestions.

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## **Section 1 -- Understanding and Using Deliberation**

- Why Deliberation?
- Debate, Dialog and Deliberation
- Characteristics of Debate, Dialogue and deliberation

## Why Deliberation?

It is helpful before beginning to moderate your public forum to give some thought to the concept of deliberation. What makes it so different from debate and dialog?

Western democratic thought has two threads. One has developed the institutions, rules and procedures—the machinery—of democracy: written constitutions, one person/one vote, political parties, free and fair elections, representative government, checks and balances, independent judiciary, etc. The other has roots in the citizens' forums of ancient Greece and Rome and in communities anywhere in which citizens have come together to talk about their problems and their plans for the future.

The second we call "**deliberative democracy**" –or the process, "**deliberation**"—because it builds on the capacities of citizens to think, talk and act together in their common interests. Deliberation is designed to produce a change in the way people habitually interact with each other over public issues.

People can't act together, either to set directions or build **relationships** as citizens, without making **choices**, or decisions. Choices are always difficult because choices about what kind of community or country we want to have force us to deal with things we hold deeply valuable. And these may vary from person to person.

When people have different concerns and things they hold valuable, this "choice work" can really only be handled effectively in a **deliberative dialogue**. *Deliberation is a particular form of reasoning and talking together in which we weigh carefully the costs and consequences of our various options for action, in the context of the views of others.* Public forums, if they are to lead to sound decisions around community issues, have to be deliberative.



Deliberation tends to change people's first opinions about an issue. Why? Because it involves people listening to each other. People discover what they share, despite what they don't agree about. Deliberative forums create more shared and reflective **public judgment** about how people should act, **public knowledge** (a deeper understanding of what people feel they need and why) and a **public voice** (a shared sense of concern).

Deliberation helps people find **connections** among their varied purposes and a shared sense of direction. This provides **common ground** where citizens engage in **public action**. People gain an "ah-ha" of the consequences and trade-offs of their actions and their impacts on others.

## Debate, Dialog and Deliberation

Debate and deliberation are usually easily differentiated. Debate has its uses. Dialog is not as clear. This chart and the one on the following page compare the processes. The critical point is to understand which problem situations are best addressed by debate and which are best addressed by deliberation.

### DEBATE VS. DELIBERATION

In debate, you search for weaknesses in another position	In deliberation, you search for strength in another position.
In debate, you search for glaring differences.	Deliberation involves concern for others.
Debate involves countering the other's position at the expense of the relationship.	Deliberation assumes that many people have pieces of an answer to a workable solution.
Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in your beliefs.	In deliberation, you temporarily suspend your judgment of other's beliefs.
Debate is oppositional and seeks to prove the other wrong.	Deliberation is collaborative and seeks common understanding.
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, you listen to find flaws and counter-arguments.	In deliberation, you listen to understand and find meaning in agreement.
Debate defends assumptions as truth.	Deliberation reveals assumptions for reevaluation.
Debate defends original solutions.	Deliberation opens the possibility of better solutions.
In debate, you submit your best thinking and defend its rightness.	In deliberation, you submit your best thinking in order to improve it.

Differences between deliberation and dialogue are more difficult to see. The crucial difference is that dialogue is discussion to increase understanding. *Deliberation may include dialogue, but it goes further.* Deliberation is discussion to make a choice about how to act together. Dialogue is also a useful form of discussion. Again the critical point is to understand which problem situations are best addressed by debate and which are best addressed by deliberation.

### Characteristics of Debate, Dialogue and Deliberation

Debate	Dialog	Deliberation
Compete	Exchange	Weigh
Argue	Discuss	Choose
Promote opinion	Build relationships	Make choices
Seek majority	Understand	Seek overlap
Persuade	Seek understanding	Seek common ground
Dig in	Reach across	Framed to make choices
Tight structure	Loose structure	Flexible structure
Express	Listen	Learn
Usually fast	Usually slow	Usually slow
Clarifies	Clarifies	Clarifies
Win/lose	No decision	Common ground

# National Issues Forums

## An Overview

### **What is NIF?**

National Issues Forums (NIF) is a non-partisan, nationwide network of locally-sponsored forums which address 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. Based on the premise that democracy requires an ongoing deliberative dialogue, these forums engage citizens in public work and provide a venue for them to have a public voice.

### **How NIFs Work**

Each year, citizens identify critical issues such as health care, juvenile crime, gambling, or education for public deliberation. Non-partisan issue books are commissioned from a variety of sources and these issue books present approaches for people to consider as different options for acting on an issue.

Forums are sponsored by thousands of organizations and institutions within many communities. They offer citizens the opportunity to join together to deliberate, to make choices with others about ways to approach difficult issues.

Programs for NIF convenors and moderators are conducted each summer in training workshops, often called Public Policy Institutes (PPI's), in more than a score of communities all across the country. They provide participants, both NIF newcomers and veterans, with background on the program as well as the skills for sponsoring, organizing and moderating forums.

### **NIFs Focus on Public Deliberation**

Public deliberation is simply people coming together to talk about a community problem that is important to them. Participants deliberate with one another - eye-to-eye, face-to-face, exploring options, weighing others' views, considering the costs and consequences of public policy decisions.

Citizens have a responsibility to make choices about how to solve problems because government alone cannot solve them all. Citizens' views often differ from those of officeholders. Deliberation may reveal new possibilities for action that neither citizens nor officeholders saw before.

Forums enrich participants' thinking on public issues. Although the issue books tend to approach subjects from a more general perspective, they are very helpful in communities.

Using these books in a deliberative process helps people to see the issues that affect them, from a different point of view—the views of others. At their best, forums help participants move toward shared, stable, well-informed public judgments, based on what is valuable to them about important issues. Through deliberation, participants move from making individual choices to making choices as a public.

### **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, community agencies, 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 practically every type of citizen seeks out and participates in these public forums.

Each year, more than 20 workshops or (PPIs) are held at institutions all across the country to train NIF moderators and convenors. These 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 - 1-800-433-7834. Or see their website at [www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org).

## Coming to Public Judgment

Issue Forums move people from unchallenged individual opinion to considered judgment. Publicly thinking together leads to a shared, mutual understanding of an issue and the development of more carefully weighed personal judgment. The process of coming to public judgment may be rapid through forums but may take years through an evolving process. On any issue, public opinion evolves from incoherent bits of opinion toward integrated, coherent and considered judgment.

### Public Opinion

#### Stage I—Dawning Consciousness

People become aware of an issue or an aspect of it.	Opinions are unstable, feelings may be strong but that does not mean settled views.
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#### Stage II---Greater Urgency

A sense of urgency develops.	There is a general sense of urgency and demands of "Someone do something".
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*The first two stages are "consciousness raising". People become aware of the problem without necessarily seeing the problem as important or needing any large-scale action. People do not yet connect the issue to their own lives and the concerns they have.*

#### Stage III—Discovering the Choices

People start to explore choices for dealing with the issue.	There is a focus on alternatives for dealing with the issues. Often, the proffered options are not the best choices.
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#### Stage IV-Wishful Thinking

Resistance to facing costs and trade-offs. People want it all, wishful thinking.	It is easy to get expressions of approval for a wide range of things everyone wants (e.g., cheap medical care, the very best medical care).
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*Media and experts do much of the work in these early stages. Leaders and experts formulate the choices. In conventional politics, they attempt to sell their solutions through contests and advertising campaigns. Public politics would have people connecting the issue to other concerns and describing how it affects their own lives and communities.*

### Stage V-Weighing the Choices

People start to weigh the pros and cons of alternatives.	Now the public invests effort to grasp the choices, understand consequences and wrestle with conflicts over what they value most.
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### Stage VI-Taking a Stand

People take a stand intellectually.	People see the intellectual reasons for making one choice over others but may not be prepared for the reality of the trade-offs (free speech and censorship).
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### Stage VII—Making a Responsible Judgment

Making a responsible judgment morally and emotionally.	The public overcomes the impulse to put their needs and desires first. The commitments to society take over. The ethical dimension asserts itself.
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PUBLIC JUDGMENT - This chart adapts Daniel Yankelovich's *Coming to Public Judgment* (1991) Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York, 13244-5160.

## **Section 2--The Issue Book**

- Why use an Issue Book?
- Constructing an Issue Book: Why and How
- The Choice Grid

## Why use an Issue Book?

Issues books provide a framework for people to use when they come together to deliberate an issue. So, you might ask... just how does a framework lead to deliberation?

1. 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).
2. 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.
3. 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, preventing typical polarization on issues.
4. Approaches are not mutually exclusive. In well-designed issue books, there is tension between the approaches. That is, the approaches encompass a wide range of options that express commonly held positions. Often, participants realize that there are parts of two or more approaches which have value to them.
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 accept 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. In an issue book, no approach is the direct opposite of the other. It is not that easy. There is always a myriad of options. A simple "yes" or "no" vote would not force us to acknowledge the complexity of the issue nor have us confront the fact we must make choices.

## Constructing an Issue Book: Why and How

In addition to understanding that an issue book is helpful in a forum, it may also helpful to understand **WHY** and **HOW** is it constructed a certain way.

### **WHY—Because deliberation is about making tough choices**

To join together as citizens to act and/or set direction for government, people need to make tough choices so their solutions for public policy reflect what is important to them. Making these choices, or **choicework**, requires individuals and the group to grapple with *underlying values* and the *tensions* among values. *Thus, the framing of an issue and the choices in public terms is vital to effective choicework.*

### **HOW—focuses on getting to the underlying values and tensions of an issue**

The HOW of constructing an issue book is based on addressing the underlying values and tensions of an issue. One way to think about this is to consider how people talk about an issue. This process is presented below.

What is considered	Types of responses
<b>Problem behind the problem</b>	<i>Well, if you ask me, the real reason we have this problem is..."</i>
<b>Broad Remedy</b>	<i>"And the only way to fix it is..."</i>
<b>Specific Actions</b>	<i>"Specifically, I think we are going to have to ...."</i>
<b>Arguments in favor and key facts</b>	<i>"Well, this answer is clear because everyone knows.."</i>
<b>Arguments against</b>	<i>"Yes, but what about the fact that ...."</i>
<b>Values</b>	<i>"When all is said and done, what we are really talking about here is ...."</i>

## The Choice Grid

Understanding the WHY and HOW helps us put together a grid to design the issue book:

Question	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3
What is the problem behind the problem			
What should be done? The broad remedy			
What specific policy actions should be taken?			
What are the key arguments for this choice			
What underlying values motivate this choice			
What are the potential consequences of these policy choices?			
What are the key arguments against this choice?			

## Looking at the Choice Framework

### Racial and Ethnic Tensions

**Definition of the Problem:** Great strides have been made in breaking down barriers that separate American people. But we still struggle with disparity and discrimination between races and among ethnic groups. The legal system and a broad array of educational and information programs have decreased the incidence of blatant and overt discrimination based on race and ethnicity, but there is evidence that discrimination is still substantial, though often more subtle. Hate crimes that target racial and ethnic groups occur frequently. In a country that is becoming more diverse (racially and ethnically) every day, what can be done to reduce conflict and discrimination and move closer to the goal of “equal opportunity for all” ?

Questions	Choice 1: Look Beyond Race and Ethnicity	Choice 2: Build Self-Identity First	Choice 3: Open All Doors to Everyone
What is the problem behind the problem? (What are the key assumptions?)	Assumes if everyone must read/speak English., “melting pot” process will eliminate racial and ethnic discrimination. If everyone has the same standards, separateness will not be a problem.	America was built by people of different ethnic groups, it is its strength. Knowing your own culture permits you to join and find common values with others. Cultural separatism is natural and positive.	Integration is necessary and aggressive actions to achieve it is the only way to reduce conflicts and achieve harmony among the racial/ethnic groups.
What should be done? (the broad remedy)	English only in schools. Focus on <u>Americanism</u> . Focus on what unites us, not what separates us.	Encourage and support community efforts to celebrate, encourage multi-culturalism. Provide options for differences in schools, business practices where there are racial/ethnic differences.	Use existing laws, amend those that are not achieving the desired ends, find ways to bring races and ethnic groups together in more places and more frequently.
What specific policy actions should be taken?	Reject multi-cultural emphasis. Eliminate affirmative action. Enforce existing civil rights laws. Abandon school integration, busing.	Support charter and community schools that work. Provide incentives for minority/ethnic small business startups. Give companies breaks for supporting community projects that strengthen racial/ethnic groups.	Rigorously enforce existing civil rights laws, prosecute violators. Continue and add programs to reduce poverty. Reduce profiling by law enforcement et al.

What are the key arguments for this choice? (Are there strategic facts?)	Requiring same standards, same language is the only “fair” thing to do. Young people are already accepting integration. There has been a lot of progress.	America is more racially and ethnically diverse than ever. We can’t learn to live together if we don’t recognize and accept the reality of differences and use the strengths of diversity.	Though progress has been made, we are still discriminating against certain racial/ethnic groups. Educational levels, housing, 3 <sup>rd</sup> world conditions still exist in the U.S. Separatism is growing.
What underlying values motivate this choice? (Values and Convictions people hold)	Fairness, equality of opportunity, rules should be the same for everyone. Reverse discrimination is not acceptable, not right.	Human dignity, worth of person, honoring one’s heritage and culture. Diversity rather than sameness is the desired outcome.	Equality. Togetherness is necessary for a strong democracy. Fairness. Justice.
What are potential consequences of these policy actions?	Reduction in conflicts caused by current laws. Focus would be on individuals, not on “groups”. Disparities might widen rather than narrow.	Litigation based on real and perceived racial/ethnic injustices would likely dramatically increase. Gives tacit support to extremism, potential for creating civil unrest.	A major increase in “rights” based on one’s ethnicity or race that could lead to more anger and resentment between and among groups.
What are the key arguments against this choice?	Some areas of the country will “re-segregate” if permitted to do so. Recent immigrants will suffer – they are not ready for total and immediate assimilation. Fails to recognize that much of the progress has been because of current laws.	Allowing too much difference in how communities implement schools or assist with economic development could return us to the days of injustice and inequity between racial/ethnic groups. If federal \$ are involved, can lead to waste and abuse. Doesn’t provide a means of developing and highlighting the “commonness” that is necessary for a strong and democratic society.	More intervention by government in how one lives. Help for some who have truly been “left behind”. Requires major federal expenditures that could lead to more dependency, not more independence by individuals and groups. Focuses on racial/ethnic differences as reasons for individual/group failures to succeed. Doesn’t recognize that there is always a “bottom” quartile (or decile) in any group.

Framework prepared by Susan Clark  
Revised by Ron Powers

## Section 3—Getting Started

- Planning the Forum
- Checklist for Convening A Forum
- Moderators, Recorders, Observers
- Logistics
- Identifying Resources
- Advance Publicity
- Participants
- Sample Press Release for Marketing your Forum
- Who Should Come to the Forum?
- Sample invitation letter



## Planning the Forum

### Getting started

When getting started, here are some questions to consider when thinking about holding a public issue forum:

1. Consider your issue carefully- why are you having the forum?
  - a. Intellectual deliberation --educational?
  - b. Highly charged?  
Remember! Not all issues are suitable for deliberation.
2. Do I want to hold forum on my own (just my agency/institution) or in partnership with another organization in the community?
3. Why are partnerships of value and how would I build one?
4. Who should come to the forum? Should it be open to the public or do I want to make sure there is diversity of voices and have it by invitation-only?
5. What is the ideal number of forum participants?
6. How do I handle the media?

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### **1. Why is this public issue forum being held?**

All public issues forums are educational in the sense that people are learning more about a subject and the perspectives of others. However, libraries may be more interested in an intellectual deliberation or having a forum for an educational purpose. Other agencies may want to hold a forum to deliberate a highly charged issue. Some are held as a demonstration of the deliberative process...so it varies. You need to be clear about why you are holding the forum as it influences how you answer the rest of these questions.

Not all issues are suitable for public deliberation. For example, a community may be faced with a decision to build a new road because of traffic congestion. If it's clear a new bridge is needed, a forum is not necessary. Where a deliberative forum may be

valuable is where to build it, how to handle environmental issues, etc. Or, if a community has funds for community development, a deliberative forum can be useful to get a diversity of voices on the type of community development.

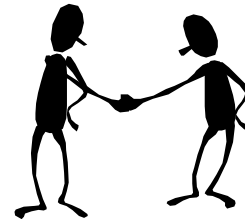
**2. Do I want to hold this public issue forum on my own (just my agency or institution) or in partnership with another organization in the community?**

Some agencies/institutions may wish to hold a public issue forum on their own because they have a specific purpose in mind, they want to reach a certain audience or it is part of a program they offer. They may also have adequate resources of their own to support the issue forum.

For others, creating a partnership with a community agency, civic group, faith-based organization or other community entity might be the way to go. It is an opportunity to reach a broader audience, share information on the deliberative process with the partner and help defray some of the costs of holding a public issue forum.

**3. Why are partnerships of value and how would I build one?**

Building a broad base of support for local public issues forums not only ensures participation from many segments of a community, but also serves to spread the workload and prevent burnout of committed volunteers. Starting small with one or two partnerships is often effective for new forums. As participation rises and the forum influence extends, adding more partnerships and increasing the diversity of the connections will further the growth and outreach of the public politics process. Following are some guidelines for creating positive partnerships :



- Be inclusive. Look for partnerships including and beyond organizations that may already understand the importance of public deliberation. Successful forums represent a diversity of interests, resources, and perspectives.
- Invite partners to participate at the earliest stages of planning a forum. Give them "ownership" in the forum and the opportunity to contribute their special skills, resources, and points of view. They will be far more likely to participate fully if they are part of the planning process as well as part of the forum implementation.
- Clearly define the roles for partners. What skills and resources do they bring to the table that will improve the capacity of the participants for public deliberation? Delegate tasks that best serve the partners' needs and interests, so that all parties feel rewarded for their efforts. Who is the partner's contact? What is their task? What kind of involvement in time

and resources will the partner provide? What is the timetable to complete the assignment? How will their contribution be recognized?

- Provide your partner(s) with a clear mission and goals for the public forum. Make sure they understand them. It is also helpful to supply partners with a mission statement for your organization. Communicate clearly why the forum needs their participation. Ask the partner what their expectations are and how they hope to benefit. From this discussion you can build a mutually beneficial relationship that will be long lasting.

#### **4. What types of local partnerships might be available in order to hold issue forums?**

A number of national organizations that are familiar with the national issues forums have local chapters and offer an opportunity to develop a partnership to hold forums.

✓ **Missouri Library Association**

✓ **City Cares**

CityCares supports an innovative alliance of grassroots volunteer organizations building communities through service activities. CityCares affiliates, known locally as "Cares" or "Hands On" groups, are in over 30 cities nationwide

✓ **The General Federation of Women's Clubs**

The General Federation of Women's Clubs works locally, through thousands of clubs in the U.S. and in 20 countries abroad, to promote education, stress civic involvement, and work toward world peace and understanding

✓ **The Federation of State Humanities Councils**

The state humanities councils, located in each of the 50 states, have been working for nearly 30 years to educate citizens about our history and culture and stimulate dialogue about contemporary issues of concern. Collaborating with libraries, museums, churches and other religious institutions, schools, senior centers, historical societies, community centers, and others, state humanities councils have supported community forums and discussions

✓ **Kiwanis International**

Over 8,200 Kiwanis clubs around the country sponsor service projects as well as weekly club meetings of business and professional men and women in their communities

✓ **The League of Women Voters**

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase

understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

✓ **The National Black Chamber of Commerce**

The National Black Chamber of Commerce, with 190 local, national and international affiliate chapters, is dedicated to the economic empowerment of African American communities.

✓ **The World Affairs Council of America**

The World Affairs Councils, with 80 member councils and 27 affiliates, offer international exchanges, school programs, teacher workshops, model United Nations programs, foreign policy discussions, national opinion polling, travel programs, journals, newspaper columns, and local radio and television programs.

✓ **Others**

- Chamber of Commerce
- Ministerial alliances
- Community partnerships
- Human service agencies
- Community betterment organizations
- Schools
- RC & D's (locally-led natural resource councils in some states)
- Community Colleges

**1. *Who should come to the forum? Should it be open to the public? Should it be invitation-only? What can you do to assure as much diversity as possible?***

Why you are having the forum may influence your audience make-up. If it is held at a library for educational purposes, chances are it will be open to the public and your participants will self-select. If it is being held to get a cross-sectional viewpoint from the community, you will probably want to invite at least some, or all, of the participants to get a diversity of voices. Sometimes forums are a combination, where certain people in the community are invited and the session is also open to the public.

Again, why you are having the forum is important. If you want to build a civic infrastructure for deliberative forums to become an important habit for the community, a broad outreach is necessary. Successful forums extend their influence of civic dialogue and deliberation to schools, banks, service organizations, businesses, churches, elected officials, and citizens. Inviting more members of the community to participate in and learn from the dialogue generated through the forum process strengthens the deliberative process and fosters its continuation.

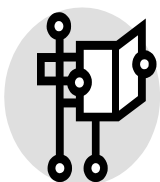
Following are some suggestions to help you reach more participants in your community.

- **Form a steering committee.**  
When recruiting members for a forum steering committee, look for candidates who can offer strong partnerships through their professional or civic involvement. To form links with local schools, for example, consider school administrative staff or classroom teachers for appointments to forum committees.
- **Seek the involvement of local media** during the very first stages of planning a forum. By involving media representatives early in the forum process, they will be more likely to become involved as a partner to carry out winning community efforts, as well as cover the forum events.
- **Utilize all opportunities for media exposure.** Local leadership will be far more willing to champion the forums when they already view it as a success. Media coverage is one of the best tools for building a successful image. Take advantage of the networking channels available through members of a forum steering committee. Ask for their help. Most businesses and organizations have newsletters, and many have access to speaker's bureaus, talk show hosts, reporters, and online Web sites. (See question 6 below for more information.)
- **Continue to make connections** and to reach out. Public politics depends on multiple connections and relationships, not only those of similar interests but also those with different points of view. Building a civic infrastructure is an ongoing process. Continue to ask: Whose voice is not in this room that needs to be here? How can we bring them to the table? How can we reach them where they are?

## ***2. What is the ideal number of forum participants?***

An ideal number of people is between 20 and 25, so that everyone has a chance to be heard. With larger forums, you run the risk that not everyone will be able to participate. Conversely, you would not want to hold a forum with less than 8 people.

## ***3. How should I handle the media?***

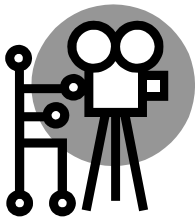


As mentioned earlier, the media can be helpful in providing exposure for the forums in your community. There are several things to think about:

**Print media.** A news release can be helpful to alert the media (see sample on page 27). Ideally, those who come in order to report on a forum should be observers. There have been cases where a reporter participated in a

forum, but as a citizen. They may write a story later on their experience. If someone is at your forum as a reporter, try to get them to stay for the whole forum so they have a good sense of how a deliberative forum works. If not, ask them to come and go quietly so as not to disrupt the forum.

It would be good to communicate with the media ahead of time and get agreement that they will not associate names with what participants say. They can report that "a man said ..." but not "John Jones said" . If they will not agree to this, and it is a public forum and is open to the public, forum participants should know ahead of time they may be quoted.



Television. Having a film crew at a forum trying to get a sound bite for the 10 o'clock news can be very disruptive. Usually they will not stay the whole time and are more interested in getting a few shots and talking to a few people. This rarely captures the essence of a deliberative forum. Forum participants may not want to be on television. It is important to always ask them. If you can avoid a cameraman coming in for a brief period and leaving, it will be less disruptive for the forum. The ideal interview would be after a forum so that participants have an opportunity to experience the whole process.

Videotaping a forum. There are mixed views on video taping a forum. If you must do so, here are a few tips:

- Be clear about the final goal for the video. If you think there are possibilities to distribute the tape widely, instead of using it for one client or for internal purposes only, you'll want to organize the videotaping project differently.
- Be sure participants sign any release forms.
- Make sure the room is big enough to accommodate the lights and to allow the videographers to move freely, and that there are plenty of electrical outlets. Give the crew plenty of time before the forum to set up.
- Get someone with journalism experience to interview participants about what it was like to participate in the forum. Make it clear the interviews aren't about "selling" the process but that you really want to know what they thought.
- Check with your local public access television station if there is one. They may be willing to video tape the event for you and show it in your community.



## Checklist for Convening A Forum

### Moderators, Recorders, Observers

- Who will moderate? Co-moderators? Is this a chance to pair a less experienced moderator with a more experienced one?
- Who will record? One or two people?  
A note on this: You don't want so many people in the front of the group so that it is distracting. If, because you need a record of this forum, two recorders makes more sense then make sure they are settled discreetly off to the sides up front.
- How about observers?  
Observers can be of two types:
  - To help keep track of the forum also, eliminating the need for two recorders. May take notes as a "silent" recorder.
  - To listen and watch to see what goes on in a forum. This type does not usually take notes to help record the forum process.Observers should also be kept to a minimum so as not to detract from the forum participants. They are silent, and do not participate in the process at all.
- Have the moderators, recorders and observers met?
- Do they have an agreement amongst themselves as to how they will interact?
  - Will recorders interrupt when aren't sure what a participant said?
  - If there are two moderators they should decide on who will do what parts.

### Logistics

- What day/night works best?
  - Your steering committee can help identify times which may work best and not conflict with other community activities.
- Where will the forum be held?
- Are facilities handicapped accessible?
- Is there public transportation to the site?
- Room size—is it large enough to handle your group AND the seating arrangements
- Seating arrangements
  - U-shaped (many moderators prefer this)
  - With/without tables?
- Forum length (2 hrs is suggested, can go 3)

- Room details
  - Location of light switches
  - Bathrooms
  - Water fountains
- Posters
  - National Issues Forum
  - Guidelines
  - Reflections
  - Choice Work
- Equipment
  - Microphones (will you need a "handler"? Remind the handlers—Never let go of the mike!)
  - Easels with flip charts
  - Markers
  - VCR and TV
  - Extension cords
  - Three-prong adapter
  - Extra issue books or summary of approaches
- Sign-in Sheet
- Refreshments
- Child care?

## Identifying Resources

- Whose stationery will you use?
- Who pays for photocopying?
- Who pays postage?
- Who will process the registration (if necessary)?
- Who designs/prints the flyers?
- Who will purchase the issue book?
- Who manages the budget?

## Advance Publicity

How will you handle publicity? Your partners can provide valuable assistance through their networks.

- Newspaper/radio/TV announcements
- Posting flyers (see example on page 29)
- Special newsletters
- Church newsletters
- Organization newsletters
- Extension newsletter

Make sure publicity is well-timed AND accurate about the forum.

## Participants

Who will attend the forum and how you will reach them?

- Will it be invitation only? Will the public also be invited? This will depend on the purpose of your forum
- Where do you look for diverse voices?
  - See page 33 for a useful grid when considering who to invite
- If you want to issue invitations, will the steering committee do it?
  - How? Written? Oral?
  - Work through local organizations that may have the contacts but are not on the steering committee, such as neighborhood associations?
  - See sample invitation letters on pages 30-32.
- Will you thank participants for attending? Verbally? By letter?

## **Sample Press Release for Marketing your Forum**

June 13, 2003

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI OUTREACH AND EXTENSION

SOUTHWEST REGION NEWS SERVICE

Contact: David Burton, civic communication specialist

Headquartered in Greene County

Tel: (417) 862-9284

E-mail: [burtond@missouri.edu](mailto:burtond@missouri.edu)

### **PUBLIC ISSUES WORTH TALKING ABOUT**

**A monthly public issues column from University Outreach and Extension ...**

## **The News Media Needs Fixing, But Who is Going to Do it?**

Over the past 10 years, study after study has found that American citizens are losing confidence in the news media. This includes a study published May 28, 2003, by USA Today and Gallup Poll that found only 36 percent of Americans "believe news organizations get the facts straight."

The downward trend began in the 1980's and gained steam in the 1990's, long-before the Jayson Blair scandal at the New York Times gave the credibility of large newspapers a black eye.

Finding ways to restore the public's trust in the news media is the purpose of a public deliberation program developed by the Ketting Foundation and being delivered in southwest Missouri by University of Missouri Outreach and Extension. Both organizations believe that restoring the nation's trust in the news media is vital to the continued success of our democracy.

The area's first news media issues forum was held in Springfield, Mo., May 19. Forty persons attended and deliberated all sides of this issue before making choices and finding common ground.

It was apparent from the forum's beginning that a majority of citizens no longer trust the news media.

Some citizens think the news media covers up real stories for the sake of owners or advertisers. Others find liberal bias in much of what is written and said (or left out). Still others find the news sensationalized and hyped for the sole purpose of profit. Meanwhile, others say the news media is nothing but entertainment while the real hard issues of our culture get ignored.

Over 80 percent of participants agreed that irresponsible journalists are eroding public trust in the news media. The blame, however, was placed on owners, with 85 percent of participants saying the news media is "more concerned with profits than with public service."

There was also universal agreement that the “failure” of America’s news media is a serious challenge to the functioning of our democracy. However, there was some difference regarding the source of the news media’s failure and few solid solutions on how to fix it.

Only 15 percent of participants agreed with licensing journalists like lawyers and teachers.

"The ownership of too much of the media industry rests in a handful of huge companies," was agreed with by 85 percent of forum participants. There was support for public broadcasting, with 48 percent supporting more funding (although the issue of tax money being used was a concern).

There was support for making the media more accountable to the public interests, but no suggestions of how this could be accomplished without additional government involvement.

The idea of “getting citizens involved” with the news media was the most appealing to participants. However, it was not without concerns. There was agreement that citizens need to engage the news media more and take a more active role.

There was also agreement that the news media needs to do a better job of listening to the citizens of their community. In fact, 93 percent of forum participants agreed, "the local media should initiate community discussions of civic issues in their communities."

This issue of restoring the public trust is a serious one for the future of our nation's democracy. It is serious for the news media too, especially when you consider that 50 percent of participants agreed with giving the federal government power to “more strictly regulate the news media."

Your local newspaper has an opportunity to host a Public Issues Forum on restoring the public's trust in the news media. If you would be interested in bringing that University Outreach and Extension program to your community, contact your local community newspaper.

*This monthly public issues column entitled, "PUBLIC ISSUES WORTH TALKING ABOUT," is written by David Burton, civic communication specialist, University of Missouri Outreach and Extension, 833 Boonville, Springfield, Mo., 65802. He can be contacted via e-mail: [burtond@missouri.edu](mailto:burtond@missouri.edu)*

## Sample Publicity Flyer



**NATIONAL ISSUES FORUMS**  
*A Different Kind of Talk, Another Way to Act*

*Forum Topic:*

### **The Troubled American Family** *Which Way Out of the Storm?*

Most Americans say their family is life's most precious gift, but one that's wrapped in life's greatest worries. Two out of every three Americans say they fret the most about family matters. While most people worry about money, many also worry about the ability of today's family to instill basic social values in children. This forum will discuss questions and issues associated with the family. Some core questions to be discussed include: Are families failing to impart healthy values to their children? Is a hostile economic, cultural, and legal environment undoing the work of families? Are too many adults focusing on their own desires and needs and thus cheating children of stable childhoods? What public and private actions are needed to strengthen the family's ability to foster healthy children?

**March 26, 2003**

**2:00 to 4:00 p.m.**

**First Christian Church Family Life Center**

*Please RSVP by March 24 for the forum by calling 543-4156  
so that a handout can be sent to you prior to the forum.*

Attendance will cap at 25.

**Facilitated by Alexa Casey and Georgia Stuart-Simmons**

*Cosponsored by:*

*Greater Warrensburg Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center*

*University of Missouri Outreach and Extension*

*CMSU Office of Community Engagement*

## Sample Invitation Letter 1

March 20, 2003

Address of invited participant

Dear Mr. or Ms.

The Education Forum Steering Committee, on behalf of the Columbia/Boone County Community Partnership, invites you to participate in a Forum to be held on April 22, 2003 in Columbia, MO. The Forum, “**Challenges to Public Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**”, cosponsored by The Columbia/Boone County Community Partnership and National Issues Forums, will be held in three sessions conducted simultaneously at Lange Middle School, Gentry Middle School, and Smithton Middle School. The agenda for each will include a meal beginning at 5:00PM. The forum will begin at 6:30PM, and will wrap up by 8:30PM. There is no charge for this event.

The Education Forum Steering Committee has been working since last December to develop this exciting opportunity for the Columbia community. Each Forum will be an opportunity for 15-20 community members to have a structured dialogue about education and the public schools. The National Issues Forums have developed a highly effective process for community members to deliberate on various approaches to address local education issues. The process will provide a great opportunity for diverse community members to have dynamic conversations about some approaches to address education issues in the community.

If you accept this invitation to participate, please call the Partnership office at 256-1890 and ask for Dionne Richardson. She will confirm your commitment to attend and will then send the Forum information and instructions to you by mail. If you are not able to attend, it would be greatly appreciated if you would recommend another representative from your organization or group to participate in this activity. Please respond no later than Tuesday, April 15, 2003. You should allow yourself at least one week to examine the materials before attending the actual forum.

If you have any questions about the program, please contact one of the Forum Steering Committee members or call the Partnership Facilitator, Janice Dawson-Threat at 256-1890. For more information about NIF examine their website at <http://www.nifi.org/>. We look forward seeing you on April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Sincerely,

Chuck Headley  
Steering Committee

Jeffrey Williams  
Steering Committee

## Sample Invitation Letter 2

March 12, 2003

Dear Friend:

As a past participant in one of our Issues Forums, we wanted to make you aware of another opportunity to participate in a deliberative session. An Issues Forum will be held on **Wednesday March 26 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the First Christian Church Family Life Center**. The forum topic of “**The Troubled American Family: Which Way Out of the Storm?**” will promote public deliberation that can help us find common ground for action on the troubling problems facing today’s families. The forum will provide an overview of the issue and outline three different approaches. It will be facilitated by Alexa Casey and Georgia Stuart-Simmons.

This forum is being cosponsored by the Office of Community Engagement at CMSU, University Outreach and Extension and the Greater Warrensburg Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitor’s Center. In order to allow for good discussion, attendance is limited to 25 participants. Those interested are asked to RSVP by calling 543-4156 so that a discussion summary can be sent to you prior to the forum.

Enclosed is a flier that is being used to promote the forum. We hope you will share this information with others who may be interested in participating. We appreciate your past participation in our forums and hope you will be able to join us once again.

Sincerely,

Georgia Stuart-Simmons  
Community Development Specialist

## Sample Invitation Letter 3



OUTREACH & EXTENSION  
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI  
LINCOLN UNIVERSITY

WARREN COUNTY

KNOWLEDGE IN ACTION

107 West Walton, Warrenton, MO 63383  
Ph. 636-456-3444 Fax 636-456-4108  
E-mail: warrenco@missouri.edu  
<http://outreach.missouri.edu/warren>

*You're invited to participate in a  
Missouri Issues Forum on Terrorism – What Should We Do Now?  
on Tuesday, September 17, 2002 from 7-9 p.m.  
at the Warren County University Outreach & Extension Center.  
A reception with light refreshments will start at 6:30 p.m.*

**Make your reservation today by calling 636-456-3444  
Deadline: Friday, August 9**

### **What is an issues forum?**

How can we in the U.S. address terrorism? A forum is an opportunity to weigh the pros and cons of different choices and the likely trade-offs for each choice. It is an opportunity to meet face-to-face for public deliberation, a chance to explore and share viewpoints, and to gain a better understanding of the subject. An issues forum is non-partisan and does not advocate a specific solution or point of view.

### **Why the topic on terrorism?**

On September 11, the curtain came up on a troubling new world, filled with danger. In one awful day, the nation's self-confident mood and its public agenda were turned on their head. A threat that had been waiting in the wings moved to center stage. Since then, terrorism has been public issue #1. Deciding what to do about it, and how to regain a measure of our national security, is now the chief preoccupation of elected officials and the American public.

### **Who will be moderating this session?**

Issue forums are structured discussions, led by trained moderators. Sandra Hodge, State Public Policy Specialist from the University of Missouri-Columbia and Miranda Duncan of the Public Policy Research Center at University of Missouri-St. Louis will serve as our moderators. Using nonpartisan issue books, participants weigh several possible ways to address a problem. They analyze each choice and the arguments for and against it. The moderators will encourage participants to think not only as individuals but as members of a community.

### **Who else will be there?**

We've invited citizens with a variety of viewpoints such as faith-based leaders, law enforcement, and people from the military, local government officials, farmers, store owners, and more.

We would value your participation. **RSVP by August 9 to reserve your spot.**

Sincerely,

Sandra McKinnon  
County Program Director/Consumer & Family Economics Specialist

## Who Should Come to the Forum?

Community Team --REPRESENTATION MATRIX

A worksheet to help you think about recruitment from all parts of the community

	Business and Industry	Civic & service clubs	Media	Health	Education	Religion	Human services	Government	Volunteers	College students	High School students	Technical centers
<b>Geographic areas</b>												
<b>Cultural groups</b>												
<b>Skills / Expertise</b>												

## Section 4—The Forum

- Structure of a Forum
- Basic Principles of Moderating
- Preparing to Moderate
- Moderator Guidelines
- Handling Moderator Challenges
- Reviewing the opening of a Forum
- Operating Principles for Participants
- Strategies to promote Dialogue/Deliberation
- Questions to Prompt Deliberation
- Recording Your Forum
- Ending the Forum
- Practice Forum

## Structure of a forum

<b><i>Welcome</i></b>	10%	The convener or moderator introduces the program, acknowledges the host, explains the process, reviews the guidelines, and collects the pre-forum questionnaires.
<b><i>Personal Stake</i></b>	5%	As an icebreaker, participants tell personal experiences related to issue. This establishes that the issue is relevant, important and provides participants with a starting point for their conversation.
<b><i>Deliberation</i></b>	65%	Participants examine all of the approaches. The moderator directs the flow of conversation to make sure that everyone gets a chance to speak and that all sides of the issue get a fair hearing.
<b><i>Reflection</i></b>	20%	Hearing a public voice. Going from <i>my</i> voice to <i>our</i> voice. The moderator guides the participants to reflect on their own learning, then to reflect on what they learned about how others think and finally to construct statements that reflect the common ground of the group.

## Basic Principles of Moderating

An effective moderator:

Remains neutral with regard to the subject of the forum

- Does not take on an expert role with the subject matter.
- ❑ Creates an atmosphere of acceptance of all persons and ideas.
- ❑ Brings participants back to the choices when comments go astray.
- ❑ Spends about the same amount of time on each choice.
- ❑ Keeps the discussion focused on issues, not on personalities.
- ❑ Is courteous, open, and even-handed.
- ❑ Intervenes as necessary to remind the group of ground rules, re-focus the discussion, and call for clarification.
- ❑ Encourages everyone to join in the conversation.
- ❑ Lets the group make up its own mind.
- ❑ Facilitates the group arriving at its public voice.
- ❑ Communicates in advance and during the forum with co-moderator(s) as necessary.
- ❑ Communicates in advance and during the forum with recorder(s) as necessary.
- ❑ Communicates in advance and during the forum with convener as necessary.



## Preparing to Moderate

Everyone will prepare to moderate an Issue Forum using his/her own approach. There is no right or wrong way to prepare. However, here are some strategies that experienced moderators have found useful when preparing to moderate a forum.

### 1. Know the forum materials

Read the issue book at least twice. First skim the book to get the feel for the issue and the choices. Then read the book and highlight the key points. Be familiar with the moderator's guide, starter tape, and pre/post questionnaires.

### 2. Identify the key elements of the issue framework.

Be familiar with how the issue is framed. Using a Choice Framework Form, write out the following elements of each choice. Use your own words.

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

Once you have charted the key elements, you may want to transfer your work to note cards for use as you moderate a forum. **Note:** If you do this for each new forum subject you moderate, you won't be sorry!

### 3. Prepare questions

- Prepare a personal stake question that will help participants connect to the issue personally, such as:

- How have you experienced this issue?
- Has this issue affected you personally or someone you know? How?
- Use the moderator guide and your own experience to develop suggested questions to guide the deliberation

- Keep in mind that your prepared questions are only a resource.

- The best forums take place when the moderator listens closely to the group and adjusts questions to best fit the situation.

### 4. Work out teamwork

Communicate with co-moderator(s) and recorder(s) so everyone has common expectations of roles, styles and techniques during the forum.

## Moderator Guidelines

Keep these behavior guidelines in mind:

- Remain neutral; don't contribute ideas or evaluate group members' ideas. Remember, also that body language and facial expressions are important to neutrality.
- Be courteous and fair. These qualities are basic to dealing with potentially disruptive situations. Be supportive, but be careful about seemingly 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. Equality isn't 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. Ask questions such as:

What do you like most (least) about this choice?

- It sounds like you feel strongly in support (against) of this choice.
- What about this choice troubles (appeals to) you?

What is the strongest argument against (in favor of) this choice?

- Be patient. Don't interrupt. Don't complete participant sentences.
- Listen carefully to model that behavior (patience).
- Don't become 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.
- Don't make assumptions, check out your assumptions.  
Use active listening and paraphrasing to make sure you're hearing accurately:
  - 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?
- Use conflict productively. Don't 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 don't fully agree"? Civility isn't an end in itself and 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.

#### Stimulate Discussion:

Ask questions such as:

What do others think about this?

- What ideas have not been expressed?
- How would you respond to the concerns just expressed?
- Could you tell me a story to illustrate that?
- For those who hold that position, what do they care deeply about?

Remember the guidelines for participants. 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.

## Handling Moderator Challenges

### Dealing with participants who dominate the discussion:

Ask questions such as:

What do others think about this?

- What ideas have not been expressed?
- How would you respond to the concerns just expressed?
- Could you tell me a story to illustrate that?
- For those who hold that position, what do they care deeply about?

### Deal 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 ground rules (everyone participates, no monopolizing conversation)
- Redirecting 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?

### Handling Misinformation From A Participant

Ask questions such as:

Does anyone have a different perspective on that?

- Use the issue book. Point out that "on p. 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.

## Reviewing the Opening of a Forum

### Welcome

- Introduce yourself. If you like, you can BRIEFLY explain the role of the moderator (to guide the deliberations, yet remain impartial.)
- Introduce your co-moderator and/or recorder(s)
- Point out details such as restrooms and water fountains
- REVIEW THE GROUND RULES
  - Go over basic ground rules and then ask if there are any others the participants would like to consider. You will have to monitor the number they suggest and be sure they still allow for good deliberation and are not too limiting.

## Operating Principles for Participants

Listed below are some key points to share with participants:

- Talk to each other not the moderator.
- Everyone is encouraged to participate. No one dominates.
- Everyone understands that this is not a debate. The talk is deliberative rather than argumentative.
- The deliberation focuses on the options.
- The major choices or options are considered and the trade-offs are examined.
- Listening as important as talking.
- Everyone works toward making a decision about how he or she acts on the problem or what policy he or she thinks best for the community or country.

### Variations and additions for the above points

- Listen carefully to others, especially when their ideas differ from your own.
- Be open to changing your minds; this will help you really listen to others' view.
- Speak your mind freely, but don't monopolize the conversation.
- When disagreement occurs, keep talking. Explore the disagreement. Search for common ground.
- Value one another's experiences.
- Ask clarifying questions. Help to develop one another's ideas.
- Don't waste time arguing about points of fact. For the time being you may need to agree to disagree and then move on.

## Strategies to Promote Dialogue/Deliberation

Once you have done the welcome and ground rules.....

1. Begin by asking participants to comment on how the issue affects them. (Allows people to connect to the issue personally and to hear how others connect. Engagement begins with this sort of personal conversation. )

**Note:** 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 few minutes with one another 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 shouldn't call attention to itself.

2. Err on the side of including people who disagree.
3. Initiate dialogue through a gesture of empathy.
4. Check for the presence of all three-core requirements of dialogue -- equality, emphatic listening and surfacing assumptions nonjudgementally -- and learn how to introduce the missing ones.
5. Minimize the level of mistrust among participants before pursuing practical objectives.
6. Keep dialogue and decision-making compartmentalized.
7. Focus on common interest, not divisive ones.
8. Use specific cases to raise general issues.
9. Bring forth your own assumptions, or what you THINK is being said, before speculating on those of others.
10. Where applicable, identify mistrust as the real source of misunderstandings.

11. Expose old scripts to a reality check. Do they hold true now and under all conditions?
12. Focus on conflicts between value systems, not people.
13. When appropriate, express the emotions that accompany strongly held values.  
(It seems you are very angry (upset, hurt, etc.) by .....)



## Questions to Prompt Deliberation

Four basic questions are asked in forums to prompt deliberation:

1. What is valuable to us? This question gets at the reason that making public choices is so difficult, namely, that the various actions people may want to take are rooted in things people care about very deeply. The question can take many forms:
  - How has this issue affected you personally? Or, why is this important to you? (This question is usually asked at the beginning of a forum.)
  - When you think about this issue, what concerns you?
  - What is appealing about this choice or approach?
  - What makes this approach a good one -or a bad one?

(These last two questions, of course, can be asked at appropriate transition opportunities to move the deliberation to each of the other choices to be examined.)

To uncover deeper concerns, people can ask one another how they came to hold the views they have, or a moderator can raise the question. It helps to encourage talk about actual experiences, rather than just reciting facts or making rational arguments.

### Consequences, Costs/Benefits

This question can take any number of forms as long as it prompts people to think about how each choice affects what is valuable to them.

Because deliberation requires evaluating the advantages and weaknesses of different choices, it is important to be sure that both aspects are fully aired.

2. What are the consequences, costs, and benefits associated with the various choices?

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

- 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 choice, which is receiving so much criticism?

Often participants will feel some conflict about the choices. This illustrates the tension that exists among the approaches. These questions can assist participants in working through some of the conflict and tension.

3. What are the inherent conflicts that we have to "work through"? As a forum progresses, participants or the moderator may ask:
  - 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?

The moderator should say during the first few minutes of a forum that the objective is to work toward a decision about how to act together. The moderator may continue to intervene from time to time with questions that move the deliberation toward a choice. (Experienced forum participants will often make this same point 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:

4. Can we detect any shared sense of direction or common ground for action?  
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. Someone might ask, for example:

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

## Effective Recording



Along with the moderator, the recorder of a forum is a critical member of the deliberative process. The recorder basically keeps a "record" of what transpires during the forum. This requires careful listening and communication skills so that what is recorded is accurate and reflects what is being said. A good recorder captures the tensions, consequences and trade-offs in a forum and can play a valuable role in assisting the moderator with reflections at the end of a forum, whether common ground is discovered or not.

An effective recorder:

- Communicates in advance of the forum with the moderator(s) to make sure roles and expectations are clear.
- Makes sure recording materials are available and functioning.
- Demonstrates neutrality.
- Communicates with the moderator(s) and participants during the forum whenever help is needed to capture a comment accurately or slow down the conversation.
- Does not participate in the substance of the forum.
- Is flexible.
- Captures comments accurately and concisely.
- Other:

## Techniques for Recording a Forum

Here are some suggestions for fulfilling the role of a forum recorder successfully.

**Read the issue book.** It's important that you know the material as well as the moderator. This will aid your listening skills tremendously, ensuring that you will be able to "hear" and "distill" pros and cons, consequences, values, conflicts, tensions and trade-offs.

**Determine a strategy** for recording in concert with the forum moderator. Some questions the two of you should take up prior to the deliberative forum might include:

- Will I, as recorder, participate in the forum? Your role - as neutral recorder or as participant/recorder - should be clear to the participants.
- Should I introduce myself and explain my role or will the moderator do that?
- May I ask the participants to clarify something or to correct me if I don't capture their thought appropriately?
- Who is responsible for writing up the flip chart notes?
- Who will provide easel, flip chart, markers, tape, etc.? Can I tape paper on the wall at the forum site? (make sure you have good, thick-lined dark markers.)
- Should I assist with distributing and collecting the questionnaire, or setting up the video, putting up the posters, etc.?
- Should I help the moderator during the "reflections" part of the forum to identify areas of agreement?

When recording, you may want to **provide headings or titles**. Some recorders find it helpful to write on one set of flip chart paper the three or four choices on a given issue. You can do this prior to the forum and post it. Then write a choice name and number at the top of each page. (i.e. Choice 1: Demand Citizen Responsibility.)

Be sure to **capture the pros and cons, tensions, concerns** and trade-offs in a succinct, synthesized manner. Some recorders do find it helpful to provide headings for these also. For instance for "pros" under a given choice, you might subhead it "likes", "appealing", "attractive" or "pros". For "cons" try "dislikes", "pitfalls" or "concerns" for variety. Sometimes trying different words can strike different chords.

Keep in mind that you are **recording key points**; not every comment made. You don't have to synthesize every single comment. Remember that you are listening for areas of tension, identifying trade-offs people are willing or not willing to make, noting advantages and disadvantages to each choice.

It may be helpful for the moderator or recorder to explain this, so participants won't misunderstand your job or be offended if you don't write down each statement made. **Stay out of the way of deliberation.** Approach your job quietly, as any good listener would. You wouldn't want your physical movements to distract from the deliberative process.

Your recording can be helpful in **supporting the moderator's role**. If participants aren't confronting trade-offs because the moderator hasn't yet introduced them, you might make a heading that says "trade-offs", as a way of gently reminding the moderator to get back on the deliberative track. *Only do this if you've worked it out strategically with the moderator ahead of time.* Write down questions folks have - the great unanswerable ones that are important to confront.

Keep in mind that **not every forum needs a recorder**. There is no rule that says you must have a recorder for every forum. Remember each forum has its own distinctive character and purpose. Many feel that recording can show the participants that you value what they are doing. Others feel that recording can get in the way. You will know your audience best. Most important is that you plan your forum ahead of time.

## Ending a Forum

One-time forums may not always be sufficient to fully develop the possibility of common ground for action. We are becoming increasingly aware that for citizens to choose how to act together effectively they probably need a series of deliberative meetings.

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.

The moderator can use these questions as a guide.

### Individual Reflections

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?

Letting people respond voluntarily to the above questions assists personal assessment about what has happened in the forum. The second question helps people think about how different relationships might create greater possibilities for working together on the issue.

### Group Reflections

Can we identify any shared sense of purpose or direction for acting together? Do we detect any possibilities?

What trade-offs are we, or are we not, willing to make to move in a shared direction?

In asking these three categories of questions, the moderator **must not let the forum reopen**. Addressing possibilities for future direction where the group wants to go with the issue helps avoid pressure 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

### Next Step Reflections

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

The first of these questions helps people connect with the number of possibilities that may be emerging from the forum. 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 one-time, one-issue forums. Forum organizers need to be prepared to follow through on expressions of interest in additional opportunities to keep working on an issue together.

## Practice Forum Directions

To give you an opportunity to practice moderating and recording, you and the other members of your small group will hold your own practice forum. During this practice forum, group members will rotate moderator, recorder, observer and participant roles. You will wear more than one hat during the course of your practice forum.

### Moderator:

As moderator, you are responsible for that portion of the forum. You can either keep track of your own time or ask someone else to keep track of your time. You are also responsible for communication with your recorder. You may want to speak briefly with the other moderators in advance to coordinate your transitions. When you are not moderating your portion of the forum, you are a participant (unless you are in some other role such as observer or recorder).

### Observer:

When you are an observer, you are responsible for keeping trace of ways that moderator and recorder are effective and suggestions you have for improvement. If you can participate in the forum and act as an observer at the same time, feel free to take on both roles. If you are more comfortable, feel free to simply observe and take notes during the portion of the forum for which you are signed up. During the rest of the forum, you are a participant (unless you are in some other role such as moderator or recorder).

### Recorder:

You are responsible for recording during that portion of the forum. You are also responsible for communicating with your moderator to coordinate you roles. When you are not recording your portion of the forum, you are a participant (unless you are in some other role such as moderator or observer).

### Forum Participant:

When you are not serving as a moderator, observer, or recorder for any part of the forum, you are always a participant and have the responsibility to consider consequences, pros and cons of the choices, listen to what others think and contribute your perspectives. Please be yourself and do not role-play.

# Blank Practice Forum Sign-Up Sheet

Moderator

Recorder

Observer

Opening			
Choice #1			
Choice #2			
Choice #3			
Reflections			

## **Section 5—Reporting the Forum**



## Reporting your Forum Step By Step

### **Making Preparations for a Report**

- Select one or two observers who will be responsible for writing the report. Don't give this job to the moderator or recorder; they have enough to do.
- Make sure the observers have read the issue book, viewed the starter video and become familiar with the questionnaire. It's impossible to analyze what happened without a command of the material that has been discussed.
- Don't let the analysis affect the forum itself. Observers should stay in the background, out of the way of deliberation.

### **Next, Consider Who Will Read the Report**

Think about who will read your report and its purpose. This will help you to focus your report. Also, be mindful of the criteria that may be used to evaluate the credibility of your report:

- How many forums were held?
- How many questionnaires were filled out?
- Was there a diverse group of participants

### **Some Important Points to Include in the Report**

How did deliberation influence people's thinking? The answer to this question should be the focus of the report. Where was there agreement and why do people feel as they do? Where did they disagree? What did they appear to be considering for the first time?

The report should capture the evolution of people's thinking as they considered the issue initially, and as they deliberated over the course of the forum.

- Moderators often begin the forum by asking participants to tell a story about how the issue affects them. Listen carefully to such stories and try to get people's "starting point" on this issue. What do they understand and not understand about the issue? What language and terms do they use? Do they talk about the issue the way it is generally discussed in the media or among policy makers?
- Assess what people say about each choice, one choice at a time. How does what they say initially change, after they have heard from others and considered the choice at greater length? Do people divide into camps, or is the disagreement more scattered? What are the principles that underlie their conclusions? Are there issues that people don't understand or need more time to deliberate about?

**Options to Consider as you prepare your report:**

Is the conventional wisdom about the public correct? Did the people in your forums see the issue in the way the public's attitudes are portrayed in polls and media reports?

Does the public connect to the issue as conventional wisdom presents it? Did the people in your forums have the concerns that "the public" is reported to have?

How did forum participants approach the issue?

Are there dimensions of the issue participants saw that officeholders or experts didn't?

In other words, what is valuable to citizens and how did it come into play in the deliberations?

What effect did deliberation have?

How did people deal with the conflicts among the many things that were valuable?

Was there any common ground for action?

What did the participants think needed to happen next?

Listen for what is not said. Some of the most important findings may involve ideas that people did not mention. For example, some forums on governance there was little spontaneous interest in public financing of political campaigns. Even though this is a prominent reform proposal that has been advocated by “good-government” organizations for decades, it was most conspicuous by its absence. If key issues are not addressed, consider doing post-forum interviews with participants and moderators to follow up on them.

Don't let an especially articulate or passionate voice overly influence the analysis of what people *generally* said.

- Is there common ground for action? By the end of most forums, people will have reached some general agreement in some areas. What can everyone live with? Are they comfortable with the agreement areas? Where do they continue to disagree?
- Incorporate an analysis of the questionnaire results into the report. The questionnaires are a tool to help analyze how people feel. Though they should not be seen as a “be-all and end-all”, they provide tangible, corroborative evidence to support the report.

Ballot results should be tallied and considered against the backdrop of what people said. Be prepared to explain all ballot results, especially any that seem to run counter to the report itself.

## **Background That Readers May Find Helpful**

To supplement your report, you may want to provide some background about NIF itself. Here are some commonly asked questions:

### **Q. What are National Issues Forums?**

National Issues Forums (NIF) is a long-standing, nationwide network of thousands of civic groups, educational institutions and public service organizations dedicated to promoting nonpartisan public deliberation about complex policy issues. For more than 15 years, people have come together in National Issues Forums to deliberate, consider the difficult trade-offs, and then make choice together about how the country or their community should deal with an important public issue.

Q. What is an "important public issue?"

Each year, members of the NIF network indicate what they think should be the issues covered in the following year, based on feedback they receive from forum participants. Recent issues have included the future of Social Security, affirmative action, problems involving young people, health care and governance in a democracy.

The issue books are reviewed and tested for fairness and clarity by outside experts and by researchers. They contain a brief pre- and post-forum questionnaire that participants are asked to fill out.

In addition to the issue book, most forum moderators use a five- to eight-minute "starter video tape" which summarizes the issue to be deliberated.

Q. How are participants selected?

NIF participants are usually self selected. They come to the forum because they choose to, not because they were drawn from a random sample. Participants receive no incentive or reward for attending.

There are times, however, when participants are expected or required to attend. NIF is used as classroom work in some high schools, community colleges, university honor programs, literacy programs, bilingual education programs and prison inmate programs. NIF may also be a featured activity of a service organization that meets regularly, such as the Rotary Club or Kiwanis.

Generally, NIF conveners engage a wide, diverse group of participants for each forum. But even when the groups are fairly homogeneous, neutral moderators make sure that all voices are heard and all points of view are expressed

### **After the Report is Written: Some ways to Validate Results**

- Review preliminary conclusions with at least two other people who attended the forum. If they don't agree with the analysis, make every effort to understand why they hold a different view.
- Does the analysis make sense in light of everything else that is known about the issue?

Remember, what you are **trying to capture is public judgment, NOT public opinion.** "Judgment" refers to views about what should be done and "public judgment" means shared and reflective views, which are more mature, or fully developed, than opinion. Popular opinion is often contradictory and doesn't account for what would happen if a policy was followed over the long term. Popular opinion, for example, says that the government should provide more services, yet insists that taxes should not be raised. This

is shortsighted: Lower taxes would mean more disposable income in the near term but schools, social services, and highways would eventually deteriorate without financial support. Are people willing to accept those consequences? No one can know what the judgment will be until people face up to the contradictions and the long-term effects. Deliberation helps them do this.

## Reporting on a Forum: Validating the Public's Knowledge

Public deliberation produces its own kind of knowledge. It is different from what is usually thought to "educate" citizens - different from the information provided by professionals, experts, and officeholders. Scholars call it socially constructed knowledge. You might call it "public knowledge" because it consists of things people can know only when they engage one another - and never when they are alone. What you have learned about everything from the way citizens approach issues to their willingness to act is public knowledge. It is knowledge about the public that comes from a deliberative practice.

### *Claims That Can and Cannot be Made About What Happens in Forums*

- Forums reveal the values people draw on and the considerations they deem important as they deliberate about a complex issue. Forum results are much richer and more complex than a snapshot of what people think, which is what comes from an ordinary public opinion poll. Forums shed light on people's thinking about the trade-offs for each potential course of action. They reveal the evolution of people's thinking as they hear from others and consider the issue at some length.
- Forums point the way toward common ground for action by illuminating the trade-offs people find acceptable in dealing with the complex public issue.
- Forums help people reach a more informed, logically inconsistent, considered judgment about an issue, instead of a top-of-the-head, knee-jerk view, which may be logically inconsistent and emotionally reactive.
- Forums enable people to speak in a "public voice". By helping people see an issue in a broader context than their own immediate self-interest and to recognize that others may have a point of view quite different from their own, forums help people assess an issue in a national or communitywide context, and to weight their own self-interests along with the interest of the larger community. By the end of the forums, people are usually willing to take other points of view into consideration, thereby speaking in a "public voice".
- Forums lead to "public making", in that they are a mechanism to help people learn to act as citizens in a democracy, or as members of a public in a community.
- Forum results are not poll results. Although issue books contain a questionnaire for participants, the results are not like poll data. Forum participants are a self-selected or invited group; they are not selected by an rigorous research method.

- Forums are not focus groups. While both involve open-ended conversations, focus groups are managed, narrowly directed discussions, designed to explore how people react to an idea. They are often used to learn how to influence people's thinking through advertising. Focus group participants are paid to attend. They are not self-selected, but are chosen by the researcher or moderator.

## Sample Reports



**NATIONAL ISSUES FORUMS**  
*A Different Kind of Talk, Another Way to Act*

[www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org)

A number of different reports are available at [www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org) and can be downloaded at no charge. It is particularly helpful to visit this website to learn what has happened in other forums.

These reports can be helpful in the following ways:

- Convenors can use them to take stock of what citizens may have attended in other areas
- Moderators can use them to help guide deliberations
- Reporters can illustrate similarities or differences in views in different communities
- They can be used to educate legislators
- Information can be used for use in policy discussion or to influence policy direction
- Other ways?

## Section 6

# From Common Ground to Public Action: Next Steps

## **Common Ground for Action: What Difference Does It Make?**

Attendees at PPIs will encounter the term common ground for action. Many confuse it with consensus or compromise. The distinction between common ground for action and consensus may seem like hair-splitting on first encounter; but it does make a difference.

Common ground for action is based on a very different idea from consensus (total agreement) or from compromise (apportioning agreement). Common ground for action describes the relationship we have when we must take action together, even when we do not fully agree about our convictions.

When you think about it, much of our daily decision-making is in the area between agreement and disagreement. We usually don't fully agree with or fully disagree with others. We don't often give up our convictions to other people. But we do find ways to work with others - sometimes even if we don't particularly like them. That is the reality that common ground for action attempts to capture.

Deliberation is that form of talking through that helps us to address differences of conviction. If we differ in conviction, we can't have consensus and we are very unlikely to compromise. What we do is find overlapping self-interests that enable us to take action together. That behavior is common ground for action.

## Tips for Creating Partnerships

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

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

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

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

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

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

## An Exercise for Developing Public Action

### Step I: Identifying a Shareable Purpose

- At the end of your forum you may have come up with a general sense of direction or an approach that seemed to make sense in dealing with an issue. Describe this direction or approach. If you can't, go back to some smaller forums to work on a sense of direction. Don't try to agree on solutions or plans of action just yet.
- Why is taking this direction so important to people? What are their basic interests or underlying purposes for taking this direction? Don't be surprised if people have different interests and purposes. They may not be the same, but where and when do the interests and purposes overlap?

### Step 2: Restructuring Our Working Relationships

- Overlapping purposes are interrelated, but given the limitations of the circumstances we are each in, they sometimes seem incompatible. So the question is, can we structure the way we work to maximize our interrelated purposes and minimize our incompatible purposes?
- How can we work with those who seem to have the most incompatible purposes? What do we need from them; what might they need from us?

### Step 3: Recognizing Our Capacities

- The way people go about relating to one another, the habits of working (or not working) together are subject to change. What can we do in our jobs, social relations, and homes - in our daily lives - to change our working relationships on the issue we have been discussing? Think about things you do every day in your job, home, or civic life.

#### Step 4: Joining Capacities

1. How can we reinforce and support one another in our separate efforts to get us closer to the overall purpose that we share? How can the way I do my work help you in the work you are doing?
2. What connections do we need to make that would make "your" work and "my" work (the whole of our work) more effective? Can we link our efforts? Are there any natural opportunities for making these connections?
3. Rather than making demands on governments or other institutions, can any of our citizen action make government or institutional action more effective? Specifically, what actions that we thought of in the session could make official action more effective?

Since communities have many different neighborhoods and sections, several different small groups should ask themselves these same questions. Then compare results!

## Tips for Organizing a Steering Committee

Experienced conveners suggest forming a steering committee as soon as your NIF program is larger than a single study circle. 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 NIF programs.

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

Recruit volunteer candidates who can make a commitment to actively participate and contribute to the success of forum operations and grow -from making phone calls to raising money from local foundations.

Identify the skills, interests and network connections of each committee member. Keep these 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 task forces as funding, site selection, moderator orientation and training, evaluation, and policymaker connections.

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

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

Encourage steering committee members to embrace the NIF philosophy and process by providing background materials and training opportunities.

Thanks to the Public Issues Forum of Centre County, State College, PA, for contributions to this tip sheet.

## Section 7

- Daily Evaluation Forms
- Blank Practice Forum Sign-up Sheets
- Resources: Ordering Issue Books, Moderator Guides and Videos
- Glossary of Terms

## Discovering Common Ground on Community Issues

### Workshop--Day One Reflections

1. What are you learning? What are your "aha's"?
2. What isn't clear yet?
3. Suggestions and comments:

## Discovering Common Ground on Community Issues

### Workshop--Day Two Reflections

1. What are you learning? What are your "aha's"?
2. How do you feel about the training experience so far?
3. What do you want to learn about or be able to do?
4. Other:

## Discovering Common Ground on Community Issues

### Workshop--Day Three Reflections

1. What is your opinion about this training?
2. What have you learned? What are your "aha's"?
3. Where do think you can apply deliberation?
3. Other comments:

## Some Resources

Building Communities Through Public Deliberation

Sandra S. Hodge, Ph.D

State Specialist—Public Policy

Community Development Extension Program

University of Missouri—230 Gentry Hall

Columbia, MO 65211 573-882-4435

Email: [HodgeS@missouri.edu](mailto:HodgeS@missouri.edu)

<http://www.ssu.missouri.edu/commdev/pubdelib/pubdelib.html>

Kettering Foundation

200 Commons Rd.

Dayton, OH 45459

1-800-433-7300

[www.kettering.org](http://www.kettering.org)

National Issues Forums

100 Commons Rd.

Dayton, OH 45459

1-800-433-7834

[www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org)

Public Agenda

6 East 39<sup>th</sup> St.

New York, NY 10016

212-686-6610

[www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org)

Study Circles Resource Center

P.O. Box 203

Pomfret, CT. 06258

203-928-3713

[www.studycircles.org](http://www.studycircles.org)

## Sample of Page to Download Moderator Guides


[www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org)

Report Request Form - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Forward Stop Home Search Favorites History Print Print Preview Print Setup

Address <http://www.nifi.org/modformterrorism.html> Go

 **NATIONAL ISSUES FORUMS**  
*A Different Kind of Talk, Another Way to Act*

Home News FAQ PPI Calendar Issues **Reports**

Thank you for your interest in our moderator guide. Please fill out the following information.

Name

Address

Phone Number

E-Mail Address

How many NIF forums have you moderated?

Done Internet

Start In... Fri... co... RE... Re... Re... htt... 9:37 AM

**NOTE:** It is sufficient to fill in your name and email address. You do not have to fill in your address, phone or how many forums you have attended to download a moderator guide.

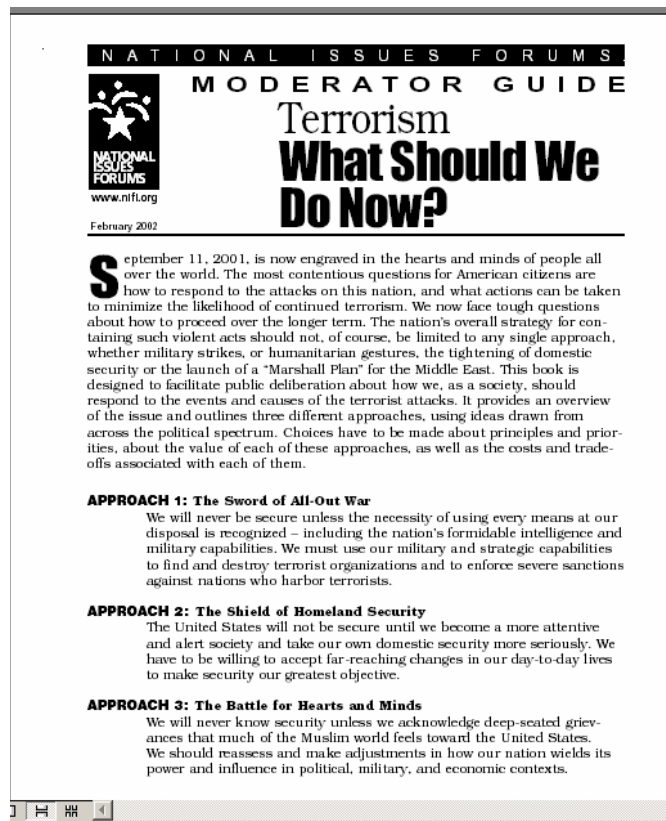
This is a helpful format if you wish to show people how the forum is moderated.

## Order Issues Books, Moderator Guides and Videos

Most of the issues books and videos can be ordered (for a cost) through  
Kendall Hunt  
1-800-228-0810

Moderator guides and posters (ground rules, reflections, etc.) can be ordered free through:

E.C. Ruffalo  
800-600-4060



Two issue books are not available through Kendall Hunt. They are "Justice for All..." and "Pathways to Prosperity: Choosing a Future for Your Community".

## "Justice for all..."

With the assistance of the [Kettering Foundation](#), the [American Bar Association Coalition for Justice](#) and the [ABA Standing Committee on Judicial Independence](#) have produced a [National Issues Forum](#) (NIF) program entitled "*...And Justice For All*" *Ensuring Public Trust and Confidence in the Justice System*. This program is designed to foster community discussion about the justice system with an aim to develop community-centered initiatives for system reform. It affords an opportunity to critically discuss the way the justice system operates today and whether all people have access to fair and impartial justice. Participants in the program's deliberative discussions are encouraged to use the ideas they have developed by getting involved in improving the justice system.

This site provides the resources for bar associations, courts, and members of the community to organize local discussions using the ABA/NIF program materials. It provides information on how to get issues books, moderator guides and the 10-minute starter video...all materials are FREE!

For more information and to Download the moderator guide at no cost:

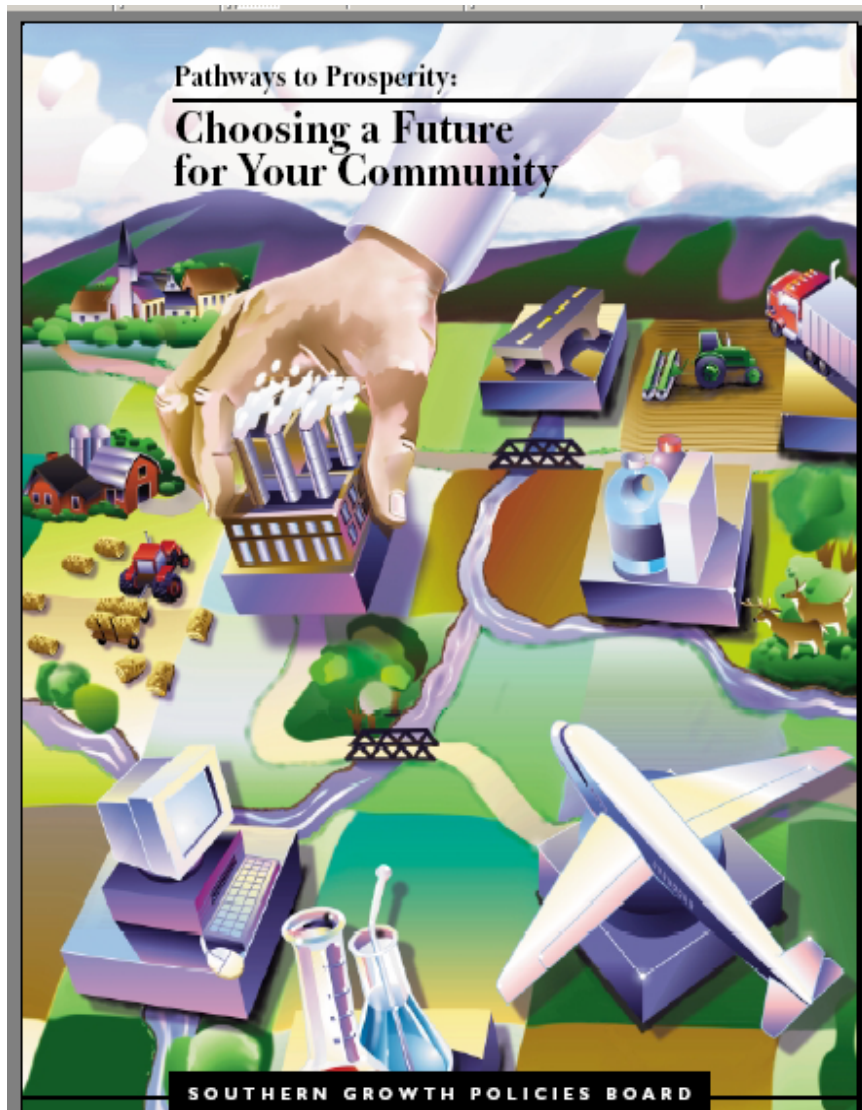
<http://www.abanet.org/justice/nif/home.html>

Here's a description of the products available, also accessible on the web from [http://www.abanet.org/publiced/courts\\_videos.html](http://www.abanet.org/publiced/courts_videos.html)

## "Pathways to Prosperity: Choosing a Future for Your Community"

For ordering information go online to <http://www.southern.org/pubs/scupso/pathways.shtml>

The print version of the discussion guide and the video are available together for \$15. To order, call (919) 941-5145 or e-mail [ngos@southern.org](mailto:ngos@southern.org). For questions about the discussion guide and video contact Linda Hoke at [lhoke@southern.org](mailto:lhoke@southern.org).



## Glossary of Terms

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**Accountability:** Citizens holding *themselves*, not just officials and institutions, responsible to participate in deliberative processes. The kind of accountability in which citizens participate in determining success rather than just receiving reports of what others have done will help to restore a sense of "ownership".

**Associations:** The civil or civilian sector can be observed in such things as informal associations and social networks. It is to the political environment what wetlands are to the natural environment -- the place where public life -- our life together -- takes shape. Informal, ad hoc associations don't have offices, telephones or street addresses. And the way life is organized and business is conducted is equality difficult to find using the standard definitions of political behavior. Things get done, but not by planning, legislating, evaluation or other means common to governments and formal organization. Relationships and networks are used rather than organizational hierarchies. Power comes from the relationship more than from legal authority or money.

**Choicework:** A shared moral struggle; conflict is among more than just between people, even within them; because of conflicting concerns people can't always be certain which option best serves everyone's purposes. Choicework prompts people to examine what is most valuable to them, the most desirable ends and means of political action or "their deepest motives," which are shared.

**Civic Learning:** Observing and reading about places where public life is strong or growing shows how similar communities are to good students. Then are voracious learners, picking up everything they can from both their own experience and the experience of others. That seems to be how they maintain the vitality of their public life. We have been calling the *civic learning*.

**Civil Society:** A society of citizens; Civil society is the part of society that exists between individuals and families, on one hand, and governments and formal institutions, on the other. The civil or civilian sector can be seen in such things as informal association and social networks. It is to the political environment what wetlands are to the natural environment -- the place where public life -- our life together -- takes shape.

**Common Ground for Action:** A shared sense of direction and an awareness of the interdependence of purposes could be called "common ground for action," to distinguish it from "common ground" or consensus. We have learned that making this distinction is

important because many public conversations can produce a temporary sense of closeness for commonality that can obscure important differences.

**Community:** A set of relationships, ways of dealing with problems, the formal and informal organizations that connect people, and the norms that dictate citizens' obligations to others. Together all of these generate a certain feeling of connectedness, of belonging that is called a sense of community.

**Convenor:** A person or group of people in a community or a community organization who plans and coordinates local activities of a National Issues Forum including contacting the local newspaper, letters or fliers to potential participants, all in an effort to bring all voices or viewpoints to the forum.

**Deliberation:** The kind of reasoning and talking we do when a difficult decision has to be made, a great deal is at stake, and there are competing options or approaches we might take. It means to weight possible actions carefully by examining and evaluating what is most valuable to us.

**Deliberative Dialogue:** Deliberation or making choices is interwoven with another kind of talk that is used to make sense of the world. People try to find out what is going on around them and what it means. Some call this kind of talk "dialogue". Although these two kinds of talk have different purposes -- one is for defining meaning and the other decision-making -- they are so closely linked that you might call the two together "deliberative dialogue".

**Dialogue:** Conversation aimed at mutual understanding, not decision-making. While deliberation is for deciding, dialogue is very dependent on mutual understanding.

**Framing an Issue for Public Deliberation:** Framing issues -- laying out the various options for dealing with a problem and identifying the points of conflict; framing issues in terms that reflect what the public considers most valuable rather than in the expert of technical terms in which issues are typically framed. Framing the issue is critical to knowing all of the perspectives of the issue or subject. In contrast to this, in politics, names and frameworks control who will become involved and what kinds of solutions will emerge. They also determine the amount of political will that can be generated to solve problems.

**Issue Book:** The continuing challenge for anyone, preparing an issue book to prompt deliberation is to identify the key facts, to put them in the context of the things that are valuable to people, and to come up with a guide that is comprehensive, fair to all perspectives, and clear about where the different approaches to a problem are in conflict. For twelve years NIF issue books have been prepared and published jointly by two nonpartisan research foundations, Kettering Foundation and Public Agenda Foundation.

**Making Choices Together:** Making choices together is that form of talking and reasoning called deliberation or deliberative dialogue. Making choices means weighing the consequences of various options much as people used to weigh gold on an old-fashioned scale in order to make the hard decisions that deliberation entails. The purpose of making choices together is, in the final analysis, to be able to act together. Making choices together identifies the shared or interconnected purposes that join people as a public.

**Moderator:** In a forum, the moderator encourages people to engage one another. Effective moderators remain impartial so that the group can consider all the options fairly. People won't take a forum seriously, won't invest themselves, if they believe the dialogue is biased or structured to reach a predetermined conclusion. More than twenty colleges, universities and national organizations are instructing NIF moderators through their own public policy institutes.

**Naming a Problem in Public Terms:** The name that is given a problem, in terms that are used to describe it, either indicate or fail to indicate how it connects with people's deeply held concerns. People don't become attached to a community unless they feel that what is most valuable to them is reflected in the issues the community considers most important. To name a problem in public terms is to identify these concerns. The name given a problem and who names it determines (a) what kind of response will emerge and (b) the number of people who will be available to solve the problem.

**National Issues Forums (NIF):** A network of locally-held and financed forums that deal with problems common throughout the country. From their experience in these forums, citizens have learned a great deal about how deliberation differs from other forms of speech like debate and discussion. In order to prompt decision making, the forums often use issue books that identify three or four options or approaches to an issue (there are never just two polar alternatives).

**Politics as Usual:** Another name for conventional politics -- special interest groups, lobbying, voting. In politics as usual, communities try to address major problems by breaking the problem down to a manageable form, finding a plausible solution, delegating responsibility to an accountable institution, getting busy with visible activity and selling the public on what the leadership has decided is best.

**Power:** Particular people and institutions are thought to have the power or authority to act, while others are seen as powerless. That leads to the widely shared belief that those without power must be empowered by the powerful. The power given by others isn't real power; no one can really empower someone else because true power, the ability to act effectively, grows out of each person's unique experiences and talents. This traditional concept of power is bound to leave a great many people feeling powerless -- or in need of

being empowered by someone else (which raises the question of who really has the power). Another way of thinking about power is to take into account the potential in people's innate capacities to do public work, which is amplified through their ability to band together.

**Public:** A diverse body of people who have joined to try to promote the well being of the community as a whole.

**Public Acting:** Public acting is a habit of ongoing cooperation among a large and diverse body of citizens who work both with one another and with governments. Public acting differs structurally from governmental or institutional action, where there is usually just one action -- a program is created or a law is passed. Institutional efforts are uniform, linear and usually coordinated by some administrative agency. Public acting, on the other hand, consists of a repeating collection of lateral efforts. They aren't linear, being at one point and ending at another. Public acting produces a form of capital -- social or public rather than financial -- which communities can draw on when they need to keep on acting.

**Public Agenda:** A foundation that Daniel Yankelovich and Cyrus Vance founded to help average citizens better understand critical policy issues and to help the nations' leaders better understand the public's point of view. Its in-depth research on how average citizens think about public policy forms the basis for its extensive citizen education work. Its citizen education materials, used by the National Issues Forums and media outlets across the country, have won praise for their credibility and fairness from elected officials from both political parties and from experts and decision-makers across the political spectrum.

**Public Capital:** Public capital consists of relationships formed during the course of working together, norms of relating and the memory of a particular way of solving a problem. The more public acting there is, the more public capital is generated.

**Public Choice:** The choices that people make about the purposes and direction of their communities. They are the decisions we make about what is most valuable to us as a public. Whether made formally and consciously or informally, these policy choices shape the character of the community in a way nothing else does. A community is the product of its choices, intentional or not.

**Public Judgment:** Is created when people arrive at shared and reflective views, which are more mature, or fully developed, than opinion. People move from popular opinion to public judgment, and the shift is a "long journey".

**Public Policy Institutes (PPI):** More than 20 institutions -- from the University of California at Davis to Gulf Coast Community College to Purdue University and community-

based groups -- have established public policy institutes or centers to promote a stronger democracy. They are preparing citizens to lead forums on the critical issues facing every community in the country -- drug abuse, welfare, affirmative action, economic development. Participants come from civic organizations and neighborhood associations, leadership and literacy programs, churches and synagogues, as well as high school and college campuses.

**Public Politics:** Kettering research suggests that public politics is deeply rooted in everyday life and personal experience. Public politics isn't confined to organized evenings of learned discussion on world affairs. Its origin is in the ordinary conversation of Americans -- at lunch counters, on the bus ride back home, over the kitchen table -- conversations that flow into more formal public forums and town meetings. Public politics is not a special kind of politics found in heroic citizens initiatives; it is simply politics at its most basic. Public politics begins in people's efforts to solve the problems that invade their lives and dim their future.

**Public Space:** For public life to flourish there must be space, that is, events and meetings, where people can join to talk about and organize action to address common problems, spaces where citizens do their work. There must be institutions and associations willing to organize those gathered.

**Public Will:** The willingness or commitment of citizens to work on a problem until they have it under control. Will is essential in attacking those systemic "we-can't-seem-to-get-ride-of-them" problems that grow out of a lack of community and then further destroy community. Public will has staying power; it has deeper roots in the body politics; it is not just the superficial enthusiasm of popular support. Public will grows out of joining existing self-interests rather than replacing them with one "general will", and the amount of public will available in a community seems to be a function of the degree to which people do or don't claim responsibility for what happens to them.

**Solution Wars:** Pressure to find the "right solution" can lock a community into a never-ending battle between proponents of various plans. Those who rush to solutions often say that "everybody knows what the problem is". Communities have been known to spend their energy debating which of a number of predetermined solutions is best, little aware that there is no agreement on the nature of the problem. To end or prevent solution wars, Kettering studies suggest that civic organizations raise questions that prompt people to step back to identify what it is they really want before talking about specific solutions.

**Transaction Costs:** Economists would say that public acting is efficient in that its transaction costs are low. Transaction costs are those expenses associated with human interactions. In an economy, they are the cost of getting people to work together. Obviously, the lower the expense of giving orders, settling disputes, and the like, the more

productive the economy will be. Transaction costs have been shown to be as much a determinant of productivity as the factors usually cited -- the cost of labor, capital and technology.

**Valuable vs. Values:** Choicework prompts people to examine what is most valuable to them, the most desirable ends and means of political action or "their deepest motives", which are shared.

## Notes