

Moderator's Toolkit

For



www.nifi.org

A House Divided

**What Would We Have to
Give Up to Get the Political
System We Want?**





MODERATOR'S TOOLKIT

A House Divided

This toolkit includes the following documents:

- 1. Deliberative Facilitator Cheat Sheet**
Cheat sheet for moderators to use during a forum
- 2. Questions That Can Support Deliberation**
A series of questions that can help spur deliberation in any forum, sourced from hundreds of pages of training materials from a variety of centers for public life
- 3. Fostering Deeper Deliberation**
A brief handout that discusses some of Kettering Foundation's basic research findings on how to foster deeper deliberation
- 4. Nine Key Elements of Deliberative Forums**
A short course in NIF moderating



Deliberative Facilitator Cheat Sheet

A House Divided What Would We Have to Give Up to Get the Political System We Want?

Introduction & Ground Rules

___ minutes

Purpose: Look at Alternative Approaches to the Issue and Hear Different Points of View

- This is not a debate; we're not here to "win" an argument. We're here to listen and learn.
- We'll look carefully at alternative approaches—all of them with trade-offs and drawbacks.
- At the close of the forum, we'll reflect on what we've heard—looking for common ground, but also recognizing remaining areas of tension. We'll identify areas where we ourselves might be willing to reconsider.
- We'll try to think about what matters most to us and what we are willing to give up to make progress on resolving this issue.

My Role: Serve as Impartial Facilitator

- I'm here to help us have a conversation that is as deliberative as possible.
- I'll encourage everyone to consider different viewpoints.
- I'll watch the time to ensure we talk about all the options and have time for reflections at the end.
- From time to time, I may point to specific questions and ideas in the guide, especially if they represent voices not in the room or trade-offs we haven't talked about.
- This is your conversation. Please talk to and listen to each other.

Structure: The Four Parts of a Deliberative Forum

- Ground Rules
- Personal Stake
- Deliberating on the Options: Option 1, Option 2, Option 3
- Closing Reflections

Ground Rules

___ minutes

Some sample ground rules used by forum moderators

- Listen to other voices. Listening is as important as speaking.
- Consider each approach fairly, looking at its benefits and its trade-offs.
- Everyone is encouraged to participate. No one or two individuals should dominate.
- It's okay to disagree, but do so with curiosity, not hostility. Learning more about how others think is one of the most interesting parts of a forum.
- Keep an open mind. Avoid coming to conclusions until we've deliberated on all the options.
- Are there additional ground rules we would like add?
- Do we all agree to follow these ground rules and hold one another accountable to them?

Personal Stake:

___ minutes

Some questions moderators often use to encourage participants to talk about their personal stake in the issue

- Why did you come out to the forum today?
- What aspect of the issue concerns you most?
- How has this issue affected you, your family, or your community?
- When you think about this issue, what bothers you?
- How does this problem impact the things in your life and community that are most important to you?

Deliberative Facilitator Cheat Sheet

Option 1: Recap and Questions for Deliberation

___ minutes

This option says the way we talk about public issues is pushing us apart. On TV, online, and in our own lives, it doesn't take long to find examples of Americans calling each other names, spinning the truth, and assuming their opponents are immoral or corrupt. Therefore, we should empower media and online companies and important institutions like universities to take action against uncivil, abusive rhetoric. **BUT** this gives these decision-makers enormous power to determine what people can say about each other or about public issues. Who gets to decide what's "outrageous" and what's not?

- Curtailing free speech harms our democracy. But doesn't abusive, dishonest political rhetoric do the same thing by driving people away from politics? What's the right balance here?
- The "outrage industry" continues because it's popular—it boosts TV ratings and increases clicks online. Is there any practical, realistic way to make users to behave more responsibly?

Option 2: Recap and Questions for Deliberation

___ minutes

This option says our current political system is tilted toward those with money and influence who use the rules for their own benefit and oppose all efforts at compromise. To fix our system, we need to make changes that will encourage compromise and broader participation. We should remove obstacles to voting, limit money in politics, and allow nonpartisan commissions to draw Congressional districts based on population patterns, not party politics. **BUT** this focus on compromise could hinder people's right to fight for what they believe in. Doesn't our system need more fundamental change?

- Some of the nation's worst decisions were the result of compromise, notably the acceptance of slavery by the founding fathers. Would more compromise help, or would it move use further away from doing what's right?
- Are the requirements for voting really so burdensome? Isn't it fair to expect people to clearly identify themselves? Wouldn't this end up giving too much power to those who aren't willing to put in the effort to register and go to the polls?

Option 3: Recap and Questions for Deliberation

___ minutes

This option argues that we have placed too much power in the hands of a remote national government, which often doesn't understand local conditions. Therefore, we should allow states and local communities to make more of our decisions about education, healthcare, energy, poverty, and other important issues. **BUT** won't this option produce a patchwork of rules on major national challenges that harms our country as a whole? Won't this put people at the mercy of local decision-makers who may or may not defend their interests?

- This option assumes that local decisions will be better decisions, but what happens to people living in areas where local decision-makers are biased or corrupt or inept?
- What will happen if citizens focus mainly on local problems and issues? How will our country look in 20 years if we basically throw up our hands about national government?

Deliberative Facilitator Cheat Sheet

Closing Reflections

___ minutes

Acting on the ideas and proposals presented here will bring about changes that affect all of us, in every city and town, and none of them is guaranteed to produce the results we want. It is important to think carefully about the implications of the ideas presented here—to consider how they could improve our politics and, EQUALLY IMPORTANT, how they might misfire and make our problems worse.

As we think back on our conversation, here are some important questions to consider:

- Now that we have deliberated, are there ideas or viewpoints you hadn't considered before?
- Can you now identify any shared concerns or hopes we have discovered in our conversation?
- How has what you heard affected your thinking?
- Are there other people or groups you would like to hear from, now that you've begun to weigh some of options before us?
- What could you do as an individual?
- What could your community do? How likely is it that your community would take up this challenge?
- What do we want our elected officials in Washington to do? Are our expectations reasonable?
- Can you identify any tensions that came up during the forum?
- What questions remain? What work do we still need to do?



Questions That Can Support Deliberation

A House Divided What Would We Have to Give Up to Get the Political System We Want?

Perhaps one of the most important jobs of a deliberative facilitator is to ask good questions. Every time a facilitator intervenes in any way, she or he is essentially taking some power and control from participants, so each intervention should be important, one that helps the group deliberate and learn from each other. Questions should serve specific, intended purposes and should push participants to engage more deliberatively.

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

- Could you please share a story to illustrate that point?
- Can anyone envision how their life or the life of someone they know would change if this approach became policy?
- How has this issue affected you personally?
- (FOR NATIONAL ISSUES) How would changes in the way we address this issue affect our community and our state?

Questions to ensure a fair and balanced examination of the options and proposals:

- What would be the consequences of doing what you are suggesting? How would it affect different people in your community? What would be the short-term and long-term effects?
- Can you think of any ways this course of action might backfire? Could there be unintended consequences we need to consider?
- Do you know anyone who would like (or dislike) this option? What would that person say?

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

- Why is _____ an acceptable trade-off for you?
- What trade-offs are you not willing to make? Why?
- Would you give up _____ in order to achieve _____? Why?
- Is this one of the most important steps we can take in your view? How much would it do to solve the problem?

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

- Why does that choice appeal to you?
- What is important about taking this direction?
- Can you give an example of how that might work out?
- What is most valuable to you or to those who support that action/option?

Questions That Can Support Deliberation

Questions that discourage groupthink and that can draw out different perspectives in homogeneous forums:

- What seems to be most important to those who are attracted to this approach?
- For those who dislike this approach, what seems to be their concern?
- Can anyone think of something constructive/negative that might come from this approach?
- How might this conversation be different if _____ were in the room?
- How might this conversation be different if we were in _____ instead of _____?

Questions that give the participants an opportunity to identify what they have heard and/or acknowledge common ground for action:

- What actions did you hear about that you think we could not accept or live with?
- What trade-offs are you unwilling to accept?
- Are there some actions we could all live with?
- Can someone suggest areas that we seem to have in common?
- Are there any tensions or areas of disagreement that we need to talk or think more about?
- Are there any questions we need to answer? Any information that would help us make a better decision?
- Are there other people we need to hear from?



Fostering Deeper Deliberation

A House Divided What Would We Have to Give Up to Get the Political System We Want?

Set-Up/Introduction

The introduction sets the tone for the entire conversation, and the facilitator or convener should spend five to seven minutes setting up the discussion and covering the following items:

- Purpose of and structure of a forum
- What deliberation is and why it matters
- The role of the facilitator
- Ground rules for the forum (see the Deliberative Facilitator Cheat Sheet with some specific suggestions)

Kettering research shows that when participants understand what deliberation is, they are more likely to reconsider their own views, listen to others, and keep an open mind throughout the forum. That is, the forum is likely to be more deliberative.

Being clear about the facilitator's role at the start can also help mitigate potential problems later. The facilitator should be impartial about the subject matter while simultaneously pushing the group to be as deliberative as possible and guiding participants through the forum process. Since participants should take ownership over their own deliberations, it can be helpful to request that participants direct their comments to one another, rather than to the facilitator. This simple direction at the beginning can help de-centralize the role of facilitator and enable a more organic deliberation.

Setting ground rules and asking everyone to commit to them is another important way to mitigate potential problems later. The facilitator should suggest some ground rules (see the Deliberative Facilitator Cheat Sheet). Participants should understand their purpose and feel ownership over them.

Personal Stake

The personal stake portion of the forum grounds the deliberation in the experiences of participants and serves two primary functions. The first is simply to increase participation and set the pattern of listening to each other's ideas and experiences right up front. The second is to generate a set of stories for the group to refer to as policy choices are deliberated. Ensuring there is sufficient time for personal stake is an incredibly important component of a successful forum and the forum schedule should be adjusted to allow for more time if the topic is particularly personal/salient. See the Deliberative Facilitator Cheat Sheet for some specific questions to consider.

Discussion of the Options

Perhaps one of the most important jobs of a deliberative facilitator is to insure that participants take a close look at each of the options along with its benefits and trade-offs. Both the issue guide and issue advisory offer a general description of each option, along with specific proposals that may accompany it. To the degree possible, the group should spend equal amounts of time with each option and talk about the specific policy ideas connected to it.

Fostering Deeper Deliberation

Some moderators open the deliberations on each option by asking: “Tell me something you like about this option—how it could help solve the problem-- and something that worries you about the option—something that might go wrong?”

Kettering research shows there are some key moments when the facilitator should intervene such as:

- People are sharing their personal stories, but the group does not move on to looking at the options—at what can be done to address the problem.
- Everyone quickly agrees with or rejects one of the options.
- Not enough attention is being paid to the cost, trade-offs, and difficulties of an option or action.
- One or two individuals are dominating.
- Extending the conversation about the option would mean giving short shrift to the others or to the closing reflections.

What are some good questions to ask if you need to intervene?

- “What would opponents (or supporters) of this option say?”
- “Do you know anyone who would like (or dislike) this option? What would that person say?”
- Thinking about your community or the nation as a whole, what would we need to consider to find common ground and a basis for change?
- Use the issue guide to introduce alternate points of view. You don’t need to “play devil’s advocate” yourself. Doing so can make some participants worry that you are taking a position on the issue or trying to persuade them of a particular point of view.

Closing Reflections

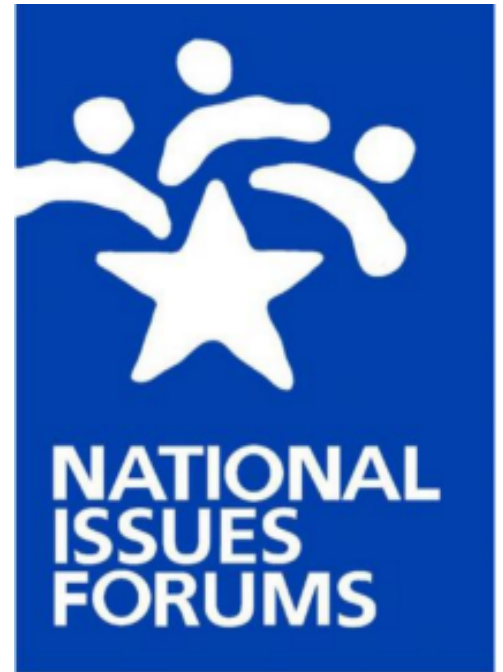
The reflection portion of a forum serves many important functions in a deliberation and should not be cut short due to time constraints. When facilitating an A Public Voice 2018 forum, the following areas for reflection should be prioritized:

1. Revisiting some of the overall tensions among the options. Now that people have talked about all of them, how has their thinking changed?
2. Giving participants the chance to identify common ground, but equally important—identifying areas where people want and need to think about more, areas where there are tensions, areas where people have questions.
3. Giving people a chance to think about what kinds of changes they may want to make in their own lives and thinking, changes their communities could act on, and changes they want elected officials and other policymakers to address.

There are some specific questions for closing reflections in the Coming to America issue guide and in the Deliberative Facilitator Cheat Sheet available for download.

Other questions that may be helpful include:

1. Now that we have deliberated, are there ideas or viewpoints you hadn’t considered before?
2. Can you identify any tensions that came up during the forum? What questions remain? What work do we still need to do?
3. How has what you heard affected your thinking? What could you do? What could the community do? About what we want our elected officials in Washington to do?



9 KEY ELEMENTS OF DELIBERATIVE FORUMS: A SHORT COURSE IN NIF MODERATING



WHY DELIBERATE?

Deliberation is a conversation in which people tackle controversial problems that are not easily solved and weigh different approaches with an open mind

Deliberating asks us to think about questions like these:

“What should we do?”

“How would different solutions affect the things I care most about?”

“Could there be unintended consequences I haven’t considered?”

“No solution is perfect. What trade-offs can I accept?”

Deliberation happens all the time:

We routinely deliberate about personal, family, and work decisions.

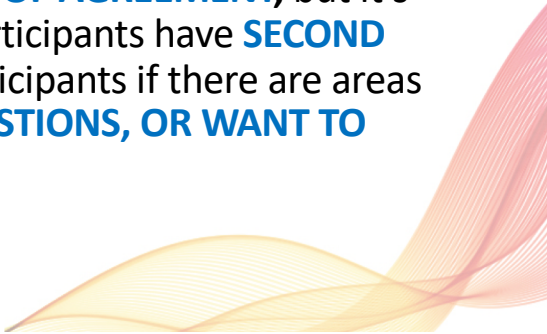
It’s essential for our politics as well





NIF FORUM DESIGN—4 KEY ELEMENTS

These four elements can help participants deliberate:

-
1. **GROUND RULES:** Take a few moments to help participants understand the distinctive goal of deliberative forums and consider ground rules for the conversation
 2. **THE PERSONAL STAKE:** Ask participants to talk about their personal experiences and **LISTEN** to those of other participants
 3. **WEIGHING OPTIONS:** Ask participants to work through the options and proposals in the issue guide and wrestle with benefits and trade-offs
 4. **REFLECTIONS:** Allow time for participants to reflect on their deliberations. This includes identifying **POINTS OF AGREEMENT**, but it's just as important to talk about areas where participants have **SECOND THOUGHTS** after hearing from others. Ask participants if there are areas where they are **UNDECIDED, HAVE MORE QUESTIONS, OR WANT TO DELIBERATE MORE.**
- 




WHAT ARE SOME GROUND RULES TO CONSIDER?

- Listen to others. Listening is as important as speaking.
- Consider each approach fairly, looking at its benefits and its trade-offs
- It's okay to disagree, but do so with curiosity, not hostility. Learning more about how others think is one of the most interesting parts of a forum.
- Keep an open mind. Avoid coming to conclusions until we've deliberated on all the options.
- Others?






WHAT KINDS OF QUESTIONS FOSTER DELIBERATION ON THE OPTIONS?

- What do you like about this option?
 - What worries you about it?
 - How might people who have other life experiences see this option?
 - Could this option have any unintended consequences?
 - Do you see any gray areas?
 - Others?
- 



WHEN SHOULD I INTERVENE?

As much as possible, participants should take responsibility for the deliberation. Moderators should intervene when:

- Everyone quickly agrees with or rejects an option.
 - Not enough attention is being paid to the cost, trade-offs, and difficulties of an option or action.
 - One individual is dominating.
 - The time allocated for that section is used up.
- 




IF I NEED TO INTERVENE . . .

Go back to the issue guide:


- The guides include questions and trade-offs for each choice. Ask the group to take a look at them and talk about them.

Ask questions such as

- “What would opponents (or supporters) of this option say?”
 - “Do you know anyone who would like (or dislike) this option? What would that person say?”
- 



THE MODERATOR'S ROLE— SEVEN RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Explain the purpose of deliberative forums and set ground rules. Emphasize listening and reconsidering initial views
 2. Encourage participants to talk about their personal stake—why this issue matters to them, their personal experiences with it
 3. Insure all options are considered seriously.
 4. If necessary, refer participants back to the issue guide to talk about tradeoffs that aren't being considered
 5. Keep track of time: All segments of the forum design are important
 6. Stay neutral. Avoid being an expert.
 7. Make sure participants reflect on what they've heard
 - ✓ Identifying points of tension and uncertainty is just as important as identifying area of agreement
- 



NEED HELP CONVENING?

ENLIST A PARTNER ORGANIZATION:

- Look for local organizations that bring people together on a regular basis. These include clubs, senior centers, religious groups, and book clubs
- It can be a great partnership—they convene participants; you moderate the forum

CONVENING A FORUM ON YOUR OWN? TRY THE 4 x 4

- One person takes responsibility for logistics: the room, refreshments, etc.
 - One will be the recorder.
 - Two will share the responsibility of moderating.
 - Each of the four recruits four more people & follows up to encourage them to attend
- 