

Thank you for joining us.  
The workshop will begin shortly.

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*Moderating deliberative discussions*

February 17, 2022  
2:00 EDT

*National  
Issues  
Forums*



# *Welcome*

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## **Moderating deliberative discussions**

*National  
Issues  
Forums*



## What we'll focus on today

- 1 What are deliberative discussions?
- 2 Moderator practices that encourage productive discussions
- 3 Learning from each other: questions, insights, and challenges
- 4 Resources to support your work
- 5 Additional time to interact



*Democracy* is strengthened when individuals, institutions, and governments find ways to talk and work with each other.

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Deliberative discussions of the issues that impact our lives make a profound contribution to our capacity to do just that.



## *What happens in a deliberative discussion?*

- explore your own views and learn why others have different ones
- consider trade-offs and consequences of a range of actions
- acknowledge agreements, disagreements, and challenges
- listen for emerging directions or next steps that might be taken



## *What are National Issues Forums?*

- **National network** of individuals and organizations
- **Practices** that promote nonpartisan, multi-perspective discussions
- **Issues** of national scope that impact communities across the country



# *Deliberating about important public issues*

- In communities
- On campuses and in classrooms
- In person
- Online



*Elections:*

*How Can*

*We Encourage*

*and Safeguard Voting?*

## Multi-perspective framework

- Make it easier to register and to vote
- Do more to make elections secure
- Offer more and better choices



*Policing:*

*What Should We Do  
to Ensure Fair Treatment  
and Keep Neighborhoods  
Safe for Everyone?*

## Multi-perspective framework

- Increase accountability
- End racial bias
- Avoid violent encounters

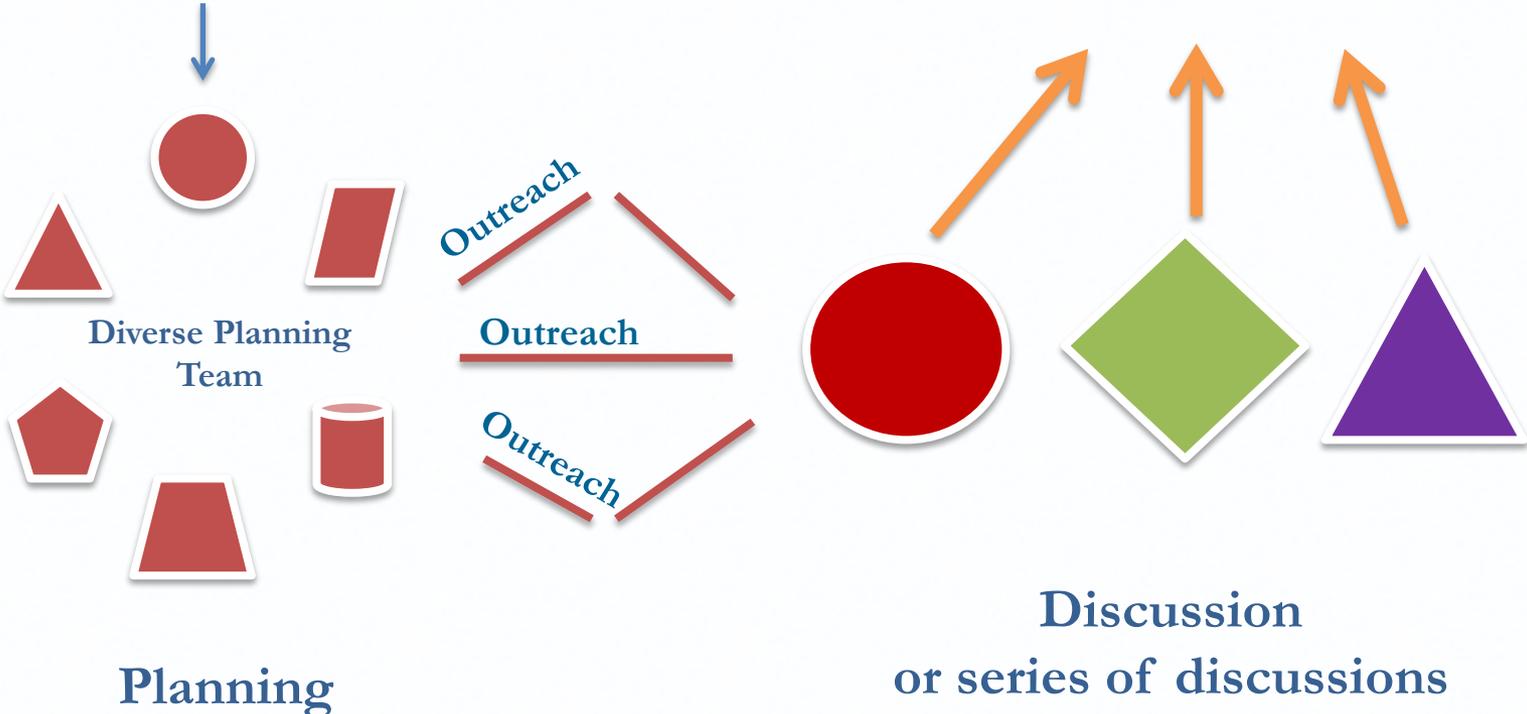


## *Moderating deliberative forums*

- Examine differing approaches for moving forward.
- Begin to work through tensions among ways to address the issue.
- Consider the trade-offs of a wide range of potential actions.
- Reflect together on what's been said, capturing commonalities and differences.



# Moderating in the context of convening

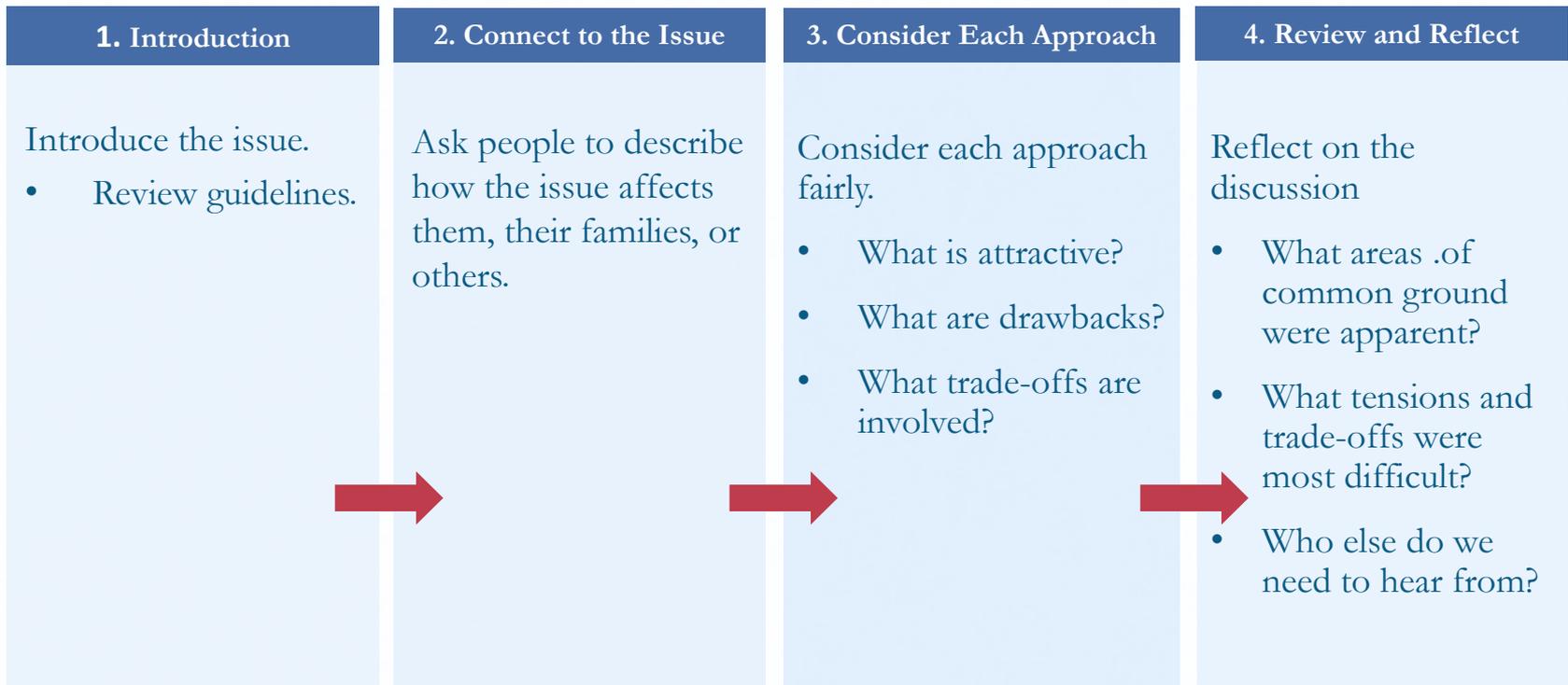


## Multiple moderator roles

- Set a welcoming tone
- Be an active listener
- Behave neutrally
- Ask probing questions
- Encourage reflections and direction-setting
- Manage time



# Moderating a Deliberative Discussion



## Sample discussion guidelines to share with participants

- Consider different perspectives fairly.
- Everyone is encouraged to participate.
- Listening is just as important as speaking.
- Maintain an open and respectful atmosphere.
- Consider actions that might be taken in our communities as well as nationally.



# Four basic moderator “moves”

- Ask a follow up question for clarification or to dig deeper.
- Ask a reaction question to the last speaker’s comment.
- Ask a transition question to move the conversation forward.
- Synthesize key points when necessary.



# Asking questions to promote deliberation

- **Connect the issue to the concerns of participants**

*How would this action affect your life or the lives of others?*

- **Examine potential consequences**

*Is there a downside to this course of action?*

- **Ask participants to weigh trade-offs**

*Would you give up \_\_\_\_\_ in order to achieve \_\_\_\_\_?*

- **Promote interaction among participants**

*Could someone give an example to illustrate what \_\_\_\_\_ just said?*



## Questions to go deeper

- What strengths do we have to build upon?
- How might that idea affect other people?
- Why would someone disagree?
- What viewpoints are missing in our discussion?
- How will we prioritize among many good ideas?
- Given what you care about, what are you most eager to see happen?



## Reflecting on the discussion

- What new insights did you gain?
- How has your thinking changed—or expanded?
- What were our areas of greatest concern?
- What do we still grapple with?
- What actions are most important?
- Who else needs to be involved?
- What are our next steps?



**What might  
a moderator  
try to avoid?**

- Summarizing every comment
- Intervening too frequently
- Being “the expert”
- Losing track of time



## What does it mean to *behave neutrally*?

Think of it as  
“principled impartiality.”

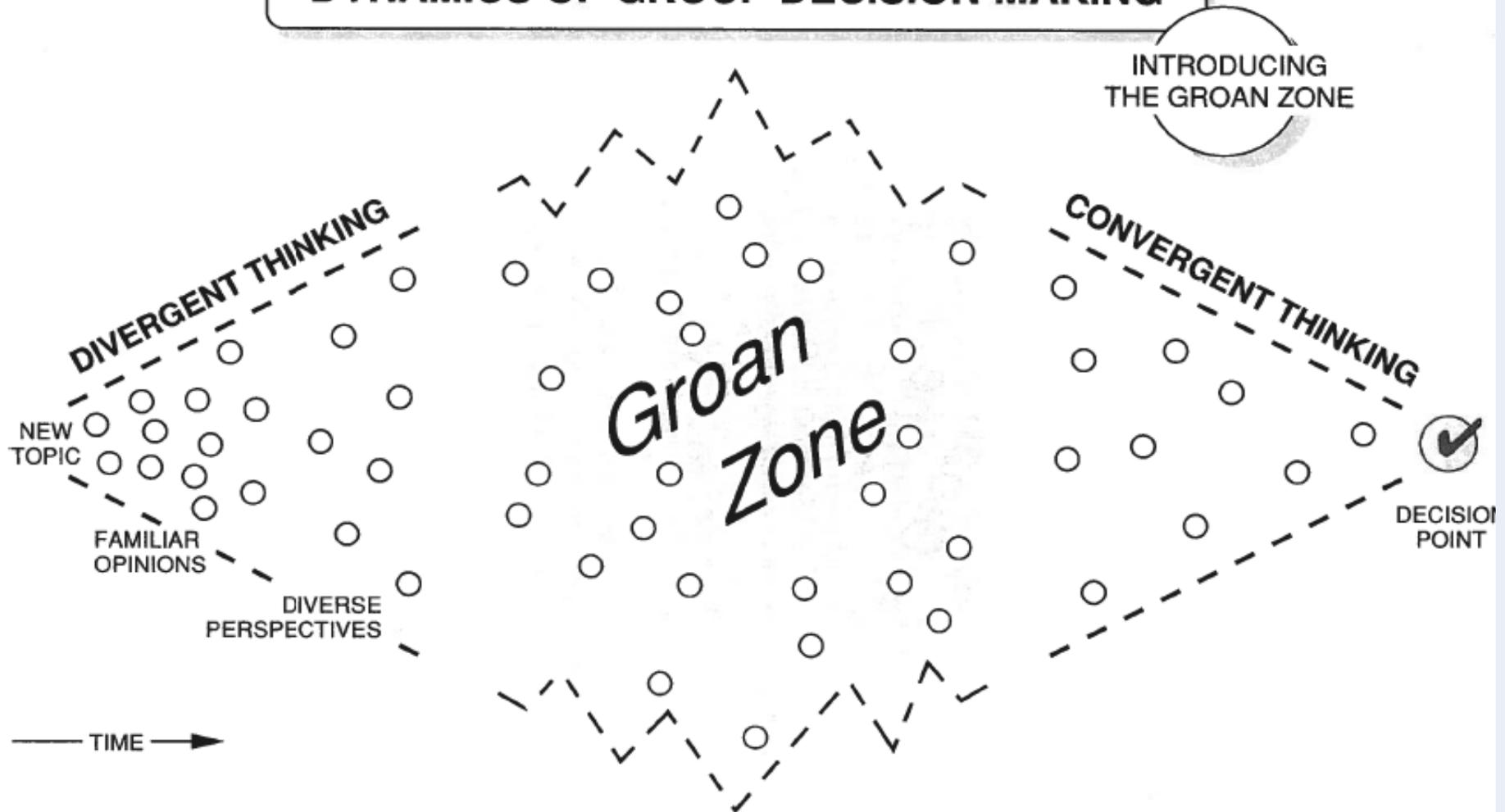
While you might not *be neutral* in your personal view of the issue, in your role as moderator, it is helpful to the group that you *behave neutrally*.

- Avoid agreement or disagreement with participants.
- Avoid using your personal experiences to make a point.
- Encourage discussion of differing points of view.
- Ask for viewpoints held by others outside of the group.



# You are entering the *Groan Zone*

## DYNAMICS OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING





Cristin Brawner  
Nashville, TN



Lori Britt  
Harrisonburg, VA



Patty Dineen  
Gibsonia, PA



Leslie Garvin  
Elon, NC

## Meet your discussion leaders

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Margaret Holt  
Watkinsville, GA



Kara Lindaman  
Winona, MN



Lisa-Marie Napoli  
Bloomington, IN



Verdis Robinson  
Montpelier, VT



Lissa Staley  
Topeka, KS

# Deliberative discussion initiatives

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

**Policing:** What Should We Do to Ensure Fair Treatment and Keep Neighborhoods Safe for Everyone?

**Elections:** How Should We Encourage and Safeguard Voting?

**Youth & Opportunity:** What Should We Do for Future Generations to Thrive?

**School Interrupted:** How Should We Teach in a Pandemic?

**COVID-19 and Vaccines:** How Should We Keep Our Community Safe?

**Free Speech** & the Inclusive Campus

**Back to Work:** How Should We Rebuild Our Economy?

**Resources  
to support  
your work**

Issue Discussion Guides

Guides for Moderators

Questionnaires

Constitution Connectors

Issue-based slides to use online

Discussion starter videos



# Online

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## Zoom and similar online platforms

- Moderating deliberative discussions in Zoom
- Using platform features to support deliberation
- Convening discussions online



## Online

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### Common Ground for Action platform

- Visual and chat-based online platform
- Small groups with moderator
- Evaluations of actions and drawbacks that show group's judgment as discussion evolves



Thank you for joining us.

Please stay in touch.

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