

Thank you for joining us.
The webinar will start shortly.

*Convening and moderating
deliberative forums on voting*

June 17, 2021
1:00 EDT

*National
Issues
Forums*



Convening and moderating deliberative forums

How Can We Encourage and Safeguard Voting?

What we'll focus on today

- 1 What is a deliberative forum?
- 2 Public framework for voting forums
- 3 Convening and moderating
- 4 Resources, reflections, discussion



What happens in a deliberative forum?

- 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



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

Make it easier to register and vote.

Actions

Offer in-person early voting for 15 days for at least 10 hours a day so people have more chances to vote and long lines and wait times can be eliminated.

Make Election Day a national holiday as other countries do.

Automatically register all those eligible to vote whenever they get a driver's license or visit designated government offices.

Allow people who have completed prison sentences to vote. They have paid their debt to society.

What else could we do, especially on a community level?

Possible Drawbacks

Keeping polling places open and staffed will be a huge investment for local governments or would require new federal funding at a time of massive deficits.

This will hurt small businesses by forcing them to either close on Election Day or pay their workers more to stay open. And it wouldn't help essential workers such as nurses and firefighters.

Automatically adding people to a public database is intrusive and violates their privacy. And there is no assurance it will improve voter turnout since it does not mean those who are registered will vote.

People convicted of serious crimes have forfeited their right to vote.

What's the trade-off if we do that?

Do more to make elections secure.

Actions

Require photo ID for all federal, state, and local elections. This will be much more reliable than just matching signatures.

Require voters to apply for and give a valid reason, such as travel or illness, for absentee voting.

Use only voting machines that scan voter-prepared paper ballots, and mandate that all election boards keep a paper trail.

Remove voters from registration rolls if they haven't voted recently.

What else? What could we do, especially as a community?

Possible Drawbacks

Making voter ID a requirement will deprive millions of the basic right to vote, especially older Americans and those who do not drive.

People should be able to vote absentee for any reason. This requirement would just make it harder for many people to vote.

Paper-based voting systems are slow and inefficient. Some election outcomes will not be known for days or weeks after the ballots have been cast.

Americans have the right to sit out elections where the issues or the candidates don't interest them. This just discourages people when they do want to vote.

What's the trade-off if we do that?

Offer more and better choices.

Actions

Make sure congressional districts are not slanted in favor of either party by having nonpartisan commissions, rather than politicians, draw the districts fairly.

Make it easier to run for office by publicly funding candidates and easing requirements so that voters have more and different candidates to choose from.

Encourage candidates to campaign in all states by eliminating the Electoral College and using the popular vote instead.

Increase participation in primaries by ending registration by party (as 19 states have done already) so that all voters can participate in either party primary.

What else? What could we do, especially as a community?

Possible Drawbacks

Rural and minority voters will lose power if districts are redrawn without their interests in mind, and even “nonpartisan” commissions can be manipulated.

This means public money will be spent on people with almost no chance of winning, including unqualified fringe candidates who are merely seeking attention.

This requires changing the Constitution and gives less populous rural states less say in the outcome, which could result in their needs being ignored.

Political parties have the right to choose their own candidates, and this could lead to some partisan voters switching primaries just to undercut the other party’s most promising candidates.

What’s the trade-off if we do that?

Convening voting forums

Outreach for broad participation

- In communities
- On campuses
- Across boundaries
- In-person
- Online

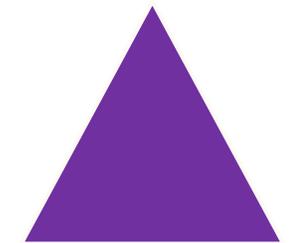
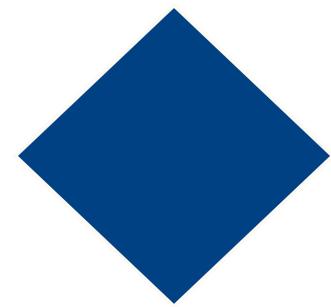
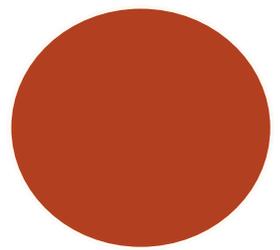
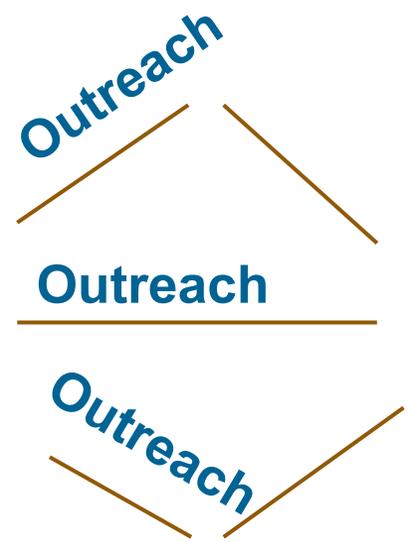
**Today's
Webinar**



**Diverse Planning
Team at Home**

Planning

Convening for broad participation



**Discussion
or series of discussions**

**Today's
Webinar**



**Diverse Planning
Team at Home**

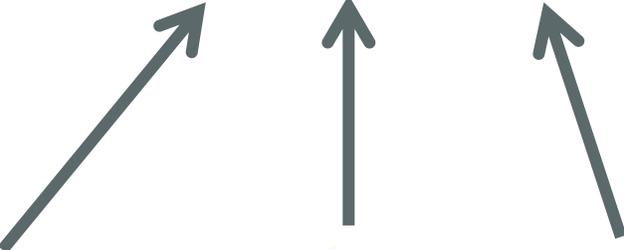
Planning

Outreach

Outreach

Outreach

**Sharing insights
Next steps**



**Discussion
or series of discussions**

Building a planning team

- Civic organizations
- Libraries
- Nonprofits
- Educational institutions
- Government agencies
- Volunteer groups
- Faith groups
- Private sector
- Organizations with related mission, such as League of Women Voters



Convening online

- Bridge geographical boundaries
- Bring people together who would not normally be able to talk to one another
- Increase diversity of viewpoints
- Large and small group interactions

**Zoom and similar online
platforms**

**Common Ground for Action
(CGA)**





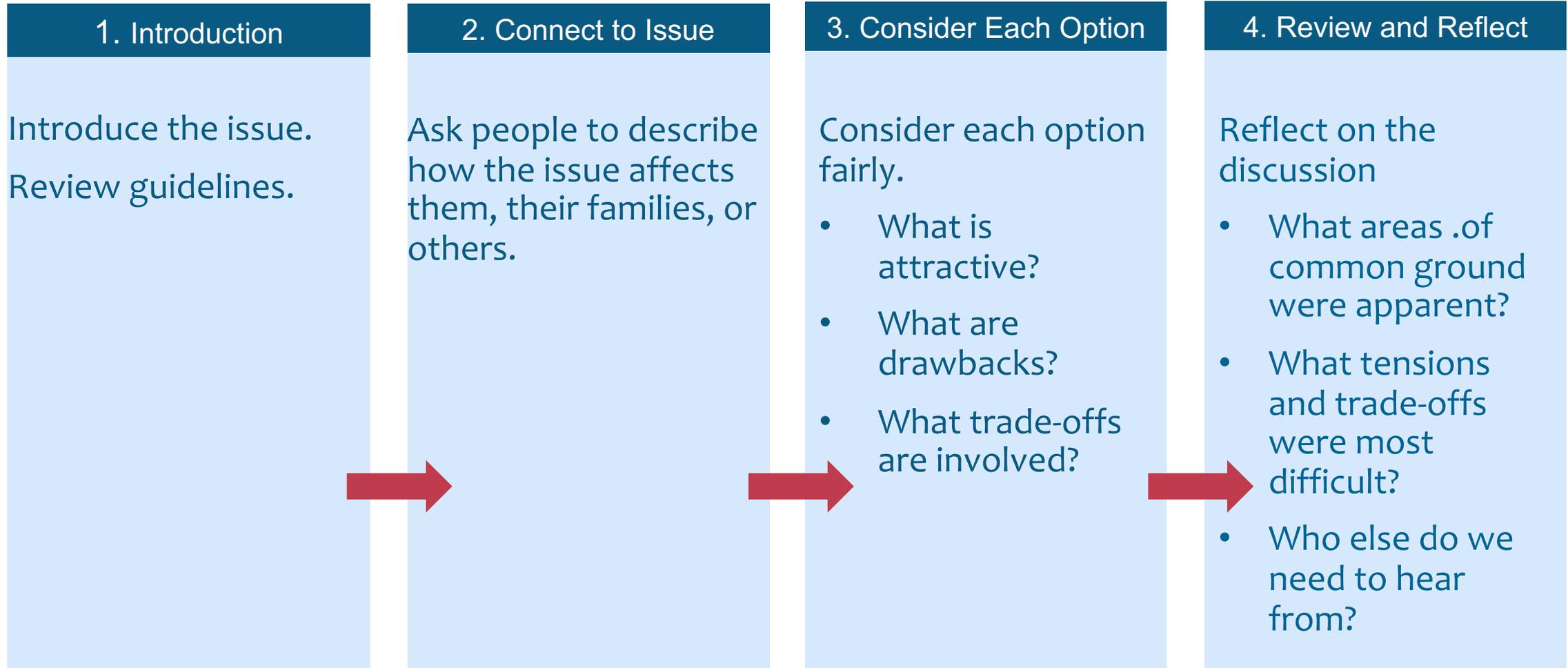
State University of New York
College of Environmental Science and Forestry



Moderating deliberative discussions

- Setting an inclusive tone
- Asking deliberative questions
- Engaging in reflections

Moderating a Deliberative Forum



Your Roles as a Moderator

- Set a welcoming tone.
- Be an active listener.
- Remain neutral.
- Ask probing questions.
- Manage time.

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.

What does it be to be neutral as a moderator?

While you might not *be neutral* in your personal views, in your role as moderator, it is important 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.

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?



Reflecting on the discussion

- What areas of greatest agreement did you hear?
- What are the most challenging aspects of this issue?
- What were our areas of greatest disagreement?
- If a reporter were describing today's discussion to the public, how would you want it described?
- What next steps might be taken?

Support materials for voting forums

nifi.org

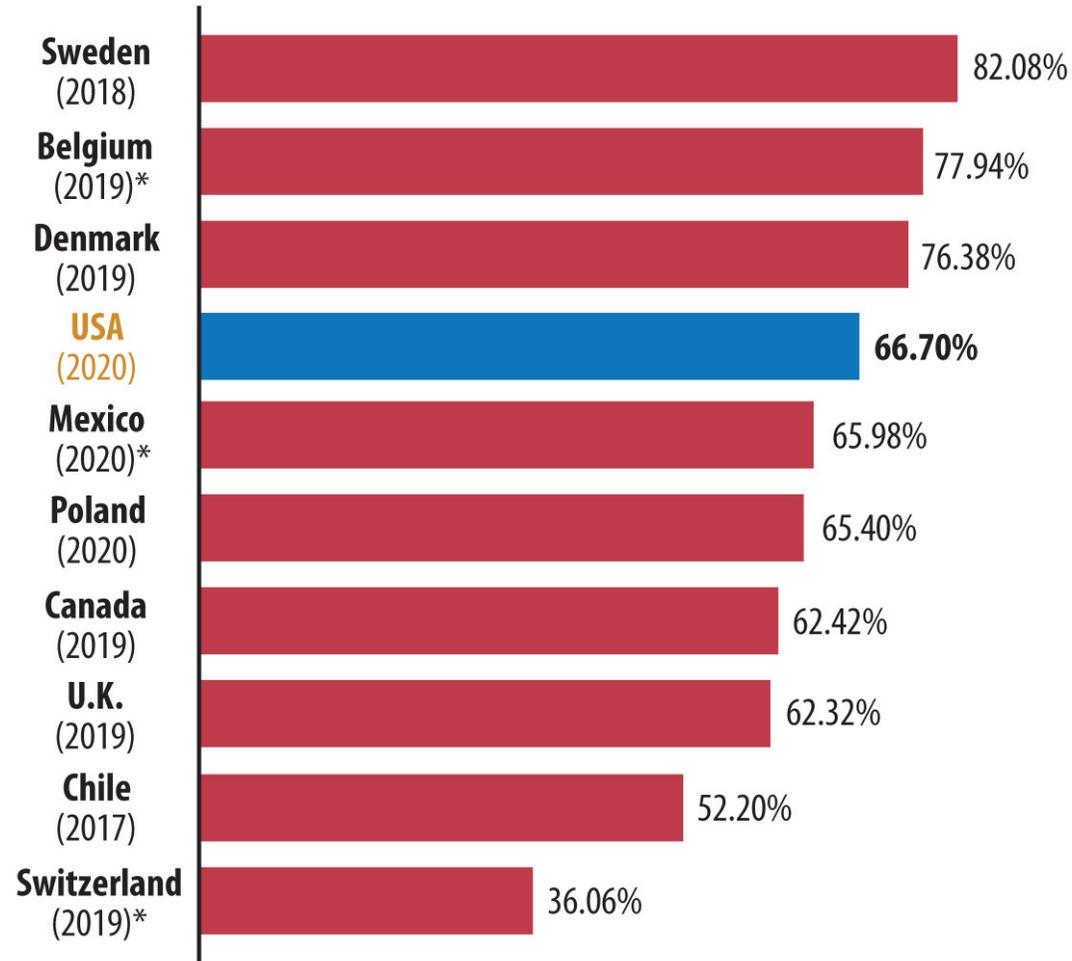
- Issue discussion guide
- Guide for moderator
- Discussion starter video
- Issue-based slides to use online
- Questionnaire to gather insights



Consider **localizing**
the voting discussion materials
to include information from your area.

Voter Turnout in the 2020 Election Moved the US Up Among Its Peers.

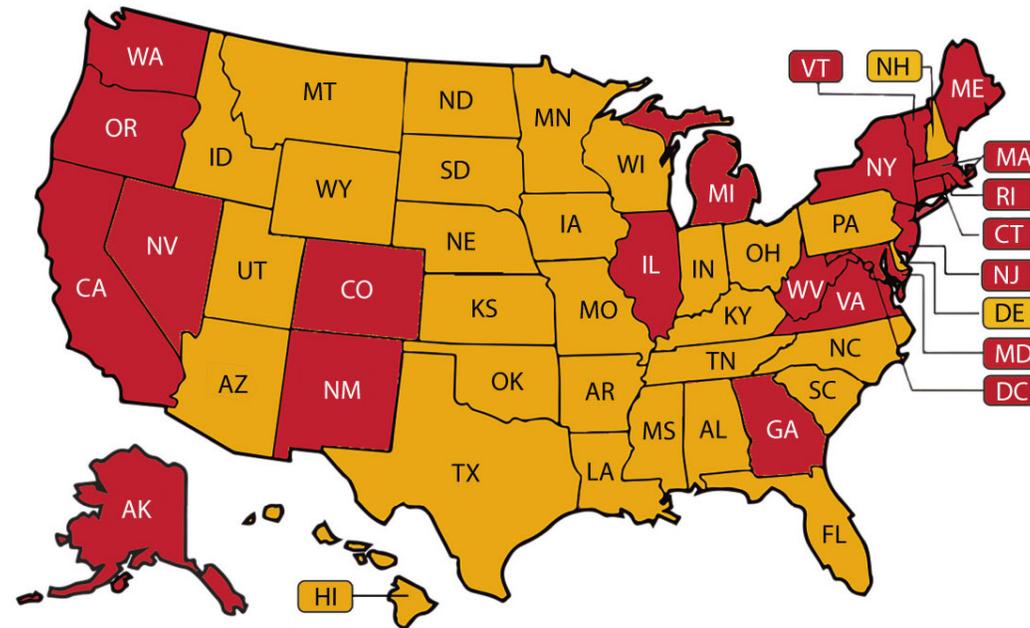
Votes cast in most recent national elections as a percentage of the voting age population



*Voting is compulsory in Belgium and Mexico and in one Swiss canton.

Eligible Voters in 20 US States and Washington, DC, Are Automatically Registered to Vote When They Get Their Driver's Licenses or Visit Designated Government Offices.

■ Automatic voter registration



Let's Talk . . .

- **Your questions?**
- **Your comments?**

Thank you for joining us.

Please stay in touch.

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