

*a guide to moderating and
organizing forums*

ENVIRONMENT &
SOCIETY SERIES

 naaee


NATIONAL
ISSUES
FORUMS
www.nif.org



climate choices

how should we meet the
challenges of a warming planet?

why are we here? what are we going to do?

We are here to move toward a public decision on a difficult issue through choice work.

how do we do that?

We do that by engaging in a deliberative dialogue in which we:

- understand the pros and cons of each option—its benefits, drawbacks, and trade-offs;
- know the strategic facts and how they affect the way the group thinks about each option;
- get beyond the initial positions people hold to their deeper motivations—the things they consider to be the most valuable in everyday life;
- weigh carefully the views of others and appreciate the impact various options would have on what others consider valuable; and
- work through the conflicting emotions that arise when various options pull and tug on what people consider valuable.

Environment and Society Series

This guide to organizing and moderating forums was prepared for the National Issues Forums Institute in collaboration with the Kettering Foundation and the North American Association for Environmental Education. The Environment and Society Series is designed to promote meaningful, productive deliberation, convened locally and online, about difficult issues that affect the environment and communities. For more information, see www.naaee.org/eif. For deliberative forum guides on other environmental issues, see www.nifi.org.

For More Information

- To order issue guides or starter videos for this issue, visit nifi.org.
- For more information or to make comments, visit the National Issues Forums Institute website at www.nifi.org or call NIFI at 1-800-433-7834.
- Post the dates and locations of your forums on the Events section of nifi.org or e-mail forums@nifi.org.

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organizing a forum

KINDS OF FORUMS

National Issues Forums are about encouraging public deliberation. The needs of your community will drive the schedule in which deliberation can best occur.

Single Forums: Many NIF groups choose to organize single forums around issues of concern in their communities. Most single forums last 2 to 2 ½ hours.

Multiple Sessions: Other groups plan for multiple sessions or study circles to allow participants greater opportunity to examine issues in depth. Some groups set aside time for two meetings while others might devote a separate session to each option. Still others plan ahead for a session after the forum for participants to come back together and consider next steps.

Breakout Groups: In some communities, people begin their examination of an issue in a large-group forum and then break off into smaller groups for subsequent sessions. The reverse is also helpful—starting in small groups and culminating in a larger community forum.

MATERIALS

Issue Guides: Each participant should have an issue guide. Ideally, participants have a chance to read the guide before they attend the forum.

Starter Videos: These 5-8 minute videos present strategic facts and some of the key trade-offs and tensions involved in the issue. They work well to get everyone on the same page at the beginning of the forum.

Questionnaires: Paper copies of the participant questionnaires are included inside print copies of the issue guide. They're also available for download on the NIFI website.

Moderator Response Form: This is for you, the moderator, to complete after the forum. It's the back page of this guide, but you may also fill it out online at: www.nifi.org/questionnaires.

CONVENING

Size: Generally, between 8 and 20 participants is ideal. If you have a larger group, perhaps break into two groups and have someone else moderate the additional group.

Invite a Diverse Group: The point of these forums is to work through the hard choices involved in a tough problem, but those hard choices can be evaded if a group is very like-minded. Having a diverse group almost ensures that tensions will surface and the group will have to wrestle with trade-offs.

Let the Network Know: Please create a listing for your forum in the Events area on nifi.org. This can be a helpful link to share as you promote your forum.

stages of a forum



1. Welcome

The convenor or moderator introduces the NIF program.

3. Getting Started

One good way to start is for participants to take a few minutes to talk about their personal experiences with the issue and tell their stories. Sometimes the convenor or moderator begins by showing a starter video that reviews the problems underlying the issue.

5. Ending the Forum

Participants reflect on what has been achieved.

2. Ground Rules

Participants and the moderator review desired outcomes and agree on ground rules.

4. Deliberation

Participants examine all the options. An approximately equal amount of time should be spent on each option.

6. Questionnaire

Participants complete the questionnaire.



your role as moderator

- 1 Provide an overview of the deliberation process. Ask probing questions about what's at stake in each issue and each option.
- 2 Encourage participants to direct their questions and responses to one another.
- 3 Remain neutral.
- 4 Report: Participants should fill out the questionnaires in their issue guides or online at **bit.do/NIFclimatechange**. Moderators should fill out the moderator response form at the end of this guide or online at **nifi.org/questionnaires**. Mail written questionnaires to the address on the form or e-mail to forum **reports@nifi.org**.

- everyone is encouraged to participate,
- no one or two individuals should dominate,
- the discussion should focus on the options,
- all the major options should be considered fairly,
- they will maintain an open and respectful atmosphere for the discussion, and
- they will listen to each other.

3. GETTING STARTED

Starter video: Many moderators start the forum by showing the NIF starter video that introduces the issue.

Personal stake: Ask participants to take a few minutes to talk about their personal experiences with the issue and tell their stories. A good question to ask is, "Can anyone say how this issue has affected them or their family or community?"

4. DELIBERATION

Participants examine all the options individually. An approximately equal amount of time should be spent on each option. Some good questions for all three options are:

- How does this option address our concerns about climate change?
- What worries or makes us uncomfortable about this approach?
- If this approach worked perfectly, what would the trade-offs or consequences be?

Some individual questions for particular options are listed with each option.

moderating a forum

1. WELCOME

The convenor or moderator introduces the NIF program.

2. GROUND RULES

Before the deliberation begins, it is important for participants to review guidelines for their discussion. They should agree that:

5. ENDING THE FORUM

Before ending a forum, take a few minutes to reflect, both individually and as a group, on what has been achieved. Consider the following kinds of questions:

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?

Group Reflections

- What didn't we work through?
- Can we identify any shared sense of purpose or direction?
- Which trade-offs are we willing to make to move in a shared direction? Which are we unwilling to make?

Next-Step Reflections

- What do we still need to talk about?
- How can we use what we learned about ourselves in this forum? Do we want to meet again?

6. QUESTIONNAIRES

Have participants fill out the questionnaires in their issue guides or online at bit.do/NIFclimatechange. Mail written questionnaires to National Issues Forums Institute, 100 Commons Road, Dayton, OH 45459, or you may scan and e-mail them to forumreports@nifi.org.

if this is your first experience as a moderator

You don't have to be an expert on the issue. Read the issue guide thoroughly. Consider questions that get to the heart of the issue and think through the essence of each option. This is a critical part of preparation.

Stay focused on what the forum is about—deliberation. Ask questions that probe the underlying motivations of each option, the trade-offs it might require, and the willingness of the participants to recognize them. (Sample questions begin on Page 5.) Listen to others; remain neutral.

Keep the discussion moving and focused on the issue. Sometimes it's difficult to move on to another option when there is so much more that could be said. But in order to make progress, participants need time to weigh all the major options fairly. Be mindful of the time.

Reserve ample time for reflections on the forum. In many ways, this is the most important work the group will do. The moderator will provide reminders that time is passing, but it is up to all the participants to help preserve the time to reflect on what they have said and what they might want to do about it.

Invite a diverse group of participants. Groups where everyone thinks similarly have a difficult time considering the trade-offs of the option(s) they favor. A diverse group will force participants to work through the trade-offs of all the options more equally.

option 1: sharply reduce carbon emissions

We need to take aggressive action to reduce energy consumption and climate-changing behaviors. If we do not address the problems swiftly, present and future generations may not be able to adapt. But this approach limits personal choices and freedom, and some will be affected by the changes more than others.

Questions to Surface Trade-Offs and Tensions

- How have you, your family, or other people you know tried to cut down on your personal CO₂ emissions? Did anything make it difficult?
- What do you think is the best way to reduce emissions of CO₂ or other greenhouse gases in the United States? Why?
- How much are you willing to invest in weatherizing your home, installing clean-power systems, or making other changes that help address climate change? Do you think changes like these should be required?
- How much more would you be willing to pay in energy costs to allow for “cleaner” energy?
- Would you be willing to deal with more regulations as an individual or as a business owner in order to collectively reduce emissions?
- Would you be willing to change your lifestyle—eat differently, ride a bike or take public transportation more often, lower your home thermostat—in order to reduce carbon emissions? Do you think changes like these should be required?

Solar professionals, job trainees, and volunteers work together to install solar systems in low-income communities through programs such as the nonprofit Grid Alternatives. (© Grid Alternatives)



option 2: prepare and protect our communities

We should protect and prepare communities and businesses for the most likely effects of climate change, such as flooding, drought, fire, health problems, and social unrest. But this approach does little to slow climate change, so we will have to accept greater—potentially unmanageable—environmental damage.

Questions to Surface Trade-Offs and Tensions

- If we help farmers adapt to climate change, are we obligated to help other industries?
- If climate change is almost certainly going to cause noticeable changes to the places we live in, how much change are we prepared to accept?
- This option is mostly about protecting human communities—but what about wildlife and/or special natural areas? Do we want to protect those as well?
- Climate change will likely result in health problems, especially among children and the elderly. What do we owe others in our communities to help them adapt?
- How should we balance individual rights and the good of the community, especially when it comes to property rights?
- Does focusing on adaptation rather than reducing CO₂ emissions renege on our obligations to people in other countries?



Volunteers at the Earthworks Urban Farm in Detroit, Michigan, are part of a local food movement encouraged by city ordinances that promote urban agriculture. (© Earthworks Urban Farm/ Capuchin Soup Kitchen)

option 3: accelerate innovation

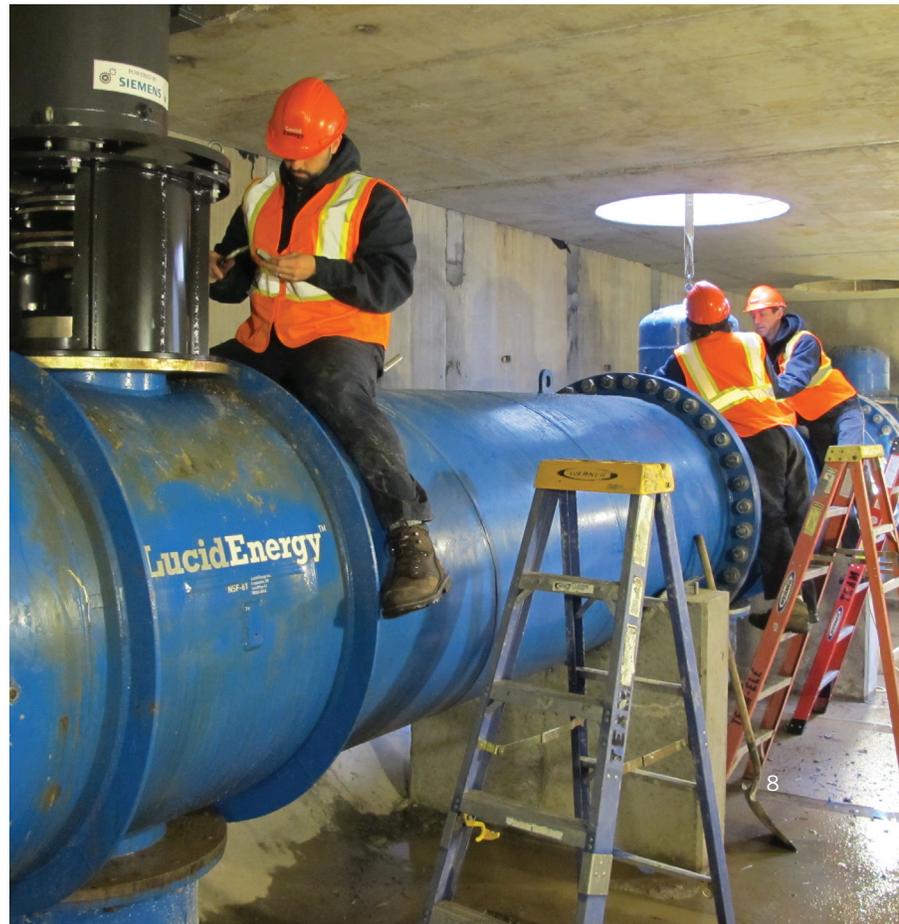
We must invest in rapid innovation to develop new, cleaner fuel sources, new ways to influence Earth's climate, and even new societal arrangements. But we may not make progress quickly enough to avert the worst climate-change impacts, and some new ventures will fail or cause other environmental problems.

Questions to Surface Trade-Offs and Tensions

- This option assumes we'll be able to keep our current way of life—including the amount of energy we use and waste we create—through innovation. Is consumption itself an issue to be considered?
- Are you concerned about unintended consequences of new experimental technologies?
- How important is cost-effectiveness when considering new technologies?
- Do you think that relying on technological change will address the problems of climate change quickly enough?
- What are the best ways to encourage widespread adoption of new technologies and ways of doing things? Should this be mandated?
- Does this option risk giving too much power and discretion to private companies?

Companies like Lucid Energy in Portland, Oregon, generate revenue by producing power in less-polluting ways. Lucid's in-pipe turbines use water moving through pipes to make electricity.

(Jennifer Newton, © Lucid Energy)



moderator response

Moderator's Name _____ Phone _____

E-mail Address _____

Date and location (state) where forum was held:

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

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

What common concerns were most apparent?

What things did participants appear to hold most valuable as they wrestled with trade-offs? Please describe.

Which trade-offs were participants most comfortable with? Please describe.

Which trade-offs did the participants struggle with the most? Please describe.

Did the group identify shared directions for action?

RETURN WITH PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRES TO:

National Issues Forums Institute, 100 Commons Road, Dayton, OH 45459, or scan and e-mail to **reports@nifi.org**. You may also fill out this report online at **nifi.org/questionnaires**.