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**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’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 or ambivalence.
* 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?

**Option 1: Recap and Questions for Deliberation \_\_\_ minutes**

This option says that immigration has helped make America what it is today—a dynamic and diverse culture, an engine of the global economy, and a beacon of freedom around the world. We should develop an immigration policy that builds on that tradition, one that welcomes newcomers, helps immigrant families stay together, and protects those fleeing from war and oppression. **BUT** wouldn’t this option add even more burdens to systems that are already overwhelmed by historically high levels of immigration.

* If we do not guard our borders and enforce our immigration laws strictly, will that tempt more people to come into the country illegally?
* Many people born in the United States lost their jobs during the pandemic. Should we pay more attention to their needs and potential, rather than focusing so much on helping people from other countries?
* Should having family members already in the United States be an important basis for admitting new immigrants? How does this help our economy? Does this make us safer?

**Option 2: Recap and Questions for Deliberation \_\_\_ minutes**

This option says we need a fair system, where the rules are clear and, above all, enforced. But with an estimated 10.5 million people living in the country illegally, our current system is unjust and uncontrolled. In fairness to the long lines of people who are waiting to come to America and stay here legally, we have an obligation to enforce our borders and deport people who entered the country without our permission and vetting. **BUT** won’t this harm millions of people by tearing their families apart and harming many businesses and communities. Won’t this spread fear in cities and towns nationwide?

* Shouldn’t we balance justice with mercy when it comes to people who entered the United States illegally many years ago? How serious a crime is it, after all? Is deportation really a fair punishment?
* Identifying and deporting undocumented people will cost billions of dollars. Is this really one of the best ways to spend our tax dollars? How will this help our communities recover from the pandemic’s economic toll?
* Shouldn’t communities with undocumented immigrants living peacefully and productively in their midst be able to protect them, without federal interference? Don’t people living in so-called “sanctuary cities” know what is best for their own communities?

**Option 3:** **Recap and Questions for Deliberation \_\_\_ minutes**

This option recognizes that newcomers have strengthened America in the past, but also say that current levels of immigration are so high, and the country is now so diverse, that we must regain our sense of national purpose and identity. We need to moderate the flow of immigrants and focus more on assisting newcomers as they join American society. **BUT** won’t this option rob us of the energy and hard work people from around the world bring to the United States? In many cases, immigrants are more grateful for the freedoms and opportunities of this nation than the people who were born here.

* Is immigration really to blame for the loss of unity we see in our country today? Are there other factors that are more responsible?
* Most immigrants are hard-working, family-oriented, and grateful to be in the United States. Given the numbers of immigrants working in healthcare and other essential services, will our communities really be better off with fewer of them? What will we lose if skilled, talented immigrants start going elsewhere?
* Industries like agriculture and construction keep prices down by relying on low-wage immigrant workers. Will we accept the rising costs that come from paying higher salaries to US workers? Won’t higher food and housing costs just make life harder for the working families already reeling from the economic collapse caused by the pandemic?

**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—those of us who are citizens and those of us who are not. It is important to think carefully about what matters most to us and what kinds of decisions and actions will enable our communities and country to thrive.

Before ending the forum, take some time to revisit some of the central questions this issue guide raises:

* Should we strictly enforce the law and deport people who are here without permission, or would deporting millions of people be a punishment that far outweighs their crime?
* Should we welcome more newcomers to build a more vibrant and diverse society, or does this pose too great a threat to national unity?
* Should we accept more of the growing numbers of refugees from war-torn regions, or should we avoid the risk of allowing in people whose backgrounds may not have been fully checked?
* Should our priority be to help immigrants assimilate into our distinctively American way of life, including learning English, or should we instead celebrate a growing mosaic of different peoples?

**Other 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?
* What could you do as an individual? What could the community do? What do we want our elected officials in Washington to do?
* Can you identify any tensions that came up during the forum?
* What questions remain? What work do we still need to do?