



National Issues Forums Workshop for Academic Libraries

Participant Workbook

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The materials contained in this handout are primarily drawn from Martin Carcasson's CSU Center for Public Deliberation student workbook and material that was originally created by members of the National Issues Forums network and the International Deliberative Democracy Workshop Faculty (particularly Betty Knighton, Taylor Willingham, and Sandy Hodge) and reflect over three decades of research and practice.

PART 2: BASICS OF NIF-STYLE FORUMS

Why such a focus on NIF? There are multiple ways of actually sparking deliberation (see the NCDD Engagement Stream document as well as the sample deliberative techniques section at the end of this workbook). At the CPD, we utilize “NIF-style” forums as the base process model for our training program. Not all CPD events use this format—each project is different and calls for different formats—but the NIF model is a great starting place and a useful and flexible model that can be applied in a number of situations. We also utilize NIF discussion guides often for training and in classrooms, and occasionally for community events, but typically develop our own material.

National Issues Forums -- An Overview

What is NIF?

National Issues Forums (NIF) is a nonpartisan, nationwide network of locally sponsored forums for the consideration of public policy issues. They are rooted in the simple notion that people need to come together to reason and talk – to deliberate about common problems. Indeed, democracy requires an ongoing deliberative dialogue.

How does it work?

Each year, major issues of concern are identified. Issue books, which provide an overview of the subject and present several choices, are prepared to frame the choice work. Forums are sponsored by thousands of organizations and institutions within many communities. They offer citizens the opportunity to join together to deliberate and to make choices with others about ways to approach difficult issues. Programs for NIF conveners and moderators are conducted each summer in Public Policy Institutes in more than a score of communities all across the country. They provide participants, both NIF newcomers and veterans, with a background on the program as well as skills for sponsoring, organizing and moderating forums.

Who participates?

Forums are organized by civic, service, and religious organizations as well as by libraries, colleges, universities and high schools, literacy and leadership programs, prisons, businesses, labor unions and senior groups. The network of convening institutions is both large and diverse. NIF participants vary considerably in age, race gender, economic status and geographic location. Studies of NIF deliberation tell us that every type of citizen seeks out and participates in these public forums. Each year, more than 20 Public Policy Institutes (PPIs) are held at institutions all across the country to train NIF moderators and conveners. PPI participants receive training and practice in moderating forums, become acquainted with NIF materials, discuss how to organize NIF programs in their communities, and learn to appreciate the importance of deliberation in identifying the public’s perspective on public policy issues.

So what?

Citizens cannot act together until they decide together. By making choices, the public defines what it considers to be in the public interest and finds common ground for action. By offering citizens a framework for deliberative forums, the NIF network helps the public take an active role in policy decision-making. And the health of this nation’s democratic enterprise depends on the active participation of responsible citizens who take the initiative to deliberate about public policy choices to set the public agenda.

For more information, contact:
National Issues Forums Research
100 Commons Road
Dayton, OH 45459-2777
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Basic Features of and Theory Behind the NIF style (according to the CPD)

- Designed for one-time 2-3 hour meetings of small or medium sized groups (8-30 people).
- Works best when multiple similar meetings are held, and data is compared across the meetings.
- Issues are focused on a common problem most would agree is a problem (start from common ground). Now, people may certainly disagree about the nature and cause of the problem, but generally most would agree *something* needs to be done about that issue.
- Uses background material (discussion or issue guides) that establish the importance of the problem and explores at least 3 different **approaches** to addressing the problem.
- NIF publishes national issue books for use, but often local centers develop their own discussion guides. You can visit www.nifi.org for a list of all the NIF guides, as well as many booklets created by others using the NIF style. Public Agenda also creates similarly framed material (see www.publicagenda.org).
- Discussion of the approaches is focused on having participants **explore the appreciations and concerns of each, with dedicated time to each approach**. The approaches are specifically set up with the realization that there is **no magic bullet or perfect solution**, every approach will have positive consequences along with difficult tradeoffs.
- The approaches are **not necessarily mutually exclusive**. Any community action would likely combine the choices in some manner. The “reflections” time at the end of a typical NIF forum is somewhat designed to combine and go beyond the approaches. In other words, the approaches are set up to insure a broad conversation and to insure dedicated focus on the different approach, but **participants are not asked to “pick your favorite.”**
- A particular strength of the NIF approach is it **supports broad discussion across multiple perspectives**. By having dedicated time to examine pros and cons along with a focus on listening, participants hear new aspects they haven’t considered before. By focusing on a common problem and multiple approaches, it inherently forces participants to get beyond simple pro-con views, as well as beyond the typical process of criticizing individual solutions. By providing a range of solutions, participants are faced with the tough choices and the realization that any solution will have tradeoffs that must be accepted. If we take solutions one by one, we can simply focus on what we don’t like. If we are faced with a range of solutions, we are more likely to realize we have to make a decision and act. Certain solutions also become much more viable when examined in conjunction with others, especially when perceived obvious solutions turn out to be not so obvious.
- Another strength is the **simplicity** for facilitators. Inexperienced facilitators can utilize a well-framed discussion guide and host a meeting with minimal training.
- The overall framing of a common problem with three or four potential approaches helps participants **move away from the blame game** concerning the problem, and more toward what they would like to see in the future, which is generally a more productive conversation. The approaches essentially provide a diverse set of entry points into the issue, helping assure a broad range of issues will be discussed.
- The approaches can often help participants **consider a broad range of actors** and their role in reacting to the problem. At times the approaches may even be particularly framed to focus on the various actors, with each approach essentially focused on a different primary stakeholder and what they could do.
- Two of the **key limits** of the NIF approach are: a short one-time meeting is difficult to transfer to action, and the approaches may actually limit discussion somewhat. As a result, the basic NIF model is often combined with other strategies.

Setting the Ground Rules

Deliberation is more likely to take place if some guidelines are laid out at the beginning; they can help prevent difficulties later on. Often these rules are posted somewhere in the room (perhaps on a flip chart and then displayed on a side wall). At the CPD, we tend to use the term “Ground Rules,” other processes may use guidelines, community agreements, covenants, or group norms based on the desire to get away from “rules” which are perceived as imposed or they want to emphasize mutuality of the behavioral understandings. Ideally, the groups come up with the rules themselves through a process, but we often don’t have the time to do that so we often just explain them and ask people to agree to work with them during the event.

There is a very real tension about using these rules. We want to create a productive, safe environment, but we also do not want to cut off discussions, unduly suppress ideas, or unnecessarily favor particular communication styles. In other words, getting the ground rules right is more about finding the right balance between too much and too little control, rather than applying them deductively. Most often, the rules are mentioned at the beginning and that is it. At times facilitators may need to simply remind people of the rules generally, or, in very rare situations, call out an individual based on the rules.

A wide variety of potential ground rules to deliberation exist (see the list of “ground rules” used by various deliberative techniques at the end of this workbook), thus individual moderators need to decide which rules to use and how to frame the rules before the forum. Some moderators also allow the audience to suggest additional rules to the discussion.

The CPD’s basic Ground Rules are:

- **BE HONEST AND RESPECTFUL**
- **LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND**
- **ITS OK TO DISAGREE, BUT DO SO WITH CURIOSITY, NOT HOSTILITY**
- **BE BRIEF SO EVERYONE HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE**

When we go over these rules at the beginning of a forum, we use the time to help us explain the overall philosophy. For example, we talk about the importance of listening and the critical role of listening in deliberative politics as compared to adversarial politics. Another function of ground rules is to essentially provide the participants with examples of norms and behaviors that hopefully they will find value in beyond the forum itself. The hope is that once they realize the higher quality of conversation that occurs under these conditions, that they become a habit for them that impacts their communication style in multiple settings.

Stages of an NIF forum

Welcome	The convener or moderator introduces the program. In some cases, pre-forum questionnaires may be used (either online or at the start of the event)
Ground Rules and Goals	Facilitator reviews ground rules for the discussion, as well as the desired outcomes of the forum. This discussion often allows the facilitator a chance to establish key aspects of the deliberative perspective as well as to create the necessary environment for the process.
Introduce Framework	A starter video may be used to set the tone for dialogue, or the moderator can introduce the choices themselves.
Personal Stake	As an icebreaker, participants share personal experiences related to the issue. This sets the stage, and also allows all participants to talk at least once, making it easier for them to talk later. (May be completed before the video, so that the participants do not simply react to the video in their comments).
Deliberation	NIF style forums are typically focused on a common problem, with 3-4 approaches to addressing that problem. Participants examine all the approaches, spending specific time focusing on each approach. Typically 15-20 minutes per approach if time allows. NIF-style discussions often focus on the Appreciations and Concerns with each approach, and notes are taken on easel pads focused on developing a list of the appreciations and concerns of each approach. Discussions often begin with appreciations (“What do you like about this approach?”) but then naturally shift to concerns during the discussion as participants respond to each other and facilitator prompts. Facilitators should insure that the participants have ample, but not necessarily equal, discussion of both, and if the discussion focuses primarily on one or the other, should ask specific questions to make sure the participants fully consider each (“We seem to be focusing primarily on concerns with this approach, does anyone have any particular appreciations? Why do people support this approach?”).
Reflection	Once each approach has been discussed, the remaining time can be used in a variety of ways, depending on the purpose of the event (see the Goals and Consequences information from earlier). Questions should be developed that allow the participants to build on the overall conversation and move toward accomplishing the purposes of the event. Time may also be used to allow the participants to look back over all the notes that had been captured during the discussion, as well as perhaps use “dot voting” to identify the key points they support in the discussion.
Questionnaire	Participants may be asked to complete post-forum questionnaires or surveys to gather additional data.

PART 3: THE BASICS OF FACILITATING

An effective facilitator balances many responsibilities:

- 1. Remains impartial about the subject of the forum.** Deliberative facilitators avoid expressing their own opinion or evaluating the comments of the participants based on their own perspective. However, moderators are not “neutral” or disengaged, and in fact they should be passionate about democracy and about the process itself. Facilitators should be invested in helping the community and supporting democracy. At the CPD, we believe “neutrality” leaves the facilitator too detached from the larger goals of deliberation
- 2. Allows the participants to own the process and topic as much as possible,** Facilitators facilitate (i.e. help others achieve their goals more productively), they don’t control or dominate. Based on the other responsibilities, they must intervene as necessary, but should also realize that doing too much may be worse than not doing enough. As much as possible, facilitators should allow participants to direct the conversation, as they will then take more ownership of its results. Deliberation is about bringing the voice back to the people. They need to feel heard and in control. Ideally, the group deliberates on its own and the facilitator is only necessary to keep time. That all being said, groups rarely do the hard work of deliberating are their own, so the deliberative facilitator is often rather busy making interventions tied to the other responsibilities.
- 3. Keeps the deliberation on track in terms of time and subject matter.** Facilitators serve as timekeepers, making sure the time is used well, the pace is appropriate for notetaking and the participants, and the group transitions to new questions or sessions as necessary based on the process plan. In addition, when comments go too far astray, bring participants back to the process (though at times what seems to be a tangent may be useful).
- 4. Manages the group well by maintaining a safe environment, encouraging everyone to join in the conversation, and ensuring no one dominates.** Facilitators must attend to both the task and relationship dimensions of the group’s work. Work with the participants so people know the order of speaking and do not get frustrated with procedural issues, seeking the right balance between having too much and too little structure to the conversation. Facilitators should be aware of who has spoken and who has not, assure that all voices get heard if possible, and no voices dominate the discussion (such as strong advocates or experts). Getting everyone to participate is important, not just for the deliberation, but for those individuals as well. People need to feel safe, be heard, and be validated, and it is the facilitator’s job to ensure that those things happen.
- 5. Models and encourages democratic attitudes and skills, particularly listening.** By exhibiting strong listening skills and asking good questions, facilitators can model the behaviors they are hoping the participants will develop. This includes maintaining a safe and respectful environment, and keeping the floor open to all perspectives and ideas. Deliberative facilitators can also praise certain participant behaviors (the sharing of a difficult story, the asking of a high quality question), while remaining impartial to the actual content / perspective of the information shared.

6. Does not take on an “expert” role with the subject matter, and seeks to support the appropriate role for quality data in the discussion. The facilitator’s role is not to teach the participants about the issue - even if it is a subject they know very well. Facilitators in particular need to think like non-experts in the room, and if jargon is used, ask for clarification as a service to less informed participants. Facilitators need to be prepared for their events but they cannot assume that everyone has the same background or understanding regarding the issue. One of the main tensions within deliberative work is between experts and data being too much or too little of the focus, and facilitators can play a key role in working to help negotiate that natural tension.

7. Manages several deliberative tensions, seeking the ideal middle ground (for example, idealism v. realism, complexity v. simplicity, depth v. breadth, etc.). When groups slide too far toward any extreme, the facilitator should intervene to help them move back towards the other pole and a healthy balance. Deliberative facilitators must often help the group with manage multiple polarities during their discussions (see *Polarity Management* by Barry Johnson).

8. Helps participants identify the values and underlining interests that can serve as common ground across their perspectives. In deliberation, participants’ values, motives, and underlying interests—their reasoning—are just as important, if not more so, than their positions and opinions. Sometimes people with different opinions share the same motive or value, and that similarity can form the basis for common ground. Facilitators should train themselves to listen for the underlying values and bring them out in the conversation for the participants to discuss. Since participants would rarely explicitly cite values, the facilitator can play a key role in making the implicit values more explicit.

9. Helps participants develop mutual understanding and consider a broad range of views, particularly the drawbacks of their perspective and the benefits of opposing views.

Facilitators ask thoughtful and probing questions to surface costs and consequences, whether intended or unintended, and plays devil’s advocate as necessary. Facilitators in particular should serve as a pathway for the underrepresented opinions and perspectives. If there is an issue that is closely tied to the conversation at hand and no one brings it up, it may fall to the facilitator to highlight the potential issue and allow the participants to decide whether or not it merits more conversation.

10. Helps participants identify and work through key tensions within and between their perspectives, working toward public judgment. At the center of deliberative processes, particularly for the CPD, is the need to negotiate tensions and paradoxes that lie at the heart of the wicked problems we face. Doing such “choice work” and “working through” is hard work, and rarely happens on its own, therefore facilitator interventions (along with quality framing that may highlight such tensions) may be critical to helping participants complete such tasks.

An Initial Look at the Key Tensions among the Responsibilities

(excerpt from Martin Carcasson's "The Deliberative Facilitator: Reimagining Facilitator Responsibilities for Deliberative Practice")

These ten facilitator responsibilities were developed to help create a framework to deepen our understanding of the unique role a deliberative facilitator plays in supporting deliberative practice, and to lay out a research program to spark additional reflection and innovation regarding the training and evaluation of deliberative facilitators. I argued in this essay that the mark of a quality facilitator is one that can successfully balance the tensions between many of these responsibilities. As I walked through the responsibilities, I often marked instances where facilitator interventions were constrained within one responsibility because of their concern with another. In this section, I review a few of these key tensions to hopefully spark future research on them.

The two most evident tensions involve responsibilities 1 and 2 in competition with essentially all the other responsibilities. The ***impartiality tension*** recognizes that interventions that work to fulfill any of the responsibilities from 3-10 will often represent a departure from a pure sense of impartiality and are thus open to criticism. Similarly, the ***control tension*** (responsibility 2 v. responsibilities 3-10) captures the tension between allowing the deliberating groups to control the conversation and the facilitator making interventions based on the other interventions. In many ways, any intervention inherently works against both of the first two responsibilities. The ***time tension*** focuses on the tension between responsibility 3 and the more deliberative responsibilities (8-10), all of which take significant time to engage. Responsibility 4 also brings out a tension with responsibilities 8-10, perhaps best framed as the ***social v. task tension***. Is it more important, for example, to create a safe and comfortable environment, to make sure all participants are engaged, or to explore key tensions? At times these goals may be alignment, but often they will not be. Responsibility 5 focuses on its own tension regarding the appropriate role of data and experts (not dominating, but not dismissed either), which we are calling the ***expert dilemma***. Responsibility 6 obviously highlights the ***idealism v. realism, complexity v. simplicity, depth v. breadth tensions***.

The essential question, of course, is how should facilitators negotiate these tensions? Because deliberative facilitation is an art, not a science, there are no clear answers to this question. The answers will be exceedingly situational, depending at least on the goals of the deliberative event (i.e., exploration v. conflict transformation v. decision-making v. moving to collective action), the particular group that the facilitator is working with (i.e. diverse v. homogeneous, naturally deliberating v. quiet and polite v. aggressive and confrontational), and the skills of the facilitator (i.e. skilled facilitators are more likely to recognize key opportunities and are more likely to be able to take advantage of it, thus would normally be much more active). We do believe that as facilitators gain experience, especially if they have the opportunity to reflect on those experiences, they will improve how they manage the tensions, and be equipped with a broader range of skills they can deploy to manage them. Indeed, building off the notion of the reflective practitioner, we believe the best way to operationalize the quality of a facilitator is to frame it in terms of their ability to not simply fulfill individual responsibilities, but manage the tensions between them all.

What roles does the facilitator play?

Guide – You must know the steps of the process the groups will execute from the beginning to the end. You can also help by holding up a mirror to them and their work and letting them know how they are doing and how far they have gotten and that particular parts are difficult sledding

Motivator – From the rousing opening statement to the closing words of cheer, you must ignite a fire within the group, establish momentum, and keep the pace. To remain impartial, however, be sure to praise good behavior (good questions, engagement, etc.) not specific ideas or opinions.

Questioner – You must listen carefully to the discussion and be able to quickly analyze and compare comments and to formulate questions that help manage the group discussion.

Bridge Builder – You must create and maintain a safe and open environment for sharing ideas. Where other people see differences, you must find and use similarities to establish a foundation for building bridges to consensus, while also helping groups better understand their differences.

Clairvoyant – Throughout the session, you must watch carefully for signs of potential strain, weariness, aggravation, and disempowerment , and respond in advance to avoid dysfunctional behavior. Facilitators use social and emotional intelligence to sense the feelings in the room.

Peacemaker – Although it is almost always better to avoid a direct confrontation between participants, should such an event occur, you must quickly step in, reestablish order, and direct the group toward a constructive resolution.

Taskmaster - You are ultimately responsible for keeping the session on track; this entails tactfully cutting short irrelevant discussions, preventing detours, and maintaining a consistent level of detail throughout the session.

What are the characteristics of the “Soul” of the Facilitator?

Facilitators care about people. They value people, their views, and their input. They want each person to walk away from a facilitated event feeling welcome, heard, and understood. They model positive affirmation and demonstrate their caring through their words and actions.

Facilitations want to help. The word *facilitator* comes from the Latin word *facil*, which means “to make easy.” Facilitators get great pleasure from being of assistance. They genuinely enjoy using their expertise to help others succeed.

Facilitators put their egos aside. Facilitators recognize that they are servants of the group. They understand that their presence is secondary, that their personal views are inconsequential, and that their value is defined by their ability to help the group define or achieve their objectives, not the facilitator’s. They don’t get upset with a participant’s difficult behaviors. They don’t take concerns personally. They are willing to play as little or as great a role as necessary to help the group be successful.

Source: Michael Wilkinson’s *The Secrets of Facilitation* (Jossey-Bass, 2004), pp.24-26.

A quick note about the terms “Facilitators” and “Moderators”: NIF material tends to use the word “moderator,” while at the CPD we prefer “facilitator.” We use both interchangeably in this workbook.

Primary Facilitating Styles

Facilitating is an art, not a science. Like deliberation itself, it involves trying to find the perfect balance between various, often competing, goals. For example, moderators seek to remain impartial, but must also insure all views are considered. Facilitators are charged with guiding the discussion and making sure the group stays on track time-wise, but also they do not want to dominate or force the discussion into too strict of a set structure.

The best facilitators are flexible yet consistent, another tricky balance. Overall, there seems to be at least four primary facilitating styles:

1. **The Referee** – Only interferes as necessary to enforce rules and time constraints. A good moderator from this perspective is barely noticed. They introduce a topic, and let the participants take over. They may only say “So what do you think?” and then step back until its time to consider a different approach.
2. **The Interviewer** – Prepares specific questions beforehand and pushes participants on particular issues. A good moderator from this perspective helps the participants dig deeper and do the hard work that the group may not naturally do on their own.
3. **The Devil’s Advocate** – Works to present views that are not represented in the forum. Can be particularly important if the room is not diverse, or if the deliberation is particularly one-sided. A good moderator from this perspective is able to introduce alternative voices without seeming to lose their impartiality.
4. **The Weaver** – Focused on helping participants identify and build upon common ground. A good moderator from this perspective is able to dig deeper into participant comments, identify underlying motives and values, and connect those values to others. May also focus more on strengthening the interpersonal relationships between participants.

No one style is “best.” It depends on the subject matter, the participants, and the goals of the deliberation. Good facilitators are likely able to play all four roles as necessary.

Recognizing Deliberation

A good facilitator also recognizes when deliberation is occurring, and nurtures it.

- Discussion considers several points of view – a range of views.
- People are talking about what is valuable to them.
- The group recognizes that the issue is complex.
- People are talking about consequences and weighing the trade-offs.
- People are struggling within themselves and WITH each other.
- “I” becomes “we”.
- The discussion is civil, but also not simply polite. Disagreements are aired, but aired in a spirit of seeking increased understanding.

Again, while facilitators should be neutral as to the perspective, **they are not neutral about the process**. If a participant asks a good, clarifying question, it is ok to praise the question (whereas moderators should avoid praising points made about the topic in general).

A Quick Starting Guide to Facilitating Forums

Facilitation is essentially about supporting a productive, respectful conversation that helps participants better understand the issue and each other. While there are many advanced facilitation skills that you can work on as you get more and more experience, the basics of deliberation are actually rather simple.

Deliberative conversations start with “**starting questions**,” which are open ended questions that get people talking about an issue. For NIF style forums, the starting question for each approach is often, “So does anyone have any particular things you like about this approach?” Once you ask an initial starting question, the deliberation begins when someone starts talking. As the facilitator, you must both listen carefully to what is being said, and plan your next move. Your next move will generally be one of the following:

The Five Basic Facilitator Choices:

1. **Move on** to the next speaker by simply pointing to the next person in line or asking the group for additional comments. People like to talk, and in many cases, you will often have a line of people ready to talk (see the discussion of “stacking” on page 57) and can simply move from one to another (after insuring the previous comment has been captured by the notetakers).
2. **Paraphrase** what that person said in order to clarify the point, help the notetakers, and/or move the conversation to a deeper level. When paraphrasing, always do so in a way that makes it easy for the speaker to correct you (“So what I’m hearing is that...is that right?”) You would rarely do it for every speaker, but it likely will be used rather frequently during a discussion because of the many functions it serves (see page 63).
3. **Ask a “probing” or “follow up” question to the same speaker** to get clarification or dig deeper. (see next page for examples and page 64 and on for more info on questions)
Ex. “Why is that important to you?” “What do you think the consequences of that perspective would be?” “Are there any drawbacks to that position?”
4. **Ask a “reaction” question** that seeks to have other people respond to the last speaker’s comments in some way. (see next page for more examples)
Ex. “Does anyone else have a different view?” “What do others think about that idea?” “Lets stick with this topic for a minute, how would you respond to that?”
5. **Ask a transition question.** Depending on the design of the forum, you may have a set of questions you are supposed to ask, or you may have certain issues you want to discuss, that you may just jump in to take the conversation a different direction. Based on the responses, you may also develop a question that works to combine or compare opinions that were shared. A transition question may be particularly important if the deliberation got off track and the participants need to be redirected to the issue.
Ex. “Many argue that one of the key topics with this issue is X, what are your thoughts on its importance?” “Looking back at the document, what else do we need to talk about?”

Examples of Probing and Reacting Questions

Probing Questions

When people are vague, probe to clarify

Can you tell me a little more about that?
Keep going.

When people are too broad, probe to specific

Can you give me an example of that?
How do you think we can do that? What steps do you suggest?
So whose responsibility would that be? How is it done?

When people are too specific, probe to broaden

So how do you think that could apply more broadly?
What insights do you think are most important from that example?

When you want to bring out an underlying value (especially when they focus on a position, and you want to identify the value/interest behind it)

Why?
Why is that important to you?
So it sounds like safety is particularly important to you then, right? Can you talk a little more about that?

When people are too negative, probe to push them back into more positive areas

Let's assume things change and get better, what needs to happen?

When people are too positive/simplistic/one sided, probe to push them to see the alternative view

Can you anticipate any particular difficulties or unintended consequences to your plan?
People that would disagree with you, how do you think they would respond? What is important to them?
I imagine ____ would disagree with your point (potentially with “because ____”). How would you respond to them?

When people setting for an “easy middle ground”/ “we just need balance”, probe them to struggle with that balance

You say we need balance. What does that balance look like for you compared to what we are doing now?
Are we currently out of balance?

Reaction Questions

The Basic What do others think?

Any reactions to that?
Let's stick with this idea of ____ for a couple minutes. Other thoughts?

Seeking affirmative/supporting reactions

What do you think? Who else agrees with Joe? Why?

Seeking negative/dissenting reactions

What do you think? Anyone see if differently that would like to share?

Opening up space for disagreement (particularly when many agree) - generic

Seems like most of you like this idea. What are we missing? Who might disagree with this and why?
Can anyone make the case against this?
What problems may come up if we do this?

Opening up space for disagreement – with generic perspective taking

Who, maybe even people not in the room right now, might disagree with this and why?
Let's put someone in the “empty chair” that would disagree. What might they say?

Opening up space for disagreement – with specific perspective taking

If a business owner/social worker/teacher was in the room, what might they say?

Opening up space for disagreement – with specific arguments from a perspective

If a business owner was here, I imagine they may express strong concern about such regulations. How would you respond?

When people setting for an “easy middle ground”/ “we just need balance”, probe them to struggle with that balance.

Seems like we have some agreement that there needs to be a balance. What does that balance look like for you compared to what we are doing now? Are we currently out of balance? (you can also do a quick poll. 1 we are too far to X, 5 we are too far to Y, 3 we have found the right middle ground. How would you vote?)

Basic Facilitator Techniques

Paraphrasing	Linking	Balancing
Summarizing	Intentional silence	Drawing people out
Stacking	Empathizing	Encouraging
Tracking	Validating	Making space for a quiet
Listening for common ground	Acknowledging feelings	person

These skills are detailed in the supplementary material from the *Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*, 2007.

KEY SKILL: “Stacking” but still encouraging interaction and productive disagreement

When moderating, facilitators need to make sure to allow space for disagreement, and actually encourage it in some ways. One of the best products of deliberation is clarification of key tensions/tradeoffs/tough choices (see pages 77 on for more information), and you can only get those if you bring them out or allow them to surface. We've realized that a strict appreciations/concerns or pro/con format to a discussion can prevent useful interaction. If you are talking about appreciations, and 4 people have their hands up, people that want to respond/disagree to what the first person said can't really do it, because they would be fifth in line (or they may think that "we are talking about appreciations right now"). So this is what we suggest you do:

Do your stacking like normal (pointing out who is next), but after someone has talked, before you go to the next person in the stack, say something like this, "Ok, you are next (point to the person who is next), but before we go to the next topic, does anyone have a quick response to what was just said? Do you agree/disagree?"

This can get messy, but basically you want to allow time for people to talk to each other on that point before moving on to the next point, because otherwise all we are doing is gathering a laundry list of individual pros and cons.

So you allow some response, if there is some, on that point, and then be sure to return back to who was actually next in line. If there is a lot of commentary about the initial point, you may need to jump in at some point and say, "Ok, let's have one more comment on this issue, and then we will move to a new topic."

I think we can still take notes in terms of appreciations and concerns, and even have them on two separate easels, but notetakers will need to jump back and forth more. Moderators will have to manage the time on their own to ensure that some time is spent both on appreciations and concerns. At some point, you may need to specifically ask for concerns, but you may not if the responses to appreciations covered them on their own.

That being said, responding to appreciations may not bring out the main concerns, so at some point you should probably ask that question (Any additional concerns we haven't discussed yet).

The Art of Paraphrasing

Purposes of paraphrasing

- Shows you are listening and thus shows them that what they are saying is important
- Helps solidify your role as impartial facilitator (so your paraphrases need to be fair and nonjudgmental)
- Checks meaning and interpretation of a message
- Helps people more clearly express themselves
- Helps equalize contributions (those that are more eloquent do not gain as much an advantage)
- Helps others understand each other better (your paraphrase may be the key to others getting what the original speaker meant)
- Gives them a chance to clarify their points (they realize they aren't explaining themselves well)
- Helps them evaluate their own feelings (your paraphrase may actually teach them about themselves – “yeah, I guess that is what I meant....”)
- Helps notetakers capture a summary
- Can help shift the discussion to a deeper level (move from positions to interests)
- Can help shift the discussion from a tense/emotional level to a more understanding level (especially when you paraphrase and take out “inflammatory statements”)
- Helps you keep present in the conversation and paying attention

Perils of Paraphrasing

- You can easily get too caught up in paraphrasing everything, making it more about you than them.
- Paraphrasing encourages more back and forth between you and the speaker, rather than the speaker and the rest of the group.
- People may get the impression that you are implying you speak better than they do.
- You may only capture part of what they are trying to say
- You may miss the main point and they may not feel comfortable correcting you

Be sure to paraphrase in a manner that allows the participant to feel overly comfortable disagreeing with your paraphrase. Do not paraphrase matter-of-factly (“You mean that...”), always paraphrase with qualifiers (“What I am hearing is...is that right?”; “So do you mean that...”; “Would you say then that...”; etc.

Facilitators can also utilize the participant, the notetakers or the other members to help paraphrase, particularly by relying on the need to capture the thought well on the notes. You can ask the person to summarize for the notes (“How could we write that briefly and still capture your concerns?”) or ask others (“Could someone try to paraphrase that for me so we can get that down?”). If you as the facilitator are not following a comment—and you think it is important—be honest. Ask for help to make sure the comment is captured and appreciated.

The Art of Asking Good Questions

“The quality of our lives is determined by the quality of our thinking. The quality of our thinking, in turn, is determined by the quality of our questions, for questions are the engine, the driving force behind thinking.”

Elder and Paul, *The Foundation for Critical Thinking*

The following five pages provide a variety of information concerning the kinds of questions facilitators can ask during forums. Asking good questions is a critical part of facilitating, as is knowing when *not* to ask questions. Forums can often progress pretty well without specific questions, all participants may need is some initial prodding to react to the background material. This fact makes it somewhat easier for novice facilitators, because they can learn on the job by simply letting things go on their own somewhat and picking and choosing when to intervene. If the participants are doing well on their own, the need for the facilitators and their questions is diminished, so don't feel the need to force questions.

Some Overall Thoughts about Asking Questions

- Question asking will depend on the overall goal/purpose for the event
- Be careful of starting a forum with specific questions. People may have something pressing they want to share, and a specific question may not give them that chance. If you start with a detailed question about a specific topic, participants may not be prepared to answer it.
- Preparing questions beforehand can be helpful, but also be prepared NOT to use them
- At times there will be some questions you NEED to ask because you are gathering specific information on that question from all the groups. There is nonetheless an important tension here between too much and too little structure. Asking specific questions of all groups will provide good information on that question, but it is also somewhat forced. The topic did not necessarily come up naturally in all groups, it was introduced by the facilitator. A more open process may bring more interesting results because you will be able to observe what issues arise naturally in the groups. The tradeoff is that by allowing the natural process, you may not get feedback on a particularly important issue. All in all, you need to be careful when introducing specific discussion questions, and be transparent in the reporting of the data about what questions were asked. Impartiality can be questioned if questions are loaded or direct participants in particular ways.
- Most questions will be reactive clarification/follow up questions
- Asking too many questions can be as bad as asking too few
- Ideally, participants are asking each other good questions by the end of the forum

NIF’s “Four Key Questions of NIF Forums”

1. **What is valuable to us?** This question gets at the reason that making public choices is so difficult, namely, that all the approaches are rooted in things about which people care very deeply. This key question can take many different forms. To uncover deeper concerns, people may ask one another how each came to hold the views he or she has. Talking about personal experiences, rather than simply reciting facts or stating rational, impersonal arguments, promotes a more meaningful dialogue.
 - How has this issue affected us personally?
 - When we think about this issue, what concerns us?
 - What is appealing about the first option or approach?
 - What makes this approach acceptable – or unacceptable?
2. **What are the consequences, costs, benefits and trade-offs associated with the various approaches?** Variations of this question should prompt people to think about the relationship that exists between each approach and the values people have. Because deliberation requires the evaluation of pros and cons, it is important to ensure that both aspects are fully considered. Questions to promote a fair and balanced examination of all potential implications include:
 - What would be the consequences of doing what we are suggesting?
 - What would be an argument against the approach we like best? Is there a downside to this course of action?
 - Can anyone think of something constructive that might come from the approach that is receiving so much criticism?
3. **What are the inherent conflicts that we have to work through?** As a forum progresses, participants should consider the following:
 - What do we see as the tension between the approaches?
 - What are the “gray areas”?
 - Where is there ambiguity?
 - What are you struggling with? What are you not sure about?
 - Why is reaching a decision (or moving forward) on this issue so difficult?
4. **Can we detect any shared sense of direction or common ground for action?** After saying during the first few minutes of a forum that the objective is to work toward a decision, the moderator or someone else may continue to intervene from time to time with questions that move the deliberation toward a choice, always stopping short of pressing for consensus or agreement on a particular solution. Then, as the tensions become evident, as people see how what they consider valuable pulls them in different directions, the moderator tests to see where the group is going by asking such questions as:
 - Which direction seems best?
 - Where do we want this policy to take us?
 - What tradeoffs are we willing and unwilling to accept?
 - If the policy we seem to favor had the negative consequences some fear, would we still favor it?
 - What are we willing and unwilling to do as individuals or as a community in order to solve this problem?

**At the heart of deliberation is the question of whether
we are willing to accept the consequences of our choices**

Questions with a Purpose

Perhaps one of the most important jobs of a moderator is to ask good questions. Questions like, “What do you think?” or “Do you agree with this statement?” often do not encourage people to think deeply about their own opinions and the impacts they might have on others. Instead, questions should serve specific, intended purposes. Consider the following types of questions and the examples provided.

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

- Could you illustrate how this issue is touching the lives of most of us in the community?
- What makes this issue real for us?
- What evidence do you see that this is something that is important to all of us?

Questions that ask participants to weigh the costs and consequences of each approach

- What might be the effects of your approach on others?
- Could you identify those things that are important to us that seem to be clashing?
- In a positive light, what seems to be most important to those who are attracted to this approach?
- Also, for those who think negatively about this approach, what seems to be their concern?

Questions to help ensure a fuller examination of all potential effects

- What would be the consequences of doing what you are suggesting?
- What would be an argument against the choice you like best?
- Is there a downside to this course of action?
- Can anyone think of something constructive that might come from this approach, which is receiving so much criticism?

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

- Can you live with the consequences?
- Would you give up _____ in order to achieve _____?
- What costs are at stake and can we live with them?
- What do you see as the tension among the approaches?
- What are the gray areas? Where is there ambiguity?
- Why is this issue so difficult to decide?

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

- What does that mean to you?
- 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?

Questions that encourage the speaker to make a connection between the actions he or she would advocate and what is important to him or her

- Could you live with the actions being considered?
- Would you be willing to have that action apply to everyone?
- What is most valuable to you or to those who support that action?
- If we did what you have suggested, could you explain how that might impact your life?

Questions that promote interaction among participants instead of just between the moderator and the participants

- Does that bring up anything for anyone?
- That gets us started, so how do you respond?
- Could someone give an example to illustrate what was just said?
- Allow silence. Someone will respond.
- Move back out of the circle.

Questions that give the participants an opportunity to identify what they have heard, to recognize a shared understanding of the issue, and/or to acknowledge a common ground for action

- What actions did you hear that you think we could not accept or live with?
- What trade-offs are you unwilling to accept?
- What seemed important to all of us?
- Suppose we cannot have everything. What are we willing and unwilling to do as individuals or as a community in order to solve this problem?
- Is there some action we could all live with?
- Have we come to some common ground to support certain actions? What are those actions? Can someone say what the common ground might be? Can someone take shot at summarizing any common ground we have? And the actions that are indicated from the common ground?
- Which direction seems best?
- Where do we want this policy to take us?

Moderating the “Reflections” Section of the Forum

The reflections time at the end of the forum can often be the most productive time overall. This time is precious, and should be used wisely. How it is used depends heavily on the goals for the event overall. For example, if the goal was primarily learning about the issue, then the reflections time should focus on the issue itself and what people learned. If the goal was to improve relationships and democratic attitudes, then questions should be asked connected to that goals (such as asking them how their thinking has changed about other people, or what they learned about the other participants). If the goal was action, this time should be used to identify and gain some commitment on individual and group actions. The basic NIF format for reflections are below, but feel free to adjust these to your particular needs for your event.

Overall question: What did we accomplish?

Individual Reflections

- How has your thinking about the issue changed?
- How has your thinking about other people and their views changed?

Group Reflections

- Can we detect any shared sense of direction or any common ground for action?
- What did you hear the group saying about tensions in the issue? What key values we all hold seem to be in conflict?
- What trade-offs were the group willing or not willing to make?

Next Step Reflections

- What do we still need to talk about?
- Who else needs to be here? What voices were missing that could have added to the discussion?
- How can we use what we now know?

One type of question we like to ask at the CPD, particularly if the report will be provided to decision-makers, is to ask the participants something along the lines of, “Now that you’ve had a chance to think about this issue from multiple perspectives and listen to your fellow community members, what is the one thing you would tell [insert most relevant decision-maker here, such as “school superintendent,” “governor,” “city council,” etc.] if they were here right now?”

Moving from Positions to Interests: An Important Way for Facilitators to Dig Deeper

In their classic work, *Getting to Yes*, Roger Fisher and William Ury discussed the importance of moving participants from a focus on their positions to one that focused on their interests. This move was critical to the Harvard negotiation method that sought to discover “Win/Win” solutions to conflict rather than the typical “Win/Lose” nature of competition, or even the “Lose/Lose” nature of compromise and bargaining.

Positions are concrete proposals about specific plans of action, such as hiring more teachers, damming a river, banning cell phones in cars, or increasing the penalty for a crime.

Interests are the underlying needs, desires, concerns, and fears that lead people to support particular positions. Interests connected to the positions listed above may include the need for high quality education for one’s children, being proactive and adequately prepared for future growth, the safety of children, bicyclists, and other motorists, and the need to increase deterrence.

Fisher and Ury argued that interests define the problem, not positions, but most conflict focuses on position differences, and the underlying interests often remain hidden or misunderstood. “Behind opposed positions,” they explained, “lie shared and compatible interests as well as conflicting ones.” Similar to the points made concerning values on pp. 14-17, most people hold rather reasonable interests, and when those interests are surfaced and understood, the negotiation—or deliberation—is much easier.

Surfacing interests—both those that shared and competing—helps with the next task Fisher and Ury discuss in the book: Inventing options for mutual gain. Interests are much easier to combine, or find creative ways to satisfy, than positions.

Facilitator Tactics to Move from Positions to Interests:

The easiest way to move from positions to interests is for facilitators to simply ask “Why” (or, at times, “Why not?”) The question must be framed or clarified so participants understand you are not belittling their position or simply asking for justification for their opinion, but that you are seeking better understanding of the needs, hopes, fears, or desires that it serves.

Another tactic that helps move from positions to interests is to have participants focus on what they want in the future (and why) rather than playing the blame game about what happened in the past.

Finally, facilitators can make the shift from positions to interests themselves, by paraphrasing a position statement made by a participant, and moving it to more of an interest statement (while, of course, giving the participant clear opportunity to disagree with the new framing).

Participant: We need to install additional speed bumps in our community!

Facilitator: Are you wanting to slow down traffic because of a concern for your children’s safety?

Dealing with Difficult Situations

Overall, it is important to consider that deliberation is difficult, and at times participants will struggle. Sam Kaner describes this as the “Groan Zone” that groups must go through as they work on difficult issues. So challenges are not failures or evidence of something going wrong, they may very well mean things are doing as they should. In many cases, when an individual is being difficult, the best remedy is not to focus on the individual, but the rest of the group. If one person is dominating, the rest of the group is not active enough, for example.

Here are some specific facilitator techniques for dealing with difficult people or situations:

- **Preview/pre-empt and prepare for your weaknesses** – If you know it is difficult for your to interrupt someone who dominates, explain that up front when you introduce yourself. It makes it much easier to intervene later (“you’re making me interrupt you...”). If based on experience you struggle with particular interventions, ask other facilitators how they handle such situations and prepare specifically for them.
- **The notes and process are your friend** – The need for good notes and to stay on time are two important tools for you to use to address difficult situations. If someone is rambling, intervene based on the need to have a clear summary of their point. If a conflict starts escalating, you can intervene to make sure you clearly understand each side for the notes. If time is short, jump in to establish that and the need to hear other people or to move on. Each of these interventions can be “blamed” on the need for notes or to stay on time, making it easier for you to pull them off without seeming heavy-handed.
- **Process adjustments** (rounds, writing, smaller groups) – If one or two people dominate, you may want to adjust the process to insure other voices are being heard. Do a round (asking everyone in the group to briefly reply to a question), ask everyone to write down an answer on a notecard or post-it note and then to share, or ask them to work in groups of 2 or 3 briefly and then report out.
- **Be honest/Ask the group** – For many difficult situations, there is no perfect technique to resolve it. The best move may be to be honest with your own struggle, and simply ask the group. This can be used if something does or doesn’t seem to be working or needs adjustment (“it seems to me we only have about 2-3 people doing most of the talking, do you think that is a problem?” or “this seems to be a bit of tangent, but I could be wrong. What do you all think?”). If a problem participant is requesting process adjustments, rather than deal simply with them, open it up to the group (“what do people think, should we move on now to action steps?”). Of course, it depends on the process and how much control you as a facilitator has to make adjustments, but asking the group can help you find the balance between letting the group own the process and achieving the task. If participants are “debbie downers” shooting down all ideas or pushing conspiracy theories, facilitators can simply ask the group (“so what do you think, is this exercise futile?”). Its likely that people will think differently and defend the process, which tends to work better than you having to defend it.
- **Shifting from past to future** (“Imagine...”). If participants are stuck in conflicts or actions from the past, shift the discussion to the future. Rather than dwell on past transgressions, ask them how they would want to be treated in the future and what they would hope to happen
- **Moving from positions to interests** – See page 83.
- **Perspective taking.** If certain perspectives are dominating and it seems opposing views may be reluctant to speak up, make it easier for them by making room for alternative perspectives (“If _____ were here, what would they say?” or “Lets think about the other key stakeholders or groups that care deeply about this topic that we haven’t heard from yet. What may they say if they were here?”)

Dealing with Difficult Situations (continued)

Dealing with participants who dominate the discussion

- What do others think about this approach?
- What ideas have not been expressed?
- How would anyone else in the group respond to the concerns just expressed?
- Could someone tell us a story to illustrate that point?
- For those who hold that position, what do they care deeply about?

Dealing with a difficult participant

- Gradually escalate your response.
- Use body language (move close to the person)
- Gradually use more assertive verbal techniques such as interrupting to capture the points stated so far.
- Refer to the guidelines (everyone participates - no monopolizes conversation)
- Redirect the conversation by saying “Thank you. What do others think about that?” or “Let's create some space for those of you who have been quieter. Someone else?”

Handling misinformation from a participant

- Does anyone have a different perspective on that?
- Use the issue book. Point out that “on page xx it states...” How does that fit with the information you just gave us?
- What meaning does that information have to you?
- Would you give us an example?

Often in a forum, participants themselves will call other participants on their behavior such as dominating the conversation or giving misinformation that others know is not correct.

Understanding Conflict

Facilitating deliberative practice has many connections to the field of conflict management. Conflicts are inherent to democracy, and communities need to learn how to deal with inherent conflicts more productively, rather than seek to resolve, or avoid, them). Entire courses can be taught in conflict management, but I'll just provide some quick thoughts here.

The first step to managing conflict is understanding the conflict, which can be an important function of deliberative practice. In particular, understanding at what level the conflict may reside is critical for facilitators to understand how to address them.

One way to categorize conflicts uses a 4 level typology:

1. **Conflict based on different facts** – These conflicts are perhaps the most difficult to address in deliberative forums. If opposing views have fundamentally different facts they are working with, and there is no clear way to resolve those differences with the resources available during the forum, then at times the best the facilitator can do is bracket the discussion and have the participants simply agree to disagree, and perhaps seek out the answer—if there is one—after the forum for the report. Thankfully, well designed deliberative forums with high quality background material and framing should not get derailed by any particular factual conflicts.
2. **Conflict based on misunderstandings** – At times, what appear as differences in facts are actually misunderstandings. Here the process and the facilitator can help address the conflict by making sure the opposing sides have a clear opportunity to explain themselves and listen to each other. Our current political culture often relies on misunderstandings, so there is plenty of misunderstandings for deliberation to undo, and many conflicts dissipate when opposing sides truly understand each other.
3. **Conflict based on value differences** – Many conflicts are fueled by value differences. The process of clarifying those value differences, and having participants struggle with their *actual* value differences rather than false, perceived differences is very important (see pp. 15 on value dilemmas, as well as page 28 on polarized discourse). While serious differences may still exist, they are typically much more manageable when understood. The key to addressing these conflicts then is to isolate the values and help participants identify underlying values and work through the differences. If the conflict is particularly heated, it may be useful for the facilitator to lay out what they see as the conflict, or perhaps even ask a third participant to do so (“Would anyone want to try to characterize the differences between these two perspectives?”).
4. **Conflict based on outside issues** – Sometimes, conflict arises that are the result of personalities, past history, or other factors irrelevant to the issue (such as political goals). These conflicts are also difficult to address during the forums, and would often require a deeper interventions. The primary response for facilitators in these cases are to try to bring the group back to the issue at hand, in part by directing attention away from those participants.

Facilitators should also remember that in most deliberative settings, they do not need to resolve the conflict. Consensus is rarely necessary for a deliberative forum to be useful and successful. Once the conflict is clarified, and the opposing views clearly captured in the notes, it may simply be time to move on. Do not let a personal conflict dominate a discussion.

Dealing with Emotion

The first point to make here is to be clear that emotions are not detrimental to deliberation. Indeed, the lack of emotions is much more of a problem. Some early theorists of deliberation sought to create purely “rational” discussions that were devoid of emotion, but current deliberative practitioners understand that dealing with emotions is a critical aspect of high-quality deliberation. The surfacing of emotions represents an important teaching moment that facilitators should welcome.

One function of deliberation is to allow participants to express their emotions in a productive manner. Another is for participants from opposing perspectives to see the emotions present in others in a respectful, safe environment, so those emotions can contribute to increased understanding.

Facilitators can react to emotion in many different ways. Most often, you simply allow the participant a chance to vent (as long, of course, as no one feels threatened). The expression of emotion is often a clear opportunity to help participants move from positions to interests and reveal powerful underlying values and concerns. Paraphrasing may be particularly useful, especially for the other participants, who may get caught up the emotion and not be really listening to the message being sent. Restating an argument made by an emotional participant in a less emotionally-laden manner—taking out, for example, particularly inflammatory statements that may distract others—can be valuable technique. Overall, these ideas are connected to a key mediation idea; the power of acknowledging feelings and values. Without agreeing or assenting one can acknowledge how another is feeling thus recognizing their humanity.

Other suggestions for dealing with emotional participants from IAP2 include:

- Don’t interrupt, be defensive, or argue
- Respect their opinion and their right to it
- Try not to take their anger or emotion personally
- Use active listening skills
- Ask questions to clarify the source of their anxiety, concern, fear, or anger
- Summarize what you have heard so they are sure they are being understood (often anger comes from repeated failed attempts to get their opinion across)
- Get their agreement on the summary, and be sure to have their concerns clear on the notes
- Ask them what they would like done to address their concerns (shift from past to future)
- Check to make sure that you have accurately recorded their comments and concerns

If they continue to interrupt:

- If there is more than one facilitator available, suggest that the person talk directly to the other facilitator in another room to allow the meeting to continue
- If you are the only facilitator, offer to talk to them during a break or after the meeting so that you can continue the meeting
- Alternatively, ask the person to write down their concerns, and commit to providing the comments as part of the meeting record

Helping Moderators Stay on Track

Good signs	Signs that moderator should make a move	Tips to get back on track
People listen to what others are saying	People are just waiting their turn to “have their say”	
People are talking to each other; asking questions of each other	All comments are directed to the moderator	
Everyone is listening with respect; no one is dominating	There are “sidebar” conversations or interruptions	
Alternative viewpoints get aired	The group mainly concurs on each choice	
The consequences of each choice get addressed	The pro arguments have no negative consequences	
People share personal experiences	People speak theoretically/analytically	
People express emotion around what is important to them	The forum is cerebral and lacking feeling	
The conversation uses the group’s prior work	Comments ignore prior comments	

PART 5: NOTETAKING & REPORTING

Forum Recording

Purpose of Recording

- To help establish that what the participants say is valued and being listened to
- To remind forum participants of their comments, agreements, and action items, particularly during the reflections time.
- To support the importance of equality and inclusion. Comments are captured regardless of the source, and the author is not identified.
- To serve as a reference document for future forums
- To facilitate the writing of the report that will inform a wider audience of the discussion, decisions, and actions

Qualities of Effective Recording

- Brief
- Clear
- Legible
- Accurate
- Well organized
- Uses active verbs
- Reports the appropriate amount of information
- Captures the tensions, trade-offs and common ground for action
- Notes are distributed soon after the forum
- Treat each person's contribution with equal respect. It is not your role to determine the value of a comment, but rather to capture the discussion.

Suggestions from Kaner's *Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision-Making**

- Print in capital letters 2 to 4" tall
- Make think-lined letters
- Write straight up and down
- Close your letters (don't leave gaps in B's and P's, for example)
- Use plain, block letters
- Practice makes perfect
- Alternate colors between speakers, but don't use too many colors on one page
- Don't crowd the bottom of the page

Additional suggestions

- Use key words they used as much as possible.
- If you plan on using “dot voting” at the end of the forum, be sure to leave some space for the dots. You may also want to draw lines between the separate comments
- Be sure to label and number the sheets before you take them down.
- Have a pen or pencil handy to write additional clarification comments if necessary. Have notetakers add comments to the sheets before they are taken down.
- Moderators and notetakers should discuss beforehand how they will work together, especially concerning how much the notetakers will interact with the participants.

Deliberation and Diversity

Why is diversity so important in deliberative forums?

- Lack of diversity leads to group think and diminishes the wisdom of crowds
- Diversity provides a greater potential for learning
- Diversity provides a potential for increased understanding/tolerance of others
- Diversity provides a greater potential for increased sense of efficacy/voice, especially for members of a community that have traditionally not been a part of such events.
- Diversity can increase the quality of the process and results, because often everyone has one small piece of the best solution.
- Diversity can increase the legitimacy of the process and results, because ideally in a democracy all voices are heard and represented in broad decisions.

What sort of diversity should be targeted?

The primary goal should be to attract true diversity of thought. Such diversity includes but also goes beyond typical notions of diversity (race, gender, and ethnicity), and also incorporates diversity of age, geography, education level, occupation, political views, etc.

The Barriers of True Diverse Participation

Insuring a representative room is critical to a successful, legitimate deliberation, but attendance does not guarantee participation and consideration. During the deliberation, those with minority views often will not feel comfortable speaking, may have language issues, or may not be taken as seriously by other participants. Indeed, finding the right balance between “impartiality” and “insuring minority views are heard and considered” is perhaps the most difficult challenge of moderating deliberative forums.

The “Diversity Dilemma”

Clearly, considering the information above, attracting a diverse crowd can be critical to a successful and legitimate forum. On the other hand, the more diverse the audience, the more difficult the job of the moderator can be. If a deliberation degenerates into a polarized argument, deliberation can be much more harmful than beneficial, leading to participants leaving with a negative opinion of deliberation as well as hardened negative assumptions concerning those that think differently than them. The diversity dilemma, therefore, is that while a diverse room offers greater potential for positive consequences, at the same time it offers the opposite potential (said differently, a diverse audience offers high risk, high reward).

Attracting a Diverse Audience

- **Plan early** – Brainstorm with multiple sources about who needs to attend the forum to insure major voices participate.

- **Learn and overcome the hurdles to participation**

Find out why certain segments tend not to attend public forums, and address that issue

- Do they not know about it? (publicity problem)
- Do they not have time or access? (convenience, money, need for child care, or transportation problem)
- Do they think they will not be taken seriously or listened to? (respect problem)
- Do they not believe the problem is important or relevant to them? (a motivation problem)
- Do they think the process is empty talk, not action? (legitimacy, efficacy problem)
- **Varied sponsorships** - connect with organizations that will increase the legitimacy of the event in the eyes of diverse audiences
- **Multiple meetings** - host meetings in different locations that will draw different audiences
- **Targeted recruiting** - send specific invitations to various communities and follow up
- **Assisted recruiting** - develop contacts within various communities that will recruit for you
- **Representing missing voices** - if the room is not diverse, moderators can ask for those attending to consider the missing voices, or could themselves introduce those voices

Stakeholder/Audience Analysis

A useful tool to help a group think through audience issues is an audience/stakeholder analysis. The form below, developed by the Institute for Participatory Management and Planning, can help a group brainstorm possible aspects of a topic, as well as the various groups that may be impacted by those aspects of the issue. The list developed on the left hand side could then be used to consider an audience strategy.

IPMP: the Institute for Participatory Management & Planning, PO Box 1911, Monterey, CA 93940-1911 Tel: (408) 773-4290; FAX: 773-0760. Contact us and let us train your key managers in Citizen-Building methods and strategies, specifically, in: SDIC (Symmetric Development of Informal Citizens), CPI (Citizen Participation-by-Objectives), CPI-J (Dealing with Extremists and Terrorists), COSTAR (Communication / Staff Relations), Professional Ethics, and Crisis Management.			Project Name:																															
Issues: An "Issue" is an unambiguous statement. It can be: - a fact, - a fear, - a fancy, - an accusation, - a concern, - a myth, . . . etc. A good way to express an Issue <i>unambiguously</i> is to dare to																																		
PAIs: to write today all the News-paper Headlines that, someday, will be written about those issues. Potentially Affected Interests include: individuals, groups, corporations, institutions, other agencies, and other officials, . . . outside and inside your organization . . .																																		
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Convening the Forum – A Checklist

Moderators, Recorders, Observers

- Who will *moderate*? How many people will moderate?
- Who will *record*? How many people will record?
- Will you utilize *observers*?
- Have the moderators, recorders and observers met?
- Do they have an agreement amongst themselves as to how they will interact? (For example, will recorders interrupt if they are not sure what a participant said?)

Logistics

- What date and timeframe will work best?
- Where will the forum be held? How flexible is the space? How many different groups could it hold?
- Are facilities handicapped accessible?
- Is public transportation to the site available? If not, how will people without transportation get there?
- Is the meeting space large enough to accommodate all participants?
- Consider the seating arrangement.
 - U-shaped / circled?
 - With / without tables?
 - Arrange the room so you have a good spot for easels, and to put the paper up
- Room details, e.g., location of bathrooms
- Equipment
 - Microphones (**Note:** Try to avoid using microphones unless it is difficult for people to hear. With 15-25 people you might not need them.)
 - Easels with flip charts
 - Markers
 - DVD/VCR and TV

- Extension cords
 - Dot stickers
 - Extra issue guidebooks
- Sign-in Sheet
- Will you provide refreshments?
- Will you provide child care?

Other details

- Do you intend for people to complete a registration process?
- Who will handle registration?
- How will you handle late comers?
- Who is responsible for designing promotional materials?
- Who is responsible for copying and distributing promotional materials?
- Who is responsible for securing issue guides?
- Will you be using a survey? What demographic information would be useful for the report? What questions would be useful for the report?