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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 personally? What about your family or your community?
* How does this problem relate to your goals and aspirations for your community and the country as a whole?

**Option 1: Increase Accountability—Questions for Deliberation \_\_\_ minutes**

According to this option, ensuring safety and justice for everyone requires well-trained, thoughtful, and accountable police officers who do not rely on force and intimidation. To reach that goal, this option says, we need to rethink how officers are supervised and disciplined, as well as how they’re armed. Departments should focus less on weaponry and more on instilling professional behavior and building community ties.

BUT this approach does little to address the racism that often drives police abuse and basically leaves police departments as they are, with the same roles and responsibilities they currently have.

* Thinking of the officers in your own community, do you believe most can and will carry out their duties fairly and humanely if they have good training and oversight? Why or why not? If not, what concerns you?
* Unpredictable situations like mass shootings can occur anywhere. How can departments respond to situations like these if they don’t have well-equipped SWAT teams and protective gear at the ready?

**Option 2: Confront Persistent Racial Discrimination in Policing**

**Questions for Deliberation \_\_\_ minutes**

According to thisoption, law enforcement agencies, like other institutions, reflect America’s history of racial discrimination and injustice, and unfortunately, the problem is not confined to a few officers. Law enforcement training and operating assumptions tend to penalize people of color. If we don’t address the widespread racial discrimination and bias in policing, abusive practices and excessive use of force will continue.

BUT this approach assumes nearly all officers are biased. Stereotyping entire police departments as racist misrepresents the reality in most communities. In the end, it could drive well-intentioned individuals who want to work with communities and reform policing out of the field.

* Police officers often need to make split second decisions in confusing, dangerous situations. Do you think racial justice and de-escalation training can reduce police errors in these circumstances? Or do you think it could end up jeopardizing the officers and public safety?
* Thinking of your own community, would a complete re-organization of the police department be helpful or just disruptive? Do you have any concerns that public safety might be jeopardized if law enforcement is reimagined and drastically transformed?

**Option 3**: **De-escalate to Create New Responses to Nonviolent Problems**

**Questions for Deliberation \_\_\_ minutes**

In many communities, police departments address a broad range of social problems such as mental health crises, drug overdoses, domestic disputes, and similar problems. This option argues that armed law enforcement officers shouldn’t be responding to these situations, that social service and other health professionals should take on this role instead.

BUT drug abuse, mental health problems, and domestic disputes often escalate into violence, and counseling and negotiation is not always effective at defusing these situations. This approach could leave neighborhoods more disorderly and put many more people at risk.

* Is drug abuse a mental health problem that mainly harms the user, or is it a dangerous lifestyle that endangers others? What about selling and distributing drugs? Given your answer, what roles should the police and social and mental health workers play in this area?
* Additional mental health and social services cost money. Thinking of your own community, would you be willing to move funds away from the police or other government services and/or to raise taxes to cover it? Why or why not?

**Closing Reflections \_\_\_ minutes**

Changing the relationship between law enforcement and communities and reducing police abuse is a vital mission, but it is complicated. Not everyone defines “public safety” and “fair policing” in the same way. And many Americans, both in minority communities and law enforcement, believe the dangers they face are being ignored.

That means it is important to think carefully about how the ideas and proposals outlined in this guide would work, and what the advantages, trade-offs, and risks might be—in your community and for the country as a whole.

* Most Americans say reducing racial inequity is a top priority for our country.
  + Which ideas in this guide seem most likely to reduce racial inequity in law enforcement?
  + Are there ideas here that might end up increasing racial bias and tension, rather than reducing it?
* Everyone wants to live a safe community where they can feel secure in their daily lives.
  + Which ideas in this guide seem most likely to increase safety for everyone?
  + Are there ideas in this guide that might reduce public safety, even if that was not the intention?
* Often, proposals for change produce either near-term results or longer-term results—but not both.
  + Will some ideas in the guide produce positive near-term results, but create important long-term risks?
  + Will some present near-term challenges and problems, but produce positive long-term results?
  + Given the near-term / long-term trade-offs, which ideas seem most promising to you?
* Different communities face different challenges in ending abusive policing, promoting fair law enforcement, and maintaining public safety.
  + How would you describe the one or two most important challenges in your own community?
  + Are there any ideas here that would be particularly beneficial given your top priorities?

**Other important questions to consider:**

* Now that we have deliberated, are there ideas or viewpoints you hadn’t considered before?
* Have your priorities shifted as a result of this deliberation? In what way?
* Can you now identify any shared concerns or hopes we have discovered in our deliberations?
* Can you identify any potential unintended consequences that came up during the forum?
* What questions remain? What work do we still need to do? Who else do we need to talk to?
* What could you do as an individual? What could the community do? What should we expect from our elected officials at the local, state, and national level?