****

**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 decide to participate in the forum today?
* How has this issue affected you personally?
* When you think about this issue, what worries you most?
* How does this problem affect your goals and vision for our country?

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

According to this option, the major problem is that the U.S. is not adequately preparing the next generations for the challenges ahead. We have failed to ensure that younger people have the necessary skills to succeed in a rapidly changing world. That means we need to invest in education—in smaller class sizes and more help for struggling students. We also need to reduce student debt and expand mentoring and mental health services.

BUT improved education policies won’t help if students don’t take advantage of them. This approach does too little to address the need for more personal responsibility and hard work and stronger support at home.

* These changes would be enormously costly, and most of us also want to expand health care and improve the environment. Plus, the federal budget is already awash in red ink. Are these ideas the best use of taxpayer dollars compared to other needs?
* Can a motivated, hard-working student get a good education in the existing system? Will less motivated students really take advantage of these better options? How important is motivation and hard work in equipping younger people to succeed in the future?

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

Our most fundamental challenge, according to this option, is that not everyone in the U.S. has an equal chance to succeed. Entrenched biases toward race, religion, gender identity, and sexual orientation have created an uneven playing field, so making our society fairer and more just should be the first order of business. That means eliminating standardized testing, guaranteeing a minimum wage and college access for all, and revamping history texts and teaching to acknowledge the mistakes and biases of America’s past.

BUT policies mandating equitable treatment can’t eradicate biases or change people’s hearts and minds. Plus, lack of opportunity and economic injustice often extend across demographic categories.

* Hardly anyone likes standardized testing, but without it, teachers have an enormous power in determining student success. How do we know teachers will always make good judgments? What about the possibility of racial bias and low expectations among teachers as well?
* Paying for two-year college for everyone is costly and could end up helping students who are quite well off and haven’t faced bias. Is this really the best use of limited taxpayer dollars?

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

This option focuses on deep-rooted problems that put the next generation at risk: the nation’s deficit spending, a declining environment and need for clean energy, and lack of investment in roads, bridges, transportation and internet capacity. If we don’t address these issues, the next generation will live in a hobbled country.

BUT politicians have stalled on these issues for years. Even if we could tackle them, the next generation won’t prosper without a solid education and a country and economy that gives everyone an equal chance.

* Politicians often want to improve education, health care, and other government services, but keep tax benefits low. Being as realistic as possible, how much can we raise taxes without harming business and investment? Would you be willing to support taxes on people and businesses in your own community and yourself to accomplish some of these goals? Why or why not?
* This option asks us to address longer term issues while we still can. But won’t that take attention and resources away from nearer term goals like improving education and reducing bias? What should come first? How much can we realistically accomplish in the next five years?

**CLOSING REFLECTIONS \_\_\_ minutes**

Acting on the ideas and proposals presented here would affect Americans young and old in every city and state—whether we are attuned to these issues or not. And policy changes that sound good initially sometimes go wrong in unexpected ways. That’s why it’s important to think carefully about how the changes in this guide, along with other changes you might have identified in your deliberations. How would they actually work out in real life?

1. Often, deciding which approaches make sense to you personally is the easy part. Finding common ground with those who disagree can be trickier.
   1. What groups need to be brought into discussions about the prospects for the next generation?
   2. What kinds of concerns and motivations might they have?
   3. Can those concerns be addressed while still making progress?
2. In this guide, we’ve mainly talked about what can be done to improve the prospects for younger people. Do younger people owe anything to older Americans? If so, what?
3. We can’t, and maybe shouldn’t, try to make too many changes at once. If you had to choose one of these goals, which seems most crucial right now and why?
   1. Improving education?
   2. Reducing bias and racial injustice?
   3. Addressing problems like the federal debt and environmental destruction that could devastate the next generation’s chances?

Is it realistic to think that we could address all three goals at once? How would that work? Would we have to put anything to the side?

**SOME KEY OVERALL 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?
* Can you identify any tensions or disagreements that came up during the forum?
* What questions remain? What work do we still need to do?
* What could you do as an individual?
* What could the community do?
* About what do we want our elected officials at the local, state, and national level to do in our name?