Effective Facilitation for Deliberation

Courtesy Martin Carcasson, Colorado State University
From CPD Student Associate Training Workbook – Spring 2014

An Effective Facilitator:
An effective facilitator balances many responsibilities:

☐ **Remains impartial about the subject of the forum.** Avoid expressing your own opinion or evaluating the comments of the participants (be careful with saying "good point!"). However, moderators are not "neutral" or disengaged, and in fact they should be passionate about democracy and about the process itself.

☐ **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.

☐ **Keeps the deliberation focused on the task.** When comments go too far astray, bring participants back to the process (though at times what seems to be a tangent may be useful).

☐ **Manages the room well and encourages everyone to join in the conversation**. 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, and assure that all voices get heard if possible.

☐ **Models democratic attitudes and skills**. By exhibiting strong listening skills and asking good questions, you can model the behaviors you are hoping the participants will develop.

☐ **Does not take on an "expert" role with the subject matter.** Your role is not to teach the participants about the issue - even if it is a subject you know very well. Facilitators in particular need to think like non-experts in the room, and if jargon is used, ask for clarification.

☐ **Listens for values and underlining interests that motivate a participant's comments.** In deliberation, participants' values and motives are just as important, if not more so, than their 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.

☐ **Encourages deeper reflection.** Ask thoughtful and probing questions to surface costs and consequences. Make sure that the participants have considered the potential outcome of

1

their preferences. Help draw out what people are willing to accept and are not willing to accept.

☐ **Helps participants find common ground and identify and work through key tensions.** Participants will not always agree and may sometimes be in direct conflict with each other. Helping them identify both common ground and key tensions will help move the conversation forward in important ways.

What are the responsibilities of a facilitator?

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* (Josey-Bass, 2004), pp.24-26.

A quick note about the terms "Facilitators" and "Moderators": National Issues Forums material tends to use the word "moderator," which is another word for "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 supports a productive, respectful conversation that helps participants better understand the issue and each other. While you can work on advanced facilitation skills as you get more experience, the basics of deliberation are rather simple.

Deliberative conversations start with open-ended "**starting 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.

3. **Ask a** "**probing**" or "**follow up**" question to the <u>same speaker</u> to get clarification or dig deeper.
   > 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 <u>other</u> people respond to the last speaker's comments in some way.
   > 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?"

Basic Facilitator Techniques

Paraphrasing

Summarizing

Stacking

Tracking

Listening for common ground

Linking

Intentional silence

Empathizing

Validating

Acknowledging feelings

Balancing

Drawing people out

Encouraging

Making space for a quiet 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, 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).

When to Intervene

The basic question facilitators constantly ask themselves is "should I intervene here?" Since the facilitator is technically not part of the group, any action that facilitator takes (asking a question, paraphrasing, making an observation, etc.), should be considered an intervention. Whereas the participants will have varied goals for the discussion, such as convincing others of their perspective, hearing alternative viewpoints, having their voice heard, etc., the facilitator's focus is on helping the group actually deliberate well. This is the real value-added of the facilitator. They are typically the only person focused on the quality of the discussion and process. Generally, facilitators must consider how to best balance the various functions and responsibilities of facilitators as outlined on pages 53.

Some of the specific reasons to intervene are:

- **Opportunity for learning**: A question, paraphrase, or observation would likely help participants think deeper about an issue and/or develop more mutual understanding, particularly in terms of the consequences of certain actions, or the interplay between common ground and key tensions between perspectives on the issue.

- **Ground rules being violated**: Not any violation of a ground rule merits an intervention, but with high-emotion topics, it may be important for the facilitator to clearly enforce the rules to insure a safe environment for the discussion.

- **Lack of clarity and mutual understanding:** Facilitators should be particularly focused on making sure people understand each other, so when participants use a term or acronym others may not understand, or when others nonverbally communicate they are confused, they should step in to improve the level of understanding. Often, a term means different things to different people, so brief discussions about terminology can be important.

- **Adjusting pace/time management:** Another basic responsibility of the facilitator is keeping the group on time with the process. Being clear on the time and providing time warnings ("We have about 2 minutes left with this question") can be important to the flow of a process.

- **Opportunity to improve group dynamics or honor democratic values** (i.e. equality and inclusion): Facilitators must consider both the task and relationship dimensions of group work. At times, interventions may be more focused on the relationship dimensions, such as helping address conflict between participants or the perception of disrespect. Other interventions may be more focused on getting new voices heard or supporting a participant who may have less of a sense of power in the group.

The decision of when to intervene is a difficult one. It is basically a function of the following factors:
- Importance of the issue
    – Potential positive/negative impact on task
    – Potential positive /negative impact on relationships/climate
        (the relationships between participants and between them and you)
- Potential for it to resolve or occur by itself
- Availability of time for the intervention
- Likelihood of success

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 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.

   - 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?*** 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.**

Types of Questions & Question Pitfalls

Open questions: expansive, only specifying a topic, allows the respondent considerable freedom in determining the amount and kind of information to provide

 Highly open
  Reactions?
  What do you think about this approach?

 Moderately open
  What do you like about this approach?
  What values might people have who support this position?
  How might your concerns differ if you were wealthy?
  What is there about this approach that you cannot accept?

Open questions are designed to generate longer responses that include more explanation. When you want people to explain their reasoning or offer examples, open-ended questions can help signal that you are looking for a longer response.

Closed questions: narrowly focused questions
 Bipolar questions: Questions limited to two polar choices
  Are you a conservative or a liberal?
  Do you agree or disagree with the President's position on same-sex marriage?
  Are you for or against the gun control bill?

 Yes/No Bipolar questions: questions that ask for yes or no responses

  Have you voted?

  Can anyone think of something constructive that might come from the approach that is receiving so much criticism?

  If we weren't in an economic crisis, would you prefer this approach?

  Could you share a story to illustrate that point?

Closed questions have a short answer. Sometimes you might want to get a quick reaction from people. For example, you may want to do a quick round to get everyone talking or see where everyone is at. A close-ended question can help signal that you want brief answers.

Categories of probing questions

Nudging probes: a question that literally nudges someone to reply or continue

> Yes?
> Go on.
> And?
> So?
> Uh-huh?

Informational probes: questions designed to get more explanation or information

> Explain what you mean by efficient government.
> For example?

Restatement probes: restating the original question if someone misses the purpose of a question or does not answer it (or some portion)

> **Facilitator**: How do you feel about the proposed "new terrain" route for the I-69 extension compared to using I-70?
> **Participant**: It is all pork barrel spending.
> **Facilitator**: And how do you feel about the proposed routes for the I-69 extension?

Challenge probe: tries to get a participant to see another perspective, deal with a tension/trade-off

> How might someone make the case against what you said?

> Would you still support approach C even if you had to give up some of your personal freedoms?

> If more funding was allocated to childcare programs, what other programs would alternatively suffer?

> How would you address the concern that lower childcare costs might also lower the quality?

All of these different probes are ways that you can get someone to continue talking and nudge them in a particular direction. These questions aren't introducing a new topic as much as they are deepening or redirecting a specific speaker or topic of discussion.

Potential Pitfalls

With all of these generic types of questions, there are particular types of pitfalls that facilitators can fall into. We'll introduce the general category of pitfall with examples before explaining why this pitfall is particularly problematic for a facilitator.

Leading questions: questions that suggest the answer expected or desired because the questioner leads the respondent to a particular answer

How do you feel about the ridiculous, politically correct school curriculum?

So you think that we should just build the bridge even if it destroys the nature preserve?

These extreme examples make it easy to see why leading questions violate the impartial stance of a facilitator. Leading questions often make participants feel as though they are being trapped or words are being put in their mouth. Deliberation aims to be a safe space where different perspectives are honored and explored. Leading questions suggest that certain opinions are not worthy of consideration. This can silence certain voices. Sometimes facilitators do want to set up tensions or play the devil's advocate. The challenge is to do this without belittling another perspective or making it seem unreasonable.

Binary trap: when you ask a question designed to elicit a yes or no answer when you really want a detailed answer or specific information. (Hint: Avoid do, can, have, would, and will. Use what, why, how, explain, tell me about, and help me understand).

Could you illustrate how this issue is touching the lives of most of us in this community?

Is there a downside to this course of action?

Do you approve or disapprove of heightened security at the airport?

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

As mentioned above, not all closed questions are bad. Sometimes you want a yes or no answer. But if you are trying to solicit a longer explanation for WHY people think a particular, bipolar traps can solicit the wrong information. Sometimes people will respond to bi-polar traps with a longer explanation, but research shows that this phrasing is more likely to solicit short responses or even confusion.

Open-to-closed switch: When you ask an open question but before anyone can respond you rephrase it to a closed question

Tell me about your experiences as a single parent. Was it hard?

Sometimes when you ask a closed question people still provide long answers. But research shows that the way that you ask the question does influence the type of response that is offered. If you are looking for someone to provide a longer story, don't cut it off by asking a simple yes/no question.

Double-barreled questions: when you ask two or more questions at the same time instead of a single, precise question

Facilitators sometimes rephrase a question multiple ways in order to make sure that everyone understands the question and to give people a moment to think of an answer. Nonetheless, sometimes facilitators get nervous and start asking a series of different questions that would all take the conversation in a different direction. The problem is that participants don't know which question to answer. In turn, when someone starts to speak it can be confusing to know which question they are responding to. Rephrasing a question can be ok (e.g. what do you appreciate about this approach? What do you like about it?), but be careful not to offer more than one question (e.g. what do you appreciate about this approach? What do you dislike about this approach? What are your general reactions to this approach? What do you think needs to be changed?)

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?

General Questions to Encourage Deliberation Cheat Sheet

- I understand you do not like that position, but what do you think people who favor it deeply care about?

- How would someone make a case against what you said?

- What is there about this approach that you just cannot accept?

- How may your ideas affect other people?

- Can someone suggest areas that we seem to have in common?

- Would someone identify the values that seem to be clashing? What is really happening here?

- What perspectives don't seem to be represented in our group, and what might they add if they were here?

- If we followed this course of action, what would be the effects, positive and negative, on your life?

- What values might people hold who support this position?

- Can anyone envision how their life would change if this approach became official policy?

- What are the consequences of what you said? Do they make a difference?

- How might your concerns differ if you were (poor/wealthy)?

- How do you separate what is a private matter from a public matter in this issue?

Other favorites?

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). We tend to you Ground Rules, other processes may use guidelines, covenants, norms, protocols based on the desire to get away from "rules" which are perceived as imposed or they want to emphasize mutuality of the behavioral understandings, i.e. covenants**.** Ideally, the groups come up with the rules themselves through a process, but we often don't have the time to do that. 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.

Moderators find it useful to ask the group to ratify these rules verbally or by a show of hands rather than just announcing them. A wide variety of potential ground rules to deliberation exist (see the list of "ground rules" used by various deliberative techniques at the end), 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.

Basic Ground Rules

- **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.

Moderating the Welcome

The manner in which any particular forum begins is an open question to be answered by those planning the forum. These are some potential elements that could be incorporated into the welcome portion of the forum.

Overall, the welcome should be rather short. Participants are there to talk to each other, not listen to the organizers. Provide enough background to explain the process and goals for the meeting, but otherwise move quickly into the process.

Potential components of a welcome:

- Introduce your team

- Thank sponsors

- Thank participants

- Explain any logistics (bathrooms, refreshments, etc.)

- Explain Deliberation

    - Define

    - Compare "politics as usual" and deliberation

    - Compare debate and deliberation

- Address the "so what" question and the goals of the event.

- Explain what information will be captured and what will be done with the information.

- Preview structure of the forum

- Go over ground rules and garner buy in from participants (see p. 64)

- Explain the roles of the facilitator and notetakers

- Encourage and Answer questions

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 think you would tell [insert most relevant decision-maker here, such as "school superintendent," "governor," "city council," etc.] if they were here right now?"

Ideally, after the forum everyone should be able to...

- Identify the range of realistic alternatives and move toward a choice;
- Make a good case for those positions one dislikes as well as the position one likes, and consider choices one has not considered before;
- Understand others have reasons for their choices and that their reasons are very interesting—not dumb, unreasonable, or immoral;
- Realize one's own knowledge is not complete until one understands why others feel the way they do about the choices;
- Consider the underlying values of each choice; and leave the forum/study circle "thinking hard" over the choices.

Other Considerations about Ending a Forum

If practitioners are planning on completing a report for the forum, they should consider the goals and audience of that report as they put together the forum, especially the reflections period. Particular questions that would be useful for the report could be asked then.

It may also be useful to include a written survey to be completed at the end of the forum to capture additional information. Most NIF books include post-forum questionnaires at the end of the book.

Lastly, it may be useful to use "dot" voting at the end of the forum. We often provide each participant with 5 dot stickers, and explain they can place the dots next to any statements they strongly agree with at the end of the forum. We allow them to put all dots on one if they prefer, or they can spread them out. That provides the reporter with additional information concerning the preferences of the group that can be helpful.