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**Set-Up/Introduction**

The introduction sets the tone for the entire conversation, and the facilitator or convener should spend five to seven minutes setting up the discussion and covering the following items:

* Purpose of and structure of a forum
* What deliberation is and why it matters
* The role of the facilitator
* Ground rules for the forum (see the Deliberative Facilitator Cheat Sheet with some specific suggestions)

Kettering research shows that when participants understand what deliberation is, they are more likely to reconsider their own views, listen to others, and keep an open mind throughout the forum. That is, the forum is likely to be more deliberative.

Being clear about the facilitator’s role at the start can also help mitigate potential problems later. The facilitator should be impartial about the subject matter while simultaneously pushing the group to be as deliberative as possible and guiding participants through the forum process. Since participants should take ownership over their own deliberations, it can be helpful to request that participants direct their comments to one another, rather than to the facilitator. This simple direction at the beginning can help de-centralize the role of facilitator and enable a more organic deliberation.

Setting ground rules and asking everyone to commit to them is another important way to mitigate potential problems later. The facilitator should suggest some ground rules(see the Deliberative Facilitator Cheat Sheet). Participants should understand their purpose and feel ownership over them.

**Personal Stake**

The personal stake portion of the forum grounds the deliberation in the experiences of participants and serves two primary functions. The first is simply to increase participation and set the pattern of listening to each other’s ideas and experiences right up front. The second is to generate a set of stories for the group to refer to as policy choices are deliberated. Ensuring there is sufficient time for personal stake is an incredibly important component of a successful forum and the forum schedule should be adjusted to allow for more time if the topic is particularly personal/salient. See the Deliberative Facilitator Cheat Sheetfor some specific questions to consider.

**Discussion of the Options**

Perhaps one of the most important jobs of a deliberative facilitator is to insure that participants take a close look at each of the options along with its benefits and trade-offs. Both the issue guide and issue advisory offer a general description of each option, along with specific proposals that may accompany it. To the degree possible, the group should spend equal amounts of time with each option and talk about the specific policy ideas connected to it.

Some moderators open the deliberations on each option by asking: “Tell me something you like about this option—how it could help solve the problem-- and something that worries you about the option—something that might go wrong?

Kettering research shows there are some key moments when the facilitator should intervene such as:

* People are sharing their personal stories, but the group does not move on to looking at the options—at what can be done to address the problem.
* Everyone quickly agrees with or rejects one of the options.
* Not enough attention is being paid to the cost, trade-offs, and difficulties of an option or action.
* One or two individuals are dominating.
* Extending the conversation about the option would mean giving short shrift to the others or to the closing reflections.

What are some good questions to ask if you need to intervene?

* “What would opponents (or supporters) of this option say?”
* “Do you know anyone who would like (or dislike) this option? What would that person say?”
* Thinking about your community or the nation as a whole, what would we need to consider to find common ground and a basis for change?
* Use the issue guide to introduce alternate points of view. You don’t need to “play devil’s advocate” yourself. Doing so can make some participants worry that you are taking a position on the issue or trying to persuade them of a particular point of view.

**Closing Reflections**

The reflection portion of a forum serves many important functions in a deliberation and should not be cut short due to time constraints. When facilitating an A Public Voice 2018 forum, the following areas for reflection should be prioritized:

1. Revisiting some of the overall tensions among the options. Now that people have talked about all of them, how has their thinking changed?
2. Giving participants the chance to identify common ground, but equally important—identifying areas where people want and need to think about more, areas where there are tensions, areas where people have questions.
3. Giving people a chance to think about what kinds of changes they may want to make in their own lives and thinking, changes their communities could act on, and changes they want elected officials and other policymakers to address.

There are some specific questions for closing reflections in the Coming to America issue guide and in the Deliberative Facilitator Cheat Sheet available for download.

Other questions that may be helpful include:

1. Now that we have deliberated, are there ideas or viewpoints you hadn’t considered before?
2. Can you identify any tensions that came up during the forum? What questions remain? What work do we still need to do?
3. How has what you heard affected your thinking? What could you do? What could the community do? About what we want our elected officials in Washington to do?