NORTH CAROLINA LEADERSHIP FORUM AT DUKE

BUILDING A BRIDGE TO CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT

A PLAYBOOK: BUILDING CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT AMONG STATE AND LOCAL POLICY LEADERS

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What is a Leadership Forum, and what are the goals of NCLF?

Chapter One: *What is a Leadership Forum, and what are the goals of NCLF?*

A state Leadership Forum prepares that state's policy leaders to engage with each other constructively across partisan, ideological, and other differences. The goal is for these leaders to enhance their collective capacity to develop and adopt sound and broadly accepted approaches that address significant public issues for the benefit of the people of the state (or regions within the state).

The North Carolina Leadership Forum (NCLF) was founded in 2015 by a bipartisan group of experienced leaders in partnership with the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. Our participants are 30-36 policy leaders per cohort whom we bring together to address a serious and complex problem facing the state or region. They are Republicans, Democrats, and unaffiliated; they come from urban, exurban, and rural parts of the state; they are men and women of multiple races and ethnicities; and they are leaders in government, business, and nonprofit organizations. We include leaders from the business and non-profit sectors, not just elected and appointed government leaders, because they play a critical role in shaping public policy and in determining the nature of policy-making deliberation. Forum participants are all leaders.

NCLF takes a deep-dive approach. We do not believe that the relationships, understanding, and skills we seek to develop can happen in a single morning or over a single meal. Over the course of four day-long or two-day sessions, NCLF participants, guided by our facilitation, dive into what influenced the participants to be the people that they are, their concerns and values related to the issue that the Forum will address, and the actions they propose to address the concerns they have. The group then determines which of those actions are the most important to discuss further, and delves into the benefits and inherent downsides of each of them. They focus on the importance the participants attach to the benefits and whether they can tolerate the downsides.

While NCLF embraces the areas of consensus, we spend the most time enabling Forum participants to dig into what lies under their differences. They discuss what experiences, messages, and values led them to appraise the most polarized actions so differently.

As of 2023, NCLF has approximately 400 alumni who are influential elected and appointed government officials, leaders of businesses impacted by public policy, and leaders of nonprofits that engage in public policy related work. As of 2024, we have convened eight statewide cohorts of leaders on topics ranging from education to health care to energy policy, and we have conducted four additional multi-county regional cohorts on access to adequate housing.

NCLF's immediate goal is to develop a critical mass of policy leaders who have the will, the skills, and the relationships they need to engage with each other constructively across party and other lines of difference. We do not merely aim for civility. While being civil and polite is important, almost all of these leaders already know how to be polite if they want to be. Our aim is to enable them to go beyond civility to meaningful engagement with each other on the important, complex policy issues that are faced by the State and its regions.

- These leaders need the **will** to do it. That is, they need to be motivated to listen to the views of people who disagree with them and to speak with an array of people candidly before they decide whether and how to move forward. They need to be willing to do this throughout deliberative processes.

- These leaders need the **skills** to do it. That is, they need to be able to engage in active listening — listening with a goal of understanding the views of other people, including those who have different perspectives, as opposed to listening in order to rebut them. They need to listen with curiosity and without prejudgment. Leaders also need the skills and courage to express their own honest views in a way that even people who disagree can hear.

- These leaders need the **relationships** to do it. That is, they need to have trust-based relationships with leaders of other parties and perspectives with whom they can engage in a candid and productive way.

In the long run, NCLF’s aim is not only to build the capacity for constructive engagement among the individual leaders who are alumni of NCLF. It is also to change the political ecosystem of our democracy, decreasing counterproductive polarization and bickering, and replacing them with norms of constructive engagement and deliberation. To do this, NCLF aims to build a critical mass of leaders at the state and local level who are committed to constructive engagement and deliberation.

Specifically, by 2030, NCLF’s goal for North Carolina is to have a thousand alumni who are policy leaders with the will and the skills, and the relationships and networks of leaders with whom they are able to engage constructively. We believe a thousand leaders will be able to change the norms of the policy making process of the State.

This is the bridge to constructive engagement.

CHAPTER TWO

Before You Start

Chapter Two : *Before You Start*

If your state or region is considering building a State or Regional Leadership Forum, or basing a program on the NC Leadership Forum model, here are some important questions to ask before you decide whether to proceed.

First, does your state or region need this program? Unless leaders in your area perceive the need for the program, you will have a hard time getting the participants and resources needed for it to be successful. In particular,

- Is there a close-to-even partisan division among voters in your area? Is the policy-making environment fractious? Is the grassroots politically polarized? If the answer to one or more of these is yes, here's the follow-up question: is the division, fractiousness, or polarization preventing leaders from being able engage with each other constructively to adopt sound and widely supported ways of addressing problems or creating opportunities?

- If there is not a partisan divide, is there some other difference in ideology, perspective, or faction that gets in the way of sound policy development? There could be, for example, a racial, ethnic, or urban-rural division, or factions within the dominant party.[1]

- Does your state or region already have a similar program addressed to policy leaders? If so, why do you need another one? Would a Leadership Forum add something that is different? Perhaps it would be more long-term, or would focus on a broader or more diverse group of leaders.

[1] Note, for the rest of this manual, we will assume that the division you are trying to bridge is partisan, but the same principles will apply if you are trying to build a bridge between other kinds of factions.

Second, is there cross-partisan commitment to establishing the program?

A Leadership Forum is not likely to succeed if there is not equal representation from the major political parties. That cross-partisan commitment needs to be there from the beginning. It is not easy to persuade leaders to commit a significant amount of their time to this kind of program. Unless they believe it is an effort led in part by people on their own “team,” it will be even harder. High-level leaders do not want to feel like they are being invited to someone else’s dance, and if they feel like tokens in the other side’s effort, they will not trust the process.

In addition, people in different political parties think and perceive things differently. Your organizers will make better decisions about how to proceed from the beginning if people who understand these differences are at the planning table.

As an example, NCLF spoke privately with leaders from both parties to explore whether there was interest and support before moving forward with its effort. Some people privately expressed strong interest and support, and some expressed reservations. Both were important to hear. If members of only one party had been interested and not the other, we would not have continued to develop the program.

For similar reasons, there must be trusted and respected leaders from the two major parties who are willing to be the public face of the program.

This will be needed for you to be able to recruit participants, have credibility with the public, and convince funders to provide you with the resources you need. The leaders who are the public face of the Forum do not have to be engaged in the day-to-day effort to develop the program as long as they are truly on board, understand the program, and make meaningful endorsements as needed. So, for example, the NC Leadership Forum started with Democrat and Republican co-chairs and steering committee members who were respected thought leaders from both parties, and we have continued to have past Republican and Democratic NC Governors and the Duke University President sign the invitation letter to our participants.

Third, is there an institutional home that can provide administrative, operational, and other support? Ideally, being hosted by this institution will also provide credibility to the program.

The right institution will give your organization credibility. Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy gave NCLF support from its beginning by providing expertise, helping develop and staff the program, and providing other in-kind support. Not only did NCLF get a lot of practical help, good ideas, and leadership by becoming a program of Duke, we also got a big credibility boost. There was confidence that Duke would not run a shoddy program. It was prestigious to participate in a Duke program. Foundations trusted Duke as a grant recipient. You don't have to have an institution that can give you all these benefits, but it is helpful to get some of them.

A caveat: If you are housed within an existing institution, it needs to be one perceived as politically neutral. It should not be known, for example, as a progressive advocacy organization or conservative think tank. All the people you are going to invite to participate, to help, and to fund you need to be able to trust that basic neutrality.

Practice tip: You will need to have the capacity to send out mail and email, enter into contracts with venues and caterers and pay them, create a website, enlist experts to help you in various ways, and receive donations and grants. You should consider whether it would be better for you to have an institutional home to do this instead of creating a new nonprofit organization and obtaining tax exempt status.

Fourth, can you acquire the resources you will need to cover the out-of-pocket costs and necessary staff to run the program?

A Leadership Forum is not a very expensive program to run, but there are operational and administrative costs, and you will at least need some ongoing administrative help. If you decide to do this on an ongoing basis, you will need a program director.

The costs will include venues, food, and lodging (if participants need to spend the night or you do multi-day meetings). There will be some printing, and you might want to pay some experts to gather data for you and put together a data presentation. If you do not have volunteer facilitators, you will need to pay two to four facilitators to run about five days of meetings per cohort. There should also be some funds available for assessment and evaluation. If you don't get any of this donated to you, you should count on spending about $125,000-$150,000 for an initial program. Of course, this will vary depending on your location.

It is not advisable to plan to charge leaders to participate in the program. Most elected officials are significantly underpaid, and you don't want their decisions about whether to participate to be a financial decision. Also, many nonprofits do not have a budget that can support participation in this kind of program. In addition, you don't want to feel beholden to the businesses that can afford to pay for their leaders to come. If participants contribute their time and pay for their own transportation, that is enough to assure buy-in.

Will you be able to find in-kind donations or raise the necessary funds from local philanthropies or other donors to support you in getting this program off the ground?

Fifth, think through who needs to buy into the program for it to succeed in your state or region. Will you be able to get them to lend their names? If not, will you be able to get them to be neutral?

You should have a pair of red and blue co-chairs who are respected leaders in your area as the face of the program and a few highly respected past or current leaders who will serve on your steering committee or will lend their names to the effort. In addition, consider whom else it would be helpful to have buy-in before you decide to go forward. This might be, for example, the current governor or legislative leadership. For a regional program, it could be county board chairs or mayors of the major cities. These leaders will lend credibility, and they can be important in encouraging participants to attend. You might also want to seek the support of your local philanthropies — or a pair of progressive and conservative philanthropies. Who are the local thought leaders who you would like to have on your side to enable the Forum to be a success?

Another approach is to think through who could sink the program if they think the program will be a waste of time or counterproductive. Who is influential and who needs to be at least neutral? The editor of the local newspaper? The head of the community foundation? The state or local party leadership?

This will be different in every state and region.

Once you have your list of influential people, divide it into the ones you need to have supporting you and the ones that you need, at least, to be neutral. Will you be able to persuade those people?

When you can answer all five of these questions "Yes!" (or even "Probably"), then you are ready to move forward.

CHAPTER THREE

Getting Going

Chapter Three: *Getting Going*

When you are ready to start a cohort, there are three things you will need to do to get going: recruit a steering committee, choose a topic, and select participants.

A. Recruiting a steering committee

It is good to have a steering committee of six to ten publicly respected leaders who are representative of the geographic area you will be serving, have a good sense of group process, are diverse by party, sector, and gender, race and ethnicity, and are reliable. The steering committee will need to be able to perform four main functions.

Select Topic
- First, they will help select the topic.

Select Participants
- Second, they will help select and recruit participants.

Help Facilitate
- Third, they might serve as facilitators, or help to recruit facilitators. In the case of NCLF, for the most part, the steering committee facilitates the statewide programs, but we contract with others to facilitate regional programs. If you want steering committee members to serve as facilitators, they need to already have those skills or have the aptitude to learn them, and you need to determine whether your steering committee will facilitate as volunteers or need compensation.

Give Feedback
- Fourth, during the program they will be extra eyes and ears to understand how the participants are reacting, will give the facilitators feedback on how the program is going, and can reach out participants as needed. We often also ask steering committee members to serve as "table captains" and help facilitate small group discussions.

B. Choosing a topic

Each Leadership Forum focuses on a topic that is considered important to a wide array of people in your state or region, is controversial, and is currently being publicly discussed.

People of different parties or ideologies should have different views about the nature of the problem and its best solutions. At least some of the differences should be principled (though some of the differences can stem from having different experiences or perspectives.)

1. People of different parties or ideologies should have different views about the nature of the problem and its best solutions. At least some of the differences should be principled (though some of the differences can stem from having different experiences or perspectives.)

2. It should be an ongoing, systemic, persistent problem that is difficult to solve.

3. It should be intractable because it involves tensions between things held valuable, its solutions involve trade-offs, and its solutions require multiple actors.

4. It should be complex enough to sustain a discussion over several months.

5. The issue should be neutrally stated. You should not have values embedded in the question.

6. The topic should not primarily have a technical solution (in the sense that an expert can tell you the best solution: e.g. of what material should the new bridge be made?)

7. The topic should not be primarily educational, in the sense that what is needed is more study or public information.

8. It should not be so factually complex that the amount of time needed to understand the facts enough to have a deep discussion will interfere with the group's having enough time to have a sustained opinion-based discussion.

9. The issue statement should be intentionally broad, but not so broad that there is no way to present enough context for the group to focus. The group can narrow it by using the process to decide which of their concerns are the most important for further deliberation.

Here are some of the topics NCLF has focused on so far:

- What can we do to enable more North Carolinians to earn enough to support their families?
- What would be the best energy future for North Carolina?
- What is the best way to pay for state government?
- How can we increase access to adequate housing?

C. Selecting Participants

1. Size of the group: A Leadership Forum cohort should be between 30 and 36 people. If you have fewer than 30 you will not be able to get broad enough representation of the many kinds of leaders involved in your state or region's policymaking process. Also, there will inevitably be absences, and you want a big enough group to be able to function well even if a few people are missing. On the other hand, if the group is larger than 36, it's hard to give everyone the opportunity to put their voices in the room and to get to know everyone else in the group, and people may feel like their presence does not matter.

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2. Stick to leaders: This is a program for people who are currently policy leaders. It is not a program for aspiring leaders, or people with leadership potential. The goal is to have an impact on the policymaking process now. Also, if you want to decrease polarization broadly in your state or community, it is important to have leaders modeling constructive engagement.

Usually, you want the CEOs of businesses or nonprofit organizations, or the elected or appointed officials themselves. People will ask if they can send someone lower down the chain in their organization. They will ask if they can send the staff member who has technical expertise on your topic. The answer should almost always be "no." Having leaders in the room produces a different level of conversation with greater understanding of broad community values and what the trade-offs of various proposed actions are. Also, we have observed that these top leaders have very little opportunity to talk with each other in a way that is not transactional, and this time together is valuable to them. Leaders will be reluctant to participate if they do not believe they will be among a group of peers. You want these leaders to feel like it is prestigious to be asked to participate.

3. Categories of leaders to include: The goal is to have a participant group that reflects the array of characteristics of the policy leaders of your state.

a. It is most important for the group to be balanced by party. Participants need to feel like everyone is on equal footing, and that no one is in the political minority or, even worse, feels like a token.

b. Elected and appointed officials are not the only people involved in the policymaking process of your state. Leaders of businesses impacted by policy decisions, and leaders of policy-focused nonprofits also play significant roles. The group should be about 30-40% elected or appointed government leaders and the remainder evenly split between business and nonprofit leaders.

c. Geographic representation is also important. Include people from around the state or, for a region, from every county or political subdivision. Make sure that there are urban, suburban, exurban, and rural residents in the room.

d. The group should generally reflect your state's or region's demographics in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender. People of different genders, races and ethnicities bring a range of perspectives and experiences into the room as they do into policy debates. You do not need to be rigid about this. When you break into small groups, it is good if there is enough gender, racial and ethnic diversity that no one feels like he or she is expected to represent the viewpoint of his or her whole group.

e. While it is helpful to have some people in the room who are experts on the topic, not everyone needs to be an expert. If you are discussing an education topic, for example, you might want the chair of the Education Appropriations Committee, a school district superintendent, the chair of a school board, and the president of the teachers' association. They will bring nuance to the discussion and keep it grounded in reality. But you don't want those experts to dominate the room. Leaders of other kinds of organizations, or those with different perspectives, bring the broader concerns and values of the community, priorities across issues, and a deeper sense of political realities to the conversation. You want some of both, and generally not more than half of your leaders should be subject-matter experts. You can always bring in a speaker to educate the group on the relevant data, trends, and constraints if you need to.

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4. Determining the group's ideological span: Within each party there is a broad ideological spread, and the ideological spread of the parties should be represented in the room. That said, you don't want people who are so far on the edge that they will come into the room wanting to blow up the conversation. They have to at least be open to the idea of hearing the concerns and ideas of people they disagree with. On the other hand, you don't want your group to be largely made up of people in the middle, or people who are easy to get along with, are quick to compromise, and already work well across the aisle. If you have too many centrists, or people who are politically unaffiliated, participants will not have the chance to listen to, learn from, and accept points of view that are really very different from their own. On a 1-10 scale, from conservative to progressive, try to have participants from 2-9, and not too many 4-6's.

5. Considerations about age: You are trying to create a critical mass of people who are leaders in policymaking in your state and have the will, skills, and relationships they need to engage constructively across differences. To get there, your participants generally should not be former somethings, they should be current somethings. To build the critical mass, you want people who you think will still be leaders, perhaps in a different role, ten years from now. Within those constraints, it is good to have participants that span a few decades in age. It can be hard to identify people in their 20s and early 30s who are already leaders, not aspiring leaders. But they are out there, and they have an important different voice that should be brought into the room. It's worth the effort to look for them. If you want to include a few retired or former leaders, be conscious of your reason for doing so.

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6. How to build a participant pool: There are many good ways to select participants. The NC Leadership Forum is by invitation only. We don't have the capacity to do an open application/nomination process. In addition, the kind of leaders we want as participants are unlikely to apply or nominate themselves. We think we are more likely to get them to participate if they have been invited. At the beginning, the steering committee can put together a list of nominees from people they know or know about. It should be 60 to 70 people so you can end up with a group that is balanced and includes all the desired categories. Once you have alumni, it is helpful to ask them to make nominations. Alumni have a good idea of who would benefit from, and contribute to, the program. Then, using the guidelines above, the steering committee should pick your 30-36 from these nominations. Include in your number count any steering committee members who have never been participants in a Forum and are not going to be facilitators.

7. Inviting participants: Once you have the 30-36 people you are going to invite, it is preferable to invite them in several ways. Send them a letter that is signed by the co-chairs and three to five respected, influential, politically diverse people (e.g., former governors from both parties) and Email this letter to them, and email it to their administrative assistants if you can. This, however, does not guarantee that they will even see the letter, much less understand what they are being invited to. To get them to accept, someone they either know or respect should reach out to them in the way it is most likely that your message will be seen, offering to have a conversation about the program. An additional effective way to reach out is to ask Leadership Forum alumni to contact invitees asking them to be on the lookout for the invitation, and encouraging them to accept the invitation and to fully participate.

All of these leaders are busy people, so the goal of the contact is to persuade them that it will be worth their time to participate. The caller should explain the goal of the program, its selectiveness ("we are only inviting important leaders"), and what you think they will get out of it.

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8. Get a commitment to attend: In addition to getting your invitees to agree to participate, you need to make it clear that you want participants to commit to attend every meeting. Send the invitation out a couple of months before you plan to start, including the dates of the meetings. Repeat the details of the meeting expectations and timing frequency. Many leaders accept invitations under the assumption that they can attend portions of a meeting, or attend a few out of a series of sessions. Emphasizing the need for meaningful participation in a sustained set of long meetings over several months is particularly important.

This program loses its power if people drop in and out, come late, and leave early. You are trying to enable them to build relationships, and each session builds on the last. Each session is very participatory. It is demoralizing to the people who show up for there to be a lot of people missing. The voice of every person you invite is important to have in the room.

There is very little they will need to do in between meetings, but they must agree to prioritize attendance at the sessions.

Even given this rule, some participants will have no choice but to miss a meeting (e.g., they are sick, or have a critical meeting that they do not have the ability to change). Have a plan for how you will bring along participants who know they cannot attend a session or miss a session at the last minute.

Once you have your group of leaders committed to participating, you are ready to start planning your sessions.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Flow of the Program

Chapter Four: *The Flow of the Program*

A Leadership Forum is a deep-dive program, not just a shared meal or a one-day affair. The program typically lasts four sessions, including at least one overnight session. You might need more, depending on how far participants need to travel. There should be about 30 hours of programming, not counting meals, breaks, field trips, and social time.

The goals of each session are to:

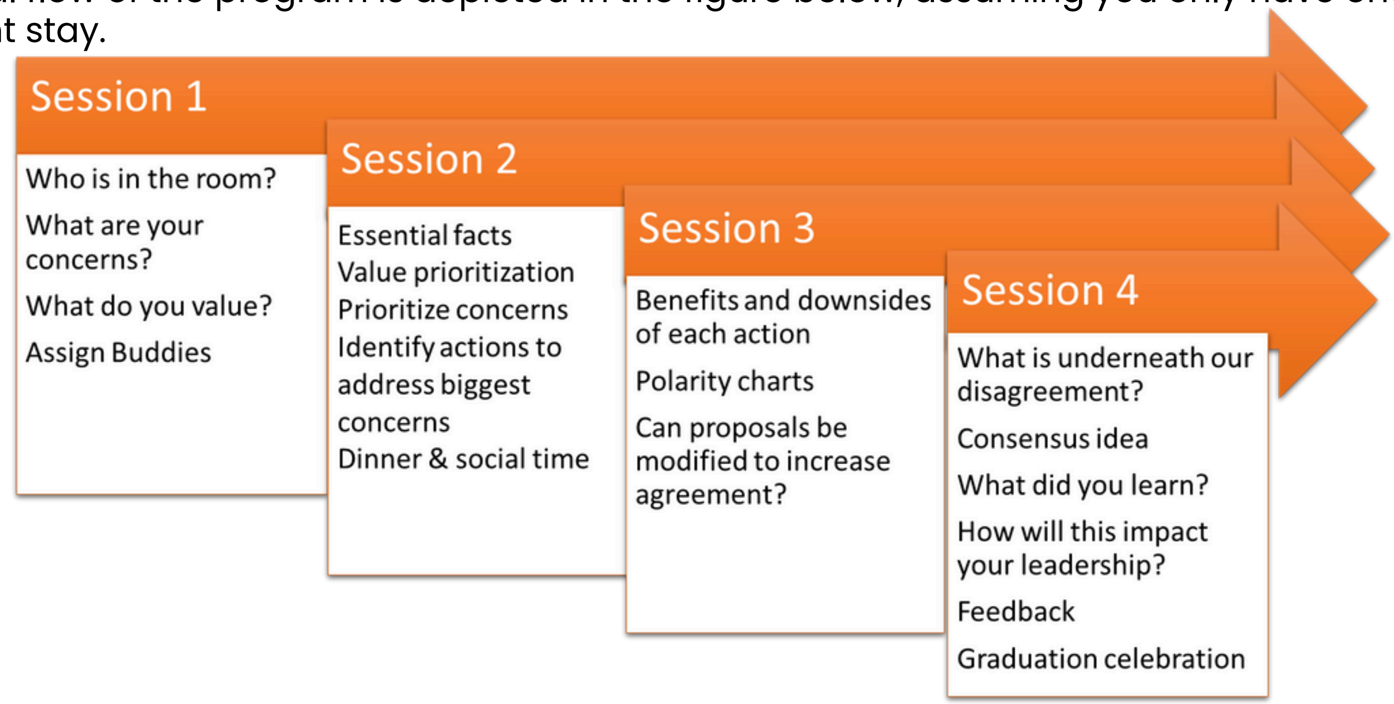
Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3
• Enable particiapnts to build trust relationships broadly across the group	• Increase understanding of and deliberate on the policy issue on which the Forum is focused	• Increase participants' breadth of understanding about the state or region in which you are working.

These three goals are integrated into every session and most exercises are designed to promote both discussion of the topic and relationship-building.

Resist the urge to shorten the time and number of meetings. If anything, aim to meet for longer. You will need a lot of time to deliver this program effectively. People need time to build trust with others very different from themselves, and participants can't delve deeply into a complex topic if you rush through the discussions.

In addition to the scheduled program time there needs to be unstructured time, including an overnight stay, so that people can learn more about each other personally, seek out participants they'd like to get to know better, or follow up on conversations that were started in the full group. Open, unstructured time can lead to some of the best relationship-building and provides a space for interaction many participants don't have in other parts of their daily lives. An overnight session provides an opportunity to get to know the city or area where you are meeting and gives participants time for offline conversations over dinner and afterwards.

The usual flow of the program is depicted in the figure below, assuming you only have one overnight stay.



The exact program flow is not intended to be rigid. Sample agendas for a four-day program with one overnight can be found in Appendix 1.

CHAPTER FIVE

Setting the Stage

Chapter Five: *Setting the Stage*

The goal of every convening of a Leadership Forum is to provide a place where participants can articulate their authentic views, hear the various views of the other participants, understand what is underneath the views of the people with whom they disagree, and form authentic trust relationships with people with whom they disagree — even when they disagree very fundamentally. It is the responsibility of leaders and facilitators to create and sustain a place where participants are likely to achieve those goals. There are several key elements to setting the stage for that.

CLARIFY PURPOSE: DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING, NOT ACT AS A BLUE-RIBBON COMMISSION

Participants must understand that the primary purpose of the Leadership Forum is to build relationships and deepen understanding of other perspectives for the long-term, not solve a problem immediately. In order to create a political environment in which policy leaders engage constructively across ideology and other differences to solve problems and create opportunities, their understanding of each other must be deep enough to allow them to form trust relationships. This requires a deep dive process. This is not a blue-ribbon commission which brings experts and stakeholders together to, as efficiently as possible, find points of consensus for an agreed-on action plan.

The people in the room are invited to the Forum primarily because they are leaders, not because of their technical expertise, even though some of them will have technical expertise which will help the group get deeper into the topic. The Forum process is not designed to be efficient. It takes time for people to warm up to getting to the heart of the matter. While you should be conscious of not wasting participants' time, they should know they will have enough time to really talk and to listen with curiosity.

Most importantly, while inevitably there will be some actions about which there is a consensus that will be in a report, producing a cogent, comprehensive action plan is not the goal of a Leadership Forum. Instead, any report you release should read more like a description of the proceedings. For an example of a report that shows actions with various degrees of consensus and disagreement, see http://sites.duke.edu/nclf/cohort-6-revenue.

Many participants will find this stated purpose counterintuitive. We recommend repeating the purpose throughout the program, particularly at the start of each meeting.

GROUND RULES:

In addition to making sure all the participants know the goals and understand that it is not a blue-ribbon commission, it is important to establish ground rules that the participants buy into. Setting ground rules creates a place where leaders are willing to articulate and hear authentic views. These may include the usual rules of any constructive convening, but they should always include the following:

1. FORUMS USE THE CHATHAM HOUSE RULE

Participants should be urged to take advantage of the opportunity to speak candidly. A primary way the Leadership Forum encourages participant to do this is by operating under the **Chatham House Rule:**

When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

Having participants agree to abide by the Chatham House Rule is core to enabling public leaders to speak candidly without fear that they will be quoted outside the room or that their views will be lampooned in social media. In all the years NCLF has been offering programs, to our knowledge, no one has been quoted or had their opinions revealed outside the room to their detriment. This is critical to the success of the program.

2. ATTENDANCE IS IMPORTANT

An agreement to prioritize in-person attendance at all of the meetings should be a condition of participation in the program. There will be only four or five meetings, and they build on each other. People will not benefit from the program if they do not participate consistently. In addition, it is not fair to their fellow participants if they drop in and out, losing the train of the conversation as they come and go. An incomplete group is demoralizing to those who are present. Also, your group will be carefully balanced, and if some participants do not come, the group loses its balance.

Occasionally someone will know from the beginning that they will need to miss a part of the program. If they can't be at the first meeting, you should defer them to participate in a future cohort of the Forum. If they know they will need to miss one meeting, and you really want them to participate, you will need to use your judgment about whether to accept that. But if they know from the start they will need to miss more than one meeting, they should not be part of the group.

Of course, emergencies arise that are not in the participant's control. They or their dependents might get sick, or they might be the subject of a non-negotiable appearance before a judicial or governing body. But if they plausibly can be, they should be committed to making it a priority to be there. For people who miss a meeting, have a back-up plan for how you will follow-up and keep them included in the group. For example, often a steering committee member or a participant's buddy can catch them up one-on-one between meetings.

3. PARTICIPANTS SHOULD AVOID SELF-CENSORING

From the beginning, participants should be encouraged to avoid self-censorship. People cannot hear or understand the views of people who disagree with them if they cannot hear the truth. Of course, lying is one way to obscure the truth. But in these programs, a more common problem is self-censorship. Leaders are so afraid of the consequences of saying something unintentionally offensive, or ill-thought through, or which could be used to skewer them, that it is safer to say something anodyne — or nothing at all. Our leaders should be encouraged to take advantage of this place and time, where negative consequences are unlikely, by practicing talking without self-censoring.

4. SAVE YOUR CELL PHONE AND OTHER DEVICES FOR THE BREAKS

All of these leaders have busy lives, and they will be tempted to look at cellphones and other devices during the day. Because paying attention to what others are saying is such an important part of the process, this habit should be explicitly unacceptable. The agenda should build in breaks that can be used for checking emails, texts, etc., or to make a quick phone call. Also, lunch should be long enough that participants can both eat and have a bit of time to respond to the morning's communications. It is important to stick to the agenda for these breaks so that people can plan a phone call or Zoom during lunch or a break if they need to.

A sample set of ground rules can be found in Appendix 2.

ACTIVE LISTENING

One of the skills that NCLF teaches is active listening. Consistently, at the end of the program when we ask for feedback, we hear that learning how to listen, and taking the time to do it, is one of the most valued parts of the program.

Active listening means listening for the purpose of understanding what the other person is saying. It means listening with curiosity without thinking about how the listener is going to respond and without distraction. It can be helpful for the listeners to summarize what they heard to confirm that they got it right. Knowing that the listener heard what the speaker said is very affirming feedback for the speaker, especially if the speaker has been candid and vulnerable.

A lesson in active listening should be an early part of the program, and it helps for the facilitators to model it. Explicit opportunities for active listening should be incorporated into various agenda items along the way.

A sample Introduction to Active Listening can be found in Appendix 3.

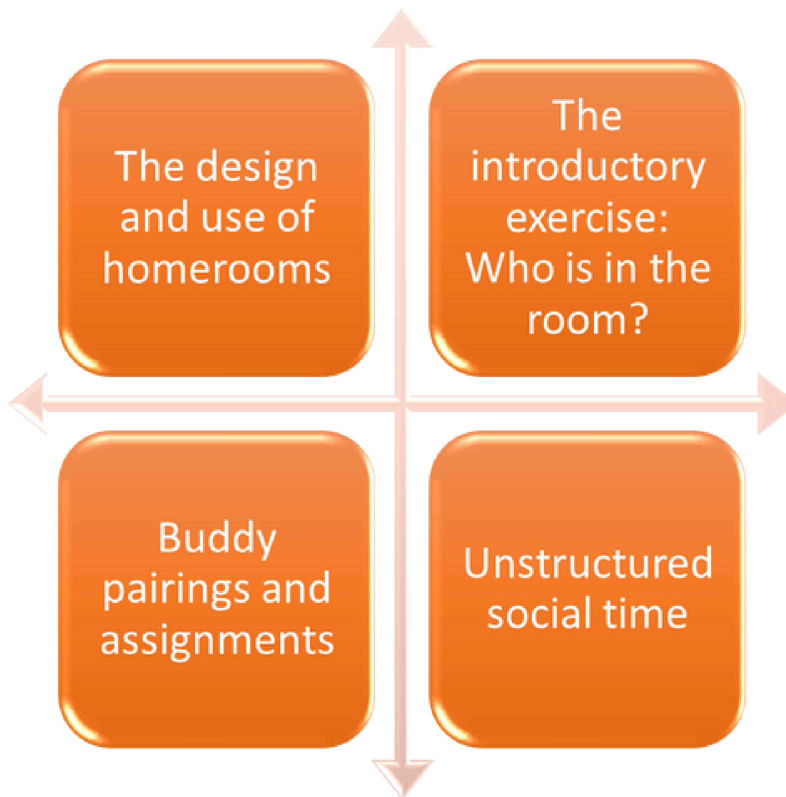
CHAPTER SIX

Enabling Relationship Building

Chapter SIx: *Enabling Relationship Building*

Providing intentional opportunities for participants to develop authentic trusting relationships with each other is a core part of a Leadership Forum. There are four parts of the program that are primarily focused on this. Opportunities for relationship building are also included in the design of all the rest of the aspects of the groups' time together.

The four parts of the program primarily focused on relationship building are:



Relational and Deliberative Components of NCLF Model (2024)

Relational	Deliberative

• Recruit very diverse and balanced cohort; leverage contacts to engage
• Story sharing at kickoff (Who is in the room? Share a transformational moment with the group)
• Homeroom groups
• Buddies
• Assigned seating
• Assigned small groups, with attention to diversity and repeated mixing
• Occasional affinity group
• "Jigsaw" reporting
• Dinners and/or receptions
• Open social time
• Reflection on how lessons learned influence their leadership
	• Select a broad topic that is current, controversial, practical
	• Introduce deliberation/ground rules
	  o Ground rules
	  o "Chatham House Rule"
	  o Active listening instruction
	• Articulate and cluster concerns
	• Articulate and cluster what they value on the topic
	• Values prioritization/forced ranking
	• Facts related to concerns: What facts do we agree/disagree about?
	• Develop broad options for addressing concerns
	  o Inherent benefits and downsides of concerns
	  o Are there ways to modify, mitigate, or minimize downsides
	  o Vote on polarity charts to visualize where people stand
	• Discuss areas with most polarization
	• (Sometimes: If areas of substantial agreement, what is holding back progress? Action planning)
	• Reflect on taking skills and relationships into work as a leader

Setting up the Room

Setting up the space can play a role in making people comfortable and encouraging relationship-building. At every meeting, have name tags for all participants and facilitators with names big enough to be easily legible. The name tags don't need to say anything except their names, and perhaps their title. At the first meeting, you can also put the homeroom numbers or any other seat assignments on the back of the nametags if you want (see #2 below).

Choose a room big enough to have all participants at round tables that can seat 6-8 people, and also a space where everyone can sit in a circle with no table. You want the room to be comfortable, pleasant, and accessible for a group of 35-40 participants.

1. Homerooms

Before the first meeting, divide the larger group into homeroom groups of about 6 people, including one steering committee member. These homerooms are a relational anchor within the larger group. Make these homerooms as diverse as possible, with representation of the political parties, racial and ethnic groups, sectors, genders, and geographies reflective of the larger group represented in each homeroom group. You do not need to be rigid about this, but it is good if there are enough people of different genders and racial or ethnic minorities that no one feels like he or she is expected to represent the viewpoint of his or her whole group.

Homerooms help participants feel connected by getting to know at least a few other participants quickly. In addition, they can rely on each other if someone misses something or otherwise needs support.

- At the first meeting, start with everyone in homeroom groups at small round tables. It is good to take about 10 minutes for an icebreaker at the very beginning of the meeting so people will know who is at their table.
- Participants can remain in their homeroom groups while you are making your introductory remarks, going over ground rules, etc.

Practice tip: One icebreaker we like to use is to have a penny at each seat and ask each person to take a minute to share something they remember from the year that is on their penny. Another is to pick a month and ask each to share something they associate with that month.

- Have some part of each meeting with people in their homeroom groups to reinforce these relationships. They could be a small group for some part of the agenda, or you can ask them to sit together at a meal.
- The steering committee member in each homeroom group can be the facilitator for the group's activities, but you will need to prepare them in advance about what the goal of the activity is and what their role will be.
- While we do not often have programming in between our formal full group meetings, if you find you would like to have informal or online short programs in between, these homerooms could be a useful organizing small group for such events.

2. Who is in the room?

Each Leadership Forum starts with 30-36 participants who know few of the others well. The rest are either complete strangers, people they know only shallowly, or people they hardly know but may have demonized based on what they have heard about them. Our goal is to start enabling trust relationships among these people from the very beginning.

We know that sharing personal background information leads to an increase in perceived trust.[2] Borrowing from the Aspen Institute Rodel Fellowship Program, each Leadership Forum starts with a get-to-know-each-other exercise in which each person receives a few minutes to talk about who they are. This is not a resumé recitation or elaborate sharing of their life story. This is a time for meaningful and, perhaps vulnerable, sharing of a single story that offers a view into how participants perceive themselves.

The prompt is:

"Tell us about an event or incident that was formative in your becoming the person you are today."

[2] See e.g., Olson, Bradley J., Satyanarayana Parayitam, and Yongjian Bao. "Strategic decision making: The effects of cognitive diversity, conflict, and trust on decision outcomes." Journal of management 33.2 (2007): 196-222; Balliet, D., & Van Lange, P. A. M. (2013). Trust, conflict, and cooperation: A meta-analysis. Psychological Bulletin, 139(5), 1090–1112. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030939; and Warren, Mark E., and Jane Mansbridge. "Deliberative negotiation." Negotiating agreement in politics 86 (2013).

- It is best to do this with participants seated in a circle of chairs without a table.
- Remind them that we already know that everyone in the room is a leader, and we already have their resumés. This isn't a time to tell their life-path, but rather to focus on a particular event or experience that will help the others understand how they became the person that they are now.
- Discourage them from talking about their parents or grandparents.
- Give everyone 3-4 minutes to think about what they want to say.
- Tee this up as an active listening exercise encouraging everyone to listen with curiosity and to avoid thinking about what they are going to say when it is their turn.
- It can be helpful to have a couple of steering committee members, who you know will be personal and revealing, prepared to go first.
- Do not go around the room. Let people volunteer to go next, giving each participant 3-4 minutes to tell their story.
- It is helpful to advise the group that you will give a discrete 30-second warning if they have used their allotted time. Most people will not talk more than 3 minutes or so, but a few will go too long.
- The rest of the facilitators should go at the end, to help the group build trust with them.
- This part of the agenda will take about 2 ½ hours. You will probably want to set up the agenda to take a break, or to break for lunch, in the middle. It might be helpful to take a brief break after a particularly intense or emotional story, or to take a stretch break if the energy of the room is waning.
- You should send out brief resumés of members in the group ahead of time and have them available on paper during this exercise. You can give people a few seconds to look at the relevant resume before each person starts talking.

A sample introductory script for facilitators might be:

*"**Now we're going to move into learning who is in the room.***

*We're going to ask each one of you to take 3-4 minutes to tell us about **an event or experience that was transformative, transformative in you becoming the person you are today.***

You do not need to tell us about your career path—we already have everyone's resumé, and we already know you are all leaders. This is an opportunity to tell us about a meaningful experience you had that significantly determined your life path, provided you with an important life lesson, or was formative of who you are.

*We'll give you **a few minutes to think about what you want to say.** After you have thought about what you want to say, we'll let people volunteer to tell their story.*

*Hearing everyone else's story will be a great chance to **practice active listening.***

*You will be able to **put all your focus on listening to and learning about each other with curiosity, with no need to think about what you are going to say or how to respond.**"*

Practice tip: You might also provide biographies and photos of every participant and a list with just titles, as a reference tool for before and after meetings. You might also share basic contact information like cell phones and email addresses after the first meeting, or, post biographies and contact information on a private shared cohort website for easy access and follow-up between meetings.

3. Buddies

We pair up each participant in the Forum with a buddy. This should be another member of the cohort that you think they don't already know and who has a different perspective in terms of party, sector, or otherwise. They should also live or work geographically near enough to each other that it won't be burdensome for them to meet face-to-face in between the first and second sessions.

As homework after the first session, we ask each buddy pair to meet face-to-face, preferably over a meal, before the next session. They should talk about something of significance, not just small talk, for at least one hour, and then they can meet as long and often as they want after that. They might even carpool to one of the next meetings.

Give the buddy pairs an opportunity to find a time on their calendars for their meeting before they leave the first session. For example, say "Before you go to lunch, get out your phone calendar, find your buddy, and agree on a time and place to meet before the next meeting."

These buddy pairings are extremely beneficial if the participants actually get together. Time and again people describe these one-on-one buddy conversations with words like "amazing," "life changing, "or "the best part of the program." Unfortunately, about 25% of the participants do not participate. Those people really miss out. It's especially problematic if one partner wants to do it and the other won't make the effort. Say whatever you can to persuade everyone to actually to do this.

At the beginning of the second meeting, ask for a few volunteers to talk about how their meetings with their buddies went.

After the second meeting, follow-up with participants whose buddy has not been responsive and either encourage the partner or reassign the participant who wants to have a buddy, even if it means creating a three-person group or pairing someone with a steering committee member.

4. Unstructured Social Time

Because we know that trust cannot be built on fact- or task-based communication alone, and that open, personal conversations are necessary to build a level of trust that leads to improved outcomes we make sure that every meeting has unstructured social time.

Practice Tips

- We rarely tell people with whom to sit with at meals. Let them find the person they want to follow-up with, or want to get to know better, and sit with them. Or you might say find your buddy and sit together—so you will be sure to have some diversity at the resulting tables.
- Don't make lunch too short. Give people time to linger over their meal a bit if they want to, or to both eat and answer a phone call if they need to.
- We have sometimes incorporated short "field-trips" that include a walk or a bus tour, another opportunity for participants to bond as they transition between spaces.
- For one-day programs, starting slightly earlier with a slow-start unstructured breakfast can help.
- Social hours at the end can also be helpful. You may need to evaluate the culture of your group to understand their preferences for and the time and place of social time.
- Overnights are excellent for unstructured time, especially if you are staying in a hotel with a a public gathering space. Reliably, a few groups of people will go sit around the bar or in the lobby for an hour or two, and these groups tend to be open to all comers. So don't end dinner too late, and don't plan anything after dinner. If the hotel does not have a bar, designate a bar nearby where people can go socialize if they want to. And encourage even those participants who live in the city you are meeting in to stay in the hotel anyhow.

In addition to intentional relationship building opportunities, relationship strengthening is enabled as part of all of the substantive program pieces.

For all of your substantive conversations, use designated pairs, planned small groups, and assigned seating arrangements to maximize the chance that everyone in the group will have an opportunity for meaningful discussions with everyone else in the group.

- For pairs, you can tell them with whom to pair up, or you can ask them to find someone who they think has a different perspective and who they haven't talked much with yet, or you can get them in two lines along some difference, and tell them to find a partner in the other line. For example, "Everyone who thinks the benefits outweigh the downsides of this, line up here; and everyone who thinks downsides outweigh the benefits, line up there. Now go find a partner in the other line." Or you can count off around a circle. There are many good ways to do this.

- For small groups, you can use homerooms, or different small groups you have designed, informed by who you know will be absent. You can do affinity groups, for example, "rural people stay here, urban people go there, and exurban people go over to that corner." Or you could do clusters of buddy pairs. Think about the purpose of your small group discussion when you consider assigning people in diverse groups or by affinity and how it will affect the conversation.

WE MUST BUILD TRUST FOR LEADERS TO BE ABLE TO ENGAGE WITH EACH OTHER CONSTRUCTIVELY ACROSS DIFFERENCE. THE REASON WE SPEND SO MUCH TIME ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING IS THAT IT IS OTHERWISE IMPOSSIBLE TO BUILD TRUST.

Practice Tips

- One useful way to do small groups is to array your homerooms on a grid, so that each homeroom is a column, but do it so the rows are also diverse. Then you can do one part of the exercise by the letter columns, and then the next part by the number rows. Give everyone a number and a letter on their nametags, and everyone will be in two completely different groups during successive parts of the agenda. (This is called a jigsaw, and it is very engaging to have a small group discussion using letter columns, and report-outs in number rows. More about this later.)

SAMPLE JIGSAW GRID

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	A1	B1	C1	D1	E1	F1
2	A2	B2	C2	D2	E2	F2
3	A3	B3	C3	D3	E3	F3
4	A4	B4	C4	D4	E4	F4
5	A5	B5	C5	D5	E5	F5
6	A6	B6	C6	D6	E6	F6

- When in a full-group circle, it is best to do chairs without a table. That makes it more personal and less businesslike, and it makes it less likely that participants will get distracted by their cell phones. It is also good to give some seating guidelines so that people are not sitting next to others with the same perspectives. If the circle is diverse, and you ask them to move from the full group into groups of 2-3-4 to talk about something briefly, those small groups will still be diverse.

- It's good to keep a spreadsheet of all of this, so as you plan the groups for the next session, you use different diverse groups than you used at the last session.

CHAPTER SEVEN
Concerns

Chapter Seven: Concerns[3]

There are **two goals** for this part of the process.

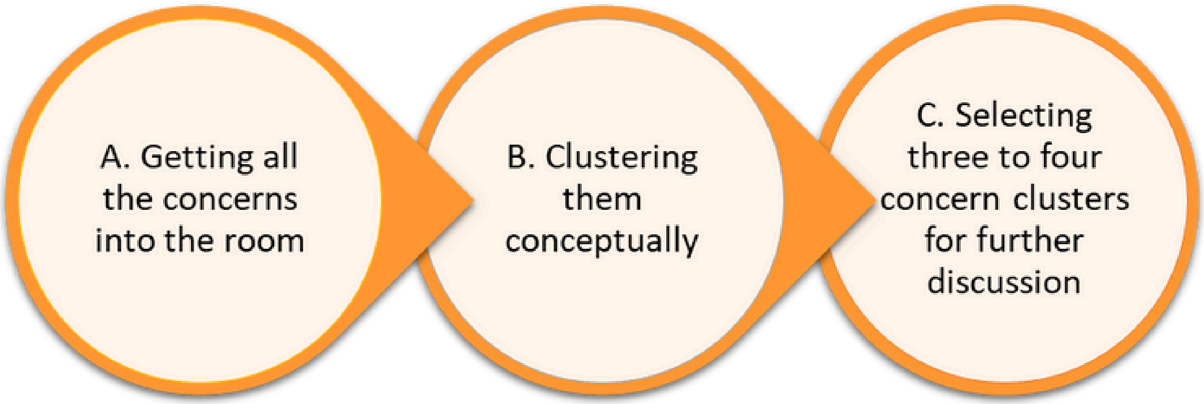
First, your participants will all come into the room with concerns about the issue at hand, and they will want to express them. If improving health outcomes is your issue, people will come thinking: Too many people don't have access to high-quality health care. Rural hospitals are closing. The cost of employee health insurance is too high for small businesses. Insurance companies have too much control over treatment decisions. And so on. It is important to get these concerns out in the open early in the process. People need to articulate them, and it is important for them to be able to hear the concerns that other people bring into the room.

Second, getting consensus on which concerns the group thinks are the most important will help you narrow down and refine your very broad problem statement into something more manageable. Later in the process the group will develop proposed actions to address the most important concerns.

Hearing all the concerns, conceptually clustering them, and winnowing them down to the most important three or four clusters will be the basis for the rest of the group's discussion of your substantive issue.

[3] Developing Materials for Deliberative Forums, The Kettering Foundation, at 10.

The three steps of the process are:



A. Getting the concerns into the room

As homework for the first meeting, ask your participants to think about what concerns they have related to your issue. “When you think about [housing, energy, immigration, etc.] what are you concerned about?” Request that they also ask 4-5 friends or colleagues what concerns those people have about the issue. Ideally, this would include some people who they think have a different perspective from their own.

1. When you get to this part of the agenda in the first session, a facilitator should ask the participants to start telling the group their concerns or the concerns they heard when they did their homework. Do this in the full group because it is important for everyone to hear everyone else’s concerns. Call on one person and ask that person to tell you one concern. Give them time to fully articulate their concern and ask everyone to actively listen to the concerns of others.
    a. Be careful to elicit concerns, not actions to address concerns (“building regulations are too restrictive” is a concern; “we should amend the zoning ordinance to allow more multi-family housing” is an action.)

b. Ask who else had the same concern, or a very similar concern. Then ask another person to share their concern, but not to repeat a concern that has already been said.

2. The facilitator should actively facilitate the collection of concerns. For example, if the concern is a few paragraphs, the facilitator should loop back to articulate the heart of it: "What I am hearing you say is .... Did I get that right?" Or if the concern itself is not clear, ask a clarifying question. For example, "When you say housing is too crowded, do you mean that neighborhoods or communities have too many dwelling units for their area, or that individual houses and apartments have too many occupants for their size, or something else?"

3. Call on participants to express their concerns until no one has a new concern to add.

B. Conceptually clustering the concerns

1. While one facilitator is moderating the group discussion, another facilitator should be writing the concerns on sticky notes and clustering them conceptually so at the end you have 10-15 clusters of concerns.

2. Once all the concerns have been expressed, that facilitator should review the themes of the clusters with the group. Point out tensions. For example, "Excessive regulation increases costs" is in tension with "There is not enough regulation to protect the community."

3. Check to make sure everyone thinks their concerns are fairly captured within one of the cluster descriptions and that their concerns ended up in the right group.

4. At the break, or in between sessions, the facilitators should tidy up the clusters and the articulation of the cluster headings.

5. Be sure to capture all the concerns that are within each cluster either by taking a photo of the sticky notes, or by having someone type them before you remove the sticky notes from the wall or flipcharts.

C. Selecting three to four concern clusters for further discussion

At the second session of the Forum, you will narrow down these clusters of concerns to three to five. These selected three to five concerns will be the focus of the remainder of discussions. Later the cohort will develop proposed actions to address these concerns. When you introduce this part of the work, it is important to tell the group that they should be thinking about which concerns will have actions to address them that will be most engaging to discuss, in addition to thinking about the concerns about which they or the public are the most worried. The goal of this activity is to select concerns which have disagreement in the room about either the concern or actions to address the concern. Further discussion will help participants learn more about the roots of the disagreement and explore different responses. Discourage the group from using this exercise to find consensus; that is not the goal of this activity. To the contrary, the actions with the most consensus at the beginning of the process will produce the least enlightening discussions later on.

Practice tip: There are a few ways to do this narrowing:

a. If there are over ten clusters, you might do an online survey in between sessions to assess which cluster participants think are most important to discuss. To get deeper into polarization, you might ask participants which concerns they think are the timeliest, the most important, and where they perceive the most disagreement. You can use this to develop 8-10 concern clusters for the discussion at the second session.

b. Starting in small groups of about 6 people, ask each table to divide into pairs of people who have different perspectives. Each pair should then have time to pick the four concerns they think the group should address. This might take 15 minutes. Then the pairs should report out to the whole table. The whole table should then winnow it down to four concerns. Don't let them avoid winnowing by combining clusters. (It will cause problems later if the concerns are too broad.) Make sure there is a scribe at each table who will give the table's list of four concerns to the facilitator.

c. Then you can jigsaw the groups. See chapter 6, "Relationships," for how to set up a jigsaw. In the jigsawed groups, the representative from each table will explain the reasoning of their table to the people from the other tables.

d. Alternatively, you can go into a full group and let anyone who wants to explain why they think a particular concern cluster is important to discuss further.

e. While the group is in the reporting stage, a facilitator should write all the concern clusters on flip chart paper and note how many tables selected each cluster. When the jigsaw tables or the full group are finished discussing the concerns, suggest to the group that they eliminate any of the concern clusters that got no votes, or maybe ones that got only one vote, and if there is a consensus to eliminate them, delete those.

f. Then give each participant four sticky dots, and ask them to use the dots to vote for the ones they think are the most important to discuss. They can allocate their dots any way they want. Let them know that this is an advisory vote and that the facilitators might modify the results to make sure the group has a good set of three or four concerns for further discussion. It is best to do this voting on the way to a break or to lunch.

g. After the break, report the results.

Once the group has voted on narrowing the concerns, the facilitators should look at the top ones and make sure they are reasonably balanced in that they don't all lean left, or all lean right. If two are so similar that they are likely to produce the same proposed actions, you might combine them. You also might combine two that are in necessary tension with each other. For example, “There isn’t enough housing” might be combined with “New housing development will damage existing communities” into “How to produce enough housing while protecting existing communities.”

You should end up with three or four concerns that are likely to produce actionable ways to address them and will produce several actions that are controversial. Avoid the group’s instinct to move towards consensus, or you will end up with boring discussions going forward that won’t allow people to express and understand their different perspectives. You will need to structure your agenda so that there is enough time for the facilitators to select the concern clusters you will move forward with before the group moves on to developing actions to address the concerns. If you look at the sample agenda for Session 2, you could pick one clear concern cluster for the group to develop actions for on the first day, and then the facilitators could work on refining the other 2-3 concerns overnight.

CHAPTER EIGHT
Values

Chapter Eight: Values

Why focus on values?

Once everyone has gotten their concerns on the table, and before jumping into what the actions to address the concerns might be, it is important for the group to articulate what values they bring to the table. That is, when thinking about this problem, what do they value? We are not talking about universal values like loyalty and kindness. We are talking about the things they value as applied to the issue at hand.

For example, when one group talked about the best energy future for the state, the participants named the following things that they value:

- **The electric system should be reliable.**
- **Utilities should be affordable.**
- **The cost of energy should be equitable.**
- **Sources of energy should be environmentally clean.**

It turned out that almost everyone in the group held all of these values, but they prioritized them differently. For example, when forced to choose, some people prioritized clean over affordable, and some people prioritized affordable over clean. In that instance, the group was about evenly divided. It is very common for almost everyone to hold all the values to some degree. Friction arises because people prioritize the values differently.

Recognizing that the other participants share a person's values, even if to a lesser degree, helps build trust. Understanding that they are prioritized differently will help people understand why others weigh the benefits and downsides of various solutions differently than they do.

The goals of this exercise are to:

Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3
• Enable the participants to articulate what they value ("things valued" in the terminology of The Kettering Foundation)[4]	• Assess how broadly each value is held	• Determine how the values are prioritized differently.

Articulating what is valued:

It is surprisingly hard to explain what we are talking about when we ask people to articulate the things they value in relation to the issue at hand. The question is:

What is important or valuable to you when you think about [your issue]? What is valuable to you about how it is now, and what would be valuable for you to see in the future?

See Appendix 4 for a sample script for introducing this exercise.

Once the exercise has been explained and everyone has had a chance to think about and write down what they value, there are a variety of ways to get the things valued on the table. It is important for the whole group to hear all the values. Then the facilitators will group the stated things valued into conceptual clusters.

[4] Developing Materials for Deliberative Forums, The Kettering Foundation, at 16 (2014).

Practice Tip:

Here are some ways to elicit values from the group and cluster them:

1. Give everyone a few minutes to write down what is or would be valuable to them, one thing-valued per sticky note.

2. Then one approach is to ask people to say one of the things that they value, clearly limiting it to one. Then, ask everyone else who has that value, or a closely related value, to raise their hands. Give them a chance to articulate their slight variations on the theme.
After that, facilitate them away from saying things-valued that have already been said.

A caveat is to distinguish between things valued and desired actions.
“Everyone should have a home they can afford” is something valued.
“The government should provide income-based housing vouchers” is a desired action.
Remind the group that we will get to actions later in the process.

A second facilitator should collect the sticky notes after they are said, re-write them if necessary, and put them on the wall in clusters (e.g., “there should be enough housing” and “the housing supply should be adequate” should go into the same cluster).

It is fine for either facilitator to condense the wording of what is said and loop back with the participant to make sure you captured the heart of what the participant was trying to say.

Then ask another person to say a different thing-valued and repeat the process until no one has a value that hasn’t already been said.

3. As the conversation is proceeding, the second facilitator should be collecting the values sticky notes and clustering ones that are conceptually similar. At the end you are likely to have 8 to 12 clusters of values. The second facilitator can name the clusters with a word or phrase and review what is in each cluster with the group. Then ask if anyone thinks their value has been put in the wrong cluster or if there are any values that have been left out.

At the next step, these named clusters will be used to determine the importance each participant places on each of the values and to determine the differences in prioritization.

Assess how broadly each value is held.

Before the next session, clean up the clusters and give each a phrase or short sentence that describes it. Then at the next session, return to your value clusters to determine how broadly each value is held.

First, review the value clusters and remind people what each of the values includes.

Then using an instant polling device, ask everyone to vote on how important each value is to them on a 1-5 scale.

Practice tip: One such instant polling program is Poll Everywhere. If you decide to use that, or some other cellphone-based app, ask everyone to download the app to their phone before the meeting. Then, when they sign in at the beginning of the meeting, give them a practice question, like a relevant demographic question, to make sure they have the program working. If you wait until you get to the values part of the agenda to make sure everyone can use the polling, you will waste 20-30 minutes of your meeting!

Then disaggregate the vote by people who self-identify as leaning conservative and people who self-identify as leaning progressive so you have a pair of bar graphs for each value. Caveat: don't include "identify as moderate" as a choice; almost everyone will label themselves a moderate. Alternatively, you can break it down by some other relevant categories like urban, sub- or ex-urban and rural. Make sure your demographic categories include at least three participants so that you protect anonymity in the voting as needed.

This usually shows that all of the values are fairly widely held and it will let you see which values are the most important to the whole group and relevant sub-groups.

Prioritize values.

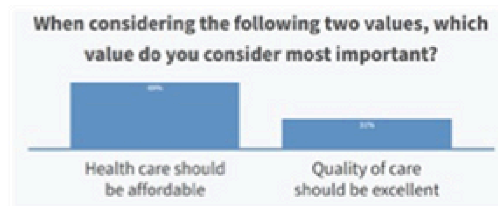
Start with 7- 8 values that are widely held and that include some that you think lean left and others that you think lean right. Then ask people to vote for the 4 that are the most important. Graph the percentage of participants that voted for each value cluster (not the percentage of the total vote that each value got). Note that your percentages will not add up to 100% since everyone is voting more than once.

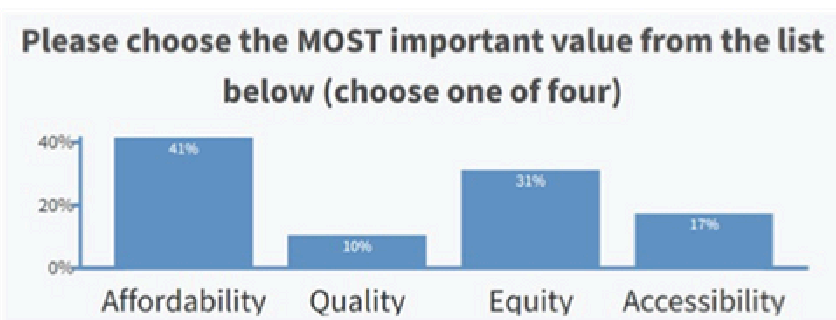
From this you will be able to determine the four values that the most people think are the most important. Then there are two good ways to proceed, and you can use them both.

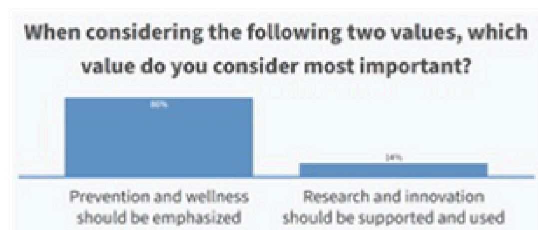
First, you can ask the participants to make a forced choice between pairs that you think have an inherent tension between them. For example, "X should be affordable" and "X should be high-quality."

As an example, in an education group, we asked people to choose between "parents should be able to choose where their children attend school" and "schools should benefit the community." The group split exactly in half! (This told us we had done a good job of selecting a diverse group of participants.) Then give the group time to discuss their reactions to the poll results.

Here are some sample graphs from this approach:







You can also do what we call “voting with your feet.” Tell people who think value #1 is more important to stand on the right end of the line, and people who think value #2 is more important to stand on the left end of the line, or they can stand anywhere in between that reflects how they prioritize the two values. For example, “If you think protecting the identity of existing neighborhoods is more important line up on the left. If you think having enough housing for everyone is more important, line up on the right. Or you can stand wherever in between reflects how you balance these values.” Then call on people who are standing at different points on the line and ask them to explain why they are standing where they are. This exercise is important because it eliminates the binary and helps the group understand that there are many shades of gray. It also may surprise participants to see who is standing next to them. In addition, it’s always good to get people up and moving around.

By the end of these exercises, you should have a set of three or four values that are fairly widely held, but which different participants prioritize differently. You can refer back to these values later when you are talking about the benefits and inherent downsides of suggested actions.

CHAPTER NINE

The Role of Data

Chapter Nine: *The Role of Data*

We know that one reason our policy leaders cannot engage constructively in addressing complex issues is that they do not have the same sources of data, and they do not have a common set of agreed on facts.

On the other hand, because a Leadership Forum is not a Blue-Ribbon Commission trying to develop highly detailed recommendations, it does not need to be data heavy. Also, the goal is to have the participants talking, not sitting and listening to experts present data, and not deferring to those experts.

Presenting a small amount of basic data can serve two purposes:

First, if the data is presented by a neutral presenter in a plainly "unspun" form, usually the group will agree that the data is accurate. By unspun, I mean just the numbers, or other information, not their implications and without interpretative adjectives. For example, if urban and rural counties have a different amount of something, we don't call it "a significant gap," "an unacceptable gap," or even "a gap." We just put the numbers out there. One of the causes of political polarization is that different groups see different data. So getting them to agree to a common set of facts is a step forward.

The second purpose is to help make the discussion of potential actions and their benefits and downsides more grounded in reality. Sometimes different sides disagree on a fact, and the truth is we just don't know the answer (e.g., how well do private schools educate students). But sometimes the answer is clear (e.g., this is the number of cases of voter fraud that have been reported to the Board of Elections in the last 10 years) and knowing that helps the discussion be more constructive.

Finally, it is often quite helpful to put an issue in the context of demographic data in the state. Issue experts sometimes have not focused on how the growth or decline of the population is changing the contours of the issue. Stick to neutral sources like the Census or state population resources, and use the most recent data available or share trends over a ten- or twenty-year time horizon to illustrate the ways an issue may be dynamic over time.

At the first session, a staff member, or perhaps a neutral expert, lays out the basic data that is relevant to the issue of the Forum, using graphs and charts the participants can take with them or can access online later. If you are affiliated with a university, gathering this data can be a good way to involve students.

For example, if the topic were access to health care you could put out the number of doctors and hospitals per capita, life expectancies, maternal and infant mortality rates, and what portion of people have health insurance, in various parts of the state. You might also provide the eligibility requirements for Medicaid, Medicare, and the Children's Health Insurance Program.

After the data and facts are presented, we ask:

1. Is there anything we presented that you think is not accurate?
2. Is there anything that was presented that was in a context that made it misleading?

This presentation, along with any modifications that result from the discussion, provide an agreed-on fact base.

You might also ask if anything important was left out and, if feasible, supply that data later.

Second, after the group settles on concerns, there might be additional facts or data related to those specific concerns that will help the group develop better actions to address them or better assess the benefits and downsides of the actions they propose. The staff and steering committee, or experts you are consulting with, can determine what information would help. If a concern is that rental housing is too expensive, you might want to provide the rental occupancy rate, the average market rent and what portion of it is above or below various price points, how long the waiting list is for rental subsidies, etc. You should also ask the participants if there is information that they think would help their discussions.

It is a judgment call about when and if to call in experts to help with presenting this information. If you do, they need to be completely neutral, or you need to bring in a pair of them. They also need to be able to present the facts effectively and efficiently, in a way that is easily understood without talking about how to solve the problem. You don't want to spend much time with your group listening to experts instead of engaging with each other, and you don't want them either to defer to the experts for the answers or to use expert opinions as ammunition against people with whom they disagree.

Do not underestimate how suspicious different partisan groups are of "experts," who they often perceive to be on one political side or the other. Ask your steering committee how speakers will be viewed, and review presentations before the meeting, if possible, to address any concerns about how an expert might present data with too much weight on their own values. These presentations can alienate participants early in the program and can diminish trust in the facilitators of the program if you are not attentive to how people with different perspectives will receive presenters.

See Appendix 5 for an example of the agreed facts, rewritten into narrative form, from a regional Forum on access to adequate housing.

CHAPTER TEN
Actions to Address the Concerns

Chapter Ten: *Actions to Address the Concerns*

A. DEVELOPING PROPOSED ACTIONS

Now that we know what the group is most concerned about, how do they propose to address the concerns?

Answering this question is the next step in the process. Once you have narrowed the concerns that the group is going to dig into, they need to develop a set of proposed actions to address those concerns. You want to end up with 15-16 potential actions: four actions per concern if you have prioritized four concerns and five actions per concern if you have prioritized three concerns.

We call these "proposed actions," not "solutions," because given the complex issues that your Forum will be addressing, it is very unlikely that your group will be able to solve the problem. The goal is to end up with a group of actions that would address the most important concerns in significant ways.

Guidelines for Proposed actions:

1. Be actionable in your state

The proposed actions should be actionable in your state. That means someone or some entity in the state has, or could build, the capacity to do it. It should not be something the federal government would need to do (though, for example, it could be that a local entity should apply for federal funds through an existing program).

2. Stating what will be done

Actionable means stating what will be done, not stating the desired the goal. For example, "we should have more solar energy" is not actionable. "The state should create a tax incentive for installation of solar panels on rental housing" is actionable.

3. Should not be a proposal to study

These should not be a proposal to study the concern. While studying technically is actionable, it is usually just an easy way to avoid dealing with the issue or to avoid controversy.

4. Should identify who would do it and specifically what they would do

Each action should identify who would do it and specifically what they would do in a sentence or two. NCLF has a template asking those two questions that make it more likely to get this specificity. See Appendix 6.

Process for Generating Proposed Actions:

1. Proposed actions should be generated concern by concern, not all the concerns at once.

2. This is best done in ideologically diverse small groups.

3. Each small group needs a facilitator or table captain to keep the process on track, and to encourage the group to end up with proposed actions that are actionable and meet the guidelines.

4. Each small group should articulate all the ideas for actions that anyone at the table has that would address concern #1, and write them down. This is not a time to debate the merits of the action, but just to understand what the action is, who would do it, and what the proponent thinks its impact would be.

5. Then the group should decide which four or five they want to recommend to the whole group. In doing this narrowing, they should not limit their recommendations to ones for which there is consensus. They should include ones that they think would make an important difference, or are important to discuss, especially if some people strongly support them and others are opposed to them. Remind them they will have time later to fully discuss the benefits and downsides of these proposals. Putting an idea forward does not mean that everyone at the table supports implementing the action.

6. Once the group is down to 4-5, someone at each table should write each of them down, one per piece of paper, including specifically what action would be taken, and identifying who would do it.

7. A very good way to report out each table's 4-5 proposed actions is to use a jigsaw, so that everyone at the table is responsible for reporting out, and each participant has a chance to hear and get clarification about each proposed action.

8. Alternatively, you could move into a full group report out, leaving participants at their small tables. Ask one table to report out one action and hand up their action sheet. Ask if anyone has any clarifying questions. Then ask other tables that had the same or a very similar idea to hand up their action sheet too. Then move on to another table and repeat the process until no one has any more actions to report.

9. Remember this is not a time to debate the merits of an action. It is a time to get clarity about what the action would be, who would do it, and what impact its proponents think it would have.

10. As the ideas are being reported out, a facilitator should write them and cluster them on flipchart paper. This can be shorthand (it does not have to be full sentences), and small variations on the same idea only need to be written once. If there are similar ideas with significant variation, cluster them.

11. Then participants should vote with sticky dots on the 4 or 5 they think would be the most important to delve into. It is good to do this voting on the way to a break or to lunch.

12. After you have done this for concern #1, repeat the process for concerns #2, #3, and #4.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEVELOPING PROPOSED ACTIONS

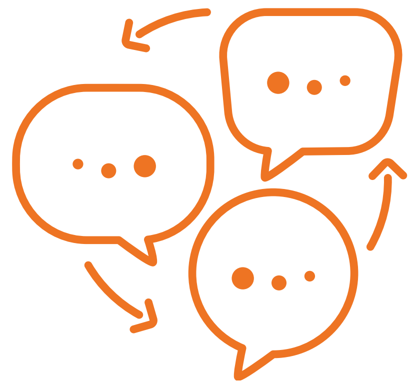
As many times as you say that the actions should be specific, with an identified actor, and actionable, and that they should not primarily be ideas that have broad consensus, it is hard to get the group to select a good subset of actions for further discussion. The subset should both meet the actionability guidelines and include several that are controversial in the sense that some lean left and some lean right or because one sector supports it while a different sector opposes it. In addition, sometimes essentially the same proposed action bubbles up to address two different concerns.

One idea for ending up with a good set of actions to delve into is that the steering committee could seed the process with a couple of proposals for each concern, making sure that controversial actions are on the table, and ask the tables to supplement those.

At a minimum, the facilitators should edit the proposed actions to make them crisp and generally in the format of “X should do Y.” The Forum members should be told that their votes will be advisory because the Steering Committee will make sure that the actions taken as a whole are specific, have enough breadth, are not repetitive, and have diversity of support. In between Session 2 and Session 3 the Facilitators, perhaps with input from the Steering Committee, should edit and finalize the group of 4-5 actions for each concern that you will move forward with.

DISCUSSING THE BENEFITS AND DOWNSIDES OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Once you have your list of 14-16 actions that the participants are going to discuss, you need to take the time to focus on the benefits, or upsides, and costs, or downsides, of each action. All actions have inherent downsides, or potential downsides. Sometimes people don't support an action because they do not believe it will, or is likely to, produce the benefits that its proponents promise. But most of the time people oppose an action because either they can't tolerate the downsides, or they think the benefits are not worth the cost.



It is especially important to enable the supporters of an action to recognize its costs and downsides, and for the people who don't support it to be able to recognize its benefits. All of this will take time, so don't rush it along.

THE ROLE OF DATA AND EXPERTS

There is a question at this point about whether more data or information is needed for these discussions to be meaningful, especially if there is a significant knowledge gap between leaders who are immersed in the field and participants who are general leaders, not specializing in the field. For example, when we were discussing criteria that the Utilities Commission used in setting electricity rates, we were able to find one neutral expert to explain those criteria to us.

In contrast, when one group was discussing publicly funded vouchers for private schools, it became apparent that most people did not know how private schools are evaluated and what information there was about how successful the voucher program is in educating the students they support. In response, we had a pro-voucher and an anti-voucher expert present information about this.

In other circumstances, data, or information about the status of the law, can be provided in written fact sheets, or presented by the staff, and that will be sufficient to adequately inform the discussion. Try to leave 5-10 minutes for the group to digest any fact sheets you provide.

If you utilize an expert or experts, it is preferable for them not be participants in the Forum, as that will elevate their views above the views of the other participants.

There is an important tension between using your time for staff or experts to present information that informs the participants' assessment of the benefits and downsides of the proposed actions, versus letting the leaders discuss the benefits and tradeoffs based on their collective knowledge and experiences. The former can level the playing field among the participants, and it may produce a more sophisticated discussion. On the other hand, it uses valuable time, shifting the focus from the participants to people outside the room, and decreases the degree that the participants own the process and its results. This is a decision that will need to be made carefully, and on a case-by-case basis. It is helpful to bear in mind that while policymakers regularly collect information for decision making, they also often make decisions on policy with incomplete information.

The Process

Discussing upsides and downsides of the proposed actions should be done for one concern at a time. Discuss the benefits and downsides of all the proposed actions for concern #1, report out, and vote before moving on to the actions to address concern #2.

Discussing the benefits and downsides can be done in many ways, and it is good to mix it up, so people aren't sitting at the same table for several hours in a row, and so they are able to interact with many different people. Here are a few options:

- Use diverse small groups. You can designate new diverse tables or use homerooms. Either way, after the (number) tables discuss the benefits and downsides, do a jigsaw for reporting out to the letter tables. Then use the new, jigsaw (letter) tables to discuss the next set of proposed actions, and participants can report out to their original (number) tables.

- You can ask people to form two lines, one with people leaning towards supporting the action and one for people leaning against supporting. Then have people in each line count off 1 to 5 (or as many small groups as you want to create), and ask all the 1s to go to one table, the 2s to another table, etc.

For a few actions, to get people up and moving around, you can do a vote with your feet exercise, with participants lining up from those who strongly support to those who strongly oppose, and any point in between. Then ask people at various points on the line what they see as the benefits and downsides and how they weigh them.

If there is an action for which the opponents may be reluctant to express what they see as the downsides, you might put them into affinity groups by sector or ideology and ask each group to list the benefits as well as the downsides. Initially ask the opponents to report out the benefits, allowing the supporters to supplement those. Then ask the supporters to report out the downsides, allowing the opponents to supplement those.

It does not matter if every participant hears every potential benefit and downside as long as each is exposed to an array of them, including from people who have different perspectives. Note that it is hard to capture all of the benefits and downsides for purposes of report writing purposes using these various dispersed processes, and you will want to have some note takers writing down as much as they can. Remember, in the end, what happens in the room is more important than the report is.

VOTING

Unlike in a legislative body, a Forum is not looking for a binary yes or no vote. Binaries increase polarization, whereas recognizing gradations decrease polarization.

To help everyone visualize the gradations, the Leadership Forum has developed "polarity charts" which we use for voting. They have four quadrants.

- The X axis on the top shows how much benefit the action will produce, from a lot of benefit to the left to no benefit at all to the right.
- The X axis on the bottom shows the extent of the downsides or costs, from no cost or downside on the left to a big cost or downside on the right.
- The Y axis show valence.
    - On the top half of the graph, how important the benefits are. High importance up, low importance down.
    - On the bottom, how much can you tolerate the costs or downsides. High ability to tolerate up, low ability to tolerate down.

The most polarized options will have dots in the four corners, with (A) one half of the group seeing benefits they think are very important and few downsides that they can easily tolerate, and (B) the other half the group seeing little benefit that has importance to them and a lot of downsides they can't tolerate.

Chart A

Dots in the middle mean the action won't do much, and it doesn't matter much., and that the downsides aren't great and don't matter much.

Of course, the dots can be anywhere in between. Here are some actual examples:

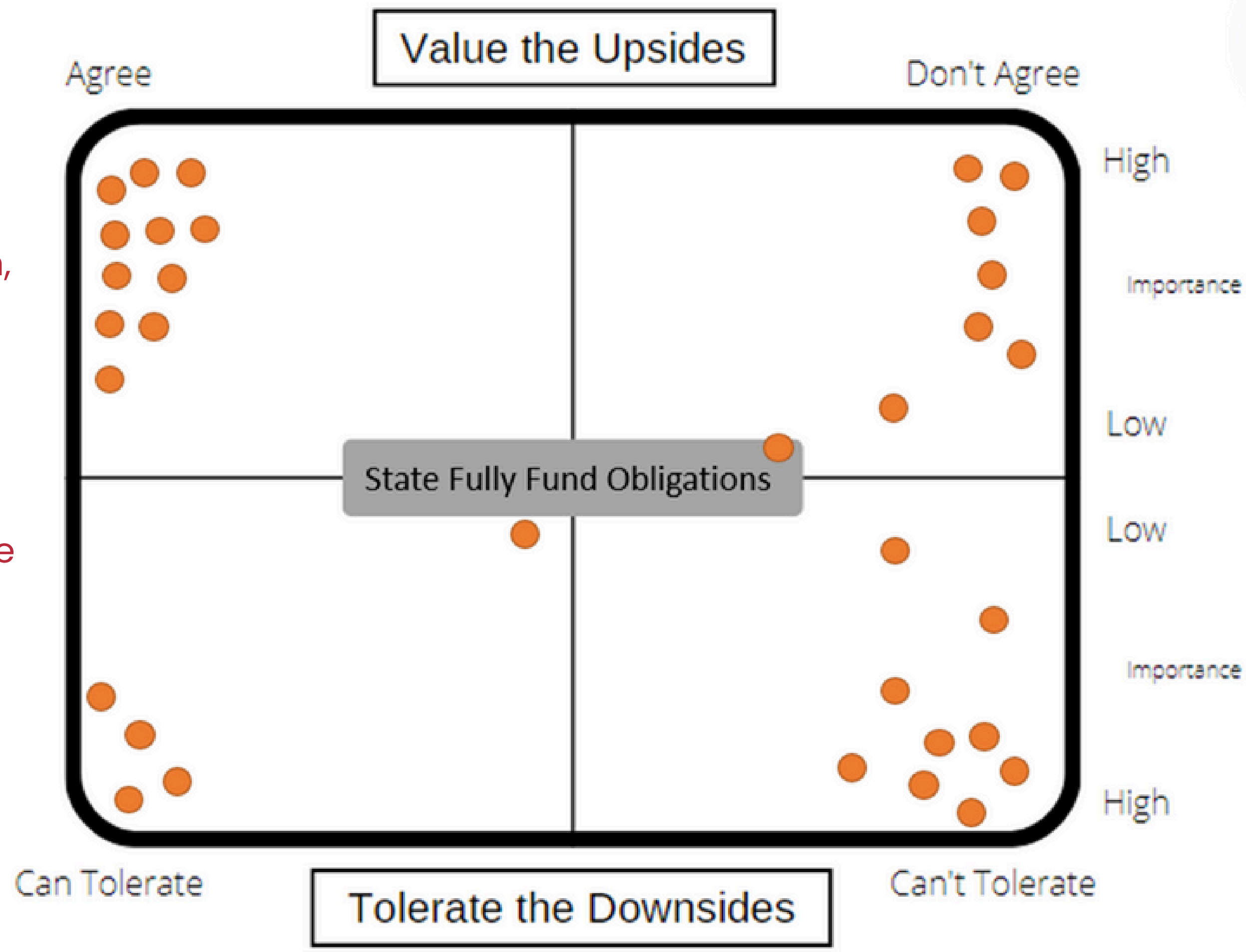
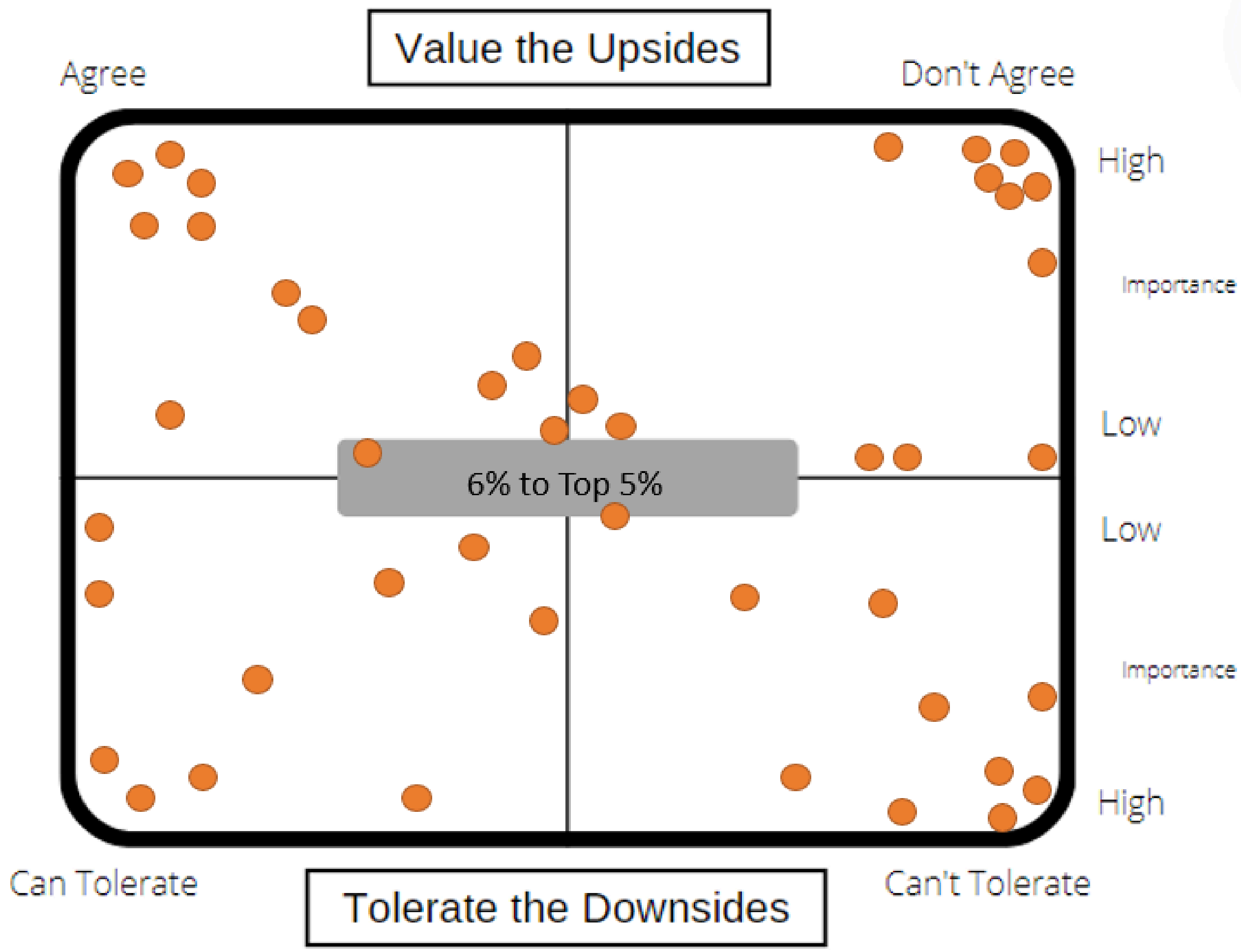


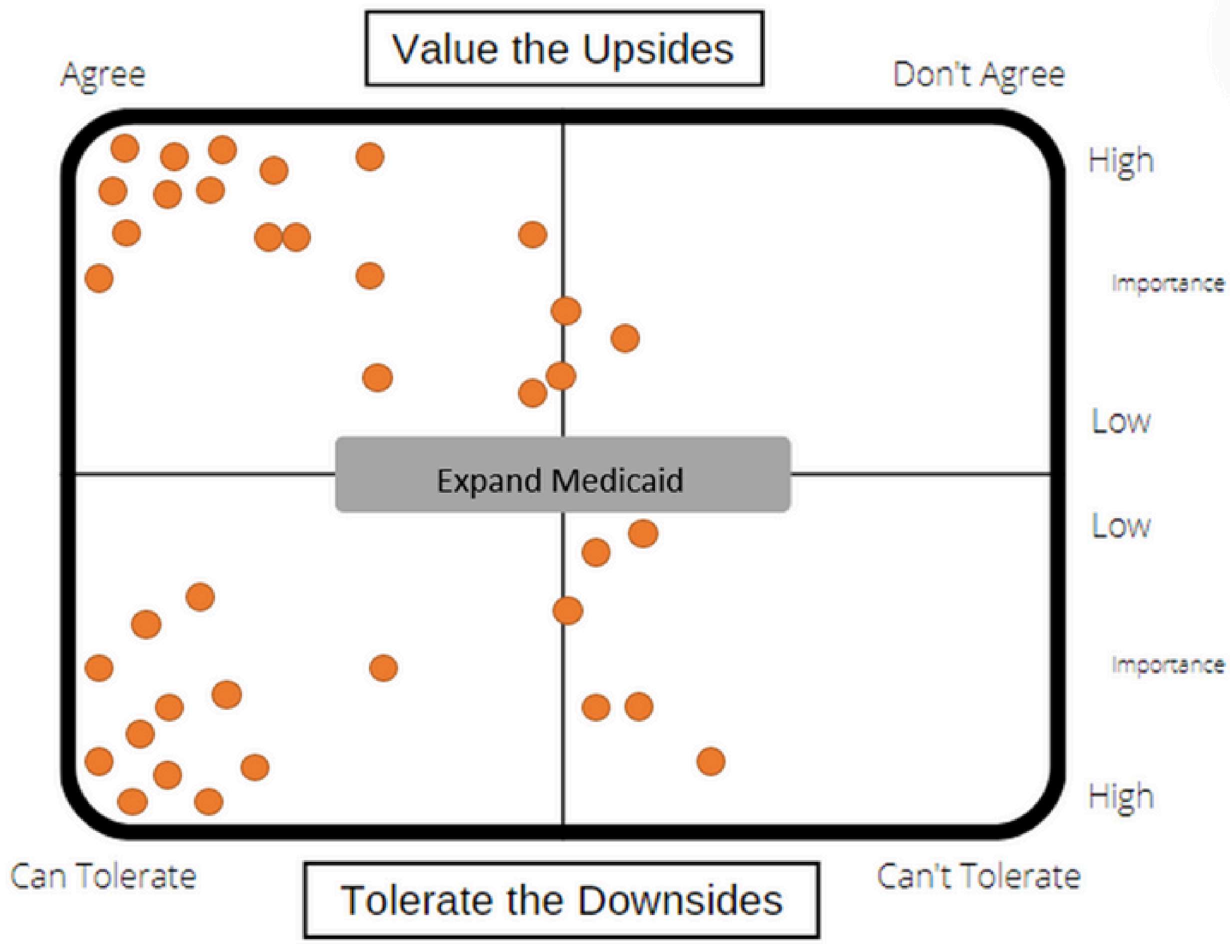
Chart A (State fully fund obligations) shows the most polarization. Almost everyone either sees a big, important benefit and insignificant downside, or not much benefit and an intolerable downside.

Chart B



In Chart B (Raise state tax to 6% for the top 5%), there is no consensus nor strong polarization: a few people really support or oppose the idea, but most people are in the middle and they don't think it is very important.

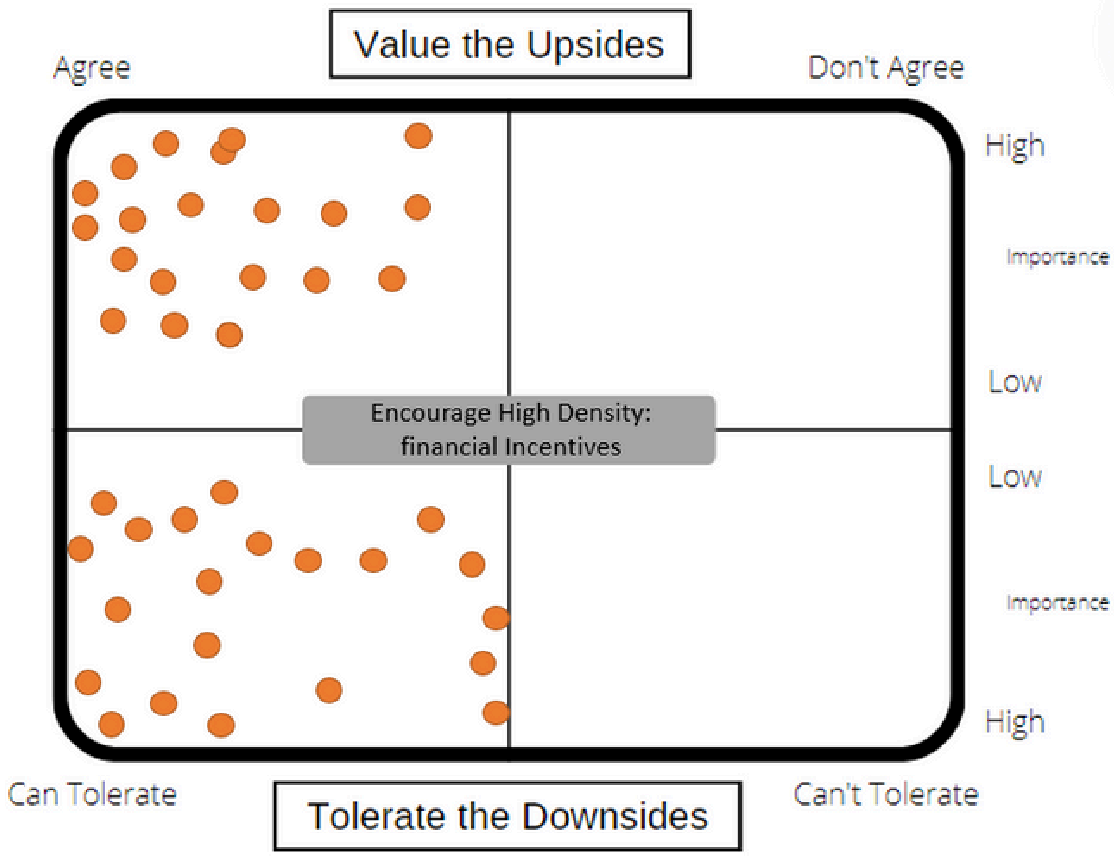
Chart C



In Chart C (Expand Medicaid), the group is divided between those who strongly support it and clearly can tolerate the downsides, and those who just don't care very much. No one strongly opposes it.

Chart D

In Chart D (Financial Incentives to encourage density), there is a weak consensus. Everyone values the benefits and can tolerate the downsides to one degree or another, but the level of support varies widely.



Once the voting is done, everyone will have a nuanced visual sense of the gradations of support and opposition for each of the proposed actions based on the benefits/ upsides of each proposal and its downsides and costs.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Capturing Consensus; Modifying the Middle; Dividing into Disagreement

Chapter Eleven: *Capturing Consensus; Modifying the Middle; Dividing into Disagreement*

Once participants have voted on the polarity charts, the actions under consideration will fall roughly into three groups: ones with substantial consensus, ones with clear polarization, and ones somewhere in the middle (usually they have some strong support, many people in the middle, and a few opposed).

First, focus on the items with strong consensus. It is important to note these both at the meeting and also in your final report. Some Forum group participants will want to come back to these later to develop a collaborative action plan to implement these ideas. You can decide if your Leadership Forum organization wants and has the capacity to facilitate that as an alumni activity or an add-on session, but that is not the main goal of a Leadership Forum. If your Leadership Forum does not take on the facilitation of the follow-up action planning, you might still provide a way for people who want to pursue an idea to sign up to be part of a task group and ask someone on the list to volunteer to be its initial convenor.

Next, focus on the items that have some strong support, but many people in the middle (and no more than a few clearly opposed). Occasionally, the ambivalence is that participants think the idea won't have enough impact to be worth the effort to make it happen ("the juice is not worth the squeeze"). But more usually the cause of the ambivalence for people in the middle is that they see some benefit of the idea, but they are concerned about its downsides or costs. Pick 1-3 for which the lack of support is the inability to tolerate the downsides and spend some time talking about each of those, one at a time. The goal is to see whether the proposed action could be modified in some way that would retain most of its benefits but that mitigates or decreases the costs or downsides.

There are two reasons to do this. First, it helps participants to build trust to understand that some of their opponents share their goals, and, on the other side, that the proponents are willing to modify their actions to address their downside concerns. Second, this is good practice in constructive engagement as applied to public policy negotiations. For each item, after the modifications are made, vote again on polarity charts to see if the modifications have increased support for the action.

Finally, really dig into two or three of the items that are the most polarized, either because (1) some participants strongly value the benefits and can tolerate the downsides while others neither value the benefits nor can tolerate the downsides or (2) because some participants think the idea is very important while others just don't care very much. This is your opportunity to enable participants to go deep into understanding what is underneath their differences. Make sure you leave enough time for this and do it a a time that the group is still high energy.

The goal here is not to rehash the talking points of the costs and benefits of these actions, or to attempt to change anyone's mind. Rather it is to understand what in each participant's experiences and/or values lead them to their position, to dig into the understory.

Practice Tip:

Below is a sample introduction from a Forum that was addressing how to improve health outcomes:

Often we talk about issues, without really digging into the "why" of why we are passionately for or against an issue, or why we are in the middle and don't think the issue is very important while others are passionate about it. We also don't frequently dig into why the other side feels so strongly in a different direction and can't be persuaded to our point of view. The goal is not to reach agreement, but to understand deeply what is underneath our differences.

By "what is underneath our differences," we mean what experiences, values, or messages led you to your current view.

We are going to ask each of you to talk about these three issues where you have significant disagreement: Scope of Practice reform, Certificate of Need reform, and Medicaid expansion. This is your opportunity to talk deeply about what is underneath your passion (or lack of passion) regarding each topic.

First, we (Facilitator A and Facilitator B) will demonstrate what we mean by understanding "what is underneath" with examples on different issues—why each of us is passionate about a particular issue: what in our lives led us to seeing the issue the way we do.

[Facilitators A and B each give a short demonstration about what is underneath their passion about some issue.]

Now, for each topic, we're going to give you about 30 minutes. For the first 10 minutes, discuss with your partner about what in your life experience and the messages you received led to your position on this issue and what values (Affordability, Accessibility, Equity, or other ones on our list) are guiding your view. Ask each other questions to dig a little deeper and get at the underlying values or life experiences. After 10 minutes, discuss this issue with your table as a group.

It is generally important to start this in pairs of people who see the issue differently so everyone can articulate his or her story or beliefs and also hear a different view. You can preselect the pairs, or just get people on one side of the issue to line up in one line and people on the other to line up in the other and get them to pair up with someone on the other line that they haven't talked with very much yet. Then get each pair to form a group with another pair, and they can be a table of four for the discussion.

At the end, you might want to get into a full group circle and ask people to report what they heard that surprised them or had an impact on how they perceived the people who disagree with them. What were their "lightbulb" moments?

You should allow about an hour and a half for this part of the agenda, or 30-40 minutes per topic, in addition to transition time for moving in and out of groups and reporting out.

Note: while it is not the goal of a Leadership Forum to do action planning on the consensus items, some groups really want to do that. If you have time to add that to your agenda, do that last, after digging into what is underneath the differences. It is rare that people have a chance to really talk about why they disagree without the pressure of trying to reach consensus, prioritize leaving the most time for that type of discussion.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Importance of Good Facilitation

Chapter Twelve: *Importance of Good Facilitation*

When we first started the Leadership Forum, we thought the problem would be breaking up fights and teaching the leaders to talk politely to each other. But it turns out that these leaders knew how to be polite to each other. The challenge was not politeness; the challenge was getting them to talk candidly, especially when that involves vulnerability.

The key to encouraging leaders to be candidly forthcoming is good facilitation.

1. Selecting facilitators: A Leadership Forum needs at least three facilitators, and it can have up to six. If they are going to be the steering or advisory committee members, then those committee members need to be selected with facilitation in mind. Otherwise, they can be facilitators with whom you contract.

When selecting the facilitators, you should consider:

a. Competence with group engagement and diverse perspectives: Your facilitators should have some experience in group facilitation or some other experience in leading group engagement. It is helpful if some of this facilitation experience is not primarily task oriented. Helping a group develop a timeline for completing a project is different from helping a group understand each other and build relationships. Some kind of team building experience is helpful. Experience as a mediator who is good at getting the parties to hear each other's point of view can also be helpful.

b. If you have more than three facilitators, one or two can start with no significant facilitation experience if they have been through the program, meet the other criteria, and are game to be paired up with experienced facilitators to learn.

c. Good team players: Your facilitators need to be able to work well co-facilitating with people who see the world differently than they do, and they need to model this. They also need to be able to stick with the agenda that was agreed to in advance and to avoid taking the Forum group on tangents.

d. Gravitas: Your group consists of strong leaders. It is helpful in getting them to trust the program, to follow instructions, to stick with it, and to participate fully if the facilitators have their respect.

e. Strong interpersonal skills: Your facilitators need to be able to interact with a wide array of people with respect, compassion, and humor, making them feel included, understood, and valued.

f. Diversity: If you have three facilitators, no more than two should have the same partisan affiliation, be the same race, or be the same gender. Each person in the room should be able to identify with one or more of the facilitators in some way.

g. Familiarity with public policy development.

Whether or not facilitators have experience, facilitating a Leadership Forum is different from other facilitation work, and all new facilitators will need to be trained about the goals of, processes for, and techniques used in a Leadership Forum. Many facilitators are used to moving a group to consensus or facilitating a group where the facilitator is aligned with the participants' beliefs. Here, encouraging conflict and discussing difference can be counter-intuitive, and facilitators need to understand and be comfortable with the goal and processes.

2. Stick with the agenda, but think on your feet. There is always a tension between (a) accomplishing the goals of a session within the allotted time, and (b) being attuned to what has gone on, or is going on, in the room and making facilitation decisions that respond to what is actually happening in your group. For example, it is important in designing a session to be attuned to what happened at the last meeting without feeling rigidly constrained by the agenda templates we have provided.

This can also mean changing your approach to a problem mid-stream. For example, if everyone seems tired and disengaged, instead of having a full group discussion sitting in a circle, you might get them on their feet talking in pairs. It can also mean giving someone enough time to talk to get to the difficult point they are wanting to make, even if you are running a bit behind schedule. You might decide to ask a follow-up question if you think there might be a nugget to be uncovered. The facilitator should be willing to let the flow of the group be emergent and to allow enough time to finish a conversation.

There is a fundamental logic to the flow of the program that should be honored, but in the details, be creative, and be attuned to the needs of your particular group of leaders and of the individual participants.

If the facilitators' delivery is rote, it will feel flat, people will not feel energized, and they will not be engaged.

3. Focus, intention, group composition, implementation:[6] It is important to be intentional in designing each segment of the agenda.

a. Focus: What is the overall goal of the segment? Is it to give participants the opportunity to hear each other's values? To understand each other's concerns? To agree on a data set? You might have an additional relationship goal, like enabling participants to know their homerooms, or their buddies, or someone they haven't talked with yet. Know going in where you want to end up.

b. Intention: How do you intend to get there? Will people likely need time to clarify their own thoughts? Do you want to get a lot of ideas on the table and narrow them down? Do you want each person to be exposed to all the other ideas or just a sample of them?

c. Group composition: What is the best size and composition of group to use to get where you are trying to go? For size of group, you can use individuals, dyads, small groups of 4, 5 or 6, or you can divide the group into two or three subgroups. You can also use the full group. You can use different sized groups in sequence, for example, first pairs and then groups of six.

For composition of group, they can be groups of people who have already worked together, such as homeroom groups, or groups that haven't already interacted much. They could be people of different perspectives or they can be groups that are alike in some way, such as affinity groups.

[6] The is an adaption of FILOSI, a group facilitation tool used by the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland.

There are many ways to populate the groups. You could preassign the groups to be sure they have the composition you want, let people find a partner based on a criterion you tell them and have the pairs join with another pair (2>4); or use random groups by counting off.

These sizes and compositions each have different advantages and disadvantages, and it is important to think through which ones will be most likely to meet your goals. For example, giving individuals a few minutes to think helps if people need to decide what they want to say first, so they can listen better later. Dyads assure everyone will be able to talk, but they only hear one other person. Small groups expose people to a wider array of ideas, but they need some facilitation to avoid having one or two people dominate. Affinity groups are good if there is a topic you think people will be reluctant to talk about candidly with people who disagree with them. The affinity groups let participants express their views in a safer space and then, once articulated, the views will more readily be shared with the whole group. Using the whole group allows everyone to hear everything that is said, but it takes strong facilitation to enable broad participation.

d. Implementation: What do you need to do to implement your plan?

- How should the chairs be arranged?
- What supplies do you need?
- What do you need to say to the group to set the activity up?
- Which facilitators are going to do what? Does each small group need one?
- If you are using small groups, will there be a report out? If so, how?
- Who, if anyone, is going to take notes?

4. Ways to report out: If you are using groups smaller than the full group, you need to think through whether you want each small group to report out to the full group. First, think about whether a report out is even necessary. If so, the goal is to do this in a way that is engaging. Having one person from each group report out that group's whole list of ideas hardly ever works. One person at a time talks, and everyone else zones out.

Here are some better ways to do it:

a. Use notecards: Ask the small groups to write each of their ideas on a separate notecard. Then ask one group to say just one of their ideas. Then ask the other groups if they had the same or a similar idea. Let them explain their variations, and have all of those pass up their cards. Then go to another small group and ask them to say another idea. Again, ask for the same or similar ideas. Repeat until all the ideas have been sent forward.

b. Popcorn: If you don't care if all the ideas are reported to the whole group, bring the group into the circle and ask who wants to share one idea from their group. Allow the other group members to ask clarifying questions (or to respond, if that is appropriate to the task). Then ask for another volunteer to share a different idea and allow for questions/responses. Do this for five or six ideas, then ask if anyone else has an idea that is really important to share with the whole group. If you use this method, and you want to capture the content from each small group, you'll need to have a notetaker at each table.

c. Jigsaw: See Chapter 6 for how to structure a jigsaw. To use a jigsaw for reporting out, start out with each participant at their number table. Tell them they each need to pay attention, because everyone at each table will need to be able to explain where their table landed and why. You'll need to have some pens and note cards on each table. Then let each number table do the exercise for that segment of the agenda. When the number tables are finished, tell everyone to go to their letter table.

At the letter table each person will report out where their number table landed and why. Since there will be one person from each first-round number table at each second-round letter table, each person at the letter table will have a chance to hear the report out from each number table and to ask questions in a small group setting. An advantage of this is that it gives everyone an incentive to listen and be engaged in their first-round (number) table, and it lets everyone respond to the reports from all the other tables at their second-round (letter) table.

Note: participants might be confused as you are explaining this to them for the first time, but it becomes clear in implementation, and our experience is that once they do it, everyone stays engaged and participants really like it.

5. Ask follow-up questions:

A good facilitator should feel free to ask follow-up questions that are clarifying or encourage people to go deeper, and that are not judgmental. Frequently, people will say something that is conclusory, or subjective, or just not clear. In those cases, the facilitator can follow up by asking something like, “When you said X is too big, what did you mean by that?” Or “When you said X is premature, in what way is it premature?”

In other instances, someone will explain their perspective in a shallow way, and the facilitator can encourage the participant to go deeper by asking a question such as, “I’m curious what led you to that view,” or “When you say X will be too big, what are you concerned about,” or “When you said we should do X, what value are you trying to promote?” Sometimes the facilitator senses that someone wants to respond but is hesitant and could use a gentle nudge like, “Joe, it seems like you might want to respond?”

Asking follow-up questions requires judgment. The facilitator needs to discern whether it is likely the person has more to say. You don’t want to push people too far or embarrass them. So, if you issue the invitation and the person declines, it is generally wise not to push farther. That said, carefully placed follow-up questions can help people clarify their own thoughts, and they can deepen the understanding of the people listening to them. It also models deep listening and encourages participants to ask more questions for the purpose of understanding others.

6. Questions and behaviors to avoid:

While follow-up questions can be useful, the wrong follow up question can shut people down.

a. Asking "why" questions makes people think you disagree with them, and it makes them defensive. So asking "why do you think x is a good idea?" can feel more like an attack than like a follow-up question. A better question might be, "What do you think the benefits of X would be?"	b. Asking people how they feel works with some people, but it turns other people off. Better to ask something like, "What are you taking away from this?" or "What was your response to that?"	c. Avoid asking leading questions. Let the participants use their own words, not your words.

In general, facilitators should avoid dropping, interrupting, overexposing, ignoring, coercing, or over-protecting participants.

Remember, this is the participants' time to talk and tell their stories. It is not about the facilitator's story. So, unless part of the strategy is to have a facilitator tell his or her story as part of the set up for the activity, or the facilitator is intentionally agitating or pot-stirring, the facilitator should avoid telling their story or injecting their opinions.

7. Talking about race:

Many of the topics that are discussed in a Leadership Forum have racial implications. There may be racial disparities in the relevant data, or some participants might have had relevant racially charged experiences, or there might be a racial segregation concern. We do include relevant data showing racial disparities along with other data, and we do create cross-racial buddy pairs where appropriate. Otherwise, in general, the Leadership Forum neither structures racial concerns into the discussion nor shies away from racial issues. Invariably, racial equity or other ideas related to race come up organically in the concerns, in the values, and, frequently, in the analysis of benefits and downsides of proposed actions. When participants raise race-related values or concerns, or racial implications of actions, we facilitate the discussion of those, being careful to let everyone who wants to express their view. Enabling a discussion about race in a racially diverse group can be a very important part of the program.

Occasionally, someone says something that is racially offensive. It is usually most appropriate for the offended participants or a facilitator to have a discussion with that person one-on-one, outside the full group, to explain why what they said was offensive and to address any need for repair if someone was harmed or offended.

It is rare that leaders in our society have the opportunity to have candid cross-racial conversations about race. When they happen organically, and they are facilitated well, they can be very impactful. These conversations, whether between buddies or during a Forum session, have occasionally been described by their participants as life changing.

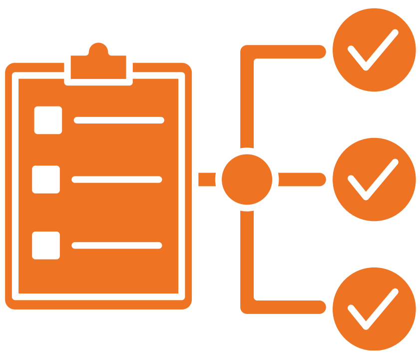
CHAPTER THIRTEEN
Importance of Closure

Chapter Thirteen: *Importance of Closure*

One of the characteristics of a Leadership Forum is that we don't strive for closure in the sense that we do not seek to find consensus around the best course of action or an agreed upon set of solutions that addresses the list of concerns that have been raised. Nonetheless, closure within the process is still important. There should be closure at the end of every meeting, closure for the participants at the last session, and closure for that Forum cohort in the form of a report of the proceedings.

1. Every session of a Leadership Forum should end with closure.

First, because you never finish everything, a facilitator should acknowledge what was accomplished and what is unfinished, and then should briefly preview what the group will do in the next session.



Then you should give participants the opportunity to articulate to themselves and to others what they are taking away from the session and an opportunity to say anything important that is on their minds. This doesn't have to take a lot of time. Just give each person a chance to say a few words or a sentence. You can go around the circle calling on people (and if they pass, that's fine), or you can do it popcorn style letting people "pop up" in any order they wish.

2. At the end of the last session a couple of hours should be set aside for wrapping things up. This takes three forms: (a) expressing what the participants are leaving with, (b) getting feedback about the Forum process, and (c) celebrating the participants' completion of the program.

a. What are the participants leaving with?

- This first question is how the participants have changed as a result of being part of the Leadership Forum. What have they learned? How have their perceptions or attitudes changed? What relationships have they formed? What skills have they gained? This is best done in pairs or very small groups to give the participants time to collect their thoughts, followed by a full group sharing.

- The second part is to ask the members of the group to think about how their participation will impact who they are as leaders. Specifically, how are they going to change their leadership behavior? It can be useful to give each person a chance to think about this individually. Give each person a few notecards. First, ask them to write one thing they are going to do differently once the Forum has ended on a notecard and then make a copy of that one. Then they can write other changes they intend to make on as many note cards as they want. After everyone is done thinking and writing, go around the circle and ask each person to share one thing they are going to do differently, giving the copy of that card to the facilitators. The copy handed to the facilitators can be anonymous. In the aggregate, these actions are useful for later report writing.

b. What should the Leadership Forum learn? Because the Leadership Forum process is not static, it is important to get real time feedback. First, what could we have done differently, less of, or omitted? Second, what really worked for them that we should be sure to keep as part of the program, or do more of? It's good to tell them that you need them to be honest, as a gift to the members of the future cohorts, because we will use what they say as we move forward. It's also better to do the negative feedback before the positive so they end on a high note with good energy.

c. Graduate and celebrate! These leaders have invested a lot of valuable time into the program, and, if they have been candid, they have been brave and vulnerable. This is worth celebrating with a special dinner or reception, and a graduation with each person coming forward for a handshake or hug, a photo, a certificate, and maybe a lapel pin. Give each an opportunity to say one last thing to the other members of the group. If you haven't already done it, be sure to take a "class photo."

3. At the end of each Leadership Forum, you should write and publish a report.

There are several reasons to do this. First, it is important to explain to the public that it is possible to bring policy leaders who have very different party loyalties and ideological perspectives together to engage constructively around important and difficult policy topics. Second, the participants in the program may want to use the substantive part of the report as they work to address the issue on the ground. They may use the data, they may use the list of consensus items, or they may use it to refresh their memories of the benefits and downsides of the various proposed actions. Finally, you will probably want to use the report to attract funders and future participants.

The report should:

a. List the participants.

b. Explain the process.

c. Set out the substantive information concerning the things valued, the concerns, the agreed upon data, the actions considered, and a summary of their benefits and downsides, and the lists of actions on which there was consensus, high polarization, and a mixture. Be clear this is not a blue-ribbon commission, and this is not a list of recommendations. Take pictures along the way during the process that you can include, and you should include the polarity charts as graphics.

d. Being careful not to write anything in a way that is attributable, report what the participants said they were leaving with, and how they said it was going to change their behavior as leaders. You can also include data from the post-program participant survey (see Chapter 14).

e. Include what you think this Forum accomplished, what the Leadership Forum learned from the process and the feedback, and how the process might be improved going forward.

The report should not include anything that was said during the program and was covered by the Chatham House Rule in a way that is attributable to an individual or sub-group of participants.

You can see examples of several reports under the “Programs” tab at https://sites.duke.edu/nclf/.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
Leadership Forum Evaluation

Chapter Fourteen: *Leadership Forum Evaluation*

There are many reasons that it is important to evaluate your Leadership Forum program.

Reasons to Evaluate your Leadership Forum

The most important is that neither your steering committee nor your policy leader participants should be spending their valuable time on it unless it is having an impact on improving cross-partisan engagement.	The program is not static, and you need feedback to understand how to improve the program as you move forward.	Evaluation is necessary to help you raise the funds you will need to sustain the program and to attract the participation of important policy leaders.

Evaluation of this kind of program is, however, easier said than done. The ultimate goal of the program is to improve the policy-making environment of your state or region by enabling widespread cross-partisan collaboration. It is hard to determine whether this is happening, much less to attribute positive movement (or lack of it) to your program.

A secondary goal is to develop in the individual leaders who participate in a Forum the will, the skills, and the relationships they individually need for effective cross-partisan engagement. It is easier to determine these individual impacts than it is to determine your impact on the broader policy making environment, but it still takes an intentional commitment to evaluation.

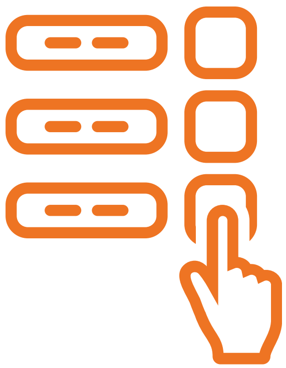
1. Pre- and post-program polling of participants

The most basic method of evaluation is to do a pre-poll of your participants to get a baseline of their cross-partisan relationships and behaviors, and the breadth of their exposure to information and opinion sources. Then at the end of the program do a post-program survey to determine if these have changed. It is important to ask if their understanding of their own views or of the views of others related to the issue has increased, if they have modified any of their views relating to the issue, and if they have formed new relationships. You will also want to ask program related questions about what aspects of the program were impactful and their recommendations for program changes.

Finally, you should ask whether they would recommend that a colleague or friend participate in the program if invited (this is a standard customer satisfaction question.)

The polls should be anonymous, but ask for respondents' political affiliation so you can cross-tabulate your analysis of the answers.

You are most likely to get a broad response to the post-program poll if you ask participants to do it while they are present at the last session, before they go to your closing celebration.



You can find sample pre- and post-program polling questions in Appendices 7 and 8, respectively.

2. Collecting anecdotes

A post-program survey can tell you what participants are taking with them out the door, but it doesn't tell you how the program has changed their behavior going forward. One way to get an idea about this is to collect anecdotes. You will be surprised how many stories you will hear of alumni helping each other professionally, using the process to address other issues, or collaborating on public policy initiatives related to the topic of their Forum, or initiatives related to a different issue.

Your staff and steering committee should get in the habit of asking these questions when you see or talk with your alumni- How has your time in the Forum affected you? Have you collaborated with anyone you met in the Forum, or seen others in your group collaborating with each other? Have you kept up with your buddy?

Stories and qualitative data paint the picture in a way that quantitative data does not.

3. Third-party assessment

A very effective and credible learning tool is to have a third-party assessment of a Forum cohort at a time when the elements of the program are still fresh in the minds of the participants, but it is far enough out to learn how participants have incorporated the skills and relationships from the Forum into their work and lives. This assessment should include both a written survey and interviews. It should be clear that the report will anonymize the replies. Participants may be more forthcoming, especially with criticism, if responding to a third-party who was not involved in running the program and with whom they do not have an ongoing relationship. This data collection should focus on both the impact of specific programmatic elements and also on how the Forum changed the participants' attitudes and behaviors as leaders after the Forum ended.

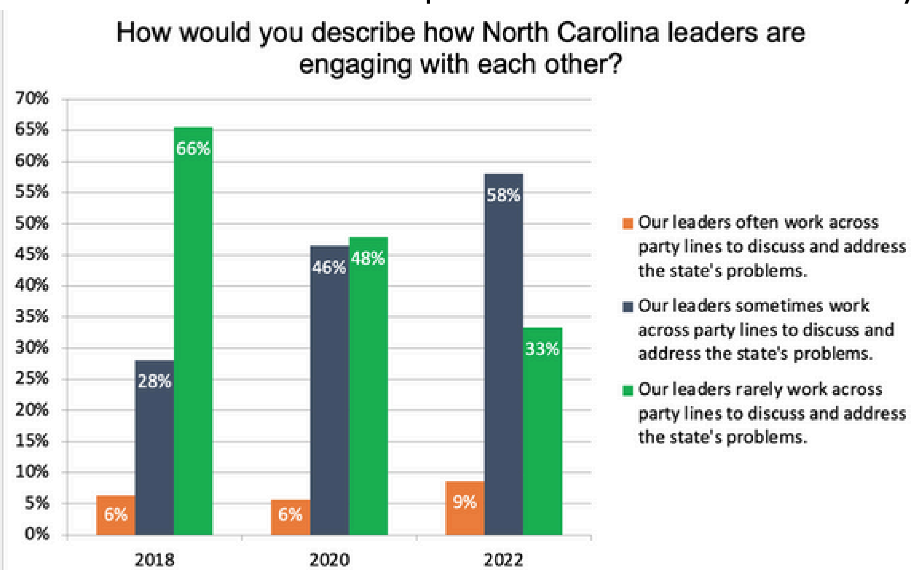
Third-party assessment can be expensive. If you are based in a university, the university's research institute might be able to do it for an affordable price. Also, it is sometimes possible to get a grant to fund program evaluation.

NCLF would be happy to provide a copy of the Program Assessment that Duke's Social Sciences Research Institute did of our program upon request.

4. Polling

In order to get an idea of how the program is impacting the broader political environment, it is helpful to get a few questions in a poll of public policy influencers or legislative participants. This could be a poll of lobbyists, journalists who cover public policy, legislators, or a combination of those. It is important for this polling to be longitudinal so you can see trends. Of course, trends do not establish causation, but correlation, understood in the context of what else has been happening, can still be very informative about whether your program is making a difference.

Here are the results from a question that NCLF was able to get into a state level influencers poll. During the time that NCLF was operating, and a time that the United States was getting more politically polarized, the amount that our leaders worked across party lines to address problems increased. This does not prove causation, but it's very encouraging.



Source: McGuireWoods Consulting surveys, 2018-2022

The combination of these four kinds of evaluation can (1) let you know what individual participants are getting out of the program, (2) inform your programmatic decisions about what program elements to retain or emphasize, and what program elements to revise or eliminate, and (3) give you a good sense of whether or not your program is having a positive impact on the political environment of your state.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
Alumni Engagement

Chapter Fifteen: *Alumni Engagement*

After a cohort is finished, it is important to reinforce the relationships Forum participants have developed during the program and give them an opportunity to practice the lessons they have learned. Think of it as a booster shot.

It can also be beneficial to have cross-cohort alumni events to encourage the development of relationships across the groups: a network of networks.

Another reason to have alumni events could be to give a group or groups that have worked on an issue time to do action planning to enable their collaboration moving forward.

There are several ways to **organize alumni events:**

1. Alumni from the same sector: Forum participants from the same sector (e.g. legislators) may not know that others in that sector are also Forum alumni who participated at a different time. These other alumni may be more receptive to engaging across partisan and other divides, so it's worth making the connections. For example, NCLF had a gathering of its legislative alumni on a topic that was current in the legislature. The event was held on Zoom to make it easier for legislators to attend. Members of the state House and Senate from both parties participated. They were able to discuss their hopes and concerns about the issue and recognize some previously unknown common ground across parties. At least one cross-partisan agreement to co-sponsor a bill emerged.

2. Alumni who work on the same topic: Although Leadership Forums do not focus on strategic planning to implement the consensus actions that emerge from a Forum, Forum participants frequently leave with a desire to work together to implement some of these ideas. For example, one Forum group that worked on access to adequate housing asked us to reconvene them about six months after the end of the Forum to hear and learn from what other members of their group were doing to move forward on the issue. They also wanted to make plans for collaborating to implement some of the actions they had discussed. If you have held multiple Forums on the same issue, you might want to have an event that brings together the alumni from all these groups to enable them to build strategies for collaboration across groups.

3. Alumni from the same region of the state: If you are in a geographically large state, you might want to host regional alumni events to make it easier for people to attend and to enable alumni in that region to see who else in the region has gone through the program. People who live in the same region might then find an opportunity to work together in the future on a region-specific topic. These events can be purely social or they can include discussion of a current issue the region is grappling with. Even if you have a region-specific event, you needn't limit invitations to alumni from that region. When NCLF had what we thought would be a regional social event, we sent an invitation to all our alumni, and, to our surprise, Forum alumni came from all over the state and from every cohort, resulting in some very nice cross-cohort networking.

4. An all alumni gathering: If you are going to have an all alumni gathering and your state is geographically large, it very likely needs to be a half-day or a most-of-a-day affair with some substantive content and some social time. You will need to make provisions for those who live at a distance to spend the night. You will also want to be intentional about building in opportunities both for alumni of a cohort to have a reunion with each other, and for people across cohorts to get to know each other. For example, you might have cohort reunion lunch groups. Then after lunch you could have break-out groups on several current topics with attendees across cohorts doing a mini-Forum in each break-out group (concerns, values, actions). Then you could end with the whole group doing something social or fun.

If you decide to have a speaker at any of these events, you need to have either a pair of left- and right-leaning speakers, or a panel with different perspectives. If you have a single speaker, the person shouldn't be perceived as tilting one way or you will skew who decides to attend. Remember, good food and interesting venues are always a draw!

Whichever approach you take, keep in mind your goals: reinforcing the relationships and skills the Forums enabled to develop, creating opportunities for constructive cross-partisan engagement among your participants across cohorts, reinforcing existing networks, and building a network of networks.

APPENDIX 1

Sample NCLF Agendas for Four-Days with One Overnight
The following facilitators' agendas show the general flow of prior NCLF programs. They are intended as a basis for planning and can be adjusted as needed if the group needs more time with a particular section of the program or for other reasons.

Session 1

Pre-meeting assignment:
Ask each participant to gather input on the concerns of people in their community that are relevant to the issue of XXX and bring them to the first session. Participants should talk with 4-5 people in their community: they can be friends, neighbors, co-workers, or others; they do not need to be experts. Ideally, they will include some people that have a different perspective than the participant's perspective. Here are some sample questions they can ask:

a. When you think about XXX in our community, what concerns you? What bothers you the most, personally?

b. What concerns do you hear friends and family members talk about when it comes to talking about XXX?

Flow of the day next page

Flow of the Day:

9:15	Welcome Homeroom Ice Breaker Purpose of program Ground Rules Introduce concept of Active Listening
10:00-12:30	“Who is in the Room?” (*Tell us about a transformative event that influenced the person you are today.*) Allow 3-4 minutes per participant. Incorporate a 15-minute break at halfway point.
12:30-1:30	Lunch (30 minutes) and Local Panel
1:35--2:30	Share concerns and cluster into categories
2:30—2:45	Break
2:45--3:45	Share what is valued and cluster into categories
3:45--4:30	Present basic facts relevant to the topic. Do people agree these facts are accurate? Are any facts misleading? Is anything important missing?
4:30—5:00	Wrap-up Explain purpose of Buddies and assign homework. Housekeeping Closure exercise
5:00-6:00	Reception

Homework:

1) Meet with your buddy for at least one hour and have a substantive conversation on a topic of your choice.
2) Share feedback on facts (What was accurate, inaccurate, or accurate but misleading? What topics do you want more info on?)

Session 2 (overnight)

Day 1

12:00	Soft start with optional unstructured lunch
12:45	Welcome and opening
	Reiterate goals and ground rules
	Preview the day
	Report from Buddies
1:15	What is valued: how are values prioritized?
2:30	Recap concerns clusters. Is anything missing? Select 3-4 of them for further discussion
3:15	Vote and break
3:40	Develop actions for addressing concern #1 and report out (4 actions per concern if there are 4 concerns; 5 if there are 3 concerns)
4:30	Housekeeping and vote on way out of the room
4:45	Some combination of a field trip to see the local community, and time to check into hotel and get to dinner venue
6:00/6:30	Cocktails and Dinner (with a post dinner panel if no field trip) Followed by free time with a designated optional gathering place

Day 2

8:30 a.m.	Unstructured breakfast if not included with rooms (or breakfast panel, in which case start 15 minutes earlier)
9:00	Recap yesterday and preview today
9:15	Develop actions to address concern #2 and discuss
10:00	Develop actions to address concern #3 and discuss
10:45	Vote and Break
11:10	Develop actions to address concern #4 and discuss
12:00	Wrap-up & preview next session
	Closure exercise
12:30	Vote on way out of the room.
	Stay for lunch or lunch to go

Session 3

9:00 a.m.	Welcome, review goals and progress, preview day
9:20	Facts relevant to some of the options (could be panel, experts or NCLF presentation)
10:00	Present concern #1 and its 4 proposed actions. Articulate upsides and inherent downsides of each of the 4 actions.
11:15	Vote on polarity charts and break
11:30	Repeat for concern #2
12:45	Lunch: Vote on polarity charts and unstructured lunch
1:30	Repeat for concern #3
2:30	Vote on polarity charts and break
3:30	Repeat for concern #4
4:30	Recap day, closure, and vote
5:00	Local panel and reception or field trip (or social hour)
6:00/ 6:30	Adjourn

Session 4

9:00	Welcome, review goals and progress, preview the day
9:20	Briefly review handout with levels of agreement/disagreement
9:40	Acknowledge areas with most consensus
	Review areas of most polarization. Dig into two or three topics with most disagreement (break in the middle)
12:00	Lunch
12:45	Pick 1-2 actions with mixed agreement and disagreement and see if they can be modified to increase agreement
1:30	Areas of agreement: pick a few and do action planning
2:45	Break
3:00	What have you learned? What are you walking away with from this program? How will you take what you learned and new relationships into your role as a leader?
4:00	What feedback do you have for NCLF?
4:20	Graduation and closure—what do you want to say to the group?
4:50	Evaluation survey
5:00	Celebration/ social hour

APPENDIX 2
Sample Ground Rules

Duke NORTH CAROLINA LEADERSHIP FORUM

Ground Rules

Chatham House Rule

When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the **Chatham House Rule**, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

In addition to the above, we use the following to guide and support constructive engagement across differences:

1. **Try it on for size**
2. **Let all voices be heard**
3. **Accept non-closure**
4. **Stay away from labels, stereotypes, and pre-conceived notions**
5. **Don't be PC/Be honest**
6. **No wrong answers**
7. **Test your assumptions**
8. **No offensive/bad language**
9. **Assume motives are good, give motives benefit of the doubt**
10. **Save cell phone for breaks**
11. **Attendance is crucial**
12. **Put your voice in the room**

APPENDIX 3
Introduction to Active Listening

Active listening means listening solely for the purpose of understanding what the other person is saying.

- Try to **focus** only on what the other person is saying.
- Listen with curiosity.
- **Avoid thinking about how you are going to respond to or rebut** what the speaker is saying. (Most of us spend almost all of our "listening" time thinking about how we are going to respond.)
- Also **avoid internal and digital distractions, for example**
    - thinking what you are going to say when it is your turn
    - daydreaming
    - making a mental list of things you need to do, or
    - wondering who has emailed, messaged, or tweeted you since you last looked.

At the end you might repeat what you thought you heard to make sure you got it right, ask **clarifying questions** or questions that come from your **curiosity**, or just thank the person for explaining their perspective.

APPENDIX 4
"What is Valued?" Sript

Facilitator 1: Now that all your concerns are on the table, we are going to shift to talk about what is or would be valuable to you in conducting elections in NC.

So I want you to think about what is important or valuable to you when you think about this. This could be what is valuable about the process and policies we have now or it could be what's important to you about the way you would like elections to be conducted in NC.

When I say valuable, I don't mean values like truth, reliability and kindness. For example, when thinking about the topic of education, I might say INSERT VALUES are important to me.

So, Facilitator 2, when you think about education, what are a couple of things that are or would be valuable to you?

Facilitator 2 responds…

Facilitator 1: *Now, take a couple of minutes to think about and write down what is or would be important or valuable to you about conducting elections in NC.*

Writing it down will let you be an active listener by focusing on what other people are saying when they are talking without having to remember what you want to say.

And hearing what everyone values is important because it will help all of us understand where other people are coming from and what is important to them.

[Then do round robin (one from each table) asking people not to repeat things that have already been said. Facilitator 1 calls on people and Facilitator 2 writes down the essence on flip chart, or collects sticky notes and clusters in the background). Nuances are OK, but try to prevent people from repeating. Go until no one has anything new to add.]

Close: *Thank you…*

We will cluster these values into themes, and next time have some discussion of which of these things you value are the highest priority for each of you.

APPENDIX 5

Sample Basic Facts from Western NC Regional Housing Forum

Context: Adequate Housing in Western NC

NCLF selected five counties in Western NC: Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties. Four of these counties (with the exception of Haywood) are in "The Land of Sky" Council of Governments.
This area was selected because it has leaders from both political parties, is large enough to recruit a dynamic group of leaders, it already has a vehicle for cross-county coordination that could be enhanced, and the counties have both overlapping and conflicting interests concerning housing. The NCLF relied heavily on a Housing Needs Assessment produced by Bowen National Research and funded by Dogwood Health Trust to inform the group's knowledge of the population and housing demands of the region.[i]

In recent years, the population of all five counties has grown, collectively outpacing North Carolina's population growth, and population growth is expected to continue. For example, Buncombe County, the metropolitan center containing the city of Asheville, has grown over 21% since 2000 – now home to approximately 272,000 people.[ii] In addition to population growth, Western North Carolina continues to be a popular tourism destination, attracting nearly 11.1 million people annually.[iii]

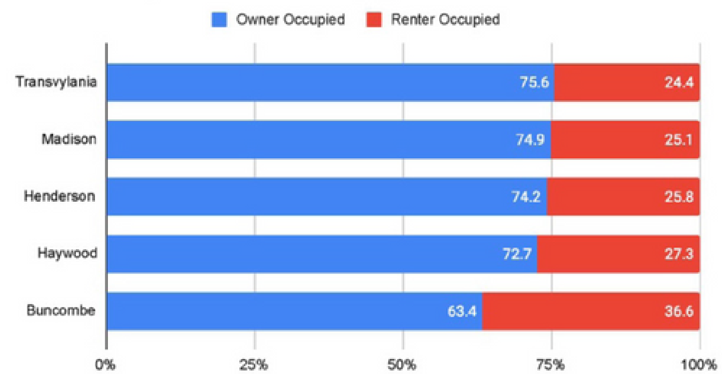
In recent years, the area has become popular among higher-income people, both retirees and working adults, who have drastically increased the cost of living in the region. Median household income in Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, and Transylvania, for example, has either outpaced state income growth or will over the next five years. At the same time, about 50% of the homeowners in the region earn under $60,000/year, and are now being categorized as economically vulnerable because of the stiffening competition for housing.[iv] Moreover, 50% of minority households earn below $40,000/ year as compared to 40% of white households, displaying vulnerability among racial lines as well.[v]

According to the Bowen Housing Needs Assessment, the region's growth is expected to remain significant for the foreseeable future. The study's housing gap analysis shows that based on current growth projections, the region needs somewhere between 13,000 to 14,500 more rental units, including 5,500 for seniors, and somewhere between 3,000 to 9,000 homes to accommodate homeowners.[vi] This gap is expected to continue rising, as jobs continue to move to the region, tourism increases, and remote work continues to be common.

Both the cost of rental and owning a home are rapidly increasing in the region. From 2016-2020, the median value of owner-occupied homes ranged from $185,600 to $250,600 in Buncombe County. The median sales price of new homes during this period, however, has been much higher—reaching around $400,000 in Buncombe County by December 2020 and continuing to climb in subsequent years, reaching above $500,000 recently.

Context: Adequate Housing in Western NC 9

Owner Occupied and Renter Occupied



Source: U.S. Census Quickfacts

Rents have similarly increased. For example, in 2020 the median price of renter-occupied units varied from $686 in Madison County up to $1,019 in Buncombe County. Rents continued to rise during the pandemic, as the region attracted many remote workers and additional tourists. Further, rental vacancies are extremely limited, with lower vacancy rates for affordable units or even no vacancies or waiting lists in some cases. Of the 250,000 some units in the region, renters consist of 25-35% occupants, with the majority concentrated in urban areas.

The availability and affordability of housing is a challenge at every price range, even as the development of homes and volume of home sales continues to grow. For homeowners or those seeking to become homeowners, currently, the percentage of available homes for sale is approximately 0.9%, whereas a healthy market would expect between 2-3% of homes to be available. Within this low supply of available homes, over two thirds are priced over $300,000, demanding a household income of $95,000/ year to live without being cost-burdened.[vii] Furthermore, efforts to build housing on steep lots, such as those in Western NC, have proven to be more difficult and costly on average due to the region's mountainous terrain.[viii]

While cost-burdened households are cause for great concern, so are those people without homes who are struggling in this high-cost region. Based on the Point-in-Time (PIT) counts conducted by the local Continuum to Care agencies, nearly 637 people were homeless in Buncombe County in 2022 (up from 527 in 2021 and 580 in 2019). In Henderson, the 2022 PIT counted 140, in Haywood 208, in Transylvania 36, and in Madison 16 (compared to 150 in Henderson in 2020, 130 in Haywood, 56 in Transylvania, and 11 in Madison in the same year).[ix] In the area, nearly half of the homeless population are veterans, with a fifth being chronically homeless.

APPENDIX 6

Sample Action Template

ACTION PROPOSAL for Concern: ______________________

State the proposed action using the following phrasing AND being as specific as possible:

X should do Y

For example, an action to address the concern that the cost of healthcare is too high is: The legislature (X) should cap the monthly price of medications that treat chronic conditions (Y).

Action: (1) WHO WILL DO IT?

____

(2) WHAT, SPECIFICALLY, SHOULD THE ENTITY OR PERSON DO?

____

Note any necessary resources or groups who would need to be involved below.

APPENDIX 7

Sample Action Template

NCLF 2024 Pre-Program survey - Community Safety

1. Why are you participating in the NC Leadership Forum program?

____
____
____
____
____

2. How knowledgeable are you about the topic of community safety in North Carolina?
   - o Extremely knowledgeable
   - o Very knowledgeable
   - o Moderately knowledgeable
   - o Slightly knowledgeable
   - o Not knowledgeable at all

3. The NC Leadership Forum will be discussing the following question, "What should we do to keep North Carolina communities safe?" How confident are you in your answers to these questions?
   - o Very confident
   - o Somewhat confident
   - o Neither confident or unsure
   - o Somewhat unsure
   - o Not confident at all

4. How confident are you that you understand the of people who generally disagree with you about the answer to the above question on community safety?
   o Very confident
   o Somewhat confident
   o Neither confident or unsure
   o Somewhat unsure
   o Not confident at all

5. What, if anything, do you hope to gain from participating in NCLF?

____
____
____
____
____

6. What, if anything, do you expect to be most challenging about participating in NCLF?

____
____
____
____
____

7. How often in the last month have you had a substantive conversation with someone who disagreed with you about an issue of public importance? (Do not count your NCLF homework assignment)
   - o 0
   - o 1-2
   - o 3-5
   - o 6-10
   - o More than 10

8. What are your top three regular sources of news?

____

____

____

____

____

9. How often in the last week have you read, watched, or listened to a news source that generally expresses a different view from your own?

o 0

o 1-2

o 3-5

o 6-10

o More than 10

10. How comfortable are you when engaging in conversations about policy issues with people with whom you disagree politically?
    o Very comfortable
    o Somewhat comfortable
    o Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable
    o Somewhat uncomfortable
    o Very uncomfortable

11. How confident are you that North Carolina's leaders will work together effectively to find solutions to major issues facing our state?
    o Extremely confident
    o Somewhat confident
    o Neither confident nor unsure
    o Not very confident
    o Not confident at all

APPENDIX 8
Sample Post-Program Survey

NCLF 2024 Post-Program Survey - Community Safety

Please select the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following

1. I learned more about community safety in NC.
   - o Strongly agree
   - o Somewhat agree
   - o Neither agree nor disagree
   - o Somewhat disagree
   - o Strongly disagree

2. I better understand my own values, opinions, or priorities concerning keeping NC communities safe.
   - o Strongly agree
   - o Somewhat agree
   - o Neither agree nor disagree
   - o Somewhat disagree
   - o Strongly disagree

3. I better understand the values, opinions, or priorities concerning keeping NC communities safe held by people with different perspectives than mine.
   - o Strongly agree
   - o Somewhat agree
   - o Neither agree nor disagree
   - o Somewhat disagree
   - o Strongly disagree

4. I view some issues about how to keep NC communities safe differently than I did before participating in NCLF.
   - o Strongly agree
   - o Somewhat agree
   - o Neither agree nor disagree
   - o Somewhat disagree
   - o Strongly disagree

5. I formed relationships with one or more people of differing views that I likely would not have otherwise formed.
   - o Strongly agree
   - o Somewhat agree
   - o Neither agree nor disagree
   - o Somewhat disagree
   - o Strongly disagree

6. I gained skills that will help me engage constructively with people of different views.
   - o Strongly agree
   - o Somewhat agree
   - o Neither agree nor disagree
   - o Somewhat disagree
   - o Strongly disagree

7. In the last two months, how often have you talked about something substantive with someone of a different political party or ideology? On average:
   - o Every day
   - o Twice a week
   - o Once a week
   - o Twice a month
   - o Once a month
   - o Rarely/never

8. Is this an increase over the frequency you had such conversations before you participated in NCLF?

   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

9. In the last two months, how often have you read, listened to, or watched information or opinions from people or sources of a different party or of a different political ideology?
   - o Every day
   - o Twice a week
   - o Once a week
   - o Twice a month
   - o Once a month
   - o Rarely/never

10. Is this an increase over the frequency you read, listened to or watched such information before you participated in NCLF?
   - o Yes
   - o No

11. Since NCLF started in February of 2024, how many times have you had a conversation with someone in your NCLF class whom you did not know before the class (not counting conversations at the NCLF meetings)?
   o 0
   o 1-3
   o 4-6
   o 7-9
   o 10 or more

12. Have you made, or are you making, any effort to encourage or facilitate conversations between people of different parties or ideologies in your community or elsewhere?
   o Yes
   o No

13. If yes, how are you doing that?

____
____
____
____
____

14. Name one way, if any, that your views have been modified as a result of your participation in NCLF.

____
____
____
____
____

15. What aspects of the process enabled you to modify your view(s)?

____
____
____
____
____

16. What aspects of NCLF were the most valuable to you?

____
____
____
____
____

17. What aspects of NCLF were the least valuable to you?

____
____
____
____
____

18. In what ways could NCLF be improved to make it more beneficial?

____
____
____
____
____

19. What would meaningful follow-up on the topic of keeping communities safe look like to you?

____

____

____

____

____

20. Would you be interested in participating in programming for a network of NCLF alumni, and if so, what kind of programming would be of interest?

____

____

____

____

____

21. If a friend or colleague of yours was invited to participate in NCLF in the future, assuming the session would be held in person, would you recommend that he or she accept the invitation?

    o Definitely yes
    o Probably yes
    o Might or might not
    o Probably not
    o Definitely not

23. Select all of the NCLF sessions you attended, even if you attended only a portion of the session

- ☐ Feb 29 - Mar 1 in Durham
- ☐ April 11 - 12 in Rocky Mount
- ☐ May 9 - 10 in Alamance County
- ☐ June 13 in Durham

24. What is your political party? (This data is collected for evaluation only, not for identification of respondents)

- o Democrat
- o Independent or other
- o Republican

About the Author

Leslie J. Winner is a lawyer with a 48-year career of public service in North Carolina. She currently works with non-profit organizations on strategic planning and on issues related to justice, public education and bridging divides. Previously, she served as Executive Director of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, as Vice President and General Counsel of the University of North Carolina, and as a member of the NC Senate.

Winner is engaged in many civic leadership roles, serving as the co-chair of the NC Leadership Forum, an effort to increase bi-partisan dialogue and cooperation; has served as co-chair of the board of the NC Justice Center and vice-chair of the board of MDC, organizations that work promote equity and reduce poverty in NC and the US South; as President of Durham's Beth El Congregation; and as a member of the Governor's Commission for a Sound Basic Education ("the Leandro Commission.).

During Winner's three terms as a member of the North Carolina Senate, representing a portion of Mecklenburg County, she served as Majority Whip, Education/Higher Education Committee co-chair, Education Appropriations co-chair, and Judiciary Committee vice-chair.

Winner worked for 16 years as a public interest trial lawyer. As a partner at Chambers, Ferguson, Watt, Wallas, Adkins & Gresham, P.A. she served as lead attorney on cases involving voting rights and other civil rights issues. Winner also has served for three years as General Counsel of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education.

She has received the NC Justice Center's "Lifetime Champion of Justice" award, the Elon University School of Law's "Leadership in the Law" award, and NC Foundation for Public School Children's "Champion of Children" award, and has been inducted into the Order of the Long Leaf Pine.

Winner received an A.B. from Brown University and a J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law. She is a native of Asheville, NC.

About the N.C. Leadership Forum

The NC Leadership Forum aims to transform the State’s policy making environment from one of negative polarization and distrust to one of effective collaboration. Emphasizing the importance of trust-building and relationship development, NCLF encourages constructive dialogue even in the presence of ongoing disagreements. Founded by John Hood and Leslie Winner in 2016 in partnership with Duke’s Sanford School of Public Policy, NCLF works with state and local policy leaders from the government, business, and nonprofit sectors to provide them with the will, skills, and relationships they need to engage with each other constructively across ideology, party, race and gender, age, and rural-urban divides.

Now a part of Duke’s Office of Community Affairs, the NCLF program benefits from collaboration with Duke University students and faculty, who conduct research on topics raised by participants and observe policy deliberations, as well as engage in dialogues following NCLF's model. By June 2024, NCLF will have successfully engaged approximately 400 state and local leaders in North Carolina.

NCLF Steering Committee Members

The following people have served as leaders on NCLF's Steering Committee (Current and Former):

2023-2024 Steering Committee:

- **John Hood**, Co-Chair and Founder - President, John William Pope Foundation
- **Leslie Winner**, Co-Chair and Founder - Former Executive Director, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, former NC General Assembly member
- **Abdullah Antepli** - Associate Professor of Public Policy and Interfaith Relations, Duke University
- **Tamara Barringer** - Associate Justice, NC Supreme Court, Clinical Professor of Business Law & Ethics, UNC Kenan-Flager Business School
- **Anita Brown-Graham** - Professor of Public Law and Government, UNC School of Government
- **Ricky Hurtado**, Program Officer, Z Smith Reynolds Foundation and Former NC State Representative
- **Chuck Neely** - Partner, Williams Mullen, former NC General Assembly member

Former Steering Committee Members

- **Maurice "Mo" Green** - Executive Director, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation
- **Robert Reives**, North Carolina State Representative
- **Lee Roberts,** Managing Partner, SharpVue Capital ; Interim Chancellor - UNC-CH
- **Ray Starling** - General Counsel, NC Chamber of Commerce, President, NC Chamber Legal Institute