



# **FACILITATION TRAINING HANDBOOK**

**A guide to bringing people together for  
public deliberation**



*Prepared by the League of Women Voters North County San Diego  
May 2017*

# League of Women Voters North County San Diego



P.O. Box 131272  
Carlsbad, CA 92013-1272  
760-736-1608



*The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy on selected government issues in the public interest.*

*Membership in the League is open to all citizens eighteen years of age and older. Student memberships are also available. When you join the League, you join at all levels—local, county, state, and national.*

*The League of Women Voters of North County San Diego shall not support or oppose any political party or candidate.*

For more information about the League, go to our website: [www.lwvncsd.org](http://www.lwvncsd.org)

## Table of Contents

Background	3
Deliberative Civic Engagement	4
Trends in Civic Engagement	4
Preparing for Dialogue	6
1. Identify, Research & Frame an Issue	
a. Research Methods	7
b. Synthesize Research Results	8
c. Prepare the Issue Guide	
2. Bring People Together	8
Facilitator’s Role	9
1. Basic Principles of Facilitation	9
2. Key Facilitator Skills	9
3. Step-by-Step Tasks for Facilitation	10
4. Questions to Stimulate Deliberation	10
5. Learning Together and Moving Towards Decisions	11
6. Handling Facilitator Challenges	12
Note Taker’s Role	13
1. Basic Qualities of Note Taking	
2. Key Note Taking Techniques	
Resources	14
Books and Websites	
Glossary	15

# Background

---

The roots of our League's work in civil discourse began in 2011 following the shooting of U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords and eighteen others during a constituent meeting in Tucson. Our League proposed civil discourse/civics education as one of three topics to the state League's 2011-12 program.

In League fashion, our League launched a study seeking a deeper understanding on the roots of incivility and defined civility in our community, which led to outreach with events such as *Democracy in the Balance* with Mira Costa College in 2012, *What Kind of Talk Does Democracy Need?* with the San Diego League in 2013, and a *Democracy in Dialogue* workshop at the state League's 2015 convention in San Diego.

Determined to put the results of our study and outreach into action, League civil discourse members have affiliated with groups throughout the San Diego region. We believe using deliberative dialogue to bring the community together in small groups of diverse individuals to exchange and weigh ideas and opinions will demonstrate that ideas can be exchanged with civility.

**“Civil Discourse:** *A dialogue in which all participants have a right to speak and to be heard. Such dialogue is characterized by: Respectful participation, equally sharing the time available, attentive listening, and balanced discussion.”*

-League of Women Voters North County San Diego

## Deliberative Civic Engagement

---

Deliberation, in the context of this training handbook, is the thoughtful and reasoned consideration of information, views, experiences, and ideas among a group of individuals, where people carefully examine a problem and arrive at a well-reasoned solution after a period of inclusive, respectful consideration of diverse points of view. More specifically, deliberation requires that a diverse group of participants take part in an open and accessible process of reasoned discussion during which they “reflect carefully on a matter, weigh the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions to a problem, and aim to arrive at a decision or judgment based not only facts and data but also values, emotions, and other less technical considerations.”<sup>1</sup>



- **Who:** *Ordinary people, not just experts or politicians, are deeply involved in public decision-making and problem solving, having a voice on critical issues by weighing different approaches and considering costs, consequences, and tradeoffs.*
- **How:** *Impartial moderators are trained to create safe spaces where participants are guided and encouraged to actively listen and to seek to understand the experiences and views of others, striving to seek common ground for addressing difficult problems*
- **Why:** *The purpose of public deliberation is to increase the likelihood of making sound, well-supported decisions about public issues by exploring and testing our ideas as we struggle with hard choices, considering the pros and cons of each action.*

---

## Trends in Civic Engagement

**Matt Leighninger**, Vice President of Public Engagement & Director of the Yankelovich Center for Public Judgment at [Public Agenda](#) makes a case that meaningful, productive forms of civic engagement over long periods of time show improvements in quality of life. In Brazilian cities which adopted democratic innovations more than 20 years ago, those communities have higher tax compliance, lower infant mortality, higher economic growth, higher redistribution of wealth, and lower corruption.

However, despite the energy and ingenuity evident in newer forms of engagement, democratic innovations are not transforming American politics. Some say innovations are making things worse. Some societal trends affect a belief that our democracy is in trouble:

- We're not as willing to join in the forms of in-person social intercourse which built social capital, undermining active civil engagement, which a strong democracy requires from its citizens.
- We're no longer as deferential to expertise and authority as we once were. We seek information from networked information sources via the Internet.
- We still want the protection of laws and the ability to choose representatives, but those powers are no longer enough to make government legitimate in the eyes of some people.
- A bigger, broader view seems to be that our problems are of our own creation, and are to be solved only by ourselves.

Leighninger sees potential for a 21st century vision of a comprehensive, holistic, citizen-centered local democracy. Enlightened policy makers are learning to tap into a rising citizen capacity through democratic dialogue and deliberation earlier in the decision-making process to tackle the most complex problems facing communities today.

## Preparing for Dialogue

Successful deliberations are structured conversations which rely on a prepared foundation:

<p><b>i</b></p> <p>Success Factors</p>	Influence	The process should influence policy and decision-making, though in the beginning the scope may be information sharing for understanding.
	Inclusion	The process should represent the population’s diverse viewpoints and values, with an equal opportunity for all to participate.
	Open Exchange	The process should provide open dialogue, access to information, respect, space to understand and reframe issues, and movement toward consensus.

### 1. Identify, Research & Frame an Issue

According to Kettering Foundation research<sup>2</sup> there are two critical moments in dealing with public problems:

- When a problem is being named—when someone **defines** the problem.
- When different **options for dealing** with a problem are put into a framework. Deliberations are more likely to occur if the full range of options is available for consideration.

After naming a problem, evaluating which problems can benefit from public deliberation is called determining deliberative ripeness.

### Deliberative Ripeness

A measure of whether an issue's characteristics make it likely for deliberative interventions to have a net positive impact on the issue.

Signs of Ripeness/Green Flags	Problems/Red Flags
Tensions between positive values (i.e., wicked problems) even if not currently framed as such	Zero-Sum conflict (one side can't make a gain without it being at the expense of the other)
All major stakeholders realize the need for action and ineffectiveness of current approach	Major stakeholders prefer the status quo or conflict over any potential solutions
Need for broad action by many stakeholders	Necessary actions/costs fall on one group or issue is a specific policy decision
A broad "middle" exists and is accessible, even though potentially silent	Issue dominated by interest groups who have their identity tied to the issue. Any compromise would be seen as giving up.
Misunderstanding across perspectives, but adequate trust to build on	Significant distrust between sides
Significant resources to support the project	Resources supporting the adversarial frame outweigh deliberative resources

## a. Research Methods

People's views are central to naming and framing an issue. Information gathering methods include phone calls, online surveys, or person-to-person interviews. It is important to use open-ended questions and capture actual quotes whenever possible, which typically reveal what is valuable to people. This "naming" can capture people's experiences and their concerns. It is critical to ensure a wide diversity of thought during the research. Questions about the issue could probe:

- Views of the primary individuals, groups, or actors involved such as, "What should we do?"
- Views on different policy ideas such as, "Should we?" or "Why do you care?"
- Views on different sources or causes of the problem such as, "We should . . .because..."
- Views on different degrees of responses, from limiting, moderate, and extreme.
- Gather all relevant information about the issue from vetted public sources.
- Scan social media for untapped voices of the people about an issue.

## b. Synthesize Research Results

Collating the results of information gathering requires more than a statistical analysis. Underlying people's stated concerns are the values they hold. "Framing" collects and presents options for acting on a problem and highlights the tensions within and among assorted options.

## c. Prepare the Issue Guide

Whether a single sheet or multi-page booklet, information for use in a deliberation consists of an introduction to the problem, usually in the form of a question ("What should we do?"), supporting facts, and then an outline of possible options to addressing the problem, including actions that could be taken, and trade-offs for each action.

## 2. Bring People Together

<b>i</b>	<b>Who</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All people who could be affected by the problem</li><li>• Policy makers</li><li>• Facilitators</li><li>• Note Takers</li></ul>
	<b>Expectations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What outcome should people expect?</li><li>• Other paths to action</li></ul>
	<b>Accessibility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Convenient hours &amp; locations</li><li>• Public transportation available</li><li>• Optimum room set-up</li><li>• Child care; translators</li><li>• Food</li></ul>



## Facilitator's Role

---

The word *facilitator* comes from the Latin word *facil*, which means “to make easy.” Besides acting as a guide, motivator, questioner, and bridge builder, the facilitator’s key role is to ensure all voices are heard and to help participants find common ground. A critical characteristic as a facilitator is self-awareness and the ability to check for unconscious bias. According to Teaching Tolerance<sup>3</sup>, a Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, if people are aware of their hidden biases, they can monitor and attempt to ameliorate hidden attitudes before they are expressed through behavior.

### 1. Basic Principles of Facilitation

- Remain neutral about the subject
- Do not take on an “expert” role with the subject matter
- Keep the deliberation focused on the approaches
- Listen for values that motivate participants’ comments
- Intervene as necessary
- Ask clarifying questions if necessary
- Encourage everyone to join in the conversation
- Ask thoughtful and probing questions to surface costs & consequences
- Help participants find common ground
- Encourage deeper reflection

### 2. Key Facilitator Skills

Reflecting & Clarifying	Feeding back or restating an idea or thought to make it clearer. “Let me see if I’m hearing you correctly. . .”
Summarizing	Briefly stating the main thoughts. “It sounds to me as if we have a few major themes.”
Shifting Focus	Moving from one speaker or topic to another.
Asking Probing or Follow-up Questions	Using questions to help people explore disagreements, understand multiple perspectives & uncover common ground. “What are the key points here? What would someone with a different point of view say?”
Managing Conflict	Helping conflict & disagreement be productive. “Let’s refer to our ground rules.” “What do others think?”
Using Silence	Allowing time & space for reflection by pausing between comments.
Non-Verbal Signals	Recognizing & understanding how people communicate without words.

### 3. Step-by-Step Tasks for Facilitation

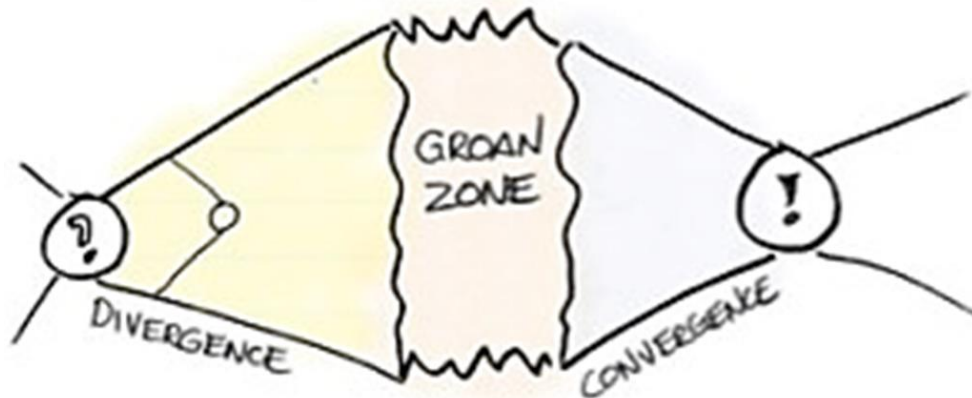
Step	Stage	What happens
1	Welcome	Facilitator introduces the program
2	Guidelines	Everyone contributes to ground rules for conversation
3	Key Questions	Facilitator poses the questions after outlining the key issue being considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What is valuable to us?</li> <li>– What are the consequences associated with the various approaches?</li> <li>– What are the inherent conflicts we must work through?</li> <li>– Can we detect any shared sense of direction or common ground for action?</li> </ul>
4	Introductions	Using a “one-breath” statement, participants share a brief, personal experience related to the issue
5	Deliberation	Participants examine all approaches; Guide thru the Groan Zone.
6	Reflection	Hearing a public voice? (Going away from my voice to our voice?)

### 4. Questions to Stimulate Deliberation

- Could you share a story to illustrate that point?
- I understand you do not like that position, but what do you think people who favor it deeply care about?
- How would someone make a case against what you said?
- What is there about this approach that you just cannot accept?
- How may your ideas affect other people?
- Can someone suggest areas that we seem to have in common?
- Would someone identify the values that seem to be clashing?
- Who should we include in this dialogue that is not already represented?
- If we followed this course of action, what would be the effects on your life?
- What values might people hold who support this position?
- How might your concerns differ if you were (poor/wealthy)?

## 5. Learning Together and Moving Towards Decisions

When people come together to explore ideas and begin moving towards a decision or action, they typically pass through three phases, described by Sam Kaner in the *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*<sup>4</sup>.



### Dynamics of Group Decision-Making

Group conversations start in the **divergence zone**, where people brainstorm, explore ideas and become aware of diversity and possibilities.

As people begin to integrate what they are learning from others in the group, they may enter the **groan zone**, which can be a period of struggle as people try to integrate what they are learning.

In theory, after brainstorming the group's next task seems simple: sift through the ideas and discuss some in depth. But in practice, that task is often tough. Everyone has his or her own unique frame of reference and communication can easily break down. The defining work of the groan zone is to understand one another's perspective and build a shared framework of understanding.

The simplest way to help group members gain a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives is to encourage them to ask direct questions of one another and listen carefully to the answers.

The groan zone is an important part of the journey toward sustainable results. Facilitators need to support a group to keep it working through the groan zone, sensing what process shifts might be needed to not rush to convergence too soon.

In the **convergence zone**, excitement and clarity builds and decisions become clear.

## 6. Handling Facilitator Challenges

Dealing with participants who dominate the discussion:

- What do others think about this approach?
- What ideas have not been expressed?
- How would anyone else in the group respond to the concerns just expressed?
- Could someone tell us a story to illustrate that point?
- For those who hold that position, what do they care deeply about?

Dealing with a difficult participant:

- Gradually escalate your response.
- Use body language (move close to the person).
- Gradually use more assertive verbal techniques such as interrupting to capture the points stated so far.
- Refer to the guidelines (everyone participates—no one monopolizes the conversation.)
- Redirect the conversation by saying, “Thank you. What do others think about that? Or “Let’s create some space for those of you who have been quieter. Someone else?”

Handling misinformation from a participant:

- Does anyone have a different perspective on that?
- Use the issue book. Point out that “on page xx it states. . . How does that fit with the information you just gave us?”
- What meaning does that information have to you?
- Would you give us an example?

## Note Taker's Role

---

The purpose of recording is to remind participants of their comments, agreements, and action items; to serve as a reference document for future discussions; and to inform stakeholders, or a wider audience, of dialogue, decisions, and actions.

- To help establish that what the participants say is valued and being listened to.
- To remind forum participants of their comments, agreements, and action items, particularly during the reflections time.
- To support the importance of equality and inclusion. Comments are captured regardless of the source, and the author is not identified.
- To serve as a reference document for future forums.
- To facilitate the writing of the report that will inform a wider audience of the discussion, decisions, and actions.

### 1. Basic Qualities of Note Taking

- Clear
- Legible
- Accurate
- Well-organized
- Reports the appropriate amount of information
- Captures the tensions, trade-offs and common ground for action
- Notes are distributed soon after the discussion

### 2. Key Note Taking Techniques

- Print in capital letters 2 to 4" tall
- Make thick-lined letters
- Write straight up and down
- Close your letters (don't leave gaps in B's and P's, for example)
- Use plain, block letters
- Practice makes perfect
- Alternate colors between speakers, but don't use too many colors on one page
- Don't crowd the bottom of the page

## Resources

---

### Books

***Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making***, Sam Kaner, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2014

***Democracy in Motion***, Tina Nabatchi, Gastil, et al, Oxford University Press, New York, 2012

***The Big Sort***, Bill Bishop, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston, 2008

### Websites

**Center for Public Deliberation** [www.cpd.colostate.edu](http://www.cpd.colostate.edu)

CPD is dedicated to enhancing local democracy through improved public communication and community problem solving. Working with students trained in small group facilitation, the CPD assists the community by researching issues and developing useful background material, and then designs, facilitates, and reports on innovative public events. The Center is based at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO.

**Kettering Foundation** [www.kettering.org](http://www.kettering.org)

An independent, nonpartisan research organization rooted in the American tradition of cooperative research. Everything Kettering researches relates to one central question: what does it take for democracy to work as it should?

**National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation** [www.ncdd.org](http://www.ncdd.org)

Network of practitioners, researchers, activists, artists, students and others who are committed to giving people a voice and making sure that each voice counts.

**National Institute for Civil Discourse** [www.nicd.arizona.edu](http://www.nicd.arizona.edu)

NICD integrates research, practice and policy to support and engage elected officials, media and the public. The Institute is based at the University of Arizona and was established in 2011 following the tragic Tucson shootings.

**San Diego Deliberation Network** [www.SDDN.org](http://www.SDDN.org)

A regional collaborative of the area's leading academic institutions and the League of Women Voters promoting civil dialogue and deliberation on issues that impact the community by engaging the people of the region.

## Glossary

Term	Definition
<b>Deliberative Dialogue</b>	Deliberative dialogue is a form of discussion aimed at finding the best course of action. Deliberative questions take the form "What should we do?" The purpose is not so much to solve a problem or resolve an issue as to explore the most promising avenues for action.
<b>Framing</b>	Identifying the options or choices that are available. It is helpful to identify at least three alternatives that might be pursued to avoid the polarization that is likely to emerge when only two options are considered. It is also important that each option address the core concerns that were surfaced in the naming process.
<b>Groan Zone</b>	The Groan Zone is a normal part of the deliberative process characterized by group frustration as a group moves from divergent to convergent thinking. To work through the groan zone, groups can create shared content and strengthen relationships. Group members should be encouraged to ask direct questions of one another and listen carefully to the answers. Avoiding or leaving the groan zone prematurely can result in false consensus, leading to unsustainable outcomes.
<b>Naming</b>	Identifying the problem or issue for which a solution is sought. The challenge is to identify core concerns in a way that resonates with a great number of people without alienating others. It is also helpful to name the problem in a way that reveals how different things that are important to people may be in tension in any solution.
<b>Passionate Impartiality</b>	Passionately impartial scholars and students are passionate about their communities, democracy, and solving problems, but are nonetheless committed to serving an impartial, process-focused role to improve local communication practices.
<b>Wicked Problems</b>	Wicked problems inherently <b>involve competing underlying values</b> , paradoxes, and tradeoffs that can be <i>informed</i> , but cannot be <i>resolved</i> by science. Any proposed solution to a wicked problem tends to <b>create new problems</b> . Optimal solutions to wicked problems often <b>require adaptive changes</b> rather than simply technical ones. Addressing wicked problems <b>necessitates effective collaboration and communication</b> across multiple perspectives.

---

<sup>1</sup> Tina Nabatchi, Gastil, et al, [Democracy in Motion: Evaluating the Practice and Impact of Deliberative Civic Engagement](#), Oxford University Press, New York, 2012, pp 7

<sup>2</sup> Kettering Foundation Report, "Naming and Framing Difficult Issues to Make Sound Decisions," 2011, [https://www.kettering.org/wp-content/uploads/Naming\\_Framing\\_2011-.pdf](https://www.kettering.org/wp-content/uploads/Naming_Framing_2011-.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>"Teaching Tolerance, a Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center website, "Test Yourself for Hidden Bias," accessed 5/6/2017 <http://www.tolerance.org/Hidden-bias>

<sup>4</sup> Kaner, Sam, [Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making](#), Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2014