CIVIC
COMMUNITY VOICES
INFORMED CHOICES

A GUIDE FOR

HELPING COMMUNITIES ADDRESS CHALLENGING ISSUES

FAMU FLORIDA AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL UNIVERSITY

UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

A Florida Cooperative Extension Program collaboratively led by faculty from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and the University of Florida

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Welcome to the **CIVIC Guide**

Overview

This document explains the goals of the CIVIC program and how agents can develop events and activities to meet those goals. This material provides direction to agents who are building their capacity to support communities as they meet the challenges of resolving important issues through thoughtful public engagement and governance. The partnership between FAMU and UF helps Cooperative Extension Service (Extension) staff and faculty in both institutions better reach audiences and meet their needs. CIVIC activities are designed to do the following:

- provide research-based information about community issues in ways that help people understand the issue and options, ask questions, and respect differences;
- build partnerships with organizations, agencies, and institutions to enhance civic life and governance;
- develop events (such as town hall meetings and deliberative discussions) that enable a variety of people to hear different perspectives and express their concerns as they seek common ground; and
- facilitate small groups of people taking reasonable steps toward identifying, recommending, or implementing solutions to community issues.

The partnership between FAMU and UF helps Cooperative Extension Service (Extension) staff and faculty in both institutions better reach audiences and meet their needs.

As you work together to consider which events to organize in your communities, the chapters in this guide can be a source of suggestions, examples, and references.

Getting Started with CIVIC

We suggest that CIVIC activities are best accomplished in partnership with municipal agencies and community organizations; perhaps you will meet new friends! As you work together to consider which events to organize in your communities, the chapters in this guide can be a source of suggestions, examples, and references—all of which are organized on a general timeline so that agents can begin their efforts with an exploration of the issues that concern members of their community and move forward through the chapters. Come back to it when you have questions or are beginning a new component. Each chapter includes background information and justification for the principles and strategies, guidelines and how-to explanations, examples from Florida, and suggestions for exercises as agents practice these skills. Certain chapters may emphasize some of these elements more than others. All chapters reference materials in other chapters.

This document can be used in several ways: by individuals who wish to develop CIVIC activities, as materials for an in-service training, and as supplementary material for those who have attended a training. Portions may be helpful to share with community partners to guide your team toward a collective program. This document is an evolving and growing guide to CIVIC. We intend to update the information from time to time and would appreciate your suggestions for improvements. Please leave comments on the feedback form on the CIVIC website.

CHAPTER

1

Introduction to CIVIC

The Cooperative Extension Service helps individuals and communities solve problems to enhance well-being. ***CIVIC: Community Voices, Informed Choices*** is the Florida Extension Program that prepares Extension faculty to help communities address challenging community issues. It complements other Extension programs that provide information to help people take actions as individuals by creating a platform for community members to learn about and discuss community issues that they care about but either cannot solve alone or would be better solved with community perspectives and efforts.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- Exercise 1-1: Identifying Local Community Issues
- Worksheet 1-1: Identifying Local Community Issues Worksheet
- Exercise 1-2: Describing A CIVIC Issue

A good facilitator will be needed to help the group acknowledge differences and move toward common ground.

A successful CIVIC activity is not a debate or arm-wrestling competition. It is a thoughtful expression of options and trade-offs that address an issue and explore why people think some choices might be better than others. This healthy two-way conversation involves understanding the conditions and assumptions that lead people to prioritize different solutions. It helps a community focus on a path forward to address complex issues and invites participants to continue the momentum toward change. It helps people discuss the motivating question: "what should we do?" while generating the energy to begin the next step. Inviting people to work on issues that they care about, however, can create strong feelings and conflicting perspectives. A good facilitator will be needed to help the group acknowledge these differences and move toward common ground. Everyone needs to be heard and respected.

The CIVIC program includes several activities, each of which involves multiple steps and options. This guide will describe how Extension faculty and staff can determine which activities to implement and be successful. Most activities will begin with exploring the concerns that people express (Chapter 2) and developing partnerships in the community (Chapter 3). In some cases, Extension will work with an organization or agency to understand how the public perceives the issue. Some issues and some communities may require more information to fully understand the problems, the solutions, and the trade-offs. Residents may be curious about the details and want to learn more. We recommend that agents use a town hall meeting (Chapter 4) to provide information and enable participants to ask questions. Agents can use a deliberative forum (Chapter 5) to engage participants in a facilitated discussion to discuss

various perspectives and potential solutions. A deliberative forum enables participants to share their preferences; it does not focus on providing information. As a result, it may be reasonable to pair a town hall meeting with a forum to help provide information and opportunity for discussions. Participants may identify several actions that could be taken to move their community closer to resolution. Extension faculty can help facilitate small groups working on the actions the participants would like to tackle. These might include organizing events to raise awareness of the problem, asking experts to speak to the community to answer specific questions, jointly collecting additional data to explore potential solutions, developing recommendations for decision makers, or serving on a committee as a community representative (Chapter 8).

Participants may identify several actions that could be taken to move their community closer to resolution.

Chapters in this guide address the following program building blocks: concern collecting, partnerships, town hall meetings, deliberative forums, and community actions. Other chapters describe the skills and tools needed to support these building blocks, such as facilitation and evaluation. Building skills to address the needs of all residents is inherent in any successful CIVIC activity.

CIVIC began with several assumptions and realizations:

1. Residents in every community want many of the same things–health, security, and opportunities to thrive. Many would also like an opportunity to create a better community for themselves and their families. They may not know how to begin to work together; they may feel like they don't know enough to engage.

2. Communities, large and small, face difficult challenges and may not have the resources or capacity to resolve them. As a result, people are frustrated, defeated, and concerned that problems do not appear to be addressed.

3. Increasingly, these community challenges make it difficult to know how to begin to work on contentious issues.

4. The Cooperative Extension Service—with its presence in every Florida county, its access to research-based information, and the trust it has garnered with various stakeholders—is well positioned to create new opportunities to build community capacity to address these issues, such as those strategies offered through CIVIC.

When community members participate in this process it strengthens our democracy.

Some of the public perception challenges inherent in addressing and solving community problems are a combination of believing that one does not know enough, is not skilled enough, is alone in the concern, or does not have access to the system that makes these decisions. Often people face these challenges while nevertheless being motivated to make a difference. Such situations are not unique and can leave otherwise concerned citizens throwing up their hands in frustration and defeat or resorting to anger and resentment. This context has been the genesis of a theory originally called the Reasonable Person Model (RPM; Basu & Kaplan, 2015; Kaplan & Kaplan, 2009) that seeks to explain and explore how we can create supportive environments that bring out the best in people. While these ideas can be applied to the workplace or within a family, CIVIC is interested in addressing community issues through improved public engagement and participatory democracy. The rest of this chapter explains the guidelines from RPM, which is now called Supportive Environments for Effectiveness (SEE).

What Topics Can be Addressed with CIVIC Activities?

CIVIC focuses on community issues that need to be addressed with input from the people who live there. For example, senior citizens may be worried about timely evacuation information before a hurricane or fire. Coastal towns might wrestle with the costs of replumbing stormwater drains given rising sea levels. Residents may want to debate a regulation requiring developers to provide affordable housing in a percentage of their units. A series of healthy community discussions can be useful to help people focus on what matters, collect more information, and prioritize recommendations for decision makers. CIVIC activities help create supportive environments for engaging the community in decisions that affect them. The process of making community decisions is governance. When community members participate in this process it strengthens our democracy.

GOVERNANCE refers to the structure and process for decision-making, accountability, and behavior among leaders of an agency or organization. It includes government, other stakeholders, and the rules that give leaders authority.

CIVIC is a robust and appropriate resource for tackling complex issues. Often a community issue is important to individuals and families, but there may be little individuals can do alone to work toward solutions. Furthermore, these issues are not likely to be solved with one decision

or a simple action. When organizations and agencies work together with community members, opportunities emerge for Extension to suggest and support optimal decision making and new strategies. Furthermore, this work is relevant to all initiative areas across Extension.

Challenging community issues are well suited for public deliberation. Rourke (2014) lists several other attributes that describe types of issues that are appropriate for CIVIC:

- There is lack of agreement about what is at issue.
- There is disagreement on the cause of the problem, or the cause is not clear.
- There is no definitive or single solution to the problem, but a decision needs to be made about what may be done.
- Every solution involves trade-offs or downsides that involve things someone cherishes.
- The problem is intractable, ongoing, or systemic.
- People may believe they hold different deep-seated values about the issue.
- Any solution requires multiple actors (e.g., community groups, individuals, and government).

How Can CIVIC Activities Help These Problems?

Community challenges are often best solved through strong member participation. But if community members are overwhelmed or uninformed and thus hesitant or apathetic about engaging, they are unlikely to participate (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). Lack of engagement can be addressed with four key strategies: 1) listen to the concerns of people in the community, particularly those who might not be engaged in community decision making; 2) provide information that helps people

Community challenges are often best solved through strong member participation.

When people have a chance to ask questions, we know they are getting information that is relevant to them and their communities.

understand the issue and potential solutions; 3) build skills and capacity to engage in community governance; and 4) provide opportunities that make it easy for people to learn, grow, and engage. This simple formula is the essence of SEE (Box 1-1) (Basu & Kaplan, 2015).

BOX 1-1

Supportive Environments for Effectiveness (SEE)

CIVIC activities are based on the Supportive Environments for Effectiveness (SEE) framework in several ways. CIVIC training programs use a SEE-mindset to help agents build skills. CIVIC activities use the same SEE-approach to help residents feel comfortable sharing their perspectives and finding local meaningful actions. This framework pays attention to helping people 1) obtain and understand needed information, 2) process and use that information effectively and 3) find opportunities to contribute and make a difference. Throughout this guide you'll see references to SEE's three domains: Model-building, Being Capable, and Meaningful Action. People are motivated to use all three goals to improve their lives, and CIVIC aims to create opportunities that support these important components of effectiveness.

Additionally, there are several elements of CIVIC activities that are essential to creating the capacity for communities to approach contentious issues:

1 **People are interested in working on an issue when it is relevant to them and when they have a clear idea of what to do and why.** They may be motivated to understand more about the problem and seek information that makes sense to them—it helps them build a mental model of the problem and use it to see a path forward. This suggests Extension agents might begin their CIVIC process by finding out what problems people care about or by helping people understand how a problem is relevant to various groups of people. This helps us know what is in their mental model, and what connections they make to the current issue. Listening can tell us a lot! When people have a chance to ask questions, we know they are getting information that is relevant to them and their communities. Chapter 2 describes how agents can collect concerns; Chapter 4 provides guidance on a town hall program for engaging people in learning and asking questions.

2 **Controversial issues raise strongly held opinions.** Many of the differences that people argue about are actually different perceptions

and interpretations of the information they believe to be true about the cause of a problem. It can be frustrating to engage in discussions when this is the case, as people are invested in maintaining their view of the world (Kahan, 2010). Rather than debate the cause of a problem, CIVIC activities begin with acknowledging that there is a problem and focusing on what the community can do to improve the situation. When we carefully frame the discussion to include the values and perspectives that a wide mix of participants hold, everyone feels the program is designed to include them (Haidt, 2013). We want to create an environment where people are willing to consider different perspectives, even if they believe one perspective is wrong. A supportive environment, where people know they will be heard, helps change the tone of the discussion, and ideally, move people toward solving problems rather than advocating for one particular solution. CIVIC calls these activities "deliberative discussions" because participants take the time to listen to each other and consider various options (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 explores how to frame an issue to achieve this goal. These discussions are particularly beneficial when the participants represent a mix of perspectives, such as business leaders and environmental advocates. Agents have, however, used deliberation to engage the residents of one neighborhood in successful discussions about improving their local community. In this case, the goal was to generate agreement and empower the residents of this community. When different perspectives are needed to create discussion, there are several ways to bring people with different ideas together. See Chapter 3 to consider how to build partnerships to bring new ideas to your activities.

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3 **All are welcome.** CIVIC is founded on a partnership between FAMU and UF to help us increase the number of people and audiences who attend our programs. Extension agents work hard to make their programs available and accessible to everyone in their community. Reaching all audiences can be challenging, and it may be necessary to move outside a regular group of stakeholders, clientele, and partners to understand the concerns of people who rarely engage with Extension. In addition, if some groups of the community are not part of the conversation, the community won't be able to consider all of the concerns about the possibilities for addressing the issue. CIVIC activities can help build a shared mental model and expand the small group of concerned citizens who are typically involved to include those who aren't typically involved. CIVIC helps Extension address the challenges of reaching new audiences by seeking out community leaders to work with or represent community members not usually engaged with Extension and including them in the development of programs. Building new partnerships can be extremely rewarding, as the case studies in Chapter 10 demonstrate. Community

Participants may identify several actions that could be taken to move their community closer to resolution.

discussions should include all voices from the community, and the solutions to those community issues should enable all community members to prefer at least one option. The chapters in this guide explain how this work can be reflected in the concerns we collect (Chapter 2), the partnerships we build (Chapter 3), the way we design activities (Chapters 4 and 5), and the way we frame issues and facilitate discussions (Chapters 6 and 7), in our follow up actions (Chapter 8), and evaluations and reporting (Chapter 9).

4 **A trained facilitator can help moderate these discussions,** give quiet people the time and space to contribute, and gently manage those who dominate the exchange (Kaner, 2014). These skills may come naturally to some and can be learned and practiced by others. Chapter 7 provides an outline of important concepts for facilitation. Training designed to improve facilitation skills is available to Extension faculty through several programs: the Extension Foundation offers workshops and training tools to faculty in member institutions (FAMU and UF); the Natural Resources Leadership Institute at UF offers workshops and a year-long program; and CIVIC provides training, mentoring, and opportunities to practice skills.

5 **People may be willing to volunteer when they hear others express interest in a project that makes sense.** Ideally, the outcome of a deliberative discussion or town hall meeting is an opportunity to discuss potential actions and possible next steps. It might take the form of reporting the outcome of the forum to decision makers; collecting information to explore a question; setting up meetings with relevant community leaders; learning about the strategies for addressing the municipal planning process; or increasing public awareness by organizing an event, printing a brochure, or posting a sign (Chapter 8). The action proposed should be small enough to feel doable, yet compelling enough to move participants toward their goal (Weick, 1984). These are examples of meaningful actions that the SEE framework describes. Extension agents can facilitate these participant-led actions that seek reasonable solutions without advocating for or determining a particular solution. Our job is to build community capacity to work toward solutions the community members develop. Community leaders are typically part of this process and usually welcome Extension's role in enhancing public engagement.

The following paragraphs outline some of the ways CIVIC is rooted in a broader understanding of social science and community change.

Why is deliberation needed? There are many ways to make decisions. When the science is clear, and when everyone agrees on the problem and vision for a solution, a good decision should not be controversial. There may not even be a need to engage the public; people are happy to have community leaders take initiative to, for example, improve pedestrian safety near a school. But when information is conflicting, when the problem definition depends on the lens through which you view the issue, or when stakeholders have strong and different opinions about the type of solution they want, decisions are likely to be more appropriate and more lasting if they are made with public engagement (Chess, Dietz, & Shannon, 1998). For example, is school violence a problem because guns are available, background checks on prospective buyers are insufficient, teachers are not armed, automatic weapons have the capacity to do large-scale damage, or gun owners are not trained? There are many ways to think about gun safety. How a community should protect school children is not always straightforward, and there often are advantages and disadvantages to each option.

THE ESSENCE OF A DELIBERATIVE DISCUSSION should merely assume there is a problem and focus on what to do about it. This eliminates the need to delve into the source of the problem, which is often where debates on facts surface.

Building skills to address the needs of all residents is inherent in any successful CIVIC activity.

The traditional strategies for increasing public engagement fall short of the goals of deliberation. Opinion polls, for example, collect opinions which may be formed without sufficient information or knowledge of the choices (Yankelovich, 1991). Nor is a public hearing any better, since the most passionate community members are allowed only three minutes to speak their mind, one after another with no opportunity for exchange

If the public helps generate the options and galvanizes energy toward recommended solutions, community leaders may be motivated to act more quickly to solve important problems.

of ideas. Public hearing speakers get little feedback from the organizers and rarely know if their input mattered. When public opinions matter, people should have an opportunity to become informed about the issue, to consider multiple perspectives, and wrestle with their ideas about what is important. Policy choices about scientific issues are often complex and multifaceted. Judgments, informed by deliberation, are needed to define the problem, select the appropriate data, analyze the data, and interpret the information and analyses (Stern, 2005). Deliberation is an appropriate form of decision making when a complex issue requires open discussion to uncover bias and error, when subjectivity is unavoidable, when issues are interdisciplinary, and when discussion can bring concerns and value positions into perspective (Stern, 2005).

DELIBERATION is "any process for communication and for raising and collectively considering issues... In deliberation, people discuss, ponder, exchange observations and views, reflect upon information and judgments concerning matters of mutual interest, and attempt to persuade each other" (NRC, 1996, p. 215).

When community members engage as public body, they are strengthening democracy. If the public helps generate the options and galvanizes energy toward recommended solutions, community leaders may be motivated to act more quickly to solve important problems (Mathews, 2014). CIVIC helps agents develop activities that create a supportive environment—a space that enables people to be comfortable expressing their ideas, listening to others, building their understanding, and thinking about what they can do. The background work of collecting information and concerns is just as important to setting the right tone and framing the discussion as is the facilitator who welcomes everyone into the meeting.

While traditional Extension often shares information through one-way communication strategies, such as fact sheets, CIVIC activities present a new approach for engaging residents and partners, which contributes to collective knowledge and action through two-way communication. Needs assessments are at the core of Extension work, and forums can serve as needs assessments when the topic aligns with an agent's programmatic discipline. In the **PINELLAS COUNTY CASE STUDY**, the forums provided insights on gaps in sustainability education and opportunities for a collective impact approach where Extension and its city partners could work together to create a local solution.

What does deliberation require? It isn't easy to talk about strongly-held values and contentious issues in a civil manner. It is even harder to listen carefully to counter opinions. However, people can engage in meaningful conversations when the forum is set up to respect different values and perspectives, a good facilitator explains and guides the process, and others model deliberation. Eventually, people can improve their skills in deliberation. This requires that individuals learn to listen carefully to other participants. Rather than preparing how they will respond, people should focus on actively listening to what is being said. This is easier to accomplish when participants know they will be given the same opportunity to be heard when it is their turn. Good listeners repeat the main points someone makes, clarifying that they heard the message. Deliberation also requires that people express their own opinions thoughtfully, with "I" statements, and in ways that respect others' opinions.

Deliberation requires that people express their own opinions thoughtfully, with "I" statements, and in ways that respect others' opinions.

A study at Wake Forest University engaged a group of students in deliberative experiences as participants, researchers, and hosts. Compared to a control group, the deliberators became more aware and engaged in civic life. They demonstrated a more sophisticated and nuanced ability to reason and think critically about issues, and they expressed confidence that they could work with others to solve problems (Harriger & McMillan, 2007). Research at Dartmouth College suggests that when a group of people talk about ambiguous

Including all community members in the process of discussing a community issue helps give a voice to everyone.

and uncertain information and come to consensus, their brain activity synchronizes. They even agreed on things they hadn't talked about (Hughes, 2022). Talking together can be a powerful tool for communities.

Even more critical to effective deliberation than practice and experience is enlisting a skilled facilitator. A facilitator can help all participants add to the discussion, move the discussion toward values that may not be articulated but may underlie a comment, keep the conversation focused on solutions, help save questions that require more information for a different event, and nudge participants toward considering actions, where relevant (Kaner, 2014; Mathews, 2014). Facilitators are essential for all CIVIC events and activities.

If the public is engaged, why is additional attention to recruiting an audience needed? CIVIC purposely engages those who have not traditionally been involved in making decisions simply because their perspectives are important to include, and the solution will ultimately be better for all community members. By this we mean people who don't usually engage in governance, such as farmers, youth, or people who are busy taking care of children in the evening. We aim to create an atmosphere of respect in our programs so everyone feels welcome to engage. We want to demonstrate that the views of all communities will be heard and will have a place in the suite of recommendations going forward. Those working in the community may recognize which communities are most likely to be sidelined, and a knowledgeable facilitator should be able to help those community members feel respected and included. Achieving this vision takes additional attention and effort.

Including all community members in the process of discussing a community issue helps give a voice to everyone. While protests can attract attention and provide an outlet for voicing opinions, they might not move toward community agreement on solutions. CIVIC activities, on the other hand, are an avenue for enabling all voices to be heard, considered, and incorporated into future activities and solutions. In time, and if early efforts are successful, it can build community capacity across all demographics. This may threaten those with traditional forms of power—they may prefer to maintain the status quo (French & Raven, 1959). Including these leaders early in the planning process may help them recognize the importance of a process that makes more evident the values and priorities that are shared across the community.

What is the role for science-based information? People seek and need information for daily life, careers, education, and all sorts of decision making. This enables us to act as individuals, selecting the information we believe to be true (Nickerson, 1998). In addition, we select information that allows us to fit into certain social groups and to match the behavior of peers (Asch, 1961). When it comes to weighing options and making decisions, we might seek information to answer specific questions. In general, people are more able to receive information when they know they need it. Allowing them to realize their needs by asking questions, and then receiving answers they seek has been a useful strategy used by teachers for decades (Wilson et al., 2010). CIVIC activities such as town hall meetings encourage people to ask questions for this reason.

Although information is important, it can also shut down deliberation. If people perceive that the "answer" is known, or if it ignores their perspective, then why should they bother listening and learning? What is the reason for the discussion? CIVIC activities tread carefully between these two possibilities by emphasizing information from experts in the town hall meetings and discussions about participants' feelings and concerns in deliberative forums. The framework for that deliberation is about solutions, worldviews, and values rather than facts about the problem. Information is used, however, to help legitimize the advantages of competing options (Mathews, 2014). All options should be based on our best understanding of the relevant science.

Allowing people to realize their needs by asking questions, and then receiving answers they seek has been a useful strategy used by teachers for decades.

The process of framing an issue for deliberation includes attention to the choices that a community could implement.

Creating solutions takes more than talk. A series of deliberative discussions can be healthy for a community and informative for leaders. But if the energy they generate does not carry participants toward additional action, these discussions can be frustrating to participants who want to see something done. It is essential that facilitators, organizers, and partners offer opportunities to engage participants in continuing to work toward solutions. Part of this work should be obvious in the actions and trade-offs that frame the issue. It will also be important for the facilitator to listen to suggestions that arise from the participants, and for others to add their knowledge of the community. What could be accomplished? How can a big goal be subdivided into smaller doable steps?

The process of deliberation and the ensuing work toward solutions builds community capacity through the development of social capital and political capital (Jacobs, 2011). In particular, social capital may be most useful in building community capacity to bring about change. It refers to the glue that holds a community together and is often measured by the degree of trust and reciprocity that people express for each other. Bringing people together, establishing an atmosphere of trust, and helping people understand new ways of seeing a problem build both bonding and bridging capacities that are essential to enhancing social capital (Emery & Flora, 2006).

The process of framing an issue for deliberation includes attention to the choices that a community could implement. Facilitators should help guide the discussion toward issues to explore, recommendations, the development of working groups, and/or the identification of those

who wish to continue meeting to discuss the issue. These next steps (Chapter 8) can be thought of as small experiments, without a huge investment that might end in failure or the need to change direction, but with the promise of making small advances, learning, getting to know new people, and feeling a sense of accomplishment as the group/community works toward solutions (Weick, 1984). Leaving one meeting with the promise of another helps participants feel their time was spent wisely.

Those readers who are interested in exploring how to think about working with CIVIC in their communities can begin by completing the exercises at the end of this chapter.

Summary

CIVIC helps provide a framework and platform for engaging Florida Cooperative Extension in building community capacity to work toward the resolution of complex community challenges. These issues require public participation and engagement. Many scholars have explored the challenges of democracy; CIVIC suggests that we offer events and activities that help people increase understanding, deliberate on perspectives for solutions, and engage in projects that fit their skill level (Basu & Kaplan, 2015). The following summary of the characteristics of good public participation by Nabatchi and Leighninger (2015) can be applied to CIVIC activities.

The structure

- allows people to tell their stories,
- provides choices,
- provides factual information, and
- supports a variety of actions.

The process

- is meaningful and legitimate;
- is enjoyable, convenient, and easy; and
- demonstrates good group process strategies.

If these characteristics appeal to you and resonate with how you wish to represent Extension in your community, you are welcome to continue with this document and work to advance CIVIC in Florida.

Congratulations! You've just started to develop your CIVIC program! Your next step is to build relationships with the people, organizations, and agencies that can help you understand the nuances of the problem and solution options; relate the issue to various audiences; frame the issue for an effective and deliberative discussion; and help you attract participants. Those readers who are interested in exploring how to think about working with CIVIC in their communities can begin by completing the exercises at the end of this chapter.

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Identifying Local Community Issues

Communities have a variety of issues and conflicts. Some are straightforward and can be solved by assigning sufficient funds to the appropriate municipal department. Patton and Blaine (2001) call these Type 1 issues. Other issues have multiple solutions that appeal to different stakeholders, and there may not be consensus on which option makes sense. These are Type 2 issues. And still other controversies (Type 3) may be so difficult to define that the problem is unclear, and solutions are unlikely (Patton & Blaine, 2001). Issues are appropriate for CIVIC if they need community support or funding to resolve (Types 1, 2, and 3) and require community discussion, either to understand and prioritize the solutions (Type 2) or to define the problem (Type 3).

THE FIRST STEP in this exercise is to better understand the issues in your communities that might be appropriate for a CIVIC activity. Using your local newspaper, local TV news, or a conversation at any local watering hole, select up to three community issues and answer the questions below for each issue. Use Worksheet 1-1 to record your responses.

1. What is the issue?
2. Who cares about this issue? Who are the stakeholders?
3. What organizations might be interested in resolving this issue? Who might be partners in a CIVIC activity?
4. If Extension addressed this issue in the past, what was the outcome? If not, why?
5. To what extent does this issue affect different segments of the community differently?
6. Where is there agreement and where is there disagreement on this issue?
7. Would different segments of the community agree with this assessment?
8. How might working on this issue fit with your current programs? If it doesn't fit, why not?

As you reflect on your responses, consider the following:

In what ways are the issues you identified similar? *Are they about spending public money? Do they involve scarce resources? Do they have common characteristics?*

Are they simple problems with more than one solution (Type 2)? *Are these complex issues that could have different ways of defining and solving the problem (Type 3)?*

If this is an issue that Extension should not be involved with? Why is that?

Of the issues that Extension could address, which meet the parameters of a CIVIC project? *Community scale problem and solution; Type 2 or 3; public engagement could assist with priorities, recommendations, or solutions; partners are available.*

How could Extension assist in working toward a community solution? *Engaging underheard voices in the community; building partnerships; providing public priorities to decision makers; building capacity for local civic problem solving; facilitating activities toward common ground.*

Identifying Local Community Issues Worksheet

Complete this worksheet with three issues in your community using local news and conversations to explore whether they are appropriate for a CIVIC event.

THE ISSUE:	#1	#2	#3
Who are the stakeholders?			
What organizations work on this issue?			
Has Extension worked on this issue before? What happened?			
Who is responsible for fixing this issue?			
Does the concern affect people in the community differently?			
What is agreed upon? Where is the disagreement?			
How would this issue fit with your current programs?			
Is this a Type 1, 2, or 3 issue?			

Describing a CIVIC Issue

Use the Plan of Work and Report of Accomplishments framework for reporting on Extension activities to brainstorm and then develop the basis of a CIVIC activity in conjunction with your program area.

THESE QUESTIONS and prompts may be useful as you start to describe the need for a CIVIC activity in your county.

1. List at least three challenging community problems in your county that intersect with your program area.
2. Now reflect on the type of solutions that have been discussed or could be developed for each of these problems.
   - If all the solutions seem to revolve around individual behavior change, cross out that issue and move on to the next.
   - Circle the issues if the potential solutions involve policy change, investment of public dollars, the coordination of public and individual actions, or decisions that elected officials can make.
3. Looking at the issues you circled, consider the following questions:
   - **Which have been discussed in the news media?** *If none, are you willing to spend time developing awareness on this issue? If yes, proceed; otherwise loop back to #1 and think about other topics.*
   - **Which represents a major local controversy?** *If none, this could be a great way to get started with a CIVIC project–before the sides have become entrenched.*
   - **Which idea would you like to dedicate some time and energy to?** *If none of the issues on your list meet this criterion, go back to #1 and think a bit more. If you are excited to work on one of these issues, continue.*
4. In a paragraph, describe the issue. Mention how the problem affects people in the community, and how various populations might be affected differently. Describe what you currently understand about the potential options for a solution, and who should be involved in making and implementing a solution.

Your paragraph might have led you to think about potential partners for this issue. Continue this line of thinking and list a few more. Consider local, state, and federal agencies; informal community leaders such as civic groups and religious leaders; and elected officials and municipality staff. Also, think about people you know in these organizations, or who you know that know people in these organizations. Are any on your advisory board? Do you need another advisory board for your CIVIC activities?

CHAPTER

2

Community Assessments and Concern Collecting

As you consider how a CIVIC activity can support your Extension program(s), you need to know more about the community you are serving. A community assessment reveals the needs and assets of a community. Needs can be defined as the gaps between what a community has and would be optimal for the citizens. Assets are defined as "things that can be used to improve quality of life" (Center for Community Health and Development, n.d.). Extension faculty often use needs assessments to identify the educational needs of a community but rarely look for community assets. Knowing the community's assets can help identify partners and community leaders who can help make your activity successful (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Bringing community members together to discuss their concerns about the community will provide multiple perspectives. Listening to the words they use to describe the problems or issues they see in their community will help you learn what is most valuable to them (Rourke, 2014). This chapter covers how to assess a community and collect the concerns of its members.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- Exercise 2-1: Practice Collecting Concerns
- Handout 2-1: Concern Collecting Checklist

There are many ways to assess a community, and the method chosen depends largely on your goals for conducting the assessment.

Assessing the Community

Community assessments take time, can be approached in various ways, and are always evolving. Additionally, census data and surveys of past program participants are not enough to fully understand the needs and assets of a community (Teuteberg & Cummins, 2017). There are many ways to assess a community, and the method chosen depends largely on your goals for conducting the assessment. One goal might be identifying educational needs to guide program development, which is a common goal among Extension professionals. While this is often done using surveys with known individuals, a community assessment can help identify new audiences. You also want to learn if any organizations or institutions are already delivering educational programs on the topics you identified. Or you might want to find funding sources, which a community assessment can help identify (Royse, Staton-Tindell, Badger, & Webster, 2009). And a community assessment is especially useful for identifying potential partners (Caravella, 2006) and recruiting participants, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Whatever your goals, a community assessment can be as simple as drawing a neighborhood map or as complex as analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the

Concern collecting is also useful for identifying possible options, actions, and trade-offs, which are integral to developing an issue guide.

community. For communities defined by a geographic boundary, numerous online resources such as Google Earth can help identify organizations (e.g., neighborhood associations, nonprofits, places of worship), businesses, and institutions (e.g., libraries, community centers, local government offices, schools). Collecting data from community members can be accomplished through focus groups, questionnaires, direct observations, and interviews. For a CIVIC activity, you will want to use "concern collecting" to learn about the issues the community members care most about.

Concern Collecting

Concern collecting is a method for learning how your audience perceives an issue. If the issue is unknown, this method can help identify the issue. Concern collecting is also useful for identifying possible options, actions, and trade-offs, which are integral to developing an issue guide. Issue guides, covered in detail in Chapter 6, are necessary for guiding a deliberative discussion (Chapter 5). The process can help you answer several questions:

- What is the issue, specifically?
- What does the community call the issue?
- What is at the heart, or the root cause, of this issue?
- Do community members care about the issue?
- What actions do they think will help resolve this issue?
- Are they aware of the issue?
- If they don't care about the issue, why?
- What other issues does the community care about?
- Who are potential partners to address this issue?
- What has been tried in the past?
- What should be some goals for this CIVIC activity?
- Who else should be asked to provide insights?
- What resources does the community currently have to address this issue? Which leaders and organizations are involved in this problem?

The goals of concern collecting are to 1) understand how the community perceives the issue and solutions; 2) generate interest in the issue and raise awareness among the community and partners; 3) learn how the community talks about the problem—what perspectives they have and what words they use to describe the issue; 4) learn what values they place on the issue; 5) understand how they think the issue could be resolved; and 6) identify how they might want to be involved in future activities.

Getting Started

Concern collecting can occur with individual interviews or formal surveys, but the most effective way to collect concerns is through group activities such as focus groups or community conversations. These methods are effective because participants will hear other perspectives and can use others' stories to elicit their views or stories (Galindo-Gonzalez & Israel, 2020; Ernst, Monroe, & Simmons, 2009). There are no rules for how many people should participate in a concern-collecting session but a group of 12 to 16 participants creates enough differences in opinion and still allows for optimal discussion. If you have more than 16 people, time will become an issue if everyone fully participates. You can conduct sessions with fewer than 12 people but expect fewer perspectives, and the conversations might not be as rich.

Perhaps the most difficult part of concern collecting is recruiting participants. If you are already working with partners, ask them to help you recruit. If you haven't identified partners, contact organizations or institutions that might be working on the issue or are interested in it—members and leadership might even want to partner with you! Depending on the community you work with, you might want to send personalized individual invitations to recruit participants. Suppose you are working with a geographical community. In that case, you might want to contact a neighborhood organization or church to help attract participants—these organizations might be willing to host the event at their facility or even become partners in the work.

RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS can be easier if you work with partners. For example, to help the City of Clearwater gather community input for its sustainability plan, Extension faculty partnered with a community center and invited its patrons to participate. In Sumter County, Extension faculty partnered with a neighborhood church to host concern-collecting sessions. The sessions were well attended partly because they occurred during a regularly scheduled weeknight event to accommodate working families. The church pastor cared about the issue and was instrumental in encouraging participation.

Concern collecting can occur with individual interviews or formal surveys, but the most effective way to collect concerns is through group activities such as focus groups or community conversations.

As with any Extension event, schedule the sessions when it is convenient for most participants.

Choose a convenient meeting location for participants (e.g., ample parking, easy to find). Also, ensure you can arrange the room so participants can sit in a circle. Research has shown that circular seating arrangements keep participants focused and encourage participation (Falout, 2014; Ward, 1968). If you provide refreshments or a meal, be sure the meeting space can accommodate that. Depending on the group size, collecting concerns can take anywhere from one to three hours. It is always best to schedule for more time than needed; however, if time has expired and the conversation is still valuable, ask the participants if they are willing to stay longer. As with any Extension event, schedule the sessions when it is convenient for most participants.

Developing Questions

Once you have a location secured and the invitations sent, it is time to develop the questions. But first, gain a fundamental understanding of the issue before you begin concern collecting. This process can start with the following:

- Reading editorials and op-ed pages in newspapers to learn what main arguments are being made about why the issue exists and what can be done about it.
- Refer to recent public opinion reports such as Gallup, Public Agenda, and other survey organizations to investigate survey results of similar issues.
- Read important historical and contemporary data points needed to understand the issue or interview experts on the issue (Rourke, 2014: 10).
- Scan social media posts to learn the various perspectives people have about of the issue and what they are saying in your local area.

The questions should always be open-ended and thought-provoking. You want to avoid asking questions that might lead to a specific answer. For example, if the issue is affordable housing, you don't want to ask, *how could the government fix affordable housing?* This implies that it's the government's job to resolve the issue or that affordable housing needs fixing—both of which may prompt immediate disagreement from some participants. Instead, you should ask, *how can this issue be addressed?* Below are some questions you might want to ask:

- When you think about this issue, what concerns you? What bothers you most personally?
- What concerns do your friends and family members express about this issue?
- Why is this issue important to your community?
- What are some possible solutions to this issue?
- Who else cares about this issue? Which leaders and organizations are involved in this problem?

Conducting the Concern Collecting Session

It is always recommended to have a note-taker when conducting a concern-collecting session. Just as you would do in a deliberative forum (Chapter 5), use flip chart paper to collect the information provided by the participants. Unlike a deliberative forum, you rarely need an outside facilitator for concern collecting. Still, if you are not confident in your facilitation skills, then you might want to ask someone with more experience to facilitate. This is especially true if the issue might be contentious.

If you are not confident in your facilitation skills, then you might want to ask someone with more experience to facilitate.

Agenda

A concern-collecting agenda might look like this:

1. **Welcome** and introductions
2. **Overview** of why you are collecting concerns
3. **Explanation** of format for session
4. **Collection** of concerns, clarifications, facilitation of discussion
5. **Final thoughts** and reflections
6. **Next steps**

You might want to indicate how much time will be allocated for each agenda item. You can print hard copies of the agenda and give one to each participant, or preferably, you can write the agenda on flip chart paper and display it during the session. Displaying it for everyone to see can help keep participants on track, and it helps everyone know that the session will end on time.

BOX 2-1

Examples of Group Agreements

Select those that are appropriate for your CIVIC activity.

- Everyone participates
- No one dominates
- Tough on the issues, not on the people
- Minimize distractions
- What is said here, stays here
- Practice "yes, and" to acknowledge and add to others' ideas
- Avoid "either/or" ways of thinking
- Focus on the options
- Maintain open and respectful atmosphere
- Listen actively ("Seek first to understand, then to be understood")

Record off-topic comments or questions on a separate flip chart titled "parking lot" and explain that you will revisit these comments as time permits.

The flow of a concern collecting session. Begin by welcoming everyone to the session; then introduce yourself and your team and the goals of the meeting. Share the group agreements (see examples in Box 2-1), which can be recorded on flip chart paper. Ask the group if there are any agreements they would like to add. You might want to tell the group that you will record off-topic comments or questions on a separate flip chart titled "parking lot." Explain that you will revisit the parking lot at the end of the session if time permits. This strategy acknowledges that all comments are important but doesn't take time away from the main goals of the session. Display the group agreements and the parking lot in a location where everyone can easily see them. Briefly describe what will happen and how much time it will take. Explain that someone will be taking notes and that you might stop the conversation now and then to allow the notetaker to catch up or verify that the information recorded is what the participant intended.

Once the group agreements are shared, ask the participants to introduce themselves. You can do this by going in order around the circle or asking participants to pair and share, then report out. You could ask them to share their names and something about themselves that is relevant to the issue. This helps relax participants and creates a sense of community. For example, you could ask, *What do you love about your neighborhood (city, school, organization, club, etc.)?* Their answers can provide clues into what participants value about their community, which can be a great segue into addressing the issue.

Take a few minutes to tell the group a little about the issue but refrain from providing too much information. You don't want to sway anyone's opinion or suggest they should feel a certain way about the issue. Keep the information broad and brief. This would be a good time to share a little bit about the purpose of the session. For example, you might be collecting information to develop an issue guide, a local government or partner might be seeking input

on a strategic plan or initiative, or perhaps you hope to learn more about the community and the issues they face to help you develop a CIVIC activity.

During this part of the session, you or the facilitator asks participants a question, and the notetaker will record responses. Box 2-2 provides example questions that were used to collect concerns on land-use issues. Check-in with the notetaker periodically to ensure they keep up with the conversation. See Chapter 7 for additional guidance on how to facilitate.

Once the group agreements are shared, ask the participants to introduce themselves. You could ask them to share their names and something about themselves that is relevant to the issue.

BOX 2-2

Here are the questions asked to start the land-use concern collecting:

1. What do you like best about your community?
2. How has your community changed over time?

Followed by questions that focused on concerns:

3. What are the concerns, or worries you have about property, or land, in your community? Follow-up question prompts can be: What are you considering "your community"? How common are these concerns and worries? Do you all have them?
4. Are you aware of any issues or community debate around land use?
5. What solutions or actions can you imagine that could help resolve these concerns?

And then questions that focused on engagement in land-use code, plans, regulations, and policies:

1. How familiar are you with what the land use policies say and what that means for development in your community?
2. Have you participated in any of the methods you discussed above?
3. How do you think citizens should be engaged in decisions about land use?
4. How should land use policy (zoning) address new growth and development?

The closing question:

1. If you were in charge of land use policy, what would you change?

Using a concern collecting process brings community members together to generate interest in the issue and raise awareness.

Give the group a few moments of silence at the end of the session to reflect on the conversations. You might ask them if they heard anything that surprised them or if they heard something they had never thought of before. If time permits, allow them to add any final thoughts. This is also a good time to check the parking lot for anything that can be or should be addressed.

Before you adjourn, let the group know what happens next; this will depend on your goals for the concern collecting. You might ask the group if they would like to stay involved by attending a town hall meeting. If you are developing an issue guide, you will probably convene a deliberative forum in the future. If so, you might want to invite some of the participants. Someone in the group might represent an organization that could become a partner. Take a few moments to explain to the group what you intend to do with the information you collected. Offer to send them a copy of the final report if that is what you plan to produce.

Processing the Data

Once the concern-collecting session is done, review the flip chart paper containing the concerns shared by the participants. The first step is transcribing the flip chart information to a document or spreadsheet. Ask your notetaker to do this if they are able since they can read their handwriting easier than anyone else. What happens with that data—or those concerns—depends largely on your goals for collecting the concerns in the first place, but in most cases, you will categorize the data according to major themes. If you are collecting concerns to develop an issue guide, you might search the data for common themes that can help you identify options, actions, and trade-offs, which are the foundations of an issue guide. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. When collecting concerns for a local government or a partner, identifying common themes throughout the data might suffice, especially if they want a written summary of the results. See the CIVIC website for examples of written reports.

Summary

Learning how the community thinks about a complex issue is an important early step to implementing a CIVIC activity. A community assessment reveals the needs and assets of a community, which helps identify the issue and understand who needs to be part of the CIVIC activity—from partners to participants. Using a concern collecting process brings community members together to generate interest in the issue and raise awareness. Conducting interviews or a group discussion enables you to learn how the community talks about the issue and what values they place on it. Concern collecting also helps you understand how participants think the issue could resolved. The process provides opportunities to learn how the participants might want to be involved in future activities.

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EXERCISE 2-1

Practice Collecting Concerns

The work of concern collecting is something that can be practiced, and practice improves our skills in asking questions and listening to responses.

PRACTICE concern collecting with a group of friends, colleagues in your office, or family members. Pick an issue that you know they care about or try to identify an issue they care about. Ask them to answer the questions below and take notes to capture the responses.

- When you think about this issue, what concerns you? What bothers you most personally?
- What concerns do your friends and family members express about this issue?
- Why is this issue important to your community?
- What are some possible solutions to this issue?

PROCESS their responses by answering the following questions:

- What words do the participants use to describe the issue?
- What values emerged during the conversation?
- What are some of the different perspectives shared?
- What are some possible solutions to the issue?

REFLECT on the exercise.

- Did the conversation flow?
- Were participants willing to engage and share their perspectives?
- What could you have done differently to encourage participation?

Concern Collecting Checklist

IN ADVANCE

- ❑ Meet with partners to identify goals, objectives, location, date, and time.
- ❑ Check the location for parking, accessibility, ability to provide snacks, childcare, etc.
- ❑ Identify who will fill the roles for the concern collecting: convenor, host, facilitator, notetaker, report writer.
- ❑ Advertise the event using sources your audience will see.
- ❑ Personally invite key participants.
- ❑ Ask partners to promote the event and to contact key participants directly with invitations to the concern collecting event.
- ❑ Create a registration link or system for participants to register.
- ❑ Create a supplementary feedback form or use sticky notes for participants to record thoughts that they were not able to share during the event.
- ❑ Arrange for food, snacks, and drinks if possible.

THE DAY BEFORE THE EVENT

- ❑ Send a reminder email to registrants and partners.
- ❑ Check in with those who are filling the roles for the concern collecting.
- ❑ Print the supplemental feedback forms or add sticky notes and pens to your resource container.
- ❑ Assemble your resources: name tags, pens, flip chart paper, easels, flip chart markers, painter's tape, participant list, and food items.

THE DAY OF THE EVENT

- ❑ Arrive to the event location early enough to arrange chairs, tables, sign-in table, food items, etc.
- ❑ Arrange the room/chairs in a circle or horseshoe so the participants can see everyone.
- ❑ Get ready! Put on a smile and a name tag.
- ❑ Ask the convenor or host to greet people as they arrive.
- ❑ Make sure the supplemental feedback forms or sticky notes and pens are handy.

AFTER THE EVENT

- ❑ Type all the flip chart statements and supplemental feedback forms into a Word document or Excel spreadsheet.
- ❑ Draft your report to share with the partners.
- ❑ Send a thank-you email and an update of next steps to the participants.
- ❑ Meet with partners to review the report, the event, and plan next steps.
- ❑ Organize the next steps.

CHAPTER

3

Building Partnerships

This chapter provides information on why partners are essential to your CIVIC activities, how to find relevant and compatible partners, the different types of partnerships, and building and maintaining effective partnerships. The tools and resources provided within this chapter, such as worksheets, assessments, and case studies, are designed to help you build effective and appropriate partnerships.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- Exercise 3-1: Partnership Challenges
- Exercise 3-2: Evaluating Potential Partners
- Exercise 3-3: Finding Common Values
- Handout 3-1 : Barriers and Challenges to Partnerships (BCP) Tool
- Handout 3-2: The Partnership Agreement Development (PAD) Tool

Why Partners Are Important

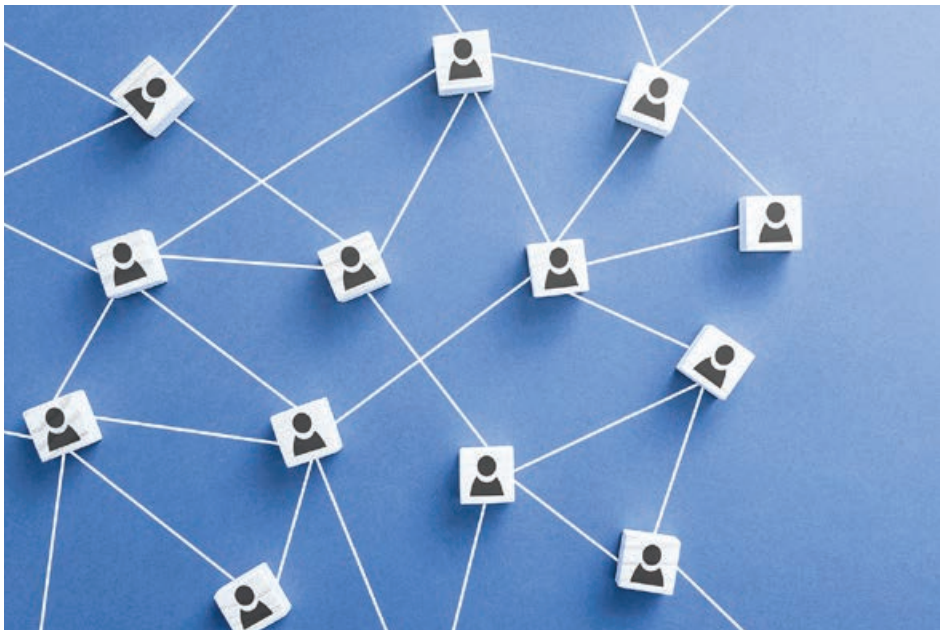
Before you start looking for partners, it can be helpful to think through your strengths and weaknesses so that you choose partners optimal for mutual assistance.

Partnerships are vital to developing and implementing a CIVIC activity because partners may possess skills or resources that you lack. Before you start looking for partners, it can be helpful to think through your strengths and weaknesses so that you choose partners optimal for mutual assistance. In other words, both partners benefit from the relationship.

A partner might be an expert on an issue or a particular community you are trying to reach. For example, suppose you are trying to engage with a community that you have not worked with before. In that case, you might partner with an organization with a history of serving that community. In return, you might offer new programs or services that help the organization meet the community's needs, so the partnership helps everyone achieve their goals. If you do not have the staff needed to implement a CIVIC activity, but you possess the expertise, you might look for a partner organization with a strong volunteer or membership base. Additional examples of activities that may help partners work toward common goals include

- mailing event flyers to their membership,
- hosting an event at their building,
- offering to coordinate next steps toward a resolution,
- helping identify community concerns,
- involving decision makers in a review of the event report, or
- obtaining media coverage of the event.

The term **PARTNERSHIP—**and related terms such as *collaboration*, *coalition*, *network*, *task group*, *workgroup*, and *cooperative*—describe a variety of relationships and structures among entities. For the purposes of this chapter, partnership refers to a group of organizations with a common interest who agree to work together toward a common goal. That goal could be as narrow as obtaining funding for a specific program, or as broad as trying to improve the overall quality of life for a particular population in the community. Likewise, the organizations involved might be drawn from a narrow area of interest or might include representation from every segment of the community.



In a CIVIC activity, there are three categories of partners: local government, organizations that work on an issue, and organizations that work with a community facing a complex issue.

In the **INDIAN RIVER LAGOON CASE STUDY,** CIVIC partnered with a city commissioner who represented one community in the city. With his help, CIVIC was able to reach a new audience. He used his contacts to invite people to the town hall meeting and then used his position to prompt suggestions and generate discussion.

The Evaluating Potential Partners activity (Exercise 3-2) can help you think through the benefits of developing partnerships and assessing the compatibility of a potential partner. These should be discussed with key members of your CIVIC activity responsible for establishing and maintaining relationships with your activity's partners. Additionally, the Barriers and Challenges to Partnerships Tool (Handout 3-1) provides a list of issues that could support the need for partnering with other organizations.

Types of Partners

In a CIVIC activity, there are three categories of partners: local government, organizations that work on an issue, and organizations that work with a community facing a complex issue. Your partners will likely come from more than one category of partners.

1 Local Government

There are many types of local governments with whom you might partner. In Extension, the most obvious is county government. In

most cases, these partnerships will occur within a specific county department that works on a particular issue. For example, if you are addressing a natural resources issue, you might partner with the county environmental or natural resource department. Your CIVIC activity might address an issue that concerns a city government. Other types of government partnerships might be state agencies with a local focus, such as water management districts, utility commissions, Florida Department of Health, or Florida Department of Elder Affairs.

The **MONROE COUNTY CASE STUDY** is an excellent example of how several city governments, stakeholders, and concerned citizens worked together on a transportation issue of mutual concern. In another case study (**PINELLAS COUNTY CASE STUDY**), the City of Clearwater and the City of Dunedin contacted the Pinellas County Extension office for help with urban sustainability plans.

Organizations are immersed in the community and often employ community members who can provide valuable insight into its needs and challenges.

2 Organizations

Organizations are your window into the community. They are immersed in the community and often employ community members who can provide valuable insight into its needs and challenges. Which organizations might work alongside you on the front lines of your community? Who is active in this issue? Who has resources that complement your own? There are many different types of organizations or agencies that you could partner with (Box 3-1). These include nonprofit organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, neighborhood action groups, homeowner associations, stakeholder groups, or allied industries.

The community members might represent other categories of partnerships, or they might be people who live in a geographic area and are concerned about the issue.

BOX 3-1

Examples of organizations or agencies with local chapters that might partner with you:

- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- (NAACP)
- Sierra Club
- Kiwanis Club
- League of Women Voters
- Junior Welfare League

Examples of local organizations who might partner with you:

- Chambers of commerce
- Community redevelopment agencies
- Nonprofit organizations (e.g., Native Plant Society, Indian River Lagoon Council, local food banks, United Way)
- Neighborhood or homeowner associations in the community
- Professional associations (e.g., Urban Sustainability Directors Network, National/Florida Association for County Community and Economic Development, National /Florida Association of Counties, Florida State/American Horticulture Society, National/Florida Association of Environmental Professionals)

In most cases, these potential partners may be working on the issue you hope to address, and if they aren't working on it, they are probably working with community members for whom the issue is a concern. Faith-based organizations can be valued partners when their mission aligns with yours. Places of worship are often regarded as essential resources for a community and have diverse congregations with skills and resources.

3 Communities

The community you are targeting with your CIVIC activity is also a partner. The community members might represent other categories of partnerships, or they might be people who live in a geographic area and are concerned about the issue. These people know the community better than anyone, and they can help you recruit participants, market your forum or town hall meeting, locate a suitable venue, and identify other resources.

The **ST. LUCIE COUNTY CASE STUDY** is an excellent example of a partnership between organizations and local government. In this case, the Council of Social Agencies, comprised of many organizations and local governments, wanted to address affordable housing. Extension partnered with the Council of Social Agencies to hold a facilitated discussion on affordable housing at the annual retreat.

Partnerships can range from informal, requiring minimal work between organizations, to formal, which might include a contract or memorandum of understanding or perhaps a financial obligation.

Type of Partnerships

Partnerships can range from informal, requiring minimal work between organizations, to formal, which might include a contract or memorandum of understanding or perhaps a financial obligation. Since Extension faculty are not permitted to sign contracts, you should work with the IFAS or FAMU Extension Director of Administrative Services to help develop a formal agreement if one is needed. A formal agreement should contain sufficient detail to guide the partnership and serve as a mechanism by which partners assess their commitments and contributions. Many partnership agreements also include an addendum that describes how the partnership conducts business. This addendum might specify who does what, when, how, with whom, and for what purpose. It may also contain specific outcome goals and a plan to measure achievement. The Partnership Agreement Development Tool (Handout 3-2) can serve as a guide to assist in developing a comprehensive agreement that addresses each partner's roles and responsibilities and many of the other elements needed for the partnership to run smoothly. This tool includes a list

To ensure that your CIVIC activity gets what is needed from a partnership, partners must come to the negotiation table with a sincere interest in working together on the issue and drawing from one another's strengths.

of the specifics that partners might include in a written agreement. While agreements can and should be reviewed and revised over time, a strong agreement forged early in the partnership lays the foundation for a sustainable partnership. Partnership negotiations should be oriented toward finding solutions or dealing with problems in a mutually beneficial way. To ensure that your CIVIC activity gets what is needed from a partnership, partners must come to the negotiation table with a sincere interest in working together on the issue and drawing from one another's strengths. Your discussion should clearly articulate what each can bring to the partnership, as well as an understanding of how potential partners will benefit.

Sometimes partnerships evolve, and roles and responsibilities may change over time. Partnership development follows several stages: coordination, progressing to cooperation and collaboration, and ultimately creating a partnership (Snow, 2012). Each stage is important and worth pursuing. While developing your CIVIC activity, the organizations you work with might be in different stages of the partnership's development, and not all partnerships will pass through each stage.

- **Coordination:** At this level, you learn about the organization's services and gain insight into the clientele served. You learn about the organization's motivation for participating in a partnership. There typically is a lot of organizational independence. Self-interests and resources are defined. Coordination may include an exchange of information and materials. You might have existing partners who want to help with your CIVIC activity, so this stage might not be as evident as subsequent stages.
- **Cooperation:** Cooperation among the partners increases understanding of target audiences and motivations for developing a partnership. There might be minimal agreement, and you and the organization might still be defining roles and responsibilities. There is usually a greater appreciation of the resources and skills that the partnership can bring, and joint strategies begin to appear.
- **Collaboration:** This is the stage where real work begins. The partners are working toward the same goal. As the organizations collaborate, the partners' values are revealed, and trust and respect among the organizations are built. The organizations begin to identify their strengths and weaknesses, which helps determine the benefits of the partnership. At this stage, innovative ideas begin to surface. Likely, there will be challenges, as in any relationship building, but the benefits far outweigh the challenges.
- **Partnership:** In an authentic partnership, there is effective communication and a high level of trust. The roles and responsibilities of the partners are well-defined and developed.

There is a feeling of "us." There might be shared space, shared authority and decision-making, and formal agreements might be in place. There is a unified vision, although challenges might exist, for example, with funding streams and support.

It is important to note that the progressions of the stages don't always follow a set order. Social and political factors might cause partnerships to change—stages might have to be repeated, and changes in personnel or leadership can even end partnerships.

Knowing what success looks like before you start helps you recognize when you achieve it.

With Whom Should You Partner?

When considering partners, you might start by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of your programs. For example, you might have adequate funding to implement your CIVIC activity but lack the networks needed to identify key participants. Once you have identified your strengths and weaknesses, you will have a clearer picture of the partners you need to enhance your program or CIVIC activity. A partnership is a two-way street, so remember that you also have valuable resources to offer.

Also, look for partners that will help you achieve your goals to attract particular audiences. This could allow participants to be introduced to varied perspectives, which can help the group identify broader sustainable solutions. Such partners can also help reach new audiences. Consider who has a stake in the issue that isn't on your list of typical participants. Realtors? Business leaders? Developers? Public health officials? Non-English-speaking services? If you lack experience working with a specific group in the community, this is the perfect reason to find a partner with that experience.

Before entering into a partnership, consider how you will evaluate the effectiveness of the relationship. Knowing what success looks like before you start helps you recognize when you achieve it. It is essential to assess (evaluate) potential partnerships at the beginning to ensure that you will work well together and strive for the same goal. The exercise Evaluating Potential Partners can guide you through this analysis.

Often, you will find key individuals within the partner organization or agency that will become your "go-to" contacts and important team members. Within this level of the partnership, it is important

What works for one partner might not work for another, so there is no one size fits all prescription. In every case, trust is at the heart of maintaining relationships.

to consider their individual strengths and weaknesses in relation to your own, your mutual interests and motivations to conduct CIVIC activities, and how you can best work together to achieve your goals.

Maintaining Partnerships

Relationship building takes time and patience. Realistic expectations should be set based on both partners' needs. What works for one partner might not work for another, so there is no *one size fits all* prescription. In every case, trust is at the heart of maintaining relationships. This is true among the organizations as well as the individuals you are working with, and sometimes you can't discern the difference! Here are some tips for building trust (Loden Coley, 2004):

- **Consensus:** Start by working on those areas in which there is common ground.
- **Truthfulness:** Clear the air of any hidden agendas. For example, your partner might hope to gain funders by accessing your networks. That should be revealed early in the relationship.
- **Disagreements:** It is doubtful that both parties will agree on everything. When there is disagreement, listen carefully to understand the issue.
- **Working agreements:** This refers to group agreements. Establish group agreements at the beginning of the relationship so there are no misunderstandings. An example of a ground rule could be a request that you not contact your partner's members or clientele directly but instead communicate through leadership. It is also helpful to decide in the beginning what is the best method for when and how to communicate. Some individuals prefer email, while others prefer a telephone call.
- **Following through on commitments:** Fulfilling obligations and commitments is crucial to establishing and maintaining trust. If a commitment cannot be met, communicate with your partner immediately. This could be one of the group agreements.
- **Integrity:** Integrity is key to building trust. Take responsibility for your actions, be supportive of your partner, value the needs of others, and be willing to listen.
- **Time:** Trust tends to evolve as people work together. The tasks of planning and implementing a CIVIC activity could help build trust such that your next adventure will be much easier. Consider a get-to-know-you activity as a practice task to build trust and communication skills.

In addition to trust, sharing common goals and effective communication are essential to maintaining partnerships. Box 3-2 lists some common challenges with partnerships and helpful practices to prevent or overcome them.

BOX 3-2	
Obstacles to partnerships and ways to mitigate them	
Common Pitfalls	**Helpful Practices**
Treating the partner as a "supplier" for one-way communication with the community.	Develop processes for two-way communications about mutually defined concerns OR, confirm that the partner wants to be the go-between with the community. Find out how you can support them.
Unrealistic expectations are set for partners with limited capacity.	Establish expectations early and communicate expectations.
Participants came, but the information didn't match the audience's needs.	Work together to develop materials that meet the needs of the audience.
Selecting partners who have a limited mission unless it exactly matches the problem.	Find partners whose work is broader.
When working with local government, there is a perception that decision-makers do not respect new community voices brought in by the partner.	Communicate expectations and responsibilities for the partner and the decision-makers. Demonstrate how the new voices matter and will make a difference.
The community feels "used" spending time providing input with no information about outcomes.	Explain decisions and next steps. Continue to invest in opportunities for two-way communication. Provide an example of a success story.
Partnership agreement is too vague. Responsibilities are not clear.	Create a detailed list of roles and responsibilities. Revisit it frequently.

Adapted from Institute of Local Government, 2015

Develop processes for two-way communications about mutually defined concerns or, confirm that the partner wants to be the go-between with the community.

You can use the exercises and handouts at the end of the chapter to help identify potential partners.

Summary

Partners are essential to a successful CIVIC activity. Developing and maintaining partnerships can be time-consuming, but the payoffs can be significant. Remember to analyze your strengths and weaknesses before identifying partners. You can use Exercise 3-2 to help identify potential partners. Select partners whose values and mission align with or complement yours. Set reasonable expectations and clearly define roles and responsibilities. Trust is crucial to effective partnerships, so work to establish trust early and maintain trust throughout the duration of the partnership.

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Partnership Challenges

Developing partnerships is not an easy task. Use these scenarios to help your participants think through a useful strategy.

REVIEW the following scenarios and discuss the problem, how it could have been prevented, and how it can be resolved.

1. **You work with your partners to design and plan a community event.** It was their idea, so you feel great about investing time in the program planning since it appears the partners are invested in the event. Your position with Extension gives you easy access to various organizations and agencies, so it makes sense for you to work on the logistics and arrangements. You determine a budget, collect donations, organize the food, and reserve the site. You pull in a few CIVIC colleagues to help and confirm the speakers. As the date gets closer, you notice that fewer members of the original partner groups attend the planning meetings, but you know they are busy people. The event is a smashing success, and everything works well… except one thing. The partners aren't there. What happened, what could have prevented this problem, and what do you do now?

2. **You have a great idea for a series of CIVIC events to help the community understand a current conflict and to explore options for resolution,** such as the development of a new power plant or changes to the land use plan to allow a large development. You are aware of three groups representing different positions interested in partnering with you. You share this opportunity with your supervisor, who says this issue is too political for Extension to address in your county. How do you respond? What could you have done to help your supervisor understand how CIVIC can address community issues, and what are your next steps?

3. **A woman reaches out to you by phone.** She wants help building a community garden, so you schedule a field visit. A couple of days later, you find yourself standing next to a vacant lot in a small, rural neighborhood. While waiting for your client, you look around and notice a gate to the local park is closed with a chain and padlock. The surrounding houses are either vacant or in desperate need of maintenance and care. Litter lines the street. Your client arrives. After introductions, you both dive into a conversation about community gardens. During the conversation, you learn that some people in the community do not have potable water, and many residents experience frequent sewage backups in their yards. Your client says that officials in this small, rural city have not been helpful, crime is out of control, drugs are prevalent, youth have little to no direction, no one is willing to repair the park, and there are few jobs to be had. You find yourself far outside of your comfort zone. You lack the expertise and knowledge needed to address these complex community issues. The people who live in the community don't look like you, and they likely won't trust you. They lack the resources and skills needed to engage with local government to address these issues. Suddenly, community gardens are far from your mind, and you don't know what to do, but you know you must do something. How do you respond to a situation like this? Do you proceed with assisting the client with a community garden? Do you seek help with the other issues? Who else can help?

EXERCISE 3-2

Evaluating Potential Partners

It might be helpful to do some prior thinking about your needs for a partner, given your issue and your resources. The following chart can help you think through how a potential partner might fit with your goals and educational programs.

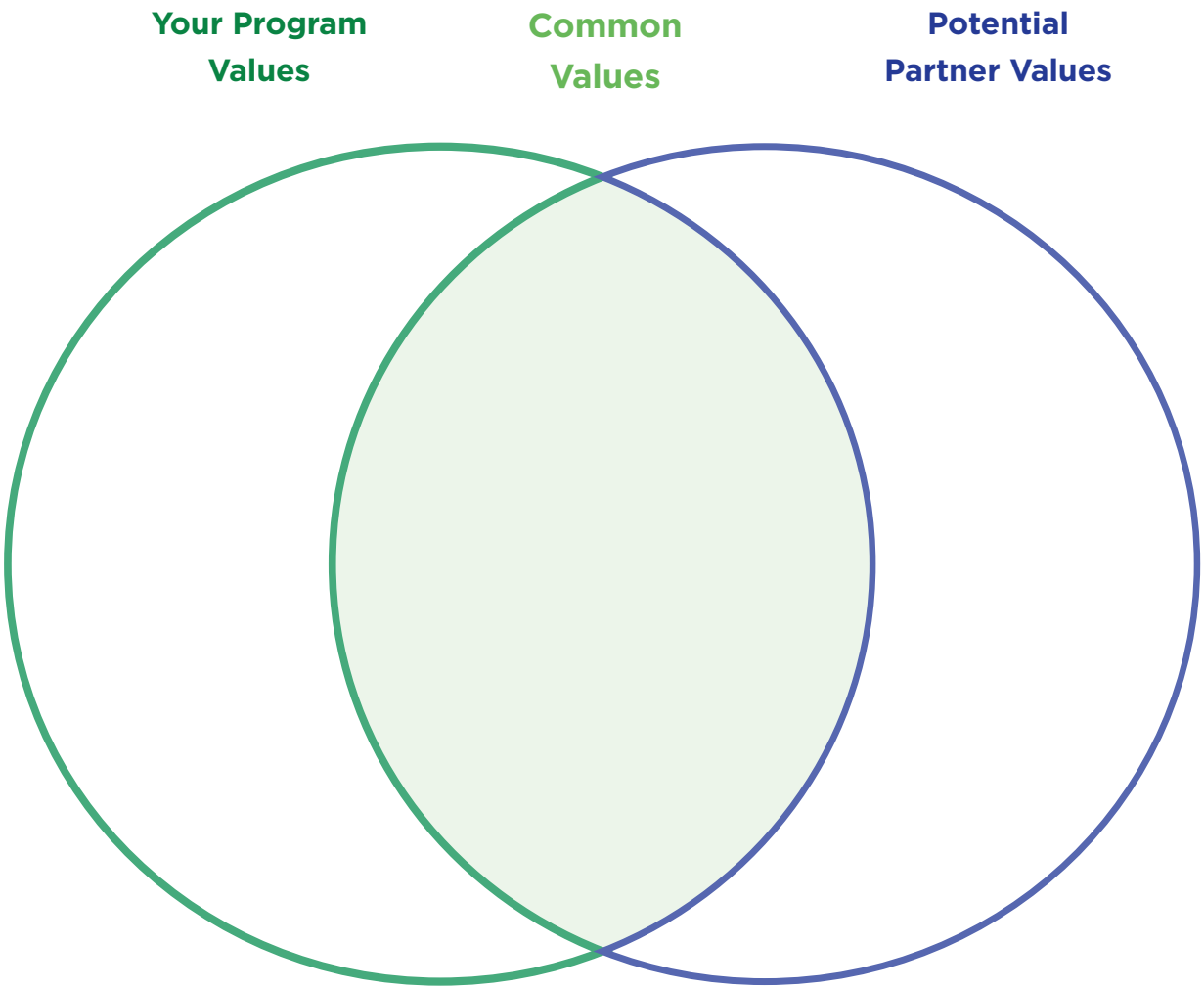
QUESTION	RESPONSE
Organization type: Think about what type of organization would be most beneficial to pursue. Is it a nonprofit? Is it religious in nature? Is it large or small? Describe the organization.	
Target audience: What audiences are you trying to reach, and who would be most helpful in reaching that audience?	
Benefits and challenges: What benefits would this organization provide? What are the drawbacks?	
Benefits and challenges: Is this organization or individual well-regarded in the community? Do the organization's values align with your organization's values?	
Goals, aims, and outcomes: What does each organization want to accomplish by working together?	
Purpose: What kind of relationship is necessary to accomplish those goals?	
Quality: Is there sufficient trust and commitment to support these relationships?	
Resources: Are resources available for this kind of relationship, such as time, skills, client understanding, financial resources, community support, commitment, and human resources? If not, can those resources be accessed?	

Source: Snow, J. (2012). *Engaging your community: A toolkit for partnership, collaboration, and action.* Office of Adolescent Health, Department of Health and Human Services. Washington D.C. Retrieved November 6, 2023, from https://publications.jsi.com/JSIInternet/Inc/Common/_download_pub.cfm?id=14333&lid=3

Finding Common Values

How do the organization's values fit with your program?

Managing a partnership is much more difficult if your mission and goals do not align. In the circles below, list your organization's values and your potential partner's values and see where they overlap.



HANDOUT 3-1

Barriers and Challenges to Partnerships (BCP) Tool

This tool provides a list of issues that could support the need for partnering with other organizations. Consider the dynamics of your CIVIC activity and community. What are the issues you want to address for which you would need to partner with other organizations? Take a few minutes to answer these questions and add other questions that come to mind. Assess the results and determine if partnering makes sense.

Recommended data collection, analyses, and interpretation: There are six basic items in the BCP tool. Each item is to be scored as 1 (True) or 0 (False). If your answer is True to most of these (i.e., you score a 4 or above), establishing partnerships to reach a target audience and to address a specific issue may be a strategy for progress.

For your community, the dynamics are:	True	False
There are few public dollars available to address the issue.		
Problems and solutions are increasingly becoming the responsibility of our local community; it is up to us to take the lead.		
Collaboration will be important in addressing these issues.		
New strategies and tools are needed to develop plans and to work together to address the issue.		
Community involvement is dependent on a few organizations.		
Our community is becoming more divided and/or is made up of subgroups that tend to see issues differently.		

Source: Snow, J. (2012). *Engaging your community: A toolkit for partnership, collaboration, and action.* Office of Adolescent Health, Department of Health and Human Services. Washington D.C. Retrieved November 6, 2023, from https://publications.jsi.com/JSIInternet/Inc/Common/_download_pub.cfm?id=14333&lid=3

The Partnership Agreement Development (PAD) Tool (1 of 2)

For each section and set of items below, you and your partner/potential partner document (check and write-down) whether each was ADDRESSED, DISCUSSED, or FINALIZED and what was done at each stage of the process (Action Steps). The use of the PAD is a progressive step-by-step building process that allows you and your partners to discuss, negotiate, and identify/decide the critical components of an agreement. The end product is a systematically developed and well-reviewed mutual agreement. The worksheet that follows consists of the following four sections:

1 General Information **2 Partnership Services** **3 Fiscal/ Resources** **4 Systems**

	Not Addressed	Under Discussion	Finalized	Action Steps
1 General Information *(often introductory)*				
General statement of the agreement's purpose				
Affiliation of Partners				
Partnership duration				
Partnership amendments, renewal, and termination procedures				
Role of each partner in decision-making				
2 Partnership Services				
Location of program				
Partners' roles in program delivery				
Staff assigned to support the partnership				
Professional development responsibilities (training)				

HANDOUT 3-2

The Partnership Agreement Development (PAD) Tool (2 of 2)

		Not Addressed	Under Discussion	Finalized	Action Steps
3	**Fiscal/Resources**				
	Funding and resource commitment of each partner				
	Designated responsibilities for facilities/space, maintenance, repairs, food service, and supplies and equipment				
	In-kind services				
4	**Systems**				
	Each partner's role and responsibilities in decision-making and planning				
	Community assessment or concern collecting process				
	Items needing prior approval (items a partner reserves the right to approve)				
	Communications type (e.g., how will the team communicate: email? Text?), frequency of meetings; meeting participants				
	Type and frequency of reports and information exchange. What are your deliverables?				

Source: Snow, J. (2012). *Engaging your community: A toolkit for partnership, collaboration, and action.* Office of Adolescent Health, Department of Health and Human Services. Washington D.C. Retrieved November 6, 2023, from https://publications.jsi.com/JSIInternet/Inc/Common/_download_pub.cfm?id=14333&lid=3

CHAPTER

4

Town Hall Meetings

This chapter describes a town hall meeting as one type of CIVIC activity that supports the process of building community capacity to work on challenges. It provides a brief orientation to the literature that justifies this approach, an explanation of what agents can do to organize a successful town hall meeting (Handout 4-1), examples of what agents have done, and two exercises to build your skills. Relevant information in other chapters can enhance town hall meetings, such as building partnerships to help frame and market your events (Chapter 3), strengthening facilitation skills to keep the conversation moving appropriately (Chapter 7), following up a town hall meeting with either deliberative discussions (Chapter 5) or small group action teams (Chapter 8), and evaluating your activity (Chapter 9).

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- Exercise 4-1: Framing A Town Hall Meeting
- Exercise 4-2: Giving A Speaker Feedback
- Handout 4-1: Town Hall Meeting Checklist
- Handout 4-2: Town Hall Meeting Speaker Checklist

A town hall meeting provides information about an issue from several perspectives so participants can learn and ask questions.

What Is a CIVIC Town Hall Meeting?

A town hall meeting is a public meeting where officials, experts, and/or community leaders speak about an emerging issue or problem and answer questions from the public. It can be used to provide information, and to "take the pulse" of the community by listening to the questions that arise. A town hall meeting can be a chance to relay any actions that are already being done to solve the problem. It can also be an opportunity to collect informed opinions from the audience about the issue or options. In this case, consider modifying a paper version of the CIVIC evaluation (Chapter 9) to ask key questions. Additionally, the meeting may be an appropriate time and place to provide research-based information about the problem or to compare alternatives, for example.

One important difference between a CIVIC town hall meeting and a typical Extension presentation is that in a town hall meeting special care is taken to present multiple perspectives and encourage participants to ask questions and voice their ideas. Consider splitting the allotted time in half, with the speakers getting a portion and audience questions filling the rest. And like all CIVIC events, attention is also paid to ways to attract, encourage, and help make comfortable those who may not have attended Extension programs or community meetings in the past. Town hall meetings also differ from deliberative forums (the other major CIVIC activity). Deliberative forums are described in Chapter 5, which also includes a comparison chart (Handout 5-2) that explains the similarities and differences between the town hall meetings and deliberative forums.

Since CIVIC issues may be contentious and complex, it is helpful to have multiple perspectives represented on the panel, and a process for the audience to ask questions. The panel speakers should be carefully chosen for their ability to explain information and acknowledge different interpretations without disparaging those who disagree. Depending on the issue and the community, consider using a facilitator and establishing guidelines to keep the discussion civil and helpful. More information about these elements is provided below.

The essential elements of a town hall meeting are credible speakers and an opportunity to ask questions.

What Is Important in the Design of a Town Hall Meeting, and Why?

Many people will be drawn to a town hall meeting because they want more information about the community concern. They are curious about the issue, and they want to learn more. In the language of SEE (Supportive Environments for Effectiveness, Box 1-1), they are motivated to create a mental model of the issue, to fill in blanks, and to make links to what they already know (Basu & Kaplan, 2015; Kaplan & Kaplan, 2009). The SEE approach also provides clues about how to help people gain new information and build their understanding (i.e., their mental models).

There are many aspects of a town hall meeting that are important for participants to feel engaged and motivated to attend and participate. A survey following a series of six town hall meetings in Gainesville, FL, asked 108 participants to rate the importance of various characteristics of the community meetings (Monroe et al., 2009). The highest rated characteristics were

- credible speakers (4.55 out of 5.0),
- an opportunity to ask questions of experts (4.52 out of 5.0), and
- an opportunity to learn about issues (4.45 out of 5.0).

Think carefully about these components when planning your town hall meeting. Town hall meetings are attractive to busy people because they are relatively easy and convenient opportunities to learn and engage in civic issues (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). The promise of clarity is powerful (Ivancich, 2015; Kaplan, 2000).

Having credible speakers at your town hall event is vital for attracting participants and for participants to believe that the information is valuable and trustworthy. It is essential that the speakers briefly present information that is easy for the audience to understand (Kaplan, 2015). This means they don't use jargon, but rather plain language. They don't use incomprehensible slides full of data that

Opportunities to collect information can elevate the town hall meeting from a mere information source to a pathway to meaningful civic action.

require an apology, but rather present slides with digestible bits of easily understood evidence. Just as people can't drink from a firehose (speed and quantity are issues), it helps to organize information to make it easy for people to follow. Tips for accomplishing these tasks are in the next section and in Handout 4-2.

Participants may also be attracted to a town hall meeting because of an advertised opportunity to participate in a community decision (De Young, 2000). In such cases, it is valuable to use a survey at the end of an event to record their informed opinions (Yankelovich, 1991), particularly if the results will be shared with decision-makers. You can use the CIVIC Town Hall Meeting post-survey template and add items specific to your issue (Chapter 9).

Opportunities to collect information can elevate the town hall meeting from a mere information source to a pathway to meaningful civic action (Basu & Kaplan, 2015). However, merely collecting the information will not build trust and faith in community decision making. To be useful, this information must be synthesized and shared with partners and participants as well as decision makers.

Making It Happen: A Guide to Implementing a Town Hall Meeting

Since the goals of a town hall meeting include providing accessible, understandable information and creating a comfortable atmosphere where people are willing to ask questions, here a few tips for the planning phase to help your event achieve success. A checklist is provided in Handout 4-1.

1. **Work with partners to select geographic locations, times, meeting venues, and amenities that will attract all potential audiences.** Offering the event as part of a partner organization's monthly meeting, such as a Kiwanis Club lunch meeting or a PTA meeting might mean your time will be very limited. In that case consider dividing the issue into several parts (each with two speakers) and creating a series of town hall meetings. If you choose an evening meeting, consider offering childcare services at the venue. If you are planning to offer food, make sure the facility allows it. A registration option will enable you to make sure you have enough chairs or get a bigger room. If the topic attracts many people, you might consider concurrent break-out groups to help people ask all their questions. If the meeting is in the daylight hours, think about the meeting room windows and what participants can see through them. A pleasant scene can provide a calming moment that enables people to reflect and absorb information.

2. **Create a flow for the town hall meeting that speaks to the issue and opportunities.** Consider an introduction that reminds people of what they already know to help anchor the new information that will be presented. Ask each speaker to do the same before they introduce a few new concepts and offer evidence and support for this information. Your speakers should be able to offer slightly different perspectives on the topic. For large issues, such as land-use planning, consider a series of meetings covering different aspects to make delivering information and listening to stakeholders more manageable. Think about how information can be organized and delivered in digestible bits. It isn't helpful to provide everything that is known and expect the audience to do the work of making sense of it all at once. Speakers need to provide a foundation for the topic, then the audiences' questions can drive additional information and conversation. You can also ask the audience for suggestions of speakers for the next event. It may be helpful to create short summaries that attendees can take home or access if they miss a meeting, especially if you are planning multiple meetings.

3. **Select the right helpers for a good town hall meeting.** While you don't need a lot of people to help you organize a town hall meeting, you do need the right people! Think carefully about who can fill these roles. This chart (Handout 5-3) will help you compare these roles to those with deliberative forums.

4. **Invite a neutral facilitator to introduce the event and speakers, coordinate the question period, diffuse controversy, and encourage participation.** A neutral facilitator can open the meeting and set group agreements for how questions will be asked and answered, reminding everyone that there are uncertainties and unknowns associated with the issue, which is why it is a challenging problem to solve. The goal is to exchange information and learn, not persuade or convince. During the welcoming introduction, if there is time, the facilitator can also ask attendees to briefly mention interest in the topic, or to speak to a person near them about their experiences. If you expect the discussion to be heated, the facilitator might consider passing out notecards so participants can write their questions. The cards can be collected and the questions organized, eliminating duplicates and helping to ensure all the questions are heard. Consider in advance whether you want participants to share their perspectives and experiences, or just ask questions. That decision may depend on the size of the group, the amount of time, and how much the community disagrees about the issue.

Speakers need to provide a foundation for the topic, then the audiences' questions can drive additional information and conversation.

Ideal speakers believe they have information to share, but not answers to the problem, and they convey this attitude with sincerity.

5. **Carefully select and train your speakers. Not every expert is a good speaker.** You are looking for people who are knowledgeable, but also humble. Ideal speakers believe they have information to share, but not answers to the problem and they convey this attitude with sincerity. Speakers should be able to use words and plain language that communicate the topic easily to the public. They should recognize that the participants also have ideas to share. They should use easy-to-understand analogies, relevant examples, and useful details. If they use graphics, the charts should have limited but easy-to-read text. Consider how someone whose first language is not the one being used in the meeting will receive this information and remember that the public generally appreciates information at an 8th grade reading level.

6. **Let speakers know in what order they will speak and encourage them to link to and build on what previous speakers have said.** Think about what people already know about the issue as you and your team develop an order for your speakers. You also might encourage them to share outlines with each other to create a program that flows well. A meeting to review the entire program and see everyone's slides can be a good opportunity to create these helpful transitions. See this checklist for details (Handout 4-2).

7. **Pay attention to ways you can create a comfortable atmosphere.** The atmosphere at the event should make

people feel comfortable enough to ask questions. Creating this atmosphere includes thinking about everything from room selection and arrangement to speaker training. When people ask questions, they are revealing a gap in their mental model, and speakers should be poised to fill it in without making the audience feel foolish. Answering questions allows people to build their understanding and creates an effective event. It also may help reveal misconceptions that speakers can address through interchange.

Depending on the size of the audience, you might ask people to introduce themselves or even use an ice breaker to make people feel comfortable and included.

8. **Set the tone.** Welcome participants at the door. Ask them to make a name tag, register or sign in with their name and email address, and pick up informative handouts on the issue if you have them. Invite them to take a snack. Arrange chairs in a horseshoe pattern so everyone has equal access to the speakers. If more people have registered than will fit in a horseshoe, try to set the chairs in a slight V-pattern to allow participants to see each other as well as the speakers. Provide paper and pencil if people wish to take notes. If the town hall meeting is a virtual event, consider playing upbeat and timeless music while people are waiting before the meeting begins. Depending on the size of the audience, you might ask people to introduce themselves or even use an ice breaker to make people feel comfortable and included.

9. **Consider ways to identify next steps.** People attend our programs for a reason. They may just want information and are happy to disappear when you conclude. They might want to contribute, in some way, to a resolution to this issue. Use the information in Chapter 8 to introduce ways that people may want to continue their involvement, from joining an organization to working with others to plan additional activities. You can provide a handout about organizations that work on this issue for people to take home. On the sign-up list, ask people to note their interest in continuing to meet.

10. **Don't forget to evaluate!** Your participants can provide valuable information that you can detail in your report of accomplishments that can help move the community toward resolution, and that can help you design a better town hall meeting in the future. We offer a post-meeting survey that will give you data on all three of these objectives. If your partners are expecting specific feedback from the participants to guide priorities and recommendations, you can create a separate survey to collect that information. See Chapter 9 for more information.

Think creatively about how to market your event to reach all the people who might want to learn more about the issue and engage in its resolution.

Several case studies demonstrate ways to build next steps into your town hall event.

The **FAMILY HEIR'S PROPERTY CASE** details a long-standing challenge involving many African-American families in the South, where land is passed down through generations, often without a will. It is a complex issue involving legal co-ownership of property, sometimes with distant relatives who are not aware of their share and is one factor in perpetuating poverty. Given the many details, Sandra Thompson, Ph.D., planned a town hall meeting for a panel of speakers to provide definitions, characteristics, and potential solutions to issues about Family Heir's Property. Participants were then invited to discuss several topics in small groups, enabling them to have a more in-depth exchange.

In the **WOODY BIOMASS CASE,** participants heard from a set of speakers who explained forest ownership, management objectives, cost comparisons of various sources of wood fiber, emissions from burning wood, and the areas where wood could be economically used for power. Because the city council was discussing how to generate more power for the region, this was a timely issue. Participants had opportunities to ask questions and to submit questions they were not able to ask in person; responses to all the questions were sent by email to all participants who provided addresses. Participants were asked to complete a pre and post survey expressing their concerns and hopes for energy. The organizers compiled that information in a report to the city commissioners, explaining what a small sample of the public was willing to accept after they took the time to learn more about the issue.

Marketing a Town Hall Meeting

Think creatively about how to market your event to reach all the people who might want to learn more about the issue and engage in its resolution. Think beyond the usual strategies you use to advertise and promote a program, which might be sufficient to reach your traditional attendees, but not other subsets of the community. Use your partners to learn more about how to attract their supporters and consider ways of reaching a wider and more diverse audience interested in the issue.

CIVIC team members have learned that the title of an event can attract some people and not others. Any mention of Indian River Lagoon, for example, brings out the environmental community, but not necessarily, for example, the subsistence fishers and real estate professionals who likely also care about a healthy and attractive ecosystem.

If the issue is relatively new, you might not get a large attendance by advertising in the local papers because the topic may not be attracting attention yet. You might consider using social media and your partner organizations to promote the topic, or posting flyers at community gathering places, as well as in newsletters of relevant organizations. Or perhaps you can ask the local news media cover the issue, which might increase visibility for the town hall meeting.

Another strategy to create an audience is for the town hall meeting to become the program for a partner organization's regular monthly meeting. This will likely constrain the time you have but could greatly increase attendance. When we organized woody biomass town hall meetings, for example, four people came to the public library for an evening discussion, but 35 engaged with us over the Kiwanis luncheon meeting. We also presented at Sierra Club and NAACP meetings, where the members were pleased to have the issue presented and the chance to explore various perspectives at their meetings (Monroe et al., 2009).

If the issue is relatively new, you might not get a large attendance by advertising in the local papers because the topic may not be attracting attention yet.

If you believe the issue is controversial, it helps to provide group agreements to guide everyone's behavior.

The Process

Exactly what happens in a town hall meeting? It may not be much different from any other set of presentations on a common topic. Below are guidelines of what ought to happen, with suggestions for planning an event.

Setting the stage. We suggest that the convenor or facilitator (who might be the Extension agent) start off with a welcome and orientation to the event, stressing that the speakers will provide short introductions that reflect their expertise and then the floor will be open to questions. If you believe the issue is controversial, it helps to provide group agreements such as turn off cell phones, listen carefully, ask questions with respect, and be kind, to guide everyone's behavior. We suggest the following and that you make them available for your event. Remember to tell the speakers to follow these group agreements too!

Group Agreements

- Listen to understand.
- Consider each idea.
- Everyone has a chance to ask questions.
- No one dominates.
- Be tough on the issue, not on the people.
- Minimize distractions.

Virtual Group Agreements

- Keep your camera on.
- If less than 20 attendees, ask them to wave their hand to ask a question and remind them to unmute their microphone to speak.
- If more than 20 attendees, keep their microphones muted and ask them to raise questions in the chat box. We recommend setting up the chat box to allow participants to direct questions only to the host and/or co-hosts to reduce the possibility of distracting side conversations. If you want them to speak, ask them to use the raised hand icon. In either case, it is helpful to have a person designated to watch the screen, noting questions in the chat, and helping manage the virtual room.

Setting expectations for civility, curiosity, and exploration with these and additional group agreements may help deflect frustration or anger. Also, the facilitator can encourage audience members to offer neutral or alternative perspectives or even change the subject if things get too heated.

Presentations. The facilitator should introduce the speakers, reinforce the themes, and briefly describe what participants will hear. It may be helpful to tell the audience upfront that the speakers were chosen to represent different opinions about the issue. Consider reminding the audience that this event is one step in a longer process of resolving an issue, and they are encouraged to participate in a variety of complementary actions and activities. You can share this information in a handout for future reference (Chapter 8).

Asking questions. When all the speakers have concluded their presentations, invite questions from the audience. Questions from the audience may help the speakers focus on exactly what was confusing, where they agree and disagree, and what additional information is needed. If microphones are set up, a volunteer should make sure audience members use them. If no microphones are available and the audience is large, someone should repeat the question so everyone hears it. For large groups, you may have previously decided to pass out cards so the audience members can write out and hand in their questions as the Q&A session begins. The questioner may want to direct a question to a specific speaker, or the facilitator might invite several speakers to address the same question if they bring different perspectives.

Wrapping up. When the audience appears to be slowing down with questions, or when it is time to close the event, thank everyone for attending, thank the speakers for presenting, remind people to consider next steps, and pass out evaluations and pencils or direct people to the URL to complete the evaluation on their mobile device (Chapter 9).

Questions from the audience may help the speakers focus on exactly what was confusing, where they agree and disagree, and what additional information is needed.

Summary

A town hall meeting can help Extension meet the needs of communities, promote civic engagement among community members who may believe they don't know enough to contribute, and move toward a better understanding of a challenging issue. Town hall meetings can be offered repeatedly and in multiple formats to suit your community's needs. Such meetings form one important activity in the suite of opportunities called CIVIC.

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Framing a Town Hall Meeting

Use the following snippets from land-use concerns to frame a town hall meeting. What topics could be presented? What type of speakers could be asked to assist?

BELOW ARE A SERIES OF CONCERNS about land-use planning and land development in Florida communities. Assume these were expressed in your county and that your partners think a town hall meeting would be a good strategy to move forward. Consider which concepts could be covered and what order they might best be presented and discussed. Consider the organizations and agencies that might provide the best speakers for each topic. Determine what is needed to develop a well-organized approach to meet these concerns.

Examples of community concerns:

1. The roads in our subdivision were never paved. At best they are dusty washboards. Some can be impassable. The county expects us to fork over thousands of dollars to provide the same service that town folks have. It isn't fair.
2. Our city won't allow backyard chickens. They are a wonderful way for people to have homegrown food, reduce the insect population, and gain the companion of a pet. We want chickens.
3. I'm concerned about the level of development going on near the coast. Anyone who has money can buy the shoreline, without any thought of rising seas and others' views.
4. Florida welcomes everyone. But we don't have enough clean water for everyone! And I worry about putting farmers out of commission due to lack of water. What will we eat?
5. Development brings construction jobs, expands our vital road system, and brings cultural opportunities to rural communities. The problem with public meetings for proposed development is that people don't want change.
6. We have a comprehensive plan that people thought was a good plan. And then developers come along and want exemptions for projects larger than the plan allows. And they usually get it! The system is broken.
7. Every time a developer proposes something, our county commission approves it. The system is rigged.

EXERCISE 4-2

Giving a Speaker Feedback

It can be challenging to help a speaker adjust their presentation, their tone, and their language to be inviting and accessible for a town hall meeting. Use the following hypothetical situation to practice how you could help guide the speaker in this scenario toward success and add to Handout 4-2!

YOUR FIRST TOWN HALL meeting has just concluded, and for the most part it was informative and engaging. One speaker didn't do as well as you had hoped. You heard this individual say the following:

"So, here's the deal. I have spent my career exploring this topic and I know what I'm talking about…"

When responding to a question, he said: "As I said before…"

And later after another speaker answered a question: "My colleague may not have the benefit of the training that I've had…"

This event is over, but you have arranged for the same set of speakers to participate in two more town hall meetings next month, and you would like to help this speaker do a better job of relating to the audience and earning their trust. Make a list of how this speaker can improve delivery of information and consider how to share reasonable expectations for the next town hall meeting.

What feedback will you give the speaker to help adjust their attitude? Remember to be positive, provide concrete suggestions for the speaker, and be ready to explain why a different approach is optimal.

Town Hall Meeting Checklist

IN ADVANCE

- ❑ Meet with partners to identify the goal, structure, speakers, location, and date.
- ❑ Contact speakers (see speaker checklist).
- ❑ Determine if you need a facilitator or additional organizers.
- ❑ Check the space for adequate parking, availability of projector and screen as needed, ability to provide snacks, access, childcare, etc.
- ❑ Set up a registration form.
- ❑ Promote and advertise the event in media that your audience will see.
- ❑ Ask partners to promote and advertise the event.
- ❑ Create a post-meeting survey with a unique URL to evaluate the event.
- ❑ Arrange for food/snacks.
- ❑ Print handouts/resources (such as additional information on the topic or ways people can become involved in the issue).

THE DAYS BEFORE THE EVENT

- ❑ Check the registration and create a participant list.
- ❑ Print evaluation forms for those who do not wish to complete the online version.
- ❑ Assemble your resources: name tags and pens, flip chart, easel, markers, tape, participant list, computer, projector, screen, extension cords.
- ❑ Purchase snacks.
- ❑ Send email reminders to those who registered.
- ❑ Check in with speakers and review their presentations (see speaker checklist); check in with facilitator if there is one.

THE DAY OF THE EVENT

- ❑ Arrange the room so people can see each other. For a large group, consider the best options for audience to see the speaker and each other if possible.
- ❑ Check and set up the projector and other AV equipment.
- ❑ Arrange the snacks, drinks, handouts, and registration tables (with sign-in page and paper post evaluation surveys).
- ❑ Get ready! Put on a smile and a name tag!
- ❑ Greet people as they arrive, ask them to confirm their contact information, and invite them to chat with each other.
- ❑ Be ready to post the link to your URL for the post-evaluation survey.

AFTER THE EVENT

- ❑ Enter the paper survey responses into the online system and download the results.
- ❑ Write your report to partners.
- ❑ Send thank you messages to the speakers and others that assisted with event.
- ❑ Send an update to the participants and a notice of next steps.
- ❑ Meet with partners to review the event and plan the next!

HANDOUT 4-2

Town Hall Meeting Speaker Checklist

Use this checklist as you invite and confirm your speakers for a town hall meeting event.

BEFORE YOU CONTACT SPEAKERS:

- ❑ The community is interested in this topic; you understand their concerns.
- ❑ Speakers have been selected to provide complementary perspectives.
- ❑ A location, date, and time for the event has been confirmed.
- ❑ Partners who will help advertise the event have been identified and contacted.

AS YOU INVITE SPEAKERS:

- ❑ You have explained the purpose of this event and the goals.
- ❑ Speakers understand their presentation will be 5-10 minutes.
- ❑ Speakers understand they are part of a panel that will present multiple perspectives.
- ❑ Speakers understand the audience will be encouraged to ask questions.
- ❑ Speakers have been informed of what may most likely confuse and/or concern those in attendance.
- ❑ Speakers have been asked to share slides with each other on _____ (date).
- ❑ All speakers will meet for a practice run on _____ (date).
- ❑ Final versions of the slides are due on _____ (date) to _____ (name/email).

AS YOU REVIEW SLIDES:

- ❑ Slides begin with a helpful orientation that reminds people of what they know.
- ❑ Slides do not use jargon and clearly explain important terms.
- ❑ Slides are not crowded.
- ❑ Text is readable.
- ❑ Images include people who look like your audience.

CHAPTER

5

Deliberative Forums

The CIVIC activity of a deliberative forum is one strategy to revitalize community governance by giving people a voice in decision making. Participants share their concerns and ideas as they speak to the actions and trade-offs that are presented and generated. The structure of the forum, which usually takes 1.5 to 2 hours, is detailed in this chapter, and the organization of the issue guide that frames the discussion is presented in Chapter 6.

After defining a CIVIC deliberative forum, this chapter explains the roles and tasks that need to be covered, describe the planning and implementation, and offer several exercises to hone your skills in organizing a forum. These are not identical, one-size-fits-all programs. There are a lot of nuances and decisions that create unique events. They can also be profoundly important in galvanizing community engagement and restoring faith in government. While there are many roles than an agent might take on, if you are new to CIVIC you might be the host or convenor of a forum and the reporter. This will give you a leadership role in your community.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- Exercise 5-1: Dissect a Forum
- Exercise 5-2: Summarizing a Forum
- Handout 5-1: Deliberative Forum Checklist
- Handout 5-2: Town Hall Meeting and Deliberative Forum Comparison
- Handout 5-3: Town Hall Meeting and Deliberative Forum Comparison of Roles

A successful forum is a carefully orchestrated event that is led by a combination of people with established roles and a framed issue guide.

The Purpose of Deliberation

The goal of a deliberative forum is for community members to honestly and openly share their ideas about resolving a complex issue in their community. To achieve this goal, it is important to create an environment that welcomes all people and helps them feel comfortable expressing their ideas and challenging others so they can begin to understand why others see the problem differently. Ideally, some participants will want to continue the conversation, learn more about the issue, and find ways to move forward toward a more satisfying outcome. It is not likely going to be a simple issue to resolve, but there might be little steps that a smaller group can take to help them feel they are making a difference.

It may appear to be a simple recipe: Bring people together, ask a facilitator to get them talking, review some options, and look for common ground. In reality, a successful forum is a carefully orchestrated combination of people with established roles and a framed issue guide (Chapter 6). The same ingredients that make other CIVIC activities successful are particularly important here. A forum requires the following: a group of interested community members with a skilled facilitator to moderate the process; a minor commitment of participants' time; a willingness to share their concerns about the issue; a framework for discussion that includes about three options that cover the range of possibilities for actions; and an opportunity for participants to speak and be heard in a civil, respectful atmosphere.

Your partners will play a key role in helping to decide when the community is ready for a deliberative discussion and how to plan for the next steps. On a practical level, they can fill many of the roles (described below) to help organize and convene a forum. They can also help make decisions about the most convenient locations, dates, and times of day to hold the forums that will help attract and engage your audiences (see marketing, below). Since one goal might be to engage community members who have not previously been involved in community issues, you and your partners will need to keep this audience in mind as you adapt the issue guide to be relevant to your community and advertise the event.

Many Extension agents express concern about wading into a controversial issue, but forums can be effective opportunities for community discussion on topics that are not controversial! Disagreements can be appropriate ways to explore new ideas. Discussions with your partners and County Extension Director about the topics about which you would like the community to discuss should consider what is expected and whether it is appropriate for Extension. Furthermore, a highly contentious topic may not be appropriate for deliberation.

Facilitation is critical to help set the tone, encourage quiet people to speak, constrain the dominant talkers, and keep the group thinking together.

What Is a CIVIC Deliberative Forum?

A deliberative forum is a public meeting where attendees talk and listen to each other. They come because they are concerned about a particular issue. They bring their own expertise, values, and perspectives. They listen to each other—deeply listen—to learn how their ideas are similar to and different from others' ideas. Even though the issue may be relevant to the entire state, or even the nation or planet, the discussion should include opportunities people can imagine implementing in their own community. The facilitator carefully guides the group through a discussion of several options, each with a set of specific, community-related actions and the potential trade-offs. Facilitation is critical to help set the tone, encourage quiet people to speak, constrain the dominant talkers, and keep the group thinking together (Chapter 7). Using a carefully framed issue guide keeps the discussion focused on what people care about the various potential solutions rather than facts about the issue. Toward the end, the facilitator asks whether people see some common ground, a way forward, or a next step they can take (Chapter 8).

It is also helpful to consider what a deliberative forum is not. It is not a presentation to community members. It is not a debate. It does not typically include decision makers or their election promises. It is not a chance to speak for three minutes, one person

Community forums democratize the process of engagement outside of the recognized public spaces for community input.

after another, with no opportunity to ask questions or explore new ideas. Nor is it a free-form discussion or rant.

Community forums democratize the process of engagement outside of the recognized public spaces for community input, i.e., commission meetings. Many people are interested in accessing more opportunities to connect directly with community leaders and provide input, especially on sustainability activities, which at the local level might lag because of the bureaucratic nature of government. Extension agents observe that participants of forums greatly appreciate the opportunity to be heard, leave the forums more knowledgeable and motivated to act, and are willing to continue discussions with other forum participants.

Although community forums are a valuable tool in the Extension toolbox, there are multiple barriers for successful integration of this approach in Extension. It is time-intensive; a successful and well-reported community forum on a local issue is not as simple as a presentation at a field day. It may draw relatively few participants if it is a new strategy in your county or focused on a small community. And, finally, a forum is not an event where Extension is perceived to be the technical expert, and as such may need additional justification to be viewed by Extension administration as a value contribution. For example, a good forum can improve the visibility of UF/IFAS Extension in the local community, demonstrate facilitation as an expertise that UF/IFAS Extension possesses, leverage UF/IFAS Extension as a neutral party, and promote UF/IFAS Extension as a purveyor of resources that can support a myriad of local and state issues. With the right issue and supportive administrators, a deliberative forum can create new opportunities for civic engagement and Extension.

Daniel Yankelovich, an early proponent of **DELIBERATION,** claims that public judgment is a more mature, considered form of public opinion. “In making a judgment, people take into account the facts as they understand them and their personal goals and moral values and their sense of what is best for others as well as themselves” (McCoy & Scully, 2002).

Forums can be beneficial to the community beyond learning more about a local issue. Some participants may be seeking like-minded souls to work with as they take next steps together (McCoy & Scully, 2002). David Mathews, the President Emeritus of The Charles F. Kettering Foundation and early promoter of deliberation said, “a democratic public can’t be a dependent body to be acted for or upon. It has to be able to act, producing things that benefit all” (Mathews, 2014).

Why Does Deliberation Work?

Deliberation enables people to listen to others, thus extending or strengthening their mental models of the issue and potential solutions.

Two aspects of the process of deliberation improve how people consider community issues. First, a deliberate approach to weighing options and trade-offs slows down the decision-making process and encourages people to take the time to think about various angles and possible outcomes. Immediate reactions are less likely to consider alternatives; deliberation allows for people to think of and hear the alternatives. Second, a forum enables people to hear others express their reasons for favoring one option over another. This is one reason it is critical to bring together people who have different experiences and perspectives. We can't hear different ideas if we only talk to people who are similar to ourselves!

Research suggests that most people create and hold on to the reasons that support their initial judgment and rarely change their mind on their own (Haidt, 2001). When asked why we support a certain perspective, we merely justify our immediate reaction. But when people listen to others' justifications, they might hear a new perspective, consider the reasons that make sense to someone else, and question their own reaction. They might change their minds. A good facilitator will help people express not just what they like about an option, but why they favor it. A facilitator can even help participants see that preferences and positions might vary for very good reasons. This level of thinking is essential to deliberation and the hard work of democracy.

Another explanation for why deliberation works is that it is an activity that engages all three aspects of the SEE framework of Model Building, Being Capable, and Meaningful Action (Box 1-1). The process enables people to listen to others, thus extending or strengthening their mental models of the issue and potential solutions. The event is an action in which they are engaged and can lead to additional meaningful actions that are possible and relevant, with the support of the partners and Extension. And the entire process is meant to build capacity and effectiveness, because of how it is designed and facilitated to enable people to feel comfortable expressing their concerns and opinions.

An effective forum takes into account the organization of the space, the length of time, and the time of day.

What Happens During a Forum?

The Kettering Foundation has a long history of conducting deliberative forums and research about enhancing democracy. CIVIC builds directly on that work. The forum process involves a welcome and introduction, personal stake, weighing the options, and reflection and next steps. Of course, like every Extension activity, an evaluation is part of the process.

The Forum Basics

A deliberative forum usually lasts 1.5 to 2 hours. It is important for everyone to be heard, so the number of participants and the level of engagement determine the length. If more than 30 people will attend and there are two facilitators, you might consider running two smaller groups concurrently. To attract and engage more people, you may wish to host forums at several locations around the community.

If the forum is to be delivered in-person, the arrangement of the meeting space is important. Ideally, forum participants sit in a circle without tables, but tables can be useful if snacks are served or to give people a place to take notes. People need to be able to see each other, the facilitator, the flipchart, and the notetaker. You will also need flip charts, an easel, markers, an introductory video or slide presentation, copies of the discussion guide, and copies of the evaluation (or the URL for people to complete the evaluation on their mobile device). A checklist can be found here: Handout 5-1. If the forum is held virtually, participants should have a computer with microphone, speakers, and video camera, and a reliable Internet connection.

If you have planned more than one forum, either to allow for smaller groups or to provide easier access for wider geographic locations, plan plenty of time in between forums so organizers and facilitators can review the notes and make revisions for the additional forums. Look at the evaluations to see how people felt about the activity and if there are any recommendations for improvement (Chapter 9).

A forum introduction helps people become comfortable with each other and the topic, and foreshadows the purpose and potential outcomes of the discussion.

Welcome and Introduction

The host welcomes participants, recognizes the partners, and introduces the facilitator. The introduction sets the tone for the discussion and the forum and covers the following:

- The purpose of a forum and clarification of deliberation
- The role of the facilitator and notetaker
- The structure of the event and time allocated to each portion
- The group agreements for the event

Kettering Foundation research shows that when participants receive a detailed introduction, have the chance to understand what deliberation is, and understand how they will be involved in the process, the forum is more deliberative in nature and participants are more likely to engage.

It is important to establish or review group agreements at the beginning of the forum and ask everyone to commit to those rules. This helps to keep everyone accountable and can mitigate any challenges that might arise during the deliberation. Basic group agreements are described in Chapter 4. Allow time for the group to decide on additional group agreements they would like to adhere to during the deliberation. This gives the group ownership over the rules and makes it more likely that self-policing will occur during the deliberation.

It is helpful to introduce the topic with a slide presentation or introductory video that helps spark discussion. The complexity of the issue should be clear, with a variety of voices expressing reasonable concerns and potential trade-offs of each option. Most national issue guides from the Kettering Foundation have introductory videos, and the CIVIC team is working on creating Florida versions as slide presentations. They are designed to get the conversation started.

Personal Interest

One of the most important ways to set the stage for open and honest discussion is to ask participants to briefly explain their personal interest in the issue. Be sure to allot at least 15 minutes (or

At least one option should resonate with each participant; everyone should feel there is something they agree with. But it is also essential that participants hear from those who disagree. The mix of opinions helps everyone learn.

30 seconds per person) for this part of the forum. The facilitator asks participants to quickly express their thoughts with succinct phrases or very short personal stories about the issue. Why are they concerned? What meaning does it have for them? Why is this important? The opportunity to share their ideas will increase participation and set the tone for the discussion. Participants are more likely engage once they have expressed their thoughts and heard the thoughts of others. It may create larger sense of community when people hear the shared hopes and values. By explaining their personal interests, the group generates a set of stories to which the facilitator can refer as the deliberation progresses.

Weigh the Options

During a forum several options are presented to the group for deliberation. Twenty minutes is an appropriate amount of time for each option to be discussed. There are generally three options provided in the issue guide, and the group may come up with a fourth. Each option includes a set of possible actions that could reasonably be expected to meet this goal, and trade-offs that would be the consequence of implementing that action (Chapter 6). The objective of the forum is for the participants to weigh each option and consider the trade-offs they might experience if the actions were implemented. What are they willing to give up for that option to occur? Are there things they are not willing to give up? As people share their ideas about the actions and trade-offs, their values might become more apparent, such as protecting health and safety, safeguarding individual freedom, being loyal to a group, or protecting the environment (Handout 6-1). Other participants or the facilitator can highlight these values as they might help to form the common ground that everyone agrees to work toward. During the discussion the facilitator should summarize key points (Chapter 7), direct the conversation to new voices, and help keep the deliberation focused on the options. The notetaker records the comments about each option so people do not repeat previous comments and can reflect on what has been said.

Participants in the **SUSTAINABILITY LIVING PROGRAM** in Monroe and Brevard counties engaged in a CIVIC forum on land use as a demonstration of how they could engage others in discussions and to consider how to work with their communities on land use issues. Few people had previously engaged with their county comprehensive planning process, but the discussion helped them realize this could be an important avenue for change.

Participant comments were also reported in the **PORT ST. JOE CASE STUDY** from their discussion of development and land use. This was a lively interaction that give people a chance to complain but also a time to think about what could enhance their community and promote a vision of success.

Local Extension agents should be involved in helping the group plan for next steps to continue the momentum and work toward a meaningful action.

Reflection and Next Steps

Use 25 minutes at the end of the forum for participants to reflect on the deliberation. You want participants to consider how the group prioritized different options and actions and how these address the group's concerns. Ask participants to reflect on what things or values they are not willing to give up and where they heard similar ideas, or common ground. Ask them to reflect on whether they view the issue differently after hearing others discuss the issues. Has anyone reconsidered a perspective during the deliberation?

Participants will want to know about next steps (Chapter 8) after the forum. Will there be a report or recommendations? Who will get a copy? Will there be follow-up about the discussion? Who will be contacting participants? Are there any questions that were brought up that need to be clarified or explored? Are there specific action items for individuals after leaving the forum? All of these questions should be discussed before leaving the forum so that participants feel that the discussion is part of an ongoing effort. In fact, you and your partners should answer these questions before the forum so you can explain the plan! You might ask for volunteers to continue the discussion, plan to schedule another meeting with those interested, collect data or answers from questions, or even establish a working group (see Chapter 8). Get a feel for what the group would like to see moving forward before ending the forum. As the convenor or host wraps up the event, distribute and collect the evaluation forms.

To prepare for and implement a deliberative forum, you and your partners should decide who will fill the various roles.

Providing regular updates for participants allows those who attended to feel recognized for their contributions, to see that their time and effort was valued, and to believe they are making a difference by participating in the outcome or solution. The reporter (probably the local agent) can use the notes and evaluations to write a report to share with partners. If an organization or agency is seeking input, participants should be aware that their voices will help create recommendations for action. Additional next steps could be useful (see Chapter 8).

In summary, the typical two-hour forum agenda looks like this:

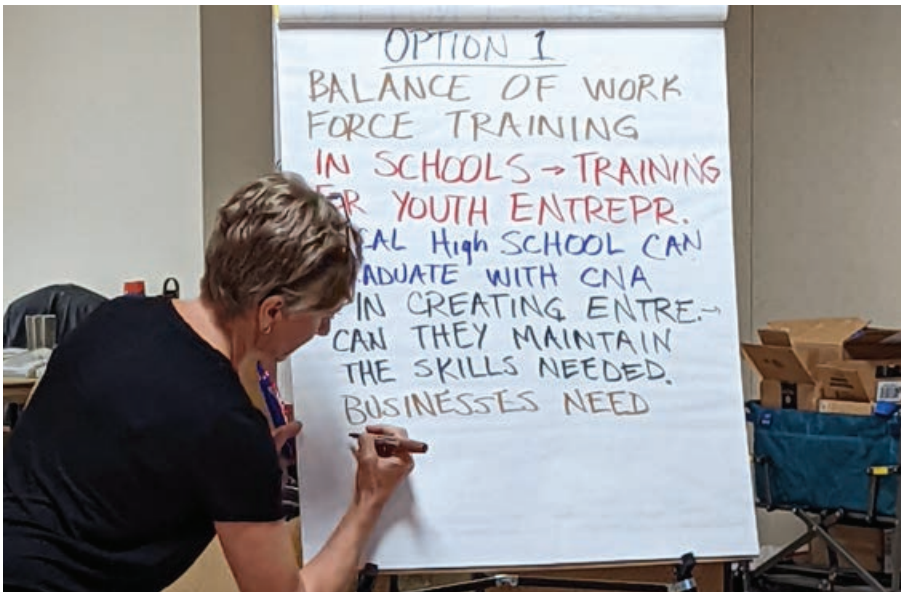
- Welcome (host) and introduction of the facilitator (3 to 5 minutes)
- Purpose, expectations, and group agreements (facilitator, 5 to 10 minutes)
- Introductory video or slide presentation (5 minutes)
- Personal interest (15 minutes)
- Option 1 discussion (20 minutes)
- Option 2 discussion (20 minutes)
- Option 3 discussion (20 minutes)
- Common ground and next steps (25 minutes)
- Follow up and evaluation (5 minutes)

Roles

To prepare for and implement a deliberative forum, you and your partners should decide who will fill the various roles. Some can overlap or be filled by the same person; other roles need to be clearly separated. Each role has responsibilities that may need to be filled before, during, and/or after a forum. These roles are discussed in more detail below: (1) convenor, (2) host, (3) facilitator, (4) notetaker, (5) participants, and (6) report writer. Any of these people can help set up the room, assist with registration, or complete other tasks as well.

What should the Extension agent do? You are likely to be the convenor and may or may not be the host. You should be responsible for evaluation and writing the report with your partners (Chapter 9). To better understand the similarities and differences between the roles for a deliberative forum and a town hall meeting, refer to the charts in Tables 5-1 and 5-2.

Determining who has what role should be done early in the forum planning process. Roles will usually be shared among the partners, and you can help the team determine who has the skills, resources, and time for each task. If a partner organization promotes one solution over another, they could be the convenor or host but



should not be the facilitator. To ensure participants feel comfortable about the process, and to make sure the dialogue remains fair and neutral, the facilitator should be neutral.

The convenor should be someone who has been involved in collecting concerns and building partnerships with community organizations and agencies and can crystalize the topic for the partners.

Convenor

The convenor is responsible for bringing other roles together to deliberate an issue. The convenor is likely the Extension agent working on the issue. The convenor should be someone who has been involved in collecting concerns and building partnerships with community organizations and agencies and can crystalize the topic for the partners (Chapters 2 and 3). When it is clear that a forum is appropriate, the convenor works with partner organizations to plan the event. The convenor may also be the host, notetaker, and report writer. The convenor may also suggest multiple forums, locations, times, and dates to be sure the community is represented most appropriately.

Host

The host is responsible for securing the forum venue, ensuring a comfortable environment and, along with the convenor, welcoming participants and thanking them for attending. The host may also be the convenor, notetaker, and report writer. Separating these roles, however, can give every partner a way to contribute. The host may also purchase snacks and drinks, make copies of the framework, and coordinate the evaluation.

Facilitator

The facilitator is someone who remains neutral and guides participants using the issue guide to deliberate possible solutions

Whenever possible the facilitator should not answer questions as an expert to ensure consistent neutrality.

to a problem. This means they should not have a public position on the issue and might not even be from the community. The facilitator is responsible for ensuring that participants do their best thinking and deliberating while engaging everyone in a conversation that focuses on reasonable solutions. The facilitator does this by encouraging full participation and mutual understanding of the forum issue. The challenge of facilitating a deliberative discussion is to help participants gain new appreciation of the issue and see the problem from other perspectives. This often requires the facilitator to listen carefully to the discussion and suggest when people are agreeing or disagreeing on some fundamental values. (Note that for large, long, or complicated forums, a co-facilitator may also be designated.) The Facilitator Guide is a valuable reference for helping to guide these discussions and should be provided for the facilitator before the forum. It contains a short summary of the purpose of deliberation, the group agreements, and sample questions that may prompt discussion of each option.

Whenever possible the facilitator should not answer questions as an expert to ensure consistent neutrality. When anyone answers content questions about a controversy, it is hard to avoid being perceived as having a bias. This means when participants ask questions about the science or the background, the facilitator should ask a local expert to answer. If no one is available to answer with expertise, then the facilitator can record the question and make sure it is answered at a future meeting or in a mailing to participants. See Chapter 7 for more details on the role of the facilitator.

Notetaker (also called Scribe)

The notetaker is responsible for taking notes during the discussion. The preferred format during in-person forums is to use large flip charts so participants can see, correct the notes, and make sure they accurately reflect the participants' words. People find that using different colored markers help people find individual comments. For online forums, a designated person can take notes as the discussion flows and give a verbal synopsis of the highlights after each option is discussed or share their screen.

The notetaker should try to write the key idea that a speaker conveys, using the speaker's words. The notetaker will likely need to shorten and paraphrase what participants say but should check with the participants to ensure intent has been captured accurately. The notetaker can also keep one page as a "parking lot" for additional questions or ideas that can be addressed later. It is often useful to keep a second page for ideas for next steps, too.

Additionally, the notetaker and facilitator need to work closely together so the conversation moves at a pace for accurate notetaking. The notetaker may ask the speaker to clarify points or ask the facilitator to return to a previous comment. The facilitator should check in with the notetaker to determine if there are points of confusion. Each flip chart can be posted on the wall in chronological order so they can be used for reflection. While the notetaker, by necessity, cannot be the facilitator, the notetaker may also be the convenor, host, and ideally, report writer, as they will best remember what they wrote.

Participants are integral to a forum, of course, and successful marketing or advertising will help attract them.

Participants

Participants are integral to a forum, of course, and successful marketing or advertising will help attract them. Personal invitations also help and may be necessary for hesitant community members. Participants are invited to deliberate the issue, using the issue guide. Participants' roles should be independent of all other roles. Participants should agree to the group agreements and can be invited to add rules to the list. They can also generate additional options, actions, and trade-offs if their ideas are not represented in the issue guide. Participants may also be experts or in positions of community authority, but if they are participating in the forum, then they should not be called to express any opinion but their own. If you want an expert in the room to assist with questions, ask them to sit on the side and make sure they understand their role is primarily to listen.

Report Writer

The report writer is likely to be the local Extension agent. This person should collect the notes from the notetaker and the evaluation data to draft a report. If there are multiple forums being conducted in a community on the same topic, then consider combining the notes into one report if appropriate. The report should include a brief introduction to the issue (perhaps from the issue guide) and to the deliberation; a summary of the partners and their planning effort; a description of the participants; and a synthesis of the conversation, noting areas of disagreement and agreement on the actions and trade-offs. If there are recommendations for next steps, they should be included. The report should also summarize the evaluation data from the participants, the options they favor, and what they learned. The report writer and partners should work together to finalize the draft. Once all partners approve, the report can be shared widely with stakeholders, decision makers, managers, funding sources, etc. The report writer may also be convenor, host, facilitator, or notetaker as long as others are editing to ensure the neutrality of the forum discussion (Chapter 9).

The issue guide provides at least three carefully selected alternate ways to approach the issue (options) and helps participants focus on and deliberate the choices and trade-offs associated with each option.

Others

You may wish to invite a subject matter expert to briefly answer clarifying questions that may arise, particularly for issues that are new to the community. This could be an Extension professional or outside individual who can provide unbiased responses. This person does not present their opinions (that would be appropriate in a town hall meeting) and should remain on the sidelines to keep the focus on the participants and their opinions. Many facilitators prefer to record questions for experts, keeping them on a separate list to be answered at another event or emailed to participants.

In summary, a forum requires these roles and skills:

1. **Convenor:** This person brings the team together, helps coordinate the purpose for the forum and makes sure the team is functioning. This could be the Extension faculty. They will also summarize the evaluations and write a report.
2. **Host:** The person who coordinates the site logistics, welcomes people as they arrive, works in the background to address issues, oversees refreshments, etc. This could be one of the partners.
3. **Facilitator** (and possibly co-facilitator): This person introduces the group agreements, establishes a comfortable atmosphere, asks participants to provide their personal interest, moderates the discussion during each of the options, and leads the group toward next steps.
4. **Notetaker:** This person is comfortable writing on flipcharts and summarizing what people say so comments are recorded accurately (and they have neat handwriting). If you are using an online delivery platform (e.g., Zoom), the notetaker should be a fast and accurate typist and knowledgeable about how to share notes on the screen.
5. **Participants:** These people are community residents who care about the issue and are willing to support their community.
6. **Report Writer:** This person works with the Notetaker and Convenor to summarize the notes and evaluation data. They should draft a report and revise it with the Partners before sending it to relevant decision makers.

Issue Guide

A key component of a deliberative forum is the issue guide. The issue guide, or sometimes called the "issue framework," is the printed handout to help participants discuss the issue. The introductory video, or slide presentation, introduces the same framework and helps spark discussion. The issue guide provides

at least three carefully selected alternate ways to approach the issue (options) that helps participants focus on and deliberate the choices and trade-offs associated with each option (Chapter 6). Each participant should receive a handout when they arrive so they can read and reference it during the discussion. After participants arrive and are welcomed to the forum, they can read the introduction to the issue guide as they wait for the forum to start. The National Issues Forums has well-tested issue guides https://www.nifi.org/en/nifi-materials that might be relevant to your community. You will need to work with your partners, however, to develop locally specific actions and trade-offs (Chapter 6). The CIVIC team has developed several issue guides (https://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/civic/issueguides) for Florida and tries to take on a new issue each year.

The framework for the issue varies depending on whether you are deliberating local solutions to a national issue (such as food security) or to a hyper local issue (such as developing a downtown business district). The options may represent values-based worldviews or moral foundations (such as caring for the vulnerable versus protecting an existing hierarchy of wealth), or they may delineate different approaches to the solution (business investments versus compelling individual actions). Regardless of how various factors are compared, the framework represents a variety of perspectives and generates thoughtful discussion about potential solutions.

Marketing

Your marketing activities should attract people who are concerned and who are open to considering other perspectives and potential solutions. You and your partners can discuss how best to advertise

Ideally, the locations and dates of your forums should be convenient and comfortable for your audience so you can maximize participation.

If your goal is to attract a specific audience, make sure you (or your partners) understand their perceptions and interests in the issue and make the forum relevant to them.

the forum to attract the right audience. Part of this discussion should include careful consideration of the location(s) for the events. Begin by discussing your target audience and the relationship they have with your partners. Ideally your locations and dates should be convenient and comfortable for your audience so you can maximize participation. The forum venue should be neutral and easy to access. You want to make it as easy as possible for people to contribute and to be a part of the discussion. Consider offering childcare, a translator, and snacks and think about when most of those in your potential audience have time to gather. Rely on your partners, if they frequently work with your intended audience, to help you make the forum attractive and appropriate.

Because a smaller group of participants (ideally about 20) will enable everyone to engage in the discussion, you might plan to have several forums across the community. More than one forum also enables organizers to gather information and hear perspectives from various areas of the county or from different communities to gain a more comprehensive view of people's perspectives.

Advertisements that market the event should set clear expectations for the purpose and what will happen during the forum. This will help people arrive with appropriate expectations, as people are often expecting to passively listen to a speaker rather than be asked to share their ideas.

Also consider the title of the event and ask your partners what might best attract their audiences. You want people from a variety of experiences and perspectives to attend; will they read the title and assume it is of interest? A good title attracts the intended audience and gives that audience an idea of what will be discussed.

Avoid using jargon or acronyms that may be confusing for your audience.

Provide a succinct description of what will be discussed and how the forum is organized so participants have a better understanding of what to expect. Participants should have a basic understanding of or interest in the topic and know that they will be asked to provide opinions and input. The topic of the forum will likely determine who is interested. If your goal is to attract a specific audience, make sure you (or your partners) understand their perceptions and interests in the issue and make the forum relevant to them.

For a successful forum with optimal representatives in the community around the topic, organizers will want to promote and advertise the event. While the convenor typically coordinates the promotion and marketing for the forum, the partners should be engaged for assistance in reaching the optimal audience. And if a deliberative forum is a new type of activity in the community, the promotional efforts should include a detailed explanation of what participants should expect in the forum.

Marketing and promotional avenues include broadcast, social media, signs, flyers, emails, local periodicals, personal conversations, and community presentations. If the topic is an important community issue, people should want to attend and let their views be heard. If, however, the community is less aware of the issue, a town hall meeting might be scheduled first to increase awareness and identify partners.

A deliberative forum can be a powerful tool for building community capacity to solve problems and refresh our attitudes about democracy.

Evaluation

A deliberative discussion can be evaluated like any Extension program. But unlike some programs, an individual behavior change is not the goal. You are building community capacity and helping people work together on an issue that concerns them. You can assess steps along that path such as increased awareness of both the problem and the variety of ways people think about it. You can assess willingness or intention to continue to meet or work on a project. You can compare participant demographics to those who make up your intended audience and decide if you are attracting the people you want to reach. You can write a report to your partners and municipal decision makers to let them know what a group of thoughtful citizens discussed and how they feel about the options. Please see Chapter 9 for more details on evaluation and a template for a pre and post survey that you can use with your deliberative discussion.

By conducting a deliberative forum, participants can work to create change in the community and recognize that there are others willing to work on that change with them.

Summary

A deliberative forum can be a powerful tool for building community capacity to solve problems and refresh our attitudes about democracy. There are a variety of tasks that are essential to conducting a successful forum, most of which are outlined in other chapters (such as addressing community concerns, building partnerships, and using a skilled facilitator). The development of a good issue guide that frames the discussion into appropriate options, choices, and trade-offs is also critical (Chapter 6). By conducting a deliberative forum, participants can work to create change in the community and recognize that there are others willing to work on that change with them.

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Dissect a Forum

You can help participants learn more about the flow of a forum by watching and dissecting one.

ATTEND A FORUM and pay attention to how and when the facilitator transitions to the next section. If a forum is not available, watch the recorded version of the Indian River Lagoon online forum. What was brought up in the personal interest opening? Did the facilitator reference these experiences later? How much time was allocated to each option? Did the group finish and move on, or bounce around? How did the facilitator close out the discussion? What suggestions were offered for next steps?

EXERCISE 5-2

Summarizing a Forum

The ROA helps Extension agents think about the situation that makes a forum a good activity, generate an objective, and write a description of a forum as an educational activity. Chapter 9 includes a guide to writing the impacts.

SELECT AN ISSUE IN YOUR COMMUNITY that has an issue guide, and that would advance one of your Extension programs. Imagine you have formed partnerships and conducted five forums in your county on this issue. You have evaluated the events and synthesized a report. Now, think about how you can describe this in your ROA. Do you need to add an objective to your program description? What would that be? Write a SMART objective that relates to building community capacity and problem-solving and a paragraph that describes the forum. Share this with your team for comments.

SMART
objectives are:

- specific,
- measurable,
- achievable,
- relevant, and
- time-bound.

Deliberative Forum Checklist

IN ADVANCE

- ❑ Meet with partners to identify goals, objectives, location, date, and time.
- ❑ Check the location space for parking, accessibility, ability to provide snacks, childcare, etc.
- ❑ Identify who will fill the roles for the forum: convenor, host, facilitator, notetaker, and report writer.
- ❑ Identify the issue guide that will be used during the forum. If this is a national guide, make local adaptations to reflect your community.
- ❑ Advertise the event in media that your audience will see.
- ❑ Personally invite key participants.
- ❑ Ask partners to promote and advertise the event or to reach out to participants directly with invitations to the forum.
- ❑ Create a registration link or system for participants to register.
- ❑ Create a pre- and post-event survey with a unique URL so participants can evaluate the event.
- ❑ Create a supplementary feedback form if your partners have specific questions not covered in the CIVIC evaluation.
- ❑ Arrange for food, snacks, and drinks.
- ❑ Duplicate the issue guide and other handouts.
- ❑ Determine if you will be using an introductory video or slide presentation; make sure you have the equipment to project it.

THE DAY BEFORE THE EVENT

- ❑ Send a reminder email to registrants and partners.
- ❑ Check in with those who are filling the roles for the forum.
- ❑ Print evaluation forms for those who do not wish to complete the online version.
- ❑ Assemble your resources: name tags, pens, flip chart paper, easels, flip chart markers, tape, participant list, issue guide, snacks/drinks, computer and projector.

THE DAY OF THE EVENT

- ❑ Check in on the space to arrange chairs, tables, sign-in table, snacks, drinks, etc.
- ❑ Arrange the room/chairs in a circle or horseshoe so the participants can see everyone.
- ❑ Post the URL for the pre-event survey, and have the post-event URL at hand for later.
- ❑ Get ready! Put on a smile and a name tag.
- ❑ Ask the convenor and/or host to greet people as they arrive.
- ❑ Make sure the paper evaluations are handy.

AFTER THE EVENT

- ❑ Enter the surveys that were completed on paper into the online evaluation system and analyze the results.
- ❑ Draft your report to and share with the partners.
- ❑ Send a thank-you email and an update of next steps to the participants.
- ❑ Meet with partners to review the report, the event, and plan next steps.
- ❑ Organize the next steps.

HANDOUT 5-2

Town Hall Meeting and Deliberative Forum Comparison

Characteristics	Town Hall Meeting	Deliberative Forum
Purpose	To enable the public to learn about an issue from experts and ask questions.	To enable the public to share their perspectives and concerns about how an issue might be resolved and to listen to each other.
Possible Outcomes	Participants are able to describe different aspects of the issue, express their priorities for options, unanswered questions, and ongoing concerns.	Participants are able to articulate the options they think are best for the community and why others might select different options. Some participants may wish to continue meeting to take meaningful actions. More information may be requested of experts and partners. Recommendations may be prioritized.
Essential Elements	Speakers who provide information and answer questions	The issue guide, which frames the issue into three options, each with choices and trade-offs.

Town Hall Meeting and Deliberative Forum Comparison of Roles

Roles	Town Hall Meeting	Deliberative Forum
Convenor	Coordinate with partners and arrange for the event: location, time, date. Promote and advertise the event. Provide snacks and drinks, and registration forms. Collect post-evaluations.	Coordinate with partners and arrange for the event: location, time, date. Promote and advertise the event. Provide snacks and drinks, name tags and registration forms. Collect pre- and post-evaluations.
Host	Introduce and describe event. Welcome participants. Help connect this event to other related activities. Thank people for attending. (May also be the convenor.)	Introduce event. Welcome participants. Help connect this event to other related activities. Thank people for attending. (May also be the convenor.)
Facilitator	Coordinate questions from the audience, keep the discussion moving. Smooth over disruptions, if any.	Establish group agreements. Engage participants in healthy discussion. Seek suggestions for next steps.
Notetaker	None needed, but could be helpful to record questions and prepare a report. This would be easier if it is a small gathering.	Records all comments as they are made and summarizes the discussion for participants to check. Flags items that require additional exploration.
Experts	Provide five- to ten-minute presentations. Answer questions.	None. Or, quietly listen and learn. Answer questions if needed.
Participants	Listen to experts, ask questions, and learn.	Engage thoughtfully in a discussion of concerns and feelings while seeking to learn and take meaningful actions to help find widely acceptable resolutions for an issue.
Report Writers	Compile a summary of main points from each speaker, audience concerns, and evaluation data.	Compile a summary of the notes, next steps, and evaluation data.

CHAPTER

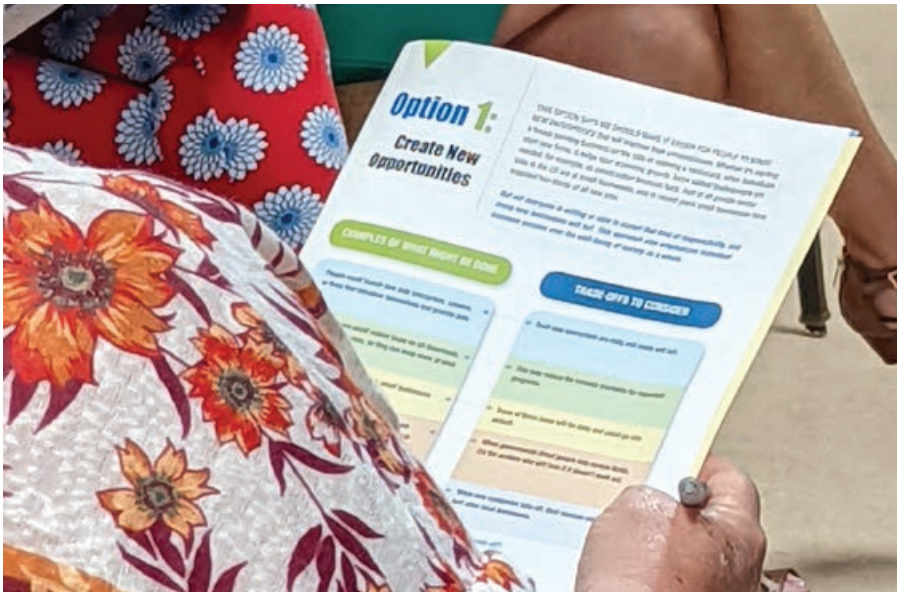
6

Adapting and Developing an Issue Guide

This chapter explores and explains the issue guide—the framework that drives a deliberative discussion. Agents can adapt existing issue guides for their own counties or work with CIVIC leaders to create new frameworks. This chapter provides the rationale behind the framework, guidelines for adapting existing guides and creating new ones, and suggestions for how these frameworks can be used.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- Exercise 6-1: Developing Options
- Exercise 6-2: Actions and Trade-offs
- Handout 6-1: Four Supportive Theoretical Frameworks that Underpin CIVIC



Issue guides are not designed to stand alone but rather to support deliberation in public forums.

What Is a CIVIC Issue Guide?

CIVIC uses an issue guide to help organize a deliberative discussion and guide the facilitator and participants to a thoughtful, thorough discussion. An issue guide can be a one-page handout that describes three options, a multi-page document that introduces the topic and describes three options, or a booklet that provides more background on the issue and each option. Regardless of the length, the issue guide describes the problem in a way that resonates with the concerns of the community members and outlines three options that cover a range of solutions that could help resolve the problem.

The National Issues Forum Institute offers issue guides on national issues, and the CIVIC team has created several issue guides for Florida. You will want to adapt these frameworks to include locally recognized details and enhance relevance with reasonable actions for your community. This chapter also explains modifying and, when appropriate, creating an issue guide. An example of the development process is shown through a case study of the Indian River Lagoon Issue Guide.

Issue guides are not designed to stand alone, but rather to support deliberation in public forums. Guides provide a balanced description of the concern, often with a chart or graph, and focus on the basic question “what should we do about this issue?” They provide brief

An issue guide provides the foundation to address tensions that might otherwise lead to frustration, conflict, or apathy among participants.

introductions to each option with short lists of actions and trade-offs, with space for community members to add additional ideas. The issue guide should encourage participants to reflect on the options by providing questions focused on finding common ground or solution-oriented points.

What Is So Important About an Issue Guide?

An issue guide is essential to a successful deliberative discussion. The guide frames a concern in a way that sparks reflection on values and encourages participants to share their thoughts and feelings. By providing a limited number of actions to discuss, the forum structure helps remove the overwhelming sense of "too much to consider" or the fear of not being an expert. Remember that CIVIC activities address complex concerns at the community level, not the individual, so that actions will be taken by the community. Individuals and groups often define an issue differently, and that can help lead to new insights and helpful discussion. An issue guide provides the foundation to address tensions that might otherwise lead to frustration, conflict, or apathy among participants. The guide's purpose "is to jump-start deliberative decision making. [Its] job is to be provocative, not comprehensive" (Mathews, 2016: 17).

The title of an issue guide usually reflects the core of the issue. The introduction briefly explains the issue's history and why action needs to be taken. Subsequently, the issue guide clearly identifies and concisely outlines three options to address the concern. Lastly, each option proposes several actions and the trade-offs/drawbacks of each. The shorthand phrase "name and frame" refers to naming the issue and framing the options.

THE ISSUE GUIDE is the overall structure that outlines the deliberative discussion. The guide defines and frames the concern with language and possibilities that are broad and concrete. This should help encourage participation by a wide mix of participants.

AN OPTION is one of (typically) three approaches to address the larger issue of concern. Options stem from the themes or categories discovered from concern-collecting and represent different worldviews or priorities. Each option has a description—a concise explanation of the option's purpose that is generally two to four sentences in length.

AN ACTION pertains to possible "let's try this" scenarios for each option. A series of three to six actions are offered for each option. They are generic enough to be appropriate for any community but specific enough to enable people to imagine how they could be implemented.

A TRADE-OFF is the perceived consequence(s) of an action. There is usually some drawback to each action, something that is "traded" when an action is taken (or not taken).

If the issue is specific and uniquely local, the purpose of the discussion and issue guide may be to obtain input for a community decision.

A Note About Scale

CIVIC is interested in engaging Floridians in working with their community on local actions; however, the issues being discussed in a forum might be broader in scale. For example, the issue guide might be centered around regional, national, or global issues. Even with national or global issues, there are likely some actions and trade-offs at the community level that people can discuss.

If the issue is specific and uniquely local, the purpose of the discussion and issue guide may be to obtain input for a community decision. It may be most helpful to frame the options in terms of specific perspectives being debated in the community. For example, people might be interested in discussing whether they should expand the existing power plant or construct a new one. Only having two options sets up a traditional pro/con debate, which could make it difficult to deliberate the advantages and disadvantages of more basic options. Try to create three options, such as, should we only meet our projected needs with existing fuels, should we look into the future and consider renewable fuels, or should we dramatically conserve power to reduce demand?

When adapting an existing issue guide to your community, you can start by adding local details to the description of the issue.

When issues are defined at a larger scale, it may be easier to identify perspectives that are fundamentally different and options that are distinct. These could be state-wide or national in scope, but they still involve ways the community could support various actions. For example, what type of energy should power our homes and businesses—fossil fuels or renewable energy sources?

If an option doesn't seem to have reasonable actions or trade-offs, it may not be at the appropriate scale for deliberation. Listening to the community (Chapter 2) and partners (Chapter 3) as they explain their concerns might be helpful in reframing the issue.

Adapting an Existing Guide

The off-the-shelf national and state issue guides can be adapted to be relevant to your community. Because the options are created to be broad enough to allow for a variety of perspectives, we do not recommend altering them. If actions and/or trade-offs need to be enhanced or new ones added to improve understanding of or relevance to a community, they can be adapted with pertinent details. When adding new actions and/or trade-offs, use care with wording to ensure that a balance of perspectives is offered to welcome a mix of viewpoints and values.

When adapting an existing issue guide to your community, you can start by adding local details to the description of the issue. It might be helpful to include data about the problem: How many days was the lake unfit for swimming? How many times did the streets flood last year? How many people are homeless in your county? What is the high school graduation rate?

The options are likely to be appropriately generic but check each action to make sure it is relevant to your community and issue. Do you need to modify some or add a few to help people discuss the issue as it relates to their lives? You can remove some inappropriate actions, particularly to end up with three to five actions to discuss. For example, a national guide on food security included an action about understanding and celebrating indigenous food. The CIVIC team suggested broadening that action to encompass other cultural groups and the meaning they ascribe to various foods. A national guide on climate choices included an option about investing in new technology. Because that is not something communities are likely to do, that option was changed to reflect another way a community could address climate change. Since the community's concerns depend on location (e.g., sea level rise for coastal towns, heat stress on cows for ranchlands), CIVIC is developing a series of actions from which agents could select to create a localized discussion guide.

To adapt an existing guide, start with concern collecting. This could be conducted in a meeting of an existing group familiar with the issue or through individual interviews (Chapter 2). Ask people to explain the problem in their own words and the types of solutions they believe would be relevant in their community. Review the list of actions to see how they might fit under the existing framework of options. Ideally, you would swap only a few actions and trade-offs to create a locally meaningful framework.

If you need to change an option, make sure that the three options are balanced and could enable people with different experiences and views to engage in discussion because they feel like something speaks to them.

It is essential that a group of people who represent different perspectives work on the guide together.

Developing a New Guide

If a topic of concern in your community is not addressed by an existing issue guide, you may need to develop a new one. If this discussion will be limited to only your community, we suggest a simple process. If you are developing a guide for use across the state, the process will likely take a team working through several rounds of edits, pilot tests, and revisions. In both cases, new frameworks need to be tested with experts and the public and thoughtfully constructed to represent a variety of viewpoints.

Form an issue guide team. It is essential that a group of people who represent different perspectives work on the guide together, since deliberation is the process of "carefully weigh[ing] possible civic actions, laws, or policies against the various things that people hold dear in order to settle on a direction to follow or purpose to pursue" (Mathews, 2014: 75). It is hard for a group of people who agree with each other to develop options that arise from different value positions. While this group does not need to be large, it should involve at least two people with expertise in the issue, someone who knows the community and someone who represents the major partner.

When developing the **INDIAN RIVER LAGOON ISSUE GUIDE,** the team was able to use the results of focus groups with experts to understand the issues, and a survey of community members in two counties to understand concerns and the actions the community was already taking to protect the lagoon (Monroe et al., 2018).

Understanding people's concerns around an issue could involve individual interviews, formal surveys, focus groups, and listening to casual conversations.

Conduct some background research. Look for surveys or reports that relate to your issue. The literature might include another needs assessment of how people feel about the issue and what concerns them. Your team might know of these resources. News articles and social media can also provide information to explore the community's perspectives. Is there a similar issue guide at the national level that can be adapted?

Collect community concerns (Chapter 2). Understanding people's concerns around an issue could involve individual interviews, formal surveys, focus groups, and listening to casual conversations. The exercise in Chapter 1 is one way to begin this process. Chapter 2 continues with additional background and guidelines for collecting concerns. If you have not already used that chapter to identify community concerns, please do so and use them to guide the naming and framing process. Concerns revealed through various methods form the basis of the options to be framed for public deliberation. In addition to asking about concerns, it is also important to ask about possible solutions as these can form the basis for the actions and trade-offs. It is helpful to ask people why this issue has become such a problem—what is the root cause of this concern? Ideas about well-being could help you think about the variety of things people value to make their lives more satisfying. You can read more about that theory in Handout 6-1.

SOME VOICES were less represented in the Indian River Lagoon focus groups and survey, so CIVIC asked a graduate student to visit churches and other organizations in their communities to gain a better understanding of their perspectives.

Name and frame. Group similar concerns and describe the options. There are two ways to organize the comments into a framework for discussion. The Kettering Foundation recommends that you group similar concerns together to ensure that "the starting point of the issue guide matches the starting point of citizens—that their concerns and the values that underlie them will be reflected in the discussion guide" (Rourke, 2014: 15). If your team members see the issue similarly, you might need to add additional perspectives or make sure you have adequately and accurately noted the collected concerns. For example, there might be an agreed upon environmental issue and broad agreement that it is a problem. But what should be done about it? That's where people may have different approaches, with some investing heavily to address the root cause and others content with minor modifications. Keep the focus on what the community can do to resolve the problem.

With various concerns grouped together, you can consider what underlies each category. This is when the name of the issue will begin to solidify and be validated.

With various concerns grouped together, you can consider what underlies each category. This is when the name of the issue will begin to solidify and be validated. For each concern, ask, "What is the thing held valuable behind this concern? What do you think was really bothering the person who said this?" (Rourke, 2014: 15). Look for themes and strive to integrate them into three options. Recall that the goal is to focus the discussion on community-level actions and end up with categories that are distinctly different with little overlap. In other words, an action should fit only one category to make it easier to isolate the perspectives that are unique to each option. If the actions could fit into any option, it will be easy for participants to say they want everything, and that won't help them prioritize what to do.

Concerns can be clustered in many ways, and various approaches may look equally valid. Representing and articulating concerns into options that address the overarching problem and support dialogue demand reflection, time, and breadth of viewpoints from the team. More information about moral foundations and worldviews, both of which speak to value perspectives can be found in Handout 6-1.

The second strategy is to start with a long list of actions and group those into three distinct options. This can also result in several sets of potentially viable options. Discussions among the team may help clarify that some are better than others at representing the variety of perspectives or promoting deep discussion. No matter which way you go about it, every participant in a deliberative discussion should be able to see their own ideas represented. The set of options must represent all values.

Actions should not address what individuals can do acting alone but what communities can do acting together.

If you are creating a specific, local issue discussion guide, it may be easier to group actions together into similar themes to form the option categories. The more distinct these options, the easier it will be to compare and weigh the various approaches. For example, climate solutions tend to be in the two categories of mitigation and adaptation, which doesn't create an easy third option. In thinking about what makes the solutions similar and different, we settled on nature-based, community infrastructure, and economic approaches to solutions. These options represent different underlying approaches to solutions and come with different assumptions and preferences.

In discussing water quality of the **INDIAN RIVER LAGOON,** we initially landed on "Individual, Government, and Community" actions. Another person suggested we look at sources of water concerns: "Water for people, Water for agriculture, and Water for nature." Both ways were valid, yet neither was ideal because neither spoke to different values. "Healthy people, Healthy ecosystem, and Healthy economy" begins to broaden the discussion in important ways.

Identify actions and trade-offs. The actions under each option help people imagine how the problem might be addressed through each approach. Actions should not address what individuals can do acting alone but what communities can do acting together.

The following questions can be asked as the issue guide development team frames actions and trade-offs:

- Is this action clear?
- Who would do the action?
- Does the action relate directly to only one option?

It may be easier to brainstorm and use direct ideas from the concern-collecting data to create a long list of actions and then critique them by asking questions such as the following:

- Does this action fit best under this option, and only this option?
- Is this action distinctly different from the others?
- Can two actions be combined?
- Does each action reflect a concern and lead to a solution?

No action is perfect! Everything comes at a cost and can lead to unforeseen consequences; one purpose of the issue guide is to bring the most divisive potential challenges into discussion so that they can be explored. For each option, provide the most common trade-

offs that are likely to result from these actions. What is the trade-off and who will be affected? What would be the cost if this action were carried out? This should help people discuss whether the action is an optimal invest for the outcome. Trade-offs are not arguments against an action, but possible consequences that could result if the action is taken.

The result of this part of developing a new guide should be a draft framework: a brief statement (two paragraphs or so) of the overall problem and three or four options (a few sentences each) for responding to the problem, with four or five actions and associated drawbacks for each option (Rourke, 2014). As you f inalize the draft options, actions, and trade-offs, reference the following list of criteria. Finally, after examining the concerns, determining options, and specifying actions and trade-offs, the naming and framing team will have a better idea of how to finalize the name of the issue guide.

The ideal voice conveyed in the issue guide is a neutral tone that respects all possible perspectives.

BOX 6-1

Critique Actions and Related Trade-offs

Ensure they are balanced by considering the following list.

- ✔ **Actor(s) –** Who will perform each action?
- ✔ **Science –** Do these actions reflect/address key concerns and/or recommendations outlined in the scientific literature/ by the scientific community?
- ✔ **Public –** Are these actions perceived as important by the public?
- ✔ **Level of Action –** Which levels or scales of involvement are addressed in these actions? For example, individual, community, institutional (organization, government), or multiple levels; may also consider local, regional, or state-wide scale.

Consider voice and language. The ideal voice conveyed in the issue guide is a neutral tone that respects all possible perspectives. Actions should be written succinctly and start with a verb. There is a sweet spot when it comes to the public presentation that lies somewhere between academic specificity and the down-home friendliness of an op-ed article. The issue guide should create an unbiased and safe space for people to share their values and ideas without judgment.

Different perspectives should be expressed positively so that all participants feel welcome.

Different perspectives should be expressed positively so that all participants feel welcome. The American Psychological Association provides a list of words to avoid because they refer to unhelpful stereotypes and also suggests alternatives.

Test the framework and reflect. Both adaptations and new issue guides should be pilot tested with several groups. The first round can be done with experts, colleagues, and select community members who can offer constructive feedback. With them the questions are: Do these options cover the breadth of ways people think about the potential solutions? Are these actions feasible in this community? Are there obvious actions that are missing? Do these trade-offs cover the range of potential concerns? The second round of pilot tests should be with community members who can offer further refinement of the guide in both content and language. As you listen to the discussion, think about whether the actions spark new ideas and additional thinking. Are they at the right scale for addressing specific local problems and value-based perspectives? Notice if all community members are participating—is the issue framed to engage all perspectives? During this test stage, reflect on the results to clarify and deepen your understanding of the dynamics of the issue and community involvement that may help strengthen the efficacy of the issue guide.

When the team is happy with the framework, the following questions can assist in addressing any remaining deficiencies or biases:

- Is there a balance of positive actions and trade-offs for both conservative and liberal perspectives?

- Should the actions be revised to help people imagine solutions? Could you identify tensions where more information and dialogue would be beneficial?
- Could specific terms or phrases be perceived as biased, confusing, or inflammatory? If so, consider adjusting the vocabulary.

Finalize the issue guide. Now that the issue guide's intent and effectiveness have been solidified, please provide pdf and word versions so that others in CIVIC can use your masterpiece. Please work with the CIVIC team to finalize the material, add the appropriate logos, and insert your draft into the CIVIC template.

To help people recognize common ground or understand different perspectives, they often must realize the underlying values expressed.

Two More Resources

The last step is the development of two resources that will accompany your issue guide and support a successful deliberation. One is a Facilitator Guide that helps facilitators plan for the discussion. This is a good place to explore thinking behind the selection of options and actions, the moral foundations and worldviews addressed, and the ways participants are likely to voice their values. To help people recognize common ground or understand different perspectives, they often must realize the underlying values expressed. While a liberal environmentalist may prefer government regulations to protect water quality, business owners might rightly bristle at the thought of greater governmental control. Digging into these assumptions and nuances help people understand each other when their perspectives differ. A useful facilitator guide should include the following:

1. An introduction that recognizes the power of deliberation and importance of the facilitator
2. A reminder of the facilitator's role
3. Reminder of group agreements and how the facilitator can use them
4. Review of the options and purpose of topic/issue
5. Starter questions for each option
6. "Insider" tips of how to bring out values and moral foundations in these options to move the conversation from the specific actions to the deeply-held worldviews
7. Suggestions for ways to prompt people to think about local actions
8. Suggestions for how to navigate next steps

The second resource is an introductory video or slide presentation that complements the written issue guide with a visual introduction to launch the discussion. A few photographs of the problem and a summary of each option, with good reasons to agree and a trade-off or two, will help the group begin to deliberate. Providing this as a video (see Indian River Lagoon example) or slide presentation (see

A well-designed issue guide and a facile facilitator will ensure a thoughtful, meaningful, and satisfying deliberative forum.

Land Use example) will help the host and facilitator start the event with clarity of purpose. A slide presentation may be preferred so agents can insert their own photographs of examples.

Summary

A good issue guide is essential to create thoughtful, reasonable, deliberative discussions at a community forum. Adapting an existing issue guide enables Extension agents to use local data to make the issue salient and suggest local actions that could be feasible. This focus on the local community is essential for nudging participants toward next steps and ways they could be engaged in meaningful action to create a healthy community. The process of issue guide development requires teamwork and can involve significant time and effort. The following key points have been echoed with each attempt we've made to develop an issue guide:

- Frame the issue to be relevant to the people who live in the community.
- Provide information that makes the issue locally relevant.
- Add choices and trade-offs that are locally specific.
- Make sure that all perspectives are represented and the choices are feasible and balanced.

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Developing Options

Use the following information to create two or three option names and descriptions for the issue of land use. The list below contains example concerns that were voiced from focus groups and interviews around the state. What themes do you see? What are the underlying concerns? What options may help address these concerns?

The Issue:

Florida's population is expected to grow to 33.7 million by 2070 (1000 Friends of Florida, 2017), doubling the state's population of 2005. These new residents will need homes, jobs, and shopping centers, in addition to schools, roads, and health care facilities. The essentials of clean water, energy, and food must also be available. These resources ought to be offered while also supporting, maintaining, and protecting existing communities, natural ecosystems, and economic prosperity.

Concerns:

- "Portions of the community are just ugly because of abandoned properties."
- "People can't afford to buy or rent in the community, and with developers buying up surrounding property and with the increase in housing prices, they might be unable to stay where they currently live!"
- "Land use decisions seem to be made in the back room with lots of good ol' boys. They probably smoke cigars."
- "Why bother to live in town; people can't find jobs here either."
- "We only hear about a new development after it has been approved and they start to clear the land."
- "My neighbor can't put up a clothesline, and I can't have chickens. We can't live the way we want in our own house because of the many regulations!"
- "Every developer wants a big chunk of undeveloped property, which means new roads are needed, new restaurants line the roads, and open space eventually disappears."
- "We don't know how to become engaged in land use decisions."

1000 Friends of Florida. (2017). *A special report Florida 2070: What is your vision for Florida's future?* A project by UF Geoplan, FDACS, and 1000 Friends of Florida. Retrieved November 6, 2023, from https://1000fof.org/florida2070/

EXERCISE 6-2

Actions and Trade-offs

Below is a sample issue guide on health care. In the blank rows (Actions #2 and #3), add two other actions and potential trade-offs that could be relevant in your community. Remember that actions are meant to encourage dialogue—broad enough to elicit different perspectives and concise enough to suggest concrete solutions.

ISSUE GUIDE TOPIC: HEALTHCARE	
Healthcare costs continue to grow faster than inflation. No wonder a recent Gallup Poll (NIF, 2020) found that healthcare availability and affordability still top the list of Americans' worries. Results indicated that one in four people skipped medical treatment because of the costs, and 77 percent said that rising costs will damage the United States economy. How can we bring costs down while getting the care we need?	
OPTION 1: ENSURE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL	
All Americans deserve healthcare coverage and some believe the fairest way to provide it is to create a single public health insurance program similar to Medicare that covers everybody. Most other developed countries provide citizens with some type of universal coverage (NIF, 2020). Health care should not depend on a person's income, job, or medical history. Providing universal health care would mean a significant restructuring of a government system and in addition would create new government fiscal and management responsibility as well as possibly reduce private and employment-based insurance that currently covers 181 million Americans.	
Actions	**Trade-Offs**
1 Move people with private and employment-based insurance onto the public plan. A single payer will simplify the complicated system and save on paperwork and administrative costs.	Forcing people onto a Medicare-like plan whether they want it or not would upend our entire health care system. Individuals and employers may save on premiums but may well have to pay new taxes.
2	
3	

National Issues Forum [NIF]. (2020). NIF National Healthcare Issue Guide. Retrieved November 6, 2023, from https://www.nifi.org/en/issue-guide/health-care-2020

Four Supportive Theoretical Frameworks that Underpin CIVIC (1 of 5)

Many philosophers, psychologists, educators, political scientists, and community development specialists have good ideas about how to engage people in social change. CIVIC was based on their common denominators. Four of the most helpful theories are explained below.

1 Moral Foundations

People determine what is right and wrong based on immediate reactions that engage six perspectives or moral judgments.

Why do people respond so differently to the same information? How do the values and norms we hold sway our interactions and choices? Moral psychologist Jonathan Haidt explains that people determine what is right and wrong based on immediate reactions that engage six perspectives or moral judgments (see list on next page). People and cultures vary on how much importance they give to each. For instance, in the United States, our culture tends to link the liberal perspective with concern for the vulnerable (people or environment), which are addressed by the care/harm foundation. A conservative perspective is more likely to be linked to loyalty and authority. Stories from the nightly news are clear indications of various perspectives and priorities for different solutions to many major social problems. Are we obligated to provide sufficient health insurance for all, or should people pay for what they get? Should individual property owners determine the future of their lands, or should the community have a voice in the future vision of their landscape?

The Moral Foundation Theory helps provide a deeper understanding of the ways participants' preferences and priorities may differ, based on their beliefs about how the world should be. It is helpful for issue guide developers to understand these foundations that can be built into the options, actions, and trade-offs. Applying moral foundations to framing an issue allows for the close examination of how specific words, phrases, and approaches activate moral frames. Haidt even offers a dictionary of key words for each foundation (https://moralfoundations.org/other-materials). Understanding these foundations can assist forum facilitators hear the underlying concerns when people explain why they prefer one action over another. Each of these foundations explains how people decide if something is basically good or bad in their perspectives.

HANDOUT 6-1

Four Supportive Theoretical Frameworks that Underpin CIVIC (2 of 5)

MORAL FOUNDATIONS (Haidt, 2012)

1. **Care/Harm:** This foundation is concerned primarily with easing suffering and avoiding harm to others. An action is good if it demonstrates care. An action is bad if it harms others.
2. **Fairness/Cheating:** This foundation is concerned with rewarding good deeds as people interact with each other and punishing the free riders or cheaters who do not contribute to a partnership.
3. **Loyalty/Betrayal:** As human groups grew and developed, we needed ways to organize ourselves into effective social groups. This foundation drives us to trust and reward those displaying commitment to their group and to punish those who betray or ignore group values or causes. Symbols of a group, such as a flag or statue, become highly valued. The phrase "one for all, and all for one" represents this foundation.
4. **Authority/Subversion:** This foundation enables us to recognize and respect legitimate authority and hierarchy that bring order to social systems. It also makes us sensitive to indicators that leaders are abusing power or people are subverting legitimate authority, thus threatening the societal order.
5. **Sanctity/Degradation:** This foundation drives our appreciation of intrinsic purity and sense of disgust. We feel some things are inherently good because they represent something sacred, pure, or beautiful. We feel other things are bad because they are disgusting or vile, such as pollution, disease, or waste products. Taboos often arise to guide behavior around these topics.
6. **Liberty/Oppression:** This foundation is concerned with maintaining personal freedoms or rights and avoiding being dominated. It triggers our urge to band together against bullies or repression in order to oppose or take down the oppressor. It also drives feelings about the appropriate role of government in society.

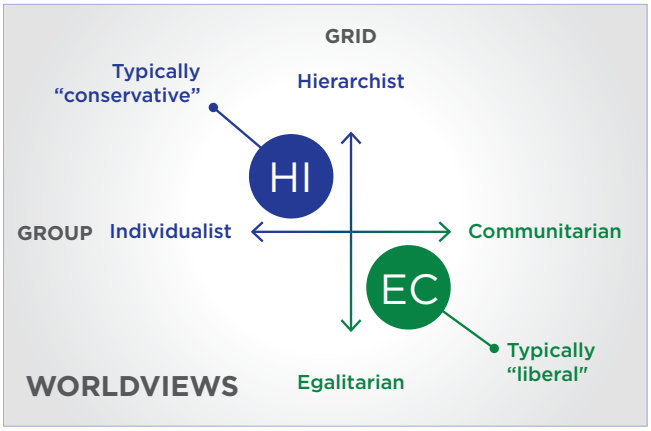
Understanding these foundations can assist forum facilitators hear the underlying concerns when people explain why they prefer one action over another.

Haidt, J. (2012). The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion NY: Vintage/Random House. Retrieved November 6, 2023, from https://moralfoundations.org/

Four Supportive Theoretical Frameworks that Underpin CIVIC (3 of 5)

2 Cultural Cognition Worldviews

Dan Kahan answers the same question of why people have different priorities and perceptions with a different combination of social science theories. His resulting theory of Cultural Cognition explains that people perceive different risks to the things they value (Kahan, 2012). Those who deny climate change, for example, may believe that acknowledging climate change imposes unacceptable risks to our current fossil-fuel-based economy. Others see climate change (and the fossil-fueled economy) as a risk to ecosystem health and biodiversity. They hope that stronger government regulations can mitigate the risk. The former group believes that more government regulations will undermine private enterprise. There are valuable insights from both groups. These divergent perspectives have shaped American political debate for 250 years.



Cultural Cognition characterizes different worldviews along two dimensions that represent the degree to which we value individual or community gain and a hierarchy of power or a more egalitarian vision of distributing power. In this figure, the horizontal axis runs from individual to community and the vertical axis covers hierarchy to egalitarian. Based on a series of surveys, Kahan suggests that most Americans tend to land in the two opposing quadrants that are typically conservative (Hierarchical-Individualist) and typically liberal (Egalitarian-Communitarian). Understanding the way people perceive risk and the values that are threatened by those risks is another strategy for constructing frameworks that support deliberation, and of course, facilitating a discussion.

Kahan D. M. (2012). Cultural Cognition as a Conception of the Cultural Theory of Risk, pps. 725-759. In S. Roeser, R. Hillerbrand, P. Sandin, & M. Peterson (Eds.) Handbook of Risk Theory. Dordrecht: Springer. Retrieved November 6, 2023, from https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1433-5_28

Four Supportive Theoretical Frameworks that Underpin CIVIC (4 of 5)

3 Dimensions of Well-Being

Woodhouse et al. (2015) suggests categories for the things people value. By analyzing the factors that support a positive physical, social, and mental state, or well-being, the researchers delineated a series of ingredients that motivate people. This is similar to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, but without the hierarchy. Given our many different cultures and environments, Woodhouse et al. believe well-being is informed by locality. For CIVIC, this suggests the types of concerns people might express when involved in a concern collection exercise and what they might envision to improve their lives, family, and community. Additionally, intangible elements like the quality of social relationships (including with community-level organizations), peace of mind, and ability to fulfil a sense of purpose all impact our well-being.

The following five dimensions of well-being may be useful during concern collecting, framing an issue, facilitating a discussion, or identifying next steps. Further, they can help identify barriers to participation and prerequisites to healthy deliberation.

DIMENSIONS OF WELL-BEING *(Woodhouse et al., 2015)*	
Well-Being Domains	**Description and Examples**
Material	Secure and adequate livelihoods; food security e.g., land, natural resources, livestock; savings and capital; goods e.g., housing, furniture, tools.
Health	Feeling strong and well, access to health services, appearing well, having a healthy physical environment e.g., fresh air.
Social Relations	Good relations with family, community, and country; dignity e.g., not being a burden, feeling listened to; ability to help others and fulfill social obligations; ability to care for children (including education and marriage).
Security	Confidence in the future, safe and secure environment, personal physical security and safety, safety in old age and for future generations.
Freedom of Choice and Action	Sense of control and power, ability to pursue what you value doing and being, meeting aspirations

Woodhouse, E., Homewood K., Beauchamp, E., Clements, T., McCabe J.T., Wilkie, D., & E. J. Milner-Gulland. (2015). Guiding principles for evaluating the impacts of conservation interventions on human well-being. Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B, 370:20150103. Retrieved November 6, 2023, from https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2015.0103

Four Supportive Theoretical Frameworks that Underpin CIVIC (5 of 5)

4 Supportive Environments for Effectiveness (SEE)

Environmental psychologists and creators of the Reasonable Person Model (RPM), Rachel and Stephen Kaplan emphasize addressing peoples' cognitive needs in order to support them in being reasonable, thriving, and functioning at their best. The Supportive Environments for Effectiveness (SEE) approach is built upon the foundation of RPM. For more information about SEE, refer to https://redirect.org/

Chapter 1 of the CIVIC guide suggests that CIVIC activities create opportunities for people to function well, solve problems, and contribute to their community. RPM is at the core of this work (see table below). The CIVIC activities are framed based on the concerns of the community, which makes them relevant and meaningful: participant access to and comfort in the physical venue of a forum is considered (Becoming Effective); facilitators and participants listen intently to how people talk about the issues and what they value (Model-Building); and next steps are developed collectively as people see ways to help solve problems (Meaningful Action). SEE suggests examining and applying the following three RPM domains.

REASONABLE PERSON MODEL (RPM) *(Kaplan & Kaplan, 2009)*
Model-Building refers to the importance of developing a common understanding of the issue. While information is not sufficient for taking action, it is certainly a necessary ingredient. A program or CIVIC event helps provide the information people need to make sense of a problem and reveals the ways others understand the same issue, helping to expose conflicts and challenges. By asking questions people can build on what they already know, strengthening their own mental model.
Meaningful Action reflects the importance of having opportunities to make a difference. Such opportunities bring along a chance to be heard, to gain respect, and to provide growth. Success builds a sense of empowerment that can lead to a renewed commitment for future actions. Developing reports of recommendations from deliberation can be one such action as well as any next steps that are generated by the group.
Becoming Effective means creating environments that enable people to be clear-minded and feel competent, essential precursors of being effective. Building efficacy through supportive networks and practice would help. Providing views of nature or outdoor walks help people restore their attention and improve their outlook. Even strategies as simple as offering food and nametags can help build trust in a community and create a comfortable atmosphere for discussion.

Kaplan S. & Kaplan, R. (2009). Creating a larger framework for environmental psychology: The Reasonable Person Model as an integrative framework. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 29(3), 329-339.

CHAPTER

7

Facilitating a CIVIC Event

This chapter explores the concept of facilitation and describes how to facilitate a CIVIC town hall meeting or deliberative forum. Extension faculty should be able to use this chapter to understand the role of the facilitator, identify specific facilitator characteristics, improve their facilitation skills, and address challenging dynamics within a town hall or forum setting. If you are uncomfortable facilitating or need more skills to facilitate a potentially contentious town hall or forum, you can ask someone else to facilitate your CIVIC activity. But the more you practice, the better you become at facilitation; so take every opportunity to do so.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- Exercise 7-1: Effective Questions and Listening
- Worksheet 7-1: Effective Questions and Listening Worksheet
- Exercise 7-2: Facilitation Practice
- Worksheet 7-2: Role Cards for Facilitation Practice
- Handout 7-1: NIF's Four Key Questions for Facilitation Practice
- Handout 7-2: General Questions to Encourage Deliberation for Facilitation Practice

The facilitator enables groups to work together more effectively by helping everyone to think about issues differently and gain new perspectives.

What Is a Facilitator/Facilitation?

The Latin root of facilitate *(facilis)* means "to enable or to make easy." Facilitation is the act of engaging participants to work together, and their willingness to work together creates a range of ways facilitators think about their work. When you facilitate a meeting of your advisory group, you are working with people who want to help you. You have an agenda, but you may not need to deal with recalcitrant participants; people generally want to be there and want to help you. In the context of CIVIC, facilitators help participants engage with speakers in a town hall meeting and engage participants in a deliberative forum as they discuss options, talk about actions, or create a plan together. Using the Supportive Environments for Effectiveness framework can help make these tasks easier (see Box 1-1). Participants have chosen to be there, but they may disagree with what someone says. The facilitator enables groups to work together more effectively by helping everyone to think about issues differently and gain new perspectives (Kaner, 2014).

Skilled facilitators are key to the democratic process of engaging citizens and residents in community problem-solving. Following are some tips for optimal facilitation:

- The facilitator supports a calm environment for a productive exchange of ideas and opinions between deliberators.

A good facilitator is an effective communicator and is able to summarize and reflect group members' ideas.

- The facilitator listens for values that motivate the participants' comments and makes connections between common values. Participants may have different opinions, but if their values align, common ground can be achieved. The facilitator asks clarifying questions to make sure the commentator was understood.
- The facilitator avoids taking an expert view of the topic and remains neutral. They also keep deliberation focused on the options rather than allowing the discussion to go astray (Kahl, 2016).
- The facilitator encourages participation from all participants (Kaner, 2014). They draw out the tensions and trade-offs from participants' comments so everyone can consider what they are willing or not willing to accept. The facilitator is also tasked with keeping participants focused on issues to avoid personal attacks. The facilitator promotes constructive feedback by using these tensions and redirecting energy towards deliberation rather than debate. They do this by asking the group to react to comments, share different opinions and discuss trade-offs to ideas.
- The facilitator encourages participants to reflect on what is important to them about the issue and share with the group the option they feel is most valuable (Corbett & Offenbacker, 2008).

A good facilitator is an effective communicator and is able to summarize and reflect group members' ideas. They must be concise and clear in the description of the process. From our experiences, the following characteristics are ideal.

- A facilitator needs to be a keen observer of group members' nonverbal communication to help recognize areas of tension or agreement so they can respond as needed.
- A facilitator should help connect with participants and earn their trust, which will in turn encourage participants to be open and honest about their values and opinions.
- Good facilitators need to be open to change and able to respond to the group.
- A facilitator should be able to infuse energy into the group when the discussion flags and redirect divisive energy if it erupts. It helps if they are good at reading the room, detecting the beginnings of frustration or resistance, and keeping the conversation flowing.

An effective facilitator should possess a variety of characteristics. According to Facilitation First, a Canadian company with 30 years of experience in conducting professional facilitation, the top 10 characteristics of an excellent facilitator are as follows *(Top 10 Characteristics, n.d.):*

- Effective Communication
- Keen Observation
- Demonstrates Unwavering Positivity
- Authentic
- Maintains Constant Neutrality or "Passionate Impartiality"
- Open to Change
- Energetic Personality
- Promotes Constructive Feedback
- Asks Versus Tells
- Patient

Good facilitation in CIVIC events may include a facilitation team. It is helpful to create a team of people with different skills, for example, one who will guide the discussion, another who serves as a notetaker, and another to help manage time. A facilitation team approach to representing the "Top 10 Characteristics" will contribute to a stimulating town hall meeting or deliberative forum.

The notion of neutrality is worth emphasizing, since Extension agents are often called upon to be the source of answers. However, the facilitator is not a subject matter expert when facilitating a deliberative discussion. In fact, it helps if the issue is outside their program area. Martin Carcasson, professor of Communications Studies, and founder of the Colorado State University Center for Public Deliberation uses the term ***"passionate impartiality"*** and encourages facilitators to maintain objectivity and commit to engaging people with diverse perspectives. This means the facilitator should avoid agreeing or disagreeing with participants or offering their personal points of view. The facilitator's role is to draw out peoples' ideas, opinions, criticisms, and the possibility of reaching some degree of common ground or agreement on how to move forward.

The facilitator should avoid agreeing or disagreeing with participants or offering their personal points of view.

Town Hall Meetings

Town hall meetings are designed to inform the community about a public issue. In contrast to a deliberative forum (dialogue), where people are encouraged to make some choices about reasonable next steps, town hall meetings help participants understand a problem. Depending on which speakers are selected, a town hall meeting may explore how this problem developed and evolved, how other communities have addressed similar issues, the advantages and disadvantages of various options, what the community has already done about the issue, and how the decision-making system might address the problem.

Chapter 4 describes how to organize a town hall meeting as well as the event characteristics and general objectives. The facilitator has a critical role in executing a successful event.

After welcoming the participants and audience members, the facilitator guides the meeting and reviews agreed-upon group agreements. They demonstrate respect for all participants and work to maintain a respectful atmosphere in the meeting. Facilitators do not represent the host or the public; rather, they are devoted to the process of enabling information to be shared and providing for a respectful exchange of ideas to deepen understanding of the issue.

In the town hall meeting, the facilitator has two foci: speaker presentations and audience participation. The first involves engaging the speaker or panelists in offering relevant information and may

In the town hall meeting, the facilitator has two foci: speaker presentations and audience participation.

include facilitating a conversation among the speakers or panelists. Typically, each speaker is given a short amount of time to describe their position on the issue followed by a time for an exchange of perspectives among themselves, if appropriate. The facilitator may prepare questions for the dialogue among panelists and pose questions after listening for themes or areas of disagreement during the speakers' presentations.

The convener, partners, and facilitator may decide to interview the panelists. They would come prepared with questions, such as, "How has this issue affected your constituents or communities? What are the consequences if there is no progress in addressing the issue? Where are there tensions in the possible solutions? Are there trade-offs the public needs to be aware of should we move in one direction or another?"

Most of a town hall meeting time, however, should be dedicated to participants asking questions of the panelists and offering opinions about the issue. Perhaps 30 percent of the event is set aside for panelists and 70 percent for everyone to participate. The facilitators should also be prepared with questions to spark helpful dialogue. For example, "We've heard several insightful arguments about the subject, what questions do you have about the problems you see? What concerns do you have about the source of the problem? How about the alternatives that were presented—what concerns do you have about these options?"

Planning for audience questions and comments is a challenge. In some instances, especially regarding controversial issues, audience members can be provided with cards to use to write questions, which are submitted before the Q&A. Facilitator teams have the advantage of organizing the questions into a flow that proceeds from basic foundational questions to more detailed or controversial concerns. This also enables the public to ask sensitive questions anonymously. If the facilitators vet the questions to avoid highly political or potentially inappropriate questions or ad hoc opinions, they risk compromising free speech or conveying bias. Of course, if time does not allow for all the questions to be presented, experts can be asked to provide written responses that can be sent to the participants.

Another approach is to simply invite people to raise their hands to speak or ask their questions. The advantage here is egalitarian opportunity. The disadvantage is creating embarrassing tension or inviting a rant. Facilitators should plan how to handle difficulties with audience participation. If additional conversation appears to be necessary, an additional town hall or separate meeting can be planned.

Facilitators should create a comfortable atmosphere so that participants are able to ask questions. This may mean starting the process with a few prepared questions, or simply waiting for the audience to contribute their own.

Facilitators should encourage people to direct questions to particular speakers.

Additional approaches to facilitating audience Q&A include inviting audience members to make comments or ask questions based on what they appreciated about the presentations, followed by soliciting concerns about what was troubling. Some might want to ask for more clarification about a particular subject or problem-solving approach. Audience members might want to know why the guests or experts have different or contradictory problem-solving approaches. Facilitators should encourage people to direct questions to particular speakers. Alternatively, facilitators can direct questions to one or more appropriate speakers.

Audience participation time also allows participants to share their experiences with the issue. Has the problem impacted some neighborhoods and not others? Does the problem represent an injustice? Is the problem impacting community health, communication, safety, or other aspect of community life? Ideally, town hall meetings can offer a supportive space for learning about an issue and airing differences of opinion while maintaining a civil and supportive atmosphere.

There are several steps that are important at the end of the meeting. As the town hall wraps up, the facilitator may wish to ask the audiences a few questions, such as, "What did you appreciate about today's meeting? What could we have done better?" If the event had recorders, the facilitator could ask the audience to review what the recorders captured and make sure key ideas were included. The host or Extension faculty can also provide information about the next steps and how the town hall meeting outcomes will be used to ensure participants that their voices have been heard and are valued. The speakers could summarize what they heard and what they believe might be fruitful directions for another gathering. Finally, a sincere expression of thanks to all who participated is critical. At the end of the town hall meeting, facilitators should remind participants to complete the CIVIC Town Hall Survey either online or on paper. People from the team should be available to help with the survey.

Deliberative Forums

CIVIC draws upon the Charles F. Kettering Foundation and National Issues Forums Institute's (NIFI) work by using a communication activity called deliberative dialogue or deliberative forum. The Foundation and NIFI have a forty-year history of fine-tuning the act of community deliberation with the help of civic engagement organizations located in universities and communities across the nation. Sponsoring groups typically convey the deliberative forum outcomes, representing the "voice of the people," to elected officials

and community decision-makers. CIVIC events have generated similar reports to community leaders, and we have provided additional options in Chapter 8.

The deliberative process (Chapter 5) depends on skilled facilitation. With modest training, prospective facilitators from Extension can serve effectively. Whether using an NIFI issue guide or a CIVIC dialogue resource, an impartial facilitator is essential during a deliberation where people challenge each other with different perspectives on an issue of importance to them. In a time of heightened polarization and tension, remaining neutral, impartial, and calm is key for a successful forum. Instead of defending one's own ideas, facilitators listen for nuances and tensions raised in the group. When facilitators ask participants to respond to a person's comment by offering a different or even opposing perspective, they help small group members talk across differences. By remaining neutral, facilitators also may feel less anxious and more centered, and can focus on listening carefully and empathically. The more one facilitates, the better one becomes at listening.

By remaining neutral, facilitators also may feel less anxious and more centered, and can focus on listening carefully and empathically.

Deliberative dialogue invites a different way of talking about public issues, and it is up to the facilitator to guide this process. Because a deliberative forum convenes small groups of people, everyone has time to listen and share ideas with others. The facilitator's job is to create a comfortable atmosphere for people to speak and to encourage everyone to share opinions. For those new to deliberation, it is helpful for facilitators to describe what to expect and what NOT to expect from the forum experience. Facilitators might offer some time for Q&A and clarification after explaining these expectations before discussing the options.

LINDA SEALS

To find out how the participants feel about the topic, the facilitator might ask the following: "What is valuable to us? How are you affected by this issue? What concerns you?"

As explained in Chapter 5, after introducing the issue and going over the group agreements, the forum begins with facilitators inviting people to share their concerns about the issue. To find out how the participants feel about the topic, the facilitator might ask the following: "What is valuable to us? How are you affected by this issue? What concerns you?" Provide participants with some guidelines for answering the questions. You might ask them to answer briefly in one or two sentences. The facilitator might summarize the group's comments and refer to the participants' answers as the forum progresses.

The facilitator keeps the group moving through each of the options, with the help of a timekeeper, spending about 20 minutes on each of the three options. Since many actions and trade-offs involve deeply held values or moral foundations (Chapter 6), the facilitator can help participants see how their concerns about government regulation, for instance, might be related to the importance they place on independence. Another option might emphasize the value of security or speak to the need for accountability. Some of the reasons to solve a problem may revolve around reducing harm to people or the environment, which some folks would agree is important. But is it more important than something else? Therein lies a discussion! Facilitators may choose to identify the option's value and should concisely summarize the option and its drawback. The value might help people realize the edge on which the decisions turn.

Not only are values an underlying foundation for preferences and perspectives, but the things we hold valuable can be another way people talk about an issue. For example, consider personal safety, security of the community against threats, being treated fairly, and minimizing harm as examples of what people hold valuable (Rourke, 2014). Each of these are indicators of the fundamental value of caring for others and oneself. As deliberators discuss specific actions and corresponding trade-offs, facilitators need to listen for what people deeply care about. For example, participants in the land-use forums in Apalachicola spoke specifically about gathering spaces for the predominantly Black community. This led to a robust discussion of the role of these gathering spaces in both present and historical contexts in Black communities and the impact of government decisions on these spaces.

The facilitator guides the forum discussion by asking meaningful and appropriate questions. Four key questions are integral to meaningful dialogue (Carcasson, n.d.).

- "What is valuable to us?
- What are the consequences, costs, benefits, and trade-offs associated with each option or approach?
- What are the inherent conflicts or tensions we might need to work through?

- Can we detect any shared sense of direction or common ground for action?" (See Handouts 7-1 and 7-2 for more facilitator questions).

In addition to the key questions, inquiries to assist in the flow of the dialogue are helpful. A facilitator can help clarify a deliberator's comment by asking, "Please tell us more about why you think this way? Would someone like to give us an example of what was just said? Does this raise any concerns for anyone?"

When the group appears to agree, a facilitator could ask, "What seems to be most important to those who like this action? Why do you agree? Have we come to some common ground or agreement to support a specific action in this option? Which action(s) seem reasonable?" Significant disagreement might prompt, "For those who disagree with this action/option, what concerns do you have? Where are the gray areas or ambiguity? What negative consequences might take place if this action were pursued?"

Dialogue around a possible action should always include consideration of the drawbacks or trade-offs. In other words, participants also need to imagine the consequences of an action. If the action succeeds, what might occur as a result? Question may include, for example: "Can anyone think of something constructive that might come from this action succeeding? Is there a downside to this course of action? Would you give up _____in order to achieve _____? What are the costs and could you live with them?"

Facilitators should avoid "yes or no" questions. For example, "Do you think X should be done?" "Some people support Y. Do you

Facilitators should avoid asking questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no" because they stifle discussion.

In response to a dominating individual, a facilitator might say, "I hear and respect your passion for this issue. I'm curious what others have to say in response."

agree?" These questions can be answered with a simple yes or no and do not invite explanation or discussion. Open-ended questions, on the other hand, encourage critical thinking: "What would it take for the community to implement X? How would we improve the situation? What might the downside of this course of action be? Where will we find support (or resistance) for this action?" By helping the group employ critical thinking, the participants see how others think about an issue and begin to explore their own thinking. Rather than a knee-jerk "yes," facilitators can help participants dig deeper into their understanding and values to bring these ideas to the surface.

Difficult Dynamics

Facilitators may face challenges during a town hall or deliberative forum. Highly-charged topics give rise to heated emotions. Some people might feel offended by others' comments and retreat from the dialogue. Others who are passionate might dominate the group or frequently interrupt. A successful facilitator pays attention to the entire group's dynamic and skillfully manages the room. In response to a dominating individual, a facilitator might say, "John, I hear and respect your passion for this issue. I'm curious what others have to say in response." Facilitators might even employ body language by rotating their body toward others in the group after speaking with the vocal individual. This provides a physical cue that they are directing their attention away from the vocal individual and toward other group members.

Not all participants are talkative. Introverts and shy persons have difficulty, especially amid groups with more active speakers. Facilitators can try to draw out quiet persons by asking, "Are there ideas or comments from those who have not had a chance to contribute?" Some people absorb content and think synthetically. In some cases, toward the end of an option's dialogue or during the forum reflection period, such thinkers surprise facilitators and their cohort by making connections. The facilitator may ask, "Would anyone like to tie together or synthesize our dialogue?"

Another challenge involves conversations about data or actual information. Quoting statistics to make a point is a familiar argumentation tactic. Since facilitators are content neutral, they should not have responsibility for correcting or challenging participants. It is better to deflect comments to others and draw them into the conversation by asking, "Can anyone respond to what was just quoted?" Facilitators may also want to remind group

members to focus on the options and actions, what they hold valuable regarding moving forward, rather than debating facts. The essence of a deliberative discussion should merely assume there is a problem and focus on what to do about it. This eliminates the need to delve into the source of the problem, which is often where debates on facts surface.

Sam Kaner, author of *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making,* has a lot to say about dealing with difficult dynamics. Kaner (2007) explains that the act of deliberation can set the stage for challenging communications. In such cases, it is easy for people to say something that isn't exactly what they mean and for people to be misunderstood. If this occurs, it can lead to frustration. A skilled facilitator can bring attention to this problem and say, "Folks seem to be having a hard time articulating what they mean; why do you think this might be?"

Another example of a challenging communication problem is a comment that distracts the group from the main topic of discussion. A skilled facilitator will note this deviation and ask the group whether they want to address it now or later.

A set of always-useful questions and statements that a facilitator can make include: "Does anyone have any more to add? Can anyone give an example? Before we change the subject, let's make sure everyone has a chance to speak" (Kaner, 2007: 137).

Facilitators may want to remind group members to focus on the options and actions, what they hold valuable regarding moving forward, rather than debating facts.

During the deliberation of options, actions, and trade-offs, facilitators will likely need to intervene to help move the discussion forward.

Facilitator Strategies

During the deliberation of options, actions, and trade-offs, facilitators will likely need to intervene to help move the discussion forward. There are five basic ways they can transition from one participant to another as they share their ideas.

1. **Move on** to the next speaker by simply pointing to the next person wanting to speak or asking the group for additional comments.
2. **Paraphrase** what that person said to clarify the point and help the note-takers. "Did we capture your comment accurately?"
3. **Ask a "probing"** or **"follow-up"** question to the same speaker to get clarification or dig deeper. "Could you say a little more to help us understand what you mean?"
4. **Ask a "reaction"** question that prompts other people respond to the last speaker's comments. "Would someone like to respond to what Juan just said?" or "Does that concern bother anyone else?"
5. **Ask a new starting question.** "We devoted serious attention to this action. Is there another action you would like to discuss?

Depending on the facilitator's preference or the group's dynamics, facilitators can choose one or more strategies to guide their efforts. It helps to select different choices from time to time to keep some spice in the forum. Some deliberative groups almost guide themselves and organically participate with little need for facilitation. In this case, the facilitator becomes a **referee,** only stepping in to remind participants of the rules and manage time. A facilitator may say, "The group is very engaged and focused on this action. But let's be cognizant of the time. Are there other aspects of this option that need attention?"

Acting as an **interviewer** is another strategy. Some facilitators prefer preparing specific questions before the forum based on their understanding of the issue guide's options, actions, and trade-offs. Most NIFI issue guides include a facilitator's guide with questions to help prepare for the forum. For example, the moderator guide for Youth and Opportunity offers questions for Option #1, Equip People to Succeed. "Can a hard-working student get a good education in the existing system? Will less motivated students really take advantage of these better options? How important is motivation and hard work in equipping younger people to succeed in the future?" (NIFI, 2020). Forum groups with little or no familiarity with the issue benefit from this facilitator interviewing strategy.

There are times when asking questions as a **devil's advocate** is beneficial. In cases where there is significant like-mindedness, facilitators may want to nudge the group to consider perspectives not represented in the forum group. The facilitator may ask, "What voices are missing, and what might they have to contribute to the dialogue?" "If you were a person with limited resources, what would you think about this action?"

Listening carefully to an individual's comments and ensuring everyone clearly understands contributes to successful deliberations.

Finally, some facilitators who are adept at listening and making connections serve as **weavers.** Weavers help the group identify agreement or common ground by weaving threads of their deliberation together. "How might we connect some of the ideas we've discussed today?" The weaver strategy provides a transition to the facilitator's efforts from the three options to the forum reflection section. As the forum moves into its final phase, facilitators help the group debrief. "Can we identify any shared sense of purpose/direction? Did we reach any common ground or areas of agreement? Were there tensions we could not resolve or trade-offs we were unwilling to make? What still needs to be discussed or resolved? What should we consider doing to move forward?"

In addition to group reflection, facilitators may want to encourage personal reflection. "How has your thinking about this issue changed? How did others help you understand the issue more deeply?"

First and foremost, facilitators must be good listeners. Listening carefully to an individual's comments and ensuring everyone clearly understands contributes to successful deliberations. However, in addition, concentrating on everyone in the room involves watching their faces and bringing others into the dialogue journey. Watching for peoples' expressions and encouraging people to respond to others—by agreeing or politely disagreeing—or to assert their perspectives makes for a good forum experience.

Summary

Deliberation is not easy work, especially around options that have not been widely discussed. Facilitation is not easy either! It requires carefully listening for underlying assumptions and values and asking questions that help people realize what they care about. Fortunately, most of these sample questions offered in this chapter will be useful for any issue. You can practice using them to become an effective facilitator.

Whenever possible the facilitator should not answer content questions as an expert to ensure consistent neutrality.

This chapter focused on the facilitator's role in CIVIC activities. Passionately impartial facilitators are essential for engaging the public in talking about tough issues and talking across differences of opinion. Facilitation need not be a solo enterprise. Co-facilitating with a partner offers advantages. Two pairs of ears and eyes can spot more reactions and make connections between comments more effectively. Skillful facilitation on challenging issues can be very rewarding for both you and the participants.

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Effective Questions and Listening

This exercise focuses on questions that help people reveal what they care about and elicit the most information. If you have a group, please work in triads to interview each other and note the types of questions that help people share their deepest feelings.

This is an opportunity to practice the most essential skill of facilitation: asking questions that prompt people to talk and listening carefully to what they say. In advance of this exercise, select the topics the group will discuss. We suggest the following, but you are welcome to adjust this list to match the group. Provide at least three options:

a. My pet
b. Favorite sport
c. Favorite food
d. My hobby

1. Introduce the importance of asking questions that help respondents think about and explore how they feel about a topic. For this exercise, participants practice that by talking about their favorite pet or hobby (or whatever has been decided). Ask the large group to brainstorm the type of questions that might be useful. Here are some questions to get started:

   a. Can you tell me a story about _____?
   b. What first interested you in this _____?
   c. How did _____ become your favorite?
   d. How many of your friends also enjoy this?
   e. How does _____ make you feel?
   f. How would you feel if you could no longer _____?

2. Ask each participant to select one of the topics and write it on an index card. To find two more people who share their interest, each person should hold their card in front of them and walk around the room, scanning everyone's card. This will form triads for discussion. If you have unmatched people, they can work in pairs or become a second observer in another triad.

3. When everyone is part of a triad, introduce the three roles and tell them they will have five minutes for one person to interview another while the third person observes and notes the insightful questions. Then they rotate to allow someone else to practice asking questions. The task is to interview each other while carefully listening to the questions that prompt introspection and the comments that reveal underlying values.

   a. **Interviewer –** Asks questions to understand why the interviewee enjoys this subject/activity. Probe and try to find the values and personal growth that comes from the person's engagement with the subject/activity.
   b. **Interviewee –** Answers the questions as thoroughly as possible.
   c. **Recorder –** Listens carefully. Notes the questions that help people open up to share their feelings. Listens for what s/he values, what excites her/him, and any other unique facts or impressions. Take notes about the values that are expressed.

4. After five minutes for the first round, switch to allow people to take a different role and repeat. Switch again to give everyone a chance at each role.

5. Using the following worksheet, give each triad five to ten minutes to discuss their experiences, noting the best questions and insightful comments.

6. Lead the full group in a discussion about questions and values.

Effective Questions and Listening Worksheet

The purpose of this exercise is to have participants practice asking probing questions and listen for underlying values in another person's story.

Topic: _____

Debriefing the Exercise

1. **For Interviewers:** What was challenging about this exercise? What questions did you think were most insightful? What comments or body language did you notice that helped you understand questions?

2. **For Interviewees:** What was challenging about this exercise? What questions helped you open up to share your thoughts? What did you enjoy about this exercise?

3. **For Listeners:** What was challenging about this exercise? Which questions did you think were most effective? Did anything surprise you? What do you think the interviewee deeply cared about or valued?

Facilitation Practice

There is nothing like practice to improve one's facilitation skills. Assemble flip charts and easels (one for each group of five), markers and tape for each group, and copies of issue guides (one for each person) for this two-hour exercise.

This is a chance to improve your facilitation skills. Think about what you'd like to work on and build it in to this mock forum. For this exercise, each person will facilitate one component of a deliberative discussion while others in the group play a given role.

1. Organize participants into small groups of five. You can double up some roles to accommodate groups smaller than five. Ask each group to select an issue guide to use. You are welcome to use a NIFI guide or the CIVIC examples (CIVIC Website). Pass out a set of roles (provided on Worksheet 7-2) to each group and ask each person to agree to play one of the roles. If this is the first time the participants are facilitating anything, we recommend using only these roles. If the group is experienced, feel free to add challenging individual cards to the groups.

2. Ask participants to arrange five chairs in a circle around a flip chart and take a few minutes to become familiar with the issue and options. Distribute Handouts 7-1 and 7-2 and encourage them to use these questions as they facilitate. Tell them they have 90 minutes to work through an entire deliberative discussion and explain they will take turns facilitating and being a notetaker for each section of the forum. The person with Role Card 1 will begin.

3. When the groups have concluded their discussions, facilitate a discussion about their experiences, drawing out their ah-ha moments and challenges:
   - How did this go for you? What was easy about this exercise? What was challenging?
   - What was the situation in which you felt things were going well?
   - What was the situation in which you felt things were headed off the rails?
   - Who used the questions on the handouts, and how did they work?
   - How were you able to resolve challenging people?
   - What do you want to remember to improve your skills?

Role Cards for Facilitation Practice (1 of 2)

Role Cards
ROLE CARD 1 ■ You will welcome people to the forum, introduce the topics, and facilitate the Personal Stake. ■ You will be scribe for Option 1. ■ For the rest of the discussion, you will participate as a 4-H parent. You believe the county Extension office does a great job of supporting the community.
ROLE CARD 2 ■ You will facilitate the Option 1. ■ You will be scribe for Option 2. ■ For the rest of the discussion, you will participate as someone who lives in the wildland-urban interface. You are familiar with Extension's support of agriculture, but aren't sure how Extension can help you. You are recently retired from teaching with the public school system.
ROLE CARD 3 ■ You will facilitate the Option 2. ■ You will be scribe for Option 3. ■ For the rest of the discussion, you will participate as a member of the local Black church and are very proud of your community's work to support low-income members.
ROLE CARD 4 ■ You will facilitate the Option 3. ■ You will be scribe for Summary and Next Steps. ■ For the rest of the discussion, you will participate as a tax specialist and consultant for small businesses.
ROLE CARD 5 ■ You will facilitate the Summary and Next Steps. ■ You will be scribe for the Personal Stake. ■ For the rest of the discussion, you will participate as a volunteer firefighter and environmental advocate.

Role Cards for Facilitation Practice (2 of 2)

Challenging Individual Cards (for advanced facilitators)

CHALLENGE CARD 1

You believe you have expertise on this topic, and it is your job to help everyone else understand what you know. You have a superior attitude and ego to match.

CHALLENGE CARD 2

You are distracted because your daughter is home sick. You are worried that it might be something contagious that the rest of the family will soon get, and you have other things you need to do this week. You can't focus on the discussion and offer irrelevant comments.

CHALLENGE CARD 3

You are very quiet. You only speak when asked to contribute something. But then it is a very valuable comment.

CHALLENGE CARD 4

You disagree with someone and let them know.

HANDOUT 7-1

NIF's Four Key Questions for Facilitation Practice

1 What is valuable to us?

This question gets at the reason that making public choices is so difficult, namely, that all the approaches are rooted in things about which people care very deeply. This key question can take many different forms. To uncover deeper concerns, people may ask one another how each came to hold the views he or she have. Talking about personal experiences, rather than simply reciting facts, or stating rational, impersonal arguments, promotes a more meaningful dialogue.

- How has this issue affected us personally?
- When we think about this issue, what concerns us?
- What is appealing about the first option or approach?
- What makes this approach acceptable – or unacceptable?
- Could anyone try to tie together or synthesize our dialogue?

2 What are the consequences, costs, benefits, and trade-offs associated with the various approaches?

Variations of this question should prompt people to think about the relationship that exists between each approach and the values people have. Because deliberation requires the evaluation of pros and cons, it is important to ensure that both aspects are fully considered. Questions to promote a fair and balanced examination of all potential implications include the following:

- What would be the consequences of doing what we are suggesting?
- What would be an argument against the approach we like best? Is there a downside to this course of action?
- Can anyone think of something constructive that might come from the approach that is receiving so much criticism?

3 What are the inherent conflicts that we have to work through?

As a forum progresses, participants should consider the following:

- What do we see as the tension between the approaches?
- What are the "gray areas"?
- Where is there ambiguity?
- What are you struggling with? What are you not sure about?
- Why is reaching a decision (or moving forward) on this issue so difficult?

4 Can we detect a shared sense of direction or common ground for action?

At the beginning of a forum, the facilitator should note that the objective is to work toward a decision. As the discussion progresses, the moderator or someone else may continue to intervene from time to time with questions that move the deliberation toward a choice, always stopping short of pressing for consensus or agreement on a particular solution. Then, if tensions become evident, and people see how what they consider valuable pulls them in different directions, the moderator tests to see where the group is going by asking such questions as:

- Which direction seems best?
- Where do we want this policy to take us?
- What trade-offs are we willing and unwilling to accept?
- If the policy we seem to favor had the negative consequences some fear, would we still favor it?
- What are we willing and unwilling to do as individuals or as a community to solve this problem?
- At the heart of deliberation is the question of whether we are willing to accept the consequences of our choices.

General Questions to Encourage Deliberation for Facilitation Practice

To get started:

- Could you share a story to illustrate that point?

To clarify what someone just said:

- I understand you do not favor that position, but what do you think people who favor it deeply care about?
- What might be the consequences of what you said? Would they make a difference?
- How might your concerns differ if you were (a caregiver, a business owner, etc.)?
- How might someone make a case against what you said?

To keep the discussion moving:

- How do you separate what is a private matter from a public matter in this issue?
- 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?
- Can anyone envision how their life would change if this approach became national policy?
- How may your ideas affect other people?

To work toward common ground:

- Can someone suggest areas that we seem to have in common?
- Would someone like to identify the values that seem to be opposed?
- What is there about this approach that you just cannot accept?
- What might we modify to make this decision more acceptable to more people?

CHAPTER

8

Next Steps

This chapter explains how faculty can help community members initiate action that moves toward the resolution of challenging issues after town hall meetings and deliberative discussions. Start planning for the next step before the end of the CIVIC activities. Community action possibilities need to be woven into every aspect of your CIVIC work, starting with collecting concerns and building partnerships (Chapters 2 and 3). Read on to learn more about how you can do this.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- Exercise 8-1: Exploring Next Steps
- Worksheet 8-1: Exploring Next Steps Worksheet
- Exercise 8-2: Listening for Next Steps
- Worksheet 8-2: Listening for Next Steps Worksheet

Moving from Discussion to Action

CIVIC events, such as town hall meetings and deliberative discussions, are just one step in the process of building community capacity and helping to address challenging issues. As we discussed in previous chapters, one reason CIVIC activities are popular is that people are interested in participating in resolution of a problem in their community. In fact, one element of the SEE framework (Box 1-1) is "meaningful action" (Kaplan & Basu, 2015). People want to be engaged. They want to make their community a better place to live. And they want meaningful and feasible opportunities to be able to make a difference. Furthermore, they don't want to feel like they are wasting time just talking about the problem. They want to see that their investment in a CIVIC town hall meeting or deliberative forum will lead to improvements or solutions. Although talking together is the most effective way to share our ideas, we can make a conversation even more successful by facilitating next steps. We recommend that the local agent be engaged in this aspect of a CIVIC event, as you will have a better idea of the possibilities for next steps than an external facilitator.

Particpants want to see that their investment in a CIVIC town hall meeting or deliberative forum will lead to improvements or solutions.

Agents' experiences at the **INDIAN RIVER LAGOON** and during the **PINELLAS COUNTY** sustainability forums suggest that one complaint participants have about deliberation is that it might end without a clear plan about what happens next. People want their time and their voice to matter. You can help them by building opportunities for next steps into your CIVIC event.

Since you probably are using a CIVIC activity to address a problem in one of your Extension programs, you likely have a good idea about potential next steps. If your activity generated healthy discussion and some agreement on next steps, the participants are likely energized and motivated to engage with their community to address the issue. You and your partners might have developed a plan for these next steps when you first decided to work together, or you might have agreed to wait and see what the participants suggested before deciding how to move forward. In either case, you don't want to wait long before you engage with the participants since they are likely expecting some kind of action to take place. Be ready to invite them to participate in the next event as you wind up your town hall or deliberative forum.

Before the meeting, work with your partners to find a common time about two weeks after your event and schedule the space.

Planning for Next Steps While Letting Participants Decide

There might appear to be a conflict between encouraging participants of a deliberative forum to come up with the next steps but at the same time planning ahead for them. But never fear—you can do this by balancing momentum the event while respecting the ideas expressed by participants.

1. **You can assume that someone will suggest that the group schedule a follow-up meeting.** Before the meeting, work with your partners to find a common time about two weeks after your event and schedule the space. You can arrange the details later, but you can at least announce a time and location for the next meeting if one is requested.
2. **Review the actions in the issue guide that are going to be discussed.** If you have included actions that are currently being promoted in the community, you might contact the proponents and ask if they might be available for a presentation a few weeks after your event. You won't want to commit to anything just yet, but if the participants ask questions or raise conflicting conceptions, you can suggest that a meeting to gain more information about these options might be appropriate. And you can announce the time and place if it becomes clear that such an event would be desirable. It might become a Town Hall meeting (Chapter 4).

3 **Consider if the decision makers in your community would benefit from a report from the deliberations.** If a ranked list of priorities or a list of most important considerations would be useful, make sure you have a tool ready that will enable you to report these data. You could develop a survey, use flip charts and dots, or count raised hands to enable participants to vote. One example comes from Gainesville:

Town hall meetings in **GAINESVILLE, FL** were held to explain the costs and benefits of woody biomass when the city commission was discussing a new power plant. The Extension specialist organized a series of 7 community discussions in the format of a town hall meeting and surveyed participants as they walked in the room and before they left, sharing that the responses would be reported to the city commission to help them make decisions about a future power plant. One survey question asked people to rate the importance of various components of a proposed woody biomass power plant if one were to be authorized. Using the responses of more than 100 participants, the organizers reported to the city commission what elements were most important to citizens who took the time to learn more about woody biomass. Meaningful actions can be extremely simple, such as completing a survey.

If a ranked list of priorities or a list of most important considerations would be useful, make sure you have a tool ready that will enable you to report these data.

Types of Next Steps or Actions

Worksheet 8-1 lists some of the most common activities that tend to follow CIVIC events. Think about which ones you and your partners are interested in pursuing. Listen for comments that might suggest your participants would like to engage in one of these—or something different.

Summarize the event. Plan to analyze the evaluation data, write a report about the activity using the CIVIC Case Study template, and share the results with your partners and the CIVIC team. You should return to the initial concerns and interests that formed the partnership and suggested the CIVIC events. Synthesize the main themes that developed from participant comments, share the types of questions people had and where more information is needed, and then suggest the types of activities that you and your team might conduct next.

Answer the questions. A healthy discussion is likely to generate more questions, which may have been noted in the Parking Lot. Return to that list, and with your partners, sketch out the types of events or opportunities you or others might conduct to provide answers. Do you need a town hall meeting? Who should speak? Could a partner

write a letter to the editor for the local newspaper? Perhaps a press event could help the local reporters write about the issue and options. Some traditional Extension programs, like a workshop, a field day, or a demonstration area could be helpful to provide information and answer questions. Will they attract the people who have these questions? Are there people from the event who might like to work on a committee to make these programs possible and attract the audience who ought to attend?

Follow the discussion and ask for ideas. Listening carefully to the discussion during the deliberative forum can generate a very simple next step, such as asking to meet with an influential participant to discuss which next steps they think should be taken! This example came from St. Lucie County:

After a brief discussion about the health of the **INDIAN RIVER LAGOON,** one participant suggested that more community leaders (and those who represent key communities) would be interested if the organizers took a different approach. He agreed to meet four CIVIC team members to discuss his ideas at an outdoor restaurant. Together they planned to organize a town hall meeting, and he agreed to encourage his constituents to attend. The original focus attracted people who cared about the environment (since it was about the health of the lagoon). His suggestion was to focus on whether the fish were healthy to eat. This research is underway, and a local researcher was interested in presenting her findings to date. That town hall meeting occurred and generated interest in a community fishing tournament, which could simultaneously offer an opportunity to share information, have fun, and collect fish for future research. Several participants agreed to help plan the event.

Listening carefully to the discussion during the deliberative forum can generate a very simple next step—such as asking to meet with an influential participant to discuss which next steps they think should be taken!

Follow the discussion and meet the needs. Listening to questions, frustrations, and comments during your event might reveal that the next steps involve building new skills for participants. For example, they might have information but aren't sure exactly how to proceed. Consider offering a class or workshop to demonstrate, teach, and support participants in trying something new. It might be they need advice to be able to reduce their risk of wildfire, write a letter to the editor, cook lentils, speak with elected officials, or read a county budget. Extension can help!

Capitalize on suggestions for publicity. Maybe your participants believe all the information is out there, but not enough people have heard it. Maybe they want to lead an effort to publicize the issue or the solutions. You can help the group organize themselves, provide meeting space, and even help them obtain local funding to print a brochure, post a sign, or organize a community celebration.

Capitalize on suggestions for action. Perhaps the event resulted in strong consensus that a local action is reasonable and needed. You can use your pre-arranged next meeting to start a committee to do exactly that. It might be helpful to invite a local expert to that meeting to make sure the group is aware of the relevant costs and concerns. If the action requires action from elected officials, their staff might suggest how that could happen.

Consider offering a class or workshop to demonstrate, teach, and support participants in trying something new.

In large communities, or if you held multiple discussions to enable more people to attend, one of the easiest next steps is to tell participants from all the CIVIC events what they said.

In **SARASOTA COUNTY,** concern about plastics in the ocean generated a desire for action, but no clear path forward. Extension and Sea Grant agents used CIVIC strategies to bring together local food and beverage providers, leaders in the plastic-aware community, nonprofits, and the City of Sarasota staff to discuss the benefits and challenges to switching to alternative products. The outcome of the first discussion was to conduct a survey for the food and beverage community to gain a broader perspective. A second meeting was held to report the survey results and discuss a shared vision. Participants agreed that the price of alternative products was a barrier and that changing policies and creating incentives for local businesses to make a shift were two helpful solutions. Shortly after, and perhaps motivated by the survey results, the City of Sarasota proposed a ban on the use of single-use plastic for food and beverages on city-owned land, which was approved. The work is continuing with the development of a plastic reduction working group.

Provide feedback. In large communities, or if you held multiple discussions to enable more people to attend, one of the easiest next steps is to tell participants from all the CIVIC events what they said. You could synthesize their comments, noting which statements were common and which were unique, and create a report or presentation so that everyone can see where their comments are on a spectrum. Once they realize where the common ground is situated, they might be ready to move forward. This could also be the first step of reporting to decision makers. You can ask the participants to improve and approve your synthesis. Whoever responds to that request would be a valuable member of the Next Steps team.

Hold additional town hall meetings or deliberative forums. If your previous activities failed to reach certain parts of the community, you might expand your reach to be sure a wider audience is invited to the next event. Representation from all parts of the community and a healthy mix of attendees help others hear perspectives they may not have considered. When everyone in the community feels heard and represented, the actions are more meaningful. It would be valuable to make sure the decision makers know the demographics of the participants.

Let your partners lead efforts that involve advocating for a policy or regulation.

Who Is Responsible for the Next Steps?

In many cases, there will be many actions or next steps that participants generate. As county Extension faculty, you might be the person who coordinates future efforts, or your partners might lead these efforts with your support. You might just be there to provide science-based information, or you might be more intimately involved in all phases of planning and implementation. Your role will depend on you and your partners' capacity to do the work, and the desired outcomes of the actions to be taken. For example, if the actions include advocating with elected officials for policy change, you will likely take a step back from those activities and return if they need scientific information. If the next step is to seek funding to establish a demonstration plot to answer a key question, however, you might have the connections to make that happen. In all cases, you will want to stay in touch with your partners after the conclusion of CIVIC activities so you can capture the impacts of these events for your reports and build a foundation for future work.

Paving the Way for Next Steps Starts Early

There are a variety of actions you can take, and in fact should take, as you plan for a CIVIC activity that will help guarantee that participants generate ideas for next steps and are willing to take them. Here is a recap of those strategies from previous chapters:

Set expectations when you advertise the CIVIC event so participants know they can contribute to a resolving a local challenge.

1. Set appropriate expectations when you advertise the CIVIC events so that people are aware they will be talking about ideas for potential actions.
2. Make sure your topic or issue has a local application. Rather than "water quality" or "land use," find local statistics and frame the event around "our local lake" or "how can we fix the traffic on Main Street." It also helps if the issue guide is designed to look at actions and trade-offs that are locally relevant. If people have seen the problem, experienced the hassle, and know what you are talking about, they might be more invested in working toward a solution. Use your partners' needs and advice to suggest reasonable ideas as you adapt the issue guide for your county.
3. Let people know what they might get out of the event. They might find like-minded collaborators or a project that will fill their need to do something for the community. They might understand the issue a bit more and realize why it is so challenging to resolve. And they might help move the problem toward resolution.

During the CIVIC Event, Make Next Steps Apparent

During a town hall meeting or deliberative discussion, Extension faculty can also foreshadow opportunities to engage in additional efforts. Below are actions that are easy to incorporate into the event and can help with determining next steps.

1. The convenor should make sure everyone signs in when they arrive and leaves an email address or phone number where they can be reached. You will need to contact these folks again! For Extension faculty, be sure to collect demographic data as required by the USDA.
2. The host or facilitator should make sure everyone introduces themselves and provides a personal connection to the issue. This may help increase networking possibilities and allow people to form working groups later.
3. Consider the best way to make note of comments during the discussion that may lead to next steps. You could ask the notetaker to use a separate flip chart for notes and comments that speak to unanswered questions (probably in the "parking lot" notes) and another for possible actions. This could be as simple as another meeting or as complicated as creating an educational program or launching a communication campaign. Toward the end of the event, as the facilitator synthesizes the discussion, they could remind people of the new ideas and ask which ones have support.

4. The facilitator should ask participants for their ideas for next steps. A facilitator might say, "what are some easy first steps?" "Who would like to be involved?" "When can you attend a future meeting?" Make sure something concrete is in the works before people start leaving.
5. Expect your facilitator to help. During a deliberative discussion people should be using their own experiences to discuss various actions and trade-offs. A good facilitator will be able to pick up threads of agreement and energy for several existing options or note when new ideas are suggested. It may help to compare where the community is now with the problem, and where the participants want to be in the future. How can they move across that distance?
6. If another meeting is planned or is clearly desired, announce the next meeting opportunity at the forum for those who are interested in exploring options. If people appear to be hesitant, a personal invitation might be needed. You might say, "Your insights have been very valuable; who is able to attend the next meeting to continue the discussion?" Pass around sign-up sheets while the participants are completing their CIVIC evaluation.
7. The convenor may distribute guides, handouts, or materials from existing organizations that work on related issues and encourage people to attend those meetings or join various groups. Some communities have ongoing efforts. Are those groups interested in new members and more ideas? If they are interested, you might invite them to a follow-up meeting to share their organization's work with participants.

A good facilitator will be able to pick up threads of agreement and energy for several existing options or note when new ideas are suggested.

Dedicate Time to Follow Up

Extension faculty have an important role to play as they continue to facilitate these next steps. Don't drop the ball because the forum is over. Keep going and keep track of what arises from these newly empowered community members! They might be featured in one of your success stories in your Report of Accomplishments (ROA).

Taking the next step might lead to a long process that could have significant benefits for the entire region. For example, in **MONROE COUNTY,** efforts to improve traffic problems caused by having only one, 100-mile road from the mainland of Florida to the tip of Key West launched a series of community meetings and then a formal committee. The group critiqued a traffic study, created recommendations using a facilitated process, and added their own solutions to the growing list.

Call a meeting of those who are interested and help them identify the next step. Support emerging leadership from the group.

1. **Meet with your partners** again to take stock of what you learned and what the community is telling you. What are they hearing? Where do they want for next steps?
2. **Write up your experience** as a report to partners or a case study for CIVIC. Complete the reporting form and tally your evaluations (Chapter 9). You may want to do this before you and your partners solidify your plans.
3. **Contact people** who were interested and make sure they know when the next meeting will be.
4. **Schedule a follow-up** program or event in response to the needs and suggestions from the group.
5. **Compile suggestions for next steps** from multiple events on the same topic and share them with all participants. Call a meeting of those who are interested and help them identify the next step. Support emerging leadership from the group.
6. **Participants might meet and take action without you!** That would be wonderful, but you'll need to follow up with them to learn about their activities. It would be a marvelous success story for your ROA. You have helped to build community capacity by empowering community members to take action.
7. **Provide civic education.** You may decide that people need more skills or resources to prepare for the next steps. Do they know which offices in their municipality are involved with this issue?

Do they know how to share an informed opinion at a commission meeting? Perhaps you can help with this civic education (Telg & Rampold, 2019; Telg, Rampold, & Raulerson, 2021). As educators, IFAS faculty and staff can connect people to the resources, processes, and organizations needed for successful progress and resolution.

8. **Send out a follow-up email evaluation** to the participants of the CIVIC events with a survey to stay informed about what they've been doing (Chapter 9).

The partners who have invested in CIVIC might be willing to coordinate next steps. Check to see if they have something in mind.

You don't want to wait too long before you engage with the participants since they are likely expecting some kind of action to take place.

Summary

A CIVIC activity can energize participants and motivate them to take action. You might have identified some potential next steps early in the planning process, but through concern collecting, and town hall meetings, or deliberative forums, you might have identified additional or different next steps. You and your partners might have developed a plan for these next steps when you first decided to work together, or you might have agreed to wait and see what the participants suggested before deciding how to move forward. In either case, you don't want to wait too long before you engage with the participants since they are likely expecting some kind of action to take place. Be ready to invite them to participate in the next event as you wind up your town hall or deliberative forum.

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EXERCISE 8-1

Exploring Next Steps

It is helpful to think about next steps before you launch your CIVIC activity. Having a sense of what might happen as a result of your event helps you market the event and helps your participants come with appropriate expectations.

Meet with a partner to review Worksheet 8-1 for potential next steps and discuss how each one might play out in your county with your issue. Which ideas might generate traction with your partners? Since you are probably using this CIVIC activity to support your Extension program, what next steps are also beneficial for your goals? What other next steps might be feasible in your county?

Exploring Next Steps Worksheet

A variety of possible next steps could engage participants in exploring ways to resolve their community issue. Consider if any of these ideas could be appropriate for your CIVIC event and add more ideas.

- Host a town hall meeting with speakers who can answer the lingering questions.
- Ask participants to write a letter to the editor for the local newspaper.
- Work with participants to create an asset-map of the community to identify who is working on the issue, who might provide support, and who might be missing from the conversation.
- Sponsor a field trip to see the problem first-hand.
- Sponsor a field trip to a nearby community to see how they addressed the issue.
- Host a panel of speakers who can describe how other communities addressed the problem.
- Organize a festival or summit to raise awareness of the issue.
- Organize a community challenge to ask families to learn about the problem, complete a quiz or solve a mystery, and submit their response to win a prize.
- Help the municipality appoint a committee with community members and experts to address the problem.
- Conduct a survey of community members to get broader input on perspectives or opinions. Ask students at a local university or those completing an internship to do the research.
- Once participants at the events have learned about the options and made careful deliberation, share the results with the local municipality.
- If you believe there to be potential disagreements on basic facts and data, organize a joint fact-finding mission for participants to collect information, or ask a team of participants to oversee the data collection that an agency is doing.
- Seek funding for community actions from local organizations and community foundations. Programs that are generated by the community to solve community problems might be high on their priority list for funding.
- Form a working group or coalition to work on the issue.
- Another: _____
- Another: _____

EXERCISE 8-2

Listening for Next Steps

When people engage in a forum, they might convey their ideas about next steps. Can you hear them?

The statements on Worksheet 8-2 were collected from an in-person deliberative forum in Gadsden County in 2022. The group discussed land use and their vision for development. Please review these comments and think about how you might have facilitated a discussion about next steps. What would you have asked the group to explore? What common themes do you see across the responses? Is there any "low-hanging fruit" that would make sense to work on first?

Listening for Next Steps Worksheet (1 of 3)

Please review these comments and think about how you might have facilitated a discussion about next steps. What would you have asked them to explore? What common themes do you see across the responses? Is there any "low-hanging fruit" that would make sense to work on first? What comments need further clarification?

Option 1: Develop Community While Protecting Quality of Life.

This option suggests that some development is appropriate, if natural resources, farmlands, history, and culture are protected.

- Property taxes – I would like to see them lowered.
- One trade-off would be that road maintenance might decline and safety might decrease.
- Taxes are high but we're not seeing benefits of them.
- I would like to see some community gathering spaces.
- We should create a bus tour to educate kids and residents on local history – to increase pride in knowing this history.
- The booming downtown and businesses of past have died.
- We live in the only majority Black county in state.
- The tobacco industry recruited people to area in the past; what will bring new workers?
- Regarding the mural downtown – is the building it's on considered historic enough to preserve/protect it?
- The businesses in the "historic district" are not seen as very historic.
- People go to Tallahassee to buy things instead of purchasing them from our businesses.
- King Street is seen as a historic district (mostly white), not the same in the Black "mom and pop" business area.
- Improve and bring in events to Tanyard Creek Park—there was an improvement plan, but we have not seen any action yet.

Option 2: Community Vitality.

- This option prioritizes development that improves a community for those who live and work there. Communities should be clean, safe, attractive and livable.
- There has not been any follow up for Tanyard Creek enhancement (city park/ facility).
- Who pays for city protection? The funds collected through taxes are not being used for this purpose.

Listening for Next Steps Worksheet (2 of 3)

- SBIRA = Small Business Initiative for Rural America grant funding is available. We need documented fiscal accountability to apply. Often difficult to apply for this and go through process for small businesses. We would have to work with different agencies to apply/receive grant.
- Check out agencies to apply for grants.
- We should apply for broadband access grants that are available too.
- Elderly and handicapped need assistance here, too.
- Food safety and pesticide application certifications are offered through FAMU Extension but it is hard to get people to show up. There's a need for communities to spread word of what services and programs are available.
- We need to invest in revitalizing downtown, creating a compact community.
- Improve sidewalks and streetlights on Martin Luther King (MLK). We have some, but more are needed.
- Highbridge and Adams need sidewalks, too.
- "We're working on it" is heard too often!
- Park in Midway needs to be updated. I heard at city meeting that city was going to restore/enhance, but no action [has] been taken yet.
- There are trade-offs to sidewalks, such as the easements that take away people's property.
- "One-way in, one-way out" of any community (housing development) is a public safety issue, and a land use planning issue, particularly if the entrance crosses a railroad track. Even emergency vehicles have to wait!

Option 3: Community Engagement.

- The process of planning and zoning the land for future development is open to the public, but few people know how and when to engage. Education and transparency are needed.
- We need all three of these issue guide options.
- Start right here. Meet one time a month and take our ideas to commissioners.
- Improve transparency of planning process. It is very important for people to be involved, otherwise others are making decision for you. You can help the decision if you are informed.
- People know what we need but where does it go from there?
- Scheduling/information access is antiquated.

Listening for Next Steps Worksheet (3 of 3)

- I just don't see the changes – money goes into city government, but I don't see the benefit of paying taxes.
- We need to go beyond complaining, like our ancestors did, and be proactive.
- We should use our institutions to educate our kids about what's not taught in school.
- You have to get out and do the work and come back together to move things forward. "Do what you have to do!"
- Voter registration with NAACP – supporting voters to jump over the hurdles. "It's a lot of work but someone has got to do it!"
- Your vote is your voice!

Reflections – How was forum? Any insights gained?

- It highlighted concerns we have here … it was insightful.
- Revitalization/home improvement options
- Poor planning of apartments near railroad tracks—this is a safety concern, since you can't access the building if the train stops.
- It's not even affordable, people only last there a few months.
- "Backward things in Midway!" There is no stoplight at busy road crossing and this is dangerous.
- We also have a traffic problem at the high school, there is a bottleneck when kids going in and coming out.
- We need help in public education in Gadsden. We have more problems than the lack of a traffic light.
- I have nothing good to say about school system now. If they're our future, we've got to do something.
- Inter-generational change in raising kids—lack of support leaves kids not knowing better, need for mentors.
- We need to get engaged with children.
- Parents must choose between work and being involved with their kids' school.
- This forum was more informed and engaged than a city meeting!
- Some don't have transportation to meetings, like this one. Maybe we could pick people up so they can attend, like we do for voter support.
- This forum was informal and everyone was heard.

CHAPTER

9

Evaluating CIVIC Events

This chapter explains the CIVIC evaluation process, which includes five tools that agents can use to evaluate CIVIC activities, instructional resources for agents, and a system for summarizing and reporting CIVIC data. We provide background information about how the tools were developed and offer resources to adapt these tools to meet your needs. In addition, suggestions are provided for including CIVIC activities in your Reports of Accomplishment (ROAs). You will find all the accompanying forms and directions on our CIVIC website.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- Exercise 9-1: Create a URL for Your CIVIC Event
- Exercise 9-2: Summary Data and Reporting
- Worksheet 9-1: Summary Data and Reporting Worksheet
- Handout 9-1: State Leadership CIVIC Logic Model
- Handout 9-2: CIVIC Activity Logic Model

What Is the Purpose of Evaluation?

Program evaluation is essential for all Extension activities. You evaluate programs for several reasons: to make improvements, to learn if participants were satisfied, to assess changes due to the program, and to learn if your objectives were met. CIVIC activities could also yield outcomes in addition to the intended ones. For instance, you might have built a relationship with a partner that is worth documenting, or participants may have gained insights that you had not expected (and thus were not a specific objective). If you are planning to conduct a set of CIVIC activities, or continue with this work for several years, consider documenting community-level changes in social capital or community problem solving capacity. All such outcomes can be assessed in a comprehensive evaluation.

You evaluate programs for several reasons: to make improvements, to learn if participants were satisfied, to assess changes due to the program, and to learn if your objectives were met.

The CIVIC team has created the following tools to help you collect data. You can use information from these evaluation tools in your annual Report of Accomplishments (ROA) and with community decision makers to help your community wrestle with the challenge you are addressing. All evaluations tools in both PDF and Word formats and suggestions for their use are on the CIVIC website: https://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/civic

1. **Town Hall Meeting Post-survey**
2. **Deliberative Forum Pre-survey**
3. **Deliberative Forum Post-survey**
4. **Participant Follow-up Email Survey**
5. **Partner Interview Guide**

The first four tools are for participants attending your events. These tools are meant to be as short as possible and completed through a Qualtrics platform to make analysis easy. The CIVIC Leadership Team has received approval through the UF Institutional Review Board (IRB) process (#201903198) for you to use the tools to collect evaluation data. The fifth tool, the partner interview guide, can be adapted and used with any of your partners to encourage reflections about outcomes and direction for collective efforts. Each tool can be found on the CIVIC website, where you will also find information on analyzing data. This chapter provides helpful background and detailed instructions on using these tools... Read on!

A CIVIC evaluation helps agents report the success of the CIVIC activity in the context of broader natural resources, agriculture, or youth programming.

CIVIC Activities in Your Report of Accomplishment

One of the first questions agents ask about CIVIC is "How do I report CIVIC activities?" There are several answers because agents use CIVIC activities in a variety of ways. Most agents will use CIVIC as a tool for addressing an existing program in community development, horticulture, nutrition, natural resources, agriculture, or youth development, for example. For them, a series of town hall meetings or deliberative forums will be activities that help community members gain insights and work toward the resolution of an issue within an existing program. The program objectives will not be related to public engagement or democracy, but will be about their issues—water quality, food security, or youth engagement, for example. A CIVIC evaluation helps agents report the success of the CIVIC activity in the context of broader natural resources, agriculture, or youth programming.

Here are sample objectives for a **CIVIC activity** that is part of a water quality program:

1. At least 75% of participants in town hall meetings will understand why a county ordinance on lawn fertilizer might improve water quality at the end of the event. *Measured by post-activity survey.*
2. At least 35% of participants in deliberative discussions will report increased familiarity with the advantages and trade-offs of two perspectives on water quality issues at the end of the event. *Measured by post-activity survey.*

A few Community Resource Development agents might develop a program to build community capacity and reinvigorate democratic processes. The objective might be to increase public participation in community issues. They might do so by frequent engagement with community members, made possible by a mailing list of those who have attended town hall meetings and deliberative discussions. In this case, the agent's CIVIC activities would likely be a part of their Community Resource Development work.

Here are sample objectives for a **CIVIC program:**

1. At least 75% of participants in deliberative discussions on land-use planning will be able to state how the public can be effectively involved in the county comprehensive planning process at the end of the event. *Measured by post-activity survey.*

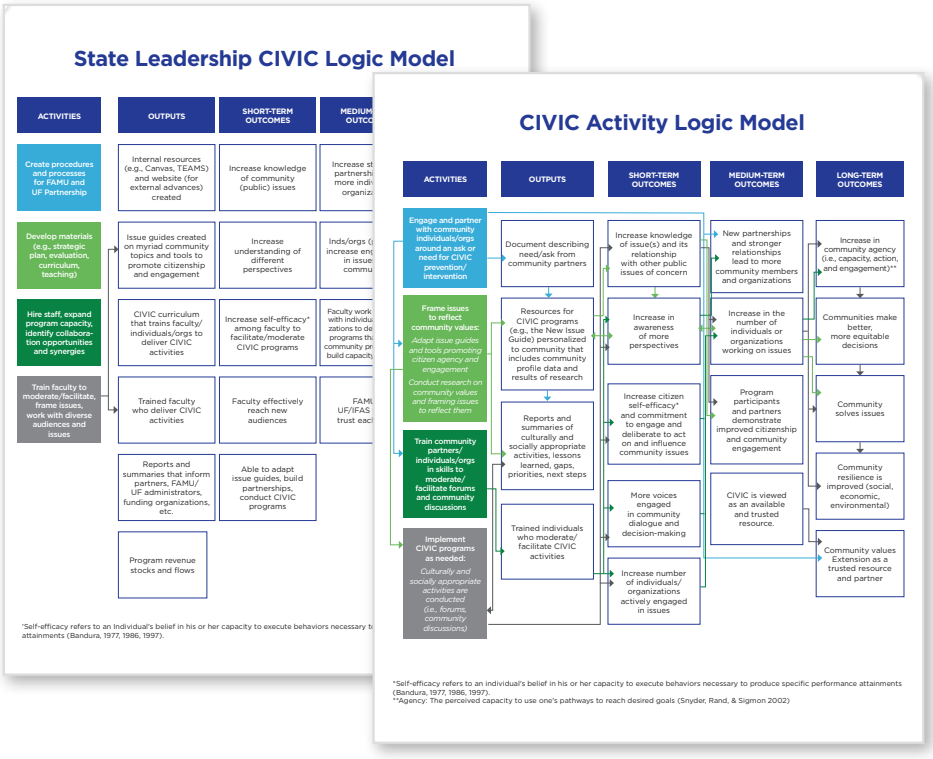
2. A cadre of active citizens will attend at least three CIVIC activities per year and engage in follow-up activities to build community capacity. *Measured by attendance records and follow-up surveys.*

The tools provided in this chapter can be used to collect the data you need to report outcomes on objectives like these.

CIVIC has two logic models, one for the state leadership team, and another for agents who use CIVIC tools (Handouts 9-1 and 9-2).

CIVIC Event Logic Models

The CIVIC Leadership Team began the process of developing CIVIC evaluation tools by creating two program logic models. The state leadership team creates resources for agents, develops in-service training programs, and writes grant proposals. In this way, they lead CIVIC and support agents in community-level CIVIC activities, and the state logic model reflects these objectives (Handout 9-1: State Leadership CIVIC Logic Model). Agents do the community work with CIVIC activities, building partnerships, collecting community concerns, organizing town hall meetings and forums, and nudging communities toward strategies that may help them work toward resolution of various issues. The program logic model for these objectives includes indicators allowing you to track the success of the outcomes (Handout 9-2: CIVIC Activity Logic Model). The following potential outcomes can help you communicate reasons to use CIVIC activities with your partners, write SMART objectives for your ROA, and conduct an evaluation.



The long-term outcomes (LTO) of a program reflect the ways a CIVIC program could affect a community.

Learning Outcomes

Among the *short-term learning outcomes* (STO) are a combination of knowledge (STO1 and STO2), self-efficacy for community engagement (STO3), and quantitative measures (such as STO4 and STO5).

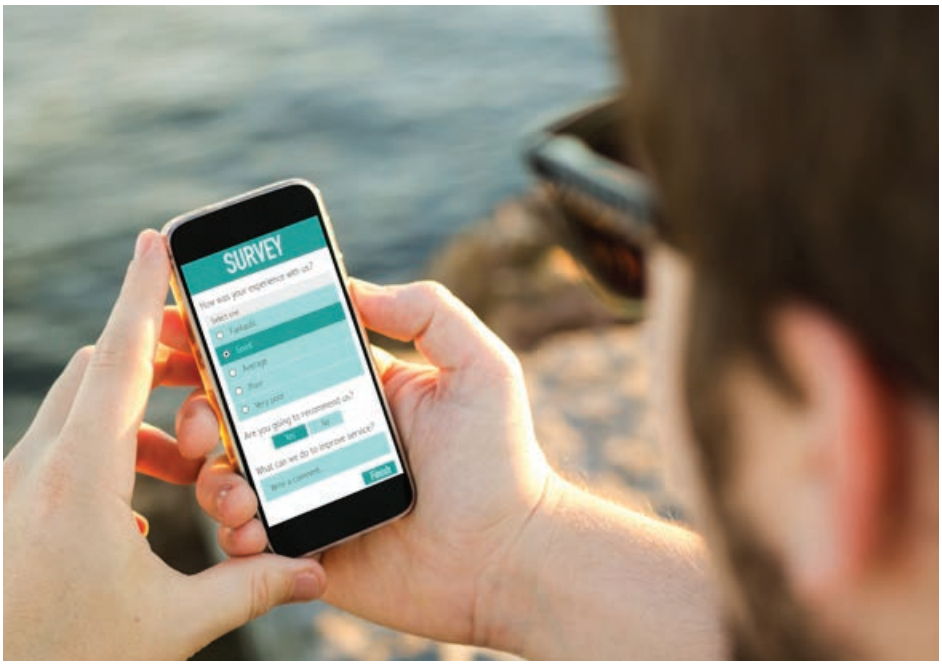
- STO 1. Increase in knowledge of issue(s) and its relationship/s with other public issues of concern.
- STO 2. Increase in awareness of diverse perspectives.
- STO 3. Increase in citizen self-efficacy and commitment to engage and deliberate to act on and influence community issues.
- STO 4. Increase in the mix of voices engaged in community dialogue and decision making.
- STO 5. Increase in the number of individuals/organizations actively engaged in issues.

The *medium-term outcomes* (MTO) are designed to track the behaviors that participants should be able to do once they gain the short-term outcomes. The CIVIC program includes quantitative measures of more community engagement (MTO1 and MTO2) and individual actions (MTO3). It is also valuable to track how CIVIC activities are perceived by the community, especially the partners (MTO4).

- MTO 1. New partnerships and stronger relationships lead to more community members and organizations.
- MTO 2. Increase in the number of individuals or organizations working on issues (due to increase in short term outcomes).
- MTO 3. Program participants and partners demonstrate improved citizenship and community engagement.
- MTO 4. CIVIC is viewed as an available and trusted resource.

The *long-term outcomes* (LTO) of a program reflect the ways a CIVIC program could affect a community. This assumes a program has involved a considerable number of people, or repeat participants, over time, so that these broader impacts can be measured. These outcomes include several indicators of increased community capacity for problem solving through democratic governance (LTO1, LTO2, LTO3, LTO4) and recognize Extension's role in this endeavor (LTO5).

- LTO 1. Increase in community agency (i.e., capacity, action, and engagement)
- LTO 2. Communities make better, more equitable decisions.
- LTO 3. Community solves issues.
- LTO 4. Community resilience is improved (social, economic, environmental).
- LTO 5. Community values Extension as a trusted resource and partner.



Asking participants to complete the survey on their mobile devices is encouraged. This increases response rate and is more efficient for compiling data.

Using CIVIC Evaluation Tools

Collecting information to report on these outcomes requires several tools that are implemented at different points in time.

- For deliberative forums, you will want to administer the *deliberative forum pre-survey* as your attendees arrive (before the event begins) and have them complete the *deliberative forum post-survey* before your attendees leave the event.
- For town hall meetings, the *town hall meeting post-survey* will be sufficient; ask participants to complete the survey before leaving the event.
- The *follow-up survey* should be sent (via email) to participants approximately six months after the event.

Asking participants to complete the survey on their mobile devices is encouraged. This increases response rate and is more efficient for compiling data. Give the unique survey URL to your participants (which you can create from the CIVIC website) or display a QR code on the screen so participants can quickly link without typing the URL.

Be sure to also provide some paper copies of surveys in case there are internet issues or limited cell service. The template Word and PDF documents provided on the CIVIC website and allow you to modify the survey instruments to include the community issue and the three recommended options (for the deliberative forums).

You will need to create two unique survey URLs for each deliberative forum (pre- and post-survey links), or one unique survey URL for each town hall meeting (post-survey link).

Regardless of which forms participants complete, you will need to create a unique survey URL associated with your event to retain and analyze the data. You will need to create two unique survey URLs for each deliberative forum (pre- and post-survey links), or one unique survey URL for each town hall meeting (post-survey link). The unique survey URL will be used only by you to record your participants' responses to your event and cannot be reused for other events. These unique URLs enable you to filter the survey data based on county, event date, and community issue. It is essential that you carefully read these instructions for creating the unique survey URL: CIVIC Evaluation - Step 2. If you do two events on the same day on the same topic and in the same county, give the Community Issue identifier a slightly different title (such as Morning Land Use Forum and Evening Land Use Forum).

If you use paper versions of the surveys, then you will need to manually input the surveys after the event using the unique URL you created. This will enable the state team to include your data in their reports.

You can ADD questions that are of interest to your partners, but do not CHANGE any of the existing questions in these surveys. If you do add questions to the survey, you cannot put those responses into the Qualtrics database as it is limited to the existing survey items. You will have to tally these responses separately.

A fourth tool is a short email survey that you can send to your participants after the event to learn what they have done as a result of attending the event. We recommend allowing enough time for there to be actionable results from the program's efforts. Here are the questions for this email survey:

- Since attending the event, I did this:
- I interacted with the following people or organizations...
- I believe this event is changing my community by...

Tracking the variety of important activities that may evolve from your CIVIC discussions and forums will help you document how participants take an active role in their community and are important to assessing CIVIC's intermediate outcomes. Information gained using this email tool can also help you write success stories for your Report of Accomplishments. Additionally, this effort can help you document the number of individuals and organizations that are working together (STO5, MTO1, MTO2, MTO3, MTO4) on the issue.

Lastly, we have created an interview guide to use with your partners. This tool can be used to reflect on your CIVIC activities, write reports,

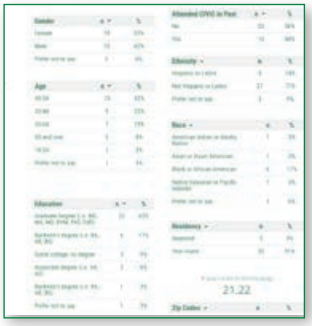
and plan future efforts. The source of data for these objectives are your partners—they are critical team members in your CIVIC project. Your partners might have asked you to conduct these events because they wanted to know what the public is willing to consider on a specific issue. They might have joined your efforts to help you reach specific communities. They might represent an agency or NGO with special expertise and a significant investment in this topic. In all cases, their insights and impressions are helpful as you reflect on the value of your CIVIC related efforts. Their feedback will help you consider your next steps. How can you continue to work together? What are they excited to do with their Extension partner? You can interview them individually or ask a colleague to facilitate a focus group discussion to enable everyone to hear others' ideas. Together you can grow your CIVIC endeavor.

Partner feedback will help you consider your next steps. How can you continue to work together? What are they excited to do with their Extension partner?

You should adapt the questions to suit your situation, but below are the types of questions we suggest asking your partners:

- How would you define the community issue that our partnership is addressing? How has the definition of this issue changed over time? What prompted the change?
- How many CIVIC activities (town hall meetings and deliberative forums) did you attend? What was your motivation for attending?
- What are some of the meaningful interactions that you remember from those discussions? Did you notice any participants having an "ah-ha" moment of clarity or greater realization as they understood another's perspective?
- What are some of the outcomes of the CIVIC work that you have seen in the community? Can you point to new relationships or understandings? How have agencies or committees been able to use the CIVIC report?
- What would you like to see happen next? Do you think there is a role for Extension in these next steps?

To assist in summarizing your CIVIC evaluation data and determining whether you are meeting program outcomes, we created a data dashboard that displays survey data provided to Qualtrics.



Making Sense of the Evaluation Tools

To assist in summarizing your CIVIC evaluation data and determining whether you are meeting program outcomes, we created a data dashboard that displays survey data provided to Qualtrics. This dashboard compiles the data and allows you to filter, share, and export the data accordingly. There is a dashboard for deliberative forum pre and post surveys and a separate dashboard for the townhall post survey responses.

- CIVIC Deliberative Forum Report - https://datastudio.google.com/reporting/158cfdb3-9667-444b-8604-819241a66bda/page/YGtNB
- CIVIC Townhall Report - https://datastudio.google.com/reporting/76ba136e-3ceb-48d0-b23a-cfc1142e007b/page/YGtNB

The following information explains the connection between the questions asked on the surveys and the program outcomes in the logic model.

Demographics

The pre-survey for deliberative forums and post-survey for town hall meetings have questions to collect demographic data from participants. Comparing this information to your intended audience, county data, or previous Extension events can assist you in determining if participants are those who typically attend or are a new audience. Data provided about gender, age, and education can help determine if STO 4 (to reach a mix of voices) has been achieved. If it is helpful to you, a compilation of your county data can be found using the Florida County Dashboard (https://datastudio.google.com/s/qZLnCjnl-LU).

Awareness, Understanding, and Knowledge

The townhall meetings and deliberative forums seek to provide information about the issue and increase awareness of different perspectives (STO 1 and STO 2). For deliberative forums, there are three questions in the pre-survey and five questions in the post-survey that can help you determine whether STO 1 and STO 2 were achieved. Question 1, statement 1 on the pre-survey *(As a participant... I can describe different perspectives on the community issue.)* is designed to help you assess your audience's baseline awareness and knowledge of the community issue. There is not a direct post-survey comparison to this question, but you can review question 1, statements 1-3 *(As a participant, after attending this program... I feel like I have a more well-rounded understanding of this community issue; I feel comfortable explaining different views on this issue to someone else; I learned about new aspects of this issue that I hadn't previously considered)* to assess if and how your audience's knowledge and awareness changed as a result of the event.

The following is an example of best practices for reporting data as well as an example of an inappropriate description for reporting data.

Correct	Incorrect
34% of the audience agreed that they can describe different perspectives on the community issue. After attending the event, 47% agreed they learned new aspects of the issue they hadn't previously considered, 52% feel like they have a more well-rounded understanding of the issue, and 60% feel more comfortable explaining different views on the issue to someone else. Overall, the audience appeared to have gained awareness and knowledge around the community issue.	34% of the audience agreed that they can describe different perspectives on the community issue. There were significant increases in those agreeing they learned about new aspects of the issue, feeling more well-rounded in their understanding of the issue, feeling more comfortable being able to explain different views on the issue to someone else. (You have not asked the same question twice so you cannot calculate if the difference is statistically significant.) **OR** 34% of the audience agreed that they can describe different perspectives on the community issue. After attending the event, 47% agreed they learned new aspects of the issue they hadn't previously considered. The 13% increase in agreement means that the audience improved in their awareness and understanding. (Describing different perspectives is not the same as learning new aspects.)

Because the pre and post questions are slightly different, care must be taken in reporting your findings.

Since the deliberative forums are framed around three options and the advantages and trade-offs of various actions, we created two questions that allow you to quantitatively measure the change in knowledge and awareness. This analysis is done by comparing pre and post scores on the two questions that ask about familiarity with

The townhall meeting survey question 1, statements 1-3 assess your audience's knowledge and awareness of the community issue (STO 1 and STO 2).

the advantages and disadvantages for each of the three options (questions 3 and 4). We propose running a simple t-test. We created a how-to companion document that walks you through the entire process, and a Google Sheet template that automatically runs the analysis for you after you paste the survey results in the appropriate tabs (as outlined in the document and how-to video). Note that the scores are transformed to ordinal data where 1 represents Very Unfamiliar to 5 representing Very Familiar. You are more likely to see a meaningful difference if you have more than 20 for each survey.

After pasting the survey results (using the instructions found in the how-to companion document) in the two tabs (Pre-Responses and Post-Responses), the data automatically calculates in the Overall Results tab and Detailed Results tab. The Overall Results tab indicates whether there is a significant difference in scores between the pre and post survey responses. However, just knowing there is a significant difference does not tell you what that difference is. You can use the Detailed Results to assess if there are significant differences between the advantages and disadvantages overall. You can use the Options Results tabs to assess if there are significant differences between options 1, 2, and or 3.

The townhall meeting survey question 1, statements 1-3 *(As a participant, after attending this meeting… I feel like I have a more well-rounded understanding of this community issue; I feel comfortable explaining different views on this issue to someone else; I learned about new aspects of this issue that I hadn't previously considered)* assess your audience's knowledge and awareness of the community issue (STO 1 and STO 2). Ideally, these figures should be reported using percentages of those that agreed with these statements.

Self-efficacy and Intent to Act

The deliberative forum's pre- and post-surveys, and the town hall meeting post-survey ask multiple questions that help you assess whether you have achieved STO 3 *(Increased citizen self-efficacy and commitment to engage and deliberate to act on and influence community issues).* Question 2, statements 1-3, and question 7, statement 1-3 on the deliberative forum's pre-survey help establish a baseline of how the audience believes their community considers the issue an important issue, the issue impacts the community, they can change the course of the community issue, how much the community talks about how to solve community problems, how open the community is to hearing different viewpoints, and whether there is cooperation between groups in the community.

The deliberative forum post-survey does not have corresponding questions but does ask questions about how the event altered

The questions asked on the deliberative forum post-survey are the same questions asked on the town hall meeting post-survey.

participants' feelings associated with self-efficacy, engagement, and ability to influence community issues (question 1, statements 4-9). When reporting these values, we recommend reporting percentages and grouping those that *strongly agreed* and *agreed.* For example, 77% of respondents agreed that people in the community consider the issue important. Conversely, if there is an outstanding amount of those that *strongly disagree* and *disagree,* then we would recommend summing those amounts and reporting as a lump sum (i.e., 67% of respondents disagreed with the statement that people in the community believe they can change the course of the community issue).

The questions asked on the deliberative forum post-survey are the same questions asked on the town hall meeting post-survey (question 1, statements 4-9).

Active Engagement

Like the previous outcomes there are a suite of questions asked on the three tools to assess whether these events are increasing the number of individuals actively engaged in the community issues (STO 05). For example, these three items on the deliberative forum pre-survey help assess the audience's baseline level of engagement in community issues.

DELIBERATIVE FORUM PRE-SURVEY

- QUESTION 1: As a participant… I am likely to discuss issues in my community with other people.
- QUESTION 5: How important are these motivations for your attendance at this program?
- QUESTION 8: Have you attended CIVIC programs in the past, and if yes, how many?

Intermediate and long-term impacts are better assessed several months after the event with the partners and participants who continue to be active in the next steps the community is taking.

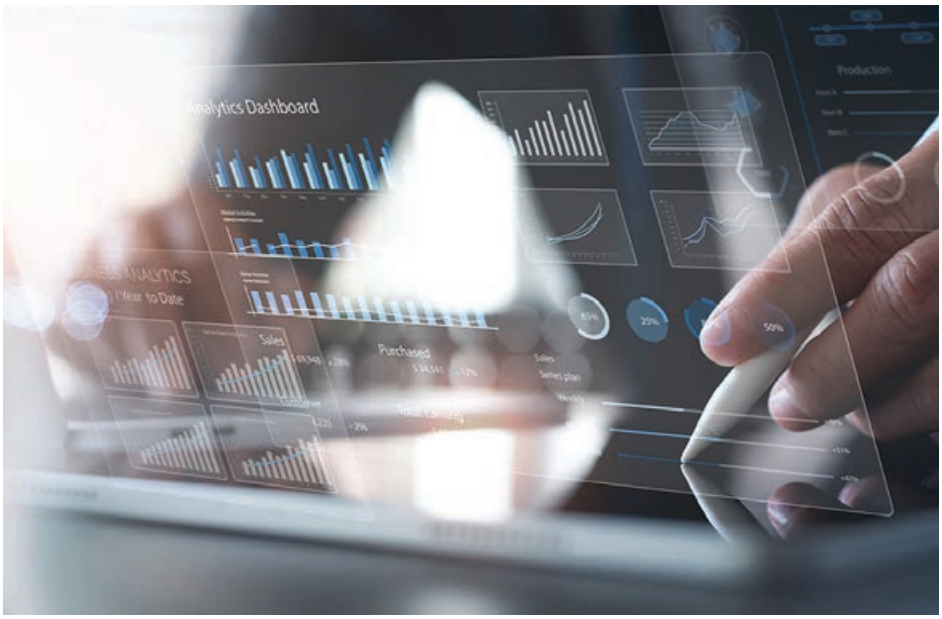
Similarly, statements 4-9 in question 1 of the deliberative forum and the town hall meeting post-surveys help assess the impact of the event on the audience's feelings about getting actively involved in community issues. To see how these tools link to the outcomes, go to https://sites.google.com/view/civic-evaluation/survey-to-outcomes.

Event Logistics and Audience Satisfaction

The CIVIC evaluation tools also provide agents and partners with information on how well the logistics for their event met the participants needs (e.g., *The meeting space was comfortable, easy to find, easily accessible)* and the skill of the facilitator (e.g., *The facilitator listened carefully, used clear simple language, gave all members a chance to contribute).* Both components help you think about improvements that might be made for the next event. Here are a few questions to help you reflect on what happened and what you might have observed during the event.

- What do the post-surveys say about your speakers and facilitator? What worked well and what suggestions could you offer?
- What did the facilitator do that helped participants understand different perceptions on the issue? What could help focus the discussion?
- What would you say about participants' interest and ability to engage in community decisions? How did the facilitator steer the discussion toward common ground and next steps?
- Based on feedback from the surveys, how would you market this event the next time?
- Was the location convenient and appropriate? Did you run out of snacks?

Intermediate and long-term impacts are difficult to measure with validity in a survey immediately after the event and are better assessed in follow-up interviews or surveys several months later with the partners and participants who continue to be active in the next steps the community is taking. The follow-up survey (for participants) and interview tool (for partners) are designed to provide information for these outcomes. If people attend additional meetings and events, tracking repeat visitors is helpful to demonstrate building community capacity. Several items in the deliberative forum and town hall meeting post-survey assess interest and willingness which may demonstrate movement in the direction of community engagement, such as *I feel more confident that something could be done to address this issue; My community is more united on this issue; I feel like I could play an important part in helping to address this issue.*



The CIVIC Evaluation portal provides a visual summary of your data to make it easy for you to select key elements for your reporting.

Synthesizing Your Data

The CIVIC Evaluation portal provides a visual summary of your data to make it easy for you to select key elements for your reporting. To access your Qualtrics evaluation data, go to

- CIVIC Deliberative Forum Report – https://datastudio.google.com/reporting/158cfdb3-9667-444b-8604-819241a66bda/page/YGtNB
- CIVIC Townhall Report – https://datastudio.google.com/reporting/76ba136e-3ceb-48d0-b23a-cfc1142e007b/page/YGtNB

The reports are sectioned based on major outcomes (see the left-hand column after opening the report links).

CIVIC Deliberative Forum Report	CIVIC Town Hall Meeting Report
Event Demographics	Event Demographics
Familiarity	Familiarity
Motivation	Motivation
Efficacy and Commitment	Process
Process	
Social Cohesion	

There are many good reasons to describe your CIVIC events and outcomes to others. People are curious. Partners are invested. Participants want their voices and stories to be heard.

The reports are provided using this tool to make it easier for you to visualize and share your survey results. To explore the different options to share the reports, select the dropdown arrow next to Share at the top of the report. You will be provided with options to "Invite people," "Schedule email delivery," "Get report link," "Embed report," and "Download report." You can also take screenshots of the graphs and/or hover over the data to get additional detailed information (such as percentages). Depending on the chart type, you can export the raw data by hovering your mouse over a graph or table of interest, selecting the three stacked dots at the top-right, and selecting Export. This will permit you to conduct your own analysis of the data.

Writing a Report

There are many good reasons to describe your CIVIC events and outcomes to others. People are curious. Partners are invested. Participants want their voices and stories to be heard. And last, but certainly not least, your Report of Accomplishments should have a CIVIC impact statement! Here are some suggestions for telling your CIVIC story, starting with your Report of Accomplishments.

Report of Accomplishments (ROA)

Your Report of Accomplishments should help you describe the impact you are having in your community. When it comes to reporting CIVIC efforts, think about the value and the outcomes of your activities, and find ways to document those outcomes with evidence that will also advance your program objectives. You can describe your CIVIC event under *Educational Methods and Activities* in Section 24. You might want to create a subheading (e.g., forums, community conversations, town hall). Explain your role in the event, describe the partners with whom you worked, and record the number of participants. In the outcomes section, you may need to describe what happened at the town hall meeting or deliberative forum to help readers understand what your event entailed. Also in the outcomes section, use your post-event survey data to report knowledge gained, perceptions gained, and satisfaction. Use the open-ended items and the follow-up survey to report on how people have used this event to reshape their actions or ideas.

When you write up the *impact* of your CIVIC event, consider a two-paragraph success story that answers the following questions (taken from AEC579/WC241: Guidelines for Writing Quality Impact Statements for Workload and Marketing (https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/WC241).

- What was the concern that prompted the partnership and the CIVIC event? How did the partners invest in your event?

Partners and decision makers may be interested in more details about what you organized: the discussions, the participants' insights, and the evaluation data.

- Who (and how many) attended your event and how was it designed?
- What did individuals report after the event regarding their changed knowledge, perceptions, and intentions? You can take this from your survey data reported in the results section.
- How is the community changing or how has the issue been affected, as a result of this event? The follow-up survey and partner interviews may provide helpful details.
- How can these changes create documentable benefits to the environment, the economy, or the social fabric of your community?
- Why is this important to your community and how could this be expanded in the future?

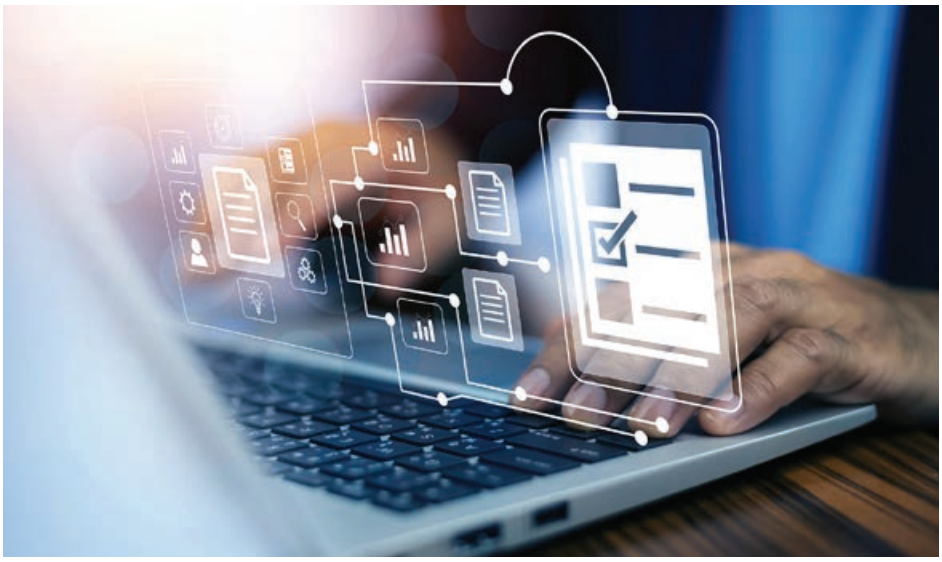
Your partners and community decision makers would also appreciate a report summarizing the findings of your CIVIC events. Much of what you have written for your Report of Accomplishments will be useful, but partners and decision makers may be interested in more details about what you organized: the discussions, the participants' insights, and the evaluation data. Decision makers may be interested to know what participants thought should be the next step, what they agreed about, and what they are willing to accept after their deliberation. Your partner interview results could be very helpful here, as well as your post-forum and follow-up survey data. Consider using the following elements and questions to frame your partner report:

Much of what you have written for your Report of Accomplishments will be useful, but partners and decision makers may be interested in more details about what you organized: the discussions, the participants' insights, and the evaluation data.

- **Describe the issue:** What was the concern that prompted the partnership and the CIVIC event?
- **List the partners and contributors:** Who helped make this happen?
- **Context:** What happened in advance of the event that contributed to its success? For example, consider marketing strategies, media coverage, and unexpected outcomes.
- **The event:** What did you do and how many attended? Who was your intended audience and how well did you reach them?
- **The setting:** Where was the event held, and what qualities of this location were essential?
- **The conversation:** What was asked and said at the CIVIC event? What insights seemed to be "turning points" in understanding? How did the facilitator handle tricky challenges?
- **Common ground:** Where was there general agreement? What new ideas were generated? What actions had support? What plans were made for taking action? What additional information do people need? What priorities were identified?
- **Lessons learned:** What should readers take away from this case study? What did you learn from the experience? What challenges can you help others overcome?
- **Next steps:** What are you going to do next? How does the process evolve and continue?

In a report to the **CITY OF CLEARWATER,** Extension agents were able to say that cumulative participant data from the waste reduction forums showed 100% (N=44) were very satisfied with the facilitators, the opportunity to discuss the issue, and the overall forum. Participants were asked to complete a retrospective assessment of their knowledge and motivations. In all three forums, participants were more knowledgeable on the subject, were more likely to discuss the topic with others in their community and expressed a higher level of motivation to participate with others on projects related to waste reduction because of their participation in the forum. Partners indicated that listening sessions or forums would help serve the needs of their community.

Several examples of reports from town hall meetings and deliberative forums can be found on the CIVIC website.



Here are some tips for when you are ready to write.

- Generate an informative title with a verb that tells the story. For example, Community Forum Drives New Partnership.
- It may be useful to have a brief abstract or summary at the beginning of the document to provide an orientation for the reader.
- Use quotes from the survey tools or your interviews to provide insights into motives and experiences. For example, one participant said, “I wasn’t sure what to expect, but it was the most enjoyable discussion I’ve had in a long time. I’m jazzed to come back.”
- Images are great to include! Think ahead of time and assign someone to take useful photographs. Be mindful of privacy concerns. Action photographs of those engaging in conversations or presenting topics are ideal. Include easy to understand graphics if such were presented in the meeting/forum.

Summary

Evaluations are essential to good programs and required in Extension. The CIVIC team has created a variety of tools to help you evaluate and track changes in community capacity to resolve challenging issues. Data entered into the CIVIC evaluation portal will help the CIVIC leadership team synthesize state-wide reports for UF and FAMU administration and share our collective story of helping Floridians help themselves and improve their community well-being.

CIVIC leadership team will synthesize state-wide reports for UF and FAMU administration and share our collective story of helping Floridians help themselves and improve their community well-being.

EXERCISE 9-1

Create a URL for Your CIVIC Event

In this exercise you will gain familiarity with the Qualtrics interface and learn how to produce unique URLs for your upcoming events.

When practicing, make sure to use the FORUM or TOWN HALL DATE **August 1, 2015 (08/15/2015).** This will allow us to separate practice responses from those submitted by audiences at actual CIVIC events. You can use whatever COMMUNITY ISSUE, Florida COUNTY, and OPTIONS, but for practicing purposes please use the 08/15/2015 DATE.

Instructions (written and visual) on how to generate a unique URL for the deliberative forum and town hall meeting surveys are provided on the CIVIC Evaluation website (Step 2). If you get lost in Qualtrics (specifically in the Survey Flow screen), select "Cancel" in the survey flow, and select "Yes" that you want to exit without saving changes. Additionally, you are welcome to reach out to the CIVIC Leadership team if you have questions or concerns.

Remember, if you are providing participants with hard copy versions of the surveys (instead of the URLs), you will need to create a unique survey URL **prior to** manually entering the responses into the online survey. Regardless of how you administer the surveys, you will need to create the unique survey URL following the instructions on the CIVIC Evaluation website (Step 2). It is strongly encouraged that you practice this process.

Summary Data and Reporting

In this exercise, you will increase your familiarity with the data dashboards as you practice analyzing, interpreting, and reflecting on data results.

After your event you will either have…

- all the survey data submitted by participants using the unique URLs (you created) ***(strongly recommended);*** or
- some responses submitted by participants using the unique URLs (you created) and the other survey responses will have been recorded using the hard copy versions (meaning you'll still need to manually input them into the database using the unique URLs (you created) ***(it happens and can't be avoid sometimes***); or
- all the survey responses recorded using the hard copy versions (meaning you'll need to manually input them into the database using the unique URLs (you created) ***(whew, that's a handful).***

For this exercise, we assume you've entered your data for a deliberative forum that was held on August 1, 2015 (see Exercise 9-1 for context). The next step is to generate a report and reflect on how you might improve next month's deliberative forum.

Access the data dashboard specific to deliberative forums (you will need Internet connectivity). Open the dashboard and the worksheet (see below). You may also want to have a hard copy or a digital copy of the worksheet nearby. Using the data dashboard, complete the worksheet (Summary Data and Reporting Worksheet).

WORKSHEET 9-1

Summary Data and Reporting Worksheet (1 of 2)

Event Date____/____/____ County_____

Event Title (if applicable)_____

Community Issue _____

Options (if applicable) _____

Partners (if applicable)_____

Who attended this event? _____ Number of participants: _____

Demographics

Note what you wish to remember about the demographics of the participants.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Audience Familiarity

Percent of audience that indicated familiarity with... (sum percentages of advantages and disadvantages of those indicating familiar and very familiar)

Pre-Forum	
Option 1	%
Option 2	%
Option 1	%
Post-Forum	
Option 1	%
Option 2	%
Option 1	%
Check option(s) that increased from pre-forum	
❒ Option 1 ❒ Option 2 ❒ Option 3	

Summary Data and Reporting Worksheet (2 of 2)

Motivations

Percent of participants attending other CIVIC events:_____%

The percentage of participants that indicated extremely important and moderately important.

Interest in the community issue:_____%

Interest in becoming involved in the community: _____%

Percent of participants that agreed they are likely to discuss issues in their community with other people: _____%

Percent of participants that agreed to the following statements after attending the event.

I feel more confident in my ability to address this issue. _____%

I feel like there are ways that I can get involved and make a difference. _____%

I feel like my efforts would be valued and appreciated by others. _____%

I feel like it's easier for me to think about this issue without feeling hopeless or mentally exhausted. _____%

I feel like I know how I could use my talents and skills to address this issue. _____%

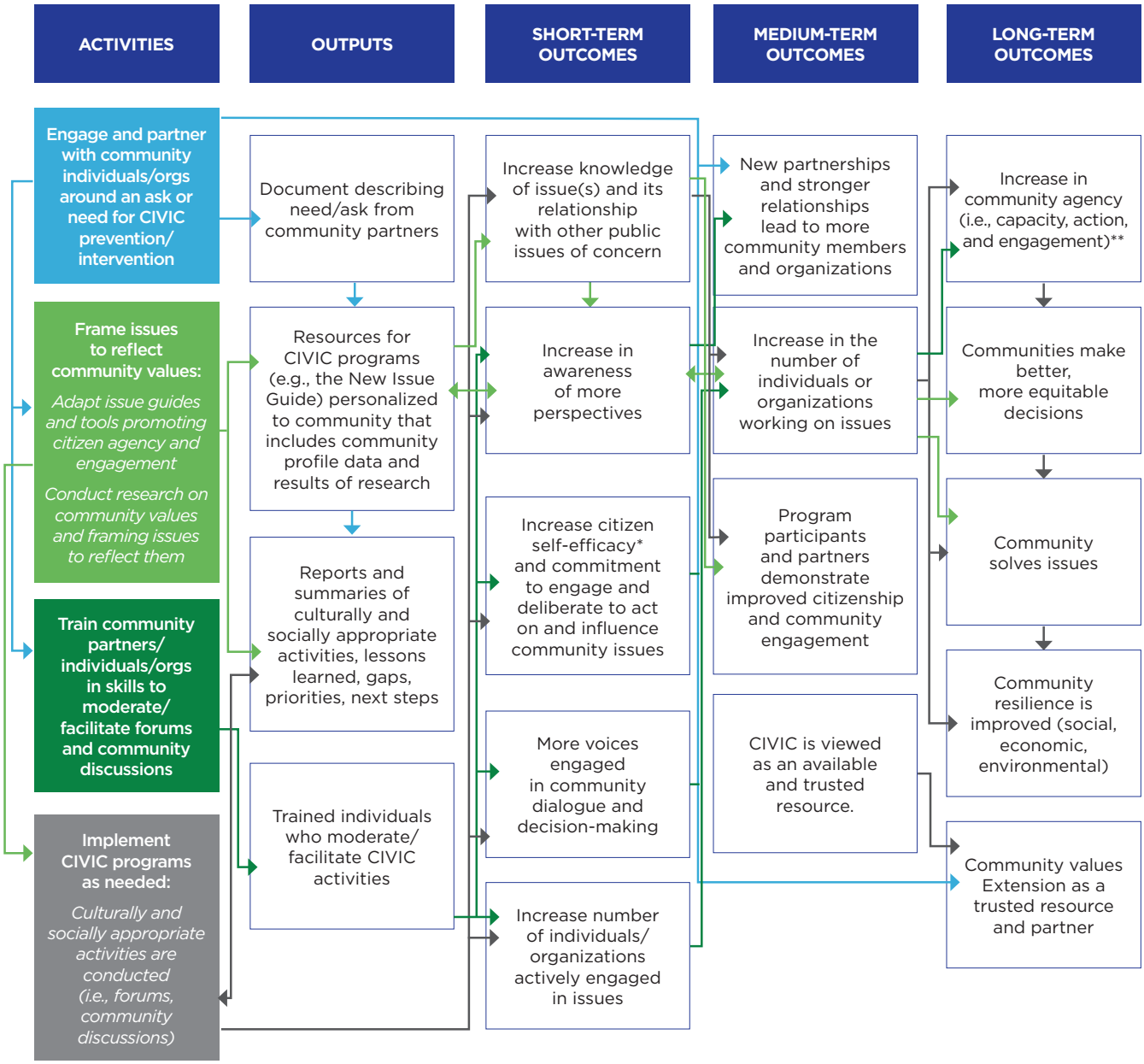
How many respondents agreed and disagreed that the meeting speakers or facilitator:	**Agreed**	**Disagreed**
Listened carefully to what everyone said		
Gave everyone a chance to contribute and ask question		
Were respectful		
How many participants:		
Have a more well-rounded understanding of the issue?		
Can explain different views on the issue?		
Learned new aspects of the issue?		
Could help address the issue?		
Feel more confident that something can be done?		

State Leadership CIVIC Logic Model

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
Create procedures and processes for FAMU and UF Partnership	Internal resources (e.g., Canvas, TEAMS) and website (for external advances) created	Increase knowledge of community (public) issues	Increase statewide partnerships with more individuals/ organizations	FAMU and UF work seamlessly to deliver state programs
Develop materials (e.g., strategic plan, evaluation, curriculum, teaching)	Issue guides created on myriad community topics and tools to promote citizenship and engagement	Increase understanding of different perspectives	Inds/orgs (partners) increase engagement in issues and communities	CIVIC creates meaningful and impactful programs
Hire staff, expand program capacity, identify collaboration opportunities and synergies	CIVIC curriculum that trains faculty/ individuals/orgs to deliver CIVIC activities	Increase self-efficacy* among faculty to facilitate/moderate CIVIC programs	Faculty work effectively with individuals/organizations to deliver CIVIC programs that address community problems and build capacity statewide	CIVIC is known nationally as an innovative community development program
Train faculty to moderate/facilitate, frame issues, work with diverse audiences and issues	Trained faculty who deliver CIVIC activities	Faculty effectively reach new audiences	FAMU & UF/IFAS faculty trust each other	Extension (FAMU & UF/IFAS) is viewed as an available and trusted resource by state partners
	Reports and summaries that inform partners, FAMU/ UF administrators, funding organizations, etc.	Able to adapt issue guides, build partnerships, conduct CIVIC programs		
	Program revenue stocks and flows			

'Self-efficacy refers to an Individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997).

CIVIC Activity Logic Model



*Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997).
**Agency: The perceived capacity to use one's pathways to reach desired goals (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon 2002)

CHAPTER

10

Case Studies

1. Developing an Issue Guide for the Indian River Lagoon (IRL)
2. Testing the Land Use Framework for Deliberation in Port St. Joe
3. Indian River Lagoon Water Quality Forum and Fishing Clinic Event
4. Land Use Deliberative Discussion with Sustainable Living Series in Florida
5. Monroe County Transportation Initiative
6. Forums as Needs Assessments for Urban Sustainability
7. Town Hall Meeting for Leaders Creates an Action Plan—The COSA Affordable Housing Retreat
8. Heir's Property Town Hall Meeting
9. Marketing Challenges for Online Events
10. Woody Biomass In Gainesville

1

Developing an Issue Guide for the Indian River Lagoon (IRL)

By Mandy Baily and Martha Monroe

CASE STUDY 1

The first steps in developing this issue guide began with collecting available resources.

In the spring of 2019, a CIVIC team made up of faculty, a graduate student, and a Kettering trained facilitator gathered to create an issue guide to prompt discussion around the health of the Indian River Lagoon (IRL). The situation and its problems were identified in many reports over the years, and public opinion was summarized in a report developed for the IRL National Estuary Program (IRLNEP) (Monroe et al., 2018). That report was based on a series of interviews and focus groups with experts and a public survey across the five-county region to understand awareness, attitudes, and behaviors that protect the lagoon. The IRLNEP has a history of funding educational programs that prompt appropriate individual behavior changes; CIVIC members believed it was time to elevate the discussion to community-level activities to build broad support for larger-scale actions.

The first steps in developing this issue guide began with collecting available resources. The team used the IRL reports and the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) and the Kettering Foundation booklet "Let's Talk About Water." Realizing that the concerns from some communities were missing, they gathered information through in-person interviews. These data and the team's impressions were organized into broad themes. The team members

asked themselves how to organize themes to best generate discussion around solutions. This meant that traditional ways of representing water quality concerns may not be helpful (Fig 1). A framework that revolved around the environment, public health, and economic health was pilot tested in community discussions.

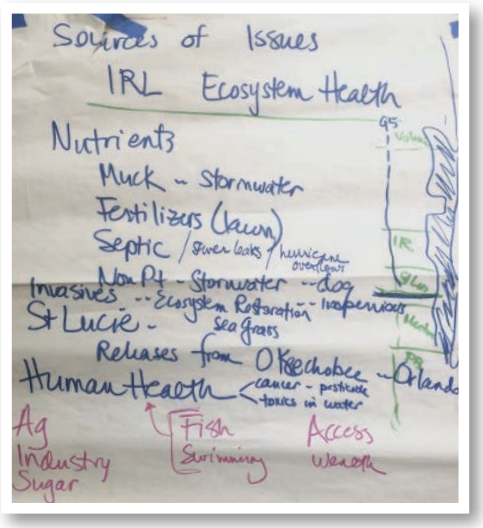


FIG 1. Initial Framework

Pilot tests of this first draft clearly reflected four challenges in developing a salient IRL Issue Guide: (1) it was hard to move people away from discussing what individuals should do toward what communities could do; (2) even with special invitations, some perspectives and voices were consistently missing from the forums; (3) stressing "ecosystem" concerns primarily attracted environmentalists to the discussion; and (4) very few participants got excited about addressing an economic option. Getting a full complement of perspectives at a discussion was challenging. After pilot tests and in partnership with IRLNEP, the team simplified the language, reshaped the guide introduction and descriptions of options, and renamed the Issue Guide: "*Our Home, Our Water, Our Quality of Life: How Can We Protect Our IRL Communities?*"

The new IRL Issue Guide was used in online discussions several times during the COVID-19 pandemic. Forum conversations appeared to reflect more values and approaches for IRL communities. As a result of the pilot test forums, a variety of possible next steps were suggested. One action was a subsequent town hall meeting with the Ocean Research Conservation Alliance (ORCA) that led to the development of the Indian River Lagoon Youth Fishing Clinic.

This iterative process of listening to the community, developing various frameworks, testing them with both experts and the public, and revising them based on observations of the discussion is essential to the development of a useful guide that prompts deliberation.

References

Monroe, M. C., Crandall, C., & Maynard, L. (2018). Developing and Testing a Citizen Survey for the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program. Final report of project UF P0037358.

NAAEE and Kettering National Issues Forum Guide. (2017). "Let's Talk About Water" Retrieved November 6, 2023, from https://eepro.naaee.org/resource/lets-talk-about-water

Testing the Land Use Framework for Deliberation in Port St. Joe

By Mandy Sunshine Baily

Port St. Joe, a small town of about 3,400 people, is located in the Florida panhandle along the Gulf of Mexico at the site of a deep-water natural harbor. The town, settled in 1835, has a history of storm surges and hurricanes, with the most recent being Hurricane Michael in 2018. Thanks to community contacts at Florida A&M University (FAMU), Port St. Joe was selected as a site to pilot test the CIVIC land use issue guide.

Audience and Community

During the mid-20th century, Port St. Joe thrived economically with national and international shipping trade. However, during the early 1970s, shipping began a steady decline and by the mid-1980s most shipping activity had ended. The St. Joe Paper Mill and Box Plant and the Arizona Chemical Company were the primary users of the port. The buildings that housed these companies "were razed so that the land can be reclaimed for further use" (http://www.portofportstjoe.com/port-history.cfm). In sharing a bit of local history with the forum participants, a CIVIC team leader mentioned that these

2

CASE STUDY 2

Community heritage has continued to suffer from lack of funding and commitment to economic improvements, particularly the mixed-use corridor of Martin Luther King Boulevard.

The deliberative forum was convened by CIVIC Team members, some with long-standing connections to the community.

two significant employers hired African American laborers who moved into North Port St Joe. The community even had a Black beach during the segregation era. But since then, these two companies have closed shop, the community has deteriorated, and opportunities for residents have disappeared.

Port St. Joe maintains a historically African American neighborhood and has long supported a separate business district and housing areas in keeping with the norms of racial segregation. The Black portion of Port St. Joe is sometimes referred to as "North Port St. Joe." According to a participant at another forum, the "North" addition to Port St. Joe is not looked upon favorably by many in the Black community, as "North" was added after racial integration in the early 1970s to further racial delineation. Community heritage has continued to suffer from lack of funding and commitment to economic improvements, particularly the mixed-use corridor of Martin Luther King Boulevard.

CIVIC Activities

The deliberative forum was convened by CIVIC Team members, some with long-standing connections to the community. The forum was held virtually (over zoom) due to COVID-19 safety concerns. Participants included a Port St. Joe city commissioner, Port St. Joe resident representing the local Planning and Redevelopment Board, a Port St. Joe realtor, and a Port St. Joe resident. As there was a large storm moving through the area during the forum, one attendee was unable to retain Internet connection and was forced to leave the session early.

When asked "what concerns do you have about land use in your community?" each person's responses were recorded by the facilitation team and included:

- In the Martin Luther King (MLK) corridor—the original business district of Port St. Joe—property owners need help to develop properties, they're concerned about taxes, how to acquire funding to move forward with developing properties—not just for individuals, but larger community betterment. People being priced out but still want to improve property—what type of home can hold value? North Port St. Joe is a Black community. Need for education on what to do if taxes go up. People

worried about taxes going up, they don't understand they need tax money to make positive changes. It's happening already, they need to learn how to deal with it, because "it's not the Forgotten Coast anymore, they found us!"

- My primary concern is family housing, old unlivable structures, and lack of affordable housing available to encourage people to live and work here. I want the community to understand the importance of generational wealth, of our kids being able to have opportunities. As for the MLK corridor – business development won't be what it was, it needs to expand elsewhere, I don't [want] North Port St. Joe to become a retirement/"old" community, how do we attract families? How do we provide work to get them to stick around? This goes for Port St. Joe in general, not just North Port St. Joe.
- Researchers and others [wanting to assist in improving North Port St. Joe] need to coordinate before coming to the area so that they do not exhaust communities! Can they collaborate better?

Outcomes

When asked in closing about how they felt about the discussion, participants stated:

- I enjoyed it! Informative, it's how problems are solved…great for community to join in. Still a long way to go, but time to broaden the circle so can make stronger attempt at change in the community.
- We started development discussions in early 1980s… community interest has dwindled over time, folks are not motivated, can't blame everything on Covid. We can reach out and invite others who may not feel empowered or are afraid of appearing foolish. If we can invite 5 more folks, if we get more skin in the game, that'd help with networking if the whole goal is to make community better!
- Pandemic concerns had restricted in-person meetings, but there are plans to hold additional forums in the North Port St Joe area in the future. Utilizing the CIVIC framework to begin the engagement process around a community issue seemed to work quite well.

When asked "what concerns do you have about land use in your community?" each person's responses were recorded by the facilitation team.

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CASE STUDY 3

Participants were motivated to organize a youth fishing event that would enable people to catch fish from the Indian River Lagoon while learning more about the waterway itself.

Indian River Lagoon Water Quality Forum and Fishing Clinic Event

By Carol Roberts and Mandy Baily

In December of 2020, community members in Fort Pierce, Florida, met virtually to participate in a CIVIC Indian River Lagoon Water Quality forum. The topic was an important one for residents in the region because of their proximity to the Indian River Lagoon and the community's reliance on it for subsistence, recreation, and ecosystem services. Once a vibrant estuary along the east coast of Florida hosting thousands of different species of marine life, the Indian River Lagoon has been damaged by pollutants and became an impaired waterway.

Attendees included a candidate for city commission, a brewery owner, a local pastor, and the leader of the local Black Chamber of Commerce, among others. Participation from representatives of the historically African American city of Fort Pierce were especially appreciated as it had been difficult for Extension to form partnerships with members of that community in the past. An influencing factor for participation might have been the establishment of CIVIC as a joint venture between the University of Florida (UF) and Florida A&M University (FAMU). Although both are land-grant institutions, FAMU is a historically Black college, from which several of our participants graduated.

As discussion ensued and perspectives were shared during the forum, it became clear that participants had different

agendas for their participation, though all participants brought distinct concerns for the impacts of poor water quality. The city commission candidate's focus on water quality stemmed from health considerations of those who relied on fish for subsistence from tributaries of the lagoon. The commissioner also spoke about barriers to accessing fishing areas, relaying a recent story of a man who was killed while fishing from a railroad bridge. These concerns were in stark contrast to the brewery owner's frustration with access to convenient kayak launches where there would be no need to step in muck. Hearing these differences, everyone in the virtual room listened intently as the brewery owner exclaimed, "People are eating the fish they catch in those canals? That's not safe!" The group determined that before more deliberative forums should be held on this topic, it would be important to find out which waterways were being tested and what those results indicated.

The city commission candidate's focus on water quality stemmed from health considerations of those who relied on fish for subsistence.

To that end, CIVIC worked with the community and recruited staff from the Ocean Research Conservation Alliance (ORCA). CIVIC and ORCA collaborated to offer a town hall meeting about fish toxicity. From that gathering, participants were motivated to organize a youth fishing event that would enable people to catch fish from the Indian River Lagoon while learning more about the waterway itself. Any wild-caught fish would be exchanged for farm-raised fish. While a farm-raised fish sandwich (or hot dog) was enjoyed by participants, any wild fish would be analyzed by ORCA for toxins.

On the day of the event, the community offered an informative and fun experience for local youth who were given new fishing poles and tackle boxes to use and keep. Despite rainy weather, twelve "keepers" were caught and donated to ORCA. Thirty-five youth learned fishing skills and waterway protection methods they can carry with them into adulthood. More than $2,000 in equipment and supplies was donated and most donors indicated a desire to contribute again for such as worthwhile event. Although there was enthusiastic engagement by local businesses, there was a palpable absence of the community leaders who initially suggested the need for the event.

In order to improve engagement methods, reflect on participant feedback, and consider the variables involved in creating change in communities throughout Florida, a CIVIC team member interviewed five of the six participants from the original October 2020 deliberative forum one year later to explore outcomes. An interview guide was designed to address the following questions:

Although the CIVIC deliberative forum and subsequent youth fishing clinic were successful in raising awareness of water quality issues, there is still more to be done.

1. Does participation in a forum promote new relationships among community members?
2. Did participants gain a new understanding or perspective on issues related to IRL water quality?
3. What do participants do, if anything, as a result of attending a CIVIC-IRL forum?

- **Question 1:** *Does participation in a forum promote new relationships among community members?* Only two of the six participants knew each other prior to the forum; three others were in professional contact after the forum at least once. Two participants commented on a new relationship formed with Extension faculty as a result of the forum.
- **Question 2:** *Did participants gain a new understanding or perspective on issues related to IRL water quality?* Responses ranged from no (one individual was already knowledgeable) to somewhat (two) to a lot (two).
- **Question 3:** *What do participants do, if anything, as a result of attending a CIVIC-IRL forum?* Responses ranged from nothing (one) to "I was already involved but was motivated by the forum to expand my network or become more active" (three) to "this forum got me up and running" (one).

Although responses unanimously revealed positive feedback on the opportunity to engage with others and learn new perspectives on this topic, there were also questions raised during the interviews about why participants were invited to attend and what the goal was for this CIVIC dialogue. Respondents wanted to know how to plan further engagement in their community and said the forum is a "great platform to learn from one another and assess issues together," but they were left pondering to what end will dialogue really serve if no one picks up the task or leads an activity. Another person, however, suggested broadening the discussion by asking each person to bring others, including community leaders, to support next steps and create more integrated approaches.

While CIVIC's deliberative dialogue forums provide a method of community engagement that has the capacity to promote new relationships among community members, offer new understandings or perspectives on issues, and motivate participants to take actionable steps of improving their community, there is still a need for better methods of co-creating community solutions. Although the CIVIC deliberative forum and subsequent youth fishing clinic were successful in raising awareness of water quality issues related to the Indian River Lagoon, with adult and youth audiences, there is still more to be done.

Land Use Deliberative Discussion with Sustainable Living Series in Florida

By Holly Abeels and Alicia Betancourt

Florida's growing population is expected to double the 2005 estimate of 17 million to 33.7 million people by 2070 (1000 Friends of Florida, 2019). The additional inhabitants will need homes, shopping areas, and jobs in addition to schools, roads, clean water, and food. The expansion of infrastructure to serve the growing population will need to take place while supporting, maintaining, and protecting existing communities and natural ecosystems.

Along Florida's coast, balancing the needs of the future is particularly challenging, since a variety of interests collide. The monetary value of the land with a spectacular view drives up the price and limits access. As sea levels and storm frequencies change, coastlines are more susceptible to erosion and shoreline migration, which can interfere with endangered sea turtle nesting habitat and threaten personal property. Most people care about all these things, of course, but decisions about land use will prioritize one over others.

To better understand how Floridians feel about local land-use issues, Extension and Sea Grant agents conducted concern-collecting interviews with residents. Information from these interviews was used to develop materials that can be used for town hall meetings, deliberative discussions, and local working groups. A land-use discussion guide was created and piloted with the participants of the Sustainable Living Series.

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CASE STUDY 4

To better understand how Floridians feel about local land-use issues, Extension and Sea Grant agents conducted concern-collecting interviews with residents.

The goal of the discussion was to hear participants' perspectives and opinions on the actions they thought should be taken and to learn of any additional actions that they would consider under each option.

Audience and Community

The participants in the Sustainable Living Series were already interested in sustainability and wanted to learn more about how to be leaders within their communities. The participants primarily lived in three Florida counties—Brevard, Monroe, and Seminole—and faced a variety of land-use concerns that could be addressed through a deliberative forum.

CIVIC Activities

On the last meeting of the seven-week course, the land-use discussion guide was presented and discussed. The goal of the discussion was to hear participants' perspectives and opinions on the actions they thought should be taken and to learn of any additional actions that they would consider under each option. This information would be useful to help the CIVIC team revise the issue guide. But a secondary objective was to empower these community members to consider the value of engaging in land-use decisions. The first option, "Develop our community while protecting our quality of life," generated a variety of comments about the economic value of land, and that a property has multiple values. They discussed how greenspace doesn't offer tax revenue but could demonstrate benefits if the community steps forward and gets involved with protecting the natural area. They discussed the need to hold local government accountable for how land is used. One person said, "if it's really just economics, how much do you spend on landscaping?"

The second option, "Develop to support and enhance community vitality," led a few participants to support revitalizing urban areas instead of building new structures at the edges of town. They discussed the cost of rezoning and whether that influences the decision to improve or tear down and rebuild. They brainstormed who has the power to control policy and thought that some environmental organizations could partner with chambers of commerce and other business organizations that have the money and influence. Many expressed frustrations, and one person said "How can citizens speak to this when they are busy? They don't have time to study this!" In response, a participant said, "It requires vigilance because the status quo is so easy."

The third option, "Enable the community to understand and engage in the community planning process," resonated with participants who noted that the people who are involved are from a small, non-representative slice of our community (retired, often wealthy). People need to get engaged early in the decision process. "As a citizen, I'm still so clueless about how things get funded." One person said, "Someone has to learn the process to share with others. People are interested, they just need to know where to go." Another relayed, "It truly all comes down to relationships."

During the discussion, participants quickly became frustrated with the narrow focus of the three options, but these options also generated significant discussion. Because participants were from different communities in Florida, they did not share the same experience although they had similar environmental concerns about new development. Time was spent deliberating the merits of each option and extended time was spent discussing how and when the community can get involved in land-use decisions. Many felt frustrated with local government practices of having already made land-use decisions without much, if any, community input. Some felt that developers often get rules bent in their favor and, unless a large enough mass of people speak up, the elected leaders tend to support the development over environmental concerns. Many agreed that community awareness of land-use decisions often comes too late to change the trajectory of that decision. Participants discussed ways to track and follow local land use decisions. On reflection, one participant said, "[it] takes time to build community and trust … unwinding our pace and challenging the powers that be." Another reinforced the nature of deliberation: "listening, connecting to others, then engaging in dialogue."

This activity shed light on the lack of transparency in land-use planning and increased the participants' determination to address these issues

Outcomes

Individual participants were aware of the limitations and barriers to participation in land-use decisions. Collectively they brainstormed ways to overcome those barriers. This activity shed light on the lack of transparency in land-use planning and increased the participants' determination to address these issues. Participants increased their knowledge of the issue and its relationship with other environmental concerns.

Conclusion

This program increased community capacity both through increasing Extension's capacity to serve the community and by empowering residents to become more engaged. Communities are often plagued with complex issues that have no clear solution and often lack effective community engagement. Bringing citizens together to identify solutions can motivate citizens to participate in the democratic process and can lead to collective action but the issue must be seen to be solvable. Finally, deliberative issue forums can help communities identify solutions; therefore, increasing community capacity.

References

1000 Friends of Florida. 2019. How will Florida grow by the year 2070? Retrieved November 6, 2023, from https://1000fof.org/how-will-florida-grow-by-the-year-2070/

5

CASE STUDY 5

Since 2009, the county and its municipal partners struggled to alleviate traffic congestion but the issues continued to affect both residents and visitors.

Monroe County Transportation Initiative

By Alicia Betancourt

Monroe County is the southernmost county in the state of Florida. Most of the 83,000 residents live on the island chain called the Florida Keys, which are accessed on land by one 113-mile road and 42 bridges. This scenic highway is heavily traveled, congested, and dangerous. The primarily two-lane road has not changed since the 1950s, despite an annual influx of five million tourists. Accidents and congestion can snarl traffic for hours.

Since 2009, the county and its five incorporated municipal partners struggled with ways to alleviate traffic congestion by supporting local bus routes, free ride programs, and bus shelters but the issues continued to affect both residents and visitors. The fact that the Overseas Highway is owned and operated by the State of Florida, Department of Transportation (FDOT) has been the main barrier to local adoption of any mitigation or adaptation measures desired by residents and local planners.

Audience and Community

As resident and visitor complaints about transportation issues mounted, county and city leaders began searching for solutions. UF/IFAS Extension faculty provided examples of how the local Extension Service could organize and facilitate a community forum to hear from stakeholders such as business owners, residents, and municipal staff about how the issue is affecting them. Extension worked with county staff to ensure that there was a variety of perspectives from all areas of the Keys. Relevant experts such as regional transportation coordinators and public works directors were invited and an agenda for the forums was designed.

CIVIC Activities

In early 2019, three public forums were held to represent the three geographic areas of the Keys: upper, middle, and lower. More than 110 participants attended the forums. Participants were given a discussion framework tool describing possible actions surrounding traffic mitigation and adaptation strategies that would be discussed during the forum. While none of the issue guides from the National Issues Forum Institute are specific to traffic, Extension faculty referenced relevant frameworks (i.e., economic, land use) and worked with municipal staff to adjust and adapt options presented to ensure they reflected realistic and relevant topics, actions, trade-offs, data, and images.

Each of the forums began with a welcome, an overview describing the objectives, and group agreements to guide the conversation. The goal was to provide feedback about possible traffic improvements throughout the county. Participants were asked to review three broad options: increase public transportation, widen the highway to 4 lanes at known "choke-points," and reduce the number of tourists. Many other suggestions were brought forward during the forums. After the discussions, a brief reflection exercise was conducted, and attendees were asked to complete a post survey.

Outcomes

Organizing and facilitating community forums on local issues using a discussion guide created specifically for that community provided a platform for a variety of stakeholders to voice concerns. The discussion guide could not capture all the potential solutions but was a good starting point to look at different types of solutions. Although there were clearly traffic specialists in the room, the forums allowed all participants the opportunity to be heard. Working, living, and traveling in the community were the only requirements for opinions about what could be improved.

Organizing and facilitating community forums on local issues using a discussion guide created specifically for that community provided a platform for a variety of stakeholders to voice concerns.

Extension leadership helped the community recognize the wide agreement that transportation was a problem that could be solved.

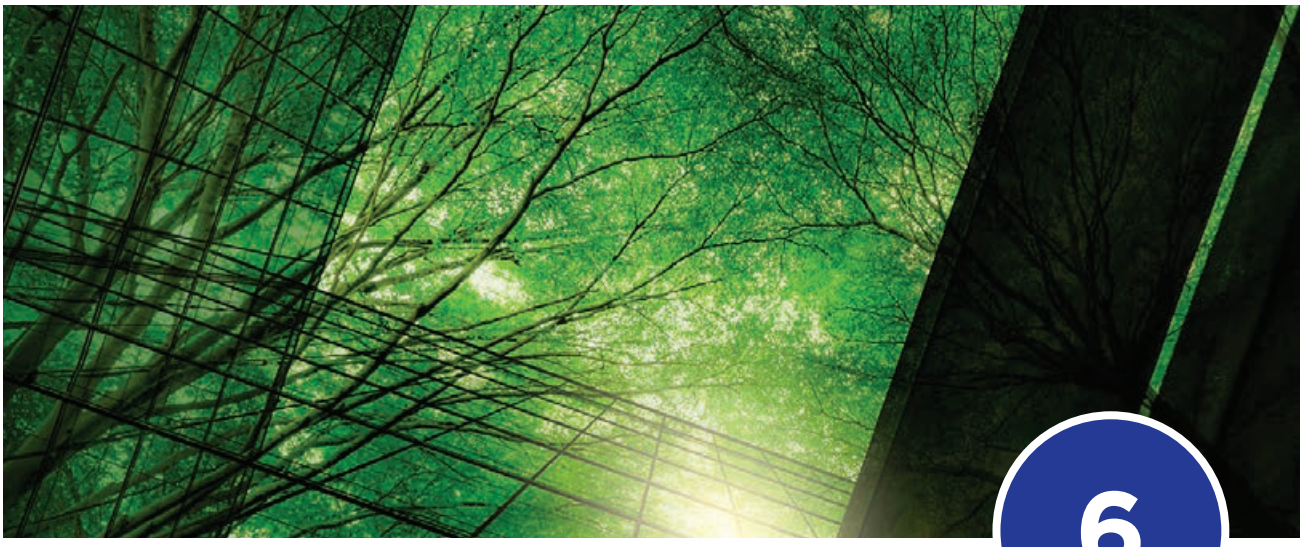
Following each forum, UF/IFAS Extension faculty provided a written report to the Monroe County Commissioners and other municipal elected leaders. The report summarized the process, the discussion, and the results of participant surveys, along with conclusions and recommendations. Cumulative participant data from the traffic forums showed 89% (n=99) were very satisfied with the facilitators, the opportunity to discuss the issue, and the overall forum. Participants were asked to complete a retrospective assessment of their knowledge and motivations. In all three forums, participants were more knowledgeable on the subject and more likely to discuss the topic with others in their community. The discussions at the forums allowed residents to hear different perspectives on the same issue and contributed to increased knowledge and access to resources for participants.

The primary outcome of the forums was the creation of a formal Monroe County Transportation Committee, which soon grew to include local stakeholders, experts, and elected officials. The committee met over several months, hired a contractor to complete a detailed traffic study, and began to implement several recommendations from the public meetings. Within a year, the committee made 11 recommendations to the county and the FDOT to ease congestion with left-turn lanes and more buses.

Conclusion

Deliberative forums democratize the process of engagement outside of the recognized public spaces for community input, i.e., commission meetings. Many participants are interested in accessing more opportunities to connect directly with local government and provide input, especially on quality of life and safety issues. While CIVIC activities can increase participation across diverse audiences, Extension alone cannot carry forward a complex process to solve community issues. Providing an opportunity to be heard only solves one side of the problem; leaders and stakeholders must act on those recommendations.

The CIVIC framework helped begin the engagement process for this community issue in part because Extension leadership helped the community recognize the wide agreement that transportation was a problem that could be solved. Extension played an important role as a convenor and facilitator to provide a structured response to community needs.



6

CASE STUDY 6

Forums as Needs Assessments for Urban Sustainability

By Ramona Madhosingh-Hector and Lara Milligan

Pinellas County is the most densely populated county in Florida with 3,347 persons per square mile and a total of 937,000 people (U.S. Census 2020). It is a coastal county with 24 municipalities, making it complicated to address common issues such as land use planning, sea level rise, economic development, and sustainability.

Since 2010, the county and its municipal partners have demonstrated varying degrees of engagement with urban sustainability issues. This case study focuses on two partnerships between Extension and Sustainability Coordinators: one in the City of Clearwater and the other in the City of Dunedin. As is often common, sustainability programs are managed by a staff of one and the relationships with UF/IFAS Extension provided additional capacity to support existing and emerging needs on urban sustainability issues (e.g., waste management, sustainability action plans, community engagement, water pollution).

Audience and Community

The City of Clearwater is a large urban center of 116,946 people while the City of Dunedin is a town of 36,537. The sustainability coordinators at both cities were interested in developing sustainability plans and both brought to their new positions (in 2019) a focus on waste management and recycling. Extension faculty had worked with sustainability coordinators in the past on more traditional Extension programs (i.e., Sustainable Floridians℠), and the coordinators were aware of the educational and facilitation services available through Extension.

Based on previous community forums, the collaborators knew targeted efforts would be needed to reach diverse audiences and receive input that represented the entire community.

Sustainability coordinators stressed the importance of getting input from a representative population from their communities. Strategic efforts were implemented to reach Spanish-speaking and underserved residents.

CIVIC Activities

In 2018, significant changes to the recycling markets forced municipalities to rethink waste management programs. To address these concerns, Extension faculty offered to collaborate with sustainability coordinators to facilitate community conversations on waste reduction, pollution, and general sustainability. Based on previous community forums, the collaborators knew targeted efforts would be needed to reach diverse audiences and receive input that represented the entire community.

In Clearwater, the partners conducted two community forums focused on waste reduction. One forum was held at the Hispanic Outreach Center (HOC) and the other at the Martin Luther King Jr. Neighborhood Center (MLK Center). Participants were given a discussion framework tool describing possible actions surrounding waste reduction that would be discussed. While none of the issue guides from the National Issues Forum Institute were specific to waste reduction, Extension faculty worked with sustainability coordinators to adjust and adapt similar issue guides to ensure they reflected realistic and relevant options, actions, trade-offs, local data, and relevant images.

The programs began with a welcome and overview describing the objective of the program, which was to engage and foster dialogue about pollution, and to gain feedback about possible waste management improvements in the City of Clearwater. After establishing group agreements, the participants reviewed three broad options and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each. Participants reflected on the overall direction of the program, completed an evaluation, and received free tickets to the Clearwater Marine Aquarium as an incentive to attend.

In Dunedin, Extension faculty conducted waste reduction community discussions similar to those in Clearwater. After seeing the impacts of this type of community engagement, in 2021 the sustainability coordinator asked Extension faculty to facilitate a series of community forums to support Dunedin's Resilient Environmental Action Master (DREAM) Plan.

The city staff wanted to hear residents' goals, hopes, and dreams for a sustainable city. A total of nine community forums were scheduled over a three-month period at various times and days of the week. Forums were virtually conducted via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which yielded fewer participants than anticipated. To hear from more residents, an online survey was developed with similar questions used in the virtual forum discussions. This survey provided an additional opportunity for constituents to provide input on DREAM and proved to be significantly more effective than the online forums. Over the nine virtual forums, 22

members engaged in discussion; an additional 198 people responded to the online survey. Similar responses were received from both the online forums and survey.

Outcomes

The opportunity to discuss local issues of interest enabled participants to contribute their ideas in an open, structured format without any social or political pressure. Given that many of the individuals who attended did not know each other but were interested in the same issue suggests an underlying connection everyone had about the topic. The group agreements and a neutral facilitator helped create a comfortable atmosphere for discussion. Additionally, each participant was not required to be an expert; their opinion was all that was required for participation. Working with community leaders to identify forum locations helped support the successful turnout of African Americans (50% of the participants at the MLK Center) and Hispanic/Latinx residents (80% of the HOC participants). Translators were made available at the HOC to ensure all participants could participate equally.

The opportunity to discuss local issues of interest enabled participants to contribute their ideas in an open, structured format without any social or political pressure.

Following each forum, UF/IFAS Extension faculty provided a written report to the sustainability coordinators summarizing the process, the discussion, and the results of participant surveys, along with conclusions and recommendations. Utilizing this report, the City of Clearwater sustainability coordinator met with the city manager who expressed an interest in doing more outreach to the community, and budgeted funds to support those efforts. Both coordinators shared the report internally and referenced it in conversations with their community groups.

Conclusions

In general, the community forums were valuable strategies to connect the sustainability coordinators with residents and highlight ongoing projects. The forums were also valuable for UF/IFAS Extension as many residents were unfamiliar with the services offered. In some cases, the forums were strategies to engage residents in the planning process and served as a needs assessment. Unlike classroom learning, forum participants can truly engage on the topic, connect with others who feel strongly about the issue, and empower each other to become civically engaged. This collective, peer-to-peer learning network can be capitalized on by proactive partners with a view to increasing opportunities for action and engagement at the community level.

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CASE STUDY 7

Town Hall Meeting for Leaders Creates an Action Plan—The COSA Affordable Housing Retreat

By Carol Roberts

The one-day retreat was about how unaffordable housing affects a diverse number of social services in the community—even those with indirect links to housing.

In February of 2019, representatives of many St. Lucie County's social agencies met to tackle the issue of affordable housing. The one-day retreat was a result of discourse shared by agency representatives about how unaffordable housing affects a diverse number of social services in the community—even those with indirect links to housing. For instance, members of a domestic violence organization explained that their clients were forced to return to abusers because of a lack of space in local shelters and rent-controlled properties. To the Extension faculty participant, this seemed like an opportunity for a CIVIC activity to enable organizers to focus on common needs and develop a plan. While not a traditional deliberative forum or public town hall meeting, it was a productive and helpful combination of the two activities.

Representatives from more than half of the Council of Social Agencies' (COSA) 62-member organizations met for a day of

dialogue and planning. Guest speakers from local and state housing agencies framed the issue, reporting on current housing efforts in Fort Pierce, the county seat and predominantly low-income area of the county, and on projections for population and aging that would impact the future. Armed with information, the participants used engaging activities to help identify the path forward. One activity involved a Tents vs. Palaces visioning session culminating with suggestions on how to move from poverty to riches.

After much discussion, three complementary action items emerged and as each was described and discussed, a contact person was identified. The contact persons' responsibilities would involve recruiting a subcommittee to begin work and report back to the COSA. The first item involved financial education, a basic need for improving the housing situation in St. Lucie County. Members agreed to create a source list of educational tools and providers so all COSA members could offer training if they saw the need or value. The second action item was to identify an advocacy team and craft a consistent, shared message for community leaders. Lastly, the participants felt that they needed to know more about what programs and efforts existed for housing support so they could direct clientele to the appropriate providers. Participants felt that more coordination was needed between existing housing initiatives. For instance, zoning and regulation issues prevent property development, funding for housing is required, and educating local decision makers about the severity of the situation were vital to support those residents who need these resources.

After the day-long retreat, COSA members reported feeling more connected and empowered to communicate about the issue. Subcommittee members showed more active involvement in subsequent COSA meetings, and one volunteered for a leadership role on the board. Participants also voiced frustration regarding the challenge of addressing affordable housing because of the many different aspects of the issue, seemingly insurmountable regulations, and funding disparities for solutions. The subcommittees each accomplished their tasks, but were ultimately stymied by COVID and the changing needs that these member social agencies were required to fill during that time.

After the day-long retreat, COSA members reported feeling more connected and empowered to communicate about the issue.

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CASE STUDY 8

The issue impacts communities of color because FHP is easily stolen or lost due to unpaid taxes or family conflict.

Heir's Property Town Hall Meeting

by Sandra Thompson

Family Heirs Property (FHP) is land that has been passed down informally from generation to generation, in most cases without a will or an improperly written will. The result is co-tenancy, where owners of a parcel cannot authenticate their piece of the parcel separate from other owners and all members of all generations effectively co-own property. Many family members do not know they own a sliver of property. FHPs are disproportionately owned by African Americans. The issue impacts communities of color because FHP is easily stolen or lost due to unpaid taxes or family conflict. As a result, families do not have the benefit of land as a source of wealth. FHP is a primary factor in perpetuating persistent poverty (Bailey et al. 2019).

Faculty at Florida A&M University (FAMU) have worked to assist in the resolution of FHP issues. In April 2019 they launched an FHP

town hall meeting. The goal was threefold: 1. Provide foundational information about FHP and its impact; 2. Facilitate group discussion; and 3. Encourage participants to continue FHP discussion around their dining room tables, in their churches, at civic and other organizational meetings, and with city or county government and other stakeholders.

FHP foundational topics were presented by a panel of FHP past and present owners; lawyers; representatives from a conservation organization; and county and federal representatives from local, state, and federal units. The main categories of topics discussed were definitions, characteristics, economic vulnerabilities, remedies, roles of property appraiser, county growth management, engineer, surveyor and legal experts, and the Uniform Partition's Heirs Property Act (UPHPA; Uniform Law Commission, 2014). Following a panel discussion, a large group and several small group discussions occurred consisting of FHP owners and professionals from various stakeholder disciplines. The prevailing view was that heir's property was a complex issue requiring resolution on multiple fronts. However, as the meeting neared conclusion, a cross section of participants determined that UPHPA adoption in Florida should be the next step and focus of their activity.

Following a panel discussion, a large group and several small group discussions occurred consisting of FHP owners and professionals from various stakeholder disciplines.

Additional stakeholders with significant human capital and organizational influence joined the committee, expanding their reach and circle of influence. The result was a cohort of legislative champions, resulting in passage of Florida Senate and House Bills. The final bill was signed into law on June 20, 2020 by Governor Ron DeSantis, just 14 months to the day from the April 20, 2019 town hall meeting.

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CASE STUDY 9

The agent's goal was to target community members 18 and older to participate in an anonymous platform to start getting attendees comfortable with sharing opinions about various issues.

Marketing Challenges for Online Events

By Katherine Allen

The CIVIC team had many success stories during COVID when programming pivoted to online. To build skills in conducting online discussions, nine agents attended a healthcare discussion using the Common Ground for Action (CGA) Online Forum, which is not only online, but also is strictly a type-in-the-chat-based platform to deliberate. After this experience, five more agents and staff from UF and Florida A&M University (FAMU) attended a training to become CGA moderators.

One of the agents who was trained is a Family and Consumer Sciences Agent (FCS) and has worked for the University of Florida/ IFAS Extension for 28 years and lives and works in Live Oak, Florida. Live Oak is situated in Suwannee County in north-central Florida, positioned to the west of I-75 and south of I-10. Live Oak is a rural, agricultural community of about 44,000 people. The community does not see a lot of civic engagement in city, school board, or county meetings. The county has seen challenges to its economic development due in part to its rural nature and distance from metropolitan areas.

The agent's goal was to target community members 18 and older to participate in an anonymous platform to start getting attendees

comfortable with sharing opinions about various issues. Her intent was to start with the solely-chat based platform, then move to Zoom or TEAMS where attendees could see and hear one another and eventually move to in-person discussions. Repetition strengthens skills, so if more people could experience dialogue to understand a variety of perspectives, the agent felt there would be more engagement with local decision-makers as a result.

The first scheduled program on healthcare was after an issues-gathering exercise where leaders in the community shared what they felt were issues or concerns in their community.

The first scheduled program on healthcare was after an issues-gathering exercise where leaders in the community shared what they felt were issues or concerns in their community. The agent left it open for each leader to answer from the viewpoint of their job or their own neighborhood. She directly called the leaders and was met with generous participation.

Since the Suwannee County community had recently lost their hospital and the online forum was during COVID, the agent did not expect zero registrations. So, after the first failed attempt (with no registrations), she invited the Suwannee River Regional library in Live Oak to become a partner. The library had a following with their *Lunch and Learn* series and used their email list to advertise their monthly offerings. Three classes were scheduled on topics of: healthcare, energy, and the future of work.

In addition to traditional advertising for the co-sponsored dialogues, the agent sent a personal email to other Family and Consumer Sciences agents in the Northeast District asking them to participate or at least share with their clientele (and provided the FCS Agents with a link to the NIFI guide). Suwannee County Master Gardener volunteers were sent an email invitation and link. Facebook pages for Extension and the library were utilized, as was the Extension newsletter. The agent discussed the offering with staff in case they got calls or questions in the office. The forums were described as community chats or community conversations in order to sound casual and less foreboding. Would they get more traction from using different words to describe the event? There were zero registrations for both Health Care and Energy Community Chats.

For the final community conversation scheduled in August, a personal email invite went out to more than 200 community members including Branford Town Council, the Suwannee County Board of County Commissioners, the Live Oak City Council, and the Live Oak Community Redevelopment Agency. It was also sent out through the Suwannee County Chamber of Commerce's blast email. In this advertisement, there was a link for the issue guide so people could look at it prior to signing up.

FCS advisory committee were asked to brainstorm how to improve participation. This resulted in ideas such as providing incentives, holding conversations in-person, presenting to professionals and then encouraging those organizations to facilitate to their groups.

When still no participants signed up and the deadline for registration was looming, marketing professionals at University of Florida and members of the Suwannee County. FCS advisory committee were asked to brainstorm how to improve participation. This activity resulted in ideas such as providing incentives, holding conversations in-person, presenting to professionals (e.g., the Health Department or Suwannee Valley Electric Cooperative), and then encouraging those organizations to facilitate to their groups. Figuring out how to incorporate the benefits to participants was also discussed. Finally, the advisory committee was given information on how to participate. Still no luck—zero registrations.

Conclusion

We are not sure if the virtual platform turned people away, or if it was lack of broadband access, lack of interest in the topics, incorrect marketing, or the agent's remote working environment that caused collaboration networks to become less interconnected and more siloed. Remote work caused the agent to spend more time using asynchronous forms of communication, such as email and message platforms, and less time having conversations in person, by phone, or by video conference. From a marketing standpoint, more attention to providing potential attendees with benefits from attending are needed.

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Woody Biomass in Gainesville

By Martha Monroe

CASE STUDY 10

Speakers each took five minutes to introduce their expertise (forest management, boilers and power facilities, carbon and climate change, and woody biomass economics) and then a facilitator fielded questions.

Audience and Community

Projections of energy use and population growth suggested that the community of Gainesville, Florida, would soon need to consider a new source of energy. The local power plants were burning coal and natural gas, and the city council reconsidering these sources and considering wood from local forestry operations, storm damage, and restoration activities. A county-wide survey revealed that the public was not knowledgeable about using wood for energy, had misconceptions about its benefits and disadvantages, and were interested in participating in the decision-making process for a new power facility (Plate et al., 2010).

CIVIC Activities

A team from the School of Forest Resources and Conservation at the University of Florida organized a series of community meetings using existing organizations (e.g., NAACP, Kiwanis Club) as well as open meetings in the local library to present information from four speakers and answer questions from the audience. Speakers each took five minutes to introduce their expertise (forest management, boilers

A pre and post survey revealed that many respondents felt more knowledgeable after the event and attitudes about using woody biomass changed as well.

and power facilities, carbon and climate change, and woody biomass economics) and then a facilitator fielded questions. Between 4 and 60 people attended each event, which lasted no more than 90 minutes, for a total of 185 participants.

Outcomes

A pre and post survey revealed that many respondents felt more knowledgeable after the event and attitudes about using woody biomass changed as well. On the pre-forum survey, 43% of respondents felt positive about a wood-to-energy proposal. The post-forum survey allowed people to select components of an energy proposal that they would like addressed. Over 80% would feel favorable toward a proposal with the components they indicated. The team summarized both the county survey and the results of the community forums in a report to the city council who eventually approved a bid for a wood-to-energy facility (Monroe et al., 2009).

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