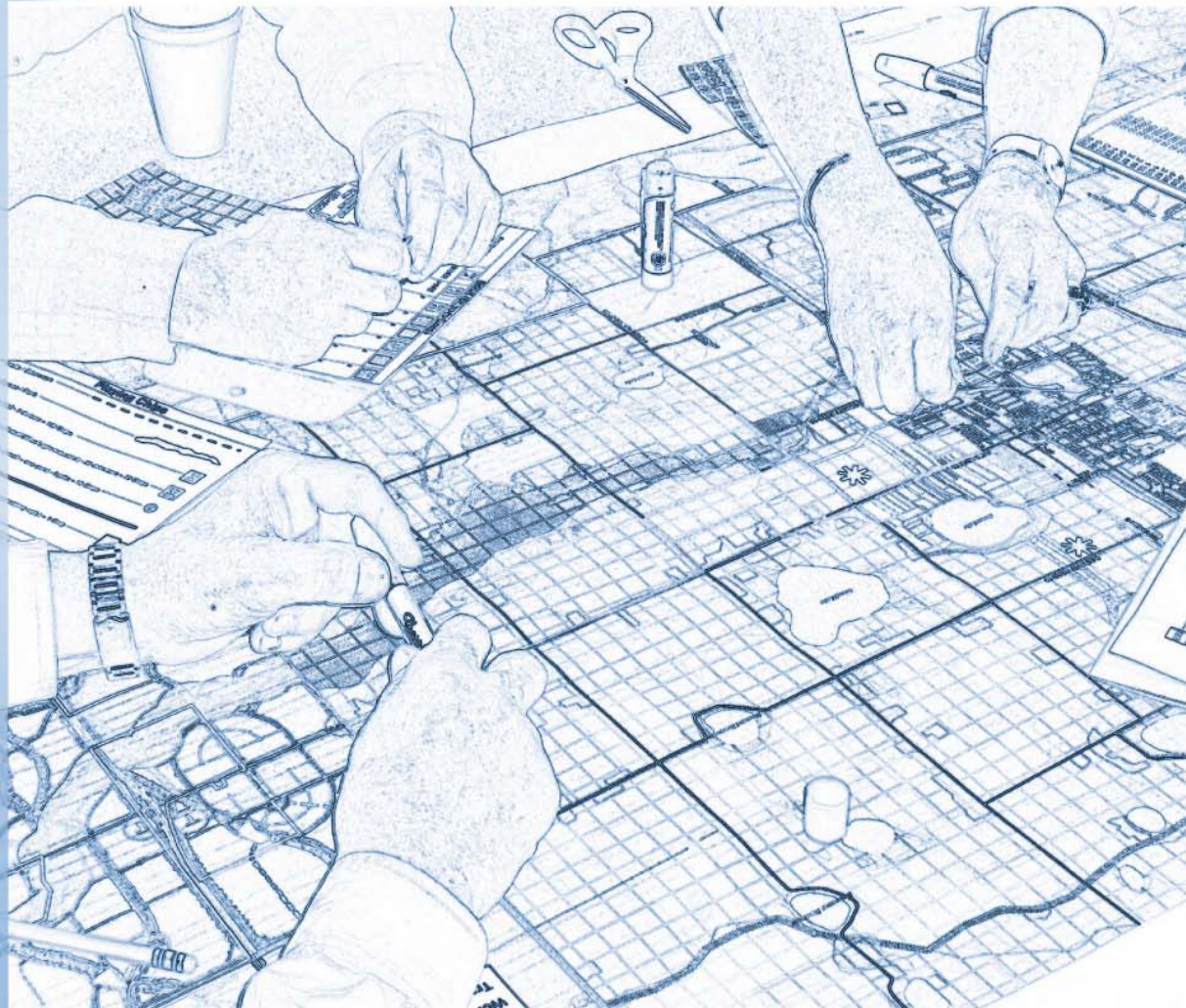


Funding and Fostering Local Democracy:

What philanthropy should know about the emerging field of deliberation and democratic governance



By Matt Leighninger

PRESENTED BY PACE
Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement

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ABOUT PACE

PACE is a learning community of grantmakers and donors committed to strengthening democracy by using the power, influence and resources of philanthropy to open pathways to participation. PACE's mission is to work within the field of philanthropy to inspire interest, understanding and investment in civic engagement, broadly defined.

PACE was founded in 2005 with an intent to bring new philanthropic focus to the issues of civic engagement, democratic renewal and citizen activism. Formerly known as the Grantmakers Forum on Community and National Service, PACE was created to take a broad approach to educating grantmakers about effective civic engagement strategies that strengthen communities and improve our democratic practice.

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About this paper

This guide is intended to give funders a concise overview of an emerging field that increasingly impacts their work. I want to emphasize, however, that because democratic governance is so complex, diffuse, and diverse – and above all, because this work is changing and growing so rapidly – this guide cannot be considered an exhaustive description of the field, and it will be out of date very quickly.

Section III, which lists some of the main organizations and approaches in the field, is liable to attract more questions and objections than any other part of the guide. The organizations listed here were selected for their track records in helping communities engage citizens and achieve tangible changes; this is an art rather than a science, and it would be easy for a researcher surveying the field from a different vantage point to come up with other organizations that were not mentioned. Section III is not meant to be a complete list, and it does not include promising groups and approaches that are simply too new or untested. It also does not encompass the many “home-grown” projects that have sprouted up in communities across the country (see box on p.16). I suspect that these efforts, which are not officially connected to any of the organizations in Section III, may in fact represent the majority of the activity happening in this field.

A number of people were particularly helpful to me in compiling the list for Section III (in addition to giving extremely valuable comments on the guide overall):

Terry Amsler, Collaborative Governance Initiative, Institute for Local Government,
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Sandy Heierbacher, National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation

Carolyn Lukensmeyer, AmericaSpeaks

Martha McCoy, Everyday Democracy

Michael Wood, United Way of the USA

I solicited the descriptions of each organization and its work from the organizations themselves; the comments in the “What Experts Say” boxes were contributed by a panel of academics and expert practitioners who have experience with multiple models and organizations.

There will doubtless be differences of opinion about various aspects of this guide; in the spirit of deliberation, I hope that they provoke interesting and productive discussions. However, the blame for any errors or omissions rests solely with the author.

Matt Leighninger

Deliberative Democracy Consortium

I. How the changes in local democracy affect funders

For funders, the health of local democracy matters a great deal.

One facet of a healthy local democracy is the effectiveness of government and the leadership of elected officials. But a more fundamental aspect – and the more important one to funders – is the broader relationship between citizens and the institutions that provide services, make public decisions, and react to people’s concerns. (In this guide, we will define the term “**citizens**” as referring to all kinds of residents, not just citizens in the legal sense.) The most obvious of these institutions is local government, but foundations, nonprofits, businesses, other government agencies, and faith-based institutions all play important roles in public problem-solving.

When ordinary people are able to find the services they need, affect how those services are provided, partner with local institutions and with each other to solve problems, and participate meaningfully in policymaking, a number of benefits result:

- public policies and services are ‘smarter’ because they are informed by citizens’ knowledge and information;
- policies and services enjoy broader political support;
- citizens contribute their own skills, ideas, energy, and time to improving their neighborhoods and community;
- citizens feel more powerful, more respected, and more a part of their community.

Perhaps the most significant – and overlooked – recent development in the health of local democracy is the shift in citizen expectations, capacities, and attitudes toward government. This change has made it more difficult and more beneficial to establish stronger relationships between local institutions and the people they serve.

Citizens have less time to get involved in their community, but they bring more knowledge and skills to the table. They feel more entitled to the services and protection of government, and yet have less faith that government will be able to deliver on those promises. Through the Internet, people have greater access to information, and are more able to find useful allies and resources. They are increasingly diverse – culturally, linguistically, racially and ethnically. They are ready to get involved at a younger age – and able to continue that involvement longer into retirement and old age. They have more to contribute to the solving of public problems, and less patience for those situations where they feel shut out of the process.

For foundations, this shift presents new challenges and new opportunities. Decisions made by funders are likely to receive more scrutiny and, in some cases, more opposition from citizens. Service recipients are less willing to be treated as clients and more insistent that their ideas and concerns be honored and addressed. Decisions about the siting of shelters, affordable housing, treatment centers, and other buildings may be increasingly difficult and controversial. Questions of how race, ethnicity, and culture affect the way foundations operate may be raised more frequently and more publicly. When local institutions like school systems and local governments are unresponsive to the public,

their budgets and programs are more likely to be threatened and curtailed – creating gaps in public services and greater burdens for foundations that try to make up for these deficits. When local institutions *are* more responsive to the public, foundations may be called upon to play more proactive roles, brokering new partnerships between public, private, and nonprofit organizations.

In response to these pressures, some funders – along with many other kinds of local leaders – are finding new ways of working with citizens. The best of these efforts embody four successful principles:

- They mobilize participation by diverse groups of ordinary citizens (usually in very large numbers, but sometimes in carefully constructed representative samples);
- They involve those citizens in structured, facilitated meetings (usually face-to-face, but increasingly in online settings as well);
- They give people the opportunity to compare values and experiences, and to consider a range of views and policy options (rather than promoting a single cause);
- They result in action and change at a range of levels (policy changes, organizational changes, small-group efforts, individual volunteerism, or all of the above).

In all these areas, an appreciation of the diversity of the community is critical for designing a program that will work for many different kinds of people – young and old, Republican and Democrat, people of different income levels or racial and ethnic groups. Recognizing this diversity is also essential for creating the connections that will bring a variety of people into the process.

Foundations have employed these principles in a variety of ways. In many cases, they initiate or fund public engagement projects that operate along these lines. In other instances, they incorporate these ideas into the way they interact with grantees and other allies in the community.

These efforts are sometimes referred to as examples of “democratic governance” or “deliberative democracy.” They have proliferated dramatically in the last fifteen years, involving hundreds and sometimes thousands of people in addressing issues such as education, land use planning, crime prevention, human relations, environmental protection, housing, economic development, public finance, and public health.

Civic synonyms

In common usage,
“deliberation and democratic governance”
= active citizenship
= deliberative democracy
= citizen involvement
= citizen-centered work
= public engagement
= citizen participation
= public dialogue
= collaborative governance
= public deliberation

Different people define these terms in different ways – and in most cases, the meanings are blurry and overlapping.

The primary reason for this language confusion is that this field developed in different places, in different fields and issue areas, simultaneously.

This guide is intended to help people who work for philanthropic organizations better understand the different approaches to deliberation and democratic governance, decide how they might apply democratic principles in their work, identify potential areas for innovation, and find useful resources for further learning.

II. What do you need to know about this work?

People who are trying to understand the development of this field often ask these key questions:

What do these efforts look like on the ground?

The democratic governance efforts that have emerged in the last fifteen years have taken three main forms:

- Temporary initiatives to help citizens address a major public issue. These have been led by all kinds of organizations, and are usually supported by a broad coalition of groups. Sometimes the sessions are spread over several weeks, sometimes they take place in a single day. Most of these projects aim to engage a diverse critical mass of people, but some of them are designed to assemble a smaller, representative microcosm of the community.
- Efforts to involve citizens in particular policy decisions. These are usually initiated by governments, sometimes with support from other groups. These activities are similar to temporary organizing initiatives in the sense that they are tied to a policy debate that usually subsides once the decision has been made; however, they are different in that the public officials and employees may come back to the community again on the same or other issues in the future – there is some kind of ongoing commitment by government to working more intensively with the public.
- Permanent structures such as neighborhood councils, district councils that represent multiple neighborhoods, school councils, and other standing bodies that are intended to give citizens regular opportunities to solve problems and make decisions over the long term. They usually are structured around monthly face-to-face meetings, though there are many different variations.

Face-to-face meetings are still the most common type of interaction in all three forms, but the use of online formats is increasing dramatically.

Each form has advantages and disadvantages. Many permanent structures do not seem to emphasize recruitment adequately; over time, these neighborhood groups often devolve into small sets of ‘professional citizens’ who don’t necessarily involve or represent their neighbors. The recurring government-led initiatives have the strongest connection to the policymaking process, but they are often narrowly focused on the policy questions of the moment, and do not encourage citizens to devote their own energy and time to solving broader public problems. The temporary projects sometimes have greater difficulty affecting policymaking processes, but probably their greatest shortcoming is simply that they are temporary – even in situations where they’ve been extremely successful and have produced a range of tangible outcomes, they often don’t lead to structured, long-

term changes in the way citizens and governments interact. Practitioners and local leaders are looking for ways to combine the strengths of all these approaches.

How does this work lead to change?

One of the most confusing things about deliberative democracy – and yet one of its greatest strengths – is that it can lead to change in a number of different ways. In many cases, you can see several different kinds of changes happening in the very same project:

- **People changing their attitudes and behavior.** Many evaluations of deliberation projects have shown that the attitudes of participants change as a result of the sessions. People also frequently report that the experience has made them more likely to behave in ways that will make an impact on the issue being discussed.
- **People volunteering their time and talents to help improve their communities.** Some projects and structures are particularly focused on promoting volunteerism; in these situations, organizers try hard to connect participants with volunteer opportunities.
- **Small groups of people taking on projects to improve their communities.** Many deliberative democracy efforts produce citizen committees, task forces, or action groups that try to implement action ideas developed during the sessions. The track record of these kinds of efforts is uneven; without continued support from organizers or decision makers, these groups can quickly become isolated and lose their momentum. However, these kinds of small-group efforts have also produced some of the most dramatic outcomes of these kinds of projects.
- **Organizations (businesses, churches and other faith institutions, universities, schools, nonprofit groups, foundations) undertaking new projects.** Non-governmental groups and organizations already play important roles in local problem-solving. Deliberative democracy efforts sometimes lead these kinds of groups to change their policies or begin new action efforts.
- **Action ideas moving forward because they have been reported extensively by the media.** When newspapers and other media outlets cover deliberative projects in an extensive way – especially over a sustained period of time – they encourage the people involved in implementation efforts and make it more likely that public officials and other decision-makers will use citizen recommendations.
- **Public officials implementing policy changes because they are impressed by the recommendations given by citizens.** Some public officials report that the chance to sit down with citizens, understand why they care about an issue, and find out why they support a particular policy option, will change the way they think about a policy decision.
- **Public officials implementing policy changes because they are backed by a large, diverse number of voters.** In other situations, the support of a large set of voters for a particular policy option seems to be persuasive to public officials.

The members of the Deliberative Democracy working group that met as part of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's "Civic Engagement Learning Year" were particularly critical to the development of this list of pathways to change.

Some of them describe this broad-based support as the ‘political cover’ they need to ‘do what they already thought was the right thing.’

Because these efforts can lead to change in so many different ways, they are inherently unpredictable, difficult to plan, and difficult to evaluate. The first few changes on the list above – shifts in individual behavior, volunteerism, and small-group efforts – are the most likely to occur, least dependent on outside factors, and easiest to document. The policy-related outcomes at the bottom of the list are the most dependent on outside factors; from an evaluator’s perspective, it is often difficult to disentangle them from other developments in the community.

What do all these terms mean?

One of the challenges facing the field is that there are so many terms being used to describe this work. The list includes deliberative democracy, citizen involvement, active citizenship, citizen-centered work, democratic governance, public engagement, citizen participation, dialogue and deliberation, collaborative governance, and public deliberation. Sometimes a particular term will dominate in a particular issue area; for example, most efforts to engage parents and other citizens in school issues are referred to as “public engagement” by educators. The definitions of these terms (and how they might differ from one another) are usually quite vague.

What’s more, all of these terms are rather dry, academic, and unappealing to practitioners, let alone the average citizen. The leaders initiating these projects will often avoid any of these words. When they need a name for their efforts, they usually use titles with simpler words and/or a local hook: “The Decatur Roundtables,” “Neighbors Building Neighborhoods,” or “Lee County Pulling Together.” The field needs shared, plain language to describe why this work is proliferating, and why it matters.

Deliberation in action

Kuna, Idaho – The population of Kuna, which is west of Boise, has grown from 600 to 8,000 in the last decade. In the mid-1990s, the town experienced repeated conflicts over issues of growth, school funding decisions, and tensions between older and younger residents. Several community leaders formed an organization called the Kuna Alliance for a Cohesive Community Team (Kuna ACT) to ease tensions and foster better communication. Kuna ACT, which was funded by small donations from the city council, school system, sheriff’s department, and almost every other organization in town, held a series of small-group deliberations and informational forums on the main issues facing the community. The process quickly gained credibility because it attracted large numbers of people and provided a neutral arena where different views and ideas could be voiced. It has resulted in the establishment of Kuna as hub of a “Birds of Prey” area; improvements made to Kuna’s downtown; and the construction of a high school using input gathered from young people and adults. The community has now used this process, addressing virtually every major decision facing the town, almost thirty times in the last seven years.

Why are there so many models and methods being used?

This is a field that emerged outside the boundaries of most professions or academic disciplines. You don't need a particular academic degree, professional license, or training certificate to be a practitioner or consultant on deliberative democracy. Moreover, the concept of engaging citizens in discussion has a long history and may seem simple enough to execute. The apparently un-technical character of deliberative democracy, and the absence of barriers to non-specialists, may have made the field more entrepreneurial and innovative, but it also meant that aspiring practitioners and consulting groups needed some way of demonstrating their competence and distinctiveness. Many of them established their own (sometimes trademarked) models, and worked hard to demonstrate the value of these processes.

Merely surveying the models, however, may not be a good way to understand the field. Most of these models have more commonalities than differences, and the most widely used processes have been adapted in many different ways, as local leaders (or sometimes the 'owners' of the models) adjusted the approach to fit the specific needs of a community or issue. The field is beginning to get past some of this initial over-emphasis on models; practitioners and consultants are finding other ways to tout the value of their organizations and their approach to democracy.

What are the main networks in the field?

The professional infrastructure for deliberation and democratic governance is growing as fast as the field itself. There are four networks that serve deliberation practitioners and researchers in different ways:

- The Canadian Community on Dialogue and Deliberation (**C2D2**) is a Canadian network that attracts many people from the U.S. and other countries to its biannual conferences. C2D2 convenes practitioners and advocates of related fields, such as intergroup dialogue and conflict resolution, in addition to people who work in deliberation and democratic governance.
- The Deliberative Democracy Consortium (**DDC**) is an alliance of practitioners and researchers representing more than 50 organizations and universities, all of whom share an interest in deliberation and democratic governance. More a think tank than a membership organization, the DDC develops publications, builds connections between different fields, and convenes meetings targeted at particular issues and areas for collaboration.
- The International Association for Public Participation (**IAP2**) is a network of practitioners that has particularly strong representation in the U.S., Canada, and Australia. Many of the members of this association are planners and development specialists who have used democratic principles to involve citizens in land use and development decisions.
- The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (**NCDD**) is a network of over 700 organizations and individuals. Like C2D2, NCDD convenes practitioners in many related fields, such as intergroup dialogue, in addition to people working in deliberation and democratic governance. The NCDD website

offers a comprehensive assortment of over 2,000 tools, best practices, and links related to participatory democracy, public engagement, collaborative action, and conflict resolution at all levels. The NCDD listserv reaches over 10,000 people.

In addition to these networks, a number of professional associations in other fields are playing an increasingly important role in the field. Groups like the National League of Cities, International City/County Managers' Association, NeighborWorks America (formerly the Congressionally chartered Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation), League of Women Voters of the USA, National School Boards Association, National School Public Relations Association, American Association of School Administrators, and Grassroots Grantmakers are trying to help their members use democratic principles and strategies to make progress on the key issues they face in their communities.

How is this work different from advocacy?

One of the defining elements of deliberation projects is that they welcome a range of views; the intent is not to advocate for a particular cause or policy proposal, but to allow citizens to learn about the issue, listen to other perspectives, and decide for themselves what they think. To accomplish this, most deliberative processes rely on impartial facilitators who act as the caretakers of good group process: giving everyone a chance to speak, helping the group set ground rules, managing the allotted time, helping the group use discussion materials, and helping ensure that conflicts are addressed openly and productively. (Some models employ voting of one kind or another to help groups make decisions; others stress the importance of consensus; still others seek to establish common ground or help participants reflect on their beliefs and attitudes in ways that will lead to individual or group action.)

It is true that most of the people initiating these kinds of projects have their own (usually highly informed) views on the issue being addressed. But by engaging citizens in deliberation, they are taking a 'leap of faith' that ordinary people, given adequate information, a range of options, and a setting for productive conversations, will come to better, smarter, more broadly supported conclusions than might otherwise be the case. Local leaders are therefore employing deliberative democracy not only because it is the 'right thing to do' but also because it is a

Deliberation in action

Northeast Ohio – In 2004, funders, public officials, and other leaders in Northeast Ohio (encompassing Cleveland, Akron, Warren, Youngstown, and surrounding communities) formed a coalition to help their region work together to ensure economic growth. Thousands of jobs had disappeared from the region, and there was a lack of collaboration between urban and suburban communities. To reverse these trends, the coalition members felt it was critical to involve large numbers of people in deliberative settings where they could learn more about the issues, weigh different options, and build the political will necessary to effect change. The coalition launched "Voices and Choices," a two-year project to involve citizens in deliberation and action on economic development. A total of 21,000 people took part in online discussions, small face-to-face sessions, and large summits. Over \$30 million was raised to help implement the action ideas that emerged from these discussions.

way of moving the policy agenda forward in situations where traditional advocacy might not work.

What kinds of organizations have initiated these projects?

Many different kinds of groups have initiated or helped to organize deliberative projects. The non-governmental organizations include: neighborhood associations, local education funds, Community Development Corporations, newspapers, YWCAs, community organizing or Fastcommunity building organizations, interfaith groups, chapters of the League of Women Voters, university extension offices, community foundations, youth programs, advocacy groups, and other nonprofits. On the government side, many different kinds of public officials and public employees have led these kinds of efforts, including: mayors, city councils, school superintendents, school boards, zoning and land use boards, planning departments, human relations and human rights commissions, police departments, and federal and state agencies.

How is this different from traditional community organizing?

The line between community organizing and other forms of civic engagement is becoming more and more blurry. This is partly because practices of community organizing have diversified and evolved dramatically over the last fifty years. This dissemination was driven by the experimentation of local organizers, who reacted to changing conditions by modifying various aspects of their approach. The organizers themselves have also diversified, partly because people who were trained as community organizers have gone on to serve as public officials, nonprofit directors, program officers at foundations, and in other roles. These leaders have adapted the skills and philosophies of traditional community organizing to fit the perspectives and needs of their new positions.

Deliberation in action

Kansas City, Kansas – Almost ten years ago, the director of the United Way and the superintendent of schools in Kansas City, Kansas (KCK) hatched an idea to help connect the schools and parents in the city’s Old Northeast neighborhood. They were convinced that parents and other community members were crucial to the success of the schools, and they felt that the schools needed to bring education issues to citizens on their own ‘turf.’ As part of the “KCK Study Circles” program, parents, teachers, and other community members began meeting in many different parts of the neighborhood to talk about how to collaborate on the education of young people. Over the years, the project branched out to other local issues and other parts of the community. Over 2,000 people, including many students, have since been involved in this effort. Many school policy decisions have been affected, including disciplinary and school funding policies. Many parent-led and student-led initiatives have resulted, including after-school mentoring and enrichment programs and an anti-violence campaign. Student test scores have also risen dramatically in the last eight years.

Some of these organizers have reached an important threshold: rather than pressuring public officials to give citizens what they want, they have created arenas where citizens, decision makers, and other stakeholders can sit down and make policy together. The idea that citizens and decision makers should be kept apart from one another was one of the original precepts of community organizing. Organizers tried to build a separate base of power by interviewing citizens, identifying their common interests, and then recruiting them for “house meetings” and other events that would solidify their commitment to a shared cause. Once the people had turned out and the group was formed, the organizers and participants could begin to broadcast their priorities in the corridors of power. From that point, community organizers might confront the decision makers (“us” vs. “them”) or they might work together with public officials (“us” working with “them”), but they still assumed that citizens and decision makers were two very distinct sets of people.

Some community organizers now use a broader definition of “us.” This is partly because organizers are much more likely to negotiate and partner with public officials than in the more confrontational days of the ‘60s and ‘70s. More recently, organizers began to realize that if they structured the sessions well, and offered additional leadership training opportunities for residents, they could change the dynamic between citizens and decision makers and include both sets of people in the discussions. Many of these leaders, who still refer to themselves as community organizers, employ different tactics in different situations: they will use a more traditional, confrontational approach on some issues, and a more deliberative, inclusive approach on others.

What is the role of race in this work?

One of the most influential events in the development of this field was the violent aftermath of the 1992 Rodney King verdict in Los Angeles. The civil disturbances in L.A. made public dialogue seem more critical than ever before. Local leaders across the country realized that, while they might address racism and race relations through their work in areas like economic development or housing discrimination, they also had to deal directly with the race-related perceptions, biases, and beliefs of their constituents. This kind of public outreach had rarely been done before; most communities lacked venues for people of diverse backgrounds to talk to each other about race or any other issue.

Over the following decade, deliberative projects focused on issues of race and racism were organized in scores of communities, involving thousands of people. Typically, these kinds of initiatives lead to changes in local government policies in areas such as hiring, police conduct, and school redistricting, as well as volunteer-driven efforts to celebrate cultural diversity and help young people learn about cultural difference.

The particular dynamics of race as an issue helped introduce some of the defining aspects of this work, including: the value of personal experiences and storytelling, the importance of examining underlying assumptions and beliefs, and the need for joint work by citizens to achieve tangible outcomes. Furthermore, deliberative projects that were focused on issues *other* than race – such as education, crime prevention, and criminal justice – often brought issues of race to the surface, as participants in those discussions shared their

experiences and examined their assumptions. It is fair to say that issues of race and difference helped propel the development of deliberative democracy, and that the growth of deliberative democracy has helped make issues of race and difference more prominent. Progress on race and the evolution of democracy are wrapped up in one another, pulling each other and pushing forward together

How are online technologies being used in this work?

Ten years ago, online pioneers argued that the Internet would replace many kinds of face-to-face meetings, and face-to-face organizers expressed skepticism about the value of online communication. Today, those arguments have been swept aside: face-to-face and online formats for engagement are increasingly being combined and interwoven. For example, most deliberative democracy efforts use web-sites, listservs, and blogs to recruit participants, provide background information, and stimulate discussion. There are also an increasing number of ways to conduct dialogue and deliberation online, in ways that mimic face-to-face interactions. In a few instances, local governments are using online tools that allow citizens and public employees alike to measure and track the outcomes of public engagement processes. This work may soon leave desktop computers behind: in Brazil and South Africa, leaders are developing tools specifically for cell phones and other kinds of mobile technology. In the future, online technologies will likely be used more and more to enrich, complement, and convene deliberative democracy efforts.

What these initiatives typically cost?

The resources required to organize a deliberative democracy initiative can vary wildly from one effort to the next. In most cases, the key resource is staff time: the salary, stipend, or contract of the primary coordinator(s) is typically the largest single line item in the budget. Therefore, the budgets of deliberative projects range from millions of dollars to effectively zero. Many of the “home-grown” efforts described in the box on p. 14 have budgets made up entirely of in-kind costs: the government department or nonprofit organization that has initiated the effort has donated the staff time necessary to coordinate it (in these

Deliberation in action

Fort Myers/Lee County, Florida – “Lee County Pulling Together” was formed in response to a study showing that the city was the most segregated community in the South. Congregants at a local church began talking about the need to get people talking productively about issues of race. In its first year, their project involved over 600 residents in deliberative small-group discussions. Participants generated dozens of action ideas and implemented many of them, including: a multiracial community choir, a Habitat for Humanity house, the clean-up of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and a cookbook called “Lee County Cooking Together,” which includes recipes representing the various different cultural backgrounds of people living in the area. The most notable outcome was the Dunbar Shopping Center, which was proposed by citizens as a way to bring jobs and amenities to a low-income neighborhood. At a concluding action forum, participants in the small-group sessions formed a task force to conduct a market survey, raise funds, and convince local government, an economic development corporation and a supermarket chain to collaborate in building the new facility.

cases, it is common to find many other organizations donating some of their own staff time and resources to the project). There are also some examples of initiatives run entirely on volunteer labor, with no in-kind or cash donations whatsoever (this is particularly true of neighborhood-level projects). In projects which require large numbers of small-group facilitators, the facilitators are typically volunteers.

When no single organization is willing or able to staff the project, the cost of staffing is often the main element of a grant proposal. One highly subjective rule of thumb: in a city of 100,000 people, a project that aims to attract 500-1,000 participants will require one full-time coordinator for a six-month period.

Many of the organizations listed in Section III operate as consultants to local leaders, providing the staffing necessary to build organizing coalitions, create agendas and discussion materials, facilitate the various sessions, manage the technological aspects of the effort, and so on. Many of these groups help communities raise the necessary funds to defray these costs.

Organizations that specialize in “random sample” projects add in one additional cost: small stipends for participants. The intent of these initiatives is to assemble a group of participants that reflect exactly the demographics of the larger population: their method of recruitment is the kind of random dialing used by pollsters, and the stipends are useful for bringing these randomly selected participants into the process.

What are the key values underpinning deliberative democracy?

From the beginning, this field had something of a split personality. Some of the original advocates and practitioners were inspired by idealistic, sometimes utopian visions of how democracy ought to function. Many others were motivated by very immediate, pragmatic reasons: the need to solve a critical public problem or bridge divisions in their community. The pragmatists and idealists were speaking in such different terms that it wasn't always apparent that they were interested in the same things. Furthermore, the field has been segregated by geography (people in different communities doing this work in isolation from each other), and by professional divisions (educators, planners, public officials, community organizers conducting separate public engagement efforts; scholars working on deliberative democracy isolated from their colleagues in other academic disciplines). It has been difficult, therefore, to develop a clear message about the common values underpinning the field.

But whether they articulated these tenets from the beginning or simply followed them by instinct or expediency, the pragmatists and idealists all seem to have coalesced around a shared set of values:

- **Bringing everyone to the table.** It is important to bring a large, diverse set of people together to address public problems and decisions. (In some cases, this may be a smaller but extremely representative group – see the model descriptions below.) This is different from *allowing* citizens to participate; it means reaching

- out proactively, listening to why people might participate, and providing participation opportunities that are aligned with those goals.
- **Giving people equal opportunities to participate.** It is important that everyone have the opportunity to speak; it is also important to begin the conversation with questions and topics that most people can relate to. Most successful projects allow ample time for people to talk about their experiences with the issue being addressed, and why they care about it. Impartial facilitators play a strong role in establishing equality within the group.
 - **Asking people to consider a range of views or options.** It is important to give people adequate, unbiased background information and present the full range of arguments or policy options under consideration. In most cases, some kind of discussion guide is used to help provide this information and structure the discussion.
 - **Affirming the capacity of citizens to make decisions and solve problems.** It is important to honor the time and talents of citizens, and give them a sense that their contributions are valuable and legitimate. Many deliberative democracy efforts encourage citizens to think of themselves as problem-solvers (rather than simply making recommendations on how government should solve problems) and help them coordinate their action efforts.

III. Key organizations and models

It can be very difficult to sort out the main organizations and models in this field. Some groups identify themselves with a particular model (or models), while others do not. Some organizations are now emphasizing their track records rather than the deliberation formats they use (see p. 9) – and yet the name recognition for models like “study circles” or “citizen’s juries” is still higher than for the organizations that helped popularize those formats. Finally, there are some models that have never been associated with any particular group.

Because the models tend to have more similarities than differences, this section is structured as an alphabetical list of key organizations. Models that are associated with a particular organization are listed with that group; ‘stand-alone’ models are listed in the sidebar on p. 26. The organizations listed here were selected for their track records in helping communities engage citizens and achieve tangible changes; **it is not meant to be an exhaustive list**, and it does not include promising groups and approaches that are simply too new or untested. Finally, it does not encompass the many “home-grown” projects that have sprouted up in communities across the country (see box on p. 16).

The descriptions of each organization and its work were solicited from the organizations themselves; the comments in the “What Experts Say” boxes were contributed by a panel of academics and expert practitioners who have experience with multiple models and organizations.

Why this list only tells part of the story

The practice of deliberation and democratic governance is far more widespread and diffuse than this list might suggest. One reason is that there are more practitioner organizations than could fit in this guide. An even more important reason is that many successful projects have not been connected at all with the practitioners and researchers who consider themselves part of the field.

A wide variety of leaders have initiated these kinds of deliberative efforts, including many who work in local government. Some of these leaders are working with, or learning from, the organizations or models listed in these section, while others have launched their own initiatives without any knowledge that there is a ‘field’ of experts out there to consult.

It is difficult to estimate just how many of these ‘home-grown’ efforts have taken place. “In California, hundreds of deliberative participation activities are taking place annually,” says Terry Amsler of the Collaborative Governance Initiative of the League of California Cities. “Most of them appear to be homegrown, either managed by city or county staff or by private consulting firms.” Some of these projects been successful, and some haven’t. The best examples tend to exhibit the successful principles listed on p. 5 – local organizers simply learned them by trial and error, or applied them from previous experiences in working with citizens. One thing seems clear: the demand for this kind of work is outstripping the capacity of the ‘field’ to support it.

difficult policy problems or to develop community plans. Demographically representative groups of 50 – 10,000 are recruited to take part in the meetings. Participants sit in small groups with trained facilitators. Each participant is provided with non-partisan educational materials.

AmericaSpeaks

Description: AmericaSpeaks is a nonprofit organization with the mission of providing citizens with a greater voice on the most important issues that impact their lives. Over the past 13 years, we have engaged more than 135,000 citizens on important issues, like the recovery of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, health care reform in California, economic development in Northeast Ohio, and creating the municipal budget in Washington, DC.

AmericaSpeaks’ 21st Century Town Meetings engage groups of 50 – 10,000 citizens at a time to shape policymaking and planning. We seek to reflect the actual demographic diversity of the community in our meetings by developing highly customized recruitment strategies that combine grassroots organizing, organizational partnerships, and sophisticated media campaigns.

Primary models:

21st Century Town Meeting® – The 21st Century Town Meeting® integrates authentic face-to-face deliberation with “state of the art” technology to enable very large, diverse groups of citizens to identify collective priorities on

The ideas generated through small group discussions are submitted to a team of analysts through laptop computers on each table. Participants can then prioritize the strongest themes that came from the entire group through wireless polling keypads. The results of the polls are displayed instantly on large screens at the front of the room.

In some cases, AmericaSpeaks uses satellite videoconferencing or webcasting to link together multiple meeting sites to create state-wide or nation-wide discussions.

21st Century Summit – 21st Century Summits convene large groups of stakeholders to identify shared priorities. Summits integrate authentic face-to-face deliberation with “state of the art” technology to ensure that everyone is heard and that the group can make collective decisions. Stakeholder groups of 50 – 10,000 are recruited to take part in the meetings. Participants sit in small groups with trained facilitators. Each participant is provided with non-partisan educational materials. Keypad polling and groupware computers (described above) support the deliberations.

Community Conversations – Community Conversations convene thousands of citizens in self-facilitated deliberations to contribute their views to community priority setting processes. A discussion leader kit provides citizens with the tools they need to convene and facilitate the conversations. A video-recorded facilitator helps to lead the discussion, and the results of the forums are submitted over the Internet. Participants are provided with tools to recruit their friends and neighbors, orchestrate the meeting logistics, and facilitate the discussion itself.

Online Dialogue – AmericaSpeaks regularly partners with online experts to convene deliberations online. These asynchronous virtual events enable large groups to learn about an issue and help set public priorities. Diverse groups of participants are recruited to the online homepage, where they create descriptive profiles. In small groups, participants respond to questions, read and rate the responses of others, and vote on priorities.

What the experts say

“The 21st Century Town Meeting is an incredible event, which is important when seeking media publicity and attention. Through the individual keypads and the table-top computers, participants truly feel that they are a part of an important effort to inform decision-makers. Because it usually occurs during a day, one must be cautious about employing this methodology on complex policy issues. Participants can feel they are ‘drinking from a fire hose,’ when asked to both learn about and offer opinions on intricate policy concerns.”

– Pete Peterson, Executive Director, Common Sense California

Recruitment strategies: Early in a process, AmericaSpeaks works with its local partners to set specific demographic targets. We then develop a pre-registration process that enables us to track our progress at reaching these targets, and to adjust our strategy as needed to recruit those groups who are underrepresented.

In some cases, we use recruitment methodologies that begin with a randomly selected group of citizens. Generally, this method is employed to address significant concerns

about the threat of manipulation by advocacy groups on a given issue. Through our 21st Century Summits, AmericaSpeaks also convenes diverse stakeholder groups to identify collective priorities.

How the organization works: Typically, AmericaSpeaks works with local partners who are either decision-makers on a policy or playing an important mediating or convening role in the decision-making process. In some cases, AmericaSpeaks serves as a general contractor, serving as the lead on all aspects of a citizen engagement process. In other cases, AmericaSpeaks performs specific roles, like outreach, content framing, development of discussion materials, facilitation, and project management.

What funders say: “AmericaSpeaks provides a way for people to feel that they can plug back in on the issues that matter and have their voices heard. I think that’s a concept that’s really important – whether you’re working on health, whether you’re working on education – people need to feel connected to the leaders who are making decisions, and this is a terrific way to do that.”

– Crystal Hayling, Blue Shield of California Foundation

The organization in action: Owensboro, Kentucky

About 650 residents of Owensboro-Daviess County, KY participated in a 21st Century Town Meeting® in November 2007, the area’s largest-ever public meeting. *We the*

People brought together demographically diverse citizens to discuss their region's education, environment, health care, economic development and local government. Participants worked together in small facilitated groups, reviewing challenges and opportunities. Then, using keypad polling and groupware computers, room-wide themes and collective priorities were identified. Discussions deliberately featured tradeoffs to ensure the resulting recommendations were realistic.

This 21st Century Town Meeting was the starting line for the community’s long-term citizen engagement strategy.

Priorities established during the meeting became the mandate of five new citizen working groups. A new Leadership Council was also formed, whose mission is to champion the implementation of the priorities affirmed at the meeting. Much progress has been made in the one year since the meeting was held. For example, the education working group has introduced new programs and materials encouraging parental and community involvement in schools. The downtown redevelopment group has successfully worked with local councils to begin a

What the experts say

“Ten years ago, the maximum number of people we could engage in simultaneous deliberation was measured in the low hundreds. Today, thanks to the technology pioneered in 21st Century Town Meetings, the number is in the thousands. This model combines the benefits of intimate small-group dialogue with the statistical significance of large groups of participants. The instantaneous results of electronic voting create a great energizing atmosphere amongst participants.”

– Edward Andersson, Head of Practice, Involve (UK)

comprehensive downtown master plan, including the hiring of an executive director. The government working group is meeting with city and county governments to encourage their collaboration in order to improve services, streamline operations and stretch tax dollars.

For more information: www.americaspeaks.org or 202-775-3939.

Ascentum

Description: Ascentum fosters local democracy by helping entire communities come together to work through tough issues and answer questions that matter to them. Using a complementary mix of online and face-to-face tools, Ascentum allows foundations to foster dialogue across whole communities, including a broad range of interested and affected citizens, as well as local stakeholders. Ascentum’s unique process is supported by its innovative, *dialoguecircles.com* platform – a suite of face-to-face and online tools to support deliberative democracy.

Primary models:

Face-to-face dialogues – Ascentum’s dialogues are custom-designed to bring interested and affected citizens and groups together to share their stories and experiences, learn about the issues, and explore common ground, solutions, or priorities together. Working individually with voting keypad technologies, or together in self-moderated small-group dialogues, participants use specially-built “conversation guides” to give decision-makers or funders key insights on community values and priorities. Experienced facilitators support participant-led dialogue by ensuring that everyone has opportunity to contribute, and by taking detailed records of the dialogue to analyze and report on strategic findings and outcomes.

Online dialogues – Ascentum’s online dialogues replicate a face-face experience, and usually take place over a 2-3 week period. With the active support of a moderator, users post questions, comments and ideas on a specially-built website. Participants can add “body language” to their posts

What the experts say

“Compared to conventional public hearings or forums, the Deliberative Poll and 21st Century Town Meeting bring together a remarkably large and diverse group of participants and produce a clear snapshot of what people think after a bit of reflection and discussion. When citizens need more time to work through complex issues and hope to develop a joint recommendation, one should employ a process like the week-long Citizens Jury, which uses a smaller sample of participants but provides for more in-depth analysis and deliberation. When the stakes are even higher, one might turn to the Citizen Assembly, which brings together a large body of citizens for meetings held over a period of months to produce a robust consensus on a concrete policy proposal suitable for public ratification.”

– John Gastil, Professor,
Dept. of Communication,
University of Washington

using emoticons (☺) and share links to bring new ideas, knowledge, or perspectives into the conversation. Moderators can provide regular summary postings to regroup discussion, and stay in touch with participants through email or “whisper” posts. By participating in an Ascentum online dialogue, participants can set priorities, vote on ballots and decide on next steps for community change. Online dialogues can support face-to-face processes by providing a venue for participants to contribute in a flexible “my time” format that fits into different schedules.

Recruitment strategies: Ascentum’s strategy is custom-designed for each unique town, issue or population, but always seeks to bring the right voices into the discussion. Typically, key stakeholders and perspectives engaged right at the start, through steering or governing groups, to ensure that community members themselves are at the center of the initiative.

Aside from the community as a whole, Ascentum designs its recruitment approach by asking strategic questions like: “Who is interested in the issue?” “Who is affected by the issue?” “Who can affect the process or outcome?” And, “Who can help us make sure the whole community is involved?”

To reach and involve the broader community, Ascentum uses creative, high-impact techniques to brand and promote participation, from online viral messaging to “on the ground” partnerships with local leaders and respected community groups.

How the organization works: Ascentum is a small, independent, for-profit consulting firm, bringing together leading practitioners who share a passion for involving communities in decisions that matter to them.

The company works in partnership with its clients, to bring together perspective and expertise, and ensure that clients end projects having reached and surpassed their goals – whether these are to inform municipal decision-making, foster greater civic participation, or strengthen local democracy (or all of these).

The organization in action: Mental health and addiction in Canada

Ascentum worked with the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology to consult with Canadians on the current and future state of mental health, mental illness, and addiction in Canada. It was the Committee Chair’s belief that online consultations were essential on this issue for two critical reasons. First, they needed to get beyond the usual stakeholders to hear from individuals directly. Second, with such a sensitive issue, there was a value to the anonymity that the Internet could afford. If people were sharing personal stories and ideas for fixing the system, they should be able to contribute in a more discrete or private means.

Between April and June 2005, over 1,255 substantive contributions were made through the Committee’s e-consultation website. This included 460 unique ideas and 795 deliberative workbooks that took more than 30 minutes on average to complete.

The diversity of participants and the quality of input were unprecedented. The process gave the final report a rich new source of data to draw upon, and provided additional legitimacy to the findings and recommendations. Ultimately, the report helped in the establishment of a new Mental Health Commission of Canada, which is charged with developing a coordinated national strategy for mental health.

For more information: www.ascentum.ca or 613-761-7306.

The Center for Deliberative Democracy

Description: The CDD, housed in the Department of Communication at Stanford University, is devoted to research about democracy and public opinion obtained through Deliberative Polling®. Numerous Deliberative Polls have been conducted in the US and abroad. We have tackled a variety of issues, including healthcare, education, national security, housing, the economy, and candidate selection. In October 2007, the CDD and its European collaborators conducted the first European-wide Deliberative Poll with more than 360 randomly selected citizens from all 27 member states with discussions conducted in 23 languages. In February 2008, we helped supervise and plan the third Deliberative Poll in Zeguo Township, Wenling City, China. In this project, the entire budget of the town was the subject of the deliberations, and the local People’s Congress observed the process in order to consider adjustments in the budget based on the results of the DP. Deliberative Polls have been conducted in the US, Britain, Australia, Denmark, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, China, Northern Ireland and other countries.

Primary model:

Deliberative Polling® – Deliberative Polling® is an attempt to use public opinion research in a new and constructive way. A random, representative sample is first polled on the targeted issues. After this baseline poll, members of the sample are invited to gather at a single place in order to discuss the issues. Carefully balanced briefing materials are sent to the participants and are also made publicly available. The participants engage in dialogue with competing experts and political leaders based on questions they develop in small group discussions with trained moderators. During these discussions, participants are not asked to reach any consensus, recommendations, or decisions. Participants are asked only to deliberate on the topics at hand. After the deliberations, the sample is again asked the original questions. The resulting changes in opinion represent the conclusions the public would reach, if people had the opportunity to become more informed and more engaged by the issues.

What the experts say

“Deliberative polls provide unique insight on the desires of the public. The conversations during the gatherings and the opinions and levels of knowledge expressed in the post-event poll provide a perspective of public opinion that usefully complements the results from other mass sample surveys. It’s helpful to know what opinion looks like when people have a chance to become informed, question experts, and talk with other citizens.”

– Katherine Cramer Walsh, Associate Professor, Dept. of Political Science, University of Wisconsin

Deliberative polls are conducted face-to-face and online. Face-to-face Deliberative Polls gather a microcosm of participants for one to three days, usually over a weekend. Online Deliberative Polls use voice-only chat software. Scientific samples of participants engage in a one-hour small-group discussion every week for five to six consecutive weeks. Questions developed in small-group discussions are sent to competing experts and political leaders for immediate responses. In all the online projects, some of the sample is randomly assigned to a control group condition in which they do not deliberate.

Recruitment strategies: Organizers of Deliberative Polls recruit participants through scientific random sampling and participants are contacted through random digit dialing, online and/or in-person. In general, organizers will work with polling firms, social science research centers at universities and educational institutions, and similar organizations.

How the organization works: The CDD works with a variety of partners to develop Deliberative Polling projects. The CDD involvement can range from just offering technical advice to undertaking most or all aspects of the process. The stages include development of briefing materials, questionnaires, consultation with stakeholder advisory committees, sample recruitment, the logistics of a face-to-face or online Deliberative Poll, data collection and analysis as well as media relations. In the US, the CDD has worked extensively with “By the People,” a project organized by MacNeil/Lehrer Productions. Through By the People, the CDD has partnered with many local community organizations and universities to develop, organize, and publicize projects with numerous local and national PBS stations.

What the experts say

“Deliberative Polling provides a forum for participants to both thoroughly examine and deliberate on a policy issue. The involvement of ‘experts’ in the plenary sessions is empowering to participants, who can learn from and question actual decision-makers. Their random sampling also grounds the process in a certain social scientific legitimacy. Still, questions remain regarding the criteria one uses to define ‘statistically representative,’ and there can be a drop-off between those who initially qualify for participation in a Deliberative Poll and those who show up, indicating a certain predisposition to passion around an issue.”

– Pete Peterson, Executive Director,
Common Sense California

What funders say: “The W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s Civic Engagement Learning Year has been enriched by the innovative work and voice of The Center for Deliberative Democracy as they advance the field of civic engagement.”

– Anne Mosle, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The organization in action: Energy issues in Texas

Beginning in 1996, the research team now at the Center for Deliberative Democracy (Stanford University) conducted a series of Deliberative Polls (DPs) in Texas on energy issues. All eight of the regulated electric utilities in the state sponsored DPs with the

cooperation of the Texas Public Utility Commission. Stakeholder Advisory Groups representing consumer groups, environmental groups, advocates of low income customers, and the large customers approved the briefing materials, the questionnaires and the agendas for the weekend DPs. All eight of the DPs were broadcast on local television. Averaging over eight DPs, the percentage willing to pay more on its monthly utility bill to support renewable energy went from 52 to 84 per cent. These results were incorporated into “Integrated Resource Plans” that led to increasingly large investments in wind power and helped establish the Renewable Energy Portfolio later approved by the legislature. Before the DPs, Texas had the lowest usage of wind power on a percentage basis of any state in the US. The DP results led directly to Texas becoming the leading state in the US in wind power, surpassing California in 2007. Since the Texas projects, the initiative has continued with similar results in Nebraska, Vermont and Nova Scotia.

For more information: <http://cdd.stanford.edu> or 650-723-2260.

Deliberative Democracy Project

Description: The key objective of the Deliberative Democracy Project is to put public problems in the hands of community members. By working through the problem in a deliberative way, citizens can consider alternatives, weigh their advantages and disadvantages, and come to an informed judgment about which course they favor. This allows them to move beyond the exaggerated rhetoric and simple solutions that often characterizes public discourse about policy problems. The Deliberative Democracy Project was formed over a decade ago at the University of Oregon in the Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management. Ed Weeks, its founder and director, retired in 2008, and the DDP has transitioned into a small, for-profit consultancy.

Overall approach: DDP community dialogues make simultaneous use of two broad strategies. The first is to make available a “pencil and paper” exercise that allows a participant to work through a problem, come to an informed judgment about what policies they would favor, and to then express that preference. Participants are provided with substantial background information, a realistic representation of the problem, and an opportunity to invent or construct a solution. These worksheets are typically sent out to a random sample of households in the community.

The complementary strategy is to convene community workshops where participants are assigned (randomly) to small work groups where they are given the opportunity to work through the problem together and to jointly come to a preferred solution. The exercise is sufficiently structured to make good use of the participant’s time, allows them to engage in informed deliberation, and limits the influence of aggressive personalities.

For the community workshop, the role of the volunteer facilitator is to be a steward to the structured exercise. Depending upon the subject matter and exercise, expert resource persons are available to consult with the workgroup. The workshop deliberative exercises are carefully designed and rigorously pretested and revised.

The workshop materials are the same materials that are sent out to all community members. The exercise is typically printed on newsprint, is tabloid sized, and is 15-25 pages long. The tabloid introduces the project and provides a substantial amount of background information. The objective is to offer the participants the same sort of information that the political decision-makers would have as they confront the issue. The written material must be complete, accurate, and free of any advocacy. It must be written in a style that would be understood by a lay audience, and it must be sufficiently compelling to be of interest to the ordinary, disinterested community member.

Recruitment strategies: Community dialogues are, as the name suggests, directed at bringing large numbers of participants into the discussion. We attempt to provide a practical opportunity for each member of the community to participate. We also make special attempts to engage a demographically representative cross-section of the community. We report the results for these groups separately: the “self-selected” participants who respond to general recruitment efforts and the participants who were recruited as part of a random sample.

We use an array of recruitment strategies: 1) news media coverage; 2) a speakers bureau; 3) print and broadcast public service announcements and paid advertisements; 4) posters at public buildings and other well-traveled public locations; 5) activating community leaders, especially among population groups with historically low rates of participation; 6) individually addressed letters (on appropriate letterhead and over an appropriate signature) to a randomly selected sample of community members.

How the organization works: The preferred approach to working with an organization is: 1) an informal diagnosis phase to investigate whether a community dialogue would likely be useful and/or feasible; 2) work with staff to develop a tentative plan for the dialogue along with likely staffing and budget requirements; 3) recruit (if possible) implementing partners from local colleges or universities; 4) develop an internal work team; 5) consult as needed on the preparation of materials, participant recruitment, and other design details; 6) assist, as desired, with report preparation and presentation.

The organization in action: Eugene, Oregon

The City of Eugene first used community dialogues to solve a structural budget problem: the gap between revenues and costs was widening, and the community had resisted measures to reduce services or increase taxes. The process produced a community-supported plan for a balanced budget which included both additional revenues and service changes. This plan (including 61 specific actions) provided a blueprint for a sustainable budget over the next decade.

Later Eugene experienced another intense community dispute, this time on growth management and urban development. Entrenched interests with hardened positions had effectively paralyzed city action in a variety of areas. City Council convened a community dialogue that produced 18 broad goals that have been implemented through

49 specific actions. Ten years later, the goals and policies derived from this dialogue continue to guide development.

Most recently, the Eugene School District confronted a set of challenges that were rooted in shifting enrollment patterns, increasing student diversity, and an emerging pattern of de facto economic segregation. The district used a community dialogue to allow citizens to work through these issues, consider a range of options, and identify the course they would have the district pursue. The district then embraced the results of the dialogue as a guide in setting future policy.

For more information: www.uoregon.edu/~ddp/ or 541-346-3892.

E-Democracy.Org

Description: Launched as the world’s first election information website in 1994, today E-Democracy.Org focuses on hosting local online Issues Forums. We provide a service-club-like infrastructure for local volunteers (and partners) using a shared, low-cost technology base and, more importantly, a universal set of civility rules and facilitation guides that help communities succeed with online engagement.

Primary model:

Issues Forum – E-Democracy.Org hosts local online townhalls called Issues Forums. E-Democracy.Org requires 100 participants before a forum is officially opened. This ensures a critical mass of participation and a broader sense of community ownership from the beginning.

Unlike typical online forums that lack direction, civility, or accountability, Issues Forums are facilitated, participants use real names, and they focus on specifically local public issues. Unlike a typical meeting, they are ongoing, multi-topic, and convenient – this is ‘anytime, anywhere’ local public engagement. Issues Forums in the E-Democracy.Org network currently reach 15 communities in three countries.

What the experts say

“E-Democracy is the go-to place for online deliberative conversations. Their web tools are first-rate, and better yet, they’re pretty inexpensive too.”

– David Ryfe, Associate Professor,
Reynolds School of Journalism,
University of Nevada-Reno

Citizens use Issues Forums to become informed on local issues and connect with others – including people with whom they often disagree. With its low cost and pragmatic focus on agenda-setting, the model represents a very high degree of public engagement per unit of cost. We use highly accessible open source technology to allow publishing and reading via e-mail or the web. Participants may also share pictures and videos related to local issues.

Recruitment strategies: Supported by a non-partisan volunteer model, we seek to launch Issues Forums within the heart of real power based on socially inclusive outreach. To ensure socially inclusive recruitment in the initial launch process, we encourage local volunteers (or contractors when funding is available) to sign people up on paper at diverse community events. Setting the right expectations and framework is essential to attracting participation.

Other models

There are some commonly used deliberative formats that are not ‘owned’ by a particular organization. They include:

Future Search, is a collaborative planning process that has been used in communities, within organizations, and in many other settings. It can involve 60 to 80 people in one room, or hundreds of people in parallel rooms, meeting for 16 hours spread over three days. Participants begin by creating timelines to illustrate the history of the issue or topic being addressed, and relevant personal experiences they have had. They may also spend part of the first day mapping out key trends that affect the issue. On the second day, participants describe what they are currently doing about the issue, develop future scenarios that illustrate their hopes and goals, and look for common ground between different approaches and scenarios. The focus of the third day is on confirming that common ground and forming action plans and teams. For more information, see www.futuresearch.net. Sandy Heierbacher of the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation says that “Future Search, which allows the entire group to be in dialogue when necessary, is especially useful in uncertain, fast-changing situations when it is important that everyone have the same large picture in order to act responsibly.”

Open Space Technology, developed by Harrison Owen in the 1980s, is a way for groups of people to self-organize their meetings. A large space is needed with a blank wall, smaller meeting rooms, flip charts, a place to post session times and places, and computers to record. Participants are asked if they wish to initiate a discussion, and if so to write it down and announce it to the group. They select one of the pre-established times and places and post their proposed workshop on wall. Participants then put together their personal schedule for the conference. The first meetings begin immediately. The person who has posted the offering generally takes responsibility for initiating the session. If a session doesn’t seem to be interesting or productive, participants simply move to another one (the “Law of Two Feet”). There is a final plenary session where participants can give comments, and often a report that summarizes the main action ideas and responsibilities. For more, see www.openspaceworld.org. “Open Space events place the responsibility for the agenda firmly in the hands of the participants making them both creative and energizing,” says Edward Andersson of Involve. “However, they are not for control freaks.”

WorldCafé, in which people move from group to group exploring questions related to a particular issue. In this format, 4 or 5 people sit at a small Café-style table. They participate in progressive rounds of conversation of approximately 30 minutes each, using a set of discussion questions. Members are encouraged to write or draw key ideas on their tablecloths or large ‘post-it’ notes. After the initial round, one person remains at the table as the ‘host’ while the others move to new tables. The host shares the main themes with the new group and encourages guests to link ideas from their previous conversations, listening carefully and building on others’ contributions. After each session, key insights can be written onto post-it notes – one idea per post-it. At the conclusion, groups can cluster the ideas into themes to be used for planning the next steps. Finally, there is a whole-group conversation, sharing discoveries and insights, patterns and possibilities for action. For more, see www.theworldcafe.com.

In addition to in-person recruitment, our power mapping process helps communities identify leaders – be they elected officials, civil servants, local journalists, or activist citizens – for “make the forum matter” recruitment. “Average” much less disengaged citizens will not waste their time sharing their views if it won’t make a difference. We seed recruitment through aggressive “tell a friend” recruitment and by preparing tailored e-mail announcements/newsletter text for distribution lists hosted by area organizations.

Retention is as important as recruitment. In addition to civility and accountability generated by real names, forum posters may only post twice a day, which greatly diversifies participation and limits domination and “flamewars” typical of online news and blog comments, and other political forums online. By limiting the worst aspects of online exchange, further growth and recruitment occurs organically. Our largest and oldest forum (established in 1998) in Minneapolis has 1,000 registered members and many more unregistered visitors.

How the organization works: Effective outreach, be it in-kind or funded, represents the main start-up cost for an Issue Forum. Some Issues Forums are all-volunteer start-ups; others are launched with special assistance ranging from \$5,000 to \$30,000 depending upon initial local in-kind support. A nonprofit organization, E-Democracy.Org provides training and assistance where funding is available. We are currently launching funded Issues Forums in three rural communities, including a majority Native American area, and two neighborhood-level Issues Forums in low-income, higher immigrant population areas in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Groups are also free to use and adapt our processes to their own purpose.

In addition to ongoing Issues Forums, E-Democracy.Org does provide special online event facilitation, including hosting of online candidate debates. Professionally run online events are a much more expensive proposition and require significant online participant recruitment if the host organization does not already have a base of online participants.

What funders say: “Steven Clift and E-Democracy.Org have been Blandin Foundation’s ‘secret sauce’ partner to help us move our convening work from good to great. With vision, imagination, impressive technical know-how, peerless networks, and rock solid reliability, our partnership with E-Democracy.Org has inspired and enabled the Foundation’s Public Policy and Engagement program to take our convening work to a whole new level of public participation and impact. One specific example is the online gubernatorial candidate debate that e-democracy organized to support a statewide broadband conference we sponsored that helped connect citizens and candidates in fresh and substantive ways.”

– Bernadine Joselyn, Blandin Foundation

The organization in action: Minneapolis, Minnesota

E-democracy forums have become a vibrant part of the local scene in the Twin Cities. Most commonly, the forums have generated neighborhood-level actions like efforts to start community gardens, support local businesses, or prevent crime. But they sometimes affect policy as well: on one occasion, an elected Minneapolis Park Board member sent a post to the Minneapolis e-democracy forum asking residents what they thought about the Board's decision to let Dairy Queen run the concessions at Lake Harriet. "Bad ice cream," was a common response. "Hey you white liberals, give us our soft serve," said another resident. "Don't commercialize the public parks." "If the park concessions are losing money, why not [bring in DQ]?" The exchange exploded into the Metro section of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* the next day (the newspaper didn't have a reporter assigned to the board meeting, due to cutbacks) and at the next Park Board meeting 200 people packed the room. Faced with more resistance than support for the proposal, the board reversed their previous decision.

For more information: www.e-democracy.org/ or 612-246-4594.

Everyday Democracy

Description: Everyday Democracy (formerly the Study Circles Resource Center) helps local communities find ways for all kinds of people to think, talk and work together to solve problems. We help them pay particular attention to how racism and ethnic differences affect the problems they address. Since our founding in 1989, we have worked with more than 550 communities across the United States on issues including racial equity, poverty, diversity, immigration, police-community relations, education, neighborhoods, youth issues, and growth and sprawl. Everyday Democracy is the primary project of The Paul J. Aicher Foundation, a national, nonpartisan, nonprofit operating foundation.

Overall approach: Our approach to community change does not prescribe a particular model, but a set of principles that include community-based organizing for large-scale, diverse participation; small-group, diverse deliberative dialogue across a community (sometimes called study circles); and ongoing support for collaborative action on community priorities. We have found that this combination of organizing, dialogue and collaborative action can lead to meaningful, long-term change.

At the center of an effective effort are many small dialogue groups that meet several times, over a period of weeks, to explore the same issue. These small-group dialogues are guided by trained peer facilitators, from diverse backgrounds, who manage the discussion and make room for all voices. The dialogues rely on ground rules that are created by the group. Typically, the small-group work is launched and energized at a large community-wide event, and wraps up with another large gathering to galvanize the public for action.

Nonpartisan, accessible discussion materials provide a framework for the conversation on any particular public issue. The first session is often devoted to personal stories and

concerns, with subsequent sessions exploring the nature of the issue. Participants examine the issue from many points of view, consider many possible approaches, and ultimately, develop ideas for action and change.

In many cases, dialogue-to-change efforts have led to:

- Changes in the public attitudes and behavior of individuals;
- New community networks and collaboration among individuals, organizations, and sectors, and between the public and community institutions;
- Increased community capacity for problem solving and democratic governance; and
- Changes in public policy and institutions.

Recruitment strategies: Broad, inclusive recruiting to ensure large-scale, diverse participation is essential in every aspect of a public dialogue-to-change program – from creating a steering group, to recruiting participants, to recruiting and training facilitators, to establishing and supporting action groups. The best way to engage significant numbers of people from every sector of the community is to create a diverse working group of community leaders who will plan and organize the effort. We have found that creating an explicit link between the dialogue process and measurable community change is vital to successful organizing.

How the organization works: We focus our assistance where people of different backgrounds and views are committed to working together to solve public problems. Learning along with communities, we work to refine the basic elements of a dialogue-to-change process (organizing, deliberative dialogue, and action implementation), developing tools each community can adapt to fit its needs. We work at the neighborhood level, and in cities, towns, regions and states. And we help people focus on ways that racism and ethnic difference affect the problems they address.

What the experts say

“Everyday Democracy’s model is an excellent approach for communities who seek to address contentious public problems. All too often the most difficult problems facing our communities are ones in which opinions about the issue are steeped in perspectives that have not had the benefit of listening to the other side. The Dialogue-to-Change meetings provide a rare opportunity for people of all walks of life – ordinary citizens, immigrants, public officials, law enforcement officials, etc. from a variety of backgrounds – to sit down in a circle together and hear others’ stories. The format encourages people to listen, and through this listening people come to understand the nature and depth of the challenges they face. The format also allows people to build relationships with one another without glossing over the differences and tensions that have divided them for long periods of time. The ‘Dialogue-to-Change’ label is important: the model enables people to put the understanding and the relationships they have built through the dialogue to work to change their community.”

– Katherine Cramer Walsh, Associate Professor, Dept. of Political Science, University of Wisconsin

We encourage communities to use and adapt the guides we have created on a number of critical issues, or to create their own. Our newly created Issue Guide Exchange is a free, online resource available for people to share, create, and discuss dialogue materials.

In some cases, we are able to provide in-depth, ongoing assistance via phone, e-mail, and field visits. We consider a number of factors when deciding which communities will receive this customized assistance. Most of our assistance takes the form of in-kind “community assistance grants.” That is, we do not charge communities for our assistance, but we ask them to leverage the value of our grant as they develop ways to sustain their work. We have a diverse pool of skilled senior associates, located across the country, who often provide facilitator training (and train local trainers). They are also available to provide a full range of assistance and training, on a fee-for-service basis.

What funders say: “Everyday Democracy is the best! They helped the Northwest Area Foundation gear up in record time to engage hundreds of small rural and reservation communities in community-wide exploration and action on the issue of poverty. Even in tiny communities, people have forgotten the skills of simple, deep conversation about things that matter. Everyday Democracy gives communities the processes and support to move from conversation to meaningful action.

– Jean Burkhardt, former program lead, Northwest Area Foundation

The organization in action: Portsmouth, New Hampshire

For the last decade, Portsmouth, has been adapting the flexible tools, resources, and advice provided by Everyday Democracy, helping residents and public officials to deliberate and prioritize action ideas for change. Portsmouth Listens, a citizen group that champions a deliberative approach, has been the catalyst for these efforts. In 1999, dialogues with students and parents led to new school policies and a decline in bullying in the middle school. In 2002, the police department, school district, and local NAACP responded to allegations of police profiling by sponsoring dialogues on racism. Also that year, Portsmouth Listens organized public conversations for input on the city’s master plan. The plan now reflects residents’ values; city leaders use it to hold themselves accountable, and residents are collaborating with the city on environmental projects. The *Portsmouth Herald* credited the public for “refocusing city leaders.” Most recently, Portsmouth Listens partnered with the city council and school board to tackle a controversial local question: whether to renovate a 75-year-old, downtown middle school

or build a new one on a plot of open ground along a tree-lined creek. Participants spent 1,400 hours combing documents and meeting to explore options before recommending the existing school be rehabilitated; this decision has been upheld by local decision-makers.

For more information: www.everyday-democracy.org or 860-928-2616.

What the experts say

“The people at Everyday Democracy have been helping communities do public work as long as anybody. They are extremely knowledgeable, and, unlike many other organizations, their model takes communities end-to-end, from organizing to talking to action steps.”

– David Ryfe, Associate Professor,
Reynolds School of Journalism,
University of Nevada-Reno

The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation

Description: For more than 20 years, the Harwood Institute has been researching, developing, and innovating practical approaches for changing the negative conditions in society which often prevent neighborhoods and communities from making progress. We have recently shifted our work to focus on diffusing and sharing our ideas, tools, and frameworks so that people can make them their own, and accelerate their efforts to create hope and change.

Overall approach: The Harwood Institute equips leaders and organizations with the principles of authentic engagement so that they can make choices about the structure and format of their engagement efforts – with a focus on generating the kind of public knowledge they need to create hope and change in their community.

We work with individuals and organizations to reorient themselves and turn outward. Engagement efforts of any size or structure must be informed by a public orientation, meaning that they engage the public as citizens and not just as consumers. The engagement effort is designed to generate public knowledge, and then the individual or organization infuses this public knowledge into their work.

Organizations that authentically engage with their community are seen as speaking and acting from a position of authority, and as having the best interest of the community at heart. In tough economic times, by gathering public knowledge organizations can make informed choices about their impact and standing in the community.

Recruitment strategies: The Harwood Institute works with boundary-spanning organizations such as public broadcasting stations, United Ways, and others to help them authentically engage with the public they serve in a way that generates public knowledge.

Different formats, different purposes

Most successful democratic governance efforts combine meetings of different types and sizes. In general:

- Small-group discussions of 8-12 people are useful for some kinds of purposes (learning, sharing experiences, making choices, developing action plans);
- Large-group meetings of 50-1,000 people are useful for other purposes (giving momentum to the dialogue project, providing information, summarizing shared conclusions, connecting with key resources, providing a sense that change is possible);
- Online groups can help people access critical information, connect people who can't (or don't want to) meet, or help prepare or follow up fact-to-face events.

(Note that some formats combine the first two: they assemble large numbers of people in one large room, then split them into small groups for most of the session.)

Traditional formats for public involvement often fail because the format doesn't match the purpose. For example:

- Large public hearings aren't practical for generating dialogue or considering policy options;
- City council proceedings are inappropriate for sharing experiences or developing action plans.

As a result, traditional public meetings often frustrate both citizens and public officials, and tend to increase confrontation and polarization on major issues.

We are working with The Corporation for Public Broadcasting to help 12 such stations discover pathways for reengaging and reconnecting with the communities they serve – to deepen their relevance and significance. While this engagement may take place at a number of levels, from small conversations to community-wide deliberation, our work with these stations and other organizations enables them to make decisions about how to best engage the public so that they can build the public knowledge they need to create the hope and change they seek.

How the organization works: There are five main ways for organizations, communities and individuals to access our work:

- The Public Innovators Summit is a gathering of some of the most talented, innovative and visionary leaders in public life to discuss the state and future of public life and our communities. The Summit also gives these leaders a chance to connect with others from across a number of sectors – business, academia, non-profit, foundations, public media, and beyond.
- The Public Innovators Lab is an intensive three-day immersion in Harwood tools and frameworks for those who are interested in accelerating change in their organization and community.
- The Public Innovators Corps is a group of men and women certified to teach Harwood tools, ideas and frameworks. The Corps allows organizations to host local labs, and to bring elements from the national lab to their community or network.
- Individuals in our national Public Innovators Network can seek support and guidance from other innovators, access Harwood tools and frameworks through our online site.
- The Harwood Institute has already formed key strategic alliances with a number of nationally and regionally networked organizations including The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Hands On Network, The United Way of America, and others. We work with national organizations such as these to help these groups embed our tools and frameworks within their network to accelerate change and speed diffusion.

What funders say: “The folks from The Harwood Institute do not offer techniques. Instead, they present people with concrete tools in a framework regarding public life. As a result, their students are able to integrate the training into their lives and work, and are prepared to address new community issues as they arise.

– Chad Wick, KnowledgeWorks Foundation

The organization in action: St. Louis, Missouri

Over the last two years, The Harwood Institute and The Corporation for Public Broadcasting have worked together to help public broadcasting stations strengthen the civic health of their communities and deepen their local significance. One example, KETC (St. Louis), put authentic engagement principles into action to address the mortgage crisis. Rather than simply create a one-off program, KETC connected residents to other organizations, and connected organizations to each other across boundaries. They

made use of both on-air assets (programming) as well as off air assets – holding community conversations with residents and helping create a 20 person partnership with housing and non-profit groups. To ensure the knowledge these efforts generates informs station efforts, KETC created new internal Innovation Spaces for staff to share what they have learned, and to talk about its implications for their work.

The results, evaluated by researchers from the University of Wisconsin are a powerful demonstration of the potential for authentic engagement to create change. The evaluation found KETC’s work on the mortgage crisis increased by 10.5% residents’ understanding of the scope of the problem; a 27.7% increase in people sharing information about the crisis with others, and a 400% increase in 211 calls for mortgage assistance.

For more information: www.theharwoodinstitute.org or 301-656-3669.

International Institute for Sustained Dialogue

Description: The International Institute for Sustained Dialogue:

- Designs and conducts dialogues in international conflicts and in peacebuilding (for example, with Americans and Russians; among participants from the civil war in Tajikistan; between democratic reformers from the Muslim Arab heartland, Western Europe, and the United States; on national reconciliation with Iraqis).
- Has helped the Institute for Democracy in South Africa incorporate Sustained Dialogue into its programs.
- Aspires to take Sustained Dialogue into corporations, organizations, and communities and to develop other partnerships.
- Is home to the Sustained Dialogue Campus Network, an autonomous program within the Institute.
- Engages in research, publication, and teaching in the field of dialogue, deliberation, and public engagement.

Primary model:

Sustained Dialogue – Sustained Dialogue differs from most other change processes in two ways: first, it focuses first on relationships rather than issues. Participants will talk about issues but moderators will lead them to probe the relationships underlying them. Second, it is sustained over time, becoming the essence of a change process. Because relationships change only slowly, Sustained Dialogue works through a five-stage process that provides a framework, not a rigid technique. It works within a clearly defined concept of relationship. That concept is both an analytical and an operational tool. Using its five components as a guide, a moderator can analyze the dynamics of the interactions in the dialogue group and beyond. As dialogue progresses, it is possible to get inside each of the components of relationship to change it.

Co-moderators lead a group of 10-20 diverse participants in face-to-face dialogue at regular intervals over months – sometimes years. As adversarial relationships become constructive, participants change individually and consider how to approach changing

their leaders and their communities. They can become “a mind at work” in the middle of deeply divided communities, naming problems and devising scenarios of interactive steps for drawing broader elements of the community into dealing with them. The moderators’ approach is elicitive. The dialogue shapes the agenda.

We often say that Sustained Dialogue is for people in hostile relationships – open or under the surface – who can’t talk productively with each other, whereas deliberation is a way for people who can talk productively to make decisions together. Sustained Dialogue is for people who are not ready for collaborative problem-solving approaches like mediation and negotiation. It has often paved the way for those collaborative approaches.

Recruitment strategies: IISD brings together participants who represent a microcosm of the groups that are most in tension or conflict with one another. We focus on transforming the relationships that cause a problem or conflict, and that must be changed if the conflict is to be dealt with constructively. We engage people to whom leaders listen – not necessarily top leaders, but people who are freer to explore the roots of unproductive relationships than leaders who feel wedded to their positions.

How the organization works: At present, IISD operates with minimum staff, drawing board members or “associates” on contract into moderating teams. It operates programs from grant funds and covers overhead expenses from research contracts and in-kind assistance. IISD generally seeks out and develops its own projects, while also working collaboratively with partners who seek its assistance.

What funders say: “The inter-Tajik Dialogue continues to break new ground as it places processes for dealing with conflict in the context of strengthening civil society’s capacity for resolving differences peacefully. . . . The process of Sustained Dialogue being used in the Inter-Tajik Dialogue has been at work in a black-white dialogue in Baton Rouge over the past year [1995-1996].”
– David Mathews, Kettering Foundation

What the experts say

“Sustained Dialogue is not a problem-solving workshop; it is a sustained interaction to transform and build relationships among members of deeply conflicted groups so that they may effectively deal with practical problems.”
– Sandy Heierbacher, Director,
National Coalition for
Dialogue and Deliberation

The organization in action: Tajikistan

In any complex political situation, one cannot claim credit for any tangible result, and important results are often not tangible. We conducted 35 three-day dialogues among influential pro-government citizens and a fragmented opposition in Tajikistan’s civil war, 1993-2007. In our first six bimonthly meetings, this was the only channel of communication between government and opposition. Two dialogue members worked with opposition faction leaders to form the United Tajik opposition and a common platform that contributed to the government’s decision to accept UN mediation. The group met alongside that mediation with three members on negotiating teams. The dialogue designed a National Reconciliation Commission – an idea written into the peace

treaty as the instrument for implementing it. After peace was declared, dialogue members registered their own NGO, the Public Committee for Democratic Processes. That NGO has: (1) organized introducing 21 professors from 7 universities to the field of conflict resolution and produced a textbook that is required reading for all social science students; (2) helped citizens in 15 communities form Economic Development Committees using the dialogue process; (3) organized monthly dialogues in 6 regions on “the state, religion, and society” in a country with the only legitimate Islamic party in Central Asia.

For more information: www.sustaineddialogue.org or 202-393-4478.

Jefferson Center

Description: The Jefferson Center pioneered the use of the Citizens Jury process in the United States, starting in 1974. The use of randomly selected citizens to participate in a deliberative method is at the heart of the Citizens Jury process and it is now internationally recognized.

Primary model:

Citizens Jury – The goal of a Citizens Jury is to gather between 18 and 24 people who are a microcosm of the city, region, state or nation from which they are selected. The intention is to create a committee of the public that is trustworthy not only because of its diversity, but because of the careful and fair way the process in which they participate is conducted.

The Citizens Jury process brings the participants together for five days. They hear testimony from a group of high quality and balanced witnesses on the issue, question the witnesses, and then deliberate in small and whole group settings. The length of the hearings allows them to come together as a community as they make their decisions. Finally they issue a report in their own words. The process is carefully designed for fairness, with the pair of moderators carefully trained to avoid bringing in any biases. More participants can be involved by conducting multiples of the process or by extending the basics of the process to a larger group similar to the Citizens Assembly process used in Canada.

What the experts say

“This process has the benefit of being easy to explain, as most people get the jury analogy.”

– Edward Andersson, Head of Practice, Involve (UK)

Evaluation to insure quality and fairness is done daily and at the end. We believe that the quality controls are unsurpassed among deliberative methods. A key aspect of quality control is to have the participants evaluate the fairness of the project. The Jefferson Center record on this goes back to 1981 (see “bias evaluation” on the website). The method has often been used in Europe without proper quality controls. The Center has trademarked the process in order to prevent its misuse and we are happy to give permission to any group in the United States to use the method so long as they do so properly.

Recruitment strategies: The selection method for a Citizens Jury is done in an anonymous and transparent way and is described in detail in the *Citizens Jury Handbook* found on the Jefferson Center website, www.jefferson-center.org.

How the organization works: The Jefferson Center currently does not have staff, but works with affiliated organizations and consultants in order to promote the use of the Citizens Jury method. The Center does not conduct any Citizens Jury projects on its own any more, given the reluctance of public officials to take the recommendations of the jurors seriously. On the other hand, serious attention is being paid to the use of Citizens Juries to evaluate ballot initiatives (see www.healthydemocracyoregon.org). The Center stands ready to help any organization or governmental entity conduct a high quality project if there is a clear indication that the jurors’ recommendations will be taken seriously.

The organization in action: Pennsylvania

During the 1992 Pennsylvania Senate race between Arlen Specter and Lynn Yeakel, the Jefferson Center joined with the Pennsylvania League of Women Voters to convene Citizen Juries to compare the views of the candidates. Specter used the findings in television campaign ads, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* praised the process and presented the findings in detail. (Specter prevailed on election day by a 49% to 46% margin.) It is impossible to determine the extent to which the jury results influenced the outcome of the election, but it seems clear that the Pennsylvania Citizen Jury played a prominent role in the electoral debate about the issues and candidates.

For more information: www.jefferson-center.org.

Mixing, matching, and adapting

Local innovation and adaptation has always been a hallmark of this work. In most cases, the models and approaches in this list have been mixed, melded, and modified to fit the dynamics of the community and the issue or decision being addressed. Sometimes this customizing is done by the organizations listed in this section, sometimes it is done by local organizers, and often it happens as some sort of collaboration between the two.

For example, the methods of Deliberative Polling have been incorporated into the multi-site MacNeil/Lehrer Productions “By the People” project, the Citizens Forum started by the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, and its Hill Neighborhood Forum.

Furthermore, the organizations listed in this section have increasingly found ways to work with one another on particular projects. This kind of collaboration and shared learning is beneficial both for the project and for the field.

Keystone Center

Description: Keystone brings together public, private and civic sector leaders to confront critical environment, energy, and public health problems. In conjunction with the issues we work on in the policy domain, through our educational programs, we also arm the next generation of leaders with the 21st Century intellectual and social skills they will require to solve the problems they will face.

Overall approach: We typically have a steering committee of 3 to 5 people who work with the Keystone facilitator to structure the meeting agenda. Participants meet in person as well as via conference call, depending upon the issue's complexity, the length of the project, and other factors. We may also split the group into small working groups, which meet via conference call and then come together with the other working groups for in-person plenary sessions.

The pre-meeting interviews allow us to understand and assess the range of issues and concerns and to ascertain the readiness of the group to work towards consensus. A steering committee that helps focus the issue and build the agenda is a welcome relief to the group, as they can start the process with something to react to. The Keystone dialogues are flexible and take into account the complexities of the issue and the temperament and needs of the group.

The facilitator guides the meeting, being sure to adjust the agenda when needed and to include all voices at the table. We provide guidelines for discussion that include encouraging participants to consider different points of view and creative solutions that may not be obvious.

Keystone prepares a summary report based on the preliminary interviews conducted as part of the scoping phase of the project. We also provide an agenda in advance. After the meetings, we write up and distribute meeting notes. At the end of the project, we generally produce a final report that is shared with the participants as well as decision-makers who were not part of the dialogue.

Recruitment strategies: When beginning a Keystone Dialogues, we conduct a series of interviews with people representing a range of perspectives on the issue. First we assess whether or not there is the potential for a constructive dialogue and ultimate some agreement to come out of a dialogue. Once we determine that there is, we strive to have a balance of representatives from the corporate, nonprofit, and government sectors involved on the project. We recruit participants by sector (energy, environment, health) and take into account not only the organization's position and interests but also that of the person representing the organization.

How the organization works: The Keystone Center is a non-profit public policy and educational organization. We initiate projects and fundraise for them from a combination of corporate, government, and foundations; we also do fee-for-service work and respond to government RFPs.

What funders say: The Denver Foundation helps provide funding to Keystone Science School for the residential field science program for school groups called Classroom Access to Science Education (CASE), which has engaged more than 80,000 students in 2nd – 12th grades in inquiry-based explorations. CASE is a well-planned, thoughtfully created program that encourages students and teachers to get excited about learning science. We often hear of how few inner-city youth have the opportunity to travel to the mountains; CASE not only gets them there but gives them in-depth study. What they learn sticks with them because the information is offered in such an interactive, engaging manner.

– Rebecca Arno, The Denver Foundation

The organization in action: Pandemic influenza preparedness in the U.S.

The increasing threat of a deadly worldwide outbreak of pandemic influenza raises many issues for families and communities, including how to balance health concerns with the need to have children in schools or day care so that parents can work. At the request of the Centers for Disease Control, The Keystone Center conducted public meetings to help inform national health policy for pandemic influenza planning. We worked with community leaders to choose representatives from the ten major sectors that are the most likely to be affected. We also recruited approximately 260 members of the general public, selected by age, race, and sex, from the four principal U.S. geographic regions. Keystone structured the group processes to: (1) provide essential information to the participants; (2) encourage them to engage in discussions; (3) weigh tradeoffs, and (4) reach a collective viewpoint on whether or not the government should implement a package of five community level control measures. In addition, we asked participants to identify any possible barriers to implementing such control measures and to suggest solutions. The data collected from these meetings are helping the federal government to create and publicize a federal action plan to use in preparing for pandemic influenza.

For more information: www.keystone.org or 970-513-5800.

National Charrette Institute

Description:

The National Charrette Institute (NCI) is a nonprofit organization that advances the fields of community planning and public involvement through research, publications, and facilitation. NCI increases local capacity for communities to work collaboratively to implement innovative, smart growth solutions for land-use planning and development. We provide solutions for what is often the weak link in the chain – the point of communication and decision-making between public and private entities such as community members and local governments.

Primary models:

NCI Charrette System – The primary model NCI teaches, researches, and develops is the NCI Charrette System, a design-based, accelerated, collaborative project management system. It is a proven, flexible, three-step framework that can be customized for a wide range of projects, including sustainable community plans, regional/comprehensive plans, transportation/infrastructure plans, and development plans. A charrette plan is far more than just a vision: the process results in a well-tested, feasible plan that is ready for implementation.

The NCI Charrette System begins with the Charrette Preparation Phase, followed by the NCI Charrette acting as a fulcrum at the middle phase, and closes with the Plan Implementation Phase. All three phases of the NCI Charrette System are of significant importance to the outcome of a project.

The charrette itself is a collaborative event that lasts four to seven days. The goal of the charrette is to produce a feasible plan that benefits from the support of all stakeholders. A multidisciplinary charrette team, of consultants and sponsor staff, produce this plan.

The charrette takes place in a studio situated on or near the project site. It is organized as a series of feedback loops through which stakeholders are engaged at critical decision-making points. These decision-making points occur in primary stakeholder meetings, several public meetings, and possibly during an open house throughout the course of the charrette. Between these points, the charrette team breaks off to create alternative plans, testing and refining them with the goal of producing a preferred plan. The feedback loops provide the charrette team with the information necessary to create a feasible plan. Just as importantly, they allow the stakeholders to become co-authors of the plan so that they are more likely to support and implement it.

The charrette maximizes the opportunities for members of the public to participate – day or night, weekday or weekend. The charrette is an exciting, community event that gives people the opportunity to really help design their community and solve the problems most important to them. It is a hands-on experience that allows participants to see the results of their input quickly and is a remedy to the seemingly endless string of meetings held in conventional planning processes. It is intense, rewarding and efficient, and leaves people feeling that their time was well-spent.

Recruitment strategies: Broad-based stakeholder involvement is crucial to a successful charrette project. The value of collaboration and a cross-disciplinary approach dictates that everyone who has a guiding influence on the project must be involved from the beginning in an atmosphere of trust and respect.

Stakeholder analysis and outreach begins early in phase one of the charrette system. When the stakeholder analysis is performed, it is important to engage the following categories of stakeholders: decision makers, those directly affected by the outcome, those who have the power to promote the project, those with the power to block the project.

How the organization works: NCI is a nonprofit educational organization. Both on our own and with partnering organizations, NCI offers public certificate trainings on the NCI Charrette System and NCI Charrette Management and Facilitation. We also offer in-house trainings to firms and municipalities. Increasingly, NCI is becoming involved with model projects to assist in the implementation of successful charrettes while testing the process and educating large numbers of participants. We are focusing on the use of the NCI Charrette System for sustainability planning and increasing the use of high-tech analytical and public involvement tools throughout the charrette system. NCI also writes publications and creates other tools for charrette education, such as a documentary movie on the process, digital forms kits for project management, and a free Request for Proposal template for the charrette system.

The organization in action: The Gulf Coast

Six weeks after Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast in 2005, hundreds of national and local professionals and community members participated in the Mississippi Renewal Forum. This massive six-day charrette was sponsored by the Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding, and Renewal and conducted by Duany Plater-Zyberk and Company with the assistance of many professional volunteers. Members of the NCI board of directors and NCI staff participated in the management, facilitation, and design of the charrette. Eleven of the twelve communities that were addressed during the charrette have adopted elements of the charrette plans. The Mississippi communities of Ocean Springs, Gulf Port, and Long Beach have since hired members of the charrette team to continue to work on the implementation of the revitalization plans.

For more information: www.charretteinstitute.org or 503-233-8486.

National Civic League

Description: The National Civic League (NCL) is a non-profit, non-partisan, membership organization headquartered in Denver, Colorado. It is dedicated to strengthening democracy by increasing the capacity of people to build and fully participate in healthy and prosperous communities. Embracing and promoting diversity and inclusiveness is among NCL's core values. NCL fosters innovative community building and political reform, assists local governments, and recognizes cross-sector collaborative community achievement.

NCL accomplishes its mission through technical assistance, training, publishing, research, and two awards programs: the MetLife Foundation Ambassadors In Education Awards, recognizing educators who connect school and community, and the All-America City Awards, which for 60 years has recognized neighborhoods, villages, cities, counties, and regions for outstanding civic accomplishments, collaboration, inclusion, and innovation.

NCL offers technical assistance to towns, cities, counties, government agencies, and organizations through its Community Services (CS) program. CS has worked with communities all over the country employing a “visioning/strategic planning” approach to goal setting, problem solving, and capacity building.

Overall approach: NCL’s Community Services (CS) program helps communities identify and convene diverse groups of people to confront and resolve their most pressing and urgent challenges. The basic philosophy is doing “with,” not “to” or “for.” NCL has developed a community diagnostic tool known as the “civic index” to help communities assess their own “civic infrastructures” and analyze aspects like citizen participation, government performance, diversity, and regional cooperation.

The first step in any CS process is to convene an initiating committee, which typically consists of leaders and citizens from the public, private and nonprofit sectors. This committee undertakes a “stakeholder analysis” process to determine who needs to be part of the working group. The goal is to go beyond the “usual suspects” who tend to show up at community meetings and have a broad cross section of the community’s diversity.

After recruiting stakeholders, the working group that emerges convenes to consider a desired future or “vision” of what they would like the community to be in ten or 15 years. The committee conducts a community assessment before identifying “key performance areas” (KPAs) to address in order to move toward their desired future. The KPA process forces stakeholders to consider what practical steps have to be taken (including funding sources) to move forward.

The last step is to create an implementation infrastructure to ensure action with the developed plan. NCL/CS continues to help the community with implementation of the plan in subsequent months and years, thus ensuring that the process results in tangible changes and outcomes.

Recruitment strategies: The initiating committee also designs a communications and media strategy to publicize the effort. If certain key stakeholders in the community are not present, an effort is made through community-based organizations and informal leadership networks to gather additional input. One of the benefits of this process is to develop new leaders who may not have been active in community affairs in the past. Some who have participated in these community efforts have been inspired to run for public office.

How the organization works: The National Civic League has a unique connection to local government thanks to its historical mission as a municipal reform group. (The Civic League originated the “city council/city manager” form of government through publication of its Model City Charter, currently in its 8th

NCDD’s Engagement Streams Framework

Another resource for comparing and contrasting the different models and methodologies being used in this field is the “Engagement Streams Framework” developed by Sandy Heierbacher and the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation. You can find the framework at www.thataway.org/exchange/files/docs/ddStreams1-08.pdf.

Edition.) Consequently, it is often a city manager or elected official who invites NCL to help convene a community process. Typically, it is because the community has tried to solve problems or make an important decision in the “old way” (city officials or developers initiating changes or decisions and trying to “sell” them to skeptical citizens) and have reached a frustrating impasse to progress.

What funders say: “The National Civic League is a true leader in Colorado when it comes to community engagement. Having worked with NCL over the years on a variety of issues, we have found them to be uniquely positioned and adept at bringing together diverse groups of individuals, organizations, and collaboratives, and helping them to forge successful partnerships that transcend consensus, foster leadership and strengthen authentic community change.”

– Ed Lucero, The Colorado Trust.

The organization in action: Lee’s Summit, Missouri

Over the last 16 years, this suburb of Kansas City has worked repeatedly with the National Civic League to involve large numbers of people in developing and implementing objectives for the community. These planning initiatives were a response to the challenges the city faced in the early 1990s, when rapid growth produced mistrust and factionalism and citizens routinely rejected ballot initiatives to finance local improvements. The initial community-based planning effort in 1993 produced 47 shared strategies, and the community was able to implement 40 of them within six years. Results included new growth ordinances, new police and fire stations, infrastructure improvements, and Legacy Park (a large complex of fields and facilities that is now the envy of the region). In 1998, the update resulted in new health facilities and programs, partnerships between schools and local government, a senior center, a new city hall, and a revitalized downtown. These outcomes have created a profound belief in civic participation. Over 270 people took part in the 2008 community-based strategic planning effort. “The National Civic League led us in changing our community culture to one of active problem solving, creating solutions and striving for excellence,” says Mayor Karen Messerli. “We are now a community that embraces change and we are far better for it.”

For more information: www.ncl.org or 303-571-4343.

National Issues Forums Network

Description: In 1981, a group of civic and educational organizations began a new effort to promote public deliberation in America. They turned to two nonpartisan research organizations, the Kettering Foundation and Public Agenda, to begin preparing issue books expressly designed to prompt serious deliberation on a wide range of public issues. The forums convened by the civic and educational groups are often called National Issues Forums. These groups and others that use similar public choice books comprise the NIF Network.

Primary model:

National Issues Forums – Face-to-face forums organized by a variety of organizations, groups, and individuals, offer citizens the opportunity to join together to deliberate, to make choices with others about ways to approach difficult issues, and to work toward creating reasoned public judgment. Forums range from small- or large-group gatherings similar to town hall meetings, to study circles held in public places or in people’s homes on an ongoing basis.

Forums focus on an issue such as health care, immigration, Social Security, or ethnic and racial tensions. The forums provide a way for people of diverse views and experiences to seek a shared understanding of the problem and to search for common ground for action. Forums are led by trained, neutral moderators, and use an issue discussion guide that frames the issue by presenting the overall problem and then three or four broad approaches to the problem. Forum participants work through the issue by considering each approach; examining what appeals to them or concerns them, and also what the costs, consequences, and trade-offs may be that would be incurred in following that approach.

Recruitment strategies: All forum activity is locally organized, moderated, and financed. Forum organizers attract participants to their forums in a variety of ways including: media (and online) advertising, newsletter announcements, flyers, direct invitation, and word of mouth. Because the forums are intended to be public, media and others are usually also welcome to attend. Information about the outcomes of forums is collected in a number of ways which may include; flipchart recording, note taking, post-forum

questionnaires, and occasionally audio or video recording. Each year one or two issue topics is chosen for the production of a national report. Information collected from forums held on the selected topic(s) is gathered and a national report is prepared based on outcomes of the forums that were held around the country.

How the organization works: The NIF Network is not a membership organization and therefore does not recruit members or participants, but makes information and materials available to any and all who wish to make use of them. The network is a voluntary alliance of civic and educational organizations connecting a wide variety of leagues, clubs, religious organizations, libraries, study circles, schools, and individuals. While the size of the network is impressive, the diversity of the audience is equally significant. Participants vary considerably in age, race, gender, economic status, and location. The main activity that participants in the network take part in is to convene and moderate public deliberative forums.

What the experts say

“NIFs are the grand dame of deliberative democracy. No one trains facilitators better, and their issue guides are first rate. They are a great out-of-the-box option for civic leaders wishing to catalyze a deliberative conversation in their communities.”

– David Ryfe, Associate Professor,
Reynolds School of Journalism,
University of Nevada-Reno

Training and information about convening and moderating forums is available at a number of locations (often university-connected) around the country. The NIF website currently lists 47 network contacts (at <http://www.nifi.org/network>) who provide workshops (some still use the original term "public policy institute" for their workshops) where people can learn about the theory, history, and mechanics of convening public deliberative forums. Other workshops focus on issue framing – how to frame public issues for public deliberation.

What funders say: Great Expectations [see case below] is one of the most extensive civic engagement initiatives ever undertaken in Philadelphia. Taking advantage of the timing of a competitive mayoral race, the project offered citizens a chance to participate in more than 60 structured dialogues and other activities for more than a year to develop a ‘Citizens Agenda’ for Philadelphia as the next great American city. The mayor-elect was the keynote speaker and asked the citizens to hold him and his administration accountable for results.

– H. F. (Gerry) Lenfest, The Lenfest Foundation

The approach in action: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

From November 2006 to fall 2007, the Penn Project for Civic Engagement and the Philadelphia Inquirer collaborated on the Great Expectations project to develop the *Citizens Agenda for Philadelphia’s Future*. The *Agenda* is the work of more than 1000 citizens in 60-plus forums across Philadelphia. In forums, citizens talked about their hopes and fears and what they’re expert in: their families, neighborhoods, and work, creating the Citizens Agenda. The project included hundreds of articles and citizen essays in the paper and on the project web site, as well as debates where candidates answered citizen questions.

What the experts say

“NIF is known for its careful issue framing and quality issue guides, which outline 3 or 4 different viewpoints.”

– Sandy Heierbacher, Director,
National Coalition for
Dialogue and Deliberation

In their *Agenda*, citizens identified 12 broad areas for the next Mayor to focus on, including more collaborative leadership that could take advantage of citizen expertise. The *Agenda* is a civic to-do list that sets expectations for the incoming mayor and city council. The nonpartisan and non-agenda-driven project was credited with transforming the mayoral campaign into a more civil, issue-focused, and

citizen-driven process than usual. The winning mayoral candidate, Michael Nutter, made a public commitment to the Citizens Agenda and asked Great Expectations to hold an annual citizens convention to evaluate his administration’s progress on achieving its goals.

For more information: www.nifi.org or 800-443-7834.

Public Agenda

Description: Public Agenda, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, brings more than 30 years of experience in engaging the public in productive and meaningful dialogue and deliberation, conducting qualitative and quantitative public opinion studies, and producing high quality citizen education materials. Since its beginnings in 1975, Public Agenda has been a pioneer in the practice of public engagement, with hands-on experience in hundreds of communities and on dozens of tough issues.

In addition to the Community Conversations discussed below, Public Agenda also employs leadership dialogues, multi-session stakeholder dialogue groups, focus groups, online strategies, and other methods.

Primary model:

Community Conversation – Public Agenda uses a particular model of Community Conversation as one core method to conduct deliberative meetings. These are inclusive community events, sponsored by local nonpartisan coalitions that bring diverse stakeholders together to address a pressing public issue. Rather than lectures by experts, or gripe sessions by angry constituents, well-designed Community Conversations create a frank, productive problem-solving process in which diverse ideas are put *on* the table, diverse participants sit *at* the table, and people work together to find common ground and identify solutions.

The heart of the Community Conversation process takes place in small breakout discussion groups of 12 to 14 participants, with a moderator and recorder in each group. Discussions begin with carefully prepared discussion materials, either in print or video format, that help participants evaluate a range of perspectives and deliberate on the pros and cons of different approaches. This technique of framing for deliberation, which Public Agenda calls “Citizen Choicework,” is a cornerstone of our deliberative model. Trained moderators from the community help all participants contribute, while trained recorders capture the common ground, disagreements, questions, concerns, and ideas and priorities for action generated during the discussion.

The results of citizens’ deliberations at Community Conversations are used to inform leaders about the community’s values, concerns and priorities, and to educate, encourage, and enable more individuals and groups across the community to work together to make progress on the issue at hand. Community Conversations are best understood as points of departure for new forms of individual and collaborative action, community leadership development, and further engagement.

In addition to helping communities tackle particular issues, the Community Conversation process also builds local capacity for ongoing engagement by training local organizers and facilitators, providing a model and method for addressing other issues in the future, and stimulating new collaborations, coalitions, networks, and initiatives.

Recruitment strategies: The nonpartisan coalition sponsoring a Community Conversation is responsible for setting goals for participation and for recruiting participants. Public Agenda recommends that Community Conversation sponsors invite a diverse group of participants, typically 80-140 people who represent the diversity of the community itself. We advise sponsors to include a broad cross section of the community's general public along with any and all "voices" and stakeholders who would want to be represented and/or have important roles to play in the issue at hand. Sponsors are encouraged to make special efforts to reach out to people who tend to be uninvolved and who represent the diversity (ethnically, economically, politically) of the community.

For all Community Conversations, we strongly urge sponsors to use grassroots outreach strategies and to utilize social networks to invite participants. Direct personal invitations from respected local leaders or other trustworthy sources are far more likely to generate positive responses from diverse community members than general announcements or advertisements.

How the organization works: While always adapted to the task at hand, our public engagement work revolves around three fundamental and interrelated practices. First, we frame issues for public deliberation so everyone can enter the public dialogue and participate effectively. Then, we work with communities to engage citizens and leaders for democratic problem solving and change. Finally, we build local, civic capacity for the long term, beyond the life span of any project.

What funders say: Public Agenda has been our active and valued partner for many years in Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count. In that initiative – where it's so critical to foster true engagement among faculty members, campus leaders and community stakeholders – the expertise and commitment of Public Agenda's staff have been absolutely vital."

– Sam Cargile, Lumina Foundation for Education

The organization in action: San José, California

In the late-1990s, the San José, California School District began working with Public Agenda to place community engagement at the center of their efforts to better serve their students. At the time, the district was considering enacting more rigorous standards, but was unsure of how quickly and extensively they could pursue this agenda. Public Agenda held a series of English and Spanish language focus groups with parents and students, and trained local leaders to organize and facilitate a district-wide Community Conversation. As a result, the district not only implemented more rigorous standards, it committed to a yearly Conversation (along with other strategies to engage the community), and solidified its commitment to engagement by creating an official Public Engagement Office. Since the late nineties, the district has continued to hold Community Conversations, both district and neighborhood-wide, reaching more than 6,000 people. In addition to generally sensitizing the district to the needs and concerns of community members, these efforts have led to a variety of specific school-community activities to improve education. Results have included increased volunteerism at the schools,

increases in parent, student, and staff satisfaction on the district’s annual climate survey, and the passing of bond issues with unusually strong majorities. Part of the reason for the strong community support, according to Superintendent Don Iglesias, is that “through this [public engagement] project, we have learned what strategies work from a public standpoint, and parents feel heard and respected.”

For more information: www.publicagenda.org or 212-686-6610.

Public Conversations Project

Description: The Public Conversations Project is a non-profit organization that guides, trains and inspires individuals, organizations, and communities to constructively address conflicts that involve differing values and worldviews. PCP’s work is grounded in ideas and practices from family therapy; we are known for working with groups with complicated histories and high levels of suspicion and animosity. PCP sometimes partners with other practitioners from related fields or with specific topical knowledge.

PCP helps groups achieve various types of objectives, e.g., to break through a specific impasse in a multi-stakeholder network, to regain a climate of respect and cooperation in a mission-driven group or faith community torn by internal conflict, to foster constructive ways of relating among embattled organizations so they can work together on concrete projects like environmental legislation. A common outcome for participants is increased capacity to design and facilitate constructive conversations on their own. Even projects focused on direct service provision by PCP associates (meeting design and facilitation) incorporate capacity building as an objective.

What the experts say

“PCP helps civic leaders grapple with very tense, seemingly intractable conflicts that can paralyze a community – issues like race, abortion, or ethnic conflict. A great model for getting people with intense disagreements to sit down and talk with one another.”

– David Ryfe, Associate Professor,
Reynolds School of Journalism,
University of Nevada-Reno

Overall approach: PCP takes a collaborative approach to custom designing agendas and formats. Before the meeting, PCP works with leaders and members of the involved groups to ensure a credible convening process, make informed decisions about whom to invite, articulate clear goals, develop communication agreements, and craft a promising format. Formats typically involve some opening questions that surface new information and soften stereotypes. PCP also employs structures for speaking and listening that restrain polarizing behavior while fostering authentic speaking. As fresh angles and options emerge and are explored, the PCP facilitator works with participants to develop subsequent formats that support participants in pursuing evolving interests and goals.

The facilitator’s role is to support the participants to have the sort of fresh, constructive conversation they have said they want, and to help them avoid old ruts or stuck places. Facilitators’ interventions are grounded in this understanding of their role and in the

communication agreements that participants have made with each other. Depending on the needs and goals of the group, readings, presentations, or films are sometimes used as a common stimulus for the dialogue and/or to interweave participants' desire to learn together with their relational goals.

Recruitment strategies: Some dialogues are public and publicized with fliers. Most are by invitation. Some are highly confidential. Some groups involve leaders from different sectors, but those leaders usually participate not as spokespeople for constituents but as individuals drawing on the full range of their experiences and knowledge.

What the experts say

“The Public Conversations Project dialogue model is characterized by a careful preparatory phase in which all stakeholders/sides are interviewed and prepared for the dialogue process.”
– Sandy Heierbacher, Director,
National Coalition for
Dialogue and Deliberation

How the organization works: PCP works with groups, communities, networks and organizations in which the presence of different values, worldviews, or identities has impeded collaboration toward shared goals, fostered an atmosphere of distrust, blocked problem-solving,

or evoked cold silence or disengagement, in spite of a need or desire for connection and collaboration. PCP has worked with educational, religious, civic, non-profit, business and philanthropic organizations concerned with internal and external tensions. Group size has ranged from 4 to 80. PCP works locally, nationally and internationally. The vast majority of meetings are conducted face-to-face.

What funders say: “As a result [of the UNPD process – see below], the US delegation...and the not-for-profit community were able to work together to help find common ground with both developing and developed country representatives. [Their collaboration] caused the main Vatican negotiator to comment later that he had never seen such effective team work on any delegation that the US has ever sent to an international conference.”

– Susan Sechler, formerly of the Pew Charitable Trust

The organization in action: UN Conference on Population and Development

PCP was recruited by the Ford and MacArthur Foundations and the Pew Charitable Trust to foster improved working relationships among population-focused organizations and those focused on women's reproductive health. Funders felt that the opportunities offered by the 1994 UNPD conference would be lost unless interactions among many of the key players were significantly improved.

PCP staff conducted phone interviews with the key players to learn whether they shared the funders' concerns and whether they were motivated to come together to constructively address those strains. We learned that the sources of strain lay primarily in different strategic priorities, competition for funds, and a divisive history. We also learned that sufficient motivation existed in the potential participants to convene a one-

day meeting. The funders gave PCP a free hand in convening and planning that first meeting and committed in advance to underwrite another meeting if the group agreed there was a need for one. Over time, four meetings were held. Collaboration among those involved improved dramatically and the US delegation to the Cairo conference was widely regarded as an unusually effective one.

For more information: www.publicconversations.org or 617-923-1216.

The Right Question Project

Description: The Right Question Project (RQP) has worked with hundreds of programs and agencies in communities all around the country for 17 years developing, implementing, and refining an educational strategy to make it possible for more people in low-income communities to participate effectively in democracy on all levels. The RQP Strategy builds the skills of all people, no matter their educational, income, or literacy level, to focus on key decisions, ask strategic questions, expect and require accountable decision-making, and participate effectively in decisions that affect them. RQP’s work focuses on making it possible for people in low-income communities to acquire skills to participate more effectively in decisions made on a “micro” level across all fields, such as at their children’s schools, the welfare office, the job training program, the Medicaid-funded health care center and other basic services.

Overall approach: The Right Question Project offers a simple, practical educational strategy that teaches skills that are essential for self-advocacy and for effective

What the experts say

“The Right Question Project is unique in its individual-level, ‘micro-democratic,’ approach to strengthening our democratic system by enabling individuals to understand the institutions that they confront and by fostering the self-confidence necessary to ask powerful people difficult questions. Their impressive record of accomplishment should make funders, governments, and democratic reformers consider focusing more of their attention upon the micro-dynamics of democratic interaction.”

– Archon Fung, Associate Professor,
Kennedy School of Government,
Harvard University

participation in democracy. Based on lessons from widespread implementation of the educational strategy, RQP has also identified a new starting point for democratic action, **Microdemocracy**, and defines it as: “individuals using essential democratic skills to participate effectively in decisions in their interactions with public agencies.” Alma Couverthie, Director of Organizing for Lawrence (MA) Community Works, has observed that: “You can just see the difference in any meeting. The people who learned RQP’s skills are able to focus right away on the key decisions, they ask questions, and, this is really important: they are persistent, they don’t give up, they’re not intimidated, they keep pressing until they have made their point or get the information they need.”

RQP’s educational strategy is a combination of simple techniques, methods, and frameworks for developing the skills to focus on decisions and formulate questions.

RQP's **Question Formulation Technique (QFT)** is particularly effective as a deliberative tool for including the voices of people who are often not heard. The QFT uses a sequence of steps that allows people working individually or in small groups to produce their own questions, improve their questions, and strategize on how to use them. Because it sanctions "not knowing" by putting the emphasis first on generating questions rather than opinions or answers, the QFT helps bridge the gap between "experts" and "novices," and between people in positions of authority and ordinary citizens. RQP's **Framework for Accountable Decision-Making** quickly builds a sophisticated understanding of decision-making by helping people learn for the first time how to identify when key decisions are being made. Then, it provides a simple structure that helps them ask questions about the reasons for decisions, the processes for making decisions, and opportunities for participation.

Direct outcomes of RQP's educational strategy include:

- greater and more effective participation in decision-making by people who have never participated before
- improved dialogue between public officials or service providers and citizens and clients
- greater sense of urgency to take action among people who have never before participated
- new forms of positive action in individuals, families, neighborhoods, communities, and statewide systems
- citizen-initiated changes in policies and practices on agency, municipal and state levels

How the organization works: RQP is not a discrete program, but a strategy that can be integrated into the on-going work of an existing infrastructure of services, programs, and agencies already working in low-income communities. There is no need to hire additional personnel or create new programs. The RQP strategy is taught to staff and volunteers through local, regional, and national trainings, technical assistance, online support, and written materials. The actual content of the RQP educational strategy is fairly simple and can be delivered in workshops, one-to-one meetings, and appointments, and in self-guided materials.

RQP's training, technical assistance, and consulting services focus on helping staff and volunteers make a shift in practice so that they can better develop the skills of the people with whom they work to think and act on their own behalf. RQP also teaches

What the experts say

"RQP 'meets people where they are' and prepares them to advocate, to participate in decision-making processes, and to hold decision-makers accountable. This reflects a recognition that no system, no professionals, no individual dealing daily with large numbers of people can meet all their needs without the avid involvement of those whose needs are to be met."

– Martha Minow, Professor,
Harvard Law School

explicit facilitating techniques that are designed to create space for and encourage participation by people who are often hesitant to make their voices heard in public discussions.

The organization in action: Columbus, New Mexico

In Columbus, which is near the border with Mexico, immigrant parents who had never set foot inside their children's schools were worried about rising violence in the schools. A parent advocate, trained in RQP's strategy, led four parents through the question formulation process. They were excited about what they had begun to understand and recruited 125 other parents and led them through the process. They identified the need for a violence prevention program, after school activities, and better transportation for their children. They used their new skills to meet with school officials, the Superintendent and the School Committee. They went from there to participate in City Council hearings and advocated for more services from the state legislature. All their actions derived from using the RQP Question Formulation Technique.

For more information: www.rightquestion.org or 617-492-1900.

Viewpoint Learning

Description: Viewpoint Learning has applied its innovative dialogue-based methods to a wide range of issues, including health care, education, the federal debt, foreign policy, land use, housing, local budgeting, aging, and environmental sustainability. Founders Daniel Yankelovich and Dr. Steven Rosell have more than 80 years of experience in public opinion research, dialogue and governance issues. Viewpoint Learning builds upon Yankelovich's groundbreaking work on highly sophisticated polls and focus groups and the in-depth issues forums of the Kettering Foundation and Public Agenda; as well as on Rosell's work on scenarios, group and societal learning, and learning-based approaches to governance.

Primary models:

Choice-Dialogue™ – Polls and focus groups (which take snapshots of opinions) provide little sense of how opinions are likely to evolve as people learn, or of the kind of leadership initiatives that can help accelerate this learning process. Choice-Dialogue consists of a series of 8-hour dialogues with representative random samples of the public, selected through random-digit dialing (35-40 participants in each session). The dialogue is organized around 2-4 alternative scenarios, laid out in a workbook that sets the agenda, provides background information, and lays out pros and cons grounded in research. Two Viewpoint Learning facilitators keep people on track and in dialogue mode. Before and after measures quantify shifts in preferences, coupled with qualitative analysis. Choice-Dialogues provide leaders with a basis for anticipating how the broader public will resolve an issue once they have the opportunity to come to grips with it, and insight on how best to lead such a public learning process on a larger scale.

Stakeholder Dialogue – Stakeholder Dialogues bring together citizens (who usually have participated in a Choice-Dialogue on the subject) with elected and civic leaders in daylong sessions. Leaders concerned with the issue are recruited along with citizens who represent the different viewpoints expressed in the Choice-Dialogues. These sessions build on the common ground defined in the Choice-Dialogues and identify action steps to move the vision forward. They provide an unusual opportunity for leaders to work with ordinary citizens to reconcile the complex and emotional tradeoffs involved in major reform efforts. Stakeholder dialogues provide a powerful way for leaders to grasp and test what the public would be prepared to support, and under what conditions.

Meeting in a Box – A “Meeting in a Box” is a specialized kit that includes video and print materials, a detailed process guide, and feedback mechanisms. This kit allows leaders, their representatives, and a range of local organizations to conduct a 2-3 hour “mini-dialogue” in which people begin to work through the choices themselves. Recruitment is up to the organizations, though the objective is usually to get to as many people as possible; generally this is done both through meetings convened especially for that purpose, and through “piggy-backing” on other meetings like those of service organizations, schools, LWV, community groups, unions, and church groups. These sessions replace top-down models of “informing and educating the public” with two-way dialogue in which citizens become partners in solving problems. When accompanied by ongoing feedback mechanisms (online or otherwise), this method creates a growing list of citizens who are engaged in the issue over a longer period of time.

Online Dialogue – Viewpoint Learning’s Online Dialogue enables people to participate in an electronic dialogue with others who hold very different worldviews. In an environment where flaming is rampant, Online Dialogue is a strikingly civilized process that finds common ground and reveals new ways forward. It can involve thousands of people; recruitment is accomplished through on-line advertising, email blasts, postings on relevant sites and lists, and social networking sites. Participants begin by working through a series of values-based choices and tradeoffs laid out in an interactive “Choice-Book.”

They provide online feedback on their views as they grapple with the choices and their pros and cons. Participants can then go on to participate in a structured dialogue in which they interact on-line in moderated small groups. Each group operates as its own virtual community, with its own conclusions that can be compared with the conclusions from other groups.

What the experts say

“Viewpoint Learning’s Choice-Dialogues offer participants a great opportunity to deliberate over important policy issues. While assembled through random sampling, the gatherings are smaller (35-40), giving a certain small group ‘feel’ to the process even in the plenary sessions. Sometimes the 3-4 ‘scenario’ discussion format can become simplistic on complex policies – equating and conflating options – but it is an understandable format, which is easy to digest in an 8-hour period.”

– Pete Peterson, Executive Director,
Common Sense California

How the organization works: Viewpoint Learning is a research and consulting company. We work closely with clients to customize our methods to meet their needs and to achieve their objectives.

What funders say:

“Viewpoint Learning’s Choice-Dialogues approach is a powerful tool to help people get beyond the typical polarized positions on tough issues, identify areas of common ground, and lift up ideas and solutions that unite people rather than dividing them.”

– Kristi Kimball, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

The organization in action: Health care reform in Canada

The Canadian government created the National Commission on the Future of Health Care to recommend reforms to address rising costs, increasing waits and declining quality. Instead of relying solely on consultation with experts and special interests, the Commission wanted to incorporate the views of “unorganized” citizens into their recommendations.

The Commission retained Viewpoint Learning to conduct a series of *Choice-Dialogues*[™] across the country. In each daylong dialogue, a randomly selected representative sample of Canadians considered four very different values-based choices for health care reform, ranging from raising taxes to fund the public system, to shifting toward a market-based approach. Each choice had support in elite circles. The dialogues showed Canadian policy-makers that their latitude for action was broader than polls or focus groups indicated. One proposal in particular, to reorganize the delivery of primary care and increase accountability, had powerful benefits and appeals for Canadians (once they had a chance to work through the implications and the alternatives) that were not clear to policy makers beforehand.

The Commission called these insights into public values on health care “a compass” that they used in developing their reform recommendations (published under the title: *Building on Values*), which were subsequently enacted by governments.

For more information: www.viewpointlearning.com or 858-551-2317.

IV. Frontiers of local democracy

The changes in citizen capacities and attitudes, the resulting pressures on governments and other institutions, and other trends are liable to create new challenges in local democracy – and new opportunities for local funders to push the envelope of innovation. There are ten areas that promise to be particularly fertile ground for experimentation:

1. **Encouraging leaders to work together on their involvement efforts.** Most work to involve citizens is done in a piecemeal fashion, by different sets of “involvers” who try to work with citizens according to their own particular needs. Schools try to engage parents and other citizens in supporting their children’s education; police departments encourage residents to start neighborhood watch groups; planners try to involve people in land use decisions; and so on. The result is that most people, faced with limited time and energy, are pulled in too many different directions. Even though “collaboration” has become a byword in public management circles, there seems to be very little collaboration among citizen involvement efforts. Perhaps by joining forces, the involvers can broaden their recruitment appeal and provide a variety of tools and opportunities for citizens to address the full range of challenges and priorities they face. Jane Jacobs urged us to do mixed-use development fifty years ago; perhaps what we need now is to start doing mixed-use public involvement.

Possible activities:

- Convening local ‘involvers’ to talk about how they might collaborate more effectively in their work with citizens.
 - Convening the state or national associations that represent local leaders to talk about how they might collaborate – and how they might encourage similar local conversations among their members or affiliates.
 - Piloting collaborative, cross-sector democratic governance projects that enable citizens to address a range of issues or problems in a more holistic way.
2. **Embedding democratic practices in the way communities operate.** Temporary organizing efforts and permanent citizen structures have different strengths and weaknesses: temporary efforts tend to be better at recruitment, facilitation, and meeting design, while some of the permanent structures have well-established roles in local and neighborhood decision-making. This realization has produced a new question: How can we ‘embed’ democratic principles in the work of our public institutions, so that deliberation and democratic governance become commonplace in the way that our communities conduct their public business? The political scientist Archon Fung suggests that there are three ingredients to the embeddedness challenge: buy-in from local officials and other decision-makers, local capacity for organizing and convening citizen deliberation, and constituencies who are ready to defend democratic institutions and practices.

Possible activities:

- Providing technical assistance to communities and agencies working on embeddedness challenges.
 - Convening local leaders who are working on embeddedness challenges, and helping them reach out to their peers to explain what they are doing and why.
 - Commissioning and disseminating research on successes and challenges in embedding democratic principles – including the ways in which democratic governance efforts can change (or fail to change) the “organizational culture” of large bureaucracies.
3. **Ensuring that these are social and cultural opportunities, not just political ones.** One of the common features of the most sustained deliberative democracy efforts is that they are more than just political opportunities: people participate not only because they care about public issues, but because it gives them a chance meet friends, enjoy good food or music or the arts, show off their children (or enjoy free child care), and so on. Lois Giess, a city councilwoman from Rochester, New York, says that “We sometimes forget that people are desperate for social connections. They make time ... because these experiences fill a void in their lives.”
- Possible activities:*
- Encouraging collaboration between local leaders who are working to engage citizens and local organizations that focus on the arts, music, drama, food, and other cultural assets.
 - Commissioning and disseminating research on why people choose to participate in democratic governance efforts (focusing particularly on projects that have been sustained over time.)
 - Piloting innovative projects that offer people the chance to connect socially as well as politically. (Example: the partnership between the Case Foundation and PerfectMatch.com which gave single people a chance to meet other singles as part of volunteering activities.)
4. **New applications of online technology.** Existing online formats for dialogue, networking, blogging, joint editing, and fundraising are only beginning to be incorporated into deliberative democracy efforts. Communities could take advantage of these tools, and develop new ones, to help develop and test discussion guides, recruit hard-to-reach populations, produce reports and action plans, and connect participants with people in other communities (or other parts of the world).
- Possible activities:*
- Customizing some of the existing online technologies so that it is easier for local leaders to apply them to democratic governance efforts.
 - Convening expert practitioners in online involvement with expert practitioners in face-to-face approaches, in order to establish guidelines for projects that will feature both kinds of interaction.
5. **New tools for tracking, measurement, and accountability.** One area in which online technologies might be especially catalytic is in tracking deliberative democracy processes and outcomes. In some communities, people can now use their computers or cell phones to report to local government on a pothole that needs to be filled – and then track the response of the public works department

from the receipt of the request to the eventual repair of the street. These kinds of technologies could be used to help citizens track the processes of democratic decision-making – such as how many people took part in a face-to-face or online forum – as well as the outcomes – recommendations made, committees formed, action ideas proposed. By making it easier for people to follow a process online, communities can build mutual accountability more thoroughly into the system.

Possible activities:

- Assessing the planning software that is already available, and determining how to make it more accessible and useful to citizens (rather than public employees only).
 - Creating a prototype for an online tracking system and helping communities to customize it for their own needs.
6. **New legal frameworks.** The existing legal framework for citizen participation is a patchwork assortment of local, state, and federal laws – many of them now at least thirty years old. The practice of deliberative democracy has evolved dramatically in that time, and some of the laws governing open meetings, advance notification, advisory committees, and public meeting formats have become obstacles to good public participation rather than assets. Some communities are beginning to reassess how the legal framework might uphold the best practices in engaging citizens.

Possible activities:

- Convening discussions between local leaders and legal personnel (such as city attorneys) who are grappling with these challenges.
 - Crafting model statutes and ordinances and helping communities adapt them to their own needs.
 - Developing a training for city attorneys and other legal professionals on how to work with existing laws and ordinances
7. **New roles for the media.** Starting a decade ago, some newspapers started convening deliberative projects because they seemed to fit the goals of “public journalism,” the notion that the media has a responsibility to bring citizens directly into the discussion of public issues. More recently, journalism has been transformed by the proliferation of new media outlets, from blogs to alternative weekly newspapers. There seem to be new opportunities for local and neighborhood media to convene and inform deliberative democracy.

Possible activities:

- Commissioning and disseminating research that explores whether and how deliberative experiences affect citizens’ information needs.
 - Piloting projects which have strong buy-in and involvement from journalists, and which help journalists understand how they might develop new innovations.
8. **Efforts to engage citizens across a metropolitan region.** It is increasingly apparent that many of the challenges facing communities are in fact regional issues, and must be addressed regionally. There have been few region-wide efforts to engage citizens in deliberation and action, perhaps because the scope of these projects is more daunting, and perhaps because of the lack of adequate region-wide networks and leadership. Involving citizens across a metro area may

be a way to tackle seemingly intractable issues, strengthen regional connections, and build awareness of the region as an important political arena.

Possible activities:

- Convening, on a metro-wide basis, local leaders who have a track record for involving citizens productively in public issues.
 - Piloting region-wide democratic governance efforts, especially ones that use online technologies to help address the challenges of scale.
 - Commissioning and disseminating research that explores the relationships between deliberative democracy, sprawl, and smart growth.
9. **Architecture for deliberative democracy.** In the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration and other New Deal agencies constructed a national infrastructure of schools, hospitals, government buildings, parks, concert halls, and other vital public facilities. Many of these civic assets are now crumbling, and many communities lack buildings that facilitate and celebrate the best practices in deliberative democracy. The time has come to construct a ‘built environment’ for 21st Century public life.

Possible activities:

- Supporting efforts to engage citizens in the design and decision-making process for new public buildings.
 - Developing white papers, research projects, and design competitions that focus on the “built environment” needs of 21st Century democracy.
10. **Assessing the state of local democracy.** Many local leaders are unsure what citizens think about local government and other institutions. When people fail to turn out for public meetings, is it because they are satisfied, or apathetic, or angry? Does the community have valuable civic assets that haven’t been adequately recognized or tapped? Many communities are looking for more comprehensive ways to gauge the health of local democracy and decide how to engage citizens more productively.

Possible activities:

- Creating and disseminating measurement tools that help local leaders assess local democracy.
- Applying those measurement tools in awards programs that recognize communities for their efforts to improve local democracy.

More resources for funders

Two other excellent resources for funders working in this field are:

- “Citizens at the Center: A New Approach to Civic Engagement,” written by Cynthia Gibson and published by the Case Foundation, available at www.casefoundation.org/spotlight/civic_engagement/summary.
- “Collaborative Governance: A Guide for Grantmakers,” written by Doug Henton, Keith Melville, Malka Kopell, and Terry Amsler, published by the Hewlett Foundation, at www.hewlett.org/Publications/collaborativegovernance.htm.

V. Assessing proposals that aim to strengthen local democracy

Many foundations are receiving funding requests for projects that would engage citizens in deliberation and democratic governance. Assessing these kinds of proposals requires particular attention to the goals and capacities of the would-be organizers.

As a first step, funders should consider reaching out to the national networks listed on p. 9 and to any local groups that may have experience with public deliberation. These may be local chapters or affiliates of national groups like the League of Women Voters, or key local institutions like libraries, community colleges, public broadcasting stations, or university departments of public policy, communications, political science, or other disciplines.

Understanding the goals and philosophy of a potential project

Understanding a project's goals and philosophy can help you explain exactly why you are supporting – or choosing not to support – the effort. Ask the organizers:

- What are the goals of the project?
- How many people are you trying to involve?
- What kinds of changes are you hoping will result from this project? What is the theory embodied in this project – what is your sense of how we can make progress on these issues?
- How will those changes take place? Who will be responsible for carrying out any action ideas generated by your project?
- Are there examples of programs from other communities that have inspired you?
- Are you using or adapting a model that was developed by another organization? If this group is a national organization, how do they help local organizers use their process?
- What kinds of written materials will you give participants?
- How will you measure the success of the project? How will you monitor any recommendations or action efforts that might emerge from the effort?

It may become clear in the course of this conversation that the project is in fact an advocacy effort, intended to rally citizens around a particular cause or plan. In other words, the organizers have already decided what the community should do, and want citizens to support them. There's nothing wrong with these kinds of initiatives, but they shouldn't be confused with deliberative democracy efforts, which put a variety of views and options on the table and allow citizens to decide what they think should be done.

Assessing their capacities: Can they implement the project?

Mobilizing citizens is more difficult than it sometimes appears. Officials, activists, and other organizers often underestimate the time and effort it takes to recruit large numbers

of people, recruit residents who haven't traditionally been involved in public life, structure the meetings, and ensure that the project leads to outcomes that are clear and verifiable. In assessing the capacities of potential organizers, here are some factors to consider:

Staffing needs – If the organizers do intend to recruit large numbers of people, they will probably need a staff person (full-time in a big city, perhaps part-time in a smaller community) just to handle recruitment. Have the organizers planned for this? Do they have a 'donated' staffer from a community organization, or are they requesting sufficient resources to hire someone? Are the organizers planning to hire an out-of-town consultant as the main coordinator or organizer? If so, what kind of local infrastructure will be left when the consultant leaves? Involving large numbers of people usually requires at least 3-6 months of planning and organizing – has this been factored into the proposal?

Facilitators or moderators – Most of the formats for deliberative democracy employ facilitators or moderators of some kind. Sometimes another organization (i.e., a national organization, or a local or state mediation center) can provide this kind of technical assistance, usually for a fee. How will the organizers handle this? What do they expect the costs to be? How will they evaluate the trainers or facilitators, so that they can learn from the project and improve it over time? How will they allow for participation by residents who do not speak English?

Research and writing – Most processes require written materials that inform the participants and help structure the sessions. Sometimes the national organization supporting a particular process can provide guides, either free or for a fee; other processes require a locally produced guide. Even when the process uses a generic national guide, it will probably be helpful to provide participants with background information on how the issue affects their community. How will the organizers meet this challenge? Can they produce information that is clear and unbiased? Will the material be available in different languages?

Outreach capacity – Recruitment efforts that rely on newspapers, television, and radio as the primary method of outreach generally aren't very effective. To involve large numbers of people – particularly if you want people representing a range of backgrounds – you need to reach out to the groups and organizations they belong to, and convince leaders in those settings to help you make the pitch. Do the organizers have access to a broad and diverse network of groups and organizations? Do they already have credibility in different parts of the community? If the main coordinator will be an out-of-town consultant, does this person have sufficient local connections to manage the recruitment process? Can the organizers describe the project in such a concise and compelling way that organizational leaders will want to recruit people from their constituencies?

VI. Resources to consult

Organizations and networks

AmericaSpeaks
1050 Seventeenth Street, NW
Suite 350
Washington, DC 20036
202-775-3939
www.americaspeaks.org

Ascentum Incorporated
30 Rosemount Avenue
Suite 300
Ottawa, ON K1Y 1P4
Canada
888-761-7306
613-761-7306
www.ascentum.ca

Canadian Community for Dialogue and Deliberation
www.c2d2.ca

Center for Deliberative Democracy
Dept. of Communication
Stanford University
450 Serra Mall, Bldg. 120
Stanford, CA 94305-2050
650-723-2260
<http://cdd.stanford.edu>

Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)
Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service
Lincoln Filene Hall
Tufts University
Medford, MA 02155
617-627-4781
www.civicyouth.org

Center for Wise Democracy
1122 E. Pike Street, #578
Seattle, WA 98122
206-459-8429
www.wisedemocracy.org

Collaborative Governance Initiative
Institute for Local Government
League of California Cities
1400 K Street, Suite 301
Sacramento, CA 95814
www.ca-ilg.org

Community Building Institute
8718 Mary Lee Lane
Annandale, VA 22003
703-425-6296
<http://communitybuildinginstitute.org/>

Conversation Cafés
PO Box 1501
Langley, WA 98260
www.conversationcafe.org

Deliberative Democracy Consortium
1050 Seventeenth Street, NW
Suite 350
Washington, DC 20036
www.deliberative-democracy.net

Deliberative Democracy Project
119 Hendricks Hall
1209 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403-1209
541-346-3892
www.uoregon.edu/~ddp/

Democracy Design Workshop
Institute of Information Law & Policy - RM-A800
New York Law School
57 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013
212-431-2368
<http://dotank.nyls.edu>

The Democracy Imperative
www.unh.edu/democracy/

E-Democracy.Org
3211 E. 44th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55406
612-246-4594
www.e-democracy.org/

Everyday Democracy (formerly the Study Circles Resource Center)
111 Founders Plaza
Suite 1403
East Hartford, CT 06108
860-928-2616
www.everyday-democracy.org

Future Search Network
4700 Wissahickon Ave, Suite 126
Philadelphia PA 19144
800-951-6333
www.futuresearch.net

Harwood Institute
4915 St. Elmo Avenue, Suite 402
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-656-3669
www.theharwoodinstitute.org

Information Renaissance
714 Hastings Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
412.901.0022
www.info-ren.org

International Association for Public Participation
13762 Colorado Blvd.
Suite 124-54
Thornton, CO 80602
800-644-4273
www.iap2.org

International Institute for Sustained Dialogue
444 North Capitol St., NW
Suite 434
Washington, DC 20001-1512
202-393-4478
www.sustaineddialogue.org

The Jefferson Center
www.jefferson-center.org

The Keystone Center
1628 Sts. John Road
Keystone CO 80435
970-513-5800
www.keystone.org

National Charrette Institute
1028 SE Water Ave., Suite 245
Portland, OR 97214
503-233-8486
www.charretteinstitute.org

National Civic League
1640 Logan Street
Denver, CO 80203
303-571-4343
<http://www.ncl.org/>

National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation
717-243-5144
<http://www.thataway.org>

National Issues Forums
Kettering Foundation
200 Commons Road
Dayton, OH 45459
800-443-7834
www.nifi.org

Public Agenda
6 East 39th Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10016
212-686-6610
www.publicagenda.org

Public Conversations Project
46 Kondazian Street
Watertown, MA 02472
617-923-1216
www.publicconversations.org

Public Forum Institute
2300 M Street, NW
Suite 900
Washington, DC 20037
202-467-2774
www.publicforuminstitute.org

Right Question Project
2464 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 314
Cambridge, MA 02140
617-492-1900
www.rightquestion.org

Viewpoint Learning, Inc.
4660 La Jolla Village Drive, Suite 700
San Diego, CA 92122
858-551-2317
www.viewpointlearning.com

World Café
www.theworldcafe.com/

National associations

There are a number of national associations that represent and convene the kinds of local leaders who are involved in deliberation and democratic governance. Responding to the needs of their constituents, these associations have become increasingly prominent advocates and innovators in the field:

American Association of School Administrators
801 N Quincy St.
Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22203-1730
703-528-0700
www.aasa.org

Grassroots Grantmakers
P.O. Box G
Hallettsville, TX 77964
361-798-1808
<http://www.grassrootsgrantmakers.org>

International City/County Management Association
777 North Capitol Street, NE
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002-4201
202-289-(ICMA)
<http://www.icma.org>

League of Women Voters of the USA
1730 M Street, NW
Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20036-4508
202-429-1965
<http://www.lwv.org>

National League of Cities
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 550
Washington, DC 20004
202-626-3000
www.nlc.org

National School Boards Association
1680 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-838-6722
www.nsba.org

National School Public Relations Association
15948 Derwood Road
Rockville, MD 20855
301-519-0496
www.nspra.org

NeighborWorks America
1325 G Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20005
<http://www.nw.org>

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