

# **Implementing a Dialogic Process for Social Change: Dialogue for Uncertain Times**

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## **Abstract**

We are losing confidence in our political institutions and in each other. With society increasingly facing complex challenges, the future of universities and communities are intertwined. Colleges and universities can play an integral role in involving a broad range of people and perspectives in ways that lead to positive social change. This workshop utilizes the *Public Conversations Project* process as it applies to the Social Change Model for community engagement and change. A dialogic process was implemented in conjunction with the Mayor's office for over 1000 citizens in Middle Tennessee on "Race, Equity and Leadership." This workshop will lead participants in a simulation applying this method to a real world issue and discuss the outcomes of the dialogue and implications for students of leadership.

## **Introduction**

The primary mission of colleges and universities is to educate and prepare students to become leaders within their communities for the betterment of society (Astin and Astin, 2000). This work is happening in the classroom as well as through the service learning opportunities that many universities across the country offer. However, the literature specifically related to the influence of higher education on college students capacity for leadership is relatively sparse (Dugan & Komives, 2010). University administrators and professors must go deeper to develop the leadership skills of students by teaching them to collaborate for sustainable change in the communities in which they live, work, play and ultimately serve. Often lacking in this effort are well structured methods for universities to engage with communities around the most challenging issues facing them.

At a small private liberal arts college in Tennessee, a graduate degree in Civic Leadership is designed to increase focused attention on civic challenges and to prepare students to meet them. One of the possible models to develop students' leadership skills that is taught in the Civic Leadership program is the Social Change Model (SCM) of Leadership. The model promotes the values of social justice, equality, self-knowledge, empowerment, collaboration, citizenship and service to the community (HERI, 1996). This curriculum, when fused with intentional theoretical and application-based activities, creates a well-rounded experience (Buschlen and Dvorak, 2011).

As much as leadership educators attempt to impart these values, they also must be tested in the community in which a university is embedded. Sometimes, public will needs university skill to catalyze social change. The aforementioned University aspires to help shape and practice a different approach to leadership and public service, built on a model of civil discourse, innovation and bold action. Students are learning to ask the right questions, listen to understand, collaborate to serve, and to use collective impact to create. The way this happens is through cross-sector collaboration around issues of mutual concern.

In the summer of 2016, students in the graduate program in Civic Leadership asked the right question of a representative of the Mayors' Office. The representative and several members of the Metropolitan Council joined the class for a discussion on "Participating in State and Local Politics as a Civic Leader." The conversation was timely. One of the students asked, "what is the Mayor's response to all that is happening in this country and how do we ensure we don't become a Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Falcon Heights, Minnesota; or Dallas Texas?" Earlier in the week, there were three shootings by Police of unarmed black men and the deadly shooting rampage by a citizen killing five police officers in Dallas, TX. The response from the Mayor's Office was thoughtful and communicated the heart of the Mayor. The Mayor wanted to have conversations in the community. To listen to the constituency and to learn from them. However, the conversation was to be held "within the next two weeks" with 1000 people, in a town hall format. This format went directly against the type of inclusive dialogue we were teaching. The researcher/presenter offered a different way to dialogue to the Mayor's Office representative, the dialogic process as designed by the *Public Conversations Project* (Herzig & Chasin, 2006). The representative took the information back to the Mayor. The University was chosen as the convener for the Mayors Conversations on *Race and Social Equity* with 150 leaders and ultimately for the larger dialogue on *Race, Equity and Leadership* with nearly 1000 citizens.

The purpose of the dialogue was for participants to provide an honest assessment about life in their city and how they could improve as a community as it related to race and inequality. Conducting the dialogue as opposed to a town hall meeting secures an expanded and diverse group of leaders. Through this process students from the College, as well as faculty and staff of the University engaged in the dialogic process with over 1000 people participating bringing together the public, Metro Government representatives, and community organizations from across the city. The process resulted in the identification of 10 issue areas (e.g. community empowerment, criminal justice, health disparities and public education/youth) for participants to critically respond and ultimately for the Metropolitan Government to develop a plan to implement to address the aforementioned issues.

The purpose of this workshop will be to apply the Social Change Model for adult student leadership development utilizing the dialogic process and ways it can be applied to community engagement and change. The Social Change Model for leadership development is a model primarily used and studied in undergraduate education. The workshop will give evidence of its successful use for adult learners showing participants of the workshop how they might implement a dialogic process in their own communities.

Learning objectives include

1. The Social Change Method as a means for developing leadership in students
2. The dialogic process as a way to engage the community in social change
3. The dialogic process as a technique and structure for talking about and moving through serious issues
4. The use of the dialogic process as a way to develop relationships, mitigate power differentials, heal and restore, identify issues and clarify them, and/or move to action on issues

## Review of Related Scholarship

Many citizens have lost faith in our democracy and young people are showing apathy to getting involved in political systems through voting and/or influencing the political process.

Acknowledging this need, colleges and universities should undertake the development of a new generation of leaders. As Alexis de Toqueville (1969) pointed out, each new generation is a new people that must acquire the knowledge, learn the skills, and develop the dispositions or traits of private and public character that undergirds a constitutional democracy. In general, researchers agree that it is important for individuals to develop a civic identity based on a sense of connection to their community and an understanding that the connection entails responsibilities to engage in activities that benefit both them and the communities in which they live (Atkins & Hart, 2003). Additionally, active citizenship confers benefits to include the development of social connections and networks that promote both personal and community development (Balsano, 2010). Universities can enhance their overall mission of teaching, research and service by working to improve the quality of life in their local communities through the leadership development of its students. These institutions already serve as living laboratories of social innovation. Therefore, the wealth of knowledge existing there can provide rich opportunities for students based on collaborative projects that serve both the institution and the community (Astin, 1996).

The Social Change Model (SCM) of Leadership was developed in response to this growing need specifically for undergraduate college students. Astin (1996) stated that she and colleagues designed this “college-based program of leadership development to be used in training and developing leaders who will effect positive change in the many areas of national and international affairs” (p. 4). The principles of the model are that values demand a conscious focus, leadership ought to bring about desirable change, leadership is a process and not a position, all students are potential leaders, and service is a powerful vehicle for developing leaders (Astin, 1996). Leadership development has been linked to several additional developmental outcomes among college students, including multicultural awareness, personal and societal awareness, and civic responsibility (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 2001). Thus, student leadership development begins with the individual self, and moves outward toward the level of community (as defined by the student), and ultimately toward the greater society.

Examples abound when considering the many ways in which student’s community experiences can foster their development of socially responsible leadership (Soria, Nobbe & Fink, 2013). In working with community organizations, students can learn to collaborate and work effectively on a team. Students may also become inspired to engage in promoting social justice by directly witnessing the results of social injustice (Sorria, Nobbe & Fink, 2013), e.g racial discrimination, gender discrimination, public school inequality in poor income areas, etc. More specifically, they begin to understand the values of a community as it relates to injustice, the values of opportunity, community (working together) and equity. Shared values encourage aspirational, hopeful thinking as well as the development of relationships, which is a better place to start when entering dialogue than fear and anxiety (“The Opportunity Agenda” 2017). Opening conversations with values provides a bridge from shared values to the roles of racial equity and inclusion in fulfilling those values for all. Doing so can move audiences into a frame of mind that

is more solution- oriented and less mired in skepticism. How we talk is important. Dialogue must address the issues of equity before it can be successful (Romney, 2005).

The dialogic process provides a conceptual framework for applying the SCM model to working in groups to achieve sustainable community change. This is a process in which people from as many parts of the community as possible, involved in serious conflict, exchange information, face-to-face, in an effort to create better understanding (Herzig & Chasin 2006). Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make it and remake it...through dialogue, reflecting together on what we know and don't know, we can then act critically to transform reality (Friere, 1970). It creates a "holding environment" for productive conflict and challenge which is often at the heart of leadership (Heifetz, 1994).

The specific dialogic process utilized for the purpose of this proposal is a relationship-centered approach authored by the *Public Conversations Project* (Herzig & Chasin, 2006). This method is based on:

- Preparing people for new conversations
- Reflecting on one's own and others' perspectives
- Using shared agreements that guide the conversation
- Encouraging curiosity and honest questions
- Structured conversation that prevents old, unproductive patterns and enhances listening and speaking respectfully

Leadership educators need a deeper understanding of how innovative practices, such as the dialogic process, can be used within the SCM of leadership to equip students to lead in these uncertain times. The process also serves as a good lesson for universities staying in close dialogue with the cities in which they serve and challenging their current methods of approaching tough issues. The challenges that communities face as they position themselves for long-term success are not technical problems with engineered fixes (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). They are adaptive challenges stemming from the interaction of many interrelated trends. Understanding this complex environment, again, requires contributions from many people operating from a variety of perspectives (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002). It should be noted, though that engaging in dialogue with many actors can also stymie a group in moving to concrete action that ultimately will make a difference on the issue at hand (Easterling & Millesen, 2012). Building individual capacity as taught in the SCM, to discuss issues of social justice is one very important step in the process, which is the personal value portion of the model. However, effective problem solving on the community level is desired and can be attained when expressed and practiced in the group work of the dialogue. Collaboration within the group values component of SCM teaches students to recognize that working with others with multiple talents and perspectives increases effectiveness of the group by harnessing the power of diversity to generate creative solutions, actions (Astin, 1996) and social change. Civility in the dialogue on controversial viewpoints is achieved when there is open and honest dialogue backed by the groups commitment to understand the sources of the disagreement and to work cooperatively toward common solutions. Having dialogue in this way can ameliorate many of the issues of inequity plaguing our society today.

## Lesson Plan Description

Title: Implementing a Dialogic Process for Social Change: Dialogue for Uncertain Times

Time: 90 minutes

Purpose: The purpose of this workshop will be to share the methodology of the Social Change Model (SCM) for Leadership Development and how to apply it utilizing the framework of the dialogic process. Participants will leave the educator workshop with the resources to implement these models at their Institution and in their communities.

Learning objectives include:

1. The Social Change Model as a means for developing leadership in students
2. The dialogic process as a way to engage the community
3. The dialogic process as a technique and structure for talking about and moving through serious issues
4. The use of the dialogic process as a way to develop relationships, mitigate power differentials, heal and restore, identify issues and clarify them, and/or move to action on issues

Teaching Methods:

1. Upon entering the room, participants will be asked to sit at round tables that mirror the dialogic process.
2. Introduction (5 minutes)
  - a. Brief introduction of the facilitator
  - b. State objectives of the workshop
3. Pre-assessment. Activate prior knowledge (5 minutes)
  - a. Facilitator will ask the participants to introduce themselves to one another and dialogue at their tables about how they have seen the dialogic process play out.
  - b. Facilitator will walk around the room and listen to dialogic process to gauge participants' background knowledge and interest
4. Discuss and give examples of how universities can impact communities for social change (10 minutes)
  - a. Utilize PowerPoint to review relevant literature around universities impact on community
  - b. Share excerpts of the curriculum design of the graduate degree in Civic Leadership, its relationship to SCM for development of students for leadership in community and the dialogic process as a valuable tool for making the relationship between the values of common purpose, controversy with civility and citizenship work

5. Dialogic Process Overview (20 minutes)
  - a. Utilize PowerPoint to define and train workshop participants on the process to include process goals, an overview of the communication agreements and sample dialogue questions
  - b. Discuss the possible uses for the process
  - c. Show video clip of Nashville's Dialogue on *REAL Talk: a Forum on Race, Equity and Leadership*
  - d. Discuss the use of the process in this proposal as it relates to social injustice, particularly race in America, and gaps between what we know and what we see happen with local government actions in a community around key issues.
    - i. Introduce key components utilized in the training (handouts already on the table)
  
6. Simulation: At the round tables, participants will go through a shortened dialogic process answering pre-assigned questions (30 minutes)
  - i. Complete this sentence: "The word I bring to this table is \_\_\_\_: the word I hope to take away is \_\_\_\_\_."
  - ii. Based on what you have learned heretofore, what are two questions you would like to have the facilitator answer?
  - iii. As a contributing member of your institution, what keeps you up at night regarding what you see/hear happening in the community?
  - b. A facilitator and scribe will be assigned for each table
  - c. Each table will report out the highlights of their discussion and how they might move from discussion to action
  
7. Debrief the process (10 minutes)
  - a. Results and impact of the discussions in Nashville, lessons learned and where the researcher sees next steps
  - b. Participants share out one take away: "I used to think \_\_, but now I know \_\_\_\_."
  
8. Conclusion – (5 minutes)
  - a. Question and Answers
  - b. Facilitator contact information

### **Discussion of Outcomes Results**

The dialogic process as designed by the *Public Conversations Project* (Herzig & Chasin, 2006) was presented as an option for dialogue to a southern Metropolitan Government to convene the Mayors Conversations on "Race and Social Equity" with an estimated 150 leaders and ultimately for the larger dialogue on "*REAL*" *Talk: A Forum on Race Equity and Leadership*" with nearly 1000 citizens. The researcher/presenter was tapped to co-facilitate the discussions. The purpose of the dialogues was for participants to provide an honest assessment about life in their city and how they could improve as a community as it related to race and inequality. Conducting the dialogue as opposed to a town hall meeting secured an expanded and diverse group of leaders as well as faculty, staff and students from the University.

The first dialogue on “Race and Social Equity” was held in July of 2016. An estimated 150 leaders from organizations across the city were invited to participate in the process to include university presidents, the chief of police, the DA’s office, non-profit, government and business leaders, educators and citizens. Evaluations were distributed at the end of the dialogue and later analyzed by the Metro Human Relations Commission (“MHRC Community Dialogue Report,” 2016). Eighty-seven (87) total participants submitted evaluations. Approximately 55% of them identified as either male or man, while 45% identified as female or woman. In terms of racial/ethnic identity, nearly 63% of respondents were black, 26% were white, 6% were Latino, and another 5% checked more than one race/ethnicity category. As it pertains to age, less than 10% of respondents were under the age of 30, 27% were between 30-39, 26% were between 40-49, nearly 22% were 50-59, and 15% were 60 and older. Average age for respondents who indicated their exact age (n=70) was 44 (“MHRC Community Dialogue Report,” 2016).

Respondents were asked a series of questions about the process (Appendix 4) to include questions leading up to the dialogue and during. They indicated their level of agreement with each statement on a 5-point scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Data gathered from leaders indicate the majority of respondents were largely in agreement (“strongly agree” or “agree”) that the communication from the Mayor’s Office and the materials sent to them prior to the dialogue were helpful. More respondents strongly agreed that they came into the dialogue feeling prepared for the discussion (23%) than they did for any other statement. In terms of their expectations for the dialogue, the largest shares of respondents indicated that they had high (42%) or neutral (33%) expectations (“MHRC Community Dialogue Report,” 2016).

Regarding the dialogue itself, respondents were asked about different parts of the process and about their feelings toward the dialogue, again, on a 5-point scale. For all statements but one, 80% or more of respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed.” The statements for which agreement was especially strong (the share of those who “strongly agreed” was larger than the share that “agreed”), included “The facilitator at my table adhered to the communication agreements,” “I felt comfortable speaking honestly,” “the climate during the conversation was positive,” and “I would participate in a conversation like this again.” The statement with the most varied distribution of agreement was “the dialogue gave me new insights into how to work toward racial and social justice.” While nearly 70% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with this statement, another 20% neither agreed nor disagreed and nearly 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed. For the most part, disagreement (“disagree” or “strongly disagree”) was minimal and stayed under 10% of respondents. The exceptions to this were the statements, “the expectations for the conversation were clearly stated” (10.6% disagreement), “the time given to respond to each question was sufficient” (10.4% disagreement), and “the dialogue gave me new insights into how to work toward racial and social justice” (12.7% disagreement) (“MHRC Community Dialogue Report,” 2016).

The dialogic process of July 2016, informed the creation of “REAL Talk” that brought together nearly 1000 citizens from across the city. “REAL” was an initiative of the National League of Cities where in partnership with President Obama’s administration and the US Conference of Mayors, cities were encouraged to convene community conversations on race relations, justice, policing and equality. During Nashville’s “REAL Talk,” citizens joined together to discuss several important identified topic areas from the process that happened in July 2016; community

empowerment, criminal justice system, data/information, diversity/inclusion, health disparities, housing/gentrification, immigrant and refugee/New American communities, public education/youth, public safety/policing, and workforce/jobs. Below are highlights of the dialogue and the city's response showing how dialogue can lead to social change for a City Government. (Metropolitan Nashville Government of Nashville & Davidson County, 2017):

- Community empowerment: participants desired a greater level of input into Metro decision-making. In response, the Mayor's Office initiated several opportunities to include a meeting with University Presidents/representatives to talk about and encourage them to utilize their faculty, staff and students conduct their own REAL dialogues throughout the city to come together, coordinate and collaborate on issues facing the city.
- Criminal Justice: with all of the reform efforts occurring nationwide, it is clear that issues exist within the criminal justice system. The Metropolitan Government reported it had had taken steps to reduce the number of beds in Metro's new Criminal Justice Center, adding Mental Health diversion, continuing support of the Drug Court diversion program, creating a program to address driver's license revocation and working to start Restorative Youth Diversion in Juvenile Court
- Public Education/Youth: residents requested that an accountability pipeline be created for families, teachers, school, board, central office and the state. In response, the Mayor formulated a teachers cabinet and a parent cabinet that both provide feedback to the Mayor's Office and Nashville Public Education Foundation on various initiatives and strategies, elevating both voices in education
- Public Safety: The Metro Human Relations Commission collaborated with the Police Department to host a *Diversity Bus Tour* for cadets at the academy. Additionally, the community was very integral in creating the policies for the Police Department's body-worn cameras (BWC) as the Mayor appointed a Public Safety Community Advisory Group to come up with the best policy for the program

### **Workshop Plan & Implications**

The workshop will benefit administrators and educators interested in applying the mission of universities and colleges to help shape a different approach to the challenges facing society. The model and framework taught during the workshop will provide new tools for bringing practice in to the classroom/university (theory to practice).

The researcher/presenter will discuss the approach of the Social Change Model for leadership development and how to apply it utilizing the framework of the dialogic process. The participants will understand the dialogic process as a way to engage the community. Participants will know the dialogic process as a technique and structure for talking about and moving through serious issues. Participants will go through their own dialogic process simulation utilizing the skills learned during the session. The simulation will allow participants to become more skilled at the uses of a dialogic process, leading the process, and ways in which to move from discussion to action. Participants will be provided with reference material and will ask questions for clarity.

The information provided will serve as a starting point for participants who wish to realize a dialogic process for their community.

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## **Appendix**

Emailed letter to participants.

On behalf of Mayor Megan Barry, we are glad that you can participate in her Race, Equity and Leadership Dialogue this Saturday, July 23.

This is the first step in a process of community dialogues and we appreciate all the representatives of close to 100 community organizations who are giving their time to provide input into a variety of issues that can only strengthen our community. We also want to thank Lipscomb University's College of Public Service and Leadership who is designing and leading this process, Metro Public Schools for providing the location, as well as representatives from the Metro Human Relations Commissions and our criminal justice system and departments who will also be present.

### Logistical Details

- Location: Pearl –Cohn Comprehensive School, 904 26th Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37208
- Parking: surface parking lots at the School
- Time of event: Check in for confirmed registrants from 12:30 – 1 p.m.; Program starts at 1 p.m.; the event should conclude by 4 p.m. DPTs meets at 11am for training, followed by working lunch at noon.
- Set-up for the event in the Pearl-Cohn gymnasium: Tables of 10 for facilitated dialogue circles. Each table will have a one DPT consisting of a table host (facilitator), a scribe, and a timekeeper.

### Process Details

- Upon check-in, each organization rep (one per organization) will receive name tag with table assignment, table tent, and event information
- Dialogue circles at each table:
  - Facilitated process: A facilitator (table host) trained by Lipscomb University will lead dialogue that will be divided into two rounds with 3 questions each (the first round: Telling our Stories; the second round: Tools toward Action and Accountability) – there will be a break between the rounds
  - Time limits for question response will be shared and followed
  - Dialogue circles will be operated according to the below Communication Agreement (Source: Fostering Dialogue across Divides: A Nuts and Bolts Guide from the Public Conversations Project (2006).
    - We will speak for ourselves and allow others to speak for themselves, with no pressure to represent or explain a whole group.
    - We will not criticize the views of others or attempt to persuade them.
    - We will listen with resilience, “hanging in “when something is hard to hear.
    - We will share airtime and participate within the suggested timeframes.

- We will not interrupt except to indicate that we cannot or did not hear a speaker.
  - We will “pass” or “pass for now” if we are not ready or willing to respond to a question.
  - We will hold in confidence what we hear in this circle. We will not confront one another about circle comments after we leave here.
  - We may go hard against ideas, ideologies, and institutions. We will not, however, harm or attack individuals within or beyond this circle.
- Please come prepared to answer this question as part of the process: What does your membership/constituency want the Mayor and other city leaders to understand about the impact of issues of racial injustice on their lives? Can you give a brief specific example?
  - Report outs after each round will be shared with the full group

If you have any questions or comments about the event details, please let us know. The day of the event, if needed, I can be reached at (#) .

Again, the Mayor and our team look forward to seeing you on Saturday.

Respectfully,

Director, Mayor’s Office of Neighborhoods and Community Engagement

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#### Agenda

- 1:00 – 1:15 Greetings from Metro Government
- 1:15-1:20 Michelle Steele, Institute for Civic Engagement
- 1:20 – 1:30 Phyllis Hildreth, Institute for Conflict Management. Process description, task introduction, Communication Agreement.
- 1:30 – 1:45 Table Introductions (30 seconds)
- 1:45 – 2:05 Round One, Question One (2 minutes)
- 2:05 – 2:40 Round One, Question Two (4 minutes)
- 2:40 – 3:00 Round One, Question Three (2 minutes)
- 3:00 – 3:05 Silent Reflection
- 3:05 – 3:15 Break
- 3:15 – 3:25 Round Two, Question One (1 minute)
- 3:25 – 3:40 Round Two, Question Two (2 minutes)
- 3:40 – 3:55 Round Two, Question Three (2 minutes)
- 3:55 – 4:15 Debrief
- 4:15 – 4:25 Next Steps and Action Commitments
- 4:25 – 4:30 Evaluate and Adjourn

Participant Handout:

Dialogue Processes—Seeking Understanding

## Appendix

### The Process

#### Dialogue Processes—Seeking Understanding

Dialogue is a process in which people or groups involved in serious (often intractable and identity-based) conflict share information in order to create better understanding. Key objectives include slowing our reflexive leaps to stereotypes and building towards relationships of trust and respect. In dialogue participants may not change opinions, but may undergo a profound shift in how they view self, other, and the relationship. This is a space to attend to the wishes, hopes and concerns of each speaker. Today you are invited to participate in a dialogue circle on race, equity and social justice in our community.

#### **Process**

At each conversation table, eight participants will gather to work through the following questions. A table host will ensure the safety and fairness of the process by a) posing each question, b) managing time limits for responses, and c) holding respondents accountable to the *Communications Agreement* adopted here today.

We will consider two sets of three questions each. We will consider and collect new questions generated by our conversation. We will exchange commitments for next steps towards the community-wide conversation scheduled for September 10<sup>th</sup>. We will evaluate our work.

We will depart with gratitude for each speaker's courage and generosity of spirit; for new understanding, and cautious hope.

#### **Table Introductions (30 seconds each person)**

What is your name? What organization do you represent? What did you give up to be here today? Complete this sentence: "The word I bring to this table is \_\_\_\_\_; the word I hope to take away is \_\_\_\_\_."

#### **Leadership Dialog Round One – Telling Our Stories**

##### **Question One (2 minutes)**

What are the two most pressing issues of racial injustice affecting your membership/constituency? Are these urgent or systemic issues?

##### **Question Two (4 minutes)**

What does your membership/constituency want the Mayor and other city leaders to understand about the impact of those issues on their lives? Can you provide a brief example (Question

should be written out in advance, per word limit, to ensure our ability to hear the whole story within time limits).

**Question Three (2 minutes)**

As their leader, what keeps you up at night; what is your biggest fear for the well-being of your members/constituents if these issues are not addressed?

**Leadership Dialogue Round Two – Tools Towards Action and Accountability**

**Question One (one minute)**

What terms or concepts need to be clearly defined in order to effectively address issues identified in Round One?

**Question Two (two minutes)**

What data do you and your members/constituents need to better understand and place into context issues of primary concern? What data do you need to assess progress and accountability? What are barriers to accessing that data?

**Question Three (two minutes)**

What change do you need to see in the next 30 days? Three months? Next year?

**Communication Agreements**

1. We will speak for ourselves and allow others to speak for themselves, with no pressure to represent or explain a whole group.
2. We will not criticize the views of others or attempt to persuade them.
3. We will listen with resilience, “hanging in” when something is hard to hear.
4. We will share airtime and participate within the suggested timeframes.
5. We will not interrupt except to indicate that we cannot or did not hear a speaker.
6. We will “pass” or “pass for now” if we are not ready or willing to respond to a question.
7. We will hold in confidence what we hear in this circle. We will not confront one another about circle comments after we leave here.
8. We may go hard against ideas, ideologies, and institutions. We will not, however, harm or attack individuals within or beyond this circle.

Source: *Fostering Dialogue Across Divides: A Nuts and Bolts Guide from the Public Conversations Project* (2006). [www.publicconversations.org](http://www.publicconversations.org)