

Police- Community Dialogues

resilience connection + hope

A Case Study



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Executive Summary

When Kate Dieter-Maradei—a court mediator, activist, and mother to two black children—found herself talking to an off-duty police officer at a mutual friend’s barbecue in 2015, she instinctively drew boundaries around the topics she would broach. Kate recognized how easy it would be to get into heated exchanges about issues like Black Lives Matter, racial prejudice, and law enforcement. Despite her deep professional expertise, she didn’t feel equipped to have such a difficult conversation.

In that moment, something shifted. With so much at stake for families like hers, Kate realized that she simply couldn’t avoid conversations like these, as difficult and emotional as they are. She also recognized that everyone in her community—even professional mediators—would need support in order to engage meaningfully with people across painful, polarizing differences.

Kate and a group of like minded colleagues envisioned a local alliance between activists, communities of color, and police departments, which could serve the community by creating spaces for meaningful dialogue about race and justice. Kate was referred by one of her colleagues to Essential Partners.

After initial mapping and design conversations with Kate about her hopes, the community context, and the stakeholders who should be involved, Essential Partners experts embarked on a series of community focus groups in order to understand the community’s needs more fully.

Subsequent Essential Partners programs, shaped by that input, were designed in collaboration with activists, members of law enforcement, and local community members.

After the initial mapping and design process, Essential Partners launched a pilot training of activists and police officers. Their goal was to provide the participants with a shared set of robust communication tools, which would empower them to craft, organize, and facilitate dialogues about race and justice on their own, drawing on their local expertise, designing to meet the needs of their context.

With the help of a generous grant of \$25,000 from the American Arbitration Association Foundation, Essential Partners was able to follow up this pilot stage with a self-paced four-part dialogue series.

There were several key programmatic learnings and outcomes from this project.

The most important outcome was the forging of new, resilient relationships between previously skeptical activists of color and local law enforcement officers. The dialogue process engendered trust among participants and reduced tension, invited new mutual understanding of different experiences, and shifted existing patterns of communication.

Not only have the new relationships persisted across subsequent high-profile cases of racially-inflected episodes of police violence, they have provided a conduit of mutual understanding between the local Black community and members of law enforcement.

There have been both affirmative and corrective learnings from the project as well.

Foremost among them is the need for deep trust-building to occur prior to any dialogue across differences in the community. There are also challenges and considerations related to the professional expectations of law enforcement that are not widely understood by those working to bridge or repair this polarized conflict.

Finally, community settings require frameworks and skill-building for effective communication as well as project management support (such as materials, guides, or hours of direct support) in order to coordinate and maintain momentum for transformative dialogues.

“As a black mother, I participated because I want to save my son from harm, and I feared for our safety. **I no longer have that fear—just a belief that my community is stronger** and there are honest police officers who care about me and my son.”

—Anonymous Dialogue Participant

Program Summary

There were four stages of the Raleigh intervention.

1. Mapping and Interviews

During this initial phase, two EP practitioners and EP’s local partner, Kate Dieter-Maradei, mapped out and connected with potential participants in both law enforcement departments and area communities. Once potential participants were identified, the practitioners held hour-long interviews to establish a basis of trust and to understand the goals, fears, and hopes that participants held for dialogue.

2. Facilitator Training

In April of 2018, with the goal of having future community dialogues be both for and by the community, Essential Partners organized a facilitator training for 14 participants interviewed during phase one. The racially diverse group comprised trained mediators, members of law enforcement, and local community members. Over two days, the participants were trained in EP’s Reflective Structured Dialogue (RSD) approach, which leverages structured communication and purposeful engagement to build relationships grounded in mutual understanding across different

perspectives and identities. Through this, the participants gained the competence and confidence to facilitate a dialogue on topics related to race and policing.

3. Pilot Dialogue

Within a week of completing the facilitator training, Essential Partners coordinated a pilot dialogue as a proof of concept for a potential larger dialogue series. Similar preparation was required for this dialogue as for the facilitator training, with further mapping of potential participants and interviews with each. Ultimately, 28 local community members and law enforcement officers were brought together to participate in an evening dialogue led by the trained facilitators. The dialogue ended with a closure circle asking the participants to join Essential Partners in exploring where the dialogue could go next.

4. Four-Part Independent Dialogue Series

The success of the facilitator training and initial pilot dialogue was evident by the desire among both trained facilitators and pilot dialogue participants to expand the dialogue project further in the community. Essential Partners generously received a \$25,000 grant from the American Arbitration Association Foundation in spring 2019 to continue the work. Throughout the summer of 2019, Essential Partners engaged more community members and law enforcement officials through listening circles and interviews. They used the insights and testimonies from this preparation to design a four-part dialogue series that was convened and led by the trained facilitators from winter 2019 through spring 2020.

Project Goals

- Forge stronger and lasting relationships between Law Enforcement Officers and Community Members
- Empower and train local Law Enforcement Officers and Community Members to be facilitators and advocates for dialogue within their communities
- Provide a safe space for open dialogue and difficult conversations focused on Law Enforcement's role and relationship with their communities.

Summary:

- 30+ Law Enforcement and Community members trained as local facilitators
- Pilot Program Dialogue with 28 Law and Enforcement and Community members
- Four Self-Paced 4-Part Dialogues with 24 total people participating (4 groups of 6).

Setting The Stage: The Critical Prework

When Kate reached out to Essential Partners in 2016, Essential Partners had limited experience convening community members and law enforcement for dialogues. There had been very few successful examples of such dialogues elsewhere, and those that had occurred were focused largely on anti-violence discussions. They largely avoided direct discussions of the most divisive topics, and failed to resolve those confrontations once they had been ignited. These dialogues also rarely dealt with the difficult task of forging relationships, repairing trust, and strengthening understanding between law enforcement and their communities.

Thus Essential Partners went into the project with a clear theory of change that if a successful, trusting and sincere dialogue could be created between law enforcement and local community members, then this would create important touch points within Raleigh communities, facilitating a healthier and safer space for the entire community.

EP's Reflective Structured Dialogue framework is designed to meet the diverse needs of different topics, participants, and circumstances. It creates a context in which people can both share and hear difficult personal experiences and perspectives without triggering a threat response or activating polarized dynamics. With this powerful framework in hand, EP practitioners believed that a community-police dialogue could succeed in building trust, relationships, and deeper mutual understanding across this immense and polarized divide.

Goals of Mapping and Interview Process

- Identify community members and members of law enforcement who are motivated to engage in the dialogue process.
- Prepare practitioners for dialogue by building trust, learning the needs of participants and understanding the context.
- Prepare the participants to come to the dialogue with an open mind and the tools to engage in a productive conversation.
- Demonstrate and model an example of what a successful, open and empathetic dialogue would like.
- Ground participants in the values of their community.

Mapping, Interviews, and Small Groups

To achieve the established goals for the project, Kate and the Essential Partners practitioners identified the need for extensive community and stakeholder mapping to identify potential dialogue facilitators.

As the local stakeholder, Kate began this mapping process. She identified fourteen leaders, including members of law enforcement, who held a breadth of perspectives on the issues and were open to the possibility of dialogue.

Over the course of 2-3 months¹, Essential Partner's practitioners conducted one-hour interviews with each of the fourteen potential participants as well as small group dialogues. These provided crucial to understand the context, uncover their specific needs, and build a foundation of trust. Through these conversations, the EP practitioners were able to distill a set of key questions and challenges that participants had raised about a dialogue.

Helping participants prepare themselves for a dialogue on a difficult or polarizing topic through self-reflection and motivational interviewing is a core tenet of Reflective Structured Dialogue.

These interviews also provided the potential participants with an experience of a dialogic process by offering a space where they were actively listened to and heard. Participants reported that this experience helped assuage fears of previous "dialogues" that had ended in direct conflict and heightened polarization.

100% of these initial potential participants volunteered to train to facilitate community conversations as a result of these initial conversations.

Learnings and Key Takeaways

- **Leverage Existing Networks of Trust:** This process relied upon the trust and relationships that the local partner, Kate Deiter-Maradei, had built in her role as a local mediator. She was able to provide the trust that potential participants had in her. This was not carte blanche, however. EP's practitioners still needed to successfully harness that trust through individual relationship-building and process transparency.
- **Ground Participants in Experiences and Values Before Broaching the Polarizing Issue:** The interview and small-group discussion questions with impacted community members did not invite positions or perspectives about their experience with the intersection of race and policing directly. Instead, it invited reflections about experiences grounded in their community—for example, they were invited to share an experience that would help people understand what this community means to them. The goal was to reframe

¹ This length of time reflects the challenges associated with recruiting police officers into dialogue work during a heightened period of distrust between police officers and community members following the case of Philando Castile.

conversations about race and policing with a very grounded sense of the value of the community. Once this was established, the participants were then asked about their communities' and their own experience with the issue.

- **Utilize a Pre-Written Script for Interviews:** Using a script of standard questions for every participant allowed the interviewers to more effectively gauge the different levels of concern, different types of concerns, and avoided the undue influence of individual biases on the design and preparation.
- **The High Level of Organizing and Coordination Recommends a Modest First Stage:** Organizing and coordinating large groups of diverse participants can be extremely difficult. The EP practitioners drew on past experiences to right-size this project. Early positive experiences created a foundation of deeper community investment and resilience that allowed both the program and its impact to have greater longevity.
- **Name and Model Better Practices to Overcome Initial Skepticism:** Given the initial wariness of many participants and their previous negative experiences with public dialogue, it was critical to both name and demonstrate that this dialogue process would be qualitatively different from others they had been a part of. Throughout the interview and focus group processes, the practitioners and Kate (who had previously trained with Essential Partners) named and then modeled the deep active listening that RSD makes possible. Acknowledging negative previous experiences, naming the difference, and modeling were all crucial steps to help participants overcome their initial skepticism.

Testimonies from the Mapping and Interview Process

- Kate: “The script used for calling each of the participants. In my opinion it is the most critical thing EP does that is different from other ways like a town hall. The questions are all the same no matter law enforcement or community participants. They allow people to hear what will happen and also voice their fears, concerns, why they are doing it—their motivation.”
- Kate: “We tried to target 4s, 5s, and 6s. On the ‘1’ side is someone who is an officer who thinks no officer has done anything wrong. Then the ‘10’ on the other side is ‘defund the police.’ These two sides aren’t right for this dialogue. We want people who have differing opinions but can come in with an open mind and open heart.”

Examples of Interview Questions

The questions provided here are meant to invite participants to reflect on their hopes and fears, as well as identify and catalog the different types of interactions that occur between the community and law enforcement. Below are some of examples of questions asked:

- “What do you think would be helpful for me to know about your current life circumstances, your relationship to the members of law enforcement, to conflict, or to anything else?”
- “Have you ever felt mis-characterized by the other party / parties? If so, how? When? What was the effect on you? On others?”
- “What could happen during the meeting that would lead you to feel that your decision to participate was worthwhile?”
- “Do you have any additional concerns, mixed feelings, or fears that it would be useful for me to be aware of?”
- “Have there been prior efforts to discuss the topic and the broader issues? If so, what do you see as the implications of these prior efforts for communication agreements that you might make with the other party?”
- “What do you perceive to be the major sources of strain in the situation? From your perspective, are any of these strains related to more general strains in the relevant broader context? Are any of these strains related to the different cultural contexts of different groups?”
- “What do you want the other party to understand about you in relation to this specific situation or conflict? What questions do you hope that others might ask you?”
- “Given the goals of this meeting, what do you most want to understand about your fellow participants and their concerns? What might you want to ask others in order to get some clarity about these things?”

Examples of Questions and Concerns Asked by Participants in the Interviews

Prospective participants raised a range of concerns about the potential dialogue. Many of these were rooted in difficult or traumatic personal and second-hand experiences. Some were influenced by the larger media environment.

- Will people be carrying sidearms?
- Will officers be in uniform?
- Will the conversations be recorded?
- Will my words be posted on social media?

Foundations:

Facilitator Training

In April 2018, with the goal of having future community dialogues be for and by the community, Essential Partners organized a two-day training for 14 community members who they had already identified and interviewed in the previous mapping process. The group included trained mediators, law enforcement officials, and local community leaders.

Goals for Facilitator Training

- Learn how to design and facilitate Reflective Structured Dialogue (RSD)
- Learn how to create safe-enough space for openhearted engagement that encourages curiosity, community and connection across differences
- Achieve clarity of purpose and expectations among participants
- Learn how to use agreements, structure, preparation and inquiry
- Understand the thinking behind RSD and its effectiveness in overcoming divisions
- Experience competence and confidence to facilitate through challenging moments

Format and Sample Agenda

Taking place over two days, the facilitator training included setting the agenda, overviews of a Reflective Structured Dialogue, and agreement/commitment setting before diving into the preparation for a dialogue. Participants were then trained on how to prepare, lead and participate in a small dialogue group. Throughout the two days, participants were taught skills for a successful facilitator and given opportunities to immediately practice them. They were asked to reflect on what they had learned and invited to ask questions about the theory, tactics, and any perceived challenges.

Lessons and Challenges From the Facilitator Training

- **Include Participants in Difficult Decision Making (i.e. Dealing with Sidearms):** There were concerns raised by some community members during interviews and then during the facilitation training about Law Enforcement Officers wearing sidearms during the facilitation.

- Challenge: There was a major value to having police officers in uniform for the dialogue, however Officers felt that if they were in uniform then they should have their entire uniform—including sidearms. And yet, some community members felt uncomfortable by it.
- Handled with Transparency and the Buy-in of Participants: The EP trainers listened closely to both sides. They transparently named the uniform dilemma with the group. Together, the trainers and the group talked through how wearing a uniform could affect the dialogue and its goals. They invited participants to serve as collaborators in managing the situation. Because of this transparent management of the dilemma and the explicit invitation to collaborate on a path forward, the group had ownership over the issue—and ultimately, that helped defuse tensions.
- Example of Reframing: “We think it’s important for officers to come in uniform, but if they are in uniform, they need to be armed. We’ve talked and listened to the officers and they’ve understood the impact of being armed. They say they don’t want it to be something that makes people uncomfortable. Can you help us manage what that’s like?”
- **Speak For Oneself and Not on Behalf of Others:** A challenge for law enforcement officers and community members was learning how to speak for themselves and not on behalf of all law enforcement officers/all community members. Given some of the overlap and complexity of participants’ identities, this proved an important difficulty to identify and overcome.
 - Challenge: Many police officers talked about the difficulty they feel in representing the badge and what they are allowed to say. Similarly Black Leaders in their Community were used to speaking for their communities. On both sides this often led each group to be reluctant to speak as individuals.
 - Handled by Asking Participants to Be Explicit when Identifying who they are Representing: Participants were asked to explicitly name this difficulty and what they were saying because of it –“If you feel you must speak for more than yourself, please name it. For example, please say, ‘I can’t speak for all police officers, but as a police officer in my role.... we feel xyz...’”

Developing an Appetite: Pilot Program

Following the successful training of facilitators, Essential Partners coordinated and ran a pilot dialogue in Raleigh in May 2018. Further mapping of potential participants and interviews was conducted to prepare.

Ultimately, 28 local community members and law enforcement officers were brought together to participate in an evening dialogue led by eight of the previously trained facilitators. The dialogue ended with a closure circle asking the participants to join Essential Partners in exploring where the dialogue could go next—how it could grow and what future iterations could look like.

Goals for Pilot Program

- Provide a proof of concept for a longer and larger project in Raleigh.
- Provide an opportunity to learn and gather information on how to best support a community in dialogue with local law enforcement.
- Build credibility for Essential Partner’s model and process in a new community.
- Successfully give participants an opportunity to listen and learn from others who they may not often hear from—whether from a different community or from a different police department.

Format of Pilot Program

The 28 participants were divided into roughly four groups of six to eight people—with at least three community members and three law enforcement officers in each group. The Essential Partners organizers were intentional in dividing the groups in a way that any community members or law enforcement officers who may have known each other before the dialogue were not in the same small group.

Eight of the fourteen trained facilitators were divided amongst the four groups with two facilitators per group. The other six facilitators, while not able to join the night of the pilot program, assisted in the planning and preparation of the event. Dinner was catered for the event and provided during the break.

Within the sessions, the trained facilitators were provided an Essential Partners designed Facilitator’s Guide (See Appendix B) and script to follow and lead their participants through a Reflective Structured Dialogue. The Facilitator’s Guide asks participants to reflect on their communities and their own relationship with law enforcement or their community—with tailored

questions for both community members and law enforcement officers. Participants are then given the opportunity to ask honest questions of curiosity about what they may have heard during the session.

Throughout the night, Essential Partners practitioners were available and floated between discussion groups to aid and support conversations and the facilitators as needed. At the end of the program, participants were all brought together to reflect on the dialogue, and asked for their input and support on the future of the project. They were asked questions such as: Where should this live? Help Essential Partners understand what is next? Who else should be part of this? Can you help make that case?

After the dialogue, the trained facilitators were brought together to debrief with the Essential Partners organizers. They were asked to reflect on a series of questions of what they learned. These included: What went great? What was a moment of brilliance? What was a moment you wish you had back? What was a dilemma you faced? How did you handle it? What was a moment you were not sure what to do and you wanted some feedback on?

Lessons Learned from the Pilot Program

- **Divide Groups so Participants Won't Have Known Others Previously:** This was an important step to take to ensure that individuals were able to hear different stories and opinions than they may typically. It was also designed to allow participants to feel more comfortable sharing honest opinions, which they may have initially felt uneasy doing in a group of colleagues.
- **Let Facilitators Run the Show with Support When Needed:** One of the biggest successes was how well the trained facilitators were able to lead the dialogue themselves. With two facilitators per room, there was always one facilitator who could step out quickly and ask for the help of the Essential Partners practitioners if needed. This allowed for the dialogue to continue smoothly without unnecessary disruptions.
- **Provide a Space for Closure and Invite Help from Participants:** After the dialogue, the small circle of closure and gratitude provided a space to ask the participants to help grow the project. Having now experienced what a Reflective Structured Dialogue looks like, they were best placed to be the spokespeople for the project to help expand it further in their communities.

Outcomes

- **Clear Appetite for More:** Following the project and the closing circle there was a clear desire from the participants and facilitators for this program to grow and continue.

- Further Funding: Following the Pilot Project, Essential Partners was graciously awarded a grant of \$25,000 to continue the programming by the American Arbitration Association Foundation.

Testimonies from Pilot Program

- “As a black mother, I participated because I want to save my son from harm, and I feared for our safety. I no longer have that fear—just a belief that my community is stronger and there are honest police officers who care about me and my son.” —Anonymous Participant

The Four-Part Dialogue Series

Following the success of the pilot program, Essential Partners built on the relationships they had made and continued the mapping and outreach process to more participants. Given the larger scale of the intended program, this process involved bringing together potential participants into like-group listening circles to build trust.

Both groups needed to understand the motivation, purpose, funding sources, and ensure that there was no hidden agenda behind the dialogue. Law Enforcement in particular were wary of being recorded, publicly attacked, or verbally ambushed.

Essential Partners utilized this time to deeply listen and learn more about the issue, context, and nuances of the relationship between the community and local law enforcement.

Once the group of participants was established, they were divided into small groups and led by the trained facilitators through a four-part dialogue series over the course of 8 weeks in the Winter/Spring of 2020.

Goals for Dialogue Program

- Forge stronger and lasting relationships between Law Enforcement Officers and Community Members
- Provide a safe space for open dialogue and difficult conversations focused on Law Enforcement's role and relationship with their communities.
- Empower and train local Law Enforcement Officers and Community Members to be facilitators and advocates for dialogue within their communities

Format of Dialogue Program

The group of participants was divided into small groups of six people per group with an even makeup of community members and law enforcement. Each group was given two trained facilitators who were given new dialogue guides to lead a four-part dialogue series with their group over a period of roughly eight weeks. Within this time period, these four dialogues were entirely self-paced so that the facilitators could coordinate the best time for their specific group to all meet together. Each discussion asked participants to dive deeper and reflect on different parts of the relationship between their community and law enforcement.

Lessons Learned from Dialogue Program and Preparation

- **Importance of Preparation to Build Trust:** The like-group listening circles were an invaluable way to learn from potential participants and uncover fears, worries, and

skepticism about a program. It helped Essential Partners better understand the nature and complexity of the relationships and issue of community and law enforcement relations, and ultimately better prepare the dialogue.

- **Preparation Can Help For Learning about Who the Participants are:** The listening groups and early interviews helped Essential Partners identify the roles different participants may play in a dialogue and therefore best place them amongst groups. Some people have social status amongst the group, who might set the limits on what can/cannot be shared and what perspectives are allowed, while some people only wanted to talk to the people they understood to be leaders.
- **Sometimes Facilitators Have to Share their Own Personal Experience to Gain Trust:** Building trust with groups is not always easy and can require facilitators to discuss their personal story and identity to demonstrate their commitment to support the participants. For example, one Essential Partners practitioner found that they needed to share their family story to gain the trust of one like-group listening circle.
- **A Range of Ages can Provide a Useful Array of Opinions:** The age of participants ranged from roughly sixteen to seventy years old. While there were initial concerns about the inclusion of high school students, many participants felt that their inclusion was hugely successful and helped them ground themselves and bring their best selves.
- **Polarizing Events May Occur During the Dialogue, but Won't Necessarily Derail It:** While the dialogues were taking place, in April 2021, the verdict for the trial of Officer Derek Chauvin in the death of George Floyd. There was concern that this would be hugely detrimental towards the dialogue process, but it did not explode or dissolve the groups. Rather, by intentionally using the event as a discussion point, the groups were challenged and galvanized to use the dialogue successfully. One organizer described it as “making them more clearly recognize the importance and value of the effort and time they were spending together.”
- **The Public Nature of the Role of Police Can Make it Feel Difficult For Them to Participate:** When reaching out to potential participants within Law Enforcement, especially amongst Law Enforcement Chiefs, Essential Partners found that there could be a sense of protectiveness or defensiveness which presented a significant challenge to their involvement. Law Enforcement described a worry of feeling exposed, at risk or entrapped, when they are typically accustomed to a sense of control. Several officers described previous dialogues they had attended which resulted in them on a stage being yelled at or asked questions such as “on a scale of 1-10 how racist are you?” Essential Partners successfully listened to these fears from Law Enforcement and worked to demonstrate how this dialogue would be a safe space for them.
- **Scheduling Can be a Major Challenge:** While many participants voiced that they would have loved to have the dialogues more frequently, it proved incredibly difficult to

coordinate larger groups. At times this made it difficult to know how many people might attend any given event until the last minute.

Testimonials from the Dialogue Program

- “Something had been built between the group that made people think ‘we were doing something together. This is why we are doing this.’ It gave them a clearer purpose of why they were spending their evenings together. ‘I know a police officer on the other side trying to do something good.’ Or, ‘I know a community member who is angry but wants to engage.’ They sensed that this was real and they were doing something together and they were glad they had these partners.” - Essential Partners Practitioner
- “Session One has a profound moment of people having a first experience being open and honest with each other in a relationship where that was not generally the case. People scratched the surface of some important conversations and had both a need and an energy—a sense of ‘that wasn't enough, there is more to talk about, *and* I feel an energy or readiness to talk about it more. do more/go deeper” - Essential Partners Practitioner

Outcomes

- **TRUST:** Essential Partners established trust with participants throughout the process and series of dialogues.
- **POSSIBILITY:** A sense of possibility that a dialogue could be successful and relationships could be forged was established amongst participants.
- **LASTING RELATIONSHIPS:** Many lasting relationships were forged during the dialogue process. One in particular was between a community activist and a police officer who had had a very fraught relationship prior to the dialogues. Their relationship threatened the possibility of the project at one point because of their very public, direct conflict and they initially refused to be in a dialogue together. However, over the course of the process, they were eventually able to build trust with one another and come together in facilitated dialogue. They have since fostered a healthy, lasting relationship in which they have been able to meet both their community goals more effectively as a result of this transformed relationship.

Outcomes:

In Their Own Words

Using its [Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Program](#), Essential Partners assesses the impact of its interventions and trainings over the course of 12 months.

Qualitative Impact Testimonials

- “Yes, I have noticed a change. I can think of a specific example. I have a friend, a man I dated years ago. He was in the navy back then. He’s now a retired police officer in the Charleston, SC area. He recently posted on FB about the NFL taking the knee thing in a very negative way. I was taken aback. Shocked. I don’t respond on FB. I hide my politics pretty much. I can’t engage in this way. To me, it’s not worth it. I was so surprised at the vitriol of his response. I wanted to pound back at him with logic. I’m very linear and logical. I wanted to engage with him and then I didn’t. I steamed about it for a little bit. And then I found myself stopping and thinking about it. If he were in the room right now and I could see him, how would that be? I found myself thinking how I would ask him questions. It shocked me that he had responded with such vitriol and I connected this with him being a former police officer. OK. In my mind, I started thinking about the questions I would ask him. I’d have to be so careful to be quiet, to let him speak. I wanted to understand why he said what he said. That only happened in my own mind. We didn’t actually have the conversation, but that’s not to say that we won’t. I might call him up soon. Hey Alan, I’m curious, I want to know. I shelved the whole thing then, but every once in a blue moon, we contact each other. Maybe I will call. I feel very safe having the conversation with him. Maybe I will. I don’t think we’d have a huge argument, especially if I do this in a neutral way, if I keep my stuff together.”
- “In my circle of friends, about 12 people, yes, there has been change. The change is that there is ease and willingness to raise and talk about harder questions. It has created a reciprocal safety zone. ‘OK let’s talk about it.’... I have a tremendous capacity to believe I’m right. Intellectually I know that’s not true, but emotionally I do feel this to be true. The training literally gave me a toolkit to sit down and shut up. The capacity to listen thoughtfully. To suspend judgment while I’m listening. I stopped trying to formulate a response before the other person is finished. Now, I’ll frequently listen, think, and say, let me ask you a few questions. It’s only after this that I weigh in with my own thoughts. I do this every day. This is a significant difference for me.”

- “I use the no-response method across the board. It’s difficult for me to learn something new and not apply it. I have a 3-minute rule. I re-think for a few minutes after I make a decision. Sometimes I can come up with something better. The training allows me to use this—it promotes thinking longer about what I’m planning to do, how I’m going to engage. How am I going to respond? For me, I was a law enforcement officer for 10 years. There are circumstances where you have seconds to respond. You walk into a room and have got to get it all in one blow. Do I tase, shoot, or take down? And when I was a supervisor, I had to think about the lives of the officers I was working for. That’s not easy to do. You don’t have the opportunity to delay thinking. It doesn’t happen in this way. To be able to think longer is a gift. It’s not something that I’ve had before.”
- “I’m more empathetic to police officers. Even though I have had some not-so-good experiences with them, I look at them now with compassion. To see an officer cry, and experience the emotions that were felt, it humanized this police officer. It’s something we talk about a lot to the students at Cary Academy. I tell them that teachers are human. We make mistakes too. Seeing that in the officer made me more empathetic. I understood more about what their fears are. They get a minimal amount of money to serve and protect. Everyone is so hyper-sensitive now. Things can go one way or another. We need to get to the time before we only saw ‘them versus us.’ ... “I want to start a dialogue initiative in our community between the residents and the police. I tried to reach out to the police in our community but the police officers who are open to this work different hours than me. One responded but he’s moving. My plans were to go into my own community and speak with the police there and then do a dialogue to introduce them to the people in our neighborhood. The goal is to form relationships because we don’t know them. One of the officers at the training said he’d be interested in this, but I haven’t heard back from him. We never got email addresses. If I had the contact info of the participants in our training I could do this. I want to do this. We have a lot of young African American boys in our neighborhood. With better relations with the police, maybe the kids would be more responsible. Maybe there’d be times when they’d stop to think about [what] they’re doing.”

Insights & Recommendations

Successes

1. **Creation of a Safe Enough Space for Honest Dialogue:** The participants felt comfortable to go deep in the nuances of their differences, share a lot and have real honest and hard conversations.
2. **Lasting Relationships:** Participants built relationships that lasted beyond the sessions they were involved in.
3. **Successful Training of Diverse Facilitators for Difficult Dialogues:** Facilitators were successfully trained and prepared to run the program without the immediate support of an expert. Police officers, clergy, and local citizens were all trained to do this. They reported confidence and competence in their facilitation training.

Learnings for Future Programs

1. **Create Framework for Longer Engagement Among the Groups:** It may have been even more successful if participants had engaged over a longer period of time. Ideally the groups would have done the 4 sessions of self-paced dialogue and then agreed to come back once a month and keep working through problems in a self-sustaining manner.
2. **Importance of Who Sponsors or Organizes the Dialogue:** Who sponsors and who organizes the dialogue can have a huge impact on the attendance and trust of participants. For example, having the department chief be on board is really important, and if there is any reluctance by that chief, then there will likely be major difficulties. Essential Partners spent a lot of their time trying to convince chiefs that it was in their best interest, which can be incredibly difficult given the many other priorities a law enforcement department has.
3. **Importance of Understanding “Why” Participants Have Joined:** Helping clarify to participants why the program is being led and, for themselves, why they are there can help focus the dialogue better. It does not mean there needs to be an end product, but a personal motive or commitment can be helpful. One possibility is that past participants share their own motives with prospective new participants, in order to build trust and promote the effective impact of dialogue.

4. **Having More Space for Flexibility and Evolution in the Program:** While a major benefit of the program for the facilitators and participants was the preset agendas and guides, a future dialogue could leave more space to incorporate the participants' reflections and desires for future sessions. For example, asking participants to reflect: 'What do you want out of the next 2 sessions?'

Moving Forward

1. **Awareness of dialogue as a proactive and responsive tool.** These types of dialogues can be set up and used by Schools and Police officers both reactively, to respond to problems in a community, and proactively, to build trust and relationships within the community. The key is to spread awareness about the potential uses of dialogue as both a responsive and proactive/preventative tool.
2. **Local stakeholders have become hubs of continued engagement.** Members of law enforcement have maintained relationships with local community members, while local clergy and community members have continued to engage in dialogue and dialogic practices across a range of other issues and community challenges, including COVID vaccination hesitancy.
3. **Subsequent Essential Photovoice collaboration.** Multiple community members and law enforcement officers participated in an innovative multimedia-dialogue initiative, Essential Photovoice, co-led by Essential Partners and Interfaith Photovoice.
4. **Law Enforcement have become advocates for dialogue training.** Chief Mitchell McKinney of the Meben Police Department published an article in *Police Magazine* on the value of dialogue skills for healthier community engagement, mutual trust, and resilience.
5. **Led to the launch of EP's Community Dialogue Fellowship in the NC Triangle area.** Essential Partners has offered a grant-funded annual fellowship to expand the dialogue capacity of local residents, with 75 fellows to date, including members of law enforcement.

Appendix: Sample Materials

Note: These materials are intended as examples, but should not be re-used outside of the context for which they were designed.

Index

1. Guidelines for Pre-Meeting Conversations
2. Dialogue Facilitator's Script
3. Dialogue Prompts

Guidelines for Pre-Meeting Conversations with Participants (Preparing for Constructive Conversations)

This is a basic protocol that we use in our work of facilitating conversations across deep divides related to identity, values, religion and worldviews. Practitioners in related fields (mediation, law, organizational development, coaching, etc.) have used or adapted many of the questions in this protocol to their unique needs and contexts, both in the US and many other countries. We do not follow a strict interview format.

The points below simply guide us in the conversations we have with prospective participants, although at the end we hope to know how these participants did or would respond to particular questions. We hope that they will have experienced us as conversing in an engaged way, not as having taken them through a checklist of items.

We don't want to gather information as if we were looking in from the outside; we know that our behavior and attitudes affect how the conversation goes.

By the end of the conversation participants should feel that their perspectives have been well understood and taken seriously, that they have been heard in ways that do not evaluate them or their perspectives, and that their ideas about what will help the meeting work for them have been received as collaborative and generative.

We hope too that they have become more interested in reflecting on themselves and their own perspectives and in learning more about the people they are about to meet with whose perspectives differ from theirs.

1. **Openness.** “This ... is what I understand to be the agreed-upon goals for the proposed meeting. This is why I am calling—to get to know you a bit, to give you a chance to ask me any questions you may have, to understand the issues and contextual stresses from your perspective, to hear your ideas for planning a generative meeting, to learn what conditions you see as most likely to produce a successful outcome, to ensure that the meeting design is respectful and supportive of participants' wishes,” and so on.
2. **Confidentiality.** “I'd like to start out with an agreement that everything you say in this call is confidential, that is, not to be shared with other participants, unless at the end you decide to revise that agreement with me. We can revisit this agreement at the end of this call.”
3. **“Pass” agreement.** “Please just say ‘I pass’ if you don't feel ready to answer or don't want to answer for any reason. This is to be sure that every aspect of what you do in this phone call—and in any meetings you may come to with us—is entirely voluntary.”

4. **Questions of clarification.** “Do you want clarification about anything about the meeting?”
5. **Goals of meeting.** “What questions, if any, do you have about the goals I have said I understood were the proposed (or agreed upon) goals for the meeting(s)?”
6. **Questions about facilitators.** “What questions, if any, do you have about the facilitators or the role they will take in the meeting?”

Inquiring about the history and context of the conflict

1. “What do you think would be helpful for me to know about your current life circumstances, your relationship to the members of law enforcement, to conflict, or to anything else?”
2. “How are you (or, How have you been) involved in event(s) pivotal to the development of the conflict?”

Inquiring about the effects of the usual conversation

1. “How, if at all, have you been personally or professionally affected by the way differences about the situation (the conflict) have been handled?”
2. “What have you witnessed or experienced in previous meetings that you don’t want to see repeated. What kinds of things do you believe we must avoid to have a successful meeting?”
3. “Have you ever felt mis-characterized by the other party/ies? If so, how? When? What was the effect on you? On others?”
4. “What have you learned over time about the issue, about yourself and others with relation to the issue that you think may be important for me to know?”

Inquiring about experience of constructive conversations

1. “Have you experienced conversations about the situation that have been especially constructive?”
2. “What do you think made them constructive?”

Inquiring about hopes and concerns

1. “What could happen during the meeting that would lead you to feel that your decision to participate was worthwhile?”
2. “What could happen following the meeting that could lead you to be glad to have participated? What ‘ripple effects’ do you hope these conversations might set in motion?”
3. “What could happen or fail to happen during the session that might lead you to regret agreeing to participate?”

4. “What could happen or not happen following the meeting that would lead you to feel your participation had not been worthwhile? What ‘ripple effects’ do you worry might flow from the conversation?”
5. “Do you have any additional concerns, mixed feelings, or fears that it would be useful for me to be aware of?”
6. “Is there anything about your ongoing relationship with any of the other participants that might constrain your speaking candidly? If so, are there any conditions that might be set in place to enable you to speak as fully as you wish?”
7. “What do you want to make sure that I (and any other practitioners working together) keep in mind?”
8. “What are your thoughts about the scope of the conversation? What should be included; what if anything excluded?”
9. “What questions or topics do you most want to see discussed at this meeting? If we can only consider a few questions or issues, which ones do you think are most likely to further the goals of the meeting?”

Process and structure for the conversation at the meeting

1. “The other meeting planners and I are asking all of the participants to agree to some communication covenants, agreements, or guidelines during the meeting. Can you suggest any that support your own commitments to speak and listen in ways that support the general purpose of the meeting?”
2. “Have there been prior efforts to discuss the topic and the broader issues? If so, what do you see as the implications of these prior efforts for communication agreements that you might make with the other party?”
3. “What, if anything, do you believe that you and the others in this meeting are likely to have in common? Might what you share become a resource for addressing your differences? If so, how?”

Mapping

1. “What do you perceive to be the major sources of strain in the situation? From your perspective, are any of these strains related to more general strains in the relevant broader context? Are any of these strains related to the different cultural contexts of different groups?”
2. “From your perspective, what does the usual conversation or conflict focus on? What topics, questions, and/or information are usually avoided or excluded?”
3. “What code words or ‘hot buttons’ would you like us to be aware of?”
4. “What do you think we should be most careful about in setting up the session?”

Questions participants hope will be addressed in the meeting;
questions they want to ask others; questions they wish to be asked

1. "What questions would you like to see discussed during the meeting? Why?"
2. "What do you want the other party to understand about you in relation to this specific situation or conflict? What questions do you hope that others might ask you?"
3. "Given the goals of this meeting, what do you most want to understand about your fellow participants and their concerns? What might you want to ask others in order to get some clarity about these things?"

Closing

1. "Is there anything that you hoped I would ask you that I have not asked? If so, what?"
2. "Now that you know what you said here, do you want to change the confidentiality agreement you made at the beginning of our conversation in any way?"
3. "Do you have any further questions to ask me?"

Dialogue Facilitator's Script

PURPOSE

Welcome. The purpose of this conversation is to learn from one another and to hear each other's perspectives as well as to feel heard about interactions and relationships between law enforcement and the Black community. It's not to try to persuade, debate, convince each other.

HOPES FOR THIS DIALOGUE

We hope that you get a chance to reflect and speak deeply about your own experiences and values and listen deeply and with resilience when you hear something that might be different from your views.

We hope that you will come away with some new understanding about what's important to others and a clearer understanding of what's important to you.

My ROLE AS FACILITATORS is to:

- Guide you through the dialogue and make sure everyone gets a chance to speak.
- Present the agreements for your approval and/or amending.
- Ask some questions for all of you to answer.
- Remind you of the agreements, if people need reminding

THE STRUCTURE OF THE DIALOGUE

We will begin by reviewing the Communication Agreements.

We will give you an opportunity to introduce yourselves

We'll pose a set of opening questions, you'll have a few minutes to reflect and then you'll speak in a "go-round." Each person will have an equal amount of time to respond to the question.

As you listen to people, If you have questions, write them down, you'll be able to ask those to each other when we open the space in a less structured time we call questions of genuine interest.

Then we'll close by asking each of you to reflect on your experience here together and say something that will help you bring this to a meaningful conclusion.

Let's get started now with the Agreements.

AGREEMENTS

In order to have a constructive conversation, where people speak thoughtfully and listen respectfully, we have proposed the following agreements.

Could we go around the circle and read them out loud? You have them in your handout.

- We can “pass” if we are not ready or do not wish to respond, no explanations required.
- We'll speak one at a time, and not interrupt or engage in side conversations.
- Honor time limits to ensure everyone has a chance to participate
- We'll “step up and step back,” taking responsibility for contributing and for making space for others to contribute.
- We'll be attentive and seek to understand, especially when differences surface.
- We'll check out our assumptions by asking questions.
- We'll speak for ourselves (speak as “I” not “we”) and allow others to do the same.
- We'll respect confidentiality of participants and will not speak outside the group in a way that could allow others to be identified. This includes no recording of this conversation.
- Remain muted unless you're speaking

Does anyone have any questions about these?

Does everyone agree to follow these agreements? (Get nods or yeses)

OK, so these are the Agreements that you're all committing to doing your best to follow. Your commitment also serves to authorize me as a facilitator to remind the group if need be.

INTRODUCTIONS

We are going to take a moment for you to introduce yourselves.

Can you please say your name and one thing you left behind to be here tonight?

We would like to keep this brief so we can speak at more length about the interaction and relationship of law enforcement in the Black community. So, we ask that you respond in one

breath. Take a minute to think of an answer, write it down if it helps and then I will ask someone to start and I'll announce a circle from there.

Repeat:

**Can you please say your name and one thing you left behind to be here tonight?
(Respond in one breath)**

OPENING QUESTIONS

The Opening Question is designed to get people's foundational experiences into the conversation. I'm going to ask the question, make sure that it's clear, and then give you two minutes in silence to reflect on what you want to say. Then I will ask one of you to begin and we will go around the circle again.

Question 1

2 min each

(for Police) Would you share an experience from your life or career that has shaped the way you approach being a law enforcement officer in the community? What lessons have you drawn from that experience?

(For Community members) Please share an experience you have had that shapes the ways you relate to (or, your relationship with) law enforcement in your community or elsewhere. What lessons have you drawn from that experience?

Repeat the question

Take 2 minutes to think and make some notes about what you're going to say, so that you'll be able to give full attention to each other when others are speaking.

After 2 minutes

As you listen to understand each other, you may hear things that you want to ask about—write your questions down as you think about them - you'll have time to ask each other later. Don't interrupt at this point—unless you are having a hard time hearing.

I'm going to keep time for you. So when you are ready to speak, I'll start the 2 minutes. When the 2 minutes are up, I'll let you know and then you can find a quick way to finish your speaking—you finish your sentence, but not your paragraph.

Find someone on the screen

_____ Would you start us off, and then _____ and then_____.

Go-around

After everybody has answered: Before we go on to the next question, reflect back on what you heard. Write down at least one question that you would like to ask later that you are curious about—something you heard just now that you wish you could hear more about.

Question 2

Now we're ready to move on to the second question---and the intention of this question is to offer you the opportunity to reflect on what is most important about this issue for you. You will have 2 minutes this time to answer the following question:

Question 2 (for Police and Community Members)

As you think about the relationship between law enforcement and the communities of color where you serve or live, what is at the heart of the matter for you? What do you think is most important for people to understand?

Repeat the question

Take 2 minutes to make some notes about what you're going to say, so that you'll be able to give full attention to each other when others are speaking.

Pause for 2 min; when 2 min is up:

Let's go around again. This time would _____ start and then _____, and then _____.

After everybody has answered: Before we go on to the next question, reflect back on what you heard. Jot down any questions so you will have it when we get to the section meant for questions.

Question 3

Now we're ready to move on to the third question---and the intention of this question is to offer you the opportunity to reflect on your own complex thinking about this. You will have up to 2 minutes this time to answer the following question:

Question 3

As you think about this relationship, are there places where one thing you care about bumps up against another or places where you feel pulled in different directions?

Repeat the question, ask if it is clear and then tell people they will have two minutes to reflect.

After two minutes, ask someone to begin.

Let's go around again. This time would _____ start and then _____, and then _____.

Questions of Genuine Curiosity

This is the time to learn more about what others have said and to make connections between what's on your mind and what you've heard. It is important to remember that you are not here to debate or persuade but to explore your curiosity, to better understand others.

Is there something someone said that you are curious about or would like to understand better? Ask your question of the group or of particular individual. Other members of the group are welcome to reflect and comment as well.

You will have 20 minutes and I will let you know when you have about 2 minutes left. Take a moment now to think of the questions that you have for others. When someone has one—please begin. It would be great if everyone could get a chance to ask or be asked a question. So remember to share the space.

Remember to track who has asked and who has answered so that everyone has an opportunity to participate.

After 30 minutes, tell people something like the following:

There's never a perfect time to end this section, but we want to be respectful of the time that you have committed to be here and so we're going to move to the Closing section.

Closing (one minute)

The purpose of this section is to bring your dialogue to a conclusion. You will have up to one minute to respond to the following questions:

- 1) What are you taking from what you heard here that you want to continue to think about, dialogue about or work on in the community?
- 2) What did you do or refrain from doing that helped this dialogue go as it did?

Repeat both questions.

Take a minute to reflect on this questions and in a minute I will ask someone to begin—remember you will have up to one minute to answer.

Confidentiality Review and Wrap Up

We have one final piece of business and that is to review the confidentiality agreement that you made at the beginning of this dialogue. You have all agreed to:

- Honor confidentiality—that is, not sharing what you hear in a way in which the speaker could be identified without the speaker's permission

Today you may have taken the risks of speaking what's true for you and listening deeply to others. Though this dialogue experience is ending, our hope is that the speaking and listening here will continue. Thank you for your participation.

Dialogue Prompts

Note: Purpose changes slightly for each session - sessions 1 and 2 are most similar, with session 2 going more deeply.

Police-Community Dialogue: Session 1

Introduction Question

In one breath, please say your name and one thing you feel committed to in your community.

Question 1

(for Police) Please share an experience you have had that has shaped the ways you relate to (or your relationship with) the people in the communities of color where you serve?

(for community members) Please share an experience you have had that shapes the ways you relate to (or, alternatively, your relationship with) law enforcement in your community or elsewhere.

Question 2

(for police and community members)

As you think about these relationships, experiences, roles between law enforcement and the communities of color where you serve or live, what is at the heart of the matter for you?

Or

What do you think is most important for people to understand?

Or

When you think of how police/community relations in the US [or _____-local community] should be [handled, managed, addressed], what's at the heart of the matter for you?

Question 3

Within your overall perspective about this relationship, are there places where one thing you care about bumps up against another or places where you feel less certain or pulled in different directions?

Police-Community Dialogue: Session 2

Dialogue: Police and Community Members Together

Purpose (emergent from first session): Pick up on themes from first session and have an opportunity to go deeper

People spoke a good deal last time about the fear that exists between police and members of communities of color. Knowing that that may be only one part of your feelings and that this is always more complex:

1. Is there an experience that would help us understand the origin of that fear?
2. And is there some way you can share - either through a story or example - how that fear impacts the way you live, think of yourself, or the choices you make?
3. What could you or members of the other group do to help you live with less fear?

Police-Community Dialogue: Session 3

Exercise on Stereotyping

This exercise gives you an opportunity to speak about the ways in which you have felt stereotyped by people who have identities, life experiences or perspectives that differ from yours. You will have some quiet time to use this worksheet then you will have a go-round in which you will only share what you want to share. When discussing the exercise in the full group you will not be asked to comment on whether you do or do not hold the stereotypes that others spoke about.

The purposes of this exercise are 1) to enhance understanding of the concerns you may have about the ways you might be viewed by others and 2) to become better known for who you are, in contrast to how you may fear you are viewed. If you're asking yourself whether a stereotype is relevant, think about your purposes for being here and whether including it might help you to be better known by and feel more connected to people in this group.

Individual Reflection & List Generation

Please reflect for a moment on situations in which you have felt stereotyped by people who have different identities, life experiences or perspectives. Please make a list of 4-5 stereotypes, not worrying for the moment about how much truth (if any) there is in those stereotypes.

As a _____ I think that I am viewed as having these characteristics, beliefs or intentions: _____

As a _____ I think that I am viewed as having these characteristics, beliefs or intentions: _____

As a _____ I think that I am viewed as having these characteristics, beliefs or intentions: _____

As a _____ I think that I am viewed as having these characteristics, beliefs or intentions: _____

As a _____ I think that I am viewed as having these characteristics, beliefs or intentions: _____

Marking the Lists (Individually)

Reflect on your list and consider the following:

1. Which one stereotype would you find to be most painful or offensive if someone applied it to you? (Mark with a “P”)
2. Which one or two statements are the most inaccurate as applied to you? (Mark with an “I”)
3. Which stereotype on your list, if any, do you think is understandably applied to you, even if it is not fully accurate? (Mark with a “U”)

Sharing (in your group)

Painful Stereotypes

Please say something, if you wish to, about the one stereotype that you would find most offensive or painful if applied to you and then please say how you understand and know yourself that makes this stereotype so painful?

Inaccurate Stereotypes

Are there any inaccurate stereotypes on your list that you’d like to speak about, again, indicating how you know yourself to be different from what these stereotypes would suggest about you? If so, please share something about the stereotype and how you understand it to be inaccurate.

Understandable Stereotypes

Many stereotypes have some degree of truth—even if very small—for some people and groups to which they are applied. It can be helpful for people with different identities or perspectives to “own” some aspects of their groups about which they are less than proud, or that they feel comfortable with, but about which they can understand being seen in a somewhat negative light. Were there any like that on your list? If so, please share if you are willing.

Questions and Reflection (in your group, 15 min.)

What would you like to ask others in order to better understand what they’ve said or to further explore how they feel they are stereotyped?

In Whole Group: Please speak briefly about one or two things that surprised, touched or interested you as you participated in this exercise.

Police-Community Dialogue: Session 4

A Connecting Question

What made you smile today (or this week)—really honestly made you smile?

We would like to keep this brief so we ask that you respond in one breath—literally in the span of one breath. Take a few seconds to think of an answer, write it down if it helps and then we will ask the person on our right to start and we will go around in a circle.

Looking Back / Looking Forward (20 min)

The first part of this dialogue is meant to give us an opportunity to look back and look forward for ourselves as individuals and as a group.

Looking back:

- Describe what you personally have learned or gained from this experience, or in what ways have you grown from this process so far? How would you describe the progress of the group so far?

Looking forward

- Looking forward to the future, what more do you want to learn? What do you envision is possible for this group?

Brainstorming the Possibilities

This Section is meant to give you an opportunity to think together about three things - needs, resources, and collective action. Spend 4 minutes journaling on your own about where you see a need, what resources exist or might be created that could support that need, and what might you do together to make that connection.

1. A place you see a need or opportunity for your community to further relationships across these two communities.
2. What are resources in your community that could address that need or opportunity?
3. What are ideas for action that this group or others can make to move these relationships across difference forward?

We want you to focus on what the community can do or what a group of people might do for the community. We're going to give you a handout and some time to think and make notes. Then, we will ask you to get into pairs and share about what you've written. Finally, we will ask you to share what you've spoken about in the large group. As before, we will ask one of you to begin and go around the circle and this time we will write things on the board until all of the ideas are up.

Take about 4 minutes to think and write on the handout. We will let you know when that time has passed and instruct you to get into pairs to discuss.

Please finish your notes and find someone to pair off with in the group. You will have 5 minutes to discuss together your reflections and thoughts you have. We will let you know when half your time is up so that you can switch speakers.

You will now share with the group one need or opportunity you named and the resources of the community to address that need or opportunity and what we might do to move that forward. We will go around as many times as we need until we get all our ideas up on the paper. Just one idea per person, per turn so we can keep it moving and give everyone a chance to speak.

We are not going to time this so please try to limit your speaking and get right to the heart if it—we want to have time to talk through the ideas later. **Remember a need/opportunity and a resource that could be used, and what we might do to support it.**

Think of this as a brainstorm in which there are no bad or unwelcomed ideas—we are not making any decisions—just collecting your creativity and perspective. As you listen to each other, listen to understand, not to judge or find fault. Don't interrupt at this point—unless you are having a hard time hearing.

If you go on too long—we will lean in and ask you to wrap up.

(turning to a person next to you) Would you like to start?

(Go-around | One idea per person | go around as many times as needed to get ideas up there)

(after everybody has answered)

Curiosity and Connections (10 min)

This is the time to learn more about what others have said and to make connections and build on what you have heard. Is there an idea that you are curious about or would like to understand better?

It is important to remember that we are trying to imagine possibility and inspire some new thinking about what might help to build community.

You have 10 minutes and we will let you know when you have about 2 minutes left. What questions, connections, or new thinking is inspired by this list. This is a good time to remember our agreement of sharing the airtime so that everybody gets a chance speak. When someone has one—please begin.

Remember to track who has asked and who has answered so that everyone has an opportunity to participate. Remember to give a 2 minute warning.

After 10 minutes, tell people something like the following:

Ideas for Action (10 min.)

As you have listened and reflected here what comes up for you as something that really excites you that you would like to propose the group works on or supports others working on.

We are going to try to coalesce around three ideas but if we have more -that is fine too—we will just have to prioritize.