

PARTNERING FOR INCLUSION

Recruitment strategies for deliberative
conversations

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CENTER FOR
PUBLIC DELIBERATION
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Key Summary of Findings

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About the Center

The Colorado State University Center for Public Deliberation (CPD) serves as an impartial resource to the northern Colorado community. Working with students trained in small group facilitation, the CPD assists local government, school boards, and community organizations by researching issues and developing useful background material, and then designs, facilitates, and reports on innovative public events. The interpretations and conclusions contained in this publication have been produced by CPD associate, Kalie McMonagle, without the input of partner organizations to maintain impartiality.

Executive Summary

The following white paper summarizes the key findings of a research study on the recruitment strategies that cross-sector partners use to gather participants for deliberative conversations. Deliberation occurs when individuals affected by an issue are brought together to discuss complex issues, weigh key tradeoffs, and decide next steps. This study focused on one element of the deliberative process: engaging those individuals in the conversation. The following findings are useful to government, education, business, and nonprofit organizations who are seeking to engage their communities in decision-making.

Defining Inclusion: A Deliberative Approach

While deliberative conversations can take on many forms, some key factors determine whether something can be called a deliberative process. Deliberative conversations engage community members in weighing multiple perspectives so that they can make tough choices. Then decisions are implemented in partnership with businesses, educational institutions, non-profits, and governments in a process called democratic governance (Carcasson & Sprain, 2010). The remaining key ingredients are inclusiveness and equality. Ideally, this means that:

“Deliberative processes must strive to be inclusive and represent the whole community, and participants must be considered equal during the deliberation,”

It's unrealistic to make sure that every citizen is able to represent their viewpoint in every conversation. For the deliberative practitioner, the aim is to ensure that everyone at least has, “a meaningful opportunity to participate in this process and to have their needs, concerns, and interest understood by their fellows,” (Briand, 1999, pp. 75).

What makes inclusion important?

If good theoretical principles were all it took to implement deliberative practices, America would look like a very different place. Aside from the theoretical imperative for inclusion, what makes including diverse voices important?

Participating in deliberation helps to promote civic health.

Participating in deliberation allows citizens to expose themselves to a greater range of viewpoints, be open to learning, and reconsider previous viewpoints (Ryfe & Stalsburg, 2012). Moreover, by attending a deliberative event, participants are more likely to engage in civic behaviors in the future (Gastil, Deess, Weiser, & Simmons, 2010; Fishkin, 1995; Price & Capella, 2002).

Including diverse groups improves the quality of conversation.

Participating in diverse groups can encourage traditionally marginalized individuals to speak up. For example, a study by Toosi et al. (2012) found that in all-white groups, women, “spoke less than White men, and were considered less persuasive” (Toosi et al., 2012, p. 1154). In groups that included people of color, women’s confidence grew over time and they spoke as often as male participants (Toosi et al., 2012).

When forums aren’t inclusive, people call the process unfair and disregard results.

Participants gauge the legitimacy of a forum based on the inclusion of stakeholders (Kahane, Loftson, Heriman, & Hardy, 2013; Karpowitz & Raphael, 2014; Carcasson & Sprain, 2010).

Doubts about the process will make people less likely to adopt changes.

This spells trouble, because one of the other key tenets of deliberation is governance. Deliberative practitioners trust the wisdom of the crowds to come up with innovative solutions, but moving from talk to action also requires that the larger community have a hand in making those visions come to life.

That can turn into a distrust of deliberation over time.

As a result of these potential consequences, previous studies have called for future research into engaging the hardest-to-reach participants and sustaining this participation over time (Su, 2014).

How do we create inclusive conversations?

There tend to be some “usual suspects” that show up to community conversations. Participation is closely linked with education level, socioeconomic status, and proximity to social networks (Ryfe & Stalsburg, 2010). This means that events that use voluntary self-selection to recruit usually attract wealthy, educated, and professional community members. We also know that as the symbolic and material risks of participating decrease and the potential benefits increase, people are more likely to attend (Ryfe & Stalsburg, 2010). As a result, these are the common barriers to diverse groups participating in deliberative events.

External Barriers

These determine whether someone was able to attend the forum.

Internal Barriers

These determine whether someone was able to participate effectively in the forum.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they receive an invite? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were they the only person of a given identity in the room
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they have transportation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did some participants dominate the conversation more than others?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they have time to attend? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was there a facilitator present?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would attending the event mean giving up something else (i.e. work or childcare)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the forum offered in their primary language or communication style?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they trust the organization/location hosting the event? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they believe their voice would make a difference?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were they interested in/affected by the issue? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they have enough knowledge to form an opinion?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they feel they would make a difference? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they feel safe participating?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they consider their potential contributions to be of value? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were their contributions affirmed and taken seriously?

Methods

This study evaluated recruitment strategies of organizations that partner with the CSU Center for Public Deliberation to conduct deliberative forums. The researcher conducted 9 interviews with representatives from partner organizations. Organizations consist of community groups (i.e. government, non-profit) who are active in engaging and enacting public solutions for community problems. Interview participants were members of organizations who participated in the planning process of a deliberative event with the CPD. Participants were asked to describe the recruitment goals of their event, challenges they encountered in recruitment, and the strategies they used to recruit participants (see Appendix for complete interview questionnaire). Then a grounded theoretical analysis was conducted to analyze the qualitative data from interviews.

Key Findings

This research sought to answer three primary questions. The following is a summary of the findings.

Question 1

What barriers do cross-sector partners (XSPs) encounter in engaging participants in deliberative events?

- **MATERIAL COSTS OF PARTICIPATION.** Without certain resources, community members were not able to attend a forum. Community partners primarily identified time and the location in conjunction with a lack of transportation. However, other barriers previously identified by deliberative theorists were left out. These included a lack of childcare or loss of wages incurred.
- **LIMITATIONS OF OUTREACH.** If participants did not hear about the event, they in turn could not attend the event. Most partners did not have a specific budget for marketing the event. This meant marketing needed to be very low cost.
- **PERCEPTIONS OF PARTICIPATION.** If community members weren't interested, didn't believe their involvement would make an impact, or were conflict avoidant, XSPs felt they'd be unlikely to attend.

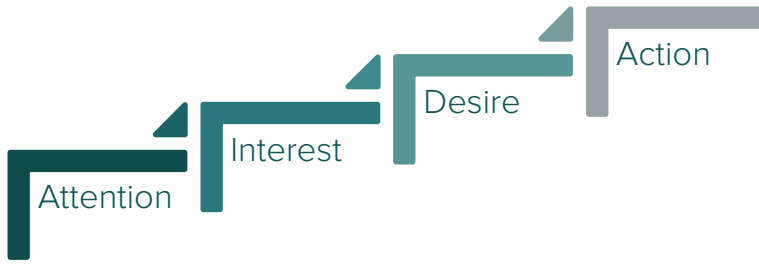
Question 2

How do XSPs conceptualize stakeholders in a deliberative process?

We can understand the way XSPs identify who they're stakeholders are through two different models: The Ladder of Engagement and Bennet's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity.

LADDER OF ENGAGEMENT

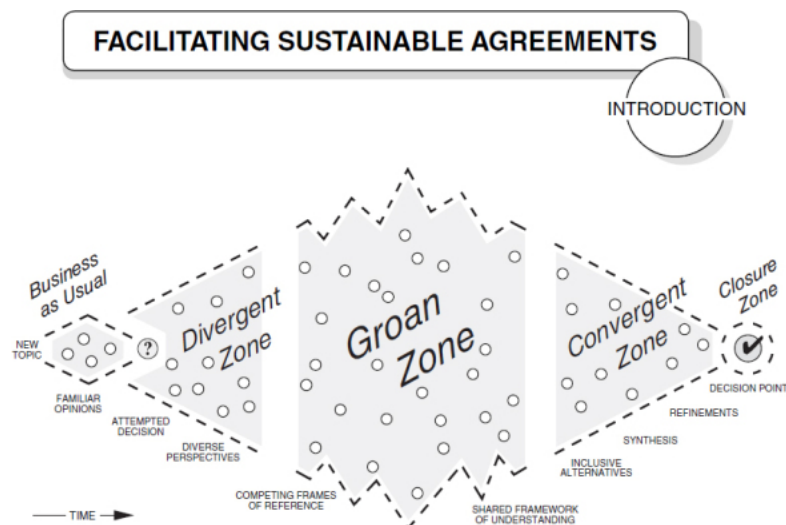
This model describes, "the different stages people go through to become stakeholders," (Kanter & Delahaye-Paine, 2012). The Ladder of Engagement moves through 6 steps from observing to leadership (Kanter & Delahaye-Paine, 2012). Many partners described the recruitment of stakeholders based on their role in the Ladder of Engagement. This could include focusing on those who were



unaware of an issue and building interest. In other forums it could be trying to engage community members with the most power to enact change to empower the leadership and action stages of the model.

This can be a useful model for engagement. However, there's a few key differences in the ways that deliberative practitioners think about stakeholders when it comes to getting them to events. In the Ladder of Engagement, the desired outcome is a participant who takes an action or becomes a leader. This creates tensions between the Ladder of Engagement and the one often held by deliberative practitioners.

Ladder of Engagement	Deliberative Stakeholder Perspective
The desired action is pre-determined from the beginning.	Community members are capable of making decisions for themselves and may generate solutions that experts wouldn't.
The more you become involved, the more you become a key stakeholder. Those who have more agency to create change are higher up on the ladder.	Everyone who's affected by the issue is a stakeholder and should have the opportunity to meaningfully impact the process.
As a linear model, the objective is to get more people up the ladder towards action.	The Diamond of Participation illustrates the long-term process of coming to a decision. Stakeholders may not be a part of every step of the conversation, but are still important contributors.



BENNETT'S MODEL OF INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity also provides a framework for understanding responses from partners (1986). This framework identifies six key stages in an individual's process towards cultural incompetence: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Partners' inclusion of disempowered groups in deliberative forums reflects that many partners fell within the minimization and acceptance stages.



Minimization

Within the minimization of difference stage, individuals emphasize the commonalities between different groups rather than acknowledging the differences in value systems and cultural patterns.

(Bennett, 1986)

By focusing on the similarities, those in the minimizing stage avoid making adaptations in cross-cultural scenarios. Most significantly, interviewees rarely mentioned disempowered groups when asked about their recruitment goals for the event or their key stakeholders. Interviewees most commonly broached the topic when asked what strategies they used to engage disempowered groups. This reflected a tendency for planners to focus their strategies on culturally normative stakeholders, oftentimes without thinking about it. While minimization resulted in a lack of specific strategies for recruitment, these partners also made statements that reflected the acceptance stage.

Acceptance

In the acceptance stage, people recognize the cultural differences between people.

While they may exhibit curiosity towards other cultures, they do not express agreement or preference for alternative values.

(Bennett, 2011)

One partner recognized the importance of including diverse groups, but ran into difficulties when attempting put this into action. Partners emphasized the value of including multiple cultures at the table, but acknowledged that their tools for engaging cross-culturally were insufficient.

In addition to reflecting the different stages, partners identified the way in which the movement from one stage to another is a continuous process. As partner organizations adapt to the deliberative process, changes will occur incrementally. Partners expressed that making cultural adaptations comes as a secondary step to engaging normative groups in deliberative conversations.

Thinking about the intercultural sensitivity lens, deliberative organizations need to model culturally competent recruitment strategies for partners. They could also provide localized resources on different cultures, have them participate in conversations with non-dominant groups, lead them in reflections of the impact of their own culture on their practice to help promote learning around difference and adaptation.

Question 3

What strategies do XSPs use to engage participants in deliberative events?

- **MARKETING** encompasses strategies that sought to promote the event by conveying a message to their target audience, including:
 - Email
 - Posters
 - Flyers
 - Newspaper advertisements
 - Newspaper editorial
 - Radio advertisements
 - Word-of-mouth
 - T-shirts
 - Sidewalk chalk advertisements
 - Press releases
 - Sponsorship packages

- **NETWORKING** allowed partners to access parts of the community that the Center for Public Deliberation could reach out to, but fail to authentically engage on its own. Partners relied on the existing networks they were tapped into, whether that was in terms of their contact lists, location, or formal organizational partners.

In particular, individuals may build bridging or bonding capital. Bonding capital exists between socially homogenous groups. This could be within a workplace, a neighborhood, or a cultural group. Alternatively, bridging capital occurs when individuals build relationships with different groups.

Event demographics tended to reflect the existing bonding capital of the convening group. The strength of bridging ties determined how successful groups were at engaging participants outside of their own network.

- **DESIGNING** refers to the way the event structure was planned in an effort to attract specific participants to attend. This include combining diverse topics of conversation into a single event, assigning participants to specific tables to to insure stakeholder diversity, or incorporating polarized parties into the process of designing the conversation.

Partners implemented design recruitment when there was a significant stakeholder that was unlikely to attend the event, because a lack of interest, trust, or efficacy around the process. These strategies indicate a desire to mitigate the negative impacts of participation that specific stakeholders may feel when entering a forum.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, we recommend using the following steps for successful deliberative recruitment.

Complete a stakeholder analysis

1. To complete a stakeholder analysis, use the chart in Appendix I.
2. Generate a list of stakeholders affected by the issue in the left hand column. Stakeholders are groups or organizations that are thought to have a collective interest in an issue. For example, business owners.
 - a. As you think about potential stakeholders, consider:
 - i. People that can block the proposal
 - ii. People affected by the proposal
 - iii. People that have important knowledge regarding the proposal
 - iv. People that can help implement the proposal
3. Add key interests to the top row. Key interests are some of the primary concerns or values that stakeholders take into account when considering this issue. For examples, key concerns of business owners could be cost, legal requirements, etc.
4. Add an X to show the primary interests for the different stakeholders. This will reveal key areas of common ground and potential areas of value conflict.

From this list you can prioritize the things you can do and the things you want to do if possible. It's oftentimes not possible to address the interest of every group, but looking at your list, what would benefit the most people.

Decrease barriers to participation

Material

What are the material costs of attending an event for different participants? How might you provide these resources for participants? Can you make budget allocations to help overcome the most pertinent barriers?

- Transportation
- Childcare
- Lack of knowledge
- Language barrier
- Loss of wages
- Length of event
- Time of the event

Symbolic

What are the symbolic barriers to attending an event for different participants? How might you design the process to help participants overcome these barriers?

- Distrust of event organizers
- Lack of self-efficacy
- Lack of solution-efficacy
- Distrust of deliberative process
- Perception of partiality
- Disinterest in the issue

Increase benefits of participation

Material

What are the material resources that someone can gain by being a part of this process?

- Money/Gift Cards
- Food
- Merchandise

Symbolic

What are the symbolic resources that someone can gain by being a part of this process?

- Educational benefit
- Experience builder (i.e. Resume)
- Decision-making power
- Social benefit

Create a network map

Successful recruitment also requires social capital. There are two types of social capital:

BONDING social capital is referred to as social networks between homogenous groups. Bonding can be valuable for oppressed and marginalized members of the society to band together in groups and networks and support their collective needs. The shared social norms and cooperative spirit from bonding also provide social safety nets to individuals and groups to protect themselves.

BRIDGING social capital is referred to as social networks between socially heterogeneous groups. Bridging allows different groups to share and exchange information, ideas and innovation and builds consensus among the groups representing diverse interests. This widens social capital by increasing 'radius of trust'.

As you plan your forum, sit down with your planning committee and identify where the group has bonding or bridging capital with primary stakeholders. Sometimes these ties can be weak (i.e. have their business card) or strong (i.e. you have neighborhood block parties together). Connect with these ties to find out how to recruit primary stakeholders and engage them in the conversation.

Make connections personal and one-on-one.

If you don't have network ties, invite a stakeholder into your planning committee to help supplement social capital or develop relationships through one-on-one meetings with representatives of key stakeholder groups. What can you offer them in return for their partnership on this project?

Use culturally competent communication

When conveners implement recruiting from the minimization and acceptance stages of Bennett's Intercultural Sensitivity Model, they're unlikely to successfully recruit participants. Folks who utilize denial or defense by actively not recruiting disempowered groups may actually get activist or protest participation from disempowered groups out of anger. Rather, successful recruitment requires an adaptation or integration level of communication.

Here's a few tips, though all recruitment methods need to be tailored to the specific community you're looking to recruit:

1. Advertise using ethnic media. What kinds of media is your target population consuming? How can you deliver your message via that platform?
2. Utilize interpreters and facilitators and have them work in pairs. This increases the chances that even if the first person didn't catch something, the second person will.
3. Make a list of all the things you've done to make the event "neutral". Now rethink these efforts from the perspective of someone outside of your cultural community. Would they perceive those efforts as neutral?
4. Use person-centered language. Refer to people as people first and then add additional language that describes their identities. For example, a person with disabilities instead of a disabled person.
5. Do your research. If you don't know the answer to a question, find out. There's lots of resources out there for better understanding cultures that are not your own.

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