

Designing a Deliberative Forum

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Deliberation comes in many shapes and sizes

- Length, size, frequency and content of deliberation are dictated by:
 - purpose, scale and complexity of deliberation initiative (e.g., local vs. national; time limited vs. on-going, one site vs. multiple)
 - available budgets, institutional requirements and legislative mandates

Key considerations for each design feature (1)

1. Frequency and length of sessions

- single vs. multiple?
- hours vs. days?

Key considerations

- Ensure that adequate time (1-2 days) is built in for participants to:
 - become familiar with the deliberation issue, their fellow deliberators and organizers;
 - learn how to deliberate (i.e., listen, ask questions, share and challenge viewpoints, and produce collective output)

This is essential for trust building and high-quality deliberation.

Key considerations for each design feature (2)

2. Size of group

- deliberative events can include large groups of 100 – 1000+ or smaller groups of 12-20

Key considerations

- Ensure adequate opportunity for small-group deliberation (6-12 people) to take place to support full and fair participation and meaningful deliberation
- Establish clear goals and carefully manage transitions between small and large groups to avoid confusion and duplication of tasks

Key considerations for each design feature (3)

3. The content and product of the deliberation

- values elicitation?
- policy option development/evaluation?
- recommendations?

Key considerations

- Deliberation activities should be guided by the goals of deliberation and how the sponsors intend to use the output (e.g., inform/guide vs. explicit uptake)
- Purpose and intended use needs to be communicated clearly and often:
 - recruitment stage
 - beginning of first deliberation event
 - beginning and end of each session
 - prior to deliberation wrap-up