

# Activity 5.8 Practicing Deliberation with Others

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## Description

This activity introduces the concept of legislative juries to participants and gives them the opportunity to practice deliberating in collaboration with others.

## Learning Goals

- Develop the ability to distinguish between exploratory discussion and deliberation.
- Practice collaborative discussion skills and habits that result in decision-making and a specific outcome.

## Instructions (60 minutes)

<p><b>Set Up</b></p>	<p><b>Prepare for the Activity</b></p> <p>This activity can take place in the classroom or community. If in the classroom, create a mock experience that replicates how it might happen in the community or with real legislative juries.</p> <p>Select a topic relevant for your community. Be sure to offer example policy ideas using a different topic from the one selected so as to not limit the imagination of the participants.</p> <p>Edit the instructions shown below in Step Two to include your chosen topic and some example policy ideas for a different topic. Share these</p>	
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<sup>1</sup> **Citation for this activity:** Debra Campbell (2023). Practicing Deliberation with Others. In Hartman and Byrd (Eds), The Interactivity Foundation Collaborative Discussion Toolkit. Retrieved from <https://www.collaborativediscussionproject.com/activities/module-5>

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	<p>instructions as handouts, a shared document, or on a shared surface visible to everyone.</p> <p>Organize participants into small groups (6-8 ppl).</p> <p>Begin by introducing the learning goals of this activity.</p>	
<b>Step One</b>	<p><b>Introduce the Concept of Legislative Juries</b></p> <p>Share this brief introduction:</p> <p>During the past thirty years, there has been a movement toward direct democracy in the form of citizen-sponsored “initiatives.” At present, 24 states allow ordinary citizens to propose and sponsor bills that are then voted upon in special or general elections. This form of direct democracy has been heavily criticized. A possible improvement to the initiative process would employ the use of randomly selected citizens to serve on “legislative juries.” The purpose of the legislative jury is to collaboratively discuss and refine possible initiatives before they are placed on the ballot. This process of citizen lawmaking would add the element of collaboration and deliberation to the initiative process and offer an improved form of direct democracy.</p>	<b>5 min</b>
<b>Step Two</b>	<p><b>Share Instructions</b></p> <p>Welcome everyone to the Legislative Jury Session. Begin the session by reading the instructions shown on the handout or shared screen.</p> <p><b>Template for Instructions:</b></p> <p>You have been randomly selected from a citizen list (e.g. motor vehicle registrations or voter registration rolls) to serve on this legislative jury. You have already been through extensive questioning and have agreed that you will engage in a good faith effort to deliberate on the above issue.</p> <p>Your task is to formulate the language for four different possible ballot initiatives regarding the issue of [insert topic]. The four versions should vary greatly, even to the point of being diametrically opposed, in order to assure real alternatives from which to choose.</p> <p>For example, four (briefly stated) versions of possible initiatives on the issue of gun control could be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Retain only the current restrictions on automatic weapons and semi-automatic weapons – no change</li> <li>2. Restrict the sale of automatic and semi-automatic weapons by requiring rigorous background checks, annual training, and carrying insurance policies for victims of shootings.</li> <li>3. Restrict the sale of all automatic and semi-automatic weapons.</li> <li>4. Restrict the sale of all guns to the general public.</li> </ol>	<b>5 min</b>

<p><b>Step Three</b></p>	<p><b>Explore Possibilities and Deliberate</b></p> <p>In small groups, have participants elect one member of their group as the foreperson. That person will preside over the deliberations of the jury.</p> <p>Next, ask each group to explore possible ballot initiatives and decide on the final four. If possible, highlight skills or habits learned via other toolkit activities (for example, encourage participants to think boldly, imagine stakeholders, build on the ideas of others, surround the topic, etc.).</p> <p>The group must unanimously support the final four options.</p> <p><b>Facilitator Tip:</b> Encourage participants to change their opinions if the discussion persuades them. It is important to reach a consensus, but, of course, only if each person can do so after having made their own conscientious decision.</p>	<p><b>30 min</b></p>
<p><b>Step Four</b></p>	<p><b>Share Policy Options with the Full Group</b></p> <p>Invite each small group to share their final four policy options with the full group. Keep track of the policy ideas on a flip chart, shared document or other shared surface visible to everyone.</p> <p><b>Facilitator Tip:</b> As each group shares their policy possibilities, be sure to organize them according to theme (not just a list from each group).</p>	<p><b>10 min</b></p>
<p><b>Step Five</b></p>	<p><b>Debrief as a Full Group</b></p> <p>Review the policy options generated by all the groups and discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Where is there overlap?</li> <li>● Where are there outlier or radical proposals?</li> <li>● Which proposals seem most interesting? Most plausible?</li> <li>● What would happen if citizens were more involved and invested in the legislative process?</li> </ul>	<p><b>10 min</b></p>

## Reflection Journal

- What was the most challenging part of this activity? What was the most rewarding?
- Would you serve on a legislative jury in your state? What might be some of the strengths and weaknesses of this lawmaking process?
- How important is diversity of perspective and experience for jury selection? How might you create a process to ensure expansive thinking in the deliberation process?

## Practice Journal

This week, organize a legislative jury. You can select a “friendly jury”--that is, friends or colleagues or family members. Try to get 6-8 people together and replicate this process. Have the group select the topic and then imagine and agree upon 4 possible policy ideas or laws. Write up a reflection on the most difficult and rewarding aspect of this challenge. Which collaborative skills or habits did you use in this process?

## Dive Deeper: Additional Resources

- [Direct Deliberative Democracy](#): Campbell, Debra J. and Jack Crittenden. *Direct Deliberative Democracy: How Citizens Can Rule*. Black Rose Books, 2019.

## Activity Cluster

[2.8 Encouraging Bold Imagination \(Telling the History of the Future\)](#)

5.8 Practicing Deliberation with Others

[5.7 Practicing Collaboration with Others](#)