



Facilitator's Guide

Detailed Process for Community Forums

Duration: Approximately One Hour

Purpose – Community Forums

- Community forums are an essential way that the Wilson 20/20 initiative is gathering input, perspectives and ideas from across Wilson County. The process and data gathered will:
 - Provide a way for diverse elements of the community to get involved in Wilson 20/20.
 - Deepen understanding of issues that are important to the future of Wilson County.
 - Sharpen the skills of leaders in how to facilitate a simple group process.
 - Help to frame the focus of the Wilson 20/20 Summit, April 19, 2007.
 - Provide an opportunity for interactive, collaborative conversations.
- The same process will be used by all facilitators conducting forums. This consistent format will assist in gathering data that can be compared and/or contrasted across the county.

Facilitator's Role

- The facilitator's job is to enable the group to work efficiently, fairly, and effectively. The facilitator should:
 - Ensure that all members participate.
 - Keep the group on topic.
 - Help members adhere to their ground rules.
 - Make interventions if there are problems.
 - Maintain a high energy level.
 - Set a positive tone.
 - Help the group achieve their objectives.
 - Prepare the space and tools/materials for an effective experience.
- Generally, the facilitator does not interject content-related ideas into the discussion; however, throwing out a few questions or thoughts to stimulate others' thinking is appropriate.
- The facilitator may wish to use a sheet of flip chart paper to capture the expression of ideas that are of interest, yet not relevant to the process at hand. The sheet could be titled "And another thing...", and markers or sticky notes used to write the ideas/concerns.

Preparation

- The coordinator and facilitator for each forum are responsible for assuring the space is ready for the participants.
- Facilitator tasks:
 - Study the process, prepare, and implement it.
 - Make sure participants sign attendance sheet.
 - Help coordinator organize the room.
 - Write the 6 questions below on 6 sheets of flipchart paper. Write ground rules on flipchart paper.
 - Write up results of the session on the form provided and submit by the Thursday, February 15 deadline.
- Coordinator tasks:
 - Secure site.

- Set date and time and report it to the School of Government staff.
- Recruit participants.
- Have flipchart, markers, sticky notes, masking tape, and name tags available.
- Help facilitator organize the room.
- Ensure that access to the meeting space is available (key, on-site helper, etc.).
- Ensure space will be secure at conclusion of session.
- Be on hand during the session to assist the facilitator.
- Be a note-taker (on flipchart) or recruit one.

Group Process

Welcome and Introductions

- Facilitator introduces him/herself and welcomes the group.
- Facilitator offers a brief explanation of Wilson 20/20 and how the community forums and this session fit in (see above).
- Facilitator asks each person to give a *brief* introduction.
 - Name.
 - Affiliation, if appropriate.
 - Town.
- Facilitator gives overview of group time (approximately 60 minutes) and objectives.
 - Objectives
 - △ To give all group members a chance to participate in the dialogue.
 - △ To learn from one another.
 - △ To generate material that will be fed into all the research for Wilson 20/20.
 - △ To have a community conversation about the future.

Instructions

- Facilitator introduces **Ground Rules** for group behavior (see below). Ask the group if they have additions, corrections, and/or deletions. Get agreement to use the rules to facilitate the group's work as distributed/amended.
- Facilitator reminds the group that we are here to think about and discuss aspects of Wilson County and its communities. Remind participants that the boundaries for the conversation extend to the county borders. However, participants may feel more comfortable reflecting on their town, community, or neighborhood.
- Facilitator explains the sequence of the group's work:
 - Group will dialogue on four questions about the current state of the community.
 - Group will discuss and write responses to two questions about the future.

Ground Rules¹ for Productive Meetings

- The following ground rules help to make meetings more productive:
 1. **Participate fully.** It's all right to disagree. Everyone should have the opportunity to state his or her own views, regardless of rank or other differences.
 2. **Work on the problem.** Put other issues aside, including personalities, previous experiences, offices, or other differences. Show respect for each other.
 3. **Focus on interests, not positions.** Explain why you favor a particular course of action. Invite questions so you can explain your reasons fully. Avoid staking out a specific posture until all viewpoints are heard.
 4. **Share all relevant information.** Be specific. Offer to the group information you have about a topic. Agree on what important words mean. Discuss "undiscussable" issues.
 5. **Stay focused.** Discuss a topic long enough for everybody to be clear about it.

6. **Decide how the group will make decisions.** Strive for consensus. (No decisions are required in this particular forum process, but the ground rule is relevant in other settings.)

- The facilitator can ask:
 - Do you have any questions or reservations about these ground rules?
 - Will you try to follow them in our meeting today?
 - Do you have any other ground rules to suggest?
 - Are you ready to amend or adopt these ground rules??
- The values that underlie these ground rules include:
 - Developing and sharing valid information.
 - Making free and informed choices.
 - Developing internal commitment to carrying out those choices.

¹Adapted from *The Skilled Facilitator: Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups* by Roger Schwarz. Published by Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1994.

Dialogue and Information Gathering

- Facilitator reveals questions that will be discussed and the time allotted.
- Questions and time allotment:

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Method</u>
The Present			
1.	What do you see as the most significant Strengths this community has? What asset do you have here?	7 minutes	Discuss and record key ideas.
2.	List some of the Weaknesses that characterize your community? What's holding it back?	10 minutes	Discuss and record key ideas.
3.	What do you see that is currently happening or about to happen that present(s) Opportunities for the Wilson community?	7 minutes	Discuss and record key ideas.
4.	As your community progresses in the next 15 years, what specific Challenges will be faced?	10 minutes	Discuss and record key ideas.
The Future			
5.	What one challenge do you believe is most important for Wilson 20/20 to prioritize for action in the future?	5 minutes	Write on sticky notes or flipchart paper. Discuss, time permitting.
6.	When you envision the ideal state for this community, what adjectives come to mind? What words do you want to use to describe your community in 20/20?	5 minutes	Write on sticky notes or flipchart paper. Discuss, time permitting.

- Consider the first four questions in turn. (Questions are written on flipchart sheets.)
- Record key ideas and thoughts on the flipchart paper.
- Be aware of pacing the discussion. If time is getting short, notify the group.
- Ask leading or probing questions.
- Verbally summarize the work at the end of each question's dialogue.
- Consider Questions 5 and then 6 by asking each person to think about their response, and then quickly state their ideas for each question in turn. Keep track of how many times each response is verbalized using hash marks or some other method. We want to make sure the frequency of each response is recorded.

- Ask participants to write down their responses to each question either on the sticky notes or on flipchart paper with markers. If time is short, eliminate the verbal response to these two questions (as described in the previous step) and do this step only.

Follow-Up Participation

- Explain to group that all the data generated will be compiled and fed into the body of data being collected for Wilson 20/20. Responses to all community forums will be aggregated and given to the Steering Committee, used at the Summit in April, and, most likely, be reported by the media. This information will provide direction for Wilson's future.
- Encourage participants to continue their participation in Wilson 20/20 activities. They can do this in the following ways:
 - Help to organize another community forum, especially with community members who might not typically have a voice.
 - Visit the Wilson 20/20 website: www.wilson2020vision.org. or email us at : wilson2020vision@yahoo.com.
 - Fill out the community survey posted on the website.
 - Attend the Summit on April, 19, 2007.
 - Serve on one of the task forces following the Summit.

Appreciation and Closure

- Thank the group members for their participation and helpers for their assistance.
- Tell them to watch for Wilson 20/20 activities in the future.
- Ask if there are any questions or parting comments.
- Thank them again.

Thank you for facilitating!

Completion of "Paperwork"

- Ensure each person has signed in. Give sheet to School of Government staff or Steering Committee member.
- Write up and file electronically the results of the session. They are due Thursday, February 15, 2007 to lydian@sog.unc.edu or c/o Lydian Altman-Sauer, 317 East Johnson Street, Clinton, NC 28328.

For Reporting on events:

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