

**THRIVING  
TOGETHER**

**RECOVERY TO RENEWAL:**  
Dialogue Guide

October 2021



# RECOVERY TO RENEWAL DIALOGUE

## AN HISTORIC JUNCTURE...

Our country is polarized and faces ongoing uncertainty and instability. We continue to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, an economic crisis, and increasing racial inequities. The question is: do we seek to recover to the status quo or to a future where all people have a fair chance to participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.

## WITH UNPRECEDENTED FUNDING...

In response to our compounding challenges, the federal government is making unprecedented investments in local and regional communities. Never have communities had access to direct, flexible dollars. Funding is for both short term response needs, as well as for longer term investments in community resilience and renewal.

## REQUIRING A BALANCING ACT...

Community leaders across the country have begun to develop plans, balancing creative tensions:

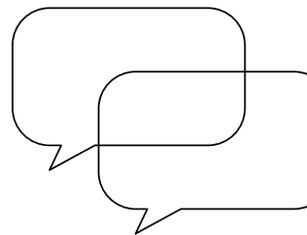
- Meeting shorter -terms urgent needs and investing in longer-term community-wide well-being
- Getting needed resources out ASAP and slowing down to ensure investments lasting impact
- Engaging traditional stakeholders and including underheard and marginalized stakeholders

## FROM COMMUNITY STEWARDS...

Navigating these tensions during a period of significant political and social polarization requires shared stewardship -- people and organizations who share responsibility for working together with others to change the system we inhabit today and expand opportunities for all people to thrive tomorrow.

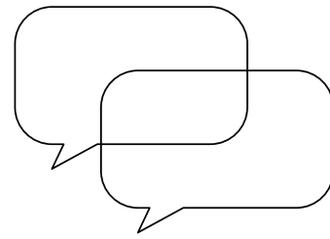
## STARTING WITH DIALOGUE...

Meeting the challenges and opportunity at this historic moment will require authentic Dialogue.



- Dialogue is the art of thinking together. It is different from focus groups or other community input formats because it generates deeper understanding and new possibilities
- Dialogue strengthens our sense of belonging and connection by strengthening relationships. When we listen, share, and discover the stories of our community, we are able to create meaning together —and are better positioned to act as stewards in our organizations, communities, and regions.
- The connections developed through dialogue help to build our civic muscle, making it easier to take action together. When we are able to harness our collective experience and best thinking, we are better able to create solutions that meet the needs of all community members.

# ENGAGING THROUGH DIALOGUE



Community engagement processes are critical to ensuring residents and community partners are able to share their ideas and solutions. Authentic dialogue is a simple and powerful place to start.

## WHAT IS DIALOGUE

Dialogue creates an environment that builds trust and respect by honoring diverse values and perspectives— and by seeking a deeper level of understanding that makes collaborative action possible.



“Come as you are, but don’t leave as you’ve come”

Iowa, Community Church Marquee

## DIALOGUE IS COUNTERCULTURAL

DEBATE <i>“Standard Discourse Today”</i>	DIALOGUE <i>“Countercultural”</i>
Assumes there is a right answer, and you have it	Assumes many people have pieces of the answer and together can craft new solutions
Combative: participants attempt to prove the other side is wrong	Collaborative: participants work together toward common understanding
About winning	About discovering common ground
Reinforces, restates the same points	Balances advocacy and inquiry
Defends assumptions as truth	Reveals (shares) assumption for re-evaluation
Searches for flaws and weaknesses in others’ positions	Searches for strength and value in others’ positions
Avoids, undervalues or disrespects differences	Seeks out and welcomes different perspectives

## WHEN WE'RE IN DIALOGUE, WE'RE...

- Listening for what's true for others
- Sharing what's true for you
- Discovering what we have in common



# RECOVERY TO RENEWAL DIALOGUE

## PREPARING FOR DIALOGUE

The following are some quick tips for starting a dialogue on moving from Recovery to Renewal.

### 1 DETERMINE GOALS FOR YOUR DIALOGUE:

What do you (conveners) hope will come from a dialogue(s) around Recovery to Renewal? To build relationships with influential organizations and community residents? To better understand perceived challenges and opportunities? To co-create actual strategies and solutions to specific focus areas?. No doubt there will be different goals for different stages of change.

### 2 ENGAGE DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES (EMPHASIS ON LIVED EXPERIENCE):

The critical ingredient for a meaningful dialogue is to bring together a diverse group of people. Clarity on goals will help you hone in on the best blend of perspectives to meet those goals. Reach out to people and groups who are most affected by the pandemic, economic downturn and structural inequities. Engaging individuals and groups with lived experience requires real intention to set up-- timing, location, and the right facilitator.

### 3 COMBINE GENERATIVE QUESTIONS + LIGHT FACILITATION:

Good questions are the lifeblood of a productive dialogue and reduce the need for facilitative interventions. It is helpful to have a facilitator who is a good listener, can set context, inspire conversation and redirect if necessary. It's important to have someone the whole group sees as credible and welcoming. Generative questions: surface personal stories; are provocative; spark creative thinking; lead to new ideas and innovation.

### 4 ANTICIPATE AND SUPPORT NEXT STEPS:

Make sure your fellow conveners have thought about how to use dialogue results, how to share results and opportunities for deeper engagement in Rescue-to-Renewal efforts. Productive dialogues often generate unexpected ideas and outcomes--be prepared to be surprised.

Note: Moving from Recovery to Renewal will take many dialogues and broader community engagement strategies--see resources for how to deepen dialogue, engage residents and round out your engagement approach.

# A STARTER DIALOGUE

These questions are designed for discovering common values, unique insights and shared aspirations for the future. These can be used in small and large group settings (ideally broken into groups of 4-6) for approximately 75-90 minutes.

## FACILITATOR SET UP:

- Set Context (Points on Page 2 + Local Process)
- Name hopes/purpose for this/these dialogues
- Working agreements

**INTRODUCTIONS:** Please share your name, connection to this community AND what is one value that is important to you that you bring to this conversation?

1

What is an example of how this community has demonstrated resilience?

- In the past, how has our community bounced back (recovered) after experiencing significant challenges?

2

What signs of community renewal would you be most excited to see five years from now?

- What are past legacies -- decisions, actions or norms we have inherited from our ancestors that we should build on? Leave behind?

3

What will it take for different sectors and diverse community voices to work together for the common good? (i.e. building belonging and civic muscle)

- How do we ensure that voices that are often excluded (marginalized) are truly included and engaged?
- Share your experience of what has worked/not worked when the community has received significant funding (i.e. federal stimulus/recovery dollars or large grants) in the past?

4

What will be key to stewarding incoming resources to both alleviate immediate suffering AND to create the conditions for all community members to thrive?

- What shifts in mindsets and practices will it take to create the conditions for all community members to thrive (today and for generations to come)?
- What would be a legacy of this Rescue-to-Renewal work that would make you most proud?

5

Final reflection: What about this dialogue gives you hope?