U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)
Community Relations Service (CRS)

Dialogue on RACE

PROGRAM GUIDE

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Introduction

Introduction to Dialogue

What does dialogue mean?

Dialogue is a process that convenes diverse participants from the community to exchange information, share personal stories and experiences, express honest perspectives, clarify viewpoints, and develop solutions to community concerns.

Dialogue emphasizes listening to deepen understanding. Dialogue invites discovery. It identifies common values and allows participants to express their own interests. It sets expectations that participants will grow in understanding and that they may decide to act together with common goals.

In dialogue, participants can question and reevaluate their assumptions. Through this process, participants improve trust, gain perspectives, learn from each other, and learn to work together to improve community relations. See **Appendix A: The Difference between Debate and Dialogue** to better understand aspects of dialogue.

What makes for a successful dialogue on race?

The nature of the dialogue process can motivate people to work toward change.

Effective dialogues do the following:

- **Move toward solutions rather than continue to identify and analyze issues**. An emphasis on personal responsibility moves the discussion away from blaming others and towards collaboration.
- **Reach beyond the usual boundaries.** When fully developed, dialogues involve the entire community and offer opportunities for new or more fully developed relationships. These relationships develop when participants listen carefully and respectfully to each other. A search for solutions focuses on the common good as participants are encouraged to broaden their horizons and build relationships outside their comfort zones.
- **Unite diverse communities through a respectful, informed sharing of local racial history and its impacts on the community.** This experience of "walking through history" together can promote understanding.

Planning a Dialogue on Race

What size planning group is needed? Who should be a member of the planning group?

The organizer should form a planning group. If the approach is an informal dialogue with friends, neighbors, or co-workers, for example, then the planning group may consist of the organizer and one or two others.

However, if the approach is a more ambitious effort, then the organizer will need to have a planning group of six or eight people who represent different backgrounds, professions, and viewpoints. Once the planning group members are identified and assembled, they will need to spend enough time together to build a level of trust.

This group will be the nucleus that drives the process and should "model" the kind of relationships and openness hoped to be modeled by the overall effort. This group will be responsible to complete all the necessary logistical tasks, including date, time, location, invitations, registration, and communications. Additionally, the planning group will work with the organizer to address all the following questions.

What partners are needed for success?

Partners are important for long-term success. The organizer should identify people who are already working to support race relations and racial equity and who have experiences to share. Groups from different racial, ethnic, or religious communities can make good partners and offer networking possibilities. Religious officials, law enforcement leaders, small business owners, elected officials, leaders of educational institutions, and various nonprofit organizations are also important partners. These partners often have a good sense of the current issues impacting the community; they know the key leaders who can influence changes, and they can provide additional resources to support the dialogue effort.

What is happening in the community?

The organizer and the planning group should identify the needs of the community. They should consider the following questions:

- What issues related to race relations and racial equity exist in the community?
- What are the critical issues?
- Who needs to be part of the dialogue?
- Are there any individuals or groups not talking to each other?
- What role do language barriers play in groups not talking to each other?
- Are there people who should be allies, who may be doing similar work, but who are competing rather than working together?
- What are some of the impacts of community conflict?

What are the dialogue goals?

The organizer should establish short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. It is important to set some attainable goals that participants can work toward together. Participants can identify common issues and interests that can form the basis for coalitions. For more formal, long-term efforts, the planning group can create task forces to study specific needs and to work on concrete action plans. This approach has the strongest potential to keep key business and civic leaders at the table.

How many dialogue sessions should take place, and for how long?

The answer to this question depends on the dialogue goals. Dialogues can range from a single two-hour session to a series of sessions lasting over many months. For example, if the goal is simply to get people who know each other to come together and have a conversation about race, one session may be enough.

What additional planning is needed?

To ensure diverse perspectives in the dialogue group, the organizer should consider the following:

- "Which voices need to be included?" Answering that question will ensure the racial, ethnic, religious, age, and gender diversity necessary for successful dialogues; and
- "Who is missing?" That answer will steer the organizer toward others who need to be involved. Other people to contact are those in uninvolved or unaffiliated groups who, while a visible part of the community, may be harder to reach through traditional means.

The organizer can generate interest in a formal dialogue process by doing the following:

- Asking civic leaders and other influential members of the community to help rally the public;
- Leveraging social media and traditional media to reach the target audience;
- Using multilingual communications;
- Attending various group sessions in the community to get the word out; and
- Partnering with local chapters of national organizations.

The organizer should consider logistics issues, including:

- Identifying date(s), time, and location;
- Planning communications;
- Promoting the dialogue session;
- Registering the participants;
- Identifying facilitators;

- Obtaining chart paper and marker pens;
- Developing the dialogue meeting agenda; and
- Staffing the dialogue sessions.

How is a dialogue session facilitated?

The most successful formal dialogues use neutral facilitators to keep the discussion flowing constructively. The critical components of the facilitator's duties include welcoming participants and having them introduce themselves; setting out the dialogue's purpose; establishing ground rules; promoting discussion through thoughtful questions, visual media, or other materials; and periodically summarizing and evaluating the dialogue.

Was the dialogue successful?

The organizer should document and evaluate the dialogue sessions, including keeping a record of the individuals and groups who take part in the dialogues. Documentation should include the number of participants, group composition (diverse community leaders, youth leaders, faith leaders, community organizations, etc.), main topics discussed, how productive the discussions were, and how they might have been improved. This approach will allow the organizer to see whether changes need to be made to the dialogue format.

What are next steps?

If the dialogues continue, expand the planning group to include representatives from all sectors of the community, if some groups were not already included. In addition, in subsequent sessions, the dialogue group may create a statement about the community, its history, the challenges it faces today, and the group's collective vision for the future. Groups that continue meeting over time should consider holding an annual event to celebrate achievements, evaluate effectiveness, and invite new participants. The groups should also develop a plan that identifies specific action steps that address community issues identified during the dialogue process.

Below are some questions and possible answers to help the organizer and planning group plan a dialogue on race. These questions may be modified to use with dialogues on other issues. They are meant to promote brainstorming. The answers to these questions will help the planning group better understand the purpose and potential of the dialogue effort. The planning group is encouraged to use **Appendix B: Community Profile Worksheet** to develop a profile of their community.

What's going on in our community that a dialogue on race could address?

- There are protests and tensions due to alleged racial hate crimes or bias incidents;
- There are underlying issues that led to civil unrest due to alleged race-related acts of violence;

- There are diverse groups that want to get to know each other better;
- There is a race-related issue in my community that people want to talk about;
- There are young people from diverse racial groups who could increase their understanding of each other by sharing their experiences;
- The community wants to work together to address common issues; and/or
- Community demographics are changing.

What are the dialogue goals?

- To improve communication and partnerships between diverse groups;
- To build new relationships between diverse groups;
- To strengthen existing relationships between diverse groups;
- To bring people together who do not typically engage with one another;
- To reduce the potential for violence;
- To improve police and community relations;
- To improve understanding about other cultures;
- To open up new economic possibilities;
- To create partnerships between organizations that do not typically work together; and/or
- To develop plans for joint community initiatives.

Who should participate in the dialogue? Is this a "come-one-come-all" dialogue, or should participants be primarily community leaders? Participants may include:

- Diverse community leaders and influencers;
- Diverse youth leaders;
- Faith-based and inter-faith leaders;
- Neighborhood associations;
- School administrators, teachers, parents, and students;
- Law enforcement leaders;
- Elected officials and community leaders; and/or
- Business leaders and owners.

What type of meeting(s) should we have?

- A few small groups meeting once or twice;
- A large public meeting;
- A series of small groups from across the community meeting for six weeks or more, concluding with a large meeting;
- A year-long commitment among a group of key community leaders to study, reflect on, and discuss race relations and racial equity concerns;

- School projects aimed at understanding cultural differences, concluding with a multicultural potluck dinner; and/or
- Study groups meeting from racially diverse congregations, concluding with a joint worship service.

After completing the **Community Profile Worksheet (Appendix B),** the dialogue organizer must make some decisions. Anyone can have an honest conversation about race, but the dialogue organizer has several choices about meeting types ranging from the very simple to the somewhat complex. At the simple end of the spectrum, the organizer can gather a small group of friends, neighbors, or schoolmates to talk informally about race. This approach can be a constructive beginning but will likely not result in long-term impacts.

Another option is to convene existing community groups and leaders for a dialogue on race. This approach can have a larger effect on the community, depending on the groups involved. The organizer could also convene new community groups and bring them together for dialogue sessions. Whatever the approach, for a lasting impact on the larger community, it is important for the organizer to consider how the effort will be sustained. Dialogue may start at many levels and in many ways. While the guidance in this guide can be adapted for the small "ad-hoc" gathering, it is generally intended for a larger session that a diverse planning group is hosting.

Role of the Facilitator

Using a facilitator to help conduct a dialogue is a best practice for success. The facilitator's role is to keep participants focused and organized. As a result, the facilitator must possess good listening skills and be willing to enforce the dialogue ground rules. The facilitator's responsibility is to the group as a whole, while also considering each person's individuality and level of comfort. CRS offers facilitator training, "Facilitating Meetings Around Community Conflict," that might be a helpful resource.

Because facilitating dialogue is an intensive activity requiring a high level of alertness and awareness, often two or more facilitators conduct the dialogues. It may be particularly valuable to have co-facilitators who identify as members of different races or who have different ethnic backgrounds and genders. Co-facilitation can help to balance the dialogue and "model" the type of collaboration encouraged in the dialogue process.

While the dialogue facilitator does not need to be an "expert" or even the most knowledgeable person in the group on the topic being discussed, they should be the best prepared for the discussion. It is up to the facilitator to keep the group moving forward, using techniques that enhance conversations and encourage discussion. This means understanding the goals of the dialogue, thinking ahead of time

about the directions in which the discussion might go, and preparing questions to help the group tackle their subject.

The facilitator guides the process to ensure that it stays on track and avoids obstacles that could derail it. While the facilitator guides the dialogue, they are impartial and do not advocate for any issues or perspectives by adding their point of view or opinion. Rather, the dialogue facilitator lets the participants dictate the flow and pace of the discussions.

At the start of each session, the facilitator conducts an introduction where they remind everyone that the purpose is to have an open, honest, and cooperative dialogue, and that the facilitator's role is to remain neutral, keep the discussion focused, and enforce the ground rules. After the facilitator's introduction, they help the participants establish ground rules and ensure that all participants are willing to follow them.

Ground rules must emphasize respect, listening, honesty, and the importance of sharing time equitably, as well as stress the importance of respecting different opinions and perspectives. The facilitator can develop the ground rules on their own; eliciting the ground rules from the group will ensure group buy-in and voluntary compliance. The following are some basic ground rules for dialogues:

- We will **respect** confidentiality;
- We will **share time equitably** to ensure the participation of all;
- We will **listen carefully** and not interrupt;
- We will **keep an open mind** and be open to learning; and
- We will **be respectful** of the speaker even when we do not agree with their views.

The facilitator then confirms the ground rules with the group and asks for their compliance. The facilitator should ask, "Are there any questions about these ground rules? Can we all agree to them before we continue? Are there any you would like to add?"

Tips for Facilitators

Set a relaxed and open tone. Welcome everyone and create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

Stay neutral. This may be the most important point to remember as the facilitator of a dialogue. The facilitator should not share personal views or try to advance their agenda on the issue. The facilitator is present to serve the discussion, not to join it.

Stress the importance of confidentiality. Make sure participants understand that what they say during the dialogue session is to be kept completely confidential. Define for them what confidential means. For instance, it is not all right to speak outside of the dialogue about what someone else aid or did. It is all right to share one's own personal insights about the issue of race and racism as a result of the process.

Encourage openness about language. Dialogue facilitators should encourage participants to use unbiased and non-offensive language during dialogue sessions.

Provide bilingual translation, if necessary. Also, ensure that provided material is translated into the participants' first language, or recruit bilingual discussion leaders.

Keep track of who is contributing and who is not. The facilitator should not only help to keep the group focused on the content of the discussion, but also they are monitoring how well the participants are communicating with each other -- who has spoken, who has not, and whose points have not yet received a fair hearing. A facilitator must constantly weigh group needs against the requirements of individual members.

Follow and focus the conversation flow. A facilitator who listens carefully will select topics raised in the initial sharing. To help keep the group on the topic, it is helpful to occasionally restate the key question or insight under discussion. It is important to guide gently, yet persistently. The facilitator might ask, "*How does your point relate to the topic?"* or state, *"That's an interesting point, but let's return to the central issue."* Keep careful track of time.

Do not fear silence. It is all right if people are quiet for a while. When deciding whether to intervene, err on the side of nonintervention. The group usually will work its way out of a difficult situation. Sometimes group members only need more time to think through alternatives or to consider what has just been said.

Accept and summarize expressed opinions. "Accepting" shows respect for each participant in the group. It is important for the dialogue leader to make it clear that dialogue discussions involve no right or wrong responses. One way to show acceptance and respect is to briefly summarize what is heard and to convey the feeling with which the person shared it. Reflecting both the content and the feeling lets the person know that she or he has been heard. For example, the facilitator might say: *"It sounds like you felt hurt when you were slighted by someone of a different race."* Once in a while, ask participants to sum up the most important points that have come out in the discussion. Write them on a flip chart. These techniques give the group a sense of accomplishment and a point of reference for more sharing.

Anticipate conflict and tend to the ground rules. When conflict arises, explain that disagreement over ideas is to be expected. Remind participants that conflict must stay on the issue. Do not allow it to

become personal. Appeal to the group to help resolve the conflict and abide by the ground rules. The facilitator may have to stop and reference the ground rules several times throughout the discussion.

Close the dialogue. Give participants a chance to talk about the most important thing they gained from the discussion. The facilitator may ask them to share any new ideas or thoughts they've had as a result of the discussion. Ask them to think about what worked and what didn't. The facilitator and the planning group may design a closing activity for use at each session.

Provide some time for the group to evaluate the program by providing verbal feedback and/or completing the evaluation form in **Appendix C: Dialogue Evaluation Form**. After completing the evaluation, the facilitator should thank everyone for their participation.

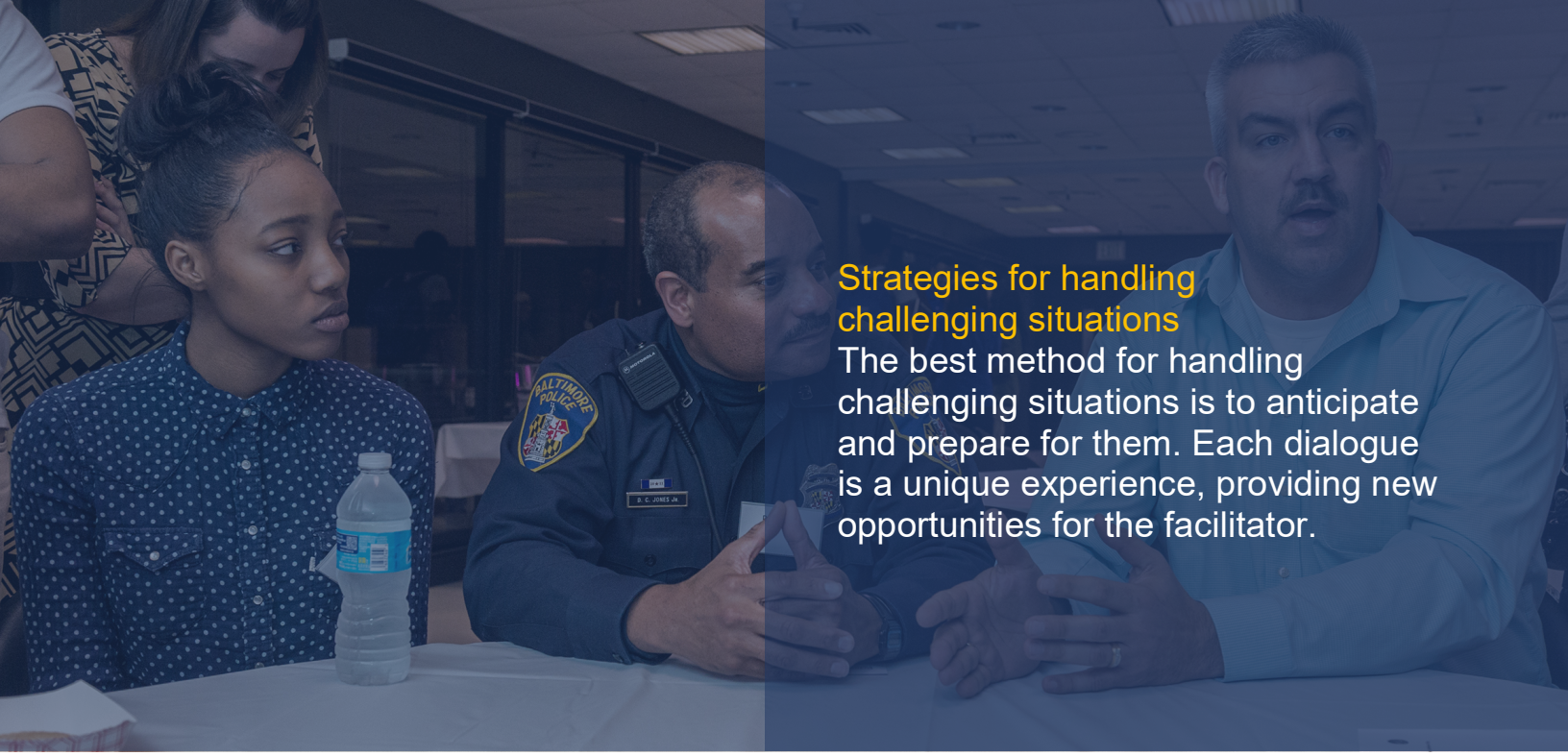
Strategies for Handling Challenging Situations

The best method for handling challenging situations is to anticipate and prepare for them. Each dialogue is a unique experience, providing new opportunities for the facilitator. Even those who have been facilitators for many years are often faced with new problems requiring on-the-spot creative action. There are no certain answers; sometimes groups just do not go well, and other times all participants seem engaged and satisfied.

The following scenarios present some possible challenges to the facilitator and offer some strategies for handling them.

Challenge 1: The group is slow to respond to the process.

Strategy: Check-in with the participants to determine whether the directions are clear. The facilitator may need to restate the purpose of the process, and how it should be carried out. The facilitator may also have people who are reluctant to participate because of perceptions around the amount of "power" held by various members of CRS in the group. If so, invite them to participate to the degree they feel comfortable. Assure them that the purpose of the process is to share different insights, experiences, and personal reflections on the topic; however, the members choose to participate is valuable. It is also important to make sure members are physically comfortable.



Strategies for handling challenging situations

The best method for handling challenging situations is to anticipate and prepare for them. Each dialogue is a unique experience, providing new opportunities for the facilitator.

Challenge 2: One or a few members dominate the dialogue.

Strategy: Developing and enforcing ground rules about respecting time limits are helpful. Invite participants to be conscious of each person having time to share their reflections, ideas, and insights. It may be helpful to invoke the ground rule, "It is important to share time equitably," when a few individuals dominate the discussion.

Another solution is to tell the group that it is important to hear from those who have not said much. Participants will look to the facilitator to restrain domineering group members. Sometimes, this situation happens when those dominating the dialogue feel they have not been heard. Summarizing the essence of what they've expressed can show that the facilitator has understood their point of view.

Challenge 3: The facilitator feels strongly about an issue and has trouble staying impartial.

Strategy: The facilitator should maintain their role, which is to guide the process and to elicit participants' perspectives. If the facilitator respects the views of others and shows interest and curiosity for others' experiences and viewpoints, it will not be difficult to keep personal ideas from influencing the dialogue. This is not to say that the facilitator never shares, but they must guard against moving from the facilitator role into a teacher/lecturer or a participant role.

Challenge 4: A participant walks out of a group following a heated conflict.

Strategy: Dialogue sessions may become heated. Participants may be confrontational or walk out. The best way to deal with conflict is to tactfully confront it directly. The facilitator should remind participants that they were told initially that tensions could arise, but that they agreed to respond to differences respectfully. Name-calling, personal attacks, and threats are never acceptable. This is one

situation where the facilitator should readily appeal to the group for support. If they accepted the ground rules, the group will support the facilitator.

Group Size

The facilitator(s) should consider the size of the group. In general, groups of 10 or fewer are best. For groups larger than 10, the facilitator initially should separate participants into 2 or 3 smaller groups. After answering the questions, the participants are then brought back together in the larger group.

Participant Feedback and Evaluations

After each session, the facilitator should elicit participant feedback about the session. Evaluations can be written and/or expressed verbally. If collecting written comments, the organizer should distribute and collect an evaluation form. An evaluation should include questions like:

- Why did you join the group?
- What were your expectations?
- Were you comfortable participating in the discussion?
- Did the dialogue give you new insights about how to support race relations or racial equity?
- Was the dialogue positive and respectful?
- Did you find the dialogue to be a valuable experience overall?
- How might it have been improved?
- Would you like to participate in a future session?
- Did the experience motivate you to act differently?
- What additional comments do you have?

A formal, written evaluation is distributed and collected from participants during the final dialogue session. This evaluation provides the organizer, facilitator, and planning group with an understanding of the strengths and areas of improvement of the dialogue process, as well as its impacts.

Facilitating a Four-Step Dialogue on Race

The dialogue methodology described in this guide includes four steps that have proven useful in moving participants through a process from sharing individual experiences, to gaining a deeper understanding of those experiences, to developing a vision and committing to collective action.

This section of the guide describes the four steps of the dialogue methodology, but this approach can be modified by adding more sessions to best fit the needs of the community.

In most situations, one dialogue session is not sufficient to discuss complex issues surrounding racial equity, and multiple sessions are recommended. Regardless of the number of sessions, participants move through all four steps, exploring and building on shared experiences. See **Appendix D: Sample Agenda of a Dialogue Session** for more information about how to organize the dialogue session.

The facilitator(s) uses this methodology to keep the participants focused and moving in a common direction.

1. The **first step** sets the tone and explores personal stories by using the question, "*Who are we?*"

2. The **second step** asks the question, "*Where are we?*" and helps participants more deeply understand personal and shared racial history in the community.
3. During the **third step**, participants develop a vision for the community, in response to the question, "*Where do we want to be?*"
4. Finally, in the **fourth step**, participants answer the question, *"What will we do as individuals and with others to make a difference?"* In this final step, participants discover shared interests and develop partnerships on specific projects.

Script—Four Dialogue Steps

Below is a sample script for a facilitator(s) conducting the four dialogue steps. The planning group and the facilitator should read through the questions below and then, if necessary, develop questions tailored to the needs of their particular groups.

Step One: Who Are We?

This step sets the tone and context for the dialogue, which begins with the sharing of personal stories and experiences. In addition to serving as an icebreaker, this kind of personal sharing helps to level the playing field among participants and improve their understanding by hearing each other's experiences.

Welcome, Introduction, and Overview

The facilitator says,

> "It's not always easy to talk about race and race relations. **A commitment to the dialogue process will help us make progress.** Your presence here shows that you are dedicated to positive race relations in this community."

The facilitator then does the following:

- Explains the purpose of the dialogue and the steps involved;
- Discusses, clarifies, and sets ground rules;
- Facilitates participant introductions;
- Provides an overview of the session; and
- Describes their role as dialogue facilitator.

Starting the Dialogue

Getting started is often the most difficult part of talking about race. Some participants may feel uncomfortable at first and hesitant about expressing their personal beliefs or sharing their personal stories. To get people talking, it may help to relate personal stories or anecdotes or to bring up a race-related incident that has occurred within the community.

The facilitator says,

> Let's begin by looking at the first question: **'Who are we?'** By listening to one another's **personal stories**, we can gain insights into our own beliefs and those of others and come to new understandings of the issues we face. By sharing our **personal experiences**, we can learn more about each other as individuals and about how we have been influenced by our diverse backgrounds. We can also **shed light on our different perceptions** and understandings of race relations and racial equity.

Guiding Questions

The facilitator should begin with guiding questions that allow people to talk about their own lives and what is important to them. These initial questions do not focus on race. Rather, participants are given a chance to get to know each other as individuals and to find out what they have in common. Examples of questions to use include:

- How long have you lived in this community?
- Where did you live before moving here?
- What are some of your personal interests?
- What things in life are most important to you?

Once the participants are familiar with each other and have developed the beginnings of a relationship, the facilitator transitions to the questions that explore how race may affect the participants on a day-to-day basis. The questions include:

- What is your racial, ethnic, and/or cultural background?
- Did you grow up mostly around people similar to you?
- What are some of your earliest memories of coming in contact with people different from you?

Session Wrap-Up

The facilitator charts participants' responses to the following questions, summarizes the session, and asks participants:

- How did you feel about this meeting?
- Is there anything you would like to change?

The facilitator thanks the participants for their important and hard work, and then provides information about the next steps. In preparation for the next meeting, the facilitator asks the participants to consider the following questions:

When it comes to race relations, what are the issues, if any, impacting the community? What are the community's greatest strengths for overcoming these issues?

Step Two: Where Are We?

Step two uses guiding questions that highlight different experiences and perceptions of the participants about the issues their community is facing with regard to race. The goals of this step are to allow participants to express their different understandings about race and then explore the factors producing them. It centers on the idea that it makes sense to talk about the issues the community is facing before exploring solutions. By the end of this step, participants should have identified the themes and issues in their community.

The facilitator says,

> Let's turn now to our second question: **'Where are we?'** The purpose of this session is to look at our **current experiences of race and ethnicity** and to discuss the state of **racial equity in our community**. It is okay to feel uncomfortable, as that is a normal part of the dialogue process where we seek to better understand various perspectives.

If needed, the facilitator will remind the participants of the ground rules.

Guiding Questions

The facilitator begins with questions that get participants talking about their race-related experiences, including the following examples:

- How much contact do you have with people of other races?

- What type of contact do you have with people of other races?

The facilitator then transitions the dialogue to focus on the state of race relations and racial equity in the community. The facilitator asks the following questions:

- How would you describe the overall state of race relations and racial equity in our community?
- What are some of the factors affecting race relations and racial equity in our community?

Session Wrap Up

The facilitator charts the responses, summarizes the session, and asks participants:

- How did you feel about this meeting?
- Is there anything you would like to change?

The facilitator thanks the participants for their important and hard work, and then provides information about the next steps. In preparation for the next meeting, the facilitator asks the participants to consider the following questions:

What can we do to improve relationships between all community groups?

- When it comes to strategies to support racial equity, what types of actions can we take? Try to identify a broad range of possibilities.
- What are the pros and cons of these various actions?

Step Three: Where Do We Want to Go?

In this step, participants begin to build their collective vision. They first identify what would be a part of that vision and then brainstorm about how they could all help to build it. By the end of this session, participants should have identified accomplishments, barriers to overcome, and opportunities for further action.

The facilitator says,

> Let's turn our attention to the question, **'Where do we want to go?** You may all share a common desire to **support racial equity**, so let's talk about what we mean by that and explore specific actions to achieve that goal.

Guiding Questions

The facilitator asks questions about the participants' vision for the future, including:

- What kinds of things would we see in the community?
- What would we hear in the community?
- How would our community feel?
- What are the main changes that need to happen to support equity, understanding and cooperative action across racial lines?
- What might impact racial equity in our community?

The facilitator then transitions the dialogue to questions that ask individuals to address racial equity, including:

- Where do you see racial equity in your community?
- What are some steps we could take to better support racial equity in our community?
- What are some steps we could take to better support racial equity in our organizations, schools, and institutions?

Session Wrap Up

The facilitator records the participants' responses on chart paper, summarizes the session, and asks participants:

- How did you feel about this meeting?
- Is there anything you would like to change?

It is important to note that there may not be consensus at this stage about what, if anything needs to change in the community. Facilitating a discussion on what the group can agree on will be the focus on Step 4. The facilitator thanks the participants for their important and hard work, and then provides information about the next steps. In preparation for the next meeting, the facilitator asks the participants to consider the following questions:

- What concrete steps can you take as an individual to support race relations and racial equity in the community?
- What concrete steps can you take with others to support race relations and racial equity in the community?
- What do you think is most needed in this community, if anything?

Step Four: What Will We Do, As Individuals and With Others, To Make a Difference?

The goal of the final step is to identify specific actions that individuals will take, by themselves or with others, to make a difference in their communities. This step helps participants develop a range of concrete actions for change.

The facilitator says,

> "The purpose of this session is to identify specific steps we would like to take to support racial equity in our community."

Guiding Questions

The facilitator then asks the following questions:

- Are there actions each of you are personally willing to take to support race relations and racial equity in our community? If so, what are those actions?
- Are there actions you are willing to take as a group to support race relations and racial equity in our community? If so, what are they?
- How do we implement the actions we've discussed?
- How will we know if our actions are working?

Session Wrap Up

The facilitator charts the responses, summarizes the session, and asks participants:

- How did you feel about this meeting?
- Is there anything you would like to change?

If this is the final session, the facilitator then distributes and collects the Dialogue Evaluation Form (**Appendix C**).

Appendices

Appendix A: Differences between Debate and Dialogue 26

Appendix B: Community Profile Worksheet 27

Appendix C: Dialogue Evaluation Form..... 28

Appendix D: Sample Agenda of a Dialogue Session 29

Appendix A: Differences between Debate and Dialogue

Debate	Dialogue
Is oppositional: two sides oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong	Is collaborative: two or more sides work together towards common understanding
Has winning as the goal	Has finding common ground as the goal
Allows one side listen to the other side in order to find flaws and to counter its arguments	Allows one side to listen to the other side to understand
Defends assumptions as the truth	Reveals assumptions for reevaluation
Causes critique of the other position	Causes introspection of one's own position
Defends one's own positions as the best solution and excludes other solutions	Opens the possibility of reaching a better solution than any of the original solutions
Creates a closed-minded attitude, a determination to be right	Creates an open-minded attitude, an openness to being wrong, and an openness to change
Prompts a search for glaring differences	Prompts a search for basic agreements
Involves a countering of another's position without focusing on feelings or relationship and often belittles or deprecates the other person	Is collaborative: two or more sides work together towards common understanding

Appendix B: Community Profile Worksheet

1. What is going on in our community that a dialogue on race would address?

2. What are the dialogue goals?

3. Who should participate in the dialogue? Is this a “come-one-come-all” dialogue, or should it be focused on community leaders?

4. What type of meeting(s) should we have?

Appendix C: Dialogue Evaluation Form

U.S. Department of Justice
Community Relations Service

Program Evaluation Form
City-SPIRIT
Community Dialogue
Dialogue on Race
Strengthening Police and Community Partnerships

Program Name:	CRS Staff:
Date:	Location:
Your organization:	

We greatly appreciate receiving your feedback, and we will use your responses to help improve the program.

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by circling the corresponding number.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I understood the goals and expected outcomes for the program.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The program created a safe environment that made it more comfortable for me to share my personal experiences, views, and opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The facilitator(s) effectively managed the process, promoted productive dialogue, and handled any tensions that arose.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I gained a greater understanding of people with different personal experiences, views, or opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Participation helped to identify the **issues** that are important for the community to address.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Participation helped to develop and prioritize **solutions** to address important issues in the community. (If applicable)	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel motivated to stay engaged in addressing important community issues.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The program was a worthwhile use of my time.	1	2	3	4	5

For the following questions, please write your comments in print and as legibly as possible.

9. Which aspects of the program (e.g., activities, discussions) were valuable?

10. How do you plan to implement what you learned during the program?

11. What could improve the program? Please be specific.

12. Do you have additional comments that you would like to share?

Thank you for your feedback!

Appendix D: Sample Agenda of a Dialogue Session

The following is a sample agenda of a dialogue session. It's based on a group size of 8-12 participants, guided by a facilitator using questions. In general, participants meet for 90-120 minutes at a time.

1. Introductions, roles, and goals. (10 minutes)
The session begins with a welcome from the facilitator, and then participants briefly introduce themselves. The facilitator explains their role as the impartial person who is responsible for guiding the discussion. The facilitator will also explain the goals of the session(s), the number of sessions planned, and any other relevant information.

2. Ground rules. (20 minutes)
Establishing ground rules is important to establishing the group's behavior and norms. The facilitator should start with a basic list and add any others the group wants to include. Other rules can be added to the list during future sessions, if needed. The list of ground rules should be posted where everyone can see it. The group should be sure to discuss how to handle conflict and disagreement, as well as the need for confidentiality.

3. Discussion (75 minutes)
The facilitator begins the session by asking the guiding questions that are applicable to the step in the dialogue process that is the focus of the current session. The heart of the discussion follows. It is important to structure the discussion so that it is focused on the issues, is grounded in concrete examples, and offers participants a chance to take action on the issues (especially during Steps 3 and 4). Dialogue participants may get frustrated if they feel the conversation is too abstract, too vague, or "going around in circles."

The facilitator will keep track of how the discussion is going. They will determine when it is time for a clarifying question or a summary of key points, keep all participants fully engaged and ensure that conversations are balanced. The facilitator should then ask the participants to summarize the most important results of their discussion and, in later sessions (especially in Step 4), consider what actions they will take individually or together. The facilitator should document this discussion on chart paper.

4. Wrap up and evaluation (15 minutes)
In the last 15 minutes, participants offer their thoughts on the experience. If meeting again, this is the time to look ahead to the next meeting. If this is the last dialogue, the facilitator should thank the participants and ask for any final thoughts for staying involved in the effort. Dialogue evaluations should be distributed and collected. The facilitator will share how the dialogue notes will be distributed to the participants and how follow-up will be conducted.

For more information please contact:

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