

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ORGANIZER'S CHART

The following chart summarizes the relationship and responsibilities of the various organizers and workgroups.

Logistics Workgroup

- selecting a location for the community conversation.
- coordinating the meal and meal-related needs.
- ensuring that all necessary equipment is arranged and in place on the day of the event.
- day-of-event coordination, including:

1. registration of participants.
2. making sure all equipment is in place for plenary and small group meetings.
3. providing general support and troubleshooting to other workgroups.

Moderator/Recorder Workgroup

Try to recruit moderators with the following skill set:

- Group facilitation skills/experience, especially in working with diverse groups and with the general public (as opposed to working only with professionals).
- Ability to create an environment in which it is safe and comfortable for people to express their views.
- Ability to help participants articulate the reasoning, experiences and values supporting their positions.
- Ability to play devil's advocate and challenge people (in a friendly, civil way, of course) to consider alternate viewpoints.
- Comfort with and ability to manage group conflict.

- Ability to take a nonpartisan moderating stance.
- Nonpartisan credibility. Some people may be able to moderate in a nonpartisan manner but, because of past associations, will not be viewed in that light by members of the group.
- Some general familiarity with community college and education reform debates, although expertise is not required. This attribute is less important than the others.
- Some diversity. Ideally, the moderator team overall will roughly reflect the demographics of the community, so it is often a plus to have some diversity of race, ethnicity, gender and the like among the moderators.

Participant Workgroup

We recommend you consider recruiting the following:

- The general public, aiming for a demographic spread that roughly reflects the overall community.
- Parents/guardians and spouses of community college students.
- Current community college students and alumni.
- Four-year college students (recent high school graduates, transfer students and the like).
- Community college faculty and

administrators.

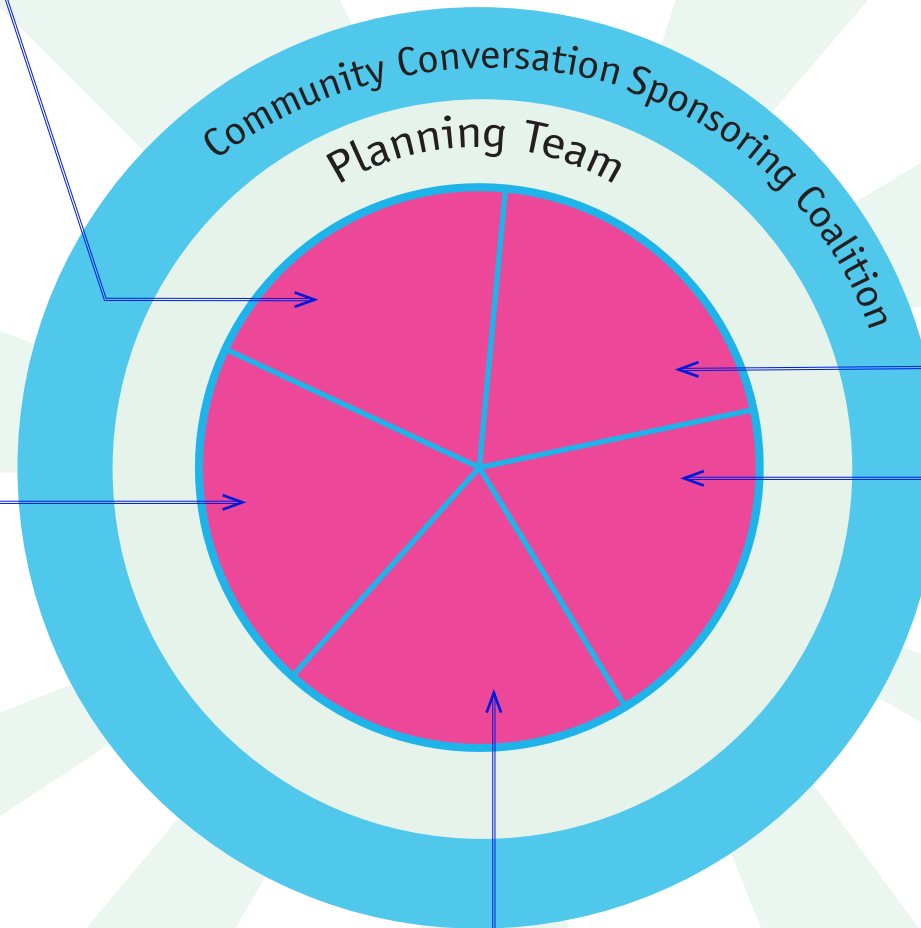
- K-12 educators/school administrators/guidance counselors.
- Four-year college administrators, guidance counselors and/or faculty, if there are any nearby.
- Local employers, especially those who might be in a position to hire young people from the community.
- Community leaders, such as
 - o local government officials.
 - o community-based organizational

- leaders, particularly those in workforce development programs and who serve low-income communities and/or populations of color.
 - o religious leaders.
 - o civic leaders, such as the League of Women Voters.
- Local employers, especially those who might be in a position to hire young people from the community.
- High school students (11th and

12th graders only, as younger students have a more difficult time participating in a group of adults).

Participant Materials:

- "Success Is What Counts" Participant Guide
- Participant Survey
- Spanish Language Materials (for bilingual forums)
- Other materials



Communications Workgroup

There are three fundamental communications tools you will find useful:

- A set of talking points to help you explain the initiative.
- A flyer that explains the purpose of the community conversations and gives basic information, such as when and where it will take place.
- A "pitch letter" to explain the event to potential partners and allies.

Follow-up Workgroup

Community sponsors and organizers should think early on about how to create the conditions for effective follow-up to their forums. At the very least, they are advised to:

- Provide a summary report to all participants.
- Report results to decision makers and, when possible, convey decision maker response(s) back to participants.
- Disseminate the results in other ways, such as online and through media channels.
- Suggest ways that participants who are so inspired can stay

involved, such as joining organizations dedicated to some aspect of the topic at hand and helping with future community conversations.

- Pick at least one issue or problem raised during the conversation to address concretely and specifically in your follow-up. This could be something you are already working on or something new. Let participants know you will be addressing the issue/concern and invite them to help, if appropriate.

Additional Steps for Linking Community Dialogue to Meaningful Action

- **Creating action task forces** to plan and promote specific policies or new initiatives based on important directions for action that emerged from the community conversation.
- **Continuing and expanding** the dialogue that was begun in the community conversation on the Internet or through a newsletter.
- **Providing needed information:** One category of outcome produced by this community conversation process is to identify questions people have,

areas where they want more information. There are often items here that are easy to respond to, and the college and organizers should do so after a community conversation—it is an important sign of good faith on the part of the organizers and shows participants that someone is addressing their questions.

- **Convening a leadership session** to react to some of the results of the deliberations. For instance, a college leadership team and/or trustees board could meet following community conversations and issue a response, and/or a meeting of community leaders could do the same.
- **Conducting a focus group** to better understand some of the areas of disagreement that were identified at the meeting and how you might help people work through them. This can lead to new ideas for future forums and other kinds of community action.
- **Taking advantage** of the fact that many people simply want to help in any way they can after a community conversation and may be open to volunteering or raising money for the college and its students. It is important to capitalize on this energy and motivation as quickly as possible—after all, most of us lead busy lives, and good intentions are easily "overtaken" by the events of daily life.