



Stand and Declare: Building Appreciation for Diverse Ideas

Overview: This workshop engages people in a semi-structured dialogue around a set of statements intended to provoke critical thinking and sharing. By engaging in these, participants have the chance to articulate their own viewpoints and learn about viewpoints different from their own. This activity fosters communication, listening, and leadership skills. It helps participants to enter into conversation by using intentionally ambiguous statements, which are effective at encouraging a variety of different perspectives from the group. This workshop can work well for a variety of settings and purposes, most often to focus on issues of race, class, gender, religion, sexual identity, and other issues in a way that promotes active listening and articulates community building skills.

Category: Self-efficacy; diversity; communication skills; advocacy

Level: Suitable for all levels but higher levels may require more skillful facilitators. Use this activity following other, more general, team building and introductory diversity activities. See “Facilitation 101,” “Facilitation 201,” and/or “Facilitation 202,” also in the C.O.O.L.-Idealist Civic Engagement Curriculum, for hints and resources for facilitators.

Type: Structured workshop session. Two to three hours is recommended for this session, though it can be adapted for longer or shorter sessions.

Focus or Goals of this Guide:

- Participants will engage in dialogue about their own points of view and beliefs in relation to a set of statements
- Participants will discuss issues related to diversity to build skills in listening, dialogue, self-reflection, and critical thinking
- Helps participants deepen their understanding of each other and create a space that respects the diversity of ideas and perspectives

Materials:

- Pens/pencils for all participants
- Handouts with three to five prepared statements (sample statements can be found at the end of this guide)

- Signs labeling four points along one wall of the room: “1—strongly agree,” “4—agree,” “7—disagree,” and “10—strongly disagree”
- Flipchart paper
- Markers
- Tape

How to Prepare:

Begin by reviewing the trainer guide and becoming comfortable with all information and activities. In this guide, you will find instructions for the Four Corners exercise, which is a guided facilitation activity that allows participants to articulate, clarify, and dialogue about their own views. This exercise can be used for a variety of topics (you will find a range of sample statements at the end of this guide). The statements are designed to be open for interpretation in a way that has the potential to divide the group into four subgroups. Examples are:

- “Men and women are more alike than they are different.”
- “What is often interpreted as racism is really classism.”

As facilitator, you need to prepare the statements in advance – depending on the group, the length of the workshop, the focus of the session, etc. – and have them printed on paper (small pages) to distribute to participants at the beginning of the workshop. Three to five statements is a good number for a 2½ hour workshop.

In this guide, some statements have been recommended. The facilitator should prepare to be an objective, non-biased participant, ready to use effective facilitation techniques to bring about deeper sharing and dialogue. The purpose of this exercise is not about making one perspective right. Rather, the exercise gives participants a chance to truly delve in to what they think and believe, communicate it to others who share and do not share their views, and exercise communication and speaking skills. In the best sense, this is about the diversity of ideas and open dialogue about those ideas.

How to Do/Brief Outline:

The basic outline for this 2½ hour session is:

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| 1. Welcome and Focus | suggested time 5 minutes |
| 2. Setting Ground Rules | suggested time 5 minutes |
| 3. Present Statements | suggested time 5 minutes |
| 4. First Round: Small Group Discussion | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 5. First Round: Small Group Report-Backs | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 6. First Round: Cross-Room Dialogue | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 7. Second Round | suggested time 30 minutes |
| 8. Third Round | suggested time 30 minutes |
| 9. Fourth Round | suggested time 30 minutes |
| 10. Closing | suggested time 15 minutes |

1 Welcome and Focus

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Begin with a welcome. As the facilitator, you should introduce yourself and provide an overview of the workshop. The overview can include a description of the workshop, why you're doing it, and your expectations.

Explain that you want the group to focus and move quickly into the body of this workshop. Set a calm, polite, welcoming, reflective tone. As the facilitator, you will be important in establishing a safe climate for the exercise.

2 Setting Ground Rules

Suggested time: 5 minutes

It is important to present ground rules that set clear expectations for participants' comments and actions.

Some suggested ground rules:

- This workshop requires you to think about and articulate your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. Please use "I" statements and speak for yourself and not for any group.
- In the subgroups, you want to articulate your own point of view and listen to others' points of view. Even though you are in the same 'corner,' you may not all have exactly the same ideas.
- As the facilitator, my job is to provide a space where all can feel comfortable speaking. If anyone's statements or actions begin to infringe on that comfortable space, I will warn you once before asking you to leave.
- Everyone is encouraged to speak often and share opinions, but we won't force anyone to speak.
- This activity's success depends on your honesty and open mind. There are no wrong answers or questions.

You can also elicit additional ground rules from the group and/or ask folks for their agreement or disagreement with the ground rules.

3 Present Statements

Suggested time: 5 minutes

The statements you choose for this exercise should be prepared and on a handout. **See the sample statements at the end of this guide.** Distribute copies of the statements to each of the participants, and make sure that everyone has a pen or pencil.

For each statement, participants must choose one of four responses:

- 1—strongly agree
- 4—agree
- 7—disagree

10—strongly disagree

Read the statements aloud and answer any clarifying questions. Only clarifying questions may be asked; reinforce that there is no discussion at this time. People will most likely express anxiety about the questions and ask the facilitator to interpret them. Do not give in to participants' complaints that the questions are too ambiguous. Ask people to go with the activity and simply choose one of the responses. Stress to people that they should interpret the questions any way they want because they will have a chance to explain themselves later.

When all the participants have finished, ask them to write their names on the paper and put their pens/pencils away.

4 First Round: Small Group Discussion

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Now that people have marked off their personal responses, read over the first statement. Point out that there are four pieces of paper (one on each wall of the room), designated the same as on the statement sheet: 1 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 7 = disagree; 10 = strongly disagree.

Ask people to move themselves and their chair to the point along the spectrum with the number that corresponds to their response to the first statement. Though there is a spectrum represented by the posted numbers, participants should pick one of the four points along the spectrum (i.e., they can't choose to stand at "3"). They should form a circle at each location (some locations may not have anyone standing there, which is fine). Reinforce that people should move quickly and without talking.

Limit the size of small groupings to no more than six participants, so that everyone has time to share. If necessary, ask the group to break into two circles. Distribute a piece of flipchart paper and a marker to each grouping of people.

Set the stage for dialogue:

Give the group a designated time in which to discuss the following: Why did you respond the way that you did? How did you interpret and respond to the statement? Explain that each person should be able to talk. Request that each group select one note taker (who will write comments on the flipchart paper) and one reporter (who will report back on behalf of the entire group after the discussion).

As facilitator, you want to observe the various dialogues, not participate. Examine and make note of what you see, hear, and perceive, and use these observations to think about how to engage the group in dialogue after report-backs.

5 First Round: Small Group Report-Backs

Suggested time: 10 minutes

The facilitator can use a technique like “Hands Up” (raise your hand for attention and wait for everyone else to do the same while becoming quiet) to call the group to attention and do report-backs. Ask the group reporter to share what members of that group discussed, not simply one’s own thoughts. One person from each group can add things that they think might have been left out.

Give each group a designated time (for example, two minutes) for their report.

6 First Round: Cross-Room Dialogue

Suggested time: 10 minutes

As facilitator, your job is to ensure that each group has the opportunity to present its views while the other participants listen. Allow questions and comments from other groups/participants only at the end of the presentation. Use questions that raise dialogue between the groups, not seeking to resolve differences but to draw them out, including hidden similarities or fundamentally different points of view. You can give people the opportunity to ask questions across groups, as well. Observe the ground rules.

After each group has spoken, ask if any individuals would like to change their group affiliation based on what they have heard. If anyone changes, ask them if they would like to share briefly why they switched. Then, move onto the next round. This exercise is about listening and learning how differences can often arise from misunderstandings. Many people who go to the same corner will find they are there for very different reasons.

7 Second Round

Suggested time: 30 minutes

Repeat steps 3-6 for the second statement you selected for the group. They should quantify their response using 1, 4, 7, or 10, but only allow two or three minutes this time.

You can go in order of the handout, or switch the order if you think the room is becoming imbalanced (e.g. if no one has raised issues of gender, you may want to go to a statement that will prompt participants to consider gender).

Make sure to pay attention to the time and provide the same amount of discussion, report back, and group dialogue time.

8 Third Round

Suggested time: 30 minutes

Use the same process as above for the third statement on the handout.

9 **Fourth Round**

Suggested time: 30 minutes

Use the same process as above for the fourth statement on the handout.

10 **Closing**

Suggested time: 15 minutes

This is your opportunity as facilitator to make observations, summarize what you saw and heard, allow participants to assess their own learning or attitudes, and lay out next steps. If you are working with a group that has a specific focus and is participating in this workshop on the road to further work together, you can use this time to gather thoughts on the next steps to take. If you are working with a group that is not planning future work together, you can use this time to reflect on the exercise – asking questions like, “What surprised you about this exercise?” or “What did you learn about yourself through this exercise?”

Sample Statements (For Use by Facilitator)

Statements that get at multiple issues:

- "The United States of America is the most diverse country in the world."
- "Gender differences are natural."
- "A lack of 'family values' is responsible for the crisis in the U.S.A. today."
- "Day to day, my class background is more important to me than my race."

Statements that get at race and ethnicity:

- "Anyone can be racist."
- "My racial identity is most important in defining who I am."
- "People of color cannot be racist."
- "Race is the most important part of one's identity in the U.S.A."

Statements that get at class:

- "What is often interpreted as racism is really classism."
- "Materialistic items (like clothes, cars, etc.) are an accurate indication of one's class."
- "My class background is most important in defining who I am."
- "Class mobility is almost impossible in the U.S.A."

Statements that get at gender and (biological) sex:

- "Men and women are more alike than they are different."
- "Gender differences will always exist."
- "There are some things that women are naturally better at; the same is true for men."
- "Gender is a cultural construction."

Statements that get at sexuality identity/orientation:

- "People can choose their sexual identity or orientation."
- "A person should be able to love and legally marry a person of any gender/race."
- "There are varying degrees of homosexuality."
- "Most homosexual individuals have had sexual problems in the past."

Statements that get at views on diversity:

- "In our organization, there is more talk about appreciating diversity than action."
- "The organization/team I work with appreciates diverse definitions of leadership."
- "The more diverse our organization, the better we are."
- "There are many different types of diversity."

Statements that get at citizenship and rights:

- "People should be allowed to say whatever they want."
- "Free speech is a critical foundation in a fair society."
- "Illegal aliens are entitled to schooling and health care."
- "All citizens should be guaranteed food, healthcare, and schooling."

Statements that get at culture:

- "People should accept the cultural practices of other groups, even if they don't agree."
- "I consider my cultural background more key than my gender or race in defining who I am."
- "People are only as strong as their ability to resist indoctrination by the surrounding culture."
- "I am a product of many different cultures."

Stand and Declare: Participant Cards

<p><u>Statement:</u></p> <p><u>My response:</u> (Circle one)</p> <p>1 = Strongly agree</p> <p>4 = Agree</p> <p>7 = Disagree</p> <p>10 = Strongly Disagree</p>	<p><u>Statement:</u></p> <p><u>My response:</u> (Circle one)</p> <p>1 = Strongly agree</p> <p>4 = Agree</p> <p>7 = Disagree</p> <p>10 = Strongly Disagree</p>
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