

Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution & Public Collaboration

The Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution & Public Collaboration (MODR) is an institute of the University of Massachusetts Boston, whose mission is to build capacity for conflict resolution and collaboration within government and across sectors state-wide.

With sponsorship from the Kettering Foundation, MODR created a Public Policy Institute. MODR convenes dialogues on a variety of public issues across the state, trains dialogue moderators from municipalities and community organizations, provides access to dialogue materials, frames issues for discussion and conducts research. MODR has convened dialogues within local communities and on university campuses, in partnership with libraries, schools, churches and civic groups.

MODR is collaborating with other Public Policy Institutes in the National Issues Forums Network. One collaboration is with the New England Center for Civic Life (NECCL) at Franklin Pierce University. The NECCL was founded in 1998 on the premise that an engaged, deliberative citizenry is vital to a healthy democracy. In the summer of 2007, MODR and the NECCL moderated thirty dialogues across the state of New Hampshire for AARP.

MODR works with communities to:

- Plan and convene dialogues
- Network with other interested organizations
- Provide guidance through the ordering and set-up process for a dialogue
- Schedule trained moderators for dialogues
- Train new moderators

web sites for further information:

www.umb.edu/modr

www.kettering.org

www.nifi.org

www.franklinpierce.edu/neccl

For more information, please contact:

Loraine M. Della Porta, Deputy Director
 Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution
 & Public Collaboration
 University of Massachusetts Boston
 100 Morrissey Boulevard, M-1-627
 Boston, MA 02125
 Telephone: 617-287-4040
 Fax: 617-287-4049
loraine.dellaporta@umb.edu

The Kettering Public Policy Institute of the Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution & Public Collaboration at the University of Massachusetts Boston



**DELIBERATIVE
 DIALOGUE
 FOR
 COMMUNITIES**

- ◆ Are public policy issues in your community difficult to solve because of varying opinions?
- ◆ Are you searching for a way to find understanding and common ground on these issues?

MODR can help!



THINK

In order for democracy to flourish, citizens must participate in civic life, but many people today have no meaningful political connection with other citizens and feel they are powerless to have an impact on the government at any level. Few opportunities exist for us to meet as citizens across different backgrounds and affiliations to share concerns and have problem-solving conversations that can lead to action and change.

The Kettering Foundation

The Ohio-based Kettering Foundation established by Charles Kettering in 1927, researches education, international affairs and democracy, with a focus on what it takes to make democracy work the way it should.

National Issues Forums

The National Issues Forums were created in 1982 to give citizens an opportunity to come together to discuss public policy issues. The Forums are a nonpartisan, nationwide network of civic, educational and professional groups and organizations that support public deliberations around the world.

Professionally prepared materials on the following topics are ready for your use:

- Children & Family
- Civil Rights
- Economics
- Education
- Energy & Environment
- Government & Politics
- Health & Well-Being
- International & Foreign Policy
- Justice System

DELIBERATE

Deliberative dialogues encourage civic engagement by encouraging participants to speak as members of a community with shared goals and concerns, not as competing individuals. Participants are asked to examine assumptions, and weigh the advantages and drawbacks of various courses of possible action on an issue of public concern.

Deliberative forums are typically two and one half hours long, facilitated by a moderator, have ground rules and use an issue map or discussion guide.

Why Bring Deliberative Dialogue to Your Community?

- To discuss community issues, such as violence, taxes, or education
- To teach community members a civil way to deal with conflict
- To encourage shared understanding of an issue
- To work toward a common ground for action

Where to Convene:

- Colleges and Universities
- Libraries
- Schools
- Community Centers or Town Halls
- Churches

Who Could Convene:

- Civic Organizations
- Community Leaders
- Mediators/Mediation Centers
- Educators

ACT

Examples of Dialogue in Action:

- The New England Center for Civic Life participated in the Rindge 2020 project, which brought together community members in of the town of Rindge, NH to define the common concern regarding the future growth of the town. A discussion guide was developed and deliberative forums were convened to find common ground for action. This series of forums led to formation of groups to address common actions expressed in the forums.
- Kettering Fellow Tokunbo Awoshakin created the issue book *Better Life From Oil Wealth: What Public Prescription* and facilitated dialogues with the people of the Niger-Delta, Nigeria on approaches towards peace and development in the oil-rich region.
- Michigan State University Faculty convened a series of forums on *Dioxin Contamination of the Tittabawassee River and Flood Plain*, which brought citizens living near the river together to evaluate approaches to the issue.

