



A DCI Deliberation Guide

Climate Choices

What climate strategies, if any, should we pursue?

Format for Deliberation

Before the Deliberation

- I. Read this document (Required)
- II. Read the “**Climate Choices: How Should We Meet the Challenges of a Warming Planet?**” from the National Issues Forum Institute and the North American Association for Environmental Education (Required)

During the Deliberation

- I. Setting Expectations – 5 min.
- II. Getting to Know Each Other – 15 min.
- III. Understanding the Status Quo Option – 15 min.
- IV. Understanding Option 1: Sharply Reduce Carbon Emissions – 15 min.
- V. Understanding Option 2: Prepare and Protect our Communities – 15 min.
- VI. Understanding Option 3: Accelerate Innovation – 15 min.
- VII. Break – 5 min.
- VIII. Weighing the Options – 20 min.
- IX. Reflections – 15 min.

Setting Expectations (5 min)

In this section, we will review the “Expected Outcomes,” “Deliberative Dispositions,” and “Conversation Agreements” below.

Expected Outcomes of the Conversation

The purpose of this deliberation is to deepen our understanding of the arguments surrounding climate change policies in the United States. Over the course of the deliberation, we will have the opportunity to listen to the perspectives of our fellow deliberators as well as share our own experiences and beliefs about climate policies. By the end of the conversation, we will have deliberated about the strongest and weakest arguments for sharply reducing carbon emissions, preparing and protecting our communities, accelerating innovation, and doing nothing directly focused on addressing climate change. Finally, we will have reflected on our

conversation, our areas of agreement and disagreement, and what we have learned from our time together.

Deliberative Dispositions

The DCI has identified several “deliberative dispositions” as critical to the success of deliberative enterprises. When participants adopt these dispositions, they are much more likely to feel their deliberations are meaningful, respectful, and productive. Several of the Conversation Agreements recommended below directly reflect and reinforce these dispositions, which include a *commitment to egalitarianism, openmindedness, empathy, charity, attentiveness, and anticipation*, among others. A full list and description of these dispositions is available at <https://deliberativecitizenship.org/deliberative-dispositions/>.

Conversation Agreements

In entering into this discussion, to the best of our ability, we each agree to:

1. Be authentic and respectful
2. Be an attentive and active listener
3. Be a purposeful and concise speaker
4. Approach fellow deliberators’ stories, experiences, and arguments with curiosity, not hostility
5. Assume the best - and not the worst - about the intentions and values of others, and avoid snap judgements
6. Demonstrate intellectual humility, recognizing that no one has all the answers, by asking questions and making space for others to do the same
7. Critique the idea we disagree with, not the person expressing it, and remember to practice empathy
8. Note areas of both agreement and disagreement
9. Respect the confidentiality of the discussion
10. Avoid speaking in absolutes (e.g., “All people think this,” or “No educated people hold that view”)

Getting to Know Each Other (15 min)

In this section, we will take 1-2 minutes to share our names, where we are currently located, and 2-3 aspects of our identities that are important to us. These could be our gender pronouns, our occupation, our family status (e.g., husband, mother, etc.), our hometown, our favorite hobby, etc. If you are online, while there is no pressure to do so, everyone is welcome to type in any, all, or none of these aspects of your identity into your Zoom nameplate (just right-click on your own image and click “Rename”).

Understanding the Status Quo Option (15 min)

In this section, we will examine the arguments for and against maintaining the current status quo in terms of our energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. In other words, this option entails not making any significant changes to combat climate change but continuing on our current energy, emission, and development trajectories. In light of the increasingly obvious impacts of climate change, for some considering the status quo as a viable option may seem unreasonable and deeply dangerous. Others may not perceive the risks of climate change as worth the potentially high costs of trying to abate them. And many of us, unconsciously or not, already contribute to maintaining the status quo by the choices we make everyday in terms of how we travel, what we eat, where we live, which politicians we support, and what kinds of lifestyles we live. So it is worth discussing the costs and benefits of this status quo, informed by our understanding of the risks of climate change. We will each take 1-2 minutes to answer each of the questions below, without interruption or crosstalk.

- *What are the **most important benefits and concerns associated with maintaining the status quo?***
- *Which of these arguments do you find **most persuasive?***

After everyone has answered these questions, the group is welcome to take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions and responses. Continue exploring the topic as time allows.

Understanding Option 1: Sharply Reduce Carbon Emissions (15 min)

We will now discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different mechanisms we could implement to sharply reducing carbon emissions. These include creating a federal low-emission standard (or renewable energy standard), limiting allowable carbon emissions but making them transferable (a “cap-and-trade” program), imposing a carbon fee on fossil-fuel suppliers, mandating alternatives to vehicles that burn fossil fuels, and reducing our personal and household power consumption. We will each address the question below, and then together we’ll explore our areas of agreement and disagreement. We can also generate additional ideas that may transcend and elicit more support than existing proposals.

- *What are the **most important benefits and concerns associated with reducing carbon emissions?***
- ***Which carbon reduction strategies should we prioritize and NOT prioritize? Why?***

As time allows, we should engage with one another on our answers to these questions. Throughout our discussions, if there is strong disagreement in the group, we will try to explore the underlying reasons for the disagreement – are they based on different factual interpretations, different value emphases, or different life experiences? Perhaps we can

agree on where precisely we disagree, which can be helpful. Alternatively, if there is widespread agreement in the group, try to dig deeper and examine the nuances of these policies – are there particular contexts, for example, where our agreement breaks down? Or perhaps our reasons for supporting particular policies are different? Exploring this complexity can be helpful as well.

Understanding Option 2: Prepare and Protect our Communities (15 min)

We will now evaluate arguments for and against prioritizing efforts to prepare and protect our communities from climate change. Risks include storm surges, flooding, rising sea levels, extreme weather events, hotter temperatures, droughts, and more. Possible strategies include improving infrastructure (such as storm water systems, levees, seawalls, etc.), expanding health and social services (such as cooling centers, emergency food and housing, etc.), keeping people from living and building in vulnerable areas (such as flood zones), making our communities more self-sufficient (through small-scale power grids, local agriculture), and changing agricultural practices.

We will each address the questions below, and then together we'll explore our areas of agreement and disagreement.

- *What are the **most important benefits and concerns** associated with preparing and protecting our communities?*
- ***Which community preparation and protection strategies should we prioritize and NOT prioritize? Why?***

As time allows, we should engage with one another on our answers to these questions and the specifics of different climate adaptation strategies.

Brief Break (5 min)

Use this time as a chance to stretch your legs, go to the bathroom, get a drink of water, and re-charge for the next part of the deliberation.

Understanding Option 3: Accelerate Innovation (15 min)

We will now evaluate specific policies related to accelerating innovations that help us solve the challenges associated with climate change. These include incentivizing climate-related innovation, investing in geoengineering, strengthening the role of businesses and nongovernmental organizations in shaping research and development, and using innovations to encourage individuals to reduce their carbon emissions. We will each address the question below, and then together we'll explore our areas of agreement and disagreement.

- What are the **most important benefits and concerns** associated with accelerating climate-related innovations?
- **Which innovation strategies should we prioritize and NOT prioritize? Why?**

As time allows, we should engage with one another on our answers to these questions.

Weighing the Options (20 min)

This is a time to discuss the relative importance of the four options we have discussed so far.

- After considering the specifics of each option, which of these four options should we prioritize?
- Are there other options we haven't considered yet?
- If you were to design a federal law or state program to combat climate change, what percentage of the funding you allocate would go to reducing carbon emissions, preparing and protecting communities, and encouraging innovation?

We can frame our discussion around these questions, and together we can explore our areas of agreement and disagreement.

Reflections (15 min)

While today's conversation is an important step in the journey, effectively managing the tradeoffs associated with our climate choices will take time and commitment. Please reflect on the insights from your discussion with your fellow participants today, and then answer one of the questions below without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group is welcome to continue exploring additional questions as time allows.

1. What was most meaningful or valuable to you during this deliberation?
2. Where are the areas of both agreement and disagreement in your group?
3. Have any new ways to think about this issue occurred to you as we have talked today? Any new ideas that might transcend our current way of conceiving of the problem and its potential solutions?
4. Was there anything that was said or not said that you think should be addressed with the group? Are there any perspectives missing from this conversation that you feel would be important to hear?
5. What did you hear that gives you hope for the future of conversations on issues related to climate change?
6. Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the deliberation you just had?

About This Guide

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The Deliberative Citizenship Initiative

The Deliberative Citizenship Initiative (DCI) is dedicated to the creation of opportunities for Davidson students, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the wider community to productively engage with one another on difficult and contentious issues facing our community and society. The DCI regularly hosts facilitated deliberations on a wide range of topics and organizes training workshops for deliberation facilitators. To learn more about these opportunities, visit www.deliberativecitizenship.org.

DCI Deliberation Guides

The DCI has launched this series of Deliberation Guides as a foundation for such conversations. They provide both important background information on the topics in question and a specific framework for engaging with these topics. The Guides are designed to be informative without being overwhelming and structured without being inflexible. They cover a range of topics and come in a variety of formats but share several common elements, including opportunities to commit to a shared set of Conversation Agreements, learn about diverse perspectives, and reflect together on the conversation and its yield. The DCI encourages conversations based on these guides to be moderated by a trained facilitator. After each conversation, the DCI also suggests that its associated Pathways Guide be distributed to the conversation's participants.

DCI Pathways Guides

For every Deliberation Guide, the DCI has also developed an associated Pathways Guide, which outlines opportunities for action that participants can consider that are related to the covered topic. These Pathways Guides reinforce the DCI's commitment to an action orientation, a key deliberative disposition. While dialogue and deliberation are themselves important contributors to a healthy democracy, they become even more valuable when they lead to individual or collective action on the key issues facing society. Such action can come in a range of forms and should be broadly understood. It might involve developing a better understanding of a topic, connecting with relevant local or national organizations, generating new approaches to an issue, or deciding to support a particular policy.

If you make use of this guide in a deliberation, please provide attribution to the Deliberative Citizenship Initiative and email dc@deliberativecitizenship.org to tell us about your event. To access more of our growing library of Deliberation Guides, Pathways Guides and other resources, visit www.deliberativecitizenship.org/readings-and-resources.