

Engagement Streams

A Matrix of Proven Practices.

Primary Purpose	Name of Engagement Stream	Key Features	Important When...
To encourage people and groups to learn more about themselves, their community, or an issue, and possibly discover innovative solutions	Exploration	Suspending assumptions, creating a space that encourages a different kind of conversation, using ritual and symbolism to encourage openness, emphasis on listening	A group or community seems stuck or muddled and needs to reflect on their circumstance in depth and gain collective insight.
To resolve conflicts, to foster personal healing and growth, and to improve relations among groups	Conflict Transformation	Creating a safe space, hearing from everyone, building trust, sharing personal stories and views	Relationships among participants are poor or not yet established yet need to be. Issue can only be resolved when people change their behavior or attitude, expand their perspective, or take time to reflect and heal.
To influence public decisions and public policy and improve public knowledge	Decision Making	Naming and framing the issue fairly, weighing all options, considering different positions (i.e. deliberation), revealing public values, brainstorming solutions	The issue is within government's (or any single entity's) sphere of influence.
To empower people and groups to solve complicated problems and take responsibility for the solution	Collaborative Action	Using dialogue and deliberation to generate ideas for community action, developing and implementing action plans collaboratively	The issue/dispute requires intervention across multiple public and private entities, and anytime community action is important.

Examples of Issues	Organizer's Strategy	Appropriate D&D Processes	Key Design Questions for Organizers
Strengthening democracy, understanding a community of practice	To encourage new insights and connections to emerge by creating a space for people to share their thoughts, feelings and perspectives.	Conversation Café, Intergroup Dialogue in the classroom, Wisdom Council, Wisdom Circles, Socrates Café, World Café, Open Space, Appreciative Inquiry, Bohm Dialogue	How can we ensure that people feel safe expressing what inspires and touches them? What kind of techniques or rituals will stimulate listening and sharing, without making people uncomfortable?
Political polarization, Jewish-Muslim relations, race relations, value-based conflicts, healing after crises or trauma	To create a safe space for people with different views to talk about their personal experiences and feel heard. Often, to set the groundwork for deliberation and action.	Sustained Dialogue, Intergroup Dialogue in communities, Victim-Offender Mediation, PCP dialogue, Compassionate Listening	How can the issue be framed so that all sides are brought to -- and feel welcomed at -- the table? What are people's needs relating to this issue, and how can divergent needs (healing, action, respect) be met effectively? If a conflict exists, how overt and volatile is it? How, if at all, will you transition people to "what's next"?
Budgeting, land use, health care, social security	To involve a representative group of citizens in thorough discussions about complicated policy issues. Ideally, the process is linked to policy making.	National Issues Forums, Citizens Jury, Deliberative Polling, 21st Century Town Meeting, Charrettes, Citizen Choicework, Consensus Conference	How can we best represent the public (random selection, stakeholder representation, recruiting a critical mass)? Should/ can public officials participate in the process side-by-side with citizens? What kinds of materials need to be developed or obtained? How can we ensure that this process influences policy?
Regional sprawl, institutional racism, youth violence, responding to crises	To encourage integrated efforts among diverse stakeholders, sectors, organizations, etc. involved in the issue.	Study Circles, Future Search, Appreciative Inquiry	Who needs to be at the table? What kind of power dynamics exist already? What group/leader/ institution is most resistant to change? What group tends not to be at the table, although they're affected?

The Engagement Streams Framework (2005) was developed by Sandy Heierbacher and members of the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD). Visit www.ncdd.org/streams for various downloadable formats of this resource, and see NCDD's website, at www.ncdd.org, for many more resources and tips.

Process Distinctions

Processes	Focuses significantly on...				Size of Group	Type of Session (excluding prep sessions)	Participant Selection
	Exploration	Conflict Transformation	Decision Making	Collaborative Action			
21st Century Town Meeting			X		Hundreds to thousands in 1 room at small tables	All-day meeting	Open; recruit for representativeness
Appreciative Inquiry Summit	X			X	From 20 to 2,000	4 to 6-day summit	Internal and external stakeholders
Bohm Dialogue	X		x		Small group	No set length or number of meetings	Open or invitation
Charrettes			X	x	A small team of professionals and a much larger group of stakeholders	Intense work sessions last 1-3 days typically; some last 1-2 weeks	Participants represent a range of organized groups, but others with a stake in the issue are encouraged to attend
Citizen Choicework			X		Multiple small groups	1 session, ranging from 2 hours to all day	Open; recruit for representativeness
Citizens Jury			X		Small group	5-day meeting	Random selection
Compassionate Listening	x	X			2 to 200 people; usually fewer than 30	Varies between 30 min and 3 days, depending on how many people are involved	Open to whoever is drawn; often listeners are brought in to hear the stories of oppressed or oppressors
Consensus Conference			X		Large group	2 weekends for participants to prepare, 2-4 day conference	Random selection
Conversation Café	X	x			Single or multiple small groups	1 90-minute session	Open; publicize to encourage representativeness
Deliberative Polling			X		Up to several hundred people in small groups in 1 room	Weekend-long meeting	Random selection
Future Search		x	x	X	60 to 80 people	3 days	All inclusive (attempts to bring in all involved)

The Engagement Streams Framework (in Excel, PDF, and comic!) can always be downloaded from www.nccd.org/streams.

Process Distinctions (continued)

Processes	Focuses significantly on...				Size of Group	Type of Session (excluding prep sessions)	Participant Selection
	Exploration	Conflict Transformation	Decision Making	Collaborative Action			
Intergroup Dialogue	X	X		x	Single or multiple small groups	Regular weekly meetings of 2-3 hours	Open; recruit for representativeness
National Issues Forums			X		Up to hundreds in 1 room at small tables	1 two-hour meeting	Open; recruit for representativeness
Open Space Technology	X			x	Up to hundreds in 1 room, then break up in interest groups multiple times	3 days	Varies
Public Conversations Project dialogue		X			Small group	Multiple 2-hour sessions	Involves all sides of an existing conflict
Socrates Café	X				3 to 30 people	1-2 hours	Whoever is in the class or at the meeting, or whoever responds to the flyers or articles
Study Circles	x		x	X	Up to hundreds meeting in separate small groups; all come together later for Action Forum	4 to 6 2-hour sessions	Open; recruit for representativeness
Sustained Dialogue		X	x	x	Small group	Numerous 2- to 3-hour sessions	Open; recruit for representativeness among conflicting groups
Victim Offender Mediation		X			Small group	Multiple 2- to 3-hour sessions	All inclusive (attempts to bring in all involved)
Wisdom Circle	X				Small group (3-12 people)	One or more sessions lasting 1-3 hours; ongoing sessions are ideal	Usually used with an existing group
Wisdom Council	X		x	x	10-12 people initially (and sometimes periodically), then entire community	Several-day session with group of 12, followed by informal large-scale dialogue	Initial 10-12 are randomly selected from community; broader segment is open to everyone
World Café	X				Up to hundreds in 1 room at tables of four	Single event ranging from 90 minutes to 3 days	Often held at events, involving all attendees; otherwise, invitations boost representativeness

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