
#RightTrack Community Conversation Project Guide

Purpose:

This guide has been developed to assist Project Teams to run a community conversation project in their local community. It is based on our experience of running a conversation project in partnership with a community from the Higgins electorate in the lead up to the 2016 federal election. This guide needs to be read in conjunction with the #RightTrack Facilitator Coordinator and Data Coordinator Guides.

Overview

The #RightTrack Community Conversation Project (Conversation Project) is the vehicle for people interested in the rights of people seeking asylum to work together to run structured conversations with family, friends and people of influence. Running a Project is an opportunity to reach large numbers of people by identifying and tapping into the power relationships people have within their local communities.

The structured conversation model is based on a values-based framework which uses personal narrative to guide a conversation on the human impact of Government policies on people seeking asylum, based on one person's experience of applying for protection.

Values-based conversations allow time and space for people who are open to learning more, to engage in an objective and inclusive conversation, free from judgement. Here they can reflect on the problem and draw their own conclusions about asylum processes in Australia.

This conversation model has been developed from an evidenced based trial in the Melbourne electorate of Higgins and proven to shift attitudes in people who were previously undecided or unaware of these issues. You can read more about the Higgins project here:

<http://bit.ly/HigginsProject>

One of the benefits for local communities running a Conversation Project is the generation of data using a simple exit survey which measures shifting attitudes in guests. Surveys completed by almost all guests in Higgins who were undecided or unaware of the issues, showed their attitudes had shifted towards fairer and more humane policies by the end of the conversation. Having an evidence base to support advocacy with local MPs, to attract media interest or to engage influencers is a powerful way to raise community awareness and prove that the current treatment of people seeking asylum is a growing issue in their electorate.

Using this Guide

The following recommendations for running a Conversation Project are based on our experience of evaluating the Higgins trial with staff, volunteers, facilitators and hosts. As such, the guide isn't meant to be prescriptive but flexible enough to be adapted to the needs of your group and local community. We look forward to working with you on the Community Conversation Project and to learn from your experiences of planning and running a Project in your electorate.

Attending a Conversation Project Handover

This handover session is designed for anyone interested in playing a role in a Conversation Project. If people are attending as representatives from an established group it is recommended that a small delegation attend the session together. This will make it easier to establish a Project Team who can plan how best to introduce the Project to your group. Handover sessions also attract highly motivated local people not yet connected to a group who want to get more involved. Having more than one member from your group attending a session increases the opportunity to meet other people and bring them into your Project.

Preparing your Group

Following the Conversation Project Handover Session, thought needs to be given to how you will introduce the idea of running the Project to your group. Obviously this will depend on culture of your group, for example some may prefer to get their head around the project first and then together consider how it may be integrated into existing plans. Others may prefer to have some options to consider such as using the project as a key activity to plan for an upcoming event e.g. World Refugee Day.

Some will be better suited to a formal presentation, for example using some of the Handover PowerPoint slides and resources to prompt discussion about implementation. For others it may be better to immerse them in the core element of the Project first by facilitating a conversation using the script and audio recordings to stimulate the discussion.

Planning your Project

Once your group is on board you can start planning your project for maximum impact. Essentially impact will depend on the data the project generates and the extent to which either the group or Project Team has strategically planned where to source that data.

Factoring in the following considerations may assist groups or teams with their planning:

- **Electorate mapping:** Where are the population clusters in the electorate? Is there voting trends across these populations? Are there specific locations (or voter pockets) where it would be strategic to hold conversations? For example: areas with high numbers of liberal voters to prove there is support or people are shifting their attitude on the issue?
- **Size and scale:** How many people do you want to reach? What would be considered a significant sample for your local community? Is there a community or area in your electorate you want to strategically target? Is your group better resourced to start small or jump in and plan something large scale? Are there other local groups you could partner with?
- **Duration:** Is your group better resourced to run a short term, targeted, high intensity project? Should it be timed around an important event to make best use of the data? Or is it better to run something more long term, tapping into people's informal networks, gathering data over time?

- **Target Group:** What is more likely to influence your MP, attitudes of constituents across their electorate or a particular influential group such as the business sector, Regional Councils, etc.? Identifying existing networks within the group is a good way to make an informed decision.
- **Management:** Do group members have capacity to take on the project roles? Will you need to source expertise outside the group?

One of the primary goals of running a Conversation Project is to use data as a compelling case to show that attitudes are shifting on the rights of people seeking asylum in your electorate. To create this case your data sample will need to be interpreted as a representative sample of the broader consistency, or a strategic group of constituents within that electorate.

Cluster Sampling - one way to strategically collect data

Cluster Sampling is one method political parties use to collect constituent data. Cluster Sampling selects people from different locations or groups within a population and places them into smaller groups (clusters) that represent the entire target population. The data gathered from all of the clusters can be assumed to represent the entire sample population.

In the context of political campaigning, identifying people from each specific geographical area within one electorate should provide a fairly accurate cross-section (sample) of the overall electorate. Cluster sampling is a strategic and efficient way to gather data from a large and varied population.

Using the cluster sampling method allows Project Teams to be less focused on sample size and more on selecting small groups of people from strategic locations across the electorate to attend conversations. For example, one way of doing cluster sampling is to source one or two hosts in a strategic location, such as an area with high migrant population, and set a goal of 5 conversations for that area to create an impactful representative sample.

Forming a Project Team

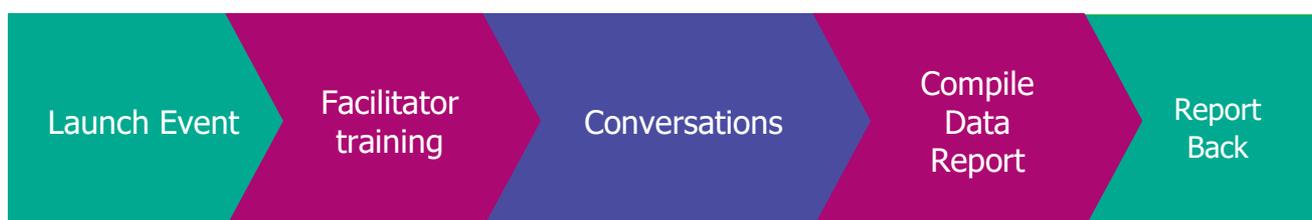
Once you've introduced and gained commitment to run your project, the next step is to identify and fill the roles you will need. We learnt from the Higgins trial that in order to run a well-managed Project it's best to have the following roles, regardless of the size. That said, some members may have capacity to take on more than one role. Each Project Team will be connected to members of the ASRC Community Engagement Team who will work with the Project Leader and Data Coordinator throughout the duration of the Project.

- **Project Leader:** Is responsible for the overall coordination and is the #RightTrack contact person for the Project.
- **Bookings Coordinator:** Is the contact person for hosts, keeps records of when and where conversations occur and works with the Facilitator Coordinator to match the most appropriate facilitators to hosts.

- **Facilitator Coordinator:** Is responsible for training and supporting the facilitators, including debriefing facilitators after a conversation and working with the Bookings Coordinator to match facilitators to hosts.
- **Data Coordinator:** Ensures surveys from every conversation are collected and entered into SurveyMonkey, the online survey tool. They also work with the #RightTrack Data Contact who can assist with the generation of updates and your data report.
- **Events Coordinator:** Is responsible for organising your Project events determined by your group, such as a Project Launch, Report Back event and possibly the organization of public conversations which can be organised alongside small scale hosted conversations.

Running a Conversation Project

Steps at a glance:



	Action	Purpose	Outcome
Step 1	Launch	Engage base supporters, enlist hosts and facilitators, media opportunity	Hosts and facilitators recruited
Step 2	Facilitator Training	Train facilitators, establish systems, handover materials	Facilitators confident in their role and understand process skills
Step 3	Conversations	Match facilitators and hosts, start conversations rollout	Data Coordinator enters survey data, flow on conversation bookings made
Step 4	Compile Data Report	Measure attitudinal shift in participants	Evidence base to support advocacy efforts
Step 5	Report Back	Re-engage base and newly persuaded audiences, media opportunity	Increased MP and community awareness of asylum policy as an issue, growing support for fair and humane policies

Step 1: Launch

We recommend holding some type of public event to launch your Project. This is a great way of raising community awareness and engaging and connecting like-minded people to the Project from the outset. This may also be an opportunity to include a speaker from a refugee background who can ground the conversation and speak from their lived experience.

You may consider building a relationship with a supportive journalist who is prepared to cover the event and work with your group throughout the Project. Having an event to create 'hype' around the Project will increase the potential number of people who attend and maximizing your chances of enlisting people into conversation roles early in the Project.

An example:

In the Higgins trial we used a panel discussion consisting of someone who could speak with authority on the visa application process and a person with lived experience who had been through the process and had permanent residency so there was no risk to their claim. This worked well as people felt they were getting truthful information from a trusted source. This was followed by a Project briefing and then pitching the idea of facilitating, hosting or being a guest at a conversation and having tables set up where people could then sign up. If you were thinking of doing this locally possibly a migration agent or someone who knows people going through the process may be able to step into this role.

Don't be concerned if your community doesn't have people seeking asylum going through the process, our Higgins example is just one idea. Other things that would work equally well are film screenings, a guest speaker such as a university lecturer or a well-known member of the community from a refugee background.

Tips:

- *Make sure your event has a high interest 'draw card' who can establish the legitimacy of your Project and the conversation topic*
- *Be organized and have people who know about your Project on sign up tables as some people will want to know details before they commit*
- *Be sure that potential hosts understand that guests need to be people who are open to learning more and not those with opposing views. Not stressing this from the outset risks inviting people who may potentially 'derail' a conversation and undermine the confidence of your facilitators*
- *A very obvious one is to provide food, (it doesn't have to be much) just a token gesture of hospitality*

Conversation Roles

A Conversation Project allows for people to engage at varying levels and to increase their level of engagement if they wish during the Project. Find below an outline of the level of engagement required and role descriptions of the conversation facilitator, host and guest.

Levels of engagement:

Facilitate	Host	Guest (bring a friend!)
Attend facilitator training session. Commit to facilitating a number of conversations during project	Commit to hosting a conversation by providing a space (home, café, etc) and inviting guests	Commit to bringing a friend (who may not know much or open to learning more about the topic) to a hosted conversation Potentially host a conversation

Conversation Facilitator

It is important that people who come forward to be facilitators at your launch event or recruitment drive are supportive of the rights of people seeking asylum. They may have prior experience of facilitation but some may not. In our experience, the conversation script coupled with the training and support of the Facilitator Coordinator is sufficient for people new to the role to conduct successful conversations. Strategies such as using buddy systems which pair experienced with inexperienced facilitators for their initial conversation can be used to build confidence in new facilitators. You may consider developing a Conversation Facilitator Information Sheet to provide people with further information on the role. Our sample Conversation Facilitator Information Sheet may give you some ideas on how to put this together.

Host

It is equally important that people who come forward to be Hosts are also supportive of the rights of people seeking asylum but have networks who include people who don't know much about the issue and are open to learning more. Although we didn't hold a host information session as part of the Higgins Trial this may well be considering as Hosts need to be strategic about who they invite to their conversation. It is important there is a mix of people in support and people who aren't as informed. If this balance isn't right the conversation may get bogged down in the Government's rhetoric as this is what most people know. You may consider compiling a Conversation Host Information Sheet to provide people with further information on the role. Our sample Host Information Sheet may give you some ideas on how to put this together.

You may also like to target influential people in your community and invite them to become Hosts as they are likely to have extensive and influential networks. Having high profile people agreeing to host a conversation is a great opportunity to generate media interest in your Project and may also benefit the interests of the person. For example, a supportive local MP or Councillor agreeing to host a conversation would make a great story.

Guest

You may need to consider whether you wish to promote the role of guest at your recruitment event as this may dilute the number of people who come forward to host a conversation. In our experience a small handful of people came forward to participate in a conversation during the Higgins Trial because they didn't feel they had a network of people they could invite to a conversation. In our experience if people can't identify at least 4 people they could invite to a conversation it is better to recruit them as guests. As said, people who come forward as Hosts will generally be well connected and effort can be well placed here encouraging your Hosts to have multiple conversations. Asking a guest to bring a friend is a great way of potentially doubling the number of people who participate in your Project. You may consider compiling a Guest Information Sheet to provide people with further information on the role. Our sample Guest Information Sheet may give you some ideas on how to put this together.

Step 2: Facilitator Training

Training your facilitators is a key element of the Project, get this right and the rest will fall into place. We recommend that you source someone with a facilitation background for this role. Although Facilitator Coordinators will have the support of the #RightTrack Facilitator Coordinator Guide and resources, this role will need to support and debrief facilitators throughout your Project. Having a person with a background in facilitation will make this task easier and further instil confidence in your facilitators.

Most people who sign up to be facilitators will have prior experience but some may not. In our experience, the conversation script coupled with the training and support of the Facilitator Coordinator is sufficient for people new to the role to conduct successful conversations.

The Facilitator Coordinator Guide provides an outline for planning your training sessions. These sessions are also an opportunity to handover the resources facilitators need to run their conversations. It is also where facilitators get an understanding of the importance of the data collection process and securing a commitment from guests to host a conversation.

Tips:

- *Ensure facilitators are confident in their role and can manage irrelevant questions or comments and redirect the conversation back to the topic*
- *Stress the importance of facilitators remaining neutral to avoid being perceived as guiding the conversation*
- *Ensure facilitators understand the significance of the data collection process and the importance of guests completing and submitting surveys*
- *Ensure facilitators understand the importance of directly asking guests to host a conversation before concluding the session and recording their information for the Booking Coordinator to make follow up contact.*

For further information on facilitator training see the #RightTrack Facilitator Coordinators Guide, PowerPoint Presentation and sample conversation video.

Step 3: Conversations

Matching Facilitators and Hosts

Once facilitators are trained your Booking Coordinator is ready to start matching facilitators with their hosts. In our experience the more Booking Coordinators can learn about the host and their guests the better the match. In this way if the Booking Coordinator gets a sense that it may be a large group or guests have been inadvertently invited with opposing views, measures can be taken to ensure the conversation is well managed.

Based on our experience the ideal conversation has around 8 guests. You may like to use this as a guide and match two facilitators to a host with guests or where conversations are potentially more complex.

Once facilitators are matched confirm the conversation details with both the facilitator and host. In the Higgins trial our Booking Coordinator did this by sending an introductory email to both parties and included the location and time of the conversation with a suggestion that facilitators contact the host prior to the conversation to confirm the details.

Collecting Surveys

By emphasizing the importance of data collection during the training, facilitators will be diligent about completing and collecting surveys before ending the conversation. This will avoid facilitators forgetting and 'chasing up' with their hosts at a later date, which in our experience is messy and delays the data collection process.

Having a simple collection system established between the Data Coordinator and facilitators will also help to streamline this process. During the Higgins trial we found that scanning and posting was the most effective collection method because distance prevented us from establishing a collection point.

Debriefing Facilitators

Debriefing facilitators following a conversation (particularly their first) is an essential part of coaching them through the early stages and responding to issues that may undermine their confidence. It is also an excellent opportunity to remind facilitators of the survey collection process, reinforce the importance of facilitators asking guests to host and collecting the contact details of newly enlisted hosts. Much of the power to mobilise and bring new people into your Project will fall to the facilitator's ability to identify and activate potential hosts during a conversation.

Step 4: Compile Data Report

Entering and Analysing the Data

Entering and analysing your data is a straightforward process. Get in contact with us prior to your Project commencing and we can connect your Data Coordinator with the #RightTrack Data Contact who will be working with them on your Project. Your Data Coordinator will then be emailed their unique link to SurveyMonkey an online survey tool where they will be able to enter your survey data. The Data Coordinator will be guided through this process by the #RightTrack Data Coordinator Guide.

SurveyMonkey is an easy way of storing and collating your data and will allow you to receive a report which will measure attitudinal shift of guests who participate in your Project. No prior knowledge in the use of SurveyMonkey is required to successfully manage this role but a background in SurveyMonkey or data management entering data will really assist your Project.

Compiling a Report

Your #RightTrack Data Contact will be able to provide you with a final report on data collected from conversation surveys measuring attitudinal shift. Some Projects Teams may wish to compile their own report from using this data which can be tailored to the current and future advocacy needs of your group. For this reason consideration needs to be given to how you plan to use it and who you wish to influence as you build your case for change in the lead up to the next federal election.

Example:

In the Higgins trial it was important to compile quite a lengthy report because we were evaluating the effectiveness of the conversation model to shift attitudes. However, we also did a one page headline report which we found very useful to use in presentations and distribute to people who may not read the longer version.

Some ideas:

A longer report may be useful to use to engage and build a relationship with your local MP while a headline report could be incorporated into a fact sheet or to use as a handout on an information stall. Your group may want to generate both and if needed, the #RightTrack Data team member can provide advice on different reporting methods. You can view the Higgins headline report here: <http://bit.ly/HigginsProjectResults>

Tips:

Use a reporting format that will:

- appeal to your target audiences
- serve its potential uses and the current and projected needs of your group
- best showcase the attitudinal shift of guests

Step 5: Report Back

Reporting back on your Project findings will motivate and further raise community awareness of refugee rights in your community. This can be viewed as the beginning of your advocacy rather than a culmination of your Project. There are many ways and channels you can use to report back depending on your community. This may take the form of an event such as a public meeting, re-engaging speakers from your Project launch, a press conference etc. This is an excellent opportunity to again engage local radio and print media to build 'hype' in the lead up to your report back to ensure as many people attend as possible. Live streaming to Facebook and other techniques will help you to broaden your reach.

Example: In the Higgins trial we invited everyone who attended the launch, facilitators, hosts and guests as well as the sitting MP and candidates from all parties. We chose Shen Narayanasamy, Get Up's Human Rights Director, as our guest speaker as she was the brains behind Let Them Stay, the first community campaign to use Words that Work. We felt she was in the best position to drive home the importance of using values-based framing and the power of community to bring change. We then used the infographics from the headline report in a PowerPoint to cap off our key statistics ie: attitudinal shift, community expectations of their local MP on refugee rights etc.

The following day a community delegation delivered both the full and headline report to the sitting MP and candidates and left a message with staff they would be making an appointment following the election if elected to discuss their Project and findings.

Tips:

- *Don't feel pressured to get a 'big name' if you decide to go with a guest speaker for your report back. It is more important to recruit someone with local credibility who can reinforce your message and set the scene to lead into the key data you want to showcase*
- *If your group doesn't have an existing relationship with your local MP, try to start doing this prior to your Project launch so they know what you are doing and don't see the Project or your report as a threat. The optimum position for your group (delegation) is to be perceived by your MP as a credible source of information who can connect them to issues gaining traction in their electorate.*

Resources:

This guide is supported with the following resources:

- Conversation Facilitator Guide (script and note-taking tool)
- Conversation Survey
- Recording 1 - Raj's Experience, Recording 2 - The Process, Recording 3 - Raj's Conclusion
- Fact sheet: A Fair Process
- Sample Facilitator, Hosts' and Guests Kit (sample invitations, run sheet for conversation, setup requirements)
- Facilitator Coordinator Guide, PowerPoint Presentation and Sample Conversation Videos
- Data Coordinator Guide

Online Conversation Project Portal:

Run a Conversation Project: https://www.asrccampaigns.nationbuilder.com/_conversationproject

Data Snapshot – Higgins Trial

CASE STUDY – RIGHT TRACK CONVERSATIONS IN HIGGINS

During the 2016 Federal Election, the ASRC coordinated **23 community conversations** in the federal electorate of Higgins. The most common values that emerged from these conversations were; **Empathy & Care, Respect, "Do unto others" and Fairness and Equality**. These values were used to explore the process of seeking asylum in Australia, with many attendees concluding that it's **deliberately unfair**. Those who attended a conversation were asked what would improve the process, and their responses included having; a **timely process, fair and transparent process, stable futures and a regional/global framework**.

Following the conversation, **47% of people** expressed that their views had changed, with **52% of people** saying they supported a fair response before the conversation. There was a resounding commitment after the conversation to take collective action to affect change.

Read more here: #RightTrack in Higgins Report <https://www.asrc.org.au/campaigns/righttrack/>

You can read more about the Higgins project here: <http://bit.ly/HigginsProject>

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