

#RightTrack Community Conversation Project - Facilitator Coordinator Guide

Purpose

This guide has been developed to assist Facilitator Coordinators to train and support conversation facilitators (Facilitators) as part of a Community Conversation Project. This guide is based on our experience of training community members from the Higgins electorate to facilitate community conversations in the lead up to the 2016 federal election. This guide needs to be read in conjunction with the #RightTrack Community Conversation Project Guide and #RightTrack Data Coordinators Guide.

Overview

One of the most difficult aspects of shifting community attitudes on the rights of people seeking asylum is that most people have never met someone going through this process and therefore have no personal connection to the issue. This poses a problem for supporters and advocates because when we think about how people shift attitudes on an issue, it is through a direct personal connection or trusted voice who shares their values and exposes them to information and experiences they haven't heard before.

The natural progression of how we change our attitudes has underpinned the development of the community conversation model outlined here. It follows the same principles of this progression, giving time and space for people who don't know much about the issue to reflect on the information provided, to make their own connection with the issue and form their own opinion. Community conversations are inclusive, respectful spaces where all opinions matter. Where people trust the process and feel safe enough to ask questions and voice their opinions. At the heart of building this trust is the ability of the conversation facilitator to establish common ground between guests, and legitimacy in the conversation resources and process. Our ideas on how this can be achieved will be the primary focus of what we discuss here.

Using this Guide

This guide has been developed to assist Facilitator Coordinators to train conversation facilitators as part of a Community Conversation Project.

The guide has four main sections:

1. An introduction to the conversation model and how it works
2. How to prepare for a facilitator training session, which provides a conceptual understanding of how to frame and facilitate a values-based conversation, an understanding of the values based conversation framework which underpins the conversation script followed by an unpacking of each stage of the conversation
3. Running a facilitator training session, which provides some pre-session tips to consider and a recommended session plan based on our experience of training facilitators and the feedback we received from them after their conversations
4. Supporting and debriefing facilitators during the project

Facilitator Coordinator Role

We recommend that you source someone with a facilitation background for this role. Although Facilitator Coordinators will have the support of the Facilitator Training Guide and resources, this role will need to support, coach 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.

For further information on the roles of Conversation Facilitator, Host and Guest refer to the Conversation Project Handover Guide.

1. Introduction to a Community Conversation on the Asylum Process

The Community Conversation Model

This model is based on a values-based framework which guides a conversation on the human impact of Government policies on people seeking asylum, based on one young man's experience of applying for protection. This model was trialled in the Melbourne electorate of Higgins in the lead up to the 2016 federal electorate and was proven to shift attitudes in 98% of people who previously didn't know much or were unaware of the issue.

Conversations can be held in the intimacy of people's homes, a café, town hall or public space. They are an opportunity for supporters to tap into their networks and identify friends, family and people of influence in their communities who they believe may shift their attitude if they receive accurate, firsthand information about the issue rather than relying on what they hear in the media. From our research we know this is the situation for most people in our communities and it is this group we need to reach and invite into the conversation if we are to shift public opinion on this issue.

How it works

Members of the community who support the rights of people seeking asylum agree to host a conversation with approximately 8 people from their network, who are either in support or open to learning more about the issue. Trained conversation facilitators are then invited to the host's home or place of preference and guide the group through a conversation based on shared values and supported by a script and audio recordings of two people: Raj, a young man the ASRC Human Rights Law Program is assisting with his asylum claim, who describes his personal experience of seeking asylum; and Rachel, an ASRC immigration lawyer who outlines the legal process of seeking asylum. Facilitators then invite guests to discuss their views on the process and consider alternatives to what is happening currently. At the conclusion of the conversation the Facilitator asks guests to complete a short survey about their experience of the conversation and asks them to host a conversation and invite their networks. This is a critical part of the conversation in ensuring the broadest reach of your Project.

2. Preparing for a facilitator training session

Facilitator Coordinators will need a conceptual understanding of the community conversation framework they will be using to feel confident in their role. In this section the concepts of values-based framing will be addressed and how this has underpinned the facilitation of each stage of the conversation process.

Framing a values-based conversation

Understanding framing as a concept, and being able to explain how to frame a values-based conversation, are vital aspects of training community members to facilitate conversations. Framing is the *terms in which* a conversation is had. If we discuss seeking asylum in the frame of facts and figures - how many people come, what the laws are, the economic cost of different policies - we are less likely to communicate the human impact and further dehumanise the content. However, if we are in a values-based frame - treating others the way we want to be treated, fairness and family - we are more likely to prioritise the human experience at the core of seeking asylum. This doesn't mean there isn't a place for facts and figures, but it's more about where they're placed in the discussion: to substantiate and add to, but not establish our terms of reference.

Facilitating a values-based conversation

Facilitating a values-based conversation sets a tone and context which is different from other types of conversations. Values-based conversations are not only framed by the values of guests engaging in conversation, but they provide the Facilitator with a reference point to ground the conversation.

Therefore, applying this understanding to facilitating a values-based conversation on the asylum process requires the following skills:

- eliciting values in guests such as compassion, dignity and respect which frames a conversation which is very different from one which is framed by facts
- creating an environment which humanises and grounds the conversation not only for guests but also the subject of the conversation;
- raising awareness of shared values among guests which allows people to make the connection between their values, beliefs and attitudes and how these relate to others in the conversation who share their values
- asking question and using prompts so people can reflect and process new information
- creating time and space for the group to self moderate and reach common ground (a point of agreement)
- guiding and reinforcing the importance of shifting the conversation focus from the problem and groupthink about the complexity of the problem to a focus on the alternatives and what can be created

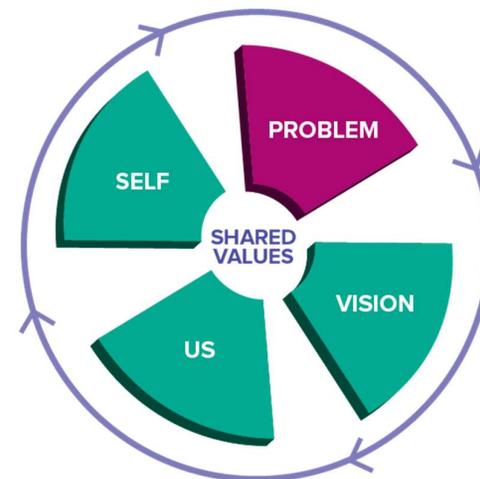
The values-based Conversation Framework

The values-based conversation framework has two parts: *Personal Narrative* and *Getting on the Right Track*.

Personal Narrative is a two-stage process which starts the conversation with a story of **SELF** using personal experiences and values to frame the **PROBLEM** being shared.

Getting on the Right Track also has two stages where the focus of the conversation transitions from discussing the problem to reflecting on the problem and how it fits with our values in order to **VISION** a future different from what is current. The last stage of the conversation is **US** where an understanding of shared values finds some aspect of common ground in the conversation and creates an environment where taking the next step towards making a further connection with the issue is possible.

Facilitating a values-based conversation informed by this framework guides the conversation from awareness of own values to an understanding of shared values to reach some aspect of common ground on the subject. How this framework relates to a community conversation on the asylum process will now become obvious as we unpack the stages of the conversation script.



Unpacking the conversation script

Stage 1: Establish legitimacy as a trusted voice



After introductions and outlining the process, the Facilitator starts the conversation by posing the following question to guests *"What are the values that guide you in the way that you treat others?"*

The purpose of asking this complex question is to establish the conversation as values based, but also to connect people's value systems to the treatment of others which then frames the introduction to Raj's experience in the first recording. It also allows guests to start identifying other people in the conversation who may share their values and to reflect on what underpins the values of others. Finally it establishes the Facilitator as a trusted voice who is maintaining their role outlined earlier in the introduction. It is crucial to the success of the conversation that the Facilitator establishes their neutrality from the outset so all guests are trusting of the process, the information being provided and the opinions and knowledge that others bring to the conversation. At this stage Facilitators need to spend some time eliciting values from guests to ensure the purpose of asking the question is achieved.

To watch a video example of how facilitators can establish legitimacy refer to Stage 1 SELF on the online Conversation Project Portal

Stage 2: Create space to reflect on values



This stage consists of two recordings and discussion questions. The first recording asks guests to respond to Raj speaking about his experience of applying for asylum in Australia. After the second recording, guests are then asked to respond to Rachel, an immigration lawyer, speaking about the legal process Raj is going through as one of 24,500 people who arrived in Australia by sea.

Listening to Raj's experience is deeply humanising therefore emotionally moving for many guests. It is not unusual for people to report being shocked or upset after listening to Raj's experience. For many it will be the first time they have heard a firsthand account from someone going through the asylum process in Australia. For some it will challenge their world view of the Government's 'tough but fair' immigration policy as they contemplate the apparent unfairness of Raj's situation.

The Facilitator then poses the two-part question: *'What are your views on Raj's experience, and how do you feel this sits with the values we discussed earlier?'*

The purpose of the first part of the question is to elicit responses so each participant can understand what each other is thinking and feeling. The second grounds the conversation in values as guests are asked to reflect on their values and how these guide their treatment towards others. This is when Facilitators may see attitudes start to shift in some guests as the Government's treatment of Raj contradicts their sense of fairness, compassion or another value they feel strongly about. Others may question Raj's legitimacy and comment there is insufficient information to determine if Raj is a 'genuine refugee' and has a right to a fair process. This can be one of the tension points for Facilitators who may feel the need to intervene, but by leaving time and space for self moderation often these concerns are resolved for the person by engaging in group discussion.

After listening to Rachel's account of the legal process the Facilitator then poses the question *'What are your views on the process Rachel described?'*

This is an opportunity for guests to gain additional information and further reflect on whether the process aligns or contradicts with their values. For some guests a lawyer confirming or legitimising Raj's experience consolidates their opinion about the asylum process. This is when Facilitators may see a strengthening of opinions and some guests dominating the conversation. It is easy to get off track or get stuck in the detail of the problem as some guests seek further information about this or other subjects such as offshore detention policy etc.

It is important at this point for the Facilitator to bring the discussion back to values and to pose questions either to stimulate reflection or to refocus the conversation on a particular aspect of the subject such a permanent protection or family reunion. This will allow Facilitators to raise awareness that people share similar values and opinions about some aspect of the subject. For example, a participant may be fearful about Raj getting permanent protection because they believe bringing his family members here will mean fewer jobs, but at the same time agree that people being separated indefinitely from their family is unfair. Finding common ground on some aspect of the subject being discussed is a

turning point in the conversation as it allows the Facilitator to guide the conversation from the problem to considering alternatives.

To watch a video example of how Facilitators can create space to reflect on values refer to Stage 2 PROBLEM, and how to facilitate awareness of shared values and reach common ground refer to Troubleshooting: Establishing Common Ground which are both located on the online Conversation Project Portal.

Stage 3: Transition to shared values



While Rachel's account remains fresh in the minds of guests the Facilitator then poses the question '*What would a fairer and more efficient process look like?*'

Research tells us that many people who appear to support the Government's asylum policies do so because they don't know or believe an alternative is possible. They support the status quo rather than the Government's actions. Discussing solutions opens people's minds to alternatives and creates a shift in thinking from being stuck with a problem to envisioning a future that is fairer. Facilitators may find this a point of tension as some guests will want to continue to talk about the problem or find it difficult to envision alternatives. Returning to values and topics the group has raised earlier will stimulate ideas and help to keep the conversation on track. For example 'what about the issue of temporary detention we discussed earlier, what do you think could be a fairer alternative?'

During this stage it may also be useful for Facilitators to remind the group of the survey and report on their views to be given to their local MP which reinforces that Government policy is ultimately driven by the views of the community. This can instil hope and agency in some of the guests. Facilitator's guide this stage to a close recapping on alternatives put forward by the group.

To watch a video example of how Facilitators can transition to shared values so alternatives can be considered refer to Stage 3 VISION on the online Conversation Project Portal

Stage 4: Progressing internalised attitude change



The purpose of this stage of the conversation is to raise awareness of agency as some guests will feel compelled to do something as a result of what they have experienced during the conversation. For some the journey from knowing very little at the beginning of the conversation to expressing strong values based opinions on the subject by the end will be a transformative process.

To stimulate reflection about how guests can further connect their experience and values to the issue the Facilitator poses the following question *'Who would you want to talk to about this and what would you want to say to them?'*

Asking this question allows guests the space to listen to a range of responses. Some guests will want to write to their local MP others may wish to tell a family member. This closing stage will again reinforce that if Government is to change policy on this issue it will be due to the power of people to act on their concerns and join with others in their community who share the same values as they do. By this stage of the conversation the Facilitator may observe that connections have formed between some of the guests and invitations to take the next step have been extended.

To watch a video example of how Facilitators can progress internalised attitudinal change refer to Stage 4 US on the online Conversation Project Portal

Using the Troubleshooting Video Example

In the previous section we referred to the Troubleshooting video example, which demonstrates how Facilitators can troubleshoot their way through Stage 2 of the conversation and establish some aspect of common ground with guests. The purpose of this video is more than a reference point. It's a training video for Coordinators to use in their facilitator training session and is included in the session plan to follow. The troubleshooting video focuses on the most critical part of the conversation. Towards the later part of Stage 2 is the time where some guests will want to get deeper into the problem rather than reflect or think critically about it. Some guests may want to get bogged down voicing their disdain for the Government or the Immigration Minister. While letting off some steam is acceptable keeping the focus on the problem for too long reinforces the Government's frame and influences the beliefs of some guests that the problem is insurmountable. We recommend that Coordinators include the video example in their training session so Facilitators have an opportunity to discuss the core facilitation skills used by the Facilitator to bring guests back to shared values which assisted them to reach some aspect of common ground. The Facilitator will need to be able to manage similar situations in order to guide the conversation onto the next stage.

3. Running a facilitator training session

Preparing for your facilitator training session

We recommend that Coordinators invite no more than between 15-20 potential facilitators to a training session at one time. The session plan below has been developed around this configuration. It is important to consider the location of the venue before promoting the event as some people may be deterred by limited parking or distance. In our experience making it as simple as possible for people to attend will remove as

many barriers as possible for those who are having second thoughts about their undertaking.

We also recommend that Coordinators invite the Data Coordinator along to the session as they will be able to speak to the importance of guests completing the survey and potentially organise a survey collection system with Facilitators directly.

Conducting the training session

The following training plan outlines the timing, objectives, learning activities and resources to assist Facilitator Coordinators to run a two-hour training session with conversation facilitators.

Time	Objective	Learning Activity	Resources
5 mins	<p>Check understanding of the Project</p> <p>Understand range of facilitation experience</p>	<p>Welcome, Acknowledgment of country, and Introduction</p> <p>Group Activity – who’s in the room?</p> <p>Facilitator Coordinator asks guests to introduce themselves; briefly outline why they want to be involved and if they have previous facilitation experience.</p> <p>Outline Agenda – three main areas to be covered</p>	<p>PPT Slide 1</p> <p>PPT Slide: 2</p>
10 mins	<p>Establish expectations and objectives of role</p>	<p>Group Discussion: What is the role of a facilitator? What is it not?</p> <p>Guests discuss in small groups, then group debrief. Facilitator Coordinator elicits views and records responses – emphasise there are a number of skills but the goal of an effective facilitator is to guide so the group takes hold of the discussion.</p> <p>Cap off with skills on slide 4; highlight any not covered by the group.</p> <p>Briefly share example phrases on slide 5 that aid with facilitation.</p>	<p>Whiteboard</p> <p>PPT Slide: 3</p> <p>PPT Slide: 4</p> <p>PPT Slide: 5</p>
10 mins	<p>Ensure guests understand and prioritise values-based framing</p>	<p>Framing and facilitating a values-based conversation</p> <p>Framing:</p> <p>Facilitator Coordinator introduces the idea of framing. Pose the question: What ideas, language and concepts exist in the frame in which we want to have this discussion?</p> <p>Cap off the discussion on framing with slide 7 on a values-based frame. Outline the ideas we want in the frame for our conversations about the asylum process.</p> <p>Briefly highlight the fact that significant linguistic and psychological research on how language impacts people’s attitudes underpins this approach. Mention <i>Words that Work</i> and briefly summarise key findings, and remind people of the Replace/Embrace table on the back of the <i>Words that Work</i> summary.</p> <p>Facilitating the conversation:</p> <p>Facilitator Coordinator shares how this conversation is designed to implement the values-based approach. Touch on the key features of this from notes on slide 9. Remind facilitators that we are not there to convince people, but facilitate a process which enables people to make their own values-based assessment about the current situation. Refers to facilitation skills discussed earlier. These will be reinforced and become more obvious during the practice session.</p>	<p>PPT Slide: 6</p> <p>PPT Slide: 7</p> <p>Words that Work overview</p> <p>PPT Slide: 8</p>

10 mins	Give overview of the conversation structure and process	<p>Community Conversation Model - Overview Introduce the conversation model and briefly explain the purpose of each stage: Self, Problem, Vision, Us.</p> <p>Facilitator Coordinator distributes the Conversation Facilitator Structure Guide (script and notetaking tool) and briefly outlines the reasoning and objectives behind each section. Show guests broad discussion questions designated to each section. Highlight values. <i>Words that Work</i> messaging principle 'lead with values' discussed here.</p>	PPT Slide: 9 Conversation Facilitator Guide (script and notetaking tool)
3 mins	<p>Prepare guests for facilitation practice</p> <p>Establish order of turn-taking</p>	<p>Facilitating a Community Conversation Split people into groups of 3 (minimum) to 5 (maximum) to prepare for facilitation practice. This will be the first time people hear the recordings.</p> <p>Explain that there are 5 discussion prompts in the conversation, so each person in the group will have a turn at facilitating by the end of the session. Ask group to decide on the order they will take turns in facilitating. For groups of less than 5 people, encourage people with less facilitation experience to take the additional turns. Highlight use of notetaking tool, facilitators can use this as much or as little as they like.</p>	Stay on PPT Slide: 9
60 mins	<p>Practice facilitation</p> <p>Troubleshoot</p>	<p>First person facilitates Self: What are the values that guide you in the way that you treat others? - quickly debrief</p> <p>Facilitator Coordinator plays Recording 1 - Raj's experience</p> <p>Next person facilitates Problem: What are your views on Raj's experience? Follow up question: How does it sit with the values we discussed earlier? - quickly debrief</p> <p>Facilitator Coordinator plays Recording 2 - The Process</p> <p>Next person facilitates Problem: What are your views on the process Rachel described? Follow up question: How does it sit with the values we discussed earlier? - quickly debrief</p> <p>Troubleshooting: take a break from facilitating and all watch example video. Debrief on what the facilitator did well, and what he could improve on. Discuss strategies for troubleshooting (tips on slide 17)</p> <p>Resume practice</p> <p>Next person facilitates Vision: What would a fairer and more efficient process look like? - quickly debrief</p> <p>Facilitator Coordinator plays Recording 3 - Raj's conclusion</p> <p>Next person facilitates Us: Who would you want to talk to about this, and what would you want to say to them? - quickly debrief</p> <p>Facilitator Coordinator distributes surveys for completion</p>	PPT Slides 10-18 Recordings 1, 2 and 3 Video: Troubleshooting Conversation Surveys

10 mins	Ensure data collection Ensure facilitators broaden reach of project through recruiting new hosts and sign-ups	Continuing the Conversation Stress the importance of ensuring everyone completes the survey, and that they are collected and sent to the data coordinator. Briefly overview the purpose of each question in the survey. The ask: ensure facilitators encourage guests to host a conversation of their own to broaden reach.	PPT Slide: 19 Surveys Host sign-up sheets Your group's sign-up sheet
10 mins	Debrief and identify areas for additional support	Debrief, Reflection and Questions In small groups, guests reflect on their experience facilitating - what do they feel confident about, do they have any concerns? These are workshopped and debriefed together. Good luck!	PPT Slide: 20

Other ideas

This session plan is simply an example - a 'fishbowl' of a conversation (where some people participate, and others observe) is another way this could be done to enhance people's understanding of the conversation and its objectives. If you come up with your own activities and ideas, we'd love to hear about them and how they go.

Resources for the training session

The following resources are required for the training session, all of which can be found on the conversation project portal (https://asrccampaigns.nationbuilder.com/_conversationproject):

- *Words that Work* overview (ideally sent to facilitators before training as pre-reading)
- Facilitator Training Power Point Presentation
- Video: Troubleshooting 1: Establishing common ground
- Conversation Facilitator Guide (script and notetaking tool)
- Recordings 1, 2 and 3, and the transcript of the recordings (take enough for one-between-two in the conversation)
- Conversation guest survey (one for every guest in every conversation)
- Fact sheet: A fair process (one for every guest in every conversation)
- Host sign-up sheet

You might also like to take a sign-up sheet for your local group – for updates on the project, invitations to other events or actions, and most importantly: for people to express interest in hosting or facilitating more conversations.

4. Supporting a debriefing facilitators during the project

Support before a conversation

We recommend Facilitator Coordinators touch base by phone or in person with the facilitators before their first conversation to ensure that the facilitator:

- feels confident in the structure of the conversation
- has all required resources ready to go, including recordings, surveys for every guest and sign-up sheets
- has contacted the host and have a rough idea of who to expect in the conversation
- is clear about the process for getting the surveys to the Data Coordinator

Debriefing after a conversation

We recommend Facilitator Coordinators touch base again by phone or in person with the facilitators after each conversation. Simply asking questions like 'what went well?' and 'what would you do differently next time?' assists facilitators in processing the conversation and enables the Facilitator Coordinator to share useful tips with others and identify if there is any need for additional support.

Group debriefing

You may like to bring facilitators together during or at the end of the project to share experiences, boost morale and troubleshoot, or create a closed Facebook group or email chain so people can communicate in their own time.

Resources

This guide is supported by the following resources, all of which can be found on the Conversation Project Portal (https://asrccampaigns.nationbuilder.com/_conversationproject)

- Conversation Facilitator Guide
- Conversation guest surveys
- Recording 1: Raj's Experience, Recording 2 – The Process, Recording 3 – Raj's Conclusion
- Fact Sheet: A fair process
- *Words that Work* Summary
- Conversation Facilitator Training PowerPoint
- Sample Facilitator, Hosts' and Guests Kit (sample invitations, run sheet for conversation, setup requirements)
- Facilitation skills video series:
SELF, PROBLEM, VISION, US, and Troubleshooting a community conversation

Online Conversation Project Portal:

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