**Handout #2 - Community Energy Conversations:   
Ground Rules, Structure and Outline**

**Read out loud the following sections until you get to “Conversation Structure”.**

The **purpose** of Community Energy Conversations is to have a practical activity that supports civil discourse and civic engagement, creates new relationships between people with different viewpoints, sparks opportunities and encourages sustained participation in solutions to our local and national challenges. The conversation focuses on energy and energy efficiency.

**The Community Energy Conversations Ground Rules for Civil Discourse**

**Be Curious and Open to Learning**

Listen to and be open to hearing all points of view. Maintain an attitude of exploration and learning. Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking.

**Show Respect and Suspend Judgment**

Human beings tend to judge one another; do your best not to. Setting judgments aside will better enable you to learn from others and help them feel respected and appreciated.

**Look for Common Ground**

In this conversation, we look for what we agree on and simply appreciate that we will disagree on some beliefs and opinions.

**Be Authentic and Welcome that from Others**

Share what’s important to you. Speak authentically from your personal and heartfelt experience. Be considerate to others who are doing the same.

**Be Purposeful and to the Point**

Notice if what you are conveying is or is not “on purpose” to the question at hand. Notice if you are making the same point more than once.

**Own and Guide the Conversation**

Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the quality of the conversation by noticing what’s happening and actively support getting yourself and others back “on purpose” when needed.



**Tips For Managing Off-topic, Lively, or Disruptive Situations During the Community Energy Conversation**

Everyone shares responsibility for guiding the conversation. You are invited to be self-monitoring and help keep the conversation on track.

1. For any situation that gets the conversation off track, respectfully interrupt.
2. If an area of interest has arisen that has taken the group off topic, ask the group if they would like to set aside the new topic for a second Campus Conversation.
3. If helpful, refer to the Participant Handout, where the Purpose, Intended Outcomes and Conversation Guidelines are described.
4. If someone is lively, disruptive or has found their soapbox, ask if they are willing to get back on track with the current question of the round, so the group can fulfill the intent of the Campus Conversation.
5. If the group decides to leave the format of the Conversations, please provide us with feedback for future learning. Thank you! [campusenergyconversations@gmail.com](mailto:campusenergyconversations@gmail.com)

**The Intended Outcomes of Community Energy Conversations are:**

1. To generate a spirit of mutual curiosity, respect and appreciation among those of differing cultural backgrounds, viewpoints, and political perspectives.
2. To bring forth the trust and courage to generously express and actively appreciate one another’s authentic revealing of heartfelt values, principles and sense of purpose.
3. To listen generously and actively support the discovery of common interest and concern, and use that discovery for civic engagement.
4. To be open and curious about all perspectives and see what can be learned from listening to one another, rather than debating differing “opinions” on any topic or issue.
5. To inspire a sense of openness, willingness and even partnership for further connecting or cooperating in some way.
6. To evoke a direct experience of an authentic, meaningful and rewarding conversation.
7. To foster a sense of confidence and willingness in participants to take initiative to reach out to those they usually avoid and to engage in solutions to societal problems.

**Conversation Structure**

**The facilitator reads the following:** This conversation is designed to flow through 5 rounds and take approximately 1 ½ hours or less. During some rounds, each question will be addressed. In other rounds, you need only respond to the one or two questions that you have pre-selected. In the event the conversation wanders off track, refer to this Conversation Structure to get it back on track. Appoint a timekeeper now. Give all a chance to speak on each round. Use a blank sheet to take any personal notes about what you are discovering.

**Round One: Getting Started - Why Are We Here? ~ up to 6 minutes – one minute/person**

**Answer one or more of the following:**

1. Why are you here?
2. Why did you accept the invitation to participate in this conversation?
3. What interested you or drew you to this conversation?

**Round Two: Hopes and Concerns for The Future ~ up to 20 minutes**

**Answer one or more of the following:**

1. Who are you? (e.g. job, political affiliation)
2. What sense of purpose / mission / duty guides you in your personal life?
3. What would your best friend say about who you are and what makes you “tick”?
4. What three words would you use to describe the “essence” of you?

**Answer one of the following:**

1. What are your hopes and/or concerns for the longer term future for our community and/or country?
2. What most concerns you about our community and/or the country right now?

**Round Three: Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energies~ up to 40 minutes**

**Distribute Handout #5 “Energy Information to Inform the Discussion”  
Answer one or more of the following (10 minutes):**

1. What are you most concerned about regarding the U.S., energy efficiency, and wasted energy?
2. What are you most interested in regarding renewable energy?
3. How has dirty energy impacted your life?
4. Please share a story from your life experience that might help others understand how you came to  
   have the perspectives, concerns or values you have related to energy

**Answer the following (10 minutes)**  E. Regarding renewable energy and energy efficiency, what are you most hopeful about?

**Answer all of the following (15 minutes):**

F. What might be the benefits of using more energy efficiency and renewable energy?

G. Who should own the energy sources (e.g. the government, the utilities, individuals)?

H. The Tea Party and the Sierra Club joined forces in Georgia and successfully created more favorable policies and more implementation of renewable energies. Does this surprise you? Why do you think they came to agreement? (Look at the Energy Info sheet for more information if desired.)

**Answer one of the following (up to 5 minutes)**

I. Who needs to hear the answer to these questions and take action?

J. Who needs to hear about the things we agreed upon today?

**Round Four: What Are We Learning Here? Accomplishment, Appreciation, Acknowledgement ~ 12 Minutes**

**Answer the following questions:**

1. What learning, new understanding or appreciation do you have about energy?
2. In one sentence, share what was most meaningful / valuable to you in the experience of this Conversation.

**Round Five – Final Round: Take Action. ~25 minutes**

**Complete the following:**

**Individually** write and send emails to the following: your state legislators, your federal legislators (U.S. Senator and Representative) and your governor. Use the draft letter provided by the facilitator (Handout 3: Draft Letter) as is or customize it.

Below is a draft letter that you can use to write your own letters to your:

1. governor,
2. your state legislators, and
3. U.S. senator, and
4. U.S. representative

These are four key people who need to hear what we discussed today. These individuals are making decisions about our state’s and country’s energy future. The opportunity exists to include energy efficiency and renewable energies in the plans.

You can just fill in the names of your governor and state and federal legislators on this version and sign them and we will put them into envelopes right now and get them mailed. Alternatively, you can write your own customized versions. You can also use a computer if available and email the letters.

Work with your facilitator to complete this section on **Taking Action. If the facilitator doesn’t already have the emails and the addresses you need, you can look them up by going to the following:**

* <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>

**Stay informed by signing up for policy alerts at:**  <http://www.uspartnership.org/passages/26>

* Choose at least one policy alert
* Share with the group which policy you’d like to follow
* Use the draft letter or script from the policy alert webpage when contacting elected officials

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**In regards to contacting your elected state officials:**

Feeling Cynical? Do you think writing to representatives doesn’t make a difference? Here is a true story of how people can make change: three students called to ask a senator to change his vote on a solar bill. On the third call the senator got on the phone and said: “Thank you for calling. I’m going to look into this.” Within two weeks he had changed his vote. There are many more stories just like this.

Sometimes it really makes a difference to share your views with your elected officials!

**Closing - Thank you!**

Optional next steps

* Would you like to have a second conversation? Many groups share their contact information amongst themselves and have ongoing conversations both online and in person as a group and one-on-one.
* As an open source project, Conversations is a shared resource. Anyone is welcome to use the Conversations materials and adjust them to fit their purposes. We ask you to provide the website, <http://www.livingroomconversations.org/campus-conversations/>, when you use the materials. Let us know what you are doing via [CampusEnergyConversations@gmail.com](mailto:CampusEnergyConversations@gmail.com). You can also join the online community for Living Room Conversations.

**Hosts: Please fill in the feedback form and email to** [**CampusEnergyConversations@gmail.com**](mailto:CampusEnergyConversations@gmail.com)**.**