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**Introduction & Ground Rules \_\_\_ minutes**

**Purpose: Look at Alternative Approaches to the Issue and Hear Different Points of View**

* This is not a debate; we’re not here to “win” an argument.
* We’ll look carefully at alternative approaches—all of them with trade-offs and drawbacks.
* At the close of the forum, we’ll reflect on what we’ve heard, looking for common ground, but also recognizing remaining areas of tension or ambivalence.
* We’ll try to think about what matters most to us and what we are willing to give up to make progress on resolving this issue.

**My Role: Serve as Impartial Facilitator**

* I’m here to help us have a conversation that is as deliberative as possible.
* I’ll encourage everyone to consider different viewpoints.
* I’ll watch the time to ensure we talk about all the options and have time for reflections at the end.
* From time to time, I may point to specific questions and ideas in the guide, especially if they represent voices not in the room or trade-offs we haven’t talked about.
* This is your conversation. Please talk to and listen to each other.

**Structure: The Four Parts of a Deliberative Forum**

* Ground Rules
* Personal Stake
* Deliberating on the Options: Option 1, Option 2, Option 3
* Closing Reflections

**Ground Rules \_\_\_ minutes**

**Some sample ground rules used by forum moderators**

* Listen to other voices. Listening is as important as speaking.
* Consider each approach fairly, looking at its benefits and its trade-offs.
* Everyone is encouraged to participate. No one or two individuals should dominate.
* It’s okay to disagree, but do so with curiosity, not hostility. Learning more about how others think is one of the most interesting parts of a forum.
* Keep an open mind. Avoid coming to conclusions until we’ve deliberated on all the options.
* Are there additional ground rules we would like to add?
* Do we all agree to follow these ground rules and hold one another accountable to them?

**Personal Stake: \_\_\_ minutes**

**Some questions moderators often use to encourage participants to talk about their personal stake in the issue**

* Why did you come out to the forum today?
* What aspect of the issue concerns you most?
* How has this issue affected you personally? What about your family or your community?
* How does this problem relate to your goals and aspirations for your community and the country as a whole?

**Option 1: Make rigorous accountability the top priority \_\_\_ minutes**

According to this option, ensuring safety and justice means we need well-trained, accountable police officers who do not rely solely on force and intimidation—they treat everyone respectfully. To reach this goal, we need to rethink how officers are hired, trained, supervised, and disciplined. And we need to ensure that officers who are abusive do not continue policing the streets.

BUT: Very few of us understand the dangers and complications officers face daily, and constant second-guessing and monitoring may lead the police to be less vigilant than we need them to be. We should enforce the accountability measures we have now, but there is no need to keep adding to them.

* This approach proposes rigorous oversight of police by civilian review boards. Thinking of your own community, could there be too much civilian oversight of the police? Is there a danger of politicizing and undercutting law enforcement? Why or why not?
* One proposal for this option is to make it easier to sue individual police officers for misconduct. Would this be an effective way to deter officers from using abusive and violent tactics? Why or why not? Do you think this might lead to frivolous lawsuits against officers who were only doing their jobs?

**Option 2: Make ending racial bias the top priority \_\_\_ minutes**

According to thisoption, law enforcement agencies, like other institutions, reflect America’s history of racial discrimination and injustice, and unfortunately, police violence and bullying are not confined to a few rogue officers. If we do not deal with the widespread biases among officers and the racial discrimination embedded in current police practices, we’ll see continued abuse and more deaths at the hands of law enforcement.

BUT this approach assumes nearly all officers are biased. By labeling all officers and departments as racist, we do a disservice to those who treat citizens with respect, support reforms, and work to end misconduct.

* Police officers often make split second decisions in confusing, dangerous situations. Would more racial justice and de-escalation training reduce police errors? Or could it end up jeopardizing officers and public safety because the police are more hesitant?
* One proposal for this option is to require officers to live in the communities. Would this improve their relations with residents? Would it deter officers from taking jobs in troubled areas? Is it fair? Most of us have choices about where we live. Shouldn’t police officers have that too?

**Option 3**: **Make avoiding violent encounters the top priority \_\_\_ minutes**

Police departments generally respond to a range of problems—from murders and robberies to mental health crises, drug overdoses, and domestic disputes. But according to this option, armed officers aren’t always the best responders to many of these incidents. This approach proposes sending skilled mental health professionals and trained community members to respond to certain mental health, drug, and domestic crises.

BUT drug use, mental health problems, and domestic disputes often escalate into violence, and counseling and negotiation are not always effective at defusing these situations. This approach could leave neighborhoods more disorderly and put many more people at risk.

* This option proposes decriminalizing some “non-violent” offenses such as marijuana possession, prostitution, solicitation, trespassing, and public urination. How would this approach affect downtown areas, malls, and parks? What should happen to those who commit these offenses repeatedly if they cannot be arrested or ticketed?
* Thinking of your own community, do you think it’s a good idea to shift funds away from the police department to fund more mental health services? Do you believe your community has enough trained mental health professionals and mental health services to take on these tasks?

**Closing Reflections \_\_\_ minutes**

Changing the relationship between law enforcement and communities and reducing police abuse is a vital mission, but it is complicated. Not everyone defines “public safety” and “fair policing” in the same way. And many Americans, both in minority communities and law enforcement, believe the dangers they face are being ignored.

That means it is important to think carefully about how the ideas and proposals outlined in this guide would work out in “real life.” What are the advantages, trade-offs, and risks in your community and for the country as a whole?

* Reducing racial inequality and injustice is a top priority for our country and communities.
  + Which ideas in this guide seem most likely to reduce racial inequity in law enforcement?
  + Are there ideas here that might end up increasing racial bias and tension, rather than reducing it?
* Everyone wants to live a safe community where they can feel secure in their daily lives.
  + Which ideas in this guide seem most likely to increase safety for everyone?
  + Are there ideas in this guide that might reduce public safety, even if that was not the intention?
* Many reforms aim at reducing law enforcement’s role in addressing “non-violent crimes.” But how clear is the distinction? Is selling drugs “violent” or “non-violent.” What happens if “non-violent” acts go unaddressed and unpunished? Would we see them spread? Would they damage the quality of life in our cities and neighborhoods?
* Different communities face different challenges in ending abusive policing, promoting fair law enforcement, and maintaining public safety.
  + How would you describe the one or two most important challenges in your own community?
  + Are there any ideas here that would be particularly beneficial given your top priorities?

**Other important questions to consider:**

* Now that we have deliberated, are there ideas or viewpoints you hadn’t considered before?
* Have your priorities shifted as a result of this deliberation? In what way?
* Can you now identify any shared concerns or hopes we have discovered in our deliberations?
* Can you identify any potential unintended consequences that came up during the forum?
* What questions remain? What work do we still need to do? Who else do we need to talk to?
* What could you do as an individual? What could the community do? What should we expect from our elected officials at the local, state, and national level?