



Visioning Circle Facilitation Guide: Prepare

Facilitation and Leadership

What do great leaders and great facilitators have in common?

- A genuine desire to listen to every voice, to honor every contribution.
- Know that real, long-lasting change comes from this inclusion, rather than suppressing or ignoring opposing points of view.
- Draw people out and invite them to rise into their best selves.
- Don't have a need to talk a lot. When they do speak, it is to provide information or a new direction that will be empowering to the group.
- Are willing to risk trying new things for the good of the whole.
- Egos do not get in the way of the process.

This means that your leap into facilitating a Visioning Circle will also develop your leadership skills. Consider how much more powerful you can be as a leader if you learn to listen deeply to the hopes and dreams of your community.

If you aspire to these traits, take some time before your circle to visualize yourself hosting your Circle. Look at each of the traits above and see yourself embodying them in your Circle.

Facilitation is an art that requires practice, and doing this simple exercise is a powerful first step!



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1. **Read through this sample agenda** carefully, making sure you are clear on each piece. Make notes and practice speaking on key points – it is important that you be able to convey each point without just reading from the paper. Make it your own!
2. **Explaining the Campaign (Agenda item 3):** Prepare what you want to say to explain the Visioning Campaign. Make some notes below. Remember that the most important thing is to use your own words and to speak from your heart.
3. **Guided visualization:** Practice aloud a couple of times. Your goal is to read it through smoothly, and give people enough time for images to come. Most of us go too fast. As a way to check your time, read it and do the visualizing yourself as you go! If you're worried you're going too slow, here's a good rule of thumb: when people start to fidget, it's time to move to the next piece. Feel free to change the language so it is natural for *you* to speak it.
4. **Multi-media?:** Choose whether you want to include video or audio recordings in your Visioning, and pull together the necessary equipment. Practice using your equipment so it goes smoothly. Refer to Agenda Item 11 for one easy way to do this.
5. **Practice Generosity:** Choose whether you want to pass the hat to help support this movement. If you are uncomfortable asking for money, ask yourself this: who benefits, when we are unable to ask for resources that will create change? If you want to transcend this block, work with your resistance, remembering that the only way this movement will become sustainable is if we all overcome it together. If you decide to do this step, know that people give when they are asked with clarity, integrity and heart. People *want* to support projects that will lead to real change. Rehearse what you want to say, and make some notes.
6. **Fill in the start and end times for each agenda item** based on the start time for your Circle. Consider when it is realistic to start. For example, if you asked people to arrive at 6, and your friends are relatively prompt, you can aim to start by 6:15. (If it is a potluck dinner, you may be safer starting at 6:30.)
7. **Print** out your agenda, demographic form and enough copies of the sign-in sheet to accommodate all your guests
8. **Don't forget to call and remind people to come!**



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Before you begin...

Consider: What are my intentions?

One secret to great meetings – or any gathering of people – are clear intentions. Take a few moments before people arrive to clarify your intentions for the evening. Some ideas:

- Generate positive, creative visions for our communities
- Take people to a new place of hope and connection
- Build community
- Inspire people to host their own Visioning Circles
- Honor all voices

Set the Space

The circle is, in our experience, the spatial arrangement which best encourages community and honoring every voice equally. It works even better without a table.

Unless you have a flipchart stand, you will probably want to arrange your circle so it touches a wall. You can tape the flipchart paper to the wall in advance and then write up people's ideas easily.



Visioning Circle Facilitation Guide: Agenda

Agenda

1. Welcome (recommended time: 1-3 minutes) (Host gives the welcome)

Write in start time here: _____

Say a few words about why you invited people to this circle. You help create the space if you speak from your heart.

2. Council Practice to reveal the values we aspire to live by (15-20 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 6:20-6:35):

Council Practice comes to us from many indigenous traditions from around the world. The basic values behind this practice: the group is not complete until every voice is heard, and that true wisdom comes from opening our hearts. We offer four basic guidelines:

Speak from your heart. This is an invitation not to present arguments, but rather to speak from your own personal experience and honor your passion.

Listen from your heart. Give all your attention to the person who is speaking. In our culture this is unusual. You may find yourself rehearsing what you want to say rather than listening. If you notice yourself doing this, simply let go, and bring your attention back to the speaker.

Speak spontaneously. Trust what is alive in you the moment it is your turn to speak. Even if you have rehearsed something else, go with what is alive right *now*. People will find it easier to listen to you. **TRUST THE PROCESS – SOMETHING WILL COME TO YOU!**

Speak leanly. This isn't about an actual length of time, but an invitation to use only the words you need, to convey what is alive in you in the moment.

Council Question, Round 1: Share your name, and something you did in the last week or so that embodies the way you want to live in this world. (It does not have to be a big deal. Change is made up of a lot of little actions.) [HOST: MODEL THIS BY GOING FIRST, THEN GO AROUND IN A CIRCLE]

Council Round 2: Reflect on what you shared in the first round, and share 3 or 4 values that underly that act. (You don't need to explain – just share the values.) If someone else has already named your values, it's okay to repeat them. [HOST: AGAIN, MODEL THIS BY GOING FIRST.]

(QUIETLY WRITE UP VALUES ON FLIPCHART)



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3. Explain the Visioning Campaign (10 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 6:35 – 6:45): _____

Please take some time to read about this campaign at www.letusrise.org. Figure out what you want to say and how you want to say it. Below are some key points to cover, and you can jot down some notes in the extra space:

How and why the Visioning Campaign started

Let Us Rise and the Visioning Campaign:

- groups all over Colorado and the US are hosting these Visioning Circles
- multi-media website
- All are welcome to participate: individuals, organizations, churches, other groups.
- It's easy to participate – all you have to do is get your friends or organization to envision the kind of society we want to see
- You publish the results of your circle at www.letusrise.org

Next Steps: Let Us Rise will work with us to find the common ground in our visions, coalesce the results into an independent, proactive vision for change, and then figure out what action we want to take

Why I care, why I am working with Let Us Rise:



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4. Introducing the Visioning Process (3 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 6:45 – 6:50): _____

Our culture tends to value analysis more than creativity. In this two-step process, we will make room for both of these sources of inspiration.

We will be doing a silent, guided visioning exercise that invites the more creative, intuitive part of you to participate. There is only one guideline for this part of the process: **trust what comes**. Some of you may see actual images; some may “sense” images; some might feel a certain way and some folks may not respond to this part of the process at all, or may only have a glimmer of an experience. All of this okay. Trust that whatever comes to you is perfect, and that the collective wisdom of our group and other groups will generate all that is needed.

[[Hosts: if you really don't want to do this part at all, that is alright. We encourage it, because it elicits answers that are very different from brainstorming alone, but it is not required.]]

5. Envisioning our Community in line with our deepest values (10 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 6:50 – 7:00): _____

(Read slowly in a calm, centered voice:)

Get in a comfortable posture, feet on the floor, hands relaxed in your lap or in front of you.

Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. As you breathe, become aware of your body and feel yourself relaxing. Breathe normally and relax, with your eyes closed.

(Wait a minute for the room to become still.)

Now picture yourself in your house or apartment on a relaxed Sunday morning. Your apartment is comfortable and reflects you. You have had a deep sleep, have woken up to a bright sunny day and look forward to a whole day that is free.

(Wait some seconds for these thoughts to settle)

You are at your front door, about to walk out of it. You have been working for a long time with your community to make it a better place, to heal it, to reflect the life-giving values you cherish. Your work has been successful, and your community has changed over time to become a place that reflects and supports



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Community Visioning, cont'd

the best in all of you. Your community now is a place that helps everyone develop the gifts they have to offer. This community is a place that is attractive, pleasing to be in. It is a healthy place for people and the planet. It fosters respectful relationships between very different people. You are about to take a walk in that community. (wait a moment)

Open the door and step outside. What do you see on your street? What does it smell like? What does it sound like? (wait a moment)

Is there any traffic? What kind of traffic is there on it? (wait a few moments) Are there people? What are they doing?

Now see yourself walking to a special place in the community. This is a space where you frequently find the things you need in your life. What does this place look like? What do you find there that helps you live the way you really want to live? Who is there with you? What are you doing? What does this place feel like? Take a minute to envision yourself finding the things you need most in your life, whatever they are. (Wait some minutes for these images to appear)

Are people healthy in your community? How do people stay healthy here? When people are sick, what do they do?

How do people exercise?

What kind of foods do you eat in your community? When people are hungry, where do they go to eat?

What kind of places do people live in? When someone needs a place to live, what do they do?

How are children raised? What do families look like?

How do people treat the land in your community?

How do people treat new members of the community?

How do people treat visitors?

How do people express emotion in this community?

Are there arts in this community? What kind? Who participates in creating art?

How do people experience the sacred or spiritual in this community?



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How are community decisions made? (What does power look like?)

When you are ready, open your eyes. (When everyone has opened their eyes, proceed.)

6. Sharing our Vision and Brainstorming (30 min.)

Write in start and end time (7:00 – 7:30): _____

Now we are going to share what we envisioned. And, if **any new ideas come to you, about the kind of community you want to live in, please share these as well.**

WRITE VISIONS ON FLIPCHART. You may want to identify someone to help you write these, to ensure writing doesn't slow down the group. When you fill up one sheet of paper, tape it to the wall and start on another.

ONCE EVERYONE HAS SHARED: Now we're going to switch into brainstorming. So if you have any other ideas about what our communities would look like, if they are aligned with our deepest values, share them now!

This is a brainstorming process, which means there are no bad ideas; all ideas go up on the paper. If you hear something you don't like, try to figure out how to share *your* vision, rather than arguing with the other person about his/her vision. If people start to argue, let's all remember this rule and re-direct the conversation to sharing our positive vision.



Write ideas on flipchart.

7. Publishing Our Vision and Action Appeal (5 min.)

Write in start and end time (7:30-7:35): _____

Your vision will be published to www.letusrise.org, so that there is a public record of the ideas we have generated tonight.

In order to check how we're doing in reaching all people, Let Us Rise is tracking demographics. This is an optional form – if you are uncomfortable filling it out,



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you don't have to. Just put a tally next to every group you identify with – and multiple tallies within a single category are okay.

Our vision will be more powerful if we are willing to put our names by it. I am passing out a sign-up sheet, please put your name down, but if you don't want your name to appear by our vision, just put a line through it and we'll make sure it is not published.



You'll also notice you can also check boxes if you want to receive monthly email updates on the visioning campaign, and if you are interested in hosting a Visioning Circle yourself.

We need you to host Visioning Circles. This is how we will take this campaign into every community. You have friends, you have organizations you are involved with. Please host one! We'll provide facilitation, we'll walk you through step by step. This is your chance to serve, to pass on the gift you have received tonight. Even if you're not totally sure you're ready, but have some interested, check the box and I'll be in touch with you, to see if it is something you can do.

8. Optional: Practice Generosity, Build a Movement (3 min.)

Write in start and end time (8:20-8:25): _____

Let Us Rise is funded entirely by people like you. We want to be accountable to a grassroots movement, and so we are asking everyone who participates in a visioning circle, if you believe in this process, please give generously, so that you "own" a piece of this movement. This is also an opportunity to transcend the way we are taught to treat money in our culture – hoarding it! – an opportunity to practice generosity and funding our values. **If you'd like to write a check, please make it payable to Community Resource Center, and write Let Us Rise in the subject line.**

Pass the hat, take an offering. Or, invite people to leave money in a hat placed by the door.

9. Optional: Multi-Media Soundbytes! (10 min.)

Write in start and end time for this section (for example, 8:25-8:35): _____

You're welcome to do whatever you want, we welcome your creativity! Video, audio, or even digital photographs will add a lot to your vision submissions.

Here is a very simple way of adding video to your vision with nothing more than a digital camera with video capability and literally a couple of extra minutes of time:



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- 1) Ask each person to think of their favorite idea from the visioning
- 2) Prepare each person to say their name and then the idea (“Hi, my name is _____ and my favorite idea from tonight was...”)
- 3) Let people know you’ll film one person after another, around the circle.
- 4) Record each person in one take – don’t hit stop on the record button.
Then you don’t have to edit the video or audio, you can upload it just as it is.

10. Close (5 min.)

Write in start and end time (8:35-8:40): _____

Suggested closing process: go around in a circle, and ask people to share a sentence or two about how they’re feeling.

Thank you for participating!



Including Everyone

Without full participation from diverse communities, the People’s Platform will not be complete. We invite you to help create a truly inclusive People’s Platform by including demographic information about yourself. This allows us to see how we’re doing. Your information will not be displayed publicly.

This is optional.

Put a tally mark next to all that apply to you.

Demographic Info	Put a tally in this column if you identify as...
Race	
Latina/o, Chicana/o, Mexicana/o	
Black and/or African American	
White	
Native American, Indigenous	
Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander	
Middle Eastern	
Gender	
Female	
Male	
Trans	
Other	
Age	
Under 18	
18-25	
26-40	
41-54	
55-65	
66+	
Sexuality	
Straight	
LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning...)	
Other	
(more, see next page)	



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Income/Class	
Low Income	
Working Class	
Middle Class	
High Income/Wealthy	
Religion and Spirituality	
Christian – Protestant	
Christian – Catholic	
Jewish	
Muslim	
Buddhist	
Hindu	
Atheist or Agnostic	
Native American	
Earth-Centered Spirituality	
Spiritual but not strongly identified with a particular tradition	
Other	



Visioning Circle Follow-Up

Afterwards: Critical Follow-Up

To make sure that all of your great work doesn't go to waste, complete these steps within one week of your circle:

1. Call the people who are interested in hosting a Visioning Circle within 3 or 4 days of your Circle and support them to make it happen!
2. Upload your vision, along with the names, contact info, demographic info, any photos, video or audio submissions, by going to www.letusrise.org (click on the Participate section) within one week. If your group identified action steps, be sure to include those as well. **This is critical – otherwise your ideas will not become part of the larger collective vision!**
3. Send the donations you collected to Let Us Rise, c/o Community Resource Center, 655 Broadway, Suite 300, Denver, CO 80203 within one week.
4. Send out a thank you email to the folks who participated, with a link to your vision on letusrise.org, within one week.
5. Follow-up on other action steps the group decided on. If your group elected to share your vision with the Obama team, the current place to do so is here:
<http://change.gov/page/s/yourvision>