

IDENTIFYING A COMMUNITY SPIRIT



By

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Other publications by the Divided Community Project, available at:
moritzlaw.osu.edu/dividedcommunityproject

Planning in Advance of Civil Unrest (2016)

Key Considerations for Community Leaders Facing Civil Unrest:
Effective Problem-Solving Strategies That Have Been Used in Other Communities (2016)

Divided Communities and Social Media (2017)

Simulation for Leadership During Crisis (2017), available by request to William Froehlich,
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When community members realize that the vast majority of them share a basic aspiration -- a sense that can be termed the “Community Spirit” — they will treat each other with more respect and consideration and feel that they belong to something bigger than themselves. This rationale, though in the context of the nation rather than the community, has recently spurred historians and commentators across the nation to call for an articulation of the current American Spirit to counter this period of deep division and alienation in our country. At a local level, communities can benefit as well from identifying a statement of what they value that helps unite their residents across their differences. They may become more engaged in improving the community and more willing to solve problems despite their differences. In this guide, the Divided Community Project suggests a process to help communities articulate their spirit.

The guide applies what was learned from other communities and from an American Spirit initiative to suggest a collaborative process that any community can use to identify and express its own spirit. Each community will select among these processes, and some communities may even find the identity so self-evident that they skip many of these steps. Erring on the side of over-inclusion, this guide elaborates on the following steps that any community can follow:

Conduct research aimed at securing answers to four key questions:

- ✿ What are the current challenges facing your community?
- ✿ What diverse communities of thought and experience exist within your community?
- ✿ What is special about your community in terms of history, geography, traditions, and more?
- ✿ What are some ideas for a statement of community spirit from elsewhere or from those already being floated in your community (pg. 9)?

Identify meeting participants who – when joined together – represent the diversity of views within the community, offer needed expertise and buy-in, and are good listeners, creative, and thoughtful (pg. 11).

Prepare meeting participants by providing them with materials that explain the concept a community spirit – why it matters and what about it gives it strength -- and also that community’s special character and current challenges (pg. 12).

Devise a meeting agenda for a collaborative drafting of the community spirit. First, try the agenda out by facilitating short small group pilot meetings with participants who have been given the preparation materials. Then analyze the results, identifying challenges that persist despite preparation. Work with experienced facilitators to revise preparation materials and adjust the ultimate meeting plans to overcome the challenges (pg. 13).

Develop a communication strategy to try out the ideas for a community spirit that emerge from the larger meeting with a larger audience (Do the ideas for a community spirit resonate broadly and deeply?) and let others know about it (pg. 18).

The guide ends with a list of books on meeting facilitation. Click on www.AmericanSpirit.osu.edu to find: an example of a summary meeting agenda, a “behind the scenes” worksheet for facilitators that illustrates how detailed preparation can help, and a guide for co-facilitators. You can secure additional support from the Divided Community Project in the preparation, facilitation, and drafting of your community spirit and let the Project know about successes that can be shared with other communities by emailing Bill Froehlich, Deputy Director, Divided Community Project, at Froehlich.28@osu.edu with a copy to americanspirit@osu.edu.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Divided Community Project at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law synthesizes insights for collaborative approaches to community division, provides counsel to local leaders based on these insights, and helps local leaders translate these principles into practice in local communities throughout the nation. This publication is the Project's fourth report and comes out as the Project also launches its website on the American Spirit. The Project has posted its publications on its website, <http://moritzlaw.osu.edu/dividedcommunityproject/>. You may duplicate them without charge if you attribute the source, use them for non-profit purposes, and share the documents on the same basis with others.

The Kettering Foundation's willingness to join in this initiative made it possible. The Ohio State University, especially the Institute for Democracy Engagement and Accountability, the Emeritus Academy, and the Moritz College of Law, provided key assistance to this initiative. The JAMS Foundation and the Littlefield Foundation provide basic support for the Divided Community Project, which launched this initiative.

The ten law student co-authors of this document were part of the Dispute Resolution Certificate program at the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law. Some researched national and community spirits and group process, and conducted

interviews. Others facilitated small group sessions, analyzed the results, worked with Nancy Rogers and Susan Carpenter to develop preparation and processes to make possible the successful plans for the American Spirit meeting in November, 2018, and helped to co-facilitate that meeting. They then reflected on what worked and did not, and drafted this report.

Throughout, the members of the Divided Community Project's Steering Committee advised on the initiative and helped with facilitation and editing this guide. Susan Carpenter was the primary facilitator for the American Spirit meeting. Co-facilitators included Grande Lum, Josh Stulberg, Nancy Rogers, Bill Froehlich, Chris Carlson, Michael Lewis, Craig McEwen, Sarah Rubin, Andrew Thomas, and the Project's director, Becky Monroe. Allyson Hennelly of Moritz provided logistical and office assistance throughout this initiative and Moritz Dean Alan Michaels provided support. People from across the nation accepted the invitation to become part of this collaborative effort.

We are grateful to all of these individuals and institutions.

The Divided Community Project
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WHY DOES A COMMUNITY SPIRIT MATTER?

A statement of community spirit that resonates broadly and deeply with the community's residents helps spark something constructive. **People more often are seen:**

- ✿ Collaborating;
- ✿ Listening to other viewpoints;
- ✿ Weighing the overall community values as they plan their own advocacy;
- ✿ Feeling like a part of the community rather than alienated from it and therefore more resistant to those who seek to demonize people with different viewpoints; and
- ✿ Joining more often in achieving the aims implicit in the community spirit.¹

WHAT MAKES A STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT POWERFUL?

A community spirit that achieves the results mentioned above will be more than a slogan that might attract tourism or investment. Instead it will be what residents aspire to achieve working with each other in the community.

These aspirations for the future at a general level differ from agreement on immediate policy decisions to, for example, increase the gasoline tax to pay for infrastructure improvements. Agreement on community-wide hopes for the future though may facilitate discussions on narrower policy decisions.

Experience suggests a few questions to test a particular idea for a community spirit with wide and deep resonance:

- ✿ Will it be deeply valued across societal and political divisions and by the vast majority of residents?
- ✿ Is it directed toward reducing the community's current challenges – especially polarization and alienation?
- ✿ Is it special for your community – growing from history, experiences, geography, and traditions?
- ✿ Is it bent toward a sense of optimism, hope, and aspiration, while recognizing that the community has sometimes fallen short in realizing the values that the spirit embodies?
- ✿ Does it confer a sense of belonging to the community?
- ✿ Does it feel natural and authentic?²

“Community engagement is essential in creating a shared vision. Starting with overall community goals and values works better than starting with decision-making on immediate actions. If people agree on their future, it is easier for them to gauge the wisdom of immediate actions.”

– Cheeying Ho, Executive Director, Whistler Centre for Sustainability.

Illustration of a local spirit responsive to these questions: In Orlando, Florida, following the June 12, 2016 shootings at the Pulse nightclub frequented particularly by gay residents and on that “Latin Night” also Hispanic residents, city and community leaders began to think of ways to help all residents realize that they belonged, and were valued. They began calling the spirit “Orlando United,” then some moved to “Orlando Strong,” with descriptions of Orlando residents united in creating an actively welcoming community for all. They tied Orlando’s welcoming spirit to the association of almost everyone in Orlando someone who worked at Disney World with its focus on expressing a warm welcome to visitors of all ages and nationalities. Soon Twitter hashtags, mugs, t-shirts, and even mixes of music appeared, displaying the wide engagement with Orlando’s spirit.

HOW CAN YOU GO ABOUT IDENTIFYING A UNIFYING COMMUNITY SPIRIT?

It is possible that a creative individual who understands the viewpoints within the community can articulate a community spirit that will resonate deeply and broadly, as occurred in Pittsburgh in the aftermath of the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue. Both Orlando and Pittsburgh's quick articulation of a community spirit followed a tragic hate incident, but later we will examine discussions of a community spirit in Vancouver and Columbus, which occurred without such an incident.




Tim Hindes, an artist living near the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, created the "Stronger Than Hate" image after the deadly attack that took place at the synagogue on October 27, 2018. The image takes the old U.S. Steel logo (popularized today by the Pittsburgh Steelers), three diamonds within a circle. The image replaces the top diamond with a Star of David, and replaces the words "US Steel" with "Stronger Than Hate." With his post of the image, Hindes wrote: "Before it was the logo of a globally popular football team, the three diamonds were the product which helped develop the foundation of many cities across the globe – steel. Like Pittsburgh and its residents, steel is strong." Hindes stated that his anger and sadness led him to doodling. His friends convinced him to post the final image to Facebook, and it went viral from there. The image has been re-posted across the internet and has been used in fundraising, on t-shirts, and more.

Suppose a community does not have someone like Tim Hindes in Pittsburgh who intuitively states a statement of community spirit and a logo that resonates deeply and broadly in the face of the challenges that this community faces. Absent such an individual, the community might decide to convene a creative group of people who can work together to formulate a community spirit that will inspire the larger community. Such a group can build on each other's ideas to come to consensus on aspects of the community spirit. That consensus can then be tested.

Because the sponsor or convener of this group plays such a central role, it may help to first consider whether potential participants will perceive that group's sponsorship as credible and unbiased. The convening group can aid in that perception by communicating their goals and objectives openly and transparently, and striving for inclusive participation. They will also need to be able to secure sufficient resources to see the process through to conclusion.

Two examples highlight the challenges inherent in reaching consensus on a community spirit. First, the division and dissension being experienced nationally can also be present at the community level and serve as motivation for people to try to develop a shared community spirit. Those divisions, however, can also make it more difficult to achieve that result. For example, those who suffer the most as the result of division may resist envisioning an aspirational community spirit that does not recognize past discrimination. (We discuss below Danville, Virginia where a project called History United precedes an effort to form a united aspiration.) Second, you will be asking meeting participants to consider not only what would motivate them, but also what would motivate the overwhelming majority of residents – including people with whom they might not normally agree.

Because this conversation involves so many challenges, you may want to do more than simply engage an experienced facilitator (though that should help). This section offers considerations regarding three parts of the process for articulating a spirit:

-  How Do You Select and Prepare a Group to Identify Your Community Spirit?
-  How Can Meetings Be Structured to Achieve Consensus on Ideas that Might Resonate Broadly and Deeply as the Community Spirit?
-  How Can a Community Try Out the Ideas?

This guide distills experience in several communities and by the Divided Community Project when it used this process to articulate an American Spirit.

"I think Pittsburgh demonstrates how a community can come together to console the Tree of Life victims in Squirrel Hill, a very diverse and close neighborhood, and to condemn racial hatred and prejudice."

— Dan Sandman, former vice president, U.S. Steel.



A makeshift memorial outside the Tree of Life synagogue



HOW DO YOU SELECT AND PREPARE A GROUP TO IDENTIFY YOUR COMMUNITY'S SPIRIT?

The table below includes general suggestions for addressing the challenges listed above through selection and preparation of meeting participants.

Challenge: Understand what is meant by spirit

Ideas for Meeting the Challenge Through Selection and Preparation:

- Offer examples from other communities and explain the importance.
- Explain it concretely: (1) a catchphrase, (2) a short sentence, and (3) a longer explanation and even an illustration if time permits.
- Note that although a community may want to acknowledge a history of discrimination and injustice, going forward it can unite in its aspirations to be inclusive and just in the future.

Challenge: Listen to people they disagree with

Ideas for Meeting the Challenge Through Selection and Preparation:

- ✿ Select participants who, while advocates for various viewpoints, can engage effectively and respectfully with people with whom they disagree.
- ✿ Allow time for them to get acquainted, with facilitators attentive to this goal during dinner, breakfast, etc.
- ✿ Help participants understand the importance of task.
- ✿ Send ahead ground rules for the meeting that make participants comfortable with candid discussions.
- ✿ Keep the preparation materials light in tone.

Challenge: Creativity

Ideas for Meeting the Challenge Through Selection and Preparation:

- ✿ Give participants time prior to the meeting to come up with their own ideas. Perhaps create a protected online site where they can begin sharing ideas with other participants and read ideas others submit.

Challenge: Understand the community’s special characteristics

Ideas for Meeting the Challenge Through Selection and Preparation:

- ✿ Research these (history, traditions, etc.) and present the research in advance of the meeting.
- ✿ Invite participants who together have an ear to all communities of thought within the community.

Challenge: Optimism

Ideas for Meeting the Challenge Through Selection and Preparation:

- ✿ Interview people for ideas for the community spirit and send out a few of these ideas before the meeting.
- ✿ Recruit participants who tend to be optimistic, even while acknowledging the reality of past and current failures.
- ✿ Recruit some participants with stature, recognizing that stature comes in many different forms (“If they care enough to carve out the time, there must be some likelihood of success.”).

Challenge: Care enough

Ideas for Meeting the Challenge Through Selection and Preparation:

- ✿ Research the current challenges for the community. Summarize them in preparation materials and explain how a community spirit might help.
- ✿ Recruit participants who care about the community’s future.
- ✿ Explain in advance to each participant the unique role that each individual will play.

Challenge: Working within the meeting timeframe

Ideas for Meeting the Challenge Through Selection and Preparation:

- ✿ Give participants the explanatory materials and get them thinking about ideas before the meeting.
- ✿ Size the group after considering both diversity of viewpoint/background and the amount of time required for a group that size to discuss the issues.



In this subsection, we offer more detailed suggestions for dealing with the challenges of achieving consensus on a community spirit. **The discussion is divided into:**

- ✿ Research
- ✿ Selection of meeting participants
- ✿ Preparation for meeting participants

RESEARCH

Research inquiries that will facilitate preparation in the ways just described include:

- ✿ What are the current challenges for your community?
- ✿ What diverse communities, including communities of thought, exist within the larger community?
- ✿ What is unusual about your community in terms of history (include accounts of injustice and suffering but also moments of strength that the community might want to claim now as its aspiration for the future, for example), geography, traditions, and more?
- ✿ What are some ideas for a community spirit from elsewhere or those already being floated in your community?

In the illustration that follows, Vancouver, Canada explains how its aspirations rest on its history and its process for reaching consensus. Note that, unlike Orlando and Pittsburgh, Vancouver's spirit does not emerge from a tragic incident.

Vancouver, Canada calls itself the Greenest City and lists its aspirations in this regard. Its Greenest City: 2020 Action Plan connects this community spirit to its history: "In the 1960s, Vancouver's Strathcona neighbourhood residents stopped the construction of a massive freeway into downtown that would have leveled their community and altered the shape of the city forever. Today, Vancouver is one of a very few cities in North America that does not have a major highway cutting through its core. And our city was one of the first in the world to recognize the importance and gravity of climate change. In 1990, the groundbreaking Clouds of Change Task Force recommended the city begin reducing its carbon dioxide emissions. Today, Vancouver has the smallest per capita carbon footprint of any city in North America. We have been able to achieve this in collaboration with our energy utility providers, senior levels of government, and innovators in the business and non-profit sectors who see new opportunity in responding to this challenge. Because of these achievements, Vancouver is quickly becoming a new green economy hub."

Fortunately, volunteers and students can do much of the research bulleted above that might help to prepare participants in a meeting to articulate a community spirit. Here are some ideas for conducting the research:

- ✿ Interviews of individual residents can provide helpful information and have the added advantages that:
 - Word of the interviews will begin building excitement about the community spirit initiative, and
 - People may add personal stories that will illustrate and bring down to a personal level the community spirit that ultimately emerges from the process.
- ✿ Community meetings on other topics can provide a basis for observing what matters to residents and where there are divisions among communities within the community, as occurred in Orlando, Florida.
- ✿ A media search, particularly of archives, can suggest concerns and divisions that have occurred over time.

In Orlando, Florida, following the tragic shootings at the Pulse nightclub, meetings were held to learn about concerns in the community. Listening to representatives of mental health providers and Hispanic and gay communities, a local foundation staff member distilled from discussions a suggestion for an Orlando spirit that ultimately, with modifications, caught the imagination of others.

Historical examples can anchor an idea for the community spirit (e.g., past creative collaborations that produced businesses that are now booming, individuals who displayed determination and resilience in the face of discrimination, the community banding together in face of a natural disaster when hope seemed to be lost, and more), as illustrated in the example immediately below.

Over the years, public and private leaders in Columbus, Ohio, took pride in their behind-the-scenes discussions of differences, characterized by a Midwestern "niceness." They called this the "Columbus Way," an approach taught by some business schools. More recently, the Columbus Dispatch editorials began urging community leaders to broaden the Columbus Way conversations to include those not currently in the power structure – to extend the Columbus Way to all parts of the community.³

Acknowledging a history that includes tragic mistakes will be important for portions of the community still enduring the after-effects. However, the remembrance can lead to despair as well. As Fred Rogers of “Mr. Rogers Neighborhood” suggested, one can discuss a tragic error and its ongoing effects without producing despair if one “looks for the helpers” – feature those who worked in those dark times to create a better society in which everyone has the opportunity to flourish.⁴

Before 2010, Danville, Virginia often identified itself with a moment in 1865 when Danville served as “the last Capital of the Confederacy.” Now roughly half of Danville’s residents are white and half are African-American. Representatives of the community want to find a new identity that will build a “unified vision of the future and a cohesive strategy for moving forward.” To do so, Danville and the rest of the Dan River Community began working with the University of Virginia in 2013 to create a project called History United. The History United website documents stories, including those of suffering and the people who struggled to overcome past divisions. The process of documenting this shared history is designed to build the connections among the broader community that will be necessary to arrive at shared future aspirations. “The city is working to reclaim and rebrand who they are, while at the same time, being honest with the past,” explained Chad Martin, Director of History United and Vice Mayor of Martinsville, Virginia. “We had people of different backgrounds from the community doing blood work to learn their genealogy. A [Confederate] flagger and a civil rights leader discovered that they are related. This changed the conversation between them despite their different views on politics.” virginiahumanities.org/2016/05/history-united-renewing-community-danville

Polling data can offer a sense of what proportion of the community hold particular values – useful information because the interviews and groups may not reflect the community proportionately. Twitter hashtags may yield information about community concerns and aspirations, as occurred in Orlando.

After the Orlando nightclub shootings, the Twitter hashtag #OrlandoStrong was used widely by residents to vent and offer encouragement. Reviewing concerns captured by the “#OrlandoStrong” hashtag gave Orlando leaders a sense of the values that could be used for a local identity.



🌟 Small group discussions are covered in more detail in Section B and can lead to:

- Better ideas of the community spirit than the interviews because participants build on each other’s ideas and
- Trying out questions, ground rules, and processes in advance of larger meetings.

Using experienced facilitators for small group meetings can help to encourage collaboration, ease tension or disagreements, and make participants feel that their opinions are valued and that they have reason for optimism about the initiative. Finding volunteer facilitators may be easier than it appears; mediators, teachers, attorneys, and others may have experience in facilitation.

SELECTION OF MEETING PARTICIPANTS

If you plan a one-day meeting to articulate the community spirit, you may have more stakeholders than you can realistically include as participants. Listing all of the stakeholders makes it easier to remember to involve them in some way during the larger process and ensure that their views will be taken into account during a meeting. You can begin a list of stakeholders during the research phase, updating the list as you learn more. Stakeholders include persons who variously:

- ✿ Care about the initiative;
- ✿ Will be affected by the spirit that emerges (perhaps classified by viewpoint or experience – e.g., conservative Republicans, recent immigrants, racial minorities, various religious affiliations);
- ✿ Are necessary to spreading the word about the community spirit (media, social media experts, public officials);
- ✿ Have expertise that will help to craft the community spirit (historians, survey experts, speechwriters);
- ✿ Understand whether particular communities within the community will support the community spirit (clergy of various faiths, former elected officials, advocacy group leaders, law enforcement);
- ✿ Will provide resources (foundations, businesses);
- ✿ Will influence how the community views the initiative (influential individuals from the various communities within the community, media, for example);
- ✿ Might denigrate the spirit if not involved; and
- ✿ Are community bridge builders (United Way, bar associations, Legal Aid, NAACP, Chamber of Commerce, agencies providing social services, YMCA/YWCA, for example).

For stakeholders not included in the one-day meeting, interviews and small group discussions may engage these stakeholders, allow you to distill for the one-day meeting participants how viewpoints within the community converge or differ, and demonstrate for the community the breadth of involvement in the initiative.

Keeping in mind the stakeholders and varied interests, you can help produce meeting success by inviting participants who, in addition to representing these viewpoints, can:

- ✿ Understand the task at hand (to come to consensus on a community spirit, not policy choices such as more investment in schools, though a community spirit may help people work on these policy choices);
- ✿ Listen carefully to people they disagree with;
- ✿ Be creative;
- ✿ Understand what is special about the community – its traditions, history, and more – and its current challenges;
- ✿ Represent, or at least understand, the perspectives of many different groups within the community;
- ✿ Have enough optimism or commitment to the community that they become engaged in the process;
- ✿ Care enough to have high aspirations for the result, and not just accept any result; and
- ✿ Achieve consensus on a community spirit within the time they are willing to devote.

When deciding whom to invite to the one-day meeting on your community spirit, you may face a tension between, on one hand, keeping the numbers small to help the group reach consensus during allotted time and, on the other hand, representing as many of these stakeholders as possible. One happy medium may be to maximize the number of viewpoints rather than try to assemble the number of participants holding a particular viewpoint that is proportional to their representation in the community's population. If you maximize viewpoints and therefore lack proportionality, you may want to test the outcomes resulting from the meeting, as discussed on pg. 18, and illustrated below.

The American Spirit meeting involved 35 persons, 16 of whom were trained facilitators. Together the group included persons who were: from 10 states, Republicans and Democrats, former elected and appointed officials, ages 25 to 90, representative of the three largest U.S. religious groups, of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, a survey expert, a historian, a political scientist, a sociologist, lawyers, an online democracy expert, foundation representatives, a civil rights activist, a recent immigrant now working with new immigrants, a former police chief, and clergy. These participants had input from small group sessions held before the meeting. (The small group meetings had included rural and small town participants, participants of varied incomes, and more.) Participants reached consensus that: “Americans share a sense that we want to be an innovative and ‘can do’ people, acknowledging a tragic history involving discrimination but now unified in our commitment for the future to be inclusive and to appreciate individuality.” Participants also pointed out that the aims of this statement of the American Spirit have yet to be fully realized and that the nation has, in fact, made tragic mistakes in this regard. In aiming higher, Americans continue the process of becoming a “more perfect union,” as the preamble to the U.S. Constitution puts it. Interviews after the meeting reached business leaders, a social media expert, a speechwriter, a former governor, and polling experts, among others. Subsequently, a sociologist is reviewing existing polling data to determine the breadth of resonance of the emerging spirit identified by this effort.



PREPARATION FOR MEETING PARTICIPANTS

As indicated more generally on pages 7-8, preparing participants can contribute to an effective meeting by:

- ✿ Helping them understand the goal of the meeting;
- ✿ Engaging them in the project;
- ✿ Giving them the background to offer ideas that have some likelihood of success;
- ✿ Encouraging an optimistic frame of mind, while recognizing past failures in reaching aspirations;
- ✿ Getting them thinking in terms of what will resonate with those who have different backgrounds, concerns, beliefs;
- ✿ Helping them anticipate that an interesting and diverse group of individuals will be attending the meeting;
- ✿ Emphasizing the importance of the task; and
- ✿ Setting a light, and even fun, tone about the project.

The Divided Community Project discovered that each time it improved the preparation materials, the pilot small groups accomplished more. At one small group meeting, the participants had not been prepared in advance. The outcome of that one-hour meeting was only a list of concerns about the community (housing, infrastructure, etc.). Later small group outcomes improved with more preparation. The Project used an online site at TheTheChisel.com to allow participants to read more deeply in their areas of interest. About two thirds of the participants responded positively to the online materials, while one third would have preferred a written report in advance of the meetings.

HOW CAN MEETINGS BE STRUCTURED TO ACHIEVE CONSENSUS ON IDEAS THAT MIGHT RESONATE BROADLY AND DEEPLY AS THE COMMUNITY SPIRIT?

Holding the Meeting to Develop Consensus on a Tentative Local Spirit

The agenda for the meeting might be constructed by starting with typical aspects of a facilitated meeting to gain consensus (time to get acquainted, introduction of participants and affiliations, goals, etc.) and then adjusting the agenda to incorporate features responsive to the obstacles to reaching consensus on a community spirit that will resonate. Facilitator notes (such as those immediately below the agenda) provide a checklist for adjustments. Having a number of experienced facilitators involved allows for additional adjustments during the meeting.

Here's an illustrative agenda for a one-day meeting, with notes that anticipate challenges such as those listed above:

AGENDA

8:15 Breakfast

8:45 Participants find places at tables

9:00 Welcome.

Participants introduce themselves by name and affiliation.

Ground rules.

History of project.

Purpose of the session and overview of day.

9:20 Small group idea generation

10:20 Break

10:30 Large group discussions

11:30 Small group discussions on whether to change or elaborate on top four ideas.

12:00 Lunch

12:30 Large group discussions and narrowing: Identify common themes, combine similar ideas, discuss, prioritize.

1:30 Implications for the community: Small group discussion of next steps: What can be done to check to see how this spirit resonates? To share this community spirit?

2:30 Large group discussions of small group results.

3:15 Summaries of what was accomplished and what will occur after the meeting.

3:30 Adjourn

NOTES FOR FACILITATORS

Breakfast: Hand out nametags. Use a buffet and free seating to facilitate mingling. Assign a co-facilitator to seek out each attendee and introduce that person around.

Find places at tables: Set table for 6 to 8 persons to engage each person in discussion. Arrange name tents to produce diversity at each table. Include a table facilitator and recorder at each table.

Welcome: To make this quicker, hand out a list of participants and affiliations. Put on a slide (and send ahead) the ground rules, emphasizing that statements won't be attributed to a person without permission. Make especially clear that the spirit is aspirational in nature, not merely a description of what has occurred, and illustrate the importance of the task through examples. Project optimism that this group can make that contribution.

Small group idea generation: To encourage reflection, ask each person in the small group to write silently for five minutes, listing in a few words several ideas for the community spirit. (To help recorders quickly group ideas on flipchart paper, ask participants to use a felt tipped pen to write each idea on a separate large post-it note.) Then ask each person to express one idea that has not yet been presented, going around the table until the recorder has all ideas posted. To facilitate creativity, facilitators can participate by suggesting tentative or rough ideas that encourage others to improve on those ideas and model an openness to other ideas. Discuss the ideas, asking which ideas best fit the six questions from pg. 5 above (which can be kept on a slide). Compliment the group on progress. Select the top four ideas, perhaps by asking each person to put a dot or check mark next to four or five that they think are most effective. Post the top four ideas for the larger group.

Break: Suggest that people review ideas emerging from the other small groups while on break..

First large group discussions: A spokesperson from each small group presents the top four ideas. Discuss the ideas presented. Compliment the group on progress.

Second small group discussions: To encourage elaboration and also the beginning of consensus among the larger group: Were there ideas from the other small groups that anyone wants to include on this small group's list? Perhaps divide into pairs to elaborate on revised list of top four ideas. Post the elaborated ideas. Discuss and modify. The facilitator can again press on the six questions from Part II to help identify the strongest candidates. Compliment each group on progress.

Lunch: Suggest that participants wander and read ideas posted by each group. A buffet lunch facilitates speed and mingling.

Second large group discussions: Combine the top ideas on a separate flipchart or slide, without listing which group originated the idea to free people from supporting "their" group's ideas. Facilitators can use various devices for recording preferences for the combined-idea list. The group may discuss as it looks at the results, perhaps deciding to combine three or four ideas into a single community spirit. Take a break when consensus is reached.

Small group discussions on next steps: Use the same idea generation methods as in the 9:00 discussions. Celebrate the progress that the group has already made. Record the ideas for sharing.

Identifying Meeting Challenges and Procedures to Overcome Them

The research discussed on pages 8-10 can help to identify the challenges of gaining consensus on a statement of community spirit. Many of these challenges will be familiar to experienced facilitators, but some may be novel. For novel challenges, you may want to try out facilitation approaches in small group settings before holding the meeting at which you hope that a tentative consensus on a community spirit will emerge. You might make a list of challenges and then a meeting feature that you can try out during the small group meetings as a means for overcoming the challenge, as was done in the chart below. For example:

Challenge

Participants might devolve into arguments about whether the community is living up to the suggested spirit.

How to Overcome

The facilitator can ask participants to think in terms of what sorts of aspirations for the future will help to grapple with the ongoing effects of problems in the community as well as how any statement of the community spirit can acknowledge both past failures and how the spirit claims for its future the values implicit in those instances when the community was at its best.

Challenge

Participants might not understand the importance of making the community spirit pertinent to current community challenges.

How to Overcome

Prepare participants on this point. Project criteria from pg. 5 for a strong spirit on a large screen during the meeting.

In preparing for the American Spirit conference, facilitators held seven small group meetings to establish and refine a process for effective group discussion of shared American or community spirit. Central to this work was the question of whether a small group of diverse community members, within an hour, could come to meaningful agreement on at least one candidate for a spirit and, if so, what process would be most effective for conducting such conversations. The small groups revealed overwhelming participant interest in seeking agreement on a shared community spirit in the face of current societal polarization. Many of the facilitators noted that the conversations were substantive, candid, and guardedly optimistic. Ultimately, the small groups generated useful substantive suggestions to inform the conversations of participants in the one-day meeting. They also provided key insights into how conversations around shared identity should – and should not – proceed.

The focus groups each consisted of 3 to 6 participants and 1 or 2 facilitators. Participants were selected based on their knowledge of the community (whether the U.S. broadly or Columbus, Ohio specifically), potential diversity of viewpoints, and likelihood of being thoughtful and respectful in the conversation. Facilitators began preparing participants by explaining the purpose of the project in their initial invitations to participate, encouraging participants to reflect on spirit candidates that they thought could resonate broadly, and directing them to the preparation site on TheChisel.com.

Given the wide range of participants – with some from Ohio, California, Utah, Georgia, Kentucky, and more – the conversations took place in varying settings: some in person, some via video conference, and others via conference call. The groups also varied in their level of political diversity, providing an opportunity to test the process across several levels of likely ideological disagreement. Consistent across groups was the core format used by facilitators, consisting of:

- ✿ A brief overview of the project and conversation ground rules;*
- ✿ Individual introductions by participants;*
- ✿ An opportunity for participants to present initial suggestions for a shared American or community spirit;*
- ✿ Conversation-inducing questions by the facilitator; and*
- ✿ Open-ended discussion.*

Generally, facilitators took a passive role, intervening to encourage the critique and development of the initial ideas proposed by participants. As facilitators applied this framework in each setting, they gained valuable insights about the positive outcomes and opportunities for improvement of the process, each charted below.

Small group facilitators analyzed the results of the seven small group meetings and met with facilitators to identify strategies to improve the large group meeting process. The first chart below lists the positive outcomes and the second chart identifies potential obstacles and opportunities to improve for the large group meeting.

Positive Outcomes from Small Group Sessions

Observation

All facilitators noted a general tone of respectfulness.

Related Design Feature

- ✿ Participant selection based on this attribute.
- ✿ Ground rules.

Observation

Many facilitators observed a willingness to “dig deep” and constructively push back on idea proposals.

Related Design Feature

- ✿ Ground rules encouraging respectful critique.
- ✿ Questions such as “Can you imagine a stakeholder who might take issue with this point?”

Observation

Participants came prepared with thoughtful proposals.

Related Design Feature

- ✿ Use of the preparation site on *TheChisel.com*.
- ✿ Invitation by the facilitator to reflect on and prepare proposals in advance of the meetings.
- ✿ Participants often knew the facilitator and felt some obligation to come prepared.

Observation

Participants contributed diverse viewpoints.

Related Design Feature

- ✿ All participants were allowed to propose ideas before beginning a more focused discussion.
- ✿ Many groups had politically diverse participants.

*An important “tailwind” in building participant engagement was the fact that many felt exhausted by the amount of political polarization and were excited to have a productive forum to discuss ways for the community to move forward.

Obstacles in Small Group Meetings and Opportunities to Improve for the Large Group Meeting

Obstacle

Some participants offered little push-back/development of proposals (groupthink).

Problematic Design Feature:

- ✿ *Political/ideological homogeneity in some groups.*
- ✿ *Facilitator introduction that emphasized agreement.*

Opportunity:

- ✿ *Facilitator can model or further encourage constructive disagreement with ground rules and questions.*
- ✿ *Be certain that even each table has viewpoint diversity.*

Obstacle

Some groups failed to arrive at a clearly articulated proposal.

Problematic Design Feature:

- ✿ *Open-ended discussion format was relied on until there was too little time to conclude.*
- ✿ *Some facilitators reported an unnecessarily long introduction and initial proposal period.*

Opportunity:

- ✿ *Consider having a clear period of time at the end of which the facilitator transitions the group from idea generation to idea narrowing.*
- ✿ *Prepare narrowing and conclusion-oriented questions in advance.*
- ✿ *Set aside more time – most of a day – for discussions.*

Obstacle

Some groups tended to focus on policy solutions rather than identifying a unifying community spirit.

Opportunity:

- ✿ *Facilitators can prepare to reorient policy discussions with questions such as “What concern underlies these policy positions?” and “What aspirations for the future might help the community work together on solutions to the problems it is facing?”*
- ✿ *Facilitators can be clear at the outset about what the final product should look like and post the goal on a screen throughout as well as include it in the written agenda put out for each participant.*

Obstacle

Some groups had an unequal distribution of contributions among group members.

Opportunity:

- ✿ *Facilitators can explicitly solicit feedback and encourage participants to do so as well. The group discussions can begin with time to write ideas followed by the facilitator going around to solicit one idea from each participant until all ideas are on a flipchart.*
- ✿ *Facilitators can provide a space for various contribution styles (real time dialogue, individual reflection then report-back, etc.).*

Obstacle

Certain participants expressed skepticism that any agreement could bridge the political divide.

Opportunity:

- ✿ *Facilitators can craft the introduction to be more clear and optimistic about the expected benefits of the project.*
- ✿ *Facilitators can be prepared with examples of how a shared vision has helped communities in the past.*
- ✿ *The use of multiple facilitators in each subgroup allows the facilitators to offer tentative or incomplete ideas for an American or community spirit that keep the conversation moving.*
- ✿ *To show progress, ideas from subgroups can be posted through a joint document projected onto a screen during discussions.*

HOW CAN A COMMUNITY TRY OUT THE IDEAS?

Once the meeting is over, it will be time to gain additional input and refine the ideas. Do the ideas for the community spirit resonate as the meeting participants predicted? Is the language such that it will alienate some parts of the community, leading them to reject the idea itself? What illustrations will help bring the spirit home to various members of the community? Here are some ideas for accomplishing this:

- ✿ Send the draft to stakeholders who did not attend the meeting and interview for reactions.
- ✿ Conduct polling on the ideas that emerged from the meeting.
- ✿ Hold small group meetings that will allow for nuance and creativity in coming up with ways to convey the community spirit – stories, quotes, even songs.
- ✿ Use an online platform that limits participation to residents of your community, such as NextDoor.com or TheChisel.com, for example. Some communities have similar platforms. By way of contrast, town halls and broadly accessible online methods often attract those who ridicule or have strong views, perhaps derailing a proposed community spirit that otherwise would have enjoyed broad support.
- ✿ Revisit later to assess whether a community spirit has the effects identified at the beginning of this report or can be adjusted to achieve desired results.

Communication strategies for a community spirit differ from other communication strategies for one key reason – for the community spirit to achieve the desired results, people must take it to heart. Embracing the spirit must make them feel part of something bigger than themselves, something that they care about. Other communities have tried to achieve resonance through stories, songs, or other means to get people thinking about it. **Options include:**

- ✿ Draft the original release to demonstrate – through photos of participants or in other ways – that the spirit results from a community effort and thus make people more open to considering it. The first minute or line of communication may affect the community reaction.
- ✿ Ask all stakeholders who are invested in the result to come up with stories and to partner in the communication strategy through their own resources.
- ✿ Prepare a speaker's kit that staff for public officials and other leaders who give speeches regularly can use and have an individual trusted by these persons send the kit to them.
 - Including multiple quotes that illustrate the community spirit can bring it home. Quoting a number of persons may help avoid a negative reaction based on low regard for a particular speaker.
 - Offering stories may help them make the spirit memorable and inspirational.
- ✿ Celebrate the spirit at festivals.
- ✿ Who are opinion leaders with each of the communities within the community (clergy, bar association, radio, social media, athletes, etc.)? Are they willing to talk about the community spirit?
- ✿ Who is already communicating to create a positive image of the community (tourism, Chamber of Commerce, etc.)? Will they include the community spirit?

“Having a shared sense of identity of being an inclusive and equality-seeking community...gave us the ability to recover and heal united as a city -- hand in hand, heart to heart.”

– Lori Pampilo Harris, former Senior Advisor on Homelessness and Social Services to Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer

Orlando, Florida celebrates “Orlando United Day – A Day of Love and Kindness” each June 12, the day of the tragic shooting that left 49 people dead and others injured in 2016.

- ✿ Are professional publicists and journalists willing to help? Would they be willing to write editorials or publish columns or blogs, include human interest stories related to the community spirit, or even open a newscast with such a story?

In Orlando, one news outlet entitled a picture of a homeless man lighting the candles for the victims after they went out: “This Is What It Means to Be #OrlandoUnited.”

- ✿ Create a challenge that brings awareness to the spirit – the concept of the Ice Bucket Challenge to raise research dollars for Amyotrophic Lateral Schlerosis (ALS).⁵ Similarly (though for different purposes) social media influencers have created dance challenges related to particular songs, and thousands of people have participated, including entertainers, athletes, news reporters, and schools.⁶ As with other online strategies, trolls may ridicule in ways that interfere with the positive message, so any challenge would need to take that risk into account.
- ✿ Use NextDoor or create an analogous local social media platform with access only by local residents.
- ✿ Develop kits for schools to use, perhaps for an art project that children will take home to show their families; a competition for ideas that represent the community spirit; a template for class discussions.
- ✿ Poll residents about the community spirit and release the poll results to the media.
- ✿ Create hashtags, screen savers, and authorize use on mugs and t-shirts.
- ✿ Use the Divided Community Project’s basic facilitator guide (forthcoming, June 2019) or another (see Appendix A for a list) to assist any neighborhoods or local group meetings to brainstorm ideas for enhancing the spirit in their sectors.

In addition to communicating with residents broadly, it might be important to reach people who will be influential in the community’s response during a crisis. Will they speak about the community spirit even as they advocate in a situation of strong disagreement? In this way, these influential individuals can encourage advocacy groups to express their views in ways that do not imperil what the community as a whole wants to preserve. They can also remind people of what they share in common with fellow residents as members of a community with high and valued aspirations, and thus humanize interactions to deal over the long term with the concerns underlying the advocacy during a crisis.



Orlando United Day 2017

RESOURCES

Books marked with * are especially pertinent to meetings to articulate a local spirit. See AmericanSpirit.osu.edu for example of a summary meeting agenda, a “behind the scenes” worksheet for facilitators that illustrates how detailed preparation can help, and a guide for co-facilitators.

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*ROURKE, Brad (2014). *Developing Materials for Deliberative Forums*. Dayton, OH: The Kettering Foundation. <http://kettering.org/wp-content/uploads/Developing-Materials-guide.pdf>

*ROURKE, Brad. (2011). "Framing Issues for Public Deliberation," YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ahqj-MTcQi8>

*SCHUMAN, Sandy ed. (2005) *The IAF Handbook of Group Facilitation: Best Practices from the Leading Organization in Facilitation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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¹Paraphrased from Nancy H. Rogers, *One Idea for Ameliorating Polarization: Reviving Conversations About an American Spirit*, 2018 *J. of Disp. Resol.* 28, 29-35; Susan Carpenter & W.J.D. Kennedy, *Managing Public Disputes: A Practical Guide for Professionals in Government, Business, and Citizens' Groups* 204 (1988);

²Rogers, *supra*, n. 1; 35-43; William Ury, *Getting to Peace: Transforming Conflict at Home, at Work, and in the World* 16 (1999); Mary B. Anderson & Marshall Wallace, *Opting Out of War: Strategies to Prevent Violent Conflict* 18-31 (2013); Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* 161-62 (2013).

³<https://www.dispatch.com/opinion/20190310/editorial-columbus-way-is-due-for-makeover>; <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20190216/columbus-way-has-benefited-city-but-what-about-black-community>.

⁴<https://www.fredrogers.org/parents/special-challenges/tragic-events.php>.

⁵Amanda Trejos, *Ice Bucket Challenge: 5 Things You Should Know*, USA Today, Nov. 19, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/07/03/ice-bucket-challenge-5-things-you-should-know/448006001/>.

⁶Lisa Respers France, *Drake's official 'In My Feelings' video a tribute to #InMyFeelingsChallenge*, CNN, Dec. 2, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/03/entertainment/drake-in-feelings-video/index.html>.

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