

Moderator's Guide

Youth: The Real Future of the South **Making Choices for Your Community**



What should your community do to strengthen and capture the vision, passion and talents of youth? This Moderator's Guide is designed to help you lead a community forum to help choose a path to the future for your community. The purpose of the forum and the supporting materials is not to advocate a specific solution or point of view. Rather, it is intended to inspire thoughtful examination of differing points of view and a movement towards common ground around which the community can plan for its future.

Equipment/Supplies Needed

- *Youth: The Real Future of the South* Participants' Discussion Guide for each participant
- A Post-Forum Questionnaire for each participant
- Pencils/pens for completing the questionnaire
- Flip chart and markers
- Ground rules poster (optional)

Copies of the Participants' Discussion Guide and the Post-Forum Questionnaire can be downloaded from Southern Growth's Web site at <http://www.southern.org/forums/forums.shtml>. If you would prefer for Southern Growth to copy and mail you the materials, please let us know via the online RSVP form at http://www.southern.org/forms/forum_rsvp.shtml. We encourage you to submit the RSVP form even if you are downloading the materials so that we may list your forum and sponsors on our website and in our 2008 *Report on the Future of the South*. Please contact Paula Baker at (919) 941-5145 or pbaker@southern.org with any questions regarding forum materials.

Suggested Format for a Two-Hour Forum

Welcome (5 minutes)

Introduce yourself and tell participants about the organization(s) convening the forum. Stress the co-sponsorship if several organizations are involved.

Give a brief introduction about the importance of youth to the community's future. As the National Academy of Sciences has said, "The future well-being of the country depends on raising a generation of skilled, competent, and responsible adults."

Explain that the results of the forum will be shared with Southern leaders through the Southern Growth Policies Board, by saying something such as the following:

This booklet was prepared by the Southern Growth Policies Board. Southern Growth is a public-private partnership of 13 states, including our own. Formed by the region's governors in 1971, Southern Growth Policies Board develops and advances visionary economic development policies. It provides a forum for collaboration among a diverse cross-section of the region's governors, legislators, business and academic leaders and the economic- and community-development sectors.

Participating in this forum means that many Southern leaders will hear your views. Southern Growth plans to prepare a report on forum results that will be presented to the governors and other Southern leaders at the 2008 Conference on the Future of the South, scheduled for June 1-3, 2008 in Little Rock, Arkansas. You are also invited to attend the conference to hear what others are saying about future directions for youth development and engagement in the South.

Ground Rules (5 minutes)

Review ground rules with participants before beginning the discussion. Make clear that the forum is not a debate. Stress that there is work to do (this is not just a free flowing discussion with no purpose), and the work is to move toward making plans for the community's future. The work will be done through deliberation.

The moderator should guide the discussion yet remain neutral. Make sure that:

- ◆ Everyone understands that this is not a debate.
- ◆ Everyone is encouraged to participate.
- ◆ No one or two individuals dominate.
- ◆ Every approach is considered fairly and fully.
- ◆ An atmosphere for discussion and analysis of alternatives is maintained.
- ◆ Participants listen to each other.

The moderator should ask the group if they agree with these rules and invite them to suggest others to add to the list.

Moderators can call the Kettering Foundation at (800) 433-7834 to request a free poster that outlines these ground rules.

Personal Stake (15 minutes)

Connect the issues to people's lives and concerns by getting participants to talk about their personal experiences with the issue. This makes the issue human rather than abstract. Some questions you might ask include:

- **For young people:** How are you involved in the community now (community service, community organizations and programs, etc.) and what impact has this had on your life so far?
- **For adults:** What programs or experiences in your youth had the greatest impact on your future? If you have children or grandchildren, what are they involved in and what impact is this having on them?
- **For young people:** Describe a positive relationship that you have—or had—with an adult outside of your family. How did you meet? What did you learn or gain from the relationship?
- **For adults:** Describe a positive relationship that you have—or had—with a young person outside of your family. How did you meet? What did you learn or gain from the relationship?

Reviewing Possible Approaches (45 minutes)

The next step is to review and deliberate each approach in the Participants' Discussion Guide, one-by-one, roughly 15 minutes each. Deliberation requires weighing the "pros" and "cons" of different approaches so it is important to be sure that both are fully aired. Questions to help ensure a fair and balanced examination of each approach include:

- What makes this approach a good idea? What do you find most appealing about it?
- What are the costs or consequences associated with this approach? Is there a downside to this approach?
- How might others see this approach?
- What would someone who favors this approach be likely to say?
- If we followed this approach, what would be the effects on your life?
- How might your concerns differ if you were under the age of 18/over the age of 40? Lacked a high school education? Didn't plan to attend college?

Review of Approach One: Focus on Youth Development

Begin with an overview of the approach, such as:

As the Pew Partnership for Civic Change has emphasized, “Young people just don’t grow into active, productive citizens by themselves.” Some people say that we need to focus on creating opportunities that help youth discover their talents and passions and develop the skills and confidence they need to realize their full potential.

Initiate discussion by using the general questions outlined above or some below:

- What do you think are the biggest challenges facing young people in the community? For young people: What are the biggest challenges you are facing right now?
- What kinds of programs does your community have to help young people develop leadership skills – and other important skills they need for college and/or work? What types of young people are involved in these programs?
- Are there young people who aren’t being reached by existing programs? What are the barriers? (They don’t know about the programs? The programs aren’t “fun?” They have to work and don’t have time? Only top students are picked?)
- Do you think most young people in your community know about the youth leadership and development programs that are available?
- Does your community have a formal mentoring program that matches young people with adult mentors? What other opportunities are there for youth-adult partnerships in your community? Are there places in the community where young people and adults interact?
- Do schools in your community teach entrepreneurial skills?
- Do schools in your community incorporate community service into classroom learning?
- Are there programs in your community that are focused on strengthening families and relationships between parents and their children?

Review of Approach Two: Realize the Value of Young People

Begin with an overview of the approach, such as:

Young people have a lot to offer. Schools, government, non-profits, religious organizations, businesses, the media – and other organizations throughout the community – can benefit by creating opportunities for meaningful youth involvement and leadership. We need to involve young people in everything we do – not just in youth-serving programs.

Initiate discussion by using the general questions outlined above and/or some of the following:

- What are the biggest challenges facing the community – and how can young people help address these challenges and make the community better?
- Do you think the involvement of young people in decision making can lead to better decisions? Can you offer an example?
- How are young people involved in the community now? What kinds of leadership opportunities do young people have in the community? For example, how are young people involved in government? In decision making in the schools? In non-profit organizations? What impact are young people already having on the community?
- Do local businesses offer jobs, internships, career mentoring or involve young people in other ways?
- Is it easy for young people to find out how to get involved?

- Do you think the community is doing all it could to use young people’s skills and strengths? How could the community take better advantage of young people’s strengths?
- Do you think the leaders in your community would welcome young people’s involvement if better informed about the potential advantages? What are some reasons leaders might resist young people’s involvement? How could these barriers be overcome?
- Do you think young people are interested in getting more involved in decision making in the community? Why or why not? What can be done to facilitate their participation (i.e. timing of meetings, providing transportation)?
- Do you think young people have a *right* to be involved in community decision making? In what types of roles? Responsibilities typically accompany rights. What responsibilities do you think young people have to the community?

Review of Approach Three: Build Youth-Friendly Communities

Begin with an overview of the approach, such as:

Many communities are concerned about losing young people to jobs and other opportunities outside of the community. Some argue that we need to focus our attention on creating a quality of life in our communities that is attractive to young people, not only to keep our “homegrown” youth, but also to attract other bright young people.

Initiate discussion by using the general questions outlined above or some below:

- What do young people like about the community? What do they not like?
- “Brain drain”—in other words, young educated people leaving the community—is considered a problem in some communities. Do you consider this a problem in this community? What are the consequences of young people leaving the community?
- To young people: Do you plan to stay in the community after you finish school? Why or why not?
- What kind of jobs does the community have for teens? For recent high school graduates? For college graduates?
- Where do young people get together in the community? What is there for young people to “do”?
- Do community services for young people—like workforce training and recreation programs—meet young people’s needs? How could they be improved?
- What assets do we have in the community (natural or man-made) that we could build on to retain and attract young people?
- Do you think community organizations are doing a good job of communicating with young people—or how could they improve? Does the community have technology resources, such as school and community listserves and websites, where youth can interact with each other and receive information from local organizations and institutions? What do you think is the best way to communicate with young people in the community?

Working through tensions or conflicts (15 minutes)

Help participants see and work through the tensions or conflicts between the approaches by asking some of the following types of questions:

- What do you see as the tensions between the approaches?
- Can anyone think of something constructive that might come from the approach that is receiving so much criticism?

Moving towards a shared sense of purpose (15 minutes)

Remind people that the objective is to work toward a decision. Test to see where the group is going by asking questions such as:

- Can someone suggest areas that we seem to have in common?
- What values appear to be in conflict?
- What trade-offs are we willing (or unwilling) to accept?
- What are we willing to do as individuals or a community to solve this problem?
- Should communities focus on youth development programs, EVEN IF there is no guarantee that youth will stay in the community?
- Should communities focus on giving youth a real voice in community decision making, EVEN IF it means a risk of disrupting current “tried and true” processes?
- Should communities focus on building youth-friendly communities, EVEN IF it diverts resources from other age groups?

Ending the Forum (15 minutes)

Before ending a forum, take a few minutes to reflect on what has been accomplished. Questions like the following have been useful:

Individual Reflections

- Did you hear anything that surprised you?
- Has your thinking about the issue changed?
- Has your thinking about other people’s views changed?
- How has your perspective changed as a result of what you’ve heard in this forum?

Group Reflections

- What remains unsolved for this group?
- Can we identify any shared sense of purpose or direction?
- What trade-offs are we, or are we not, willing to make to move in a shared direction?

Next Steps

- What do we still need to talk about?
- How can we use what we learned about ourselves in this forum?
- Do we want to meet again?

Post-Forum Questionnaire (5 minutes)

Distribute the Post-Forum Questionnaire and ask participants to respond before leaving the forum. Collect the Post-Forum Questionnaires. Please complete the Moderator Summary Sheet while the forum participants are completing the questionnaires or you may fill out the Moderator Summary Sheet online at http://www.southern.org/forms/forum_mod_summary.shtml. Please return the Post-Forum Questionnaires and Moderator’s Summary Sheet to:

Paula Baker
Southern Growth Policies Board
P.O. Box 12293
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Your response by March 3, 2008, will help ensure that your community’s feedback is included in Southern Growth’s research and 2008 *Report on the Future of the South*.

