

Moderator's Guide

The Road to Recovery Making Choices for Your Community

What should your community do to respond to current economic challenges, while at the same time positioning itself for success in the future? 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

- ▶ *The Road to Recovery* Participants' Discussion Guide for each participant
- ▶ A Post-Forum Questionnaire for each participant
- ▶ A Forum Attendance Sheet
- ▶ Pencils/pens for completing the questionnaire
- ▶ Flip chart and markers

Free copies of the Participants' Discussion Guide, the Post-Forum Questionnaire and the Forum Attendance Sheet can be obtained from the Southern Growth Policies Board. The materials can be downloaded and copied from Southern Growth's Web site, at <http://www.southern.org/forums/forums.html>. 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.html. We encourage you to go online and fill out the RSVP form even if you are downloading the materials so that we know of your plans and can recognize your organization and forum date on our website. Please make plans to hold your forum in time to send the results to Southern Growth by April 1, 2010. Feel free to contact Paula Baker at (919) 941-5145 or pbaker@southern.org with any questions regarding forum materials.

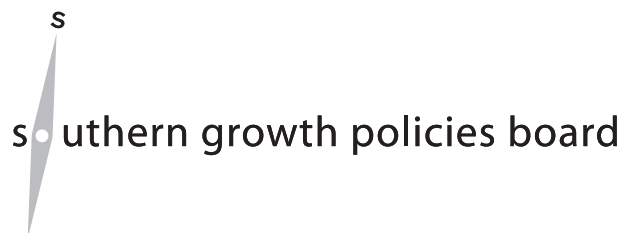
Suggested Format for a Two-Hour Forum

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 that emphasizes the importance of making decisions now that can help position your community for success when the current economic downturn ends.

As a columnist at *Fortune* magazine recently said, "It's hard to be upbeat in a recession, but it truly is an opportunity." "Marathoners and Tour de France racers will tell you that a race's hardest parts, the uphill stages, are where the lead changes hands," he explained. "That's where we are. When this recession ends, when the road levels off and the world seems full of promise once more, your position in the competitive pack will depend on how skillfully you manage right now."



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 in the summer of 2010.

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.

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:

- ▶ How has the economic downturn affected you at work? For example, have you or has someone in your family lost their job? Are you feeling less secure at work? Do you expect to go without a raise this year? Is the place you work suffering from a loss in sales or other problems?
- ▶ How has the economic downturn affected you at home? For example, have you cut back on spending or made or considered other changes in your lifestyle?
- ▶ How has the economic downturn affected the community? For example, have you noticed any businesses closing? Have neighbors lost their jobs? Are more houses up for sale than usual? Are people moving out of the community to get work elsewhere?

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?



Review of Approach One: Wait it Out

Begin with an overview of the approach, such as:

This downturn is not much different than those of the past, some say. Things will eventually turn around if we just wait it out. There's not much that we can do locally to affect global economic trends anyway. Help from the federal and state government, along with cutbacks where necessary, are what we need to get us over this rough patch.

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

- ▶ Are you aware of any cutbacks in government services due to a lack of available funding? For example, are classrooms more crowded due to cutting back the number of teachers? Have planned infrastructure projects had to be postponed? Have library hours been reduced? Are these cutbacks ones that you could live with if they continued in the long-term, or do you think that would be a negative for the community? What other cutbacks, if any, might you see as being necessary or appropriate due to the economic downturn?
- ▶ What kinds of services are available to help people bridge the gap until the economy picks up? How do you think we can help people who are struggling without creating more problems for local governments that may already be financially strapped? What kinds of actions can people take themselves to tide themselves over?
- ▶ Do you know if your community has any experiences in working with other nearby communities to deliver services? Do you see any barriers or challenges to cooperation between communities in your region?
- ▶ Do you know if the local government has received any stimulus money from the federal and/or state government? If so, do you know how these funds are being used?

Review of Approach Two: Build on What We've Got

Begin with an overview of the approach, such as:

We need to play to our strengths by looking at our community's current assets and finding ways to strengthen them in order to build wealth in our community. We can do a lot to become more self-sufficient.

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

- ▶ What assets or strengths do we have in the community that we could build on to strengthen our economy?
- ▶ How often do you shop in the community compared with outside the community? What types of goods and services do you currently purchase from outside the community? Of the goods and services you purchase inside the community, what percentage would you say are from locally-owned businesses?
- ▶ How would you describe the community in terms of its support for existing businesses? For example, is there a directory of locally-owned businesses and/or a buy-local campaign? Are there classes or support programs to help businesses learn how to expand their markets or cope with financial problems? How might the community be more supportive? How knowledgeable do you think businesses in the community are about help that is available to them?
- ▶ To what extent are businesses in the community already involved in exporting? Are both large and small firms active in trade? Does the community have any success stories that might serve as an example to others?

Review of Approach Three: Create New Strengths

Begin with an overview of the approach, such as:

Traditional industries such as manufacturing have been hit hard in this recession and many think they won't be coming back as before. We need to look at new high growth industries, such as green businesses and health care to build a strong economy in the future.

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

- ▶ What about this community would make it attractive to high-growth industries?
- ▶ Does the community have the infrastructure needed by high-growth industries? How might you address any weaknesses in this area?
- ▶ Does the community's workforce have the skills needed by high-growth industries? How might you address any weaknesses in this area?
- ▶ How would you describe the community in terms of its support system for new businesses? Are there business incubators, networking opportunities, and assistance programs? How might the community be more supportive?

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?

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?
- ▶ What might you personally be able and willing to do to help take action on this issue in the community?

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 in this forum?
- ▶ What is one step that we could take in the next 60 days to take action on this issue in the community?
- ▶ Do we want to meet again?
- ▶ Who else do we need to get involved in this discussion?

Post-Forum Questionnaire (5 minutes)

Distribute the Post-Forum Questionnaire and ask participants to respond before leaving the forum. Please collect the Post-Forum questionnaires and return them, along with the Forum Attendance Sheet to:

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

Please complete and return a *Moderator Summary Sheet* at the same time, or fill out the Summary Sheet online at http://www.southern.org/forms/forum_mod_summary.html. Your response by April 1, 2010 will help ensure that your community's feedback is included in Southern Growth's research and *2010 Report on the Future of the South*.