

INCLUSION AROUND THE CYCLE

Applying strategies of sufficient inclusion
throughout the cycle of deliberative inquiry

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CENTER FOR
PUBLIC DELIBERATION
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Key Summary of Findings

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PUBLIC DELIBERATION
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About the Center

The Colorado State University Center for Public Deliberation (CPD) serves as an impartial resource to the northern Colorado community. Working with students trained in small group facilitation, the CPD assists local government, school boards, and community organizations by researching issues and developing useful background material, and then designs, facilitates, and reports on innovative public events. The interpretations and conclusions contained in this publication have been produced by CPD associates without the input of partner organizations to maintain impartiality.

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Introduction

Inclusion and Deliberation

A key criticism of deliberative public engagement focuses on issues of exclusion during public forums.¹ What makes this criticism so difficult to address throughout the process is the fact that practitioners must account for both external and internal exclusion.²

External exclusion is the idea that certain voices are not actually present during the conversation (e.g. they did not hear about the forum, could not attend due to transportation constraints, etc.).

Internal exclusion is the less noticed dismissal of non-dominant individuals that are in attendance.³ With internal exclusion certain individuals may not feel comfortable speaking up during the process, or may not be taken seriously (e.g. a group of experienced business owners and managers may dismiss ideas presented by a young undergraduate student).⁴

Since this criticism goes beyond ensuring that there are diverse voices present during the forum, operationalizing how to address exclusion is challenging. Using the framework of Carcasson and Sprain's deliberative cycle,⁵ I argue that it is imperative that practitioners consider strategies during each part of the cycle—before, during, and after events—as they work towards ensuring sufficient inclusion of broad citizen identities and perspectives in a public process.

Sufficient Inclusion is inclusivity that is reachable, significant in thinking about broad citizen identities, and acts as an expectation of inclusion in deliberative processes.

The cycle of deliberative inquiry (page 5) thus acts as an operational model for deliberative practitioners, focusing on deliberative issue analysis, convening, facilitation, reporting, and

¹ Tina Nabatchi, "An Introduction to Deliberative Civic Engagement," in *Democracy in Motion: Evaluating the Practice and Impact of Deliberative Civic Engagement*, ed. Tina Nabatchi et al. (Kettering Foundation, 2012); Lynn M. Sanders, "Against Deliberation," *Political Theory* 25, no. 3 (1997): 347–76; Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Iris Marion Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy," *Political Theory* 29, no. 5 (2001): 670–90; Jennifer C. Green, "Challenges in Practicing Deliberative Democratic Evaluation," in *Evaluation as a Democratic Process: Promoting Inclusion, Dialogue, and Deliberation*, ed. Katherine E. Ryan and Lizanne DeStefano (Jossey-Bass Inc., 2000).

² Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*.

³ *Ibid.*, 55.

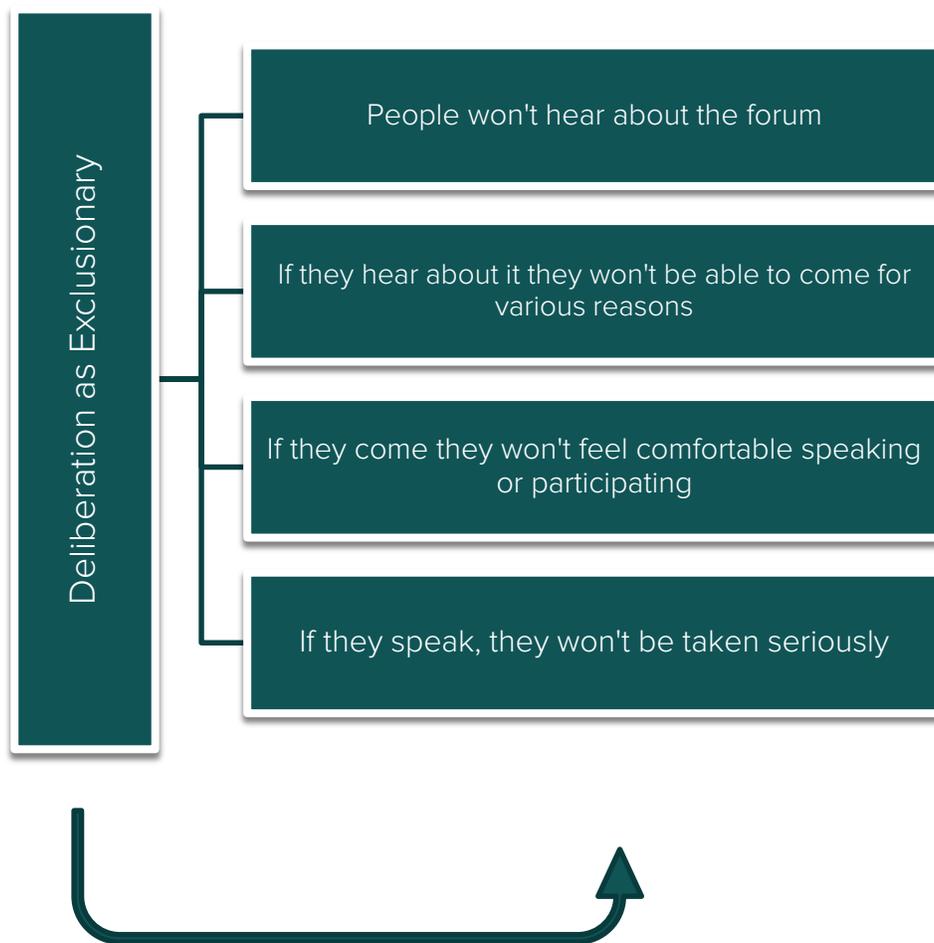
⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Martin Carcasson and Leah Sprain, "Beyond Problem Solving: Reconceptualizing the Work of Public Deliberation as Deliberative Inquiry," *Communication Theory* 26, no. 1 (2015): 41–63.

community action.⁶ In general, the purpose of this guide is to provide deliberative practitioners and other organizations with some strategies on how to run more inclusive engagement processes.

Common critiques

As issues of diversity in the United States continue to make news headlines and fill social media timelines, work on diversity within deliberation is essential for bridging divides and ensuring productive conversations during public engagement. We live in a diverse society and it is important for deliberative scholars and practitioners to be cognizant of this fact throughout—before, during, and after—deliberative processes. However, in terms of sufficient inclusion, deliberation has been critiqued for the following four reasons...⁷



⁶ Ibid.

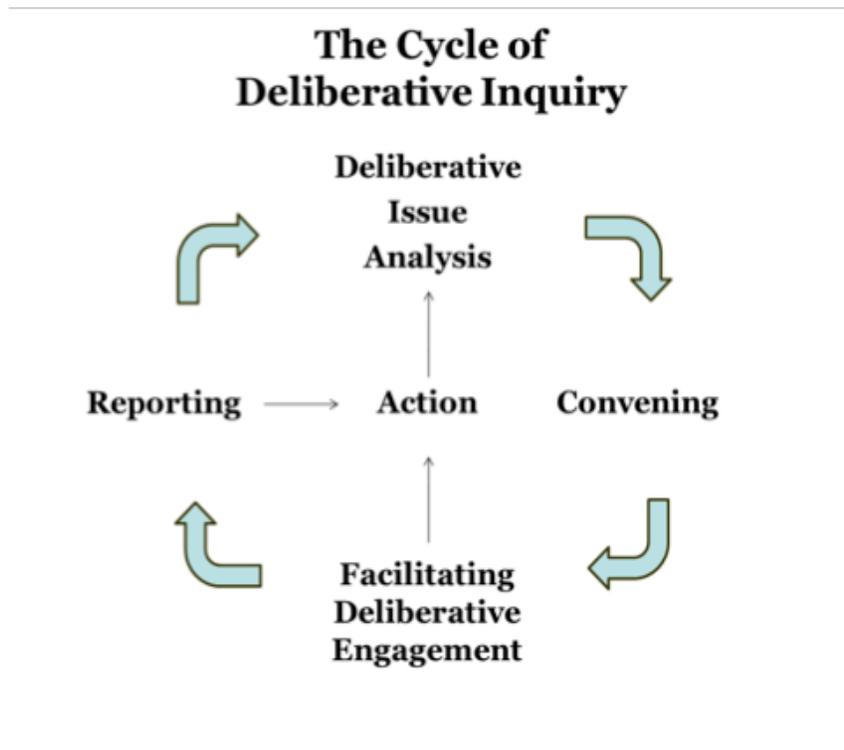
⁷ Sanders, "Against Deliberation."

An unreachable ideal

Though many have critiqued deliberation for being exclusionary, it is important to note that there is no way to ensure complete inclusivity of all voices during deliberations. A deliberative discussion should aim to make the experience at the table be inclusive of the perspectives represented in the room, through the survey data, and from the community at large. However, with a vast number of varying perspectives within a community, it is unrealistic to think that any public conversation will be “fully” inclusive. Thus, this document aims to present strategies for practitioners to work towards “sufficient” inclusion. Deliberative practitioners should not allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good in public processes. Though scholars and practitioners should strive for a perfectly inclusive forum, ensuring sufficient inclusion works to address issues of exclusion while accounting for an unreachable ideal of perfection.

The Cycle of Deliberative Inquiry

The cycle of deliberative inquiry is a process model for deliberative public engagement introduced by Martín Carcasson and Leah Sprain in 2015.⁸ According to Carcasson and Sprain, “Rather than attempting to solve wicked problems, communities need better processes for discovering, understanding and managing the tensions and paradoxes inherent within systemic, value-laden problems.”⁹



⁸ Carcasson and Sprain, “Beyond Problem Solving.”

⁹ Ibid., 41.

The deliberative cycle is a five stage model designed to improve the quality of public engagement. It is made up of:

1. Deliberative issue analysis
2. Convening
3. Facilitating deliberative engagement
4. Reporting
5. Action

The combination of these five stages provides citizens with the opportunity to react to materials framed for deliberation, and work through various opinions and tensions surrounding a public issue, and *eventually* move towards community action.¹⁰

Though the action is ultimately important for any community, it is important to note that action is not always the goal of the deliberative cycle. In order to reach an understanding of productive action practitioners may need to go around the cycle a few times to sufficiently grasp what course of action is appropriate. Carcasson and Sprain note the importance of the cyclical nature of the first four stages of the cycle with the assertion, “The goal for deliberative practitioners is to improve the quality of discourse concerning the issue with each trip around the cycle, so when the move to action is endeavored decisions are improved and wicked problems are managed better.”¹¹ Because this model is designed so that practitioners can revisit each stage multiple times when exploring an issue, it is imperative that they consider whether or not the process in its entirety is sufficiently inclusive before encouraging community action.

The following pages of this guide review each stage of the cycle and provide general tips for inclusion. For more details on these suggestions see this document’s corresponding paper.

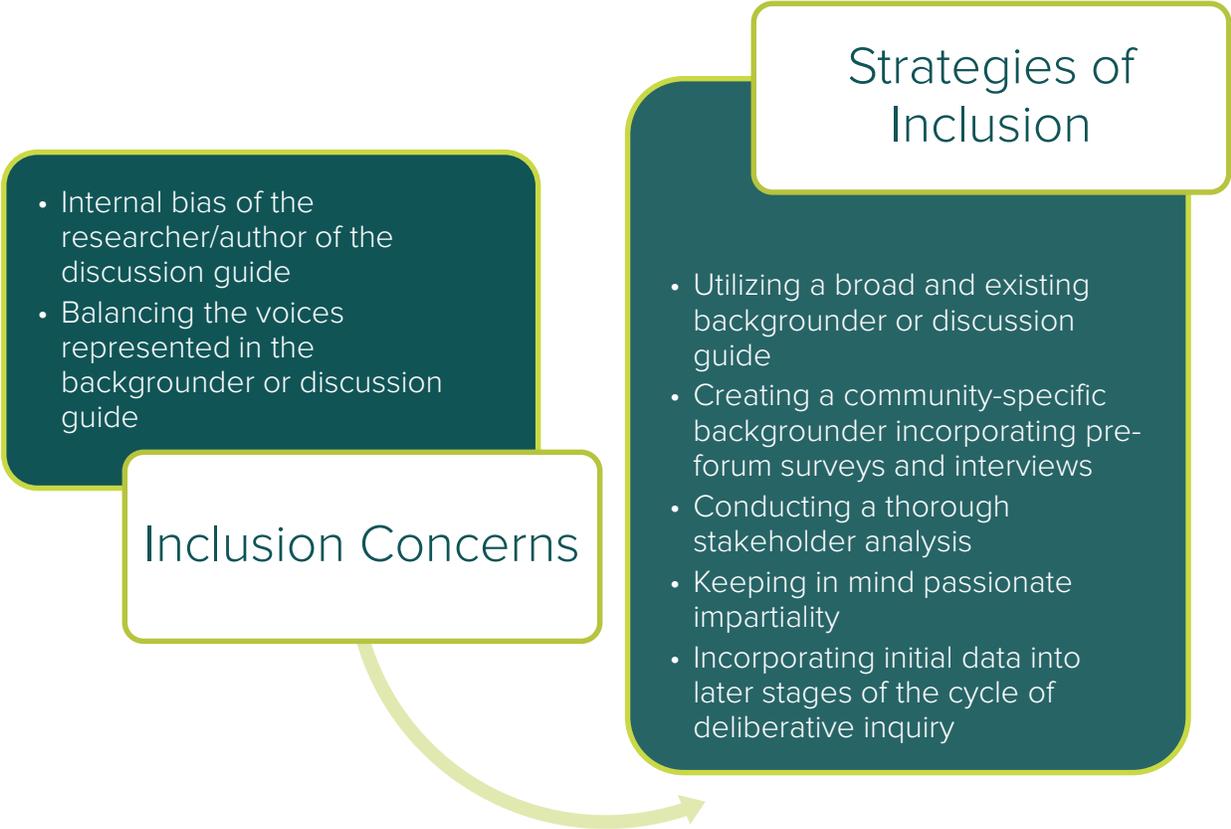
¹⁰ Carcasson and Sprain, “Beyond Problem Solving.”

¹¹ Ibid., 52.

Deliberative Issue Analysis

The main goal of deliberative issue analysis is to map out a topic and its stakeholders to provide participants with materials to help them consider multiple perspectives and tensions.¹²

Issue analysis involves researching issues, positions, and community voices from a holistic perspective to better understand the issue and ultimately provide the community with material to structure productive deliberation. Issue analysis works to bring together expert and public information to seek out a broad range of potential collaborative actions rather than simply rely on expert testimony. The mix between expert and public opinion helps address a broad range of underlying values and tensions, while accounting for credible information. This mix ultimately works to gather and then frame background information in a way that strengthens the democratic process.¹³ One way of bringing this democratically framed information together is through the use of a “backgrounder” or “discussion guide.”



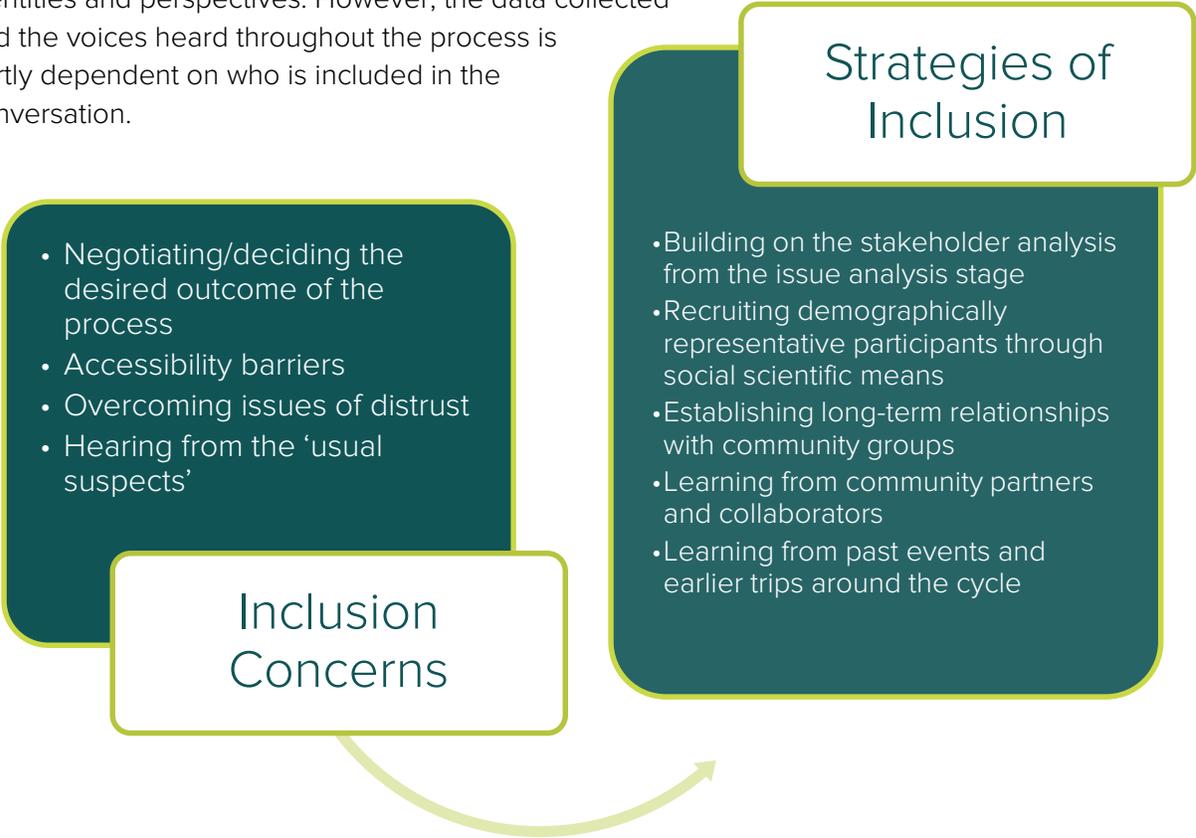
¹² Carcasson and Sprain, “Beyond Problem Solving.”

¹³ William Friedman, “Reframing ‘Framing’” (Public Agenda, February 6, 2013), <https://www.publicagenda.org/media/reframing-framing>.

Convening

“An important aspect of deliberative engagement and addressing wicked problems is the need to engage broad audiences, particularly going beyond the usual suspects and empowering previously disengaged audiences.”¹⁴

Since convening involves getting community members to an event, this stage of the cycle is crucial in addressing issues of external exclusion.¹⁵ Generating a well-developed, representative sample of participants reflects a key challenge associated with overcoming external exclusion. While exploring challenges of deliberative democracy, Green recognizes that the absence of significant stakeholders is a major hindrance of promoting an inclusive dialogue.¹⁶ As a perfect example of the consequences associated with external exclusion, Green notes, “voices that are not present cannot speak, even if an open microphone is available. And voices that do not speak are not heard.”¹⁷ In a perfect world deliberative processes would be sufficiently inclusive of community identities and perspectives. However, the data collected and the voices heard throughout the process is partly dependent on who is included in the conversation.



¹⁴ Carcasson and Sprain, “Beyond Problem Solving.”
¹⁵ Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*.
¹⁶ Green, “Challenges in Practicing Deliberative Democratic Evaluation.”
¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

Facilitating Deliberative Engagement

The facilitating deliberative engagement stage of the cycle goes beyond the guiding of a small group conversation. Though facilitation is a key aspect of this part of the cycle, facilitating engagement ultimately begins in the process design phase and includes a variety of components. According to Carcasson and Sprain key pieces of this phase feature, “deliberatively framed goals and background material, ground rules, small groups with trained facilitators, note takers, and ample time.”¹⁸ These features of facilitating engagement requires practitioners and facilitators to think about the diversity that will be at each table and how to make the small group conversations as inclusive as possible.

Ultimately, if the table is not representative of the room, the survey data, or the community at large, it is important for the facilitator to encourage the group to think about the broader community, thereby working toward sufficient inclusion.



¹⁸ Carcasson and Sprain, “Beyond Problem Solving,” 51.

Reporting

After the facilitation stage of the cycle, the fourth stage involves practitioners generating a report of the notes, surveys, and other findings from the deliberative process thus far.

“Reports from deliberative forums provide a competing source of information to advocacy organizations, technical experts, and opinion polls.”¹⁹

Though reports can provide broad information to a series of organizations, they are also a tool for providing community partners with details about why groups hold certain positions on an issue.²⁰ Many reports focus on the following sections: key themes/findings, process information, participant demographics, areas of common ground, participant quotes, survey statistics, an overview of deliberation, changes in viewpoints, background information about the topic, and tradeoffs.²¹ Even though these sections are all important to the process, they reflect a broad range of information that could benefit from more depth to enhance the inclusion of overlooked or minority voices. Since the research on how to make reporting more inclusive is limited, there are some concerns that deliberative practitioners must think through.

- Internal bias of the researcher
- Deciding what information is included in the report

Inclusion Concerns

Strategies of Inclusion

- Including key aspects of the forum in the report (purpose, review of the issue, when and where the forum was held, sponsors or collaborators, key themes, next steps)
- Recognizing the quality of the process
- Building trust through transparency and follow-up after public events
- Have multiple report writers
- Check in with participants after the forum to make sure their perspective was accurately captured
- Contact those whose voices were missing from the report
- Learn and grow each time around the cycle

¹⁹ Carcasson and Sprain, “Beyond Problem Solving.”

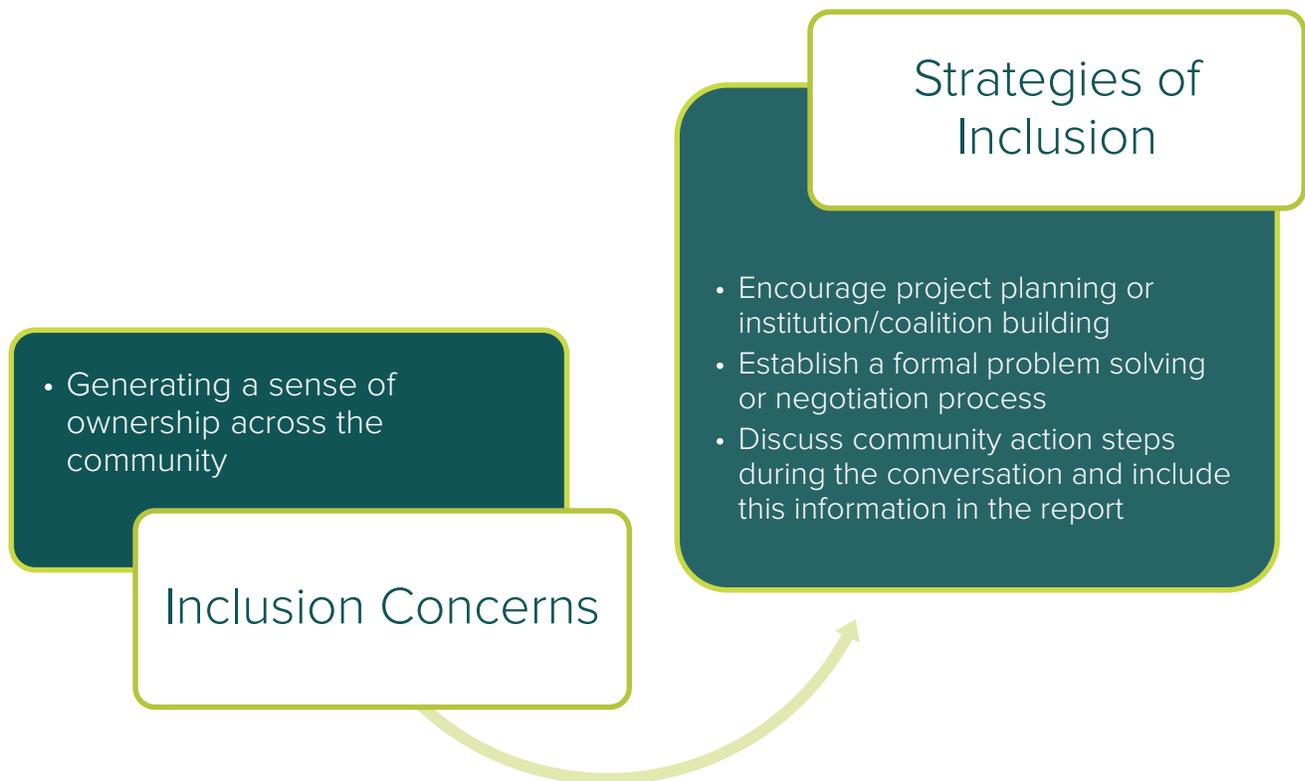
²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Martin Carcasson, “Reporting on Deliberative Forums: Current Practices and Future Developments” (Kettering Foundation, August 15, 2011).

Action

“Collaborative action is placed in the middle of the cycle because it is an important consequence of [deliberative inquiry].”²²

Carcasson and Sprain explain that action likely does not occur each time around the cycle, rather it is a result of acquiring enough information from necessary stakeholders and talking through tensions around an issue before attempting to manage wicked problems.²³ Collaboration is a particularly important aspect of this stage of the cycle. As Straus notes, “The power of collaboration comes from inclusion, not exclusion.”²⁴ For this reason, sufficient inclusion while moving to action is key in motivating people to collaborate and work towards a solution. Though action is an important step in addressing wicked problems, the participation of so many different community members can make inclusion particularly difficult at this stage of the cycle.



²² Carcasson and Sprain, “Beyond Problem Solving,” 52.

²³ Carcasson and Sprain, “Beyond Problem Solving.”

²⁴ David Straus, *How to Make Collaboration Work: Powerful Ways to Build Consensus, Solve Problems, and Make Decisions* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2002), 39.

Deliberative Redundancy as a Failsafe

Although each stage of the deliberative cycle is described independently, many stages intersect and offer each other a failsafe in terms of inclusion. In engineering, the term “redundancy” refers to a model “in which there are one active and one standby service unit (SU). The active SU operates normally and the standby is ready to assume the active role should the active SU fail.”²⁵

Therefore, “deliberative redundancy” enables later stages of the deliberative cycle to act as standby service units, or a failsafe, for previous stages in case pieces of inclusive planning are overlooked.

Since sufficient inclusion is an expectation, deliberative redundancy allows practitioners to catch any oversights that occurred early in the process and make sure they are addressed later on.

Perhaps the ultimate source of deliberative redundancy stems from the cyclical nature of the deliberative process. After all, the cycle of deliberation is a *cycle*, each stage can be visited again and again with redundancy in mind to work towards sufficient inclusion.

While making corrections at later stages through redundancy is necessary, it should be noted that the need for deliberative redundancy is not ideal. Ideally, each stage of the cycle would reach sufficient inclusion through deliberative synergy, or the ability for each stage to build upon each other to ensure inclusion across the cycle. Synergy allows for the process to broaden inclusion, rather than fixing earlier mistakes of exclusion. If practitioners consider a broad range of citizen voices during issue analysis, convening, facilitation, and reporting, the community is more likely to reach, and even surpass, sufficient inclusion.

Case Study: Parking at CSU

For example, when the CPD was holding forums on parking at Colorado State University, it was uncovered in the reporting stage that the practitioners overlooked a key stakeholder, retirees.

Ideally, this realization would have emerged in the deliberative issue analysis stage and steps could have been taken to include retirees at each step. For instance, if the CPD planners realized this oversight in issue analysis and the backgrounder, they could have been more intentional in inviting retirees during convening.

In case there was still a lack of representation, facilitators could have been prepped to encourage participants to think from the perspective of retirees, or simply bring in the empty chair if no retirees were in a small group. Though it would be best to have those personal experiences and opinions come straight from a community member, redundant thinking at each state of the cycle can at least add perspective that may otherwise be lost in the conversation.

Considering retirees were overlooked during issue analysis, convening, and facilitation, the report allowed the CPD to recognize this mistake and encourage inclusion of retirees in future trips around the cycle.

²⁵ Y. Lee, “Availability Analysis of Redundancy Model with Generally Distributed Repair Time, Imperfect Switchover, and Interrupted Repair,” *Electronics Letters* 52, no. 22 (October 27, 2016): 17–18.

Beyond this Guide

Though many of the tips throughout this document discussed deliberative public engagement in the context of deliberative practitioners, many groups and organizations could benefit from this information. The tips laid out in this project would be great to bring into discussions run by municipalities, universities, non-profit organizations, or even business meetings. Even community leaders and authority figures who are not officially associated with local government could utilize this information to run inclusive forums in their neighborhoods. In addition, business owners or managers may be interested in developing inclusive forums to work through issues in their organization or gauge how their employees feel about certain policies in the workplace. In general, any group that aims to hold an inclusive conversation could utilize some of the strategies previously described.

Final thought

While total inclusion is an important goal, it is important to note deliberative practitioners will never be able to create a perfectly inclusive forum. Despite the impossibility of perfection, it is important to strive for at least sufficient inclusion, a form of inclusion that is expected to improve with every trip around the cycle. With careful attention to deliberative redundancy at each stage of the cycle of deliberation, deliberative practitioners can address challenges of inclusion while accounting for an unreachable ideal of perfection.