Good discussion materials help people explore a complex, public issue from a wide range of views, and find solutions that they can agree to act on and support. Discussion materials don’t have to provide all the answers; instead, they provide a framework and a starting place for a deep, fair discussion where every voice can be heard.

Keep in mind that this is an art, not a science. As you write, think about your audience. Don’t overestimate what people know, but don’t underestimate their intelligence. Trust the public, and trust the process.

The step-by-step instructions provided here mirror the order that many discussion guides follow. They are designed to help the writing team move through a series of meetings and tasks to produce the discussion materials.

**Getting started**

- Form a small, diverse committee to develop your discussion guide. Look for people who come from different walks of life and different racial and ethnic groups. You need people on your team who see the issue from different points of view. You will need at least one skilled writer. You will also need people who are willing to do some research and who can look at an issue from several angles. They don’t need to be experts on the topic; in fact, it’s more important that they are able to relate to the viewpoints of everyday people.

- To get ready to do this work, read pages 13-18 in *Organizing Community-wide Dialogue for Action and Change*, available on our web site at [www.studycircles.org](http://www.studycircles.org).

- Please review some of the discussion guides on our web site. This will help you understand a tried-and-true format. You will see how each session is designed to build on the one before it. Feel free to adapt and/or borrow from these guides. You may even find one that you can use, with only a few changes.

- In this toolkit, you will find templates for sessions one through four. This is the “formula” we use for *Everyday Democracy* discussion guides. Using these templates will make your work easier.

- Text in boxes (like this) is **standard language** that you can use, as is, or adapt to suit your needs.

- We recommend that you allow two hours per session. Be sure to think about how much time people will need to complete each part of the session.

- It’s a good idea to include some tips for the facilitators. Please see samples in *Everyday Democracy* discussion guides ([www.studycircles.org](http://www.studycircles.org)).
Finally, before you publish your guide, test it with people from different parts of the community who hold different views on the subject.

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Guiding principles

Your discussion guide should ...
- give people a sense that their voice matters.
- connect personal experience to public issues.
- help people understand the power of collective thinking and collaborative work.
- welcome all points of view.
- acknowledge and embrace cultural differences.
- help build trust.
- encourage people to analyze the values and assumptions that underlie their views.
- help people uncover common ground and find better solutions.
- help people move from dialogue to action.

Characteristics of effective discussion guides

An effective discussion guide ...
- addresses a current issue with broad public appeal.
- provides a starting place for a safe and open discussion.
- presents many different points of view about the issue, without promoting any particular point of view or solution.
- represents widely held views of citizens and experts.
- is easy for people from all walks of life to use.
- is brief and uses plain, jargon-free language. Quotes or viewpoints should sound like something people might actually say.
- states each viewpoint clearly, in the “voice” of a person who holds that view.
- helps people learn about the issue.
- helps people explore areas of disagreement.
- may include sample action ideas.
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PART 1 – GETTING STARTED

How will we define and describe our issue?

Standard framework for a discussion guide

Tips for doing research
**Exercise**
This exercise is designed to identify and clarify the issue that your community needs to address. Have this discussion *before* you begin to develop your discussion guide.

**How will we define and describe our issue?**

Often, people have a broad topic in mind. They say: “We need to talk about education.” Or, “We need to talk about community-police relations.” Or, “We need to talk about crime.” But a discussion about such a general topic may not go anywhere because it doesn’t get at the points where people connect to the issue in their own lives.

The challenge is to narrow and clarify the focus, within the context of the larger issue. If, for example, the broad issue is education, the question is, what is it about education that we want to focus on? It may be increasing parental involvement, or student achievement, or redistricting. Ask yourselves: What aspect of the broad issue are people here concerned about? What should we be focusing on?

**Instructions**
- Bring together a diverse group, including a writer and others who have signed up to help.
- Before the meeting, everyone should read pages 13-18 of *Organizing Community-wide Dialogue for Action and Change*.
- Have some *Everyday Democracy* discussion guides on similar topics available to use as resources.

**Define the issue**
Start with the broad topic you would like to discuss, such as “education,” “housing,” “crime,” “growth,” etc.

Ask the group to respond to the following questions:
- What is it about _____________ that worries me?
- What have I heard people saying about ___________?

Write down what people say.

**Examples:**
- The drop-out rates are high.
- High school students aren’t prepared to enter the workforce.
- Discipline in the classroom is a problem.
- Some kids don’t test well.
- Children of color and children from low-income families are falling behind.

When the list is complete:
- Look for themes, or recurring words or ideas.
- Develop a statement that captures the themes.
  
  *Example:* “Some children are not doing well in school.”

- Convert it into a question or a statement that sets a positive tone: “How can we help every student succeed?” or “Helping every student succeed.” *This is your title.*

Once you have a working title, test it by asking: Is this something we all care about?

Following the discussion, ask the writer to compose a three-to five-sentence paragraph that describes the issue.

*Example:* "We know that many of our students are not doing well. When we fail to educate our students, our whole community is affected. If we listen to each other and work together, we will have a better chance of finding solutions that help young people do their best in school."

This could serve as an introductory paragraph for your discussion guide.
Standard framework for a discussion guide

A standard discussion guide has a brief introduction that sets the context for the dialogue. Typically, there are four sessions that progress from a first session on personal experience to a final session that focuses on moving to action (see below). The idea is to provide a framework for dialogue that will help participants build understanding and work together to find solutions. Each session builds on the one before it.

Each session has **three basic elements:**
- Introductory section
- The main discussion
- Wrap-up/closing questions

*Instructions*
Post the following information where everyone can see it, or keep it handy so you can refer to it as you develop your guide.

**Typical progression of study circle sessions**
- **Session 1:** Getting to know one another: What is my connection to the issue?
  - Optional element: Visioning exercise*
- **Session 2:** (Views) What is at the root of the problem? Why is this a problem in our community?
  - Optional element: Data or fact sheet
- **Session 3:** (Approaches) How can we start to solve the problem?
- **Session 4:** Moving from dialogue to action: What can we do?
  - Community assets brainstorm*

*These exercises can happen at various places during the discussion. This is a typical progression. Use your own discretion about where to use them.

**Alternative Frameworks for Discussion Guides:**
Some topics lend themselves to briefer discussions; some require more time. Decide how many sessions you will need to fully explore the issue you are addressing. Some communities have had success with three- or five-session discussion guides.
This advice will help you gather background information to use as a starting point for developing your discussion materials. Do the research before you start to write.

**Tips for doing research**

There are two basic kinds of research: background research and face-to-face research.

**Background Research**

- **Read widely about the topic.** Look at newspaper coverage, magazines, and journals. Read current books on the topic and do research on the Internet.

- **Look between the extremes.** Many debates on controversial issues are dominated by people at the extremes. (For example, the abortion debate is often portrayed as a stark choice between pro-life and pro-choice activists; however, the views of many Americans may fall somewhere in the middle.) Make sure to seek out moderate views as well as the ones on both ends of the argument.

- **Read other Everyday Democracy discussion guides** that address similar issues.

**Face-to-Face Research**

- **Talk with community members** about the problem or issue you are working on. Be sure to talk to people from different walks of life, so that you can capture a range of views. Every member of the committee should conduct interviews. If possible, they should talk with people whose views differ from their own.

- **Consult the "experts."** Once you have some background knowledge about the issue, interview some experts: academics, public officials, and people who work in organizations on related issues.

- **Use questions like these:**
  - What concerns you about this issue?
  - What does this problem look like in our community? How would you describe it?
  - How have you—and people like you—been affected by this problem?
  - How are others in the community affected by this issue or problem?
  - What are people saying about this issue in the community?
  - Why do you think this is a problem in our community?
  - What do you think we might do to improve the situation?
  - What other ideas have you heard about ways to tackle this issue?

- **Take good notes** on your face-to-face conversations. Write down the words people use.
PART 2 – TEMPLATES

Session 1 Template
Getting to know one another: What is my connection to the issue?

Session 2 Template (Views)
What is at the root of the problem? Why is this a problem in our community?

Session 3 Template (Approaches)
How can we start to solve the problem?

Session 4 Template
Moving from dialogue to action: What can we do?

A sample action forum agenda
Session 1 Template

Getting to know one another:
What is my connection to the issue?

Introduction
In this session, we will get to know one another, talk about what is important to us, and see how we want to work together.

Each person will answer these questions:
- Who are you? Where were you born? Where did you grow up?
- Where do you live?
- Why did you come today? What concerns you?
- What are your hopes for this effort?

Part 1: Getting Started
Setting ground rules
We need to create some ground rules to help our discussion work well. Here are some ideas.
Are there rules you would like to add?
- Listen to one another. Treat each other with respect.
- Each person gets a chance to talk.
- One person talks at a time. Don’t cut people off.
- Speak for yourself. Don’t try to speak for “your group.”
- It’s OK to disagree. If you feel hurt, say so and say why.
- Stick to the issue. No name-calling.
- If you talk about people who are not here, don’t say their names.
- Some of the things we talk about will be very personal. We will not tell these stories to other people, unless we all say it is OK.
- Help the facilitator keep things on track.

Part 2: Sharing Personal Experiences
What is my connection to the issue?
- How has this issue affected your daily life?
- How does your own experience affect your views and attitudes about this issue?
- How has the situation changed since your parents were your age?
- What has stayed the same?
- Why is it important to talk about this issue?
- What worries you the most about this issue?
- Based on the discussion so far, what have you learned from others in this group?
- What do we agree about? Where do we differ? Why?
⇒ Optional Element: “Visioning” exercise. Insert the visioning exercise on page 27, here.

Wrap-up
Our group will talk about these questions:
- What did you learn in this session?
- What stories touched you or surprised you?
- What do you hope we can accomplish together?
Session 2 Template (Views)

What is at the root of the problem?
Why is this a problem in our community?

Introduction
In Session 1, we talked about our personal connection to [this issue]. In this session, we will talk about what [this issue] looks like in our community. We will also discuss a range of views to help us explore the roots of the problem. This will help us develop action ideas in later sessions.

Part 1: Getting Started
- Review the “Introduction to the Session.”
- Review the ground rules.
  - Does everyone still agree with the list?
  - Do we need to add anything?
- Since our last meeting, has anything happened that relates to this issue that you would like to share?
- Our facilitator will post the notes from Session 1 and sum up the main ideas from that discussion. This will help us to be ready for our work today.

► Optional Element: If you have a fact sheet, use it at this point in the discussion. See page 26 for advice on creating a fact sheet.

Using a “Fact Sheet”
This “fact sheet” provides information to help us understand what [this issue] looks like in our community.

Use these questions to talk about the data:
- When you look at the information, what stands out? Why?
- Does anything surprise you? Why?
- What overall themes and trends do you see?
Part 2: Exploring (this issue)
People have different ideas about the situation. One view cannot tell the whole story. We may agree with each other on some points, and disagree on others. That is OK.

Each view stated here is in the voice of a person who thinks it is a very important idea. As you read the views, think about these questions.

- Which views come closest to your own way of thinking? Why?
- Is there a view you would like to add?
- Do some of these views surprise you?
- Is there anything that you don’t agree with?

➔ Once you have written the views, put them here. (See page 21 for exercise on Writing “Viewpoints.”)

Wrap-up
Turn to your neighbor. Discuss the following:

- How did this session go?
- What views do we agree about? What are things we disagree about?
- What themes keep coming up in our discussion?

Think about these views. See if you hear them from others in the community. Also, look and listen for ideas about what we could do to improve the situation.
Session 3 Template (Approaches)

How can we start to solve the problem?

Introduction
In Session 2, we talked about why [issue] is a problem in our community. Today we will talk about how we can start to solve the problem. The next time we meet, we will talk about specific action ideas.

Part 1: Getting Started
- Review the “Introduction to the Session.”
- Review the ground rules.
  ✓ Does everyone still agree with the list?
  ✓ Do we need to add anything?
- Since our last meeting, has anything happened that relates to the issue that you would like to share?
- Our facilitator will post the notes from Session 2 and sum up the main ideas from that discussion. This will help us to be ready for our work today.

Part 2: Approaches to Change
We’ve talked about how our community is doing. Now, we will explore some ways to improve things. What approaches will work well? What will help us deal with [this issue]?

Use these questions to think about the different approaches:
- Have we already tried any of these approaches? If so, what happened?
- Which approaches do you like best? Why?
- What other approaches can you think of?
- Which approaches address [this issue] in different types of institutions (government, businesses, schools, nonprofits, etc.)?
- What approaches won’t work? Why?

➔ Once you have written the approaches, put them here. (See page 23 for exercise on Writing “Approaches.”)
Wrap-up

- Did we agree on any approaches that could help our community make progress? If so, what are they?
- What good things are we already doing? How can we build on these?
- What else will help us make progress? What problems will we face?
- What action ideas should be recorded?

Think about our discussions, so far. What themes kept coming up? Next time, bring some ideas for how we can make progress.
Session 4 Template

Moving from dialogue to action: What can we do?

Introduction
In this session, we will move to action. First, we will look at the assets we have; next, we will brainstorm action ideas; we will then connect our action ideas with our assets; and, finally, we will set priorities for action.

Part 1: Community Assets Brainstorm
Every town or city has strengths or assets. Assets can be people, places, or organizations—whatever makes our community a better place is an asset.

“Brainstorming” is a creative way for a group to come up with lots of ideas in a short amount of time. Build on one another’s ideas. All ideas are OK. Don’t stop to discuss or judge them. The facilitator will write down every idea. Use the table here, as a guide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNITY ASSETS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use these questions to help people start the brainstorm:
- Who has talents and skills that they might offer?
- What groups in the community can help us out?
- What sources of funding do we have in our community?
- What groups do you belong to? How can they help?
- Can you think of anything else?

Part 2: Brainstorm Action Ideas
Think about the approaches. Try to come up with specific actions that fit with these approaches. How many different ideas can we come up with?

Make a list of action ideas in the following categories:
- Things that you can do on your own
- Things you can do with small groups of people
- New partnerships, collaborations, or projects
- New policies
- Institutional change
**Part 3: Connect Action Ideas with Assets**
Post list of action ideas beside the assets, and talk about which ones can be linked. Keep these connections in mind as we prioritize our action ideas.

**Part 4: Set Priorities for Action**
Look at our list of ideas for action. Now we are going to narrow it down to a few ideas to take to the action forum where people from all the discussion groups will meet to share their ideas.

These questions will help you set priorities for action:
- Which ideas are easiest to get done?
- Who would work with us on these ideas?
- Which ideas might do the most good?
- Which ideas might have a long-term impact?

As a group, choose two or three ideas that are important and doable. Then, consider the following questions:
- What would it take to make this happen?
- What community assets could we use to move this idea forward?
- What kind of support do we need to take these steps? Who else could we link up with?
- How do we begin?

Write the top two or three ideas on a flip chart labeled **Priority Action Ideas**.

**Part 5: Get Ready for the Action Forum**
The facilitator will explain the agenda for the action forum and the group will choose someone to present their top two or three ideas for action at the event. See the sample action forum agenda on page 19.

**Wrap-up**
Hold a brief discussion about the study circle.
- What have you learned in this discussion?
- Do you understand more about [the issue]? In what ways?
- How has this experience changed your thinking?
- What surprised you?
- How do you plan to stay involved and support action?
A sample action forum agenda  
(Approximately 3 hours)

1. Snacks, social time, music or poetry, and time to read action ideas from each circle, posted around the room

2. Welcome everyone and introduce the sponsors
   - Review agenda.
   - Talk about the study circle effort in the community.
   - Thank facilitators and other key volunteers.

3. Reports from the study circles
   - Ask one person from each circle to make a brief report about action ideas from their group.
   - Or, when the group is large (more than 60 people), post summaries from the circles where everyone can see them. Invite a few people to report out on their circles.

4. Overview of community assets
   - A person from the organizing group reviews key community assets. These assets will help the community move action ideas forward.

5. Moving to action
   - The master of ceremonies identifies the main ideas from all the circles.
   - People sign up for an action group or task force.
   - Action groups meet and begin their work. They also set the date for their next meeting.

6. Closing remarks
   - Closing remarks (including how the action efforts will be tracked and tied to further organizing).
   - Next steps (including plans for another round of circles, celebration, or check-in meeting).
   - Thanks to all.
PART 3 – EXERCISES

Writing “Viewpoints”
What is at the root of the problem? Why is this a problem in our community?

Writing “Approaches”
How can we start to solve the problem?
**Writing “Viewpoints”**

**What is at the root of the problem?**

**Why is this a problem in our community?**

**Definition**

"Viewpoints" in a discussion guide are opinions about what is at the root of a community problem. Each view should be expressed in the voice of a person who holds that view. (They’re not ideas about what should be done to solve the problem.)

**Instructions**

Bring together a diverse group, including a writer and others who have signed up to help. Make sure there are people who represent a variety of views.

Post the “Standard Framework for a Discussion Guide” (see page 8) on a flip chart, and explain where the “viewpoint discussion fits in—usually, the second session. Refer to Everyday Democracy discussion guides for examples of views.

**Setting the Stage – 15 minutes**

Explain that the role of discussion materials in large-scale public dialogue is to provide structure for the conversation. Make it clear that the purpose of this meeting is to explore and develop a range of viewpoints about why this problem exists. The views should represent the opinions of different kinds of people in the community who are affected by the situation.

Before you start working in small groups, ask yourselves: “Who is affected by this problem?” Make a list of the groups you identify.

**Small-group Work – 45 minutes**

Break into small groups and assign a role to each, based on a sector of the community that is affected. Example: If the topic is student achievement, the groups might be parents, students, educators, community members, minority groups, senior citizens, and public officials.

Ask each group to consider the following question: From the point of view of your group, what is at the root of the problem in our community? The task is to develop a statement that reflects the opinions of the group they represent.

**Exercise:**

This exercise will help you identify different viewpoints on the issue and generate text for your discussion guide. Views usually appear in the second session of a discussion guide. Case studies or scenarios can be added to deepen the discussion.

---

**Time – 2 hours**

**Supplies for the meeting**

- Samples of Everyday Democracy discussion guides:
  - Facing Racism in a Diverse Nation
  - Thriving Communities
  - A Community for All Generations
- Easel(s)
- Flip chart(s)
- Colored markers
- 3x5 post-it notes
For example, regarding the subject of student achievement, a teacher might say: "Some parents are not involved enough in their children's learning." And a community member might say: "Schools have different goals for different groups of students."

Ask the groups to write each of their statements on a separate post-it note.

**Large-group Work – 50 minutes**
List each group’s statements, and review them. Ask:
- Are these the kinds of things that people are saying in our community?
- Is there an important view that we have missed?

Be sure to write down any new views that come up in the general discussion.

After discussing the views, collect all the post-it notes. On a flip chart, list four to six categories that reflect the voices of different groups in the community. Sort the ideas (post- its) into these categories. Discard duplicates, or merge them. After further discussion, you may decide to move some of them into different categories.

As a group, evaluate the views in each category and narrow down the list; then, convert the ideas into one comprehensive statement.

Include the following questions in the final version of your discussion guide to help people explore the views.

- Which views come closest to your own way of thinking? Why?
- Is there a view you would like to add?
- Do some of these views surprise you?
- Is there anything that you don’t agree with?

Before you adjourn, ask if any views have been overlooked. Be sure to write them down, so the writer can refer to them.

**Wrap-up – 10 minutes**
Thank everyone. The writer will collect the notes from the meeting and develop brief viewpoint statements. Try to capture each view in one topic sentence. That is all you need to spark a good discussion.
Exercise:
This exercise will generate text on the ways to approach change on the issue you are working on. Approaches usually appear in the third session of a discussion guide.

Writing “Approaches”

How can we start to solve the problem?

Definition
“Approaches” in a discussion guide describe, broadly, where we need to start addressing the problem. This discussion is usually followed by developing concrete ideas for action.

Instructions
Bring together a diverse group, including a writer and others who have signed up to help. Make sure there are people who represent different groups. It is best if this is the same group that worked on developing the views for your discussion materials.

Refer to Everyday Democracy discussion guides for examples of approaches.

Setting the Stage – 10 minutes
Define “approach,” and explain that the purpose of the session you are writing is to help people explore a range of ways to start addressing the problem. The approaches should represent the opinions of different kinds of people in the community who are affected by the issue.

Small-group Work – 20 minutes
Divide into small groups. Each group should come up with four or five ways to improve things. Think of ways individuals, or groups, or institutions could help.

Example: Here are some broad ideas for addressing gaps in student achievement:
- We need more resources.
- We need to develop community partnerships.
- More people should be involved.
- New leadership is needed.
- We need better policies.
- We need to reach out to all families, not just those whose children are doing well.

Ask the groups to write each of their approaches on a separate post-it note.

Time – 2 hours

Supplies for the meeting
- Samples of Everyday Democracy discussion guides:
  - Facing Racism in a Diverse Nation
  - Thriving Communities
  - A Community for All Generations
- Easel(s)
- Flip chart(s)
- Colored markers
- 3x5 post-it notes
Large-group Work – 50 minutes
List each group’s approaches, and review them. Ask: Are there ideas in this list that would appeal to different kinds of people in the community?

Be sure to write down any new ideas that come up in the general discussion.

After reviewing the ideas, collect all the post-it notes. On a flip chart, list four to six categories that reflect the voices of different groups in the community. Sort the ideas (post-its) into these categories. Discard duplicates or merge them. After further discussion, you may decide to move some of them into different categories.

As a group, evaluate the approaches in each category and narrow down the list; then, convert the ideas into one comprehensive statement.

- Have any of these approaches been tried? If so, what happened?
- Which approaches do you like best? Why?
- What other approaches can you think of?
- Which approaches address [this issue] in our institutions?
- What approaches won’t work? Why?

Wrap-up – 10 minutes
- Thank everyone. The writer will collect the notes from the meeting and develop brief approach statements. Try to capture each approach in one topic sentence. That is all you need to spark a good discussion. Avoid language that conveys only traditional partisan positions.
PART 4 – OPTIONAL ELEMENTS

Making a “Fact Sheet”

A “Visioning” Exercise: What are our hopes for our community?
Making a “Fact Sheet”

**Definition**
A “fact sheet” provides hard data about how an issue is playing out in a community. Fact sheets can cover a range of information—from general to specific.

A good fact sheet paints a picture of the community and the issue, and creates a context for the discussion. It should include:

- data that describes the community as a whole.
- data that illustrates the situation or issue under discussion.
- information about what is already being done in the community to address the issue.

**Instructions**

- Get a few people together to think about what kind of information should be in your fact sheet. Be sure this group is diverse and represents many points of view. Don’t forget to include seniors and young people.
- The information should be simple, clear, easy to understand, and brief—two pages at most. Provide enough data to ground the discussion, but don’t overwhelm people with facts. Be sure the information is balanced and objective and relates directly to the issue. Use as few words as possible. Simple graphics—such as pie charts or bar graphs—are a good way to get complex information across. Always cite your sources.
- Put a variety of information in your fact sheet. Try to create a very broad picture, supported with facts. Use your imagination.—What would you like to know about this issue? What kinds of information will help people from different parts of the community understand what’s going on?

It is easy to find economic or demographic statistics. Sometimes it’s harder to find information that tells a fuller story. Ask for help at local institutions—the library, schools, government offices, the police department, and the housing authority. Use newspaper articles or official documents. And search for information in county and state databases. Remember that a lot of this information is available on the Web.

**Resist the temptation to include everything!** After you have collected all of your information and you are ready to put your fact sheet together, ask: “What is really essential to the discussion?”
A “Visioning” Exercise

What are our hopes for our community?

Definitions
A “Vision” is an image of what we hope for the future—a goal to pursue.

“Visioning” is a process you can use to identify and name the values and beliefs that represent your hopes for your community. For example, if you say, “I hope we can create a community where everyone has an opportunity to succeed,” the word that sums up this idea is opportunity.

Why it’s important to hold up a vision for our community
- Creating a vision motivates people. It gives them the energy and spirit to get the job done.
- A clear vision implies and promotes change.
- A vision that embodies cultural values and beliefs can inspire and guide the way community members treat one another.
- “You tend to move in the direction you’re looking!”

Instructions
The goal of this exercise is to come up with four or five words that describe the group’s hopes for the community.

- Label a piece of newsprint: Our Community Vision. Set it aside to use at the end of the exercise.
- Label a piece of newsprint: Ideas to Start Our Visioning Process, and list words like: Opportunity, Respect, Safety, Health, Diversity, Spirituality, and Culture. Use this list to start the exercise.

Ask the group to imagine that they are going to build a monument that stands for things they like about their community. Their job is to come up with four or five words that describe their vision of hope for the community. These words will be carved on the monument.

- Do a brainstorm. Write the ideas on the newsprint labeled Ideas to Start Our Visioning Process. (It’s OK to include words that describe the community as it is today.)

Use the following questions to help the group come up with ideas:
- What are the things that make a community a good place to live?
- What words describe the things you like about this community?
Once the brainstorm is complete, ask the group to talk about …
- what the words mean to them.
- which ideas matter most.
- how others in the community might feel about these ideas.
- words they would like to add.

Now, the task is to narrow the list to four or five top ideas.
- Ask group members to vote for their three top choices. They can do this with a show of hands, or put stickers next to the three words they prefer.

List the top four or five words on the paper labeled **Our Community Vision**.