

Organize a Community Dialogue Session

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a community dialogue session?

A community dialogue session is a way for members of the community to come together and discuss important issues.

Why organize one?

Outreach is an important part of any advocates' work and community dialogue sessions promote discussion of important issues and can clear up confusion about government programs. These events are also less time intensive than organizing a larger [community forum](#).

Who would I invite?

It is up to you whom you want to invite. You could keep the session limited to those in your circle already or open it up to others in your community who may have differing opinions but could bring new perspectives, ideas and experiences to the discussion.

How much time would this take?

Your community dialogue session could be as simple or complex as you want. It is up to you how much time and energy you want to commit.

Quick Steps for Organizing a Community Dialogue

Find a location.

For a small gathering, you may want to host the event in your home or at a local coffee shop or diner. For larger gatherings, you may want to reserve space at a library, community center, school or church.

Decide whom to invite.

It is up to you whether or not you want to limit the group to existing allies, close friends and colleagues or open it to a wider audience. Keeping the group small may allow you to have more control however your event will have a greater impact if you invite people with differing opinions.

Invite people to attend.

Being personally invited to an event always produces a larger group. The best strategy may be to send a written or e-mail invitation and then follow up with a phone call or invite individuals in person. Use posters, fliers, and online web postings if you want to generally get the word out.

Get necessary materials.

You may want to use an article, book or short video as the basis for your discussion. If so, be sure to make copies for people or send out information on how they can acquire the materials themselves.

Set up the room.

Set up the room so that everyone feels included in the discussion. Put chairs in a circle so people can properly see and hear each other. Refreshments help create a comfortable setting. You could serve light refreshments yourself or ask everyone to bring a dish or beverage to pass.

Host the community dialogue.

Gather people together and let the discussion begin. The ideal number for a group in which everyone is included in the discussion is 8–10 participants. If there are more than 14 participants, break into two groups and appoint a facilitator for the second group.

Serve food.

Make sure there are refreshments available for individuals at the meeting.

Prepare an agenda.

Go into the community dialogue session with a plan. Make sure to base the discussion around a big, overarching question that participants are there to address, such as "How can we improve TB control in our community?"

Introduction: At the beginning, give a brief introduction to this issue and make sure to thank everyone for attending. Go around the circle and ask each person to give a brief introduction, including why they are there.

Discussion: Ask a few specific questions to spark conversation. Be prepared to continue to pick up the discussion with questions if it tapers off.

Closing: At the end, make sure to thank everyone for attending and talk about ways the group may want to continue the discussion. If applicable, think of a specific action that all attendees could take before leaving the meeting, i.e. writing a letter to the editor.

Source: [RESULTS Educational Fund's Activist Milestones](#)