

# VOICE Listening Session Guide

**INSTRUCTIONS:** 1-1.5 hours needed is normal. Yet, if you only have 20-45 minutes then you can still make it work. You may not have time for #3 but it is still worth doing it. (For example you have 30 minutes before choir practice or time during a regular committee meeting, etc.) If you have any questions you can contact [voice@voice-iaf.org](mailto:voice@voice-iaf.org). Thank you.

## HOW DO WE BUILD PEOPLE POWER?

- Identify common self-interests we can only tackle collectively.
- Intentionally build relationships necessary to **motivate** participants to take more leadership in improving their communities and **sustain action**.

## WHY DO GROUP LISTENING SESSIONS?

- Identify ISSUES of common concern that are widely and deeply felt.
- Identify LEADERS who are willing and able to take action on the issues.

**WHAT DOES A LISTENING SESSION LOOK LIKE?** 1) **Size:** 8-15 people; 2) **Location:** Your home, at your institution (after service, before choir practice, small groups, etc), school, ethnic club, book group, etc. 3) **Who to Invite:** People you know! Neighbors, people you've met at your institution, workers, youth organizations, etc – people who, like yourself, might act on their values.

## SAMPLE AGENDA

**WELCOME & FRAME:** Our institution is a member of VOICE, which is 45 institutions working together throughout NOVA that has a track record of taking on and winning on tough issues like affordable housing, taking on backlogs with immigration and school. Leaders like me are doing hundreds of listening sessions this year, like this one, to determine what we will act on together as a collective.

**WHY IS THIS EFFORT IMPORTANT TO YOU?** (2 minutes or less)

**GROUP DISCUSSION.** A) Before the first person shares, ask for permission to interrupt so that you can move the session along & end on time. B) It is important that people share a brief story to illustrate their concern and/or hope. It is through stories that communities form stronger relationships and it will give you a better sense of the person.

1. **INTRODUCTIONS.** Please state your name, where you live & institution AND then ask **ONE** of the following questions (**ONE MINUTE PER PERSON**).
  - a. What brought you and your family to Northern Virginia? What keeps you here?
  - OR**
  - b. Where do/did your children go to school? What is one thing you like about it?
2. **LISTEN TO PEOPLES' CONCERNS & HOPES (2-3 MINUTES PER PERSON).** What is one specific change that would make life better for you or your family? What story can you share with us that illustrates why you care so much about that issue?
3. **DISCUSSION.** What issues did people share in common? **IF time,** Do participants have concrete ideas on how to solve problems they raised?

**END & NEXT POSSIBLE STEPS:** 1) **Broadening your Group.** Ask who else is affected that we can reach out to? Where could we visit to learn more about this issue? Ask participants if they will set up additional listening sessions. 2) **One-on-One Meeting.** Who were the strong people? Ask to meet with them to get to know them better. 3) **VOICE is Your Vehicle for Change.** Invite participants to join you at the next VOICE meeting.

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## EVALUATE YOUR SESSION:

Please fill out right after your session and share with your VOICE core team leader.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT INFO \_\_\_\_\_

INSTITUTION/GROUP \_\_\_\_\_

### Potential Leaders in Your Session:

A. Which participants stood out for their passion, creativity, leadership, or deep networks?

B. Which participants really seem like they want to do something?

Follow up individually with those people, or pass along their information to a leader in VOICE.

### Issues

A. Which concerns came up the most?

B. Which concerns elicited the most passion and anger?

C. What were the most memorable stories?