

# **Collaborative Problem-Solving: A Path to Wise and Durable Solutions**

**Building Together: Leading Collaboratively Across Differences**  
**Council on Foundations**

**May 2024**

**CONVERGENCE**



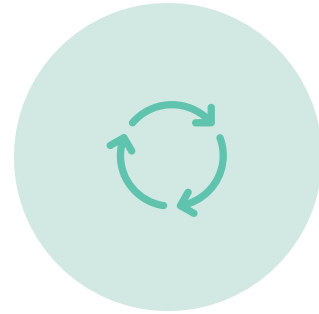
# Agenda



WELCOME AND OVERVIEW



COLLABORATIVE  
PROBLEM-SOLVING  
MINDSET



COLLABORATIVE  
PROBLEM-SOLVING  
PROCESS



CLOSING

CONVERGENCE



# Session Objectives

- ✓ Participants begin to cultivate a problem-solving mindset
- ✓ Participants understand the steps of collaborative problem-solving
- ✓ Participants have a framework for forging higher-ground solutions

# Convergence: Who We Are

## Mission

We build trust and bridge divides to solve critical issues and strengthen our democracy and society.

## Vision

We envision a vibrant society built on broad collaboration and inclusion.

## What Differentiates Us

- Our rigorous problem-solving methodology and expert facilitation
- Our neutrality
- Focus on contentious, "stuck" issues
- Frame issues in a way that brings a truly diverse group to the table
- Development of higher ground solutions that go beyond compromise
- Design projects to lead to action and impact

# Convergence Collaboratives Drive Real Change

We maximize impact through:



Changes in national, state, and local policy



Improvements in national conversation



Create unlikely alliances to move proposals to action



Changes in business practices



Catalyze funding for higher-ground solutions



Equip participants to champion collaborative approaches



Pilots & tests of public/private solutions



Ongoing changes in participant behavior



# Highlighted Examples of Convergence's Impact



Walmart and McDonald's implemented practices to support upward mobility for their workforces, including greater access to higher education, career pathways initiatives, and predictable scheduling as a result of the *Working Up Collaborative* in 2018.



The *Education Reimagined Collaborative* spun off into an independent organization in 2019 and plays a catalytic role in the learner-center education movement.



On June 30, 2022, California's Governor Newsom signed legislation establishing the Office of Healthcare Affordability, which mirrored the recommendation issued by *Convergence's California Health Reform Dialogue* in March 2020.

# Activity: Introductions

## Activity Directions

- Write your responses on post its
- Post your responses on the chart paper
- 15 minutes

## Questions

- What is your name? Where do you work? Where do you live?
- What do you hope to learn during this session?
- What is your experience with convening? What worked? What didn't work?



# Collaborative Problem-Solving Mindset

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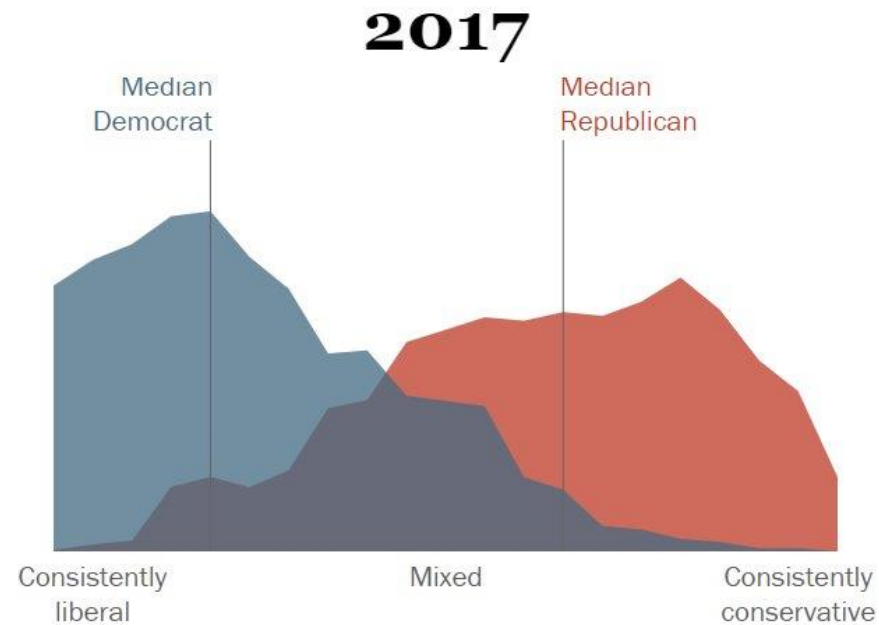
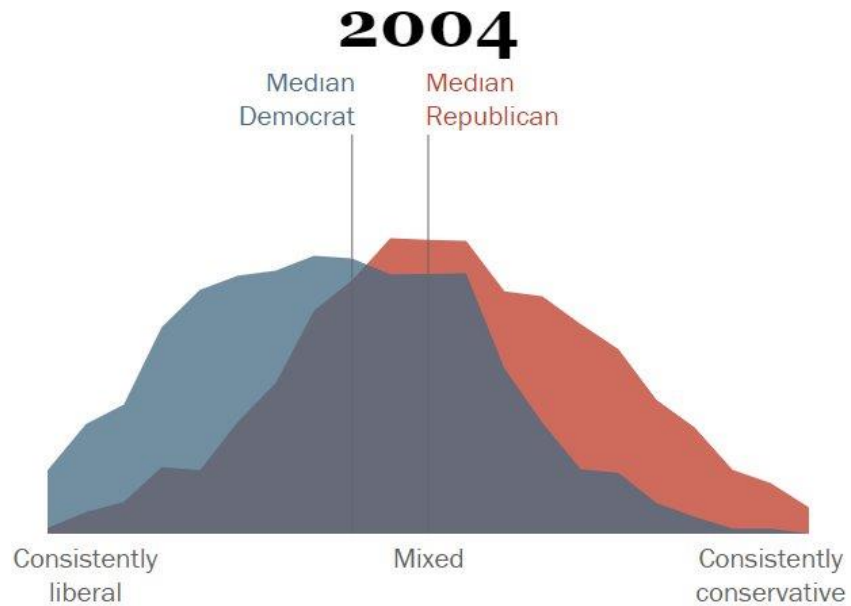




# Social and Political Divisions

More and more people are either all-liberal or all-conservative in their political positions—and so are the politicians they elect

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# Social and Political Divisions

Americans are using their political party affiliation as a source of meaning and social identity, which informs how we play, what we buy, which movies we like, and even our sense of right and wrong.

**NEW YORK POST**

## Liberals really do drink more lattes

By Alessandra Malito, Marketwatch

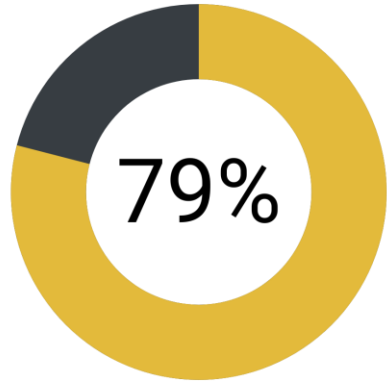
Published June 21, 2018, 11:27 a.m. ET



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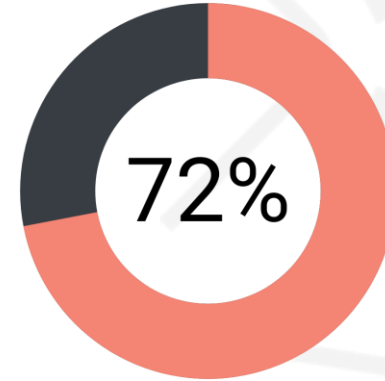


# More in Common



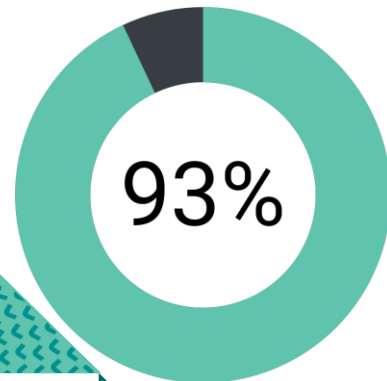
79% say, given the opportunity, they would play a part in reducing social division in America.

([Listen First Project](#))



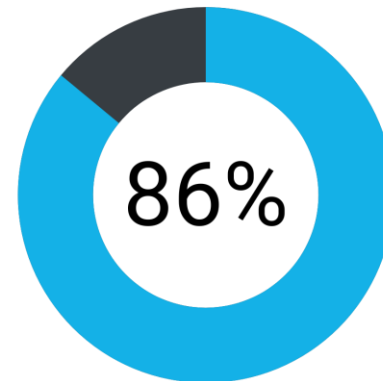
72% believe Americans have more in common than what divides us.

([Public Agenda](#))



93% of Americans say it is important to reduce divisiveness in the United States, including two-thirds who say it is very important to do so.

([Public Agenda](#))



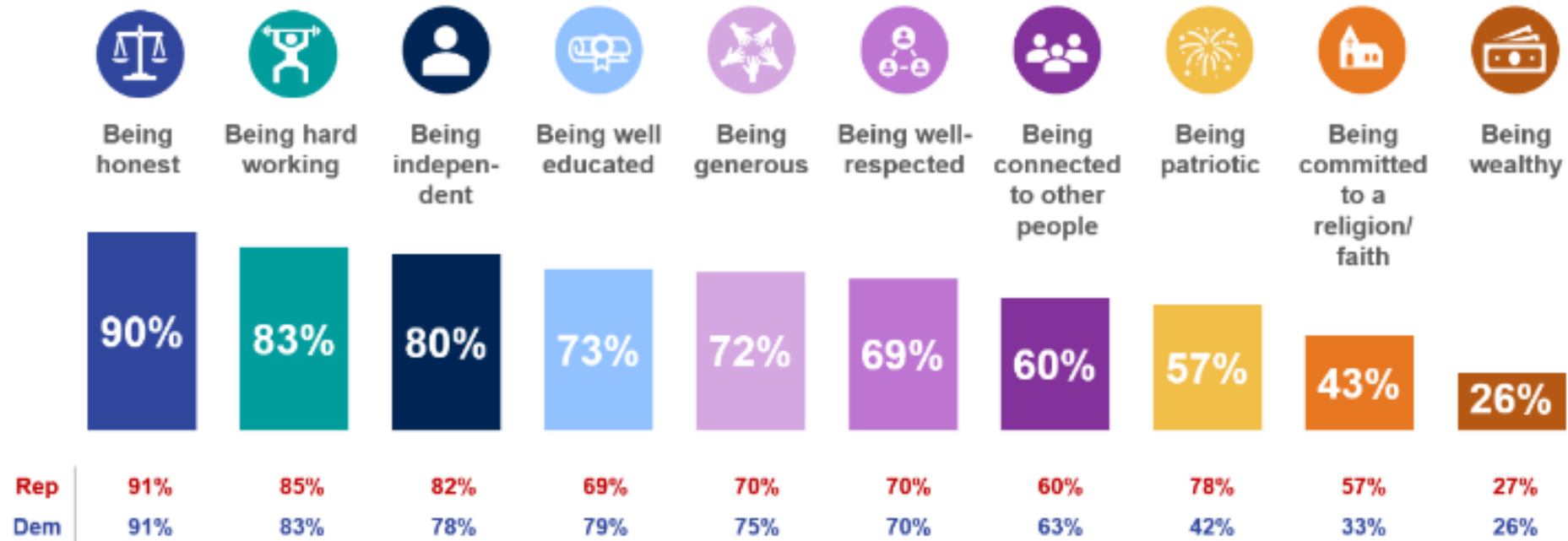
86% of Americans believe it is possible for people to disagree in a healthy way.

([Weber Shandwick](#))

# Shared Values

How important are each of the following values, if at all, for you?

*% Extremely Important/Very Important*



Source: Ipsos-FixUS Poll. September 2020

# Mindsets Are the Foundation

## Typical Mindset

- Conflict is **scary** and **dangerous**
- Assume **negative** intentions
- It is about the **truth** and who is **right**
- They are **adversaries**
- Goal is to **win**

## Problem-Solving Mindset

- Conflict is **healthy** and **important**
- Presume **positive** intent
- It is about conflict **perceptions, interpretations, and values** to be explored
- They are **joint problem-solvers**
- Goal is wise and durable **solutions**

# Problem-Solving Mindset

- Conflict can be **constructive**
- Everyone gets the **benefit of the doubt**
- **Curiosity** is the cure
- **Relationships** at the core
- Seek **higher ground**



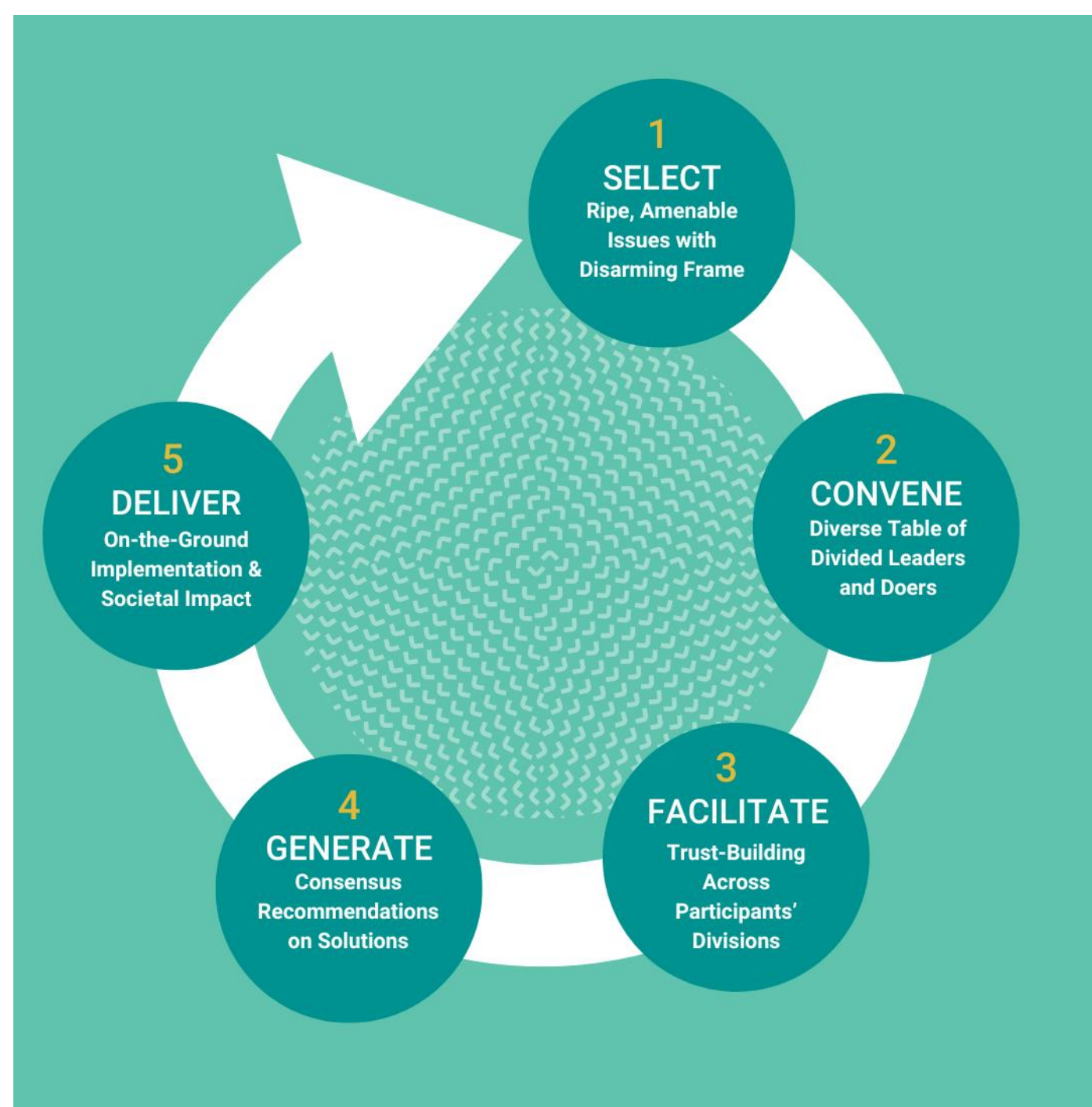


# Collaborative Problem-Solving Process

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# Collaborative Problem-Solving Process



The background of the entire image shows the silhouettes of a family—a mother, a father, and two young children—holding hands and standing on a grassy field. They are positioned against a bright, glowing sunset sky with soft clouds. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden light that silhouettes the figures. The overall mood is peaceful and supportive.

# IN THIS TOGETHER

A CROSS-PARTISAN ACTION PLAN TO SUPPORT  
FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN IN AMERICA

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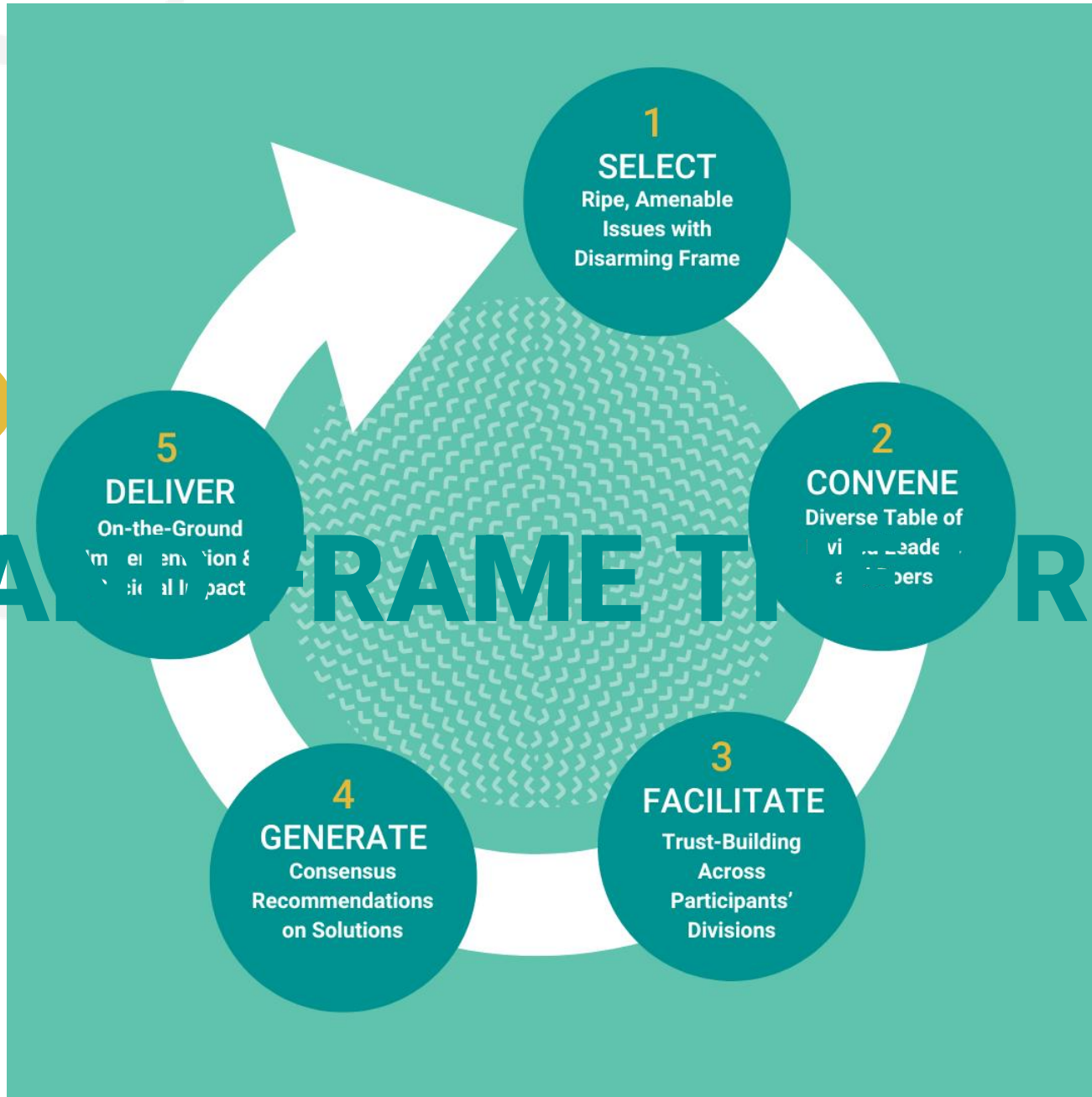


# STEP

# DEFINE AND

# FRAME THE

# PROBLEM



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# Define and Frame the Problem

## Polarizing Framing

- Economic Inequality
- Welfare Reform

## Disarming Framing

- Economic Opportunity
- Supports for Working Families





# STEP Convene



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# Activity: Identify and Frame an Issue

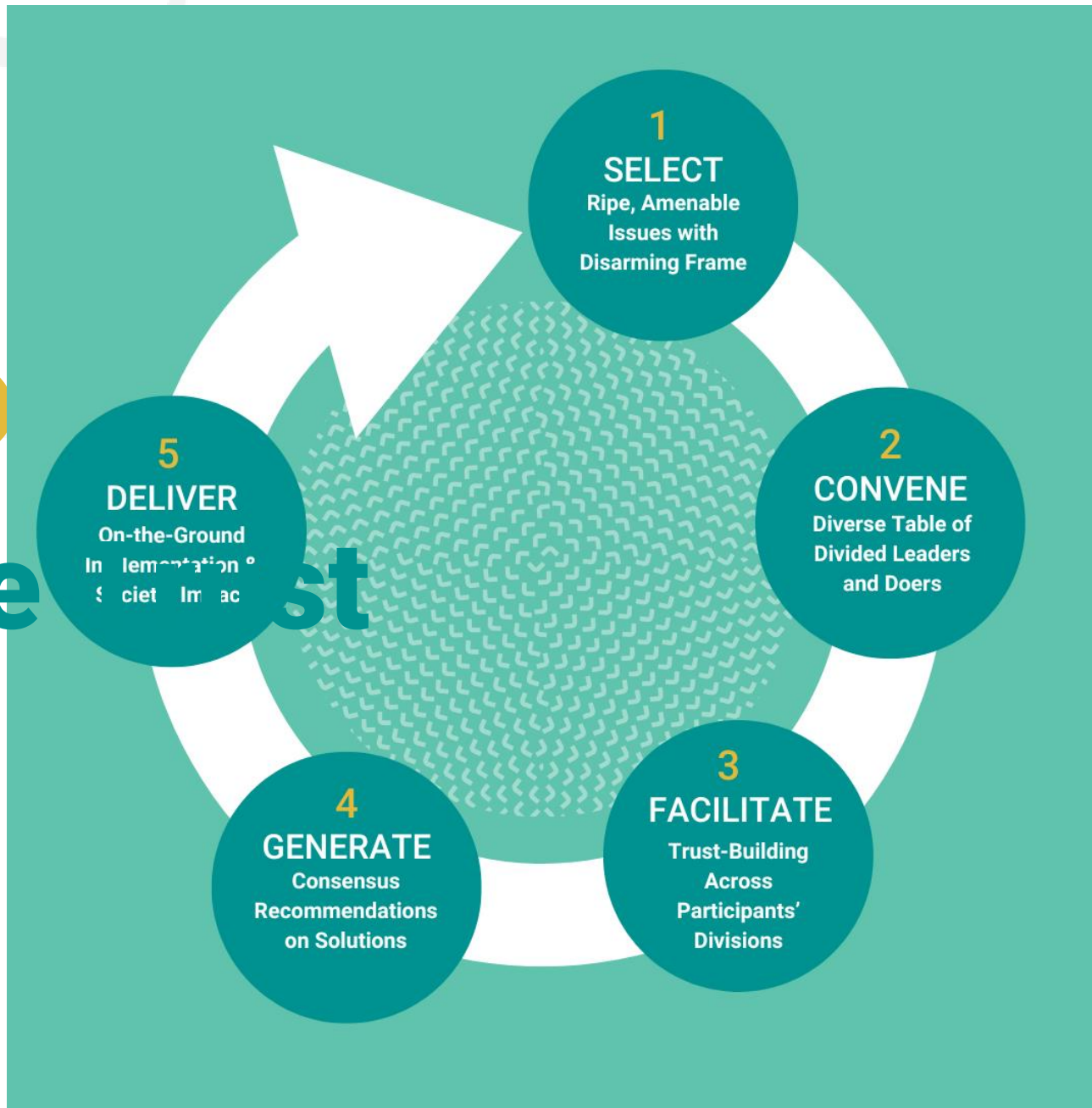
## Activity Directions

- Identify an issue impacting your organization or community
- Write a description in your workbook
- Debrief with your neighbor
- 15 minutes

## Consider these questions

- Who should you interview to create a better understanding of the issue?
- Who are the key parties that should be at the table to solve the issue?
- What is a neutral framing of the issue that will be inviting to all stakeholders?

# STEP Facilitate



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# Use Connecting Questions

- Lead individuals and groups to **make meaningful connections quickly**
- Element of **self-reflection and self-disclosure** that help participants to identify shared values, goals and identities

# Examples

- Where do your core beliefs on these issues come from?
- How were your views on this issue shaped?
- How do you feel that you and those who are aligned with your perspectives are misunderstood?
- Where is an area that you have mixed feelings or doubts on this issue?
- What is oversimplified about this issue?
- What does the world look like when we have addressed this issue?



# Activity: Create Connecting Questions

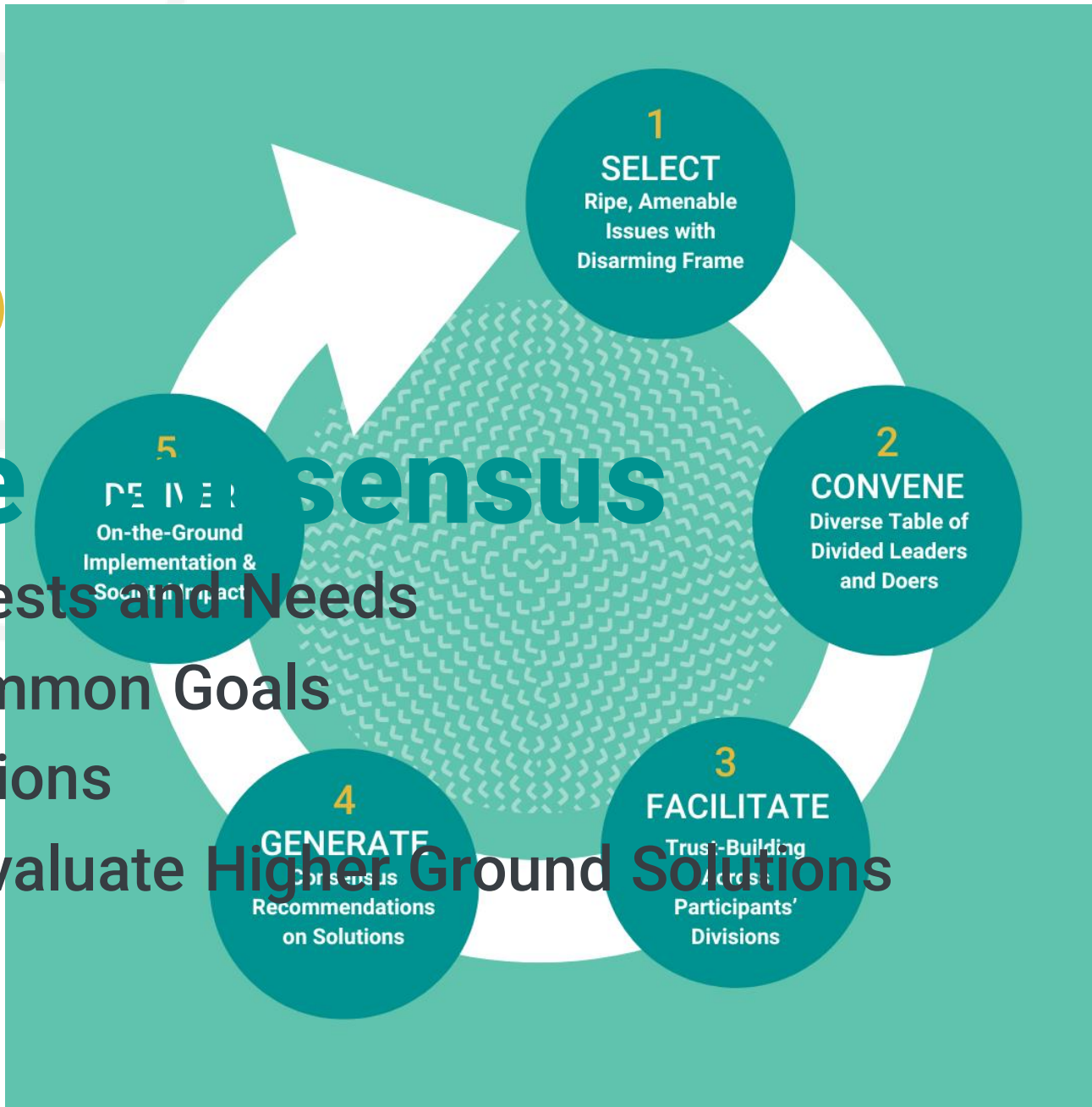
## Activity Directions

- Review list of connecting questions
- Identify one that you think would work well for the issue you selected
- Pair-share
- 10 minutes

# STEP Generate

# Consensus

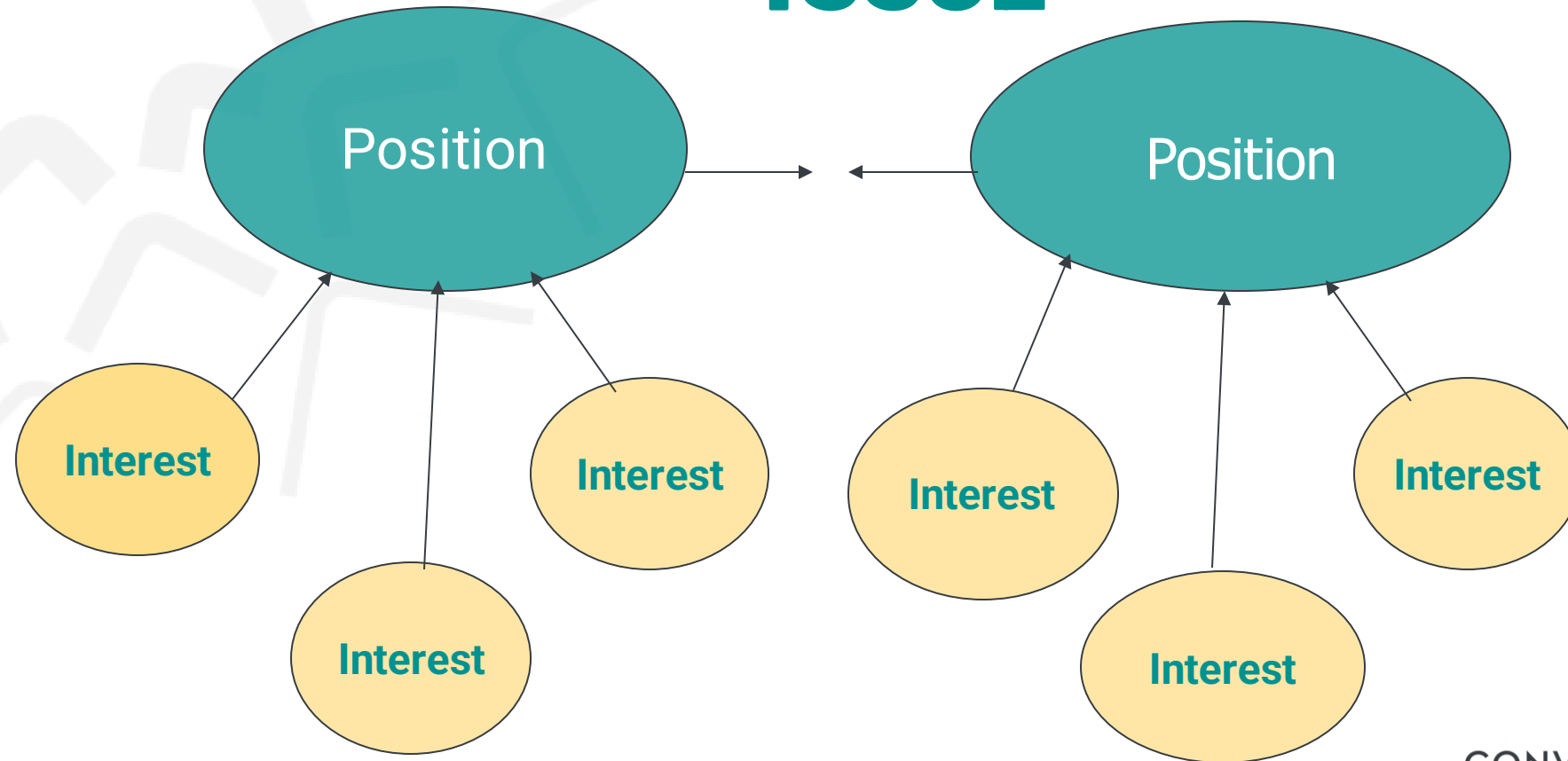
- Identify Interests and Needs
- Establish Common Goals
- Generate Options
- Create and Evaluate Higher Ground Solutions





# Interest Based Problem Solving

## ISSUE



# Focus on Interests, Not Positions

Issues are the **topics** or **areas of controversy** that people wish to discuss

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# Focus on Interests, Not Positions

Positions (the what?)

A person's expressed, **fixed solution** to resolve the issue

Interests (the why?)

A person's **needs that underlie** their expressed positions



# Issue

Should our state legalize marijuana?

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# Positions (the what?)

We need to **legalize it!**

We need to **keep it illegal!**

# Interests (the why?)

## Legalize it

- Therapeutic mental and physical health benefits
- Reduce prison populations for justice and economic interests
- Generate significant tax revenue for schools and other services

## Keep it illegal

- Roadway safety
- Gateway drug
- Youth addiction and brain development impacts





# Interest-Based Problem Solving: Integrative Solutions



# OPTIONS

Only

Proposals

That

Include

Others

Needs

Succeed



Participants discuss whether Tennessee should allow temporary removal of firearms from individuals deemed to be a danger to themselves or others.

They also discuss criteria for removal, including risk of violence, and whether a mental health diagnosis should be considered.

# Establish Common Goals

- **Essential needs are met.** Families have access to jobs that pay enough income to meet essential economic, health, and safety needs.
- **Relational and community connectedness.** Families have relationships of acceptance, belonging, and reciprocity within the family as well as with the community. They are not isolated.



# Establish Common Goals

- **Relational and community connectedness.** Families have a wide network of support to overcome obstacles and set-backs and have a sense of hope and optimism about the future.
- **Choice, agency, and diversity.** Families have actual choices when it comes to living their lives and caring for children



# Activity: Part I: Identify Interests and Shared Goals

## Activity Directions

- Make a list of the interests of all stakeholders
- Create a list of shared goals or principles

## Consider these questions

- What is the “why” behind the positions?
- What are elements of the future that all stakeholders envision.

# Activity: Part I: Identify Higher Ground Solutions

## Activity Directions

- Develop solutions that include the interests of all parties

## Consider these questions

- What solutions include the interests of all parties?
- How do the solutions include others needs?

# Activity: Part III: Your Issue

## Activity Directions

- Identify the interests underlying the positions related to the issue you identified.
- Generate possible higher ground solutions.

## Consider these questions

- What is the “why” behind the positions?
- Which potential solutions maximize mutual gain?



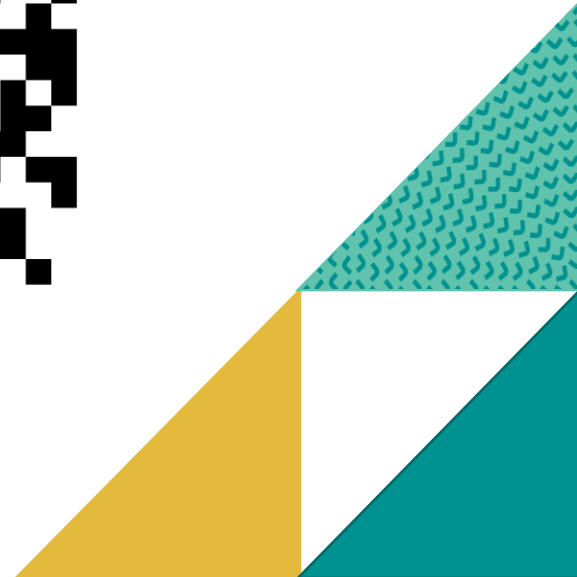
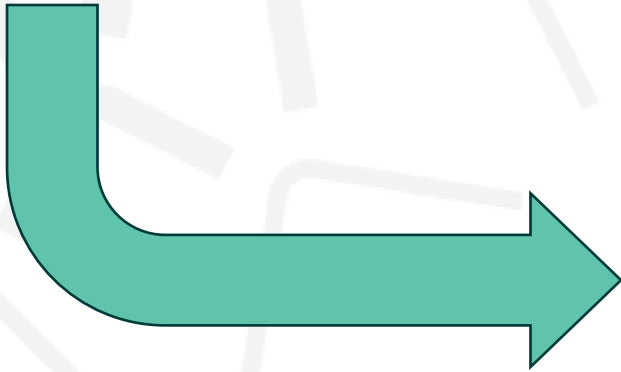
# Activity: Wrap-Up

## Activity Directions

- Write down two takeaways from today's session, and one thing that will commit to do differently because of what you've learned
- Share with your neighbor
- Group debrief

# Resources

Scan QR code



# For More Information

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