WHAT WE HAVE IS A FAILURE TO DELIBERATE: REFRAMING CITY MANAGEMENT AS DELIBERATIVE PRACTICE

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What We Have is a Failure to Deliberate: Reframing City Management as Deliberative Practice

Overview of the Forum

- I. Introduction to Democratic Practices and Deliberation

- II. Introducing Table Exercises

- III. Table Exercises

- IV. Summary of Lessons

- V. Facilitated Reflection

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INTRODUCTION TO DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES AND DELIBERATION

Which statements best describe your view of the current quality of public discussion and debate?
(choose up to three)

- 1. High quality, informed
- 2. Mean-spirited
- 3. Polarized
- 4. Involves a broad range of voices
- 5. Simplistic
- 6. Dominated by a few loud voices
- 7. Dominated by experts
- 8. Robust
- 9. Weak/limited, people are apathetic
- 10. (press 0) Productive
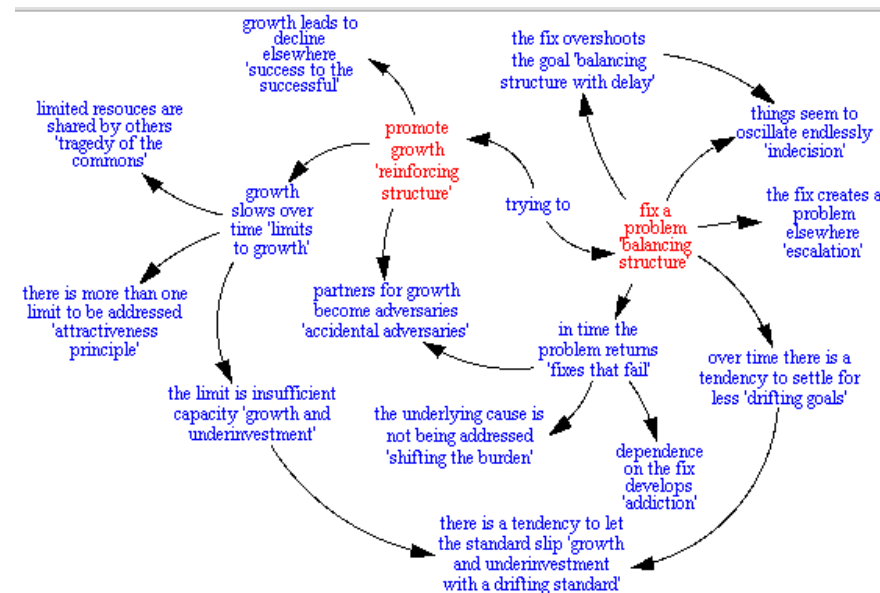
Three Key Points

- The wicked problems lens

- A brief primer on social psychology, polarization, and engagement (i.e. why what we are doing isn't working)

- The value of deliberative practices
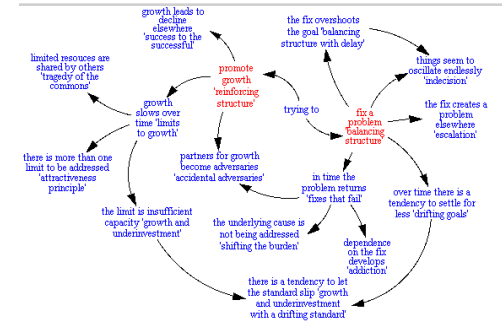
Wicked Problems

Wicked problems inherently involve **competing underlying values**, paradoxes, and tradeoffs that **cannot be resolved** by science.

Water in Northern Colorado as a Wicked Problem

Some things we care about:

Healthy river with healthy ecosystems

Recreational opportunities

Economic vitality

Water for homes & lawns

Open space and wildlife habitat

Low cost of living

Water for local farms

Local food economy

Freedom of choice of where to live

Key Deliberative Responses
1. Prioritizing
2. Balancing
3. Transcending

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HEALTH CARE AS A WICKED PROBLEM

High Quality

Accessible

Low cost

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Competing Values in Downtown Fort Collins

- Aesthetics/Beauty
- Compassion
- Diversity/Inclusivity
- Economic health/vitality
- Effective use of public resources
- Equality
- Excitement/fun
- Family

- Individual freedom
- Individual responsibility
- Individual rights
- Justice/Fairness
- Public health/ environment
- Respect for law
- Respect for others
- Safety

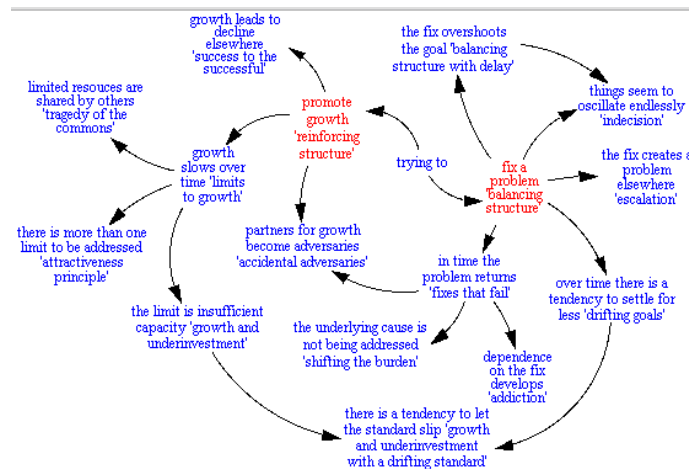*Wicked problems* inherently involve **competing underlying values**, paradoxes, and tradeoffs that **cannot be resolved** by science.

They call for ongoing high quality **communication**, **creativity**, and broad **collaborative action** to manage well.

.

Actions to address wicked problems come from multiple levels

Public Policy
national, state, local laws

Community
relationships among organizations

Organizational
organizations, social institutions

Interpersonal
family, friends, social networks

Individual
knowledge, attitudes, skills

Source: Adapted from McLeroy, et al., An ecological perspective on health promotion programs. Health Education Quarterly 1988; 15:351-77.

The Wicked Problems Mindset

- Presume wicked problems, not wicked people

- Become more comfortable with uncertainty

- Focus on elevating the conversation not just winning the argument

- Put your energy toward identifying, engaging, and negotiating inherent tensions

- Work toward creating a learning community

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What Are We Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?

The Problematic

We crave certainty and consistency

We are suckers for the good v. evil narrative

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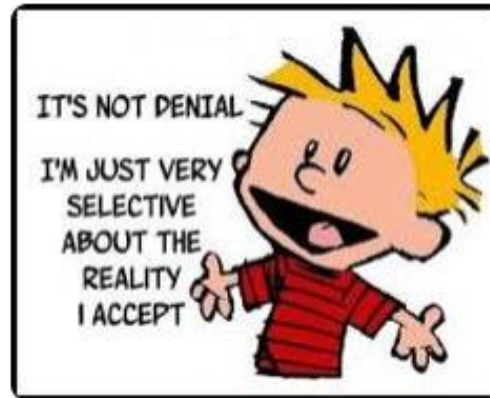
The Problematic

We crave certainty and consistency

We are suckers for the good v. evil narrative

We are "groupish" (prefer to gather with like-minded)

We filter & cherry pick evidence to support our views

IT'S NOT DENIAL

I'M JUST VERY SELECTIVE ABOUT THE REALITY I ACCEPT

What We Are Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?

Stages of motivated reasoning	
What and who we expose ourselves to	*selective exposure / echo chambers/ filter or media bubbles*
How we interpret new evidence	*confirmation bias, backfire effect, cognitive dissonance*
How we make attributions and tell stories	*egoism, illusory correlation, negativity bias*
How we make decisions	*heuristics, self-serving bias, social proof*
What we remember	*availability bias*

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What Are We Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?
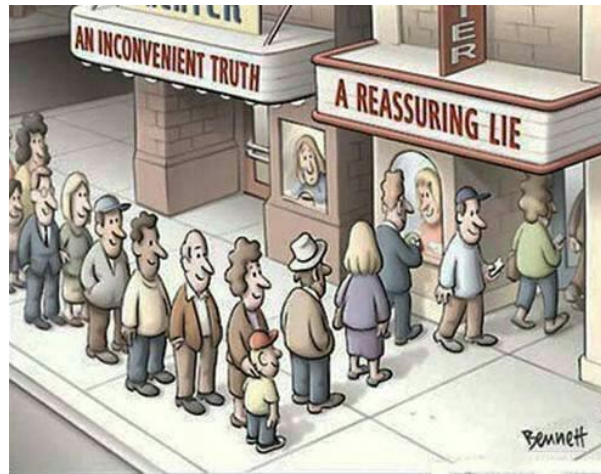
The Problematic

We crave certainty and consistency

We are suckers for the good v. evil narrative

We strongly prefer to gather with the like minded

We filter & cherry pick evidence to support our views

We avoid values dilemmas, tensions, and tough choices

Consider our Typical Public Processes

- *Our two-party system*

- *Campaigns, referenda, and elections*

- *"Town halls"*

- *Interest groups and lobbyists*

- *Political debates*

- *Congressional deliberations and legislative debate*

- *Social media political engagement*

- *Citizen comment and public hearings*

- *Expert panels*

- *Letters to the editors*

- *Emails and email campaigns to policymakers*

Traditional Forms of Public Participation
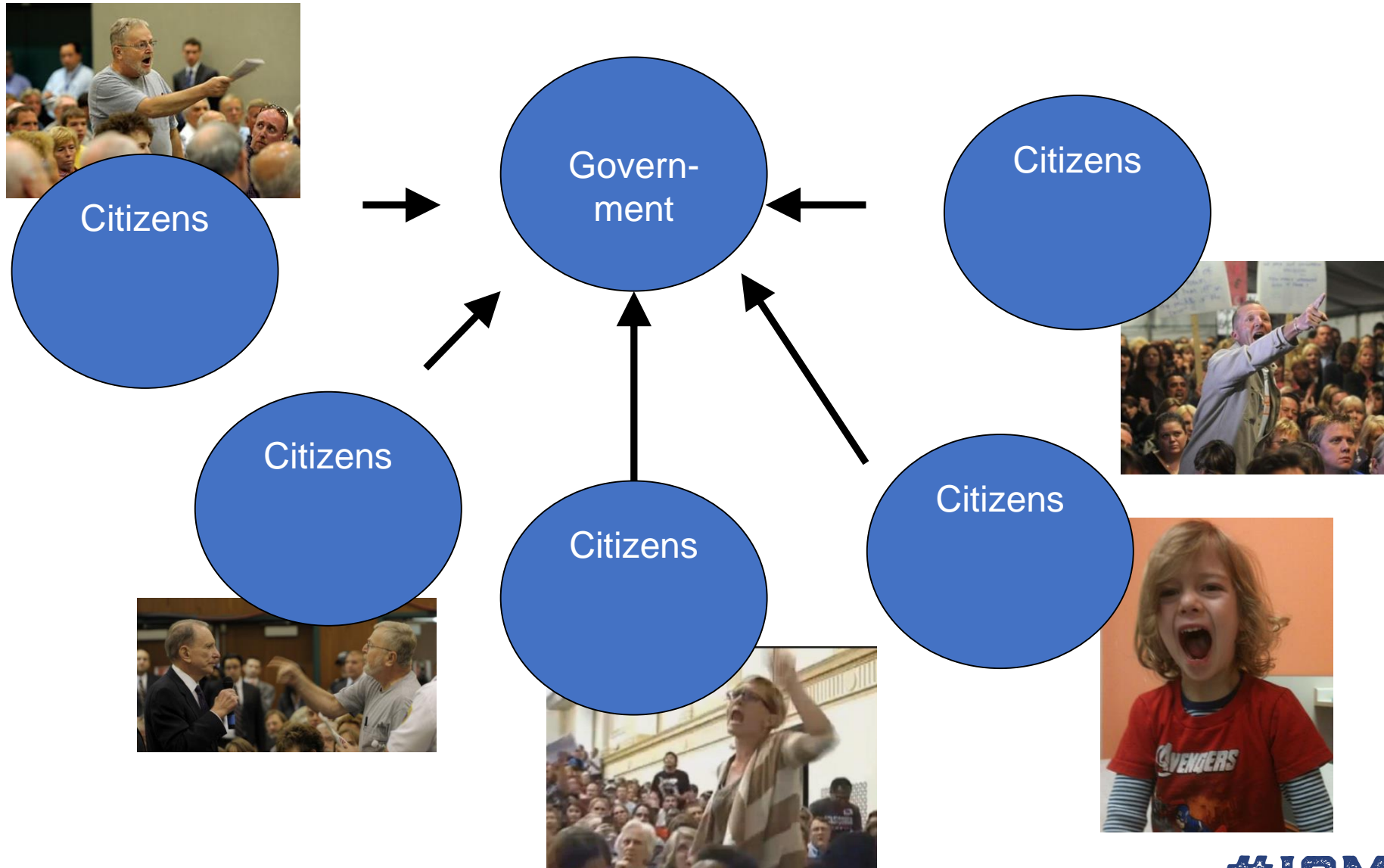
Key Problems with our Typical Public Processes

- *Engage too late in the process when issues are simply framed as "yes" or "no"*

- *Primarily provide opportunities for individual or group expression*

- *Caters to entrenched, confident, and organized voices*

- *Little to no effective interaction or learning/refinement of opinion*
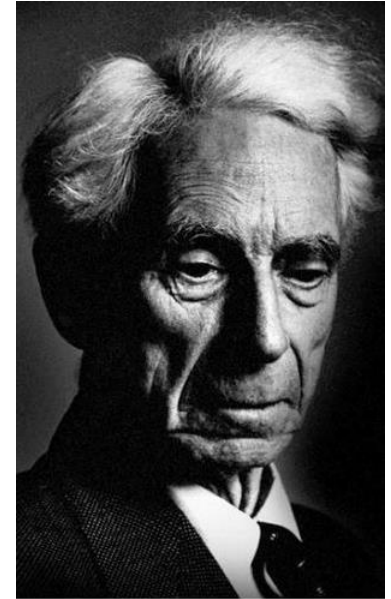
"The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people full of doubts."
Bertrand Russell, Philosopher

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The Problem We Face

Most of our processes for public engagement and community problem solving primarily activate the negative aspects of human nature, and rarely tap into or nurture the positive.

What Are We Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?

The Good

We are inherently social and seek purpose and community

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

"Provocative and fascinating." —MALCOLM GLADWELL

Daniel H. Pink

author of *A Whole New Mind*

DRiVE

The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us

What Are We Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?

The Good

We are inherently social and seek purpose and community

We are inherently empathetic

We are inherently pragmatic and creative

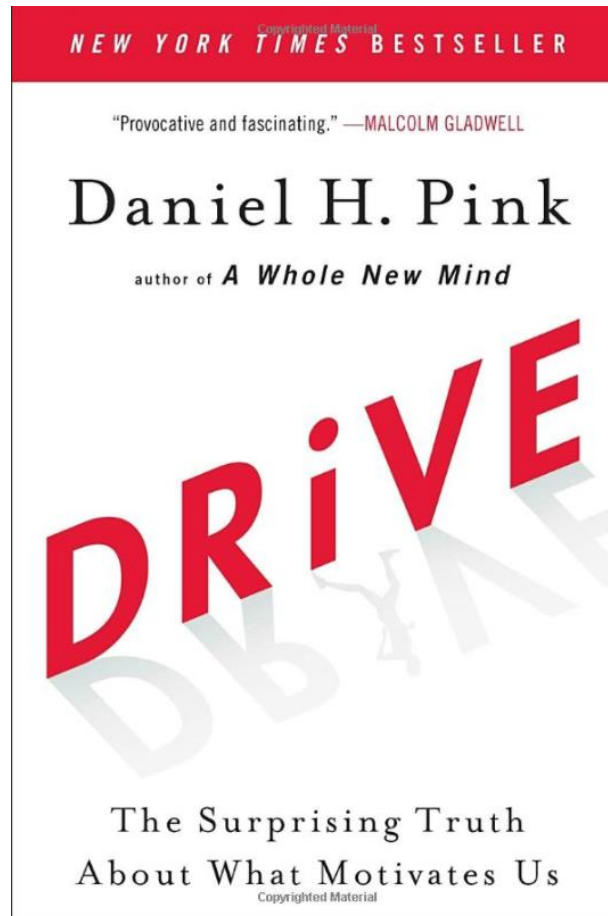# What Are We Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?

The Good

We are inherently social and seek purpose and community

We are inherently empathetic

We are inherently pragmatic and creative

We have a deep inherent hunger for learning

We can overcome our bad tendencies and build better habits

What Are We Learning from Brain Science and Social Psychology?

Bottom line: The most powerful thing to help people overcome their biases and tackle wicked problems well is **genuine conversation with people they respect**.

Three Key Points

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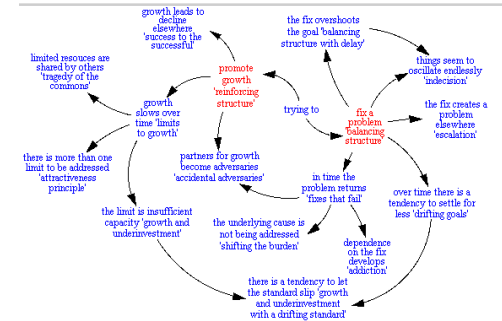
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Kettering Foundation's Six Democratic Practices

Identify or **NAME THE ISSUES** facing them in their own terms; that is, in terms of what is most valuable to them

Kettering
Foundation's
Six Democratic
Practices

Identify or
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FRAME ISSUES
so that a range of actions
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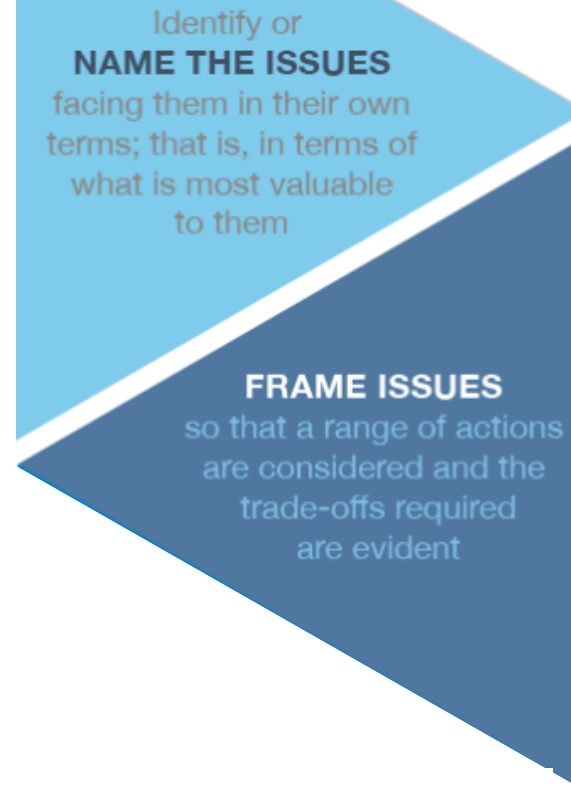hasty reactions into
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Kettering Foundation's Six Democratic Practices

Identify or **NAME THE ISSUES** facing them in their own terms; that is, in terms of what is most valuable to them

FRAME ISSUES so that a range of actions are considered and the trade-offs required are evident

IDENTIFY RESOURCES that are available— even intangible ones like enthusiasm and commitment

MAKE DECISIONS DELIBERATIVELY, which means weighing the trade-offs, to turn hasty reactions into sound judgment

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Kettering Foundation's Six Democratic Practices

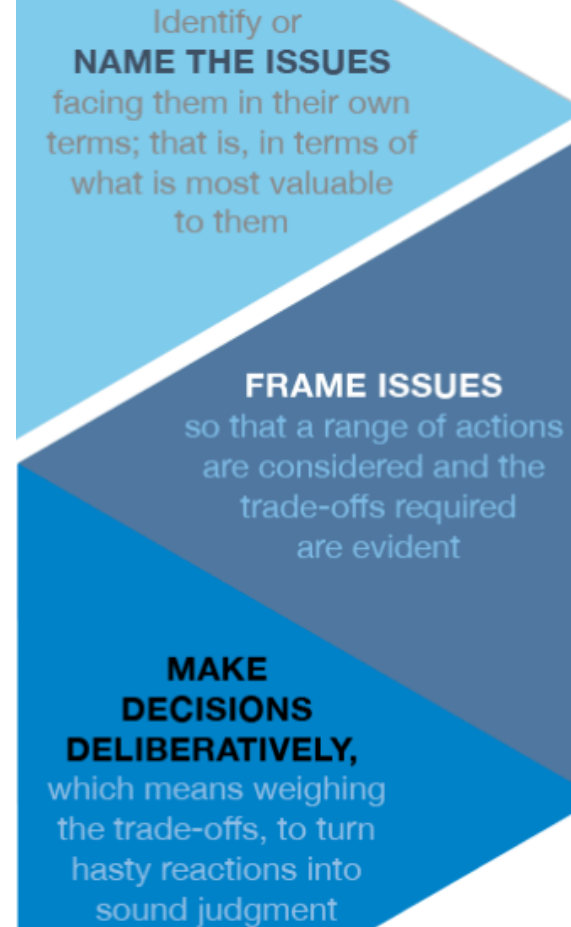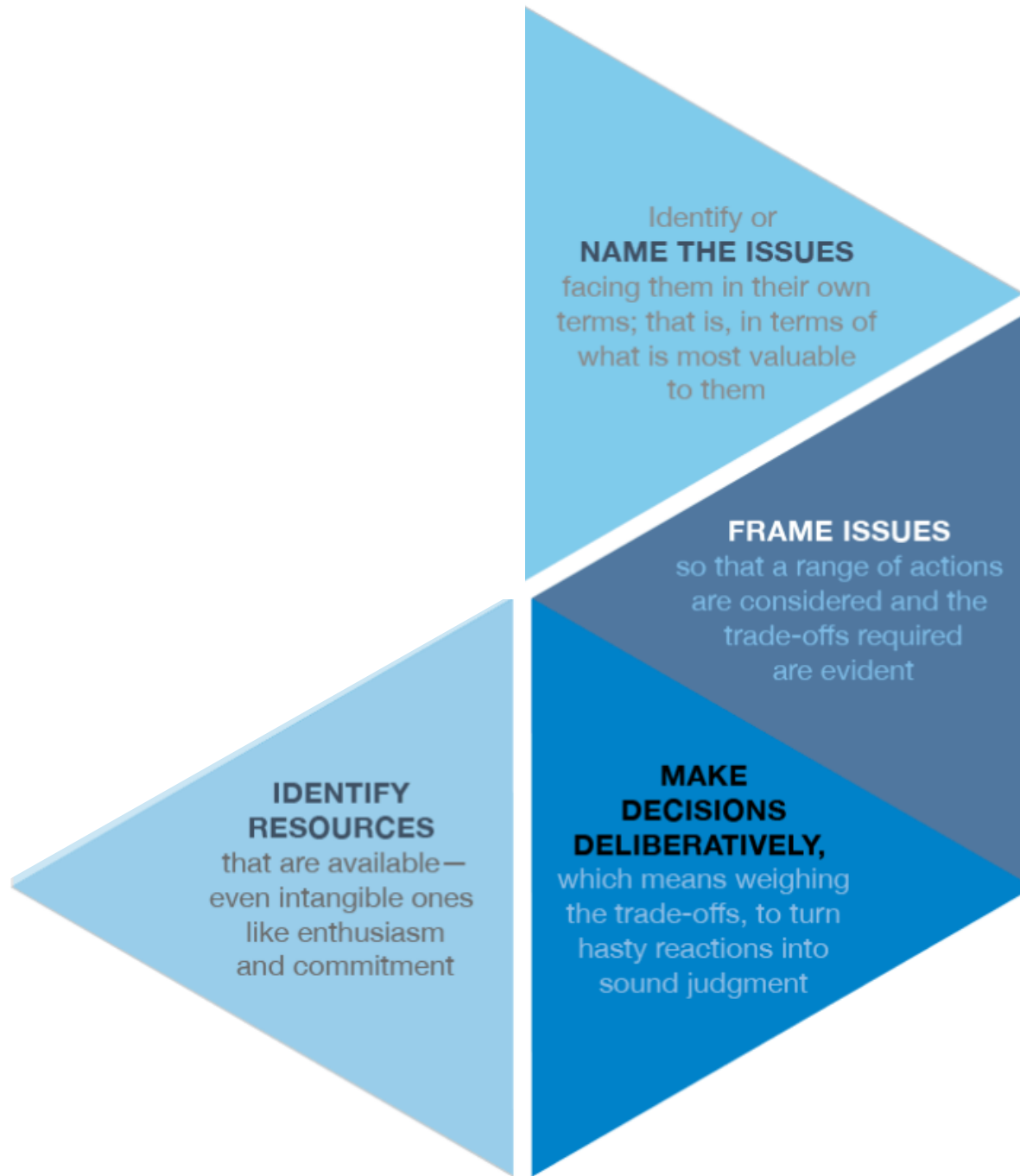Identify or **NAME THE ISSUES** facing them in their own terms; that is, in terms of what is most valuable to them
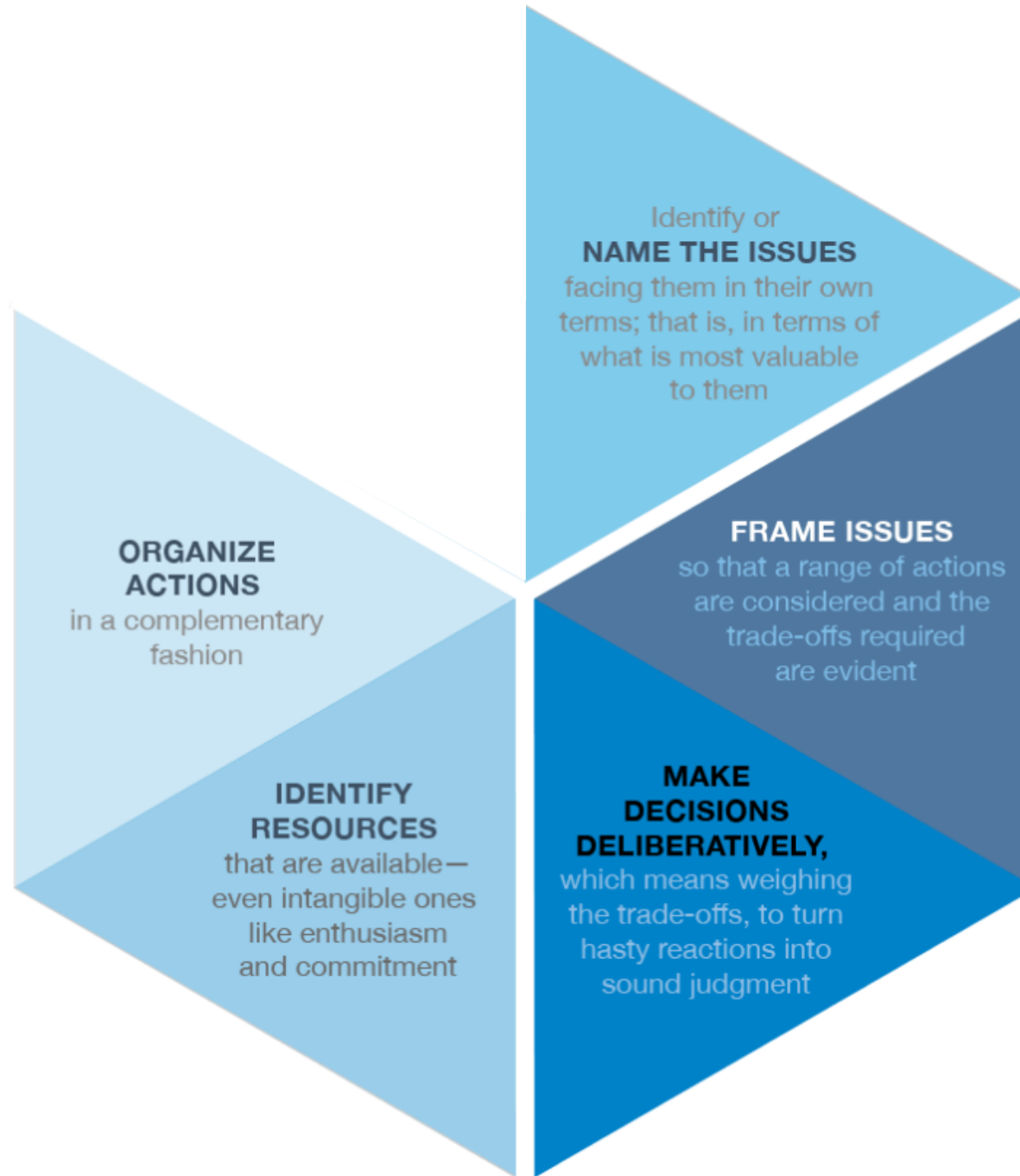
FRAME ISSUES so that a range of actions are considered and the trade-offs required are evident

ORGANIZE ACTIONS in a complementary fashion

IDENTIFY RESOURCES that are available— even intangible ones like enthusiasm and commitment

MAKE DECISIONS DELIBERATIVELY, which means weighing the trade-offs, to turn hasty reactions into sound judgment

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Kettering Foundation's Six Democratic Practices

Encourage constant **COLLECTIVE LEARNING** to keep the actions going

Identify or **NAME THE ISSUES** facing them in their own terms; that is, in terms of what is most valuable to them

ORGANIZE ACTIONS in a complementary fashion

FRAME ISSUES so that a range of actions are considered and the trade-offs required are evident

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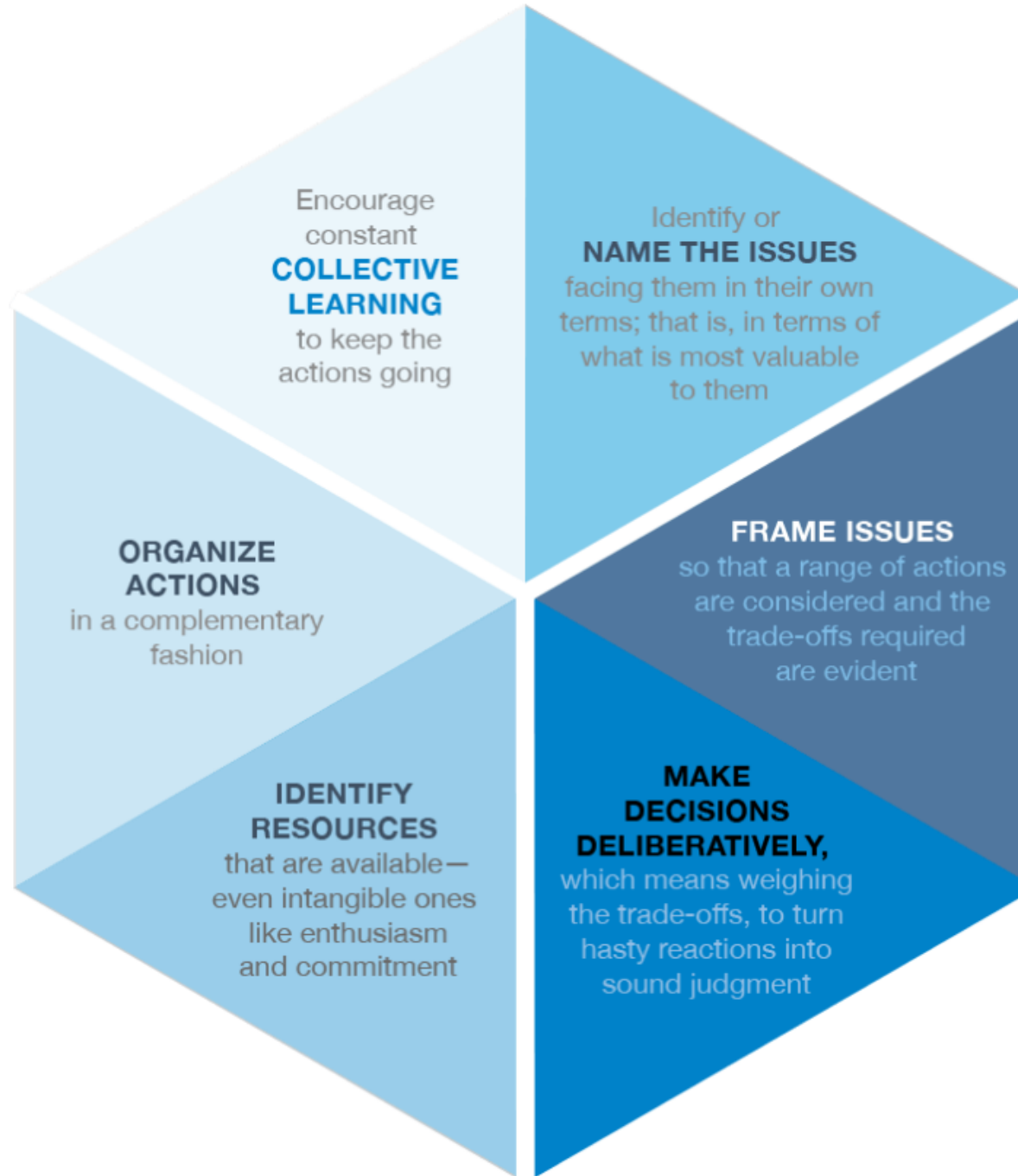https://www.kettering.org/core-insights/democratic-practices

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Key Components of Deliberative Engagement

- Overall deliberative framing

  ➤ Wicked problem, multiple approaches, broad range of actors, starting discussion "upstream" (before polarization)

- Discussion guides/backgrounder

  ➤ Base of information, something to react to, framed for deliberation, not persuasion

- Small, diverse, representative groups

- Deliberative facilitators
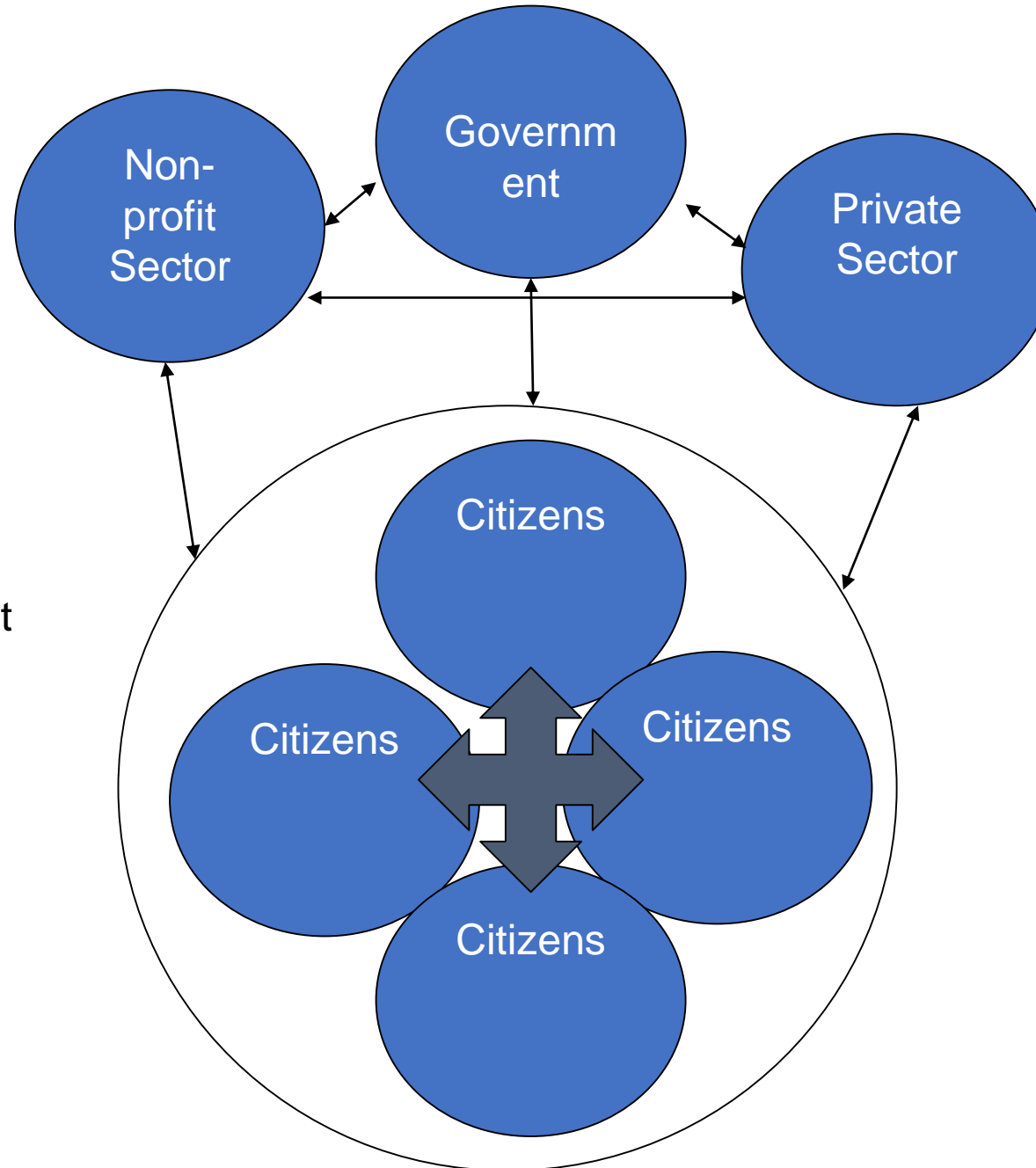
- Processes designed for interaction and learning

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Traditional Forms of Public Participation

Deliberative Engagement

Non-profit Sector

Government

Private Sector

Citizens

Citizens

Citizens

Citizens
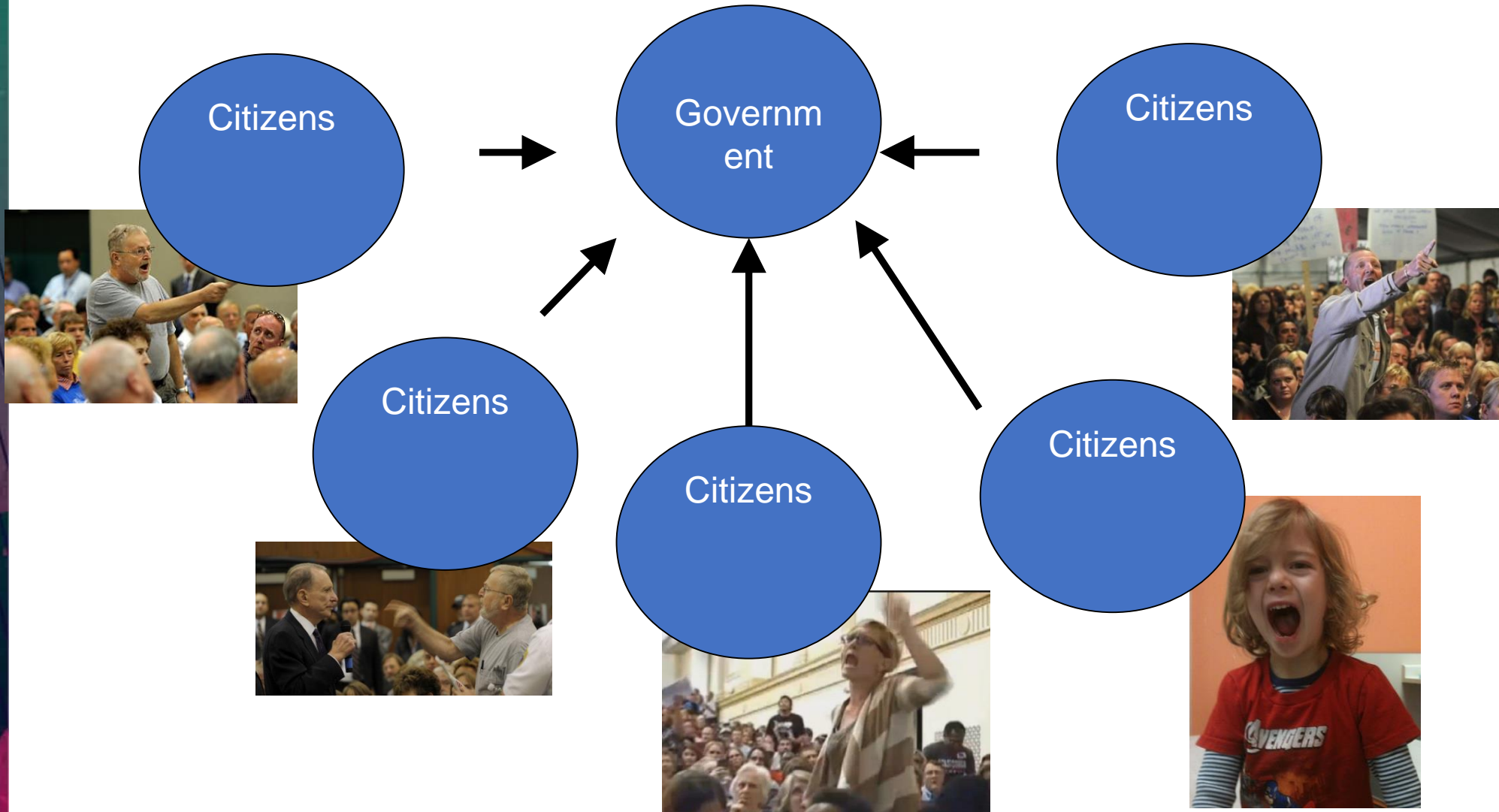
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Resource Guide on Public Engagement

ncdd

Resource Guide on Public Engagement

National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation

Engagement Streams

A Matrix of Proven Practices.

Primary Purpose	Name of Engagement Stream	Key Features	Important When...
To encourage people and groups to learn more about themselves, their community, or an issue, and possibly discover innovative solutions	Exploration	Suspending assumptions, creating a space that encourages a different kind of conversation, using ritual and symbolism to encourage openness, emphasis on listening	A group or community seems stuck or muddled and needs to reflect on their circumstance in depth and gain collective insight.
To resolve conflicts, to foster personal healing and growth, and to improve relations among groups	Conflict Transformation	Creating a safe space, hearing from everyone, building trust, sharing personal stories and views	Relationships among participants are poor or not yet established yet need to be. Issue can only be resolved when people change their behavior or attitude, expand their perspective, or take time to reflect and heal.
To influence public decisions and public policy and improve public knowledge	Decision Making	Naming and framing the issue fairly, weighing all options, considering different positions (i.e. deliberation), revealing public values, brainstorming solutions	The issue is within government's (or any single entity's) sphere of influence.
To empower people and groups to solve complicated problems and take responsibility for the solution	Collaborative Action	Using dialogue and deliberation to generate ideas for community action, developing and implementing action plans collaboratively	The issue/dispute requires intervention across multiple public and private entities, and anytime community action is important.

National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation
www.ncdd.org

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IAP2'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process.
The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION →

|	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

The Four Key Shifts
of Deliberative Engagement

- From wicked people → to wicked problems

- From adversaries → to collaborators

- From inciting the worst of human nature → to bringing out the best of human nature

- From facts as cherry picked ammunition or "fake news" → to facts as tools for addressing problems together

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In the End, We Must Elevate the Conversations in our Communities

- Build capacity for **collaborative action** and co-creation

- Spark **collaborative learning** and the refinement (not just expression) of opinion

- Help **differentiate** good and weak arguments

- Positively **manage conflict**, build mutual **understanding**, and develop **respect**

- Support **listening** and genuine **interaction**

- Provide opportunities for **voice** and public input
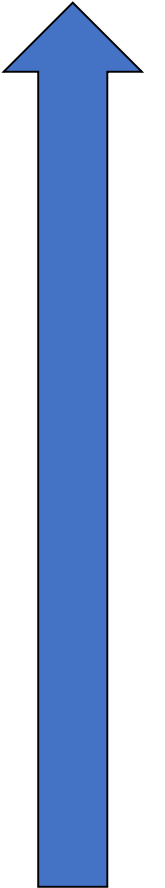
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INTRODUCING TABLE EXERCISES

TABLE EXERCISES

SUMMARY OF LESSONS

FACILITATED REFLECTION

THANK YOU

Questions?

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