Connection

**WHAT TO DO:** Welcome participants, give them the opportunity to connect with one another on a personal level, and help them establish a sense of group identity.

**WHEN IT’S IMPORTANT:** Important at every convening. Spend more time here if the group has never met, there is opposition within the group, or building networks is the primary purpose.

**SAMPLE ACTIVITIES**

**STRUCTURED GO-AROUND:** Participants take turns sharing introductions (clockwise around a circle, tossing a beanbag, or popcorn-style).

**GROUP TIMELINE:** Participants place themselves on a visual timeline of the group’s previous work.

**NETWORK-MAPPING:** Visually map the relationship connections among participants.

**STAND UP, SIT DOWN:** Have participants stand or sit in response to questions about their background.

**HUMAN SPECTROGRAM:** Describe two opposing perspectives that form a spectrum, and ask participants to line up along it to show where they stand.

**ASSET MAPPING:** Participants from an existing community build mutual understanding of one another’s capabilities and needs to find ways to support one another.

**APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY:** Participants interview one another about the strengths of the community or field.

**WORLD CAFÉ:** Participants rotate among small groups to discuss the topic, building on the previous conversation and sharing the results in plenary.

To learn more about each activity, see the list of resources listed at the end of the section.
**Shared language**

**WHAT TO DO:** Orient the group to the substance of the conversation—the state of play, relevant history, important facts, and other shared understanding that is foundational to the work.

**WHEN IT’S IMPORTANT:** Important at every convening. Spend more time here if participants understand the topic from very different angles, if they need to be caught up on recent changes, or if sharing learning is the primary purpose.

**SAMPLE ACTIVITIES**

- **ASSET MAPPING:** (see “connection”)
- **APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY:** (see “connection”)
- **WORLD CAFÉ:** (see “connection”)
- **FACTS AND OPINIONS:** Create a separate list of facts and opinions about the issue in order to get information on the table quickly.¹⁹
- **JIGSAW:** Participants self-segregate into groups to discuss key themes, then re-form groups that contain at least one person from each interest group to report and reflect on their group’s ideas.¹⁰
- **TRADE-SHOW PRESENTATIONS:** Participants split into several groups and rotate through multiple speakers.¹¹
- **FISHBOWL:** A small group sits in a circle and converses about the topic while participants listen—or join in by moving their chair to the middle.¹²
- **SYSTEMS MAPPING:** Gather insights on the workings of a large social system, diagram them visually, and identify key levers for creating change.¹³

To learn more about each activity, see the list of resources listed at the end of the section.
**Divergence**

**WHAT TO DO:** Give participants the space to spell out their perspectives and identify similarities and differences among them. Also, create opportunities for participants to brainstorm expansively about the topic at hand.

**WHEN IT’S IMPORTANT:** Important at every convening. Spend more time here if it is important for participants to understand one another’s perspectives in detail, or if sharing learning is the primary purpose.

**SAMPLE ACTIVITIES**
- **HUMAN SPECTROGRAM:** (see “connection”)
- **APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY:** (see “connection”)
- **WORLD CAFÉ:** (see “connection”)
- **FACTS AND OPINIONS:** (see “shared language”)
- **JIGSAW:** (see “shared language”)
- **TRADE-SHOW PRESENTATIONS:** (see “shared language”)
- **FISHBOWL:** (see “shared language”)
- **SYSTEMS MAPPING:** (see “shared language”)
- **OPEN SPACE:** Participants volunteer to lead a discussion on a topic; others join the sessions they find most interesting.
- **BREAKOUT GROUPS:** Divide participants into small groups either to work on parts of a large task or to work in parallel on the same task.
- **RAPID PROTOTYPING:** Identify pain points, generate potential solutions, and flesh them out into plans for a testable prototype.
- **SCENARIO PLANNING:** Participants contribute a range of perspectives about how the issue could evolve in the future in unexpected ways and construct narratives of the divergent possibilities.
- **BRAINSTORMING:** Generate ideas by speaking off the cuff and treating all ideas as valid, using flipcharts and post-its in various combinations.
- **ROLEPLAYING:** Some participants take on the role of key outside stakeholders and either brainstorm or provide reactions in that role.
- **POPCORN REACTIONS:** Ask the group for quick, informal reactions to something they’ve just heard or done, to move the conversation forward without taking the time for a longer conversation.

To learn more about each activity, see the list of resources listed at the end of the section.