Kettering Foundation's Six Democratic Practices

A Framework for Identifying, Assessing, and Utilizing Democratic Practices

DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES (the politics of self-rule)	HOW TO IDENTIFY EACH IN PRACTICE	QUESTIONS TO ASK
NAME THE ISSUE(S) in terms of language that identify what is valuable to citizens	• When people say (identify or name) what is bothering them • When the name given to a problem affects what is done to solve it	What bothers you about this issue or problem? What kind of community do we want? What is most important to you and your family? What are the most serious problems that stand in the way of having the community that we want?
FRAME THE ISSUE(S) so that a range of actions are considered and the costs, consequences, and trade-offs required are evident	• When people talk about what can be done by proposing options • When options are put on the table and people create a framework for tackling a problem • When the framework structures everything that happens thereafter, which sets up a very different political discussion from what happens if there are multiple options on the table	How this problem affects you and your family? What are some options for actions that we might take to combat this problem? What are three or four options discussed that seem to have the most support?
MAKE DECISIONS DELIBERATIVELY by weighing consequences and identifying trade-offs to turn hasty reactions into sound judgment	• When people move on to assess the possible costs and consequences that might result from one course of action or another • When people weigh possible costs, consequences, and trade-offs against what are deeply important to them • When people settle on some work that they need to do with other citizens or want a government to do; or, both.	What should we do? What are some consequences if we took this action? If there are negative consequences to what you propose, do you think we should still do it? What is the right thing to do? What might be downsides of the options we like most? Are there costs and consequences we wouldn't like?—Would we still go ahead with the options that are favored by most? Are there people in the community who would answer these questions differently? Are we giving the options for action favored a fair hearing?
IDENTIFY RESOURCES that are available—even intangible ones like enthusiasm and commitment	• When a decision has been made about how to proceed and people test: to see if anyone or any group is willing to act on the decision; or, to identify resources they can draw on • When citizens identify and commit civic resources to bring about the desired change or objective	Who else do we need to solve the problem? What resources do we need to solve the problem? Who needs to act? What could you do personally? What resources are needed? Who has them? Are there resources going unrecognized and unused?
ORGANIZE ACTIONS in a complementary fashion	• When people join forces to do something that brings the many and various resources a citizenry has to bear on a problem (this is referred to as organizing civic action) • When citizens' commitments produce collective political will	What do we have that we can use? Even if we differ in what the most serious problems are and on what should be done about them, are there possibilities for working together? What are there opportunities to support each other's efforts?
EXERCISE (MAKE USE OF) COLLECTIVE LEARNING encourage constant learning to keep the actions going	• When action is followed by evaluating what was accomplished, in order to distinguish collective from individual learning • When learning provides the political momentum needed to follow through on difficult problems	What are we learning about our problems? What are we learning about ourselves as a community from the conversations we are now having? What should we do next?

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