

Process Outline

Debate Format to Enhance Understanding of Positions *A method used to expose common ground*

The basic focus of this method is to enhance both the disputants' and the audiences' understanding of all positions so that the key issues, concerns, and emotions in the debated topic can be identified. The format helps stakeholders move away from a "win-lose" perspective to a "better understanding" perspective. This gives parties on all sides of an issue a chance to explore and that allows for the emergence of common ground. (See SIM Argument in Conference Materials folder.)

The selection of panel members is important. Panelists should be selected for their ability to articulate their position with factual evidence and not base it on emotional sentiments. Panelists may strongly stand by their position, but should also have a self-reflective, open-minded character and the ability to debate respectfully.

Engaging in Better Dialogue – The GMO Hypothetical (Part 1) – Moderator

- I. Explanation of the Problem and Process (5-min)
- II. Opening Position Statements (10-min each stakeholder)
Panelists (stakeholders) speak. Alternate speakers on both sides (*pro* and *con* for balance. Give each speaker 10 minutes to state position.
- III. Brief Statements from Stakeholders to include:
 - a) a clear position;
 - b) what is at the heart of the issue; and
 - c) what personal experiences have contributed to your view.
- IV. Table Conversations (20-min): Divide room in half. Half the tables to list on newsprint (or enter electronically if logistics allow) all the reasons *for* labeling. The other half to list all the reasons *against*. Post papers on two different walls (or put on screen).
- V. Moderator Questions to Stakeholders
 - a) What sorts of further new information would you like to see?
 - b) What arguments did you hear that might prompt you to re-examine your opinions?
 - c) Are there any areas of uncertainty in your own positions?
 - d) Are there any areas where one set of your beliefs are in conflict with other beliefs or values?

- VI. Stakeholders Questions each Other
 - Questions should be based on curiosity, not “gotcha” attempts. Moderator may add or reframe questions or invite questions from the audience.
- VII. Stakeholders are asked to formulate a joint statement that captures the essence of the issue on which they are divided, any practical areas that they do agree on, and key questions for further exploration.

“GMO Labeling” (Part 2) –

- I. Open Discussion with everyone in the room led by the moderator.
 - What do we learn from this exchange?
 - What is different in the way we were trying to talk?
 - What is gained or lost, what is useful and productive, and what is not?
 - What stands in the way of these kinds of conversations in real life?
 - What is needed by way of bringing better conversations together at the right time?
- II. Joint Statement Presented and Final Reflections