

The Network for Peace through Dialogue
in cooperation with **Marymount Manhattan College**

Presents

Dialogue In/As Action

Setting the Conditions for Dialogue in State Level Policy Discussion



Linda Mather, Forums Institute for Public Policy

For many years the Forums Institute brought together in New Jersey policy makers in the area of health care. This was mostly funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Although the organization has lost its funding, Linda offered the model that the Institute used successfully as an example that can be adapted by others. Critical to success is having a neutral organization that can bring together both elected and appointed officials and key stakeholders around a particular issue. The discussions are off-the-record so that participants can express themselves openly without fear of public repercussions. There must be balanced information; that is, as many aspects of a problem as possible should be represented. It's also a good idea to build in a social time where people can exchange views and network in a relaxed setting.

In planning it is important to consider who to invite and what you want invitees to experience. There must also be the criteria for success that you will have to report to funders. The location should be very accessible – parking can be an important consideration, as public transportation—and attractive.

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