

Moderator Training

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LWVMI Voter Services



Presenters

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Planning the Forum

- Schedule Forum
- Determine format (in-person, virtual, hybrid)
- Handle logistics (location, audio/technical, invite candidates)
- Assist with development of forum team (i.e. producer, timekeeper, question sorters, greeters)
- Develop/secure questions
- Write Forum Script/establish ground rules (with producer)
- Share ground rules with candidates in advance
- Schedule videographer, if needed



Virtual vs. In-Person Forums

- Pros
 - Cheaper-no venue or video fees (except Zoom cost)
 - Candidates more readily available
 - Doesn't require as many volunteers to assist
 - No food, snacks or other amenities
 - Easier to agree on a date
 - If Zoom works, no audio or video snafus
- Cons
 - Not as exciting for members and candidates-audience misses out on candidates' body language/reactions
 - Press coverage is harder to come by
 - Lack of live audience
 - Difficult to get questions from voters
 - LWV member engagement is minimal
 - Limits access for voters who can't watch forum on Zoom

Role of the Moderator

- Host and referee
- Explains the format of the forum
- Maintains order at all times
- Ensures fairness and equal opportunity
- Maintains decorum



Qualities of a Forum Moderator

- Well prepared
- Professional demeanor and appearance
- Confidence
- Sense of Humor
- Politically Neutral
- Good coping skills

Moderator Responsibilities

- Rehearses the script so that it comes naturally, using words with which the moderator is comfortable.
- Virtual forum: conducts rehearsal with timekeeper and technology coordinator prior to forum
- Meets with candidates prior to forum to draw lots and confirm names
- Explains purpose of event and forum format to the audience
- Explains ground rules for audience behavior
- Introduces the candidates
- Asks the questions

Moderator Responsibilities (con't)

- Reins in candidates who don't follow the rules
- Doesn't show favoritism to any candidate
- The moderator uses a matrix/grid to keep track of the speaking order of the candidate(s).
- Strictly enforces time limits
- Refrains from judgment
- Is always alert to timekeeper

Other Considerations

- The moderator should be a trained League member who has participated or volunteered in at least two forums.
- If possible, select a moderator who is not a constituent of any candidate appearing at the forum. Consider trading moderators with a neighboring League to avoid any appearance of bias or partisanship.
- The moderator usually works closely with the League Voter Service Director or other League member to plan the format of the forum. An experienced moderator may work directly with the organization that is co-sponsoring the event.



Securing/Managing Questions for Forum

- In-person
 - Index cards distributed to audience and collected by question sorters
 - Questions can be solicited in advance from community
 - Open microphone for audience to ask (this has risks-no screening in advance)
 - Questions obtained from your League's Observer Corps
- Virtual
 - Questions solicited in advance from community
 - Questions entered in the chat (although can have privacy/control issues)
 - Questions obtained from your League's Observer Corps
- All questions selected by the team working on the forum
- Be prepared with extra questions to ensure enough variety
- Sample questions available on LWVMI website (lwvmi.org)
- Questions (whether used or not) should never be released to the media/audience

Rehearsal for Virtual Forums

- Important to have a rehearsal prior to a virtual forum
- Participants include:
 - Moderator
 - Producer
 - Timekeeper
 - Technical Coordinator
- Review forum format and script
- Review timekeeper's role



Determining Candidate Speaking Order

- Use some object (strips of paper or sticks) to draw lots
 - For virtual forum, colored strips of paper work best
- Each object has a number and each candidate will select one
- The number indicates the speaking order, with #1 starting opening statements
- The order is reversed for closing statements
- Once the order is determined, make a decision on how to handle late candidate participation

Moderator's Meeting with Candidates

- Candidates report 15-20 minutes before start of forum
- Draw lots for speaking order
- Confirm correct pronunciation of candidate's name
- Confirm signed ground rules and consent form received
- Respond to any last minute questions/concerns



During the Forum

- How to address candidates
- Asking/repeating questions
- Using the question grid
- Managing time
- Refraining from judgment
- Being alert to timekeeper



Calculating Forum Timeframe

- Determine the length of the forum
- Determine the number of questions based on # of candidates
- Determine length of Opening and Closing statements
- Example: 60 minute forum with 4 candidates:
 - Opening/Closing 2 minutes each: $(2s \times 2m \times 4c) = 16$ minutes
 - Questions typically 1 minute response each $(10q \times 1m \times 4c) = 40$
 - Opening/Closing remarks: 4 minutes
- Time Management: Moderator's discretion to determine when to ask last question.

Connecting with Timekeeper

- Know timekeeper's signals
- Be sure timekeeper is in line of sight to moderator and candidates
- Be aware of time limits for:
 - Opening statement
 - Questions
 - Closing statement
- Be prepared to stop candidate's responses if necessary



Using the Forum Grid

- Used to track candidates' responses to questions in the designated order
- Grid avoids duplication of questions to the same candidate
- Mark who starts first. Make sure all participants are present and write down names in the prescribed order for the Opening.
- Mark as candidates began speaking or during answers.
- Who speaks next? Check that your columns are filled before going to another question.



Sample Forum Grids

CANDIDATES		QUESTIONS											
	Name	Opening	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Closing
1	Apple	1							1				
2	Orange		1							1			
3	Peach			1							1		
4	Plum				1							1	
5	Ice Cream					1							1
6	Kale						1						1
7													
8													
9													

LWV - Grosse Pointe										Script			
Forum Moderator Checklist										Open:			
8 candidates										Q's:			
8 @ 8 min per question										Close:			
Venue										102			
Date										REVERSE			
Name										2 minute			
										Opening			
										Questions to all: 1 minute			
										Statement			
										1			
										2			
										3			
										4			
										5			
										6			
										7			
										8			
										Statement			
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													
6													



What if?

- –a candidate arrives late?
- –a candidate keeps talking when their time is up?
- –a candidate is difficult to control or unruly?
- –a member of the audience is rowdy?
- –the audience gets unruly during an in-person event?
- –there is a challenge to your authority and the way you are conducting the event?
- –people demand to see the written questions afterwards?

Questions?

