



Deliberation for Better Health, Science, and Technology Policy: Five Steps for Effective Deliberation¹

Presidential Commission *for the* Study of Bioethical Issues

The process of democratic deliberation is especially useful for the types of questions we face in bioethics, in which solutions have complex empirical as well as moral bases and about which reasonable people can disagree. This method of decision making can be used by bodies at all levels—institutional, local, state, national, and international—to inform policy development.



Step I. Begin with an open policy question

Choose an open question and consider distinct points of view. The question should have an applied component, including questions about how to move forward and what should be done.



Step II. Time deliberation for maximum impact

Allow ample lead time for deliberation before a decision becomes absolutely necessary. In the case of an ongoing emergency situation, conduct deliberation simultaneously, and apply results as soon as possible.



Step III. Invite input from experts and the public

Use sound and relevant information to inform the deliberation. If new information emerges, integrate it into the deliberation. Evaluate evidence through an established and reliable mechanism before and during deliberation. Make established facts, in the form of accessible background materials, available to all participants.



Step IV. Foster open discussion and debate

Cultivate an environment that encourages participants in the deliberation to practice mutual respect and reason-giving.



Step V. Develop detailed, actionable recommendations

Feed decisions back into the policymaking process whenever possible, either by making the results of deliberation binding or by asking participants to develop a set of recommendations that policymakers can use to guide their decisions.

¹Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues (PCSB). (2016, May). *Bioethics for Every Generation: Deliberation and Education in Health, Science, and Technology*. PCSBI: Washington, DC, adapted from Appendix I.