



## Founding a Local Listens Group

Local Listens organizations are founded and operated by citizen leaders in communities and regions located across New Hampshire. Sometimes local Listens groups are affiliated with existing nonprofit organizations, and sometimes they are stand-alone organizations that may or may not be formally incorporated. In any case, each local Listens organization is independent and locally run.

All local Listens groups operate by common guiding principles for effective public engagement (listed below) and network with NH Listens and other Listens organizations to strengthen civic engagement in our communities, our region, and our state. Each local Listens organization is expected to create a nonpartisan, fair, and transparent process, without advocating for a specific cause or agenda, thus local leaders are drawn from all sectors and political points of view.

### Our Principles

- Bring people together from all walks of life
- Provide time for in-depth, engaged conversations
- Respect differences as well as seek common ground
- Achieve outcomes that lead to informed and equitable community solutions

### What Will NH Listens Do?

- Share advice and tools related to public engagement and deliberation, including guidance and templates for discussion guides, report writing, and evaluation tools.
- Meet with you and local leaders to discuss how public engagement can work.
- Stay in touch to provide ongoing support and guidance.
- Local, customized facilitator training.
- Support a statewide network of trained facilitators and Local Listens organizers.





## What Will Your Town Listens Do?

- Form a balanced leadership group that can earn trust as nonpartisan and fair.
  - » Consider ways to include a mix of perspectives and political views.
  - » No one person is neutral or objective but, as a group, local leaders work together to maintain fairness and a balanced approach to solving problems.
- Organize outreach to establish an ongoing presence in your community.
  - » Start meeting one-to-one and with groups to let people know who you are and the mission of your group.
  - » Build relationships so when the time comes to launch a specific community-wide conversation, you have a network of decision makers and thought leaders who know and trust your work.
  - » Be transparent about meeting times and locations.
  - » Connect with local and regional media.
- Work on the ground to recruit facilitators and volunteers.
  - » Promote the Facilitating for Public Engagement Trainings offered by NH Listens and let people know there are lots of ways to be involved: board member, event planner, host registration, facilitator, website and communications help, and more.
- Identify cash and in-kind sources of support (website, meeting space, snacks).
  - » Local Listens groups are not particularly expensive to run. Often they are connected to other 501c3 organizations or seek a fiscal sponsor if needed for a large project.
  - » NH Listens has some matching funds provided by the NH Charitable Foundation to support the development of local Listens organizations.
- Keep in touch! We'd love to help.

