

DEEP POVERTY INITIATIVE

Lived Experience Townhall Action Guide

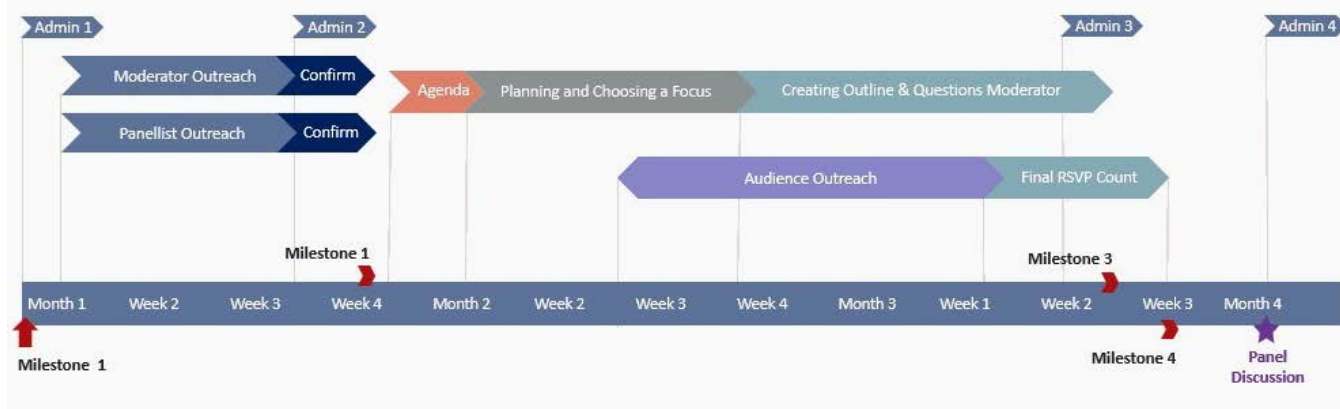


AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

Deep poverty occurs when an individual's household income falls below fifty percent of the poverty line. More than 18.5 million people within the United States live in deep poverty. Research has shown that living in deep poverty can have profound effects on an individual's behavioral, physical, and emotional wellbeing. It is important to gain insight from those directly affected by deep poverty and incorporate their input into the work already being done.

As a part of the *Engage and Empower* Objectives of our Toolkit, we call on you to organize a lived experience townhall in your state and/or local communities to provide a space for people with lived experiences within the community to share their stories and insight with psychologists, leaders of community-based organizations, and other service providers. The first objective of this townhall is to empower community members with lived experience to have a voice in sharing what their needs are and to become involved in the decision making of how to improve outcomes for people living in deep poverty. The second objective of this townhall is to give psychologists, representatives of community-based organizations, and other service providers an opportunity to engage with community members who are living in deep poverty; to listen to and incorporate community members' input in program planning and implementation; and to explore opportunities to apply the input for improved service and impact to reduce deep poverty locally.

TIMELINE Organizing a Panel Discussion



Outreach Efforts (Townhall)

- Make updates to the two sample invitation letters drafted in the Appendix section of this document.
- Procure a list of local officials, psychologists, and leaders belonging to local organizations confronting poverty and invite them to participate in the townhall.
- Reach out to local organizations (i.e. local libraries, community centers, schools, YMCA, etc.) to advertise the town hall event and to invite community members to attend the townhall discussion. Procure a list of advocates with lived experiences and invite them to share their stories, suggest ideas, and ask questions of psychologists and representatives of local community-based organizations, using the sample letter drafted in the Appendix section of this document.
- Consider polling attendees to identify the audience make up and perceptions about the state of deep poverty in the local community.

Outreach Efforts (Facilitator)

- Research advocates, psychologists, and journalists in your local community that are well versed in your selected issues and invite them to facilitate the townhall discussion with organization leaders and community members.
 - Twitter is a good place to locate advocates and journalists.
 - Attending local townhall events will also expose you to community advocates.
- Select three individuals, however, initially email your first preference for a facilitator. Email at least 8 weeks before the townhall.
- An alternative option is having a President of the affiliate organization or an appointed liaison facilitate the panel discussion.

Administrative Tasks

Organize Your Event (Admin 1)

- Connect with leadership of your affiliate organization and ask for access to an event space for the townhall; or reach out and connect with a local library, school, or coffee shop. If you belong to a University, request space from your Department chair.
- Based on the choice of location, consider transportation accessibility (public transit, parking availability, etc.)

Administrative: Preparation (Admin 2)

- Request a short bio from the facilitator for you to introduce
- Request short introductions for each participating community-based organization/leader/service provider and what they do within the community to address the effects of deep poverty, in order to introduce them to community members attending the townhall.
- Include the website link to the Deep Poverty Initiative in the outreach email and invitation

Administrative: During the Panel (Admin 3)

- Print the agenda for attendees
- Assign somebody to serve as timekeeper
- Assign somebody to serve as recorder
- Provide attendees with notecards for questions and suggestions they might have during the discussion

Preparing for the Discussion

Defining Your Agenda

- Framing: Explain how each of the agenda components supports the larger purpose of the Deep Poverty Initiative.
- Understand the local deep poverty landscape.
- Review local organizations efforts to address deep poverty within the community.
- Hear stories from people with lived experience and their suggestions on ways to address deep poverty within their community.
- Apply the [intersectional equity lens](#)ⁱ to understanding opportunities to strengthen intervention efforts.
- Psychologists learn how they can directly get involved with the work of community leaders.
- Build time in for networking after the townhall.

Planning for Your Conversation & Choosing a Focus

- Allow for community members to suggest issues pertaining to deep poverty within their community. Research 2-3 local issues pertaining to deep poverty. Refer to the following resources for assistance:
 - [50 State Policy Tracker](#), National Center for Children in Poverty
 - [Young Child Risk Calculator](#), National Center for Children in Poverty
 - [Spotlight on the States](#), Spotlight on Poverty & Opportunity
 - Refer to Deep Poverty Initiative Issue Briefs for more inspiration
- Research state and local government policy and programs pertaining to the 2-3 issues.
- Consider how much time you will allocate to the audience question and answer.

Sample Outline for Townhall

- Introduce the Deep Poverty Initiative and the agenda and purpose of this townhall
 - Include the polling data you collected during registration – what the professional make-up and involvement of audience members is, and what perceptions about the state of deep poverty are.
 - [Present list of guidelines](#)ⁱⁱ for having a respectful dialogue. Ask if anyone would like to add anything to the list.
- Have local community organization representatives introduce themselves and what their organization does to reduce deep poverty
- Have each advocate with lived experience introduce themselves before sharing their specific experiences
- Open it up to community members to ask questions of the different organizations, share their experiences, needs and recommendations to local organizations who serve them

Sample Questions

- Explain how your organization, or assigned role confronts deep poverty in your community and broadly?
- What would you want psychologists to know about your experience/work?
- How do you think psychologists could contribute?
- What are some of the misconceptions about people in your community?
- What are the greatest challenges that you experience?

Facilitation Tips

- Refer to the following resources for advice on facilitating a panel discussion:
 - [How to Moderate a Roundtable Discussion](#)ⁱⁱⁱ
 - [Developing Facilitation Skills](#)^{iv}

- 0 [Capturing What People Say^v](#)

Invitation Letter for Organization Leaders (Sample)

Dear [NAME],

I am [YOUR NAME], a psychologist at [YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME]. I am participating in The American Psychological Association (APA)'s 2019 Deep Poverty Initiative which proposes moving beyond understanding causes and consequences of poverty towards using psychological science as a catalyst to address and help solve deep poverty.

In 2017, the U.S. Census Bureau reported 5.7% of the total population lived in deep poverty. For [CITY OR STATE], it reported [XX%] in deep poverty.^{xxix} Confronting the issues of deep poverty at the local and state level requires innovative engagement between service-providers and community members with lived experience, to empower people with lived experience to have a voice in how the issues of deep poverty is addressed. We intend to facilitate this process by bringing together leaders of organizations serving individuals experiencing income insecurity and advocates with lived experience for a townhall discussion.

As a leader of [ORGANIZATION NAME], we believe your input is integral during the [TITLE] townhall. We invite you to join a group of leaders and advocates with lived experience from your local community for a discussion about programmatic success, barriers, and opportunities for improvement. We know that you are a terrific speaker and our [community members or attendees] will gain much from your talk on the work of your organization to confront deep poverty.

Please let me know by [DATE] whether you would be interested in participating in the townhall discussion, and attach a short bio explaining your current and former work. Attached is some background information on the APA Presidential Deep Poverty Initiative.

Thank you for taking the time to read our invitation, and I very much look forward to hearing from you soon.

Event Details

- Facebook Link:
- Event Title:
- When:
- Where:
- What:

Invitation Letter for Facilitator (Sample)

Dear [NAME],

I am [YOUR NAME], a psychologist at [YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME]. I am participating in The American Psychological Association (APA)'s 2019 Deep Poverty Initiative which proposes moving beyond understanding causes and consequences of poverty towards using psychological science as a catalyst to address and help solve deep poverty.

We believe that given the manifold sectors psychologists belong to and the varied skills psychologists possess, psychologists are well positioned to play a role in community driven, poverty interventions. We intend to facilitate the relationship between psychologists and the community by bringing together leaders of organizations serving individuals experiencing income insecurity and advocates with lived experience for a townhall.

We invite you to facilitate a discussion for a group of local, community leaders about programmatic success, barriers, and opportunities to strengthen efforts to confront deep poverty. We know that you are an active agent, pushing the envelope for progressive change and can facilitate a dialogue that our **[community members or attendees]** will gain much from.

Event Details

- Facebook Link:
- Event Title:
- When:
- Where:
- What:

Invitation Letter for Audience Members (Sample)

I am [YOUR NAME], a psychologist at [YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME]. I am participating in The American Psychological Association (APA)'s 2019 Deep Poverty Initiative which proposes moving beyond understanding causes and consequences of poverty towards using psychological science as a catalyst to address and help solve deep poverty.

The APA Deep Poverty Initiative has organized the [TITLE] townhall where we gather locals and advocates working to address deep poverty in this community, to have an honest conversation about the latest issues and research on **deep poverty** and what it means for patients, policy and practice. Current, pertinent issues facing your community members will be discussed, and ways that psychologists might be able to help. The intended outcome of the townhall to begin the process of to enhancing partnerships for between psychologists and local efforts to fight deep poverty.

The response to this event so far has been outstanding and we're excited to share the speakers we have lined up to get the conversation going. [NAME], [ROLE, ORGANIZATION, CONTRIBUTION TO Townhall]

We invite you to join us during the townhall event to hear from organizational leadership, grow your network, and ask critical questions that further the extend of the dialogue.

Please register here [Insert link]

Event Details

- Facebook Link:
- Event Title:
- When:
- Where:
- What:

This document is a product of the American Psychological Association Deep Poverty Initiative Working Group.

ⁱ <https://viablefuturescenter.org/racemattersinstitute/resources/racial-equity-impact-analysis/>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/publinks/generalguidelines>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://medium.com/@agwp/how-to-moderate-a-roundtable-discussion-ca11ae5ef804>

^{iv} <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/group-facilitation/facilitation-skills/main>

^v <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/group-facilitation/record-meeting/main>