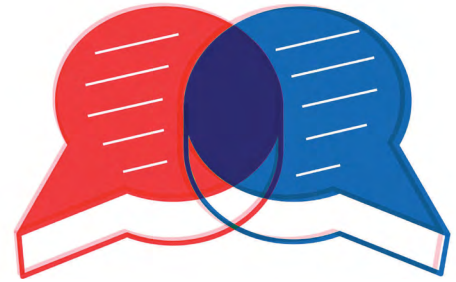


10 Steps

TO BRIDGING POLITICAL DIVIDES



A finance officer's job is not easy, and political polarization can make it even more difficult. As part of its Rethinking Budgeting initiative, GFOA has worked with Constructive Dialogue Institute to develop resources that will help finance officers navigate politically polarized environments. The 10 steps below are distilled from "Bridging Political Divides in Local Government: A New Way Forward Based on a Nationwide Study."

➡ Read the full report at gfoa.org/materials/bridging-political-divides-in-local-government

1 | **Get to know the six "taste buds" outlined in Moral Foundations Theory:** care, fairness, liberty, loyalty, authority, and sanctity. Along with people's taste buds and taste preferences, cultures and people within these cultures have the same taste buds for morality, but they often have different preferences and draw on them in different ways, and to different degrees, to form specific moral worldviews.

2 | **Understand your own moral foundations.** "Know thyself" is ancient wisdom from across many cultures. Consider taking the Moral Foundations test at yourmorals.org to see which moral foundations you emphasize and how that compares to others. This is a step toward recognizing blind spots and bridging divides.

3 | **Acknowledge that moral foundations** that are different from yours are also valid. Moral Foundations Theory argues for moral pluralism, which explains how two people can disagree about an issue while both having morally defensible positions. People have different visions and take different actions that may be of equal merit and virtue but are nevertheless conflicting.

4 | **Apply "moral reframing" to conflicts.** Look for opportunities to show someone how their preferred moral taste can be accommodated within policy arguments. For example, care for the natural environment (typically a position associated with liberals) could be reframed as conservation of an important (sacred) community asset for future generations to appeal to conservatives.

5 | **Increase your intellectual humility,** which is the extent to which people are willing to consider that their viewpoint might not represent the complete truth or that they could be wrong.

6 | **Decrease affective polarization,** or the way people view others who have different political beliefs. For example, someone with high affective polarization would see people with different political beliefs as an enemy.

7 | **Reject dichotomous thinking** or thinking about political questions as black or white—which doesn't give much room for mutual understanding, much less finding mutually agreeable solutions.

8 | **Separate goals from strategies.** Liberals and conservatives often share the same underlying goals of making their communities better places to live; the disagreement is in figuring out the best way to get there. So, identify the shared goal and keep that separate from suggested strategies; then discuss the strategies, looking to use the best ideas from both sides.

9 | **Bring together the best of both liberal and conservative perspectives to create new ideas.** For example, one part of the community might wish to invest in protecting police officers from frivolous charges (respect for authority), and another might want to invest in measures to prevent officers from acting inappropriately (care). Body cameras could be an example of a solution that accomplishes both.

10 | **Incorporate diverse viewpoints when making decisions.** They make for new and stronger ideas than those from only one side.