

OVERVIEW OF THE ARIZONA TOWN HALL PROCESS

Arizona Town Hall is a private nonprofit corporation founded in 1962 for the purpose of creating solutions to critical policy issues facing Arizona. Much of the success of the Arizona Town Halls lies in the fact that the process respects the knowledge, thoughts and ideas of all the participants.

Panel Discussions

The panel discussions are the most important piece of the Town Hall session. Each panel addresses the same discussion questions during Town Hall. The process and guiding principles for the panel discussions are as follows:

- Brief self-introductions (name, school, area of study if applicable).
- The Panel Chair reads one question at a time and discussion follows.
- It is important to stick to the question at hand.
- The panel strives for consensus (votes are taken only if absolutely necessary).
- Consensus is reached when no one wants to add anything, and no one objects strongly to the wording offered.
- The Recorder's role is to capture the consensus of the discussion.
- Viewpoints of all participants are considered equally valuable, regardless of title, age or position.
- Discussions are encouraged to be robust while maintaining a respect for different viewpoints. Participants are allowed to criticize concepts—not people.
- Observers may attend the sessions but cannot participate or contribute to discussions.
- The process is as valuable as the recommendations.

Creation of the Recommendations Report

Once complete, the consensus statements are gathered from each panel. The Town Hall reviews the statements from panels and looks for consensus across all of the groups. A draft report of what appears to be the consensus of the Town Hall participants is created and then distributed to a wider audience of Arizona leaders.