



**THE POLICY CIRCLE®**  
START THE CONVERSATION

# THE PLAYBOOK



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Welcome to The Policy Circle. The Policy Circle was created with women like you in mind: women who are leaders that pursue collaboration to solve problems. The Policy Circle, through data-driven policy briefs and enlightened conversation, increases women's understanding of the interdependence of, or connections between, government, business, and individuals. The Policy Circle builds their confidence so that women can take the lead on the most-pressing policy issues of the day.

This playbook will serve as a road map for your unique Policy Circle journey. The framework and resources have been built for you. This playbook is created to help guide you as you build your Circle. There is no right or wrong way to take this journey. The Policy Circle knows and appreciates each woman has a mind of her own, her own objectives and visions for her life. The Policy Circle team isn't here to plan your journey. Instead, we are simply supplying the tools and resources for your journey, to support you as you become more engaged on the issues and in your community!

You have found a unique place to learn, connect and grow personally and professionally. Members become part of a tight network of women who are becoming influencers in their community and encouraging one another along the way.

Let's get started!

Kathy Sylvie Angela

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# The Policy Circle Core Principles

**“Doubt kills more dreams than failure ever will.”**

**-Suzy Kassem**



# Core Principles

- **An open economy works:** We believe the core idea that practices and policies which foster creativity and responsibility provide greater opportunities and better lives, especially for the most vulnerable.
- **Fact based dialogue:** We learn through reliable data driven research from well-known and respected sources.
- **Learn from each other:** There is value in having face-to-face discussions in a safe forum that empowers women to share ideas, find their voice, learn from each other and get engaged.
- **Social issues are not discussed:** Public policy discussions of certain social issues can be divisive and distracting, so we agree to a “truce” on those issues while we focus on key issues affecting our communities, businesses, institutions.
- **What is said in a circle stays in a circle:** Circle discussions are “Off the Record” meaning what is said in a circle is not intended to be attributed publicly to the person speaking or recorded. However, if a person writes on the website, in a blog, in social media or speaks at a gathering or public forum, she cannot expect those statements will be maintained as “off the record”.
- **We are all agents of change:** We seek to increase the number and power of women who support these ideas. Talk about The Policy Circle!
- **Privacy of Contact Information:** Circle members do not use the contact information of other members for business or fundraising purposes.

*The Policy Circle is a 501(c)(3) charity. As such, it does not engage in lobbying or political activity. We respect your opinions and affirm your right to lobby or engage in political activity in your individual capacity. However, circle members are not permitted to lobby or engage in political activity on behalf of, or in the name of, The Policy Circle.*

# Getting Started

**“The best way to predict the future is to invent it.”  
-Alan Kay**

# Getting Started

Congratulations! We are so happy you have started your Policy Circle. You have found a unique place to learn, connect and grow personally and professionally. This handbook will serve as a roadmap for your unique policy circle journey.

We have [resources on the website](#) where you can find helpful hints for spreading the word and building your circle.

Start by reflecting on the women in your life to identify two potential Co-Leader and circle members. Maybe a neighbor or someone in your same line of work, a mom from your child's class or an empty-nester or women looking to pivot and find a new focus in their life. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who do you know who is reflective and seems open to discussing issues?
- Who do I trust and enjoy?
- Who do I know who is considerate and a good listener?
- Who do I know who may share my values?
- Who do I know who might offer a different perspective?
- Who do I know who seeks knowledge to go beyond the headlines?
- Who do I know who is active in the community?
- Who do I know who would appreciate conversations about fiscal responsibility, the role of government and the voices of citizens and businesses?
- Who do I know who wants to get engaged but doesn't know how?



**Already have women in mind? List them here.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_


Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Need Help Finding Members

Use The Policy Circle 3-6-12 model. Invite two women to form a circle of three. Then each of you ask two women and the circle has quickly grown to 6. Pretty soon the idea will spread from 3 to 6 to 12!



While your group can include any number of women, we have found a circle between four and twelve members is ideal. Your circle does not need to be only people you know. This is a great opportunity to add new people to your networks.



 Start with just 2 women and build the circle together

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Once your list of potential circle members is complete, it's time to share the Mission and Vision of The Policy Circle with them. We make this easy with the "Introduction to The Policy Circle" brief and website. Follow the steps below.

#### Website Basics: Introducing the Policy Circle to potential members

1. Log-in to the website and navigate to your Circle page.
2. Click on the blue [Add Members To This Circle] button on your page.  

3. Enter the email addresses of women you would like to invite to your circle.  

4. The text included in the invitation is editable, therefore you can personalize it for the person you are inviting. You can even put in suggested dates and times for the first conversation to start building a consensus.
5. Hit the [Send Message] button.

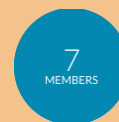
Once they accept your invitation to join, they will have:

- Access to your circle page for ease of communication
- Access to the Policy Briefs to read and share..
- The ability to share information with the broader Policy Circle community through posts.

Also, they will be listed as a member of your circle and you will see your circle count go up! Anyone listed as a pending member has yet to accept your invitation. Your circle membership count is listed in the blue bubble on the right side of your circle page.

#### Website Basics Your Membership Roster

1. From your Circle page, click on the tab titled "Members" or on the blue circle in the upper right corner



Some groups build quickly and some take time to build. Remember the 3-6-12 model if you need help growing yours.

## The Why Behind This National Movement-A Dash of Inspiration:

“Too often, women care deeply about issues--such as education, healthcare, housing, food access, etc--yet do not have quality, reliable access points to the resources, conversations, and relationships that help them cultivate an informed, unique position on these issues. Lacking sufficient substance and citation, women's opinions can be cast off as irrelevant or ignorant. My friends and I would like to start a Policy Circle to both hold ourselves accountable to our best, most-informed selves, and support each other in learning, discussing, and taking action in alignment with the innate power we have to effect positive change in our own lives and the lives of others.”

Lauren, Circle Leader in Indiana.



# Planning Your First Meeting

**“What gets scheduled gets done.” -Michael Hyatt**

# Planning Your First Meeting

## Policy Briefs are the Cornerstone of Roundtable Discussions

Conversations revolve around Policy Circle briefs. The Policy Circle Briefs are curated from many sources which provide both the historical reference to issues and current outcomes of public policies. The Policy Circle Briefs provide documented facts and links to additional information.

The Policy Circle Briefs are categorized by issue and The Policy Circle on-line Library suggests various series of 5 conversations. Each circle can choose which brief they want to discuss. Members read them in advance of your meeting and come prepared to discuss and share their perspectives.

The Policy Circle Briefs remove the need for you or anyone in your circle to be an issue expert. This is a discussion about the information provided in the brief. Talk about what you learned, what you agree with or don't, or what some in your circle have experienced on this issue. Each policy brief comes with a discussion guide, which gives structure to the conversation.

## What is a Policy Brief?

The Policy Circle Briefs are multimedia, they include links and videos, and fact-based overviews of major policy topics, written from the perspective that policy should create an economic environment where human creativity can flourish, thus providing the best path to self-sufficiency. The Policy Circle Briefs are designed to enable you to learn about a policy area in an approachable and accessible manner. They can be reviewed in about 30 minutes to 1 hour. To learn more about what goes into a policy brief, click [here](#).



## Where Are The Policy Briefs Located?

The Library of Policy Circle Briefs can be found under the title [Policy Briefs] on the blue sidebar of your circle page.



## How Can I Share The Policy Briefs?

On the first page of every policy brief there is an interactive button titled [Forward To A Friend]. Utilizing this feature will allow you to share the document with multiple email addresses. The included email text is editable so feel free to personalize your message.



## How Do I Choose Which Policy Brief to Discuss?

The Policy Circle Briefs are organized into corresponding themes for 5 conversations. Some circles focus their 5 conversations on a specific theme, others explore a new theme at each meeting based on the interest of the members, current events, or issues in their states.

Themes are offered for your convenience. Once and if your circle has identified an area of focus or interest, following a set of “5” may be an easy path to planning your meetings.



- The foundational five
- Five that impact communities
- Five that impact business
- Five for active citizenship
- Five that impact your wallet
- Five for a world view

### The Foundational Five

For your first conversation, The Policy Circle suggests either the [Free Enterprise](#) or [Civic Engagement](#) as both are foundational for understanding our system of government.

Many circles begin their first year by selecting theme: The Foundational 5. This set of conversations includes the Free Enterprise, Civic Engagement, Poverty, Entitlements, and Fiscal Responsibility briefs.

After you have selected a brief for your first meeting, it is time to set the date and get the word out.

## Decide on a Date, Time, and Place to Convene Your Circle

Each circle leader has different ideas and ways to convene the conversation. Some circles meet every second Tuesday of every other month, or monthly. Circle members suggest several dates and times and pick the one that works best for the most people. Others choose the date, time and place and hope most women can attend.

Circles meet:

- Over lunch
- At night in their homes
- In conference rooms at work
- At libraries
- In restaurants and coffee shops
- At civic groups and educational forums
- Online via Zoom video

Some circle leaders choose to host all of the meetings. Others share the hosting duties and rotate to different locations. The choice is yours.

# Hosting Your First Meeting

**“A year from now, you may wish you had started today.” -  
Karen Lamb.**



# Hosting Your First Meeting

The date, time and place has been set and the topic has been chosen. Now, what actually happens during the conversation?

The Policy Circle is based on the Socratic learning style which is not only the oldest form of fostering critical thinking but also the most powerful. The focus is on questions, not answers. It is meant to stimulate critical thinking and to draw out ideas. This is why all policy briefs include a discussion guide, which along with the Policy Circle ground rules, make a facilitated conversation easy to accomplish.

Members are asked to assume the following roles during group discussion:

1. Facilitator
2. Timekeeper
3. Note taker

Facilitators are in charge of ensuring the conversation starts, continues and stays on track. For your first circle conversation, it works best for the Circle Leader to serve as the facilitator. Some Circle leaders always serve as the facilitator, while others have co-leaders or members take turns. You and your members can decide what works best for your Circle. roundtable discussions are meant to be civil and include all participants. As the Circle Leader this is your greatest responsibility.

After you greet your guests, facilitators start the meeting by doing the following:

## Task #1 - Read the Ground Rules

At the beginning of each meeting set expectations of civility by reading the ground rules, shared here.

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so be prepared to hear a different point of view. Listen first, and focus on the facts.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

- **Respect the timer:** Each of you will have 2-3 minutes to speak. Use the timer sent to you in your welcome kit to help people keep to the suggested time frame.
- **Keep it confidential:** Policy circles are safe spaces to share, with everyone agreeing to keep in the circle what starts in the circle.
- **The “Table-it” Rule:** If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

## Task #2 - Assign a Timekeeper and Notetaker

**Assign a timekeeper:** Inform your guests they have two-to-three minutes to respond to each question. Clearly communicate this is not to limit people’s input, but to ensure everyone gets their turn. It may seem a bit stilted but women really appreciate it! The pressure is on the timer to keep someone from talking too much. You will receive a sand timer in the mail from The Policy Circle Team when your first circle conversation has been scheduled.

Trust the process, using the timer invites the quiet ones to the conversations, and ensures that everyone speaks. Giving a voice to all participants is key to the success of your circle. Using the timer is an excellent facilitation skill to develop.



**Assign a notetaker.** This is someone who will record the number of women at the conversation, any ideas of impact and key takeaways from the conversation. The notetaker will post a recap about your meeting on your circle page, to keep a log of your meetings for all members.

## Task #3 - Allow time for Introductions of all Members (about 15 minutes)

Go around the circle allowing each member to three minutes to introduce themselves giving their initial reaction to The Policy Circle brief and what lens they wore while reading it; are they reacting as a professional, business owner, parent, expert in the field or curious citizen?

## Task #4 - Allow time for recap and next steps (about 15 minutes)

To end the discussion this time should be used to determine the next meeting date and topic as, well as, the next steps on this issue and to prepare the recap on your circle page. The recap is featured in the following website video.



"Last night was great!!! It was a wonderful group of interesting, intelligent, kind, open, inquisitive & fun women, and we had a stimulating discussion. We all left craving more knowledge... and we are excited to meet again in June. Carrie was a terrific facilitator, and the format y'all have created, in which everyone takes turns around the table to speak, is great. It brings out the quieter types, and ensures the discussion is among all, not just a few. It was really lovely! ...The brief was well organized & easy to follow, and the whole thing is just so well done! The amount of thought that went into crafting this organization & the execution of it/website/reading materials/etc. is apparent. Thank you again for extending the invitation, & connecting me with Carrie - I am thrilled & honored to be part of something very special!

- Bridget, Nashville

# First Meeting Script

This is an actual script which can be followed for your first meeting. It is based on the Free Enterprise Brief and can be adapted for other topics.

**Circle Leader:** “I’d like to start by calling on each of you individually to introduce yourself and share what “lens of care” did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)? Feel free to share what you found most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters about this issue?

(After introductions, it is time to dive into the discussion guide questions. Invite each member to give a reaction to the brief answering the following questions. There may not be enough time to get to all of the questions, as the facilitator you may begin with the ones which interest you most. Start with the discussion guide questions, and here are a few more options to choose from.)

**Circle Leader:**

- In your opinion, what is the priority in regards to business growth and entrepreneurship?
- Were there some points with which you strongly agreed or disagreed? Was there a perspective that was missing?
- What should be the role of government in our economy? Where do government, business, and individuals intersect? Who are the key stakeholders in our local economy?
- Are businesses thriving in our community? Is it easy to establish and grow an enterprise?
- Is there a role for public policy or government intervention in mitigating income inequality? Is income mobility possible in a free enterprise market?
- What is the impact of government rules, regulations, fees on entrepreneurship and business growth in our area? What are the costs to the government and to the businesses?
- Are there some changes that you think are necessary around you? Is there a sense of urgency, or long term systemic changes that need to happen?

*[After a sufficient amount of time going through the discussion guide questions, some circles move the conversation into the final part of the roundtable discussion: Let's Act]*

**Circle Leader:** “Let’s pick 2-3 facts we think best highlights this current topic so we can develop our talking points on the issue. Let's review the list in the discussion guide. Feel free to suggest ones not listed here. If we come up with new ones we can share them with the broader community in our recap.” (Make sure your notetaker records them)

heard as our takeaway that we can share in our recap.

Examples:

- We are concerned the average citizen doesn't understand how they lose a little bit of their freedom every time they look to the government to solve a problem. Isn't the point of America to be independent and self-reliant so you don't risk having another person be in control of you?
- Government in search of utopia will always fail because government does not have the incentive to solve problems they only have the incentive to keep the taxes flowing in.
- I think it's important to point out that most people understand life takes work and nothing will be handed to you. That is why the free market system has worked.

**Circle Leader:** Before we go, let's discuss some ways we can take action on this issue. I would love to hear if other women have ideas so we can share them with the broader Policy Circle community in our recap.

- Do we want to learn more about how free enterprise is working in our community, city, state?
- What organizations, legislators and journalists could we contact to ask questions, learn more and get engaged?

**Circle Leader:** "Thank you again for participating in the conversation. What date and time would work best for everyone to meet again? And what topic would we like to explore next?"

We can either continue with another brief from The Foundational Five (Civic Engagement, Poverty, Government Regulation, or Taxation) or consider exploring some related briefs to Free Enterprise (Economic Growth, Government Regulation, Creating Career Pathways).

[Have your computer handy so you can peruse the topics together.]

## Track and Share Your Next Circle Get Together:



### Our Next Conversation

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief: \_\_\_\_\_

# Facilitation Tips

**“A ship in harbor is safe, but that's not what ships are for.”  
-John a. Shedd**



# Facilitation Tips

## An Effective Small Group Facilitator:

- Uses the Socratic style of discussing using questions to draw out ideas.
- Guides, models, encourages, and supports.
- Is flexible, patient, friendly, and enthusiastic.
- Reminds learners of the goal.
- Does not serve as an “expert”.
- Resists the urge to dispense information.
- Gives and receives feedback.
- Discusses problems that arise.
- Is comfortable with silence. Learners think, and thought requires time.
- Comes prepared to refocus the discussion.
- A good facilitator is not fearful of saying, “I don’t know.”

Understand the role is to encourage everyone to participate and share, as well as ensure the conversation stays on topic.

For more information on how to have an effective circle discussion click [here](#).

Congratulations, you are now ready to host your first circle meeting.

# How To Use The Website

**“It does not matter how slowly you go as long as  
you do not stop.” -Confucius**

# Website Functions

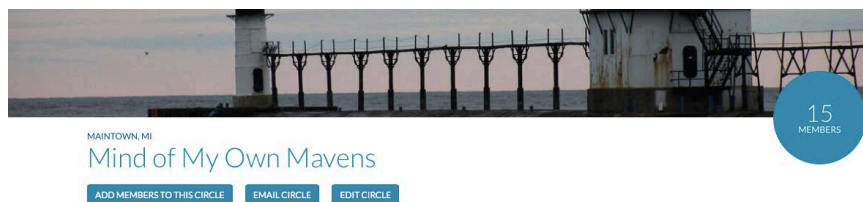
The Policy Circle website makes convening the conversation easier. Below is your master list of tools available to you. Acclimate yourself now to these tools and functions so they are familiar when you log-in to your circle page. And feel free to be creative when utilizing this educational platform. Should you have any additional questions after reviewing the website functions and toolkits, please contact [help@thepolicycircle.org](mailto:help@thepolicycircle.org).

## Finding Your Circle Page

You can find your circle by expanding My Circles in the blue side bar or by clicking the My Circles tab in your Newsfeed.



## Using Your Circle Page



### ADD MEMBERS TO THIS CIRCLE

[Add Members To This Circle] this function is only available to Circle Leaders. It allows a unique and personal invitation to be sent and includes a concise summary of the mission and work of The Policy Circle. It is the easiest way to invite women to join your circle. Note: You may add multiple emails in the [To] field to issue several invitations at once.

### EMAIL CIRCLE

[Email Circle] this function allows Circle Leaders and members to email each other directly from the circle page allowing for quick communication among the group.

### EDIT CIRCLE

[Edit Circle] this function allows Circle Leaders to update their circle page information, circle picture and add details about their circle.



[Posts] this function allows The Policy Circle network to communicate with one another outside of the scheduled conversations. It is a place where everyone can share best practices, interesting articles and ideas.



[Create Event] after following the prompts to create your event it will send invitations and track rsvp's. It also allows you to add a Policy Brief into the invitation so every invitee has access to the reading material.



[Resources] this tab lists outside sources from whom we have obtained information for the benefit of circle members. These resource groups and organizations are eager to help Policy Circle leaders and members learn more about their issues of expertise. We are always growing the number of resources we offer, so be sure to check this often.



[Recaps] this is a self-reporting function where Circle Leaders share details about their meetings. This will also allow members to catch up on any past meeting they might have missed. It is strongly encouraged Circle Leaders fill out the recap form or assign this task to a circle member.

## A mToolbox

Please take time to visit the Circle Leader toolkit in the blue side bar. It includes tools to help you grow your circle, organize your meetings, and engage in your community.



# Thank You

The Policy Circle is a nonpartisan, non-profit organization committed to advancing women's leadership through expanding knowledge of the impact of public policy on our society. The website offers additional information and resources not included in this Playbook, so please take the time to review it.

Thank you for becoming a part of our national network of women dedicated to learning the facts about issues our families and communities deal with everyday. Through these facts and conversations women become more knowledgeable and confident in their voices. This naturally translates into us becoming stronger advocates for the issues that matter most. With your interest, involvement and support, we will continue to encourage women to learn about the importance of public policy on our free enterprise system and become influencers in their community.

Thank you for starting the conversation to change the conversation!

For questions contact:

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