

Guidelines for Stakeholder Conversations

Society of Biblical Literature

These guidelines and best practices are suggested to support the conversations each SBL committee/board will have over the next several months. The convening groups (committees/boards) should plan to host conversations lasting 60-90 minutes in length to allow time for each member to speak if desired; for the group to reflect together; and for the development of a set of short term and long terms action items as outcomes from the discussion. It is recommended that at minimum of two meetings be scheduled per committee/board.

Meeting Preparation

Facilitation Team:

A two-member team from each committee/board will meet before the group conversation to ensure a shared understanding of the task, to review questions, and to discuss the general conversation format. This team consists of the following.

- *Group Facilitator (chair of the committee/board or other member skilled in facilitation)*: the facilitator asks the questions and moves the discussion along, and if/when there is disagreement is able to help clarify issues and build consensus. In some respects, this person is a provocateur, leading the discussion with “what if?” and “how can we think of this differently?” as they guide the discussion.
- *Note Taker and Finisher (member of the group)*: The note taker/finisher closes each group discussion, summarizes notes and action items of the conversation, and suggests or reviews next steps.

Meeting Framing Questions

- What work needs to be done within our committee/editorial board to address the needs of Africana scholars and support them as well as other Scholars of Color as we work toward a more inclusive and welcoming community? Can we develop a common understanding among committee/board members that leads to clarity of purpose and impact?
- What obstacles and challenges do we need to speak out loud and name in order to get beyond them as we seek to create an inclusive and welcoming environment in our committee/board? Can we identify the so-called elephant(s) in the room?
- What short term actions and policies can we engage in right now? What is the risk assessment associated with each action item? In other words, what would we have to let go of or give up, or what might we fear in taking such action, such as an unintended consequence or a challenge to the way the system has traditionally worked?

- What long term actions and policies can we plan for the next three to five years? What is the risk assessment associated with each action item? What would be necessary for such Society-wide culture change?
- What bold “big idea” have you been thinking about that you have not raised as you think about SBL’s future?

An additional lens to consider: John Kutsko is developing strategic discussions with colleagues in peer organizations as well as with the SBL Council on what he considers to be the core work of learned societies on behalf of their members. He is calling this core work the 3Cs: Convening, Credentialing, and Creating Community(ies). These 3Cs might be an additional lens to be used by you to engage your committee/editorial board around the questions listed above.

Meeting Format, Recording, Summary and Outcomes Document, and Continuing Conversations

- Meeting Format: A Zoom meeting format is recommended with a note taker designated for the committee/board to record notes and recommended action items?
- Written Document from Each Group: Each group is being asked to produce and submit to the SBL Council a document outlining short- and long-term action items. The document should include timetables and those accountable to complete the actions. *The committee document should be sent to Glory Emekeme, Executive Assistant and Manger of Development, SBL at glory.emekeme@sbl-site.org.*
- Continuation of the Conversation: Are additional resources needed to continue the conversation? When will a second conversation be scheduled as follow up?
- Additional Questions for Follow-up Conversation(s):
 - How are other minoritized groups impacted by the current issues? Are the experiences of racism the same or different among the groups?
 - How are responses to these issues specifically addressing SBL’s global outreach?