

## BACKGROUND

Let's Talk, Marathon County (2023–2025) was a multi-year deliberative dialogue program led by the Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service (WIPPS). The program gathered nearly 100 politically and demographically diverse residents from urban and rural areas of Marathon County to participate in structured small-group discussions on complex public issues.

Through moderated deliberation and post-dialogue evaluation, Let's Talk examined whether sustained, facilitated civic dialogue could increase trust, perceived common ground, and confidence in civil discourse within a politically divided community.

## PROGRAM GOALS

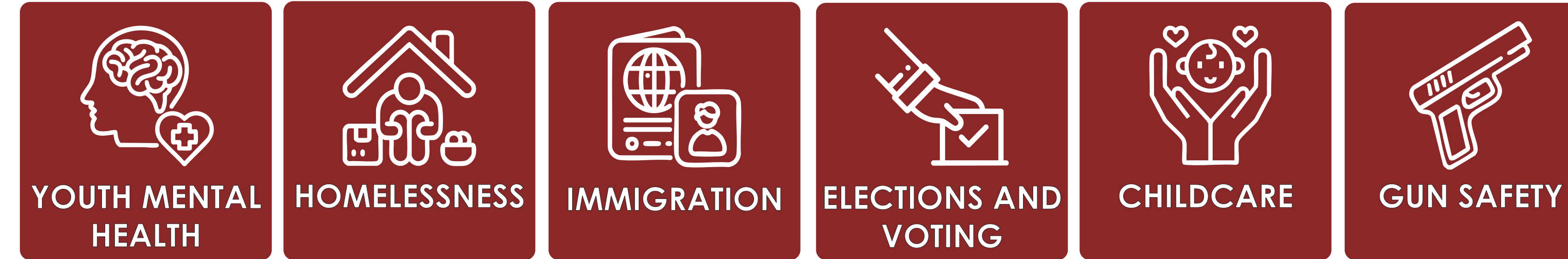
- 1 Create spaces for residents to address issues that matter in a civil and constructive manner.
- 2 Build and sustain a community culture of civil dialogue around important.
- 3 Improve feelings of trust among fellow residents despite differences in viewpoints.
- 4 Train local facilitators with capacity to moderate future community dialogues.

## WHAT ARE DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUES?

Let's Talk uses the deliberative dialogue process to facilitate conversations among community members. In most sessions, two trained moderators facilitated each dialogue.

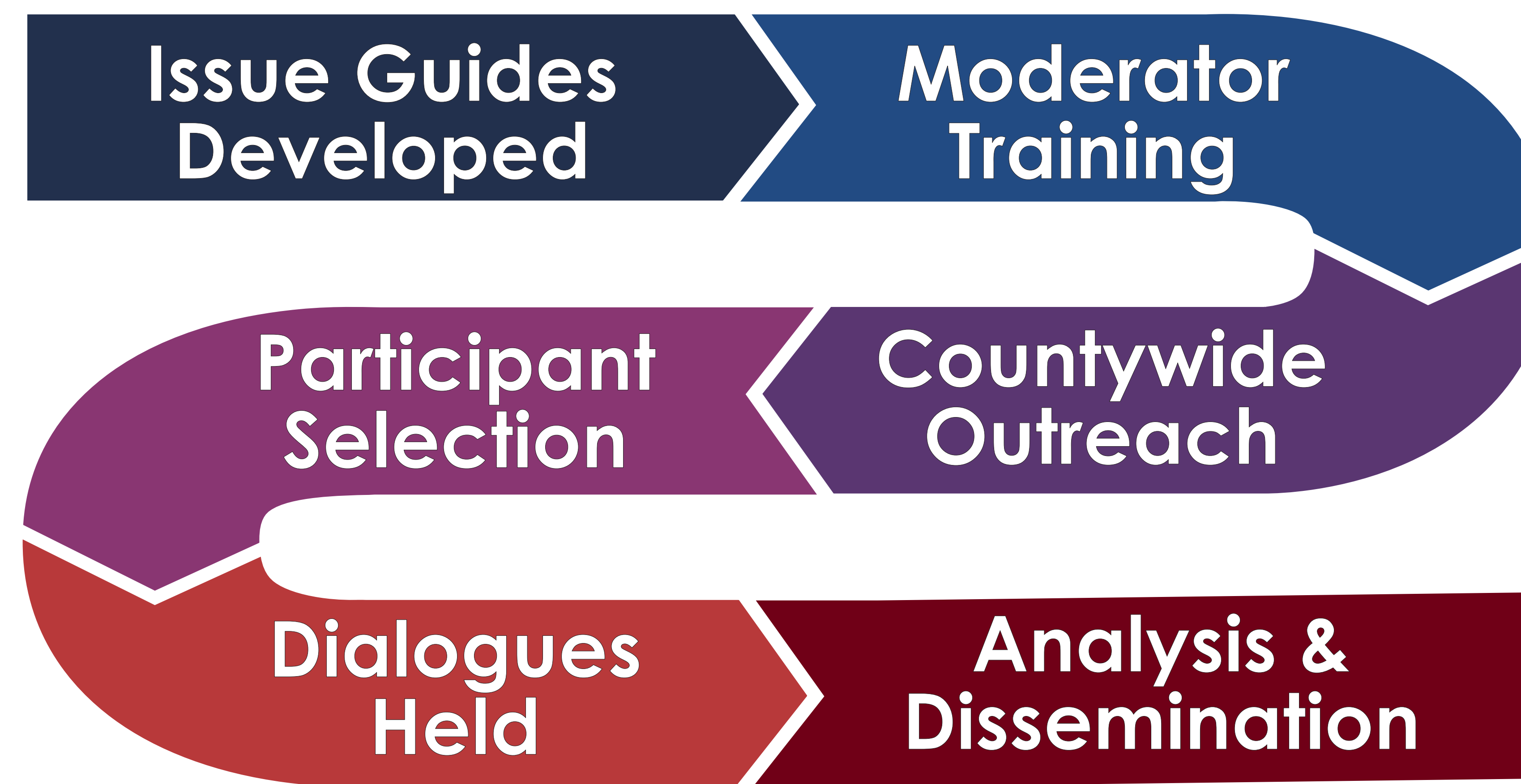
- Deliberation means actively listening when you may not agree and seeking to understand why others feel the way they do.
- Deliberation weighs the costs and consequences of potential actions.
- Deliberation involves uncovering common ground and negotiating potential solutions.
- Deliberation is a kind of talk that encourages responsible decision-making.

## DIALOGUE TOPICS

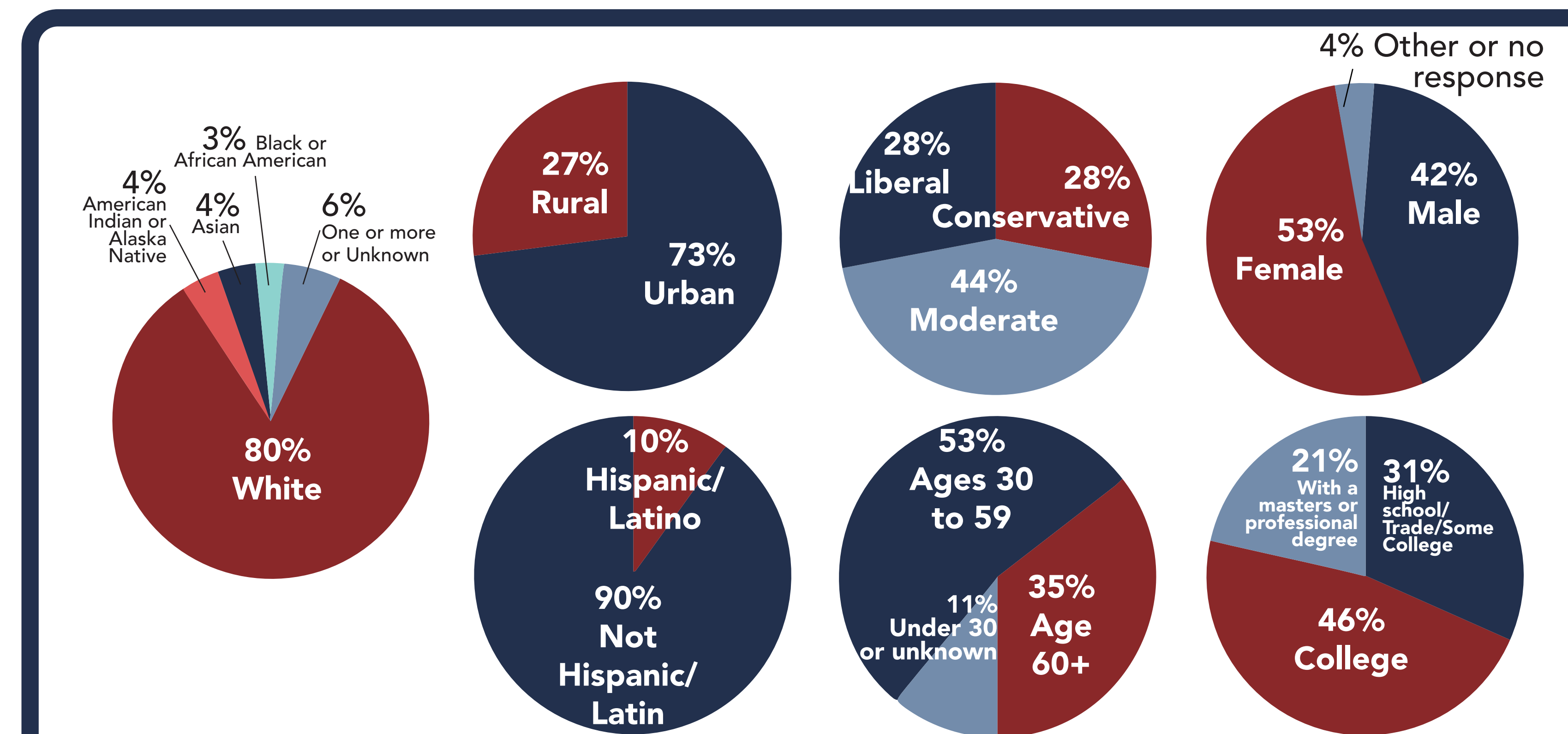


## PROCESS

- 53 dialogues were conducted, including 8 in Spanish
- Sessions were hosted in both urban and rural locations
- Zoom options were available to increase accessibility
- Each dialogue lasted approximately 120 minutes
- Participants received a \$100 gift card for each session



## THE PANELISTS



Over the course of the entire project, a total of 97 separate community members were included in the panel from across urban and rural areas of Marathon County. 71% participated in at least one dialogue.

## RESULTS



### Let's Talk, Marathon County Dialogue Participants Report...

## NEXT STEPS

- Continue to expand the capacity of moderators by offering trainings
- Communicate and use areas of common ground to create action
- Link the Let's Talk model to community decisionmakers and elected officials
- Extend the model of Let's Talk beyond the borders of Marathon County
- Develop Issue Guides on other topics of key interest to communities
- Expand youth involvement in deliberative dialogues



Let's Talk, Marathon County was fully funded by New Pluralists: newpluralists.org.

WIPPS was awarded funding from a pool of almost 800 applicants and no taxpayer dollars were used for this project.

Detailed summary reports, issues guides, and a short film about Let's Talk can be found at: [wipps.org/lets-talk](http://wipps.org/lets-talk) or by using the QR code.

**Interested in hosting a deliberative dialogue?**  
Reach out to us at [info@wipps.org](mailto:info@wipps.org)

