

FACILITATION SERIES: Facilitating Group Discussions

Generating & Narrowing Ideas and Planning for Implementation

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Facilitators use a variety of tools to guide groups in the decision-making process. Depending on the maturity of the group and the defined goals, facilitators may begin by discussing the values the group holds and building the common ground on which decisions will be based. Many times, groups are “fuzzy” on what they want to accomplish and need to spend time discussing what the end result should be. To begin this conversation on the vision, a facilitator might ask “if this were perfect, what would it look like?” With a clear vision, the group begins the process of generating ideas, narrowing down the ideas into a list of priorities, and finally developing a plan for

implementation that includes accountability measures.

The facilitation process is not hard. It’s just not easy. Listening, clarifying, and planning are key ingredients to a successful process. The following facilitator tools outline appropriate approaches to the multiple parts of a facilitated discussion. The list is not exhaustive but offers facilitators the basic methods for structuring group conversations. A key point in each approach is to ensure that the group clearly understands the question being discussed.

Visioning

Wish, want, wonder	<p>Ask group to respond to three questions . . .</p> <p>I wish I want I wonder</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Great Meetings: Great Results http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/greatmeetings/greatmeetings019.shtml</p>
Newspaper article about the future	Report on the situation “in the future.”
Picture the path to the future	<p>Draw a picture of your community (area) as it will look in the future.</p> <p>Set a timeframe.</p>
Defining the vision	<p>Lead the group through a visualization exercise.</p> <p>Create a scene in the minds of the participants.</p>

Defining the Issue/Problem

<p>Brain Mapping</p>	<p>Display the analysis of a situation graphically through attached circles that are connected to a main/central idea circle (Haskell and Cyr, 2007, Lesson 3). .</p> <p>Write the main action that the group decides in the center circle.</p> <p>Write the consequences of the action in circles attached to the center circle.</p> <p>Write the consequences of those consequences in other attached circles.</p>
<p>Fishbone Diagram</p>	<p>Place the main idea into the head of the fish.</p> <p>Write the positive outcome/issues on one side of the backbone.</p> <p>Write the challenges on the other side of the backbone.</p>
<p>Picture It</p>	<p>Draw a picture of the vision.</p> <p>Allow for creative expression.</p>
<p>SWOT</p>	<p>Discover the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of a community.</p> <p>Use the findings to build a case for addressing the issue.</p>
<p>What is / isn't the problem</p>	<p>Ask "why do we have a lack of play equipment. . .(whatever the issue is)?"</p> <p>Chart the responses into one column 1) What is the problem?</p> <p>Ask "what is not the problem related to our lack of play equipment . . .?"</p> <p>Chart the responses into a second column 2) What is not the problem?</p>
<p>5 Whys . . .</p>	<p>Ask "why" over and over or "what caused the problem". By repeating the question, the group should be able to define the root cause of the problem.</p> <p>Example: Your client, Hinson Corp., is unhappy. Using the 5 Whys, you go through the following steps to get to the cause of the problem:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why is our client, Hinson Corp., unhappy? Because we didn't deliver our services when we said we would. 2. Why were we unable to meet the agreed-upon timeline or schedule for delivery? The job took much longer than we thought it would. 3. Why did it take so much longer? Because we underestimated the complexity of the job.

	<p>4. Why did we underestimate the complexity of the job? Because we made a quick estimate of the time needed to complete it, and didn't list the individual stages needed to complete the project.</p> <p>5. Why didn't we do this? Because we were running behind on other projects. We clearly need to review our time estimation and specification procedures.</p> <p>http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_5W.htm</p>
Appreciative Inquiry	<p>Focus on what is going right.</p> <p>The first step of the process is to identify and describe the problem you're trying to solve. From there you go on to look at the issue in four phases: Discovery, Dream, Design and Deliver.</p> <p>http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_85.htm</p>

Generating Ideas / Brainstorming

Popcorn	Anyone speaks at anytime.
Hybrid	<p>Suggest any idea.</p> <p>Obtain general or modified consensus of the group to record the idea.</p> <p>Write idea on the chart.</p>
One-at-a-Time Brainstorming	<p>Give individuals time to think.</p> <p>Ask them to record their ideas on a piece of paper.</p> <p>Ask each person to share one idea per person.</p>
Sticky Note	<p>Use sticky notes or slips of paper.</p> <p>Ask each person to record one idea per piece of paper.</p> <p>Invite each person to post the idea pages on the sticky wall.</p> <p>(Remember to encourage people to write large enough to read each idea. Use flipchart markers.)</p>
Subgroup	<p>Assign people to small groups.</p> <p>Ask each group to generate a list of ideas.</p> <p>Provide time for each group to report.</p>
Subset	<p>Encourage group to think "outside the box."</p> <p>Look for the opposite of what has been suggested.</p>
Warm-up	<p>Launch a non-task related activity.</p> <p>Allow group to demonstrate creativity and discover new energy before beginning the brainstorming task.</p>

	<p>appropriate cell. A rank of 1 indicates the top choice. Total each column. The column with the lowest total indicates the top priority.</p> <p>One-at-a-time brainstorming may be used with Nominal Group Technique (see <i>Collaborative Decision Making, Attachment 6</i>). Ensure that the group has sufficient time to process the ideas before the group begins to narrow the ideas.</p>																				
Paired Comparisons	<p>Use when a decision must be made from a limited number of ideas. Compare ideas by pairs. Round One: Compare Idea A to Idea B. Round Two: Compare Idea B to Idea C. Round Three: Compare Idea C to Idea A.</p> <p>At the end of the rounds, it will be clear which ideas are preferred.</p>																				
Option Comparison Grid	<p>Prepare a chart In column one, list the criteria for selecting an action as defined by the group. The heading for each of the remaining columns will contain the name of the identified options. Analyze each option to determine if the option has the listed criteria. If so, place a check mark in that column.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Criteria</th> <th>Option A</th> <th>Option B</th> <th>Option C</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.</td> <td></td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3.</td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>4.</td> <td></td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Criteria	Option A	Option B	Option C	1.	✓	✓		2.		✓		3.	✓			4.		✓	✓
Criteria	Option A	Option B	Option C																		
1.	✓	✓																			
2.		✓																			
3.	✓																				
4.		✓	✓																		
Force Field Analysis	<p>Prepare two columns: 1) Driving Forces and 2) Restraining Forces In column 1, list the groups, stakeholders, and conditions that will support the goal. In column 2, list the groups, stakeholders, and conditions that will “be against” or restrain the goal.</p>																				
Pro/Con Sheet	<p>Prepare two columns: 1) Pros and 2) Cons. Ask participants to brainstorm the positives and the challenges related to the idea.</p>																				

Voting

Majority or Supermajority	<p>Ask participants for a “show of hands” or use a paper ballot to select their choice. Participants may vote with dots, check marks, or any other creative tool available.</p> <p>Remember to tell the group what will happen to the remaining ideas that are not included as high priority items.</p>
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Levels of Consensus	<p>Absolute consensus is a time-consuming process. Facilitators should be patient while using listening and questioning skills to discover unasked questions or unexpressed concerns.</p> <p>Determine which level of consensus will be acceptable: Absolute or Modified (Haskel & Cyr, 2007, Lesson 5). Participants can use hand signals to represent their response as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • Acceptable • Live with it • No • Do not agree • No clear consensus <p>Refer to SYFS and Consensus Building resources such as http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/treatment/consens.htm http://www.nps.gov/nero/rtcatoolbox/dec_consensus.htm http://web.mit.edu/publicdisputes/practice/cbh_ch1.html</p>
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Planning

Moving from Vision to Action	<p>A nine-step planning guide that takes a group from articulating the values, gathering the facts, defining the problem, creating the vision, setting the goals, researching the options/strategies, analyzing the stakeholders, implementing the plan, and evaluating the process and outcomes.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Source: MDC. (n.d.). <i>RCCI: Leadership for change</i>. http://www.mdcinc.org/docs/education_pub_leadership.pdf MDC. (1998) <i>Moving from vision to action: A planning guide for the Rural Community College Initiative</i>. Chapel Hill, NC: MDC, Inc.</p>
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References

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- Kelsey, D. & Plumb P. (2004). *Great meetings: Great results*. Portland Maine: Hanson Press.
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