Unvent the Future

Virginia Cooperative Extension

## 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	Ask group to respond to three questions
	I wish
	I want
	I wonder
	Great Meetings: Great Results
	http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/greatmeetings/greatmeetings019.shtml
Newspaper article about the future	Report on the situation "in the future."
Picture the path to	Draw a picture of your community (area) as it will look in the future.
the future	Set a timeframe.
Defining the vision	Lead the group through a visualization exercise.
5	Create a scene in the minds of the participants.

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Defining the Issue/I Brain Mapping	Display the analysis of a situation graphically through attached circles			
Бтапт марріпу	that are connected to a main/central idea circle (Haskell and Cyr, 2007,			
	Lesson 3)			
	Write the main action that the group decides in the center circle.			
	Write the consequences of the action in circles attached to the center			
	circle. Write the consequences of those consequences in other attached circles.			
	Costly to move Will have to take \$ from another Kostly to Move to a larger office Short- term chaos			
Fishbone Diagram	Place the main idea into the head of the fish. Write the positive outcome/issues on one side of the backbone. Write the challenges on the other side of the backbone.			
Picture It	Draw a picture of the vision.			
	Allow for creative expression.			
SWOT	Discover the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of a			
	community.			
	Use the findings to build a case for addressing the issue.			
What is / isn't the problem	Ask "why do we have a lack of play equipment(whatever the issue is)?"			
problem	Chart the responses into one column 1) What is the problem?			
	Ask "what is not the problem related to our lack of play equipment?" Chart the responses into a second column 2) What is not the problem?			
5 Whys	Ask "why" over and over or "what caused the problem". By repeating the			
5 Wily3	question, the group should be able to define the root cause of the problem.			
	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:			
	<ol> <li>Why is our client, Hinson Corp., unhappy? Because we didn't deliver our services when we said we would.</li> <li>Why were we unable to meet the agreed-upon timeline or schedule for delivery?</li> </ol>			
	The job took much longer than we thought it would.			
	<ol> <li>Why did it take so much longer? Because we underestimated the complexity of the job.</li> </ol>			

	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.
	<ol> <li>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.</li> </ol>
	http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_5W.htm
Appreciative Inquiry	Focus on what is going right.
	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.
	http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_85.htm

## Generating Ideas / Brainstorming

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

Starbursting	Draw a large six-pointed star in the middle, and write the idea, product, or issue in the center.
	Write the words Who, What, Why, Where, When and How at the tip of each point of the star. Brainstorm questions about the idea or product starting with each of these words. The questions radiate out from the central star. Don't try to
	answer any of the questions as you go along. Instead, concentrate on thinking up as many questions as you can.
	Starbursting is a form of brainstorming that focuses on generating questions rather than answers. It can be used iteratively, with further layers of questioning about the answers to the initial set of questions. For example, a colleague suggests a new design of ice skating boot. One question you ask might be "Who is the customer?" Answer: "Skaters". But you need to go further than this to ensure that you target your promotions accurately: "What kind of skaters?" Answer: "Those who do a lot of jumping, who need extra support", and so on. This would help focus the marketing, for example to competition ice dancers and figure skaters, rather than ice rinks that buy boots to hire out to the general public.
	http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCT_91.htm

Narrowing the Ideas	/ Evaluating the Ideas / Priority Order		
Affinity Groups	Use sticky notes / individual slips of paper.		
	Ask whole group to reorder ideas into categories.		
	Allow no talking during the process.		
	Discuss and confirm the groupings.		
	From the chaos of the randomly generated ideas comes an insight into the common		
	threads that link groups of them together. From there the solution or best idea often emerges guite naturally.		
	http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_86.htm		
Loop & Group	Circle related ideas with the same color marker. List each grouping of ideas on a flipchart page or transfer each idea to a		
	separate page, group, and post on a sticky wall. Continue to discuss each group for clarification and to verify that the		
	participants are comfortable with each grouping. Identify a new title or label for each grouping.		
Multivote	Allow each participant a specific number of votes.		
	Ask the participant to place a mark/dot beside the idea.		
	Count the number of votes and announce the selection.		
Pick 3 – Drop 3	Identify the highest and lowest priorities.		
Nominal Group	Prepare a chart placing individual participant names on each row.		
Technique	Label each column with the specific idea. Ask participants to rank each idea and write the "rank number" in the		

	Total each colum The column with One-at-a-time bra (see <i>Collaborative</i>	n. the lowest total ainstorming may e <i>Decision Mak</i> ent time to proce	ing, Attachment 6).	iority. inal Group Technique
Paired Comparisons	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. At the end of the rounds, it will be clear which ideas are preferred.			
Option Comparison Grid	<ul> <li>Prepare a chart</li> <li>In column one, list the criteria for selecting an action as defined by the group.</li> <li>The heading for each of the remaining columns will contain the name of the identified options.</li> <li>Analyze each option to determine if the option has the listed criteria. If so, place a check mark in that column.</li> </ul>			contain the name of ne listed criteria. If
	Criteria	Option A	Option B	Option C
	1.	V	✓ ✓	
	2.	$\checkmark$	✓	
	3.	v		
Force Field Analysis	4.       ✓       ✓         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.			
Pro/Con Sheet	Prepare two columns: 1) Pros and 2) Cons. Ask participants to brainstorm the positives and the challenges related to the idea.			
Voting				
Majority or Supermajority	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.			
	Remember to tell are not included a			remaining ideas that

Levels of Consensus	Absolute consensus is a time-consuming process. Facilitators should be patient while using listening and questioning skills to discover unasked questions or unexpressed concerns. 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: • Yes • Acceptable • Live with it • No • Do not agree • No clear consensus 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
Planning	
Moving from Vision to Action	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. 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</i>

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