

Tools for Facilitating Goal Setting: Resource Guide

The following three tools/methods can be helpful in facilitating a goal-setting process: (1) Brainstorming, (2) Nominal Group Technique (NGT), and (3) Delphi Technique. You may also want to read more about the role of the facilitator (Pages 6-7).

I. Brainstorming

Generates a broad range of ideas and encourages team members to think freely before critiquing each contribution.

Process

- The facilitator or meeting moderator poses a question to the team: (What goals should we commit ourselves to as a unit, keeping in mind that we're here in service to families and that we need to work with each other, with other colleagues, and with the community?).
- Record the responses of the team members on a flip chart. There is no discussion of ideas until the brainstorming phase is completed.
- In this step, the group reviews and discusses each of the items. As the team reviews the brainstormed list, they begin to group items or eliminate others if they seem redundant.
- Once the items have been clarified, categorized and clustered, the team may use a variety of methods to rank the ideas and refine their meaning to identify the core priorities they wish to address.
- It is sometimes helpful to "sit on" the results for a day or two to give the team members a chance to think about and propose changes or suggestions to the list; this addresses the "2nd thought" phenomenon and reinforces the group's commitment to the goals.
- Once there is team consensus, the group then meets to generate a work plan to implement the goals.
- Seek & get the approval of the goals by senior managers, colleagues, & community stake-holders, if relevant before moving on to the work plan.

During brainstorming session:

1. No discussion of ideas, no criticism, no judging
2. Write them as they are stated; try to be brief
3. All ideas are accepted; anything is possible

4. Keep it moving
5. Needs full participation
6. Takes about 8 – 12 minutes.

After brainstorming session:

1. Review each item to be sure everyone understands what's being suggested (clarify)
2. Combine items if they appear to be the same or similar; be sure to get the group's approval first before combining items.
3. Eliminate items that aren't possible, controllable, relevant, or feasible; get group's approval before eliminating an item
4. Add new or spin-off items that come up ("piggybacking")

2. Nominal Group Technique

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) uses an iterative approach to first collecting information from team members one by one from responses they list on paper and then reviewing and ranking their contributions to produce a group result or consensus. NGT is a method for pooling individual judgments in situations where uncertainty or disagreement exists about the nature of a problem and its possible solutions. NGT comes from the old OEO and was designed to get disadvantaged and inexperienced citizens involved in community action planning. NGT is good for identifying elements of a problem situation or solution. It establishes priorities and is a single purpose technique. (Delbecq, AL, Van de Ven, AH, & DH Gustafson. *Group Techniques for Program Planning: A Guide to Nominal Group and Delphi Processes*. Glenview ILL: Scott, Foresman, and Co., 1975.)

Process

- Silent generation of ideas in writing. In this approach, the facilitator poses a nominal group question to the group (similar to the brainstorming question above); however, each team member first writes as many responses to the question as they can on a piece of paper. This approach minimizes the dominance of any one member & maximizes the contribution of members who are reluctant to talk in a larger group
- Round-robin recording of ideas. Once they feel they have listed as many responses as they can (usually takes 10 to 15 minutes), each team member offers one idea in a round-robin approach - one person, one idea at a time. The facilitator records their response on a flip chart until every team member's written list is exhausted.

- Serial discussion of the listed ideas. When all of the items have been listed on the flip chart, the team then reviews, clarifies, clusters, and eliminates items.
- Voting...or preferably polling. The team ranks the items using a method like Pareto polling, which gives the group a chance to see where it stands. There may be further polling until the group they achieve a final consensus. [Note: Polling is not voting; polling is repeated as the group clarifies the items & their ranking]

NGT Steps

Step 1: Silent Generation of Ideas in Writing

Process

- The Nominal Group question is distributed or displayed and also read to the group.
- The group is asked to write their ideas -i.e., their responses to the question - in brief phrases or statements.
- Group members work silently and independently.
- The leader/facilitator tries not to lead the group in any direction. Group members can list responses in whatever way is most comfortable and meaningful to them.
- Depending upon the size of the group, this step takes from 4to 8 minutes.

Benefits

- Provides adequate time for thinking
- Avoids interrupting each other's thinking
- Avoids premature focusing on a single idea.
- Eliminates dominance by high-status or aggressive members.
- Keeps the group focused on the problem at-hand.

Step 2: Round-robin recording of ideas on a flip pad.

Process

- The purpose of this step is to map the group's thinking.
- Present ideas in brief words or phrases
- Ideas are taken serially from each group member
- Each member decides if his/her item is a duplicate.
- A member may pass if he/she has no additional items but may re-enter later.
- A member may hitchhike and add new ideas even if he/she hadn't recorded the idea earlier on the worksheet.
- No discussion prior to the completion of the listing.

Benefits

- Equalizes opportunities to present ideas.
- Separates ideas from personalities.

- Provides a written record or guide.
 - Increases group's ability to deal with a larger number of ideas.
 - Avoids loss of ideas.
 - Provides the group with an array of clues.
 - Encourages hitchhiking.
- Places conflicting ideas comfortably in front of the group.
- Forces group to fully explore the problem.

Step 3: Serial discussion for clarification

Process

- Verbally define the purpose of this step.
 - Clarify meaning of items.
 - Explain reasons for agreement or disagreement.
- Final judgments are expressed by a polling or voting procedure so extended arguments are unnecessary.
- Group is paced so all ideas receive sufficient time for clarification.
- Avoids forcing member who originally listed an idea to be solely responsible for its clarification -i.e., the list becomes the group's property.
- Duplicate items can be combined here but not to the extent that an individual item's precision is lost.

Benefits

- Avoids discussions that focus too much on anyone idea or subset of ideas.
- Helps to eliminate misunderstanding.
- Provides opportunities to express the logic behind an idea.
- Allow members to disagree without being overly argumentative.

Step 4: Polling

Process

- From the entire list, the group selects a specific number (usually 7 + or -2) of priority items
 - Each priority item is placed on an index card
 - Each item is then rank-ordered
- Cards are shuffled to retain anonymity
- Selections are tallied and recorded on a flip chart

Benefits

- Obtain independent judgments in writing, eliminating serial "pressure."
- Expresses judgments mathematically, which increases accuracy and objectivity of judgments
- Displays an array of individual tallies, which clearly highlights areas requiring additional clarification or discussion

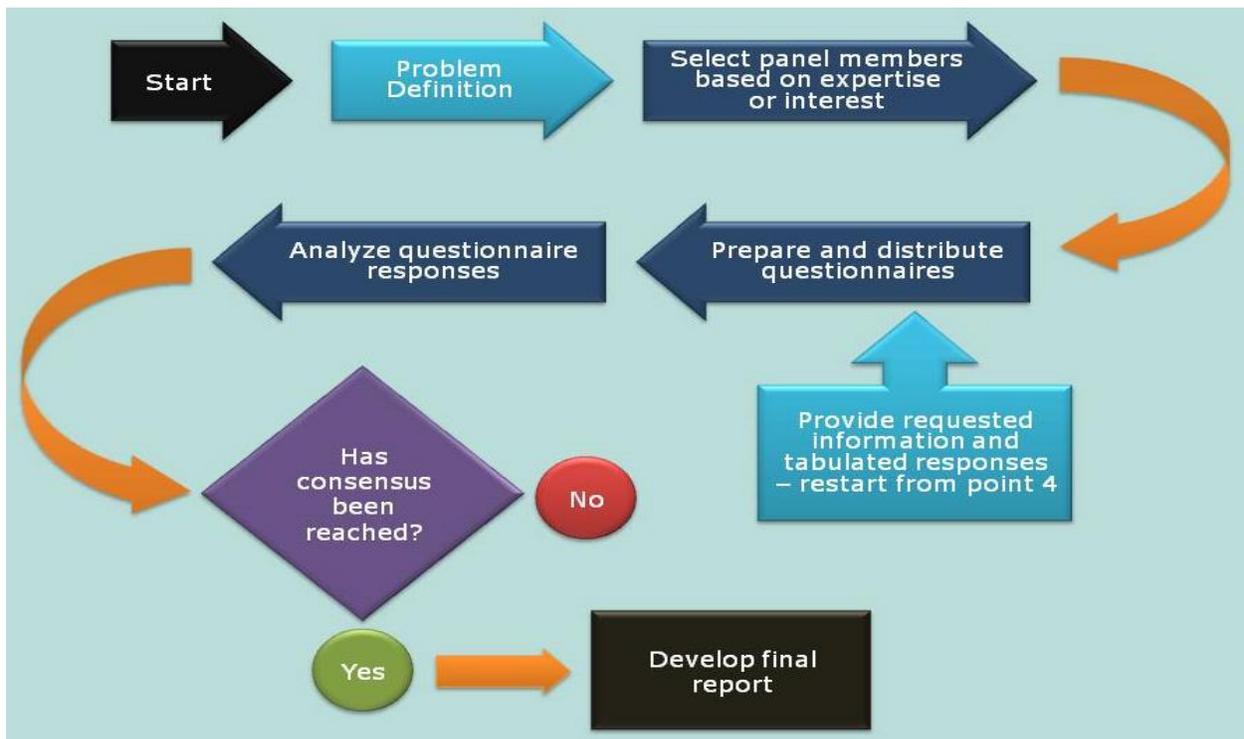
3. Delphi Technique

The Delphi Technique is well known method used for forecasting. A panel of carefully selected experts is asked to reply to a series of questionnaires. The goal is to reach consensus about an opinion or view.

Process

- The experts don't have to meet face to face; questionnaires can easily be completed via e-mail or other ways. This method requires more time but can encourage team members to think in more depth about the issues.
- After each round of questioning, the experts receive feedback. The anonymous answers provided by the other experts. They are then asked to revise their answers in light of the other replies.
- This process is repeated until the number of diverse answers has sufficiently decreased to determine the final answers by looking at the median scores.
- Anonymity is an important factor in the process because it helps to avoid the so called "bandwagon effect" (the observation that people often do or believe things because many other people do or believe the same) or the "halo effect" (when a person's perception of another is influenced by their appearance) and it allows experts to freely express their opinions.

How it Works



Facilitator Roles

Facilitator Role: Organizer

The Organizer prepares for and conducts the meeting. Statements or questions such as the following can be helpful in this role:

- Today we'll discuss...
- The next area of discussion...
- Let me explain...
- (Name), what do you think?
- We haven't heard from you (Name) yet...
- Can I answer any questions at this point?

While serving as an organizer, the Facilitator:

- Notes area of discussion on the Agenda
- Keeps discussion moving
- Sets the pace.
- Provides explanation.
- Uses effective questions
- Stimulates participation.

Facilitator Role: Moderator

The Moderator maintains a balance between objective thinking and the emotions and feelings of the group members. Neutral statements that could help with this role include:

- It seems (Name) sees this from a different perspective
- (Name), your background indicates...
- (Name), good point, let's move on to...
- I understand our problem is...
- Could you hold that thought for a moment while...(or could we put that on the Parking Lot and get back to it later?)

While serving as a Moderator, the facilitator:

- Avoids becoming a participant
- Encourages everyone to participate
- Maintains control of the group
- Redefines group roles
- Watches the time
- Keeps group working on objective (maintains the group's focus)
- Follows the Agenda
- Uses the Parking Lot for side issues

Facilitator Role: Clarifier

The Clarifier insures that contributions in the meeting are clear to all group participants. Phrases that introduce clarifying statements may include:

- You mean...
- I understand...
- Is your point of view that...?
- For example...
- Let me repeat...
- You're saying that...

While serving as a clarifier, the facilitator:

- Presents visible objectives
- Keeps the group on course
- Minimizes repetition
- Helps secure agreement
- Highlights discussions
- Clarifies basis or criteria for decisions
- Checks for agreement

Facilitator Role: Summarizer

The summarizer uses brief summaries to consolidate the gains the group has made toward an objective. The following statements may be used to lead into a summary:

- At this point...
- Let's summarize...
- Let's look at what we've done so far...
- To this point we've discussed...
- Let's see how we've done...
- Let's see how accurate we are...
- So far we've...

While serving as a summarizer, the facilitator:

- Defines difficulties encountered during the meeting
- States compromises made to overcome the difficulties
- Clarifies what's been accomplished
- Discusses what wasn't accomplished
- Summarizes what will happen as a result of the meeting