

Tool 55

Group Facilitation Models

(The following strategies, with the exception of “Write-Pair-Share,” are reprinted from *Group Facilitation Skills: A Toolbox for Effective Meetings*, by permission of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources/Division of Soil and Water Conservation. The *Toolbox* is available from the Ohio Watershed Academy, OSU Extension, at www.ohiowatersheds.osu.edu/owa/pdf/libmod08_1.pdf).

Sort Cards	Round Robins Brainstorming
Brainstorming	Think-Pair-Share
Carousel Brainstorming	Write-Pair-Share

Sort Cards

Purpose

This strategy activates and engages prior information on a topic. It honors participant knowledge, levels the playing field of information, equalizes member status, and saves meeting time by surfacing information relevant to the topics under deliberation.

Materials

3 x 5 cards, pencils, markers, flip chart paper, tape for each group, masking tape

Procedures

1. On your own, generate the following:
 - Knowledge or feelings you have about a topic the group is about to address
 - Standards or values that you believe should drive a piece of work
2. Use 3 x 5 cards. Write one idea per card. Be specific so that others will know exactly what you mean.
3. In table groups, share, categorize, label categories, and make a display.
4. Discuss the work. How does this information inform you about how to proceed?

Adapted from: Garmston, R. J., & Wellman, B. M. (1999). *The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Brainstorming

Purpose

This strategy is used to collect ideas from all participants without criticism, judgment, or questions. It separates idea generation from analysis and decision-making.

Materials

Paper, pencils, big and bold colored markers, flip chart, post-it notes

Procedures

1. Name the topic, time frame, or goal (e.g., 5 minutes or until the group gets 20 ideas).
2. Remind the group that the goal in brainstorming is quantity, not quality. Encourage all ideas, even if silly or wild.
3. Remind group of brainstorming guidelines—hot ideas only, no questions or disagreements, tag-ons are fine. Opportunity for clarification and advocacy will follow.
4. Check for understanding of the topic which is the focus of the brainstorming and the process itself. Allow 1–2 minutes for each participant to silently reflect.
5. Begin brainstorming. Record all items on flip chart (write big, alternate colors).

After Brainstorming

A group can get overwhelmed by the number of ideas generated in a brainstorming session.

Here are several things a group can do after a brainstorm:

- Create categories.
- Sort data into predefined categories.
- Sort the items by *necessary* and *nice* or *what we can control* and *what we cannot*.
- Reflect on the list as a whole.
- Discuss what to do now.

Adapted from: Garmston, R. J., & Wellman, B. M. (1999). *The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Carousel Brainstorming

Purpose

[Carousels are] used to generate a large number of ideas, alternatives, or responses. This physically active exercise is especially good for times when participants' energy level is low.

Materials

Paper, pencils, big and bold colored markers, flip chart, post-it notes

Procedures

1. Write a series of topics or questions related to the issue being explored on the top of separate sheets of newsprint.
2. Post the newsprint on the walls, five to seven feet apart.
3. Divide participants into groups (four or five members are best) and ask each group to stand at a sheet of newsprint. Explain that each group will remain together throughout the exercise.

4. Have each group choose a recorder while the remaining members brainstorm ideas on the topic for two minutes. The recorder writes the generated ideas on the newsprint.
5. At the end of two minutes, signal the groups to move one sheet to the right to the next sheet of newsprint. Groups read what is already written, brainstorm, and record their ideas at this new sheet for two minutes. Movement continues until all groups in the room have brainstormed on all the sheets of newsprint. Each group adds to the ideas of the group before them.
6. At the end of the exercise, participants do a “gallery tour” to circulate and read what other groups have generated for each piece of newsprint in the room.

Adapted from: Ohio Office of Quality Services. (1995). *QStP Tool Kit For Quality*. Columbus, OH: Author.

Round Robins Brainstorming

Procedures

1. The leader or scribe asks each member, in turn, for an idea.
2. Members may pass on any round.
3. The session continues until all members have passed during the round.
4. Ideas are recorded as in basic brainstorming.

Adapted from: Ohio Office of Quality Services. (1995). *QStP Tool Kit For Quality*. Columbus, OH: Author.

Think-Pair-Share

Purpose

This strategy is used to instantly engage participants in a topic. It provides participants with the opportunity to think about a question or issue and generate a verbal response. It also places a value on individuals' prior knowledge and beliefs, yet allows for ideas to be extended by listening to the views of others.

Procedures

1. Pose a question to participants.
2. Give everyone 1–2 minutes to think about their response.
3. Instruct participants to pair with 1–4 neighbors to discuss their responses. If you are looking at a relatively simple idea or concept, have them share for 2–3 minutes. For complex and/or controversial topics or tasks, have them share for 20–30 minutes.
4. Invite participants to share their “big ideas” with the large group.

Write-Pair-Share

Purpose

This strategy acknowledges participants who may be less verbal in a group. It provides participants with the opportunity to think about a question or issue and generate an individual written response. It also places a value on individuals' prior knowledge and beliefs, yet allows for ideas to be extended by listening to the views of others.

Procedures

1. Pose a question to participants.
2. Give everyone 2–5 minutes to write their individual response.
3. Instruct participants to pair with 1–4 neighbors to discuss their responses. If you are looking at a relatively simple idea or concept, have them share for 2–3 minutes. For complex and/or controversial topics or tasks, have them share for 20–30 minutes.
4. Invite participants to share their “big ideas” with the large group.