

Nominal Group Techniques

Number of people: Most effective 4-8

Materials: Flip chart, newsprint, felt tip pens, tape, paper, pens

Purpose

To obtain many ideas from several people on a problem or issue in a structured format.

Process

This technique is a structured variation of small-group discussion methods. The process prevents the domination of discussion by a single person, encourages more passive persons to participate and results in a set of prioritized solutions or recommendations.

1. Divide the group into small groups. Each group should have a recorder to write on the flip chart and make the group's presentation. A quick way to select recorders, is to ask each person in the group to give their birthday (month and day) and then select the person with the birthday closest to Presidents' Day, etc.
2. State an open-ended task (What are some ways we can increase funding?).
3. Have each person spend several minutes in silence, individually brainstorming all the possible ideas he or she can generate and jot these ideas down.
4. Have the groups collect the ideas by sharing ideas one person at a time. Record the ideas on a flip chart. Encourage clarification to questions, but do not allow criticism.
5. Then ask each person to evaluate and rank the ideas, awarding points for the best five. The best idea gets five points, the next best four points, etc.
6. Tabulate points within the group, and prepare a group report on the ideas receiving the highest score.
7. Allow time for brief group presentations.