



Nominal group technique

Nominal group technique (sometimes referred to as Delbecq groups) can be used to define needs and goals from representatives of different interest groups. The technique may also help in prioritising ideas and identifying solutions to specific planning questions. A small group of less than 12 persons is preferable. The meeting starts with a facilitator asking a few simple questions in order to generate participant response to the issue. The attendees normally formulate their answers and judgements of alternative ideas independently in written form. Participants are then asked to read out and explain what they have written. Each idea is discussed more widely and clarified by each participant and the individual ideas are numbered. Participants then indicate their preferred ideas (for example by voting with sticky dots) and a discussion of the preferences then follows. The group tries to reach a common solution to the questions or issues that were originally posed. If there is still lack of consensus, the individual judgements are produced again. The method should lead to a prioritised list of actions or issues.

Resources and requirements

Skills

- Skilled facilitators (one to three per group) are required.

Equipment

- Meeting facilities that enable efficient individual and group working are necessary.
- Clipboards, sticky notes and flip charts are useful.

Time

- Time is needed for identifying and contacting the participants and organising the group meeting.

Useful sources of information

Books

- The guide to effective participation. D. Wilcox (1994). Partnerships Books, London.
- Participatory approach to natural resource management: a guide book. T. Loikkanen (1999). Forest and Park Service, Finland.

Web

- darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rgp/PPPM613/class10summary.htm

Level of engagement

INFORMING:

CONSULTING: ★★

INVOLVING: ★★★

PARTNERSHIP: ★

Strengths

- All participants are likely to contribute due to the small group size.
- As the debate is limited, participants may express their ideas with minimal fear of being criticised.
- The technique can help to prioritise different issues or options.
- Judgements and discussion can lead to consensus between participants.
- Participants may be from a variety of backgrounds.
- Only limited resources are needed.

Weaknesses

- Only a very limited number of participants are involved.
- The technique does not generally allow in-depth examination of the issues.
- A balanced participation of stakeholders is essential.
- The technique must be combined with other means of involvement when issues are complicated.

- The Guide to Effective Participation by David Wilcox: www.partnerships.org.uk
- www.iucn.org

This toolbox is designed to assist Forestry Commission staff when they are considering which tools they could use to involve the public in the forest and woodland planning process. For more information please visit the website at: www.forestry.gov.uk/toolbox