

WORKING TOGETHER AS A TEAM

Utah Education Association (UEA) Team Building Materials

Ground Rules

Following is a sampling of various ground rules or norms that help workgroups function productively:

- Begin and end on time.
- All individuals are equal and their contributions are of equal value.
- Everyone participates--be fully present
- Active listening
- One speaker at a time--no side conversations
- Speak the truth of your experience--own what you know and encourage others to do the same.
- Attack issues, not people
- If uncomfortable, speak up. Silence = agreement.
- Support honest questioning
- Value diversity--all ideas and points of view are okay.
- Be willing to change--value the past but be willing to let go of the parts of the past that are not currently helpful to you.
- Strive for consensus in decision-making--reach an agreement for the good of the whole.
- Honor agreements
- Respect confidentiality.

Brainstorming

WHAT? Brainstorming is a way of generating as many ideas as possible about a topic.

WHY? Often groups get too focused on one idea and engage in "tunnel vision." Or perhaps the discussion is dominated by one person while the other group members sit silent. Brainstorming is a way of encouraging the active participation of all members and at the same time gets the "creative juices" flowing again.

HOW?

Step 1: All members of the group are encouraged to offer as many ideas as possible, no matter how outlandish they may seem at first glance. Ideas should be generated by group members in a "round robin" fashion with one idea coming from each individual in turn. This gives all group members an equal opportunity to share ideas. The recorder writes, verbatim, the ideas on a flip-chart. While the ideas are being generated, the following norms apply:

- Do not evaluate the ideas. Clarifying questions may be asked only so that the idea can be recorded accurately.
- Suggest all ideas. Even the strange and absurd should be heard.
- Generating as many as possible during this time is important.
- Look for ways to combine or "piggy-back" on another person's idea.

Step 2: Ask questions about the ideas listed so that everyone in the group understands each suggestion. Record any other new ideas that emerge from your discussion.

Step 3: Evaluate and narrow down the ideas to the most feasible and workable. Methods for reaching consensus are helpful here.

Variation: Sometimes group members are too intimidated to state their ideas openly in the group. If this should be the case, try the following before going into the Brainstorming process: Have each individual write down on a piece of paper all the ideas that come to mind. After five to ten minutes, have each person read his/her ideas as the recorder lists them on the flip-chart. Then proceed through Steps 1, 2, and 3 of the Brainstorming process.

Best/Worst Case Scenarios

WHAT? The Best/Worst Case Scenarios process requires the group to visualize what the most successful implementation of a solution might look like. At the same time, it asks the group to also envision what the most disastrous outcome might be. This analysis allows the group to modify its plan to include ways of preventing problems and contingencies should the "worst" case come true.

WHY? Too often, groups will focus on only one aspect of a solution – the positive or the negative. This "Best/Worst Case Scenario" process requires the group to look at both sides of the coin. Furthermore, the group must generate ideas for preventing failure as well as dealing with it should things go wrong.

HOW?

Step 1: Tape two pieces of chart paper on the wall or use two easels. Write the idea at the top of each flip-chart page. Label one sheet "Best Case" and the other "Worst Case."

Step 2: Ask the group to describe what perfect implementation of the solution would look like. List all ideas on the "Best Case" sheet.

Step 3: Now ask the group to describe what an unsuccessful implementation of the solution would look like. Focus on the question "What could go wrong?" Record all ideas on the "Worst Case" sheet.

Step 4: Focus on ideas for preventing the "Worst Case" from happening. List all ideas.

Step 5: Next, examine the "Worst Case" sheet and generate ideas for dealing with failure should it occur. List these contingencies on the flip-chart.

Step 6: Examine the "Best Case" sheet and generate ideas for maximizing the potential of achieving this outcome.

Step 7: Acknowledge that either is possible, depending on the group's ability to work effectively