

Tool 13: Brainstorming

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| Phase | Phase 2: Where are we going? Vision and strategic objectives |
| Sub-phase | Sub-phase 2.2: Set strategic objectives |
| Name of tool | Brainstorming |
| Objectives | Brainstorming is used to develop action ideas based on earlier analysis using tools such as force-field analysis (Tool 9). Specifically, it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ stimulates the development of a range of possible actions and strategies which potentially can meet the originally defined objective ▪ encourages thinking outside of the normal or routine approaches ▪ Facilitates participation and ideas from stakeholders not normally involved |
| Under which circumstances to use the tool | Use the tool: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To develop action ideas ✓ As a base for developing strategic options ✓ Can be used with a technical team, but should also be used with a wider group to develop more ideas ✓ With stakeholders in a well moderated participation meeting |
| Main actor(s) responsible | The planning team should organize a moderated session as part of the planning process. The main stakeholders should agree the contents |
| Target / beneficiary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning team ▪ Everyone participating in the planning process |
| Description of tool | <p>There are two main forms of brainstorming—oral and written. They are similar, except that the written form starts with each individual writing ideas down first. This encourages more areas of thought, and is considered to be a more productive form.</p> <p>Ideas are written on cards – this is use in the meta-plan approach.</p> <p>There are simple, but important rules which are explained in the exercise.</p> <p><u>Step 1</u>: The main areas where action is necessary are identified. These are identified using tools such as Force-Field Analysis (Tool 9). For example, lack of finance might be identified as an area limiting action. This can then become an area for brainstorming</p> <p><u>Step 2</u> : Group areas where action ideas are needed. Typical groups would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resources ▪ Institutional capacity ▪ Physical approaches <p>Prepare large sheets of paper on a wall and put the heading on a card.</p> <p>Step 3: Provide participants with cards or A4 sheets of paper and markers and ask them to write one idea on one card</p> <p>Step 4: Remind participants of the brainstorming session what problem is to be tackled and give 3 minutes to come up with ideas</p> <p>Step 5: Ask participants to fix their cards on the sheets of paper</p> |

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| | <p>Step 6: The moderator goes through the ideas/ groups them and stimulates more ideas directly from the participants. He or she can also use provocations (crazy ideas) to stimulate thinking in new directions. The role of the moderator is important. For example, participants may come with ideas of how to get more resources but then be stimulated to think of ideas of how to improve efficiency.</p> |
| <p>Time needed for the use of the tool</p> | <p>A brainstorming session should be managed as a high-intensity high energy activity. Emphasis should be on keeping momentum and flow of ideas. When ideas dry up – move on. Depending on the number of action areas it may take about 3 hours. It may be necessary to manage the time within what is realistically available.</p> |
| <p>Advantages and disadvantages of this tool</p> | <p>Advantages (+)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The tool can stimulate useful and creative approaches + The tool is relatively simple + A well moderated session can be fun and builds ownership + It helps build support for approaches which will be further developed as part of a strategy <p>Disadvantages (—)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Although apparently simple, it is not easy to do well – For success it requires a skilled and knowledgeable moderator – May not work well in certain cultures |
| <p>Related tools</p> | <p>Brainstorming is often used after Force Field Analysis and as an input to strategy development.</p> <p>Mind mapping can be used to show the connection between action ideas and also as an alternative way to organize brainstorming. The mind map can be projected on a screen and participant ideas typed in directly. This is quick and the results can easily be distributed.</p> <p>Well moderated focus group discussions can also be used. Again, the quality of moderation is very important.</p> |
| <p>References and further resources</p> | <p>Generally accessible documents:</p> <p>UN-Habitat (1989) Community participation in problem-solving and decision-making (2) : leadership, Nairobi: UN-Habitat.</p> |