

## Brainstorming Best Practice

### What is it?

Brainstorming is a technique for generating a large number of useful ideas on any subject or topic by suspending criticism, judgement and evaluation. It is based on the principle that *"the best way to have a **good** idea is to have **lots** of ideas"*. This briefing note outlines the key points of the technique and provides tips for getting the most out of your brainstorming session.

### When should I use this tool?

Read this briefing note before you start to plan any activity, workshop or meeting where the purpose is to generate ideas or options on a topic.

### What are the key points to remember for this tool?

- **Timing**

- the session should last between 15 minutes and one hour

- **Number of people**

- it's best to work in small groups (4 – 8), but if you have to work with larger groups then either divide them into sub teams or appoint a specific person to capture ideas on a flip chart to leave you to facilitate the session

- **Equipment**

- somewhere to visibly display the ideas as they are generated (e.g. flipchart, whiteboard, brown paper on wall)
- rules of brainstorming (see below) clearly displayed for all to see

- **Rules**

It is important that these rules are enforced:

- there will be no criticism, judgement or evaluation of ideas
- "free-wheeling" (i.e. letting go of barriers and inhibitions and "drifting" around the topic) is encouraged
- quantity is needed
- there will be no questions during brainstorming
- state ideas quickly and succinctly
- no enlargement or explanation is needed
- it is ok to state the obvious
- it is ok to repeat ideas
- it is ok to combine and improve on others' ideas

- **Method**

- **Idea generation**

- clearly state the topic and make sure everyone understands the scope of the session
- ask each team member to state his/her ideas. This can be done whenever someone thinks of an idea, or in a 'round'; it may be effective to start with a free-for-all then use a round when the flow of ideas slows to ensure that all ideas have been collected
- record all of the ideas, for all to see, exactly as given



### **Assessment**

- after all of the ideas have been collected, you may need to go back and clarify any that are unclear
- as a group, examine each idea in turn, expanding them and/or combining or eliminating some
- you may wish to group the ideas under headings, which can be used as key areas to take forward.

### **How should I use this tool?**

Use brainstorming whenever you need to generate ideas to solve a problem or as a way to include people in the thinking processes. It is especially useful as a tool to bring energy and life to a meeting.

### **Are there any predefined templates I can use?**

Yes, see the **Rules of Brainstorming** guidelines below which you may wish to print out in A3 size to display on the wall during the session.

# **RULES OF BRAINSTORMING**

## **During idea generation**

- No criticism
- “Free-wheeling” welcome
- Quantity is needed
- No questions during session
- State ideas quickly
- No enlargement needed
- Don’t mind stating the obvious
- Don’t fear repetition
- Combine and improve on others’ ideas

## **During assessment**

- Only criticise the idea, not the person