

## **Some Different Formats For Use In Meetings**

### **Why use different formats?**

1. Increase air time by allowing multiple people to speak at the same time
2. Provide safer space for people who are not comfortable speaking in front of the whole group
3. Provide an opportunity for people to contribute in diverse ways (e.g., drawing or moving instead of speaking)
4. Shift the energy
5. Use time efficiently
6. Gather information
7. Explore an issue in depth

### **Formats for Different Contexts**

There are many different formats you can explore and use. Listed below are some formats that are particularly useful in relatively small groups.

#### **Full Group**

- Plenary/full group discussion (consensus, Robert's Rules)
- Presentations/Reports: expert, committee, staff, etc.
- Go-Round
- Talking Stick
- Brainstorm (no cross talk, all ideas welcome, generative)

- Multivoting/Dots exercises (for prioritization – 1 color for “important to the organization” and another color for “I want to work on this”)
- Blind Voting (a straw poll technique, for when you are worried that people will not speak their own truth)
- Switching Places – have people represent each others’ view points.
- Kinetic Mapping
  - Lines -- put different options/ views at opposite ends of the room on signs and ask people to stand in the spot on that continuum that reflects how they feel right now)
  - Clusters -- create spaces around the room for people to cluster in according to their views or identities – for example:
    1. I have lived in Portland
      - a. Less than 5 years
      - b. Six to 10 years
      - c. 11 to 20 years
      - d. More than 20 years, but was not born here
      - e. Was born here and have lived here most of my life
    2. I spent my elementary school years primarily:
      - a. In urban area(s)
      - b. In rural areas(s)
      - c. In suburban area(s)
    3. My work in this organization focuses primarily on:
      - a. Working directly with those we serve
      - b. Working with our community partners
      - c. Supporting the employees who do a or b
      - d. Supporting the systems that support the people who do a, b or c.

4. I think of myself as:

- a. An strong and experienced x (meeting facilitator, trainer, etc.)
  - b. A competent x, with room for development
  - c. An inexperienced but good x, in need of more training
  - d. A complete newby at x, but interested in learning
  - e. Someone who hates doing/being x
- Arm (or height) meter (how much do you agree/ disagree, support, feel, etc.)
  - Migration process (use lines and invite people to shift if/as their opinion changes, or use clusters and keep throwing out new questions of identity or views and let people move around, pausing each time to see who their “peeps” are in that categorization)

### **Individual Reflection**

- Generally guided by a question or series of questions (best to use questions that start with “what” rather than “why” – see “Using What Questions” handout)
- Structures include
  - Silent, no writing
  - Writing without direct sharing (often used to just get people thinking before a larger discussion, or as a way to regroup if things get difficult)
  - Writing with sharing in small group (with our without report out to full group in writing and/or verbally)
  - Writing with sharing back popcorn style in big group
  - Writing with cumulative/organic collective reporting process (post-it notes on wall sheets, etc.)
  - Writing and then submitting input in writing, either anonymously or labeled

## Small Groups

- Pairs, triads, or larger (I try for no more than 5-6 generally, to be sure everyone gets to participate)
- Active listening design, or more conversational
- Can incorporate role-plays, individual reflection time, appreciative inquiry, specific exercises or assignments (make a list of... or, discuss questions x and y, or fill out chart z for your team, etc.), and many of the other formats listed here.

## Other Formats Include:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. <a href="#">Group Works</a> card deck<br>(can be used in many different ways) | 10. Shelter Scale/Bar Graph                           |
| 2. Guided Meditation/<br>Visualization   | 11. Ranked Ballot                                     |
| 3. Fishbowl - homo & het   | 12. Nonverbal, Act out                                |
| 4. Roleplay, Theater, Improv   | 13. Read Aloud  |
| 5. Appreciative Inquiry  | 14. Migration   |
| 6. Council/Talking Stick   | 15. Small Groups (zoom groups<br>- for larger groups) |
| 7. Card-Storming (Snow<br>Cards)   | ▪ <a href="#">Open Space</a> model                    |
| 8. Anonymous Cards   | ▪ <a href="#">World Café</a> model                    |
| 9. List Pros & Cons  | 16. Inspiration from Nature                           |
|  | 17. Draw Picture                                      |
|  | 18. Silence   |

(This list draws from a handout developed by [Tree Bressen](#).)