

Nominal Group Technique*

The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is designed to promote group participation in the decision-making process and can be used by small groups to reach consensus on the identification of key problems or in the development of solutions that can be tested using rapid-change cycles.

STEP 1: Clarify the aim. What is it you are trying to improve?

STEP 2: Silent idea generation. On a separate sticky note each person writes at least 5 ideas that may improve the aim. *The benefits* of silent generation include: a) Allows adequate time for thinking and reflection through recall; b) Promotes social facilitation (e.g., seeing others hard at work); c) Avoids interruptions, undue focus on one idea, and competition, as well as status and conformance pressures or choosing prematurely among ideas; d) Promotes a problem-centered focus.

STEP 3: Round-robin recording of ideas. The group leader goes around the table and records one idea from each participant on the flip chart. The ideas should be recorded verbatim with little to no paraphrasing by the leader. However, leaders are allowed to ask questions for clarification of the idea. The process continues until all ideas have been recorded. *The benefits* of the round-robin recording are that it: a) Promotes equal participation in the presentation of ideas; b) Increases problem-mindedness and the ability to deal with a large number of ideas; c) Separates the ideas from the person; d) Allows for the tolerance of conflicting ideas; e) Encourages hitchhiking on ideas -- a process that may stimulate other participants to think of an idea not recorded.

STEP 4: Serial discussion of ideas. Take each idea, one at a time (serially) and discuss or clarify the idea prior to the vote. *The benefits* of this step are that it: a) Avoids unduly focusing on any one idea or a subset of ideas; b) Provides an opportunity for clarification and the elimination of any misunderstanding c) Outlines the arguments and disagreements over ideas; d) Records differences of opinion without undue augmentation.

STEP 5: Voting. Group participants will use their five dots in any combination to represent a potential solution to the question of how to make progress toward the aim.

*These instructions have been modified from the NIATx web site:

<https://niatx.net/Content/ContentPage.aspx?NID=147#5>. This tool is based on information derived from reading Group Techniques for Program Planning: A Guide to Nominal Group and Delphi Processes by Andre L. Delbecq, Andrew Van de Ven and David H. Gustafson, Scott, Foreman and Company, Glenview, Illinois, 1975. Other references on the Nominal Group Technique: <http://asq.org/learn-about-quality/idea-creation-tools/overview/nominal-group.html>