

Organizing a Discussion on Outcomes

Step 1: Identify the areas in need of improvement.

- a. Analyze aggregated assessment data.
- b. Make a list of findings.
- c. Discern which areas are functioning well and which areas are in need of improvement.

Step 2: Analyze areas in need of improvement.

- a. Discern the reason(s) for not meeting stated outcomes.
- b. Word each problem area as a broad, open question that encourages exploratory thinking. The aim of writing broad, open questions is to encourage brainstorming. Brainstorming may lead to new, outside the box, solutions.

Examples

Too specific: Should we switch from being a Pepsi campus to a Coca-Cola campus?
(Reason: The choices provided are too limiting for a rich discussion)

Preferred -- Broad and open: Should we switch from being a Pepsi campus to a different brand? (This option encourages exploratory thinking)

Too specific: Should we require all students to visit the Writing Center? (Reason: The choices provided are too limiting for a rich discussion)

Broad and open: What options are available to help students improve their writing skills?
(This option encourages exploratory thinking)

Step 3: Develop creative solutions for improvement through brainstorming.

- a. List as many solutions as possible without judging their quality.
- b. Try not to reject any solutions that may be suggested; doing so may inadvertently stop the flow of ideas.

Step 4: Evaluate the solution(s)

- a. Create a list of criteria that should be used when evaluating solutions (e.g., must be low-cost or free, must already exist on campus, needs to be implemented in a classroom environment, must have supporting technology, et cetera.).
- b. Go through each idea on the brainstorming list. Combine, remove or revise identified solution(s).
- c. Gain consensus on a final solution. When deciding, it is good to ask the following types of questions:
 1. Will a given solution produce the desired changes?
 2. Can your group implement the selected solution successfully?
 3. Given the amount of time, resources and support available for your department or unit, is each solution practical and/or possible?
 4. Will the solution be supported by your colleagues and/or by campus systems beyond your immediate department or unit?
 5. Does the solution contain any serious disadvantages?

Step 5: Implement solution(s)

- a. Create timeline for implementation.
- b. Identify specific tasks to be accomplished.
- c. Determine necessary resources.
- d. Define individual responsibilities.
- e. Provide for emergencies.

Step 6: Review the solution(s)

- a. Meet periodically to evaluate progress.
- b. Revise each solution as necessary or remove completely and revisit Step 4.