

Bridge Builder
A Guide for Watershed Partnerships

Paired Weighting

Purpose:

- To establish priorities by ranking items.

Uses:

Paired Weighting can be used to rank any list of items, such as: needs, goals, problems, solutions, resources, achievements, etc.

Materials Needed:

- List of items to be ranked.
- *Paired Weighting Form* and pencil or pen for each participant.
- Chalkboard, chalk and eraser
or
Newsprint, felt pen and masking tape.
- Transparency of the *Paired Weighting Form* and an overhead projector (optional).

Directions:

1. Paired Weighting is usually used immediately after a group has established a list of items to be ranked, e.g. needs or goals. The first step is to display the list to be ranked on a chalkboard or newsprint. For example the following is a list of goals of a Citizens Group for Alternatives to Incarceration. (*Bylaws of Missouri Coalition for Alternatives to Incarceration, 1983.*)

(a) To serve as a communications network among persons and groups involved or interested in alternative programs.

(b) To educate the public on the ineffectiveness of imprisonment and the need for alternatives.

(c) To advocate for legislation which facilitates alternatives.

(d) To support the implementation and enforcement of existing laws and programs which allow alternatives.

Nominal Group Technique: An Applied Group Problem-Solving Activity

Goals

- To increase creativity and participation in group meetings involving problem-solving and/or fact-finding tasks.
- To develop or expand perception of critical issues within problem areas.
- To identify priorities of selected issues within problems, considering the viewpoints of differently oriented groups.
- To obtain the input of many individuals without the dysfunction of unbalanced participation, which often occurs in large groups.

Group Size:

- Any number of groups of 5 to 8 participants each.

Time Required:

- 2 hours.

Materials:

- Newsprint and felt-tipped markers for each group.
- A copy of the *Nominal Group Task Statement Form* for each participant.
- 20.3" x 5" cards for each participant.
- Paper and pencil for each participant.
- A copy of the *Nominal Group Tally Sheet* for each group.

- Masking tape.
- Tables and chairs to accommodate up to 8 participants per group.

Physical Setting:

- Groups are seated around tables with newsprint nearby for recording purposes.

Process:

1. The facilitator states that the role of everyone present is to contribute perceptions, expertise and experience to defining the critical issues within the problem at hand. It's stressed that the theme of the experience is "problem-centering" rather than "solution-finding." A nominal group is defined as one in which individuals work in the presence of others but do not interact verbally with one another except at specified times.
2. The facilitator divides the participants into groups of 5 to 8 persons each.
3. The facilitator passes out *Nominal Group Task Statement Forms* to the participants, who are asked to respond in writing to the question or statement on the form. The facilitator gives an example of the kind of response desired. (The introductory process above takes about 10 minutes.)
4. Without discussion, silently and independently, each group member lists on the *Nominal Group Task Statement Form* those facts and resources needed to deal with the question. The facilitator enforces silence by requesting that those who have stopped writing not interfere with others and that they think more deeply for other possible items. (15 to 20 minutes.)
5. A volunteer in each group acts as recorder for that group. This individual asks each participant, one at a time, to present an item which that person has listed on the *Nominal Group Task Statement Form*. The items are recorded on the newsprint. This continues until each participant's list has been included. Discussion of items is not allowed and no concern is given to overlap of items at this time. However, "hitchhiking" is encouraged by having members generate new ideas on their forms, based on items presented by others in the group. (30 minutes.)

6. Groups now discuss the items listed on their master sheet for purposes of clarification, elaboration or addition of new items. Items are not to be condensed or collapsed into categories. (15 minutes.)

7. Without discussion, each group member should select from the master sheet and list on separate 3" x 5" cards (by name and number) the 10 items most critical to the solution of the problem. Then each participant should place the 10 cards/issues they selected on the table in front of them. From these, items should be ranked by placing a "1" in the upper right corner of the card with the most important item, a "2" in the upper right corner of the card with the next most important item, and so on until all 10 items selected have been ranked. (15 minutes.)

8. When all members have voted, the group recorder collects the 3" x 5" cards from each member, tabulates the results on the *Nominal Group Tally Sheet*, and shares the results with the group.

9. Further discussion and clarification of the ranking of priorities is led by the group recorder to ensure that all members understand what is meant by each priority. (10 minutes.)

10. Each participant is asked to select 10 items from the master chart that he or she considers most important. Silently and independently, group members list these items by name and number on new 3" x 5" cards. Then the members rank the items from 1 to 10 in the upper right corner of the cards, as before. (Any changed opinions resulting from the previous group discussion should be reflected.)

11. The 10 items are then rated by having each participant assign a value of 100 to his/her most important priority card. Next, values between 0 to 100 are assigned to the remaining 9 item-cards so as to indicate relative differences in importance between the items.

12. The re-rankings and ratings are then collected and tallied by the group recorder.

13. All participants meet together and the latest votes of each group are reported to the entire audience. The facilitator leads a discussion and again states that the reason for the experience was to be able to understand better the critical issues of a problem area.

Variations:

1. A single target group or different target groups can be used to respond to the same problem (e.g., providers of services and consumers of services, etc.).

2. The facilitator may wish to use 1 problem with a conventional interacting group and generate a set of responses, then lead into this exercise with a different problem and compare the results of the 2 methods in terms of number of items generated, acceptance of high-priority items by all members, etc.

3. A simple listing of priorities or ranking only (instead of ratings) may be appropriate if one does not seek an understanding of the importance of priorities.

Source:

Reproduced from *The 1975 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators*; John E. Jones and J. William Pfeiffer, editors; San Diego, California. University Associates, Inc., 1975.

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Nominal Group Task Statement Form

Handout 1

Problem: (Example) How would you compile and produce an information brochure on your organization?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

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Nominal Group Tally Sheet

Handout 2

Item Number	Ranks Assigned by Participants	Average of Ranks
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

(e) To foster research and publications regarding alternatives to incarceration.

2. Give each participant a copy of the *Paired Weighting Form*. Ask each participant, working independently, to rank the items by comparing and ranking the first item with every other item, then the second item with every other remaining item, and so on. To illustrate:

Begin by using only the first line.

Number 1 is, "To serve as a communications network, ..."
Begin by comparing Number 1 with Number 2, "To educate the public, . . ." If you believe Number 1 is more important than Number 2, circle Number 1.

If you believe Number 2 is more important than Number 1, circle Number 2. Similarly compare Number 1 with Number 3, then with Number 4, and then with Number 5 and circle your choices.

Up to this point you will have used only the first line - the line with Number 1 above and Numbers 2, 3, 4 and 5 below. It works well to use a transparency and expose only line one until certain that everyone understands this first step. If, for example, you believe Number 1 is more important than Numbers 2, 4, and 5, but you believe Number 3 is more important than Number 1 your first line would look like this.

①	1	①	①
2	③	4	5

3. Now move to line 2. You will be comparing Number 2 with Numbers 3, 4 and 5. Begin by comparing Number 2 with Number 3 and circling your choice. Then compare Number 2 with Number 4 and circle your choice. Then compare Number 2 with Number 5 and circle your choice.

4. Similarly rank the numbers on line 3, then line 4.

5. When you are through ranking, by circling numbers, count the number of times each number is circled and enter those totals at the right. You will see that Number 1 is circled 4 times, etc.

Blank Form

TOTALS

1	1	1	1
2	3	4	5
	2	2	2
	3	4	5
	3	3	
	4	5	
	4		
	5		

1=
2=
3=
4=
5=

Completed Form

TOTALS

1	1	1	1
2	③	4	5
	2	②	②
	③	4	5
	③	③	
	4	5	
	4		
	5	⑤	

1= 3
2= 2
3= 4
4= 0
5= 1

6. When everyone has finished add the number of times each number has been circled, using the totals from each participant's work sheet, and then rank the totals.

A Word of Encouragement

Even though all the numbers make this exercise look confusing, give Paired Weighting a chance. Once you have practiced it all the way through, you'll become more comfortable with it. It really is a very good tool for helping your group establish priorities in a thoughtful, deliberate manner.

Approximate Time Required:

Time will vary depending on the size of the group and the number of items to be ranked, from 15 minutes to an hour.

Number of Participants:

- 5 to 40.

Paired Weighting

The Paired Weighting form which is shown can be used for as many as 15 items. Since Paired Weighting is usually used immediately after a group has generated a list, you will need to have the forms ready in advance. It is very unlikely that you would want to use this technique to rank more than 15 items. This form can, of course, be used for 15 or any number less than that.

Paired Weighting Form

1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20				
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2			
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20					
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3			
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20						
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20							
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5			
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20								
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6			
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20									
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7			
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20										
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8			
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20											
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9			
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20												
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20													
11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20														
12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12			
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20															
13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13			
14	15	16	17	18	19	20																
14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14			
15	16	17	18	19	20																	
15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15			
16	17	18	19	20																		

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Assigning tasks

- ✓ Once a problem is defined and consensus is reached someone has to complete the work to get the group's desired result.
- ✓ To keep track of who is doing what an Action Register can be developed.
- ✓ What is important is what works for your group. Most important someone follow up on seeing work is completed.

**Action Register
Crawdad Lake**

Meeting:

Date:

Problem/Issue	Action Step	Target Date	Person Responsible
Lake home owners not involved with watershed project	Contact lake home owners and explain watershed project and ask for their involvement	October steering committee meeting	Watershed Coordinator
Unknown source or cause of orange material along lakeshore	Contact Health Department to visit site, collect samples, and identify source if possible	December steering committee meeting	Watershed Coordinator, USDA-NRCS, SWCD committee member