

PRIORITY-SETTING GROUP EXERCISE

Goals:

- Identify, discuss, and consensually agree on priorities for an organization's work.
- Make explicit what undergirds assumptions and decisions.
- Elucidate areas to be monitored as work is implemented, setting the stage for adaptation as needed.

Room set up:

- Place large papers on walls with "menus" for categories to be rated
- Give each participant a stack of sticker dots in three colors representing high priority (green), medium priority (yellow), and low priority (red).

Process

1. Invite participants as a group to review every element that's listed that will require a priority rating. Ask the group: 1) Does any wording need to be modified? 2) Can we let go of anything listed here right off the bat? 3) Is anything missing from this list that we need to add right off the bat? Collectively modify the lists responsive to group input, if needed.
2. Invite each participant to individually rank priorities by placing a colored dot reflecting high, medium, or low priority status next to each item on the agreed-upon menu.
3. Once everyone's done, invite the full group to look at the assembled lists with all dots attached. Ask the group to share what they say by prompts such as: What do we observe? What patterns do we see? What's consistently ranked low? Consistently high? Can anything be removed right away since no one wants it? Where do we see strong "variance" (a range in rankings from low to high)? Invite staff who ranked items with variance "low" or "high" to comment on their reasoning, followed by collective questions and discussion.
4. Give participants an opportunity to move around their dots if their priorities have changed in light of group discussion and points argued by others.
5. Invite the group to take stock – out loud – about majority priorities. If anyone gave a "low" ranking to these high priorities, invite them to share their thinking. Query if they have changed their mind and/or what if anything might enable them to change their mind. If unable to shift perspective, ask if they are OK going with the will of the majority nonetheless.
6. Call for consensus – tiering items, dropping some altogether, and identifying areas of variance etc. that require additional work.