

CARDSTORMING: A WAY TO THINK TOGETHER

Cardstorming is a powerful tool for helping groups to think and make decisions together. Sometimes it's called "clustering." Sometimes it's called "snowballing." [The Institute for Cultural Affairs](#) calls this technique the "workshop method" and incorporates it into their strategic planning process.

This method works well with almost any group because it is very visual, involves individual brainstorming, conversation among people, writing, organizing ideas, and also can get people moving. Cardstorming works well for visioning, identifying issues, and strategizing and many groups use this process during community "town hall" meetings.

Cardstorming

- ✓ Creates powerful representation of group thinking
- ✓ Encourages individual thought
- ✓ Moves group toward consensus
Fun, user-friendly, accommodates most learning styles
- ✓ Promotes open discussion
Leads to a deeper understanding of community issues

Materials:

- ✓ Approximately 60 half-sheets of colored paper
- ✓ A box or two of colored markers
- ✓ A "sticky wall" of either heavy paper, butcher paper, or nylon fabric sprayed with remount spray (hang on wall)
- ✓ Masking tape (if no sticky wall is available, use tape loops to stick half-sheets to wall. You can also use post-its if they work better in your space. Be sure to buy a large size so people can easily read from a distance.
- ✓ Scratch paper and pens, if needed by participants

How to Proceed:

Allow about two hours for entire process

1. Begin with a broad "Focus Question" that will draw out the ideas and creativity of the group.
2. Individual Brainstorm: Participants write down on scratch paper all their ideas and star their most important ones.
3. Participants share in pairs or small groups what they have written.
4. Participants decide on most significant ideas between them.
5. Facilitator calls for ideas in about 3-4 rounds. Ideas go up randomly.
6. Participants' pair, then cluster, similar ideas. Ideas can be clustered under value-less symbols like boxes or circles.
7. Facilitator asks for additional ideas not included.
8. Participants name/title the clusters.

Notes/Tips:

- ✓ You want to end up with 30-40 ideas. Therefore, whether you work in pairs or groups will depend on how many people you have and will determine how many "most significant" ideas participants will be asked to agree on.
- ✓ You can call for the "most outrageous idea" or the "easiest idea to implement" or whatever you think will stimulate the group's thinking.
- ✓ When an idea is not generally understood, call for clarity from the author.

SAMPLE CARDSTORMING RESULTS

Focus Question:
What are the most important elements of community building?

Inclusivity	Asset-Based	Relationships	Creating Positive Change	Common Vision	Celebration
Shared leadership	Everyone contributes	Getting to know neighbors	Making a difference in our community	Working toward the same goal	Have fun
Diversity is valued	People are valued for their gifts/skills	Meeting new people	Working together to create change	Know what we want to achieve	Celebrate success and progress
Everyone participates – regardless of age, language, abilities	Focus on strengths, not deficits	Building relationships			Acknowledge people's efforts
Open membership	Identify local resources/assets	Multigenerational bonds			
Equal power to make decisions	Engage local associations	Forming partnerships			