

## Convergent Thinking Activities

### **Convergent Tools –**

The general idea of convergent (critical) thinking is to refine the number and quality of possible ideas. This disciplined process results in the emergence of the one or two ideas that best match the framed issue or desired outcome. There are two general types of convergent thinking activities. The first set seeks to reduce the number and refine the quality of options. The second type connects the ideas to the desired outcomes.

#### Reduce & Refine:

After generating a large number and variety of ideas through divergent thinking it will be necessary to check for redundancy and relationships. An initial review of the ideas will reveal that some ideas are repeated or redundant while other ideas are closely related to each other. Eliminating redundancy and exploring relationship can reduce the overall number of ideas and increase the quality of the remaining options.

#### Activity Ideas:

- **Group, Grab, & Grow**
  - Create separate groups or lists for related or redundant ideas
  - Continue to review the entire list of options to grab additional related ideas
  - Consider if an option should be added to an existing group or if it deserves its own group.
- **Clump and Compare**
  - Using different colored pens, circle related or redundant ideas with the same color. Resist creating label or name for the color as long as possible.
  - Once 3 or 4 different colors are being used, begin to list the ideas by color on a separate sheet of paper as you continue to review the list of options.
  - Continue sorting by color until every idea belongs to at least one color. By this time a label or name should become obvious.

#### Connect and Prioritize:

In general, connect and prioritize activities look for ideas that most accurately address the desired outcome and, if more than one idea meets the criteria, prioritize the options for next steps or implementation. Once you have reduced and refined the original lists of ideas you may still have several good options to choose from. Structured approaches to evaluate the strength of connection to the desired outcome and prioritization will point to the one or two best ideas on which to focus resources.

#### Activities:

- **Forced Choice – eye test (best for when you have many possible options)**
  - Write one idea/option per 3X5 card
  - Starting with any two, hold two cards up and ask “between these two ideas, which best addresses our desired outcome?”

- Continue to hold the card with the preferred idea. Discard (set down) the card not selected to start a new pile.
- Pick up a new card to compare with the first “winner” and ask the same question “between these two ideas, which best addresses our desired outcome?”
- Continue to hold the winner and put the “loser” on the discard pile.
- Continue until all the cards have been compared one time.
- Go back to the discard pile and continue until one card remains in your hand through an entire cycle of comparisons.
- Direct Measure – Gauge aka “Deadliest Catch” (good for when you’re down to a few options)
  - Consider your desired outcome the gauge of the quality of an option. The better you have defined your desired outcome or success the better it will be able to be used as the gauge.
  - Create a clear statement or definition of each idea or option
  - For each option ask. Will this meet our needs better than any other?
- Forced Prioritization - Platonic Triangle (best for if you have 4-6 quality options left)
  - Draw a triangle on a clean page
  - Write each component concept, issue or symptom in individual boxes along the base of the triangle
  - Just above the base draw one less box than the number of component concepts.
  - Discuss which concepts move up and which one does not.
  - Continue this process until only one concept remains at the top of the triangle.
  - The process (discussion) is as important as the product.
  - Choose which concepts must be addressed, solved and/or decided

