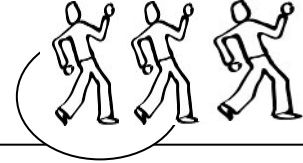# WALK THE TALK COMMITTEE
BRAINSTORMING TOOL

INTRODUCTION

Brainstorming can be an effective tool for developing highly creative solutions to a problem or generating a lot of ideas on a specific issue. It is particularly helpful when you need to break out of stale, established patterns of thinking, so that you can develop new ways of looking at things. Brainstormng asks people to come up with ideas and thoughts that at times may be a bit shocking, crazy or impossible. These ideas can then be changed and improved into ideas that are useful and often stunningly original.

Brainstorming is most effective with groups of 8-12 people and should be performed in a relaxed atmosphere. A brainstorming session requires a facilitator, a brainstorming space and something on which to write ideas. The facilitator's responsibilities include guiding the session, encouraging participation, and writing ideas down.

Brainstorming works best with a varied group of people. Participants should come from various departments across the organization and have different backgrounds.

Creative exercise, relaxation exercises or other fun activities before the session can help participants relax their minds so that they will be more creative during the brainstorming session.

BRAINSTORMING METHOD

1. Define your problem or issue as a creative challenge. This is extremely important. A badly designed challenge could lead to lots of ideas which fail to solve your problem. Creative challenges typically start with "In what way might we…?" or

"How could we…?" Your creative challenge should be concise , and exclude any information other than the challenge itself. For example, "In what way might we improve our clinical outcomes?" or "How can we encourage the public to access our program's services?"

2. Give yourselves a time limit. Approximately 25 minutes is generally recommended, although larger groups may require more time to get everyone's ideas out. Alternately, give yourself an idea limit. At minimum, push for 50 ideas.

3. Once the brainstorming starts, participants shout out solutions to the problem while the facilitator writes them down so that everyone can see them. There must be absolutely no criticizing of ideas. No matter how crazy, impossible or silly an idea is, it must be written down. Laughing should be encouraged. Criticism is not.

4. Once your time is up, select the five to ten ideas which the group likes best. At this point any of the ideas listed can be modified or improved to make them more feasible/practical. Make sure everyone in the brainstorming session is in agreement.

5. Write down about 5 criteria for judging which ideas best solve your problem. Criteria should start with the word "should". For example, "It should be cost effective", "It should be legal", It should be possible to finish by April", etc. An alternative would be to conduct a force field analysis on each idea.

6. Give each idea a score of 0-5 points depending on how well it meets each criterion. Once all of the ideas have been scored for each criterion add up the scores.

7. The idea with the highest score will best solve your problem. But you should keep a record of all your best ideas and their scores in case your best idea turns out to be unworkable.