

March 15, 2021

To: Participants in the Locally Led Conservation II Training Series Session #3

From: LeAnn Buck, Executive Director, MASWCD  
Keith Kloubec, Assistant State Conservationist-Programs, NRCS

Welcome to the March online training series where the spotlight is on **Locally Led Conservation**. Engaging speakers, important concepts, topic refreshers, and examples to apply are in this training package. Each session will include a handout packet of materials to support the key messages of the speakers.

This week's session is *Making Local Working Groups Meaningful*. Specifically, the aim of this session is identifying ways to engage with people to foster useful input and enhance ongoing relationships. Involving people, defining options, seeing where support lies, and naming a set of recommendations that lead to conservation outcomes is a powerful approach for progress. As always, you'll hear examples from your colleagues showing ways they've figured out how to make this happen.

- **Setting the Stage for Today** – Keith and LeAnn
- **Involving the Public, Key Stakeholders and Partners** – Lisa Hinz, University of MN Extension, Farmington, and Anita Provinzino, North St. Louis SWCD
- **Small Group Discussion:**  
*How and when do I connect purposefully with underserved groups and individuals? Who typically influences priority directions and funding flows for conservation in my area? What tips can I offer to expand who is involved and ways to invite into conservation efforts?*
- **Seeking Input is Worth the Effort** – Donna Rae Scheffert, Leadership Tools, Northfield, and Ed Musielewicz- NRCS, Detroit Lakes
- **Building Consensus** – Donna Rae and Nate Hylla, Stearns SWCD
- **Making Group Decisions** – Nate and Lisa



**NOTES:** Included in this packet is a handout with each segment of the agenda and space for your key take- aways, notes, and action ideas to jot down as you go along.

**TIPS FOR SUCCESS:**

1. Log onto Zoom 5-10 minutes before the session begins to be sure your connections are working well. You will be in a waiting room.
2. Preference for participation is for video camera on and muted.
3. Use the chat feature to share questions and ideas, and as time allows a response will be given or look for follow-up information after the session.
4. The session will be recorded (exception is the breakout discussion) and posted in April after the conclusion of the series. We encourage live participation as that will have the greatest benefit.

Thank you for investing in this time. We value your active involvement.

Questions: Please contact Donna Rae Scheffert [leadershiptools@charter.net](mailto:leadershiptools@charter.net) or call 612-360-4484

# Locally Led Conservation Training Series

## #3 Making LWG Meaningful



*What are ways to engage people to foster useful input and enhance ongoing relationships.*

### Agenda and Presenters

#### Welcome, Purpose, Goals, and Game

Keith Klobec, NRCS \_\_\_\_\_

LeAnn Buck, MASWCD \_\_\_\_\_

Donna Rae Scheffert, Leadership Tools  
\_\_\_\_\_

Lisa Hinz, U of MN Extension \_\_\_\_\_

### Key Ideas and Notes

#### Involving the Public, Key Stakeholders, and Partners

Lisa Hinz, U of M Extension

Anita Provinzino, North St. Louis SWCD  
\_\_\_\_\_

For more information on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation <https://www.iap2.org/mpage/Home>

#### Discussion:

*How and when do I connect purposefully with underserved groups and individuals?*

*Who typically influences priority directions and funding flows for conservation in my area?*

*What tips can I offer to expand who is involved and ways to invite into conservation efforts?*

### **Seeking Input is Worth the Effort**

Donna Rae Scheffert, Leadership Tools

Ed Musielewicz, NRCS \_\_\_\_\_

### **Building Consensus**

Donna Rae Scheffert, Leadership Tools

Nate Hylla, Stearns SWCD \_\_\_\_\_

### **Making Group Decisions**

Nate Hylla, SWCD

Lisa Hinz, U of M Extension



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service



## YOUR BEST PRACTICES

The following ideas and quotes on things working well and meaningful impacts are those most often mentioned in the October 2020 online survey on Locally Led Conservation practices and perspectives completed by 188 SWCD and NRCS staff and elected officials.

**Q. What are you already doing in your LWG process that is working well to engage people, identify resource concerns and potential solutions, and/or get results?**

*I don't think we do anything out of the ordinary, just have a good group of people that show up and are comfortable enough to share their thoughts.*

Survey Respondent

### HOSTING IN PERSON LWG MEETINGS

"Small group discussions either in person or remotely."

"In-person meetings, individual landowner input"

### USE OTHER PLANS TO INFORM LWG

"Using the local water plan and watershed plans as a guide for the meetings."

"Staff can report priorities identified from county and 1W1P planning processes, as well as report concerns voiced by landowner who are currently working with them or requesting assistance with BMPs."

### PARTNERS ID AND GET FEEDBACK IN LWG

"Our local work group meetings have helped facilitate conversations regarding agency or community group updates and/or project priorities for the upcoming future. This has not only been critical to helping determine resource concerns but identifying potential areas to partner."

### SURVEYS AHEAD OR STANDALONE TO SHAPE PRIORITY SET

"Sending out survey's to over 300 participants per county to gain input and invite them to the listening session prior to the LWG"

### DIVERSE GROUP

"Maintaining and building on a diverse group and working to have as many different voices and backgrounds involved in the discussion. This allows for different perspectives and good discussion about the resource concerns."

### PERSONAL INVITATIONS

"Invite people face to face or phone call is the most success for new people."

### BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

"We already have a good relationship with our producers and agencies. We talk to them about other things throughout the year, so a LWG meeting is just a part of that."

**Q. In addition to securing funding for NRCS and other federal programs, what results from the LWG do you see as meaningful?**

#### **SET OF PRIORITIES**

“LWG participant ownership in sculpting the conservation delivery process is very meaningful. Random acts of conservation are still OK, but if the majority of the deliverables from the work unit are random (vs. addressing the priorities) then the conservation partnership has failed the LWG.”

“It’s a great way to get a variety of interest groups to sit down & discuss conservation priorities and find out who’s doing what.”

*Get a better sense of community and a better shared vision within the county of what each individual farm could do as their part towards an overarching goal for the county/ community (if well attended).*

Survey Respondent

#### **PARTNERS MEET UP**

“Interaction and networking with local conservation professionals.”

#### **PLANNING FOR FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

“Landowners and general public get involved with the SWCD to help set what resource priority needs in the county plus help with long-term planning.”

“Could help to summarize priorities for other funding sources that the SWCD uses, such as County dollars or BWSR grants.”

“I feel like sometimes these meetings spark conversation between partners and come up with other ways to fund a project.”

#### **BUILD TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS**

“It builds trust between organizations/agencies/farms/commodity groups.”

“Getting some public buy-in and build relationships.”

#### **ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER PLANS**

We are able to align the LWG goals with the watershed planning goals.

“Aligning local priorities and watershed-based priorities with federal funding requests.”

# IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

## Benefits to Consensus Decision Making

### How can you benefit from consensus decision-making?

#### Tip: Involve others and increase commitment

If groups want high-quality decisions with strong support for follow through, and they are willing to invest time to create a proposal or plan, they will benefit from consensus decision-making. Involving all group members in the discussion of issues and making decisions together is a powerful process.

Consensus decision-making has a rich history dating back to early Native American societies, as well as the Quaker tradition. The consensus process has also been used within political movements, nonprofit organizations, intentional communities, and worker cooperatives. Consensus decision-making is also being embraced by government entities and corporations, such as Mitsubishi, Levi Strauss & Co., and Starbucks.

Work teams become more engaged and committed to implementation when they can create their own goals, projects, or action plans. Creating consensus generally requires a common purpose, an understanding of consensus and skilled facilitation.

#### Definition of consensus decision-making

Consensus is a cooperative process in which all group members develop and agree to support a decision in the best interest of the whole. In consensus, the input of every participant is carefully considered and there is a good faith effort to address all legitimate concerns. (Dressler, 2006)

Arietta and Wallace (2000) define consensus as “a journey and a destination.” As a process, consensus is the means by which groups can productively resolve issues, make choices or develop strategies. As a product, consensus represents a resolution—a decision that satisfies all participants.

**Consensus as a process:** Often referred to as “consensus building,” the process is a journey of preparing participants to make a decision. Discussion is needed to identify issues, clarify questions, establish decision-making criteria and address all concerns. The goal is to create understanding of the issues and then share the perspectives of all involved. Using a trained facilitator to plan the process and lead conversations to get to a decision is important.



#### Quick facts

Consensus decision-making is a process that builds trust and creates ownership and commitment. An effective consensus process (consensus-building) is inclusive and engages all participants. Consensus decisions can lead to better quality outcomes that empower the group or community to move forward to create their future together.

Facilitators employ a number of strategies within the consensus process:

- Gaining buy-in from all members about the purpose or goal of the session
- Ensuring that every idea is acknowledged in writing and honored
- Linking thoughts together so that people can formulate a common idea
- Creating areas of shared understanding
- Naming categories of related ideas.

**Consensus as a product:** Consensus is the outcome of a consensus-building process. After listening to all perspectives, participants develop a proposal that honors the wisdom of the group. When people think and talk together, they can find a solution or proposal to move forward as a group.

A consensus decision does not mean that everyone agrees on all the details or that some have changed their ideas or perspectives. Ideally, a consensus decision reflects mutual understanding, agreement to support a decision, and commitment to take action steps for the benefit of the group.

### **Benefits of consensus decision-making**

- Inclusive participation engages and empowers the group
- Requires a commitment to work together and increases cooperation
- Creates shared understanding through discussion that bridges differences
- Equalizes the distribution of power in a group
- Can create better decisions that are more representative of the larger community
- Creates more ownership and commitment
- Results in more effective implementation because the entire group takes action on the project or plan

### **Choose consensus when...**

- There are many stakeholders and perspectives for a complex problem
- People are willing to participate
- The group has authority to make decisions and will be affected by them
- Creative solutions are needed
- You need everyone involved to be committed to the decision or plan

### **Choose alternatives when...**

- There is no common goal or purpose
- There is an unwillingness to participate or cooperate
- Group has low trust or a lack of commitment
- Time is limited or there is an emergency
- Needed information is not available
- People are polarized on issues or values
- The problem has a clear solution

## References

- Arietta, D. L., & Wallace, L. (2000). *Consensus building fieldbook*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Extension and Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.
- Bressen, T. (2007). Consensus decision making. In P. Holman, T. Devane & S. Cady (Eds.), *The change handbook* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Dressler, L. (2006) *Consensus through conversation*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Williams, R. B. (2007). *More than 50 ways to build team consensus*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

More Public Engagement Strategies resources are available at [www.extension.umn.edu](http://www.extension.umn.edu)

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## Public Engagement Strategies

# Best Methods for Making Group Decisions

### Tip: Decide who decides—and how

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Sometimes, who decides in a group is pre-determined by a statute or law. However, there may be opportunities to expand the involvement of who decides. By engaging the public or increasing the level of participation in decision-making, groups can make more informed decisions that address public concerns. As a group, it is important to have a conversation about who will make the decisions, and how.



Image by [Tanya Ferrera](#) from [Pixabay](#)

### Decision-making methods

To help your group select a decision-making method, you might lead a discussion using questions such as:

- To what extent do the group members feel the need to be understood and influential in the decisions that are made?
- To what extent are members committed to the decision and responsible for its implementation?
- To what extent are members satisfied with their own participation and the group atmosphere?

There are a variety of options when deciding how to decide. Below are four types of options with a summary of the strengths, weaknesses and consequences of each:

### Decision by authority

**Description:** This method can be described as “one person decides.” This might mean assigning the decision to the most expert person or to a person who decides after listening to the group discuss the problem. Often, the person making the decision is a positional leader.

**Strengths:** This method is useful when the group lacks knowledge or skills and has little time to make a decision. It works well when decisions are “routine” or when commitment to implementation is not a concern.

**Weaknesses:** This method probably won’t work well with more complex decisions because it doesn’t use all available help or support from group members. As a result, the group might not support the final decision and group resentment may develop.

### Minority control (small group decides)

**Description:** This method uses the skills and resources of a small number of group members. Usually, the small group is made up of experts on the issue or a delegated subgroup that has the necessary information to make a decision.

**Strengths:** This method is useful if the whole group cannot meet, if only a few members have information on or interest in the decision, or for routine types of decisions. This decision-making method may be appropriate when overall commitment to the decision is not necessary.

**Weaknesses:** This method does not use the resources of most of the group and doesn't build group support for the decision. Nor does it yield the benefits of group interaction.

### Majority control (voting)

**Description:** Often mandated by rules or bylaws, voting allows all members to vote for or against an issue. Groups using this method typically adopt the idea that wins a majority.

**Strengths:** This may seem like the fairest method, and it is seen as a legitimate method in a democracy. It is effective when there is no time to build consensus. This is a good method to use when members of the group are equally informed.

**Weaknesses:** Someone wins and someone loses in voting. This can result in a disgruntled minority in a group or can cause opposing factions to mobilize. Voting also cuts out the option of finding a compromise solution.

### Consensus (all decide)

**Description:** Consensus strives for the full empowerment and involvement of all group members when making a decision. Consensus is generally understood to mean that everyone involved has a chance to participate, understands the decision, and is prepared to support it.

**Strengths:** Consensus can produce a high-quality decision that has strong commitment to implementation. The future ability of the group to solve problems is enhanced. Consensus is useful for serious, important, complex decisions that affect a lot of people.

**Weaknesses:** This method takes a great deal of time and energy. Consensus is hard to achieve in a large group and requires a rich exchange of ideas and information.

### References

Bryson, J.M. & Carroll, A.R. (2007). *Public participation fieldbook*. St. Paul, MN: University of Minnesota.

More Public Engagement Strategies resources are available at [www.extension.umn.edu](http://www.extension.umn.edu)

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## HOSTING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS IN PERSON OR ONLINE

# Using Dots to Rank and Rate Ideas

Stick-on dots can be used to establish rankings and ratings of ideas<sup>1</sup> (or options, projects, proposed budget amounts, etc.). Participants indicate their views by where they place the dots they have been given for the purpose. This can be adapted online as well, using shared screens and annotation tools

### INSTRUCTIONS: RANKING

1. Create the list of items to be ranked on a sheet of flip chart paper or whiteboard – something participants can easily see.

If meeting online, record ideas live on a shared document or slide screen so that all can see items.

2. Give each participant a certain number dots – typically 5 to 7.
3. Ask participants to place a dot next to each item they think should be pursued.

If meeting online, ask participants to use annotation stamps on a shared screen of options.

4. Sum the number of dots placed next to each item. The item with the most dots is ranked first; the item with the second-most dots is ranked second; and so forth.
5. As a variation, participants may be allowed to place more than one dot (perhaps even all of their dots) next to an item as a way of indicating intensity of opinion.
6. As another variation, participants can be given dots of two different colors. One color (say, green) can be used to indicate items a participant favors; the other color (say, red) can be used to indicate items with which the participant cannot live.



### INSTRUCTIONS: RATING

1. Create the list of items to be rated.
2. Create a verbally anchored rating scale (e.g. 1 = very poor, 2 = fair, 3 = average, 4 = good, 5 = excellent). (An alternative may be to create a behaviorally-anchored rating scale, such as strongly agree to strongly disagree.)
3. Create a matrix with options to be rated down the left-hand side of a sheet of paper or on a whiteboard, and rating scale to be applied to each across the top of the sheet or whiteboard.
4. Give participants as many dots as there are items to be rated.
5. Have participants indicate their rating of each item by where they place their dots on the rating scale.
6. As a variation, participants might not have a formal rating scale, but instead might use dots of different colors to indicate their ratings (e.g., red = very poor, yellow = fair, green = good).

<sup>1</sup> Bryson, J. M. and Carroll, A.R. (2005) Public Participation Fieldbook. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

## HOSTING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS IN PERSON OR ONLINE

### Tool: Fist to Five<sup>1</sup>



#### WHAT IS IT?

“Fist to Five” is a simple and quick group activity to test the degree of agreement on a proposal and discuss options.

#### WHEN TO USE IT?

It can be used at the start of a conversation or after options have been proposed or discussed.

#### WHAT DOES IT DO?

“Fist to Five” gives you a quick picture of how close to agreement the group is. Once you’ve got the range of responses and ***if there is significant agreement***, you can move forward to a new topic or to planning around the decisions made. And likewise, ***if there is significant dissent***, the group can discuss what it would take to get closer to agreement and consensus.

#### HOW TO DO FIST TO FIVE?

**Step #1:** Once the group appears to be moving in a clear direction, the individual leading the discussion should state the proposal or direction as s/he perceives it.

**Step #2:** Invite members of the group to indicate their perspective on the proposal/direction as stated by the discussion leader based on a scale of fist to five.

If meeting online, you can do this by having people turn on their cameras or, alternatively, creating a poll.



[Link](#) to image credit

Fist: No way, I’ll block it.

One finger: I don’t agree, but I won’t block.

Two fingers: I don’t agree, but I’ll work for it.

Three fingers: I’m neutral

Four fingers: It’s a good idea, I’ll work for it.

Five fingers: It’s a great idea, I’ll lead.

**Step #3:** Once preferences of the group are noted, the discussion leader should move the conversation forward in one of two ways:

- 1) move to the next conversation/project (if there is support– all 3s and above),
- OR

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Scheffert, Donna Rae, et al (2008). Committees That Work: Common Traps – Creative Solutions. (p 36). University of Minnesota: St. Paul; Anderson, Marian, et al (1999) Facilitation Resources: Volume 5—Making Group Decisions. (p 5.12). University of Minnesota: St. Paul.

2) clarify concerns (if there is NOT full support – if there are fists, 1s, and/or 2s).

**NOTE: If there is not support, the discussion leader should ask those individuals who have indicated *anything less than three fingers* (neutral) a few clarifying questions.** With a poll, you will need to ask people who indicated a lower rating (fist, one, or two fingers) to identify themselves and share their thinking.

- What part of our current proposal do you object to?
- What would it take to move your vote to neutral or supportive?
- What would be a more acceptable proposal?

NOTE: Take some time to get comments from those who are not supportive so that the group better understands the reasons for their resistance. This input is helpful because it surfaces concerns and places the responsibility or accountability where it rightfully belongs – with the person who has an objection. It also encourages considering re-shaping proposal to make a decision that everyone could support (or at least be neutral to). ***Once it's apparent that the proposal or some support has been gained, repeat the "First to Five" process to as you move toward following your group's plan of action.***

**Step #4: Move on...**to the next conversation and/or decision-point in your process.

NOTE: Throughout a decision-making or planning process you may need to use the "Fist to Five" often to assure you have agreement on various parts of your plan!

## WHAT'S THE OUTCOME?

When you use "Fist to Five", you end up with agreement to ideas/plans that all members of the group support at some level. Plus, those interested in working on and/or leading the plan will be identified. Using the "Fist to Five" technique should be used often as it can apply to many different situations where you want everyone involved in deliberation and decision making.

## LEARNING MORE

"Fist to Five" is just one type of ***decision support tool***. For more tools and examples, here are a few additional resources to consider:

- Anderson, Marian, et al (1999) Facilitation Resources: Volume 5—Making Group Decisions. University of Minnesota: St. Paul.
- Bens, Ingrid. (2016) Facilitation at a Glance! A Pocket Guide of Tools and Techniques for Effective Meeting Facilitation (4<sup>th</sup> Edition). GOAL/QPC.
- Bens, Ingrid. (2005) Facilitating with Ease! Core skills for facilitators, team leaders and members, managers, consultants, and trainers. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Kearny, Lynn (1995). The Facilitator's Toolkit: Tools and Techniques for Generating Ideas and Making Decisions in Groups. Human Resource Development Press, Inc: Amherst, MA
- Justice, Thomas and David Jamieson (1998). The Complete Guide to Facilitation: Enabling Groups to Succeed. Human Resource Development Press, Inc.: Amherst, MA

## Locally Led Conservation 2

### #3 Making LWGs Meaningful

## Resources



### Session Content Resources:

North St. Louis County SWCD weblink:

<https://www.nslswcd.org/partners-links/>

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) [link](#) – source of the Spectrum of Public Participation and much more.

Becker SWCD Links:

[https://twitter.com/Becker\\_SWCD](https://twitter.com/Becker_SWCD)

<https://www.facebook.com/Becker-Soil-and-Water-Conservation-District-437661879747314>

[https://www.instagram.com/becker\\_swcd/](https://www.instagram.com/becker_swcd/)

U of M Extension Public Engagement Strategies - resources [link](#)

### Online Tools:

**Jamboard** - an interactive whiteboard from Google – used for sticky note activities - [what is jamboard](#) 22 min video (detailed “how to” by a teacher – note that to have others be able to contribute, you click the “share” in the upper right and with “get link” permissions, give “edit” rather than “view”

**Mentimeter** / <https://www.mentimeter.com/> – online presentation software, word clouds especially easy to set up for a group to respond to online. Free basic access, has short “how to” videos.

**Padlet** – an online notice board – a bit more structured than Google Jamboard. Can be used interactively. [what is padlet?](#) webpage with descriptive info. Padlet site has short video “how to do”s. Up to 4 pads for free. Can delete old padlets to keep within the 4 free padlet limit.

# Our tips on expanding who's involved and ways to invite into conservation efforts

Make sure people know that they have a chance to provide input.

Think outside the box: go to farmer's markets, auctions, ...

Beginning farmers - connecting with landowners who are looking to pass along their land/stewardship

Listening to underserved groups specific issues

Have meeting after a board meeting

publish available programs via media

Use social media to promote broad invitation (and ongoing work!)

Personalized phone calls or door to door/face to face outreach to clients or groups of clients.

Individually invite people

**Offer food**

Stress that EQIP funding is now on the Team level, making it so input in the LWG is not diluted and has immediate impact.

Share outreach events with partners, ex: cattleman's groups - expands reach

Women's groups for forestry and landowners

**Connect with schools**

Follow up mailings with phone calls.

Letters/email followed up w/phone call, posting it on District websites, personal invites

Be encouraging, not just same old, same old



## HOSTING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

# POWERFUL QUESTIONS

*Asking a good question in a group meeting is a very effective way of opening up a conversation, hearing different perspectives, and engaging others. High-quality questions focus on what is meaningful for the participants, triggers curiosity, and invites further exploration.*



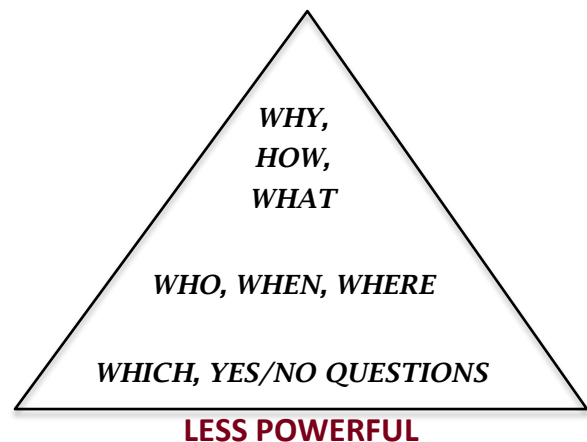
### SOME GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING QUESTIONS:

- Context matters so questions should be customized to fit the group's purpose and objectives
- A well-crafted question attracts energy and focuses attention on what matters. Open-ended questions, not ones that have a simple yes/no answer, tend to invite more engaging conversation.
- Good questions invite inquiry and curiosity. "Why" questions should be used carefully as they can give the impression of interrogation or that respondent has done something wrong. Substituting how, what or when often works
- Check possible questions with key people who will take part in a conversation. Does it hold their attention and energy?

### A POWERFUL QUESTION...

- Is simple and clear
- Is thought provoking
- Generates energy
- Focuses inquiry
- Challenges assumptions
- Opens new possibilities
- Evokes more questions

### MORE POWERFUL



Examples of this range from less to more powerful include:

- Did you finish the project?
- When is the deadline?
- What possibilities haven't we thought of yet?
- What does it mean to be the best at our work?

Questions can come from this entire range depending on the situation. Choose thoughtfully to make your meetings more engaging and effective.

*Resources: The Art of Powerful Questions by Eric Vogt, Juanita Brown and David Isaacs, (2003), and Making Questions Work by Dorothy Strachan, (2007), San Francisco, CA, Jossey-Bass*

## HOSTING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

# Paired Comparisons

It can be difficult to set priorities, especially when you think all the options are important. This worksheet can help you decide. First, list 3 to 5 existing programs that seem important to continue. Then, list 3 to 5 new programs that you are considering. Compare each item with all of the other items and circle the one with the highest priority in the column on the right. For instance, on line one, compare the first program with the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and 10th, circling the highest priority in each pair. Repeat until all pairs have been compared.

### Programs

### Comparison

1. _____	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2. _____		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3. _____			3	3	3	3	3	3	3
			4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4. _____				4	4	4	4	4	4
				5	6	7	8	9	10
5. _____					5	5	5	5	5
					6	7	8	9	10
6. _____						6	6	6	6
						7	8	9	10
7. _____							7	7	7
							8	9	10
8. _____								8	8
								9	10
9. _____									9
									10
10. _____									

Now look at your results and, if applicable, the choices of the group. Count how many times you circled each number and enter in the left-hand spaces below. Enter the group totals in the right-hand spaces. The numbers circled the most times should be the top priorities. How do your priorities compare with those of the total group?

1	_____	2	_____	3	_____	4	_____	5	_____
6	_____	7	_____	8	_____	9	_____	10	_____

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from [Mindtools](#) and Ohio State University Extension. (2009). Building Dynamic Groups.

## HOSTING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

### Written Record: One-Text Facilitation



The one-text procedure utilizes a neutral facilitator to elicit interests of all the participants. The neutral person serving as facilitator does not answer the questions; they ask the questions, record responses or find a recorder to do so, and help the group to refine their responses until the participants find the text acceptable. This works best in a group smaller than 15 people. If more, go to small groups for responses to the first and second questions.

The process is called the "one-text" procedure because quite literally there is only one written record. All the participants see the facilitator's draft of the written record so they are using the same language. The only people who can revise, delete, or add to the written draft are the facilitators.

#### Procedure

1. First, the facilitator seeks responses to key question(s).  
The facilitator writes key points of those responses onto a flipchart and makes it visible to the participants.

*"What resource concerns might we focus on for conservation priorities in the coming year?"*

2. Changes are made to the text on the flipchart during the interaction with participants.

*"Is there anything we should add or change?"*

*"In what ways would you revise this set of priorities?"*

3. Once the options are outlined, use a ranking or rating process (dots, votes, etc.). Use this information to put the new list into a top to bottom order.
4. The facilitator continues to revise drafts based on participant's comments until the facilitator feels the draft they currently have meets all/most of the participants' interests. Then they state that the work is done, and ask for any questions.

*"This is the final set of priorities. Questions?"*

*"Given our work today, this is the set of priorities. Any questions?"*

#### Example of Written Record

##### List A – Resource concerns focus?

Water	Cover Crops
Soil	Bees
Habitat	Groundwater
Nitrates	Buffers

##### List B – Any to add or change?

Cover crops  
Water Quality (groundwater and nitrates)  
Wildlife Habitat (bees)  
Soil Erosion (buffers)  
Water Quantity

##### List C – Revisions?

Soil Health (cover crops)  
Water Quality (groundwater and nitrates)  
Wildlife Habitat (at-risk species)  
Soil Erosion (loss of productive soil)  
Water Quantity

##### List D – Prioritized concerns

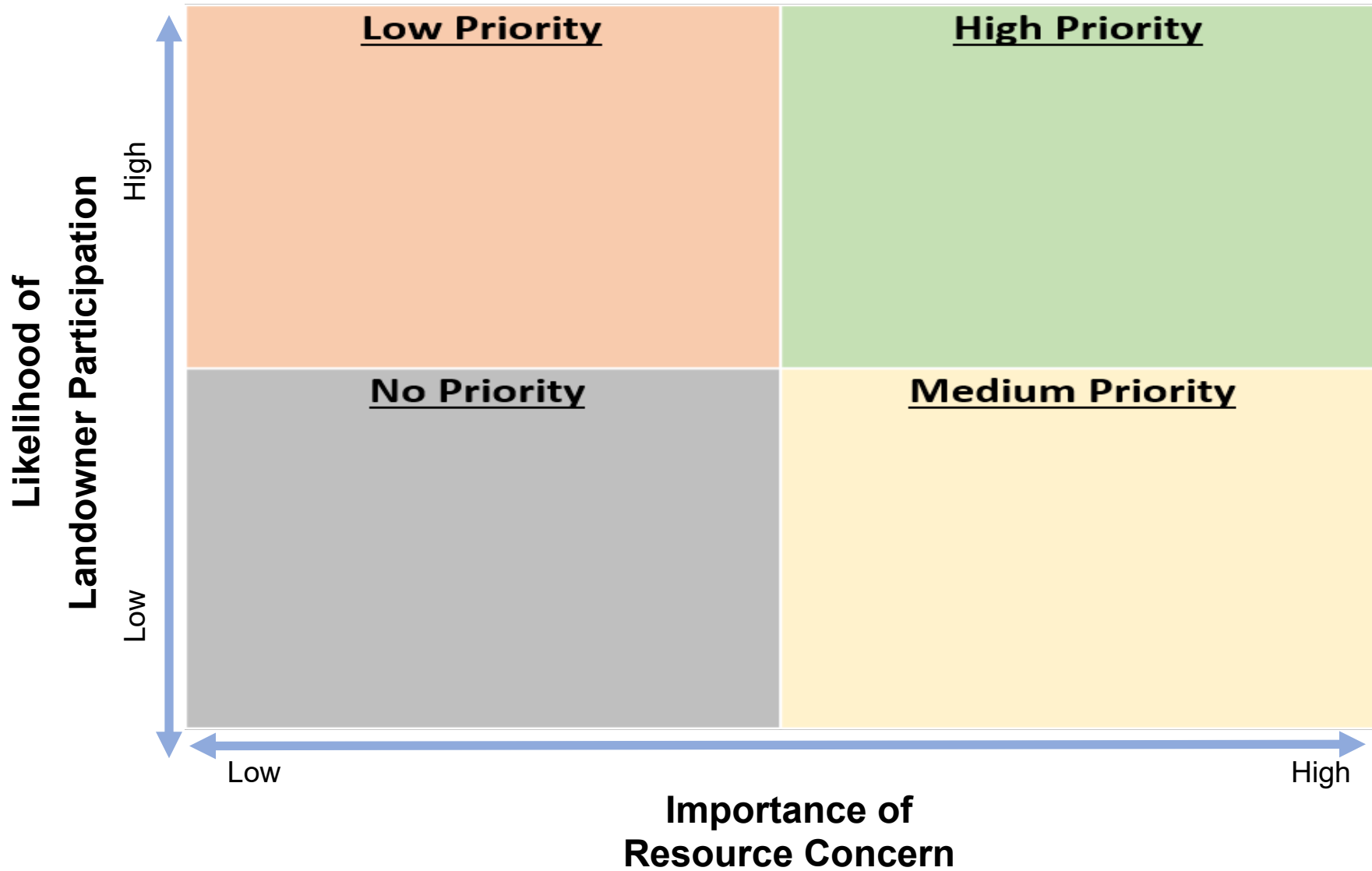
1. Water Quality groundwater
2. Soil Health - cover crops
3. Soil Erosion
4. Animal Habitat
5. Water Quantity

##### Final

1. Water Quality
2. Soil Health
3. Soil Erosion
4. Animal Habitat
5. Water Quantity

## *Matrix for Prioritizing Resource Concerns*

Land Use: \_\_\_\_\_





## SPEAKING SCIENCE:

# Five Tips for Talking about Your Work<sup>1</sup>

by Kevin Coss, University of Minnesota  
Office of the Vice President for Research

The word “science” is a broad term, but when it comes to communicating with others, it often means “complicated information that many people don’t understand.”

The University of Minnesota hosted a conference designed to help scientists more effectively share their knowledge and research with the audiences outside of academia. [Speaking Science: Communicating with Media, Funders, Policymakers, and the Public](#) brought more than 400 faculty, post-doctoral researchers, and graduate students together to hone their communication and storytelling skills.

For those who couldn’t make it to the event or would like a refresher, here are five tips on speaking about science:



### 1. FOCUS ON THE POINT

It may feel natural to discuss your research the way you would write for an academic journal—starting with background information, then filling in the details and methodology, and finally discussing the results and conclusions.

That approach doesn’t work so well for a general audience. Before you dive into the details,



people want to know the main point and how it affects them or their environment. Think about the one key thing you want to the audience to know before you start talking, and then stick to it. Emphasize what it means and why it matters.

For practice in finding the main point, try turning the title of your latest published research into a news headline. Replace complex words with ones that are more accessible, keep it concise, and capture the one main point from your study’s findings.

### 2. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE, STOW YOUR JARGON

One hazard that all experts must avoid is assuming people have the necessary background information and experience to understand what they say.

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<sup>1</sup> Cross, K. (1/24/2018). Retrieved from <https://research.umn.edu/inquiry/post/speaking-science-five-tips-talking-about-your-work>

Taking steps to avoid this pitfall will help you communicate more effectively. Consider who you're trying to reach and what they may or may not already know about the subject. Remember that the last time most people had to actively think about scientific concepts was in high school. Check in with your audience from time to time to see if they understand.

Think of jargon—the terms specific to your field that aren't used in the same way (or at all) in nonscientific conversation—as a roadblock to good communication. Your audience probably doesn't know these words. It's not because they lack intelligence, but because they rarely need to discuss the concepts these terms describe. Find ways to replace the jargon with plain language.

Plain language =  
most effective

Keep in mind that words you use every day may mean something different in the scientific community than they do to your audience. The word “theory,” may mean “scientific understanding” when you use it, but most people think it means a “hunch”—and there's a big difference between those two. See the chart in this [Physics Today article](#) for more examples.

### 3. DON'T CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM



Communication works best when you form a connection with your audience. Embrace your enthusiasm as you speak about your science. What makes you passionate about it? What fascinates, amazes, or alarms you?

Talk to your audience the way you would talk to a neighbor. Pull their attention in with eye contact, gestures, and laughter (when appropriate). Tell stories, especially ones that may link to experiences your audience has had, and draw analogies between complex concepts and more familiar things. Illustrate your point through pictures, videos, and models when possible.

All of these strategies will build your audience's comfort with your science and help them to understand it better.

### 4. AVOID FACTUAL OVERLOAD

Focus on what's relevant to the current discussion and make sure everything you say backs up your main point. Avoid speaking too broadly or providing too many facts at once.

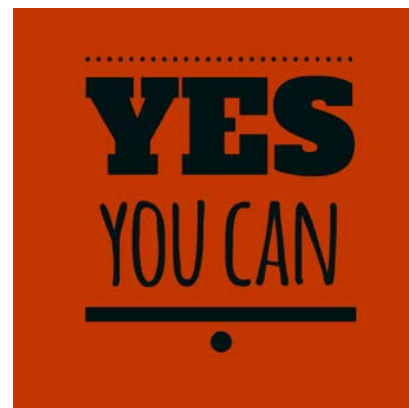
Remember that when an audience doesn't understand or doesn't agree with your main point, barraging them with more supporting facts can be like adding water to a leaky bucket. Additional information will further fluster those who are already confused and make skeptics more liable to reject your expertise. Instead, revisit your earlier points and work to clear up doubts or questions.

Remember, the Internet makes it easy to find alternative explanations—scientific or not—to any theory or finding. People who are staunchly opposed to scientific claims aren't likely to be swayed by your supporting evidence.

## 5. BE CONFIDENT—YOU'RE THE EXPERT

It's normal to be a little nervous when speaking to a new audience, especially if that involves being on camera. Remember to breathe and relax. You are the expert in this conversation—draw confidence from that fact and speak with authority.

Along the same lines, if your audience seems to focus on something trivial or unrelated, make sure to guide them back to the main point. It's your interview and your opportunity to relate what you know. Don't hesitate to take control of it and emphasize what's really important.



*Thank you to the following conference speakers, whose talks were the source of the tips in this post:*

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