

LARGE GROUP INTERVENTIONS

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One of the most interesting breakthroughs in Organization Development (OD) methods in recent history occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. OD practitioners working with systemic problems in organizations developed methods for bringing together “the system”, all the concerned parties or “stakeholders”, in one place to make decisions about the issues facing them.

Until the 1980s, change work often occurred within organizational departments or units. “Teambuilding” was popular and effective for the group involved. At the same time, change processes led by top management that affected the direction of the whole organization usually occurred as a waterfall process. The plan or strategy began at the top and cascaded down the organization hierarchy. By the time it reached the floor of the organization, a rather watered-down version usually remained. To be sure, some change practitioners, particularly those whose practice is based in Gestalt theory or the Tavistock organizations-as-systems work, have always worked with the whole system. The ability to implement these ideas, however, was limited by lack of methods to bring all the stakeholders together to do the work of change.

The history of the development of large group methods can be understood in three periods of development: early invention and development; adoption of new methods; and incorporation of these methods into a wide variety of situations.

INVENTION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT -- MID-1980S TO ABOUT 1993

Three precursors made the invention of large group methods possible in the mid 1980s. The precursors were theory and practice developments in understanding organizational change and they began in the 1950s. Large group methods could not have developed without these three

strands. The first strand was the emphasis on systems in the organizational work of Eric Trist and Fred Emery in the 1950s that developed from their study of new technology introduced into the British coal mining industry. Their theory, socio-technical systems, showed how changes in technology can disrupt system functioning even when what is being introduced is a more efficient technology. They proposed a theory that requires attention to both the technological and the social system for the best productivity (Emery & Trist, 1960). Their work helped practitioners understand that change in one part of the system affects the whole system. Thus, sustainable change requires systemic intervention.

The second precursor was a shift from focusing on solving organizational problems which began in the past to more focus on the future and its potential. This occurred in both North America and in the UK. In the United States, Herb Shepard, a creative early OD practitioner, began working with individuals in the late 1960s in “life planning” experiential exercises in which people created their own desired futures. He found that “futuring” created positive energy for change at the individual level. About the same time, Ronald Lippitt at the University of Michigan noticed in his work with problem solving with organizational clients that dealing with problems is energy draining. On the other hand, he discovered that when you ask people to invent a future they would prefer and enjoy, energy is created in the people doing the planning. Lippitt began consulting with many cities in Michigan that were being devastated by the closing of automobile plants. He brought city stakeholders together in large group meetings, up to 3,000 in one town, to create and plan their new future. The effects of this work focusing on the future are reported in *Choosing the Future You Prefer* (Lippitt, 1980). It is interesting that this work which, in retrospect, was clearly groundbreaking, was viewed by many practitioners at the time

as a kind of curiosity. Those were the days of the growth of teambuilding methods and many practitioners had practices in which this was their major business.

In the UK, emphasis on the future developed when Eric Trist ran a conference with Fred Emery working with the merger of two aerospace engineering organizations in the early 1960s. They asked the two merging companies to consider what kind of company they wanted to become in the future. This process of searching for a desired future eventually became “The Search Conference” which Fred and Merrelyn Emery then further developed. Merrelyn Emery devoted more than 30 years of her practice in Australia to working with this method in organizations, communities, and at the national level (Emery & Purser, 1996).

The third precursor was the work done by NTL Institute in the 1960s in large summer laboratories at Bethel, Maine. In the community lab and the college lab, trainers learned to work with large groups by creating small groups within a larger framework. This created a model for working with larger groups of people which only fully developed during the 1980s.

These early strands of work came together in the mid 1980s when, almost simultaneously, the importance of working with the whole system became focal for OD practitioners. The first clear statement of this new approach appeared when Marvin Weisbord wrote a history of thinking about organizations, *Productive Workplaces (1987)*. As he reflected on what had worked and what had not worked in his own change practice, he realized that when he had been able to “get all the stakeholders in the room”, he had been able to effectively create changes that were desired and desirable. Out of the thinking in this book and a dialog with Eric Trist and Merrelyn Emery about their Search Conference work, he developed a new method that he called “Future Search”. One way it differed from the Search Conference was that it was intended for a larger groups of 70 or more which meant that many stakeholders could be present.

Also in the mid 1980s, Kathie Dannemiller, a student and colleague of Ron Lippitt, was asked to train Ford middle managers to be more proactive. Understanding that the Ford system was not encouraging this kind of behavior and that many hours of training would probably not be successful, she refused the quite extensive contract. The stunned potential clients at Ford asked her what she might do to reach the objective. After thinking about it, she proposed that they give her 500 managers from three levels of management for a week in an off-site location if they really wanted change. This was the birth of “Real Time Strategic Change” (now called Whole Scale Change), a method that involves stakeholders in planning and implementing changes for a better organization future. The breakthrough that occurred in this work was the large number of people who could be involved at one time so that literally a whole plant or organization could work on the same issue together and make decisions that would stick and could be immediately implemented.

About the same time, but in a quite different in structure, Harrison Owen created a method of gathering people with passion and energy to discuss a topic in a method he called “Open Space” (Owen, 1992). Again, hundreds of people could participate in creating the agenda for the one or two day meeting and engage the topic as they wished.

A typical large group meeting is held in a large open room with many 5 or 5.5 foot round tables set up for working sessions. These are not the usual six foot banquet tables because they need to be small enough in diameter so that people can talk easily across them without shouting. There is a platform for the two facilitators that is located in a place optimal for viewing from all the tables. Flip charts are stacked on the side walls to be available when needed. The logistics staff, usually wearing a distinctive color, circulates in their areas bringing printed instructions and materials to the tables as well as microphones in the periods of reports or discussions.

These breakthrough methods not only accommodate a large numbers of participants, but they do not require professional facilitators to be at every discussion table because leadership roles are rotated among table participants. This made the use of these methods much more available to communities and organizations without big budgets. The composition of the table groups is heterogeneous for much of the work, but in functional groups when appropriate to the task.

ADOPTION OF THE NEW METHODS -- 1993-2000

As the 1990s progressed, differences among the methods gradually became clearer. Some of the publications and activities that encouraged this development were the following: A special issue of The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science edited by Bunker and Alban (1992) gathered articles by originators of several different Large Group Interventions. They shared the idea of working with large groups of stakeholders. In addition to some of the methods already mentioned, Dick Axelrod was using a series of large group conferences to redesign work in a process he calls, The Conference Model. Don Klein proposed that his 1970s SimuReal method was a systems model that could accommodate many stakeholders and was included. The Inter-Cultural Association (ICA) was using and further developing methods that they had learned in the early days of OD from OD practitioners. Although associated with individual practitioners, all of these methods were being developed and refined in practice as ways of gathering stakeholders together to engage each other about issues of common concern. Interest was so intense that the special issue required five additional printings.

Beginning in 1993, two developments went hand in hand. First, developers of methods wrote books on how to use their methods, spoke at national conferences, and offered training workshops in the method. Practitioners were thirsty for this new knowledge. They wanted to

understand in as much detail as possible what these methods were and how they worked. At the same time, Bunker and Alban developed and presented a framework for understanding all 12 of the original methods in training workshops and at conferences. There was so much interest that for four years (1995-1998), Tom Chase helped plan and sponsor a “Large Group Interventions” conference in Dallas Texas that was attended by method originators, practitioners, companies using the methods who offered a case describing their experience, CEOs talking about what it was like to involve the whole company, and organizations that were “shopping”, thinking about using these methods. Mobil, for example, brought a multi-level group of 14 people to a conference before they decided to use Real Time Strategic Change with one of their divisions.

The differences among methods gradually became clear as methods were adopted and used. For example, some methods are easier to learn and adopt than others. Methods with a structured flow of activities like the Search Conference or Future Search are easy to grasp. This means they are easy to try out on an unsuspecting client. In early periods of innovation, there is always a certain amount of experimentation. Ethical practitioners keep this to a minimum and do not suggest methods when the issues are not appropriate for the method. Gathering stakeholders is expensive in time and resources. It should be reserved for issues that are worthy of this kind of commitment such as the future plans for the organization or important problems.

Some methods also take a longer time commitment to plan and implement than others. Work redesign takes months with many large and small meetings. Open Space can be set up and run with very short lead time. Custom-designed methods like Real Time Strategic Change require planning with an internal design team, so need longer lead times than pre-structured methods.

Large Group Interventions (Bunker & Alban, 1997) was the first effort to describe and compare all large group methods. The authors organized the methods into three categories based on outcome: methods for the future, methods for work design, methods for discussion and decision making. Then, they also compared them for degree of structure, size of group they could handle, and length of time for the event. This framework proved useful in helping people make good judgments in selecting a method. Several years later, Holman and Devane (1999) edited *The Change Handbook* in which many of the methods included in Bunker and Alban (1997) were discussed by their originators and a few newer methods were added and compared. Developers of methods have continued to publish new versions of their own work as they built experience and made changes in what they were doing. In Table 1, there is a comparison of the methods as they currently are practiced.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

During the 1990s, practitioners were learning these methods and building an experience base. Some chose to define themselves as specializing in one of these methods. Others added competence in some of the methods as they needed it in a more general practice of organizational change. Because work re-design which developed from socio-technical design theory usually occurs over months and even years, there are a group of practitioners who do mainly this work. Future planning consultants, on the other hand, often know several of the future methods. Future Search practitioners can join a network, Search Net, learn from each other, and offer Future Search expertise to communities and non-profits with limited budgets. General Electric began offering training in its Work-Out process for solving organizational problems to its clients. The method was effective and widely adopted by companies often with their own name for it.

After they learned the method and gained experience, practitioners began to modify methods to fit client requirements. Shorter versions of Search Conference and Future Search were tried. Open Space was planned with intervals between meetings. Simultaneous meetings in different parts of the country or world allowed global companies to use these methods more effectively. All kinds of innovation occurred in the late 1990s and continues today. Some of it worked well and added to our knowledge base. Some created problems and did a disservice to the method. Unfortunately, when people have a bad experience, they tend to assume that the method does not work, not that it was used inappropriately.

By the end of the 1990s, these methods were established as a standard part of an OD repertoire when dealing with system level issues.

INCORPORATION – 2000s

The 21st century marks the beginning of the third period of development. Large group methods were once new and intoxicating because there was both promise and the hope that a magic bullet for change had been found. Now large group methods have become part of the world of change practice. Bunker and Alban (1997) is now referred to as a “classic” text and is used in many OD courses. There have long been methods for change that are used at the personal, the interpersonal, the group, and the intergroup level. Now there are methods for the system or the organizational level. These methods fill a special niche where nothing like them was previously available. They have been accepted and incorporated into change practice.

Not only have these methods become part of the repertoire of Human Resource and OD practitioners, but there has been fall out into the general culture of some of the basic ideas. For example:

1. The idea that *stakeholders* need to be involved in decision making is not a new one, but using the word, stakeholder, connotes involvement. That word appears more frequently in the press and in spoken language than it used to.
2. Rotating leadership in small groups is more common as a practice. Professional facilitation is often reserved for times that are expected to be difficult.
3. Round tables for discussions are now commonly accepted. In the early days of this work, one had to do battle with hotels to get smaller than banquet size tables. Now, most facilities know what is wanted and have them available.
4. The idea of searching for “common ground” in situations of high divergence is common.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS

In this section, some of the current uses of these methods in different venues is presented. They were selected because they show the diversity of the uses of large group methods.

In the Community

The National Education Association (NEA) is using these methods to hold community conversations about controversial issues in public education across the United States. First, a national research group identified seven key issues currently being debated. Examples are funding, parental involvement, the purpose of education. All are issues where stakeholders hold widely divergent views. Communities that want to engage stakeholders in a conversation select the issue(s) with a planning committee of stakeholders that includes the school board, teachers and administrators, parents, students, other relevant stakeholders. The planning committee picks an issue that is relevant to their particular community. Materials and a format are provided from the NEA which also offers training for local facilitators.

These events are usually evening conferences that start with an informal meal. After dinner, there is a general introduction to the purpose and hoped for outcomes for the meeting. Then, participants go to assigned heterogeneous breakout groups. The groups are usually 15-20 people and are facilitated by a trained facilitator. The conversation starts with a short professional video presenting very credible but polarized views on the issue to be discussed. Rather than wait for the divergent views to emerge, the breakout group starts with the differences on the table. Participants then discuss the issues in a format that encourages each person to express their view and understand others. What participants tend to realize is that there is some truth on both sides. The group then lists those things that they hold in common and those areas where there are differences. Each group comes up with some recommendations based on their common ground agreement. These are shared with the larger group at the end of the evening. These recommendations are transmitted to the school board or the planning committee, whichever is more appropriate. It is important to point out that the major purpose is to give people a better understanding of the issues that confront every school system. If there are also positive actions that emerge, that is an added plus.

Another innovative use of these methods involved a modification of Future Search. In a community that was concerned about its youth, rather than having the adults conduct a future search with a few youth included, they decided to have the event run by young people. So, young people were selected and trained to lead the event and to facilitate it at the tables. The stakeholders included educators, social services, police, parents, hospitals, housing. One third of the conference were youth of middle and high school age. They were selected from public, religious, private, and alternative schools in the city. Recommendations about the need for a

teen center, parenting classes in schools, better transportation were sent on to the city commission on youth for action.

Communities in a number of states like Colorado, Vermont, and California where environmental disputes between people concerned about jobs and those who want to protect the environment have effectively engaged the issues using these methods.

In Business Organizations

Business organizations increasingly incorporate these methods with other change methods to help them do their regular business. Initially, the tendency was to try these methods out on big change projects, and indeed, they are very effective in that area. But as they have become more familiar, organizations are more and more using large group processes in day to day business. One health care system in Cincinnati held a series of large meetings of emergency room personnel across their hospitals to understand and solve problems they were having in their ERs. Toys-R-Us transformed their annual meeting for store managers from a “talking heads and golf” format to an imaginatively interactive event that rolled out a whole new store redesign and employee reorientation to the customer.

At the National Level: Conversations for US citizens about the State of the Country

During the 1990s, Carolyn Lukensmeyer started an organization, AmericaSpeaks, devoted to creating conversations in the electorate about issues of national importance. She used large groups to hold conversations in major cities across the United States about the dilemmas facing the Social Security system and how to address them. These large meetings (500 or more) were managed using innovative software technology developed by CoVision of San Francisco that allowed people at round tables to discuss a topic and input their ideas on a laptop to a central team that posted themes from all the tables on big overhead screens that everyone could see and

react to. In addition, every participant at each table had a set of buttons they could press that instantly recorded and summarized for the whole gathering the agreement and disagreement with issues presented. Thus, each person's vote was recorded and seen.

This same technology was used by AmericaSpeaks in the July 2002 meeting of 5,000 citizens at the Javits Center in New York City to react to proposals for the redevelopment of Ground Zero. This meeting changed the direction of the thinking about the site as a result of the discussion at this large meeting. AmericaSpeaks has also held meetings for the Mayor of Washington, D.C. every two years that allow 3,000 citizens to react to his plans, comment on the progress the city has made, and generate new ideas about what the city government should be doing. Using these methods with high tech support, they are in the business of creating national conversations.

Technology Developments

The technology described above is becoming more widely available for meetings. A new software product, Unison, uses laptops and local-area networks to allow meeting participants to communicate with each other, polling, brainstorming, group competition, and idea documentation (Hosford, 2004). Some activities, like generating good ideas to solve specific problems, require a panel of experts who review what comes in from the laptops for similarities and create themes or generate the top 10 suggestions from hundreds. Firms like Deloitte and J.P. Morgan Chase are using this process in large meetings to create more collaboration. At a Deloitte new partner meeting with partners from 40 countries, the emphasis was on input from the new partners, not just one way communication from the top. When an organization or a community truly wants to hear the views of all of the stakeholders, these processes allow individuals to have voice to a much greater degree than any meeting innovations to date.

Costs of adding this type of technology to a meeting are described as about \$30-40 per person per day which includes laptops and plasma displays, on-site technical support and facilitation, and reports but does not include the \$15 per person licensing fee (Hosford, 2004).

Another software program, Meetingworks, is now also available for smaller collaborative meetings and can include distant participants over the web. This program offers templates for meetings, full documentation of decisions, opportunity for input, and prioritization.

Hosford (2004) comments on the change in social dynamics that accompanies using new technologies. For example, people are able to ask serious or difficult questions without being identified personally. This useful process was occurring before the introduction of technology. “Table questions” allow a group not an individual to pose sensitive questions and are a routine part of Large Group Interventions. What is not discussed by Hosford is any potential dysfunction that can occur using this intensive level of technology. One danger for first-time users is that they get fascinated with the technology and are less engaged with the ideas of the meeting. However, these days most people use computers all the time so this is less likely than overlooking the importance of good human conversation at the tables. At some of the early large meetings with technology, the group discussed and then agreed what to feed into the laptop. Groups got to know the people they were working with during the meeting and the social group dynamics occurred naturally.

International Uses in Multicultural Settings

The use of large groups for system interventions has clearly become international. In Europe, the originators of these methods like Weisbord and Janoff, Dannemiller, Axelrod, and Owens have been giving training seminars for OD practitioners since the latter part of the 1990s in England, Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, and other countries. Practitioners in those countries

are active using these methods. In Germany, a recent study (unpublished) documented more than 1000 large group events over a three year period. Most frequently used are Open Space, Future Search, Whole Scale Change and more recently, Appreciative Inquiry.

In Africa, Future Search has been used to take action to demobilize child soldiers and to work on problems of displaced children in the Sudan. Appreciative Inquiry has been used in strategic planning in South Africa and Ethiopia. Many NGOs in developing countries are using these methods to involve their clients in decision making about how programs they administer go forward.

In Asia, there has been work in India and Indonesia. Future Search has also been extensively used in Indonesia including the remote islands. Appreciative Inquiry and Real Time Strategic Change have been used effectively in India. However, in the more formal Asian cultures such as Japan and Korea where participation is less culturally part of management practice, we have not heard about much use of these methods. One of the authors of this chapter presented a seminar on these methods in Korea in the 1990s. She was well received and participants found the methods interesting, but when asked if they could be used in their companies, there was general agreement that it would be difficult if not impossible!

Australia has held a Future Search about Aborigines' issues that included Aborigines in the meeting. Of course, Australia has 30 years of extensive experience with the Search Conference at both national and local levels. An Open Space about teenage suicide, an urgent problem within Maori culture, was held on Maori sacred ground in New Zealand

Multiple methods have been used in Mexico (Manning & DelaCedro, 2003) to bring about change in business and government organizations. In 2004, the Parliament of World

Religions met in Spain using these methods to bring 2000 delegates into conversation about critical issues facing the world and the role of faith communities in these issues.

This is only a sample of what has been occurring around the world. There is no mechanism for keeping track of all the work that is going on so what is reported here is limited by these constraints.

Method Innovations

Since the late 1990s, practitioners who have learned these methods have been adapting them to new client situations. In the same period, many organizations are expecting more of employees who are experiencing greater and greater demands both to do more and do it in less time. This means that there is pressure on these methods to do the same thing in less time. This creates dilemmas for practitioners who understand the methods well and have a good sense of the time it takes to get the full benefit from them. For example, Future Search is usually held for three days beginning at noon on day one and ending at noon on day three. As a compromise, practitioners run a full Future Search over two days beginning early the first morning and ending the second day with the end of the workday. Weisbord and Janoff now discuss what difficulties that can create and how to manage them. One-day programs using some of the modules from these methods can be implemented to great effect, but this work should probably not be labeled “Future Search”. Practitioners are customizing their methods to meet their clients’ needs, which creates confusion about how to label current practice.

Appreciative Inquiry

Some older methods have also changed their way of working by adopting large group methods into their methodology. *The Appreciative Inquiry Summit* (Ludema et.al. 2003) is a clear example. Appreciative Inquiry aims to capture and retain the best of the positive values

and practices of an organization at the same time that changes are made for the future. In the first phase of Appreciative Inquiry, *the Discovery Phase*, employees are trained to interview other employees about positive experiences in the organization and what they see as the organization's values and strengths. The task of the interviewer is to tease out the core elements that help create these positive experiences. This phase may occur as part of a large group meeting called *The Summit Meeting* or it may happen in advance of the meeting. The next phase, *the Dream Phase*, now uses large group methods to bring together the system and its stakeholders to plan how to build the positive elements from the interviews into a vision of the desired future state. The best stories from the interviews may be retold at the summit meeting, the core elements may be presented as "future possibilities". However it is done, the group comes to some common ground about what they want more of in their future. The final phase of the Summit Meeting is the *Design Phase* in which participants plan actions to create and sustain the future they want. This involves examining leadership, infrastructure, policies, and systems that would support the proposed changes.

The World Café

Another innovation in large group methods called *The World Café* was developed by Juanita Brown and is being used separately or in combination with other methods. The World Café is a process that fosters authentic conversation and takes about two hours. Each World Café activity is focused around a theme that engages the invited group of stakeholders. They sit at small tables covered with tablecloths of drawing paper and drawing pens. Each group is given about 20-30 minutes to both talk about and draw their conversation about the theme. After 20 minutes or so, the table host instructs them to leave one person at the table who will communicate to the next group the substance of the conversation that just occurred. Then,

everyone else separates and goes to a different table and the process repeats itself. There are at least three iterations of this process before the final groups post the ideas their table has developed. The entire group then engages in a town meeting discussion of what has occurred. If themes are identified, they can lead to whatever is appropriate, action, task forces, further discussion. This process is very useful in settings where there are factions or people come in with set ideas and need to engage with others and find out how they are viewing the situation. It mixes people up for a different conversational experience. Drawing opens up a new dimension and assists the process. Critical to a productive experience is a focused theme that fully engages the participants. The World Café can be used in groups as small as twelve and as large as 1,200. It has been used internationally in many countries of the world.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS: GIVING VOICE, MANAGING DIFFERENCES, FINDING COMMON GROUND

There is some wonderful work going on using these methods which involves two principles. The first principle that underlies these methods is that they all create interaction among diverse stakeholders and a process that allows stakeholders to participate and to be heard. Essentially, these are democratic methods that encourage all voices to be heard. They encourage input to decisions employees or citizens are asked to support. It is important to point out that this does not necessarily mean that 500 stakeholders get together and make the decisions. They may be the decision makers, or their input may be incorporated by an executive group that is present at the event and responsible for the organization. Both methods work well if people know in advance what the ground rules are. Practitioners who propose these methods need to understand that not all leaders and managers want to involve stakeholders in having their say or in mutual decision making. This means that sensitive negotiation and coaching are part of

contracting with executives about the use of these methods. There have been instances where practitioners, in their eagerness to help the client move into action, did not insist that the client really understand what these methods do in terms of stakeholder voice, involvement, commitment, new ideas, and what they require in terms of leadership participation, support and follow-up. Taking enough time to fully educate clients during the contracting phase of the intervention is key to realizing the true potential of these methods.

A second principle that underlies these methods is their process for managing differences (Bunker, 2000). None of these methods use conflict resolution strategies to deal with differences. In large groups with many different stakeholders, there are bound to be differences, many of them. That is not of great concern because there is no objective to resolve differences. The objective in most of these methods is *to find common ground*. That is, to understand what those present and representing the system *agree on*. The assumption is that once what is agreed on is clear, it is possible to move forward from that common ground even though differences remain. Differences are simply not the focus of the work. The theory is that when differences occur, the natural tendency is to focus on them and try to resolve them. In much of this work, differences and disagreements are acknowledged, dealt with if that can happen in reasonable time. But, they are not allowed to stop the work of moving forward by crowding out awareness of areas of agreement. Merrelyn Emery proposes that there is usually far more agreement than most people are aware of in groups. When this becomes salient, the group can move forward. The search for common ground is a key principle.

There is great opportunity for the use of these methods in communities where managing differences among diverse stakeholders is thwarting movement and holding up the progress that many urgently desire. Since these methods provide a process that allows people to have a voice

and manage differences, it is not surprising that they are being used in many community settings where stakeholders expect to have input into important decisions.

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**TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF LARGE GROUP METHODS**

Planning the Future				Redesign Work Processes			Flexible Methods			
Method	Search Conference	Future Search	Inter-Cultural Association /ToP	Conference Model, Fast Cycle, Full Participation, Real Time Work Design	Participative Design	Open Space	Real Time Strategic Change/ Whole Scale	WorkOut	SimuReal	
Optimal Duration of Meetings	2 days	2 ½ days	2-3 days	3-5, 2 day conferences over 6 months	2-3 days	1-3 days	2-3 days	3days + 30, 60, 90 day follow-ups	1 day	
Meeting Capacity	20-35	40-150	50-200	80-200	30-50	30-500	50-1000+	20-200	50-150	
Time for Pre-plan	Average	Average	Average	High	High	Low	High	High	Average	
Design * Format	1	1	1	2	2	1	3	2	2	

* 1 = Predetermined design, good written materials available
 2 = General guidelines and written material available, some consultant design skills necessary
 3 = Flexible design, written materials available but requires excellent design skills

**TABLE 1 CONTINUED
COMPARISON OF LARGE GROUP METHODS**

Flexible Methods (Cont'd)			
Method	World Café	Appreciative Inquiry Summit	Participative Democracy AmericaSpeaks
Optimal Duration of Meetings	2 hours; can be repeated	3 days	1-2 days
Meeting Capacity	12-1,200	80-1000	500-5000
Time for Pre-plan	Low	High	High +
Design * Format	1	2	3

- * 1 = Predetermined design, good written materials available
- 2 = General guidelines and written material available, some consultant design skills necessary
- 3 = Flexible design, written materials available but requires excellent design skills