

Description

A relaxed informal setting between a facilitator and a small group of people with a common interest. The title of this community engagement technique does not have to be taken literally, though it implies a certain informality that is an essential element. The venue does not have to be a 'kitchen table', it might well be a cafe or pub or similar venue.

The purpose of the technique is to both hear their views, but also hear where their are differences between those individuals of the group.

Benefits

There are various methods of creating the group, a particularly successful one is to ask a significant contact if they would like to ask some of their friends to meet with you. This way there is less likely to be conflict than if you made the invitations

It is especially useful for when there is a topic that needs further exploration, both at the beginning and during a process. Examples would be members of a club, or a particular social cohort, such as senior citizens, or the motor cycle club. It is also especially good for people to see the differences between each other, without it being made obvious.

Skills

It is useful if the interviewer has both good listening skills, but also an understanding of group facilitation techniques. It is sometimes necessary to carry out basic processes as enabling people to 'vent' if necessary, but also ensuring that ultimately they keep on track and encouraging the quieter members to talk.

Other Considerations

It is best if the facilitator uses OPEN (as opposed to CLOSED yes/no) questions for the group to consider,

Examples of poor questions are Leading (Don't you think we should have a new library?) and Ambiguous (Do you go to town often?).