Directions: Brainstorming, Affinity Grouping, and Multi-voting are approaches for generating, categorizing, and choosing among ideas from a group of people. Using these techniques encourages every person within the group to contribute, instead of just one or two. They spark creativity in group members as they listen to the ideas of others and generate a substantial list of ideas, rather than just the few things that first come to mind. Finally, the techniques allow a group of people to choose among ideas or options thoughtfully.

The following descriptions of Brainstorming, Affinity Grouping and Multi-voting are intended to be used by QAPI teams when ideas are needed and decisions need to be made.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is an idea-generation tool designed to produce a large number of ideas through the interaction of a group of people.

1. The session leader should clearly state the purpose of the brainstorming session and lay out the ground rules, as they are discussed below.

2. Participants call out one idea at a time, either going around the group of people in turn, which structures participation from everyone, or at random, which may favor greater creativity. Another option is to begin the brainstorming session by going in turn and after a few rounds open it up to all to call out ideas as they occur.

3. Refrain from discussing, complimenting, criticizing, or evaluating ideas as they are presented. Consider every idea to be a good one. Aim for many ideas in a short amount of time. The quantity of ideas is what matters; evaluation of the ideas and their relative merit comes later. This tool is designed to get as many ideas generated in a short period of time as possible. Discussing ideas may lead to premature judgment and slow down the process.

4. Record all ideas on a flip chart, or on self-adhesive notes so that all group members can see them.

5. Build on and expand the ideas of other group members. Encourage creative thinking.

6. When generating ideas in turn, let participants pass if an idea does not come to mind quickly or if the participant does not have something to share at that time.

7. Keep going when the ideas slowdown, reach for less obvious ideas to create as long a list as possible. Do not cut off the flow of ideas.

8. After all ideas are listed, clarify each one and eliminate exact duplicates.

9. Resist the temptation to "lump" or group ideas. Combining similar ideas will come later (see Affinity Grouping).

Examples of topics when brainstorming might be helpful in nursing homes:

- Identifying was to involve direct care staff in QAPI
- Identifying ways to address the identified root cause of a problem that has occurred or is occurring
- Identifying ways to be more welcoming to new staff or to new residents
- Identifying ways to promote more a more restful night's sleep for residents
- Identifying ways that residents and families could be involved in QAPI

Affinity Grouping

Affinity Grouping is a brainstorming method in which participants organize their ideas and identify common themes.

1. Write ideas on individual cards or adhesive notes (see directions for Brainstorming).

2. Randomly place cards on a table or place notes on flip chart paper taped to the wall.

3. Without talking, each person looks for two cards or notes that seem to be related and places these together, off to one side. Others can add additional cards or notes to a group as it forms or reform existing groups. Set aside any cards or notes that become controversial.

4. Continue until all items have been grouped (or set aside). There should be fewer than 10 groupings.

5. Now discuss the groupings as a team. Generate short, descriptive sentences that describe each group and use these as title cards or notes. Avoid one- or two-word titles.

6. Items can be moved from one group to another if a consensus emerges during the discussion.

7. Consider additional brainstorming to capture new ideas using the group titles to stimulate thinking.

Multi-voting

Multi-voting is a structured series of votes by a team, in order to narrow down a broad set of options to a few.

1. Generate a list of items (see directions for Brainstorming).

2. Combine similar items into groups that everyone agrees on (see directions for Affinity Grouping).

3. Number each item.

4. Each person chooses one-third of the items. This voting can be done in a number of ways: a) each person submits their votes privately to the person will tally the votes, b) each person shares their votes publicly with the group and with the person who will tally the votes, or c) each person marks their choices from the list of items that are displayed on wall charts with an "X" or colored dot – this displays the results instantly.

5. Tally votes.

6. Eliminate items with few votes. The table below will help you determine how to eliminate items:

Group size (number of people)	Eliminate items with less than "x" votes
4 to 5	2
6 to 10	3
10 to 15	4
15 or more	5

If a decision is clear, stop here. Otherwise, repeat the multi-voting process with remaining items, as necessary.