

Prioritizing Solutions

Purpose: This resource is intended to help task force leaders plan an effective and inclusive process to prioritize the solutions that will inform the task force’s formal recommendations.

Users: Facilitator, co-chairs, or small leadership group

Instructions: Prioritizing solutions is a critical step in the process of defining the task force recommendations. To effect real change, the recommendations must be bold and visionary as well as practical. The recommendations must also focus the efforts of stakeholders across the state on high-impact strategies. Be mindful that recommendations do not become a “laundry list” of every possible solution—such a list would dilute the potential impact of collective and focused action.

The process of prioritizing solutions should allow for equal input from all task force members and guard against dominance by a few members with strong opinions.

This resource provides support in two forms:

1. A checklist to guide thinking about essential components of your process for prioritizing solutions.
2. Suggestions for different approaches to the process.

Checklist

Preparing for prioritization:

- Do we understand the problems that we are trying to solve?**
 All task force members clearly understand the overall problems that the task force is trying to solve and the challenges that have been identified that contribute to the problems.
- Do we understand the proposed solutions?**
 All task force members have an opportunity to understand and ask questions about the proposed solutions, including the associated advantages and disadvantages identified by working groups.

Process of prioritization:

- Does the prioritizing process allow for individual input?**
 Every task force member is able to give input on which solutions should be prioritized in some systemized way other than large-group discussion.

After the prioritization:

□ **Who is responsible for synthesizing the responses?**

The facilitator and co-chairs or some subgroup of the task force synthesizes the input to:

- Identify high consensus items.
- Identify items with overlap or connections that should be combined.
- Identify items for which more information is needed.
- Identify items on which there is no consensus and more discussion is needed.

□ **Do the solutions that are identified as priorities address the problems?**

The facilitator and co-chairs or some subgroup of the task force conducts an analysis to ensure that the prioritized solutions will address the identified problems and challenges.

Suggestions for Process

- **Voting:** Each task force member gets a number of votes to use for solutions addressing each challenge. For example, if there are four identified challenges, each member can vote for three solutions within each of the four categories.

Logistics:

- In-person meeting: Write the solutions for each challenge on chart paper. Members can vote directly on the chart paper with post-it notes or hash marks or can record their votes on a form that is submitted to the facilitator.
- Remotely: Send the list of proposed solutions to task force members and have them submit votes on a form.

- **Simple rating system:** Each task force member rates the proposed solutions within each category. A further option is to have the task force members then identify the top three or four solutions across all categories.

Logistics:

- This process is most easily done with a form listing the solutions and with a place for rating; rating can be done both in person and remotely.

- **Weighted rating system:** Each task force member has a certain number of points to divide among the solutions within a category. This rating approach provides a way to show a strong preference among solutions. For example, each member assigns the solutions a percentage so that the total for a category is 100%. Members have the option to assign 0% to a solution.

Logistics: Same as simple rating system.