

A Tour of Stakeholder Engagement Methods: Consensus Methods

Megan Morris, PhD, MPH

- Definition: A systematic, structured process to elicit and distill knowledge from experts to develop consensus on a topic in which there is little evidence yet action is needed
- Involves convening of experts around a specific topic or problem during multiple rounds to reach agreement or consensus
 - ◊ Three main methods:
 - ◊ Delphi Method
 - ◊ Nominal Group Technique
 - ◊ Consensus Development Panels or Conference

Characteristic	Nominal group process	Consensus development panel	Delphi technique
Panel composition	Experts—multidisciplinary	Experts—multidisciplinary	Experts—multidisciplinary
Panel size	5–9	5–10	6–11
Face-to-face contact?	Yes	Yes	No
Literature provided?	As necessary	Yes—presented by experts in the field	Yes—overview of literature provided
Rounds/sessions	4 sessions	Variable—as needed	At least 2
Exemplary publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott EA, Black N⁵ • Horton NJ⁶ • Delp P, Thesen A, Motiwalla J, et al⁷ • Halcomb E, Davidson P, Hardaker L⁸ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nair R, Aggarwal R, Khanna D³ • Halcomb E, Davidson P, Hardaker L⁸ • Fink A, Kosecoff J, Chassin M, Brook RH³³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloor M, Sampson H, Baker S, Dahlgren K¹¹ • Rowe G, Wright G³⁴ • Schmidt RC²¹ • Dagenais F²³

*Table 1 provides a basic comparison of the three consensus methods discussed in this article, including the ideal panel composition and size (both determined by reviewing the current literature), how the members of the panel interact with one another, how the panel is prepared before meeting or submitting their responses, the number of optimal rounds in each method (as evidenced by current literature), and finally a sampling of exemplary papers found during the research process.

Waggoner J, Carline JD, Durning SJ. Is there a consensus of consensus methodology? Descriptions and recommendations for future consensus research. *Acad Med.* 2016. May; 91(5):663-8.



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Description of a Proposed Delphi Process Protocol

Participants and consensus

- Determine how you will identify your experts
- Predefine what consensus will be

Process

- First round (asynchronous):
 - ◇ Content
 - ◆ Overview of the process and goal
 - Need a well defined “ask” for what the end product will be. Consider a finite number of competencies so the participants don’t describe “everything as important”
 - ◆ Competencies or domains for the experts to react and respond to
 - ◇ Format
 - ◆ For each domain/competency
 - Closed ended questions: this could be having the participants rate each competency on a construct, such as importance. Not necessarily having them compare/contrast or rank competencies at this stage.
 - Open ended questions that allow participants to provide comments and opinions on the competency areas. Could also have participants provide a reason behind their ratings for each competency.
 - ◆ Give participants the opportunity to propose additional domains, competencies, etc.
 - ◆ End with “is there anything else you would like to share”
 - ◇ Analysis
 - ◆ Descriptive summary of the open response fields and a summary of the ratings
 - ◆ (How this happens exactly is of course dependent on what is presented in the first round and what exactly you are having them comment on)
 - ◆ Consider the influence of team bias in this process - important to not weigh certain participants more heavily than others
- Second round (this round could be repeated multiple times) – Could be either synchronous or asynchronous
 - ◇ Content
 - ◆ Summary of the responses from the first round (this is anonymous so participants do not know who said what)
 - ◇ Format
 - ◆ Participants rank order the competencies (Again, this depends a bit on the content. Perhaps you have them sort competencies into “include” and “exclude” piles.)
 - ◆ Participants will have opportunity to provide open responses to explain their reasoning behind their rankings



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Description of a Proposed Delphi Process Protocol

(continued)

- ◇ Analysis
 - ◆ Descriptive summary of the rank ordering
 - ◆ Need to predefine what consensus will be (no standard in the literature so just need to decide as a team if it will be 51%, 66%, etc.)
- Final round
 - ◇ Present the final results and have the participants provide their final comments

Timeline

- The participants have 1 week to complete the Delphi “survey”
 - 2-3 weeks to analyze/summarize
 - 1 week to create new “survey” to present in the next round
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Notes:



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