

# Brainstorming Effectively

Developed as part of a series of exercises  
on the Design Thinking process

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# Brainstorming Exercise

Brainstorming can be a powerful tool to help your team effectively generate ideas. In the Design Thinking process, it is used in the Ideation phase – after you have gathered information about the people you want to serve and are ready to formulate ideas on how to best address the problem at hand.

As with any tool, how it is applied can make all the difference. Brainstorming can lead to mixed results, however we suggest that leading a group through this distinct process will yield the best outcome.

# Brainstorming Exercise

## **Use and disclaimer**

Brainstorming can help you process information and determine which ideas to prototype. Groups often use this method to reach consensus, but consensus is not the goal of every brainstorming session.

At the beginning of the meeting let the group know that you have convened them to share and build on each other's ideas. Clearly define where the session fits in the process and what the next steps will be – whether to reach consensus as a group or to defer the decision making after the session to a few key players.

We encourage you to try this formalized style as a method for achieving group buy-in. Bear in mind that the more a team uses such a process, the higher degree of comfort and productivity they will experience. We encourage you to review the reference material provided as a reminder of why the brainstorming process works and when to use an alternative approach.

## **Who should be involved**

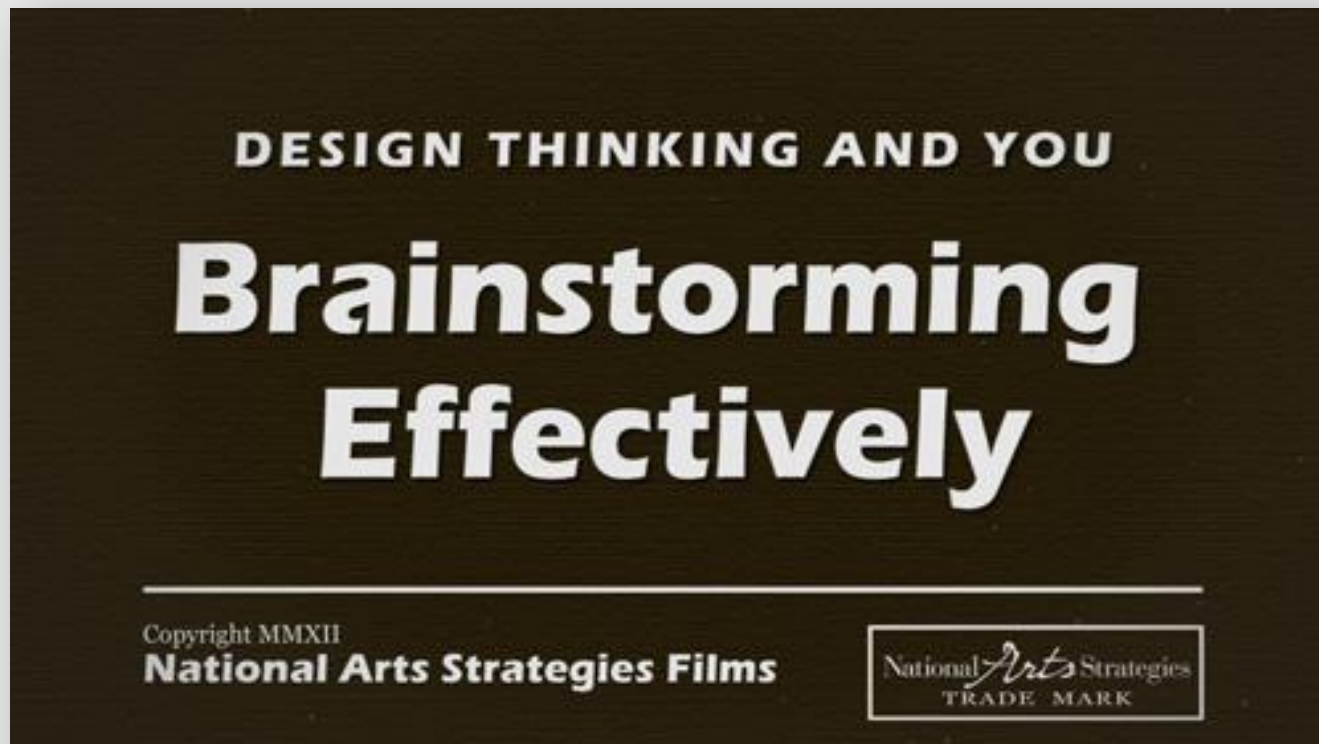
Any combination of senior leadership and staff. If consensus is your goal, it is important to involve as many stakeholders as possible so that there is a shared responsibility for the idea that is chosen.

## **Time to complete**

This will depend on the number of people involved in your brainstorming session. To manage time, you can limit the number of ideas each participant is allowed to produce or simply have participants write down ideas before coming to the meeting. Creating a timed agenda and sharing it with the group will help you to stay on task throughout the meeting.

# Video presentation

Watch the short video by the NAS team linked below and then work through this exercise with your team.



Thank you for taking the time to work through this exercise with your team. These online lessons are a bit of an experiment for us. As we learn more, we will continue to adapt and refine them.

Your feedback is vitally important. Please [let us know](#) how you used this tool. What was unclear? What would you add?

We look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks,  
The NAS Team