



DPA

**Colorado Department of
Personnel & Administration**

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How To Identify Key Positions

Identifying and selecting key positions is a collaborative effort which requires an organization to convene a group of experts and/or leadership people for the purpose of making a decision for succession planning efforts. A group decision-making tool, called a Nominal Group Technique, is described below as one method of facilitating the collaboration of thoughts and ideas regarding the identification and selection of key positions in the organization.

Objective – Conduct a nominal group technique to identify the key positions for succession planning efforts.

1. Gather a group of decision makers.
2. Select a spokesperson, if necessary.
3. Define the topic under consideration: Identify the most important key positions for succession planning efforts.
4. Generate a list of proposed positions (brainstorming):
5. Clarify and discuss the positions: The spokesperson points out each item, one by one, and asks if there are any questions or clarifications for a highlighted item. Initially, the person who generated the item should give clarification, but other members may join in to help define and focus the information. The participant that originally suggested the position must agree to any wording changes in defining the position. At this point the participants should combine and condense any duplicate positions or information.
 - a. Option #1 – Have the participants verbalize positions and record those on a flip chart or grease board; stop when there are no more positions suggested. **Do not allow discussion on the positions at this time.**
 - b. Option #2 – Have the participants write a list of positions on cards without discussing the positions. In round-robin fashion, go from one participant to the next having each participant read only one position at a time. Record their positions on a flip chart or grease board. Continue this process until all participants have verbalized all their positions. **Do not allow discussion on the positions at this time.**
6. Selecting the most important, key positions:
 - Option #1
 - On a sheet of paper, each participant lists all the items remaining from the brainstorming list. Each participant rank orders the positions by assigning a number to each position. If there are 10 positions, each participant assigns 10 to his/her most important position, 9 to the second most important position, and so on, until all positions have a number. If there are 5 positions, each participant assigns 5 to the most important position, 4 to the second most important position, and so on. Members will always assign the least preferred position a 1.

- When all have completed the individual rankings, the spokesperson collects and tallies the rankings on a separate sheet or flip chart. The spokesperson makes a list of the positions on a flip chart. The participant writes each member's total for a position next to that position and sums all those totals to get a grand total score for that position. The position with the highest grand point total is the group's most important position. The position with the second highest grand point total is the group's second most important position, and so on.
- Option #2
 - From the brainstorming portion, list all positions on a flip chart. (This should have been done during the brainstorming, but a clean sheet may be necessary.) Give instructions to the participants that they will be voting for the positions that they deem most important and that they should take a few minutes to consider their choices. (At this point give them a few minutes to make their decisions.) Allow the participants to vote, by a show of hands, for three positions from the brainstorming list. They can only vote three times and cannot vote twice for any position. If there is a long list of positions, give them more votes. Point to the first position on the list and ask for a show of hands of who votes for that position as the most important key position on the list. Record the number of votes next to the position on the flip chart. Continue this process until all positions have been addressed. The position with the highest number of votes is the most important key position. The position with the second highest number of votes is the second most important, and so on. Circle the positions with the highest numbers of votes.