

## Group-Level Assessment

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Vaughn, L. M. & Lohmueller, M. (2014). Calling all stakeholders: Group-level assessment (GLA)—A qualitative and participatory method for large groups. *Evaluation Review*, 38(4), 336-355.

“Group-level assessment (GLA) is a qualitative and participatory large group method in which timely and valid data are collaboratively generated and interactively evaluated with relevant stakeholders leading to the development of participant-driven data and relevant action plans” (p. 336).

“The benefits to using GLA are numerous, including (a) hidden agendas and problematic issues are often revealed, (b) stakeholders are responsible for honesty in presentation and validity of data, (c) phenomena under investigation are shaped by the interaction of multiple purposes and agendas, (d) and stakeholders are more likely to ‘buy into’ data they generate and evaluate, therefore they are more ready to act on the outcomes of the process” (p. 346).

### Process

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**Preparation:** Write prompts on large chart paper and place on walls. Cover until Step 2 to avoid distraction (easiest to just fold paper upward from bottom and tape till ready to expose). Good to have as many as 1.5 as many flipcharts as participants.

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Prompts should generally be a balance of:

- Open-ended and structured
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Positive and negative
- Specific and broad
- Silly and serious

Sample prompts are included below.

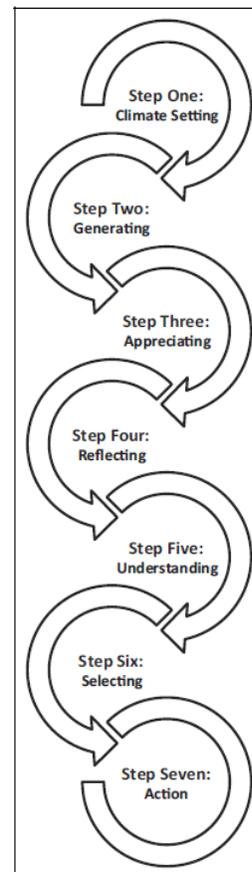


Figure 1. Group-level assessment (GLA) process.

### **Step 1: Climate Setting**

Trust building. Overview of GLA process and what will occur. Ice-breaker or warm-up exercise useful when participants do not know each other.

### **Step 2: Generating**

Participants are given markers (can be one color to maintain the most anonymity) and go around the room responding to the prompts. If they agree with another's statement, place a check or star next to it.

### **Step 3: Appreciating**

Participants spend a short time walking around looking at all the responses to get an overview, encouraged to interact and discuss. They might also like to add stars/checks to some more of other people's responses.

### **Step 4: Reflecting**

Participants spend a short time thinking on their own about the data as a whole, might jot down initial thoughts or observations.

### **Step 5: Understanding**

Participants are divided into smaller groups of 5-8 and assigned 5-6 charts. They discuss and look for *themes across* the set of charts, analyzing the data from their perspectives. Good to give examples to avoid participants looking for main ideas on each chart. Can have facilitators for each group. After, groups come together and report verbally their most commonly occurring themes, facilitator records for everyone to see.

### **Step 6: Selecting**

Participants clarify the most important ideas, distilling the themes from Step 5. This can be done as a large group with the primary facilitator, or in self-facilitated small groups. This step might also include some type of prioritization process, with participants individually placing dots or rankings next to their own priority themes, for example. Themes not selected might not be completely discarded, but "parked" on a separate list for consideration at a later date.

### **Step 7: Action**

Large group considers possible next steps based on priorities, informing relevant future programs, interventions, developments, or other change. Can choose to then break into smaller groups for specific action planning. This step can also be scheduled at a separate time for those interested in being involved in the action, if this makes more sense.

**Table 1.** Examples of GLA Prompts Organized by Category.

Open Ended	Structured
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need to do more....</li> <li>• We need to do less....</li> <li>• Hopes/Dreams (related to group or topic)</li> <li>• _____(group or topic) is really about...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our potential for action would be enhanced if we....</li> <li>• Most important areas to address (list areas with Likert-type scale 1 to 5)</li> </ul>
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As we move forward, we need to consider...</li> <li>• Best part of our group?</li> <li>• We are awesome because....</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The worst mistake we could make...</li> <li>• Our toughest problem to address is...</li> <li>• In order to be more effective we should...</li> <li>• Biggest barriers to success?</li> </ul>
Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We can be proud we....</li> <li>• We are exceptional because we....</li> <li>• Potential assets?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We usually remain silent about...</li> <li>• What's hidden? (in our group or about the topic)</li> </ul>
Specific	Broad
<p>The roadblock to our success is...</p> <p>Best way for us to support people?</p> <p>Key collaborators include:</p>	<p>Let's start/Let's stop....</p> <p>We definitely need...</p> <p>Related to (topic or group), I wish....</p>
Silly	Serious
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw a bumper sticker (group or related to the topic)</li> <li>• If our group was an animal...</li> <li>• Theme song (represents our group or the topic)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 3 years, we need to be...</li> <li>• _____is usually ignored (in group or within topic)</li> <li>• To improve the functioning of our group, we need to...</li> </ul>