Appendix E
GROUP PROCESS METHODS

NOMINAL GROUP PROCESS
A Technique To Ensure Full Involvement in Identification of Issues or Options

The purpose of the Nominal Group Process is to provide structure for a group discussion when the group is facing the challenge of reaching agreement on complex topics. In the absence of some form of structure and formal process, the decisionmaking process is at risk of "spinning wheels" or being dominated by a few individuals who are more vocal than the rest of the group members. The facilitator has an active role in taking the group through the steps in this process, but the facilitator does not participate in the substantive debate on the topics being considered. The group is asked to agree to follow the step-by-step "rules of the road" for the Nominal Group Process, so that all group members will have an opportunity to contribute ideas and agreement can be reached efficiently on the issues at hand. These steps are as follows:

1. Each team member, in turn, makes a suggestion for one of the items of interest (e.g., a barrier to implementation or a possible metric to monitor). The facilitator gives all members a chance to offer suggestions before discussion on any of the proposed items.

2. Then rank the items in order of priority. To do this, the facilitator asks each team member to identify the 3 to 5 items that he/she thinks are most important. Tally the counts of votes as each member reports their candidates.

3. After the ranking is completed, the team members identify items where they disagree and discuss the merits of each item.

   NOTE: An alternative approach is to reverse the order of steps 2 and 3, so that the group discusses the items briefly before ranking them, discarding any that the team agrees are not appropriate. This discussion should be limited in length, serving to identify issues that team members should consider as they do their rankings.

4. The team reviews the priority list to assess how acceptable it is to the group and to identify any break-off points where a "cluster" of items clearly are rated more highly than the remaining items. If these results are not acceptable to the team, repeat the ranking process (steps 2 and 3).

AFFINITY GROUPING
A Technique to Synthesize or Group Individual Items from a Gap Analysis

When performing a gap and barrier analysis, a planning team will identify a potentially large number of barriers to desired clinical practices, and many of these barriers may be problems for more than one guideline element. Affinity Grouping is a technique that the team can use to reach consensus on how individual barriers can be grouped into categories of related barriers. Then actions can be defined to make changes for a group of barriers, which can make guideline implementation more effective and efficient.

The following outline of Affinity Grouping assumes that, during the gap analysis, the team wrote each barrier to desired practices on a separate card or self-stick note, and those cards or notes are displayed on a wall of the meeting room. To perform Affinity grouping, take the following steps:

1. Without talking, each person on the team takes a turn to look for cards/notes that seem to be related (regardless of the guideline element they address) and places these together, off to one side. Other team members can add additional cards/notes to a group as it forms or they can reform existing groups. Set aside any items that become contentious.

2. Continue until all the items have been grouped or set aside. Consolidate groups where possible to obtain fewer than 10 groupings.

3. Now discuss the groupings as a team. Generate short, descriptive sentences that describe each group and use these as title cards or notes. Avoid very short titles.

4. Items can be moved from one group to another if a consensus emerges during the discussion.

5. Consider additional brainstorming to capture new ideas using the group titles to stimulate thinking.

SUB-GROUP PLANNING METHOD
A Technique To Accomplish Several Similar Tasks at One Time

A larger planning group can perform multiple tasks simultaneously by breaking out into smaller sub-groups, with each group being assigned a portion of the planning tasks. For a guideline implementation plan, this technique may be useful for developing the specific actions the guideline team will undertake to carry out its implementation strategy. Not only does this approach allow for efficient planning, but it also ensures active involvement by all team members in the establishment of the plan they will be asked to help implement. Take the following steps:

1. Working with the team members, the facilitator establishes teams of 2 to 3 people and assigns one or more actions to each team to develop the details for carrying out the actions. Include in these actions any planned data collection activity to document current practice for guideline elements where the team has insufficient information to determine gaps in practice.

2. The small teams complete the planning tasks and worksheets for each action they are assigned. Describe the action itself and specify the tools and other resources that will be used to carry out the action, the staff responsibilities, and the timeline for completion.

3. The full implementation team reconvenes and consolidates the action plans into one implementation schedule. The team reviews the planned tools, staff assignments, timeline, and monitoring strategy to (1) identify overlaps that can be worked on together and (2) adjust time lines to make the plan feasible to implement. Evaluate the action priorities to be sure the most important actions are given a priority for timing and resources. Less important actions may be delayed or dropped from the plan.