ADVICE NOTE: PRIORITISATION FOR DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLANS

VisitEngland™

Destination Management Plan (DMP)
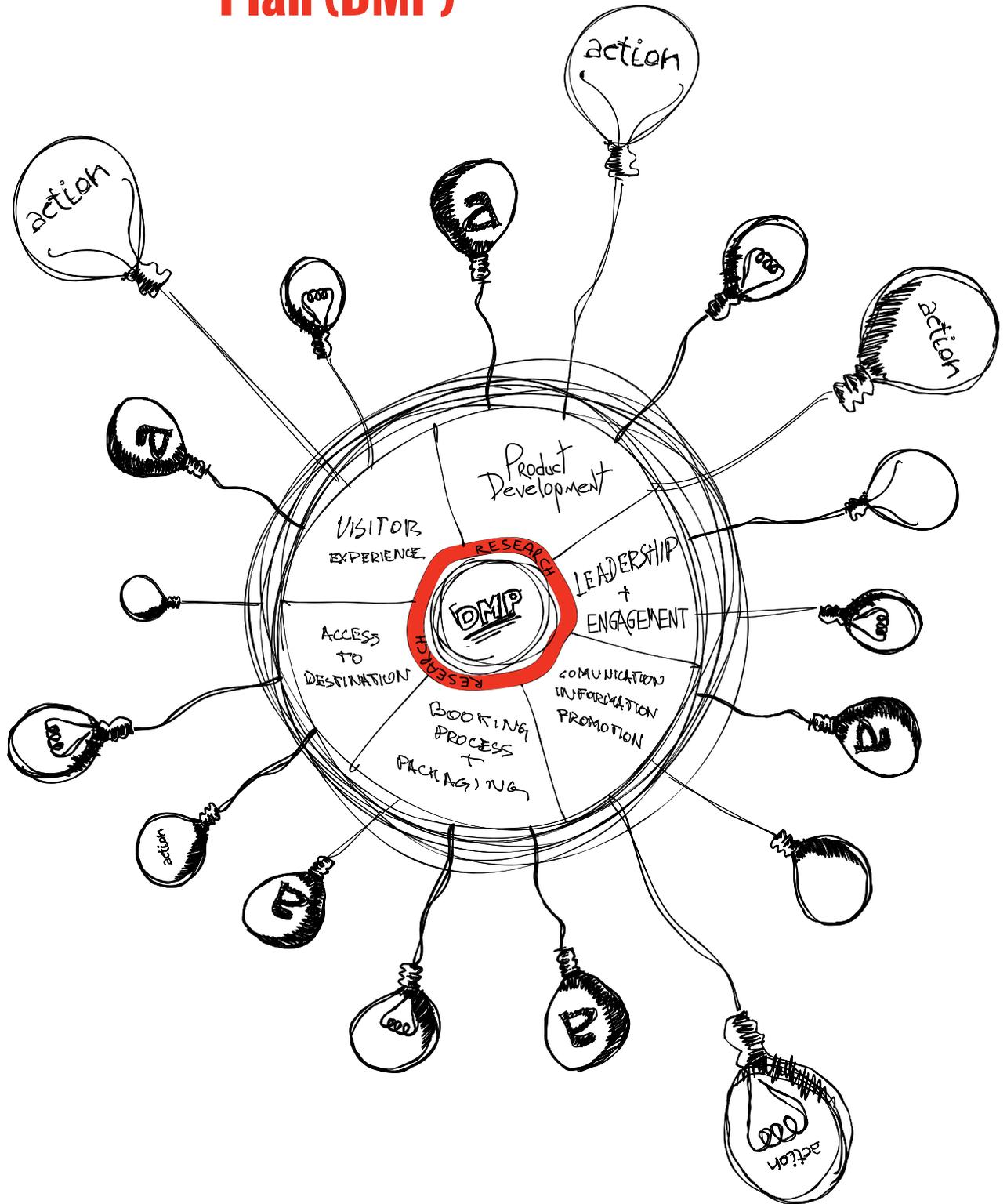
This guide provides tools, ideas and approaches to assist with the prioritisation of objectives, issues and actions within the development of a Destination Management Plan (DMP)

Many destinations struggle with trying to address every single issue or understanding which actions they should focus on, as it will often seem that all are equally important. Therefore VisitEngland has prepared this guidance to assist destinations in focussing and making the most of their resources during the DMP process.

This guide is for any Destination Organisation leading on or implementing a Destination Management Plan (DMP) whether they are an existing Destination Management Organisation (DMO), a looser partnership of businesses and volunteers or a local authority.

It is relevant for destinations which already have a DMP or equivalent document and who want to strengthen or renew it, as well as to those who are beginning to plan together.

What is a Destination Management Plan?

- Destination Management is a process of leading, influencing and coordinating the management of all the aspects of a destination that contribute to a visitor's experience, taking account of the needs of visitors, local residents, businesses and the environment.

- A Destination Management Plan (DMP) is a shared statement of intent to **manage a destination over a stated period of** time, **articulating the roles** of the **different stakeholders** and identifying **clear actions** that they will take and the **apportionment of resources.**

In these definitions, 'manage' and 'management' are taken in their widest sense. Crucially, destination management includes the planning, development and promotion of a destination as well as how it is managed physically, financially, operationally and in other ways.

Where does this guide fit?

This guide complements and adds to the main "Principles for developing Destination Management Plans" document produced by VisitEngland and should be read and implemented alongside it.

The documents can be found on VisitEngland's corporate website www.visitengland.com/destinations along with further supporting information on various aspects of destination planning and management.

1. WHY PRIORITISE?

1.1
The reality of creating a DMP

A DMP is created to enable a destination to plan and work collectively to manage and develop all aspects of tourism within a destination, from promotion to visitor experience, investment and stakeholder communication. Inherently a DMP can and likely will contain a raft of areas and activities that require action.

Often it can be tempting to try and make a DMP encyclopaedic and cover all the potential activity required within the destination. Whilst this is potentially useful in understanding how tourism could develop, it makes the DMP unwieldy and hinders activity actually taking place, rendering the DMP pointless. It is important to prioritise at several stages in the creation of a DMP, thereby focussing effort, time and resources on a smaller number of key areas rather than spreading them too thinly to try and encompass everything.
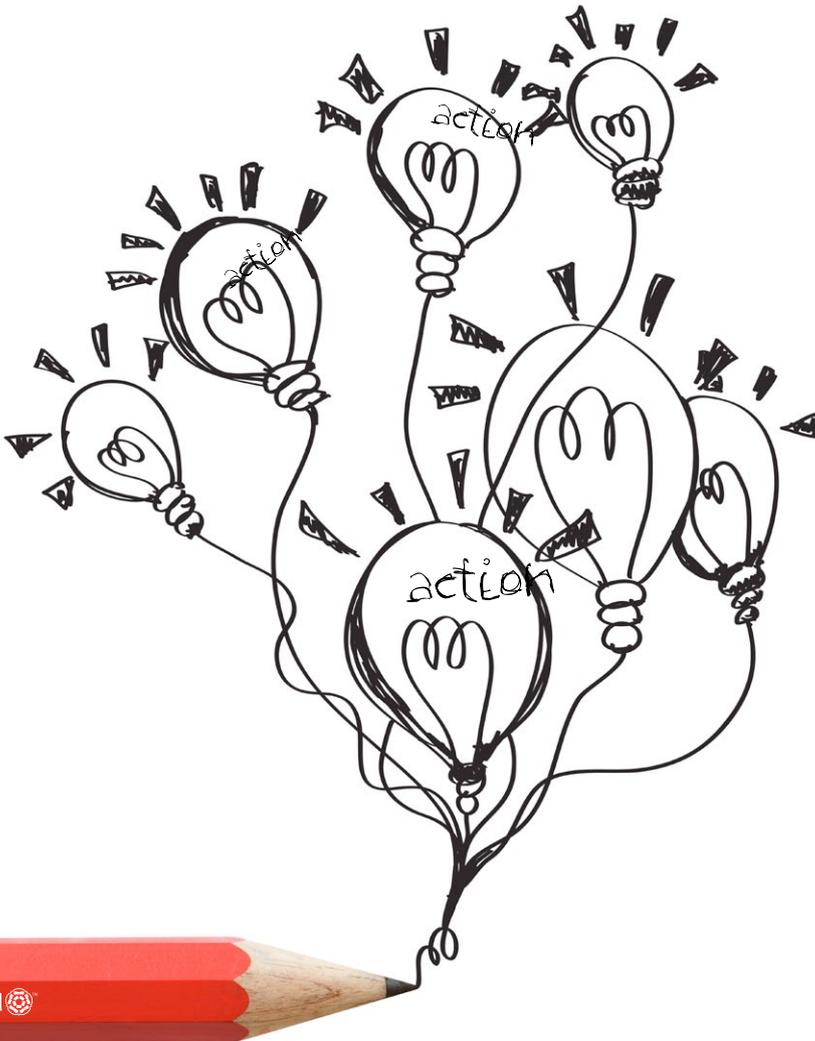
1.2
The benefits of prioritising

Prioritising keeps a DMP focussed and succinct, but creates far more value than just keeping things neat and tidy.

- A succinct, clear and manageable plan will make it much easier to gain commitment, support and resources from others to help deliver it.

- Keeping the areas and actions to a manageable number will improve chances of the actions happening. If action occurs it breeds confidence and support that the process is working and will make it easier to undertake further activity.

- A DMP with fewer areas and activities is easier to manage, monitor and review.

- Prioritising actions that are most important to the destination's strategic direction will ensure more impact and better return from the resources invested.

1.3
What needs prioritising?

Although prioritisation can apply to almost any stage or area of the DMP, the two main areas that will invariably require prioritisation are; Strategic Direction and Actions.

Strategic Direction governs what the DMP aims to do and the areas it focuses on. Too many choices here reduce the clarity of what the plan is trying to achieve and can cause confusion. When compiling a DMP it is suggested to have no more than five or six key priorities to keep things manageable.

Actions provide the tactical "how" for a DMP and is the area where the temptation to be encyclopaedic is greatest. Action plans in particular need to be clear, succinct and focussed; too many choices or options will quickly make the whole look unachievable. The number of actions to include will depend on capacity within the destination and the need to be realistic about what can actually be achieved.

Furthermore, there is a temptation to put actions in simply to satisfy all stakeholder requests, and whilst this may be a useful engagement tool it does not assist in developing a clear and focussed DMP.

Prioritisation needs to be undertaken to ensure actions are intrinsically linked to the delivery of the strategic direction, and this will often mean that some interests will not be happy but discussion and reaching agreement should be an important part of the prioritisation process.

1.4
What about the rest?

The process of developing a DMP will generate lots of ideas, direction and actions not all of which should be included in the final plan. However do not cast these aside if they do not make it into the final document. Priorities, context and resources change so keep them to one side to reconsider at the next annual review; they may become part of a second phase or evolution of the DMP.

2. HOW THIS DOCUMENT WORKS
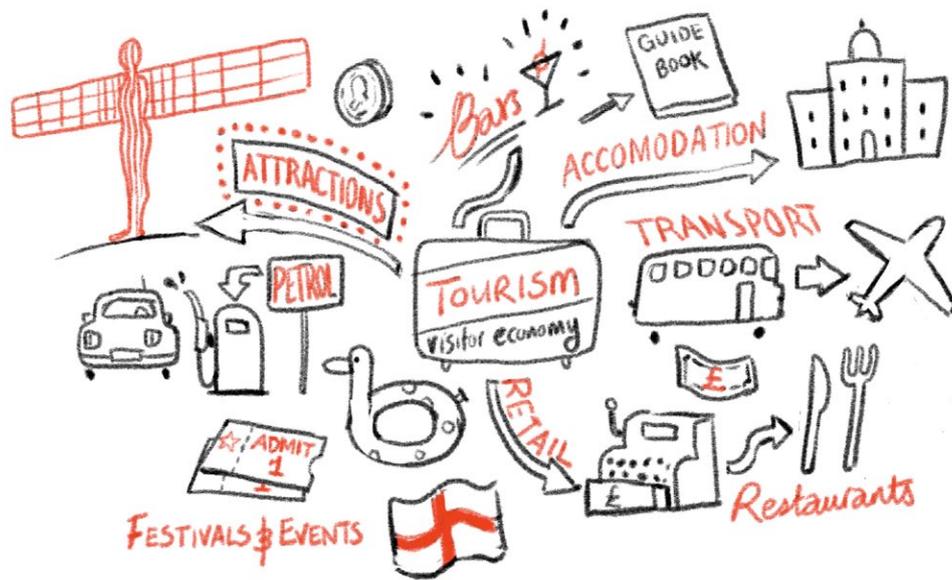
This guide includes several models and options that Destination organisations can use to prioritise elements of their DMP.

It is not intended to be all-encompassing or to provide a prescriptive approach; rather it seeks to provide suggestions and ideas that could be useful. It is up to the destination to determine which method is most beneficial for their situation.

It is important to recognise that the models are suggestions and are not set in stone. Destinations are encouraged to tailor them to their own circumstances. The models do not need to be mutually exclusive; in fact an approach that utilises two or more in a phased approach could be very beneficial.

A note of caution – prioritisation is a subjective process as it depends on the perception, experience and outlook of those undertaking it. To reduce any bias being introduced to the process, it is suggested a representative group is used.
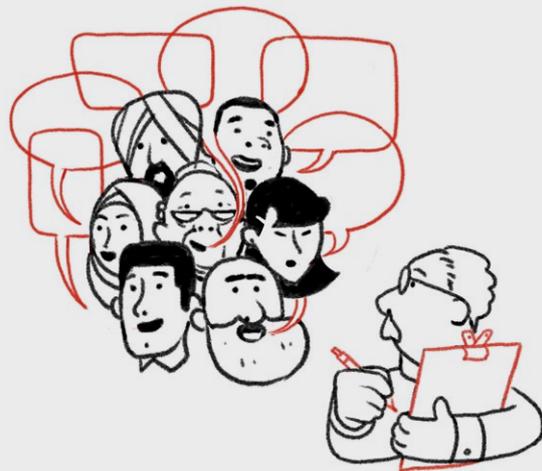
3. PRIORITISATION MODELS

A) Checklists

A relatively simple method of prioritisation is to draw up some checklists comprising standards of criteria and then assess whether actions meet the requisite criteria.

Any action that achieves the criteria is determined a priority.

The Model

Prioritisation by checklists is an option that requires careful planning, but once set up is relatively speedy to assess actions against. To avoid the model being a simple in-or-out decision it is recommended that two levels of checklists are employed.

Level one incorporates the 'show stoppers' – criteria based around the fundamentals in terms of delivering the strategic direction and implementing actions.
If actions cannot meet the criteria here the idea should not be pursued in its current form. This level might include criteria such as:

1. Is the activity going to directly support the DMP's core objectives?

2. Is there budget for the activity (or can budget be sensibly found for this type of activity)?

3. Can we actually deliver the activity in the time and with the resources we have?

4. Will it reinforce the right 'messages' that we want to communicate as a destination?

5. Is the impact of the activity easily measurable?

Level two. For those actions that pass level one, level two places supplementary criteria that whilst not vital are still important. Performance at this level determines order of priority for the actions. The higher the pass rate the higher the priority.

1. Does the activity strengthen or support existing activity?

2. Can the activity be easily sustained beyond its initial phase?

3. Is the activity tailored to our target audiences?

4. Is there a destination-wide benefit from the activity?

5. Can we manage the interest or outcomes of the activity successfully?

Of course criteria at both levels can be tailored or set as required.

Usage of the model

Checklists are useful for setting global criteria to interpret a large action list; as such they require careful planning and are not suited for group or participative working. They are very useful however if the decision making is being delegated to sub-groups or organisations and undertaken in a consistent manner.

Any number of criteria can be added to each level, however it is recommended that level one is kept small and focuses only on the "deal breaking" criteria. Level two can also feature specifics related to level one (e.g. level one asks whether it is possible, level two may set a criteria of achievable within 18 months).

Be aware you may end up with several actions that pass everything and achieve a perfect score. To combat this you can apply weighting to certain level two criteria or alternatively simply take all of these as top priority.

Pros and Cons

PROS

Useful for maintaining consistency in process

Ties prioritisation to multiple criteria

Easy to understand and implement

Easily flexible for multiple criteria

CONS

Time consuming to set up and agree criteria

Doesn't work in a group environment

Only applies loose prioritisation

Will require regular review and updating

Worked Example

See appendix for a worked fictional example of the model in practice.

B) Scoring Systems

Scoring as a method of prioritisation takes the notion of checklists and expands upon it by giving each action a score for the relative criteria. Scores are aggregated across criteria and then totalled. Actions are prioritised based on their final score.

The Model

Prioritisation by scoring also requires careful planning as it is a relatively simple and open method. Care must be taken to frame the criteria to be scored against and ensure consistency in how the actions are scored across criteria.

A simple way of undertaking this is to use a scale of 1 - 5 for each criteria, providing a scale with a neutral mid-point as well as grades of positive and negative without being unwieldy. Criteria can be flexible but must be clear and unambiguous, and could include the following:

1. Time to deliver
2. Ease of delivery
3. Cost
4. Strategic importance
5. Importance to the customer or visitor
6. Ease of measurement
7. How easy it is to sustain moving forward

It is also key to spell out the nature of the scale for each criteria, i.e. translating time to deliver for instance into a 5 point scale.

Of course when aggregating scores we should not assume that all criteria are equally important. To combat this, weighting could be attached to one or more criteria to arrive at the final result.

Usage of the model

Scoring is a useful prioritisation technique in that it is widely recognised and used in surveys and questionnaires. It works very well in gaining individual feedback and would function well remotely (e.g. gaining prioritisation input from multiple people via email on online survey forms) but functions poorly in a group situation without adequate facilitation and preparation.

It is vital to ensure the scoring criteria are clear and unambiguous to avoid "score creep" and ensure all actions are scored on a consistent basis.
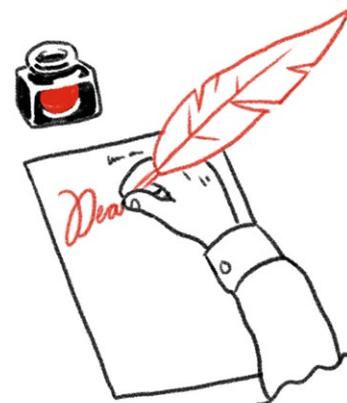
Any number of criteria can be scored against, however it is recommended to keep the number limited to 2 or 3 particularly if the action list is lengthy. Too many options will confuse and exhaust the participant.

Be careful with weighting and keep it hidden from the participants until after any exercise to ensure the knowledge of what is more important does not influence their scoring.

Pros and Cons

| PROS	CONS	Worked Example
Widely used and easy to understand	Easily skewed	See appendix for a worked fictional example of the model in practice.
Easily applies clear prioritisation	Doesn't work in a group environment	
Relatively easy and simple to set-up	Criteria needs to be limited to 2 or 3	
Allows statistical analysis	Any ambiguity can easily invalidate data	

C) Matrix Prioritisation

One of the most straightforward methods of prioritisation is through the use of a matrix. Here the relevant action is judged against two competing criteria and plotted within a matrix accordingly, its subsequent location determines the "priority".

The Model

There are many models for performing this form of prioritisation varying in complexity; however for the purposes of a DMP the simplest and most useful is outlined in the diagram below:
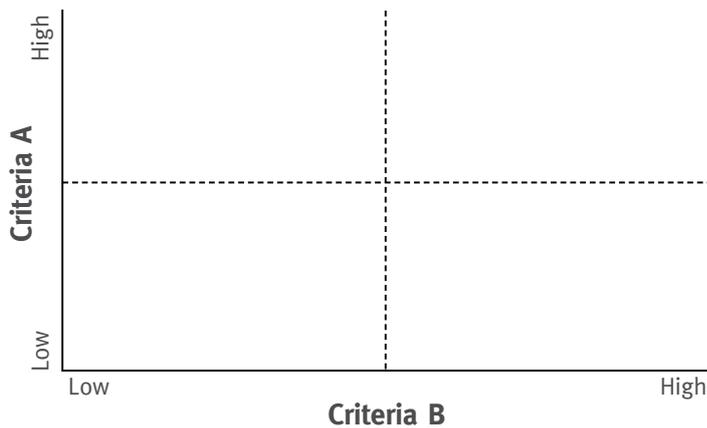
The nature of the criteria determines where the areas of highest and lowest priority sit. For example if Criteria A is "importance to strategic direction" and Criteria B is "difficulty to deliver" then the matrix functions as follows:
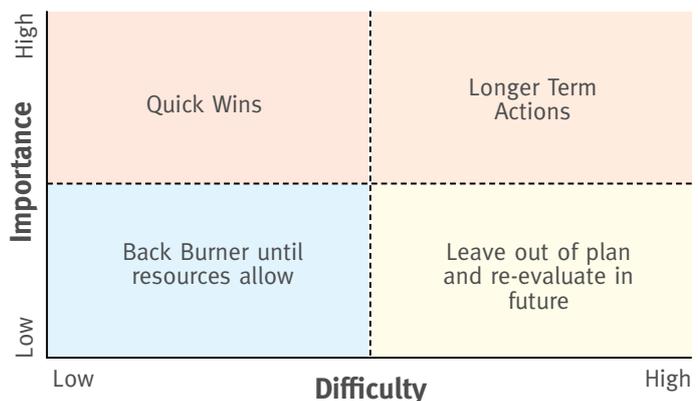
In this example the group would need to take each potential action and evaluate it against both criteria before agreeing on where it should be plotted. Anything that appears in the top two sections is viable to include in the action plan, however prioritisation should be given to items falling closest to the top left corners of the top two quadrants.

This shows only one set of criteria but either can be replaced as required e.g.

- Time vs. Cost – Useful for assessing practical achievability of actions

- Strategic need vs. Customer need – Useful for assessing relative importance of actions to key audiences.

However the "Strategic Importance" vs. "Difficulty to deliver" is probably the most useful as it assesses actions against an amalgam of the above, thereby making it a quicker and easier tool to use.

Note: replacing criteria will change where the points of prioritisation sit. E.g. in Time vs. Cost priority could sit in bottom left corner for quick and low cost actions.

Usage of the model

A prioritisation matrix works best in a group or workshop environment as it allows participants to instantly visualise the relative priorities which can promote useful discussion and also forces agreement on where they should sit. They work particularly well with the matrix drawn on paper and the actions on individual post-it notes.

For a more objective prioritisation, criteria on both axes can be assigned values (e.g. 1-10 or actual values based on cost or time for instance). Further this model can be easily used in stages weeding out lower priority actions based on destination need and then prioritised on time and cost to deliver.

Pros and Cons

PROS

Useful participative process

Allows prioritisation on differing levels

Relatively simple to undertake

Easily flexible for multiple criteria

CONS

Requires fully informed participants

Criteria need to be carefully chosen

Requires time and discussion to agree

Placement can be subjective

Worked Example

See appendix for a worked fictional example of the model in practice.

D) Nominal Forced Ranking

Prioritisation can be a thorny issue for a destination, given the various interest groups and the tendency of certain groups to shout louder and lobby harder for certain elements to be prioritised. To ensure a level playing field nominal forced ranking can be used. Here all options are on the table and each individual involved in the exercise scores each dependent on their preference. Scores are aggregated and prioritisation is arrived at.

The Model

Nominal forced ranking requires individuals to "nominate" their preference in terms of priority to each action based on specific criteria. Each person is given a list of actions and a range of numbers corresponding to the number of actions. Each number can only be awarded once, thereby "forcing" a scoring of the actions in terms of priority.

Higher numbers typically denote higher score.

This approach works best if there are two independent criteria to score against, allowing individuals to judge differing merits.
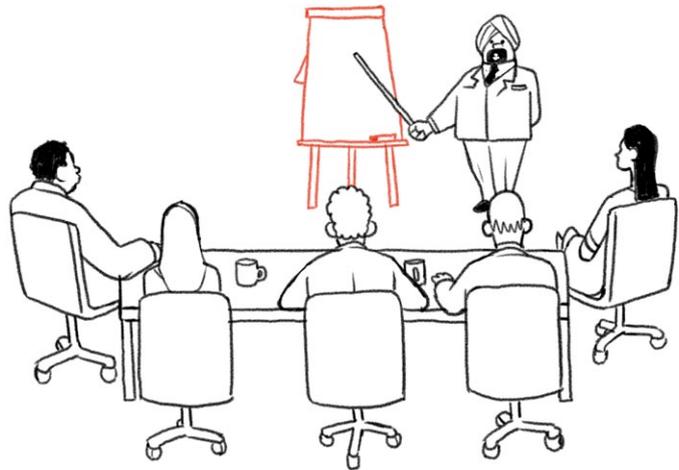
A sample of an individual's scoring table may look like:

Action	Score (1-4)	
	Strategic need	Difficulty to deliver
Action A	1	3
Action B	3	1
Action C	2	4
Action D	4	2

On completion the scores for each action are aggregated for both criteria separately and the overall rank determined as outlined below in the example that aggregates scores from multiple participants.

Strategic Need	Score	Rank
Action D	149	1
Action B	134	2
Action C	91	3
Action A	78	4

Difficulty to Deliver	Score	Rank
Action C	147	1
Action A	114	2
Action D	97	3
Action B	94	4

At this juncture the criteria scores can simply be added together and final rank determined based on the total. This approach however assumes all criteria are equally important, but if you determine this is not the case then weighting could be attached to one or more criteria to arrive at the final result.

In the example below Need is weighted over Difficulty, so actions with same total are prioritised based on the Need score.

Action	Need Rank*	Difficulty Rank	Combined Score	Final Rank
Action A	3	1	4	1
Action B	1	3	4	2
Action C	4	2	6	3
Action D	2	4	6	4

Once ranked a cut off point can be decided and only actions above the cut-off are included in the full DMP.

Pros and Cons

PROS

Useful for obtaining a genuine consensus

Enables clear prioritisation

Requires statistical analysis

Easily flexible for multiple criteria

CONS

Requires fully informed participants

Can be time-consuming

Relies on honest opinions for all scores

Rigid structure does not encourage debate without well planned facilitation

Usage of the model

Nominal forced ranking is very useful in group contexts with many competing agendas as it encourages individual opinions from all participants thereby ensuring a level playing field. It is also useful as a slightly more objective method of statistically determining priorities.

Any number of criteria can be added to rank the respective actions against e.g. Time to deliver, Customer need, Cost etc but bear in mind the more respondents and more criteria the more complex the analysis becomes.

Worked Example

See appendix for a worked fictional example of the model in practice.

4. SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

Further support on developing a DMP including case studies, examples of completed DMP's and other resources are available on the VisitEngland Corporate website through the VisitEngland Destination Managers online resource –

www.visitengland.com/destinations

VisitEngland encourages and supports the development of Destination Management Plans throughout England as an essential tool in the development of a successful visitor economy. National Government policy encourages destination organisations to become focused and efficient bodies that are increasingly led by the private sector. Created with and by the private sector, Destination Management Plans are one mechanism to achieve this.

If you have any specific questions on this guidance on Destination Management Plans you can contact VisitEngland on

destination@visitengland.org

This document has been developed by VisitEngland.

VisitEngland is the country's national tourist board responsible for driving forward England's Strategic Framework for Tourism with industry partners. We work in partnership to lead the development of a thriving tourism industry, supporting our national and local partners to achieve economic growth and increase investment and employment by encouraging the development of excellent visitor experiences and effective business practices. For information on the wide range of support and opportunities we offer to the different sectors involved in England's visitor economy visit visitengland.org and for further information on England, visit visitengland.com

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