

Action Group or Discussion Group

The difference between the two

An Action Group facilitates learning in a group situation, and is focused on a group objective designed to help individual members achieve their on-farm goals. A discussion group supports individual members to implement action for their farm business.



	Action Group	Discussion Group
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enables farmers to learn together to build confidence to try new things and make changes to their farm business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enables farmers to share ideas and gain new ideas to help improve their farm business
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Membership can be local or spread over a wide range of locationsClosed once the group is full (i.e. have seven to nine farm businesses involved)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Locally based, region specificOpen or closed membership depending on groupGenerally, only one member of the farm team attends
Number of farmers involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Seven to nine farm businesses (in order to encourage farm teams, i.e. key decision makers, to be involved in and it still be a relatively small group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Usually 12-15, sometimes more
Farm team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Encouraged to be part of the group in order to help get action on-farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sometimes part of a group (depends on the group)
Facilitated by	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Facilitator/expert (often a farm systems expert)

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Definition of facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan, guide and manage group activities to ensure that the groups objectives are met and there is engagement and good participation from everyone involved Facilitators focus on the process of helping each member of the group learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More of a chair or coordinating role, focusing on the subject matter
Experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraged to be involved and funded to be involved in activities as appropriate Separate to facilitator role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasionally involved as needed
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$4,000 per farm business provided by RMPP into a pooled group fund Used to pay for facilitators, experts, mentors and appropriate meeting costs Each farm business contributes \$800 to the group fund in year two 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual farmers are billed for their portion of group running costs
Goals, plans and rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group objective and goals formed from discussion with group and documented in the Extension Plan Group activities should be linked to achieving group goals Individual Action Plans with individual farm goals and KPIs documented Guidelines and rules provided by RMPP Group establishes rules at the first meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes developed with and for a group (depending on the group) Often there are rules on confidentiality agreements. The discussion group must agree to share and discuss financial information

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Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group activities designed to achieve the objective and goals of the group It's about creating a group environment to enable change in attitudes, knowledge, skills and aspirations that lead to practice change Group activities can be hosted by Action Group members, but do not have to be on-farm (can be held on-farm or elsewhere as appropriate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-farm visit made to each farm in the group The host farmer provides the focus topics for discussion and a different group member's farm is visited each meeting Creating a group environment to share each farmers knowledge and experiences
Pre/post work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused on all group members Good practice for extension activities is to have pre-work for each group member to do before an activity and then post work agreed to at the end of the activity This is reflected on and discussed at the start of the next activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused on individual farm host Host for the day prepares information for the group, and previous host provides update at the start of the meeting
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal, via Action Plans Each farm business completes an Action Plan outlining their goals for being involved in the group and some key actions they will take In addition, three KPIs are documented in each Action Plan. These are updated each year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal although each time the group meets the previous host is asked to give an update on outcomes from the day on their farm (and others may add to this as appropriate)
Training and support for facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes Facilitators are required to attend the RMPP Lead Facilitator course and the Action Network Fundamentals course, be observed and then attend Action Hub meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None (in most cases)
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal through RMPP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal