



## GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING CONSENSUS

**Definition:** Building consensus is a process of bringing a team to a shared and agreed-upon decision. It does not mean complete agreement, but rather that the team comes to a decision with which each member is comfortable.

### Building Consensus to Identify a Focus of Inquiry

1. Follow the Developing a Focus of Inquiry Protocol to generate a list of potential inquiry questions.
2. Vote to identify the top three to five questions.
3. Discuss the benefits of each of the top questions. What evidence might each one surface that would inform the topic or issue being discussed?
4. Individually, rank the top questions to determine which question will most help the team hone its observation Focus.
5. As a group, discuss individual ratings.
6. Vote to select the top question as a way to narrow the options.
7. Discuss the outcome of the vote. Can everyone support the question that got the most votes? If not, what would enable them to be comfortable with that Focus of Inquiry?

### Strategies for Group Process

- Organize the discussion so that it will not go in circles. It is helpful to have a facilitator to keep everyone on track.
- Actively ask for dissenting opinions and perspectives (for example, “*Does anyone see things differently?*”).
- Emphasize that everyone’s opinion is important and should be considered.
- Provide time for evaluating options when a decision is made.
- Value strong opinions, but ensure that those opinions do not overcome the opinions of less vocal team members.