

MAKING DECISIONS BY CONSENSUS

This tool provides guidelines for reaching decisions by consensus.

WHAT IS CONSENSUS?

Consensus means general agreement. For consensus to exist, it's not necessary for every member to agree in full, but every participant have a chance to be heard and, in the end, be able to "live with" the decision. They don't have to consider the decision made to be the best one, but the decision should not violate each member's personal convictions. There should be no member who strongly opposes the group's decision.

Reaching consensus requires

- time

- active participation from all members

- skills in communication, active listening, conflict resolution, facilitation

- creative thinking and open-mindedness

HOW TO FACILITATE FOR CONSENSUS:

- help the group work together in positive ways

- clearly state the problem and ask the group to arrive at a solution which they all can live with

- take disagreement for granted, but do not emphasize it

- involve everyone in the discussion

- use brainstorming as a tool to generate many ideas without judgment

- consider all ideas, one by one, giving pros and cons and modifying the ideas when necessary

- identify two to three of the best, most workable, solutions

- remind the group of its goal – to reach consensus – when necessary

- ask group to show a "thumbs up" if they agree with or can live with the decision, and a "thumbs down" if they cannot

CONSENSUS CHECKLIST:

- Did each member give an opinion?

- Did each idea presented receive comments and consideration?

- Did members who disagreed with the decision express their concerns, reservations, and feelings before the idea was adopted?

- Is any team member hesitant to actively support the decision?