

Meeting Processes/ Decision-Making at the 2110

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This guide attempts to give you a basic framework and some tools for working within a consensus environment. It can be applied to modified versions of consensus as well as other democratic decision-making structures. I feel passionately committed to finding ways for people to work together horizontally, (that means no leaders, no strati) refusing formal hierarchy and undermining informal ones, fighting against domination and oppression in our organizing as we fight against it in the world.

I believe that the best decisions are ones that have broad input, and are tested against the concerns and critiques of those who will be implementing the decisions. I believe the best actions are decided up and carried out by those directly affected. I think that the tools contained within help create a context in which people's voices are heard, creativity is pushed, and ideas are valued.

It is a work in progress and the result of years of practice and discussion with many amazing people and learning from the most productive and most frustrating experiences in various contexts, generally in grassroots militant organizing, including mass consulta and spokescouncils but also working within not-for-profits, corporate settings and just living in a community with a people with a broad range of experiences, beliefs and styles of communication and decision-making.

It's based on workshops I've given in the past and might be useful for other people's workshops. I've put it under a creative commons license to ensure no one uses it commercially or profits from it and that anyone amending or building upon continues to keep it non-commercial and shares it freely. If you correct the typos, all the better!

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INTRODUCTION TO CONSENSUS

Deciding on Decision-making

Like any action, it is important to make a conscious and informed choice about how a group will make decisions. In any group, informal hierarchies can form. These usually are reinforced by systemic hierarchies in place in the rest of the world. A formal structure which recognizes these tendencies can help to address these informal hierarchies.

Such a structure can also help move beyond theoretical discussions and passionate rhetoric into action and provide a framework to process and deal with an unwieldy amount of ideas being tossed around.

Part of that structure includes a clear decision-making process.

There are probably as many ways to make decisions as there are decisions to be made. People should choose a decision-making process that makes sense given the context.

There are many different ways that groups can make decisions in various contexts, including using parliamentary or quasi-parliamentary procedures, like Robert's or Bourinot's Rules Order, or even just a free-for-all. There are pro's and con's to each model and each can be adapted to suit the context or group it's being used for. This document talks about consensus, and how it can be used effectively in making anti-heirarchical decisions (i.e. directly democratic decisions of all involved, without leaders or factions) for horizontal group structures.

What is Consensus?

Consensus is a group decision making process which attempts to ensure that everyone involved is an equal participant, all opinions are considered and the final decision comes about through extensive discussion and the constructive resolution of critique and dissent. Consensus is not unanimity, nor is it compromise. It is a decision that everyone in the group accepts, (even though people may have concerns, reservations or prefer other options to that which is decided), and should be what the group considers the best possible decision in a given context.

Good consensus requires training, practice and a commitment to the process by every member. It requires a degree of openness, trust and risk-taking within the group and it requires a basis of unity from which people will be making decisions. It also requires that people will show regard for each others opinions and ideas and be supportive of each others needs within the group.

Consensus decision-making has its roots in several indigenous cultures throughout the world, such as the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, various faith-based and cultural contexts including Jewish and Quaker cultures, Pirate ships, etc. and is used in a variety of contexts not limited to grassroots, progressive or left-wing organizing.

Important Environments For Consensus (adapted From Work By Daryl Novak)

Unity of purpose: There should be a basic core of agreement within and about the group. Of course there will be many areas where group members have varying opinions about what is best, but there must be a unifying base that is recognized and accepted as a common starting place by all members.

Equal access to power for all members: There should be no formal hierarchy which gives any member more authority than other members. Additionally, there should be an effort to share informal distribution of power. Ideally then, there not only is no "director" or "president", but there is also an effort to have all members contribute and, participate equally, despite differences in seniority, assertiveness, and other personal qualities. It is also essential that informal hierarchies are acknowledged and confronted, such as those which are a result of oppression within society.

Autonomy of the group from external hierarchical structures: It is very difficult for a group to use consensus within its own operations when the group is part of a larger system that does not recognize the process. Groups such as university departments, state agencies, or divisions of a business have often experimented with using consensus and have sometimes been successful. Their success, though can easily be disrupted by interference or mandate from the larger structure. For example, it is difficult for a person to participate within a group as an equal when the same person is designated "director" by associated or controlling bodies. It is also difficult when the decisions made by the group can be ignored, overturned, or undermined by the people who have the power to enact them.

Time: The process of developing an effective consensus group requires time spent on group process and relations between members as well as time spent making decisions. Consensus groups can often work very smoothly and efficiently to make effective, stable decisions, but a difficult consensus decision cannot be rushed. If your group does not have the time to devote, or the patience to use the time, consensus will be thwarted.

A willingness in the group to attend to process: The way group members work together to reach decisions is important and needs attention. Members of a consensus group must be willing and able to spend group time discussing process and working towards necessary changes in the process, as well as attending to tasks and decisions.

A willingness in the group to attend to attitudes: Consensus works well when group members are willing to work cooperatively and when they feel they are able to trust each other. This requires a commitment by group members to examine their own attitudes and to be open to change. Such trust and cooperation also requires a caring group community which supports the development of these attitudes.

A willingness in the group to learn and practice skills for meeting participation, facilitation and communication: The group must encourage and assist all of its members to develop these skills for the group to work well as a whole.

What else might you need?

REACHING CONSENSUS

How to express your decision

Consensus has 3 options: Support, Standing Aside or Blocking.

Support if:

- you believe that this agrees with the basis of unity and is the best decision possible at this moment
- you are committed to following through with it.

Remember:

Although not everyone has to be active in every aspect of a group, it is important to determine that there are people able to follow through on a decision..

Stand Aside if you:

- do not have enough info but trust that others do
- will be unable to follow through for personal reasons
- are unable to make up your mind about the decision
- disagree but can live with the decision

Remember:

Address concerns of people who are standing aside as well as those who are blocking. A stronger decision will be one that works through any objections regardless of whether they are blocks or stand-asides.

Block a proposal if you:

- believe it is against basis of unity
- could not in good conscience live with the group making this decision.

Remember:

If someone's fundamental beliefs are contrary to the rest of the group, the question of whether this group can function on consensus has to be addressed.

When you can't reach consensus:

Be sure the concerns are articulated; try to discuss them one at a time and come up with resolutions for each concern.

Refer back to the basis of unity of the group. After all, this is what has brought you together – this is what the decision should be based on.

Break into smaller groups to allow people to discuss more fully in smaller settings

Take a break or postpone the discussion to a later date (with everyone present) in order to:

- to step away from the issues and start with a renewed energy
- reflect on the matter outside of the meeting
- do more research and investigation into the issue at hand
- come up with different and/or creative approaches that take concerns into account.
- bring in an outside facilitator who is not implicated in the decision
- Those in support can agree to drop the proposal; those blocking can agree to stand aside.

At the point at which consensus can not be achieved, the group can dissolve or members can chose to leave the group. If one finds themselves fundamentally at odds with the rest of the group, it is questionable whether there is truly a basis of unity to work within. In such a case, it is generally the responsibility of that person to realize that and to leave the group.

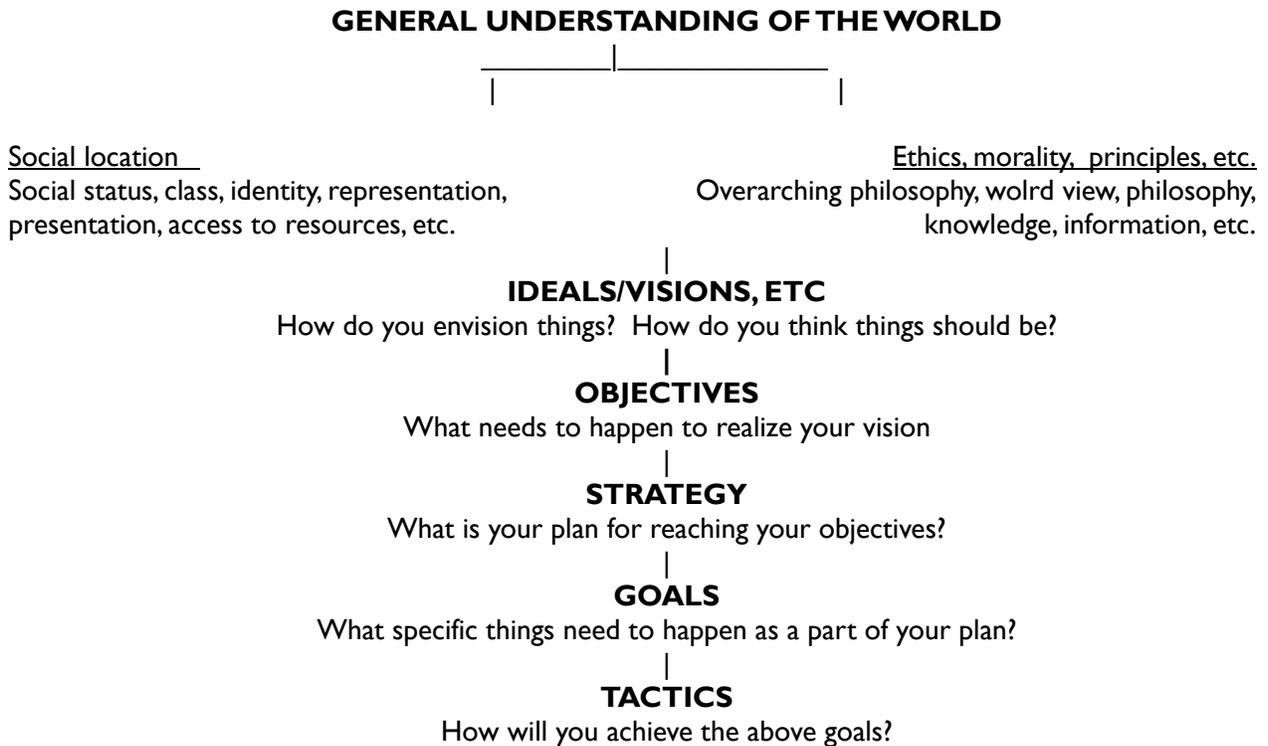
Incorporated organizations are required to have and outline the means for voting in the event that consensus is not reached. Therefore, for incorporated organizations, there must be a method for moving to a vote and the majority for that vote (50%+1, 2/3s, 75%, minus-one) must be defined.

REMEMBER, NOT MAKING A DECISION IS A DECISION IN ITSELF

MAKING ACCOUNTABLE DECISIONS

Action Flow Chart

The following flow-chart describes the relationship between who you are, what you are trying to achieve and how you plan to do this.



Each of these steps informs the next one. If you are going to ultimately be accountable and effective, your answers in each of these steps should be consistent with each other. Your tactics need to be able to realize your immediate goals, which need to fit in with a general strategy, which is built around achieving an objective for realizing your overall vision and ideals which would be consistent with your understanding and analysis of the world. If your tactics contradict any of these steps, then there is something inconsistent with your reasoning and you should reevaluate your decision.

Key Questions to focus decisions

When you find yourself talking in circles and unable to make decisions or take action, consider the following questions one at a time to help narrow down the issue into manageable questions.

What do we need to decide?

What are the key issues?

What do we want the outcome or resolution to be?

What do we need in order to achieve the outcome we want?

What steps do we need to do this? (These can become proposals)

STEPS FOR MAKING A DECISION

The following can be used step-by-step as a way to make sure that you have really made a consensus-decision.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA ITEM/GENERAL DISCUSSION

Name the issues, brainstorm ideas, do go-arounds, etc. The facilitator should gradually try to get from general discussion to specific proposals

2. a) STATE PROPOSAL

– a specific position and/or plan of action, including timelines, who is responsible, etc.

b) MOTIVATION

– when necessary, the person creating the proposal provides motivation.

3. CLARIFYING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

– not debate, but specific questions of clarification, so that everyone is clear on *what* the proposal is

4. RESTATE PROPOSAL, WITH CLARIFICATIONS IF NEEDED

– again, to make sure questions have been clarified and people understand the proposal

5. DISCUSSION

– This is where debate comes in. If there is good discussion before hand, there might not be any need for this. Remember to focus debate and make amendments to speak to specific concerns.

If you believe no discussion is needed, proceed to step 6.

6. 1 a) CALL FOR BLOCKS

b) STATE REASONS FOR BLOCKING

– so that concerns can be brought up and worked through in order to achieve consensus

6. 2 a) CALL FOR STAND ASIDES

b) STATE REASON FOR STANDING ASIDE

– so that potential concerns can be identified and worked through. If there are no blocks, there is still consensus, but it is important to still consider concerns of those who stand aside so that everyone's opinions are heard and taken into account. Also, addressing concerns raised here might make the proposal stronger.

If there are blocks or concerns raised as stand-asides which could be resolved, go back to step 5.

8. CALL FOR SUPPORT

– just to be sure that the lack of blocks means that people are behind the proposal

9. DOUBLE-CHECK THAT TIME-LINES, RESPONSIBILITIES, ETC. ARE DEFINED

MEETING ROLES:

Participant

Everyone present in a consensus environment is a participant and is responsible for the policies, processes and procedures. Though people may have other roles, all participants should be vigilant at self- facilitation

Self-facilitation

Simply put, self-facilitation means taking responsibility for your own participation in a meeting. It is important for everyone to take up as much space as they need *but not more* than that. To self-facilitate means that, without reminders from the facilitator you:

-]] check your ego at the door; you have nothing to prove to yourself or others
-]] engage in the process by paying attention to the discussion and the process throughout the meeting
-]] stay focused and on topic
-]] do not interrupt people as they speak; do not interrupt the agreed upon order of speaking
-]] abide by the procedure and process set out before the group and agreed upon by the group
-]] frame your comments in constructive ways
-]] keep the basis of unity in mind at all times
-]] speak to the issue and the politics of a matter, not to a person
-]] do not repeat what someone else has said
-]] do not rephrase your own points unless people are asking for clarity
-]] are aware of how much time and space you are taking up in comparison with other people
-]] are aware of how your own social location, especially any privilege (such as male or white privilege) that you possess, effects your interactions
-]] are aware of and interrogate your own motivations, participation, assumptions, etc. and be honest with yourself and the group
-]] do not argue merely for the sake of arguing
-]] make choices about what you respond to; speak when an issue is important to you but do not feel that you have to speak to (or argue) every point
-]] speak for yourself, from your own position—don't speak "on behalf of" others; don't presume that your experiences or opinions are universal
-]] make decisions based on the basis of unity
-]] remember that this is about the group, not an individual

What are your self-facilitation skills? What areas do you need to work on?

Facilitator**Role:**

-]] hold people accountable to the agreed-upon group process
-]] ensure full and equitable participation of everyone in the group
-]] keep discussion focused and facilitate decision-making
-]] *direct process, not content*

Responsibilities:

-]] welcome people to the meeting and introduce everyone to the decision-making process, including how people can bring things up for discussion, how people can participate, how decisions are made, etc.
-]] with all present, set the ground rules of the meeting and how the facilitator will encourage people to respect them (i.e. cutting people off who are speaking out of turn; confronting oppressive behaviour, etc.)
-]] plan in advance and facilitate setting the agenda
-]] make sure everyone is clear on what is being discussed at all times by referring to a posted agenda, re-stating proposals and decision-making procedures, etc.
-]] use a variety of methods to create a space in which everyone is able to participate
-]] clearly explain any tools being used to encourage speaking and decision-making
-]] give total and complete attention to each contribution; pull out relevant points if the speaker seems muddy or obscure; try to integrate all contributions
-]] keep discussion on topic, and on time; remind people when they are repeating themselves or others, make sure that one or two people do not monopolize the discussion, and try to focus discussion towards a decision
-]] bring out dissent by calling for objections or concerns, by being aware of body language, by doing go-arounds, etc.
-]] clarify and paraphrase points raised
-]] make sure that all proposals are understood by everyone participating in the meeting.
-]] ensure that decisions are clearly made on each proposal, giving people the chance to express dissent, to block or stand-aside, using clear and agreed-upon process.
-]] hold people accountable to the group basis of unity policies and ground-rules
-]] confront any oppressive behaviour immediately
-]] make sure that any personal conflicts are acknowledged and dealt with when possible
-]] be open to suggestions for process but be confident, firm and consistent in your process
-]] check with yourself or the group that people are understanding what is going on

Things to remember:

Give your complete and total attention to each contribution. Assume there is relevance in every contribution and try to pull it out and help articulate it.

Try to synthesize comments into relevant, comprehensive and clear proposals

Remember and remind people that the goal is to come up with the best decision for the group, not individuals and that people may disagree personally, as long as they believe that the decision best reflects the group.

Be aware of the power you hold as a facilitator and take responsibility for it

The facilitator may pass facilitation to another during the meeting for any reason. It can be difficult to participate a lot when facilitating. For instance, if you have a lot to say about an issue or have the most information about it, you should let someone else facilitate. Also, in the event of a personal conflict or conflict of interest the facilitator should pass on facilitation

People have different learning styles, communication skills, social power, processing speeds, language barriers, etc. Adapt your tools to account for such diversity.

Things to consider during a meeting (add your own)

Are people following what is going on? Does anyone seem lost?

Has everyone been participating in one way or another?

Are there particular dynamics that need to be addressed (one person dominating discussion, etc.)

Does the body language in the room/of a person tell me anything in particular?

Is the discussion focussed? Moving along?

Do people need a break?

Questions to help focus discussion (add your own)

When you find yourself talking in circles and unable to make decisions or take action, consider the following questions one at a time to help narrow down the issue into manageable questions.

What is the actual question/what needs to be decided?

What are the key issues here? Can we break things down to simpler parts?

What do we want the outcome or resolution to be?

What do we need in order to achieve the outcome we want?

What steps do we need to do this/How can we achieve this outcome?

Minute-Taker

Keeping records, including recording decisions, is essential to the sustainability of any group. A minute-taker should:

-]] record who is present and who has sent take notes on the discussion for each item
-]] record specific proposals and be prepared to read them back to help structure discussion
-]] record decisions, including any stand-asides or dissension
-]] record the time-line for action and who is responsible for what?
-]] summarize the decisions and timelines
-]] ensure that minutes and any supplement material get distributed and archived appropriately (could include typing and emailing them out, placing them in binders, etc.)

Other Possible Roles

<p>Preparation Someone other than the facilitator to prepare the agenda, send it out with all reports in advance, perhaps follow up from last meeting to ensure updates are prepared</p>	<p>Back-up or co- facilitator To share the responsibilities of facilitator and/or to be prepared in the event the facilitator can't carry out their responsibilities or is heavily implicated in a particular discussion</p>
<p>Time Keeper Someone other than the facilitator to keep track of the time of the meeting, as well as time spent per discussion item and/or per intervention.</p>	<p>Stack-taker Someone to keep track of who wants to be on the speakers lists, according to the method of speakers list being used.</p>
<p>Mood-minder Someone particularly aware of tensions, boredom, restlessness coming up in the group and suggesting breaks or other interventions as needed</p>	<p>Task-list/Tmelines Somone other than the minute-taker to specifically record tasks, who is responsible and when they shall be reported on or completed, to provide a summary for the end of the meeting and the minutes (as well as to help inform the agenda for the next meeting.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Other roles:</p>	

Tools for Moving Towards Decisions

Speaker's Lists

People must indicate that they want to speak (through raising their hands, etc.). Someone (facilitator or co-facilitator) takes a list of names. No one may speak until called upon.

Rather than simply taking names down in the order in which people raise their hands, an equity speakers' list prioritizes speaking rights in a way that is intended to equalize power imbalances in the room. The most common formats are:

First-time priority. Prioritizes first-time speakers, either for a particular issue or in the meeting as a whole. Generally, 1st time speakers get bumped ahead of people who have spoken before. Sometimes people are not allowed to speak twice to an issue unless everyone else has spoken once. Or people are limited to a certain number of interventions. Less formally, these are things that a facilitator might take into account and employ at will.

Gender parity: Male and female-identified people alternate in speaking priority. This would mean that if there are 4 males on the speaker's list and a female raises her hand, she is bumped up to speak before the 2nd male. Parity would mean that if the genders were reversed, a male could bump a female as well.

Gender-Equity: Allows for more flexibility to the facilitator or speaker's-list taker. Although it would generally alternate male-identified/female-identified, if a number of males have spoken in a row and then a few females raise their hands, the male list might be stopped for a while. Unlike gender parity, gender equity is an explicit means of addressing male-domination in meetings. Clearly this creates complications since folks' gender identities don't conform to either male or female identifications.

Equity Speaker's List uses a more nuanced approach to try to equalize speaking, incorporating both a first-time speakers list and gender equity. As well, the facilitator might prioritize other people who face systemic barriers to expression and participation in meetings. The problem is that no one can ever know everyone else's social identity. It takes a very conscious facilitator who has the general trust of the group to employ such a mechanism; this is much easier to do in smaller meetings

These are imperfect for a number of reasons, including the fact that facilitators often have to make assumptions about a person's gender and other aspects for their identity. One way to combat that is to have one person keep track of male-identified speakers and another track female-identified speakers, and have people raise their hands to one person or another depending on their own self-identity. This generally is only effective in larger meetings, however, and still does not resolve things entirely for a number of reasons, including that fact that many people identify neither as male or female.

Also, none of these mechanisms fully address other dynamics, such as white domination and racism, class, language barriers, etc.

Different systems of oppression play out in different ways and one keystone of patriarchy is that bio men take up more space, have more decision-making authority in general, and are listened to more when speaking and ignore women who speak. This is why gender is a focus on in such lists. But other barriers might be accounted for in a particular setting or discussion.

5-Second Rule

Requires people to pause for 5 seconds before being recognized on the speakers' list or before speaking. People then have a chance to pause and assimilate what has been said. It also allows people who face barriers of language or processing speed the time to catch up to the rest of the group. This is especially important in meetings with translation or interpretation.

Brainstorming

This is pretty self-explanatory. Someone should take notes on a flip-chart. It can be done as a free-for-all or in a go-around. Try to keep it to brainstorming rather than having people responding to points that are made. After the brainstorm, someone usually the facilitator(s) should try to organize the ideas in a way that would make discussion possible, such as grouping similar ideas together, pointing out contradictions, etc. Build on ideas within a brainstorm can be great but can also eliminate the opportunity for other ideas to be raised.

Go-around

Everyone in the room speaks to an issue without interruption or debate between points. It is a mechanism to understand where everyone is on an issue at a particular moment, or to draw out people who are not participating. As it goes on, people do tend to respond to what someone earlier has said or might say things like "I agree with most of what has been said already". To be most effective, however, people should be encouraged to clearly state their own opinions and preferences. For example, rather than saying "I agree with most of what has been said", a person should clearly state the points they agree with, although it is good self-facilitation to not repeat arguments that have already been made. Also, if you need to respond to what someone else has said, for example if they have made a comment that you believe is factually wrong or is oppressive, do so *but* limit your responses to those which are necessary. since a go-around is not a forum for debate. If you need to, you can ask that the group spend time discussing a specific point after the go-around.

Time Limits

Limits on how long any one person can speak help prevent a few people dominating discussion and can also help keep people focused and on track. Limits on how long an item will be discussed or on the meeting as a whole also help keep things focused and are very important for accessibility matters. Whether some people have difficulty concentrating for hours on end or whether people require firm time-lines because they have had to arrange for transportation, child care or other needs that are time-sensitive, most people will have time limits. Establishing them as a group means that the default won't go towards those who are privileged enough to have no time restraints. Time lines can always be revisited if the group wishes.

Feedback

This is essential for any decision. Be sure to self-facilitate and practice good communication skills when offering or accepting feedback. Don't be afraid of conflict or anger but be prepared to work through such things openly and constructively.

Break-out Groups

The meeting breaks off into smaller groups to discuss the matter at hand and come up with some concrete proposals. Especially useful if there are a couple of people in disagreement who need time to process their concerns and see if they can resolve the disagreement.

Fishbowl

When a few people feel very strongly and are divided by an issue, you can give them the space to have a back-and-forth debate for a designated period of time. Others in the group can listen and observe, thus getting a sense of the debate. Although the purpose is not for the dissenting sides to reach consensus during a fishbowl, issues may be cleared up and new ideas may be brought forward. Furthermore, the rest of the group can observe the discussion and dynamic and offer feedback as to how the discussion went.

Visual Aids

Keeping track of what is being said on a flip chart or white-board is useful, especially as a way to organize discussion.

Organizing and refocusing

The facilitator should always be doing this in their head. At times, it is useful to take a short break while the facilitator (possibly with a co-facilitator or minute-taker) looks at the discussion thus far and tries to break it down into specific points that need to be discussed. It is also useful to remind people of what has been decided thus far, so that people don't continue to speak about point that has already been clearly made.

Straw Poll

This is a non binding vote to see where people are at in a quicker way than a go-around. Usually, this will be to determine which the favorite of a number of different proposals is. People will usually be asked to vote in favor of which ever proposal they are in favor of. Often, people can vote for more than one proposal. The proposal with the most votes will be considered first since it is the one with the most support. In consensus, it is important to see if anyone strongly objects to each option as well..

Non-verbal cues...

Though there are many problems with these methods, in terms of what the meanings of such action mean for different people, where the actions come from and who can participate in them, closed groups can devise clear non-verbal ways of indicating consent (or dissent).

These methods can be used as actual decision-makers – similar to raising hands or can also be used during a person's intervention, (like pounding the table saying "hear hear!"), to indicate general agreement with what is currently being said.. It can be useful in giving facilitator and other speakers a sense of general support for an idea, which could speed along the process. But remember that negative indicators given while someone is speaking could be taken personally as well as be very disruptive to someone's train of thought in speaking or listening. It can also be disruptive if people are constantly waving their hands around as someone is trying to speak.

Twinkling is where everyone in agreement with a statement or proposal extends their hands and oscillates their fingers. This is similar to the ASL sign for clapping.

Some groups have pre-printed signs with "YAY" or "I Agree" or something on them that can be flashed.

Another method is calling for a *show of thumbs*:

- Thumbs-up means in support of the idea going forward.

- Thumbs-sideways means that the person does not support the proposal but would not block it. This can either be because someone does not agree with it or if they do not feel they have enough information or if they are ambivalent or indifferent.

- Thumbs-down indicates a block. Essentially, it means that not only do you not support the idea, but you believe it is against the basis of unity and that you question your ability to be in a group that would take such an action

People can also use a thumbs-up to indicate support for something while it is being said. It is useful in that it gives the facilitator and other speakers a sense of general support for an idea which could speed along the process. But no one should thumbs-down a speaker as this could be taken personally. It can also be disruptive if people are constantly waving their thumbs around when someone is trying to speak.

Other Tools:

AGENDA

The following is what an agenda might look like. Come up with a standard format that works for you.

I. Introductions

-]] Introduce facilitator, minute-taker, etc. (if these have not been selected prior to the meeting, they should be selected first).
-]] Facilitator goes over process ground-rules, etc.
-]] Go around of people in attendance. People can say information that pertains to their participation but this should be voluntary. It is a good practice to ask people what pronoun they use for themselves, to ensure that people are addressing each other appropriately.
-]] List people who've sent regrets

2. Setting Agenda

Start with standard items and any items from the last meeting, including updates from action taken on last meeting's decisions, unfinished items from last week, etc.

-]] Add any items which were sent in before the meeting
-]] Open the floor for other items
-]] Prioritize urgent matters or matters that involve people who have to leave early
-]] Set time line for meeting, either firm end-time or a time to assess progress
-]] Read out or write final agenda and make sure there are no objections or concerns.

3. Approval of Last Weeks Minutes

This is not to rehash debate or discuss the decisions but to make sure the official record accurately reflects what people believe happened.

4. Updates/Reports

It is a good idea to go through last weeks minutes before this meeting and pull out what decisions will have updates. List all working groups, committees, etc. that will be reporting back at this meeting.

Each update or report should include: presentation of report/update, Q&A and Business Arising (deal with now or under the "Items of Business")

5. Items of Business

Go through each item one at a time and make decisions. Often, it can help to divide the section into sub-categories, such as *New Business*, (items coming up for the first time at this meeting) *Unfinished Business* (leftovers from previous meetings) and *Business Arising from Updates/Reports*

6. Recap

Go over decisions that were made, including timelines and people who is responsible for what.

7. Announcements

A space to announce anything anyone feels would be relevant or of interest to the group.

8. Next meeting

To make sure you will meet again it is good to set the time place now. If people commit to roles now they can be prepared for the next meeting Make sure someone takes on getting in touch with anyone who wasn't at this meeting, sending out minutes, etc.

9. Closing Comments

Sometimes it is nice to evaluate the meeting quickly. This should not be mandatory- same as opening go-arounds.

FACILITATORS WORKSHEET

<u>Section</u>	<u>What To Include</u>	<u>Potential Problems</u>	<u>Tools I Can Use</u>
INTROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Background - History - Facts 		
GENERAL DISCUSSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ideas - Problems - Thoughts 		
FOCUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify issues - Come up with solutions - Create concrete proposals - Make sure proposals are clear 		
PRIORITIZE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try to reconcile various proposals if possible - Identify proposals with the most support - Debate the proposal with most support - Amend it as possible to account for concerns and critiques 		
CHECK FOR CONSENSUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restate amended proposal that seems to be the strongest - Call for blocks to the proposal - Call for stand asides - List specific concerns that came up from blocks and stand asides and return to FOCUS to try to resolve the issues 		
DECIDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When there are no blocks and no stand asides that need resolution, ask for a show of support to make sure that people are in consensus. 		
TASKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make sure that tasks, timelines, etc. are identified. 		

SAMPLE MINUTE FORMS

Date/Time:
Attendance:
Regrets:

Facilitator:

Minute-Taker:

AGENDA

- 1) Introductions/Opening Remarks
- 2) Approving the agenda
- 3) Summary from last meeting/approval of minutes
- 4) Updates and Reports
 - a) *Item*
 - b) *Item*
 - c) *Etc*
- 5) Items of Business
 - a) *Item*
 - b) *Item*
 - c) *Etc*
- 6) Summary of decisions
- 7) Announcements
- 8) Next meeting
- 9) Closing Comments
- 10) Adjournment

1) **INTRODUCTIONS/OPENING REMARKS** (*make note of any comments, etc.*)

2) **APPROVING THE AGENDA** (*make note of any comments, changes etc.*)

-Agenda was approved with the following ammendments

3) **SUMMARY FROM LAST MEETING/APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

4) **UPDATES AND REPORTS** *(Use this format for each item of business)*

a) *Item*

Presented by:

Summary of presentation *(or get copy from presenter)*

Questions/answers:

BUSINESS ARISING *(once they are identified, they should be discussed and recorded as other items of business shall be)*

5) **ITEMS OF BUSINESS** *(Use this format for each item of business)*

a) *Item*

Proposal/motion:

Summary of presentation and motivation

Questions/answers

Discussion of proposal *(usually not verbatim but a summary of the points for, against, etc...also record any amendments)*

DECISION*(restated proposal with any amendments.)*

Record if the decision passed or was blocked, and record any stand-asides.

Who Is Responsible:

Date To Report Back:

Date To Be Completed:

6. **SUMMARY OF DECISIONS** *(although this happens at the meeting after decisions are made, putting them at the beginning of the typed minutes is helpful when revisiting them.)*

Item a) *title of issue*

DECISION: *(use this format for each decision that was made)*

Who Is Responsible:

Date To Report Back:

Date To Be Completed:

7.) **Announcements**

8) **Next meeting**

DATE/TIME:

LOCATION:

FACILITATOR:

MINUTE-TAKER:

OTHER ROLES:

AGENDA ITEMS:

9) **Closing Comments**

10) **Adjournment** record the *time*

OTHER RESOURCES:

Follow-up Resources

Parliamentary decision-making procedure such as Robert's and Bourinot's rules can be a good resource to draw on for setting your own procedure

Robert's Rules of Order

<http://www.rulesonline.com/rror--00.htm> (though this is a very dated version. *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, take into account phone and on-line conferences.)

Bourinot's Rule of order summary

<http://www.trentradio.ca/governance/bourinots.pdf>

Some of the following provide practical tools or examples of policies that can be considered in your group. Others provide a brief critical analysis of group decision-making and consensus. These resources are by no means comprehensive and I certainly don't agree with everything contained therein. I have provided them to you as a starting point to exploring grassroots, accountable decision-making.

Tools for White Guys who are Working for Social Change and other people socialized in a society based on domination <http://colours.mahost.org/org/whiteguys.html>

Overcoming Masculine Oppression by Bill Moyers

<http://riseup.net/uuignite/article.php?id=39>

Anti-Oppression Principles and Practices By the Unitarian Universalists

<http://riseup.net/uuignite>

But We Don't Have Leaders: Leadership Development & Anti Authoritarian Organizing Chris Crass

<http://colours.mahost.org/articles/crass14.html>

The Tyranny of Structurelessness [revised version] – Jo Freeman

http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/hist_texts/structurelessness.html

On Organization by Tom Wetzel

<http://www.workersolidarity.org/organization.htm>

The following is a list of websites that might be of interest, in no particular order:

<http://colours.mahost.org/>

<http://seedsforchange.org.uk/free/res#grp>

<http://www.zmag.org/forums/consentthread.htm>

<http://www.starhawk.org/activism/consensus-nu.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_decision_making

<http://www.anarres.org.au/essays/amje1.htm#top>

<http://www.iifac.org/fl/fl-2004-06-en.html>

<http://riseup.net/uuignite>

