

## Consensus Decision-Making

### 2.5hrs hours, 10-20 participants

<i>Time</i>	<i>What</i>	<i>Materials</i>
15min	<p><b>Introductions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aims of workshop: understanding of consensus process and how to apply to projects</li> <li>• Facilitation – what it is, what my role is in facilitating the workshop</li> <li>• Go-round: names (if relevant) and what people want out of the workshop -write up</li> <li>• Proposed Agenda – run through and check, adjust if necessary. Explain what agenda is, how to use it for meeting (make visible, vary easy/difficult points, keep focus). Explain Flipchart "for stuff to be discussed later" and how to use it. (eg. Any issues/questions that come up but don't fit in right then – record and deal with at the end of workshop).</li> <li>• We have handouts – take now or later.</li> </ul>	<p>Flip for stuff to be discussed later</p> <p>Proposed agenda written up</p> <p>Handouts</p>
15min  Note: this can easily get out of hand so facilitate tightly.	<p><b>Group Agreement</b></p> <p><b>Explain what it is:</b></p> <p>Group Agreement – The group agrees at the beginning of the meeting what behaviour is acceptable/not acceptable. Can include things like switching off phones, not smoking, one person speaking at a time, no put-downs, respect etc.</p> <p><b>Why use it:</b></p> <p>Reaching a consensus in a group is to a great extent based on good communication – creating an atmosphere where everyone feels they can express themselves and where they can trust that their ideas and concerns are being listened to. Group agreement helps to make this explicit and to remind us.</p> <p>Useful tool at beginning of meetings and as part of welcome pack for new members</p> <p><b>Draw up group agreement:</b></p> <p>Ask people to think for themselves what would make this particular meeting a good space for them. Then take points and write them on flipchart. Clarify each point as you go along.</p> <p>Include: active, listening, respect all opinions, which handsignals to be used, list of things, active participation, no oppressive behaviour, mobile phones off, time keeping.</p> <p>Group Agreement is responsibility of everyone in group. Explain use for setting tone and backing up of facilitators in meetings.</p>	Group Agreement flip

<b>Time</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>Materials</b>
10min	<p>Presentation:</p> <p><b>What is consensus:</b></p> <p>It's about finding solutions that are acceptable to everyone.</p> <p>Brings together the best from everyone's ideas.</p> <p>Dialogue between equals</p> <p>All actively agree to final decision – which makes everyone much more committed to turning it into reality.</p> <p>Participative – requires and encourages everyone to engage – without full participation it ceases to be consensus</p> <p>Co-operate to find win-win solutions for a group's problems</p> <p>Consensus is about making effective decisions</p> <p><b>For consensus to work: 3 sets of skills needed</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Communication Skills (Explaining, Active Listening, Summarising)</li> <li>2) Understanding the consensus process</li> <li>3) Tools for good meetings</li> </ol> <p>Today: 1) and 2)</p> <p>Next week: 3) tools and facilitation</p> <p><b>Any questions?</b></p> <p>Note: people often start asking stuff that will be covered later, so don't get side tracked. It's for clarification only.</p>	<p>Definition flip</p> <p>Components flip</p>
10min Note: tell people when the 3min are up and to swap over	<p><b>1) Communication Skills</b></p> <p><b>Explaining, active listening and summarising</b></p> <p>In pairs of two. Explain how it works and why important skill for meetings. Set question: “Why are you interested in using consensus decision-making? What concerns do you have about it?”</p> <p>Person A has 3 min to talk uninterrupted and without comments. Person B summarises in a few sentences what A said and checks for accuracy. Swap over. Explain that we will feed back reasons to use consensus and concerns later.</p>	<p>Flip with question</p>

<i>Time</i>	<i>What</i>	<i>Materials</i>
15 min	<p><b>Feedback</b></p> <p><b>Bring everyone back into the circle</b></p> <p><b>Ask – how was that?</b></p> <p>Draw out points about how difficult it is to concentrate fully on listening and how tricky it is to remember correctly. These are key skills for consensus.</p> <p><b>Go-round</b></p> <p>Ask people to feed back reasons for using consensus and concerns – ask them to feedback only one reason and one concern each. At end of go-round check whether all got covered.</p> <p>Summarise reasons for using consensus. Acknowledge concerns and point out when/how they will be addressed.</p> <p>Rest of workshop: look at process that helps consensus to work achieve this. Next week look at tools such as facilitation that makes it run smoothly</p>	Empty flip and pens

<b>Time</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>Materials</b>
30mins	<p><b>Presentation Consensus</b></p> <p>Consensus – reach decision that everyone supports or at least can live with. To make this work certain conditions need to be fulfilled:</p> <p><b>Conditions for consensus</b></p> <p><b>Common goal:</b> Everyone at the meeting needs to be united in a clear common goal – whether it's the desire to take action at a specific event, or a shared ethos. Being clear about the shared goal helps to keep a meeting focused and united.</p> <p><b>Commitment to reaching consensus on all decisions:</b> Consensus requires commitment, patience, tolerance and a willingness to put the group first. It can be damaging if individuals secretly want to return to majority voting, just waiting for the chance to say “I told you it wouldn't work.”</p> <p><b>Trust and respect:</b> We all need to trust that everyone shares our commitment, and respects our opinions and equal rights.</p> <p><b>Clear process:</b> Everyone needs to understand the process for making decisions you are using. There are lots of variations of the consensus process, so even if people are experienced in using consensus they may use it differently to you! Explain the process at the beginning of the meeting.</p> <p><b>Active participation:</b> If we want a decision we all can agree on, we all need to play an active role in the decision-making.</p> <p><b>Good facilitation:</b> Facilitation helps to ensure that the group works harmoniously, creatively and democratically. When your group is larger than just a handful of people or you are trying to make a difficult decisions appoint facilitators to help your meeting run more smoothly.</p> <p><b>Q&amp;A's</b></p> <p>Presentation: <b>Process flowchart.</b> when consensus is achieved, testing for agreement</p> <p><b>Tools for each stage: mention examples. Short explanation of facilitation.</b></p> <p>Introduce issue to be decided - presentation  key/issues/clarify question – question and answers  gather initial thoughts and reactions - go-round  collect ideas – brainstorm  broad discussion of ideas – discussion/ pros and cons/ SWOT analysis  amend/refine proposal  test for consensus  implement decision.</p> <p><b>Q &amp;As</b></p>	Various consensus flips

<b>Time</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>Materials</b>
25 mins	<p><b>Practice</b></p> <p>Think of a fairly realistic problem for the group to come to decision on. If it's something that needs deciding (but is not too controversial), that would be a good one.</p> <p>Split people into groups of 5. Ask them to run through the consensus process using the example. Important: focus on following the process, make sure everyone is involved. Don't need to get to a decision by the end. Choose a facilitator that takes you through the different stages of consensus process.</p> <p>15 min</p> <p>Debrief 5 min. in group, then general feedback to large group How was that? Did you follow the process? Did you reach a decision? Was everyone involved? What could be improved?</p> <p>If people want to, it's a good idea to do another example. Or if they are really immersed in the decision-making you could run the first one a bit longer, but interrupt them in the middle and ask them how they are getting on and whether they are following the process. Also good to go round the groups and help them if they are stuck or not using the process.</p>	<p>Empty flips and pens</p> <p>Process flip/flowchart for each group</p>
10-20min	<p><b>List – stuff to be discussed later/Open Discussion slot</b></p>	
10min	<p><b>Evaluation and closing</b></p> <p>Explain why evaluation is important – improve workshop and reflect on what happened</p> <p>go-round each person to say one thing they are taking home from it, one thing in the workshop that worked well and one thing that could be improved about the workshop. Write on flip.</p> <p>Handouts.</p>	<p>Evaluation flips handouts</p>