

Consensus Decision Making Process for Foundation of Sustainable Living

A consensus decision-making process is designed to capture the best wisdom of the group. Decision-making follows a rich conversation that allows the opportunity for the best thinking, from many perspectives to be considered. Although this process has a component of voting, rather than being a competitive win-lose process, it is meant to measure support and to surface any considerations that may have an unintended impact on the desired results.

When agreement is apparent

In the course of conversation, if it becomes apparent that a clear decision is called for, a member of the group can frame a proposal for a decision. If there is no dissent then it is implied that all have agreed. If the decision will be part of the permanent record of the group, such as a new policy, it is wise to write the decision on a board or on paper to be read aloud, so that the explicit wording can be agreed upon.

Using the Consensus Decision Making process

At some point during group conversation when:

- issues get complex and agreement is not apparent or clear
- it seems that there are not many more new ideas coming forth
- someone would like to get a measure of the level of agreement present
- someone is ready to float a proposal for a possible decision or course of action

Any member of the group can suggest the use of the Consensus Decision Making process to check the level of agreement in the group. The person proposing a decision can frame it, (with the help of others if they wish,) and ask where individuals in the group stand by a show of fingers on the proposed decision according to the rating system below.

LEVELS OF ACCEPTANCE (SHOW FINGERS OF A HAND)

Consensus on a decision **can be achieved when all members register an opinion of 1, 2 or 3 fingers** (unless the group wants a higher level of agreement-1's & 2's.)



Yes, I can say an unqualified yes to the decision. The decision is an expression of the wisdom of the group.



Yes, I find the decision perfectly acceptable. I can live with the decision.



Yes, I am willing to support the decision. I do not fully agree with the decision. However, I do not choose to block it, I trust the wisdom of the group.



No, I do not agree with the decision and feel the need to stand in the way of this decision. I still have some questions before I can support it



No, I cannot support this at all. I feel we have no clear sense of unity. We need to do more work before agreement on the decision.

If there are votes of four or five or three (optional) in the group, their reservations are solicited and considered. Further conversation follows, other decisions are to be proposed. This process may be repeated until the group feels that its wisdom is apparent. This process becomes more efficient with familiarity and will lead to more harmonious, well thought out decisions.