

## Attachment One

### Consensus Building Guidelines and Bylines

#### **What do we mean by group consensus?**

##### **Group consensus is reached when:**

- Agree to support the decision, though it may not be their first choice
- Agree to support the decision as if it were their first choice
- Feels as though he/she has had sufficient opportunity to influence the decision
- Yeah, that's consensus!

#### **PAY ATTENTION TO THESE DETAILS:**

1. Try to bring underlying assumptions about the situation into the open where they can be discussed.
2. Listen and pay attention to what others have to say. This is the most important characteristic of successful groups.
3. Be wary of early, quick, easy agreements and compromises. They are often based on false premises that need to be challenged.
4. Avoid competition and arguments. Maintain a focus on what is right, not who is right. When using consensus, the right decision is one that the entire group can support and help implement.
5. Avoid voting. Voting divides the group into winners and losers, and limits discussion.
6. Encourage everyone; particularly quiet individuals, to offer their ideas so that everyone's views are included.
7. Look for the best results to flow from a fusion of information, logic and emotion.
8. Try to honestly listen to alternative ideas and be flexible and open-minded enough to change personal views and positions.
9. Don't get locked into limited alternatives. When there is an argument between alternatives A and B, maybe the group can find an alternative C or D that will satisfy everyone.
10. Use a "facilitative" leadership style that encourages discussion and participation.
11. Record issues, comments and ideas on a chart paper or other visual aid. Don't put names by items as this can increase ownership and shift the focus to "who" is right.

#### **Factors influencing decision-making methods include:**

1. Group size
2. Time
3. Need for buy-in
4. Quality of decision needed
5. Consensus possibility
6. Amount of division on issue
7. Working relations in the group

#### **Consensus works best when:**

1. Group size is small.
2. Time for discussion is plentiful.
3. Need for buy-in is high.
4. Quality of decision must be high
5. Possibility for consensus is high.
6. Expertise on topic exists among group members.
7. Amount of division on issue is not so high that it makes consensus impossible.
8. Working relations in the group make discussion, creativity, and flexibility possible.
9. The group is focused on a shared goal that can help individuals rise above differences.

Note: Decision-making is situational and consensus is not appropriate in all cases.



## **Facilitating Consensus**

### ***How Do I Help A Group Reach Consensus?***

#### **The facilitator is**

Neutral

Focuses on the group process, not content

Keeps the group focused and moving forward

Helps everyone have equal access to the conversation

Does not offer his or her opinion on the issues

