

DECIDE WITH CONSENSUS

COLLABORATION AND WORKING IN GROUPS

THIS TOOL WILL HELP YOU TO:

- ★ make group decisions with support from as many people as possible
- ★ refine project proposals based on input from everyone
- ★ reach a fair decision without getting stuck in disagreement.

HOW TO:

What do you do when your group wants to develop a project proposal? Going straight with the proposal that has the majority may miss a better alternative. The Decide with Consensus tool helps you develop a proposal that everyone supports.

- 1 Discuss a proposal that has been made.
- 2 See if the others in the group support the proposal.

People's answers are more complex than a simple 'yes' or 'no'. They may be supportive, indifferent, tolerant or opposed to a proposal. If someone is opposed, or significant numbers are indifferent, continue with Step 3. Otherwise you can adopt the proposal.

- 3 Everyone in the group needs to explain their reasons for opposing or being indifferent to the proposal.
- 4 Revise the proposal based on everyone's concerns, using group suggestions.
- 5 Repeat Steps 1 to 3 for the revised proposal.
- 6 If consensus on a proposal is not achieved after a reasonable time or several attempts, use the Decide with Dotmocracy tool to choose the most popular proposal from the range that emerged from your attempts at consensus. Or you could use a majority vote.

Active listening, clear thinking, clear speech, an ability to empathise and creativity are important for effective consensus decision making.

In smaller groups consensus doesn't need to be formal. Bouncing an idea around and evolving it to meet everyone's needs through discussion can come naturally.

When you have a large group it helps to use the steps more formally. Pre-determine when to move to Decide with Dotmocracy or voting, and use techniques to ensure all people are heard and their opinions understood.



Does consensus suit your project, group and the situation at hand?

Consensus can be difficult or unneeded if:

- your group doesn't share a vision or values. You may need to create smaller groups.
- you need a decision fast. Use Decide with Dotmocracy or vote sooner.
- the issue is not that important. Don't spend 40 minutes deciding whether lunch should go for 20 or 30 minutes. Flip a coin.
- the group has insufficient information. Obtain more information first.
- the decision doesn't need consensus. We don't always need to do the same thing. Let individuals or subgroups go their own way.
- a group isn't willing or able to communicate and grow. Some groups have underlying tensions and issues that block the empathy, creativity and clarity needed for consensus.

BRING IT TO A MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN MEETING

Report back

Describe the process of using this tool on your project. What insights did you gain? What changes will you make to your project as a result? Did you have any difficulties your Make Change Happen group could advise on? What tips on the tool do you have for your Make Change Happen group?

Practice run

Choose a topic and proposal use Decide with Consensus on. It's best to use an action from your project. However, your Make Change Happen group need to know your enough so they can contribute meaningful insights. An alternative topic could be as simple as 'What restaurant shall we go to?'. You'll need a whiteboard or large piece of butchers paper. Follow the steps and capture any insights generated.

DECIDE WITH CONSENSUS

ACTIVE LISTENING, CLEAR THINKING, CLEAR SPEECH, AN ABILITY TO EMPATHISE AND CREATIVITY ARE IMPORTANT FOR EFFECTIVE CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING.

COMBINE THIS TOOL WITH:

Decide with Dotmocracy

Design a Team Charter

Colours of Empowerment

Give and Receive Feedback

Adapted from: The Change Agency (www.thechangeagency.org)