

How to reach a consensus decision

A consensus decision is one in which everyone, or nearly everyone at a meeting agrees to a decision even though it may not be the best thing for them as individuals. There are no “winners” or “losers” as there are when people vote. If everyone has agreed on a course of action it also means that they are showing active commitment to it.

The stages that are normally used when making a consensus decision are:

Discussion

The issue to be decided is discussed so that people can give information about and their opinions on the topic.

Formation of a proposal

Based on the discussion, a formal proposal on the issue is presented to the group by the chairperson.

Call for agreement

The chairperson of the meeting calls for agreement to the proposal. People must actively show their agreement by raising their hand or a coloured card rather than remaining silent. If people would rather remain anonymous they can put their cards into a box, the contents of which are then counted.

Addressing concerns

If some people do not agree then each of them presents his or her concerns and there is discussion about them. M

Modification of the proposal

The proposal is amended or re-phrased in an attempt to address the concerns of those who disagreed. People are then asked for their agreement to this new proposal.

The cycle is repeated until a satisfactory decision is made.