

ESTABLISHING A DECISION-MAKING PROTOCOL

OVERVIEW

A participatory activity to develop recommendations for the how a group makes decisions.

OBJECTIVES

To become familiar with the types and nature of various decision-making methods.

To make recommendations for the type of decision-making to be used by the group.

TIME REQUIRED

Approximately one hour.

| WHAT | TIME | HOW | MATERIALS |
|--|---------|--|--|
| Step 1: Lecturette | 10 min. | <p>Say to the group, “One of the most crucial tasks for a group is establish a decision-making protocol. Groups feel empowered when members understand how to make decisions. Let’s look at some of the styles of decision making.”</p> <p>Refer to Handout 6D. Tell the group that the style and structures are not mutually exclusive—they can use elements of more than one. Have the group quickly think of some of the advantages and disadvantages of each.</p> | Handout 6D |
| Step 2: Being consultants for our group | 30 min. | <p>Say to the group, “For the next 30 minutes, you are no longer going to be members of this group. Instead, you are going to be consultants, applying what you know and feel about your group. The purpose of this step is to come up with a set of clear recommendations for the decision-making protocol for this group. Make sure that you carefully weigh pros and cons.</p> <p>“Refer to Handout 6D. Record your recommendations on flip chart paper. Select one member of your team to report to the large group about your recommendations.”</p> <p>Split the group into 2 or 3 teams, ensuring diverse representation in each team.</p> | <p>Flip chart paper</p> <p>Markers</p> |
| Step 3: Report out | 15 min. | Give each team 5 minutes to share its recommendations and answer questions. | |
| Step 4: Discussion and decision | 15 min. | <p>Ask the group the following questions:</p> <p>What stands out for you about the presentations? What ideas are you excited about? What ideas make you a little worried? On which things do we seem to agree or disagree? Based on what you heard, what recommendations would you make for our group? What are the next steps that we need to take?</p> | |

STYLES AND STRUCTURES FOR MAKING DECISIONS

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|----------------------------|---|
| Consensus | We probe issues until everyone's opinions are understood, especially opposing opinions. The decision is only made when everyone in the group says that they can live with that decision. |
| Working consensus | We probe issues until everyone's opinions are understood, especially opposing opinions. The decision is made when two-thirds of the group says they can live with that decision. |
| Democratic | We discuss the options sufficiently that people understand the consequences of the majority vote. We establish the ground rule that losers support the decision, even though it was not their choice. Then we vote and count. |
| Advisory group | We appoint a group of experts to either make decisions for the group or make recommendations on decisions. |
| Leadership Team | We form a subgroup that represents the whole group. This group makes decisions. |
| Weighted | When we make a decision, some members' voices and opinions are given more weight than other members' voices. |
| Organizational veto | If one group disagrees with a decision, it can pull out of that activity. The next time we make a decision, they are part of it. |

(Segments adapted from *The Collaboration Handbook*, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1997)



RESOURCES ON POWER SHARING AND YOUTH DECISION MAKING

Referring back to page 16, the chart that shows the phases of youth/adult partnerships, the last phase relates to young people's participation in the process of making decisions. When young people and adults work in equal partnership, a logical step is to include young people at the tables where decisions are being made. Youth are members of City Councils, boards of non-profit organizations, and program management teams.

In this tool kit, we do not include resources, activities and tools for youth in decision making, because so many excellent ones have already been created. There exists a movement in many youth and community organizations to promote this concept.

Publications and resources

University of Vermont Cooperative Extension System. *Guide to Making Group Decisions*.
Order at <http://ctr.uvm.edu/ctr/pubs/popular2.htm#cred>.

K.S. Young and J. Sazama. *14 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision Making*. Somerville, MA: Youth on Board, 1999.
Available by calling (617) 623-9900, or at www.youthonboard.org

Community Partnerships with Youth, Inc. *Youth in Governance, Youth as Trustees, and Youth as Philanthropists*—three training resources for involving young people in real ways in organizations and communities.
Available at www.cpyinc.org

W. S. Lesko and E. Tsourounis, II. *Youth! The 26% Solution*. Kensington, MD: Activism 2000 Project, 1998.
Available through Activism 2000 Project, (800) KID-POWER, www.youthactivism.com.

S. Zeldin, et. al. *Youth in Decision Making: A Study of the Impacts of Youth on Adults and Organizations*. Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council, 2000.
Available at www.fourhcouncil.edu/cyd or innovation@fourhcouncil.edu.