

DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

An agreement about how decisions will be made and commitment to abide by decisions that are made through that process is critical. Below are some options or the group can determine its own process.

San Diego Grantmakers encourages a consensus-building process that ensures all voices are heard, offers an option to dissent without blocking, and supports positive progress towards goals. A consensus decision is one that is acceptable to all, even if it is not everyone's first choice.

Some Tools to Assess Consensus

No objections: Each decision is presented clearly to the group; all participants are given an opportunity to voice and discuss objection. If none exist, the proposal moves forward. Note: this requires that trust has been established among group members to ensure that the invitation to voice dissent is one that will be used.

Fist of Five: Following discussion, a proposal is presented and those present vote, simultaneously, with their fingers, showing a score of 1-5. If anyone indicates a 1 or 2, they are invited to explain their view.

- 1: Strongly dissent. I will not agree to this option. If any one person shows a '1' the group must resume discussion, divert the problem to a sub-group, or take some other course
- 2: I have some concerns, but I think we can resolve them with more discussion
- 3: I will support the idea, but I have some concerns or I'm right in the middle
- 4: Agree
- 5: Strongly agree! I'll champion this idea

Thumbs: To assess readiness to vote or to get a quick sense of agreement

Thumb up: agree or ready to vote

Thumb sideways: neutral/not blocking or need more information

Thumb down: disagree or not ready to vote

Other Options

RAPID® decision making ([described here](#)) allows input from numerous individuals but assigns decision-making to an individual or small group. This may be appropriate in some cases, but be open and intentional with the authority assigned to the decision-maker and potential for alienation of others.

Majority voting is most appropriate for making a decision between consensus-supported options. In cases where one option has opposition, it ignores the possibility of compromise and sets up one or more factions as losers.

- **Simple majority:** on a vote between options, if more than half of those present votes the same way, their preference prevails

Super majority: on a vote between options, if more than a pre-determined percentage (>50%, usually 67%) vote the same way, their preference prevails