Decision Making Protocol: Consensus

Purpose
A group might use this protocol to decide on specific changes to prioritize or to make a decision about important team logistics. Teams might also use this to solve specific problems such as where to allocate funds, the mission or vision of the group, and group membership.

Audience: This activity can be used with a group of any size and can be done with youth and adults. Note that it is more difficult to come to a consensus with larger groups. A possible modification is to break into smaller groups to work on different decision points.

Suggested Time: 1-2 hours

Facilitator note: This activity should take place in a space where group agreements have been established. You also need to make sure you decide on a way to establish criteria for selecting solutions. This could be done by voting, using "fist to five" or an effort/impact graph, etc. This is important to establish before you begin this protocol.

Time	Activity
2 min	*We are now going to take a few minutes to assign roles for the meeting. Roles are important because they help us clearly define who is going to do what. It will also help us keep track of time AND keep a record of the next steps. The facilitator will help us move the meeting along; the notetaker will ensure important points are recorded in this agenda; and the timekeeper will remind us of how much time we have for each section. Are there any volunteers for the facilitator? Notetaker? Timekeeper?* **Facilitator:**　　　　**Notetaker:**　　　　**Timekeeper:**
1 min	**Reminder of Goals of the Meeting:** *To orient everyone to today's goals. Also, let's take a quick look at the agenda. Are there any concerns or wonderings about the schedule?* ● Clarify the problem ● Brainstorm solutions to the problem ● Come to a consensus on the best option to move forward
2 min	**Agreements** *I'd love for you all to quietly read our agreements. And, while you are reading I'm going to ask you to pick one agreement you would like to focus on today.* ● *Add Agreements

COMMUNITY
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5 min	**Name the Problem, Topic, or Issue** *The problem we are going to focus on today is _____. We will spend some time understanding the problem as a group, brainstorming possible solutions to this problem, and then coming to a consensus on one solution to try out over the coming weeks.*
5 min	**Clarifying Questions** *To start, are there any clarifying questions about the problem/topic/issue? As a reminder, a clarifying question elicits a brief, factual answer.* Facilitator note: 5 minutes is suggested, but adjust this if needed.

10 min	**Probing Questions**
	
	We will now transition into probing questions. As a reminder, probing questions are intended to help the presenter think more deeply about the issue at hand. A few question frames for probing questions might be:
	
	    ● *Why do you think this is the case?*
	    ● *What would have to change in order for _____?*
	    ● *What's another way you might _____?*
	    ● *How is _____ different from _____?*
	    ● *What sort of an impact do you think _____?*
	    ● *What was your intention when _____?*
	
	Facilitator note: Probing questions can be hard for folks to ask if they don't have prior experience. Consider [offering this tool](#) for participants to use during this time.

10 min	**Further Discussion** *Now we can open the floor up to a general discussion about the problem/topic/issue. Are there any additional thoughts or wonderings?*

15 min	**Brainstorm solutions**
	
	Unless there are any more questions or ideas, let's transition to brainstorming solutions. I'm sure many of you are at the point of wanting to offer ways we could address the problem/topic/issue so let's jump in. We will have three minutes to individually brainstorm solutions. During this time let's think about the rules of brainstorming! Go for quantity, defer judgment, stay on topic, be visual, build on others' ideas, one idea at a time, and we encourage wild and divergent ideas, too! Once we've had time individually brainstorm we will then share out in rounds.
	
	    ● Team brainstorms different ways to address the problem, topic, or issue
	    ● Suggested format:
	        ○ 3 min, individual brainstorming
	        ○ 12 min, team share-outs in rounds
	
	Let's now share our ideas in rounds. We will go around the group once and then open the floor up for everyone to jump in and share their ideas.

5 min	**Establish Criteria for Sorting Solutions** *We will now review how we are going to decide on the solution. We will use _____ as our criteria for deciding on a solution. Are there any wonderings before we begin?* Facilitator note: As mentioned at the start of this document you need to have sorting criteria for this protocol. - Present group with different ways of sorting or rating possible solutions. - Voting, decision grid (effort/impact), "fist to five," "hearts and stars," etc.
5-30 min	**Vote or Engage in Longer Process** *Now that we've established how we will collectively make the decision we will now spend the time needed to come to a consensus.* Facilitator note: spend the time needed to make a decision. This time could take anywhere between 5-30 minutes.
10 min	**Clarify/Address Disagreement** Facilitator note: It's important to clarify and/or address any disagreement during this process. You can do this as a separate section or it can be integrated into the above voting/engagement process. You can use the following prompts to help: "What would it take you to move to a 3 (or vote yes)" "What are your main areas of concern?" "What are you wondering at this point?" "What is needed at this point for us to move forward?" A decision is not ratified until everyone agrees.
5 min	**Closing and Next Steps** *Deep appreciation to all for joining today and collectively supporting this process. We have indicated clear next steps and I will now read those out so everyone is on the same page.* (Read the next steps). *We will update all participants related to these next steps and anything else that comes from this decision. Before we close we would love for folks to share and pluses or deltas (changes) related to this meeting.* Facilitator note: Close out the meeting with CLEAR next steps related to the decision - who will do what and by when? Have everyone circle up and express plus/deltas and appreciations for the meeting.