

Bilag 3 – appendix 3: Decision making

Consensus introduction

Consensus enables a group to **share power** - everyone who is fundamentally affected by a decision can work together to find solutions that meet everyone's needs. It's about working with each other rather than for or against each other.

It helps to build a **stronger community**. Consensus relies on us respecting other people's needs and opinions, and being open and honest about our own needs. This in turn leads to better relationships in a group.

Making better decisions: Consensus is looking for 'win-win' solutions that are acceptable to all. That doesn't mean everyone has to completely agree on their favourite solution all the time – but nor should anyone have to compromise too much. The idea is to weave together all the best ideas and address all the key concerns to find something that works for everyone - a process that often results in surprising and creative solutions, inspiring both the individual and the group as a whole.

Getting things done: When everyone agrees with a decision they are much more likely to implement it. In the long run, people are also more likely to stay involved in a group that is committed to hearing their views and meeting their needs.

Consensus in Friskoven

Consensus is defined as a style of decision making whereby participants are able to arrive at a decision through discussion in which all participants' viewpoints are considered, the final decision is agreeable to all involved.

Consensus is an agreement to reach agreement. If a person does not agree he/she must be at work with an alternative proposal. Consensus is not to be used as a veto or as an obstruction of business.

We take decisions in Friskoven only on topics that are on the agenda for the meeting, 24 hours before the meeting.

If no consensus is found during the meeting, and there is still need for another attempt to make a decision on the topic, it can be put on the agenda for the next meeting. If there is still no consensus found after this second round, voting can take place as described in the articles of association.

Step by step

Start by **introducing and clarifying the issue**. This ensures that everyone has the relevant background information and the group is clear about the remit of the discussion and key questions to resolve.

It can be tempting to launch straight into problem solving. However, a key stage in consensus is **opening out the discussion**.

Once you've got a good understanding of what is important to people, you can collect and **explore all the ideas** for moving forward. Looking at the pros and cons of different ideas helps the group with really understanding everyone's key needs and concerns.

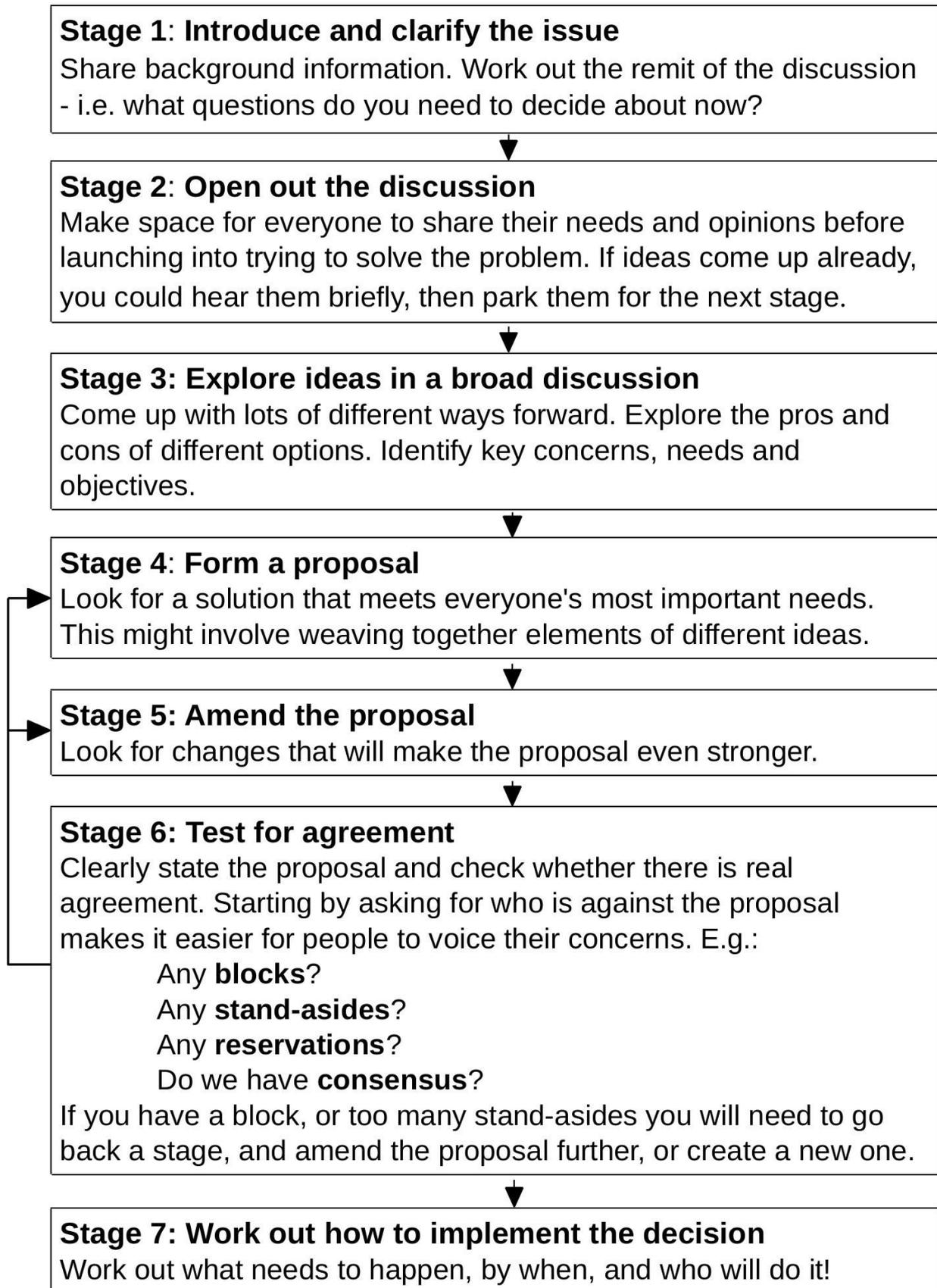
The group then looks for common ground and weeds out some of the options, combining all the useful bits into a **proposal**.

Clarifying and **amending the proposal** helps to address any remaining concerns.

Test for agreement by clearly stating the final proposal and asking people to signal whether they agree or disagree. This stage is important to check if there are concerns that haven't been heard. If you don't have consensus go back to an appropriate earlier stage in the process.

Finally work out how to **implement** the decision. Making sure group decisions are acted on is essential for building trust in your meetings.

Consensus visualized



Agreement and disagreement

There are many different reasons why someone might not agree with a proposal. For example you might have fundamental issues with it and want to stop it from going ahead, or you might not have time to implement the decision or the idea just doesn't excite you.

Consensus decision-making recognises this – it's not trying to achieve unanimity but looks for a solution that everyone involved is OK with. Not all types of disagreement stop a group from reaching consensus. Think about it as a spectrum from completely agreeing to completely objecting to a proposal.

The words used to describe the different types of agreement and disagreement need to be clear. Here is a common set of options:

- Agreement with the proposal
- Reservations
 - Stand Aside
 - Block

Agreement with the proposal: 'I support the proposal and am willing to help implement it.'

Reservations: You are willing to let the proposal go ahead but want to make the group aware you aren't happy with it. You may even put energy into implementing it once your concerns have been acknowledged.

Stand aside: You want to object, but not block the proposal. This means you won't help to implement the decision, but you are willing for the group to go ahead with it. You might stand aside because you disagree with the proposal, or you might like the decision but be unable to support it because you don't have the time or energy.

Block: A block always stops a proposal from going ahead. It expresses a fundamental objection. It isn't "I don't really like it," or "I liked the other idea better." The group can either start work on a new proposal, or look for amendments to overcome the objection.

It is important that the person who blocks actively works to find a solution that suits all, and he/she can present his alternative at the next meeting.

Appendix 3

In an ideal consensus process a block wouldn't happen since any major concerns about a proposal should be addressed before the decision stage. However, sometimes people aren't able to express their concerns clearly enough, or aren't heard by the group. In such situations the block acts as a safeguard to ensure that decisions are supported by everyone.

Being able to block is an integral part of consensus, but it comes with a big responsibility. A block stops other people from doing something that they would like to do, and it should therefore only be used if serious concerns are unresolved.

