

How Do We Make Decisions?

One of the first decisions of your partnership should be *deciding how you will decide*. Teams often resort to some variation of head nodding, but when the decision is more deliberate, choose either a voting or consensus process. Voting is popular because it is a commonly understood process; consensus means that all team members agree to support the decision, even if it is not everyone’s ideal choice. Although the technique is useful for bringing together representatives from different stakeholder groups, the larger the group, the more difficult it is to reach consensus.

Use the chart below to help you determine which method is best for your partnership. You may also incorporate use of both voting and consensus: e.g. voting for most decisions, but consensus for decisions involving the expenditure of funds, adoption of policies.

Decision-Making Method	Voting	Consensus
Description	Decision determined by majority (must first define majority)	Every partner voices position All team members agree to support the decision
Pros	Familiar, time-honored, efficient. Considered "fair" by most. Useful when time constraints make reaching consensus difficult	Ensures buy-in of all members which increases the likelihood of success Input from all perspectives produces benefits
Cons	Does not necessarily include discussion of minority opinions May not encourage full-group interaction Creates winners and losers.	Time consuming, difficult Often contentious Sometimes tedious
Variations	Majority-more than half support decision Plurality-large block of members support decision Range Voting-each member scores each option; the option with the highest average score	Hand Signals: e.g. Thumbs Up, Fist-to-Five Red/Yellow/Green Colored Cards "Dotmocracy"
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