

## PATHWAY TO CONSENSUS

Updated 2017

- I. An individual brings up an issue
  - A. to the appropriate team if one exists
  - B. to the Process Team
    1. or the Board of Directors to help find the proper place
  - C. to Community Forum to discover if there is enough support for an ad hoc team.
  
- II.
  - A. A preliminary discussion is held
    1. Salon – discussion with no decisions, referred elsewhere if desired by the group.
    2. Workshop – information in more depth
    3. Seminar – outside expert
    4. Plenary discussion of values as feedback to ad hoc team.
  - B. The topic is assigned to a team or elsewhere
  
- III. The team or group explores the issue and decides on a course of action, then brings it back to the full group as one of the following:
  - A. workshop
  - B. discussion
    1. discussion as designed by the facilitator and the presenter
    2. for feedback to team
  - C. other
    1. report
    2. action not needing group time
    3. other
  - D. proposal
    1. it is put out on e mail to the group 3 days in advance of the meeting
    2. it follows the steps below during the meeting
      - a. introduce proposal
      - b. clarifying questions
      - c. check to see if proposal is aligned with the mission and vision statements
      - d. general discussion
      - e. review our values and what is important
      - f. identify concerns
      - g. seek possible solutions
      - h. resolve concerns, modify proposal if necessary
      - i. call for consensus
  
- IV. In a show for consensus, the membership may
  - A. Agree
  - B. Block: “The decision to block consensus is a momentous one. If you as an individual block a decision that the rest of the group supports, you are saying that you feel the decision is so seriously wrong for the community that you will not permit the group to proceed on it.”
    1. The dissenter's responsibilities:
      - a. to clearly explain his/her reasons for blocking
      - b. to continue to communicate and listen to others
      - c. to remain open to input from others

- d. to work to make sure the group fully understands and considers his/her concerns
- e. to consider the needs of the whole group separately from his/her own needs and opinions. What is best for the group may be different from what is best for the individual.
- f. to only block when he/she believes the decision goes against the values of the group and not for personal reasons, and to consider “stand-aside” as an alternative action.

2. The group's responsibilities:

- a. to listen and carefully consider the objections being raised
- b. not to blame or intimidate the minority viewpoint, but to treat the blocker with respect
- c. to respond in a thoughtful way, seeking greater understanding and creative solutions
- d. not to listen for the “weak” point of his/her objection, but rather that everyone comes to the process with a different but equally valid perspective of “truth.”
- e. If the blocker can not demonstrate to the rest of the group how the decision goes against the values of the group, then the rest of the group may over-ride the block.
- f. to consider alternative courses of action: i.e., delay the decision, meet in subgroups to further work on the proposal, take a break from the discussion, find a temporary solution.

C. Stand aside:

- 1. The participant does not personally agree with the decision, but is willing to let the group make the decision.
- 2. His/her reservations are recorded in the minutes
- 3. He/she may request that the decision not be considered as a precedent that will influence future decisions.
- 4. He/she can opt not to participate in the implementation

D. The group does not agree, which may or may not require further action, and/or a return to a team

V. Implementation: If a decision requires an action:

A. The team or individual can request time to fill out an implementation form (see addendum). The form can be started during the meeting time to provide the team with clear guidelines as to expectations. The team will finish the report with specific tasks and assignments.

B. The form is then posted on e mail.

C. The membership can respond on e mail.

D. Periodic reports are made on e mail as needed.

E. Outcome/reward

- 1. If the job remains incomplete, the membership is informed and may
  - a. re-evaluate the priority of the action
    - 1. agree to look at it at a later date
    - 2. kill it
    - 3. re-assign it
    - 4. other

2. Appreciation and celebration of completion of job

VI. Evaluation and follow-up

ADDENDUM: IMPLEMENTATION FORM

Action Requested (brief description): \_\_\_\_\_

Desired Results (end Product) \_\_\_\_\_

Guidelines: specific instructions from team or member \_\_\_\_\_

Resources Needed:

a. financial \_\_\_\_\_

b. human \_\_\_\_\_

c. technical expertise \_\_\_\_\_

d. other \_\_\_\_\_

Task list

Task

Responsible Person

Targeted Date

Report Back to Group