



## Overview



**Topic:** Group decision-making models

**Audience:** Individuals, adolescent through adult. Having a group of at least 12-15 helps.

**Conceptual Objective:** Participants will understand multiple models for decision making. They will understand that the process for making the decision is just as important as the decision itself. Each model will include the group in different ways, and will emphasize different parts of the process.

**Experiential Objective:** Participants will get the chance to consider different decision making processes and try one. Participants will come away with an understanding of how and when each can be most applicable.

**Facilitator Prep:** Review the handout, perform as many of the exercises as you can, and assess your own comfort directing a group through new decision making processes. Consider how you tend to make decisions. Also consider your leadership style. How will your inclinations interact with the models?

**Related Content:** This exercise is best when included as part of a broader training on teamwork, group development, interpersonal growth, etc.

**Materials:** Pen and paper, paper charts around the room, markers (different colors) or stickers (different colors), and attached handout.

## Procedure

### INTRODUCTIONS (3 MIN)

- ❑ Facilitators introduce selves, participants introduce self to neighbor.

### OPENING (5 MIN) (SET THE STAGE, INTRODUCE THE TOPIC)

- ❑ We make quick decisions every day: what to eat for breakfast, what you're wearing today, etc, but those are all individual decisions. Making a group decision can be a much more complicated process.
- ❑ Sometimes groups fall into a decision-making model, rather than choosing one. Often groups default to a majority rule process because it's what's most familiar, not because it's what will work best. In choosing a process, it can be helpful to make explicit that decision-making models have cultural contexts, and processes based in majority rule reflect the norms of the current dominant culture. Groups engaged in work with ethnically and racially diverse people can consider the cultural makeup of their group and the decision-making style most comfortable to this group. For example, if members of Native communities bring a cultural practice of talking circles to group process, a consensus decision-making model may be a particularly congruent decision-making model.
- ❑ This workshop provides a few different options for group decision making. There are models that suit a variety of situations, including ones that allow for discussion and group conversation, ones that emphasize efficiency, and so on. Using a scenario, we will try out a few different decision-making approaches, beyond majority rule, to explore the pros and cons of each and increase the tools in your toolbox.

### INTRODUCE THE SCENARIO & MODELS (10 MIN)

#### Scenario 1:

*(Facilitator note: You can choose another issue area relevant to your group.)*

You are one of five committed members of a student group organized to support first-generation Latinx college students on your campus. In past years, this has been a powerful student organization. Key leaders have graduated in recent years, however, and many of your potential members seem more interested in programming hosted by another student group focused on Latinx students overall. As you begin a new semester, your first event – a potluck – had very low turnout. This has been an ongoing trend. You've gathered together with the other core members to discuss what to do. You've generated 3 possible options: 1) merging with the other Latinx student group, 2) going all-in for one year to increase involvement in your group, 3) accepting that you're a small group right now and waiting it out until new leadership and interest surfaces in the future.

Here are three possible ways to make this decision:

### Traditional Consensus

- Invite each person to share their thoughts on the issue/decision
- Propose one option that seems most agreeable to all
- Discuss whether everyone agrees
- Those who disagree raise their concerns
- They can request modifications to the proposal, choose to stand aside (abstain), or block the decision from going forward
- With modifications, the group discusses the proposal again.
- The decision can be finalized when everyone either supports or stands aside. It cannot proceed if someone blocks.

### Fist to Five

- Fist – do not like
- 1 finger – mostly don't like or not participating in the vote.
- 2 fingers – don't like it that much, but will go along with the group
- 3 fingers – in between
- 4 fingers – Fine.
- 5 fingers – All for it.

### 100 Votes (10 MIN)

- Each person has 100 votes, and can distribute their votes however they wish. They can give all of their votes to one, or none. They can split their vote 60-40 or 26-74.
  - Many end up giving their votes to the sole option that they believe is the best option
  - Each person should have a distinct method of marking their votes (to simplify the counting process). This could be different colors of stickers or markers, or different shapes.
- Tally the votes. Note the number of people who voted and how many collective votes were counted. Allow time for visual processing of the information.
- Ask for the group's feedback on what they're looking at.
- Based on the feedback, create an action plan.

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (5 MIN)

- In groups of 2 -4, assign each group to discuss this scenario and make a case for one assigned decision-making mode, including costs and benefits of your model.

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION (15 MIN)

- Share out to the full group: What is the case for your model, and what are the costs and benefits of your model?

### ROLE PLAY: FIST TO FIVE FOR SCENARIO (20 MIN)

- Facilitator of this workshop will facilitate the role play decision process.
- Invite open discussion on the scenario options.
  - Propose one option that seems most agreeable to all.
  - Have everyone show , using fist-to-five, their level of support.

- ❑ If low support, propose another option. If high support, those who disagree raise their concerns.
- ❑ They can request modifications to the proposal, choose to stand aside (1 finger), or block the decision from going forward (fist).
- ❑ With modifications, the group does show of hands, using fist-to-five, to display level of support.
- ❑ The decision can be finalized when everyone either supports or stands aside. It cannot proceed if someone blocks (fist).
- ❑ Run the scenario for 20 minutes. Even if group has not reached consensus, stop and debrief.

### DEBRIEF (5 MIN)

Write down your impressions of this exercise.

- ❑ Is this inclusive enough? Explain.
- ❑ What are the positives? What are the negatives?
- ❑ Does this method accurately represent the group decision?
- ❑ How do you see yourself using this method?
- ❑ Are there ways that this method could be improved?

### DECIDING WHO DECIDES (15 MIN)

Not all situations require input from everyone in the group. Group processes takes time, and forward progress can be slowed if every decision is made collectively. Before deciding on a group decision making model, you may need to determine whether a group decision is actually required, or if an individual can make the decision. Here is one situation where the group isn't yet sure how involved everyone needs to be:

#### Scenario 2:

A new semester has just started. You are college students and your professor has just told you she would like your help in creating the syllabus. She explains that this is a capstone class, and she wants you to have ownership and stake in this class. She explains that you as students can have as much or as little ownership in crafting the syllabus as you collectively decide. She then proposes this model to make the decision.

"Deciding Together" was developed by Minnesota Campus Compact staff from a variety of publicly available workshops. Content includes: Vroom-Yetten from a blog post by Ava Butler (<http://www.avasbutler.com/ten-techniques-to-make-decisions-1-vroom-yetten-decision-making-model/#.WBNI9k0rKM8>); 100 Votes from a blog post by Ava Butler. (<http://www.avasbutler.com/ten-techniques-to-make-decisions-5-one-hundred-votes/#.WBNI500rKM8>); and Fist to Five was adapted from NASCO's Fist to Five Activity (<https://www.nasco.coop/sites/default/files/srl/Fist%20to%20Five%20as%20Voting.pdf>); Framing Ideas adapted from Susan Gust—[susanangust@gmail.com](mailto:susanangust@gmail.com)

We welcome your suggestions for improving this guide further for future trainings. We also welcome you to use it and adapt it for your own trainings, subject to the restrictions below.

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One possible approach:

The Vroom-Yetten Decision Maker is a framework by which everyone includes their input on who should be involved in making the decision. This is most useful when groups want to delegate leadership but also keep others involved.

#### ❑ Categories

- A1 – The leader makes a decision by themselves
- A2 – Casual input group, but leader still makes the decision
- C1 – The leader formally requests input. This could be one-on-one meetings, by email etc. The leader does make the decision independently.
- C2 – The leader holds all-group meetings to gain input; they discuss as a group, collectively, individual makes the decision
- G2 – The leader holds a group to discuss the issue and the **group** makes the decision.

In order to make the decision, the group can use any of the consensus tools we already explored.

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS (5 MIN)

In groups of 2 -4, discuss this scenario and make a recommendation for which category of decision-making you would recommend for this scenario. Include costs and benefits of your model.

### LARGE GROUP DISCUSSIONS (5 MIN)

- ❑ Share out to the full group: What is your recommendation and what are the costs and benefits of your model?
- ❑ What are other types of situations where you'd want to delegate decision-making?

### CLOSING (5 MIN)

- ❑ Going around circle, ask each participant to share one word reflecting how they are feeling now. Ask participants to please complete the evaluation for this workshop.

# Handout: Deciding How to Decide

## Scenario 1:

*(Facilitator note: You can choose another issue relevant to your group.)*

You are one of five committed members of a student group organized to support first-generation Latinx college students on your campus. In past years, this has been a powerful student organization. Key leaders have graduated in recent years, however, and many of your potential members seem more interested in programming hosted by another student group focused on Latinx students overall. As you begin a new semester, your first event – a potluck – had very low turnout. This has been an ongoing trend. You've gathered together with the other core members to discuss what to do. You've generated 3 possible options: 1) Merging with the other Latinx student group, 2) Going all-in for one year to increase involvement in your group, 3) Accepting that you're a small group right now and waiting it out until new leadership and interest surfaces in the future.

## Scenario 2:

A new semester has just started. You are college students and your professor has just told you she would like your help in creating the syllabus. She explains that this is a capstone class, and she wants you to have ownership and stake in this class. She explains that you as students can have as much or as little ownership in crafting the syllabus as you collectively decide. She then proposes this model to make the decision.

## Traditional Consensus

- Invite each person to share their thoughts
- Propose one option that seems most agreeable to all
- Discuss whether everyone agrees
- Those who disagree raise their concerns
- They can request modifications to the proposal, choose to stand aside (abstain), or block the decision from going forward
- With modifications, the group discusses the proposal again.
- The decision can be finalized when everyone either supports or stands aside. It cannot proceed if someone blocks.

## Fist to Five

- Select one person to tell a second story (in the same vein.)
  - Fist – do not like
  - 1 finger – mostly don't like or not participating in the vote.
  - 2 fingers – don't like it that much, but will go along with the group
  - 3 fingers – in between
  - 4 fingers – Fine.
  - 5 fingers – All for it.

## 100 Votes

- Each person has 100 votes, and can distribute their votes however they wish. They can give all of their votes to one, or none. They can split their vote 60-40 or 26-74.
- Many end up giving their votes to the sole option that they believe is the best option
- Each person should have a distinct method of marking their votes (to simplify the counting process). This could be different colors of stickers or markers, or different shapes.
- Tally the votes. Note the amount of people who voted, and how many collective votes were counted. Allow time for visual processing of the information.
- Ask for the group's feedback on what they're looking at.
  - What surprises you about these results?
  - What did you expect?
  - Are you as a group ready to move on from some of the options?
- Based on the feedback, create an action plan.

## Vroom—Yetten Decision Maker

The Vroom-Yetten Decision Maker is a framework by which everyone includes their input on who should be involved in making the decision. This is most useful when groups want to delegate leadership but also keep others involved.

### Categories

- A1 – The leader makes a decision by themselves
- A2 – Casual input by employees or group input, but leader still makes the decision
- C1 – The leader formally requests input. This could be one-on-one meetings, by email etc. The leader does make the decision independently.
- C2 – The leader holds all-group meetings to gain input; they discuss as a group, collectively, individual makes the decision
- G2 – The leader holds a group to discuss the issue and the **group** makes the decision.



# Survey for "Deciding Together" Workshop

Thank you for taking time to attend this Civic Agency workshop. We are very interested in receiving your feedback. (Alternatively, you may also complete this survey online at <http://tinyurl.com/ja28zek>). If you have participants complete evaluations on paper, please scan them and send them to [info@mncampuscompact.org](mailto:info@mncampuscompact.org).

## Your information

**Primary Role:** Student, Faculty, Staff, Administrator, Community Organization Staff, AmeriCorps/VISTA

**Institution** (College, University, Organization):

**Date:**

**Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following about your experience with the Civic Agency workshop you participated in.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
I feel capable of using the tools and exercises I learned about					
The tools and exercises I learned about are valuable					
I increased my confidence in my own ability to lead					
I gained useful leadership skills, strategies, or insights					
I learned about new leadership tools or resources					
I developed new or deeper connections with others					
I both learned from and contributed to the learning of others					
Other participants in the workshop helped me see things from a different perspective					

**Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with each of the following statements about yourself before the workshop**

## Before the Workshop

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I understood my own identities and cultures										
I understood how identities and culture matter in social/community change work										
I understood how I connect with social issues on a personal level										
I was aware of strategies for fostering collaboration in diverse groups										
I was aware of strategies for effectively leading others										
I was aware of strategies for developing an action plan for social/community change										
I believed I had power to address social/community										



Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with each of the following statements about yourself now:

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>After the Workshop</b>										
I understand my own identities and cultures										
I understand how identities and culture matter in social/community change work										
I understand how I connect with social issues on a personal level										
I am aware of strategies for fostering collaboration in diverse groups										
I am aware of strategies for effectively leading others										
I am aware of strategies for developing an action plan for social/community change										
I believe I have power to address social/community issues										

Is there anything you would like to tell us about your experience with the workshop?