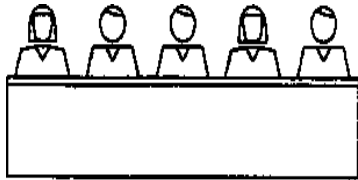


New
Jersey **4-H**

Leader Training Series



Decision Making by Consensus



Groups can make decisions in many ways. Two of the most common methods are voting to determine a majority rule and consensus.

The way a group makes decisions greatly influences how people feel about the group and how well the group members support a decision.

If the decision made by the group is liked by the members, they feel as though they have 'won'. If the members do not like the decision, they will feel as though they have 'lost'. A good decision for the group is one that is understood, carried out, and supported by its members.

The term consensus means that the entire group supports the decision. Consensus decision making is a cooperative team-effort process of selecting options that are liked, understood, supported and carried out by a group.

Consensus decision making can be used by all varieties of 4-H groups: general membership, committees, executive boards, etc. Refer to *Running a Smooth Business Meeting*.

Steps in the Decision Making Process

1. Identify the problem, situation, or issue that needs a decision.
2. Brainstorm a list of alternatives. (*See back of this page for explanation of brainstorming.*)
3. Test each alternative. What would happen if....? Choose a member to record the results of the testing. **Caution: Remind the 4-H youth that only the alternative solution is being evaluated, not the person who made the suggestion.** Change, rewrite, or discard the alternatives.
4. Take the list of rewritten, and/or saved alternatives to the problem where everyone can see them. Use group discussion as the process for ranking the alternatives. If your

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1990, revised 1994*

Brainstorming

- group is very large, sub-divide into smaller groups so everyone will have an opportunity to say what they think. If more ideas are needed, brainstorm more solutions.
5. Make your decision. After the group has discussed the alternatives, they are ready to choose the preferred solution. The decision should be written on newsprint or chalkboard or poster so everyone can see it.
 6. Implement the decision. Decide who will do what? When? How? Where?
 7. Evaluate the results of the group decision.

Work in small groups of five to eight people. Ask each group to choose a recorder who will list the ideas. Set a time limit.

Present the problem, the situation, or the issue clearly. Write the problem on the chalkboard or newsprint so all can see it and refer to it.

Go around the group to get an idea from each person. Ask for ideas as rapidly as possible. To be sure everyone's ideas are included, ask for one idea from each person. The goal is to produce a long list of possibilities, so go back to the first person and go around the group as often as your time limit allows.

Rules of Brainstorming

***No idea is to be
judged, discussed
or rejected!
Anything goes!***

RECORD ALL IDEAS. The more ideas the better.

For 4-H'ers to feel a part of the group/team they need to:

- feel they belong, are welcome and needed.
- share in planning and goal setting.
- know that their ideas are heard.
- feel that the group is doing something worthwhile.
- share in the way the group will work toward common goals (rules).
- know what is expected.
- see that progress is made.
- have confidence and trust in the leader.

Reference:

Family Community Leadership Resource Packet

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N.J. AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
NEW BRUNSWICK**

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