

Guide to Shared Decision-Making

Practices to help coalitions, collaborators and teams make important decisions together

1.

Establish group agreements

At the outset, create agreements about how the group will work together, including how decisions will be made and how conflict will be handled. These serve as an anchor for the group.

2.

Align on purpose that centers people

Start with a clear, human-centered purpose: Why are we working together, and who are we helping? A shared purpose helps the group move beyond individual agendas.

3.

Get clear on why a decision is needed

Align first on why it's important to make this decision, so everyone understands what's at stake and stays motivated to navigate the complexity of decision-making together.

4.

Identify who needs to lead the decision

Not everyone needs to play a leading role in a decision. Determine who has the expertise or role to make an informed decision. The rest of the group plays an important role in offering feedback.

5.

Use a structured process

Add just enough structure to keep the decision-making process moving forward. Ask decision-makers to offer proposals for the group to consider and build on these to align on a direction together.

6.

Advance with consent, instead of consensus

It's difficult to reach full consensus. Instead, work toward enough alignment to move forward.

Ultimately, if everyone can live with the decision, we consider that a win.

7.

Codify the decision

This seems obvious but is often overlooked. It's important to document decisions so you can build shared memory as a group, refer back to decisions and communicate with stakeholders.

7.

Know when and how to reopen the decision

Before you close out the decision, get clear with each other about what would prompt a revisit of the decision. If a decision needs to be re-opened, repeat these steps.