A Checklist for the Consensus Process

These are just some of the many ways to conduct a meeting using the consensus process. Roles should be carried out by everyone as needed — not just the person specially designated.

Basic Procedure

Before the meeting (or at previous meeting):

Choose facilitator(s) Gather agenda items Determine presenter/initiator for each item Determine item type: announcement, report, discussion, decision Bring materials/supplies needed

At the meeting:

Connect (game, song, ritual, etc.) Check-in/excitement-sharing Agenda review: agree on order and time Choose notetaker, timekeeper, vibeswatcher Step through the agenda Set next meeting Evaluation (good, bad, better) Closing (game, song, ritual, etc.)

The Flow of a Cooperative Decision-Making Process

Issue raised — what is the problem? Clarify problem — put it in context Discuss, bring out a diversity of ideas, concerns, and perspectives — look at possible solutions and the problems with those solutions Encourage heartfelt dissent and challenge Note agreements and disagreements and the underlying reasons for them — discuss those underlying reasons Synthesize proposed ideas/solutions or come up with totally new ideas in the supportive atmosphere of the meeting (find a "third way") Evaluate the different ideas until one idea seems right for the group Establish how the decision will be implemented Make sure there are no loose ends Restate the decision for the notetaker (including implementation) **Discussion/Problem-Solving Tools Brainstorms**

Go around the circle Small-group discussion (3-7 people) Advantages/disadvantages chart Visual aids Visible notes Goals-/priorities-setting techniques Challenges/devil's advocate questions

Process/Empowerment Tools

Participation equalizers (pebbles, etc.) Active listening in pairs Support groups/caucuses Feelings sharing Fishbowls Role plays

Typical Tasks of Facilitator(s)

Helps formulate agenda
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Helps establish a hopeful, upbeat, and safe atmosphere
Helps group work through decisions:
Asks for clarification
Summarizes and sorts discussion — lists threads of thought, agreements, and disagreements
Helps focus and order discussion topics
Brings out all viewpoints
Restates final decisions
Encourages equal participation
Draws out quiet people
Asks windy speakers to be brief
Encourages everyone to perform leadership tasks
Calls on speakers
Stays neutral while facilitating

Typical Tasks of a Vibeswatcher ("Caretaker")

Watches the process of the meeting
Notices underlying feelings from tone of voice and body language, points out tension and weariness, recommends changes
Stops bad process (domineering, guilt-tripping, interrupting, put-downs, bulldozing, defensiveness, space-outs, etc.)
Helps resolve conflicts
Helps work out negative emotions (fear, anger, anxiety, hopelessness)
Suggests tools to improve meetings
Helps create a safe, accepting tone

Deals with outside distractions

Stress-Reduction Techniques

Stretch breaks/cooperative games Singing Humor Affirmations Feelings sharing Silence (mediation, prayer) Calm voice Eye contact Breathing (deep) Back rubs

Conflict Resolution Tools

Appreciations/affirmations Active listening I-messages Restating other's viewpoint Six-step problem solving technique Support groups Venting emotions somewhere else Gripe sessions Resentment sharing Fishbowls