

**FACILITATION NOTES FOR
LEARNING CIRCLE D:**

**MAKING DECISIONS COLLABORATIVELY
(2 hours, 45 minutes)**

Session set-up:

- Outcomes/Agenda Transparencies
- Prepared newsprints for brainstorm activities (See Appendix A)
- Scenario poster (See Appendix A)

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the key characteristics of the collaborative decision-making process.
- Recognize situations in which collaborative decision-making strategies will be effective.
- Understand factors that can slow down or speed up the collaborative decision- making process.
- Carry forward the collaborative decision-making process in their community.
- Discuss the importance of decision making processes and patterns within communities and how it relates to community-based work.

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
10 min. total	Session Set-Up	Transparency: Outcomes Agenda
2 min.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome participants to the learning circle. 2. Introduce the outcomes for the LC and go through the proposed agenda, asking for clarifications and questions. 3. Begin with a short exercise designed to get an idea of participants' expectations about the LC, and to generate a list of topics and issues participants would like to see addressed. 4. Facilitate idea generation from the large group. Say, "Now we are going to spend a few minutes brainstorming the skill development needs of this particular group. Every person brings a different skill set to the table, and to ensure that everyone has their questions answered and receives the information they want the most, let's start by coming up with some topics you'd like to have covered in this session that relate to fostering collaborative decision making in communities." 5. Take note of all the topics generated by the group on the newsprint on the easel or posted to the wall. Be sure to use different colored markers that are in 	

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	<p>decisions being made by an authority figure at an organization or in a community who has gathered community input?" Write down the responses on the space provided on the poster.</p> <p>8. When those ideas have been exhausted, ask "What are some of the negative aspects of decision making in the same framework?" Write down responses on the space provided.</p> <p>9. Again look for common ideas between both the positive and negative attributes and draw attention to those things for participants.</p> <p>10. Lastly, move on to Decisions by Consensus. Untape that newsprint and ask, "What are some of the virtues or positive aspects of decisions being made by consensus?" Write down the responses on the space provided on the poster.</p> <p>11. When those ideas have been exhausted, ask "What are some of the negative aspects of decision making in the same framework?" Write down responses on the space provided.</p> <p>12. Again look for common ideas between both the positive and negative attributes and draw attention to those things for participants.</p> <p>13. Once all three models have been discussed in full, lead a short segue discussion to draw out themes between all three, and to allow participants an opportunity to think about the real situations in which all three might be useful. The next part of the LC will involve facilitating an experiential activity designed to give participants an idea of how consensus works.</p>	<p>Newsprint: Decisions by Authority with Small Group Input</p> <p>Newsprint: Consensus</p>
	<p><u>Note to Facilitator:</u></p> <p>For the purposes of this LC, this session focuses only on three of the seven models introduced in the handout packets. If time allows, go through the others with participants and do the same exercise verbally.</p> <p>The following definitions are to be used:</p> <p><i>Decision by Authority:</i> <i>The designated leader makes all decisions without consulting group members.</i></p> <p><i>Decision Made by Authority after Group Discussion:</i> <i>The team creates ideas and has discussions, but the</i></p>	<p>Handout Packet: References pp. 6-9 in packets</p>

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	<p><i>designated leader makes the final decision. The designated leader calls a meeting, presents the issue, listens to discussion from the team, and announces her/his decision.</i></p> <p>Decision Made by Consensus: <i>Collective decision arrived at through an effective and fair communication process (all team members spoke and listened, and all were valued).</i></p>	
40 min. total	Collaborative Decisions: An Experiential Activity and Debrief	Newsprint: Game Scenario
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain that during the next 40 minutes, participants will be taking part in an experiential activity designed to give an idea of how consensus comes together in the community. 2. Answer any other questions about the nuts and bolts of consensus, the decision-making framework that this activity focuses on. 3. Ensure that participants are evenly divided at their separate round tables. If any groups are particularly chatty, or if as a facilitator you want to ensure that participants that don't know each other work together, divide the group into even sizes and distribute around the round tables. There should be at least 3 groups. 4. Give each participant an index card with tape applied to the blank side. They should not look at the front of their cards. 5. Ask participants to first bring their attention to the Scenario newsprint posted on a visible wall. 6. Say, "Each group represents its own separate nonprofit board of directors. Each group will be working with the same scenario." 7. Next, read off the newsprint scenario at the front (see Appendix A for content and scenario ideas). Say "Your organization's goal is to use consensus to make a decision about this situation. You will have 7 minutes in your group to use this framework to reach consensus. Go ahead and stick your index card to your own forehead now, but remember not to look at the front of your own. Your other instruction is that you must treat your other team members in the way that their card tells you to, even if that means behaving in a way that you ordinarily would not. Remember that this is a 	<p>Materials: Role Index cards prepared in advance, with tape applied to back (see Appendix A for content and instructions for creating)</p>

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	<p>simulation activity.”</p> <p>8. Participants will apply the cards to their foreheads and commence play.</p> <p>9. Circulate and observe the behaviors and attitudes of participants. If necessary, remind participants to truly follow their peers' card's instruction. Watch as the groups find that reaching consensus with the added burden of weighing some people's ideas more than others is not as easy as they thought it might be.</p>	
	<p><u>Note to Facilitator:</u></p> <p>This goal of this simulation activity is twofold: to give participants a sense of how difficult consensus can be; and to draw attention to other aspects of collaborative decision making, especially as it relates to power dynamics, cultural differences, and the importance of inviting those most affected by an issue to the decision-making table.</p> <p>The cards will have different instructions on them, and participants will not know what their card says, though they will see their other group members' cards. See Appendix A for content. For example, one participant's card might say, "Treat me like the leader," while another's may say, "Ignore me."</p> <p>These issues should come up during the debrief, but as the facilitator it is important to circulate through the groups as they play the game and make notes and observations about behavior, attitudes, and culture as they unfold during play. These will provide fodder for the debrief discussion.</p>	
	<p>1. After 7 minutes, get all participants' attention and bring them back to debrief their experience.</p> <p>2. For the next 35 minutes, engage in a deep debrief of the activity. Some leading questions to bring the discussion to that length include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened in your small group when you put on the labels? • Did you get a sense of what your role might be? How? • For those of you whose label said "ignore me," how did you feel? • How was your role of being ignored similar to what actually can happen in a consensus situation? • For those of you who were "leaders," what 	

Time	Steps	Resources/ Materials
	<p>happened? How did you experience the activity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did anyone reach consensus? Why or why not? • What does this activity tell you about consensus? Is it easy? Is it realistic? What could you do to make it more realistic or easier to implement? • Has anyone experienced something similar to what we just did? What happened in that situation? How was it resolved? Was it resolved? • Do we wear labels in our own communities? What are some of the labels we wear? How do others treat us based on those labels? • Why are labels sometimes hard to see? What are some less obvious stereotypes or ways of behaving that are not as obvious as things like race, gender, or ethnicity? • How can you help to dispel labels or associations and actually bring a consensus process to your own community? 	
	<p><u>Note to Facilitator:</u></p> <p>This part of the activity can sometimes run a little fast, or take longer. This activity and debrief should run right up to the break, but it's OK to give participants a few more minutes of break if the conversation wears out before time is up.</p> <p>Debriefing the conversation about the activity is as important as the actual activity, and the majority of the conversation should be about real world experiences and situations, and less about the nuts and bolts of what happened in the groups, unless it ties directly into real experiences.</p> <p>At the end of the debrief, before break, let participants know that the second half of the session will be focusing on their actual sites and community issues, and will help them pick up ideas and solutions to difficult situations they might be encountering that hinders a collaborative process from occurring.</p>	

15 MINUTE BREAK		
50 min. total	“The Real World”: Applying Decision-Making Principles	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set up the room during the break with the four station posters: (1) Information; (2) Authority Figures; (3) Resources; and (4) Your Role in the Community (<i>see Appendix A for set-up and content</i>). 2. Bring participants’ attention to the transparency screen to go over the schedule for the next hour. 3. Explain that this part of the LC is designed for participants to each have an opportunity to discuss their own and their peers’ communities’ readiness to engage in collaborative decision making. 4. Over the course of the hour, the participants will form 4 teams, which will travel to each of the 4 stations to discuss the different topics. At the end of the hour, they will have an opportunity to come up with solutions and ideas to assist in creating better community readiness for collaboration. 5. Referring to the transparency, explain the following protocol: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Round One: 10 minutes – Each team will begin at one of the four stations and have 10 minutes to brainstorm ideas or challenges that correspond with that topic. b. Round Two: 10 minutes – each team will travel to the next station. c. Round Three: 10 minutes – each team will travel to the next station. d. Round Four: 10 minutes – each team will travel to the last station. e. Round Five: 10 minutes – each team will rotate back to their original station and take 10 minutes to work out a potential solution or ideas to increase readiness for that topic to prepare for presentation. 6. Have LC participants either count off by 4, or use another creative method to break participants into 4 teams. 	<p>Newsprint:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Information (2) Authority Figures (3) Resources (4) Your Role in the community <p>Transparency: Station Schedule</p>

Note to Facilitator:

Each of the four stations will deal with a different aspect of Community Readiness for Collaborative Decision Making. Each station's instructions are the same for the four rounds that deal with brainstorming:

- At each station, teams will have 10 minutes to brainstorm in what areas their community or project is lacking in something.
- For example, at the "**Information**" station, teams will brainstorm about their own individual community's situation, and write down collectively all the different types of information their community needs, but maybe does not have, that would make them more ready for collaborative decision making.
- For example, at the "**Resources**" station, teams will brainstorm about their own individual community's situation, and write down collectively all the different resources their community needs but might not have that would make their community more ready for collaborative decision making.
- For example, at the "**Authority Figures**" station, teams will brainstorm who are the important community members and authority figures who have the power to make decisions in their community, or who influence what decisions are made. These are the people who could influence a collaborative process.
- For example, at the "**Your Role**" station, teams will brainstorm what their role is at their organization or in the community, and how they can play a part in creating readiness for collaborative decision making.

During the fifth round, when teams will be returning to their first station and coming up for solutions or creative ideas for addressing and promoting readiness in a particular area, the following instructions will apply:

- For the **Information**, **Resources**, and **Your Role** stations, each team will look at the ideas and challenges written on the newsprint and create a poster with strategies and ideas for obtaining or addressing the things listed on the newsprint. They will put these ideas on a new poster and present it to the larger group.
- For the **Authority Figures** station, that team will brainstorm strategies for engaging those people listed in a collaborative process, and think of how to influence these influential people. They will also create a poster to present to the larger group.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin the rounds. Set a timer and let teams know when they have 2-3 minutes left in each round. 2. Circulate among the groups and provide assistance as necessary. 3. After 10 minutes, announce the beginning of Round Two and have teams rotate clockwise to the next station. 4. After 10 more minutes, announce the beginning of Round Three. Teams rotate again. 5. After 10 more minutes, announce the beginning of Round Four. Teams rotate again. 6. After Round Four has concluded, ask teams to return to their original station. Hand each team a blank newsprint page with markers, and announce the next assignment: "Now that you are back at your original station, you will see that the other teams have added to your ideas and thoughts. Your next assignment is to come up with solutions or creative ideas relating to actualizing some of the issues brought up on the newsprints. Create a poster to share with the large group in about 10 minutes that captures your team's solutions and ideas." 	<p>Newsprint: Hand out blank newsprint pages and markers to each team.</p>
	<p><u>Note to Facilitator:</u></p> <p>Despite all your best efforts to keep all the participants on track with the timing of the rounds, one or two groups will inevitably move more quickly or slowly than the others. Careful time management on your part will help keep this from becoming a problem. This may come up in the final two rounds, as teams will come to stations that have been well-brainstormed already. If necessary, it is possible to shave off some time from the last two rounds and give more time for presentations and debrief at the end of the LC.</p>	
<p>25 min. total</p>	<p>Presentations and Carry Forward Conversation</p>	
<p>2 min.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bring participants back into the large group for presentations. 2. Say, "Now your teams are going to have an opportunity to present to each other what kinds of ideas they came up with that are for all of you to think about implementing back at your sites. Each team will have 4 minutes to present." 3. Select one team to present first, and then set a timer to keep everyone on track. 	

<p>16 min.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Each team presents their ideas to the others. 5. Spend the final few minutes of the LC facilitating a dialogue with participants about what they will do next with their ideas about collaborative decision making in their communities. 6. Ask, "When you get back to your service site on Monday morning, what will you do with these ideas?" 7. Use the responses to facilitate a discussion on action steps and applying what was learned in the session. 8. Conclude by reminding participants that it's always important to ensure that the right community members are at the decision-making table, and that their role in their community may not necessarily be the person leading the process, but possibly finding the right person to facilitate that process. 9. Thank participants as they are leaving. 	
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Learning Circle D – NEWSPRINTS TO PREPARE

Section One

1. Blank newsprints with headings for participant brainstorming:

a. *Decision By Authority Figure (landscape format)*

1. Decision by Authority Figure: The designated leader makes all decisions without consulting group members.

Pros:

Cons:

b. *Decision by Authority after Group Input*

2. Decision by Authority after Group Discussion: The team creates ideas and has discussions, but the designated leader makes the final decision. The designated leader calls a meeting, presents the issue, listens to discussion from the team, and announces her/his decision.

Pros:

Cons:

c. *Decision by Consensus*

3. Decision by Consensus: Collective decision arrived at through an effective and fair communication process (all team members spoke and listened, and all were valued).

Pros:

Cons:

2. Prepared newsprints:

a. *Activity Scenario*

Consensus Scenario:

You are the board of directors for SkateYouth, a grassroots organization trying to create opportunities for local youth who want to skateboard for recreation and competition. Skateboarding in public areas of the city is currently banned by city ordinance. As an organization, you just received a donation of \$15,000 from an anonymous local donor. Your Board is meeting today to decide how to spend that money.

Section Two: Stations Newsprints

1. *Information*

Station #1: INFORMATION. E.g., what kinds of information does your organization/community need to become ready for a collaborative process?

2. *Resources*

Station #2: RESOURCES. E.g., what resources does your organization or community need to become ready for a collaborative process?

3. Authority Figures

Station #3: AUTHORITY. E.g., who are the authority figures or influential community members who impact or impede collaborative processes?

4. Your Role

Station #4: YOUR ROLE. E.g., what is your role within your organization and what limits your ability to influence a collaborative process?

INDEX CARD LABELS FOR ACTIVITY

Prepare regular 3 x 5 index cards as follows (ensure there are enough for all participants and that there are few repetitions in each group):

- Treat me like the leader
- Ignore me
- Laugh at all my ideas
- Argue with me but let me win
- Defer to me
- Shoot all my ideas down
- Consider my opinion
- Ask my opinion after every idea

Or make up your own. It's OK to have a set for each group and so only have to come up with 5-8 labels, since they will be doing the activity at their tables.