

How Does Your Group Make Decisions?

“It is now 10:30 p.m. I told my family I would be home no later than 9:30 p.m. and we still have not made a decision about the budget!!”

If this sounds familiar, maybe your group needs to take a look at what kind of decision-making process is used. People make decisions on a daily basis. Often these decisions have a small impact on their daily routine; in other cases, they have a huge impact on many people.

FIVE BASIC STEPS IN DECISION-MAKING

Here is a simple, step-by-step process that may help your group make effective decisions.

But first, remember that all your decisions should:

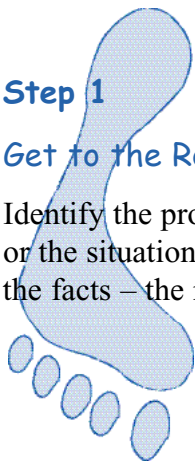
- involve all committee or group members;
- be well-thought out and clear;
- be written and recorded (filed) for future reference; and
- be communicated to the appropriate people within the organization or group.

Tips:

Step 1

Get to the Roots

Identify the problem, the issue or the situation by getting all the facts – the real facts



- Remember that often what is identified as the problem isn't really the problem. ("I have to leave early tonight" may mean "The babysitter can only watch my kids until 9 p.m." or "These meetings are boring".)

Step 2

Explore Different Solutions

Generate a list of options and possible solutions and decide how you will make your choice



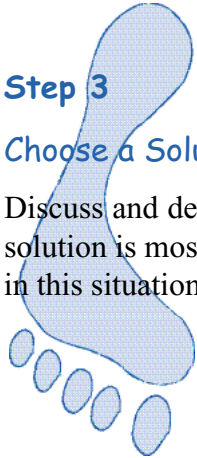
- Groups make better decisions if they have choices in front of them.
- Rather than selecting or rejecting one idea – generate a list of ideas.
- From this list, choose 3-5 options that sound most likely to succeed.

Tips:

Step 3

Choose a Solution

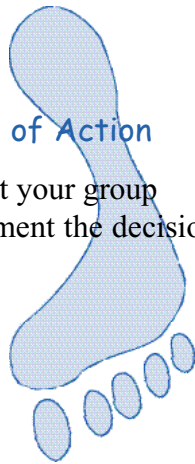
Discuss and decide what solution is most likely to work in this situation



Step 4

Create a Plan of Action

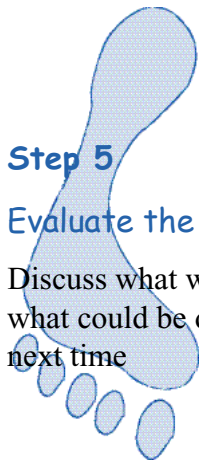
Determine what your group needs to implement the decision



Step 5

Evaluate the decision

Discuss what worked well and what could be done differently next time



Discuss each of the short-listed options, one-at-a time, and ask yourselves:

- What are the likely consequences? What happens if we do it this way?
- Who will be affected by this decision (members, participants, community, committee, etc.)? Can we make it easier on them in any way?
- How will this affect our group's work? Is it acceptable to expect us to do this?

- In order to move forward with the decision, the group needs to develop an action plan.
- This plan must include a list of the resources needed, the people involved, and the timelines for putting the plan into action. It should be assigned to one ultimate leader.

- Once the decision has been "brought to life", the group should review their decision.
- What worked well and what could be done differently to improve your decision-making process?

A Final Point About Decision Making

Be patient. Decision making takes time. Remember that some people need more time than others to "think about it" and come up with options. Respect individual opinions and appreciate everyone's input. A decision made by a group should reflect a little of everyone's opinion.

Decisions made by your group are important. Your participation in the decision-making process is important. And, the plan for moving forward with our decision is also important. Do we spend the money on new playground equipment for the summer or use our budget to rent gymnasium space during the winter?

There is an approach to finding, involving and keeping dedicated volunteers. It's called **Volunteer Development** and it is made up of five stages. This **Fact Sheet** (no. 9 of 14) addresses the importance of **volunteer orientation and training**.

For more information on the Volunteer Development Cycle or Volunteer Involvement, contact your local Volunteer Centre (www.volunteer.ca/volunteercentres).

Volunteer Development Cycle



This series of Fact Sheets, **Involving Volunteers Effectively**, was designed to support citizen-based groups in the effective involvement of volunteers. The **Fact Sheets** were produced by the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network and Volunteer Canada,

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