

Different decision-making methods

The table shows 'locations' where decisions can be taken (individual, sub-group) and methods of decision making (command, democratic vote, consensus and consent decision-making (Sociocracy))

Decision making method	description	advantages	disadvantages
Command or centralised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individuals are directly responsible for every decision within a specified area • authority may lie in their job description or in policy documents 	enables quick, co-ordinated action, particularly when a deadline is imminent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deprives others of the responsibility, learning and personal rewards of making decisions themselves • can result in inefficiency or bottlenecks if review needed before others will take action
Delegation or distributed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decision-making is delegated to subgroups • needs clear terms of reference, autonomy and lines of accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improves efficiency by reducing the number of people required for each decision • delegated decisions best taken by those the decision is most likely to affect (subsidiarity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhances responsibility for consequences by those who take decisions • will not of itself ensure effective decision making without clear authority and lines of accountability
Democratic or majority vote	One member one vote (OMOV) Proposals receiving more than 50% of the total votes are carried	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can involve large numbers of people in decision-making • can initiate debate between people with comparable power and strong views • decision guaranteed, as long as there's a tie-breaker process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not ideal when the co-op needs everyone to implement a decision enthusiastically • nearly half the participants can end up on the losing side, and be expected to implement the decision • voters may be swayed by apathy, inaccurate information, or the influence of charismatic individuals
<u>Consensus</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an agreement acceptable to everyone • decisions taken reflect the ideas and thought of all team members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensures decisions are explored thoroughly and strong disagreements resolved • maximizes commitment and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compared to delegation or command, consensus can take longer • may not result in support for any specific course of action, which could

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is not unanimity (the outcome may not be everyone's first choice) nor a majority vote • It requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>time</i> * <i>communication skills including listening, probing, conflict management</i> * <i>viewing disagreements and conflicts as part of the process</i> * <i>keeping an open mind and thinking creatively</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'buy-in' during decision making and implementation • fosters a sense of goodwill that increases patience, flexibility, and willingness to participate in damage control • encourages discussion of potential obstacles, facilitating development of alternatives • can be very efficient from a cost per decision standpoint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be frustrating for someone who wants to see immediate action • can lead to 'groupthink' (a mode of thought whereby individuals intentionally conform to what they perceive to be the consensus of the group)
<p>Consent decision making (Sociocracy)</p>	<p>a decision is made when there is no objection from group members with authority to make the decision.</p> <p>The method:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design and present a proposal for decision 2. Clarification round (questions about the proposal) 3. Quick reactions round (first reactions) 4. Consent round (do you have any objections to the proposal?) <p>Final steps are either to announce the decision or to amend the proposal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gives a group a way to move forward without unanimity, but respecting dissent • can help to avoid group think since the group becomes accustomed to members raising objections in order to improve the proposal • ensures everyone's ideas are taken on board • ensures proposals are examined in depth before moving to a decision • acknowledges that things change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • members may not be familiar with this approach • takes time to learn • needs practice and all team members may not recognise the potential benefits so may not be willing to put the time in