



## Consensus Decision Making Matrix

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### Description:

Consensus decision making is a process in which group members develop and agree to support a decision in the best interest of the group. Consensus achieves general agreement or an acceptable resolution, one that can be supported, even if not the “favorite” of each individual.<sup>3</sup> Getting a group to come to consensus on an issue or problem is one of the hardest tasks a facilitator can undertake. When the group finds widespread agreement, planning and the implementation of decisions will be much more effective. Learning new tools and ways to work together can also benefit future accomplishments.

Striving for consensus requires that the group divide an identified issue or problem under consideration into its primary components. Primary components are key system elements, factors, or leverage points, which contribute directly to achieving an understanding or resolution to an issue or problem. Since primary components are usually broad in scope, they need to be broken down into their secondary components. These are typically in the form of descriptions, actions, interventions, or lower-level components necessary to achieve the primary component.

Secondary components are typically:

- Definable, tangible, actionable, and able to be detailed
- Identifiable changes that can be tested in order to affect the primary component
- Measureable

*See “Example: Consensus Decision Making Matrix” on page 4 for examples of primary and secondary components, and how to use this tool.*

Upon finalizing the Consensus Decision Making Matrix, a group will better understand these primary and secondary components, and what needs to be addressed in order to resolve the issue or problem under consideration. This information can be used for decision making and determining next steps.

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<sup>3</sup> [Miriam-Webster](#), accessed January 30, 2017.

**When to Use:**

The Consensus Decision Making Matrix can support a group struggling to come to consensus decisions around a previously defined issue or problem. The matrix helps provide a structure to discuss the issue or problem and allows everyone concerned with the issue or problem to have input into the final acceptable resolution. This tool can be used both when a single decision needs to be made, as well as with a complex issue or problem that requires multiple decisions.

**Construction Steps:**

1. Assign a core team to divide the previously defined issue or problem under consideration into its three to four Primary Components (PCs). An example of a PC is “Increase Access to Physical Activity Opportunities.” Core team members may be subject matter experts or individuals with experience addressing the issue or problem under consideration, and will work to create a framework for which key stakeholders can react. Document the issue or problem under consideration at the top of the Consensus Decision Making Matrix.
2. Core team members should next divide each PC into its corresponding Secondary Components (SCs) and populate the Consensus Decision Making Matrix with the PCs and associated SCs of the issue or problem under consideration as shown in Figure 1.

Issue:

	Agree	Add	Change	Original Notes	Suggested Rewrites
<b>Primary Component</b>					
PC 1					
<b>Secondary Components</b>					
SC 1a					
SC 1b					
SC 1C					
<b>Primary Component</b>					
PC 2					
<b>Secondary Components</b>					
SC 2a					
SC 2b					
SC 2C					

Primary Component					
PC 3					
Secondary Components					
SC 3a					
SC 3b					
SC 3C					

Figure 1

3. Convene a meeting of key stakeholders interested in or impacted by the issue or problem, which will include and expand upon the core team. Appoint a lead as the subject matter expert for each PC, who may or may not be a member of the core team. The lead will be responsible for collecting the comments for his/her assigned PC (and SCs), as well as for the final wording of the assigned PC.
4. Break stakeholders into groups for each of the PCs. Each group should comment on its assigned PC and each of the SCs within it. The lead, assigned in step 3, should capture the comments from the group, documenting those in the Notes column.
  - a. The group should comment on the appropriateness of the PC and SCs, agreeing with each or providing edits, as well as adding new SCs as necessary.
  - b. The group should mark “X” in the column marked Agree, Add, or Change, as appropriate.
5. Rotate the groups every 20 minutes until every group has had a chance to comment on each PC and SC. They can agree, add, or change (including suggested deletions), as they deem appropriate. Document any new comments in the Notes column. If any SCs are added, they should be listed as “New SC” and numbered accordingly.
  - a. The leads should remain with their assigned PCs and not rotate with the teams.
  - b. The leads should facilitate discussion toward achievement of consensus on the PC and SCs in each of the groups, reaching language that everyone can at least support and that builds on what previous groups have recommended. To reconcile the changes that occur between groups, the leads can share suggested changes that have occurred along the way.
6. When all of the groups have finished their comment rotations, the leads should summarize the responses and determine final wording for the PC and SCs.
7. Each lead should give a 10-minute overview of his/her assigned PC, including final wording. This overview should describe how each of the groups contributed to the final wording.

When the PC leads have finished their report-out, the group (as well as the core team) should have a better understanding of the key areas and what should be considered or addressed as the organization does its work to address a problem or issue. The core team can then use these results for making decisions and determining next steps.

**Example: Consensus Decision Making Matrix**  
 Issue: Reducing community obesity rates

	Agree	Add	Change	Notes	Suggested Rewrites
<b>Primary Component 1</b>					
Increase Access to Physical Activity Opportunities	X				
<b>Secondary Components</b>					
1. Develop formal agreements between agencies addressing the same or similar concerns	X			-Joint use agreements -Rx participation agreements -School/Counties agreements	
2. Keep underserved populations in mind when developing new programming			X	-Consider cost -Underserved populations: low "cost" -Spanish programs -Neighborhood parks/playgrounds -Adaptive equipment for those with disabilities -Uninsured aware of program barriers -Consider transportation issues Medicare "qualifier" for reimbursement -Grants don't provide transportation -Transportation grants don't align with physical activities -Parent work day consideration for child pick up	Develop programming that considers the needs of and barriers for underserved populations

	Agree	Add	Change	Notes	Suggested Rewrites
<b>Secondary Components</b>					
3. Develop policies that create incentives for using existing resources	X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Include Lunch Plus</li> <li>-Increase activity above current</li> <li>-For employees - model the "behavior"</li> <li>-Have policies hook back to Network of Care</li> <li>-Consider those without internet</li> </ul>	
4. Improve marketing of existing resources and facilities			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Make Network of Care in all</li> <li>-Map "places to play &amp; grow" for children</li> <li>-Current geared to adults - need children</li> <li>-Similar messages - paper still needed (different delivery)</li> <li>-Apps - interactive</li> <li>-Relationships are important</li> </ul>	Improve marketing and partner communication of existing resources and facilities (i.e. through Network of Care)
New SC #1		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Funding issues</li> <li>-Partners working together</li> <li>-Collaboratively ask for money</li> <li>-Educate each other on what we are doing</li> </ul>	Improve collaboration to meet the needs of the underserved populations (i.e. share funds, work together)

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