



Setting up Cooperative Decision Making

At the formative stage, all groups need to grow the shared capacity for determining how decisions will be made and activities will be implemented. An initial group or circle is usually established to define the social pattern of the group and to help set the scaffolding for the appropriate social governance in order to ensure the right kinds of processes are used to support a group in shared stewardship and decision making activities.

Before the formal architecting of the governance structure and decision making processes, groups still need initial decision making practices to support the development and design. Setting up light weight decision making in the early phase is essential. This requires integrity of the designing members to consider the needs and intentions of the group and to strive to craft something fair, equitable, and useful to guide ongoing cooperation and common ground. It is recommended to start simple and create just enough governance to address the immediate needs of the group, while developing processes for adjusting and changing over time as the group grows and complexifies.

Considerations for Initial Decision Making

- Determine the purpose, culture, and goals of the group
 - * See the “Alignment Processes” resource or the “Culture Mapping” resource for more suggestions on creating the foundational alignment of a group

- Determine the initial "core" or "design" circle members who will set the patterns/templates for the decision making, as well as determining the organizing patterns for the group's activities and growth. This core circle may change its members as the group solidifies to include additional people or may dissolve to allow for a more formal stewardship circle process to determine long term leadership. Ensure this group has a diverse cross section of members and there is fair representation and participation in this process.

- Consider the capacities and strengths of the group members and how the members of a group will collaborate together at different levels of responsibility/accountability/equity/stewardship.
- Consider the activities of the group and what is needed at an early stage to help a group organize itself and begin to engage initial activities together. Designing governance and decision making can be iterative, creating lean structures and processes to guide the authentic level of maturity of a group or project. Creating heavy decision making and governance before the maturity of the group is established can sometimes create more burden and effort designing, rather than learning and responding by doing, reflecting, adjusting, and doing again in ever increasing patterns of coherence.
- Define "Scope of Decision Making"- outlining what kinds of decisions need to get made and who has the agency to make them.

Examples of Scopes of Decision Making

- Legal or Fiscal decisions
 - Agency & authority- who makes what kinds of decisions?
 - Processes for decision making
 - Internal communication practices
 - External communication practices
 - Group goals and activities
 - Value accounting and resource allocation
 - Membranes of involvement or levels of engagement
 - Tension revelation- How do groups navigate tension, solve disagreements and resolve conflict
- Determine best tools (such as Open Impact, Loomio, or VoteMe, Whatsapp, or facilitated live group process) and processes for presenting proposals, allowing for review and feedback, for weighing in or official voting. Make sure to create transparent methods for sharing outcomes/feedback processes/report backs from decisions.

Initial Decision Making Process

Resonance decision making process (* See the *Resonance Decision Making Process*” Resource for more information) is a lightweight and easy to use social process to support a group to sensemake initial agreements before more formal decision making processes are established.

The term “Resonance” means to create a relationship of mutual understanding, alignment and trust within a group. Resonance decision making provides a pathway for respectful engagement, for exploring differences, honoring unique viewpoints, and for arriving at holistic agreements based on valuing the perspectives of each individual as essential to the wisdom of the whole.

Making decisions as a group based on Resonance practices calls upon the intelligence of both our intuition and logic to make choices that align with each member and their commitment to the shared Purpose and Values. This style of decision making is best used with groups who have good practices for handling disagreements, navigating tensions, and are regularly tending the relationships of the group to ensure that people are not holding latent resentment or frustration that exhibits itself within a decision making process.

Using a Decision Making Menu

The initial core circle members can determine a Decision Making Menu (* See the *Decision Making Menu*” Resource for more information) for the newly formed to draw from when needing to make different kinds of decisions. This encourages self-organizing within circles allowing for flexibility of using the right process for the right purpose. For coherence, it is essential for groups to establish protocols and collaborative best practices that ensure the circle operates from a shared ethical foundation and is in service to the shared purpose.

Growing the capacity of each member of a group to be knowledgeable with dynamic decision making practices and processes allows a group to easily “pull a practice/process off the shelf” and ensure the right kind of process is used for right kind of decision that needs to be made in any given situation.

