

Sample Agenda for a Consensus Workshop

Note: This agenda has various exercises and presentations from which to choose. No workshop will likely have all (9 hours 45 minutes) of them. The presentations listed below rely on the paper "Notes on Consensus Decision-Making."

Time Item Topic

10 Presentation — Introduction to the Day

- Who we (the preparers) are
- Literature

5 Game

- Mwaaa or Ball Pass

10 Presentation/Decision — Agenda Review

- Why we have visible agendas — 4 items (time allocated, kind of activity, presenter/ initiator, topic)
- Why we review them
- Review the agenda
- Make changes, get consensus of group including preparers
- Pick a timekeeper
- Circulate a list to get names, addresses, phone numbers ??

20 Group Introductions

- 2 Explain
- 6 (3x2) Each person introduces self to partner
- 12 Introduce partner to group

• Possible Topics:

- Who you are, what you do
- Why you are here, what made you decide to come
- What is important to you about group process
- When you are likely to use what you learn today
- One technique you saw work well in a meeting
- Good thing that happened to you recently

Introduction to Cooperative Decision-Making

15 Exercise — Group versus Individual Decision

- 2 Break into groups of 5 - 6
- 5 Discuss/decide the first topic — notice your process, how do you discuss/decide?
- 3 Silently consider a second topic by yourself (without discussion with others) — again notice your process
- 5 Back together, discuss — how is the process different with a group than individually?

• Possible Topics:

- What book would you most like to write?
- Where is the best place to live (city/neighborhood)?
- What is the single best way to spend \$100,000?
- To which group would you most like to donate money?

20 Exercise — Listening (3-2-1)

- 3 Divide into pairs; explain exercise
- 3 First person talks while second listens without saying anything
- 2 Second person repeats back what she/he heard
- 1 First person corrects misunderstandings
- 6 Switch roles and repeat
- 5 Back together, briefly discuss — how was it?

• Possible Topics

- A time when you stood up against oppression
- A time when someone gave you good support
- Why you are (or are not) a vegetarian
- What you would regret not accomplishing in your life

20 Presentation — Consensus Basics, Examples, Flow of the Process, and History

10 Questions

30 Exercise — What is Truth? (diversity, assumptions, multiple truths)

- 2 Break into groups of 5 - 6; choose one of the statements
 - 10 Come up with 3 ways the statement is true, 3 ways it is false, and 3 ways it is ambiguous
 - 10 How many assumptions must be true for the statement to be true
 - 3 Sum up the sense of the group
 - 5 Back together, share exciting highlights and insights; discuss what it means for something to be “true”?; notice how much ambiguity and how many assumptions are inherent in “true” statements; notice your process
- **Possible Topics:**
- The Earth is round.
 - A day has 24 hours.
 - Columbus discovered America.
 - Love means letting go of fear.
 - Rich people are smart.
 - The United States is governed by democracy.

10 •• Stretch break

- Backrubs, ball pass, knots, jelly roll, sitting in laps, mwaaa, song
- Collect list of participants (if applicable)

10 Presentation — Values and Attitudes Underlying Consensus

- Why Consensus?
- Values and attitudes, learning skills
- Problem solving

5 Questions**25 Exercise — Being Right!** (diversity, assumptions, multiple truths, inter-relationship of issues)

- 5 Break into groups of 5 - 6; explain exercise; choose a set of three statements
 - 15 Discuss: What kind of person is likely to agree or disagree with these statements? Why do various kinds of people believe what they do? What leads people to hold the opinions that they do?
 - 5 Back together, share exciting highlights and insights; discuss what it means to “be right”?
- **Possible Sets of Statements:**
- Regarding Nazis parading through Oakland: (1) Nazis are abhorrent, (2) Citizens have the right to demonstrate peaceably even on behalf of unpopular causes, (3) People should have some control over what goes on in their community.
 - Regarding war: (1) You should not kill another person, (2) If a foreign army attacks your country and threatens to kill or oppress your fellow citizens, you have a moral obligation to stop them, (3) Make love, not war.
 - Regarding taxes: (1) Taxes are too high, (2) Taxes should be raised for the rich, (3) Tax policies should be left to our representatives to decide.

15 Presentation — Roles and Techniques of Cooperative Meetings

- Facilitator
- Order of speaking
- Nods and shakes
- Other roles — notetaker or recorder, timekeeper, vibes watcher, etc.
- Agendas and review (if not already covered)
- Evaluation (if not already covered)
- Discussion (small groups, go around the circle, fishbowls, etc.)
- Brainstorming and other problem solving techniques
- Spokescouncils
- Male/female differences
- Teaching skills to newcomers

10 Questions and Other Techniques People Have Used**10 Evaluation of first session — Goods, bads, improvements**

3 hours 45 minutes

Second Session

10 Gather

- Game (ball pass, knots, jelly roll, sitting in laps), song
- Maybe re-introductions, agenda review (especially if on another day)

Cooperative Meetings — Informal Facilitation

5 Presentation — Task and Maintenance Functions in a Group

5 Questions

45 Exercise — Fishbowl Observation of Functions

- 5 Break into two groups: meeting attenders and observers; give each observer a task and a maintenance function for them to observe — use task and maintenance functions outlined in **Resource Manual for a Living Revolution**, p. 46-47.
 - 25 Role play — meeting attenders discuss an important topic and try to make a decision
 - 15 Discuss — Did you see your function employed? When should it have been employed? When not?
- **Possible Topics**
 - John Goodheart wants to give \$20,000 to good causes. Which groups should he give his money to?
 - A topic pertinent to the group

Facilitating Cooperative Meetings

20 Presentation — Facilitating a Group

- Tree/horse drawings
- Summarizing, sorting, synthesizing ideas, and focusing a discussion
- Other important task and maintenance functions
- Small groups, etc. (if not already covered)
- Dangers of facilitation (manipulation, control, etc.)

10 Questions

35 Exercise — Facilitation Skills (summarizing, sorting, synthesizing, focusing discussion)

- 5 Break into groups of 5; choose an initiator and a facilitator; explain exercise
- 25 (5 x 5) Discuss the topic and try to reach a consensus. At the end of 5 minutes (whether it needs to be done or not) the facilitator **briefly** summarizes, sorts, synthesizes, and focuses the discussion (as appropriate). Facilitation then passes to the person on the left for the next 4 minutes.

— OR —

One person facilitates for the entire time, remembering to summarize, etc. at appropriate times.

- 5 Back together, briefly discuss — how did it go?
- **Possible Topics:**
 - Mary Dugood has \$10,000 she wants to give to one group to promote women's issues. Who should she give the money to?
 - Your group agrees to drop campaign literature door-to-door for a political candidate you support, but when the literature is delivered it contains a statement that is controversial (pro/anti-welfare, pro/anti-taxes, pro/anti-military, pro/anti-socialism, etc.)
 - An important leader agrees to endorse your group at a press conference, but asks that you change your appearance / disavow a position important to you / adopt a position you are uncomfortable with / etc.

10 •• Stretch break

- Backrubs, ball pass, knots, jelly roll, sitting in laps, mwaaa, song

Confronting Problems

15 Presentation — Confronting Problems

- Potential Problems with Consensus
- “But Consensus Takes Too Long”
- Interrupting Poor Process

10 Questions

25 Exercise — Confronting Problems

- 5 Break into pairs (lines facing each other); explain exercise (“hassle line”)
- 15 One person assertively (but supportively) makes strong statement to the other — target says nothing or responds as appropriate. Switch roles and repeat. Repeat for every topic. Spend about 1 minute on each roleplay and allow people to say how hard it is, etc.
- 5 Questions, demonstrations
 - **Possible Statements**
 - Tell someone to stop talking so much / repeating him/herself
 - Stand up for your perspective — refuse to go along with others
 - Tell someone to cooperate with others and stop insisting that the group do it her/his way
 - Gently throw someone out of your group

Developing Appropriate Organizational Structures

20 Presentation — Organizations and Decisions

- Egalitarianism, hierarchy, managers, committees, bureaucracy, and personal initiative
- Federations, alliances, coalitions, spokescouncils
- Group membership, executive committees and general members

10 Questions

Other Topics

10 General Questions

45 Exercise — Difficult Decision (with or without a spokescouncil)

- 5 Break into groups of 5 - 7 explain exercise
- 30 Role Play
- 10 Questions, demonstrations
 - **Possible Topics**
 - John Goodheart or Mary Dugood want to give away money
 - Decide to stay or go when violent police are on the way
 - A topic pertinent to the group

10 Evaluation — Goods, bads, improvements

Closing Circle — Group mwaaa

4 hours, 45 minutes

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Alternate Agendas for Different Occasions

7 Hr.	7 Hr.	7 Hr.	6 Hr.	3 Hr.	2 Hr.	1 Hr.	
10	10	10	10	10	5	5	Presentation — Introduction to the Day
5	5	5	5	5	—	—	Game
10	10	10	10	10	10	5	Presentation/Decision — Agenda Review
20	20	20	20	20	5	—	Group Introductions
Introduction to Cooperative Decision-Making							
15	—	—	—	15	—	—	Exercise — Group versus Individual Decision
—	20	—	—	—	—	—	Exercise — Listening (3-2-1)
20	20	20	20	15	15	10	Presentation — Consensus Basics, Example, Flow, History
10	10	10	10	5	5	5	Questions
30	—	30	20	—	—	—	Exercise — What is Truth?
10	10	10	10	—	—	—	<i>Stretch break</i>
10	10	10	15	5	5	—	Presentation — Values and Attitudes Underlying Consensus
5	5	5	5	—	—	—	Questions
—	25	—	—	—	—	—	Exercise — Being Right!
15	15	15	20	10	10	—	Presentation — Roles and Techniques of Cooperative Meetings
10	10	10	10	5	5	—	Questions and Other Techniques People Have Used
10	10	10	10	—	—	—	Evaluation of first session — Goods, bads, improvements
3hr	3hr	2h45	2h45	1h40	1h	25m	
60	60	60	45	10	10	—	Lunch or Stretch Break
Second Session							
10	10	10	10	—	—	—	Gather (Song, Game, Intros)
—	5	—	5	—	—	—	Cooperative Meetings — Informal Facilitation
—	5	—	5	—	—	—	Presentation — Task and Maintenance Functions in a Group
—	40	—	45	—	—	—	Questions
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Exercise — Fishbowl Observation of Functions
Facilitating Cooperative Meetings							
20	20	20	15	10	10	5	Presentation — Facilitating a Group
10	10	10	10	5	5	—	Questions
35	25	35	25	30	25	25	Exercise — Facilitation Skills (summarizing, etc.)
10	10	10	10	—	—	—	<i>Stretch Break</i>
Confronting Problems							
15	15	15	—	10	—	—	Presentation — Confronting Problems
10	10	10	—	5	—	—	Questions
25	—	—	—	—	—	—	Exercise — Confronting Problems
Developing Appropriate Organization Structures							
15	15	20	10	—	—	—	Presentation — Organizations and Decisions
10	5	10	5	—	—	—	Questions
10	—	—	—	—	—	—	General Questions
—	—	45	—	—	—	—	Exercise — Difficult Decision (with/without a spokescouncil)
10	10	10	10	10	10	5	Evaluation — Goods, bads, improvements
3h	3h	3h15	2h30	1h10	50m	35m	
7h	7h	7h	6h	3h	2h	1h	Total Time