

# Decision Modes

There are several decision modes which exist and can be helpful in a variety of different decision-making arenas.



## Absolute Consensus

DESCRIPTION: Absolute consensus requires that all group members not only can live with a decision, but that they actively support the decision and are convinced that the decision is superior to the existing status quo. Absolute consensus is thus synonymous with unanimous agreement. This process, when it involves complex data will require a great deal of time...and in at least half of the cases where unanimous consensus decisions are attempted the group ends up in a hopeless deadlock with at least one member not being able to agree.

## Modified Consensus

DESCRIPTION: The most stringent definition of consensus decisions insists that all members of the group agree with the decision before any approval is made by the team or task force. These types of consensus decisions are time-consuming and often unreachable. Thus, modified group consensus is a decision procedure that enables a group to achieve a type of consensus that ensures that each member of the group is willing to support the decision.

## Consultative

DESCRIPTION: Consultative decisions means that the group is providing consultation and advice to the person/group who has the responsibility for choosing the ultimate course of action. With this decision method, a problem, question, or issue is studied and the responsible party asks the advisory group to help clarify the issue, draw suggestions and advice for consideration, and recommends which of the ideas will be implemented.

## Consultative Consensus

DESCRIPTION: Consultative consensus decisions, just as the name implies, represents decisions that combine consultative and consensus decision techniques. It is clear from the start who will make the decisions, yet the group leader or facilitator makes a special effort to have the decisions represent a growing consensus that emerges from the collective intelligence of the group.

## Voting

DESCRIPTION: Voting is not the preferred alternative for most group decisions because it interferes with the development of a participative culture, is not supportive of team building, and tends to entrench people in their positions rather than unleash the group's collective intelligence. However, there are times when voting can be helpful to groups. Simple nonbinding "straw voting" can be a useful way to eliminate least-preferred alternatives, and actually helps to build consensual decisions.

*Developed for use in Red River Basin Watershed Planning Processes*

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