

Peer Support Tip Sheet: Participatory Group Decision-making

This tip sheet briefly introduces participatory group decision-making. Throughout the year PeerNetBC offers training on problem-solving and decision-making and other facilitation topics. To learn more give us a call!

What is participatory group decision-making?

- It's a decision-making process where everyone in the group has a chance to speak their mind and when differences of opinion are valued, not feared.
- It happens when group members do their best to understand one another even in the face of pressure and when contradictions arise.
- It's a process that takes time and careful facilitation so that each member of the group feels heard, divergent opinions and ideas are allowed to surface, and when the final decision is made it is reflective of a wide range of opinions.

What are the benefits of participatory group decision-making?

When done well, participatory group decision-making creates a deep respect for individuals and their points of view. The search for synergies and overlapping goals can strengthen the power of the group as a whole. Participatory decision-making takes time and requires patience, flexibility, and a high tolerance for ambiguity in order to allow the decision-making process to evolve and solidify. In the end, the benefits are clear – improved thinking, greater commitment from individual group members, and better decisions.

Characteristics of participatory group decision-making:

- Everyone participates.
- Everyone is given time to think and fully express their thoughts.
- Everyone listens fully and without judgement.
- Differing opinions are expressed freely.
- Members can accurately represent different points of view even if they don't agree with them.
- A decision is not made until all the group members understand the reasoning.
- When a final decision is made, it still reflects a wide variety of viewpoints.

Create better buy-in and commitment from your group – practice participatory group decision-making!

*Adapted from "Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making",
Sam Kaner et al, New Society Publishers, 1996*