Decision Making
How to Make Sustainable Decisions

When an organization makes a decision, it represents agreement among members. But all too often, decisions are made but not carried out. There are many reasons this happens, including:

- Members agree because they feel tired of the discussion or feel pressured and give in.
- Members are confused about decision-making processes.
- Members have different interpretations of the decision.

Here are a few things you can do to help your organization make decisions that have solid support and result in action.

1. **Define and agree on how decisions will be made**
   a. What is your organization’s Decision Rule?
      e.g. consensus, majority rule, autocratic, etc.
   b. Who decides what
      Does the Core decide everything? Do the committees decide certain things?
   c. What is the basis for making decisions?
      e.g. does the proposal support the organization’s goals?

2. **Set the Tone**
   a. It’s okay to disagree
      Don’t take disagreements or challenges personally.
   b. It’s okay to make mistakes.
      If the group makes a decision that results in errors, the group can sum it up and learn from it together.
   c. Be open-minded.
      Remember that it’s a group decision. Welcome new ideas. Try new ways.
   d. It’s not life or death.
      Even if you “know” you’re right, it’s not worth fighting over.

3. **Key Steps in Deciding**
   a. Summarize the main points of the discussion. (Include all “sides.”)
   b. Clarify the decision being made.
   c. If it doesn’t seem like a clear consensus:
      - Poll the group
      - Have more discussion
      - Try adjusting the proposal and look for a compromise
      - Discuss the option of postponing the decision
   d. Use your organization’s Decision Rule to reach a decision.
   e. Record it!

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