

CONSENSUS

Handout

(Definition and Guidelines)

CONSENSUS: DEFINITION

What It Is Not

- It is not agreement by vote, coin-flip, bargaining
- It is not arguing for your ranking or changing your mind to avoid conflict
- It is not a win/lose
- It is not a fast procedure

What It Is

- It is a new way of thinking
- It is agreement by discussions, with everyone's views taken into account
- It is slow and time-consuming
- It is listening, responding, being open and seeking out differences

The final product is potentially more complete than individual knowledge.

GUIDELINES FOR CONSENSUS

1. Avoid arguing for your own view. Approach the task on the basis of logic, and be willing to change your mind if other group members have persuasive reasons for change.
2. Avoid changing your mind only in order to reach agreement and avoid conflict. Only support answers which you are able to agree with even partially.
3. Avoid techniques such as majority vote, averaging, or trading in reaching a decision.
4. Understand that differences in opinion are helpful rather than hindrances in decision-making. New and better ideas for solving a common problem will come out of discussing the differences.

