

Consensus Statement and Guidelines

What do we mean by consensus?

- Group solidarity in sentiment and belief
- General agreement

Group consensus is reached when every girl can comfortably state:

“I understand what the group has agreed upon. I might not totally agree with everything, but I feel I’ve expressed myself fully and everyone has listened to me with an open mind and taken my views into account. Therefore, since I trust the judgment of the members of the group, I agree to support the decision we’ve made.

What Makes Consensus Work:

1. Remember that you are making decisions as a representative of the girls’ grantmaking program and the foundation, not as an individual. Follow organizational guidelines and minimize how much your personal biases influence your participation.
2. Try to bring into the open anything you are thinking about so it can be heard by all and discussed.
3. Listen closely to everyone. Be open-minded enough to change your personal views and opinions based on what other say.
4. Be careful of early, quick, easy agreements and compromises. They are often based on ideas that need to be challenged
5. Avoid competition and arguments. Maintain a focus on **what** is right, not **who** is right. Consensus is reached when the entire group is willing to support and help implement the decision.
6. Avoid voting. Voting divides the group into winners and losers, and limits discussion.
7. Balance participation: Encourage everyone, particularly quiet individuals, to offer their ideas so that everyone’s views are heard and discussed.

8. Look for the best results to flow from a combination of information, logic and emotion.
9. Don't get locked into differences. When there is disagreement between opinions "A" and "B", try to find a new and different alternative such as "C" or "D" that will satisfy everyone.
10. When a person has stated your opinion, you do not need to repeat it. Simply say "She speaks my mind," to show agreement. This reduces repetition and allows other points of view to be expressed and discussed.

Factors Influencing Consensus:

1. Group size
2. Time allotted
3. Type of decision being made
4. How divided participants are on the issue/item
5. Trust among the group
6. Flexibility of individuals