

Consensus Decision-Making Model

The work of the Accessibility Advisory Board (AAB) is complex and there will be many decision points along the way. Collaboration and collegiality will be key ingredients to success as will hearing the perspectives of all AAB members.

Complete unanimity on all aspects of our work and the decisions before us may not be possible, especially given the scope of the work of the AAB.

In this context, a Consensus Decision Making Model will help to advance our work.

Step 1: Discussion

The issue at hand is discussed until everyone understands what is being considered and has had an opportunity to be heard. If a member of the AAB is not present but has provided written input, it will be provided to all other members. Members are encouraged to:

1. Understand the topic thoroughly, express their viewpoints clearly, and generate ideas.
2. Explore available options and understand each other's views and concerns.
3. Prioritize first voice, valuing the experience and expertise of persons with disabilities.
4. Recognize areas of common ground and weave together diverse ideas to find solutions to areas of disagreement.

Step 2: Decision

Each member is asked how they feel about the proposed decision by selecting one of the following responses:

1. Absolutely yes, this is the best decision
2. This is a good choice, which I find acceptable
3. I'm not enthusiastic, but I can live with it
4. No, I do not agree and feel we should discuss further or explore other options

Consensus has been reached and a decision made, if:

- All responses from members are 1, 2 or 3, and
- At least half of all responses are 1 or 2

Step 3: Re-Visiting Discussion, as required

If consensus has not been reached, Step 1 (Discussion) should be revisited to determine how the concerns of those who responded with 3 and/or 4 might be lessened or alleviated before proceeding again to Step 2 (Decision).

If the AAB cannot easily reach consensus through further discussion, some considerations for discussion include:

- Whether the conditions for consensus exist, and, if not, improving them. For example:
 - Is everyone committed to finding a solution?
 - Does everyone understand the consensus decision-making model?
 - Does the Board have all the information they need to make a decision?
 - Is this a worthwhile decision to be making?
 - Are the choices being proposed adequate and appropriate?
- Whether the discussion has been thorough and honest enough and whether everyone understands the views and issues at hand. If not, revisit the discussion.
- Whether the issue has become polarized by personal opinions or convictions. If so, encourage self-reflection, avoid discussion of binaries and either/or options, and remind members of the shared goal to find a solution.
- Whether the decision must be made now, or whether:
 - It can be divided into smaller points that the committee can agree on now, and others that can be deferred
 - The decision can be re-visited at a subsequent meeting

If consensus cannot be reached after discussing the considerations outlined in Step 3, the Chair may decide to put the issue to a vote (Step 4).

Step 4: Voting

In the, hopefully unlikely, event that consensus cannot be reached through Steps 1-3, a decision may be made by vote, using the same responses outlined in Step 2.

A vote has passed if:

- 75% of responses are 1, 2 or 3, and
At least half of responses are 1 or 2