

# FORMAL CONSENSUS DECISIONMAKING

**Decisionmaking:** There are many ways to make decisions. Methods of decisionmaking can be seen on a continuum with one person having total authority on one end to everyone sharing power and responsibility on the other.

**Formal Consensus:** Formal Consensus has a clearly defined structure. It requires a commitment to active cooperation, disciplined speaking and listening, and respect for the contributions of every member. Likewise, every person has the responsibility to actively participate as a creative individual within the structure.

**Conflict:** Conflict is usually viewed as an impediment to reaching agreements and disruptive to peaceful relationships. Formal Consensus works best in an atmosphere in which conflict, or differing opinions about proposals, is encouraged, supported, and resolved cooperatively with respect, nonviolence, and creativity.

**Cooperation:** Consensus creates a cooperative dynamic rather than a competitive one. Everyone works together to make it the best possible decision for the group. Any concerns are raised and resolved until all voices are heard. Since proposals are not the property of the presenter, a solution can be created more cooperatively.

**Proposals:** In the Formal Consensus process, only proposals which intend to accomplish the common purpose are considered. During discussion of a proposal, everyone works to improve the proposal to make it the best decision for the group.

**Call for Consensus:** The facilitator asks, “*Are there any unresolved concerns?*” or “*Are there any concerns remaining?*” Note that the question is not, “Is there consensus?” or “Does everyone agree?”

**Concern:** All concerns are important and need to be resolved. It is not appropriate for a person to come to a meeting planning to block a proposal, or, during discussion, to express their concerns as *major objections* or *blocking concerns*. A concern must be based upon the principles of the group to justify a block to consensus.

