



Consensus Based
DECISIONMAKING

Arkansas Region Service Committee

AGENDA

CBDM IN EVERYDAY LIFE

WHAT IS CBDM?

CBDM VS. ROBERTS RULE OF ORDER

HOW CBDM WORKS

FACILITATION

STRAW POLLS & VOTING

GROUP PRACTICE

QUESTIONS



**The meeting after the meeting:
Going out for coffee or food after a
meeting**

everyday
LIFE EXAMPLES

Did you realize you've probably
been practicing CBDM all along?

**Does someone say “I make a
motion that we go get coffee at
Java’s Coffee with the intent that
we fellowship”?**

**Or does someone say “Hey,
anyone want to go out for
coffee?”**



WHAT IS CBDM?

CBDM stands for Consensus-Based Decision Making

Consensus may be defined as an acceptable resolution, one that can be supported, even if not the “favorite” of each individual.

Merriam-Webster

general agreement
solidarity of belief or sentiment

Latin translation

“feel together”



WHAT IS CBDM?

CBDM is an understanding that everyone has a piece of the truth, no one has all of it

CBDM gives more opportunity for voices to be heard, and very often actively seeks the minority voice

CBDM is a move from “I need to be heard” to “I need you to be heard”

CBDM is a buffet of options based on principles – there isn’t a rigid guideline for the “right” way.



NON-GOVERNING

2nd Tradition

“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority -- a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscious. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern”. (reprinted from Narcotics Anonymous 12 Traditions)

12th Concept

“In keeping with the spiritual nature of Narcotics Anonymous, our structure should always be one of service, never of government”. (reprinted from the Twelve Concepts of NA Service)



ROBERTS RULES

Complete Robert's Rules is 816 pages (only 699 are considered essential) - Easy to follow 5 page "cheat sheet"

Lots of rules, requirements, niceties that can be manipulated and slow things down.

Divisive: creates an us vs. them atmosphere and makes compromise difficult.

The goal of Robert's Rules is to structure the debate and passage of proposals that win approval through a majority vote (51%) or a super majority (2/3).

The process does not emphasize the goal of full agreement for the service body.

Not Universal.

Does a simple majority really reflect God's will?



Robert's Rules of Order	Consensus Decision Making
Competitive, win/lose	Problem-solving, cooperative
Discussion constrained by motion	Multiple concerns and info can be considered
Discussion takes the form of a debate with a win-lose approach.	Discussion involves active listening and sharing information.
constraints are placed on the order and frequency of speaking.	Norms limit number of times one asks to speak to ensure that each speaker is fully heard.
Differences resolved by voting on motion.	Differences resolved by discussion. Facilitator identifies areas of agreement and names disagreements to push discussion deeper.
Chair calls for a vote.	Facilitator articulates the sense of the discussion, asks if the body understands topic and is ready to reach consensus.
Winners and losers are identified. Decision belongs to the winners.	Group as a whole is responsible for the decision, and the decision belongs to the group.
Chair's vote can determine the decision when votes are tied.	Facilitator can discern if a minority concerns' warrant a delay in a decision.
Dissenters' perspectives suppressed in majority vote.	Dissenters' perspectives are embraced and incorporated into decisions.



SO...WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT CBDM?

CBDM is less about the decision, more about our conscience

- It is a shift from focusing on making the decision to listening to the voices of the group for our decision
- The focus is on having enough support for moving together, rather than a competition between pro and con
- CBDM decisions are decisions made together.



WHY DO WE USE CBDM?

A way for a group of equal to make decisions.

The process rests on the fundamental belief that each person has a piece of the truth, but not one person has the whole truth.

A solution acceptable to everyone.

An agreement on some decisions by all members of a group, rather than a simple majority.



WHY DO WE DO CBDM?

7th Concept

**“All members of a service body bear substantial responsibility for that body’s decisions and should be allowed to fully participate in its decision-making processes”.
(reprinted from the Twelve Concepts of NA Service)**

9th Concept

“All elements of our service structure have the responsibility to carefully consider all viewpoints in their decision-making processes”. (reprinted from the Twelve Concepts of NA Service)



HOW CBDM WORKS

Any member can raise topic for new business.

Any member can join the conversation.

All members can consent (vote).

80% consensus, is needed.

All voices get heard and considered.

With Consensus Based Decision Making, the focus is on building our decision, collaboratively with our voices, to move forward together

CBDM decisions are decisions made together in the belief it is more important that we move forward together than it is that we just move forward



HOW CBDM WORKS

Anyone with experience doing CBDM will tell you: a decision reached by consensus feels a lot more in keeping with the spirit of Tradition Two than a decision formed by a simple majority or, even, a two-thirds majority

- Participants trust the process and the other participants.
- In an environment where every idea is heard and considered, people are usually fine to stand aside instead of block.
- It is very rare when unanimity cannot be found, and proposals are blocked.

Allows for a more natural flow of service work through spiritual principles, not one that would rely heavily on “wordsmithing”



HOW CBDM WORKS

Easy decisions come quick: if no one disagrees on the first straw poll, move on.

Tough decisions may take a bit more time, but the final solution is always better when everyone has had a voice and all ideas have been considered.

Less than full consensus is rare.

Flexible processes allow us to adapt and evolve.

Simple facilitation tools work well – e.g., “Does anyone object?”, or “let’s take a straw poll.”

Moving away from motions toward ideas and goals.



BENEFITS OF CBDM

Over time, everyone feels a part of the process and learns to trust it.

It is easier to accept an unfavorable outcome if you are in a small minority.

There's no need to manipulate the process, e.g., no stacking two pros and two cons in Robert's Rules.

Flexible process allows us to adapt and evolve

Unless decisions are time-sensitive there's always the option to postpone

Simple tools of facilitation work well – i.e. “Any objection to” or “straw poll”

Moving from motion-like proposals, to focusing on the idea or goal first,



FACILITATION

basics



May take longer



Takes practice



**Facilitatory is key
to the process**



**Monitor time and
mood of the room**

FACILITATOR ROLE

Manage the agenda.

Make sure that all are able to speak and ask questions.

Be open minded, unattached to any outcome.

Don't express an opinion.

Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen.

Facilitator LISTENS for the voice of the body

Listening for topics, concerns, compromises

Listening for items that just need discussion, not voting

Listening for compromises rather than competition

The process allows for solutions to emerge

No need for tedious pro/con/second/amendments

Facilitation is leadership NOT government

A facilitators LISTENS to the voice and will of the body



FACILITATOR ROLE

Facilitator presents the proposal to the body

Maker of the proposal speaks to the intent

Open up the floor for clarifying questions

Facilitator asks for reservations about the topic

Facilitator asks if there are any blocks or stand asides

If no one raises any reservations we have reached consensus

Proposals may be modified during the discussion.

In case of no Consensus decide:

- To send back the areas.
- To send to a Committee, or a workgroup.
- Continue Discussion
- Rule the proposal rejected.



UNDERSTANDING THE VOTE

Participants have three options:

- Agree - you're ok with it
- Block - you don't like it and really don't want us to do it
- Stand aside - it may not be something you want, but not enough to stop it

No confusion with abstentions.

Block is basically a veto.

If a Region hates an idea, it can block.

At a minimum, it delays the decision.



CONSENSUS PERCENTAGE

True consensus is 100%, but difficult to achieve in NA

Can be 60% to 100%

Usually 80% to 90%

Calling a decision : Options

A.Proposal Passes

- More than ___% in favor, not postponed, not assigned to workgroup

B.Decision postponed or “tabled”

- Pass or fail, decisions can be postponed

C.Form workgroup or ad-hoc

- If more information is needed for a decision

D.Proposal Fails

- Less than ___% in favor, not postponed, not assigned to workgroup



CONSENSUS OR STRAW POLL

GREEN

AGREE - I agree with the decision

YELLOW

AGREE with RESERVATIONS - I have concerns, but I can live with it.

WHITE

SURRENDER - I go with the group conscious.

ORANGE

STAND ASIDE - I personally can't do this, but I won't stop others from doing it.

RED

BLOCK - I cannot support this or allow the group to support this.



FOR DISCUSSION

GREEN

I have something to say.

YELLOW

I have a question or I need clarification on what was just said.

WHITE

I've heard enough, let's have a consensus or straw poll.

ORANGE

I can clarify what was just said.

RED

STOP!! There is a problem with the process.

- Our agreed upon procedures are not being followed.
- The discussion has gone off topic & and needs to refocus.
- A member is dominating the discussion.
- A member is being otherwise inconsiderate.
- You'd like to suggest a break.



HOW IT FLOWS

