

## OVERVIEW

This **Consensus-Building Workbook** is designed to supplement the content of the **Facilitating Conversations for Consensus** infobrief. Specifically, this workbook contains four separate tools to support school leaders in Virginia in establishing structures and facilitating discussions focused on building consensus within the context of a shared leadership model at their school. The directions for using each tool and a corresponding hyperlink are presented below.

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**Norm-Setting Protocol for Consensus-Building Discussions** – pp. 2-4 ([accessible here](#))

Directions: Follow the steps in this protocol and use the accompanying response spaces to set norms for how your leadership team will conduct consensus-building discussions and reach consensus decisions. This protocol should be distributed to all team members so that they can complete the embedded individual tasks and group activities.

2

**Consensus Decision Proposal Generation Worksheet** – pp. 5-7 ([accessible here](#))

Directions: Answer the questions and respond to the prompts contained in this worksheet to formulate your own *individual* proposal to address a given situation or solve a specific problem currently impacting your school community. This worksheet will help individual team members prepare their own opinions and proposed courses of action prior to larger consensus-focused discussions with the full school leadership team.

3

**Consensus Decision Proposal Analysis and Ranking Template** – pp. 8-9 ([accessible here](#))

Directions: Use this template while your leadership team is discussing various proposals made by individual team members to determine the merits, challenges, and uncertainties associated with each. This template presents prompts and questions to help you evaluate presented proposals and determine if you will support or consent to the implementation of a given course of action. *Please note that this template will need to be reproduced for each presented proposal, so having multiple copies on-hand during discussions is recommended.*

4

**Facilitator's Discussion Guide for Consensus-Building** – pp. 10-11 ([accessible here](#))

Directions: Use this discussion guide to facilitate conversations within a school leadership team meant to result in a consensus course of action related to a particular situation, challenge, or problem impact your school community. Space is provided for participants to take notes related to each question. *Please note that this guide outlines a basic structure for leading consensus conversations and likely will need to be added to or modified depending on the needs of your school.*



## Norm-Setting Protocol for Consensus-Building Discussions

**Directions:** Follow the steps in this protocol and use the accompanying response spaces to set norms for how your leadership team will conduct consensus-building discussions and reach consensus decisions. This protocol should be distributed to all team members so that they can complete the embedded individual tasks and group activities.

### MEMBERS OF LEADERSHIP TEAM

Record the names of the individuals participating as members of the leadership team who will be involved in consensus-building conversations, including yourself.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

### INDIVIDUAL NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS

In the space below, record **three to five norms and expectations** that you believe the leadership team should follow in order to ensure consensus-building discussions are productive and cordial (e.g., not interrupting one another, avoiding name-calling). You may reference the [guiding questions for norm- and expectations-setting](#) presented on p. 4.




Norm/Expectation 1
Norm/Expectation 2
Norm/Expectation 3
Norm/Expectation 4
Norm/Expectation 5

## GROUP NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS

As a group, share out each of your individually composed norms and expectations. Listen for areas of overlap and areas of difference. Discuss how you can consolidate overlapping norms and expectations and how you can mediate between norms and expectations that may be inverses of one another. During this conversation, select **6-10 norms and expectations** that the full group agrees to commit to during consensus-building discussions and consensus decision-making. Record this items in the space provided below.

<i>Group Norm/Expectation 1</i>
<i>Group Norm/Expectation 2</i>
<i>Group Norm/Expectation 3</i>
<i>Group Norm/Expectation 4</i>
<i>Group Norm/Expectation 5</i>
<i>Group Norm/Expectation 6</i>
<i>Group Norm/Expectation 7</i>
<i>Group Norm/Expectation 8</i>
<i>Group Norm/Expectation 9</i>
<i>Group Norm/Expectation 10</i>

## GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR NORM- AND EXPECTATIONS-SETTING

AREA OF CONSIDERATION	GUIDING QUESTIONS
 <p><b>Scheduling and Timing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When will the leadership team meet to review issues and/or situations requiring a consensus?</li> <li>• How long will individual meetings be? Will meeting time vary based on topic, or will it remain consistent across iterations?</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Listening and Participation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can our team encourage active listening by all participants?</li> <li>• How can our team discourage interruptions?</li> <li>• How can we promote participation in group discussions by all member of our team? How do we ensure that all opinions and proposals are heard?</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Decision-Making</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the specific process we will use to make decisions? Will decisions require a certain threshold of agreement to proceed? What does “consensus” look like for our leadership team?</li> <li>• How do we intend to deal with and manage conflicts within our team? What strategies will we deploy to resolve disagreements and to maintain focus on decision-making?</li> <li>• Will all of our meetings be open to others (e.g., the public, represented stakeholders)? If not, how will we report on our discussions beyond our immediate team?</li> </ul>

Norm-Setting Protocol for Consensus-Building Discussions adapted from: [1] Wentworth, M. Forming Ground Rules (Creating Norms).” School Reform Initiative. [https://www.greatschoolspartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/forming\\_ground\\_rules.pdf](https://www.greatschoolspartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/forming_ground_rules.pdf) [2] “What Teacher Leaders Need to Know About...Creating Norms.” National Staff Development Council, September 2006. p. 3. <https://learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2006/09/nsdc-tool.pdf> [3] “Norm-Setting Protocol Instructions.” Data Wise Project, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2013. [https://datawise.gse.harvard.edu/files/datawise/files/norm\\_setting\\_protocol\\_instructions.pdf](https://datawise.gse.harvard.edu/files/datawise/files/norm_setting_protocol_instructions.pdf)



## Consensus Decision Proposal Generation Worksheet

**Directions:** Answer the questions and respond to the prompts contained in this worksheet to formulate your own *individual* proposal to address a given situation or solve a specific problem currently impacting your school community. This worksheet will help individual team members prepare their own opinions and proposed courses of action prior to larger consensus-focused discussions with the full school leadership team.

### INVESTIGATING THE ISSUE REQUIRING A DECISION

What is the situation or problem currently facing your school community that requires a solution? How does the situation or problem impact the school community *as a whole*? Describe the situation or problem, including any factors that must be factored into decision-making around it.

How does the above-described situation or problem impact the *specific constituencies whose interests you represent* (e.g., families, special education staff, administrative staff)? What priorities of those constituencies should be factored into the consensus decision?

### PROPOSAL GENERATION

What actions, investments, and/or programmatic or policy changes do you believe the school should take in response to the above-described situation or problem? Describe these actions, investments, and/or programmatic or policy changes below.

What are the *benefits* of your proposed course of action as described on the preceding page? Consider how this course of action will impact the specific constituencies whose interests you represent, as well as the broader school community. List 3-4 benefits in the table below, and record a rationale for why you believe this benefit will manifest—based on available data, existing research, and/or a viable theory of action.

BENEFIT	EVIDENCE INDICATING BENEFIT WILL MANIFEST

What are the *challenges* of your proposed course of action as described on the preceding page? Consider obstacles to implementing this course of action including logistical barriers, resource limitations, and/or community investment in the decision. List 3-4 challenges in the table below, and record solutions to address each challenge that you can refer to in larger consensus-focused discussions.

CHALLENGE	POTENTIAL SOLUTION

What *objections* do you expect that other team members might have to your proposed course of action as described on p. 5? Consider the competing interests or different priorities that other individuals on the school leadership team might possess. List 3-4 potential objections in the table below. Then, record a counterargument and one or more points upon which you are willing to compromise in pursuit of consensus for each potential objection.

OBJECTION	COUNTERARGUMENT	POSSIBLE POINT(S) OF COMPROMISE

Consensus Decision Proposal Generation Worksheet adapted from: [1] "Overview of Multi-Stakeholder Consensus Building." The Consensus Building Institute. pp. 1-2, 5-8. <https://www.ctdatahaven.org/sites/ctdatahaven/files/HEA%20Consensus%20Building%20Steps%20CBI.pdf> [2] "Consensus-Based Decision-Making Process." The Consensus Council, Inc. pp. 4-5. <http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/38-National-Partner-Recommendation-Consensus-Decision-Making-Process-incl-Modified-Consensus.pdf> [3] "Group Decision-Making and Problem Solving." Free Management Library. <https://managementhelp.org/groups/group-decision-making.htm>



## Consensus Decision Proposal Analysis and Ranking Template

**Directions:** Use this template while your leadership team is discussing various proposals made by individual team members and determine the merits, challenges, and uncertainties associated with each. This template presents prompts and questions to help you evaluate presented proposals to determine if you will support or consent to the implementation of a given course of action. *Please note that this template will need to be reproduced for each presented proposal, so having multiple copies on-hand during discussions is recommended.*

### PROPOSAL SUMMARY

What actions, investments, and/or programmatic or policy changes are integral to this proposal? Summarize these actions, investments, and/or programmatic or policy changes below.

### WEIGHING PROS AND CONS

In the table below, record the potential benefits and the potential challenges associated with this proposal. What positive impacts might this proposal have on the larger school community, as well as the specific constituencies which you represent? What adverse impacts might the proposal have? What obstacles may inhibit successful implementation of this proposal?

POTENTIAL BENEFITS	POTENTIAL DETRIMENTS	ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES

## OUTLINING REMAINING QUESTIONS

What questions do you still have about the proposal and its potential impacts? Record these questions in the spaces provided below. Additional space is provided to record notes on the question answers as they are asked.

QUESTION	ANSWER

## ASSESSING WILLINGNESS TO CONSENT

Based on the benefits, detriments, and challenges recorded on the prior page and the questions and answers recorded above, how likely are you to support this proposal's implementation?

- I am willing to give the proposal my **full support without any changes**.
- I am willing to give the proposal my **full support as long as certain changes are made**.
- I am willing to **consent** to this proposal's implementation in its current form but would **prefer that revisions be made**.
- I am willing to **consent** to this proposal's implementation in its current form but would **prefer a different proposal**.
- I **cannot consent** to this proposal in its current form.

If you would like to see changes to this proposal, please describe what those changes would look like in the space provided below.

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Consensus Decision Proposal Analysis and Ranking Template adapted from: [1] Moran, J. and A. McCarty. "Consensus Decision Making Matrix." Public Health Foundation, June 2017. pp. 1-5. [https://www.phf.org/resourcestools/Pages/Consensus\\_Decision\\_Making\\_Matrix.aspx](https://www.phf.org/resourcestools/Pages/Consensus_Decision_Making_Matrix.aspx) [2] "Consensus Decision Process with Brainstorming and Consensus Tools." Kansas Coalition of Sexual and Domestic Violence. pp. 5-7. <https://www.kcsdv.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Consensus.pdf>



## Facilitator's Discussion Guide for Consensus-Building

**Directions:** Use this discussion guide to facilitate conversations within a school leadership team meant to result in a consensus course of action related to a particular situation, challenge, or problem impact your school community. Space is provided for participants to take notes related to each question. *Please note that this guide outlines a basic structure for leading consensus conversations and likely will need to be added to or modified depending on the needs of your school.*

What is the problem or challenge we wish to address? What aspects of this situation should we be especially mindful of as we explore solutions and weigh our options?

Notes

How is this problem currently impacting our school community? Are there any specific constituencies who are more adversely impacted than others? Do any constituencies benefit from the current situation?

Notes

What ideas do we have about how to address this situation, challenge, or problem? What are the potential benefits and obstacles associated with each idea?

Notes

Which of the previously discussed ideas do we believe has the most merit and would best address the situation, challenge, or problem we currently face? Should we combine aspects of multiple proposals into one solution?

Notes

Does everyone consent to or support implementation of the proposal? If not, what concerns prohibit you from offering your consent or support?

Notes

*If consensus is* unreached: How can we amend the proposal to garner your consent or support? What changes must be made?

Notes

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Facilitator's Discussion Guide for Consensus-Building adapted from: "Consensus Flowchart." Seeds for Change.  
<https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/consflow.pdf>