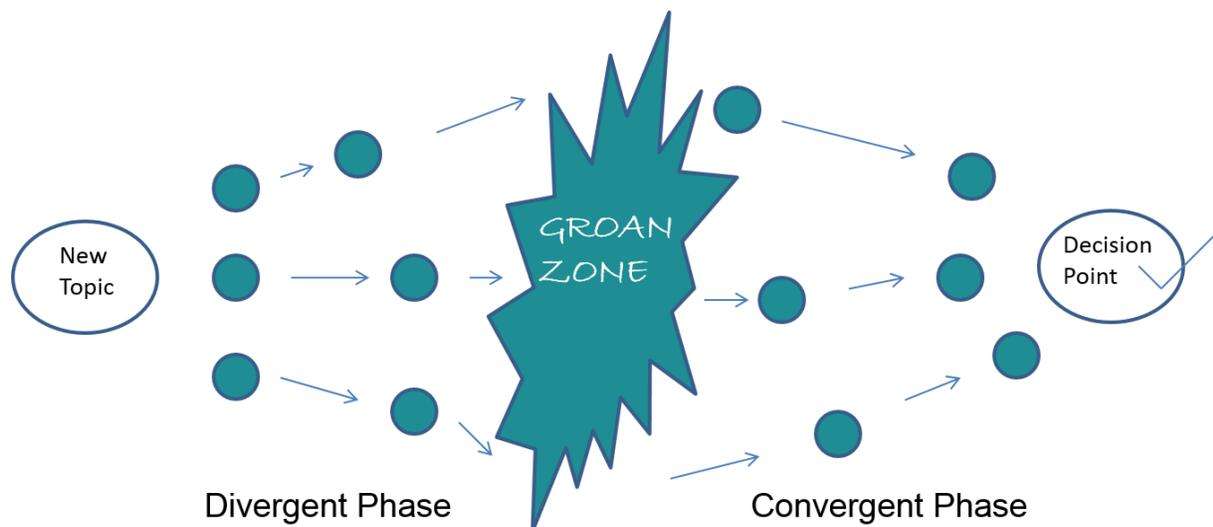


BUILDING COMMITMENT THROUGH GROUP DECISION MAKING

How Groups (Really) Make Decisions



Because groups move through three phases when making decisions, it is critical for a leader to be aware of the phases and to have tools to use for each phase to support the group in coming to a decision. Use these tools when a shared decision is desired. If you simply want to tell a group something, then do that and don't worry about using group-decision-making tools.

But if you want stakeholders to share in the decision, to be engaged when their perspectives are heard, understood, and integrated into solutions, then consider the three phases and choose the tools that will help you accomplish that.

Your role as a leader is to:

- 1) Promote mutual understanding among group members
- 2) Foster inclusivity in solutions selected
- 3) Structure the discussion to support everyone to do their best thinking

Selecting the Right Tool for Group Decision Making

This tools matrix will help you select the tool that will be helpful at specific stages of group decision making. Some tools are particularly effective for special circumstances.

Group Decision Making Tools Matrix			
Decision Making Stages 1-3	Useful Tools to Consider	Special Circumstances and Recommended Tools	
I DIVERGE The group needs to generate ideas about this topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Go-Rounds • Individual Work then group work • Un-represented Perspectives • Exaggerations • Seven Words or Less • Talking Stick • Undiscussable 	A) 1-2 people dominate discussion or a power difference inhibits flow of ideas	•
		B) The topic is especially sensitive or contentious and people are not willing to speak out	•
II GROAN ZONE The group has a lot to consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sort and categorize ideas • Role Storming • Reframing • Focus on what is going well • Strengthening relationships • Changing Perspectives 	C) 1-2 people have strong opinions and 'jump' to a premature solution	•
III CONVERGE The group needs to narrow down the choices and make a decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying evaluation criteria • Decision Rule • Decision Point • Continuum of agreement: thumbs up/flat/ down or stop light 	D) Opinions widely differ and agreement is unlikely E) Lack of response for decision, unclear if decision is made or if there is consensus to proceed	•

Find additional materials on "Building Commitment Through Group Decision Making" in the Resource Library at www.ruralcenter.org