Group Decision Making: Moving Toward Change

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Rural Health Innovations (RHI), LLC, is a subsidiary of the National Rural Health Resource Center (The Center), a non-profit organization. Together, RHI and The Center are the nation’s leading technical assistance and knowledge centers in rural health. In partnership with The Center, RHI connects rural health organizations with innovations that enhance the health of rural communities.
The National Rural Health Resource Center (The Center) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to sustaining and improving health care in rural communities. As the nation’s leading technical assistance and knowledge center in rural health, The Center focuses on five core areas:

- Transition to Value and Population Health
- Collaboration and Partnership
- Performance Improvement
- Health Information Technology
- Workforce
Engagement: To attract and hold attention, gain support.

- Board Members
- Providers
- Patients
- Staff
- Partners
- Network Members
How Groups Make Decisions

Diversity of ideas

New Topic

Decision Point

Time
Only in your dreams!
How Groups (really) Make Decisions

“Business as usual” can rely on familiar opinions and solutions
How Groups (really) Make Decisions

New Topic

Decision Point

Time
Complex issues with no obvious solutions often require consideration of unfamiliar or unpopular opinions.
How Groups (really) Make Decisions

New Topic

Decision Point

Distrust
Lack of understanding of the process
Unwillingness to support the decision
How Groups (really) Make Decisions

- New Topic
- Divergent Phase
- Convergent Phase
- Decision Point
Divergent vs. Convergent Phases

- Generate alternatives
- Free-for-all discussion
- Gathering diverse points of view
- Unpacking the logic of a problem

- Evaluate alternatives
- Summarize key points
- Sorting ideas into categories
- Arriving at a general conclusion
How Groups (really) Make Decisions

New Topic

Divergent Phase

GROAN ZONE

Convergent Phase

Decision Point
The Groan Zone

“The Groan Zone”
- Confusion
- Frustration
- Misunderstandings
- Lack of progress; “feeling stuck”

“Sticking With It”:
- Potential for new solutions (beyond familiar thinking)
- Breakthroughs
Leadership Tools for Each Phase

**Divergent Phase**
- Types of structured go-arounds
- Individual work, then group work
- Unrepresented perspectives
- Un-discussables
- Exaggerations

**Groan Zone**
- Reframing
- Role-storming
- Focus on what is going well
- Sort and categorize ideas
- Strengthen relationships
- Changing Perspectives

**Convergent Phase**
- Clarify evaluation criteria
- Continuum of Agreement
How Groups (really) Make Decisions

- New Topic
- Decision Point
- Divergent Phase
- Convergent Phase
Group Decision Making and Stakeholder Engagement

There are three phases in group decision making:

1. Divergence
2. Groan Zone
3. Convergence

Use the methods described on the *Building Commitment Through Group Decision-Making* worksheet to engage your stakeholders in each phase.
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