

## Working Towards Consensus Method

### Sample Process for Reaching Consensus in Groups

#### Fist to Five

**This process helps staff come to consensus when choosing a topic to pursue further or in choosing a collective course of action to take:**

After a list has been generated of possible actions or ideas to pursue, number each item. It is ideal to have a list of no more than five or six. Allow time for each item to be explained. Ask that the explanation be stated by a single person and that the explanation provide any necessary background information for others to understand. Explanations cannot be more than one minute in length. After each item has been explained, ask if anyone would like to participate as an advocate for any of the listed items. As an advocate, your time is limited to two minutes. The advocate must state why this action or idea is important. Do not worry if not all items have an advocate. The group process will support individual opinions.

When all advocates have had their time to share, a collective vote is taken. The facilitator asks the group to look at and consider each item and vote with their hand. Participants will hold up:

- 5 fingers if they totally agree
- 4 fingers if they think it's a good idea and will support it
- 3 fingers if they are neutral but will support
- 2 fingers if they don't agree, but will support
- 1 finger if they won't support
- Fist, if they will resist - BUT WILL HELP FIND ANOTHER SOLUTION

#### Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down

Use this method in small groups to get a quick reading on group consensus. Be sure to take the time for neutral and thumbs down explanations.

- Thumbs up if they agree
- Thumb sideways if they are neutral - explain why
- Thumb down if they disagree - explain reasons for disagreement

#### Group Agreement Scale

Use this method two or three times to gauge group support. Make the following voting indicators for each member of the group:

3 = total agreement

2 = support idea with reservations

1 = can't support

? = need to have more questions answered

Write statement, concept, or action so all group members can see it and ask everyone to hold up one of their numbers or a question mark. Tally the numbers and fully discuss the questions. Poll again and continue cycle of discussion and voting until highest level of agreement is achieved.