

Make decisions, together.

In your campaign journey together, your team will have to make hundreds of decisions, big and small. People in your group might have different ideas about what roads to take. And sometimes you can't get all the information you want, before you need to choose a path. This workshop explores how to make good decisions, together.

Outcomes of this training

- Agreements about how your group works together, including simple rituals
- Learning about different ways to make decisions
- Practice making decisions together
- Reflecting on your group's decision-making habits.

Preparation

- Gather materials: you'll need a way to record the outcomes of your group discussion for all to see - like a large paper flipchart, or a whiteboard. This helps participants feel that their input has been heard.
- You might share the 'Key Concepts' (page 3), for participants to read in advance. If not, make sure you confidently present the concepts to your group - practice! You might also make print-outs to share.
- If you are unsure, talk to your 350.org contact person or coach.

After your workshop, you can email community@GoFossilFree.org with feedback from your group - what worked well? How can we improve this guide?

Suggested Workshop Outline

| ~90 mins | Activity |
|----------|--|
| 10 min | <p>Introductions!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review the purpose and agenda for our training ● Go-round with prompts: “One thing you may not know about me is _____” and “I chose to join this team because _____” |
| 15 min | <p>#1 - Group Agreements - how will we work together?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduce the concept, share examples & experiences. ● Generate a shared list together ● Test for universal agreement, adjust if needed. |
| 15 min | <p>#2 - Simple rituals - how will we open and close group meetings? In small groups, share examples of simple group opening and closing rituals. Find 1 or 2 ideas to offer to your group. As a whole group, make a decision - agree on a ritual to start & end meetings!</p> |
| 20 mins | <p>#3 - How can we make better decisions together? Collectively, reflect on and celebrate the decisions we’ve already made together, what we have already achieved. In pairs, discuss what <i>helps</i> good decision-making, and what <i>gets in the way</i>. Then return and share learnings as a whole group.</p> |
| 15 mins | <p>What are our next decisions to make together?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● List the next decisions your group wants to make ● Can we make any decisions in the time available now? If yes, do! |
| 15 min | <p>Conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is one key learning, something you are ‘taking away’? ● Feedback for the organizer: what was good about this training, what would you change for next time? ● What are the next steps after this meeting? <p>When the work is done, finish with your group’s new closing ritual!</p> |

Key Concepts

#1 - Group Agreements

'Group Agreements' are a list of commitments that your group members make to each other, about how they will work together within your group, to achieve shared goals and build the team. They can also be called Communication Agreements, Norms, Ground Rules, or, more formally, a Code of Conduct.

Agreements support everyone to feel included and safe to express their opinions. It is as part of building internal democracy, and enables full participation in your group.

Some examples include:

- We treat each other with respect.
- We welcome different experiences and ideas.
- We are curious: we seek to understand each others' perspectives.
- We start and end meetings on time.
- We are present and focused when we meet, minimising distractions.
- We put digital devices away during meetings.
- All our meetings start with a clear goal, and end with clear next steps.

#2 - Group Rituals!

A ritual is repeated pattern of actions, performed for a purpose.

All groups - formal or informal, spiritual or secular - develop habits and patterns, either purposefully, or by accident. These rituals define group's culture, or "way of doing things". We've found that groups who choose their rituals intentionally, to build community, will develop a stronger sense of solidarity, have more ease in decision-making, and have more impactful work.

Examples of simple opening or closing rituals your group might use:

- Singing, drumming, or silence
- Passing an object around a circle
- Reading a poem, prayer, or short verse
- Sharing food or drink
- Joining hands and sharing silence
- Reading over the Group Agreements.
- Sharing celebrations and challenges
- Playing a game, dancing, stretching

#3 - Making decisions together

Each time your group meets, you will make decisions together. The way you make decisions is critical for the success of your groups and of our movement!

There are many ways to make decisions as a group. For example:

- Discussing to building alignment, until there is consensus
- Voting with 'majority' or 'supermajority' thresholds
- A smaller project group being empowered to make a decision, or to make a recommendation that your group decides upon.
- A person with expertise is empowered to decide - within certain bounds.
- An individual may take initiative and make a decision without consultation

Your group may use all of these methods for decision-making, at various times.

For example, your group might:

- identify a skilled spokesperson to speak to the media on behalf of your group, according to an agreed communications plan,
- take a majority vote to decide between two different group names or logos,
- gradually build consensus around a campaign strategy
- task a project group to decide on a venue and agenda for an event, and,
- someone might take initiative and order pizza for a group meeting.

Choosing the right decision-making method for each decision is a skill - it takes practice, and you won't always get it right. That's OK!

Social movements succeed when lots of people volunteer their time and energy to work towards a shared vision for the future. We risk losing people from our movements if people feel like their voice doesn't matter in your group's decision-making, or if too much time and energy is spent making decisions that people don't find important.

Our challenge is to make sure that our decision-making is inclusive: ensuring that people feel heard, and that everyone's time and energy is respected and used effectively. Inclusive, efficient decision making keeps people motivated to stay with your group, and helps to grow our movements for change!

Exercises

Exercise #1 - Group Agreements

Share the concept, then ask your group: *What are some experiences you have had using Group Agreements in another setting - in your family, at school, workplace or a community group? How do Group Agreements help a team to be more effective?*

Invite your group to generate principles for their Group Agreement:

Record the ideas as you discuss, and display for all to see. You could use a 'popcorn brainstorm' - anyone with an idea can speak up to offer an idea - or go around, inviting each person to add an idea. Encourage everyone to contribute. Avoid making too many of your own suggestions, so your group feels shared ownership of the outcomes.

What shared behaviours would help you to achieve your goals in your group? What are things you can do to maximise the value you get from meetings? What do you need others to do, to help you participate fully in your group? Finish these sentences: When we meet as a team, we should always_____. When we meet as a team, we should never_____.

A list is good - but it's not a 'group agreement' until your group as a whole agrees!

So, ask: *"Does anyone have any hesitations about any of the proposals on this list? If any of these ideas make someone uncomfortable, or if they present a barrier to your participation, let us know, and we can make a change."*

It is important to not push people to reluctantly agree to something that they have reservations about. For example, if 'no cell phones during meetings' is a rule, one of your group members who is a caregiver for a family member may be uncomfortable - they might need to be available in case of emergencies. You can easily change the rule to support your group member's participation.

Once there are no more hesitations, ask everyone in your group for enthusiastic agreement! A show of hands or verbal affirmation helps.

Congratulate your group on making these agreements! They are an important part of a successful group's culture and identity.

Keep a copy of your list of Group Agreements, for future. You might display it in your meeting space, or share it on your group's other communication channels. Agreements can be updated over time.

Exercise #2 - Group Rituals!

As a large group, introduce the concept. Briefly invite discussion: *Why is ritual important? How can rituals help a group?*

Discuss in groups of 2-4 people, for 5-10 minutes: *What are some examples of rituals we use in our daily lives? What ideas do we have for rituals that we would like to try, for opening and closing meetings? Identify your favourite 1 or 2 ritual ideas that you would like to share with the larger group.*

As a large group: Invite each small group report back on the ideas they generated for group rituals. Make a group decision. *"Can we agree on a ritual to try, for opening and closing our meetings?"*

Exercise #3 - How can we make better decisions together?

By this point in the workshop, your group will (hopefully!) have made two decisions together - your communication agreements, and a group ritual. Now we will reflect on the process of making decisions.

1 - As a large group, list some other decisions you've already made together.

Take a moment to give your group some praise, and celebrate what you have already achieved together!

2 - Invite some group reflection on how we made those decisions, to draw out both positive experiences, and criticisms.

This is a moment to reflect and learn. Try to focus more energy on drawing out positive experiences, but also welcome criticisms - these can help us learn.

- Which of these decisions felt most positive, and which were more difficult?
- What did we do, which made the positive decisions feel positive?

3 - In small groups or pairs, invite people to discuss the following questions for a few minutes, then report back to the larger group, recording the answers on two sides of a flip-chart:

| What helps us make good decisions? | What gets in the way of making good decisions? |
|------------------------------------|--|
| | |

4 (optional, if there is time) Some additional questions to reflect on:

If you don't have time in this session, keep these ideas for later.

- When might we delegate smaller working groups to make a decision or recommendation, versus discussing in the whole group?
- What is an example of something that could become a big disagreement in the group? How might we handle it?
- What would your group do if they felt like they didn't have enough information? What are examples of when might choose to wait, and gather more information, before deciding? What are examples of when you might make a decision anyway, and move ahead, despite the uncertainty?
- What should we do if we feel that a decision of the group should be revisited?

Links to more resources

- In meetings, sometimes it can feel difficult to reach decisions. But no matter your group structure or style, here are some tips on [helping your group make decisions](#).
- Add a lot of [games and energizers](#) to spice up your meetings. (And some other [facilitation tools](#) from our trainings website: trainings.350.org)
- Your group feeling a little stuck – doing the same old tactics or rituals? Here's a tool to help [Expand a group's comfort zones](#).