DECISION MAKING TOOL

HEADWATERS™
FOUNDATION *for* JUSTICE

Introduction

At Headwaters, we believe good decisions come from listening to the people closest to the work and those who will be affected. This decision-making tool provides a clear framework for how we make choices as an organization. It lays out who to consult, how to explore ideas and options, and ways to come to agreement together. Developed with input from staff and inspired by proven models, this tool reflects Headwaters' commitment to support consistent, transparent, and equitable decision-making across the organization.

Advice Process

Default Decision-Making

The **advice process** is a decision-making model that requires individuals or groups to make sure they are getting input from relevant members of the team before making a decision. **Our default mode of decision-making that we use at Headwaters is the advice process.**

Within an advice process we:

1. Identify the person responsible for the decision, who should be someone close to the decision and/or most well-equipped to be the decision-maker.
2. That person proactively seeks advice from:
   - Everyone who will be significantly impacted by the decision.
   - People who will help them make a better decision (due to particular experience/expertise they may have).
3. That person makes the decision as an individual or may choose to ask a group of people to make the decision together. A group can include the full staff.

Decision Making Steps

When making decisions using the advice process, staff should follow the steps below. Depending on the level of consultation needed, not all steps may need to be completed. Consult the decision-making table on **pages 4-5** to determine what level of consultation is needed.

1. Reflect and Plan

Project lead identifies who needs to be consulted in their decision-making process and, if desired, completes the decision-making reflection and planning tool (Appendix A).

2. Research

Project lead gathers information about best practices (if relevant) and other important information to inform the decision and present to consulted staff.

3. Explore Interests

If gathering interests from multiple people, all parties should be together at the same time so staff can benefit from hearing one another's perspectives and ask each other questions. (Appendix B)

4. Generate Options

Brainstorm options that meet the most pressing interests of the majority of the people. Project lead creates opportunities for consulted staff to participate in the options generation process to determine what's possible. (Appendix C)

5. Draft

Project lead develops a draft plan.

6. Feedback

Project lead shares draft with consulted staff for feedback and discussion.

7. Proposal

Project lead revises draft and shares with consulted staff.

8a. Project Lead Decides

Project lead decides

8b. Consensus Process

If Necessary

Project lead creates space for further deliberation, and consensus using the fist-to-five process (Appendix D)

9. Inform

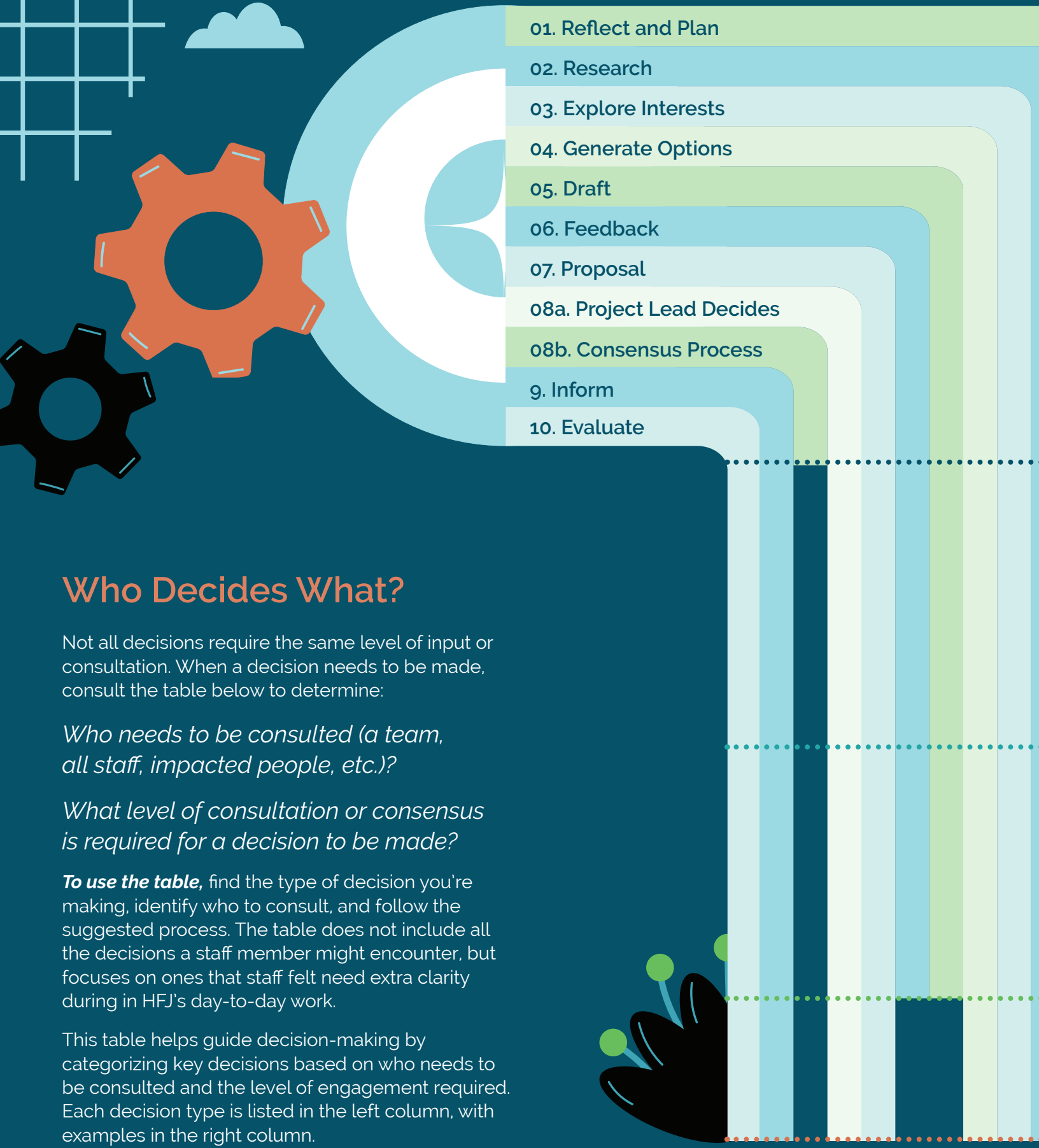
Project lead informs other key stakeholders of the decision-making process and final decision for transparency.

10. Evaluate

Project lead schedules time to evaluate the decision and the decision-making process used to get to the decision.

NOTE: *"Project lead" may be either an individual or staff team that is leading a body of work. Examples of teams include organizational departments as well as staff committees and circles (e.g. Organizational Development Committee, Directors Circle etc.)*

Categorizing Key Decisions



Who Decides What?

Not all decisions require the same level of input or consultation. When a decision needs to be made, consult the table below to determine:

Who needs to be consulted (a team, all staff, impacted people, etc.)?

What level of consultation or consensus is required for a decision to be made?

To use the table, find the type of decision you're making, identify who to consult, and follow the suggested process. The table does not include all the decisions a staff member might encounter, but focuses on ones that staff felt need extra clarity during in HFJ's day-to-day work.

This table helps guide decision-making by categorizing key decisions based on who needs to be consulted and the level of engagement required. Each decision type is listed in the left column, with examples in the right column.

Consultation Process	*Decision Type*
ALL-STAFF *decides with* ALL-STAFF	• Any changes to Compensation Philosophy and policies • Significant changes to cultural building blocks • Defining and deepening org commitment to Black liberation, Native self-determination, and gender justice • Any changes to health & safety protocols • Significant changes to hiring/onboarding policies and practices • Significant changes to organizational structure • Any changes to performance management and core practices • Significant changes to organizational budget that may require organizational-wide cuts to team budgets or staff lay-offs • Significant challenges related to a major donor or funder that threaten the integrity of the organization or its ability to meet commitments.
PROJECT LEAD *decides with* ALL-STAFF	• Board is making major changes to its by-laws or structure • Project lead is developing a new major initiative that will significantly shift the work of the organization, will have an impact on other teams, and will require additional resources to get underway. • Project lead wants to develop and post a new position that has not existed before.
PROJECT LEAD *decides with* IMPACTED PEOPLE	• Org-wide and team annual budgets • Funder relationships/grant management • Individual donor relations • External communications • IT/technology concerns, upgrades or changes • Team/individual work plans
PROJECT LEAD DECIDES	• Issues of legal compliance • Intra-team practices • Intra-project decisions

APPENDIX A.

Decision-making Reflection and Planning Tool

Adapted from RVC Seattle

- What decisions need to be made related to this project?
- What is the deadline for making the decision? Is it time sensitive?
- Who is responsible for making this decision? Who is the project lead or lead circle? Is this an all-staff decision? *(Consult table on page 4)*
- Who will be consulted for advice?
- Who has expertise in this area?
- Who will be impacted by this decision?
- Who should be informed once the decision has been made?
- What support do you need to make a good decision?
- What criteria will be used to make the decision?
- How will you develop the criteria?
- Who should you share the criteria with?
- How will you make this decision?
- What is the timeline for making this decision?
- When will you announce the decision-making process is underway?
- When will you inform people the decision was made and how?
- When will you revisit this decision to learn from it?

APPENDIX B.

How To Use The Advice Process: Inquiry And Interests Exploration

When you are in the advice process you are charged with gathering information from experts and/or impacted people. Because of power dynamics related to role, tenure and social identity, when we ask people for their input we may be met with people advocating for a position, or people shrinking back because they do not feel empowered to offer their input. In order to get underneath positions and open up space for input, it is important to build skills in interest exploration.

Interests are people's hopes, fears, wants, and needs in any given situation. They are the things we actually care about. People's interests are not always clear, even to themselves. Therefore, those who are trying to gather information for advice process practice inquiry and deep listening. They must create enough time to ask questions and keep asking questions as people peel away the layers to get to the core of what matters. You may use the guide below as a support as you gather interests with your colleagues.

Steps for Exploring Interests in a Group

1. Manage your reactivity to others' positions

a. Pause, take a breath, use somatic strategies to settle yourself
b. Become aware of your own judgments or assumptions and do what you can to put them to the side
c. Focus your attention on the other person or people

2. Ask the group to spend some time exploring interests

a. Invite group members to share what matters to them about this issue
b. Use a go-round to hear everyone voice
c. Record all the interests

3. Use inquiry skills to understand other's interests

a. Listen without interpretation or judgment
b. Reflect back what you heard; check for understanding
c. Ask open, curious questions to understand more of what they care about
d. Do NOT try to influence or persuade

4. Summarize

a. Review the recorded interests
b. Look for themes - where is there alignment, and what still needs to be talked through?
c. Organize interests into a list or grid so people can see them easily

APPENDIX C.

Options Generation and Proposal Development

Once interests have surfaced, the decision-maker or decision-making body (in the case of an all-staff or circle decision) can enter a period of options generation, with the goal of building options that meet the most pressing interests of the majority of people. Creativity should drive this options generation process before practicality. The options can then be narrowed to a few options that meet multiple interests, and these can be developed into proposals. Proposals can then be shared with impacted people and experts for comment, question and refinement.

It is important to remember that there may be times when not all interests can be met. Interest gathering is about giving time and space to allow all parties to be heard with genuine empathy and with the hope that we can also meet interests.

APPENDIX D.

Consensus or Voting?

In the spirit of making wise decisions collectively, when more than one person is making a decision, we strive for consensus. This means that all consulted parties agree with the proposed decision and are willing to carry it out. No one will block or obstruct the decision or its implementation and everyone agrees to support the decision and implement it.

- Ensure everyone has time to review proposals and prepare questions
- Begin with clarifying questions to ensure the content makes sense to everyone
- Open up the floor for substantive questions, concerns.
- Create space for discussion and deliberation.
- Utilize the Fist to Five model to help flush out where the group stands
- Check for consensus and particularly blocks to a proposal going through.
- Understand the difference between major blocks and our commitment to "good enough."
- Re-open discussion if there are major blocks or move to a decision if there are minor changes requested and finalize.
- If major blocks persist, determine if you can go back to options generation, or if a decision must be made through a vote or other mechanism.

About Fist-to-Five voting

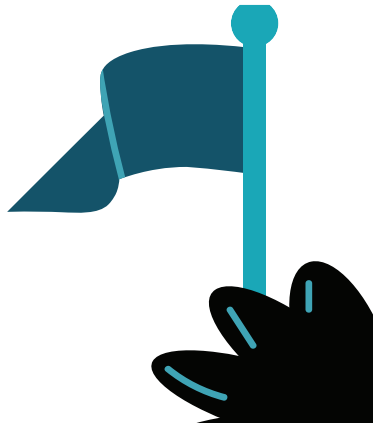
The Fist-to-Five model is a consensus decision making tool that Headwaters uses to make decisions throughout the organization. Fist-to-Five allows a decision-making group to move forward proposals while allowing for more input and nuance than simple yes/no votes. This tool allows a group to understand the "quality of a yes" - whether a group is neutral, satisfied, or enthusiastic about a proposal - as well as identify areas of concern. It can be used both at a "temperature check" tool and as a tool to take a formal vote when making a decision about a proposal.

To use fist-to-five voting, individuals or groups present decision-makers with a proposal and provide time to discuss any questions, concerns, and get clarity on the proposal. Once all voting participants have clarity on the proposal at hand, participants vote by raising their hands with the number of fingers that indicate their degree of agreement with the proposal. Votes can be seen by everyone in the room, allowing everyone to understand the level of agreement in the group.

The Fist-to-Five scale is as follows

FIST	Block "I object and will not support this proposal moving forward." (NOTE: this is used for serious concerns, often around major misalignment with values or goals)
1	"I have significant concerns or see significant problems that need to be addressed before I can pass this"
2	"I have moderate concerns or see moderate issues that need to be addressed before I can pass this"
3	"I am fine with this / I can live with this / I have minor concerns that I don't need to discuss"
4	"This sounds good to me"
5	"I am an enthusiastic yes! I am fully on board"

- 3, 4, and 5's are all passing votes.
- 2, 1, and blocks are all votes that must pause a decision making process for discussion.
- If a decision passes with all 4s and 5s, no discussion is needed.
- If a decision passes with 4s, 5,s and 3s, give 3s the space to name any concerns, if present, so that those moving forward the proposal can be aware of any potential issues.
- If a vote includes any blocks, 1s, or 2s, discussion must reopen with those people naming concerns and problems.
- If blocks, 1s, and 2s, still feel they cannot pass the proposal after discussion and any additional clarification, the proposal must be reworked. This can happen within a decision-making session, followed by an immediate revote, or may require for the individuals bringing forward the proposal to take time to rework the proposal and then come back at another time to vote. There may be multiple rounds of revotes and reworks within a single meeting.



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