

What does "consensus" mean?

Everyone can support the decision. Not everyone needs to believe it is the "best" decision, yet everyone agrees to live with it, to stand in support of its success and to not work against it.

What is "Fist to Five"?

The **Fist to Five Consensus Building Process** is a tool facilitators can use when leading groups in decision making. At any point in the discussion, the facilitator can call for a "Fist to Five" to quickly and easily know each person's opinion (test for consensus) at any given time.

How do you use it?

- Distribute or post this "Fist to Five" chart.



- Explain that at different points in the discussion, you will ask people to indicate their opinion of a decision proposal being discussed by holding up a fist or any number of fingers up to all five. (Or, alternatively, people can indicate their opinion by stating it using the language of "fist" to "five.") A decision proposal is any idea, suggestion, resolution, or plan of action that is put forward as an answer to the issue or topic for which a decision is needed.
- Open the meeting and introduce the issue or topic for which a decision is needed. Provide as much background as you are able and invite others to share what they know about the issue or topic as well. As the discussion goes forward, decision proposals may organically arise. In other cases, you may need to call for decision proposals.
- At any point after a decision proposal has been made, you can assess the group's current position by calling for a show/statement of "Fist to Five." Here is how to read the responses:
 - ✓ "Fist," "one," or "two" - These require additional discussion to determine what else needs to be considered. Negotiation and compromise may be necessary in order to raise these responses to a "three" or higher.
 - ✓ "Three" - While acceptable, a "three" strongly suggests the need for the facilitator to ask what else, if anything, can be done for the "three" people to raise their responses to "four" or "five." Nothing may be needed nor can be done; however, it is important to clarify whether the "three" indicates a substantive reservation that needs to be addressed.
 - ✓ Responses of "four" or "five" mean consensus has been achieved and the proposal can be considered "approved." The group can now move forward to implementation of the proposal and/or to the next issue or topic. Ideally, "approval" is achieved when all responses are at least "three" and mostly "four" and "five."