



# Proposal Based Decision Making: Guide for Facilitators

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| <b>Make a Proposal</b>     | <b>Look for Convergence</b>                          | <b>Show Thumbs</b><br> | <b>Build Support</b>                  | <b>Thumbs up!</b><br> | <b>Commit to Action</b>          |
|----------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| <i>Who has a proposal?</i> | <i>What proposal will get the group's thumbs up?</i> | <i>Where are you? Support? Don't support? Not sure?</i>   | <i>What will bring your thumb up?</i> | <i>Proposal adopted!</i>   | <i>Who will do what by when?</i> |



## 1. Decisions that stick

Are you frustrated when groups can't make decisions and get something done? Do you find sometimes that even when a decision is made, nothing happens? Proposal Based Decision Making creates the opportunity for equity by making space for everyone to provide input and is used to get decisions that stick, decisions that everyone can support and that lead to action.

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## 2. Proposal Based Decision Making

### ✓✓ Make proposals

Ask group to take an idea of what they want and use proposal language to make a proposal. Proposals can be generated individually or in small groups. Proposal should be clearly written so that it can be understood without further explanation. Share with group using a calm, constructive tone of voice starting with "I propose that ..."

### ✓✓ Look for convergence

Invite people to walk the room to review all proposals, identify potential areas of convergence, and form new proposals. Consider proposals as different options or possible decisions the group might make. Ask group who has a proposal to bring forward.

### ✓✓ See where people are – use a show of thumbs

Ask people to show where they are by a show of thumbs. Do they support a proposal (thumb up), are they not sure (thumb sideways), or do they not support (thumb down)? Set expectation that if sideways or down participants will be asked, "what will bring your thumb up?" This is data for full group so invite participants to raise hands high.

### ✓✓ Build proposals everyone can support

Ask people whose thumbs are sideways or down (not sure or don't agree) "what will bring their thumb up?" Listen to their issues and encourage new proposals (or amendments) to address the issues. Invite everyone to make proposals that everyone can support and ask the entire group to do the work of finding convergence. Document each new proposal on a new piece of paper visible to group.

## ✓✓ All thumbs up! Decision made

A proposal is adopted and becomes a decision when everyone's "thumb is up" and everyone can move forward with the proposal.

## ✓✓ Commit to Action

The group moves to action by deciding who will do what by when to implement the decision. This might be captured on a chart and/or through a journal reflection.

### 3. Tips

Encourage participants to:



Build on a proposal or make another proposal instead of criticizing



Ask questions about others' ideas instead of only advocating for their own ideas.



Address concerns and issues with proposals instead of ignoring other points of view



Make proposals and say what will bring you up instead of holding back

### 4. The talk that moves to action

Using Proposal Based Decision Making can turn frustration into decisions that lead to action. The following are examples of frustrations turning into constructive proposals:

| Frustrations  | Proposal language that turns frustration into action:   |
|---|---|
| The meeting is going on too long.   | <b>I propose</b> that we conclude this meeting in five minutes, and use those five minutes to say what we want to do at our next meeting. |
| The meeting devolves into a circular discussion, repetitive comments and conversations that "go nowhere". | <b>I propose</b> that we review the issues under discussion and then say what we want to accomplish by discussing each of these issues.   |
| People talking at cross-purposes, or about different topics simultaneously.                               | <b>I propose</b> that we list the topics under discussion, and then decide which topic to discuss first.                                  |
| You and others are using their PDAs, reading correspondence or having side conversations.                 | <b>I propose</b> that we pause and see what people want to do right now in order for our time together to be well spent.                  |
| You have been sitting too long and are about to fall asleep.  | <b>I propose</b> that we take a stretch break, come back to this discussion with new energy and decide what to do next.                   |