

**Based on Sociocratic Governance, Formal Consensus decision-making, Appreciative Inquiry, the U-Theory and the 4 Powers of Integrity. Resolver is copyright Nathaniel White 2010, under a Creative Commons Attribution-Commercial-Share Alike 3.0 United Kingdom License.**

**Substantial material taken from the 'Dynamic Governance Cheat Sheet' and 'On Conflict and Consensus'. For more info visit [decisionlab.org.uk/Resources](http://decisionlab.org.uk/Resources)**

Resolver is a way for teams to make decisions that include everyone's insights and creativity while quickly getting things done.

**Circle Meeting:** This is where you decide policy, and delegate authority to make operational decisions.

**Resolver**  
a game for teams

For each agenda item:

If you have no proposal:  
**Proposal Forming p5**

If you have a proposal:  
**Consent Process p6**

Use **Role-making, Election, and Evaluation** as agenda items in Circle Meetings. Role-making produces a Proposal; Election fills a Role and Evaluation gives feedback on Role performance.

**Operations Meeting:** This is where you coordinate your work, once the Vision [what winning looks like], Mission [how you will go about it], Aims [the value you deliver], Domain [your resources and area(s) of authority] and Policy [any other rules] of your team (and of any relevant roles) have been set.

### **Short Elections - when you don't have a facilitator yet**

A participant says, "short election! raise your hands to give me nominations for facilitator." Participant calls on the first three hands she sees, then arbitrarily picks one suggested name and asks if there are any objections to the nominated person serving. If anyone objects, repeat until you have a facilitator. If more than 5 minutes is spent, then the group needs a discussion about the unity of purpose of this group and why it is having this problem, a discussion which must be put on the agenda for the next meeting, or held immediately.

**Circle Meeting Rules:**

1. In general, only one person has permission to speak at any moment. The person with permission to speak is determined by the group discussion technique in use and/or the facilitator.
2. Once a decision has been adopted by consensus, it is the policy of the group. It cannot be changed without reaching a new consensus. If a new consensus cannot be reached, the old decision stands.
3. Policy decisions are made by consensus. Every policy decision must be openly discussed before it can be tested for consensus, at least through a Reaction Round. . Operational decisions are made by the person, group or process to which policy has delegated authority. The one policy decision that cannot be delegated is the election of a circle's Leader or Representative.
4. A concern must be based upon the Vision, Mission and/or Aims of the group to justify a block to consensus (a "paramount objection").
5. Every meeting which uses Resolver must have an evaluation.

**Circle Meeting Roles:**

Facilitator (decides who will speak and what group process to use -- e.g., small groups -- may ask disruptive person to change behavior or leave)

Time-keeper (tracks agenda & time)

Scribe (records Proposals, Concerns (both resolved and set-aside) and Consensus on a flip-chart or whiteboard, then photos & distributes to the group)

**Circle Meeting Participation:** As a participant during a consent process, when the facilitator tests for consent, you may: 1) Remain silent, 2) State that you have a concern that has not yet been heard, 3) State that you are willing to set aside your concern, as it would not prevent the group from accomplishing its purpose (also known as "standing aside"), or 4) State that you have an unresolved concern that is vital to the group accomplishing its purpose ("declare a block" or "make a paramount objection").

**CIRCLE  
MEETING**

*IF THIS IS NOT A CIRCLE MEETING,  
GOTO THE OPERATIONS MTG p4*

**Framing**

- If no Facilitator currently serves, choose one using a Short Election as described on the Rules Page.
- Consent to the Purpose / Aim of the group, and of this meeting (or leave).
- Facilitator outlines ground rules; participants consent (or leave).

**Opening Round**

- Check-in, transition into meeting
- Requests for adding or changing agenda items. (If you used a Short Election to elect a Facilitator, put the Facilitator role description and electing a Facilitator on the agenda).

**Administrative Matters**

- Agree to agenda if there were changes requested.
- Consent to minutes of previous meeting
- Schedule next meeting (date, time, place, duration)

**Matters of Content**

- Consent to proposals (use "Consent Process" card)
- Tackle an issue (use the "Proposal Forming" process)
- Accept reports from other circles / teams
- ROLE-MAKING, ELECTION, AND EVALUATION HAPPEN HERE.

**Closing Round**

Each Participant should EVALUATE:

- Quality of Facilitation
- Productivity of Meeting
- Timekeeping
- Emotional state

---

**WHAT IS A LEADER?**

A leader is someone who has been delegated authority over a circle's operational activities by the next higher circle. If there is no higher circle, the leader is elected by the circle. When the circle is DOING, the Operational Leader is (by default) in charge. The circle may make policy that modifies this.

---

**Start Meeting**

Leader opens meeting informally with a positive tone.

REMEMBER:

- There is no opening round
- Decisions are made by leader
- Circulate summary reports before the meeting
- Meet regularly and enforce deadlines.

**Monitor & Direct Progress**

Report in turn on priority activities:

- For *project work* include item, status, brief note -- as needed.
- For *ongoing work* include trend, aging, brief notes -- as needed.
- Leaders or peers may give input or ask questions from reporter.
- Leader may provide direction, assign priorities, delegate tasks.

**End Meeting**

The team gives quick feedback to the Leader and each other on the meeting.

---

**IMPORTANT**

IF an issue comes up that a participant thinks should be dealt with in a policy meeting, it is immediately noted for addition to the next policy (Circle) meeting agenda. Until then, the leader's decision is final.

---

## Picture Forming

1. Present the issue, the "ball of yarn".
2. Identify dimensions or elements of the issue, the "strands of yarn".

### REMEMBER:

- No solutions at this stage.
- This step is about understanding the problem.

### KEY QUESTIONS:

- How do the Circle's values (Vision, Mission, Aims, key policies) relate to this issue?
  - Are there any needs we haven't heard yet?
  - Are there any voices we need to hear from that haven't spoken?
  - Do we have any unrecognized strengths or resources around this issue?
3. Consent to the completeness of this list.

## Proposal Shaping

4. Generate proposal ideas in Rounds

### REMEMBER:

- Refrain from judging or evaluating ideas.
- This step is about free-flow creative idea generation.

5. Organize ideas.

- (A) Select "Tuners" (could be the Facilitator for small group or simple issue)
- (B) Tuners shape ideas concisely, into a manageable number of proposal(s)
- (C) Circulate proposal(s) to whole circle.

### REMEMBER:

- Part (B) can be done in a break or separate session.
  - It is important that Tuners keep a neutral attitude while organizing collected information.
6. Confirm that Tuners "did their job" and that all identified dimensions of the issue were addressed by proposal(s).

Once you have one or more proposal(s), you can use the Consent Process.

## CONSENT PROCESS

*IF THIS IS NOT A CIRCLE MEETING,  
GOTO THE OPERATIONS MTG p4*

### PHASE 1: INTRODUCE THE PROPOSAL

- One of the people who created the proposal describes it to the group. Include what will happen if the group makes no decision now.
- Group members may then ask CLARIFYING QUESTIONS.
- People may then respond, first in a REACTION ROUND and then (if the Facilitator deems it necessary) in an OPEN DISCUSSION.
- Facilitator TESTS FOR CONSENT.

### PHASE 2: LIST CONCERNS

- The Facilitator asks for concerns that relate to the proposal.
- The Scribe writes summarized concerns on the wall and checks for accuracy.
- Switch to Phase 3 when people consent to completeness of the list.

### PHASE 3: RESOLVE CONCERNS

- Group the concerns into related bundles, as needed.
- Facilitator, ask for suggestions on how to modify the proposal (or invent a new proposal) to meet a concern. If the issue is complex, do one concern at a time.
- When you have a proposed resolution, test for Consent on that piece, and write it on the Resolution chart.

### PHASE 4: FILL IN THE DETAILS

- For each Resolution on the chart, make sure you clarify: WHO will do WHAT, by WHEN? HOW will you know this has been successful? WHEN will you evaluate this policy? (pick a future meeting).

### Test for Consent:

The Facilitator says either, "Are there any unresolved concerns relating to this proposal?" (in Phases 1 & 3) or "Are there any paramount objections to this proposal?" (in Phase 4). SILENCE = CONSENT. **After Consent, Celebrate!!**

### Alternate Endings:

- Send issue to Research or Tuning group (to resume at specific future meeting); --Set aside to resume at a specific future meeting.

## ROLE MAKING

*Use this for a developing a proposal for a role.*

### Getting Started

- Is everyone present who is likely to deal with this role?
- Is the primary candidate(s) for the role present?
- Whoever has asked for this role to be created should spend a minute or three describing the purpose and value of the role.

### Why this role?

- What do you need this role to do? Exactly who needs that?
- How often or in what quantity is this needed? At what level of quality?
- What resources are available to role? (pay, budget, staff hours, material, etc.)

### The Outer Game

- Start with Aims. An Aim is an exchange of value, phrased in a way that captures the uniqueness of this role's contribution and that is understandable for the role's customer. What will s/he deliver? How do you measure success?
- Work up to Mission (overall strategy) and Vision (win conditions!)
- Work down to a set of tasks or milestones you expect this role to complete.
- What is this role's Domain (authority / resources)?
- Is there any additional guidance (Policy / rules) you need to give to the person playing this role?

### The Inner Game

- Is this role like a character of any kind?
- In the context of this business, what themes does it deal with?
- What internal state is most likely to produce success for this role?
- Are there any useful directions to the player for reaching this state?

### The Review Period

How long will this person serve? How often will they be evaluated?

### Write Up the role as a proposal

**Review Role & Specified Term**  
State responsibilities, qualifications, term.

### Pass out Ballots; Fill them in; Return to Facilitator

Facilitator: "Without talking, write your name and the name of the person you nominate on your ballot. When you are done, pass the ballot back to me."

### Reason Sharing Round

Participant: "I'd like \_\_\_\_ in this role because \_\_\_\_."

### Changes Round

Participant: "I change my nomination to \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_."

### Open Discussion

Use this step only if necessary. It is optional and seldom used.

### Consent Round

Facilitator proposes the candidate with the *strongest arguments* relative to qualification.

REMEMBER:

- Propose candidates based on arguments. Numeric majority is less important than "weight" of reasons.
- Ask for the candidate's consent last.
- To address Stop Sign, see "Options for Moving Forward" in the consent decision making process.
- If necessary, amend proposal and repeat consent round.

### ----- DO NOT! -----

- \*Elect for an unlimited term.
- \*Elect without defining meaning of success.
- \*Ask for a volunteer.
- \*Inquire who is interested or who is not.
- \*Have a dialog during a Round.
- \*Seek the *perfect* candidate: recall that each candidate has strengths and weaknesses.



**Framing**

The Secretary of the role's circle states...

- When was the person selected / last evaluated?
- What are the agreed Vision (ultimate goal), Mission (overall strategy), Aims (value to be delivered), and Domain (resources, territory) of the role?
- Have any particular measures been defined for the success of this role?

**Ballots**

--Each person in the circle fills in a ballot that looks like this:

**Evaluation Ballot for (name): \_\_\_\_\_**

My name: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance (circle a number from 1 to 5):

Dangerous	Fair	Magnificent
1.....	2.....	3.....4.....5

**Reasons Round**

Each participant, beginning with the evaluated, says the number they gave and why.

**Changes Round**

Each participant may, if they wish, change their evaluation number and give a reason for the change.

**Closing**

Secretary records the numbers.

Evaluated thanks each of the other participants for the feedback.