

## Polling for Consensus

Groups, boards or committees looking to build consensus during a meeting should check in with the group every so often during the discussion to see where people are. It could save valuable time and move the decision to closure more quickly. **Remember:** *Consensus does not mean that everyone will be thrilled, but that everyone can support the decision and live with it.*

**First:** Build a list of criteria through which to sieve the decisions first. For instance, the group might have the following criteria for a downtown project:

- ✓ Under \$10,000
- ✓ Under 6 months start to finish
- ✓ Should garner local support
- ✓ Should be one the city staff can support
- ✓ Should involve all of the group one way or another

**Second:** Ways to poll the group:

**PRES Model:** Individuals advocate for their choice using a Point, Reason, Example, Summary format.

Have each person do PRES around the circle for their vote until each reason is exhausted. If someone had the same advocacy, make your reason different, or just say “ditto”.

*Example* **Point:** I think we should go ahead with a new entrance signage plan for our town. **Reason:** We have 4 different “Welcome” signs at our town’s entrance, and they all are made of different materials and some are falling to pieces. It looks shabby and confusing for motorists. **Example:** A signage plan that puts a welcome sign at the most appropriate place into the entrance of the community and includes a nicely landscaped design would be more welcoming, like the entrance into Niceville. **Summary:** So in conclusion, I think an entrance signage plan would help us deliver a durable, attractive entrance into our town for visitors and community members alike.

**Fist-to-Five:** A hand motion that tells everyone who is where on an issue.

Fist = no-way that person supports the solution as is – needs to re-write.

A-five-fingers up = supporting the solution all the way and willingness to take the lead.

Three or four fingers means support with some reservations, but will help move the issue forward. A two or three finger flash means “I need more info, convincing, these are my concerns, etc....”

**Self-Stick Dots:** Post the different choices on paper around the room. Each person is given 1-3 dots and puts them on their top choices. This quickly selects the highest priorities for the group. Then you can move to PRES or to other polling methods for final consensus.