

NOHT-ESON Consensus Decision Making Framework

Consensus is a decision-making process which involves gathering and considering diverse perspectives. It allows partners to work together to improve and refine a proposal to make the best recommendation/decision as a group. It requires a commitment to active cooperation, disciplined speaking and listening and a creative response to conflict.

Basic principles of consensus:

- *clarity of process and discipline in speaking and listening*
- *respect for the unique contributions of all meeting participants that are carefully considered and used in achieving a resolution*
- *belief that the best decisions result when the group works cooperatively and not as competing individuals/organizations/sectors*
- *care to create a cooperative atmosphere in which conflict is expressed, supported and resolved.*

1. Topic/Issue Identification

- A Briefing Note outlining key facts/data/timeline for decision (using the standardized template) will be circulated to the Planning Table prior to the meeting for discussion and/or decision (when contextual information is available).

2. Exploration

- Exploration presents an opportunity for partners around the table to participate and express their views. If a view has been expressed OHT partners will not speak up to support a perspective but rather to add to a perspective or to provide a differing perspective. Simply, one may ask a question of clarification or express concern/objection.
- Partners indicate their wish to speak by raising their hand. Partners may speak when recognized by the co-lead. A list of speakers will be made as hands are raised and identified by the co-lead. Comments should be addressed to the group as a whole and not solely to the co-lead or the person introducing the agenda item.

3. (Re)Framing Question for Decision

- The co-lead will (re)frame the question for decision, based on discussion and input.
- Based on the exploration and resulting input the co-lead will (re)frame a question if necessary for a decision.

4. Discussion

- A proposal or question is put before the group. All partners with something to add to improving the proposal or answering the question speak. The co-lead's role is to summarize the emerging areas of agreement. No decision is made until each partner feels that his/her/their position is tabled and acknowledged. The group then seeks out the decision to which all can agree.

5. Test for Consensus

- The co-lead will initiate the process of testing for consensus by asking for clarification or objections/disagreement with the item for decision.
- There will be no individual recording of decision/position made by each partner.
- Discussion can be recorded as part of the minutes.
- Agreement, standing aside, and disagreement is part of the consensus process.
- Entrenched disagreement leads to alternative conflict resolution framework.

Definitions for Test of Consensus

5.1 Agree/Can Live With It

Agree

- A Consensus decision is the decision to which all can agree. It may not be the preferred option for some partners, but if they can accept it, consensus exists. It does mean that concerns with/objections to the decision have been completely expressed, are understood and have been considered in coming to the decision.

Can Live With It

- Expressing concerns or disagreement but also a willingness to yield to the group, not in full agreement but willing to 'live with it'. A partner stands aside, when s/he/they have any of the following opinions:
 - (i) "I am not a content expert, but I'll go along"
 - (ii) "I think this may have some downside, but I can live with it"
 - (iii) "I am neutral"
- Can live with it is not a declaration of a conflict of interest.
- The partner should ensure that they have voiced their concerns with the decision.
- When a partner "can live with it," it will still constitute consensus.

5.2 Disagree

- If a partner cannot support a decision (ie. cannot live with it), then that partner can express their position by disagreeing. A partner who disagrees with consensus is saying, "I cannot support this." When disagreeing, the partner will explain the nature of and the reasons for the concern/objection as fully as possible. To disagree or express an concern/objection precludes proceeding in the way proposed.

6. Consensus/Decision Made

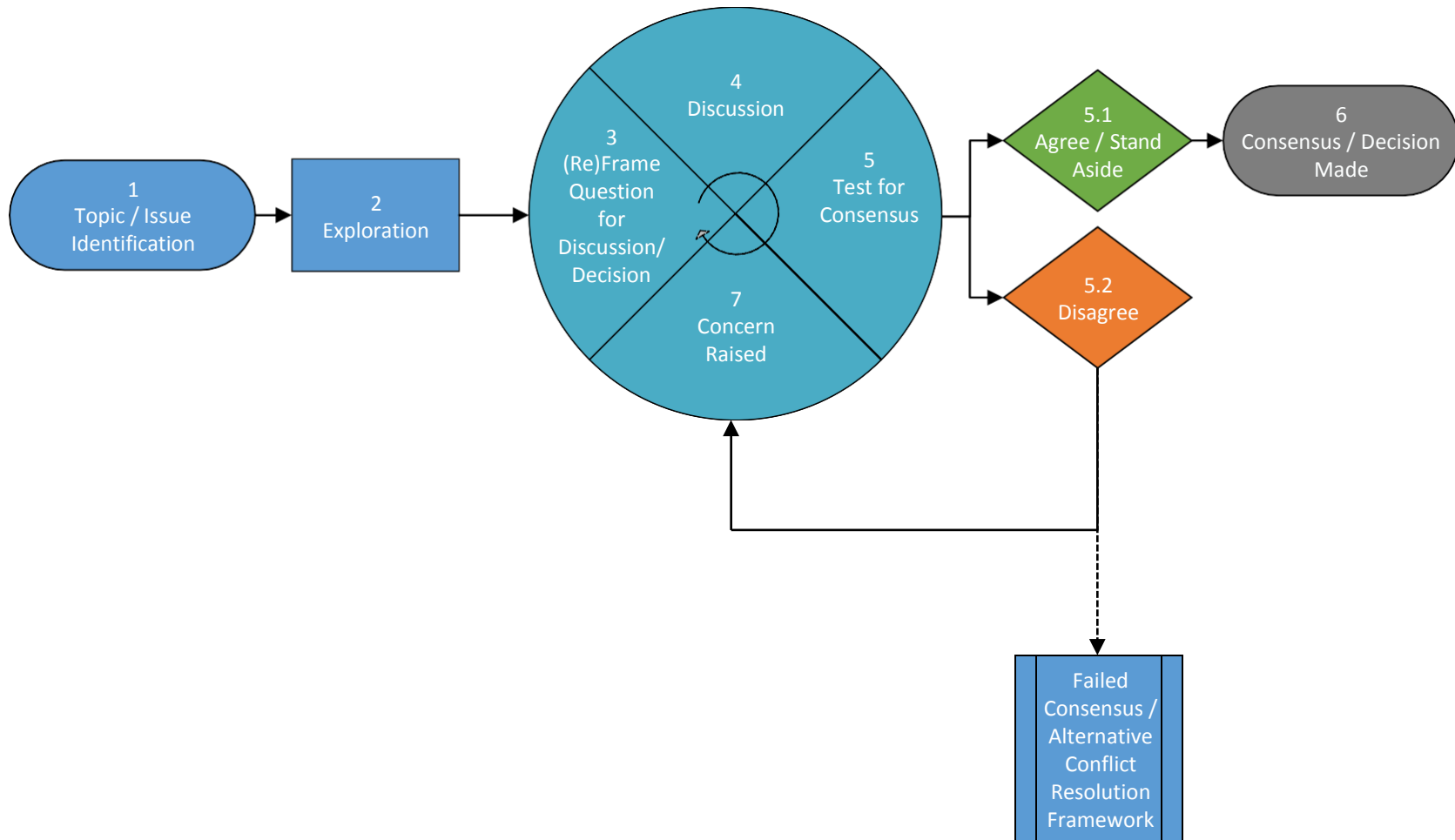
- The decision has been made and based on the consensus decision making framework.

7. Concern Raised

- If a concern is raised through a disagreement, the co-lead will summarize the concerns and will either clarify or frame a new question. This will recommence the steps in the consensus decision making framework.

DISCLAIMER: The Consensus Decision Making Framework, Conflict Resolution Framework, and/or any other decision framework is a process developed for the purpose and intention of facilitating decision making that falls squarely and clearly within the legal jurisdiction and authority of the Niagara Ontario Health Team – Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara (NOHT-ESON) participants. For clarification, any process used or decision reached by the Niagara Ontario Health Team –Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara (NOHT-ESON) participants is entirely subject to, defers to, and is not intended to usurp or abrogate from legal authorities, jurisdiction, parameters, restrictions and considerations as applicable to any of the individual or collective partners/participants to the Niagara Ontario Health Team – Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara (NOHT-ESON), their respective board of trustees/governors/directors or other, or other applicable decision making body, whether local, regional, or provincial, and their relevant applicable legislation and it is further affirmed and understood that any process or decision that does so, in whole or in part, may be considered null and void.

NOHT - ESON CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING FRAMEWORK



Step numbers are for reference purposes only; they do not necessarily represent sequencing.

NOHT-ESON Alternative Conflict Resolution Framework

The alternative conflict resolution framework is initiated by the Planning Table only when not making a decision in a timely way (e.g., pending deadlines) is detrimental to residents of Niagara and their healthcare. The disagreement prevents consensus and cannot be resolved through the consensus decision making framework (refer to Consensus Decision Making Framework).

When the Planning Table has recognized that consensus has failed/unresolved decision the Alternative Conflict Resolution Framework will be exercised by a neutral facilitator. The neutral facilitator can be a partner selected from the Planning Table who has no vested interest in the outcome. The alternative option is to retain a third party facilitator. Utilizing a neutral facilitator will allow for the co-leads to fully participate in the discussions to express their view points.

1. Failed Consensus/Unresolved Decision

- Discussion is exhausted. Entrenched disagreement has occurred if, through the Consensus Decision Making Framework, a partner can/will not support a decision (ie. can/will not live with it), then that partner must express their position by “blocking consensus.”
- The co-lead will acknowledge that consensus has failed/not achieved and that the Alternative Conflict Resolution Framework will be initiated.

2. Frame the Conflict

- Partner(s) will explain the nature of and the reasons for the objection as fully as possible.
- The facilitator will clearly re-state the conflicting issues/points.

3. Optional Mediation

- Is there an opportunity to pursue mediation?
- Governance working group to develop recommended processes for selection of mediation
 - 3.1 *Yes*
 - 3.2 *No*

4. Mediation

- Mediation occurs.

5. Test for Consensus

- 5.1 *Agree/Can Live With It*
- 5.2 *Disagree: if no consensus move to vote*

6. Consensus/Decision Made

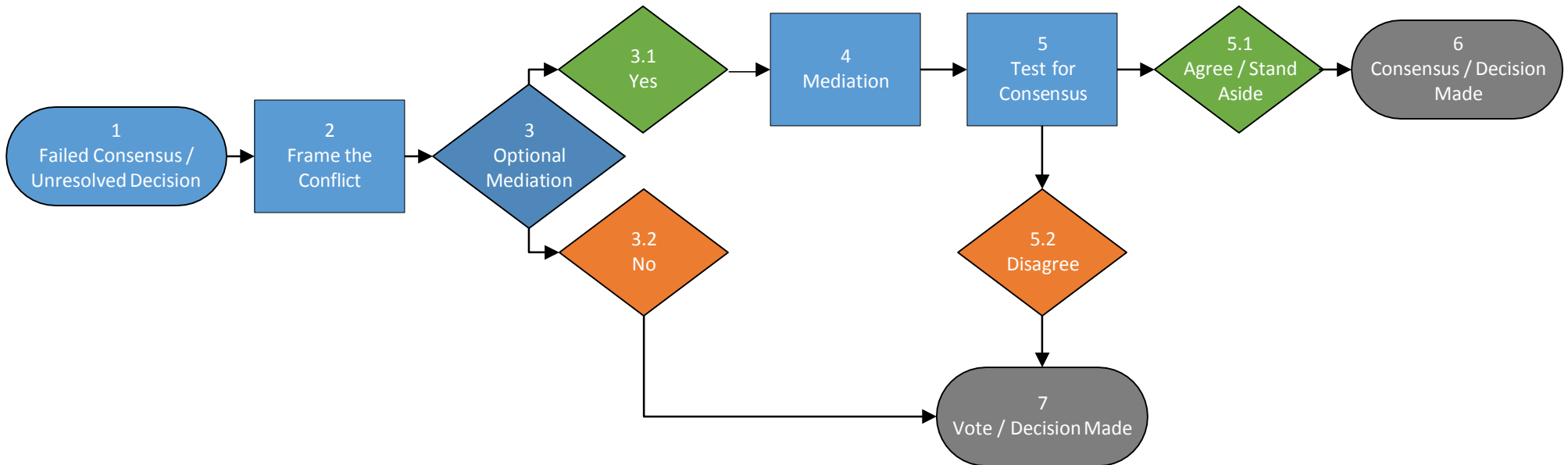
- The decision has been made.

7. Vote

- The Co-Leads will state the decision to be made and then ask: "All in favour?" "All opposed?"

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NOHT - ESON ALTERNATIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION FRAMEWORK



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