Decision-Making Methods

University *of* California
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Why consider different decision-making methods?

Identifying the appropriate decision making method will clarify expectations, build relationships and help your work be more effective.

Why you need to articulate how decisions will be made.
- It makes clear who will be making the decisions
- It enables decision makers to set clear boundaries regarding the involvement of others
- It provides participants with guidelines as to how their input will be used
- Let's participants know what to expect and what is expected of them
- Builds support for the final decision

Buy-in increases with the level of engagement in the decision-making.

As the level of involvement by participants in decision making increases, so does the level of ownership or buy-in to the process and the outcome.

6 Decision making methods:
1. **Spontaneous agreement** – A unanimously supported decision, often made quickly and with minimal discussion. Used when issues are simple or trivial.
2. **One person decides** – A fast and efficient way for a decision to be made; accountability is clear and the decision gains more support if input is sought beforehand. Used when issues are small, when there is an expert in the group, or when one person is solely accountable for the outcome.
3. **Compromise** – A negotiated approach applicable when there are several distinct options and members have strong opposing positions; 'you win a few points and you concede a few points'; generates a lot of discussion. Used when two or more ideas are proposed, neither of which is fully acceptable to everyone involved.
4. **Multi-voting** – A systematic, priority setting, democratic approach where everyone votes for the outcomes. Used when there are many options presented or when ranking options will help clarify the best course of action.
5. **Majority-voting** – A fast method of decision making once all options have been identified and analyzed. Used when two or more options are submitted, when the decision must be made quickly and when a division in the group is acceptable.
6. **Consensus building** – A collaborative effort that demands high levels of participation, analyzing of facts, discussion and debate. Produces a decision that everyone can live with. Used when the decision affects a large group, when buy in and commitment from all participants is essential, and when the decision is important enough to warrant the time and energy of the consensus process.