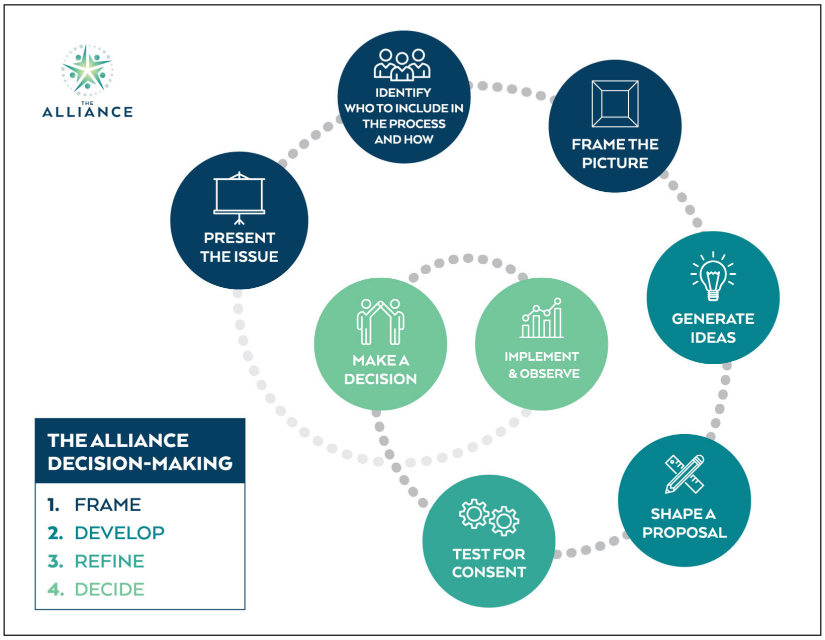


Decisions imply power.

Who makes a decision denotes who and/or which group has the authority to effect an impact. Community stakeholders of The Alliance devoted many hours to developing this values-driven dynamic tool to sustain a culture that honors equity and shares power. As a consent-based protocol, it reinforces a commitment to engagement and trust among participants who are impacted by decisions, to both listen to each other and adapt, and to make timely decisions.

In a decentralized way, workgroups, regional co-chairs, and individuals are empowered to make decisions within the scope of their charters or role descriptions, as long as they engage people who are meaningfully affected by the decision, or those who have expertise, to advise; and, they adapt as needed to address objections.

This protocol can be used in different ways at different times. Some decisions are far-reaching and need very involved processes for engagement. Other times, decisions have much lower impact, and the steps can be more informal.

## PRESENT THE ISSUE

Name the area of concern or opportunity, who is naming it, and who are the decision-makers who are stewarding the process.

## IDENTIFY WHO TO INCLUDE IN THE PROCESS AND HOW

Some of the questions to ask: Who is impacted by the issue area of concern and who can impact the decision? Who is already working on this? What lived experience can be brought to the conversation? Who do we have to have on board in order to make progress?

## FRAME THE PICTURE

Identify the decision needed and have an exploratory conversation to find out where the group's preferences and concerns are. What is the context? What are the priorities? What is driving this decision right now? What is the timeline? What is the landscape, the data and background information associated with the issue? What do we need to learn/assess to understand the context better?

This step might include: needs, facts, issues, benefits, concerns, objectives, feelings, resources and skills that already exist. Create a common frame of reference or vision. Even if you already have an idea to suggest, engaging this step will create clarity for the group.

## GENERATE IDEAS

Whether an individual or team is developing/delivering a proposal, the next key question to consider when generating ideas is, "given everything that is part of the picture, what should we do?" At this step, it is helpful to be open to new ideas. Don't limit creativity prematurely! 1-2-4-all from Liberating Structures is a great process when doing this step in groups, to fully unleash creativity. This step provides the raw material for the next step, shaping a proposal.

## SHAPE A PROPOSAL

A proposal is a plan or suggestion, especially a formal or written one, put forward for consideration or discussion by others. What is possible? Has this already been done/tried before and what can we learn from that attempt? What is within the bounds of Alliance strategy and what isn't? These questions can be considered during a team/circle/workgroup meeting, in a larger forum, or by working asynchronously. Proposals are the vehicle for communicating what is being decided. This can include any context about the process that led up to forming a proposal. It should have a clear objective, indicate how it's aligned with Alliance objectives, be direct and use clear language, and include a timeline, including review/evaluation. Here is an example of a proposal for Alliance strategy: prototype for strategy proposal.

## TEST FOR CONSENT

Decision-makers all have blind spots. So. testing the proposal for consent with people who will be meaningfully affected is a step intended to reveal blind spots and mitigate negative impacts before taking action.  The "Range of Tolerance" tool gives people a framework for naming "objections" they may sense -- defined as potential risks with a course of action that could lead to unacceptable consequences.  This is different from their "preferences" about what they like and don't like.

In a consent-based culture, decision-makers are accountable for adapting proposals to address objections, even if they do not agree with the assessment of risk. (By definition, those are blind spots!) Decision-makers can choose whether or not to use the feedback based on people's preferences, i.e. when people indicate they could live with it either way. The person who senses the objection is invited to reflect on "what is the risk we cannot afford to take?" Anyone involved can suggest how to adapt the proposal, until it is brought back within the range of tolerance. Sometimes decision-makers will go back to an earlier step to rework the proposal.

## MAKE A DECISION

There is a point when no one produces any significant objection, and a proposal is deemed good enough to try, safe enough to fail. At this point, decision-makers take all the advice and feedback on people's preferences, and they finalize this decision for now, and record it in an archive or memory system. At this stage, the decision is communicated back out, as appropriate. After the decision is made, there is always the opportunity to revisit it (and adjust) if unintended consequences become evident. Decisions guide the work until they are deemed not effective given new circumstances and information.

## IMPLEMENT & OBSERVE

Review decisions at least annually, or when someone identifies a risk. Remain open to blind spots, sometimes when new people come in.