

Assembly Facilitation Guide

Quick guide to facilitating online assemblies

For the moment and until we implement other improvements our decision-making space is a monthly assembly held virtually through a [Telegram](#) / [Fairchat](#) chat. Being aware that this is NOT the most effective tool, it is important that we take into account some aspects:

- We are willing to work for the collective good and the group's objectives
- Let us measure our interventions & let us make democratic use of speaking time - time is golden!
- Let's avoid repeating ideas
- Let's not get off the subject we're talking about.
- Let's consider [general netiquette](#) when expressing ourselves - addressing our colleagues:

Constructive criticism + RESPECT

Facilitation

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS of those who are in charge of energizing and overseeing the assemblies:

- Open the pad minutes in advance
- Announcements in groups: calls for proposals
- Prepare and organize the agenda in advance with the points of the assembly
- Remind new people of the rules of participation in assemblies (these!!!).
- Introduce and close points for discussion
- Encourage participation in the assembly
- (if necessary) Organise people speaking in turn - management - participation
- Regulate the time with help from the "timekeeper"
- Facilitate decision-making (consensus)
- Summarize agreements / takes notes
- Inform participants of the next meeting date

The facilitator is at the service of the group so that:

- All people can share their ideas
- Each person feels listened to
- All ideas are incorporated if they are in line with what is being sought
- The final decision is taken by all members
- Do not deviate from the subject matter
- Avoid aggressive or disrespectful behaviour (attacks)
- The topic of the meeting, the collective and the assembly should be remembered.
- Someone helps the facilitator to control the times

Recommended duration: **2-3h maximum**

TASKS BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY

1. Pad

Open the **pad** in which

- the AGENDA will be organized (items to be discussed, proposals, etc.)
- the MINUTES (most important interventions, decisions, consensus, etc.) of the assembly will be collected

What is a pad? A public, open and collaborative online document.

Normally we are using <https://board.net/> doing the following: /p/assembly number + GlobalAssembly
example: <https://board.net/p/32thGlobalAssembly>

When is the pad created? From the end of the previous assembly and up to ONE WEEK before the scheduled date of that assembly.

FairCoop's general assemblies are at 19h CET/CEST (Central European Summer Time) | 18h UTC on the **third Thursday of every month**.

2. Notify

Tell the different groups about the pad to inform and invite participation in the assembly.

Main groups to notify of FairCoop General Assemblies:

- FairCoop General
- FairCoop Assemblies
- OCW (Open Coop Work)
- ...

[MODEL]

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Hello everyone! Our next assembly is in one week's time. Don't leave your proposals to the last minute, please give everyone a chance to review them :)  
32nd FairCoop Global Assembly Thursday April 19, 2018 - 19:00 CET / 18:00 UTC  
Pad: https://board.net/p/32thGlobalAssembly
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All those proposals that are included in the agenda must have a person responsible at the time of bringing them to the assembly; please, do not forget to indicate your name with your proposal! Thank you. Similarly, if the proposal came from a specific area, it would have to nominate one or a couple of representatives who could present it.

3. Agenda

24h before the start of the assembly, finalise the agenda / define the items to be discussed and identify and notify the responsible persons so that they can have them ready (proposals ready, summarized, structured).

The facilitator can order the items or group them together if she or he feels that they are of a similar nature (subject to approval by the assembly).

Types of issues to be addressed

- [Agreement / consensus]
- [Information]
- [Follow-up of agreements]
- [Approach to topics: developments, reflections]
- [Creative ideas]
- [Plan outline, proposals]
- [Formation]
- [Document improvement and approval]
- [Transparency]

TASKS DURING THE ASSEMBLY

1. Give prior notice at the beginning of the meeting, encouraging participation and sharing the link to the agenda. 2. Start at the scheduled time, giving a margin of 10min while

- Welcoming the attendees. Inform assembly participants to introduce themselves in the chat and also write their name on the pad as attendees.
- The pad link is shared with the agenda and time schedule for each item. Do a quick review of the points and estimated times for each of them. Here it would be interesting to have someone (other than the facilitator) take responsibility for being the timekeeper.

3. Introduce the points and summarize the main ideas at the end of each point, at the end of the minutes, in a way that serves to highlight the points: capital letters, bold, different color.

EXPERIMENT FOR GREATER EFFECTIVENESS :::: use of certain emoticons for expression/intervention:

- clock icon, for marking the half hours! (timekeeper)
- spiral icon, if the time came, few people were monopolizing the conversation and the rest (the majority) would like to give way to other voices
- red exclamation marks!! in case it is necessary, in order to:
 - ask for more opinions on a topic » ANYONE ELSE want to say something?)
- palm of the hand icon, to request to speak if necessary
- thumb up | +1 | hands raised means 'I agree'
- thumbs down | -1 -1 |disagree
- emoticon without mouth means abstention
- Red X means block
- warning triangle symbol + @mention to call someone or to have someone call you about it

Is everyone comfortable with this?

Is there anyone who disagrees with this proposal?

If no one objects, we have consensus.

TASKS AFTER THE ASSEMBLY

1. The participation of the attendees is appreciated and we start saying goodbye.

1. Shares the most important information / decisions made in the different groups
2. Indicate when the next meeting will be held and who will facilitate it.

The monitoring of agreements and evaluation is the responsibility of each area / OCW.

Consensus

What it is?

Consensus means that when a decision is reached no one feels that their input has been misinterpreted or not given sufficient attention. It is not a vote of unanimity or of agreement. Its goal is that each person thinks that the decision made is the best one. This usually happens because collective consciousness, when it works, provides better solutions than those that come from isolated individuals.

All participants contribute ideas and encourage the use of each other's resources and opinions. Difference of opinion is taken as something positive and not as an obstacle. In the end, everyone takes part in the decision-making process.

Consensus requires more time and skill on the part of participants, but there are many resources to make a decision and commit to it. Participants may accept a decision even if they disagree, but recognize that it responds to the needs of the group and allows the group to move forward with it and support it.

How to use it

For complicated topics that require more time for discussion / approximation, the **FORUM** is proposed as a preliminary tool that helps to present points of view without urgency, debate, bring positions closer together, etc. When the proposal is mature, it is when it is taken to an assembly for consensus.

Why do we need consensus?

Consensus decision making gathers the experiences of the whole group.

Consensus is a means of collecting the knowledge of the group in order to arrive at the decision that is both most favorable and within the limits of the possible.

Consensus promotes interpersonal relationships.

It requires time and effort, sincere communication, and a willingness to trust others; sharing ideas and feelings; and listening attentively.

By working together to clarify ideas and proposals, members build mutual trust and communication skills. By fostering shared leadership and participation, members of a group are in a position to reach the best decision. The synergy that emerges from developing joint agreements helps to create a strong sense of commitment to the group and its mission, and a sense of belonging and commitment among members.

Consensus leads to doing what is best for the common good.

The key element for a well-functioning consensus is a commitment by each individual to accept what is of most interest to the group. This leads to consideration of other interests beyond one's own.

Consensus agreements are more easily implemented.

Consensus agreements have implementing force in themselves because consensus means that each member has given its consent for the agreement to take effect, and failure to follow it jeopardizes the sense of belonging to the group. If a community relationship is strongly desired, then the decisions taken by the group in consensus will also have force.

Phases

- 1.- **dialogue**. THIS STAGE CAN BE DONE IN THE **FORUM** The group meets to discuss a topic at length. Thoughts, opinions, feelings, ideas are freely shared and the contributions of others are reacted to. This is essential in consensus. At this stage you can change your mind by listening to other contributions.
- 2.- **proposals**. WHEN THE PROPOSAL IS SUFFICIENTLY MATURE This comes after the dialogue stage. This is where a good facilitator can be very valuable as she can help the group to find common ground, highlight and summarize aspects of understanding and agreement for the group. When a proposal, the result of dialogue, is achieved, it is put in writing.
- 3.- **modification** This is the moment when the proposal that has been arrived at as a synthesis of everyone's contributions is tested and modified in order to respond to the needs of the group. In some cases this is done at the same meeting: things are added to the provisional proposal or the way it is worded is changed. In other cases, this is done after the meeting, once it has been implemented and is better known; after the experience, the decision is reviewed, and the necessary changes are made based on the new information obtained. In larger groups, a small group can deal with the information obtained, make proposals and, after a while, submit a new proposal for modification.

Types of consensus

- a) by collective dialogue
- b) by the conviction of any involved party (requires honesty, humility, etc.)
- c) by negotiation (there are concessions from both sides to reach a common position)
- d) by the withdrawal of differences (minimum agreement)

Consensus responses

- I agree
- I'm indifferent to it
- I disagree, but I yield
- I block

Positive practices in consensus building

• Ability to listen

Pay attention so as to understand the other person. Avoid interrupting. In any case, ask for clarification or questions to help you understand the issue.

• Focus on solutions

It is very important not just to criticize, but to suggest solutions and ideas to resolve situations and to make sure that the problem is expressed as clearly as possible before seeking solutions.

• Be open to results

Try to look at the pros and cons of all ideas fairly and equally. Be open to group changes and modifications. Do not focus only on your own ideas and defend them above all else. Consensus is about making a process that leads us to reach a common agreement, not simply about convincing others.

• Be concise

Think about what you are going to say before you say it and be brief. Do not mix; do not repeat what other people have already said. DEMOCRATIC USE OF SPEAKING TIME.

• Be patient

Some people may need more time or information than others to understand or assimilate. Consensus is NOT a rapid decision-making process. We must be prepared to make the time available that is needed. The Forum could be a space for discussion of a topic that requires more time in order to achieve consensus.

• Be humble

Be willing to accept what the group can teach us, even if we are experts in what we are dealing with.

• Recognize one's feelings and share them when necessary

Express if we feel unhappy or uncomfortable and try to identify the causes.

• Have a vision of the future

Many decisions and proposals serve to help us gain experience in things we have never done before. If they don't work, they can be changed after a while.

• Knowing when a decision made should be left behind

The group can change decisions made after a while. Clinging to small details does not help: we have to let the decisions run their course and then check whether they need to be changed.

- **Give reasons for the way of thinking**

When we express an opinion, provide the reasons that lead us to think that way (so we can provide valuable information). And we must also be open to questions and comments about our own opinions.

- **Intervening to help the group**

Even if you are not the moderator, if you notice that something is not right, tell the group what you perceive is happening. For example: "It seems that when we start to deal with this issue, I perceive that there are some angry reactions. Is there anyone who can see things in the same way as me? Can we address this to see what's behind it?"

- **Preparing the work**

Be actively involved in the research. Set up the meeting. Reflect on what will be discussed. Read carefully everything that has been given and reflect on it before the meeting.

Netiquette in chats

- 1) Do not add any participants to a group without first consulting them. There are people who for different reasons may not want to be in telegram groups on this or other topics.
- 2) Avoid judging whoever decides to leave the group. Everyone may have reason to leave such groups at any given time; let us assume that their aim has not been to annoy or offend others.
- 3) Do not use the group for issues that do not affect FairCoop. These groups are not created to deal with particular issues. If we can't help it, let's be humble. #OT
- 4) If a question is posed to the group and the answer is only for us, let's request the answers by private message, adding at the end a sentence of this kind: "so as not to disturb the whole group, anyone who wants to can answer me by private message. Thank you." In this way, we avoid 25 answers for each question posed".
- 5) Let's not forget to start and end the messages with the magic words: Please and Thank You. "In digital communication we do not see the face of the writer, nor can we appreciate his tone of voice. A poorly translated request can be interpreted as a kind of order".
- 6) Let us not interpret silences as a gesture of contempt. Sometimes it is true that a silence says more than many words, but in this age of immediacy we are too sensitive to the speed of response. There are many people who read the messages once a day, or who think that the question is not for them, or who need to take their time...
- 7) Let us avoid irony. In conversations that we have through a messaging platform, as in radio talk shows, irony is often not well understood.
- 8) Emoticons provide very important non-verbal information, which is precisely what we miss in digital communication, but they should NOT be abused if they do not add information.
- 9) Avoid writing messages under altered emotional states. If we have just read something that has made us angry, had a confrontation with a colleague, or any other situation that affects us emotionally, that is precisely the time for us to take some time before writing in the chat. Let us

remember that it will be read, preserved and perhaps disseminated by many people.

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