

Life of a Proposal

Excerpted from Bea Briggs' booklet, *Introduction to Consensus*

1. Develop the idea and seek support.

If there is a large or complex issue you wish to raise, consult in advance with as many people as possible, especially those who would be most affected by a proposal or those who have knowledge or experience relevant to the issue. Include their suggestions and concerns in the proposal. If possible, the proposal should be co-sponsored by one or more other members of the group. If no one else supports your proposal, then you should consider not presenting it at all or making a different proposal.

2. Circulate the proposal before the meeting.

The full text of the proposal should be distributed (posted physically, and/or by email, and/or put in each person's mailbox, etc.) far enough in advance so that all participants have time to read the proposal before the meeting.

3. Present the proposal in the meeting.

The full text of the proposal should be handed out to each meeting participant or written in large letters on a whiteboard or on easel paper in front of the group, or both. People should be able to read as well as hear proposals in the meeting.

4. Modify the proposal.

The process of amending the proposal will continue through as many meetings as needed for the group to resolve difficulties or add features which will improve the proposal. Group members may need time to do more research or simply to ponder the ideas.

5. Decide on the proposal.

Well-prepared, thoroughly discussed proposals which effectively address a real community need usually move quickly through the consensus process and receive the support of the group. If the above-mentioned conditions do not apply — and sometimes even when they do — the proposal will die a natural death.

6. Record decision in the minutes of the meeting.

It is important to record in the minutes the exact wording of the consensed-upon proposal with all amendments, as well as the names of those standing aside and their reasons for doing so. The minutes serve as the final word in case of later confusion about the decision and how it is to be implemented. Minutes also allow the group to trace the history of its decisions in later years.

Beatrice Briggs, excerpted from *Introduction to Consensus* (\$14, FIC mailorder bookstore)

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How to Make a Proposal

Adapted from "Contents of a Proposal" from Bea Briggs' "Introduction to Consensus."

Title: _____

Make it brief and explicit. It should not contain the name of the sponsor; i.e.: "Bike Shed Proposal," not "Jack's Proposal." (If it's a draft and not the final proposal, put "DRAFT" and the date after the title.)

Name(s): _____

Of the sponsor(s)

Date: _____

Date proposed.

Summary: _____

Of the principle ideas.

Background: _____

What has happened before on this issue, including any previous agreements or decisions.

Justification/Goals: _____

- What the proposal is trying to accomplish.
- Why the group should consider it now.

Recommended Action: _____

Exactly what is being proposed, including who, what, when, where, and how, including costs, when appropriate.

3 Pros: _____

Three possible benefits to the proposal.

3 Cons: _____

Three potential downsides to the proposal.

Alternatives: _____

Alternatives to the proposal (including taking no action).

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