



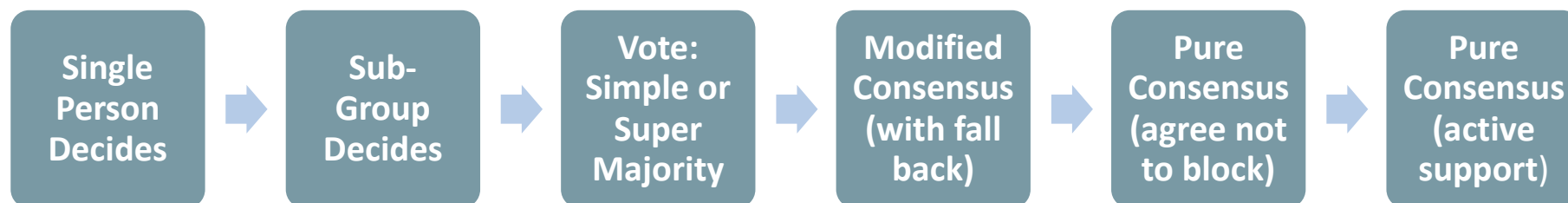
# Thoughtful Decision-Making

## A Resource for SURE-Fire Meetings

Confusion and tensions often arise in the workplace—and in our personal lives, for that matter!—when we haven't given enough thought to how decisions will be made. So before getting deep into any issue, we encourage you to step back and do two things:

1. Clarify exactly what decision needs to be made  
-and-
2. Determine how it will be made: by when and by whom

Here is a continuum of possibilities for decision-making. Any of them can be effective decision-making methods if defined beforehand.



On the following page, the continuum has been expanded with descriptions and a playful example you might relate to. As you review the decision-making options, consider the relative advantages and drawbacks of each for a specific decision you are facing.

- *Which of these options seems best for the decision you have at hand?*
- *How can you best prepare for the decision to be made that way?*
- *How will others react?*

# Models of Decision-Making

**An example:** If the definitions of these models still seem a bit academic, you may want to think of the family vacation. On the far left end of the continuum, Grandpa alone decides where the family will go. On the far right of the continuum, everyone has a voice in the final decision (including the puppy), and no tickets are purchased until everyone says they are ready to pack their bag!

Single person Decides	Sub-Group Decides	Vote: Simple or Super Majority	Modified Consensus (with fall back)	Pure Consensus (agree not to block)	Pure Consensus (active support)
One person holds the final voice on a decision. This person may consult with others, and may research the topic. However, he/she is making the decision alone in the end.	A team of two or more people makes a final decision. These people may volunteer, or be assigned, to do so.	Everyone affected by the decision is invited to cast a vote. Before the vote is cast, everyone agrees what percent-in-favor is required for the decision to pass (e.g. over 1/2 in favor, or at least 2/3 in favor).	In this model, we seek to get full agreement by the whole group. But, if that is not achieved after a certain amount of time, the group has agreed to use one of the other models (e.g. single person, sub-group, or vote).	In this model, dialogue and research continue until everyone is sufficiently in agreement with the decision. This means that everyone is either fully in favor of the decision OR agrees with it enough not to oppose it.  To reach this kind of consensus, a group has to revise a proposal or decision until everyone supports it, or at least agrees to go along.	In this model, dialogue and research continue until everyone is fully in agreement with the decision.  To reach this kind of consensus, a group has to revise a proposal or decision until everyone voices their active support.