Decision Making 101

Have you ever been put in a position of having to choose between two things for your organization? You try to look at each choice equally, but you just can’t seem to make a decision. If that’s the case, then these steps for decision making may be useful to you and your group.

1. Clarify the Problems or Situation

The problems or need for a decision should be clear. For example, the problem of trying to get better food in a cafeteria might be clarified as the problem of obtaining more fresh fruit, larger entree portions and more salad varieties. Try to figure out exactly what the problem is.

2. Collect Information

Identify information to be gathered and the sources available to obtain the information. Questions like: “How much? How will others react? Where? What restrictions are there?” should be answered at this stage.

3. List Alternatives

Brainstorm possible solutions and then narrow the list down to the workable suggestions and those you would like to consider further.

4. Weigh or Evaluate the Remaining Alternatives

Consider what would occur if each particular alternative was selected. Resources like time, money, interest and skills may all be criteria in making a decision. For example, how much time will a possible alternative take, and do you really have the skills to make it happen? Use the same criteria to evaluate each alternative.

5. Select a “Tentative Decision” to Try

The alternative that best meets the evaluation criteria is usually the solution to implement. Be sure to present this decision to those who may be affected by it or possibly to a larger group for feedback.

6. List the Steps to be Followed in Implementing the Decision

Determine what needs to be done and in what sequence to meet the goal of the decision.

7. Evaluate the Experience

This determines if the decision is a good one, if it is worth it, or has value. Ask questions like, “What good things have happened? What has gone wrong? What has been the reaction of others? What changes will make it better?” This will help identify possible weaknesses in the original decision and clarify steps to remedy the problems.