

Consortial Decision Making: Pilot Proposal

April 2026, Shared Technology Committee

Introduction

During the September 2025 Shared Technology Committee (STC) meeting, the following question was posed: **How should we make decisions?**

The STC quickly recognized that decision-making practices varied widely across WRLC committees, especially after the recent restructuring. Longstanding committees had established procedures, while newer ones lacked clear processes. The STC proposed this pilot to promote a consistent decision-making model that could be adopted WRLC-wide and support smoother transitions as members move between committees and task forces.

This prompted research into how other academic library consortia approach group decision making and how various decision-making models work.

Based on this work, the STC recommends adopting a Modified Consensus model using the “Fist to Five” practice and creating Decision Pages to document committee decisions, providing clear context and a consistent reference point for future work.

A pilot will be conducted to test the efficacy of the recommended approach and gather feedback to adjust the process as needed.

- LDC expressed support for piloting the proposed decision-making framework through the end of the current term (through 2029).
- The framework will be treated as iterative: piloted, introduced and collaboratively reviewed with other committees, and refined based on feedback.

Framework Overview

Our intent is to establish a framework for WRLC committees’ decision-making that supports the following principles:

- **Clarity of process:** The framework should provide clarity on the process of decision-making, the roles of committee members and stakeholders in the process.
- **Transparency in communication:** The framework should set expectations regarding how to communicate that a consortial decision is under consideration, when and how to gather feedback from the consortium at large or specific stakeholder groups, and how to communicate the final decisions and the rationale behind them.
- **Efficiency and scalability:** The framework should facilitate timely decision-making and provide a generalizable process that makes it easier to coordinate efforts across committees.

The framework should also attempt to strike a balance between important interests that exist in tension:

- **Standardization vs. local autonomy:** Making decisions with a sole focus on streamlining operations on the consortium level may impinge on members’ ability to address the specific needs of their user communities. On the other hand, overly minimizing consortium-wide standardization may result in lost efficiencies and have an unequal impact on member libraries without sufficient staffing to support robust local customization.
- **Speed of decision-making vs. thoroughness in consultation:** The framework should empower committees to make decisions on a reasonable timeline without getting bogged down in endless

discussions. However, it must also account for the lack of representation for many member institutions on any given committee and provide adequate opportunities for those affected by the decision to understand what is being decided and provide feedback.

The tools we propose to use to support decision-making based on these principles include the following:

1. Fist-to-Five
2. Modified Consensus (Consensus with Fallback Majority Vote)
3. Decision Pages

Proposed Tools

Fist-to-Five

Fist-to-Five is a simple method to gauge support in a group. In its original form, each participant in the meeting raises their hand, showing a number of fingers (0–5) to indicate their level of agreement. The method should be adjusted as necessary to meet the needs of participants with visual impairments or in settings where a visual display is not feasible for all participants.

- **5 = Strongly support**
- **4 = Support with minor concerns**
- **3 = I'm okay with it**
- **2 = I don't like this but I'll go along with the consensus**
- **1 = I have serious reservations about this but I'm not blocking it**
- **0 = I block this decision**

This technique encourages participation from all committee members, provides more context about the strength of assent, and helps surface concerns early by providing more nuance than a simple yes-no vote. We recommend the use of fist-to-five as a tool that committees can use in their deliberations to understand where and when further discussion may be needed, in support of a **modified consensus** approach to decision-making.

Modified Consensus

Modified consensus is a decision-making model that begins with the goal of full consensus—meaning all members can support or “live with” the decision—even if it is not everyone’s preferred option. If consensus cannot be reached within a reasonable timeframe, a majority vote will be used to finalize the decision.

This approach balances **inclusivity**, **equity of voice**, and **timely progress**, making it well suited for multi-institutional and collaborative groups like the WRLC committees.

Example:

- **Scenario:** A digital collections committee debated metadata standards. After two meetings and a draft comparison, all but one member agreed on Dublin Core. The chair called for a *modified consensus vote*- a 8–1 majority confirmed the decision, with no votes to block.
- **Result:** Everyone’s perspectives were heard and work could move forward. The dissenting member’s concerns were documented for future review, preserving institutional trust.

A modified consensus decision means:

“Everyone can support or live with this decision, and no one will obstruct its implementation.”

Decision Pages

Decision Pages are formal, structured documents used by groups to systematically capture, track, and communicate key decisions that have been made.

While such information is typically available from committee meeting minutes and notes, [Decision Pages](#) provide a central, standardized way to manage and reference important committee outcomes. This will make it more transparent where a decision currently stands in the decision-making process, improve communication regarding the final decision, and make it easier for future committee members and the broader WRLC community to understand the reasoning behind past decisions.

Benefits include:

- No digging through minutes to find decisions
- Improved transparency
- Clear context and reasoning behind decisions
- Serves as a reference for those who need to act on or implement the decision

Two examples of library consortia using Decision Pages include:

- [University of California Library System](#)
- [University System of Maryland & Affiliated Institutions \(USMAI\)](#)

The Process

This section describes **how WRLC committees should move from question or idea to outcome** using a shared, repeatable workflow. The goal is to provide a clear path that helps committees stay organized, inclusive, and transparent- especially when decisions affect multiple institutions.

To support this, the process is documented in two complementary resources.

Decision-Making Flow Chart (Image)

This visual overview shows the full lifecycle of a decision at a glance, including key decision points and where specific tools are used.

 [Flowchart](#)

Decision-Making Workflow Walkthrough (PowerPoint)

This resource provides detailed guidance for each step and tool in the process. It is designed to be both a training tool and reference guide during the pilot.

The walkthrough explains:

- What qualifies as a “Motion”
- When and how to update Decision Pages
- How to use Fist-to-Five as a temperature check
- How Modified Consensus works in practice, including when to trigger a vote
- When LDC approval is required and how that escalation works

 [Walkthrough](#)

Together, these resources outline *what* happens at each stage of the decision-making process and *how* committees should use Modified Consensus, Fist-to-Five, and Decision Pages along the way.

The Pilot

During the pilot period, committees will apply the proposed decision-making framework as part of their normal work. The goal is to test how the tools and process function in practice and identify areas where clarification or adjustment may be needed.

Use of the Framework in Committee Work

Committees will incorporate the following practices into their regular meetings and decision-making:

- Decision Pages will be used to record motions, track research and consultation, and document final decisions.
- Fist-to-Five may be used during meetings as a quick method to gauge support, surface concerns, and guide discussion.
- Modified Consensus will be the primary decision model, with escalation to a majority vote when consensus cannot be reached within a reasonable timeframe.

These tools are intended to support committee deliberation rather than replace existing discussion practices.

Roles and Responsibilities

Clear roles will help ensure the pilot operates consistently across committees.

- **Committee Chairs** facilitate meetings using the framework, ensure Decision Pages are maintained, and guide the consensus process.
- **Committee Members and Liaisons** participate in discussion and decision-making according to committee norms and consult with their institutions as appropriate.
- **Shared Technology Committee Members** provide guidance during the pilot, answer process questions, and gather feedback from participating committees.

Training and Orientation

To support consistent use of the framework, introductory training will be offered at the start of the pilot. Sessions will introduce the workflow, demonstrate the use of Decision Pages, and review how Fist-to-Five and Modified Consensus are used during committee deliberation.

Training materials, including this document and the workflow walkthrough slides, will be made available on the WRLC Intranet, so committees can reference them as needed throughout the pilot.

Timeline

The pilot will begin in May 2026 and continue through June 2027. During this period:

- **May 2026:** Committees receive training.
- **Beginning June 2026:** Committees apply the framework during regular meetings.
- **Ongoing:** Feedback may be shared with the STC at any time via email (stc@wrlc.org).
- **Ongoing:** The STC will review feedback and identify potential refinements.

At the conclusion of the pilot period, the Shared Technology Committee will summarize lessons learned and recommend the next steps for the framework.