RadHR
Decision-making
Policy & Process

## May 2023

## Outline

This policy aims to outline the process for [the RadHR Core Team](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hgcaUdkxkkOVzaENfAwPohazot2ZhkaCqPyDw_2-wqk/edit) to make decisions about operations and strategic direction within RadHR, as an organisation. It is based on a small team of part-time workers and directors and aims to reflect the desire to work together based on consensus decision making principles, as well as the limits on everyone’s time. While not all workers will choose to also be directors, workers will have an equal say with directors in decision making.

We want to make space for differences, to allow for relative autonomy, and to find constructive compromise when we are not in immediate agreement with one another. We recognise that different decisions come with different levels of organisational risk and are more or less reversible if they go wrong; we want this document to reflect this range. This policy doesn’t pretend it will have answers to every potential scenario, but does aim to outline the principles and approaches that we all aim to uphold together.

This policy is currently based on the assumption that all decisions related to RadHR will land with the RadHR Core Team, but that this will not always be the case. Over time, as the RadHR Community becomes more reflective of the groups and organisations that are at the frontlines of countless struggles for justice, we imagine that a range of decisions will gradually begin to happen with the wider RadHR Community, via RadHR organisational structures that are not yet established.

## Review

We will review this decision making process annually to assess if it is still appropriate to the size, involvement and demographics of the wider RadHR Community.

## Principles

Our decision making should always primarily reflect the [values of RadHR](https://radhr.org/about/#values-principles).

Additionally, we feel that our decision making should:

* Always aim to be built on full consensus amongst the RadHR Core Team;
* Actively work to recognise and address any systemic or relational power differences amongst the RadHR Core Team that might make it harder for some of us to fully engage with decision making (see below: [Making involvement in decisions more possible](#_fxeb185416vv));
* Try our best to actively listen to our differences with one another in good faith, when working towards consensus;
* Aim to involve or consult wider parts of the RadHR community in a growing share of organisational decisions, as appropriate;
* Take into account current capacities and existing commitments.

## Process & structure

We recognise that there are many different types of decision-making. Our decision-making tends to fall into two categories ([via the Hum](https://61846587-0d20-490a-806e-6c2340528750.filesusr.com/ugd/b31745_672a9b0eecec4efb93737a675df25761.pdf)):

### Consensus

*Everyone is satisfied with the decision.*

Most collaborative, often better decisions and more anti-oppressive, but takes more time, harder with more people and only anti-oppressive if the wider culture is supportive.

### Mandate

*Groups/Roles can make decisions within their remit without input.*

Fast, with clear responsibilities, based on trust. Can miss out on collective intelligence, can undermine trust if done without transparency. Best in areas of low risk or with more expertise, where less group buy-in is needed.

In a small team, with limited time, we aim to make most day-to-day decisions by **Mandate**, individually, or by [Work Areas](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/117viiWLNxcCfGX9ISn6w5jIyka6bSeMCPsr9iDIxc4w/edit#gid=0), or when necessary, amongst the [Core Team](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hgcaUdkxkkOVzaENfAwPohazot2ZhkaCqPyDw_2-wqk/edit) members who are present at the time. Additional input from others is always encouraged, but isn’t necessary for most decisions. That said, we recognise that some decisions should always aim for full **Consensus** amongst the Core Team and should be recorded.

These should include (but are not limited to):

* Organisational strategy decisions,
* Increases to any particular budget line over £250, or which are part of restricted organisational funding (and thus will need to be reported to a particular funder),
* Decisions to apply for particular sources of funding or take on particular pieces of consultancy work, in the name of the organisation,
* Decisions which are likely to create reputational or legal risks for RadHR, its workers, directors or members,
* Issues which members of the Core Team think are likely to significantly impact or raise major concerns or differences with others in RadHR.

These issues can be addressed at weekly Core Team meetings, quarterly away days, or at the RadHR AGM each year. Currently Core Team meetings are held on Monday afternoons. We can review when workers have overlapping work time, if Monday afternoon doesn’t work as the team grows, as long as there is a regular slot, most weeks, that we can all attend.

The following steps should be taken to ensure that all Core Team members are able to participate in these types of decisions:

* Information regarding the decisions should be shared at least a week before the decision is due to be made;
* If possible, the decision should be discussed and made at a time when all Core Team members are able to be present in the meeting;
* There should be sufficient time allocated to the discussion around the decision.

If for whatever reason a member of the Core Team is unable to attend the meeting where the decision will take place, other members of the team should create opportunities to feed into the discussion. However, decision making will still land with those who are present in the meeting itself.

In any situations where differences have arisen amongst the Core Team, a more formal consensus process should be followed when the issue is discussed. It should include the following steps:

1. **Frame the problem**: What is the issue that the group wants to address?
2. **Explore the topic**: What are the different ways the group could address this issue?
3. **Underlying concerns**: Are there any concerns around the ideas that are coming forward from the group?
4. **Develop proposal**: What does the group feel should be done, which can address the different concerns that were raised? (If a proposal is already formed before the meeting, you can start with Step 4)
5. **Agreement/opinion check**: How are people feeling about it? Can do a go-round to ask everyone, or use hand signals (ie - hands up for support, hands down for opposition, hands in the middle for mixed feelings). If there are still strong objections, the group should work to reshape the proposal.
6. **Decision**: If the temperature check hasn’t brought any strong objections forward, the group should formalise the decision (and the facilitator should be clear that this is not just an opinion check!) A decision is made by all members indicating a ‘Fist-to-Five’ opinion on the proposal, where everyone shows a number of fingers, based on their feelings about the proposal (or types the numbers 0 to 5 in the chat).
	1. 3-5 fingers = consent (these indicate medium-to-strong support)
	2. 2 fingers = stand aside (a stand aside means that someone doesn’t feel equipped to make a decision but trusts others to do so)
	3. 1 finger = disagree (indicates that someone doesn’t like the decision, but is not worried that it is a major problem if it goes ahead. If someone presents a 1, other members should always check in with them, in case there are additional steps that might help them feel better about the proposal)
	4. 0 = block (this is an indication that someone in the group feels the current proposal is at fundamental odds with the values of the group and must be re-evaluated. If someone in a group uses a block, they need to be prepared to explain why they have done so [ie - what values are being violated], and it means that the group must start on a new proposal.)
7. **Closing**:
	1. *Addressing a situation where not everyone is super happy*: If there have been any stand-asides, think about what is needed to help those who haven’t been as strongly in-favour of the decision to stay involved and invested in the group. Often someone making time to talk to them one-to-one afterwards, to listen to their needs, can help with this.
	2. *Agreeing particular action points and actually doing the thing*: Leaving time in the meeting for members to think through the next few steps needed to implement a decision together, and then getting multiple people committed to the action points involved in the follow-up steps.

In situations where there has been an inability to reach consensus for two Core Team meetings, we will make decisions by a two-thirds majority at the third meeting discussing the issues. This should always be a last-resort option.

In the event that a decision is made via two-thirds majority, those who have secured the decision should arrange to meet with those who have stood against it at the earliest chance. If either party feels the decision has been a significant source of conflict, or has worries about how internal power dynamics may affect the discussion, they can arrange for outside facilitation in this meeting, paid for by RadHR (as is financially viable, until budget is confirmed). The aim should be to find ways to support further compromise between those involved and, if needed, to repair any harm or difficult feelings that came up in the decision making process.

If a Core Team member is ever unclear if they can make a decision themself, or if a smaller group of Core Team members is ever unclear about if they should make a decision themselves, another Core Team member who hasn’t been involved, should be asked. This may lead to a decision being taken to a wider group, up to the full Core Team, aiming for consensus.

Financial decision making should follow the process outlined in the
[Financial Accounts, Decision-Making & Monitoring Policy](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eZbZ42ES4hUSvrEwzV4Ag8Q-JxD2IhLSzwcrnmHyhjA/edit).

## Making involvement in decisions more possible

We recognise that it will not be possible for everyone to engage in decision making on equal terms, without active support from the group. This may be because a member is newer to the team, or because of different communication or learning needs, or because the team is still subtly reproducing wider societal power dynamics. To help counteract these factors, the team will take responsibility for practicing the following:

1. **Facilitation techniques:** Those who are facilitating (or everyone, if the meeting isn’t being formally facilitated) will take responsibility for noticing who has and hasn’t spoken, or if there are signs of tension or distress arising from anyone in the team. If it feels appropriate, we should encourage one another to share their perspectives, or offer space to discuss the decision in private, to help them to voice their perspectives, if they are not able to do so in the group, in the moment.
2. **Consensus amendments:** The outline of consensus process above can be amended to include specific go-rounds so everyone is encouraged to speak by default (rather than having to proactively make a point). It can also include guiding questions (ideally brought by the person/people raising the proposal), to help encourage more direct feedback about what is being proposed.
3. **Side conversations:** Offering to have 121 conversations in advance of a decision making meeting, or after it has occurred, can help bring to the surface thoughts and opinions that some members of the team might feel less-comfortable sharing in the full group. This can also help to keep team members in the loop, if they aren’t able to be present when a decision is going to be made, or have had to miss a key meeting unexpectedly. This work should always be distributed amongst the team, so it doesn’t fall on one person to keep others involved and informed.
4. **External facilitation:** Any member of the team is free to suggest outside facilitation for any upcoming discussions. This will likely end up requiring some planning to fit the schedules of, and prepare a brief for, an external facilitator, but there is budget that has been allocated for this purpose and should be spent any time there is felt to be a need amongst the team, as is financially viable. Recognising that it may feel difficult to raise this kind of suggestion, anyone can say ‘I think we need some extra help with this conversation’ and someone else on the team can support them to make arrangements around securing an outside facilitator. It may be that members of the current RadHR Sounding Board, or other representative bodies of the RadHR membership (as they develop), would be able to offer this support.

## Towards a RadHR Community Decision Making Process

At the time of writing, RadHR is still in its early stages of development and thus all decisions will be held by the current Core Team (or smaller configurations of its members), based on work mandate, consensus approaches, involvement mechanisms and the wider principles outlined above. While this is the case, there is still a longer-term commitment to involving more of the RadHR membership in various aspects of decision making, both for the website and for the organisation.

This commitment, and steps towards practicing it, will be balanced against the need to uphold RadHR’s core values. We are aware that members’ ideas of what is or isn’t radical will vary, and that there are voices and experiences that can easily get lost or silenced, in both online and offline communities, if there is not proactive work to shift or challenge existing power dynamics.

At this stage, responsibility lies with the Core Team to ensure that these values are upheld, even if there are moments when this is not the most democratic option. Over time, we aim to support the RadHR community to share greater responsibility for upholding core organisational values, and will continue to take steps to bring more members into consultation and involvement in more decisions (via the RadHR Community Forum, the Sounding Board, and one-to-one outreach). This assessment will be included in the annual review of this decision making process.

## References

Decision-Making Policy (PIRC, Unpublished)

[4 Decision-Making Methods for Decentralised Teams](https://www.thehum.org/post/decision-making-methods-for-decentralised-teams) (The Hum)