RadHR

Flat structure decision making & prioritisation processes

A decision making and prioritisation processes that enables us to work efficiently in a high-trust culture within our flat structure.

04.09.23

Info
Overview

This is a decision-making / planning policy that's been used for 3+ years by a self-managed / flat charity with 05–14 people and a turnover of £500k+.

Policy details

Type: Policy

Used for: 3+ years

Policy areas: 📁 Decision-making

📁 Planning

Known legal issues: No

Organisation info

Name: [Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll) <https://www.weall.org>](https://www.weall.org)

Type: Charity

Structure: Self-managed / Flat

People: 05–14

Turnover: £500k+

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How we make decisions

We have a two-tier process for decision making: both of them operate on a foundation of transparency and equality, respecting the input of all team members.

For smaller and sub-team decisions we use the **advice based process**: this means focused decisions, tactics, actions, smaller financial spending, and work that only impacts on a small number of other [team members].

- [Team members] are trusted and have autonomy to make decisions in their remit but must seek advice from team members who the decision will impact. They are not obligated to act on that advice but they must seek it and listen.
- [Team members] have responsibility to include others in their decision making and keep people informed.
- When in doubt about who is impacted by a decision, share it with the whole [staff] team giving all colleagues the opportunity to respond.
- It is good practice to share decision making as it develops, and certainly the outcome once a decision is made, on Slack with the whole team.
- It may be appropriate to consult other stakeholders beyond the [staff] team, like members, hubs or partners, if the decision impacts them.

For major budgetary and strategic decisions we use the **consent based approach**: this means macro decisions e.g. strategy, financial health, things that impact everyone in the team.

- We do not need to find complete consensus but we do need to have consent. If someone disagrees with a proposal they can say so, but they have to provide suggestions to improve it or make a counter proposal.
- Generally speaking, it will be more appropriate for these discussions to take place in team meetings with enough space given for everyone to contribute, rather than via Slack.
- These decisions might also be referred to the Global Council or trustees, but only after being discussed within the [staff] team.
- It may be appropriate to consult other stakeholders beyond the [staff] team, like members, hubs or partners, if the decision impacts them

How we prioritise

When faced with new work or an emerging opportunity, we consider our capacity and whether the activity/opportunity is worthwhile.

Here are some questions to ask ourselves – first individually and then with relevant colleagues.

At the organisational level:

- Is there funding for this project? Does this bring in additional funding for the team?
- Is it aligned with WEAll's strategy?
- Is it aligned with WEAll's action plan?
- Is it a reasonable use of team time / resources?
- Is there a high opportunity cost of team time? (our most valuable asset!)
- What is the potential impact: is it incremental / additive to existing efforts (within WEAll and outside WEAll) or duplicative?
- Is it potentially worth bringing in new capacity onto the team to deliver on this work?
- Does this work need to happen now or can it happen later?

At the individual level:

- Does the [staff] team and the lead for the project have the skill sets to deliver this work well?
- Would we enjoy this work? Would we be able to bring our passion into it?
- Does this work have a relationship or other residual benefit that makes it worthwhile?

This diagram may also help with the decision making process – the questions above can be used to plot the activity on the diagram.
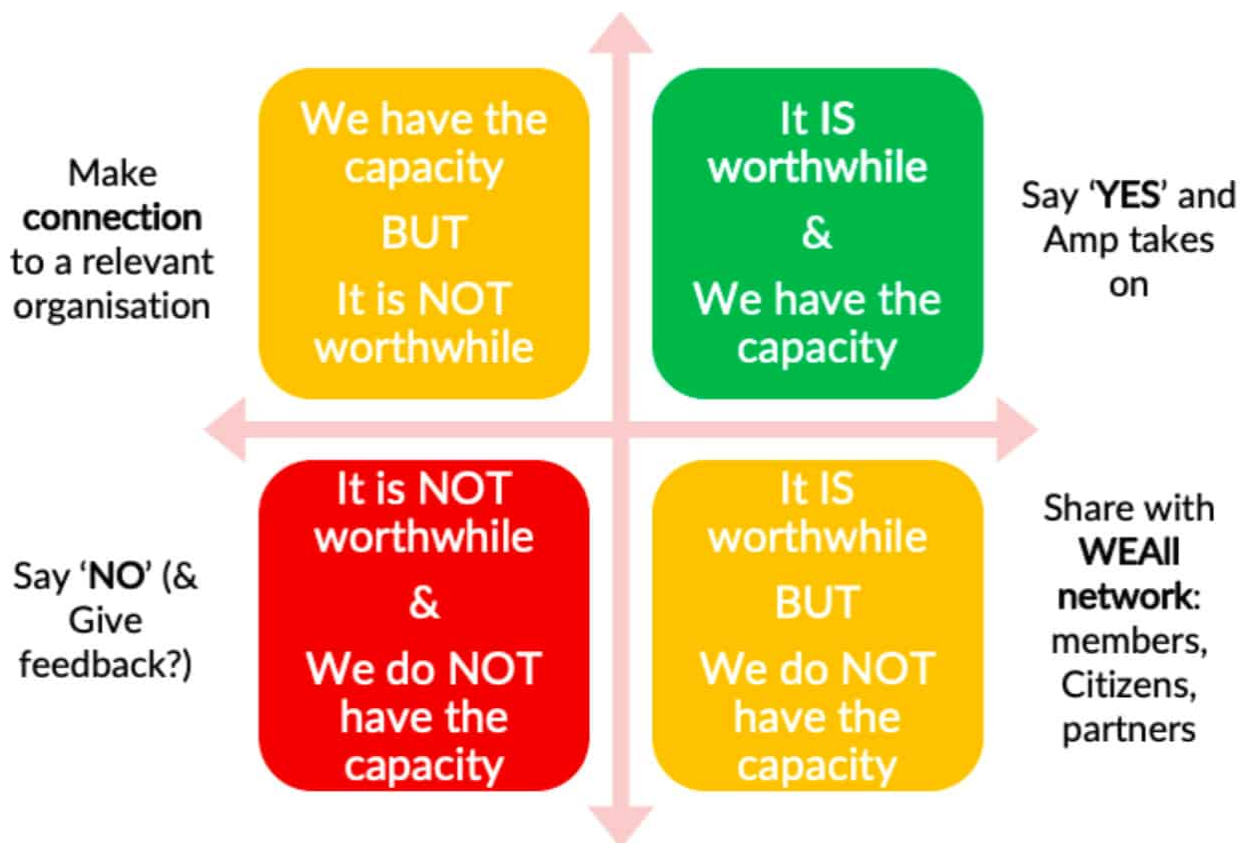
Should I/we attend that meeting?

Depending on the specifics of attending external meetings, either the advice process or consent model is to be used.

Whichever decision-making approach is adopted, here are some questions to help us decide whether or not to prioritise attendance at in-person meetings and events:

- What is the fundraising potential?
- What is the exposure to new audiences?
- Is the location/country of particular relevance to WEAll's strategy?
- Is the subject relevant to WEAll's strategy?
- Is there an added value to the team member?
- Is there any WEAll member that could substitute for the team team?

Fundraising decision making has its own unique approach [set out in separate doc].

From the RadHR.org Policy Library.