

How to decide who will make the decision

Some groups may include individuals who all are “on the same page,” with similar philosophies, problem-solving approaches, and roles or power. More common, however, are groups made up of people who vary in background, skill, and roles or power.

Since many conflicts result from disagreements about power and authority, groups with a clear understanding of who has decision-making authority will have fewer conflicts. It is important for the group leader or facilitator to work with group members to determine who gets to make decisions. High-performing teams learn to negotiate and clearly define the most appropriate decision-making approach for each situation. Decisions can be made differently, depending on the situation. Some decisions may best be made by one person. Time and who will ultimately be accountable for the outcome of the action are key factors in deciding who should make decisions.

School leaders can use a ARCIO chart to identify who is responsible for decisions and review past actions. Each letter of the acronym is used to fill in the cells of a chart:

A = Approve. These individuals approve the decision.

R = Responsible. These individuals are responsible for making and implementing the decision.

C = Consult. These individuals must be consulted before the decision is made.

I = Inform. These individuals need to know about the decision.

O = Out of the loop. These individuals or groups do not need to be consulted.

To use the ARCIO chart, invite teams or small groups to identify a handful of major decisions in the school or district. Write the tasks in the first cell of each row. Across the top of the chart are cells indicating different stakeholders. As the group looks at each stakeholder group’s involvement in each task, members can discuss ways to improve decision making and the most efficient and collaborative methods.

Here’s an example of how a ARCIO can be used

In *Making Meetings Work: How to Get Started, Get Going, And Get It Done*, author Ann M. Delephant describes a middle school where three teachers took issue with the principal’s decisions about room assignments.

The principal decided to give responsibility for the room assignments to a committee of teachers. She handed over the building layout with the number of rooms, a list of the class sections, the assignments of students with individual education plans, and the teacher list — all of the data for making the decisions.

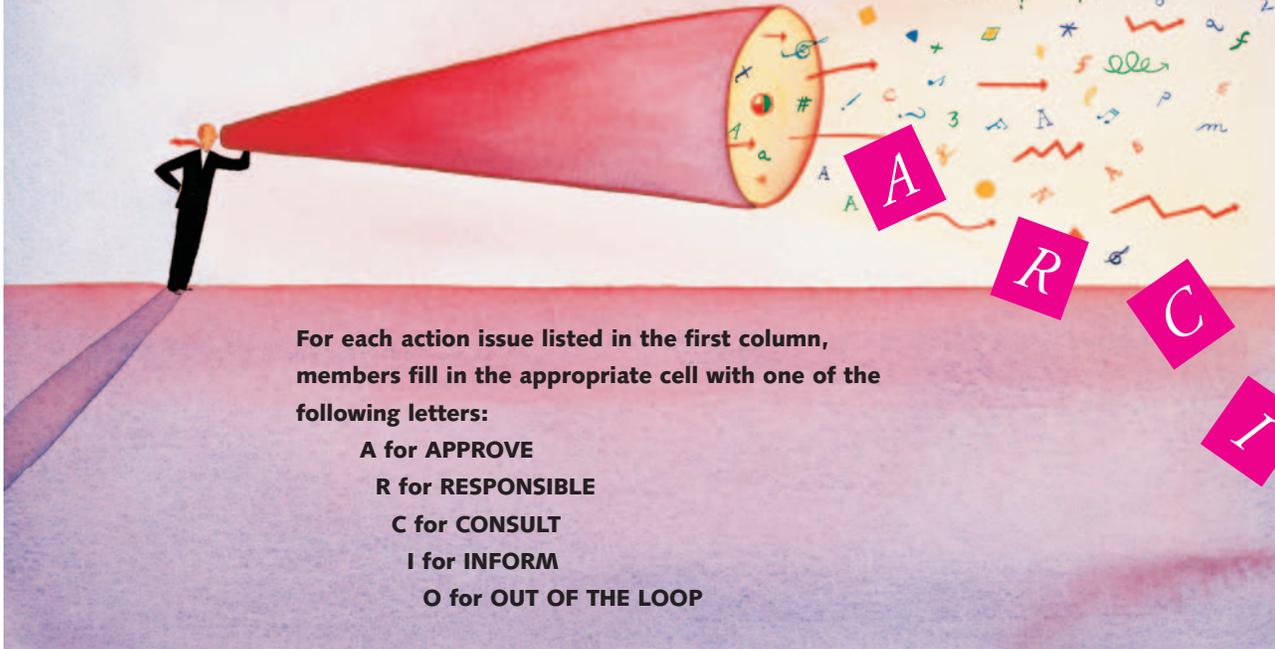
The committee moved the R in the chart to the teachers, acknowledging that the committee was responsible for the decision.

They would consult with the principal and the teachers, and therefore they both got Cs on the chart. And they agreed that the teachers would all be informed by the committee when the decision was made, so the teachers were also recognized with an I.

Three weeks later, the teachers came back in and asked the principal to make the final decision about the room assignments. Their friends weren’t happy with the decisions they were making, and they were being shunned in the teachers’ lounge. Reviewing who had the responsibility and allowing it to shift ultimately helped everyone agree on who should make the final selection.

Excerpted and adapted from *Making Meetings Work: How to Get Started, Get Going, And Get It Done*, by Ann M. Delephant with Valerie von Frank (Corwin Press with NSDC, 2007). Available at store.nsd.org.

DIRECTIONS: Identify the groups that need to be in your top cells. The example here will provide ideas, but include the real groups and titles used in your school or district. In the first column, list the issues or tasks that require clarity about who makes decisions.



For each action issue listed in the first column, members fill in the appropriate cell with one of the following letters:

- A for APPROVE
- R for RESPONSIBLE
- C for CONSULT
- I for INFORM
- O for OUT OF THE LOOP

Issues and tasks	Givens (board policy, contracts, regulations)	Supt./ central office	Principal	School improvement team	Grade level/ dept. chairs	Com- mittees	Staff	Parents	Students	Other