

Published on *OpenChannels* (<https://www.openchannels.org>)

Special Focus on Consensus-Based Planning: Tips for Better Negotiations

MPA managers or planners pursuing a consensus process with stakeholders may benefit from following the advice of expert mediators who conducted a workshop at the Coastal Zone '99 Conference in San Diego, California, USA, attended by MPA News:

Follow through: Be sure that you are clear with stakeholders on what you intend to do once agreement is reached. Are you prepared to follow the consensus decision? If not, you risk alienating stakeholders.

Group size: Keep the size of the consensus group reasonable. A group of 12-20 negotiators is manageable; more than 20 may be unwieldy.

Voting: Absence of a negotiator from a decision-making meeting can hinder the voting process. In order to thwart the use of absence as a stalling tactic, make an absence equivalent to a non-dissenting vote. This virtually guarantees that all negotiators or their representatives show up.

For more information:

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Source URL: <https://www.openchannels.org/news/mpa-news/special-focus-consensus-based-planning-tips-better-negotiations>