

P-Patch Community Gardening Program

Making Decisions

Tip

PP512

P-Patch TIPS are reference documents that address topics related to the development and ongoing management of P-Patch Community Gardens.

Making Group Decisions

As caretakers of public open space, P-Patch community gardeners make many decisions that can have some effect on the whole garden. Each decision, no matter how small, should involve inclusion of as many people as possible. Inclusive decision-making results in better decisions, community building, and a higher degree of participation and commitment from everyone.

Best Practice

Where capacity allows, a garden should have a shared understanding of group decision-making. It does not have to be complicated. Before decisions are made, gardeners should be reminded about the site's decision-making process. In addition, there should be a clear process for submitting an idea for decision-making. How a P-Patch makes decisions will depend on the individual circumstances of each garden. Ask your P-Patch staff for examples from other gardens.

Types of Decisions

Level 1: Day-to-Day

Simple day-to-day decisions, such as planting or weeding the giving garden. This level requires decisions by a leadership team, a small group, or an individual. Other examples include setting up work parties, deciding work tasks, creating agendas for meetings, setting dates for potlucks, or rebuilding of compost bins, etc.

Requirements for Level 1:

If all decisions are Level 1, no additional decision-making is required.

Level 2: Changes that affect the garden

Proposed changes moderately affect the whole garden (people or plants). Examples include: relocating compost bins, creating more gardening space, replanting any common area, major pruning, spending over \$100 from garden funds, etc.

Requirements Level 2:

- Notify P-Patch staff before any project.
- Notify the whole garden of proposal. Use more than one form of communication.
- Provide at least 2 weeks for comments and feedback; offer multiple ways for comment (email, letter, etc.)
- Submit for review and approval by P-Patch staff.
- Adjust proposal based on comments from P-Patch staff.
- Agree on method of voting and take a garden-wide vote on final proposal. Provide at least 2 weeks and allow for more than one way to vote.
- Use language translation or interpretation, if needed.

Items to include in a proposed change:

- Name of proposal, include date and sponsoring gardener/s.
- Overview of project: what you will do, budget, if needed, description, drawing of end product, and timeline.
- Reason/Purpose of proposal: list problem solved or special opportunity. Include pros and cons.
- Process for approval or disapproval of the proposal.



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Level 2 Process Example:

Step 1: One or more gardeners write up a proposal/s for a change in the garden; present to leadership team and P-Patch staff person.

Step 2: Team assesses decision level and discusses with P-Patch staff person.

Step 3: Leadership or person making the proposal shall begin a process for garden-wide approval based on program requirements and specific garden decision-making process.

Level 3: Major Changes to the garden

This is a proposed major change to a garden that affects the larger community's experience of the P-Patch. Some examples include redesign, rebuild, major installation, honey bee hives, new entries, large signs, etc. You should always check with your P-Patch staff before you begin. Permits may be needed.

Requirements of Level 3:

- Notify P-Patch staff before beginning any project.
- Notify the whole garden of proposal. Must use more than one form of communication.
- Develop a public involvement and outreach plan. It should include a broad range of participants and use more than one form of communication to gardeners, neighbors, and larger community.
- Public Process: Notify larger community of proposal. Involve adjacent neighbors and other major users of the site.
 - Flyer adjacent neighbors.
 - Do translation when possible.

- Install a sign at the site in a safe visible location announcing planned action, meetings, maps, drawings, timeline, name and phone/email of a contact person.



- Document the public process: include steps taken and who participated. Submit with final proposal to P-Patch staff for review.
- Hold at least 3 public meetings. Topics could include a brainstorming session, presentation of options, unveiling final design, and a celebration.
- Post final design at garden during work
- Allow for comments; provide at least 2 weeks and offer a variety of ways for people to comment.
- Provide draft plans showing concept and details to P-Patch staff for review and approval.
- Adjust proposal based on comments where needed.
- Agree on method of voting and conduct a garden wide-vote on final proposal. Provide at least 2 weeks and allow for more than one way to vote.



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Process Example Level 3:

Step 1: One or more gardeners write up a proposal/s for a change in the garden and present to leadership team and P-Patch staff.

Step 2: Team or individual assesses decision level and discusses with P-Patch staff.

Step 3: Garden leadership or person making the proposal begins a process for garden-wide approval based on program requirements and specific garden decision-making process.

Step 4: If needed, hire a landscape designer/architect to help run the public process and draft a design.

Step 5: Begin outreach plan and public process and complete other notification requirements.

Step 6: Submit final concept and details to P-Patch staff and applicable property owner for approval.

Step 7: Modify design where needed and post final design on-site while under construction

Step 8: Get permits where needed.

Step 9: Begin Construction

Step 10: Celebrate!

Garden Wide Comments and Votes

(1) Leadership Team submits proposal electronically to all that have email and program staff will mail to those without email, for garden-wide comment for a certain time period. All gardeners are encouraged to comment.

(2) Following the comment period, the final proposal will be sent to the primary gardener in each plot for a vote (one vote per plot regardless of plot size). The voting will be done electronically using a program such as Survey Monkey or a ballot mailed to those who do not have email.

(3) Garden wide decisions are made in favor of the option receiving the most votes. A "none of the above" option will be included except for simple "yes/no" votes.

(4) Operational details (e.g. length of comment period, dates for voting) will be determined by the Leadership Group and the P-Patch Office and may change over time due to circumstances and/or nature of the proposal.

P-Patch Office

- The P-Patch Office must review and approve all proposals before they are posted for a Garden-Wide comment and vote.
- As a final safeguard the P-Patch office has final review, appeal, approval and veto power on all decisions.

Queen Anne P-Patch Voting Sample

Additional Resources

Examples of how a decision is made: Check in with your P-Patch staff person to get examples of processes adopted by other P-Patch gardens.

[Inclusive Outreach and Engagement](http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Neighborhoods/PPatch/Inclusive-Outreach.pdf)

<http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Neighborhoods/PPatch/Inclusive-Outreach.pdf>

[Communication Agreement-Sample](http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Neighborhoods/PPatch/Tips/P%20Patch%20Communication%20Agreement%20(0).pdf)

[http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Neighborhoods/PPatch/Tips/P%20Patch%20Communication%20Agreement%20\(0\).pdf](http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Neighborhoods/PPatch/Tips/P%20Patch%20Communication%20Agreement%20(0).pdf)

Meeting Etiquette Tips

- Keep an open mind.
- All of us have valid ideas and opinions.
- All of us have the right to be heard and have our ideas and opinions respected.
- We will not interrupt others or enter into personal remarks.
- We will not make personal attacks or disparaging remarks.
- We will not shout or yell to make our points.
- We will be acknowledged by raising our hands and the facilitator will do their best to make sure that everyone gets an opportunity to speak.
- The facilitator can't manage everything in the meeting, so will ask the help of everyone to keep the discussion lively and orderly.

Models of Ways to Decide**Consensus Model**

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_decision-making

Majority Rule:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majority_rule



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