ORGANIZATIONAL DECISION MAKING:
WHAT ARE THE DECISION POINTS FOR LEADERSHIP?

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Have you ever been surprised about an action and wondered about the rationale used to make the decision? While individual decisions are often less complicated because the implications primarily affect the decision-maker, organizational decisions often carry multiple levels of impact. When exercising leadership in organizations, decision-makers often consider several levels of implication, not only for the individuals involved, but also for the overall organization. Some organizations use the "***triple bottom line***" or the consideration points of how the decision will impact people, the environment, and the budget. Others may use additional criteria to help them make decisions like the one below.

EXAMPLE DECISION POINTS:

o *ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITY - How does the decision align with the priorities of the organization?*

o *TRUST – Does the decision bring about trust, and if so, with whom? Are there implications of trust between individuals or positions? Which are most important to preserve right now, and do other trust-building measures need to be considered?*

o *EVIDENCE BASED or DATA INFORMED – Is external data or evidence driving the decision?*

o *FAIRNESS – How does the decision impact some people more than others?*

o *PRECEDENT- What are the future implications of this decision? Can the decision be made without creating precedent – or is it intended to create precedent?*

o *ETHICS – Does the decision align with the ethics embraced and upheld by your organization?*

o *MORALE – How might the decision or action impact the overall morale of others in the organization?*

o *COST –What are the costs, who bears the costs, and what are the anticipated benefits? Who benefits the most?*

o *EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION – To what degree do the decision options disrupt the existing way of doing things? Does the ease of implementation affect which choice is preferrable?*

This list of decision-making criteria is not intended to be exhaustive. Not all decisions will require equal consideration of each factor, and some decisions may require additional decision criteria to be considered. In addition, the factors weighting the decision-making process are not always equally relevant. Yet, despite the nuances and differences in decision-making processes, the decision points listed above are important elements to consider in organizational leadership decision-making.

There are inherent challenges associated with organizational leadership but using clear decision criteria can help leaders to navigate some of those obstacles and reduce unintended repercussions of decision-making. Using established decision criteria can support leaders to be attentive to the broader implications and anticipate possible decision repercussions. Using established criteria also increases transparency and allows leaders to explain the rationale behind decisions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *What criteria do you think should be considered when making professional decisions?*

- *How do you determine which criteria is most important when weighing decisions?*

- *Are these same criteria relevant to community decisions? Why or why not?*

- *What systems or methods do you rely upon when predicting responses to organizational or community decisions?*

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Within a given professional field, an established "best practice" may frame the decision-making process. In Community Development circles for example, the Community Development Society (https://cdsociety.org/) details the following principles of good practice guidelines for community development related decisions.

- *CO-LEARNING. Engage in mutual learning and capacity building among professionals and community members through reflective practice, experiential knowledge, professional development, and scholarship.*

- *COLLABORATION. Bridge boundaries of place, sector, discipline, identity, and interest to integrate diverse perspectives and resources in shared decision-making and co-creation.*

- *COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PRACTICE. Center those most directly impacted in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of community initiatives, policies, programs, and research that affect their lives.*

- *COMMUNITY POWER. Respect the ability of community members to develop and sustain a strong self-image, create shared power, and think and do for themselves.*

- *DIGNITY WITHIN DIVERSITY. Practice and foster cultural humility, nonjudgmental listening, and accountability for any harm done.*

- *ECONOMIC AUTONOMY. Strengthen local ownership and stewardship of community assets and wealth building opportunities.*

- *SOCIAL JUSTICE. Identify, resist, and dismantle systems of oppression experienced by both historically marginalized groups and emerging social identities.*

- *SUSTAINABILITY. Practice and foster careful deliberation of the cultural, social, economic, and environmental impacts of actions and inactions over time.*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

On a practical level, local decisions may be improved by establishing core criterion for decisions. For facilitated decision making support, contact Blueprint Kentucky at the University of Kentucky.

Justice, T., & Jamieson, D. (2012). The Facilitators Fieldbook, Third Edition. *Harper Collins*.

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