

Knowledge-Based Decision-Making



March 2021 (Rev.)

What is KBDM? Why do we use it?

Knowledge-Based Decision-Making means information gathering and discussion *before* a possible solution is crafted and a decision is made.

We use this method during informed group conscience meetings because:

- it allows for a thorough examination of issues without an end in mind.
- conversation/dialogue is emphasized, not debate—as in Roberts Rules.

KBDM Alignment with AI-Anon Principles

- **Tradition #1:** Our common welfare comes first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.
- **Concept #4:** Participation is the key to harmony.
- **Concept #5:** The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and ensure that they be heard.
- **General Warranty #3:** All decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, are unanimous.

KBDM's Basic Steps

- Announce topic 2+ weeks in advance – describe problem/issue
- Pick a facilitator & note-taker
- Adopt guidelines: time overall, time per share, stay on topic etc.
- If you have heard your point made, don't repeat it.



Information Exchange

1) Frame/clarify the topic by using the “Framing the Topic” document

2) Facts on the topic are gathered:

- historical perspectives
- archival information
- previous motions
- information in the *Service Manual*

Framing the Topic

Framing provides background history, relevance (why we're discussing the topic), and context (how it fits current circumstances) to a topic which brings clarity, focus, and perspective when presenting the topic to the group.

General Guidelines for filling out this worksheet:

- Avoid drawing any conclusions. Set the background so the conclusion can come from the discussion.
- Consider personal thoughts or experiences if they assist in clarifying, lending credibility, or illustrating a point. Please keep it simple and consider the Al-Anon Legacies.

Framing the Topic Worksheet

1. Create a title for your topic. It can be questions or a statement that needs clarification.
Topic for discussion:
2. Summarize why you brought this topic or question forward to the group. Provide relevance and context. Why are we having this discussion now? Why is this discussion important?
Summary:
3. Include any available background information on the topic. Sources could include, but are not limited to our Al-Anon Service Manual, group conscience archives, Conference Approved Literature.
Historical background information:

Complete and return to the Secretary/Group Conscience Steward. Complete and give to the Secretary 2 weeks before the group conscience. **Date:**

Submitted by:

2/7/25

Four KBDM Questions

The answers to the questions provide a basis for discussion.

- Gather information to these questions
- Everyone can add to them
- Opinions are backed up by experience, principles or knowledge

They provide common information so everyone can be on the same page.



Question #1



What do we know about our members' or prospective members' **needs** that is relevant to this discussion?

What do we wish we knew, but don't?

Question #2



What do we know about the **resources** and our **vision** for the organization that is relevant to this discussion?

What do we wish we knew, but don't?

Question #3



What do we know about the **current realities** and **evolving dynamics** of the world and our fellowship that is relevant to this discussion?

What are the pros and cons?

What do we wish we knew, but don't?

Question #4

What are the ethical implications of our choices?

In other words...

Will our decision be consistent with our spiritual principles, policies, and Twelve Traditions?

What do we wish we knew, but don't?

Summarize...

- You can summarize what's been said as the information exchange goes along...
- Or summarize at this point:
 - The problem description
 - The information that's been gathered

Before making a decision...

- Has everyone asked all the questions needed for clarity?
- Have all opinions, including minority opinions, been heard?
- Does everyone feel they thoroughly understand the topic?
- Does everyone feel that an informed group conscience has taken place?

Decision-Making

Based on the information exchange, there are 3 options:

Option #1

A suggestion/solution may evolve from the discussion; facilitator can ask for a show of hands.



Decision-Making

Option #2

The topic is sent to a task force, committee, or individual for further research or gathering of more information.



Decision-Making

Option #3

No suggestion or decision is made
and the “status quo” remains.

No vote is taken.

We Accept the Group Conscience





Knowledge-Based Decision-Making *Background and Rationale*



Summary: Knowledge-Based Decision-Making means information gathering and discussion *before* a possible solution is crafted and a decision is made.

The essential elements of the KBDM process are:

- Open communication between all members.
- All decision-makers have common access to full information.
- The idea that everyone participates is a spiritual principle. The KBDM process models this principle.
- Dialogue *before* deliberation and decision.
- Opinions are backed up by experience, principles, or knowledge.
- We are all equal and everyone is valuable. We respect all ideas and do not tolerate domination.
- We exist in a culture of trust and good will.

Why it is a good model (from *Conference Summary*, 2006):

- It allows thorough examination of issues without an end in mind.
- It is not necessary to choose sides or develop evidence with an end in mind.
- It allows those who make the decision to become far less important than the fact that a good decision is made.
- The outcome is not as important as the way we got there (discussion and an environment that encourages healthy thinking).
- It provides for open dialogue, so everyone's needs are heard, expectations and preferences are acknowledged, and ethical dimensions are considered.
- How we talk and listen to each other is more important than the decision we come to. Our Higher Power is present in the process of speaking and listening.

KBDM alignment with Al-Anon Principles

- Tradition #1: Our common welfare comes first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.
- Concept #4: Participation is the key to harmony
- Concept #5: The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and ensure that they be heard.
- General Warranty #3: All decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by unanimity.

The benefits for our groups

- Group members are more likely to support the decision made.
- Group effort is more likely to yield better results.

- Participants become part of the process, more voices are heard, and more solutions are generated.
- There is recognition that responsibility for action rests on everyone.
- Actions tend to lean toward the greater good for the organization.
- Negativity is diffused.

How is KBDM different than Robert's Rules of Order?

- Robert's Rules is rarely followed as written. The *Newly Revised 11th Edition* is 669 pages long. *(the following quotes are from that edition or "In Brief, 2nd edition)*
- In RR, a motion is *necessary* for any discussion to begin. *"To begin the process of making any decision, a member offers a proposal by making a motion. . . . Strictly speaking, there should be no debate on a matter before a motion regarding it has been made."* (In Brief, p. 19)
- A motion describes a specific action to be taken; there is an end in mind from the outset. *"It is very important to say precisely what the words of the motion are to be. The group votes on exactly language, not on a vague idea."* (p. 20)
- The RR process is geared toward efficiency and toward getting the decision made in a timely manner. *"A prime value of parliamentary procedure is that it provides processes through which an organization, large or small, can work out satisfactory solutions to the greatest number of questions in the least amount of time."* (p. 7)
- The process of refining and defining alternate possibilities or solutions—or putting off a decision until a later meeting—is cumbersome and requires a series of votes:
 - *If the main motion doesn't address the issue at hand, it has to be voted on or amended before a new motion can be discussed.* (p. 53)
 - *If more information is needed, another motion must be made and voted on, allowing that to happen.* (p. 53)
- Debate (not conversation or dialogue) is the style of communication presumed by RR. *"Debate means discussion on the merits of the action—that is, whether the proposed action should or should not be taken."* (p. 23)



Knowledge-Based Decision-Making Process to Reach An Informed Group Conscience *KBDM Quick Reference Tool*

Before you begin discussing the issue, the group:

- Announces topic at least 2 weeks in advance
- Decides who will call on people, take notes, and who will summarize (this could be the same person or several people). Decides how and when people will be called upon. (Use a timer or not? Who hasn't spoken yet?)
- Considers adopting guidelines like: Start and stop on time. Stick to the agenda. No side conversations. No cross talk. Be polite and courteous. Listen: if someone says what you were going to say, don't repeat it.
- Your individual part? Participate in the dialogue. Practice our principles. Assume good will. The issue may require more than one group conscience: practice patience and humility. "Let it begin with me."

How It Works (What do we actually *do*?)

– Discussion and information gathering before deciding –

The issue is first "framed" or introduced by someone familiar with the topic. Then we gather information, ask questions, and have a conversation *before* crafting a solution. A "Framing the Topic" document may be created.

1. **Exchange Information**—everyone has equal access to the same:
 - a. Printed material (e.g. *Service Manual*, past motions, archives from meeting, etc.), and
 - b. **Explore the issue using the 4 KBDM questions** (below) as a guide (or this can be assigned to a task force or a committee).
2. **Summarize** what you learned before moving onto the discussion.
3. **Discuss**
 - a. Discuss and offer opinions *based on information already exchanged* and on experience, strength, and hope.
 - b. Additional questions may be asked at this time.
4. **Summarize** the discussion. Then, *before* making a decision or offering a motion:
 - Has everyone asked all the questions needed for clarity?
 - Have all opinions, including the minority opinions, been heard?
 - Does everyone feel they thoroughly understand the topic?
 - Does everyone feel that an informed group conscience has taken place?
5. **Make a Decision** (3 possibilities)
 - a. Further research or deliberation may be needed about the issue.
 - b. Suggestion may be made (e.g. informal show of hands).
 - c. Status Quo (leave as is).

Four KBDM Questions

The answers to the questions below can provide a basis for discussion. They provide common information so everyone can be on the same page. Gather information regarding these questions. Everyone can add to them.

- 1. What do we know about our members' (and prospective members') needs, wants and preferences that relate to this issue?**
(How important is it? Is it what our current members want? How will it affect newcomers? What purpose would this serve? Is it necessary? Is it helpful?) What do we wish we knew, but don't? Might our decision have unintended consequences? We might need to do some additional work or research to help us make a sound decision.)
- 2. What do we know about the resources and our vision for Al-Anon and our meetings that are relevant to this issue?**
(What are our resources? Can we afford it? Do we have enough volunteers to make it happen? Do we have any background information in our archives that can help us answer this question?) What do we wish we knew, but don't?
- 3. What do we know about our "culture" and "environment" that is relevant to this discussion? In other words--Will our decision be consistent with our principles, policies, and legacies: The Twelve Steps, Traditions, and Concepts? What are the implications of our choices? What are the pros and cons?**
(How would this affect our meeting? How would this affect our fellowship? Newcomers? Al-Anon (and A.A.) as a whole? Does our Service Manual provide any guidance about this issue? Pros/Cons: The advantages of this change might be? The disadvantages might be?) What do we wish we knew, but don't?
- 4. What are the ethical implications of our choices? Would we be practicing our "principles in all our affairs"?**
(Is our decision legal? Will our decision help us fulfill our primary purpose? If we decide to take an action, will it be the "right" thing to do?) What do we wish we knew, but don't?

After our best efforts to answer these questions, and through listening with open minds and hearts, we trust in each other and our Higher Power, and make a decision. Once a decision is made, the entire group supports the decision.