

Decision-Making for Equity and Inclusion

Decision-making practices reflect an organization's equity and inclusion values. They also reveal how authoritative a.k.a. commanding power is distributed throughout an organization. Use this decision-making mode graphic to investigate how power is currently distributed through decision making and determine if an alternate strategy might increase inclusion and a diversity of ideas. Authoritative or commanding power can work well when a leader's primary focus is to ensure tight and immediate control in a crisis or high-risk position. Once a crisis has passed, effective leaders shift into alternate leadership styles that increase diversity, equity, and inclusion through clear and transparent decision-making processes. The authoritative or commanding style is unhelpful when applied over an extended period because there is a significant risk that people will feel underutilized, undervalued, and demotivated.

The "I Decide" mode is from the perspective of the Executive Director (E.D.) or Chief Executive Officer (C.E.O.), or whomever carries the highest authoritative or commanding power. It also applies to co-leadership structures where multiple E.D.'s or a management team share responsibility. The "We Decide" mode refers to shared power, where the power to decide is shared between a team or team lead and the E.D. The "You Decide" mode transfers decision making power from the E.D. to the project team or project lead.

As you move from top to bottom, the decision-making modes carry increased states of inclusion and equity. For instance, "I Decide – Tell" does not include a process for gathering input from those affected (inclusion) or a process for designing an equitable solution that serves the staff's disparate and intersectional experiences. In contrast, under the "We Decide – Join" Mode, teams or team leads, and E.D.'s have equal decision-making power over project or program decisions. This increases inclusion and equity respectively by inviting input from a diverse set of voices, and including those most affected by the decision.

These Decision-Making Modes can be combined with the [DARCI decision-making model](#). The DARCI Decision Making Model clarifies your organization's decision-making process by explicitly naming who is involved in decision making. If used early and often at your organization, your team will have clear expectations for their role in each decision or project and will feel more connected to and engaged in their work.

Decision-Making Modes

