
Fair process is a decision-making approach that gives those who will be most impacted by a decision the opportunity to help shape it. You, the manager, are the decision-maker, but you engage stakeholders upfront to gather input, anticipate risks, and identify alternatives—leading to better decisions and better buy-in. Check out the quick start guide below for FAIR, a four-step framework to help you use fair process in your organization. Then, review these examples of how fair process can be used for a wide range of decisions.

1. Frame your decision

Identify your “decision mode.”
Sometimes you just want your stakeholders to validate your decision or help you test your assumptions. Other times, you are open to all ideas. Being honest about your starting point and decision mode lets you gather the most useful input. For more on finding your decision-making mode, see [here](#).

Decide which of your stakeholders to involve.
Consider who can give you the best input and advice based on your mode. Think carefully about what experience, expertise, or perspective each stakeholder brings to the decision. Cast the widest net that will capture the most relevant input. Beware of polling just your allies. By seeking diverse perspectives, you can identify risks and opportunities you might otherwise ignore.

Check your list:
1. Am I talking to people who will be impacted by the decision?
2. Does this list have a diversity of positional power and personal identities?
3. Do I have representatives from each group affected by the decision?

2. Ask for & engage with input

Set the stage for your conversations.
Your stakeholders have vital information that can make your decision more effective, so be open to their input. Listen with an open mind and engage deeply with the input. You get no points for making a show of asking for input and then ignoring what you hear.

To help your stakeholders understand your situation, start your conversation with:
- Relevant context for the decision
- Process, time, and budget constraints
- The question or problem you’re wrestling with
- How their input will be used

**Frame your decision**

Find your mode: Let’s say you’re crafting a remote work policy. If you already have 2-3 defined options, your decision is in TELL mode.

Consider who’s likely to:
- Have better information
- Come up with creative alternatives
- Spot equity implications
- Anticipate risks and problems
- Surface implementation ideas
- Have different perspectives

Stakeholders:
- Managers responsible for team-level outcomes
- Staff most likely to benefit from remote work (eg., caregivers, those with long commutes etc)
- Staff least likely to take advantage of the policy (eg., front office staff)

Ask for & engage with input

Ways to seek input:
- Staff surveys
- Focus groups
- 1-1 interviews with managers
Ask questions to gather the feedback you need.

Given differences in power, privilege, or identity, your stakeholders may shy away from critiquing your proposal. Encourage stakeholders to offer ideas and engage them in identifying benefits, drawbacks, and alternatives. The pros, cons and mitigations tool is a structured way to surface ideas.

Below is a sample matrix:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
<th>Mitigations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remote work as default</td>
<td>Applies equally to all staff and could open up possibilities for hiring</td>
<td>While equitable in theory, some staff may not be able to take advantage of it</td>
<td>- State in job descriptions whether the role is remote work-eligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- For staff with non-remote job profiles, work with managers to offer flex times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote work allowed based on manager discretion</td>
<td>Managers can make the right decision based on their staff’s needs, productivity levels, and circumstances</td>
<td>Decisions are more vulnerable to manager bias, which could have equity and inclusion implications</td>
<td>- All staff must work from the office for at least 6 months before requesting to work remotely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- If a manager chooses to deny remote work, they should discuss with the COO and a peer to do a bias check</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Inform & explain the final decision

Fully communicate your decision and lay out next steps.
Your stakeholders want to understand how you made your decision and what it will mean to them. Communicate your decision transparently to win trust and commitment, especially from those who will implement it. Recognize those that provided input. Ask for buy-in and be explicit about any changes that will result from the decision.

- Rearticulate context
- State the final decision
- Recap decision-making process
- Acknowledge input and its impact
- Clearly lay out next steps
- Seek staff commitment to implementing the decision
- Indicate you will be checking in to gather lessons learned

4. Revisit the decision-making process

Don’t be afraid to examine the results.
You aren’t reopening the decision, you’re seeking lessons learned. Some questions to consider:
- How was the process received?
- Did we consider our choice points (h/t to our friends at RaceForward)?
- What could we do better the next time?