

FOOD NOT BOMBS LOWER MANHATTAN CORE DOCUMENTS

A note to readers: The following documents outline basic processes and procedures for organizational matters in this Food Not Bombs chapter. They were developed in draft form over the summer of 2021 by the Core Docs Working Group, then discussed and ratified by the chapter as a whole over the fall. They go over the Formal Decision Process (FDP), the Resource Allocations Principles (RAP) and the FNB Accountability Structure (FAS). The purpose of the Core Documents is to reduce friction and ease action by providing a consistent set of guidelines one can turn to in the event of confusion or ambiguity. Its purpose, ultimately, is to make our jobs easier. This in mind, readers should understand that this is meant to be a living document, changing alongside the facts and circumstances on the ground. ****The document serves the group, the group does not serve the document.****

I. Formal Decision Process (FDP)

In general, we should strive to make decisions and resolve issues informally through conversation. This Formal Decision Process should only be brought out when informal processes have failed or are seen as inadequate. In general, this process should be raised only on matters of serious concern, generally matters affecting the group as a whole or decisions that must be made by the group as a whole, and should avoid being applied to operational matters unless necessary. The fewer times this is invoked the better.

VENUE: To avoid clogging the Signal loops with proposal discussion, the Formal Decision Process will take place on a separate RiseUp pad. That is, unless something comes up during one of the meetings, in which case we simply follow this procedure in person.

NOTICE: We will provide notice of all formal proposals so people can be aware of ongoing discussion. This includes placing the link to the RiseUp pad at the top of the signup sheet, posting the link on the Logistics thread once a day (and only once a day), and ensuring people at the serve are informed about the proposal (by either being at the serve themselves, or having someone they know will be at the serve talk about it)

STEPS:

1. **Initial discussion** -- an issue or idea arises out of informal conversation.
2. **Call for process** -- someone calls for the matter to be run through the FDP. If at least one other person seconds, the process begins.
3. **Initial proposal** -- the person who opened the FDP articulates a specific proposal. This will include a reasonable deadline (by which time a proposal must be finalized, and standasides/blocks must be counted), of at least one week. This person shall also be responsible for starting the RiseUp pad for the proposal and providing notice.
4. **Discussion** -- people on the pad workshop the proposal and suggest possible amendments.

5. **Final proposal** -- Once there are no more questions, concerns, or proposed amendments, the final proposal with changes is now stated.

6. **Stand asides and blocks** -- if people still have concerns about the proposal, they can choose to either stand aside ("I dislike this but if others want to do it that's fine") or block ("I am against this to the point where I might leave FNB if this passes"). Otherwise support is presumed.

6. 1 If fewer than half of people stand aside, and there are no blocks, then consensus has been reached and the proposal passes.

6. 2 In the event of a block, proposal returns to the discussion stage to see if there are any ways to resolve the issue. If, after at least a day of discussion, this fails, the group goes to a 9/10 vote. If 90 percent of people support the measure it passes.

PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCTING DISCUSSIONS ON A RISEUP PAD

When doing the Formal Decision-making Process (FDP) on a RiseUp pad, it is advised that one conduct the discussion in the following manner:

1) Set up:

1. Create the document (obviously). Make sure it has a lifespan of at least a year.
2. At the top of the document, list the formal proposal
3. Below that, clearly marked off, add a space for Discussion Participants
4. Announce that the document has been formed and put a link on the Logistics thread.
5. Get someone to add a link to the main site so people can see it there too.
6. Discussion participants list their name in the allotted space. All comments in any section should be preceded by their name as written in the list.

2) Discussion:

0. In general, do not delete your own or others' lines after the fact, as a consistent record of the discussion is important.

1. **Stage 1: Questions.** In a clearly marked off section, people list questions, which pertain to MATTERS OF FACT (e.g. "who's that group?" "Where is the event?" "When do they need an answer by?" "Is gelato vegan?") The person or persons who made the proposal shall work to answer all questions (though others may also answer if they know) ("Nah, gelato has egg whites"). Once at least one day has passed with no new questions, move on to the next stage.

2. **Stage 2: Concerns and Amendments.** In a clearly marked off section, people write concerns and ideas for amendments for the proposal. The people who made the original proposal shall respond to each one, writing under the concern or idea posed. Others can chime in too. Suggested amendments shall be considered and, if the discussion seems to be favoring it, can amend the initial proposal to

incorporate it. This process goes on until there are no more concerns or proposed amendments for at least one day.

3. Stage 3: Counting. In a clearly marked off section, the people behind the proposal restate the now-amended idea and tests for consensus. This process shall last at least one day. Discussion participants can choose to either Stand Aside or Block. A Stand Aside basically means "I'm not wild about this but would accept it if it goes through." A Block is a serious matter that essentially means "I feel so strongly about this, I am willing to leave FNB if this passes or, at the very least, dramatically scale back my participation." If you block, this is a hill you are willing to die on.

If FEWER THAN HALF of the people Stand Aside, AND there are no Blocks, then the proposal, as amended, is considered to have passed. An announcement is made, with a link to the RiseUp pad posted to the Logistics thread. The pad is then copy/pasted into a text file and archived on the site.

In the event of a Block, proposal returns to the discussion stage to see if there are any ways to resolve the issue. If, after at least a day of discussion, this fails, the group goes to a 9/10 vote. If 90 percent of people support the measure it passes.

The right to be counted comes with being part of the discussion process. Participation is opt-in; if someone really doesn't care, they do not have to be part of the decision process.

Resource Allocation Principles (RAP)

DISBURSEMENTS AND REIMBURSEMENTS

Food Not Bombs money can be used in reasonable amounts for anything that is part of regular operations. This can include disposable supplies like cups and utensils, equipment and appliances, space rentals, sanitary materials (e.g. gloves, masks, etc.), and transportation.

FNB will not front load funding in most cases, but rather work towards reimbursing people for things they have bought. *The exception* will be for large purchases over \$100, in which case funding IS front loaded after being discussed in the Logistics thread with no objections.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

If someone wants to be reimbursed for something they bought for/at FNB, they will announce the purchase in the logistics thread and include a picture or screenshot of the receipt. If someone objects to reimbursing them for this purchase, it shall be discussed in the thread, possibly (but ideally not) resorting to the Formal Decision Process, though such debates are expected to be rare.

When a purchase is reimbursed, it shall be recorded on a spreadsheet accessible via the FNB website, which shall also include the picture of the receipt.

Should FNB ever achieve a combined savings in excess of \$1,000 then a cash audit shall be conducted on at least an annual basis to reconcile purchases with account balances. Any discrepancies in the cash balance shall be disclosed and discussed in the Logistics thread.

FUND CUSTODY:

FNB's funds shall be spread out among no more than six persons, so as to discourage power concentrations while remaining somewhat manageable. These people, with their current fund balances, shall be disclosed on the website spreadsheet. Who spent what and when shall be tracked on said spreadsheet to ensure accurate balances. It is highly important that this happens so as to avoid misappropriation and unexpected shortfalls.

Donations on site should be directed to one of the people who have custody of funds (custodians). The person who receives or directs the donation shall announce it on the logistics thread. If the donation is cash, one should take a picture of the cash in front of at least one other person, then transfer the same amount to one of the custodians and announce on the logistics thread in the same manner as other donations.

Alternately, a cash donation can be placed in the Big Jar. Money in the Big Jar can go towards directly reimbursing people on site for items necessary to the serve that day. At the end of the day the contents of the Big Jar shall be counted and reported to the Logistics thread. On an ideal level, the counting and reporting shall be done in front of at least one other volunteer at the serve.

Fund custodians should be mindful that holding the money comes with a small amount of legal risk and liability, from both a tax perspective and an authoritarian perspective should FNB be cracked down upon. However, they should also be mindful that the risk is extremely low, akin to an airplane toilet falling out of the sky and crushing someone.

SAVINGS

FNB will maintain a certain amount of savings to deal with unexpected expenses and provide a financial buffer of at least \$50.

FNB Accountability Structure

STATEMENT OF VALUES

Food Not Bombs Lower Manhattan strives toward being a safe and inclusive community in accordance with our values. We do not tolerate rape, sexual assault, any other form of violence, sexual harassment, creepy, predatory and/or sleazy behavior, racism, ageism, sexism, misogyny, homophobia, queerphobia, transphobia, transmisogyny, whorephobia, ableism, classism, sizeism, sex-negativity, cultural appropriation, or any other behavior or language that may perpetuate oppression.

We are an organization that aims to be radical, accessible, and which aims to be a safer space for indigenous, not-white, mixed race, migrant, queer, trans, intersex, femme, butch, sex-working, disabled, formerly incarcerated, non-neurotypical, or otherwise marginalized people.

We vehemently oppose the protection and promotion of white supremacy, patriarchy and nationalism. We acknowledge that the police force and federal agents pose threats to the safety of one another and

our spaces. Therefore, we do not condone any individuals with professional affiliations to these violent state institutions being a part of our organization.

CLARIFICATION ON ABUSE

Physical abuse

* Violence and threat of violence: A deliberate action that is likely to cause somebody physical pain, or the threat of such action, made verbally or implied physically.

This does not mean: Acting in self-defense or in defense of others, as a last resort, in response to a clear and direct physical threat.

* Use of force and threat of force: Preventing a person from leaving a situation or forcing them into one, either by physically restraining them, blocking their way, refusing to stop following them or refusing to move away from them when asked. Threatening to carry out any of these actions.

This does not mean: Preventing somebody from doing violence to themselves or others, or preventing somebody from damaging a space being used collectively, or removing someone who is acting abusively or violently, using minimal necessary force.

* Rape/Sexual assault/Sexual harassment: non-consenting sex or sexual touching, as well as acting in a sexual way towards somebody, invading their personal space or making sexually suggestive moves or gestures to them without their explicit consent.

This does not mean: Telling somebody that you find them attractive or initiating a flirtation, provided that lack of enthusiastic reciprocation is taken as an unequivocal “NO” with immediate effect, and all attempts at flirtation cease. Develop personal relationships at appropriate times and places, where nobody is likely to feel trapped, coerced, isolated or embarrassed, and make sure anybody you are flirting with has ample opportunity to exit the situation or end the flirtation at any time. It bears repeating: always treat the absence of enthusiastic reciprocation as an unequivocal “no” with immediate effect.

Non-physical abuse

* Verbal abuse: This means insulting terms specifically applied to individuals, or criticism made abusive by being shouted or expressed aggressively, with the outcome of causing hurt, intimidation or humiliation. This applies regardless of whether the outcome was intentional.

This does not mean: A ban on insults, compliments or personal remarks in conversation amongst friends who know and respect one another’s limits. However, when engaging in such “banter”, we should always be aware of our context – where we are, who else is around us and how what we’re saying affects the general atmosphere of the space.

* Oppressive language: This is language used in general conversation, not necessarily in connection with a specific person, that insults, expresses prejudices or reinforces preconceptions about a group of people that are marginalized, disadvantaged or oppressed by mainstream society. This includes (but is not limited to) any racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic or ableist language and includes using such language as insults and slurs against political opponents such as fascists or police. The reason for this is

not “political correctness” or fear of criticizing people’s values. The real problem with such language is that it normalizes prejudices and recreates the very hierarchies that we aim to oppose, as well as creating a space that is unwelcoming to anybody outside of a narrow demographic.

This does not mean: Compiling lists of unacceptable words and phrases in order to catch out the unwary – we don’t need to ban words, we do need to meet challenges to our language without defensiveness, be prepared to apologize for unintentional offense and take the opportunity to reconsider our language, the implications behind it and the impact it can have on others. Free expression ends at the point where it becomes an act of oppression to another.

* Emotional and psychological abuse: This includes behavior that undermines the targeted person’s confidence and credibility by patronizing or dismissing them, putting them down or ridiculing them, ignoring, isolating and ostracizing them, scapegoating them, and other bullying behaviors. It includes ‘gaslighting’, which is to try to make a person doubt the validity of their own senses and perception by denying or contradicting their perspective, and may include telling them and others that they are “crazy” or similar.

This does not mean: That you can’t disagree with somebody or contradict them. Do this by outlining your own perspective or recollection of events rather than ridiculing or dismissing theirs.

* Harassment: This is a pattern of repeated, persistent, unwelcome behavior targeted at a person. The individual actions seen in isolation may be benign, but become abusive by being repeated, especially when the targeted person has asked for the behavior to stop. For example, contacting someone is not inherently abusive, but multiple unwanted calls or messages is harassing behavior. Harassment may include making unsolicited and inappropriately personal remarks (complimentary or otherwise) about somebody’s appearance or other personal attributes, or making repeated personal requests of them, sexual or otherwise, which have been previously refused, ignored or not met with enthusiasm.

This does not mean: Seeking clarifications or offering reminders about a task or action that somebody has agreed to. This section of the policy should be used to protect ourselves from repeated requests as an intimidation and bullying tactic, not to avoid answering a valid question or making a decision.

* Written abuse: While it can be easier to both misunderstand written communication and to cross boundaries in terms of abusive language, the medium also has advantages for debate – many people find it easier to express themselves clearly and coherently in writing, to think their points through and to find the confidence to put their words into a public forum. But the same rules should apply in terms of avoiding personal insult, oppressive language, bullying and harassment, and for the same reasons.

This does not mean: That you can’t discuss political issues or dispute things that people have said in writing. However, always try to always keep it generous and constructive, and if you feel that you are being antagonized, suggest a different format for the discussion (e.g. private correspondence or a meeting).

SCOPE

The applicability of these values are not limited solely to what happens at a serve but, rather, represent an overall expectation of behavior when interacting with other volunteers and more general members of the community.

PROCEDURE

0. In any situation where someone feels uncomfortable, please remember you have the right, and in fact are encouraged to, reach out and consult with other FNB members on an issue you are having.

1. In general, people should strive to resolve conflicts and address issues informally in a way that is comfortable for all. This is the preferred procedure. The subsequent steps should ONLY be turned to in the event that the matter cannot be resolved this way despite effort.

2. In the event an issue cannot be addressed informally, parties should first seek mediation through a group of trusted people. These mediators are selected to speak with the person with whom there is an issue and assist in developing a resolution that will be satisfactory (if not ideal) for all parties. Mediators may wish to document their participation in this step where possible (e.g. a screenshot of something they can point to saying 'yes I did talk to this person,' or noting the date of an in person convo with someone else there who can confirm the conversation was made). It is not mandatory but helps with transparency and documents the necessity of further escalation.

3. If, and only if, this process breaks down or is at an impasse, then one of the mediators will call on the logistics thread for a panel of between three to five volunteers--ideally neutral parties in the matter--to discuss the issue. This panel will form their own loop on Signal and will be expected to speak with all parties involved to gain a wider context of the situation, sometimes multiple times if needed. Once a full roster of panelists has been obtained, the composition shall be disclosed on the logistics chat. If a member is felt to be wholly unacceptable, individuals may raise the matter at that time. Further, individual panel members can drop out of the process, but it is highly recommended that in such cases they find a replacement, whom they will brief on the matter at hand.

4. Afterwards, if the panel finds that a real harm has been done, it shall release a set of recommendations, which can be at least partially informed by a statement from the party which called for the panel in the first place. If the person or persons believed to have committed a harm do not accept these recommendations, then their participation in FNB matters shall be paused for a period of no more than three months. While there is no hard deadline for how long such deliberations should take, it is expected that this process shall be completed within a reasonable timeframe.

5. If, after this pause, the problematic behavior continues, then a larger meeting with a specific date and time can be announced by the original panelists in the Logistics Thread (possibly at the request of the original harmed party and/or their mediator). There should be advanced notice of the meeting, with the announcement made several times prior to it. The announcement should include the reason for the meeting, the date, the time, and the venue.

6. During the meeting, the group shall discuss whether or not a party should be removed from FNB entirely. The decision will be made via **Formal Decision Process**. If such a decision is reached, that party is removed from FNB. This step should only be followed as a last resort, used only in very serious matters.