

What's Relevant? Who's Affected?

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In LLL we work with distributed leadership, a system of involving all relevant and affected parties in making decisions.

What do we mean by *relevant and affected* in La Leche League?

While the phrase means more than the individual words, let's look first at the definitions of the individual words.

Relevant, by definition means:

- closely related to a matter under consideration;
- having some sensible or logical connection with something else, for example, a matter being discussed or investigated;
- having some bearing on or importance for real-world issues, present-day events, or the current state of society.

Some synonyms given are:

- pertinent
- applicable
- germane
- appropriate
- important

Affected is defined in this context as

- acted upon or influenced by something or somebody

Synonyms given are:

- have an effect upon
- influence
- involve
- shape
- concern
- change
- impinge upon

So the relevant parties would be those: who are closely related to the matter under consideration; who have a sensible or logical connection to the decision; who have some bearing on and knowledge of what is happening around the decision; and those who have the responsibility for it and for the aftermath. That would include those who are designated to make the decision; who have the needed knowledge of the situation and circumstances involved; those who will be charged with carrying it out; and those who are responsible for dealing with the results.

Affected parties are those who will be influenced or may see: notable change in their situation or ways of working as a result of the decision; change that would have a major effect on what they do or their ability to do their work.

When talking about people to include in decision-making discussions, we want to include those in *both* of the above categories, not just one or the other.

Thus, being distributed does not mean that everyone must be a part of every conversation and every decision. Who should make decisions depends on what kind of decision is being made and the impact of that decision. Not all decisions are equal; not everyone is relevant and affected. For instance, there are differences about making decisions about raising money for LLLI, what speakers to invite for an Area Continuing Education (CE) Day/Health Care Professional (HCP) Seminars, or where a Group should hold Series Meetings, etc.

Let's look at some examples. Who makes the decisions about LLLI licensed products, or whether to publish a new edition of The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding? It may be surprising to hear that Leaders may be affected but they are not relevant to those kinds of decisions. For instance, if a product is being considered to carry the LLLI brand—that is a decision for LLLI. It is written in the Bylaws that LLLI has the responsibility to make all decisions about the brand (how our logo and name are used) and is charged with responsibility for the budget. Therefore, LLLI is the relevant and affected party to decide about licensing products or publishing a new edition of a cornerstone publication. The LLLI BOD and the Executive Director (ED) know best by virtue of being informed and doing the fiscal work needed to know how the money needs to be spent—plus, they are charged with the responsibility. Thus, they are both relevant and affected parties in those kinds of decisions.

Let's look at some examples at the Area level. When making a decision about whether to have a CE Day and/or whom to invite as the speaker(s), Area Leaders would be invited into the discussions. They would then have a voice, that is, give their input, as affected parties of the decision. They would need to be consulted about what help they could offer. (And by volunteering, might become relevant parties.) However, the decision of whether to have a CE Day and/or who the speaker(s) would be is up to the Area's decision-making body. In most Areas, that's likely to be the Area Department Coordinators (ADCs). They are the ones responsible for the Area budget. The Area Professional Liaison (APL) has an overview of the hot lactation topics and in-demand CE speakers. The Area Coordinator of Events (ACE) and her committee would have information about past efforts and what kind of work might be involved. In consultation with Area Network support people, ADCs have the information and the bigger picture of what needs to be considered when making those decisions, and those volunteering to help know what they are able and willing to do. So while Area Leaders would be affected and have input, only those Leaders who are members of the decision-making body are *both* affected and relevant.

Let's look at some examples involving Leaders locally. Who would make the decision about whether a Group could hold its Series Meetings in a baby store? There might be at least two scenarios to consider here. LLLI is the relevant and affected party for all decisions related to LLLI brand and image. If the store were part of an area or nationwide franchise, the Area (in consultation with the Area Network, as liaison for LLLI) would be involved in the decision. While the local store might seem very breastfeeding-friendly, with no bottles or formula being promoted, other stores in the franchise might be less so and thus could be damaging to LLLI's image.

However, if this store were locally owned and operated, the Group Leaders could make the decision as to whether to hold Series Meetings there. Since Leaders are responsible

for the image of LLL in what they do, this consideration would be part of their decision-making. In addition, the Leaders would want to consult with others who are affected. They would probably consult with the DA or ACL for her insight of the "bigger picture." They may ask the mothers attending the Group, and talk with other local Leaders because they might be affected. In the end, the local Group Leaders would be the relevant and affected parties making the decision about whether to meet at the locally-owned store.

Sometimes a consultant is brought in to help make decisions, to offer broader or deeper information, or perhaps offer expert knowledge. Because a consultant doesn't have to work or live with the ongoing consequences after the decision is made, the recommendations he or she makes aren't relevant to the ongoing work and the decisions involved. Thus, a consultant is not a relevant party to the decision for which he/she is consulted. Those who hire the consultant and those who are charged with the actual decision-making responsibility are the ones who have to deal with the consequences later and are therefore relevant to the final decision.

A committee created to give input to the Board of Directors is like a consultant (without the pay!). Committee members aren't relevant to the decision of whether or not to adopt the results of their work. They are, however, relevant to the decision of what and how to present to the Board. So for example, a committee formed to review and present recommendations for a portion of the PSR is not relevant to the decision of whether or not the Board accepts the recommendations present, but they are relevant to the decision of what recommendation is made to the Board. Likewise a Strategic Planning Committee is relevant to the decision of what plan to present to the Board, but not to the decision of what plan to adopt. That's policy; it's the Board's bailiwick and can't be delegated!

It is desirable to share information and ask for input from those affected even if they are not relevant *and* affected for making the actual decision. Knowing who the relevant and affected parties are for each decision makes it easier for everyone concerned.

To re-cap, **affected** parties

- will be influenced by a decision
- may see notable change in their situation or ways of working as a result of the decision
- would realize a major effect on what they do or their ability to do their work

Relevant parties

- are closely related to the matter under consideration
- have a sensible or logical connection to the decision
- have some bearing on and knowledge of what is happening around the decision
- have the responsibility for the decision and for the aftermath.