Methods for Assessing Level of Agreement

Replace Repetition with an Agreed Signal
Institute a discussion guideline that says, "Don't repeat." Instead, put in place some other mechanism for group members to signal when they resonate with a comment as it's made—preferably a mechanism that doesn't take any airtime from the group. Common examples include:

- Saying "ditto"
- Twinkling (this is the ASL sign for applause and consists of holding up both hands over one's head, palms facing forward, and wiggling your fingers)
- Holding up a white card
- Snapping one's fingers

Take a Straw Poll
The facilitator can say to the group, "Please wave if you feel alignment with X idea" (note that this should be done based on the idea itself, not "do you feel alignment with Maria"), or ask for a show of hands for and against. In a consensus-based group, this must be done in a way that avoids falling into a voting atmosphere; you can use it to quickly evaluate process suggestions (e.g., "Should we take a break now?") or occasionally in some stages of proposal development if done *carefully.*

Gradients of Agreement
You can use a scale to assess the level of support for a proposal. Here is an example modified from the organization Community at Work:

1. Endorsement: "I like it."
2. Endorsement with a Minor Point of Contention: "Basically i like it."
3. Agreement with Reservations: "I can live with it."
4. Neutral: "I have no opinion."
5. Abstain: "I am not currently informed enough to decide," or "I have a conflict of interest."
6. Significant Concerns: "I am pretty worried about this direction."
7. Stand Aside: "I don't like this, but i don't want to hold up the group. Please don't expect me to take a lead on its implementation."
8. Block: "I strongly believe that this proposal does not serve the well-being of the group."

Formats for doing this include:
Shelter Scale: Pass out small sticky notes to everyone. Each person writes the # of their choice and passes the note back in. The collected notes are immediately posted onto a bar graph at the front.
Blind Voting: Everyone in the group closes their eyes except for the facilitator, who calls out each number and tallies the number of hands.
Level Check: Facilitator asks everyone to hold out their hand in front of them simultaneously, at a high level (for strong support), middling, or down low, to provide a visual read of the room.

Private Ballots
If you are choosing from among multiple possibilities, you can have everyone rank them from most to least favorite and then tally up the point totals to see what has the most support.

Line-ups
For issues that have a natural continuum of opinion. Ask everyone to stand up. Lay out a spectrum in the room, e.g. "Everyone who thinks our work requirement should be 1 hour stand at this end, 10 hours stand at the other end, and arrange yourselves accordingly in the middle." Everyone places themselves along the line.