

CO-CREATING COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS: FOSTERING COLLABORATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2024
10 - 11 AM PT / 1 - 2 PM ET



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MEET OUR TEAM



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LOGISTICS

- ✓ We're scheduled to be together for the next 60 minutes
- ✓ We do not have a formal break scheduled during this presentation
- ✓ Take care of your needs and those in your care
- ✓ We encourage you to silence the things that ding, ring and buzz
- ✓ Use technology to help keep you in the "room" today
- ✓ During today's session, we are broadcasting in Zoom webinar format; please ask questions via the Q&A function in your Zoom navigation bar
- ✓ We will make all slides available to you following the presentation

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AIMS

RATIONAL AIMS

- ✓ Better understand the purpose of community agreements – what they are vs. what they're not.
- ✓ Gain actionable skills to develop and practice dynamic community agreements with the groups you facilitate and modify them as needed.


EXPERIENTIAL AIMS

- ✓ Reflect on how community agreements could be useful to you and in what contexts.
- ✓ Explore your curiosity around community agreements as an equitable facilitation practice.

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AGENDA

- 1 FOUNDATION
- 2 RESOURCES
- 3 REFLECTION
- 4 APPLICATION
- 5 CREATION + COMMITMENT
- 6 WRAP-UP + NEXT STEPS

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DEFINING AGREEMENTS

STARTING WITH A STRONG FOUNDATION

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EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

ARE A TOOL/PRACTICE INTENDED FOR

- Meaningful dialogue
- Trust building
- Consensus building
- Equitable engagement
- Conflict engagement strategy
- Shared accountability and decision-making

ARE NOT

- A tool to shut people down
- Logistics
- Ground rules
- A conflict avoidance strategy
- Punitive
- Performative
- Housekeeping

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CONTEXTING AGREEMENTS

We will often pre-populate some commonly used agreements based on the audience and/or facilitator needs. Some require additional context:

MAKE SPACE/TAKE SPACE

Sometimes known as “step up/step back.” However, some disability rights groups have advocated for less ableist language. We often use an acronym known as W.A.I.T. and W.A.I.N.T.

INTENT AND IMPACT

It's important to note that you can impact others without meaning to and to establish up front that you'll be prioritizing the impact over the intention. We often use an analogy of physical injury.

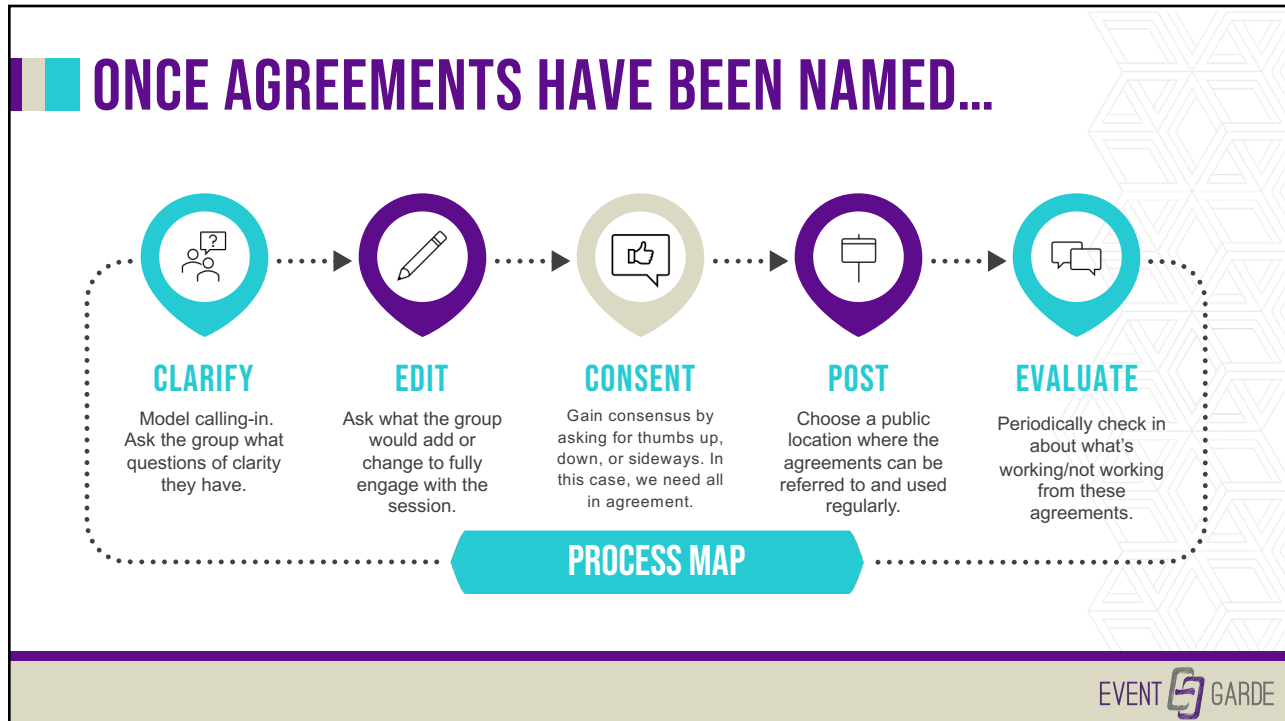
BOTH/AND THINKING

Both/And thinking is one response to counter Either/Or thinking. EX: I don't have to ONLY be angry OR compassionate. However, it is also important to not engage false equivalencies.

WE ARE ALL LEARNERS/WISE

Everyone has something valuable to contribute and everyone has something to learn, regardless of your level of expertise. This often comes after make space/take space.




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CREATED IN COMMUNITY

You may notice some community agreements (or some iteration of them) that feel familiar because they are shared widely. We borrow and build upon them as an honor to the wisdom used to engage in respectful, meaningful dialogue and knowledge exchange in communities working toward improved conditions and liberation.

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AORTA
http://schadavis.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/ao_facilitation_resource_sheet_july_2014.pdf
- 
SERVANT LEADERSHIP/NVC
[https://couragerenewal.org/PDFs/CourageRenewal-CircleOfTrust-Touchstones-stones-\(c\)2016-web.pdf](https://couragerenewal.org/PDFs/CourageRenewal-CircleOfTrust-Touchstones-stones-(c)2016-web.pdf)
- 
FIRST ALASKANS INSTITUTE
https://assets.nationbuilder.com/firstalaskansinstitute/pages/317/attachments/original/1696548927/About_Us_FAJ-AGREEMENTS-POSTER.pdf?1696548927

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REFLECTION

THINKING ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

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REFLECTION

Think about a facilitation experience in which you felt safe and could fully engage.

What was present in that environment – facilitator and participant behaviors – that helped you feel like you could authentically participate?



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APPLICATION

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS IN ACTION



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A BRIEF HISTORY LESSON

SOCIALIZATION

In Western culture, we have been socialized that authority and decision-making come from the top and flow downward.

CONTRIBUTIONS

As a result, there is a prescribed order for who speaks first – typically members of the dominate culture: White, men, cisgender, middle-upper class, etc.


PERSPECTIVES

When we perpetuate White supremacy culture characteristics (secrecy vs. transparency or efficiency vs. effectiveness), perspectives are missed.




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ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICES




INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Use language that is inclusive and respectful of diverse identities and experiences. Ensure that agreements reflect a commitment to recognizing and valuing all perspectives, backgrounds, and identities.




POWER SHARING

Foster a culture of shared power and decision-making. Avoid hierarchies that can perpetuate oppressive structures. Encourage collaboration and equitable participation from community members and facilitators alike.




ACCOUNTABILITY

Establish mechanisms for accountability that address harmful behaviors from participants and facilitators. This includes clear processes for addressing harm, restorative justice practices, and consequences for oppressive actions.



FEEDBACK LOOPS

Establish regular feedback loops where participants can express concerns and provide input on the effectiveness of the community agreements. This helps in continuously refining and adapting the agreements.

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A CAUTIONARY TALE

THESE PRACTICES CAN CAUSE HARM

- TOP-DOWN DECISION-MAKING
- SELECTIVE ENFORCEMENT
- SUPPRESSING DISSENT
- LACK OF FLEXIBILITY
- NOT MODELING "CALLING IN"


When facilitators or sponsors create community agreements **for** a group instead of **with** a group, top-down decision-making is reinforced.

This can reinforce existing power dynamics and allow certain individuals or groups to act with impunity while others are held to a stricter standard.

Rigid enforcement without allowing for constructive dissent or disagreement can stifle diversity of thought and hinder the growth of the community; we as facilitators must also be "disruptable."

Overly rigid community agreements that lack flexibility may not account for evolving circumstances or changes within the community.

Participants and facilitators must be able to "call in" oppressive behavior; however, if you don't role model what this looks like, people are likely to object, shut down, or miss the point altogether.

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CONSIDERATIONS AROUND SOCIAL IDENTITIES

For example:

- White people often show up/push on agreements with facilitators of color (tears/highly emotional, restating what's already been said, etc.)
- With a white facilitator, they **may be** more affirming and less challenging
- Likewise, it can look, feel, and be oppressive to participants of color when a white facilitator simply imposes "ground rules"

These and other dynamics can come up for other social identities, as well

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AGREEMENTS

MOVING INTO CREATION & COMMITMENT

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EVENT GARDE'S COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

MAKE SPACE, TAKE SPACE

- Let one person share at a time
- Ask yourself W.A.I.T and W.A.I.N.T.
- Ask yourself if it's already been said

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY CONFLICT/TENSION

- Address problems, not people
- Share your experience/feelings
- Practice letting go of defensiveness
- Practice calling one another in vs out

LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND VS. RESPOND

- Ask questions of clarity
- Reflect back: "I understood you to say..."
- Use tech to keep you in the room

VALUE EFFECTIVENESS OVER EFFICIENCY

- Spend our meeting time on tasks/relationships that add value to our work

WE ARE ALL LEARNING, WE ARE ALL WISE

- Share your expertise
- Make space for the expertise of others
- Share from your own experience

BOTH/AND THINKING

- "Yes, and..."
- "I understand you and..."

TAKE ACCOUNTABILITY

- Use "I" statements
- Tend to the impact vs the intent
- Oops and ouch

TAKE GOOD CARE OF OURSELVES

- Maintain schedules that allow for non-work needs
- Communicate changes to shared work tasks based on needs of all involved

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ONCE AGREEMENTS HAVE BEEN NAMED...

CLARIFY

Model calling-in. Ask the group what questions of clarity they have.

EDIT

Ask what the group would add or change to fully engage with the session.

CONSENT

Gain consensus by asking for thumbs up, down, or sideways. In this case, we need all in agreement.

POST

Choose a public location where the agreements can be referred to and used regularly.

EVALUATE


Periodically check in about what's working/not working from these agreements.

PROCESS MAP

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IF YOU ARE WITH A GROUP FOR...




HOURS

- Pre-populate agreements
- Ask for questions of clarity
- Give one example of calling-in
- Gain consensus
(10-20 mins.)




DAYS

- Ask for additions/edits
- Add behaviors
- Revisit. Ask: What's working/not working?
(20-30 mins.)



MONTHS/YEARS

- Review agreements every 6 months – 1 year for changes
- Could use a focused conversation
(45 mins. - 1 hr.)



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AGREEMENTS WE DON'T USE

Two of the most common ones are:

ASSUME THE BEST INTENTIONS

This isn't always possible, especially when we take into consideration that when people have been harmed by sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, they/we build up necessary tools to take care of and protect themselves/ourselves.

DEFAULT TO TRUST

When someone is unable to do this (say they're feeling untrusting of someone or unsafe), having a community agreement telling them to do so isn't going to change anything.

Agreements we offer instead are "we are all learners. we are all wise" and "prioritize impact over intent." We also model saying "this isn't a fully formed thought" when sharing something we aren't yet sure of.





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ADDITIONAL AGREEMENTS

- 1 PRACTICE SELF-FOCUS
- 2 ONE DIVA, ONE MIC
- 3 BE PRESENT
- 4 PRIORITIZE CURIOSITY
- 5 WHAT'S LEARNED LEAVES, WHAT'S SHARED STAYS
- 6 DON'T BLAME, SHAME, ATTACK


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