



Group Agreements Template

Group agreements are a set of guidelines a group comes up with together at the start of a collaborative process to lay out a common understanding of how they will work with each other. It is to help remind everyone of their shared values, especially when difficult conversations or disagreements come up. Creating group agreements together can set the tone for respectful and productive collaboration. There are two types of group agreements:

- Relational community agreements are about how we want to be in relationship with each other
- Operational agreements identify procedures or structures we all agree to use

This template will help facilitators lead the system modeling workgroup through the exercise of creating their group agreement.

Steps to create a group agreement:

- 1. Explain the purpose of the group agreement.** Not everyone will be familiar with group agreements. Take some time to explain what they are and why they're important. Some of the most critical conversations teams need to have are emotional, painful, and uncomfortable. Group agreements provide frameworks for difficult conversations.
- 2. Get feedback.** To be sure everyone is on the same page, all group members should participate in creating the group agreement. Facilitators may want to ask everyone to think and talk about these questions:
 - What is the purpose of our system modeling process?
 - What makes an effective collaboration?
 - What makes a good team member?
 - What are your hopes and worries for our work together?
 - What can I and your fellow group members do to make this experience better for you?
 - How can we ensure inclusion in our group interactions?
 - How should we work through disagreements?
 - What should happen if a group member goes against something in our group agreement?
- 3. Build your agreement.** Use the discussion to create basic rules and guidelines for how the group will work together. Because every group is different, every group agreement will be different. Many group agreements include the following:
 - active participation
 - respectful listening
 - shared responsibility
 - confidentiality
 - respect for people's varying backgrounds, experiences, and opinions



4. **Test the guidelines.** Review the guidelines with the group and remind everyone that they are all expected to honor the agreement throughout the system modeling process. Role playing examples of how the rules may be applied in specific situations may help. Encourage everyone to raise any concerns they have and make changes if needed. Every single person may not love or want every item, but the group should reach a consensus on the overall agreement.
5. **Finalize and use the group agreement.** Once the work group has created the final set of guidelines, each member of the work group should agree to follow the group agreement. The facilitator can ask every group member to sign the agreement or otherwise signal their consent (for example: through a show of hands or verbal yes). Copies of the group agreement should be made available. Reminding everyone of the agreement before each meeting can be helpful, especially at the beginning, too. The facilitator can be responsible for making sure all group members follow the agreement at each meeting. The group may also decide that anyone can and should let others know if they step out of line with the agreement, but the facilitator needs to be ultimately responsible if no one else in the group feels safe to hold people accountable.. Especially while the group is still getting to know each other, facilitators may want to encourage everyone to be understanding if someone does or says something out of line with the agreement, especially if it is not on purpose. If new members join the group, the agreements should be explained, and they should be asked to agree to follow them.

Every group agreement will be unique to the group that develops it, but the template below may be a helpful starting point.



Group Agreement Template

This group agreement is intended to provide clear guidelines for all members of the [work group name] as we work together through a system modeling process for our community's homeless response. The [insert work group name] developed this agreement together and every member has agreed to the shared values contained below. We hope to participate in a respectful, collaborative, and process.

We will each and all:

- [insert principles, guidelines, and expectations]
- **Examples:**
 - Honor start and stop times for meetings
 - Be present, open, and engaged throughout meetings. (e.g., not check emails, mobile devices, or otherwise “multi-task”)
 - Respect differences of opinion
 - Bring our best ideas and contributions
 - Focus on creating new possibilities while honoring the strengths of the past
 - Seek understanding and ask for clarification when needed
 - Remember that everyone in the group has different experiences and knowledge
 - Avoid “cross-talk”
 - Share the space and time, making sure everyone is able to contribute ideas. Allowing everyone to speak once before speaking twice.
 - “What’s said here, stays here. What’s learned here, leaves here.”