

# Community Agreements Sample

## What

Community agreements (sometimes referred to as “community norms” or “guidelines”) are shared or co-created with a group of people to establish a commitment to one another.

## Why

Community agreements lay the foundation for an open, inclusive, and safe space. They provide guidance for everyone to play a role in fostering participation, dialogue, respect, and trust building. Co-creating community agreements gives power to participants as they are more likely to feel responsible for implementing and upholding the agreements (as opposed to compared rules imposed by the facilitator).

## How

Share this sample with participants at the beginning of the FGD + Storytelling session. Ensure the facilitator(s):

- Clearly explain the purpose of a community agreement.
- Acknowledge everyone’s needs are different.
- Provide time on the agenda for participants to consider their needs.
- If predetermined agreements are selected for consideration, invite participants to review the proposed agreements. Then collectively add to or amend any of the statements.

- If co-creating new agreements, introduce this sample to help inspire participants in shaping their own agreements as part of a facilitated activity.
- Highlight the importance of empowerment. Community agreements must have the genuine consent of everyone involved. An ‘agreement’ isn’t helpful if some participants do not support it.



We are here to help! [Reach out if you have any challenges or questions.](#)

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## Introducing community agreements

As we gather as a collective group, we are committing to forming a community that is respectful, kind, diverse and open. We recognise and acknowledge that we are all individuals. We all come from different backgrounds, experiences, and places of knowing.

These agreements are intended to help us get the most out of this session. We agree to work together effectively and respectfully through the guidance of these agreements. We agree to be mindful and accountable for our own actions. We commit to being open to observations of our behaviour, and we are open to being called in. We will be honest when sharing feedback with others.

## Pool of possible community agreements

- No one knows everything but together we know a lot.
- This is a safe space where we respect the opinions of all people without judgement.
- One voice at a time. We won't interrupt each other.
- We can't be articulate all the time, so give the benefit of the doubt and ask questions.
- Take space and make space. In other words, if you are usually quiet, challenge yourself to take more space. If you usually talk a lot, be mindful to leave room for quieter voices.
- Embrace mistakes and failure. They show us what we need to learn. Treat this as a learning experience and challenge yourself to learn new things.
- Speak in headlines and use summary statements for everyone's clarity. Be aware of time.
- Expect unfinished business. There will be opportunities to finish these discussions at another time.
- What is shared here stays here, what is learned here leaves here. In other words, protect the confidentiality of fellow participants. Don't repeat something shared in a private or safe space.
- Work together to ensure everyone feels listened to and no one feels excluded.
- Lean into discomfort. Use dialogue to work together through conflict.
- We live at intersections, meaning we all benefit and are harmed by systematic oppression.
- We take care of ourselves. We are encouraged to stretch, eat, drink, use the restroom, take a break, etc. as needed.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms. Instead, use inclusive language that is accessible for people with varying knowledge.
- Speak from your own experience. Use "I" statements when sharing personal insights instead of generalisations. Do not assume everyone is on the same page or has the same opinion.
- Listen to understand.

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- Debate and challenge each other's assumptions and ideas. But don't challenge the person. Everyone's ideas are valid.
- Be conscious of intent vs. impact. No matter the intention, you are responsible for your impact.
- Avoid using "-isms" without explaining what you mean by them.
- "Nothing about us, without us." Be inclusive of others without tokenising, stigmatising, or disrespecting them

## Tips

- Be aware of power dynamics within the group. Some participants, such as people who already feel confident and share insights more vocally and easily, might gain even more power by creating agreements for everyone else to follow. This is a particular concern if the agreements themselves make it difficult for participants to challenge each other.
- Make sure the agreements are realistic to uphold within the context of the session and the dynamics of the participants. For example, it is unlikely for participants to transform the way they communicate simply because they 'agreed' to a guideline.
- Write the agreements using language that is familiar to everyone. If anyone has any questions, explain before moving ahead.
- Test the agreements by implementing them and amending if necessary.

Notes

