

# Community Agreements

## What are Community Agreements?

Community Agreements are an aspiration for how we want to be in relationship with one another. These agreements can be used to define the behaviors, actions, and processes the group agrees to use to live their values and work together to achieve a common vision or goals. They are explicitly developed and agreed to by a group that creates them and are reinforced through the individual and collective commitments and actions of the same group. These agreements often include relational and operational components.

- **Relational** agreements are about how a group wants to be in relationship with each other (e.g., communicating needs clearly; assuming good intentions; asking questions; listening fully; seeking out multiple perspectives; avoiding specific behaviors that the group determines are unhealthy, etc.).
- **Operational** agreements identify procedures or structures the group agrees to use (e.g., starting & ending on time; setting and sticking to the agenda; limiting cell phone use; including process observations at each meeting; ending with clear next steps, etc.).

## Why Do Community Agreements Matter?

Developing community agreements can help a group coalesce as a team. The process of constructing agreements is as important as the product. When agreements come from a consent-based process to identify what people in the group need from each other and are willing to commit to each other, they provide an authentic common framework for how people will seek to work together, take action, and navigate change.

A healthy team culture is essential when doing any type of collaborative work. Some of the most critical conversations teams need to have may feel emotional and uncomfortable (e.g., shifting priorities, changing roles, altering mindsets, adopting new tools, making decisions about resource flows, implementing new policies or processes, unwinding programs, etc.). Generally, people won't engage or be open to learning or changing without emotional safety and trust. Likewise, people will struggle to work together toward a shared vision in a hostile, disrespectful, or undermining group culture. An internal team's relationships may also model for other community members how relationships may be: team culture shapes organizational culture, and organizational culture influences broader community systems.

