



GIVE & LEARN

TOPIC 1: GROUNDING AGREEMENT

Creating **grounding agreements** or community agreements, as they're more commonly called, is an important way to decentralize power, build a healthy work culture, and promote courageous conversations, the kind we need to have to foster positive change both within and beyond our places of work.

So how do you get started? According to the National Equity Project, the process of constructing agreements is often more important than the product. Envision this activity as an early step to creating a culture of equity. At this stage, it's helpful to consider meetings taking place at a round table, meaning one that does not have a head—which often signals an imbalance of power. With this as your model, start your conversation around topics like: Why do grounding agreements matter? And what do we hope to achieve by creating a grounding agreement?



During the initial stages of development, look at sample agreements for inspiration, as well as note possible shortcomings. Also, host a brainstorming session, where each member of the team is invited to share what they'd like to see included and prioritized. It might also be helpful to have colleagues draft their suggestions ahead of time, as it could build their confidence, especially if such collaborative practices are not the norm at your agency or organization.

Find commonalities and themes among what everyone in the group shares, while not neglecting any more nuanced contributions, and endeavor to bring the full perspective of the team together as you start drafting your agreement. If possible, it might also be helpful to work with an outside consultant to provide support. NJCASA worked with **Sunflower Strategists** to formulate our grounding agreement, and we benefited greatly from their guidance and encouragement. Also, in cases where someone takes a leadership role in drafting the agreement, make sure that person is selected through an equitable process and always bring the draft back to the whole group for additional feedback and suggestions.



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Now that you worked collaboratively to complete your agreement, it's easy for everyone on the team to feel invested in adopting it. Consider hosting a special event to commemorate the occasion! And remember, the work of advocates is everchanging, and, as you evolve, so may the content of your agreement. That's why it's okay and even encouraged that you update your agreement by remaining receptive to new suggestions as they arise.

To learn more, join us on Day-One of Creating Transformative Spaces for our workshop entitled “Grounding Agreements: A Tool for Building Courageous Workplaces.”

And support our work by making a donation now and/or on Giving Tuesday, November 29, 2022!

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