

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES EXAMPLES

### PURPOSES & BENEFITS

Establishing a collective, agreed upon set of group guiding principles or norms helps a group to determine how they will work together to successfully accomplish their community organizing efforts. Examples of common collaborative group guiding principles like the ones outlined in this tool will help the group to have a starting point for their collective conversation with a set of ideas that they can customize as is relevant and applicable to the group.

### HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

Use this tool in conjunction with the “Developing Guiding Principles” tool, which can be found in the same section of the toolkit as this one.

The collaborative partners can review the example ideas outlined in this tool as a place to then begin their collective conversation outlined in the “Developing Guiding Principles” tool on what guiding principles they deem important for the collaborative group’s success.

In addition, previous collaborative group discussions and decisions already made by the group members that are of relevance to and should be referenced in order to help to inform the development of guiding principles include the following tools (*See section 1A – Setting Your Collaborative Group Up for Success: Tools for Coming Together of the toolkit*):

- “What I Have to Contribute to & How I Benefit from This Collaborative”
- “What Does It Mean for Us to Collaborate?”
- “Collaboration Benefits”



## EXAMPLES OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Below are some examples of guiding principles that can be useful for a collaborative group:

1. **Confidentiality** – What’s said in the meeting stays in the meeting. Collaborative group members agree not to repeat what other group members have said outside of the meeting without their permission, even to other collaborative group members. Collaborative group members also agree to respect the organizational confidentiality requirements of group members whenever relevant and not ask or expect group members to violate those confidentiality requirements.
2. **Trust in the Group Process** – Collaborative group members agree to have trust in the group process; that the steps they are working on together represent forward progress and the right outcomes will result from trusting the process, even if individuals don’t always agree.
3. **Play or Pass** – The collaborative group maintains forward progress by making decisions in meetings (announced reasonably in advance of meetings to all collaborative group members) with the group members present. Whenever a group member cannot attend a meeting but wishes to have input on an issue or decision, he/she should make that known to the group in advance (e.g., in an email to all group members). Group members trust in the group and the group process to make the right decisions with those present in the meetings. Also, group members in attendance at a meeting have the right to pass in a discussion or decision, as long as they still do their part to make the group function.
4. **Openness** – Collaborative group members agree to remain open to other points of view, to all group members, to the group process and its outcomes.
5. **Listening and Speaking**– Collaborative group members agree to focus on each speaker rather than prepare their response, as well as allowing for no interruptions. Collaborative group members can expect the same in return. Speakers will speak as briefly as possible to allow for others voices to be heard. Speakers can expect that they may speak freely and honestly without fear of being attacked, but not necessarily that they will always wholly be agreed with by other group members. Group members agree to only speak for themselves and not on behalf of other group members.
6. **Fairness** – The collaborative group allows for equal access to and participation in the group, as well as maintains a spirit of shared leadership and power equity, among all group members.
7. **Respect and Conflict**– Collaborative group members agree that they may disagree without being disagreeable. Whenever there is conflict that interferes with the group’s forward progress or performance, group members will actively and intentionally work in a spirit of open and honest communication and cooperation to address the conflict rather than ignore, avoid or be disrespectful to each other about it; they will have an approach in place for dealing constructively with the conflict that uses “service of the greater good” as the guidepost for resolution.
8. **Commitment to the Group** – Collaborative group members will prepare for and attend meetings and get up to speed if they cannot attend a meeting; they agree that they will begin and end meetings on time.
9. **Believe In and Support the Group’s Vision and Mission** – Collaborative group member agree to always believe in, support and uphold the group’s shared vision and mission in every discussion and decision made, as well as positively promoting them in the community.
10. **Resources and Competition** – Collaborative group members are willing to make resource contributions to the group’s success, including individually (e.g., their skills and talents), organizationally (e.g., providing meeting space for free), and collectively (e.g., working together to obtain resources for the group’s work). Collaborative group members agree that it is ok and even sometimes important to acknowledge and encourage serving self-interests of group members when they do not violate the self-interests of other group members or the collaborative group itself.



11. **Commitment to Results** – Collaborative group members will maintain a commitment to achieving results by working together to meet their collectively agreed upon goals and demonstrating their successes, being willing to adapt to changing conditions in order to meet their goals as necessary and agreed upon collectively. They will balance planning and action, acknowledging that both of these are integral to their group's successes and that their group process is a product in and of itself and thus also important.
12. **Assume Good Intent** – Members of the collaborative acknowledge that sometimes things are said that may initially sound problematic or may be offensive. Members of the group agree to assume good intent when interacting in the group and to clarify meaning before jumping to conclusions.
13. **Commitment to Work and Play Hard Together** – The collaborative group will work hard together, but also have fun and celebrate their successes together!

## THE FOUR AGREEMENTS

In addition to the example guiding principles, the four agreements, from the book by the same title by Miguel Ruiz, or a version of the four agreements, can also be used as guiding principles for a collaborative group.

1. **Be Impeccable with Your Word** – To be impeccable with your word means to:
  - Speak with integrity
  - Say only what you mean
  - Avoid using words to speak against yourself and avoid putting yourself down
  - Don't use excuses or blame others
  - Avoid using words to speak against others and engaging in gossip
  - Use the power of your word for encouragement
2. **Don't Take Anything Personally** – It is important to understand that when people are critical it is about them and about how they feel at that moment. Nothing other people do or say is because of you but when you take things personally, you feel offended and react by defending yourselves—then it does become about you. This rarely produces good results and often creates or escalates conflict, distracting from the purpose of the group, which may be the intentional or unintentional goal of a negative person. When we avoid taking words personally, even if someone intends it to be personal, we take away much of the power of negative people.
3. **Don't Make Assumptions** – The ABC's of emotions tell us about how and why we make internal assumptions. First, there is an **A**ctivating event that helps us set up an assumption. Then we establish **B**eliefs about that event and person, especially about his/her motives and negative characteristics. These beliefs may be either rational (i.e., based upon observable, factual data) or irrational (i.e., not based upon facts). Finally, we develop a **C**onsequential emotion that is triggered by our beliefs.
4. **Always Do Your Best** – Your best is never going to be the same from one moment to another and from one day to the next. Regardless of the quality, keep doing no less than your best. Also, accept your best on a given day and recognize the power of acknowledging you indeed did your best and that you will do your best again tomorrow. First, though, do your best to live up to the other three agreements:
  - Be impeccable with your word
  - Don't take anything personally
  - Don't make assumptions

Adapted from Ruiz M. (1997). *The four agreements*. Amber-Allen Publishing: San Rafael, CA.