

Introduction:

Various types of organizations (NGO, educational, government) have adopted and apply Community Agreements to support their work and the creation of a healthy, safe, productive workspace in which groups of people are working together. This document is intended to support a UFC discussion of Community Agreements and whether/how they might be instituted to support the UFC's work.

In reviewing online examples, one finds many definitions, forms, and expressions of Community Agreements. However, most share a host of common themes. For example, most call for a collaborative process in which group members participate in developing their Community Agreements. It also appears common for groups to adopt the Community Agreements and agree on their use by consensus. Some organizations read Community agreements at the start of their meetings. Some revisit and update them on a regular basis or when new members join the group. A group could also post Community Agreements on their meeting agendas and/or webpage.

Here are a few examples of Community Agreement definitions or purpose statements:

"Agreements come from a consensus-driven process to identify what every person in the group needs from each other and commit to each other to feel safe, supported, open and trusting. As such, they provide a common framework for how people aspire to work and be together as they take transformational action." National Equity Project

"Through these Community Agreements, members of the Portland Charter Commission will collaborate and build mutual trust, open communication, and equitable practices for our work and public proceedings." Portland Charter Commission

"Community agreements are created as a way to establish a mutual understanding or make a set of expectations for all members of a community to abide by." Sierra Nevada Journey

Below is an example “Statement of Intent” for UFC consideration and a list of topic words or phrases that have been paraphrased from examples found online. These topics are intended to prompt and support a UFC brainstorming session from which Community Agreements could potentially be derived. (Actual Community agreements would likely be short complete sentences.)

Statement of Intent (example): *At the Urban Forestry Commission, we seek to create a culture that is inclusive, equitable, diverse, open, respectful, and engaged. Our community agreements are shared expectations that guide or work to build our community, ensure that we stay in relationship with one another, and support our relationships with staff and community participants.*

Community Agreement topic examples:

- Staying engaged
- Inclusivity
- Listening to understand
- One mic
- Accountability (intent and impact)
- Truth telling – “I statements”
- Respectful communication/treating all with dignity
- Asking questions
- Addressing hurtful statements/situations
- Avoiding shaming or belittling
- Accessibility/using plain language
- Accepting feedback
- Openness to different perspectives
- Doing our best/assuming good intent/benefit of the doubt
- Taking space/making space
- Time constraints/respecting time
- Honoring expertise
- Dealing with discomfort and contentious situations.
- Compassion
- Accepting lack of closure/agreeing to disagree
- Sharing/shifting power and privilege