

Sample Participation Agreement

What is a Participation Agreement?

A participation agreement is a written document that summarizes expectations of how members of the group will interact to ensure that everyone is heard and work together toward mutual understanding. A participation agreement should be developed at the beginning of the decision-making process and referred to from time to time to reflect on whether it is effective. The participation agreement can be updated if needed.

Sample Items That Might be Included in a Participation Agreement

- Listen actively and attentively.
- Ask for clarification if needed.
- Everyone's input is equally valued.
- One person shares at a time.
- Only one conversation will go on at a time.
- Agree to disagree but do so respectfully.
- Critique ideas, not people.
- Share all relevant information.
- State your reasoning and intent.
- Keep jargon to a minimum.
- Provide opportunity for everyone to participate in the discussion.
- Avoid put-downs (even if humor is the intention).
- Build on one another's comments; work toward shared understanding.
- Silence your cell phone.
- Maintain confidentiality: what happens in the meeting, stays in the meeting.

Also, keep in mind that some group members may come from different countries or cultures and thus may have different ways of interacting. Be sure to educate yourself about diverse customs in order to develop a culturally aware participation agreement.

(Adapted from Brookfield & Preskill, 2005 and Requirements by Collaboration by Ellen Gottesdiener, Addison-Wesley, 2002)