



Community Governance Cards

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Introduction

This card set supplies guidelines to running a successful community group, to be used by all participants inclusively. A self governed community group has no assigned leader, allowing each person in the group to feel equally included in all decision making processes. This type of group is most successful when each participant is held accountable for their actions by other participants. The tools in this card set will assist the group in running successful meetings, cultivating open communication, and engaging all of the people in the community that the project affects. It is important that community groups keep in mind the broader context of their neighborhood when identifying goals, and making group decisions.

Using the Cardset

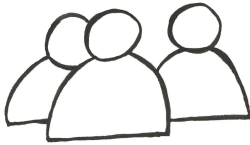
These cards are designed to help your group start and re-visit conversations about how you work AS A GROUP. They are organized by color into four topics: Working Together, Communication, Engaging Neighbors and Knowing Your People. The cards are color-coded by these groups, too. In each group, each card presents a tool or strategy on one side and a story about that tool on the other.

-  Agree together on one topic that you want to focus on for your group or for this day: Working Together, Communication, Engaging Neighbors or Knowing Your People.
-  Distribute the cards for that topic to the people present. If you have more cards than people, just chose the ones you think are important. If you have more people than cards, have groups of 2 or 3 or 4 each share a card.
-  Individuals or pairs read for 3-5 minutes to become expert on their cards.
-  Everyone shares the tool they just became an expert on and talks about how this tool might work for your group.
-  Every individual or pair takes a turn presenting the tool from their card until you have finished all the cards for the topic.
-  Repeat. You can focus on the other topics on another day or later in the same meeting. You might chose a topic you have talked about before as a way to check-in or in an effort to solve a problem you are having working together.

Icon Key



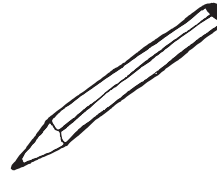
Volunteer



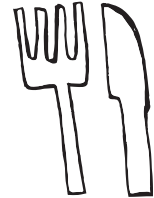
People



Paper



Pencil



Food



Talking



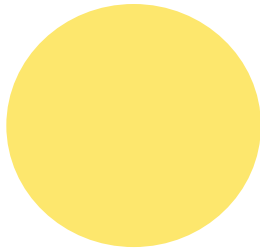
Computer



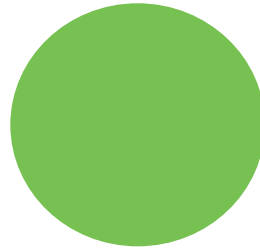
Phone

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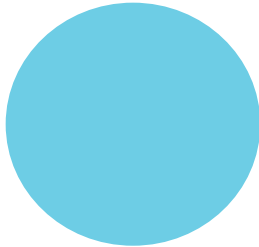
Color Key



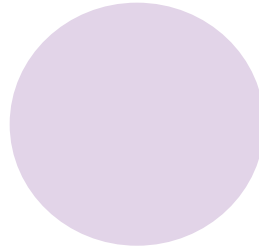
Working Together



Communication



Engaging Neighbors



Knowing Your People

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Facilitating

Facilitation is about making any process easier. The facilitator is vital to maintaining a strong group. A facilitator plans, guides and manages a meeting or event to ensure that the group's objectives are met effectively and through everyone's involvement.

- ♥ One person should volunteer at each meeting to facilitate. It needs to be clarified who is assuming this role at the end of the previous meeting.
 - ♥ Facilitator should be objective and neutral.
 - ♥ Listen, engage, and include everyone.
 - ♥ Keep track of the agenda.
 - ♥ Maintain positive group attitude.
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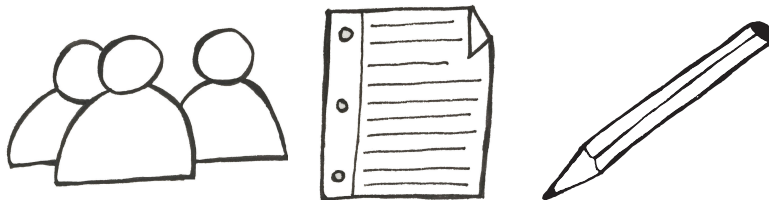
Story: Facilitating

The group of gardeners gather for their monthly meeting. After the last meeting Grace had volunteered to facilitate this next month's meeting. As facilitator she comes to the meeting prepared with the agenda, asks for a volunteer to take meeting minutes, asks for another volunteer to keep track of time, and makes sure that everyone is kept on task and not distracted with side talking!

Setting Ground Rules

These are unanimously agreed upon rules that are followed by all member's at every meeting. Agreeing to meeting norms or "ground rules" in advance makes meetings more productive, shorter, and less frustrating.

- 🍏 Create ground rules through member consensus at the **first meeting**.
 - 🍏 Some groups benefit from reading all the ground rules at the beginning of each meeting as a **reminder** to both old and new members
 - 🍏 Create and edit ground rules when necessary.
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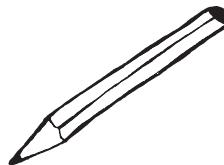
Story: Ground Rules

Two hours into one meeting the group realizes that only half of the topics on the agenda have been covered! Group members are looking at their watches, and one of them states, “I think one of our ground rules should be to keep the meetings to two hours. That way we can respect everyone’s time.” Grace says, “I think this is an excellent time to modify the ground rules. Let’s make a note to do that at the end of the meeting.”

Meeting Agenda

An agenda is a list of things that need to be discussed in a meeting, identifying a clear purpose, outcome, and process (POP) It is made based on the outcome of the previous meeting, and outlines goals for the current meeting. The agenda helps clarify meetings purpose, and gives the meeting structure.

- 🍋 The facilitator of the meeting should distribute the agenda prior to meeting.
 - 🍋 Begin and end each meeting on time.
 - 🍋 Give each discussion item a time limit.
 - 🍋 Use the agenda as a guide for taking notes on decisions made in the meeting.
 - 🍋 Keep in mind while creating an agenda:
 - 🍋 Meeting goal.
 - 🍋 Action items.
 - 🍋 Decisions to be made.
 - 🍋 Agenda for next meeting.
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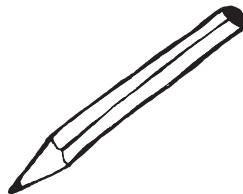
Story: Meeting Agenda

Grace's group is having her second meeting. One of the neighbors has brought a large sheet of parchment paper to write the meeting's agenda on. Those attending the meeting raise their hands to share what they think should go on the list. The list says: 1. Decide what kind of space we want and what we think should be included. 2. Plan what steps to take next. 3. Assign roles to everyone to work towards completing current tasks. At the end of a meeting Grace's group is going over their agenda to make sure all issues were addressed. Then, they begin creating next week's agenda with things they know they'll need to discuss.

Minute Taking

Meeting minutes are notes taken by a member of the group for each meeting that takes place. They act as public record of the meeting, creating a sense of trust and transparency within the group.

- ♥ A different person can volunteer to be minute taker at each meeting.
 - ♥ Distribute the meeting minutes after each meeting to all group members.
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Story: Minute Taking

Grace catches a cold and has to miss a meeting. She calls up her neighbor to ask what she missed at the meeting. Luckily, this neighbor had the role of minute taker at the last meeting! He makes a plan with Grace to walk over to her apartment and hand her a print out of everything that happened and who attended. A neighbor is handing another neighbor a printout. They are saying, "Here is the last meeting's agenda. I was the minute taker and I didn't miss a thing!"

Consensus

Democratic decision making processes include everybody's opinions and are aimed towards reaching a consensus. Consensus is reached when everybody in the group participates and agrees with each other on a solution.

- ♥ State the Issue: What are we talking about?
 - ♥ Clarify the question: What needs to be decided?
 - ♥ Discussion: What are all the viewpoints?
 - ♥ Make the proposal: Describes an action the group can take.
 - ♥ Discussion: Time to ask clarifying questions, express support and concerns.
 - ♥ Modify the proposal.
 - ♥ Test for consensus. A group member repeats the proposed solution and asks "Is everyone okay with this?"
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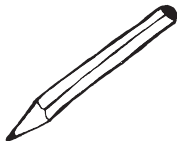
Story: Consensus

A lot of new people have joined the garden, and the long term members are not sure about how to accommodate and include everyone in running the garden. They decide to create a membership manual, so that everyone can feel included. At the next general meeting they hold a discussion about how all members, old and new, would like to participate in the garden space. Everyone has different ideas, and the meeting's facilitator takes notes, and then asks for a volunteer to write up the notes and create a plan of action that includes everyone's ideas. At the next meeting everyone reviews the document and makes modifications. After the modifications are agreed upon, the volunteer facilitator asks the group "Is everyone okay with this", and they take a vote. Everyone agrees on the proposal for new members!

Determine Goals

Create a list of goals and objectives for the project your group is working on together. Once you agree on goals and objectives of the project, it will be easier to create and assign tasks, make time-lines, and determine what needs to be done. You can use Consensus to make sure everyone in your group agrees on the group's goals. Goals should be inclusive of everyone in the group.

- What does the group want to accomplish? Start with a visioning to generate ideas and build momentum.
 - Set specific goals. Identify requirements and restraints in accomplishing your goal.
 - Establish criteria for measuring success of goals.
 - Give each goal a time frame. Assign a point person to manage each goal.
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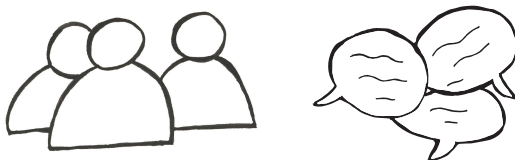
Story: Goals

Grace's garden is having their first meeting, and everyone has shown up with different ideas of what they want to do. At first everyone is talking to each other at the same time, and discussing their ideas at once. After awhile Grace stands up and says, "Why don't we list our goals as a group?". She gets out a large piece of paper and marker, and everyone goes around and gives an idea of what they want to accomplish. Once they have everyone's goals listed they ask for a volunteer to make a time-line of the goals. At the next meeting, the volunteer has the list of goals in sequential order, and the everyone in the group goes around volunteers for the task they want to take on.

Conflicts

Differences often crop up when people come together. Creating a safe and open space for people to communicate in a sensitive manner about their concerns and feelings is important for the functioning of the group. Open communication can help create trust and eventually heal painful conflicts.

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- ♥ Conflicts can be avoided or resolved through open communication.
 - ♥ Cultural sensitivity may be required to avoid and resolve conflicts.
 - ♥ Emphasize the importance of the community over the individual.
 - ♥ Create a community of active listening, and discourage interruption and side conversations, both considered a sign of disrespect.
 - ♥ Listen to understand, not to contradict.
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Story: Conflicts

Grace is one of several people that want to build a large composting system. However, Lou is worried that the food scraps will bring rats into the garden. Another member is saying to Grace and Lou: “Maybe you should both attend a workshop on this issue. That way you can both understand what the garden would be tackling if we decided to build a compost system. At the next meeting you can report back.”

Communication Tips

Foster a successful group culture by creating open and positive communication between all group members. Open communication leads to better and more productive meetings.

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- ♥ Active listening: Give the speaker your full attention, let them speak without interruption.
 - ♥ Reflecting: Repeat, summarize, paraphrase what the speaker has said.
 - ♥ Speaking: Speak only after first listening and reflecting.
 - ♥ Problem solving: Brainstorm solutions to each solution.
 - ♥ Remember to step forward/step back. Encourage everyone's participation.
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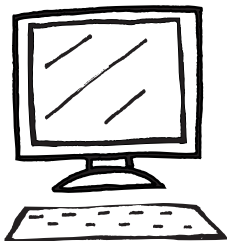
Story: Communication

Grace is facilitating a meeting, and she notices that a few of the group members are having side conversations, and not paying attention to the group as a whole. Grace decides to check in with the group, because she notices that people are no longer engaged in the conversation. She asks for someone in the room to summarize the key points that have been previously discussed in order to bring the group back to the present moment. As a facilitator, it is important to always be aware of the dynamics in the room, and to make sure everyone stays engaged and involved. This ensures that the meeting is productive and constructive and respects the time and space of the meeting at hand.

Email

Email is highly effective as a communication tool that can be used for several purposes such as; reaching out to people inviting them to meetings, sending out the meeting agenda, meeting minutes, ensuring inclusiveness and transparency.

- 🌱 Keep track of everyone's email, each member of the group should have access to each others emails.
 - 🌱 Respect people's in-boxes, try to send out only pertinent information.
 - 🌱 Email is a great tool for connecting people, but do not rely on it to communicate with all members. Many people don't use email.
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Story: Email

At a meeting everyone is wondering where Lou is - especially since they are supposed to receive an update from him about the block association's approval of their garden. Later, Grace calls him at home. He says that he didn't know about the meeting, because he didn't see anything posted on the lot's fence. Grace tells him that the info for the meeting was sent out over email, but unfortunately, he hardly uses the internet. She says, "From now on I'll make sure all announcements are posted on the fence of the garden. At our next meeting, we need to make sure we address how email can leave people out!"

Phone Tree

A phone tree is a fast way to get information to a big group of people over the telephone. Phone trees are great for people who don't use email, for when information needs to travel fast, for when the internet is down or for when you need to communicate something you don't want to put into writing. You need to make your phone tree in advance so that people already know who they need to call when the situation arises. Each person in your group will receive one call and make one or two calls to spread the message.

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- Assign one person as a constant top of the phone tree so that information can be distributed without confusion.
 - Everyone in the group should have a copy of the phone tree. and know who they are responsible for calling.
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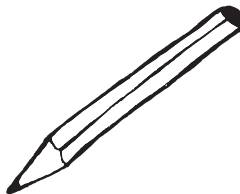
Story: Phone Tree

Grace just found out that the block is getting a big mulch delivery tomorrow morning at 8am for the street tree beds and the community garden. A truck will come and dump the mulch in a pile. People will need to be there when it comes so that the block doesn't become a big mess. Grace gets out her phone tree. She is the head of the tree. That means she is going to call two people and tell them the news and ask them to be ready in the morning. When she gets off the phone with those two people, each of them is going to call the two people they are assigned to call in the phone tree and do the same thing. Those people are going to call two other people. In half an hour, everyone on the block has gotten a call. The next day, the truck comes and 15 people are waiting with shovels to move the mulch. Happy trees and a happy garden!

Making Fliers

Putting up fliers and posters is a creative way to reach out to your neighborhood. Fliers can provide general information about the project, meetings, and other regular activities.

- ♥ Use large font and bright colors to attract viewers and make the information accessible.
 - ♥ Weatherproofing can make them long lasting.
 - ♥ Fliers can be handmade or printed, be creative!
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Story: Making Fliers

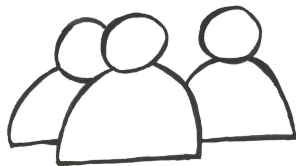
Grace is walking down her street on the way home when she passes a vacant lot. It has a sign on it that says "WANT TO START A GARDEN? Come to a meeting this Saturday right here, in front of this lot. We are building the Maple Street Community Garden and need your help!"

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One-On-Ones

Reaching out to people through one-on-one interactions is a powerful tool for inclusion and action. You can meet and discuss your project with community members in community centers, religious organizations, public spaces, community board meetings, markets, precinct meetings, anywhere where a gathering of concerned community members might take place!

- ♥ Empower all members of the group to feel comfortable approaching community members by creating talking points.
 - ♥ It can also be helpful to bring and leave behind a flier with information about your project. People you spoke with can then review the information after you are done talking to them and share with others.
 - ♥ You can also ask for their email and send them updates on the project.
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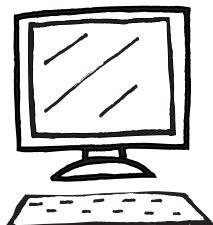
Story: One-on-Ones

Grace notices that a man she has repeatedly invited to join the garden group hasn't attended the meetings although he always sounds interested. When she sees him again on the street she gently asks him if there's a reason he hasn't been attending. He says that he saw online that many people are interested in turning the space into a vegetable garden, and he is someone who is very passionate about growing flowers. He's been hesitant to attend because he guessed that most of the plans for the space are in place, and there might not be much room for flower growing. Grace lets him know that plans for the space are just starting, and his input would be appreciated. "We have people from all over the neighborhood sharing their ideas and what they would like to see happen."

Continued Communication

Communicating through a variety of mediums regularly helps newer members integrate and also fosters enthusiasm in the older members.

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- 🍷 Include new people in the neighborhood through emails and one-on-one interactions.
 - 🍷 Send out regular updates on the project status.
 - 🍷 Communicate about needs and challenges.
 - 🍷 Include appreciation and gratitude for people's participation.
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Story: Cont'd Communication

It's winter and so the group is meeting inside, at a member's house. Grace says, "I noticed people are moving into the building down the street that just got remodeled. I think we should put a flier in their lobby inviting them to come to our meetings and to join the garden."

"I can do that," says Lou. "Do you have a flier for me to take?"

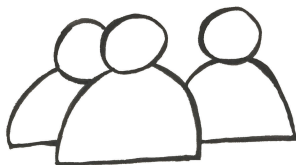
Cindy, a younger member who is there with her mother, says, "How about we make a facebook account so people can know what's happening with us, to?"

The group agrees, and asks Cindy if she can do it. "Sure," she says. "I'll make Instagram and Twitter accounts, too."

Strength of your group

Understanding each person's unique strengths and relying on them gives group members the opportunity to contribute in the way they feel most capable. It helps in utilizing each person's talent most efficiently, and ensures tasks are accomplished.

- ♥ Activities that help to identify strengths may be used.
 - ♥ Some people may need encouragement to recognize their skills.
 - ♥ These strengths can be matched with roles required.
 - ♥ Repeat the activity every couple of months.
-



Story: People's Strengths

Grace's group is sharing what role they would each like to play in the garden. One neighbor responds that she would love to lead some workshops if possible. "I work part-time at a daycare, so I'm familiar with children. However, I'd love to combine that with my passion for gardening!"

Roles

When members take on different roles it facilitates effective meetings and completion of projects and goals. Rotating roles helps people build new skills and use existing strengths.

- 🍋 Match the roll with the each person's strengths to increase commitment.
 - 🍋 Take the extra moment to review a volunteer's intentions: are they building on a strength ("I'll take notes because I type fast.") or developing a skill ("You know I lose track of the time easily; why don't I practice by keeping time at this meeting?")
 - 🍋 Roles within a meeting such as meeting facilitator, minute taker, agenda maker can be rotated at every meeting, and should be assigned at the end of each meeting.
 - 🍋 Voluntarily choosing and committing to roles is highly recommended!
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Story: Roles

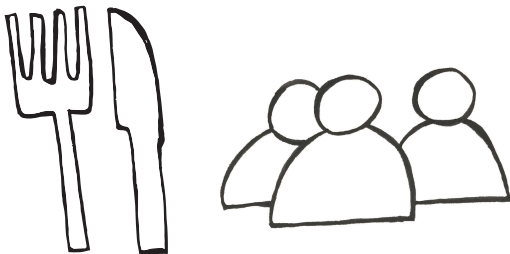
At the end of their second meeting, roles are assigned. Brian is assigned the role of Treasurer. He is in charge of keeping track of the garden's bank account and receipts from purchases. At the present meeting, he is also the minute taker.

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Bonding with each other

Community building activities play a big role in creating a sustainable group that can start, finish and enjoy a project together. Having fun together and sharing through different activities is important for building long-lasting bonds.

- Remember that potlucks, games, picnics and group gardening activities are just as important as working meetings!
 - Sharing personal thoughts and life events create a sense of neighborliness.
 - Community activities can help revive group attachment and enthusiasm.
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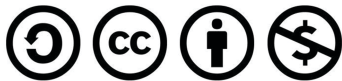
Story: Bonding

Although the group has not yet been successful in turning the lot into a garden, they decide to host a BBQ on the vacant lot to draw neighborhood attention. One member states at the BBQ “So great to be hanging out at the site of our future garden! It’s a nice to step back from planning and meetings to just get to know each other better.”

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