TOOL | AGREE-DISAGREE EXERCISE ABOUT COLLABORATION

This tool will help groups develop a common understanding of one another's perspectives on collaboration and can assist in making a case for collaboration that is rooted in participants' ideas, observations, and values.

Premise

What we think about collaboration may not always equal our shared experience of collaborating. As well, each of us approach collaboration with our own biases, opinions, and beliefs. Working together to understand one another's experiences, biases, and ideas about collaboration can help create go-forward actions that reflect the collective perspective of the group.

Purpose of Tool

To create a common group understanding of the positive attributes of Collaboration and a shared perspective of the potential downside of it, as well. At the end of this exercise, you will have a concise case for collaborating that has been identified collaboratively.

Instructions

❶ For this exercise, you can work with the statements included in the list of Agree-Disagree statements or you can identify your own common beliefs or statements about collaboration.

While the team organizing the session can do this, it is recommended you brainstorm with the group in order to use statements they identify. It is recommended that this exercise not have more than 10 statements. Keep in mind that the fewer statements you identify, the quicker you can get to discussion and revisions.

❷ Ask everyone in your group to review the statements in the Agree-Disagree Worksheet and circle whether they Agree or Disagree with them. At this point, individuals can summarize their rationale for their decision (A or D) but should not yet revise any of the statements.

❸ Organize participants into groups. Consider the following:

Size of Large Group	Size of Break out Groups
Up to 15	Dyads or Triads
16 – 40	Groups of 5
41 and more	Table Groups (10 to a group maximum)

4 Ask participants to talk about why they agree or disagree with a statement. This helps one another understand the rationale used that led to each participant's circling of A or D in the worksheet.

Writing down rationale is helpful because it can reveal a group perspective that goes beyond rote acceptance of common beliefs about collaboration. It also begins to identify strengths and weakness of collaboration as identified by your group.

<table>
<tr><td>Facilitation Tip</td></tr>
<tr><td>*If you are a large group, you can save time by having each group report on one or two of the statements they worked on and then ask others to report on different ones.*</td></tr>
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5 Next, have participants work in their groups to rewrite those statements where there is disagreement. Note that it only takes one person in a group to disagree to prompt a rewrite. In other words, if six people agree with a statement and one person doesn't, then work together to change the existing statement so that all can agree. This is one way to honour minority opinions, which sometimes end up being correct.

6 Now in your full group, share the following:

a) The rationale identified that supported individual perspectives on a statement, whether there was agreement or disagreement with it.

b) The actual rewrite of a statement that small group members agreed with and why.

c) After each presentation, ask the larger group how many agree and disagree with the rewritten statement. Likely it will be rare that there is 100% agreement, but chances are good that the large majority of participants will confirm their agreement with a revised statement.

7 At the end of the exercise, identify together where there is full or majority agreement with a revised statement and where there is still considerable disagreement. Your options now can include undergoing a round-two exercise focusing on those statements/revisions where disagreement is still significant in order to determine if statements can be identified where agreement increases markedly.

If there is not enough time to do this and the group wants to continue working on this exercise, have someone compile the work of the groups as well as the number of participants who agree and disagree with revisions and then bring that back to your group at a subsequent date to address.

Collaborative thinking can help us understand one another before we launch into debates and negotiations. The best agreements are reached through dialog about our different perspectives and assumptions

Agree-Disagree Statements Worksheet

This exercise is based on ten statements; however, you can identify your own statements to work with.

Statement		Agree	Disagree
1	Collaboration enjoys significant evidence that it saves everyone time and money	A	D
	Revised Statement:	Rationale for A or D	
2	Collaboration consistently produces better solutions than working independently.	A	D
	Revised Statement:	Rationale for A or D	
3	Collaboration must require that participants set aside their personal or professional agendas.	A	D
	Revised Statement:	Rationale for A or D	
4	Collaboration reduces tensions among participants and unites us going forward.	A	D
	Revised Statement:	Rationale for A or D	
5	Collaboration is more enjoyable than going it alone.	A	D
	Revised Statement:	Rationale for A or D	
6	Collaboration fosters effective innovation much faster than independent efforts.	A	D
	Revised Statement:	Rationale for A or D	

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Statement		Agree	Disagree
7	Collaboration requires skills and know-how that most groups currently have.	A	D
Revised Statement:	Rationale for A or D		
8	Collaboration has proven to increase clarity between funders and organizations about engaging in successful ventures.	A	D
Revised Statement:	Rationale for A or D		
9	Collaboration is always more effective than competing with one another for clients, money, or market position.	A	D
Revised Statement:	Rationale for A or D		
10	Collaboration is easy and straightforward to design and implement.	A	D
Revised Statement:	Rationale for A or D		

HELPFUL TIPS

- *Seek first to understand different points of view than yours instead of moving right away to debate.*

- *Remember the goal is to reach agreement, not be the one everyone else agrees with.*

- *Try to avoid majority-rule decisions as much as possible. If full agreement is determined by the group to not be possible, then explore going with a significant majority but consider how to include minority perspectives in your "case" for collaboration. If there is significant disagreement, ask yourself if you should abandon the statement for the time-being and focus on where there is agreement.*

- *The purpose is not to water down a statement just to achieve agreement. There is a fine balance between constructive compromise and creating an agreeable statement that is vague or too general.*

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