



Why are Rules of Engagement important?

Establishing the specific ways your Health Council will operate is a critical piece of infrastructure for your collaboration. This doesn't mean that Health Council meetings should run by [Robert's Rules of Order](#), however it is helpful to have defined expectations for *how* the group functions. Rules of Engagement can serve to manage accountability with individual members and the collective group, prevent conflict, orient new members, and can act as a stabilizing reference for when the group has experienced major changes.

What is included in the Rules of Engagement?

Some Health Councils may choose to adopt a strict set of rules for governance, such as Robert's Rules of Order or formal Bylaws, while others may prefer to choose elements that can be adapted depending on the make-up and culture of your Health Council.

Basic elements of effective Rules of Engagement include:

- Mission, Vision and Core Values
- Definition of Health Council membership
- Expectations for members
- Decision making process
- When, where, and how often to meet

Your Health Council might decide other expectations are important to include as well, such as when and how to celebrate successes or how often to report in on the implementation of specific projects.

The Rules of Engagement may be considered a living document that gets built upon as new needs arise and new expectations need to be clarified, agreed upon, and documented. It's important to review Rules of Engagement regularly to update them and ensure accountability.

Example:

ACE Nashville is a multi-sector collaboration that was initially formed from the CHA and action planning work of their local Health Council. Their Rules of Engagement are [linked to here](#). These are provided as just one example of what a health-focused community coalition's Rules of Engagement might look like.

Worksheet: Developing Rules of Engagement

Step 1: Decide what should be included in your Rules of Engagement.

Below is a checklist of items you might include as well as some questions for discussion. Check any components that your Health Council wants to include – as well as anything not on this list that you feel are important to add.

___ Mission Statement (*See "Building Block: Mission, Vision, Values"*)

___ Vision Statement (*See "Building Block: Mission, Vision, Values"*)

___ Core Values (*See "Building Block: Mission, Vision, Values"*)

___ Definition of Health Council Membership (*See "Building Block: Membership Analysis"*)

- How are new members identified? How are they added to the group? Do they get voted in? Is there an interview process? Is there an orientation?
- Are there aspirations for membership representation? Are there certain sectors, skillsets and/or demographics that can be listed out to ensure diverse representation?
- Is there a minimum and/or maximum number of members that should be strived for on the Health Council?

___ Expectations for members

- Are members expected to agree to conduct themselves in alignment with the core values?
- What are the expectations for meeting attendance (ex: members should attend x% of meetings)? Is there need for agreement that all meetings will start and end on time?
- What are the responsibilities and expected contributions of varying members (i.e. Health Council Chairs, support staff, general members)? Is there a need to define officer positions (secretary, treasurer, etc)? Should members be expected to contribute a certain amount of time or participate in certain activities?
- What is the process should a Health Council member need to resign or be removed from the group? What are the criteria for removal?

___ Decision Making Process

- How does your Health Council make decision? Consensus? Majority vote? What type of decisions require a vote (funding related, CHA priorities, etc)? Does this require a quorum? What makes a quorum for your Health Council?

___ When, where, and how often your Health Council meets

___ Other: _____

Step 2: Once your Health Council has settled on what they want to be included, write out a draft document (recommended to do this outside of a meeting). Email it to the group to review/suggest edits before your next meeting

Step 3: Bring the draft document back to the full Health Council for final edits and approval. Consider reviewing your Rules of Engagement at least once a year to update the document and to ensure accountability.