

Group Agreements for PSO Board Engagement

Last edited on April 9, 2021

The PSO Board recognizes that group agreements can be effective tools to develop the trust that is essential for successful interactions and efforts as part of board service. Authentic engagement, deeper communication, and overall cohesiveness find large pieces of their roots in trust, and group agreements can create a safe and brave space for this to occur. We have co-developed the below PSO Board Group Agreements because we want to work together in respectful, effective, equitable, and enjoyable ways. In adopting these agreements, we are collectively setting intentions for how we will treat each other.

The PSO Board Group Agreements are “live and in play”: they will be included in Board agendas, posted on the PSO website, and shared as part of Board member roles and responsibilities. We encourage new board members to discuss these agreements with their board buddies, and for all board members to refer to these agreements if they feel it will support authentic engagement.

As is the case for all such living agreements, the PSO Board Group Agreements will be the most useful if they are revisited and revised as needed. These agreements will be revisited quarterly: at the summer retreat, and at the November, February, and May board meetings. Additionally, processes for holding ourselves and each other accountable are suggested below.

1. Give space/Take space

- a. Allow everyone to speak or otherwise provide input
- b. If you usually talk a lot, give others air time
- c. If you are usually quiet, consider speaking up

2. Aim first to understand

- a. Be open minded and assume positive intent
- b. Gather a diversity of perspectives
- c. Listen to learn, not to reload
- d. Give grace

3. Pay attention to impact as well as intent

- a. Be aware of power dynamics
- b. Be transparent; don't “hand down” decisions
- c. Be clear about expectations
- d. Give grace

4. Invest, engage, and respect the process

- a. Prepare
- b. Show up
- c. Contribute
- d. Hold ourselves and others accountable with diligence, empathy and grace
- e. Read and adhere to PSO bylaws and roles & responsibilities

- f. Understand the “why” behind processes like parliamentary procedure
- 5. Build relationships while getting work done**
 - a. Nurture relationships with each other as whole people
 - b. Be thoughtful about how we use each other’s time: what is useful for group interaction/co-development? What could be done asynchronously?
 - c. Consider having a facilitator/moderator to support group dynamics
- 6. Create an environment that embraces a variety of skill sets so that all can contribute and feel valued**
 - a. Recognize, respect and support different technological skills and capacities
 - b. Provide multiple ways to contribute (not just speaking in meetings)
 - c. Give grace--everyone has bad days and good days

If you are experiencing stress, harm, or challenges due to broken group agreements, the below steps should be considered:

1. If you are struggling to understand or maintain group agreements, please feel free to bring this to the Board for discussion. Alternatively, reach out to those listed in #3 below.
2. If you have felt harmed by another board member’s breach of agreements, and you feel safe to do so, you might reach out to that person for a 1:1 conversation. We encourage you to lean on these group agreements in that conversation.
3. If a 1:1 conversation does not resolve the issue for whatever reason, please reach out to the following members of the Board:
 - a. Leyla Salmassi, President
 - b. Jen Davison, Vice President
4. Other options are available, including larger group conversations, the Ombuds office, or considerations of the PSO bylaws with regards to board responsibilities.