



Women's Forest Congress: Community Agreements

The Women's Forest Congress Community Agreements focus on how we aspire to work together in an inclusive, collaborative, and respectful manner. Our community agreements serve as the foundation for each of our meetings and guide how all participants relate to each other.

Our community agreements:

- **Be gentle:** we are all living through unprecedented times, listen with care and kindness
- **Be open-minded:** explore new perspectives and learn from others' experiences, even if they are different from your own. Use disagreements as opportunities to learn
- **Be present:** stay attentive during conversations and discussions, speak your truth using "I" statements
- **Be accepting of uncertainty:** we are charting a new course together; it is okay not to have all the answers

Why community agreements matter:

Our shared goal is to transform the forest sector by creating a space for women to be heard and listened to. We cannot achieve our common goal in a hostile, disrespectful, or undermining environment.

Developing and using community agreements fulfills our desire to be intentional about how all participants can work together in an inclusive, collaborative and respectful manner.

We expect women throughout the forest space to share personal and professional experiences, foster connections, and shape the latest innovations and developments. To consider how our perspectives can make a profound impact on the future of forests, we will need to have critical conversations that may be emotional, painful, and uncomfortable. Therefore, we must create an environment that is based on emotional safety and trust.

We recognize that our grassroots approach may lead to a mix of emotions and thoughts, such as fear, confusion and optimism. We ask that you be flexible, patient and active while we collectively work towards transforming the forest sector.





We acknowledge the importance of forests to us all. This is why we call attention to the existing disparities faced by all women in the forest sector, whether involved through land ownership, industry, conservation, public agency, or other roles. In acknowledging this void, we highly value the perspectives of all women in the forest sector. By welcoming multiple perspectives of women in forestry that are typically unequally represented, we hope to provide a model for future actions in the forest sector.

We recognize that each of us brings our prior working experiences with us. We also recognize that our current work environments may have their own leadership structures and standard operating procedures, which may differ from how we aspire to work together as a team.

The process of developing community agreements is consensus-driven, meaning the focus is on identifying each person's needs and commitments and then aligning on an agreed-upon framework for how we aim to work together.

We encourage this framework to be shared before meetings and can be respectfully brought up during meetings if someone does not feel safe, supported, open, productive, or trusted.

The Community Agreements of the Women's Forest Congress are based on the previous experience of steering committee members and the National Equity Project's guide for Developing Community Agreements: <https://nationalequityproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Community-Agreements-Developing.pdf>

Additional Links:

- [Co-creating community agreements in meetings](#)
- [Women Belong Membership Agreement](#)
- [Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group Community Agreements](#)

