# Case Scenario

Project Team Community Agreements

# Meet the Project Team

A **project team of four** convenes, provides capacity building opportunities for, and shares information with a network of statewide food and health stakeholders who work individually and collectively to make progress on local food systems issues. The project team works at an outreach center within an academic institution, which created the network nearly 10 years ago. In the last five years that the full project team has been established, exponential progress has been made toward articulating and implementing a vision centering equity practice. The project team holds weekly meetings to share updates on progress across multiple projects, assign tasks, address requests from their network partners, and troubleshoot challenges. These challenges include network, project-related, and interpersonal challenges.



**Adrian** is a creative white, queer, trans non-binary organizer / facilitator / coach who believes feedback is a gift. They are interested in making the implicit explicit. As an abolitionist dedicated to collective liberation, they have an appreciation for group culture. They are also disabled and polyamorous. Adrian was the newest addition to the team.



**Corinne** is a multiracial female facilitator / strategist / team coordinator. She processes and translates information quickly and navigates issues politically. She is not conflict averse, taking on a "say what you mean" approach with close relationships, both personal and professional. With a deep commitment to racial and health equity influenced by her own lived experience, she is a fierce advocate and practices compassionate accountability. She and Belinda worked together for a few years before Adrian and Deidre joined the team.
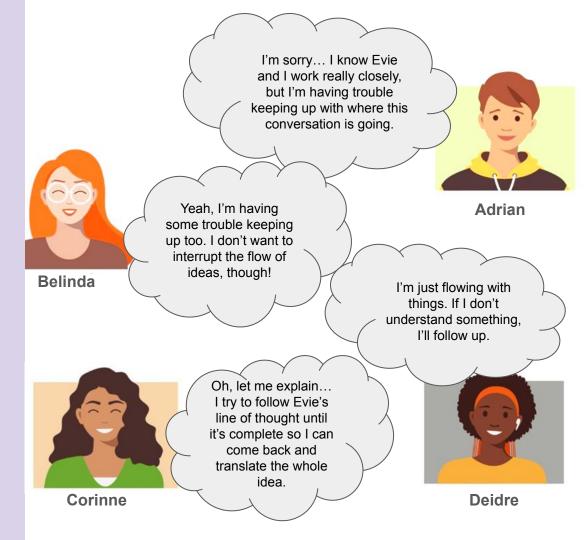


**Belinda** is a white female who thrives in project management and administrative roles. Being relationship-oriented, she looks for connection and areas of agreement to move things forward. She is an external processor and prefers time to digest before providing input. Although she isn't comfortable in conflict, she tries not to avoid it. She also co-founded the network and has had a long tenure with the organization.



**Deidre** is a Black, African-American female who is joyful and exudes positive energy. She is a trusted family- and community-oriented leader committed to designing just, sovereign systems focused on community health and economic development. As a holistic thinking, design strategist and researcher, she focuses on practical solutions and tools that challenge the status quo (including - and especially - Western thought). Deidre was a network member before joining the team.

**Scenario #1:** On a monthly basis, the project team meets with Evie, another colleague who has adjacent projects, for strategic coordination. Adrian works directly with Evie on her project. During these monthly meetings, a lot of ideas that the team must translate into strategic action often emerge. Having worked together on other creative projects, Corinne and Evie usually build on these emerging ideas in real time and very quickly, leaving everyone else playing catch up.

### See the conversation unfolding →

Belinda expresses again that she doesn't want to interrupt, and Corinne tells her that it's fine to interrupt any time. Belinda explains that she is uncomfortable with interrupting. Corinne responds that she's happy to slow things down to check in with the group, but also that she can't make Belinda feel comfortable with doing something that she has given Belinda permission to do to meet her needs.

**Possible Solution:** Adrian has suggested that the project team create Community Agreements to mitigate this issue. The project team doesn't seem directly opposed to the idea, but they have a very heavy workload and this is another to-do. Adrian offers to pull together some draft language and the other project team members agree to review, comment, and give input.

**But this surfaces a new issue…**

**Scenario #2:** Deidre notices an agreement about addressing one another with the proper pronouns and is confused. This issue has never been brought up among the project team before. She wonders if this is directed toward her because she has unintentionally used the wrong pronouns with Adrian before, and she brings this up in a project team meeting.

# Discussion Questions

1. What is happening in these scenarios? How would you **diagnose** the issue(s)?

2. What **interpretations** can you offer of this team's communication processes?

3. What do you interpret to be the **conflict goals** in these scenarios? Are they topical, relational, identity-based, and/or process related? How so?

4. How is **identity** showing up in these conversations? Who do you most identify with in these conversations?

5. As this team moves forward, what **challenges** might come their way? What's possible here and who cares?