Inked with Intent: Crafting Meaningful MOUs for Collaborative Governance

How to Use this Facilitation Guide

Thank you for your interest in *Inked with Intent: Crafting Meaningful MOUs for Collaborative Governance*. The Greenlining Institute created this interactive activity for our annual Just Future Summit to collectively wrestle with complex equity topics and share best practices.

We encourage you to make a copy of this document and customize your own facilitation notes. We ask that you credit the Greenlining Institute with developing this activity, and retain the GLI logo where it appears on any materials.

Activity Summary

In order to create a more just future, we must correct the current governance system that is built on extraction and exclusion, to instead be rooted in community ownership. Our communities must be centered in the decision-making processes that shape our lives and neighborhoods. This requires shifting traditional hierarchies and finding new ways to collaborate to achieve greater collective impact. When grounded by equity and community leadership, we can build power and strength through collaboration.

Materials

- Digital materials to print: handout, board, cards (components, roles, resources)
- Needed materials: pens, post-its
- Slides

Facilitation Overview

- We recommend 2-3 facilitators to share speaking roles, check in on the activity, and support clean up and close down
- Time: 1 hour 30 minutes (includes 13 minutes buffer time)
  - 10 minutes: intro
  - 45 minutes: activity
  - 20 minutes: report backs
  - 2 minutes: close
Facilitation Script

Intro & Framing (7 minutes)  

[Slide 1]  

[Intro] Customize introduction to speaker and organization.  

[Activity Goals] We’re excited to have you here. Today, we will be sharing an activity developed by the Greenlining Institute. I’m going to invite you to problem solve with your neighbors. We’re gonna do an interactive activity, we’re gonna have some fun, and we want to work through operationalizing complex equity topics that don't have easy answers.

We have 3 goals for this session: 1) we engage with each other and with collective thinking; 2) we wrestle with real world constraints and tensions; and lastly, everyone in this room walks away with conceptual models and resources to apply in your own neighborhoods and work.

[Collaborative Governance] So that’s the big picture of what we’re doing. And then specifically, we want to unpack building community power and collaborative governance.

Customize to why you’re interested in collaborative governance. Here's GLI’s example. At GLI, we believe that a key strategy to combat the legacies of redlining is to invest in community power. As many of you already know, impacted communities historically and currently don’t often have the power to shape the decisions that deeply affect their lives and communities.

To move towards more community power, our theory is that community needs to be in the driver’s seat, but that we also have to work with other stakeholders like local government who hold resources and power within neighborhoods.

We believe that our work is stronger when grounded by community leadership and equity, and that in fact we have to work together to achieve the kinds of big transformations we want to see.

And, as everyone in this room knows, it can be so hard to work together across divides of power, distrust, and real harm.

So that’s the question we’re putting in front of you this morning:
- How do we work together between communities, government and other stakeholders?
- What are the tangible ingredients that lead to equitable processes and outcomes?
- And how do we stand up and operationalize collaborative governance?

[MOUs] To do that, the Greenlining Institute developed the activity in front of you. In your tables, you are going to work together as a group and develop a Memorandum of Understanding, or MOU, that outlines how a multi-stakeholder group will work together to advance a community vision.

So show of hands: who here has developed an MOU before? And can I get a volunteer to tell us in a few words what an MOU is?
Right, MOUs are agreements between stakeholders that outline respective responsibilities, including roles, governance, financial relationships and more. When working with other people, MOUs can be helpful to set the terms of the working relationship.

**MOU Examples** Customize to why you’re interested in collaborative governance. Here’s GLI’s example. Greenlining designed this activity based on their own experience. In 2020, they had to develop a MOU between over 10 partners, and it was hard to figure out what language and safeguards to put in place around participation, decision-making and accountability.

And since that time, we are seeing more collaborative governance requirements show up in policies, policies that we’re actively pushing for. And so other folks too are grappling with the same questions: How do you even make an MOU? How do you stand up a good partnership agreement?

To start answering these questions, the activity in front of you will ask you to identify what you think are the needed components to stand up community voice and collaborative governance.

To get us started, I’m gonna invite up *insert facilitator here* who will explain the activity instructions.

**Activity Instructions (3 minutes)**

[Slide 2]

*Customize introduction to speaker.*

Let’s get started and see what’s on your tables. You should have: 1 Handout that includes full activity instructions, an index of the MOU components and other resources, 1 Game Board, color coded MOU cards matching each section of the board, 1 additional set of role cards for the partnerships section, $ and time cards, and some sticky notes and pens to write on instead of directly on the board or cards.

[Slide 3]

Okay, so the game board is your blank MOU. We ask that you start by completing the Partnerships and Shared Principles sections first. This is where you’ll use the partners, roles, and shared principles cards. You don’t have to roleplay unless you want, just follow the instructions on the board and make sure to assign a role card to the partners you choose. Then the rest of the MOU can be completed in any order. You can jump around, go back to sections, change your choices, whatever you need.

One more note is that there are two optional sections, trainings and evaluation. Meaning you don’t have to play cards there.
So the cards to fill out the rest of the MOU board look a little different from the partners, roles and shared principles cards. These cards have money and time symbols indicating how much they cost, and star symbols indicating their equity score. To play them, you will need to spend your money and time. When spent, please place the money and time cards in a separate pile from your available funds.

You will also notice some create your own cards on the table. Your group is free and encouraged to write in a new choice if the ones offered don't fit quite right. There are three blank cards to use, with different money, time, and equity values assigned to them. Write in your new choices on a sticky note, paste them on a card and play these cards as you would a normal one, by spending money and time to use them.

We've had a few groups use these cards and sticky notes to combine choices, or add in details on how they would implement a certain strategy. We encourage you all to come into this game with your knowledge and experience, and also offer up different ways to do things!

Finally, you'll have 50 minutes to work with your table and develop your MOU. Once you're done, take note of the Equity Scores, the stars at the bottom of the cards you've chosen. Tally up the stars and write your equity score down on a sticky note. If you're reaching 30, your MOUs are pretty equitable.

And that's the game!

At the end of this session, we'll have time to reflect on the MOUs that were created. We're interested in hearing the different ways that groups choose to stand up collaborative governance--what gets prioritized and what gets left behind.

Please go ahead and introduce yourselves to your table and get started on the activity.

**Time Checks**

- 20 minutes remaining
- 10 minutes remaining
- 3 minutes remaining

**Report Backs (20 minutes)**

*Customize introduction to speaker.*
We were already hearing some really great discussions in your tables, so we wanted to reflect on the activity together as a larger group.

We have about 4 questions prepared and about 20 minutes to discuss, so I ask that you try to keep your remarks brief so that we can hear from as many folks as possible.

[Slide 7]
1. To start, we’d love to hear the story of the MOU your table decided on. So our first question is, what partners did you choose and which core components did you prioritize to stand up collaborative governance?

[Slide 8]
2. We designed this activity so that there was room to dream big while wrestling with real-world constraints such as time and money. So, how did it feel for you all to negotiate collaborative governance elements? What tradeoffs did you have to make and what did that bring up for you?

[Slide 9]
3. While this activity is informed by real-world experiences, it’s obviously a simulated activity in a closed environment. In your experience, how does setting up or negotiating collaborative governance actually play out? What are some of the real-world constraints and challenges that you’ve seen or experienced in building collaborative governance?

[Slide 10]
4. Building on our last question, how have you been able to overcome these constraints and challenges? What opportunities or successes have you seen in building equitable and collaborative governance?

[Slide 11]
**Closing (2 minutes)**
Thank you all for sharing space with us for this past hour.

We welcome and encourage you to take the things you may have learned, as well as the discussions and questions that came up during this activity back to your communities and work so that we can begin to advance better governance structures together.

We also encourage you to come back to this activity as a tool. PDF versions of this Equity Lab are currently available on Greenlining’s website for you all to print out. Again, thank you all so much!