



INCLUSIVE  
ORGANISATIONS



# MODULE

on

# “How to be accountable to the people we strive to include”

(VERSION A)





## MAIN GOAL

Empower participants to contribute to a culture of accountability in their work practices.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE SESSIONS

- Participants understand the concept of accountability and its importance for their work, especially with a focus on marginalised communities.
- Participants have a heightened awareness of formal and informal accountability practices they already use, and become familiar with further practices.
- Participants acquire knowledge and skills to de-center themselves as workers and place marginalised communities at the centre of their work.
- Participants formulate commitments towards practising accountability (either self-accountability, mutual or communal, depending on the organisation, how far along they are, what comes up in the workshop)

## DURATION FORESEEN

7 hours

## NEEDS (FOR THE SPACE)

- A room with chairs and the possibility to project a presentation and/or hang flipcharts (for this module we have many flipcharts to display so make sure there's room for them). The room should allow participants to work in small groups as well.
- The module is quite long, so take into account that you might need to have a canteen or a bar close by, or to buy food in advance and have a place where you are allowed to eat and drink as well.





## FOR WHOM

Members of an organisation, from all structure levels,

## STEP BY STEP DESCRIPTION

- INTRODUCTION
  - 5' The trainers welcome the participants and share appreciation for joining this workshop
  - 5' Overview over the workshop - presentation of aims, objectives and timeline
  - 5' Contextualization of the workshop within the overall Certification Scheme
- GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER AND TEAMBUILDING
  - 10' The trainers invite the participants to discuss in pairs and write or draw on a post-it-note the answer to these questions:
    - Who is at the heart of your work?*
    - Why are you here?*
  - 20' Come back into the plenary: we invite everyone to share their name, pronouns, and position, invite them to share their post-it-notes and place the post-it-note with question one (Who is at the heart of the work) on a flipchart with a big heart drawn on, and the post-it-note with question two (Why are you here) around it.  
If people get off track, defensive etc. use the visualisation, and frame it as: this is what accountability is about - to put the people we work with at the centre of our work.
- FOUNDATION OF ACCOUNTABILITY = GROUP AGREEMENT
  - 15' The trainer gives an input on Foundations of Accountability





**Notes for trainers:** use the following bullet points and present them in any way you want, e.g. flipchart, PPT, integrate into previous conversation. Visualise layers of accountability, emphasise their interconnection.

- Accountability means we acknowledge the power and privilege we hold and how it is distributed across our society
- ...we seek to learn and unlearn about and how we use power and privilege, so that we can contribute to a more just society
- ...accountability is relational, we learn together, with and from each other
- ...accountability does not equal cancel culture or being called out, but being called in and leaning in
- ...accountability is a continuous process
- ...taking accountability is an emotional process, when people invite us to lean in they offer us a gift - of their time, wisdom etc., when people lean into taking accountability they open themselves up to learning, unlearning, reflecting on values and behaviours, and navigating complicated feelings.
- ...accountability can be formal and informal, e.g. an apology can be an accountability, a commitment to oneself to change or improve some behaviour can be accountability, but the creation of structures for safer spaces, formal feedback mechanisms, feedback surveys etc. are part of accountability-practices
- ...ultimately accountability is a process and pathway that supports us to put our values into practice, centre the ones we seek to serve and keep us close to that. It does not only show up in times of transgressions, but also as a practice of collective care throughout our work and teams.

Then, we move to creating a Community Agreement. This is the starting point to build a community agreement on accountability and will be added on throughout this process. Use what participants come back with after the reflection to ensure that people have understood the concept of accountability





- You can transite to this exercise by explaining how accountability is one way of how we agree to be in relationship or community with each other, what is deemed acceptable, how we make up for transgressions etc.
- 10' Reflect in pairs and write on moderation cards: "*What do you need to feel safe to share and contribute?*" & "*What do you need to feel motivated to participate in this workshop?*" & "*What do you need to practise respect and feel respected?*"
- 20' Come back to the plenary and share. Place the post it notes on an empty flipchart

- 15' BREAK

- SELF ACCOUNTABILITY

15' As a starter point, we explain the energizer: 1-2-3

- We ask people to team up in pairs of two. Then, we tell them to count to three together, one person saying one, the other saying two, the first one saying three and so on. In a second step the number 1 is replaced by a nonverbal sign (e.g.: a hand-clap) instead of saying it out aloud. Gradually all numbers are replaced by a different sign (for example spinning around and making a small jump). Additionally the numbers can get re-introduced gradually.

→ Framing: we all make mistakes, it depends on how we respond and learn from them

Then, the facilitator gives an input on Self-Accountability (15 min). This can be accompanied by guiding questions for self-reflection. The input should explain the concept of self-accountability, why it is important and what hinders us from taking it. It could touch upon these points:





- *What is self-accountability?*

“Self-accountability is the practice of taking responsibility for your actions and the consequences of those actions.” Every single member of a team must recognize that they have a role to play in building a culture committed to inclusion, belonging, and equity, and this recognition begins with taking responsibility for their own contributions to that culture.” (Anderson 2021)

- *Why is it important?*

Every team member has a role in building a culture committed to inclusion, belonging and equity, beginning with taking responsibility for their own contribution to that culture.

- *What stands in the way?*

The cultural framework within which we navigate, leaves us with complicated feelings when faced with criticism for our actions. It is important to acknowledge these feelings and understand their roots. Feelings don't originate in a vacuum, but have a social, cultural and historical quality to them and are thus structured by power relations. Criticism is often experienced with guilt, shame, defensiveness and fear of punishment, separating us from each other and, due to their unpleasantness, stand in the way of holding ourselves truly accountable. Learned ideas of where knowledge and decision-making power are situated and what characteristics are valuable in leadership, disconnect us from others. In my role/ with my education, don't I know better? Is my effort not seen? If I admit to a mistake what will happen? What does it mean, if I hurt someone or have been unaware of their needs?

Being socialised as we are, we will not get rid of these initial responses all together. So it might be helpful to sit with them for a moment, and think where they point us to. A desire to do the right thing. A desire to do right by the people we hope to centre in our work. Framed this way, we can see how initial negative feelings of not having fulfilled these desires actually connect us with others in a meaningful way, which can be used constructively. Taking accountability is a way to work with that desire and





reach out to others. From there we can work on making things right, make change by communicating and negotiating our needs. Acknowledging these complicated feelings helps us with understanding accountability as a generative opportunity to work with our complicated feelings around mistakes and conflict.

20' After the input, we guide the participants toward self reflection or reflection in pairs with guiding questions. The participants are to reflect alone on the topic with a set of guiding questions and discussion in the plenary afterwards

- Distribute the guiding questions for reflection and read through them together, present them in any way you want, e.g. flipchart, PPT, integrating into previous conversation. Check if the questions are clear.
- Give the option of reflecting on these questions in pairs or alone. To indicate if you'd like to reflect on these alone, grab a chair and place yourself facing the wall - or, if the weather is nice, look for a quiet spot outside.

25' The facilitator finalises this activity with a plenary exercise

- We ask everybody to write at least one mechanism or example of self-accountability on a post-it and put them on a flipchart titled "self-accountability", allowing people to ask for clarification as needed.
- Ask people to think about how these mechanisms relate to their role or the organisation.
- Invite every participant to choose one mechanism they would like to practise more of in the future. Encourage them to take the note and put them somewhere visible on their desk, into their notebook etc.

- 60' BREAK





- MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

15' We start with a brainstorming exercise

- Create groups of four.
- Every group receives one collage from [Intelligent Mischief](#) with a question on it. Discuss the question and how this connects to enacting care and accountability towards and with each other as a team. Write key words or practices on post-its.

20' Follow up with a plenary dialogue

- Place the post-its and handouts in the centre of a circle.
- Give participants time to have a brief look at it before asking each group to share 1-2 sentences about their insights. Others can ask questions for clarification.
- Facilitate a discussion that enables participants to engage with the following questions for their team. Please, note that there is no requirement to come up with one definite response to these questions. It's more about stimulating discussion. If possible, have your co-trainer take notes from the discussion with a focus on documenting potential commitments or actions people and the team can take towards practising mutual accountability.
  1. *Based on your discussions and the cards you have created, how would you define mutual accountability?*
  2. *Why do you think mutual accountability is important?*
  3. *How do you imagine mutual accountability can benefit you/your team/your organisation?*

To close the discussion, put the notes that were written throughout it on the flipchart, have a look together and see if there is anything missing that needs to be edited or clarified. You can use the following bullet points to give further inputs and gently guide the discussion, especially if participants seem rather uncertain about the questions.







1. *What is mutual accountability?*

"The second is mutual accountability, which is based on defining a shared agenda for change, rather than using a top-down policing model rooted in punishment."

2. *Why is mutual accountability important?*

We cannot be great at our work at all times. We all have been raised in hierarchical societies which keep us divided through patriarchy, racism, ableism etc. Mutual accountability supports us to learn about the effects of these isms on our behaviour, how we can move closer to our values and becoming more inclusive and safer for the people we work with, we strive to include and as an organisation as a whole. Mutual accountability calls teams to lean in and learn about the effects of their and/or individual's behaviour, engaging with the understanding that their good intentions did not have the desired effects and that work has to be done to repair harm caused.

Defining mechanisms and setting up structures for accountability allows us to cultivate a safer and more inclusive workplace, and respond to potential transgressions with pre-existing structures, rather than ad hoc mechanisms. It allows us to practise a culture of critique and strengthens our "muscle" for giving and receiving critique in ways that are meaningful, rather than fall into habits of gossiping, backbiting or lack of trust.

20' Then, the trainers gives an input about Critique vs. criticism

The input can be based on the following structure:

- A big part of mutual accountability is critique. Critique involves constructive feedback aimed at growth and improvement. In contrast, criticism tends to be judgmental and focused on faults.
- Critique fosters accountability by encouraging dialogue about power dynamics and ethical responsibilities. It challenges harmful norms and promotes mutual respect. When we critique each other





it is so that we can support each other to stay close to our values and to centre those we seek to include.

- Practising critique is a form of collective care that prioritises well-being and dignity. It nurtures empathy, collaboration, and community resilience.
- If critique follows a transgression, it should be given in private and as soon as possible.

Encourage participants to take a moment to reflect on how they want to receive and offer critique as a means of collective care.

- 15' BREAK

- COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY IN TIMES OF TRANSGRESSIONS

20' The trainers gives an input with the following core points

- Community accountability involves establishing structures and processes to collectively respond to transgressions, with a focus on healing and preventing future harm.
- This approach was pioneered by racialized feminists in the US in the early 2000s as a response to widespread police violence against marginalised communities. Recognizing the limitations and distrust in traditional policing, they sought alternative, decolonized models like restorative justice
- Definition: [INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence](#) defines community accountability as a process where a community—such as a workplace—collaborates to (make sure you underline well these points):
  - Provide safety and support to those targeted (e.g., offering counselling, establishing an ombudsperson).
  - Establish and affirm values and practices that resist abuse and oppression, promoting safety, support, and accountability (e.g., participation in certification processes)





- Develop sustainable strategies to address harmful behaviours and guide individuals toward accountability and behavioural transformation (e.g., utilising restorative justice processes).
- Commit to ongoing community and individual learning and unlearning to dismantle and transform oppressive conditions (e.g., engaging in anti-racism book clubs).

Then, the group can discuss how these principles can be applied in the organisation to foster inclusivity, respect, and accountability.

15' The facilitator present the group work:

- Divide participants into groups of four based on the principles outlined.
- Ask each group to brainstorm 1-3 specific practices aligned with their assigned principle and write them on a moderation card.

15' We finalise this activity with a plenary discussion: compile and display the practices on a flipchart titled "Community Accountability." Allow time for questions, clarifications, and brief reflections from participants.

- **CREATING COMMITMENTS**

In Plenary, the facilitator places the three flipcharts (Self-Accountability, Mutual Accountability, and Community Accountability) in the centre of the circle or room.

Ask participants to review the practices listed on each flipchart as a group (5 min).

Then, select option A or B according to the group characteristics.

Option A: for participants with limited decision making power (15 min)

- Participants revisit the cards they have chosen on how they want to practise self-accountability.





- Encourage participants to choose an "accountability-buddy" who will support them in the implementation, monitoring progress and keeping them connected to their commitment.
- Discuss the following questions in groups of 2-3 persons:
  1. *How will you implement these practices effectively?*
  2. *How will you assess your progress and know you are performing well?*
  3. *What signs will indicate that you are losing track of your commitments?*
  4. *How can you communicate to others that you are open to feedback and critique?*

Option B: for participants with decision making power (15 min)

Fostering Action Planning

- Choose 1-3 practices from the Mutual Accountability or Community Accountability flip charts that you would like to prioritise for the organisation.
- Discuss in small groups:
  1. *What steps are needed to implement these practices organisation-wide?*
  2. *How will you measure success and monitor progress?*
  3. *What potential challenges or resistance might arise, and how will you address them?*
  4. *How can you create a culture where feedback and critique are encouraged and valued?*
    - a. Discuss if these commitments are already part of the action plan or should be added.

The facilitator encourages the participants to take the three flipcharts and display them somewhere in the organisation, store or document them so that they can be revisited, for example for the next year of action planning, monitoring meetings etc.





- 5' BREAK
- REFLECTION AND EVALUATION  
15' The facilitator presents the group Reflection: The Gift  
Form a circle and visualise a large bag of gifts placed at the centre. Each participant selects one imaginary gift from the bag and shares what they have received from this workshop. After sharing their gift, each participant then metaphorically places a gift into the bag that they hope to contribute to the group as the process continues.

Finally, we share a formal, standardised evaluation.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Name tags, which include people's pronouns, positions/departments
- Flipcharts
- Pens
- Markers
- Tape
- Moderation Cards/Post It Notes
- Projector (if you decide to prepare ppt. to support your inputs)
- Activity number 3 has specific flipcharts:
  - One with a heart
  - One with the title "Community agreement"
- Activity number 5 needs specific materials:
  - Handout "guiding questions for self reflection"
  - Flipchart with the title: self-accountability
- Activity number 7 needs handouts (collages by <https://www.intelligentmischief.com/> of your selection)
- Activity number 9 needs a flipchart titled "Community Accountability"
- Activity number 10 needs 3 flipcharts:





- Self-Accountability
- Mutual Accountability
- Community Accountability
- Activity number 12 needs an evaluation form (to be prepared according to the preferred online or offline tool).

## TIPS FOR TRAINERS

For building the standardised evaluation, you can have a look at other modules that also include examples for aspects that could be included.

This module is meant to be quite long so a good sense of the group would be very helpful and make sure that everybody is on board and focused, or propose breaks accordingly.

## FURTHER READINGS

- Russo Anne (2013). 10 Strategies for Cultivating Community Accountability. Transform Harm  
[https://transformharm.org/ca\\_resource/10-strategies-for-cultivating-community-accountability/](https://transformharm.org/ca_resource/10-strategies-for-cultivating-community-accountability/) [02.06.24]
- Anderson Piper (2021). Building a Culture of Accountability. Stanford Social Innovation Review: [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/building\\_a\\_culture\\_of\\_accountability](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/building_a_culture_of_accountability) [02.06.24]
- How to Build a Culture of Accountability to Promote Racial Equity in Your Organization  
[https://ssir.org/articles/entry/building\\_a\\_culture\\_of\\_accountability?&\\_ga=2.187675432.1614745572.1717387734-818431506.1717387734#](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/building_a_culture_of_accountability?&_ga=2.187675432.1614745572.1717387734-818431506.1717387734#)
- Resisting Burnout | Vikki Reynolds PhD RCC  
<https://vikkireynolds.ca/resisting-burnout/>
- Community Accountability Factsheet | TransformHarm.org  
[https://transformharm.org/ca\\_resource/community-accountability-factsheet/](https://transformharm.org/ca_resource/community-accountability-factsheet/)



