Cheat Sheet

Establishing Group Norms

NCEAS

WHY IT MATTERS

Even if participants are experienced in collaboration, they've never worked in this group before. Taking time to set shared expectations at the start creates a respectful, inclusive, and productive space for everyone—especially in diverse, interdisciplinary teams.

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

Start Early

Set aside time in your **first meeting** to co-create or review group norms and ensure everyone is present for the conversation

Involve Everyone

Ask participants to suggest expectations that matter to them or offer a list of suggested ground rules & invite additions or edits

Keep Norms Visible

Include the group norms in:
- Agendas
- Shared notes
- Meeting slides or boards

Revisit Norms When Needed

Set the standard that group norms are editable if the group's needs or dynamics shift

Pro Tip: Consider hybrid and remote participants too!

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Sample Group Norms to Consider

- Articulate hidden assumptions – *Don't assume shared understanding*
- Listen to understand, speak to be understood – *Your intention should be to genuinely understand on another, not to get your way*
- Assume arguments are in good faith
- Take space / Make space – *Balance your participation*
- Be concise, lead with the headline – *Share your main point up front*
- Acknowledge contributions – *Credit ideas when you amplify or build on them*
- Stay open, curious, and committed to learning – *Especially across disciplines*
- Bring humor – *Lightness helps creativity and connection*
- Go with the flow – *Flexibility helps when uncertainty arises*
- Move at the speed of trust – *Respect that trust takes time*
- Choose to be present – *Minimize distractions; agree on how to handle them*
- Start and end on time – *Honor people's time and commitments*

Suggested Language to Use

"To help make this a productive and respectful space for everyone, we're going to take a few minutes to set or review our group norms. These will guide how we work together and help us collaborate across disciplines." …✎

Helpful Resources

A list of ground rules for effective meetings