

Developing Group Norms

1. All members of the group must be present when working on the norms. IF they are not, postpone the session.
2. Ask each member to think of the *worst* team he or she has served on. Any group counts — a work team, a volunteer group, a sports team — as long as the members were dependent on each other to produce results. Have each team member spend 2 minutes writing down what made that experience so terrible. Direct them to be as specific as possible about their reasons.
3. Ask team members to share their experiences with the whole group.
4. Ask each member to think of their *best* team experience. As with the negative experience, each team member should spend 2 minutes writing down what made the experience so good. As before, encourage team members to share their experiences with the whole team.
5. With these comments in mind, discuss as a group what makes for a good team experience and what makes for a bad one.
6. Ask team members to suggest behaviors and team norms that would contribute to the current team's success. Pay attention to the most relevant issues or actions that could affect the team's biggest challenges. Be sure to keep track of suggestions on a screen or large sheet of paper that all team members can view. A form template (see below) can be helpful to guide the process.
7. Discuss the suggestions as a group and decide as a group which ones the team can support and adhere to as a group.
8. Discuss how to respond to a team member who doesn't follow the norms. What is the mechanism for dealing with this situation? Ideally, the team members will take ownership of team norms, calling out inconsistencies and violations rather than expecting the team leader to police the process.
9. Transfer the team's list of "must-do" behaviors into a document so all team members have access to it. Your team may choose to post the list of team norms electronically or in its regular meeting room for quick reference.
10. Evaluate, at least monthly, whether the group is following the norms. Do any need to be modified? Do we need to add any? Remove any?

Group Norms Template

When establishing Norms, consider:	Proposed Norm:
<p>TIME:</p> <p>When do we meet?</p> <p>Will we set a beginning and ending time?</p> <p>Will we start and end on time?</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>LISTENING:</p> <p>How will we encourage listening?</p> <p>How will we discourage interrupting?</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>CONFIDENTIALITY:</p> <p>Will our meetings be open?</p> <p>Will what we say be held in confidence?</p> <p>What can be said after the meeting?</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>DECISION MAKING:</p> <p>How will we make decisions?</p> <p>Are we an advisory group or a decision-making body?</p> <p>Will we reach decisions by consensus?</p> <p>How will we deal with conflict?</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>PARTICIPATION:</p> <p>How will we encourage everyone's participation?</p> <p>Will we have an attendance policy?</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>EXPECTATIONS:</p> <p>What do we expect from members?</p> <p>Are there requirements for participation?</p>	<p>_____</p>

Sample Norms:

- *The group will develop a real-time agenda at the start of the meeting with all members contributing to the topics and order of discussion.
- *All members participate in the conversation. Your voice is important to the group.
- *Treat each other with dignity and respect.
- *Be transparent: avoid hidden agendas.
- *Be genuine with each other about ideas, challenges, and feelings.
- *Trust each other. Have confidence that what is discussed will be kept in confidence,
- *Listen first to understand, and don't be dismissive of the input received when you listen,
- *Don't be defensive,
- *It's okay to not know the right answer and to admit it. The team can find the answer.
- *If you commit to doing something—do it.
- *Come prepared for your meetings.