

# Setting Norms for Collaborative Work

Norms are ways of working together that help groups be more thoughtful and productive. They fall into two categories: procedural and interpersonal. Once norms have been established, it is important that the entire group, not just the facilitator, takes responsibility for making sure that the norms are respected, and for redirecting the group when they are not. Norms can change and evolve as the group develops and matures.

## Overview:

Areas to consider when setting norms:

- Logistics: meeting time, place, duration, and frequency
- Timeliness: start time, finish time, lateness, and attendance
- Courtesy: listening, interruptions, equal participation, dealing with disagreements, respect, empathy, and sharing the workload
- Decision-making Process: How will we make decisions? Reach agreements? How will we show agreement?
- Workload Assignment: How will work be assigned? How will conflicts with existing workloads be settled?
- Setting Priorities: How will we discharge responsibility? How will conflicts with existing workloads be settled?
- Enforcement of Norms: How will we make sure the norms are followed?

## Participants:

The Setting Norms activity works for teams of 3-5 people.

## Time Commitment:

Depending on the size of the group, this activity will take about 25minutes.

Directions:

1. Pass out four to six post-it notes to each team member.
2. Each person writes a norm, a statement about how they want the group to work together, on the post-its.
3. The team shares its individual notes and divides them into the two categories – procedural norms and interpersonal norms.
4. Within each category, group the suggestions that are similar. (For example, *take turns speaking* and *make sure everyone speaks* should be grouped together.)
5. Give a name to the norm for each group. (For the example above, the norm could be “Make sure everyone is heard.”)
6. The group discusses the norms that have been suggested and checks to see whether or not they are in agreement. The group should reach consensus on the ones it accepts.

HINTS

- The team will work with greater commitment if they themselves generate their norms.
- Post the norms during each meeting.