# Setting and Using Norms with APGs

Group norms are a set of agreements about how members will work with each other and how the group will work overall. These agreed-upon behaviors help communicate what is accepted and help develop an inclusive, welcoming environment where group members feel safe to share information, challenge one another, and hold each other accountable. It's important for group Facilitators to:

- Invite group members to establish or add to the group norms regularly;
- Ensure that the group norms are communicated and posted, and that members agree to the norms at the start of each group meeting;
- Remind group members of the norms and problem solve when the norms are not being followed.
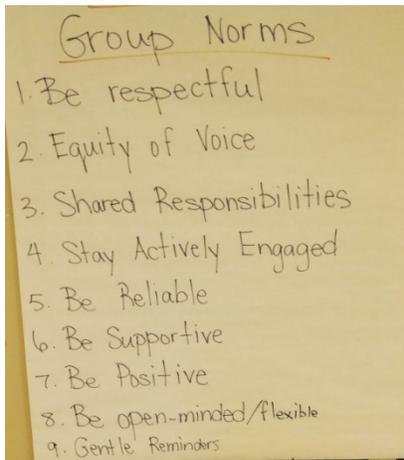
Facilitators can help the group develop norms by facilitating a discussion about what helps members feel safe, included, and work effectively together. The Facilitator can explain that effective groups generally have a set of norms that help communicate how they interact with one another, while creating an environment that feels welcoming and safe to share information, opinions, and ideas, as well as hold each other accountable.

- Provide examples of norms by posting a few suggestions, stating that we should try to frame norms positively, such as HOW TO BEHAVE, rather than HOW NOT TO BEHAVE.

- Recommend to the group that it establish a set of norms. Some ideas include:

   To ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to contribute:

   1) One person speaks at a time
   2) Listen to understand

3) Introduce ourselves using our gender pronouns to challenge assumptions about gender identity and foster inclusion, etc.

- If participants are reluctant to develop norms, or if some group members are much more vocal than others, another strategy is to give two to three index cards and the same kind of writing tool to each person in the group. Ask each person to reflect on and record norms they consider ideal behaviors for a group. Ask them to write one idea on each of their cards (Time: <5 minutes). The Facilitator should collect and shuffle all of the cards together. Every effort should be made to provide anonymity for individuals. Turn cards face up and read each card aloud. Allow time for the group members to discuss ideas and decide whether to adopt each as a norm, writing agreed upon norms on flip chart paper, a white board, or a shared screen. Review the proposed norms with the group. Determine whether the group can support the norms before the group adopts them.

- Post the norms in an accessible location for all future meetings. They can be written on flip chart paper, a white board or smart board, or listed on a printed meeting agenda for all to see.

- It is crucial that Facilitators enforce the norms throughout activities. If one or more people are not following the norms after agreeing to the norms initially, the Facilitator should pause, perhaps even making a time out hand gesture, and say, "I'd like to pause to review the norms we all agreed to earlier in the day (year, week…)." Proceed to review the norms, paying particular attention to the norm that is being broken WITHOUT singling out the norm breaker. Ask once more if everyone can agree to the norms, and then quickly proceed with the agenda. If the norm breaker is still struggling to adhere to the norm, individually, quietly, and privately work with them around the problem. For example, if the norm is "Stay strengths-based" and this individual is being particularly negative, you may ask them how they can phrase what they are saying positively or ask them privately if there is something bothering them that they need to discuss before proceeding.