Team Norms

Norms that arise naturally generally do not enhance team effectiveness. Members assume their own code of conduct triggering a downward spiral of effectiveness to the lowest-common denominator. Norms are shared expectations about how to work together. Norms can be modified only with a majority vote. We need team norms.

Our Culture

1. We are encouraged to develop personal relationships to enhance trust and open communication.
2. We treat each other with respect.
3. We will avoid being defensive and give feedback in a constructive manner.
4. We emphasize open and honest communication - avoid hidden agendas.
5. We de-personalize discussion of issues - no attacks on people.
6. We strive to recognize and celebrate individual and team efforts and accomplishments.
7. As team members, we will pitch in to help where necessary to help solve problems or catch up on behind-schedule work.
8. We strive to avoid territoriality; think instead of the overall good of the cause we are working for.
9. It's okay to not know the right answer, and to admit it. We can find the answer together.
10. A mishap may occur when a volunteer is leading a project. With thoughtful decision-making, he or she should persevere, and has a right to expect not to be criticized unfairly.
11. We practice and experience humility - each of us may not have all the answers.
12. It is okay to be the messenger with bad news. Expect a problem-solving approach, not recrimination.

Our Communication Style

1. One person talks at a time; we do not interrupt others (also a Robert’s Law).
2. Participants speak when recognized by the presiding officer or when briefly and directly answering a question put to them by whoever does have the floor.
3. We strive to say more with fewer words, focusing more on facts, not opinions. We save our opinions for voting.
4. We keep side conversations to a minimum or take them out of the room.
5. We avoid using acronyms- we don't all remember what they stand for!
6. We will listen, be non-judgmental and keep an open mind on issues until it is time to decide. We encourage and support open and honest debate.
7. When we pose an issue or a problem, we will also try to present a solution.
8. We never engage in personal attacks.
9. We each listen first to understand, as opposed to simply waiting for our turn to talk.

Our Meeting Management

1. Meeting Norms list will be available and visible to all attendees.
2. Participants will attend the meetings prepared, having already read the distributed materials and ready to make informed comments and decisions. Meeting time should not be wasted bringing an unprepared attendee up to speed. An unprepared attendee should refrain from making comments on a resolution that he/she did not read.
3. In-meeting presentation of non-actionable information will be kept at a minimum. Non-actionable, informative reports should be made available in a printable document that can be read by attendees at their leisure, preferably not while the meeting is taking place. Making these reports available electronically would additionally save paper.
4. Face-to-face meetings will be devoted to actionable items: Strategizing, problem-solving, prioritizing, planning, and decision-making.
5. Submissions and proposed resolutions will follow the standard format as set by the Resolution Template (available from Chapter staff).
6. Reports and proposed resolutions:
   a. Reports and resolutions should be submitted to ExCom Chair 10 days prior to the meeting.
   b. Those giving reports to the Conservation Chair should submit them to him or her 15 days prior to the meeting.
   c. The Chair will set the proposed agenda and make reports and proposed resolutions public 7 days prior to the meeting.
   d. The Chair may, in his or her discretion, circulate an amended proposed agenda to accommodate late-submitted items.
   e. Adoption of the agenda is up to the ExCom, which will tend to give preference to items submitted in timely fashion.
7. Meetings will start on time.
8. No one agenda item should consume an undue amount of time. Each agenda item may include a target time estimate. A timekeeper appointed by the presiding officer will advise the body when the target has been reached. Reaching the target time does not end the debate, but the timekeeper's announcement should remind members to try to conclude the matter.
9. Motions- An ExCom member who is unsure of the wording he/she wants in a motion should explain the issue and seek the help of the body in addressing it, rather than trying to compose a motion on the fly
10. Communication during meeting:
   a. A stack/queue will be maintained
   b. Distinguish between hot and cold comments (on point vs. new topics)
   c. Strive to limit comments to 3 minutes.
   d. Absent members may participate by telephone*
11. Chapter Chair is encouraged to use a gavel to maintain order**

Accountability

1. At the conclusion of each agenda item, we will identify every action item to be
followed up, and will assign responsibility for doing so.

2. We will support those who have volunteered to take responsibility for the task they volunteered for.

3. We will designate members to follow-up and check in with volunteers assigned responsibilities to measure progress.

Team Norm Notes

The information in this section may be useful in understanding some of what is or isn’t written in the Team Norms documents. This section is not part of the Team Norms.

* Telephone Usage by Absent Members
Continued use of the telephone by absent members is recommended, primarily because of the compelling need to create a quorum—especially to get a meeting started on time. Yet, there is much to say for ridding ourselves of the telephone: it is a nuisance to set up, users often cannot hear the discussion clearly, and members may too easily decide just to ““attend”" by phone rather than make the effort to attend in person.

** Gavel Usage
Experience in the Atlantic Chapter has shown that a purpose made gavel is more effective in maintaining order than the rapping of a soda can or knuckles, or shouts from the Chair. A tap tap tap of the gavel, rising in volume, will silence a person who is disturbing order.

Parliamentary Procedure (Robert’s Laws)
There is no conflict between working in a cooperative way and following parliamentary procedure. The procedures approved by Robert's Rules of Order are based on decades of experience in how to achieve fairness and efficiency in formal business meetings. Even when the rules constrain us in some ways, they are not framed arbitrarily. For example, debate cannot be set to end at a particular time because some member might still be awaiting his or her turn to speak.