Seven Norms of Collaboration

Pausing
Pausing before responding or asking a question allows time for thinking and enhances dialogue, discussion and decision-making. It provides important "think time."

Paraphrasing
Using a paraphrase starter that is comfortable for you: "So..." or "What you're suggesting is...", or "You're thinking..." and following the starter with a paraphrase assists members of the group to hear and understand each other as they formulate decisions. A paraphrase reflects content back to the speaker for further consideration. It also acknowledges the speaker and your intention to understand him/her more fully.

Probing for specificity
Using gentle open-ended probes or inquiries such as "Please say more..." or "I'm curious about..." or "I'd like to hear more about..." or "Then, are you saying…?" increases the clarity and precision of the group's thinking.

Putting ideas on the table
Ideas are the heart of a meaningful dialogue. Label the intention of your comments. For example, you might say, "Here is one idea..." or, "One thought I have is..." or, "Here is a possible approach..." Sometimes ideas need to be reconsidered for the moment and can simply be removed from "the table" until some future time.

Paying attention to self and others
Meaningful dialogue is facilitated when each group member is conscious of self and of others and is aware of not only what she/he is saying, but how it is said and how others are responding. This includes paying attention to various learning styles when facilitating and participating in group meetings. Responding to others in their own language forms is one manifestation of this norm.

Presuming positive intentions
Assuming that other's intentions are positive promotes and facilitates meaningful dialogue. Using positive presuppositions in your speech is one manifestation of this norm.

Pursuing a balance between advocacy and inquiry
Spending equal amounts of time and energy advocating for one's own ideas and inquiring into the ideas of others.

Advocacy: Make your thinking and reasoning visible.
Inquiry: Ask others to make their thinking visible.