Facilitator guidelines for Blue Sky Group meetings

Initial Meeting

1. Welcome everyone
2. Explain the purpose of the Blue Sky Groups
   - Encourage new avenues of interdisciplinary research by bringing investigators from different disciplines together (who ordinarily might not interact)
     i. invitations are based on perceived common theme of interest
     ii. promote collaborations
3. Briefly announce the general topic of discussion. Ask each participant to introduce themselves and briefly explain their interest in the topic.
4. Encourage everyone to think broadly and participate in the discussion—no idea is a bad idea in these groups.
5. Begin the discussion with a few general questions. Keep in mind that the topic is likely to evolve, and common interests identified by the group may be quite different from the initial discussion topic.
6. As the discussion develops, try to prevent people from dominating the discussion or not participating. This may involve subtly shifting the topic of conversation or asking quiet people to comment.
7. During the discussion, keep track of major ideas or themes that could be expanded in a follow-up meeting.
8. The facilitator serves as timekeeper. Most sessions are scheduled for 90 minutes. About 10 minutes before the end of the session, try to summarize the major themes of the discussion. Probe for a consensus topic and format for follow-up meeting in ~2 months. Formats can include another discussion session with more focused topic, a half-day series of informational talks, or any other idea the group comes up with.
9. Ask each participant if they want to continue being a part of the discussion. Identify others who might be interested in joining the group.
10. Let Ashley Freeman in the DOM Office of Research know the outcome so that she can keep track of tangible outcomes and facilitate scheduling the follow-up meetings. We would appreciate a short (1/2 page) bulleted summary that includes 1) attendees; 2) topics identified for follow-up, and 3) next steps defined by the group.
11. Identify leader of future discussions. This person will report back to Ashley Freeman.