SPROUT

BREAK NEW GROUND

SPROUT ECOSYSTEM CODE OF CONDUCT

2026

New Zealand's Leading Startup Accelerator and Early Stage Investor in the Agrifood Value Chain

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PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

The Sprout Ecosystem Code of Conduct sets the standards and expectations of behaviour for all members of the Sprout community who engage in Sprout-related activities. By setting clear standards for behaviour, this Code of Conduct aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- An environment that is safe, respectful and professional for everyone.
- Sprout community members understand and recognise the expected behaviours.
- Provide guidance for addressing concerns if inappropriate behaviour occurs.

At the core of this Code of Conduct are our Sprout values. Everyone within the Sprout Ecosystem has a role to play with ensuring that their behaviour and the experience of others aligns with our Sprout values.

By engaging in the Sprout community, you are expected to understand and embrace our Code of Conduct in all your interactions.



MAKE DREAMS REAL



ONE TEAM



RELATIONSHIPS COME FIRST



ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

MAKE DREAMS REAL

We are in the business of making the impossible, possible.

What people experience in the Sprout ecosystem:

- We do the mahi with our partners, cohort, alumni and portfolio startups to help turn their dreams into into reality.
- We are tenacious and commit to delivering successful outcomes for our startups. We don't stop until the job is done.
- We always choose what's right over what's easy in everything that we do - the easy path is not an option.
- We make things happen and we don't give up.
- Our tapuwae leave a lifelong, positive impact on the future of our startups - we lead and show them the way.



Expected behaviours & attitudes:

1. Persevere when faced with challenges.
2. Look for opportunities when barriers or hurdles are presented.
3. Be self-motivated and lead by example.
4. Work together to achieve desired outcomes.
5. Be willing and ready to adapt and pivot.
6. Embrace an optimistic mindset.

ONE TEAM

The journey is best when it's shared.

What people experience in the Sprout ecosystem:

- We feel proud of our actions and achievements as a team in the ecosystem.
- We take time to celebrate success and acknowledge the wins of our team.
- We always connect our whole team including our companies, mentors and partners, as well as others in our ecosystem.
- The notion of whānau is felt widely by our ecosystem - we are bound together to fulfill a common purpose.
- We are supportive of each other, and provide encouragement and help to others whenever it's needed.
- We are inclusive and welcome everyone with open arms. We understand each other, and understand that our differences are our strength.
- We execute on our commitments as a team and as individuals, and we hold ourselves and each other to account.
- Our language is humble, but we are loud with promoting our awesomeness.



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Expected behaviours & attitudes:

1. Contribute equally during conversations, allowing others to contribute equally also.
2. Encourage everyone to share openly without the fear of being judged or shut down.
3. Understand and respect different perspectives and opinions from others.
4. Check in and offer assistance when someone experiences stress or hardship.
5. Proactively share positive and constructive feedback to others.
6. Actively listen to and understand the needs of others.

RELATIONSHIPS COME FIRST

Quality connections are at the heart of everything we do.

What people experience in the Sprout ecosystem:

- We seek to grow and nurture genuine, meaningful relationships.
- We follow through on our commitments to others and don't let them down.
- We speak with honesty, and are truthful and sincere with our messages. We refuse to deceive in any way.
- We act with integrity, living by strong moral principles at all times.
- We raise concerns and we don't turn a blind eye or put our heads in the sand.
- We are transparent and forthcoming with sharing information with others.
- We communicate with compassion, kindness and respect.
- Our behaviour is always professional and appropriate, and demonstrates respect and courtesy towards others.



Expected behaviours & attitudes:

1. Communicate messages clearly, remembering that 'clear is kind'.
2. Be open to receiving feedback and advice, showing consideration of insights offered.
3. Address problems proactively and seek positive solutions and outcomes.
4. Declare conflicts of interest.
5. Drive personal self-awareness and self-reflection.
6. Accept responsibility for personal decisions and associated outcomes.

ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

We see not what is, but what can be.

What people experience in the Sprout ecosystem:

- We initiate and foster creativity.
- We look for potential and possibilities, and always keep an open mind. Our open-mindedness means that we don't place limits on what can be achieved.
- Our curiosity drives us to ask questions that others don't think to ask, and leads to our deeper understanding.
- We embrace and nurture vulnerability. Generating and sharing ideas is not for the faint hearted. We're bold and brave with our ideas and our attitude.
- We believe in people with ideas and we don't overlook the ideas of others.



Expected behaviours & attitudes:

1. Adopt a problem-solving mindset to find new solutions.
2. Generate new ideas and refuse to accept the status quo.
3. Be comfortable with navigating ambiguity.
4. Identify and challenge assumptions to expand thinking.
5. Maintain an inquisitive and explorative mindset.
6. Continuously ask questions, even if the questions are tough.

WELLBEING

Introduction

The Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand defines wellbeing as feeling good and doing well, most of the time. It means having the tools, support and environments needed to be who are we and to build and sustain lives worth living.

Taking care of wellbeing means that people are more likely to experience positive mental health outcomes, which boosts physical health, creates resilience, and helps support feelings of happiness, confidence and security.

It is essential that the wellbeing of everyone in the Sprout Ecosystem is promoted and protected. If you are concerned about your wellbeing or the wellbeing of another member of the Sprout community, please don't hesitate to reach out to Kylah Morrison, Head of Programmes and Partnerships at Sprout or any other member of the Sprout team.

Resources for Founders

As a founder of a startup venture, if you feel that you're experiencing negative mental health then the first thing that's important to remember is that you are not alone. A report found 87% of founders believe that being a startup founder can have a negative impact on their mental health. You can read the full report here: Kiwi Founders' Wellbeing: Experiences and needs.

1. Watch this founder wellness video for a brief overview of the three key ways to maintain wellness: exercise, sleep and nutrition.
2. MBIE provides a free counselling service to founders based in New Zealand, which provides three free counselling sessions. To learn more about or use this service, please visit the Founder Wellbeing page on MBIE's website.
3. Watch this webinar with Dr Michael Freeman to learn how to improve entrepreneur mental health.

RAISING CONCERNS

If you have experienced or witnessed behaviour that concerns you within the Sprout community then please don't hesitate to share your concerns with someone from the Sprout team. The key contacts for raising concerns are:

- Sandhya Sriram, CEO
- Kylah Morrison, Head of Programmes and Partnerships
- Marcel van den Assum, Sprout Board Chair

Written Submission for Concerns or Complaints

If you would prefer to write down your concerns, rather than speaking directly to the Sprout team, then please submit your concerns or a complaint via this form here.

The link above provides you with the opportunity to share your concerns to Sprout in written form and you can choose to remain anonymous. The form includes a range of questions to help you with explaining your experience, but it's not essential to complete all the questions before submitting your concerns. So please ignore any question in the form that may not be relevant to your situation.

Additional Support for Founders

Founders have access to a free and confidential service offered by MBIE to support with navigating potentially harmful situations. This independent service allows founders the option to schedule a chat with Aspen Restorative Consulting, who provides confidential, independent advice and an informal resolution service.

Founders can learn more about and access this service on the Founder Wellbeing page on MBIE's website.

ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

At Sprout we have a zero tolerance policy for behaviours and attitudes that don't align with our values. Listed below are examples of unacceptable behaviours and attitudes as they relate to our values, which build upon the inappropriate behaviours defined under Key Definitions.

MAKE DREAMS REAL:

- Allowing fear or negative beliefs to prevent progress.
- Being inattentive to the mission at hand.
- Not looking for or missing opportunities.
- Excluding people who can fast-track progress.
- Being deterred by uncertainty and staying in your comfort zone.
- Allowing challenges or hurdles to foster negativity.

ONE TEAM:

- Reacting negatively when someone shares a view or opinion that opposes your own.
- Preventing others from contributing openly and freely to conversations.
- Treating anyone negatively or unfairly.
- Allowing unconscious bias to influence thoughts.
- Excluding others, or ignoring or discarding their perspectives.
- Shaming others about their differences or mistakes.

RELATIONSHIPS COME FIRST:

- Jeopardising relationships by using passive-aggressive behaviour.
- Dwelling on problems or spreading complaints.
- Ignoring problems or allowing problems to grow larger.
- Blaming others for the outcomes of personal mistakes and misjudgments.
- Staying silent after witnessing or experiencing inappropriate behaviour.
- Excluding relevant people and parties from information or discussions.

ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT:

- Being closed-minded to exploring possibilities.
- Sticking to the status quo and not pushing the boundaries.
- Not considering different ideas or shutting down the ideas of others.
- Avoiding asking questions to remain comfortable.
- Unreceptive to and resisting new ideas, perspectives or information.
- Being reluctant to try or create new things.

KEY DEFINITIONS

BULLYING:

Repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or a group of people that can cause physical or psychological harm. Bullying can be physical, verbal, psychological or social. This may include victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening behaviours.

DIVERSITY:

The practice of including a range of human differences, including but not limited to age, caring responsibilities, cultural identity, physical and cognitive ability, gender, gender expression/identity, race, ethnicity, education, family/relationship status, sexual orientation, beliefs (religious, spiritual, political), values, socio-economic backgrounds, language, personality, ways of thinking, and work/life experience.

HARASSMENT:

Unwanted and unwarranted behaviour that a person finds offensive, intimidating or humiliating and is repeated, or significant enough as a single incident, to have a detrimental effect on someone's dignity, safety and wellbeing. This includes sexual and racial harassment, where the motivation for harassment behaviour has a sexual or racial nature.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR:

Behaviour that does not align with the Sprout Ecosystem Code of Conduct, and includes bullying, harassment, passive-aggressive, dishonest or unethical behaviour.

INCLUSION:

The practice of providing an environment and culture where:

- All human differences are accepted, valued, respected, and leveraged.
- Everyone has the opportunity to learn, develop, contribute and achieve their best work.
- There is equal access to opportunities and resources for all people, including those who might otherwise be excluded, marginalized, or represent minority groups.

KEY DEFINITIONS

PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR:

Passive-aggressive behaviour occurs when someone expresses negative emotions indirectly rather than openly, and includes:

- Making jokes that are indirectly intended to offend others.
- Communicating with an underlying tone of hostility or resentment.
- Mumbling under your breath when frustrated, annoyed or unimpressed.
- Making dismissive or aggressive facial expressions.
- Being deliberately inefficient.

SPROUT ECOSYSTEM:

All individuals that engage in Sprout's activities, including the Sprout team, mentors, advisors, partners, investors, supporters and founders (including cohort, alumni and portfolio).

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS:

The tendency to form an opinion or conclusion have a preference towards a person or thing over another without being consciously aware of that preference. It happens automatically and leads to quick a judgement or assessment of people and situations without someone being consciously aware that personal experiences are influencing their opinion.

Policy Review Cycle

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