Personal Reflection:

- **On fostering team creativity:**
  By nature, I consider myself creative with limitations. That has never stopped me from sharing my ideas especially during the GEE. This being said, I have provided support for my team members who creatively looked for solutions to problems we faced. One example is the following: we were in the last week of the GEE. The team felt that our niche market was already too competitive. As a result, we wanted to change the whole idea. Considering cultural differences within my team members, I expected some of them wouldn’t share their ideas. I contacted them via personal texts to hear their ideas. By personally brainstorming with them, I gathered all the opinions. This resulted in me discussing it with my co-leader. The team eventually decided to stick to our current idea.

  What can I improve?
  - Critically looking into other people’s ideas instead of accepting them as an outstanding and creative solutions.
  - Being able to suggest constructive feedback for creative ideas when necessary.

- **On fostering team productivity:**
  In contrast to my creativity skills, I consider myself a highly hard-working individual. This ensures that I’m always productive. I converted this during the GEE by taking the initiative and reaching out to my team-members since my co-leader sent us an email, but it didn’t leave his outbox. Also, I have volunteered to create meeting agenda’s and assembling research input from the team. These actions have resulted in the team leader requesting from me to be his co-leader. What I couldn’t fully improve regarding my communication skills was conveying my message easily. My aim was to make my message clear that a five-year-old can understand it. Instead, I was framing my messages in a way that, I think, has conveyed that I was talking to a five-year-old.

  What can I improve?
  - Conveying my message in a way that a five-year-old can understand me and NOT as if I am talking to a five-year-old.
  - Not shying away from pointing out to a team member where improvement is needed, as long as it is in a kind constructive manner that takes cultural differences into account.

- **On helping others succeed while fostering team unity:**
  I often thought that my listening skills were average. What my GEE team made me realise is that I show an enormous interest in the story of the other person. This has been exemplified by multiple times when my team members reached out to me to share their perspective on a task they were working on. During the last week, one of my team-members wanted to report their findings and not attend the general meeting due to personal circumstances. I thanked him for being responsible. My team-member then told me that I have always been a supportive good listener to their ideas and that they usually feel encouraged when they worked with me.
On the other hand, and as a team, we decided to work in two sub-groups for the first week due to the time difference. This, I felt, has resulted in half of the team not knowing the other half. I talked about this with my co-leader and tried to fix this issue. We decided to let the whole team meet on a regularly basis. To fix the distance created by that decision, I tried to lighten the mode in the team by sharing my interest in music or TikTok. This has resulted in the team sharing their personal sides as well.

What can I improve?
- Sharing appreciation for good work should be the norm and not the exception. In the example above, I only thanked my team member when he asked to skip the meeting. I should have done it regardless of him asking for that.

GEE Insights:
Cultural differences have always intrigued my curiosity. Growing up, I lived in different countries which exposed me to different lifestyles, attitudes, and perspectives. In the beginning of the GEE, I decided to use those experiences to learn how to apply them in a virtual team during the GEE. But this was not an easy task.

In the beginning of the experience, my head was full of thought like “three difficult weeks of online hours... filled with different people... every single one of them sees the world differently...”. Still, I had a clear view that I will definitely have a plan at the end of the experience, whether the whole team cooperates or not. These pre-assumptions WERE indeed my first mistake. What I overlooked was that cultural differences don’t negate productivity. It ONLY enforces it.

In the case of my group, and from my own point of view, I thought that the cross-cultural communication was outstandingly productive. What hindered at times, though, was the different English accents in the group. I had once asked a team member to speak very slowly because I couldn’t understand them. Though that the team member didn’t state it clearly, it led to the team member feeling offended. This resulted in the team member not attending the meetings or participating effectively.

After clearly apologising for my mistake, I tried different ways of reaching out to that team member via personal texts and personal video calls. Though, and to my thinking, the whole issue wasn’t resolved, I didn’t know how to handle it.