How to work with other teams (mainly for External Coordinators)

Why the External Coordinator role matters

The **External Coordinator (EC)** is crucial for integrating the work of your team with the wider movement. By bridging your team and external circles, you ensure that your team aligns with broader strategic goals and shares its insights, resources, and tensions with other circles. This alignment strengthens collective action, improves coordination, and promotes a regenerative culture across the movement.

Effective external coordination helps:

- Synchronise efforts between your team and the wider movement.
- Support distributed decision-making by making sure your team's input is part of the movement's overall strategy.
- Manage conflicts and tensions across teams, contributing to the wellbeing and resilience of the movement.

Overview of the role

The **External Coordinator** operates within the parameters of their team's mandate to keep open lines of communication between their team and the broader movement. Specifically, the role entails:

- Bringing relevant updates, requests, and decisions from broader circles to your team.
- Communicating your team's progress, feedback, and needs back to the wider movement.

- Acting as a liaison to help other teams understand your team's mandate and priorities, which helps prevent conflict and supports mutual accountability.

While the EC does not have "power over" others, they play a pivotal role in helping resolve tensions between teams and aligning the circle's work with movement-wide priorities.

EC Skills

Success in the EC role relies on several key skills:

- **Clear Communication**: share information succinctly and accurately across circles and project groups to maintain alignment and clarity.
- **Conflict Resolution**: identify and help resolve conflicts arising from overlapping responsibilities or goals. For tensions between teams, you may bring issues to broader circles or work directly with other ECs to find solutions.
- **Understanding Mandates**: grasp the boundaries of your mandate in relation to others' mandates. Knowing how mandates work can help you guide discussions on responsibilities and authority, and how decisions affect other roles or circles.

Tips for keeping on top of your role

- **Document Key Points**: Keep a live list of all cross-team interactions, requests, and tensions that need follow-up. Organise items by:
  - **Matters within your circle's mandate** for internal resolution.
  - **Inter-circle matters** requiring consultation with other ECs.
  - **Broader circle issues** that may require raising at the Hive or a larger circle meeting.
- **Set Clear Boundaries**: Align all projects and tasks with existing mandates. For new or evolving tasks, clarify accountabilities and consult with mandate holders when necessary.

Cross-circle projects and project groups

For **inter-circle** and **broader circle** issues, it may sometimes be helpful to set up a Project Group to address the issue. It's important to understand the differences between creating a Project Group — which requires no changes to the distribution of power and authority (through mandates) — and a Working Group (or Circle) — which needs a mandate:

- **Project Groups**: Often cross-team and include members from multiple circles, allowing expertise from each role to contribute. Members bring the authority of their individual mandates to the project (e.g. Action Design or Media), making their project role an extension of their circle mandate. Project groups are mostly short-term, and focus on specific goals, disbanding when the project completes.
- **Working Groups**: Are formed within a team and carry a specific mandate given by the broader circle. They generally have an indefinite lifespan, operating until the team decides they're no longer needed. Working Groups delegate part of the broader circle's work to a specialist team, and do not cross circle boundaries.

Proposing a Project: Proposing a project may not require a formal process. However, each project group should plan in a way that respects the group members' existing mandates. Considerations for project setup include defining objectives, aligning activities with roles based on mandates, coordination mechanisms and communication, and reviewing the project's expected timeline.

Team boundaries and authority through mandates

Mandates as boundaries

A mandate defines the limits of your authority but also provides you with significant autonomy to take initiative within those limits. This balance supports decentralisation while ensuring that all actions align with the movement's demands and values.

Collaborating across mandates

When your work affects another role's mandate, collaborate rather than assume control over how that work is done. For instance, if you want to send an update to a group but it overlaps with someone else's newsletter accountability, consult them first — ideally using the Advice Process. Their feedback may help tailor the communication to the group's needs, ensuring it lands effectively without overloading members with too many updates.

Summary

- **Align activities with wider goals**: Keep your team's work aligned with movement-wide priorities through consistent cross-circle communication.
- **Clarify boundaries through mandates**: Use mandates as a guide for authority and collaboration, supporting autonomy without creating duplication.

- **Organise projects effectively**: Recognise the differences between project and working groups and use each where appropriate to mobilise resources and expertise across teams.
- **Resolve cross-team tensions constructively**: Use your position to manage tensions that may arise between teams, respecting each mandate's authority.
- **Support effective information flow**: Work with other coordinators, facilitators, and the Group Admin to maintain clear, shared records and facilitate smooth team operations.

By following these guidelines, an External Coordinator can support their team's contribution to the movement, align their work with collective goals, and ensure productive cross-team collaborations.