How to write proposals

Proposals enable ideas to move forward if they are "good enough for now, safe enough to try".

Bringing proposals to your team helps it work better — from unblocking a task to reorganising your roles. They introduce agile and creative ways to progress work, bring new ideas and resolve tensions. ("Tension" is a catch-all term that covers issues from mild unease to full-blown conflict.

See also the guidance on sensing and definining tensions.)

Everyone can contribute to the better running of their group or team. If you are sensing a tension in the way your team is operating, or have a new idea or spot an opportunity to do something that is not currently covered properly, write a proposal!

You may not need to go through all of these steps below for every proposal, it depends on how complicated the issue is, or how elaborate the idea is.

Proposals should generally try to include the following:

- A short sentence summarising the proposal at the top.
- A brief list of the background, motivations, tensions addressed, including examples.
- The proposal itself. Make this as clear and simple as you can.
- The implications if it gets adopted, and how it will need to be implemented.
- A list of who you've spoken to in creating the proposal. This may include anyone who will be significantly impacted.
- A clear system for receiving feedback, eg please comment on this document, or send feedback directly to me at...

Use the template at the foot of this page if you find it helpful.

Check in with a few other people

Ask for other people's thoughts and ideas. Consider using the Advice Process. This helps to capture collective wisdom and build a culture of collaboration and joint ownership around proposals.

Redraft the proposal to integrate the advice you receive.

Circulate the proposal

Share to the wider team with enough notice for them to consider it properly before you meet.

Concerns or objections

Contact members of the circle who might object to the proposal, based on their feedback, to see if you can integrate their concerns in advance of the meeting. (This step is optional. It may be easier to process objections in a meeting.)

Bring to a meeting

Ask the Internal Coordinator or meeting facilitator to add your proposal to a meeting agenda. Then you can have your proposal processed using relevant decision-making processes. Depending on the response of the team, you may need to be open to amending your proposal or integrating objections.

Your proposal is adopted!

Be clear about any actions that should follow as part of the implementation of the proposal, and ensure these are recorded for follow up.

Keep sensing tensions

We value reflecting and learning. We adopt proposals that are good enough for now, safe enough to try. We **do not** sweat trying to make every proposal perfect before we try it. So, if experience shows that the proposal can be improved, this counts as a tension: please make another proposal for that improvement.

Proposal Template

Summary

This proposal is for the following change(s) to be made: [keep this short and clear].

Background and motivations

[The history and context that led you to propose this change, including examples. Make clear what role or circle/team is affected and how.]

Tension(s)

[What is (not) happening at the moment that your role or circle needs (not) to happen? State in one sentence if you can.]

Proposal

[How will the change(s) in the summary (above) address the tension.]

Implementation and impact

[How will the proposal be implemented? Which mandates, roles and circles/team will be affected?]

Authority

[Which mandate (belonging to a circle or role) has the authority to decide on this proposal — this checks against overreach and mitigates power.]

Advice taken

[A list of who you've spoken to in creating the proposal, which hopefully will include anyone who will be significantly impacted.]

Feedback

[How others can send feedback, pre- and post-adoption.]
