Key Terms in SOS

The Self-Organising System (SOS) is the decision-making process adopted by Extinction Rebellion (XR). This guide walks you through some key components of SOS that we adopt to further the principles and values of XR.

- Accountability
- Circle
- Domain
- Mandate
- Purpose
- Role
- Sub-circle

Definitions

Circle

A group or unit within the larger XR organisation.

Mandate

The authority given to an individual or a circle, a description of what they are working to achieve, and what others can expect them to do in order to achieve it.

Roles

Within a circle we create roles to share ongoing work among members of the team. This gives them the authority to make decisions to achieve their given goals — which are expressed in their mandate.

Circles in XR

A circle is a self-governing team within XR. The structure helps us focus on priorities, respond to events, and share responsibility across the movement.

- A circle operates to accomplish a set of well-defined goals.

- Goals for the circle are outlined in a mandate that says what it is expected to do or create.
- The circle decides how they work within their area of responsibility.

Circles and sub-circles

- Circles can delegate a specific task to a set of team members forming a sub-circle. Sub-circles are accountable for the work they do. This way, both groups can work independently towards a collective goal.
- Circles must prioritise activity as requested by the broader circle that created them.

Circle members

- Every circle includes three Core Roles crucial for the team's health, communication, and accessibility to the rest of the movement — more on that later, under 'roles'. Outside the three core roles, a circle is free to distribute roles to its members as it needs.

Understanding Mandates:

Mandates in SOS are descriptions of responsibilities given to individuals or teams, outlining what they are working to achieve and what they are accountable for.

- Components of a Mandate
  - Purpose: Clearly state goals or outcomes that the mandate aims to achieve.
  - Accountabilities: a list of activities necessary to fulfill the purpose, using action verbs.
  - Domains: Include if exclusive control over resources like technology or information is required.

Read this step-by-step guidance on How to write mandates

- Distributing Mandates: “We are based on autonomy and decentralisation.”
  - Mandates are distributed among team members to spread power and share responsibility.
- Changing Mandates:
  - Mandates are created and amended in formal circle meetings, using collective decision-making.
  - If mandate holders are not fulfilling their responsibilities, the constitution sets out escalating steps for resolving issues

Roles in SOS:

Sharing the work to achieve XR’s core demands, together.

- Types of Role:

    - Core Roles: Circles **must** include three Core Roles: **Internal Coordinator**, **External Coordinator**, and **Group Admin**. Together they help to support the team, coordinate with other teams, and keep team records accessible. These roles are re-elected at least every six months.
    - All other roles: beyond the three Core Roles, the circle’s team is free to create any other Role to meet its mandate. Teams are all different, but may have some roles in common.
- Creating or Amending Roles:
    - Creating or amending roles should be done collectively in formal meetings as governance decisions.
    - Any team member can call for an election for any team role at any time.
    - The Internal and External Coordinators of a circle must always be appointed by election.
    - When roles don't involve circle-wide power, individuals can be appointed by volunteering.
- Stepping Down:
    - Individuals can step down from a role at any time.
