What are project groups and when are they useful?

Project Groups in the **Self-Organising System (SOS)** are temporary, goal-focused teams that bring together people from multiple circles to work on a specific initiative.

Key Characteristics of a Project in SOS:

- **Short-term focus**: A project is usually created to address a particular need and is dissolved once the goal is met.
- **Cross-team collaboration**: Projects often involve people from multiple circles, unlike working groups, which belong to a single circle.
- **No formal mandate**: While working groups require a **mandate** from a broader circle, projects operate through existing roles and mandates.
- **Coordination considerations**: Setting up a project should involve defining objectives, aligning activities with relevant roles, and ensuring clear communication and coordination

When to form a Project Group

A **project group** should be formed instead of a **circle (or working group)** when the work is **temporary**, **specific**, and **cross-functional**. Here are key scenarios where forming a project group is the best approach:

- **Defined Timeframe**: If the work has a clear end date or is meant to achieve a one-time goal, a project group is preferable. Circles are ongoing and focus on maintaining long-term functions.
- **Cross-Circle Collaboration**: When an initiative requires input from multiple circles, a project group allows for flexible participation without restructuring existing mandates.
- **No Need for a New Mandate**: If the work can be carried out within existing mandates and does not require a formal governance structure, a project group is sufficient. Circles, by contrast, need a **mandate** from a broader circle to define their purpose and responsibilities.
- **Experimental or Trial Initiatives**: If an idea needs testing before becoming an ongoing function, a project group allows for agility and quick adaptation without committing to the formal structure of a circle.
- **Urgent or Fast-Moving Work**: When rapid action is needed, project groups enable quick mobilisation of relevant expertise without waiting for the governance processes required

to establish a new circle.

If a project proves to be essential beyond its initial goal, it can later transition into a **circle** with a formal **mandate** to sustain its work long-term.

Checking your Project has the Right People

Ensuring that a project group has the right participants is essential for its success. Here are key steps to assess whether your project team is well-formed:

- **Match Skills to Needs**: Identify the core tasks required and ensure that the group includes people with the necessary expertise. If gaps exist, seek additional contributors from relevant circles.
- **Clarify Mandates and Roles**: Each participant should understand how their **existing mandate** connects to the project. If someone's role does not naturally align, they may need explicit support from their circle to contribute effectively.
- **Balance Perspectives**: A good project team includes a mix of strategic thinkers, implementers, and communicators to cover all aspects of the work.
- **Check Availability and Commitment**: Confirm that members have enough capacity to contribute meaningfully. If someone is stretched too thin, consider redistributing responsibilities or bringing in additional support.
- **Review Regularly**: As the project progresses, assess together whether the team composition remains effective. If priorities shift, new expertise may be needed, or some members may step back once their contribution is complete.

By periodically reviewing these factors, you can keep your project group agile, well-resourced, and aligned with its objectives.

Organising a Project Team

Once you have the right people involved, structuring the project team effectively is key to smooth collaboration and progress. Here’s how to organise it:

- **Define the Purpose and Scope**: Clearly articulate what the project aims to achieve, how success will be measured, and the expected timeframe for completion.
- **Clarify Roles and Responsibilities**: Assign tasks based on each member’s expertise and mandate, ensuring that everyone knows their contribution and decision-making authority.
- **Establish a Communication Flow**: Decide how the team will stay connected—through regular meetings, shared documents, or messaging platforms—to ensure updates and coordination.

- **Use Existing Structures Where Possible**: Leverage the mandates of existing circles to support the project rather than duplicating efforts. If needed, designate a point person to liaise with relevant circles.
- **Track Progress and Adapt**: Use a simple system (such as task boards, check-ins, or progress reviews) to monitor work, resolve challenges, and adjust as needed.
- **Plan for Project Closure**: Before the work begins, outline what will happen when the project ends—whether the outcome will be handed over to a circle, wrapped up completely, or lead to a new phase.

By maintaining a **clear structure**, **good communication**, and **alignment with existing SOS processes**, the project group can stay focused, effective, and flexible in achieving its goals.
