Healthy Teams: An Overview

Upon taking on a role within XR, you will find yourself joining a team. This can be daunting for some but being a part of a well-functioning team can be incredibly empowering!

What Makes a Good Team?

You already know your answer to this. Take a moment to consider the following:

- When have you felt comfortable/uncomfortable working with others?
    - What stood out to you?
    - What was it that made you feel this way?

- Think about a behaviour that you find difficult to deal with in others:
    - Have you had any past experiences connected to people showing such behaviour?
    - What do you think you can do to better understand such behaviour?

- Think about a behaviour that you exhibit that others may find difficult to deal with.
    - Why might they find it difficult to deal with such behaviour?
    - What can you do to check such behaviour?

- Imagine that you are working with others to create a dream team:
    - What values do you think should help guide the team?
    - What do you want this team to know about you? How will you share this? Keep your idea of a good team in your mind as you look over the following resources - how do they fit into your experience and understanding?

Our Ways of Working

In order for our work to come together in a cohesive way, we use a Self-Organising System. This is essentially a collection of rules around how we organise and work together. We have these shared structures and processes to help us each hold something small and manageable; but collectively we can achieve our bold goals!

Your Place in the Big Picture

You can explore the XRUK structure using the XR UK Organism. By clicking on each circle, you can zoom into that space and see the circles nested within. In this diagram, you can see that **The Hive** is the widest circle within XRUK and so encompasses the widest purpose.

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(**Note:** it is a misunderstanding to say that they hold the most power; their scope is too wide to be able to wield much power over anything in particular.)

> You should be able to find the circle you are working within in this diagram, whether that be a team focusing on arrestee support in the East of England or a team advocating for Citizens' Assemblies across the UK.

Not every role is entered into Organism as this takes a fair bit of time, but most aspects of the work being done are represented or at least the circle they sit in is.

The information about groups held by the Hub feeds into the Organism. And the word "group" is taking over from the word "circle" in some places.

Interacting Between Teams

As you can see, our structure is a series of circles within circles. Each circle contains the role of **External Coordinator** who attends the meeting of the **wider circle**. So your External Coordinator (EC) will be feeding the progress your team is making into the wider circle, and the EC of that circle will do the same, and in this way information is passed through the system.

External Coordinators also feed from the wider circle back into your team so you can understand how your work fits into the teams close by.

Note: This should not be the sole interation between teams. It is recommended if you are working on something that overlaps or sits close to a team many circles from you, that you reach out to them directly. Your External Coordinater should be able to find their contact details.

Mandates

While exploring the Organism you will be able to see the purpose and accountabilities of each team and role in the system. These are part of what makes up the **Mandate** of that role or team.

We use mandates to distribute power through the movement. They help us manage without managers, and make our organisation transparent and accessible, with no mysterious 'black

boxes'.

Simply put, a mandate outlines your purpose within the system, what is expected of you and what you are responsible for. It is typically split into the following:

- **Purpose Statement** - Why does this Role/Circle exist, what is it for?
- **Accountabilities** - What will this Role/Circle do, what can I expect of them?
- **Domain** - What does this Role/Circle control, what do I need to ask them before I do?

Mandates are never set in stone; they are as dynamic as we need them to be. When you pick up a role in XR, you will likely be given a mandate with it. You can (and probably should) make this your own, either by handing back accountabilities that you don't feel you can meet, or by adding things that you think you can do to help.

To change a mandate, the desired change simply needs to be brought as a proposal to the meeting in which that role or circle sits. For example, if my role were to schedule trainings in the South West and I also wanted to do the scheduling for the Heading for Extinction talk, then I would propose that change in the SW Talks & Trainings meeting.

As part of its constitution XR UK requires that, "At a minimum, each circle must elect an Internal Coordinator, to be responsible for the healthy functioning of the circle, and an External Coordinator, responsible for liaising with the next broadest circle. The mandates for these roles can be found in Working Group Core Roles, along with other suggested roles that may be useful."

Want to know more? See Mandates in more detail (and how to write them).

Making Decisions

There are several different ways we make decisions in XR, and you will likely come across each of these fairly quickly.

Role Mandated Decisions

> "Does this need to be decided by the group?"

Many of the decisions you come across do not need to take up time in a meeting. The first thing to consider would be if anyone has a mandate for the decisions that need to be made. It may be that you can make that choice without consulting the team because you have the responsibility (or mandate) for that thing. Or it may be that someone else does, in which case you should ask them what should be done.

Temperature Checks

These are used to make very simple group decisions. The question is usually phrased as "How do you feel about..." and then the group displays their enthusiasm by either raising their hands (positive) or lowering them (negative). A neutral response hovers around the middle.

These are often used to gauge how controversial something may be. If everyone is hands-up happy then there is no need to dive deeper into a longer process. But if some people have concerns, then it's advisable to move to the Integrative Decision Process or something similar.

Integrative Decision Making

This is a more indepth process for making group decisions. The object is to find a solution that everyone thinks is "safe to try." The process follows these steps:

1. **Stating Proposal** - Whoever is making the suggestion brings their proposal to the group.
2. **Clarifications Round** - Everyone in the meeting is then asked, in turn, if they need anything clarified to fully understand what is being proposed.
3. **Reactions Round** - Everyone then has a chance to react to the proposal, what they think of it, how it may affect their work, any forseeable problems etc.
4. **Chance to Ammend Proposal** - The person who brought the proposal has a chance to make any changes to it, any additions or changes to phrasing etc. They can also choose to withdraw the proposal or bring it back in another meething.
5. **Objections Round** - Everyone in the meeting is then asked if they approve or object to the proposal. Objections must come from the role the individual is holding (not a personal view) and they must be concrete objections, either that the proposal will cause harm to the movement or it will stop existing work from being done.

If there are no objections to a proposal, it is passed and enacted immediately. However, if someone raises an objection to the proposal, the group comes together to try to integrate that objection.

6. **Integrating Objections** - The objection is stated for the group and the floor is opened to suggestions on how this objection can be integrated into the original proposal. It may be that the wording needs to be changed or that the scope needs to be limited in some way.

The outcome of this process will either be the original or an ammended proposal passed by the group or, if the facilitator or person bringing the proposal choses, it can be taken away to be worked on between meetings and brought back at a later date.

Your Power Within the System

We have created our Self-Organising System with the intention that every rebel has a voice. On an individual level, there are several things that you can do within the system.

- Any rebel can bring a proposal to their team.
- Any rebel can ask to bring a proposal to another team - by contacting the Internal Coordinator.

- Any rebel can ask for an election for a role - if they wish to step back or feel like someone isn't fulfilling their mandate.
- Any rebel can give back Action Points if they are unable to complete them.
- Any rebel can refuse to take on anything new and give back things they are struggling to fulfill.

Want to know more? See The Self-Organising System in more detail.

What do you bring to your Team?

Task vs Maintenance

The two key parts of effective group operation are task roles and maintenance roles. Each role is really a set of behaviours to pay attention to in meetings and activities. Generally, task functions keep groups headed toward decisions and action. Maintenance functions help build a group's sense of identity and develop the social relationships in a group.

Task Roles	Maintenance Roles
Initiator - Starts things off or helps to change direction.	**Encourager** - Provides warmth and accepts different points of view
Coordinator - Clarifies suggestions and seeks agreement to move ahead	**Harmonizer** - Tries to reduce conflict by encouraging sharing and respect
Energizer - Inspires and stimulates group into discussion	**Welcomer** - Draws out quieter members and suggests processes to promote equal power.
Information Seeker - Gives or seeks to find out certain information	**Self-Discloser** - Shares experiences to break through on a personal level "This also happened to me..."
Clarifier of Opinions - Encourages people to be specific "It seems like you are saying..."	**Process Observer** - Helps to unblock the group and get conversation back on track
Summarizer - Clarifies and checks what has been said	**Standard Setter** - Expresses best practices for the group

Task-related group roles and behaviors contribute directly to the group's completion of a task or the achievement of its goal. These roles typically serve leadership, informational or procedural functions and include the following: task leader, expediter, information provider, information seeker, gatekeeper and recorder.

Maintenance group roles and behaviors function to create and maintain social cohesion and fulfill the interpersonal needs of the group members. To perform these role behaviors, a person needs strong and sensitive interpersonal skills. These roles include social-emotional leader, supporter, tension releaser, harmonizer and interpreter.

Knowing your skills

When joining a new team, it is often hard to know where to start, what to pick up. Especially if that team is already established, how do you know what they need help with or what you are qualified to hold?

The first thing to remember is: **They asked you to be there and so they WANT your help!**

Now that we are clear on that, take a moment to think about what you **CAN** and what you **WANT** to offer the team. Here are a few examples you may come up with:

Knowledge (I know...)	Functional Skills (I can..)	Peronal Traits (I am...)
Java / Python	Facilitate Meetings	Creative
First-Aid	Organise Information	Empathetic
Conflict Resolution	Manage Projects	Patient
Accounting	Analyse Data	Fun
Animation	Communicate	Diplomatic

Note: Just because you **can** offer something doesn't necessarily mean you **want** to; it is important to set your own boundaries in order to avoid burnout.

Now that you know what you want to offer the team you are joining, we recommend going along to a meeting and letting them know exactly what you can offer them, both within and beyond the role your are stepping into.

Listening vs Speaking

Extinction Rebellion is not like your usual working environment, and we say this in both a positive and negative way! It can often be a bit of a culture shock if you are not used to how we work. So here are some quick hints to get you started:

- Our meetings are all facilitated; if you have something to add, **raise your hand** or type into the chat and the facilitator will come to you. This stops us all talking over each other -

especially in video calls!

- Try to be **actively listening** to others when they speak; think about what they are adding and ask your questions thoughtfully.
- Try to be okay with **staying silent**; just because you have something you *could* add doesn't mean that it is needed in the meeting. Ask yourself if your comment adds to the discussion before you raise your hand.
- Try to **own your contributions** by speaking only from yourself. Try using "*I think that we should...*" or. "*It seems that...*" rather than "*We need to...*".

Feedback

Being able to give and to receive feedback is important when working with others. It allows us to build trust, understanding and lets us make progress towards our goals. Without feedback we can't judge the impact of our own work and we just don't mesh well as a team.

That said, giving and receiving feedback is not always easy. Here are some suggestions which may help.

When Giving Feedback

- Own what you are saying; use "I" statements "I think..." or "I feel..." and try not to use "You" statements since they can come across as an accusation.
- Don't only comment on the critical. People really benefit from positive feedback or being noticed when they have achieved something.
- Think about your intention and what you want to say; sometimes it helps to write it down first.
- Give feedback in a 1-1 setting; people can often feel vulnerable or put on the spot if singled out from a large group.

When Receiving Feedback

- Try not to take any feedback personally; they are giving you information to help you improve at something.
- If the feedback has upset you, try to process it on your own. Sit with your feelings and process them before responding.
- Be aware that giving feedback is not easy - they are saying these things to you because they value you and are comfortable enough to say something.

What if I don't know to whom to give my feedback?
If you have feedback about something and you do not know who is directly involved, you should first talk to your Internal Coordinator (if it relevent to your team) or your External Coordinator (if it is relevent to a wider issue). They will most likely be able to either pass it on to the right place or signpost you to that place.

How can you best work together?

Every team is different because every team has different people in it. It may be that your team works well with brief meetings, mostly digital interaction, and minimal coordination, or it may be that your team needs longer, more discursive meetings, regular check-ins and some social spaces to let off steam together.

All teams work in different ways; the key is to identify and agree upon the way that works for your team.

Group Agreements

Having **group agreements** sets expectations for how you are going to work together and what to expect of each other. This is where you can personalise the dynamics of your team to suit the members in it.

Some groups will have agreements in place when you join and others may not; it's always worth asking. Any member of the team can propose an agreement. Here are a few examples that you may wish to bring to teams that you are in.

- **Meeting Length 1** - We will keep our meetings to a maximum of 60 minutes.
- **Meeting Length 2** - Our meetings will be for 120 minutes with a 10 minute break at the halfway point.

- **Meeting Format 1** - All meetings will start with a minute of silence to ground group members.
- **Meeting Format 2** - All meetings will start/finish with a round of Check Ins/Outs to build relationships within the group.

- **Minutes** - We will rotate the minute-taker each meeting to ensure that everyone can participate fully in the majority of meetings.

- **Agenda** - the agenda of each meeting must be set 3 days prior to give members a chance to read any documents given.

Roles

It is important for the smooth running of our teams that we are explicit about the roles each of us holds. This not only allows us to share out the responsibilities but also provides clarity for who is doing what. As a new rebel, your team should always welcome you by doing a round of role descriptions, letting you know what their role is in the meeting and providing some understanding of how things are set up.

As mentioned in the **Mandates** section, each role is adaptable; you can add to it, take things away that you can't do, as well as pick up multiple roles in a team.

Core Roles

There are a few **core roles** that you will find in your team with XR. These are typically suggested as the first roles to be filled when a team forms. Since a team usually starts off with 2-4 people these can often be shared fairly easily.

Core Role	Purpose
Internal Coordinator	To ensure that all *aspects of coordination* are met by the team
External Coordinator	To represent the team in the wider circle and be first point of contact for the team
Integrator	To actively look for new team members and welcome them
Budget Holder	To manage the financial requests of the team

As you join the team, you will likely be in contact with either the team Integrator or the Internal Coordinator. They will introduce you to everyone else and you should consider them your first point of contact if you have any questions about the team or your role within it.

Aspects of Coordination

One of the big things we share as a team is the coordination. Despite having roles such as "Internal Coordinator" as part of a team, this does not mean that the person holding that role coordinates *everything*. It is the responsibilty of the team to coordinate itself.

Here are the different aspects of coordination that each team will encounter:

Aspect	Description
Representing the Team	Making connections and feeding back to the wider circle
Project Management	Keeping track of progress and highlighting any barriers
Checking In	Problem solving in 1-1 sessions as two brains are better than one
Team Building	Strengthening the wellbeing and relationships of those in the team
Structure	Keeping track of mandates and updating the team's structure on Glassfrog
Budget	Managing finance requests and keeping track of budgets
Minutes / Facilitation	Ensuring meetings run smoothly and a record of decisions is kept

Aspect	Description
Integration	Welcoming new rebels and ensuring that they land on their feet
Communication	Keeping track of team email adresses and ensuring team is contactable

It is highly recommended that each team shares these responsibilities amongst themselves; so, if you feel that your skills match well with an aspect of the team coordination, please let your Internal Coordinator know.

Facilitation

You will soon notice that each XR meeting you are in has a facilitator. This helps us have ordered and efficient meetings where we don't talk over each other or waste each other's time. We are all very aware that we are here on a voluntary basis, often in our spare time or between other responsibilities. Our time is precious and our work important, so good facilitation is key!

Some teams have a consistent facilitator whereas other choose to change facilitators each meeting to give everyone the chance to hone this important skill.

One tool which is universal within XR is the use of handsignals in meetings, both online and in person. The most common handsignals are in the picture below.

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Facilitation Tools

We have many facilitation tools at our disposal. Here are some which you might encounter or may wish to use.

- **Rounds** - A round (or go-around) is a tool when everyone in the group is asked to give their thoughts or reaction to something, going one after another in a seated or online arrangement e.g. clockwise around a circle. This is a great tool in making sure that everyone in the group has an equal opportunity to speak and should be used often.
- **Pyramiding** - Start with an individual brainstorm (a few minutes is usually enough), before going into pairs and comparing ideas. Then, two pairs come together to form a four and between them they share ideas and select their collective favourites. Then this four can share their top ideas with the rest of the group when it becomes time to present back.
- **Reflecting** - Often helpful when there is a misunderstanding or conflict to let people feel heard. Do a round where individuals can express their feelings on the topic; after each individual has spoken for around two minutes another person reflects back to them what they have said. Doesn't offer opinions or solutions but simply reflects what they heard.

Help

Good facilitation is a skill to be learned and practiced. One important thing to know is when you need help. We have plenty of facilitators in our movement, and sometimes it is most appropriate to ask someone external to your team to facilitate you through a specific process or meeting.

If you are planning what could be a difficult session, or feel like your team is loose in it's use of good facilitation, we encourage you to reach out to either your wider circle or the SOS team of facilitators and someone will be able to step in to help.

There is facilitation training available on the Rebellion Academy, you can find it Here. There is also training available from our SOS teams, so if you are interested in some more in depth sessions.

Culture & Support

Think back to the start of this page, when we asked questions about what made you comforable/uncomfortable in a team and what values would your dream team hold.

Hopefully, you now have an idea of the tools at your disposal to forge that dream team, sharing responsibilities, playing to each others strengths and making open agreements on how exactly you are all comfortable with working together.

This is the start of building the culture of your team.

Sparking a Culture

When we think of our dream team, some of the same words always come up:

> **Trust** / **Motivation** / **Purpose** / **Direction** / **Respect** / **Cohesiveness** / **Fun** / **Openness** / **Safety** / **Energy** / **Efficiency**

These are often shared values but it can be hard to know how to make them happen within a team. So here are some suggestions, but there are many many more.

- **Inverting the Question** - So it may be hard to know how you build trust in your team, but if you ask "What would erode trust in our team?" it surprisingly seems much easier. Some examples of answers may be:
  1. We don't do the things we say we are going to do.
  2. We use violent language or are rude in meetings.
  Now that you have identified what would hinder the building of trust, flip them around. If your team did the following things, would you be more likely to trust it?
  1. We do the things we say we will and, if we don't, we are honest and hand them back.
  2. We are calm and kind to each other in meetings and celebrate our successes.
  These statements can then become the basis of your group agreements as you start to create the culture of your team together.

- **Leading by Example** - It may be that you want to create a culture where you feel safe to express your emotions or to share the more personal side of your motivations. There is no better place to start than with yourself.
  - Often people feel uncomfortable sharing because it's not something they are used to in professional settings. Maybe you start off a round of check-ins by opening up about how you truly feel that day? If you start with "I actually feel exhausted and vulnerable because..." then the check-ins that follow are likely to be deeper than if you started with "Yeah, I'm tired, but okay..."

Having Fun!

Remember, XR is not just the work we do but the experience of doing it! We are not here because of an undying passion for spreadsheets (or at least most of us aren't). We are here to change the world, to find a community that shares our values, to connect, to laugh, to cry, to play, the list goes on.

At the end of the day, we are here for each other!

Here are some things we have found during lockdown that have allowed us to get together without the work, blow off some steam and have fun!

- KumoSpace - Invite your team to a video call where they can move between conversations.
- GatherTown - Same as above but you can customise your space and add interactive boardgames and whiteboards.
- Skribbl.io - Online pictionary, slightly competitive and hilarious if you add your teammates names to the custom word list!
- Psych! - An app for your phone which pits you against your team asking silly questions about each other.

This page was written by @Raenyah please contact me if you have any questions or think something needs to be added.