

Making a Strong Working Group

Aim: to make life easier and less stressful for coordinators. For working groups to grow and do more.

This is a live document. There is no right way of doing things, but we should share what has worked. This note has an element of idealism - in practice we must adapt. Integration WGs are here to listen to you and help you make a strong working group, any questions about this page message @dbrenig or xr.welcome.bristol@protonmail.com

1. Split up the tasks Tension: People turn up to the working group, but don't contribute much. Working group doesn't grow in size.

Try: Split up your working group's tasks into a small number of work areas. See rough example for Media & Messaging.

Each work area has a mandate and can be run as a mini-working group if necessary. Someone is responsible for each work area and they hold the mandate. This person can be considered a mini-coordinator if the work requires a team.

Working group members are assigned to, or lean towards, a work area. This gives them freedom and responsibility to deliver. Mini-working groups enable the whole working group to grow as mini-coordinators can share out more tasks.

2. Have a focus Tension: Communities WG Coords have previously said their mandate felt so broad that it was overwhelming. Making it hard to perform in any area, so people left as they felt in-effective.

Try: If you are under resourced pick a single work area and stick to it until it is strong. When more people join you can open up new work areas. For example Communities could focus purely on Movement of Movements until more people join.

3. Growing a rebel in your working group Tension: Eager new rebels join a working group meeting, but they leave because they are overwhelmed or can't work out how to contribute.

Try: Look after, hold onto and grow rebels using the pathway below. Create roles within your working group and encourage rebels to take on roles once ready. Roles cement a rebel into a working group, and gives them the power to deliver without seeking your confirmation. It is

important to ask rebels to step up and take on a role. This is a hook. Note: a working group may hold roles that don't fit this pathway, e.g. a pool of stewards.

4. Rotate coordination Tension: The coordinator has been in place a long time and no-one else appears capable of replacing them. Power is more entrenched, and it limits the knowledge & personal growth of rebels

Try: Ideally a coordinator will do minimal WG tasks, instead focusing on empowering rebels to take on roles, fulfill mandates and check they are not burning out. If roles are filled, the time requirements on the coordinator will reduce.

The coordinator should educate and encourage rebels to become the next coordinator, to replace themselves. Playing down the 'high and mighty' impression of coordinating. Ideally the coordination role would slowly rotate amongst those willing. A working group with many ex-coordinators is very strong, as overall knowledge is high and rebels feel confident to deliver.

5. Recruitment Consider two types of eager rebels: Some rebels want to be told what to do. They respond well to specific role descriptions/adverts Some rebels want to explore before finding their place. These rebels respond to exciting invitations to join a working group

Ways to recruit (contact Integration for help, xr.bristol.welcome@protonmail.com)

Use the XR Volunteer website to advertise specific roles, and also post a general advert for your working group.

Call out for specific team members at events and rebel meetings e.g. "We need 3 more people to help organise wellbeing for upcoming actions and you'll love it because..."

Work with M&M to issue adverts for your working group on social media

New rebels may visit XR Bristol's webpage on working groups to find out more and then email the coordinators to get involved.

Integration host weekly 'Getting More Involved' sessions to identify what new rebels are interested in, and pass on their phone number to relevant coordinators.

Please respond to everyone who said they want to help - if they emailed in, or if you wrote down their phone number. Not getting back de-motivates an eager rebel.

6. Wellbeing & communication Hold socials to bond together. Rebels who care for each other, work for each other. Avoid burnout by accepting that your working group cannot do everything. Keep tabs on how many responsibilities each rebel holds, avoid overburdening someone. Have a wellbeing advocate

Rebels have previously left Working Groups because Signal/Mattermost chats are overwhelming.

The traffic light system helps. Every message should start with one of the following:

☐ Red stop sign means 'Stop and read right now! Action required'

◻ Orange diamond means 'This is important to note, but not an emergency. A response would be helpful when possible (if relevant)'

◻ Green heart means 'not that important'. This is general chatter or for responses. This gives rebels permission to not read everything. But highlights must see items.

7. Facilitating working group meetings Build the agenda before a working group meeting and avoid getting distracted A trained facilitator should facilitate the working group meeting. Attend a facilitation training course, to gain brilliant skills at running effective meetings Record Action Points each week and follow them up in the next meeting

Mandated roles allow most working group activity to happen without a specific action point (e.g. I didn't tell the integration WG that I was going to write this document, it was within my mandate, so I just did it). Instead each work area or rebel should share updates each week, so everyone knows what everyone else is doing. This also encourages ownership (pride) for mini-coordinators over their work.

Have food at working group meetings

Get to know other coordinators and chat to them, everyone is lovely lovely lovely :D

8. Mentoring chat with coord before first meeting explaining what we're working on and hearing what they're interested in end of first meeting match them up with an old hand who is doing something close to their interests.

Swap contacts mentor contacts with them post first meeting to talk them through tech and onboard them into their subgroup if that's a thing, newbie can contact mentor with questions, mentor tries to check in now and again and invite them to WG meetings for the first few weeks (or set up a Buddy programme :D)
