



Fast Expert Teams

# A NEW WAY TO COLLABORATE

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Co-create new knowledge, make use of digitalization, seize opportunities, and discover new solutions!

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# A NEW WAY TO COLLABORATE



## Introduction

We humans have a tremendous amount of valuable knowledge through education, work, and life experiences. Each individual holds unique knowledge and expertise, shaped by their distinct learning paths.

Despite the depth and breadth of human knowledge, many organizational and societal challenges remain unresolved, and opportunities slip by. Within organizations, knowledge and expertise are frequently underutilized, leaving valuable insights untapped. Moreover, many organizations tend to operate within their own boundaries, even when the knowledge needed to solve complex tasks is distributed among individuals working in different organizations.

When diverse individuals collaborate to co-create new knowledge, they draw from their collective human knowledge, which becomes most valuable when solving complex tasks requiring diverse expertise and contextual understanding.

Problems and untapped opportunities become solutions when people have the motivation to participate and are enthusiastic about working together. Sharing human knowledge and co-creating new solutions across boundaries requires supporting structures, processes, and leadership.

FET collaboration creates **value for individuals, organizations and society**. In short term, it enables **mutual learning and provides access to resources** that might otherwise be difficult to obtain. In the longer term, it strengthens **social and human capital** by connecting previously unfamiliar parties and enabling them to collaborate on complex missions or tasks of shared interest.

This guidebook focuses on building temporary expert communities and teams to tackle complex societal and organizational challenges with human collective knowledge.

## **Make the most of the digitalization**

Digitalization is not the end but means for collaboration when meeting in-person is not practical or possible. Digital collaboration platforms enable people to join projects rapidly without the need for travel. This reduces the time and financial resources required for knowledge collaboration, allowing participants to be located in different parts of the country or the world.

Digital collaboration platforms also facilitate more flexible participation, replacing long, real-time meetings with interactions that can occur when it best suits each participant. They enable multimodal and asynchronous interaction that is more sustainable for individual participants and suitable for cross-boundary knowledge collaboration across time and place.

Especially, large-scale collaboration involving tens of participants benefits from tools based on artificial intelligence that can be used to create real-time synthetizations of participants' conversation on the platform.

## **What kind of challenges and use cases Fast Expert Teams has been adopted?**

In 2020, LUT Business School orchestrated the first large-scale expert community with a mission: 'Fast Expert Teams vs. Corona – Let's Prevent Finland from Paralysis.' On the first day of the COVID-19 lock-down in Finland, over 100 experts were invited to a temporary expert community and eight cross-sectoral teams were composed. Their tasks included building an academia-industry group to explore 3D printing for spare parts, launching national research lab to study the transition to remote work, disseminating effective remote work practices, developing rapid funding and research instruments, and decontaminating FFP2 and FFP3 respirators for reuse.

The largest team consisted of 32 experts from 12 organizations (divided into three sub-teams). They adopted an innovation from another field, researched and tested its usability for decontaminating used respirators, and organized nation-wide training and logistics across all hospitals. This group was assembled within 24 hours, and a pilot plant with the capacity to serve national needs was ready in six weeks. Expert community insights and lessons learned were presented to Finland's Parliament Future Committee, tens of webinars, and OECD Science, Technology and Innovation committee online and in-person in Paris.

In 2021, LUT Business School was commissioned by governmental WORK2030 program to set up and orchestrate 'Fast Expert Teams & Hybrid Work' initiative bringing together a total of 80 work-life experts across different sectors in a society. They were divided into six teams, to address issues related to hybrid work, such as well-being at work, learning, innovation, and sense of community. Some of the teams also explored how Finnish organizations could utilize the FET operational model and address the contractual issues involved with the approach. Expert community insights were presented to government ministries, Minister of Social Affairs as well as the Minister of Employment and the Economy.

In 2021, the high-tech company Soletair Power used a FET digital co-creation to gain new international pilot clients and refine the product-market fit of their technology product. This successful initiative involving over 30 sustainability and energy experts from different countries was orchestrated collaboratively by LUT Business School and Solved, a platform provider and community of energy and sustainability experts. The initiative was funded by the European Regional Council.

In 2022, the Regional Council of Häme orchestrated Fast Expert Teams process with its stakeholders for SmartHäme2025 regional strategy implementation.

In 2023, the WORK20230 program organized the trainer program and three large-scale FET-initiatives facilitated by consultants. LUT Business School participated by evaluating two of the initiatives for lessons learned.

In 2024, LUT Business School orchestrated 'Fast Expert Teams & Investments in Clean Energy and Power-to-X in South-East Finland' involving 60 energy experts across different sectors in a society, including government and public sector civil servants, university professors and researchers, start-ups, investors, and large companies. The eight actions suggested by the expert community were shared with Finnish Parliament, Ministry of Finance, and regional actors. Most of them have moved forward and led to new initiatives.

In 2025, LUT Business School orchestrated 'Fast Expert Teams & Energy Efficient Buildings' to develop a new multi-stakeholder research project with academic and business partners as well as an EU project proposal with international collaborators. This initiative has also led to further collaboration beyond the online setting.

In 2026, LUT Business School orchestrates multi-stakeholder collaboration ‘Fast Expert Teams & LUT Civil Engineering’, to co-create vision for the LUT University new program. This multi-stakeholder initiative takes explicitly a future making approach to involve over 60 experts across 1 sectors from Finland and abroad to co-design the vision for LUT University unique program for Bachelor, Master and PhD education.

Fast Expert Teams (FET) collaboration model can be effectively used to make sense of and shape future directions by bringing together diverse experts in a focused, timebound online collaboration. It supports future making through structured dialogues to share ideas and knowledge and rapid feedback across teams and stakeholders. By building trust across unfamiliar participants coming from diverse networks, it supports knowledge collaboration to explore alternatives, challenge assumptions, and co-create actionable solutions.

## How to use this guidebook?

This guidebook is designed for use by various organizations, regardless of their size, sector, products, or services. It is most effective when addressing complex and open-ended challenges or missions that participants find meaningful and important. Tasks can range from smaller, to larger in scale, where multiple teams work within a FET temporary community to solve various subtasks.

FET projects have successfully invited knowledge and expertise across various sectors. Experts have been invited to participate from small to large companies, start-ups, universities, research centers, educational institutions, public sector organizations, government, as well as labor unions and employer federations.

The workbook can be utilized in several roles: as a participating expert, a community leader, a team leader, or as the client’s representative. It is freely available for use, sharing, and linking to your organization’s website.

# CONTENTS

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A new way to collaborate. . . . .	3
1. The fast expert teams organizing model. . . . .	8
2. What are the benefits of FET collaboration?. . . . .	14
3. Preparing the collaboration . . . . .	19
4. Considering people and time . . . . .	27
5. Building trust . . . . .	34
6. Shared leadership . . . . .	45
7. Collaboration principles and contracts . . . . .	51
8. Defining the task . . . . .	56
9. Co-creating new knowledge . . . . .	60
10. Conceptualization . . . . .	70
Conclusion . . . . .	75
Author of the Guidebook . . . . .	77



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**1.  
THE FAST  
EXPERT TEAMS  
ORGANIZING  
MODEL**

# Combining distributed expertise for knowledge co-creation

**Fast Expert Teams (FET)** is a temporary organizing model designed for the rapid assembly of specialized and distributed experts to tackle complex problems.

It consists of a temporary expert community and teams formed around each specific mission or challenge, requiring expertise across professional and organizational boundaries. **Each FET community is tailored to the specific problem at hand**, bringing together diverse experts whose personal experience, insight, and knowledge are relevant to the problem or opportunity.

A central premise of the model is **the value of combining the diverse and distributed expertise and related personal (tacit) and contextual knowledge for solving complex problems**. The diversity of perspectives **challenges conventional thinking and stimulates innovative solutions**.

**Dialogical structures enhance shared sensemaking**, as experts from various fields share their knowledge and learn from other experts' opinions and experience. Ultimately, FET collaboration creates new knowledge leading to **more effective problem-solving and innovation**.

**FET collaboration occurs entirely online through a digital collaboration platform**, enabling geographically dispersed experts to connect and work efficiently together. Technology-mediated and facilitated work allows organizations to access expertise that might otherwise be difficult to convene. The organizing model provides a temporary digital space supported by structures and processes that enhance co-creation and problem-solving. Because no travel is required, the approach is both efficient and sustainable.

**Organizing FET in a digital collaboration platform enables multimodal and asynchronous communication, allowing participants autonomy and flexibility in scheduling their contributions**. Digital artifacts can be shared, discussed, and iterated on the platform, enabling ideation and knowledge co-creation even when participants contribute asynchronously, at different times. Part of the collaboration takes place through live online discussions, and part through written communication where experts share insights and comments on other experts' contributions. Real-time meetings are kept short to be mindful of the participating experts' use of time.

**FET collaboration is grounded in shared organizing principles and trust.**

Supporting the rapid evolution of trust among unfamiliar experts is critical for productive knowledge collaboration and effective problem-solving. The digital collaboration environment can be flexibly adapted to each mission’s needs and the participants involved. Complex tasks often benefit from a large FET community consisting of several sub-teams, whose outputs are ultimately woven together into a collective solution.

Participants begin with a shared, relatively loosely defined mission. They are encouraged to adapt the mission based on their expertise. The work evolves through interaction rather than following a strictly predefined plan, allowing the client to receive fresh perspectives and innovative outcomes.

**FET collaboration is particularly valuable for open-ended, complex problems requiring diverse insights and complementary expertise.** It leverages existing human and social capital, while simultaneously building new knowledge, networks, shared understanding, and trust. When experts from different sectors and networks collaborate to solve a meaningful mission, a well-designed process also builds new human and social capital.

The FET organizing model can support various **cross-boundary development and innovation processes, as well as the building of ecosystems.** It has been applied in diverse contexts, including regional strategy development, internationalization of technological innovations, fostering cross-sector collaboration among leaders in health, social services, and education, responding to the global COVID-19 crisis, addressing city sustainability challenges, initiating research projects and academic collaborations, and supporting conditions for cleantech investments.

Fast Expert Teams (FET) is an organizing model designed for the rapid assembly of specialized and distributed expert knowledge to tackle complex problems. It provides the structure, process and organizing principles to connect the geographically distributed experts to a temporary online community and teams.

This guidebook provides a step-by-step guidance from preparing collaboration to conceptualizing the Fast Expert Teams solution (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Fast Expert Teams collaboration process

# How does FET collaboration differ from traditional organizations and teams?

FET is temporary, fully online community in which the **community and teams are composed and tailored for the mission and tasks**. Rather than relying on a traditional organization, the work is carried out in a temporary community and teams of experts, grounded in **shared interest in the mission and task, intrinsic motivation, trust, and mutual respect**.

Experts are invited for a pre-defined period – typically four weeks – to work on a specific mission or task. The work is carried out entirely online and is independent of the participants’ locations. When feasible, face-to-face meetings such as kick-off session can be arranged, but they are not necessary.

FET community	Traditional organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Shared interest in the task</li> <li>» Intrinsic motivation</li> <li>» Community</li> <li>» Trust</li> <li>» Flexible structures &amp; boundaries</li> <li>» Unlimited resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Shared employer</li> <li>» External &amp; intrinsic motivation</li> <li>» Hierarchy</li> <li>» Control</li> <li>» Fixed structures &amp; boundaries</li> <li>» Limited resources</li> </ul>

Table 1. Differences between a FET community and a traditional organization

**The FET community is scalable** and can be grown flexibly, effectively providing access to virtually unlimited resources. Designed and tested flexible structures and processes support the FET collaboration, and they can be adapted further to suit the specific task and the group’s needs. Participants are invited to the FET collaboration based on their personal knowledge and intrinsic motivation rather than on their hierarchical position or role within a particular organization.

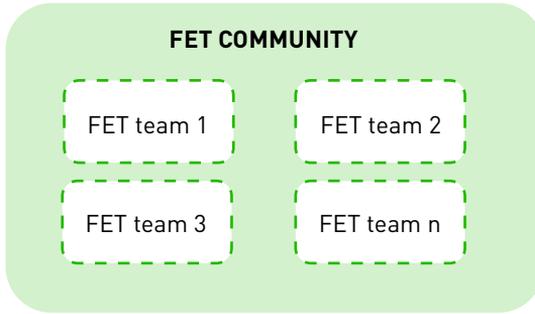


Figure 2. Fast Expert Teams scalable community and teams

Collaboration takes place at the community level and within teams. Community-level events and communication help build a **shared understanding of the mission and align participants toward a community goal**. Team-level collaboration, in turn, offers a more focused space for in-depth discussion. Team spaces in the platform remain open to ensure **cross-pollination of ideas throughout the process**. Experts can visit different teams and invite each other’s comments during the process. Teams also provide feedback to one another on the mission partial solutions developed across different teams.

FET team	Traditional team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Emerging task</li> <li>» Evolving membership</li> <li>» Adaptive roles</li> <li>» Provisional</li> <li>» Unfamiliarity</li> <li>» Diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Stable task</li> <li>» Permanent membership</li> <li>» Assigned roles</li> <li>» Permanence</li> <li>» Familiarity</li> <li>» Similarity</li> </ul>

Table 2. Differences between a FET team and a traditional team

FET teams differ from traditional teams in that they are always temporary, fully online, and composed of **diverse experts across professional and organizational boundaries**. At the outset, most participants do not know each other, and it is important to build **interpersonal relationships** to be able to work effectively as the work begins. The team’s task, composition and individual roles can be further refined as the work progresses. New members can also be invited after the work has started if the team identifies a need for complementary expertise.

Because members come from different backgrounds and organizations, teams also need to establish **shared practices and norms together**. Typically, each team is supported by two complementary part-time team leaders who collaborate closely. Shared community-level structures and team-specific practices and norms build conditions for **interpersonal trust that is needed for effective knowledge collaboration**.

FET collaboration can be flexibly scaled to match the needs of each mission and task. Often, the FET missions address large-scale complex societal or organizational challenges and typically involve dozens of participants working in several teams. So far, the largest FET collaborations have included over 100 participants, but the model can be scaled up to accommodate even larger groups. Teams can also be divided into smaller units with specific responsibilities to ensure effective progress. FET collaboration can likewise be scaled down for smaller but still complex tasks. In such cases, a compact expert community with a few smaller teams can work together to address the challenge.



**2.  
WHAT ARE THE  
BENEFITS OF FET  
COLLABORATION?**

## Benefits for the experts

FET collaboration offers participants an opportunity to apply and develop their expertise in broader and more meaningful ways than their typical work roles usually allow. It also serves as an excellent forum for exploring new themes and subject areas that intrinsically motivate them. Moreover, engaging in collaborative work on meaningful and important problems can enhance participants' work engagement and contribute positively to their overall well-being at work.

Participants in previous FET communities and teams have reported that their work felt both meaningful and collaborative. They were motivated by engaging in problems that mattered and were meaningful, exploring new approaches and experimenting with innovative ways of working. Additionally, participants valued the new network relationships they formed, recognizing these connections as beneficial for their future endeavours.

**By engaging in different FET initiatives, individuals can efficiently learn about new domains, update their competence portfolios and discover possible areas of future interest.** This way, FET collaboration also supports the renewal of **human capital** within organizations and societies.

Working on a shared mission and tasks with diverse experts from various networks enables participants to build valuable contacts, foster shared understanding, and build trust. As a result, FET collaboration can serve as a highly effective **mechanism for building social capital**.

## Benefits for the client

**FET collaboration provides the client organization with the knowledge and expertise needed to tackle challenging problems quickly.** The more complex or novel the problem, the less likely an organization is to have the required capabilities in-house. A lack of sufficient expertise can lead to missed opportunities, as organizations may be unable to act swiftly to seize them.

Working across sectoral and professional boundaries broadens perspectives and **reduces the risk of approaching complex problems too narrowly** or in traditional ways. Through this, FET collaboration creates opportunities to develop **more innovative and effective solutions to complex challenges**.

Organizations often possess knowledge and resources that remain underutilized. FET collaboration enables flexible access to expertise from both within the organization and beyond its boundaries, allowing organizations to leverage existing social and human capital.

Furthermore, FET collaboration provides an efficient opportunity for organizations to experiment with new working methods and adopt advanced digital technologies. Over time, this can positively influence collaboration culture and enhance digital working practices.

Ultimately, organizations that learn to value and effectively integrate both internal and external knowledge will gain a sustainable, knowledge-based competitive advantage.

## Benefits for inter-organizational collaboration

Inter-organizational collaboration typically evolves slowly. Building trust and fostering commitment requires far more than a few meetings – especially when those meetings include only a limited number of key persons. In practice, forming alliances between two organizations or creating ecosystems that span various organizations can take years. Trust and commitment among relevant stakeholders must be developed and institutionalized before they can effectively support collaboration.

FET collaboration offers a way to accelerate this process. When implemented successfully, it helps to build both human and social capital by creating quickly new knowledge, network relationships, shared language, trust, and mutual understanding.

SmartHäme2025 leveraged FET collaboration in spring 2021 to advance the key themes of the regional strategy among diverse actors. 80 experts participated in follow-up projects in four cross-organizational teams for a three-week period.

## Benefits for the society

FET collaboration is particularly well-suited to addressing societal challenges and wicked problems – issues that fall outside the responsibility of any single actor and cannot be solved within a single organization.

Expertise relevant to these challenges is often dispersed across organizations in different sectors. Yet, rapid and flexible collaboration among companies, public sector organizations, government, and academia remains rare. Even when such cooperation could provide the systemic understanding needed to address these complex issues effectively.

In 2024 FET collaboration brought together 60 experts from universities, industries, start-ups, government, public authorities, and research institutions to accelerate South-East Finland's clean-energy transition and attract industrial investments. Participants worked in six teams addressing renewable energy, industrial prerequisites, CO<sub>2</sub> capture, start-ups, PtX-modelling, and financing. This FET collaboration resulted in shared understanding and eight co-created action points, which have been presented to decision makers and most of them have moved forward.

[Fast Expert Teams – Investments in Clean Energy and Power-to-X in South-East Finland](#)

FET collaboration is designed for tackling complex problems or challenges that involve multiple, sometimes conflicting, interests, diverse stakeholder groups, and varied perspectives and, as well as significant cross-sectoral knowledge needs.

One of the key benefits of FET collaboration is its ability to bring multidisciplinary expertise together without participants being constrained by their organizational roles or formal authority.

Because FET collaboration relies on participants' personal knowledge and intrinsic motivation – their willingness to work on issues they find meaningful – it helps reduce tensions related to power dynamics and self-interest at the expense of others.

## **What kind of organizations should experiment with FET collaboration?**

FET collaboration is particularly well-suited for organizations operating in dynamic and disruptive industries, cross-sector partnerships and ecosystems, research and innovation organizations, public sector agencies and regional development bodies, as well as nonprofits and NGOs addressing complex societal challenges or wicked problems.

Beyond solving complex societal challenges in cross-boundary networks, FET collaboration model is suitable for solving organizational challenges that need external expertise. Large corporations can also use FET to combine knowledge from different parts within the organization. It is suitable for collaboration between ministries and across sectors between the private and public sectors, as well as between universities, research institutes and regional actors.

It differs significantly from traditional modes of organizing. The temporary online collaboration demands open-mindedness, a willingness to embrace uncertainty, and the ability to learn from others. Management support plays a crucial role in encouraging employees to explore this new form of collaborating.

Organizations that seek to experiment and benefit of FET collaboration recognize that not all the relevant knowledge resides within their own boundaries. They understand that valuable insights often exist across organizational boundaries and appreciate the importance of human knowledge that is personal, contextual, and gained by experience.



**3.  
PREPARING  
THE  
COLLABORATION**

# Composing the community

Building the FET community begins with **defining the mission** of the community and outlining the **initial tasks** for its teams. These tasks can start broadly, with the understanding that they will evolve during the process while remaining aligned with the overall mission

The FET mission leader and the client commissioning the task start by assessing the nature of the challenge and identifying the expertise required to address it effectively. Both the client and the FET organizers should allocate sufficient time for preparation and planning. Participants should also be invited early enough to ensure the collaboration can be scheduled in their calendars.

The next step is to determine who needs to be invited as experts. **Identifying the individuals whose expertise, perspectives, and experience are essential for successfully addressing the challenge.**

## Experts

The FET community should be carefully assembled with expertise aligned to the mission and its team objectives. **Diversity in educational backgrounds, professional, and personal perspectives is essential** to provide the variety and breadth of knowledge required for innovation. Participation from individuals representing different organizations and networks adds valuable knowledge and contextual insights, enabling the full potential of collaboration for generating innovative solutions.

Participants' contributions often stem from varied sources – formal education, work experience, or even voluntary activities. Their **personal, contextual, and experiential knowledge** allows them to bring unique perspectives, enrich discussions, and pose insightful questions that spark meaningful dialogue within the community.

Because FET collaboration is flexible and requires limited and part-time commitment, **participants can typically engage alongside their existing roles and responsibilities.** Potential participants may include employees from companies and public sector organizations, government representatives, entrepreneurs, consultants, researchers, and students.

Identifying suitable candidates can start within the client's and organizer's own networks, such as LinkedIn. Additional experts can be recruited using the snowballing method – asking invited experts to recommend people with relevant knowledge and insight, and with whom they would like to collaborate on the specific challenge.

**Selected experts should fulfil three important criteria.** First, they must possess the **relevant knowledge** to understand the challenge and contribute effectively to its resolution. Second, they should have genuine interest and **intrinsic motivation** to engage in the specific mission. Third, they need to have **collaboration capability** to work successfully with diverse and unfamiliar others.

These criteria align closely with the general dimensions of **trustworthiness: ability, benevolence, and integrity**. Being trustworthy – and equally willing to trust other participating experts – is essential for the success of FET collaboration. Further details can be found in the section on [Building trust](#).

## Client

The client is the party that introduces the challenge, or opportunity on which the FET collaboration focuses. **Active involvement by key representatives of the client is very helpful**, as they provide contextual and task-specific knowledge and help inspire the FET community in addressing the challenge.

While the client supports the process, they do not manage the work and **can not control the outcome**. In fact, the solution emerging from FET collaboration may be unexpected and differ significantly from the client's initial expectations. FET collaboration is inherently innovative. Its objective is not to deliver a made-to-measure report, but rather to surprise the client with new ideas and novel approaches.

## Collaboration platform and pools

In FET, work technology is a means to an end – not the end itself. **Advanced, user-friendly digital platforms and tools enable smooth online interactions and flexible collaboration across time and place.**

FET community can choose collaboration platform and tools that best support their work. Previous teams have used platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Solved ([www.solved.fi](http://www.solved.fi)) and Howspace ([www.howspace.com](http://www.howspace.com)).

For example, Solved was used in projects such as the internationalization of Soletair Power innovation (2021), collaboration development between the social, health and education sectors in nine EKSOTE municipalities (2019), and planning of the circular economy district of Hiedanranta (2016).

Howspace supported FET communities in initiatives like Fast Expert Teams vs. Corona (2020), Fast Expert Teams & Hybrid Work (2021), SmartHÄME2025 (2021), and Fast Expert Teams, Investments in Clean Energy and Power-to-X in South-East Finland (2024).

Since platforms differ in functionality, it is important to evaluate options during the planning stage before selecting one. **For large-scale collaboration, AI-powered tools can be valuable.** However, sometimes less is more – choosing simpler tools can help teams work smoothly and efficiently.

If participants are unfamiliar with the chosen collaboration platform and tools, it is essential to **provide participants an opportunity to explore and learn of them** before starting the work.

## Training and support

FET participants often include both experts familiar with digital collaboration tools and co-creation methods, as well as those with less experience. To ensure smooth collaboration, it is highly recommended to provide introductory training.

A **webinar** or **self-learning module** can help participants get acquainted with the chosen collaboration platform and tools. These sessions can be recorded and stored on the platform for future reference. Leaders may also share **short video tips** on effective working practices and tool usage, which can serve as quick learning resources.

To support ongoing learning, a **“Questions & Answers” forum** on the platform can address participant queries. Additionally, **orientation sessions** or a **chatbot** can be set up to provide technical assistance when needed.

Previous FET initiatives have also offered **extra training sessions** and dedicated **Q&A channels for team leaders**, giving them additional professional and peer support.

There are also plenty of online resources available for learning different collaboration platforms. While these platforms have become increasingly intuitive and user-friendly, it remains essential to provide **support both before and during the collaboration** to ensure fast and efficient progress.

## Contract or collaboration norms

When initiating the work, it is essential to establish a shared understanding of the principles and norms guiding the collaboration. This includes agreeing on:

- » **Participation** – why and how experts are involved.
- » **Values and norms** – the principles that will steer the work.
- » **Working methods** – the approach and practices to be used.

Clear communication at the outset helps participants understand what they are committing to. Defining time allocation and organizational principles early on builds trust and commitment.

A key question to address is the **time investment required from each expert**. Setting expectations upfront ensures clarity for all parties. In the previous FET collaborations, experts have been asked to dedicate approximately **10 hours over a four-week FET collaboration** period. Based on feedback from previous projects, we recommend agreeing on **10–15 hours** for active participation in team and community activities. Many experts have contributed even more, driven by enthusiasm for the mission and engagement with knowledgeable peers.

Formal agreements become particularly important when the work involves **business-sensitive information** or may lead to **intellectual property**, such as patentable ideas. In some cases, a legal contract may be necessary – especially in subsequent collaborations involving patentable innovation or investment. Further details can be found in the section [Collaboration Principles and Contracts](#).

# Possible compensation for time invested

Experts may participate either:

- » **Voluntarily**, without financial compensation, motivated by personal interest.
- » **With compensation**, agreed upon in advance when inviting participants.

Motivations for participation often include contributing to the mission substance, learning about the mission and new ways of working, networking with interesting professionals, or exploring job or business opportunities, and gaining insights into the assignment. These benefits can sometimes outweigh the need for financial compensation or make it reasonable to keep compensation modest.

If compensation is provided, it can be structured as a fixed amount or based on time spent.

Well-organized collaboration can minimize the time required to achieve results, making the investment efficient for all parties.

## CHECKLIST FOR THE CLIENT

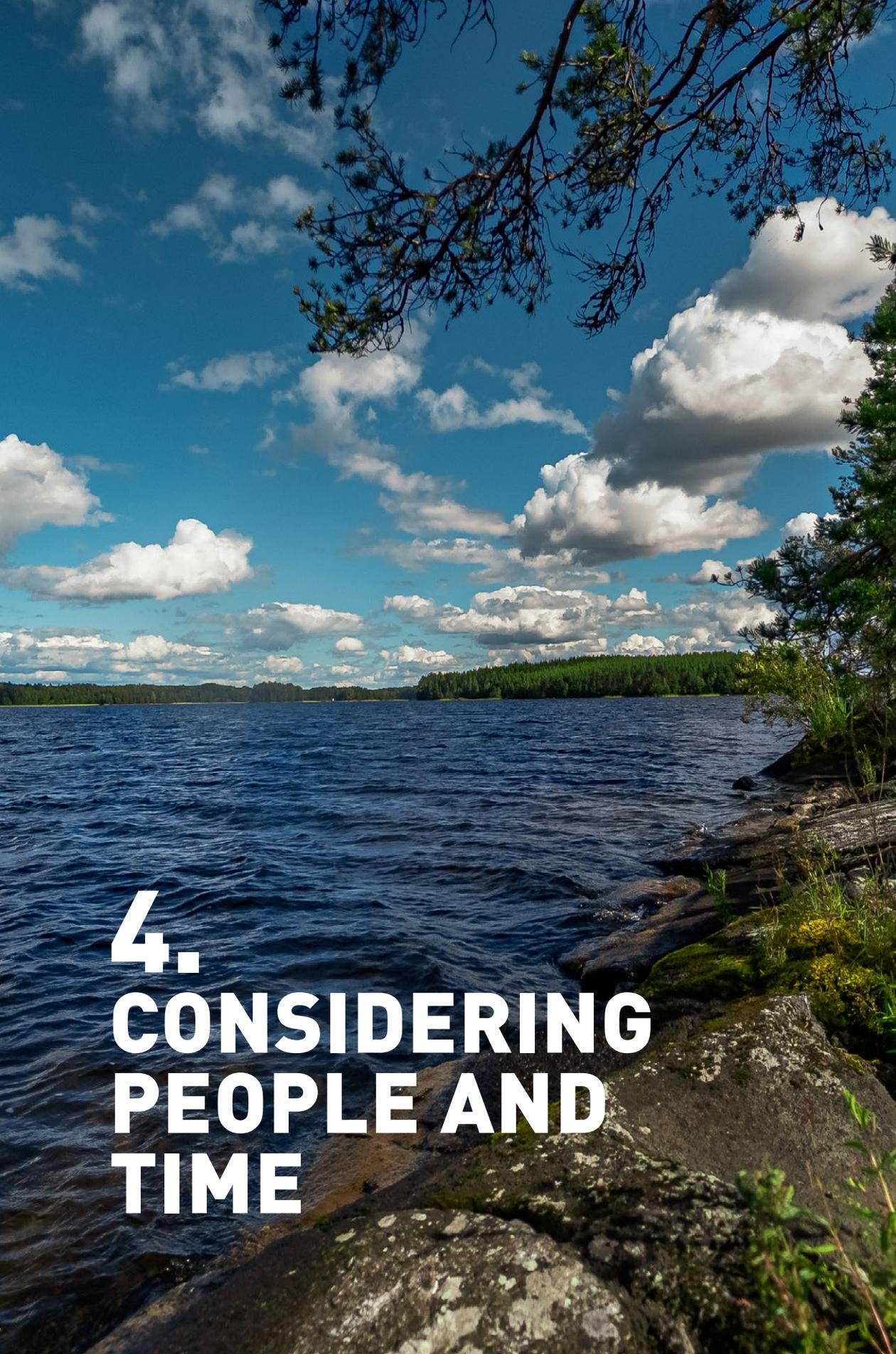
- » **Start planning early**, ideally two months before the project begins. Note that you also need to reserve participating experts' time to collaboration.
- » **Secure a user-friendly digital collaboration platform** and agree on usage costs and technical support arrangements.
- » **Allocate time for joint planning** with the orchestration team to ensure alignment.
- » **Identify participants**: who should be invited?
- » **Assess confidentiality requirements**. Decide how and when confidentiality will be agreed upon.
- » **Plan post-project communication**. To whom and how will results be shared? Create a preliminary schedule for meetings, workshops, or webinars.

## CHECKLIST FOR FET COMMUNITY LEADER

- » **Start planning early**. At least one month before the FET collaboration begins.
- » **Secure a suitable collaboration platform** and confirm usage costs and technical support needed.
- » **Schedule joint planning sessions** with the client and the platform provider or digital facilitator.
- » **Clarify mission content responsibilities**: will you manage the mission content yourself, or do you need additional support?
- » **Invite experts early**, preferably send meeting information directly to their calendars after discussing with them.
- » **Agree on team leadership**: who will lead the teams?
- » **Confirm platform-related costs**, including usage fees and content storage after the project

## MATTERS TO CONSIDER TOGETHER

- » **Roles and responsibilities.** Who will act as community leader for developing the mission content, and who will be the team leaders?
- » **Expert participation.** Identify the required expertise and consider where to find the right people (internal network, external sources, partners).
- » **Tools and platforms.** Select the collaboration platform and tools. Agree on technical support and training needed.
- » **Skills and competencies.** Define the skills, experience, and insights needed to solve the task.
- » **Agreements and confidentiality.** Assess whether a formal contract is necessary and, if so, what type. Consider if the collaboration could result in intangible rights (e.g., patents). Determine if any part of the work is confidential and how confidentiality will be managed.



**4.  
CONSIDERING  
PEOPLE AND  
TIME**

# Participating as oneself

Fast Expert Teams collaboration is fundamentally different from traditional working groups and development teams. It involves also more uncertainty, so it is helpful to prepare mentally.

First, participation in FET collaboration is personal. **Individuals join as themselves**, not as in a formal organizational role or a representative of one's organization or background group. Instead, they contribute their own knowledge, perspectives, and ideas. Hierarchical positions and titles are not emphasized. Every participant is valued as an equal, and diverse viewpoints are respected.

Second, the nature of the work feels often uncertain. **The mission and tasks are by nature open-ended and ambiguous**, without a precise predefined goal. At first, this ambiguity may feel challenging. Working without familiar roles, experimenting, and **learning new things with new people** often pushes participants outside their comfort zones.

Third, technology-mediated collaboration adds another layer of uncertainty. Adopting asynchronous communication supports participant autonomy and provides flexibility, yet it **creates also novelty for participants**, who are used to communicating verbally in real-time online meetings.

**Written communication on digital collaboration platforms is particularly valuable** for asynchronous collaboration, as all comments and questions remain visible for others to review and address later at their own pace and time. Today, **verbal online meetings can also be recorded, transcribed, and summarized**, which is a highly recommended practice to further support effective asynchronous collaboration.

Finally, FET collaboration does not expect nor require polished and final answers. Instead, **it thrives on sharing ideas, expressing different viewpoints, and co-creating new knowledge through open dialogue**. This approach can feel novel for experts accustomed to delivering carefully considered opinions aligned with their formal roles.

# A psychologically safe atmosphere enables the expression of diverse ideas and opinions

FET collaboration thrives when leaders and experts **consciously build trust and a psychologically safe working environment**. A welcoming and appreciative working atmosphere is essential for diverse experts to feel confident in sharing their ideas and perspectives. A group feels safe when participants can truly be themselves.

**At its best, FET collaboration creates a shared culture where diversity is valued, and everyone feels safe.** Working as part of a community without formal roles can be liberating, and many participants describe the experience as inspiring and energizing. One participant summarized it beautifully: “Fast Expert Teams collaboration allows you to see the world from a new perspective, discover new aspects of yourself, grow in your work, and experience moments of enthusiasm and insight.”

## Actively seeking new perspectives and solutions

The goal of FET collaboration is to **generate new ideas and innovative solutions by combining diverse knowledge, expertise, and viewpoints**. This means no one arrives with ready-made answers, instead the group collectively explores possibilities and creates new options together.

Disagreement is not only acceptable but vital. If everyone agrees on everything, the group cannot reach its full potential, and the value of combining diverse skills and perspectives is lost. **Constructive differences introduce “creative abrasion,” sparking discussion and new insights.**

## Respecting participant time

In FET collaboration, part of the work is conducted together during scheduled sessions on the digital platform (synchronously). About half the work is done independently, whenever participants prefer (asynchronously).

While FET collaboration can be **remarkably fast and cost-effective**, achieving the best results requires **thoughtful scheduling of community and team activities** as well as setting expectations right.

## Setting expectations right

**Establishing time commitments beforehand clarifies expectations** and sets a defined framework for effective collaboration, thereby **ensuring experts' engagement and contribution to the mission.**

Since FET work is done in addition to regular jobs, **it is crucial to estimate the required time and discuss participants' availability** beforehand to prevent conflicts with other commitments. Often team leaders give more time, while time input from other experts can be a bit less.

**When everyone agrees on how time will be used, expectations become clearer, and participants can make a thoughtful commitment to the process.**

For instance, someone who is excited about the work might find it reasonable to contribute 10 -15 hours over four weeks, or about 3 hours per week for the team task. Participation in FET community events is optional, even when warmly recommended, and based on personal interest and availability.

Knowledge workers usually have flexible schedules, but **notifying supervisors or getting approval is recommended.** Providing employers with a brief update may also help. The FET collaboration's purpose, expectations for participants, timing, and the benefits, such as learning digital collaboration, gaining insights of the mission, and expanding networks, can be emphasized as creating value also to the employer.

In the WORK2030 project on hybrid work, participants agreed to reserve 10 hours for their team, plus time for optional participation in community activities. In practice, this meant about 2.5 hours per week (roughly 30 minutes per weekday). A post-project survey showed that most participants spent 10–20 hours in total, with about half of that time working independently on the platform.

## Simultaneous (synchronous) meetings

FET collaboration combines **both synchronous and asynchronous work** on the digital collaboration platform. Scheduled online meetings provide structure and help maintain momentum, while asynchronous and independent work offers flexibility.

**Synchronous meetings should be purposeful, short, and energizing.** Calendar-based meetings are used sparingly to avoid unnecessary time demands. At best, these sessions inspire and empower participants; otherwise, they could become a burden and "one more meeting" which is often considered as a cost instead of value-add.

## Community meetings

FET community events create **a common rhythm** for collaboration. They are critical for **knowledge co-creation through sensemaking, a sense of belonging, and shared purpose.**

**Weekly Kick-off** (Monday, 30 min): Informing and aligning weekly goals for the community and teams.

**Weekly Wrap-up** (Friday, 30 min): Sharing progress and insights from the week.

**Community Dialogues:** (twice a-week, 30 min): Sensemaking of the mission.

The community dialogues work best when short and regular, e.g. **twice a week short dialogues during “morning coffee”** bring FET experts and invited external specialists together to share insights on the mission. These short sessions lasting only 30 minutes have got excellent feedback due to their carefully curated high-level content and concise structure (Expert presentation, 10 min; Commentary and Q&A, 5 min; Open discussion, 15 min; conversation continues in writing on the digital collaboration platform). These dialogical structures have also an important role in giving voice and building trust among participants.

In Fast Expert Teams & Hybrid Work project organized during Covid-19, virtual lunch discussions were piloted successfully creating high engagement in the community. Participants volunteered to give short presentations on topics relevant to the community’s mission. These sessions created energy and sparked lively conversations that continued in the platform afterward.

## Team-level meetings

Teams typically coordinate their meetings and decide how much of their work is done synchronously, through online meetings, and how much is handled asynchronously. **Each FET team agrees on its own working rhythm.** For some, synchronous collaboration might mean two online 45-minute meetings per week; for others, brief 15-minute daily online check-ins over coffee.

## Asynchronous work

In FET collaboration, **roughly half of the work is self-scheduled**, meaning participants contribute at times that best suit them. This includes background research and sharing documents. This asynchronous work involves also **engaging in community and team discussions on the digital collaboration platform and contributing to joint tasks whenever convenient**. Collaboration platforms support **also multimodal collaboration**, such as drawing tools, videos, attachments, and links making it easy to share information and ideas asynchronously in different formats.

This flexibility allows experts to “drop in” briefly to engage in the collaboration before the workday, during a lunch break, and/or in the evening. Some participants prefer early mornings, while others work late evenings. This way, a morning person can pick up on ideas posted the previous night and continue the discussion seamlessly.

## Combining synchronous and asynchronous work

The blend of synchronous and asynchronous collaboration creates both structured interaction and individual flexibility. **Scheduled meetings enable valuable real-time exchanges, while independent work gives participants time to reflect**, clarify their own thinking, and contribute to the conversation thoughtfully when it suits them. Balancing personal time and shared time is essential for successful knowledge co-creation.

## Setting expectations right

Experiences from earlier FET processes show that **proactiveness and reciprocity** are essential for team satisfaction.

To set **clear expectations** for team collaboration, it is also useful to agree **on how team members are** expected to contribute so that participation feels mutually **fair and reciprocal**.

This may include defining **how frequently** they should contribute and what team members should do when they enter the team space: how and what they are expected to share, in which formats (e.g., written reflections, shared materials, comments on others’ contributions).

## CHECKLIST FOR THE FET COMMUNITY LEADER AND TEAM LEADER

- » **Agree on duration and schedule.** Set the duration and schedule of the FET collaboration in advance so participants can reserve time and commit to the work.
- » **Keep meetings short and purposeful.** Shared online meetings should be concise and focused.
- » **Encourage independent work.** Promote self-directed work as a core part of the process.

## HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN FET COLLABORATION

- » **Join as yourself, not your job title**  
Set aside formal roles and organizational hierarchies.
- » **Engage actively in meetings and tasks**  
Participate in scheduled sessions and contribute independently to shared work.
- » **Listen, share, and collaborate**  
Take part in discussions, listen to others, and share your expertise openly.
- » **Use the platform's features**  
Communicate through text, images, comments, and even voice recordings to enrich collaboration.
- » **Experiment and learn**  
FET collaboration is an opportunity to try new approaches, explore ideas, and develop new skills!



**5.**  
**BUILDING**  
**TRUST**

## Trust in knowledge collaboration

Building trust quickly is essential for successful temporary knowledge collaboration, where value creation depends on participants' willingness to share and use each other's expertise.

Sharing personal knowledge can feel vulnerable, which is why trust in others' goodwill is essential. No one wants to be ridiculed or ignored for presenting emerging ideas. Without sufficient trust, these potentially valuable insights remain unspoken, and the collaboration cannot reach its full potential.

Similarly, using another person's knowledge requires trust in their competence. Experiential knowledge is deeply personal and often expressed through stories, opinions, or intuitive insights. Personal (tacit) knowledge can be hard to articulate and usually requires dialogue to be fully understood.

While no one wants to rely on incorrect information, innovation often emerges from building on ambiguous ideas through dialogue. To build trust, it is important to be transparent about what one knows for certain and what is still an intuitive idea or early signal. Therefore, acknowledging the limits of one's own expertise is important. Few people excel at everything, and that is the very purpose of FET collaboration: combining complementary knowledge and skills.

## Resolving reservations caused by unfamiliarity and diversity

FET collaboration offers an exciting opportunity to learn from new and interesting people. However, working with unfamiliar and diverse participants can also create friction and hesitation. Questions like "Who is this person?", "Why is s/he involved?" and "How can we communicate best?" often arise, even if they may not be voiced by the participants.

To address this, it is important to provide opportunities for experts to get to know each other. Participants entering the FET collaboration can be directed first to the platform's "People" page, where they can upload a photo and answer a few questions about themselves – such as why they wanted to participate and how they can contribute to the mission. While this is helpful, it remains a relatively passive way to introduce people to one another.

Active introductions by the community leader and team leaders have proven far more effective. These introductions should clarify who the person is and why they were invited. For example:

“Mary and I worked together on Project X, where her expertise in Y was invaluable. The collaboration went smoothly, and the client was very satisfied with the results.”

This approach not only introduces Mary but also demonstrates her credibility and reliability, helping others feel confident in her expertise and collaboration.

### **Diversity: visible and invisible**

FET collaboration values and leverages diversity. Solving complex tasks is built on the idea that participants bring a wide range of experience-based knowledge shaped by their varied backgrounds and contexts.

Experts often accumulate valuable insights from diverse roles and organizations. For many complex societal challenges, participants with personal or contextual knowledge can be invaluable, even if they lack formal education or an official role.

When diverse individuals come together, they contribute complementary skills and fresh perspectives. If all participants were similar, collaboration would merely increase similar resources without generating novelty. Diversity is what sparks innovation.

Alongside experienced professionals, it is equally important to involve younger participants whose perspectives are shaped by their generation. Some aspects of diversity are visible, such as age, ethnicity, or occupation. Others are less obvious, e.g. differences in thinking styles, experiences, values, and personal views. These invisible differences can easily create friction, especially when participants have contrasting work habits, values, or perceptions of time and scheduling.

Diversity is a powerful driver of innovation, but it also poses challenges for communication and trust-building. Sometimes, people use the same words with slightly different meanings. Can one truly understand what the other person is saying? When engaging with someone different from oneself, it is helpful to ask clarifying questions and practical examples as well as to listen carefully: Who is this person? How do they think and act? Where do they come from? What is their role – and who are they beyond that role?

## **Positive emotions in collaboration among unfamiliar and diverse people**

Turning diversity into strength and resource often requires positive emotions. Positive emotions help humans see opportunities, while negative emotions make them focus on risks. Both types of emotions are contagious and can shape the dynamics of collaboration. Negative emotions tend to trigger cautious thoughts and withdrawal: “What if I can’t do this? What if we fail?”

In contrast, positive emotions signal that things are going well and encourage action: “I might learn something new by meeting interesting people. Maybe together we can solve this challenging problem!”

The role of positive emotions becomes even more critical when collaborating with people who are very different from us. When we feel optimistic and open, we are more likely to see others as whole individuals rather than focusing solely on differences. This perspective helps us notice what unites us instead of what separates us. Often it is the small, incidental factors that create the first connection: “Did she also study in Germany?” “Is this platform also new to him? No problem – let’s learn together!”

## **Positive feedback encourages knowledge co-creation**

Research and experience from past FET collaborations shows that positive feedback in platform communication significantly enhances knowledge sharing and teamwork.

Simple gestures such as short comments expressing approval and respect, writing “thank you,” or even using an emoji, signal that a contribution has been noticed and appreciated. These small acts of recognition are critical especially for asynchronous collaboration, where they create an encouraging atmosphere where experts feel valued and motivated to share their insights.

# Building trust proactively

Trust typically develops naturally when people who are socially and characteristically similar interact face-to-face and learn more about each other over time.

In FET collaboration, however, participants are socially and characteristically diverse, often unfamiliar with one another, and the interaction occurs usually all online. In such a context, trust does not emerge naturally, but it must be built actively and quickly.

Trust is particularly critical for FET collaboration because the potential for value creation depends on diverse, specialized experts sharing their knowledge. Without quickly establishing trust, experts may hesitate to share their expertise. Thereby the collaboration could fail to produce new knowledge and innovative solutions.

## Ability, benevolence, and integrity: the cornerstones of trust

In FET collaboration, social trust among participants is rooted in the perceived trustworthiness of leaders and experts. When we assess other person trustworthiness, we implicitly evaluate three qualities:

- » **Ability** – the competence to perform effectively
- » **Benevolence** – the goodwill and openness toward others
- » **Integrity** – consistent and ethical behavior based on values

Participants can make their expertise visible by sharing their previous project references on the collaboration platform or linking their LinkedIn profiles. Network and team leaders can also highlight participants' skills and explain why they were invited. Making knowledge and competence visible increases trust in the group's collective ability.

Benevolence is expressed through openness to other participants' ideas, positive comments, and even simple gestures like smiling. Integrity, on the other hand, is demonstrated by aligning words with actions and keeping promises.

## Interpersonal communication and proactive behavior build social trust

Building strong trust quickly in temporary online collaboration requires **active, multimodal communication**. Interpersonal trust emerges through social interaction: open dialogue, proactive engagement, feedback, and visible commitment to collaboration all strengthen trust.

Digital collaboration platforms enable flexibility through asynchronous interaction, but technology-mediated and asynchronous communication can slow trust development. To create more effective communication, participants should use proactively **written, visual, and verbal communication** to build faster social trust.

Community leaders and team leaders play a crucial role by **demonstrating not only their trustworthiness but also their trust in the invited experts involved**. Showing trust in someone acts as a social proof of their trustworthiness for others.

Interpersonal trust based on trust among leaders and experts could be insufficient for the trust required to achieve effective temporary collaboration in the digital platforms. Trust is also shaped by factors beyond direct social interaction. Therefore, leaders and designers of FET collaboration should consider also impersonal sources for trust to create quickly stronger trust enabling expert knowledge sharing and use.

## Structures and processes build impersonal trust

**Impersonal factors** that build trust include:

- » **Structures and processes** that increase predictability and reduce uncertainty
- » **Training** that ensures equal opportunity for participation
- » **Timely and open communication** keeps participants informed and aligned
- » **Reliable technology** that supports smooth collaboration
- » **Collaborative culture** that enhances psychological safety and a sense of community

**Structures and processes enhance trust by lowering uncertainty and making collaboration more predictable.** They also create conditions conducive for trusting interpersonal relationships. For example, Community Dialogues serve as an important dialogical structure allowing participants to learn more about each other by sharing and listening to community knowledge.

**Training is essential** to ensure that all participants possess the knowledge and skills needed for effective collaboration. Before joining the community, participants should have the opportunity to learn about the FET collaboration process. This can begin by **sharing the guidebook**, which is quick to read and has proven helpful for orientation.

In addition, participants should receive **technical training** to become comfortable with the digital collaboration platform and related tools prior to the start of collaboration. Also, when inviting experts to join the FET community, it is beneficial to **discuss mutual expectations and address any open questions in a personal conversation**.

During the collaboration, **mini-training sessions** can also be provided through short videos or real-time “clinics”. Furthermore, the collaboration platform enables participants to tag members of the organizing team directly to ask questions and receive timely support.

As some of the experts join FET collaboration as part-time leaders for their teams, it is important to provide synchronous and asynchronous structures that support their work during the process. Joint brainstorming sessions and shared “backstage” spaces for team leaders have proven effective.

- » **Team Leaders’ Brainstorming Sessions:** FET community usually involves multiple teams, making peer learning and sparring between leaders highly beneficial.
- » **Leaders’ Backstage:** This shared online space in the digital platform allows quick and easy asynchronous communication on leadership and facilitation matters as the project evolves.

**Communication** should respect participants' limited time and accommodate asynchronous interaction. For example,

- » **Weekly updates:** Community and team leaders can share short summaries of progress and upcoming tasks via platform posts or email.
- » **Visual snapshots:** Weekly visual summaries increase situational awareness. Simple tools such as updating a PowerPoint file with diagrams help participants quickly grasp the group's structure, current focus, and overall progress.

**Technology functionality** also matters. Choosing tools that are stable and user-friendly and addressing common issues proactively enhances trust. Even small technical problems like meeting invitations landing in spam folders can cause frustration and disengagement.

A collaborative culture further strengthens trust. The team's climate of trust is closely related to the concept of **psychological safety**, defined as the belief that one can take interpersonal risks such as speaking up, asking questions, or admitting mistakes without fear of negative consequences. When individuals feel psychologically safe, they are more willing to share ideas, raise concerns, and take initiative. Also, the identification with other experts working toward a shared goal enhances the sense of community, which in turn reinforces trust.

Finally, **institutional trust** – confidence in education systems, legislation, and cultural norms – also supports collaboration. In Finland, for example, high digitalization, well-trained professionals, and relatively low organizational hierarchy create a favourable context for FET collaboration.

## Why soft factors matter

**Investing in soft factors of trust, communication, and commitment pays off because these elements reinforce each other and are essential for successful knowledge collaboration.** At best, proactive social interaction combined with supportive structures and processes can quickly build conditions for trust that enables effective FET collaboration.

Preparing participants in advance, as discussed earlier, also clarifies expectations and further strengthens trust.

### IMPERSONAL TRUST

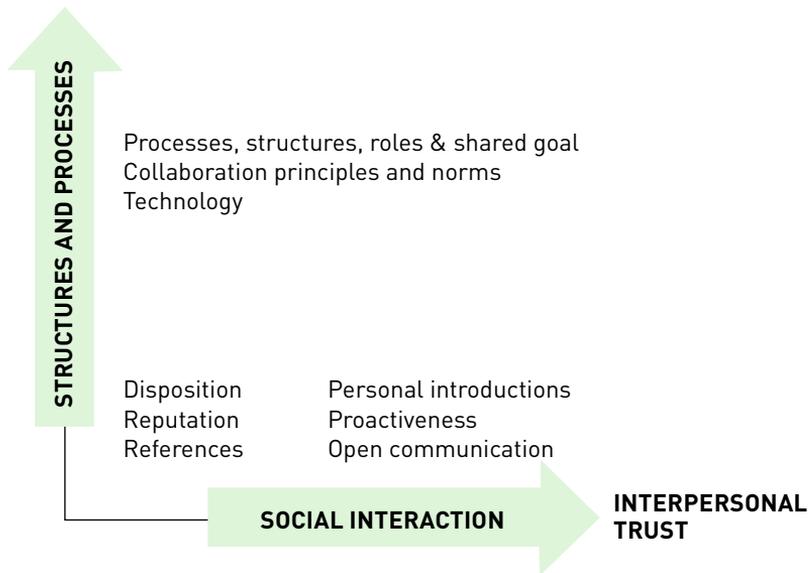


Figure 4. Building interpersonal and impersonal trust

## COMMUNITY AND TEAM LEADER CHECKLIST FOR BUILDING TRUST

- » **Clarify mission and team purpose and goals.** Explain why the work was initiated and what the shared goals are.
- » **Establish collaboration principles.** Discuss and agree on how the community and teams will work together.
- » **Introduce participants.** Explain why the specific individuals were invited to the mission and teams. Introduce participants in community and teams.
- » **Make workspaces and processes visible and understandable.** Show the collaboration platform's workspaces and outline the work process.
- » **Ensure technology performance.** Check that selected digital tools work properly and participants know how to use them.
- » **Clarify meeting purposes.** Explain the goal of each meeting before it starts.
- » **Engage diverse participants actively.** Encourage contributions from everyone. Ask questions, listen carefully, and consider diverse participants' perspectives. Respect diversity.
- » **Be consistent yet flexible.** Maintain consistence while adapting to changing needs.
- » **Communicate progress regularly.** Provide visual updates continuously to share progress. Explain what has been achieved and what comes next using agreed communication channels.
- » **Create and maintain a positive atmosphere.** Demonstrate your commitment through your social presence and proactiveness. Positive emotions encourage people to recognize opportunities and act. They are also contagious!

## PARTICIPANT CHECKLIST FOR BUILDING TRUST

- » **Communicate clearly.** Speak in a language everyone understands.
- » **Listen actively.** Pay close attention to what others say.
- » **Look for common ground.** Identify shared factors alongside differences.
- » **Be open and honest.** Foster openness and transparency in all interactions.
- » **Create a positive atmosphere.** Positive emotions are contagious. Thank, encourage, and show appreciation!
- » **Engage and contribute proactively.** Work proactively and consider how your work can advance the whole.
- » **Clarify expectations.** Share what you can and cannot do, and what you expect from others.
- » **Keep your promises.** Honor commitments and avoid making promises you cannot keep.
- » **Demonstrate trustworthiness.** Strive to do your best and focus on building the common good.
- » **Start with trust.** Give trust a chance by trusting others first. Make your trust visible in your communication and behaviour.



**6.**  
**SHARED**  
**LEADERSHIP**

# Leading FET community

Leading the FET community requires commitment and a genuine willingness to foster collaboration in a way that serves the mission and the community’s needs. Teams requires leadership and every participating expert also leads themselves to contribute effectively and benefit from the collaboration. FET collaboration does not rely on hierarchical, top-down control and FET leadership is best described as shared leadership. Successful leadership of FET collaboration happens at three levels: community, team, and individual.

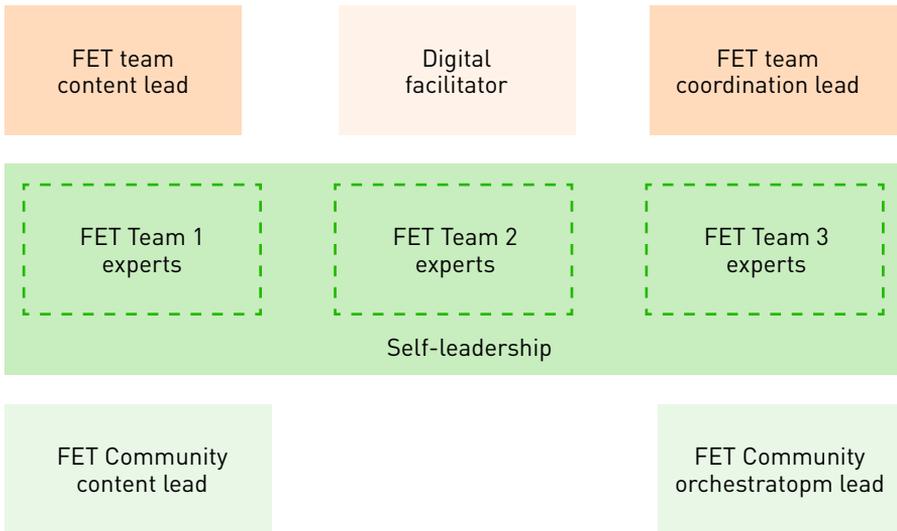


Figure 4. Shared leadership in FET collaboration

At the community level, one individual typically takes responsibility for the overall mission content. This **community content leader** should have a broad perspective and a deep understanding of the mission. Acting as a knowledge architect, s/he maintains an overview of the big picture and the diverse expertise required to co-create solutions.

The community content leader recognizes that addressing the mission involves a complex set of interconnected elements and therefore focuses on enabling collective sensemaking by integrating perspectives and identifying interdependencies. **A systems perspective**, deep respect for diverse expert knowledge, and strong communication and interaction skills are essential for this role.

Another person often takes lead of orchestrating the community by building structures and processes that support the community's mission. This person in charge of **community orchestration** is also intensively involved through the process so that collaboration process can be adapted to the community needs when beneficial. Also, this role requires a systems perspective and strong communication skills.

These community leaders are often supported by a **digital facilitator**, who understands the capabilities of the collaboration platform. Digital facilitation can also be a shared responsibility, with facilitators taking on this role alongside their expert tasks.

## Leading FET teams

Since most participants balance FET work with their regular jobs, it is necessary for each team to have **two part-time team leaders** so that the team leadership task does not become too heavy. Typically, one focuses on the **team content lead**, while the other handles traditional **project management** tasks such as scheduling work and meetings.

The two part-time leaders for each team have two primary roles: **leading content creation and coordinating teamwork**. It is helpful to agree which part-time leader focuses on which role, even if they work flexibly together.

**Team content creation** involves defining the team's task collaboratively with the experts, gathering ideas and materials, and supporting team efforts to solve the challenge. A key responsibility is proactively engaging experts in both verbal and written online discussions. **Proactively supporting experts in sharing knowledge and using each other's knowledge is essential for team successful knowledge co-creation.**

**Coordination** refers to more traditional leadership tasks, such as setting objectives and timetables. Leadership also plays a critical role in shaping the community's work culture and psychological safety. Both team leaders should also pay attention to actively **building trust** in the team.

Typically, team leaders are invited to their roles. **Intrinsic motivation** also plays a significant role, and experts can volunteer for these positions. **Prior experience in leading teams is valuable.** Some experts are more comfortable in leading conversations and engaging other experts in knowledge co-creation, whilst others may be better suited for the project management roles.

Team leaders should expect to spend **50–100% more time than other experts**. In many cases, the visual and verbal finalization of the FET collaboration output takes place after the four-week knowledge co-creation process. It is therefore important to clearly **define the team leaders' role in finalizing and presenting the team's solution**.

Participating experts need to be able to trust their leaders' competence, goodwill, and integrity in guiding the community. Leaders' authenticity, motivation, and collaborative capability become evident through their communication and behavior. Despite the distinct roles, **FET leaders work together in a highly flexible and collaborative manner to achieve the best possible outcome**.

### Case example: Soletair Power

Soletair Power's digital co-creation was conducted on the Solved platform in collaboration with experts from LUT Business School and Solved. One LUT researcher, working on her doctoral thesis, actively engaged in action research throughout the project. The collaboration was planned iteratively through short meetings inspired by agile software development practices. Experts were invited from Solved's expert community, and additional Finnish and international experts were recruited through snowballing to provide valuable knowledge and insights for Soletair Power's internationalization process.

FET collaboration for knowledge co-creation thrives through participating experts' engagement in knowledge sharing, and the learning and insights it generates. As the mission and tasks are complex, ambiguous, and open-ended, leading the FET community must remain adaptive as the work progresses.

**Digital organizing enables a high degree of flexibility.** Depending on the mission and the scope of the task, collaboration processes, structures, and roles may evolve over time. New experts may be invited as needed, and team members may adapt to different roles as the work progresses.

# Leading oneself as participating expert

Participating experts are expected to participate actively and flexibly in a way that works them best. It requires self-management and proactively sharing one's knowledge and perspective, while actively listening to the community's other participants.

**Self-management** in FET collaboration means:

- » **1. Managing one's own time** and using opportunities to work flexibly on the solution.
- » **2. Proactively contributing expertise** to the community and **learning from others** to engage in a dialogue for knowledge co-creation.
- » **3. Adapting one's role** to fit personal and team's needs. Participants should consider: What role am I prepared to take?

FET collaboration tends to be **evolving rather than rigidly planned**. Even if roles, schedules, and processes are agreed upon initially, it is wise to allow flexibility for adjustments as the work progresses. For example, some participants may wish to take on a larger role, or new experts may need to be invited as the required expertise needed to solve the mission becomes clearer.

## CHECKLIST FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

- » **Make progress visible** by using tools such as visual snapshots and weekly update letters.
- » **Clarify team leadership responsibilities:** Agree on who handles content creation and who is responsible for team coordination tasks – such as scheduling and following progress.
- » **Enable flexible communication** between leaders, for example, through a dedicated backstage.
- » **Leverage peer learning** and sparring, such as team leaders’ brainstorming sessions.
- » **Listen to the group’s needs** and experiment with development ideas.
- » **Involve interested experts** in shared leadership, for example, by assigning digital support, or other suitable roles.
- » **Refine roles and responsibilities** as needed after the work has started.
- » **Seek advice and accept help** – as a leader, you don’t have to do everything alone!

## CHECKLIST FOR SELF-LEADERSHIP

- » **Commit to the collaboration:** Reflect on how you can actively contribute and stay engaged.
- » **Plan your time:** Consider how to balance FET collaboration with your other responsibilities.
- » **Define your role:** Think about the role you would like to take and how you can help the team succeed.
- » **Offer support:** Share ideas, help, and ask how you can contribute.
- » **Stay open and active:** You’ll gain the most by being curious, proactive, and willing to learn!



# **7. COLLABORATION PRINCIPLES AND CONTRACTS**

## Working principles and norms

It is important to agree on collaboration principles, norms, and contracts in FET collaboration, as participating experts coming from diverse backgrounds and roles often have different norms and working practices. Clear collaboration principles ensure that **everyone understands how the process is intended to work**.

Also, the open-ended mission, tasks and technology-mediated collaboration with unfamiliar experts creates **uncertainty that can be lowered by agreeing on basic collaboration principles and norms** that reduce this uncertainty, increase predictability, and build trust within the participants.

First, **defining the task** involves discussing the **objectives of the collaboration** that reduces uncertainty. It is also generally advisable to agree on at least the **working principles and norms**. Without them, participants may hold differing assumptions, leading to confusion.

Everyone is invited to participate in FET collaboration in **an individual capacity**, not as a representative of any organization. The collaboration is typically **pro bono**, and participants agree to contribute a certain amount of their time to share their expertise with other experts. **Chatham House Rules** apply throughout the collaboration, meaning individual contributors' views are not shared publicly. All **participants will have an opportunity to review the final output** before deciding whether they wish to have their name included as an individual contributor.

Collaboration norms can be **formal or informal**. Regarding FET collaboration in general, **trust, collaboration, respect, and fairness** are key values for collaboration. How these values are practiced as collaboration norms are discussed also in [People and Time](#) and [Building Trust](#).

## Organizational support

When applicable, participants should also **confirm participation with their supervisor** and, if necessary, the organization's **legal team**, what information they can share, how it can be used, and the approved ways to engage in the FET collaboration.

# Confidentiality and Intellectual Property Rights

If the work involves sensitive or confidential matters, such as trade secrets, a **confidentiality agreement** should be considered. It is important to ensure that a **privacy policy** is in place for handling personal data (GDPR). A discussion about **potential contractual arrangements** can further align expectations. Legal agreements are essential when financial opportunities or significant risks are involved.

If the FET collaboration involves developing something that can give rise to patentable rights, **an agreement on the use of the rights** should be drawn up. In this case, the ownership, and rights of use of the background material should be agreed upon as well as the resulting data and the ownership and use of any patentable rights. Provisions for liability, compensation, and contract termination should also be included for research and development projects.

Even when such rights do not arise, it is useful to agree on how participants can use generated ideas and concepts within their own organizations. **As a rule of thumb, the dissemination of good practices and concepts is a good thing and does no harm to anyone.** That could also be the objective of the public organization financing the work.

The FET collaboration commissioned by the WORK2030 program also addressed contractual issues. You can view the results of the group work here (in Finnish): [Sopimukselliset kysymykset FET prosessissa](#)

# Communication with external parties

It is also important to agree on **how communication with third parties will be handled.** For example, during the FET collaboration in the COVID spring of 2020, participants shared their involvement on social media, which attracted interest in the media. Using a common hashtag – such as **#Fastexperteams** – can also promote a sense of community and belonging within the group.

It is important to agree on **what information is public and what remains internal**. One option is to adopt the **Chatham House Rule**, which allows information shared in the collaboration to be used freely, provided **the identity of the speaker is not disclosed and the content is not attributed to any individual**. It could be also agreed that ideas should only be referenced as part of the group's collective output, not as individual contributions. This ensures participants can share their thoughts freely, knowing the conversation will remain confidential.

A practical way to establish shared working methods and principles is to **ask participants in advance about their expectations, hopes, and concerns**. The first meetings with community and teams serve as a natural forum for these discussions, while also covering principles of fair and functional collaboration and related values.

## New Projects

FET collaboration brings together previously unfamiliar experts from diverse networks who discover shared interests and may wish to pursue new collaborative projects after the FET process. The increased social capital benefits all. When ideas have been developed jointly during FET, it would be fair to ask participants whether they would like to be involved in these new initiatives. This way, participants also maintain their reputation as good collaborators. In consultancy contexts, it is considered courteous to extend such invitations within a reasonable timeframe, typically within one year, after which all contributors are free to further develop the ideas independently.

This is also an opportunity to agree on **how progress toward shared goals will be monitored**. Highlighting each participant's expectations for **short- and long-term objectives** helps align efforts.

Finally, the agreed principles can be summarized into a set of **House Rules** on the collaboration platform to remind participants of what was decided. Clear principles and, where necessary, a formal contract help **Building trust** and ensure smooth collaboration.

## CHECKLIST FOR ESTABLISHING COLLABORATION PRINCIPLES

- » **Raise key issues early.** Discuss shared ground rules and any potential legal agreements from the very start of the collaboration.
- » **Identify expectations.** Gather participants' expectations for the FET collaboration and review them together in first community and team meetings.
- » **Agree on collaboration principles.** Define the principles and summarize them into a clear set of house rules for easy reference.
- » **Highlight the evolving nature of the work.** Emphasize that while collaboration principles remain stable, practical aspects such as roles, communication methods, and meeting schedules can be refined as the work progresses.
- » **Clarify participant recognition.** Agree on possible remuneration and how participants' names will appear in the final report once the task is completed.



**8.**  
**DEFINING**  
**THE TASK**

## Defining the mission

FET collaboration is designed to address **challenging, open-ended problems or opportunities**. These tasks are often complex and ambiguous meaning that their content and scope are not immediately clear and can be difficult to outline.

It is helpful to start by **discussing the mission with the client's key personnel and relevant stakeholders**. Clients often have **background materials**, such as reports, that can be shared with permission. There are also a lot of publicly available reports and materials that can be searched for. If needed, **workshops** can be organized to refine the mission using group discussions and other collaborative tools.

Additional details on data sets and background materials are provided in the chapter [Co-creating new knowledge](#).

## Building shared understanding of the mission and tasks

Building shared understanding of the mission and tasks early is critical. Ambiguous, open-ended tasks challenge participating experts' thinking, and **the more complex the task, the more important it is to understand its systemic nature and related interdependencies**.

The process typically begins with an assignment from the client, but often the client does not have a clear understanding of the mission and desired solution. Both the mission and related tasks vary widely depending on the situation and client needs. Therefore, it is crucial to clarify **what level of mission solution is expected**:

- » Is the goal to provide **an overview**?
- » A **detailed analysis**?
- » Or an innovative concept for **further development**?

**Joint discussions form the foundation of the entire collaboration**. Without shared understanding, experts risk working on different problems. Engaging experts to jointly define the tasks and open dialogue about diverse perspectives can spark **new ideas and innovative solutions**, while strengthening the group's sense of purpose and teamwork.

Active participation in defining the task fosters **commitment and ownership**. It is very different to work on a task one has participated in to define compared to one handed down pre-defined. Collaborative task definition promotes **shared goals, sense of community, and trust**.

## Mission and task evolution

The overall mission is usually broadly outlined by the client and organizers, and it evolves throughout the FET collaboration. Because of the mission ambiguity and open-endedness, it cannot usually be broken down into clear tasks for immediate allocation. Instead, organizers propose **preliminary and open-ended themes for the teams**. Invited experts are then matched to multi-disciplinary and often also cross-sectoral teams based on their expertise and interest. This mission, task ambiguity and open-endedness, makes **discussion and collaboration essential from the very beginning**.

A defining characteristic of FET collaboration is that participants jointly specify the tasks and the issues they aim to solve. When teams begin their work, they start by defining their specific task in detail. Key questions include:

- » What exactly is the task? How do we want to **specify and focus** with our task?
- » What skills and expertise are needed to address it? Do we need some **additional expertise**?
- » What is **most relevant and can be done** during FET collaboration?

Discussions about the mission and task content and goals continue in **FET community meetings and team sessions**.

As work progresses, participants will learn more about the task, and objectives may evolve. **Task specification is an ongoing process** throughout FET collaboration. This should not be seen as failure but as a reflection of the task's complexity and the team's success in generating **new knowledge and understanding**.

Often, the mission final solution is far from clear at the outset – and it may turn out to be **far more valuable than initially expected!**

## CHECKLIST FOR DEFINING THE COMMUNITY MISSION

- » **Schedule a discussion with the client’s key contact**  
Confirm objectives and clarify expectations.
- » **Identify knowledgeable representatives**  
Find out which client or stakeholder representatives have relevant expertise or insights.
- » **Assess the need for a task-specification workshop**  
Decide whether a joint workshop with the client is necessary to help refine the mission and tasks.
- » **Decide on background materials**  
Should summaries of existing materials be provided to participants? Who will prepare them?
- » **Clarify the expected outcomes**  
What will the task lead to, and how will the results be used?
- » **Plan how the FET community and teams will continue defining the mission and tasks**  
Establish a process for ongoing refinement as the work evolves.
- » **Define reporting format and communication process**  
How and in what form will the final output be delivered to the client and shared with FET participants?

## CHECKLIST FOR DEFINING THE TEAM TASK

- » **What problem are we trying to solve?**  
Define the core issue or challenge.
- » **What is the focus of our work?**  
Specify the scope and boundaries of the task.
- » **What should we exclude?**  
Clarify what is outside the scope to avoid distractions.
- » **Which factors are critical for solving the task?**  
Identify key elements that influence success. How do they interact?  
Understand relationships and dependencies.
- » **What expertise should we involve?**  
Identify the skills and knowledge required for solving the mission.
- » **What background materials are available, and how can they be used?**  
Review existing resources and clarify permissions for use.
- » **What time and resources do we have?**  
Assess the available capacity and constraints.



**9.  
CO-CREATING  
NEW  
KNOWLEDGE**

# Sharing and using expert knowledge in community and teams

Co-creating new knowledge for innovative solutions is the essence in FET collaboration. Knowledge co-creation requires **sharing and using expert personal (tacit) knowledge**. Experts bring to the mission their valuable **personal knowledge** from earlier experiences, previous projects, and networks. This **experiential and contextual knowledge** can provide unique insights to the conversation in solving the task.

Experts co-create new knowledge both at the community and team levels. Organizing FET collaboration as a **temporary community and teams provide different functional and temporal spaces for knowledge co-creation**.

At the community level, the **Community Dialogues** ([see Community Meetings at Considering People and Time](#)) enable **shared sensemaking** of the different and interdependent aspects of the complex mission. Both the real-time and asynchronous conversations related to Community Dialogues provide information, knowledge, and inspirational insights to the **whole expert community**. Without community-level dialogue, the experts working in the teams would have difficulty in connecting their work to the mission as a whole.

At the team level, both **verbal and written exchanges in the digital dialogues** generate valuable knowledge for advancing the team's task related to the mission. **Team-level dialogue allows for deeper engagement and more personal connection** because there are more time and space for each person's voice. The teams' **workspaces are intentionally open**, allowing experts from other teams to visit, follow discussions, and learn from one another's thinking. Teams are also encouraged to invite experts from other teams to share insights or comment on ongoing discussions.

Team-level knowledge mobility is further strengthened through **Cross-pollination sessions**. In these sessions, teams present their half-ready or partial solutions to others, **receive feedback, and learn** from the approaches emerging in parallel **across the community**. The purpose of the session is not only to improve each team's work but also **to ensure alignment between individual team solutions and the overall emerging mission solution**.

# Sharing background materials

Experts' verbal and written discussions are grounded on **diverse background materials** that provide information and ideas for **digital dialogues generating new knowledge** for the concept development.

Participants are encouraged to share various materials on the collaboration platform, where they can be reviewed and discussed. When experts share relevant background materials in digital dialogues, the **shared materials function as boundary objects**, enabling cross-boundary and often asynchronous conversations on the digital collaboration platform. Team leaders should encourage participants to contribute as much relevant and interesting material as possible.

**Shared materials help make verbal and written personal knowledge visible and understood.** These digital artefacts function as boundary objects enabling cross-boundary communication. Various materials provide also **useful information and inspiration for knowledge co-creation.** They help to **make sense of the complex task and build common understanding**, which is especially important when collaborating across diverse backgrounds.

## Types of materials

In addition to text-based discussions, comments, and questions, participants can upload:

- » **Attachments and links**, such as research reports or news articles
- » **Charts, diagrams, and photos**
- » **Links to online resources**, including YouTube-videos
- » **Short video recordings** created by participants
- » **Drawings or visual sketches**

The possibilities are broad, and creativity is encouraged. **Rich and varied materials inspire discussion, spark new perspectives, and allow participants to share and discuss** what they find most useful for solving the task.

## Finding and sharing background material

» **Check existing research**

Has any interesting research been conducted on the topic? You can find numerous research articles – especially in English – using Google Scholar or other tools.

» **Look for theses and academic work**

Also student theses are often available online. Master’s theses may provide good overviews and include reference lists for further reading. Use Google Scholar and Google to locate these resources.

» **Explore research institutes and think tanks’ websites**

Many institutes publish reports and summaries of previous projects on their websites.

» **Leverage professional networks**

Social networks and platforms can help you discover relevant communities, experts, and their publications.

» **Share your own work**

Have you worked on something similar before? Share any relevant material that is openly available with the group.

» **Use visuals for inspiration and shared understanding**

Drawings, diagrams, and images can spark discussion. They function also as a boundary object enabling diverse individuals to discuss about the theme. You can find plenty of images online using the image search function or create your own.

» **Use drawing tools and AI** You can also draw a picture, take a photo of it, or create figures and videos with AI tools that can be linked or uploaded to the collaboration platform. Photos of places or objects are helpful in conveying context or atmosphere.

## Co-creating new knowledge in digital dialogues

Sharing materials on a collaboration platform creates the greatest value when contributors explain why the shared material matters. What makes it interesting? What makes it relevant for the task? Providing expert opinions and context sparks meaningful discussion.

## Working across time and place

Having a conversation on shared materials is especially helpful in asynchronous collaboration. All participants can review materials on the platform at their **own pace, allowing reflections** and coming back to the platform when it works for them. By commenting on shared materials and **giving their expert opinions**, experts convey their experiential knowledge and unique perspectives.

They can add opinions, comments or questions, enabling **asynchronous, multi-modal discussion** that enriches collaboration and knowledge creation. **Shared materials offer a concrete starting point for a digital dialogue providing the visibility** that stays on the collaboration platform, so experts can revisit and add comments and questions when they have a chance to contribute to the conversation.

### Example of useful knowledge sharing around a shared material:

- » An expert uploads a report and explains what they find useful and interesting.
- » Another expert comments from her perspective, highlighting how the research might apply to the task.
- » A third expert gives credit to the contributor for sharing and poses a follow-up question for clarification.
- » A fourth expert gives her expert opinion.
- » A fifth expert suggests a practical way to apply the report's insights to the solution.

**This digital dialogue, as a chain of expert questions, opinions, and socio-emotional support by providing feedback around the shared digital artefacts, generates new knowledge.** It is essential that participants not only share information and resources but also **express their expert opinions and interpretations**. This combination of different types of experiential and contextual knowledge enhances innovation. Equally, it is important that experts **ask other experts their expert opinions** on the topic.

**Innovation requires diversity of thought and consensus too early easily stifles creativity.** Therefore, experts are encouraged to participate authentically and without the pressure of delivering 'perfect answers.' **Too polished answers may actually stop the conversation too early, as others do not see the space to contribute.** Often, the best results emerge when the work is **open, even playful**, and participants feel free to share intuitive ideas, ask bold questions, and offer candid opinions and viewpoints.

A well-functioning group welcomes different viewpoints and constructive disagreement. In innovation, this is called 'creative abrasion'. Energetic curiosity, combined with a genuine desire to understand and learn, keeps the work moving forward. On building conditions for a trusting work climate and psychological safety to speak up and disagree, see [Building trust](#).

## **Knowledge co-creation advances through divergence and convergence**

Knowledge co-creation advances iteratively through two different phases that is most visible in team-level knowledge collaboration when each team is working on a sub-task related to the mission.

- » **Divergence** – exploring and generating new ideas
- » **Convergence** – refining and integrating ideas into a solution

During the first half of the FET-collaboration, the experts explore and generate new ideas in verbal and written conversation with each other. This early '**Divergence**' phase in the knowledge collaboration should be very rich and generative. In this phase, **sharing various materials and exploring ideas broadly and freely is encouraged**. Team leaders encourage exploring different ideas and materials. **The more and varied, the better, as the materials provide resources for the digital dialogues** among the experts.

Later, during the second half of the team collaboration, team leaders start guiding the conversation toward '**Convergence**' meaning that **the shared ideas are selected and refined** further, so that teams and the whole community can provide actionable solutions that meet the mission and client needs. At this stage, the focus shifts from introducing new materials **to integrating and synthesizing** insights and **converging** towards a shared solution.

## Using templates to facilitate knowledge co-creation

Knowledge co-creation can also be supported through shared document templates, where ideas and materials are added as work progresses. These **templates function as scaffolds** shaping collaboration and making progress visible for all. They help compile a solution from diverse experts' partial contributions and provide a framework for outputs. For example, the SmartHäme2025 teams used shared templates to prepare focused solution proposals.

An excellent example of using a document template to co-create new knowledge is the design of the Hiedanranta circular economy district, developed with the participation of Solved's expert community and facilitated by Ethica.

## Design of the Hiedanranta circular economy district

In designing the Hiedanranta district on the Solved platform, Ethica's team used a pyramid structure as a design template. This template served as a shared framework into which ideas aligned with the common vision were gradually introduced.

As the task became clearer, team leaders assigned subtasks to individual experts based on their areas of expertise. Participants developed these subtasks, commented on each other's contributions, and integrated them into the shared document and final report.

The pyramid's key texts provided focus and direction for the collaborative work. Each participant could follow progress as team leaders combined and 'weaved' ideas and discussions into the evolving pyramid. Throughout the process, the textual content of the pyramid was refined and updated multiple times.

During the process, a simple pyramid (see Figure 5) was first created and then adopted as a shared framework for collaboration on the digital platform. At first, only "best practice" was written in the lower part, "cool stuff" in the middle, and "Hiedanranta superpower" in the top of the pyramid. This simple structure was developed iteratively during the knowledge co-creation and design process so that team leaders continuously updated the pyramid.



Figure 5. The pyramid template used in the concept design process for Hiedanranta circular economy city district. (image by Ethica & Solved)

The developing visual pyramid image functioned as **a boundary object enabling distributed experts collaborate across time and space** in the asynchronous collaboration. When the open-ended complex task started to be more explicit, and it was possible to divide the work into the sub-tasks such as 'recycling', 'mobility', and 'construction', each of them was developed further by experts, and finally **woven back to the main template** by leaders for the co-designed concept consisting of city, people, and business perspectives.

### Connecting team-level knowledge co-creation through cross-pollination

During the second half of the FET collaboration, each team presents their draft solutions to other teams.

In this '**cross-pollination**' phase, other teams provide clarifying questions and comments to the presenting team. However, cross-pollination is encouraged throughout the collaboration, and the teamwork spaces on the collaboration platform are open to other team members, who have access and can comment on each team's work during the FET process. Teams are encouraged to proactively seek input from other teams' experts by tagging them for questions and comments.

## **Positive emotions boost energy and engagement**

**Positive emotions, the optimism, and the energy they generate** are essential for knowledge co-creation in technology-mediated collaboration. In face-to-face settings, people naturally absorb subtle cues from the situation and from those around them. In digital collaboration, however, expressions and gestures are harder to perceive as the reduced 'bandwidth' limits our ability to observe and interpret others.

Passive meetings quickly drain enthusiasm. We have all attended in-person meetings where one person speaks while the rest simply listen. Technology-mediated work can feel similarly one directional and dull or, **when done well, dynamic and inspiring.**

**Everyone can help creating a positive atmosphere and sharing energy.** Small, behavioral actions such as making **eye contact, smiling, nodding to show active listening**, and participating in conversation signal interest, willingness to contribute, and respect for others' input.

At its best, virtual collaboration enables ideation, shared learning, and genuine knowledge co-creation. **Digital encounters can be just as rich and engaging** as those that happen in person. In successful online interactions, participants generate ideas, discuss, learn, understand, laugh, and sometimes even feel moved – just as in all meaningful encounters in work and life!

## CHECKLIST FOR EXPERTS

- » **Explain your reasoning** when sharing information, materials, or links. Why is it interesting? Why might it be useful or why do you hesitate?
- » **Keep the conversation going** by asking questions and adding comments. Invite others to share their thoughts.
- » **Create a positive atmosphere:** show appreciation and thank others for their contributions.
- » **Feel free to disagree** – constructive differences of opinion lead to better outcomes!

## CHECKLIST FOR LEADERS

- » **Create an open and safe atmosphere** where everyone feels comfortable commenting and contributing.
- » **Keep the conversation active and encourage participation** from all members.
- » **Engage specific participants by posing questions directly** to those who may have valuable insights on the topic.
- » **Provide regular updates:** explain how the team is progressing, what is completed, and what comes next.
- » **Manage time effectively** and recognize when it is time to shift focus toward developing a solution that meets the client's needs.
- » **Include the client's voice:** if the client is not actively involved on the platform, share their feedback and greetings with the group.

## CHECKLIST FOR ONLINE MEETINGS

- » **Keep your camera on** – and always when you speak – to maintain a sense of presence.
- » **Listen actively and show it** through small gestures, such as nodding.
- » **Ask clarifying questions** – this is how you turn it into a conversation!
- » **Share actively your opinions** – in addition to talking use chat to write your comments.
- » **Search proactively expertise** – who might offer a helpful perspective?
- » **Give space for others to speak** to avoid dominating the conversation.
- » **Express appreciation by thanking** others for their contributions and comments.
- » **Use reactions** – thumbs up, likes, and emojis – to support and approve.
- » **Smile!** A genuine smile communicates positive engagement and good spirit.



# 10. CONCEPTUALIZATION

# Effective conceptualization

Solutions developed through FET collaboration need to be conceptualized into clear and visual formats that make them easy to communicate to clients and stakeholders. The purpose of conceptualization is to build shared understanding and to motivate decision-makers to take action.

Conceptualization should prioritize clarity, usability, and accessibility for different user groups. Visual formats such as diagrams, charts, and infographics are often more effective than lengthy written reports.

## Examples:

**Case Hiedanranta:** The client received both a written report and a visual PowerPoint presentation of the circular economy district concept. A pyramid diagram was used to encapsulate the core elements of the solution.

**Fast Expert Teams vs. Corona:** The final report was presented to Finland's Parliament Futures Committee as a colorful, visual PDF summarizing key results. Researchers collaborated with a graphic designer to ensure clarity and visual appeal. First the report was produced in Finnish and later an English version was produced following by OECD's interest. See the links here:

[Fast Expert Teams vs Korona – Estetään Suomea halvaantumasta](#)

[Fast Expert Teams vs COVID-19: How to help Finland avoid paralyzing when experts cannot meet F2F? – Observatory of Public Sector Innovation](#)

[Fast Expert Teams vs. Corona](#)

**WORK2030 Program:** Reports addressed hybrid work and the FET collaboration model. Teams collaborated on text and visuals via Google Docs embedded in the platform, enabling real-time feedback. A graphic designer refined the visual presentation. The final report was presented to Government Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of Employment and Industry. See the links here:

[https://hyvatyo.ttl.fi/hubfs/Tyo\\_sulaa\\_esite\\_220621\\_FET\\_raportti.pdf](https://hyvatyo.ttl.fi/hubfs/Tyo_sulaa_esite_220621_FET_raportti.pdf)

<https://hyvatyo.ttl.fi/hubfs/FET%20Nopeat%20asiantuntijatiimit.pdf>

<https://hyvatyo.ttl.fi/tyo2030/tyoelamainnovaatiot/fast-expert-teams>

**Case Soletair Power:** Results were shared on Greenreality Lappeenranta webpage, see the link here:

[Soletair Power found new customers with the Fast Expert Teams network and a digital platform – Greenreality](#)

**Fast Expert Teams – Investments in Clean energy and PtX**

The report was finalized in collaboration with a visual design agency to enhance visualization and readability. The completed report, outlining eight key action points, was shared with members of the Finnish Parliament and other relevant stakeholders. Most initiatives have progressed, and some were incorporated into the Ministry of Finance’s policy report addressing challenges and solutions for Eastern Finland. Additionally, an in-person workshop was organized to discuss the implementation of action points suggested by expert community. See the link here:

[Fast Expert Teams – Investments in Clean Energy and Power-to-X in South-East Finland](#)

## Key considerations

- » Conceptualization takes time, especially when multiple parties are involved.
- » If you keep the report writing process transparent and iterative, you can ask the **participating experts if they want their names to be included.**
- » **It is important to agree on roles and allocate time for refining concepts and planning communication.** Final responsibility for the result typically rests with the FET community leader and team leaders.
- » **Plan the final concept solution communications and launch event early** to ensure all participants can attend. Celebrating the jointly created solutions together with the expert community reinforces commitment and shared success.



## Implementation requires planning and collaboration

Implementation of the solutions to practice is a topic beyond this guidebook. However, it is good to remember that turning solutions into new organizational or societal practices does not happen automatically. The more innovative and ambitious the solution, the more time and effort are required for effective implementation. Preparing for implementation often involves working with the client to **conceptualize the solution in stages**, ensuring both alignment and feasibility.

This is why **involving clients and end users** early in the FET collaboration is so valuable. Their perspectives bring essential contextual understanding, and **their active participation often inspires the experts** involved. If direct participation is not possible, sharing emerging solutions with them throughout the process is recommended to **get feedback**. Sometimes it could be useful to plan for a separate process to prepare and engage decision-makers during the FET process.

However, while engaging the client helps ensure contextual understanding and supports effective communication and implementation planning, **the outcome of the FET collaboration remains independent expert work** and should remain so. At the very latest, the client should be brought in when **solutions are being prepared for presentation and implementation**.

Depending on the mission, it may also be useful to include **more stakeholders who can influence implementation**. For example, in the WORK2030 program, the FET community leader regularly updated the program's steering group and gathered their input even before the FET collaboration began.

## CHECKLIST FOR FET COLLABORATION LEADERS AND CLIENTS

- » **Clarify client participation:** Determine how the client can be involved in work conducted on the digital collaboration platform or is there a separate process planned.
- » **Plan communication:** Who should the solution be presented to, and what is the most effective way to communicate it?
- » **Assess client impact:** What changes will the solution bring to the client or its interfaces? Will it add new elements or reduce existing ones? Who benefits, and who could lose in the change?
- » **Identify decision-makers:** Whose approvals are required? Which stakeholders must support implementation?
- » **Evaluate operational needs:** Does the solution require changes to existing processes? Does it involve new technology? Will training be necessary? If so, what is the best way to organize training for the recipients?

# CONCLUSION

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## **Unleashing and building Human and Social Capital**

Rapid technological development has increased the efficiency of knowledge work, yet organizations continue to struggle with how to combine in-person and digital collaboration. Technology-mediated work does not imply isolation: digital platforms can support learning, community building, and effective collaborative innovation. As tasks become more complex, required expertise and human knowledge are increasingly distributed across organizations and locations.

Fast Expert Teams (FET) is a fully online model for organizing such distributed collaboration. By emphasizing trust, knowledge sharing, and human motivation, FETs both unleash existing and build new human and social capital, enabling experts to solve complex problems and create innovative solutions in dynamic environments.

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# AUTHOR OF THE GUIDEBOOK

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I am a Professor of Knowledge Management at LUT Business School in Lappeenranta, Finland. My professional background spans from small to large technology companies, the Finnish government, and regional risk funding for technology firms and start-ups.

My main interest in knowledge management lies in exploring how people and organizations can solve problems and seize opportunities by combining diverse human knowledge and expertise.

In my work, I integrate research, teaching, and engaged scholarship for societal impact. I teach courses on social capital, trust, and knowledge-based organizing. Beyond academia, I serve on boards, provide consultations, and speak at seminars.

Over the years, I have published more than 230 research articles in international journals, books, and conferences on topics such as trust, knowledge management, knowledge-intensive collaboration, and collaborative innovation. Recently, I have also become increasingly interested in future making, new forms of digital organizing and advanced technologies.

This guidebook is designed for individuals who want to leverage digitalization and benefit from new ways of collaborating. Unlike academic literature, it does not include direct references or a bibliography. If you are interested in our research on these topics, please feel free to reach out.

The Fast Expert Teams (FET) organizing model has been studied and developed through research projects, including Fast Expert Teams in the Platform Economy, funded by Business Finland, the Research Council of Finland, and ERDF-funded initiatives. LUT Master and MBA students have also applied FET organizing model in courses taught by me and my research team.

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# **This Fast Expert Teams guidebook is for individuals and organizations seeking new ways of collaborating to solve complex problems or tackle new opportunities.**

## **Discover innovative solutions**

- » Are ambiguous problems slowing your organization down?
- » Do you need fresh, creative approaches but lack time or expertise internally?

## **Leverage expertise inside and outside your organization**

- » Can you flexibly access knowledge and competencies beyond your own team?

## **Identify new possibilities**

- » Are promising opportunities being overlooked because no one has time to explore them?

## **Develop new ways of collaborating**

- » Do traditional methods feel outdated or too rigid?
- » It might be time to shake things up and try something new!

## **Put your knowledge and skills to use – and learn something new**

- » Does your current role allow you to fully utilize your expertise?
- » Do you have enough opportunities to learn and grow?

## **Update your digital collaboration skills**

- » Is it time to learn new ways of working in networks in the digital age?

## **Work with experts from different fields**

- » Have you collaborated across disciplines to gain valuable perspectives on complex challenges?

## **Get inspired by co-creating solutions**

- » Collaborative problem-solving makes work meaningful and energizing!



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