

Fast Expert Teams – a new way to collaborate



Combine various types of knowledge
and competence, make use of
digitalization, seize opportunities, and
discover new solutions!

A new way to collaborate

Combine various types of knowledge and competence

"We humans have developed a tremendous amount of valuable knowledge through education, work and life experiences." At the same time, many challenges remain unresolved, and opportunities pass by.

There is a constantly growing need to combine different kinds of knowledge and competence to tackle challenges and solve complex tasks. On the other hand, the accumulation of knowledge and expertise requires time and specialization.

Knowledge and expertise are available, but it often dispersed to various people and organizations. Organizations do not always know how to use the knowledge available in networks. Skills are also often underused, leaving valuable knowledge unused.

Make the most of the digitalization

Digitalization enables people to join collaboration projects rapidly without anyone needing to travel. Collaboration requires less time and financial resources, and participants can be located in different parts of the country or the world.

Digital platforms allow replacing long, real-time meetings with flexible participation when it best suits each participant. Rapidly evolving technology enables easy interaction in a variety of ways.

Seize opportunities and discover new solutions

Problems and untapped opportunities become solutions when people have the desire to participate and are enthusiastic about working together. Sharing knowledge and creating new solutions collaboratively requires supporting structures, processes, and leadership.

How to use this workbook?

This workbook is intended to be used by various organizations regardless of their size, sector, products or services.

It is best used when working with complex and open-ended challenges. Tasks can either be small, requiring only one team, or larger in scale, in which case many teams will work within a FET community, solving various subtasks.

There are many roles in which you can utilize the workbook: as a participant, a community leader or team leader or as the client's representative.

It can be freely used, shared, and linked to your organization's website in Finnish and English.

So far, FET projects have made use of knowledge and competence across various sectors. Experts have been invited to participate from both small and large companies, universities, educational institutions, public sector organizations, as well as labor unions and employer federations.

In spring 2020, an expert community was gathered with an extensive mission: "Fast expert teams vs. corona – let's avoid Finland from paralysis". On the first day of the exceptional situation, a community of more than 100 experts was formed and split into eight solution teams. Their tasks included 3D printing spare parts, disseminating good remote work practices, launching research regarding the transfer to remote work, cleaning respirators for re-use and the development of rapid funding and research instruments.

In spring 2021, the "Fast expert teams & hybrid work" initiative of the WORK2030 programme brought together a total of 80 work life experts, split 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 considered how Finnish work communities and employees could make use of the FET operational model and the contractual issues involved with the approach.

More than 30 experts from 10 organizations took part in solving the challenge of re-using FFP2/3 respirators. In the crisis, the group was assembled in 24 hours and a functioning pilot plant was ready in six weeks.

The technology company Soletair Power used a FET project to gain new pilot clients and further focus the product-market compatibility of their technology product.

This method of working has also been tested in the development of collaboration between social, health and cultural leaders in South Karelia and in the SmartHäme2025 regional development initiative with the help of 80 experts.

The operational model is suitable for both SMEs that need external expertise as well as for large corporations that use FET to combine knowledge from different parts within 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.

FET collaboration is always solution-oriented expert work focused on a specific task or theme. It is always also fixed term in nature and concluding the FET collaboration will often result in new collaboration.

FET collaboration can also be used to build ecosystems and communities.

FET collaboration could well become a permanent practice for an organization that aims to achieve a competitive edge based on knowledge and competence.

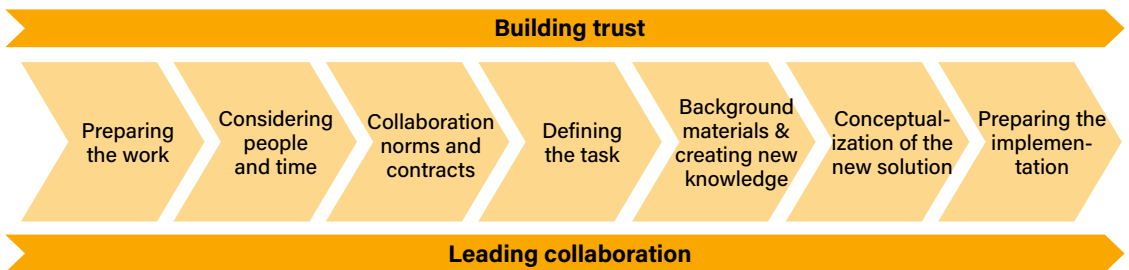


Figure 1. Fast expert teams organizing as a process

Contents

A new way to collaborate	2
1. The fast expert teams organizing model	6
2. What are the benefits of FET collaboration?	11
3. Preparing the work	15
4. Considering people and schedules	22
5. Building trust	28
6. Leading the collaboration	36
7. Collaboration norms and contracts	40
8. Defining the task	44
9. Background materials and creating new knowledge	47
10. Conceptualization and preparation of implementation	54
Conclusion	57
Acknowledgements	58
Author of the workbook	59

1. The fast expert teams organizing model

The idea behind Fast Expert Teams (FET) is to swiftly bring together people with different expertise, working in different places, to solve challenges and complex tasks. FET stands for Fast Expert Teams.

This refers to a temporary team of experts brought together to solve a challenging task across professional and organizational boundaries. A FET team can also work as part of a temporary community of experts and several teams

Experts from within and outside the organization are brought together to solve a specific challenge or task, because they have the knowledge and insight needed to do just that.

When working, value is given to expertise gained from both education and experience. Combining diverse people's experiential knowledge is particularly useful in solving a complex task.

Working this way utilizes digital collaboration platforms, and the technology-mediated way of working ensures that no one must travel, making the method fast and flexible.

Expert collaboration based on trust and shared organizing principles is actively facilitated and only a part of the work requires setting aside shared time.

Various documents, photos and videos can be discussed and shared on the collaboration platform. These digital materials that the participants bring will support asynchronous collaboration, ideation and the co-creation of new knowledge.

FET collaboration is characterized by its innovative nature, and at its best, the party commissioning the task will receive new ideas and an innovative outcome. The work is also evolving in nature rather than being carefully planned and it can be flexibly adapted.

Technology-mediated and facilitated work allows getting use of expertise that might otherwise be difficult to obtain. When the work is facilitated well, a busy expert can share their knowledge at times when it provides the greatest benefit.

The participants are allowed sufficient space to think and reflect as they can schedule their own work. Part of the work is conducted alone, some by discussing and some by writing down the participant's own views and commenting on other participants' ideas. Conscious use of time supports creativity and the participant's own learning.

FET collaboration can be scaled according to need. On a small scale it can comprise only one team and in a more extensive setting several teams can work within a temporary community of experts.

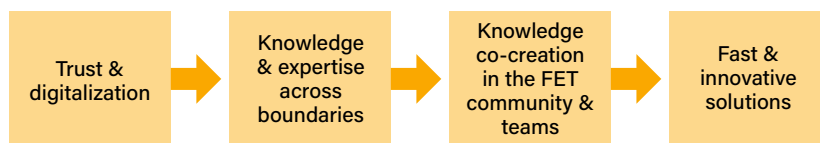


Figure 2. Solving challenging tasks in FET collaboration

How does FET collaboration differ from traditional organizations and teams?

FET collaboration is flexible and tailored to the task. Experts are invited for a prearranged period or for a specific theme or task. In principle, the work is entirely digital and independent of the participants' location. If the group so wishes, face-to-face meetings can also be arranged, but they are not necessary.

Participation in FET collaboration is based on personal expertise and motivation rather than the participants representing any specific organization.

Flexible structures and processes support FET collaboration, but the work also evolves and can be flexibly adapted to the task and the needs of the group. Instead of hierarchical organization, work is conducted in a networked mode based on trust. The FET community can also be grown flexibly, giving it essentially unlimited resources.

FET community	Traditional organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Interest in the task● Intrinsic motivation● Network● Trust● Flexible structures & boundaries● Unlimited resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Shared employer● External & intrinsic motivation● Hierarchy● Control● Fixed structures & boundaries● Limited resources

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

FET teams differ from traditional teams in that they are always temporary and comprise experts from across the organization and beyond. Depending on the expertise required, new members may be invited and as usually first ambiguous and open-ended tasks become clearer, some members may also leave the team. Participants can be members of one or more teams.

Initially, most participants of a FET team do not know each other and get to know each other as the work starts. Because the participants come from different organizations and backgrounds, each team agrees on shared practices. Usually, a team has two complementary team leaders who work together to support the team. The team's tasks, composition and the participants' roles are shaped as the work progresses.

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

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

FET collaboration can be used flexibly according to the task and needs. Work can be small scale, comprising only one team. For a larger task, a temporary FET community can be set up, where the participants work in various task solution teams (Figure 3).

This creates the necessary number of small solution teams within the FET community that focus on solving specific subtasks. The teams can be further divided into smaller responsibilities to help them take on their tasks.

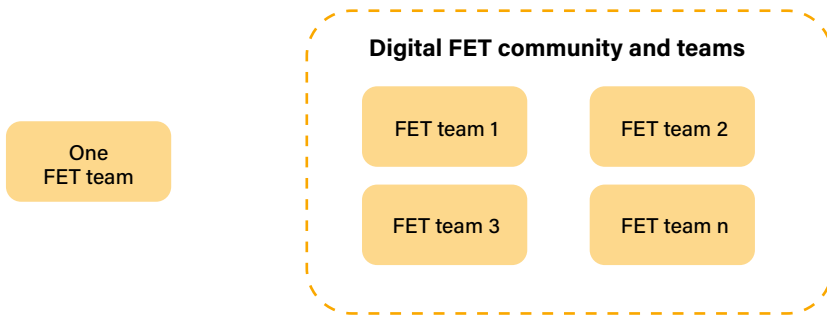


Figure 3. An organizing model that scales from one FET team to the FET community and teams

The FET community and the teams have porous borders and additional experts can be invited while the work progresses. The community supports the various teams' work, and the teams support each other throughout the process, providing feedback on partial solutions that arise in different teams.

FET collaboration can be seen as part of the innovation process and can also be used to build and support ecosystem development.

2. What are the benefits of FET collaboration?

Participants in FET collaboration will learn about the substance of the task from each other and become acquainted with new digital ways of working. Participants can work on important themes regardless of time and place.

Benefits for the participating experts

FET collaboration provides the participants an opportunity to use and develop their expertise in more comprehensive ways than their work role allows for. It is also an excellent tool for learning new skills and substance matters at work, and for updating the participant's competence portfolio.

While working on shared tasks participants develop new network contacts, shared understanding and there is a possibility for building trust while working on shared tasks. As such, FET collaboration also increases the participants' human and social capital.

Collaborative work on meaningful and important tasks can also support work engagement and well-being at work for the participants.

Between 2021–2022 participants in FET communities and teams felt the work was meaningful and collaborative. Participants were motivated by working on meaningful tasks, learning new approaches and trying out new ways of working. The participants also felt that the new network relationships they established were beneficial for their future.

Benefits for the client

FET collaboration provides an organization the knowledge and expertise needed to solve challenging tasks rapidly. Lack of sufficient expertise can cause an organization to miss even good new opportunities due to an inability to seize them in time.

Working across sectoral and professional boundaries broadens the perspective and reduces the risk of looking at the task too narrowly and traditionally. Collaboration introduces an opportunity to develop better solutions.

Some of the organization's competence may also be under-utilized. Through FET collaboration the organization gains flexible access to expertise from different parts of the organization as well as beyond its borders.

In addition, an organization's collaboration culture and digital working methods can evolve by engaging in FET collaboration.

Organizations that learn to make effective use of both internal and external knowledge will develop a knowledge-based competitive advantage.

Benefits for inter-organizational networks

Traditional methods make it difficult to build network collaboration between organizations. Network collaboration will develop slowly or collapse entirely without a shared goal, trust, and commitment by the parties.

Building trust and fostering commitment by the various parties to the collaboration requires more than a handful of meetings, which are usually attended by only a limited number of key persons.

FET collaboration can speed up the emergence of inter-organizational network collaboration and make them more efficient.

Successful FET collaboration will create social capital in the form of new network relationships, shared language and understanding as well as trust. Learning from the content of the task, new ways of working and the collaboration will also generate human capital.

SmartHäme2025 successfully used FET collaboration in spring 2021 further develop the key themes of the regional strategy among different actors. The 80 participating experts worked on the follow-up projects in four cross-organizational teams for a period of three weeks.

Benefits for the society

This approach is ideally suited to societal challenges that are not the responsibility of any single actor and cannot be solved within a single organization.

Expertise is often scattered across different organizations. It is rare for various sectors of society, researchers, and the research users to collaborate sufficiently.

FET collaboration is suitable for solving complex problems or challenges that may involve different, even conflicting, interests, multiple interest groups, multiple perspectives and, above all, cross-sectoral knowledge needs.

A particular benefit of FET collaboration is to bring multidisciplinary expertise to challenges our society faces without the participation being tied with representing any specific organization or based on formal authority.

As FET collaboration is based on the participants' intrinsic motivation, meaning their willingness to work on issues that are relevant to them, the tensions related to power and self-interest at the expense of others can be reduced.

What kind of organizations should experiment with FET collaboration?

Organizations that desire to experiment and take advantage of FET collaboration understand that there is valuable knowledge across organizational boundaries.

Flexible integration of dispersed knowledge and short-term digital collaboration across boundaries differs from organizations' traditional modes of organizing. Such work also requires having an open mind, tolerating uncertainty, and a willingness and ability to learn from others.

Approval and support by the management can encourage employees to try out new forms of organizing collaboration

3. Preparing the work

The client and the core group of participants should take sufficient time prepare and plan the work. If possible, it is worth reviewing previous FET projects. It can also be useful to invite people with previous experience of FET collaboration.

Someone needs to do overall management and take responsibility for organizing the FET collaboration. The leader of FET collaboration and the potential client commissioning the FET task, i.e., the client, start planning by assessing the nature of the task to be solved and the expertise it requires.

Composing the group

Assembling the FET team starts with establishing the task of the community and the teams. Who should be involved in finding solutions to this particular challenge?

Experts of the FET community

The group should be intentionally composed of experts with a varied educational backgrounds and experience. Often, participation by people from different organizations and networks enables fully realizing the potential of digital collaboration.

The participants' valuable knowledge and insight may come from different kinds of education, work experience or even voluntary activities. Such knowledge is often experiential and allows the participant to bring valuable perspectives and content to the process as well as to ask good questions that the group can then investigate.

People who mostly work on other tasks can be invited to join this temporary group of experts in addition to their usual work. Possible participants include company employees, public sector employees, entrepreneurs, consultants, researchers, and students.

The participants can identify suitable candidates in their own work life networks such as their LinkedIn network. Experts can also be found with the so-called snowballing method, asking the experts invited to join to propose others who they feel have the necessary knowledge and insight for this challenge or task.

Experts can be invited to participate in a single meeting, if necessary, or to follow the ongoing FET-work and learn from it.

Client of the FET task

The client is the party who has introduced the issue, challenge, or opportunity that the FET collaboration focuses on.

Active involvement by a key person representing the client provides necessary task-specific knowledge and inspires the FET community in solving the task.

The client supports but does not manage the work and cannot control the outcome. The solution resulting from FET collaboration may also be surprising and different from what the client anticipates in advance.

FET collaboration is characterized by innovation, meaning the objective is not work that is made to measure, but rather to surprise the client positively with new ideas and a fresh solution.

Leading a FET community

It is a good idea for the leader of the FET community to be a clearly neutral person with good communication and interaction skills, as well as willingness and ability to steer the network. The FET community leader is usually not the same person as the client.

Leading the FET community requires commitment and a willingness to advance the work in the best possible way, serving the group's needs.

It is important for the participants to be able to rely on the leader's abilities, goodwill, and consistent and fair approach.

Usually, the leader is also responsible for the content of the work, in addition to managing and promoting the FET collaboration, but another person may be also designated to be responsible for the content of the work. The responsibility for the content of the task should be given to a person who has the best possible overall understanding of the task or theme.

The content leader acts as a kind of a knowledge architect, considering the entirety and the different skills needed to implement the solution. It is good for the content leader to have extensive experience and a good perspective of the task along with an overall perspective.

If necessary, support can also be provided by a digital facilitator that supports the network's work on the digital platform. To enable smooth digital work, one or two digital support persons can be appointed. They can either take this task in addition to their own expert role, or they can be appointed separately.

FET team leaders

Since most participants will conduct this work alongside their own job, it is good for each team to have two leaders, who can alternate. It is also possible for one to take more responsibility for the content of the solution team's task, while the other takes on traditional project leader tasks, such as scheduling work.

Collaboration platform and tools

In FET, work technology is only a tool, not an end in itself. User-friendly digital platforms and tools enable digital encounters, working on shared tasks independently of time and place and asynchronous work to solve a task.

FET collaboration can utilize a group work platform and tools that the group deems appropriate. Past teams have used platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Solved (www.solved.fi) and Howspace (www.howspace.com).

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

“Fast expert teams vs. corona” (2020), “Fast expert teams & hybrid work” of the WORK2030 program as well as the SmartHÄME2025 FET communities (2021) utilized the Howspace platform.

Both Solved and Howspace have been used in course work and development projects implemented by M.Sc (Econ) students of LUT University in the field of knowledge management.

The different platforms also have different functionalities. That is why the various options should be assessed already in the planning stage, before choosing the collaboration platform and other tools. Sometimes less is more to enable the group to work smoothly and fast, meaning you should select only those technologies that are necessary and sufficient.

If the participants do not know the collaboration platform beforehand, it is important to offer them the opportunity to get acquainted with the platform and its functionalities before starting work.

Training and support provided in FET collaboration

Often, participants will include pioneers who are familiar with digital collaborative technologies and joint development methods, as well as people who are less familiar with them.

A webinar or other similar event can be organized for getting acquainted with the collaboration platform and any possible other tools. The webinars could be recorded and saved on the collaboration platform for possible future use.

In addition, you could create your own “Questions & Answers” forum on the collaboration platform, where participants can ask for advice later. If necessary, individual sessions for getting to know the platform or a “hotline” can also be established to provide any necessary technical support.

There are also plenty of resources online to help with using various collaboration platforms. In addition, it may be useful for the leader to provide tips on working and using the tools as short videos that can be used as teaching material.

Collaboration platforms are easy to use, and often even fairly little support is enough. Nonetheless, it is good to provide support both before and during work to ensure fast and efficient work.

Contract or collaboration principles

When starting the work, it is good to agree the basis on which the experts participate in the work, the values that will guide the work as well as the working methods to be used.

The decision to participate can be facilitated by ensuring that the participants know what exactly they are getting involved in. Agreeing on the use of time and organizing principles also fosters commitment by the participants.

Sometimes a legal agreement may also be necessary, but that will usually be relevant at a later stage. An agreement is particularly necessary if the work is concerned with companies’ business secrets or if it may result in intangible rights, such as patentable ideas. Further information on this is provided in the section [Collaboration norms and contracts](#).

Possible compensation for time used

Experts can join either without a separate fee for their work, as volunteers for their own interest, or with a separate fee. This should be agreed upon already when inviting the participants.

Participants may have several simultaneous motives to participate in the work. They can hope to learn about the new way of working, get to know interesting people, find new job or business opportunities and learn about the content of the assignment.

Sometimes these other benefits are felt to be so great that there is no need for financial compensation or it can be very moderate.

The compensation can be agreed to be paid as a fixed amount or in relation to the time used. The experts may need to use fairly little time to solve the problem, if the work is led well.

CHECKLIST FOR THE CLIENT OF A FET COMMUNITY

- Start planning well in advance, no less than 1 month before starting FET collaboration.
- Reserve a user-friendly work platform, agree on use costs and technical support.
- Reserve time for joint planning.
- Consider who should participate from your own organization?
- Consider if all or some of the work is confidential. How and when is confidentiality agreed?
- Plan who the results will be communicated to after the project and make a preliminary schedule for the meeting and possible webinar.

CHECKLIST FOR FET COMMUNITY LEADER

- Start planning well in advance, no less than 1 month before starting FET collaboration.
- Reserve a work platform, agree on use costs and technical support.
- Reserve time for planning together with the client and platform provider/digital facilitator.
- Invite the experts well in advance so that they can reserve time for the work in their calendars.
- Agree on who will be the team leader. If the team will have two leaders, consider whose competencies complement each other.
- Decide if you will manage the content of the work yourself or will you need someone to help with it.
- Agree on the cost of using the technical platform and saving the content afterwards.

MATTERS TO CONSIDER TOGETHER

- Who is/are in charge of the work?
- Which experts are required at a minimum to participate?
- Who would it be beneficial to also get to participate?
- Which collaboration platform and tools will be used?
- What kind of training and support do users need to support smooth work?
- What kind of skills, experience and insight are needed to solve the task?
- Where might you find the right people?
- Is a contract necessary and, if yes, what kind? Is it possible that this collaboration will result intangible rights?
- Is it enough to agree on the principles of collaboration?

4. Considering people and schedules

The idea behind FET collaboration is to openly examine challenging tasks in the light of a variety of experiential knowledge and perspectives in order to flexibly and quickly identify new solutions.

Participating as oneself in new way of working

FET collaboration differs from traditional project work, studies, reports and working group work. This means that participation is not representative of the views or interests of one's own organization or background group.

Everyone participates in FET collaboration as themselves. Each participant brings their skills, perspective, and ideas to the work. The most important thing is the participating person and their experiential knowledge, ideas, and active willingness to work together with others to solve the task.

The principle of FET collaboration is that participants are heard as equals, respecting their ideas and perspectives. This also means that even if people introduce themselves, there is no focus on titles.

Tolerating uncertainty in the face of new tasks

Experimenting, learning new things, and working without the certainty provided by a work role will also force the participants outside their comfort zone to a certain extent.

At first, the task may seem quite vague and even unclear, which may feel challenging especially combined with a new way of working and a group of new people.

FET collaboration does not require fully ready and refined expert responses, but rather ideas, the expression of different views and openly working on a solution in good collaboration with others. Many also find this inspiring and energizing.

A psychologically safe atmosphere allows the expression of different ideas

It is good to prepare mentally for the uncertainty associated with FET collaboration, and it is important to consciously build trust and a safe work atmosphere.

The group' atmosphere is safe when the experts dare to be themselves. A welcoming and appreciative work atmosphere is essential for participants to have the courage to express their own ideas and views.

Actively searching for new perspectives and solutions

The objective is to find new ideas and perspectives as well as innovative solutions by combining different kinds of knowledge, expertise, and perspectives from within the group. This also means that no one has ready answers, but the group collectively seeks new ideas and options.

In FET collaboration it is also very important to be able to disagree. Constructively differing perspectives add "creative friction" to the work, which creates discussion and new perspectives. If everyone agrees about everything, the group will not achieve its full potential and there would be less benefit to combining different people and skills.

At best, FET collaboration creates a common work culture in which diversity is valued and everyone is safe. Working as a member of a community without a formal job role can also be liberating, and many FET participants have found the approach inspiring.

One participant described the FET collaboration as follows: "Fast expert teams collaboration allows you to see the world from a new perspective, discover new aspects of yourself, evolve in your work, and experience moments of enthusiasm and insight."

Use of time

Agreeing on the use of time in advance further clarifies expectations and provides a framework for the collaboration, making participating in the work easier.

Only some of the FET collaboration conducted on the digital platform takes place simultaneously, at mutually agreed times. Approximately half of the work will take place independently at a time convenient to the participant.

FET collaboration is carried out in addition to one's own job, and usually the participants also work elsewhere. In this case, it is particularly important for the participants to know in advance how much time the work will require. That is why it is necessary to estimate how much time is required and how much the participants can take away from their other activities.

Not all participants need to work equally much. A team leader needs to put in more than an expert. Sometimes the knowledge of an expert can be valuable even if they can only work a couple of hours.

Discussing and agreeing on the use of time is also important because it clarifies to the participants what is expected of them and allows them to consciously commit to the collaboration.

For example, a 10-hour contribution to the team's workload over a four-week period (approximately 2.5 hours per week) may be feasible if the person is enthusiastic about FET collaboration and the task at hand. Other activities, such as events of the FET community, are voluntary and depend on the participants' own interest and schedule.

Often, knowledge workers can independently decide on how to use their time by either informing their supervisors or requesting permission, where necessary. That is why it is a good idea to compile a brief information package about FET collaboration for the employer. The presented information can include the purpose of the work, who is involved, when the work takes place and what is required of the participant. In addition, you can list some of the benefits of working this way, such as trying out a new organizing models, learning from the task, and new network relationships.

In the WORK2030 project regarding hybrid work, we agreed with each participant that they would reserve 10 hours for work in their own team. In addition to this, they participated in the FET community according to their interest and available time. In practical terms this meant 2.5h each week, or about 30 min/weekday. A survey conducted after the project revealed that most had spent approximately 10–20 hours on the work, half of which was spent working on the platform at a time of the participant's own choosing.

Simultaneous (synchronous) work

Planning the collaboration process allows scheduling the work so that some of it is conducted together and some alone, some synchronously and some asynchronously.

Shared virtual meetings within the FET community and the FET teams provide a schedule and framework for the work. One example of shared virtual gatherings is weekly meetings of the FET community to review what has been achieved and agree on the week's goals and what will be done during the week. These meetings should be planned in advance to make them sufficiently informative and interactive and keep them short, such as no more than one hour in duration.

In addition, each FET team agrees on a suitable way of working within the team. For some, this can mean a 45-minute virtual meeting twice a week, while for others, it can mean a shared 15-minute daily briefing over morning coffee.

The work should aim to respect the participants' time. This means that unnecessary meetings should be avoided and shared virtual meetings that require a calendar entry are used very sparingly.

At best, group meetings are inspiring and empowering, but insufficient time for independent work will hamper the participants' own reflection and learning.

Asynchronous work

As a rule of thumb, about half of the work is self-scheduled, meaning each participant works at a time that best suits them. Self-scheduled work includes background work necessary to solve the task done by each participant independently.

Participation in the community and team discussions on the digital collaboration platform and working on the joint task at a time that is convenient for the participant are key parts of asynchronous work. The platforms easily allow for different ways of working by including drawing tools and allowing the addition of attachments and links, for example. More information about this can be found in the section [Background materials and creating new knowledge](#).

This allows experts to join an on-going discussion on the platform and only “drop in” before the working day or during lunch break, for example. The group may include people who prefer working early morning and some who rather work late at night. This allows the morning person to read up on thoughts posted the previous evening and continue the work early in the morning.

Combining synchronous and asynchronous work

The flexible combination of synchronous and asynchronous work enables valuable virtual encounters and the exchange of ideas within the group, but also provides each participant time for working independently.

Deliberate use of the participants' own and shared time is key to the success of FET collaboration from the perspective of both the group and the individual. The group needs the experience and insights of its participants in order to achieve the best possible outcome. The individual needs not only the opportunity to participate in shared encounters and the experience of a sense of community, but also time and space to clarify their thoughts. FET community events can also foster the emergence and learning of a sense of community.

The “Fast expert teams & hybrid work” collaboration successfully piloted FET community lunch discussions. Those who wished to participate were requested to give a brief review of a topic that they felt was important and that was also linked to the work of the community. In addition to these 45-minute virtual lunch meetings, discussions took place in the collaboration platform chat room. The lunch discussions were successful, and the discussions often continued in lively fashion on the platform after lunch time.

While FET collaboration can be very fast and cost-effective, but to achieve the best possible result it is important to schedule the work of the FET community and teams suitably.

CHECKLIST FOR THE FET COMMUNITY LEADER AND TEAM LEADER

- Agree with the participants on the duration and schedule of the FET collaboration, so that the participants can reserve time for the work and commit to it.
- For example, you can agree that participants will use 10 or 15 hours per month for working within their FET team.
- Keep shared online meetings short
- Make use of appropriate tools for scheduling the meetings
- Encourage participants' independent work and provide reminders, if necessary.

CHECKLIST FOR THE EXPERT

- Participate in FET collaboration as yourself and phase out your work role.
- Aim to participate in the meetings and engage in the tasks independently.
- Participate in the discussions, listen and share your competence.
- Use the various messaging feature of the platform (text, images, comments, voice recordings).
- Participate and experiment actively: FET collaboration is a great opportunity to learn something new!

5. Building trust

The traditional way to build trust is to give it time to grow while similar people work face to face.

In FET collaboration, factors that challenge traditional trust include the participants not knowing each other, their diversity, the digital context, and uncertainty related to a new way of working.

Due to the temporary and fast-paced nature of FET collaboration, it is important to invest in building trust.

Defusing reservations caused by unfamiliarity and diversity

FET collaboration is an opportunity to get to know new and interesting people but working with unfamiliar and different people can also create friction and reservations. Who is that other person? Why are they involved in this?

Logging in to the collaboration platform can be made to first take the participants to the “People” page, where they answer some questions about themselves, such as why they wanted to participate and what they can give to the work. In addition, a small personal question can bring out the participant as a person. You could also request the participants to attach a photo.

The People page of the collaboration platform is a useful but still passive way to introduce people to each other.

Each participant can introduce themselves, but it's also a good idea for the community leader and team leaders to actively introduce new participants. Who are they and why were they invited?

For example, “Mary and I got to know each other in a previous project X. In that project, Mary’s expertise Y was very useful, and the collaboration went well and we achieved great results.” This way, the person presenting Mary will demonstrate to the others that they can also rely on her expertise and collaboration.

Diversity is partly visible and partly invisible

FET collaboration appreciates and makes use of diversity. It is based on the idea that the participants have accumulated a variety of valuable experience-based knowledge due to their varied backgrounds, which is useful in solving the task.

At best, bringing together diverse people will provide the work with complementary skills and new perspectives. If all the participants were similar, composing them together would only bring about an increase in the number of resources. Adding more of the same does not create novelty.

Some of the ways in which people are diverse is quite noticeable, such as age, ethnicity, or occupation. However, other types of diversity is beneath the surface rooted in different ways of thinking, experiences, values and views.

The community may run into friction especially due to this kind of invisible differences in the participants’ different traditions of working, what they value, how they think and how they perceive time and schedule their work.

Often, experts have accumulated valuable work experience from a host of different tasks and organizations. In addition to people with plenty of experience, it is also a good idea to invite younger participants, whose experience is different due to their age and generational experiences.

The participants’ diversity is an opportunity for finding new and innovative solutions, but it also poses challenges to communication and building trust.

It is good to stop for a moment and listen carefully: Who is this person? How do they think and act? Where do they come from? What is their task? What is the person like behind the work role?

Sometimes people use the same word in subtly different meaning. Do you understand what the other person is saying?

It is good to ask further questions and practical examples.

Positive emotions in collaboration between different people who do not know each other

Transforming diversity into a resource will often require positive emotions. Positive emotions make people see opportunities and negative emotions make them see risks. Emotions – both positive and negative – are also contagious.

Thoughts about risks raised by negative emotions make people cautious and cause them to withdraw. What if I cannot do this? What if we fail?

Positive emotions are important for collaboration, as they are a sign that everything is fine and thus encourage people to take action. You can learn something new by getting to know interesting people. Perhaps together we can solve this challenging problem?

The importance of positive emotions is further emphasized in collaboration between dissimilar people. When a person is in a good mood and sees opportunities, positive emotions also help to see the other person that is a different as an entire person instead of only focusing on the differences.

When we see others as entire persons, we can also see the factors that unite us. They may seem incidental at first from the point of view of the task itself, but it is often the small factors that connect us to different people we do not know. Did they also study in Germany? Are they also completely new to working this way? Well, let's learn together!

Building trust actively and quickly

Building trust quickly is critical in order for the experts to engage with each other, desire to share their own experiential skills and use the expertise offered by others for solving the task at hand.

Competence, goodwill and integrity as cornerstones of trust

In FET collaboration, trust between participants is built on the trustworthiness of the leaders and other participants. When assessing the trustworthiness of other people, we more or less consciously assess their competence, goodwill, and ethical and consistent action.

You can make your own expertise visible in FET collaboration by writing about your previous experience on a page of the collaboration platform intended for presenting the participants and/or by sharing your LinkedIn profile. The network leaders and team leaders can also describe which skills the participants bring to the table and why they have been invited to participate.

Making the competence of leaders and participants visible increases confidence in capability.

Goodwill is expressed in how we relate to other people. Openness to new ideas, positive comments and smiling are all signals of goodwill.

Ethical and consistent action is reflected in what we say and do. Are your words and deeds in line with each other? Does the message I relate change depending on the recipient?

Knowledge sharing requires trust in other people's goodwill and capabilities

At best, the solutions created in FET collaboration utilize not only diverse information but also the various experts' experiential knowledge.

Experiential knowledge is very personal. Sharing it requires that participants can rely on the goodwill of others. Who would want to be ridiculed or ignored for talking about their own experiences and ideas that may be still forming?

Use of knowledge, on the other hand, requires trust in the competence of the knowledge provider. No one wants to work on a solution on the basis of incorrect knowledge, but the creation of new solutions also requires reviewing ambiguous knowledge.

In order to build and maintain trust, it is good to tell what you know for sure and what is perhaps interesting, but so far more of an intuitive idea or an uncertain signal.

It is also good to be open about the limits of your own competence. Few people are good at everything. The idea of FET collaboration is to combine the complementary knowledge and competence of many different people.

Building sufficiently strong trust swiftly requires multimodal and active communication.

Communication and active interaction build social trust

Trust is born in interaction between people. Open communication, active collaboration and commitment all build trust. In addition, the way the community leader and team leaders demonstrate trust in the experts involved builds trust between the leaders and the group's trust in them. A showing trust in another person is a social testimony to their trustworthiness.

Weekly letters

In addition to face-to-face meetings, the FET community leader and team leaders can also communicate with the group by writing brief snapshots of the current status of work, what has been achieved, and what is up next. One example of the success of such digital weekly letters on the platform and/or via email is the "Fast expert teams vs. corona" initiative in the spring of 2020.

Depersonal factors in building trust

In addition to interactions between people, building trust is also influenced by factors not related with social interactions.

Non-personal factors are independent of the people involved and include structures and processes that support social interaction, communication, functionality of the related technology, and the operating environment.

Structures and processes that support social interaction build trust by increasing the predictability of collaboration and reducing the associated uncertainty.

The structures and processes of FET collaboration can also be described to the participants as visual snapshots that show the schedule and the most important events.

Visual snapshot

In the “Fast expert teams vs. Corona” initiative, the structure of the group and work progress were visualized as a so-called visual snapshot. The community leader updated the PowerPoint file displayed on the collaboration platform with images of the structure of the evolving group and the stage of work. These visualizations provided the participants quickly an idea of the structure, process, and progress of the emerging work.

The functionality of technology also has an impact on perceived trust. Instead of the latest and most complex technology, it is worth considering the use of reliable and good enough technology.

If users do not know how to use a great brainstorming tool and no training is provided, this can easily cause frustration. If meeting invitations end up in spam and the participants have not been warned about this, they may accidentally miss out on shared events and can “fall by the wayside” of the quickly evolving collaboration, at worst.

The operating environment also has an impact on building trust. The Finnish operating environment, where digitalization is at a quite high level, experts engaged in work life are highly trained and organizations have relatively little hierarchy, is supportive of FET collaboration.

Institutions that are perceived as trustworthy, such as political decision-makers, the education system and predictable legislation, also contribute to building trust between organizations and people.

It pays off to spend spent on so-called soft factors in collaboration, because trust, communication and commitment are strongly linked to each other and will strengthen or weaken each other. In addition, all three together are key elements of successful collaboration.

At best, varied social interaction and structures and processes that promote it can together quickly build trust that supports FET collaboration (Figure 4).

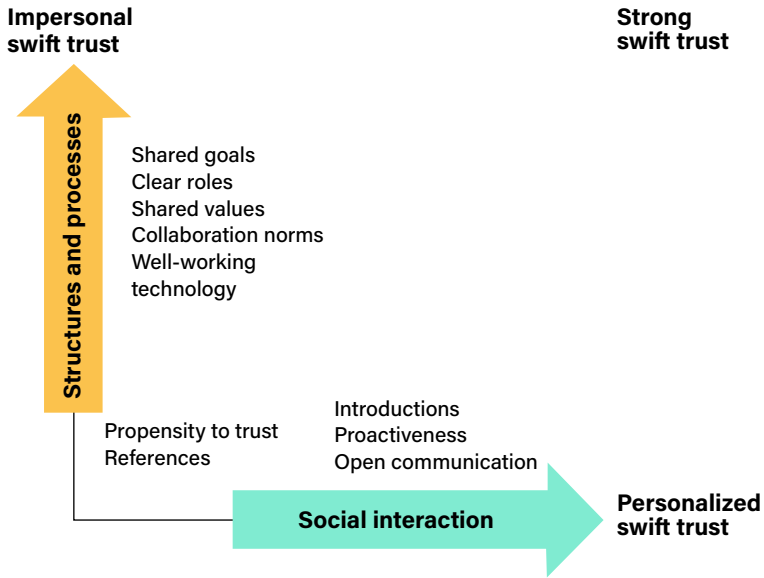


Figure 4. Building swift and strong trust

Building a sufficiently strong trust quickly is essential to achieve the desired results in FET collaboration. Preparing participants for the work, as described earlier, will also help to clarify expectations, and thus build trust.

CHECKLIST FOR THE FET COMMUNITY LEADER AND TEAM LEADERS

- Explain why the work was initiated and what the objective is.
- Discuss and agree on collaboration principles.
- Introduce yourself and people who do not know each other. Share something about each person's background and their role in the task.
- Make workspaces of the collaboration platform and the work process visible.
- Ensure that the technology used works and that the participants are familiar with it.
- Continuously update a visual snapshot of the work and make it visible.
- Describe the purpose of each meeting.
- Explain what has been achieved and what will be done next.
- Communicate the progress of the group on a regular basis and using agreed upon channels.
- Be active, ask questions, listen, and consider the participants' perspectives.
- Support everyone's participation.
- Create a positive atmosphere, thank, and encourage.
- Try to be consistent and at the same time flexible.
- Be open and honest.

CHECKLIST FOR THE PARTICIPANT

- Speak understandably in language everyone understands.
- Listen carefully to what others say.
- See common factors in addition to differences.
- Be open and honest.
- Create a positive atmosphere, thank, and encourage.
- Work actively, do your part in advancing the work.
- Tell what you can and cannot do and what you expect from others.
- Give the building of trust a chance by starting with trusting others.
- Keep your promises and do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Be trustworthy, strive to do your best and build the common good!

6. Leading the collaboration

Leadership is needed at the level of the community, the team as well as the individuals.

Managing FET collaboration does not entail hierarchical top-down control. Rather, it is shared leadership in which everyone can have some role.

Shared leadership

In FET collaboration, leadership is needed not only to organize and support the digital work, but also in the creation of new knowledge.

Usually, participants work alongside their own work activities, and the resources available for management are not very substantial.

The participants can promote successful collaboration and strengthen the leadership by participating in it. This allows participants to involve their other strengths in the work in addition to their expertise.

FET collaboration allows using different roles flexibly depending on the participants and the scope of the task (Figure 5).

It is good to have clear leadership roles, but these can also evolve and be built together. Allowing the experts to participate in developing the community's activities can also promote stronger commitment.

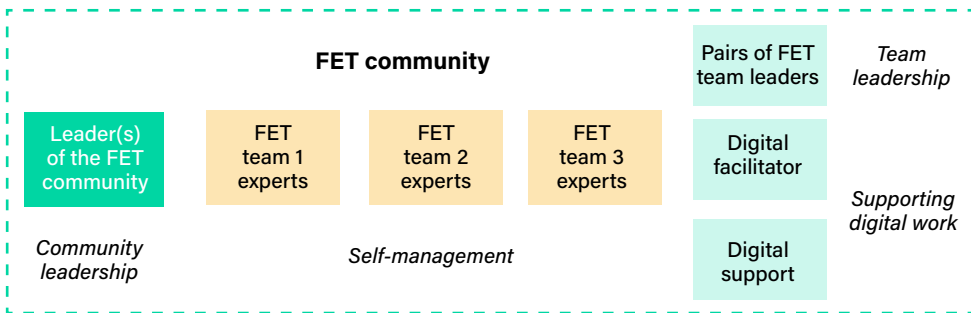


Figure 5. Roles in the FET community leadership

Leading a FET community

A natural way of utilizing of shared leadership in the management of the FET community is for the leader to have an experienced facilitator of digital work and for the participants to offer digital support. Together, they can design and implement virtual structures and processes that support FET collaboration.

We collaborated with Humap Consulting Oy in “Fast expert teams vs. corona” and the initiatives of the WORK2030 programme. The LUT University provided the substantive management and the operational model. Together with Humap’s virtual facilitation experts, we planned the way we would make the best use of the Howspace platform.

The work lives and breathes through the participants and the learning and insight that the work produces. Managing the FET community will also evolve, with the various different stages of work being planned and implemented together as the work progresses.

Facilitators’ backroom

One tool that can be useful for further planning as the work is already on-going is a “backroom” for intended for the facilitators of the FET community, which allows them to easily communicate regarding matters related to leadership and facilitation.

Leadership also plays an important role in building the work culture and identity of the community.

Soletair Power’s digital joint development was conducted on the Solved platform. The project was carried out in collaboration with experts from LUT University and Solved, with one action researcher working on their doctoral thesis actively engaged in research for the project. The following steps were planned in short meetings familiar from the world of IT. The process utilized members of Solved’s expert community and identified new domestic and foreign experts to provide useful knowledge and insight into Soletair Power’s process internationalization.

Leading FET teams

Team leaders have two clear roles: provide support for the team in creating content and co-ordinate the teamwork. Content creation is about defining the team's task together with the team, collecting ideas and materials, and supporting the team's efforts to solve the task.

On the other hand, co-ordination of team work traditionally the work of a project leader, co-ordinating the work of experts together and alone, and agreeing on objectives and timetables.

The team leader needs to put in more time and be more committed to the work than the experts. Experience of leading teams is useful, but the leadership position can also be shared between two participants. This enables maintaining the workload reasonable and provides additional flexibility for the use of time.

Team leaders' brainstorming sessions

FET collaboration can make use of peer learning and sparring between the team leaders. Team leaders' joint brainstorming sessions worked very well in the "Fast expert teams & hybrid wrk" project. The SmartHäme2025 project also made use of a Facilitators' backroom. It helped also their asynchronous work in supporting the community.

Team leaders also take care of the finalization and presentation of their team's solution. That is why they should be prepared to use 150–200% more time than the experts.

Self-management

Self-management in FET collaboration refers, first and foremost, to the participant consciously managing the use of their own time and taking advantage of various opportunities to work on the solution flexibly and in a way that suits them.

Secondly, self-management means refers to the expert actively offering their competence to the network and attempting to learn from the network.

Thirdly, it is important for the expert to adapt their role to the team's work. What role is the expert prepared to take?

In FET collaboration, participants are not strictly managed, and especially in the initial phase, tasks are not allocated to the experts. Participants are expected to participate actively and in a way that suits them.

FET collaboration is independent and aimed at new solutions. It requires self-management and independent expression of one's own perspective, while actively listening to the group's other participants.

CHECKLIST FOR THE FET COMMUNITY LEADER AND TEAM LEADER

- Make progress visible by using tools such as a visual snapshot and a weekly letter.
- Agree on who is responsible for which area of facilitation. Who is responsible for scheduling, and who for the content?
- Enable flexible communication between the leaders, for example with a backroom.
- Make use of peer learning and sparring, for example with team leaders' brainstorming sessions.
- Listen to the wishes of the group and try out development ideas.
- Involve interested parties in leadership, e.g., as digital support.
- If necessary, further specify roles and responsibilities after the work has started.
- You as the leader can ask others for advice and receive help!

CHECKLIST FOR THE EXPERT

- Consider how you can commit to the work.
- Plan how you will combine the FET collaboration with your other work.
- Consider what kind of role you would like to have and how you can help the work to be successful.
- Offer ideas and support, ask how you could help.
- You will get the most out of your work by being open-minded and active!

7 Collaboration norms and contracts

Defining the task comprises discussions on what the objectives of the collaboration are. Collaboration ground rules define how the collaboration will be conducted.

Agreeing collaboration principles is necessary for FET collaboration, as experts from different roles and backgrounds are often used to different ways of working.

In general, it is good to agree at least on the working methods, schedules, and norms. In principle, the employees participating are responsible for first verifying from their supervisor and, if necessary, the organization's legal team what information they can share/use and in which ways they can engage in the given FET task.

Agreeing on collaborating principles for the collaboration is important in order for everyone to understand how the collaboration is intended to work. Without collaborating principles and a discussion regarding a possible contract, the participants may each have their own views, which might differ from each other.

FET collaboration is more evolving in nature rather than carefully planned. Even if the roles, schedules, and procedures are initially agreed upon, it is good to leave room for changes so that the work can be flexibly adapted along the way.

For example, some participants may want to take on a larger role as the work progresses. As the task and the required expertise becomes clearer, it may be useful to invite new experts with the necessary skills.

Reciprocity and fairness are important collaboration norms. In terms of working methods, it is good to agree on how people will participate and how to inform about not being able to attend.

The open-ended nature of the task that is characteristic of FET collaboration and the new kind of technology-mediated work with many unfamiliar experts can create confusion and uncertainty in some participants. Discussing and agreeing on norms and ground rules will reduce experts' uncertainty and increase predictability. Agreeing on operational principles and norms also builds trust within the group.

The collaborating principles can be agreed upon either officially or unofficially. If the task and work involve particularly sensitive and confidential matters, such as trade secrets, a confidentiality agreement may be concluded with the participants.

Please also ensure that there is a privacy policy regarding personal data. Legal agreements are drawn up when there are opportunities for financial earnings or significant risks 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 regarding liability, compensation and contract termination should also be made if the project involves research and development work.

Even if such rights do not arise, it is good to agree on how the participating experts can use the generated ideas and concepts in 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 programme also addressed contractual issues. You can see the results of the group work here (in Finnish):

<https://hyvatyo.ttl.fi/hubfs/FET3%20Sopimukselliset%20kysymykset%20FET-prosessissa.pdf>

It is advisable to also agree on how to communicate to third parties regarding the work. For example, participants in the FET collaboration in the COVID spring 2020 reported their participation in social media, which attracted the interest of other experts and media alike. A common hashtag used in social media, such as #Fastexperteams can also promote a sense of community and belonging within the group.

What is public and what is internal to the group should also be agreed upon. For example, it can be agreed that all discussion on the platform will remain within the group. That ensures that the participants can freely write what they think on the platform, knowing that the contents of the conversation will only be known to the participants.

You could agree to use the so-called Chatham House rule, which stipulates that information presented in FET collaboration may be freely used as long as the person who presented is not disclosed or the content not linked with its presenter. [The Chatman House Rule](#)

You can also agree not to directly refer to thoughts presented by any single person, but only to the group's shared result.

If discussion within the group lead to new projects emerging, it may be fair to ask the participants of the group if they would also like to participate in the new project. For example, in consultancy collaboration, it is considered polite to invite others to participate within a certain period of time, but after a reasonable amount of time, such as a year, has passed everyone is free to develop things in their own way.

One way of negotiating shared working methods and principles is to ask the participants in advance what their expectations, hopes and concerns are in connection with the collaboration. An initial workshop to start the FET collaboration can serve as a natural forum for such discussion along with covering the principles of fair and functional collaboration and related values.

This is also a good opportunity to agree on how the achievement of the shared goals will be monitored. It is advisable to highlight the expectations of each participant for different short- and long-term goals of the collaboration.

The principles of collaboration can be grouped together into a set of house rules on the collaboration platform to remind the participants on what was agreed. Collaboration principles and a contract also promote [building trust](#).

CHECKLIST FOR THE FET COMMUNITY LEADER:

- Raise the issue shared ground rules for the collaboration and possible legal agreements in your discussions from the very start.
- Identify participants' expectations for FET collaboration and review them in a joint workshop.
- Agree on the principles of collaboration and make them into set of house rules.
- Emphasize the evolving nature of the work.
- The collaboration principles are quite permanent, but practical working methods, such as the participants' roles, communication methods and meetings, can be agreed upon in more detail during the work.
- You should also agree on how the names of the participants will appear in the final report once the task is completed.

8. Defining the task

FET collaboration is used for identifying solutions to challenging and open-ended tasks. The transparency of the task means that the content and nature of the task are not obvious. Usually, these are not clear, and they can be hard to outline.

The need for discussion and collaboration between the experts starts with defining the task. What is the task? What kind of skills are needed to solve the task?

The challenging nature of the tasks also means that they cannot be immediately divided into subtasks that could then be allocated to specific experts or teams.

It is a characteristic of FET collaboration that participants must first collaboratively identify what the task is and what issue they are going to solve together.

Specification of the task starts with the assignment received from the client. The content of the task and the type of solution sought is usually not clear even to the client. The tasks to be solved can be very different, depending on the situation and the client.

It is important to discuss with the client what level of solution they are seeking: is the objective of the task to gain an overview, a detailed analysis, or an innovative concept for further processing?

It is also good to take time to discuss the task with the client's key personnel and other representatives.

The client's key personnel can come from their own organization and stakeholders involved in the task, such as their own clients and partners.

If necessary, the content and objective of the task can also be processed in workshops in collaboration with the client, using group discussions among other tools.

Often, the client has background material related to the task. These may include previous reports or ones that can be shared as background material for FET collaboration with the client's permission. Further information regarding usable data sets and background materials is available in the chapter [Background materials and creating new knowledge](#).

You should take time to define the tasks at an early stage. Ambiguous and open-ended tasks will challenge the participants' thinking. The more complex the task, the more important it is to understand it as well as possible.

Discussion regarding definition of the task form a basis for the entire collaboration. Without joint discussions between the participants, there is a risk that the various experts involved will start working on different issues.

At best, open discussion about the different perspectives related to the task can generate new ideas and innovative solutions. Such discussion also fosters the group's experience of working together to solve an important task.

Participation in the definition of the task also promotes the participants commitment to the work. It is one thing to be able to define a task yourself compared with working on solving a pre-defined task. Defining the task collaboratively promotes a common goal, the sense of community and trust.

Discussion regarding the task will take place in meetings of the FET community and teams. If the FET collaboration comprises a larger group that is divided into several teams, it is important that each team has the chance to work on defining its own task.

Participants will learn more about the task as the work progresses and the objective can also be altered along the way.

The process of specifying the task will continue in some form throughout FET collaboration. It is therefore possible that the boundaries of the task change as the work progresses. This should not be simply interpreted as a failure, but rather as a reflection of the complexity of the original task and the fact that, in its work, the team has succeeded in creating new knowledge and understanding.

Often, the resulting solution is not clear in advance, and it can also be much more than was initially expected!

IN DEFINING THE TASK, ALL PARTICIPANTS SHOULD CONSIDER:

- What is the task?
- What is the problem or task we are trying to solve?
- Which factors are important for solving the task?
- Which factors influence each other?
- What is the focus of our work and how do we define the task?
- What do we exclude from the work?
- What should we focus on?

IT IS ALSO GOOD TO CONSIDER PRACTICAL PROVISIONS:

- What kind of questions do we have to answer?
- What kind of expertise can we involve in the work?
- Find out what background materials are available and how they can be used.
- How much time and resources do we have?

CHECKLIST FOR THE FET LEADER

- Schedule a discussion with the client's key person.
- Assess whether a task specification workshop should be organized in collaboration with the client.
- Consider who should attend the workshop. Should there be participants from stakeholder groups?
- How will the FET community and teams keep defining the task?
- Find out which of the client's or their stakeholder's representatives have useful knowledge related to the task.
- Should summaries of background materials be made available for the participants? Who will draw these up?
- How and in what form will the final output be reported to the client and the FET collaboration participants?
- What will the task lead to? How will the created results be used?

9. Background materials and creating new knowledge

FET collaboration is aimed at identifying new ideas and innovative solutions. The development of these requires diverse background material as a basis for ideation, discussion, and work.

Introducing background material to the work

Participants can share a variety of materials on the collaboration platform, and these can then be examined either jointly or independently by every participant.

Team leaders encourage participants to introduce as much interesting material as possible.

Participants from different backgrounds have previous projects, experiences, and networks, from which they can draw material to help in developing a solution. This kind of experiential knowledge from a different context that experts have can be useful.

The materials help make each person's ideas visible and thus facilitate the creation of a shared understanding. Such shared material is particularly important in collaboration between experts from a variety of backgrounds.

In addition to text-based discussion, comments and questions, it is also possible to include various attachments and links on the collaboration platform. For example, research reports and interesting newspaper articles can be attached and distributed to other participants.

It is also easy to attach different charts, diagrams and even photos. It is also easy to share links to material available on the Internet, YouTube videos as well as participants' own short video recordings. Only your imagination is the limit. Photographs or drawings may also be included as background material.

Rich and varied material inspires participants to discuss different possibilities and perspectives. Inspiring materials allow the participants to share their own views on what could be interesting and useful in solving the task.

The group leader or another expert who knows the context of the task to be solved can help explain how the material produced to solve a previous task could be useful for this task.

Everyone can review the materials made available on the collaboration platform according to their schedule and from their own perspective. The materials can be explored, and comments or questions added. This way the materials, viewing them and discussing them allow for a multiplex and varied time for commenting and discussion.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND INTERESTING MATERIAL?

- Has any interesting research been conducted on the subject? You can find a lot of research articles, especially in English on Google Scholar.
- You are almost guaranteed to find student theses in Finnish or English on the subject. Google Scholar and Google are your friend! Master's theses will often provide good overviews of different topics and a list of references that you can use to find interesting material.
- Many research institutes also publish reports and summaries of previous projects on their website.
- You may be able to find interesting communities or persons and their texts on LinkedIn.
- Searching by search term and hashtags can help you to find interesting news and texts on Twitter, too.
- Have you done something related to the subject before? Can you share some material with others?

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS...

- Drawings and diagrams can serve as a good starting point for discussion and there are plenty of images to use for inspiration on the Internet that you can find using the "image" search function.
- You can also draw a picture yourself, take a photo of the drawing, save it in jpg, pdf, png or gif format and add it onto the collaboration platform.

-
- You can include video clips and/or YouTube links.
 - Photos of places of interest also tell a lot and can convey an atmosphere.
 - For example, the Howspace collaboration platform allows easily attaching a self-made mini video.

Creating new knowledge together

Introducing various materials to the platform creates the most value when the participant who brings the material justifies and explains why they introduce this specific material. What do they find interesting about it?

By commenting on the materials, the experts will convey their experiential knowledge in the form of their different views. It is easier for experts to interact on the collaboration platform with the help of materials, even asynchronously.

For example, one expert may introduce a report to the discussion and write on the platform what they find interesting about it. Another person can then comment on the report from their perspective and what they think might be useful about this research from the perspective of their experience and the task at hand.

A third expert can thank the first for sharing a useful report and a fourth can pose follow-up question. At this point another expert might suggest some practical way in which the information in the report could be used for the solution.

Such digital dialogue between the various experts and the shared materials will also generate new knowledge. It is important that the experts involved in the FET collaboration not only share material, but also express their own opinions and views. That allows the combination of different kinds of experiential knowledge and the creation of new knowledge.

Discussions on the collaboration platform can be rich and generative at best, as the participants introduce different perspectives and materials.

In early stages of the work, this is only good, but at a later stage, it is the responsibility of the team leaders to transform the rich digital dialogue into a solution that fits the client's needs. It is still important to provide support for the participants' discussion at this point, but instead of introducing new and different material, team leaders start to steer the work towards a solution that meets the client's needs.

FET collaboration can first be seen as seeking new and diverging ideas and later as converging ideas to a solution.

Using a template document to create new knowledge

The work and creation of knowledge can also be facilitated with various document templates into which ideas and material is added as the work progresses. The document templates shape the shared work and make its progress visible.

They can be used for tasks of both the FET community and the teams. The templates provide a framework for the outputs to be achieved and facilitate compiling a solution out of partial outputs. For example, the SmartHäme2025 teams used shared templates in their work, in which each team prepared focused solution proposals.

An excellent example of the use of a document template to create new knowledge is the design of the Hiedanranta circular economy district with the participation of Solved’s community of experts and facilitated by Ethica. In it, a pyramid similar to Figure 5 was first developed in the process and then used as a common framework for working on the digital platform.



Figure 6. The pyramid template used in the concept design process for Hiedanranta circular economy city district. (image by Ethica & Solved)

Design of the Hiedanranta circular economy district conducted on the Case Solved platform

In the design of the Hiedanranta district on the Solved platform, Ethica's leaders used a pyramid pattern as the document template, into which ideas in line with the shared vision began to be introduced.

At a later stage, when the content of the task became clearer, the team leaders shared with each expert subtasks related to their expertise, which participants developed and commented on. These were also included in the shared document and the report.

The key texts of the pyramid focused the shared work. Each participant was able to follow the progress of the work as the leaders combined and "knitted" their ideas and discussions into a pyramid. While working, the textual content of the pyramid evolved and changed several times.

The creation of new knowledge is characterized by varied interaction and a relaxed atmosphere. The experts are allowed to participate as themselves, without an overly strict expert role that requires "ready and right answers".

The best result is achieved if the work is a little playful and the participants dare to express intuitive ideas and boldly ask questions and comment. It is impossible to create anything new or to reach the best possible solution if everyone agrees. A well-working group allows different ideas to arise and people to disagree without hesitation.

Energetic curiosity, and a desire for understanding and learning will keep the work moving forward!

CHECKLIST FOR THE PARTICIPANT

- In addition to sharing information, explain your reason for introducing material or a link. Why is something interesting or why do you hesitate? Ask the others what they think of it.
- Continue the conversation, ask questions and comment.
- Create a good atmosphere by being appreciative and thanking others for their efforts!
- You can also disagree – constructive differences of opinion will improve the outcome!

CHECKLIST FOR THE FET COLLABORATION LEADER AND TEAM LEADER

- Try to create an open and safe atmosphere where everyone can comment.
- Try to keep the conversation active and get everyone involved.
- Pose question also to specific participants who might have something to contribute to the issue at hand.
- Provide an overview by explaining how your team is progressing – what is ready, and what will be done next.
- Pay attention to the use of time and consider when it is time to start focusing the solution according to the client's needs.
- Give voice also to the the client. If the client is not involved in work conducted on the platform, get their feedback and greetings to the group.

Positive feelings increase energy and promote commitment in technology-mediated work

The positive feeling, and the energy it generates are important in technology-mediated work, where it is difficult to perceive the other person's expressions and gestures.

In face-to-face people will subconsciously gather information about the situation and about others, but technology-mediated work provides less "bandwidth" to communicate this aspect and reduces the opportunities to observe and gather information about others.

Everyone can help in the creation of the atmosphere and providing positive energy. Making eye contact, smiling, active listening, nodding, and participating in the conversation indicate a desire to be actively involved and to listen to others.

Passive meetings will quickly kill off enthusiasm. Everyone has experienced face-to-face meetings where one party speaks and the other listens. In similar fashion, technology-mediated work can be either boring and one-directional, or inspiring and interactive.

At best, technology-mediated meetings are at least as rich and inspiring as face-to-face meetings. These include coming up with ideas, discussing, learning, and understanding, laughing and sometimes even moving – just like in all good (work) life encounters!

CHECKLIST FOR ATTENDEES OF VIRTUAL MEETINGS

- Always keep your camera on, or at least when you talk.
- Listen actively and demonstrate this with small head movements, for example.
- Smile! Smiling is an easy way to communicate to others that you are participating in a good spirit. Of course, it is still important to be authentic.
- Thank others for their good contributions and comments.
- Write comments as you listen to someone else speak.
- Post interesting links to the chat.
- Support the communication and express approval by using thumbs up, likes and emojis.
- Give room for others to speak.
- As chairman, make sure everyone is heard and involved!

10. Conceptualization and preparation of implementation

The solutions resulting from the FET collaboration are conceptualized. This refers to processing them into a visual format that allows for them to be easily communicated to the client and stakeholders.

Implementing the solution requires preparation and collaboration

Turning the solutions into new practices for an organization does not happen on its own. The newer and more expansive the solutions, the more time and thought it takes to put them into practice. It may also be useful to prepare the implementation of the solution and work on conceptualizing it in various stages together with the client.

That is why it is good to involve future clients and users in the FET collaboration. This way their perspective can be introduced already as the work progresses. Their active participation can also be inspiring for the experts.

If the client cannot participate in the work, for one reason or another, you should aim to get them to review the emerging solutions and provide feedback during the work. They should be involved at the latest when starting to package the solutions in a concise presentable format.

Depending on the task, it may be useful to involve representatives of other stakeholder groups, who will have an impact on the implementation.

For example, in the WORK2030 programme, the FET community leader informed the programme executive team on how the work was progressing by participating in their meetings. The executive team's ideas and wishes were also requested before the teams started the FET collaboration.

The process of conceptualization should take into account various different users and use methods, in addition to clarity and ease of reading. Visualizing the solutions as easily approachable images and charts is a good alternative to extensive written reports.

For Case Hiedanranta the group provided the client both a written report as well as a visual PowerPoint presentation on the concept design of the circular economy district. In addition, the idea of the circular economy concept was communicated in the form of a pyramid, which encapsulated the core elements of the solution.

The Case "Fast expert teams vs. corona – let's avoid Finland from paralysis" final report was presented in a colorful and visual PDF presentation, summarizing the core results of the project (in Finnish). <https://futuremote.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Fast-expert-teams-Eduskunnnan-Tulevaisuusvaliokunta-05-2020.pdf>

The researchers worked on the report together with a graphic designer from an advertising agency. It is available on the participants' websites and, following the OECD's interest in the Fast Expert Teams operational model, an English version of the report was also produced. It has been praised for its visual appearance and ease of reading.

The first report of the WORK2030 programme, entitled "**Work is melting and changing its form**" presented factors to be considered in hybrid work whereas the second report presented **core elements of the Fast Expert Teams operational model** (reports in Finnish).

https://hyvatyo.ttl.fi/hubfs/Tyo_sulaa_esite_220621_FET_raportti.pdf

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

The collaboration platform was used to work on the text and visual appearance of the "Fast expert teams & hybrid work" solution. First, the teams presented their own solutions to other teams, discussed them and provided feedback. A participating graphic designer began sketching the visual appearance. The text of the shared brochures were edited in a Google Docs document embedded on the platform, allowing all participants to comment on the texts, led by the project leader.

The team leaders and the FET network leader presented the results to the Minister of Social Affairs and Health and the Minister of Labour at the reports publication events. The reports, their more comprehensive background material and recordings of the webinars were made available on the WORK2030 website: <https://hyvatyo.ttl.fi/tyo2030/work2030>.

The reports were created in collaboration between the team leaders, project leader and the graphic designer. Participating experts provided feedback on both the text and images, and the final responsibility for the joint report remained with the FET network leader.

The objective was to make the reports easy to read and use. Special attention was also paid to the wording of the text in order to make the message clear for various different user groups.

The results of Case Soletair Power were presented by the action researcher who facilitated the project in a concise, visual form reminiscent of an infographic. Special emphasis was given to communicating about the project to members of the Greenreality network in order to encourage them to try out the FET model for projects related to internationalization, among others.

It should also be noted conceptualization of a solution takes time. Usually the longer, the more parties involved in the work.

Often, the responsibility for finalizing the result will remain with the network leader and team leaders. That is why it is important to reserve time for further processing the concepts that emerge as well as for communicating about them.

Planning a possible launch will also require some time and thought. Its date should be agreed at an early stage in order to enable all participants to attend. When the solutions have been created together, it is fun to also commemorate them together!

CHECKLIST FOR THE FET COLLABORATION LEADER AND CLIENT:

- Find out how the client can participate work conducted on the platform.
- Also consider inviting end users of the solution to the platform, or at least test the ideas with the end users of the solution during the work.
- Consider what the solution will change in the organization or their interfaces?
- Is the solution going to add something or is it going to reduce something? Who will benefit and can someone feel concerned about the new solution?
- Whose decisions are needed? Who are all the parties who need to support the implementation?
- Who should the solution be presented to? What would be an effective way to communicate it?
- Does the solution require changes to existing processes? Does it require new technology?
- Does it require training? How would the training be the best to organize from the perspective of the recipients?

Conclusion

In the future, working together through an amalgamation of face-to-face interaction and technology-mediated collaboration will become second nature. Face-to-face interaction will primarily be reserved for the development of interpersonal relationships and can also take place outside the workplace.

Over time, people will become increasingly adept at communicating with the aid of technology. About half of the workforce already do so, and in the field of knowledge work, the vast majority of collaboration is technology-mediated.

Moreover, people who work this way needn't be left alone, as digital collaboration platforms are a great way to foster on-the-job learning and sense of community.

Despite some lingering misgivings, collaborative development and designing innovative concepts are possible through technology-mediated means. Working together and separately can be flexibly combined and coordinated using digital platforms, and advanced collaboration platforms also make it easy to design structures and processes for this purpose.

Through collaborative leadership and diverse means of communication, experiential knowledge can be effectively harnessed to create innovative solutions. When the data necessary for the need at hand is combined with the experience and knowledge of experts, no problem is too great to overcome.

Building strong swift trust in a focused way to promote the sharing of expertise helps gain the full benefit of collaborative problem-solving.

The Fast Expert Teams -collaboration is designed to support building human and social capital.

The bold and the open-minded can thrive in the midst of change!

Acknowledgements

Warm thanks to the experts who commented on the Fast Expert Teams workbook:

Anu-Liina Ginström, Confederation of Finnish Construction Industries RT

Eetu Helminen, The Cleantech Company Solved Oy

Riitta Hyppänen, CM & HR Consulting Oy

Eeva Kaunismaa, Ministry of Finance

Antti Närhinen, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment

Maarit Pihlajaniemi, Fortum

Ulla Rosenström, Prime Minister's Office

Nuppu Rouhiainen, Business Finland

Mika Ruokonen, LUT School of Business and Management

Minna Takala, The Regional Council of Häme

Tuuli Toivikko, LUT School of Business and Management

Matti Vartiainen, Aalto University

Seppo Yrjölä, Nokia

Thanks also to the over 300 experts who participated in Fast Expert Teams, as well as to the interested postgraduate students, researchers and thesis students: Tuuli Toivikko, Niina Salo, Kateryna Kryzhanivska, Satu Vesin, Pia Adibe, Anu-Liina Ginström, Essi Mustonen, Katariina Tavilampi and Jonna Neuvonen.

An important impetus for writing the workbook was given by the steering group of the WORK2030 programme and the programme director Sanna Kulmala.

Workbook ordering party

The workbook was commissioned by the WORK2030 programme.

The WORK2030 programme is part of the Government Programme. The programme develops new working methods together with workplaces, industries, and experts, and encourages experimentation.

Renew modes of operation can affect employment, the economy, competitiveness, and Finland's global work life brand. The Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health implements the programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, labour market organizations and other work life actors. The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health is responsible for the operational implementation of the programme.

Author of the workbook



I work as a professor of Knowledge Management at the LUT School of Business and Management. Previously, I have worked in small and large companies, ministry, and public sector organizations.

What I am particularly interested in knowledge management is the ways in which people and organizations can solve problems and seize different opportunities by combining a variety of knowledge and.

At my work I combine research, teaching and development. I teach courses on social capital, trust, and knowledge-based organizing. I also serve at boards of directors, provide consultations, and speak in seminars.

Through years I have published more than 200 research articles in international journals, books and conferences related to knowledge management, knowledge-intensive collaboration, and trust. In recent years, I have been particularly interested in new forms of digital organizing and supervise theses and dissertations on the subject.

The workbook was written for people who want to take make use of digitalization and try out a new way of collaborating. Unlike research literature, this workbook contains no direct references to academic literature or a bibliography.

The Fast Expert Teams organizing model has been studied and developed in research projects, for example, in the Fast expert teams in the platform economy funded by Business Finland and in the ERDF-funded Rapid Solution Teams projects. Students of knowledge management have also applied FET in their assignments for the "Organizing in knowledge-based networks" course.

Further information:

Kirsimarja Blomqvist
LUT School of Business and Management

kirsimarja.blomqvist@lut.fi

+358 40 755 1693



This workbook is for private and public sector organizations seeking new solutions and new ways of working.

The Fast Expert Teams (FET) organizing model utilizes digitalization and social capital and combines a variety of competencies in order to swiftly solve challenging tasks:

Discover innovative solutions

Do ambiguous problems challenge your organization? Are you looking for innovative solutions? Does the organization lack the time and skills to solve them?

Identify new possibilities

Are you missing out on interesting opportunities? Does nobody have time to figure out what they actually mean?

Develop new ways of working

Do old and tried-and-true approaches seem outdated and too rigid? It might be time to shake up the old and try something new.

Put your skills to use and learn something new

Does your work role and duties allow you to make use of the skills you already have and learn new things?

Update your digital collaboration skills

Might it be time to update your ways of working with networks to the digital age?

Work with experts in different fields

Have you tried working with experts from various different fields to see tasks in a new light?

Make use of expertise within and outside your organization

Are you able to flexibly utilize competencies outside your own organization?

Get inspired about developing and creating solutions together

Developing solutions collaboratively makes work meaningful.

