



A framework for managing successful distributed collaborative teams

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**Experiences from ecosciences and
digital humanities**

Benefits

Access to a larger more diverse talent pool

Skills sharing

Decreased staffing costs

Improved productivity

Better employee satisfaction

Rationale - when you might need a distributed team

Nationally significant/operated project

- International project or project partners
- Project partners distributed
- Lack of availability of specialised skills

Developing successful teams - principles

Respect - individual skills

Autonomy

Shared Ownership

Individual Accountability/ Competitiveness

Culture - Problem solving/ problems can be raised in a constructive environment

Remove bureaucracy

Challenges

Teams are often multidisciplinary and have specialised skill sets (such as marketing, development and change management). Furthermore, these teams may not reside under a traditional single line management structure or within the same institution.

Developing successful teams - setting up

- The ability to utilise distributed teams has become easier due to modern technologies that enable and equip these teams
- Meetings
 - Initial face-to-face kick off
 - High frequency virtual meetings
 - Face to face as frequently as possible (opportunities include workshops, conferences, stakeholder engagement)
- Communications

What can go wrong?

Not always line manager

Good communication/ forums

- With line manager
- Recognition of institutional contribution in published material

Changes need to go through line manager - team members are not 'your staff'

Ensure performance is shared and visible amongst all project partners/
supervisors

Governance - helpful to have a regular meeting with supervisors etc.

Governance/ issues - Costs

Higher costs? Maybe but necessary

- Higher PM/ Communications costs

Developing successful teams - toolkit

Travel budget

Videoconference software (i.e Zoom, GoToMeeting etc)

Shared documentation hub (i.e Google docs, SharePoint)

Ability to delegate and foster shared ownership

Team members responsible for reporting own milestones/deliverables

Deliberately foster culture you want

Clearly set expectations

How to be a great team member in a distributed team

Be respectful: Acknowledge diverse skill set/personalities

Good opportunity to learn new skills/discover new working methods

Have good lines of communication with the Project Manager

Understand the overall aims/goals of the project

How does your work package align with the overall goals

What dependencies are on you

How can others in the project help and vice versa

Attend weekly meetings

Clearly communicate your progress