Research to Practice

Beyond stereotypes

Managing expectations in international partnerships

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Thank you very much
for coming to the talk!

Let’s connect to discuss how
this theory applies to your project.

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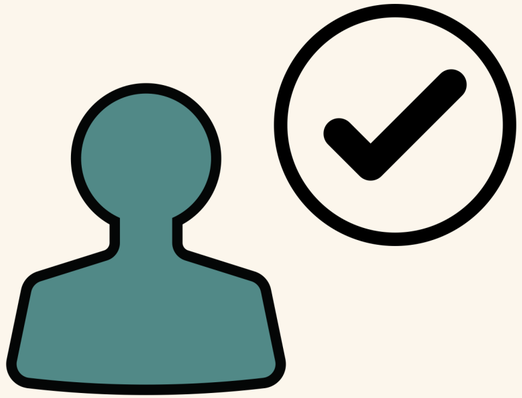
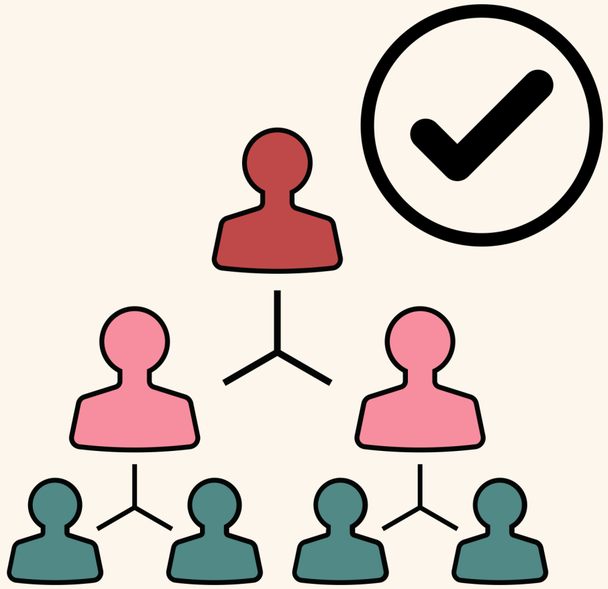
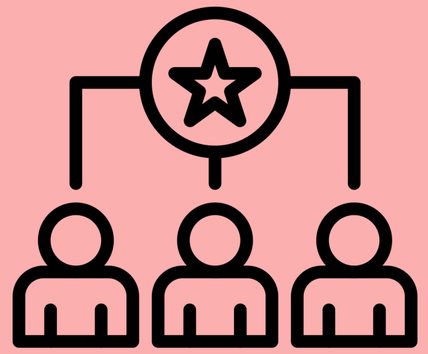
Why is it difficult?
Because partners have different rules of the game.



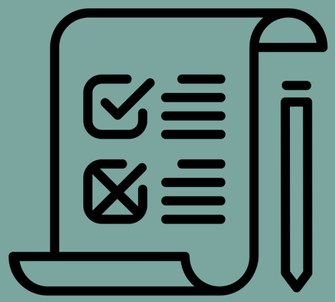


Why do they exist?

Historical necessity

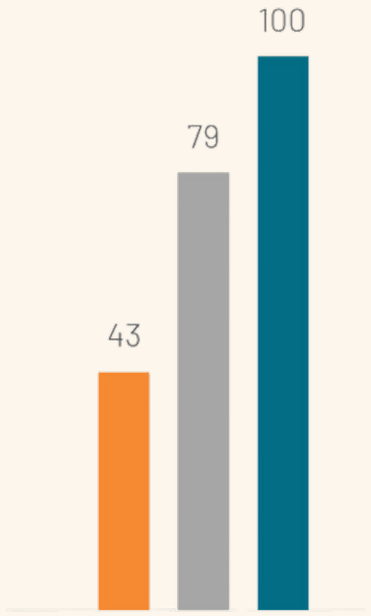


What matters most

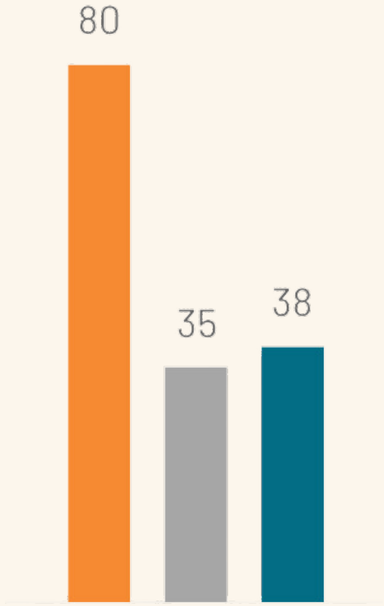


How (new) things should be done

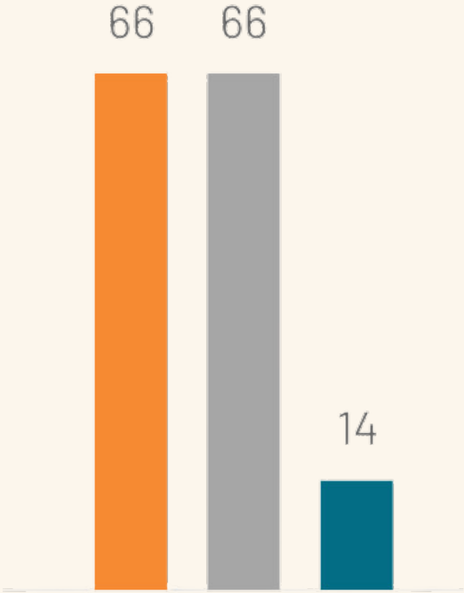
We can measure the differences between cultures



Individualism



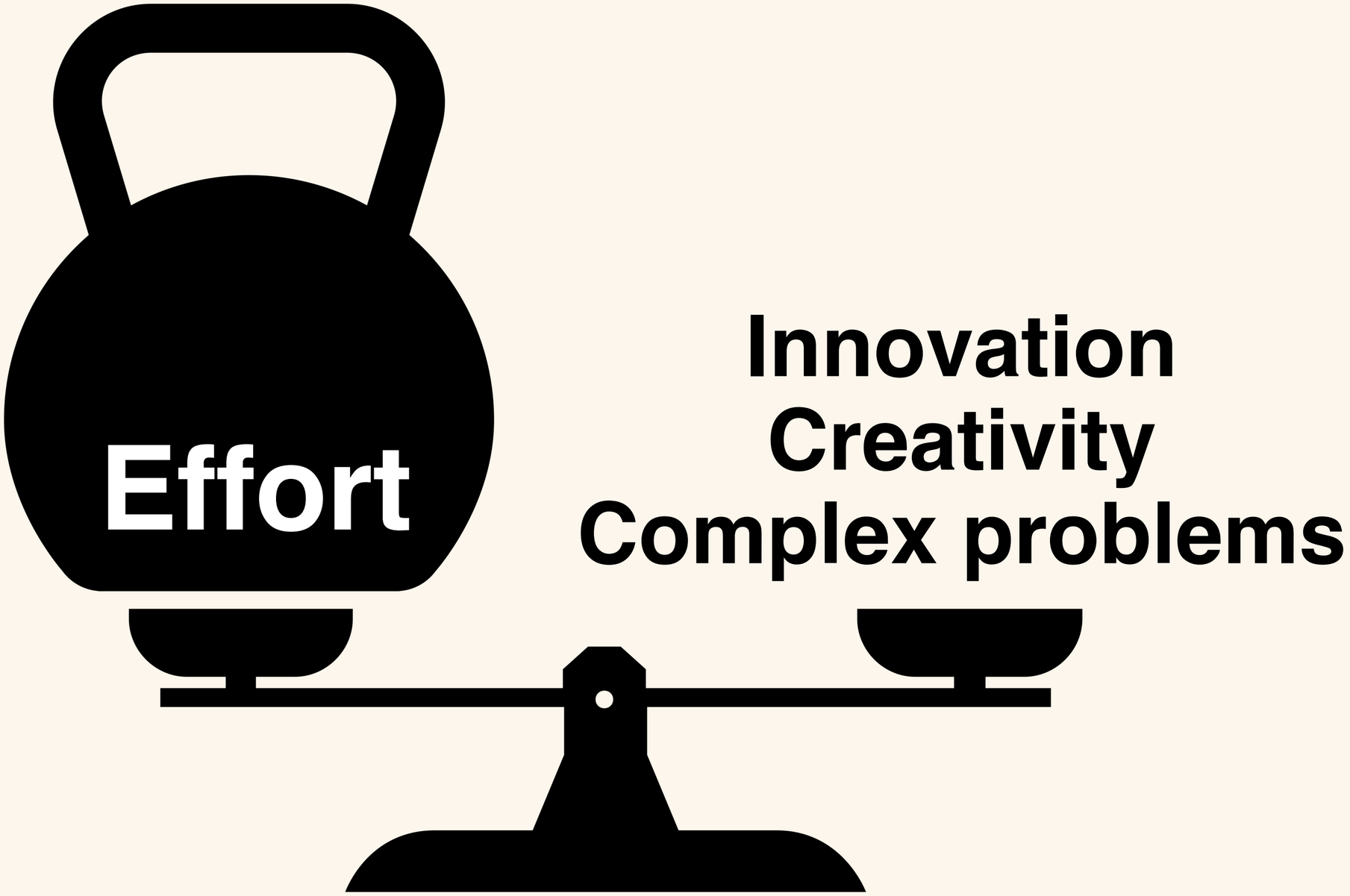
Motivation towards Achievement and Success



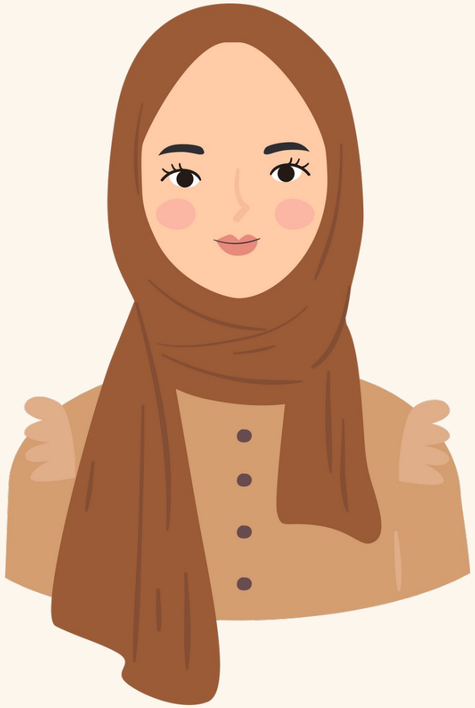
Power Distance

It is easier to work within the same culture.

Is it better though?

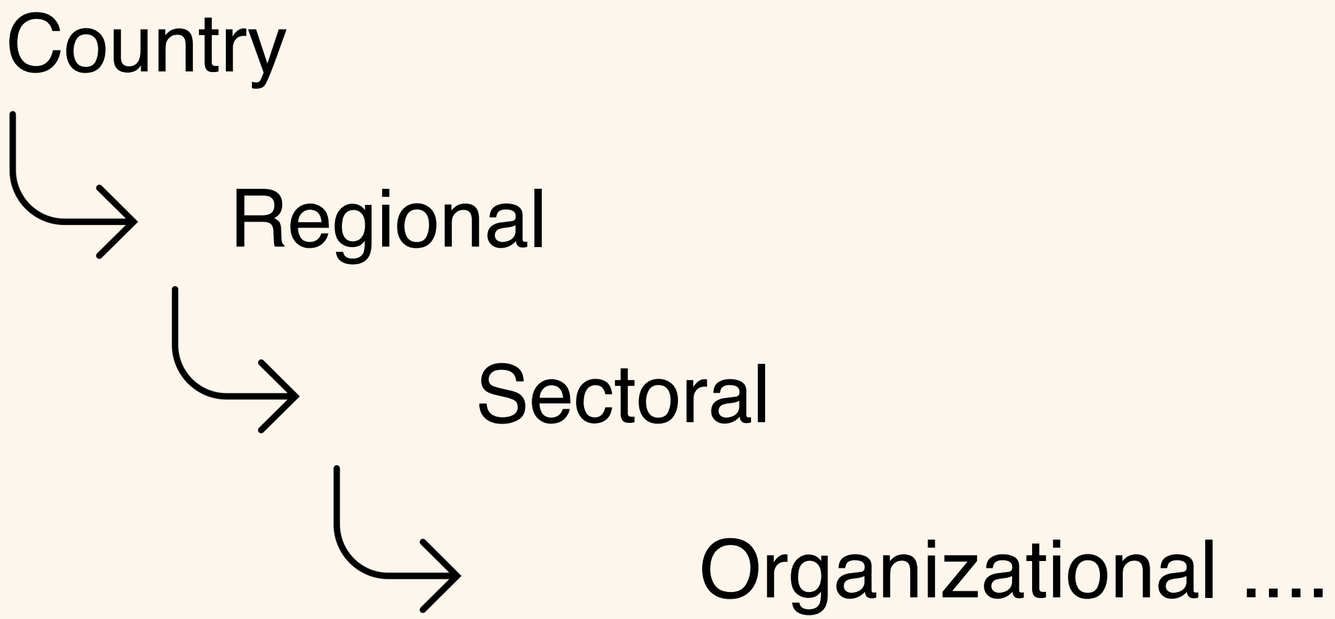

Effort
Innovation
Creativity
Complex problems

Do not use cultural differences as an excuse!



vs.

Culture ≠ Borders



“How do we do things here”

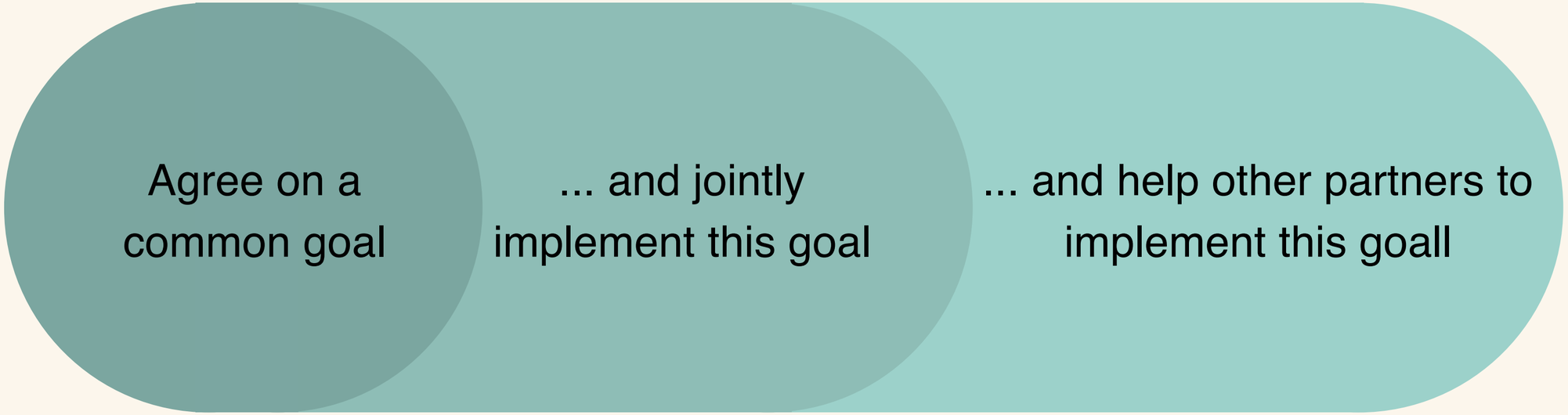
Make your shared “rules of the game” explicit.

Coordinate, cooperate, or collaborate?

How much centralization do we need?

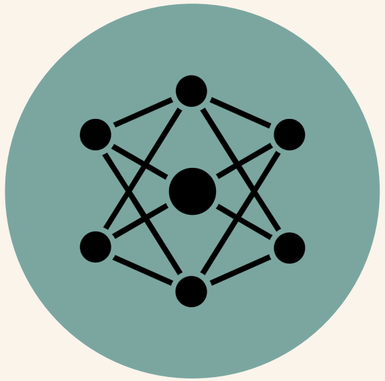
Who makes which decision?

How much involvement?

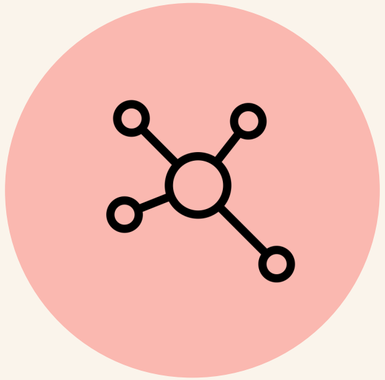


Interdependence

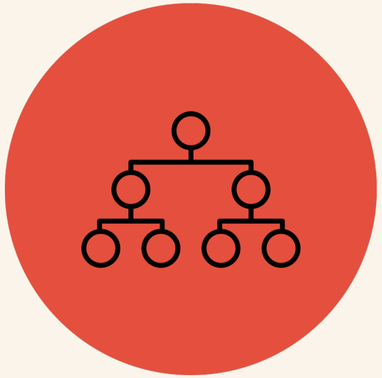
Information sharing



Selective participation



Joint production



Decentralized

Highly centralized

The right form for the right job

Decentralized

- Inclusive decision-making
- Sense of belonging
- Trust, loyalty, ownership
- Faster information sharing

Centralized

- Efficient
- Consistent
- Upward accountability
- Engagement of key players

How to combine?

	Very centralized	**Polycentric**	**Very decentralized**
Coordination	One facilitator (bottom-up)	...	Take turns organizing
Cooperation			
Collaboration			

How to combine?

	Very centralized	Polycentric	Very decentralized
Coordination			
Cooperation			
Collaboration	One key decision-maker	...	Permanent representatives

Hidden costs of “flat” structures

	Very centralized	Polycentric	Very decentralized
Coordination	This is easier and takes less time		
Cooperation			
Collaboration		This is more difficult and time-consuming	

Collaboration

Diversity

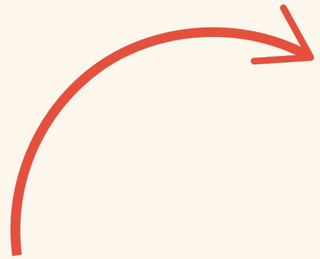
Consensus

BUT

Collaboration

Diversity

Consensus



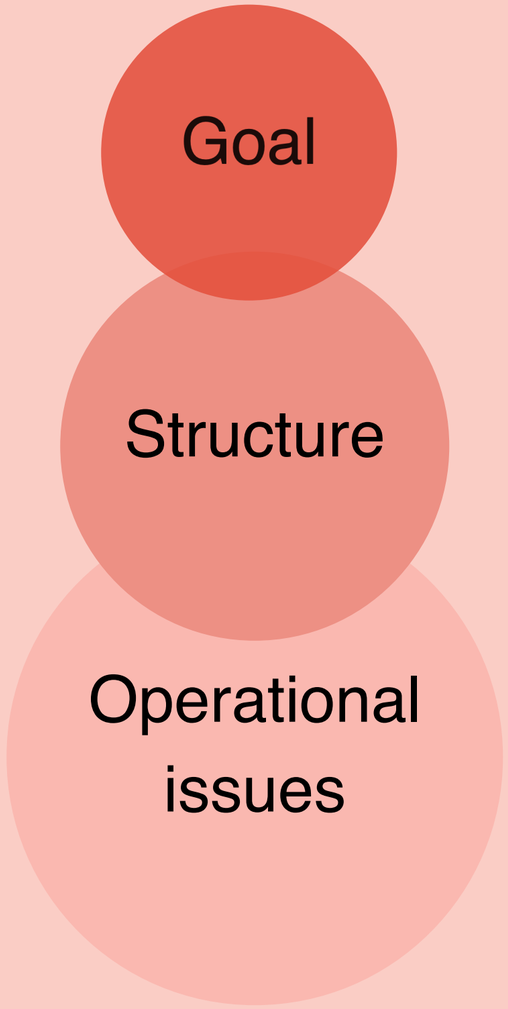
Costly adjustments
within organizations

More rules to “buffer”
different institutional logics

More rules to protect “minorities”
and costly monitoring

~~How to avoid centralization?~~

How much centralization do we need to balance efficiency and inclusiveness?



CEO:

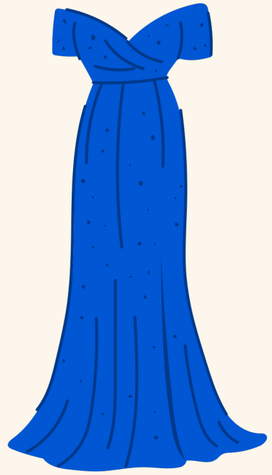
“We are like a family here,
not hierarchical at all”

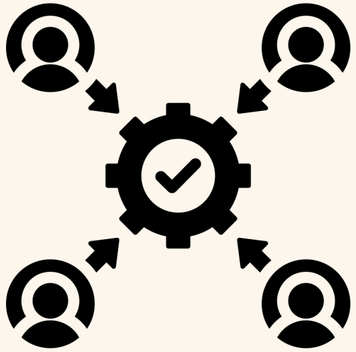
Reporting:

standardized forms;
centralised data collection;
performance metrics;
escalation procedures etc.

Decoupling, institutionalized misconduct

or





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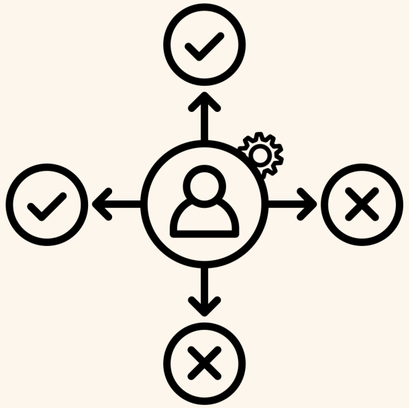

What about a Lead Partner?

Prepayment

Communication

Decision-making

1

“Cultural differences” are less problematic than sectoral or organizational

2

To deal with the differences, start with explicit discussion of your “rules of the game”

What can I read about governance of networks?

- Partnerships Resource Centre, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University
- The Partnering Initiative, UK
- A guide on successful partnerships, OECD LEED Forum for Partnerships and Local Governance
- Partnerships: Frameworks for Working Together, CCF National Resource Center, USA
- Provan, K. G., & Kenis, P. (2008). Modes of network governance: Structure, management, and
- effectiveness. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 18(2), 229–252.
- Knoben, J., & Oerlemans, L. A. G. (2006). Proximity and inter-organizational collaboration: A literature review. International Journal of Management Reviews, 8(2), 71-89.
- Reeves, M. & Pudin, U. (2022). Business Ecosystems (Inspiring the Next Game). De Gruyter.