

# Ask the Expert: Working as a Collective



“How can I support teams who need to work together on a project, but may have competing goals?”

## Forming Connections with Purpose and Clarity



### What the Research Says...

- Teams often function as part of broader systems (i.e., teams-of-teams) and these systems have their own goals and objectives ([Zaccaro et al., 2020](#)).
- Specific team members typically span boundaries between groups and serve as conduits of information and resources ([Marrone, 2010](#)).
- Team members can often find themselves with competing goals and priorities between their "primary" team and the broader system of teams ([Carter et al., 2019](#)).

## Building Capacity Within and Beyond the Team

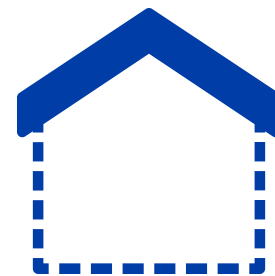


### Clarify Goals and Identities

Team-to-team connections are most effective if the teams know what the **overall objective** is for the system. As such, it is helpful for teams and their leaders to consider:

- What is our team's objectives within the system?
- How do our objectives fit with those of other groups?

It is also helpful to consider the whether people **identify** with their team or the broader system. If people only identify with their team, then conflict is more likely.



### Boundary Spanning

Ideally, teams will have individuals who form bridges and form connections with other groups.

Within your team:

- Do people know who is supposed to be spanning boundaries?
- Who is responsible for collecting information and resources and sharing it back within the team?



### Next Steps

- Consider if any team members may be overextended in their boundary spanning responsibilities.
- Authority within team-to-team systems can be shared across teams or held by one group. Consider how this is structured in your organization.



### Additional Resources

- CCL has created several tools and resources to support boundary spanning leadership.
- [Learn more here!](#)