

Building strong teams and structures



Table of content

1. Introduction
2. Designing strong teams
3. Structure
4. The Snowflake model

1. Introduction

Organizing is teamwork. **Together, we achieve more.** That means it is crucial to pay attention to what good teamwork requires and how to structure collaboration. When this is clear, it becomes much easier to welcome new people and keep them involved. People want to feel that they belong, that they have a place, and that they are part of something bigger. A clear structure also makes it easier to delegate tasks and share responsibility.

2. Design strong teams

Think back to a fun and successful team you have been part of, at work, school, in sports, or within a social movement. Chances are, you will recognize the following **nine factors** in that experience. These are elements you can intentionally build into the teams within your own organization.

- 1** A well-functioning team **is not too big or too small**: ideally between **six and twelve people**. That size makes it much easier to make decisions together and to complement one another's strengths. It is big enough to get real work done, but not so big that meetings take over or that people can hide from responsibility.
- 2** A well-functioning team has **a shared goal, vision, and mission**. The team knows what it wants to achieve and how it plans to do so. And if the team is part of a larger organisation, it understands the framework it operates within and the specific outcomes it's responsible for.
- 3** A well-functioning team has **one or more supportive/servant leaders**, not bosses who give orders, but people who bring others together, resolve conflicts, help everyone find their place in the team, and facilitate decision-making. They also prepare their own successors.



- 4 A well-functioning team is **diverse**. It includes people with different skills, perspectives, ways of thinking, and personalities.
- 5 A well-functioning team divides tasks in a way that **allows everyone's strengths to shine**.
- 6 A well-functioning team is built on **mutual trust and shared values**.
- 7 A well-functioning team has **its own identity**: a name, a character, and a story that it embodies and shares.
- 8 A well-functioning team has **fun, celebrates successes, and supports one another through challenges**.
- 9 A good team also **knows when to say no** to people. Not everyone fits into every team, and one disruptive member can cause a great team to fall apart. Don't be afraid to remove people who do not fit.

3. Structure

An organizing structure **works like a snowflake**. Teams work together, and an infinite number of new teams can be added. Everyone understands what is expected of these teams and how they communicate and make decisions together. It is also clear to everyone **where, when, and by whom decisions are made**, whether through voting, consent, a board, or a general assembly. **Any model can work, as long as it is clear.**

4. The Snowflake model

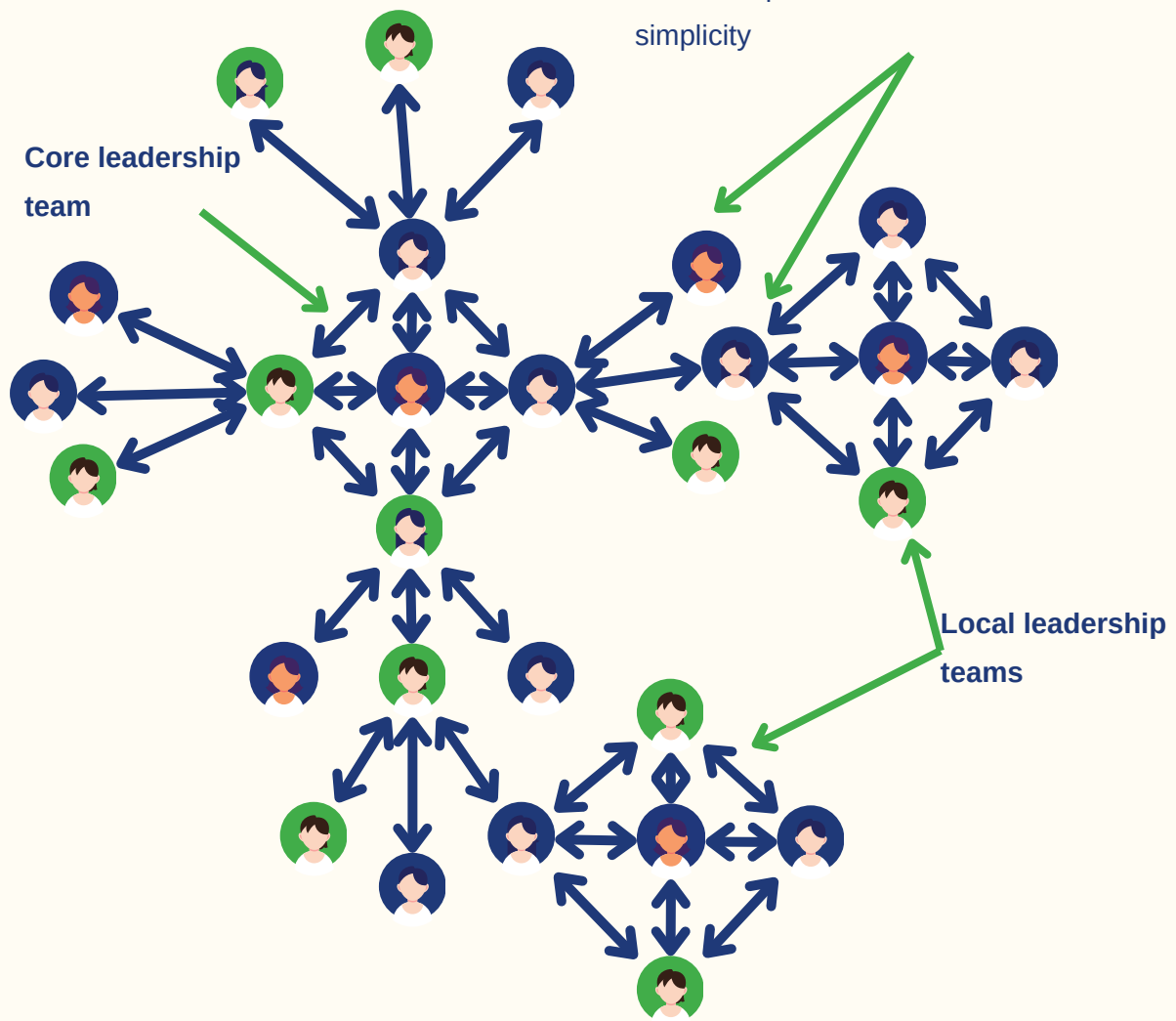
The snowflake model was introduced by **Marshall Ganz**, an American political scientist and activist, and has become an important framework within community organizing. The model shows how campaigns and movements **can scale up without losing their people**: local leaders are given responsibility for their own teams and territory, while the central hub retains strategic oversight. This structure is effective because it **combines autonomy with accountability**, volunteers feel a sense of ownership, and organizers are less likely to burn out. For groups and social movements, this means learning how to build sustainable engagement by not only mobilizing people, but also enabling them to lead.



The snowflake model **turns individual volunteers into a network of organizers who know their communities** and, as a result, build greater trust and impact. This creates scalability with depth, and a movement that doesn't just grow larger, but also becomes firmly rooted in society.

See the following article on the snowflake model: [The snowflake model of community engagement](#)

Each person in this snowflake could be a part of a local leadership team
Just a couple are illustrated here for simplicity



We are Stroomversnellers

Stroomversnellers is a trainers' collective of experienced campaigners, organizers, facilitators, and trainers. We have all been active in environmental organizations, grassroots initiatives, labor unions, or anti-racism movements. Through trial and error, we've learned how to run effective campaigns, build organizations, and create social change.

We are constantly learning and love sharing our knowledge and experiences with others. The world doesn't move in the right direction on its own—far from it. Only with many well-prepared people can a different, more just society come closer. That's why we support a wide range of groups fighting for social and ecological justice, offering advice, strategy and brainstorming sessions, (action) trainings, and workshops. Together, we grow, strengthen our impact, and work toward a better world!

Toolbox for Movements

This guide is part of the "Toolbox for Movements." The toolbox includes a collection of short digital guides covering the basics of strategy, movement building, activism, and organizing. It provides a solid foundation for beginning activists, while also offering fresh insights for experienced changemakers. [Here](#) you will find links to all other guides published so far.

We love learning too

If you have ideas for improving this guide or adding your own experiences, we'd love to hear from you!

www.stroomversnellers.org
info@stroomversnellers.org

IG: [@stroomversnellers](https://www.instagram.com/stroomversnellers)
FB: [TrainerscollectiefStroomversnellers](https://www.facebook.com/TrainerscollectiefStroomversnellers)
Bluesky: [@stroomversnellers.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/stroomversnellers.bsky.social)
Linkedin: [Stroomversnellers Trainers](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Stroomversnellers-Trainers)

STROOMVERSNELLERS 

