



Role of Steering Group for Digital-Environment System Coalition (DESC)

<http://desc.global>

Preamble

At a meeting on 10th February 2022, members of the DESC Steering Group recommended that given the emergent and flexible character of DESC there was no need to have a formal constitution for the Steering Group beyond what is already mentioned in DESC's Governance Framework, but that some elaboration on its role would be helpful.

Steering Group specification in DESC's Governance Framework

The initial role of the Steering Group is specified in the [Governance Framework](#) as follows:

7.2 The DESC *Steering Group* guides and leads the activities of DESC, taking joint decisions that cannot readily be made by its Working Groups.

- The Steering Group consists of 8-12 Members and Partners, the latter of which should comprise no more than half of its membership.
- Working Group Chairs (or Secretaries) are invited to be members of the Steering Group, and an election will be held should the number wishing to be part of the Steering Group exceed the number of places available.

The Steering Group is thus designed primarily to provide oversight of DESC's activities and to take necessary actions on behalf of the membership as required between membership meetings.

Role of the Steering Group

In essence, the Steering Group is to keep DESC's heart beating. DESC's holistic aim is ambitious in terms of how it develops the overall concept, and also in how we approach our key themes. The Steering Group's role is primarily concerned with helping to provide direction and clarity for the coalition.

In summary the Steering Groups has five main roles:

- To provide *oversight and direction* for DESC (whilst respecting the decentralised and autonomous character of its Working Groups)
- To *make decisions* where necessary on behalf of the membership (these should be ratified at the next full membership meeting)

- To *co-ordinate and provide guidance* for DESC's Working Groups and the Secretariat
- To *enthuse and encourage* members and partners
- To ensure that DESC is a *safe place* where difficult issues can be discussed openly and freely in line with DESC's [ethical guidelines](#).

Issues that the Steering Group may initially explore include:

- Developing recommendations concerning the functioning of DESC's Working Groups
- Providing clarity about the added value and benefits of DESC – many initiatives already exist – what do we bring that is different?
- How we can encourage thinking that is not reductionist (whole and parts), and to explore what it means to be holistic. The whole may be of a completely different nature to the sum of its parts. How can we encourage completely new ways of thinking.

Membership of the Steering Group

A summary of the membership of the Steering Group is provided in Section 7.2 of DESC's Governance Framework (see above). In more detail:

- The Steering Group consists of 8-12 Members and Partners, the latter of which should comprise no more than half of its membership.
- Full Members are eligible for election (by nomination of members or self-nomination to the Secretariat)
- Working Group Chairs (or Secretaries) are automatically invited to be members of the Steering Group, and an election will be held should the number wishing to be part of the Steering Group exceed the number of places available.
- Members of the Steering Group serve in the first instance for three years, and can subsequently be re-elected.

Frequency of Meetings

The Steering Group meets on an *ad hoc* basis as required. Much of its business is conducted by e-mail circulation, but it is expected that it will usually hold a minimum of three meetings each year.

First version 10th April 2022

Approved by Steering Group 12th April 2022