

The Parallel Research Arm

Chapter 2: How to run a side-research project without cannibalizing your startup.

Chapter 1 proved when parallel research is worth doing. This chapter is the operational playbook on how to execute it without destroying your focus.

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TARGET: Parley
DESC: Real-time sign language computer vision project.
MAIN OBLIGATION: QCaddy (VC-backed sports AR startup).
STATUS: Parallel execution. No cannibalization.
```

The Architecture of Constraint

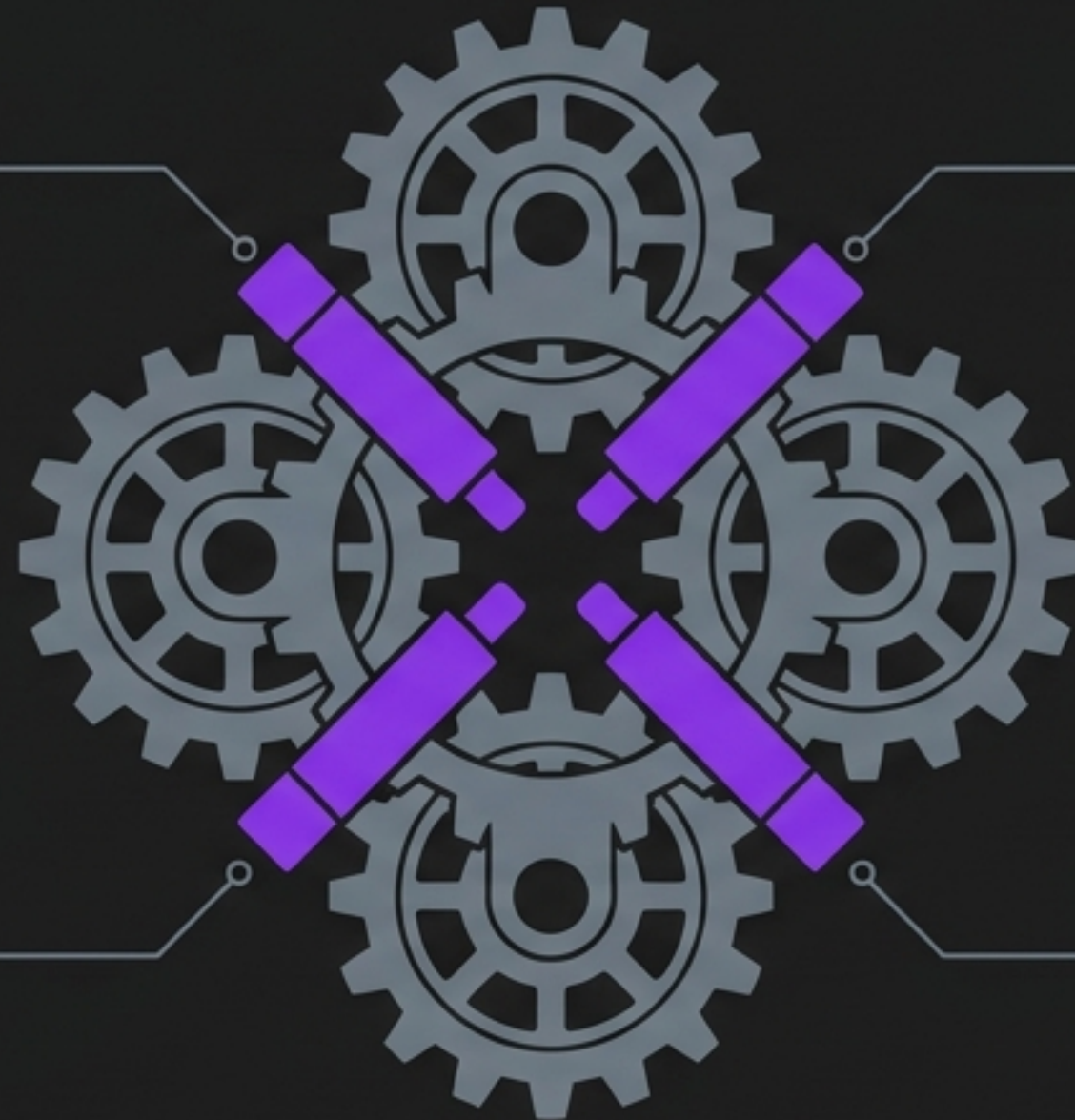
A parallel research arm survives on constraint, not effort.
Without these four interlocking discipline levers, the project
will inevitably expand to consume your primary startup.

1. Scope Rails: Hard boundaries written in stone before you start.

2. Monthly Cadence: The anti-burnout forcing function.

3. Public Publishing Loop: The external accountability engine.

4. Kill Criteria: Pre-loaded tripwires to pull the plug.



Decide Exactly What You Won't Do

Write your exclusions before you write your first line of code.

Source: /Volumes/Code Drive/Parley/docs/project-brief.md

IN SCOPE

- Monthly Kaggle notebooks
- Research-quality rigor (error bars, seeds)
- Literature synthesis
- Eventual webcam demo

NOT IN SCOPE

- Real-time production systems
- Mobile apps
- Commercial licensing discussions
- Dataset marketplace participation
- Replacing any QCaddy [URGENT] priority

Calibrating Your Constraints

To build functional scope rails, answer these three prompts in writing:



1. The Temptation

What specific technical or product rabbit hole will tempt you to expand?

(e.g., building a mobile app instead of just publishing research).



2. The Mechanism

What actions would physically expand the scope?

(e.g., engaging in commercial licensing discussions).



3. The Cost

What would this expansion explicitly cost the main startup?

(e.g., stealing cycles from urgent QCaddy priorities).

The Discipline of a Monthly Cadence

Weekly creates artificial urgency and administrative bloat that bleeds into your primary startup.

Quarterly lacks a forcing function, causing the project to quietly die.

> Slow beats fast. One notebook/month...
Pause trigger: any QC [URGENT] heat
pauses this project without guilt.

– Parley/docs/project-brief.md

Weekly: The Overhead Spiral



Monthly: The Goldilocks Zone



Quarterly: The Void



The Two-Minute Monthly Audit

Overhead must be near zero. On the first of each month, execute this exact four-question checklist to maintain alignment.

File: Parley/docs/roadmap.md

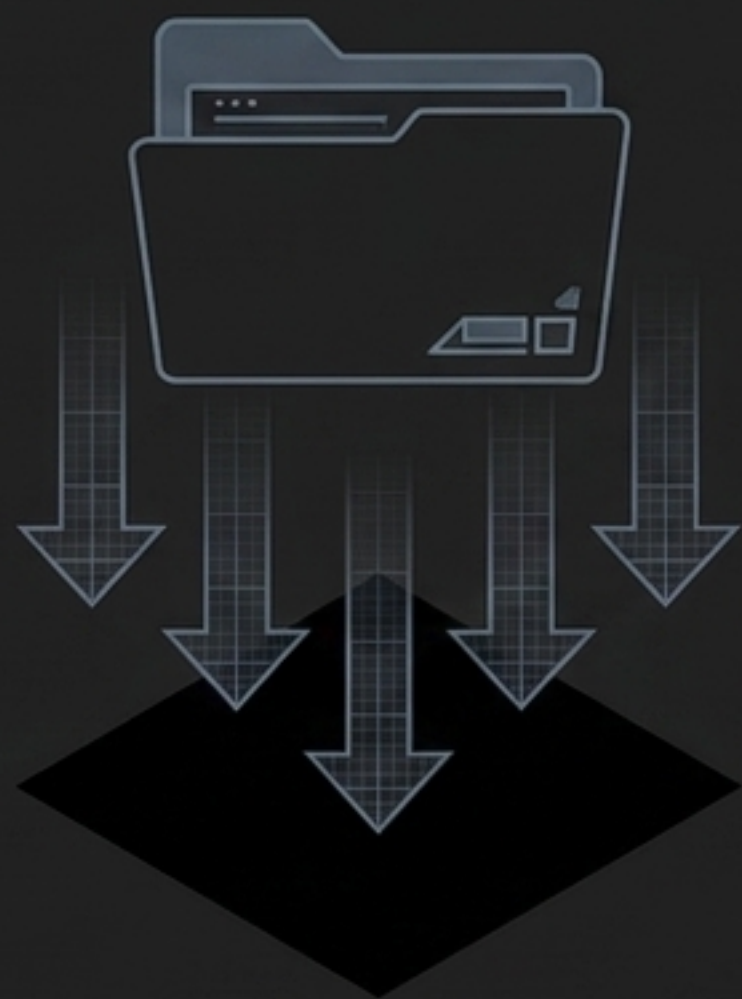
Section: Monthly check-in checklist

- Was last month's notebook shipped? (If not, it's still the current notebook).
- Did anything from QC [URGENT] pull cycles? (If yes, note it in decisions.md without guilt).
- Any new research questions surfaced for the roadmap?
- Update notebooks-published.md? ■

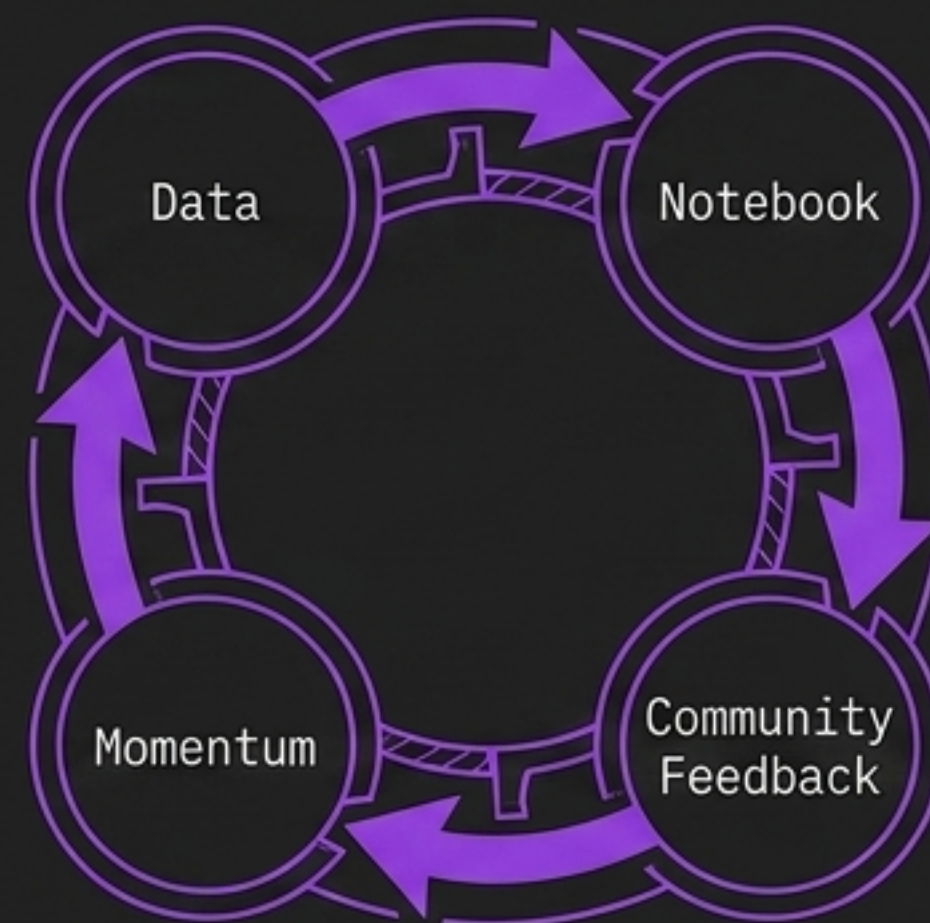
The External Accountability Engine

A parallel research arm without an audience becomes a digital graveyard. You must publish publicly. The platform provides a built-in deadline mechanism, an existing audience, and a forcing function for quality.

Entropy & Neglect



The Public Flywheel



Vault Anchor: "The journey is an educational artifact. Honesty over accuracy theater."

Evaluating the Venues

Why Parley chose Kaggle and killed the alternatives for applied research:

GitHub	✓ Right Format	✗ Forcing Function	✗ Built-in Audience
Personal Blog	✗ Right Format (high overhead)		✗ Built-in Audience
arXiv	✗ Right Format (academic posturing over code)		✓ Audience
Substack	✓ Forcing Function		✗ Code Community
Kaggle	✓ Forcing Function	✓ Niche Audience	✓ Code-Native

Corporate Discipline for a Side Project

Apply the same governance to the research arm as you do to the main company. One line per decision. If you change the scope or skip a month, log why so you cannot gaslight yourself later.

2026-04-22 – Mode: HOLD SCOPE with decompression rails.

2026-04-22 – Renamed: Sign Language APP -> Parley.

(Explicitly documents that project is meant to be a decompression channel, preventing hustle-creep).

(Tracks nomenclature changes to maintain a clean directory structure).

Establishing Pre-Loaded Tripwires

A research arm is a privilege, not a right. It goes on ice immediately if it trips any of these three wires:

1. Cadence Failure: Missing the monthly shipping window multiple times without a logged main-startup excuse.



2. Cannibalization: When research cycles begin stealing from main-startup [URGENT] priorities.



3. Scope Drift: When the project stops being research and begins attempting to be a commercial product.



The Ulysses Contract

Why must kill criteria be written before you start? Because at the exact moment a trigger is hit, you will be "inside the situation." You will rationalize the scope creep. You will justify the cannibalization. Advance written commitment acts as a ruthless third-party check against your own founder psychology.



The Ultimate ROI

Without strict operational rails, a research arm inevitably becomes a distracting third startup or quietly dies from neglect. With scope rails, a monthly cadence, a public loop, and kill criteria, it becomes a compounding asset—a decompression channel that transfers skills back to your main work without eating it alive.

