Network Leadership Toolkit

This toolkit was created by June Holley and is largely based on activities from the Network Weaver Handbook. The toolkit is a set of activities that you can use to stimulate more network leadership. The list below can help you select activities to help you develop different aspects of network leadership. Think about which aspect you most need to develop, and then select the activity or activities that can help develop that particular aspect. Some of the activities are quite simple and need no further explanation. Some are more complex so the directions are contained in the Module listed after the activity.

Section 1. Tools/Exercises for Relationship Building
- Speed Networking
- Yarn Peer Assist
- Closing Triangles Game

Section 2. Tools for Introducing and Building Network Leadership
- Network Weaving Checklist; Network Weaving Checklist Grid; Application: How to Use the Network Weaving Checklist
- Action Learning: Reflection and learning protocols for debriefing projects and accelerating learning while doing
- Peer Assists

Section 3. Tools for Building Network Culture & Structure
- Network Culture/Mindset Assessment
- Network Culture Assessment Worksheet
- Sharing Your Network Purpose

Section 4. Tools for Visualizing, Assessing and Weaving Your Network
- Individual Map Drawing Activity
- Map Drawing with Post-its
- Who is missing?
- Improving Your Periphery
- Closing triangles

Section 5. Tools for Promoting Self-Organizing
- Clustering
- Using Google Forms to Create a Clustering Survey
- Supporting Self-Organized Projects

Section 6. Communication tools/strategies
- Setting Up a Communications Ecosystem
- Communications Ecosystem Worksheet
- Steps to a More Engaging Communication Ecosystem
Section 1: Tools/Exercises for Relationship Building

Rationale: A healthy, effective network means that many people in the network know each other well enough that they know how that person may contribute to any project they initiate. Most people primarily know people like themselves. At any meeting or convening, it’s important to help people get to know those they don’t know. It’s also important that participants learn how to connect and support each other.

Speed Networking

This is a great activity that you can use at the start of every meeting, using different questions. The important part is the debrief portion that helps people become more aware of their listening skills. This session could be done virtually in virtual conferencing platforms such as Adobe Connect, Maestro or Zoom as each offers the capacity for breakout rooms.

Encourage participants to use this activity at the start of all their meetings and convenings, changing the questions to suit the topic of the gathering. This is a simple way to encourage participants to become network leaders.

Directions:

Have everyone stand up and find someone they don’t know, or don’t know well. Instruct participants to take turns listening to each other as they answer one of the following questions:

1. What excites you about the idea of networks?
2. What would you like to learn about networks?
3. What is an example of a very effective network you have been a part of?

You can adapt the questions to fit the topic of the meeting. Give them about 5 minutes for the entire exchange. After 2.5 minutes, remind them to change partners if they haven’t already.

After the first round, have the group debrief the experience. Ask “Who had a really good listener?” Then ask one of those who raised their hands, what that person did that made them aware they were listening well? Ask several others to point out other aspects of good listening (eye contact, leaning towards me, restating answers, asking questions, etc).

Then have people find another person they don’t know and repeat the activity with another question. After this ask people if they found themselves listening more effectively.
Yarn Peer Assist

You will need a large ball of yarn (easily found in most thrift stores) for this activity. This works best for groups of 10-30 people. Thanks to Roi Crouch for this activity.

Have people form a circle. Get a volunteer to start the process. Have that person share a challenge they are having. Have people in the circle who have some experience or advice that might help that first person raise their hand. Have the first person, holding on to the end of the yarn, throw the ball to that person.

The second person then shares some quick advice or a resource for the first person’s challenge. Encourage people to keep it short, but mention that they might want to talk about the challenge more deeply during a break.

Then have the second person mention a challenge they are having, and have others in the circle raise their hand if they have some advice that might help that challenge. Have the second person hold the strand of yarn, then throw the ball to one of the people raising their hand.

Continue like this until everyone has had a chance to share a challenge.

Using Events to Close Triangles

This activity was used at a big in-person gathering of an emerging network (see description on blog post with the same name at www.flisrand.com).

Instructions:
1. Start with a 101 on Closing Triangles, what it means, how to do it and why it is important in networks (see Network Weaver Handbook).

2. Share a story to provide an example of how a meaningful connection happens when a triangle is closed between two people who didn't know each other in the room.

3. Ask people to pull out the "Closing Triangles Drawing Entry form" from their registration packet (see sample below).

4. Explain how to complete the form and where the large glass bowl of completed entry forms will be. Keep the bowl in a public place like the refreshments table, at registration or a resource table. It could even be up at the podium.

5. Give time immediately after explaining the activity for people to do it. It could be right before a break and people could do the activity (network weavers could help others get the game going) and then after the activity (or break) drawing from the
completed entry forms for prizes (books on network themes). Repeat this cycle of giving time, encouraging/modeling engagement and recognizing/rewarding the behavior several times throughout the conference.

6. Be sure to use a clear glass bowl so people can see the completed forms representing new connections being made and celebration of those connections and the practice of closing triangles.

Closing Triangles Drawing Entry Form
Section 2:
Tools for Introducing and Building
Network Leadership

Rationale: Network Leadership is quite different than traditional leadership. A network approach will require an increasing number of people in the network to take responsibility for the health of the network by connecting others, initiating collaborative action, convening people and making sure that the network is well supported. The primary role of a network leader is to help others become network leaders!

Network leadership is not focused on individuals so much as a set of functions that need to be filled. Most people will fill some but not all of these functions, and more than one person should be filling each of these functions.

The Network Weaving Checklist helps individuals assess their network weaving skills and helps projects and/or networks determine what network functions are filled and which will require some training to fill.

Good reflection and learning sessions and peer assists are a key aspect of network leadership: a group of peers making sense of their experience and helping each other with challenges.
Network Weaving Checklist

Which network functions are you filling? Mark each from 1 to 5, with 5 being “major strength” and 1 being “lack this quality.”

Connecting

_____ 1. Love to unearth other people’s dreams and visions, strengths and gifts
_____ 2. Help people identify challenges & introduce them to others who can help
_____ 3. Model an approach to relationships that is positive and focused on strengths & gifts
_____ 4. Treat everyone as a peer
_____ 5. Encourage sharing information and resources with others without expecting a return from that person because you know others will share with you
_____ 6. Help people connect to others with different perspectives and from different backgrounds
_____ 7. Encourage people to listen deeply to each other
_____ 8. Connect people to others who share a similar interest
_____ 9. Help people make accurate and realistic assessments of others
_____ 10. Help people bring innovation and new perspectives into their network by adding new people to their network

Self-Organized Project Coordinating & Coaching

_____ 1. Good at identifying opportunities where a small action could make a difference in dealing with an issue or problem
_____ 2. Help people find others with similar interests and support them to form a collaborative project
_____ 3. Encourage people to spend time researching what others have done to work on this issue, and how their efforts might provide guidance for the project’s actions
_____ 4. Have the skills needed for project success: good at setting up meetings, organizing communications, and tracking task
_____ 5. Initiate activities with people from different organizations or groups.
_____ 6. Not attached to specific next steps but enjoy helping people identifying and implement actions
_____ 7. Help people listen to each other respectfully and see how their different perspectives contribute to a better project
8. Help people stop and reflect about how a project is working and if they need to make changes
9. Like checking in with people and sending reminders to make sure their tasks are on track
10. Encourage people to share about their project with larger network

Facilitating
1. Convene people with common or overlapping interests to form an intentional network.
2. Make sure convenings include time for relationship and trust building.
3. Help people map (or identify) people in the network and see who needs to be added or connected
4. Help the network participants become aligned through working to develop a network mindset.
5. Enable a network to embed a network mindset in all its work and operations.
6. Help the network map the system it is changing and identify high potential leverage points where transformation is more likely to occur.
7. Help facilitate the formation of working groups that focus on leverage points in a system.
8. Do clustering activities to enable people in the network to identify common interests and form action groups to work on those interests.
9. Help people in the network share what they are learning as they implement their projects.
10. Find resources to support the functioning of the network.

Supporting
1. Support, encourage and mentor network leadership.
2. Set up (or help network set up) communications systems so everyone knows what is happening, collaborative projects are supported, and learning is widely shared.
3. Help people in the network learn about social media and web platforms and how it can help people in the network communicate more effectively.
4. Provide training and coaching in network leadership, especially support for project coordinators.
5. Help set up Communities of Practice for network leadership to learn skills and offer each other peer support.
6. Make sure reflection and learning from projects is shared with the rest of the network so everyone benefits

7. Set up systems for just-in-time tracking of network mindset, network leadership, and network structures and helping network participants

8. Set up an innovation fund to provide seed funds for small collaborations

9. Encourage the network to create a new kind of resource system that includes network participant skills and innovative use of crowdfunding platforms.

10. Encourage funders to set up collaborative pools of funds and include participative decision-making that includes network participants.

Strengths?
Areas where you would like to build your skills?
Network Weaving Checklist Grid

Have each person put a RED dot in the quadrant where they scored the highest and/or do the most and a GREEN dot in the quadrant where they would like to work more or learn more about.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connecting</th>
<th>Facilitating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Coordinating</td>
<td>Supporting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Application: How to Use the Network Weaver Checklist

How could you use this checklist with your network?

When/where/how might you introduce this to them?

How might this tool be used for tracking and evaluation?

How does the grid help you think of the whole network’s functions, who is filling those functions, and which functions are not well-filled? In addition, how can it help the network see where training might be needed in some of the functions?
# Action Learning

Reflection and learning protocols for debriefing projects and accelerating learning while doing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre</strong></td>
<td><strong>During</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-What do we hope will happen: what would success be? How long will it take?</td>
<td>-Are we making the progress we expected to?</td>
<td>-Was our hypothesis about what would happen correct?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-How will we know if we are making progress?</td>
<td>-Does our time frame seem right?</td>
<td>-Were we successful? If not, do we know how we could have achieved a different result?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>During</strong></td>
<td><strong>Post</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-What are roles, responsibilities and plans for this project?</td>
<td>-How are we carrying out our responsibilities and working as a team?</td>
<td>-Did we implement our plan well, did our team function well?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-What are resources we need to do this, do we have them?</td>
<td>-Are we attracting the resources we need for this work?</td>
<td>-Did the team have the supports resources is needed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-What do we hope to learn from this?</td>
<td>-What are we learning?</td>
<td>-What are the most important things we learned about the idea, the team, and implementation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-What implications does this have for real time changes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Peer Assists

Peer Assists bring together a group of peers to provide feedback on a problem, project, or activity. It encourages participatory learning and draws lessons from the group’s knowledge and experience.

The systematic process generates new perspectives on a situation and options for action. The benefits include sharing learning, building connections and strengthening trust and insights in a network.

Peer assist work very well as part of a virtual videoconference.

Pre-planning: With the person or group with a challenge determine:
   a. The purpose
   b. The challenge or focus area (be open to reframing it)
   c. The peer group (diverse skills and experience and able to ask helpful questions)
   d. The length of the session (can be between 20 minutes and 1 hour)
   e. A facilitator to watch the time and process
   f. A note-taker to capture breakthrough thinking, action steps and learning

Conduct the session:
   1. Facilitators states the purpose
   2. Presenter (may be a team) describes the issue and goal
   3. Group asks clarifying questions
   4. Go round where people give advice, share resources, and identify options and opportunities
   5. The person or group with the challenge summarizes what insights they received from the session and thoughts about future next steps
   6. The note-taker captures actions, insights or takeaways

Tips:
   ● Allow time before or after for socializing. Rapport is helpful for learning.
   ● Use the facilitator to stick with the process and the note-taker to capture ideas generated and actions agreed upon.
   ● Think about who else might benefit from the lessons learned and share and reuse knowledge.
   ● Depending on the complexity of the issue, the peer assist can be as short as 20 minutes and up to 1 hour with sharing from others with comparable experiences.
Section 3: Tools for Building Network Culture & Structure

Rationale: Network approaches work most effectively if the network takes time to help people move from a hierarchical/organizational way of operating to a network way of thinking and being. A first step is to help people in the network become more aware of what this means. Once people become aware of their own personal challenges and the network’s challenges, they can develop strategies for moving to a more network way of being.

Networks may also benefit by becoming more intentional. To do this often means helping people share their sense of purpose and vision. Some groups may want to craft a vision or purpose statement, but it’s important that it is broad enough so that the network can expand and be inclusive.

Network Culture/Mindset Assessment

Use the worksheet Network Culture Assessment Worksheet with a group. You may want to redo the chart to include only 20 items.

Set up chart paper on the wall with the list. Have people put dots or lines on the items that they feel are most challenging for them personally. Then see if there are patterns: places where all of those in the room are having some difficulty. Have small groups talk about why this is, and strategies they could try personally and in their organization or network to shift to a more network mindset.

Did the activity create new awareness? Were people willing to work on shifting their culture?

Check in with the group a week later. What did they do to change their culture? What challenges did they face?
Network Culture Assessment Worksheet

For each item, put a number between 1 and 5 to describe how characteristic this is of yourself, your organization or your network. 5 means this item is very characteristic of you or your organization or your network and 1 means that it is not yet expressed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Meme</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transparent</td>
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<td>Noticing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accepting</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Value diversity and difference</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Turn conflict to breakthroughs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unattached</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunity Seeking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Embracing challenges</td>
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<td>Learning</td>
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<td>Experimental</td>
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<td>Exploring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comfortable with uncertainty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value reflection and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resourceful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Playful and fun</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interact as Peers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give and receive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listen</td>
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<td>Collaborative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interdependent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connected</td>
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<td>Engaged and engaging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutual</td>
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<td>Share</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reciprocate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symbiotic</td>
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<td>Transformative</td>
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<td>Spreading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amplifying</td>
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<td>Coaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insightful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cascading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expansive</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Connective</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Connecting</td>
<td>Reaching out</td>
<td>Including</td>
<td>Closing triangles</td>
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</table>

Once you have completed the chart, talk over what you discovered.

Select three you would most like to work on in the next month. Try keeping a journal on your progress.

**Sharing Your Network Purpose**

Bring together network participants and have them write why they want to be part of a more intentional network on Post-It Notes. They can fill out more than one. Then have one person put that purpose on the wall or two large chart papers. Others who have a similar purpose should then put their Post-it Note close to that person’s Post-It.

Then have another person put up their purpose followed by others with a similar purpose. Continue this process until all of the purposes are on the wall.
During a break, have several people summarize the various purposes and make a combined purpose statement. If there are any controversial or disputed areas, the group will need to deal with those now.

This shared purpose can then be shared in a Google Doc so others can add or edit the purpose statement.
Section 4: Tools for Visualizing, Assessing and Weaving your Network

Rationale: Network maps are one of the best ways to help people “see” the networks in which they participate. Network maps can be hand drawn during a meeting or can be part of a several month process of mapping using a survey instrument and software or a web-based mapping tool.

In this section, we present several ways to develop network maps in a group setting. The first - Individual Map Drawing Activity - can be done by individuals who then debrief what they discovered with another person. Hand out the worksheet, give the individuals about 10 minutes to complete, and then have them spend another 10 minutes sharing debriefs with a neighbor.

The second is way to see “the network in the room.”

Once the network has been visualized, participants need to take steps to improve the network by adding missing groups and adding to the periphery.
Individual Map Drawing Activity

Think of a project you are currently working on. On a 9 x 11 paper or large chart paper draw a circle for yourself and label. Then draw circles for others you are working with on that project. This includes all those who are coming to meetings, providing resources such as space or money, those writing up reports or notes, etc.

Next, draw lines between you and the others. Then draw lines between any of the people in the project who know each other. This is the Project Core.

Now, out further, draw circles for other individuals and organizations that you are working with on the project but less frequently and draw lines to the individuals in your project network who have the relationship with that individual. This would include consultants helping to design a brochure, people you called up to learn about similar projects, program officers for your project grant, etc. This is your Project Periphery.

Then add other individuals or groups the individuals are connected to (who might add value to your project) and draw lines connecting them. This would be when someone in your project group knows a grant writer or graphics consultant who might be pulled into the project, or if someone in the project has a good relationship with a funder who might be interested in your project. These are what is called Your Friends’ Friends Network.

Finally, around the outside edge, put circles for individuals or groups you are not working with on this project, but who could add value to the project if they were involved. These might be people with expertise, people from other communities who have been innovating in ways that would be of value to your initiative, or people who are often left out of projects (people of color, low-income individuals, individuals being served by the initiative, young people, elders, etc). This is your Potential Network.

Then answer the questions:

a. What do you notice about this network? Is your project periphery easy to access for the resources and expertise you need?

b. Is your core large enough to get the work done?

c. Who is missing from the network? Are the people you are serving in your network?

d. Who in the periphery, friends’ friends, or potential network would add most value to your project network if they could become part of the core? Part of the periphery?

e. Who could help you get to know key people in your friends’ friends network or in the potential network?
Network Mapping with Post-Its

Beth Kanter used this activity in our recent Design Thinking gathering to identify modules for Network Leadership. It works best with a group between 10 and 40 people in size.

Preparation: Have a stack of different colored and shaped Post-It notes on tables so participants have easy access to them.

Individual Instructions: Take one (name a color) Post-It and write your name on it. On other colored Post-Its write the name of a group or network that you are a part of.

Group Instructions: Have one person come up, say their name and organization as they put their Post-It on a large whiteboard, then put their network Post-Its around their name, briefly describing each one.

When the next person comes up they put themselves (and their networks) close to the first person if they know that person, or further away if they do not know that person. Then using a marker, they draw lines between their name and any of the other person’s networks they are also connected to.

After everyone has put their networks on the whiteboard, have them reflect on the map. Are they surprised at how expansive the network in the room is? Who might they connect with during a break that has connections they are interested in?
Who Is Missing?

Below are a list of groups that are often missing is our networks. For each one, list specific individuals or organizations you might invite into the network, and key people who could act as bridges or connectors between that group and your network. Such people may or may not belong to that group but are respected by the group. Add additional categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Missing group</th>
<th>People you know or know of from that group</th>
<th>Bridge people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Older people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>People of color</td>
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<tr>
<td>People directly impacted by the problem or issue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your opponents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Low-resource people</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Improving Your Periphery

Network leaders can use this with work groups or with large networks.

Have a list on the left side of a whiteboard of possible types of people who might be missing from the periphery of their network. This list might include funders, other donors, experts (list type such as facilitator, researcher), people trying similar strategies in other places around the world, people from other sectors, etc.
The next step is to prioritize the groups listed in column 1 that are most needed by the network. Which 5-6 are most critical for the network to build relationships with?

Then in the center of the board, have people list names (or use different colored Post-Its) – of individuals they already know, individuals they don’t know, and then organizations that might have staff with needed skills. If no one knows anyone in the organization, the group might come up with the name of someone they know who is likely to know individuals in the organization.

Now make a column on the right side that lists the name of the person who will reach out and develop a relationship with the person or organization. The goal is not to get these individuals to “join” the network, but rather to be available to be called on for advice, help in finding new resources, or for learning events or situations. It’s important that those reaching out understand the interests of the individual so that the network can reciprocate effectively and appropriately when asking for help.

Network leaders need to encourage people who take part in this exercise to think about how they could use this activity in other networks or projects they are a part of.
Closing Triangles

Print out copies of the chart below and/or write the chart on a piece of chart paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Person to be Connected</th>
<th>Resource Person you want to connect them to</th>
<th>Potential shared interest</th>
<th>When and Where to Make Introductions</th>
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Section 5: Tools for Promoting Self-Organizing

Rationale: The most important way that networks generate impact and transformation is through self-organizing. Self-organizing happens when anyone in the network sees something that needs to happen and finds diverse individuals to collaborate with. Then that group catalyzes a self-organized project to try out something to deal with the issue or problem.

One way network weavers can help self-organizing take off is by helping people find others interested in the same thing and enabling them to talk about what they might do together. This is called clustering and can be done through surveys or using Post-it notes at a gathering.

However, once a self-organized project is underway, the group will need coaching and support - since self-organized projects are quite different from teams or departments in organizations.

Clustering

Have people at a meeting answer a question such as:

1. What do you think would make the most difference in your network right now (and that you would be willing to put energy into)?

2. What do you most want to learn about with others?

3. What is an action you’d like to take right now with others?

Have them write an answer on a larger Post-it and add their name. Have them post these on a wall and take a break.
Get several volunteers to cluster similar answers together on the wall and then make a short title for the topic on a piece of poster board. Put these on each table - along with the set of Post-its on that topic.

When people return from their break, have them find the table with their topic.

Have each group share why they selected that topic, why they think their topic is so important, what they think is a small action or two the group could do together, when they might meet next, and who is willing to remind the group and set up a group email.

Organizers need to gather all the information about each group and check in with group coordinators a week later.
Using Google Forms to Create a Clustering Survey
Open a Google form, see above. Ask ONE question with 3-5 choices about burning issues, topics of group learning, action areas. Ask people which they would most like to do right now.

Then ask if they would be willing to convene or help coordinate the group. You may want to describe what coordination would involve:

1. Setting up and reminding people about meeting times and dates
2. Taking notes or finding a volunteer to take notes
3. Facilitating meetings or finding a volunteer to do this

You can present the information from a survey as a chart or you can map the results using software.

Supporting Self-Organized Projects

One of the first things a network weaver can do to support a collaborative self-organized project is to explain the difference between a team and a project, using the chart below. In addition, it’s often useful for the network weaver to coach the project, checking in to help deal with any challenges that arise.

How collaborative working groups differ from organizational teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Teams</th>
<th>Collaborative Projects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Often permanent</td>
<td>• Generates ongoing stream of projects or experiments, each has an end</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Everyone in one organization</td>
<td>• From different organizations so communication difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People have fixed roles in team, have a boss</td>
<td>• Often a small part of total job/or volunteer so attention difficult to keep</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Usually have plan, goal, and clear tasks</td>
<td>• Experimental, change plans as learn</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Can do work informally when meet at water cooler</td>
<td>• No boss, maybe a coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have to do work as part of job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Supporting clusters

- Help with challenges
- Helping reflect
- Training in Collaborative Processes
- Understand how differs from Team
- Checking In/ Coaching
Section 6: Communication Tools/Strategies

Rationale: Healthy and effective networks benefit from a robust communications ecosystem - a set of tools, places, and platforms that enable interaction and discussion to occur easily among participants (not mediated by any central individual or organization).

It’s beneficial to have the network (or a working group) explicitly identify the current communication ecosystem, and add new platforms as needed. People will often need training to use some of these platforms, and coaching as they use them, so you will need to identify some individuals to fill this function.
Developing a Communications Ecosystem

Using the diagrams above, help your network and/or leadership cohort(s) design its communication ecosystem. Which platform or platforms will it use for information sharing? For relationship building? For collaboration? For new ideas?

Initial work can often be done by a small design group which can bring a draft to the whole network for feedback. Then the design group needs to set up the platforms, and provide training in their use.

It’s often a good idea to start with the basics - learning a web conferencing platform, setting up a group email, and organizing a Google Docs folder. Once people are familiar with these, the group can provide training in platforms such as Doodle or Scoop. It for those who are interested.
Steps to a More Engaging Communication Ecosystem

At meetings: Help people get to know each other and more deeply
1. Break into small groups
2. Have time for groups of two for relationship building (Speed Networking, page 103 Network Weaver Handbook)
3. Use Skype so more people can attend
4. Encourage different people to facilitate different parts of the meeting
5. Make all tasks a group of two

Group email
1. Have someone/small group committed to asking and answering questions
2. At least weekly, ask people to share about successes or challenges
3. Make sure you mention Reply All can be used to share information with everyone
4. Encourage people to have groups of two

Conferences
1. Try open space or Clustering (Chapter 9 Network Weaver Handbook)
2. Participative conference planning: Have Adobe Connect calls open to all network participants

Platforms
1. Train network participants about Twitter and Scoop.it
2. Set up a Facebook Group and have small group do proactive facilitation (ask questions frequently to draw out people)
3. Have comments on webpage

Self-organized groups
1. Coach coordinators to set up and learn to use Google Docs and videoconferencing (AnyMeeting, ReadyTalk)
2. Show how to set up group email for project