

Actions to Improve Network Health

(Source: Adapted from June Holley's *Network Weaver's Handbook*, pages 94-98)

Priorities for Your Network

Using the results from the *Network Health Scorecard (NHS)*, check the **three** areas that the core members of your network feel need the most attention right now. **Circle three** that your core members would like to learn more about. Be sure to share these priorities and planned actions with NHS respondents.

- 1. Not enough energy
- 2. Network not inclusive
- 3. Lack of new ideas or innovation
- 4. Need for more resources or expertise
- 5. Too few people in the network
- 6. Lack of network leadership
- 7. People don't know each other
- 8. Cliques are divisive, territorial
- 9. Low trust
- 10. Not much collaboration
- 11. Not aware of opportunities
- 12. Disorganized, little action
- 13. People don't follow through
- 14. People seldom take the initiative
- 15. Few projects include new people
- 16. Network doesn't see itself as a network
- 17. Leadership autocratic, controlling
- 18. The network has no set goals or purpose
- 19. There is no governing group
- 20. One group does most of the work
- 21. Not taking time to build relationships
- 22. Money not allocated fairly
- 23. Communication not flowing well
- 24. Not understanding a network approach
- 25. People don't have networking or collaboration skills needed
- 26. Not much learning happening in network
- 27. Network does not use social media or the social web

Discuss and agree on actions, noting who will take the lead, what they will do, and when they will take action. Key network concepts that appear in bold are defined in an attached handout.

Characteristic	Action	Notes (Who? How? When?)
1. Not enough energy	Identify people's passions or interests and help them form self-organized action groups List missing groups (youth, people of color, etc.) and bring in for new energy	
2. Need innovation or new ideas	Have people attend conferences or meetings where they will meet new people with overlapping interests	
3. Not include key groups (people being served, young, old, people of color, etc.)	Identify people from excluded groups and intro to key hubs in network Include people from these groups in small projects	
4. Need more resources or expertise	Brainstorm or research on Internet names of people or organizations who have the resources, expertise or new ideas. Identify people who might know them and ask them to make introductions	
5. Not enough people	Recruit – add friends' friends Have introductory workshops and recruit	
6. Not enough Network Weavers	Introduce others to Network Weaver (NW) role Form a NW Community of Practice	
7. People don't know each other	Have NWs set up mtgs with twosies Speed Networking at mtgs Organize tables at mtgs w people from different groups, counties, sectors	
8. Cliques, territoriality, divisiveness, isolated clusters	Identify hubs in each cluster who are interested in bringing the clusters together and help them ID common interests Have people from 2 clusters go after resources they could not obtain singly	

	Have Network Weavers ID gifts of people from each cluster and connect them to people in other cluster who need help	
Characteristic	Action	Notes (Who does? When? How?)
9. Low trust	Speed Networking Try Quality Connection activities	
10. Not collaborating with other individuals or organizations	Set up a small Innovation Fund to provide incentive for collaboration: projects must involve 2 or more organizations or communities	
11. Not recognizing opportunities for action	Do Opportunities Process to help people cluster into groups then have them ID small acts Research opportunities/actions of other groups on Web	
12. Disorganized/ little action	Do Opportunities Process to help people cluster into groups then have them ID small acts	
13. People not following through on projects	Provide Project Management Worksheets Set up web-based project management site and train coordinators Have regular check-in calls or meetings with project coordinators	
14. People seldom take initiative	Use Opportunity Process to help people identify interests, then support them to take action	
15. Projects seldom include new people	Draw map of project and think of missing skills, resources, perspectives; recruit new people to project to fill these roles	
16. Group doesn't see itself as network	Do a short presentation on networks Hand out <i>Building Networks</i> resource or <i>Working Wikily</i> paper	
17. Leadership too autocratic	Explain network concepts Legitimize new leaders who score well on Network Weaver Checklist	

Characteristic	Action	Notes (Who do? When? How?)
18. No set goals or purpose	<p>Facilitate process to clarify goal (or overlapping goals) and purpose of Network</p> <p>Once goals identified, list key players needed for success in those goal areas and invite in as partners</p>	
19. No clear governing group	<p>Read about models of network governance</p> <p>Lead process to determine governing structure</p>	
20. One group or individual doing most of the work	<p>Use the Opportunity Process to help chuck out the work, then provide coaching to coordinators of these projects so they develop leadership skills</p>	
21. Not taking time to build relationships	<p>Have a Speed Networking activity at each convening</p> <p>Have long breaks at all meetings</p>	
22. Money not allocated fairly	<p>Agree on criteria for dividing up money (based on work, outcomes, etc.)</p>	
23. Communication not flowing in core or project group	<p>Set up web-based project management sites</p> <p>Have group develop ground rules for sharing information: what they agree to do?</p> <p>Organize group email or www.ning.com site and push people to send notices, news</p> <p>Close triangles between key people in core who don't know each other</p> <p>Provide templates and training to help people present more effectively on calls or report on line</p>	
24. Group or network doesn't understand network approaches	<p>Do a short presentation using the <i>Why Networks?</i> resource</p> <p>Speed Networking on "A really great network I've known"</p>	
25. Few networking or collaboration skills	<p>Provide training and coaching in skills (use June Holley's <i>Network Weaver Handbook</i>)</p>	

Characteristic	Action	Notes (Who do? When? How?)
26. Not making needed breakthroughs or learning from experience	<p>Have a meeting where people look at most successful projects or activities and analyze why successful to ID patterns of success</p> <p>Have online spaces such as ning sites to share learning and give feedback</p> <p>Provide forms for feedback at meetings (email or online if phone or Internet meeting)</p>	
27. Network does not use social media	Identify social media experts in the network, have them introduce social media, and coach individuals in their use	

Handout: Definitions of Basic Network Concepts

Cluster: Sets of individuals who are all similar in some way and tend to interact frequently.

Closing

Triangles: Connecting two people you know who don't know each other; this is done when you know both people have some interest in common.

Community of

Practice (CoP): A group of people who share an interest, role, and/or profession. CoPs are often formalized to meet regularly to support and learn from each other.

Core: The center of a network where there are denser ties. Although people in the core may not know each other, they can access most individuals through their deep connections.

Hub: People who are well connected to others; usually hubs are also very influential.

Innovation

Fund: Small pool of money that provides seed funds or incentive funds to encourage self-organization and collaboration; each project must include people from different organizations, different age groups, different communities or whomever you want to encourage to work together; applications should be very simple and timelines very short.

Network

Weaver: People who take responsibility for making networks healthier; do so by connecting people, coordinating self-organized projects, facilitating networks, and being a Network Guardian (someone who keeps track of what is happening in the network, bringing in resources and helping develop the system of support for the network).

Opportunity

Process: Activities that help networks identify people with overlapping interests and encourages them to take action steps (called Small Acts) to explore opportunities

Periphery: The outer part of a network, consisting of people who are only connected to the core through one or two people. A large periphery is important because it is the core's connection to new ideas and resources, and a gateway to many other networks.

Quality

Connections: Relationships based on respect and trust. Such relationships are critical for people to engage in high-risk, high impact collaborations.

Speed

Networking: An activity that helps people in a network get to know each other better; people pair up with someone they don't know and take turns answering a question you suggest such as "What excites you about ----?" or "What is the best network you have been a part of?"

Twosies: Two people self-organizing a small action project. Twosies enable people to get to know each other in a low-risk environment.

Your Friends'

Friends: People who your direct connections know, but you don't know; often good to explicitly ask friends or co-workers who they know and what resources/gifts each of their friends has.