



Minnesota
FOOD CHARTER
Network

“Just Getting Started” Network Scorecard

Administration and Analysis

The “Just Getting Started” Network scorecard is a planning tool for a group that is just forming or a group that has been inactive and wants to get started again. The items take you through the steps that, if completed, will maximize network health.

Once a network has been actively operating for about a year, the group should shift to assessing its health using the Network Health Scorecard (NHS). NHS is a “self-study” tool for an active network (e.g., groups that have been operating for at least one year and meet at least annually) for diagnosing strengths and areas that need further development.

Neither tool focuses on examining the added value of the network or the outcomes that have been achieved.

These self-study tools assume that a healthy network increases the probability it **will add value** to community-based efforts to improve the food system and contribute to the achievement of outcomes that a single individual, organization, or sector could not achieve alone.

The findings should be used by network participants to reflect on the group’s performance and to identify areas that need further development.

Overview and Instructions

An intentional network (sometimes referred to as a Food Network, Food Coalition, Food Policy Council, Collaborative Food Organization) requires attention to relationship building, creating a workable structure, and developing a strategy or setting priorities so any actions have more impact. Networks can be formed in several different ways. The scorecard items represent the steps most commonly mentioned by network developers. Some networks will not need all the steps. For other networks, the order of the steps will need to be modified.



You can use the steps to decide where you want to go next, identify the individual or group responsible for completing them, steer this individual or group to helpful resources, and to track your progress. We have identified actionable resources to inform the completion of each step.

Action Area	Resource
Forming (Determining parameters of the network)	Downloadable Resource: Types of Networks
Forming (Community assessment)	Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit by Barbara Cohen for the USDA
Forming (Community assessment)	The Good Food Toolkit by Angela Smith and Allison Righter
Forming (Community assessment)	The Economics of Local Food Systems: A Toolkit to Guide Community Discussions, Assessments and Choices
Forming (Introducing network concepts)	Downloadable Resource: Introducing Network Concepts to Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing • Relationship building • Setting up a support structure 	Downloadable Resource: Steps in Forming or Re-Launching a Network
Setting up a support structure	Downloadable Resource: Building Network Capacity

“Just Getting Started” Network Scorecard

Steps	Done	Started, not completed	Not started
FORMING			
People interested in forming or re-launching a network have met to explore idea			
An organizing group has consulted with someone from the Minnesota Food Charter Network to explore its fit with the MN Food Charter goals, build connections, and learn about available resources			
An organizing group has initiated a community assessment that is founded on authentic community engagement to build a greater understanding of the strengths and needs of the community			
An organizing group has specified some broad parameters for the network (type of network [e.g., advocacy, alliance, coalition, collaborative, system development, etc.], issue focus, membership, governance, coordination, approach to planning, and in-kind/financial resources) and shared as a draft for feedback			
A plan has been developed for members to regularly share and discuss information about network (i.e., rationale for, roles, approach, health characteristics)			
ORGANIZING			
A network facilitator(s) has been identified and his/her roles defined			
The group is continually reaching out to others, identifying their interests, and finding roles they can play in network development			
The group has explored the Minnesota Food Charter and started to identify possible strategies to work on together			
Members have collectively assessed their strengths and challenges (i.e., identifying the types of individuals and groups that are needed for success and determining if they are involved; mapping and reflecting on network relationships that currently exist around an issue(s) area)			
RELATIONSHIP BUILDING			
A plan has been developed for building and deepening relationships among members			
Communication strategies have been adopted that support engagement and participation			
SETTING UP A SUPPORT STRUCTURE			
A plan for using social media to support the network has been developed and members have gained access to needed tools			
Members have identified available training and resources focused on area(s) of interest and healthy network functioning			



References

Holley, June. (2012). *Network Weaver Handbook: A Guide to Transformational Networks*. Athens, Ohio: Network Weaver Publishing.

Plastrik, Peter, Madeleine Taylor and John Cleveland. (2014). *Connecting to Change the World: Harnessing the Power of Networks for Social Impact*. Washington: Island Press.