The Power of Network Leadership to Drive Social Change

SESSION
Making the Case for Aligned Action Networks

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2:30-4 p.m.
How can we design and launch social impact networks as powerful problem solving mechanisms to tackle some of the most intractable challenges we face as a society?
The Energy Action Network of Vermont
“No effort had brought together a strategically-chosen group of folks to think about where the state needed to go, mapped out how to get there, and created the capacity for that group to do work over time.”
The Global Impact Investing Network
“We believed that people needed to interact in unusual constellations—that cross-fertilization would create action. The goal was to create a rhetorical umbrella under which many people could huddle.”
Reimagine Learning
“We saw all kinds of programs expanding their models and leaders would wonder, ‘How much do we keep expanding?’ So we started to ask ourselves, ‘What would it look like if we approached social change from a network perspective? What would it take for social entrepreneurs? What would it take for funders?’”
Working in an Aligned Action way allows you to...

- Set Broader Ambitions
- Diversify Risk
- Spur Smart Coordination
- Build a Resilient Ecosystem
- Enable Innovation
Agenda

• Where We Are: Network Lifecycle
• How We’ll Configure: Axes of Collaboration
• What’s Required: Funders' roles
• Wrap
ENGAGE

How Funders Can Support and Leverage Networks for Social Impact

INTRODUCTION
What's in this guide and how do I use it?

WATCH VIDEO
Get the two-minute overview

To Network or Not?
Network Power
Funding Networks
Network Functions
General Flow

- SHORT Presentation
- Individual exercise
- Table Exercise
- Brief Plenary Reflection
Where We Are: Network Lifecycle
Network Diagnostic

Is the problem you want to solve an Aligned Action problem? (Translation: It’s emergent, shifting, and cannot be solved by your organization alone)

NO: The problem is well-structured and can be solved by your organization alone
YES: Consider Alternatives

Is your organization ready to engage in an Aligned Action way? (Translation: We are ready to focus on common goals, build a community, and experiment)

NO: We have resources, but we are not organized, we need more
YES: We are organized, we can continue

Does the Aligned Action network in question exist today?

NO: There is no established group (or networks of groups)
YES: There is an established group

How would you describe the group’s collective understanding of who they are and what they’re trying to do together?

KNIT

What needs to happen to make progress against “what they’re trying to do together”?

ACT

DISCOVER

KNOW

KNIT

ORGANIZE

GROW

TRANSFORM / TRANSITION

Stanford Social Innovation Review

Deloitte

MONITOR INSTITUTE

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Instructions

- Run through the Diagnostic on page 2 of your handbook
- Introduce yourself, your network lifecycle stage, and 1 big challenge you face OR 1 question you have about the network lifecycle
- Share an insight that emerged or question that surfaced
How We’ll Configure: Axes of Collaboration
Axes of Collaboration

- Short-term outcomes
- Maximum alignment
- Intra-sector
- Action-oriented
- Place-based
- Handful of participants
- Top-down leadership
- Formal governance
- Systemic change
- Minimal alignment
- Cross-sector
- Learning-oriented
- Global
- Leadership
- Geography
- Alignment
- Sector
- Purpose
- Governance
- Distributed leadership
- Informal governance
- Hundreds of participants
- Size

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Network Configuration

Network configuration places a strong emphasis on maximum alignment, characterized by top-down leadership and formal governance. The diagram illustrates the following key components:

- **Maximum Alignment**: Central to the network configuration, emphasizing high alignment goals.
- **Top-Down Leadership**: Hierarchical leadership structure.
- **Formal Governance**: Structured and regulated decision-making processes.
- **Systemic Change**: Long-term, transformative changes.
- **Learning-Oriented**: Continual learning and development.
- **Distributed Leadership**: Responsive, decentralized leadership approach.
- **Informal Governance**: Informal, peer-driven governance.
- **Cross-Sector**: Inter-sector collaboration.
- **Intra-Sector**: Intra-sectoral activities.
- **Place-Based**: Geographically focused initiatives.
- **Global**: International scope.
- **Handful of Participants**: Fewer participants compared to hundreds.
- **Short-Term Outcomes**: Immediate, tangible results.
- **Minimal Alignment**: Lower alignment goals.
- **Action-Oriented**: Immediate, outcome-focused actions.

The network configuration supports hundreds of participants with learning-oriented and informal governance, balancing cross-sector and intra-sector elements to achieve maximum alignment through top-down leadership and formal governance.
Network Configuration

- **HUNDREDS OF PARTICIPANTS**
- **DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP**
- **INFORMAL GOVERNANCE**
- **MAXIMUM ALIGNMENT**
- **SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES**
- **TOP-DOWN LEADERSHIP**
- **ACTION-ORIENTED**
- **PLACE-BASED**
- **HANDBFUL OF PARTICIPANTS**
- **TOP-DOWN LEADERSHIP**
- **FORMAL GOVERNANCE**
- **SYSTEMIC CHANGE**
- **CROSS-SECTOR**
- **LEARNING-ORIENTED**
- **GLOBAL**
- **SIZE**
- **GOVERNANCE**
- **ORIENTATION**
- **PURPOSE**
- **SECTOR**
- **ALIGNMENT**
- **GOVERNANCE**

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Instructions

- Complete the Axes of Collaboration on page 4 of your handbook

- Place the axes at the center of your table
  - Have 3-4 volunteers present their axes
  - Discuss whether/which components you struggled with

- Share an insight that emerged or question that surfaced
What’s Required: Funders’ Roles
Funder Roles

What support is required to fuel the network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Area</th>
<th>Support Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grants</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Investments</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Membership</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Networking</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Learning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Advocacy</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Financial Support**
- Funding member representation
- Funding member technical support
- Funding member marketing
- Funding member leadership development
- Funding member learning

**Backbone Support**
- Coordinating the network
- Advocating the network
- Governing the network
- Leading the network
- Supporting the network
- Managing collaborative projects

**Funding**
- Funding general operations
- Funding communications
- Funding innovation and growth
- Funding leadership development
- Funding measurement and learning
- Funding technology

**Engagement**
- Engaging in advocacy
- Managing external communications
- Engaging the broader community
- Building a culture of learning
- Managing the network's success
- Reaching the network
- Teaching network leadership
- Facilitating in the network

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FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Source: 401K(2010) "Money and University of Liverpool Health & Life Sciences "Front side view of vertebral column fron Andrew Bell's Anatomia Britannica (CC BY-SA 2.0)

BACKBONE SUPPORT
Roles in the Discover Phase

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- Funding research on the issue and potential for collective action

BACKBONE SUPPORT

- Funding general operations
- Participating in the network
- Attracting funding
- Catalyzing the network

Source: 401K(2010) "Money and University of Liverpool Health & Life Sciences "Front side view of vertebral column from Andrew Bell's Anatomia Britannica (CC BY-SA 2.0)
Roles in the Grow Phase

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- Funding staff (full and part time)
- Funding member participation
- Funding measurement and learning
- Funding technology
- Funding innovative or priority projects

BACKBONE SUPPORT

- Convening the network
- Managing collaborative projects
- Governing the network
- Coaching network leadership

Source: 401K(2010) "Money and University of Liverpool Health & Life Sciences "Front side view of vertebral column from Andrew Bell's Anatomia Britannica (CC BY-SA 2.0)
Instructions

• Work through the Roles Chart on page 5 of your handbook
• On an index card, write down the 1 role that is most relevant to your network

• “Play” your card, explain why you chose it
• Share observations and questions

• Share an insight that emerged or question that surfaced
Checklist: Am I clear on my intention for getting involved in a network?

There is no simple algorithm for deciding if engaging with a social impact network is the right move for you to make. Rather, there are a set of basic questions to help you in that decision making process.

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DO YOU KNOW WHAT A NETWORK CAN HELP YOU ACHIEVE?

1. Can you tell if the challenge you’re trying to solve is a good fit for using a network?

There are questions you will want to ask yourself.
Wrap

- What did I learn that was reinforced?
- What have I learned that I didn’t know before?
- What lingering questions do I have?
SESSION
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