

NONPROFIT  
MANAGEMENT  
INSTITUTE



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.”

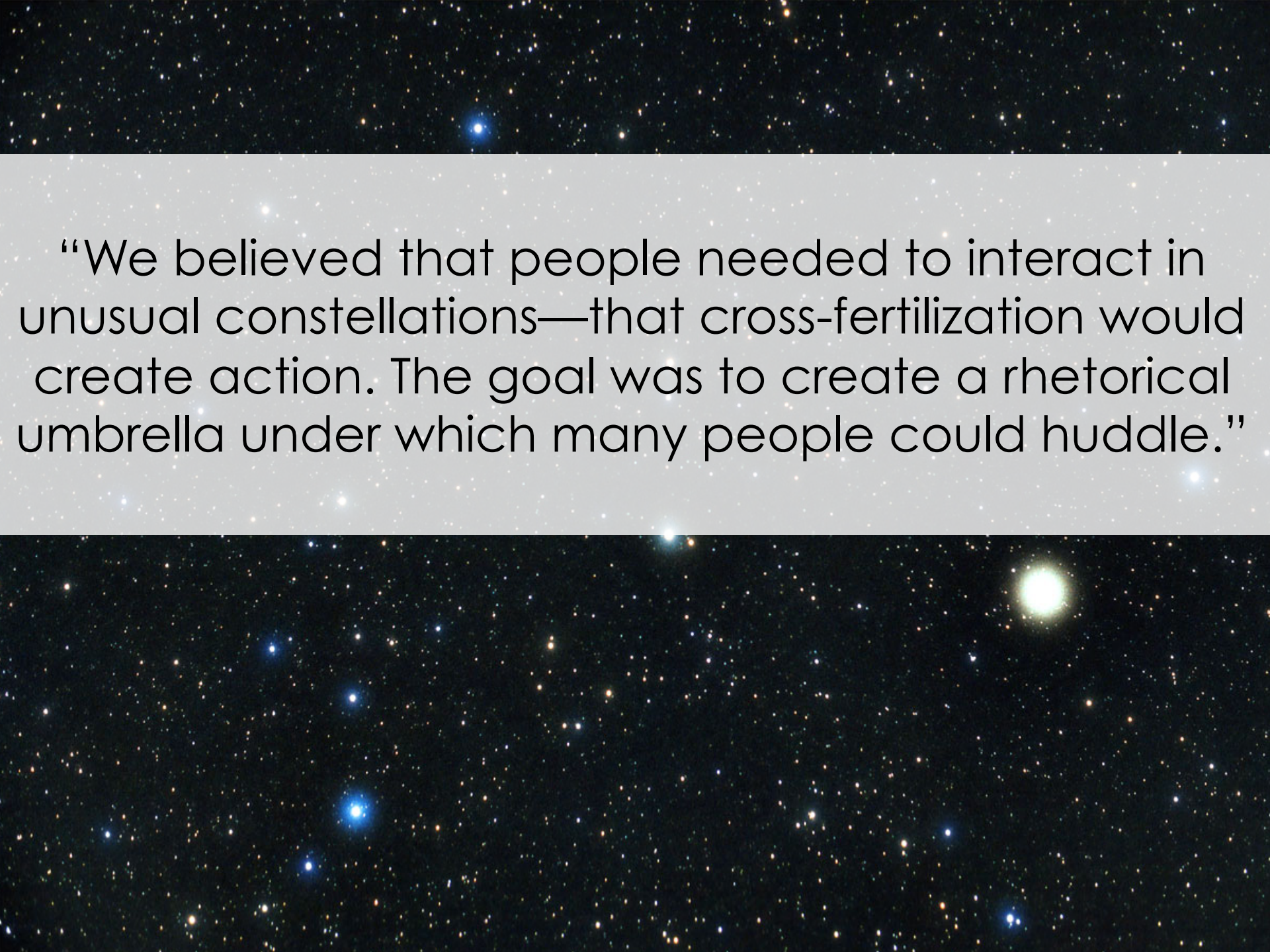




The background of the image is a deep space star field, densely packed with stars of various colors including white, yellow, orange, and blue. A semi-transparent white rectangular box is positioned in the lower right quadrant, containing the text. The text is centered within the box and consists of two lines: "The Global Impact" on the top line and "Investing Network" on the bottom line. The font is a clean, black, sans-serif typeface.

The Global Impact  
Investing Network



The image features a dark, star-filled night sky as a background. A prominent white horizontal band runs across the center, containing a quote in black text. The stars are scattered throughout, with some appearing as bright, distinct points of light and others as a dense field of smaller, fainter stars. A few stars have a noticeable blue or yellowish tint.


“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

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**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?**

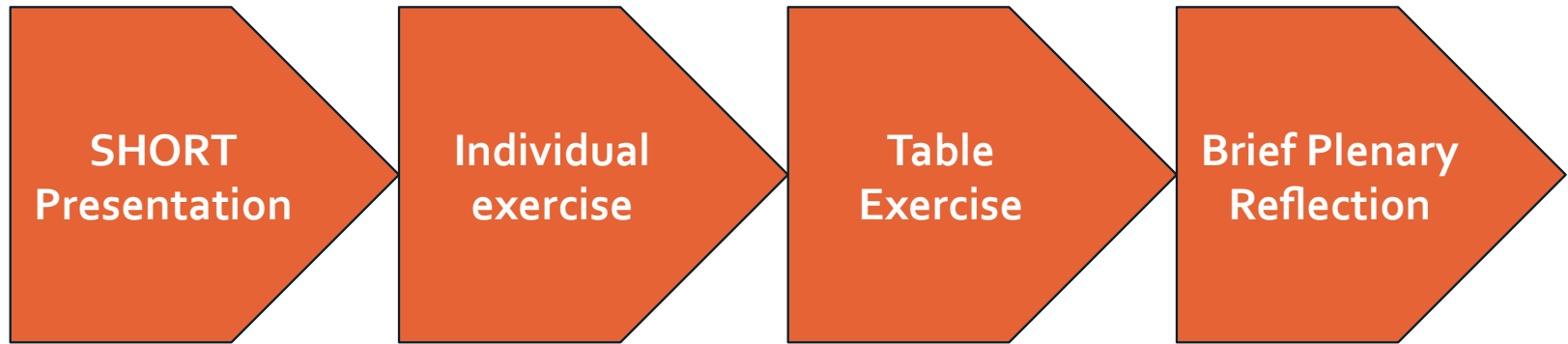
**Network Power**

**Funding Networks**

**Network Functions**



# General Flow



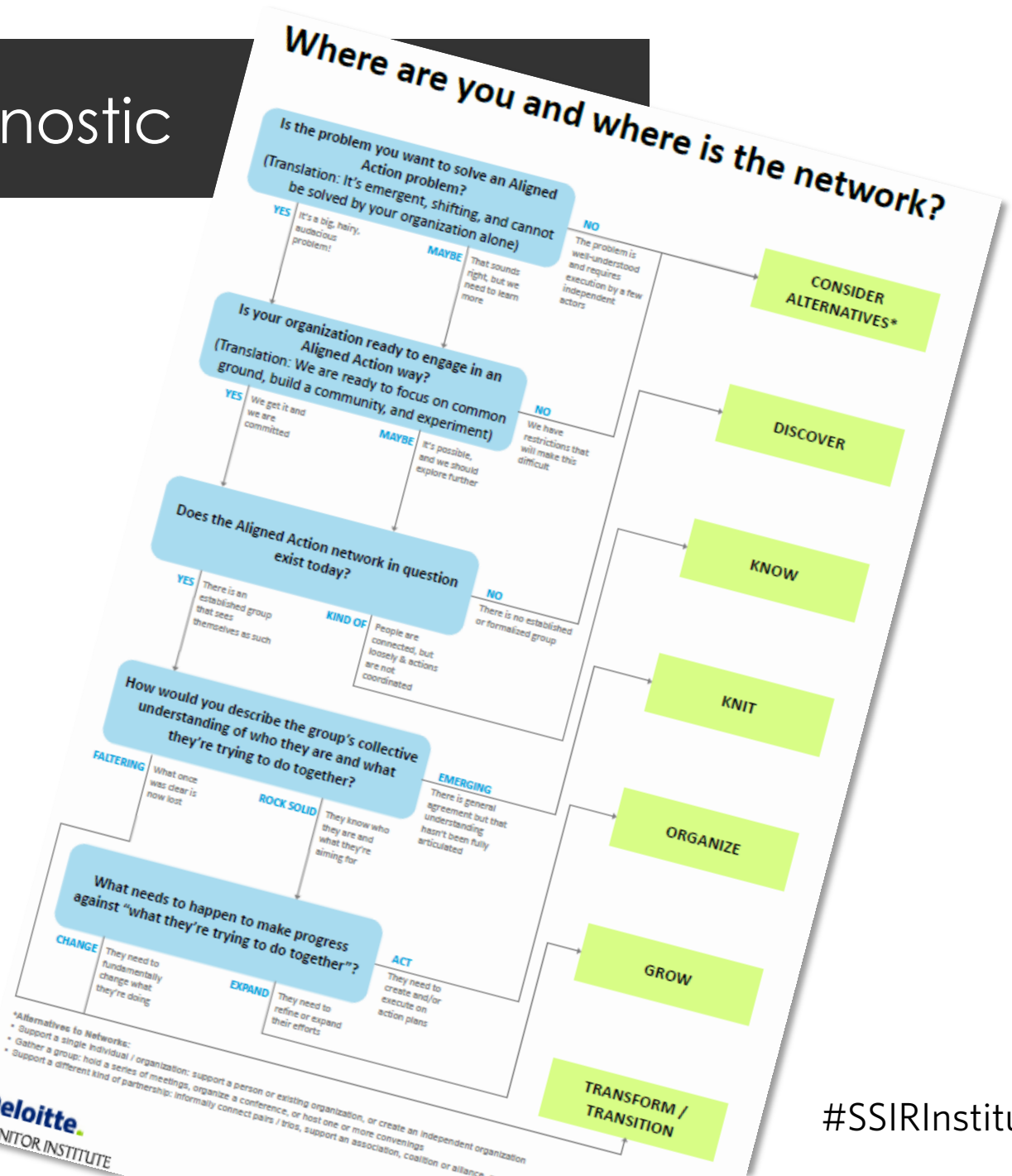
## Where We Are: Network Lifecycle



# Network Lifecycle

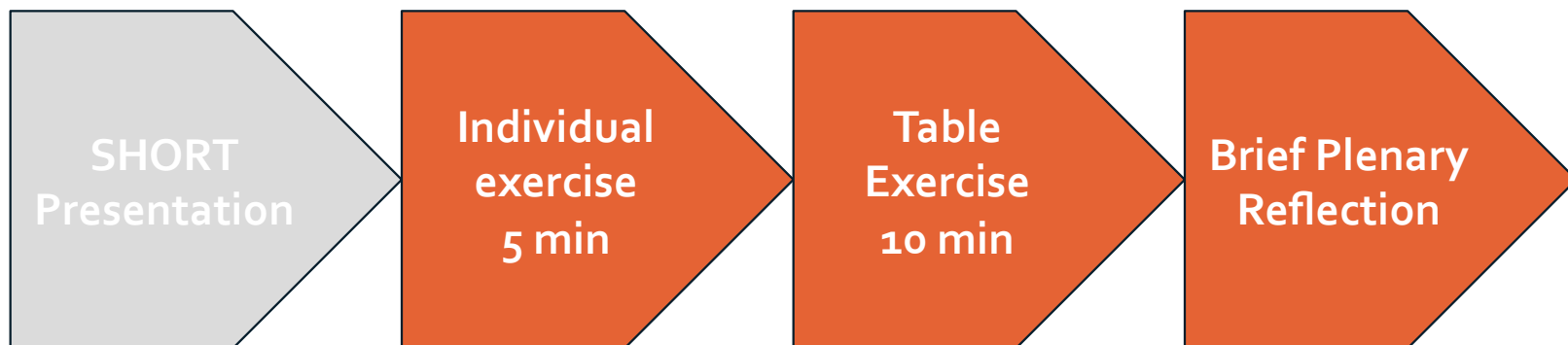


# Network Diagnostic





# Instructions

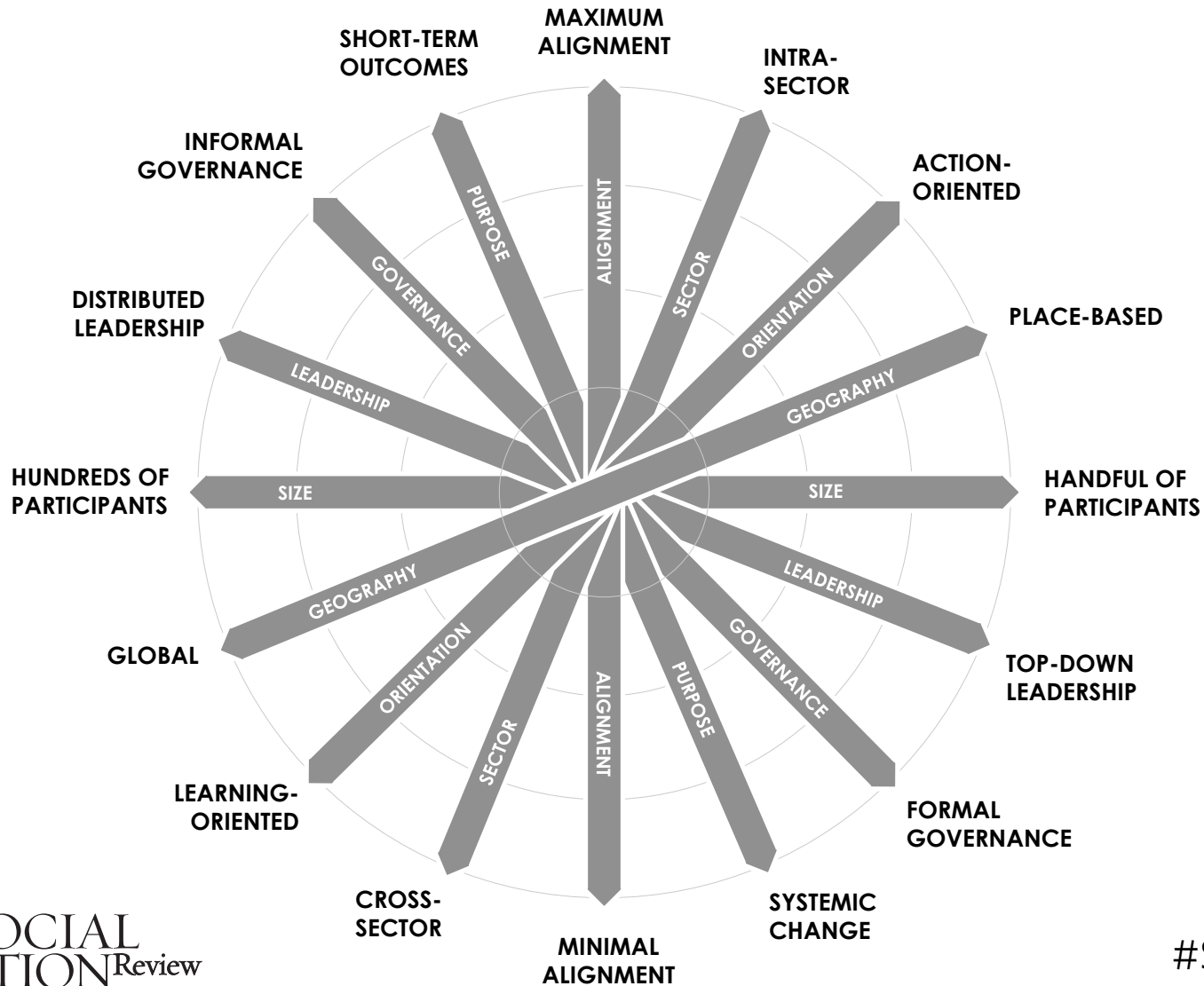


- Run through the Diagnostic on page 2 of your handbook
- Introduce yourself, your network lifecycle stage, and 1 big challenge you face OR 1 question you have about the network lifecycle
- Share an insight that emerged or question that surfaced

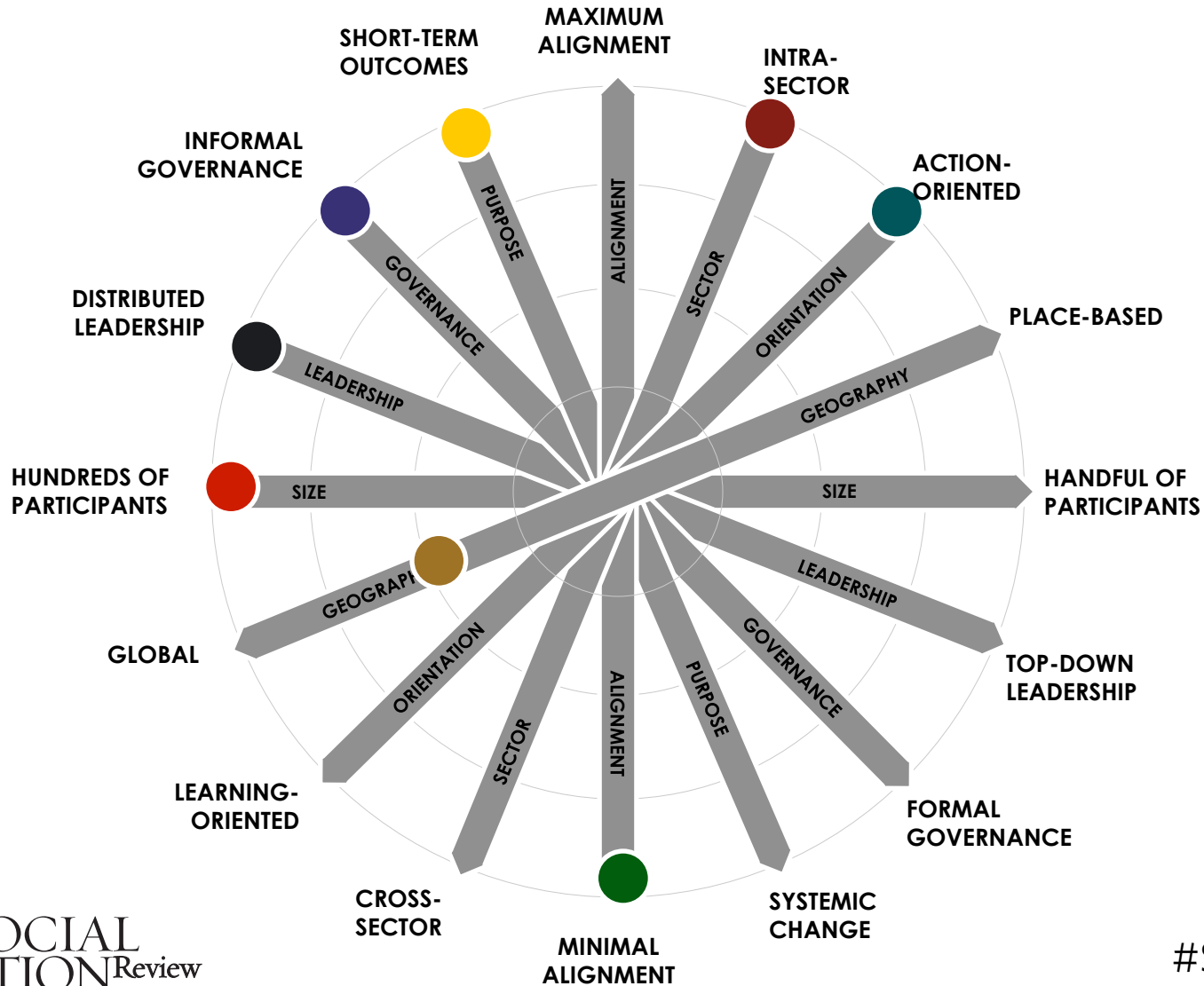
## How We'll Configure: Axes of Collaboration



# Axes of Collaboration

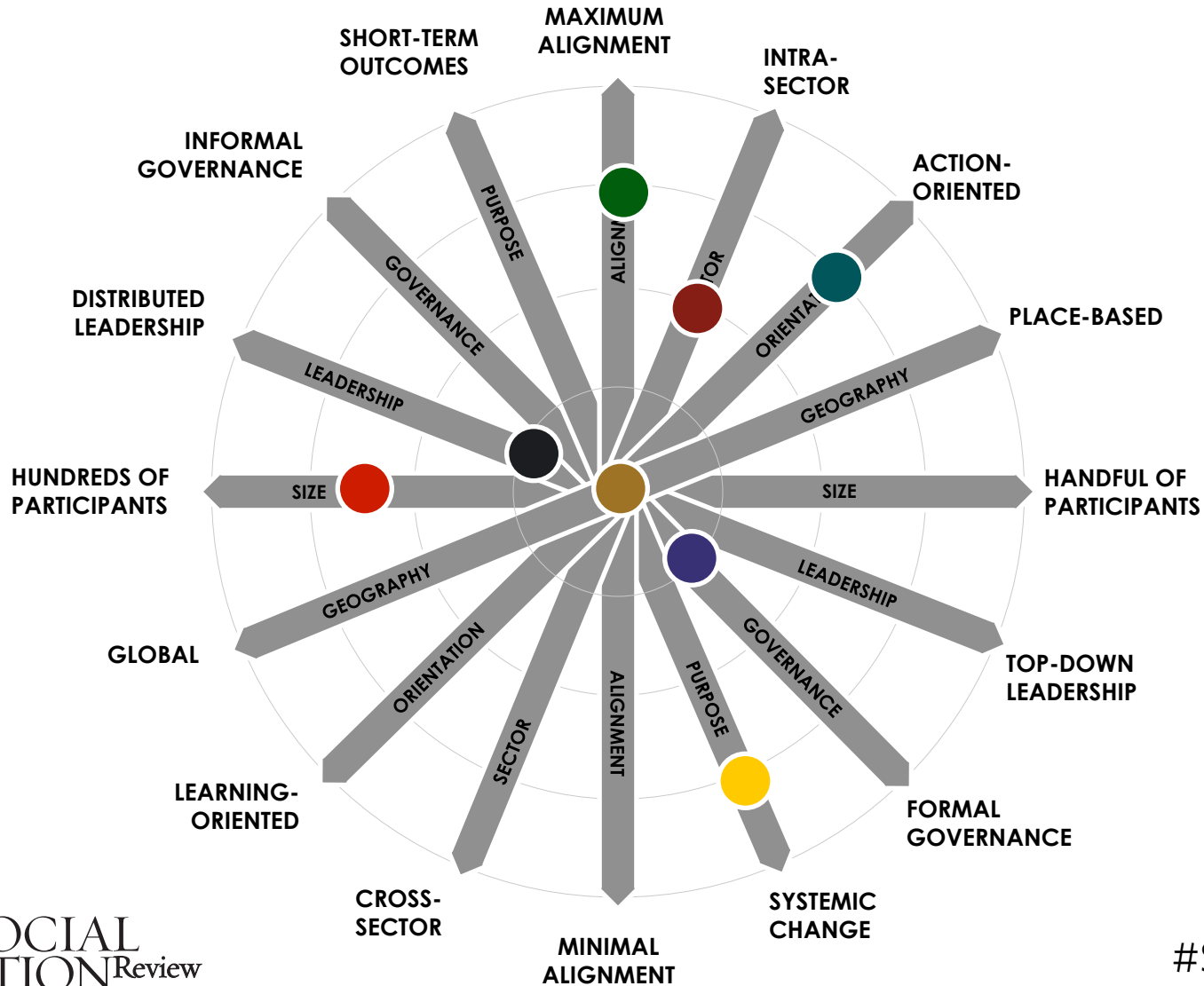


# Network Configuration

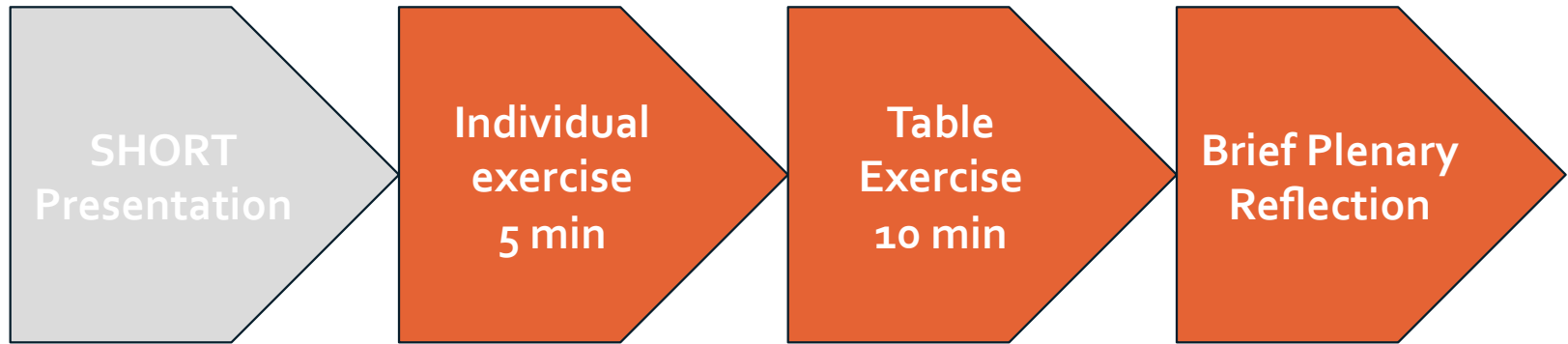




# Network Configuration



# 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







## FINANCIAL SUPPORT



## BACKBONE SUPPORT



# Roles in the Discover Phase

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

*Funding research on the issue and potential for collective action*

*Funding general operations*

## BACKBONE SUPPORT

*Participating in the network*

*Attracting funding*

*Catalyzing the network*



# 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

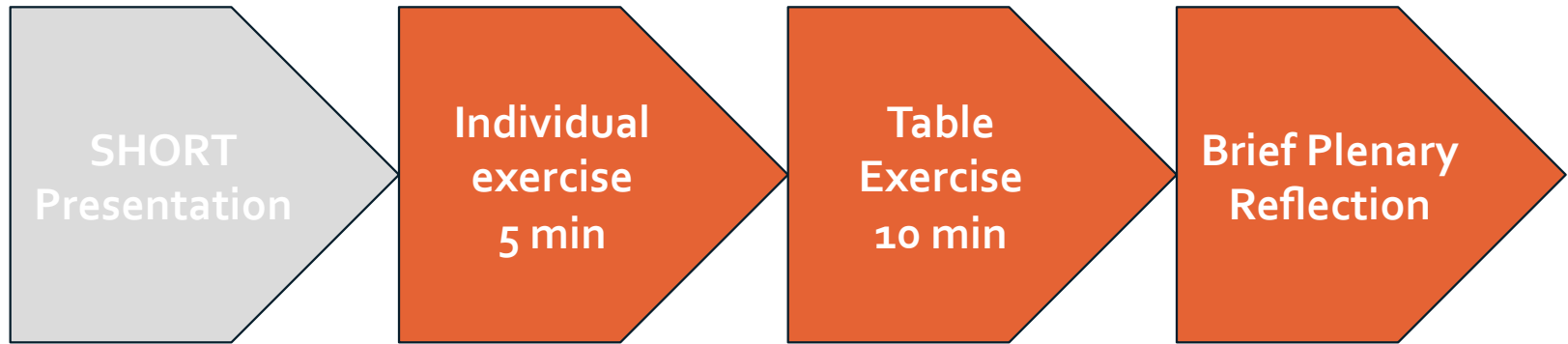
*Convening the network*

*Managing collaborative projects*

*Governing the network*

*Coaching network leadership*

# 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.

## 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?



# Wrap

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



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Lead, Aligned Action



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