

# The Costs and Benefits of Collaboration for Public and Nonprofit Managers

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# Why networks?

- Often chosen after organizations and markets have failed.
- Problems are complex and multifaceted
- We need to bring the relevant organizations together in a collaboration to address the problem that no one organization can handle
- This is the network “value proposition.”



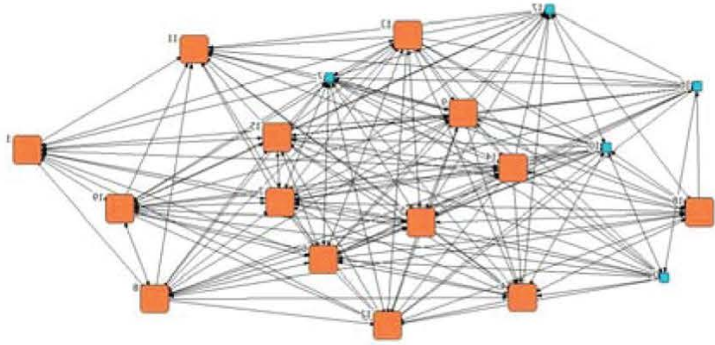
# What are Networks?

- The web of relationships connecting individuals or organizations, given certain boundaries
- Ties based on many factors: trust, advice, resources, shared information, friendship, referrals, contracts, etc.
- Trust and reciprocity are the coins of the realm

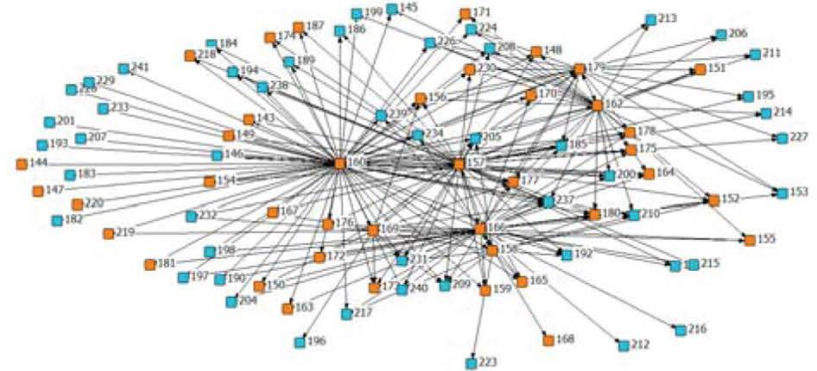


# Networks: Nodes and links that take many different forms

Less Centralized



More Centralized



# The Truth about Collaborative Networks

- Don't use a network unless you have to. Working with other organizations is inherently difficult and resource consuming.
- Unless you can only accomplish a task with others, its more efficient to use a single organization.
- If you use a network, you won't be wholly in control and leadership will likely be shared.



# Networks do not make people more Collaborative

- Human behavior in a network isn't better or worse than in an organization.
- Networks don't make people more altruistic, especially if they don't share the mission of the network.
- There are “toxic nodes” who are invested in the network's failure.



# The Two Hats Problem



# Possible Implications of the Two Hats Problem

- Varied commitment to network mission
- Organizational cultures clash
- Turf/power/autonomy issues
- High coordination costs





# Collective Impact as a Solution?



# What is Collective Impact?

- ***Common Agenda:*** All participating organizations have a shared vision for social change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed upon actions.
- ***Shared Measurement System:*** Agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported with a short list of key indicators across all participating organizations.
- ***Mutually Reinforcing Activities:*** Engagement of a diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinating a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
- ***Continuous Communication:*** Frequent communications over a long period of time among key players within and across organizations, to build trust and inform ongoing learning and adaptation of strategy.
- ***Backbone Organization:*** Ongoing support provided by an independent staff dedicated to the initiative.



# Collective Impact: What does it Mean?

- After seven years of extraordinary hype what does it really mean?
- Philanthropies are wondering what it means when they receive proposals that replace the term 'collaboration' with 'collective impact.'
- Researchers are perplexed that it looks very similar to what they have studied for years.
- Leaders in communities are confused about what it really means to put collective impact into action.



# Collective Impact and Network Research

- Collective Impact is a *normative* model of how networks can have a positive impact on social change in communities
- Many researchers would agree that it is a promising model.
  - Three problems
    - The five conditions are a very high bar for a network to meet
    - How do you maintain “fidelity” to the model during implementation?
    - If they do meet these conditions, how do you know they work better than networks that don’t meet these conditions?



# Network Leadership: Managing Dilemmas



# The Dilemma of Network Leadership

- The good news is you are managing a program with hundreds of employees. The bad news is that none of them think that they work for you.
- Managing in the absence of a typical chain of command is a craft skill that relies on trust to make reciprocity do the work of hierarchy.



# Dilemmas of Network Leadership

Efficiency: Limiting partner involvement in the decision process to limit decision costs

Inclusiveness: Participation in decision process to ensure diversity of perspectives

Internal legitimacy: Ensuring that members perceive network activities as desirable

External legitimacy: Ensuring that the external stakeholders perceive network activities as desirable

Flexibility: Ensuring rapid network response to environmental threats and opportunities

Stability: Ensuring consistent responses to stakeholders and increasing efficiency



# Questions network leaders need to ask

- What is the shared vision we are working toward?
- What is our starting point? What beliefs and assumptions do we hold?
- Who needs to be at the table?
- How do we set the table?
- Periodic checkup. Are we becoming more trusting with each other? If not, why not?
- Is our network changing with the problem or policy it was created to address?
- What does network success look like?





# “Terms of Reference” or Writing a Constitution

- Which organizations should be included?
- What kind of governance model is needed and why?
- Should core agencies be governed differently than peripheral agencies?
- What kinds of incentives will be used?
- Who handles finances?



# The Network Way of Working

- Create a narrative: “The network way of working” or “family centered care.”
- A passion for sharing the credit.
- Be comfortable with loyalty to your network and your organization. Own both hats
- Soft governance. A team of network facilitators, terms of reference, incentives like paying for conferences, etc.



# Network Leadership Skills

- Leadership in networks is about creating incentives to participate.
- Manage the agenda
- Keep the network stable. If change is necessary, make it incremental if possible.
- Have a relationship budget – costs and benefits
- Recruit new members constantly but selectively
- Manage networks carefully knowing you are likely in the shadow of hierarchy.



# Manage Networks Like a Border Collie Herds Sheep

