

Governance and Capacity Building in the Nonprofit Sector: The Role of Networks

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Capacity Building for the NGO Sector: Challenges and Opportunities
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What are NGO Networks?

- A group of 3+ organizations working toward a common goal
- Trust and reciprocity replace the chain of command
- Many types of connections (contracts, referrals, information exchange, joint projects) hold networks of organizations together
- Non-hierarchical, but often in the shadow of hierarchy and law
- Capacity building is facilitated through mutually agreed upon governance mechanisms



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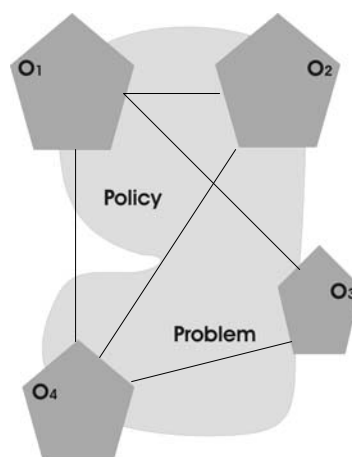
NGO Networks: The Value Proposition

- A way to get people in different organizations to work together around common problems
- An alternative to government bureaucracy
- A solution to fragmentation and lack of coordination among nonprofits, universities, and government.
- A solution to the problem of a lack of capacity among nonprofit organizations.



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Building Capacity Through Collaboration



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Types of NGO Networks

- Service implementation networks
- Information diffusion networks
- Capacity building networks
- Problem solving networks



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Characteristics of Effective NGO Networks

- Collaboration at multiple levels
- Focused integration
- Mix of strong and weak ties
- Appropriate form of governance
- Involvement built gradually through trust
- Legitimacy, built both internally and externally
- Sufficient resources
- Focus on specific goals
- Stability



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Governance Questions

- What is the goal?
 - Building capacity
- Which sectors should be included?
- Which organizations should be included?
- Should core agencies be governed differently than peripheral agencies?
- What kinds of incentives will be used?



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Governance Issues

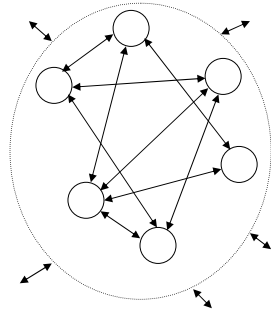
- How do you:
 - write a constitution?
 - establish and maintain trust?
 - resolve turf conflicts?
 - know others are bargaining in good faith?
 - deal with differences in organizational culture?
 - build legitimacy?
 - deal with loss of decision autonomy?
 - deal with cross agency communication?



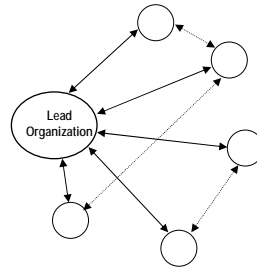
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Forms of Network Governance

Self-Governed



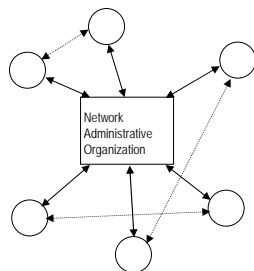
Lead Agency



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Forms of Network Governance

Network Administrative Organization



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Southern Alberta Child & Youth Health Network

Mission - use collective resources and expertise to advance high quality, coordinated programs and services for children, youth and families



Who is the Network?

- A voluntary joining of:
 - Key non-profit organizations, University of Calgary, Alberta Children's Hospital, and advocates for children and youth
 - Government ministries involved in the health and wellness of children and youth
 - healthcare, education, social services, and justice
- Covers all of Southern Alberta
 - An umbrella network, reliant on smaller regional networks

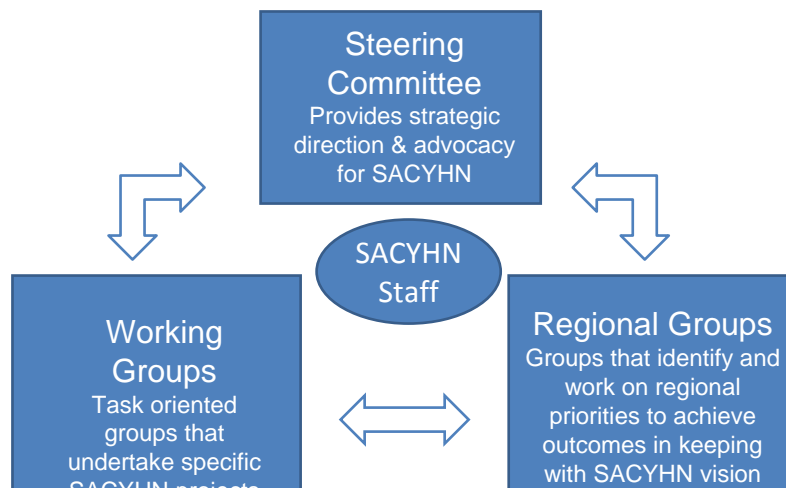


How is the Network Governed?

- Network Administrative Organization (NAO) governance form
 - Separate administrative entity to govern the network, does not provide services
 - SACYHN NAO comprised of:
 - Steering Committee
 - Executive Director and staff



SACYHN Structure



Capacity Building: Maturity

- Relationships Built**

“Collaboration has, if we do it right, has the possibility of us doing our work in new and different ways, maximizing our resources and it’s not even the resources, one of the resources we don’t talk about is the talent at the table. You learn from each other too....There’s respect for the professional expertise, but it’s bigger than that now, it’s what can we do together. And that adaptive change is really the opportunity.” (An Education Perspective)

- Trust Built**

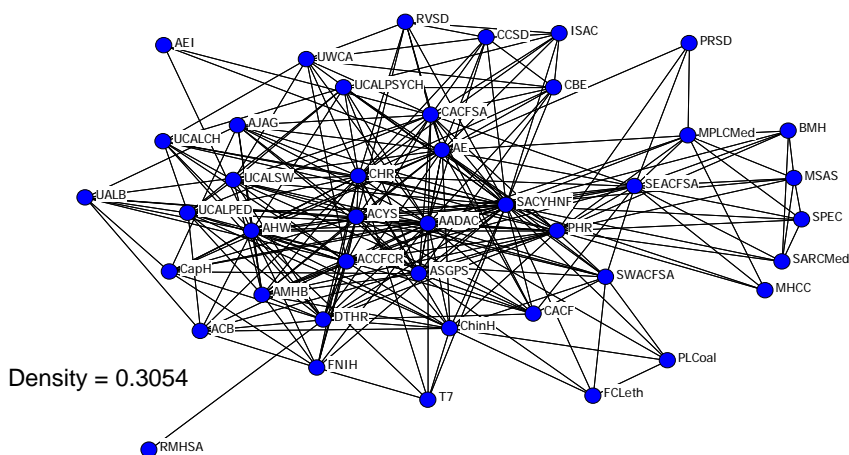
“That’s the benefit of the network...We know the responsibilities of our organization and the limits of our responsibilities. We know where we can collaborate and where we can’t, and what to bring to the table...Trust is at a very high level.” (An Education Perspective)

- Impact**

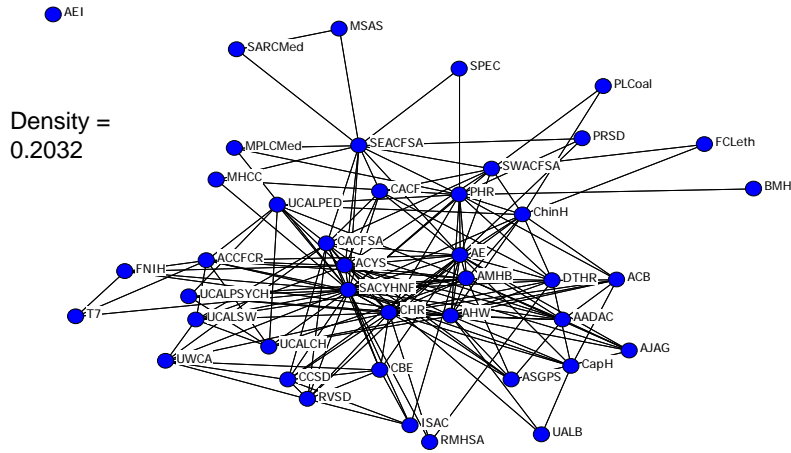
“Children now have a voice because of SACYHN. Children are a very small population. We actually have a system to move our programs forward; we are actually providing an all-inclusive care for our children. I believe that is a result of SACYHN.” (A Health Perspective)



Information Sharing



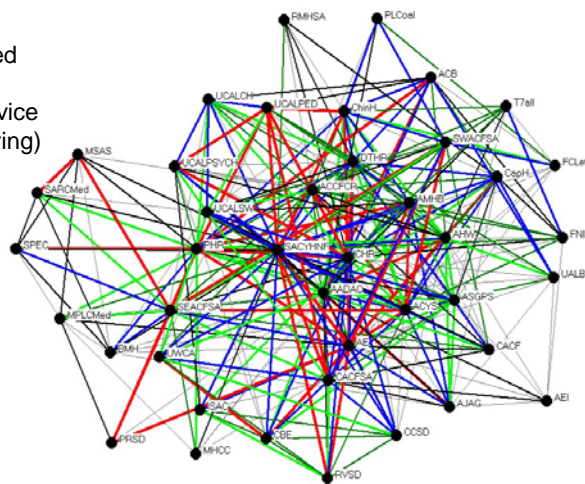
Strategic Planning



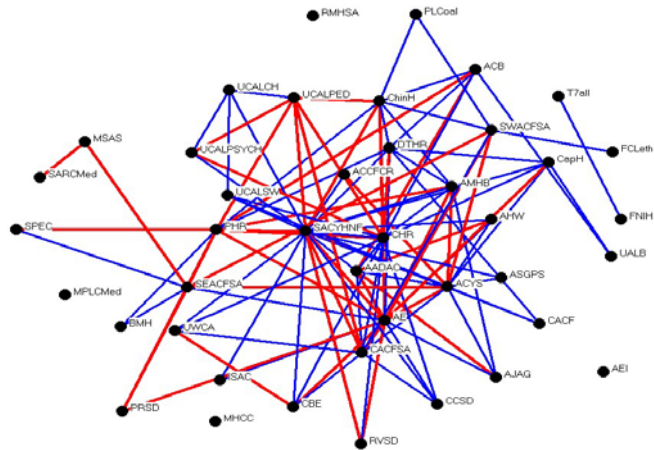
Multiplexity: Relationships Confirmed

(Strategic Planning, Shared Resources, Education, Evaluation/Research, Service Delivery, Information Sharing)

Color Coding:
 Gray = Any 1 Tie
 Black = Any 2 Ties
 Dk Green = Any 3 Ties
 Lt Green = Any 4 Ties
 Blue = Any 5 Ties
 Red = All 6 Ties

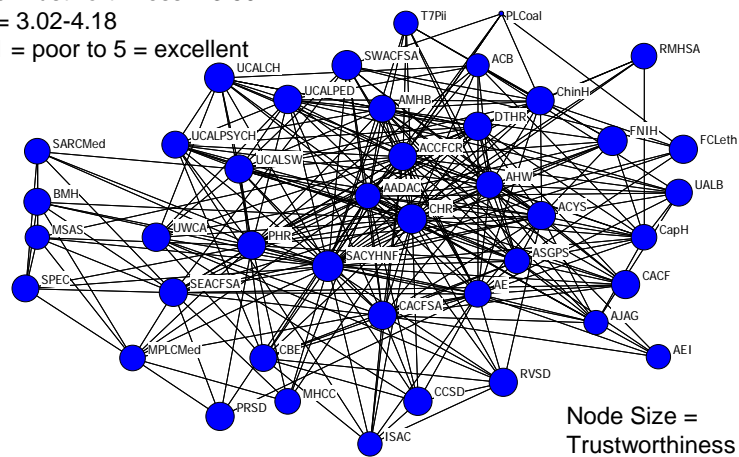


Multiplexity (Strength = 5+)



Trust: The Currency of Networks

Average Trustworthiness = 3.59
 Range = 3.02-4.18
 Scale: 1 = poor to 5 = excellent



Conclusions

- Governance can take many forms and has to be consistent with your mission.
- In the case of SACHYN, there was a great deal of effort put into “terms of reference” which was the constitution.
- Having a staff of network facilitators was critical.
- Key institutions supported the network – Alberta Children’s Hospital, University of Calgary, large nonprofits.
- Building a common culture – “The network way of working.”

