PREVENTION FIRST

Leadership Center

NETWORKING 101
TOOLKIT

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RESOURCE PURPOSE

This toolkit identifies the critical steps to build a network to support work on opioid use disorder (OUD). It is a resource to assist Leadership Center staff, coalition members, Recovery Oriented System of Care (ROSC) Councils, and other community groups in determining if a network is necessary for their work and, if so, offer considerations for creating a network.

The network-building process is meant to be iterative, continuously reviewed, tested, and revised when necessary.

NETWORKING 101

Almost everyone is a member of one or more networks. By definition, networks can be temporary or long-term, formal or informal, personal or professional. Members can be part of the same religious organization, coworkers, friends from school, or family members. People in a network often share at least one common interest with other network members.

Source: Policy Project

Building healthy communities requires a collaborative system or network to impact community and systems changes that modify local conditions. The goals of community networking are to:

- Enlist new allies and strengthen local collaborations across sectors.
- Create better communication.
- Pool resources.
- Improve overall health outcomes by coordinating prevention activities and creating lasting collaborations.

Source: Prevention First

Benefits

There are benefits members (or groups) might gain as participants:

- Connections and access to resources beneficial to organizations
- Increased knowledge, insights and information, and methods for the exchange of ideas and the development of strategies
- Opportunities to build competencies, such as a leadership skill
- Streamlining and enhancement of resources and capacities
- A stronger voice and a more significant impact
- Improved services and programs or enhanced client/customer experience
- Enhanced quality, quantity, or sustainability of outcomes

Source: Adapted, Mollenhaur, Johnston, & Gates

Challenges

Along with the many benefits, there are challenges to working effectively in collaboration with others. Some of these challenges include:

- Unbalanced workloads among network members can create resentment. Some network members may take and not give.

- Unequal power or resource distribution between people/organizations in the network or competition among network members can cause tension.

- Undemocratic decision-making can make members feel marginalized and detached.

- Members may need to sacrifice their interests to promote the interests of the network, but at the same time, they need to maintain their own institutional identity and autonomy. Balancing the two can be difficult.

- Managing networks can be complicated when members have different values and opinions.

- Communication among network members can be challenging. Without clear, ongoing communication, some members may feel excluded.

- Money is often a source of distrust and a common reason for strife within a network.

It is essential to be prepared to navigate challenges and have mechanisms to address them to ensure network success.

Source: Adapted, Southern Voices

Reasons NOT to Build a Network

An honest discussion or thinking about whether a network is necessary is essential. It's important to consider the following to determine if time will be better spent on doing the work without a network.

1. A network isn't required to meet the goals: The intended goal doesn't require a network, or the goal(s) require more accountability or authority. Networks should only be used if goal(s) or outcomes would be better met through a network.

2. The organization can meet the requirements and responsibilities of the network: Working with networks can be demanding and take time. It's essential to be realistic when deciding if the organization can work with the network.

3. Confirm if funding sources allow for networking activities: Although there are many benefits to working with a network, it is crucial to determine if funding permits it. If there are questions, communicate to the funders the network's purpose and how it will assist in meeting goals and outcomes.

Source: Adapted, Southern Voices

Definitions

Networks: A network is a group of individuals or organizations that exchange information or services to cultivate productive relationships. Networks can be formal or informal and comprise members with a common interest or who share a vision, such as preventing opiate use disorder (OUD). Network members work independently to achieve their goals but communicate regularly to share data and information.

In networks, groups or organizations work together to reach the same goal. Networks usually have a formal structure, and their members agree to share responsibilities and resources over a period, giving them power and influence on specific issues.

Partnerships: A partnership is a relationship in which two or more organizations work closely together to reach a specific goal, like implementing a program.

Alliances: Alliances are typically short-term and comprise people who work together to reach a specific goal. Alliances are less demanding on members than networks or partnerships because their time and goals are limited.

Source: Prevention First

Five Stages of Network Development

Most networks transition through five distinct stages of development. At each stage, network organizers focus on different priorities and pose questions about how to advance the network's goals. Assessing where a network is in its stage of development, including whether it is transitioning between stages, also has implications for what types of support the network needs.

Catalyzing	Potential members of the network explore their capabilities and expectations for working together.
Launching	Organizers identify the network's vision and purpose and develop an initial plan. Initial network members are recruited, and connections are cultivated.
Organizing	The network has secured resources. It is piloting strategies and beginning to adapt them based on feedback.
Performing and Adapting	The network is fully operational, with key activities underway. Goals, strategies, and membership often diversify as members seek different kinds of value from the network.
Transitioning or Transforming	The network is effective and sustainable, or the network needs to gain momentum. The network, as initially conceived, terminates, or its capacities are redeployed.

Examples of Activities and Supports for Each Stage

Stage	Activity/Driver	Potential Supports
Catalyzing	Potential members see an advantage in organizing a network, considering issues/problems the network will address, and identifying key potential members	System mapping to identify key players, where does the work of the network fit?
Launch	Organizers draft the network's vision and purpose and develop an initial plan. Initial network membership is recruited, and connections are cultivated and strengthened.	In-person convening, technical assistance for facilitation.
Organize	The network has secured the resources needed to support its work, and communication, coordination, and network governance systems are in place. During the final stages of this phase, the network is piloting strategies and beginning to adjust these based on feedback.	Core network infrastructure (e.g., backbone support for communication, connection, and coordination)
Perform/Adapt	The network is fully operational, with key activities underway. Structures and systems continue to be adapted as needed. Goals, strategies, and membership often diversify as members seek different kinds of value from the network.	Specific network projects/initiatives, diversifying funding sources
Transition/Transform	The network is effective and sustainable, or the network has lost momentum. If the latter, the network as initially conceived terminates or capacities are redeployed.	Network planning to redeploy assets is transforming.

Source: Network Impact

Build the Network

Establish a Purpose

Evaluate the Network

Structure the Network

Manage the Network
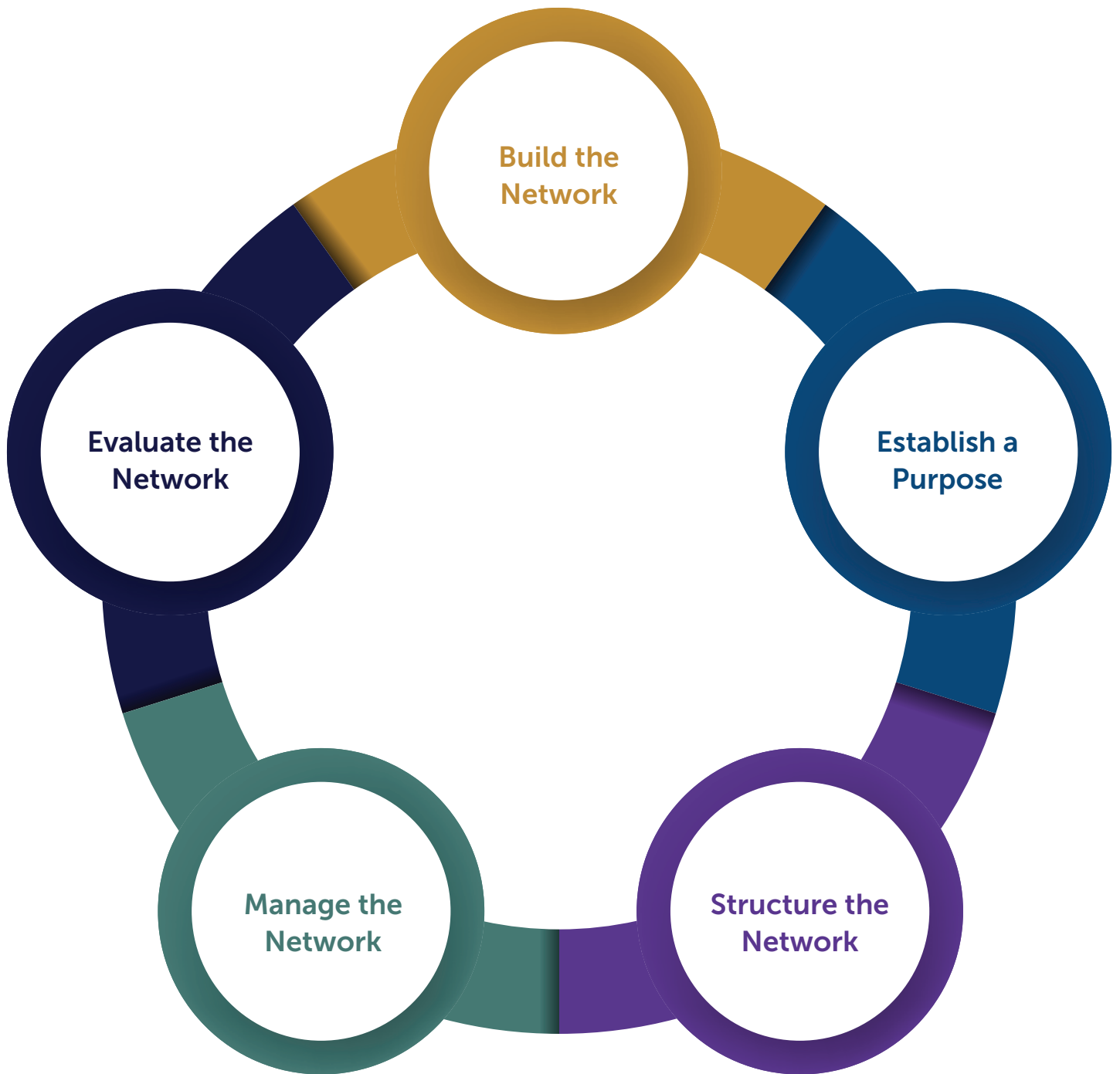
Build the Network

Networks can effectively mobilize, connect, and bring awareness to your issue through sharing resources, contacts, workload, and information.

Member Responsibilities

- Share in the vision, purpose, and goals of the network.
- Take an active role in the network's plan, priorities, and activities.
- Bring skills and abilities.
- Share skills, abilities, knowledge, contacts, resources the network.
- Utilize and promote resources and tools developed through the network.
- Recognize and adhere to the network's positions and policies.
- Be respectful and honest with other members.
- Share mutual trust, clear motives, credibility, and transparency.

Networks can effectively mobilize, connect, and bring awareness to your issue through sharing resources, contacts, workload, and information.

Levels of Membership

Identify members' engagement levels.

Active Members engage in decision-making, fulfilling the network's purpose, and accomplishing its goals. Their contribution is significant in either (or both) time and resources.

Affiliate Members take a less active role in the network's operations and decisions but benefit from being connected to the network—for example, they have access to services or programs, participate in projects, and share information specific to the network's purpose and goals.

Advisory Members share their expertise, skills, and knowledge about the issues addressed by the network. They are contacted only as needed but are kept in the communication loop to ensure they know what the network is working on or about issues to assist.

Honorary Members are prominent persons who have contributed to the cause being addressed but whose participation isn't required for decision-making. Honorary members can be useful in bringing recognition to the network and its issues.

Source: Adapted, Mollenhaur, Johston, & Gates

Strategies to Build a Network

Tap into your existing relationships. It's often easier to convince someone you know than to convince someone you don't know. Use the people you already know and the relationships you've built over time. Use these contacts to build your network or ask for suggestions from others interested in addressing urgent issues like OUD.

Tool: Personal Mapping

Get creative in thinking about other individuals or organizations impacted by OUD. Identify agencies or organizations that work on similar issues and/or serve people with lived experience. Start with prevention, treatment, and recovery organizations, local law enforcement, and groups supporting people with lived experience of OUD, as they will likely be invested in the issue.

Tool: RLC Network Development Potential Members and Resource Log

Talk to influential people or people with an extensive social network. Business, civic, faith-based leaders, or citizens in the community might lend credibility to your work. Be prepared to discuss the importance of them being involved or helping to identify potential members and the impact it will have in addressing OUD.

Tool: Key Potential Member Analysis

Join existing, relevant local networks. Attend meetings and events connected to OUD, such as Recovery Oriented System of Care (ROSC) Councils, mental health boards, and grassroots groups. Attending these meetings will connect you with community members with similar interests in addressing the impact of OUD and provide a better understanding of other community issues, priorities, or competing interests. These networks can also assist in identifying resources available and potential barriers to your efforts. Follow local social media and join community mailing lists and newsletters to *keep in the loop on community happenings*. Meeting members where they live builds trust and shows commitment and true collaboration.
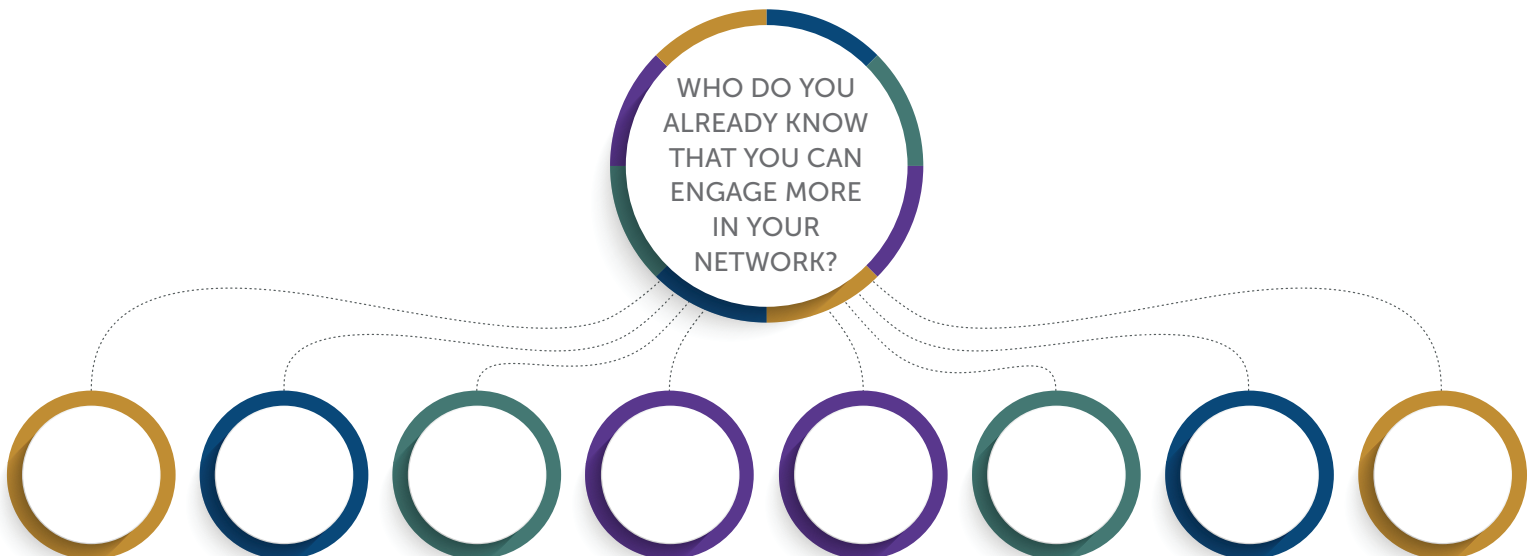
Tool: KCT Matrix

Source: Adapted, Prevention First

Commit to involving people with lived experiences of OUD to ensure their perspectives and voices are heard. Implement strategies to encourage their attendance, engagement, and participation.

Personal Mapping

NETWORK BRAINSTORM

WHO DO YOU ALREADY KNOW THAT YOU CAN ENGAGE MORE IN YOUR NETWORK?

RLC Network Development Potential Members and Resource Log

Sector	Potential Member	Potential Member	Potential Member	Potential Member
12 Step Program (In person or virtual)				
708 Mental Health Boards				
Access to Mediation Assisted Recovery Grantees (AMAR)				
Community Action Agencies				
Community Activists / Leaders				
Community Champions /other key potential members				
Community Historians/ researchers				
Community Mental Health Centers (IM+CANS)				
Correction Centers (Adult and Juvenile)				
Crisis Pregnancy Centers				
Cultural-Based Care Options				
Domestic violence support services				
Drug Task Forces				
Drug-Free Communities Grantees				
Family Allies				
Family Members				
Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC)				
Government, public, and elected officials				
Harm Reduction Centers				
Health Resources and Services Administration Grantees (HRSA) in local areas				
Hospital with Substance Use Disorder Services				

Sector	Potential Member	Potential Member	Potential Member	Potential Member
Human Services Networks				
Illinois Department of Human Services – Substance Use Prevention Program Grantees				
Illinois Drug Courts/ States Attorney Offices				
Juvenile Justice Councils				
Law Enforcement (state and local police, county sheriff, parole/probation – adult and juvenile)				
Local License Substance Use Counselors				
Local business/ business leaders				
Local health departments				
Local housing authority				
Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Agencies (Local)				
Medication Assisted Recovery Providers (Local SUPR Providers)				
Mental health Associations / Local chapters National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)				
Naloxone Access Locations (Physical or grant holders)				
Older adult associations/ programs				
Opioid Treatment Programs (OTP)				
Other Support Groups (SMART Recovery, Celebrate Recovery)				
Pain Management Support /Referrals (Local)				
Peer Recovery Support Services				

Sector	Potential Member	Potential Member	Potential Member	Potential Member
Human Services Networks				
Persons with lived experience				
Prenatal/ Maternal Substance Use Disorder Clinics				
Prescription Take-Back Programs				
Primary Care Providers/ Providers				
Recovery Care Organizations				
Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC) councils				
Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC) Lead Agency				
Religious / Fraternal Organizations				
Residential Options				
School officials				
School Resource Officers				
Shelters with Substance Use Programs				
Disorder Services				
Substance Use Prevention Networks				
United Way board members and staff				
Veterans and Active-duty military and Army Substance Abuse Program / Employee Assistance Program Directors				
Warm Handoff Options				
Youth Advisory Committee or Councils				
Youth Serving Organizations				

Potential Member Analysis Matrix

Potential Member Name	Contact Information (phone, email, or website)	Impact How much does the issue affect them? (Low, medium, High)	Influence How much influence do they have over the issue? (Low, Medium, high)	What is important to the potential member?	How could the potential member contribute to the project?	How could the potential member block the project?	Strategy for engaging the potential member

⎯ Getting Members on Board

Recruiting potential board members can be time-consuming, but it's essential to dedicate time to it. Consider the following as you move into recruitment.

Make Contact

Start by calling, scheduling a meeting, or requesting a key informant interview. If there happens to be an event planned, consider inviting potential members to introduce yourself and discuss networking to address common issues.

Conducting Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews are a great tool to make contact and establish relationships with individuals or organizations you have not previously worked with. Key informant interviews are a conversation with a purpose. Informants often feel empowered from the interview because they are viewed as an asset or resource and are allowed to be heard. They are thus more likely to increase their investment in the network and its work. Interviews also help to determine the receptivity to collaborating on prevention work, potential barriers, and ways to overcome those barriers. Select informants who know the community well and have an interest or stake in substance use prevention.

Contact the people you have identified and see if they would be willing to discuss the issue. Each interview should take 30–60 minutes.

Source: Adapted, Prevention First

Make Your Pitch

When recruiting networking members, we often only get one opportunity to convince someone to become involved, so it is essential to be prepared. Consider developing an "elevator pitch." This is a concise pitch that gets network information out quickly. An elevator pitch shouldn't be done on the fly but planned, well thought out, and practiced. This is the pitch that will be used to encourage potential members to become involved in your network and issues. Considerations:

The Three W's

WHO you are, **WHAT** you do (goals, objectives, prevention strategies, effective solutions), and **WHY** you do it (the problem you are addressing). Explain why you are making the pitch by clearly defining your program and goals.

Additionally, tailor your pitch to your audience. A pitch that engages one potential supporter might not be right for another potential member. Quality pitches address specific needs, values, and priorities. By clearly defining your audience and knowing what matters to them, you will be better positioned to craft a message that resonates and elicits your desired response.

Lead with the information most important to the potential member to get their attention. Also, be prepared for follow-up questions or concerns they might have.

Benefits

Highlight the benefits of working together by addressing the following:

- ✔ How activities relate to the interest and activities of the potential member's organization
- ✔ How the community and target population will be best served through the network
- ✔ Specific ways the potential member will benefit from collaborating
- ✔ What resources will be available to the potential member

Barriers

Acknowledge and address barriers but offer solutions to overcome or minimize their impact. The barriers you identify should be specific to the potential member.

A Call to Action

Identify what you are asking potential network members to agree to. Communicate actions, expectations, and network activities. Typically, people are more willing to collaborate if they know what is expected or what they will be doing—for example, if you'd like them to collaborate on existing initiatives or share information within their networks.

Source: Prevention First

—— Network Elevator Pitch Template

Potential Member	
THE 3 W'S WHO you are and who you represent. WHAT your organization does (your goals, objectives, prevention strategies, effective solutions) WHY you do it (the problem you are addressing)	
BENEFITS How will their participation benefit you and your organization? What is the value added to the potential member collaborating with you?	
BARRIERS What are the potential barriers to working together? How will you address these barriers?	
CALL TO ACTION What specifically are you asking them or their organization to do? What are the immediate next steps that you would like them to take?	

Source: Prevention First

──Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Networks

The key to success in a network environment is diversity. Diversity helps to better comprehend the issue, develop more comprehensive solutions, implement them, and scale them when a diverse group is brought together.

Building diverse networks requires conscious effort because we want to collaborate with people who think, live, and look like us. It's essential to consider those you already know and think about how to reach new members who will contribute new ideas and perspectives to your work. Commit to diversifying the network to ensure new ways of thinking and problem-solving are included.

To build a more diverse and inclusive network, conduct a needs assessment identifying all those affected by opioid use disorder to ensure they are engaged in the solutions. Seek those with lived experience of an issue as they have just as much, if not more, to offer than designated experts or officials.

Considerations:

Organizational sector and focus area	Race, language, and ethnicity	Faith and religious backgrounds
Educational attainment and wealth	Gender/gender identity and sexual orientation	Age and rural/urban background
Different abilities	Socioeconomic status	Others specific to your network

Source: Unknown

Inclusion

Now that diversity has been considered, it's time for networks to ask if network engagement strategies are inclusive.

Dictionary.com defines inclusion as *"aiming to include and integrate all people and groups in activities, organizations, political processes, etc. Especially those who are disadvantaged, have suffered discrimination, or are living with disabilities. Or relating to language or terminology that does not exclude a particular group of people and that avoids bias, stereotypes, etc."* (Dictionary.com).

It is critical to create an environment that makes all network members feel safe and welcome as equals and ensure they have a voice in all aspects of the network. Strategies to support inclusivity:

- Schedule meetings at a convenient time for not only staff but all network members (e.g., evenings for family members who work during the day).
- Get to know and acknowledge everyone by their preferred name.
- Don't use acronyms or jargon only recognized by certain network members.
- Allocate time for network members to discuss why the issue is important and their perspectives on solutions.
- Meet in a location accessible and welcoming to all network members.
- Allow members to participate at the level or extent they choose. Don't assign leadership positions only to staff, obtain input on agenda items, consider co-facilitation or co-chairing.

Source: Center for Consumer Engagement in Health Innovation

Establish the Purpose

Successful networks are formed when people or organizations see an opportunity or issue and how working together addresses the issue and aligns with individuals' or organizations' interests, challenges, and needs. As conversations progress, network members start to see the impact of working together to meet goals. Once that has been established, it's time to look for other people and groups interested in reaching these goals.

Source: Adapted, Mollenhaur, Johnston, & Gates

Network Categories

A network's purpose can evolve into different categories. Plastrik identified three network categories with different capabilities: connectivity, alignment, and production. Each category has another purpose, opportunities, and impacts.

Connectivity	Links people so that they can exchange information easily and learn because of the exchange.	• Building relationships between individuals and organizations within a system. • Supporting peer exchange and learning • Accelerating the adoption (and localization) of best practices • Linking innovators working on system change • Sharing information and connections about funding activities, priorities, and opportunities
Alignment	Links people to help them create and share ideas, goals, and strategies, exchange information, and coordinate more efficiently.	• Getting agreement within a system or among system changers on familiar ideas, goals, principles, strategies, practices, or methods • Moving a system toward integrating and standardizing practices and policies • Getting agreement to advocate for specific changes in the system • Reaching agreement on new principles and ideas to drive system renewal • Agreeing on areas for funder emphasis and investment agendas
Production	Links people to co-produce innovative practices, policies, or other outputs for social impact.	• Collaborations on research about a system and how to reinvent it • Collaborations to develop and implement practices and policies that change a system's performance • Defining best practices and standards for the system • Developing distribution and dissemination channels for products/services for innovations • Developing new funding sources

Source: Plastrik

── Considerations

Although starting with a clear purpose and goals is essential, they must evolve as the network grows, the environment changes, or outcomes are achieved It can be challenging to develop the purpose (and goals) together, assuring they fit the needs and interests of each member and organization represented. If the purpose isn't meaningful to all involved, it can lead to low engagement and no outcomes.

Concise	Specific and compelling to encourage and get members (and future members) excited about getting involved.
Realistic	Established in an awareness of the issue, credible need, ability to demonstrate results, and capacity and resources required.
Unique	Not duplicating other networks' efforts.
Significance	Based on a reliable issue, threat, or opportunity that needs to be addressed.
Mutual Interest	There's a common interest in the topic area or goals to address.
Beneficial	Members and their organizations benefit from being a part of the network.

Source: Adapted, Mollenhaur, Johnston, & Gates

Structure the Network

Activities will direct the structure and how formal the network needs to be. For example, if a network's purpose is solely to share information, most likely there doesn't need to be a formal structure. On the other hand, a formal structure is required if money (e.g., fundraising, cost of activities or projects) is involved.

── Structure Guiding Principles

The key to success in a network environment is diversity. Diversity helps to better comprehend the issue, develop more comprehensive solutions, implement them, and scale them when a diverse group is brought together.

- The structure allows the organization to focus on and fulfill its mission and achieve its goals.
- A good structure will make it easy to control how resources are distributed and used.
- The structure should make it easier to make decisions and solve problems in a way that reduces power struggles and conflicts between members and organizations.

Determine the structure and focus on the network's outcomes and goals. Ultimately, the structure must help the network achieve its purpose or goals. Decide how this will happen and, most importantly, how the work will be divided. Will this include (or require) committees, task forces, work groups? Who will be the lead coordinator of this effort? How will decisions get made?

⸺ Elements of Structure

Again, depending on the levels of engagement and activities, a formal structure might not be necessary. At least consider the following elements to structure the network:

Governance
Deciding how network decisions will be made and by whom is essential. Depending on the activity and engagement levels, does the network make decisions through an executive committee? Lead agency that manages the network?

Operating Procedures
Next, determining the rules or processes and procedures for the groups. Consider the rules that need to be formally stated, but some might be less formal and more assumed, but no less critical. A good practice would be to write down as many as possible so everyone is on the same page.

Work Distribution
Last, determine how the workload will be distributed. For members to continue to buy in and actively participate, engaging them and distributing work meaningfully is essential.

Rarely do network structures stay the same over time. It's essential to formally review the structure to ensure it remains relevant to membership needs and issues. A good practice is to examine the structure regularly, every year or two, to identify any necessary changes.

Source: Advocacy Experts

⸺ Network Structure Planning Guide

Question	Answer
What is the purpose of this network?	
What work will be done through the network?	☐ Information sharing only ☐ Collaborate on events/projects ☐ Other
What are the roles and responsibilities of network members?	
How will this network be managed?	☐ One organization will serve as the lead ☐ Multiple organizations serve as the lead ☐ Everyone plays a role in developing the agenda ☐ There is an executive committee ☐ There are workgroups/committees ☐ Task forces or subcommittees ☐ Other

Question	Answer
How will responsibilities be divided among network members?	☐ Lead organization ☐ Response ☐ Active participation – response, attendance at meetings or events; transparency – sharing information or if there's a conflict of interest ☐ Other

What will be the communication method and requirements?	☐ Lead organization
	☐ Communication through email only
	☐ In-person/virtual meetings
	☐ Recurrence of meetings:
	   • Weekly
	   • Monthly
	   • Bi-Monthly
	☐ Quarterly
	☐ Other

What is the decision-making process to ensure network members are recognized and goals are met?	☐ Formal vote ☐ Discussion ☐ Other
How will all network members have access to documentation or other network materials (e.g., Google Drive)?	
Are committees/workgroups required to get the work done?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, what work groupsare required?	
What is the role and responsibility of committee members?	

How will the committees be managed?	☐ Lead organization
	☐ Communication through email only
	☐ In-person/virtual meetings
	☐ Recurrence of meetings:
	   • Weekly
	   • Monthly
	   • Bi-Monthly
	   • Quarterly

How will responsibilities be divided among network members?	
What will help us work together as efficiently as possible?	

Manage the Network

For the network to function smoothly and transparently, it needs to be managed. Strong leadership can connect diverse views, organizational goals, and personalities around a common issue or purpose, all of which are crucial to the network's success.

Coordination, facilitation, and management of the network process duties are more difficult as the network matures, gets more complex, and possibly grows.

Engaging Your Network

Communication and transparency are essential in network engagement. Loop network members in on events, meetings, and work. Determine the best communication method to share information. Informed members are more likely to support network initiatives and encourage others to join the effort.

Engagement Opportunities

Meetings (in-person or conference call)

Meetings provide a forum for network members to get together periodically and share information that is mutually beneficial to all involved. Ensure meetings are organized and productive and attending is advantageous. Survey members of your network to help determine the best frequency, length, and time of meetings, meeting format, and location. Provide an agenda so everyone can keep track of progress and stay on schedule to respect everyone's time.

Conference calls typically require less time and travel expense than in-person meetings but may not achieve the same level of connection and interaction among participants. If meeting via conference call, use reliable technology, ensure the facilitator is skilled in using the technology, and provide members have the necessary equipment, access, and training.

Training and Events

Training, presentations, town hall meetings, and other events can significantly expand and engage your network. These events can be beneficial when you have information to share with your network or would like to build potential members' knowledge and skills in a specific area. Training and events should be well-planned with clear goals, have a skilled facilitator or emcee, and have a clear agenda. Start and end on time and provide supplemental materials, such as handouts, as needed.

Newsletters/Email

Newsletters and emails provide one-way communication from you to your network. They can be an excellent way to inform your network about prevention efforts. When developing newsletters or writing emails, ensure they are informative, professional, and error-free. Don't overload the reader with too much information; write clearly and concisely. Organize the information logically for readability.

Social Media

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media platforms can be great ways to provide quick, up-to-date news about your prevention efforts. When used well, social media can keep your network engaged in your efforts and expand your network by creating "buzz." First and foremost, be consistent. Develop a schedule for periodic rather than sporadic posting throughout the year to keep the issue on potential members' radars. Invest in sound design and be thoughtful about what and how you post. Use images and tell a story to generate interest.

Source: Prevention First

Overcoming Challenges to Potential Member Involvement

Although networking can have excellent benefits, managing the network can be challenging. Group work isn't always encouraged because of societal factors and sometimes territorial issues. Below are some challenges and strategies to overcome them.

A belief that individual effort is more beneficial than cooperation

It is often difficult to see the benefit of networking and whether it is worth the time and effort. This can be addressed by **focusing on the benefits** and providing concrete examples of success. Identify quick wins that will prove to network members success is possible and build confidence for larger ones. Build a working relationship by making the decision together and working towards a true collaboration.

Lack of time

People fear committing to networks due to the time requirement and their already heavy workload. They'd prefer not to over-commit. To overcome this challenge, **maximize involvement** and minimize participation time. Meet people where they are, allow them to participate at the level they can, and ensure every ask is meaningful for them to feel more comfortable in their commitment. Don't ever waste people's time!

Mistrust

Unfortunately, sometimes there are concerns about collaborating because of mistrust. Building trust through open communication and transparency about the work, intentions, and commitment to the issue is essential. Everyone should feel comfortable speaking openly and honestly. Mistrust can occur because of societal issues such as racism, classism, and other forms of prejudice. Mistrust and misunderstandings must be acknowledged and addressed. Network members must commit to learning about cultures and communities and their histories so that misunderstandings do not undermine the network's mission.

Lack of communication skills

Communication can be challenging and complicated. Get input from network members on their communication styles and preferred methods of communication and implement their suggestions. Commit to building communication, including active listening and negotiation skills.

Lack of strong leadership

Developing and maintaining successful collaborations can be hindered by weak leadership. Leaders must deal with mistrust, setbacks, attacks, and other relationship-related issues. Appoint leaders with vision, dedication, and the capacity to create and maintain momentum toward project goals to overcome this challenge. You should be aware that others may look to you as an expert in the field of prevention to take the initiative.

Source: Prevention First

Evaluate the Network

Evaluation is an essential part of the network process, although the extent to which networks evaluate differs based on the type of network.

Informal methods include regular group discussions and reflections on what works well and what needs improvement.

Formal methods assess production, activities, membership, and impact. Formal evaluations can be quantitative, qualitative, or both.

There are many benefits to evaluating the network. A well-thought-out evaluation can:

- Determine if the mission and goals of the network were successfully met.
- Make improvements to activities and resources provided through the network.
- Assess community awareness of the work done through the network or the issue the network addresses.
- Promote accountability for anyone involved in the work being done through the network, community members and stakeholders, and possibly funding sources.
- Informs policy decisions.

Another benefit of evaluation is an opportunity to increase awareness of the network and work being done and celebrate its successes, which could motivate current network members and recruit new members.

As far as options, three general levels of evaluation can be used (Butterfoss and Fancisco, 2004):

1. Evaluation of processes that sustain infrastructure and function (process evaluation)

2. Evaluation of programs designed to achieve goals (impact evaluation)

3. Evaluation of changes in the status of the community (outcome evaluation)

Process Evaluation

This level considers what has been done by the network, its reach, and if it functions as intended (Butterfoss and Fancisco, 2004). The most common forms include:

- Surveys
- Questionnaires
- Review of coalition records and reports
  - Event evaluations
  - Resources distributed
  - Network membership

Impact Evaluation

This level assesses whether network goals and objectives were met, and programs implemented as planned. A logic model can be used to evaluate at this level. It might be necessary to engage community members affected by the network to evaluate whether efforts were successful. Common methods at this level include:

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Observations

Outcome Evaluation

This level considers the big picture of the network and its impact. It is crucial to assess whether the network's efforts have affected the health, safety, and well-being of community members and the community itself. Questions in this stage will be based on the network's mission and purpose. Common methods:

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Document reviews to compare data
- Interviews with community members to assess the network's impact

Although the benefits of evaluation are many, sometimes goals take priority over assessment. Evaluation should be built into the network design at every level. For example, if the network shares resources (internally or externally) consider how this might be evaluated.

Potential Evaluation Questions

Process Evaluation Questions

- How long has the network been together?
- How often does the network meet?
- What type of structure has been developed for the network? (e.g., officers, membership guidelines)
- What types of individuals and organizations are represented?
  - Are there groups that are not represented by the network?
  - Are these individuals qualified to accomplish the work of the network?
- What has the group done to train network members and other relevant individuals in the community?
- Is the network serving as an advocate for issues in the community?
- Do all community members have equal access to the network's efforts?
- Has duplication of services been reduced or eliminated?
- Have existing funds been used effectively?
- Has the group been able to access new funds because of working together? How?
- What is the network doing that works well?
- What are the major problems faced by the network?

Impact Evaluation Questions

- Did the network achieve its goals?

- Did the network use its resources in the most efficient way possible to achieve its goals?

- Is the community aware of the network's efforts? Are they supportive of its efforts?

- Did elected officials support legislation proposed by the network?

Outcome Evaluation Questions

- Have there been behavior changes in the community related to the issue being addressed?

- Do community members feel safer and healthier because of the network's work?

- Does the network continue to offer programs or resources that support the network's mission?

Source: Smathers & Lobb

Appendix

Leadership Center Network Documentation

Network Name:	
Network Region/Area:	
Purpose of Network:	☐ Resource development ☐ Coordinate activities ☐ Information sharing
Membership:	
Membership Responsibilities:	
Network Structure:	☐ Informal ☐ Governing board ☐ Workgroups/taskforces ☐ Other
Workload Distribution:	

Communication and Meetings:	☐ Communication through email only
	☐ In-person/virtual meetings
	☐ Recurrence of meetings:
	   • Weekly
	   • Monthly
	   • Bi-Monthly
	☐ Quarterly
	☐ Other

Communication Method/ Plans	☐ Newsletter ☐ Social media ☐ Other
Training Required? If yes, what training?	
Decision-making/ Governance:	
Documentation Storage:	☐ Google Drive ☐ Other
Committees or Workgroups:	

Leadership Center Network Development Plan and Reporting Tool

Leadership Center	
Staff Name	
Staff Email	
Staff Phone	
Network Group	
Network Purpose	

Recruitment Efforts

Date	Recruitment Activity	Total Number Recruited	Notes

Activity Tracking

Date	Event/Activity	Total Number Attending/Participating	Notes

Resources Tracking

Date	Resource	Number Distributed	Location	Notes

Notes

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