



# Leading Culture and Systems Change

*How to Develop Network Leadership  
and Support Emerging Networks*

OCTOBER 2017



LEADERSHIP LEARNING  
COMMUNITY

## LEADING CULTURE AND SYSTEMS CHANGE



**Methodology:** This publication is the product of a collaboration among network, leadership and equity experts, initiated by the Leadership Learning Community (LLC) to take up the challenge of developing a comprehensive network strategy for leadership development programming. A core part of the research approach was a design thinking lab that brought together people working in networks, leadership development, public health, and philanthropy to generate innovative ideas and solutions. The team researched network infrastructure and platforms, conducted interviews to incorporate an equity lens and evaluative thinking, and tested early findings through LLC's national meetings and webinars.



**Tessie Guillermo**, Former CEO, Zero Divide.

**C. Milano Harden**, President & CEO, The Genius Group/TGG. Harden is an Organizational Behaviorist committed to strengthening Leadership and Organization for the Business of Doing Good. TGG is focused especially on organized philanthropy, the Nonprofit Sector and community improvement.

**June Holley**, Network Weaver. June is the author of the Network Weaver Handbook, consults with network projects, and is developing a set of network learning modules.

**Beth Kanter**, Trainer, Speaker, and Author. Beth is author of the Networked Nonprofit and Happy Healthy Nonprofit, provides training for nonprofits and foundations, and consults on projects.

**Heather McLeod Grant** is the co-founder of Open Impact—a social impact advising firm—and a published author, speaker, and consultant with more than 25 years' experience leading social change.

**Deborah Meehan**, Founder and Executive Director of the Leadership Learning Community. Deborah is the lead author for numerous collaborative research publications, and conducts evaluations, scans, and network activation projects for LLC's consulting services.

**Kiara Nagel** is a Creative Strategist with 20 years of experience building creative and collaborative initiatives, and supporting social groups, leaders, and organizations to become more engaged, effective, and creative in their work.

**Claire Reinelt, Ph.D.**, Evaluation Consultant & Coach specializing in leadership development, network impact, ecosystem alignment and movement building has over 20 years of experience consulting to foundations and leadership programs.

**Lina Sheth, MPH, CPCC** is the Principal of Meraki Strategies, LLC and has over 20 years of expertise in organizational effectiveness, leadership and technology in health, youth development and worker rights, primarily in communities of color.

This publication was created with the support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as a resource for leadership development programs interested in how to help the participants of their programs build and lead in networks.

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....4

Why Network Leadership .....5

    Why Leading in Networks is Critical  
    to Large Scale Change .....5

    Network Leadership:  
    What it is and Why it Needs to be Supported .....5

How Leadership Programs Can Cultivate Network Leadership and  
Support Emerging Networks .....6

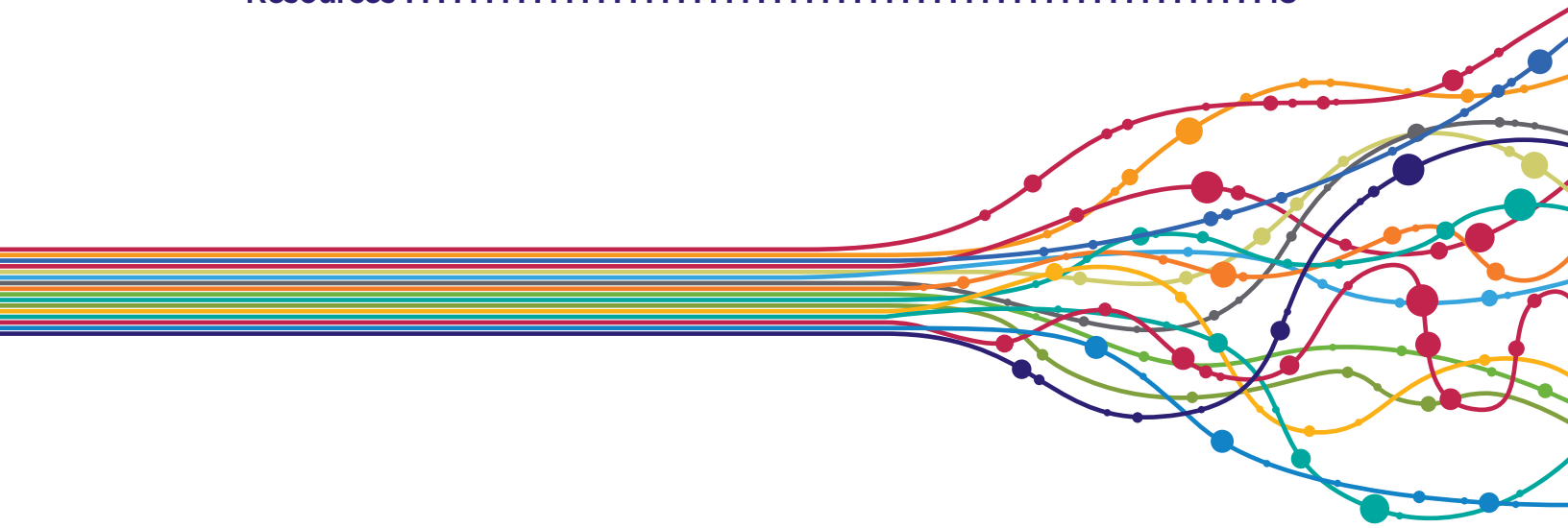
    Strategic Recruitment:  
    Aligning Purpose and Recruitment .....6

    Cultivating Network Leadership:  
    Aligning Program Design and Content .....8

    Network Engagement and Scaffolding .....14

Conclusion .....17

Resources .....18



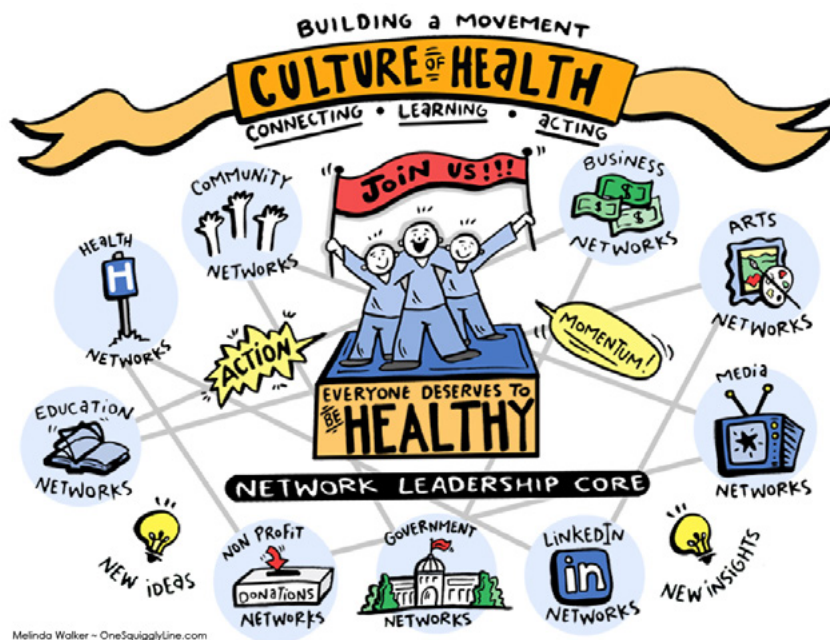
## Introduction

Social change leaders can use network strategies to mobilize and influence more people, stimulate creativity, and change systems<sup>1</sup>; but successfully using network strategies requires leadership values, skills, and behaviors that need to be learned, because they depart from more conventional ideas about leadership. Leadership programs can provide opportunities for learning and practicing network leadership behaviors. The purpose of this report is to provide leadership development practitioners with concrete recommendations about how to design and deliver leadership supports that build the network competency of participants and increase the likelihood that networks of program participants will emerge to work on social issues.

This report is organized into two major sections:

**1** “Why Network Leadership” makes the case for why people and organizations tackling complex social issues are likely to have greater impact by employing network approaches, and describes what is meant by network leadership and why cultivating network leadership requires specific attention to network competencies on the part of leadership development programs.

**2** “How Leadership Programs Can Cultivate Network Leadership and Support Emerging Networks” offers concrete recommendations in three important areas of program design and delivery that can increase the likelihood that participants will have the necessary mindset and skills to lead in networks. Each of these areas—Purpose and Recruitment; Program Design and Content; and Engagement and Scaffolding—is introduced with a set of recommendations, followed by a discussion of how the strategy builds network competency and supports a potential network of participants. Some programs may already be providing some of these network supports, while others may be just starting out. It’s not necessary to implement all of the recommendations to see results; in fact, we recommend starting with just a few modifications first.



<sup>1</sup> Leadership Learning Community, “Leadership and Networks: New Ways of Developing Leadership in a Highly Connected World,” October 2012. <http://leadershiplearning.org/leadership-resources/resources-and-publications/leadership-and-networks-new-ways-developing-leader-0>



## Why Network Leadership

### Why Leading in Networks Is Critical to Large-Scale Change Results

Individuals and organizations leading in areas of significant social challenge often find themselves involved in culture change and systems change work. One successful strategy for tackling large-scale change is to explicitly build and support networks that create the conditions for diverse and inclusive social groups to explore their interdependence, and opportunities to align their efforts around issues such as climate change or structural racism. Simply put, when we refer to networks, we are talking about people and organizations that are connected through relationships and interactions. Networks are increasingly useful in the 21st century as the pace of change increases and the nation becomes more diverse, because networks provide:

- opportunities for learning from connections and experience
- a way to bring multiple perspectives and strengths together
- a means to organize collaboration and experimentation across organizations, sectors, and geographies
- better diffusion of information and new ideas
- opportunities for successes to spread virally
- a means to generate ever-expanding leadership and initiative

Learning how to apply network leadership principles and skills is essential to increasing the likelihood of making progress on large-scale social issues. Networks can be formal (such as a coalition), loosely coordinated (like a social change movement) or social (as when sharing goods and services). Leadership development programs can apply what we're learning about these different types of network approaches so that we can more effectively cultivate, align, and leverage our networks for greater leadership impact and community well-being.

Networks are contributing to, and reinforced by, a culture of collaboration, transparency, and sharing. Nonprofits and for-profits are increasingly operating in a “collaborative” or “sharing” economy, defined as the use of networked, mobile information technology to share goods and services rather than simply to exchange information. This new culture is a movement driven by social

change values, including less consumption, less waste, and sustainability. Also, in an era of being connected online, it's driven by the human desire to connect with others—an antidote to loneliness as our world becomes progressively more global.<sup>2</sup>

### Network Leadership: What It Is and Why It Needs to Be Supported

The term network leadership is used in this report to describe leadership behaviors that foster engagement, experimentation, and self-organization among groups of people. Network leadership is fundamentally about relationships and interactions between people. The power a person has in a network is not the result of their “special” capacity or position, but rather the pattern and quality of their connections and interactions, which together create network influence.

As illustrated below, the skills needed to lead successfully in a traditional organizational context are sometimes dramatically different from the mindset and behaviors needed for leading successfully in networks.

Network leadership emerges when inclusive peer groups co-create a culture of openness and self-organizing that catalyzes action, experimentation, and learning. Leadership programs can create the conditions for a peer culture to emerge among participants. Once participants have an understanding of network leadership and have had opportunities to practice leading with network behaviors, they're more likely to use network strategies and tools to advance their work and make progress on complex social issues.

Organizational Leadership	Network Leadership
Few leaders	Everyone a leader
Broadcast	Help people engage
Tell what to do	Encourage people to initiate
Individual	Help small groups form
Planning	Encourage innovation and experimentation
Control and manage	Offer facilitation and support
Directive	Encourage emergence
Top down	Bottom up
Provide service	Support Self-organization

2 Kanter, Beth. “The Next Generation of Networked Social Change: Embracing the Sharing Economy.” Beth's Blog. May 13, 2014. <http://www.bethkanter.org/share-economy/>

# How Leadership Programs Can Cultivate Network Leadership and Support Emerging Networks

When leadership programs think about networks, it’s often in the context of wanting to start a network of program graduates. If programs don’t begin to think about how to activate a network until they have a large number of graduates, the opportunity to cultivate network leadership as part of the program will be lost. When a leadership program is conceived and designed to provide opportunities for participants to learn and practice network leadership behaviors, build connections, and become comfortable with communication tools and platforms, it lays the groundwork for the emergence of a network driven by participants who understand the value of being connected in a network and have the skills to nurture an emerging network.

We recommend the following approach to designing and developing a leadership program that will increase the network competency of participants and their impact on social issues: first, be clear on the network’s purpose and recruit strategically to support that purpose; second, align program design and content to reinforce network principles and behaviors; and finally, align strategies and structures to support the network’s potential expansion.

**Aligning Leadership Development and Network Impact**



**Strategic Recruitment:  
Aligning Purpose and Recruitment**

When a leadership program is explicit about its desire to advance a specific social change, such as better educational outcomes for all children or a reduction in health disparities, it’s more likely to attract people and organizations that share a commitment to that larger social purpose and who will benefit from being connected in a network to support and further that work. It can also help the designers of the leadership initiative to think strategically about who needs to be part of tackling the problem and what supports they’ll need. Following is our set of recommendations for how to strategically align a program’s purpose and recruitment.

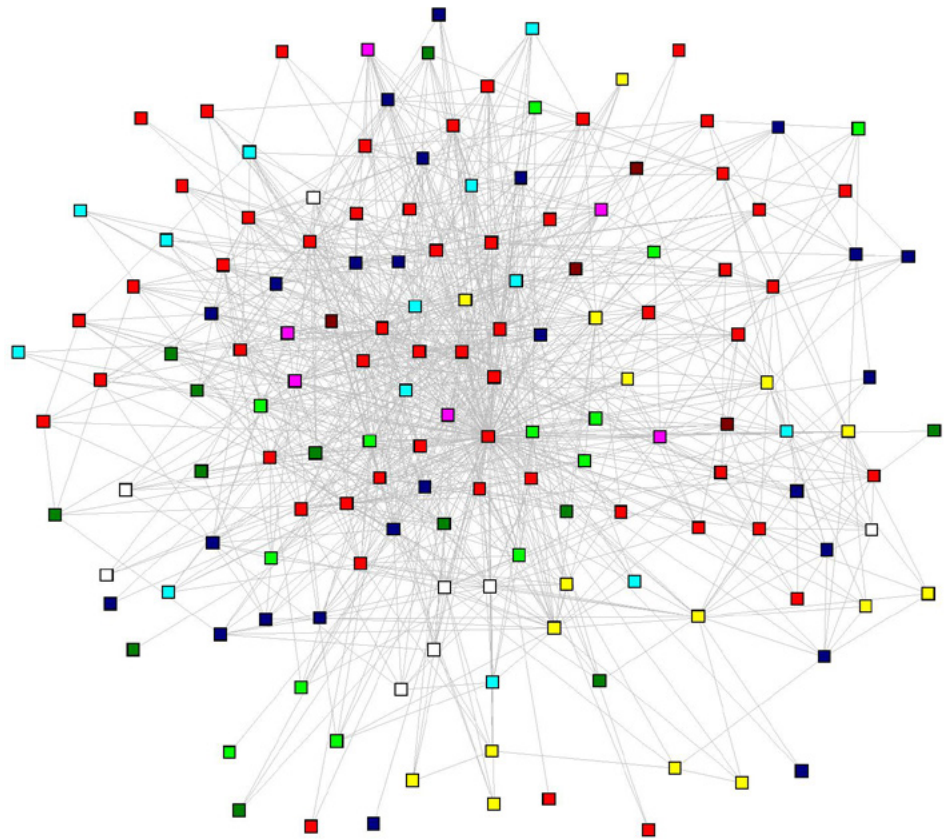
Purpose and Recruitment	
Purpose	Articulate the social purpose the program seeks to advance
Strategic Recruitment	Engage people most affected by the problem
	Map the system
	Conduct a social network analysis
	Recruit for a network mindset and skills

**Incorporate lessons from movement building into recruitment:** Building a movement requires developing a shared political frame that aligns diverse constituencies. Robin Katcher of Management Assistance Group quotes Darlene Nipper in saying that networks provide the venue for the “understanding of how constituencies of different races, ethnicities, classes, genders, sexualities, immigrant status, ability, and other historically oppressed groups are differently impacted by the same problem.”<sup>3</sup> Tackling any disparity, whether in education, health, or income, requires an understanding of the connections between systemic inequities and the broader cultural norms and narratives that implicitly or explicitly justify them, and of the ways in which internalizing these norms affects individuals’ and communities’ thinking, behavior, and outcomes. Leadership programs provide a container

3 Katcher, Robin. “Unstill Waters: The Fluid Role of Networks in Social Movements.” Nonprofit Quarterly. March 21, 2010. <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2010/03/21/unstill-waters-the-fluid-role-of-networks-in-social-movements-2/>

## Desired New Collaborations

- Government
- Foundation
- Academic
- Community-based
- For profit
- Hospital/Clinic
- Nursing home/Home health
- Schools
- None of the above



for bringing together diverse perspectives that enrich problem solving and innovation.

**Map the system:** Systems thinking can be used to identify levers of change in the system you're trying to disrupt and to provide clues about who should be recruited to ensure that the programs intentionally include critical parts of that system and representatives of potential change strategies. For example, the ReAMP energy network used systems thinking and analysis to identify four levers that would help them achieve their ambitious carbon reduction goals. They identified renewable energy as one of the levers for reducing carbon emissions, and as a result they intentionally recruited people who were working on or wanted to work on renewable energy issues.

**Conduct a social network analysis (SNA):** Computer scientists, sociologists, and mathematicians have figured out how to create visual representations of network patterns. These maps help us to better understand and study the patterns of relationships among people and organizations in a network. In the map above, the circles (called nodes) represent people and the lines (called

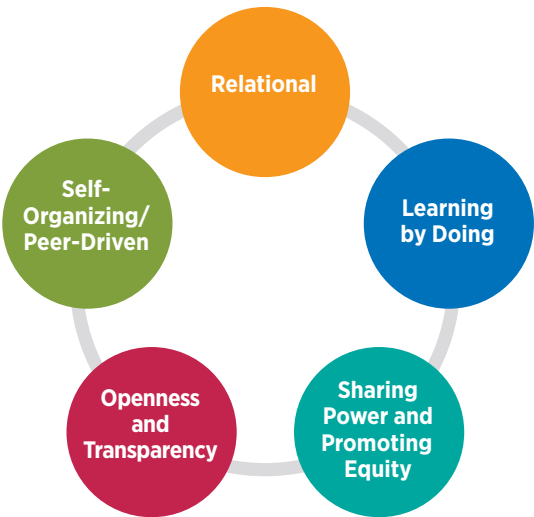
ties) represent connections among people, in this case collaborations. A social network analysis is the process of mapping and analyzing these patterns. An SNA map can be used to identify people who are influential in the network. Using network maps in a program's focus area could help to identify people who are well connected and in a good position to build bridges among different groups. This is one way to accelerate the reach and influence of the core of network activists being supported by a program.

**Recruit for specific mindsets/skills:** It's possible to accelerate learning among and across cohorts by recruiting some individuals who already exhibit a network mindset or a risk-taking spirit. Tools like the Network Weaver Checklist<sup>4</sup> could be used to identify those individuals who think about building relationships and connections. In a peer learning environment, these recruits could model desired behaviors, provide peer coaching, and reinforce collaborative learning and the development of critical skills.

<sup>4</sup> Holley, June. *Network Weaver Handbook: A Guide to Transformational Networks*. Network Weaving Publishing. Athens, OH. February 2012.

Cultivating Network Leadership:  
Aligning Program Design and Content

To optimize the network impact of a leadership program, it's useful to pay attention to every aspect of the program, including its design, delivery, staffing composition, content, post-program opportunities, and engagement strategies, platforms, and structures. The authors of this report have identified five principles of network leadership that leadership programs can incorporate into the design of their programming to create opportunities to practice network behaviors and reinforce network competencies.



In the sections that follow, we describe what we mean by each principle, what implications the principle has for leadership development programming, and the specific delivery recommendations summarized in the following table.

Network Principle	Relational	Self-Organizing/ Peer-Driven	Learning by Doing	Openness and Transparency	Sharing Power and Promoting Equity
Delivery Strategies	Storytelling	Community of learning and practice	Scaled experiments	Select activities open to non-Fellows	Transparent conversations about power
	Retreats	Peer assists or peer coaching	Learning protocols	Porous program boundaries	Culturally relevant leadership models
	Nature experiences	Co-design of the program	Rewards for risk taking	Open communication platforms	Equity evaluation metrics
	Trust-building exercises	Self-organized learning and action projects	Innovation Fund	Open source materials, modules, and curriculum	Attention to demographics of staff and participants
	Creative Disruption	Participant-run learning and action fund		Multiple entry points for engagement	

Relational

Relational

*What we mean by relational:* Relationships and connections are the foundation of networks, and this includes both strong and weak ties.<sup>5</sup> Networks have the potential to

unleash the ideas, energy, and wisdom of everyone who wants to take action; however, realizing that potential requires a more relational understanding of leadership. Many leadership programs promote models of leadership that are more hierarchical and at odds with a relational approach, focusing on leadership as the behavior of an individual who, by virtue of position or influence, persuades others to follow their direction. There is increasing recognition of the limitations of a sole point of view and sole actor.

A new relational leadership mindset has emerged in the past 7–8 years, embraced by both scholars and practitioners.<sup>6</sup> A relational view sees leadership as a dynamic process by which actors come together and align their efforts to take action on the issues they care about deeply. In a relational view of leadership, the role of the individual shifts to one of contributing effectively to the work of the whole through collaborative interaction.

5 Granovetter, Mark A. “Strength of Weak Ties.” *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 78, Issue 6 (May 1973).

6 Leadership Learning Community. “A New Leadership Mindset for Scaling Social Change.” <http://leadershiplearning.org/new-leadership-mindset-download>



## HOW TO DEVELOP NETWORK LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT EMERGING NETWORKS



### *What relationality means for leadership programming:*

We need to reexamine and elevate the skills that often have been considered “soft,” such as trust building, listening, openness, and vulnerability. These skills were traditionally considered less important than “hard” skills such as strategic planning, public speaking, messaging, and fundraising. However, when you value a relational perspective as paramount, leading effectively shifts to engaging others in setting directions or generating resources.

Part of the work of a leadership program is to nurture relationships among a diverse group of participants who, throughout the course of their work together, are supported in learning about how to listen deeply and with empathy and how to engage in challenging conversations. A focus on collective action and relationship development does not mean that relational programs no longer need to focus on the personal and reflective work of leadership. If anything, network leadership can be more challenging, because working for an extended period of time in close quarters with others often triggers individual egos or tensions over how to manage personal or organizational agendas that don’t mesh well with collective needs. The more centered and aware the individual, the more likely that relationship building will be productive.

Relationality also needs to be expansive, with continual reaching out, sharing, and supporting of others to act. This is one reason why the creation and use of communications systems—especially virtual engagement platforms—should be introduced early and integrated into leadership programming. Social media makes the building of very large

networks possible, but leaders need to know how to get many people engaging with each other in ways that enable them to build relationships of trust and collaborative action.

*Delivery recommendations:* It’s important to utilize delivery strategies that create the right container for meaningful interaction. This means giving importance to retreats, often in nature, that encourage reflection and create space for authentic relationships to form.

A number of leadership programs use team building exercises and emphasize storytelling to find connection within diversity. The Barr Foundation uses the language of Creative Disruption to talk about the value of getting people outside their comfort zones so they can let go of professional personas and form more meaningful relationships from a shared experience of vulnerability.<sup>7</sup> The Health Foundation for Western and Central New York uses a variety of diagnostic tools, including 360s (peer feedback surveys), to help participants understand the ego issues involved in leading that may diminish their connection to others.

Relational skills can also be built in a virtual environment. Using video conferencing platforms enables people to see each other and speeds up trust building considerably. An increasing number of these platforms include the capacity for breakout rooms, where dyads or small groups can have a more personal opportunity for relationship building and a chance to strengthen listening and collaboration skills. Using these platforms is much less expensive than face-to-face sessions and has the added benefit of building technology skills that can be taken back to participants’ daily work to seed connections across organizations.



7 Linnell, Deborah S. and Tim Wolfred. Creative Disruption: Sabbaticals for Capacity Building & Leadership Development in the Nonprofit Sector. The Barr Foundation, CompassPoint Nonprofit Services and Third Sector New England. December 2010. [http://tsne.org/sites/default/files/Creative-Disruption\\_0.pdf](http://tsne.org/sites/default/files/Creative-Disruption_0.pdf)

## Self-Organizing/Peer-Driven

### Self-Organizing/Peer-Driven

*What we mean by self-organizing:*

Networks encourage any member to step up when they have an idea or see a need, and then recruit others to join in. It doesn't take centralized planning to make something happen. In fact, large-scale plans constructed by a small, elite group of people can't begin to tap the multitude of ideas and energy that exists throughout a network. As June Holley describes in the *Network Weaver Handbook*:

*The simplest way to think about self-organizing is that, in well-connected networks, individuals begin to identify something that could make a difference. This could be a new research project, service, policy, festival, handbook, campaign, playground, website, etc. Then that individual or group pulls together additional people who also want to work to make that change. Together, they attract the resources needed to make something happen.<sup>8</sup>*

This has also been referred to as doacracy, a term that describes the extent to which people in a network feel authorized to take action. Someone's willingness to do a particular task is the rationale for having that person do it.

*What self-organizing means for leadership programming:*

Traditional leadership programs have been largely expert-driven, and this inclination is understandable. Participants are asked to give precious time, usually away from work, and, in the effort to maximize the value of their time, leadership programs are often heavily staffed with content experts focused on skills-based curriculum delivery. The question to consider is how those needs are identified and met. There are several problems with leadership programming that's driven and delivered from the top down:

- The power of networks comes from the capacity of participants to self-organize. Leadership participants need to be offered the chance to build this capacity by clustering and self-organizing to meet their own learning needs.
- Programs cannot anticipate and respond to the diversity of interests among their participants. Offering opportunities for peer learning taps the expertise of participants to respond to each other's needs.
- When participants are primarily exposed to external expertise, they don't experience the benefits of learning



from each other and are less likely to appreciate the value of remaining connected after the program ends.

*Delivery recommendations:* There are a number of ways that leadership programs can both benefit from participants as a delivery resource and cultivate the self-organizing capacity of participants. Program staff can engage participants in creating a learning agenda using simple survey tools, or even a social network analysis to create a visual map of who is interested in specific topics and who in the group is willing to be tapped to provide training assistance or coaching on specific topics.

There are a number of ways to provide opportunities for practicing self-organizing within a leadership program. Participants can become a community of learning and practice and use a *peeragogy*<sup>9</sup> approach, where they take surveys to identify learning topics and then self-organize into learning sessions on those topics. Peer assists are a powerful way to engage participants in helping each other troubleshoot leadership challenges. When participants of leadership programs are expected to engage in a project as part of the program, why not have them self-organize and recruit others from the cohort to collaborate with them?

At gatherings—whether virtual or face-to-face—participants can use Open Space Technology, where the agenda is created in real time based on the expertise in the room. Participants could also use Post-it notes to identify overlapping interests for further exploration. In addition, programs can experiment with using small learning and action funds to support self-organized and collaborative projects.

Supporting self-organizing, especially for a cohort that isn't place-based, requires the use of virtual platforms such as video conferencing or Google Docs. Introducing these platforms in the course of the program will give participants a chance to practice and mentor each other on new technology. Social media skills are an important leadership competency.

<sup>8</sup> Holley, June. *Network Weaver Handbook: A Guide to Transformational Networks*. Network Weaving Publishing. Athens, OH. February 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Kanter, Beth. "Peeragogy: Self Organized Peer Learning in Networks." Beth's Blog. January 26, 2012. <http://www.bethkanter.org/peeragogy/>



## Learning by Doing

### Learning by Doing

#### *What we mean by learning by doing:*

A hallmark of networks is their ability to produce innovation, which occurs because experimentation is encouraged.

Within a network with many experiments taking place simultaneously, learning is accelerated and can more easily be scaled to produce greater innovation. Breakthroughs, in most cases, do not occur through the work of the lone genius but through the cross-fertilization of ideas, tinkering, and revision.<sup>10</sup> Essentially, people learn by taking action, reflecting, incorporating lessons, and acting again but with better understanding.



#### *What learning by doing means for leadership programming:*

There are well-established methodologies to support action learning. Having protocols for cycles of action, individual and collective reflection, and incorporation of lessons into new action will build learning capacity and habits. An increasing number of leadership programs help participants understand how to use data and dashboards to learn about the progress they're making or failing to make, so that assessments and course corrections can be grounded.

Design thinking accelerates this process of iteration to produce innovation and is becoming more popular in the nonprofit sector, where there is broad recognition that the things we've been trying aren't getting us where we need to be. Experimentation sounds like an attractive idea, yet

many experiments fail, and failure is uncomfortable in the current culture of leadership. Even in leadership programs that utilize leadership action projects, an expectation of successful completion can occur, which inhibits riskier projects that could produce exciting breakthroughs.

To foster innovation, people leading in networks also need to understand the importance of differences in perspectives among the periphery of people and organizations. These different perspectives are the source of new thinking. This report, for example, is the result of a convergence of people from different fields—the leadership, racial equity, and network fields—that produced exciting new ideas about leadership.

*Delivery recommendations:* Leadership programs have implemented a number of innovations to encourage a spirit of learning by doing and risk taking. When success is acknowledged without equal attention to or reward systems for experimentation (unless of course the experiment is successful), people are more likely to be risk-averse. Some networks celebrate mistakes to honor the learning and take the cultural sting out of failures—for example, MomsRising through a ritual they call the Joyful Funeral,<sup>11</sup> and [DoSomething.org](https://www.dosomething.org) through playful FailFests.<sup>12</sup> Innovation Funds can also encourage risk taking, and having program participants administer these funds helps engage them in valuing experimentation. Leadership programs can nurture scaled experiments and design thinking methodologies to unleash creativity and enthusiasm for innovation.



<sup>10</sup> Johnson, Steven. *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*. Riverhead Books, a member of Penguin Group Inc. New York, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> The Case Foundation. "Ashley Boyd, MomsRising Talks About Joyful Funeral." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Vo4M4u5Boc>

<sup>12</sup> Kanter, Beth. "Go Ahead, Take a Failure Bow." *Harvard Business Review*. April 17, 2013. <https://hbr.org/2013/04/go-ahead-take-a-failure-bow>

## Openness and Transparency

### Openness and Transparency

*What openness and transparency means for leadership programming:*

Networks are open and transparent in a number of ways, including freely communicating information and encouraging discussion and feedback across the network, soliciting input and providing access to decision making processes, sharing resources generously, inviting different perspectives, and welcoming new people. Openness increases the flow of information, encourages engagement in decisions and action, and expands the reach of the network. It also builds trust in a network, fosters a healthy exchange of resources, and helps the network grow.

*What openness and transparency mean for leadership programming:* We estimate that more than 90% of leadership programs have strong boundaries for program inclusion, in that a specific pool of candidates is selected to participate and development activities are offered only to those selected. This is one area where there has been very little experimentation in leadership programming.

The large number of people who apply but are not selected by competitive leadership programs present a particular challenge to program organizers; these people obviously want to enhance their leadership skills but are left out. They remind us of the need to find innovative pathways to scale our offerings. One leadership program, the Kellogg Leaders for Community Change (no longer in existence), did experiment with porous boundaries for their program. A core group came to all of the sessions while a much larger group attended select sessions based on the particular topic or their availability.

In addition, leadership programs, like most organizations, are not accustomed to transparent communication and engaged decision making. This can result in program staff deciding which participants to assign to special committees or to speak at events. When these processes aren't open and clear, it can lead to perceptions of favoritism or the impression that decisions are made exclusively by staff, which can limit participants' enthusiasm and self-organizing initiative.

*Delivery recommendations:* Any leadership program, whether place-based or virtual, can identify and extend participation opportunities to people outside the program at little or no additional cost. If participants bring in people



from their networks to share their experiences and engage with them in collaborative learning and action, the network will grow and the benefits of the program will ripple out.

Leadership programs could openly share all of the materials on the program's platform, much the same way that MIT has made their curriculum publicly available. Program participants could then share with their own networks the materials they found helpful.

These approaches create multiple entry points for people who want to align their work to support the specific program purpose but may not have been selected to the program or have the time or confidence to opt in at the level of full program participation. One of the major benefits of networks is that they can be built to withstand continual growth and expansion. Open platforms and communication are critical to attracting new ideas and resources and to the viral spreading of successes, ideas, culture change, and action. There must be pathways into the new terrain, so that change flows to increasingly more people. Leadership programs need to spend time helping participants build networks into new sectors and communities and to create open platforms where increased engagement can occur. This openness, however, must be combined with facilitated clustering so that people move into collaborative action. Examples of clustering methodologies include:

- Social network mapping to identify people who have common interests. This is especially useful as networks grow larger.
- Using Post-it notes in face-to-face meetings to match people by their interests or by what they need or have to offer.
- Open Space Technology, a meeting methodology that enables people to invite others in real time to join them in discussing topics of interest to them.



### Sharing Power and Promoting Equity

#### Sharing Power and Promoting Equity

*What we mean by sharing power and promoting equity:* Power and equity go

hand in hand in networks. There is often an assumption that power in networks is

more evenly distributed because governance is

flatter. Power does exist differently in networks, but the same structures that reinforce inequity in organizations can create inequities in networks. To unleash the potential of everyone in the network, it's important to bring a strong understanding of equity to its governance and encourage transparent and frequent conversations about how to share power and promote equity.

*What power sharing and equity mean for leadership programming:* Leadership programs have paid explicit attention to issues of power and equity but in many cases have handled them as simply a recruitment issue (which they also are) or a one-time module on cultural competence. These issues should instead be part of an integrated approach to determining who should be recruited, to understanding how systemic inequities are produced, and to developing the skills needed to move a broader equity agenda across a variety of social purposes. Cultivating this approach means looking at how power and equity are functioning in the leadership program dynamics and in the network governance and activities. The network principles of openness and transparency described earlier can promote candid interactions among participants, resulting in a better understanding of power and promoting equity internally and externally.

It's important to bring a strong power and equity lens to the entire design of a network-centric leadership program, for a number of reasons: to develop effective strategies for recruitment; to introduce culturally relevant and inclusive leadership models that unleash collectivism; and to introduce a framework for understanding systemic inequity, combined with a systems analysis for better understanding levers and strategies for disrupting structural racism.

*Delivery recommendations:* The place to start operationalizing a strong commitment to sharing power and promoting equity is in the leadership program—its staff, the investors, and the program evaluation metrics. To incorporate a commitment to inclusion and equity, the programs should hold themselves accountable for the composition of their cohorts, the extent to which projects focus on addressing disparities, and the collection of data to assess the equity impact of their recruitment and the projects that participants implement. As mentioned earlier, staff that is reflective of the diversity the program is seeking to achieve through its recruitment will likely understand the need to address the issue of power, to institutionalize an equity lens into all aspects of the program, and to successfully recruit a diverse cohort.

**A number of people who work at the intersection of equity, networks, leadership, and philanthropy were interviewed about what equity meant to them, and these themes emerged:**

- the removal of barriers and access to resources and opportunity
- fairness and justice
- the opportunity to reach one's full potential and realize dreams independent of race, gender, or belonging to other oppressed groups

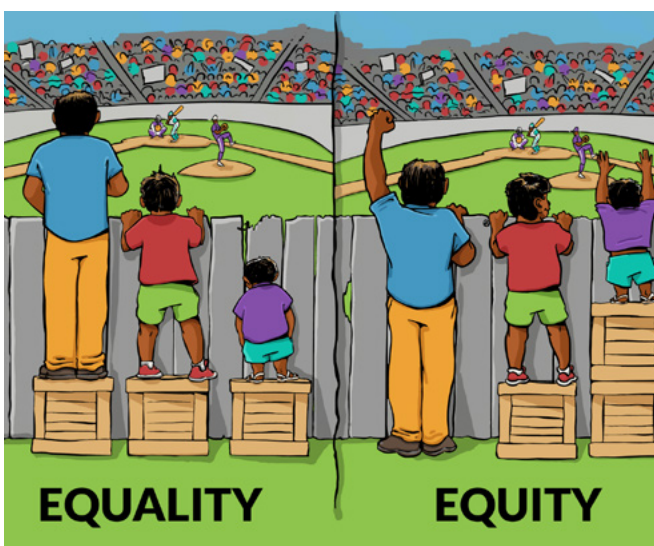


Image courtesy of Interaction Institute for Social Change

## Network Engagement and Scaffolding

Leadership programs that support hundreds of graduates have the potential to mobilize collaborative action across sectors, disciplines, and professions to produce innovation and systems change. This section offers recommendations for engagement strategies and scaffolding that can support an emerging network's growth, work, and impact.

Engagement and Scaffolding	
Engagement	Infuse cross-program programming to grow connections
	Introduce tools and processes to support cross-program learning and action
	Open boundaries to grow the network
	Provide a pool of funds to support collaboration
Communications	Develop a communications ecosystem to support multi-direction communications
Tools	Introduce and utilize tools as part of the program
	Experiment with technology
	Engage participants in choosing tools and platforms
Structures	Co-create the network structure
	Identify and support staffing and network roles
	Group participants into working groups
	Pay attention to the parts of the whole
	Bring equity into decisions about network governance

- Introduce clustering tools and processes to support cross-program learning and action.
- Open boundaries to grow the network.
- Pool funds to support collaboration.

## Network Scaffolding

For network leaders to effectively reach new people and engage in collaborative work with one another, they will need to think differently about communications, learn new tools, and experiment with structures that create the scaffolding for an emerging network.

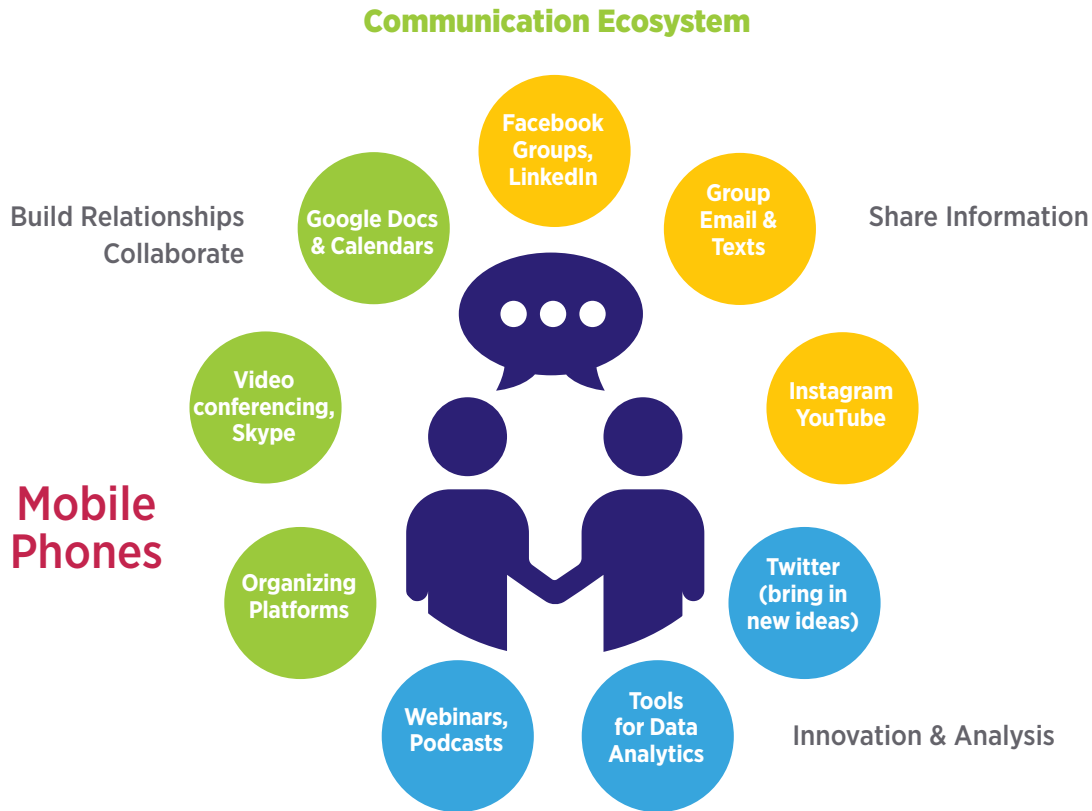
**Communications:** In networks, communications need to shift from approaches where most communication is one way—in the case of a leadership program, from staff to participants—to a communications ecosystem model that helps participants connect with each other. Networks are using a growing number of communications and engagement platforms and social media tools (Twitter, blogs, YouTube) to share information, accelerate learning and innovation, and organize action, as demonstrated in this diagram.

**Tools:** Learning to access and use collaborative technologies and tools is a 21st-century leadership competency for people and organizations that want to lead across organizations and distance. Leadership programs can provide the incentive and structure to encourage use of, provide technical support for, and increase adoption of network tools by building their use into the program. Tools are constantly evolving, so it's important for participants to develop comfort with learning new technologies and experimentation. For

## Network Engagement

The network principles of self-organizing and openness recommended for leadership programs can also be used to build more-expansive networks of leadership graduates across multiple cohorts and programs. When these network engagement strategies include the networks that graduates are already part of in their respective communities, the result is a large and robust network of people who care about and want to take action on the problem that the leadership program hopes to impact. In particular, the following three strategies mentioned in the earlier part of this report are relevant to both face-to-face and virtual network building activities:





example, new tools are being built around data and data analytics, and new technologies and platforms, such as Action Network and Wellstone, are being developed to support movement building.

Choices about platforms should be tailored to the program and participants. It may be helpful to survey participants to find out what social media and social networking platforms they're already using. Through experimentation, a subset of participants who are interested in technology can help to identify the tools and platforms that make sense for the participants involved and to determine which are best suited to the kind of work the network is taking on. It's important not to introduce too many tools at once.

**Structures:** As an increasing number of individuals and organizations connect in networks emerging from leadership programs, it will be important to think about the best structure for supporting these networks so that people can more easily coordinate activities and align their work. Social network analysis enables us to visualize and understand the network structure. The network structure provides data about where there are tight connections among members and where there are gaps in the network. Network members (and network staff) can

use this data to weave the network so that information and resources flow more efficiently through it. They may also be able to identify members on the periphery of the network who have the potential to bridge to other groups who can bring innovative ideas, new perspectives, and experiences to the network.

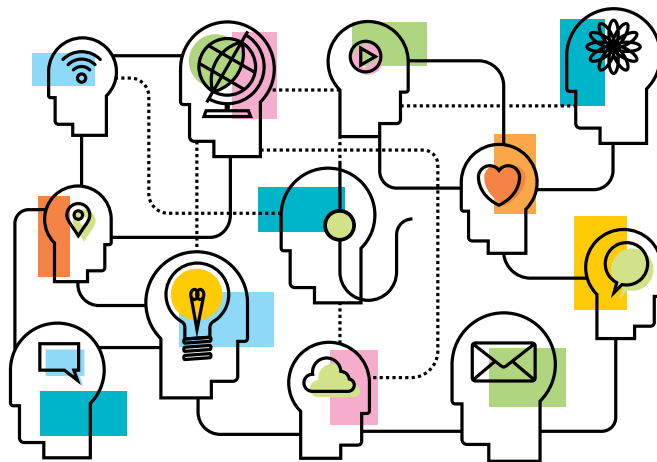
A traditional organizational staffing model may not be the best approach for supporting an emerging network. Networks are more loosely structured than organizations and much flatter. A fundamental principle in network structures is that form follows content: as the network emerges, the best structures for supporting the actual work become more evident. That said, there are several principles that could guide early thinking.

**Co-creation of the network structure:** It's important to engage graduates of the leadership program themselves in articulating the network's purpose and recommendations for how to structure themselves to make decisions and carry out their work. Is it a peer support network, or an action network to align members and resources to influence a policy issue, or a movement network mobilizing to change public opinion and create the social and political conditions for producing equitable outcomes? Depending on the purpose, the structure will vary.

**Staffing and network roles:** It's important to allocate resources for network staffing. Network staff can be external consultants, although it's important that they also be participants in the network. Network staff should not replace the initiative and action of people in the networks, but rather catalyze, support, and nurture it. One of the roles that networks need is skilled and enthusiastic “weavers” to pay attention to making connections and encouraging participation. Weavers are members of the network (including network staff) who look for synergies—opportunities to connect different projects to increase alignment and collaborative efforts. Other roles include network guardians, facilitators, content curators, process designers, coordinators, and conveners.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, networks must maintain a balance of centralizing certain functions while allowing decentralized action. This means ensuring that network members have opportunities to regularly learn and practice these roles.

**Working groups:** One common strategy for coordinating how work gets done in a network is the formation of working groups. Working groups enable a subset of network members to connect, align, and coordinate their resources, knowledge, and relationships to increase their capacity for collective action and their influence on a shared goal. Network members may also form working groups around a shared function, like communications. As participants create working groups, care should be taken to make sure that the groups have the trust, skills, and tools they need in order to work in high action and high alignment with each other so that they can maximize their effectiveness.<sup>14</sup>

Constant communication and sharing of information is the lifeblood of networks. If a network has multiple working groups, there needs to be a communications structure and platform that can support the entire network ecosystem, otherwise working groups may become too insular and siloed. One example of a platform that promotes sharing across a network is Community Commons, which provides access to an interactive mapping feature and data fields that enable



working groups and networks in a community to identify priority areas to invest in. Community Commons enables working groups to share what they're learning and to learn from others, through searchable profiles of hundreds of place-based community initiatives and multi-sector collaborations that are working toward healthy, sustainable, livable, and equitable communities. The database identifies important indicators that are predictive of poor health outcomes. Networks can monitor these outcomes to gauge their impact.

**Network governance:** Most decisions in a network are made in working groups. As the network grows, it will be important to become clear on “decision rights”—that is, whether the network operates by consensus, by majority rule, through an advice process,<sup>15</sup> or by delegation to a governing body. If the latter, the “steering committee” or governing body (board) should be broadly representative of the network while still allowing for efficiently delegated decision making on behalf of the whole. It's especially important to talk frankly about equity and power to create an equitable governance structure.

13 Ogden, Curtis. “Network Leadership Roles 2.0.” February 24, 2016. <http://interactioninstitute.org/network-leadership-roles-2-0/>

14 Goddard-Truitt, Victoria and Jolie Pillsbury, “High Action and High Alignment Assessment Tool,” <http://www.rbl-apps.com/PDF/HAHAAssessmentTool.pdf>

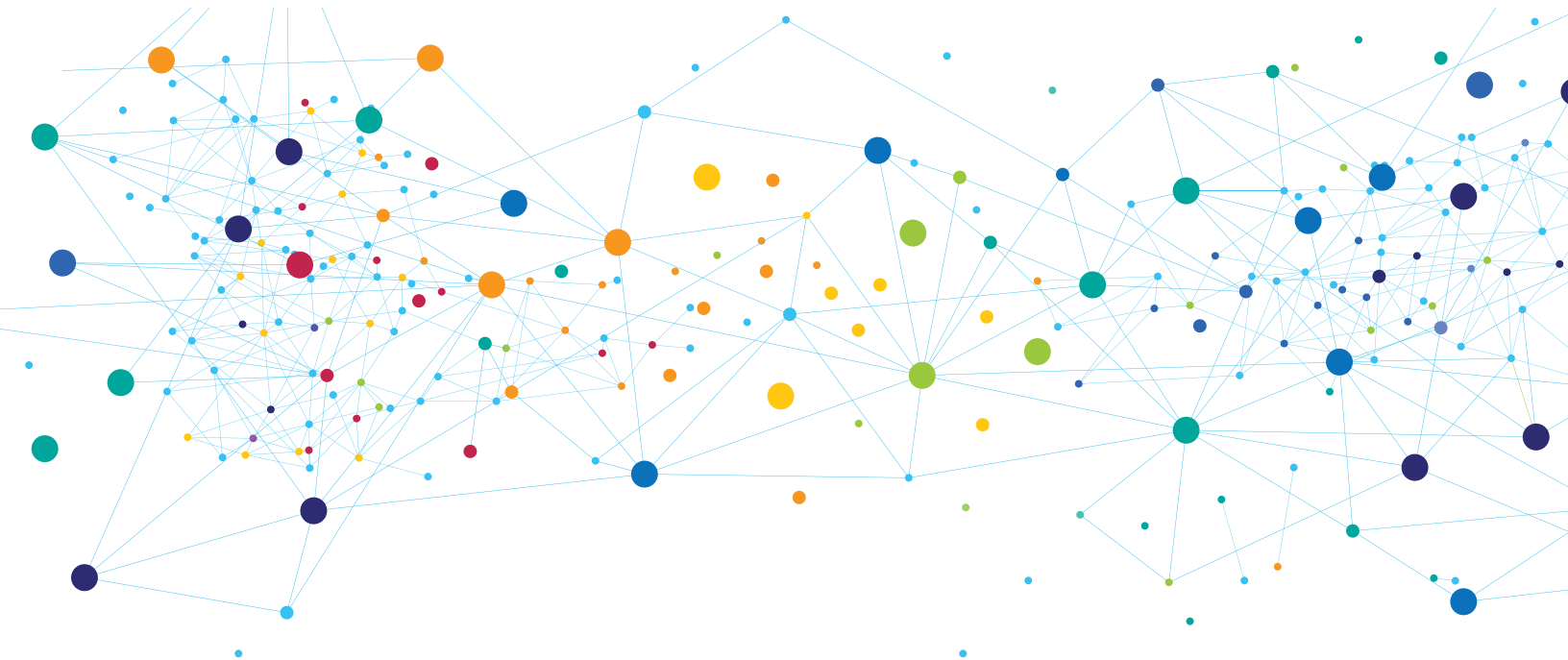
15 When using an advice process if a group in the network develops a proposal, they ask for advice from everyone who would be affected by the decision. The advice is incorporated in the best way possible but the group has the final say (although if the proposal is controversial they'll set a review date).



# Conclusion

Leadership development programs have an exciting opportunity to help their participants develop network leadership and connect with other program participants in emerging networks to increase the impact on complex social change issues. In a survey of leadership development providers conducted by the Leadership Learning Community, over 90% of respondents believed that it was important to prepare their program participants to lead in networks. They also reported that they did not have access to the resources they needed to retool their program approaches. This report has aimed to help leadership programs develop network leadership and support emerging networks of program graduates.

To decide which recommendations are the most relevant and important, we encourage programs to openly engage their participants in identifying the three to five highest-priority action steps. For example, participants might recommend a survey, decide to form a working group focused on technology, or help plan a participant convening that builds in self-organizing. The most important thing is to get started, experiment and learn together about how to support network leadership, and nurture a robust network of graduates who are ready to learn and take action.



## Competency Resources

Relational Competency	Resources
Relational/Collaborative Leadership Model	<i>Leadership and Networks</i> (Leadership for a New Era Series, Leadership Learning Community) <a href="http://leadershiplearning.org/system/files/LLCNetworkNLfinal4.pdf">http://leadershiplearning.org/system/files/LLCNetworkNLfinal4.pdf</a> <i>Catalyzing Networks for Social Change</i> , Monitor Institute, GEO <a href="http://www.monitorinstitute.com/downloads/what-we-think/catalyzing-etworks/Catalyzing_Networks_for_Social_Change.pdf">http://www.monitorinstitute.com/downloads/what-we-think/catalyzing-etworks/Catalyzing_Networks_for_Social_Change.pdf</a>
Weaving & Strategically Reaching Out & Connecting	June Holley, <i>Network Weaver Handbook: A Guide to Transformational Networks</i> <a href="http://www.networkweaver.com">http://www.networkweaver.com</a>
Listening	Institute for Conservation Leadership, <i>The Less Visible Leader</i> <a href="http://www.icl.org/sites/default/files/Less%20Visible%20Leader%20color.pdf">http://www.icl.org/sites/default/files/Less%20Visible%20Leader%20color.pdf</a>
Group Processes	Beth Kanter, Beth's Blog, <i>Using Peer Learning Strategies to Create a Network</i> <a href="http://www.bethkanter.org/ffi-socialmedia-exchange/">http://www.bethkanter.org/ffi-socialmedia-exchange/</a> <a href="http://www.bethkanter.org/capacity-building/">http://www.bethkanter.org/capacity-building/</a> Heather McLeod Grant (Monitor Institute), <i>Transformer: How to Build a Network to Change a System, A Case Study of the RE-AMP Energy Network</i>
Self-Reflection	Center for Creative Leadership, <i>Reflection for Resilience</i>
Collaboration	Eugene Eric Kim, FasterThan20, <i>Collaboration Muscles and Mindset</i> Peter Plastrik and Madeleine Taylor, <i>NET GAINS: A Handbook for Network Builders Seeking Social Change</i> Center for Ethical Leadership, <i>Collective Leadership Framework</i>
Using Self-Assessment Tools	June Holley, <i>Network Weaver Handbook: Network Weaver Checklist, Values Checklist</i>
Self-Organizing, Peer Driven Competency	Resources
Peer Assist Methodology	Knowledge Sharing Toolkit, "Peer Assists," wiki, <a href="http://www.kstoolkit.org/Peer+Assists">http://www.kstoolkit.org/Peer+Assists</a>
Peer Coaching Models	CompassPoint, <i>How We Use It and Why We Like It</i>
Peer Instruction Models	Turn to Your Neighbor <a href="http://blog.peerinstruction.net/">http://blog.peerinstruction.net/</a>
Open Space and Clustering	June Holley, <i>Network Weaver Handbook: A Guide to Transformational Networks</i>
Peeragogy	<i>Self-Organized Peer Learning in Networks</i> <i>Peeragogy Handbook</i>
Self-organizing Strategies and Skills	<i>MomsRising</i> June Holley, <i>Network Weaver Handbook: A Guide to Transformational Networks</i>
Building Swift Trust	<a href="http://stoweboyd.com/post/5452012915/swift-trust">http://stoweboyd.com/post/5452012915/swift-trust</a>
Using Collaboration Platforms	ZeroDivide <a href="http://www.zerodivide.org">www.zerodivide.org</a>
Using SNA Mapping	Net-Map Toolbox <a href="http://netmap.wordpress.com/">http://netmap.wordpress.com/</a>
Collaborative tools & practices	Design Studio for Social Intervention
Crowdfunding Skills	Best Practices in Crowdfunding <a href="http://www.bethkanter.org/crowdfunding-info/">http://www.bethkanter.org/crowdfunding-info/</a>

Learning, Innovation, Competency	Resources
Action Learning Methodology	Donna Dinkin, <i>Action Learning - Maximizing Its Use in Community-Based Leadership Development Programs</i> (webinar <a href="http://leadershiplearning.org">leadershiplearning.org</a> ) <a href="http://leadershiplearning.org/blog/bcelnik/2012-01-31/upcoming-webinar-action-learning-maximizing-its-use-community-based-leadersh">http://leadershiplearning.org/blog/bcelnik/2012-01-31/upcoming-webinar-action-learning-maximizing-its-use-community-based-leadersh</a>
Design Thinking	D School Stanford <a href="http://dschool.stanford.edu/">http://dschool.stanford.edu/</a> Luma <a href="http://amzn.to/1pjefxy">http://amzn.to/1pjefxy</a>
Growth vs Fixed Mindset	Mindset by Carol Dweck <a href="http://mindsetonline.com/index.html">http://mindsetonline.com/index.html</a>
Listening to the Margins	June Holley, <i>Network Weaver Handbook: A Guide to Transformational Networks</i> <a href="http://www.networkweaver.com">http://www.networkweaver.com</a> Stephen Johnson, <i>Where do Good Ideas Come From</i> <a href="http://www.amazon.com/Where-Good-Ideas-Come-From/dp/1594485380">http://www.amazon.com/Where-Good-Ideas-Come-From/dp/1594485380</a> YouTube: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NugRZGDbPFU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NugRZGDbPFU</a> Ted Talk: <a href="http://www.ted.com/talks/steven_johnson_where_good_ideas_come_from">http://www.ted.com/talks/steven_johnson_where_good_ideas_come_from</a>
Social Learning and Flipped Professional Development	Flipped Professional Development <a href="http://www.flippedpd.org/">http://www.flippedpd.org/</a> Social Learning Handbook by Jane Hart <a href="http://c4lpt.co.uk/social-learning-handbook-2014/">http://c4lpt.co.uk/social-learning-handbook-2014/</a>
Using Dashboards and Data for Learning	Annie E. Casey Foundation, <i>A Road to Results: Results-Based Accountability in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Education Program</i> Jolie Bain Pilsbury, Victoria Goddard-Truitt, Jennifer Littlefield, <i>Cross-Sector Accountability: Making Aligned Contributions to Improve Community Well-Being</i>
Power and Equity Competency	Resources
Understanding Structural Racism and Systems that Perpetuate Advantage and Disadvantage Inequitably	Existing frameworks and tools: John a powell webinar on <a href="#">Systems Thinking and Racial Justice</a> The California Endowment, <a href="#">Systems Thinking and Race Workshop Summary</a> Beverly Daniel Tatum: President of Spelman, Addressing the Legacy of Racism Across the Americas: <a href="https://nonprofitquarterly.org/philanthropy/23939-how-the-kellogg-foundation-takes-on-structural-racism.html">https://nonprofitquarterly.org/philanthropy/23939-how-the-kellogg-foundation-takes-on-structural-racism.html</a> Leadership Learning Community, <a href="#">Multiple Styles of Leadership: Increasing the Participation of People of Color in the Leadership of the Nonprofit Sector</a>
Using Data	<a href="http://www.racialequitytools.org">www.racialequitytools.org</a>
Talking about Race, Power & Privilege	Sally Leiderman, Maggie Potapchuk, <a href="#">Transforming White Privilege: A 21st Century Leadership Capacity</a> Janet Helms: White Privilege
Power in Networks	Leadership Learning Community, <a href="#">Leadership &amp; Networks</a>
Understanding Implicit Bias and Power	Kirwan Institute, <a href="#">Chipping Away at Implicit Bias</a> Take a Test – Project Implicit- Harvard, <a href="https://implicit.harvard.edu">https://implicit.harvard.edu</a>
Cultural and Community Competencies	Patricia St. Onge, et al., <a href="#">Embracing Cultural Competency: A Roadmap for Nonprofit Capacity Builders</a>

### Get Involved!

Thanks for reading the publication. The Leadership Learning Community promotes leadership approaches that are more inclusive, networked, and collective. We invite you to visit [www.leadershiplearning.org](http://www.leadershiplearning.org) to connect with peers across the nation, share your ideas, raise questions, access resources and ultimately, join us in leading for cultural and systems change.

### Stay Connected

To stay informed about news and events related to Leadership Learning Community, we invite you to...

Sign up for the Leadership Learning Community (LLC) newsletter: <http://conta.cc/cZuiWC>

Follow LLC on Twitter: @LeadershipEra

Join the LLC Facebook group: <http://bit.ly/2x9fXfj>

Join the LLC LinkedIn Group: <http://bit.ly/auPWDU>

### CONTACT INFORMATION

[www.leadershipforanewera.org](http://www.leadershipforanewera.org)

Deborah Meehan, Executive Director  
Leadership Learning Community  
354 Pine Street, Suite 700,  
San Francisco, CA 94104  
(510) 238-9080 Phone  
[deborah@leadershiplearning.org](mailto:deborah@leadershiplearning.org)

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License. This license allows the copying, distribution, and display of this work—and the ability to adapt the work—if credit is given to the authors. Additionally, please link to the following website:  
<http://www.leadershiplearning.org>.  
To view a copy of this license, visit:  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/us/>  
or send a letter to Creative Commons,  
171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA