Network Impact designed a network health scorecard to make tracking a network's health easier.

Compared to other ways of gathering feedback from members (e.g., monitoring member satisfaction covered in the Network Know-How Guide: Clarifying Purpose and Value), using a scorecard should be a group activity. The scorecard is designed to produce an assessment by members for members.

Sharing network health scorecard summary scores helps network members discuss topics they might not otherwise find on a meeting agenda but are vital to a network's health such as the network's ability to learn and adapt. Consistent checkups also allow networks to track changes over time to monitor their network health trajectory. We recommend scorecard questions for networks that are past the initial stages of development because the scorecard works best when all members are engaging at a level that allows them to knowledgeably respond.

KEY TERM

NETWORK HEALTH
Conditions in a network that help people participate, collaborate, add value to each other's work as well as produce outcomes they care about.

The chart is an excerpt from the network health scorecard. Following the chart is an explanation of how the SWRPN used the scorecard in their network development practice. You can find the complete **Network Health Scorecard** on the Network Impact website **(www.networkimpact.org/downloads/NH_Scorecard.pdf).**

Network Health Scorecard Sample

Please review each statement and provide your rating for the network as a whole for a basic network diagnosis of strengths and areas of growth.	1 NOT SO MUCH	2	3	4	5 TOTALLY!
CATEGORY: NETWORK PURPOSE					
• All members share a common purpose for the network.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Together, members have identified strategic goals and objectives for the network.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CATEGORY: NETWORK PERFORMANCE					
• Members are adding value to each other's work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Members are creating new knowledge or insights together.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• The way the network communicates with stakeholders builds support for the network.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CATEGORY: NETWORK OPERATIONS					
• Decision-making processes encourage members to contribute and collaborate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• The network's internal communications systems are serving it well.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CATEGORY: NETWORK CAPACITY					
• As a network, members have the material resources needed to advance network goals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
• As a network, members have the skills they need to advance network goals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

In Practice

Using the Network Health Scorecard to Chart Progress for the Southwest Rural Policy Network (SWRPN)

Regular reporting using the network health scorecard has allowed SWRPN to document its network's progress, providing valuable information for internal reflection and external funders. Joyce Hospodar, the member who chairs the network's evaluation committee, summarized the scores over four years on a 5-point scale, with 1 being the lowest score and 5 the highest. Performance and operations scores gradually increased over time, which affirmed that stabilizing operations with a consistent network coordinator and dedicating resources to network infrastructure issues—such as communications to support information sharing—were paying off. When discussing the performance scores, members noted that the introduction of small-funding support for specific projects helped focus work directly on policy, which positively affected network performance. These results reinforced the decision to renew mini-funding opportunities the following year.

Network Metrics Over Time
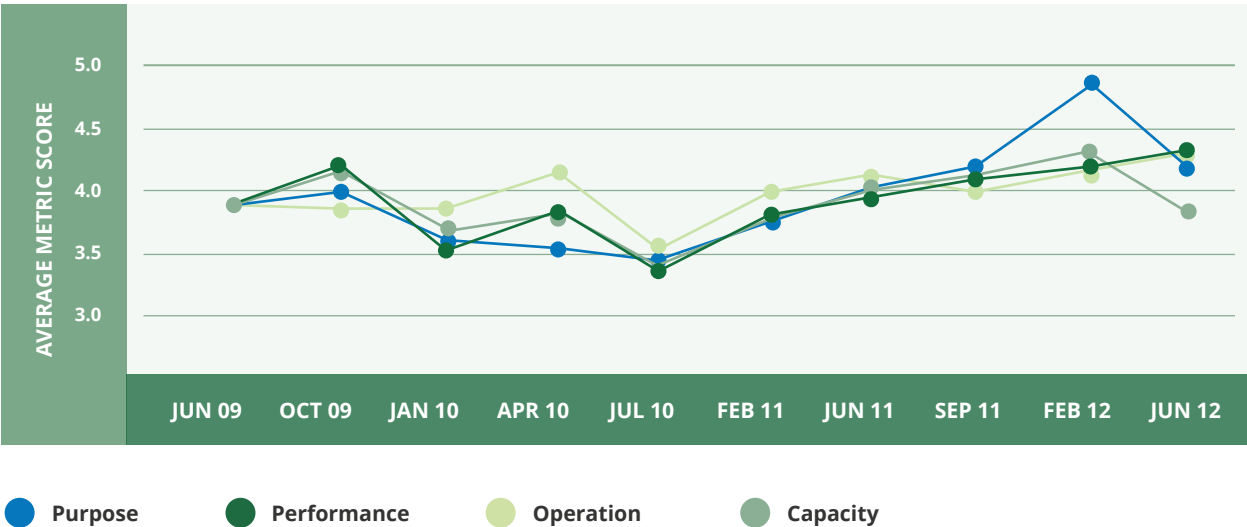
1 **Reflection Activity: Network Advantage**

Based on your experience, what conditions help members produce or get value from your network? (Think about what helps the network thrive.) For example, one health condition could be the foundation of trust among members that is essential for accomplishing network goals, or it might be an efficient communications infrastructure that allows for fast, easy exchanges. Some networks include an inclusion-related condition such as, "The network is inclusive (no one is on the periphery)."

List the conditions that are vital to your network's health:

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When creating a network health scorecard, your goal is to create a tool that monitors your network's vital conditions and is a good fit for *your* members and context.

From the list of conditions you listed in Reflection Activity 1 and drawing from other network examples, if needed, draft a scorecard for your network using the reflection activity on page 13. (The Additional Resources section at the end of this Guide has links to other scorecard examples.) For networks in the early stages of development, scorecards tend to be short—typically with fewer than 10 questions. For more mature networks, the scorecard should be more comprehensive with closer to 20–25 questions.

Common Network Health Conditions

While conditions that support a thriving network depend on your network's specific circumstances, the following is a list of core network health conditions that many networks include in their scorecard:

Shared purpose: A common understanding of and approach to solving a problem through agreed-on actions.

Value generated for members: Benefits that members realize as a result of network participation.

Trust: The glue that holds network relationships—and thus, networks—together.

Reflective action: A system or process for assessing progress and outcomes and acting on what members learn.

Connected members: Bonds in closely knit networks are a source of valuable social capital. Bridges—people who connect different clusters or groups—provide access to information, ideas and connections outside a network's core.

Communication: An efficient communications infrastructure that allows for fast, easy exchanges.

High-performance coordination: Roles and processes that facilitate members' work.

Distributed leadership: Creating space for everyone to step up and contribute.

2 Reflection Activity

To create a network health scorecard specifically for your network, think about who will respond to your survey, what categories or themes you are most interested in, and what questions you want to ask for each category or theme.

Respondents: When developing your scorecard, envision who will respond to the network health questions. A network health scorecard is designed for network members who understand and identify with the network's mission. Larger, more open networks can use the scorecard with a core group of active network members. List the potential network scorecard respondents below. In most cases, this will be member categories (e.g., individuals who participate in committees or have attended at least three meetings in the last year—not individual names).

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Categories or themes: Look for categories or themes among the network health conditions you listed in Reflection Activity 1. (For example, in the sample scorecard, the categories are network purpose, performance, operations and capacity.) Make a list of categories, and then narrow it down to four or five that you want to include on your scorecard.

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Network health questions: For each category, draft statements that describe what the condition looks like in your network. (For example, if assessing the level of trust between network members is a network health condition, the scorecard could say, "Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following: 'Members treat each other with respect,'" since this statement assesses a potential source of trust among members. You may want to start with a limited number of questions (5 to 10) to make the design process more manageable and encourage members' participation.

Make a list of possible statements for your network health scorecard.

_____

_____

_____