

G · E · T · T · I · N · G S · T · A · R · T · E · D



This Guide is part of our Network Know-How Guide series, a collection of six easy-to-use resources highlighting key network design and management principles for social impact network builders. Each Guide includes real-world examples of network principles in practice and clarifying questions to help you reflect on your network practice, focus your network strategy and develop an effective network plan.

The Network Know-How Guides were created by Network Impact, subject matter experts in the field of network theory. Network Impact created the guides for the Network Incubator, a program that ran from 2016 to 2018 for select members of ROI Community, a signature initiative of Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies.

The guides formed the basis for the Network Incubator curriculum and proved useful to the emerging networks that were part of the program. Schusterman Family Philanthropies worked with ROI Community and Network Impact to repurpose the guides as a publicly available resource to help developing and established network leaders further their work and scale their impact.

The case studies of emerging networks in the guides reflect organizations Network Impact worked with through the Network Incubator and in other settings. The networks featured are not necessarily grantees of Schusterman Family Philanthropies.

This **Network Know-How Guide: Getting Started** includes an overview of the key themes each Guide covers as well as a self-assessment to help you determine which Network Know-How Guides will be most relevant for you and your network.

[Download all of the Network Know-How Guides here.](#)

We've designed the Network Know-How Guides for:

- **social entrepreneurs** working with others to create and implement an important change agenda
- **core members of existing collective efforts** who are exploring how to maintain and evolve their network to reach shared goals

Getting Started has five sections that include core network concepts to help you get the most out of the Network Know-How Guides:

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Network Basics: Learn about generative social impact networks and what makes them different from other forms of collaboration.

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Network Development Self-Assessment: Take a self-assessment to identify which Guide and topics are the most relevant to you and your network.

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Overview of Network Know-How Guides: Learn about the key themes in each Guide so that you can focus on what is right for you based on your self-assessment results.

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Glossary of Terms: Familiarize yourself with definitions of common network concepts.

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Featured Networks: Learn valuable information about the networks we have worked with that agreed to be profiled in this series of Guides.



I·N·T·R·O·D·U·C·T·I·O·N

Social entrepreneurs worldwide are organizing strategic networks—rather than relying on conventional, centralized organizations—to have a positive impact on a pressing social challenge. These strategic networks offer key advantages, including the ability to accelerate change by aligning and activating large numbers of people. We’ve created this series of Network Know-How Guides for early-stage network builders who want to learn how to develop healthy, impactful and sustainable networks. The Guides include answers to common network-building questions, outline many practical examples of how existing networks have tackled their growth and evolution, and offer self-guided activities to help organizers focus their network strategy.

How to use the Guides

The Guides are organized so you can work your way through all of them to learn key social impact network-building concepts, or you can choose the one or two Guides focused on the topics that are most relevant to you and your network right now. The self-assessment in this Getting Started Guide can help!



We developed the Network Know-How Guides based on our work with network leaders.

Schusterman Family Philanthropies believes in the power of peer-led networks to support efforts to spark and spread widescale positive change that uses contemporary patterns of social connection and takes advantage of online technologies.

Network Impact developed the Guides based on a curriculum Schusterman Family Philanthropies used for a program designed to support early stage network builders from 2016 to 2018. While the Guides were tailored to the needs of the program's participants, the insights within them draw on Network Impact's extensive experience working with networks representing a diverse array of populations and groups around the world. In its pilot year, the Incubator program engaged a core group of seven network leaders. The Know-How Guides were shared with the network

leaders along with one-on-one coaching conversations and in-person training using each network leader's responses to the self-guided reflection questions found in the Guides. Realizing that this information could be useful to other network builders, Network Impact worked with Schusterman Family Philanthropies staff to refine the Guides. We spoke with the network leaders that were part of the Incubator to find out what was most helpful and what could be augmented to create a toolkit of Network Know-How Guides for network builders around the world.

“ Learning that there is a true science behind networks, rather than just a ‘gut feeling’ was eye-opening. Developing a plan to build a network-centric approach was pivotal for us. We are seeing that it is a far better way to build connections and collaborations.”

— INCUBATOR PARTICIPANT AND NETWORK KNOW-HOW GUIDE USER



N·E·T·W·O·R·K B·A·S·I·C·S

SOCIAL IMPACT NETWORK

A network of individuals or organizations that join together as peers to advance a social goal.

The term *network* describes many different types of connections. We start with some basic definitions.

What is a network?

The simplest definition of a network is a system of “nodes” connected by “links”: a computer network, a transportation network or a social media network. In a social network, people are the “nodes,” and the relationships that connect them are “links.” In the Know-How Guides, network refers to a *social impact network*, a specific kind of social network focused on social change.

What is a generative social impact network?

Many change agents want to build a specific kind of network where members work together, adapt over time and influence change through constant activities. We call these social impact networks “generative” because their goal is to generate multiple, ongoing types of social impact—not just a single outcome.

What are the main characteristics of a generative social impact network?

- **Member-driven:** Members set the network's mission and goals and “make the rules,” and members do most of the work.
- **Voluntary:** Membership in the network is voluntary and not a condition of receiving resources (e.g., funding).
- **Relationship-focused:** Members develop enduring relationships with each other; the focus of relationship building is member to member, not with staff or other providers.
- **Flexible:** The network's structure is flexible and changes as needed.
- **Decentralized:** Members—not a single member—share in the decision-making.

What are the advantages of a generative social impact network?

Generative social impact networks are particularly good at increasing access to learning, catalyzing innovations and spreading or expanding impact. They are well-suited for situations where the problem you are trying to solve:

- has no clear recipe or formula for success
- is evolving and requires that solutions change with it
- spans multiple sectors or fields of practice
- is too complex for any single individual or organization to address

KEY TERM

GENERATIVE SOCIAL IMPACT NETWORK:

A set of relationships maintained over time to activate as needed to advance a social goal. Members are deliberate about building, strengthening and sustaining ties so that they can activate these relationships repeatedly.

How is a generative social impact network different from an organization, coalition or alliance?

Other models of collective action can behave like a network or include networks such as *movements*. It's helpful to review different models' distinguishing characteristics and what distinguishes them from generative social impact networks.

COLLECTIVE-ACTION MODEL	TYPICAL DISTINGUISHING FEATURES	DIFFERENCES FROM A GENERATIVE SOCIAL IMPACT NETWORK
COALITION OR ALLIANCE	A temporary alignment of organizations to achieve a specific goal such as electing a candidate or securing adoption of a new public policy. Usually disbands after completing the effort.	Narrower in purpose and scope than a network. Relationships and activities focused entirely on the desired result. (Some alliances reorganize as a generative social network once their campaign is over.)
MEMBERSHIP-BASED ASSOCIATION OR ORGANIZATION	Organized mainly to pool resources and provide dues, paying members with services, often for professional development or representation in public-policy arenas. Association or organization staff does most of the work.	More staff-driven and less member-to-member relationship-driven than a network. Focus is on serving members rather than members collaborating. (Members in a generative social network may also pay dues.)
COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE	Organizations and individuals that are loosely aligned and coordinated around the development, adoption and spread of innovative practices or to address specific problems or opportunities.	Participants typically lack a firm sense of "membership identity" and do not make explicit reciprocal commitments to each other. Communities of practice often have many subnetworks.
MOVEMENT	Large numbers of people loosely aligned around a large cause (e.g., civil rights, environmental protection). A desire to right a wrong ignites their passion.	Less coherent, focused and coordinated—and much larger and sprawling—than a generative social network. A movement may contain networks; networks may spawn a movement.

1 Reflection Activity: Network Advantage

For your network, what could be some advantages of organizing as a generative social impact network?

What are the main stages of network development?

Networks emerge when people working for social change see an advantage in working together to achieve that change. From there, they must build and formalize relationships, clarify strategies, recruit others and diversify or evolve as needed. While the Network Know-How Guides are relevant for networks at any stage, they are especially geared toward emerging and earlier-stage networks that need more guidance and support.

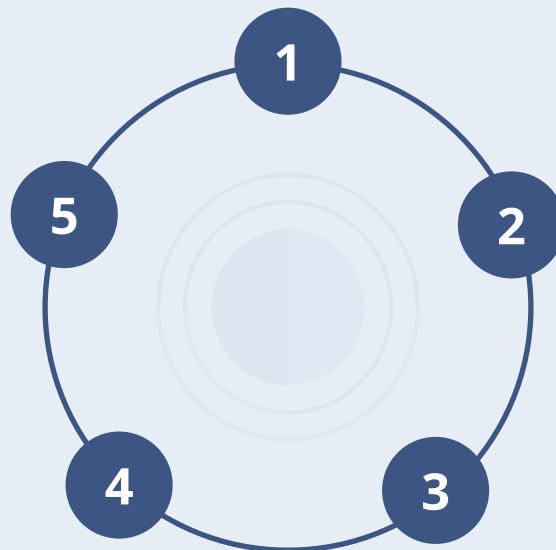
TRANSITIONING OR TRANSFORMING:

The network is effective and sustainable, or the network has lost momentum, in which case members dissolve the network or reorganize to form a new network.

PERFORMING AND ADAPTING:

The network is fully operational with key activities underway. Goals, strategies and membership often diversify as members look for and find value in the network.

FORMING: Potential network members explore capabilities and expectations to work together.



LAUNCHING:

Organizers identify the network's founding vision and purpose and develop an initial plan. Organizers recruit initial network membership and cultivate connections.

ORGANIZING: The network secures resources and begins testing strategies and adapting them based on feedback.

Adapted from Monitor Institute/GEO, Catalyzing Networks for Social Change (2011)



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Network Development Self-Assessment

We've created a brief assessment to help you identify which Network Know-How Guides will be the best fit for your network at this time.

Keep in Mind

Remember that where your network is in its evolution will influence scores for each network design dimension. For example, formal governance rules are generally less of a concern in the early formation of a network. As you get started, think about the following:

Adapting is fundamental to network vitality

Networks are dynamic entities with systems and infrastructure that you need to revisit periodically. Even well-established networks will score lower on some design dimensions sometimes. When this happens, it might be time to review network priorities or decision-making processes.

Tap into collective intelligence

The network's strength lies in its members. Consider asking network members to take the self-assessment to help you see similarities and differences in responses and make adjustments as necessary.

Network Development Self-Assessment

Instructions

For each of the following seven network design dimensions, circle the number on the 7-point scale that best describes where your network is now. Briefly describe your reason for this score.

Enter your answers in the Network Development Self-Assessment table at the end of the assessment on page 18.

Use Reviewing Your Responses for guidance on what your scores mean. Your results indicate which topics and Guides are most relevant to your network at this time.

You might want to retake this Network Development Self-Assessment in a year to monitor changes in your responses from one year to the next.

1 Network Purpose

The network's reasons for being: what the network stands for, what problems members need to address together and what activities members will undertake.

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7

EMERGENT

The network founder or core members may have a proposed goal or see evidence of interest among potential members (e.g., coming out of a gathering), but they are still clarifying the network's purpose.

WELL-DEFINED AND BROADLY SHARED

The network's purpose is clear, and most members understand it.

Reason for Score:

2 Network Value Propositions

The benefit members seek from taking part in a network.

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7

Value propositions are unclear to members or unknown to network organizers.

Value propositions are known and codified.

Reason for Score:

3 Network Leadership

Rules for guiding the direction and activities of the network.

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7

There are no explicitly stated leadership roles in the network other than the founder. This may be because the network is at an early stage of development or is an emerging network whose purpose is still being defined.

There are many opportunities to lead in the network. Members are stepping up to manage different parts of the work.

Reason for Score:

4 Network Governance

Who decides what the network will do and how they decide to do it.

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7

A single “node” or network hub makes most decisions.

Members are actively helping to make decisions about network strategies and plans.

Reason for Score:

5 Network Health

Internal conditions that help the network thrive (e.g., conditions related to network coordination and communications).

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7

There is little or no tracking of basic network health conditions.

Members systematically track network health conditions and use the results to inform planning.

Reason for Score:

6 Network Connectivity

The number and quality of ties between members.

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7

The number and quality of ties or relationships between members are unknown.

The number and quality of ties between members are being mapped regularly over time, and the results are being used to inform network-building efforts

Reason for Score:

7 Network Sustainability

How the network secures and maintains the resources it needs to accomplish its goals.

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7

There is no plan for how members will secure necessary network resources.

Members have a clear plan for securing necessary resources and are implementing the plan.

Reason for Score:

NETWORK DESIGN DIMENSIONS	SCORE
NETWORK PURPOSE	
NETWORK VALUE PROPOSITIONS	
NETWORK LEADERSHIP	
NETWORK GOVERNANCE	
NETWORK HEALTH	
NETWORK CONNECTIVITY	
NETWORK SUSTAINABILITY	

Reviewing Your Responses

Enter your scores from the self-assessment into the table above. For each network design dimension, a score of 1–3 means that this is an area of potential evolution for your network. It might be time to consider more intentional network development in this dimension, depending on your network’s priorities and its stage of development.

A score of 4–5 means that a particular network design dimension could improve but may not be a priority over other dimensions with lower scores. You can still strengthen your network in these dimensions using tips from the Guides.

A score of 6 or 7 means that your network is functioning at a high level in these dimensions. In the next section, you’ll see which Guides will help you explore different network design dimensions.



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G·U·I·D·E·S



Each Network Know-How Guide focuses on one or two network design dimensions.

The following is a summary of topics included in each Guide and two or three common questions from network builders.

Clarifying Purpose and Value

You likely decided to build a network because you saw a need in the world or your community that only a network made up of many people could address. To achieve your goals, you need to refine your vision to reflect all network members' priorities.

Common questions from network builders:

- How can we refine the network's purpose and value to get member buy-in?
- How can we create a plan that meets the expectations of members who have different priorities?

Self-assessment network design dimension:

- Network Purpose
- Network Value Propositions

Fostering Engagement and Leadership

Engaging members—and keeping them engaged—is vital to building a strong network. As the network reaches a critical mass of members, natural leaders emerge, and the network’s internal structure becomes more complex. At this point, setting up a plan for network decision-making—or network governance—becomes necessary.

Common questions from network builders:

- How can we encourage member participation?
- What strategies can we use to build and clarify network leadership and roles?
- How should we approach decision-making in the network?

Self-assessment network design dimension:

- Network Leadership
- Network Governance

Monitoring Your Network’s Health

Monitoring the conditions that enable your network to thrive helps you make informed decisions about what the network needs to succeed.

Common questions from network builders:

- How do we know that our network is on the right path?
- How do we measure our network’s health?

Self-assessment network design dimension:

- Network Health

Mapping Your Network

Connectivity is the lifeblood of a network. Strong relationships between members mean they can easily exchange knowledge, information and ideas. Creating a network map will give you a bird's-eye view of who connects with whom and how those connections form. By mapping your network, you can analyze patterns of connectivity, information flows and knowledge gaps—all of which can inform strategies to build and strengthen connections.

Common questions from network builders:

- What could we learn from mapping our network?
- When and how often should we map our network?
- What data can we use to map our network?

Self-assessment network design dimension:

- Network Connectivity

Sustaining Your Network

Networks have unique sustainability challenges. You must find strategies for securing material resources without compromising members' shared purpose while fostering engagement and leadership and generating value for members.

Common questions from network builders:

- What strategies can promote network sustainability?
- What successful business or revenue models can we use for our network?
- How can we make a compelling case to internal and external stakeholders about our network's value?

Self-assessment network design dimension:

- Network Sustainability



G·L·O·S·S·A·R·Y O·F· T·E·R·M·S

Boundary Spanner (Bridger): Nodes that connect otherwise isolated network clusters.

Cluster: Nodes that have more direct connections to each other than they have to other nodes in a network.

Generative Social Impact Network: A set of relationships maintained over time to activate as needed to advance a social goal. Members deliberately build, strengthen and sustain ties so that they can activate these relationships repeatedly.

Hub: A node with many direct connections.

Link: A connection between nodes.

Network Coordinator: A person who supports network activities from basic logistics to high-level network planning and management. Titles for this role vary but can include Network Manager, Community Manager or Engagement Director.

Network Core: The most closely connected network members. Most network mapping software algorithms place core members at the center of the network.

Network Health: Conditions in a network that help people participate, collaborate, add value to each other's work and produce outcomes they care about.

Network Weaver: A person who takes responsibility for connecting members to maximize value for each other and the network. Weavers cultivate the "give and take" in a network and promote transparency and trust.

Node: A person or organization in the network.

Periphery: Outliers that often have access to ideas and information that people at the core do not.

Social Impact Network: A network of individuals or organizations that join together as peers to advance a social goal.

Social Network Analysis (SNA): A set of theories, tools and processes for understanding a network's relationships and structures.

Sweat Equity: Nonfinancial investments that contribute to a network's or project's development.

Value Propositions: The benefits that members seek from participating in a network.



F·E·A·T·U·R·E·D N·E·T·W·O·R·K·S

The networks profiled in the Guides generously agreed to allow us to share their experiences and surveys to help other network builders.

DoubleYou

A global community of ambitious, wild and helpful women, dedicated to turning on female leadership around the world. Members are executives, investors, politicians, artists, educators, and business and social entrepreneurs all committed to ignite female leadership. www.doublingyou.life

Lawrence CommunityWorks (LCW)

A community network in the city of Lawrence, Massachusetts, that engages members in actions designed to move their families and the city forward. LCW has a membership of thousands of Lawrence families, an energetic board and professional staff and has generated over \$70 million in new neighborhood investment.

www.lawrencecommunityworks.org/site

Mensch Network

A vibrant network of over 100 Jewish social changemakers in South Africa. Established in 2014, the Mensch Network brings together Jewish people working to create positive change in South Africa for all. Network members lead, work or volunteer in nonprofit organizations, social enterprises, public health and education, and more. The Mensch Network creates a Jewish platform to support and develop these individuals, enhancing their collective impact; and for the Jewish community to engage via these individuals in active citizenship. www.mensch.org.za

ROI Community

ROI Community, an initiative of Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, is a global network of more than 1,600 rising Jewish leaders who transform Jewish life and foster positive social change globally. ROI aims to enable its members to fulfill their potential as changemakers by providing them with the tools, network and inspiration to create a positive impact on Israel, the Jewish people and the world.

www.riocommunity.org

Retreatology Network

Alumni of the leadership development program that trains young adults to effectively craft transformative Jewish learning retreats for their communities. Retreatologists exchange information, mentor and provide support to each other as they plan and lead innovative, engaging, exciting retreats for peers to connect with their own Jewish identities, their friends and their wider communities.

www.moishehouse.org/retreatology

The Story of Stuff

A global, online community of over 1 million Changemakers, including parents, community leaders, teachers and students, people of faith, entrepreneurs, scientists and others interested in creating a more healthy and just world.

www.storyofstuff.org/about

Stanton Fellowship Alumni

A Durfee Foundation fellowship that aims to create a cross-disciplinary network of Los Angeles leaders who share ideas, resources and new approaches to address the city's most vexing issues and improve life for the people of LA. www.durfee.org/our-programs/stanton-fellowship/

Southwest Rural Policy Network (SWRPN)

A network of 14 organizations from the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado working on issues that affect people and communities of the rural Southwest. The SWRPN fosters personal and professional connections, shares best practices and designs new strategies for change.

www.crh.arizona.edu/programs/rprp

The Funders' Network (TFN)

More than 150 funders in the U.S. and Canada who work to strengthen philanthropic leadership and expand funding that yields environmentally sustainable, socially equitable and economically prosperous communities.

www.fundersnetwork.org

Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN)

A network of local government professionals across the United States and Canada who exchange information, collaborate to enhance their practice and work together to advance the field of urban sustainability. www.usdn.org/index.html



Network Impact conducts research, builds tools and provides advice to change agents who are building and using networks for increased impact. Over the last decade, Network Impact has developed frameworks and tools to monitor a network's development so that network members, organizers and supporters can be more deliberate in their efforts to support effective network practice. Find more information and resources at www.NetworkImpact.org.

Acknowledgments



Thanks to the network builders that have shared their experiences, questions and lessons.



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Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies strives for a future in which the United States and Israel live up to their highest ideals and achieve more just and inclusive societies. We work to advance racial, gender and economic equity in the U.S., as well as to foster a more joyful and diverse Jewish community. In Israel, we work toward a secure homeland for the Jewish people, a thriving democracy and an inclusive society that cares for its most vulnerable. We aim to drive and support long-term systemic change through investments in leaders, organizations and U.S. public policy. www.schusterman.org