Regional Networks: Creating and Maintaining Purpose and Vision

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Network Evolution: Connect. Align. Produce.

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Presentation Purpose and Contents

This presentation is to the Regional Networks Coordinating Committee, on October 23, 2015.

It's purpose is to present the best practice of Network Purpose and Vision development and maintenance, including:

- What the practice is and looks like
- Why the practice is worthwhile
- Who should do it and when
- How to do it, with examples

Partner Networks	Network Participants	Representing
Green Cities California (GCC)	Linda Giannelli Pratt Erik Pearson Shannon Parry ALTERNATE- Susana Reyes	GCC Managing Director (Coordinator) Hayward, CA Santa Monica, CA Los Angeles, CA
Great Lakes	Matt Naud Matt Gray	Ann Arbor, MI Cleveland, OH
Heartland	T.O. Bowman Brenda Nations	Oklahoma City, OK Iowa City, IO
Michigan Green Communities (MGC)	Dave Norwood Sandra Diorka Jaime Kidwell-Brix	Dearborn, MI Delhi, MI MGC Coordinator (Coordinator)
New England Municipal Sustainability Network (NEMSN)	Troy Moon Cyndi Veit Kelsey O'Neil Virginia LeClair	Portland, ME EPA- (Coordinator) EPA- (Coordinator) Dedham, MA
Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana (OKI)	Larry Faulkin Lamees Mubaslat	Cincinnati, OH Montgomery County, OH
Prairie State Network (PSN)	Catherine Hurley Dan Hughes	Evanston, IL PSN Coordinator (Coordinator)
Southeast Sustainability Directors Network (SSDN)	Peter Nierengarten Robin Cox Meg Williams-Jamison	Fayetteville, AR Huntsville, AL SSDN Coordinator
Western Adaptation Alliance (WAA)	Tamara Lawless Ashley Perl	Flagstaff, AZ Aspen, CO

What is Network Purpose and Vision?

❖ A *VISION STATEMENT* outlines founding principles that drive the network.

❖ A vision is the way things should be.

  ❖ The landscape on the horizon is something you are always walking towards. This horizon is always there as a guiding force to chart your course.

  ❖ A billboard image of what to work towards.

❖ Think about what needs to change. Together, these pieces create an overall vision.

❖ Once a vision is articulated, it is used to communicate and lead the network.

Vision Statement Development

❖ For a network at any stage, the biggest challenge in developing or evolving a vision statement is <u>being clear and concise</u> about what activities will be pursued.

   ❖ The more a vision reflects what is really thought and cared about, the more powerful it will be. People will be more likely to respond to the message if they see passion for it, instead of political figures talking about abstract issues.

❖ Network designers need to <u>identify and articulate the founding principles</u> to catalyze the network. A clear vision statement will give direction to future work.

   ❖ Dream big, put phrases on paper, pull out key words that are most compelling, and sand them into short powerful statements. Think about metaphors and images that inspire and motivate.

❖ Creating a committee and/or surveying members will help determine the <u>interest areas</u> the network should consider prioritizing in the vision statement.

   ❖ Put a draft out there and let members respond to it and refine it. In networks putting your finger prints on shared work establishes ownership and buy in. Give members places to put their finger prints on things that matter to them.

Network Purpose Development

❖ A network's purpose is essentially <u>its reason for being</u>. This is a collection of <u>founding principles</u> for the network.

❖ A purpose statement <u>needs to be broad and adaptable</u> so that it has the flexibility to remain foundational through the life and growth of the network.

❖ Peer-to-peer sharing and learning is one of the most common starting points for a network's purpose, so tap members for contributing direction on articulating that.

Purpose Statement Example: Michigan Green Communities

MGC is a network of local government and university staff in the state of Michigan that will collaborate with one another, through peer learning and information sharing, to promote innovative solutions and move sustainability initiatives forward at the local, regional, and state level.

Purpose and Vision Example

SOUTHEAST SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTORS NETWORKS

Purpose Statement :

The purpose of this network is to build capacity for community sustainability in the Southeast. SSDN strives to support members in their work, influence sustainable policies and programs at the local and state levels, and lead the advancement of national sustainability.

Vision Statement :

SSDN strives to support members in their work, influence sustainable policies and programs at the local and state levels, and lead the advancement of national sustainability. This will be accomplished by:

- Closing the progress gaps between the Southeast and the rest of the nation;

- Leveraging the knowledge and experience of local government sustainability officials by being a member driven network to build regional capacity;

- Collaborating to streamline sustainable policymaking and program development.

Why Are These Valuable to Regional Networks?

❖ Networks must be carefully *designed*. When developing a network, leaders must weigh possible impacts of decisions in order to foster a strong purpose and clear path for future work. The vision and purpose is the elevator speech.

❖ Leadership changes over the life of a network. A well designed purpose and vision statement will act as a grounding force as the network grows.

❖ They are meant to be revisited over time for continued relevancy, yet shouldn't require a complete redesign.

Value Propositions

❖ Value propositions are the <u>benefits that members will realize by participating in the network</u>, both individually and collectively. All members don't need to value all propositions. But all members need to highly value at least one proposition. Examples from USDN:

    ❖ Have access to trusted information about urban sustainability
    ❖ Keep abreast with my peers
    ❖ Get to know colleagues with whom I can share
    ❖ Build the field of urban sustainability

❖ Identify individual value propositions by asking members directly. An effective network can then <u>offer a menu of potential benefits</u> from participation to keep members engaged.

❖ Having a clear understanding of a network's individual and collective value proposition is what makes a network greater than the sum of its parts. <u>This understanding shapes the vision and purpose</u>.

Exchanging Value in a Network

Members create value for each other by sharing individual assets. The competencies should complement the end game (vision / purpose):

Connections	Can you connect others in the network to people who may be able and willing to help them?
Knowledge	Do you know something that may be valuable to others in the network?
Competencies	Do you have a skill that may be of value to others in the network?
Resources	Do you have access to funds or other resources that may be useful to others in the network?

Who Creates the Vision and Purpose and When?

❖ The process to create the vision and purpose needs to involve multiple sets of finger prints from members who are motivated and interested in the networks future.

❖ Networks typically have founding leaders who join together with a common set of needs. Overtime new leaders emerge who have experienced value in the network and want to help deliver that value.

❖ These needs and values are translated into a vision and purpose that serves more than just individuals (WAA example)

❖ They are typically created before approaching perspective members and potential funders, but sometimes it's more organic than that. Order isn't as important as making sure it's solid, well-crafted, and has good buy-in.

❖ Then, network leaders have to show the value propositions to obtain peer buy-in and funder support.

❖ Founders and their successors serve as network weavers and servant leaders (not dictators), and allow the process to be transparent and

How to Build a Network Vision

Guiding statements help a network stay aligned with its original purpose, while implementing new programs and processes.

An effective network must (early and often):

Articulate the Purpose	Determine the target membership, the specific issues that the network will address, and the types of activities that the network will undertake.
Create a Vision Statement	Define the founding principles that drive the network.
Establish the Value Propositions	Identify what members want to get out of the network, and how this can be done collectively.

How to Develop a Network Purpose

Answering the following questions will help develop a purpose statement:

- ❖ Who is the network for?
- ❖ What problem is the network addressing?
- ❖ What type of activities will the network undertake?

Example: New England Municipal Sustainability Network

- Foster peer to peer communication amongst and between municipal sustainability practitioners in New England

- Identify topics for regional collaboration amongst municipalities and create working groups focused on tangible outcomes for the same

- Connect local efforts to Federal initiatives

- Collectively identify resources to assist with local sustainability efforts

Visions and Purposes are not Goals and Objectives

❖ Goals and objectives are a more focused look at what the network wishes to pursue.

❖ Goals and objectives should always build on the purpose and vision of the network. This list should embody how a network wants to implement its purpose.

❖ Attention should be put on the content of the goals and objectives. Network leaders should focus on the "what" instead of the "how" when developing goals and objectives - after the vision and purpose is developed.

❖ Surveys are an effective way to understand what members value. This assists in the creation of a collective list of goals and objectives that enhance the network's value proposition.

❖ Goals   to be reeva   flect the curre   rk.

Discussion

1) **Network Vision:** *What founding principle(s) drives your network?*

2) **Network Purpose:**
   a. *Who is your network for?*
   b. *What generative problem is it working on?*
   c. *What type of activities will/ does the network undertake?*

3) **Network Value Propositions:**
   a. *What are the specific benefits that your members want to gain from participation?*
   b. *How can the network offer this collectively?*

Thank you!

For more information, please contact:

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