Regional Networks: Developing Strong Governance and Leadership Structures

Presented by: Maggie Ullman, Network Advisor, Asheville, NC
maggie@saenv.com | 828.713.9488

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Presentation Purpose and Contents

This presentation is to the Regional Networks Coordinating Committee, on December 4, 2015.

It's purpose is to present the best practice of Network Governance and Leadership Structures, 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 Governance?

A network's governance involves *enabling the network to come to life organically, and to stay alive over time with more and more structure – even as individual leaders change.* <u>It provides structure and clarity.</u>

- When a network is young, informal governance is often very effective. Members are few, and the network purpose is often still developing. This allows for open discussion about the path forward.

- As a network membership and activities grow, an informal governance structure becomes less effective. A formal system of member representation and committees streamlines decision making and empowers shared ownership of network decisions.

What is Decided?

Networks are faced with a variety of decisions when developing their governance structure. Leadership must address issues about network design and purpose. The following box identifies common issues that network leaders typically need to address over time.

Even if your network isn't working on these variables now/yet plan for the future. Start with the end in mind.

- Purpose of the network
- Goals and objectives
- Network values and beliefs
- Member responsibilities
- Member arrangement and engagement within the network
- Staffing and coordination decisions
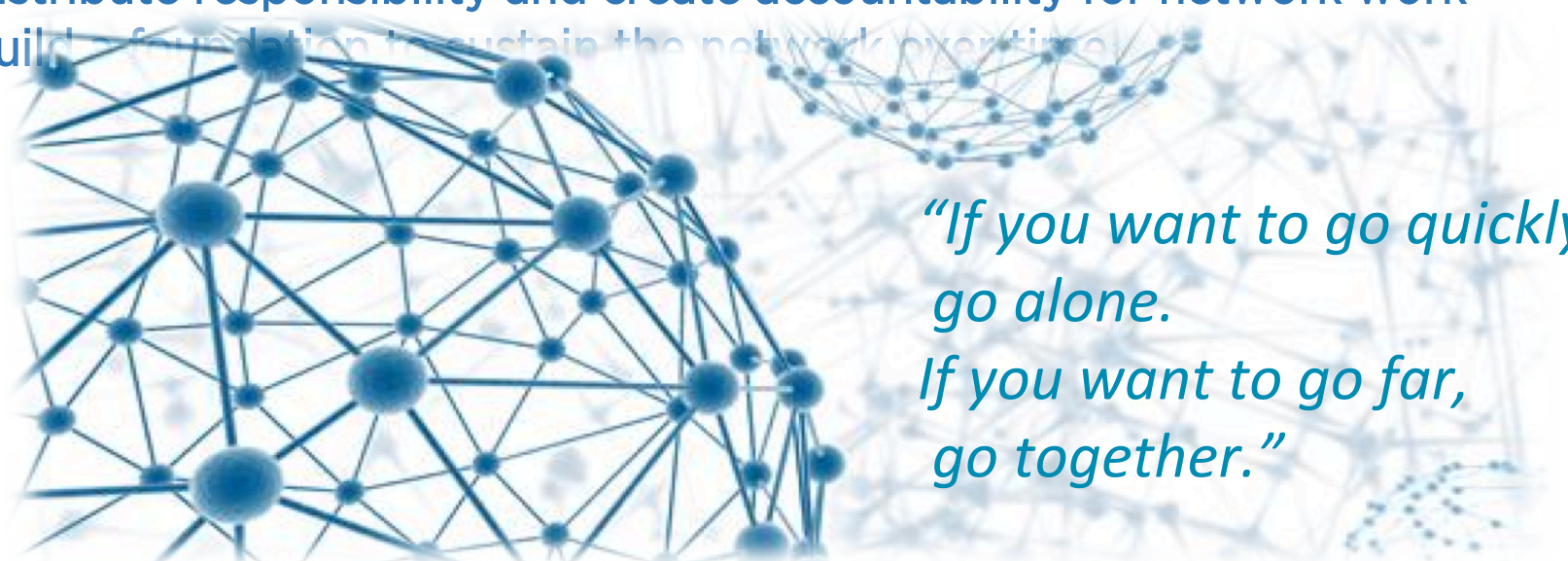- Network plans
- Budgets and fundraising

Why Structure Governance?

Establishing a governance structure builds a team with clear roles and responsibilities for the network to achieve its vision and purpose.

Creating a team and structuring decision making should strive to achieve the following:
- Build a strong, connected team of members who have the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to the network
- Distribute responsibility and create accountability for network work
- Build a foundation to sustain the network over time

"If you want to go quickly. go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

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Determine Your Network Governance Structure

Assess your network and determine what combination of decision making methods will best fit the network's needs.

- ## Who decides?

  A network must determine how to structure decision making. Consider the network size, goals, and purpose. Do members have equal power or are there steering committees? Are members elected or do they volunteer?

- ## What needs to be decided?

  What is the purpose and direction of the network? Use this information to develop a strategy for decision making. Some networks benefit from a structured policy, while other thrive with limited decision making put on the governance system.

- ## How are decisions made?

  Of the four decision making styles (imposition, community, emergence, democracy) what combination works best for your network? [Note: Slides 9, and 12-15 have more detail on these decision making styles].

Finding the Balance

Determining governance and leadership structure is a delicate balancing act. Networks have to determine how decisions will be made, and who will participate. This process needs to be addressed *periodically* as the network matures.

- Consolidated leadership from a Steering Committee

  As a network grows, creating a core group of leaders can help the network steer itself toward greater goals. Consolidated leadership brings efficient decision making when the network has many members. The network does risk losing member voice in decision making, so leadership has to be carefully selected with a focus on the members' wants and needs.

- A Steering Committee needs to create spaces for members to have input

  – Consider face to face times as important opportunities for members to weigh in and make important decisions. i.e. review and provide input to annual work plans and network goals.

  Survey your membership at important junctions

Strength in Numbers

When building your Steering Committee consider size and level of engagement before asking people to participate so people understand who the team is and what they are signing up for. All Steering Committees will benefit from having two Co-Chairs who support each other to lead the team.

Total Network Membership Size	Suggested Steering Committee (SC) Size	Frequency of Engagement
Less than 10 members	5 members	Consider quarterly or monthly SC calls. Also consider setting time aside at any face to face meeting for SC members to meet and discuss network building needs and goals.
11-20 members	7-9 members	
More than 20 members	9-12 members	

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How to Decide?

Once a network has determined who will be making decisions and what will be decided, the final step is to determine how decisions are made. The following are the most common types of decision making methods [Note: Slides 12-15 have more detail on each decision type]
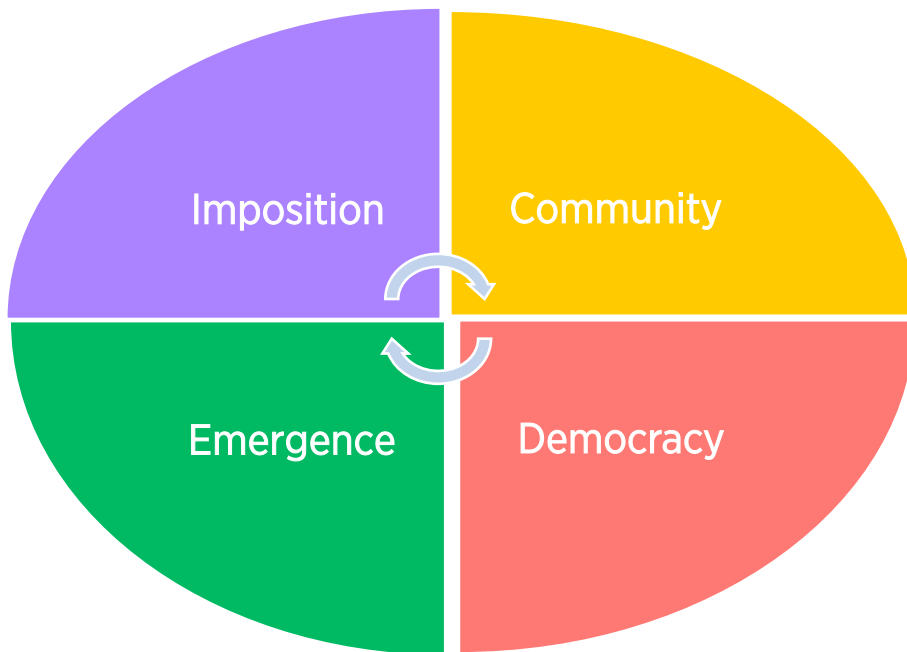
Setting Up Your Structure

- There is no single path to developing a strong governance and leadership structure for your network.

- It is important that the network stay member driven, and that progress is made toward goals and objectives.

- Remember that this is an organic process as the network grows, and needs to be *reassessed periodically* to make sure the system in place is still a good fit for your network.

- *The appendix has an example of how the Southeast Sustainability Directors Network (SSDN) has structures leadership roles and responsibilities.*

Three Guiding Questions from the Workbook

- ### Who decides?

  "In some networks, all members have equal power to make decisions about the network. In others, different "classes" of members have different power in governance; some may have none. The larger a network grows, the more likely it is to create classes of membership, or to turn to a representative system of governance in which members select other members to participate in governance decisions." (*Plastrik & Parzen, 2012*).

- ### What is decided?

  Not all decisions have to be subject to the same governance arrangements. Some networks assign a large list of decisions to the governance system, while other networks limit decision making and minimize formal governance. Each network has to base governance decision on the purpose and direction that the network wants to take.

- ### How is it decided?

  It is important for a network to clearly outline how decisions will be made by the governance system. There is not a single decision making method that can be applied across the board, so a network needs to find one that will work best for them.

Plastrik, P. and Parzen, J. (2012). Guidebook for Building Regional Networks 2.0

Decisions by Imposition

- What is decision by imposition? *A decision made by imposition is set by others. This entity acts independently to make a decision and often works independently to complete the work related to that decision.*

  - This may look like a network founder, an individual member, or a funder of the network makes certain decisions.

- An example of when this could help the network:

  - A potential funder says they will only provide a grant if the network hosts their annual meeting in a specific city or state. Although this makes a sole decision the network could likely still build an annual meeting that provides a meaningful experience that is designed around member input.

- An example of when this could harm the network:

Decisions by Community

- What is decision by community? *A decision by community is made with the participation of all members.*

- All members discuss, deliberate, and decide.
  - Decisions may require unanimous consent, or some majority of the members.
  - Many users of consensus arrangements find that this method can get bogged down when there are disagreements among members.

- A hybrid option to honor this process would be including a no response equals consent

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Decisions by Democracy

- What is decision by democracy? *These decisions are made when a majority of network representatives vote to determine how to proceed.*

- This is a time-honored governance mechanism that empowers a representative group of the membership to make leadership decisions on behalf of the membership.

- Utilizing a Steering Committee to determine key network decisions is an example of this. Using a democracy method can be efficiency and effective to engage self selected members who are interested in the network building aspects of the network.

- Keep in mind if you use this method you should still consider when to run a final decision by the whole network in order to check your compass before departing for a new path. For example, if you begin requiring members to contribute dues. This is an important decision

Decisions by Emergence

- What is decision by emergence? *Actions by members direct the decision making process. The decision making process develops over time as member actions grow and change.*

- Sometimes networks decide by not making decisions. The network will let each member do what it wants, as long as it doesn't negatively affect the network.
  - At points, the network will need to make a decision in order to move forward. At that time and place the network will address how, what, and who will make a decision. This method lets network decisions emerge over time.

- For example a group of members in the Heartland aligned around the idea to apply for a grant to colla   on fund
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  de   etwork w   t. The
  ide   an oppor

Discussion

- **Who Makes the Decisions?**
  - Do members have equal power?
  - Is there a subset of members to serve as a steering committee? Are there co-chairs? Are they elected or by volunteer basis?

- **What Network Decisions Need to Be Made?**

- **How Are Decisions Made?**
  - Determine which decision-making types work best for the network, and how they will be implemented.
  - The four decision types are:
    - Imposition
    - Community
    - Democracy
    - Emergence

Thank you!

For more information, please contact:

Maggie Ullman, Network Advisor
maggie@saenv.com | 828.713.9488

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Appendix:

Example Governance Document: Southeast Sustainability Directors Network Steering Committee Roles and Responsibilities

Southeast Sustainability Directors Network Steering Committee Roles and Responsibilities

1. **Criteria for Selecting Co-Chairs**
   a. Must be a SSDN Steering Committee member
   b. Have passion for building the network
   c. Have a vision for the future of the network and a desire to achieve it
   d. Have shown leadership within SSDN
   e. Are highly connected to other members / commit to exchange with more than 8 other members
   f. Past participation in SSDN activities exceeded minimum network participation requirements
   g. Willing to serve for two years and execute the responsibilities of the position
   h. Contribute to diversity of the Steering Committee (race, size of city, region, etc.)

2. **Steering Committee Co-Chair Roles and Responsibilities**
   a. Set priorities for the Steering Committee with Network Coordinators
   b. Lead network fundraising efforts
   c. Confer monthly (at least 1 half hour phone call) on SSDN business
   d. Chair Strategic Network Calls, Annual Meeting, and other meetings
   e. Develop relationships with all funders
   f. Co-lead SSDN Annual Meeting

Southeast Sustainability Directors Network Steering Committee Roles and Responsibilities Cont.

3. **Steering Committee Selection**
   a. SSDN members can nominate themselves for a Steering Committee Position.
   b. Nominees should have intention to serve at least three years or for as long as they are SSDN members.
   c. If a Committee member is nominated but is not interested or available to take on the role, he or she can decline.
   d. All interested nominees will draft a short paragraph (2---3 sentences) about why they would like to serve on the SSDN Steering Committee.

4. **Steering Committee Roles and Responsibilities- the SSDN Steering Committee seeks candidates who:**
   a. Have exceeded minimum network participation requirements
   b. Are regularly connecting with other members
   c. Have shown leadership within SSDN
   d. Have a vision for the future of the network and a desire to help build it
   e. Will contribute to the overall diversity of the Steering Committee (race and ethnicity, gender, size of city, and region)

Southeast Sustainability Directors Network Steering Committee Roles and Responsibilities Cont.

f. Are willing to serve for two years and execute the responsibilities of the position, which are:

    i.   Contribute to achievement of the purpose of SSDN

    ii.   Help establish goals, objectives, and budgets

    iii.   Assist in fundraising for SSDN

    iv.   Be an ambassador for SSDN

    v.   Participate in at least 75% of steering committee calls

    vi.   Respond to requests for help from network coordinators

    vii. Lead one or participate in several SSDN activities (i.e. committees, groups, emerging projects)

    viii. Recruit members to SSDN

    ix.   Communicate regularly with members about their activities, interests, and needs

    x.   Read the weekly e---newsletter and make regular posts to the usdn.org website

    xi.   Dedicate at least 5 hours/month in total