

# NETWORK TOOLKIT

## For Network Weavers

October 2018

## Purpose

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide a set of easy-to-implement activities that you can introduce to your network to help them increase the effectiveness of the network.

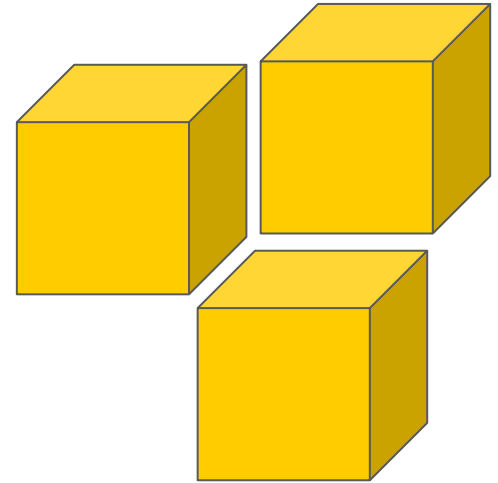
## How to Use this Toolkit

The first section, Three Action Steps, outlines steps you can take to build a more effective network. The second section includes worksheets that describe activities you can try in your network.

You might identify a small group interested in implementing the Five Action Steps and have them be in charge of determining which activities to introduce during meetings. Encourage them to debrief after the meeting to discuss how they might improve or modify the activity the next time they try it.

Section 1:

# Three Action Steps



# Step 1: Expanding and Deepening Relationships

- Help your network see the network so it can be improved. You can ask people involved in your network or a collaborative project to **draw a network map** then identify who is missing (see: Activities 1, 2, 3 and 4).
- Encourage people in your project to build and deepen their relationships (see: Activities 5, 6 and 7).

## Step 2: Building Network Leadership & Network Mindset

Have network participants complete [Activity 8: Network Weaver Checklist](#).

Put the 4 roles on a grid and have people put a red dot on those they are strongest in or do the most and a green dot for the area they would most like to do or learn about.

Identify which areas need more training.

Have participants take the Network Mindset Checklist [Activity 9: Network Mindset Checklist](#) here <https://goo.gl/forms/Ci4PilqweevTBD8l2>

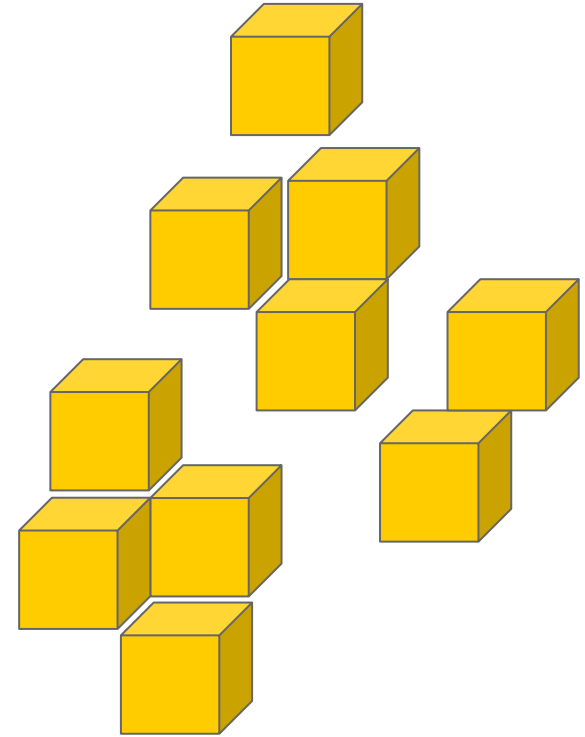
You will need to make a copy and move it to your drive, then send out link to your network)

## Step 3: Setting up a Communication Ecosystem

1. Look at the slide on Activity 10 to identify possible elements of your communication system.
2. Then fill in the Communications Ecosystem Worksheet in with the platforms and tools you will use.
3. Identify who needs help with the tools you have selected.
4. Identify tech stewards or agents willing to buddy up with people who need to learn and have them set up small group or one-on-one sessions with people.
5. Check in with people in the self-organized projects to see if the platforms/tools are working and which need to be changed or replaced.

## Section 2:

# Activity Worksheets



# Activity 1: Map Drawing

Have a stack of Post It notes of different colors. On a piece of chart paper put each of the colors in a row, then put one type of organization (non-profit, school, religious organization, volunteer, etc.) next to each color. Have people in the room come up, take a PostIt note that represents the type of organization they are from. Have them put their note closer to other people they work closely with and draw lines to them. Then have them add other PostIts for those in the network but not at the meeting.

Around the outside edge, put circles for individuals or groups you are not working in this network or project, but who could add value if they were involved. These might be people with expertise, people from others communities who have been innovating in ways that would be of value to your initiative, or people who are often left out of projects (people of color, low-income individuals, individuals being served by the initiative, young people, elders, etc).

Then answer the questions:

- a. What do you notice about this network?
- b. Is your core large enough to get the work done?
- c. Does one type of organization predominate?
- d. Who is missing from the network? Are the people you are serving in your network?
- e. Who would add most value to your project network if they could become part of the network?



## Activity 2 - Improving Your Periphery

Network leaders can use this with project groups or with large networks.

- Have a list on the left side of a whiteboard (a large piece of chart paper) of possible types of people who might be missing from the periphery of their network. This list might include funders, other donors, experts (list type such as facilitator, researcher), people trying similar strategies in other places around the world, people from other sectors, etc.
- The next step is to prioritize the groups listed in column 1 that are most needed by the network. Which 5-6 are most critical for the network to build relationships with?
- Then in the center of the board, have people list names (or use different colored Post-Its) – of individuals they already know, individuals they don't know, and then organizations that might have staff with needed skills. If no one knows anyone in the organization, the group might come up with the name of someone they know who is likely to know individuals in the organization.
- Now make a column on the right side that lists the name of the person who will reach out and develop a relationship with the person or organization. The goal is not to get these individuals to "join" the network, but rather to be available to be called on for advice, help in finding new resources, or for learning events or situations. It's important that those reaching out understand the interests of the individual so that the network can reciprocate effectively and appropriately when asking for help.
- Network leaders need to encourage people who take part in this exercise to think about how they could use this activity in other networks or projects they are a part of.

# Activity 3 - Who is Missing?

MISSING GROUP	People you know or know of from that group	Bridge people who can connect you with this group
People directly impacted by the problem or issue		
People who are English - language learners or people who speak languages other than English		
People of different ethnic/racial/cultural backgrounds, racial identities		
People presenting obstacles to progress		
Low-resource people		

# Activity 4 - Closing Triangles

Name of Person to be Connected	Resource Person you want to connect them to	Potential shared interest	When and Where to Make Introductions

## Activity 5: Speed Networking

This is a great activity that you can use at the start of every meeting, using different questions that you write up on chart paper or display in a powerpoint slide so everyone can see. The important part is the debrief that helps people become more aware of their listening skills. Questions can be related to topics that will be introduced in the meeting, or they can be about their networks. For example, "What are the networks you are involved in doing well?" Then for the next question, "What are the major challenges of the networks you are involved in?"

Directions: Have everyone stand up and find someone they don't know, or don't know well. Have them take turns listening to each other as they answer one of the following questions. You can adapt the questions to fit the topic of the meeting. Give them about 5 minutes for the entire exchange. After 2.5 minutes, remind them to change partners if they haven't already.

After the first round, have the group debrief the experience. Ask "Who had a really good listener?" Then ask one of those who raise their hands what that person did that made them aware they were listening well? Ask several others to point out other aspects of good listening (eye contact, leaning towards me, restating answers, asking questions, etc.).

Then have people find another person they don't know and repeat the activity with another question. After this ask people if they found themselves listening more effectively.

# Activity 6: Meeting Processes

There are several processes that are useful to engage participants in the network:

## **Go round:**

Starting with one group member, go around the table in order, letting each person respond to a question or issue you have raised. Make sure that people understand they are to listen to all perspectives without responding. After the group has gone around once, ask people to summarize what they heard or suggest the sense of the group.

## **Dyads/Pairs:**

When you sense that people need some time and space to get out their best thinking on a topic, have them pair up with another person. Remind the dyads that each person needs to get about half the time to speak. Remind people of the importance of listening carefully to what the other has to say and asking clarifying questions. After 5 minutes, ask for insights or new ideas that came up in the discussion.

## **Forming Small Groups:**

If a group remains as a whole group during the entire meeting, many introverts will not usually contribute and the meeting will tend to be dominated by more extroverted types. Having at least part of the meeting in small groups will provide an opportunity for many more people to verbalize their thinking. For example, if the group needs to come up with ideas for an event, break the group into smaller group of 3 to 5 people. Each group can do a quick summary of their best thinking and the group can synthesize these suggestions.

Notes

# Activity 7: Making Connections

## Questions you can ask others:

Tell me about yourself. What do you like to do for fun? Where did you grow up?  
How did you end up in your profession?

What are you most passionate about in your work? Why is that important to you?

What would others say are your skills and strengths?

What are the biggest challenges you face? What would you like to learn or  
become better at doing in the next year?

How can I best support you?

Notes



# Activity 8: Developing Network Leadership

## Network Weaving Checklist

Which network functions are you filling? Mark each from 1 to 5, with 5 being “major strength” and 1 being “lack this quality.”

### Connecting

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Love to unearth other people's dreams and visions, strengths and gifts
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Help people identify challenges & introduce them to others who can help
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Model an approach to relationships that is positive and focused on strengths & gifts
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Treat everyone as a peer
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Encourage sharing information and resources with others without expecting a return from that person because you know others will share with you
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Help people connect to others with different perspectives and from different backgrounds
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Encourage people to listen deeply to each other
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Connect people to others who share a similar interest
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Help people make accurate and realistic assessments of others
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Help people bring innovation and new perspectives into their network by adding new people to their network

# Activity 8: Developing Network Leadership - 2

## Network Weaving Checklist

Which network functions are you filling? Mark each from 1 to 5, with 5 being "major strength" and 1 being "lack this quality."

### Self-organized Project Coordinating & Coaching

- \_\_\_\_ 1. Good at identifying opportunities where a small action could make a difference in dealing with an issue or problem
- \_\_\_\_ 2. Help people find others with similar interests and support them to form a collaborative project
- \_\_\_\_ 3. Encourage people to spend time researching what others have done to work on this issue, and how their efforts might provide guidance for the project's actions
- \_\_\_\_ 4. Have the skills needed for project success: good at setting up meetings, organizing communications, and tracking task
- \_\_\_\_ 5. Initiate activities with people from different organizations or groups.
- \_\_\_\_ 6. Not attached to specific next steps but enjoy helping people identifying and implement actions
- \_\_\_\_ 7. Help people listen to each other respectfully and see how their different perspectives contribute to a better project
- \_\_\_\_ 8. Help people stop and reflect about how a project is working and if they need to make changes
- \_\_\_\_ 9. Like checking in with people and sending reminders to make sure their tasks are on track
- \_\_\_\_10. Encourage people to share about their project with larger network



# Activity 8: Developing Network Leadership - 3

## Network Weaving Checklist

Which network functions are you filling? Mark each from 1 to 5, with 5 being “major strength” and 1 being “lack this quality.”

### Facilitating

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Convene people with common or overlapping interests to form an intentional network.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Make sure convenings include time for relationship and trust building.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Help people map (or identify) people in the network and see who needs to be added or connected
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Help the network participants become aligned through working to develop a network mindset.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Enable a network to embed a network mindset in all its work and operations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Help the network map the system it is changing and identify high potential leverage points where transformation is more likely to occur.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Help facilitate the formation of working groups that focus on leverage points in a system.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Do clustering activities to enable people in the network to identify common interests and form action groups to work on those interests.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Help people in the network share what they are learning as they implement their projects.
- \_\_\_\_\_10. Find resources to support the functioning of the network

# Activity 8: Developing Network Leadership - 4

## Network Weaving Checklist

Which network functions are you filling? Mark each from 1 to 5, with 5 being "major strength" and 1 being "lack this quality."

### Supporting

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Support, encourage and mentor network leadership.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Set up (or help network setup) communications systems so everyone knows what is happening, collaborative projects are supported, and learning is widely shared.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Help people in the network learn about social media and web platforms and how it can help people in the network communicate more effectively.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Provide training and coaching in network leadership, especially support for project coordinators.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Help set up Communities of Practice for network leadership to learn skills and offer each other peer support.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Make sure reflection and learning from projects is shared with the rest of the network so everyone benefits
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Set up systems for just-in-time tracking of network mindset, network leadership, and network structures and helping network participants
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Set up an innovation fund to provide seed funds for small collaborations
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Encourage the network to create a new kind of resource system that includes network participant skills and innovative use of crowdfunding platforms.
- \_\_\_\_\_10. Encourage funders to set up collaborative pools of funds and include participative decision-making that includes network participants.

# Activity 9: Network Mindset Checklist

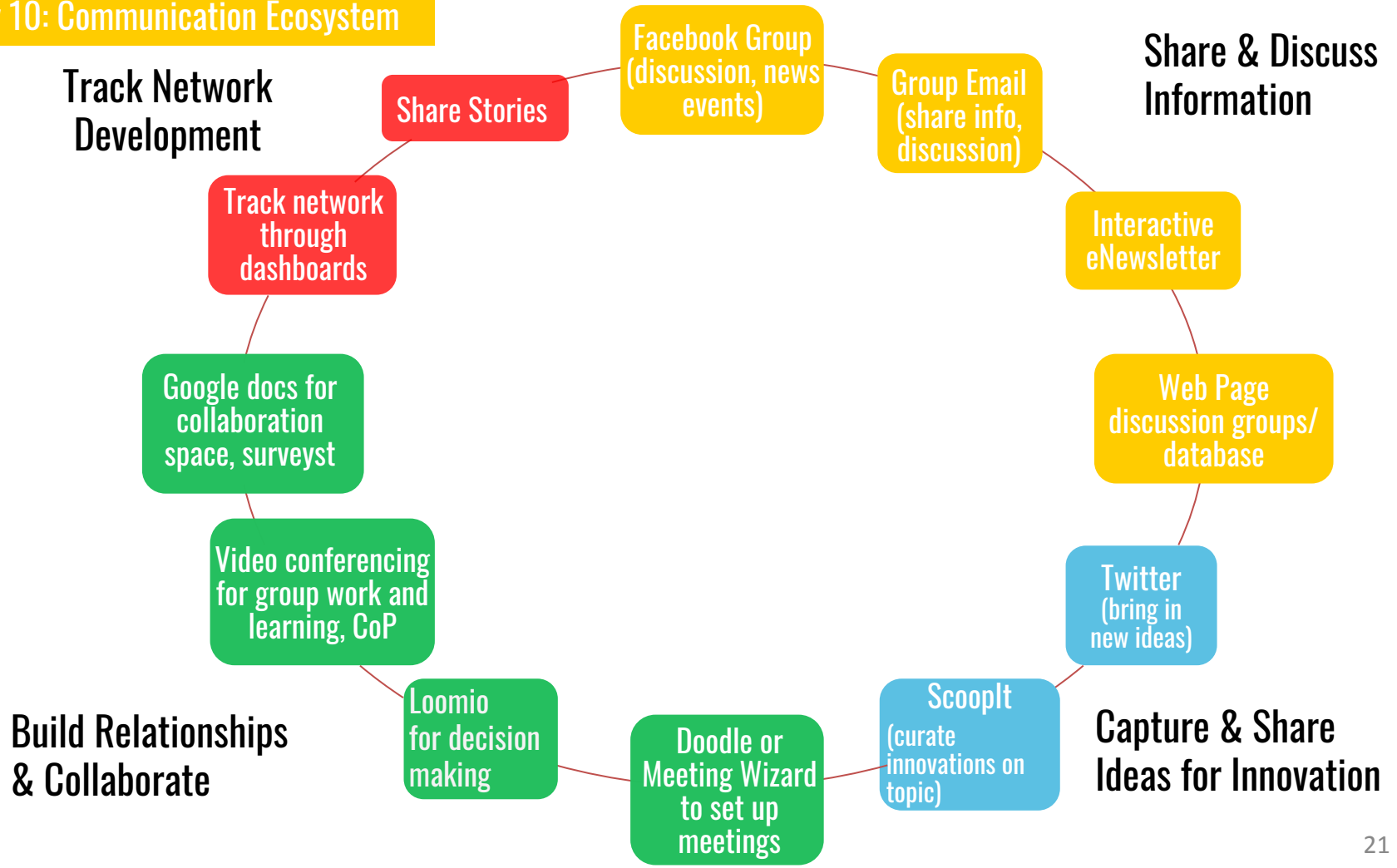
Have participants take the Network Mindset Checklist here <https://goo.gl/forms/Ci4PjlgweevTBD8Iz>  
(You will need to make a copy and move it to your drive, then send out link to your network)

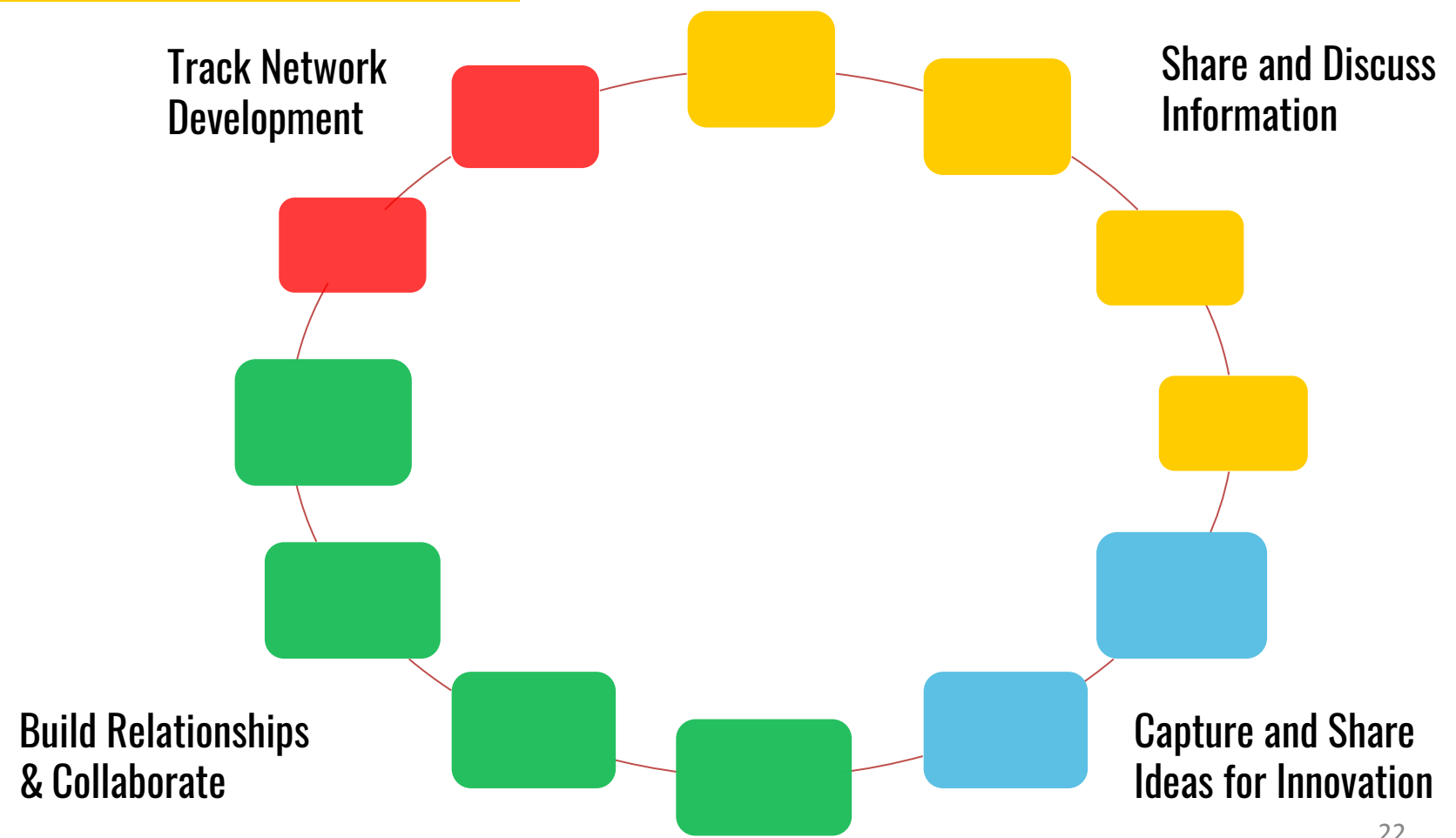
- Share the graphs with results. Focus on 1-2 to shift; retake the survey every few months
- Make sure you **model** the behaviors
- Work closely on **agendas** for meetings so they embody these values

# Activity 9: Intentional Reflection

At the end of every meeting, phone call, or videoconference, the group should answer one to three of these questions to get people in the habit of reflecting on their work and discovering insights and new ideas about action.

1. What worked really well in this project?
2. Did it accomplish goals or outcomes? In what ways?
3. Did it fall short? Why?
4. What would you do differently?
5. What surprises came up during the project? What unexpected happened? What could you learn or capture from that?
6. What insights did you get during the project?
7. What processes did you use that worked well? Which didn't work so well? Why do you think that was?
8. How did people work together? Were there conflicts? How were they handled? Did people get any new insights or perspectives as a result?
9. Were there people or perspectives missing from this project that you would include next time?
10. What skills and processes did you help people learn as part of this project? What skills and processes would you spend time on if you did this over again?
11. What were the most innovative aspects of the project? How did they work?
12. What did you do in this project that you could transfer to other projects?
13. What is the most troubling aspect of the project? What might you do to deal with it differently?
14. What skills came in most handy during this project? What skills did this project make you realize you need to acquire?
15. What did you do in this project that wasn't really necessary? What turned out to be a waste of time? What activity contributed the least to the project success?





*An introduction to Network Weaving*  
[www.networkweaver.com](http://www.networkweaver.com))

*Network Weaver Handbook, A Guide  
to Transformational Networks*  
[www.networkweaver.com](http://www.networkweaver.com))

Network Weaving Facebook Group:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/339757846085496/>

