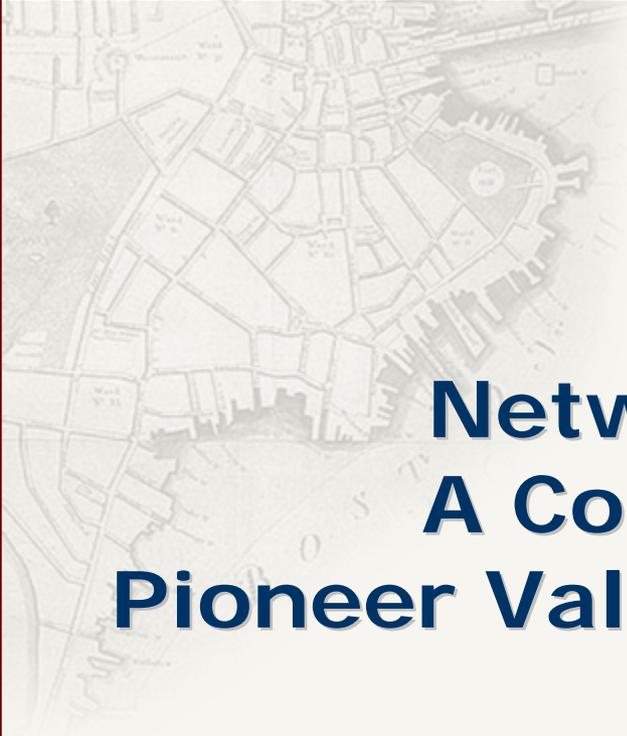
A banner for the Pioneer Valley Sustainability Network. It features a landscape view of the Pioneer Valley with mountains in the background and a river in the foreground. On the right side, there is a close-up of a hand holding a blue globe. The text "Pioneer Valley Sustainability Network" is centered in white. Below the banner, a dark blue bar contains the text "A collaboration between the Environmental Institute, the College of Engineering at UMASS-Amherst, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, and you." in white.

Pioneer Valley Sustainability Network

A collaboration between the Environmental Institute, the College of Engineering at UMASS-Amherst, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, and you.

A faded, light-colored map of Boston, Massachusetts, showing the city's street grid and the harbor area. The word "BOSTON" is faintly visible across the map.

Networks for Net Work: A Conversation with the Pioneer Valley Sustainability Network

Roberto Cremonini

Chief Knowledge & Learning Officer

rcremonini@pilothouse.com

The Pilot House – Lewis Wharf
Boston, Massachusetts 02110

www.barrfoundation.org

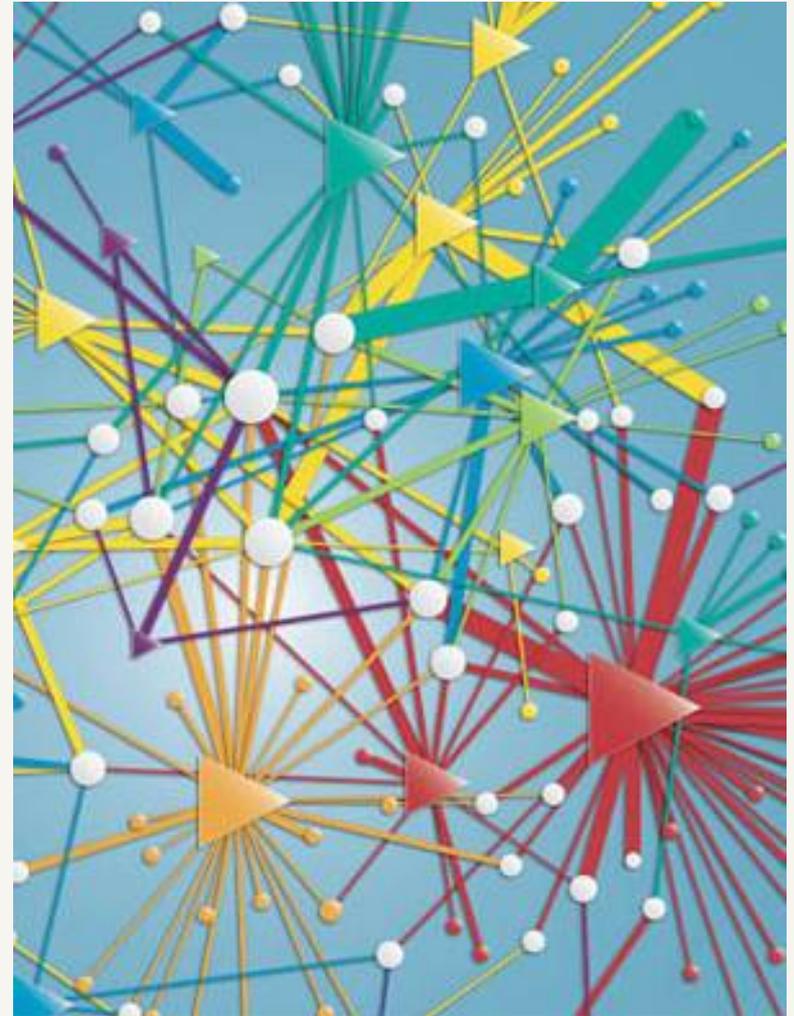
“I am hoping that this workshop will enable us to clarify that the ties we are building should support each member/cluster to

- Become stronger in their own purposes & projects*
- Coordinate activities*
- Complement not compete with each other*
- Collaborate on promotion to attract the interest of new people and new groups into the network*
- Accelerate achievement of common objectives*

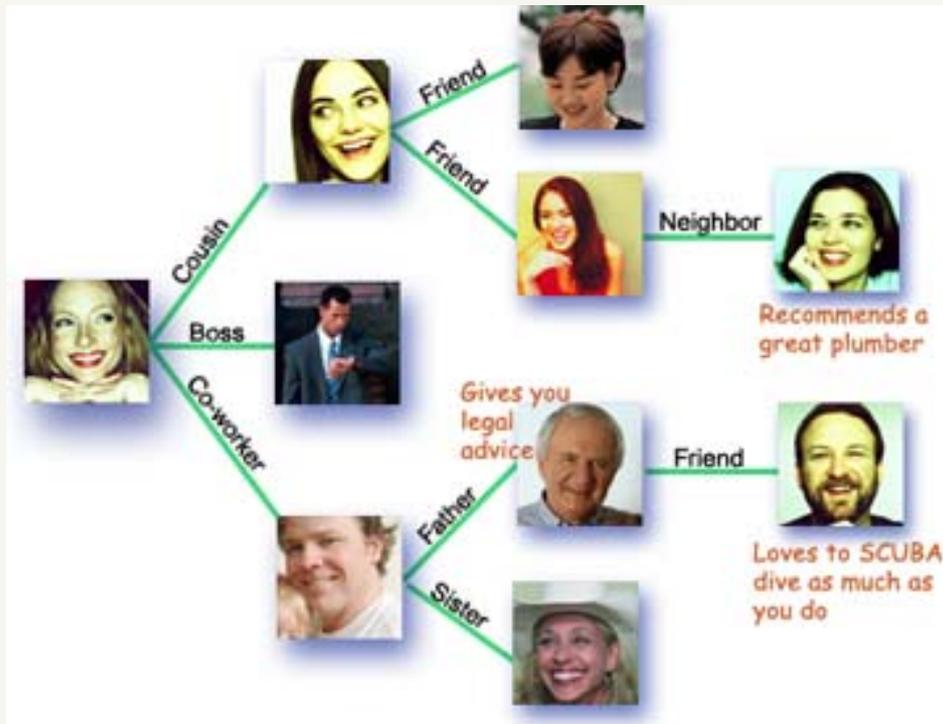
There is a misunderstanding among some who think of the network as if that means we should all be working on one project together”

Today's Objectives

- Provide a working **definition** of networks to help you see your work through a “network lens”
- Introduce a **framework** to describe how sustainable networks evolve
- Report back on your network **“health assessment”**
- Share **practices** that will help you move forward with the design of your network



Definition I: Social Networks



A group of individuals that are tied by one or more specific types of relations, such as friendship, kinship, work, emotional relationships (e.g., like/ dislike)

Purpose:

Individual support, growth, and knowledge

Value:

It's not what you know, it's who you know!

Social Networks aren't new



- Families

Social Networks aren't new



- Families
- Alumni Networks

Social Networks aren't new



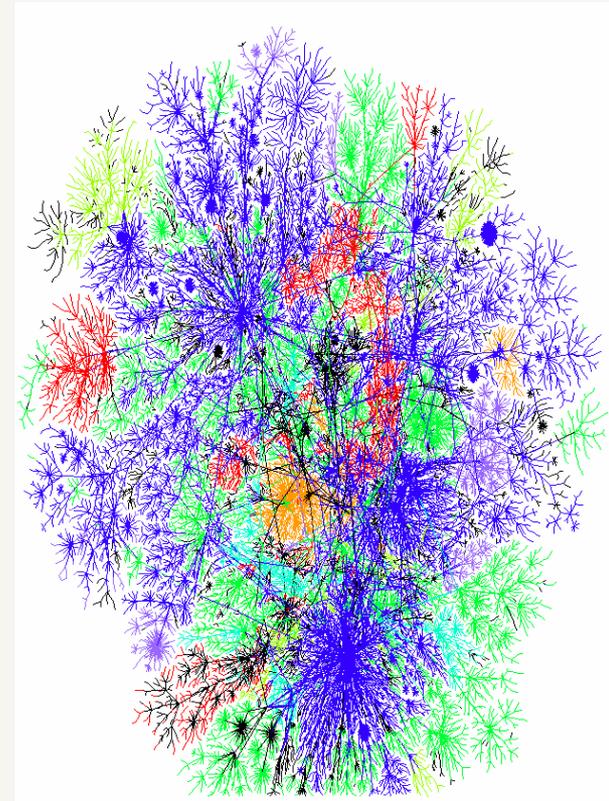
- Families
- Alumni Networks
- Social Circles

Definition II: Action Networks

What: Groups of **independent organizations** working in concert

Why: To create **value** around a **commonly-defined purpose**

How: As **equal partners** who **voluntarily** contribute their knowledge, experience, and resources for joint action and who rely on their **relationships** to support their own objectives



Adapted from: *Networks and Capacity*, ecdpm and *Networks that Work*, Vandeventer & Mandell

Examples of Action Networks

Knowledge

Purpose

- Continuous improvement and enhancement of collective knowledge

Value

- Increased advancement & innovation in the participants' discipline and consequent increased knowledge of participants

Production

Purpose

- Creation of tangible value (e.g., production of good and services) by coordinating efforts of autonomous organizations

Value

- Operating efficiency, reduced costs, new capacity to produce, market, attract funding, and decreased competition

Sector

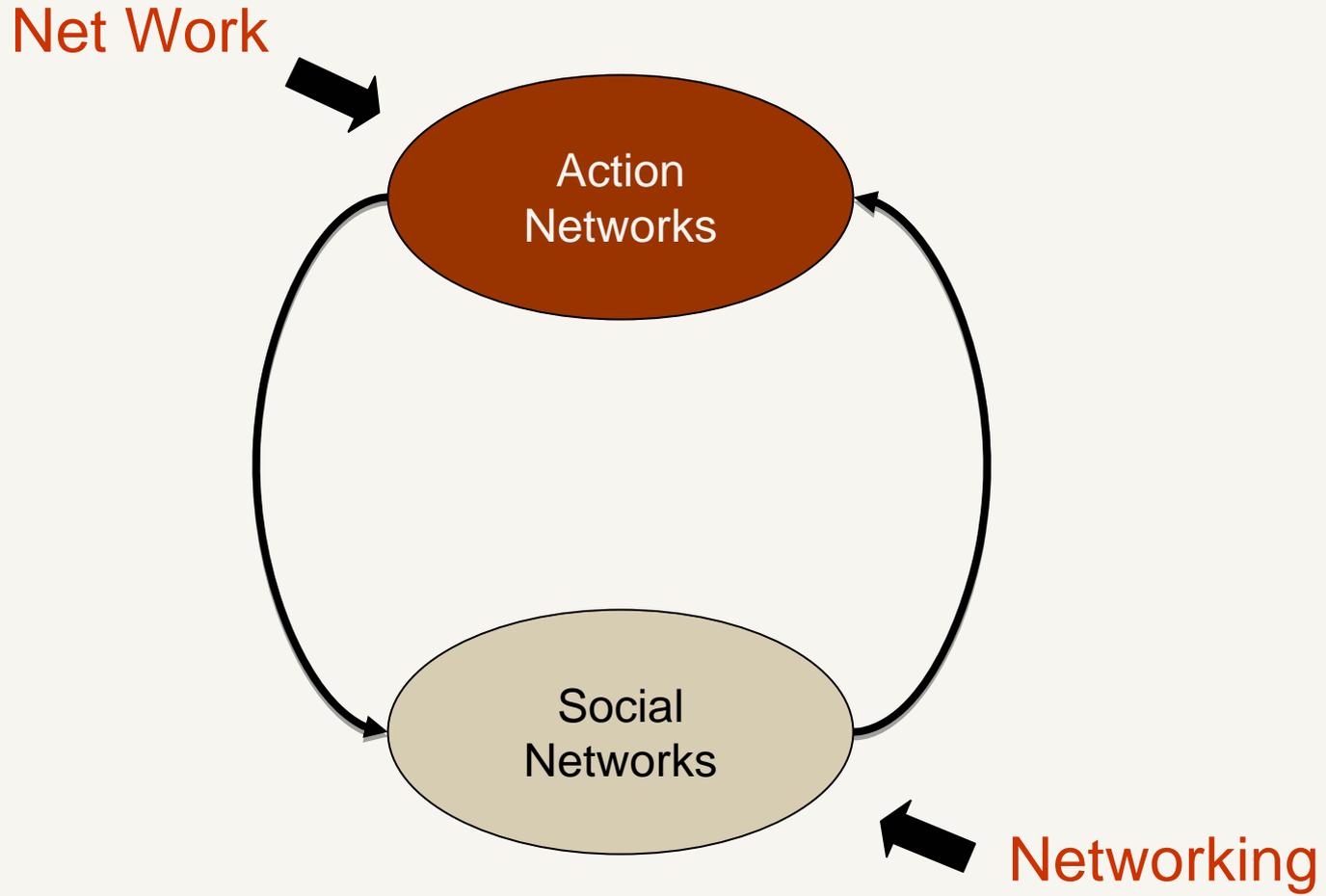
Purpose

- Achieve higher impact by sharing expertise, coordinating programs, and aggregating resources

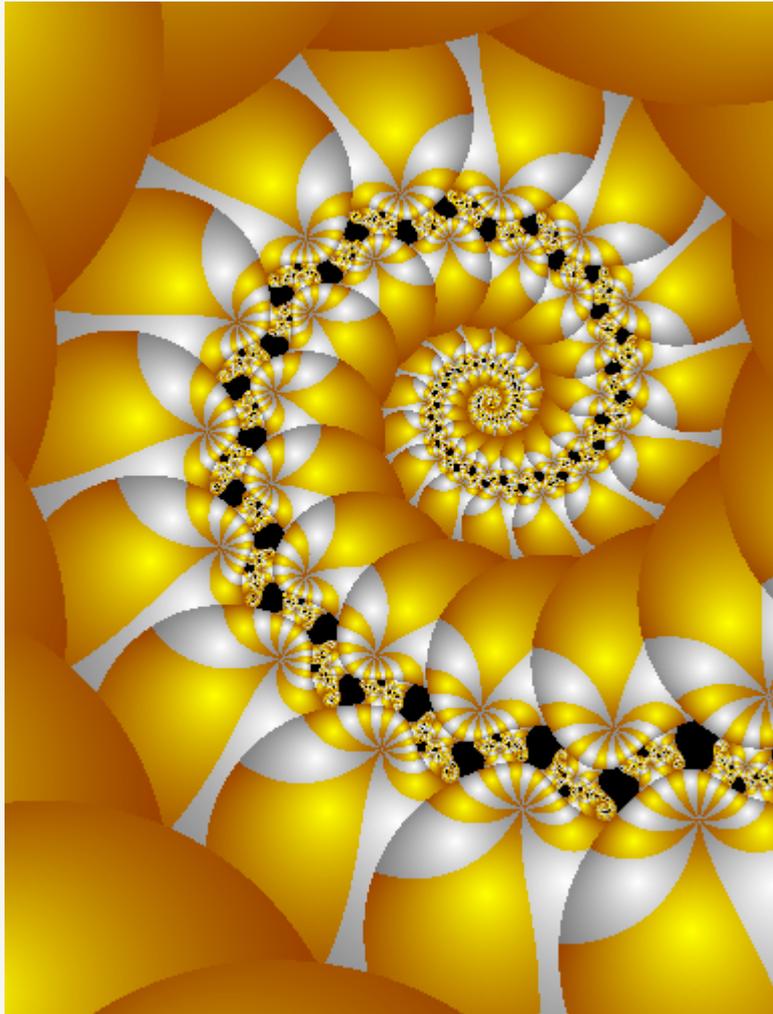
Value

- More efficient working relationships, greater scale and focus, more advocacy power, more sustainable way to address social problems

To sum up: the “Network Lens”



Net Work is not easy



- Groups organizing into networks will always encounter difficulties
- Networks mean greater complexity for inter-organizational relationships
- The decision to form a network needs to be the better trade off when compared to business as usual

What Can Go Wrong?

- Enthusiastic and most connected people end up **dominating** other members
- It is hard to understand who is **in charge**
- **Accountability** is messy
- Pre-existing **power imbalances** or inequities can be accentuated by developing the wrong networks



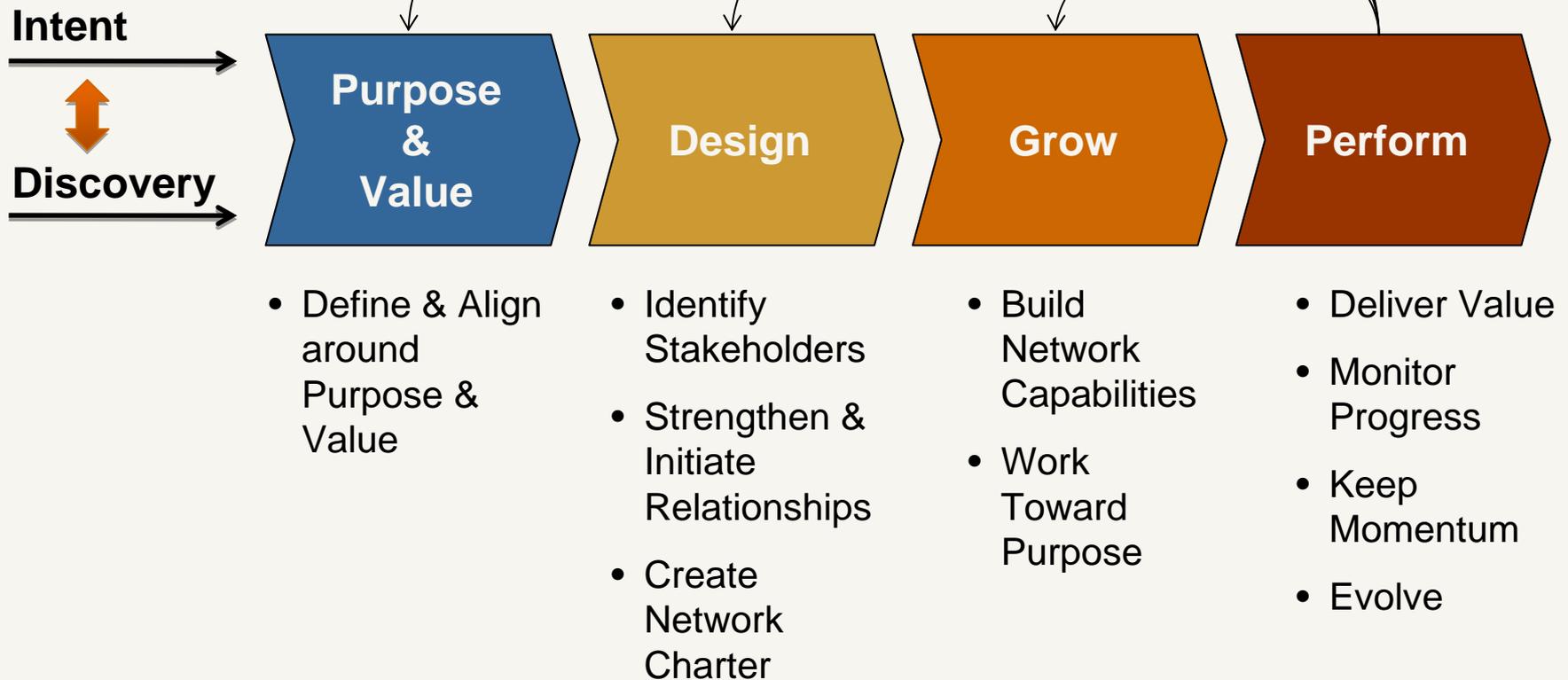
Questions you should ask yourselves before joining a network

1. What is the mission of my organization?
To produce the next output or to achieve impact in the field?
2. Should my organization focus on staffing, program development, and fundraising to achieve its mission?
3. How quickly do we want to achieve mission impact?
4. Can we do it alone or is there another way?

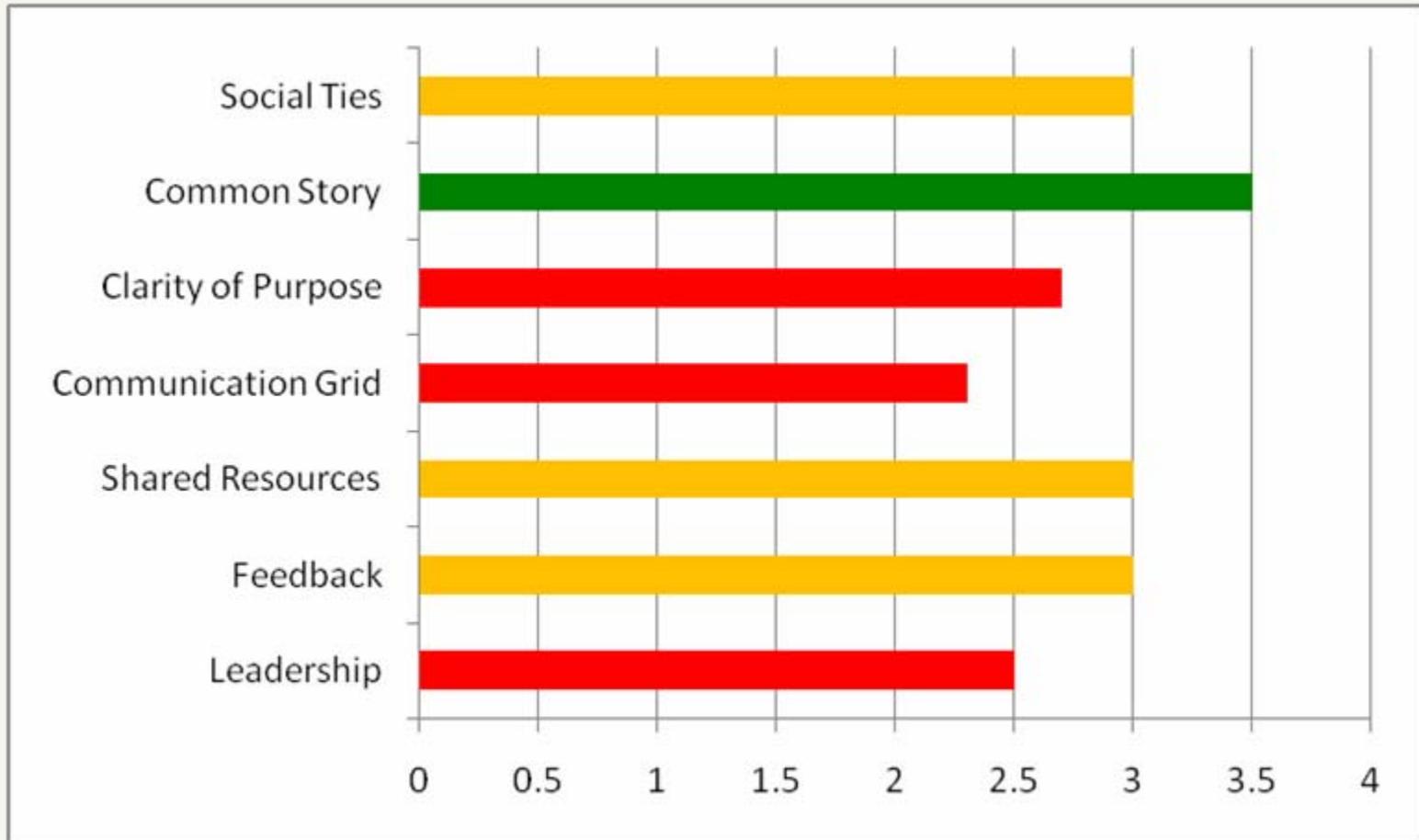


Source: From a conversation with Jane Wei-Skillern

Sustainable networks evolve through adaptive stages



How is PVSN doing? Seven characteristics of healthy networks



Weak

Moderate

Strong

The lack of Clarity of Purpose was affirmed in your open-ended answers

"I'm not clear as to the self-understanding of the network in terms of purpose and longevity. I've been told the network is a secondary development to support the primary purpose of the grant"

"I definitely believe that clarity of common purpose needs to be better identified with concrete goals and milestones and clear 'homework' with deadlines along the way"

"The network is not what I would call clear enough on how we could be effective together. The purpose of strength for network action seems weak"

And restated in comments about the network Common Story

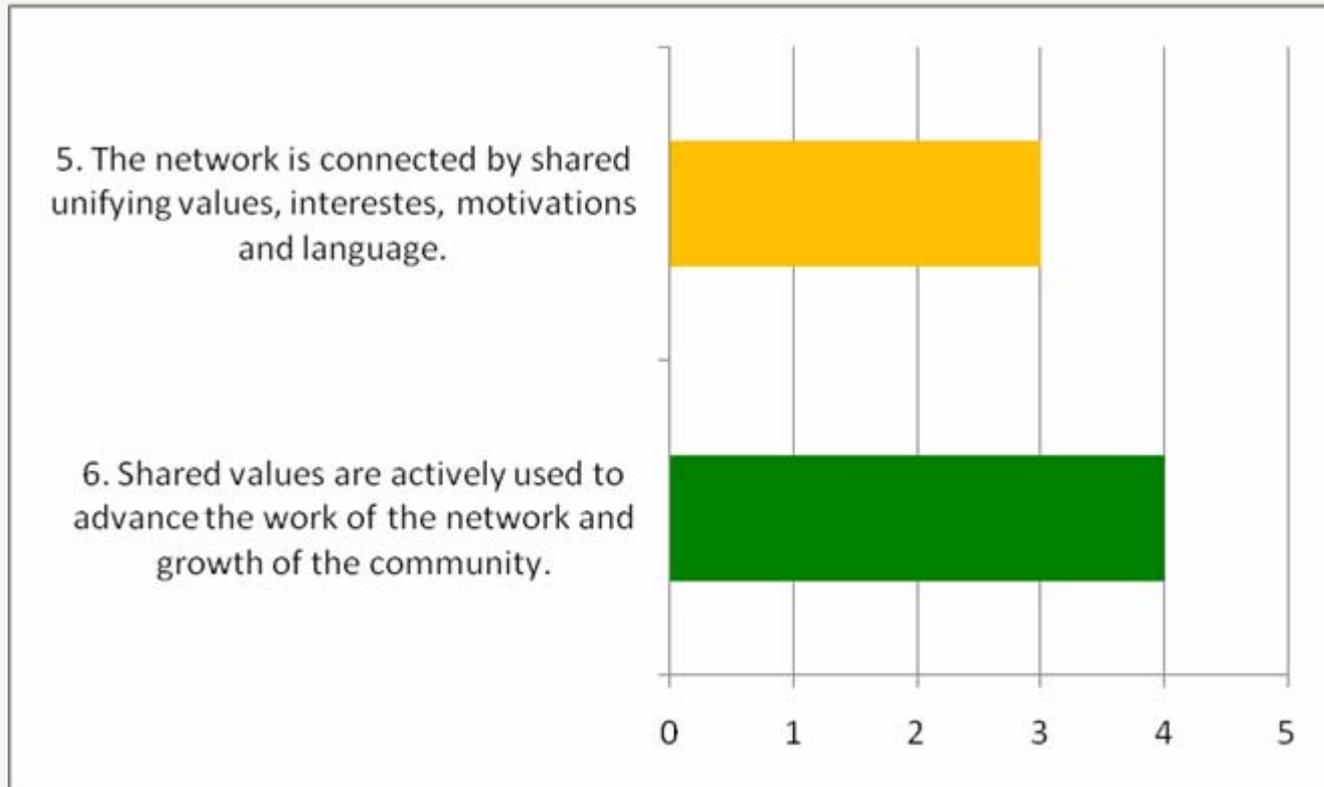
"I think personal agendas can get in the way a little bit. It's great that all members have their groups and organizations on the side which bring us together, but meetings ... should focus on building PVSN and defining its role rather than giving forum for individuals to promote their organization"

"We are in the process of forming the network, and the development of a common story is a key part of that process. It has not been done yet"

"Members share common interest in working toward goals of sustainability issues"

"There was agreement on most of the language"

“So many different stories being woven together. Everyone so passionate about their own; finding a clear unifying story may be challenging”



Weak

Moderate

Strong

Comments and suggestions about Communication were also raised

“Members have expressed interest in improved communication, but not taken advantage of a Google groups created. I think communication is an issue, but it’s also wrapped up in ... commitment to the work of the network and time”

“The more we meet, the more we will communicate. I hope”

“... consistency of communications platforms, frequency of useful communications, and ease-of-use need to be taken into consideration. Communications that are not easy to use will not be used”

Leadership is emerging, but not in a network/distributed way

"We are still learning how to lead each other"

"I think there are a handful of born leaders involved in the network"

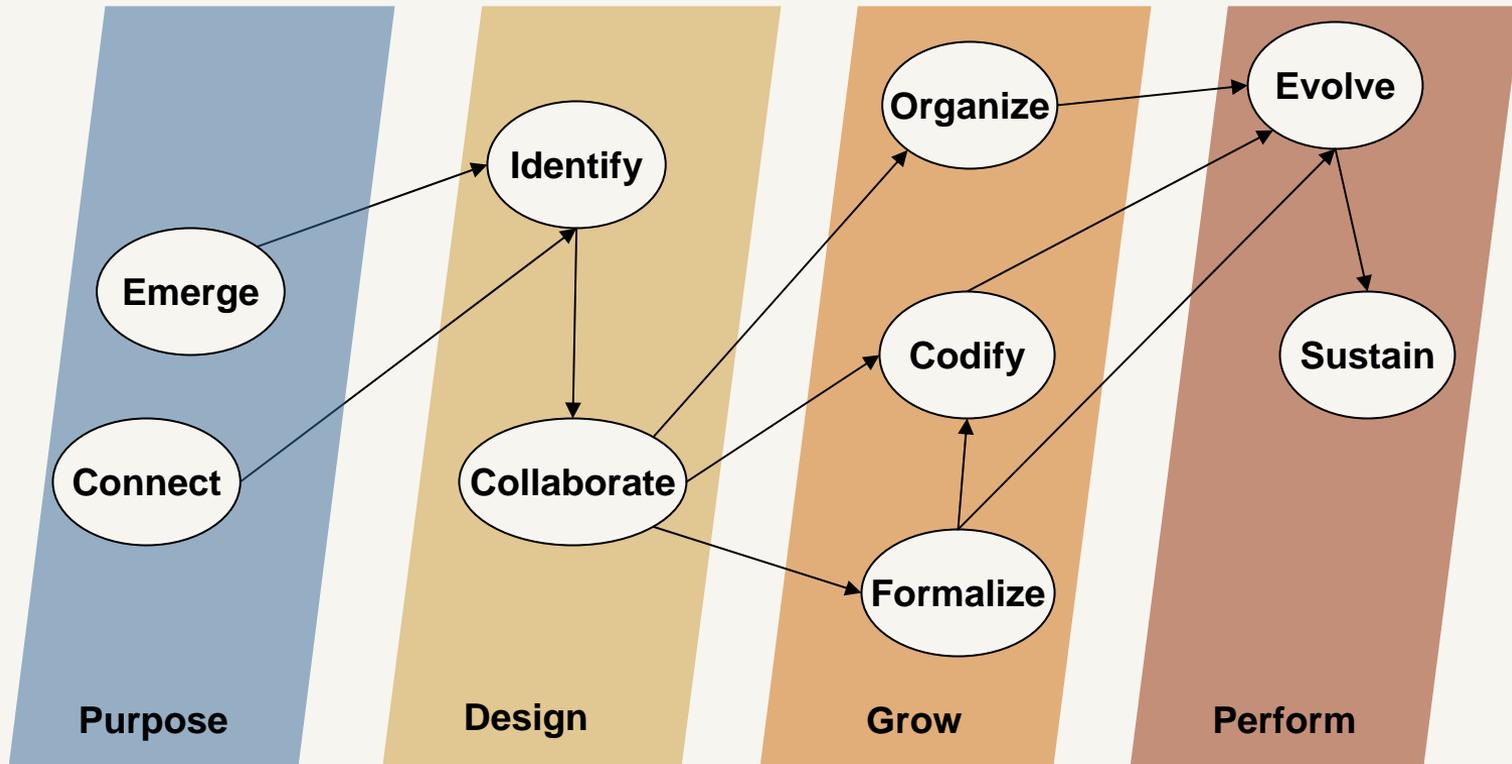
"There is only one leader that I could name at this time"

"I have no idea based on the two-tier network (organizations/activists) and not knowing the parameters for direction and goals originally set out or currently operating"

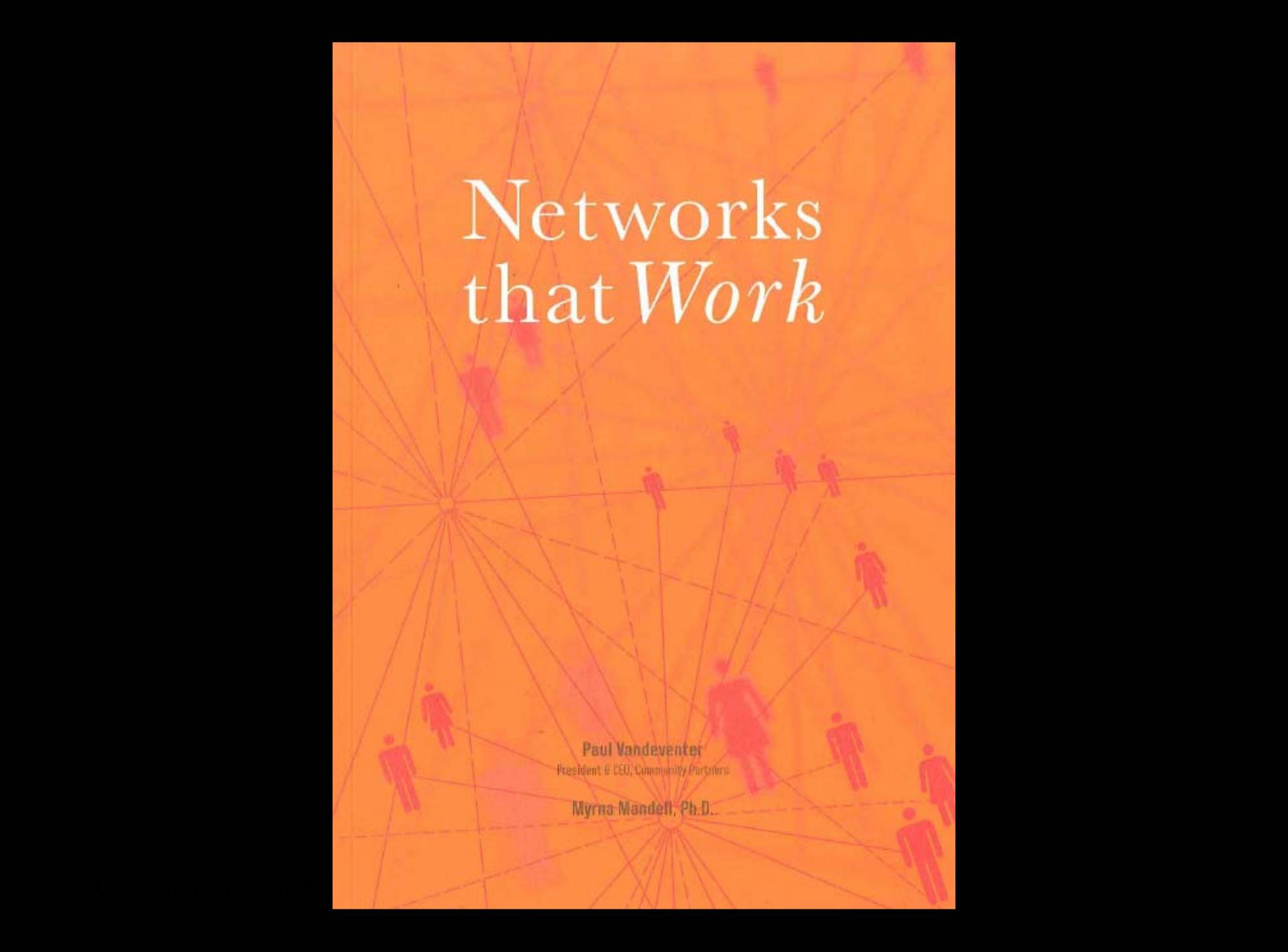
The Pioneer Valley Sustainability Network has not spent enough time ...

- Negotiating an expression of the **purpose** of the network and the **basis of connectivity** that has sparked interest in developing the network
- Defining the organizational, structural, and membership **attributes** that provide **coherence** for the activities of the network
- Laying the groundwork for the operational **style** and value-producing **activities** that will ensure the success of the network

... and is trying to move too quickly to the "Perform" stage



Source: Adapted from Anklam, *Net Work*, 2007

The background of the slide is a light orange color with a network diagram. The diagram consists of numerous small orange human-like icons connected by thin, light orange lines. The connections form a complex web, with some nodes having many connections and others having fewer. The overall effect is a sense of interconnectedness and communication.

Networks that *Work*

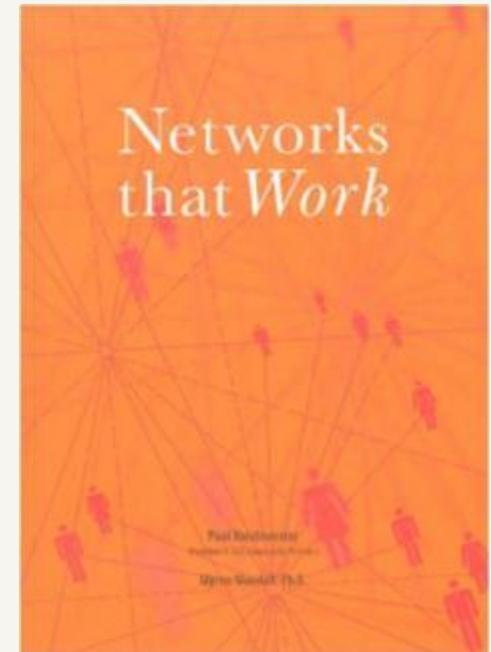
Paul Vandeventer

President & CEO, Community Partners

Myrna Mandell, Ph.D.

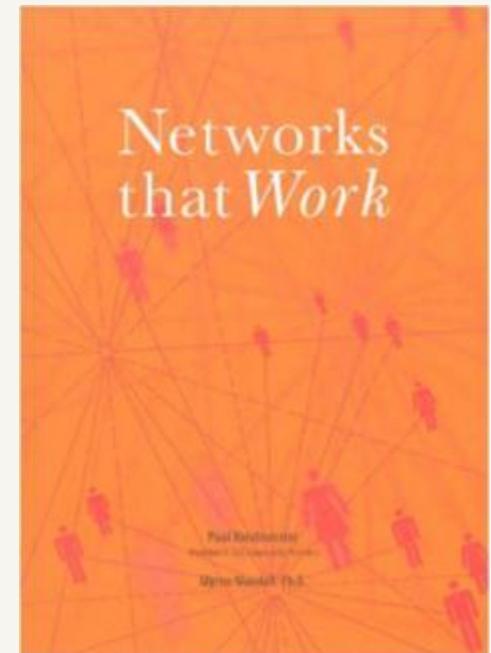
Thirteen essential questions to ask as you Design a network

1. What **purpose** drives our network and what specific **value** will our network create?
2. What determines **network participation** and defines who should join the network?
3. How firm is **member commitment** to this network?
4. To what extent does the network have continuous **outside support** or **sponsorship**?



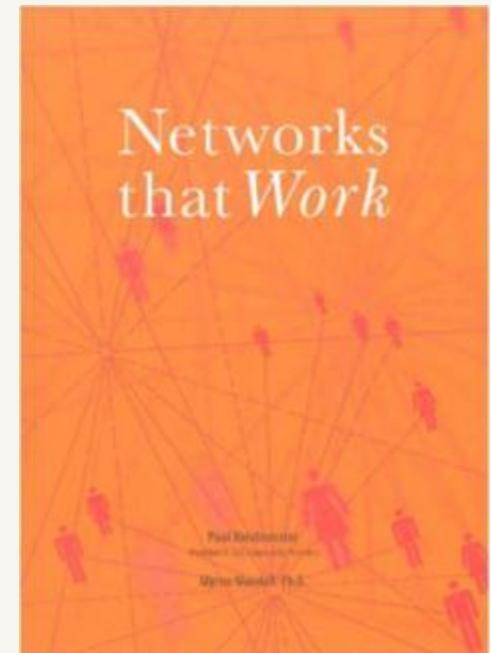
Thirteen essential questions to ask as you Design a network (cont.d)

5. How will we **organize**, **manage**, and **govern** the network?
6. How do we determine and organize our action **priorities**?
7. What methods will we use to establish **new relationships**?
8. How will we conduct our **work**?
9. What **kind of agreement** should we make to function as a network?

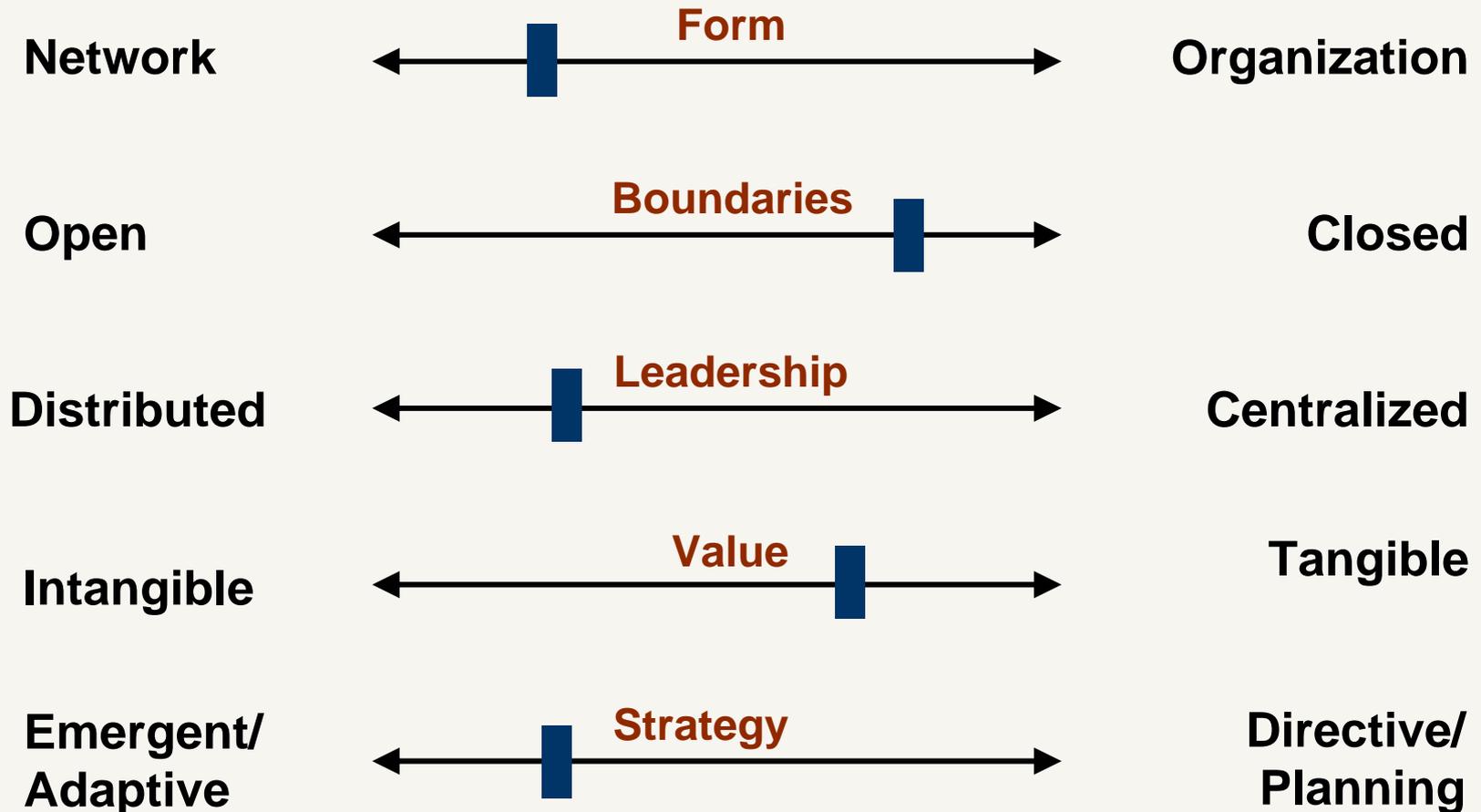


Thirteen essential questions to ask as you Design a network (cont.d)

10. How do network members hold themselves and one another **accountable**?
11. How will we **resolve conflicts**?
12. What **funding** and other **resources** will fuel the network?
13. What other **key resources** do we need to have in place?

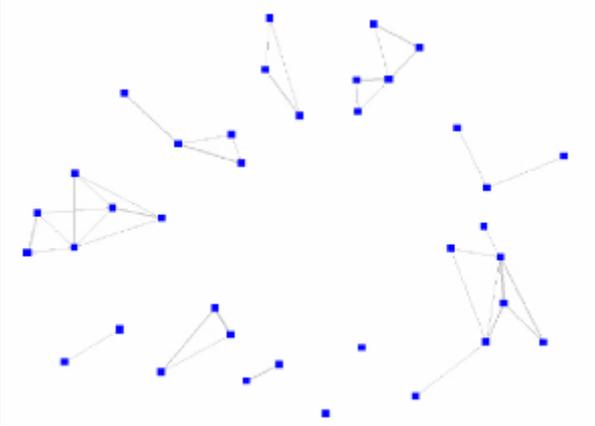


The trick to starting and maintaining networks is to find the “balancing point” in the tensions that allow the network to thrive at any given point in time

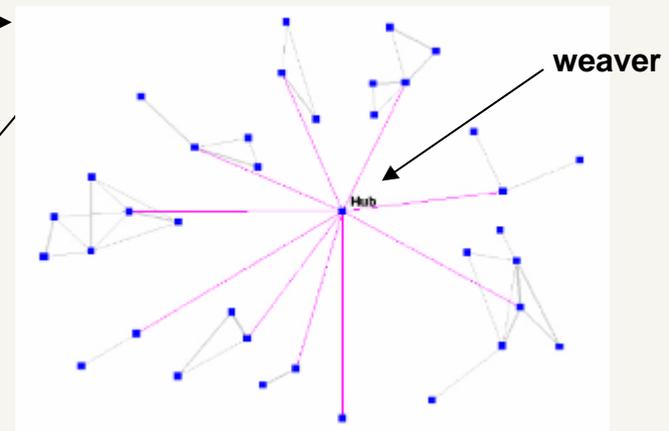


Network Weaving

Stage I – Scattered Clusters



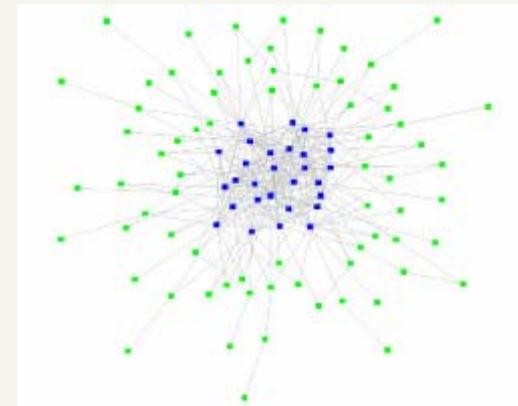
Stage 2 – Single Hub & Spoke



Stage 3 – Multi Hub Small World

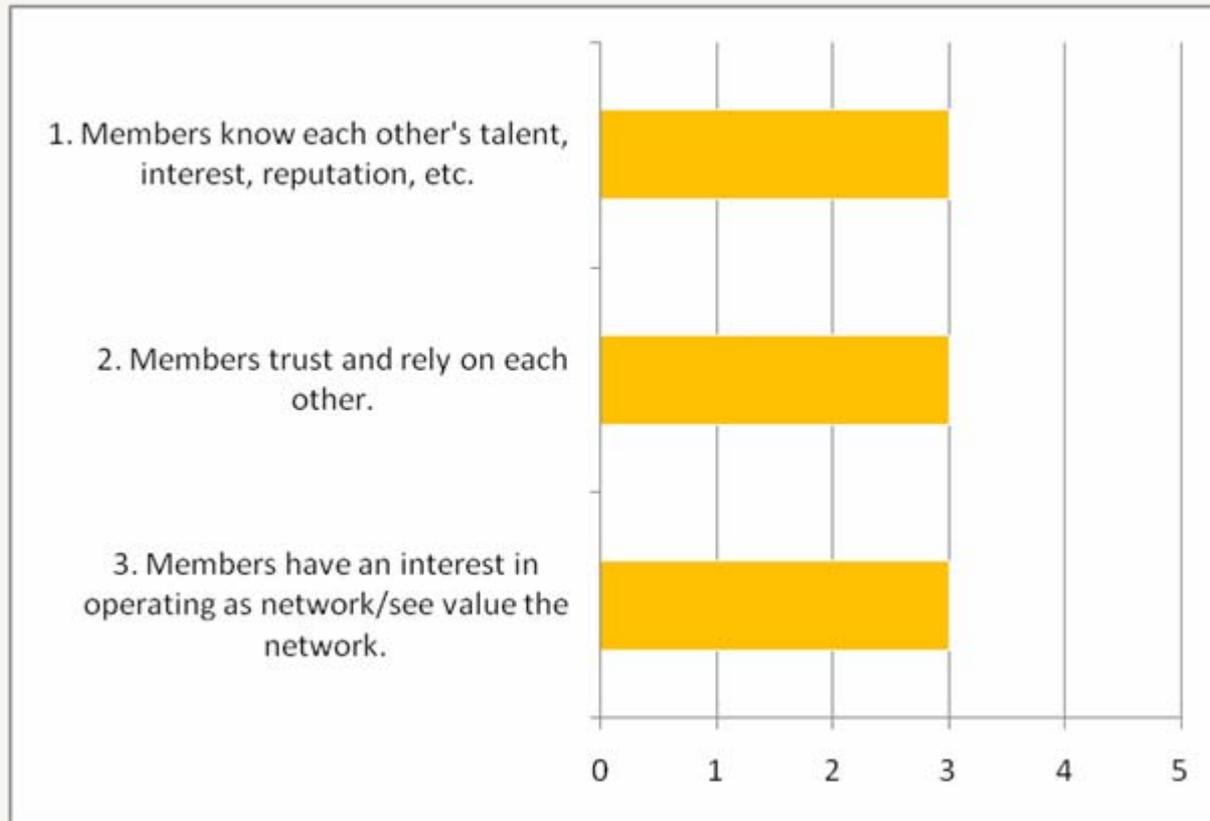


Stage 4 – Core Periphery



Source: Valdis Krebs & June Holley, **Building Sustainable Communities through Network Building**

Social Ties

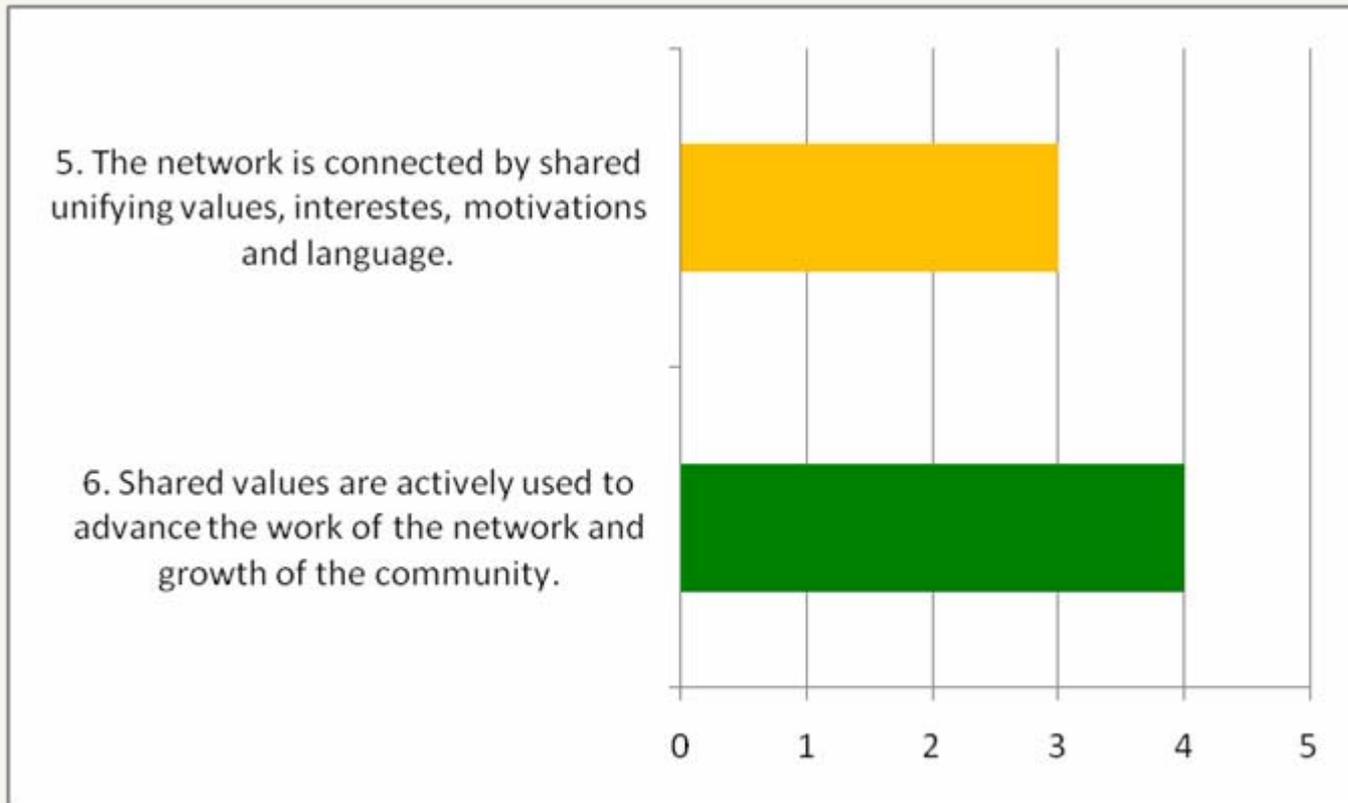


Weak

Moderate

Strong

Common Story

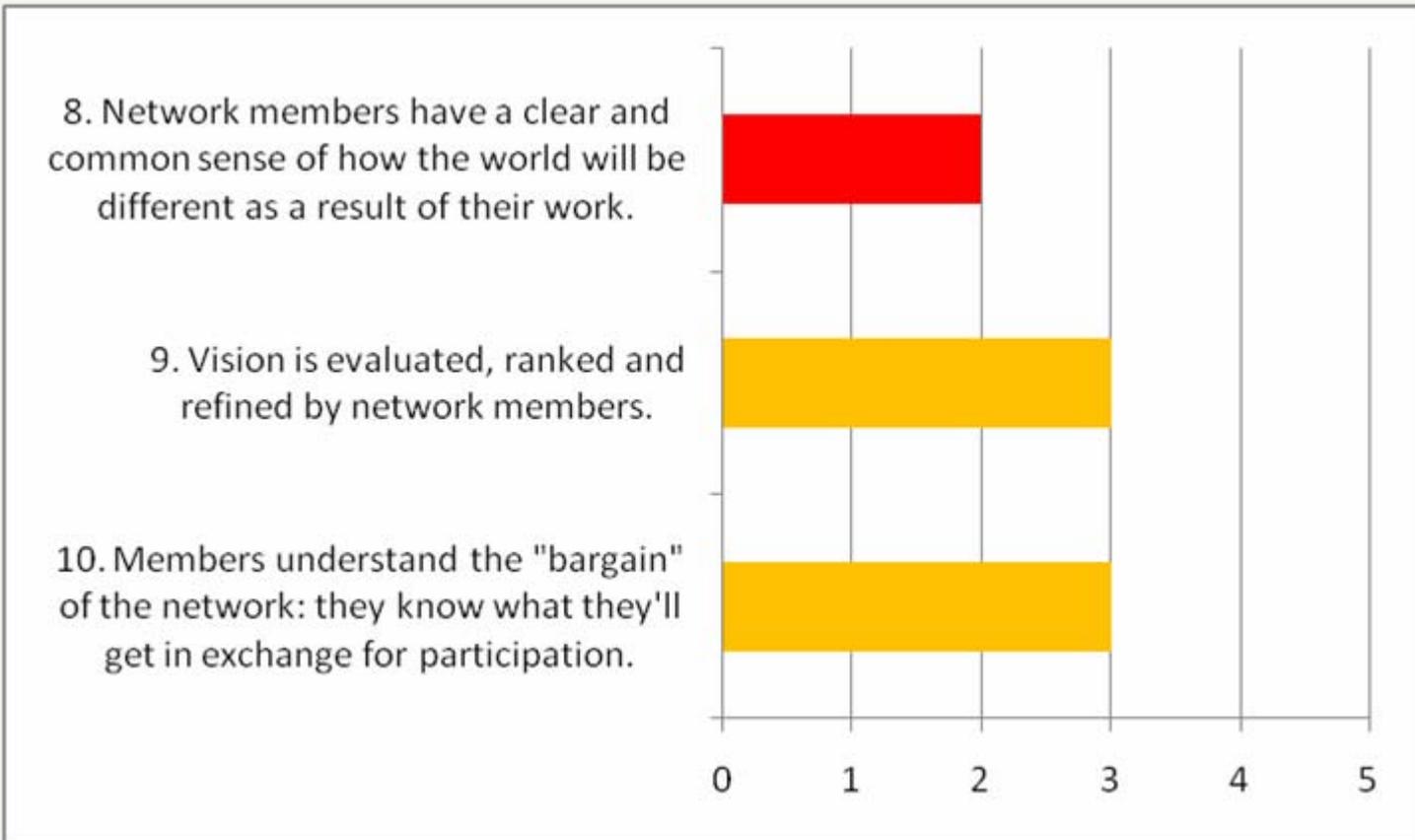


Weak

Moderate

Strong

Clarity of Purpose

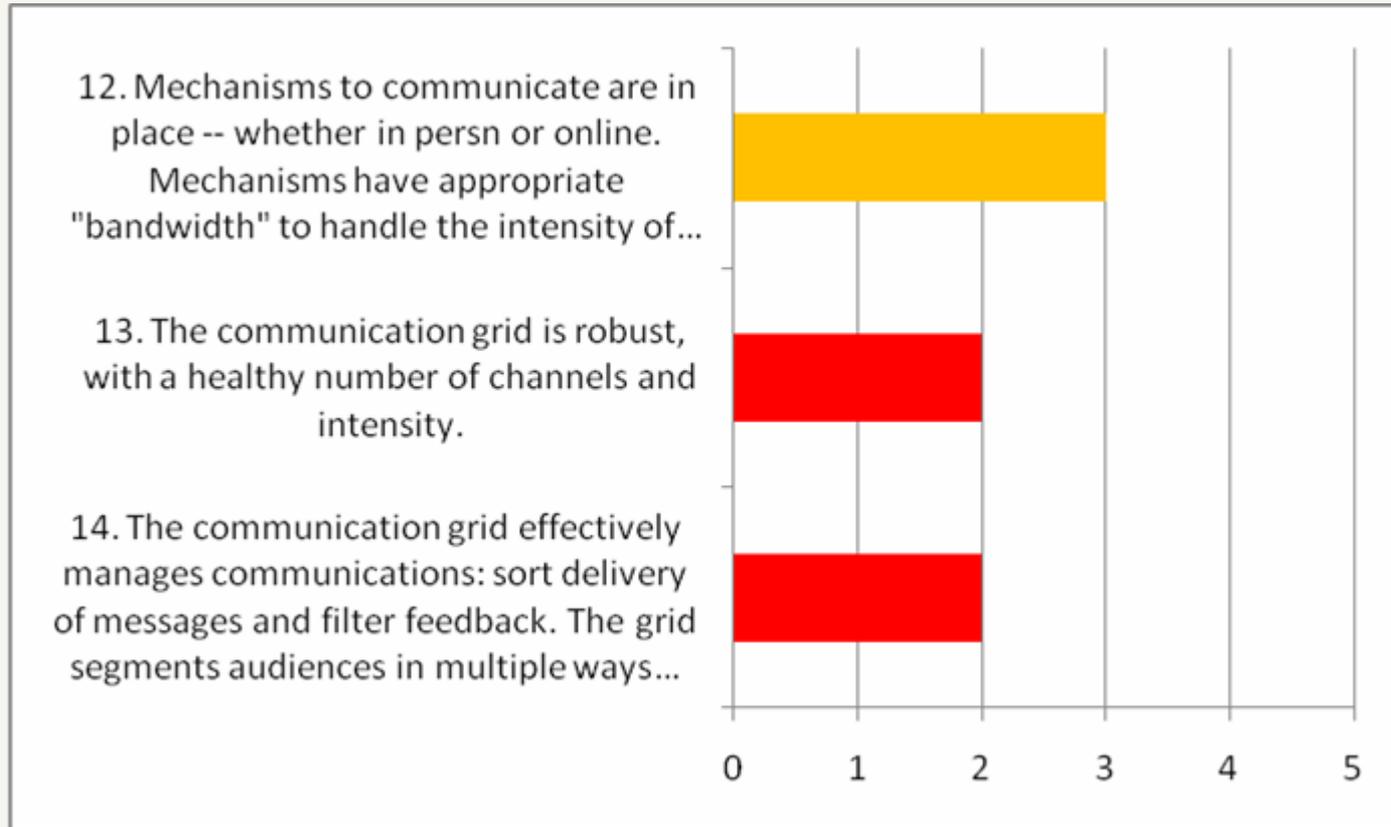


Weak

Moderate

Strong

Communications Grid

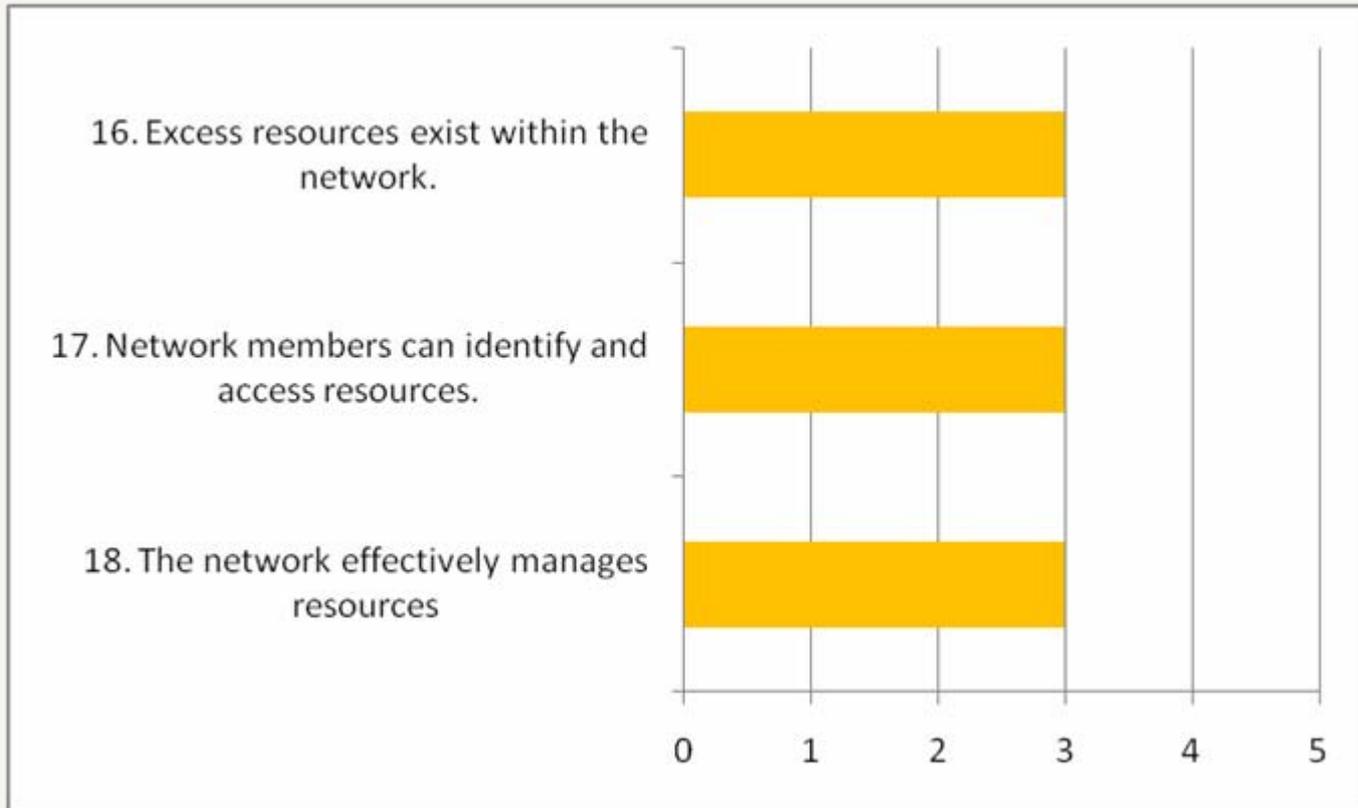


Weak

Moderate

Strong

Shared Resources

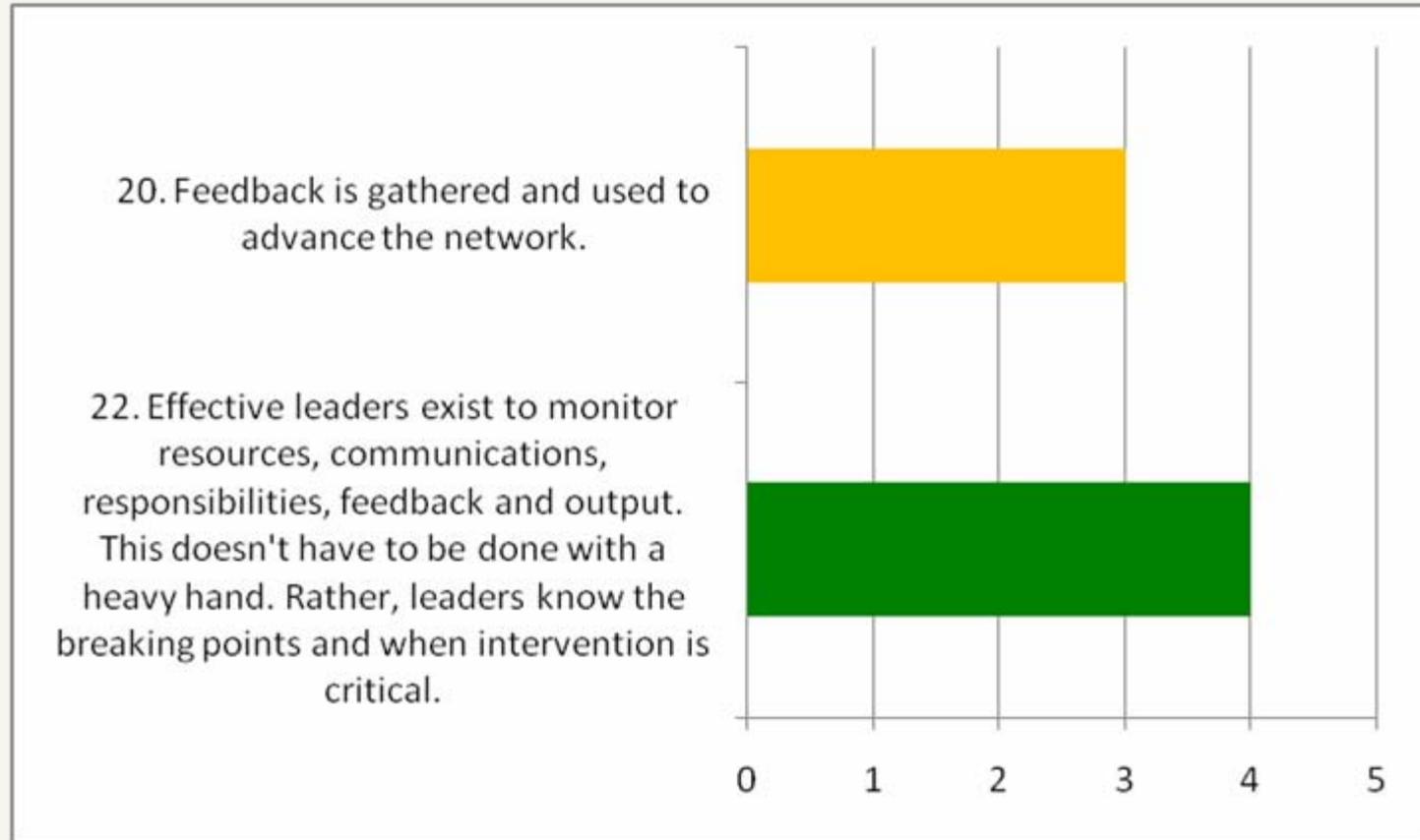


Weak

Moderate

Strong

Feedback & Leadership



Weak

Moderate

Strong