
Networking – A key activity for learning and sharing

Presentation for the First
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Overview

- Sharing of key elements of working with/through networks and networking
 - A number of points to consider or questions to ask
 - Sharing of select observations from the experience of the Promoting Local Innovation (Prolinnova) program/network
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Framework for analysis of networks

- Network objective(s)
 - Structure
 - Governance
 - Communication flows
 - Funding
 - Monitoring & evaluation
 - Analysis of 'network model'
 - Effectiveness
 - Accountability and transparency
 - Vibrancy
 - Sustainability
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Network objectives

- What are your network objectives?
 - Learning and sharing
 - International awareness creation, policy dialogue, visibility
 - Joint program implementation to bring about change
 - Or, multiple objectives
 - Primary vs. secondary objectives
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Structure

- Membership or other mechanisms to define who is part of and/or “owns” the network
 - Organized membership? How many members? Forms and conditions for membership? Membership contribution or fee?
 - Is the network inclusive or exclusive, single type of stakeholder or multi-stakeholder?
 - Level of (*de-*)*centralization*
 - Where is action or change needed most? Where are the people who need to learn?
 - Decentralization of *power and resources* as well as tasks
 - *Formalization* and legal status
 - Is formalized legal status required with a with ‘good host’? (what is a ‘good host?’)
 - *Constitution* - ‘written in stone’ or a ‘living document’?
 - Facilitation and secretariat
 - Centrally organized or tasks shared/circulating
 - Hosting arrangements and implications
 - Size of secretariat and its roles; position of secretariat staff (network only; full or part-time)
 - Availability of network facilitation skills and expertise
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Governance

- Decision making mechanisms and structures; Three general models typically used:
 - Direct decision making by members (member assembly)
 - Representative board decides
 - Secretariat decides supported by advisory committee
 - Model chosen links to choices elsewhere, including need for flexibility, member ownership, political role
 - Consider other ways of soliciting influence of members in decision-making of the network – ‘resource persons,’ advisory committee, etc.
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Communication flows

- Communication planning for specific targets groups
 - Communication flows - one or two-sided? focused on members at centre or among members at large?
 - Effective communication is ***at the heart of networking***
 - In spite of increased possibilities of ICT, well-facilitated, regular face-to-face meetings are essential
 - Design communication system(s) taking principle objective into account
 - Creative use of ICT to generate feedback and inputs from the network and beyond (e-groups, e-evaluation surveys, etc.)
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Funding

- Network budget allocation and use
 - % for secretariat vs. % for network activities
 - Spending directly through the secretariat vs. through members
 - Source of funding and management of and reporting on multiple sources of funding
 - If not handled with care this becomes *a nightmare* for networks
 - *Four models* for resource mobilization emerge
 - Project-based donor funding ('the nightmare')
 - Strategic-plan-based donor funding
 - Donors plus contribution from paying members
 - General membership contributions
 - The option of creating *a trust fund*
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Monitoring and evaluation

- Planning of M&E, the M&E framework, main M&E activities and outputs
 - A systematic M&E framework for the network open to all creates focus and strength through transparency
 - Monitoring and evaluation of network functioning
 - Generation of members' feedback and adaptation of network design and function
 - Regular, well organized, participatory M&E of the functioning of the network is essential to maintain vibrancy
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Influence of the organizational model

- How did the organizational model influence, positively or negatively, the...
 - Effectiveness of the network - level of achievement towards outputs and objectives
 - Accountability and transparency at various levels
 - Vibrancy of the network in terms of new ideas and innovation, diversity of activities emerging, growth of membership
 - Sustainability, including shared ownership by members and mobilizing and managing funds
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Observations from the networking experience of Prolinnova

- Positive experience of dispersed activities carried-out by multiple network members through de-centralized management of activities/funds/outputs – at country-program level and through ‘international support team’
- The multi-stakeholder nature of the Prolinnova network partners offers strength to its interactions (esp., to increase organizational credibility), while at the same time providing challenges in terms of a cohesive approach to network activities among diverse members
- The multiple dimensions of the network objectives – action research, capacity-building, curriculum development, policy advocacy, etc. – provide a well-rounded approach to the key network aim (promoting local innovation), but also place limitations on achieving significant impact(s) in any one of those areas
- Governance through an ‘oversight group’ which is composed of a good mix of internal representatives (‘country program members’) and external representatives