

CONNECTING TO CHANGE THE WORLD

HARNESSING THE POWER OF NETWORKS FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

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NETWORK EVALUATION ([HTTP://CONNECTINGTOCHANGETHEWORLD.NET/CATEGORY/NETWORK-EVALUATION/](http://connectingtochangetheworld.net/category/network-evaluation/)), THE NETWORK BUILDING FIELD ([HTTP://CONNECTINGTOCHANGETHEWORLD.NET/CATEGORY/THE-NETWORK-BUILDING-FIELD/](http://connectingtochangetheworld.net/category/the-network-building-field/))

Network Evolution Assessment

MAY 6, 2015 ([HTTP://CONNECTINGTOCHANGETHEWORLD.NET/2015/05/NETWORK-EVOLUTION-ASSESSMENT/](http://connectingtochangetheworld.net/2015/05/network-evolution-assessment/)) | PETER PLASTRIK ([HTTP://CONNECTINGTOCHANGETHEWORLD.NET/AUTHOR/PETER-PLASTRIK/](http://connectingtochangetheworld.net/author/peter-plastrik/))

When Maggie Ullman was asked to assess the condition of eight regional networks of city government sustainability directors around the U.S., we designed an assessment framework that would allow her to map each network's evolution and also put the networks side by side to form a composite picture of their condition. The assessment, based on interviews, survey data, observations, and written materials, has two axes:

1. *Stages of Evolution*—from Emerging to Developing to Near Mature to Mature.
2. *Network Conditions*—Connectivity, Leadership, Activities, Communications, Coordination, Member Satisfaction, and Resources.



In each Stage the specifics of each Condition are different, they evolve, as can be seen in the matrix below. Note that the specific "rubric" in each cell is somewhat tailored to the type of networks that were being assessed—but you can adjust these for your own use.

| NETWORK ASSESSMENT | | | | | | Member Satisfaction | Resources |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---|---|---|--|
| STAGE | Connectivity | Leadership | Activity | Communication | Coordination | | |
| Emerging | Small hub of 3-5 connected members | Two or more committed founders | Members connect and exchange information | Face to face meetings with no communications between meetings | Ad hoc capacity by small group of member volunteers | Most members see opportunity but network not yet delivering | No and/or in-kind resources for network activities |

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|--------------------|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| Developing | Larger hub of 6-10 strongly connected members | Established steering committee (SC) of 3-5 members | Members align and spread shared ideas such as policy or project needs | Informal communication between face to face meetings between some members | Coordination by member volunteers and minimal third party support | Network beginning to deliver satisfaction for hub of group | Minimal and/or in-kind resources for annual meeting or network coordination or collaborations |
| Near Mature | Multiple hubs of strongly connected members | SC of 6+ members who create annual strategic plans | Members collaborate on their first project | Formal network wide communication between face to face meetings | Coordination by third party | Network delivering satisfaction for most members | Resources for annual meeting, network coordination, and member collaborations |
| Mature | Multiple hubs that intertwine of 20+ strongly connected | Second generation of SC leaders who create annual strategic plans | Members collaborate and produce outcomes on multiple projects | Multiple, network wide communications between face to face meetings with high member participation | Consistent, effective coordination by third party | Broad, high level of member satisfaction by a majority of the members | Consistent resources for annual meeting, network coordination, and member collaborations |