Principles and Practices for Nourishing Networks

> *Nourishing Networks thrive because everyone has something that they need and everyone has something to give. When we create opportunities for people to give what they have to offer and receive what nourishes them, everyone benefits. Below we are naming the principles and practices that invite the behaviors and perceptual shifts that support working in networks.*

Trust the Community: Those who are in a community are in the best place to truly understand the needs and gaps and should take the lead. Those who show up know enough, have enough, are enough to do what must be done while respecting everyone who is part of that community.

Practices:
- Ask people for their stories of need, of challenge, of service and listen deeply
- Ask who else should be invited and what is the best way to do that so they feel welcomed
- Find and invite connectors – people who know a lot about what is going on
- Pay attention to whether all the network roles are being filled – guardians, conveners, connectors, project coordinators
- Be transparent about what you are doing and how people can plug in

Focus on Relationships, Not Just Task: When we focus on relationships we have a better understanding of people's gifts and the unexpected ways that they can be offered. We recognize that everyone in the network benefits by knowing and helping each other– this is an effort built on mutual reciprocity.

Practices
- Create Gracious Space – a spirit and a setting where we invite the stranger and learn in public
- Take time for a check in that allows people to share what is important to them – encouraging brevity is o.k.
- Find the gifts, talents, competencies of those in the room – ask questions
- Listen for differences of views or perspectives and find bridges across them
- Assume good intent and practice forgiveness

Collective-Sense Making: When people from many different perspectives come together around their passion and concern for community, share what they know and cooperate, we learn what we need to know to take effective action.

Practices
- As stories are shared, listen for themes, patterns, places of connection – name those
- Ask questions that help explain inconsistencies or surface different assumptions
- Be open to surprises and stories that contradict your assumptions
- Follow the energy instead of the agenda
- Use what you learn to direct action – especially if it is a new direction

[Work from Passion not Obligation](): When people work from a place of being called, of finding what is theirs to do, it liberates energy and provides focus on what is possible.

Practices
- Create the space for people to share what really excites them
- Be willing to name and share your own gifts and strengths
- Ask for help – believe that what you are doing is worthy of being supported
- Only say yes to what you can cheerfully do – and then do it
- Provide handholds for others to be able to join in easily when they are moved to do so

[Put on Offer, Rather Than Seeking to Control](): This is about people offering ideas, solutions, and resources that they believe can make a difference rather than people trying to control or tell others what they should do. Decisions are made by those doing the work.

Practices
- Share great ideas without expectation that someone else 'ought to' take responsibility for making them happen
- Be clear about what you are offering and what support, if any, you are asking to receive; – welcome partners without pushing people too much to do what you wish they would
- Remind each other of what has been offered and how it has been followed through
- Have people vote with their feet and hands rather than asking people to vote on whether they thing that what someone else wants to do is a good idea
- Trust that projects that no one wants to do are o.k. to let go

[I Make the Net Work](): When each person takes ownership for doing the part that is theirs to do, together we can do what is needed. This means making the commitment in front of your community to name what you will be accountable for – however big or small.

Practices
- End gatherings with an opportunity for each person to speak their commitment to part of or the whole group. Then people can remember what they have said they would do, speak what has not yet been said, and find partners
- Be clear about what you can offer to do with a whole heart and do it
- Look for opportunities to connect what you want to do with what is already happening of being done elsewhere
- Find people who agree with what you want to do, whether you agree about anything else!
- Use meetings to share and ignite ideas, identify needs, sharing and leverage resources. Find times outside the meetings to do the project work.

Contrasting two approaches to leadership

	Organizational	Network
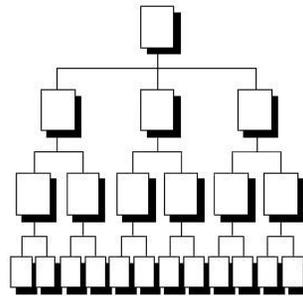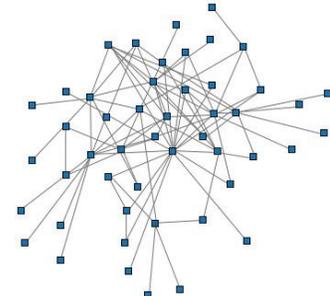
	Organizational	Network
Guidance	Vision/mission	Shared purpose
Governance	Define who decides/ who is in charge	Collective-Meaning Making – what do we know together about what is needed
How to organize work	Goals/objectives/tasks	Passion/Gifts/Ideas
How to determine what people do	Expertise/Position	Commitment/Roles
Accountability	To organization	To purpose/relationships
Nature of involvement	Participatory	Ownership
How to engage others	Enroll/delegate	Make offers/ask for help
Results	Set	Open

We know that any individual can play multiple roles and that no single person can do everything that is included in any one role! So, the purpose of this checklist is for you to see how what you love to do connects to these role categories. And, to see whether your network has all the roles covered. If not, no worries - you have an opportunity to invite some more folks to help.

As you go through these role checklists – check the activities that you enjoy or are passionate about doing:

Conveners/Facilitators create the conditions for those doing on-the-ground work to find ways to leverage opportunities and share resources with each other.

- ☐ 1. Convene the network for regular face-to-face relationship building and networking – keep track of network members and invite new members; send out notices and reminders
- ☐ 2. Prepare for gatherings and either act as facilitator or ensure there is someone who can facilitate to help gatherings be effective
- ☐ 3. Welcome and orient new network members so they can more easily find a way to connect their passion, needs and resources to the network's shared purpose
- ☐ 4. Help people understand principles and concepts of working in networks and translate those into practice
- ☐ 5. Help network determine strategic directions by helping surface key themes and opportunities
- ☐ 6. Work on communications so people know what is happening and how to connect

Connectors ensure that the work of the network is vibrant and exciting by involving and weaving key relationships into network conversations and the projects on the ground.

- ☐ 1. Invite and engage people to learn about their dreams and interests and connect them to others who can help them
- ☐ 2. Help people identify challenges and introduce them to others who can help
- ☐ 3. Encourage people with skills and resources to connect to people with needs
- ☐ 4. Learn about projects happening throughout community that are advancing the purpose of the network and connect people and projects – encourage people to share learning and resources
- ☐ 5. Make personal introductions for people who would benefit by working together
- ☐ 6. Help people bring innovation and new perspectives into their network by adding new people to their network
- ☐ 7. Pay attention to who might be missing in the conversations/work on the ground and invite those people to engage

Project Coordinators/ Volunteers organize and implement projects that deliver the purpose of the network.

- ☐ 1. Organize and coordinate projects – checking in on what is working and what is not
- ☐ 2. Encourage cross-organizational involvement and identify where new resources might be added from these collaborations to leverage project success
- ☐ 3. Ask the broader network for help and offer resources with a focus on doable projects
- ☐ 4. Encourage people to see conflicts as opportunities to develop breakthroughs
- ☐ 5. Encourage people to share about their project with larger networks
- ☐ 6. Help people reflect on successes & failures and understand the underlying "patterns of success"
- ☐ 7. Create dignity and respect for all involved – develop trust among project participants

Guardians pay attention to what is needed for the whole of the network to thrive.

- ☐ 1. Support, encourage, and mentor those working to strengthen the network
- ☐ 2. Encourage others to become connectors and conveners and take responsibility for increasing the health of the network
- ☐ 3. Stand back to see the big picture and identify patterns, needs, resources and opportunities
- ☐ 4. Look for patterns in the network: where there is energy, where there is isolation and help develop strategies to deal with those aspects of the network
- ☐ 5. Create learning communities to capture and share the learning
- ☐ 6. Think about support systems that the network needs to thrive
- ☐ 7. Pay attention to ways to connect the network to the broader community
- ☐ 8. Help connect projects to new and existing resources in the community and encourage new collaborations

Which role are you most comfortable playing?

Are there others you would like to explore?

Are all the roles (connector, convener, coordinator, guardian) being covered in your network? If not, who could you invite to play a missing role?

I make the Net Work!

Commitment Card - Where are you called to participate to address the growing gaps of hunger?

Examples:
- Work on an action-based project (gardens, summer feeding, community meals)
- Grow my local Nourishing Network to increase the number of networkers to support projects to serve people in need
- Work regionally across the networks

As a result of being here today, I will take the following specific action(s) in the next 6 months:

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Learning Communities - Is there a topic or a question that you would like to explore more in the company of others?   Are you curious to learn more about a particular project approach or sharing ideas about how to involve teens or some other group? Do you want to learn more about working in networks? What question/topic if any would you like to explore?

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What conversation, if any, would you like to lead?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Name: _____   Phone: _____

Email: _____