Practical Evaluations for Networks
Exploring How to Better 'Listen' to and Cultivate Our Networks

The theory and practice of network evaluation are underdeveloped. Typically, models of evaluation that are used in traditional organization or program settings are applied to a network environment. While this strategy may adequately serve immediate evaluation needs or commitments, it does not account for the unique character of network structures and therefore fails to provide the data that can truly inform our understanding of our networks and lead to their improved health and impact. We need to be better at adapting traditional evaluation to networks, and seek out new approaches. As a group, we undertook a year-long exercise to explore ideas and potential tools and strategies for network evaluation that are aligned with network theory and practice.

Many of us are investing heavily in network development as a strategy for making change in the world. We feel intuitively that it is working, but how do we know, track, defend, rationalize and prove that this is the right strategy? Is it working? How do we know? How can we do it better?

What follows is a summary of the discussions which took place during three meetings over the course of a year. The ideas captured here are still developing, and many questions remain.

The group working on this exploration

In June of 2007, the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation and the Centre for Social Innovation convened a diverse group of social change practitioners. The group included representatives from the private, voluntary and para-public sectors including organizations working in a wide range of issue areas, as well as representatives from the funding and academic communities (see Appendix C). Over the course of three meetings the group shared expectations, and tapped into the collective wisdom and experience of those assembled. There was a high degree of energy for the topic. From the initial go around of introductions and opening comments a rich exchange of thought provoking ideas and questions emerged. Many of these ideas have moved on to small projects as result of this work and will continue to inform our understanding.

The following describes key dynamics that enabled us to bridge our experiences, coalesce into a group and begin charting our work together.

Group members are interested in testing their approaches and assumptions about supporting a network in order to better carry out these functions, and to communicate that to various stakeholders. There were lots of questions, and lots of space given to listening to other people's experiences. This in turn gave permission for people to express their uncertainty and

frustration around evaluating networks, and network building more generally. This enriched the conversation and allowed the group to explore the edges of the work. Ultimately, this helped to establish trust in the room, allowing the group to explore a multitude of ideas and identify areas of momentum and traction.

Common threads and core questions

Within the group there is a general assumption that networks are effective ways to support social change. There is a common appreciation for the concepts of complexity, diversity and reciprocity. The language of 'listening' to our networks quickly displaced the term network evaluation. These common areas seem to have helped the group advance the thinking quickly and also contributed to the degree of trust.

As the discussion evolved some important clarifications emerged that were felt important in order to give some focus to the group's exploration:

- Our primary orientation to the question of "*How do we listen to / track / evaluate our networks?*" is that of organizations utilizing networks as a way to achieve our mandate. Networking more broadly will of course enter into the conversation, but the ultimate focus is our role as catalysts in developing and supporting networks to achieve specific goals.
- One key element of network evaluation is communicating our evaluation findings to funders. There was some tension between the perceived expectations of funders and the practitioner's efforts to communicate their network stories and findings, and this was limiting our ability to think creatively. While it will be essential to return the question of "*How do we dialogue with funders?*" there was agreement that it would be best to park that question for a while.
- A core orienting question for the practitioners in the group is to ask: "*What would we do differently if we had answers to our questions about our networks?*" Any evaluation process consumes resources and so if we cannot effectively answer this question, then it begs the question of why seek to answer it.
- While the group agreed to reconvene and to actively carry out some efforts to evaluate their networks so that some fresh learning can be shared back to the group, it was agreed that it would be premature to think of this group as a network itself.

What is a network?

Networks are variously defined and understood, and the authors are reluctant to become overly consumed in a debate of definition and nuance. Most simply, a network is an interconnected system. For our purposes, networks are systems of relatively autonomous actors or organizations who are working in concert to achieve

some shared goals, or to pursue individual goals within a shared system. Our specific interest is in networks that exist to serve 'civil society'.

Context for Network Evaluation

As the conversation unfolded it became clear a productive tension emerged within the group about the context for network evaluation. There are different ways of thinking about networks and the roles they play in our lives and work. We came to realize these different ways of thinking and experiencing networks applied not just to the networks themselves but to how we think about evaluation.

The "cause and effect" logic suited to more classical approaches to evaluation[1] does not effectively account for the fluidity, horizontality and non-linearity of networks. The very techniques that enable evaluation excellence in more linear, structured forms of organization – standardization of inputs, consistency of treatment, uniformity of outcomes and clarity of causal linkages – are unhelpful, even harmful, to understanding networks. We suspect cause and effect logic models may fail to produce a complete picture of how a network is working.

This suggests a different approach to evaluation that would start from the idea that networks are made up of multiple participants. Therefore multiple perspectives are required to assess the functioning and impact of the network. In order to develop this picture, network evaluation needs to examine the network at multiple scales and from different perspectives. These might include the environment in which a network is operating, the component parts and dynamics of the network itself and the impact the collective efforts of people operating in a network have.

But multiple perspectives were not the only characteristics making networks different in a qualitative sense. In fact, several characteristics of networks suggest that different evaluation tools and techniques might be necessary, including their "fuzzy" or permeable boundaries, the presence of multiple (even competing) goals, multi-directional flows of communication, and a high degree of independence among actors. Of course, many existing organizations contain some of these elements – but not to the same degree, and not as inherently, as network structures do. During our work together we realized that characteristics like these demanded alternative approaches for evaluation in networks.[2]

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[1] Some evaluations make overall judgments about the merit, worth, and value of a standardized program (often called summative evaluation). These judgments are then used to inform critical decisions about the program, such as its continuation, or whether to scale up. Other evaluations help a program become an effective and standardized model (what is often called formative evaluation).

[2] We see strong parallels with developmental evaluation which has the purpose of developing and adapting a program, especially innovative initiatives unfolding in complex, dynamic environments and conditions.

Evaluation oriented towards uncovering the dynamics of networks will allow the network to better understand itself and develop a fuller picture of its functioning. This perspective could, in turn, be used to support programmatic, cause-and-effect evaluations oriented towards specific change objectives.

Paradoxes within Networks

During the course of exploring network evaluation the notion of competing tensions or paradoxes emerged. Participants cited contrary aspects of networks such as open or closed, individual or organizational, formal or informal. These tensions were often the source of challenges or choices which were hard, if not impossible, to resolve. Framing these paradoxes, or tensions, as a pair of complementary tendencies in relation to each other, rather than as a choice or a challenge was helpful. The notion of holding both tendencies over time contributed to a deeper understanding that it was not about making a choice but rather what could emerge from the dynamic.

What follows is a list of some of the paradoxes we have identified through our exploration. It is by no means an exhaustive list of all the complementary elements present in networks.

Chaos ~ Order

Networks exist in a balance between chaos and order. Networks tend to be more chaotic than other, more linear forms of organization, and yet some degree of order must exist throughout the network to give it some form and structure. Networks will have varying degrees of balance between chaos and order, and these may transition over time. Different networks may identify themselves in different places along the chaos-order spectrum, and our individual networks may themselves transition through spectrum over time, or perhaps different segments of the network may occupy multiple places at any given moment.

Learning ~ Teaching

Network participants shift between the roles of learning and teaching. Networks enable the exchange of information across vertical, horizontal and spatial boundaries; hence, at one moment we may be recipients of knowledge, while the next offering some of our own wisdom to the group.

Stewardship ~ Agency

Stewardship stems from the notion that we are often in a place where we are stimulating the development of a network in some way that furthers a specific mandate or mission, while at the same time encouraging a sense of ownership and agency among network members as a means to maintain the network's vibrancy, health and potential for innovation.

Individual ~ Organizational

Many of the networks we work in are based on connections among organizational members. Yet it is really individual members who participate as representatives of their organizations. This has significant impact on a network in several ways. What happens when a key individual network participant leaves an organization? How restricted are participants by their organizational contexts? How does a healthy network navigate this tension?

Verb~ Noun (Networking ~ Network)

In networking we are connecting with others, sharing information, making introductions, and maybe even collaborating on specific initiatives. The aggregate of this activity among many people is what creates a network. This distinction between the activity of networking and the structure of a network is an important one.

Formal ~ Informal

There are both formal and informal networks – we may be explicitly part of a network and with that comes specific requirements and benefits, or we may be connected in an unstructured way with others. A given network itself may have formal and informal components, while individual members may also have informal or formal roles within the network.

Homogeneous ~ Heterogeneous

Is a heterogeneous network healthier than a homogenous network, or does it depend on the context? Is our understanding of network diversity consistent with our understanding of social capital – i.e., does a homogenous network achieve more sooner while a heterogeneous network produces more innovation by exposing members to new ideas? Some networks occupy a purposeful space within this spectrum that is dependent on their missions, while others default into a space based on the limitations of their own connections.

We see complementary pairs as a useful way to identify apparent tensions in a neutral non-judgmental way. One definition of complementarity is: "of, relating to, or suggestive of complementing, completing, or perfecting" and another, "mutually dependent, supplementing and being supplemented in return."[3] The use of these pairs as a way to surface insight and understanding by asking what role the pair plays in contributing to network coordination may help us explore new approaches to network evaluation. Does the pair need to be present if the network is functioning well? To what degree might some aspect of a pair be tilted in one direction or another? What could this tell us about how well a network is functioning?

How can investigating a pair and their associated coordination dynamics[4] help us to identify opportunities to explore unknown or previously unknowable aspects of network health and function? Seeing an apparent paradox or tension and reframing it as a set (or sets) of complementary pairs and understanding these pairs as in relation to each other through the concept of co-ordination dynamics opens up broad and rich territory for the evaluation of networks to explore.

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[5] These links are often referred to as edges.

Evaluation Approaches

The group identified a diverse set of approaches that can be utilized in evaluating networks. These methods were imagined as helpful ways to generate data about the network.

Mapping: Some form of graphical representation of a network that shows the nodes in the network, and the links[5] between them. This can be done manually or with the aid of software.

Traditional Data Collection: Participants indicated that they saw a role for common evaluation techniques such as surveys, focus groups, interviews and observations.

Storytelling: Of key interest to many within the group is how to surface the stories of what takes place in the network, particularly when this activity may be unknown to other elements of the network. How do we seek out the stories which are relevant, but are not what we expect to see, and therefore difficult to identify?

> Values for evaluating networks: being present, authenticity, hospitality, reciprocity, stewardship, diversity, acting as participant.

Natural Sources: There is some data which networks naturally generate – for example, email exchanges, meeting minutes, listserves, and discussion boards in networks that use those technologies. There is interest to think more about what other kinds of data might naturally surface within a network and to explore ways to better access and harvest that information. Network events, and the convening of network members (physically and electronically), were seen to be ideal moments for accessing information about the network.

Listening and Feedback Loops: Being on the ground enables us to listen to what is going on in our networks in a way that lets us quickly adapt and change based on what we are hearing.

As the group explored various approaches, there was a strong sense that setting the right conditions are as, if not more, important than the specific evaluation techniques. The process of listening to what is happening within a network requires the evaluator to be proactive and to find ways to enable a system to be listened to. Key to this is finding ways to embed the evaluation processes into a network in an organic way, and to think about the incentives necessary to easily generate evaluation information. The concept of organic evaluation was of particular interest to the group, which felt that many existing tools were created for other structures and hence too cumbersome, foreign or artificial for a network context. Given the apparent natural and organic qualities of networks, we felt there were yet-to-be discovered tools and strategies that worked more seamlessly in a network environment.

The network evaluator requires a set of skills and an overall sensitivity to the dynamics of networks. The following skills were identified:

- To be present in the network;
- Active listening (and the ability to adapt listening/communicating to fit the culture of the network);
- Recognize patterns and synthesize information;
- See power dynamics and the impacts of those on network activity;
- See through multiple lenses and to hold these simultaneously;
- Identify different forms of leadership; and
- Give people a voice that enables them to tell their stories.

Often the 'evaluator' of the network is one who has some stewardship role within that network. For them, the ability to do rapid interventions (try-test-adjust) and quickly get feedback is highly valuable.

As noted earlier, a central question to be able to answer about any evaluation is that of purpose. What is the intended use, by what user?[6]

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[6] See the work of Michael Quinn Patton for a rich exploration of this central question.

Explorations into Network Evaluation

We have identified three distinct but interdependent arenas worthy of consideration in network evaluation: Network Ecosystem, Network Processes and Network Outcomes. These arenas are compiled in a framework that serves the purpose of guiding practitioners in developing and implementing some form of network evaluation.

How to use this Framework

The Framework below is broken out into three Tables. Each Table addresses one arena or lens of focus and is prefaced with a brief description of that lens. The first column, titled Characteristic, itemizes a list of characteristics or points of evaluation. The second column, titled Descriptive Questions, lists a set of initial questions intended to elucidate information and insight based on those points of evaluation. The third column, titled Evaluative Questions, lists a series of initial questions intended to provoke an evaluative assessment of the network. The final column, titled Example, provides a brief example of how the specific characteristic has produced insight for a previous user.

This approach was adopted for several reasons. The Characteristics were our group's first efforts to develop as exhaustive a list as possible of all the features and variables of a network. This list was meant to stimulate thinking about the extraordinary array of features that exist within a network.

The Descriptive Questions were intended as a device to ground the evaluation. Given the multiplicity of network configurations, we believe that some basic questions might first be answered before delving into a more exploratory evaluation. Oftentimes, we have never answered these questions for ourselves and the elucidation of a basic description can itself prove to be a very worthwhile exercise.

The Evaluative Questions are the heart of the evaluation and are intended to encourage deep reflection and exploration. This often requires a reference back to the descriptive questions and a comparison between intended and actual results.

The final column, Example, was created based on the recognition that nothing is truly as informative as a real world example. Our goal is to demonstrate how this Framework has been previously used to produce some valuable insight. We hope that this helps illustrate how the Framework can be used without hindering your own opportunity to produce a vastly different response.

Of course, the list of characteristics and questions below is not exhaustive, and the particular organization of characteristics into these frames can be debated. Not only is this a work in progress, but the variable nature of networks suggests that no "final" Framework can be

developed that will apply equally to all situations; some questions will inevitably be better suited to different network configurations or to different stages of network development. You should instead feel comfortable using the framework, diverging where appropriate, and adding back to this conversation to help enrich our understanding.

Some points of consideration and advice based on prior experience include:

- Consider one specific network you are working with and try to answer the questions one by one.
- Do not limit yourself to the specific questions posed, but instead think about each characteristic as you interpret it and as it applies to your case. Use the identified question only as a starting point for your exploration.
- Some of the questions can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no', but are really intended to provoke a deeper response. How do you know that the answer is 'yes' or 'no'? Would the answer be the same for all members?
- Consider completing this with a colleague in an "interview style" – encourage them to pose the question and to follow up with appropriate probes
- Write down your responses – or record them in some fashion - if you would like to share the results with others or return to them at a later time.
- Consider ways that this Framework can be used to solicit feedback/observations from multiple points of the network. Everything we know about networks tells us that there can never be a single, correct or final perspective or evaluation. Think instead about strategies for facilitating the multiplicity of perspectives
  - Have the Framework completed by members in different 'parts' of the network (e.g., based on geography, connectivity, centrality, etc.)
  - Compare the "hub's" evaluation results with the results of an evaluation completed by members
  - Consider completing this orally in a group setting to compare and contrast perspective; identify the points of convergence and divergence at opportunities for discussion and action

Ultimately, there is no correct way to use this Framework. It is a tool intended to produce insight that will help improve network operations and impact. Use as much or as little, in whatever manner you see fit, to help you along the journey of network evaluation.

Arena One – Network Ecosystem

The first arena or "frame" of analysis is *Network Ecosystem.* Loosely defined, this refers to the environment in which network activities take place as well as the ideas, values and approaches which bind the network together; in other words, it has both an internal and external component, *referring both to the ecosystem that is the network and the ecosystem in which the network exists.* An improved understanding of the network ecosystem helps us to clarify the purpose of the network, to identify the structures and beliefs which bind its members together, and to understand its relationship to its external environment. Evaluation in this arena could reveal inconsistencies or challenges that, if remedied, will lead to improve network operations. It includes such things as:

Characteristics	Descriptive Questions	Evaluative Questions
Internal Characteristics		
Network Structure	What is the organizational structure of the network (e.g., hub and spoke, shared leadership, etc.)? Is it a network of organizations or individuals?	How well is the structure serving the interests of the network? How has the structure changed over time? Does it require further adjustment?
Network Members	Who are the members of the network? Are there varying degrees/levels of membership?	Is the network membership appropriately defined? Is it appropriate to the goals and structure of the network?
Network Goals	What is the purpose (implicit or explicit) of the network? Is there a single explicit goal or are there multiple goals? Is there common perspective on goals among members?	Are common goals needed? Are the goals maintaining their relevancy? Is there sufficient room for new goals to emerge?
Network Theory of Change	What is the (implicit or explicit) theory of change of the network? How clear is this theory of change to network members?	Does it need to be made clearer? How is the Theory of Change manifesting in the practice of the network?
Network Values	What are the values that bind network members? (e.g. democratic decision making, or a commitment sustainable practices)	Are the values sufficiently clear? Are members embracing and exhibiting these values? In what ways?

Network Expectations	What are the expectations of participants? What are the expectations of the network as a whole? Do members share a set of expectations for the network and for their own involvement?	To what degree are network expectations being met?
Network Resources	What resources are available to the network and its members? What result comes from various resource inputs or lack thereof?	Are sufficient resources available to accomplish the network's objectives?
Network Permeability	How permeable are the network boundaries? (i.e., how easily can members join or exit the network?)	Does network permeability need to be decreased or increased? How is the current level of permeability serving the network?
Network Story	What is the story – or shared mythology – of network members? How do they understand the network and their role within it?	Is further work necessary to ensure a shared understanding? How is the network story evolving?
External Characteristics		
Change System	What is the larger system within which the network operates?	What features of this system does the network need to be attuned to? How is the network attuned to the external system? Is this sufficient?
Stakeholders	Who has a stake in the network? Who would be affected by the changes that the network is working towards?	Is the network sufficiently engaging these stakeholders?
Funding Environment	How is the network financially supported? How are shifts in the external ecosystem affecting funding?	How should the network attend to changes in the funding environment? To what degree does the network have the financial resources it requires?
Political Environment	What is happening in the political environment that may have an impact on the network?	How should the network attend to changes in the political environment?

Economic Environment	What is happening in the economy that may impact the network?	How should the network attend to changes in the economic environment?
Social/Cultural Environment	What is happening in the external cultural or social environment that may have an impact on the network? Are changes to popular consciousness or social norms changing or affecting the network?	How should the network attend to changes in the social/cultural environment?
Technological Environment	Are there relevant technological changes which might impact the network?	How should the network attend to changes in the technological environment?

Arena Two – Network Processes

The second frame of analysis is *Network Processes*. Loosely defined this refers to the operations of the network and includes such things as the activities, energy, communications and relations of the network. Attention to network processes helps us to better understand the overall health and vitality of the network. Evaluation in this arena could reveal particular strengths or weaknesses in network operations, and identify strategies for improving the effectiveness of how the network functions.

It includes the following:

Characteristics	Descriptive Questions	Evaluative Questions
Network Activities	What are the activities of the network and its members?	In what ways are the network's activities working toward its goals?
Network Energy Flow	Where is there energy (or lack of energy) in the network (i.e., which activities are embraced and which are not being attended to)? To what degree does the network stimulate the activity of members?	In what ways should the network stewards act further to direct or stimulate the flow of energy?
Network Facilitation	How is the network being animated, sustained and developed?	How well are stewards of the network performing? In what ways does the network

		support reflective practice?
Network Communication	How does information flow into, out of, and through the network?	Does information move throughout the network as intended? Where are the blockages and what are the sources of those blockages? Does the network listen to its members, stakeholders, etc.?
Network Governance	What is the governance or decision-making structure that is in place for the network? What role does power play in the network?	How well is the governance structure working? Are members satisfied with the governance structure?
Network Roles	What are the roles being assumed by different members and how well are they being fulfilled? Their contributions? Are there individual members who are differentiating themselves in some way?	Are members comfortable with their roles? Are the current roles serving the network effectively? Is the assignment (or assumption) of roles being handled appropriately?
Network Relations	What is the degree of trust within the network? Is there reciprocity between network members? How transparent and authentic is the network? How dense and interconnected is the network? What are the different levels of engagement?	Is there a clear and common understanding of what healthy relations look like? Are network relations healthy? Is further work necessary to build trust and healthy relationships? Are network members happy with their existing relationships?
Network Decisions	How are decisions made in the network? Does the decision-making process differ in practice than intended?	Is the decision-making structure serving the network? How satisfied are members with the processes of decision-making?

Arena Three – Network Outcomes

The third level of analysis is *Network Outcomes*. Loosely defined, this refers to the anticipated and unanticipated impact of network activities and the degree to which the network meets its stated and emerging goals. An improved understanding of network impact helps us to understand whether the network is achieving its stated goals and can be seen as the ultimate determinant of network effectiveness.

It includes such things as:

Characteristics	Descriptive Questions	Evaluative Questions
Network Outputs	What has been produced by the network? (e.g. information, or programs, etc.)	Are members satisfied with the outputs? Are the outputs working toward the network goals?? Have you made a distinction between outputs and outcomes?
Network Goals	What are the network's goals? What new goals have emerged over time? Has the network achieved its stated goals?	Are the goals still serving the network? Are they providing sufficient direction? What do emerging goals tell us about the network?
Impact on Members	How is membership in the network impacting its members? Are new opportunities or connections being formed?	How can the impact of membership in the network be increased?
Network Impact	To what degree is the network having an impact (e.g., on behavior(s), policy, funding, etc.)? In what areas? To what extent?	Is the network having the intended impact? What changes can be made to the network to increase its impact?

Refining our thinking

The sections above merely identify the arenas of exploration; there is a great deal of work yet to be done to test the value of this framework and to develop appropriate evaluation strategies that work within and across these arenas.

It is also important to ensure that we take advantage of existing knowledge in the field. In particular, Provan and Milward (2001) encourage us to pay specific attention to what they call the three levels of network analysis: community, network and organization/ participant. This is another valuable way of organizing our thinking about networks that may influence the processes of evaluation within each of the arenas identified above. For example, are we measuring for impact at the community level or at the level of the individual members? Some clear thinking around this area will inform the evaluation strategy that is employed.

We identify several questions to further refine our thinking:

- Categorization: Do the three arenas (ecosystem, processes, outcomes) further our thinking about network evaluation? Do they sufficiently capture the full spectrum of network activities? Are they sufficiently clear and developed?

- What are the tools, strategy, lenses etc. we need to employ at each of these three levels in order to better understand the health and effectiveness of our networks? How do we connect the three levels?

- What is the connection to existing evaluation strategies that focus on community, network, and individual member levels of analysis? Is there a way to integrate the approaches? Is it important to?

- How do we better understand the dynamics of power? In what way does power surface within the network and its activity? In what way does power surface and influence in evaluation.

Where to from here?

We started with a question we believed to be relatively simple: How do we better understand the health and impact of our networks? But our exploration took us down paths that became increasingly complex – and increasingly interesting. We realized that evaluating networks meant more than applying existing tools and frameworks to a unique organizational form; it meant devising a new form of "network evaluation" whose methods and metaphors were aligned with the subject matter we were exploring.

This document reflects the outcome of this initial investigation. But in many ways, this learning journey has just begun. We have revealed dozens of avenues that still need to be pursued. Members of our group are now eager to sink their teeth into new projects that extend and advance our current thinking. One member is looking at the impact of relational practices with funding bodies. Another is exploring the shadows and ghosts of networks – the intangible forces of culture and practice and their relationship to structure and purpose. And yet another is looking to better understand the intersection of network thinking, philanthropy, and the philosophies emerging from the open source movement.

This is just the earliest beginnings of an emerging field of study. We want this document to serve as the starting point of a new exploration. As networks and the accompanying literature continue to proliferate, we want to promote attention on evaluation. We want others to become enthused and excited about network evaluation. We want others to stretch current thinking and identify tools and strategies for evaluating networks in ways that are consistent with this unique and increasingly prevalent structure.

As networks become increasingly commonplace it will become even more important to understand their health and impact. We hope this document serves as a step on this journey.

Appendix A: Recommended Readings

[Weaving Effective Networks: Insights from Packard Foundation Grantees](#) (PDF: 850 KB)
To better understand the nature of network needs and identify opportunities for supporting the effectiveness of networks, the Foundation—in partnership with the Monitor Institute—conducted a study of grantees formally structured as networks. This report provides a summary of findings, including an overview of the assessment process and a discussion of the primary areas of opportunity.

[Working Wikily: How Networks Are Changing Social Change](#) (PDF: 350 KB)
An article about networks and social media tools and how they are changing philanthropy and the social sector.

[Wiki Principles: Initial Thoughts for the Philanthropy and Networks Exploration](#) (PDF: 19 KB)
A memo drafted by Chris DeCardy early on in the Philanthropy and Networks Exploration, framing his thoughts on how network principles could be applied to foundations.

[What Networks Do and Why They Matter Now](#) (PDF: 600 KB)
A typology of what networks are structured to achieve, and our perspective on what's new about networks now.

[Logic Model](#) (PDF: 22 KB)
An outline of Philanthropy and Networks Exploration activities and the corresponding outputs and outcomes they're designed to achieve

Provan & Milward…

Others?

Appendix B: The rationale for convening this group

Apart from its core work in the delivery of merit scholarship programs, the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation has a deep interest in supporting the evolution of thinking and practice related to its core activities and areas of reflection. In other words, the Foundation sees its activities in a circular fashion with action informing reflection and vice versa. Where possible, we attempt to convene stakeholders around issues or questions which affect our work and which may be of interest to a larger group of actors.

So, in the interest of learning how to better evaluate our effectiveness, the Foundation hosted a meeting in December 2006 with June Holley of the Plexus Institute regarding network weaving and a software program she has developed which graphically depicts network evolution. This meeting generated encouraging interest form participants. As such, the Foundation saw an opportunity to go deeper and begin to create an environment of knowledge creation in the field of network development and evaluation.

One of the characteristics of the Foundation's structure is that it recognizes where its capacities end and those of other 'experts' begin. As such, the Foundation holds partnership and collaboration as fundamental principles. Although the Foundation has had an informal relationship with the Centre for Social Innovation for years which has led to intermittent collaborations, circumstances led us to approach them as a co-convener for this initiative. The Foundation felt that CSI had the expertise in working with networks and communities of learning to be able to provide crucial legitimacy and strategic thinking to ensure success. The Centre's work focuses on building social capital and connecting networks cross-sectorally, so this seemed like a good fit to co-learn together.

Foundation and CSI staff got together over the course of spring 2007 to map out what such a learning group would look like and how we could offer something that was both inspiring and concrete and maximized participants' knowledge and time. We agreed that the environment had to stimulate the creation of new knowledge and be founded upon both sound evaluative principles and the expertise of the participants. We also agreed that the people invited to participate should, where possible, represent a variety of network-focused activities and the gamut of experience from academe to practice. Finally, we agreed that it was important to engage an expert facilitator with a broad experience in evaluation to ensure follow-through and rigour.

Having set the broad strokes, we then invited participants and held our inaugural meeting on June 27th and 28th in Toronto.

Appendix C: Participants

Name	Organization
Andrew Woodall	Millennium Scholarship Foundation
Barbara Oates McMillan	Community Foundations of Canada
Chad Lubelsky	Millennium Scholarship Foundation
Colette Murphy	Metcalf Foundation
Dave Kranenburg	Meal Exchange
Deirdre Luesby	Seniors Network for Ontario
Eli Malinsky	Centre for Social Innovation
Jamie Gamble	Imprint Consulting
Jane Thompson	TD Canada Trust Scholars
Jane Rabinowicz	Santropol Roulant
Katherine Reilly	University of Toronto
Liz Rykert	Meta Strategies
Marilyn Struthers	Trillium Foundation
Mark Surman	Telecentre.org
Megan Thom	Millennium Scholarship Foundation
Melanie Redman	Belonging Initiative
Michael Manolson	Social Innovation Generation
Tonya Surman	Centre for Social Innovation