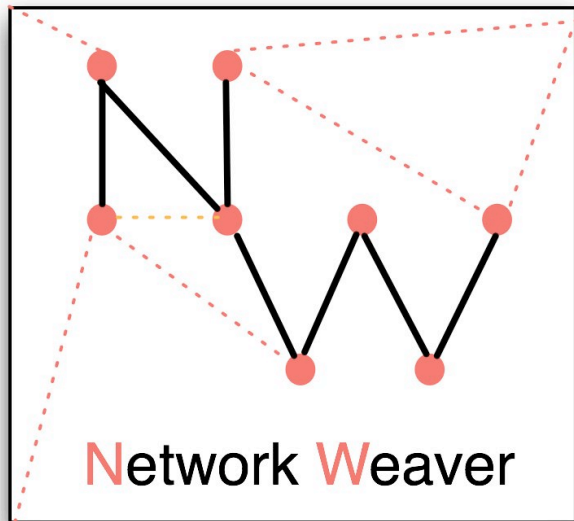


Network Structure for Self-Organizing

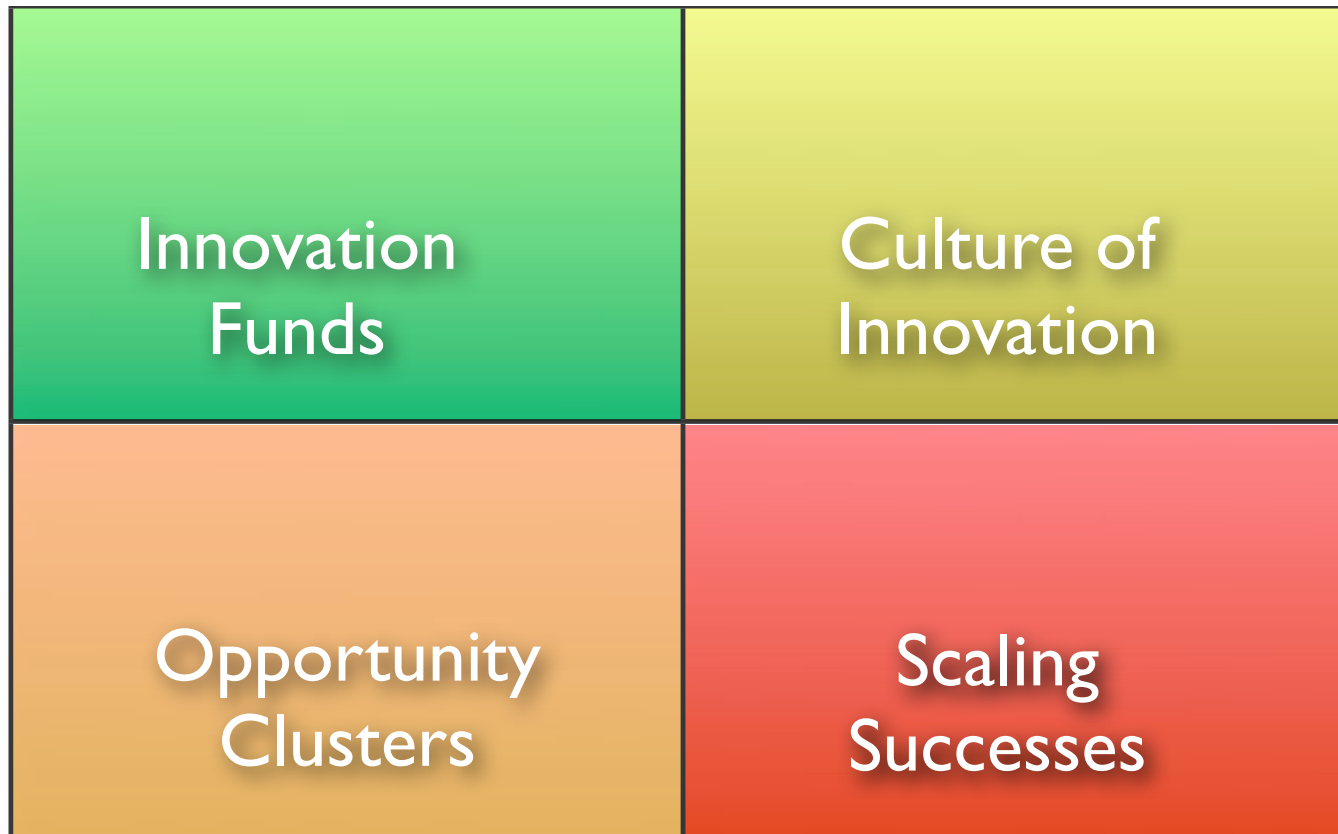


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Why Network Structure?

- How do we move from lone Network Weavers to many Network Weavers?
- How do we move from projects lead by lone Network Weavers to having many, spontaneous collaborations led by a diverse set of individuals?
- How do people in networks learn to value collaboration and organize effective collaborations?
- How do networks learn, improve what they are doing and build knowledge?
- How do we know what next steps to take to enhance the network?

Need a System to Help People Move to Self-Organization



Network Leadership
Network Guardians

Purpose of Innovation Funds

- Give people small incentives for working together
- Encourage innovation and trying out new ideas
- Build skills in project coordination
- Get pilots that show success -- and then larger funds can take the projects to scale

Examples of Innovation Funds

- **West Virginia Mini-Grants Fund**

- 1) http://www.sustainable.org/casestudies/SIA_PDFs/SIA_West_Virginia.pdf

- 2) A series of training workshops in project coordination before groups can apply

- 3) A pool of funds for mini-grants of \$500- \$2,000.

- 4) 3 Simple rules: 3 attend workshops, community-based, 6 months projects

- **Yellowroot Fund**

- 1) Mini-grants of \$300 - \$3000

- 2) 2 page grant application, 2 months to apply, 1-2 months to make decision

- 3) Simple rules: Had to include 3 groups or entrepreneurs, share what learned, leverage additional funds

- 4) Group of 3 “Network Guardians” who understand the network made decisions

Examples of Innovation Funds

- North Carolina U Innovation Fund - for new programs and projects
- SBIR Grants - Stage 1 and Stage 2
- Seed Funds - collaboration two groups of people (researchers-business; university-community)
- Community-based Innovation Funds

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Setting Up An Innovation Fund

- Amount?
- Decision-making Group? (NOT Network Weaver)
- Purpose: collaboration? innovation? leadership development? Network Weaver development?
- Other targets: cross neighborhood? cross race/ethnic? youth involvement? cross organizational type?
- Training option?
- Reward: get to present to funders?
- One or Two stage
- Role of Network Weaver? Mentor?
- Leverage Additional Funds? In-kind (sweat equity) match?

Innovation Funds & Knowledge Building

- Critical that set of funded projects operate as Learning Cluster
- Identify “patterns of success”
- Critical that whole network knows “patterns of success”

Network Leadership

To be self-organizing,

- Need many people to be acting as Network Weavers in their neighborhoods
- Need formal leaders (heads of organizations, etc) to formally acknowledge importance of networks and become Network Leaders
- Need Network Guardians who think about the whole network

Expanding Network Weavers

- Use checklists to identify Natural Network Weavers
- Provide training
- Best if they act as Community of Practice

Getting Leaders to Become Network Leaders

- Use the maps and network knowledge to identify key, visible leaders
- Start with those who already “get it” about networks
- Work with them on network soundbites
- Work of Jack Ricchiuto www.designinglife.com

Network Leadership – Network Guardians

- Big picture people
- Have a pulse on the entire network and a good sense of its health and strengths
- Know who are leaders or highly respected
- Know who is isolated, who has conflicts with whom
- Have a sense about activities or projects that are needed to keep the network moving and growing
- Work on expanding network resources, policy, etc

They sometimes meet in an informal or formal Strategy Group. They review Network Maps w/ NWs.

Culture of Innovation, Collaboration, Networks and Learning

- What sound bites?
- What media strategies?
- What training for network participants?
- Conferences, talks (Barr, other afterschool organizations)?
- What leaders get it now? How can they take responsibility for culture?

Opportunity Clusters

- 1) Networks have common interests that tie participants together. However, moving to *action* requires a focusing of those common interests.
- 2) The best focus initially is an **opportunity** that arises to do something that a two people or a small group is interested in. Often these small projects have something in common and thinking about them together helps get critical mass and helps the many small projects build into something significant.
- 3) Examples might be “opportunities for new dance spaces” or “working with sports heros to open new resources” or “swimming”, etc.

Opportunity Cluster Process

- (1) Identify high priority Opportunity Clusters
- (2) For each, identify individuals and organizations interested in acting in that area and help them get to know each other through face-to-face gatherings, conference calls, and Internet communications
- (3) Identify a cluster coordinator who will work with each local group
- (3) Identify sources of innovation relevant to that Opportunity Cluster
- (4) Identify Network Hubs who can share information about these innovations
- (5) Encourage several simultaneous joint projects based on these innovations
- (6) Have the projects share successes and failures to improve project

Scaling

(a) Evaluation

Need to develop the capacity to *evaluate* projects to determine which will benefit the network most through scaling.

(b) Expertise and Training

Training needs to be available to help new Network Weavers, Network Guardians, etc

(c) Resources

Work with foundations to develop pool of funds to expand pilots to full scale

(d) Policy

More Information?

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