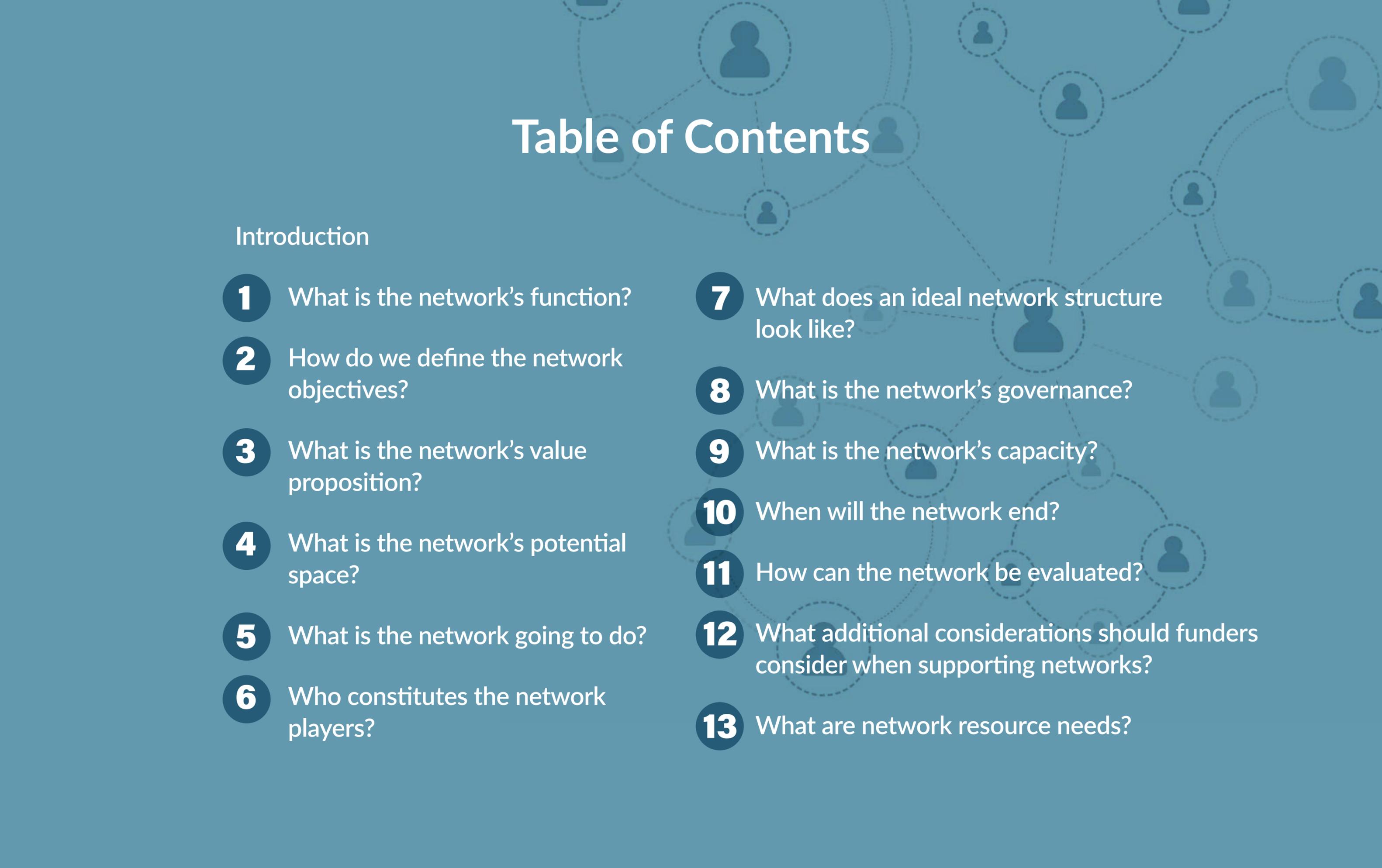


Thinking Strategically About Networks for Change

Table of Contents



Introduction

- 1** What is the network's function?
- 2** How do we define the network objectives?
- 3** What is the network's value proposition?
- 4** What is the network's potential space?
- 5** What is the network going to do?
- 6** Who constitutes the network players?
- 7** What does an ideal network structure look like?
- 8** What is the network's governance?
- 9** What is the network's capacity?
- 10** When will the network end?
- 11** How can the network be evaluated?
- 12** What additional considerations should funders consider when supporting networks?
- 13** What are network resource needs?



Introduction



Thinking Strategically about Networks for Change is a program officer's guidebook that grew out of requests from program officers who were seeking concrete background and practical information about steps to take in deciding whether – and how – to establish or enhance networks to support their initiatives.

This guide is designed for program officers to use in their work related to networks, coalitions, and other relationship-based structures as part of their initiatives, program strategies, and outcomes. It offers a set of core components that make up the basics of strategizing, implementing, and sustaining inter-organizational relationships and structures. You can work through the guide from beginning to end or jump to specific issues with which you might be struggling. Every component suggests concrete “actions” or questions that a program officer can apply.

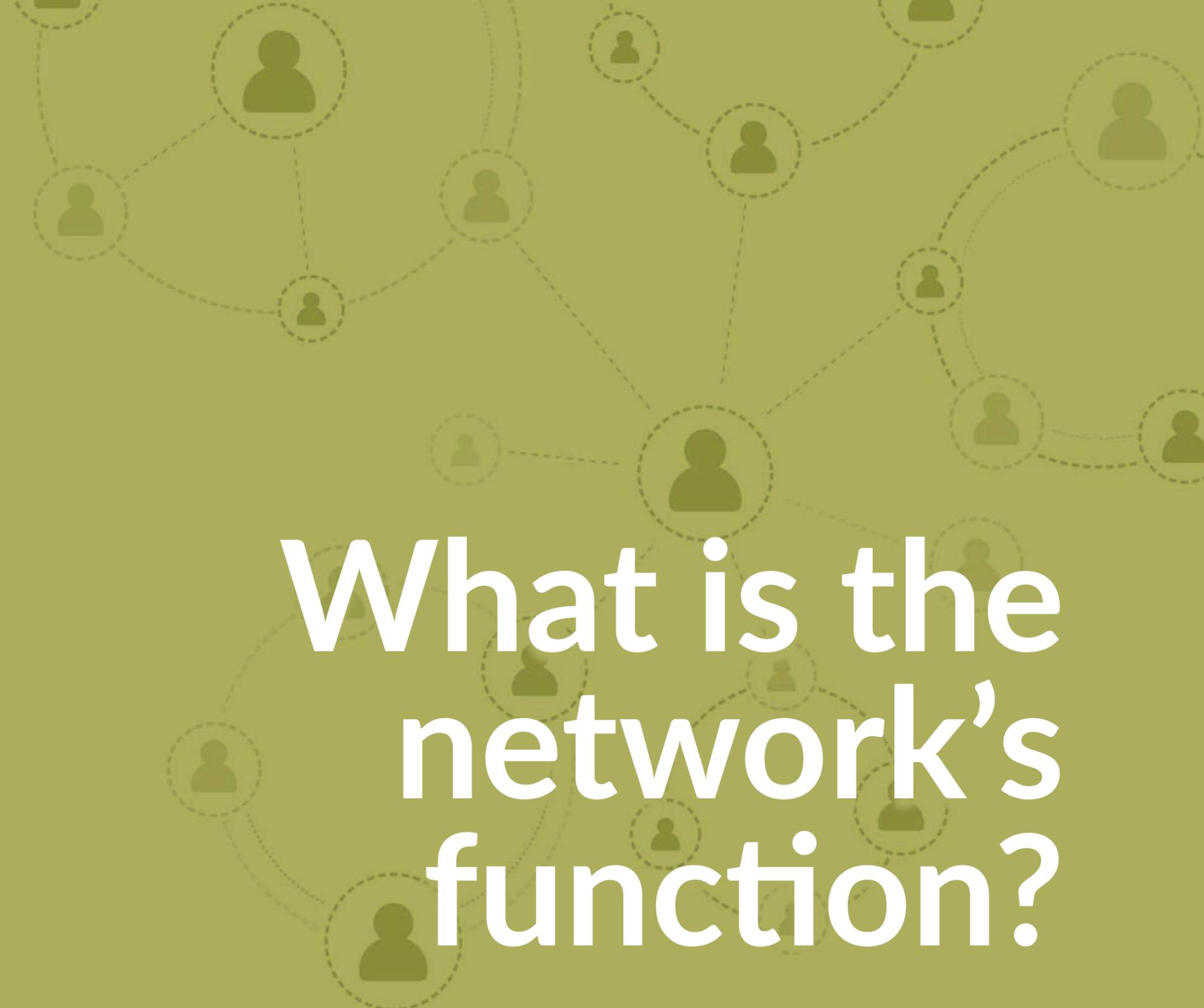
To illustrate each point, we share one practical example of how a specific network examined and addressed each point. The network example we use is the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN) – a network created as part of a Rockefeller Foundation initiative to help communities prepare to address the impact of climate change.



About the ACCCRN initiative

From 2008 until 2015, The Rockefeller Foundation supported the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN), an alliance that includes local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), scientific experts, urban planners, and disaster management specialists. Now well established, ACCCRN tests new approaches for cities to build enhanced resilience to the anticipated impacts of climate change. It creates systems to help diverse partners and policy makers learn from good practices, and supports work that brings attention, resources, and successful ideas to scale in vulnerable cities around the world.

ACCCRN had already implemented a number of important activities – including city selection, networking meetings, partner development, a baseline evaluation, and a second monitoring report – when it recognized a need to clarify what it meant by network and what it hoped to accomplish. As ACCCRN evolved, there was a desire to facilitate the emergence of a robust and sustainable network. In other words, ACCCRN needed to examine its purpose, structure, and management in order to remain relevant to current and potential network members.



What is the network's function?

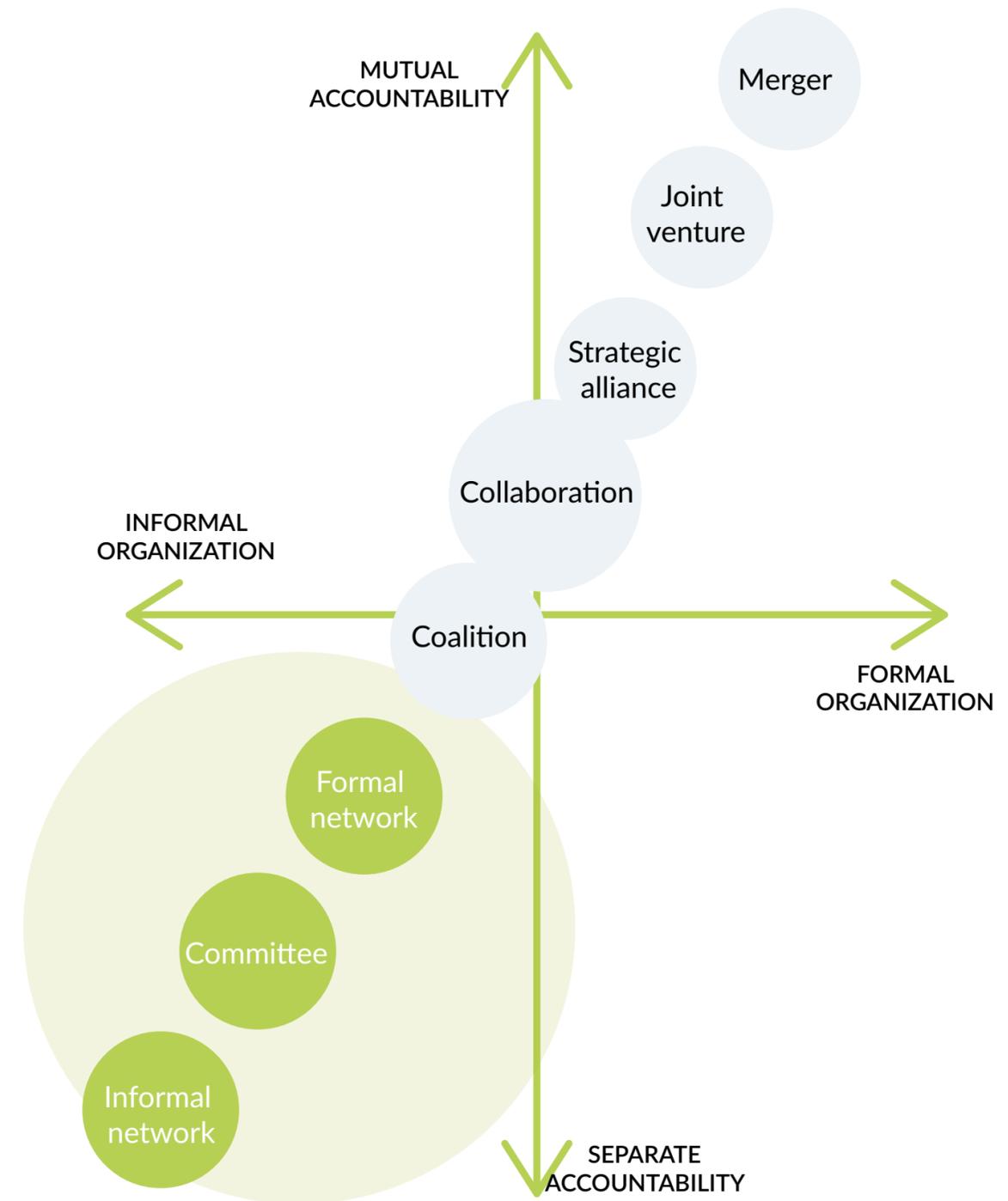
Defining networks

Networks mean many things to many people.

At their most basic, networks represent an organizational form with parameters related to shared levels of accountability and formality.

As shown in the figure “Network continuum,” these range from informal groups that are convened ad hoc to very formal collaborative arrangements.

Most people use the term network to refer to organizations such as those in the bottom-left quadrant of the figure: a formal network, a committee, or an informal network.



Network continuum

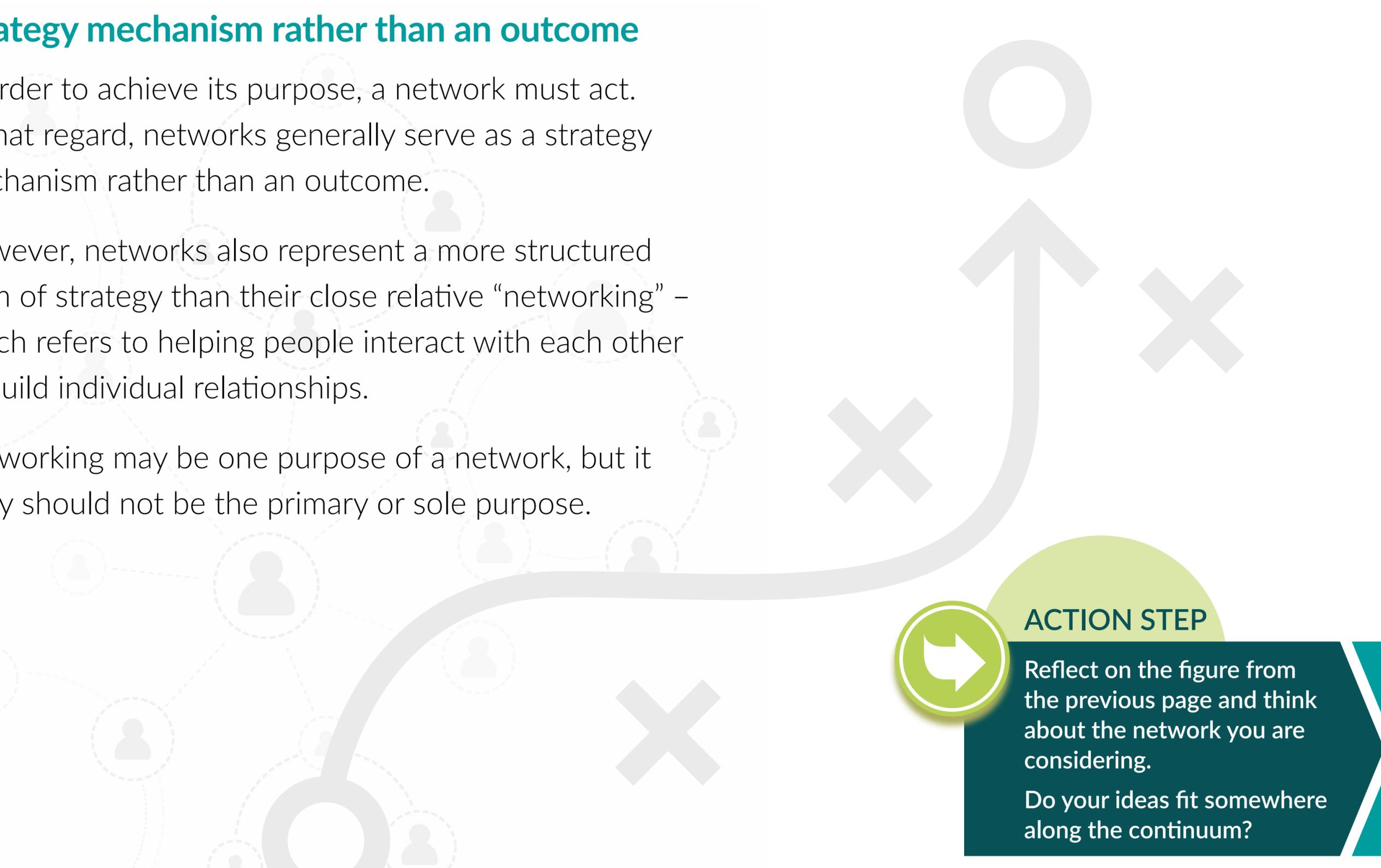
Source: adapted from Wolf T. 2003. A Practical Approach to Evaluation of Collaborations. In T.E. Backer (Ed.). Evaluating Community Collaborations, New York, NY. Springer Publishing Co. with additional acknowledgement of K. Hobson and M. Hightower King at AEA 2009.

Strategy mechanism rather than an outcome

In order to achieve its purpose, a network must act. In that regard, networks generally serve as a strategy mechanism rather than an outcome.

However, networks also represent a more structured form of strategy than their close relative “networking” – which refers to helping people interact with each other to build individual relationships.

Networking may be one purpose of a network, but it likely should not be the primary or sole purpose.



ACTION STEP

Reflect on the figure from the previous page and think about the network you are considering.

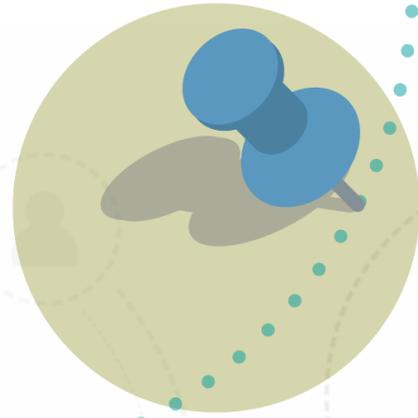
Do your ideas fit somewhere along the continuum?



ACCCRN defines its network function

Initially, ACCCRN was unclear as to the type of network it needed. Considerations ranged from a narrow community of practice with loosely affiliated adaptation professionals sharing information to a more defined coalition or collaboration that could influence external actors and have a formal identity. While leaving the door open for the network to evolve over time, The Rockefeller Foundation-convened group initially decided to define its network space as one with a focus on internal knowledge exchange, particularly within countries, but also with some facilitation across countries.

This decision grew from the fact that, initially, ACCCRN had needed to serve the core practitioners at the heart of the program in order to be of value. There was also a question as to whether the network should be branded strongly or just serve as a group of people who get together. There was a concern that an ACCCRN-branded network could be too tied to The Rockefeller Foundation. With an implicit assumption that the network would be sustained beyond the Foundation's involvement, the group considered ways to define its brand and network definition in a way that recognized other city efforts underway outside of the Foundation's support.



Remember, creating a network is different from fostering networking.

Networks generally require high levels of resources to get started and infusions of resources to keep going.

Given the potential expense of a network, thinking strategically about what you want from the network is important.

Every network should be able to answer **2** questions.

GOAL DESTINATION

What are we trying to achieve?

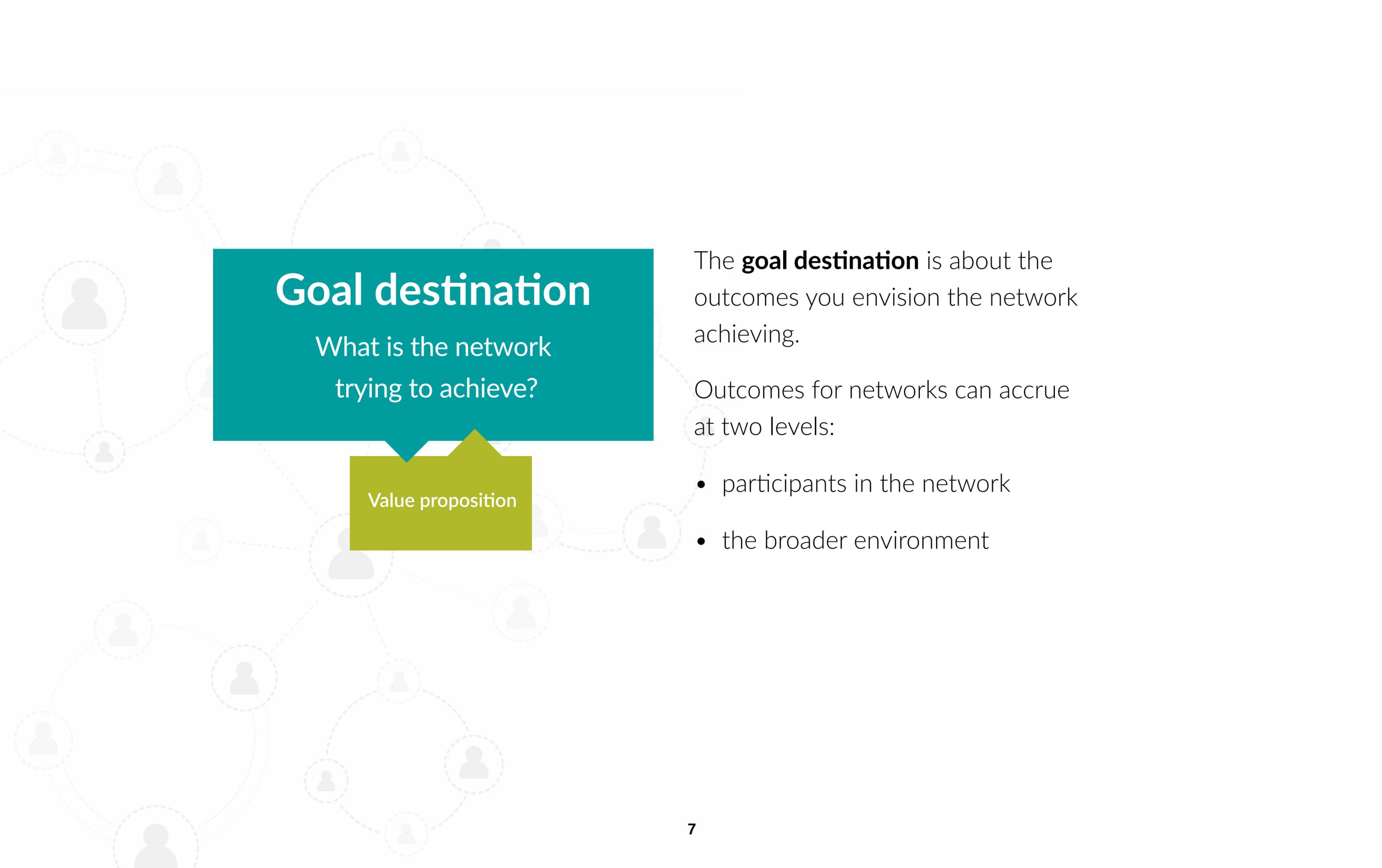
VALUE PROPOSITION

Why is the network the best vehicle for pursuing the achievement?



How do we define the network objectives?

Defining the goal destination



Goal destination

What is the network
trying to achieve?

Value proposition

The **goal destination** is about the outcomes you envision the network achieving.

Outcomes for networks can accrue at two levels:

- participants in the network
- the broader environment

Sample external outcomes

- Increased visibility and knowledge of issue
- Increased influence on external actors
- Developed good research, increased data, added new knowledge
- Overcame important “sticking” points in moving an agenda or policy
- Increased public will
- Increased coordination of activities
- Increased resources

Sample internal outcomes

- Developed sense of belonging
- Increased skills and capacity
- Increased information/data
- Increased access to resources (while maintaining autonomy)
- Decreased transaction costs
- Increased legitimacy and power



ACTION STEP

Make a list of the outcomes that you envision the network accomplishing.

Are the outcomes clear?

Does it seem like a network is the best approach to pursuing those outcomes?



ACCCRN defines its network outcomes

ACCCRN defined goals in its results framework related to capacity development, network knowledge, scaling up, and organizational excellence. These were all good short-term outcomes, but ACCCRN needed a clearer anchor outcome – a focus on what the network would really be working toward.

The ACCCRN team had to prioritize among several potential anchor goals, such as more narrowly supporting skills development of ACCCRN participants, more broadly impacting knowledge development, or driving external funding to climate change resilience initiatives.

For each of these (broadly depicted in the table on page 10), there were pros and cons. Ultimately, through a process of engaging broad stakeholder groups, the ACCCRN team settled on two anchor outcomes and decided the network was appropriate for addressing those outcomes.



Relationship outcomes

Setting short- and longer-term outcomes

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

- Fostering of relationships within cities
- Formation of sub-networks within countries
- Increased relationships among cities of network
- Improved country/regional coordinator motivation and interest in climate resilience

LONGER-TERM OUTCOMES

- Increased empowerment of local city and CBO partners
- Improved country/regional coordinator skills
- Increased interest in formally working together on climate resilience
- Increased funding for the resilience activities

Climate resilience outcomes

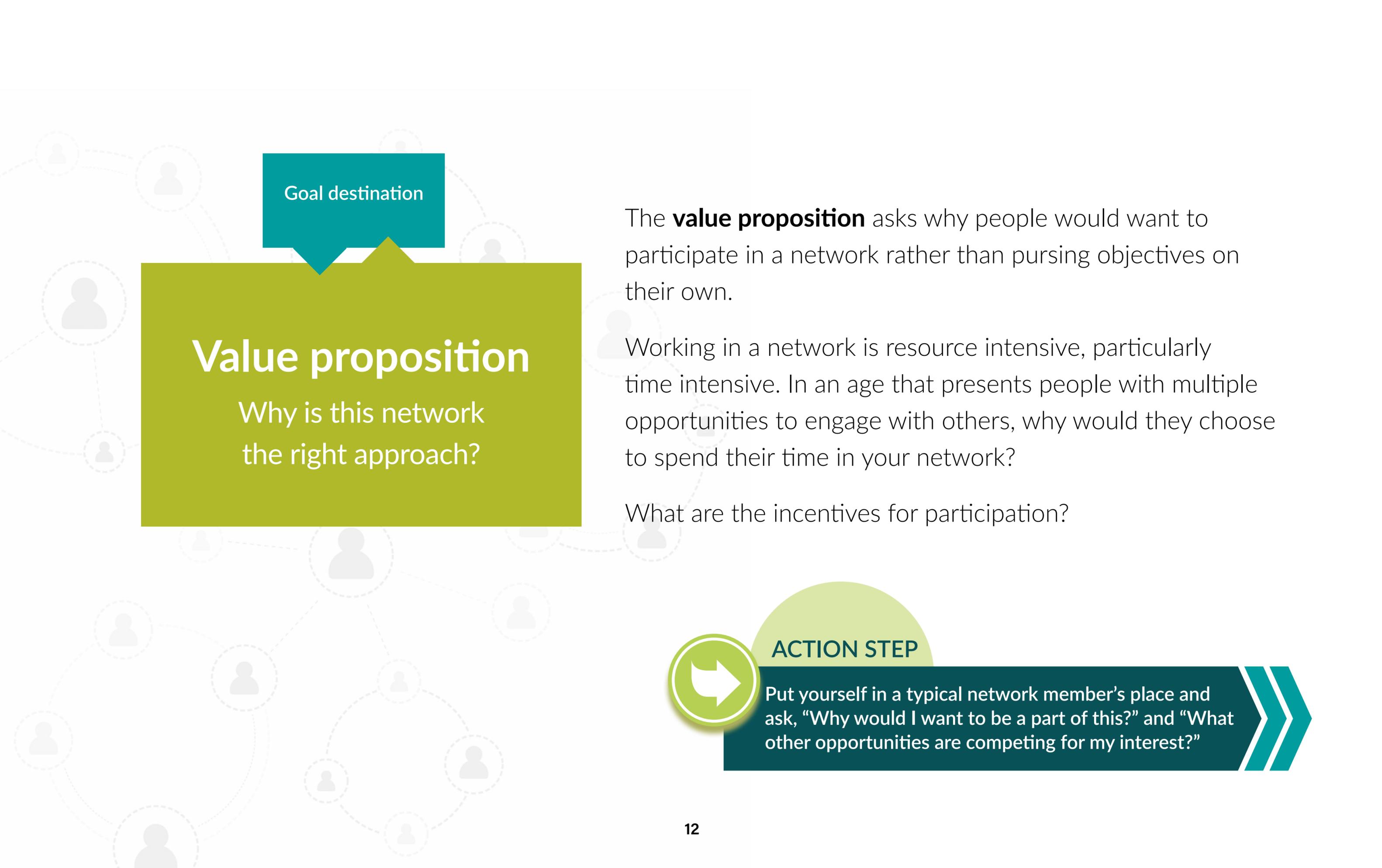
- Citizen awareness of climate adaptation issues
- City policy maker awareness/knowledge
- City policy maker motivation
- City policy maker skills/ideas
- City preparedness groundwork (planning)

- Citizen preparedness projects implemented
- City sustainability of adaptive infrastructure
- Global “best practice” dissemination and support of others
- Global policy commitment and engagement



What is the network's value proposition?

Defining the value proposition



Goal destination

Value proposition

Why is this network
the right approach?

The **value proposition** asks why people would want to participate in a network rather than pursuing objectives on their own.

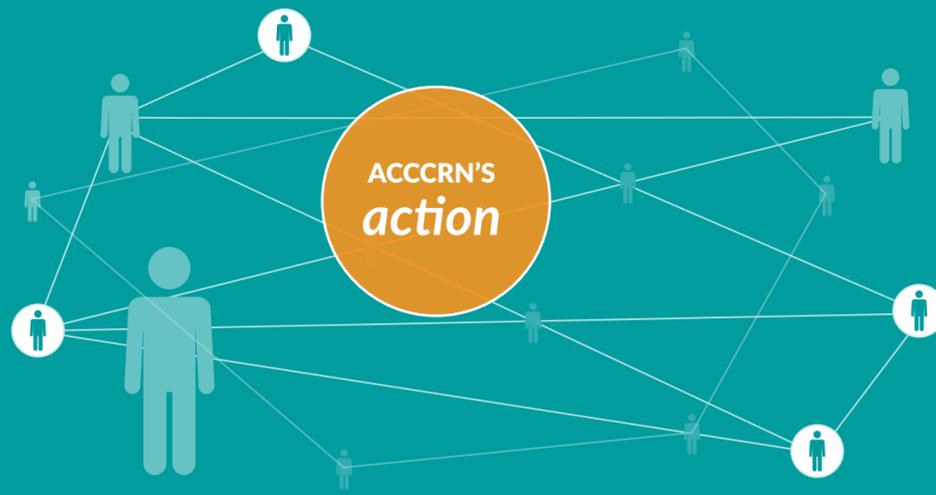
Working in a network is resource intensive, particularly time intensive. In an age that presents people with multiple opportunities to engage with others, why would they choose to spend their time in your network?

What are the incentives for participation?

ACTION STEP



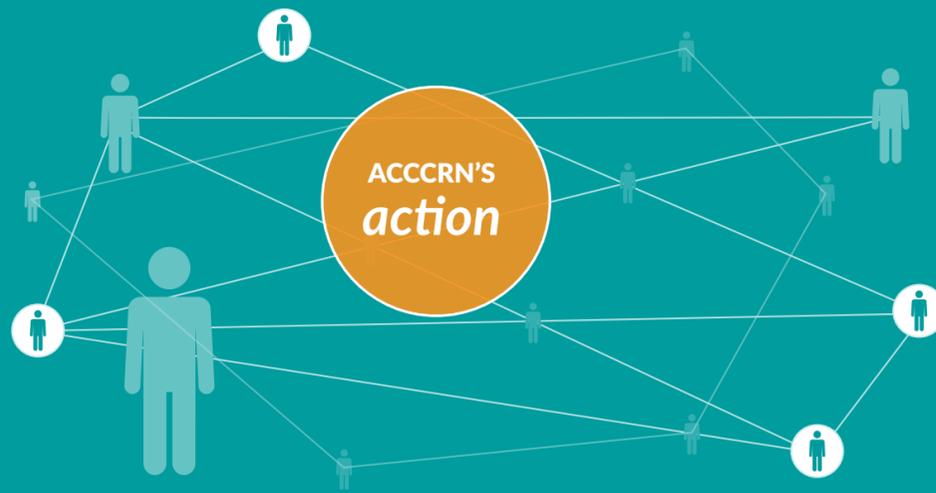
Put yourself in a typical network member's place and ask, "Why would I want to be a part of this?" and "What other opportunities are competing for my interest?"



ACCCRN defines its value proposition

ACCCRN faced several critical challenges regarding its value proposition.

- **Relationships and commonality** were still being formed within individual cities and were not sufficiently strong at the early stage to drive network development organically within individual cities. Relationships across cities, with minor exceptions, were even less developed. Some pilot activities could have potentially served as a common base, but the projects were not far enough along in their implementation.
- **Language barriers** made informal exchanges difficult. Virtual exchange would require a heavy moderating presence and potential focus on multiple language platforms.
- **The development of several other adaptation networks** made a more generic “adaptation community” value proposition less meaningful.
- **Political incentive** to participate was low. High-density urban areas grapple with a variety of problems, which meant getting their attention for adaptation activities was problematic. There appeared to be very few, if any, short-term benefits to pursuing adaptation activities. ACCCRN would be even a step removed from adaptation activities and would be in competition with other adaptation and non-adaptation networks.

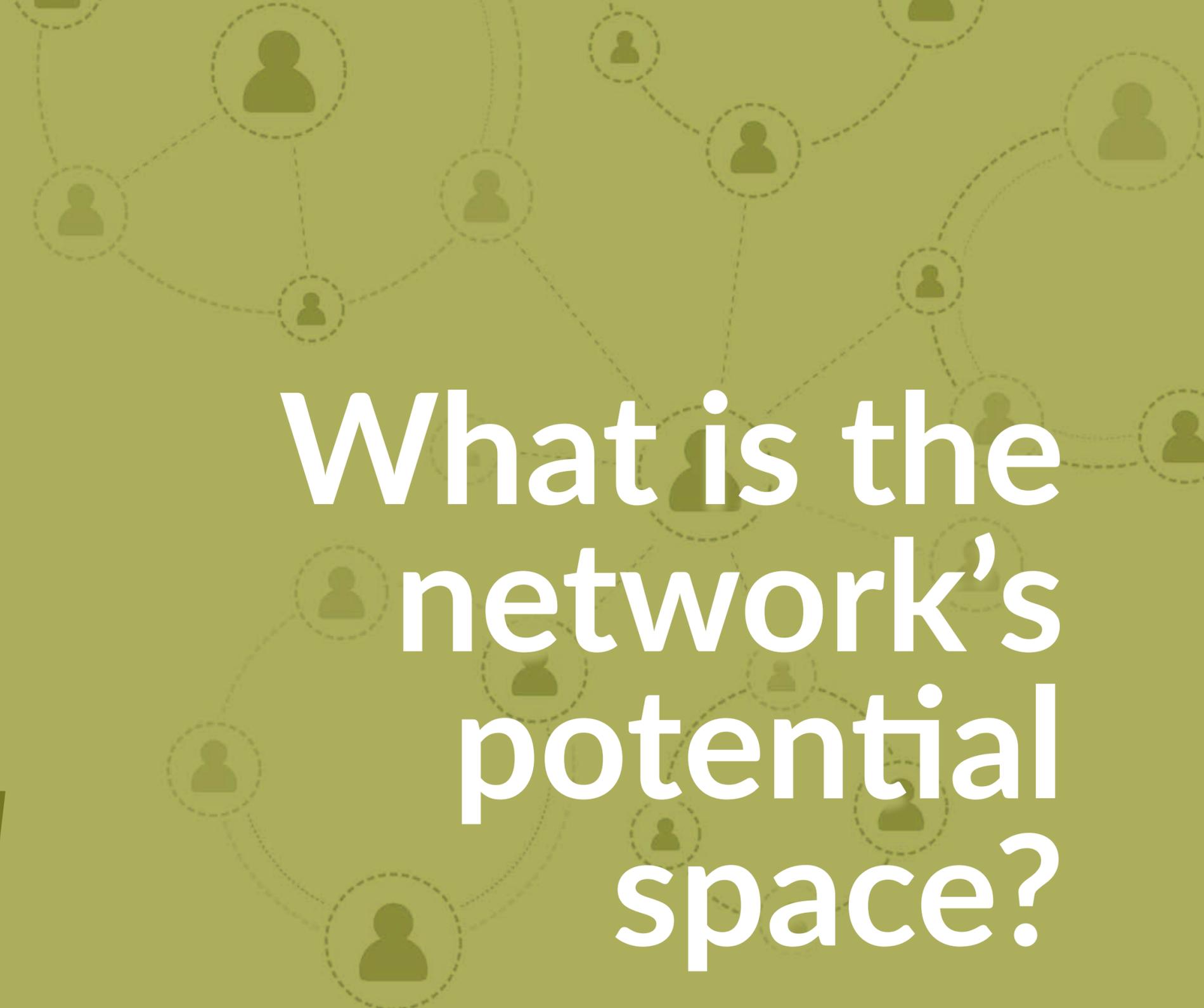


Some of the potential value propositions – which emerged as activities ACCCRN could do – were those that dealt with visibility, resources, and relationships.

- **Prestige and visibility** grew from presenting awards for cities, mayors, engineers, and others involved in the activities, as well as from disseminating information that highlighted these cities as “centers of excellence” within their country and/or region.
- **Resources** became a potential focus, with the understanding that cities would be able to attract additional money for implementing projects and creating jobs, or would gain specific knowledge or expertise in effectively implementing adaptation activities, such as undertaking case studies.
- **Relationships** were established through mentoring, one-to-one exchanges such as the city networking fund, or friendships that developed.

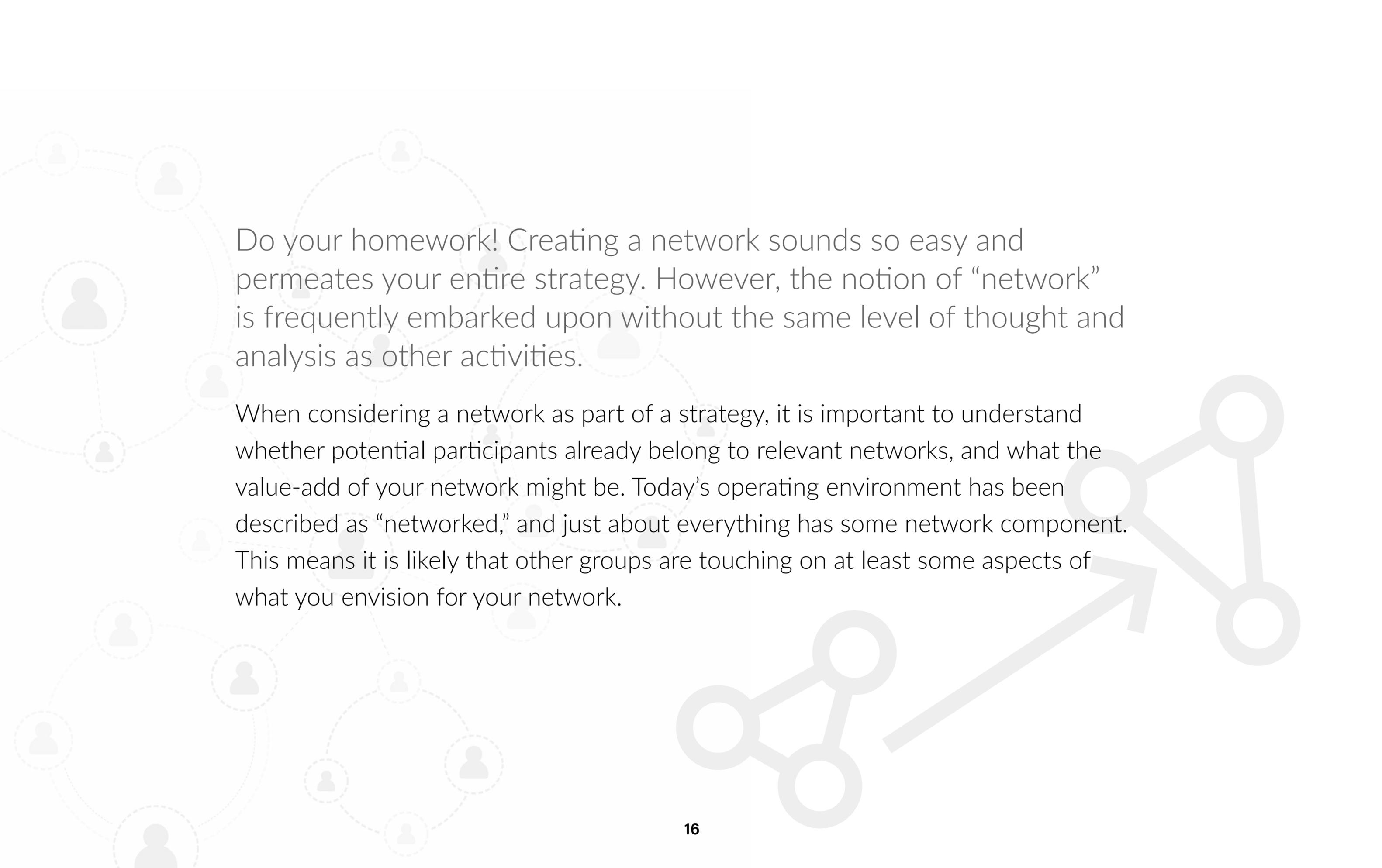


4



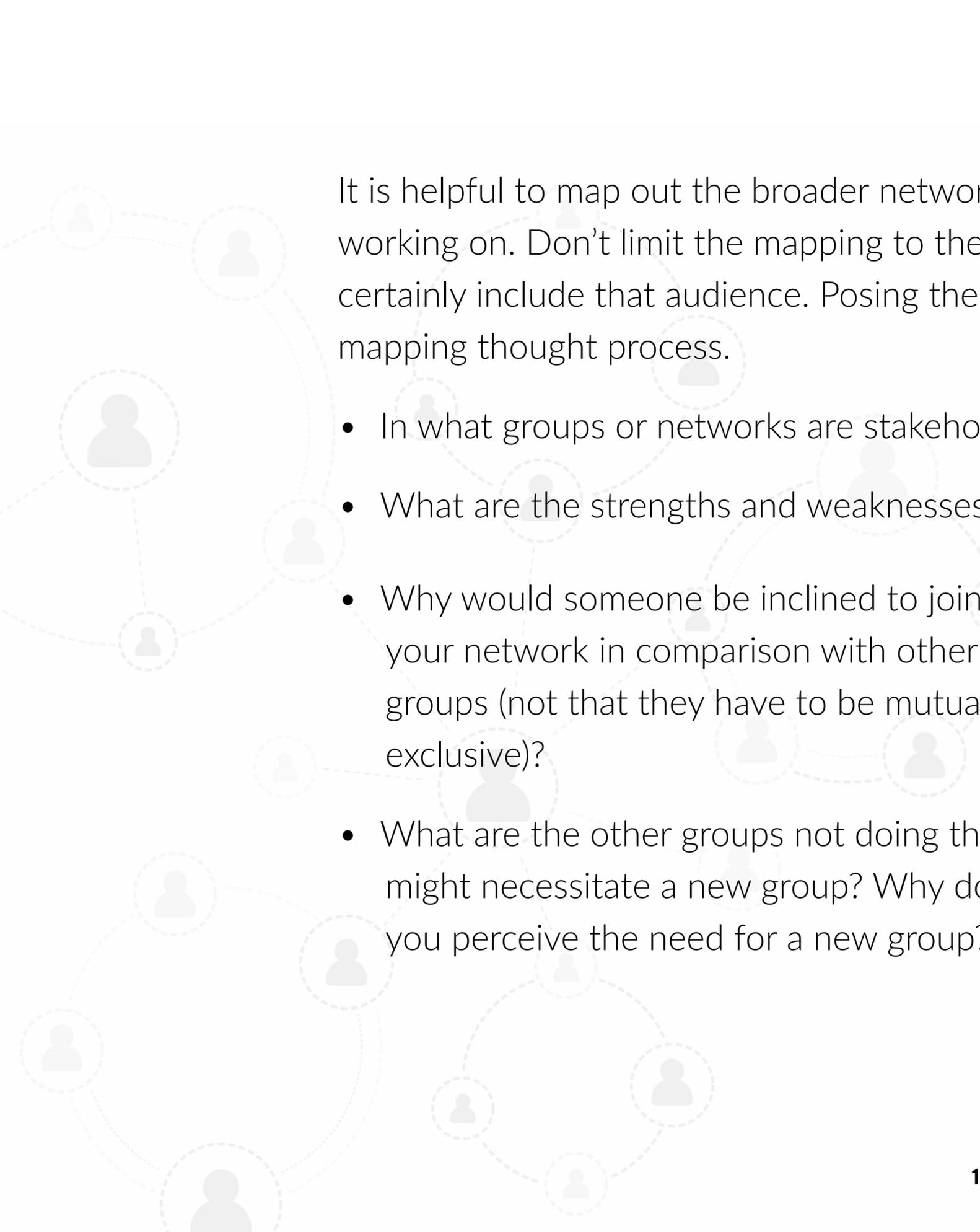
What is the network's potential space?

Defining the network environment

The background features a light gray network diagram. It consists of several circular nodes, each containing a stylized person icon. These nodes are interconnected by thin, dashed lines, forming a complex web of connections. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, typical of a professional presentation.

Do your homework! Creating a network sounds so easy and permeates your entire strategy. However, the notion of “network” is frequently embarked upon without the same level of thought and analysis as other activities.

When considering a network as part of a strategy, it is important to understand whether potential participants already belong to relevant networks, and what the value-add of your network might be. Today’s operating environment has been described as “networked,” and just about everything has some network component. This means it is likely that other groups are touching on at least some aspects of what you envision for your network.



It is helpful to map out the broader network environment on the issue that you are working on. Don't limit the mapping to the specific audience you are targeting, but certainly include that audience. Posing the following questions can help guide your mapping thought process.

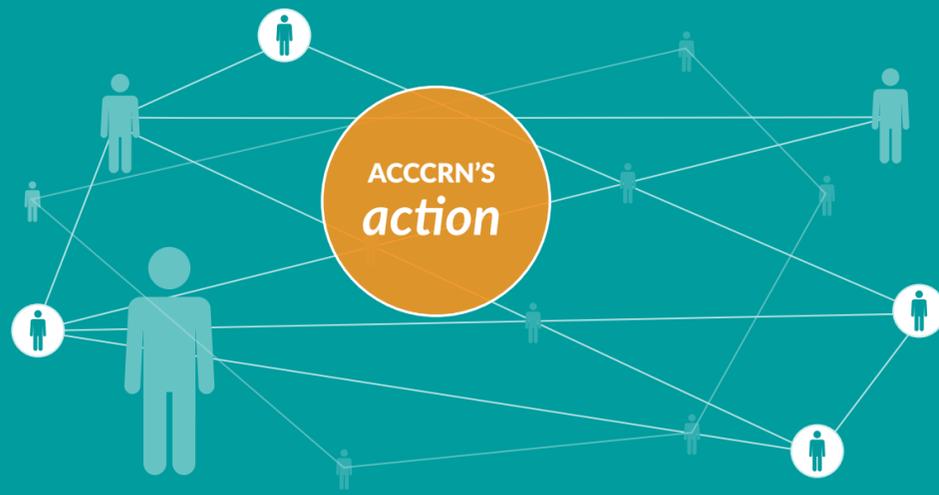
- In what groups or networks are stakeholders currently engaged?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of these other groups?
- Why would someone be inclined to join your network in comparison with other groups (not that they have to be mutually exclusive)?
- What are the other groups not doing that might necessitate a new group? Why do you perceive the need for a new group?



ACTION STEP

Map out the network environment for your issue – what other groups are out there, and what are they doing?

Then analyze the results for gaps in services or potential opportunities for collaborating or engaging.



ACCCRN defines its network environment

ACCCRN looked at the various networks that were beginning to emerge around climate adaptation, particularly as it related to Southeast Asia. Through its research, ACCCRN identified several other relevant networks that touched ACCCRN partners, including:

- World Mayor's Council for Climate Change (ICLEI)
- Indonesia Climate Change Network Asosiasi Pemerintah Kota Seluruh Indonesia (APEKSI)
- Cities Alliance
- National adaptation networks in Indonesia and India
- Solutions Exchange Index – UN offices within India and Indonesia
- Regional Learning Network – UN Habitat and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Climate Resilient Cities Program (World Bank)

As the ACCCRN team reviewed the broader network map, it identified clear opportunities for partnership and collaboration. It also realized that some of these groups had important ongoing initiatives related to climate adaptation. However, the networks neither touched a broad range of stakeholders at the local city level nor did they focus on developing a knowledge base that could be easily transferable – two things at which the ACCCRN network might excel.

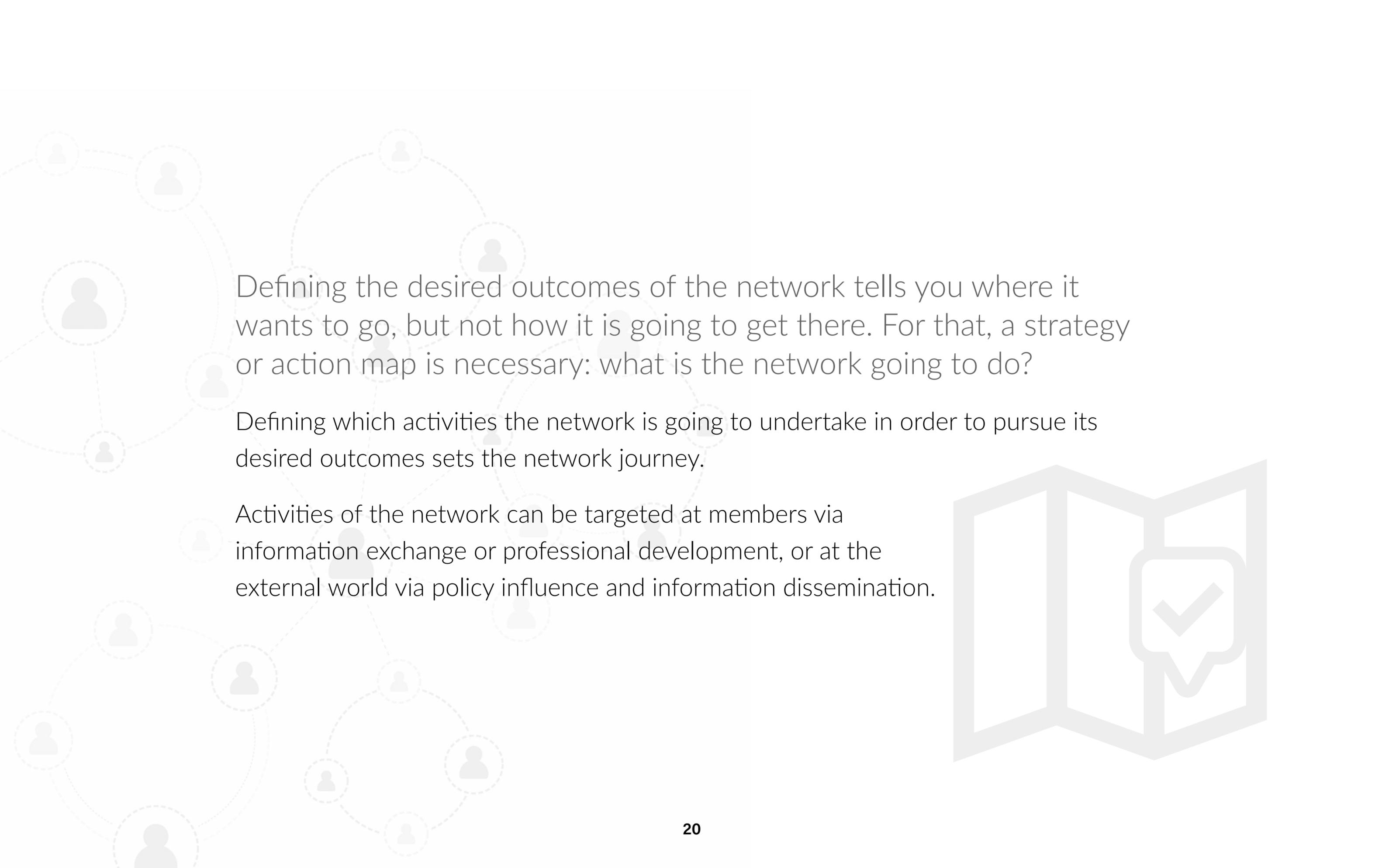


5



What is a network going to do?

Defining strategies and activities

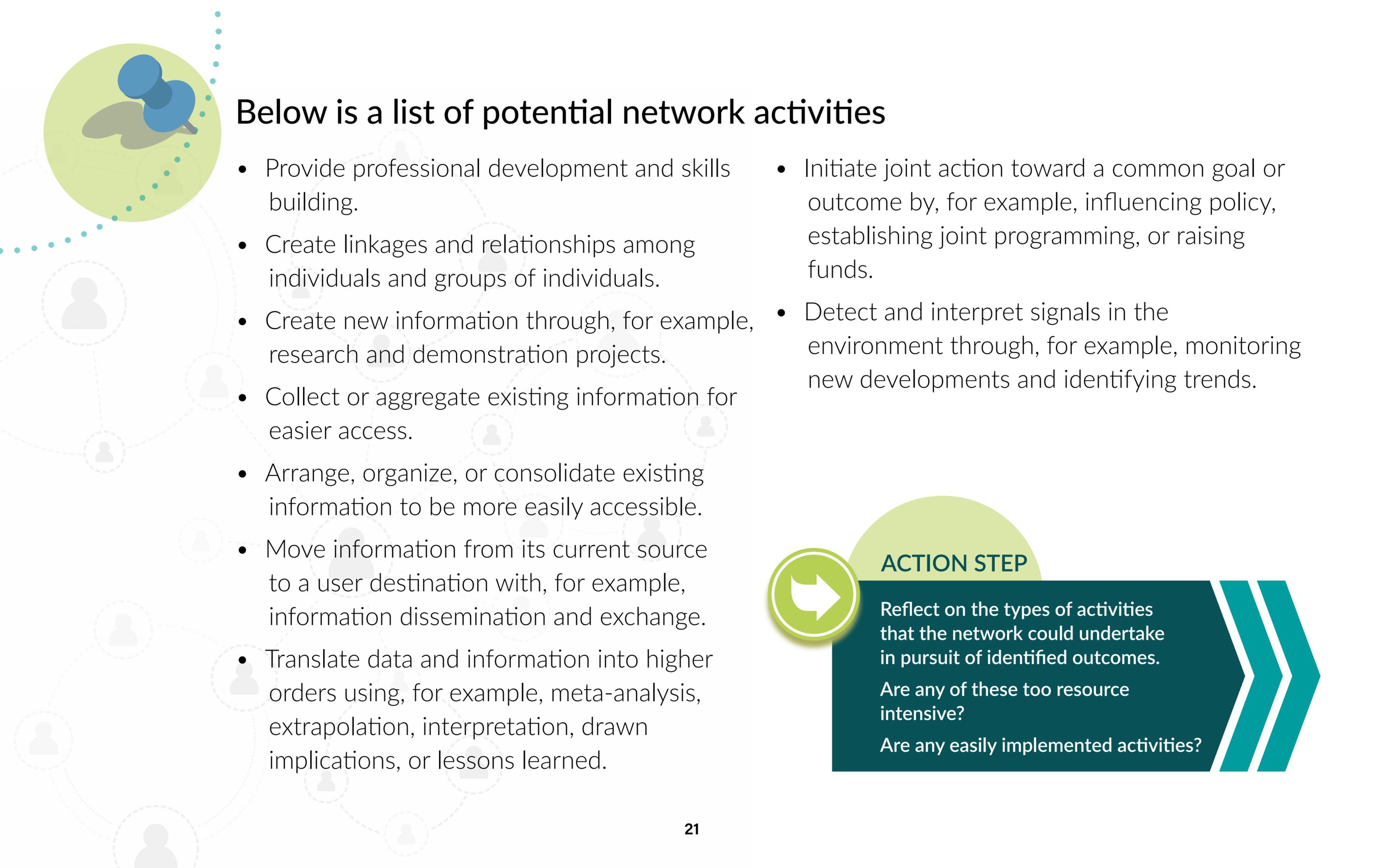


Defining the desired outcomes of the network tells you where it wants to go, but not how it is going to get there. For that, a strategy or action map is necessary: what is the network going to do?

Defining which activities the network is going to undertake in order to pursue its desired outcomes sets the network journey.

Activities of the network can be targeted at members via information exchange or professional development, or at the external world via policy influence and information dissemination.





Below is a list of potential network activities

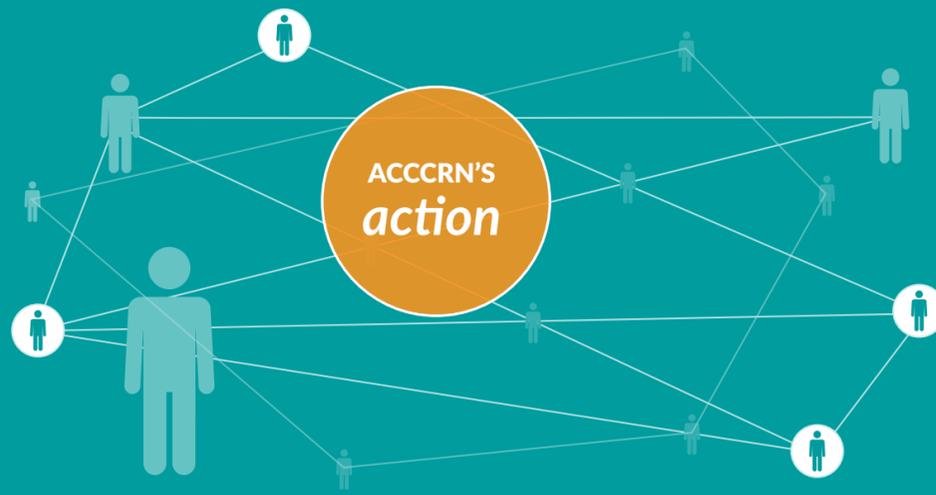
- Provide professional development and skills building.
- Create linkages and relationships among individuals and groups of individuals.
- Create new information through, for example, research and demonstration projects.
- Collect or aggregate existing information for easier access.
- Arrange, organize, or consolidate existing information to be more easily accessible.
- Move information from its current source to a user destination with, for example, information dissemination and exchange.
- Translate data and information into higher orders using, for example, meta-analysis, extrapolation, interpretation, drawn implications, or lessons learned.
- Initiate joint action toward a common goal or outcome by, for example, influencing policy, establishing joint programming, or raising funds.
- Detect and interpret signals in the environment through, for example, monitoring new developments and identifying trends.

ACTION STEP

Reflect on the types of activities that the network could undertake in pursuit of identified outcomes.

Are any of these too resource intensive?

Are any easily implemented activities?

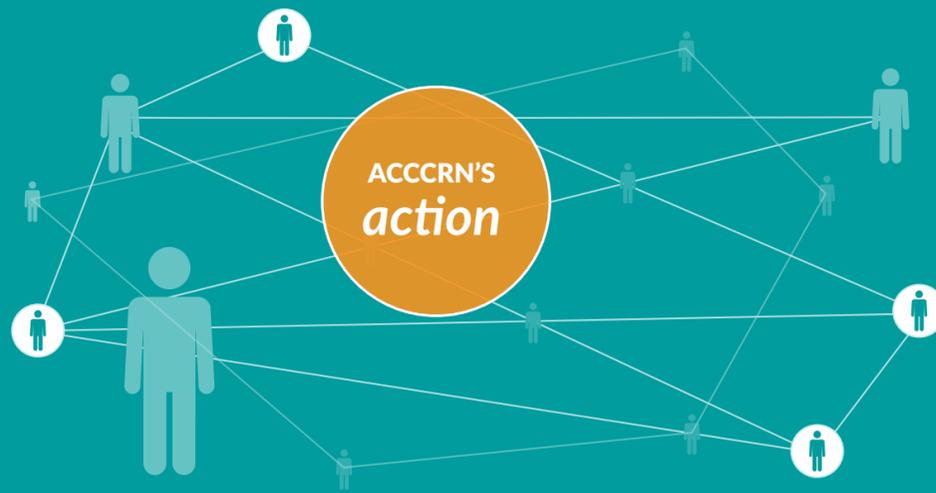


ACCCRN defines its network and activities

ACCCRN grants provided a number of networking opportunities including peer exchanges, knowledge meetings, knowledge products, and demonstration projects. Given the state of the field, ACCCRN decided that it would focus primarily on creating linkages between cities and practitioners within cities, particularly within the same country. This would call for an overall framework to connect across countries through country intermediaries who would serve as connectors. ACCCRN also decided that it needed to continue documenting its implemented activities that could, in turn, demonstrate possibilities to other like cities.

Other network activities that were of general interest included:

- supporting each other and providing specific technical assistance
 - specific activities might include setting up face-to-face exchanges, workshops, and coaching; establishing a “help desk” or clearinghouse; providing specific technical assistance for discrete activities such as climate analysis; and offering explicit knowledge support for documenting and disseminating experiences
- raising resources to support new pilot projects or to replicate successful strategies
 - specific activities might include identifying resource needs and sources, and providing cities with technical support to “absorb” funding through, for example, assisting with proposals, identifying sources of technical assistance, or developing toolkits



- informing policy makers
 - specific activities might include socializing the importance of climate change resilience with policy makers and media through trainings, one-on-one discussions, study tours or city-to-city exchanges; and highlighting effective practices.

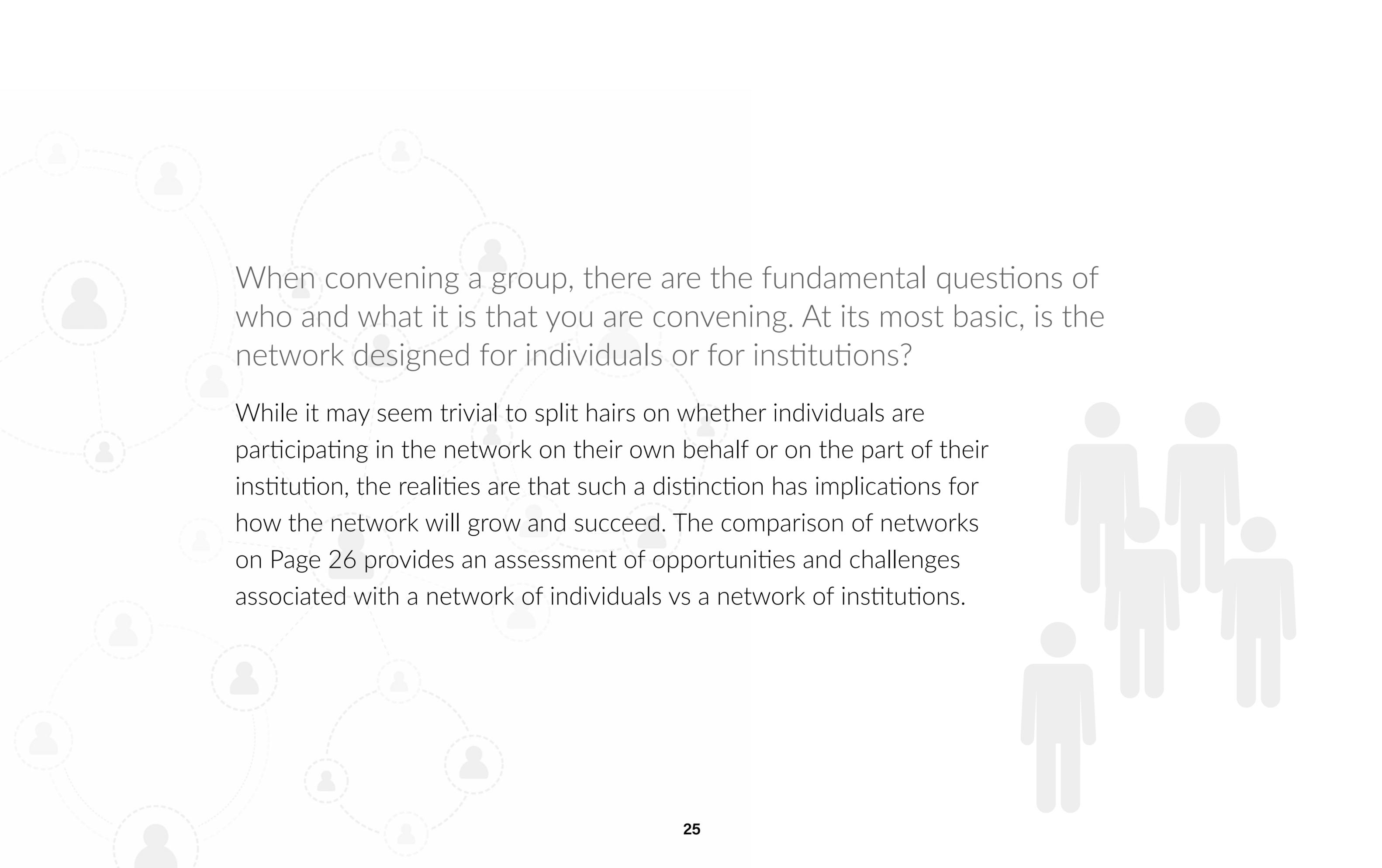
Further, defining strategies and activities enabled ACCCRN to look to the future and identify potential steps to take, such as to:

- facilitate linkages and relationships among individuals and groups of individuals
- create new information through, for example, research and demonstration projects
- detect and interpret signals in the environment by, for example, monitoring new developments and identifying trends
- collect, arrange, or aggregate existing information to make it more easily accessible
- move information from its current source to a user destination employing information dissemination and exchange.



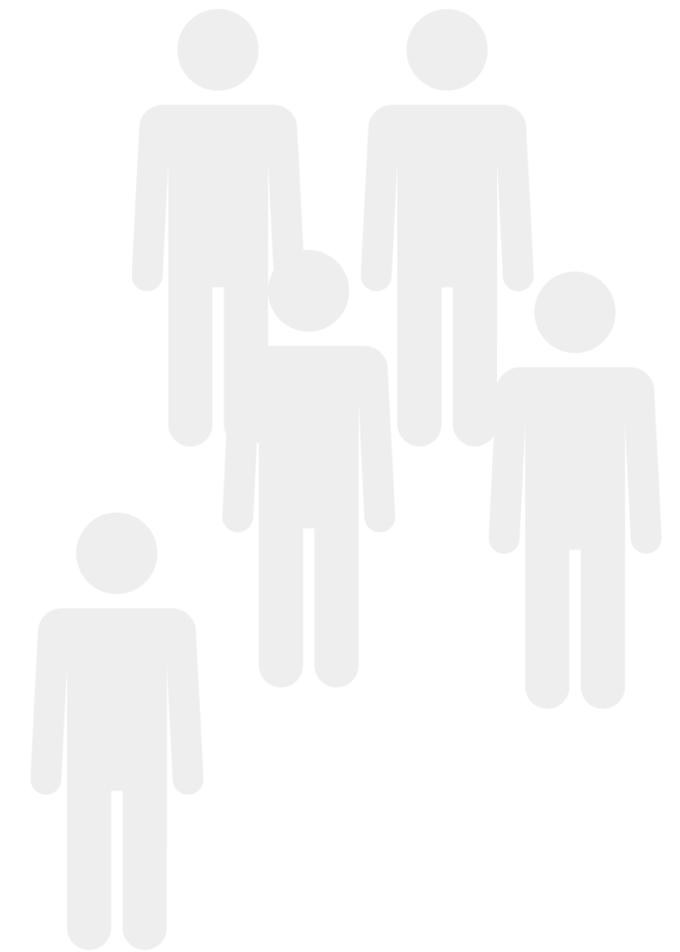
Who constitutes the network players?

Defining individual or institutional champions



When convening a group, there are the fundamental questions of who and what it is that you are convening. At its most basic, is the network designed for individuals or for institutions?

While it may seem trivial to split hairs on whether individuals are participating in the network on their own behalf or on the part of their institution, the realities are that such a distinction has implications for how the network will grow and succeed. The comparison of networks on Page 26 provides an assessment of opportunities and challenges associated with a network of individuals vs a network of institutions.



Comparison of networks: individuals vs institutions

Network of individuals

- has greater adaptive capacity
- has more stable relationships over time
- shares information more successfully, as self-selection into the network leads to higher engagement
- expands more easily and rapidly in the short term because it is easy to add academics, researchers, NGOs, and business and government representatives.

Network of institutions

- faces potential problems due to turnover of institutions' representatives
- provides greater visibility and ability to actually do things as a network
- has more potential for developing information and collective action
- has opportunity for substantive engagement as it gains traction.

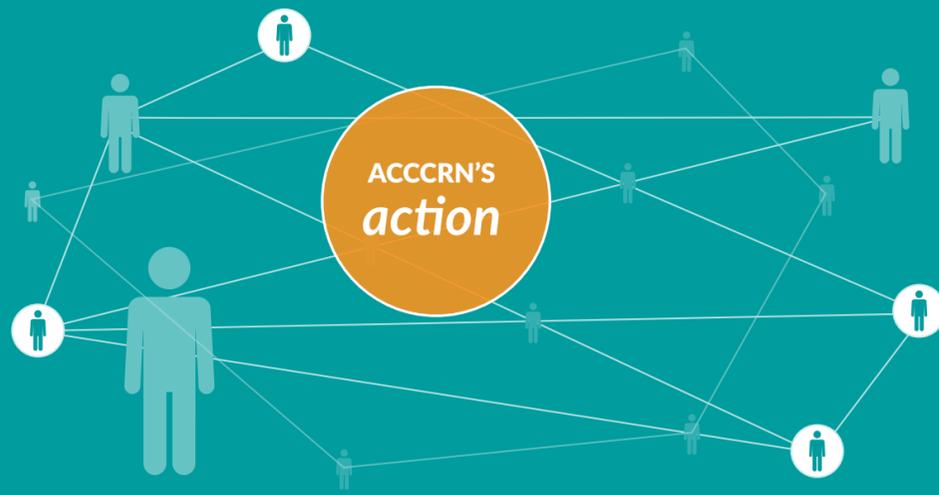


ACTION STEP

Think about who might best champion the network – individuals or institutions?

Does your network allow people to leave institutional

biases “at the door” or is it crucial to the success of the network that they represent their institutions to the group?

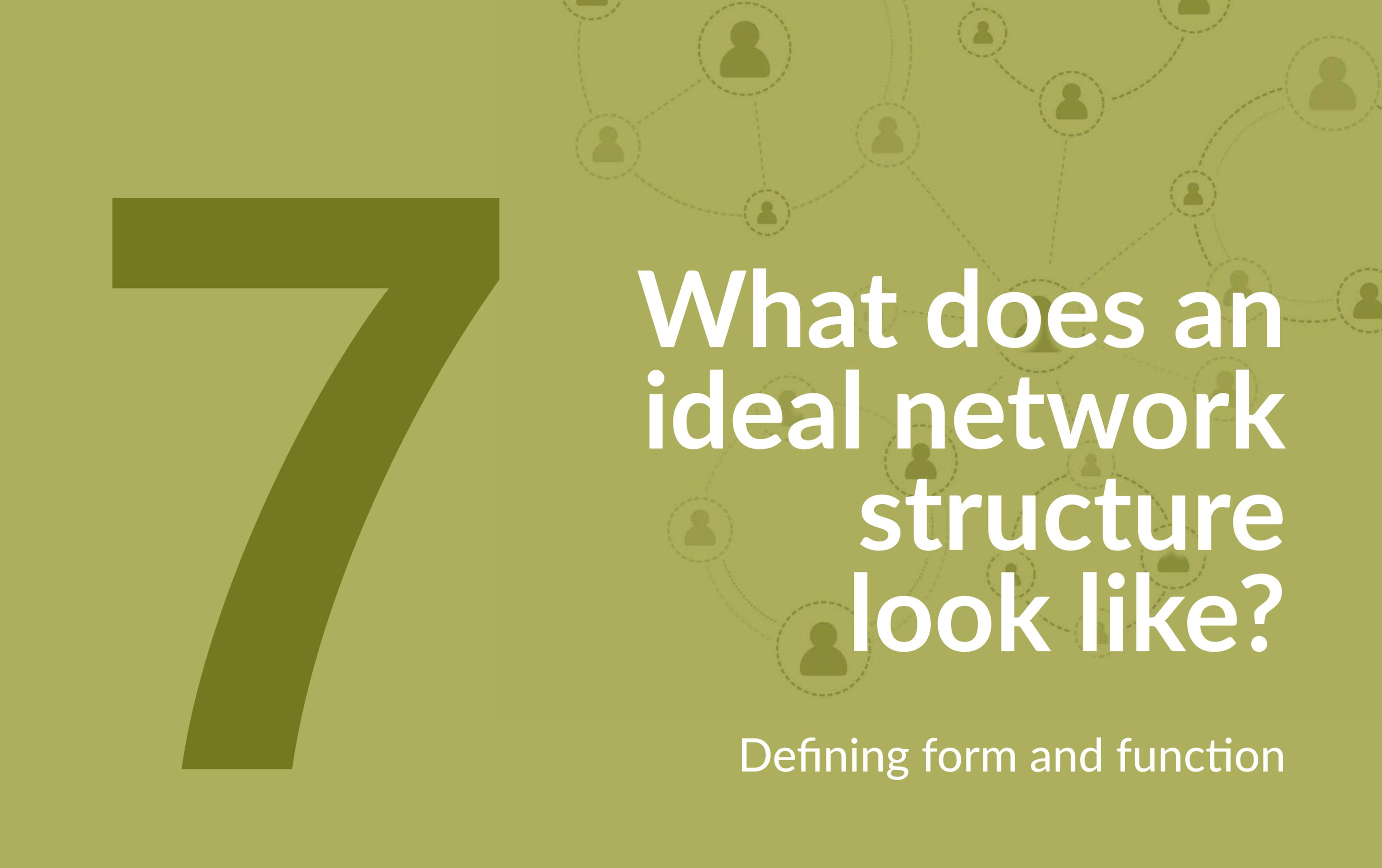


ACCCRN defined its network players

There was consensus that the greatest opportunity for ACCCRN to be contextually relevant called for linking individual practitioners and allowing for country networks to evolve from there. This would avoid some challenges of requiring cities to make political commitment to ACCCRN and allow the network greater flexibility.

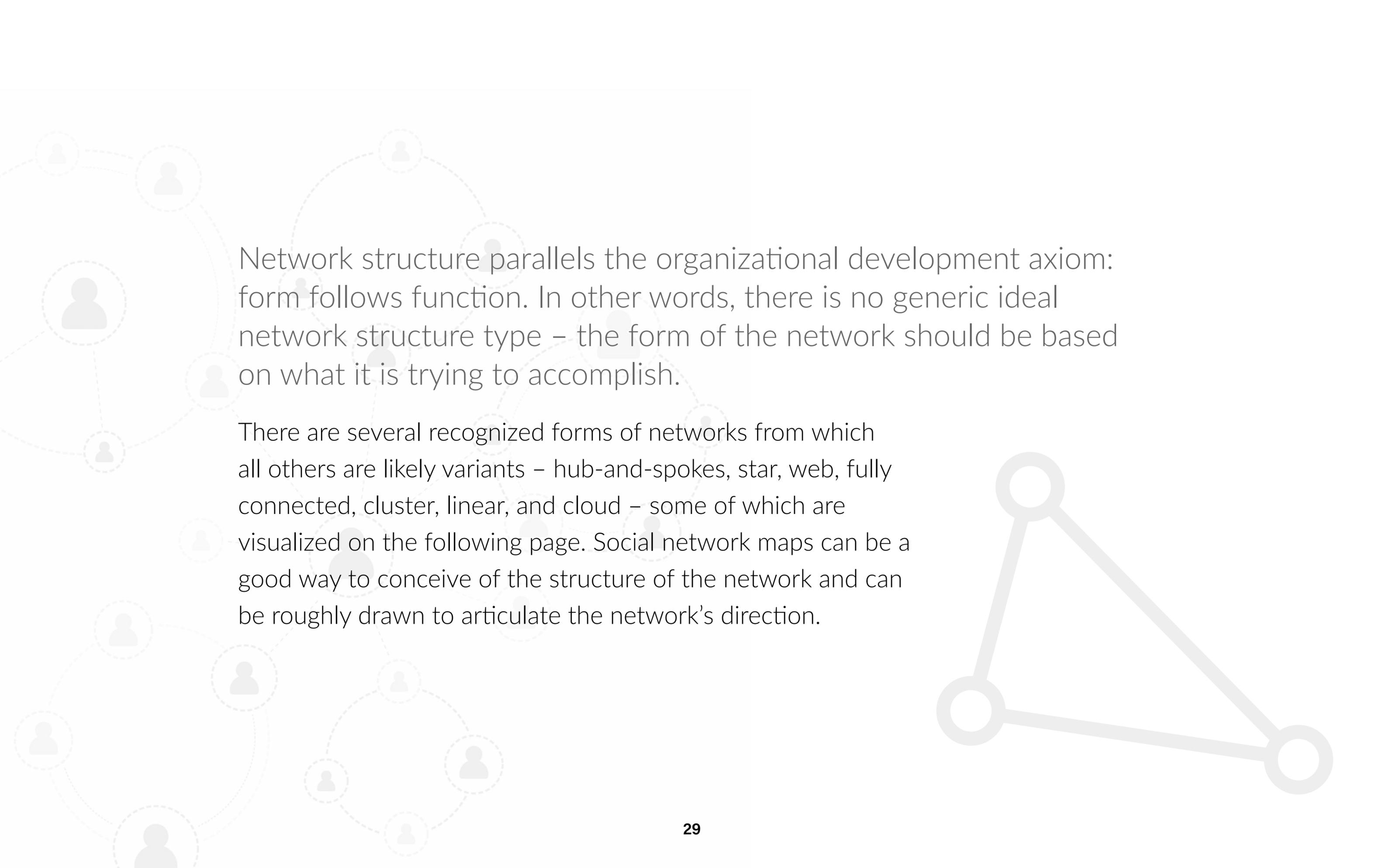
Some of the key capacities of network players were identified as having:

- ability to touch and engage multiple stakeholder groups – known as boundary spanners – such as a former mayor working at a community-based organization (CBO) who would span both the CBO and political worlds
- time and space to engage in the network
- relevant skills and interest that would provide credibility within the network
- desire to be part of something bigger and work toward, for example, global impact or attracting new donors.



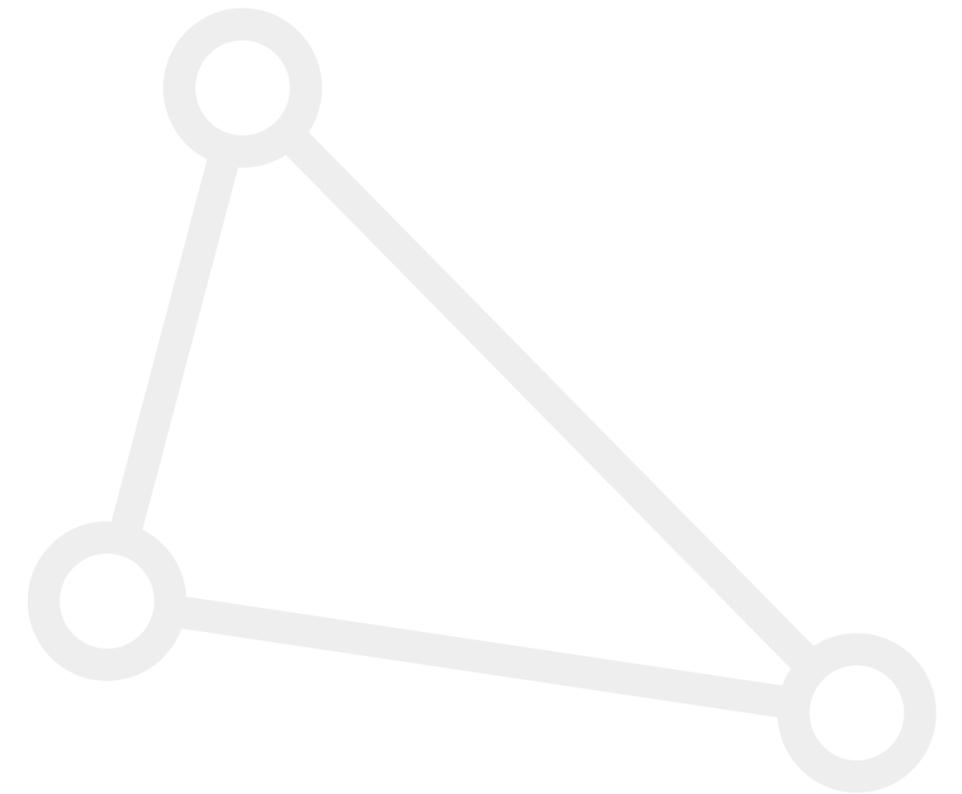
What does an ideal network structure look like?

Defining form and function

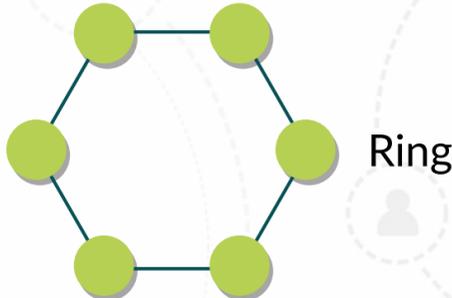
A faint background network diagram consisting of several circular nodes, each containing a person icon, connected by dashed lines. The nodes are arranged in a somewhat circular pattern on the left side of the page.

Network structure parallels the organizational development axiom: form follows function. In other words, there is no generic ideal network structure type – the form of the network should be based on what it is trying to accomplish.

There are several recognized forms of networks from which all others are likely variants – hub-and-spokes, star, web, fully connected, cluster, linear, and cloud – some of which are visualized on the following page. Social network maps can be a good way to conceive of the structure of the network and can be roughly drawn to articulate the network's direction.



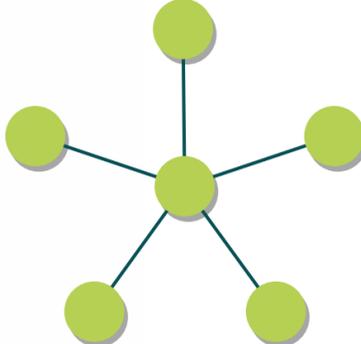
Network structure options



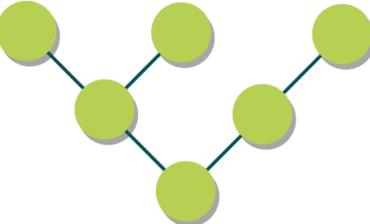
Ring



Mesh



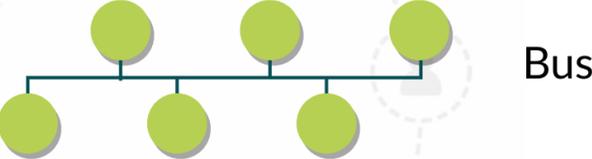
Star



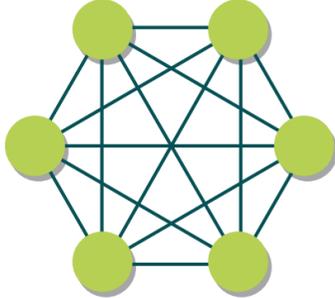
Tree



Line



Bus



Fully connected



ACTION STEP

Roughly map out the current network participants.

This calls for determining who seems to be interacting most with whom, an activity that can be done more formally using social network analysis (a formal

approach to looking at relationships).

It also calls for determining whether there are any obvious holes or trends. Ideally, you could draw the network structure based on how you would like people to interact.

Image adapted from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:NetworkTopologies.svg>



ACCCRN defines its form and function

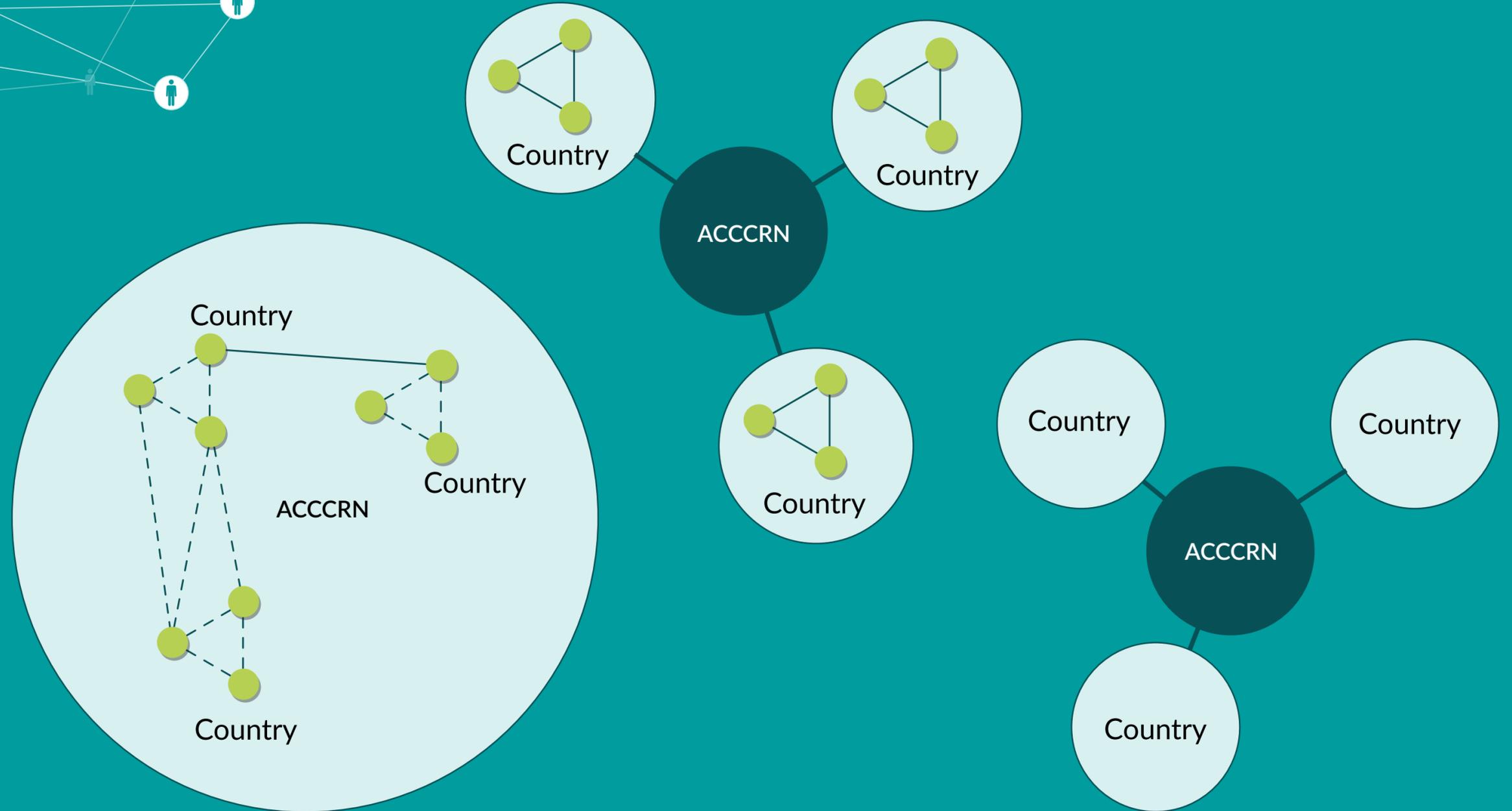
ACCCRN considered several models for its structure.

- **Cities within country** identifies relationships within countries, with broader facilitation by country partners. This seemed to be where there was the greatest initial traction and where the country and regional partners seemed especially well-positioned to act in the short-term.
- **Cities web** identifies relationships broadly across the ACCCRN selected cities. This seemed to be the initial intent of ACCCRN, though there wasn't really a compelling value proposition for cities across the region.
- **Countries or country partners** identifies relationships primarily between countries.

This group seemed to be the core relationship-brokering group, due to language issues and the capacity of the country partners.

ACCCRN also considered the notion of serving as a network of networks, bringing together a variety of groups that had begun to emerge in the climate adaptation space. However, it decided to pursue the cities-within-a-country approach in order to leverage commonalities and ease logistics.

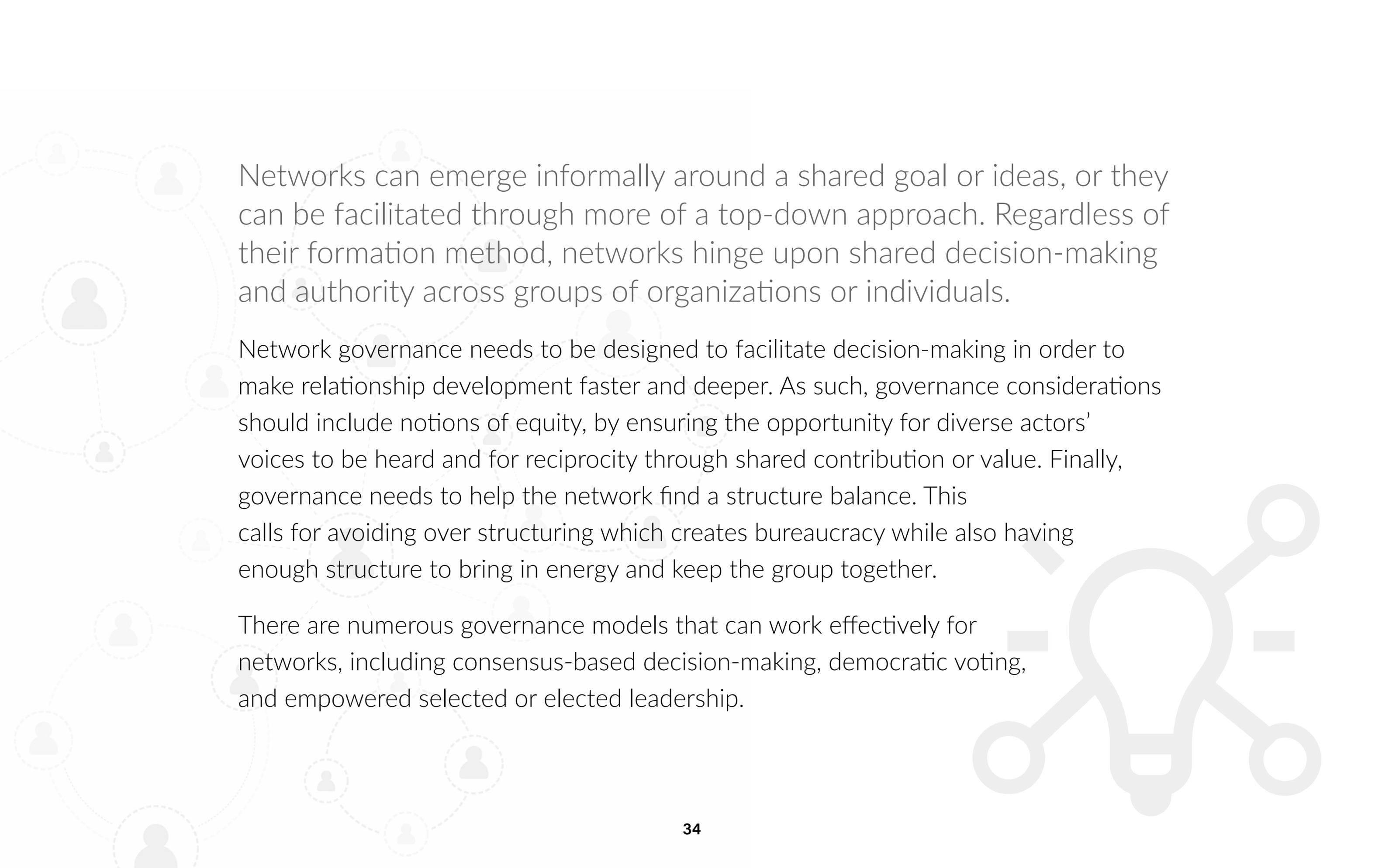
ACCCRN structure model





What is the network's governance?

Defining how decisions get made

The background features a light gray network diagram. It consists of several circular nodes, each containing a stylized person icon. These nodes are interconnected by thin, dashed lines, forming a web-like structure. The nodes are distributed across the page, with some appearing more prominent than others. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, typical of a professional presentation or report.

Networks can emerge informally around a shared goal or ideas, or they can be facilitated through more of a top-down approach. Regardless of their formation method, networks hinge upon shared decision-making and authority across groups of organizations or individuals.

Network governance needs to be designed to facilitate decision-making in order to make relationship development faster and deeper. As such, governance considerations should include notions of equity, by ensuring the opportunity for diverse actors' voices to be heard and for reciprocity through shared contribution or value. Finally, governance needs to help the network find a structure balance. This calls for avoiding over structuring which creates bureaucracy while also having enough structure to bring in energy and keep the group together.

There are numerous governance models that can work effectively for networks, including consensus-based decision-making, democratic voting, and empowered selected or elected leadership.

Pros and cons of consensus decision-making

Pros

- Increases commitment, empowerment, and participation
- Overcomes resistance to change
- Builds morale
- Leads to general satisfaction with decisions
- Presents a theoretical message of equality

Cons

- Faces difficulty of defining specific tasks
- Feels time and process intensive
- Moves slowly and is time-consuming
- Takes action only when all have spoken rather than when a decision has been made



ACTION STEP

Reflect on the power dynamics at play in the potential network.
Which organizations are in positions of power with strong voices, and which

might need help to enhance their voices?

What kind of decision-making will help the organization meet its next most pressing goals?



ACCCRN defines approaches to its goals

ACCCRN was conceived and developed by The Rockefeller Foundation as, essentially, a top-down “mandate” creation of a network. However, the Foundation’s climate resilience program meant for the network to emerge organically from the grassroots level.

This created a governance conundrum. The Foundation didn’t want to lead the network, but others within the program looked to it as the driver. In order to address this, the Foundation set up a group of institutional stakeholders to guide the network and tried to play a very light role in that group.

However, the Foundation also acknowledged that it had to be overt about its interest and goals for the network, in the same way that it hoped for that attitude from other network participants.



What is the network's capacity?

Defining how the network functions

Networks need capacity to operate. While there are a variety of capacities that can be explored, the core capacity model provides a helpful framework that includes leadership, adaptive management, and technical capacities.

Leadership capacity

The ability of all organizational leaders to create and sustain the vision, inspire, model, prioritize, make decisions, provide direction, and innovate all in an effort to archive the network mission.

Adaptive capacity

The ability of a network to monitor, assess and respond to internal and external changes.

Management capacity

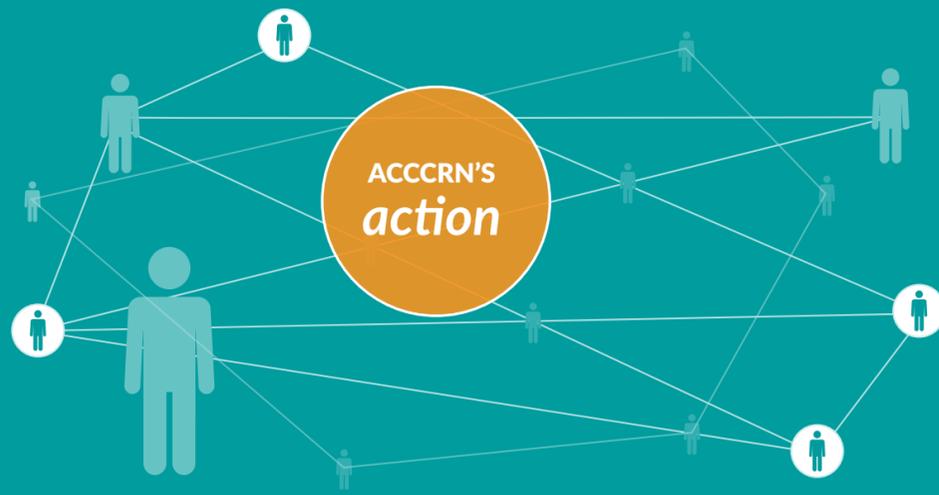
The ability of a network of a nonprofit organization to ensure the effective and efficient use of network resources.

Technical capacity

The ability of a nonprofit organization to implement all of the key organizational and programmatic functions.



ACTION STEP
Reflect on the various capacities that might be needed in order for the network to operate effectively and efficiently.

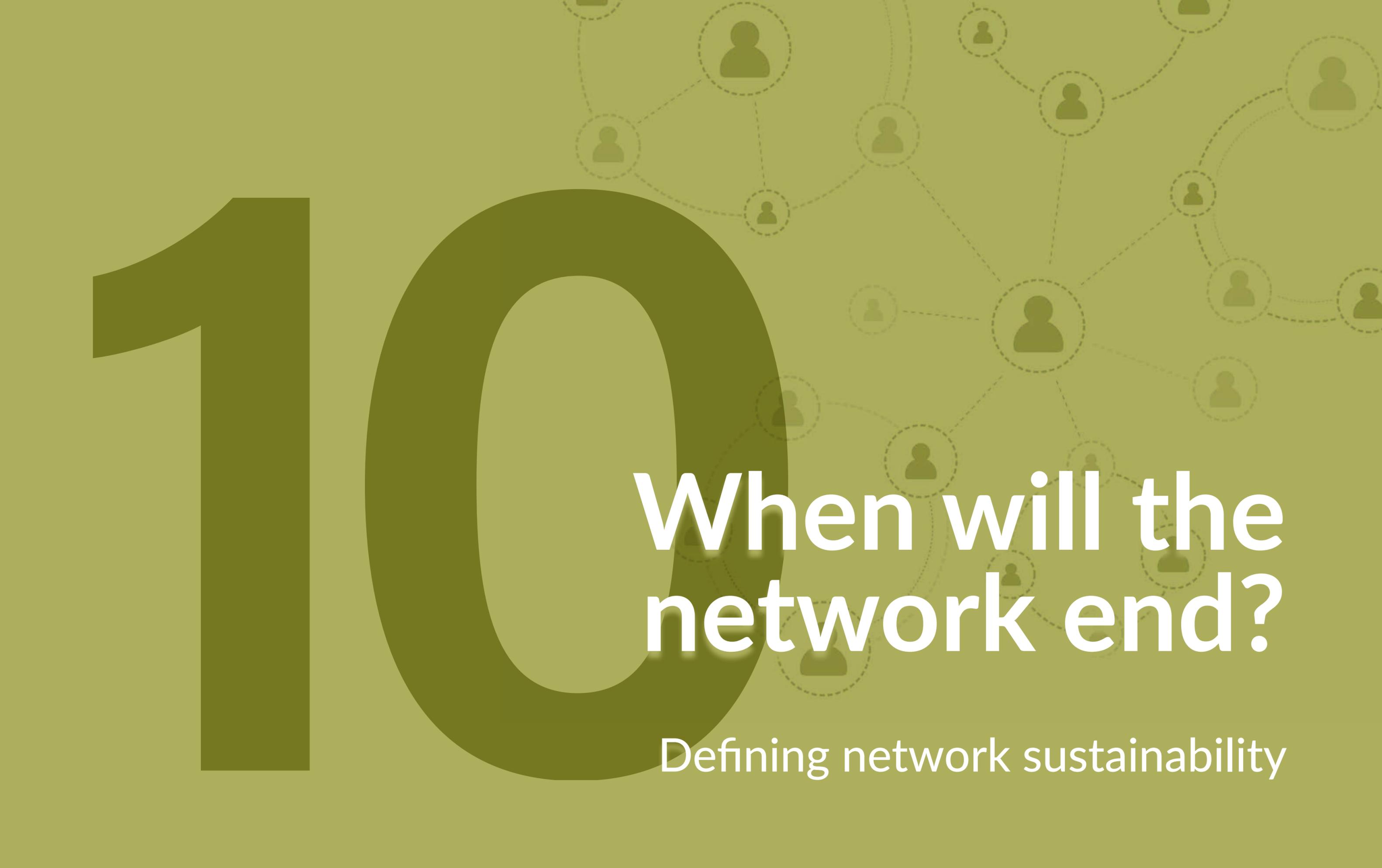


ACCCRN builds its network capacity

The Rockefeller Foundation played a leadership role in the early days of ACCCRN, but then faced the challenge of extricating itself from that role while leaving functioning and authentic leadership capacity intact. ACCCRN had good adaptive capacity in terms of understanding its environment, but lacked a long-term funding mechanism beyond the Foundation.

Ultimately, the Foundation provided a grant to an independent organization specifically to facilitate the network and, essentially, provide a management and development function to ACCCRN.

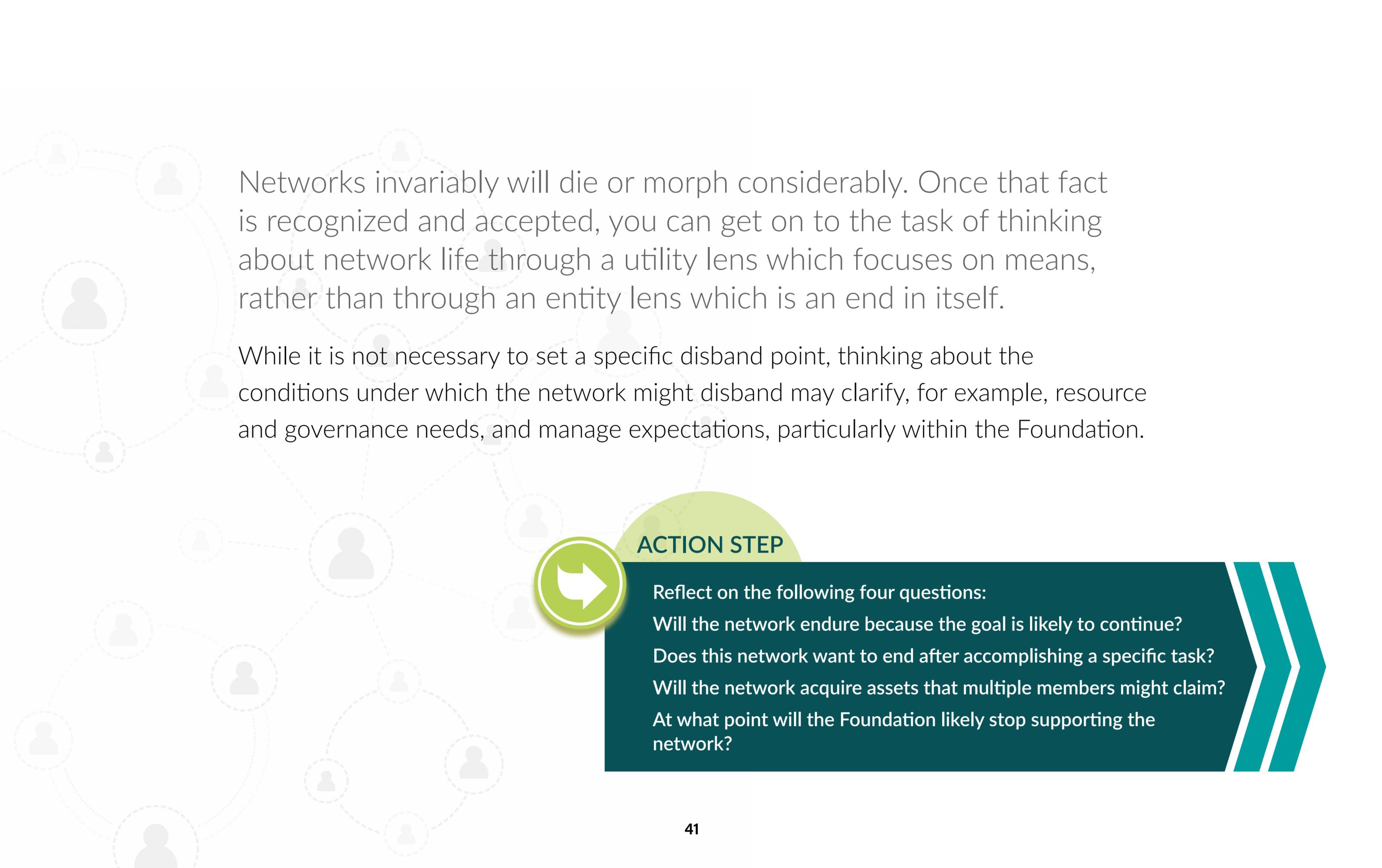
The technical capacity for ACCCRN was assumed to come from the participating practitioners, though language issues were a major block that had to be worked around. To do this, the network employed country partners to serve as representatives or liaisons for individual countries across the network, while within each countries, the networks developed more autonomously.

The background features a network diagram with several person icons connected by dashed lines, set against a light green gradient. The icons are arranged in a roughly circular pattern, with some connected to multiple others, suggesting a complex network structure.

10

When will the network end?

Defining network sustainability



Networks invariably will die or morph considerably. Once that fact is recognized and accepted, you can get on to the task of thinking about network life through a utility lens which focuses on means, rather than through an entity lens which is an end in itself.

While it is not necessary to set a specific disband point, thinking about the conditions under which the network might disband may clarify, for example, resource and governance needs, and manage expectations, particularly within the Foundation.



ACTION STEP

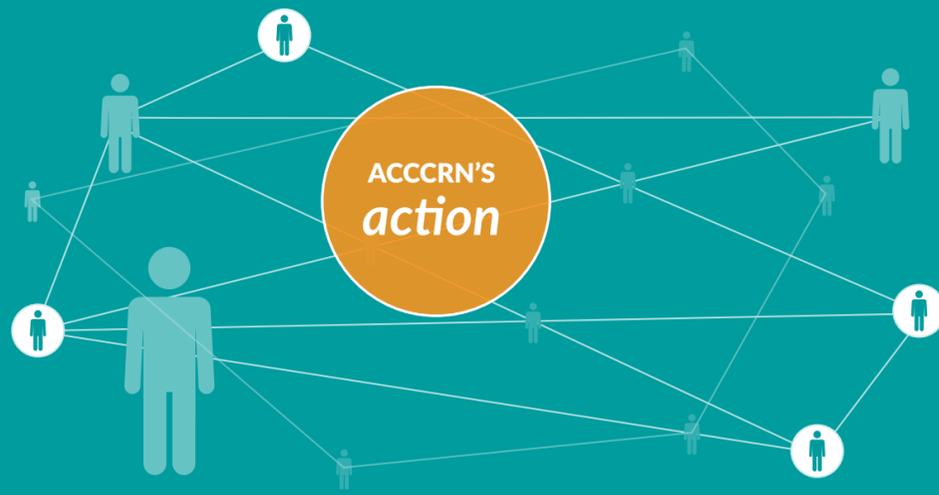
Reflect on the following four questions:

Will the network endure because the goal is likely to continue?

Does this network want to end after accomplishing a specific task?

Will the network acquire assets that multiple members might claim?

At what point will the Foundation likely stop supporting the network?



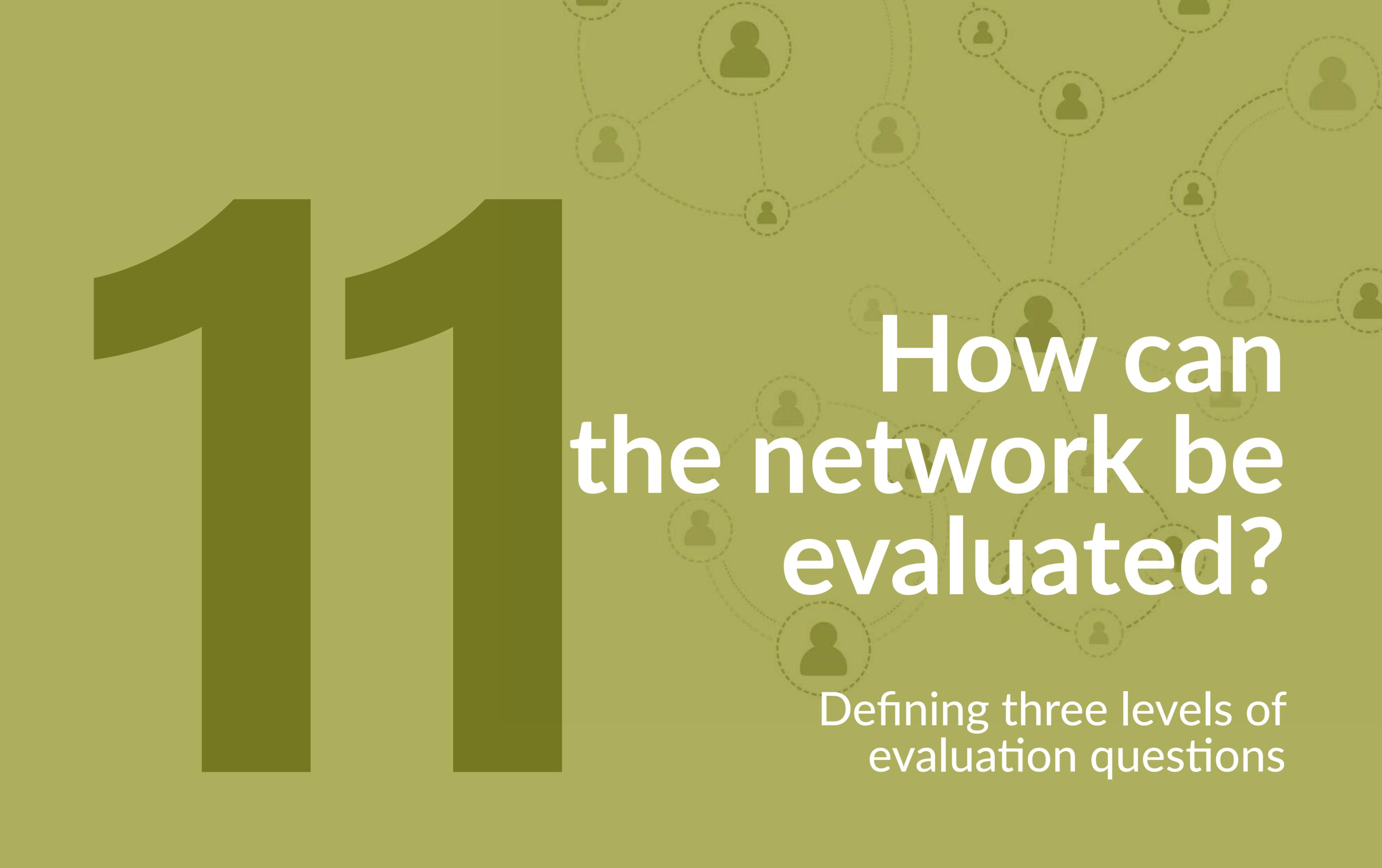
ACCCRN defines its network sustainability

The Rockefeller Foundation's dedication of substantial resources to establishing ACCCRN played a catalyzing start-up role. However, in the Foundation's desire for the catalyst to act as such, it extricated itself from its role as the sole resource and convening force.

Several years into the ACCCRN effort, the questions about ACCCRN's sustainability remained in the air. Although there was additional resilience funding emerging, it was not clear to what extent ACCCRN, as the network entity, would be able to access the funding.

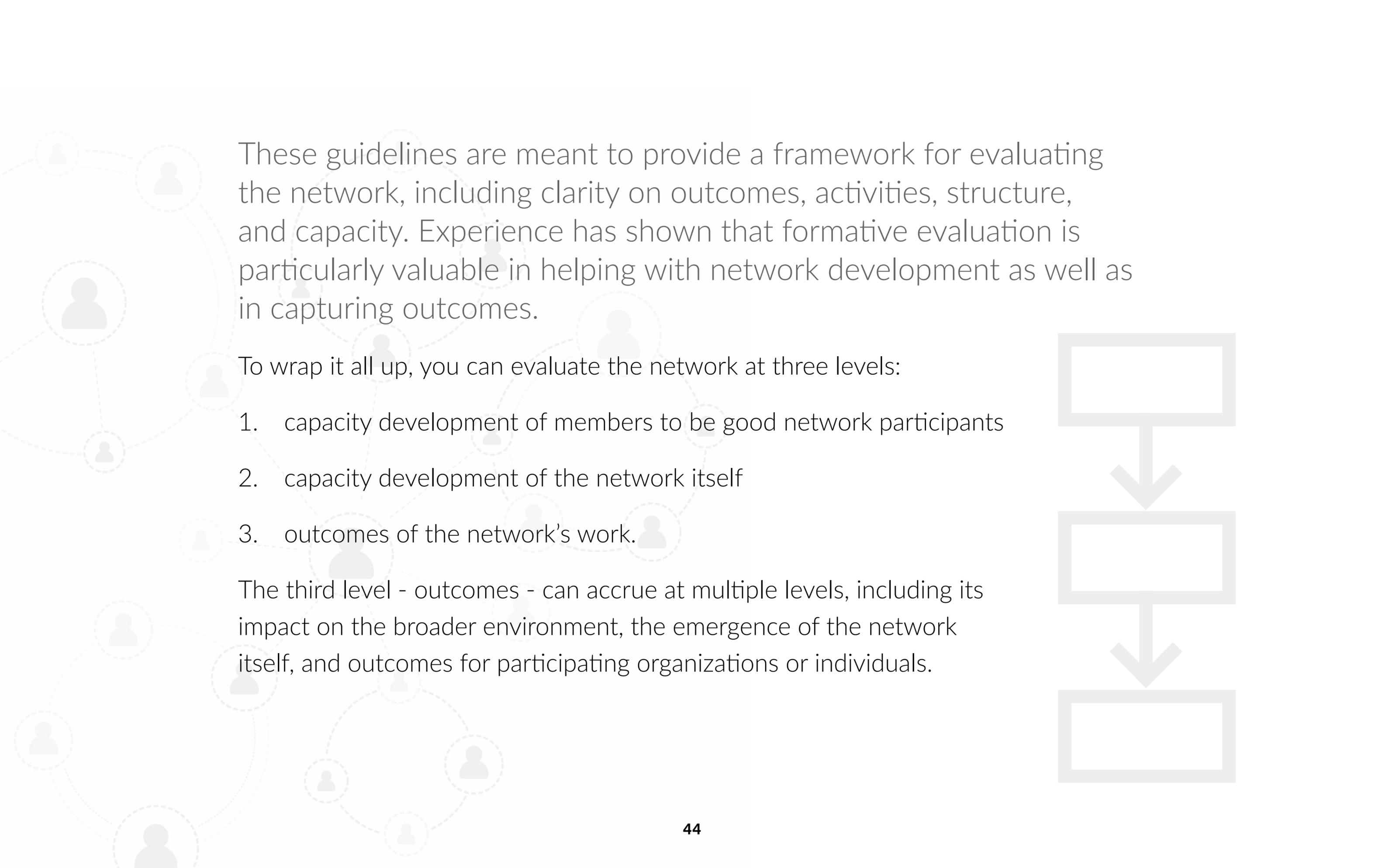
Individual stakeholder groups, including The Rockefeller Foundation, continued exploration of what a non-Rockefeller-Foundation-led ACCCRN would look like – its value and how it would garner resources.

The question of under what circumstances the network would lose its value proposition remained open.

The background features a network of person icons connected by dashed lines, set against a light green gradient. On the left side, there are two large, dark green numbers '11' stacked vertically.

How can the network be evaluated?

Defining three levels of
evaluation questions

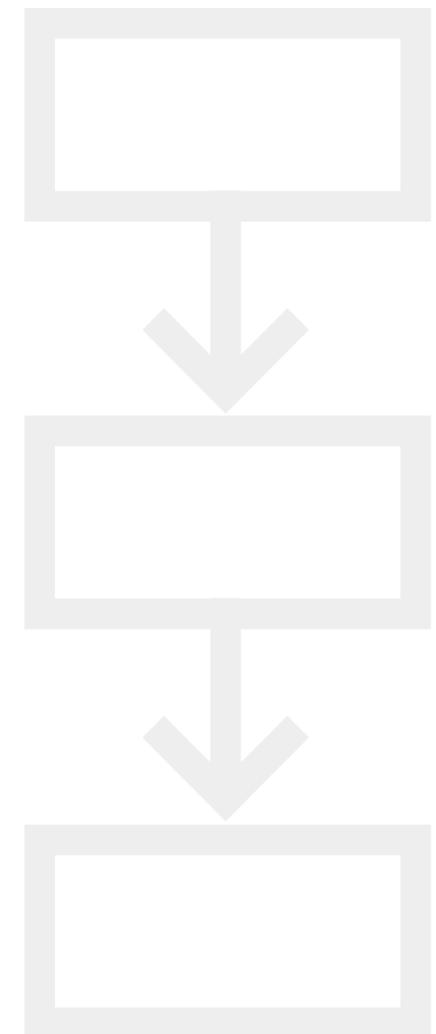


These guidelines are meant to provide a framework for evaluating the network, including clarity on outcomes, activities, structure, and capacity. Experience has shown that formative evaluation is particularly valuable in helping with network development as well as in capturing outcomes.

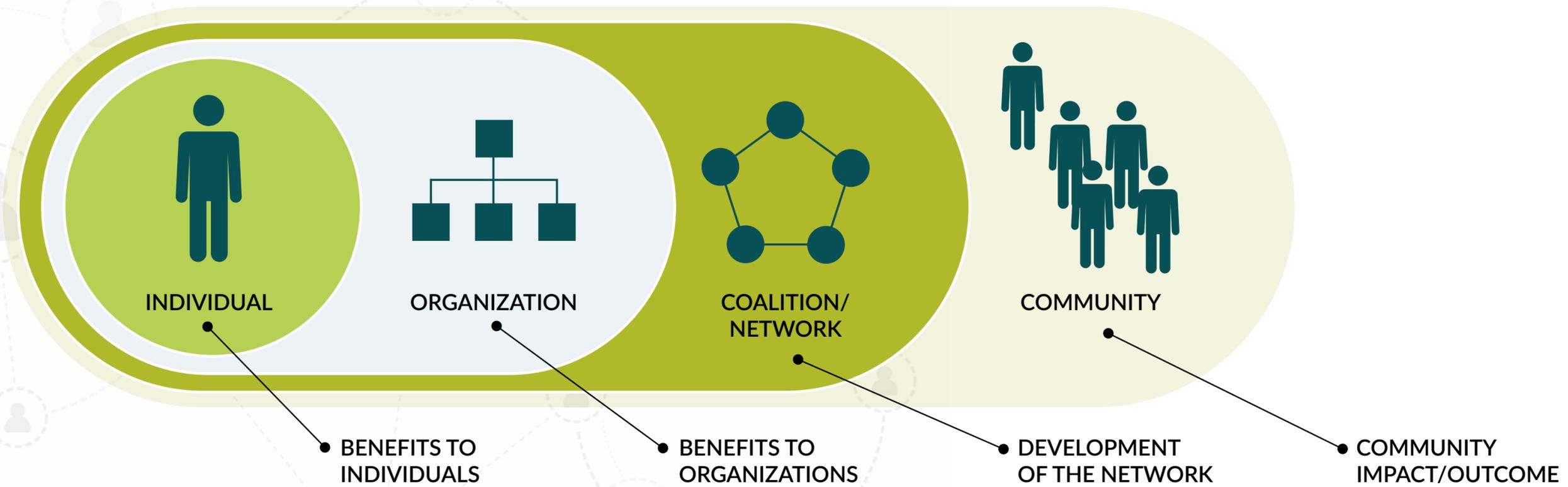
To wrap it all up, you can evaluate the network at three levels:

1. capacity development of members to be good network participants
2. capacity development of the network itself
3. outcomes of the network's work.

The third level - outcomes - can accrue at multiple levels, including its impact on the broader environment, the emergence of the network itself, and outcomes for participating organizations or individuals.



Overview of network benefits



ACTION STEP

Reflect on the various capacities. Reflect on how you will evaluate the network.

Will you embed an evaluator throughout the process?

What key evaluation questions do you need answered regarding the network?*

Source: TCC Group

* For more information on evaluating networks, see:
"Evaluating Networks and Partnerships" by Jared Raynor in *Emerging Practices in International Development Evaluation*. Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, NC. 2013.
"Next Generation Network Evaluation" by Innovations for Scaling Impact and Keystone Accountability. June 2010.

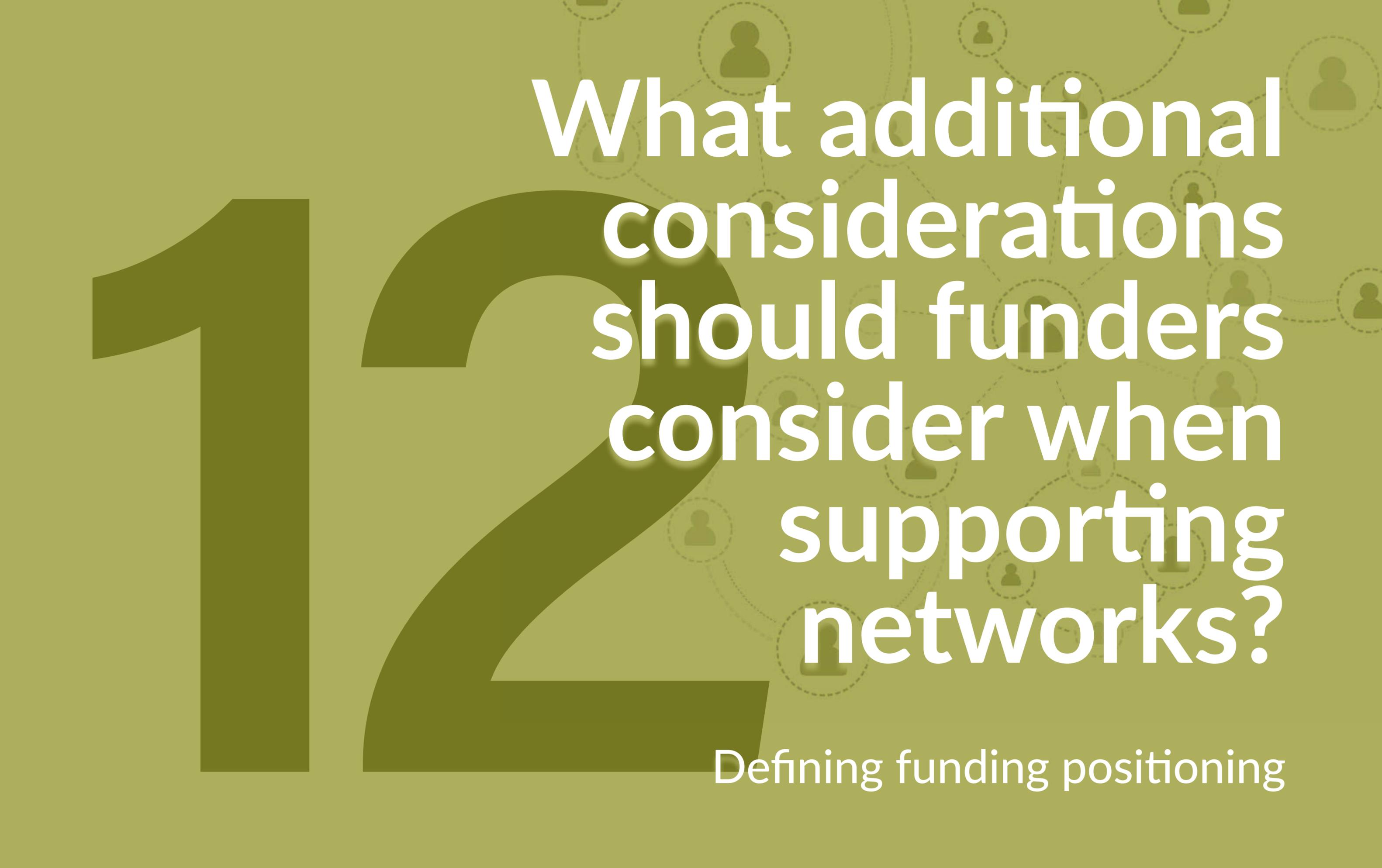


ACCCRN defines levels for formative evaluation

ACCCRN decided to approach the evaluation from a largely developmental perspective. It used an evaluation advisor early in the process to help guide the team to the kinds of outcomes that it wanted to achieve and how to track them.

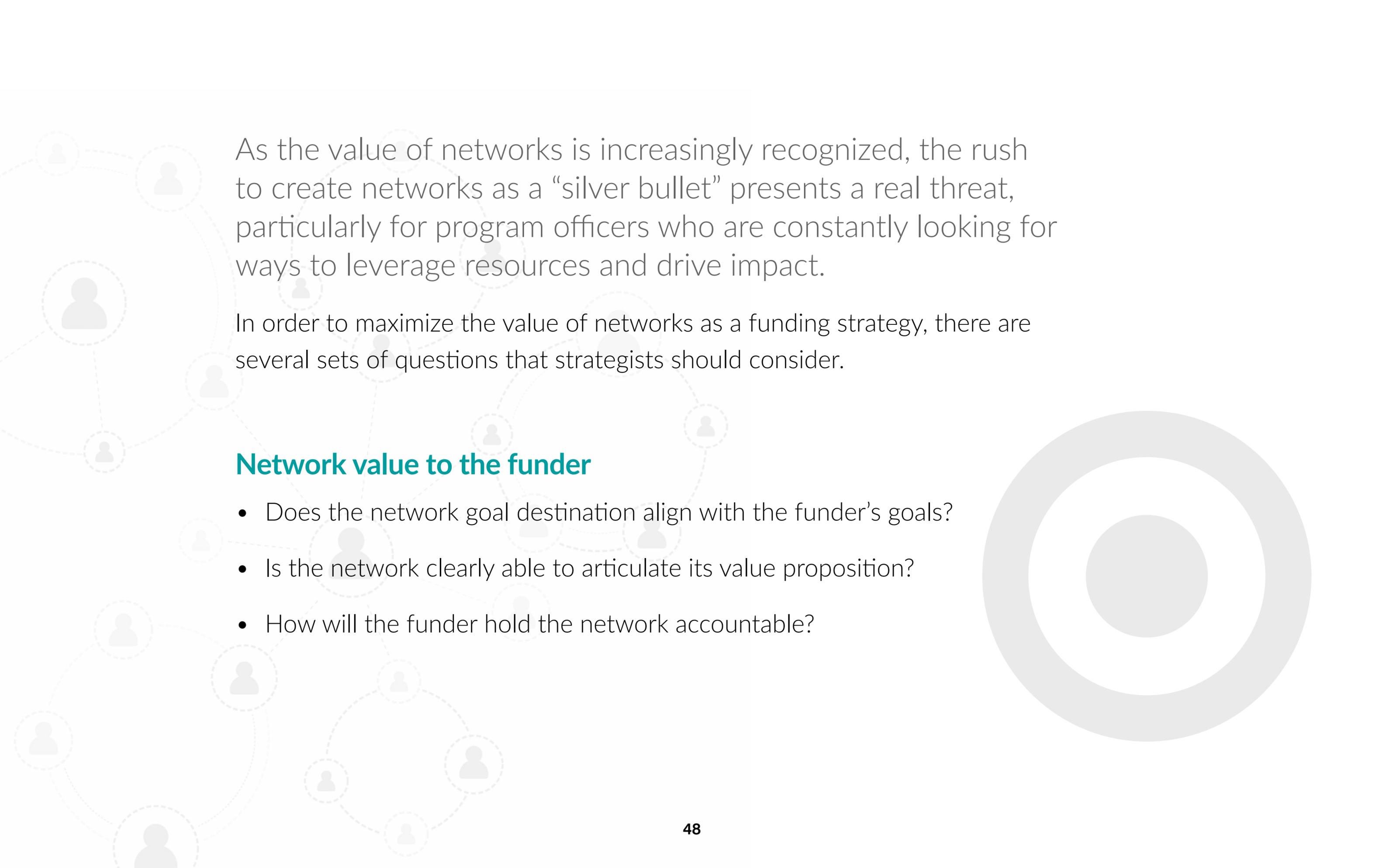
After a couple of years of operation, The Rockefeller Foundation contracted an independent evaluation firm to conduct a point-in-time review of the development of ACCCRN.

This review allowed for insights into where the network was delivering value and where participants saw gaps and perceived inequity in resource allocation.



What additional
considerations
should funders
consider when
supporting
networks?

Defining funding positioning



As the value of networks is increasingly recognized, the rush to create networks as a “silver bullet” presents a real threat, particularly for program officers who are constantly looking for ways to leverage resources and drive impact.

In order to maximize the value of networks as a funding strategy, there are several sets of questions that strategists should consider.

Network value to the funder

- Does the network goal destination align with the funder’s goals?
- Is the network clearly able to articulate its value proposition?
- How will the funder hold the network accountable?



Network ability to do the work

- Does the network demonstrate capacity to do the work?
- Where are the gaps between what resources the network members provide and what resources the network needs in order to do its work?

Network sustainability

- Does the network promote transparency and equity?
- Can non-grantmaking or intangible resources – such as convening power, relationships, and status – benefit the network?
- Is the network funded at a sufficient level to get people to dedicate their time?
- Is there a value proposition in facilitating the creation of a network, or is there one that can be developed beyond the funder's relationships and the inevitable pull of a funder's purse strings?

ACTION STEP

Take the time to thoroughly consider the answers to the questions on this page.*

* See also: Scarce, D. Catalyzing Networks for Social Change: A Funder's Guide, produced for Grantmakers for Effective Organizations. Available at www.geofunders.org.



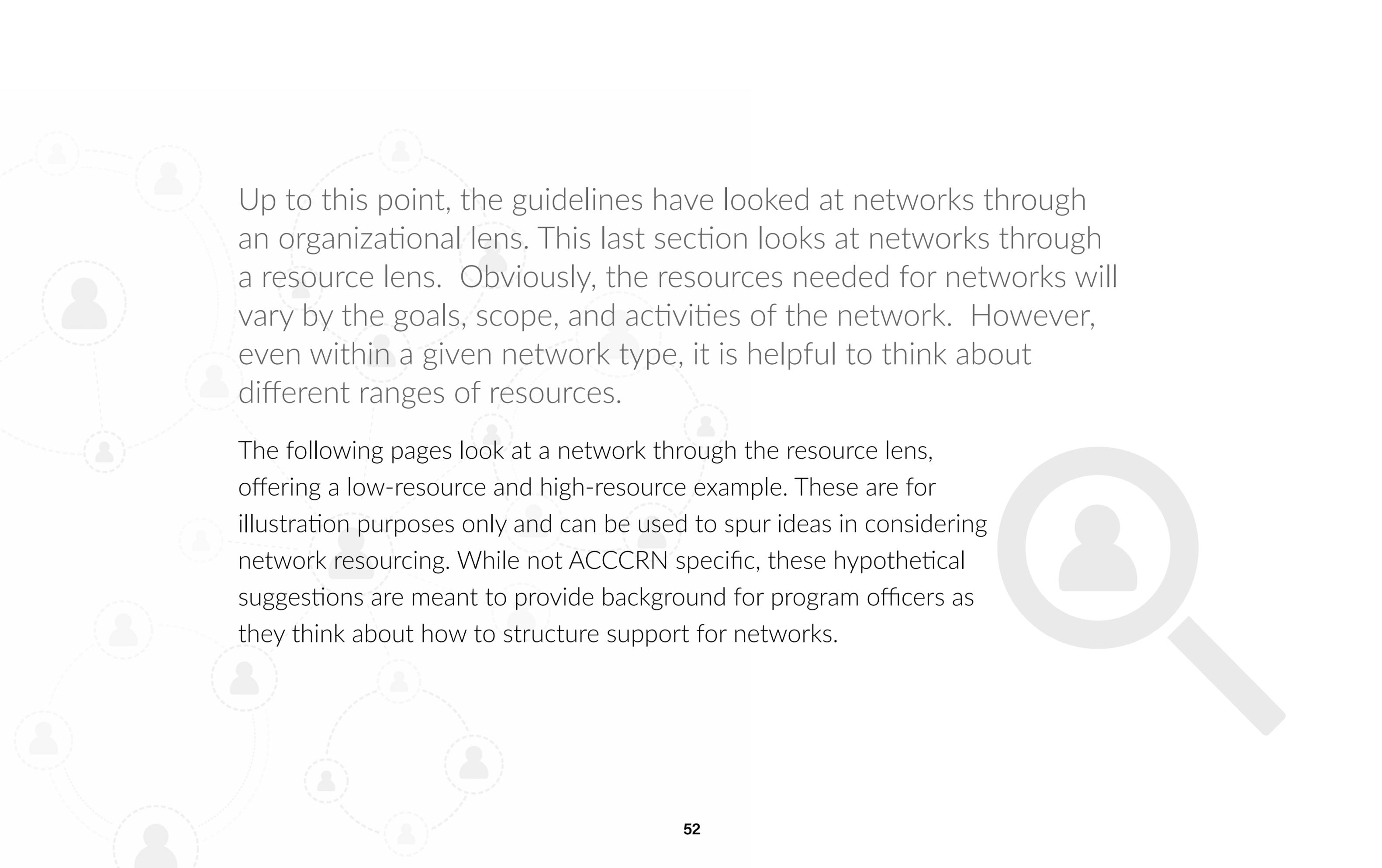
ACCCRN defines its funding position

The ACCCRN team at The Rockefeller Foundation grew in its understanding of the network along with the network. Over the course of implementing the project, the team better understood challenges it had created through early decisions on structure and worked to address them. The team also came to appreciate some of the limitations in forming a broad-based network, such as the logistical challenges in managing across language and geographic diversity. Finally, the team learned the value of finding a balance between being prescriptive in supporting the network and giving space to allow aspects of the network to emerge organically.

13

What are
network
resource
needs?

Defining low- and
high-resource networks

A faint background graphic consisting of a network of interconnected nodes. Each node is represented by a person icon inside a dashed circle, and the nodes are connected by thin, light-colored lines. The overall shape is roughly circular and occupies the left and center portions of the page.

Up to this point, the guidelines have looked at networks through an organizational lens. This last section looks at networks through a resource lens. Obviously, the resources needed for networks will vary by the goals, scope, and activities of the network. However, even within a given network type, it is helpful to think about different ranges of resources.

The following pages look at a network through the resource lens, offering a low-resource and high-resource example. These are for illustration purposes only and can be used to spur ideas in considering network resourcing. While not ACCCRN specific, these hypothetical suggestions are meant to provide background for program officers as they think about how to structure support for networks.



Low-resource networks

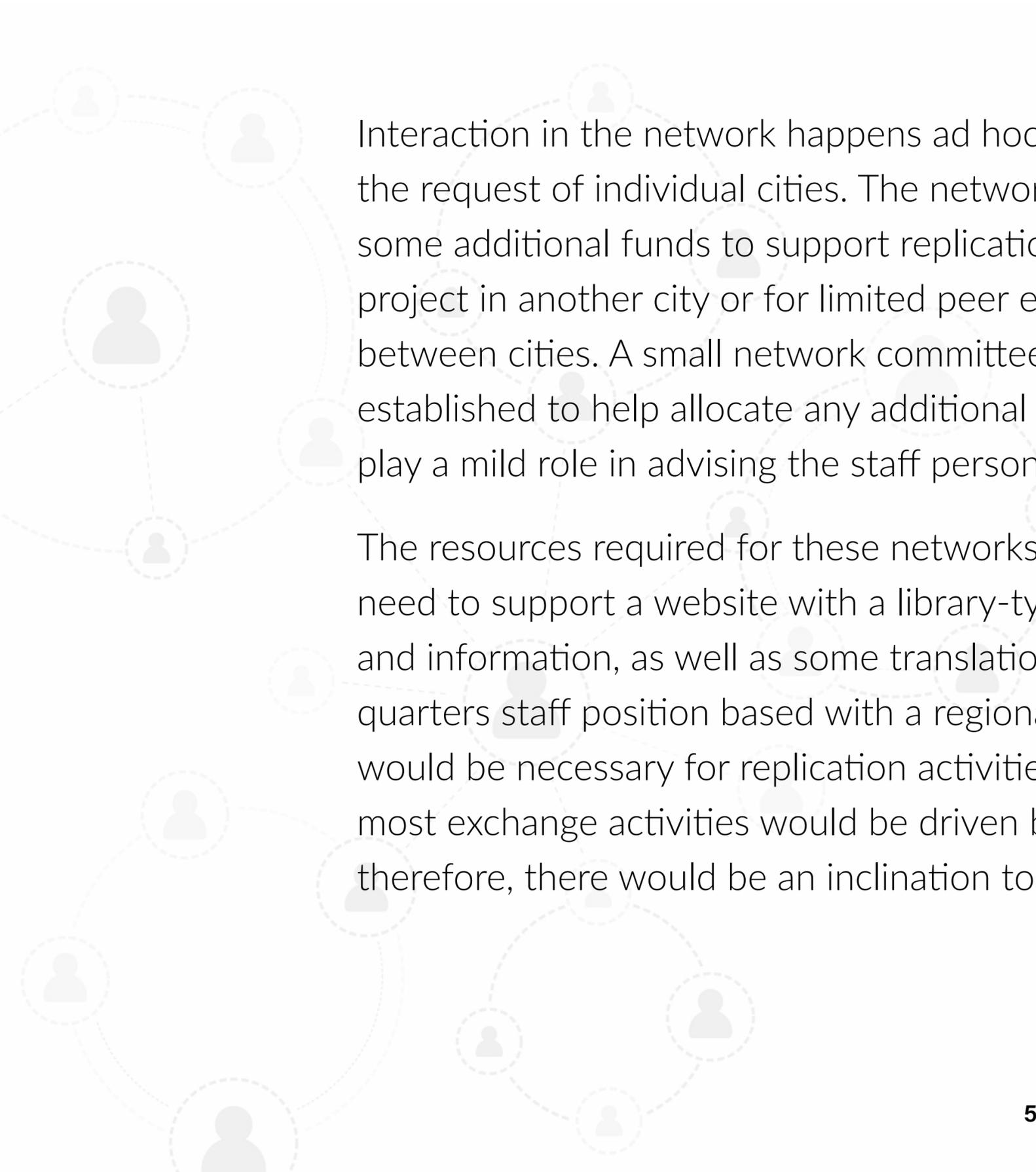
Resource repository networks or passive knowledge management networks

For these types of networks, participating cities operate fairly independently in designing and implementing climate resilience activities. As major milestones are accomplished or at designated points in time – such as timing of a grant report – cities submit information to a central repository, likely a regional partner.

The process may be:

- **iterative**, meaning city reports are aggregated by country partners and then passed on to the regional partner, or
- **direct**, meaning cities send directly to the regional partner.

Abstracts of the reports are written in a common language and made available online, although a more detailed variant would call for translating the abstracts into select regional languages. Cities interested in the abstracts can request the full reports or request to be put in contact with someone from the reporting city.

A faint background graphic on the left side of the page shows a network of interconnected nodes. Each node is represented by a person icon inside a dashed circle, with lines connecting the nodes to form a web-like structure.

Interaction in the network happens ad hoc and upon the request of individual cities. The network may have some additional funds to support replication of one city's project in another city or for limited peer exchanges between cities. A small network committee might be established to help allocate any additional funding and to play a mild role in advising the staff person.

The resources required for these networks are fairly minimal. The network would need to support a website with a library-type function, such as archiving resources and information, as well as some translation activities, and a one-half to three-quarters staff position based with a regional partner. Additional monetary funding would be necessary for replication activities and peer exchanges, but, presumably, most exchange activities would be driven by their perceived high value and, therefore, there would be an inclination to use one's own resources.



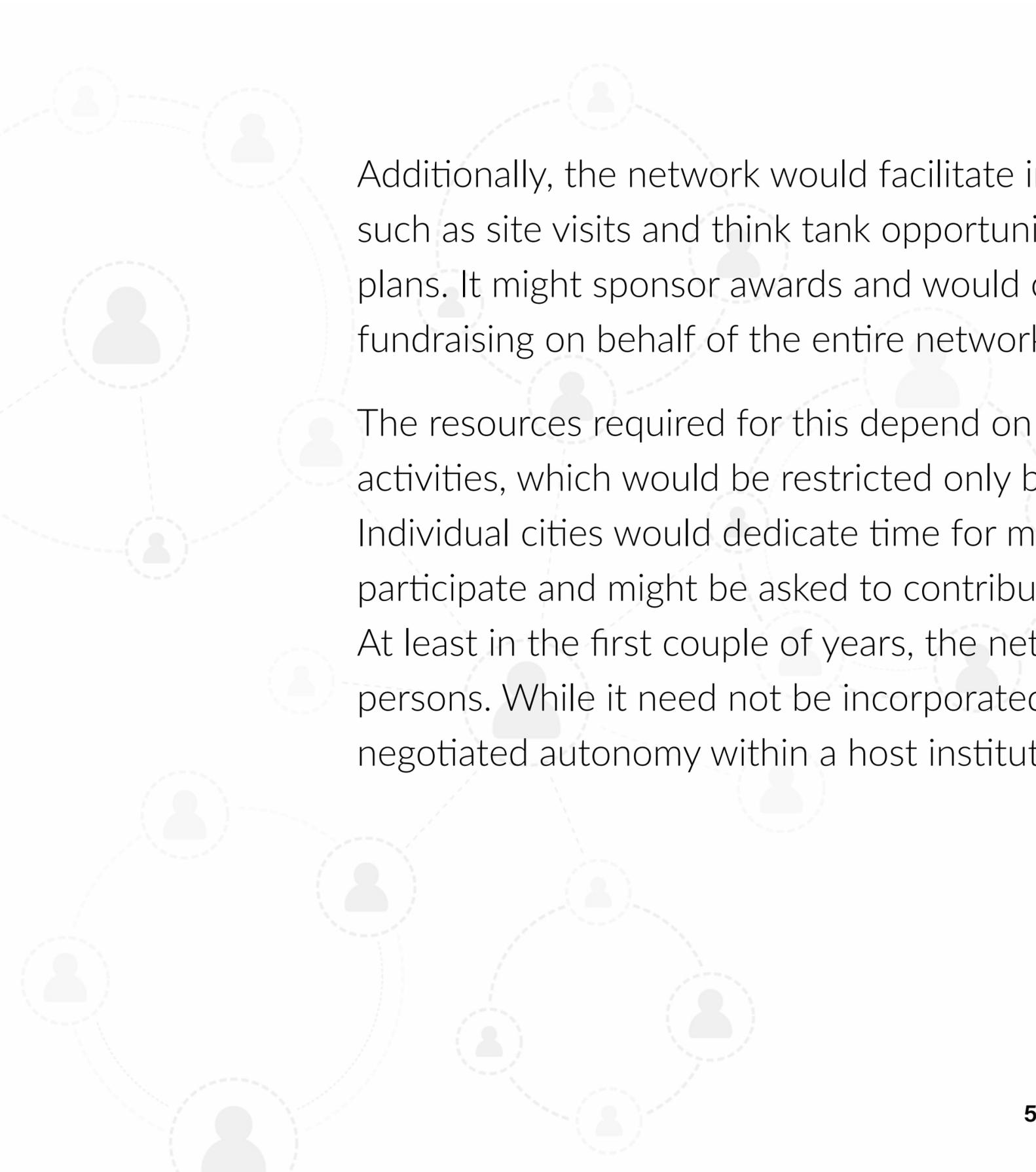
High-resource networks

Interactive exchange networks

Cities are active participants in these networks and, in addition to their own work, actively support other cities and engage regionally, if not globally.

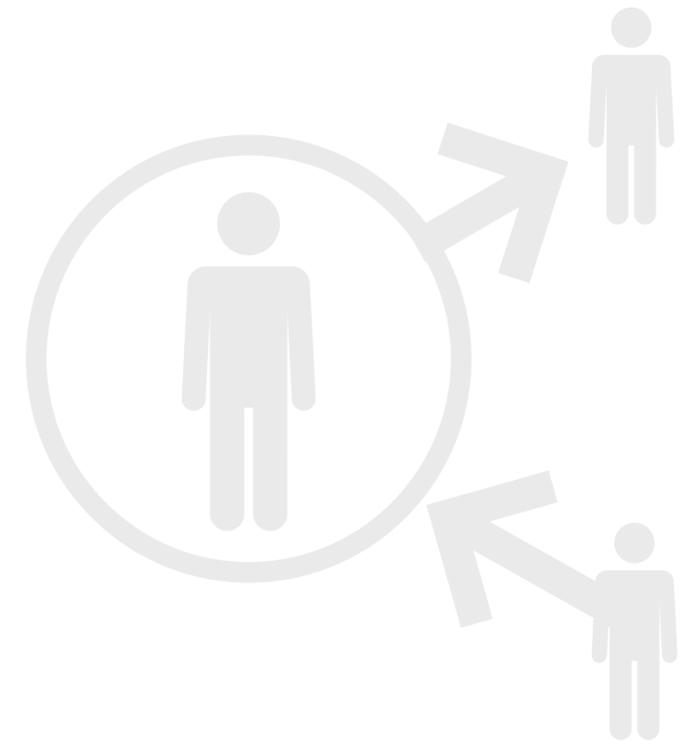
The network would:

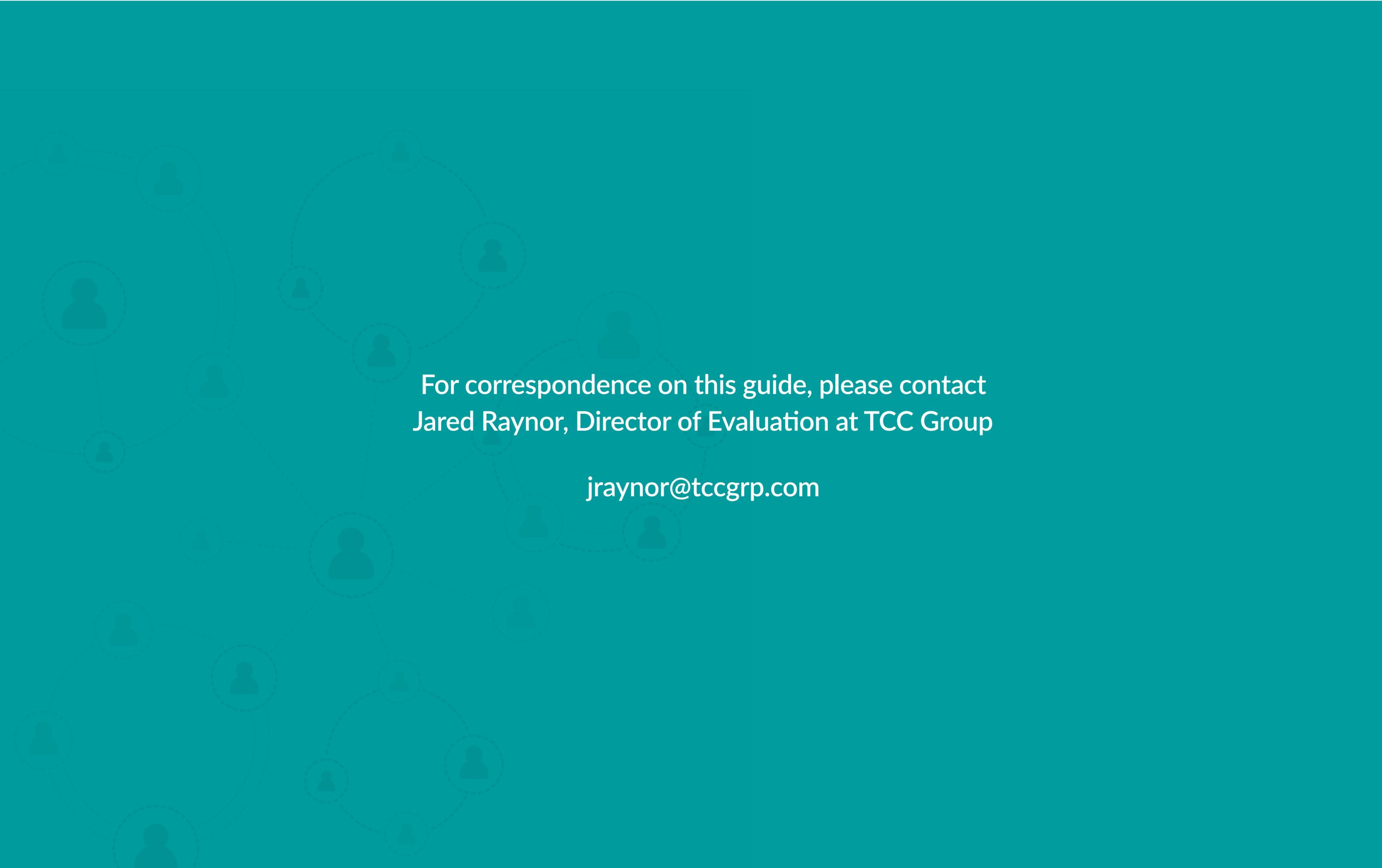
- establish a collective action plan that includes integrating the work and influence of various cities
- take on a strong identity with a functioning secretariat
- actively facilitate knowledge exchanges among cities by hosting workshops, webinars, and conferences, and providing a resource and information repository.



Additionally, the network would facilitate interpersonal exchanges, such as site visits and think tank opportunities, to get feedback on plans. It might sponsor awards and would certainly be engaged in fundraising on behalf of the entire network.

The resources required for this depend on the extent of the exchange activities, which would be restricted only by fundraising limitations. Individual cities would dedicate time for multiple individuals to participate and might be asked to contribute resources, either financial or in-kind. At least in the first couple of years, the network would need one to two staff persons. While it need not be incorporated on its own, the network would need negotiated autonomy within a host institution.





For correspondence on this guide, please contact
Jared Raynor, Director of Evaluation at TCC Group

jraynor@tccgrp.com