

THE NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT SERIES

**Bridging Boundaries, Creating Knowledge:
The Power of Good Conversation**

Networks Leadership Summit IV

January 14, 2009

Banff, Alberta

The Power of Networks in Times of Change

THE NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IV
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Sponsoring Organizations:



Child and Youth Health Networks of Canada
Les Réseau de Santé des enfants et des adolescents du Canada



Population Health Intervention Research Centre

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THE NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IV

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THE NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT SERIES

An Ongoing Evolution

The Networks Leadership Summit Series was launched by the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (CHSRF) as part of a concerted effort to understand, support and create networks linking key stakeholders within health systems. The summits are invitational sessions designed as free, open spaces where participants with a common interest in the theory and practice of networks can feel encouraged to tap into their knowledge and collectively explore the role, impact and structure of successful networks. For each summit a maximum of 25 participants is invited representing a mix of backgrounds and a diversity of perspectives to allow for an engaged and enriching discussion, and a widespread diffusion of learning and innovation.

The first two summits were sponsored by CHSRF and were held in Halifax and Toronto in October 2005 and June 2006 respectively. Conversations at these summits focused on the essence of networks and issues related to implementation and evaluation. At Summit II some discussion was initiated on how networks foster collaboration when faced with limited resources and competition, and how they can be used to support system-level change. The third summit was held in Banff in July of 2007 and was sponsored by a coalition of predominantly Alberta-based organizations. Here, the conversation continued to build on the knowledge base established at the first two summits and went on to further discuss using networks to enable change.

At Summit III, and for the first time in the Networks Leadership Series, a symposium was added to allow the conversation on networks to be opened up to a much wider audience. Over 60 delegates from across Canada, the United States and Europe came to hear speakers from both the public and private sectors present on network management, analysis and evaluation. The participant response to this first symposium indicated considerable interest and value in continuing on with a symposium series in conjunction with the summits.

A collaboration of organizations planned and facilitated Networks Leadership Summit IV and its corresponding symposium. The Networks Management and Analysis Symposium and Leadership Summit IV took place in Banff over four days, from January 11th to January 14th, 2009.

The second symposium was designed as a dynamic and interactive program of core instruction on network management and network analysis. Participants learned how multi-organizational collaboration can be achieved; how to manage in a network context; and how to better understand the dynamics of networks by analyzing network structures, processes, connections and outcomes. To capture and maximize these learnings, Summit IV was scheduled to coincide with the last day of the symposium. This strategy added great value to the summit conversations and, while the summit was underway, an optional day of advanced instruction in network analysis was provided at the symposium.

The agenda for Summit IV was designed to build on to the concepts addressed at previous summits and use key information from these discussions to more specifically address issues around sustaining networks during times of change and using them to successfully navigate and take advantage of opportunities presented by a changing environment.

THE NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT SERIES

Building the Knowledge Base

Each of the summits has strengthened our knowledge base on networks and the value they hold as mechanisms for effective knowledge transfer and exchange, and as tools for managing change. Many key messages have been generated throughout the course of the summits and are outlined here under three overarching themes: the essence of networks; implementing and evaluating networks; and using networks to enable change. It is important to consider, however, that concepts within each one of these themes often integrate and link across all three areas of interest.

KEY MESSAGES FROM SUMMITS I, II AND III

THE ESSENCE OF NETWORKS

- The term network can be used to describe the structure of relationships between individuals or organizations as well as a variety of associations between like-minded people. The key is not to get stuck on the definitions, but rather to understand the real human element that exists in networks.
- Networks are about building connections beyond one's individual or organizational experience.
- Working through networks allows greater ease of movement beyond professional, disciplinary and organizational boundaries.
- Networks that encourage the exchange of a diversity of perspectives create a culture of looking at ideas sideways – stimulating creativity and innovation.
- A network can be seen as an object or structure that holds knowledge as opposed to people holding knowledge.
- Networks and communities of practice are comparable and do overlap in many areas. Networks can provide a foundational underpinning to communities of practice.
- Through network analysis you can identify existing energy or capacity and leverage it to build communities of practice or to identify and potentially access and support them.

IMPLEMENTING AND EVALUATING NETWORKS

- There is no one way to approach network evaluation. Capturing the value of informal networks and invisible contributions are important issues for measurement.

- In all aspects of networks, context is the key to success. There is not one method that works; rather, we need to acquire a suite of approaches that we can pull from and apply to particular contexts taking into account the diverse voices and opinions that create a network.
- The notion of co-evolution applies to networks. A network develops and functions within both external and internal contexts, and everything shifts together. Each and every stage of network development can involve re-growth, regeneration or reinvention. To evaluate a network, you need to capture both the original intent and the evolution of the network over time.

USING NETWORKS TO ENABLE CHANGE

- A network can be efficient as a tool for coordinating interests and building capacity. Networks are useful mechanisms for facilitating knowledge transfer and exchange within and across professional, disciplinary and organizational boundaries.
- A diversity of membership and perspectives is key to enabling change through networks.
- Networking needs to be part of the culture of an organization, an inherent part of the way it does business.
- The alliances that networks build and weave within and across organizations and systems create linkages crucial to implementing and sustaining change.

NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IV

The Power of Networks in Times of Change

Building the Knowledge Base

Summit IV added to the foundation of knowledge established at the first three summits on the complexities involved in the implementation, evolution and evaluation of networks, and the development of innovative strategies to help facilitate and manage networks. These concepts were explored within the overarching theme of change; in particular, the value networks hold as tools for navigating change and taking advantage of opportunities that present themselves in times of change.

The following key messages were captured from the discussions at Summit IV and move us further ahead in our understanding of networks and the potential they hold to make a very real difference in health research, health services and health improvement.

KEY MESSAGES FROM SUMMIT IV

- Networks can be critical in times of change. At the very time when they are most needed, however, this is the time when they are often most at risk.
- In times of change organizations will be seeking new answers and networks can facilitate that exchange of information so organizations can learn to adapt.
- Networks allow organizations to pool resources and share the risk of failure on problems. By creating a network of 'best minds' who understand the context, you can make a concerted effort to solve problems and identify opportunities and possibilities.
- Networks have value because they can facilitate and enable the innovation of others, not just their own members. They can become a 'go-to' collection of people; a place to go to test things out.
- By linking up existing practice networks with knowledge networks you can create a network of networks that is more resonant and responsive. You can build measures more broadly, then collectively build a business case.
- There is usually someone or some group that assumes the role of 'entrepreneurial orchestrating' – getting the people together, mobilizing them and framing the issue.
- The real test of effective network leadership is if you can move the network up the learning curve. Some problems may be insoluble but you can do better and move up to a different level of performance.
- One of the challenges of being a network administrator is balancing apparent paradoxes. For example, you want individuals and organizations to identify with and invest in your network at the same time as you want your network to remain open, engaging and moving. And yet, the more people who invest in and identify with the network, the less open and flexible it becomes. You have to manage both at the same time.

“...There seems to be a fundamental flaw related to the social construct of healthcare. When dealing with conditions of deep change and limited resources ... there is a tendency to pull in and deal with core services and not worry about the other things. This is the exact opposite of what nature does. Birds flock; fish school; etc. In conditions of change and when resources are limited they get together. Even single cell slime mold sticks together. We do the exact opposite in healthcare. We have a lot to learn from complex adaptive systems theory. We should use what happens in nature as a frame for what we are trying to get across here.”

Summit IV Participant

NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IV

The Power of Networks in Times of Change

Coming out of the first three summits it was clear that work was still needed on the creation of a common understanding of networks as a legitimate strategy for knowledge transfer and exchange. Issues related to evaluation continued to be a high priority and it was evident that more collaboration would be required to develop an evaluation toolbox that would effectively capture the value networks hold for enabling change.

Change management was a particularly relevant theme going into Summit IV. The current worldwide economic crisis and the massive system-wide alterations to the landscape of healthcare both here in Alberta, where the summit took place, and elsewhere made this a very high priority. The framework for discussions at Summit IV, *The Power of Networks in Times of Change*, was fitting to this climate of change and specifically targeted at sustaining networks in times of change and using them as tools to successfully navigate and take advantage of opportunities presented by a changing environment.

As in the other summits, participants were invited who represented a mix of backgrounds and a diversity of perspectives. Seventeen delegates from across Canada and the United States attended. Some had participated in previous summits and were familiar with the series but for many it was a new experience. This mix of the 'old' and 'new', together with the variety of backgrounds and experience across multiple roles and sectors, added a sense of possibility and depth to the discussions and supported the widespread diffusion of learning and innovation. (See Appendix I for a list of Summit IV participants.)

In keeping with the intent of the series, Summit IV was designed as a free and open space to allow for a natural and lively flow of conversation. Judy Birdsell of On Management Health Group hosted the discussions and acted as a 'listener guide' rather than a traditional facilitator to ensure a natural balance between structured conversation and open space.

"We need permission in our system to be the 'deft laddies'. To
have fun – to play – is a critical element of facilitating innovation."
Summit IV Participant

Building a Framework for Discussion

In preparation for the summit, the participants were asked to consider seven propositions on networks and identify which of them or any others would be most useful as topical guidelines for discussion. These propositions were gathered from conversations at previous summits and each represented a key concept related to networks in support of their effectiveness as tools for successfully navigating change. (See Appendix II for a full listing of these propositions.)

At a welcome dinner the evening before the summit, the participants collectively identified the following four propositions as key to the discussions going into Summit IV:

1. Networks provide critical knowledge management capacity in times of change.
2. Networks accelerate learning.
3. Networks sustain and build connections within systems that are shifting structures and reconfiguring ways of working.
4. Networks can harness innovation within change.

The participants also identified the following questions and concerns as important considerations related to the management and resilience of networks:

- How do you keep the network real so that it is not just another part of the organization?
- How do you create and structure a network to serve a particular purpose?
- What are the different characteristics or properties of networks that enable them to accomplish a particular goal?
- What process would you use to assess the conditions or circumstances of a particular network situation, or how would you know what to do in a particular situation?
- How do you create and sustain a network's value?
- How do you strengthen connections between networks and/or people across systems and organizations?
- How do you increase capacity? What works? What do you need to accomplish?
- Networks have to take risks, yet this puts them at risk. How do you manage this paradox?
- How do you create network sustainability and competence to ensure survival and, at the same time, look beyond network survival to network growth?

Creating a Toolkit

Over the course of the Networks Leadership Summit Series, the need for a network toolkit has become increasingly acute; in particular, the need for useful tools related to network management and evaluation. A plan was initiated at Summit IV to develop an online workbook of resources to support the summit series and its participants, and anyone else currently managing or involved with networks.

Participants were encouraged to forward any frameworks and/or knowledge resources on networks that they found particularly useful to Donna Angus at AHFMR (dangus@ahfmr.ab.ca). This virtual networks toolkit will be developed, housed and openly accessible on a web site or web page.

NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IV

The Power of Networks in Times of Change

The Framework for Discussion

After reflecting on the propositions and questions identified by the participants as being particularly relevant to *The Power of Networks in Times of Change*, the following four themes were proposed as a loose guideline for discussions at Summit IV:

- The Evolution of Networks
- Networks in Times of Change
- Legitimizing Your Network in a World of Boxes
- (Strategic) Management of Your Network

These four themes did provide some overall structure to the conversations at Summit IV, but the crosscutting nature of the underlying concepts and the open space design of the summit stimulated a more spontaneous and lively flow of conversation.

While capturing these discussions for the purposes of this report, the concepts related to *Networks in Times of Change* and *Legitimizing Your Network in a World of Boxes* seemed to more naturally fit under one overarching theme – *Networks as Legitimate Tools for Managing Change*. The conversations are, therefore, summarized and presented in the following pages under these three themes:

- **The Evolution of Networks**
- **Networks as Legitimate Tools for Managing Change**
- **(Strategic) Management of Your Network**

NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IV

The Power of Networks in Times of Change

1. The Evolution of Networks

The following questions were identified as important to the discussion on the evolution of networks:

- How do you sustain and build connections?
- When is a network warranted?
- Where do networks come from?
- How do you become a network?
- How do networks change in the face of change?
- How and why are networks resilient?

Key concepts captured during this discussion are outlined below according to two predominant areas of interest: Evolution and Form.

Evolution

“In times of change it is important for networks to evolve in ways they did not anticipate. How can that be done, managed and facilitated?”
Summit IV Participant

- Networks do not stay the same. They change and evolve over time. The same kinds of networking skills you learn in one are useful somewhere else. Everyone knows each other through proximity and you get a diffusion of knowledge and connections. These concepts are key to the sustainability of a network.
- There are three forms of legitimacy described in the literature (Human & Provan, 2000) related to business networks that are critical to network evolution and maintenance:
 - Legitimacy of interaction (organizations talking to one another);
 - Legitimacy of form (what is this thing and do we buy into this concept); and
 - Legitimacy of the entity (is it an administrative organization or the entity of the network as a whole that the administrative organization is holding together).This makes sense as a way of thinking about what a network is and how it sustains itself. We need to take a more organic view of networks. The landscape is not linear and it can change unpredictably. Network champions can come from anywhere at anytime. This is a strength of networks.
- There is usually someone or some group that assumes the role of ‘entrepreneurial orchestrating’ – getting the people together, mobilizing them and framing the issue.
- There are expenses, and resources are required.
- The initial breakthrough can be the mandate that comes through a resource; i.e., a competitive contracting process like an RFP.
- Even when a network is mandated, there has to be reciprocity or it will not meet the mandated need for the network. We live in an organizationally dense world. A mandated network cannot assume there is a blank slate on the ground; it has to deal with other organizations to work. This same concept can apply to an emergent network when it moves from informal to formal.

- Unless the idea or the purpose of the network meets a critical mass of stakeholder needs it cannot flourish even if you agree it is the right thing to do. Shared vision has longevity.
- In the literature (Milward & Laird, 1996), four factors have been identified related to the success of policy networks:
 - A policy window has to open. The times have to be right.
 - Someone with a high tolerance for risk and reward is providing entrepreneurship.
 - There is a clear frame; something compelling that people can hear and respond to.
 - There is a movement or a group of people willing to invest time and effort.
- As your network evolves you need to ask the following questions on an ongoing basis:
 - Have you really reached a point where you have maximized what you can offer?
 - Does the network need to reinvent itself or join with something else?
 - Are we still valid? Is this still doing what it needs to do?
 - Do we still need the network to advance this vision?
- If the organizational entity that coordinates and facilitates the network is successful it should no longer be necessary to the viability of the network.

Form

- There is a dilemma related to whether the network is a network of organizational members or individuals that happen to work in organizations. If organizations fall off, some key people will still be there. If the organization changes or people change, the network loses that person and the knowledge and history that goes with them. A network needs to be both, not one or the other. There is benefit to a matrix/mix of both organizations and individuals.
- The vision of the network is more important than the form of the network. You want your network members to attribute outcomes back to the network but if you need to evolve because circumstances have changed, you may not want them to identify with the network in its form but rather in its vision. You need them to go with changing the form to sustain the vision.
- Focus on the vision and let the form emerge depending on who is ready.

“Policy frameworks are moving towards creating boxes and definitions and if you do not fit into the box, funders are asking why they should fund you. Networks are a challenge in this policy environment as they operate in the white space. How do you legitimize and mandate a network when it does not fit a traditional mandate re form and function? It is stuck between mandates.”

Summit IV Participant

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2. Networks as Legitimate Tools for Managing Change

Discussions at Summit IV highlighted strong concerns about the sustainability of networks in today's altered landscape. It was clear from these conversations, however, that at the same time as our current economic climate presents a number of risks to networks, it also presents unique opportunities for network development worldwide. The participants at Summit IV had a common understanding around why networks were so valuable as strategies for managing change. The bigger, much more challenging issue was how to effectively communicate this value to a healthcare system intent on the allocation of scarce resources to core services.

“In some ways the idea that we are living in this complex environment is an easier sell than selling networks per se. Networks sound like a fad or a trendy kind of thing whereas the complexity will stay with us. No amount of paper or report is going to change things but to engage these senior people in a way in which you want them to work may change their view of this. How do we get the linear thinkers to be more open to competencies and approaches that are more suitable to the reality of the complexity of the situation?”

Summit IV Participant

The following key concepts were captured by the participants during preliminary discussions the evening before the summit and were used to provide a loose framework for discussion around this theme:

- Networks accelerate learning.
- Networks provide robust and sustained connections in times of change.
- Networks harness innovation within times of change.
- When networks are most needed they are most at risk.

The key ideas generated by these conversations are outlined below:

- Networks are critical in times of change. Organizations that are part of the network will be seeking new answers and networks can facilitate that exchange of information so organizations can learn to adapt.
- Networks can broaden the bench so that we are not so dependent on one organization or individual. Networks allow organizations to pool resources and share the risk of failure around problems. By creating a network of 'best minds' who understand the context, you can make a concerted effort to solve problems.
- Some of the innovation is not product but process. Networks have value because they can facilitate and enable the innovation of others, not just their own members. They can become a 'go-to' collection of people; a place to go to test things out.
- There is a range of multiple bottom lines. Right now government officials are most interested in the efficiency piece. Networks have never been argued before on the basis of economic efficiency but, if nothing else, they are not inefficient.

- To facilitate an argument related to the efficiency of networks shift your language to the notion of creating an infrastructure or a platform similar to an IT network upon which you can build and create strength within the system.
- Context is key. Different networks do different things for different purposes and, as a consequence, there are different stakeholders that matter and different relevant outcomes. You need to consider your context in order to sell or defend your network.
- By linking up existing practice networks with knowledge networks you can create a network of networks that is more resonant and responsive. You can build measures more broadly and then collectively build a business case.
- There are issues around language. You need to be very vigilant about talking about your network as a collaboration not an organization and always reinforce that the work and value of the network is created by its members.
- Use narratives to draw the evidence base out and expose it in a different way. Stories can be very powerful when you are trying to demonstrate value. A government minister might not read or understand a statistical report but a compelling story may get them to change policy. Change the conversation away from efficiency and talk about other richer measures of performance.
- Digital storytelling that relays how involvement in a network has changed an individual, their thinking and the way they now work in the system can be a very powerful transformational tool at a policy level. It speaks to efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness.

A highly animated topic at Summit IV was accountability; specifically, how to maintain the 'networky' nature of a network while also being accountable to an organizational structure or board. One participant eloquently captured this paradox by using the evolution of a large Alberta-wide network as an example:

“Bringing ... out into the very explicit nature of a legal entity created a huge tension between legal requirements and financial accountability, and the innovative nature and 'borderlessness' of managing networks; or the concept of using structure to create space not fill space. You might look like another box in the system but the goal is to create a box in the system that breaks boundaries. You need to be legal or recognizable as a legal agreement but still create some level of difference to create space.

We are all functioning within some kind of structure. We need to find ways to push that. The accountability is not going to go away. The networking aspect of ... survived in its non-legal voluntary form because we created an overarching facilitative structure. You do need a networking infrastructure support.”

Summit IV Participant

Another comment went to the heart of this issue in a much more provocative way:

“Does it matter whether we have a legal home or not or whether we are a network or not? We all have to be accountable. Does what we do change based on who we are ultimately accountable to? And, if it does, what are our workarounds for that? Organizations are being thrown around like a four letter word. We are an organization just in a different form.”

Summit IV Participant

At the end of the day, though, this next comment seemed to sum up the conversation on this issue quite nicely:

“The real world is a very messy place. We find all kinds of ingenious ways of creating organizational activity.”

Summit IV Participant

NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IV

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3. (Strategic) Management of Your Network

How to manage a network and do so strategically were strong and recurrent themes during conversations at Summit IV. Many of the delegates around the table are responsible for managing large networks at a provincial and/or national level and for them these were particularly relevant and ongoing areas of interest. As one participant suggested, being a network administrator is a 'lonely' undertaking. What you need to do to keep your network viable and meet your client's expectations is often contrary to what is needed to maintain the networking nature of the network. In today's increasingly complex environment, however, it is that much harder.

“How do you keep your network perspective in the face of all of these organizational demands? If you stop behaving like a network, you will stop being a network.” Summit IV Participant

The following questions were used to frame this conversation:

- What are the competencies you need to manage a network and how do you learn them?
- Given your context, what aspects of networks are essential?
- How do we organize to be responsive?
- How do we add value for participants and the system?
- How do we connect and enable rigidly controlled organizations?

Three main themes predominated over this discussion: managing your network; managing your network strategically, or as one participant suggested, 'being opportunistic in a time when the wheels are falling off'; and finding the tools you need to manage your network. The key comments captured in these conversations are outlined below.

Managing your network

- A decision maker is going to rely on a network to help them with a problem. They need to have assurance that someone is in charge and there will be an output. As a network administrator you need to balance that with going out and doing your thing.
- The real test of effective network leadership is if you can move the network up the learning curve. Problems may be insoluble but you can do better and move up to a different level of performance.
- Shift to a design attitude around problem solving. Implementing prototypes and pilots on the ground creates a degree of depth and greater understanding.
- Innovation is the product of not just knowledge but also creativity. Create a safe space to facilitate creativity. Take your group away from the realities of what is pressuring them and start to facilitate creative thinking in a new space.
- Create 'productive tension' and a richness of cross learning by having a diverse set of views around the table.

- If the group is totally focused on fiscal realities, find space in your network conversations to talk about it. Seek out new ideas, new concepts, 'crazy thinking'. Be aware though that you need to achieve a state of maturity in your group before they will be prepared to let their hair down.
- People in the health system tend to focus in on tasks rather than relationships. Do the initial work that needs to be done around relationship building.
- You need more facilitation skills with linear thinkers. Start with stories around personal experiences. People will have certain statements that they use to represent their organizations and, if you can get them out of that and break the ice, you can get them out from under their organizational hat and be creative. They can come away with a value they have not gotten before.
- To catalyze creativity and innovation in a big network create subsets of people engaged in specific topic areas or small experiments going on in multiple spaces.

“A network entrepreneur follows the Goldilocks rule – not too much, not too little. Consider when the timing is right to move on to the next stage. Focus on the vision.”
Summit IV Participant

Managing your network strategically

“Networks are like doing group therapy. You choose to comment on certain things; do certain things. The absence of comment or activity is an action as much as the doing. It’s deliberate.”

Summit IV Participant

- One of the challenges is balancing the fact that you want people, individuals and organizations, to identify with and invest in networks at the same time as you want the network to remain open, engaging and moving. The more people who invest in and identify with the network, the less open and flexible it becomes. You have to manage both at the same time.
- The role of the network manager is to understand what people need to get from the network and ensure they get what they need. You have to find out what the gives and gets are or the people will drop off.
- Be clear about what the network is there for; i.e., to harness diversity for the members to be more innovative or to be the innovative engine. Expectations of the network will differ based on this.
- As in the private sector the concept of who your customer is applies to networks. You can have multiple customers and evaluation, innovation and success are relative to those customer needs. You really need to know what your customer needs are and which of these needs are a means to an end and which are an end. The closer you can get your customers to the end the more successful you will be.
- You need to be conscious of who your highest investors are and work with them for the benefit of the overall future of the network.
- Our natural tendency is to think it is good to get bigger and bigger and more and more inclusive but you need to budget your relationships much like you do your finances.
- Relationship budgeting has a lot to do with what your capacity is to handle multiple relationships. It also relates to who you are going to involve based on the nature of the interest. You need to bound this in a meaningful way.

- Stay open though. You might not know who the relevant stakeholders are or who the champions might be.
- There will be different levels of membership in your network. The core membership will be the people who are willing to share the risk and subscribe to a certain discipline. There will also be corresponding or peripheral members. Any of this can change over time.
- You need capacity at the core. Ask your members to self-identify if they are core or peripheral. The mission of the network is to be viable and you need to keep your focus on the core but be aware that the peripheral member or 'lurker' is important too. You can learn something from the people on the edge.
- The peripheral participant can be used as leverage to break up group thinking. Find your 'lurkers'. They can be very useful and they can become core as the network evolves.
- Tie funding to projects that are focused and policy relevant. Define relevance in consultation with policy makers to create receptivity on their part to the end result.

“The accountability and budget piece relates back to the question of what a network is. Is it the network organization or all the work that they do? When a network administrator is asked what the network budget is the reply depends on who is asking. Is it the budget that pays for the staff in the network organization or is it the services connected to the network? This is not a simple question and yet it is treated as such. It is very complex and if you give a simple answer you can put your network at risk.”

Summit IV Participant

Finding the tools you need to manage your network

- You learn to be a competent network administrator by doing it but you need to have a safe, solid space within the organization and among your peers in order to do it.
- The Networks Leadership Summit Series provides an opportunity for network leaders to connect, learn from and support each other. We need access to more opportunities for this.
- Access to information and tools related to networking is essential. An online network toolbox where relevant resources and frameworks can be shared and accessed would be extremely helpful.

NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IV

The Banff Declaration

Statement of the Fourth International Networks Leadership Summit

A need for a tangible outcome from the summit series was expressed by some participants at Summit IV. In particular, there was interest in developing a policy statement that would capture the intent and knowledge coming out of the Networks Leadership Summit Series, and could be used across a wide audience to explicitly promote the value of networks as an organizational tool for effective knowledge transfer and exchange, and managing change.

Several summit participants volunteered to draft a proposal for review by the others. This draft document was tentatively titled, *The Banff Declaration: Statement of the Fourth International Networks Leadership Summit*, and the summit discussion around this statement was framed to follow its four proposed sections: Introduction/ Background; Statement of Fact; Statement of Value; and Recommendations.

Building a Frame for the Banff Declaration

It was suggested that the Banff declaration start with the following remark courtesy of Brint Milward, Summit IV participant:

“Canada is viewed as a world leader in utilizing networks of organizations to integrate services, create knowledge in critical scientific areas, and build capacity to respond to community needs.”

The key concepts suggested for inclusion within each of the four sections are outlined below as gathered from the initial proposal and subsequent participant feedback.

1. Introduction/Background

- Frame the essence of networks in a way that will resonate with policy makers.
- Focus on public sector networks that improve health and well-being.
- Take a positive stance highlighting success and strength through an emphasis on the proliferation of networks in Canada over the last ten years in response to their success at addressing complex problems and complex environments.
- This is a strength to be protected and built on especially in this time of resource scarcity.
- For most network members this is not their primary organizational affiliation. Networks bridge organizations and link organizational silos.
- Networks provide a useful supplementary organizational form or tool alongside traditional organizational bureaucracies. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
- Networks create the synergy and leveraging you need to deal with complexity within one vehicle.

2. Statement of Fact (from the evidence base)

- Highlights from the research evidence (i.e., Brint Milward and Keith Provan).
- Networks stretch limited resources.
- Networks increase individual and organizational learning and, therefore, increase innovation and creativity.
- Networks improve our range of services.
- Networks achieve economies of scale.
- Networks respond to the need for collaboration.
- Networks increase community reach.
- Networks increase legitimacy.

3. Statement of Value (belief)

- Networks strengthen integration (collaboration, coordination).
- Networks support responsiveness by promoting patient/client centred care (family, community, population) and facilitating decision making that is close to the client.
- We can take advantage of change through the use of networks. Networks will increase the ability of people to make sense of and leverage change through heightened creativity.
- Networks are a tool for addressing challenges in complex environments.

4. Recommendations

- Ten years of investment in networks could be lost. We need to protect what we have accomplished and realize a return on this investment especially in this time of decreasing resources.
- Networks should be considered a central building block or integral part of the infrastructure within the public sector.
- The essential capacities needed to realize this should be supported.
- Existing networks should be leveraged to align with system wide goals/vision.

Another draft of the declaration was developed to capture the recommendations from the discussion at Summit IV and sent round to the summit participants for final feedback and full consensus.

Statement of the Fourth International Networks Leadership Summit

The Consensus Statement of the Fourth Networks Leadership Summit, *Innovation and Progress: The Role of Networks* (see Appendix III), is now available on several websites; has been translated into French; and is an explicit product of NLS IV – a living document on the value of stimulating and supporting networks for achieving societal goals. It is a fitting way to solidify and share more widely the key messages supporting the development, use and sustenance of networks as sources of stability through chaos, and of innovation in times of stagnation.

NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IV

Moving into Summit V

The Networks Leadership Summit Series represents an evolution in our thinking around networks. Over the course of the summits we have steadily moved forward from a need to establish a common understanding and terminology around networks to a general acceptance of the value implicit in the 'real human element' that exists in networks, and recognition of the range of approaches that can and do exist, and co-exist. Summit conversations now have the freedom to move on to more focused discussions on the strategic implementation and evaluation of networks, and the potential networks hold as tools for change management.

Coming into Summit IV, we used this common understanding around the essence of networks and concepts from our first explorations around networks as tools for enabling change to kick-start an investigation into using networks strategically as tools to navigate change and take advantage of the opportunities presented in a changing environment.

One of the strongest, most recurrent themes throughout the Networks Leadership Summit Series has been:

“Is it the ‘networkedness’ of the people to function that both stimulates and sustains change, or the fact that someone is managing the network? And, how do you create or sustain the fluid, organic nature of a network and mandate it at the same time?”
Summit III Report

This theme was once again front and centre during discussions at Summit IV. Other key themes such as evolution, collaboration, creativity, innovation, leadership, resources, process, context and complexity came up again as well.

Evaluation remains a high priority and the need for developing a network toolbox in support of the summit series is ongoing. Plans were officially initiated at Summit IV to make this network toolbox a reality, and the participants were asked to submit relevant materials for inclusion in an online workbook related to networks in general and evaluation in particular.

Another tangible outcome from Summit IV was the development of a policy statement to capture the intent and knowledge coming out of the Networks Leadership Summit Series. This policy statement is already being used across a wide audience to promote the value of networks as an organizational tool for effective knowledge transfer and exchange, and for managing change.

As in past summits, the value of the Networks Leadership Summit Series was echoed in the comments from Summit IV participants. There was also strong endorsement of the learning opportunities provided at the symposium.

Delegates from the British Columbia Academic Health Council stepped forward eagerly to take on Summit V and Symposium III, and planning is now underway to hold these events in Vancouver in the Fall of 2009. Delegates from Ontario expressed their interest in hosting Summit VI and Symposium IV in their province sometime in 2010. Interest

was also expressed in exploring the possibilities of holding a further summit and symposium outside of Canada to encourage additional international contributions.

Many summit participants expressed the desire to access a monthly conversation on networks through the Child and Youth Health Networks of Canada. This group has now been established with an expanded vision to support network management and research more generally, and has been meeting since April 2009.

It remains abundantly clear that the Networks Leadership Summit Series holds ongoing value to a large audience of people involved in networks from across Canada, the United States and beyond. By bringing an ever-increasing mix of backgrounds and diversity of perspectives to the table and providing a free and open space for engaged and dynamic conversation, the summits provide a key opportunity to collectively explore and further our knowledge base and capacity for innovation around the power networks hold to make a very real difference in health research, health services and health improvement.

NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IV
The Power of Networks in Times of Change

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NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IV
The Power of Networks in Times of Change

Appendix I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Donna Angus
Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
Research Transfer Network of Alberta

Linda Barrett-Smith
Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
Ethics Initiatives

Judy Birdsell (Listener Guide)
On Management Health Group

Ann Casebeer
SEARCH Canada
Centre for Health and Policy Studies
University of Calgary

Larry Chambers
Élisabeth Bruyère Research Institute
SCO Health Service
University of Ottawa

Christine Chociolko
National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools
McMaster University

George Eisler
British Columbia Academic Health Council

Pamela Forsyth
National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools
McMaster University

Cindy Gerdes
SEARCH Canada

Sarah Hayward
SEARCH Canada

Ronald Lindstrom
British Columbia Academic Health Council
Royal Coordination Centre of B.C.

Sharon Matthias
SEARCH Canada
Matthias Inc: Designing the Future

Brint Milward
School of Public Administration and Policy
Eller College of Management
University of Arizona

John Parboosingh
University of Calgary

Janice Popp
Southern Alberta Child and Youth Health Network

Keith Provan
School of Public Administration and Policy
Eller College of Management
University of Arizona

Nancy Reynolds
Alberta Centre for Child, Family & Community Research

Paula Robeson
health-evidence.ca
McMaster University

Wendy Spragins (Recorder)
Research Consultant

NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IV
The Power of Networks in Times of Change

Appendix II

PROPOSITIONS FOR SUMMIT IV DISCUSSION

1. Networks provide critical knowledge management capacity in times of change.
2. Networks accelerate learning.
3. Networks sustain and build connections within systems that are shifting structures and reconfiguring ways of working.
4. Networks build connections that can bypass structure and hierarchy.
5. Networks provide robust and sustained relationships in times of rapid and/or disruptive change.
6. Networks can harness innovation within change.
7. Networks allow targeted change within times of system stagnation and/or chaotic change where control is limited or absent.

NETWORKS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IV

The Power of Networks in Times of Change

Appendix III

- **Innovation and Progress: The Role of Networks**

Consensus Statement of the Fourth Networks Leadership Summit (NLS IV) **Banff, Canada, January 14, 2009**

Since 2003, international groups of leading network researchers and managers have come together in a series of meetings to share experience and increase understanding of the nature, value and effective use of networks. This statement summarizes the consensus reached at the 2009 Banff Summit on the value of stimulating and supporting networks for achieving societal goals.

Collaborative networks have been chosen by governments and businesses around the world to deal with many of the most complex problems in uncertain environments like health and wellness, social services, global warming, disaster response, and terrorism. Canada is viewed as a world leader in using networks of organizations to integrate services, create and transfer knowledge, and build community capacity.

Networks have been established in the public and nonprofit sectors to create collective solutions to complex problems through cross-boundary action, whether those boundaries are jurisdictional, organizational, programmatic, geographic, professional, or sectoral. Those looking to maximize results on complex social issues will find investment in networks to be particularly useful in a comprehensive strategy, as networks have been demonstrated to facilitate progress by:

- Leveraging scarce resources and achieving economies;
- Strengthening integration, collaboration and coordination across and within programs, funders, organizations and sectors, while maintaining the benefits of diversity;
- Leveraging change by increasing shared learning, creativity, and innovation among individuals and organizations;
- Addressing needs in a more comprehensive way and improving responsiveness by enhancing the flow of information; and
- Empowering communities to respond to change and problems with greater capacity and resilience.

Networks are collaborative structures that rely on trust and reciprocity for exchange and accountability, rather than price systems (markets) or chain of command (hierarchies). Networks create new patterns of relationships that go beyond members' primary affiliations and are thus effective mechanisms to integrate otherwise isolated capacities for a common purpose. They establish the infrastructure of processes, information, people, and relationships needed to create synergies across multiple organizations, and across wide geographic areas.

Different types of networks are available for different strategy aims. Networks may be designed to improve service delivery, knowledge exchange, research collaboration, or community capacity. They may use a variety of different types of connections, such as knowledge or resource sharing, client referrals, or informal exchange. They may be emergent or mandated. However, effective networks which remain flexible and vibrant all require committed resources and appropriate competencies for network action, communication, leadership, management, participation, and evaluation.

Continued improvement in the health and wellbeing of Canadians, especially in tough economic times, will demand networks that create working connections across silos and stand alone organizations. Canadian public and nonprofit sector networks built up over the last decade have established an essential infrastructure for collaborative action, providing efficient, adaptable approaches to complex issues in rapidly changing environments.

In times of resource constraint, existing and new networks can be effective tools for achieving sustainable change, providing a platform from which innovative responses to changing challenges emerge.

The Networks Leadership Summit Series

The fourth in a series of invitational conversations on networks, NLS IV was designed to explore and broaden our understanding of networks with the intent of making them more effective. This Summit built on previous conversations to talk about sustaining networks in times of change and using networks to navigate successfully and take advantage of opportunities presented by a changing environment.

Dates and Places

Canmore 2003: Networks Workshop; NLS I (Halifax 2004); NLS II (Toronto 2005); NLS III (Banff 2007); NLS IV (Banff 2009).

Reports

- Networks and their Role in Enhancing Research Impact in Alberta, On Management Ltd., Birdsell, J. & Matthias, S.
- NLS I and II, http://www.chsrf.ca/knowledge_transfer/pdf/Bridging_boundaries_creating_knowledge_final_e.pdf
- NLS III, Using Networks to Enable Change: Developing, Sustaining and Evaluating Networks

Partners in NLS IV

Summit IV was sponsored by: *the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research (Research Transfer Network of Alberta); Alberta Health Services - Calgary Health Region; the Centre for Health and Policy Studies (University of Calgary), the Child and Youth Health Networks of Canada, Department of Social Work (University of Calgary), National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools, Population Health Intervention Research Centre (Canadian Institutes of Health Research), SEARCH Canada, and the Southern Alberta Child and Youth Health Network.*

Participants in NLS IV

Ms. Donna Angus, Manager of Knowledge Transfer Initiatives, Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
Ms. Linda Barrett-Smith, Manager of Ethics Initiatives, Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
Dr. Judy Birdsell, On Management Health Group
Dr. Ann Casebeer, Associate Professor, University of Calgary, and Academic Co-Director, SEARCH Canada
Dr. Larry Chambers, President and Chief Scientist, Élisabeth-Bruyère Research Institute, a Bruyère Continuing Care and University of Ottawa Partnership
Dr. Christina Chociolko, Network Coordinator, National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health
Dr. George Eisler, Chief Executive Officer, British Columbia Academic Health Council (BCAHC)
Ms. Pamela Forsyth, Knowledge Broker, National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools
Ms. Cindy Gerdes, Director of Programs, SEARCH Canada
Ms. Sarah Hayward, Chief Executive Officer, SEARCH Canada
Dr. Ronald Lindstrom, Consultant, BCAHC and RCCbc
Ms. Sharon Matthias, Faculty, SEARCH Canada, Matthias Inc: Designing the Future
Dr. Brint Milward, Providence Service Corporation Chair, Associate Dean & Director, School of Public Administration & Policy, Eller College of Management
Dr. John Parboosingh, Professor Emeritus, University of Calgary
Ms. Janice Popp, Director, Southern Alberta Child and Youth Health Network
Dr. Keith Provan, McClelland Professor, School of Public Administration & Policy, Eller College of Management
Ms. Nancy Reynolds, President and Chief Executive Officer, Alberta Centre for Child, Family & Community Research
Ms. Paula Robeson, Knowledge Broker, health-evidence.ca, McMaster University

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