Lessons in Regional Collaboration:  
The Upper Willamette Stewardship Network

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Within Our Reach Conference  
December 13, 2018
Session Overview

★ Drivers
★ Approach
★ Structure
★ Outcomes

Q&A with audience & panel
UWSN Service Area

MISSION:
"Working with Communities to Care for Land & Water in the Upper Willamette"

PARTNERS:

MISSION:
“Working with Communities to Care for Land & Water in the Upper Willamette”
DRIVERS
CONFRONTING CULTURES OF COMPETITION
Wicked problems we are tackling are beyond the impact of our individual orgs:
Endangered species; Human impacts: e.g., dams, climate change; development; population increase in the WV
Why Collaboration?

- Each partner brings different strengths & perspectives
- Approaching the limits of what we can accomplish individually
- Shared desire to “Grow the pie” & create a culture of abundance
- More effectively serve our communities
APPROACH
Esprit De Corps: The Value of Trust
Elements of an Effective Network

1. Mindset
2. Process
3. Structure
4. Coordination
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Network Mindset

1. **Mission not organization:** Scale your impact, not your organization

2. **Node not hub:** See your organization as part of an interconnected system, not the center of it

3. **Humility not brand:** Work alongside peers and share the credit

4. **Trust not control:** Build relationships of trust, not formal control mechanisms

Source: Jane Wei-Skillern
Organization at the Center

- Social Service Agencies
- Civic Groups
- Churches
- Local Developers
- Government
- Business Professionals
- Corporations
- Associations
- Other NPOs
- Schools
- Academia
- Financial Institutions

Source: Jane Wei-Skillern and Marty Kooistra
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## Organizations vs. Networks

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The Five C’s Network Formation Process

- Clarify Purpose
- Convene the Right People
- Cultivate Trust
- Coordinate Existing Activities
- Collaborate for Systems Impact

Source: Converge For Impact
Crafting an initial statement of the issue to be addressed, developing shared understanding, and finding common ground.
Convene the “Right” People

Bringing together whoever is needed to tackle the challenge at hand

Source: Converge For Impact
"Strategy and structure matter, but the single most important factor behind all successful collaborations is trust-based relationships among participants. Many collaborative efforts ultimately fail to reach their full potential because they lack a strong relational foundation."

- Jane Wei-Skillern, Haas/Berkeley Center for Social Sector Leadership
Trust ≠ Liking or Agreement
Balance Self-Interest and Shared-Interest
Taking action on opportunities where you can have greater impact by working together than you can by working alone.

Source: Converge For Impact
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Types of Network Participation

**LEAD:** “I will take responsibility for making this network activity happen.”

**PARTNER:** ”I will actively work with the Lead to make the activity happen.”

**FOLLOW:** “Please keep me informed about how your work on the activity is progressing.”

**HONOR:** “Although I appreciate what you all are proposing, this activity is not of particular interest to me.”

Source: Converge For Impact
Why Networks Fail

1. Lack of clear purpose
2. The right people and orgs were not involved
3. Weak relationships
4. Lack of network leadership
5. Failure to push the edge
6. Top-down definition of goals and objectives
Critical Success Factors for Network Vitality

A vibrant and adaptive network culture requires that network partners:

1. Never stop **cultivating trust** and prioritizing **strong relationships**.

2. Are comfortable with **ambiguity** and **emergent strategy** relative to network results.

3. **Remain fluid** – let people, teams, and projects come and go.

4. **Honor** self-interest, individual initiative, and entrepreneurship.

5. Continue to **deepen** organizational engagement with the network.

6. Become skilled at **decision making** in a network context. “Close” open conversations with a decision.

7. Think deliberately about how to engage with other actors and **evolve the network**.

8. Keep having the next **hard conversation**.

Source: Converge For Impact
Converge
converge.net
STRUCTURE

UWSN STRUCTURE

- **Yellow**: Core Team of Partners
- **Blue**: Circles of Activities
- **Green**: Active Partners
Our Mission:

“We work with communities to care for land and water in the Upper Willamette”
## CULTURE:

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KEEPING RELATIONSHIPS HIGH PRIORITY

- Regular ZOOM video check-ins
- SLACK channels
- Simple MOU
- Get EVERYONE together -->
- Regular updates
- “Network” support
UPPER WILLAMETTE STEWARDSHIP NETWORK

Challenges:

- Maintaining relationships
- Moving past competition
- Tension/Conflict
- Creating organizational relationships
- Varied resources/ability to engage
- Limited shared capacity opportunities due to the legacy of project focused funding.
OUTCOMES

- Outreach
- Fundraising
- Youth Education
- Project Management/Development
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

...We’re still figuring it out!
OUTCOMES

Outreach/Fundraising

● Shared engagement of urban areas?
● Cite each others work
● Go to each others events
● Wild and Scenic Film Festival - 2019
OUTCOMES

Youth Education

- Network partners helping fund
- Programmatic collaboration
- Shared planning and grant applications
- Structure/agreements for shared equipment
OUTCOMES

Project Management/Development

- Help on variety of projects
- Common billing practices
- Non-proprietary
- Urban program
- Shared timeline
OUTCOMES

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Shared training at ED and limited staff and board levels
- Training for additional staff in 2019
- Beginning organizational EESP (Equity Engagement Strategic Process)
- Learn from parallel effort by MRT
- A work in progress....

Process itself is building trust, enriching relationships, and building community among Network members
Resources

Handout
Jane Wei-Skillern, Stanford Social Innovation Review

*Connecting to Change the World: Harnessing the Power of Networks for Social Change*, Plastrik, Taylor, & Cleveland

*Network Weaver Handbook*, June Holley

www.converge.net
DISCUSSION