

Purpose of your Network: Learning or Action?

A learning network primarily focuses on knowledge exchange, capacity building, and continuous learning among its members. On the other hand, an action network is geared towards achieving tangible outcomes, driving real-world change, and making a measurable impact in a specific field or industry.

Network Type	Year 0-2: Learning	Year 1-3: Action
Network Structure	Open Network	Tighter Network
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed to mobilize actors, facilitate the flow of information or knowledge, and build connections to advance collective learning on a particular issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed to facilitate connection and learning in service to coordinated, collective action.
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilization of member-participants through learning, relationship building, advancement of established initiatives Increase interactions and connections to create a dense network of ties where everyone knows each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members are building on learning and established relationships to identify and participate in collective action Continue to build network density; activate and leverage connections towards action
Core activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications to inform and engage members and the public Outreach and engagement of key stakeholders to bring into the network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activate and advance member-led solutions and initiatives to meet critical change areas continue action to advance the blended finance mechanism and resource coordination

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Host events to support learning, networking, and action-preparedness across critical change areas ● Initiate and/or continue action to advance the blended finance mechanism and resource coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Host events to build awareness of and feedback on member-led solutions ● Ongoing networking and relationship building of network members to advance resilience efforts ● Ongoing learning, knowledge and information sharing initiatives to support members' resilience-building efforts.
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There is no predetermined amount of time a learning network has to spend as a learning network before making the transition into an impact network. In most cases, the shift is inspired by an event or change in the context that opens an opportunity for action that the established learning network responds to opportunistically. In other situations, members' sense of urgency grows and their desire to act outweighs their desire to sustain ongoing learning. Regardless of the spark that inspired the transition, all network designers should consider the following when determining where to start:

- **Network Purpose and Goals:** Clarify the primary purpose and goals of the network. Are you primarily focused on knowledge exchange, learning, and capacity building (learning network)? Or are you driven by achieving tangible outcomes, making a measurable impact, and driving change in the field or industry (impact network)?
- **Stakeholder Needs and Expectations:** Understand the needs and expectations of the network's stakeholders, including potential members, funders, and partners. Are they looking for a platform for continuous learning and knowledge sharing, or are they seeking to be part of a collaborative force that addresses specific challenges and creates real-world impact? And if both, are there enough people interested in action to support ongoing involvement while maintaining opportunities for learning amongst others?
- **Resource Availability:** Assess the resources available to support the network. Learning networks may require resources to facilitate capacity-building activities, provide training and workshops, and support knowledge dissemination. Impact networks may need funding and resources for more rigorous coordination, facilitation, project ideation and implementation, evaluation, and communications and engagement.