# improvement collective

Network Charters

OCTOBER 2020

INTRODUCTION to CHARTERS

The initiation phase of a **Networked Improvement Community** involves empowering the right people to work on the right problem with the right set of supports. The **network charter** captures the common agreements that knits together the network and sets up the network's ability to engage in collective learning.

Lifecycle of a Networked Improvement Community
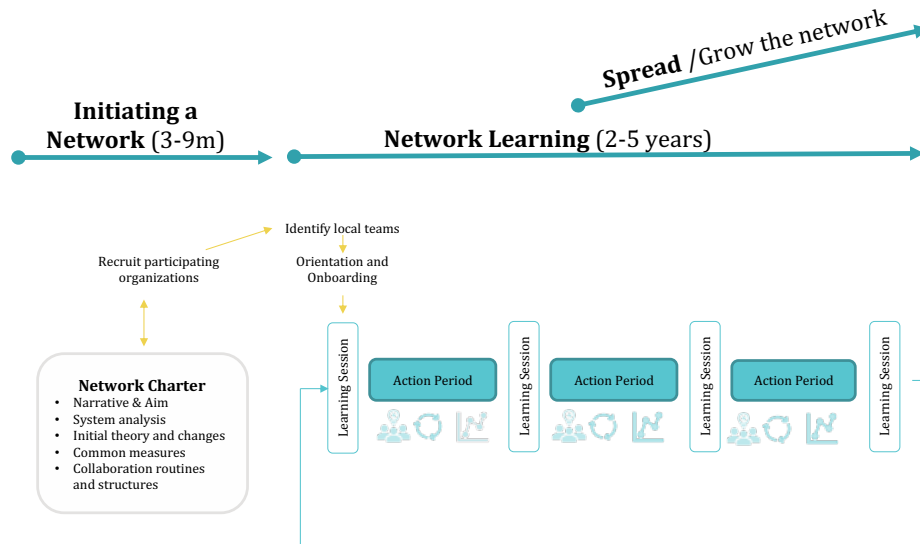
Network initiation teams are advised to spend 3-9 months to "charter" the network. Ideally the team that takes on the responsibility for initiating the network includes leaders of the host organization, leaders from participating sites and key users that the network is trying serve. The initiation team engages in a number of collective learning activities to get to common understanding of the current system, determine and aim, identify measures and develop an initial theory for making progress. The charter is merely the product that captures key artifacts from these activities. The charter can be captured in slides, on paper or web format. A network's charter is a collective and living document, evolving with the communities learning over the course of the network.

This guide provides an overview of the key elements in a network charter and an outline of the activities involved in creating each. There is no one path to chartering a network nor a prescribed order in which the charter elements are represented. The contents of this guide are intended as a scaffold. Finally, chartering is equally a technical and social process. Attending to how you get there, and who is involved is equally important as where you end up.

NETWORK CHARTER
KEY COMPONENTS

Tab 1

COMPONENTS OF A NETWORK CHARTER

1. BACKGROUND	The background gives the essential information about the context to set the stage for improvement. May include basics on geography, history, size, demographics etc. Should be 3-5 bullet points or no more than one page of text.
2. NETWORK MEMBER AND ROLES	Articulates who is in your network and their roles. Includes both local teams and members of the Hub. Visual representation is recommended.
3. NETWORK NARRATIVE	The narrative communicates **why** addressing the problem and the work of the network is important. The narrative should connect to the organization's mission and provide a compelling case for everyone involved in the effort. May not be a stand-alone section but rather woven through the background, problem analysis and aim.
4. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT CONDITIONS	Summary of key insights resulting from investigating the performance of the current system. Often includes a problem statement and key artifacts that summarize current system practice and possible causes of current outcomes (e.g. cause and effect diagram, user quotes etc).
5. AIM & OUTCOME MEASURES	Aim statement for the network. May include both a long-term and a short-term aim. In defining the aim, the outcome measures are also defined. The outcome measures can be included here or with the overall measurement system.
6. THEORY OF IMPROVEMENT	Initial driver diagram with aim statement, primary drivers, and change ideas linked.
7. MEASUREMENT SYSTEM	Common measures that members of the network agree to use to guide their learning. The measurement system should include outcome (1-3), process (2-5), and balancing (1) measures. In the early stages of an effort, sometimes only the outcome measures are defined.
8. BASELINE DATA	Includes graphs of your network's baseline data. At a minimum, baseline data should be provided for all of the outcome measures; displayed for the network as a whole and broken out by local sites as appropriate.
9. NETWORK ROUTINES	A sketch of the meetings and communication plan you have for your Hub and whole network is included here.

NETWORK MEMBERS & ROLES

PURPOSE: Identify members of the network and define roles and responsibilities
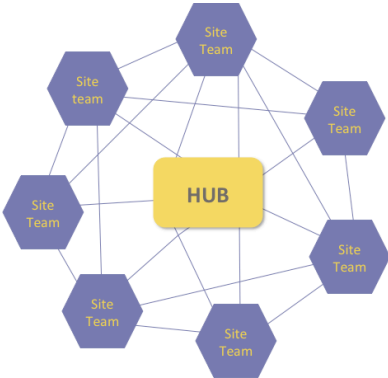
PRODUCTS:

✓ Picture of the network
✓ Clear roles and responsibilities for the Hub, local teams, and any other stakeholders supporting the effort

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

(1) **IDENTIFY HUB MEMBERS.** Review roles and responsibilities document and identify individuals who would play these roles. You do not need a separate individual for each role but do make sure you have all the Hub responsibilities covered.

(2) **IDENTIFY, RECRUIT AND SECURE COMMITMENTS FROM LOCAL SITES AND SITE-LEVEL TEAM MEMBERS.** Identify potential sites to participate in your network initially. Consider sites that are deeply motivated to address the problem of practice and have the time and resources to commit to the work. You may want to develop a recruitment plan or materials to help describe the work and what it will entail.

(3) **IDENTIFY OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO ENGAGE IN OR INFORM ABOUT THE WORK.** There may be other stakeholders that you may want to engage in the network such as parents, other organizations that are supporting EL students in your local context, as well additional groups such as the board or union.

> **EQUITY PAUSE**
> - Who are the intended beneficiaries of the effort? How are their voices and perspectives being integrated into the effort?
> - Are hub and network members representative of the communities and identities of the intended beneficiaries? What are the power dynamics that explain the gaps? How can they be addressed?

OVERVIEW OF NETWORK ROLES

NIC INITIATION TEAM	=> (DISTRICT) HUB	LOCAL SITES
Network Leaders • Champion of the work • Provides necessary time and resources for staff to engage in work • Removes roadblocks to the work • Pursues funding	**Sponsor** • Champion of the work • Provides necessary time and resources for staff to engage in work • Removes roadblocks to the work **Project Lead/Director** • Oversees daily operations; manages site-level relationships • Tracks overall progress of network; shares with district leadership • Leads design, planning, and execution of network meetings and other activities • Manages budget **Project Manager** • Oversees administrative duties and logistics • Develops project plans; monitors timelines and deliverables **Improvement Specialist** • Coaches school teams • Builds improvement capacity of school teams • Supports director in design, planning and execution of network activities **Content Expert(s):** Researchers and district personnel with key expertise on network problem of practice • Supports network in development of theory of practice improvement, measures • Supports improvement specialist in coaching school teams **Data Analyst** • Oversees analytics work of the network: develops measures and data collection tools, analyzes data, creates data reports for schools • Supports school teams in developing local data collection tools and data reports **Collaborative technology specialist** • Creates site to manage network documents, learning, collaboration	Local Sponsor • Champion of the work • Provides necessary time and resources for staff to engage in work • Removes roadblocks to the work Improvement Team Team Lead • Manages improvement work (testing, data collection, etc. at school site) • Reports progress to district director and improvement specialist • Ideally has expertise in area of focus Key front-line workers • School personnel who engage in work directly related to problem of practice • Test change ideas in practice (PDSAs); document learning

NETWORK VISUALIZATION TEMPLATE

LEGEND

NETWORK ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

HUB

| Name	Role and Responsibilities

LOCAL TEAM STRUCTURE

Role	Description Who would be a good fit?	Roles and Responsibilities in Network Include time required, key activities and the frequency of those activities
Local sponsor		
Team members and teams lead		
Other team supports		

NETWORK NARRATIVE

PURPOSE: Cultivate stories and visuals that help remind the network WHY they joined together to work on this particular problem.
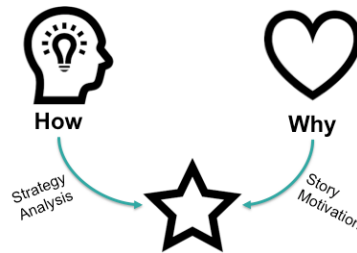
Source: Marshall Ganz

PRODUCTS:
- ✓ Compelling case for improvement that resonates with network members.

POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES:

(1) **CREATE A LEADERSHIP MESSAGE**. The leaders of a network play a key role in calling others to action. They often do this by telling stories that connect the motivations of the people in the network. Marshall Ganz' "public narrative framework" provides network leaders with one framework to create and practice using storytelling to activate change (*google "Ganz, public narrative" for a wealth of resources).*

(2) **LISTENING TOUR.** Provide time and space for other key participants in the network to talk about why this problem is important to them. Elicit stories from students and families. Listen to key stakeholders' personal visions and what brings people to the work. Identify common values and motivations. Tap some of this language to work into the narrative.

(3) **IDENTIFY KEY ARTIFACTS TO EMBED IN THE NETWORK CHARTER.** The network charter should appeal to the hearts as well as the minds of people in the network. Embedding a striking visual, a compelling user quote, a tagline, a critical story or a striking data finding are all ways to remind people of the why they came together.

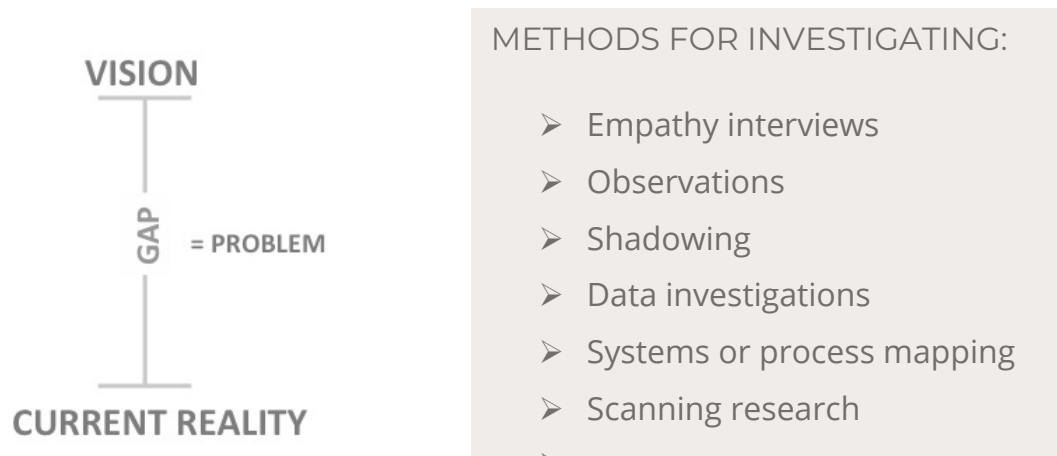(4) **VET YOUR CHARTER WITH LOCAL SITES.** Review your narrative with an eye to the motivations all the stakeholders.

> **EQUITY PAUSE**
> - Who is not being served by the current system? Are these inequities explicitly called out in the narrative?
> - How are the perspectives and voices of students and families raised up in the narrative?

SYSTEM ANALYSIS
WHY ARE WE GETTING THE OUTCOMES THAT WE ARE CURRENTLY GETTING?

PURPOSE: Create a shared understanding of current reality and identify key levers for improvement work.

VISION

GAP = PROBLEM

CURRENT REALITY

METHODS FOR INVESTIGATING:

- ➢ Empathy interviews
- ➢ Observations
- ➢ Shadowing
- ➢ Data investigations
- ➢ Systems or process mapping
- ➢ Scanning research

END PRODUCTS:
- ✓ A clearly defined problem statement and/or description of the gap
- ✓ A summary of your current understanding of the current system that is producing the problem

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

(1) **IDENTIFY A TEAM** of people responsible for investigating the problem. Ideally the team is diverse, representing the perspectives of people that see the system from different vantage points. Alternatively, the team creates an engagement strategy to regularly test their evolving analysis with a diverse set of perspectives.

(2) **COMMON UNDERSTANDING.** Generate an initial problem statement as a team with clear operational definitions. Create an initial understanding as a team of what you currently *know* about current performance and what you *want to know* (your learning questions).

(3) **PLAN AN INVESTIGATION:** Prioritize a learning question (or questions), select an appropriate method and clearly define timelines. Team members can explore one question together or explore multiple learning questions simultaneously.

(4) **GO INVESTIGATE!** Team members go out and investigate, using the method selected. We recommend that teams organize *iterative* investigations and set short timelines for each iteration (1-3 weeks). Scheduling team meetings at regular intervals where team members can share what they have learned and prioritize next steps, helps to create a rhythm for the iterations. The iterative investigations can either continue until the team identifies some "key levers" for improvement or as time allows.

(5) **SUMMARIZING YOUR CURRENT UNDERSTANDING.** At the end of the investigation phase, the team should summarize their current answer to the question "Why are we getting the outcomes we are currently getting?" along with associated evidence. This summary should include a revised problem statement and identification of a small number of causes of current performance. It can take the form of a cause-and-effect diagram, systems map or simple list. Have multiple stakeholders review it to see if it captures their perspective.
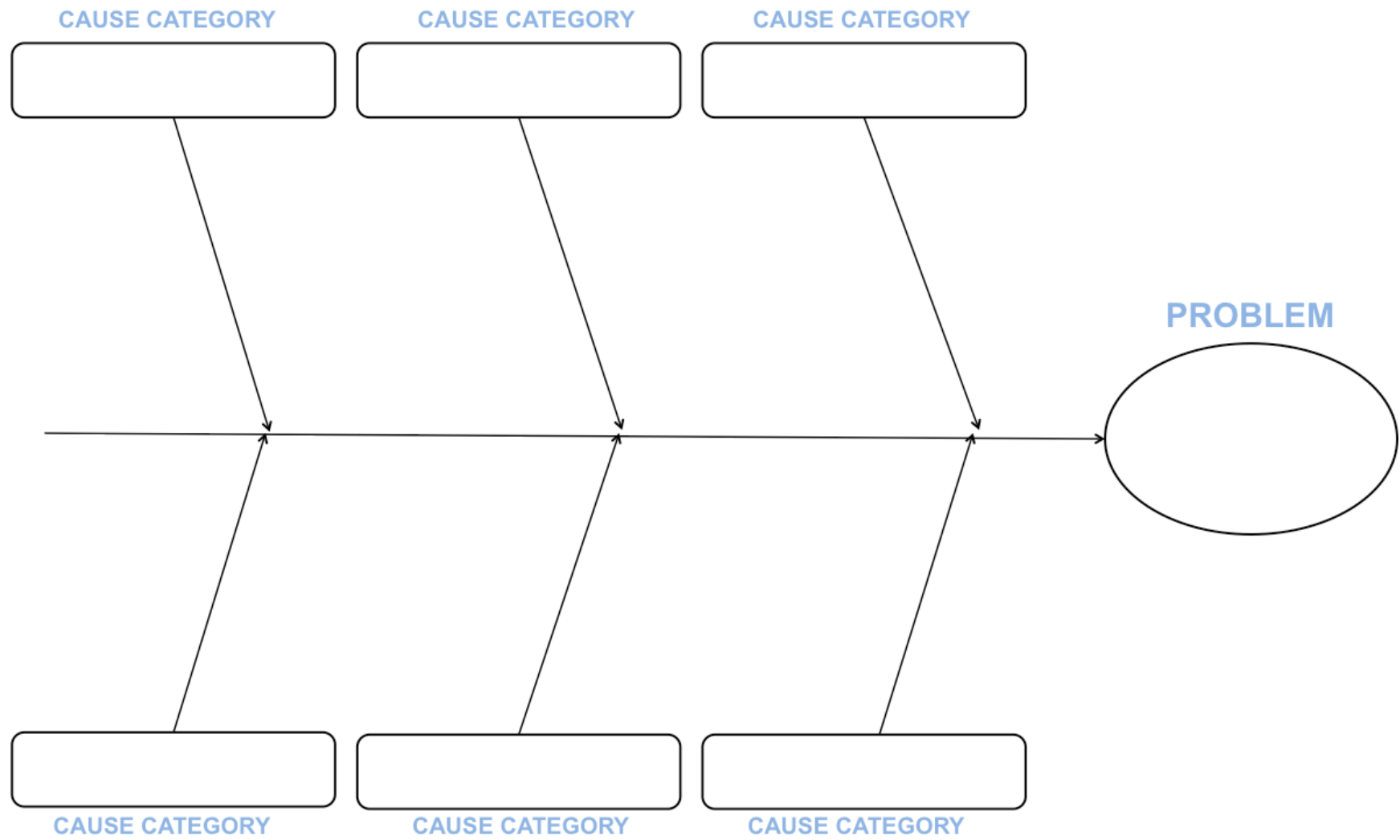
> **EQUITY PAUSE**
> - How have the experiences and voices of students and families grounded the understanding of the current system?
> - Where does our analysis locate the problem? Do we locate it in people or recognize the ways that the current system produces outcomes? What assumptions or biases do we need to explore?
> - Have we attended to and recognized the assets that exist in our students, communities and organizations?

INVESTIGATION PLAN TEMPLATE

PROBLEM STATEMENT:			
What do you **KNOW** about current performance?	**LEARNING QUESTIONS** What do you want to know?	What **METHOD** might you use to investigate?	**PLAN** Who? By when?

*Place a * next to the learning questions that your team prioritizes.*

FISHBONE TEMPLATE

CAUSE CATEGORY

CAUSE CATEGORY

CAUSE CATEGORY

PROBLEM

CAUSE CATEGORY

CAUSE CATEGORY

CAUSE CATEGORY

AIM STATEMENT & OUTCOME MEASURES
WHAT SPECIFICALLY ARE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

PURPOSE: Create a clear, shared vision and definition of success for the network.

What specifically are we trying to accomplish?

- ☐ **What will be improved?** (clear operational definitions)
- ☐ **By how much?** (measureable, specific, numerical goals)
- ☐ **By when?** (time frame)
- ☐ **For what/whom?** (target population/setting or system/process)

PRODUCTS:
- ✓ Aim statement
- ✓ Outcome measure(s)

KEY ACTIVITIES

(1) **CRAFT AN INITIAL AIM STATEMENT.** Get to a single sentence that represents your collective aspirations as soon as possible. You can iteratively refine your aim statement to make it more specific and compelling over time. Once you craft an initial aim statement you may find that you need to shop this aim statement around to various stakeholder to see if it can compel collective action.

(2) **SELCT OUTCOME MEASURES.** Select 1-3 outcome measures that will define success for your project. You may find that you need to analyze current performance before selecting a specific target for improvement.

EQUITY PAUSE
- Who was involved in crafting an aim statement? How does it resonate with students and families?
- Have we explicitly called out an equity gap in our aim statement? How does our aim connect to the equity values and goals of our organization?

THREE IMPROVEMENT QUESTIONS TEMPLATE

| **What specifically are we trying to accomplish?** (AIM)	**How will we know if a change is an improvement?** (MEASURES)	**What changes can we make that might lead to an improvement?** (CHANGE IDEAS)

THEORY OF IMPROVEMENT
WHAT CHANGES CAN WE MAKE THAT MIGHT LEAD TO AN IMPROVEMENT?

PURPOSE: Create an initial shared theory of improvement for the network that focuses efforts on high-leverage parts of the system.
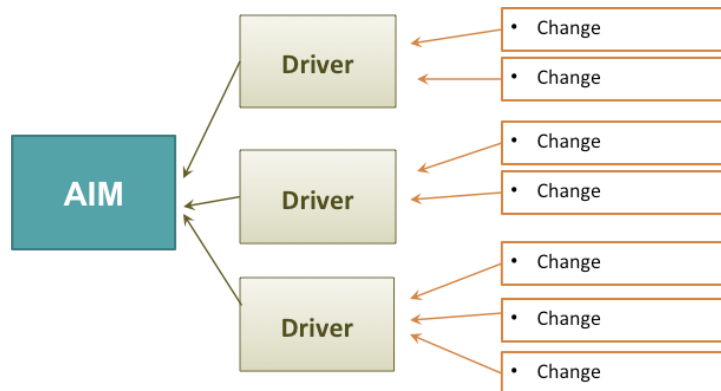
PRODUCTS:

- ✓ Initial driver diagram for the network with shared language
- ✓ Develop specific change ideas that can be tested

KEY ACTIVITIES:

(1) **CREATE AN AIM STATEMENT**. If you have done an investigation of the problem, you may also want to identify a provisional set of drivers based on what you learned to help scope the improvement work.

(2) **SCAN FOR DIVERSE EXPERTISE.** You driver diagram should be based on the best knowledge available. Identify a list of experts that could inform your driver diagram. These should include the user perspectives, "bright spots" in or outside your organization and research experts. Develop a plan to talk to the experts either through a mini-expert convening or individual interviews. After each activity, synthesize what you've learned. Repeat until similar themes arise.

(3) **CREATE VERSION 1.0 OF YOUR DRIVER DIAGRAM.** Using what you learned, create version 1.0 of your driver diagram. It may help to have an improvement specialist facilitate this process.

(4) **RATIFY THE THEORY WITH YOUR COMMUNITY.** Provide potential network members with a chance to react to the initial theory of the network. Pay particular attention if they can locate their work within the diagram and how the language resonates with them.

EQUITY PAUSE
- How will the proposed changes specifically serve those who have been marginalized in the past? How might these changes actively or inadvertently reproduce inequities?
- Where do the change ideas come from? How have the "end-users" of the change effort been engaged as co-creators of the change ideas?

DRIVER DIAGRAM TEMPLATE

DRIVER DIAGRAM

DRIVERS

CHANGE IDEAS

VERSION:

AIM

OUTCOME MEASURES:
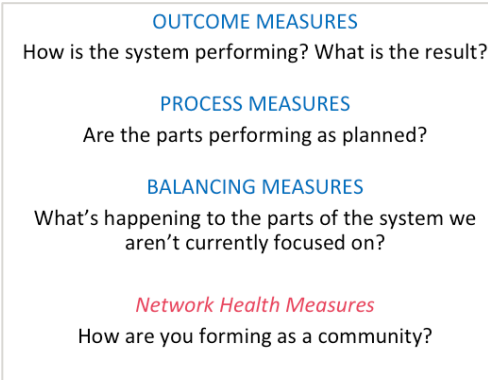
Probably wrong, definitely incomplete

BALANCED SET OF MEASURES

PURPOSE: Create a common set of network measures that enables to network to learn from one another

> **OUTCOME MEASURES**
> How is the system performing? What is the result?
>
> **PROCESS MEASURES**
> Are the parts performing as planned?
>
> **BALANCING MEASURES**
> What's happening to the parts of the system we aren't currently focused on?
>
> *Network Health Measures*
> How are you forming as a community?

PRODUCTS:

- ✓ Network measures
- ✓ Data collection instruments (if necessary)
- ✓ Baseline data

KEY ACTIVITIES:

(1) **IDENTIFY MEASURES & CREATE OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS**. At the beginning of the effort, the network may only be able to identify outcome measures.

(2) **CREATE DISPLAYS OF OUTCOME MEASURES.** The initial displays should include one graph for the overall network and a display for each individual site.

(3) **CREATE DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS.** If new data will be collected as part of the network, prototype data collection instruments and test out how easy they are to use in practice.

> **EQUITY PAUSE**
> - What are the mechanisms to get feedback from end-users?
> - How will you disaggregate data to visualize and track progress on equity gaps?

NETWORK MEASURES TEMPLATE

Type	Name of Measure	Definitions	How you will collect it? (who, when, how)	Summary statistic
Outcome				

NETWORK RHYTHMS & ROUTINES

PURPOSE: Create set of network collaboration routines to create settings for joint improvement work.
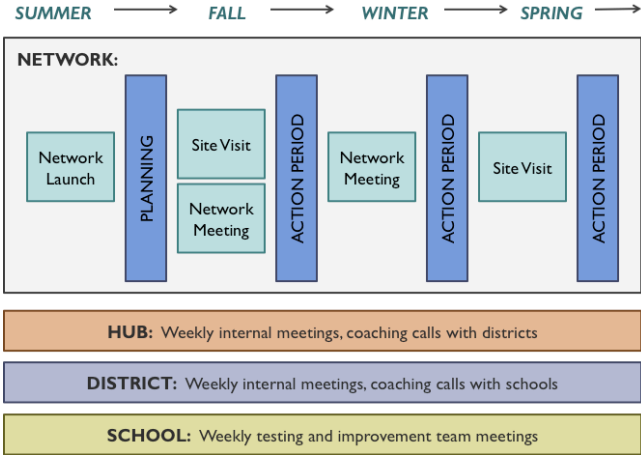
PRODUCTS:
- ✓ Schedule of network events

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

(1) **NETWORK MEETINGS AND ACTION PERIODS**. Identify times when the network can convene face-to-face (usually 2-6 times per year). These are key settings for the network to share learning, update their shared theory and learn improvement methods. Be sure to identify the network launch and closing. Usually networks designate the times between face-to-face meetings as action periods.

(2) **LOCAL RHTHYMS and SUPPORTS**. Identify the key rhythms between the network meetings. These may include weekly improvement team meetings, site visits and network webinars.

(3) **SCHEDULE MEETINGS AND COMMUNICATE EXPECTATIONS.** Put the network meetings on people's calendars as soon as possible. Work with site leaders to ensure local improvement teams will have protected time to do improvement work.

> **EQUITY PAUSE**
> - What is your strategy for regularly integrating the voices and perspectives of students and families into the work?
> - How do we "set the table" to attend to similarities in identities, values and lived experiences as we work together?

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NETWORK RHYTHMS TEMPLATE

NETWORK RHYTHMS

LEGEND

Network Meetings

Action Periods

Site Visit

| JULY | AUG | SEPT | OCT | NOV | DEC | JAN | FEB | MAR | APRIL | MAY | JUNE |