



# Theory of Action: Building & Supporting Networks

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**Collaboration is essential to systems change, and that change can take years or decades, thus NOF fosters and accelerates collaboration in a variety of ways, notably via peer learning networks of grantees. No one entity can accomplish large-scale change in a silo.**

- Catalyze and build trusting and open relationships among grantees
- Create an environment where grantees can learn from each other's strengths, weaknesses, challenges and successes to enhance their own leadership development and organizational capacity
- Create a platform to share knowledge and discuss best practice
- Promote and support a grantee-driven approach to create relationships and collaboration that last beyond the grant period
- Promote discussion on larger issues, complex problems and opportunities, and how coordination and collaboration can create sustainable change
- Explore development of a collective strategy for addressing an issue
- Develop case studies on a peer learning process and model that can be adopted by other funders for greater scale



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## Potential Goals, Target Timeframes and Outcomes for a Peer Learning Cohort

NOF Support

Goal	Target Timeframe	Ideas for Potential Outcomes
<b>Establish New Ways of Working Together</b>	Grant period	Meeting attendance & participation, group shows ownership in design of meetings, early wins captured (# of intros, etc.), self-assessment survey
		
<b>Stronger Leaders &amp; Stronger Organizations</b>	4-5 years	Everything above plus - evidence of knowledge, tools, relationships shared across group and the implementation of learnings or new processes from the topics in the meetings (e.g., development of succession plans across all orgs, implementation of new fundraising techniques, more effective boards)
		
<b>Stronger Field</b>	5+ years	Everything above plus - communication indicators (publications, messages spread, media interest in cause etc.), additional members in cohort or additional cohorts/networks formed, evidence of best practices from cohort being adopted outside of the cohort, increased revenue/fundraising support brought to the field, elimination/streamlining of overlaps in programming, creation of new programs to fill gaps in the field; changes in policy
		
<b>Healthier Children &amp; Families/Stronger Veteran-Owned Businesses</b>	10+ years	Decreased obesity, decreased medical visits, increased purchasing of healthy foods, more home cooked meals, etc.; increased # of successful veteran-owned businesses, more veterans feeling meaningfully employed and using skill set, decreased veteran suicide, etc.



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## Benefits

- Weave social ties
- Access new and diverse perspectives
- Openly build and support knowledge
- Build capacity of individual leaders and organizations
- Create opportunities for collaboration and collective action

## What capacities do nonprofits need to collaborate?

- Strong leadership and an open mindset
- Ability to share power and responsibility
- Adaptability and flexibility
- Strong connectivity and relationship-building

## How should funders approach supporting networks?

- Catalyze relationships and connections, but don't force
- Offer core support and flexible, long-term funding
- Provide necessary resources to support and enable collaboration