



East Texas Human Needs Network

Network Weaving

During our first planning meeting on August 8, 2012 we discussed the development of an infrastructure. After some research¹ and deliberation we've decided that weaving a collaborative network will help us achieve our goals. Here are a few things to know about "Network Weaving."

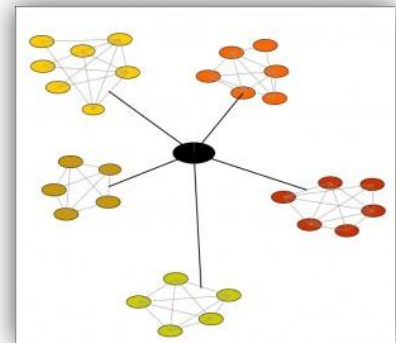
During our first meeting Christina Fulsom was selected as the Interim Leader, from now on she will be known as the Network Weaver.

Network weaver:

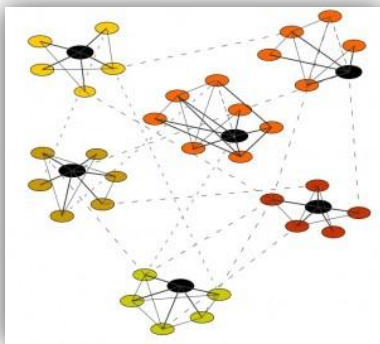
- Role is transitional
- Draws isolated groups into working relationships as an effective network.
- Combines community organizing skills with collaborative leadership.
- Helps organize diverse and creative ideas of numerous contributors without centralizing power and decision-making.

Phases of network weaving:

- **Isolated local groups.** Form as local networks around common interests. Purposes of such groups are usually directed not at community concerns but at meeting their own needs. One example could be a trade association or a non-profit group busily competing with others for limited funds. Such restricted networks tend to operate in their isolated "silos."
- **Hub and Spoke.** Network weaver first develops relationships with each local group separately. The weaver is connected to each group but they are not connected to one another.
- **Multiple Hubs.** Network weaver (hub) starts building



1 Hub and Spoke



2 Multiple Hubs

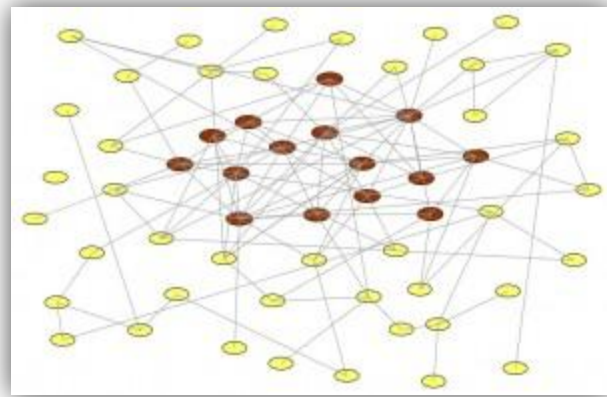
relationships across the boundaries that have kept local groups isolated. Facilitate limited collaborations among them. At the same time training of other committed participants begins in order to share responsibility more widely. Remember that the Network Weaver is a transitional role. These individuals comprise a core group who invest more time and energy than most participants; they take on the role of "hubs" for

enhancing cooperative relationships.

The emerging network now consists of separate, but larger, local networks with multiple hubs or weavers. The separate networks begin to create loose ties with one another, often through individual relationships (indicated by dashed lines in the illustration above). The core leaders work on deepening these ties into stronger bonds based on collaborative efforts. Lookout: obstacles can arise during this transition if separate networks focus more on rivalries and power struggles, rather than giving priority to achieving benefits through collaboration.

Now the role of the core group of weavers changes. They step aside from the “hub” position and let cross-boundary relationships continue. Their role shifts to working with a diverse network and helping shape them for implementation. At that point, the next stage emerges.

- **Core/Periphery.** Once effective, the network has a very different structure. There is a core group of the most active members in the center, and around them are the great majority of the participants. Each participant contributes whatever skills and ideas they want to offer. The core group takes this creative input and turns it into workable proposals for problem solving. They must continue to work in a collaborative manner and maintain active dialogue about proposed solutions or projects with the rest of the network.



3 Core/Periphery

In order to keep a growing network, it is important to keep it open to new contributors. They usually enter at the periphery but can become highly active and move into the core. This openness creates a continuing inflow of new ideas and influences that enable the network to adapt to changing circumstances.

ⁱ John Folk-Williams, www.crosscollaborate.com

Building Smart Communities through Network Weaving by Valdis Krebs and June Holley

We Think by Charles Leadbeater

Here Comes Everybody by Clay Shirky