

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for an exciting and stimulating seminar. We have so enjoyed learning about your networks, and working together to identify ways in which to strengthen networks. Many of you discussed networks that you were either a part of or were familiar with--and indeed, these can be considered "true" networks in which members' participation is enthusiastic because they believe in the mission and vision, receive benefits from membership, and contribute to the network's growth.

Focusing first on the nature of networks and then on how to make a network thrive, a few major themes emerged:

- Mission and Vision are imperative to a strong and sustainable network. Without a clear set of values, it is difficult for a network to find purpose or direction. The best networks have a compelling vision that guides the network and energizes both members and stakeholders to contribute to the network's goals.
- Membership and the contributions of members are a key component in network sustainability. Each person or member of an organization brings a unique set of attributes and resources to their group, and when all members are committed, they stand to learn and benefit from each other's perspectives and experiences. Additionally, the more involved and committed members are to their network and its leadership, the more likely the network is to thrive.
- Strong leadership and management are critical for any successful network. Just as members are important for network growth and survival, so too are a strong board of directors and leaders within the network. These individuals need to believe in the mission and vision of the network so as to lead the members in a positive direction.
- Self-driven AND donor-driven networks both have strengths and weaknesses. While self-driven networks may have more initial commitment from members, they can often lack the structure that ensures their survival. Donor-driven networks, on the other hand, may cause members to feel more like beneficiaries than "owners" and are at risk of ending when the donors support comes to an end.

While the seminar has ended, we encourage you to return to the resources whenever you find them useful, and to look out for the Network Strengthening Program (brought to you by the USAID-funded project for [Leadership, Management, and Governance](#)). Lastly, we ask that you take a few moments to fill out [this survey](#), which will help us bring more and better seminar programming to LeaderNet.

Thank you for your thoughtful contributions and participation!

Best

Lourdes De la Peza and Susan Post, Moderators