Sapwood Advisors

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# New Network Leader

## Discussion Guide

Resources to help ensure that the impact of our collective work is dramatically greater than the sum of the individual parts

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## ABOUT YOU

**What are you most proud of in your work?**
Are there existing network success stories that can be celebrated, shared, lessons learned from and further supported/invested in?

**Network leadership involves a mindset shift rooted in four principles:**
- Mission, not organization.
- Node, not hub.
- Humility, not brand.
- Trust, not control.

Which of these most resonates with you?_____ Why?

**If you were to truly reflect on the networks you are involved in, would you describe yourself as a node or a hub?**

How does that impact the work of the network?

**Does your organization's mission statement signal an openness or commitment to working in collaboration or being part of a network?**

If so, How?

**How does your organization enhance the ability of the community to own and solve the challenges the community faces?**

# BARRIERS

**In past workshops and discussions on this topic, participants identified these challenges or barriers to working in networks.** They are organized in four general buckets, though some of them could show up in several of the buckets.

## EXTERNAL
- Philanthropy's approach
- Competition for perceived scarce resources
- Funding sources limit networks—foster working in silos
- The "big dog nonprofit wags the tail"
- Various sectors need to be satisfied
- Exploitive use of "collaboration"
- Leadership transitions leaving gaps in continuity and ownership

## INTERNAL
- Time constraints
- Mentality that our organization "does this better"
- Ego
- Resistance from the board of directors to engage in networks
- Connecting with and engaging the leadership circle to gain interest and sanction
- "We are polite"

## LOGISTICS / PROCESS
- Communication challenges
- Who in the organization is right point person to engage in the network?
- How do we identify trusted partners?
- Getting agreement on which solution is best
- Follow through
- Making decisions based on behalf of another community
- Cultural differences

## EMOTIONS
- Risk necessary to succeed requires bravery
- Lack of trust among potential network partners
- Repairing trust once lost
- We are afraid of losing our donors
- Tradition—"we have always done it this way"

Circle two barriers that you think are particularly relevant to your work.

Name at least one action that you, your organization, or a group of people in your community today could take to address that barrier.

# ENGAGING OTHERS

**Your Board:** How deeply do you believe your organization's board members understand the ecosystem in which your organization operates?

Do they know:

Who are your allies?

Who are your competitors?

How well do they understand the gap between your organization's outcomes/impact and the need you are seeking to address?

**Your Philanthropic Partners:** Do you help draw your philanthropic partners to support and encourage a network mindset?

What could you do to deepen the understanding of collaboration among funders within your community? Think individually and collectively.

# NEXT STEPS

**Build a network:** What can you specifically do to foster a sense of commitment to networks among other organizations and funders in your community?

**Support a network:** Being specific, what support and assistance do you need or wish you had to create successful networks?

Who could best provide this support:

# MAPPING YOUR NETWORK

When people at Habitat for Humanity shifted their thinking about network leadership, they moved their organization from the HUB of a network map to a NODE. They put their cause at the center and mapped all of the organizations whose work connects to this cause. You can do this for your organization.

## MAPPING METHOD 1:

*Using the Network Map Template on page 8:*

**Write your CAUSE or COMMON INTEREST in the center of a network maps.**

Put your ORGANIZATION in one of the nodes.

Map other <u>key players</u> that are important to making a difference on this cause.

*Here are examples of Habitat for Humanity, first with the organization at the center and then with the organization as a node.*

**Your Organization's Competencies**
Take some time to consider all the areas of work that your organization does and note which of them your organization excels at. Note which areas are seen by others in the community as "value add." As you look to strengthen your role in the network, remember: "Do what you do best and partner on the rest."
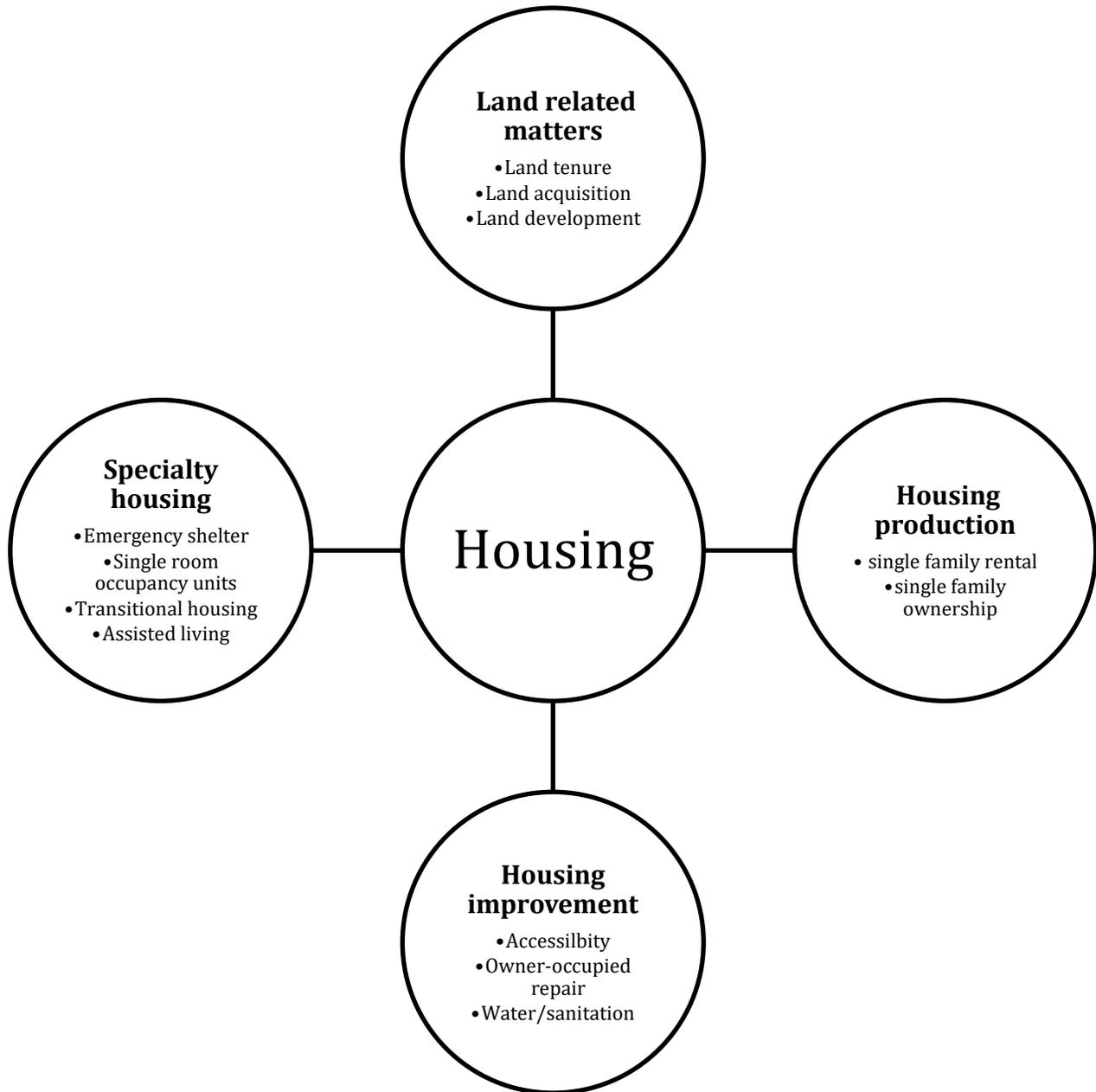


**Community Involvement Map**
Habitat for Humanity as a HUB
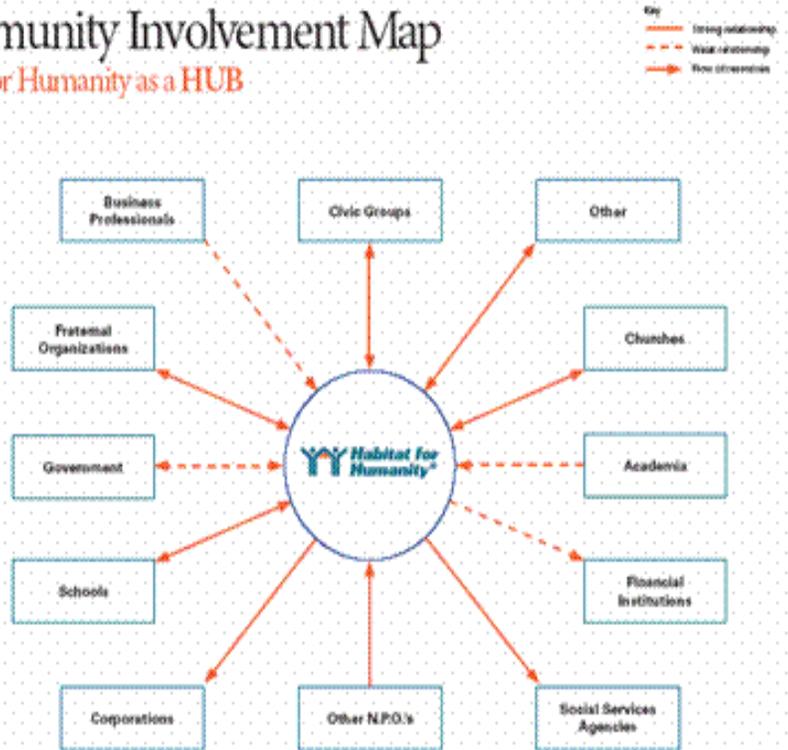


**Community Involvement Map**
Habitat for Humanity as a NODE

## MAPPING METHOD 2:

**Here's another way to think about your cause and how to make a difference.** *Using the Network Map Template on page 8:* Put your CAUSE or COMMON INTEREST at the center of the circle again. Now think about all of the <u>elements</u> important to consider related to that cause. Write them into the NODES. Here's an example for housing:

**Land related matters**
- Land tenure
- Land acquisition
- Land development

**Specialty housing**
- Emergency shelter
- Single room occupancy units
- Transitional housing
- Assisted living

**Housing**

**Housing production**
- single family rental
- single family ownership

**Housing improvement**
- Accessilbity
- Owner-occupied repair
- Water/sanitation

Take this information and use it on the next page to connect organizations to each of these issues.

# Assessing Community Capacity

**Take your Network Map that you just developed on the previous page.** Each of these nodes has organizations working to address that issue. This tool maps out these existing service providers for each node (category). Note the name of the organization or agency that specializes in providing quality services in the respective service category and any applicable comments. Consider the areas of gap as potential opportunities for an alliance-based response. Map out all potential areas of competition that might be better served with an alliance strategy.

| CATEGORY | Org name | Comments | Org name | Comments | Org name | Comments |
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# I Get It!  I Am Committed!  I Will Do the Following:

| Further My Learning | By When | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Review Follow Up Reading | | Located @_____ |
| ✓ | | |
| ✓ | | |
| ✓ | | |

| Share With/Teach Others | By When | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| __My Staff | | |
| __My Board of Directors | | |
| __My Supervisor | | |
| __My Funders | | |

| Find New Allies | By When | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| __Seek out a Mentor | | |
| __Set up an Informal Group | | |

| Personal Reflection | By When | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| __Revisit Why I Chose to Do This Work | | |
| __Get Away For a Brief Time To Reflect on My Personal Convictions | | |
| __Prepare Myself to Challenge Self-Interest When I See it or I Myself Go There | | |

| Make These Adjustments | By When | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| __My Existing Networks and Partnerships | | |
| __My Directions to Staff | | |

Other:

# SUGGESTED READING

"Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through Dangers of Leading" by Ronald Heifitz and Marty Linsky
https://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/leadership-on-the-line-staying-alive-through-the-dangers-of-leading

"The Networked Nonprofit" by Jane Wei-Skillern and Sonia Marciano (2008)
https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_networked_nonprofit

"The New Network Leader" – list of articles featuring network leaders and their stories
https://ssir.org/network_entrepreneurs

**On Philanthropy and network leadership**
"Funding Successful Collaborations" by Jane Wei-Skillern
https://www.fsg.org/blog/funding-successful-collaborations


# NETWORK MAP TEMPLATE