Starting a New Network

If you want to start a new network to share ideas or work together on a specific issue of interest, here are some steps to consider:

- Who are the people who will be involved in this network?
- Where will the leadership come from? Are there any mechanisms for participatory leadership so that the network does not rest on a few people but is supported by the active engagement of all participants?
- What kind of supportive infrastructure do you need? Do you need a governance structure and covenant framework or is it an informal network of people who share a common interest?
- If you plan to meet face to face, where will you meet, when, and how often? If this involves transportation how will mileage be paid for?
- What communications tools will you need to stay connected (email chain, Facebook page, phone tree, WhatsApp, teambuilding software program)?
- What is your mission and vision?
- Using a SMART goals framework (goals should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timebound) what are the goals you hope to achieve?

The most effective way to start and maintain a network is to keep it small and simple, and be clear about your intentions. What will this network accomplish that isn't happening already? What resources (of time, energy, and materials) are required in order to sustain it? What difference will this network make – to the participants and to the surrounding community? What need does this network serve that isn't being met by existing networks?

Being involved in a network can be very satisfying and rewarding and is an excellent way to build connections with others beyond individual communities of faith. However, many people are already very busy in their lives. It takes a good deal of organization and commitment to get a network started that will last beyond a few initial meetings. There is no financial support available for networks apart from identifying and applying for local resources, which can also be labour intensive.

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