DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY: AN EVALUATION PERSPECTIVE

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Sustainability defined

- "Effective **community changes** remain in place and continue to evolve to promote progress toward long-term health and equity goals.

- The **relationships** between people and organizations created or reinforced by our initiatives continue to drive social action to improve health."

Wong, E. Norris, T., and Solomon, L. (2009). *Community Health Initiatives Sustainability Framework*, Kaiser Permanente Community Benefit

- Characteristics of a Healthy Network checklist: "Leadership in the network is distributed, open, and encouraging."

Holley, June (2012). *Network Weaver Handbook* (www.networkweaver.com)

What are the evaluation questions?

- What are the characteristics of initiatives that are sustained?
- What roles are partners playing in to sustain the initiative?
- How is the collaborative creating a sense of shared ownership?
- What strategies are proving most effective in supporting partners to become leaders? What strategies are least effective?
- What are the challenges associated with moving from a centralized to distributed leadership structure?
- What factors are associated with success/challenges?

How, When, and Who? Answering evaluation questions

HOW:

• Partner/community surveys, focus groups, interviews, self-assessment "diagnostics"

WHEN:

• Ongoing, more than once

WHO:

• Organizational Partners
• Community members
• Youth
• Other stakeholders/influencers

YOU KNOW HOW!

Selected Indicators of Distributed Leadership

Dimensions and Factors Promoting Sustainability Within Community Health Initiatives

Community ownership:
a. Initiative is led by residents of, by, and for the community. They have formal roles on the leadership team.
b. An institutional home in the community
c. Key stakeholders are involved in strategy development and execution

Distributed action:
a. Partner organizations do their work differently
b. Partner organizations influence the work of their peers outside the collaborative

Leadership
a. Leadership is shared; leadership team has clearly defined roles and responsibilities, values diversity, has tolerance for different views, has a learning orientation
b. There is a plan for on-boarding and orienting new members **and a succession plan for formal leadership roles**
c. Leadership group makes plans for how they will continue/sustain efforts

Network Transformation Checklist

Rate on a scale of 1-5 (1= not at all, 5= a lot)
1. Many different people are initiating action
2. Many different people have the skills needed to make things happen
3. People are very good at collaborating with others
4. People are successfully working with those who are quite different from them
5. People are coming up with new ways to share their issue
6. Success that the network has had is spreading to other communities
7.Systemic changes are occurring: how people communicate, how they learn, how money flows
Source: June Holley, *Network Weaver Handbook*, 2012 (www.networkweaver.com)

What We're Learning from You: Changed network structure and functions

Centralized — Decentralized — Distributed
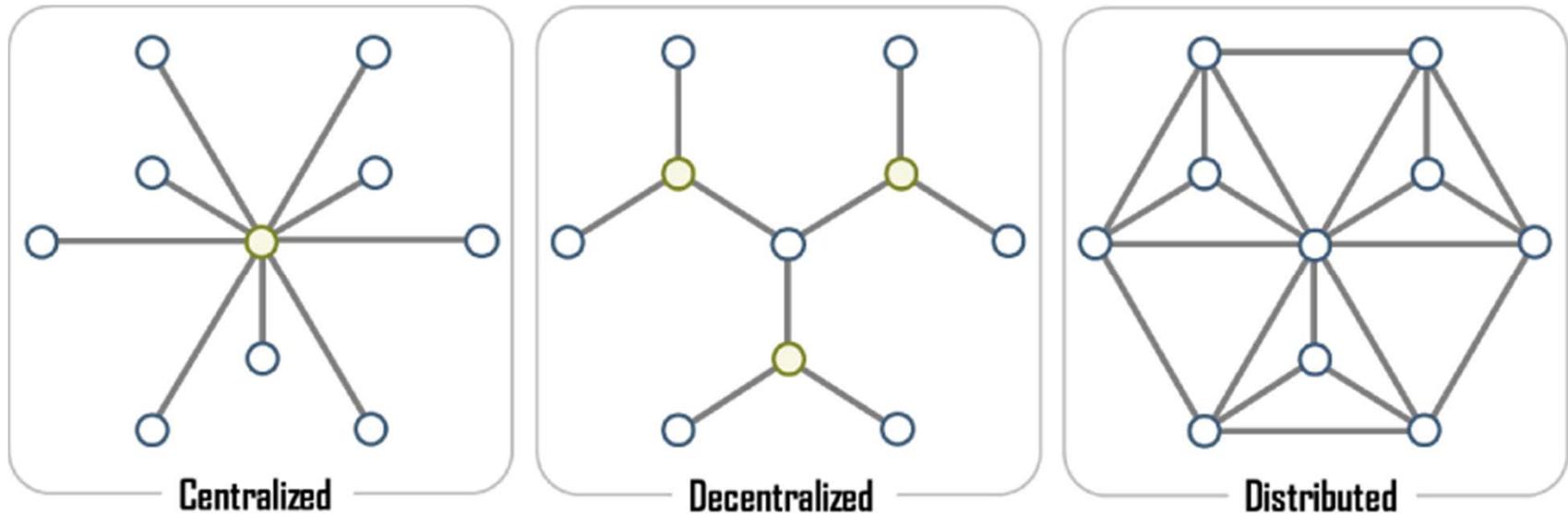
Less sustainable ➡ More sustainable

What We're Learning from You: Challenges and Lessons

- The coordination function is not being sustained in some communities

- Coordinator burnout

- Retirements with no succession plan

- To mitigate risk of losing key human resources, partner organizations are adopting and funding activities/projects.

- When the initiative is dependent on an individual performing a core function, their departure can undermine entire initiative

Summary

- Continuous learning should be "baked in" to the planning and implementation process

- Simple, elegant self-assessment tools and checklists can provide valuable guidance from partners

- Qualitative inquiry (often from an outside facilitator-consultant) can surface and address sensitive issues

- The creative methods grantees used early in planning can be adapted to monitor the health of your collaborative