

# The Power of Networks

Growing Impact through Connection and Exchange

# Why do we form networks?

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts...

- Share knowledge and learn from each other
- Pool resources and secure funding
- Expand our reach and impact
- Advocacy, coalitions
- We inspire each other

# Ingredients for a Successful Network

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- Common purpose or goal
- Clear organizational model
- Regular communication & contact
- Steady commitment (even if small)
- Financial model

# Organizational Models

- **Hub & spoke** - a central node with primary responsibility for coordination and communication
- **Mesh** – equal, distributed responsibility, sometimes with a rotating coordinating member
- **Combination** – multiple central nodes, each with a mesh of partners

# Hub & Spoke Example: ExNET

- Exploratorium Network for Exhibit-based Teaching
- More than 20 museum partners received rotating exhibit sets + tailored professional development
- Subscription model, self-funding
- Results
  - 16 years
  - >600 museum professionals
  - >10M visitors

# Mesh Example: **NAMES**

- Regional subscription network
- 15 members, 12 countries
- Common goal to expand informal science education with common challenges as well
- Rotating leadership role with excellent general assembly conference
- Much good work throughout region, shared

# Combination Example: NISEnet

- Nanoscale Informal Science Education Network
- Primary nodes: Boston Museum of Science, Science Museum of Minnesota and Exploratorium + 12 working partners
- 2 consecutive NSF grants >\$30M over past 10 years
- Results
  - Network grew to more than 100 museums
  - Museums + Research Centers
  - “Nanodays” public programs
  - Nisenet.org for exhibits, kits, programs & media

# Composition

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- Geographical - local, regional, international
- Topic or Content based
- Advocacy Group
- Homogenous vs Heterogeneous
- Community of Peers

# Challenges

- Infrastructure – coordination & communication
- Bandwidth: concentrated effort for a few individuals
- Identity - tension between individual institutions & group
- Funding
  - Broad access – subscription, travel, time
  - Specialized initiatives – grants, corporate sponsorship

# In Conclusion

- Opportunity to establish at outset
  - Plan from beginning
  - Share content, train staff, leverage programs
  - Greater, indigenous impact
  - Economic benefit
- Opportunity to leverage social media behavior
  - Well-established in this region
  - Science Centers lagging in this regard