TEXAS NONPROFIT
MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE NETWORK (TNMAN) TRANSITION

NEEDS ASSESSMENT
&
SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

PREPARED FOR

onestar
foundation
texas center for social impact

BY

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NOTES, DISCLAIMER, AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NOTES:

This study was commissioned by OneStar Foundation: Texas Center for Social Impact with funding from the Meadows Foundation and in-kind administrative and research support from the Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A & M University. It is part of a larger three phase study taking place from September 1, 2009 through May 31, 2011. In addition to the needs assessment and social network analysis reported on here, the larger study comprises:

> 1. statewide survey research on "Strengthening Capacity in Texas Nonprofit, Community and Faith-based Organizations,"
> 2. an analysis of the nonprofit infrastructure in Texas, and
> 3. a comparison of the Texas nonprofit infrastructure with eight states in other parts of the U.S.

In fall, 2010, OneStar Foundation formed an Advisory Group to oversee the transition of the Texas Network of Nonprofit Assistance Providers (TNMAN). Members of the advisory committee include: Angela Bies, Bush School of Government & Public Service, Texas A & M University, College Station; Ronnie Hagerty, Assistant Vice President of Community Relations for United Way of Greater Houston; Matt Kouri, Executive Director, Greenlights for NonProfit Success, Austin; Cynthia Nunn, President of the Center for Nonprofit Management, Dallas; and Katharyn Wiegand, Nonprofit Service Center Director and Senior Project Director, Amarillo Area Foundation.

Members of the Advisory Group along with OneStar staff members, Anna McElearney (formerly Anna Libertino, Senior External Relations Specialist) and Erin Brackney (Manager, Research, Learning, and Texas Connector) oversaw the design of the study.

Thanks to Barrett Brown, Maritza Valdez, and Joseph Golsan, graduate students at the Bush School of Government and Public Service, who contributed to data collection and qualitative data coding for this study.

Additional thanks to Danielle Varda, Ph.D., University of Colorado, Denver, who created the software program "PARTNER: Program to Analyze, Record and Track Networks to Enhance Relationships," utilized in the social network analysis component of this research. PARTNER is made available for non-commercial uses and was originally designed for use in public health collaboratives. With Dr. Varda's generous assistance and permission, we were able to apply the software to the social analysis of the TNMAN collaborative.

Special thanks to the members of TNMAN, who generously devoted their expertise and time to participate in this study.

QUESTIONS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Questions regarding this report are welcomed and may be directed to the author, Angela Bies, at abies@bushschool.tamu.edu or by telephone at 979-862-8829.

If you have any questions or wish for additional information regarding OneStar Foundation's activities related to nonprofit capacity building, network activities for nonprofit management assistance providers, or the nonprofit support infrastructure in Texas relative to the content of this report or more generally, please contact Anna McElearney at amac@onestarfoundation.org or by telephone at 512-287-2026.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The demise of the Texas Nonprofit Management Assistance Network (TNMAN) in 2010 had the potential to leave a void in services offered to the state's management support organizations (MSOs). Through discussion among key investors, and TNMAN and OneStar Foundation board and executive leadership, OneStar Foundation agreed to steward the transition and ongoing operations related to TNMAN's mission as a program of OneStar Foundation. . In order to determine appropriate and meaningful ways to move forward with this mandate, OneStar Foundation's executive leadership and an Advisory Committee on the TNMAN transition commissioned a needs assessment and social network analysis as part of a larger, multi-year research collaboration with the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. Financial support for this study was provided by the Meadows Foundation.

This study, which used a multi-method research design, asked TNMAN members to respond to the following questions:

- What do TNMAN members want from a new structure?
- What was valued/not valued about the previous structure?
- To what extent did TNMAN members collaborate and in what ways?
- What are thoughts about the mission of the new structure, membership eligibility, expectations of members, and so on?

The key findings of this study include:

- *Continued and targeted learning is needed.* A third of respondents are seeking ways that they can learn about emergent areas from other MSOs and specific needs from their clients. Respondents believe these learning opportunities would expand their organization's capacity to serve their clients. To meet these needs, OneStar can offer a variety of services, including tailored learning opportunities for individual network member organizations as well as meetings that engage nonprofits, MSOs, and funders in focused conversations to identify specific areas of need for management assistance and capacity support.

- *Although respondents believed their organization had substantial executive and staff expertise, nearly half expressed the desire to continually hone this expertise in order to meet the evolving needs of Texas nonprofits.* OneStar can provide forums for MSOs to share specific expertise in emergent areas of nonprofit management assistance and capacity building. In addition, OneStar can assist nonprofit organizations in learning how to be better consumers of capacity building and management assistance services through developing resources such as standards and diagnostic tools. Finally, OneStar

should seek ways to better integrate the knowledge and skills of academic providers into the network's efforts.

- *Fostering relationships is critically important in capacity-building and management assistance work.* This finding strongly suggests that the core of OneStar's new service model should emphasize ways to help network members nurture strong and reliable relationships.

- *Financial sustainability is a major concern.* Respondents are experiencing challenges in identifying and accessing sustainable funding streams and in cultivating a regular client base. They also have difficulty in making the case for organizational capacity building. While respondents have found that earned income models provide the most viability, inherent complications around fixed costs often arise. Respondents also have difficulty in maintaining the balance between being mission-driven as an exempt, charitable nonprofit while still operating essentially as a consulting firm. OneStar can assist network members through training and resources about the best practices in fundraising and marketing.

- *Communicating timely information to both clients and staff is proving to be a challenge.* Network members, particularly MSOs, have difficulty helping regional clients remain up-to-date on key areas, such as trainings, requests for proposals, and announcements of potential interest. Additionally, respondents are not attending to their own staff's learning needs in relation to these services. To offset these challenges, OneStar can develop targeted training that strengthens network staff members' outreach to current and potential clients about services that are offered.

- *Network members are seeking a community that allows them to stay updated, to connect with the nonprofit sector, and to continually add value to their clients.* Respondents see the potential for an expanded online network to help them stay informed of current events and connected to the nonprofit sector. Many respondents also want to find ways to develop evaluation measure that extend beyond the relational aspect (such as client satisfaction and participation) in order to consider longer-term outcome measurement strategies and a broader range of fiscal performance. OneStar is well-situated to create this on-line community as well as to assist network members in identifying expanded evaluation measures.

- *Developing a common vocabulary that defines areas such as "capacity building", "management assistance", and "nonprofit infrastructure" will build understanding among the nonprofit community.* OneStar can create a unified language that will help network members work with nonprofits to understand these terms and then take appropriate action to improve these areas. Additionally, nonprofit organizations need OneStar to clarify the respective roles of the Network and its members.

- *While TNMAN's efforts were valued by its members, OneStar has a unique opportunity to capitalize on this previous work and build enhanced services to network members.* Because respondents' understanding of TNMAN's mission varied, clarification of the overarching mission is needed. This discussion can ensure that all members are in agreement and can lead to the establishment of enhanced services. These services may include a more diversified and relevant selection of trainings as well as regional networking opportunities.

- *TNMAN proved to be a valued network service for MSO's across Texas (much more so for MSOs than other members) OneStar can capitalize and build upon this network.* MSO's reported that services provided by TNMAN were useful, especially in regards to the exchange of ideas through other network members. OneStar can now take this strong network and build upon it, advancing the capacity in Texas specifically through the former TNMAN network.

- *Members report several perceived weaknesses within TNMAN.* Members of TNMAN continually reported several services as least valuable and in need of improvement, including: training that lacked relevance, poor facilitation of network exchanges, high travel costs for network meetings, and lack of trust and ethical behavior. Given this valuable information on possible improvement areas, OneStar can focus on these issues to increase the value of network membership.

- *Network analysis demonstrates that TNMAN was highly connected, yet characterized by varying levels of connectedness between organizations.* Collaborative relationships, the lowest cost and least committing type of connection, are the most common type of relationship between TNMAN members. Findings also demonstrate the organizations are most likely to contribute nothing to the TNMAN network, yet they expressed a desire to contribute more. A summative examination of the network analysis illustrates that OneStar is absorbing a network with a large amount of connections, yet one characterized by lack of trust and large variance between each individual organization's level of connection. OneStar can build upon this network, already advantageous in regards to the number of connections, by increasing trust both between OneStar and its members, and between the members themselves.

- *Cost of TNMAN membership is high for many organizations; benefits of membership should outweigh such costs.* There are additional costs of membership beyond dues, such as travel and time commitments for meetings. Members of TNMAN report joining the network for the perceived benefits of membership, including: knowledge, networking, and skills development. OneStar can assure value added by being cognizant of both additional costs beyond membership and possible benefits of all services offered.

Given the above findings, several recommendations are made. These pertain both to OneStar and the future of the TNMAN network as a whole. Recommendations are drawn directly from the findings.

- *OneStar must clearly define the future role and mission of the network.* Members need clarification with regards to the specified mission of the network itself, as well as the mission and purpose of capacity building in general.

- *OneStar must define its own mission and role more clearly in regards to its new management role within the network, for the benefit of both network members and other stakeholders.* Members reported the need for clarification of OneStar's role within the TNMAN network, especially in regards to the distinction between OneStar, TANO, and MSOs. OneStar will have the responsibility of managing these complex interactions; clear role definition will help members understand these distinctions.

- *Beyond the network role, OneStar should create a "Nonprofit Alliance."* This alliance will be composed of key stakeholders within the nonprofit sector and can serve to increase coordination of the sector, role clarification, communication, and resource leveraging.

- *OneStar must provide staffing continuity and nonprofit management expertise.* As members make a transition to the OneStar staff, OneStar must continue to provide the same high level staffing and expertise as that provided under the TNMAN network. Members expressed concern in this area, and diligence to the continual needs of members is key for OneStar to build trust amongst its members.

- *The network should consist of both an MSO core network group and several affiliate or affinity groups.* The core network group would provide a centralization mechanism and the additional affiliate and affinity groups will provide for additional network connections for organizations with similar service areas, interests, and potential for collaboration.

- *OneStar must keep in mind that network membership carrier costs beyond a membership fee, particularly in travel and time.* OneStar must assure that incurred costs are outweighed by the benefits of membership. An additional method to reduce travel costs is holding regional meetings and seminars.

- *Encourage greater involvement and networking connection by members.* Members will directly benefit from this through the positive side-effects of increased organizational collaboration and information sharing. Suggested methods to accomplish this include: facilitating online communities, and regional associations.

- *Ethical and trust considerations were and are a great concern.* Establishment of a formal code of ethics and rules of conduct will help quell such concerns.

- *Research on nonprofit management, capacity, and the nonprofit sector are critical. The network and OneStar can play a pivotal role in building and fostering this research area.* OneStar can collaborate with universities and other key players to further this goal.

- *OneStar can and should play a role in vetting consultants and other capacity building resources*

- *Greater attention needs to be provided across member staff levels and in terms of specific content areas.* This could be accomplished through affiliate or affinity groups.

- *In terms of desired services and membership offerings, this study produced only positive, but vague results.* Additional research in the area of desired services is needed. Clearly defined areas of improvement and future development include: increasing advocacy for capacity building, and opportunities to share funding proposals.

- *These changes and network development can be accomplished in two different methods: a low cost highly collaborative model that builds upon the current network, or a longer more extensive model requiring greater financial stability.* OneStar can accomplish either of these in a series of stages, characterized by collaboration with key nonprofit stakeholders.

I. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Beginning in the mid-1980s and continuing to the present, the Meadows Foundation[1] has invested significantly in nonprofit management assistance generally, but more specifically to the development and sustenance of a statewide network of nonprofit management assistance programs[2]. Originally named the Texas Initiative Program (TIP) and "based on the success of the Center for Nonprofit Management in Dallas, Foundation leaders hoped to enable any nonprofit organization in Texas to receive professional consultation within 100 miles from home" (Buchanan & Christopulos, 1997, p. 1)[3]. A special emphasis was placed on serving the needs of small and medium-sized nonprofits.

The Meadows Foundation's support for the development of management assistance providers was path breaking. From its inception to today, TIP (and its subsequent forms) remains unique in the United States in its mission to network management support providers statewide. Authors of the 1997 study placed Meadows investment in TIP within a nonprofit sector milieu of rapid expansion, devolution of public services to the nonprofit sector, flat corporate giving, and in greater performance expectations – "a 'firestorm' for the nonprofit world"(p. 3). The study describes the following key outcomes of the early years of TIP:

- establishment of 12 new management assistance providers, to expand beyond the extant Centers in Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio;
- geographic expansion of management assistance services;
- investments in the general operational needs of the providers, including staffing, technology, and other infrastructure needs; and

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[1] Founded in 1948 and located in Dallas, Texas, the Meadows Foundation "exists to assist people and institutions of Texas improve the quality and circumstances of life for themselves and future generations." Additional information on the foundation is available at < www.mfi.org>.

[2] Nonprofit management assistance programs, particularly in the early years of TIP, were primarily nonprofit management support organizations, free-standing nonprofit organizations dedicated to providing technical assistance, training and other forms of assistance to help with nonprofit management and operations. Some MSOs are programs of larger organizations. In addition, nonprofit management assistance can also include university programs, private consultants, and other nonprofit associations.

[3] J. Scott Buchanan and Associates, & Chistopulos Management Systems (1997). *Leveraging Nonprofit Management in Texas: An Assessment of the Texas Initiative Program (TIP)*. Internal Report to the Meadows Foundation.

- funding for networking and professional development opportunities for member providers.

The 1997 study also identified several challenges facing the providers: the capacity of the management assistance providers themselves, including financing, changing or unstable institutional arrangements, and remaining current in staff, technological, and management expertise. The network itself was described as having mixed results, with loose organization, absence of priorities and standards, and unresponsiveness to network needs (p. 5). Thus, after a 1998 planning retreat, a free-standing 501 (c) 3, 509 (a) 1 corporation was established with a dedicated director, office operation in San Antonio, and a mission "to develop a coordinated network of centers and organizations, strategically located throughout Texas, that delivers quality management support services and resources to the nonprofit sector" (TNMAN, 2010a)[4].

Eventually named the Texas Nonprofit Management Assistance Network (TNMAN), its height annual expenditures (circa 2006-2009) were around $300,000; membership comprised 35 members and had expanded to include private consultants and academic providers, in addition to the original management support organization/ nonprofit management assistance provider membership type. From 1999 forward, the Meadows Foundation was TNMAN's primary funder, with several other funders[5] providing additional support and with membership fees and consulting revenue being a relatively small revenue stream. Among a diversity of programs, TNMAN provided technological consulting to members and in-person and telephone networking meetings, often centered on the professional development and associative goals of the network. TNMAN also played a lead role in Texas nonprofits' participation in the national Nonprofit Congress in 2007 and in training on the Maryland Nonprofits' (the Maryland

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[4] Texas Nonprofit Management Assistance Network (2010a). Website, front page, paragraph 1, "Our Mission". http://www.txnetwork.org/ <accessed January 14, 2011>.
[5] "During the last twenty-four years, The Meadows Foundation has been instrumental in establishing and supporting the work of nonprofit resource centers and programs. The SBC Foundation, the Houston Endowment, and the RGK Foundation have awarded operating and project grants to help support the Network office. On an annual basis, Carneiro, Chumney, & Co., L.C., has provided in-kind support and expertise to the Network. The investment of these partners has been critical in helping the Network begin its work" (Texas Nonprofit Management Assistance Network (2010)." Website, front page, last paragraph, "Funding Partners". http://www.txnetwork.org/ <accessed January 14, 2011>.

statewide nonprofit association) *Standards for Excellence: An Ethics and Accountability Code for the Nonprofit Sector[6].*

In a memo to members on August 17, 2010, after eleven years of operations, TNMAN's Board Chairperson, Bob Hickerson, announced the following:

> The continuing recession has taken a significant toll on all nonprofit organizations. National and state organizations that support capacity building work have been especially hard hit. With reduced assets, funders have had to make difficult decisions, frequently opting to invest in direct client services rather than organizations that serve a supporting role.
>
> Like its national counterparts, the Texas Nonprofit Management Assistance Network has seen long-time funders redirect their resources. Recognizing that current economic conditions are not likely to improve in the near term, the board of directors of the Texas Network has chosen with great regret to cease operations effective September 15th while the organization remains fiscally sound and able to discharge all of its current obligations.
>
> Guided by the visionary leadership of Executive Director Rose Mary Fry, and supported by the significant financial and technology skills of Rene Wilhite, the Network has ensured that nonprofit organizations across the state have had access to top-quality professional development, consulting and technology assistance in order to better serve their clients. Through the Network, its 32 member organizations have leveraged resources and shared best practices to provide their nonprofit clients with the vital strategic and operational guidance their corporate counterparts take for granted.
>
> Created by the Meadows Foundation more than a decade ago, the Network has helped to realize the foundation's vision that no Texas nonprofit would be more than 100 miles away from critical management support services. The Network board explored various ways to preserve the Network mission in Texas and is pleased to announce that the leadership of OneStar Foundation has agreed to assume the Network mission. A focus group of nonprofit leaders will assist both organizations in planning for that transfer, and at the appropriate time, the Network board will move to dissolve the corporation.
>
> The Network is deeply indebted to our Executive Director Rose Mary Fry for her tireless commitment to this work, especially during these difficult times. Ms. Fry will continue to serve the nonprofit sector as an independent consultant.

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[6] See http://www.marylandnonprofits.org/html/standards/index.asp for additional information.

The fall meeting of Texas Network scheduled for September 30, 2010 in Dallas will be cancelled while an advisory group representing the Network, OneStar Foundation and Meadows Foundation explores ways in which services to Network members may be provided in the future. More information will be provided as soon as possible (Hickerson, 2010, p. 1-2)[7].

During autumn, 2010, OneStar Foundation, in its stewardship and new network leadership role, appointed an Advisory Group to provide input and counsel on the TNMAN transition. Advisory Group members[8] comprise: Angela Bies, Bush School of Government & Public Service, Texas A & M University, College Station; Ronnie Hagerty, Assistant Vice President of Community Relations for United Way of Greater Houston; Matt Kouri, Executive Director, Greenlights for NonProfit Success, Austin; Cynthia Nunn, President of the Center for Nonprofit Management, Dallas; and Katharyn Wiegand, Nonprofit Service Center Director and Senior Project Director, Amarillo Area Foundation.

OneStar's executive leadership and Advisory Group held a series of telephone meetings and gathered for a half-day facilitated conversation to answer the question: "What are the key considerations in the effective transition of the mission and work of the Network as OneStar assumes its new leadership role?" In a related communication to TNMAN members, OneStar CEO and President, Elizabeth Seale, emphasized that the Advisory Group discussion was not intended "to make decisions related to the Network but to inform OneStar's planning for sustainability and support of capacity building work which is so vital to a vibrant nonprofit sector in our state" (Darling, 2010)[9].

In an effort to be inclusive and strategic in its planning, OneStar Foundation's executive leadership called for research to gain TNMAN member input on the transition. This research would include a needs assessment to augment a previously planned social network analysis of/study of collaboration across TNMAN already underway through a larger, multi-year

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[7] Hickerson, Bob. (2010). Memo to Texas Nonprofit Assistant Network Members, "Recessionary Pressures Lead to Closing of Texas Nonprofit Management Assistance Network". <Accessed in its entirety at http://www.txnetwork.org/components/downloads/Closing%20of%20Network%20-%20Board%20Decision.pdf January 18, 2011.>

[8] Advisory Group members were all members of TNMAN, hold management assistance expertise, and provide some measure of geographic diversity.

[9] Darling, Elizabeth M. (2010). Memo to Texas Nonprofit Assistant Network Members, "Update from OneStar". Internal document.

research collaboration of the Bush School of Government and Public Service and OneStar Foundation, with financial support from the Meadows Foundation.

The remainder of this report summarizes this research, and is organized in the following manner: statement of purpose, methodology, summary of findings, and recommendations. As the findings in this report will illustrate, the need for networking and cooperation by nonprofit management assistance providers remains as does a dynamic, complex, and increasingly pressured nonprofit context in which attention to nonprofit capacity is of paramount importance.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Recognizing the increased size and scope of the Texas nonprofit sector, the enduring call for effective performance by nonprofit, community, and faith-based organizations, and the pressing resource constraints and constituent needs facing such organizations, OneStar Foundation "supports the nonprofit sector and its stakeholders through initiatives that increase civic engagement, research, rigorous evaluation and nonprofit organizational excellence. OneStar's goal is to achieve sustainable social impact throughout the larger nonprofit infrastructure."[10] A key principal of the larger nonprofit infrastructure are the entities that provide capacity-building and nonprofit management assistance–those organizations comprising the membership of the former Texas Nonprofit Management Assistance Network.

Given the mandate that emerges from OneStar's organizational mission, coupled with the responsibility to steward the TNMAN transition, OneStar set out to research the perspectives and needs of TNMAN members to develop an agenda for future network activities operating under its auspices. From this context and agenda, the following areas of inquiry served to guide the study:

1. What do TNMAN members want from a new structure?
2. What was valued/not valued about the previous structure?
3. To what extent did TNMAN members collaborate and in what ways?

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[10] OneStar Foundation (2011). Website, paragraph one "About OneStar Foundation". http://www.onestarfoundation.org/page/mission <accessed January 18, 2011>.

4. What are thoughts about the mission of the new structure, membership eligibility, expectations of members, and so on?

Please see Appendix A for a full list of research questions used to guide the needs assessment interviews and Appendix C for the interview protocol that emerged for the study's research questions. Appendix D provides a list of the questions used in the social network analysis.

In addition, to help OneStar serve TNMAN members, the researcher also investigated the types of services, interventions, and opportunities being provided by TNMAN members, and if there were major differences in the needs and perspectives of the different types of providers that comprised TNMAN's membership (academic centers, private firms, and management support organizations). We were also interested in other areas deemed important by TNMAN members themselves and included an open question toward that end.

III. METHODOLOGY

Given the tremendous breadth and depth of the nonprofit management assistance landscape in Texas, the researcher created a three-stage multi-method research design to gather in-depth qualitative and quantitative data to help empirically understand the needs of TNMAN members. First, the researcher gathered archival data from TNMAN members about their mission, organizational structure, services, and size. Second, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with leaders of TNMAN member organizations. Third, the researcher carried out a social network analysis and collected survey data from leaders of TNMAN member organizations. These data collection strategies allowed the researcher to capture both of the following: the diversity of the TNMAN members' perspectives and needs, and the salient themes for OneStar Foundation to consider as it moves forward in this transition.

In terms of timeline, OneStar Foundation Center announced the needs assessment and social network analysis on November 11, 2010. Interview protocol was developed in November; materials related to the protection of human subjects were developed and submitted shortly thereafter. Permission to use the social network analysis software was granted in early December. The Texas A & M Office of Research Compliance Institutional Review Board approved the study in early January, 2011. Interviews commenced shortly

thereafter through February 13, 2011. By research design standards, the social network analysis had to commence as near to the conclusion of the interview component as possible; data collection for the social network analysis started on January 28 and continued through February 21. Analysis ensued during subsequent months.

ARCHIVAL DATA

Document review was an important aspect of this research. We began our investigation with a thorough review of a range of archival data, including: review of previous research commissioned by the Meadows Foundation on this topic; public materials, including annual reports, IRS Forms 990, the organizational website, and previous research of TNMAN itself; and similar public materials of all individual TNMAN members themselves, with a focus on understanding their history, mission, organizational structure, services, and financial operations. This information not only provided the foundation for the study, but it also provided important insights into the state's nonprofit management assistance and capacity-building landscape, provided essential background for expedient interviews, established the context for analyzing all of the study data, and helped to ensure the study data were interpreted appropriately.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT: INTERVIEWS

Data Collection. We conducted 28 interviews with representatives from TNMAN member organizations. Potential interviewees were identified from the membership roster of TNMAN as of September 15, 2010, the network's official close. The membership roster was provided by a TNMAN board member. Second, a member of the research team performed a review to determine any personnel or contact information changes. There were at least three personnel changes, three closures, mergers or other structural changes within the network, and a handful of contact information changes.

First, OneStar sent a letter that included information on the study and an invitation to participate in an interview. The research team then contacted potential interviewees and provided more extensive information on the study, expectations of participants, and human

subjects' protection information. Following the letter, the research team contacted the potential interviewees via telephone or email to request their participation and to schedule a convenient interview appointment time. Informed consent was granted by all participants.

All prospective respondents were asked to consent to an in-person or telephone interview, with written response to questions as a third option. The research team scheduled in-person interviews when possible, given time and budget considerations. In addition, the research team was able to capitalize on a large statewide conference in Austin that occurred during the data collection period. In this way, not only Austin-area TNMAN members but several members from around the state were able to be interviewed in person.   Due to scheduling constraints and summer vacations, it was necessary to conduct one telephone interview.

Although every interview had a flexible format, an interview protocol was developed to guide the process and to ensure consistency of data.   Questions were consistent with existing research in the field and reflected the goals of the study. The protocol for the interviews is attached as Appendix C. Interviews ranged in length from 30 minutes to over two hours; the typical length of an interview was approximately 60 minutes. All interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and coded. Identification information was redacted on the transcripts.

Sample Description and Respondent Characteristics. From the roster of 30 organizations, researchers were able to schedule appointments with 28 TNMAN members representing 26 TNMAN member organizations. Of the 28 members who participated, 15 interviews were conducted in person, 12 by phone, and one by written correspondence. The face to face interviews were conducted in the following cities: Austin, DFW metropolitan area and north Texas; San Antonio, Houston, and College Station. In terms of management assistance provider types, 63 percent of the sample comprises management support organizations or other nonprofit providers, just over 23 percent comprise academic providers, 10 percent comprise private for-profit consultants, and nearly 4 percent comprise a department of a municipal government. Among these, several might be classified as "hybrid organizations", with, for example, mixed degree programs or for-credit course and continuing education, associative or consulting functions.

The respondents were nearly all Executive Directors or CEOs, or principals of firms. The rest of the interview respondents consisted of consultants, vice presidents, professors, and internal program coordinators, at a senior level. Two respondents were new to their roles, but were familiar with TNMAN and their organization's involvement and interested in the future under OneStar. At least 20 percent of respondents had been involved with the entire history of TIP and TNMAN.

Of the organizations participating in the study, the majority were concentrated in major urban areas throughout the state. The Greater Dallas area had the highest number of TNMAN members with seven. Austin was second with five, and no other city or metropolitan area had more than two. The organizations range in age from 60 years old to less than two years. The majority of the member firms were founded in 1990 or later (for the MSOs, many had their origins with the Texas Initiative Program or Meadows funding).

We were unable to locate records of annual expenditures for 15 of the organizations. The majority of these were those that were for profit firms, academic providers, or local government entities. For those whose records were accessible, annual expenditures ranged from just over $103,000 to over $77 million. (Please note: in the largest organizations, the nonprofit management assistance program often operated as a program of a much larger nonprofit entity, such as a foundation.) In two instances, organizations that appeared to be 501 (c) 3 corporations did not have IRS Forms 990 posted on Guidestar, where all public filings exist (unless an organization is religiously exempt from filing or in previous financial cycles operating underneath the financial reporting threshold).

Services offered included consulting, education, financial services, technology services, board trainings, networking opportunities, grants, legal help, nonprofit libraries, and leadership advancement. The organizations are split between those that provide services to all nonprofits across the state, and those that only seek to serve a concentrated group of nonprofits in a specific geographic location. Several organizations limit their services to a single type, such as technology assistance or fundraising training and consulting.

Analysis. Thematic, content analysis was used for analysis of qualitative data obtained in Phase Two. The researchers carried out studies of inter-rater reliability, in which two or more

researchers coded the data independently and reviewed for consistency of coding. This is particularly important in this study as a means to address potential bias, as the principal researcher is also a member of the Advisory Group to OneStar Foundation and a previous TNMAN member herself. Risk for bias, however, remains.

The software package N*Vivo was used to assist in the analysis of the interview data. N*Vivo is a software used to analyze non-numerical unstructured data or qualitative data, where deep levels of analysis on large volumes of data are required. In this study, more than 700 single-spaced pages of narrative interview data were analyzed.

The transcripts of the interviews and research field notes were initially coded using an *a priori* coding scheme, which corresponded with the interview questions. An inductively generated coding scheme was also developed and utilized through the thorough initial reading of the transcripts. Transcripts were reviewed a second time for coding into both the *a priori* and inductively generated coding schemes. This process was based on qualitative traditions of data reduction and interpretation, a process designed to reduce voluminous qualitative data into its patterns and themes (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). All codes were entered into the N*Vivo database, which assisted efficient querying and interpretation. The themes that emerged are summarized in the findings section of this report.

SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

What is social network analysis? As part of our research effort, we have conducted an analysis/evaluation to measure and monitor connectivity of partnerships and collaboration within TNMAN, with a hope of giving insight to areas of strength from the past and to inform future collaborative network efforts. To do this, we used PARTNER (Program to Analyze, Record, and Track Networks to Enhance Relationships). PARTNER is a social network analysis program that includes a survey that can be administered online and an analysis tool, which reads the data gathered from the survey and provides options for social network analysis.

Social Network Analysis is a method used to identify the members of a network and the relationships between those members. (Networks can be operationalized in many ways; in this study, the network is TNMAN.) Members of a network can be visually represented as nodes

(often as circles/squares) and the relationships between them are visualized as lines connecting those nodes (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1. *Visualization of Nodes and Relationships in a Social Network*
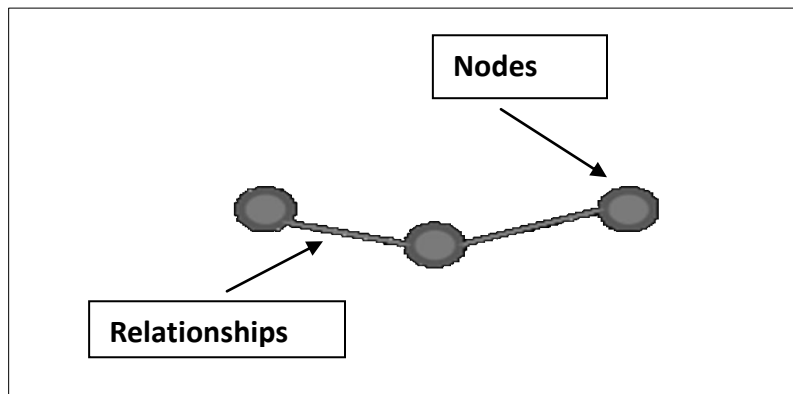
In addition to visualizations, network "measures" can tell us who the key players are in a network. For example, centrality can tell us who has the greatest number of connections, or who is a bridge between subsets of the network. PARTNER was designed to be used by the public health practice community and has now been made available for application to a broader range of nonprofit and community networks. To better understand the specific aspects of the "network" or collaboration among and between TNMAN members, this social network analysis investigates the social structures and the relationships among TNMAN members through analysis of:

1. a visual map of the whole network; an additional visual map of key relationships outside the network;

2. network measurements of density, degree centralization and trust;

3. characteristics of relationships: frequency of interaction and kinds of activities the relationships generally entailed (strength and direction of ties);

4. attributes of the organizations: connectivity, value and trust; and

5. outcome measures: outcomes achieved as a result of the project; the most successful outcome of the project; success of project at reaching its goals; and which aspects of collaboration contributed to TNMAN's success.

Measures. The principal measures utilized in the social network analysis are summarized in Table One below, and include: the number of collaborative relationships in the TNMAN network, the types of collaborative relationships among TNMAN members, the frequency of interaction among collaborators, the "value" of collaborative relationships in TNMAN (measured as power, level of involvement, and resources), trust among collaborators (measured as reliability, mission congruence, and transparency among partners), and the exchange of resources among TNMAN members. See list of survey questions used in the social network analysis in Appendix D.

Table One: *Key Measurements*

Level of Analysis	Measurement	Variable/Dimensions
Network	Density	Number of Ties
Network	Degree of Centralization	Number of Ties
Network	Trust	-Reliability in support of project -Open to discussion
Organization*	Connectivity	-Degree Centrality -Non-redundant ties -Closeness Centrality -Relative Connectivity
Organization*	Value	-Power/influence -Level of involvement -Resource contribution
Organization*	Trust	-Reliability -In support of project -Open to discussion
Network	Outcome	-Outcomes achieved as a result of the TNMAN -The most successful outcome of TNMAN -Success of TNMAN at reaching its goals -Which aspects of collaboration contribute to TNMAN's success

*Important Note: Because of OneStar Foundation's commitment to confidentiality, in the presentation of results, TNMAN member respondents will not be identified by name, but rather by organizational type only. *If an individual respondent organization would like to know its connectivity, value, and trust ratings, the research will gladly prepare a single organization summary. In this event, confidentiality of other respondents is guaranteed.*

Data Collection and Respondents. As described above, respondents invited to participate in the online social network analysis survey were TNMAN members. In addition, during the interview phase of our study, we queried about collaboration generally and added several additional types of organizations to create a list of "non-network" collaborators that included: United Way, local government, state government, federal government, other professional association, other (non-client) nonprofit, and so on. This means that respondents

are asked not only to report on relationships with TNMAN members, but also on key "non-network/non-TNMAN" relationships. For this reason, recruitment for the social network analysis needed to occur near the conclusion of the member interviews; the survey ran from January 28 to February 21, 2011.

Recruitment efforts were extensive. The initial request to participate was made at the end of each needs assessment interview. At the social network survey launch, a letter addressed to the member organization's contact was sent by email. This letter addressed the voluntary nature of the study and human subject considerations, outlined the study's purpose and goals, and included a link to the online survey. Subsequent recruitment efforts included three email requests to respondents, at weekly intervals. All remaining non-respondents were telephoned individually with a final request to participate during the week of February 14. One-third (n=20) of TNMAN member organizations responded to the survey.

IV. Findings

In this section, findings are presented from both the needs assessment and the social network analysis. Further, the sections have both a temporal and thematic focus, with a review of member practices, perspectives on TNMAN's past, findings relating to collaboration and relationships within the network, and, finally, thoughts on the future of the network moving forward under the auspices of the OneStar Foundation.

At times, the findings presented in this report are derived only from the interviews, and vice versa, only from the social network analysis. In several instances, particularly in member thoughts on the past outcomes and findings related to collaboration, findings are derived from both of the study modes and are presented more holistically. In addition, in the presentation of qualitative data, readers sometime long for "hard numbers," such as percent or proportion of respondents. With such a small sample size and nuanced, rich responses, it is sometimes more appropriate to characterize responses by volume and emphasis. (For example, a simple percentage may be highly misleading about the importance of a comment; in this kind of research, we are concerned with individual, sub-group, and the network overall, in terms of responses and related findings.) Thus, while you may see some proportions/percentage of respondents in the responses, you will also see language such as "a key finding," "expressed strongly," "nearly universal," and so on. These expressions of findings come from rigorous qualitative analyses and are considered the most accurate and the more meaningful way to portray the rich and varied responses of individual respondents, the respondents in relationship to each other, and collectively.

Member Practices

To better understand the current circumstances of individual TNMAN member organizations, researchers queried about members' primary strengths and challenges generally, and also specifically with regard to expertise, financial issues, and client needs. In addition, respondents were asked to report on their efforts (or lack thereof) to keep "up to speed" on or responsive to the needs of their clients, to be competitive in their markets, and to evaluate their own organizational successes and failures. In responding to this portion of the interview,

even in its internal, individual organizational focus, nearly all respondents raised points directly related to TNMAN or points salient to future network activities and functions. Following the summary of findings below, where appropriate, implications are noted.

Member Organizations' Primary Strengths and Challenges

Learning Focus. Notably, *all* respondents focused more on challenges than successes. At first glance, this may seem like something negative, but rather it can viewed more correctly as "other side of the coin" issue. An MSO executive observed a tendency toward challenges in his/her own responses and explained this tendency as a focus on improvement and excellence, "We are a pretty self-critical organization, always striving to learn and be better, to be 'excellent'. So one thing I have learned is that it is important to check our pulse by learning how other MSOs are doing, in terms of coping and thriving. But also to take time with staff to celebrate successes, and provide opportunities for learning." This *learning focus* was apparent in about a third of the responses, with MSOs expressing this fairly consistently.

The learning focus theme also extends to respondents learning from their clients, particularly over time, in some spirit of partnership and in consideration of the client's context. This was predominantly manifested in respondents working in a specific geographic area or community. A respondent funder further illustrates this learning focus with the following reflection:

> "So we're experimenting…but I don't think we have to be oppositional or one size fits all, or to pretend like there is this 'objective reality' that fits all situations of all nonprofits in our community. 'We will have everybody trained in logic models by this day. We will have 1,000 hours of board training.' We haven't set up those specific goals for agencies; they are not ours to impose and even if we did, they might not be meaningful. Rather, I report to the board and say, 'Here's my budget, here's what we're trying to do. Here's how we've helped and here are their comments. Ask them when you see them at a cocktail party and I'm not there.'…The stuff that comes back from this is pretty clear, like, 'Whoo! This leader's circle is the best thing I've ever done.' It doesn't sound very organized, but it's both trying to be slow and trying to be careful, within the context of a mutual relationship. And also trying to introduce things at a pace that they can accept. I'm a very aggressive person. I'm very much about within three years it'll

be a hit, but you have to do it in a pace at which they can do it. And you have to be prepared to learn from this as a funder of capacity building."

Another respondent, working in an MSO-like program of a university, frames this learning focus in terms of its approach with nonprofits by first applying a prior successful learning experience of her/his own, and then learning how to adapt an unsuccessful initial strategy to learn from that adaptation:

"Again I think it has also been in the approach and maybe language. I put out an application. Because…I had gone through the same process with OneStar. So I thought what a great way to gather folks in the community, to put out an application or call for responses. But I realized that intimidated people right away, because some of our nonprofit professionals don't consider themselves that professional. One person took three months to fill out the application. And she kept calling me and saying, 'I'm not sure I'm the right person for this,' and I kept assuring her. I think I should have taken a different approach, which was more the informal 'let's get together and talk about what's worrying you, what your agency needs, and how your skills can help make this happen'. And then just ease them into the process, instead of just throwing out the application to them."

Implications: *In the majority of responses, organizational strength and success is framed in terms of a learning focus. Prior research on nonprofit capacity-building supports the important linkage between a learning orientation and engagement in capacity building. A related observation is that learning happens over time, through experimentation, and in partnerships. OneStar should foster this learning orientation in individual network member organizations, as well as assist in dialogue among nonprofits, management assistance providers, and funders that promotes collective learning around the provision of management assistance and capacity support. A part of this collective learning could center on the regular study among network members on organization learning culture/orientation (see measures for learning orientation by Marsick and Watkins, 2003; see Bies & Millesen (2005) for similar phenomena in the Pittsburgh area context; see Ebrahim (2005) for discussion of learning orientation in relationship to nonprofit capacity and funding issues), related interventions, and evaluation of those interventions.*

Client Needs and Competition

Substantive Expertise. In addition, strengths were nearly universally framed in terms of areas of perceived *substantive expertise* held by the respondent or respondent organization, as summed up in the following way, "Primary strengths are that we are good at what we do, we

know what we're talking about, and we speak from real life experiences." Others expressed substantive expertise in its particularity:

- "Basically my strength is [providing] a model of governance that is simple to use and understand. A model for CEO evaluation that is simple to use and understand that really can be implemented…";

- "…that is my firm's primary strength…all we do is work for nonprofits and the people associated with them. With my experience, despite the fact that we have a small firm, I work on several large case IRS exams. And with that comes a strong knowledge of that part of the regulatory climate. What does the IRS expect you to do as a nonprofit?"; and

- "We have a special focus on smaller nonprofits that have less of a tendency to have infrastructure".

At least half of the respondents talked about staff expertise, not just at the executive level in their firms or organizations, but also across their staff. Simply put, one management assistance provider specializing in funding issues stated emphatically that the most important area of success and differentiation from other organizations is "personnel, the staff of course." A seasoned CEO from a large MSO further emphasized this point in terms of the credentials and experiences of the staff, as well as experiences "in the past where several MSOs have gotten together staff at a variety of levels for training or sharing of expertise. There could be a lot more of that."

Several respondents either mentioned their own resources or those of other TNMAN members they respected as success areas, such as "Greenlights toolkits." In another example, five respondents pointed to their holdings of the Foundation Center's database and resources; one agency further framed this in terms of staff expertise:

"There are a lot of cooperating collections, but the public libraries do not have time to teach people how to use the software. We have access to the Foundation Center's database…100,000 funders nationally and internationally. As do the three public libraries in the area. We actually *teach* nonprofits how to use it. We also will do grant research for a fee if somebody doesn't have the time or the expertise to do it, so that differentiates us."

Nearly half of the respondents, however, voiced concern about the quality, currency, and applicability of member agency resources and substantive expertise (in several cases respondents issued both praise and concern). This concern will be further explored in the section below related to competition, but one respondent's comment provides a synthesis of the concerns that fairly reflects the general concern:

> "Look, I remain concerned about whether firms are encouraging nonprofits to buy what they are selling instead of helping nonprofits diagnose what is really needed---even if that's not, NO, especially if that's not what I'm selling. And what is needed isn't always the presenting problem. 'We have a fundraising problem. No: actually, you have a board problem or a leadership problem. Maybe you need to get rid of that executive director'. But if I am selling fundraising or strategic planning in *ten easy dance lessons*, will I be sufficiently ethical to make sure that's what the client needs? And, really, what if my dance lessons are sub-par or totally out of date. So, it's a question of transparency and ethics, externally, but it's also an issue of self-reflection and honest brokering internally. And that's not always easy. And that's where TNMAN or something like it---with OneStar, I guess---could be more helpful. With standards, diagnostic tools, and sharing, more cutting edge content."

In terms of academic providers, all expressed substantive expertise as a strength, particularly evidenced by markers such as areas of increasing enrollments in degree programs, research capacity, and collaborations with management assistance providers, funders, and nonprofits. Undergirding the academic providers' responses was a clear and universal articulation of values closely aligned with the public good/mission orientation and motivating their nonprofit teaching, research, and service, as illustrated in this academic provider's comment, "We're in the College of Public Affairs and Community Service. So I think our strengths are we truly believe in student civic engagement in trying to find strategies to work with nonprofits, which makes that a strategy rather than a haphazard approach."

Several academic providers articulated research strengths, particularly in relationship to serving the nonprofit sector, "We've been successful in obtaining funding for some large scale research projects." Two academic respondents cited the importance of collaborations with OneStar on leadership development programs for nonprofits that have spun off into ongoing programs. And all spoke of the importance of research that is practice relevant, "We're

beginning to realize that one of our new research (opportunities) will be the science of engagement." Yet all also noted the institutional pressures and competing incentives for faculty, (who are generally rewarded on the traditional criteria of research in academic outlets), teaching, and service. One respondent notes, "A challenge is to define research and service at their nexus, which the university is calling the scholarship of engagement. But it's a challenge to change the norms around faculty expectations. On the other hand, it's an exciting time, as nonprofit management programs and nonprofit studies expand."

Implications: The findings relating to substantive expertise as a perceived strength also point to the importance of fostering learning. Here such learning could be staff or function specific, and could draw on specific strengths and areas of expertise of network members. In addition, as OneStar engages members in the evolving network, it would be useful to further capitalize on specialized expertise in emergent areas of nonprofit management assistance or capacity needs, such as regulatory changes, use of new datasets, and new evaluation or measurement models.

OneStar and the future network could further nonprofits' ability to be better consumers of capacity building or management assistance services; similarly, OneStar and network members could develop diagnostic tools and related standards for use among its network constituencies. These findings also suggest that academic providers have different needs and motivations for belonging to the network vis-à-vis their framing of success and institutional expectations. It will be important for OneStar to draw on academic providers' research and teaching expertise, while helping them to foster relationships with other network constituencies and to the network as a whole.

Relationships. A third and common theme related to the relative success or challenges of member organizations was in the area of relationships. *Every* respondent mentioned the importance of relationships, variously through negative or positive examples; several respondents provided important nuances helpful to understanding how relationships contribute to their success, including:

- **Reputation: "**I think strength-wise, within at least the <large metropolitan area> community I think we've got a pretty decent reputation for the work we're doing and building upon. We've really grown in the last year or so reputation-wise. So strength-wise, the community really sees us as a resource."

- **Development of Networks**. Another strength is the networking function that member organizations carry out in their communities and among their

constituencies. For example, "We're doing a monthly board class. We're doing a monthly Emerging Leaders in Nonprofit Management class. These are things where people are starting to develop a loose kind of cohort group where they're coming back to talk among themselves, and also increase their awareness about what's going on."

- **Reliability.** "We counsel, consult, whatever you want to call it with people all the time…Name a topic and they'll come to us. If we don't know the answer, we will find someone or agency to connect them to who will help them with the answer."

- **Trustworthiness.** "Professional standards are important to us. Confidentiality, ethics in contracting and respect. These are not short term things. This is a way of doing business and interacting with our constituents. It makes us better, and it makes our clients better, and it certainly makes the project better."

The head of a long-established MSO sums up the importance of relationships and provides advice for the future: "It's always about the relationship. So God bless OneStar for taking your energy and time to do this in getting feedback and in figuring it out. Because it is the relationship, however that relationship develops that is going to color this. That's what is at the bottom of all of our success. It could be a lot better than it's been I think." And therein lays the implication, simply put.

> **Implications: From their individual organizational experiences and some expressed values of previous TNMAN experiences, relationships are at the heart of management assistance work and in building a network. Findings related to experiences with TNMAN and hope for the future further emphasize the importance of relationships and explicate a number of strategies for OneStar to consider undertaking. In combination, the emergent implication is that as OneStar builds the new model, it must place value of "relationship" at the core of its network programs, policies, and personnel. This value of "relationship" might be enacted by OneStar's intentional efforts to develop a network of members with a shared vision and a sense of belonging and meaning. This network also could provide value-added services that build trust, navigate competition and turf issues, and address and resolve conflicts.**

Funding and Sustainability. As anticipated, a common challenge expressed by respondents is access to funding and developing sustainable funding streams. Besides the unanimity of respondent concern related to this issue is the fact that the vast majority of respondents describe this as a *compelling problem*. Below, cross-cutting themes are first presented; themes specific to provider types follow.

The case for capacity building is difficult. This issue cuts across network member types, whether they are nonprofit MSOs, some other type of nonprofit or educational entity, or private for-profit consultants. Respondents expressed the difficulties regarding making the case for capacity building as being fourfold:

1. widely held negative beliefs in the nonprofit sector that capacity building investments are a frill and unrelated to program or mission-related activities;
2. management assistance and capacity building are abstract, under-specified, and not well understood concepts among funders, policy-makers, and nonprofits themselves (One respondent offers a fairly universal summation of this sentiment, **"**A big challenge is funding because capacity building is so subjective and hard to explain");
3. capacity building entities are one step removed from day to day nonprofit operations, making the case doubly hard to articulate; and
4. nonprofits (in general) are not sufficiently well-equipped to know when and what they need in terms of management assistance or capacity building.

Earned income models are most viable, but with complications, including the nature of expenditures. Most respondents have a revenue model in which earned revenue represents the greatest source of finance. For for-profit providers, this is typically the sole revenue stream. Among the interviewed for-profit providers, earned revenue streams appeared more diversified, with products (such as books and training materials) supplementing client fees. Furthermore, while for-profit providers expressed many of the challenges facing other small businesses (such as overhead costs, with technology and insurance being two primary areas of concern), they seemed to be structured more flexibly and greater control over expenditures, as the majority are sole proprietorships employing no or few fulltime staff, having access to flexible staffing models, and less "bricks and mortar" expenses.

For MSOs and other nonprofit providers, the earned revenue model afforded greater flexibility. In free-standing MSOs and nonprofits, however, expenditures were less flexible with greater fixed costs in equipment, "bricks and mortar," and more permanent staffing models. In addition, nonprofit providers expressed concern about having adequate cash reserves. For

MSOs attached to or operating as a program of a larger organization, such as a United Way, university, or foundation, the overhead expenditures and access to cash reserves were less worrisome, and staffing was somewhat more flexible as staff members' responsibilities could be shifted across programs. One respondent relayed a related concern, "another challenge is for us to be sufficiently nimble to quickly staff up or down as projects wax and wane and to have sufficient resources at the ready to engage new technology or professional development and such."

While a number of respondents spoke about the importance of their reputation and successful "word of mouth" referrals, a number of respondents also expressed concern relating to membership or client cultivation and marketing, as expressed here by one MSO leader, "People use us episodically, just when they need us. We're not a regular resource for some people, but then they'll need something right now and then we'll connect that. We've not done a good job of cultivating and following up. And almost doing the same thing you would do with donors. It's a whole membership relationship thing."

In addition, nearly all MSOs spoke of the balancing act of focusing on their mission as an exempt, charitable nonprofit while operating essentially as a consulting firm. The upside of this is the potential for earned revenue and greater autonomy in terms of general operating support, for example. An additional advantage might be access to donative revenue. The potential downsides are the inference that the exempt charitable mission should equate subsidized fees for clients. While this may suggest an advantage in the marketplace, it is complicated by the fact costs, particularly personnel and other professional costs, which are similar for nonprofit providers. Further, the earned income streams can, ironically, make the case for donative support more challenging. One MSO director offered this reflection:

> "The other kind of nuance – I think it's a nuance, maybe not – is that we do a lot of earned revenue consulting, and our consulting business has grown dramatically. It's more than doubled since I came on board, and that makes us look and feel even more like a for-profit entity in that probably half of our total operation is in some form related to our consulting business. 60+ consulting engagements a year, and easily a half-million dollars in revenue on about a $1.1 million budget."

Donative revenue has considerable challenges. Across the board, the MSOs and other nonprofit providers indicated that philanthropic support was a significant challenge. The challenges were articulated in three key ways discussed below.

1. Individual donor support is limited. Complexities in garnering support from individual donors were expressed consistently by respondent MSOs and other nonprofits. The first challenge relates to making the case for capacity building, as related to the earlier summary. A related challenge is that capacity building providers are one step removed from nonprofits themselves, making the case for capacity building removed from day-to-day nonprofit practice, but also capacity building services are not necessarily transparent to donors to nonprofits or clients. This composite comment from two large, metropolitan MSO directors sums up this challenge:

> "The biggest challenge for any nonprofit is fundraising for sustainability. We just don't have that super-compelling, heartstrings-pulling, case-for giving, and so we don't get a lot of individual donor support beyond our board and former board and some other junior board type things that we have, an advisory board, despite trying desperately. Individuals aren't inclined to write us big checks because of our mission. As you know, 75% of all philanthropic giving in the country is individual donors, and so not being able to tap into that – you know, do major direct mail campaigns like Meals-on-Wheels can do…We struggle with that. And then there is the issue of the perception that donors want to support not only direct service organizations or organizations that pull their heartstrings, but the predilection for donors to want to support 'program expenditures'. And capacity building work sounds too much like 'excessive overhead'. It's hard to overcome these perceptions, for our clients, but for us as a fundraising issue."

2. Corporate and private foundation support is an important source of revenue, partnership, and legitimacy, but funds are limited and difficult to access. Concerns around foundation giving parallel individual giving concerns in terms of making the case for capacity building and access to funding. Several respondents indicated that making the case for capacity building to funders, while never easy, has become harder in the past decade as funder preferences have turned toward making program grants (versus operating grants) and measuring program-oriented outcomes. This concern was expressed repeatedly by nearly all MSO respondents, and the following response reflects this concern, "Recently, one of the foundations that had supported us for a long time quit funding. They're changing directions, so

it wasn't just us. They quit funding anybody doing capacity building, and that was a really big hit."

A related challenge expressed by respondents was the relative paucity of multi-year grants, which would offer greater capacity for planning by capacity building providers. Similar to previous research on Central Texas funders (Bies & Sinatra, 2006), one MSO indicated, "On the foundation side, it's also hard. Most of the foundations in Central Texas are young (first generation money). Unlike Dallas and Houston where there are some really entrenched in their communities…and the life cycle of family foundations is that they tend to start out pretty narrow… And haven't quite been on enough boards, seen enough nonprofits fail, to buy into the capacity-building model just yet." One respondent expressed the related challenge of a small and geographically focused pool of funders that engage in funding capacity building, "My biggest problem was that the same funders are funding the same people, and I didn't know to do what…it's kind of like being inside the Beltway and outside the Beltway."

Another respondent spoke of the engagement of funders as critical to the future of capacity building generally, and capacity builders and the future network respectively, "Number one, unless the conversation at the funder's level changes, unless that shifts to 'we should be going to the area capacity-builders and saying here's money for you to provide these services', we won't see a change." One respondent offered a strategy for addressing concerns about insufficient or decreasing support from corporate and private foundations, as a collective, concerted effort by network members to employ "a soft advocacy campaign," not just to educate funders and nonprofits, but to engage partners in building the capacity for capacity builders. S/He also indicated that one strategy for doing this would be to "better measure the outcomes of our services and products to nonprofits" and then to engage those successful clients in the advocacy campaign. Similarly, in terms of strategy, an MSO director offered this perspective, "And we tend to have to rely a lot more on foundation and corporate giving. Corporations seem to get us, but they also see us more through a marketing lens than they do through a pure philanthropic giving lens, which is fine. We'll take that, and we have lots of great opportunities to help them get their name out in a broad buy of the market."

A respondent funder who also supports a capacity building collective offered a funder's perspective on the complications of funding capacity building. In terms of starting the capacity building program, the funder "thought about the capacity-building program –that we should understand, not to compete with other capacity builders, but our program is to understand the quality and service. Who provides good service? Who's willing to come to [our community]? And who can we subsidize to come and provide consulting services to nonprofits in the areas that they need support?" Further this funder drew out some of the complexities that foundation staff faces in balancing the foundation's overall priorities, while attending to the capacity needs of funded and other local nonprofits, "Of course I have to show my board. Because I go to my board meeting and say, 'We've got this many grant-making dollars, and I think we ought to divert this much for capacity building services that we proactively direct instead of giving it to these organizations.' My board is not easy about that."

It is useful to point attention to one more comment from this respondent, "We have the luxury of looking long-term. I have been the person that's slugging it out over every payment, and don't know where funding will be coming from month to month. And you're on that gerbil wheel and it's every three months…It's that the foundation knows best, but we certainly need to be looking out for nonprofits the best we can." These comments, combined with the suggestion to employ a "soft advocacy campaign," point to the promise for greater partnership between funders, nonprofit, and capacity builders. Engaging foundation heads in the advocacy campaign will be important.

Staffing for fundraising and marketing is challenging. In the majority of MSOs there are no designated fundraising or marketing staff. Typically, executive directors serve in that function, while also performing a host of other roles, including often consulting on projects themselves. Several expressed having fairly limited training in fundraising themselves. In the two or three MSOs where there exist dedicated resources for fundraising staffing, the organizational scale is larger and the foundation and corporate support is more vibrant. It is not clear which came first, however, growing revenue streams and scale affording fundraising staffing, or fundraising staffing investments made to build donative revenue streams. Numerous respondents indicated that TNMAN could have done much more in this regard, and

that they hope that the network will build this capacity for the network and its individual members. Another respondent indicated that strengthening the board was instrumental in advancing fundraising, and offered this as a strategy for other providers: "But we concentrated a while in redoing our bylaws, so we've got a really good foundation, and what the board members are supposed to do and activating them."

Fiscal uncertainty and related institutional pressures are a pervasive, current concern. Although it appears that funding is a longer-term concern, heightened concern was evident in nearly all interviews. The concern relates to likely state funding cuts that affect nonprofits directly, and capacity building providers indirectly (by making client needs potentially greater while affording far less financial flexibility to seek capacity-building assistance in overcoming those challenges). An academic provider operating a diversity of degree, continuing education, and consulting offerings, summed this general concern in this way,

> "We're not seeing the funding coming down; we're not going to see the support coming down to those nonprofits who really rely on it and whose clients have greater needs. I think funders, public servants, and even educators and volunteers want to see more capacity within the nonprofit sector. Nonprofits can't even handle me when I walk in the door and want to help you. And yet we're not seeing the people who actually could help [i.e., the capacity building providers] getting the type of support they need to provide that assistance, so it's operating in a convoluted system right now."

The majority of TNMAN-member academic providers are situated at public universities. These respondents also referenced the state's fiscal uncertainty in combination with efforts to sustain their programs. In general terms, enrollment in degree programs has not been problematic. However, there are pressures, especially on continuing education and MSO-like centers or functions housed on university campuses. A chief concern expressed by all interviewed academic providers relates to the pressure to garner grant support, particularly in the form of sponsored research:

> "The challenge that would be number one, we're in a university. The university is very, very interested in research and research… and then research. Since we don't do research, there are ways that we have to sell our Center as more of a potential for research, because we bring in community members who may need research. So I think that would be one of the bigger challenges for most of TNMAN's academic providers."

Further, several respondents have been inspired by HB 492, the Renewing Our Communities Act, and some of the OneStar initiatives around capacity building. Concern exists that there will be backward movement on what were forward directions in terms of beginning to address nonprofit capacity concerns statewide.

Implications: The respondents expressed a deep concern about the financial sustainability of their organizations. These findings suggest that OneStar should provide critical support to member organizations through training and creation of resource that are focused on sharing best practices of fundraising. OneStar may want to target the fiscal issues experienced by member organizations and then identify how regional MSOs can provide financial support.

The findings also identify the need for fundraising and marketing staffing for MSOs. OneStar can consider developing trainings and resources to teach member organizations about cost-efficient methods for fundraising and marketing to members. This is also an opportunity for OneStar to collaborate with academic providers to research MSOs within the nonprofit sector and identify strategies for fundraising and marketing for this specific type of nonprofit provider.

Maintaining Currency with Client Needs and Market/Competition Issues

Provision of Resources to Clients. Several respondents commented on their concern for and difficulty in keeping their clients informed about trainings, opportunities, requests for proposals, and updates of potential interest in the greater capacity-building or management assistance community. Several respondents indicated that this was a missing piece in the TNMAN network services, and that there is a clear gap in this arena. It is an area that has proven difficult for TNMAN members with their clients. Further, it's a missing resource for internal staff and professional development needs. One respondent noted,

> "We all keep calendars to some extent, and probably always will for local purposes, to control some our own messaging and such. But, it would be so nice to have a resource focused on capacity-building resources, for a broad audience, not just capacity builders, but also funders and nonprofits themselves. From time to time I find myself looking at resources in other states, and I think we could really use that here in Texas. And there's no reason why the network couldn't do this better than TNMAN did in the future."

Internal Development and "Capacity of Capacity Builders". Despite the learning opportunity cited above, respondents noted that they do not always attend to the learning needs of their staff as well as they should. The reasons for this vary, but generally center on

time and resources. Respondents highlighted the need for opportunities for more training of capacity-building staff at all levels, and in particular substantive areas such as law, fundraising, and financial accounting. Part of this reflected the fast-paced milieu of policy and funding changes, and the tendency, as reported by an MSO head, for capacity builders to work "nose to grindstone with a kind of myopia to the larger issues. And, when you think about it, this is really a travesty in light of our mission. I need the network to do some of the heavy lifting in this regard, because I know that I and my agency are not alone in this."

Related to this, a number of respondents, particularly MSOs and other nonprofits, focused on their own need for infrastructure support, to shore up learning and professional growth of personnel, but also in the areas of unrestricted net assets reserves and staffing depth. One respondent noted the following, "It's that irony that you are the capacity-building entity, yet you also are worried about meeting salary, maintaining current systems, and so on." In addition, there was awareness among about half of the respondents of the need to contribute to and benefit from a system of external infrastructure support.

More specifically, several respondents identified needs relating to their own programs, products, and services, as evidenced in this comment, "I think the second biggest challenge has been around our educational programming. Keeping it fresh, relevant, and recently really trying to get the delivery vehicle right. We've always stuck with the 3.5 hour in classroom model, and are just now starting to look at Web-based delivery, conference call delivery, which I think more and more people want to get their education through that mode." In addition, attendance at events such as trainings and other seminars has been weak or flat for many TNMAN members. One respondent indicated, "We're flirting with some stuff this year to try to figure that out, because we have seen attendance be lower than we'd like it to. Partly I think it's the economy sucking people's professional development budgets clean. But that's been a nut I don't think we've quite cracked, the right five-year, ten-year model for that." In contrast a statewide association reported an upsurge in program attendance because they had "worked hard to balance cost, access, and quality."

Implications: The findings point out that MSOs (as well as consultants) need to better translate the service they provide to their regional areas. OneStar can approach this issue through Network trainings for MSO staffs (and potentially by MSO staff knowledgeable and successful in related areas) on methods of approaching their communities and potential clients on the work that they perform. As TNMAN members build their own internal capacity through staff trainings about sustaining operations, they can buttress their client needs.

Creating Community. The respondents commented on the importance of networks for staying informed and connected to current events in the nonprofit sector. Many reported belonging to a diversity of networks, but valuing very highly the idea of TNMAN. For some TNMAN members, relationships with other MSOs were long-standing and vital. One respondent spoke of the potential of TNMAN, and in doing so, suggested hopes for the future network functions, "Just having that connection to something bigger. And if TNMAN had been able to take that to the next level, even producing material for a video for whatever it was, engaging members more, and connecting everything and to make it a larger statewide effort."

For others, the TNMAN connections were not particularly strong. Some respondents commented that new modes for building networks, like online communities, were very appealing, especially to stay connected and informed when distantly located. Other respondents expressed the importance of maintaining formal, non-virtual communities along with any development of virtual communities. Others reported operating in relative isolation from other organizations, either geographically or due to mission dissimilarity; these respondents expressed great need for an external entity to organize and catalogue resources for capacity builders and for help in staying current with happenings around the state. One respondent, when asked about closest collaborative relationships, indicated "Not in Texas so much. Interestingly outside of Texas we get a lot of calls from groups that want to learn from and in some ways maybe emulate what we do. So it seems like once a month I'm answering some survey from some MSO group in some state. Some benchmarking and how do you guys do what you do? But no, not as much in Texas." This also suggests that more could be done with the future network to build on each other's expertise and to ameliorate isolation.

Similar to the relational orientation discussed above, a nonprofit respondent indicates,

"I think once you engage a lot of communities you learn that building something together is significantly important. TNMAN, and really capacity building more broadly, I think that was working off an old model – 'the expert in a world where expertise is much diluted'. So really listening and engagement in giving people the opportunity of power, our approach become more collegial and more like putting the arm around your shoulder to work through this together, as opposed to *This is the answer*. And for us, this orientation has made our work better, but also our sense of our own place in the community of nonprofits more clear."

Evaluation and Self-Assessment Practices

The majority of respondents engaged in evaluations of their operations and services. Their responses demonstrate a diversity of approaches to evaluating clients and services to the public. Some respondents had more professional or institutionalized evaluation processes, such as "Balanced Scorecard" or use of "outcomes measurement," or formal systems to support evaluation like a Dashboard system or customized database to track clients or participants. Other respondents relied on more informal feedback from participants. Methods of evaluation by respondents included online surveys, post-training feedback, annual surveys, and informal individual feedback from participants.

Generally, evaluation focused on the fairly narrow measurement of aspects of client satisfaction and participation. Even in those agencies that purported to do outcomes measurement, the outcomes were generally short term, and client- or event-specific. One agency spoke of an informal needs assessment that they did with their clients. The approach centered on understanding client needs, and then packaging projects together for them, more like a broker of capacity-building services than a provider themselves. This nonprofit leader explained a fairly intuitive, but seemingly unique approach to assessment considerations, "We put projects together and make them live. Well, we need somebody with expertise. Why couldn't we get somebody who shares his expertise? Wow, put them on the board or get them involved. So we use energy and creativity as a set of resources rather than focusing on, a 'we always need money' philosophy. It's a very different orientation."

Further, several respondents were critical of TNMAN's limited focus on evaluation and research, and the politics of relationships as related to evaluation. This respondent summarizes this concern in this way,

"The value was collecting the mapping data and collecting benchmarks. The reality was everybody was playing one-up man ship. The data really weren't solid data. And the academics apparently were never rarely, if ever, collaborators on the data collection. That was a real missed opportunity. We have to be willing to put ourselves out here, to be judge in the marketplace and through the use of evidence. But this applies to TNMAN and the future network, too. They set the tone; or maybe I need to correct myself, that's the problem. The members of the network should set the tone."

Related to these concerns, but also originating from other geneses, about twenty percent of the sample indicated a desire to consider longer-term outcomes measurement strategies and a broader range of fiscal performance. A large and dynamic MSO is actively engaged in staff discussion about very difficult measurement issues with a goal of moving beyond client satisfaction, and beginning to investigate the larger outcomes of their work, in terms of secondary outcomes for their clients, as well as broader sectoral outcomes. The motivation for this seems twofold: this particular organization seems particularly intellectual, with a strong focus on learning; and this organization thinks it is both the right and the strategic thing to do to counter-balance some of the misgivings about funding and purchasing capacity-building services. This organization would like to see the network, in the future, consider some similar efforts to foster broader and more sophisticated measurement across the member entities. Part of these efforts might be folded into the development and application of operating standards for excellence and ethics.

Implications: The findings suggest that the Network served as a source for community for MSOs in Texas. Though there was a sense of community, several respondents expressed interest in expanding this community to an online venue as a form of staying connected, even when distantly located. Going forward, OneStar should implement an online presence that serves as an online community for member MSOs. Because the MSOs in Texas are divided by distance and regions, developing an online community where members can stay in contact can offer a new community that has no regional or distance constraints. Additionally, OneStar can assist in the development of evaluation strategies that extend beyond the relationship considerations of customer satisfaction and participation. Additional measurements can focus on measurement strategies of long-term outcomes as well as a broader range of fiscal performance.

Nomenclature

Is nonprofit capacity building the same as management assistance? Are capacity building and management assistance viewed in process terms or organizational terms, or both? Are they internal or external to nonprofits? Is capacity building and management assistance contributing to or dependent on some other system or infrastructure of the nonprofit sector? Will those seeking and offering capacity building or management assistance agree on the meaning of the terms? These questions highlight important considerations that confront those engaged in practices, funding, policy formation and implementation, and research on nonprofit capacity building and management assistance. Indeed, terms such as management assistance, technical assistance, and capacity building are associated with the pervasive call to strengthen nonprofit effectiveness and performance (Boris, 2001; Linnell, 2003; Kapucu, Augustin & Krause, 2005; Yung, Leahy, Deason, Fischer, Perkins, Clasen, & Sharma, 2008).

The terms typically refer to "purposive action" undertaken to accomplish some specific mission-related objective, leading to improved organizational capacity and increased mission performance (Millesen & Bies, 2005). The terms are also generally framed as interventions performed by a diversity of external actors, including consultants, management assistance providers and management support organizations[11] (Glickman & Servon, 1998; Nye & Glickman,

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[11] Connor, Kadel-Taras, & Viokur-Kaplan (1999) define MSOs as "nonprofit corporations that provide support to other nonprofits through training and consulting on such issues as leadership, planning, fundraising, marketing,

2000; Eisinger, 2002; Sobeck & Agius, 2007). Such actors and interventions are also described along a continuum including: 1. individualized organizational assistance; 2. group trainings; 3. "field-building" work that involves nonprofits with similar missions working collaboratively; 4. "peer learning groups"; and 5. "geographically focused" capacity building activities (Linnell, 2003, 6). The National Council of Nonprofits provides an expansive framing of these as activities that "improve and enhance a nonprofit's ability to achieve its mission and sustain itself over time" (NCN, 2010, 1).

In the extant literature, conceptions and definitions of management assistance and capacity-building focus largely on the organizational level, either situating nonprofit organizations within the context of capacity-building resources or as an exchange between capacity-building providers and nonprofit organizations (Millesen & Bies, 2004). Connolly and York (2003) also conceptualize capacity-building at the organizational level, but fixed their lens on four central types of capacity, including: adaptive capacity, which refers to the ability of a nonprofit to monitor and respond to external and internal challenges; leadership capacity, referring to the board and the executive leadership and vision; technical capacity, relating to the ability of an organization to conduct its operations and programs; and management capacity, focusing on the use of organizational resources and personnel, volunteer and paid (Connolly & York, 2003). OneStar Foundation itself used the Connolly and York definitions in its framing of terms during public hearings as part of the deliberations of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission Task Force on Strengthening Nonprofit Capacity; these terms also serve as a conceptual basis for the assessment tool used by OneStar, the Core Capacity Assessment Tool (CCAT) [12]. In addition, a substantial body of work is devoted to advising funders on management assistance and capacity building interventions and investments (Connolly & Lukas, 2002; Blumenthal, 2003; Wing, 2004; Malveux, 2007), further emphasizing the prominence of these terms in the lexicon of nonprofits and firms. Yet, previous research

and human resource development. Their purpose and standing in the community can vary widely from these core tasks" (128).

[12] See http://www.onestarfoundation.org/page/CCAT for description of the CCAT instrument and OneStar Foundation's related program offerings.

(Bies & Sinatra, 2006) revealed that capacity builders themselves were largely unfamiliar with these terms and did not conceive of themselves as part of a "capacity building industry".

In a special volume of *The Nonprofit Quarterly* focused on the nonprofit and philanthropic infrastructure, David Renz extends organizational conceptions of capacity building and management support within a broader "nonprofit infrastructure that is the underlying framework or foundation that supports the activities of a system or community" (2008, p. 17). Renz further specifies the term "nonprofit infrastructure" as an encompassing taxonomy of eleven roles and functions played by nonprofit organizations, funders, and other actors. The taxonomy includes:

1. **Accountability and Self-Regulation —** promote accountability, transparency, and performance among nonprofits.
2. **Advocacy, Policy, and Governmental Relations —** represent sector in regulatory and policy venues; monitor and participate in promulgation and implementation of policy.
3. **Financial Intermediaries —** facilitate the collection and redistribution of resources to nonprofit operating organizations.
4. **Funding Organizations —** provide financial resources to nonprofit operating organizations through the distribution of funds from asset pools that they own, manage, and allocate.
5. **Donor and Resource Advisers —** provide information and advice to assist funding organizations and donors as they implement their roles as funding and financing sources.
6. **Networks and Associations —** link organizations and facilitate advancement of interest-based or mission-relevant activities.
7. **Workforce Development and Deployment —** recruit, prepare, educate, develop, and deploy employees and volunteers.
8. **Education and Leadership Development —** prepare staff for leadership roles in the sector.
9. **Capacity Development and Technical Assistance —** build capacity of individual nonprofit organizations through management assistance and support, organization development, and other services.
10. **Research and Knowledge Management —** engage in research and analysis to inform those in the nonprofit sector.
11. **Communication and Information Dissemination —** facilitate communication and dissemination of information; provide opportunities and tools to develop; and share information.

Although the existence of varied conceptualizations of terms (such as capacity building, management assistance, management support organizations, and nonprofit infrastructure) may

enrich our understanding of the playing field of nonprofit capacity and management assistance, such differences can also complicate improvement strategies and, by extension, the assumptions that underlie related investments. Also, despite a growing body of descriptive, conceptual and empirical research, subfield studies, and a proliferation of nonprofit capacity-building initiatives worldwide, these concepts remain somewhat elusive and contested, with the terms used in composite, interchangeable, and abstract ways. This lack of clarity can result in a range of possible meanings and potential misunderstandings about desired strategies and ends. Current imperatives for improved nonprofit performance and an increasingly complex and constrained nonprofit resource environment mandate more precise understanding and consistent use of the terms. Further, how nonprofits, funders, policymakers, and capacity building providers themselves define such terms will affect how they interpret their missions, frame critical concerns and key issues, and develop related strategies and responses.

The study of how a relatively "young organizational field" (i.e., such as management assistance providers/the capacity-building industry) conceives of and uses terms that can offer insights into the values, culture, construction, and of the evolution and resultant domain of activities, organizational structures, and processes (DiMaggio, 1991). In addition, shared terminology, concepts, practices, and policies can be called a "new cultural repertoire" (Swidler, 1986; Moody, 2008). By studying the nomenclature of TNMAN members, OneStar can better understand the emergence, institutionalization, and diffusion of capacity building and management assistance within the TNMAN Network and have a starting point and the analytic tools for future development of the network.

Thus, we asked each respondent to respond to the open question of:

- "What do the terms capacity building, nonprofit support infrastructure, or management assistance mean to your organization/firm?" We also further probed by asking: "Do you use the terms? If not, what terms/how do you use to describe your mission/services?"

Capacity Building. In response to this question, no two respondents provided exactly the same definition of these terms; nor was there unanimity of familiarity or usage. Three important trends did emerge, including:

- Nearly all respondents were familiar with the terms capacity building and management assistance, and expressed modestly greater affinity for capacity building versus management assistance.
- Virtually no respondents were familiar with the term "nonprofit infrastructure" or "nonprofit support infrastructure", except in a general or intuitive sense.
- Clarity of terminology and meaning of terms will be important moving forward.

In terms of capacity building, most definitions were similar to the expansive but rather vague notion, as put forth in earlier literature by Hansberry (2002), "to do more of what they already do better." Overall, the respondents connected capacity building to improving organizations and building new skills to function better, as seen in this conceptualization offered by an MSO leader, "Capacity-building? Working with organizations to help them improve their ability to be able to perform, and to fulfill their responsibilities or their operating aspects of what they do."

Others, often after offering a general definition, focused on the nuances of capacity building. For example, a number of respondents conceived of capacity building as interventions aimed at functional, operational, or programmatic aspects in specific organizational contexts. One nonprofit consultant states that capacity building is "refined by the organization and its needs. Of course there's a financial piece between this and this. The fundraising piece of development is building capacity. Programmatically it is building capacity." This framing is similar to Connolly and York's (2003) use of "technical capacity." Other respondents expressed an orientation consistent with Connolly and York's (2003) definitions of management and leadership capacities. This management capacity orientation is offered here by another MSO leader, "Because inevitably you come back and say, 'Well, capacity – the only reason they are more capable.' And 'building' means that you're somehow working on capabilities of the organization. I'm a management guy so I start thinking about management functions and activities, and how many people are in the organization and those kinds of things." A respondent consultant framed the definition of capacity building in leadership terms, especially in contrast to a perception of an over-emphasis on technical capacity interventions in the field of capacity building, "But I think way too much emphasis is placed on program and

development to the peril or the governance in other areas." Very few respondents mentioned dimensions of capacity building similar to Connolly and York's (2003) adaptive capacity.

Others observed that interpretations of capacity building are shaped by other industry leaders, such as key funders, government, and OneStar Foundation itself. A relatively new MSO leader offered this related observation about being influenced by a funder's lexicon and the related complexity of shaping nonprofit's usage of the terms capacity building, "Absolutely yes. Especially because our grant project is so focused on capacity-building, I had to go out and do nine workshops across [regional reference] just to define the term. We found it very challenging for especially nonprofits to see it the way we were defining it. Our definition came straight from our grant."

Similarly, a number of respondents discussed the complexity of shaping both the use and understanding of the term capacity building; several respondents indicated that the language works for "insiders", but is more difficult for their clients, funders, and partners to understand. The following response illustrates the insider/outsider problem, in which the MSO understood capacity building, but their clientele found the terms more elusive.

> "Yet difficult to understand and convey: However, the way the Center keeps talking about it is that we're building their internal effectiveness in order to be able to increase their service or increase the quality of their service. But we have to be very practical in framing everything…We have a list with about 31 actual tasks related to capacity building, and we ended up just giving that list out. *Because no matter how we described it, people were still confused about the difference between capacity-building and direct service***."**

There were incisive comments about capacity building when viewed from the vantage point of private and public sector norms. Two respondents, the head of an MSO with previous work experience in the for-profit sector, offered perspectives that framed nonprofit capacity building in contrast to the "business" or for profit lexicon. This comment sums up this perspective: "Capacity building is kind of a buzzword for nonprofits. Meaning that they undertake a plan of action to increase their ability to service or fulfill their vision is the way I would say it. While we could say we have capacity building at CPA firms, but we would not that

term." Another framed it through concern over "the pervasive view among nonprofits—a sector-wide fallacy, really—that capacity building is a frill. I don't know many businesses that don't consider operations or investments in 'r & d' in relationship to profits. To make the analogy blunt: it's like the big black box of nonprofit operations. We measure outcomes (badly, at that) but we don't consider management and operational aspects." And, in terms of comparisons with public and private sector usage, one academic provider noted, "It's research and it's technical assistance. And while government, especially in Texas, is starting to use the term capacity building, technical assistance [remains] a little more 'governmenty' in usage. And it's not assistance; it's business consulting, only you're not a for-profit."

To the extent that there is any agreement on terms, capacity building seemed both preferred and in more widespread use. Nevertheless, the vast majority of respondents simultaneously emphasized the importance and complexity of developing shared meanings and usage of terms. In even the most simple of scans of responses, one would see the respondents' narratives, dotted with a bit of wariness, expressed capacity building as being a term that is "subjective", "a buzzword", and "the word du jour." One respondent draws this concern out in the following:

> "That's a buzzword that is misused. Well, I won't say misused. But it's overly used to the exclusion of people who don't know what the word means, so it's sort of a dividing line between those in the industry and those outside of the industry. And that is problematic, as the industry itself is tenuous."

Management Assistance. Most respondents expressed familiarity with the term, with older MSOs using the term more so, especially in their early years. Yet few respondents expressed a preference for this term. In fact, about one-fifth of the respondents thought management assistance to be a dated term or "yesterday's buzzword", as one respondent put it.

In addition, respondents often contrasted definitions of capacity building as being broader in scope and diversity of types and levels of organizational interventions, while management assistance is focused at the management and leadership levels; delivery

mechanisms of consulting and technical assistance were also widely expressed as a dimension of management assistance. Some also referred to the roots of management assistance in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the establishment of MSOs or "management assistance programs", often started as programs of metropolitan United Ways, and drawing on a corporate volunteer model. This history is briefly captured by this MSO head:

> "Management assistance to me denotes more of a kind of a consulting perspective. Let's back up for a second to qualify management assistance. I'm going back to my days in Minneapolis where there is a nonprofit called 'The Management Assistance Program'. And it's a group of nonprofit consultants that come in to help nonprofits achieve a new strategy or a new objective with one-on-one consulting. It's more of a network of consultants that get in there and work one-on-one with the nonprofit to effect a specific change."

Finally, while most respondents expressed no discomfort with the term, five or so respondents indicated that management assistance had negative connotations such as "a tactical versus strategic focus", "more narrow in its focus", "a pejorative quality", and suggestive "that nonprofit mangers need special help, which reinforces stereotypes about the amateurism of the sector."

Nonprofit Infrastructure. In terms of nonprofit support infrastructure or nonprofit infrastructure, virtually no respondents reported using the term. A number of respondents, however, thought the term, on its face, was fairly accessible and intuitive. "Non-profit support infrastructure? I don't use it, but that is how we think about it, I guess. If someone was to say that to me, I would think about what is the infrastructure that is out there in the community that nonprofits can access for services, consulting, and trainings to be better."

Of the respondents that expressed some measure of familiarity with the term, they were already engaged in thinking about capacity building or management assistance in a systemic way or in terms of a set of inter-connected entities doing complementary work. One respondent conceptualizes the term like this, "Nonprofit support infrastructure is the set of organizations that are engaged in some kind of capacity-building initiatives. That would be the way I would be thinking about it. But it includes more broadly foundations and entities that provide resources as well." This conception begins to incorporate a broader set of roles and functions articulated by Renz in his systemic "nonprofit infrastructure" framework.

Other respondents took an evolutionary view of MSOs being early players (especially as supported in the formative stages of FIP); as nonprofits grew in number and size, so did performance pressures and the need for improved management and more complex operations. A respondent explained, "So the system of resources has mushroomed in the past thirty years. Now we have professional expectations for staff, degree programs, more and more consultants, and so on. Yet the work is still difficult, misunderstood, and sometimes hard to justify, even when you are in the business." One respondent, in reflecting on his/her specific context in relationship to the concept of "nonprofit infrastructure", explained, "I think that's what we try to be a part of here. I think what is sometimes challenging for us is that we're called the [name of foundation], so people really get that. But as a program of that, it's less clear. So then we used to always say we're a volunteer center and we're a nonprofit management assistance center. Or a nonprofit management support center. And people were like yeah, but what is that? What does that mean? If we talk more about the leadership opportunities that we offer for an organization to strengthen the work they do, then we would say we're a nonprofit support function. Does that make sense?" Another expresses a framing and a desire to work as part of a larger system of resources, "We have a capacity-building collaborative. We don't want to be the sole provider of capacity-building services. You need to take what you've really got there and try to help them to understand each other. We convened a collective because we already have the Nonprofit Network, which is the loosely affiliated monthly network meeting. We have the Association of Funders and Professionals that's always doing their thing. This way, while we are separate and independent entities, we can consider collective interests."

Implications: The findings demonstrate the inconsistencies in interpretation of the nomenclature surrounding the work of TNMAN members. Because of the confusions and uncertainty of the meanings of capacity building, management assistance, and nonprofit infrastructure, OneStar, with its Advisory Committee and in consultation with members, can develop clear definitions. Once OneStar determines appropriate definitions for these abstract terms, they can deliver this message not only to member organizations, but to the broader community of nonprofit clients, funders, and the general public. These definitions build a unified language for members to use when working with clients and when engaging with the Network . Also, determining a name that draws on these definitions will allow the Network to position itself within the landscape of the Texas nonprofit sector.

PERSPECTIVES ON TNMAN

OneStar was interested in understanding respondents' thoughts and prior experiences with TNMAN, in order to build on the positive legacies of TNMAN, as well as to enhance future operations of the network. Respondents were asked to share their understanding of the TNMAN mission, what they valued most/least about TNMAN, and what worked well/not so well, in terms of TNMAN's operations.

Understanding of TNMAN's mission.

Overall, a majority of respondents expressed TNMAN's original mission as being focused on capacity building and information sharing among nonprofit MSOs around the state. The mission was generally defined along these lines, "It was a network of organizations that provided management assistance or capacity-building to other nonprofits." For longer standing TNMAN members, particularly MSOs, the recounting of mission was often framed with a pointed contrast of "*the original mission*" to serve as a network for MSOs only, to the mission expanded to include a broader range of members, including private consultants and academic providers. The expanded mission was described as not having as clear a focus as the initial mission focused on a narrower membership. But this expression seemed more oriented toward the appropriateness of members versus appropriateness of mission. Nearly all types of respondents, MSOs, other nonprofits, academic providers, and consultants emphasized TNMAN's networking mission as *bringing together people* who were interested in helping or strengthening nonprofits in some way.

Approximately twenty percent of respondents thought the mission was oriented toward helping members provide services focused on nonprofit management (to the exclusion of other levels and functions of nonprofits). A respondent consultant stated, **"**It seemed to me that it was more geared toward the management end of nonprofits. The upper end of the boards or the – I don't know if you call them CEOs – but the presidents, the officers' level of nonprofits, mainly through its name. But it seemed that the topics that would come out would be more geared toward that end."

A handful of respondents lacked a clear understanding of TNMAN's mission. Three flatly stated that they never understood the mission at all. One indicated that s/he simply did not care. Upon follow up, in addition to not understanding the mission, these respondents either expressed disinterest in the mission or a negative reaction to the organization, and in turn to the validity of the organization's mission. Further, some respondents, particularly those new to their capacity building roles, framed TNMAN's mission in terms of "services to nonprofits" rather than services to capacity building or management assistance providers. Part of this seemed to stem from the workshops that TNMAN staff were doing for nonprofits broadly in recent years, such as presentations about the Maryland Council of Nonprofits' Standards for Excellence Program. For example, one respondent stated, **"**To provide resources for nonprofits, to help them better manage their organizations. They would often send out a questionnaire and say, 'What are you looking at doing? Where are your resources lacking?' Things like that so that they would know what kind of workshops to do for your local nonprofits."

Others, again those less close to the genesis of TIP and TNMAN and less experienced with capacity building, expressed confusion about TNMAN and its mission, purpose, and programs in general, but especially in comparison to other statewide infrastructure groups or associations. This comment captures the confusion,

> **"**I honestly never really understood their mission. It bothered me because there's this e-mail group called 'Texas Nonprofits', then something like a state group of nonprofits—I get email from them, and then the OneStar, LoneStar, whatever. Do you know--is OneStar a funder or a capacity builder or what? I don't know who they are, and I'd get them confused with that. It's just seems like a lot of overlap and similar stuff and belong to this and that. So I never really got TNMAN or whatever it's called."

Some respondents noted that the TNMAN's mission was to build a network of MSOs statewide or nonprofit support infrastructure (terminology varied, but the idea was that the mission was to build and connect such resources broadly throughout the state), but they were not sure if that was really achieved. Further, most of the definitions of mission focused on membership rather than a larger goal of strengthening the sector by strengthening nonprofits. In commenting on missed opportunities, several respondents indicated that the mission, conceived of in this member-oriented manner, did not "reach big enough" and "didn't

articulate the underlying raison d'être of the members' coming together". The different interpretations of TNMAN's mission suggest a need for shared development of future mission, clear communication of mission, as well as a new structure to support the mission.

> **Implications: The findings about TNMAN's mission bring to light the need for clarity by OneStar. The member organizations' varying interpretations of the mission call for a solidified mission statement that should be developed moving forward. Because some respondents believed that TNMAN's purpose was to bring MSOs and related organizations together, there may be an issue of determining what the network is supposed to offer to its members. The Network does bring members together to collaborate, which is a component of capacity building, but OneStar should identify their mission so that all stakeholders have the same understanding.**

Most Valued Aspects of TNMAN/Things that Worked Best

Overall, the respondents viewed the networking function and information sharing aspects of TNMAN as most valuable. The things that seemed to have worked best from the Network came from the connection to other management assistance providers, a sentiment expressed especially among the MSOs. Approximately one-third of respondents stated that the access to resources, contacts, and informational trainings were useful outcomes of the network.

About half of the respondents referenced the strengths of the executive director of TNMAN, Rosemary Fry. In particular, about a third of the respondents indicated that Ms. Fry was extremely responsive and possessed "an incredibly deep knowledge about a broad range of subjects." In addition, the respondents indicated that the executive director's far-reaching relationships in the state were invaluable when combined with her "eager and kind willingness to connect me with people and resources I never could have identified on my own." Four respondents spoke of how Ms. Fry welcomed them when they were new in their jobs and helped them connect with more experienced MSO leaders. There were repeated references to her generosity of time and expertise.

Similarly, several respondents praised the information technology services of Rene Wilhite. Of these respondents, several indicated that these technology services were especially useful when they were setting up initial systems. They thought that such services would be less necessary now that they had deeper staff expertise and more experience building their

systems. The technology services, however, were cited as an example of a collective good that TNMAN provided; from this, they suggested that other collective goods should and could be provided in the future.

One respondent noted that the Standards of Excellence was a great asset of the Network. The academic providers, across the board, were happy to be networked to each other through TNMAN; they indicated that these connections might not have happened easily in the absence of the network. The academic providers also indicated that the linkages and exchanges with MSOs were vital to them. Three consultants indicated that TNMAN created avenues for expansion of their clients, as well as opportunities to interact with peers specialized on meeting the needs of nonprofits.

Other respondents did not really have an opinion on what they most valued since they were not really involved or did not have enough input in the Network.

> **Implications: The findings suggest that TNMAN provided a valued networking service for members, with the greatest value expressed by MSOs. The resources that the original network offered to member organizations were useful in advancing management and sharing ideas to better serve the network's members. (It is important to note that MSOs considered TNMAN most positively in relationship to each other; much greater ambivalence was expressed by MSOs about the role of other infrastructure organizations--i.e., consultants and academic providers--as core network members. Nevertheless, exchange among a broader range of infrastructure organizations was viewed as valuable by MSOs.) OneStar should take these findings as positive reinforcement of the existing need to build nonprofit capacity in Texas and to enhance the network to better serve the nonprofit sector overall. Further, OneStar should consider the varied needs of MSOs vis-à-vis networking with each other, as well as the broader range of current members and potential future affinity groups.**

Least Valued Aspects of TNMAN/Things that Didn't Work So Well

Respondents had varying perspectives on what they least valued from TNMAN. Some respondents felt disconnected to TNMAN because they did not feel like they really had an important role in TNMAN; others would have liked more assistance from TNMAN staff. This statement by an MSO leader expresses a general "mixed evaluation" of the realized potential of TNMAN, "I think there was a decent amount of camaraderie that developed among the group. I think there was some sharing of knowledge that was beneficial. I think in general the group could have gone a lot farther, and a lot – and I underline a lot more than it did. I'm not faulting

anyone. I think the leadership had their constraints. There were different constraints that were involved."

The respondents were split on the value of content and services provided by TNMAN. Fully half of them, even while valuing the networking and relationship-building aspects of TNMAN, found the content to be rudimentary and not relevant to their agency or clients. Nearly half of the sample, however, found the content very helpful as they or their organizations were being established. In addition, several respondents highlighted the need for opportunities for more training in special content areas such as fundraising, legal aspects, and financial accounting and reporting. The rationale for these topical areas was stated more broadly, "TNMAN, or an organization like it, should be on the cutting edge in terms of content. If we are members, they should be our go-to organization. And if our agencies have particular expertise, we should be called on to share it. One area I think could be helpful for a network, would be to maybe provide a resource for what types of funding are available. And updates on things that are happening legally, politically, financially with nonprofits in general."

Further, while a handful of respondents indicated that they would have never heard of events, resources, and research had it not been for TNMAN resources, the vast majority felt that TNMAN could have done much more to serve as a conduit to freely disseminate information, resources, and research from other organizations in the state and nationally.

Half of the respondents indicated that TNMAN never realized its most important potential to engage in joint initiatives. For example, facilitation of major grants for member initiatives was often cited as a missed opportunity. One respondent indicated that "TNMAN was too caught up in its own survival to be in a position to fully realize the power of collaboration or to bring us all to bear on common problems and solutions." Similar to this, approximately a third of respondents felt that the thrust of activities, meetings, and conversations was focused on internal management needs of TNMAN members as opposed to collective possibilities.

"I don't think the capacity-building of the capacity-builders was there. I don't believe the networking potential of The Network was really there or fully realized. I think they

lacked in communications strategies. I think the website was supposed to be helpful, but it really wasn't. Those kinds of things. I think The Network was wrapped up in expert leader model for the nonprofit sector. And not so much wrapped up in creating a network of people who were working to build the capacity or make the nonprofit sector stronger."

A chief regret of most of the respondents, but particularly those long-standing members, was a missed opportunity to articulate and establish the importance of capacity-building or management assistance support. In expressing this, many also acknowledged that this was a challenge across the country. Nevertheless, given that TNMAN was unique in the nation, respondents still emphasized that more could have been done.

Half of the respondents identified a frustration with "uni-directional information" sharing, particularly at TNMAN meetings and on TNMAN calls. Members were frustrated with meetings and calls where the format was round-robin information sharing, with very little conversation and virtually no action, particularly collective action. Two points were also repeatedly emphasized by respondents with regard to information provision. The first relates to meeting facilitation; respondents felt that professional facilitation or facilitation oriented toward participation in the future would be central to information sharing and *dialogue* versus the identified "uni-directional" and related inaction problem. The second relates to missed opportunities for collaborative decision-making and participation by members. Ten respondents went so far as to indicate that dissatisfaction with the meetings was so strong that they either stopped attending or sent lower-level deputies in their stead. These issues are summed up by in this respondent comment,

> "Well, I think there was generally a sense of competitiveness between the various entities. I don't think we ever got it to a point where we were working together as an entity. I think there were a lot of missed opportunities because it wasn't the leadership's strength. The leadership's strength was not about creating a place where everyone can share. It was hard to get involved, yet there was so much that could have been done by members for TNMAN."

Similar to the reference to competition seen in the previous respondent comment, approximately twenty-five percent of respondents indicated that the competition between organizations was a deterrent to both TNMAN's success and their participation in TNMAN. This sentiment was expressed strongly, and along ethical lines. Specifically, there was one

organization cited by eight respondents as behaving in unethical ways, relating to appropriation of ideas, programming, contacts, credit, and, even, attempts to entice clients away from other TNMAN members. Particularly troubling in this regard was the way that concerned members felt that the "information meetings" promoted over-sharing of intellectual property or something along the lines of "trade secrets." One respondent with concern about issues of ethical behavior and collegiality stated,

> "it's gotten to the point where I have zero trust of [that] organization, and the competitiveness is increasing….I'm a business person, and so competition is a reality in the business world, and it makes you sharper, so in some respects I'm kind of okay with it. But do I really need it from [another TNMAN member] that's also a partner with me on other things? I'm kind of okay competing with Dini Partners and with Bacon & Lee, and with the people that are actually kind of nice to compete with because we talk and collaborate on stuff, and we have them in to present workshops. But we've got somebody that's clearly out to steal, kill, and destroy it feels like. It's just like this is not a good example that we want to be setting for our sector…"

For similar reasons, these eight respondents, along with some ten other respondents, suggested that TNMAN did not have sufficient operating guidelines and expectations for members. Four other organizations cited similar tensions with other TNMAN members. Several juxtaposed these perceptions with the content of the Standards for Excellence and the role of capacity-building organizations to model best practices, and suggested that this was an arena that needed more attention in the future.

Respondents also pointed to the resource demands on TNMAN to earn revenue beyond membership fees. This, combined with competition for market share between TNMAN members themselves was observed in this way, "But then they started doing some trainings and some things that are stepping on our territory a little bit. I sound really selfish and territorial – I don't mean to be like that. I just don't want to fight. I don't want to compete for the same small pool of constituents, I guess. It may be at some point we need to sit down and say, 'Here's what we do (well) and here's what you do well. You do that and we'll do what we do well. It's okay if we have the same people, because we're doing different things. They'll go to you for this, and they'll come to me for this.'"

In terms of meetings, while many respondents appreciated that TNMAN staff made an effort to move meetings around the state, cost, staffing, and travel demands to attend TNMAN meetings was cumbersome, especially for smaller organizations and those in parts of the state far from the large metropolitan areas where meetings were typically held. However, other described the cost and travel time of attending and participating in TNMAN meetings as unworkable, as evidenced in this comment, "I can't be gone – we're two people. And our travel budget isn't very big. Again, we have a $200,000 budget, it's not a lot. So I have to pick what I'm going to do. I can't remember if I went to two of the meetings. I think I just got to go to one of them. Part of the content was valuable and part of it wasn't particularly valuable, and that's just me. But that's a lot of expense for something not particularly valuable." This sense of isolation creates a barrier to some of the respondents to participate in networks and take advantage of resources and collaborations. Several respondents noted that in the early years of TNMAN, scholarships were very important to their participation.

Implications: The findings on the least valued experiences from the original network are compelling. The call for more relevant trainings and better facilitation of network exchanges were frequent responses for member organizations, which reiterates the members' expressed need for opportunities to learn how to improve their organizations. OneStar could prepare and implement a diversified selection of trainings for MSOs that cover a broad range of topics.

The cost, time, and effort needed to travel to network meetings also negatively affected members' experiences. The findings suggest a need to offer regional meetings so that members from all areas can gain the most for the Network. OneStar has a great opportunity to deliver capacity building resource to MSOs around Texas if they invest in reaching more members through engaging them closer to their homes and offering trainings at these regionally-based meetings.

Further, significant issues of trust and ethical behavior were evidenced in a number of responses. OneStar should work to create a "code of conduct" to guide network interactions and expectations, as well as best practices by members in their own management support or capacity-building operations. Further, OneStar will need to consider the important task of how to monitor and enforce such a code of conduct to make it meaningful.

Collaboration and Performance Outcomes of TNMAN

As part of the study of collaboration, respondents were asked to respond to a series of questions on the social network analysis survey. These questions related to perceptions about TNMAN's performance and collaboration goals, including: Outcomes that TNMAN's work could have achieved; identification of TNMAN's most important potential outcome; TNMAN's success at reaching its goals; and the aspects of collaboration that contributed to this success (or lack of success).

The results to the first question, "What were the potential outcomes of TNMAN's work?", are summarized in Figure Two below.

Figure Two : *What were the potential outcomes of TNMAN's work?*

n=22 respondents

Outcome	Value
Facilitation of funding opportunities across the network (e.g., joint proposal from…)	14
Identification of funding sources for individual members	13
Shared programming	14
Improved Communication	15
Improved effectiveness	14
Policy, law and/or regulation	11
Public awareness	16
Community support	8
New sources of data	18
Increased knowledge sharing	19
Improved resource sharing (financial, personnel, etc.)	17
Reduction of capacity disparities in the nonprofit sector	15
Improved services provided by my organization, department or firm	15
Enhanced leadership/management of my organization, department, or firm	11

In response to the question, **"**Which is the Network's most important outcome?", 15 percent of respondents chose "improved services internal to TNMAN members", another 15 percent chose "improved effectiveness by TNMAN members", and 25% chose "reduction of capacity disparities in the nonprofit sector". These results appear in Figure Three below.

Figure Three: *Perceptions of TNMAN's Most Important Outcomes*
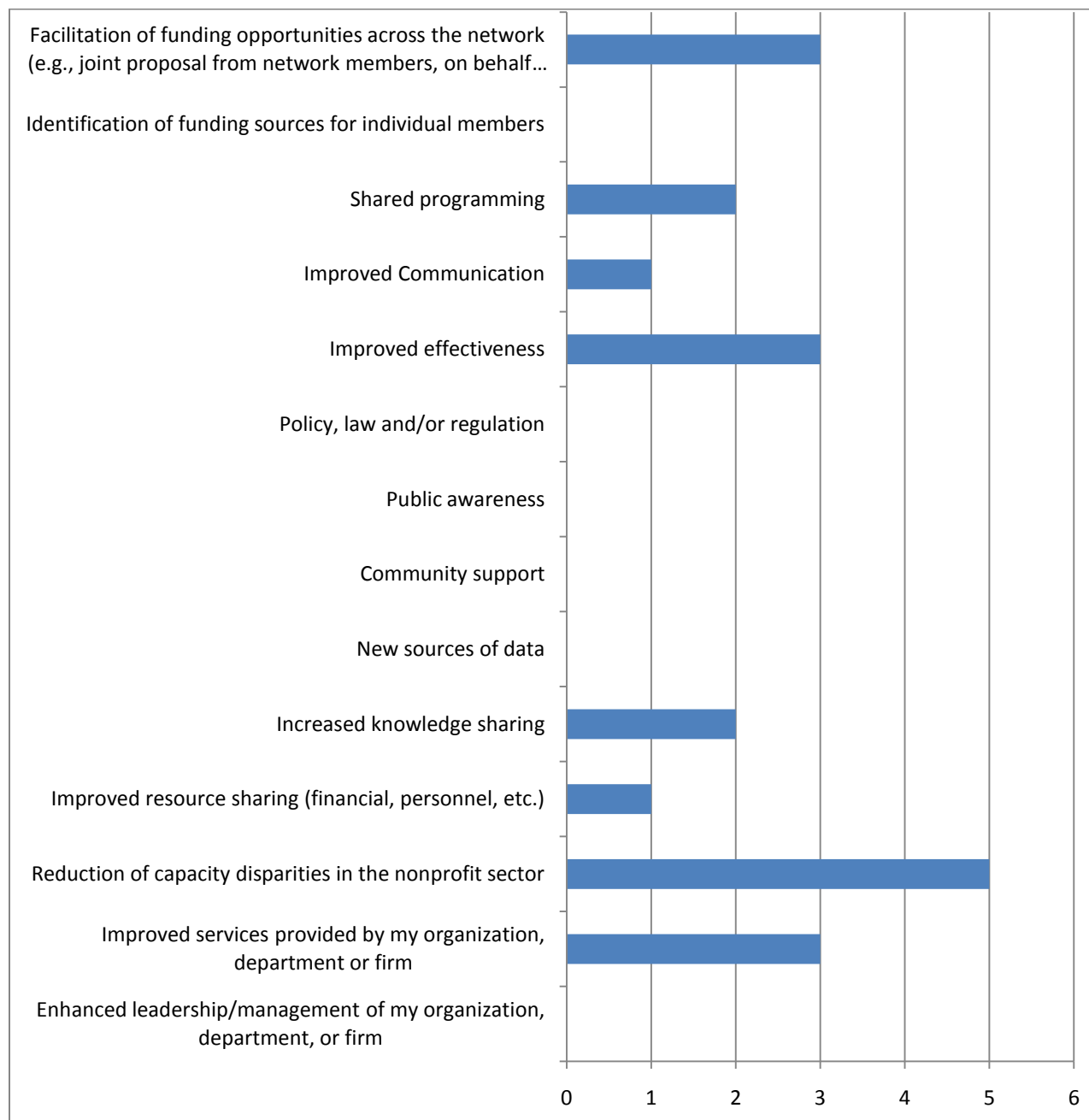
The results to the question, "How successful was TNMAN at reaching its outcomes?", are provided in Figure Four below. Out of 22 responses to this question, 25 percent indicated not successful, 40 percent indicated somewhat successful, 25% percent indicated successful, and 10 percent indicated very successful. No respondents reported that TNMAN was "completely successful." As the narrative above demonstrates, the work of TNMAN was complex, and the intersections of respondents to this survey varied in terms of their own professional and organizational experiences and contexts and their tenure with TNMAN. Given the unique nature of TNMAN's mission and the difficulties inherent in supporting capacity-building and management assistance, the results warrant attention, but also can be viewed as demonstrating some measure of success.

Figure Four : *How successful was TNMAN been at reaching its outcomes?*
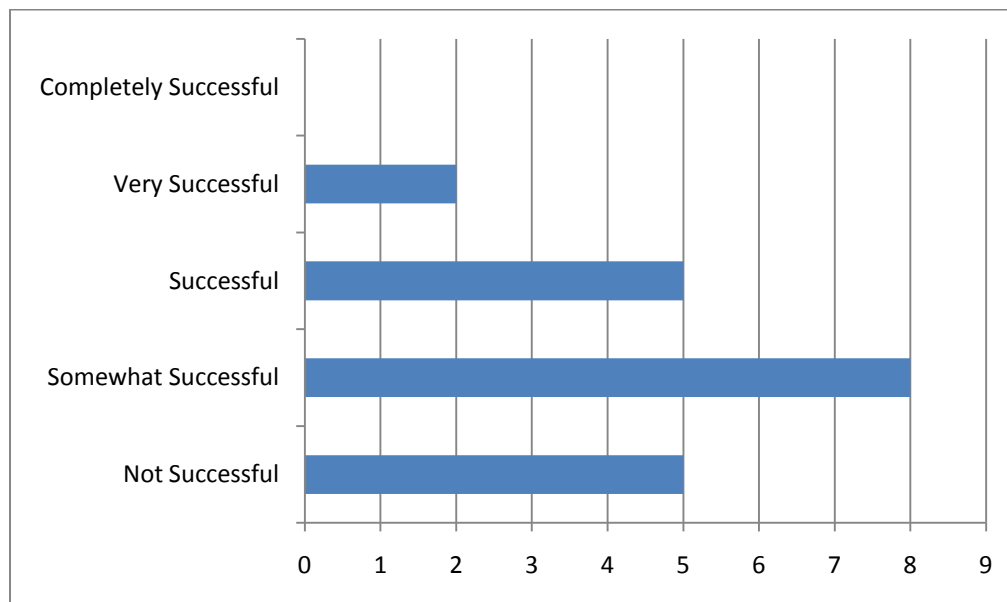
The results to the following question are summarized in Figure Five below: "What aspects of collaboration contribute to this success?" Respondents could choose all that apply. Similar to the narrative results above, relational and collaborative aspects were most valued, with 24 % indicating creating informal relationships, 22% indicated exchanging information/knowledge, and 19% indicating sharing resources.

Figure Five : *Aspects of Collaboration that Contributed TNMAN Successes*
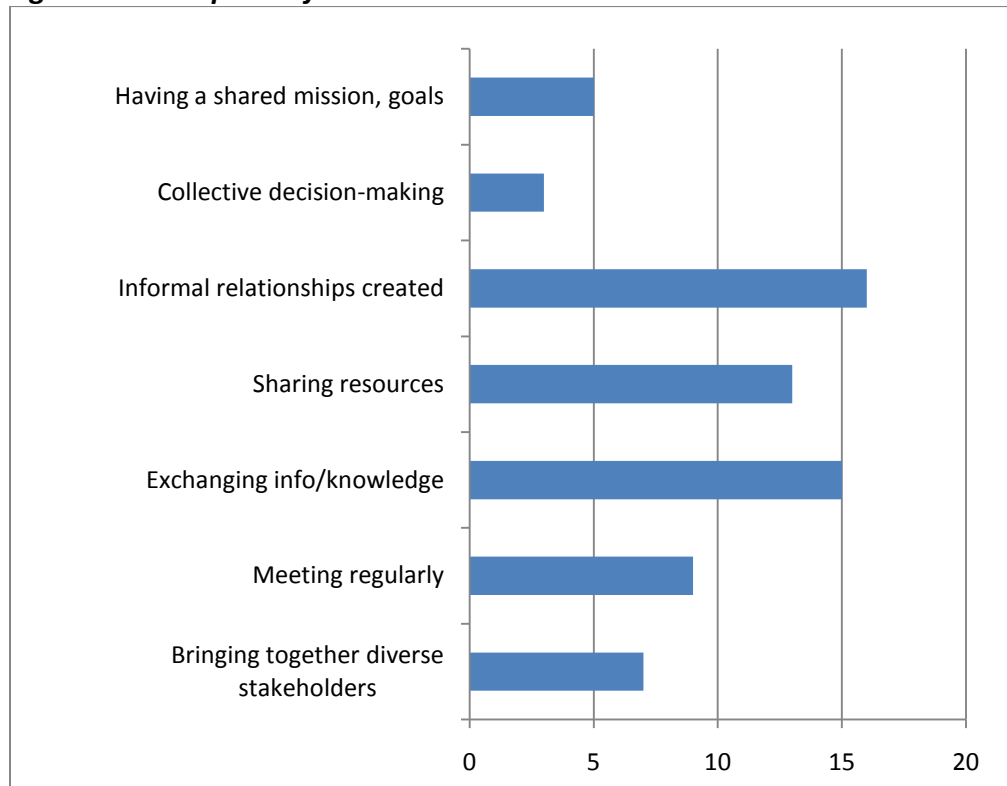
Collaboration and Social Network Analysis

In this section, the inter-organizational networks within TNMAN are measured and analyzed using social network analysis (SNA), which focuses on the relationships among organizations, instead of the organizations themselves. The analysis offers both a visual map (e.g., a graph or other figure) and mathematical calculations of the overall network structure and the attributes and characteristics of the relationships embedded within.

In Table Two, "Overall Network Score", shown below, measurements for the TNMAN network as a whole are reported. Density, degree centralization, and trust are the key the aspects of interest. Whole network measurements include:

Density: This is the most basic and common measurement in social network analysis as it allows for an easy understanding of the connectedness of a network. It looks to the whole network, simply measuring the number of ties in a network as a percentage of the total number of possible ties.

Degree Centralization: This measurement complements density by measuring how the network is organized. Specifically, it demonstrates if a network has a centralized or decentralized structure. The lower the centralization score, the more similar the members are in terms of their number of connections to others (e.g. more decentralized).

Trust: This measures the percentage of how much members trust one another. A 100% occurs when all members trust others at the highest level.

Table Two : Overall Network Score

Network Scores	
Density	28.40%
Degree Centralization	62.10%
Trust	28.80%

OVERALL NETWORK FINDINGS: Based on the findings shown below, TNMAN was characterized by a relatively high degree of centralization, indicating that there is some variation in the similarities of TNMAN members in terms of their number of connections to other TNMAN members. The levels of connectedness and trust, however, were fairly low.

In Table Three, "Individual Organizational Scores", results for individual TNMAN members are shown. Specific measures include:

"*Degree Centrality*": Demonstrates the number of connections to other members of the network;

Non-redundant Ties: Shows the number of non-redundant ties in relation to the other members that each organization is connected to;

Closeness Centrality: Measures how far each member is from other members of the network in terms of number of links between each member. A high score (close to 1) indicates members who have the shortest 'distance' between all other members;

Relative Connectivity: Based on measures of value, trust, and number of connections to others, the connectivity score indicates the level of benefit an organization receives as a network member, in relation to the member with the highest level of benefit (100%);

Value Scores: An average of the ranking given by all other members for that organization along three dimensions: power/influence, level of involvement, and resource contribution. The measure is on a scale of 1-4 where the total Value Score is a combined total average of all three trust dimensions.

Trust Scores: An average of the ranking given by all other members for that organization along three dimensions: reliability, support of mission, and open to discussion. This measure is on a scale of 1-4. Total Trust is a combined total average of all three trust dimensions.

Please note: This is the only section in the report where individual TNMAN member names are used. Individual organization names can be included here because results summarize perceptions of respondent network members, without revealing the identity of respondent organizations.

Individual Organization Scores: Based on the findings shown below in Table Three, several individual TNMAN members enjoyed both degree centrality and relatively high measures of value and trust (highlighted in green). In addition, while there was variation in terms of connectedness by TNMAN members to non-TNMAN members, value and trust measures were relatively high for local United Ways and universities (highlighted in green).

Table Three :
Individual Organizational Scores

	CENTRALITY/CONNECTIVITY/REDUNDANCY				Value(1-4)				TRUST (1-4)			
	Degree Centrality (max 40)	Non-Redundant Ties	Closeness Centrality	Relative Connectivity	Overall Value (1-4)	Power/ Influence (1-4)	Level of Involvement 1-4)	Resource Contribution (1-4)	Total Trust (1-4)	Reliability (1-4)	In Support of Mission (1-4)	Open to Discussion (1-4)
TNMAN MEMBERS												
Center for Community-Based & Nonprofit Organizations	35	29.35	0.91	100%	1.75	2	1.5	1.75	3	3.25	3	2.75
OneStar Foundation	**28**	**20.58**	**0.78**	**97%**	**2.56**	**2.67**	**2.61**	**2.39**	**2.63**	**2.44**	**2.94**	**2.5**
The Center for Nonprofit Management	**25**	**18.6**	**0.74**	**88%**	**2.5**	**2.58**	**2.83**	**2.08**	**2.47**	**2.75**	**2.17**	**2.5**
Waco Foundation	25	19.2	0.74	74%	1.33	2	1.67	0.33	1	1	1	1
Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations	**24**	**18.18**	**0.72**	**68%**	**2.04**	**2.13**	**2.2**	**1.8**	**2.36**	**2.47**	**2.6**	**2**
Management Assistance Program - United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast	**23**	**18.05**	**0.71**	**82%**	**2.46**	**2.88**	**2.63**	**1.88**	**2.25**	**2.25**	**2.38**	**2.13**
GREENLIGHTS for Nonprofit Success	**21**	**14.64**	**0.68**	**77%**	**2.41**	**2.54**	**2.62**	**2.08**	**2.51**	**2.62**	**2.54**	**2.38**
Nonprofit Management Center of the Permian Basin	21	14.96	0.68	63%	1.56	1.67	1.67	1.33	2	2	2	2
A Circle of Ten	18	12.55	0.65	60%	1.25	1.5	1.5	0.75	1.75	2	1.75	1.5
Funding Information Center	16	10.26	0.63	56%	1.95	2	2	1.86	2.38	2.43	2.57	2.14
Nonprofit Development Center, United Way of Tyler/Smith County	15	10.21	0.62	50%	1.8	1.8	2	1.6	1.87	1.6	2.4	1.6
The Bush School of Government and Public service	**15**	**8.86**	**0.62**	**56%**	**2.48**	**2.55**	**2.64**	**2.27**	**2.18**	**2.36**	**1.91**	**2.27**
Texas C-Bar	**14**	**8.5**	**0.61**	**48%**	**2.12**	**2.29**	**2.07**	**2**	**2.14**	**2.43**	**2.07**	**1.93**
The Volunteer Center of Lubbock	14	8.94	0.61	46%	1.11	1.67	1.33	0.33	1	1	1	1
Amarillo Area Foundation Nonprofit Services Center	12	6.76	0.59	44%	2.08	2.25	2.38	1.63	1.92	2	1.63	2.13
RGK Center for Philanthropy & Community Service	10	5.42	0.57	36%	2	2	2.2	1.8	1.9	2.1	1.7	1.9
Southeast Texas Nonprofit Development Center	9	5.31	0.56	29%	1.33	2	1.5	0.5	1.33	1.5	1	1.5
The GOAL Project	9	5.4	0.57	27%	1	2	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Npower Texas	8	6.18	0.54	27%	1.58	1.5	1.75	1.5	1.83	1.75	2	1.75
Executive Service Corps of Greater Houston	8	4.66	0.55	25%	1.4	1.6	1.4	1.2	1.47	1.2	1.2	2
Sommerville and Associates	5	2.8	0.5	19%	1.67	2	1.6	1.4	1.8	2.2	1.2	2
Nonprofit Management Center of Wichita Falls	5	2.81	0.53	20%	1.67	1.8	2.2	1	2.07	2	2.2	2
College of Public Affairs & Community Service, University of North Texas	4	2.16	0.52	17%	2.08	2.25	2	2	1.5	1.75	1.25	1.5
Southwest Border Nonprofit Resource Center	4	1.99	0.51	15%	1.17	1.5	1.5	0.5	1.67	1.5	2	1.5
Weaver LLP	4	2.67	0.49	13%	1.17	1.5	1.5	0.5	1.5	2	0.5	2

Nonprofit Management Program - UTSA	3	1.9	0.5	9%	1.44	1.67	1.67	1	1.44	1	1	2.33
Nonprofit Enterprise Center	2	1.42	0.46	6%	1.67	2	2	1	1.17	1	1.5	1
McLennan Community College	2	1.67	0.49	6%	1.67	3	1	1	1.67	1.5	1.5	2
Nonprofit Management & Volunteer Center	1	1	0.48	3%	1	2	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Center for Nonprofit Support	1	1	0.48	3%	1	2	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Change Dynamics, CB	0	0	n/a	0%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Non-TNMAN Collaborators												
Local United Way	**15**	**10.02**	**0.62**	**45%**	**2.09**	**2.73**	**1.53**	**2**	**2.16**	**2.47**	**1.87**	**2.13**
Local government	11	6.26	0.58	28%	1.7	2.36	1.27	1.45	1.58	2	1.27	1.45
Other Private Firms/Consultants (outside the network)	**10**	**6.63**	**0.57**	**38%**	**2.3**	**2.7**	**2**	**2.2**	**2.1**	**2.5**	**1.5**	**2.3**
Other University/College (outside the network)	**8**	**4.61**	**0.56**	**29%**	**2.17**	**2.63**	**1.88**	**2**	**2.21**	**2.38**	**1.88**	**2.38**
Other Capacity-building Nonprofit/MSO/Nonprofit Service Center (outside the network)	8	5.33	0.56	28%	1.96	2.63	1.63	1.63	1.92	2.13	1.5	2.13
National Association	8	4.16	0.55	32%	1.67	2.13	1.25	1.63	2.33	2.25	2.25	2.5
Federal Government	8	4.5	0.56	21%	1.54	1.63	1.63	1.38	1.67	2	1.5	1.5
State Government	7	3.86	0.55	22%	1.48	1.86	1.43	1.14	1.24	1.29	1.29	1.14
Other State Association (outside the network)	5	2.89	0.53	15%	1.13	1.6	1	0.8	1.8	2.2	1.2	2
Nonprofit (not a client)	5	3.29	0.53	10%	1.93	2.8	1.8	1.2	1.2	1	1.4	1.2

An examination of results displayed in Figure Six (below) adds insight to the individual scores shown above in Table Three. In general terms, MSOs, universities, and other nonprofit members have higher degrees of contact than do private firms. The figure also suggests that some bi-lateral relationships are particularly high in trust and contact. One such relationship is between a private consultant and MSOs. Consistent with collaboration and network theory, contact seems to breed trust, which may in turn promote additional contact. Conversely, it might also suggest that contact diminishes when trust is low.

Figure Six : *Trust In Relationship to Contact (Monthly)*
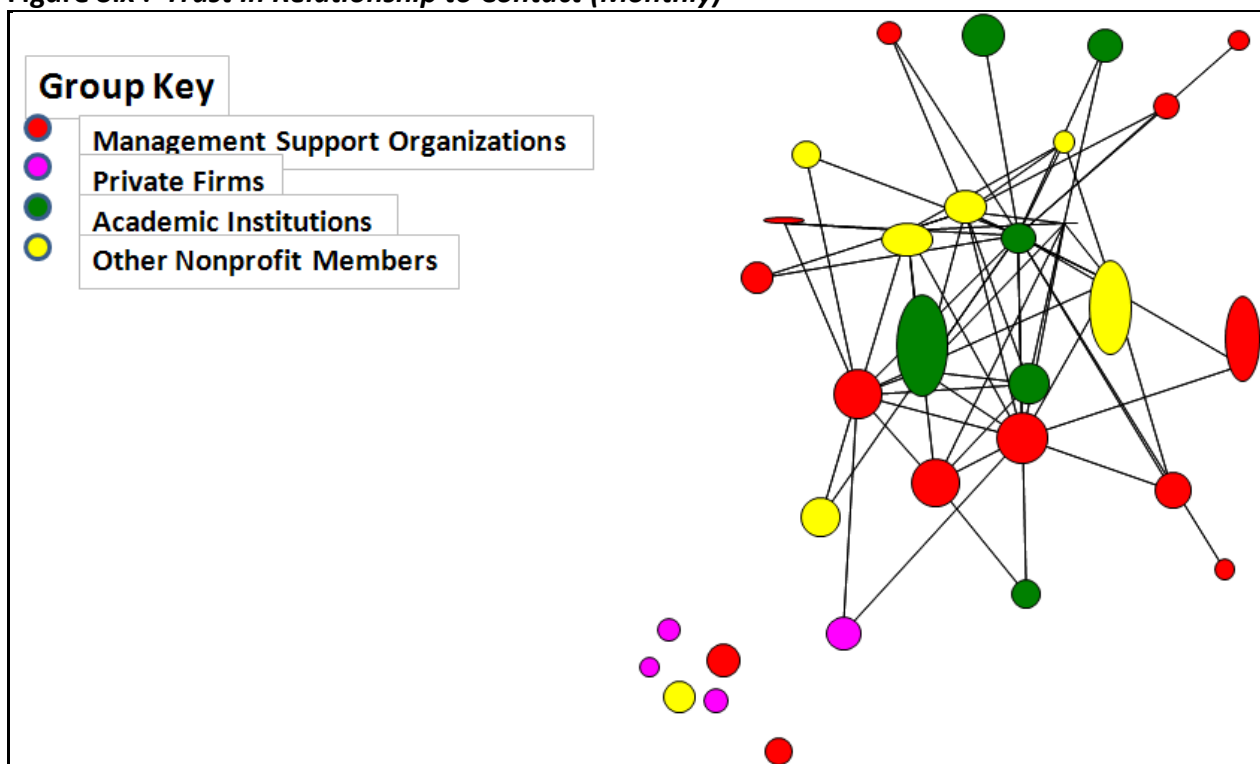
In the three figures that follow, results demonstrate a continuum of collaborations ranging from the most general "collaborative" relationships, to "coordinative" relationships", to "integrative relationships". Definitions of these relationships are as follows:

Cooperative Relationships: Cooperative work involves exchanging information, altering activities and sharing resources for mutual benefit

Coordinative Relationships: Coordinated activities involve the intentional efforts to enhance each other's capacity for the mutual benefit of programs

Integrative Relationships: Integration is the act of shared structural, theoretical and logistical frameworks that both address and enhance mutual goals

Implications: As one would expect, cooperative relationships (see Figure Seven below) are fairly common, given the nature of TNMAN and the relatively low cost and minimal expectations of such relationships. While coordinative relationships (see Figure Eight below) are less common, these relationships appear to be more bi-lateral in nature with the exception of a few key players in TNMAN engaged in multiple coordinative relationships. In terms of integrative relationships, here it is useful to look not only at relationships among TNMAN members but also of links between TNMAN members and non-TNMAN partners. As expected, the more extensive integrative relationships are fewer among TNMAN members, yet several such relationships are reported. Although some data and the ability to infer are lost by maintaining confidentiality, one can surmise that several MSOs and state associations are engaged in integrative activity. A review of integrative relationships by TNMAN members and non-members reveals slightly higher levels of integration. A useful example here would be the integrative relationships that academic providers report with funders, other universities and national associations on research.
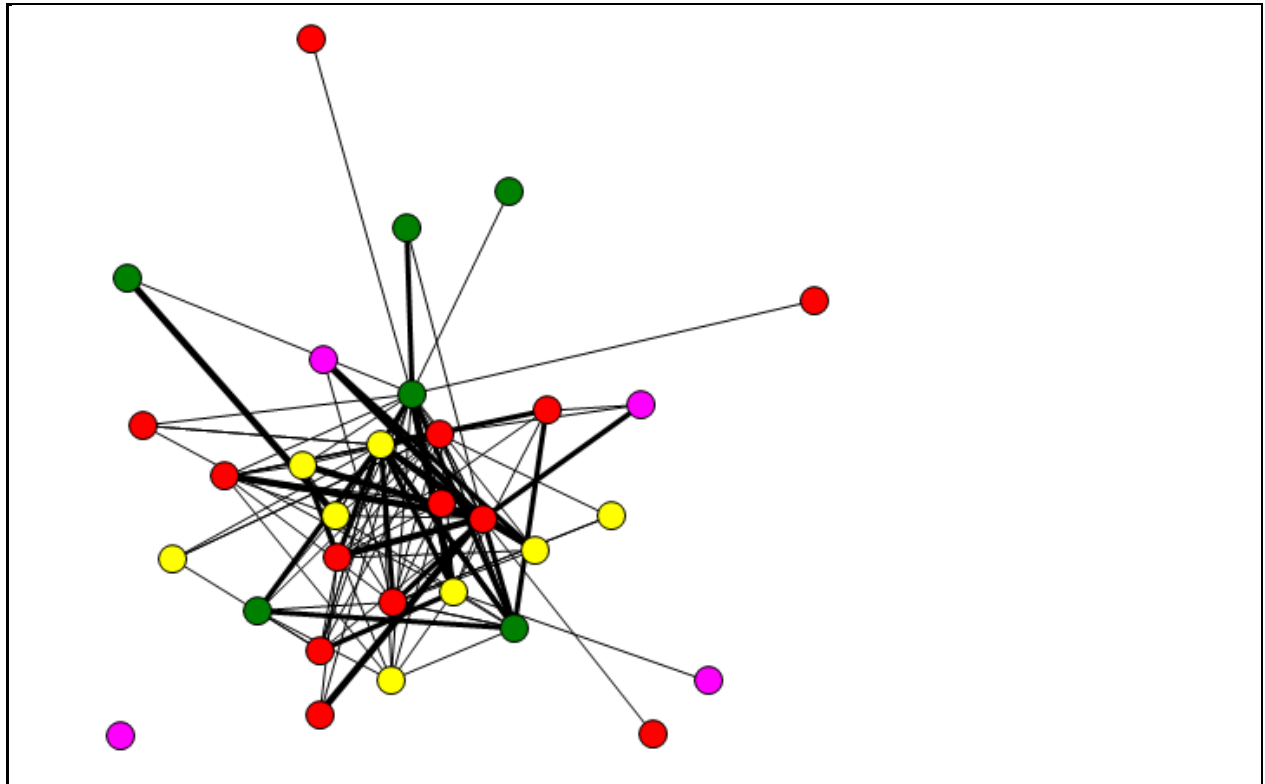
Figure Seven : Cooperative Relationships

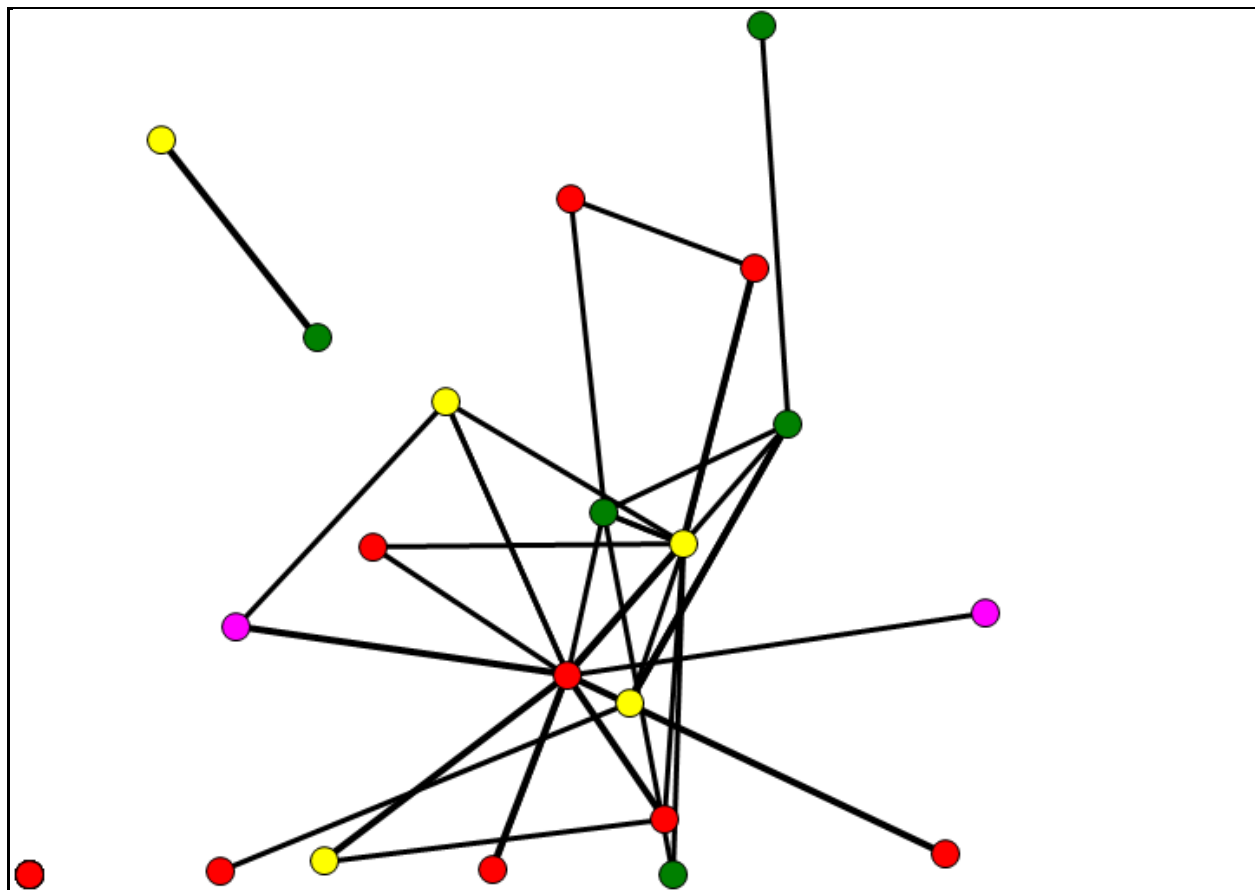**Figure Eight : Coordinative Relationships**

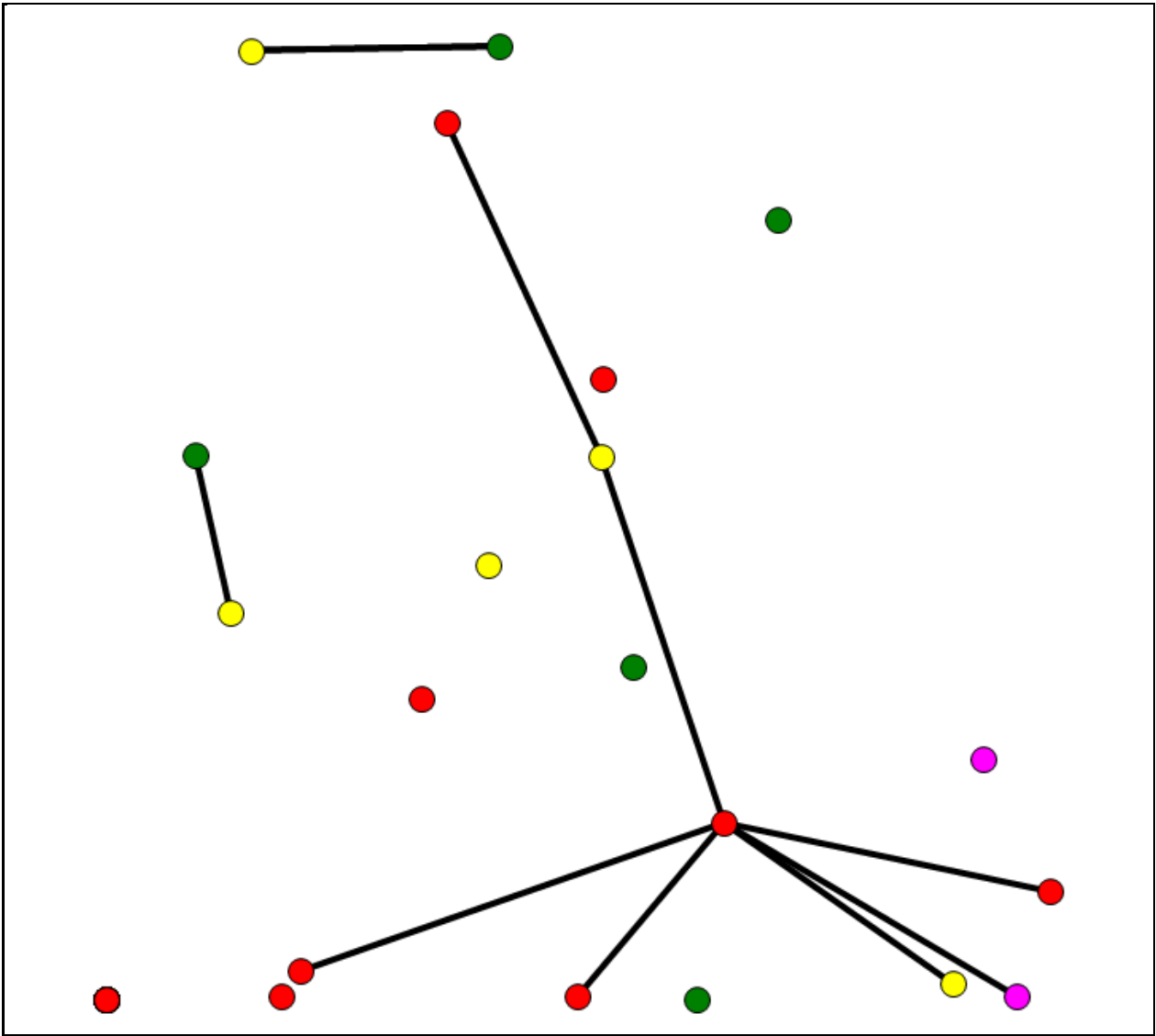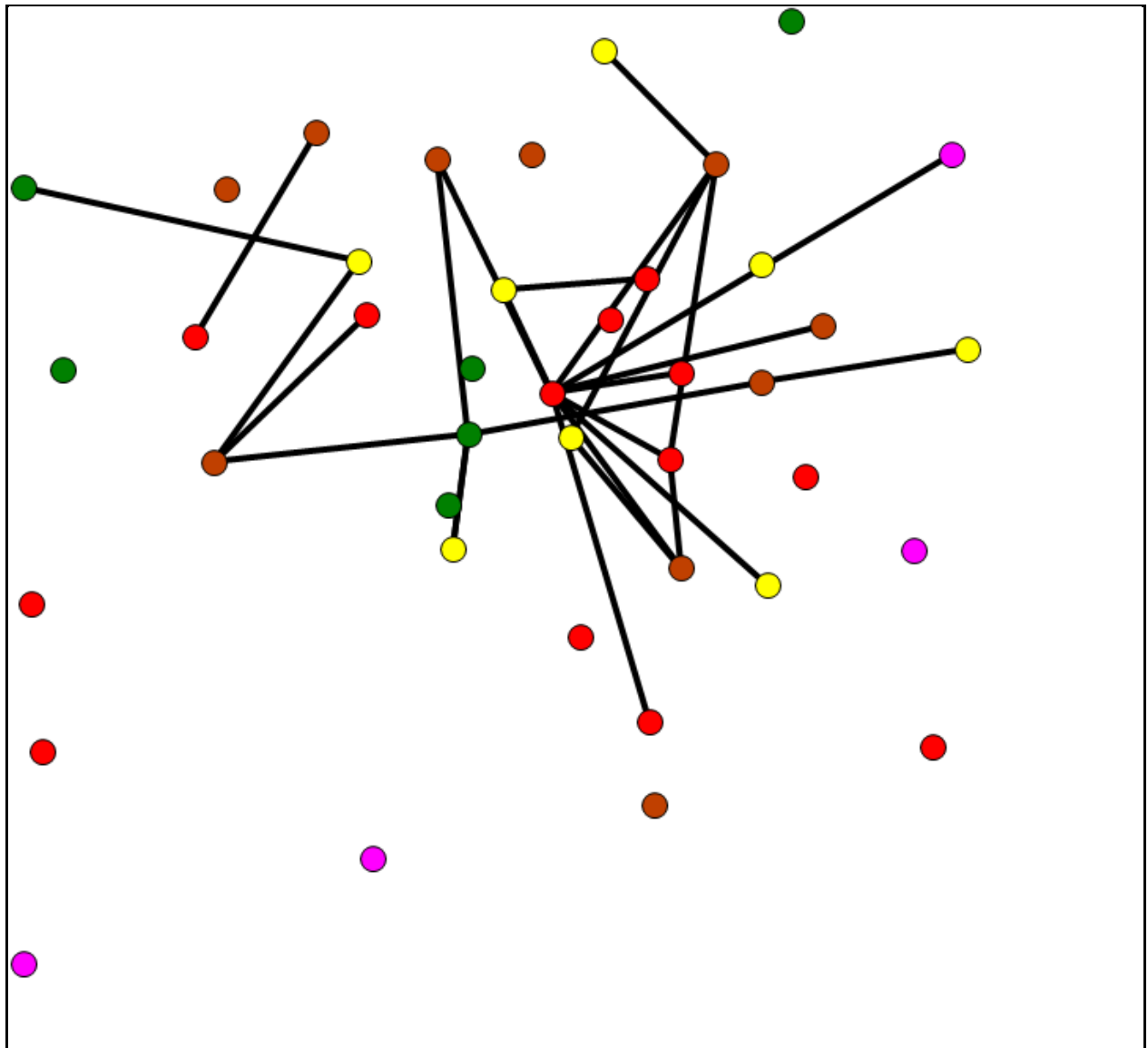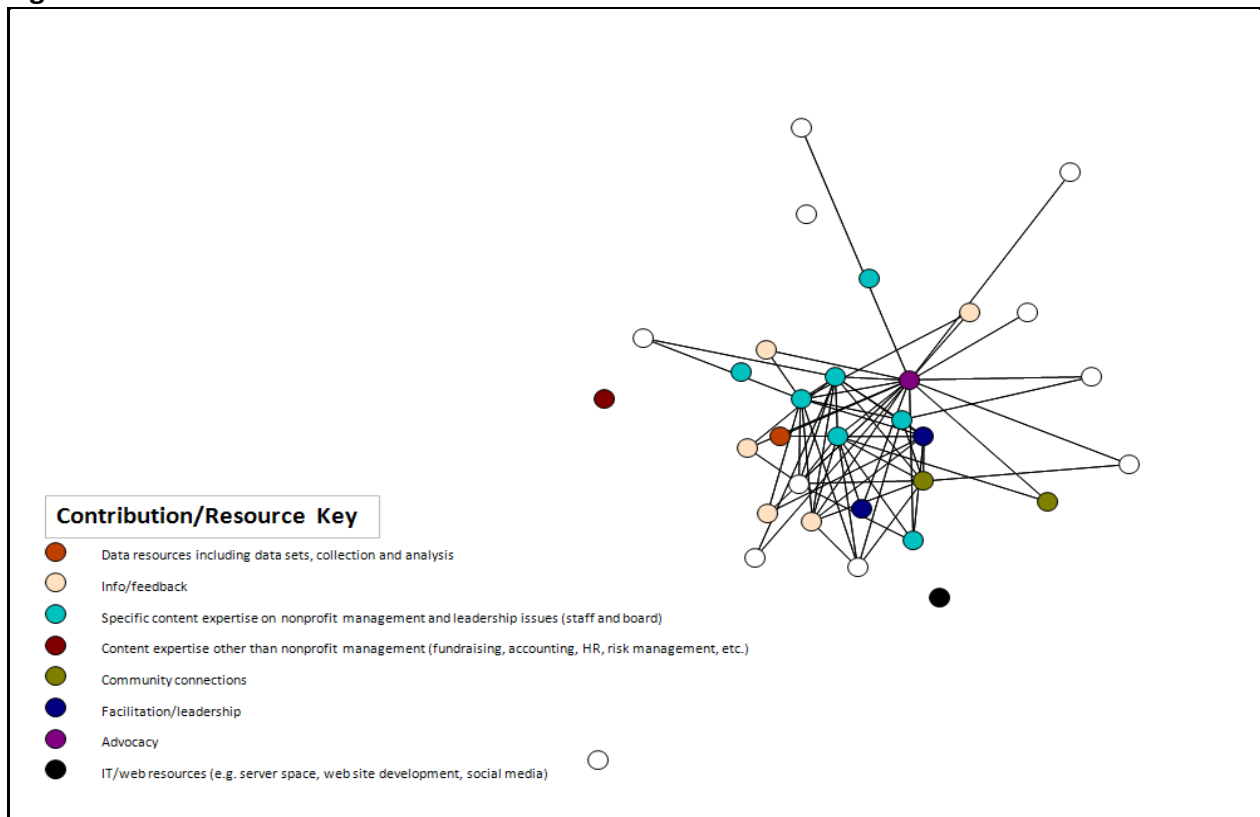**Figure Nine : Integrative Relationships**

Figure Ten : Integrative Relationships TNMAN Members and Non-Members

Implications: Social Network Analysis affords the opportunity to gain insight into the nature of TNMAN member contributions and resources. Here, again, it would be useful to associate reported contributions and resources to specific TNMAN members, but confidentiality commitments prohibit this. In reviewing Figure Eleven below, one can see, however, that while there are a diversity of contributions, the majority report content expertise related to nonprofit management and governance topics (noted in aqua) and general information and feedback (pink). Notably, the highest majority report NO resource contributions to TNMAN. In addition, community connections, advocacy, other content areas, and IT/web resources contributions are slim. These findings contrast with the interview results, where the majority of respondents reported wanting to and being willing to do more to contribute to the network, particularly in terms of volunteer service and expertise sharing.

Figure Eleven : Resource Contributions

Contribution/Resource Key

- Data resources including data sets, collection and analysis
- Info/feedback
- Specific content expertise on nonprofit management and leadership issues (staff and board)
- Content expertise other than nonprofit management (fundraising, accounting, HR, risk management, etc.)
- Community connections
- Facilitation/leadership
- Advocacy
- IT/web resources (e.g. server space, web site development, social media)

THOUGHTS ON THE NETWORK MOVING FORWARD

To understand member needs and shape future network operations, OneStar Foundation sought information on the following: purpose of network moving forward; desires of members for new structure; what organizations can bring to the structure in the future; membership in the network; communication within the network; sustaining network in future; and future network name.

Network Mission Moving Forward

In response to the question of the network's mission moving forward, nearly everyone emphasized that the mission needs to be more clear and compelling; one respondent stated that, "it needs to have a higher purpose." The respondent noted that the network should not just focus on the services to members, but services to members "*for what end.*" Much of the conversation then vacillated between whom should the network serve and for what purpose.

Fully half of the respondents thought the mission should continue to be the same as it was under TNMAN. About a third of these respondents thought that the mission, while remaining the same, should serve only MSOs. In contrast, a separate third of the sample mentioned that the Network mission should consider the diverse needs of member organizations, which include regional issues, a greater diversity of types of management support, and a broader range of staff levels. This comment by an academic provider captures this sentiment and provides additional comment on dimensions of the mission into ways to implement that mission:

> "It's such a heterogeneous sector. So the information aspect of the network will be a pretty important one; there are needs for awareness and clarity around capacity building players at different spots and different sizes that while doing slightly different things are also doing more or less related things. So there's something there that has to happen with the network's role, but that alone probably is not sufficient for a purpose of it but it needs to be done. It will take additional work to help build trust amongst some of those players, so awareness and then trust. How do you facilitate the network so these folks will actually be willing to work together if necessary? And that's the other part of this. Is it absolutely necessary that some folks offering services in some region of

the state trust and know the folks in some other region of the state? I think it is. So I would go to the second level and say this entity needs to figure how you're going to build relationships between these entities that are operating within the state as an explicit part of its mission."

In contrast, two respondents thought the Network should not be continued in the future and felt that its mission could be met through other extant mechanisms. An additional and recurrent theme surfaced with regard to mission (as well as in numerous other sections of the interviews): that of trust, integrity in interactions, and competition within the network. This theme is explored in greater depth in the section on collaboration.

Membership Issues

Composition. Several clear messages emerged relating to the composition of members in the network and follow below.

1. MSOs, with nearly complete unanimity, would like the opportunity to meet separate from other provider types.
2. The membership should be expanded to include affinity groups. Specific affinity groups identified as important include current groups beyond MSOs, as well as several new groups:
   a. Academic Providers
   b. Consultants
   c. Funders (to complement metropolitan and Southwest Conference groups; see Minnesota Council of Foundations for an example)
   d. Volunteer Centers (with the demise of DOVIA and the overlap with some management support programs, this group was thought to be vital)
   e. Specialized capacity-building organizations, specializing in functional areas (such as nonprofit technology or finance) and/or subfields capacity-building entities
   f. Executive versus other organizational levels—Respondent executives indicated a desire to meet together around executive and leadership issues. Respondent executives also thought that there would be room for affinity groups for staff at other levels in their organizations.

A critical key issue was conveyed by respondents regarding membership composition:

1. The network needs to be a *convener* for Texas capacity-building entities *broadly*.
   a. Part of the rationale for this is to support clear roles among major entities, such as OneStar Foundation, TANO, TX Nonprofits, and so on. A respondent indicates thus, "It has to go to the next level. There needs to be a convener for Texas. For example, TANO, which is ostensibly the nonprofit organization, in my opinion is

not fulfilling that role in the way it could be. Again, I'm not faulting anyone in particular. They're professionals there. But I think if you call yourself a statewide organization for nonprofits, you have to fulfill certain roles. And I think that the Network can be a place where we can harness the energies of all the players here, and create a unified approach as opposed to a bifurcated approach to addressing issues of the non-profits."

In terms of other modes of communication and critical content:

1. Respondents expressed a clear desire for OneStar to be the "go to" presence for *cutting-edge information* relevant for a diversity of capacity-building providers.
   a. Part of this will be summarizing and disseminating research and information about nonprofit issues.
   b. Part of this will be "brokering" data and other resources for members, including access to nonprofit journals, Foundation Center Data, IRS Data for Texas and so on.
   c. Part of this will be providing access to current research and experts on "the issues of the day" facing nonprofit capacity-builders
2. Access to consultant registry is desired.
   a. Respondents indicated that a "vetted" list would be helpful, whether vetted by OneStar or network members themselves.
   b. OneStar could also allow paid ads by consultants and other for-profit entities, but it would be important to specify when recommendations are objective, data-driven versus solely commercial announcements.
3. Network must play active "brokering" role to facilitate shared interests of funders and capacity builders; statewide entities (governmental and associative/nonprofit) and capacity builders.
4. OneStar must play a research, brokering and convening role around shared funding opportunities.
5. Other information and communication modes suggested include:
   a. Periodic newsletter or web venue highlighting activities of members, events of interest, requests for proposals, etc.
   b. To supplement the need for a single "go-to" staff member at OneStar, it will be critical to have easy communication channels for questions, concerns, and information sharing with the OneStar network and staff person as a hub.

Membership Fees. All respondents agreed that OneStar should charge a membership fee. Respondents' discussions repeatedly mentioned the importance of *reasonably priced membership fees.* In terms of what constitutes a reasonable membership fee, $500 was listed as the maximum amount. One respondent reflected on fees for other memberships purchased

by her organization, "They're all over the map anywhere from $200 to $500. I do know that the higher the membership fee, there has to be some sort of tangible benefit people feel like they're getting back. And I think that's true of any organization, even if it is somewhat for the consultants serves their own self-interests." One person shared an experience with Hands On fees being raised after it took over Points of Light, an umbrella group for one of the TNMAN members. "When they took over Points of Light, which used to be our umbrella group, they raised the affiliation fees substantially to be a part of that network. I think that would be a mistake. I think keeping it under $500 is a good idea." In general, when membership fees were discussed, the respondents felt it should be between $150 and $400. The general sentiment was to "make it a reasonable amount."

Some respondents believed that membership fees should be based on a sliding scale fee or on the annual budgets of organizations. One respondent mentioned that there should be standards placed on membership. Other respondents noted that creating a membership fee scale based on the type of organization could help reduce the amount of competition between members. A respondent consultant indicated a similar fee range, but also indicated that part of being a member would be agreeing to "serving on a committee or serving on whatever task force or whatever particular place that I could be used for."

Membership Benefits. The respondents tended to support the notion of membership benefits for network members. With membership, some respondents thought that the Network could offer more information or resources. Other respondents hoped that as members they could receive discounts on events or conferences. Although few respondents offered specific examples of desired membership benefits, one respondent indicated, "I like organizations, for instance, in which the membership benefit gives you some sort of discount on any fees, but you have to pay for anything else. Most membership organizations will say we have a member right and a non-member right. Or you get this newsletter every month. That's really I guess the primary ways I see that the membership fees kind of start to pay off for you in the long run." The respondents also seemed to think that enhanced membership benefits would make their connection to and affinity for the network stronger.

Respondents spoke at length about *membership rights and obligations*, as well. Similar to the suggestion offered above in terms of membership fees, nearly all respondents indicated that they would be willing to offer staff time, expertise, and meeting space to the network. Further, nearly half of the respondents discussed the need for standards of conduct for members, which would center on ethical parameters and areas of excellence to guide member interactions with each other and between members and their external constituencies.

Membership Services. Another area in membership issues was the need for more membership services. Because of the geographic distance between member organizations, the respondents commented on the need for more and better coordination than in the past. Some respondents discussed there could be online membership services. Other respondents thought that members could be offered regional support to lessen the geographical constraints of membership in the network.

Another idea discussed was the broadening of the network beyond capacity-builders to increase the scope of the Network and related implications for member services. Related services would follow, as would areas of cross-over across affinity groups. For example, one respondent offered, "If the network organizes an association of sorts for funders, a service could be an annual program and resource guide on donor trends or a local "foundation center" type directory. Or, in the case of volunteer centers, resource guides and training—based on some of the things that Sarah Jane Rehnborg is doing over at LBJ school on volunteer management, for example—could be a member benefit to volunteer center directors."

Similarly, respondents emphasized the need for attention to services or products for a diversity of member types, staff levels, and content. In terms of service delivery mode, web-based conferences garnered mention from about half of the respondents. A "smorgasbord" approach was mentioned by several respondents, in which "resources and possibly some training were offered. But if you do training it might need to be things like Web-based conferences or workshops to cut down on costs. Then that way they can pick and choose the ones that are most beneficial."

In relationship to some of the hopes and concerns about the network functioning under OneStar in the future, a number of respondents translated the convening function to services language. Here is a useful example of this,

> "I think that does make sense for OneStar to offer services in exchange for membership fees. I'd need some more thinking about what exactly that would look like. Implicitly then that means resources, so that means they need to have something on the table. They need some capacity to either facilitate the collaborative orientation to create something to happen, and then secure the resources, or securing resources to facilitate people coming together and I don't know exactly what that would look like either."

Another respondent offers a similar suggestion to the previous one, "One way potentially to do that, provide relevant services, would be to help coordinate and organize facilitated projects or initiatives. So whether it is research, conferences, or program initiatives that are statewide. Some mechanisms by which you try to get cooperation amongst those players to work together. So the third layer becomes can we find something to do and can we do it together in some capacity, whatever that means."

> **Implications: The findings uncover issues with the membership structure of the network. Members affiliate with the network to gain knowledge, resources, collaborative opportunities, and benefits, which all come at a cost. Due to the cost to participate in the network, members felt that they should receive something for their membership. Likewise, acquiring a membership should be dependent on certain rules and standards to ensure MSOs are representing the mission of the network. OneStar could outline the qualifications for membership in the network, ensure that members are receiving benefits for paying to be a part of the network, and work to develop and enforce shared norms for ethical behavior by members in their network relationships and individual organizational domains.**

Communication Mode and Frequency

In this section, preferences regarding mode and frequency of meetings are summarized. These views may change depending on how the network membership is comprised in the future.

In terms of in-person meetings, there was relative unanimity around communication mode and frequency, for in-person interviews with:

1. All respondents wanting at least one in-person meeting annually.

2. Approximately fifty per cent desired two in-person meetings annually.
3. Less than twenty percent desired more than two in-person meetings annually.
4. All respondents thought it would be wise to hold the network meeting in conjunction with some other gathering to capitalize on resources. Specifically, nearly seventy-five percent suggested that it be held in conjunction with the Greenlights/OneStar Nonprofit Summit.
5. Depending on the composition of members, MSOs would like to meet separate from other groups.
6. Similarly, if the network adopts affinity groups, it might be useful for those groups to meet separately.
7. It would, however, be nice to have a joint session of some sort (preferably both networking and educational) for the broad network membership.

Periodic or interim meetings, results were mixed for both frequency and mode:

1. In terms of frequency, about a third of the sample desired quarterly meetings (to include the on-site meeting). Another third preferred meetings two or three times annually. The remaining respondents either thought one meeting was sufficient, had no opinion, or would like to see meetings every two months.
2. In terms of mode, the vast majority of respondents did not like telephone meetings. The general consensus, though not terribly enthusiastic was for webinars or an adobe-type online conferencing program, where participants could see and hear each other during the call.
3. Respondents weighed in heavily with a preference for substantive content during the meetings, and not simply information sharing. Respondents, however, would like there to be an opportunity to hear important updates, work on collaborative issues, etc., during these calls.
4. The MSOs, in their desire to meet separately, may wish to meet more frequently (for example quarterly or every other month), on calls where they help shape the agenda.
5. For the webinars or web-based conversations, a majority of respondents thought it would be good to have one or two such calls for any specific affinity groups annually, as well.

Other issues related to meeting preferences have been reflected in other findings sections. Respondents, however, had strong preferences around several issues that warrant highlighting here.

1. Meetings should be engaging and participatory.
2. Professional facilitation is recommended to maximize time, expertise, and action.
3. Network members desire, and would be willing, to play a larger role in terms of content delivery.

4. Network members desire more opportunities for collaboration on initiatives that would support an enlarged network mission to build the nonprofit infrastructure and to advocate for capacity-building investments by funders and expenditures by nonprofits.
5. It would be wise for OneStar to consider special topic meetings for affinity groups, as well as staff at various levels within member organizations.
6. At the annual (or more frequent) in-person meeting, it will be important for OneStar to foster substantive interaction between capacity-building providers and funders.

Sustaining the Network

Future Network Name. OneStar Foundation sought information on the name of the future network. Similar to the discussion about the values and meanings that under gird the use of terms to describe the work of the network, the name of such a network will certainly be symbolic. Every respondent was asked his/her thoughts on what the network should be called moving forward. Alas, no name emerged, from the individual or collective wisdom of the respondents. Nevertheless several salient points will help inform future naming efforts by OneStar Foundation.

1. Of the terms explored in this research, capacity-building was the term most preferred. Further, in close examination of the transcripts, one sees capacity-building much more frequently than other terms. Further, one sees the term in use across the provider types.
2. Reinforcing what this study's data indicate, a respondent stated, "I think capacity-building is pretty widely recognized, although it has multiple definitions for people. But it captures broader issues of the sector-wide concerns of the institutional nature, the institutional players similar to OneStar's other term "nonprofit infrastructure." Thus, the term may be particularly useful in capturing the network's dual nature, to serve members, but to serve the sector's capacity need more broadly.
3. Despite this familiarity, "capacity building," like the other terms, are viewed as buzzwords that may alienate those "not in the know." Further, discussion of terms revealed that establishing clear meaning of the terms will be nearly as important as the selection of the terms.
4. Relative to the points above, one respondent with a background in advertising and marketing advised thus, "I think it doesn't really matter, as long as you settle on something and decide that's the brand and do it. I don't think it's ever been branded very well in Texas. I think it has in other places. So the doing of it is what matters in the long run. I say 'capacity-building' because it seems to be what funders use. The graphic description of organizations using capacity-building techniques or services gets into a more common language."

5. A foundation executive noted the following in reference to naming and terminology, "It makes my board crazy, honestly. They say, 'What do you mean by this capacity-building stuff?' And I say what it is and what it does and they are like, 'Well, yeah. That makes complete sense. But they don't like the word either. There's really nothing else. None of the terms are particularly resonating with the nonprofit world."

6. Nearly everyone agreed that the TNMAN name was cumbersome, difficult to remember, and with an acronym subject to varied usage, TXMAN, TNMAN, and so forth. (One respondent, who believes that the network has outlived its lifecycle even remarked, albeit tongue and cheek, about the appropriateness of the name, "TinMan".) One of the newest heads of an MSO-type agency noted the following about TNMAN: "Once I found out who they were and then I read the history I thought, *Well, that's just great. It's changed its own name several times. It makes it hard a bit from the outside,* and because nonprofits are sitting way outside that box, the more compartmentalized. I guess I found myself wondering well, that's great. If I could figure out how to get into what info they have, they don't want a bunch of nonprofits. They want the people who are handling nonprofits in a management consulting way to have access to the information they have, so it's a layering--Am I correct in that?--Oh, and the acronyms are already killing me."

7. Also, one respondent indicated that the language OneStar is already using really "resonates" with them, "social impact", "infrastructure" perspectives, "strengthening nonprofits" and "capacity building". This respondent encouraged a name that was consistent with OneStar's values and current style and usage. This person, and several others whose comments were quite similar, also noted that "OneStar Foundation has a reputation for quality programs, professionalism, deliberation, and a contemporary flair, and that this will serve the network well as it moves forward."

8. Finally, most answers indicated that the words "network", "alliance" or some other term related to collaboration should be embedded in the name.

These perspectives suggest that One Star Foundation should consider the following in naming the network: using the word "capacity building"; taking care to incorporate both descriptive tag line to further delineate the meaning of capacity building and words that express core values of collaboration, integrity, and service to nonprofits; and choosing a straightforward name with either a useful acronym or a short form, if necessary, that can be consistently applied. Although respondents (and researchers and OneStar program staff) had fun with this question, it is of critical importance. As the institutional scholars Powell and DiMaggio (1991) advise, language and terminology usage are the "cultural repertoire" of structures, practices, and values, that in turn emphasize communication across networks, the

role of professionals, patterns of legitimacy, and changing political and economic contexts. OneStar is wise to consider this carefully.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this report, implications and related recommendations are noted in the grey, boxed text. The recommendations below stem from these areas, but also extend beyond them to integrate and emphasize additional emergent recommendations. They are summarized below, without any preferential ordering.

- **OneStar must clearly define the future role and mission of the network** . This recommendation relates to clarification for parties internal to the network, as well as to other infrastructure organizations, funders, nonprofits themselves, and the general public. A significant challenge, well documented in this report and in the literature, relates to understanding and support of capacity building and views of its necessity. These issues are critical to nonprofits, investors to capacity building, and network members. In the current economic milieu, this messaging will be more pressing and difficult---yet vital.
- **OneStar must define its own mission and role more clearly for itself in its new network management role, for network members, and for other stakeholders, as well.** While respondents reported general respect for OneStar's professionalism, questions and ambiguities (and even some degree of ambivalence) surrounding OneStar's role and mission were also reported by TNMAN members' (even some seemingly close collaborators). This is particularly true in terms of distinctions between OneStar, TANO, and MSOs. Further, concern exists regarding OneStar's ability to manage the multiple, and sometimes competing or conflicting, roles of funder, capacity-builder itself, and convener,as well as the management of those roles vis-à-vis the network. These points are general in nature and specific to the network in terms of OneStar needing to build trust with some network members, who view the relationship with OneStar as collaborative at best, and, competitive, at worst.
- **Beyond the network role, OneStar should create a "Nonprofit Alliance",** a "meta-organization" or intermediary organization comprising other infrastructure organizations, key funders, the Attorney General's office, etc. This alliance can service to increase coordination, role clarification, communication, resource leveraging, and represent the interests of the network more broadly. See the MN Nonprofit Allies as a well-working example of such an alliance.[13]

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[13] http://www.minnesotanonprofits.org/projects-partners/partners-and-affiliations/nonprofit-allies

- **OneStar must provide staffing continuity and nonprofit management expertise.** One of the things that TNMAN members appreciated most was the availability of the CEO of TNMAN and her long history in nonprofit management. Again, while OneStar staff is viewed with respect, concern was expressed by several respondents that the majority of staff are not seasoned nonprofit professionals with extensive nonprofit CEO, board, or capacity building experience. Further, respondents report frustration with changing staffing at OneStar, including staff members who are parsed across projects. For the network to work well, members report the need for a dedicated contact for coordination and network management. For capacity-building and nonprofit management expertise, respondents report that additional staffing at OneStar that is perceived as having nonprofit management expertise will be necessary. This is particularly important for new MSO and consulting staff that need coaching and content expertise consulting. Moreover, seasoned MSO, university, and consultant members alike hope that content expertise will emerge complementary/at a peer level or at a more seasoned level. One potential solution to this might be to contract out a component of this to a sitting network member executive who holds such expertise.
- In terms of membership composition:
  - **MSOs want a single-MSO core network group.** This desire was clearly articulated, with near unanimity.
  - **All respondents see the need for affiliate or affinity groups, as well as a mechanism for connections across all network groups.**
    - Specific affinity groups should continue to include the present academic providers and consultants.
    - Additional affinity groups include funders, volunteer centers, subfield MSOs (e.g., those that serve specific nonprofit subfields such as CDC, faith-based organizations, arts organizations, etc.)
- **OneStar must keep in mind that network membership carries costs beyond a membership fee, particularly time and travel.** Meetings must be perceived as valuable, participatory, with high-level skilled facilitation, and mindful of geographic barriers and available technologies.
- **Network members need greater engagement in the network**, both in terms of network offerings to members and in terms of the network's use of member expertise and resources. Relatedly, the new network model should foster increased communication among network members. This can be accomplished through facilitated online communities, participatory or educational conference calls or webinars, or regional associations.
- **Ethical and trust considerations were and are a great concern.** There is a need to coordinate a structure for the network moderated by rules, code of ethics, standards, and such. Such a code should serve as both a gate-keeping and ongoing self-regulation mechanism.
- **Further, beyond the network's code of ethics, there is a desire by individual members to measure their own performance and articulate outcomes**, difficult and diffuse as

they may be, to external audiences, including clients, potential clients, donors, and policymakers.

- **Research on nonprofit management, capacity, and the nonprofit sector are critical. The network and OneStar can play a pivotal role in building and fostering this research area.** Some of this can be done in partnership with universities, by fostering partnership between university members and other members, and by OneStar itself, particularly in an active dissemination role to network members.
- **OneStar, and the network, can and should play a role in vetting consultants and other capacity building resources**. Respondents indicated that network members, particularly MSOs, have insight into high quality consultants and capacity-building tools, particularly in their local contexts. Further, respondents indicated that nonprofit clients need assistance in learning how to assess the quality of consulting and other capacity building resources. OneStar and the network could build on this knowledge by:
  - Providing information on consultants and resources vetted by the network (and potentially including network members themselves);
  - Creating self-assessment tools for nonprofits to understand their own capacity-building needs (e.g., potentially building on OneStar's CCAT tool); and
  - Creating tools for nonprofits to use to evaluate and manage consulting and other-capacity-building contracts and relationships.
- **Greater attention needs to be provided across member staff levels and in terms of specific content areas.** Some of this might be established through affinity groups. Additional thought could be given to fostering capacity building content or other areas of specialization or committees (i.e., fundraising/trainings and education/networking) to help members in their specific areas of need.
- **In terms of desired services and membership offerings, this study produced generally positive recommendations, but recommendations that were vague in nature**. Further inquiry, including additional market research and benchmarking, is needed in this area. This will be an important area for ongoing feedback to OneStar from members.
  - **Clear areas of perceived shortcomings of TNMAN and future desires for network action were expressed and include**:
    - OneStar itself, along with network members, need to serve as advocates for capacity building to funders, policy-makers, and the general public. Part of this can emerge from OneStar's research leveraging activities and translation for external audiences.
    - Opportunities for shared funding proposals among network members.
- Given budget exigencies, OneStar would be wise to consider two organizing alternatives for the network:
  - A low cost/collaborative model that builds on current member resources and the most pressing desire for communication and relationship building. In this model, members can play key volunteer leadership roles. An annual gathering might occur as an adjunct to an extant statewide gathering (e.g., nonprofit summit annually)
  - A longer, more extensive model requiring greater financial sustainability, though reliance on broader membership and earned income.

- Perhaps network implementation could be rolled out in stages, with OneStar leading but partnering with current stakeholders. For example, there are already affinities among Volunteer Centers, and a gap in networking through the demise of DOVIA. This would a logical first affinity group. Additionally, university members might take the lead in coordinating and building an affinity group around nonprofit research partnerships and educational issues. The Conference of Southwest Foundations might be called on to play a role in building an affinity group around capacity-building funding or within-Texas foundation affinity issues.

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Guiding Research Questions

Please note: *The questions below represent research areas to address in the study.* **The guiding research questions were developed by the leadership team at OneStar Foundation, informed primarily by advice from the TNMAN Advisory Group at previous meetings.**

- What do members want from a new structure (both short term, realistic/long term, ideally)?
- What did they value / not value about the old structure?
- Who do members collaborate with across the Network and in what ways? (We see this research question as overlapping with the network analysis process.)
- What do members think the purpose of the Network is or can be / and what should be the mission?
- Is there a need for Affinity Groups (defined as: stakeholder group or persons linked together by a common goal or interest) / if yes, how do members foresee this being integrated?
- Is there a need to expand to other organizations not currently represented?
- What is the definition of membership / what benefits do members receive?
- Who are eligible members / are standards or criteria needed?
- What benefits are members interested in as part of membership?
- What is the best way to effectively communicate with Network members (frequency and mode)?
- What should the Network be called?
- Descriptive question regarding the current status of their operations/efforts.
- Are they struggling, having difficulty with funding, other organizational matters, etc.?
- How do (does) you (your organization) stay competitive / offer capacity building for professional development?
- What can your organizations contribute / what's their most important contribution?
- What are your organization's influential collaborations / why / what aspects of collaboration have been successful?
- How can the Network be sustainable/viable?

Message from OneStar to Study Participants

Thank you for taking the time to provide important information that will inform the transition of the Texas Nonprofit Management Assistance Network (TNMAN). As you know, the Network Board of Directors ceased operations of the Network effective September 15, 2010. The Board explored various ways to preserve the Network's mission in Texas and announced OneStar to assume the leadership role in furthering the work of TNMAN. OneStar is very excited about this endeavor and envisions Texas as having the strongest, highest impact nonprofit sector in the country.

OneStar carries out its mission on behalf of state government as a supporting nonprofit of the Office of the Governor. OneStar's connection to the State of Texas, through its roles as the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and the State Commission for National and Community Service, make it uniquely positioned to lead statewide efforts to strengthen the nonprofit sector.

OneStar is very interested in hearing from you about your Network needs. Both OneStar and Meadows Foundation are funding a three phase research project undertaken and led by Dr. Angela Bies and her team from the Bush School of Government & Public Service at Texas A&M University to study the Texas nonprofit infrastructure.

Part of this project includes a needs assessment of the Network. Through an interview format, Dr. Bies will assist OneStar in implementing this needs assessment to learn more about your Network and your specific needs.

Findings from completed interviews will be communicated back to you by OneStar. If you have any questions, or need additional information, please contact Anna McElearney at amac@onestarfoundation.org or call 512-287-2026.

Thank you again for taking the time to share your Network needs with us.

Interview Protocol
TNMAN Members

Notes: Interviewer first confirms consent form, review aims of study, confidentiality/anonymity issues, ask for permission to audiotape. Also, review how OneStar and the TNMAN advisory panel will be using their information, and will share the results following analysis, being sure to manage expectations that their responses, together with that of their peers will help to provide direction in regard to planning and decision-making. Also, thank them on behalf of OneStar and Meadows for their time. Query on their preference for responding to the 15 questions regarding collaboration online or during phone interview. Interviewer will have reviewed organization's/firm's public materials prior to interview (e.g., website or other marketing materials, IRS Form 990 where applicable, and annual report).

Section One – Background—Organizational Profile of TNMAN members

1. Please provide a brief overview of your background. [Prompts: years with this organization, responsibilities, experience with capacity building in the NPO sector, overlapping years with TNMN, etc.]

2. Please provide a brief overview of your organization. [Prompts: history, organizational structure–e.g*., attached to United Way, Community Foundation, University, free-standing*, etc.– mission/purpose, types of programs/initiatives, client profile, staff/volunteer size, budget size, etc.]

3. What do the terms capacity building, nonprofit support infrastructure, or management assistance mean to your organization/firm? [Probes: Do you use the terms? If not, what terms/how do you use to describe your mission/services?]

4. What are your organization's/firm's primary strengths/challenges? [Prompts: areas of expertise, financial sustainability, client needs]

5. How (or how not) does your organization/firm keep "up to speed" on the needs of nonprofits in your region/service area? How do you stay competitive?

6. How (or how not) does your organization/firm know that you are successful?

Section Two – Experiences with TNMAN/Perspectives on Future

We are interested to draw on your expertise and learn more specifically about your thoughts on the TNMAN---past, present, and future.

7. Thinking about your organization's/firm's prior involvement with TNMAN:

- How long have you/has your organization been a member of TNMAN before it's closing this year?
- What did you understand TNMAN's mission to be?
- What *did you value* most about TNMAN? What was least valuable?
- From your vantage point, *what worked and what didn't work* so well? [Prompts: query in relationship to their organization specifically vis-à-vis the network and the network more generally, and even in terms of supporting the nonprofit support infrastructure as a whole]

8. Now shifting to the new structure (i.e., with the network mission and functions now operating under the auspices of OneStar Foundation):

- Above we asked you about your understanding of what the mission of TNMAN was. Here I want to ask you about the future—What do you think the purpose of the Network is, can, or should be moving forward?
- What do you want from the new structure? [Prompts: immediate/short and long term, realistic vs. ideal]
- What can your organization bring to/contribute the structure in terms of expertise or other resources?
- Thinking about membership in the network:
  - Is there a need to expand to other organizations not previously/currently represented? [Prompts: why/why not, and who]
  - What about "affinity groups" (defined as: stakeholder group or persons linked together by a common goal or interest)? Does such a need exist? [Prompts: why/why not, what kind of affinity groups, how to integrate]
  - Considering responses to the above, any other thoughts about how membership should/could be defined? Are standards or specific criteria needed? [Prompts: why/why not, what, how]
  - What benefits should members receive? [Prompts: prioritize around basic/essential versus desired/ideal; consider in response to types of members]
  - Any sense of what membership should cost (in dollars and in obligations)?
- What is the best way to effectively communicate with Network members? [Prompts: frequency/mode]
- As you well know, it can be hard to sustain nonprofit management assistance organizations/firms. The TNMAN organization certainly experienced this challenge itself. What are your thoughts about sustaining the network in the future? [Prompts: financial sustainability, other forms of sustainability]
- And a fun (but important) question: what should the Network be called?

One of the presumed goals of a network relates to collaboration and cooperation. (Add, if relevant: And you have certainly referred to this above.) The second component of this needs assessment involves your answering a brief set of questions specific to your collaboration in relationship to TNMAN. Prior to moving to the collaboration tool, I want to ask you two brief questions about collaboration more generally.

9. Take a moment to think about your relationships with other organizations, such as other nonprofits, local government, media, local citizens, funders, etc.
- On a regular basis, with whom does your organization collaborate most? In what ways?
- Considering the variety of relationships that your firm/organization has, what 2-3 relationships are most influential to you and why?

Explain "Network Analysis", and seek participation. Finish interview with thanks and opportunity for any questions. Review any items that are unclear. Close with details of network analysis instrument—online, by interview, or by paper.

Social Network Analysis
PARTNER Survey Questions

1. Please select your organization/program/department from the list:
    (TNMAN member list provided)

2. What is your job title?

3. How long have you been in this position (in months)?

4. Please indicate what your organization contributes, or can potentially contribute, to the Network (choose as many as apply).
    a. Funding
    b. In-Kind Resources (e.g., meeting space)
    c. Paid Staff
    d. Volunteers and Volunteer staff
    e. Data Resources including data sets, collection and analysis
    f. Info/ Feedback
    g. Specific Management Expertise
    h. Expertise Other Than in Management
    i. Community Connections
    j. Fiscal Management (e.g. acting as fiscal agent)
    k. Facilitation/Leadership
    l. Advocacy
    m. IT/web resources (e.g. server space, web site development, social media)

5. What is your organization's most important contribution to the Network?
(same response choices as #4)

6. Outcomes of the Network's work include (or could potentially include): (choose all that apply from below)
    a. Management education and training services, educational resources
    b. Improved services
    c. Reduction of Capacity Disparities
    d. Improved Resource Sharing
    e. Increased Knowledge Sharing
    f. New Sources of Data
    g. Community Support
    h. Public Awareness
    i. Policy, law and/or regulation
    j. Improved Effectiveness

k. Improved communication

7. Which is the Network's most important outcome?
(same response choices as #6)

8. How successful has the Network been at reaching its goals?
    a. Not Successful
    b. Somewhat Successful
    c. Successful
    d. Very Successful
    e. Completely Successful

9. What aspects of collaboration contribute to this success? (Choose all that apply)
    a. Bringing together diverse stakeholders
    b. Meeting regularly
    c. Exchanging info/knowledge
    d. Sharing resources
    e. Informal relationships created
    f. Collective decision-making
    g. Having a shared mission, goals

10. From the list, select organizations with which you have an established relationship (either formal or informal). In subsequent questions you will be asked about your relationships with these organizations in the context of the Network.
    (list of TMAN members and "non-network/non-TNMAN" collaborators provided)

11. How frequently does your organization work with this organization on issues related to the Network's goals?
    a. Never/We only interact on issues unrelated to the collaborative
    b. Once a year or less
    c. About once a quarter
    d. About once a month
    e. Every week
    f. Every day

12. What kinds of activities does your relationship with this organization entail [note: the responses increase in level of collaboration]?
    a. None
    b. Cooperative Activities: involves exchanging information, attending meetings together, and offering resources to partners (Example: Informs other programs of RFP release)
    c. Coordinated Activities: Include cooperative activities in addition to intentional efforts to enhance each other's capacity for the mutual benefit of programs. (Example: Separate granting programs utilizing shared administrative processes and forms for application review and selection.)

d. Integrated Activities: In addition to cooperative and coordinated activities, this is the act of using commonalities to create a unified center of knowledge and programming that supports work in related content areas. (Example: Developing and utilizing shared priorities for funding effective prevention strategies. Funding pools may be combined.)

13. How valuable is this organization's power and influence to achieving the overall mission of the Network?

*Power/Influence: The organization holds a prominent position in the community be being powerful, having influence, success as a change agent, and showing leadership.
a. Not at all
b. A small amount
c. A fair amount
d. A great deal

14. How valuable is this organization's level of involvement to achieving the overall mission of the Network?

*Level of Involvement: The organization is strongly committed and active in the partnership and gets things done.
a. Not at all
b. A small amount
c. A fair amount
d. A great deal

15. How valuable is this organization's resource contribution to achieving the overall mission of the Network?

*Contributing Resources: The organization brings resources to the partnership like funding, information, or other resources.
a. Not at all
b. A small amount
c. A fair amount
d. A great deal

16. How reliable is the organization?

*Reliable: this organization is reliable in terms of following through on commitments.
a. Not at all
b. A small amount
c. A fair amount
d. A great deal

17. To what extent does the organization share a mission with the Network's mission and goals?

*Mission Congruence: this organization shares a common vision of the end goal of what working together should accomplish.

a. Not at all
b. A small amount
c. A fair amount
d. A great deal

18. How open to discussion is the organization?
   *Open to Discussion: this organization is willing to engage in frank, open and civil discussion (especially when disagreement exists). The organization is willing to consider a variety of viewpoints and talk together (rather than at each other). You are able to communicate with this organization in an open, trusting manner.
   a. Not at all
   b. A small amount
   c. A fair amount
   d. A great deal