

## NETWORKING MASTERY

**Networking** is getting to know **other organizations'** goals, strengths, and weaknesses so that you can help each other reach your goals more effectively and efficiently.

It's the crucial first step toward forming partnerships and consortia for **bigger, better outcomes** and greater **competitiveness** in grant applications.

Much like a personal circle of friends and acquaintances, organizational networks grow naturally once they get started. And getting started takes some conscious effort and planning.

**Let's get your network going!** Here's what we'll do:

1. **STEP BACK:** articulate the big-picture features of your own organization

*Tools:*

- SWOT Analysis
- Elevator Pitch

2. **IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PARTNERS:** discover who's out there

*Tools:*

- Local knowledge
- Google search

3. **FIND MATCHES:** notice common goals and contrasting strengths and weaknesses between your organization and potential partners

*Tools:*

- Comparative Matrix

4. **PLAN THE CONNECTION:** identify how your organizations can work better together to meet shared goals

*Tools:*

- Networking Pitch

5. **EXECUTE THE PLAN:** get in touch with your potential new partners.

## 1. STEP BACK

Organizational leaders are often so busy with the day-to-day that they don't have time for the big-picture thinking that is necessary for cross-organizational collaborating and partnerships. A **SWOT Analysis** is a great way to take a step back and check in on what your organization has to offer, and where you could use some extra help in meeting your goals.



Now that all the details are on the page in front of you, it's time to summarize your organization in a way that makes it easy to explain to others.

An **Elevator Pitch** is a brief statement that sparks interest in your organization. Later, you can tailor the elevator pitch to create interest in a particular project. A good elevator pitch should last no longer than an elevator ride (hence the name). An elevator pitch should:

- immediately catch the listener's attention
- be memorable
- explain what makes your approach unique
- be as short as possible (no more than 30 seconds)

To begin crafting your elevator pitch, first take a look back at your SWOT Analysis, and answer the following questions:

1. **Who is your ideal client?** This is not meant to be a description that encompasses all your project beneficiaries. Rather, it is a description of the clients in the center-most circle of your target. It is the group of people who, of all beneficiaries, will benefit most from what your organization offers.

*Example: Female head of household smallholders in the Ugandan highland*

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2. **What results do your clients get?** Think about this in terms of what problem you solve for your clients. That is, take care not to describe what **you** do, but rather what your beneficiaries **get** from it. Thus, instead of "we offer extension services to farmers", say, "we help farmers increase their yields and product quality".

*Example: Access stable markets*

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3. **What do you do?** This should be a very short phrase.

*Example: market contracting*

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**4. How do you do it differently?** What makes your approach to solving this problem unique? What are the advantages of this particular approach?

*Example: cooperative long-term purchasing agreements with integrative extension and capacity building elements*

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**5. Put it all together.**

*Example: We integrate cooperative long-term market contracting with extension and capacity building to help female head of household smallholders in the Ugandan highland access stable crop markets.*

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**6. Check your work.**

- **Keep time while your teammate reads your pitch to you.** Is it less than 30 seconds?
- **Read your pitch to your teammate.** Is there any way to make it shorter without losing important meaning?

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- **Act out a scenario** with your teammate wherein you have an opportunity to pitch your organization. Below is a suggested script in case it's helpful:

*"Hi, long time no see!"*

*"Yes, it's been a while. How are you?"*

*"I'm great. How are you doing?"*

*"Great thanks. I've been very busy with work."*

*"Oh, yeah? What does your organization do?"*

- **Note any additional changes you'd like to make to your Elevator Pitch.**

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## 2. IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Now that you've more clearly defined your organization, it's time to start considering organizations with whom you might have a win-win partnership. Begin with a list of organizations that share locations, missions, and/or target audiences with your organization. **Don't forget to ask your peers, colleagues, and Google!**

1. Name:
  - Location:
  - Mission:
  - Target audience:
2. Name:
  - Location:
  - Mission:
  - Target audience:
3. Name:
  - Location:

- Mission:
- Target audience:

4. Name:

- Location:
- Mission:
- Target audience:

5. Name:

- Location:
- Mission:
- Target audience:

### 3. FIND MATCHES

Select 2 or 3 of the most promising potential partners from the list you made in **2. Identify Potential Partners**.

Use web searches and your professional connections to learn as much as you can about these organizations, using the **Organizational Comparative Matrix** below as a guide.

The more information you're able to gather on potential partner organizations, the stronger your potential partnerships will become.

**Educated guesses** are fine! Just be sure to note that which pieces of information are guesses on your part, so that you don't draw any strong conclusions or make assumption based on unconfirmed data.

# Trellis Fundraising and Grant Writing Workshop

## ORGANIZATIONAL COMPARATIVE MATRIX

<b>Organization</b>			
<b>Ideal client</b>			
<b>Client results</b>			
<b>What org does</b>			
<b>Unique approach</b>			
<b>Internal strengths</b>			
<b>Internal weaknesses</b>			
<b>External opportunities</b>			
<b>External threats</b>			

**4. PLAN THE CONNECTION**

1. **Who shares your goals?** After completing the **Organizational Comparative Matrix**, you may already have some good ideas about how you and other organizations might work together. Take a look back at the table and note which organizations' **client results** and/or **ideal client** are similar to yours.
  
2. **Where are there synergistic differences?** Highlight important distinctions between your organization and those with whom you share ideal clients/ client results. For example, you may:
  - use distinct approaches to achieve the similar results
  - offer similar results to different clients
  - have internal strength where they have an internal weakness
  - have an external opportunity that addresses their external threat
  
3. **How could these differences help you both meet your organizational goals?** As you brainstorm, focus on collaborations that:
  1. improve your organization's ability to **meet its goals**
  2. improve the other organization's ability to **meet its goals**
  3. leverage **your** strengths or opportunities to help the other organization (not vice versa)

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4. **Prepare a Network Pitch.** Pick one of the ideas above to share with your potential new partner organization. Whenever possible, arrange to share your Network Pitch in person.

A Network Pitch should:

- introduce your organization
- show what you have in common
- explain what the partner stands to gain from working with you



- be as short as possible (no more than 30 seconds)
- offer a follow-up question

You can start with your Elevator Pitch and modify it to address the particular organization and idea in question.

Below, we use the previous Elevator Pitch example to propose collaborating with another local organization that offers rural maternal health services in the same region, and ask a question to open up further discussion.

*Example: We currently offer integrated extension and capacity building with stable market access to female head of household smallholders in the Ugandan highlands. Since you focus on a very similar clientele, we would love to help broaden your impact. Would this potentially be of interest to you?*

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5. **Keep the conversation going.** If the organization expresses some interest in your suggestion, then your next goal is to establish a personal connection and learn as much as you can about the organization. The key to success in both regards is **asking questions** and **listening** as much as possible. This means minimizing the time you spend **talking**, and having good questions ready.

**Brainstorm** some thought-provoking questions that you could ask your potential new partner. Try to phrase most questions as open-ended (not yes/no) questions. This will give them more opportunity to share, and help you discover common goals to advance both organizations.

- *What do you see as a great opportunity for us to help you meet your goals?*
- *What would need to happen in order for you to be successful in this effort?*
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6. Check your work.

- **Keep time while your teammate reads your pitch to you.** Is it less than 30 seconds?
- **Read your pitch to your teammate.** Is there any way to make it shorter without losing important meaning?

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- **Act out a scenario** with your teammate wherein you are proposing a collaboration with a potential new partner. Below is a suggested script in case it's helpful:

*"Hello, thank you for taking time to meet with us today."*

*"It's my pleasure. How may I help you?"*

- **Note any additional ways to improve your Networking Pitch.**

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**5. EXECUTE THE PLAN**

**Now it's time to get out there and meet your new partners!** List below several next steps you plan to take to get in touch with organizations and begin building your network.

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**CONGRATULATIONS!**

You've already accomplished the most challenging part of building a network. Now it's time to for the fun part. Great opportunities await you!