



NETWORK LEADERSHIP LAB INNOVATION EVALUATION REPORT

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USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE)

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LINKING IN THE LAB

INNOVATING CROSS-MOVEMENT LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING NETWORK LEADERSHIP INNOVATION LAB EVALUATION REPORT

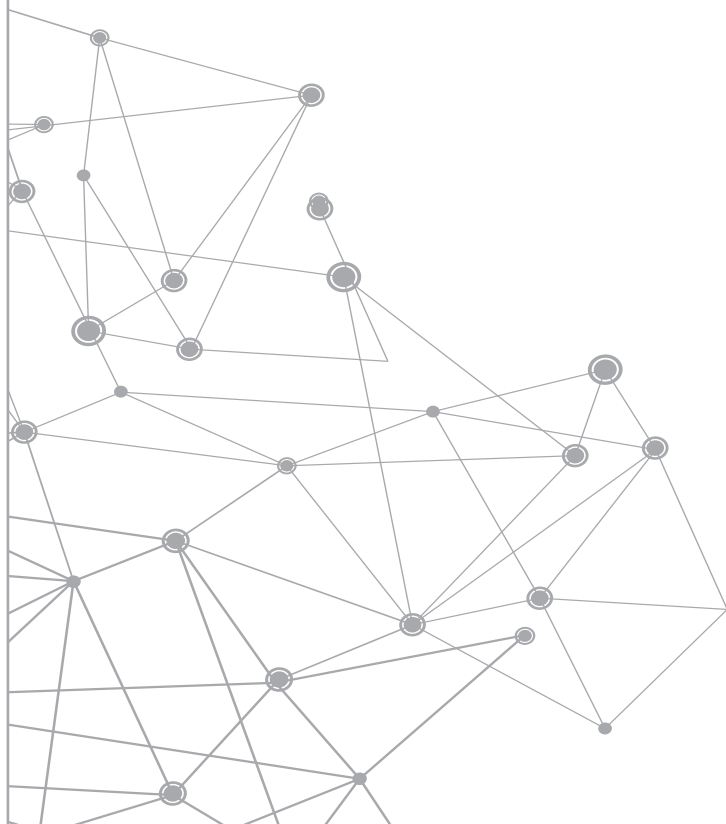
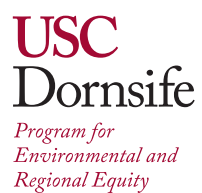


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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Linking the Lab is the result of a multi-year project—the Network Leadership Innovation Lab (or, the Lab)—organized by Management Assistance Group (MAG) to better understand the role and effectiveness of network leadership and movement building in the midst of a rapidly changing and interconnected world. To be a part of this process has been both exciting and at times overwhelming in its scope and potential reach.

Over the course of the project, we were able to observe movement network leaders as they sparked off one another, explored new territories, and discovered new opportunities for growth and collaboration. Throughout this process, we were (and remain to be) keenly aware of what a privilege and honor it was to watch and learn from these leaders as they opened their hearts, stretched their minds, and took action together. It is those leaders, and the organizations and networks they guide, who we acknowledge first and foremost. (We list their names in the report.) Thank you for welcoming us into this space with trust, grace, and honesty.

Second, we thank the MAG team: Robin Katcher, Mark Leach, Elissa Perry, and Natasha Winegar. Evaluators and researchers are often brought into a process that is well underway and are expected to jump in and carve out a space in the already busy lives of social change makers and programs. Sometimes research and evaluation even happens in retrospect or as an afterthought. Neither of these scenarios were the case with the Lab however, which from the onset devoted extraordinary attention and intention to capturing the learning from the Lab.

And so, we also acknowledge the brilliance of the MAG team for their important work co-creating the Lab with the network leaders, their genuine interest in learning together, and their foresight to bring in evaluation from the get-go. They model the best of the Lab through their readiness to reflect, question, and respond. Each of us experienced significant losses and joys during this period, and we want to also acknowledge their deep understanding and care during this journey.

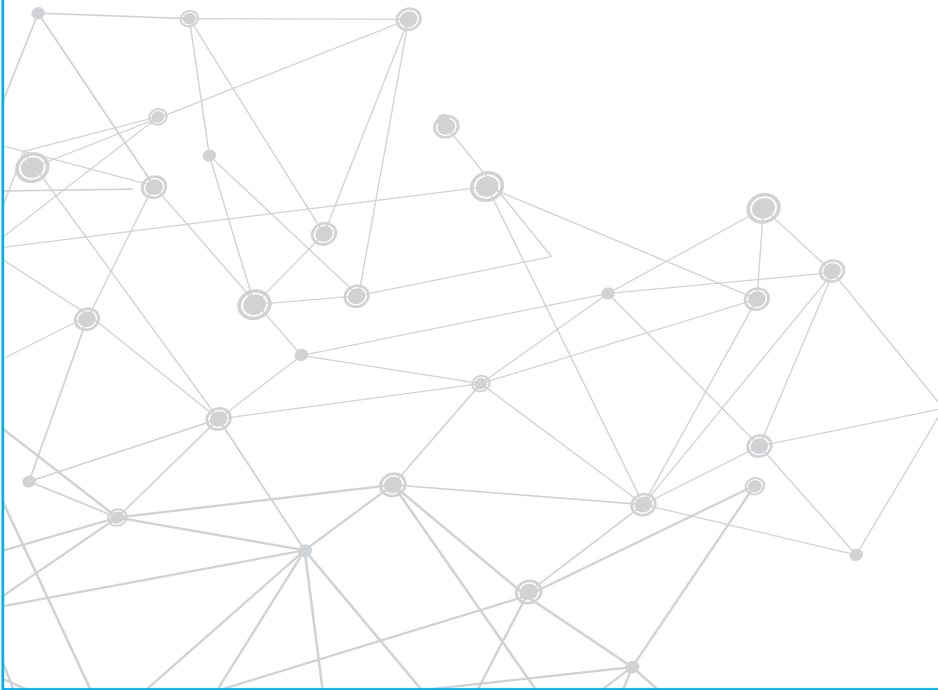
Finally, one author (Rosner), is compelled to acknowledge the encouragement and great talent of her co-author Madeline Wander, Data Analyst at USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE); the ongoing and unquestioning support of Rhonda Ortiz, Program Manager at USC PERE; and Manuel Pastor, Director of USC PERE, who has been an ally, teacher, and friend for over 20 years. Their contributions and repeated editing made this report possible—and also gave it the necessary flair to attract the attention this work merits. Heartfelt thanks to each of you.

As we traveled alongside this impressive group of leaders and the facilitation team, we could see beyond the overwhelming side of things, coming away with excitement from the promise of their high-powered synergy and creative energy. In our writing, we had the fields of movement building, leadership, organizational, and network development in mind. We hope that you, the audience from whichever field or walk of life, will read through this (somewhat lengthy) report to carry forward and build upon the rich learning that emerged.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

How do social movements form—and how do they change the world around them? It's often easy to look back with the advantage of time and point to key factors, such as the personal relationships between leaders, the embrace of a common framework and values, and most of all, the willingness of movements to weave into a larger ecosystem of change. The civil rights movement—with its deep commitment to basic principles of fairness, its intersection with labor and other social forces, and the deep personal ties so eloquently portrayed in the recent movie *Selma*—would seem to be an exemplar.

But it is not just seemingly distant history. In our own retelling of the rise of social movement organizing in Los Angeles—unexpected in a city once well-known for its anti-union stance, racially-restrictive covenants, and occasional explosive riots—we have stressed the ways in which leaders came to know each other in the crucible of crisis, developed the trust that allowed them to support each other, and then

crafted a seamless broad movement that could push for immigrant rights, worker protections, and community policing all at the same time.

Much of this movement building, particularly in L.A., happened by strategy and it happened by accident: leaders found each other, developed ties, and, over time, came to share an ideology and organizing approach. The challenge of our era (particularly in a nation in which the Tea Party has been ascendant, money has come to rule politics, and progressive institutions, such as labor and environmental groups, are threatened) is to move this process from serendipity to system, from pure luck to peer support.

This is exactly what the Network Leadership Innovation Lab (or, the Lab), launched by the Management Assistance Group (MAG) in 2012, aimed to do. Since we know that building cross-movement networks is central to sustaining a progressive movement for social justice, the Lab attempted to take the bridge building and innovation that usually happens on the margins—when executive directors have spare time (never)

or extra funding (seldom)—and make it central to everyday activities.

Specifically, the Lab created a dynamic space where leaders from various movements who are already working in networked ways can come together to share, deepen learning, take risks, and make meaning together to improve practice. The Lab encouraged participants to act as scientists, building on their collective experience rather than being trained through transmission of knowledge. From the beginning, it tried to inculcate a spirit of co-creation by involving those who would be involved in the very design of the program. And it also tried to live up to one of the emerging standards for successful movements: measuring what matters.

This report is part of that task of measurement and part of MAG's ongoing effort to inform and engage the field about what is being learned about network leadership. In it, the authors evaluate the results of the Lab, particularly its emphasis on the development of leaders at the nexus of organizations and networks; its focus on the co-creation of learning activities; and its attempt to create sustainable relationships and lasting effects.



WHAT IS THE LAB?

The Lab is based on a few straightforward premises: (1) that the key task today is to “include and transcend” short-term struggles and defensive fights to also build a long-term vision and movement infrastructure for change; (2) that a key limit on doing this is the way in

which leaders are expected to grow their own organization or group as well as their own leadership, particularly in a resource-short environment; and (3) that the way out of this scarcity framework to an abundance approach is to develop both leadership and new resources that can bridge organizational boundaries.

MAG engaged seven executive directors from different movements who were already working effectively in networked ways to co-design the Lab, including: Rea Carey (National LGBTQ Task Force), Sarita Gupta (Jobs with Justice), Kierra Johnson (URGE, formerly CHOICE USA), Vincent Pan (Chinese for Affirmative Action), Eveline Shen (Forward Together), Tracy Sturdivant (State Voices), and Gustavo Torres (CASA de Maryland). This design team represented a remarkably diverse group of prominent leaders who have been at the forefront of creating links between movements—from worker rights to reproductive justice to immigrant integration to LGBTQ rights to racial equity.

A primary suggestion from the design team was that the program needed to reach beyond top positional leaders to other key leaders in each organization to make them more effective and spread the learning further. Doing this doubled the size of the eventual Lab cohort—which then expanded a bit more when one organization from the design phase, State Voices, slipped out of the process (down one!) but the Louisiana Center for Children's Rights and 350.org, a climate justice group, stepped in to the implementation phase (up two!).

The second thing the design team emphasized was that they did not want to be “Lab rats”—that is, the subjects of a leadership development program crafted by others—but rather “Lab experimenters” who were themselves responsible for putting together the learning opportunities. The activities they decided on actually sounded sort of familiar: convenings, coaching, and Action Learning Projects (ALPs) in which participants formed smaller groups to explore learning questions of their own creation. But while they may have been conventional as concepts, they were unconventional in content.

One concrete example: In the fall of 2012, CASA de Maryland—an immigrant rights organization led by Gustavo Torres—forged an alliance

with the LGBT community to fight for a pair of state-level ballot initiatives. One initiative was the DREAM Act, which grants in-state tuition at public universities to undocumented immigrant youth. The other was equal marriage rights for gay and lesbian couples. In the Lab, CASA followed this up with an Action Learning Project aimed at the development of a Leadership Academy to equip immigrants to connect with other elements of the progressive movement.

All of the five ALPs sought to shift from siloed to networked leadership as a means to build a broader movement rather than just their own group. Together they sought to understand the context for further engaging their organizations in movement building while also engaging other social justice leaders, practitioners, and funders in ways that would enhance effective networked leadership in the future.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

This report details the learnings from the Lab project, including many focused on the details of the twists and turns in any process of this type (including one key lesson: snowstorms that throw off key meetings can slow momentum, and so you should schedule all your meetings in sunny climates... OK, not really, but it did happen). While the smaller process lessons are important, there were also a few fascinating take-aways for the participants and the field that seem to dominate the story.

The first is the realization that social justice movements tend to have a rights-based frame rather than a values-based frame—and that needs to change. The Lab leaders agreed that a rights-based approach is still relevant, but that a larger embrace of values (e.g., love, human dignity, and interdependence) can better drive the creation of the sort of world they think is possible. Fostering these common values—and indeed, finding the sort of spiritual rooting that was the key to the civil rights movement—can also be the basis for building authentic relationships between leaders, organizations, and movements that can go beyond transactional coalitions to transformational alliances.



The second key take-away is the need to recognize and address complexity. It is, after all, easy to paint the “other side” as recalcitrant or call for a silver bullet solution to any problem. But consider how the dilemma of an aging population will not be addressed without improving the situation of care workers and how the situation of those workers cannot be addressed without mustering the support of seniors and those who love them. That is a thorny match, complicated by age, race, and nativity—but in the mix (and in a values-based approach) lies the answer. Lab leader and Jobs with Justice Executive Director Sarita Gupta co-founded Caring Across Generations with the National Domestic Workers’ Alliance to confront these emerging and big issues. The Lab created an environment where complexity and trade-offs, like those that Caring Across Generations faces, were actively pursued and considered, and we need more such spaces.

The third key take-away is the importance of taking risks, both on one’s own and with others. Lab participants reported that the ambience of co-creation and co-experimentation encouraged them to engage in new activities, including writing up their thoughts for external audiences or providing leadership development deeper down their staff and their organizations. It also created a space where they could take chances on each other and on new intersectional alliances. And the openness allowed them to consider aspects of movement building usually anathema to community organizers, such as how to effectively develop and work with business allies and how to develop business models that would allow their groups to be more financially self-sufficient.

That gets us to our final take-away: the need to get this sort of work fully resourced. As noted earlier, executive directors frequently build ties with other directors in an ad hoc fashion and frequently “in their spare time.” Occasionally, funders will recognize the importance of intersectoral ties and so top-level leaders will be brought together for a weekend or a conference. Movement thinking then takes root at the top but it does not get a chance to filter down through the organization as fully as it might—or bubble up from those closest to communities. Getting to that organizational depth is going to require a shift in the attitudes of both those doing the work and those funding the work.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

MAG is still sorting out its next steps but among the ideas for going forward are online learning modules, partnerships to develop customized learning experiences, and continued writing about the Lab experiment. Future cohorts are possible, with one idea being a program for funders who are also seeking to provide resources at the intersections of organizations and movements. But as important as the future for the Lab might be, the key question is what lessons emerge from this experience for the field as a whole.

The first involves the need for early investments in relationships. This report begins with a rather triumphal description of the kaleidoscope of groups that came together for the 2014 “People’s Climate March”—and the links that broadened that organizing umbrella were made possible by early contacts through the Lab. Relationship-building can be expensive—in terms of both financial resources and organizer time—but it is also cost effective in the long run and it will lead to stronger bonds when movements are challenged by opposition forces seeking to divide.

The second involves the need to do leadership development in “pairs” (and more broadly, deeper into an organization). There is a tendency to focus on one director or a key charismatic personality but they are often not the implementers, and change in a group, particularly the sort of change that requires the

group to see itself as part of a larger movement, comes when multiple people can take it back and exhibit learning and leadership. Again, it seems costly in the short run (wouldn’t it be easier to just work with one person?), but it is more effective in the long run.

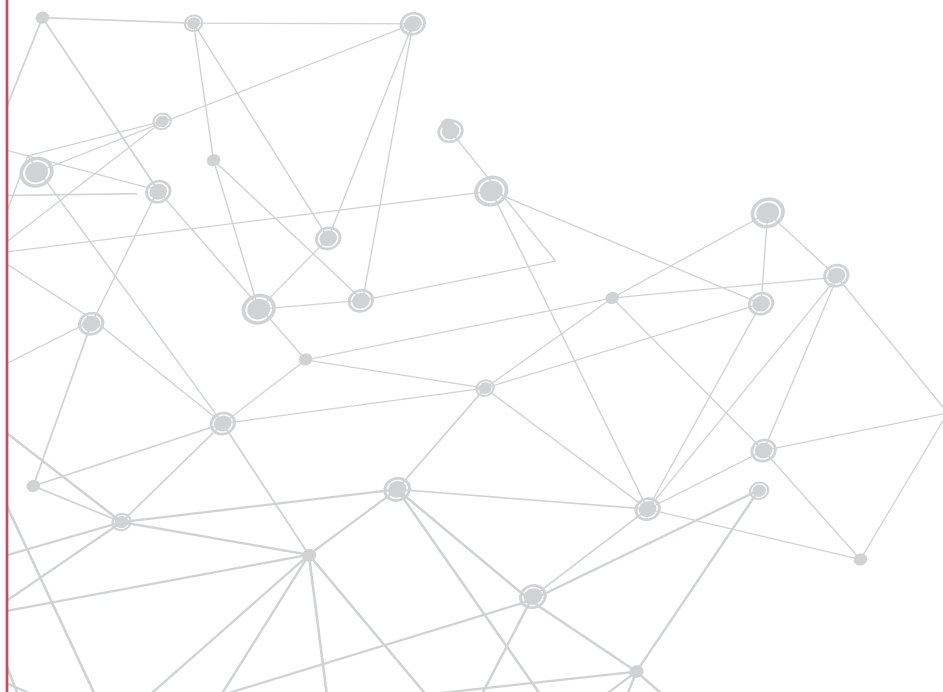
The third involves the need to develop a deeper understanding of what it means to build a movement network. One key part of that was actually demonstrated by those who were part of the Lab cohort. They certainly developed a sense of the importance of shared values, a realization of the need to experiment and innovate, and an appreciation of the nuances of movement strategies and styles. But they also evidenced and cultivated something even more profound: a deep sense of accountability—and not to MAG or to the evaluator or even to the funders, but to each other.

That is fundamentally what networked leadership and movement building is all about. After all, we live in a world in which some are pitting those on Medicare against those who need pre-K, those whose immigration status is uncertain against those whose economic situation is insecure, those whose marriage rights are being won against those who feel their faith is their key source of connection and meaning. In that context, division is the constant temptation and trope—and progressive leaders need to be accountable to each other and to a broader vision.

Indeed, we must work so that everyone understands that we must move forward together or we will stall permanently, that we must merge our movements for human dignity or we will be shipwrecked by those who fear progress. The Lab experiment is one part of a wide range of activities in the organizing world that are seeking to link strategy and soul, issues and intersections, community and coalition. We have much more to learn about what works, but we should be committed to such learning—and this report is an important contribution to making sure that the other world that is possible becomes a world in which we and future generations live.

— Manuel Pastor
Director, USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE)

INTRODUCTION



On September 21, 2014, the world witnessed the largest climate change mobilization in history. Called the People's Climate March, it drew over 400,000 people to the streets of New York, urging world leaders—who were gathering two days later at a United Nations Climate Summit—to take action on climate change. Not only did hundreds of thousands of people fill the streets of Manhattan to deliver this message, the Climate March effort also catalyzed nearly 2,650 concurrent climate-related events in 162 countries across the globe.

While the numbers are indeed extraordinary, its scale was not its only outstanding characteristic—so were its origins. A year prior, a diverse alliance of justice workers, community groups, faith-based organizations, environmentalists, and policy advocates—under the umbrella organization Alliance for a Just Rebuilding (AJR)—turned out over 500 people at New York's City Hall to mark the one-year anniversary of Superstorm Sandy and to hold mayoral candidates accountable to dealing with its devastating aftermath.

What was different about this action—called Turn the Tide on Sandy—was the coming together of mainstream environmental advocates and grassroots community and environmental justice organizers—a dynamic traditionally strained by race and class tensions.

Indeed the trust and commitment they were able to build through the planning and execution of the Turn the Tide action led to the same leaders organizing communities to participate in the People's Climate March a year later. Specifically, under the leadership of the AJR, 350.org, Jobs with Justice (JwJ), and a JwJ affiliate in NYC called ALIGN that anchored the AJR, all played a crucial role in making this happen.

What helped to bring these folks together? And how were they able to work through traditional tensions that often hinder the unification of diverse and often fragmented progressive movements? While it is impossible to isolate the time and place of these remarkable moments—since developing relationships and building trust are sensitive and often

intangible—in this case, we can pinpoint at least one crucial piece of the puzzle that helped these leaders come together in a groundbreaking way: the Network Leadership Innovation Lab (the Lab).

Convened and facilitated by the Management Assistance Group (see text box for information

“
If you had said to ‘build bridges between movements’ a year ago, it would have been vague. Now I have a better awareness of the landscape, and people I know in different movements.
”

— May Boeve, 350.org

on MAG), the Lab was a way of creating the conditions for 16 individuals from eight organizations to explore their leadership at different scales and think innovatively about challenges they face. While the group was extremely diverse, these leaders all

had one thing in common: they were bridge builders working to unite organizations within movements, and also across movements—something MAG calls “movement networks.” The Lab provided time and space for these movement network leaders to dialogue, engage in active learning, co-generate analysis, and innovate ways to support those who operate at the nexus of organizations and networks.

Indeed, the Lab was where 350.org leaders had a series of break-through conversations and coaching sessions with leaders at Jobs with Justice, CASA de Maryland, the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana, and others that enhanced the ability of 350.org to unite with allies in the labor, immigrant, and environmental justice movements. They chose to intentionally work through the historical divisions and power dynamics between predominantly white environmental groups and predominantly people of color environmental justice and community organizing efforts. And these kinds of conversations were not limited to these individuals or this example; they happened across organizations as part of the Lab.

While issues like race and class disparities within social justice movements are often too sensitive to discuss in most spaces, the Lab created a trusted, shared, and open environment in which leaders were able to dialogue, think,

and innovate around tough issues in honest and productive ways—ways that, for instance, helped catalyze the largest climate change mobilization in history.

ABOUT THE MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE GROUP (MAG)

The Management Assistance Group is committed to strengthening leaders, organizations, and networks working on the front lines of social change. For 35 years, MAG has strived to meet its mission by:

- Evolving and utilizing innovative approaches to strengthening organizations, leaders, and networks;
- Conducting research on critical organizational and field issues faced by our clients; and
- Sharing our insights and experiences with the social justice sector and the nonprofit organizational development field.

Currently, MAG is developing a more integrated approach to supporting and transforming social justice efforts—one that strengthens individual organizations as well as networks and individual leadership so that together we can build broad, long-term political power, scale up impact, and win on a wide range of progressive issues.

MAG has partnered with thousands of organizations, leaders, networks, movements, and funders to create powerful social justice efforts and lasting change, including: Atlantic Philanthropies, American Civil Liberties Union, Center for Reproductive Rights, Forum for Youth Investment, Funders for LGBTQ Issues, Funders Network on Population, Reproductive Health and Rights, Jobs with Justice, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, National Resources Defense Council, Venture Philanthropy Partners, and Western States Center.

See: <http://www.managementassistance.org>

As Phil Aroneanu, 350.org co-founder and Lab participant, put it: *“The Lab primed the pump for the Turning the Tide, which primed the pump for the Climate March. Because of the initial push from the Lab, we went down the path and without it we would have been fumbling a lot.”*

This evaluation report documents how the Lab came to be, as well as the learning and the impacts of the Lab on the network leaders (and as a result, on their organizations and networks as well). To tell the story of the Lab, we introduce its unique approach to leadership development and dig into the mechanics: its co-creation, goals, elements, and cohort of participants. We then introduce the evaluation framework, including our perspective as outside evaluators.

After providing background, we turn to the heart of the report that assesses how the Lab played out. Specifically, we describe how the participants were able to make meaning from shared analyses and frameworks, test out ideas, dive into hard questions, and apply what they learned. Here we describe how leaders came away with stronger relationships, new perspectives, and a deeper understanding of the nexus of leadership, organizations, and movement networks. To bring the findings and lessons of the Lab program to the field, we conclude with recommendations to consider what is needed to continue building movement networks and how to support them—and their leaders.

But before all that, we think it is important to answer one crucial question: What exactly are “movement networks” and why do they matter?

WHY MOVEMENT NETWORKS MATTER

The last decade has ushered in unprecedented victories for social justice efforts, from marriage equality to living wages to domestic worker rights to health care reform to administrative relief for undocumented youth—to name only a few. But at the same time, we have seen many of the systemic problems facing communities worsen, including increasing income inequality alongside growing racial disparities. This is rightly frustrating to progressive movement builders: How is it that social justice efforts

appear stronger than ever, yet conditions for the communities they serve seem to be getting worse? In response to this conundrum, there is general consensus among progressives that it is time to try something new.

In particular, social justice leaders and researchers point to two areas in need of transformation: First, progressives tend to wage short-term, small-scale, defensive fights in lieu of strategically focusing on building long-term political power to effect systemic change. In our own research, we have found that while social justice efforts have had some unprecedented wins in recent years, progressives across the board often lack the foresight, or the capacity, to leverage those fleeting moments to create and sustain long-term movements (Pastor, Perera, and Wander 2013).

Second, the all-too-common practice of individual organizations and movements operating in siloes—or worse, in competition with one another for resources—is holding back the ability of social, economic, and environmental justice efforts to come together, scale up impact, and transform conditions for the long haul. Social-movement research shows that bridging isolated efforts to pool wisdom, assets, and resources is key to building power for social change (Pastor, Ito, and Ortiz 2010; Pastor and Ortiz 2009).

“

I had begun to realize the limits of more org-centric approaches and realized that so many supports available to leaders were really about leading organizations without showing enough context, without how they are part of an ecosystem and... how movements need to be strong, and how communities need to be strong, and how strong organizations do not necessarily lead to strong movements. They don't hurt, but they are two different things.

The typical cycle: do work, make it visible, claim credit, get more resources so you can do more in a bigger way.

The counterintuitive part is for the movement to succeed we have to de-center, not decentralize. We need to see our organizations in a different way.

— Vincent Pan, Chinese for Affirmative Action

”

But this means more than forming coalitions, which typically involve temporary organizational relationships that are transactional and focused on a short-term campaign. MAG's own research—through observations in the field, reviews of existing literature (particularly around navigating complex systems), and in-depth interviews with organizers, funders, and advisors across issues, capacities, and geographies—finds that social change leaders repeatedly express the need to operate more effectively across organizational boundaries in a more long-term, forward-thinking, networked way. This means bridging across organizations within movements or across movements to create **movement networks** to cumulate the necessary political power to change systems—not just discrete policies, one at a time.

In particular, movement networks have seven defining elements: (1) they link independent organizations and activists through a central coordinating body; (2) they intentionally contribute to a broader social movement; (3) they focus on the long term; (4) they join to advance interests that extend beyond a single-issue campaign; (5) they have more flexible boundaries than a formal franchise structure (Katcher 2010); (6) they recognize race, power, and privilege as part of the organizing and ecosystem dynamic; and (7) they operate from a systems-level and movement analysis. (MAG actually incorporated the last two elements over the course of the Lab.) Ultimately, movement networks bring together individuals, organizations, and movements in ways that help them become more than the sum of their parts (Dobbie 2009)—and can be a key vehicle to funnel the various streams of work into a more powerful river that leads to systemic change.

So how do we build and sustain movement networks? Through MAG staff's in-depth research of movement networks over the last six years, they have determined that building movement networks is not about focusing on individual leaders or organizational structures, as many capacity-building programs do. Rather, it requires building relationships and developing the trust necessary for working from a shared vision and analysis to help create shared culture and frameworks among leaders across organizations and movements (Leach and Mazur 2013).

“

[I wanted] to be connected with people who I had wanted to connect with but who are outside our circle, [to be connected with] other people thinking about scale and thinking innovatively.

— Eveline Shen, Forward Together

”

For example, as National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) Executive Director Ai-jen Poo learned about both the homecare industry and the growing gap between the number of workers and the number of elderly and people with disabilities who will need care in the future, she reached out to Sarita Gupta, executive director of Jobs with Justice. Together, they recognized a powerful opportunity to make change by aligning the interests of workers and consumers. The result was Caring Across Generations, a campaign to build a movement with the vision of bringing together aging Americans, people with disabilities, workers, and their families to protect all Americans' right to choose the care and supports they need to live with dignity.¹

While the theory makes sense, the operationalization of it is not as simple a story. How do social change leaders who are already busy with their own organizational demands find the time and space to take on the labor-intensive business of participating in and leading movement networks? How do they balance often opposing organizational and network goals and priorities, including fundraising? How do they consolidate and distribute power within the network to create shared leadership? And how do they productively manage conflict (Leach and Mazur 2013)?

Despite these challenges—as well as having little support and few resources to build movement networks—social change leaders are doing it anyway. They know they need to work in networked ways to maximize impacts and so they make the time, generate processes “on the fly,” and do this work they deem to be essential to their movements in the margins of the scarce time that they have. But what if there was a discrete space where leaders could innovate,



DEFINING THE TERMS

Since there are many interpretations of the terms used in the field, it is important to define them before launching into the report. Here are some commonly used terms, defined to match their usage in the Lab and this report:

SOCIAL MOVEMENT:

Social movements are more than particularistic interests or episodic coalitions around issues: They are sustained groupings that develop a frame or narrative based on shared values, that maintain a link with a real and broad base in the community, and that build for a long-term transformation in systems of power—and occasionally produce protests, marches, and demonstrations along the way (Source: Pastor and Ortiz 2009).

MOVEMENT NETWORKS:

Movement networks, which can be within one movement or across multiple movements, have seven defining elements: (1) they link independent organizations and activists through a central hub organization; (2) they intentionally contribute to a broader social movement; (3) they focus on the long term; (4) they join to advance interests that extend beyond a single-issue campaign (Katcher 2010); (5) they have more flexible boundaries than a formal franchise structure; (6) they recognize race, power, and privilege; and (7) they have a systems-level and movement analysis (Source: MAG).

IMPACT:

Changes in practice or thinking and learning that supports further innovation, experimentation, and strengthened leadership that were catalyzed by the Network Leadership Innovation Lab.

INNOVATION:

Instances of change that result from a shift in underlying assumptions, that are discontinuous from previous practice, and that provide new pathways to creating public value (Source: EmcArts, Business Unusual).

INTERSECTIONAL:

Extending beyond a single issue, identity, or movement to see the connected nature as applied to individuals and groups. An intersectional analysis recognizes oppressive patterns (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism, etc.) as interconnected that cannot be examined separately from one another. It also recognizes the power of crossing traditional boundaries (Source: MAG).

MULTI-LEVEL:

Refers to the multiple levels of systems in the context of movement networks—individuals, organizations, movements, and movement networks.

COMPLEXITY:

Today's justice leaders, organizations, and networks are working to create change in complex systems, in which all of the parts are interconnected and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Cause and effect are non-linear and unpredictable, and changes in one part of the system can have unintended consequences in other parts of the system. Thus, in complex systems, practice that leads to real change is emergent; cause and effect can only be fully understood in retrospect; and more frequent experimentation, risk-taking, and ongoing learning may be the best course of action (Source: Adapted from David Snowden by MAG).

together, about how to build movement networks and identify what's needed to support them? This is where the Network Leadership Innovation Lab comes in.

Next, we introduce the Lab and describe its unique approach to supporting leaders who find themselves at the nexus of organizations, movements, and movement networks.

THE NETWORK LEADERSHIP INNOVATION LAB

In response to the lack of time and space for network leaders to dialogue, learn, analyze, and innovate with each other, MAG launched the design of the Network Leadership Innovation Lab in 2012. As stated above, the Lab can best be summarized as a space that creates conditions conducive for network leaders to explore their leadership at different scales and think innovatively about challenges they face.

“

The type of work is emergent, there is no blue print, no other external measures. Being seen by others on a national level helped me consolidate my confidence and ability to keep pushing forward.

– Eveline Shen, Forward Together

”

The Lab was constructed with a keen awareness of the unique tensions facing network leaders and sought to support these leaders to more effectively navigate them. And while no single program can presume to resolve these tensions, the Lab was designed to set the stage for more deeply exploring and managing them in ways distinct from other more traditional leadership development programs.

To be clear, there are many long-standing programs that lift up and support social change leaders in effective, cutting-edge, and increasingly transformational ways. Indeed, the larger social change leadership development landscape has shifted away from focusing on the

individual to an emphasis on the system in which leaders and communities operate (Komives and Wagner 2012). In keeping with this, the Lab did not focus on increasing the specific capacities or competencies of individual leaders, but rather on how network leaders can integrate their work at multiple levels—personal, organizational, movement, and network—to catalyze systemic change.

What set the Lab apart from other more traditional leadership development programs was its focus on supporting leaders who find themselves at the nexus of organizations and networks. The Lab is attempting to move away from the idea of leadership as something that only a select few are chosen to do; rather, the Lab aims to develop a broader conception of leadership that embodies the strengths, experiences, and wisdom of many diverse people and communities at multiple levels of movement building.

We intentionally do not refer to the Lab as a “leadership development program” even though it was a space for leaders to develop their thinking and practice—the goal of many leadership development programs. Rather, the program was intentionally labeled a “lab” because it set out to be an innovative space for network leaders (who were highly skilled and developed) to explore and experiment with topics that matter to them. The Lab focused on the synergy that comes from bringing together the individual network leaders’ strengths and created opportunities for them to draw on each other. This approach—putting the concepts of emergence and experimentation front and center—differs from many traditional leadership development programs and defines the Lab.

While the Lab design team certainly established concrete goals and elements (presented below), the facilitation team (made up of MAG staff Robin Katcher, Elissa Perry, and Mark Leach) also built in space to respond to and adjust the content when necessary. To keep the integrity of an **emergent process** required many feedback loops with the design team, consulting with advisors, and drawing on decades of the facilitation team’s experience working with a diversity of clients. It required adept facilitation that was both open to what bubbled up and grounded in cutting-edge experiences.



bridging the divides between different organizations and movements in order to build political power, scale impact, and win. In a basic way, the Lab created the conditions for leaders to connect with their hearts—or the values that they care about—and their minds. Having the space to join the two, while connecting with others, proved to be a powerful combination. And it did so in a **cost effective** way—meaning, as we show in this report, the Lab was able to get significant “bang for buck” in terms of impact on individual movement network leaders and thus impact on their organizations and movements.

But before diving into our evaluation of how the Lab went and what impact it had on leaders and networks, we provide some background of the Lab: its co-creation, goals, elements, and cohort.

Since movement networks rely on bottom-up, dynamic, and emergent learning—rather than top-down, static, or “expert” knowledge—the design team thought this should also be central to the Lab. This meant that participants co-created the Lab with MAG staff along the way—as we detail in the next section.

Another key and distinctive dimension of the Lab was instead of focusing predominantly on past experiences, the Lab focused on **innovation and experimentation** now and for the future. The hope was that the Lab included, yet transcended, existing practice and knowledge; it certainly drew on ideas and relationships from the past, but took a forward-looking orientation as an opening for new learning and ways of working together. Through the initial collaborative project design, the co-creators of the Lab intentionally sought to create space and provide energy to support such exploration, knowing that for this reason not all outcomes could or should be predicted in advance. MAG staff created room for learning—not just from success, but also from exquisite failure.

While we provide the bulk of our evaluation later on, we think it important to put our main takeaway upfront: The Lab filled a void in the ecosystem of progressive movements and networks as it sought to create the conditions for connecting and learning. The program was a supportive and vibrant space for those leaders who are trying to advance their own organizational goals while simultaneously

The Lab's approach to leadership development is to create a space with the conditions that reflect the types of leaders they want to be: shared, flexible, adaptive, connected, aligned, and emergent.

– From the “Core Principles” established by the Lab design team (see Appendix A).



THE LAB BACKGROUND

THE CO-CREATION OF THE LAB

While MAG certainly facilitated the creation of the Network Innovation Leadership Lab—and continues to act as the Lab’s convener—one of the most pioneering and defining features of the Lab is the authentically collaborative way in which it was designed and implemented. Rather than taking a top-down approach to designing the program, like more traditional leadership development programs, MAG staff wanted to ensure that the Lab reflected the very nature of effective movement networks by remaining fluid, focusing on long-term systemic change, and including those who are directly affected.

To do this, MAG engaged seven executive directors from different movements who were already working effectively in networked ways to co-design the Lab. To start, MAG staff identified three network leaders they knew well: Sarita Gupta (Jobs with Justice), Kierra Johnson (URGE, formerly CHOICE USA), and Eveline Shen (Forward Together). To recruit the rest of the Lab design team, MAG staff used a “snowball sampling” method; meaning, they talked to

existing design team members and other leaders in the field to identify and recruit other cohort members from social justice circles. From this they recruited: Rea Carey (National LGBTQ Task Force), Vincent Pan (Chinese for Affirmative Action), Tracy Sturdivant (State Voices), and Gustavo Torres (CASA de Maryland).

In the end, the design team represented a remarkably diverse and developed group of prominent leaders who have been at the forefront of building bridges across movements—from worker rights to reproductive justice to immigrant integration to LGBTQ rights to racial equity—and so changing systems.

Over the course of two full-day meetings and various conversations in between, the design team worked with MAG staff to create the scaffolding for an active learning space for network leaders. What was particularly exceptional was that the design team was not tasked with simply creating a program for other people; rather, they were creating a program in which they would participate themselves.



The Lab Design Team members: (from left to right): Vincent Pan, Eveline Shen, Gustavo Torres, Kierra Johnson, Rea Carey, and Sarita Gupta

Specifically, the design team worked to: articulate the goals and core principles of the Lab; identify the critical issues or questions to address in the Lab; answer design questions; build a learning agenda; identify and recruit the initial cohort of leaders for the program; inform case story development; and consider ways to engage thought leaders and funders in the learning process.²

A key part of the design process was creating the space for leaders to either affirm or challenge the learnings that MAG staff had gleaned from the field, and then modifying and building upon the original plan MAG proposed for the Lab to best suit the needs of the cohort (which included themselves). The first concrete change the design team made was the composition of the Lab cohort: Originally, MAG staff thought the Lab cohort should consist of individuals who run their own organizations, catalyze movement network approaches, are committed to learning and personal growth, and work across a range of movements. While the latter three requirements carried over, the MAG staff and design team realized early on that the cohort needed to include another “key leader” from each of the organizations—not just the executive director—to attend to the realities of working in movement networks, which recognizes that leadership is not just one person at the top but rather, shared and inclusive.

Another key shift in thinking that occurred during the design phase was the orientation mentioned previously—moving from a backwards-leaning stance to a forward-leaning one. Research and the programs that refer to them look to the past to identify “lessons learned” and “best practices” from both successes and failures. While the design team certainly acknowledged

LAB DESIGN TEAM

REA CAREY is executive director of the National LGBTQ Task Force, the oldest national LGBTQ advocacy group in the U.S., working for the full freedom, equality, and justice for LGBTQ communities in a range of areas from housing to employment to other basic human rights.

SARITA GUPTA is the executive director of Jobs with Justice, a national network of local coalitions that brings together labor unions, faith groups, community organizations, student activists, and workers not yet organized to fight for working people.

KIERRA JOHNSON is executive director of URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity (formerly CHOICE USA), a youth-driven, campus-based network centered on sexual health and reproductive justice but also centered on building power and shifting local national and state policy with other justice-focused organizations.

VINCENT PAN is executive director of Chinese for Affirmative Action, an organization at the leading edge of community-based social justice efforts in San Francisco for over 40 years, focusing on civil rights along multiple fronts and in collaboration with diverse social justice groups.

EVELINE SHEN is executive director of Forward Together (formerly Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice) and has been at the forefront of building a network-driven reproductive justice movement that works toward the reproductive health and rights of Asian women and girls within a social justice framework.

TRACY STURDIVANT is the former Executive Director of State Voices, a national network comprised of 20 state tables or networks of nonpartisan civic engagement organizations that engage in year-round civic engagement to leverage their collective power to catalyze change on important issues.

GUSTAVO TORRES is executive director of CASA de Maryland that has been meeting the needs of Central American migrants for 30 years and has been a pioneer in the immigrant rights movement.

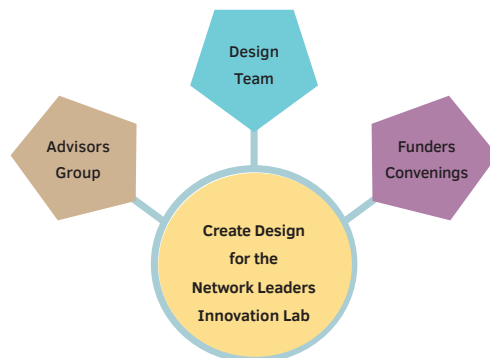
For more detailed profiles see Appendix E.

the utility of backwards examination, they also pointed out the need for forward-looking innovation and experimentation as critical to creating the conditions for change.

Finally, during the design phase, the leaders emphasized the need for participants to be the Lab experimenters rather than the Lab rats. As one design team member put it: “I don’t want to be part of another leadership program I had no part in designing.” This meant allowing enough flexibility within the very Lab design so participants could shape the Lab experience and use it as a space for trial and error—a space that doesn’t really exist in their daily work.

Ultimately, these changes and shifts that the design team implemented greatly enhanced the Lab experience for the participants, demonstrating the importance of co-creation.

PLANNING YEAR FOR THE NETWORK LEADERS INNOVATION LAB 2012



In addition to collaborating with this set of leaders, MAG facilitated four dialogue sessions—three in-person meetings in Boston, San Francisco, and Washington D.C. and one conference call—with leadership in the field including academics, practitioners, funders, consultants, and intermediaries as part of the co-creation process. Through these sessions (and many other individual conversations with thought leaders), MAG staff were able to enrich and validate their understanding of movement network leaders and what’s needed to support them. MAG staff also held two convenings—one in San Francisco and one in New York—of thought leaders in philanthropy and a few of the

nation’s most effective social justice network leaders to hear about their experiences and challenges with funding movement networks.

Finally, MAG staff invited yours truly to evaluate the process—specifically, to explore the impacts of the Lab on network leaders and how their leadership influences their organizations and their networks. In the spirit of co-creation, we were present from the beginning through completion, providing intermediate feedback along the way. This final report aggregates and concludes the series of Lab evaluation activities over the past few years.

NUTS AND BOLTS OF THE LAB

Here, we provide an overview of what the Lab actually looked like and how it rolled out after the design phase. Specifically, we outline the goals, elements (convenings, coaching, and action learning projects), and the cohort—arguably the most important piece since the Lab was designed to ebb and flow with the needs and desires of the leaders themselves.

Goals of the Lab

The overarching purpose of the Lab was to “increase the impact and scale of social justice efforts movement wide” through dialogue and active learning.³ Unlike other programs, the Lab did not have rigid benchmarks of success; rather, success was gauged by the extent to which participants engaged in learning together and the ways in which they were able to apply their learning to their own leadership as well as their organizations and networks. These indicators may sound amorphous compared to more transactional benchmarks like the number of Action Learning Projects and the number of meetings they generated, but they reach a deeper level that comes with transformative learning and practice.⁴ To do this, the design team co-created three goals for the Lab:

1. To create a vibrant space and supports that allow network leaders to learn from and inspire each other, and to innovate in their work.
2. To deepen our shared understanding of:

- How the current ecosystem (both internal capacities and external conditions) enables or inhibits leaders to work successfully in networks; and
- What it takes for social justice leaders to work successfully in networks (that link across organizations, issue silos, or sectors) and to step into effective network leadership.

3. To move this deep understanding out into the world and engage other social justice leaders, practitioners, and funders in ways that produce a more favorable set of conditions to support effective networked leadership in the future.

Elements of the Lab

The Lab design team was very intentional about creating elements that worked toward each of the Lab goals. To further Goal 1—learning, inspiring, and innovating—the Lab held three two-day face-to-face **convenings** and provided individual and peer **coaching** for Lab participants. To achieve Goal 2—exploring and experimenting—Lab participants created **Action Learning Projects (ALPs)** in which they could identify, explore, and experiment with learning questions. Finally, to accomplish Goal 3—influencing the field—the Lab **disseminated learnings** through publications, webinars, a gathering with funders, and by developing content for online tools and social media.

Convenings

The convenings were central to the Lab as they served as the physical space to facilitate dialogue, active learning, and analysis among participants about how to navigate, support, and strengthen movement networks. While the structure of the convenings was intentionally open—in order to foster emergent learning and flexibility that parallels the nature of movement networks—MAG staff provided some structure to guide participants. MAG staff developed the agendas and curricula, and in the spirit of co-creation, they conducted individual interviews with each of the Lab participants prior to the first and third convenings. And it did not stop there; participants were involved every step of the way to create their own agendas for their own Lab experiences.

The first convening set the foundation for the program by facilitating relationship building among participants through storytelling, identifying common values, exploring trends emerging from their various movements, capturing insights to inform future learning, and identifying the Action Learning Projects (which we explain below). The second convening delved into cultivating and creating the space for shared learning by identifying movement trajectories, reflecting about how they spend their time as leaders in the space between organizations and networks, exploring how to apply complexity thinking to their own work, and sharing progress, learning, and coaching around their ALPs.⁵ Finally, the third convening focused on applying the learning from the analysis, frameworks, concepts, and ALPs. Leaders also reflected on their own leadership journeys, the future of the Lab, and sharing Lab learning with the field.

Coaching

The coaching element was designed to provide customized support in between the convenings (this is one of the services that MAG specializes in, after all!). In the context of the Lab this meant one-on-one coaching with executive directors, peer coaching in between and during convenings, and Action Learning Project team coaching. The needs were as varied as the individuals involved—to be expected—calling for a tailored approach based on interest and time. As for the key leader peer coaching, it was initially facilitated by MAG staff, but became participant-led over the course of the Lab.⁶ There was also variation with the peer groups, with one of them meeting regularly and another one that chose not to continue through the whole Lab process.

It is important to note that the coaching element, normally a costly service, was provided free of charge as part of the Lab support. An added coaching benefit was that MAG staff communicated with participants between the convenings; being in a different setting helped

“

The models provide a language and body of knowledge and a scaffolding of language...it is hard to integrate the learning without having to do something together.

— Moira Bowman, Forward Together

”

them gain insights into what the leaders were experiencing. This, in turn, contributed to co-creation and informed the Lab development and supports.

Action Learning Projects

The Lab principles of emergence and experimentation were concretized in the Lab's third program element: the Action Learning Projects (ALPs), which provided an opportunity to support leaders as they explored a learning question of their own creation that invited them to experiment with a new innovation or attempt to scale up work. MAG staff did not approach the ALPs with any preconceived notions of what questions or issues participants would explore; the Lab simply offered the space and some guiding questions for the organic emergence of topics and interests.

The idea was for participants to design their own ALPs so they could take their existing efforts around movement networks to a higher level or seed new innovations. Each project received modest seed funding for the groups to use however they wanted. One group hired a consultant to conduct a landscape scan to ground their work on alternative resource generation. Another used it to bring in facilitators for a series of meetings, and a third used it to support their time planning and raising more funds around the project goals.

Crafting the ALP encouraged leaders to create projects that fit their specific interests. Some of the projects had more concrete action items (e.g., CASA de Maryland developed a curricula and raised funds), some were more relational (e.g., URGE and National LGBTQ

Task Force brought their staff together), and some were more exploratory (e.g., the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana [JJPL] investigated a potential expansion of its work into adult incarceration). The pace of the ALPs differed as well: Some were slow to start while others took off and, in some cases, changed directions. In the end, five ALPs formed, each focusing on one of the following questions:

1. How can we support the development of grassroots community leaders so that they can work more effectively with other movements on the multiple issues that impact their community?
2. Should we expand our organizational scope and network approach to address the mass incarceration issues that are so deeply impacting our community?
3. What would it look like to create a cross-movement networked response to climate disasters that ensures both impacted communities recover and that impact of climate change is understood?
4. How do we resource our movements beyond foundations and individual donors so that we have the independence and capacity to win at scale?
5. How do we deepen the set of organizational relationships beyond the executive directors that allow us to work across LGBT equality and reproductive justice issues to create a sustained and inclusive movement?

The Lab Cohort

We wrap up this section with, arguably, the most important element of the Lab: the cohort. Since the Lab was designed to be fluid and adapt to the needs, desires, and insights of the network leaders themselves, the group composition was critical.

A driving principle behind the cohort selection was diversity. With their combined decades of experience working with movement networks, MAG staff and the design team realized that network leadership can only be understood by including a broad spectrum of perspectives,

“With the ALP, working with two other groups made it more rich, it may be easier to deliver something working with one organization, but it is more isolating. I learned a lot from the other people’s leadership styles.

— Vincent Pan, Chinese for Affirmative Action

”

roles, and experiences. In the context of the Lab, diversity refers to different movements and issue areas, different schools of thought and disciplines, different scales (local to national), and different identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, class, and so on).⁷ The organizations represented a rich mix of issues and movements—labor/worker rights, climate change, criminal justice, LGBT equality, immigrant rights, family strengthening, and reproductive justice—presenting opportunities for cross fertilizing and learning.

And since many of the lives that justice-focused movement networks seek to improve are those of people of color and women, the team thought the cohort should reflect this. MAG staff noticed the challenge finding white men who fit the criteria to participate. A few names came up but they were not available to commit to the program. In the end, the group was majority women (81%) and people of color (69%).

Finally, in order to make the Lab experiment thrive, the cohort needed to consist of individuals who are excited to learn from their peers, to challenge norms and existing practices, and to innovate and create movement networks. This meant finding people who had some experience with movement networks and were open to and actively trying new strategies. Their levels of experience working in networks ranged from less than a year to more than eight. In the middle ranges, 25 percent reported having one to three years of experience working in networks, with the largest group (50%) having three to eight years of experience.

The MAG staff turned to the design team to help determine the final composition of the group. Their process worked out well, as the participants consistently reported in their evaluations and interviews that the mix of people was a great strength of the Lab.

NAME	PROJECT SUMMARY
Disaster Response: An Opportunity for Movement Building - 350.org	Use the network-building and mobilization process for the Turn and Tide rally in NYC to test new ways to scale up organizing across movements and networks in climate disaster communities.
Resource Generation - CAA, Forward Together, and JwJ	To take steps towards disrupting the philanthropic funding system by exploring other funding models and to make funders more accountable, beyond funding what we want them to fund.
Leadership Academy - CASA de Maryland	Establish a Leadership Academy to strategically build leaders in Latino and immigrant communities, connect them to other progressive movements, and ensure their voice is represented in those other movements.
Cross Movement Building - URGE and The Task Force	To create space for a collaborative movement by deepening the partnership between the Task Force and URGE and finding opportunities to work together for shared social change outcomes.
Mission Expansion and Formalizing Network Relationships - JJPL	To advance de-incarceration work in Louisiana by expanding existing JJPL programs to include adult de-incarceration and explore how to balance organizational and network needs.

Summary Table of the Action Learning Projects (See Appendix B for a more detailed table on the ALPs)

The final Lab cohort included the following 16 individuals from eight organizations:

- Rea Carey and Darlene Nipper, National LGBTQ Task Force
- Sarita Gupta and Erica Smiley, Jobs with Justice
- Kierra Johnson and Mari Schimmer, Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity (URGE, formerly CHOICE USA)
- Vincent Pan and Jenny Lam, Chinese for Affirmative Action
- Eveline Shen and Moira Bowman, Forward Together
- May Boeve and Phil Aroneanu, 350.org
- Gustavo Torres and Virginia Kase, CASA de Maryland
- Dana Kaplan and Jolon McNeil, Louisiana Center for Children's Rights (Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana)

OUR EVALUATOR LENS

To embark on this evaluation inquiry, we draw from our previous work where we developed an evaluative framework for social movements presented in our 2011 report, *Transactions – Transformations – Translations: Metrics That Matter for Building, Scaling and Funding Social Movements* (Pastor, Ito, and Rosner 2011).

The framework acknowledges the challenges of measuring social change and calls for new metrics that look at both transactions (what is counted more quantitatively) and transformations (what is less “counted” and more qualitative). In the field of evaluation there has historically been an emphasis on transactions. However, we argue that both are needed to fully understand outcomes and learning. The report—nicknamed T3—resonated in the field and proved to be a good fit for evaluating a forward-thinking program like the Lab. The framework also includes metrics that go beyond effectiveness of individual organizations to account for building social movements.

Paralleling the creation of the Lab, we approached this evaluation with open minds and a flexible stance. While we arrived with a framework and evaluation plan that certainly drove our inquiry, we remained open to what

would inevitably surface over the course of the Lab—indeed we took emergent learning to heart. Just as Lab participants engaged in learning questions throughout the Lab, we too approached this evaluation with our own set of learning questions to guide our analysis:

1. How has the Lab been a space to seed learning and co-create innovative strategies for social justice leaders and their networks?
2. How have the Lab supports enhanced network leaders' effectiveness in their networks in ways that they care about?
3. Did the Lab serve as a catalyst to ignite and spur the work to another level, and in what ways?
4. What have leaders learned from their participation in the Lab? How has the learning impacted them and what did they get out of it?
5. How was learning from the Lab applied to the participants' organizational work?
6. Has the network been affected yet by the leaders' learning and contribution of the action learning project? If so, how?
7. What was learned about network leadership and what's necessary to support it so that it brings value to the “field?”

We applied and further developed the T3 concepts using a multi-layered framework for documenting the Lab experience. Our lens focused on the *outcomes*, while also following the *process* for getting there. The outcomes show the impacts and learning on different levels (individual/organizational/network/field), but we looked most closely for changes in the leaders' thinking and practice. The process explores the effectiveness of the Lab to serve as the container for the experience, support the leaders along the way, and experiment in the form of action learning projects.

A word about the data used in this report:
As mentioned above, MAG invited us to join this process at the start of the Lab, so we had the luxury of conducting research throughout the process, helping us observe and analyze evolutions along the way. Specifically, we gathered data for this analysis using mostly qualitative methods due to the nature of the Lab, including: convening observations, written and verbal evaluations from the three convenings, monthly MAG staff calls with updates and reflections, notes from pre-Lab interviews,

post-Lab participant interviews, ALP reflection forms, reports generated by MAG staff for funders and its board, and more. Due to our early involvement during the design phase, our ongoing communication with the Lab facilitation team, and the amassing of many notes and observations, we had plenty of data to work with.

So without further ado, we move to reporting findings about how the co-creative design impacted the network leaders, what was learned, and recommendations for the field.





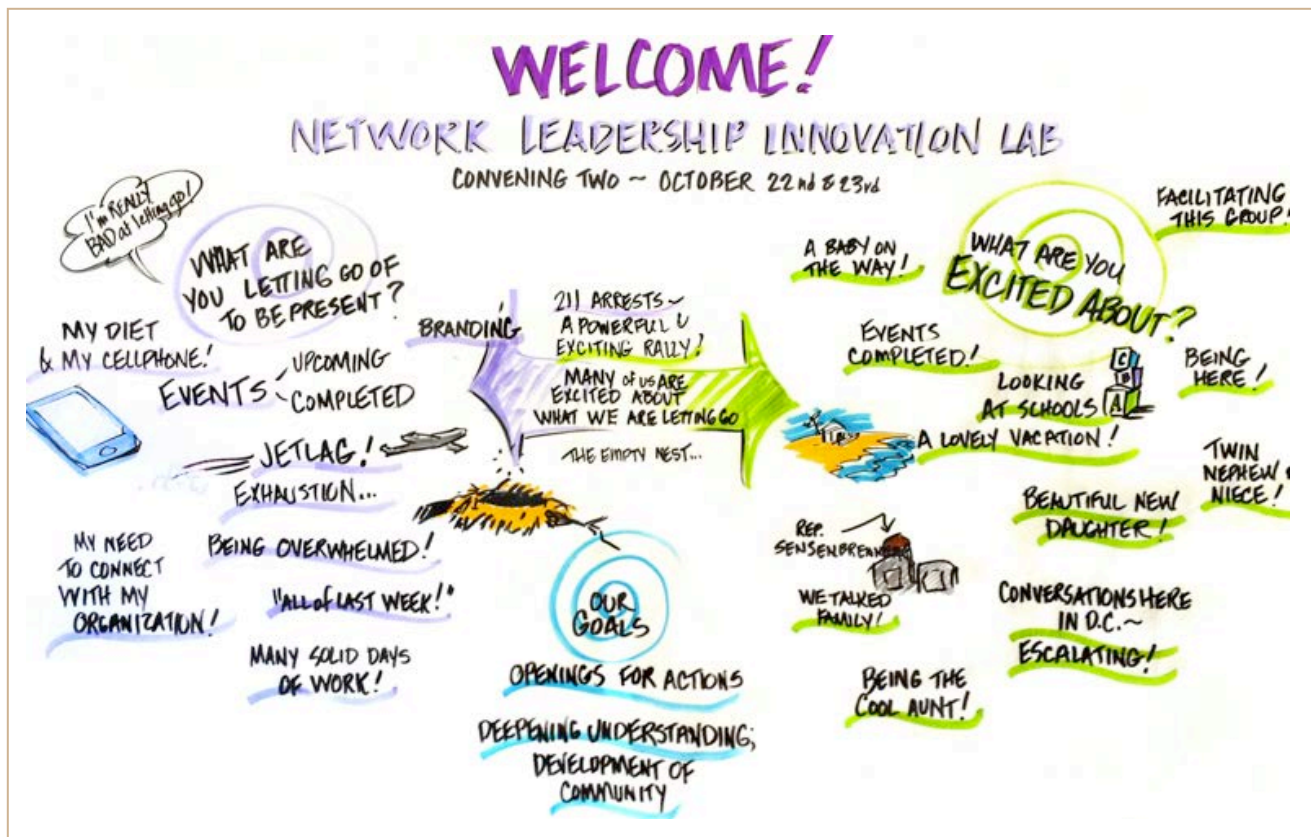
THE STORY OF THE LAB

THE CONTAINER AND CONDITIONS FOR NETWORK LEADERSHIP LEARNING AND INNOVATION

What follows is a story of connecting across movements through relationships and learning. The Lab was designed to create the conditions for tapping into the network leaders' valuable experiences to further explore and stretch their practices and thinking. In our analysis of the Lab, four overarching themes surfaced for structuring the findings about how this happened and the associated outcomes: embracing co-creation and trusting emergence; sharing frames for understanding our work; growing a shared culture; and deepening learning through practice and seeding experimentation. We introduce each theme with the story of one Action Learning Project (ALP) to illustrate what it looked like in practice. We then describe the outcomes, or results, that came out of the Lab and unpack key aspects of the process that fostered them. Naturally in the discovery process, creative tensions and insights emerged that turned out to be highly instructive, so we highlight these as well.

EMBRACING CO-CREATION AND TRUSTING EMERGENCE

Since the early design phase meetings of the Lab, an issue of huge proportion repeatedly emerged—one that has deep structural roots, no immediate solutions, and harbors long-standing frustrations: resource generation. Leaders and advisors alike lamented this issue as one of the biggest challenges facing social justice organizations. All Lab participants recognized the need for greater financial independence and sustainability beyond foundation grants and grassroots fundraising. But rather than set aside what can be an “elephant in the room,” three of the organizations represented in the Lab (Forward Together, Chinese for Affirmative Action, and Jobs with Justice) decided they would join forces to make resource generation for social justice work the subject of their ALP. Specifically, their ALP goal was to “take steps towards disrupting the philanthropic funding system by exploring other funding models and to make funders more accountable, beyond funding what we want them to fund.”



Choosing to experiment with alternative resources without knowing what they might discover was emblematic of the Lab because it demonstrated the co-creative nature of the program, the power of facing hard issues together, and the openness to just seeing what bubbled up. A much-appreciated benefit from this exercise was the high-quality relationships that developed between the six leaders involved in the ALP based on shared interests, respect, trust, and a commitment to the learning process.

Co-creating Across Movements

Co-creation was central to the Lab and fundamental to its success. Not only did network leaders co-design the Lab with MAG staff, but Lab participants (many of whom were part of the design phase) co-created throughout implementation. Co-creation is an art that requires letting go of preconceived notions of what the precise outcome(s) should be, so using this method required being open to learning from each other, engaging in ongoing reflection, and paying close attention to feedback.

The participants appreciated how the program maintained its flexible approach making the Lab more interesting (if not more unusual for evaluating!). Each convening provided a well-conceived structure as a springboard for learning and open spaces for the group to identify and explore topics of interest to them.

“

A lot of us are people who give a lot to others. Seldom do we have the space to be challenged differently, to be inspired, and to be replenished.

— pre-Lab interviewee

”

But it was not just about co-creation for the sake of it; the Lab is about fostering co-creation across movements, and so a basic premise of the Lab was “leaning into” intersectionality across movements. Within movements, there can be competition among organizations, or patterns and roles that seem to repeatedly play out. Often cross-movement work is tactical in nature—which has its place, but is not relational or strategic for the long term. For the most part, participants found that being outside one’s movement added, rather than detracted,

“

We were engaged from the beginning, even the design. We had the opportunity to give our input to see how we wanted the Lab to operate.

— Gustavo Torres, CASA de Maryland

”

from the safety and vitality of the space. The participants found it freeing to step out of their organizational roles and issue areas. The experience of CASA de Maryland provides an excellent example of the power of intersectional collaboration:

“... CASA de Maryland, the immigrant rights organization led by Gustavo Torres, forged an alliance with the LGBT community to fight for a pair of ballot initiatives in the fall of 2012. Together, they won two historic victories. Maryland voters approved the DREAM Act, which grants in-state tuition at public universities to undocumented immigrant youth. And, by popular referendum, the state was among the first in the nation to approve equal marriage rights for gay and lesbian couples.”⁸

During the Lab, CASA applied this cross-movement perspective to its ALP: The Leadership Academy. The purpose of the program, which became fully developed and funded during the Lab, was to connect Latino and immigrant leaders to other areas of the progressive movement where there is little Latino and immigrant representation, but where the issues significantly impact their communities. The Academy was a way to extend CASA’s leadership to make connections between and across movement boundaries. CASA benefited from the experience of the Lab leaders who generously offered learning modules and ideas for the Academy. Once developed, CASA was surprised by the demand for the program beyond their original audience. Fortunately, CASA was able to connect with a public funder that grew its budget

quickly and significantly. One of its biggest challenges was finding a qualified director of the program—indicating the demand for leaders like those in the Lab.

Growing Relationships

In evaluations, participants pointed to the relationships, both internal to the organizational pairs and external to the larger group, as having great value. We heard first and foremost about the importance of who was in the room. As described in “The Lab Cohort” section, it was a strong grouping of leaders who came to the Lab open and engaged. The group was made up mostly of people of color and women. For some, this allowed them to show up less guarded and also helped bring race and gender to the forefront during their time together.

Even with a strong mix of people, a safe, non-judgmental space is necessary for relationships to form and grow. Trust is foundational for exploration and learning because it allows people to take risks and be present. In the Lab spaces, people could be more open, vulnerable, and, in the words of one of the participants, were “able to spark off each other.” Many of the leaders spoke about how they could “show up” fully and differently than in other less trusted environments. For example, in the Lab cohort, the only white organizational pair consciously worked in its ALP to have people of color play a predominant role in the project, and they worked intentionally with the group to help them think about how to make this happen.

By building relationships—or strengthening existing ones—the Lab enhanced participants’ ability to support each other. Specifically, the organizational pairs had the rare opportunity outside their usual work settings without prescribed agendas to share time, frames of reference, and new strategies. They eagerly took advantage of this time, appreciating and cultivating their shared leadership. External relationships also flourished from having time with peers without the pressure of having to do something other than learn together. And in the end, many participants were interested in taking on joint efforts outside the Lab.

Graceful Endings

A big part of emergence is an elegant closing. The Lab leaders talked about how networks can outlive their usefulness and members may feel compelled to keep going long after their utility; being comfortable to move through endings gracefully is a skill in itself. In the third convening, the group acknowledged that the Lab had been a place for cross-movement learning that had come to an inflection point, a closing, or stepping stone for the next iteration of the work or a Lab. There was interest in seeing what may come next for the Lab, but it did not dampen the present with expectations for the future.

The experience of the JJPL during the Lab provides an example of how changes can unfold more smoothly with support and an ability to end gracefully. Specifically, during the Lab, JJPL wanted to explore how to expand its primarily youth constituency to include adults—but it happened to coincide with an unexpected organizational merger. This prompted a shift in attention from expanding the scope of work to dealing with a new organizational structure and how it would fit with many different initiatives under one frame.

Also during this time, key JJPL staff departed, including the executive director. However, the coaching and group thinking in the Lab provided significant support at this critical moment in JJPL history. It helped them to make a smoother transition that would not preclude the possibility of pursuing the adult decarceration piece one day, but with a significantly different structure and new leadership. The lesson here is that a jolt to an organization or individual can be an opportunity to close one phase and open a new phase—and the Lab provided a supportive space to help make this happen.

Creative Tensions and Insights

Among the many positive outcomes that emerged from the process of co-creation and building trust were also some tensions, specifically around individual and organizational capacities. In an intensive program of this type, the facilitators notice when participants are not showing up or not communicating well. One



organization actually had to drop out of the program because its staff members were unable to keep up the commitments set out at the start of the Lab.

When working with active network leaders it can be difficult to discern how much of the problem is a function of being busy versus how much is a lack of readiness or real availability. And while the desire to participate may be there, the capacity or commitment at a particular moment may not. For instance, some people were in other leadership programs or had other coaching outlets, which could have signaled an overload. Even for those who were participating fully, there were still struggles to schedule calls, which affected the continuity of building relationships. Some participants also mentioned that the unintended large gap between the second and third convenings (the result of having to reschedule the third convening because of a large snow storm) slowed momentum—something to be avoided when possible.

SHARING FRAMES FOR UNDERSTANDING OUR WORK

Having made the decision to pursue alternative resource generation as the ALP topic, the network leaders first wanted to get more grounded and informed about the current state of the field. To validate their current thinking and learn more about what possibilities exist,

they contracted with a research consultant to conduct a scan of new or nontraditional practices, including case studies of successful models. The consultant searched the literature, identified promising articles to read in depth, and interviewed key nonprofit leaders. They asked about the various streams of innovative resources or revenue that are out there, and the strengths and weaknesses of each.

The research did not uncover any magic bullet, but along with the ALP conversations and collective thinking, it gave them “a foundation to jump off of.” For most of them, previously strategizing about innovative funding was more conceptual in nature, and was difficult to get a handle on. The research on existing and cutting-edge models gave them the information and language to help articulate options for taking action. This is but one example of how sharing frames helped network leaders better understand the complex systems within which they operate.

Frameworks Make Meaning of Organizational/Network Nexus

The Lab aimed to develop a better and shared understanding of the larger movement network context—and more specifically learn about what it takes to work successfully in networks that link across organizations, issue silos, or sectors. Frameworks drawn from complexity, as well as organizational and adult development theories, resonated strongly with the group. At the third convening, in response to a request for more specific applications, MAG staff facilitated an exercise using a “carousel” of cutting-edge topics for bringing home the concepts to every day issues (refer to the table on the page 26 for a brief description of the frameworks introduced and used in the Lab).

We heard clearly that exploring these concepts and frameworks and seeing how they applied to their own contexts helped them understand more about leadership styles, organizational dynamics, and how networks function. These frameworks helped Lab participants better understand the intersections between organization and network(s) as well as how to address pressing demands that network leaders face every day, including: balancing the priorities; distributing resources; integrating

the different layers of work; getting more staff involvement with networks; and adapting structures to fit better with practice in the field.

Furthermore, the leaders expressed that the combination of the frameworks also helped them to deal with the uncertainty and complexity of movement-network building alongside leading their organizations. Framing (or reframing) the network leaders’ experiences was very validating; in some cases it allowed people to feel more hopeful.



The Power of Shared Language and Analysis

Through the Lab, the leaders began to develop shared language and analyses that helped to communicate and understand their organizational and movement network experiences. This is consistent with our 2011 report, *Transactions – Transformations – Translations: Metrics That Matter for Building, Scaling and Funding Social Movements*, that found when movements have common language and frames, they can begin to craft shared and powerful narratives—all of which are key factors in movement building (Pastor et al. 2011). Unique to this program was the writing and discovery processes that occurred concurrently with the Lab.⁹ Even before it started implementation, MAG conducted three case studies of network leaders to lift up qualities and capacities for successfully leading movement networks. Some of these capacities may be implicit or even invisible, therefore naming them becomes that much more important.

FRAMEWORK	DESCRIPTION
Movement Wave	An analogy that emerges from the research on movements—one of waves that poses questions to tell a story of a movement's trajectory (as rising, cresting, or in the trough).
Cynefin Framework	Distinguishes between contexts defined by the nature of the relationship between cause and effect (Snowden and Boone 2007): simple, complicated, complex, and chaotic. The model helps leaders identify where they are operating and how to optimally act in contextually appropriate ways. In uncertain and network contexts it is usually complex.
Complexity of Mind	Uses adult development theory to understand forms of mind that affect how people hold dichotomies, polarities, ambiguity, and different perspectives. The spectrum of stages of development is helpful in understanding people's perspectives and managing groups and individuals.
Polarity Management	Polarity quadrants is a framework used to move from dichotomous poles by shifting people from opposing stances to produce a different kind of conversation.
Carousel	In order to directly apply the concepts and learning, participants were asked to reflect on provocative statements such as, "given how complex networks are, conventional boards are dead" and "the most important thing when dealing with complexity is organizational culture." Groups rotate around (hence carousel) to brainstorm their reactions, bringing them forward in a new light.

For example, when dealing with power dynamics within a network, it is essential to navigate the tensions in ways that make sense for the particular group in that moment. This can be highly nuanced intervention or confrontation, demanding the ability to hold a generative space for the group. At the same time, it is skillful to know when to step back, to encourage and enhance shared leadership.

The MAG case studies and articles were useful articulations and resources that served the participants in the field. When asked to describe what they were doing in the Lab, participants could refer to MAG's website populated with related articles. These resources not only provided common language that helped them communicate their network experiences and learning, but they saw it as complementary to what was going on inside the Lab.

Bringing the Learning Home

Connecting the learning with the participants' lived experiences and current practices was seen as one of the great strengths of the Lab. For nearly all the leaders, the Lab was timely in one way or another. Many of the groups were going through significant changes like mergers, major staffing transitions, shifts in their organizational focus, expansions, and so on. Too often they were pulled in so many directions that without the Lab

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There were moments when the Lab space and theories was just the language I had been searching for. Very affirming of real questions.

– Sarita Gupta, Jobs with Justice

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they might not have had the space to reflect, solicit input and advice, learn new frameworks, and receive coaching. Thanks to the Lab, they had a space devoted to thinking about what happens within their organizations—including their best contributions to movement networks—and how networks impact their own organizations. The Lab brought the theories to life and helped them to see potential shifts in their practices—and much of it was immediately applicable.

The learning was so impactful that Lab leaders wanted to share their learning beyond the Lab space. More typically a single staff person goes through an intensive leadership program that is useful for them individually, but they may not get to really integrate what they learned into their organization's operations. In this case, the Lab participants wanted to avoid having knowledge stay with only one or two people and aimed to concretely model and bring back the Lab learning to their organizations and networks. The leaders plan to share (or in some cases already have shared) what they learned with their own organizational staff members, boards, and other partners through trainings and presentations.

Creative Tensions and insights

In any group there will be those who enjoy and need conceptual frames to apply for learning, and others who are more drawn to and need on-the-ground application for learning. The Lab provided a combination, yet some participants asked for more concrete and less abstract learning techniques. Some people craved more action; others recognized that even though their ALP was more conceptual, it was still action-oriented by its very nature.

“

I want to integrate network leadership and values at every level. A lot is required to hold the network position. I want it to be more intentional...to be an organizational value, not my value only.

— Kierra Johnson, Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity (URGE, formerly CHOICE USA)

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As mentioned previously, the “carousel” of issues for organizations and networks proved a useful way to ground the concepts for those wanting more concrete applications.

Similarly, people's personal inclinations will determine how much process they require. Many applauded the amount of time devoted to process and relationship building; some even asked for more. Others, however, asked to move more quickly through processes of developing relationships and shared analyses and to devote more time to digging into the applications. For some, the ALPs were a way to ground the learning and relationship building, and much of this work happened outside the convening space. Striking the right balance for everyone, at all times, is challenging—something to be expected with diverse personalities and learning styles.

GROWING A VALUES-BASED CULTURE FROM THE INSIDE OUT

As the resource generation ALP took shape, among the possibilities to explore was social impact investing, in which funders (non-profit and for-profit) have the dual goals of generating social and environmental impacts while gaining a financial return. For example, a foundation or bank might make a direct investment in community loan funds, a vehicle that can help provide financing and technical support to homeowners to help save homes from foreclosure. They were cautious about possible conflicts between being business-minded and having a social justice mission, yet funders and leaders both expressed an interest in learning more about it.¹⁰

Nonetheless, a big take away for the partners was that no matter the vehicle, the resource generation must be aligned with an organization's social justice values and culture. If there is a disconnect, then it will distract and may lead to future misalignment. Frequently during the Lab, values came up as fundamental to leadership and driving the work. Here we discuss the significance of staying true to one's values and infusing them into leadership practices.

“

I think that we really have to be values-based at the core. There's a lack of analysis and people of color get thrown under the bus. You can't pick the economy without addressing and being rigorous about equity and readjusting the system, power. The notion of a beloved community, seeing the connections with each other; linked fate, where the call is for all of us to be in this together. Fundamental, beyond civil rights is a shift in how we work together.

– Eveline Shen, Forward Together

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Starting from Values

The underlying values of individuals, organizations, and networks are the motivators and beacons for social change. Within today's polarized political climate, there is a strong tendency for binary framing of values in simple “us-and-them” terms; this tendency can be destructive because it separates, rather than unites, people and communities.

On the other hand, fostering a nuanced values-based culture and aligning strategies with those values can keep actors aligned and working together for justice over time. This is especially relevant for movement network leaders. In the face of complexity and ambiguity in movement networks, it is often these values that bind ties for the long-term.

Over the course of the Lab, the group discussed that, in many ways, social justice movements have held a rights-based frame rather than a values-based frame. They agreed that while the rights-based frame is still relevant, it can only get movements so far with the larger frame based in a wider scope of the values (e.g., love, human dignity, and interdependence) driving the kind of world they want to create. This larger frame relies on the ability to embrace a wider scope of the values, leadership, and complexity spectrums. Participants agreed that fostering these common values is the basis for building authentic relationships between leaders, within

organizations, and across movement networks (Leach and Mazur 2013).

One of the ALPs included this aspect of cross-movement building as its ALP topic. Two organizations partnered to explore creating intentional relationships that go deeper than the typical transactional, friendly relationships between executive directors. They quickly found the importance of aligning their values and theories of change at the onset. This helped them see the difference between starting with the relationship building rather than taking immediate action in times of crisis or opportunity. It was only after several facilitated meetings and ongoing conversations that they decided to “use what we've got to leverage and build with each other, connecting in concrete ways at the state level.” Before they could come to this point, they were consciously tending to their relationships, values, and priorities as the basis for their collaboration.

Values Transforming Culture

Being values driven can be transformative. And transformation is not a haphazard process, but rather deliberate and intentional (Ito et al. 2014). For example, Forward Together, a multi-racial organization that works with community leaders and organizations, seeks to transform policy and culture to catalyze social change. One of its projects is a video series that seeks to change how people think, feel, and act when it comes to young people, sexuality, and access to sex education. Created by youth, for youth, this work models their values. The same is true for their Forward Stance practice that provides “a powerful way to learn and gain new insight through physical movement and by reconnecting our bodies with our minds.”¹¹



The Lab Practice of Infusing Values

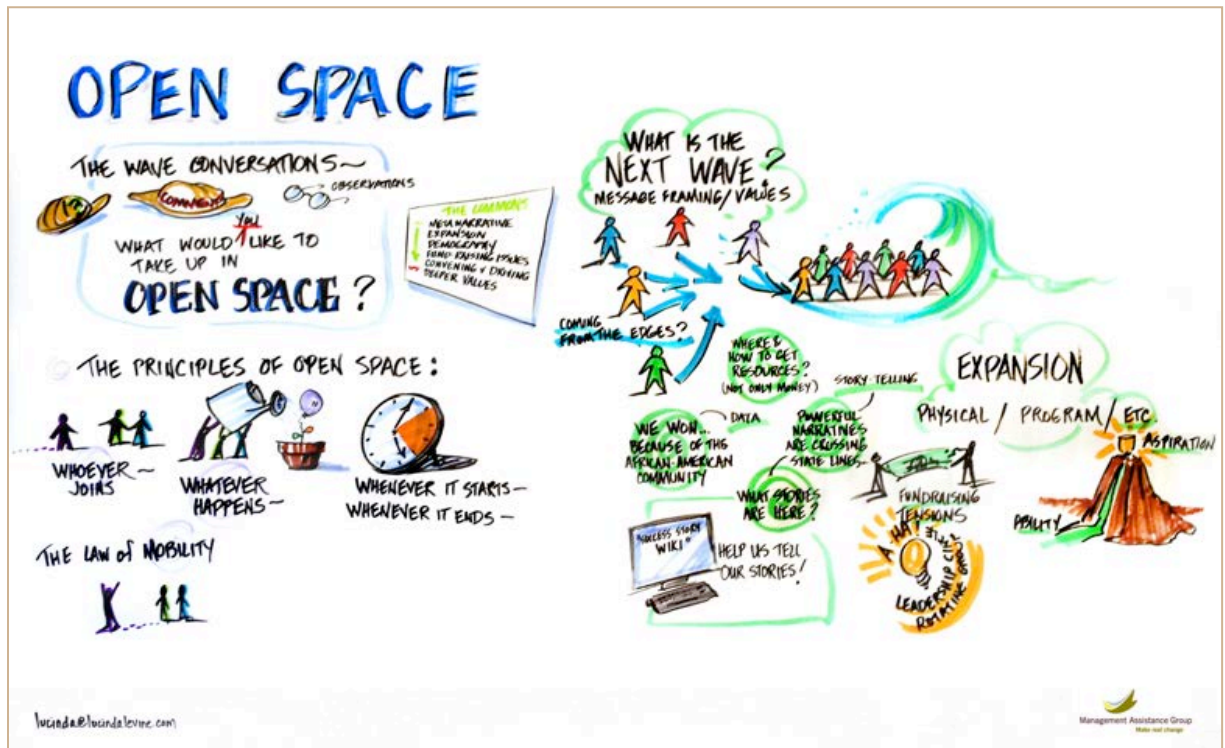
Some Lab participants expressed working from values as “spirit,” acknowledging the tendency in some groups to steer away from using spiritual language. Whatever the terms, values shape how we experience things, how we act, and who we are in the world—they influence everything. The leaders talked about accessing those personal values by developing a culture of practice that acknowledges our whole selves. The program honored where people were at by encouraging them to bring their whole selves to the space. This, in turn, allowed them to be more open to taking risks—a key component to the Lab’s innovative orientation.

Not only did Lab participants discuss the importance of a values-based frame, but in every session leaders sought out opportunities to discuss how they might more consciously apply this frame to their work. When asked before the third convening what they hoped to get out of it (in addition to other things), many of the participants wanted to explore infusing values-driven leadership at all levels. Clearly, there is a hunger for working from personal values and creating a larger values-based culture—and the Lab helped spur this conversation.

In the Lab, facilitators intentionally incorporated practices grounded in values providing different on-ramps and openings for people to engage where they wanted. By leading with centering, journaling, storytelling, and other reflections, the Lab reinforced their guiding values and principles and encouraged stimulating, honest conversations, connections, and learning. Some participants mentioned that having toys and art supplies at the tables to intentionally integrate poetry and visual art into the sessions helped to spark ideas and contributed to creating a space to think and show up differently.

Additionally, during the convenings, there were two “Open Space” sessions—or, time left open on the agendas to honor emergent ideas that bubbled up during the convenings—that were devoted to exploring strategies and experiences for integrating values into the work. By including Open Space and other opportunities like peer coaching, the leaders had different avenues to explore their values and how to embody them.

Some ways to infuse values both in and out of the Lab include: voicing one’s own values;



building a values-based culture within their own organizations and networks; exploring conversations about how values might shape the next meta-frame for our movements; and figuring out how to apply values in specific network challenges like raising and distributing resources.¹² There is a lot of interest in a values-based frame and approach, but not a lot written about it or how it is done. The Lab was a place to raise the topic and it impacted many of the leaders thinking as they returned to their home organizations.

Creative Tensions and Insights

Much like the process of conceptualizing frameworks in the previous section, the process of growing a values-based culture was essential for some and somewhat esoteric for others. Lab participants had the choice to engage with it more or less depending on their interest and orientation. Some of the leaders were already thinking deeply about the topic and this was a good place for them to take a more active lead. They did this naturally in Open Space sessions and at least one of the participants is collaborating with two Lab facilitators to write on the topic.

SEEDING AND SUPPORTING EXPERIMENTATION AND INNOVATION

Movement leaders, advisors, and academics alike acknowledge that there is longstanding dissatisfaction with the current system for funding social movements. Instead of staying in a critiquing stance, however, the resource generation ALP group sought to “move beyond our inertia and step into the waters of trying to do something”—a perfect, and ambitious, project for Lab experimentation. While they all understood that resource generation is a longer-term effort, they could also see this as a positive step in the journey. As one leader put it, “change is slow, but taking some action, no matter how small, is helpful.”

Each of the three groups took the learning in a direction that made sense for their organization. One group chose to target the resource-rich

Silicon Valley where it plans to develop and lead a basic training for tech workers to understand more about the socioeconomic landscape where they are living and where there may be opportunities for businesses to support communities. Within the union context, SEIU (a supporter of Jobs with Justice) has a relationship with pension managers, yet it has never really asked about transformative finance. At the time of this writing, it was in conversations with one of the banks that holds its pension to see if there are opportunities for social impact investing there. Forward Together is pursuing a business model where it charges for its sought-after Forward Stance training as a means of aligning fee-for-service with its mission. In the end, the Lab tells the story of a space for seeding these forward-thinking ideas.

Experimenting as Value Added

Experimentation may be where process and outcome meet the most—because the process of trying something new is indeed an outcome. Apart from the results, experimenting has value in itself as a way of learning and testing out ideas. Too often the focus is on the end result, which is important of course, but the drive to have something tangible to show for your work can get in the way of real experimentation—which is how we learn what works, and what does not.

“It is the people, but it is also the content and how [we] were brought into a space where we were wrestling with it in real time.

– Vincent Pan, Chinese for Affirmative Action

Having the chance to forge ahead on a project, without knowing where it would go, is an opportunity that seldom comes along for network leaders. Lab leaders were able to draw upon the collective knowledge of the group by presenting their ideas and receiving feedback and reactions at the convenings. Many of the leaders reported that having the space to engage with the projects allowed them to explore something they might have otherwise not done. Additionally, the Lab provided each organization with \$15,000 that, though relatively small in size, was enough to help catalyze and carve out much-needed time for experimentation.

According to the participants, the ALPs and support from the Lab for experimentation helped make the following happen: better execute a merger; form and fund a Leadership Academy for cross-issue work; organize major cross-movement events; explore alternative resource generation strategies; and begin to find a shared project for authentic long-term collaboration across two organizations and multiple issue areas. All of these experiments will live beyond the life of the Lab and will carry forward the learning.

Another outcome of playing with ideas about cross-movement work was the morphing of intersectional agendas, which holds breakthrough potential for collaboration. For example, several Lab leaders explored what it might look like to advance a women's economic justice agenda: one that brings together gender, reproductive and labor rights, and potentially other movements like immigrant and LGBT rights. These conversations were not tactical, but rather they were seeking a broader vision and deeper working relationships to advance a movement network in the long term. The moral: Innovation comes from getting outside the boundaries of movements and inside the connections of networks. The Lab space and the relationships that were formed helped to envision intersectional approaches, which is obvious in theory and can be transformative in practice.

Supporting Innovation through Coaching

The variation in experimentation required MAG to customize the coaching to each leader and ALP. In addition to the coaching outside the convenings, there was peer coaching outside and during the convenings, both formal and informal, that participants viewed as very positive.

In keeping with emergence, the coaching did not roll out as originally envisioned. Rather than having the three coaching supports (individual, peer, and ALP) allotted at the start, MAG staff ended up providing a pool of coaching resources that participants used differently based on their individual needs. Some participants, particularly those whose organizations were in transition, found the one-on-one coaching to be a vital element of the Lab. For others, they reallocated their one-on-one coaching hours to focus on their ALP. And some simply did not use coaching

because they had existing forms of support. Still others took advantage of all the coaching hours and contracted for more. Having this flexibility at the onset would have provided greater clarity and efficiency in using the resources more fully—yet this was a learning that evolved and was not necessarily predicted.

Type of Coaching	Total # sessions	Avg. # sessions
Peer Coaching (for three groups of 3)	9	3
Action Learning Coaching (for 5 projects)	16	3
Individual Coaching (for 8 Directors)	44	6

Stretching and Digging Deeper

By co-creating with network leadership the Lab sought to push to the edges of current practices through experimenting and learning. The Lab was a place for, as one leader described it, “living in the struggle.” Holding a space to work through complex issues meant finding a balance of safety and agitation. During the Lab, the facilitation team was continually looking for the right questions, tools, and conditions for supporting breakthrough learning and strategies. Hearing they were not alone with the challenges of leading

“

[We] are poised to discuss a women's economic agenda, with an anti-poverty lens and with economic and reproductive justice lenses. The conversation changed radically during the time of the Lab. We are much better positioned to develop concrete conversations.

— Moira Bowman, Forward Together

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both organizations and movement networks encouraged the leaders to grapple with them together. Taking a deeper dive into the hard questions is helpful to innovating the way out.

We asked these seasoned leaders if and how the Lab affected them, to move beyond their comfort zones and take more risks. Their responses showed different ways that they stretched their leadership capacities and roles: Three people described the value of capturing their thought leadership through writing for external audiences—something they had not done much previously and found to be a challenge to do on their own. Three mentioned how the Lab helped them step into their leadership in new ways, including shifts in their careers, being more intentional about their values and reflecting them in their leadership, and bringing new perspectives to their work.

“

I will carry a drive, interest, curiosity to look at things in new ways.

— Jenny Lam, Chinese for Affirmative Action

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Two leaders were enthused about moving forward with the intersectional agenda described in the previous section. Other responses included: helping to fulfill a lifelong dream, sharing leadership more deliberately with staff and network partners (including supervising more effectively), and exploring new funding models.

Creative Tensions and Insights

Experimenting over a limited period creates some accountability and stimulation, but there are never enough resources or time to get to the depth of collaboration or exploration that people may want. By their very nature, all the projects were time-consuming and demanded attention. Everyone would have liked more time to work on the projects, but they acknowledged this is a function of their usual filled-to-the-brim workload.

In a few of the ALPs, the person responsible for the implementation of the project was not part of the Lab cohort, or one person from the organizational pair was not involved with the project directly. When the ALP was not in their scope of work, there was a disconnect that made engagement less relevant for some people, yet they all managed to take something away from it. There may be no way of reconciling this without limiting the ALP topics or expanding the number of people from the organization participating in the Lab—which might compromise the process or be difficult to require.

Finally, the facilitators found that the Lab works for leaders who are engaged in this work now, who have experience, and who are open to learning and experimenting. This leaves the question about how to engage and inspire those who are less experienced in the work or at a different stage in their leadership development.





ADVANCING THE LAB GOALS

Using a thematic lens, we told the story of how the Lab impacted its participating leaders. Over time we might see these kind of impacts become integrated more widely into network movement practices (see Appendix C for long-term impacts). Promisingly, the outcomes and processes previously described indicate that these shifts can be in the making.

Here, we sum up the findings as they relate to the three Lab goals that were co-created and set out at the start of the program. This is not an exhaustive reporting on the program goals (as that would be both repetitive and tangential to the purpose of this evaluation). However, since the goals acted as guideposts throughout the Lab, we think it important to return to them and comment on how they were, or were not, advanced.

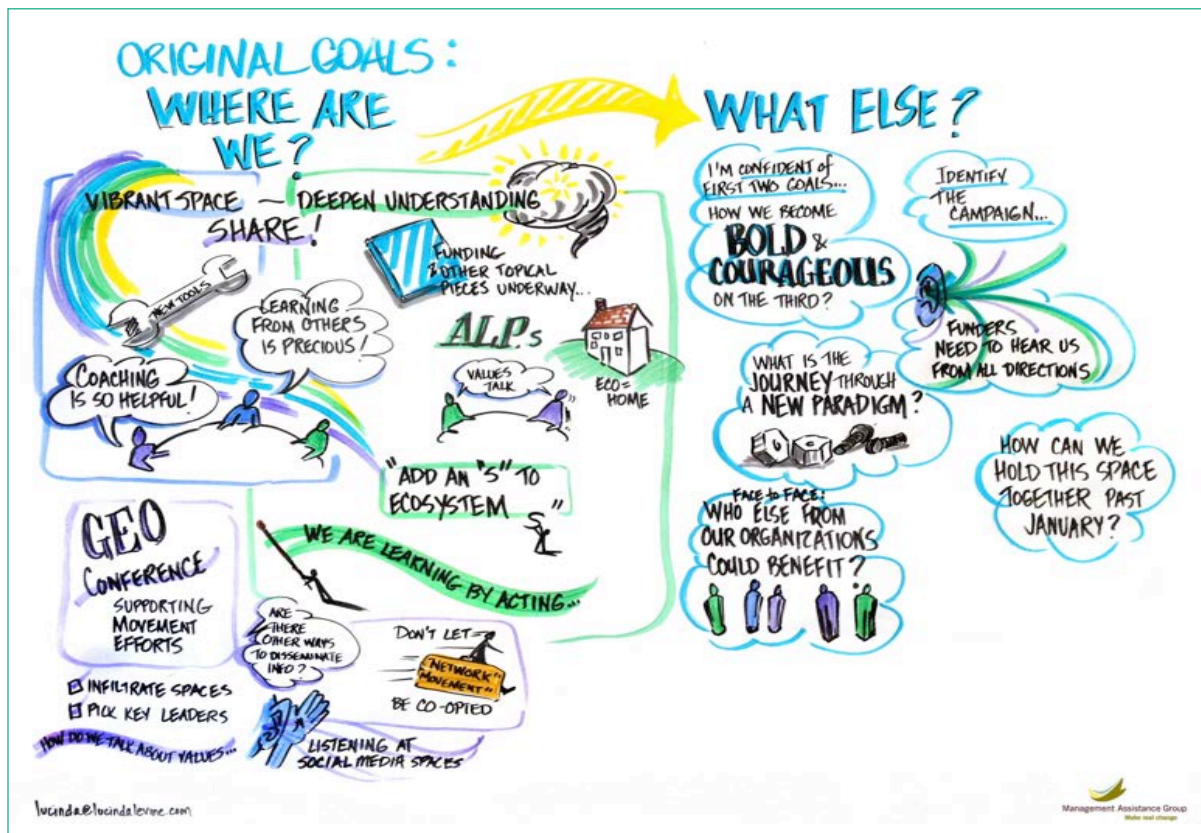
The Lab extended from the personal by creating conditions for applying and integrating learning to their broader organizations. Action learning, frameworks, and coaching all aimed to support and extend the learning to the structures (e.g., boards and partnerships) and processes

(e.g., strategic planning and governance) to which leaders and organizations relate. Creating the conditions to embrace the intersectionality of the work, often in contradiction with funding structures and other artificial boundaries, helped to develop a shared and better understanding of the micro and macro ecosystems.

The Lab's three distinct goals were shaped by this approach of "creating the conditions" for learning. What follows is a concise assessment of each goal based on the evidence of its progress over the 18 months.

Goal 1: Creating a vibrant space and providing supports that allow network leaders to learn from and inspire each other and to innovate in their work.

The convening space was seen as essential for making the Lab work as well as it did. Without the in-person interaction and opportunity to create learning together, the other Lab elements would not have developed at the same pace or with the same level of quality.



Having the intensive time together helped form the relationships that led to openness to experimenting and learning. In our interviews, many leaders not only spoke highly of the convenings, but considered them imperative for a program that asked its participants to take some chances and push to the edges of their thinking around their own leadership in a networked context.

The space was not confined to the convenings: it extended to the ALPs and coaching elements too. We heard about the learning and results coming from the ALPs and about how the coaching served different functions depending on where people were at in the current movement moment. This variation was somewhat expected and the facilitation team's ability to adapt the design along the way illustrates staying true to the process of co-creation.

The safety and vibrancy of the space came from the diverse mix of the cohort, the multifaceted design, the modeling of emergent practices, the flexible facilitation, and the focus on

putting cutting-edge questions about network leadership front and center.

Goal 2: Deepening the shared understanding of how current ecosystems (both internal capacities and external conditions) enable or inhibit leaders to work successfully in networks; and what it takes for social justice leaders to work successfully in networks and to step into effective network leadership.

“

The Lab itself is part of the ecosystem.

It gets all very meta—the degree the Lab is trying to influence funders and to affect the integrity of vocabulary—that's another piece that has been a learning for me.

– Vincent Pan, Chinese for Affirmative Action

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By sharing concepts, frameworks, and co-creating open space, Lab participants were able to place their experiences within the multi-layered ecosystems in which they live and work. This approach greatly resonated with the whole Lab cohort and they found the ALPs particularly useful in terms of bringing the concepts home. Indeed, developing shared understandings of the network contexts and dynamics can give language and tools for leading and connecting within complex systems. The Lab helped to surface what is needed to work successfully at the nexus of organizations and networks: leaders were able to explore their expertise, wrestle with uncertainties, and experiment together to break through to the next levels of thinking and practice.

“

There is a hunger and awareness [about network movement leadership] and a lot more we can keep doing to shape the discourse beyond philanthropy.

— Sarita Gupta, Jobs with Justice

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In addition to frameworks and concepts, relationships were highly valued as enhancing learning about intersectionality. They found it mutually beneficial to learn with leaders from movements outside their own. They also found it helpful to learn alongside their organizational partners, enhancing their working relationships and supporting shared leadership. And as we described previously, during and after the Lab,

participants expressed their intention to take the learning to their staff, boards, and organizations. By forming relationships, they could see the network connections of the Lab continuing long after the program ended.

Goal 3: Moving this deep understanding out into the world and engaging other social justice leaders, practitioners, and funders in ways that produce a more favorable set of conditions to support effective networked leadership in the future.

Since the Lab grew from observations of changes in the political and movement-building contexts, the Lab design team included informing and impacting the field as one of its three main goals. To be clear, the sphere of influence for this relatively short-term strategy was to reach influencers, the Lab participants, and their circles—not a broader audience, which the design team recognized was a longer-term undertaking. In some ways, this goal was the one the Lab had the least control over. But in other ways, it is more easily measured by outputs such as the number of presentations and published writings, of which there were many.

The facilitation team's writing was prolific during this period: MAG produced three case studies of movement network leaders, a chapter titled “The Network Leadership Innovation Lab: A Practice for Social Change” in the textbook *Handbook of Action Research* (3rd Edition), and two journal articles.¹³ Additionally, MAG staff and some Lab participants presented their learnings at



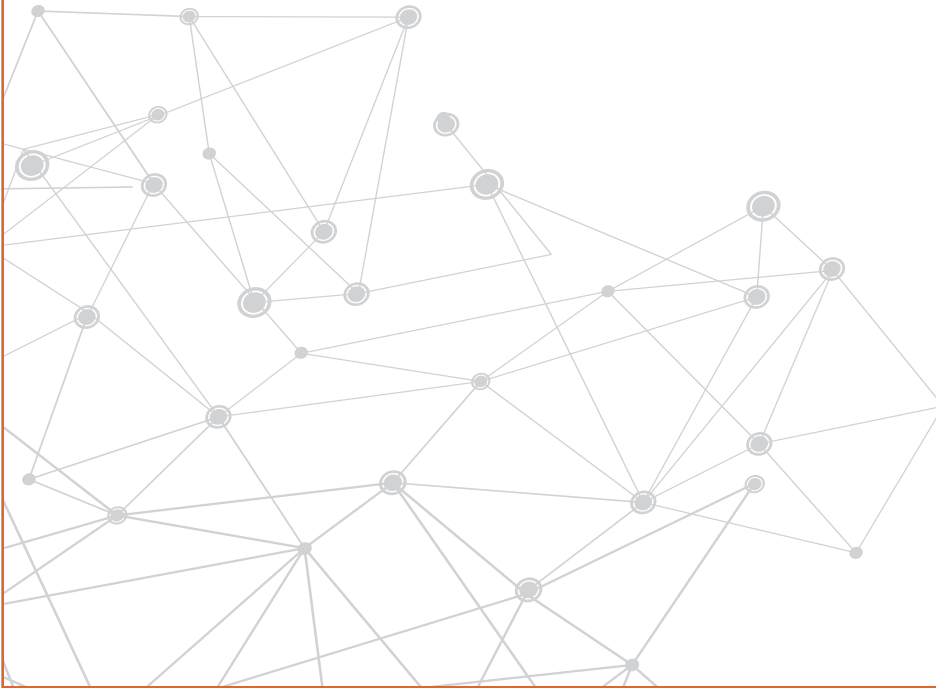
conferences and meetings. MAG has also been invited to lead eight webinars since 2011 on network leadership (see attached Appendix D describing Lab-related activities). According to MAG staff, over 1,200 people were reached directly through the webinars.

A key audience for learnings from the Lab has been funders, who are critical to the social change ecosystem. From the start, MAG included funders as Lab advisors and learners. Additionally, MAG and Lab leaders presented at different funder venues and, prior to the third Lab convening, there was a gathering of participants and funders designed to explore the possibility of co-learning together and uncovering what it might take to make that happen. One tension that emerged is that, right now, movement networks and intersectional work do not fit neatly into existing program areas. Another tension is the power that foundations wield through their funding decisions can sometimes come up against some of the program officers' values and identity as movement allies. This conversation showed there is a willingness and a desire for a space for honest dialogue about what works and does not work within existing structures. The take-away: There was a desire to go deeper to explore what they can start to do differently, understanding that systems change requires a lot of energy and perseverance.

Some suggestions that came out of the funder/leader gathering about potential next steps for these funders were to:

- Foster a core group of funders with alternative ideas to move faster and influence a broader tent of funders who will move more slowly.
- Experiment in places where they have some control.
- Build relationships between social justice leaders and impact investors for seed funding.
- Lift up stories and places where networks and philanthropy have come together to resource the work and learn from those good experiences.
- Create space to innovate and learn together as a group of funders and practitioners (and maybe think more broadly about funders beyond just traditional philanthropy).

THE NEXT LAB PHASE



The first phase of the Lab was design, the second phase was implementation—what will the next phase look like? At the Lab closing, participants brainstormed with the facilitation team about what the next iteration of the Lab might become after the final convening focused on Network Leadership Innovation. There was a range of ideas, some of which were already in motion such as webinars and creating content for a blog series. During the Lab, participants asked about how they could share the tools and concepts they learned in the Lab with staff, boards, partners, and even more widely. Here, we describe how MAG aims to share and continue the Lab using several methods: learning modules, a writing series, and potentially another cohort-based learning group.

In response to the interest in what's next for the Lab, as well as their own organizational growth, MAG staff initiated a process of identifying and developing modules anchored in the theories and approaches that informed Lab learnings. In keeping with the co-creation of the Lab, they envision using the modules in ways that make sense to the leaders and their organizations. The modules will be informed by what MAG staff

observe in the field, and they will also listen for what the field wants as the next Lab focus. The delivery of the modules will vary in length and depth with online and offline opportunities and through shorter or more intensive sessions. For example, soon after the Lab ended, a MAG consultant led a webinar on the complexity of the mind with one of the Lab participating organizations. This online session introduced staff around the world to a framework for developing shared language and points of reference for movement networks.

“

Having the articles and the website to describe the Lab was helpful. I am in a lot of groupings that don't have this and it helped me be transparent. I shared the 'Creating Culture' article with a lot of funders and colleagues and friends.

– May Boeve, 350.org

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MAG is considering creating pilots through partnerships, like with an existing movement network that wants to build a customized leadership development element to its work. Another option is pursuing partnerships with existing leadership development programs to build in space to practice and learn about network leadership. Indeed, one Lab leader suggested that the leadership programs operate in a more networked way, dovetailing rather than replicating efforts. Another path is exploring what it means to strengthen network leadership within placed-based initiatives. All of these actions allow MAG to share what was learned in the Lab while also continuing to develop learning experiences that meet different audiences where they are.

Also in progress is writing about some of the topics that were central to and enhanced by the Lab. There will be a range of topics speaking to the experiences of networks and lifting up innovative practices. A piece they are currently writing is about “Widening Spectrum of Leadership to Dance in Complexity.”

Other possibilities that MAG staff are considering include: “Values, Spirituality and Mindsets for Transformation” and “Raising and Distributing Funding in Movement Networks.” This writing series will be posted on the website, and possibly other sites to reach wider audiences.

Finally, with regards to the question of another cohort, MAG is not acting quickly to replicate. It is taking time to listen to what Lab participants and advisors are talking about, now, in order to create the most useful next iteration, later. If there was another learning focus, as alluded to above, one cohort might be made up of funders. At the gathering preceding the last convening, funders acknowledged that outside of affinity groups focusing more on dissemination of information and advocacy, movement funders do not have a dedicated space for ongoing reflection with an intersectional cohort. But, there are individual program officers who are eager and ready to learn from each other in a Lab-like environment. While they are not asking for a Lab per se, they are wanting to do what the Lab offers.





LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FIELD

By catalyzing and supporting learning at the individual, organizational, and network levels, and by taking on tough issues, the Lab is at the forefront of network-movement building. By reflecting on the emergent themes and analyzing to what degree the Lab fulfilled its goals, we can pinpoint some important lessons that, we think, are useful for the field. Here, we present lessons and recommendations organized by goal, and include emerging questions to consider in future work of building movement networks.

GOAL 1: CREATING A VIBRANT AND SUPPORTIVE SPACE

Creating a space for catalyzing and supporting learning and innovation was an intentional and core strategy of the Lab. In this section, we highlight a few key ingredients that shaped the Lab space in the form of recommendations for the field.

“

It's a paradox: Executive directors are critical, and you can't just focus on one leader.

— Eveline Shen, Forward Together

”

Emergent Design

The Lab was a space where concepts were brought to life and relationships flourished. A truly co-creative process may be more labor intensive and costly than other methods of program development, but it sets a necessary tone and benefits from the collective input to facilitate trust and buy-in—all needed for learning and effective network leadership. In practice, this meant creating an authentically open and non-judgmental space to explore. It also meant finding the right amount of structure: enough to maintain clarity and purpose, but not too much as to stifle creativity and emerging learning. Equally as important

is having the grace and perceptivity to pivot (sometimes in the moment) when necessary. Participants, many of whom are expert facilitators themselves, noticed the adept skill of the facilitation team to respond to the group, staying true to the co-creative nature of the program.

A program that is emergent presents a unique challenge when working with funders who may require a particular set of outcomes for accountability. MAG's director spent countless hours talking with funders not only to raise funds, but also to educate them about the Lab and how it was responding to changes in the field. This was a part of the Lab's goals that required considerable amount of time and energy to arrange, participate, and facilitate over numerous meetings and conversations. Working with and educating funders, advisors, and other stakeholders is an essential part of the work, but usually goes unfunded.



helps to grow better working relationships. Identifying commonalities as well as raising historical tensions—which are often so sensitive that many avoid them all together—creates authentic relationships. Paying attention to the power dynamics and being intentional about how relationships are developed, before acting together, paves the way for better collaboration in the long run.

“

I love this space. It's not like any other facilitated space I've been in. I wonder if I'll get this in any other leadership development program, ever.

— Jolon McNeil, JJPL

”

Early Investment in Network Relationships

The vibrancy of the Lab was made possible by the mutual trust that grew between the Lab participants and the facilitation team. The facilitators tended to the relationships with participants during the design phase, through pre-Lab preparation with individual leaders, and throughout the implementation through one-on-one coaching. The Action Learning Projects also provided fertile ground for deepening relationships. They showed how early investment in networks through intentional efforts to build relationships can have big pay offs—some immediate, others more long-term. The Climate March is a great example of how taking the time needed, even in the midst of fast-paced timelines and urgent deadlines in the day-to-day work,

Exponential Impact with Pairs

One asset of the Lab that participants mentioned repeatedly was the decision to include an additional key leader from each organization, which was an adjustment from earlier phases of the Lab design. Often it is the executive director that has access to high-level leadership opportunities. The assumption is that the executive director benefits from the experience, which in turn influences the organization. In practice, however, this may not come to fruition (at least in the way many leaders would like it to): it often rests within their leadership, and it can “trickle around” the organization, but may not be fully integrated.

To have more impact on organizational culture and practices, it helps when multiple members of the team experience the learning and make it their own. During coaching sessions, participants raised shared leadership as essential for sustainability at all levels—from the personal to movement network and everything in between.

Including organizational pairs, rather than individuals, had multiple advantages: First, by having two people go through the Lab and return to the organization, they could see how the learning could be infused more widely into their

organizations. Second, the dedicated space gave the pairs time and space to learn together and be supportive of each other—which enhanced their working relationships. Third, it provided a real opportunity to share leadership and support the development of one another in their organizations to take on a larger role in network leadership.

Emerging Questions/Issues

- How do we continue to support and expand the leadership of people of color and women while also engaging unlikely allies that share a common set of values and commitments (like service providers, corporate, or government actors)?
- Longitudinal analyses of working relationships would strengthen the argument for taking the time for intentional and authentic relationship building. Where will the relationships that grew within this intensive learning experience be in a year from now? In five years?

GOAL 2: DEEPER AND SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE MOVEMENT CONTEXT

A deeper and shared understanding of the network movement landscape and dynamics provides language and references that can be clarifying and illuminating. Having these frames can also be foundational for defining vision, relationship building, and developing strategies. Three key recommendations for fostering this common ground as a basis for innovation follow.

Framing and Language Matter

Articulating and discovering shared experiences deepens the understanding of how groups and people relate to each other across movement cycles. Applying the concepts through multiple methods—writing, visual graphics, coaching, etc.—helped to develop, and more clearly communicate, their stories. Attention to art and culturally relevant ways of expressing experience and making shared meaning in the Lab was present in every convening.

Not only did shared frames provide platforms for telling one's story, but they were key to help participants process it with others. The Lab opened up opportunities for mapping personal and professional experiences onto a larger landscape. By doing so it helped to frame and highlight the leaders' experiences of managing and living in the intersections of organizations and movements.

While developing shared language and crafting stories can be a tactical move in more short-term campaigns, it can also be transformative in building movements for the long term, as people connect with and see themselves in the stories shared.

“

Whether it is technology or the global economy, the field is having to evolve to be relevant, to organize differently. [The Lab] helped us hone in on how to tell our story and what we are trying to do. We had vision but being able to tell the story really helped.

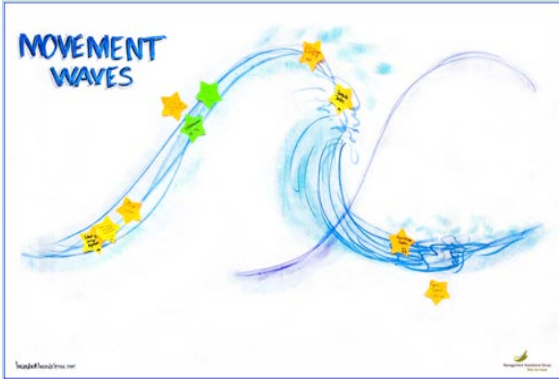
— Jenny Lam, Chinese for Affirmative Action

”

Innovation to Breakthrough

Movement builders widely acknowledge that to achieve the scale necessary to win, many of the current structures and models are not enough. Having the space without prescribed outcomes (other than learning) to try out concepts, tackle thorny issues, and potentially fail is part of the innovation process that can tap into new strategies and models. The Lab learning did not happen in a controlled environment, rather it was a trusted environment with built-in supports, making it conducive to experimentation. There were some unexpected shifts and results with the Action Learning Projects, yet in all cases it led the participants down paths where they could dig into challenges, rather than be paralyzed by them.

Forging ahead in the wake of setbacks and uncertainty is necessary to break through systems that are no longer working. The ALPs seeded



For example, they had to be fluid with the program development based on what the network leaders were wanting—which pushed MAG to the edges of its own consulting practice. MAG staff also had to balance their organizational needs to educate their funders and board about the experimental Lab, with the demands of keeping up with the Lab and writing about it. This shared experience validated participants' experiences and helped to articulate the learning.

innovative thinking and practice for organizations and networks. With networks having the potential for greater impact, devoting time and resources to innovating at this level is a worthwhile investment. Having supports built into the progressive movement infrastructure will be important for the advances that come with innovation.

The Field to Match New Forms

To be truly supportive, capacity builders and funders need to trust and follow the leaders who are oftentimes ahead of the field. This is a vastly different approach to many leadership development efforts that are designed to impart, rather than bring forward and amplify, their expertise and knowledge. In practice, network leaders are adapting to the changing nonprofit structures and landscapes. Their experiences managing their organizations and networks, and navigating the intersections and divergences between the two, is necessary for the field to understand. Just as the leaders are stepping up to meet the many demands, leadership programs need to match the new forms in the field. The Lab design reflected and supported ways of working in organizations and networks that make sense in this moment, and are also looking forward.

During the Lab, there was an uncanny parallel between the evolution of the Lab and that of the organizations and networks represented in the group. MAG experienced what the network leaders experience daily—dealing with uncertainty and complexity when bringing people together and honoring where they are at in the moment. In other words, they were called to model best network practices.

Emerging Questions/Issues

- The field could benefit from finding an easier way to describe the difference between networks, coalitions, and movements. According to one leader, “It is a mistake to see networks as what looks like chaos. There is some of that, but there is something also underlying it. And there is an appetite for something that our learnings can help feed.”
- With the fuller understanding of complexity, there is an interest in learning more about how to structure organizations to, as one leader said, “embrace and tap into potential complex systems.”
- MAG’s 2013 article in *Nonprofit Quarterly* called “Creating Culture: Promising Practices of Successful Movement Networks”—one of the writings that occurred concurrently with the Lab implementation—begins to fill a gap in writing on culture in/with movement building. The field could benefit further from sharing examples and models on how it is being done within and across movements.

“

The board remains deeply committed to the work you are doing and is so excited to continue to learn with you about how to best support leaders and movements that are testing—and implementing—new ways of working together. They refer back to your presentation in Washington often and it provides an important reference point for our conversations. One of the things they appreciate so much about how you work is your commitment to documentation—they feel that getting information out about successful models, and the leadership qualities needed by social change movements at this point in history is vitally important.

– Lab Funder

”

GOAL 3: SHARING EMERGENT LEARNING WITH THE FIELD

For a relatively short-term project, the Lab’s third goal—essentially, impacting the field—was an ambitious one. From its inception, the Lab existed to explore changes happening in the field and the implications for network leadership. With learning as the focus, there was a built-in orientation for lifting up useful lessons to share with the field—which we highlight, here.

Sharing Learning in Real Time

The cutting-edge knowledge and experience that came out of the Lab is certainly valuable outside the Lab. Making sense of the Lab learning—which started during the design and continued throughout the implementation—takes time and space to digest, analyze, and write about. The three network leader case studies served as a means to communicate the network leadership capacities, and the cross-case analysis that MAG staff wrote during the Lab took the observations and learning a step further. The writing and learning was done iteratively; all Lab participants and a subgroup of advisors gave input to an outline before the article was written and published. This allowed MAG to capture the learnings that were of most value to the field and add what might be missing from the broader conversation. Including time for this work in the program budget freed up space to capture the learning in real time.

But this work is not typically funded as part of the programming; at best, it is an afterthought. Including an evaluator to join the process from

the start and continue throughout the program positioned the Lab well for sharing its results. We underline, here, that this required foresight on the part of MAG staff. And it turned out extremely useful for communicating learnings from the Lab and also accelerated the writing process to retain its cutting-edge relevance. Considering this as a key part of any program—and writing it into the budget—will help share learning with the field in a timely way, while contributing to the body of knowledge for the long term.

“

Sometimes when there are innovation conversations, it is ‘let’s learn from it and move on.’ You might not do the same thing again, but how to do iterating.

– Funder participating in session

”

Cost Effectiveness of Shared Learning

An 18-month learning endeavor is a big commitment for everyone involved. And it may be more cost effective than you think. Other high-quality leadership development or executive coaching programs can be very expensive, so much so that many have been eliminated. We have found, however, that the Lab provided elements comparable to other programs and with added elements, but at a lower price. While it may seem like a lot of resources to invest in a small number of organizations,

it still turned out to be less than what many other fellowship or leadership programs invest in. In the end, we found that the Lab is a good financial deal, especially since it includes complementary benefits like participant stipends, funder meetings, travel, labor and other related expenses. When you look at it this way, it is a very cost-effective approach that yielded valuable results in a short time, with more likely to come.

A main financial challenge, which the Lab overcame, was the decision to include two people from each organization, instead of one, and so doubling many of the expenses. Despite the additional costs, the design team advocated for the benefits of having organizational pairs. In the spirit of co-creation, MAG staff responded by raising as much as they could as well as reallocating resources. The lesson here is a multi-faceted program that includes multiple leaders from each organization, is an effective use of resources as it enriches the learning, and can be more impactful to the organization. Looking ahead, now that there is an established (yet flexible!) design for the Lab, and the relationships to support it, some of the upfront costs for another Lab would be less. However, it is important to understand that, by design, each Lab would require retooling depending on the cohort (i.e., the co-creators) and timing.

Supporting Experimentation in the Field

Experiments can move organizations and networks into new territories, provide opportunities to incrementally test smaller bets, or help find new ways to avoid mistakes. Failed experiments have something to offer by deepening our learning and spurring on a next iteration. The idea of “failing forward” reframes mistakes as a part of becoming successful (Maxwell 2000). And these lessons learned have potential benefits far beyond the participating organizations or networks by offering new tools, changing practices, and scaling when successful.

If experimentation is so beneficial, then why isn't it a more common strategy? Being

risk averse, or being set in one's ways, can prohibit trying something new. But there are also structural barriers that contribute to the lack of experimentation within the movement network field. For instance, funder institutions often have narrow program areas with rigid outcomes. This is understandable, since boards are charged with getting the highest return on investment. Taking on a project without knowing the results can be difficult to rationalize in this context. We argue, however, that taking risks may be the best way to maximize investments—but it requires perseverance and patience to realize long-term gains.

Not surprisingly, then, our final recommendation is to embrace experimentation as an essential part of moving the needle on social change. This does not mean abandoning proven strategies. Rather, it means acknowledging where they have fallen short or have not met the demands of the moment, and supporting experimentation as a way of breaking through.

In a relatively short period, the Lab demonstrated the potential of experimentation through the ALP results, as well as the learning and knowledge that the leaders are bringing back to their organizations and networks. Imagine what could happen with a longer-term commitment to build on the Lab experimentation and learning.

“

Holding the torch on movement building is critical. We have to have funders willing to carry this leadership... and [they need to] feel supported by us too.

— Eveline Shen,
Forward Together

”

Emerging Questions/Issues

- Organizing within philanthropy and its trustees to shape institutions requires some deeper thinking and exploration. Where are there leverage points in philanthropy for supporting networks, innovation, and experimentation?
- What do philanthropy staff and donors need to feel supported in taking risks and funding in different ways?¹⁴
- As much as there is a need for multi-year support for experimentation within networks, leaders will need to continue to articulate why that matters so much, and develop both interim and long-term benchmarks for accountability.

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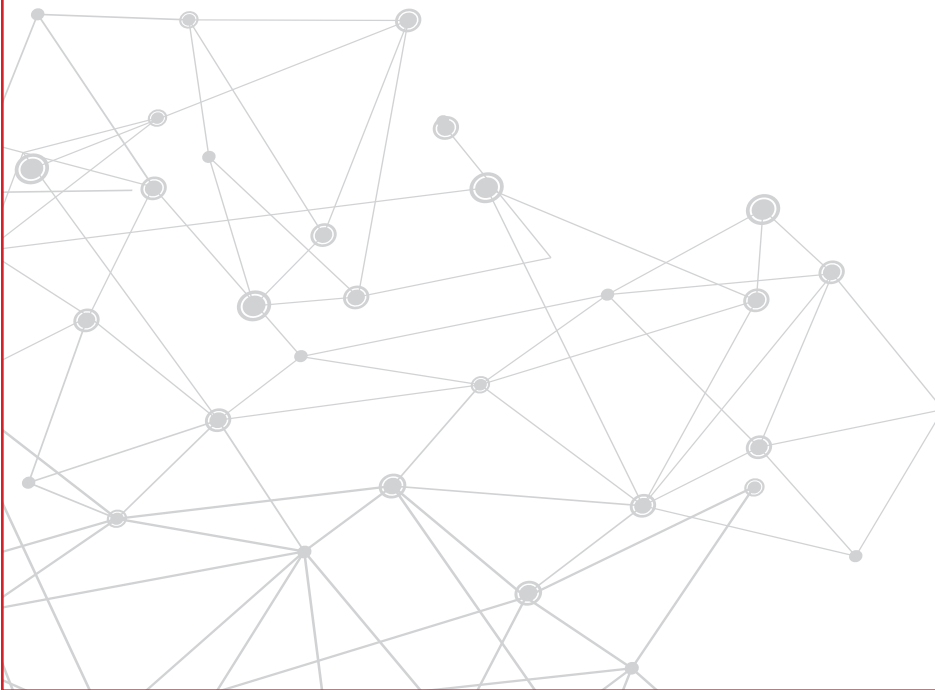
We've been good at saying we need this space. What we've not been good at is getting it. What we are doing in the Lab is thinking through the kinds of risks we need to be taking, taking those risks, and documenting and sharing the learning.

– Pre-Lab interviewee

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CONCLUSION



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In times of change, the learners will inherit the world while the knowers will remain well-prepared for the world that no longer exists.

– Eric Hoffer

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Movement building as a whole is in a period of great experimentation. The future of the network movements and their leadership is unlikely to look like the past. Individual organizations alone are not able to innovate and reach scale given the limitations and constraints that exist within the field. Managing and catalyzing the nexus between organization and network exemplifies one of the many challenges that network leaders are mastering. In this changing landscape, networks are integral to having greater impact, and network leadership is called on in new ways to draw on nuanced skill sets, shared analyses, and visions that capture the minds and hearts

of diverse communities. There is a hunger for innovation that comes from experimentation but, there is not the necessary structure to support it. The Lab is a space that fills this gap in the social movement ecosystem.

The Lab was a collective journey made up of varied and rich individual and partnered experiences that was impactful in many ways, helping leaders to (in their words): see dynamics differently, foster shared leadership, and more intentionally infuse shared values into organizational cultures and practices. We saw the difference the supports can make with the ALP that seeded the Climate March, in which 350.org (and its partners) benefited from hearing intersectional perspectives, having the space for reflection, learning about complexity in practice, and having ongoing coaching. Together, these Lab elements helped move forward what was a more fragmented effort into one that is launching groundbreaking organizing—like the events that bring more voices to the climate justice movement.

Our analysis of the outcomes, process, and lessons of the Lab showed it served its purpose well. The Lab carefully created the conditions for the participating leaders to explore their questions and grow their ideas. It held high standards of learning that were not inhibited by prescribed outcomes. This is not to say there was not any accountability—but it was a different kind of accountability: Rather than the group having to report back to the evaluator or funders, they were accountable to each other. In sum, the Lab was a vibrant learning space where participants showed up fully, seeded experimentation and relationships, and built the infrastructure to share the learning with the field outside the Lab.

Neither MAG nor the Lab participants claim that the Lab alone increased the interest and awareness of the role of networks and what it takes to lead them—but it certainly helped. MAG has engaged audiences in the social justice ecosystem, including philanthropy, by surfacing emergent learning about network leadership. :One would hope that the growing interest over time would also result in more acknowledgement and resources devoted to movement networks. The Lab begins to shed the light on what is needed, yet the learning is never done. A new set of conditions that support network leaders, who are juggling the inherent challenges and potential innovations, is needed now more than ever—and for a brighter networked future.



APPENDIX A: LAB PRINCIPLES

STRENGTH-BASED The Lab participants will be inspiring each other and working at the intersection of their strengths.

CENTERED The Lab is centered on the experience and needs of social justice leaders actually doing the work on the ground.

EMBODIED The practice of building and holding the Lab will be an embodiment of the kind of leadership the Lab is supposed to develop—shared, flowing, adaptive, connective, aligned, emergent. This includes:

- MAG, as convener, will be transparent about what we are doing.
- Together we will share and hold the inherent tensions and polarities that arise.
- In all Lab spaces we will strive to create the conditions for deep relationship, new understanding and learning, innovation and appreciation of differences.

INCLUDES + TRANSCENDS The Lab intends to “include and transcend” existing practice, knowledge, and networks. We intend to lift up and build on what’s already happening (extending the reach and usefulness of existing ideas, resources, frameworks, and relationships), and to create space for new growth, learning, and relationships.

EMERGENCE + EXPERIMENTATION The Lab will make space and provide energy to support emergence and experimentation in service of the changes social justice leaders are seeking to achieve. For this reason not all outcomes can and should be predicted in advance and room must be created for learning from exquisite failure.

DIVERSE The Lab intentionally seeks to create a rich and diverse community. We believe that these issues of network leadership can only be understood by integrating and holding a broad array of perspectives and experiences and that no networked approach can be successful without consciously engaging complex dynamics of power. Therefore we reach out to people with different movement and issue experiences, from different schools of thought and disciplines, and with different identities (race, ethnic, sexual orientation, gender, class, etc.).

APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF ACTION LEARNING PROJECTS

Name	Project Summary	Original Learning Questions	Learning and Outcomes
Disaster Response: An Opportunity for Movement Building - 350.org	Use the network-building and mobilization process for the Turn the Tide rally in NYC to test new ways to scale up organizing across movements and networks in climate disaster communities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can we build power while also meeting people's immediate emergency response needs before and after the initial aftermath of a climate-related disaster? 2. Does a climate message raise all boats? 3. Is this way of organizing applicable? 	While organizing the Turn the Tide Rally in response to the poor recovery efforts in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, 350.org learned about cross movement collaboration for building a climate justice movement, crafting a new narrative. The People's Climate March grew out of this organizing with 400,000 people on the streets of NYC and 2,646 related events across the globe just one year later.
Resource Generation - CAA, Forward Together, and JwJ	To take steps towards disrupting the philanthropic funding system by exploring other funding models and to make funders more accountable, beyond funding what we want them to fund.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What other kinds of funding practices or models have worked for organizations? 2. What are these organizations testing and finding out? 	While their research into the funding landscape did not uncover any "silver bullets," each group is pursuing different activities based on what they learned. One group is cultivating sector leadership to seek out more risk capital; another is tapping into existing private financial relationships; and the third is developing a mission-driven business model.
Leadership Academy - CASA de Maryland	Establish a Leadership Academy to strategically build leaders in Latino and immigrant communities, connect them to other progressive movements, and ensure their voice is represented in those other movements.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What worked with similar capacity building efforts and why? 2. How do we more formally surface best practices or most important pieces? 	CASA created the Academy and developed curricula with help from the AFL-CIO and Lab participants. They secured significant additional funding, enabling them to think more broadly about the program's sustainability. They have learned that the target audience for the Academy goes far beyond CASA members.
Cross Movement Building - URGE and The Task Force	To create space for a collaborative movement by deepening the partnership between the Task Force and URGE and finding opportunities to work together for shared social change outcomes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do we create authentic cross-movement relationships? 2. What does it look like to push through the things that are concrete and strategic, not only organic? 	The partners learned that there needs to be a shifting or reinforcing of staff thinking around how to operate from an intersectional lens. They also learned about developing intentional, not just transactional relationships. They created a pilot project on one college campus where they will jointly lead trainings and assessments on gender justice issues.
Mission Expansion and Formalizing Network Relationships - JJPL	To advance de-incarceration work in Louisiana by expanding existing JJPL programs to include adult de-incarceration and explore how to balance organizational and network needs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do we expand in a time of scarcity? 2. How do you balance and lead organizational and network needs? 3. How to bring staff along with this programmatic shift? 	Their learning was about innovative possibilities for organizations formalizing relationships through initially informal networks. They explored this as a sustainability strategy in itself separate from bringing in additional network funding. Staff throughout the organization is bought-into and able to articulate this evolution of their work.

APPENDIX C: SAMPLING OF METRICS FROM ORIGINAL EVALUATION PLAN

PROCESS			LONG-TERM IMPACTS The time horizon for measuring impacts of the Lab, or any program that aims for changes in practices and systems, is usually longer term. The kind of metrics to look for would be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced ability of leaders to straddle the boundary between networks and healthy organizations Effective emergent practices for leading movement networks are known and have become mainstream More powerful networks arise to anchor movements, launch innovation, and make social justice gains Funding models and organizational structures support network and movement action Staff, board, funders, and capacity builders routinely think and act beyond bounds of single organization Capacity building field has expanded knowledge, skills, and capacity to strengthen network movements, organizations. and leaders
	TRANSACTION	TRANSFORMATION	
CONTAINER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time for innovation in Lab sessions # of participants, retention rate # of sessions completed and quality of sessions Identify strategies/skills to explore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaving with some value, benefit for innovating Trusting environment for taking action and risk Joint analysis of experiences, political analysis that is useful to the group 	
SUPPORTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify most effective supports # of opportunities for topical discussions Level of participant use of supports outside Lab # and frequency of coaching/peer/mentor sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing reflection and learning outside sessions Feeling more prepared to take action to advance their project/cause in their network Network leaders feel supported to take risks 	
EXPERIMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of projects progressing, meeting goals/intended outcomes or redirected from “failures” Teams formed for project, and committed Time devoted to experimenting with their organizations on the projects Resources raised for action learning projects The real costs of the projects (budgeted, in-kind, extra) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sheltered space to take collaborative action, innovate, learn, and possibly fail Advance the strategies being tested Network leadership embodied in the project Learning that is of value to the field Innovations that were set in motion as a result of the project 	
OUTCOMES			
	TRANSACTION	TRANSFORMATION	
LEADERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New partners engaged in the process Changes in leaders use of time Changing roles, responsibilities within organization and in networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants sense of growth and learning; what was learned Better able to make strategic decisions about networks More able to take on opportunities and reaching scale Building leadership in others Managing complexity of balancing org/network demands 	
ORGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # and diversity of staff participating in networked activities Changes in the amount of time invested in networks Changing roles, responsibilities in networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realizing mission better by working in networked ways Managing complexity of balancing org/network demands Openness and deepening of support for new strategies Tools, learnings applied, integrated into the organization 	
SUPPORTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receptivity to action project: # of partners/individuals signing on and participating Level of participation and engagement of partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared goals for innovation articulated, effectively and more widely Trust, alignment, buy-in further developed 	
EXPERIMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of projects progressing, meeting goals/intended outcomes or redirected from “failures” Teams formed for project, and committed Time devoted to experimenting with their organizations on the projects Resources raised for action learning projects The real costs of the projects (budgeted, in-kind, extra) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sheltered space to take collaborative action, innovate, learn, and possibly fail Advance the strategies being tested Network leadership embodied in the project Learning that is of value to the field Innovations that were set in motion as a result of the project 	

APPENDIX D: LAB-RELATED ACTIVITIES

NAME OF ACTIVITY	DATE
MEETINGS	
Assets Learning Network Conference (CFED)	Fall, 2010 small initial conference, Sept, 2012 and Dec, 2013
Meetings with small groups of advisors (Boston, Bay Area, DC, and telephone)	Design phase
Funder dialogue in San Francisco (about 30)	Design phase
Funder meeting NY (about 15)	Design phase
Creating Change Conference - National Gay and Lesbian Task Force	January, 2012
BoardSource Conference presentation	September, 2012
Session at Leadership Learning Community Baltimore conference	May, 2013
GEO Networks Conference	November, 2013
GEO Supporting Movements Conference	November, 2013
Presentation at the Alliance for Nonprofit Management Conference (2 years in a row)	August, 2011 and August, 2013
GEO General conference	March, 2014
Bay Area Justice Funders Network	May, 2014
Edge Funders: Leading and Funding Movement Networks	May, 2014
Funder/Movement Leaders session pre-convening 3	July, 2014
Leading for Impact	September, 2014
Funders Network for Population and Reproductive Rights	November, 2014
Bay Area Justice Funders Network	May, 2014
Whitman Institute Learning Conference	October, 2013
Marguerite Casey Foundation training on Network Leadership for Network Weavers	February, 2014
Open Society Foundations' Open Places Initiative training for grantees on Network Leadership	December, 2014
Presentations to three foundations (staff of Wellspring, staff of GSF, board and staff of Compton)	
WEBINARS	
Alliance for Nonprofit Management Webinar	2011
Strong Fields Program (domestic violence leaders in CA) two webinars	July, 2011 and January, 2013
Leadership Learning Community--Supporting Movement and Network Leadership: Creating Space for Emergent Learning	May, 2014
Building Nonprofit Sustainability: Shared Leadership Learning from the Lab	October, 2014
Webinar with 350.org	Summer, 2014
Collaborative Networks webinar	July, 2014
Nonprofit Quarterly webinar on leadership	March, 2013

NAME OF ACTIVITY	DATE
WRITING	
"Unstill Waters: The Fluid Role of Networks in Social Movements," Robin Katcher, <i>Non Profit Quarterly</i>	2010
"Creating Culture: Promising Practices of Successful Movement Networks," <i>Non Profit Quarterly</i>	Fall/winter 2013
"Towards Complex Adaptive Philanthropy." MAG published	2013
3 case studies printed and posted on website	2013
"Organizational development Practitioners as Agents of Social Change," <i>NTL Handbook of Organizational Development and Change</i> (a chapter)	2014
"The Network Leadership Innovation Lab: A Practice for Social Change," <i>Handbook of Action Research</i> , 3rd Edition	August 2015
Leadership Spectrum articles	2015
Input and quotes on articles on Bold Leadership in NPQ and GEO publications	

APPENDIX E: DESIGN TEAM PROFILES

REA CAREY is the executive director of the National LGBTQ Task Force, the oldest national LGBTQ advocacy group in the U.S., working for the full freedom, equality, and justice for LGBTQ communities in a range of areas, ranging from housing to employment to other basic human rights. Under Rea Carey's leadership since 2004, the Task Force has helped defeat multiple anti-LGBTQ state and federal ballot initiatives, pass federal hate crimes prevention, developed the largest study on transgender discrimination in the U.S. and secured other gains at the intersection of various movements and experiences. At the same time, she has helped build the New Beginning Initiative, creating a multi-issue advocacy agenda on LGBTQ issues that includes issues of housing, immigration, and health. The collaboration, and the Task Force's larger approaches, centers on dynamic networks that recognize intersectional experiences.

SARITA GUPTA is the executive director of Jobs with Justice, a national network of local coalitions that brings together labor unions, faith groups, community organizations, student activists and workers not yet organized to fight for working people. Focusing on transformative social change, Sarita Gupta has helped expand JwJ into 46 cities in 24 states across the country, securing and supporting a wide range of strategic campaigns, at the same time building a long-lasting "network of networks" under the InterAlliance Dialogue (IAD, now UNITY). UNITY includes JwJ, National Day Labor Organizing Network, Right to the City, and several other major networks of economic, racial, immigration and social justice groups. Sarita has been at the forefront of major successful UNITY projects such as the Excluded Worker's Congress, which has developed the power and legislative voice of a wide cross-section of issues faced by worker's without the right to organize in the U.S., such as farmworkers, formerly incarcerated workers, and those from Southern right-to-work states.

KIERRA JOHNSON is the executive director of URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity (formerly CHOICE USA), a youth-driven, campus-based network centered on sexual health and reproductive justice but also centered on building power and shifting local national and state policy with other justice-focused organizations. Kierra Johnson has helped lead URGE for over a decade, starting as a participant in the leadership institutes, helping drive CHOICE USA to a more campaign-based, strategic focus, and expanding the organization's focus on cross-movement collaboration and dialogue. Kierra has been integral to keeping a youth voice in the larger reproductive justice movements and networks (and on a variety of mainstream and web media platforms), linking local grassroots organizing to national advocacy. Among her network leadership, she has worked with CoreAlign, to develop a 30-year strategy for reproductive justice that takes seriously intersectional questions of social justice.

VINCENT PAN is the executive director of Chinese for Affirmative Action, an organization at the leading edge of community-based social justice efforts in San Francisco for over 40 years, focusing on civil rights along multiple fronts and in collaboration with diverse social justice groups. During his time at CAA, Vincent has overseen victories in a range of arenas—from educational access to LGBTQ rights—in an intersectional model that organizes some of the most marginalized in the Chinese and immigrant communities. His approach has relied heavily on flexible, long-term networks for change: Among others, he co-founded and helped grow Asian Americans for Civil Rights and Equality, a flexible, network-based approach platform for movement building that includes other networks, grassroots media, and diverse social change organizations.

EVELINE SHEN is the executive director of Forward Together (formerly Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice) and has been at the forefront of building a network-driven reproductive justice movement that works towards the reproductive health and rights of Asian American women and girls within a social justice framework. Eveline began as an intern with ACRJ and eventually took the helm, transforming the organization through the adoption of a central mind-body practice (Forward Stance) and a quickly-evolving structure (now as Forward Together) that has spurred the growth of several multi-dimensional, multi-issue networks. She helped raise the Expanding the Movement for Empowerment and Reproductive Justice (EMERJ) network, as well as the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective, as key spaces for strategy, learning and action for long-term social justice gains.

TRACY STURDIVANT is the co-founder and co-executive director of Make It Work, a three-year campaign championing policies that allow working Americans to be there for their families and earn a living, at the same time. For the last 20 years, Tracy has worked to strengthen democracy for all by leading and strategizing inside progressive organizations and philanthropic institutions dedicated to increasing the civic participation of women, people of color, and youth. She was most recently Executive Director of State Voices; it was during this appointment when she participated in the Lab Design Team. Tracy serves on several boards, including the National Domestic Workers Alliance, Greenpeace USA, and Higher Heights for America, where she is Board Chair.

GUSTAVO TORRES is the executive director of CASA de Maryland, a pioneer in the immigrant rights movement. Over the last thirty years, CASA de Maryland has transformed from a grassroots group meeting the needs of Central American migrants to the U.S. in the 1980s to a regional services and advocacy powerhouse with over 35,000 members. Gustavo started with CASA as an organizer in 1990 and was critical to developing the organization to a leading immigrant service and advocacy organization—one that links constituents' lived experiences to on-the-ground organizing. During this time, he also helped found and build broader multi-racial, multi-issue networks for immigrant rights that have specifically integrated LGBTQ and African-American communities and led to lasting alliances that center on mutual power-building. Among these networks, the Fair Immigration Reform Network has come to include 300 grassroots organizations in 30 states, helping to secure victories such as state-level driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants and the national executive Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

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ENDNOTES

¹ Rachel Rosner, *Caring Across Generations 2012: A Vision in Motion*, April 2013.

² MAG website: <http://networkleadership.org/who/nlil-design-team/>.

³ MAG website: <http://www.managementassistance.org/lab-goals-principles>.

⁴ See the “Evaluator’s Lens” section below for more of an explanation of transactions and transformations.

⁵ Elissa Perry, “Progress on the Network Leadership Innovation Lab” memo to the MAG Board of Directors on November 7, 2013.

⁶ Recall that “key leaders” are those individuals asked to participate in the Lab, in addition to the executive directors, from each of the participating organizations.

⁷ MAG website: <http://www.managementassistance.org/lab-goals-principles>.

⁸ MAG report: “Movement Network Leader Case Study: Gustavo Torres,” <http://www.managementassistance.org/gustavo-torres-network-leader/>.

⁹ See MAG publications for more case studies on network leadership capacities, here: <http://www.managementassistance.org/publications-resources/>.

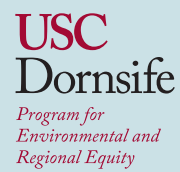
¹⁰ Other models that came up from the research were: crowdfunding, nonprofit-business partnerships, earned income, and social enterprise or social entrepreneurship.

¹¹ See: forwardtogether.org/forward-stance.

¹² Robin Katcher’s email, Fall 2014.

¹³ Downloaded data from MAG website [www.managementassistance.org] as of November 2014: *Unstill Waters* (507), *Complex Adaptive Philanthropy* (401), *Creating Culture* (175), and the combined case studies (1585)—for a total of 2668 downloads of Lab related writings from the Lab website.

¹⁴ From July 14, 2014 gathering evaluations.



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