



**Bonner Curriculum**

# Building a Personal Network

## Overview:

This training introduces the concept of building personal networks, which is a foundation for helping individuals become cognizant about how the relationships they develop through their work in various communities is also building a potentially lifelong network. The workshop is designed to guide participants to distinguish different communities in their lives and what personal resources they have in each of these communities. In addition, participants will be asked to look critically at these networks and assess whether or not they align with personal goals.

*This workshop is the foundation for other trainings including Power Mapping and Negotiating Relationships. This can also be tied into trainings on Community Asset Mapping Strategies, as suggested in the Building Idealist Alliance series of the curriculum.*

## Category:

Relationship building and self-efficacy; interpersonal skills

## Level:

Introductory (can be complemented by the Asset-Based Model trainings that introduce more sophisticated programming)

## Recommended

**Bonner Sequence:** This activity is appropriate to introduce fairly early in a student's development (e.g., sophomore year) or as late as senior year (in conjunction with supporting the intention of networking). It helps to provide a framework and approach for building a personal network. It may be a great activity for a sophomore retreat or class meeting related to recommitment, allowing the student both to look back and also look forward more intentionally. It could also serve as an excellent corollary to vocation activities in junior and senior year.

expectation	explore	experience	example	expertise
VALUES: civic engagement, others as pertaining to career paths				

**Type:** Structured workshop format, with activities that can be modified and integrated into non-workshop structures

**Focus or Goals of this Guide:**

- Participants will have a better understanding of what a personal network is and how personal networks can be important to achieving particular goals.
- Participants have thought concretely about their own personal networks and how these networks are at play in their own lives.

**Materials:**

- Paper, crayons/markers, and pens or pencils for each participant
- Flipchart paper
- Markers, pens, tape
- Hand-out for warm up activity

**How to Do/Brief Outline:**

In this trainer guide, you will find suggested activities for helping participants begin to think about the idea of a (personal) network and its connection to achieving their key goals. While this is written as one workshop, you may choose to break its components into parts to integrate them into standing meetings.

There are five parts:

- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) Welcome and Goals         | suggested time 5 minutes     |
| 2) Warm Up Activity: Find Me | suggested time 10-15 minutes |
| 3) Making a People's Network | suggested time 40 minutes    |
| 4) Developing your Network   | suggested time 30 minutes    |
| 5) Wrap Up                   | suggested time 5 minutes     |

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**Part 1) Welcome and review of goals**

Suggested time 5 minutes

Facilitators welcome participants, introduce themselves, and give an overview of the workshop and the outcomes listed above. Let the participants know the workshop will consist of two main parts: identifying their own personal network and then evaluating it.

**Part 2) Warm Up: Find Me**

Suggested time 5 minutes

Participants will each be given a list of items and asked to find people who fit the descriptions. This exercise is called “Find Me!” For example, the items may say “I can use wood-working tools,” “I like to give contributions to good causes,” “I’m good at working with children,” or “I am good at supporting others during hard times.” Each participant will be asked to find another person that fits this description. When a person is found they will initial the sheet.

Take 5-10 minutes to do this (depending on the size of the group). Ask the group:

- Who completed their sheet? (i.e. got all the statements signed)
- Who could sign the most statements?
- Give an example of something useful you learned that could help you out right away.
- Give an example of something you don’t think is very relevant to your current needs and priorities. Might this change sometime in the future?

**Conclusion: Everyone has something to contribute. Look at all the resources in this room. Some contributions may more relevant or timely than others, but they can all be important (and changing over time).**

### **Part 3) Creating a Map of People’s Networks**

Suggested time: 40 minutes

(10 Minutes)

Hand out paper and pens to all participants. During this time each participant should draw a map of all the different affiliations or communities of people that they belong to. Some of these might include clubs, family, church, neighborhood, or other communities. After drawing out each of these communities, participants should write as many names as possible in each of these communities. These are the people they know that belong to these communities.

(10 Minutes)

When finished they should share their community maps with a small group (3-4 people is best).

(10 Minutes)

As a large group, discuss the following:

- What did you notice about your community map?
- Did you learn anything that surprised you or gain any insights?
- Was there any noticeable over- or under-representation of type of person or type of function in your network?

**Conclusion:** These community maps are your personal networks. They provide the following in many different ways:

“moral support”

“expertise”  
“access”  
“status or identity”  
“resources”

Ask a few people to share why they think this concept or exercise is important and/or relevant to their current work.

## **Part 4) Building Out Networks**

Suggested time: 30 minutes

(15 Minutes)

Transition into the next activity, stating “Now that we have mapped our own personal networks, we are going to take a few minutes to look at the structure of those networks and how they align with our personal goals.”

Ask participants to turn their community maps over in order to write on the back.

Ask participants to write their insights to the following questions on the back of their community maps.

### **Current Analysis**

- Think about what’s going on in your life currently and what you are up to. Write down a few of your main projects and priorities currently. There is no wrong or right answer to this question. Your answers should be whatever comes to mind, small or large.

Have participants turn their paper over and look at their community map. Then ask:

- How can your network support your project or priority?
- Who specifically?
- Do you think your current network is well -suited to support this effort?
- How could you strengthen your network to better support your goals?

### **Future Analysis**

- Think about what you might identify as your long-term career or life goal. Write down a few of your big ideas, focusing on at least five years from now or longer. There is no wrong or right answer to this question. Your answers should be whatever comes to mind, small or large.
- How can your network support your project or priority?
- Who specifically?
- Do you think your current network is well -suited to support this effort?
- How could you strengthen your network to better support your goals?
- How do you think your network/community map will change over time to support your goals and priorities?

(15 Minutes)

Break into small groups again and debrief this exercise.

- What did you notice? What would you like to share with the group?

## **Part 5) Wrap up**

Suggested time: 5 minutes

In this session we have discussed the role a community network can play in supporting your life and work, what your network looks like currently and what it might look like in the future.

Ask a few participants to share some reflections on what they will take away.

Facilitate a Plus/Delta or other way to evaluate the session if time allows.

## ***Warm Up Activity***

### **Find Me!**

- I know how to use wood-working tools and other power tools.
- I enjoy giving small donations to causes I believe in.
- I am good at supporting people in times of crisis.
- I know how to speak Spanish very well or fluently.
- I like leading groups in outdoor activities--biking, hiking, camping, etc.
- I know a lot about health and fitness.
- I am good at working with children and youth.
- I like to plan things.
- I like to cook for others.
- I know a lot about music and bands.
- I keep very current with the local, national, and international happenings.
- I am a good writer.
- I can play a musical instrument and sing well.