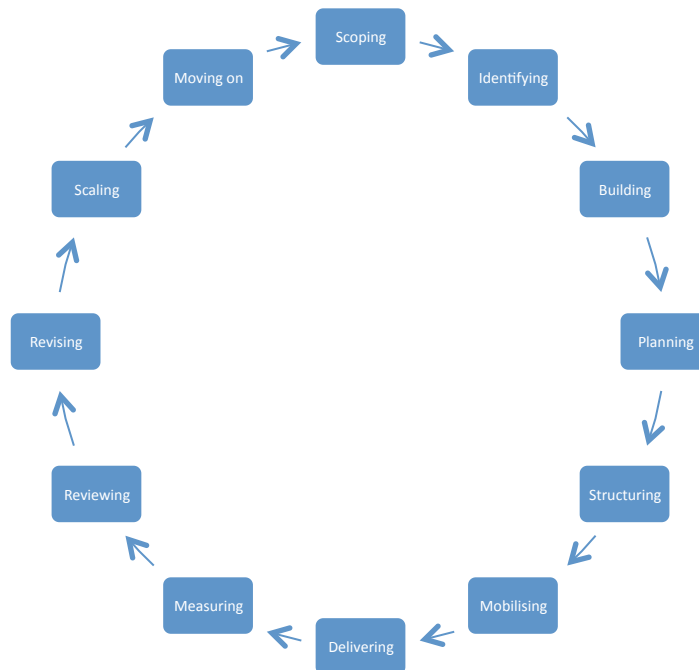


How to develop a network

Developing a network will take time, and will require need significant investment to work through the Network Cycle, which if followed is more likely to result in an effective, functional, outcomes focused network

There are 12 points on the cycle, and they are illustrated in the diagram below:



Of course you will not move smoothly round the cycle in one go, there will be times when you send time focused on one aspect in order to build a foundation before moving onto the next stage. There will also be times during the cycle when you you may restructure or re-focus your plans in light of new information and therefore return to an earlier stage of the cycle before starting round again. The following are very brief descriptions of what needs to happen at each stage, but they will give you a flavour of what is required.

- a. **Scoping:** here you begin to understand the challenge; gather information about it; and consult with stakeholders (local and wider afield) and with potential external resource providers (again local and wider afield). As you do you will begin to build a relationship with people with the aim of creating a network to address the challenge you have found
- b. **Identifying:** part of scoping is identifying potential partners and – if suitable – securing their involvement in the potential network. Part of your task will be to motivate them and encourage them to actively consider working together
- c. **Building:** this happens when you have researched the issue, found many of the players concerned about and/or actively working to combat the issue. Here you are aiming to build a working relationship through agreeing the goals, objectives and core principles that will underpin the Network

- d. **Planning:** here all the partners plan a programme of activities and begin to outline a coherent project
- e. **Structuring:** once the plans have been made and a coherent project agreed you begin to explore the structure and management of their Network medium to long- term. NOTE: it is important that this stage is addressed once people have some confidence in working together, otherwise issues that divide them will seem more important than addressing the issue that unites them
- f. **Mobilising:** this is where partners (and other supporters) identify resources (cash and non-cash) that will be needed to make the project happen
- g. **Delivering:** once resources are in place and project details agreed, the implementation process starts – working to a pre- agreed timetable and (ideally) to specific deliverables
- h. **Measuring:** Is the Network achieving its goals? To find out you need to measure and report on the networks impact and effectiveness – what were the outputs and did they match the expected outcomes
- i. **Reviewing:** as you review the Network, ask what is the impact of the Network on partner organizations? Is it time for partners to leave and / or new partners to join?
- j. **Revising:** in light of the data you have gathered when you have measured and reviewed the Network, programme(s) or project(s), then consider what aspects of the plan/structure/outcomes may need revising
- k. **Scaling:** for long term impact, commitment and continuity continue building appropriate structures and mechanisms for the Network
- l. **Moving On:** building sustainability or agreeing an appropriate conclusion – i.e. the network is able to continue in a sustainable fashion, or the point has come when it is time to stop – if this is the case end well, you will want to work with many of the partners again!