**Empathy Interviews: Exploring the Development of a Formal Network**

Summary of Group Themes

1. Prompt: What values and beliefs do you bring to being in relationship with other leaders?

Take-aways:

* *Everyone is concerned with trust and having shared wisdom*
* *Solutions need to address the problems in ways that respect, acknowledge, and value those in network and those using services*
* *Collective approach, learning from each other and working to solve problems.*
* *Respectful, where everyone is valued and respected; there is collegiality and collaboration.*
* *Wealth of knowledge available through networking.*
* *Must be based on respect. All participants are equal, have unique lived experiences, wisdom, and talent which can collectively make a difference.*
* *Everyone believes that hard work can bring change. We are caring problem solvers with a willingness to share our “lived wisdom”.*
* *Every thoughts/beliefs are about people’s needs and their organization*
* *All leaders must be willing to care for others and their needs. Also experience is needed to understand what is needed within clients.*
* *To enhance and/or improve the ability to believe/achieve/succeed, and empower new and old leadership.*
* *There needs to be respect and trust in the relationships, with a desire to make a difference.*
* *Designing for equal power when making decisions.*
* *We can be stronger and do more by networking.*
* *Hard work can bring change; energy that “we can do this together”*
* *Equality of voices; all network members feel equal*

2. Prompt: What challenges have you experienced being in meaningful relationships with other leaders? What can get in the way of building meaningful relationships?

Take-aways:

* *Be efficient; make it worth people’s time, with positive take-away*
* *The network relationships will be built over time, through clear communication, by respecting each other and being open-minded to novel ideas and change*
* *We all need to be open, carve out time, and reflect if it’s beneficial to our organization.*
* *Lack of follow-through can hinder the effectiveness of the network.*
* *When there is no clarity of purpose, time not managed well, leadership arrogance.*
* *Be consistent and structured; let all voices be heard!*
* *Must be consistent, but not too much of a drain on staff and time. Good of network: respect, good communication, equal power, accountability.*
* *Time (or lack thereof) seems to be the biggest challenge, which makes it difficult to always follow through. Envy of other programs can be discouraging. People want mutual respect from other leaders.*
* *We have the same ideas, and have challenges that need improvement. How do we improve it? Can it be improved? And are willing to work through for our clients and organization’s best interest.*
* *Building a meaningful relationship with other leaders can be a bad experience due to lack of time and others not being willing to change.*
* *Making sure it is a safe, strong, and free environment by expressing issues and goals when standing alone in the leadership.*
* *Finding it difficult to set aside time to build relationships, plus not being listened to.*
* *Time for everyone is valuable – how can we use time effectively?*

3. Prompt: Is it important to you to be connected in an ongoing way to other leaders serving East County specifically? Why and/or why not?

Take-aways:

* *Yes, very – to understand all of what we are doing. We all want to work together.*
* *The network would let us share strategies, learn about resources, and collaborate to meet needs*
* *Yes, we can expand our network of services, create more resources, double our efforts and have a collective vision.*
* *No, because of capacity for time (geographic challenges, traffic)*
* *Yes, to expand and improve services, increase awareness, and share strategies.*
* *Resource sharing opportunities that can augment and enhance services and the quality of life*
* *Being connected via networks can expand and help clients.*
* *Yes, we can share info regarding services, collaborate in order to better serve clients, and have a greater impact together.*
* *It would be very productive to share resources, services, clients…*
* *Everyone wants to stay connected. Learning from each other, sharing without competing.*
* *Yes, because building connection with other leaders helps us serve our clients to the best potential.*
* *Establish trusting relationships.*
* *It would help each NPO to meet clients’ needs by sharing resources and strategies. No travel.*
* *Collaborate in ECC to find solutions and share resources to make a difference.*
* *We can be empowered to improve our East County community.*

4. Prompt: What types of leaders would you most like to be in network with? All nonprofits? Just human service nonprofits? Funders? Government? Others?

Take-aways:

* *It depends on the organization.*
* *The network should be inclusive and welcome everyone.*
* *All leaders.*
* *Diversity of leaders with the same purpose.*
* *Flexibility of structure*
* *Flexibility of structure based on level of responsibility and accountability.*
* *Affinity/mission-driven, connected but not necessarily the same mission.*
* *Leaders with a shared mission, include funders*
* *Other NPs and funders are tops on the invite list. Adding a diverse selection of community members would be beneficial.*
* *We all want to network and build relationship with different leaders. They all bring and can bring some opportunity for the organizations.*
* *All types of leaders because it helps to have a diverse group to help connect for a cause.*
* *Convincing small businesses to trust and invest in small nonprofits.*
* *Everyone/all*
* *All stakeholders should be a part of the network.*
* *We are open to everyone – some will have occasional roles.*
* *Diversity of roles (“room for everyone”)*
* *A “core” group of members in consistent relationship with other stakeholders*

5. Prompt: Imagine a network having three (3) initial focus areas or priorities. What 3 focus areas or priorities would be important to you?

Take-aways:

* *The network should focus on health, wealth, learning, and advocacy.*
* *All over the board. Network adding value to organization’s mission, safety net services & resource sharing, advocacy, education (internal & external)*
* *Lots of individual priorities based on the types & services orgs/individuals provide.*
* *Safety net, funding/resource development, advocacy.*
* *Network focus needs to be related and add value to your own mission.*
* *Advocacy, safety net services, resource sharing, fund development.*
* *Shelter, funding, various types of education are needed for all demographics*
* *Health and poverty are some big issues that every organization would like to help clients with.*
* *The main point of having a network is to be of use to serve clients to further their life in one way or another.*
* *To educate individual community members by going door-to-door and attending town hall meetings.*
* *Education and services for all*
* *Educating ourselves and our communities about what’s going on and resources available.*
* *Safety net, resource sharing, advocacy, and education (internal/external)*

6. Prompt: What qualities or characteristics of a network would likely cause you to never join or to stop attending?

Take-aways:

* *There must be an effect, with a mechanism to set goals and track on them*
* *Network must be based on reciprocity, not just self-serving*
* *Must be a reasonable time commitment (not too often); leader must be sensitive to time needs of members*
* *Network must have a mix of types of power/capacity*
* *An ineffective and disorganized network won’t engage or retain members.*
* *Has to be worth our time.*
* *Nothing happens, or network is self-serving and not relevant.*
* *If dues are too high, network is not inclusive, or there are too many meetings.*
* *A network that doesn’t get its act together; no actionable results; or power is not distributed*
* *Not listening, power struggles, inconsistency, lack of clarity, and no action/goals.*
* *Must be relevant with shared power where all at the table understand the purpose and goals. Work together to make process and work for the benefit of all.*
* *Must be productive and not “self-serving”*
* *People and organizations value time, and important topics. Don’t waste time you could use for something more important.*
* *When a network is narrow-minded and not truly there for the community.*
* *Leadership members who cancel meetings or display not respect for values or goals – then I would excuse myself.*
* *No action or goals. Lack of purpose and not relevant.*
* *Network needs to respect the time and have a goal or outcome.*

7. Prompt: What kinds of supports and leadership, in your experience/opinion, are essential to launching and sustaining a successful network?

Take-aways:

* *Strong goals and leadership*
* *The network needs vision, and clear purpose & structure, adequate resources, and people who care.*
* *Empathy from leaders. Ensuring leaders have succession plan, leaders that are willing to learn from others, with a structure to follow.*
* *Structure and facilitation, leadership, a schedule, follow-up, and funding.*
* *A consistent and predictable set of resources with a clear vision and game plan; facilitated*
* *Format where people are heard (facilitation?); get periodic feedback for members as to the value/focus of the network; clear objectives.*
* *Strong leaders, clear structure, well resourced, consistent, with “skin in the game”.*
* *NP leaders are looking for occasional, goal-oriented networking opportunities with like-minded individuals. Must have strong leadership/facilitator.*
* *Everyone’s participation goes a long way.*
* *Supporters/leaders that are willing to go the extra mile for their clients. Willing to change for a good cause.*
* *People with a vision and purpose where trust and boundaries are present.*
* *Experienced/strong leadership*
* *Funding for strong leaders who empathize and follow through.*
* *Experienced leadership to lead the network. Adequate resources.*
* *Initial goals for what we want to accomplish*
* *Shared vision/narrative for network*

8. Prompt: In your heart of hearts, does the idea of a network excite you? Why or why not?

Take-aways:

* *A network would help us connect with each other, gain valuable knowledge about resources, and serve needs.*
* *Yes, it will create more network and resources, tap into diversity and talent, empower younger generations, hold organizations accountable to community.*
* *Yes – a network that has a shared vision, with accountability, measuring progress and results; working towards achieving greater social change/impact.*
* *Yes, to amplify information.*
* *Yes, if it is relevant, outcomes based and not too much time, we can have an amplified effect.*
* *Yes… “let’s collaborate” said all but one of us.*
* *Everyone likes to network and see the importance of it.*
* *Yes, because teamwork is what makes our community strive for success.*
* *Young folks stepping up to take leadership roles and being safe, strong, and free.*
* *Yes because resources could be expanded to do more for clients.*
* *Yes, we learn best by using our talents, connections, and knowledge to get an outcome.*
* *Yes, we’ve already started!*
* *Yes, for storytelling*
* *Yes, for a regular community needs assessment*