

# **Building a Nonprofit Network:** *Designing the Right Structures and Processes*

*Offered by*  
*Ontario Volunteer Centre's Network*  
*in partnership with*  
*Ontario Nonprofit Network*  
*Sponsored by: Ontario Trillium Foundation*

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**Mollenhauer Consulting**

**Building a network or  
collaboration is a journey.**



**But it is rarely a linear journey,  
and often chaotic.**

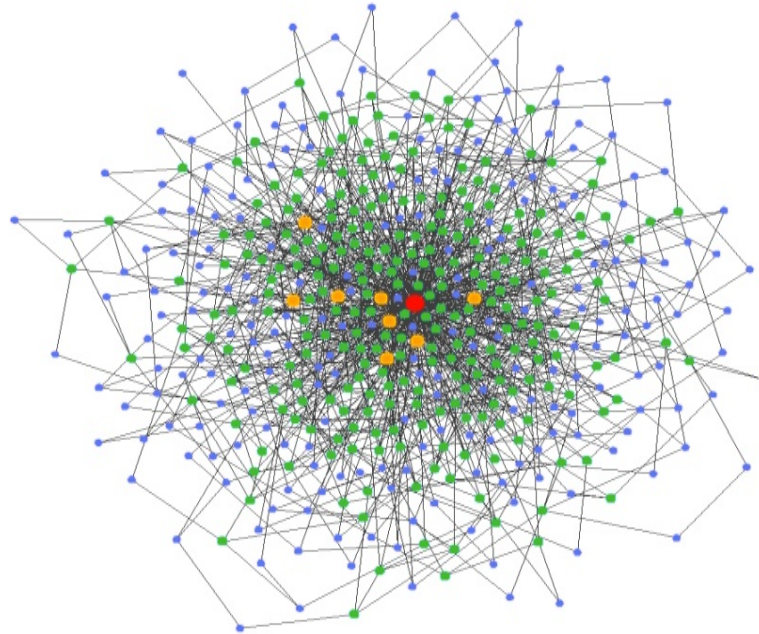


# Webinar Objectives

- ✓ **Defining what is meant by a network**
- ✓ **Talk about the critical success factors**
- ✓ **Review the critical choices or decisions**

# **Polling 1: Participant Profile**

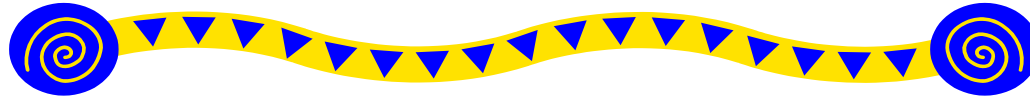
**There is no one model of  
how to structure a network  
or collaboration.**



# Defining Network

- ✓ **Often used interchangeably with collaboration, partnership, collective, council, coalition and association**
- ✓ **Group of people or autonomous organizations which choose to work together to achieve collective goals**

# Wide Range...Drives Design



**Formality**

**Duration**

**Scope**

**Diversity**

**Linkages**

**Dynamics**



**Exercise 1: What are the critical success factors that make the structure and processes of a network or collaboration hum?**

# Critical Success Factors

- ✓ Purpose is compelling and unifying
- ✓ Decision-making and ownership is shared
- ✓ Leadership facilitates and mobilizes
- ✓ Brainpower is unleashed
- ✓ Communication is fast, flexible, effective and accessible
- ✓ Design is practical and adaptive



Unifying purpose

Membership

Codify

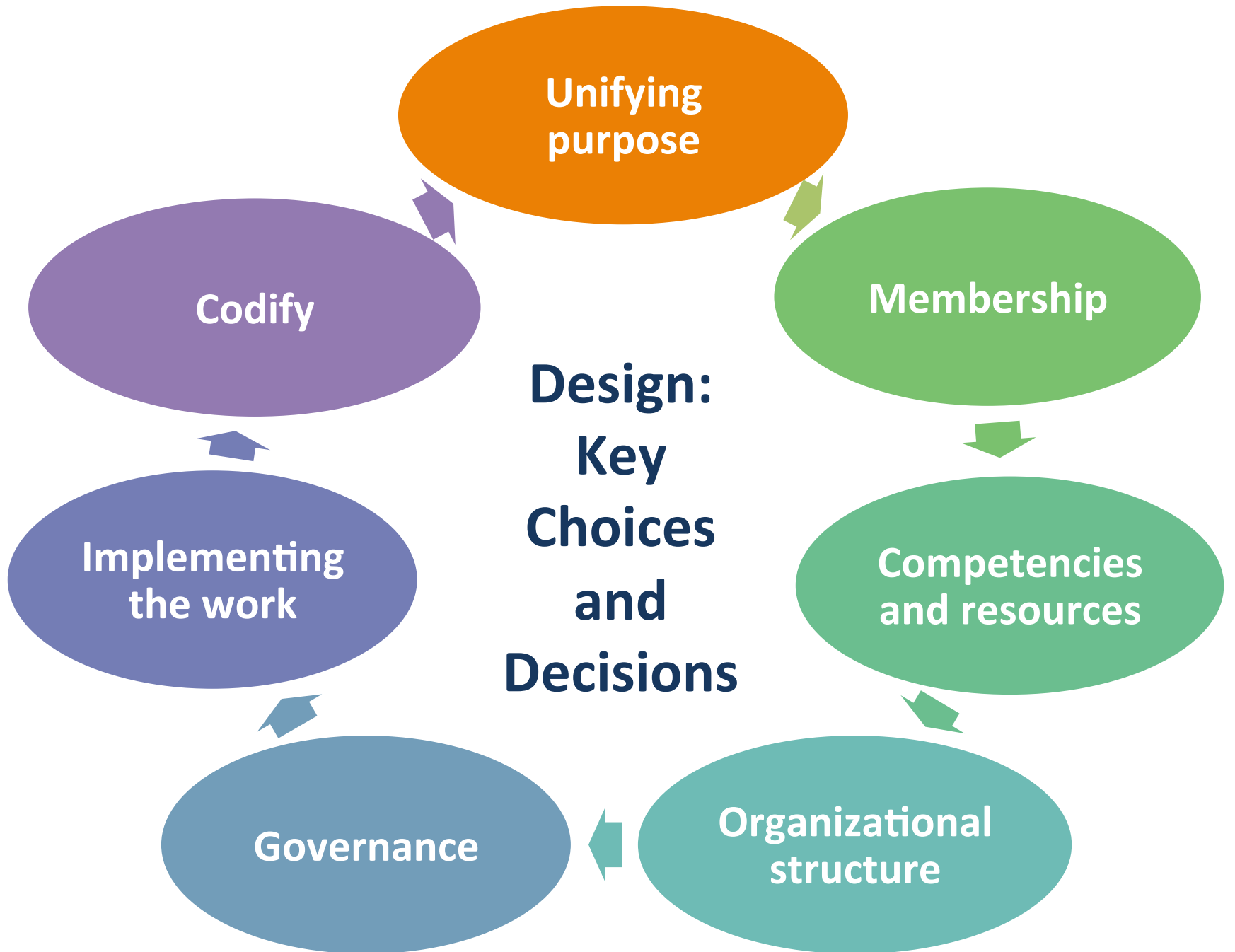
**Design:  
Key  
Choices  
and  
Decisions**

Competencies  
and resources

Implementing  
the work

Governance

Organizational  
structure



1. What is the unifying purpose?

**Form follows function**



# 1. What is the unifying purpose?

**Vision, outcomes, goals and value proposition that are:**



- ✓ **Clear**
- ✓ **Grounded in reality**
- ✓ **Unique**
- ✓ **Urgent**
- ✓ **Satisfies mutual self-interest**

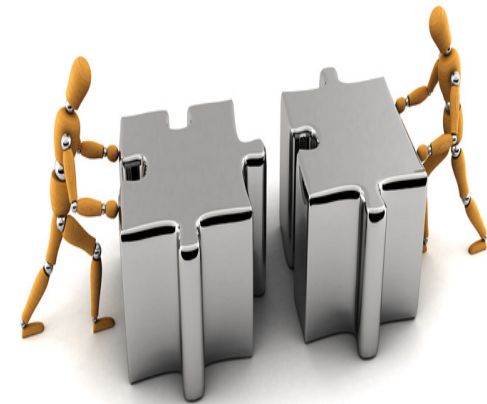
## 2. Who are the members or partners?

- ✓ **Shared vision and buy-in to the goals**
- ✓ **Vested interests**
- ✓ **Skills, capacities, connections and resources**
- ✓ **Mutual trust and respect**
- ✓ **Willingness to actively participate and be held accountable**



### **3. What core competencies, capacities and resources are required and how will we access them?**

- 1. What are required to achieve the outcomes and value proposition?**
- 2. What can members or partners contribute?**
- 3. Where are the shortfalls and how can they be addressed?**

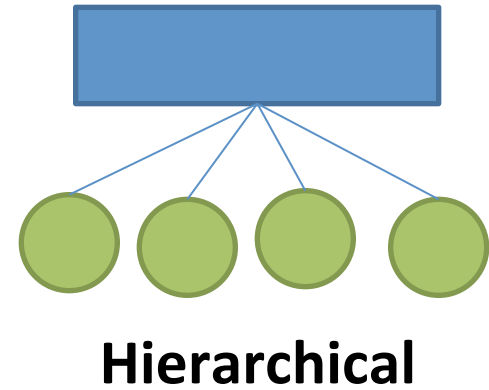
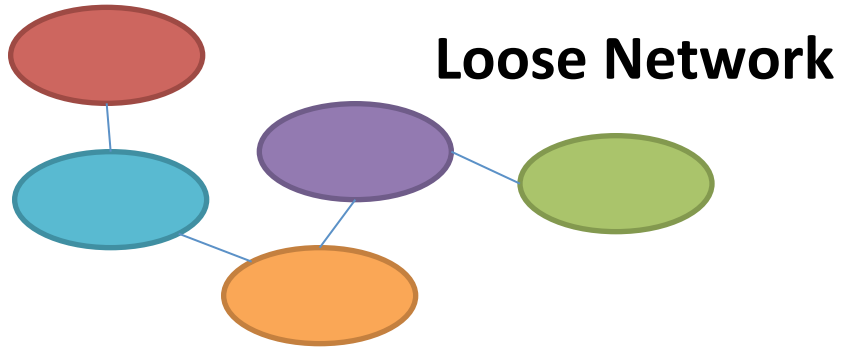


# 4. What is the organizing structure?

- Should it be collectively organized without any attachment to an entity?
- Will key functions be performed by a lead organization(s)? If so, what and how?
- Should it operate as project of a 'shared administrative platform?
- Should it incorporate as a legal entity?



# Organizing Options



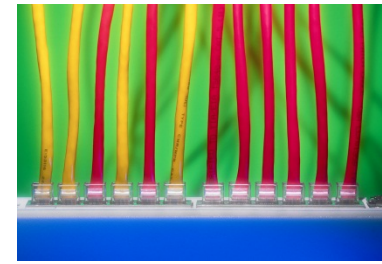
# **Polling 2: Organizing Structure**

## 4. What is the organizing structure? **Collectively Organized**



- **Contribute all capacities and resources**
- **Formal or informal arrangement**
- **Diversified/shared leadership**
- **Agile and responsive, but process heavy and challenging for accountability**

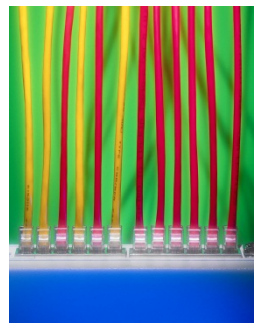
# 4. What is the organizing structure? Lead Organization(s)



- Utilize membership for various functions (*host/convenor; fiscal/legal; administration*)
- May exert more or less control
- Formal or informal arrangement
- Create efficiencies but also disengagement and/or power differentials

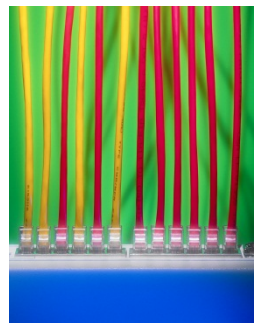
## 4. What is the organizing structure?

# Shared Administrative Platform Organization



- **SAP has governance/ legal/fiduciary responsibility**
- **Project director and Steering Committee set strategic direction and do implementation**
- **Based on Terms of Reference**
- **Raise own funds and portion to SAP**

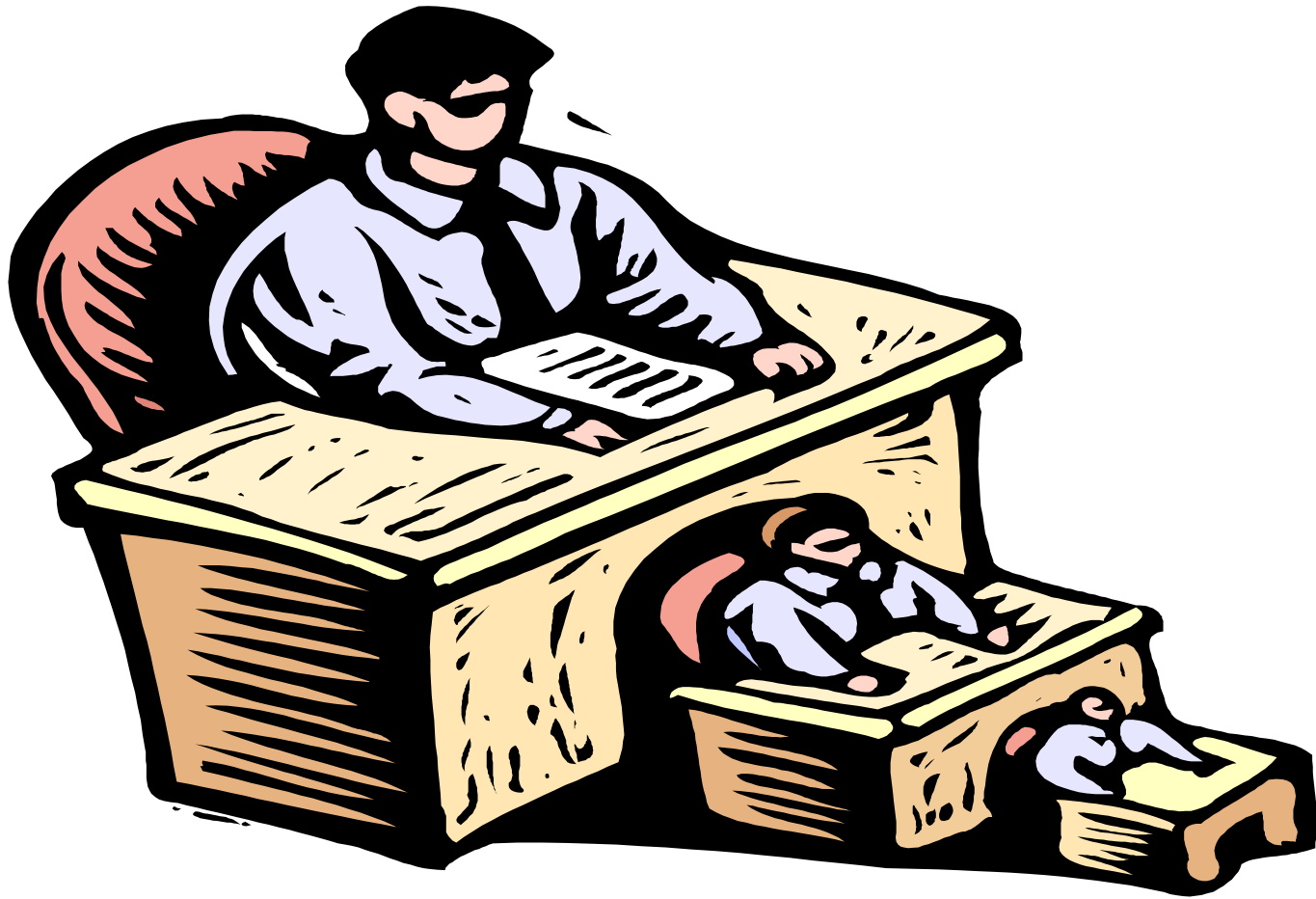
# 4. What is the organizing structure? Incorporation



- **More infrastructure**
- **More centralized**
- **Participates highly engaged or peripherally**
- **Decision-making highly distributed or centralized**
- **More accountable and easier to manage, but may be less agile and more disengaged**

# 5. How will it be governed?

**Bad**



# 5. How will it be governed?

**Good**



## 5. How will it be governed?

### Key Functions



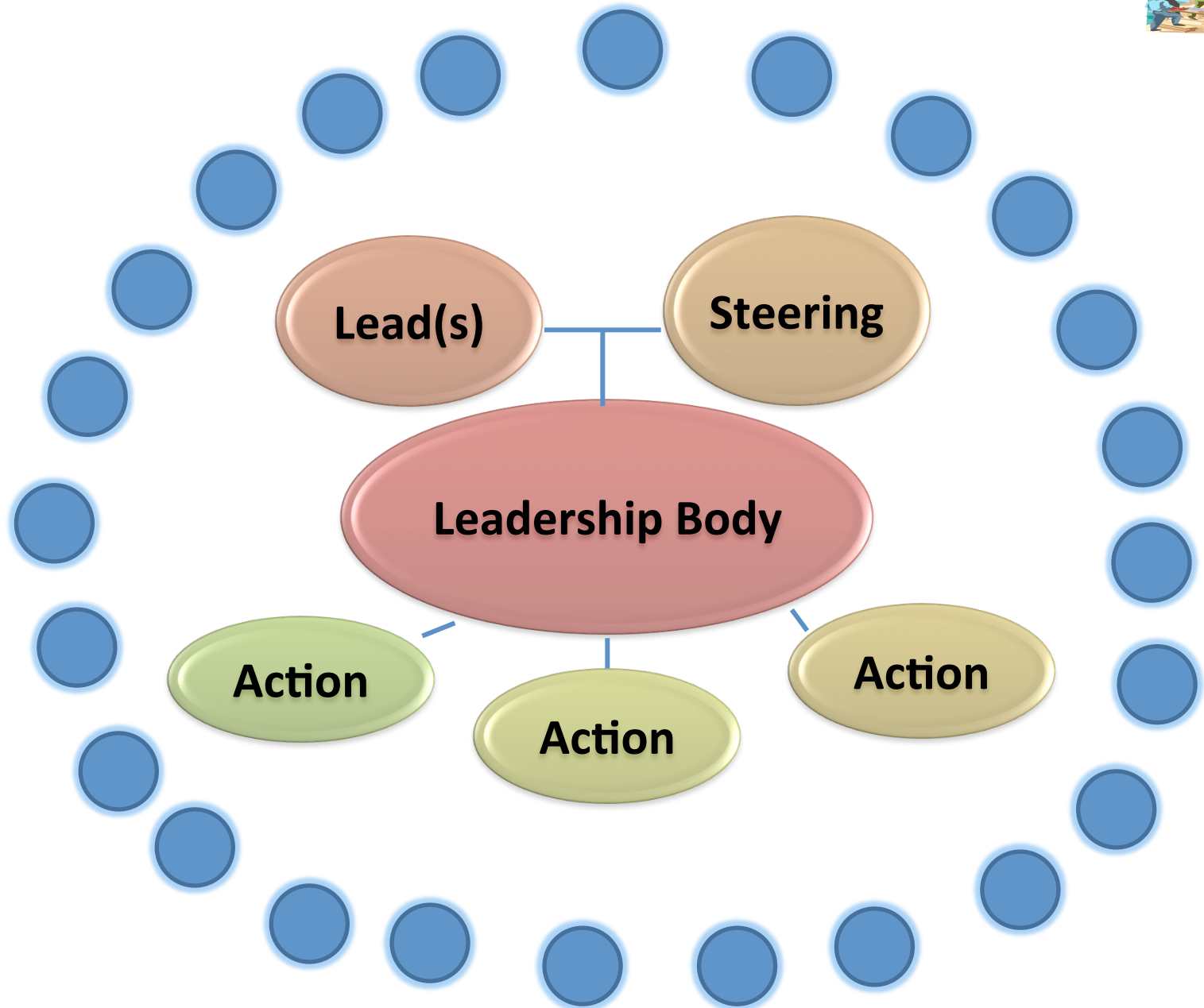
- Resources are acquired and used ethically, effectively and efficiently
- Legal and regulatory requirements are met
- Clear sense of direction and priorities; results are achieved and valued
- Values are lived; there is a high degree of trust
- Participants are engaged and held accountable

## 5. How will it be governed? Decision-making



- What is to be achieved and how fluid are the outcomes?
- What kind of accountability is required? What are the power dynamics?
- What are the values?
- How centralized or decentralized?
- How can technology be utilized?

# 5. How will it be governed?





**Exercise 2: What are the key characteristics of network leaders?**

## 5. How will it be governed? Network Leadership

- Inspires vision
- Champion
- Connects
- Facilitates and mediates
- Unleashes capacity
- Balances process with results
- Orchestrates
- Passes the baton



# 6. How will the work get done?

**1. Who will be responsible for the work of the network?**

**2. How will the network be coordinated?**

**3. What other infrastructure is required?**



## 6. How will the work get done?

# Network Coordinator



- Enables collective action by working with and through members rather than doing the work themselves
- Skilled at: project management, systems and process, engagement, facilitation, mediation

# 7. How will the relationships, structure and processes be documented?

## ■ What purpose will it fulfill?

- *Clarify expectations*
- *Ensure accountability*
- *Build engagement*
- *Create trust*



## ■ How formal does it need to be?

## ■ Who will create it, monitor and revise it?

## For more information:

***Building a Nonprofit Network*** document  
and taped webinar on:

OVCN website: [www.ovcn.ca](http://www.ovcn.ca)

ONN website: [www.theonn.ca](http://www.theonn.ca)

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