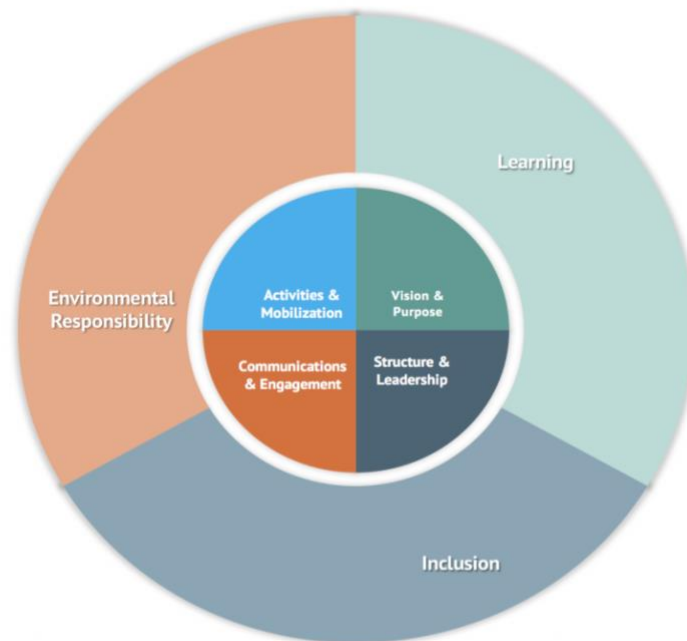# InHive Alumni Network Building Methodology

Our approach combines a decade of practical experience with sector-wide best practice and insights from network building in over 30 countries across the world.

INHIVE METHODOLOGY: NETWORK COMPONENTS AND VALUES

We believe that for alumni networks to thrive they need to have these four components:

1.   Vision and Purpose:

A network must be bound together by a shared purpose and aspirational vision for positive change. This should be guided by the organisation or school, but ultimately defined by the community itself.

2.   Structure and Leadership:

A clearly designated group of individuals to lead the network, including representatives of the marginalised, who are able to effectively co-manage and make decisions. Establish the leadership structure early and build on existing structures and systems.

3.   Communications and Engagement:

A deliberate strategy for maintaining engagement and fostering a sense of belonging is needed. This requires effective data management and careful selection of platforms and tools, which will encourage members across different segments to engage with one another.

4.   Activities and Mobilisation:

Co-define activities and collective action that will answer the needs of your network members and current students or participants. In line with your vision, this could include mentoring, careers advice, ambassadorial roles, professional development, grant-giving and more.

Cross-cutting values

Underpinning the core components are three cross-cutting values. We consider it essential to practice these values to contribute to positive social change in all components of network building:

I. Learning:
Adopt an inquisitive approach so that you can reflect, adapt and improve. Set out what you want to measure, how to track impact on a number of levels and have a plan to apply learnings.

II. Inclusion:
Create empowering spaces that celebrate diversity and enable those who are often excluded to participate, co-own and co-lead the network and feel that they belong.

III. Environmental responsibility:
Prioritise goals and the use of resources so that current and future generations can prosper and lead fulfilling and healthy lives locally and globally.

Network Assessment Matrix for Programmatic Networks

Based on our inHive methodology, we created an assessment tool for alumni networks that bring together former participants in programmes or beneficiaries of certain interventions such as scholarships.

It is intended to be used primarily by:

1) individuals outside of the networks' leadership or organisation that runs the programme (i.e. third party/external stakeholders such as inHive)
2) staff members of the organisation or programme from which it emerged; or
3) leaders of the alumni networks; (i.e. internal stakeholders)

The assessment includes 30 questions within 4 components of network building as designed by inHive. The questions are designed to help ascertain where the network is on its journey towards an engaged, inclusive, self-sustaining and sustainable network, which contributes to positive social transformation. The assessment should enable the creation of plans of action how to help the network move along its journey. This can include for example trainings or capacity building for its leaders, consultations and research with its members, purchase of assets, etc.

No matter where the network is placed along the imaginary journey line, it is possible to improve and move further towards the final destination, which is described for each assessment question. The assessment can be repeated periodically as a monitoring and learning exercise. Each organisation or network should prioritise which actions to focus on for their plan. This can be based on the resources available and the timeframe on which it operates. For example, a network may choose to focus on 10 actions based on 7 assessment questions to be implemented over a 2- year period. Within these 10 actions can be a mix of quick 'easy wins' and longer-term actions.

inHive Network Building Component	Number	Assessment Questions
1. Vision & Purpose	1.1	Does the network have a **clear aspirational vision that responds to the current and future needs of the entire community of stakeholders** (such as programme staff, current and former beneficiaries/participants, and partner organisations)?
	1.2	Does the network have a **vision that was co-created and co-decided by all stakeholders of the programme's community** such as organisation's staff, funders, senior leadership, current and former participants/ beneficiaries and partners in their diversity?
	1.3	Does the network have a clear **process to evaluate and iterate the vision and purpose** of the network in order to keep it in line with the changing needs and wishes of all stakeholders over time?
	1.4	Are the **network's vision and purpose fully embedded in the strategic vision, plans and values of the organisation**/ programme from which the network has emerged?
	1.5	Do the members of the network and its stakeholders have an **awareness of its purpose, especially its benefits,** which they use for active engagement?
2. Structure & Leadership	2.1	Does the network have a clear support for its development and growth from senior leadership/ decision makers of the programme/ organisation from which it emerged?
	2.2	Does the network have a clearly **designated diverse group of individuals to co-lead** the network to develop and strengthen it in an inclusive and sustainable way?
	2.3	Do the network leaders have **clear roles and responsibilities and collectively cover broad set of skillsets** needed to run the Network, including: communications, organisations, budgeting/finance management, event planning, inclusive leadership, team work?
	2.4	Do the network **leaders have an understanding of the principles and strategies for network building** and have the skills-development mindset to continue to grow with the network?
	2.5	Does the network have **appropriate and empowering accountability structures** that foster positive engagement of its members and improvement over time?
	2.6	Does the network have a **pipeline of future leaders and a plan for onboarding new generations of leaders** to replace any leaders who leave to ensure continuity of the network's activities over time?
	2.7	Does the network have a clear **12-month plan**?
	2.8	Do the network **leaders have a learning mindset and a process in place to gather feedback**, learn and adjust their plans and priorities?
	2.9	Do the network leaders and all diverse members of stakeholder groups, especially programme/ organisational staff from whom they emerge, operate on **high levels of trust in their relationships**?

	2.10	Does the network have **sub-structures** of members, if necessary, to enable the network to effectively reach and engage the network across various geographies and areas of interest?
3. Communications & Engagement	3.1	Does the network have a clearly articulated **process and infrastructure for the leaders to capture information** about the network members?
	3.2	Does the network have a **functioning process to keep members' details updated**, which network leaders and members use and follow?
	3.3	Does the network have a **process to transition current programme participants or beneficiaries into the network**?
	3.4	Do the network leaders foster engagement with and among all members in their diversity, especially those frequently excluded based on their gender, race, class or other sources of disempowerment in the network's context?
	3.5	Do the **network members receive frequent communication with relevant** opportunities, invitations to get involved, and with stories from other network members?
	3.6	Do the network **leaders learn about and respond to alumni communication preferences**?
	3.7	Does a broad spectrum of network **members feel a sense of belonging in the community?**
	3.8	Do the **network members, of various backgrounds, grow in number** over time in an environmentally responsible way?
4. Activities	4.1	Are there **activities for network members** in line with the networks' vision?
	4.2	Are there **activities that benefit the current beneficiaries or participants** and the organisations or programmes from which the network originates?
	4.3	Does the network have sufficient **funding** to remove barriers to participation in activities?
	4.4	Are there **activities that benefit the network members** (former beneficiaries or participants) which stimulate interest and engagement?
	4.5	Are activities purposely planned with safety, wellbeing and accessibility of all participants in mind?
	4.6	Are the network leaders **adapting activities in response to learnings?**
	4.7	Do network **members feel able to propose and implement new initiatives**?