

SUMMIT24

MARCH 26, 2024 | 8:30-9:45 AM

5D. IMPROVEMENT NETWORK DEVELOPMENT: LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

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PRESENTERS:

- *Jennifer Lin Russell, Vanderbilt University*
- *Jennifer Zoltners Sherer, Partners for Network Improvement*
- *Anthony Bryk, Carnegie Foundation*
- *Angel Li, Carnegie Foundation*



Carnegie Foundation
for the Advancement of Teaching

Presenters



Jennifer Lin Russell
Professor, Vanderbilt
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Jennifer Zoltners Sherer
Research Associate,
Partners for Network
Improvement



Anthony Bryk
Senior Fellow &
President Emeritus,
Carnegie Foundation



Angel Li
Associate,
Carnegie Evidence &
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Carnegie Foundation





Objectives

- Name the domains that constitute **network health**.
- Gain a better understanding of the **strategies and conditions** that contribute to network health and development.
- Reflect on your work and **apply lessons learned** from the session to your context.





Agenda

- Human connection activity
- Improvement Network Development Framework
- Emerging lessons learned from our project
- Collective sensemaking activity
- More emerging lessons learned
- Collective sensemaking activity



Turn and Talk

What brought you to this session?

**What do you hope to learn about
networks today?**

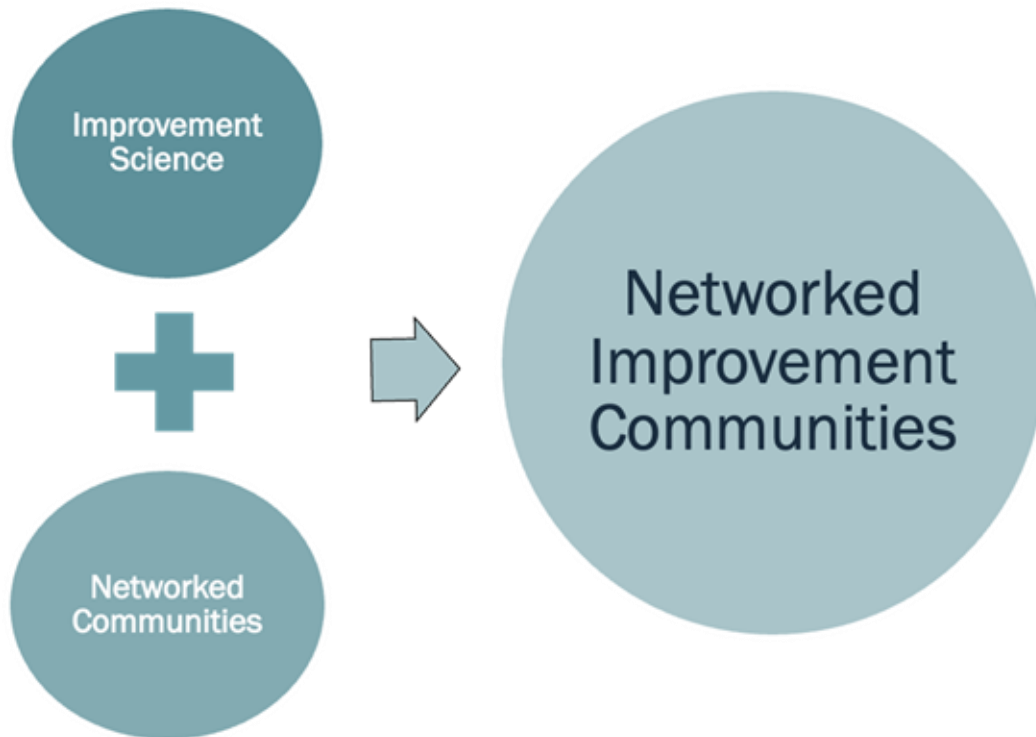


Improvement Network Development

Networked improvement communities

Integrating Two Big Ideas:

- The tools and technologies of **Improvement Science**
- The **Power of Networks**



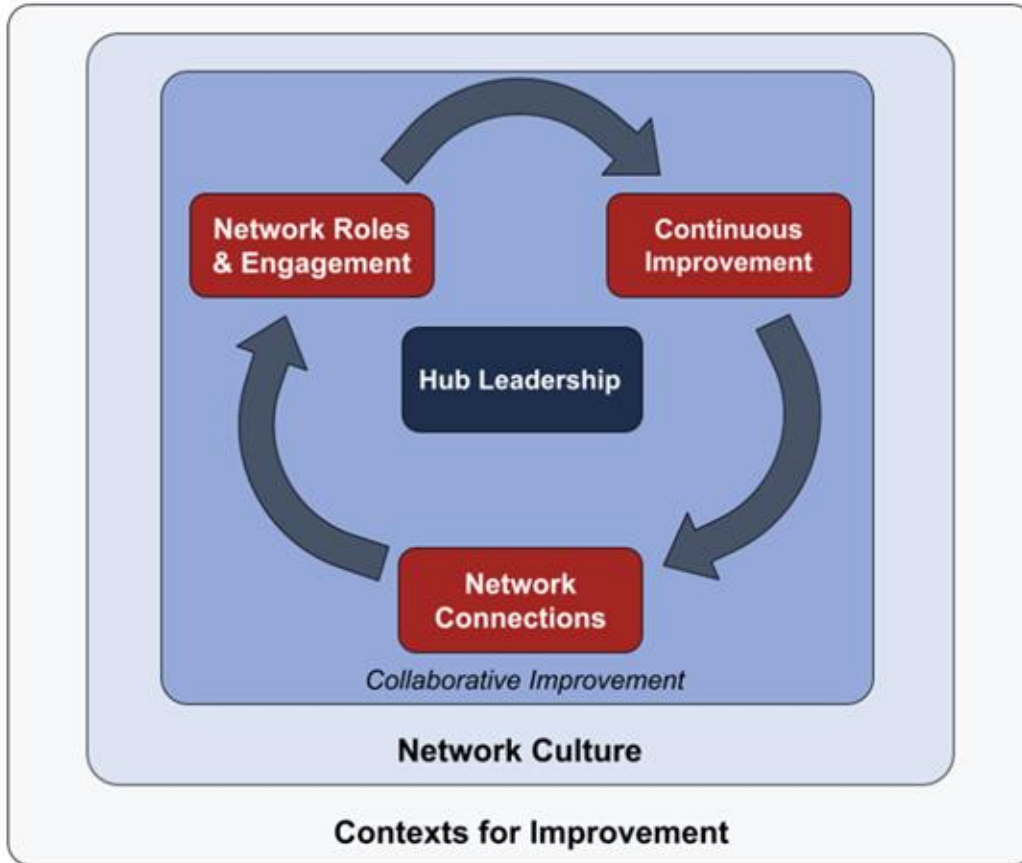
Networked Improvement Communities

- Consist of a leadership team – a “**hub**”– recruits and coordinates the work of educational professionals, designers, and researchers specifically assembled to attack a targeted improvement problem
- The hub working together with these “**network members**”:
 - *Develop a deep understanding of the problem* they are trying to solve
 - *Specify an evidence-based theory of improvement, a measurable aim, and a system of measures to inform their efforts*
 - *Utilize continuous improvement methodologies*, such as data-based inquiry cycles, to learn how to improve some processes and systems
 - *Organize for network-wide learning* as members adapt and spread evolving improvements into more varied contexts

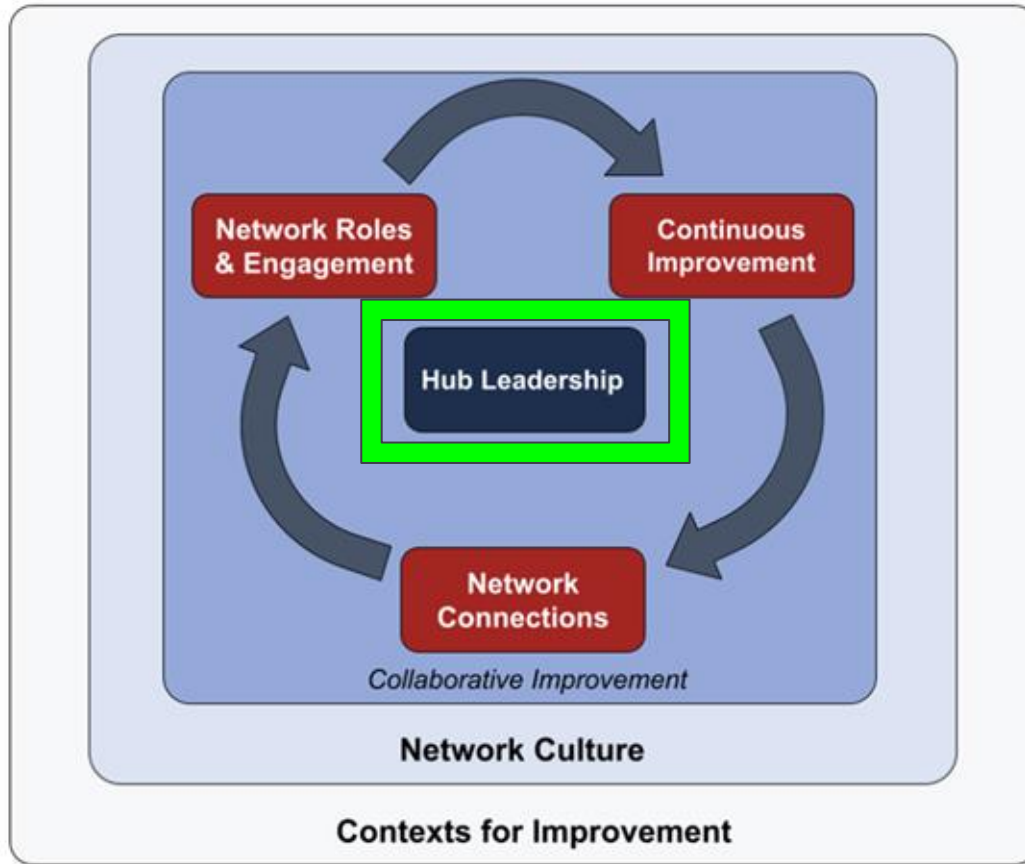
(Bryk, Gomez, Grunow & LeMahieu, 2015; Gomez, et al., 2017)



Improvement Network Development Framework



Improvement Network Development Framework

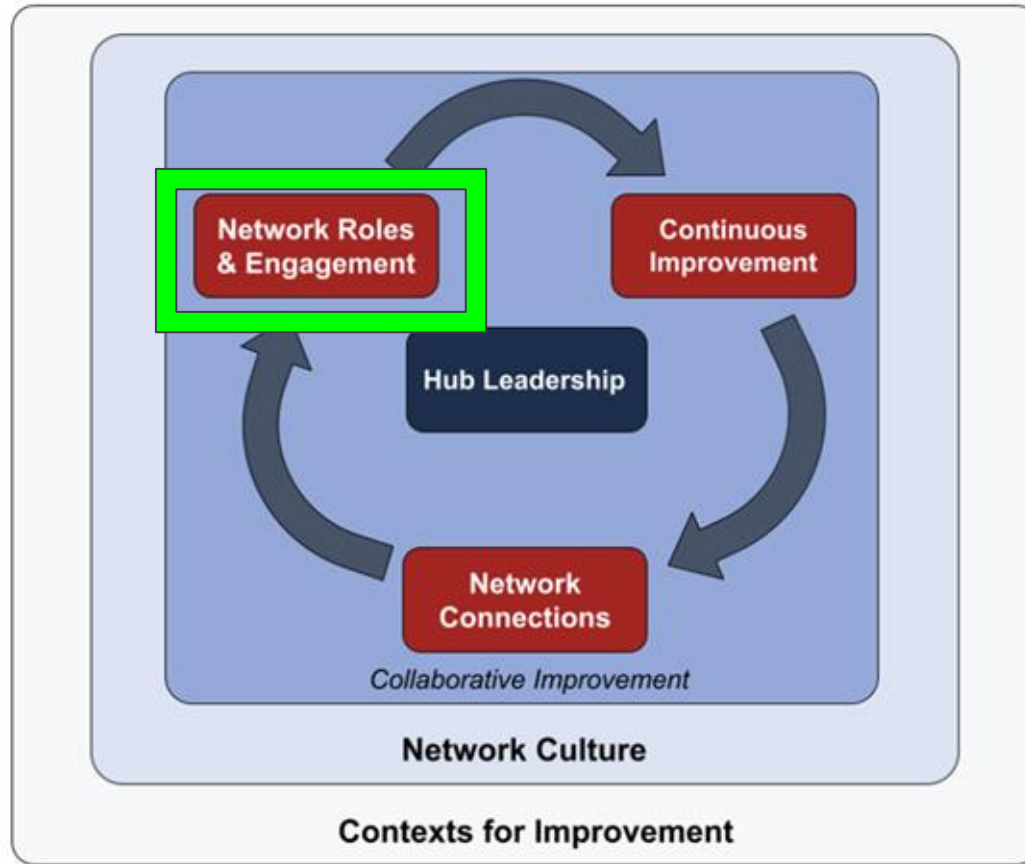


Hub Leadership

- Create a learning organization
- Establish a vision
- Design participation structures
- Build trust
- Manage knowledge



Improvement Network Development Framework

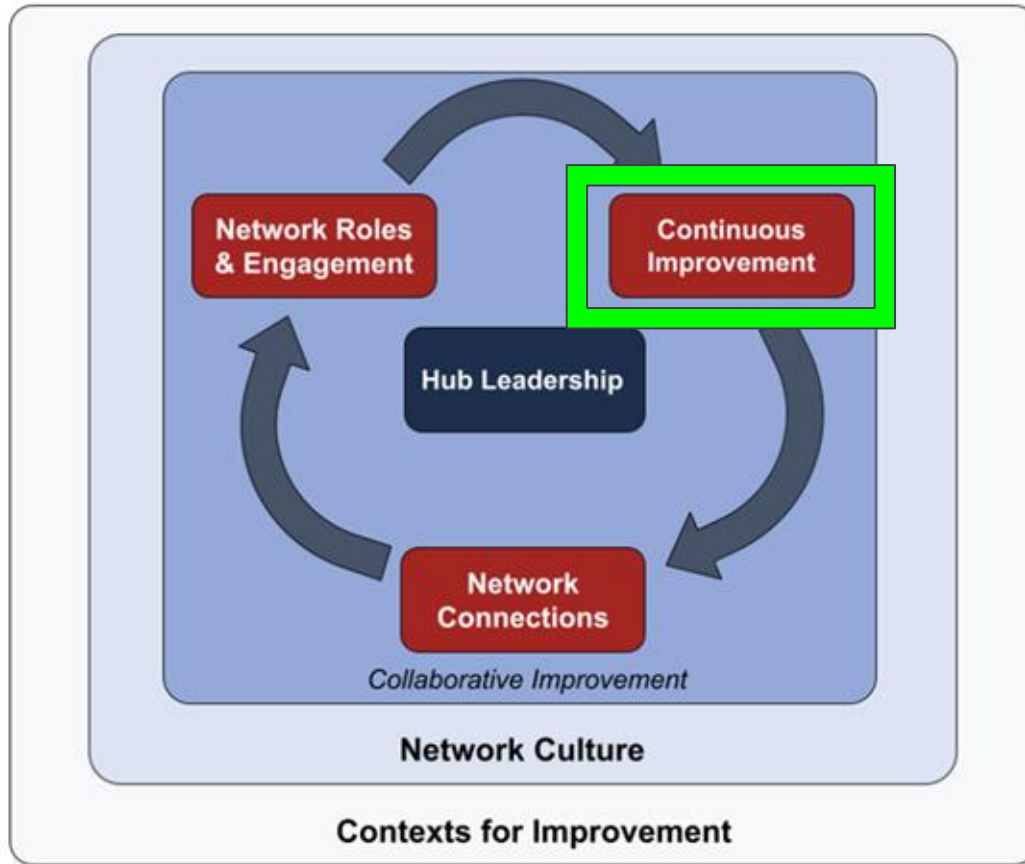


Network Roles & Engagement

- Who is in the network
- What expectations members have for how to engage in the work



Improvement Network Development Framework

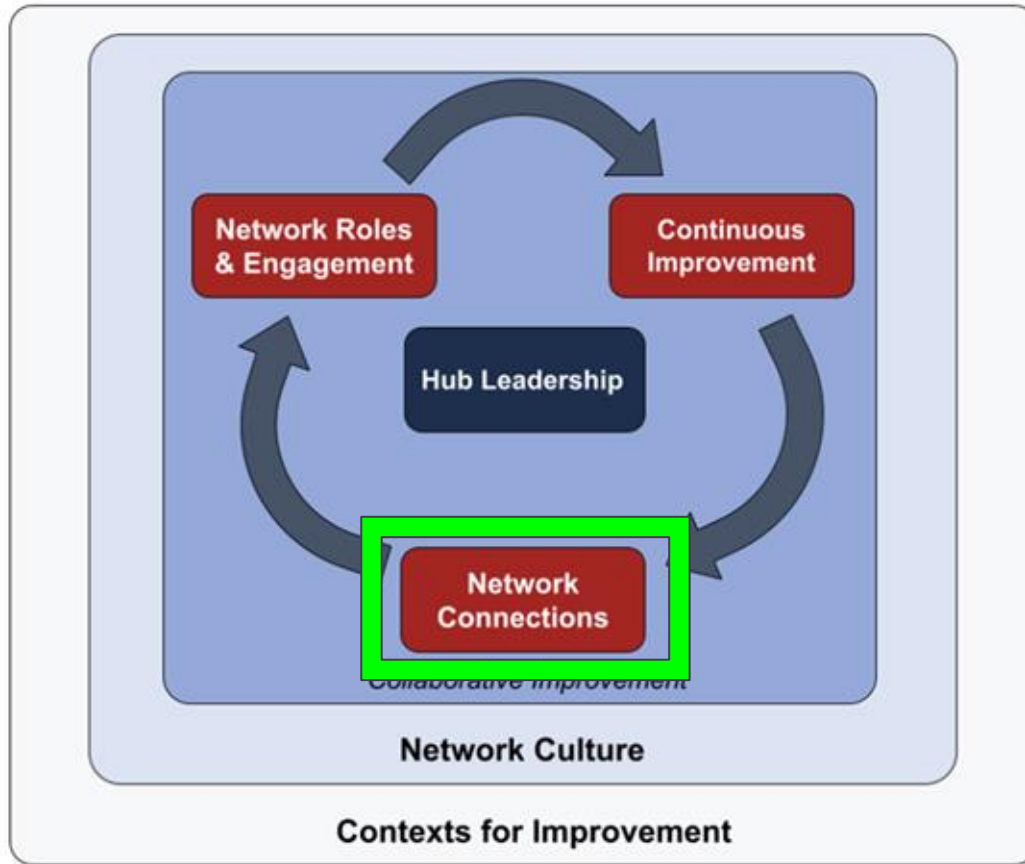


Continuous improvement

- Structured inquiry processes
- Knowledge production
- Tools and routines
- Equity-focused goals



Improvement Network Development Framework

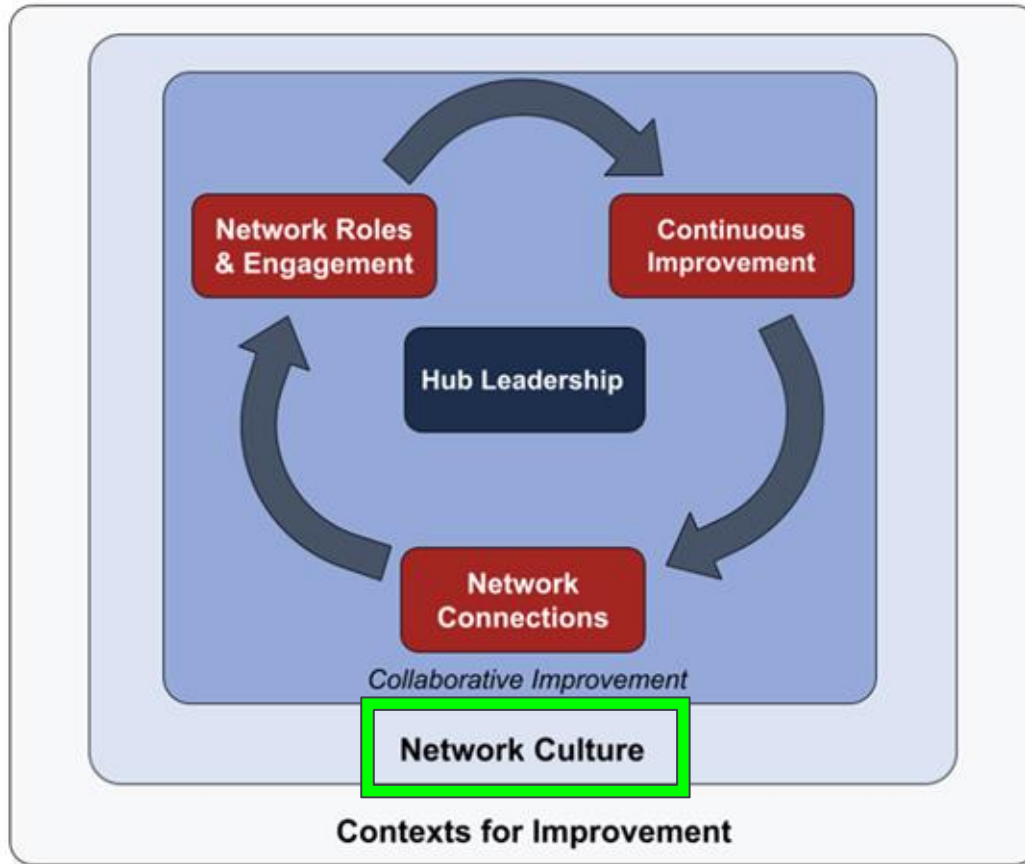


Network Connections

- Members' connections to each other
- Intentionally designed participation structures
- Social learning within and across improvement teams



Improvement Network Development Framework

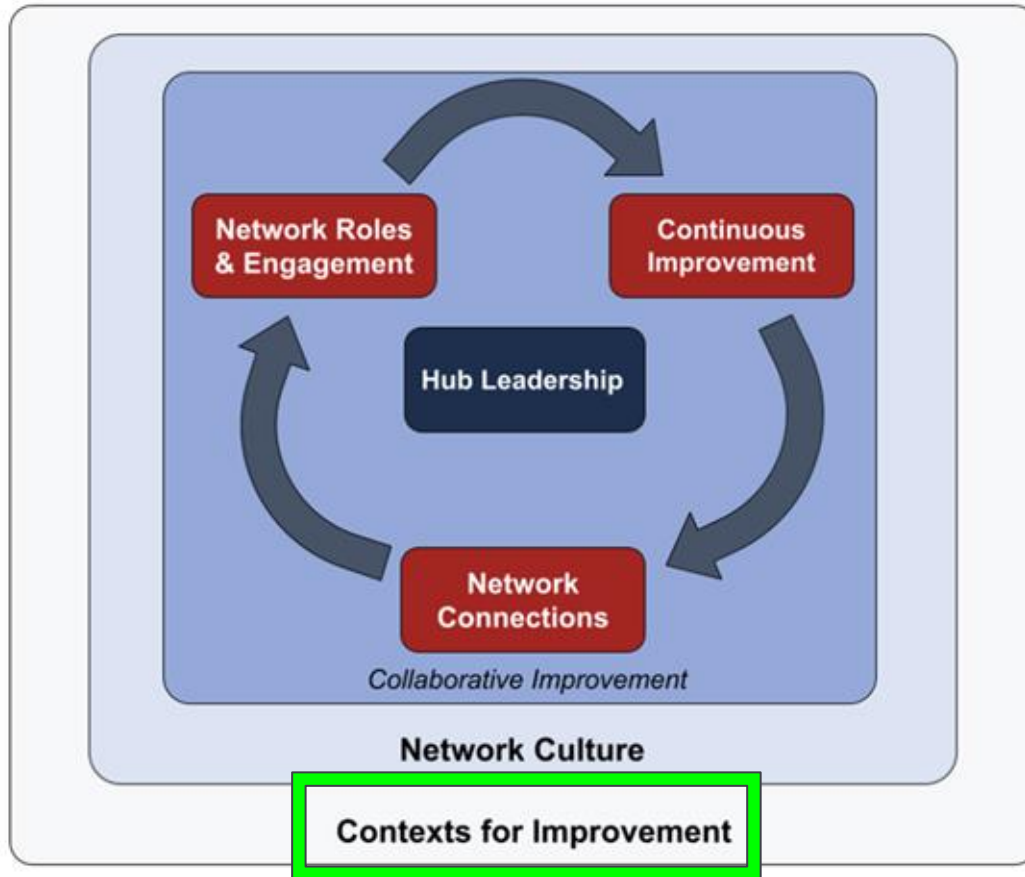


Network Culture

- A shared narrative
- Evidence-based culture
- Equity-based culture



Improvement Network Development Framework



Contexts for Improvement

- Alignment with state, district, and local contexts
- School context



Questions about the Improvement Network Development Framework



Network Health Study



- Conceptualize and measure “network health and development” in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Provide actionable data to network leaders and the foundation to support network development
- Mixed methods longitudinal study of the development of a large sample of improvement networks



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Improvement Network Development

Operating a network is a developmental process

	2019	2021	2022	2023	Trajectory
MD1	Dev (Mid)	Dev (Mid)	Most	Most	Improved
MD2		Dev (Mid)	Most	Most	Improved
MD3	Most	Dev (High)	Dev (High)	Most	Consistent Strength
MD4		Least	Dev (Mid)	Most	Much improved
MD5	Least	Most	Most	Most	Much improved
MD6		Dev (Mid)	Most	Most	Improved



Improvement Network Development

Strategic actions undertaken in most developed networks: Attention to the technical & social dimensions of improvement networks

Technical

- Very specific and consistent focus of improvement work
- Investment in data systems that support rigorous testing
- Systematic methods to consolidate learning



Balanced structure & member agency



Social

- Robust coaching / hub support for improvement teams
- Intentional designs for networked connection (e.g., structured meeting time)



Improvement Network Development

Least developed networks struggled to launch

	2019	2021	2022	2023	Trajectory
LD1		Least	Least	Least	Stagnant
LD2		Dev (Low)	Dev (Mid)	Least	Declined
LD3		Least	Least	Least	Stagnant
LD4		Dev (Low)	Least	Least	Stagnant
LD5			Least	Least	Stagnant



Turn and Talk

What resonated with you about these findings?

What are you wondering about?

What other network development strategies have you heard of or used? What have you learned about them?



Improvement Network Development

Improvement networks have the potential to be an effective strategy for a range of problems

Type of Problem / Network Focus	# of Most Developed NSI	# of Least Developed NSI
Instructional	3	4
Post-secondary Match	2	1
Early Warning	1	0



Contextual factors influence network formation: The most developed networks found ways to navigate these challenges

- Turnover / instability in network membership
 - District leadership
 - Schools & educators
- Launch during the pandemic
 - Staffing challenges (e.g., no substitutes)
 - Transition to virtual teaching (and virtual network convening)
 - Educator burnout / motivation to engage
- Access to data



Turn and Talk

What resonated with you about these findings?

What are you wondering about?

What other factors or conditions might affect network health and development?



Q&A



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Improvement Network Development

**How are you planning
on APPLYING what you
have learned today to
your work?**



7D. Putting Networks in Context: How NSI Navigate Complex Environments

TODAY, 1:00 - 2:15 PM

Networks for school improvement (NSI), like other education reform efforts that seek to improve outcomes for minoritized students, exist in political contexts with complicated layers of state, district, and school policies. Network leaders must navigate this complexity—crafting alignment between their goals, strategies, routines, and tools with those of the schools and school systems in which they work. This session highlights how hubs in various NSI managed complex, and often conflicting pressures and demands in their effort to build collaborative learning systems aimed at more equitable student outcomes during the backdrop of a dual pandemic.

Presenters

Megan Duff, Vanderbilt University

Jennifer Zoltners Sherer, Partners for Network Improvement

Jennifer Lin Russell, Vanderbilt University

Panelists

Sinead Chalmers, Bank Street Education Center

Matthew Swenson, New Tech Network

Christopher Thorn, Partners in School Innovation



Thank you for attending!

Instructions for completing the session feedback survey:

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