



# COLLECTIVE+MIND

## Network Capacity Assessment FAQs

### ***What will the capacity assessment tell us about our network?***

The Network Capacity Assessment gives you a high-value, cross-cutting snapshot of how your network is functioning and provides insight and direction on what to prioritize in order to improve and align your network going forward. Based on a collective network voice, the assessment report lays out your network development priorities and identifies your current strengths and weaknesses along a continuum of network capacities. The insights you get from your assessment serve as a springboard for network growth and for improving your approach to managing the network and generating impact. Networks can use the assessment to inform their annual membership evaluation, strategic planning exercises, governance or member engagement strategies, and more. Used year-over-year, the assessment can build your network knowledge over time, with the first capacity assessment serving as a baseline.

### ***What are “network capacities”?***

Network capacities are the core competencies and internal features of a network that are required to achieve your network’s mission. They reflect the network’s structures, design, and ways of working that underpin network facilitation, management, governance, and impact. Network capacities include: shared purpose, membership, leadership, culture, infrastructure, measurement, and resources.

Network capacities are a key component - along with network functions<sup>1</sup> and organizational functions<sup>2</sup> - of our proprietary Network Diagnostic Framework which is recognized worldwide as a definitive guide for what a network is, how networks function, and what needs to be in place to do so optimally. In the assessment, we analyze all seven network capacities as well as the key organizational functions that bolster the network capacities.

You can learn more about the Network Diagnostic Framework [here](#) or by attending one of our [free monthly Networks 101 trainings](#).

### ***What is the process like for our network to do an assessment?***

To begin, we work with your team to determine the appropriate audience for the survey, address any customization needs, coordinate communications with your network, and ensure a shared understanding of roles and what to expect.

The assessment is rooted in a simple anonymous survey with 75-question Likert questions. Respondents typically take 10-15 minutes to complete the survey, and we recommend giving your network a window

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<sup>1</sup> Network functions are the specific activities and approach a network undertakes together to achieve its shared purpose.

<sup>2</sup> Organizational functions are the core operational activities that underpin network functions, structures, and processes.

of at least 2-3 weeks to complete the survey. Collective Mind will manage the survey and any questions that arise from your network. Once we've collected a satisfactory number of responses, we can typically turn around your report in 2-3 weeks.

### ***Can we customize the assessment to get more out of it for our network?***

We've designed the assessment to be agile and adaptable to your network's unique needs. As such, the assessment can be applied in its standard form as described above or customized as desired. The standard assessment focuses on defined network features and gives you detailed insights into what internal capacities make your network tick. Customizing the survey tool with additional quantitative and/or qualitative questions tailored to your network's needs allows us to capture more and more nuanced data about where your network is at and the directions in which it needs to go. Customization is thereby a great way to link the capacity assessment to other network goals or processes, such as annual reviews or strategic planning processes. Beyond this, we can add on to and adapt the process to incorporate an array of interests or considerations - from specific strategy development questions, to advising on or building out new network designs like governance or membership structures, to staff training and Board education.

### ***What makes the capacity assessment different from other consulting projects?***

Collective Mind's mission is to support networks, and the people who work for and with networks. The purpose of the Network Capacity Assessment is to make standardized, evidence-based approaches to network assessment available and accessible to networks so that you can be more effective and impactful. The assessment is built on a thoughtful and robust backend tool that allows us to efficiently analyze your network against best practices based on the collective voice of your network. Instead of starting from scratch, we bring our curated methodology and criteria for how networks best operate and organize. Through these efficiencies, we save you time and money while delivering a high-value product to inform your network learning and development.

### ***Is this capacity assessment a good fit for our network?***

The capacity assessment is best suited for emerging, established, and evolving networks that have an existing membership and some track record of network engagement. For newer networks, we recommend working with Collective Mind in other advisory and assessment capacities.

In all cases, we have a range of customized advisory options available and encourage you to reach out to discuss your unique needs and interests to determine the best approach together. This can look like establishing your network's design and strategy, receiving direct coaching, building your Board's or team's skills and capacity, and/or receiving support in other network development areas. We are eager to help networks learn, evolve, and improve at all stages.

### ***We ask a lot of our members and want to protect their time. Will this be demanding for our network?***

No, not at all! We aim to keep the process low-lift and high-impact for your network and members. Members are only asked to complete the survey, which should take about 10-15 minutes.

### ***Can we add on related capacity building workshops and trainings for our team?***

Collective Mind seeks to provide practical, applicable support to networks and we have a range of [practitioner training](#) and [capacity building workshops](#) that can supplement an assessment to help give your team the tools it needs to turn ideas to action.