How the Hub can network its support

Our Way Ahead and Connecting Londoners December 1 2017

A big challenge for the [Hub for London](#) will be covering a wide range of functions with few staff, and limited resources, in ways that support activity from grassroots to pan-London.

This challenge could be addressed in part by developing *networked* support systems, as recommended in the [LVSC report on the hub](#).

The report suggests that "the Hub should act as a convenor and enabler, rather than direct deliverer, in effect *delivering change through networks and platforms*, rather than through traditional organisational and membership delivery methods".

That means helping and resourcing people, groups and organisations do things for themselves where possible, and learning how to cooperate and collaborate to co-produce solutions.

The Hub briefing document includes a range of functions that could be supported and enabled by this network/platform approach, for example:
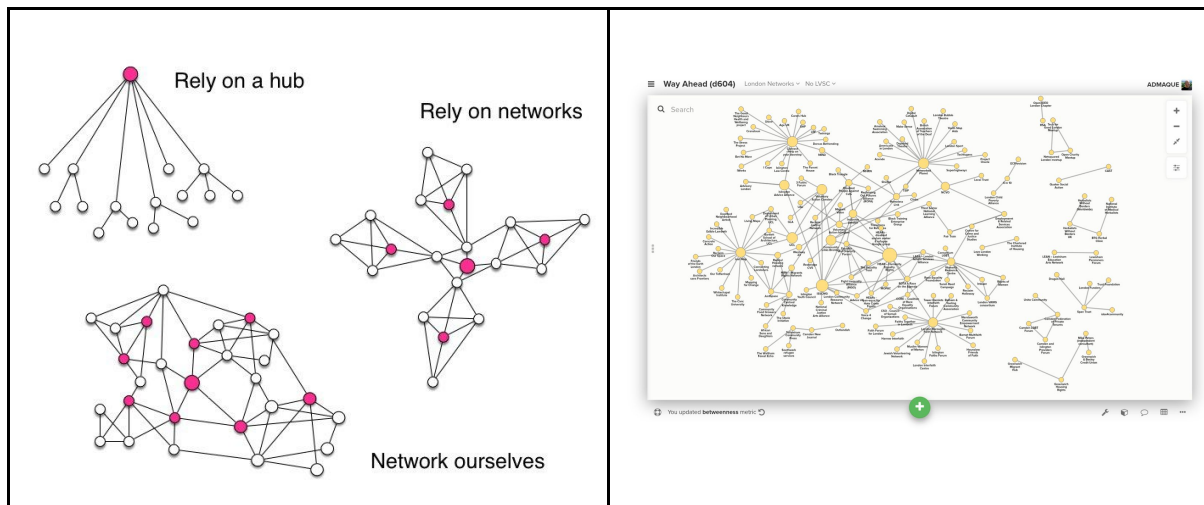
- Networks to feed data - *help build the networks to do that*
- Voice for civil society - *help people develop their own voice, with other*s
- Convening partnerships - *help people build their own partnerships*
- Build cross-sector links - *help people develop their own links*
- Showcase impact - *help people demonstrate impact themselves*
- Asset-based resourcing - *help people identify and use resources*
- Share resources - *help people do that themselves*
- Website/portal - *help people build and connect their own presence online*
- Share what works - *encourage and support that across networks*

Mapping and joining up networks

Or order to deliver through networks and platforms I suggest that we need to:

- **Think about networks and platforms** in civil society, by reflecting on how people are increasingly developing their own networks through the commercial platforms of Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin, etc. What else is needed?
- **Map assets and connections**, locally and across London to see where assets and networks exist. Our Way Ahead have started to do that, as have local community connectors.
- **Build networks** - or rather, help people, groups and organisations learn how to use a mix of old and new methods to enhance existing and develop new networks. This isn't just about technology, but tech will be important, as the LVSC report suggests in one of its scenarios.
- **Explore how to co-produce.** We could start among ourselves.

We need to combine networks at different levels. We can't just rely on a hub, or on existing networks - we need to network ourselves, and then connect with the other levels, from the top, from the bottom, and across.

Connect hierarchical, pan-London and grassroots networks. Build on OWA mapping.

Practical suggestions

I suggest that the advisory group and others in The Way Ahead address the way that functions are delivered and enabled as soon possible, because a networked approach will influence the operational architecture of the Hub, and the skills needed by staff. It's the difference between "we can do that" and "we can help you do that".

Over the past year Connecting Londoners and Our Way Ahead have explored what it will take to make London a more networked city, through research, events, mapping, creative workshops and online demonstration. Summary here. Most of the recent work has been voluntary. We now want to collaborate with the Hub advisory group, agencies and funders, to add our experience to development of the Hub and associated activities, and develop our own capacity as a demonstration of what is possible.

We believe that the best way to start is:

- **Convene and support a Community of Practice** of people who are, or want to be, network builders.
- **Learn by doing**, through mapping, network building, storytelling, informal organising and the use of a mix of digital and other tools.
- **Run a further co-design workshop**, building on the session that we ran at London Metropolitan University on November 16. For the workshop we took the LVSC Hub report and created a set of props from its recommendations representing challenges, ideas, methods. Then we took on roles, and developed solutions. In effect, we started to invent a networked Hub. Report here.

We wish to explore with the advisory group how we might collaborate in taking these ideas forward - and/or develop further ideas on the Hub as a platform for a network of networks.

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