A Framework for Evaluating
Teach For America Alumni Networks

A white paper written by Network Impact in collaboration with Teach For America

Alumni networks are commonly known for "networking" opportunities that facilitate member access to jobs or avenues for career advancement. Many organizations and alumni, especially those working to bring about systems change, have realized that collectively, networked alumni also have the power to drive broader impact. Teach For America (TFA) is exploring how alumni networks can be leveraged to increase progress towards educational equity by gaining a better understanding of how to assess the impact of their alumni network strategy. TFA's overarching model includes a core network-building component that supports and fosters community among alumni throughout their lifetime, as their careers take shape.

Figure 1: Teach For America model

Source: Teach For America website

TFA partnered with Network Impact, a research and consulting firm with over a decade of experience advising and conducting evaluations for a wide range of networks, to explore what regional alumni networks could learn through network evaluation. Colleagues from throughout TFA - the national alumni strategy team, representatives from three TFA regions, as well as individuals with assessment and development expertise - participated in a one-day convening to learn about Network Impact's network evaluation framework and brainstorm evaluation questions relevant for TFA regional networks, using the St. Louis region as an example. At the convening, participants considered the success and impact of their alumni network activities and supports, and created a short list of key areas of inquiry for a network evaluation:

- How connected are alumni to each other and for what purposes are they connecting?
- How are alumni getting connected to each other, and which are the most effective ways?
- What value do alumni see in TFA? What value are they getting from the network and from their peers?
- To what extent are alumni clear on TFA's orientation toward systems change and the role of TFA alumni network in promoting systems change?
- How are outcomes for students in St. Louis changing over time? What do we see as the driver(s) of those changes? How are alumni and the alumni network contributing to that?

This paper summarizes discussions at the convening and proposes a methodology for answering questions about the potential and impact of TFA regional networks through network evaluation.

TFA regional alumni networks as agents of change

Most TFA alumni interaction takes place at the regional level and the regional TFA teams implement most alumni network strategies, with the national alumni team providing support. Network Impact reviewed core planning documents and spoke with members of the St. Louis regional team to learn about the principal strategies and activities they use to support and encourage network development. Network Impact drew from this initial research to develop a potential TFA regional Network Theory of Action.

Network Theory of Action	A network theory of action "connects the dots" by describing how a network's activities will ultimately lead to a set of desired outcomes. A theory of action is often represented in the form of a diagram or flowchart.

One of the principal uses of a Theory of Action is to guide evaluation research. In a Theory of Action, each step in a chain of outcomes represents a hypothesis about how an activity or outcome will ultimately lead to impact. Evaluation research is then designed to systematically test these hypotheses.

TFA's overarching Network Theory of Action identifies two principal avenues through which a regional network of alumni might promote TFA's desired outcomes.

- **Peer to peer learning and exchange** -- which increases individual alumni commitment and capacity to serve as a leader in driving innovation; and increases best practices that enact excellence and equity in education systems and improved student outcomes in schools and local education systems
- **Alignment and joint action among alumni from every sector and field** -- which increases commitment and capacity to engage civically in their local communities to change policies, structures and practices that perpetuate inequitable education systems

At the regional level, the St. Louis team's strategy was summarized as having a focus on creating and facilitating the conditions for alumni to individually and collectively lead and to thrive by pursuing collective impact towards the TFA One Day goal. The specific activities and opportunities in St. Louis that support both the regional strategy and TFA's principal avenues for impact include the following:

Peer to peer learning and exchange opportunities:
- Alumni join, post, and read the St. Louis TFA Facebook Group
- Alumni engage with other alumni via other communications channels/tools (e.g. TFA Alumni network email, Alumni Blasts, online)
- Alumni utilize the TFAConnect directory
- Alumni connect with other alumni via direct connections or through staff introductions for:
    - mutual support and peer exchange of best practices
    - career guidance or inspiration
    - knowledge or understanding of policy and/or advocacy context
- Alumni serve in leadership roles on the TFA Alumni Board
- Alumni plan, organize and participate in alumni-led events (e.g. Politics and Pints, St. Louis Alumni book club)
- Alumni participate in The Collective (POC Alumni Assoc)
- Alumni serve in leadership roles and on the Board of The Collective
- Alumni lead a Learning Team track
- Alumni apply for and receive TFA Awards
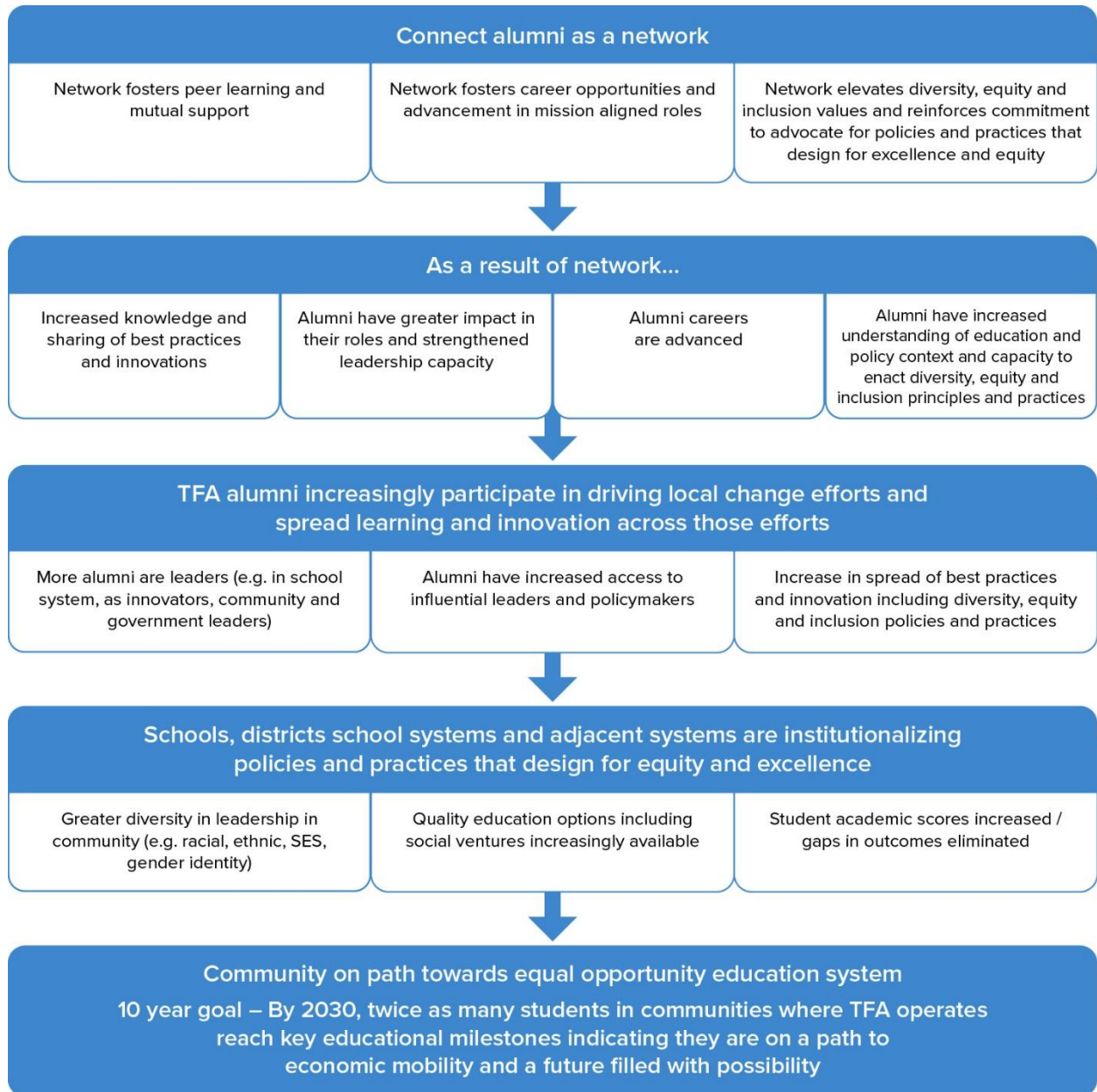
Alignment and joint action opportunities:
- Alumni connect with other alumni via direct connections or through staff introductions for coordination and collaboration to advocate for policy and systems change
- Alumni participate in TFA's Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation group for alumni Regional TFA staff provide logistical support for alumni network activities (e.g. Board support, events such as alumni induction)
- Regional TFA staff provide funding for alumni-led collaborative projects/advocacy
- Regional TFA staff provide opportunities for alumni collective action to advance policies and practices designed for educational equity and excellence

Embedded in these alumni network strategies is a commitment to inclusivity, diversity and equity, both in the alumni network's own culture and operations and in the goals and intended outcomes of the network.[1]

In the St. Louis regional Network Theory of Action (Figure 2), connecting alumni leads to the exchange of career advice and mentoring and to professional advancement, as well as to greater dissemination of best practices and innovation. Alumni then develop greater leadership capacity, greater understanding of policy in their local context and they increase their involvement in local change efforts. Those local efforts in turn bring about policy and systems changes that result in a community with more equitable practices and improved student outcomes in schools and local education systems.

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[1] TFA values related to diversity, equity and inclusion: 1) Diversity is crucial for successful change efforts and is one of Teach For America's greatest strengths. 2)The full potential of our diverse network will be reached only when we are an inclusive community. 3) The predictability of success or failure for our students or individuals in our organization should not correlate with any social, cultural or other identity-based factors. Source: TFA website: https://www.teachforamerica.org/what-we-do/values

Figure 2: Example TFA Regional Alumni <u>Network</u> Theory of Action

Connect alumni as a network

| Network fosters peer learning and mutual support | Network fosters career opportunities and advancement in mission aligned roles | Network elevates diversity, equity and inclusion values and reinforces commitment to advocate for policies and practices that design for excellence and equity |

As a result of network…

| Increased knowledge and sharing of best practices and innovations | Alumni have greater impact in their roles and strengthened leadership capacity | Alumni careers are advanced | Alumni have increased understanding of education and policy context and capacity to enact diversity, equity and inclusion principles and practices |

TFA alumni increasingly participate in driving local change efforts and spread learning and innovation across those efforts

| More alumni are leaders (e.g. in school system, as innovators, community and government leaders) | Alumni have increased access to influential leaders and policymakers | Increase in spread of best practices and innovation including diversity, equity and inclusion policies and practices |

Schools, districts school systems and adjacent systems are institutionalizing policies and practices that design for equity and excellence

| Greater diversity in leadership in community (e.g. racial, ethnic, SES, gender identity) | Quality education options including social ventures increasingly available | Student academic scores increased / gaps in outcomes eliminated |

Community on path towards equal opportunity education system

10 year goal — By 2030, twice as many students in communities where TFA operates reach key educational milestones indicating they are on a path to economic mobility and a future filled with possibility

Drawing from this Network Theory of Action, Network Impact designed a network evaluation methodology exemplar that regional TFA networks, including St. Louis, could implement to learn about alumni experiences in the network and to track the network's impact.

The following sections are designed to support regional alumni network evaluation design, implementation, and ongoing monitoring.

1. **Network Evaluation Overview**
   a. The focus of network evaluation is on the network
   b. The Three Pillars framework: Connectivity, Health and Results
   c. Stages of network development

2. **Designing and Implementing a TFA Regional Network Evaluation**
   a. How will evaluation findings be used, and by whom?
   b. Key questions to guide a TFA regional alumni network evaluation
   c. Methods: Evaluation data collection and analysis
   d. Monitoring the network over time

3. **Appendices**
   Appendix 1 - A sample dashboard for TFA regions
   Appendix 2 - Resources
   - Network evaluation resources and examples
   - Resources for Social Network Analysis
   - Evaluation examples
   - Evaluation methods resources
   - Network strategy resources
   Appendix 3 – Example chain of outcomes

1. Network Evaluation Overview

The focus in a network evaluation is on the network

Social Impact Network	Individuals and/or organizations that join together as peers to advance a social goal.
Generative Social Impact Network	Members work together, adapt over time and generate multiple, ongoing kinds of social impact.

TFA is cultivating a *generative* network where alumni work together, adapt over time and generate multiple, ongoing kinds of social impact. In a generative social impact network members (alumni) are deliberate about building, strengthening, and maintaining ties so that they can be activated again and again to advance their common purpose. Generative social impact networks are particularly good at increasing access to learning, catalyzing innovations and spreading or expanding impact. They are well-suited for situations where the problem you are trying to solve…

- has no clear recipe or formula for success;
- is evolving and requires that solutions evolve with it;
- cannot be addressed effectively by any single individual or organization; or
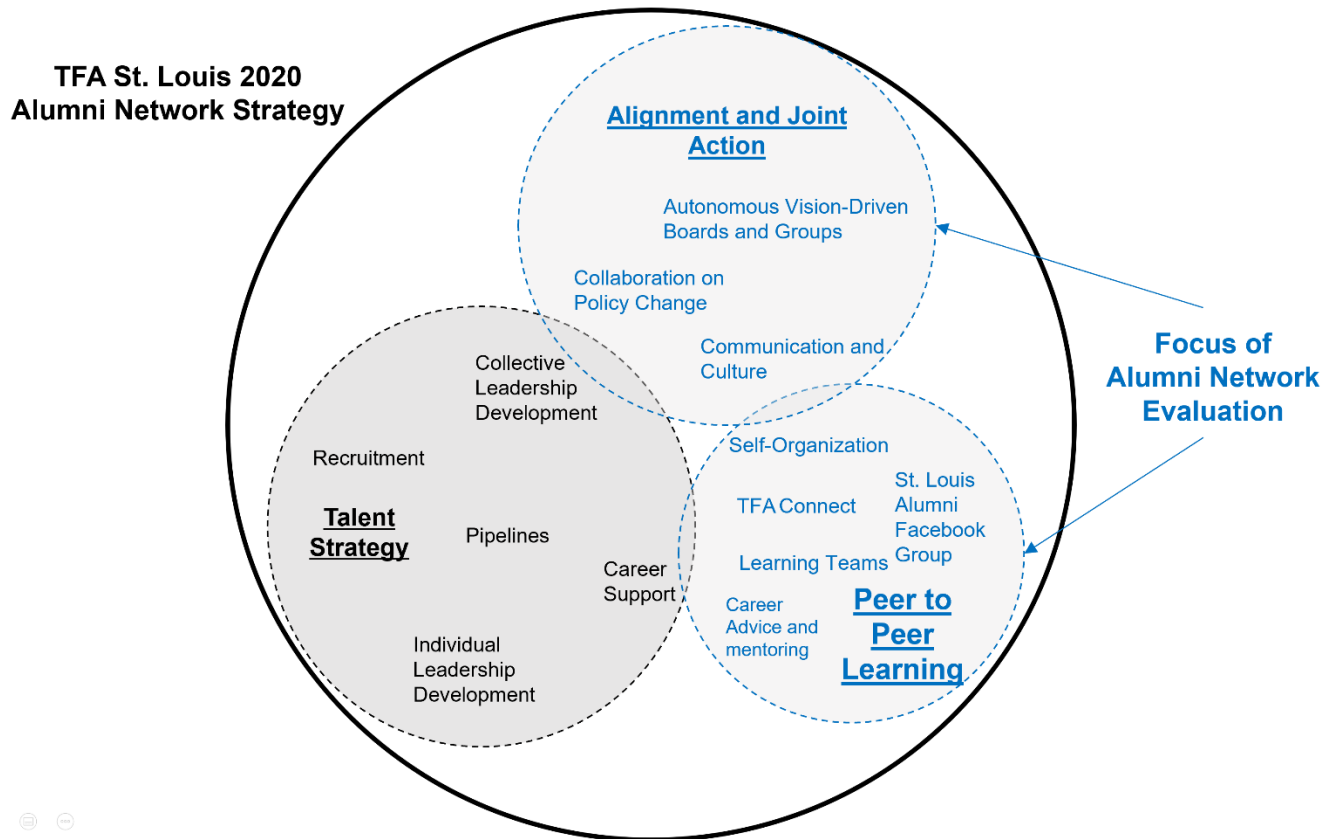- cuts across sectors or fields of practice in which actors typically operate.

In addition, some generative social impact networks deliberately seek ways to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in their internal organization and in their practice externally. Both of these dimensions of diversity, equity and inclusion are a priority for TFA and regions are thinking about how to be intentional in building alumni networks whose operations and performance reflect these values.

TFA's alumni network is one component of TFA's broader alumni engagement effort with programs that support alumni professional development and career advancement, including fellowships and graduate school partnerships, as well as organizational fundraising initiatives. While an alum may participate in a number of different types of TFA alumni activities, peer-directed alumni networks benefit from a focused assessment approach that tracks the evolution and impact of *the peer network* - specifically, how alumni to alumni connections, as well as the network's environment and activities, are contributing to outcomes - for individual alumni, as well as for students, schools, education systems and communities.

The term "network" may be used in the context of TFA to refer to all alumni or to a broader network that includes alumni, staff, current program participants (e.g. Corp Members) and other supporters. For the purposes of evaluating TFA's alumni network strategy, however, the focus is **exclusively on** those TFA alumni who are participating in TFA network activities and actively connecting with other alumni. Other evaluation approaches may be used to assess the impact of alumni-focused programmatic interventions that are not strictly *network* focused such as alumni ROI, alumni programming evaluations, as well as the success of fundraising. The diagram below shows which alumni strategies fall under the network evaluation, and which

would be evaluated through a different and complementary approach.

Figure 3: Components of TFA St. Louis Alumni Network Strategy

TFA St. Louis 2020 Alumni Network Strategy

Alignment and Joint Action

Autonomous Vision-Driven Boards and Groups

Collaboration on Policy Change

Communication and Culture

Collective Leadership Development

Recruitment

Talent Strategy

Pipelines

Self-Organization

TFA Connect

St. Louis Alumni Facebook Group

Learning Teams

Career Support

Career Advice and mentoring

Peer to Peer Learning

Individual Leadership Development

Focus of Alumni Network Evaluation

The Three Pillars framework: Connectivity, Health and Results

More than a decade of research and experience with networks has informed the development and refinement of the network evaluation Three Pillars framework[2] for tracking network development, health, and progress toward goals. The Three Pillars framework addresses results that may be attributable to both peer learning and exchange; as well as to alignment and joint action. The framework also addresses conditions of network connectivity and network health. A network's progress and its performance depend fundamentally on the quality and configuration of network ties among members (network connectivity) and conditions in the network that promote effective and efficient collaboration (network health).

Network Connectivity - Connections are the essential glue for any network. It is important to know if deliberate efforts to weave together alumni members' ties to each other are resulting in efficient and effective "pathways" for shared learning and action.
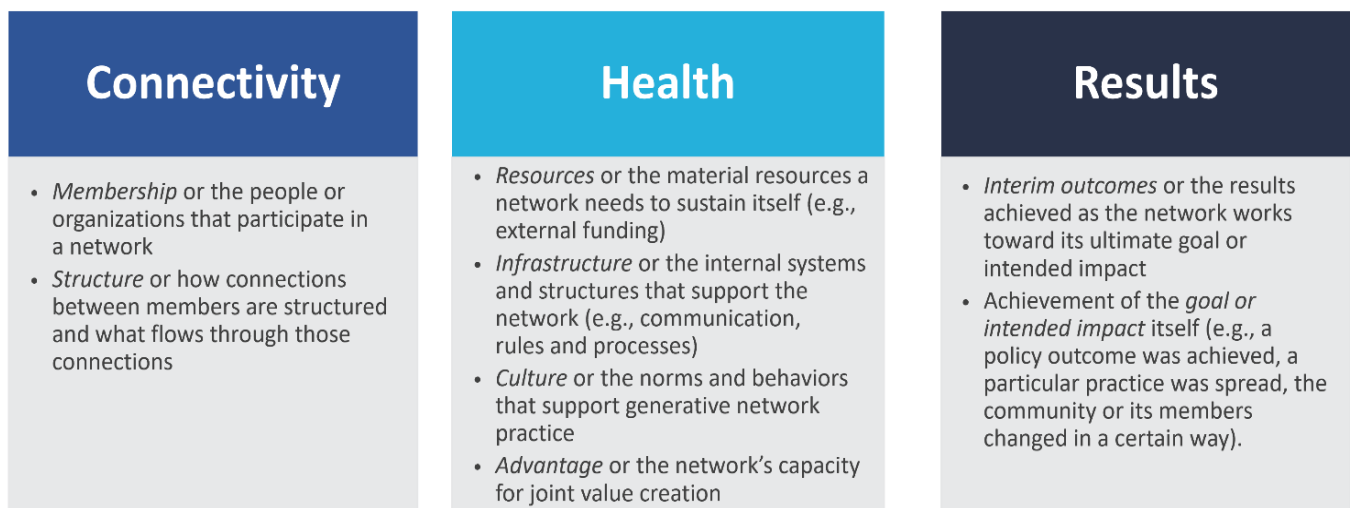
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[2] The framework is described in detail in *Guide to Network Evaluation: The State of Network Evaluation.* Network Impact and Center for Evaluation Innovation (2014)

Network Health – A core set of essential conditions must exist in a network to sustain members' commitment and engagement. This includes network operations, such as infrastructure, decision-making and communications.

Network Results - Ultimately, social impact networks aim to produce a particular type of social good. Members come together for a purpose and, while network connectivity and health are important to their ability to achieve those results, members want to know if the network itself is making a difference. Network evaluations focus on outcomes that are achieved as a consequence of network activities. Results may include interim outcomes that lead to ultimate outcomes or to outcomes in the longer term.

The figure below details which network dimensions can be evaluated in each pillar.

Figure 4: Three Pillars of Network Evaluation

Connectivity	Health	Results
• *Membership* or the people or organizations that participate in a network • *Structure* or how connections between members are structured and what flows through those connections	• *Resources* or the material resources a network needs to sustain itself (e.g., external funding) • *Infrastructure* or the internal systems and structures that support the network (e.g., communication, rules and processes) • *Culture* or the norms and behaviors that support generative network practice • *Advantage* or the network's capacity for joint value creation	• *Interim outcomes* or the results achieved as the network works toward its ultimate goal or intended impact • Achievement of the *goal or intended impact* itself (e.g., a policy outcome was achieved, a particular practice was spread, the community or its members changed in a certain way).

Stages of network development

Where a network is in its evolution is also a consideration in evaluation. Networks often move through distinct stages of development, although not necessarily at the same pace. The graphic below describes five stages of network development. The network's principal focus shifts through these stages, as does the focus of evaluation. While there are no hard and fast rules, in general, evaluations in the early and middle stages of a network's development tend to focus more on assessing network connectivity and health. Evaluations at later stages focus more on network results.

Figure 5: Stages of network development

5. Transitioning or transforming: The network is effective and sustainable or the network has lost momentum. The network as originally conceived terminates or capacities are redeployed such that a new network can form.

1. Catalyzing: Capabilities and expectations to work together are explored by potential members of the network.

4. Performing and Adapting: The network is fully operational with key activities underway. Goals, strategies and membership often diversify as members seek and find different kinds of value from the network.

2. Launching: Organizers identify the network's initial vision and purpose and develop an initial plan. Initial network membership is recruited and connections are cultivated.

3. Organizing: The network has secured resources and is piloting strategies and beginning to adapt these based on feedback.

Graphic adapted from Monitor Institute and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (2011) Stages of Network Development. *Catalyzing Networks for Social Change: A Funder's Guide*

In early stage networks (Catalyzing and Launching), while a network is still exploring its capacity and potential or developing initial plans, evaluations should explore:

- Who are the key stakeholders of the network?
- Who are the network's members?
- How are they connected?
- What are the value propositions (benefits and motivations both for individuals and collectively) that are driving participation and engagement in the network?
- What strategies will the network pilot?
- What resources does the network have?

In more mature networks (Organizing, Performing and Adapting), where a network is piloting strategies, diversifying membership, and assessing value propositions, evaluations should explore:

- What infrastructure is in place to support the network and how well is it working?
- How are the members working together to meet shared goals?
- What are the network's activities and outputs?
- Is the network developing effective processes to facilitate network action?
- Is the network diversifying and delivering on key value propositions?
- Are collective results being achieved?

2. Designing and Implementing a TFA Regional Network Evaluation

Alumni network evaluations commonly serve a range of stakeholders with an interest in evaluation findings:
- Alumni network designers and coordinators
- Alumni network leaders and organizers
- Funders and supporters of the network
- Alumni network members

When networks are planning an evaluation, key questions include: What is the goal of the evaluation? Who are the primary stakeholders? How will evaluation findings be used, and by whom? Answers to these questions can help focus an evaluation and set priorities for evaluation activities.

Following are common evaluation goals and audiences:

Goal	Description
Continuous improvement	Provide input for network coordinators and members on potential adjustments to address challenges the network is facing and confirm how to further support what is working for the network.
Inform network planning and strategy	Guide the alignment of network plans with member priorities. Includes regular check-ins (e.g. annually) with members themselves to hear systematically from all members, as well as measuring efficacy of recent efforts to shape into future plans.
Document network progress and performance	Provide information that makes it easier to explain and tell the story of a network, how it works, what it has accomplished and what it can do, which may be of interest to funders as well as to network organizers and members.

For many networks, explicitly identifying network members as an important audience for evaluation findings is a valuable network building exercise. For example, a facilitated review of network evaluation results with alumni can spark discussions among staff who are coordinating alumni efforts and alumni themselves about the potential of the network and where to prioritize evaluation activities.

Key questions to guide a TFA regional alumni network evaluation

Key evaluation questions are high-level questions that an evaluation is designed to answer. Determining your top evaluation questions will help you decide what data to collect and how, and where to focus your analysis. Network Impact used the learning questions that emerged from the convening along with the St. Louis regional network Theory of Action as a starting point for creating a list of evaluation questions designed to support the Three Pillars Framework -- network connectivity, health, and results.

Advice for Getting Started:

TFA Regions should customize their Network Theories of Action and evaluation plans to assess their own specific network strategies. Much like this paper outlines how network activities support strategies that may lead to impact for the St. Louis alumni network, other regions will need to define which activities or conditions are likely to produce desired results, including the extent to which peer-to-peer learning and exchange, and/or alignment and joint action, is likely to be a primary contributor. Unpacking and clarifying the unique steps that are expected to lead from alumni network activities to network outcomes in each region is an essential process to identify where the evaluation will test potential pathways to impact and the contribution of the alumni network through those pathways to desired outcomes.

Network Connectivity

"Connectivity" or a base of connections among members is a necessary precondition for the success of any network. Tracking changes in connectivity over time provides valuable markers of a network's evolution, not only in terms of growth in the number of connections, but also what is flowing through those connections and how relationships are being leveraged. Evaluating connectivity within a network can be particularly helpful in the early stage of a network's development or during a period of transition to provide a "snap shot" of the number and quality of connections that exist between alumni.

Alumni network connectivity evaluation questions:

Who is participating in the regional alumni network?

To what extent do factors such as geography, age, corps member generation, race/ethnicity, and career sector affect participation in the network?

How are alumni getting connected to each other, and which are the most effective ways to connect alumni?

What is the quality of connections between active alumni?

What is the reach of the network?

Network Health

Evaluating network health will allow you to investigate what the network needs in order to succeed, where the network is in its phase of development and identify member priorities. Findings tend to be internally focused and used by network coordinators (those providing support and assistance to the network; in this case, TFA regional alumni-facing staff members and/or members of local boards). In addition, members of the network often use network health findings to kick start conversations about strategy, planning and ways to improve how the network is operating.

Alumni network health evaluation questions:
What are the top benefits or motivations (value propositions) for participation in the network? *Follow up:* Is the network delivering on the value propositions?
What network strategies and support promote or hinder self-organizing among alumni?
How is the network inclusive of people who are under-represented and most directly affected by inequities?
What infrastructure does the network have to support increasing alumni engagement and network coordination and communication? (communications, alumni leadership, agreed upon decision-making processes etc.)?
In what ways does the TFA staff support/facilitate and accelerate network connectivity, health, and collective efforts of alumni?

Network Results

A network evaluation can also investigate the effects of the collective efforts of alumni, with attention to both interim results and longer-term impact. For example, in St. Louis, evaluating network results will help network leaders understand how the network is making a difference, particularly related to increasing equal educational opportunity. Network evaluations can include assessment of the network's contribution to results for alumni, their local environment (e.g., organization or workplace), as well as the contribution towards outcomes in the community.

Alumni network results evaluation questions:
What are the network's alumni-driven activities and outputs?
To what extent are TFA alumni knowledge and capacity being enhanced as a consequence of network participation?
To what extent are TFA alumni spreading best practices and innovation as a consequence of network participation?
To what extent are TFA alumni active in local efforts to advance equal opportunity education

systems in a region as a consequence of network participation?

Can a plausible and defensible case be made that the alumni network contributed to:
- school systems and adjacent local systems increasingly institutionalizing policies and practices designed for equity and excellence?
- awareness and commitment to the elevation of diversity, equity and inclusion of people who are under-represented and most affected by inequities in the local education system and the community?
- changes in key student educational milestones that indicate a path to economic mobility and a future filled with possibility?

Methods: Evaluation data collection and analysis

A mixed methods approach allows evaluators and network builders to combine data from different sources to more fully assess conditions in the network related to Connectivity, Health, and the relationship of these conditions to Results. Following is a sample of quantitative and qualitative methods that are commonly used in network evaluations.

Quantitative methods

Participation data gathering and analysis - Data describing alumni engagement, such as event attendance, service on a TFA Alumni Board, or taking a leadership role in organizing an alumni effort, are key for tracking overall network activity, as well as for exploring potential connections between patterns of alumni participation and Network Connectivity, Health and Results. Participation data can be segmented into categories that differentiate between types of engagement to explore differences in alumni characteristics. Examples of analysis are described in Appendix 1 Sample indicators dashboard.

Alumni Survey - Surveys to alumni enable the systematic collection of data about alumni connections, network value generation as well as changes in knowledge and behaviors. Online surveys could be sent by region or included as part of the national annual alumni survey. Several example questions are included in Appendix 1 Sample indicators dashboard. Survey responses can be integrated with participation data to understand the relationship between type and level of participation in the network and member experiences and outcomes. Interviews with a few alumni (3-5) can be useful to inform the development of the alumni survey, specifically to populate and/or refine survey question response options.

Network Mapping and Social Network Analysis (SNA) - Survey data describing connections among alumni may be analyzed using specialized software to measure and map network ties. An evaluation that includes social network analysis and network mapping can produce a snapshot of the full network that extends beyond any individual's field of vision, revealing patterns of connections and relationships that staff and alumni may not be aware of. Note that a

variety of specialized tools are now available to support the quantitative assessments of networks. Examples are included in Appendix 2 Resources.

Qualitative methods

Materials/document review - Materials produced by the alumni network, its members, or TFA staff in support of the alumni network, can provide important perspective on the development of network processes and infrastructure that support network health, as well as activities or products created by the network in service of the network's intended goals. Review of public documents, including systematic monitoring of local education policies and procedures may provide evidence of changes in policy to which alumni have contributed.

Alumni interviews (or focus groups) - While surveys and participation data provide a systematic look at network activity across the full network, interviews with a diverse cross section of alumni active in the alumni network provide an opportunity to learn more about the motivations, facilitating factors and challenges behind alumni actions. A limited number of interviews (approximately 10-15) can provide insights describing how collective network projects or initiatives came together and/or are sustained. This information is useful to include as examples to complement and provide additional evidence for findings identified as well as be summarized in case studies.

Observational techniques - Participant observation or self-directed evaluation such as alumni journaling may be appropriate to track network progress and performance depending on local conditions, including local resources for evaluation.

Bellwether interviews - "Bellwethers" are influential people in the public and private sector whose position requires that they track policy issues (e.g. Policy or Government Relations roles at organizations with a vested interest in education and workforce development). Bellwether interviews can reveal the extent to which advocacy messages have "broken through" and gauge the level of broader awareness of Teach For America's alumni strategies and efforts.[3]

Narrative Assessment - An approach to monitoring and evaluating advocacy that integrates theory of change and storytelling. Narrative assessment centers on the creation of credible stories about advocacy processes, achievements, and challenges. These stories are co-written by an advocate and a trained narrative assessment facilitator.[4]

Case Studies - Case studies that document specific alumni collaborative efforts should be explored to complement dashboard indicators when possible. Even brief cases can provide insight into how alumni connect and collaborate to produce results in particular settings. Case studies may also to identify pathways to desired outcomes at the policy or systems level.

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[3] Julia Coffman and Ehren Reed. *Unique Methods in Advocacy Evaluation*:
http://www.pointk.org/resources/files/Unique_Methods_Brief.pdf

[4] Margit van Wessel. *Narrative Assessment. A new approach to advocacy monitoring, evaluation, learning and communication:*
https://comm.eval.org/theoriesofevaluation/viewdocument/narrative-assessment-a-new-approac-2

Monitoring the network over time

Alumni networks can be powerful vehicles for advancing social change and they have distinct characteristics that network evaluations should be designed to explore. The TFA alumni networks consist of individuals that have a shared experience and a commitment to educational equity. Throughout their careers they apply their skills and knowledge in a variety of contexts. As network members, they also build and maintain connections that can be leveraged throughout their lifetime, which means that tracking the network over time may be especially revealing.

The core elements of a network evaluation discussed in this paper should be included in network monitoring over time. In addition to results, evaluators should assess changes in network structure in terms of alumni who are participating and their connections and what flows through those connections. Equally important are the factors that contribute to the health of the network since network connectivity and health are important enabling conditions for network results and impact. One of the benefits of a network evaluation is that the process can create a feedback loop that may be used by coordinators and members to build a stronger network. Findings can provide early indications of when the network has evolved to a point where a shift in strategy or structure is necessary. And, as new cohorts of alumni feed into the network, new types of leadership and other roles for members to play emerge. Network evaluation, like all evaluation, requires that program (network) designers identify the key learning questions they intend to answer through evaluation and tailor their evaluation plans accordingly. Those questions will also change over time as the network learns more about its potential and which strategies are most effective.

As discussed in this paper, evaluators may deploy a mix of methods and tools, some specifically designed for network evaluation, such as Social Network Analysis, and others drawn from other forms of assessment. Appendix 1 offers a beginning dashboard for TFA regions that includes sample evaluation questions, as well as sample methods and measures. These are examples only, and TFA regional evaluators should select and/or adapt these based on their network's key learning questions, the strategies and activities promoted by the network to achieve change, and their specific Theory of Action.

3. Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample dashboard for TFA regions

In the table below, each sample evaluation question is paired with potential evaluation methods as well as with potential indicators of progress. Each region should prioritize evaluation questions and methods of data collection that support its areas of focus, strategies, and activities, as well as the stage of the network's development.

Tracking common indicators across all regions will allow for regional comparisons. Aggregated data from all regions will permit an overall assessment of organization-wide alumni network strategies. Monitoring indicators over time permits the measurement of network development and progress.

Alumni network connectivity

Connectivity indicators will provide a descriptive snapshot of the size, composition and current level of activity within the network. Depending on the network's strategies and where it focuses its efforts, changes over time may be more visible in terms of number of connections, the strength of connections or in how ties between alumni are leveraged.

Evaluation question	Evaluation Methods	Frequency	Sample indicators and reporting
Who is participating in the regional alumni network?	Participation data analysis	Ongoing data collection, analysis of data annually	Number/percentage of alumni in region who are participating in any alumni network activity ("active alumni)" compared to all TFA alumni in region
To what extent do factors such as geography, age, race, CM generation and career sector affect participation in the network?	Segmentation of participation data	Ongoing data collection, analysis of data annually	Number/percentage of alumni network participants by age range, sector, location
How are alumni getting connected to each other, and which are the most effective ways to connect alumni?	Alumni survey	Annually	Number/percentage of alumni that report <specific method of connection e.g. TFAConnect> as the method of getting connected to other alumni (and other connection channels and tools)

Evaluation question	Evaluation Methods	Frequency	Sample indicators and reporting
What is the quality of connections between active alumni?	Alumni interviews (to inform development of survey question response options) Alumni survey Social network analysis	Annually	Number/percentage of alumni connections by quality of connections (e.g. trusted advisor on professional challenges, share/exchange information regularly, info or access that assists career/professional advancement, collaborate on professional projects to advance equal opportunity education system, align, or collaborate on policy advocacy/civic engagement efforts)
What is the reach of the network?	Participation data analysis Alumni survey Social network analysis	Annually	A network map that illustrates the connections between active alumni and their own personal networks to identify pathways to influential organizations and sectors in the region that are instrumental in achieving an equal opportunity education system See sample survey questions below.

A note about network mapping - When networks are large it can be cumbersome for members to report on all their connections. In these cases, evaluation can focus on members' *most important connections.* For example, in a survey, alumni network members could be asked to provide the names of up to 10 other TFA alumni in our region with whom they have the most important or significant relationships (i.e., fellow alumni that are the most helpful, connected, supportive, collaborative etc.). Follow up questions might ask alumni to report on the quality or nature of the connection as well as how they initially got connected. The results can be mapped and analyzed to highlight who are the most connected members, but also many times it is the unique and unexpected connections revealed that provide new insights into how alumni ties are being leveraged. To better understand the reach of the alumni network, the survey can include a questions about top connections for a specific purpose, such as exchange of knowledge/expertise to get a picture of relationships alumni have in the greater community or education system. Additional information on social network analysis is in Appendix 2 Resources.

Alumni network health

Successful networks keep tabs on the support systems that facilitate communications and coordination within the network as it evolves. Alumni members are best positioned to report on if and how the supports in place for the network are effective and aligned with the priorities and interests of members. This is typically done through alumni surveys to systematically gather input from all alumni.

Evaluation question	Evaluation methods	Frequency	Sample indicators and reporting
What are the top benefit or motivations (value propositions) for alumni participation in the network? (Follow up: Is the Network delivering on these value propositions?)	Alumni interviews (to inform development of survey question response options) Alumni survey	Annually (linked to survey development) Annually	Top three value propositions for alumni network (Percentage of alumni that ranked VP in top 3) See example question below Number/percentage of alumni that report network is delivering on top VPs
What network strategies and supports promote or hinder self-organizing among alumni?	Alumni survey Alumni interviews Staff observation	Annually Annually	Number/percentage of alumni that report <specific TFA network strategy/opportunity> generated value for alumni to support self-organizing (e.g. microgrants for alumni collaborative projects) Case studies to document how strategies facilitated alumni organizing
How is the network inclusive of people who are under-represented and most directly affected by inequities?	Participation data analysis Alumni survey	Annually Annually	Demographic characteristics of alumni who are engaged in network Number/percentage of alumni that positively assess the network as inclusive of people who are under-represented and most directly affected by inequities
What infrastructure does the alumni network have to support increasing alumni engagement and network coordination and communication?	Participation data Alumni survey	Ongoing data collection, analysis annually Annually	Frequency of usage for communications and coordination channels/tools Number/percentage of alumni who engage in more activities or take on more roles that are categorized as leadership roles in a spectrum of engagement (e.g. after assigning categories to activities to designate them as leading, contributing or participating or other descriptions of engagement) (Also see Network Health Scorecard for referenced in Appendix 2)
In what ways does the TFA staff support, facilitate, and accelerate network connectivity, health and collective efforts of alumni?	Alumni survey Participation data	Annually Ongoing data collection, analysis annually	Number/percentage of alumni that positively assess the support that TFA staff provides the network Usage/attendance rates of specific support activities (Also see Network Health Scorecard referenced in Appendix 2)

A note about value propositions - Value propositions are the benefits members derive from their participation in a network, as individuals and as a collectivity. A survey offers the opportunity to test which value propositions are most important to alumni and monitor how those priorities change over time. For example:

Of the value proposition statements listed below, select and rank the 3 most important for your [continued] participation in the TFA alumni network (1 being most important):
- *Give/get advice dealing with professional challenges to support others in a network that helps(ed) me*
- *Connections and information for career advancement*
- *Grow individual and collective knowledge about best practices and innovations that advance a more equal opportunity education system*
- *Develop increased capacity to advance diversity, equity and inclusion practices and policies*
- *Opportunities to practice and hone leadership skills*
- *Synergize and align my/my organization's work with others who have similar goal of education system designed for excellence and equity*
- *Opportunity to coordinate with other alumni to advocate locally for policies and practices that advance a more equal opportunity education system*
- *Opportunity to collectively influence and co-create TFA strategy*

Network Impact's Network Health Scorecard (see Appendix 2) lists additional indicators related to network operations and performance that members and organizers may wish to consider as their network matures. Additionally, monitoring a network's culture over time can reveal whether network practices are aligned with network values. For example: Are network operations and decision-making processes inclusive and equitable?

Network Results

Ultimately, networks organize for a purpose: to influence policies, systems and conditions in communities. The evaluation of network results is intended to document this impact.

Evaluation question	Evaluation methods	Frequency	Sample indicators and reporting
What are the network's alumni-driven activities and outputs?	Participation data analysis	Ongoing data collection, analysis of data annually	Number/percentage of network activities by category (example categories: sharing of best practices, peer support, career advice, connections to career advancement/new position, alignment of advocacy, or collective action efforts) Number/percentage of alumni moving up on the ladder of engagement (aka the categories of engagement)
To what extent are TFA alumni knowledge and capacity being enhanced as a consequence of network participation?	Alumni survey Alumni interviews	Annually Annually	Number/percentage of alumni who report increased understanding of potential role(s) alumni can play in supporting policy and systems change for a more equal opportunity education system

Evaluation question	Evaluation methods	Frequency	Sample indicators and reporting
To what extent are TFA alumni spreading best practices and innovation as a consequence of network participation?	Alumni survey	Annually	Number/percentage of alumni who report their organization has changed or adapted a policy, process or strategy because of information received from a fellow TFA alumnus
	Document review	Ongoing data collection, analyzed annually	Number of references to best practices and/or collective knowledge products developed and/or disseminated by TFA alumni network in organizational documents or public records (Practices and products can be identified via alumni interviews and survey responses)
To what extent are TFA alumni active in local efforts to advance equal opportunity education systems in a region *as* a consequence of network participation?	Alumni survey	Annually	Number/percentage of alumni who report increase in civic engagement or advocacy locally, specifically for policy changes that support a more equal opportunity education system
	Alumni interviews		Case study drawing insights from alumni network's collective advocacy efforts
Can a plausible and defensible case be made that the alumni network contributed to: • school systems and adjacent local systems increasingly institutionalizing policies and practices designed for equity and excellence? • awareness and commitment to the elevation of diversity, equity and inclusion of people who are under-represented and most affected by inequities in the local education system and the community? • changes in key student educational milestones that indicate a path to economic mobility and a future filled with possibility?	Participation data analysis Alumni survey	Ongoing data collection, analysis annually	Number/percentage of alumni who report increase in turning to other alumni in the region to collaborate on efforts to advance policy and systems change as a consequence of alumni network participation Network connectivity, health and individual alumni results outcomes paired with data and research documenting community outcomes such as:
	Bellwether interviews with policymakers and influencers	Bi-annually or as part of a specific case study as needed	Policy/advocacy outcomes could include tracking quantity and quality of policymakers' or influencers' testimonials. TFA and alumni network reported as a leading source of innovation to advance more equal opportunity education system (or commitment to equity and inclusion of people who are under-represented and most affected by inequities) And/or
	Narrative assessment or Case studies	Bi-annually or as part of a specific case study as needed	Documentation of local change efforts and alumni network role and contributions to accomplishment or implementation of policy or practice that brings about a more equal opportunity education system.

A note about participation and engagement as indicators of network progress - To get a better understanding of network patterns of participation and track changes in engagement over time, consider reviewing participation data and creating categories for both the level of engagement and the type of engagement of alumni in the network. This can include analysis such as the percentage of active members that participate in 1 network activity in a year, 2 - 5 activities, 6 - 10, 10+, etc., providing insight into the characteristics of the most engaged members. Review and analysis of the same data by type/categories of engagement can show how members are engaging in different peer support or joint action strategies. Some networks find it helpful to think of this segmentation as a "ladder of engagement" with a goal of moving alumni higher up the ladder over time. Even in the most robust alumni networks, type and degree of alumni engagement varies. For this reason, engagement patterns should be considered in light of the network's plans. For example, if a regional network begins by making peer support and learning a priority, then a higher level of engagement in these areas would be expected at the start. As collective potential is identified and plans for policy advocacy emerge, an increase in engagement in these other areas would be anticipated.

A note about results - Outcomes for alumni network members can serve as an interim indicators of progress towards longer-term outcomes in communities, policies and systems. In annual surveys, ask alumni a standard set of questions about how their participation in the network has affected their capacity to engage more fully or effectively. For example:

As a consequence of my participation in the TFA alumni network...
- *I have a greater knowledge of innovations and best practices that advance a more equal opportunity local education system*
- *I have an increased commitment to advocate locally for policies and implementation of practices that lead to a more equal opportunity education system*
- *I am clearer about the potential role(s) I can play in supporting policy and systems change for a more equal opportunity education system in the region*
- *I am more aware of others in the network that are also committed to and working for policy and systems change locally*
- *I am more likely to advocate locally for policy changes that support a more equal opportunity education system*
- *I am more likely to turn to other alumni in my region to collaborate on efforts to advance policy and systems change*
- *I/My organization has changed or adapted a policy, process or strategy because of information received from a fellow TFA alumnus.*

Some network evaluations may also include a further analysis of the contribution of network activities to specific policy, systems-level or community outcomes.[5] Appendix 3 provides an example of a potential causal sequence that evaluators might test focusing on anticipated changes at the alumni, school and education system level.

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[5] For an example see Contribution Analysis in Policy Work by R. Kane, C. Levine, C. Orians, C. Reinelt (2017) at
https://www.evaluationinnovation.org/publication/contribution-analysis-in-policy-work-assessing-advocacys-influence/

Appendix 2: Resources

References for Social Network Analysis

- [Social Network Analysis Made Easy](#) -- A helpful section on the Kumu website
- [Org.Net](#) – Valdis Kreb's website, which includes a brief introduction to Social Network Analysis and description of key SNA metrics
- [Asking the Right Questions: Collecting Meaningful Data About Your Network](#) – A blog post by Kumu on survey question options.
- [Network Weaver Handbook](#)– A book by June Holley that has a helpful chapter on network mapping and analysis and her website has free resources on Hand drawn network mapping and analyzing network maps.
- [Network Mapping and Analyzing Network Maps](#) - Short, free resources on June Holley's Network Weaver website.

Other network evaluation resources and examples

- [Network Health Scorecard](#) - How can we know how the network is doing? In some ways, the answer is complicated. There are different types of networks and networks evolve through different stages–factors that should be taken into account. But it's also true that some things about networks hold for any network at any stage of life. With just 22 questions and a 1-5 scoring system, the scorecard focuses on key aspects of any network: purpose, performance, operations, and capacity. It's designed for group use–network members answer each question and then discuss their answers.

- *[The State of Network Evaluation](#)* brief offers the field's current thinking on frameworks, approaches and tools to address practical questions about designing and funding network evaluations. Network Impact and Center for Evaluation Innovation. 2014.

- *[Network Evaluation: Cultivating Healthy Networks for Social Change](#)* Network evaluation strategies and easy-to-use tools designed for network practitioners. Eli Malinsky and Chad Lubelsky, Centre for Social Innovation and Canada Millennium, Scholarship Fund, 2011

- *[Social Network Analysis and Evaluation of Leadership Networks](#)* Discusses the value of Social Network Analysis (SNA) as a promising evaluation approach for leadership networks. Bruce Hoppe and Claire Reinelt, Leadership Quarterly, 2010.

Evaluation examples

- [OpenNews Fellowship and network evaluation](#) investigated the individual trajectories of fellows alumni, the health and performance of the network of journalism technologists as well as the impact of the network on journalists, newsrooms and the field of journalism.

- [Stanton Fellowship alumni network evaluation](#) Durfee Foundation engaged Network Impact to conduct a social network analysis to better understand the impact of fellows and alumni relationships.

- [Evaluating Networks for Social Change: A Casebook](#) profiles nine evaluations including key questions, methodologies, and results while expanding what is known about assessment approaches that fit with how networks develop and function. Network Impact and Center for Evaluation Innovation.

Evaluation Methods Resources

- Bellwether interviews - *Unique Methods in Advocacy Evaluation.* Julia Coffman and Ehren Reed. Accessible at: http://www.pointk.org/resources/files/Unique_Methods_Brief.pdf

- Narrative Assessment - *Narrative Assessment. A new approach to advocacy monitoring, evaluation, learning and communication.* Margit van Wessel. Accessible at: https://comm.eval.org/theoriesofevaluation/viewdocument/narrative-assessment-a-new-approac-2

- Contribution Analysis - *Contribution Analysis in Policy Work.* R. Kane, C. Levine, C. Orians, C. Reinelt. Accessible at: https://www.evaluationinnovation.org/publication/contribution-analysis-in-policy-work-assessing-advocacys-influence/
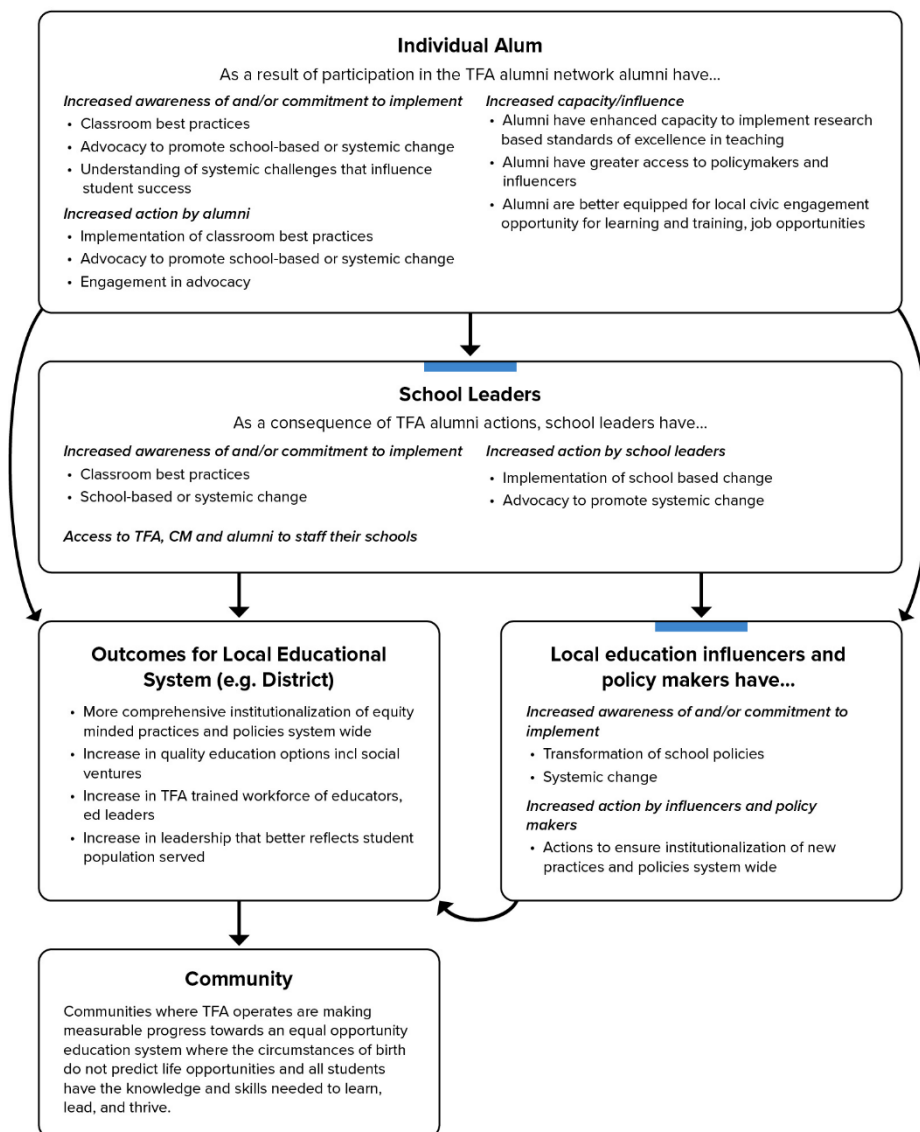
Network Strategy Resources

- Network Impact [Knowledge Exchange blog posts](#)
- [NetworkWeaver.com Blog](#)
- [New Network Leader blog](#)

Appendix 3: Example of a detailed chain of outcomes for alumni working in educational setting (classrooms/schools)

Participation in a network may lead to a chain of outcomes that links changes in individual orientation and behavior to changes at a wider scale. The following figure describes a hypothesized TFA chain of outcomes linking desired changes at the alumni, school, and education system level. Precursors to any level of outcomes occur higher up in this graphic. Testing the causal sequence at any point in the chain requires an assessment of the role of precursors in producing desired changes.

Legend:
- Arrows indicate a causal relationship.
- Precursors to any outcome are located higher in the chain of outcomes. For example, there is a hypothesis embedded in the figure that actions by alumni influence school leaders actions.
- Blue rectangles indicate alumni may hold this position. For example, alumni may be school leaders.

Individual Alum
As a result of participation in the TFA alumni network alumni have...

Increased awareness of and/or commitment to implement
- Classroom best practices
- Advocacy to promote school-based or systemic change
- Understanding of systemic challenges that influence student success

Increased action by alumni
- Implementation of classroom best practices
- Advocacy to promote school-based or systemic change
- Engagement in advocacy

Increased capacity/influence
- Alumni have enhanced capacity to implement research based standards of excellence in teaching
- Alumni have greater access to policymakers and influencers
- Alumni are better equipped for local civic engagement opportunity for learning and training, job opportunities

School Leaders
As a consequence of TFA alumni actions, school leaders have...

Increased awareness of and/or commitment to implement
- Classroom best practices
- School-based or systemic change

Access to TFA, CM and alumni to staff their schools

Increased action by school leaders
- Implementation of school based change
- Advocacy to promote systemic change

Outcomes for Local Educational System (e.g. District)
- More comprehensive institutionalization of equity minded practices and policies system wide
- Increase in quality education options incl social ventures
- Increase in TFA trained workforce of educators, ed leaders
- Increase in leadership that better reflects student population served

Local education influencers and policy makers have...

Increased awareness of and/or commitment to implement
- Transformation of school policies
- Systemic change

Increased action by influencers and policy makers
- Actions to ensure institutionalization of new practices and policies system wide

Community
Communities where TFA operates are making measurable progress towards an equal opportunity education system where the circumstances of birth do not predict life opportunities and all students have the knowledge and skills needed to learn, lead, and thrive.

Network Impact

Most people are natural networkers, but it takes real know-how and skills to develop and grow networks that achieve large-scale social impact. Network Impact is accelerating and spreading the use of networks to achieve increased social impact by providing consulting, tool-building, research and assessment services to support social-impact networks, foundations, and the emerging field of network builders. www.NetworkImpact.org