

Definition of Networks.

“A network is an aggregate of free, equal, self-sufficient and independent participants, united by common values and interests” (Lipnack and Stamps, 1982).

“A network can be defined as an association of independent individuals or institutions with a shared purpose or goal, whose members contribute resources and participation in two-way exchanges or communications.” (Plucknett, 1990)

“A group of people or organizations who meet together on the basis of something that they all have in common. This could be a mutual interest, a need for information, a desire to solve a problem, etc”.(INTRAC)

Types of Networks

There are many different types and levels of networks. The table below gives useful definitions..

Term	Definition/Description – focusing on structure, membership, decision making, secretariat, power relations, etc
Network	Semi-formal grouping of organisations with common interests to share information and knowledge. May sometimes agree common positions on certain issues.
Networking	Informal process of making and developing contacts with others, involving the sharing of information.
Alliance	Formal grouping of organisations for a common cause. Would normally speak with one voice, so members need to sign up for a common position.
Association	Formal grouping of organisations with common interests. Mainly for mutual support. May sometimes agree common positions on certain issues.
Coalition	Formal grouping of organisations around a certain issue. Similar to Alliance, but membership could be more diverse.
Forum	Informal or semi-formal group of individuals or organisations to share knowledge and debate positions of common interest.
Platform	Formal group of organisations who have a common position on a certain issue. Could be a national grouping of an international coalition, or based around a specific event.