



NIDA Networking Project (NNP): A Meeting to Explore Opportunities for Information-Sharing and Collaboration

NNP Fact Sheet #1 – June 2007

BACKGROUND

Representatives from NIDA's networks met in July 2006 to brainstorm ideas about the value and feasibility of networking. To set the groundwork, the representatives described each network's mission and purpose, so that everyone could begin in the same place. Most knew little about other networks. The meeting provided their first opportunity to exchange information about each network and find commonalities across networks. They also agreed on the potential value of networking in accomplishing common goals.

EARLY STEPS FOR BUILDING THE NNP

1. **Build awareness about the benefits of networking and collaboration.** One goal is to help to advance science, improve efficiency, and increase competitiveness.
2. **Develop an NNP Website.** The Website, which is now available, describes NIDA networks in action, provides a searchable portal to other network sites, and accesses members' expertise and research focus.
3. **Promote networking across the diverse networks that are part of the NNP.** Developing a common theme for a conference, special journal, or other project could promote participation by most of the networks.

THE BENEFITS

Discussions at the meeting identified these benefits:

- **Networking** can provide access to:
 - **Expertise, experiences, and resources** not otherwise available—For example, the NGC provided genetics consultation to the CTN nodes.
 - **Shortcuts to building networks**—Adapting other networks' policies and procedures can save new networks time and money. They will still need to build their own intra-network collaboration and commitment.
 - **Existing network infrastructures, which can reduce costs of research**—e.g., health services research conducted on the CTN platform.
- **Collaboration** can mean increases in:
 - **Speed:** Learning from others saves time and resources.
 - **Size:** Pooling data with other sites increases the number of subjects (N) and statistical power.
 - **Iteration:** When many groups study the same protocol, replicating findings is quicker and easier.
 - **Competitiveness of grants:** Conforms with NIH Roadmap priorities on transdisciplinary collaboration.
- **Networks and networking** can be valuable resources for transdisciplinary collaboration.

OTHER IDEAS TO EXPLORE

1. **Develop the next generation of transdisciplinary scientists** through:
 - a. Training programs across network areas (trans-site; transdisciplinary)
 - b. Rotating junior scientists
 - c. Researcher-in-residence program – Across disciplines (a la Humphrey Fellows model)
2. **Develop a special journal issue** across networks – Synthesize work on a focused topic area (e.g., human subjects issues).
3. **Include the NNP on the agenda at each network's next meeting** to discuss potential ideas for collaboration, integration, and dissemination.
4. **Pursue implementation research** to ensure that network-related research results are applied in the real world. Thus, drug abuse prevention and treatment practice can be improved over time.
5. **Measure outcomes of NNP efforts.**

