

The National Archives

Development Networks Evaluation Report: Top Tips

Top tips for an effective network

1. **Agree on a clear purpose**

Ensure the members of the network share a common core purpose, and that this is simple and clear. Check in on this on a yearly basis, ideally supported through an externally facilitated process.

2. **Establish priorities**

Set shorter term goals, and milestones to reach these which are achievable and relevant to all members of the network. In the early stages this may be to establish a partnership with an agreed structure for governance.

3. **Communicate and advocate**

The strongest networks are those that have been built on existing relationships, sometimes where periodic meetings take place but the group have not previously sought funding to make joint activity possible. This foundation of talking before doing is not to be dismissed or underestimated. A cohesive network is built on conversations, either in person or by phone. Then go beyond talking amongst the group: get out and advocate why a network of archives can drive improvement. The networks which are most effective have successfully engaged senior managers in their service or parent organisation through regular communication. The National Archives can support your network in promoting your activities.

4. **Get active – do stuff**

Moving on from being a 'talking shop' to an active network is an important development. Identify areas where it may be possible to get quick wins. Start a project – getting started is the thing – and be prepared to learn from it. It may not be perfect, it may fail. But the network will learn and develop from the process as long as time is taken to reflect on whatever happens.

5. **Develop a governance and management framework**

Clarify specific roles and responsibilities for network members. Keep it simple, but make sure everyone understands and agrees the terms of membership. Decide on an appropriate structure; for example, you could develop fee-based subscription model to help raise some seed funding for projects. It is essential there is an effective mechanism for setting meetings and ensuring on-going communications.