



## Brief: Bounding Your Network

Are you ready to use a social network analysis (SNA) survey to measure your network? If the answer is yes, you are likely very quickly starting to figure out all the steps. And the first, and perhaps the most important to get right, is bounding your network.

### Why do you need to bound the network?

"Bounding the network" is determining the members of the network that will participate in the SNA survey. In some cases, choosing the survey recipients is simple – just pull out your list of members. In other cases, the decision of who to include and who not to include can be challenging. It's good to put some thought into it! Deciding who to send the survey to matters because that will end up being the nodes which appear on the network map.

### Tips & Advice for Bounding Your Network:

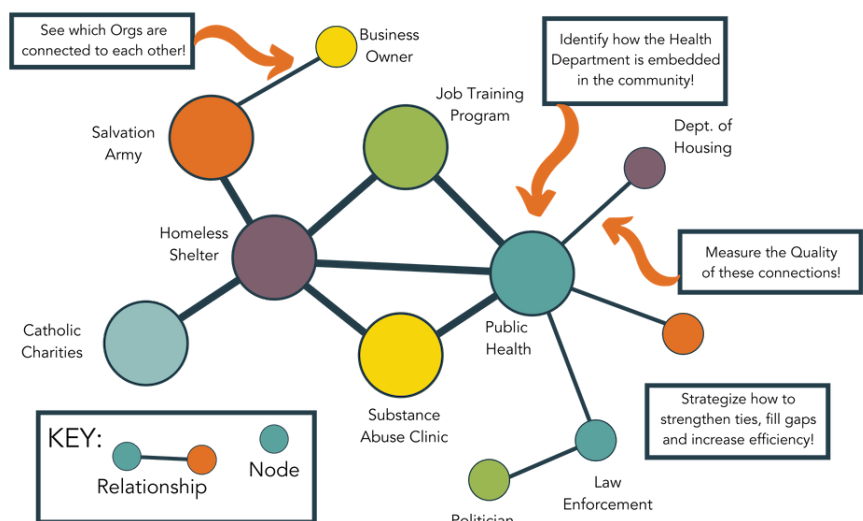
- To get started, you first want to identify which organizations or individuals are members of the existing network. If your own organization plays a role in the network, that means you too!
- Remember, the organizations you choose to include as you bound your network will be the entities that show up in the network maps representing your network. Make sure each entity you include has a unique identifier or they will be counted twice. To do this - don't include multiple people from the same organization in your list. Have them work together to answer the survey. If you do include multiple contacts from the same group, add a title or department to differentiate them.
- Don't Forget! Each organization will also need to include a specific contact to respond to the survey. Select the person that has "sat at the table" and can answer the survey questions about the network itself, along with questions about the specific partnerships their organization maintains with other groups.

Doing a Social Network Analysis can be hard. PARTNER was developed to make it easy and intuitive to collect and analyze network data. Accessible tools, good measures, and support to interpret and translate to practice.

[www.partnertool.net](http://www.partnertool.net)



**PARTNER**



# BRIEF: BOUNDING YOUR NETWORK

---

- It is critical that the process of bounding your network be both collaborative and intentional. If you are not sure who to include in the bounded list, be sure to reach out to key informants to ask them which organizations they consider to be part of your network. Keep doing this until you get a list that you feel is comprehensive and covers all the perspectives you want to include.

- Not satisfied with the inclusivity of your list? Think about who is not currently considered part of your network but could or should be involved. Consider including groups that may not already be formal partners or unusual suspects that may not always sit at the table but also play a role in the system - like major employers and the faith-based community.

"It is critical that the process of bounding your network be both collaborative and intentional."

## Should I include people/orgs not in my network to take the survey?

There may be people or organizations that you want to include in the network but not have them answer the survey, and that is okay. Include these organizations in the list.

## Now I have a massive list! How do I get it down to a reasonable number?

Narrowing the list of members means balancing several priorities:

- 1) You need to be sure to include the various perspectives that are important to answering your questions.

- 2) You want the results of the survey to be meaningful and relevant to the network that participated.

- 3) The list cannot be so long that people will not respond because of the burden (longer lists mean longer times to take the survey).

That means that after you get input, you have to make hard choices to balance these priorities. Here are some checkpoints to consider when narrowing your list:

- Your final list should include some "VIPs". These VIPs are already highly engaged in the network and obviously the most integral contacts to the network.

- Next, your list should include those most mentioned by the key informants you reach out to, and that are known to be active in the network.

- Then make sure the list includes the usual suspects and organizations that are strategically beneficial to the outcome of your network but may not be as active.

## Is this the only option?

You may hear that another alternative to bounding your network is to use a "name generator" approach. In that approach, you ask people to "list" their partners and then answer survey questions about them – all at once. We have found this approach to be a bit more unreliable and the data can be hard to work with. If you choose this approach, we recommend you separate generating a list from your network survey and wait to send the survey out until you have a clean, bounded list.