

Building a Network for Social Change:

Oral Health 2020 Network Evaluation Final Report

September 2016

DentaQuest
FOUNDATION

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research

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Introduction

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Purpose of the Oral Health 2020 Network Evaluation

- The DentaQuest Foundation (DQF) partnered with Harder+Company Community Research in 2015 to evaluate the Oral Health 2020 (OH2020) network.
- OH2020 focuses on the broad vision of making oral health an essential component to lifelong health and well-being by the year 2020.
- The Foundation engages grantees and partners around a set of bold, shared goals with specific targets to be achieved by 2020. Network-building is a core component of this strategy, based upon the Interaction Institute for Social Change's (IISC's) philosophy that "a system is more than the sum of its parts; it is the product of their interactions."
- The purpose of the network evaluation is to understand what the network looks like, how it functions, and what changes it is helping to drive. The evaluation will also help identify strategic adjustments that could be made to increase the impact of the OH2020 network.
- *This report is in the form of a slide deck, and is not intended for use as a presentation.*

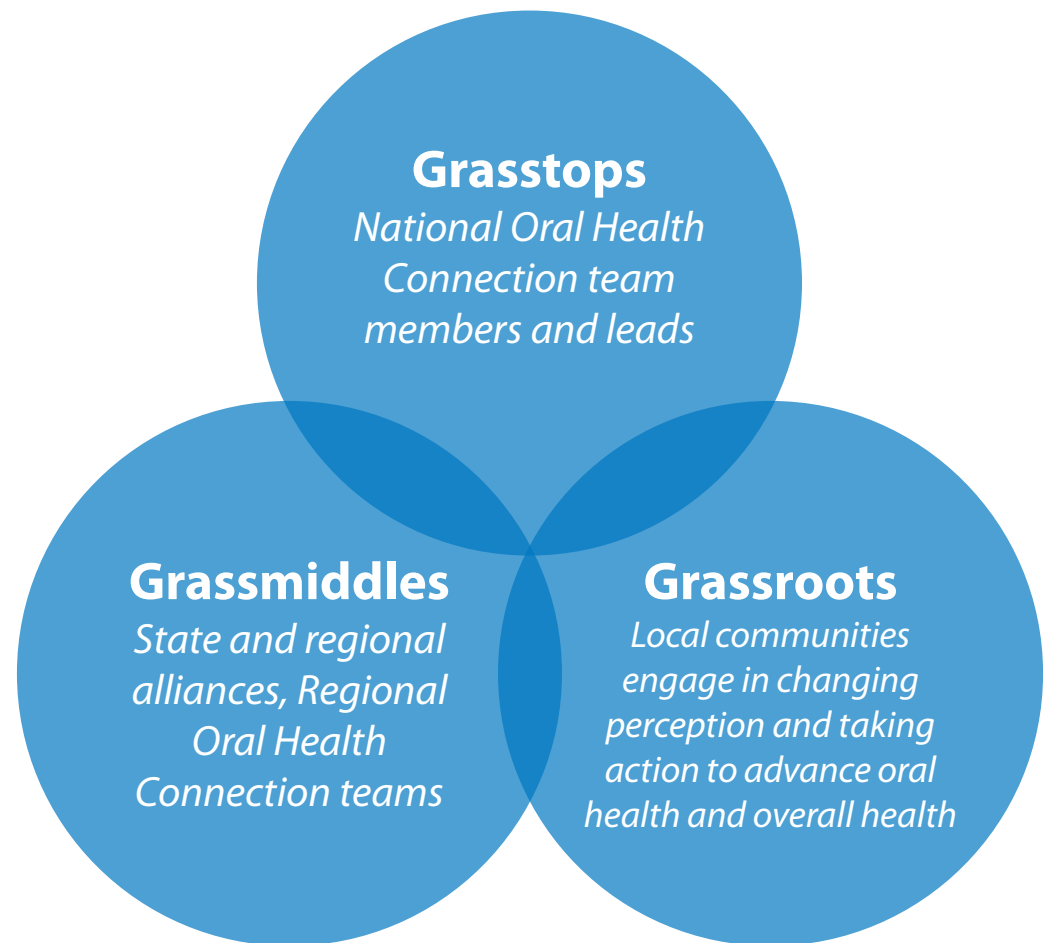
Evolution of the OH2020 Network Strategy

- This graphic shows the DentaQuest Foundation’s vision to gradually build an interconnected OH2020 network with a stronger core that shares knowledge and resources, as well as engages new members.
- The Foundation’s vision is to ultimately achieve an independent and sustainable network infrastructure in 2020.



The OH2020 Network

- The OH2020 network refers to the entire network of national, state, and community-based leaders, as well as national partners, dedicated to improving the oral health of all.
- Given the Foundation's commitment to supporting a broad and sustainable network of partners, the OH2020 network has three main levels of engagement: Grasstops, Grassmiddles, and Grassroots. A definition of who is included in each of these levels follows on the right.



Evaluation Questions

Building on the framework from "The State of Network Evaluation" by the Center for Evaluation Innovation, the network evaluation focuses on the following three key areas of inquiry:

- 1) **Network Connectivity:** Who participates and how?
- 2) **Network Health:** How sustainable is the network?
- 3) **Network Results:** What actions emerge from the network?

Methods: Survey

The evaluation team fielded a **survey of network members** between January and February 2016:

- We surveyed a subset of the OH2020 network, working with DentaQuest Foundation staff to identify a representative group of members to survey. We included individuals who were both long-standing and newer members of the network. Specifically, we sought variation in the following areas:
 - Geography
 - DentaQuest Foundation grantees and non-grantees
 - Network level (i.e., Grasstops, Grassmiddles, or Grassroots)
- We sent the survey to 83 people and received 74 responses, for an 89 percent response rate.
- Participants provided their perceptions of the network and identified actions that have come out of their participation in it.
- The survey included a social network analysis component, in which participants rated their relationships with other members of the network.

Methods: Interviews

The evaluation team also conducted **interviews** to supplement findings from the survey:

- **Interviews with DQF grantees and other network members** (n=8) – September to October 2015
 - Interviewees described how they have participated in the network and used it to facilitate joint action, as well as their common understanding of the goals of the network.
- **Interviews with DQF and IISC staff** (n=3) – May to June 2015
 - Foundation and IISC staff reflected on who members of the network are, how they communicate with each other, and the desired goals of the network.

Social Network Analysis



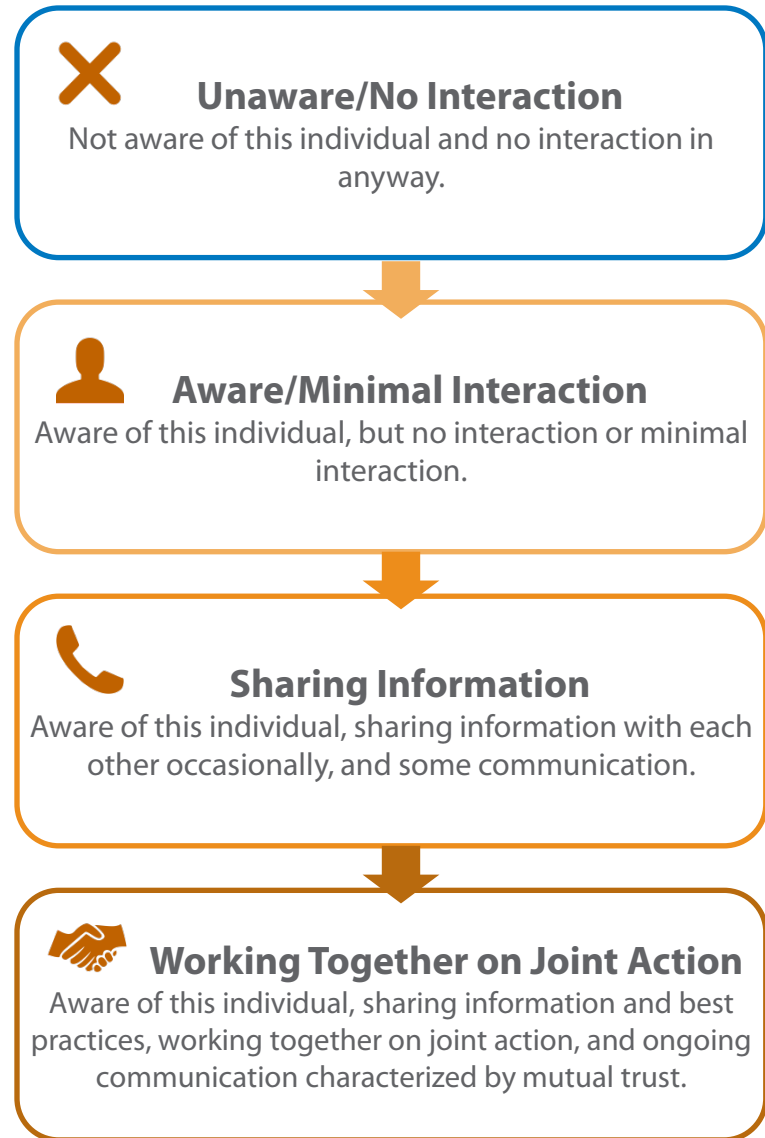
Social network analysis (SNA) is a methodological approach to measuring and mapping relationships that connect people to one another

- Social network analysis can be used to study whole networks, all of the ties within a defined group, or connections that individuals have in their personal communities.
- Social network maps view relationships in terms of individual actors within networks, and the ties – or relationships – between them.

The survey was our core evaluation method. The next set of slides provides more detail on the social network analysis component of the survey, as well as the survey participant characteristics to provide context for the findings that follow.

Survey Design

Participants rated their level of collaboration with other network members into one of the four categories on the right. Harder+Company worked with DentaQuest Foundation and IISC staff to develop these categories, based upon our hypotheses about how members interact with each other within the OH2020 network.



Limitations

- Evaluating networks is dynamic, hard to predict, and includes a complex chain of impact.
- Networks take time to organize and show results and include diverse players, many of whom enter and exit the network. This report gives a snapshot of the network and is based upon respondents' perceptions at the time they were surveyed and interviewed.
- Non-respondents may be less connected to other participants than respondents.
- We selected a portion of the network to sample, so findings are based upon a "sample of a sample."

Survey Participants by Type of Network Involvement

Participants play multiple network roles and participate through various groups. This graphic summarizes survey participants by their primary type of involvement in the network.

Respondents consisted of a representative subset of the overall *sample*, but not of the broader OH2020 network.

24% National Oral Health Connection Team (NOHCT) Lead



22% New Oral Health 2020 Grantee



9% Grassroots Grantees



8% Regional Oral Health Connection Teams (ROHCT)



8% Regional Oral Health Connection Team (ROHCT) Leads



8% NOHCT and ROHCT Leads

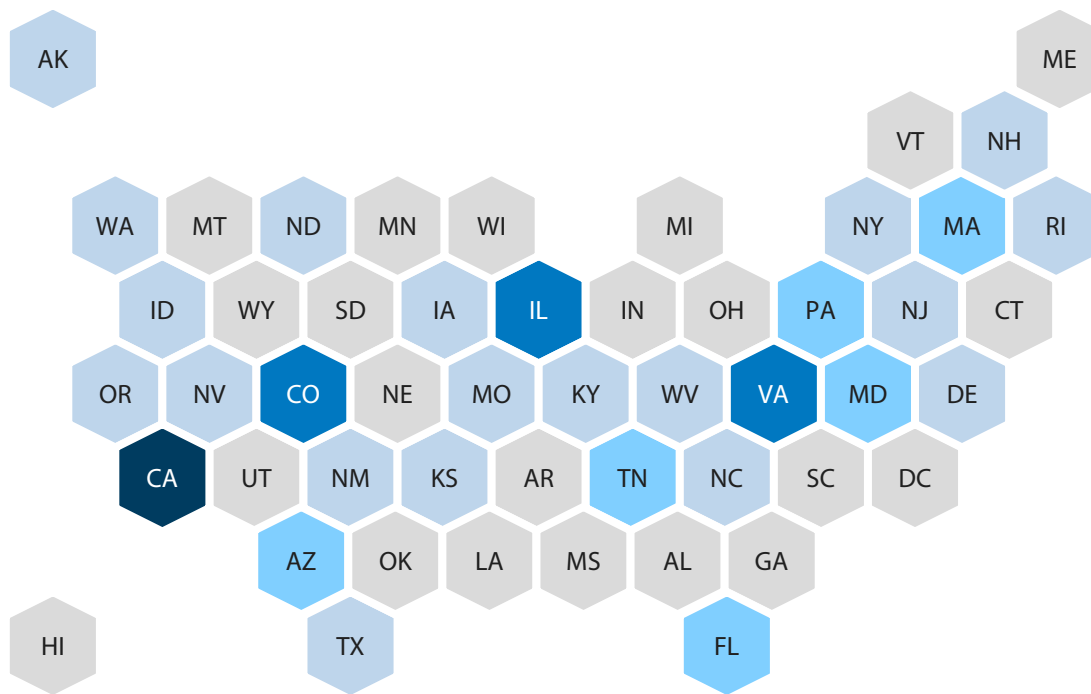


19% Other



Survey Participants by State

Survey participants represent organizations that work all over the U.S., across **33 different states** and at the national level.



Findings: Network Connectivity

Who Participates and How?

- **How are network members collaborating with each other?**
- **Who is most and least active in the network?**
- **How do network members interact with each other?**

Dimensions of Network Connectivity

A key goal of the OH2020 network is to weave network members' ties to each other and develop effective pathways for shared learning and action. The literature suggests that connectivity has two dimensions that can be assessed:

- **Membership**, or the people that participate in a network
- How **connections** between members are **structured** and what flows through those connections

The next set of slides present survey findings related to these dimensions of network connectivity.

How are network members collaborating with each other?

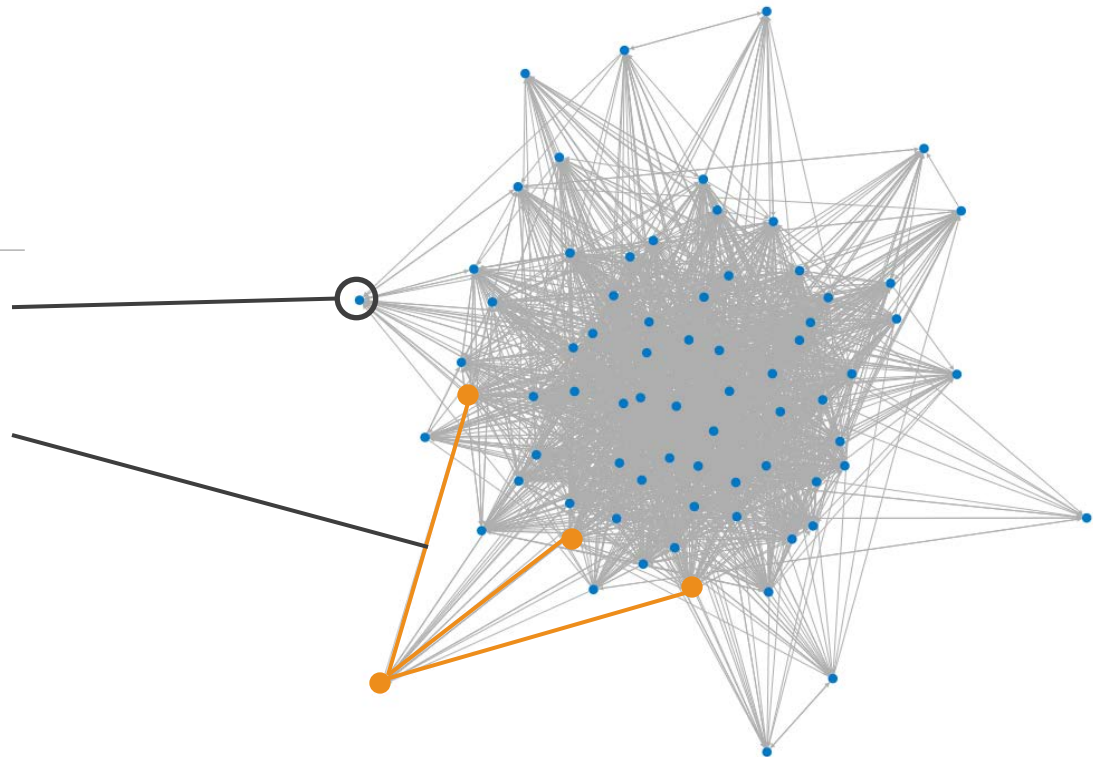
The social network analysis and maps that follow are based upon survey respondents' self-reported interactions with each other.

Reading Network Maps

Circles represent network members

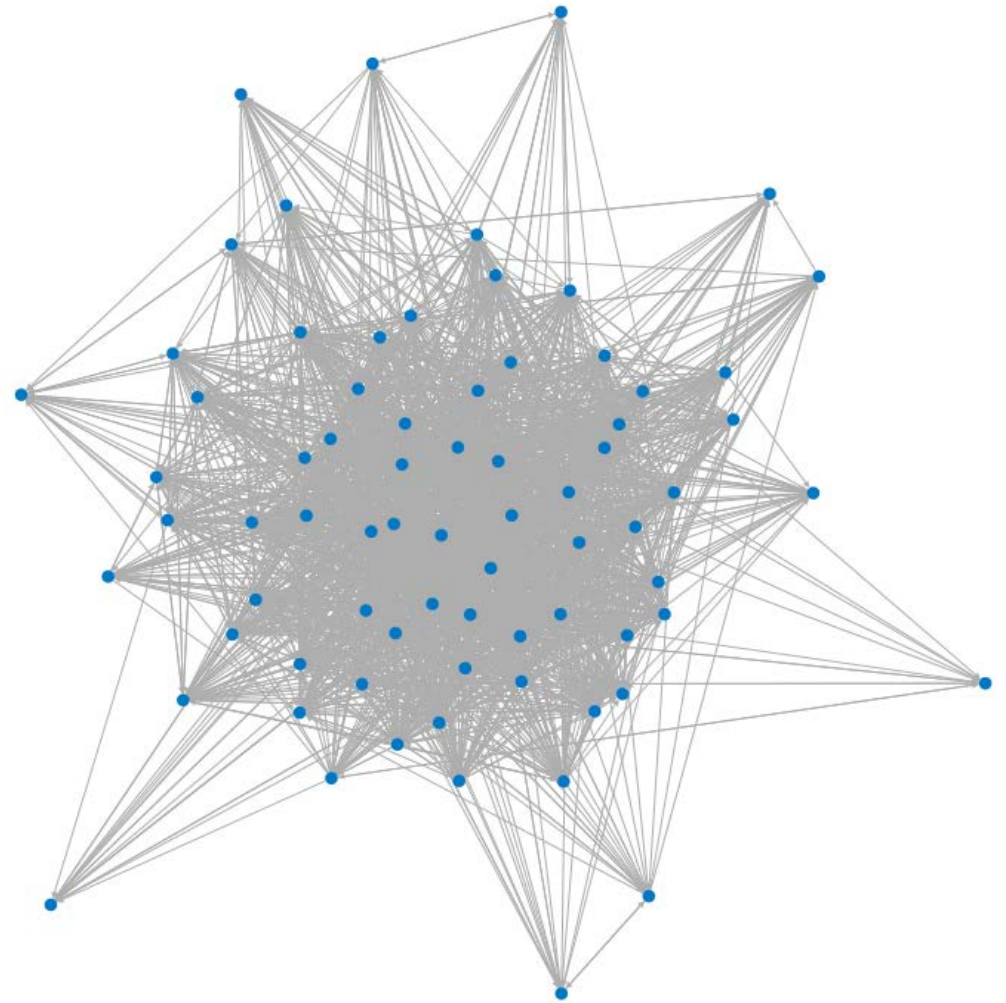
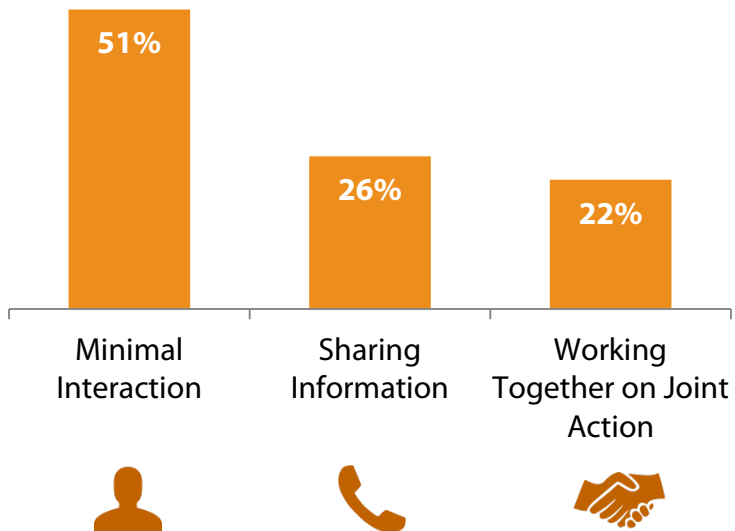
Lines represent interactions between participants

Density is the actual number of interactions reported out of the total number of interactions possible.

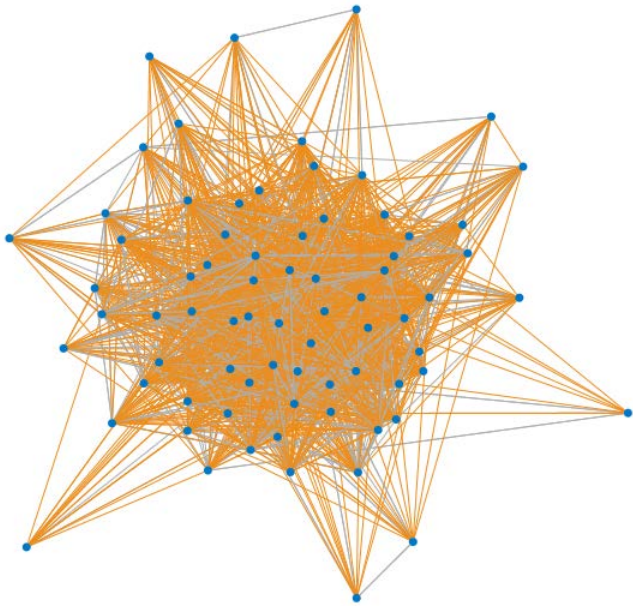


Network Density, Type and Frequency of Interactions

A total of 45% of possible interactions are taking place between network members. Of those interactions, just over half (51%) are at the minimal interaction level.

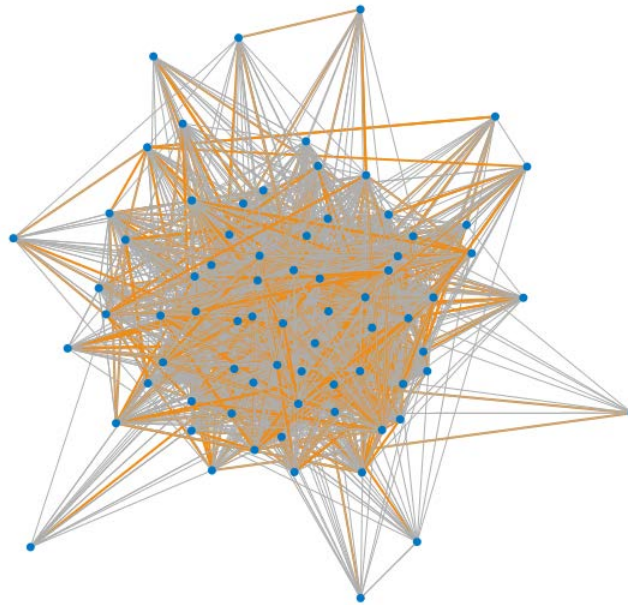


 **Minimal Interaction**



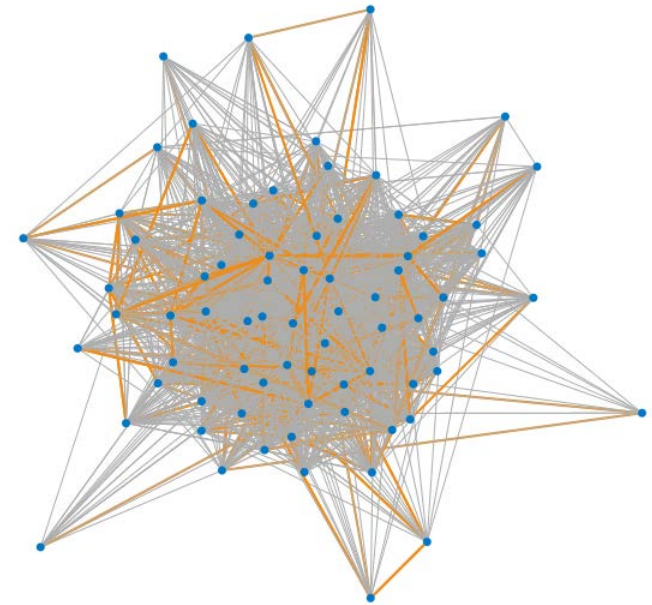
In 51% of interactions, network members reported minimal interaction.

 **Sharing Information**



In 26% of interactions, network members reported occasionally sharing information.

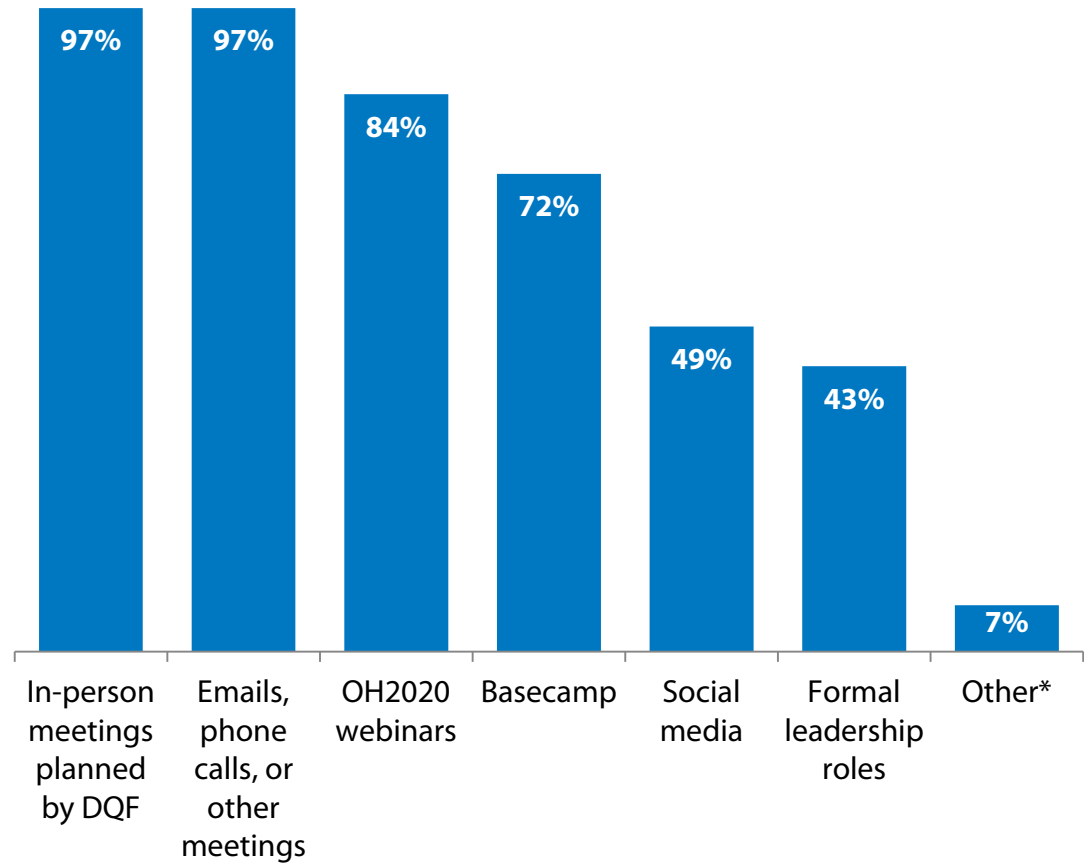
 **Working Together on Joint Action**



In 22% of interactions, network members reported sharing information and best practices, working together, and having ongoing communication characterized by mutual trust.

Network Communication

Network members reported primarily communicating through in-person meetings planned by the DentaQuest Foundation, emails, and phone calls.



*Other includes: active member of a state collaborative team; conference speaker; future state representative; sponsorship of an annual symposium; NOCHT workgroup member

Findings:

Network Health

How Sustainable is the Network?

**To what extent do
network members have
a shared understanding
of the purpose of the
network and the goals
of OH2020?**

Measuring Network Sustainability

A key goal of the OH2020 network is to create a stable and sustainable infrastructure by 2020. In order for members to stay engaged in the network and support its sustainability, the literature suggests that network members should:

- Have a strong **shared understanding** of the network's purpose and goals
- See the **value** of their continued participation

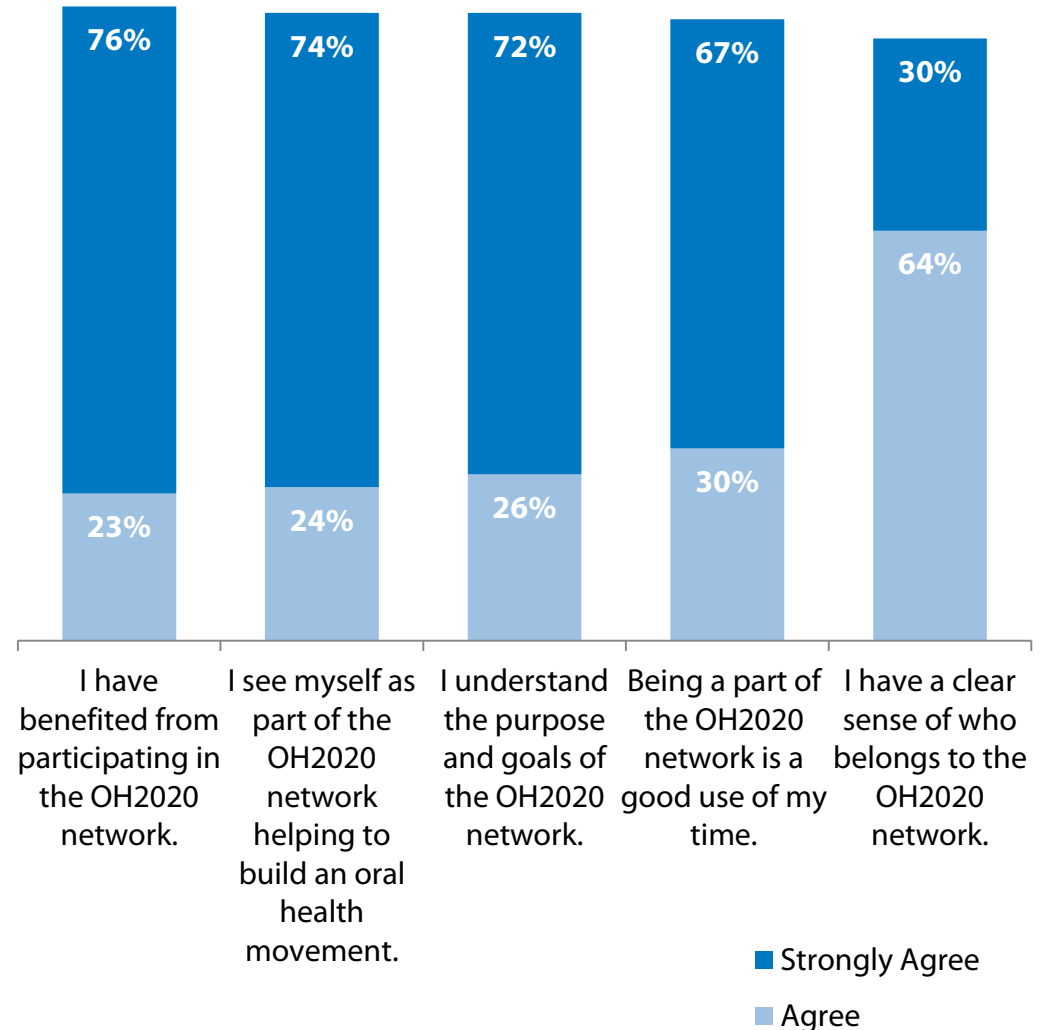
The next set of slides present survey findings related to these early markers of network sustainability. They also include quotes from partner interviews to support the survey findings.

Purpose and Goals of the Network

On a **personal level**, the majority of network members reported understanding the purpose and goals of the OH2020 network.* The quotes below from network participants illustrate this understanding:

“Being a part of the network has allowed us to raise an issue that we care about to a higher level of prominence and really make sure it gets the attention it deserves. I’ve been able to connect with groups that I wouldn’t usually be collaborating with or having conversations with otherwise.”

“Being a network member has been a very good use of my time and has educated me a lot. I feel like I have impacted the way oral health is perceived.”



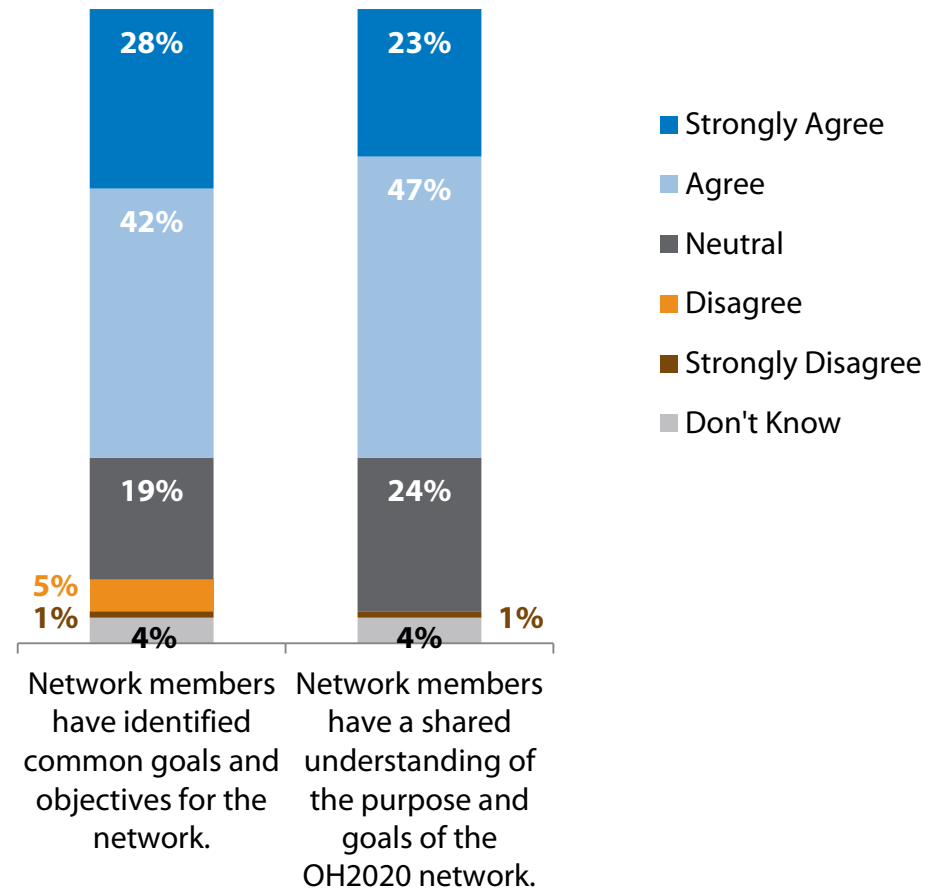
*Just 6 percent or less of responses for this series of questions were neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree.

Network Alignment

Despite their personal investment in the network, some members reported being unsure whether the broader network on a **collective level** is aligned around common goals and has a shared understanding of its purpose. The quotes below from network members illustrate this point.

"I'm unsure what the end goal will look like for people in the network and what the benefit of a self-sustaining network is for participants."

"It would be helpful for the network to have a better sense of itself ... this would require clarity on components such as how it interacts, things it has accomplished and aspirational goals."



Findings: Network Results

What Actions
Emerge from the
Network?

What oral health policy changes or other key actions have emerged from the work of network members?

Measuring Network Outcomes

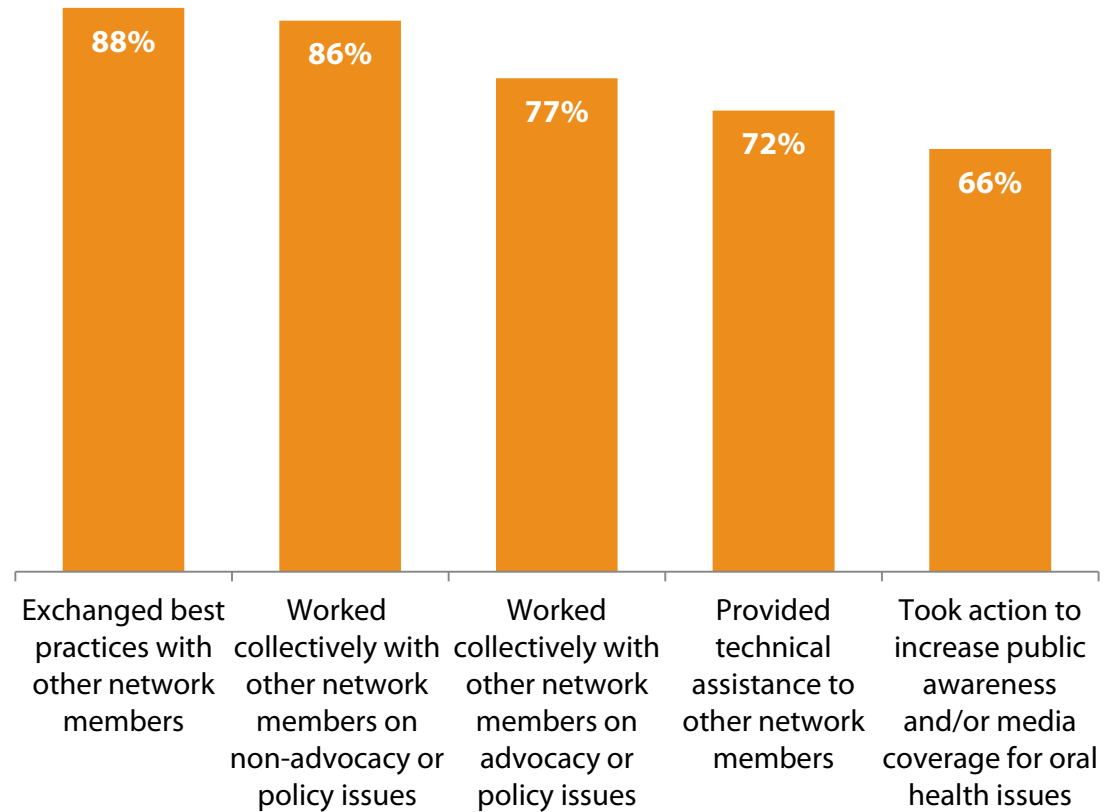
Ultimately, the OH2020 network aims to make oral health an essential component to lifelong health and well-being by the year 2020. In order to understand if the network is helping to drive towards this goal, the evaluation focused on the following components:

- **Interim outcomes**, or the results achieved as the network works toward OH2020's broader systems change goals
- **Policy changes** or other key actions that have emerged from the work of network members

The next set of slides presents survey findings and quotes from respondents related to these components of network results.

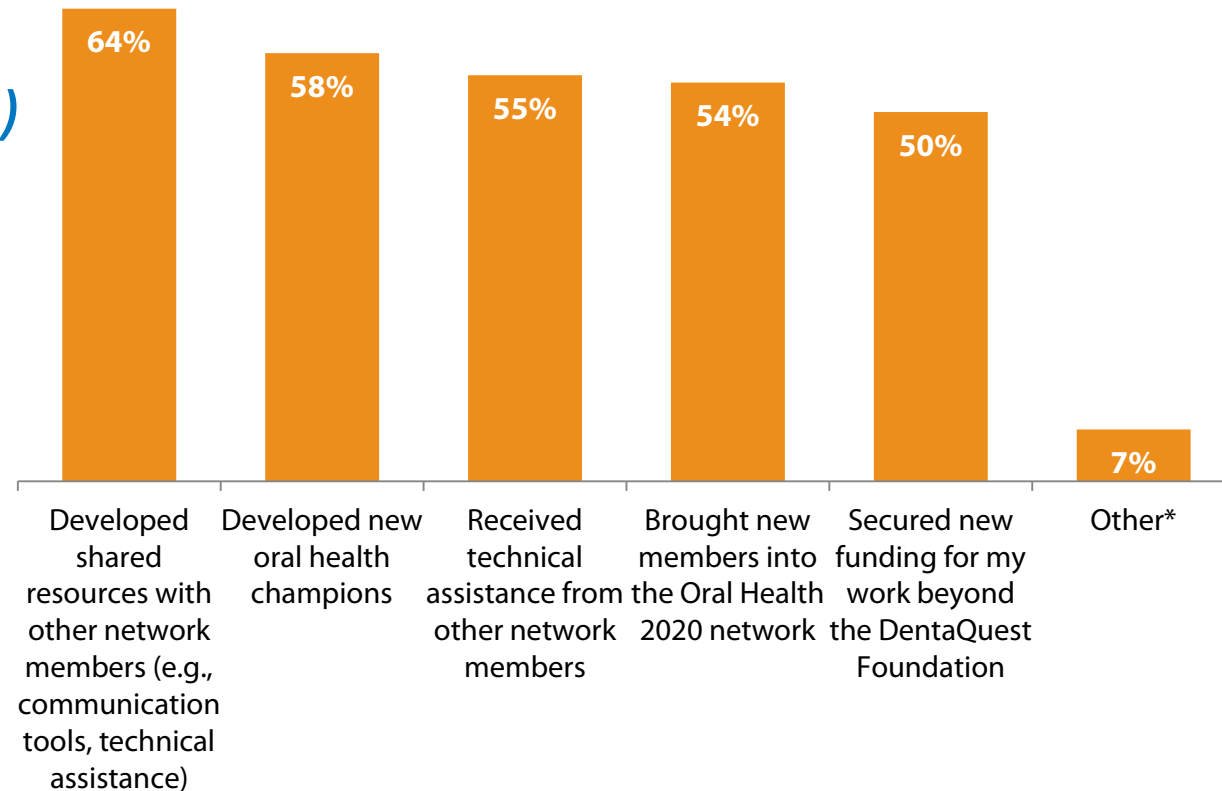
Oral Health Actions through the Network

We asked survey participants to identify oral health actions they have engaged in during the past year through their involvement with the OH2020 network. Most network members reported working with others to exchange best practices or on other activities, such as advocacy or policy issues.



Oral Health Actions through the Network (cont.)

Over half of participants reported bringing new members into the OH2020 network or securing funding for work beyond the DentaQuest Foundation.



*Other includes: collaborated with local and state partners; connected local work with state dental director's team; increased connectedness between other stakeholders; participation in the State Health Improvement Plan Workgroup.

Network Successes: Policy Change

Survey participants were also asked to share a time in the past year that they had success working with other network members on oral health actions. Many participants shared stories of policy change successes.

“In 2015, our oral health coalition brought forth a bill which would provide funding for the state sealant program. We requested resources and information from the network and Basecamp and were able to share this information with many of our legislators”.

“We worked with other network members on letter writing campaigns to defeat community water fluoridation rollback attempts, support HR416 and extend CHIP funding. We also signed onto national letters to extend CHIP funding, and support passage of S.192 and the Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.”

Network Successes: Cross-State Collaboration

Members also reported collaborating with other network members across various states. Members shared information and resources, as well as introduced members to one another.

"At a national meeting, we heard about what another state was doing with fluoride varnish and used that in our state. Likewise, I have been contacted by other states directly and we have shared our strategies."

"The team has had several conversations with organizations outside of [our state] about using our [oral health] toolkit."

Network Successes: Sharing Best Practices and Technical Assistance

In addition, most participants shared experiences about exchanging best practices and either receiving or providing technical assistance with other network members.

“We have provided our grassroots partners with technical assistance in the form of presentations on the state oral health environment, including state and local level oral health data. Our grassroots partners have helped us to reach community-level stakeholders to participate in our consumer advisory council.”

“We have used the expertise of other members of the network to increase our media presence. For example, we are participating in Twitter storms using the media tools that have been shared to support our media activities. We have also used advocacy tools created by members of the network as a guide for our local work.”

Conclusion

- **Key takeaways**
- **Implications**

Key Takeaways

- **Network Connectivity:** The network core is fairly dense, though there is room to grow for developing new connections and interacting at higher levels of collaboration.
- **Network Health:** The majority of survey participants reported personally understanding the purpose and goals of the OH2020 network, which is a key factor to ensuring network sustainability. Some participants reported uncertainty about whether the broader network was aligned around common goals and whether members had a shared understanding of its purpose.
- **Network Results:** Many members identified concrete actions that came out of their participation in the network, including working on policy change, cross-state collaboration, and sharing best practices.

Implications

These findings have several implications for how the DentaQuest Foundation, IISC, and network leaders work to strengthen and sustain the network in the future:

- **Create more structured opportunities to build the capacity of network members.** In interviews, network members suggested that they would benefit from more focused opportunities to engage with other members working on similar issues, such as through topical subgroups. These opportunities could help to create new connections and strengthen existing ones.
- **Recognize that both the quantity and quality of interactions in the network matter for achieving results.** Although there is potential for members to make new connections, the vast majority reported engaging in oral health actions through their involvement with the network. This suggests that both the *quantity* and *quality* of interactions are critical within the network. For example, some members are minimally connected (i.e., low quantity of interactions), yet may contribute meaningfully to group efforts to advance OH2020 policy and systems change goals (i.e., high quality of interactions). DQF and IISC can continue to strengthen broad network-building through convenings and other venues, while network leaders can focus on connecting members through targeted strategies. The new online platform, Socious, could be designed to encourage these targeted interactions.

Implications (cont.)

- **Continue to share information about the network's purpose, goals, and results through in-person and virtual communication.** To increase member's *collective* understanding of the network's purpose and goals, Foundation staff, IISC, and network leaders can continue to use in-person meetings and virtual communication to articulate the vision of the OH2020 network and what it has accomplished. Future evaluation efforts (e.g., the all-network member survey) can be used to probe on this topic further and identify other potential next steps.