

# E-learning Course on Network Management

September - November 2009

## Course Objective

To build on the conceptual and methodological understanding of network management by strengthening management and communication skills of network practitioners.

## Course duration

The course duration will be of ten weeks, which represents a workload of 60 - 80 hours per participant. The course will start on September 14 and will last until the 20 of November 2009.

## You will:

- Become aware of the importance and meaning of network management
- Become familiar with concepts on how formal networks can be managed
- Understand structures and processes of formal networks
- Become familiar with methods and instruments for managing formal networks
- Understand the critical factors that can warrantee the success of formal networks
- Strengthen networking skills
- Share experiences with other network practitioners

## Course Rationale

It is often observed that little designing or planning is involved while setting up formal networks, leading sometimes to the loss of time and resources. In that sense, there appears to be a wide scope for improving the management of existing networks. Additionally, not very many people are aware of the different aspects necessary to successfully manage formal networks such as: how to plan activities in complex systems; how to find a balance between organisations working together (networking) and still keeping their independence; how to set up a governance structure when members are geographically dispersed; and how to establish an effective communication mechanism that will allow a culturally diverse organisations to share information and knowledge. The E-learning Network Management Course is designed to respond to such challenges by addressing key network management issues.

## Methods

Different e-learning tools will be used: theoretical inputs, free and guided chat sessions, on-line discussions, case studies and exercises. Participants are required to have a good Internet connection and e-mail access.

The course will be moderated by a technical tutor, who is an expert on the topic of “Network Management” and an administrative tutor, who will be in charge of the administrative follow-up of the participants in a systematic manner. Exchanges among participants and with tutors will be actively supported.

## Context

Networks are generally understood as a set of formal or informal relationships between independent individuals or organisations. They are considered a “combination of persons or organisations, usually dispersed over a number of geographically separate sites, with appropriate communications technology” (Clark, 1998). They are dynamic and complex systems linking people and organisations, thus contributing to coordination and joint action.

Networks vary in form and structure; thus, three basic categories have been distinguished: Communities of Practice (CoP), Social Networks and Formal Networks.

The E-learning Network Management Course will focus mainly on aspects related to Formal Networks, which are defined as interrelated groups of several independent institutions or organisations that are established according to a specific design or need. The members of the network share a common vision, objectives and rules, and they carry out a set of common activities.

Follow-up mechanisms will be applied to monitor working time and a successful completion of assignments. The course material will be uploaded in electronic formats on the platform, a documented bibliography on each subject and a glossary will be provided. Once the course is over, participants who have attended and successfully completed the course programme will receive a course certificate.

# Course Programme

The course programme is structured as follows:

## I. Welcome Chat

- Opening, personal introduction and clarification of expectations
- Sharing basic aspects of the training course: content, rules, marking system, assignments expected, deadlines of deliverables and interaction processes

## II. Basic Concepts on Network Management

- Theoretical input on: Management, Knowledge Management and Networking
- Evaluation 1: Multiple-choice evaluation
- Chat session to clarify concepts, discuss about the three topics and share experiences
- Exercise 1: Based on a set of pre-established questions participants will have to analyse the development of an existing network

## III. Network governance and structure

- Theoretical input on: Strategic framework, network governance structure and the role of the network facilitator
- Evaluation 2: Multiple choice questions
- Chat session to clarify concepts, discuss about the theoretical input and share experiences
- Exercise 2: Based on a particular Case Study, participants will be asked either to develop the organisational chart of the Network clarifying roles and responsibilities or to establish the Network guidelines and membership rules.

## IV. Communication and Networks

- Theoretical input on: Principles of communication and communication strategy of a network
- Evaluation 3: Multiple choice questions
- Chat session to clarify concepts, discuss about the theoretical input and share experiences
- Exercise 3: Based on a particular Case Study, participants will be asked to propose a Communication Strategy for the network
- Online exercise: Drawing on experience with virtual communication tools, participants will share their experience and discuss about virtual communication tools for networking such as e-mail, chat, forums and video tele conferences

## V. Principles of Network Planning

- Theoretical input on: Planning in complex systems, time and risk management for networks
- Evaluation 4: Multiple choice questions
- Chat session to clarify concepts, discuss about the theoretical input and share experiences
- Exercise 4: Based on a particular Case Study, participants will be asked to develop an operational plan for the network

## VI. Closure chat

- Feedback on Exercises and evaluations
- Feedback on marking system
- Final assessment of the course
- Conclusions and closure

## Participants

It is designed to address in particular, networking practitioners, as well as other professionals wishing to acquire a better understanding of formal networks and to strengthen their skills for managing networks. This includes, managers, staff from non-profit-organisations, from development organisations, from multilateral organisations, from universities and research organisations. The course is designed for a group of approximately 25 participants.

## Registration and fees

Candidates are requested to fill out the registration form and send it with an updated CV and a motivation letter by July 31, 2009.

A thorough selection process will take place upon registration. Participants will be selected on the basis of their motivation, professional background, date of application, and group-mix needs. The final selection of participants will be informed by the second week of August.

Course fee is 1'100 EUR. Partial scholarships covering 30% or 50% of the course fee will be offered but are very limited. The application for a scholarship requires a separate process. Interest candidates will be informed upon registration. A 20% discount will be awarded to those participants who register before June 30.

## The organisers

Skat is an internationally renowned consulting firm, with a focus on overseas development. Since 1978, Skat has provided technical expertise and management support in development projects and programs. [See www.skat.ch](http://www.skat.ch)

Knowledge Management is one of its areas of expertise and in recent years, Skat has gained sound experience on supporting organizations and networks to make better use of their knowledge. Networks have been the focus of many initiatives supported by Skat; thus, its experts have been dedicated to developing concepts, tools and methods for strengthening network management capacities of network practitioners in different countries. Some of the most important activities on this realm are: the production of the GTZ Manual "Work the Net" in four languages (English, French, Spanish and Portuguese); the implementation of Network Management Courses in Latin America and the Assessment and Audit of Knowledge Management Processes of different Networks.

SBA is an international Non Governmental Organisation established in 1995 that promotes corporate environmental and social governance in Middle East and North Africa as well as Sub-Saharan countries. [See www.sba-int.ch](http://www.sba-int.ch)

Training and Networking are among SBA's main competences. SBA delivers up-to-date knowledge in environmental management through interactive and hands-on training, particularly suited to adult training. It has also launched regional 'business and environment' networks, thereby generating synergies between partners and efficiency in results.

In the framework of its DELTA programme, SBA has developed an e-learning platform for delivering timely training to network members. This platform has been used in a continuous training programme implemented by SBA in partnership with the Swiss Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL) and under SDC's support. The platform is now a solid tool for delivering various types of training to professionals, network practitioners and organisations.