



Visible Network Labs

Leveraging Our Social Network

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Labs

About VNL

We are a social enterprise committed to helping people, organizations, and communities use network science to increase their capacity to make a positive difference in the world.

We provide technology, training, and data analytics that empower people to build better collaborative strategies and improve the outcomes of their work.



Jennifer Lawlor, PhD
Director of Data Science & Insights

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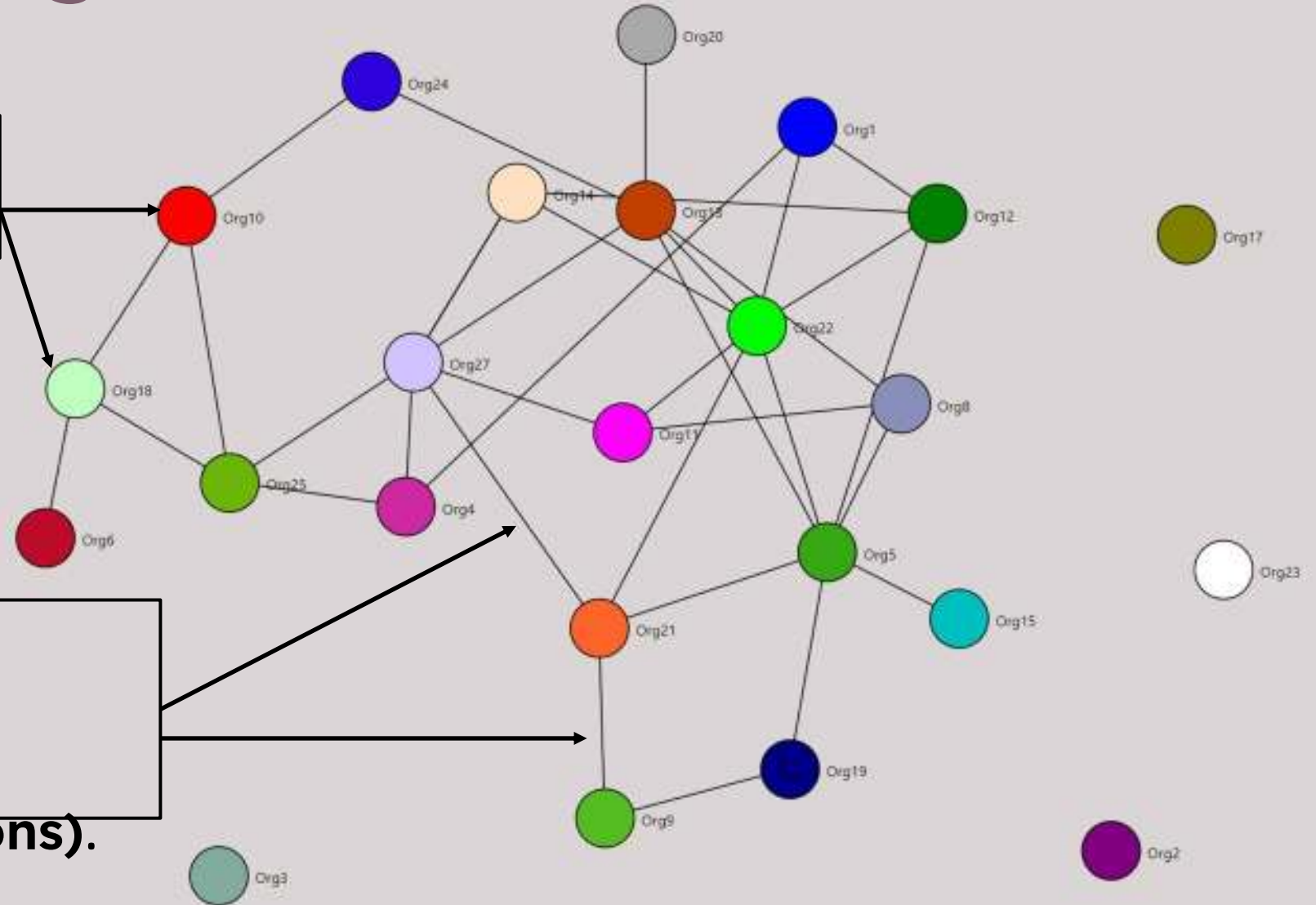


Danielle Varda, PhD
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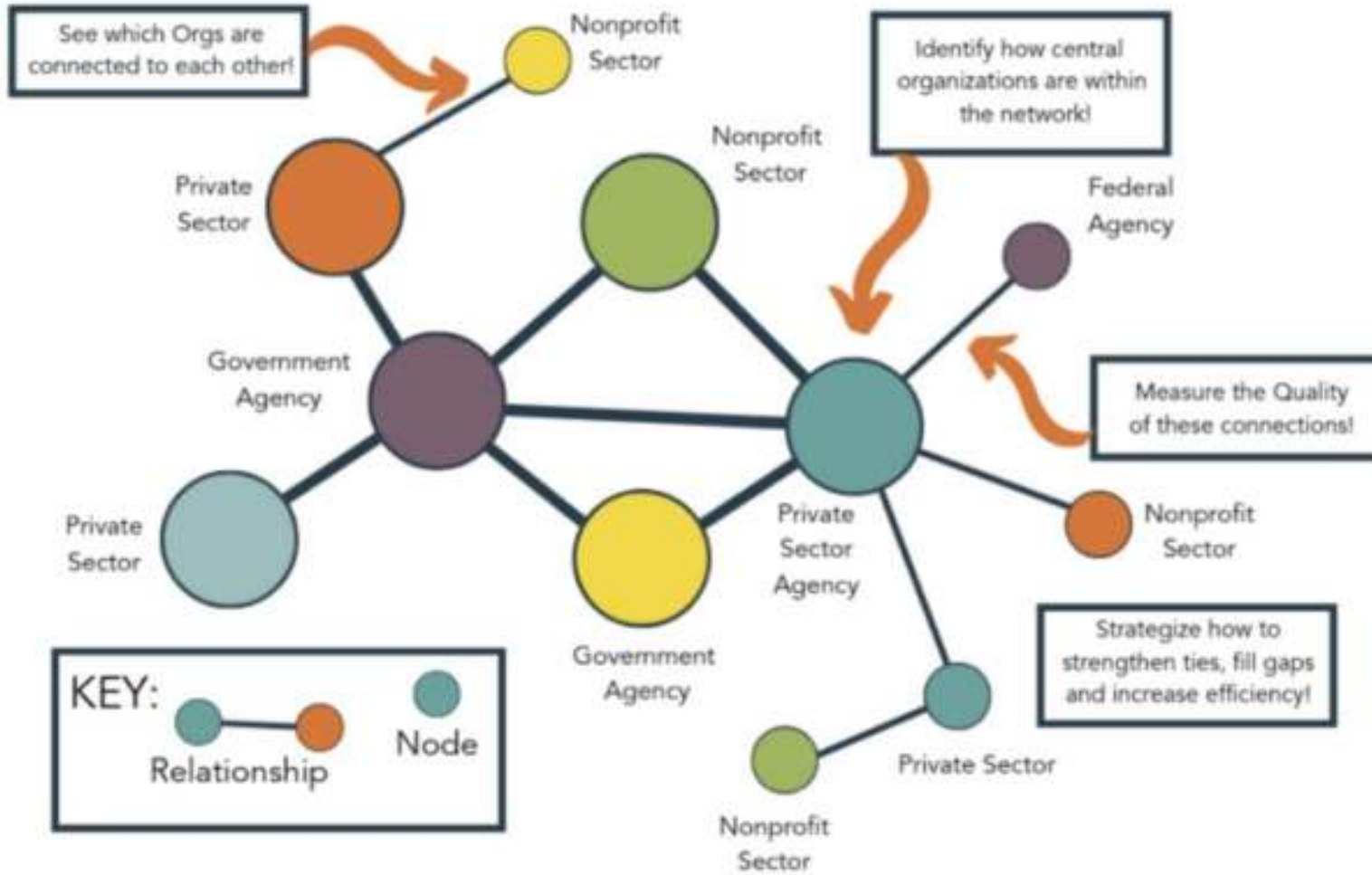
The Building Blocks of a Network

Nodes:
organizations,
people, etc.

Ties: Relationships
between nodes (e.g.,
information sharing,
referrals, collaborations).



Collecting & Interpreting Network Data



- Identify & characterize relationships
- Qualify relationship types and their outcomes
- Identify strengths and gaps in social connections

Survey Background

Purpose:

- To understand how people, organizations, and partnerships are working to advance forest conservation across the Southern United States
 - Enhance how the Keeping Forests partnership facilitates effective collaboration and decision-support products & services

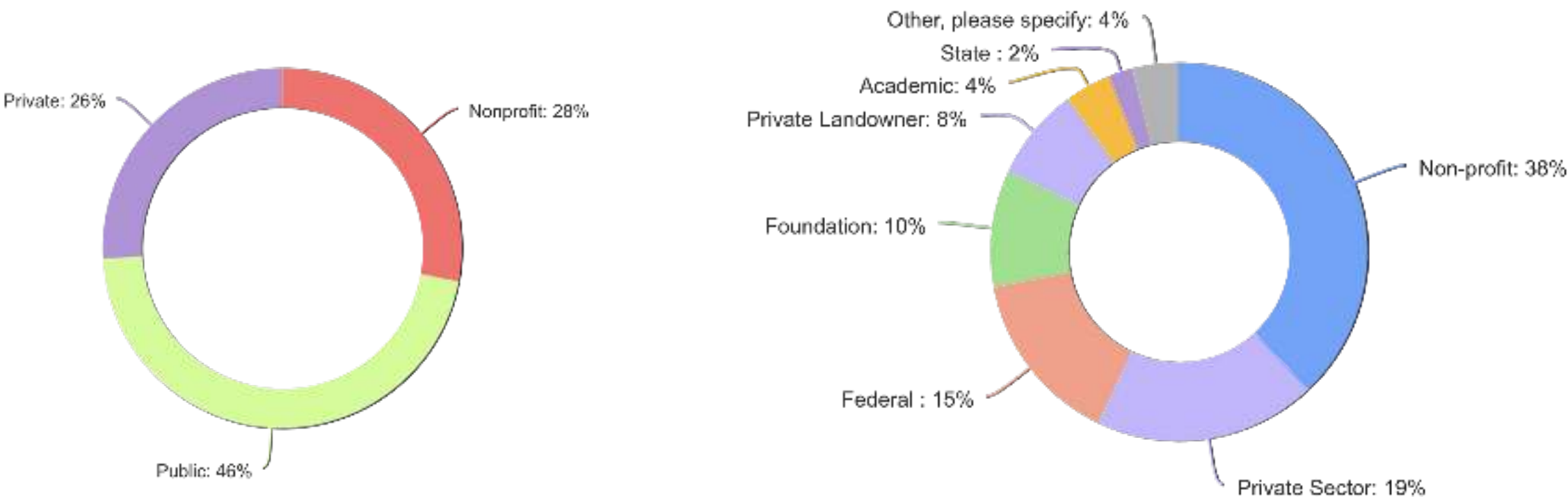
Method

- Social network analysis
- Bounding the network: selected organizations that had been deeply involved in this work
- Survey of 68 network network members (76% response rate)
- Survey Launched April 2023

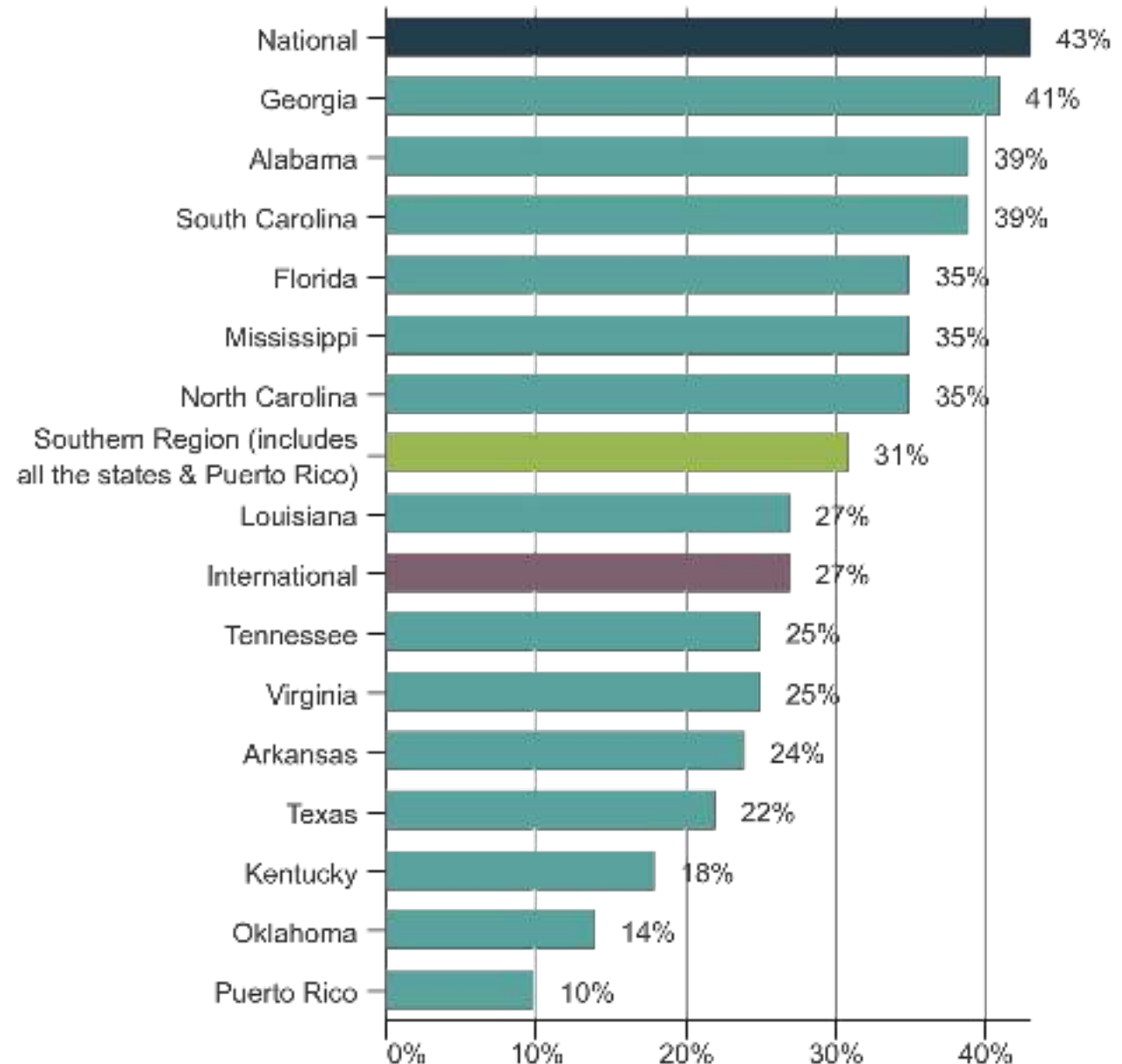


Setting the Context: Characterizing Network Members & Their Experiences

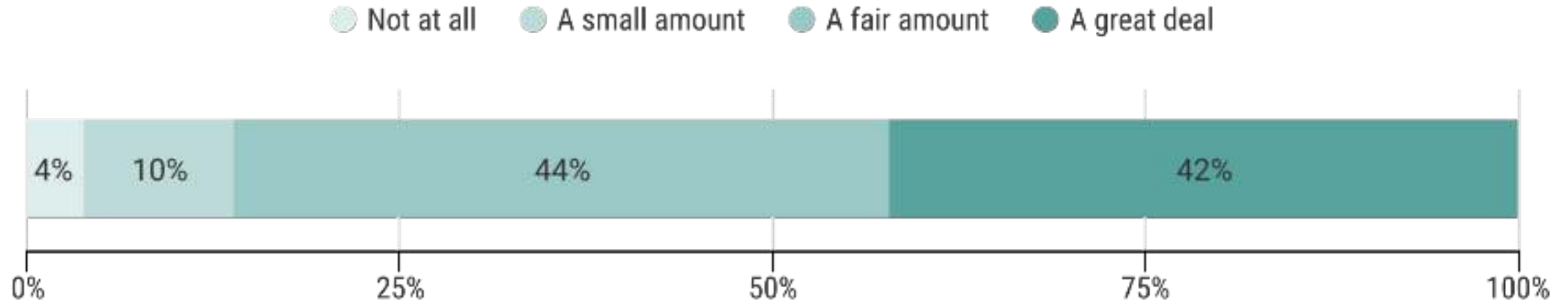
Organizational Sector & Type



Service Geography



Familiarity with Keeping Forests Mission & Strategies



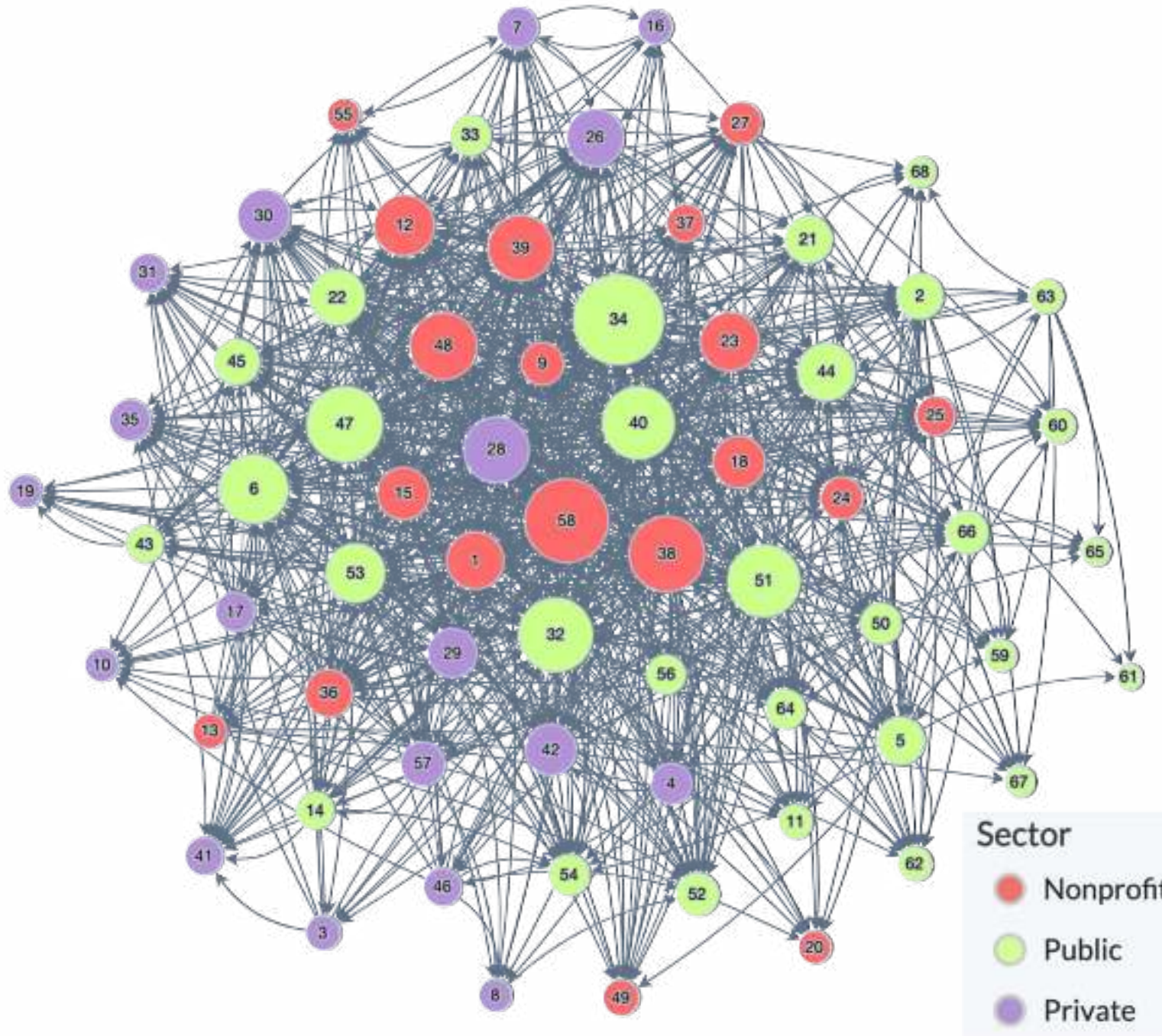
86% of respondents reported that they have a fair amount or a great deal of familiarity with the KF mission and strategies.



Understanding the Network: Identifying & Characterizing Relationships

Network Structure

- 68 Organizations (nodes)
- 1004 relationships among them
- Density: 22.04%
- Average # of Relationships per organization: 14.76

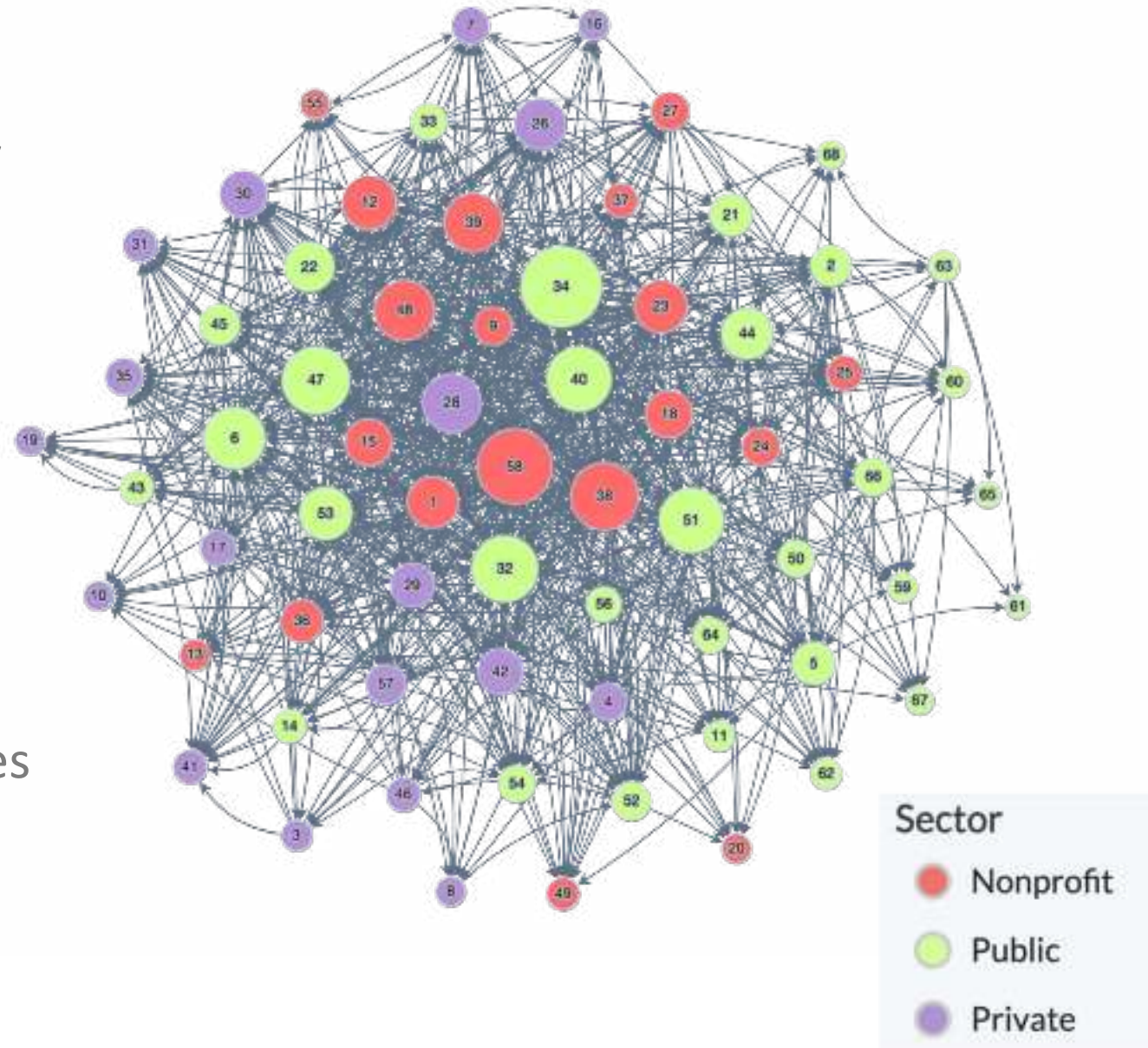


Key Roles: Network Influencers

Influencers: People or organizations directly connected to a large number of others

KF Network Influencers:

- USDA Forest Service
- Southern group of State Foresters
- NCSU CNR
- US Endowment for Forests & Communities
- National Alliance of Forest Owners

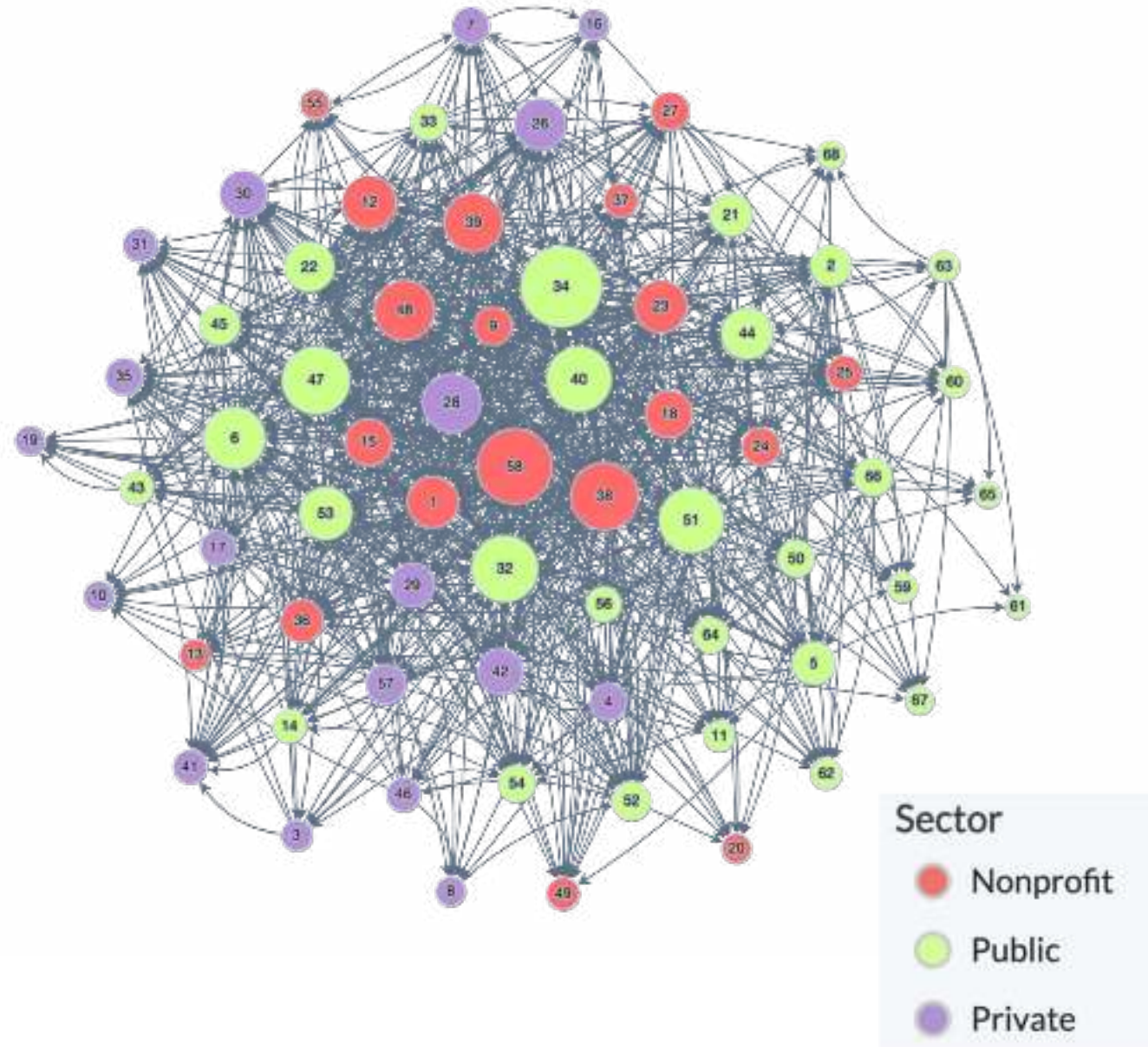


Key Players: Network Brokers

Brokers: Occupy the shortest path between other members of the network, can serve as facilitators or gatekeepers

KF Network Brokers:

- USDA Forest Service
- Keeping Forests
- US Endowment for Forests & Communities
- Southern Group of State Foresters
- National Alliance of Forest Owners

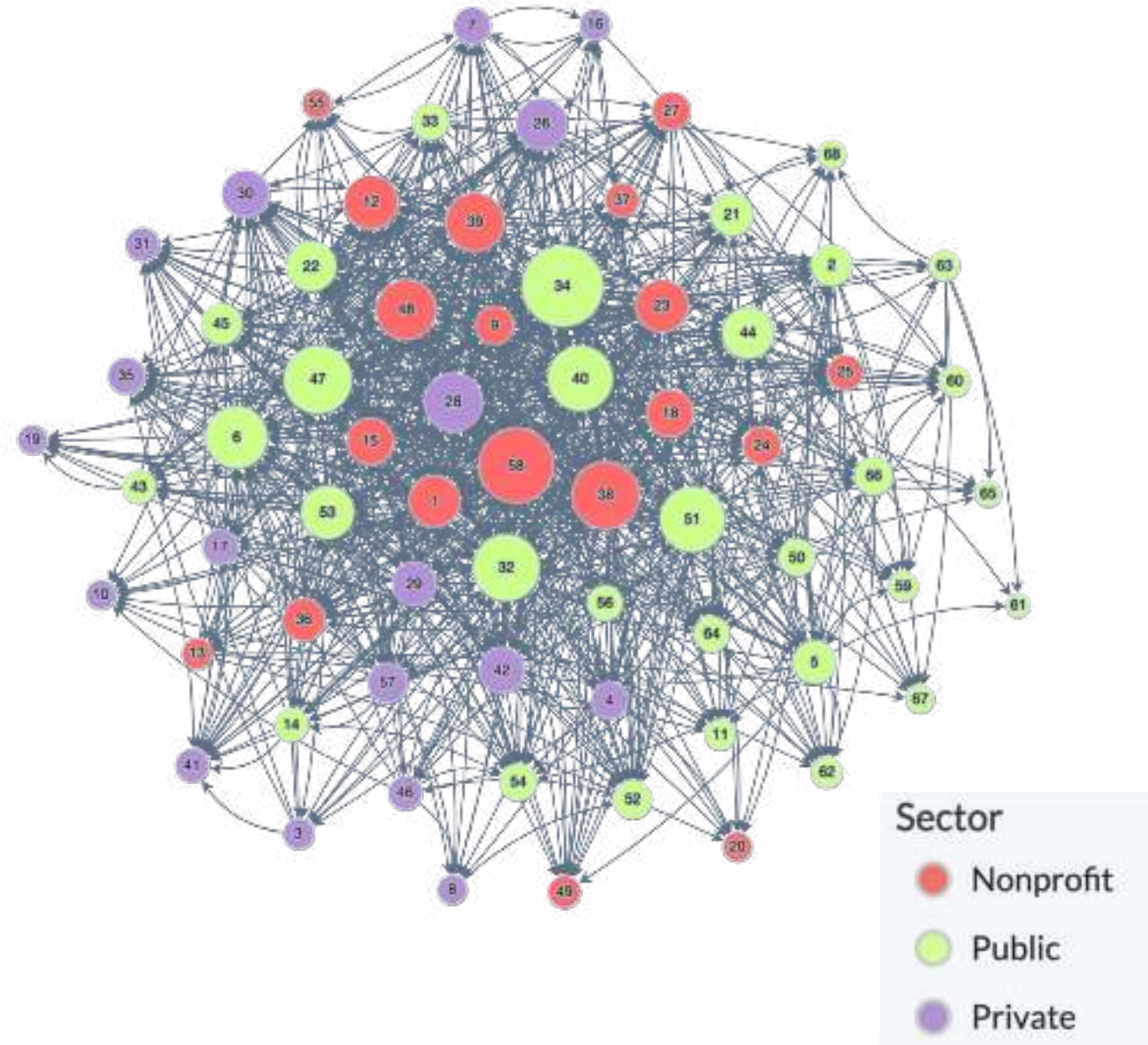


Key Players: Information Exchangers

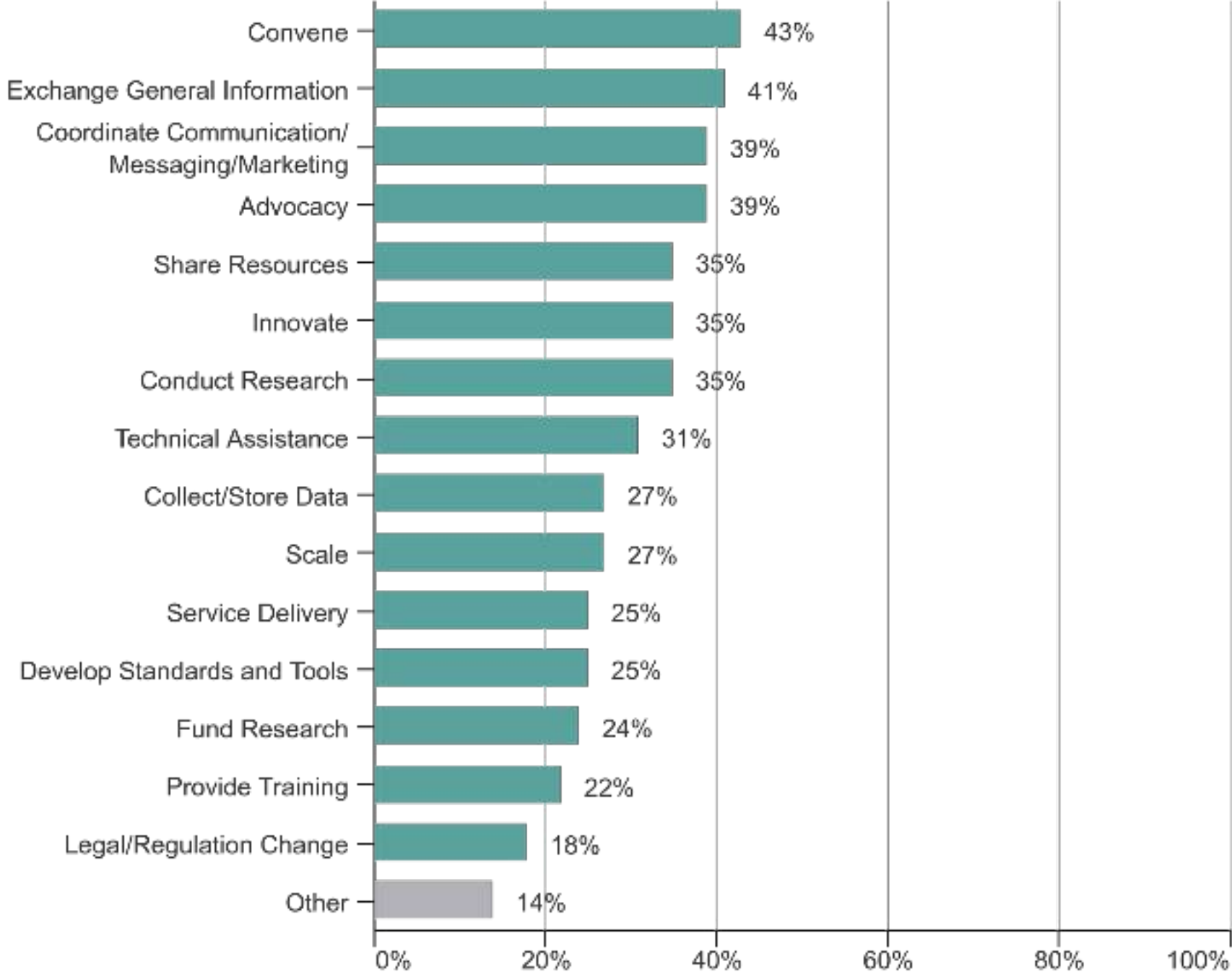
Exchangers: Have a short distance to any other member of the network, optimal for getting the word out

KF Information Exchangers:

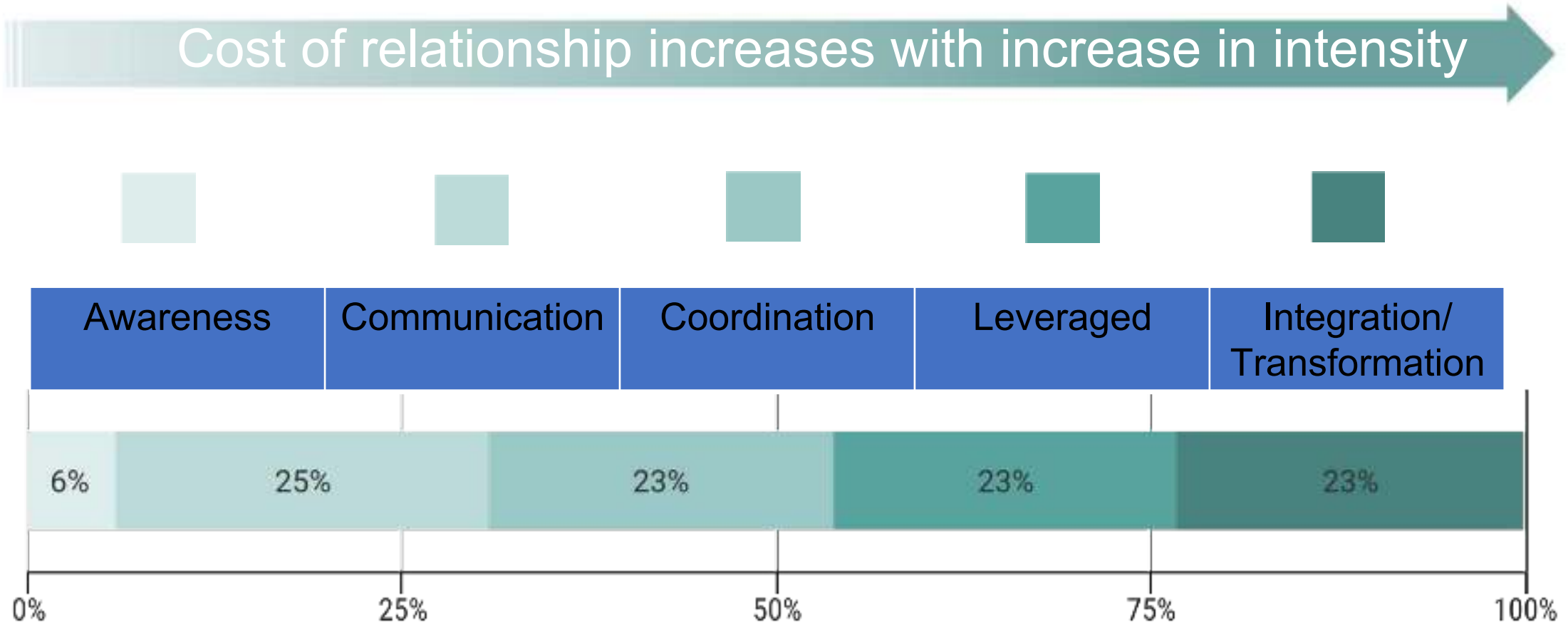
- Southern Group of State Foresters
- NCSU CNR
- Southern Regional Extension Forestry
- USDA Forest Service
- Keeping Forests



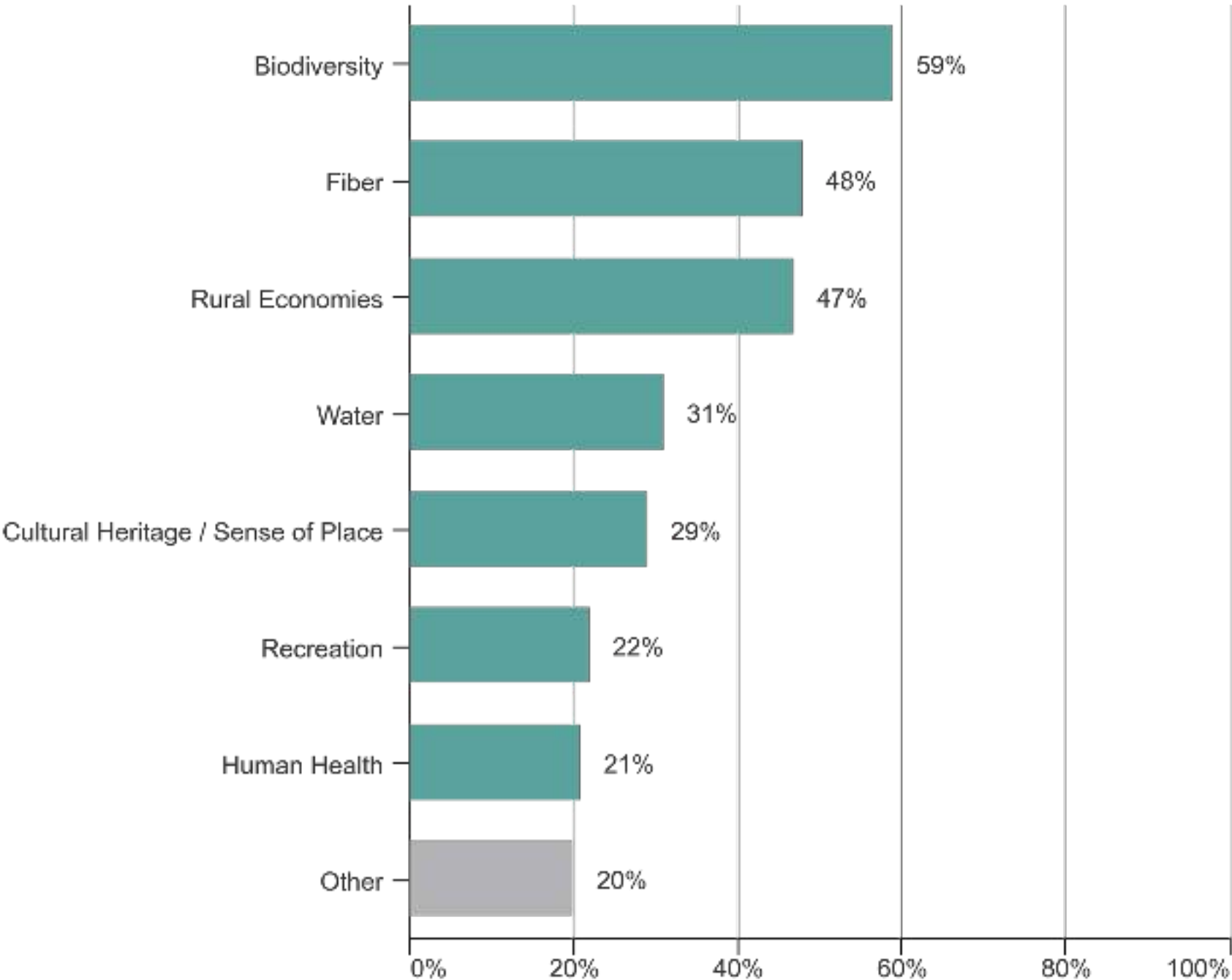
Relational Activities



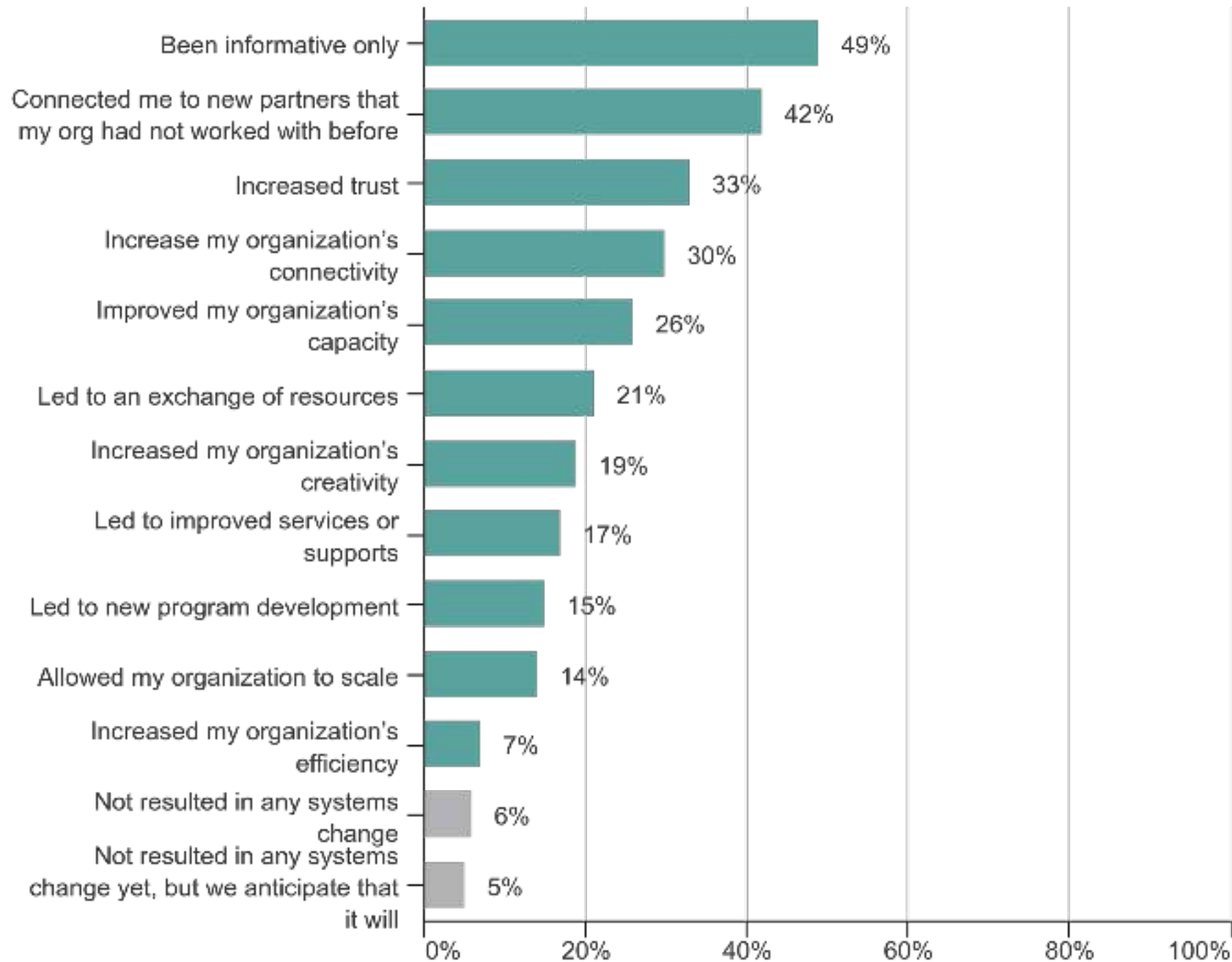
Relational Intensity



Issue focus of Relationships



Outcomes of Relationships



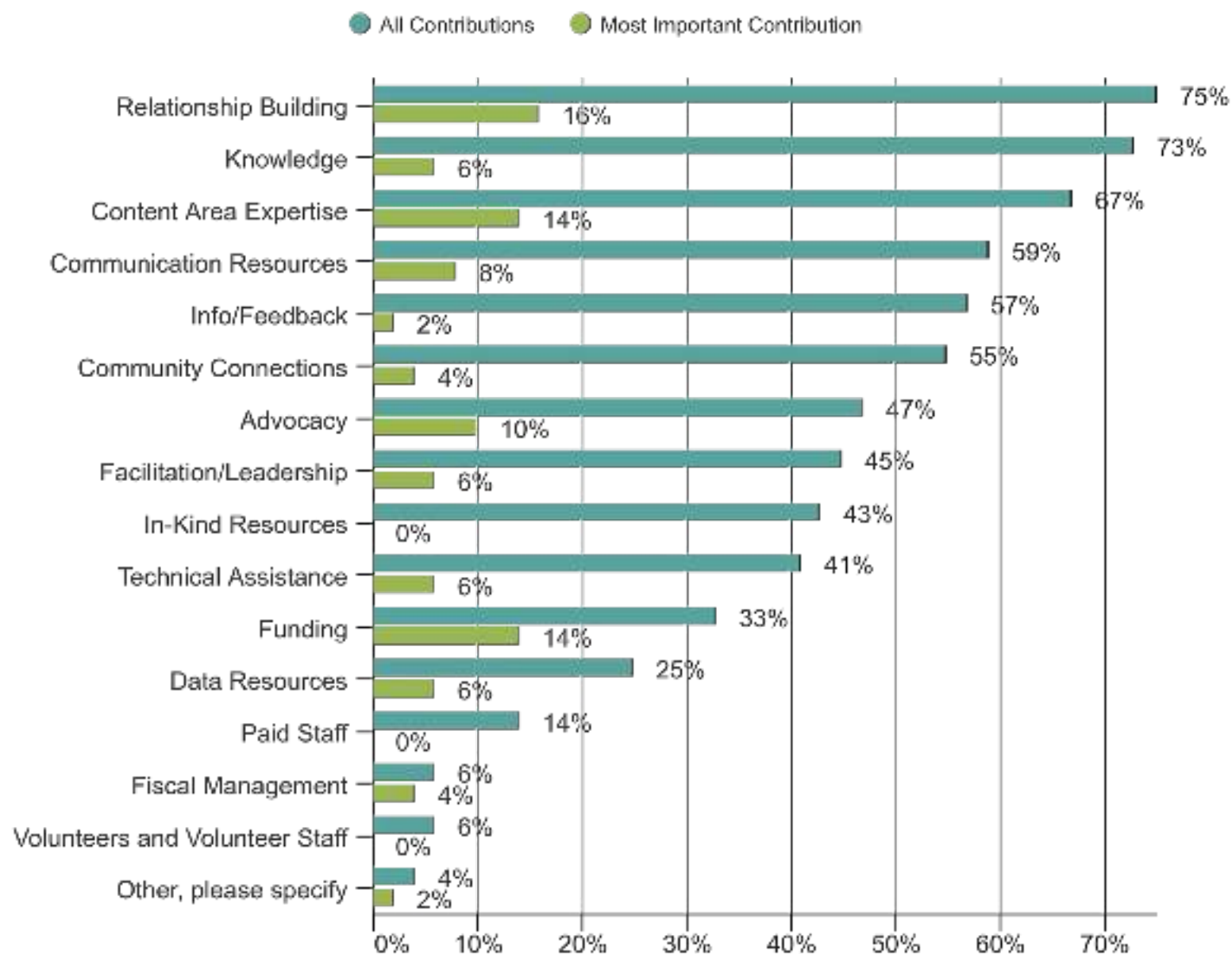


Network Resources & Assets

Network Resources & Assets

- Resource contribution data can serve as an inventory of the network's assets
- Combining this information with relational network data can demonstrate:
 - Where resources are concentrated in the network
 - Where there may be opportunities to connect organizations seeking resources with those that have access to them

Participant Resource contributions to the Keeping Forests Network



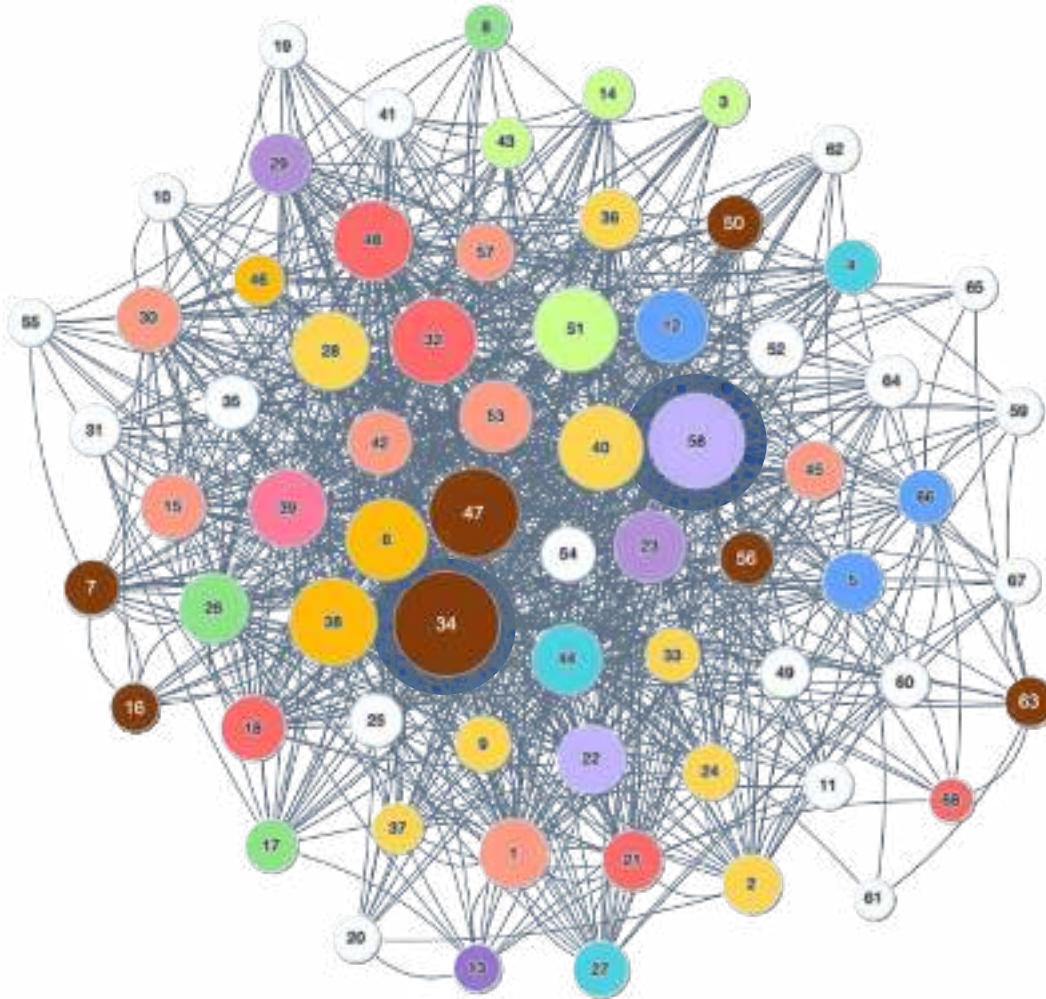
Most Important Resource Each Organization Contributes to the Network



(9) Of the resources you chose, which is the most important contribution your organization provides?

- Advocacy
- Communication Resources (including amplification of Keeping Forests' messages)
- Community Connections
- Content Area Expertise
- Data Resources (including data sets, collection and analysis)
- Facilitation/Leadership
- Fiscal Management (e.g. acting as fiscal agent)
- Funding
- Knowledge
- Info/Feedback
- Relationship Building
- Technical Assistance
- Other, please specify
- No data

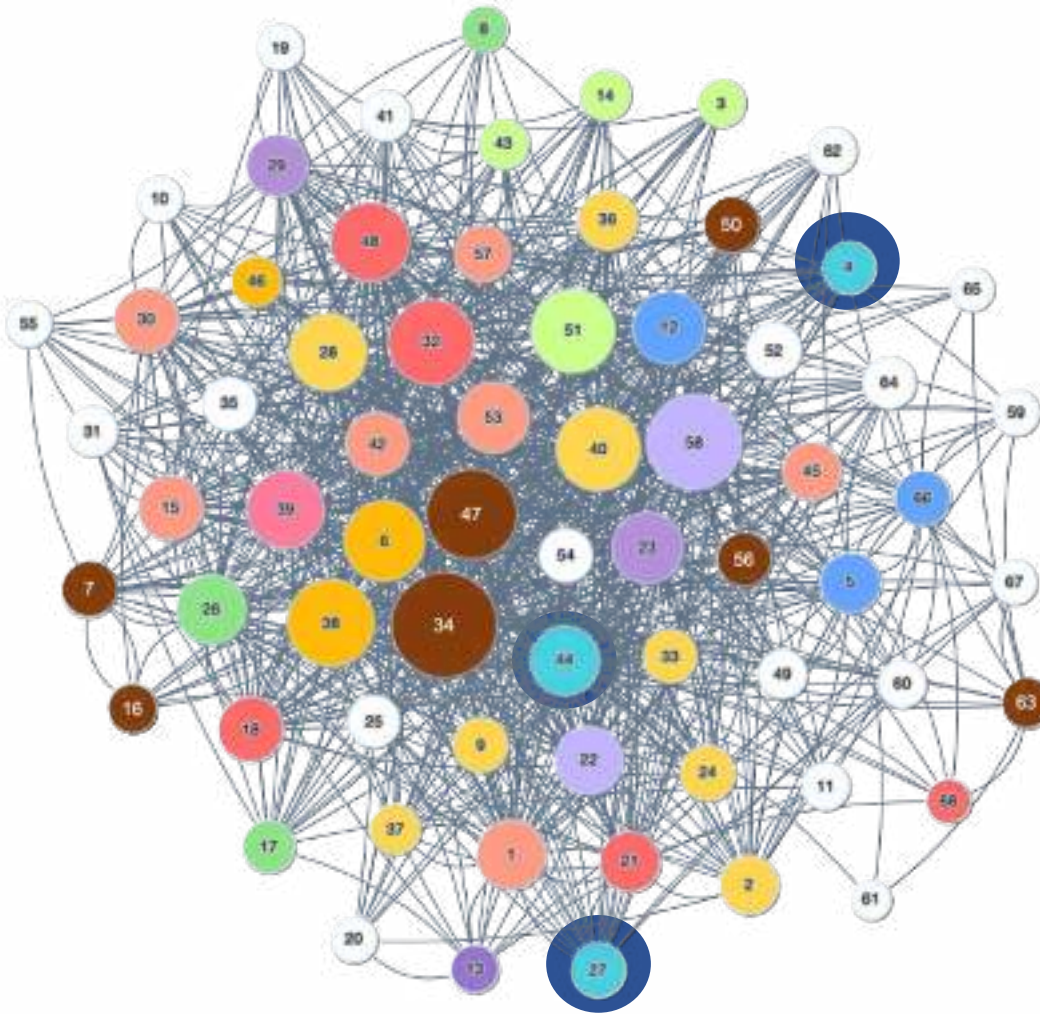
Considerations for Action Planning: Top Connectors



(9) Of the resources you chose, which is the most important contribution your organization provides?

- Advocacy
- Communication Resources (including amplification of Keeping Forests' messages)
- Community Connections
- Content Area Expertise
- Data Resources (including data sets, collection and analysis)
- Facilitation/Leadership
- Fiscal Management (e.g. acting as fiscal agent)
- Funding
- Knowledge
- Info/Feedback
- Relationship Building
- Technical Assistance
- Other, please specify
- No data

Considerations for Action Planning: Lower Connectors



(9) Of the resources you chose, which is the most important contribution your organization provides?

- Advocacy
- Communication Resources (including amplification of Keeping Forests' messages)
- Community Connections
- Content Area Expertise
- Data Resources (including data sets, collection and analysis)
- Facilitation/Leadership
- Fiscal Management (e.g. acting as fiscal agent)
- Funding
- Knowledge
- Info/Feedback
- Relationship Building
- Technical Assistance
- Other, please specify
- No data



Trust & Value in the Network

Relational Value: Perceived Value of Each Member's Relationships

Relational value is measured with a three-item scale that members apply to each of their relationships

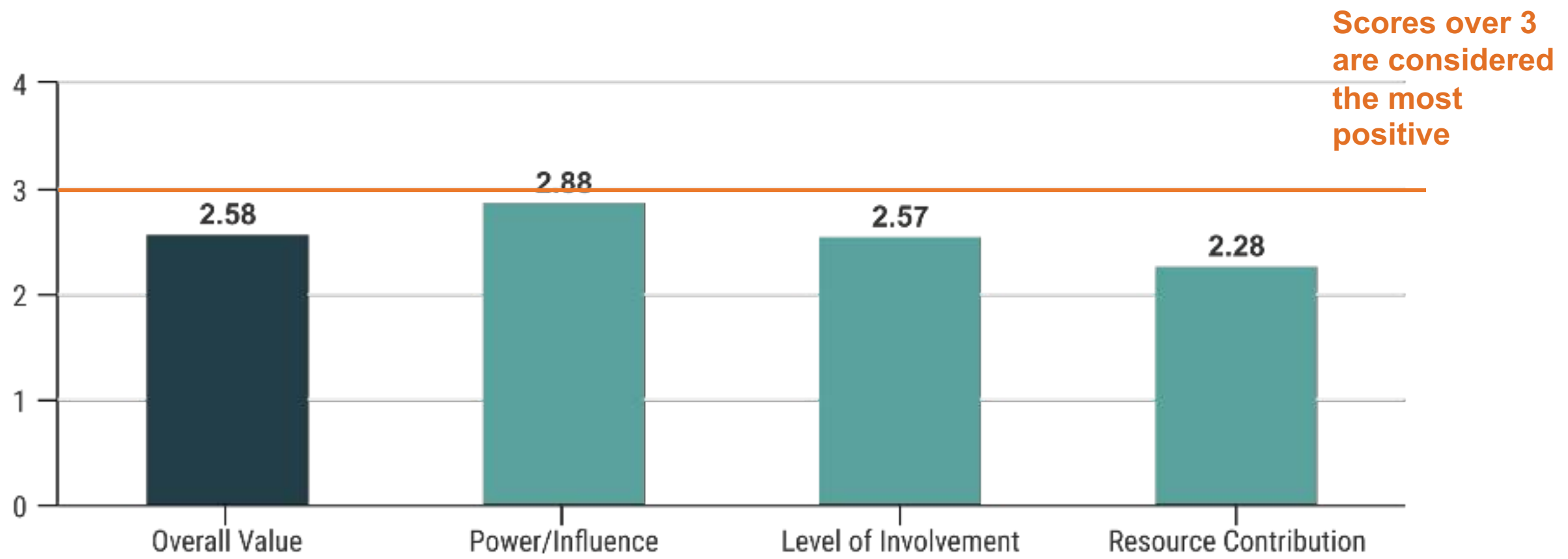
	Power & Influence: The organization/program/department holds a prominent position in the community by being powerful, having influence, success as a change agent, and showing leadership.
	Level of Involvement: The organization/program/department is strongly committed and active in the partnership and gets things done.
	Resource Contribution: The organization/program/department brings resources to the partnership like funding, information, or other resources.

Relational Trust: Perceived Trust in Each Member's Relationships

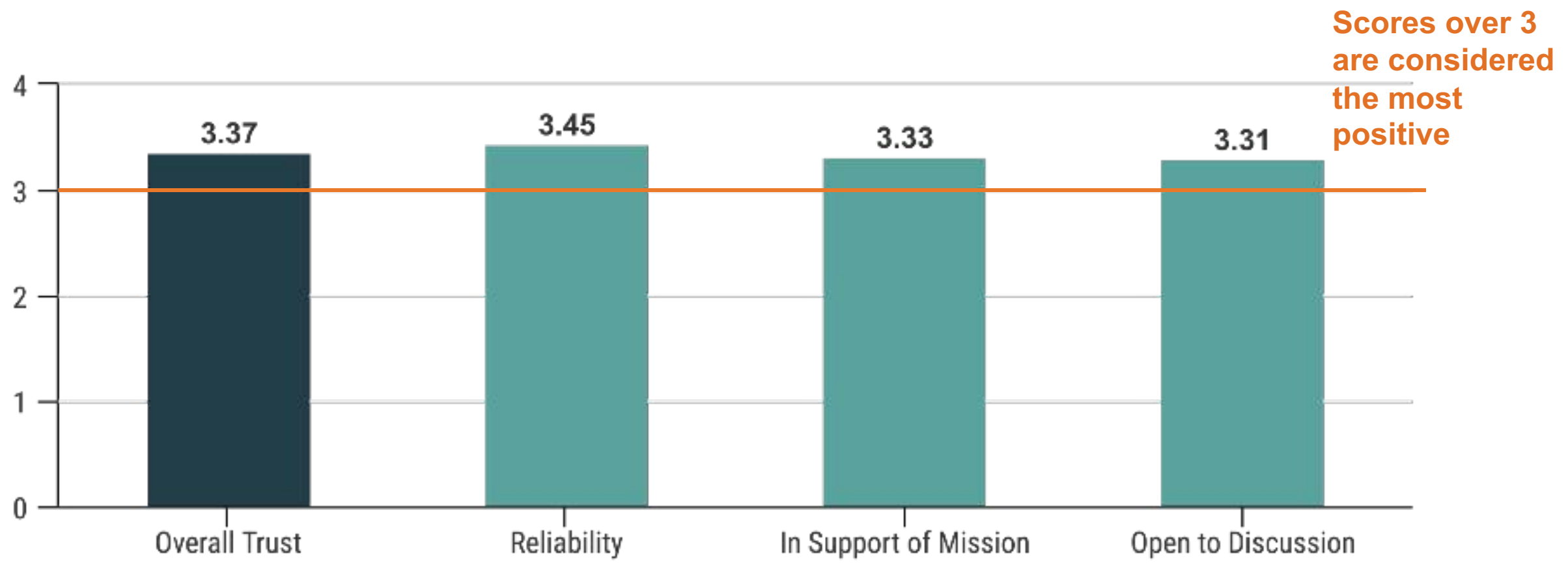
Relational trust is measured with a three-item scale that members apply to each of their relationships

	Reliability: This organization/program/department is reliable in terms of following through on commitments.
	In Support of Mission: this organization/program/department shares a common vision of the end goal of what working together should accomplish.
	Open to Discussion: this organization/program/department is willing to engage in frank, open and civil discussion

Relational Value



Relational Trust



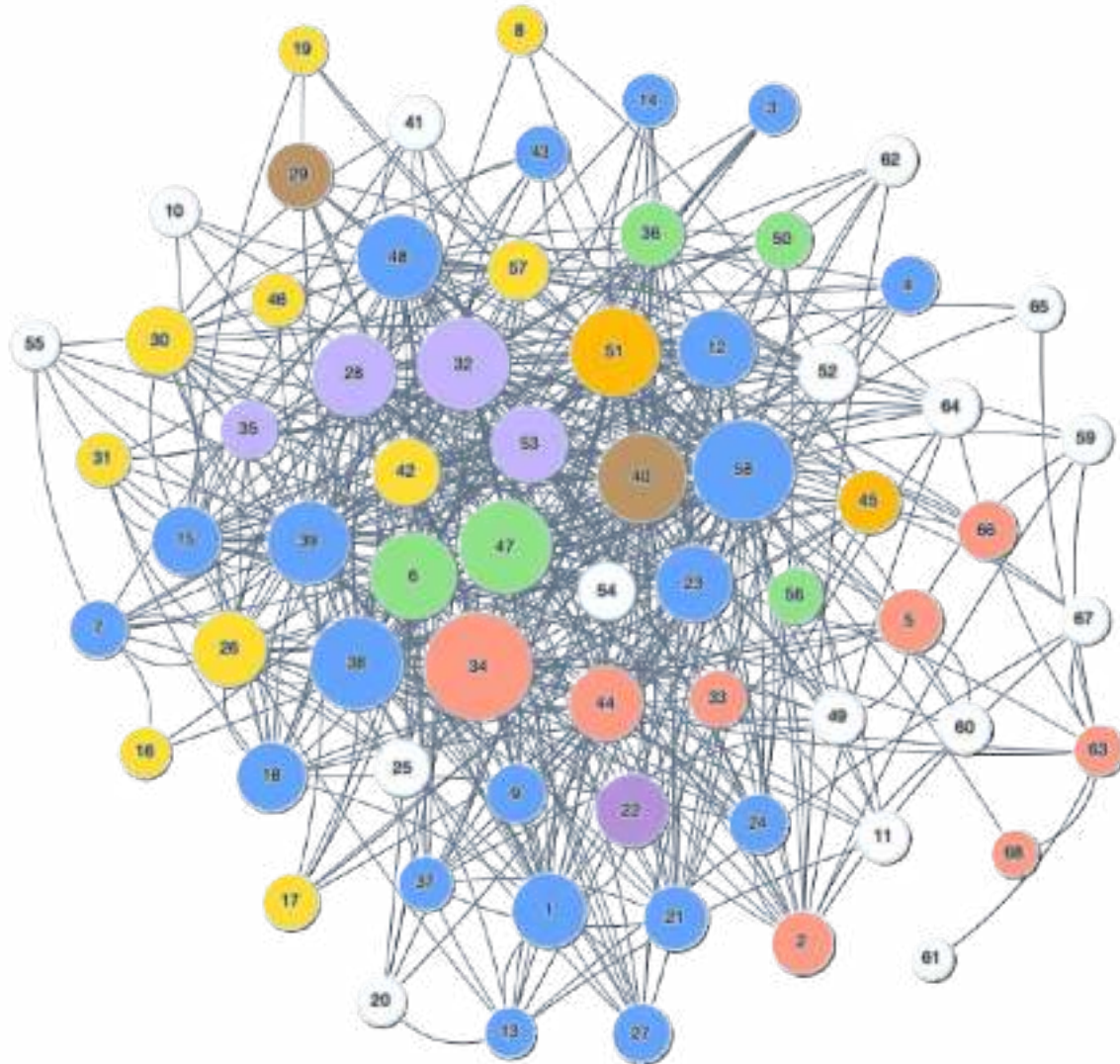
Improving & Leveraging Trust & Value

- The network has robust trust scores that can serve as a strong foundation for building further network activities
- Current value scores suggest room for growth:
 - Effectively mobilizing network resources
 - Identifying how members would like to be involved and ensuring opportunities to do so
 - Building network leadership to grow capacity for power and influence



Keeping Forests Network Activities & Structure

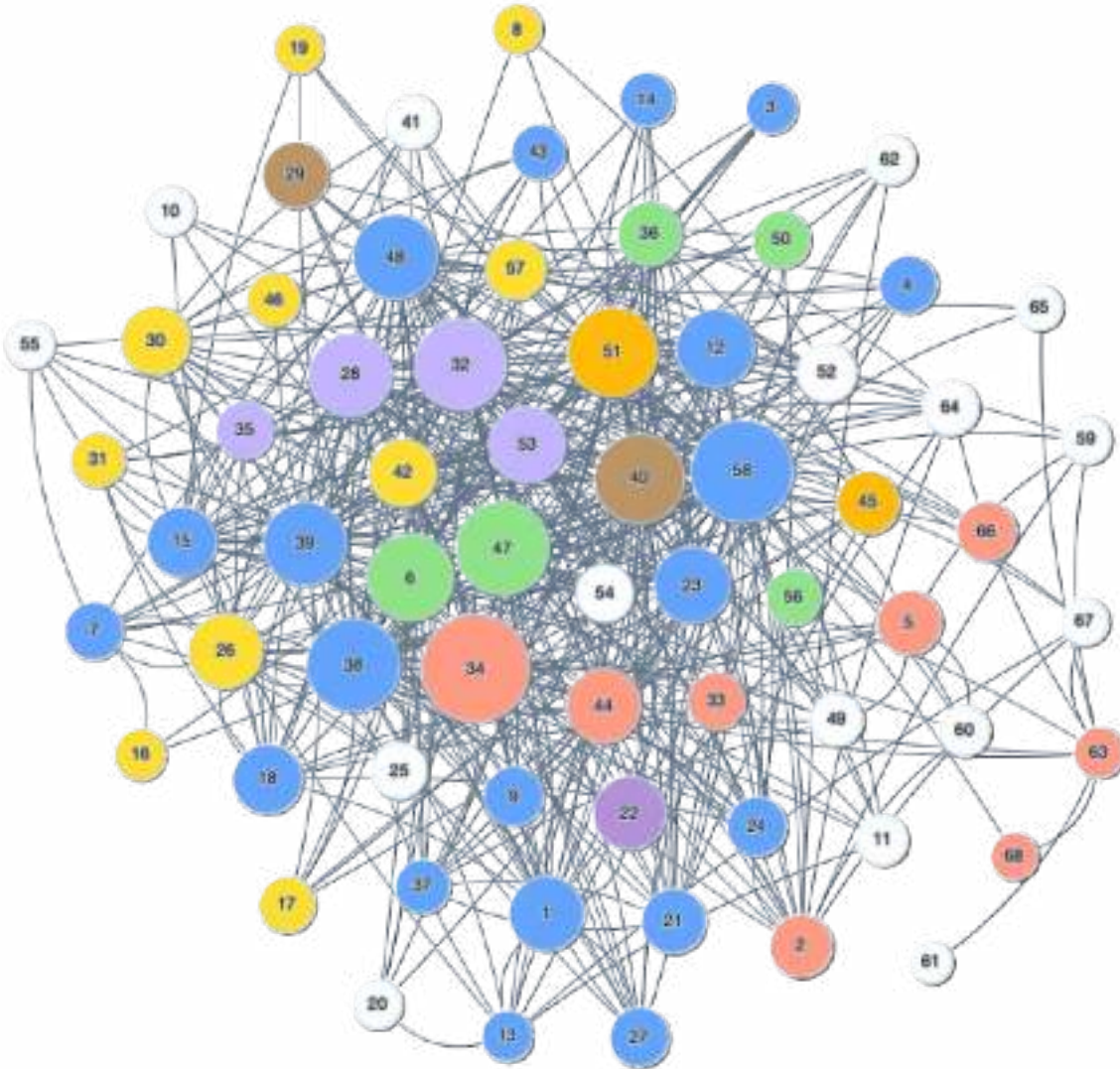
Keeping Forests Activities: Convening the Right Partners



(6) What type of organization are you affiliated with? Please select one from the list that best represents you.

- State
- Federal
- Non-profit
- Academic
- Private Landowner
- Private Sector
- Foundation
- Other, please specify
- No data

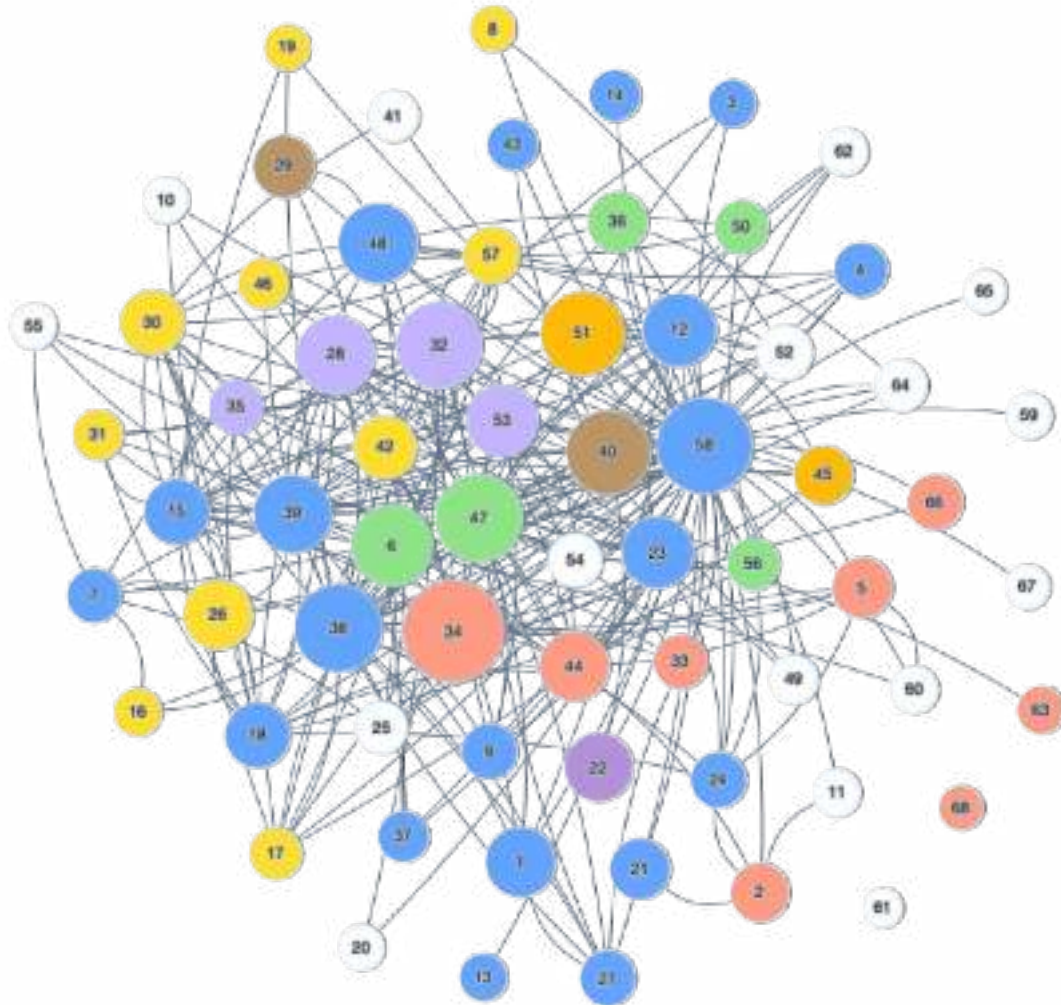
Keeping Forests Activities: Convening the Right Partners



Network Influencers for Convening:

- Southern Group of State Foresters
- NCSU CNR
- Keeping Forests

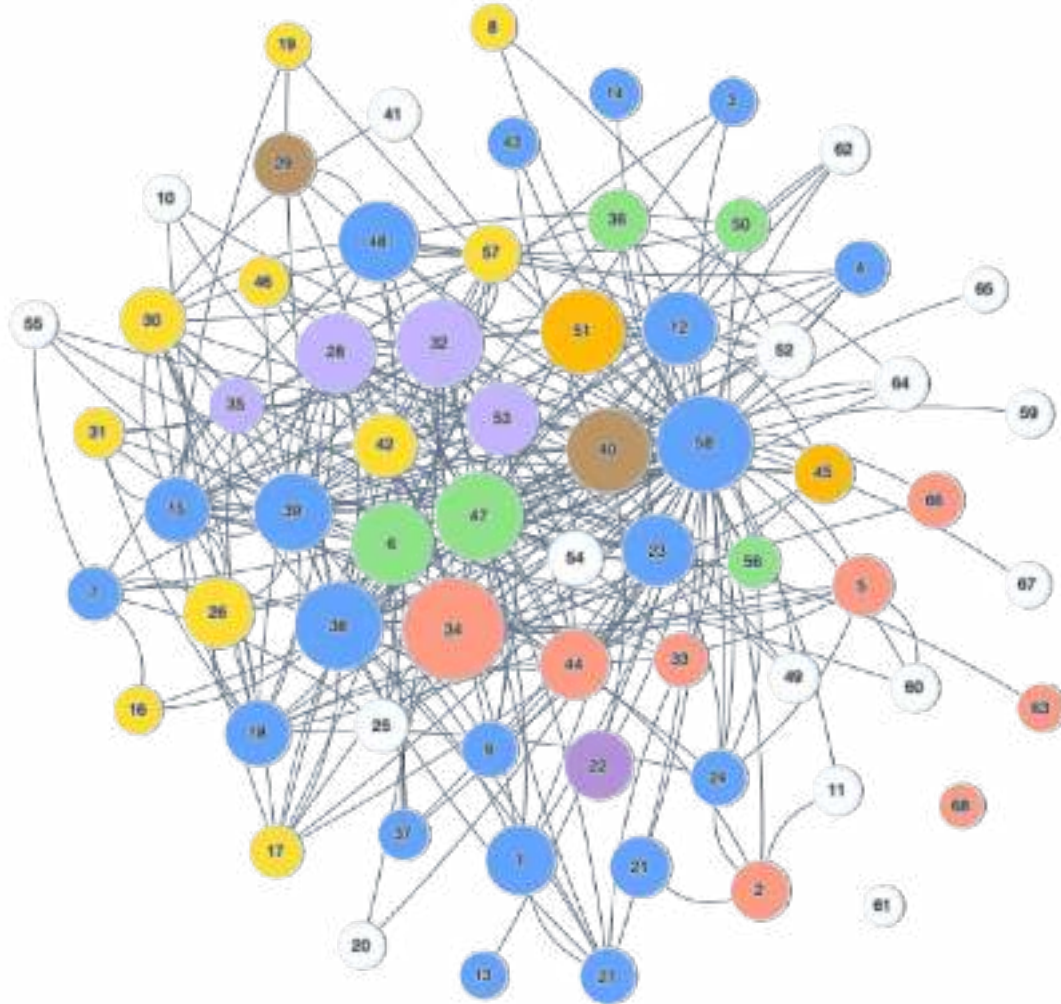
Keeping Forests Activities: Increasing Innovation



(6) What type of organization are you affiliated with? Please select one from the list that best represents you.

- State
- Federal
- Non-profit
- Academic
- Private Landowner
- Private Sector
- Foundation
- Other, please specify
- No data

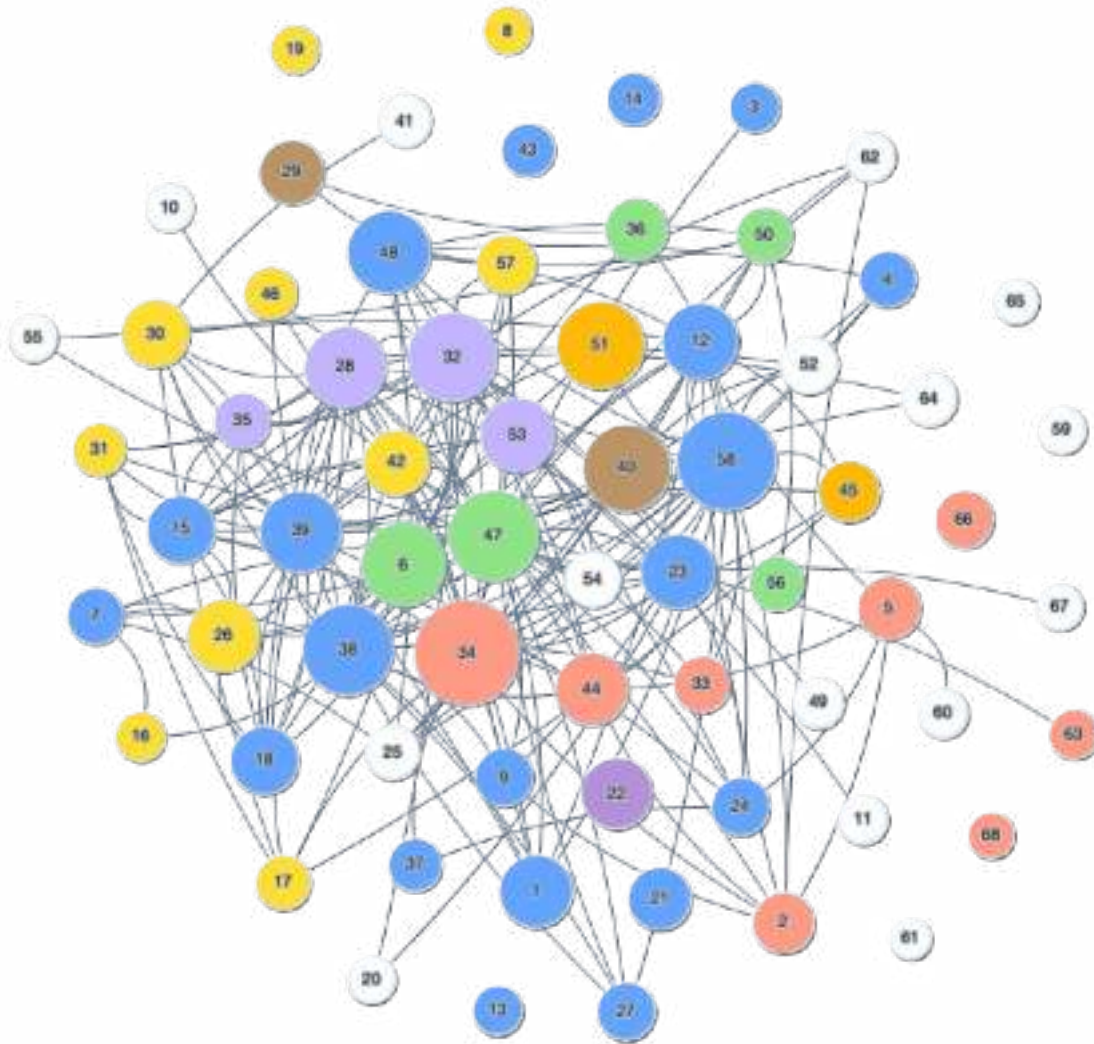
Keeping Forests Activities: Increasing Innovation



Network Influencers for Innovation:

- Southern Group of State Foresters
- Keeping Forests
- US Endowment for Forests and Communities

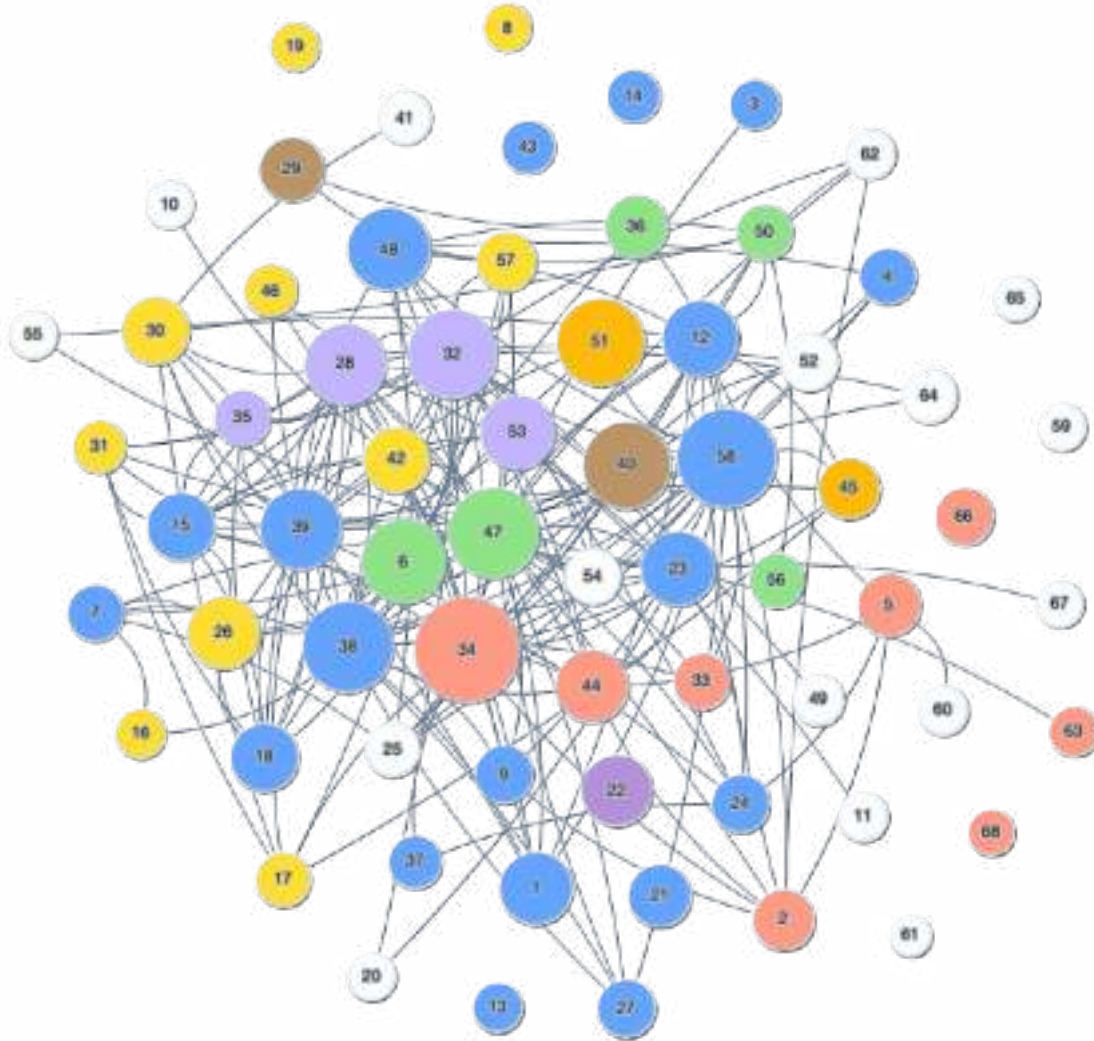
Keeping Forests Activities: Creating Scalable Solutions



(6) What type of organization are you affiliated with? Please select one from the list that best represents you.

- State
- Federal
- Non-profit
- Academic
- Private Landowner
- Private Sector
- Foundation
- Other, please specify
- No data

Keeping Forests Activities: Creating Scalable Solutions



Network Influencers for Scalable Solutions:

- US Endowment for Forests and Communities
- Keeping Forests
- National Alliance of Forest Owners

Keeping Forests Strategies

Participants indicated which strategies have occurred over the last three years. Across each strategy, they most commonly identified the ‘convening the right partners’ approach.

Most commonly, each activity had been applied to the emerging markets strategy.

	Regenerative Forest Products	Emerging Markets	Champions and Leaders
Convening the Right Partners	67%	62%	52%
Increasing Innovation	43%	60%	31%
Creating Scalable Solutions	36%	45%	29%

Keeping Forests Strategies: Advancing Strategies

- All network members are engaged in convening activities:
 - This is a strength for building the network
- Mobilize the network around less common activities to move towards outcomes as a collective
- To become more involved in the less common activities, get in touch with network influencers for each:
 - They can share work being done and help you to find the right organizational partners to get involved
 - Keeping Forests is a leader in all of these and has a mission focused on building these activities around a set of strategies



Recommended Next Steps

Next Steps & Considerations: Celebrating Success

- The network has successfully convened stakeholders from across a range of sectors and states to initiate the network
- Most members have considerable experience in this domain and with Keeping Forests' strategies
- Members also have a wide range of resources and skills they can bring to this work

Next Steps & Considerations: Value

Build relational value among partners:

- Identify opportunities to connect partners for resource exchange
- Work with network members to identify opportunities for involvement that match their interests and strengths
- Create leadership and development opportunities

Next Steps & Considerations: Value

Improve resource exchange

- This network is rich with resources that members can contribute
- The resources identified in this analysis can be organized as an inventory to help network members find organizations with complementary resources
- Discuss resource exchange in the context of network goals to mobilize them for maximum impact

Next Steps & Considerations: Activities

Consider where activities in the network will ideally focus:

- Currently, heavily focused on convening (very common for networks in formation)
- To move the work forward, consider what activities are most important for the network's goals and mobilize efforts around them

Next Steps & Considerations: Outcomes

Relational Outcomes:

- The most commonly reported outcomes of relationships in the network were focused on network-building: getting to know each other, connecting to new partners, and building trust
- Fewer outcomes focus on more tangible work to build capacity, develop programs, or change systems
- This also aligns with the types of activities network members most commonly engage in (convening)
- Consider what types of activities will lead to the most relevant outcomes

Next Steps & Considerations: Network Composition

Reflect on the current composition of the network:

- Who is currently involved and who occupies a powerful position in the network?
- What types of organizations or perspectives might be missing from the network?
- How can network members leverage existing resources to achieve impact? What essential resources are not yet available within the network?

Use these reflections to identify network development opportunities

Thank you!

Questions, comments, ideas? Please reach out!

Learn more: www.visiblenetworklabs.com

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