I once listened to a network leader describe her frustration with a year-long initiative to bring another group of organizations into her established network. There had been seven meetings, and she felt there was little progress. As we talked, I brought up the topic of competencies to investigate particular approaches, skills, and tools that she might use. I referred to a model of eight different competencies that I have identified as key to networks’ success. The model proved a great diagnostic tool. By the end of the conversation we had identified four particular competencies key to her initiative:

- communications,
- leadership,
- network development, and
- change.

Analyzing her situation in this way helped pull apart a confusion of issues, and identify strategies and tools to address her situation. In particular, it suggested the need for:

- incorporating the change competency and
- her network to renew its vision.

The work of GANs (Global Action Networks) requires three types of skills, abilities, and expertise. Particularly in their early days they lead with physical or substantive issue expertise such as expertise in some aspect of water, forestry, labor, conflict prevention, or youth employment. In early days, a GANs’ leaders are usually seen as experts in the issue. This is important to ensure the GAN is grounded in its issue and to build legitimacy of the GAN with key stakeholders.
A second type of expertise is *tool* expertise. There are certain activities that GANs elect to realize their vision. These are associated with Table 2.3, What GANs do, and include such tools as certification, resource management, index development, and financing.

But as GANs develop, these types of expertise become less central. GANs do not aim to develop leading substantive issue expertise – that is the work of universities, think tanks, and consultancies that participate in GANs. And after applying tool expertise to create a financing or certification system, simple expansion in detail and maintenance are required. GANs just need to make sure that they have these types of expertise in their network to maintain legitimacy, relevance, and an appropriate level of quality. They usually have a place for issue and tool expertise, such as with a Technical Committee.

As GANs develop, a third type of expertise becomes increasingly important. It is *change process* expertise in applying the tool to the issue arena to enhance social, economic, and environmental outcomes in the issue field using the tools. The type of change process expertise that GANs need is driven by their particular theory of change that, as Chapter 5 explained, is a multi-stakeholder one. The work of developing (1) change through (2) multi-stakeholder processes is what defines the complexion and array of the competencies that GANs need for success. A different complexion of similar competencies is often needed in other types of organizations.

To understand how this change process work distinguishes GANs, consider the tool of “certification and standards.” The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) also produces standards that are used in certification. ISO is a business–government network. ISO has an important “system organizing” role. But it is not a GAN. Its goal is not about change, but rather summarizing current standards and ensuring there is some international uniformity and way of translating standards between countries. ISO emphasizes tool expertise rather than change process expertise. It does not have triple-loop change as part of its fundamental purpose – transformational change that includes change in power relationships.

GANs involved with measurement and certification, on the other hand, take a position of leadership by gathering stakeholders who want to *significantly advance the standards in terms of their social, environmental, and economic impact*. Advancing practice for this triple-bottom-line impact is distinctive in GANs across issues. GANs’ belief that the certification should be done by embracing diversity and voluntarily gives additional wrinkles to the particular competencies that they have to both develop and integrate for success.