

Movement Intelligence in Action: Sharing, Strategy, and Stewardship

Closing the loop: using ecosystem intelligence for positioning and coordination, building shared intelligence infrastructure, and governing it all with ethics and security

Executive Summary

A movement that understands its own ecosystem holds an asset most fields never build. But intelligence only matters when it changes what people do — and it only remains safe and legitimate when it is governed well. This guide addresses the three disciplines that turn maps into movement power: **use** (translating ecosystem intelligence into organizational positioning, coalition strategy, and resource allocation), **sharing** (building the shared infrastructure — field catalysts, research intermediaries, federated networks — through which a whole field can see itself), and **stewardship** (the data governance, security culture, and equity commitments without which movement intelligence becomes a danger to the movement it serves).

The stakes of stewardship are not hypothetical. Field data — who does what, at what capacity, connected to whom, funded by whom — is precisely what hostile governments, opposition researchers, and bad-faith litigants seek. And intelligence infrastructure controlled by resource-holders alone can quietly become an instrument of movement capture, steering a field toward funder priorities under the banner of evidence. The answer to both dangers is the same: governance designed in advance, with movement voice at the table, security treated as duty of care, and knowledge returned to the field that produced it.

This guide completes the INTEL.NGO series. Guide 1 established the conceptual foundations — what movement intelligence is, the seven components of a movement ecosystem, and the capacity assessment. Guide 2 provided the practitioner's methods — actor mapping, network analysis, power mapping, resource-flow analysis, narrative intelligence, opposition monitoring, and field listening. Here, the loop closes: from insight to action, from one organization's practice to a field's shared capability, and from collection to accountable stewardship.

Evidence Table

Key Finding	Strength	Implications for Movement Organizations
Multi-organization efforts with shared measurement and dedicated coordination ("backbone") capacity outperform isolated action on complex problems — and underperform when the backbone lacks legitimacy with the field.	Moderate (collective impact literature and its critiques)	Shared intelligence infrastructure is a precondition for coordination — and its governance determines whether the field trusts it.

Key Finding	Strength	Implications for Movement Organizations
Field catalysts that hold and circulate whole-field information were present in most studied fields that achieved population-level change.	Moderate (Bridgespan study of 15 fields)	The field-level intelligence function deserves dedicated staffing and funding; it rarely happens as a side project.
Civil society organizations face documented, rising surveillance and data-driven repression; basic security practices measurably reduce exposure.	Moderate-High (digital security research and practice for civil society)	Data governance and security culture are duty of care to the field, not administrative overhead.
Funder influence can redirect movement agendas away from grassroots priorities ("movement capture"), including through control of research and evidence.	Moderate-High (movement capture research)	Who governs the intelligence shapes whom it serves. Movement voice must sit inside intelligence governance.
Organizations that institutionalize learning loops — after-action reviews, assumption reviews — adapt to changing conditions significantly faster.	High (organizational learning research)	Intelligence must be embedded in recurring decision rhythms, or it decays into shelf-ware.
Fields that share information openly among members report higher trust and collaboration when sharing is well governed — and lasting damage when data is extracted or misused.	Moderate (network and field-building practice)	Sharing multiplies intelligence; governance failures multiply harm. Charters come before pipelines.

Step-by-Step Framework

Step 1: Position Your Organization with Ecosystem Intelligence

The first use of a field map is a mirror. With the ecosystem picture from Guide 2 in hand, run a **niche and complementarity analysis**: What does the field need that we are distinctively placed to provide? Which of our programs duplicate work others do better — and could be handed off, merged, or wound down? Which empty lanes match our capabilities? The discipline here is symmetry: ecosystem intelligence should change your organization at least as often as it confirms it. Publish the resulting **complementarity commitments** internally — "we do X because the field lacks it; we do not do Y because others cover it" — and revisit them at every strategy cycle. An organization that can articulate its niche in field terms is easier to fund, easier to partner with, and far less likely to drift into fratricidal competition.

Step 2: Put Intelligence to Work in Coalitions and Campaigns

Coalitions run on shared situational awareness — and most run on far too little of it. Practical mechanisms:

- **A standing situational awareness agenda item** in coalition meetings: ten minutes on what has changed in the ecosystem — opposition moves, policy environment, narrative shifts, funder signals — sourced from members' distributed vantage points

- **Intelligence-informed target selection:** choosing campaign targets from the power map (Guide 2, Step 4) rather than from habit or headlines
- **Division of labor by theory of change:** using the field's diversity map to assign complementary roles — inside negotiators, outside mobilizers, researchers, litigators — instead of everyone doing a bit of everything
- **A rapid-alert channel** with agreed criteria for what triggers it, so the field can move within hours when a window opens or a threat lands (design the decision process in advance)

Step 3: Inform Funders — Without Ceding Movement Control

Field intelligence changes grantmaking. A concise **funder field brief** — the state of the ecosystem, its gaps, its concentration risks, its emerging opportunities — helps funders move money toward leverage rather than visibility, and makes the case for the field-level functions (coordination, intelligence, infrastructure) that individual-organization grants never cover. But the movement capture research is unambiguous about the risk: evidence controlled by resource-holders can steer fields toward resource-holder priorities. Guardrails: intelligence findings go to the field before or alongside funders, never funder-first; findings are governed by the field's charter (Step 5), not by whoever paid for collection; and funder briefs describe gaps and options rather than prescribing the field's strategy. The goal is funders who see the field clearly — not funders who steer it remotely.

Step 4: Build Shared Intelligence Infrastructure

No single organization can — or should — hold the whole field's intelligence alone. Mature movements build shared infrastructure. Four models, in rough order of formality:

- **Designated field catalyst or backbone organization** — one intermediary staffs the intelligence function for the field: maintaining the shared actor map, running the annual field survey, publishing the state-of-the-field report, operating the alert channel
- **Research intermediary** — an independent research organization serves the field with dedicated analytical capacity, useful where credibility requires distance from any campaigning actor
- **Federated network with a shared protocol** — member organizations each contribute defined intelligence (their region, their domain) under a common format and charter; no single holder, higher resilience, higher coordination cost
- **Rotating stewardship** — smaller fields rotate the function among capable members year by year; the least infrastructure, workable only with strong documentation

Whatever the model, the standard set of outputs is consistent: a **shared actor directory**, an **annual state-of-the-field report**, a **common dashboard** of agreed movement health indicators, and a **rapid-alert channel**. And whatever the model, fund it deliberately: the field intelligence function fails as an unfunded side project, and its costs are trivial next to the duplication and strategic error it prevents.

Step 5: Govern Data with Ethics and Security

Stewardship is where movement intelligence earns — or forfeits — its legitimacy. Adopt an **Intelligence-Sharing Charter** before infrastructure is built, covering:

- **Consent and purpose limitation** — data is collected for stated purposes with contributors' informed consent, and used for nothing else

- **Minimization and aggregation by default** — collect the least data that answers the question; publish aggregates, never microdata; individual-level data about people is out of scope except with explicit consent
- **Tiered access** — who sees raw data, who sees analysis, who sees publications; opposition-sensitive material (capacity details, network structure, security-relevant information) never becomes public and is never given a public targeting map
- **Security culture** — threat modeling against the field's actual adversaries; encryption and access hygiene as norms; an incident response plan; regular drills (see the digital security resources in Recommended Reading)
- **Retention limits and the right to correction and removal** — data ages out; contributors can fix or withdraw their entries
- **Equity and credit** — knowledge contributed by grassroots actors is credited and compensated where appropriate, and findings return to contributors first; extraction is the fastest way to lose a field's trust, and the hardest to repair

Step 6: Institutionalize the Learning Loop

Intelligence becomes culture when it is embedded in recurring rhythms rather than heroic efforts:

- **Field-level after-action reviews** after major campaigns and shocks — what did we believe about the ecosystem, what proved wrong, what will we watch differently
- **An annual field assumption review** — the shared strategic assumptions of the field (about opposition, public opinion, funding, political openings) explicitly tested against the year's evidence
- **The refresh cadence** from Guide 2, kept: annual full map refresh, quarterly updates to fast-moving layers
- **Movement health tracking** — a small, stable indicator set (participation, capacity, cohesion, resources, narrative position, wins) measured year over year, so the field can answer "are we getting stronger?" with evidence
- **A foresight connection** — feeding validated signals into periodic scenario conversations about the field's plausible futures, so intelligence about the present becomes preparation for what comes next

Tools and Templates

Niche and Complementarity Worksheet: Field needs | our distinctive capabilities | crowded lanes we occupy | candidate hand-offs and wind-downs | complementarity commitments.

Coalition Situational Awareness Agenda: A standing ten-minute structure: environment changes | opposition moves | narrative shifts | funder signals | implications and assignments.

Funder Field Brief Outline: State of the ecosystem | strengths | gaps and concentration risks | field-level functions needing support | options (not prescriptions).

Intelligence-Sharing Charter: Purpose | governance and movement representation | consent | minimization and aggregation rules | access tiers | security commitments | retention and removal | credit and returns to contributors | amendment process.

Data Governance Checklist: A pre-collection gate: purpose stated? consent designed? minimum data defined? aggregation default set? access tiers assigned? threat model current? incident plan named? retention clock set?

Movement Health Dashboard: Six indicator families — participation, capacity, cohesion, resources, narrative position, wins — with sources and year-over-year trend.

Field After-Action Review Guide: What we expected | what happened | why the gap | what we now believe about the ecosystem | what we will watch and do differently.

Recommended Reading: John Kania and Mark Kramer, "Collective Impact" (SSIR, 2011); Kania, Kramer, and Peter Senge, *The Water of Systems Change* (FSG, 2018); Electronic Frontier Foundation, *Surveillance Self-Defense* (ssd.eff.org); Front Line Defenders, *Workbook on Security*.

Case Vignettes

Case Vignette 1: The Shared Dashboard That Held a Coalition Together

An international coalition running corporate accountability campaigns — dozens of organizations pressing companies in the same industry to adopt and honor a welfare and supply-chain standard — built a shared commitment-tracking dashboard: every public corporate pledge, its deadline, its reported progress, and its verification status, maintained by a small backbone team and visible to all members under a simple access charter.

The dashboard changed the coalition's power in two ways. First, division of labor became self-organizing: members could see which companies were on track, which were stalling, and which had gone silent, and could pick targets that fit their geography and tactics without stepping on allies' campaigns. Second, escalation became credible: when a major company quietly missed a deadline, every member saw the same fact on the same day, and the coalition's response — coordinated public reporting, synchronized shareholder questions, renewed grassroots pressure in three countries — arrived within weeks, not quarters. Companies learned that commitments made to one organization were, in effect, made to a field with a memory.

Key lessons: (1) Shared intelligence converts a collection of campaigns into a field with collective leverage — the dashboard did the coordinating that no amount of meetings had achieved. (2) The backbone function was small (well under two full-time roles) but had to be dedicated and funded; volunteers' spare time had failed twice before. (3) Verification status mattered more than pledge counts: the field's credibility rested on tracking what was real, not what was announced.

Case Vignette 2: The Extractive Field Scan — and the Repair

A funder collaborative commissioned a landscape scan of a regional environmental justice field: a consultancy fielded a forty-five-minute survey and hour-long interviews across the field's organizations. Participation was strong — organizations assumed the scan would serve them. Then nothing returned. The report went to the funders alone; two grantees learned from a program officer's aside that findings about their "capacity limitations" had informed a quiet defunding decision; and the following year, when a genuinely field-serving research effort launched, survey response collapsed below twenty percent. The field had learned that sharing information was a risk.

The repair took two years and had to be structural, not rhetorical. A second effort was co-governed from the start: a steering group with a movement majority; an Intelligence-Sharing Charter specifying consent, aggregation-only reporting, access tiers, and findings-to-the-field-first; grassroots contributors compensated for interview time; and a public commitment — kept — that no organization-identifiable information would reach any funder. The first report under the new charter was delivered at a field convening, presented by field members, with funders in the audience. Response rates recovered, and the field gained what the original scan had promised: a shared picture it actually owned.

Key lessons: (1) Extraction is remembered: a single funder-first scan can poison field research for years. (2) Legitimacy is a design property — governance, consent, and returns to contributors must be structured in advance, because promises after the fact repair nothing. (3) Who presents the findings, and to whom first, signals who the intelligence serves.

Metrics and KPIs

Metric / KPI	What It Measures	How to Measure
Decision citation rate	Whether intelligence changes action	Documented strategy, coalition, and funding decisions referencing intelligence outputs, per year
Shared infrastructure participation	Field buy-in	Share of the field's significant actors contributing to and using shared outputs
State-of-the-field cadence	Delivery discipline	Annual report and quarterly updates delivered on schedule
Charter adoption and compliance	Governance health	Charter signed by participants; annual compliance review findings
Security posture	Duty of care	Threat model reviewed annually; drills completed; incidents (target: zero) and time-to-response
Findings returned to contributors	Equity and legitimacy	Share of intelligence outputs delivered to contributing field members before or alongside any funder
Movement health trend	The point of it all	Year-over-year movement health dashboard: participation, capacity, cohesion, resources, narrative, wins

Risks and Mitigations

Risk: Infrastructure capture — the shared intelligence function drifting under the control of the largest organization or the funders who pay for it.

Mitigation: Co-governance with a movement majority written into the charter; funding from multiple sources; periodic governance review.

Risk: Free-riding — a few organizations contributing while many only consume, until contributors quit.

Mitigation: Reciprocity norms in the charter, visible crediting of contributors, and access tiers that reward contribution.

Risk: Breach or subpoena exposing sensitive field data.

Mitigation: Minimization (what is never collected cannot leak), aggregation by default, encryption and access hygiene, retention limits, and legal review of what is held where.

Risk: Shelf-ware — reports produced on schedule and read by no one.

Mitigation: Decision-linked distribution: every report lands in a named meeting on a named agenda, with an options section that demands a response.

Risk: Gatekeeping — intelligence hoarded as power by whoever holds it.

Mitigation: Charter-guaranteed access for contributors, findings-first-to-the-field, and an appeal path when access is denied.

Implementation Checklist

- [] Niche and Complementarity Worksheet completed; commitments adopted at the last strategy cycle
- [] Standing situational awareness item added to coalition meeting agendas
- [] Rapid-alert channel established with agreed trigger criteria and decision process
- [] Funder field brief drafted under field-first distribution rules
- [] Shared infrastructure model chosen (catalyst, intermediary, federated, or rotating) and funding plan made
- [] Intelligence-Sharing Charter drafted, negotiated, and signed by participating organizations
- [] Data Governance Checklist adopted as a pre-collection gate for all intelligence work
- [] Threat model completed against the field's actual adversaries; incident response plan named and drilled
- [] Movement Health Dashboard indicators agreed and baseline year recorded
- [] Field after-action review scheduled following the next major campaign or shock

Glossary

Backbone Organization: A dedicated intermediary that coordinates a multi-organization effort, including its shared measurement and intelligence functions.

Research Intermediary: An independent research capacity serving a whole field with ecosystem intelligence — mapping, surveys, monitoring, and state-of-the-field reporting.

Intelligence-Sharing Charter: The governance agreement covering consent, minimization, access tiers, security, retention, credit, and amendment for a field's shared intelligence.

Data Minimization: Collecting only the data required to answer a stated question — the first and strongest security control.

Security Culture: The shared practices by which a field protects itself and its data from its actual adversaries: threat modeling, encryption and access hygiene, and incident readiness.

Movement Capture: The redirection of a movement's agenda toward external resource-holders' priorities — including through control of research and evidence.

After-Action Review (AAR): A structured learning conversation held after a campaign or shock: what was expected, what happened, why, and what changes.

Movement Health Dashboard: A small, stable set of field-level indicators — participation, capacity, cohesion, resources, narrative position, wins — tracked year over year.

Rapid-Alert Channel: A pre-agreed communication path and decision process by which a field responds to time-critical threats and openings.

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