

Northeast Seed Network Charter

This charter outlines the Northeast Seed Network's core elements and operational framework, offering a shared guide for active and potential partners. We are a regional alliance of partnerships in service of our mission and vision.

Mission

Foster connection and knowledge sharing among those working to improve access to diverse source-identified seeds and plants in the United States (U.S.) Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic States.

Vision

A future in which a robust seed and plant supply chain formed through collaboration, coordination, and resource sharing supports resilient and healthy landscapes.

Values

Collaborate and Complement

As a network of diverse members and partners, we are committed to building collaborative relationships that strengthen and complement one another's efforts, fostering mutual support and shared impact.

Open Communication

We are dedicated to clear, respectful, and timely communication, prioritizing active listening and accessible information for all members.

Uncompromising Transparency

Our success lies in honesty and openness. We welcome feedback, make informed decisions together, and strive to remain accountable to one another and the ecosystems we serve.

Continuous Improvement

We embrace humility and curiosity, consistently seeking opportunities to learn and adapt. Our commitment is to continually elevate the quality, relevance, and impact of our collective work.

Synergistic Collaboration

The Northeast Seed Network acts as a vital link connecting diverse stakeholders. By embracing complementary strengths rather than focusing on competition, we foster an environment where individuals and organizations work together to achieve shared goals. We prioritize collaboration and mutual support, recognizing that leveraging diverse capabilities leads to innovation, resilience, and greater collective impact. It highlights the idea that we can achieve more when we work together.

Our Story

Across the region, the demand for native seed and plant materials for activities like reforestation, coastline and wetland restoration, pollinator pathway creation, and agroforestry is rising dramatically. However, supply chains are unable to meet the needs of current restoration projects, with seeds often sourced hundreds of miles away from the region¹.

To build a more resilient, region-wide supply chain, stakeholders came together to formally launch the [Northeast Seed Network in March 2023 at the National Native Seed Conference](#). It was recognized that strengthening the region's supply chain to meet the growing demand for ecological restoration activities is too big a job for any entity to tackle on its own. The [Ecological Health Network](#) currently coordinates the Northeast Seed Network.

The Northeast Seed Network is a grassroots effort that has flourished due to the dedication of many passionate stakeholders, all united by a shared goal of increasing the quantity and quality of native plants in our landscapes. Please see our shared timeline of the efforts from partners and members that have helped spark a groundswell of support and enthusiasm for strengthening regional seed and plant supply chains (www.northeastseednetwork.org/about-1).

Geographic Scope

The Northeast Seed Network does not have fixed borders but rather operates with porous boundaries, with key areas of activity—seed partnerships – collaborating across 13 states in the US Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, including Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia. We are also gradually expanding and strengthening our linkages and cooperation in Ontario, New Brunswick, and other Eastern Canadian provinces.

¹ See key publications for more information including: Tangren, S., Toth, E., & Siegel, S. (2022). A survey of native plant materials use and commercial availability in the Eastern United States. *Native Plants Journal*, 23(1), 17–32. <https://doi.org/10.3368/npj.23.1.17>; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2023). *An Assessment of Native Seed Needs and the Capacity for Their Supply: Final Report*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26618>; and Allen, E. B., Cross, A. T., Berger, A. M., & Aronson, J. (2024). Restoration seed and plant material supply chains are complex social networks. *Restoration Ecology*, 32(8), e14279. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec.14279>

From a biogeographical perspective—taking into account factors such as geology, landforms, soils, vegetation, climate, hydrology, and wildlife, rather than political or administrative boundaries—the region spans thirteen Omernik Level III ecoregions (Omernik 1987; Bailey 2014) (see our Network Map (www.ecotypeproject.org/networkmap) to see the geographic scope that is covered by our partners and members).

Objectives

- **Fostering Community of Practice:** The Northeast Seed Network brings partner organizations and individuals together to develop channels of communication and share best practices for native seed collecting, cleaning, storage, increase, and distribution.
- **Building Regional Capacity:** We support partnerships working to improve seed supply chains at the regional scale by offering planning resources and technical guidance.
- **Interfacing with National and International Efforts:** The Northeast Seed Network aligns with national and international initiatives to ensure that regional efforts are informed by and complement broader restoration goals.

Network Structure, Leadership, and Governance

Overview: The Northeast Seed Network is an alliance of regional partnerships working to improve the native seed supply chain (See **Figure 1** for a map of existing and emerging partnerships). The network operates through a connected partnership model, with a central Steering Committee—made up of representatives from each partnership—to guide communication, coordination, and oversight, alongside working groups focused on shared goals across the regional alliance.

Regional Partnerships: A seed partnership is a localized network of diverse stakeholders collaborating to build capacity and enhance the accessibility and use of native seeds and plants (See **Figure 2** for an illustration of the stakeholder types that make up regional partnerships and **Figure 3** for an illustration of the connected partnership model). These partnerships operate at an ecoregional, state, or other geographic scale deemed feasible and appropriate by those involved.

Partnerships participating in the Northeast Seed Network (NSN) have developed independently or with support from NSN leadership. There is no one-size-fits-all template for establishing or operating a partnership or hub. Each partnership or hub is designed to address the unique ecological restoration needs and priorities of the specific ecoregion or state it serves, tailoring its approach to the restoration activities and requirements of its local context.

The functions, structures, and specific goals of a seed hub or partnership are shaped by the unique needs and priorities of the partnership itself. While there is no standardized model, many partnerships share common elements.

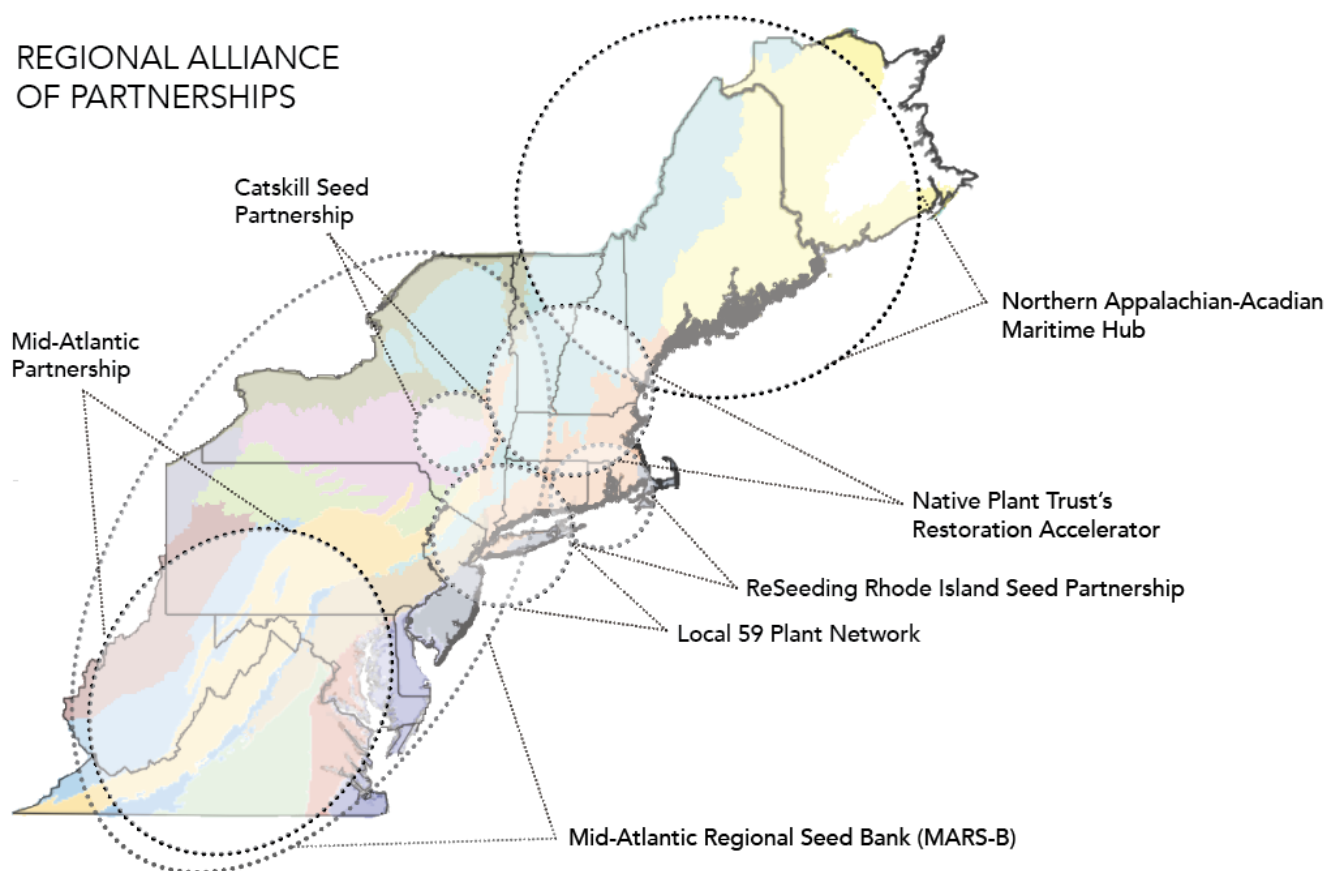


Figure 3: Map of Northeast Seed Network's existing and emerging partnerships. Credit: Ecological Health Network, September 2025.

NORTHEAST SEED NETWORK REGIONAL ALLIANCE PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE

Partnerships unite diverse stakeholders to enhance native seed and plant material availability and use.

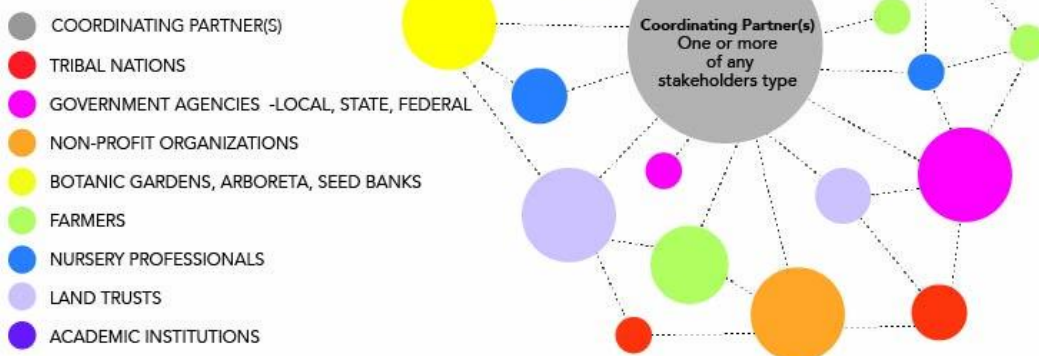


Figure 2: Illustration of the diverse stakeholders that comprise partnerships. Credit: Ecological Health Network, 2025.

NORTHEAST SEED NETWORK STRUCTURE CONNECTED PARTNERSHIP MODEL

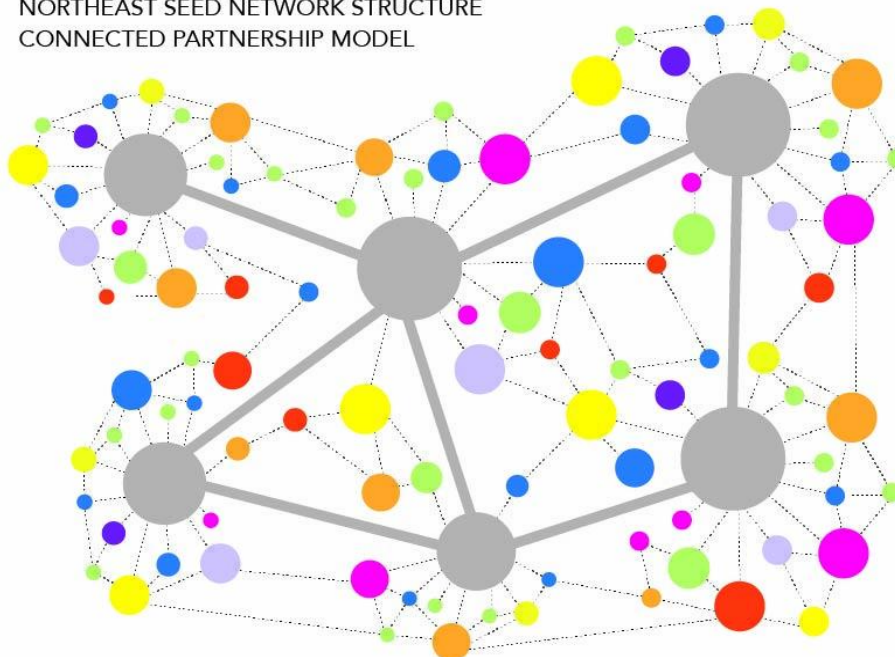


Figure 3: Illustration of the Northeast Seed Network's Connected Partnership Model. Credit: Ecological Health Network, 2025.

Steering Committee: The Steering Committee provides support, guidance, and oversight for the Northeast Seed Network. Comprising representatives from various stakeholder groups and individuals with expertise in different aspects of the seed supply chain, the Committee focuses on strategic planning, network development, outreach and advocacy, and oversight of network priorities, programs, and initiatives.

The Steering Committee is constituted through an open, inclusive process designed to reflect the diversity of our membership. We extend an open invitation to all members, and candidates are selected through a majority vote by the current Steering Committee. We aim to maintain a committee size of 8 to 12 members. Committee members commit to two-year terms, with the option to renew for up to 2 to 3 terms, and are expected to participate in quarterly meetings lasting 1.5 to 2 hours, and participate in at least one working group. The Network Coordinator will send periodic updates to the Steering Committee between quarterly meetings. For more information about the roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority of the Steering Committee, including the scope of its powers in guiding strategic direction and oversight, please refer to our NSN Operational Guidelines, which can be requested by emailing us at northeastseednetwork@gmail.com.

Advisory Council: The Advisory Council provides a flexible way for any member of the Northeast Seed Network to contribute to the Network's strategic direction and core functions without the full commitment of a Steering Committee role. There are no terms or minimum commitments, though we encourage members to join at least one of two 1.5- 2-hour meetings each year. Council members can also offer their expertise and insights as needed throughout the year. Their role includes advising on key decisions related to network growth and goals, offering feedback on ongoing initiatives and strategies, identifying emerging challenges and opportunities across the regional alliance of seed partnerships, and serving as thought partners for the Steering Committee and other Network members. See **Figure 4**, which illustrates how the Steering Committee and Advisory Council work together to provide the primary governance structure of the NSN.

Network Coordinator: The Coordinator plays a critical role in maintaining network operations, managing knowledge, and assisting network teams by keeping the network on track through identifying and framing emerging issues, gathering agenda topics, and contributing to effective meeting design. They establish and maintain network operations by setting up communication systems, managing logistics for meetings and events, and ensuring smooth organizational processes. Knowledge management is another key responsibility involving the collection of resources and insights from network projects, organizing them for easy access, and sharing relevant information with participants. Additionally, the Coordinator supports network teams by providing guidance, resources, and coordination to help teams achieve their goals and advance the network's mission.

Working Groups: The Northeast Seed Network convenes and supports working groups to collaboratively develop strategic plans, technical guidance, and other resources that address the needs of the broader community. Some of these groups are ongoing, while others are

formed to address specific challenges within a set time frame. These committees, composed of individuals from diverse sectors, regional partnerships, and disciplines, leverage their collective expertise to develop solutions, recommendations, or reports. For a full list and description of our current working groups, please visit www.northeastseednetwork.org. See **Figure 5**, which illustrates the structure of the NSN working groups.

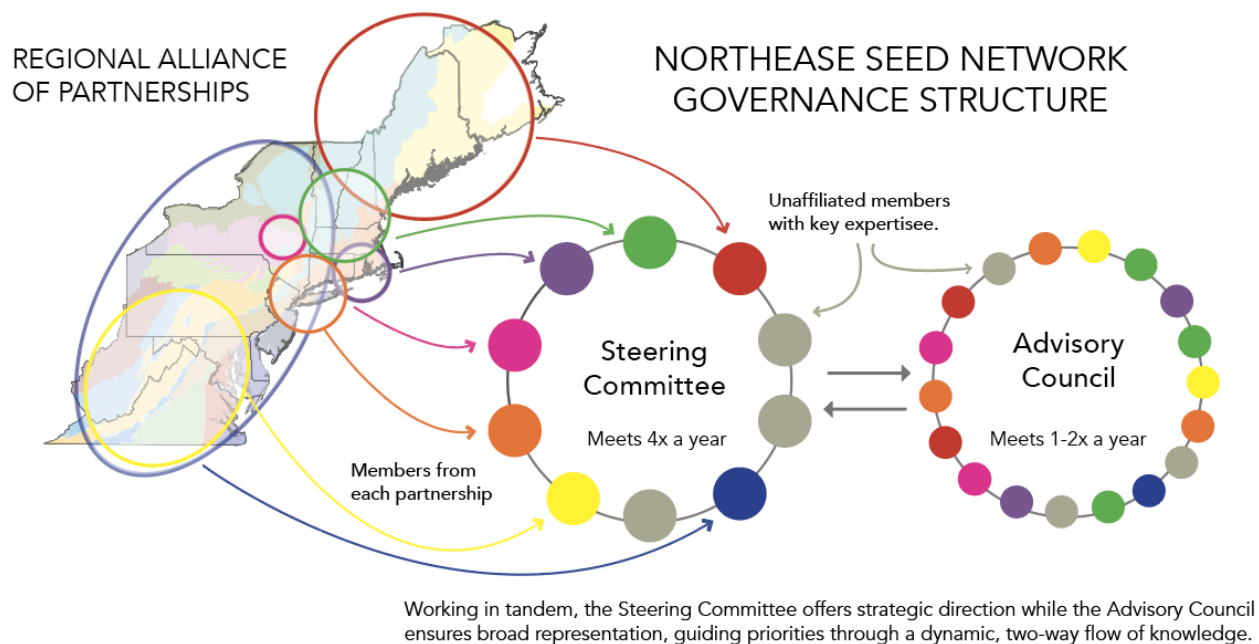


Figure 4: Illustration of how the Steering Committee and Advisory Council work together to provide the primary governance structure of the NSN. Credit: Ecological Health Network, 2025.

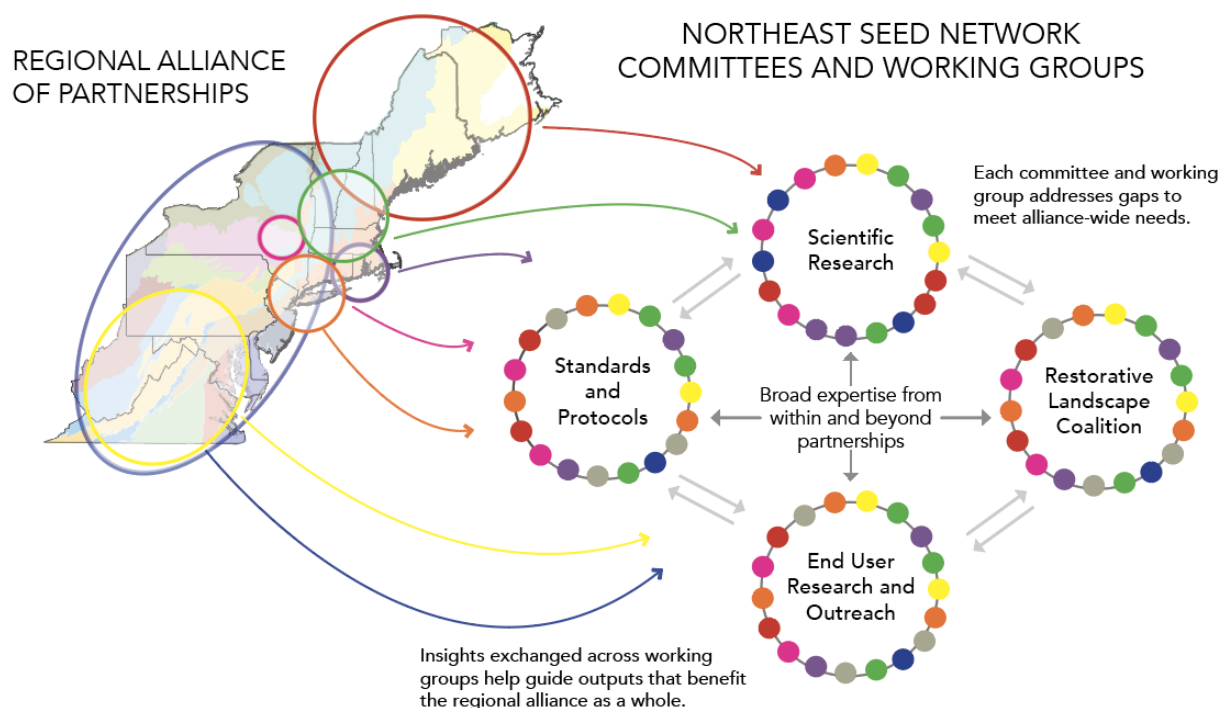


Figure 5: Illustration of the structure of the NSN committees and working group. Credit: Ecological Health Network, 2025.

Membership and Participation

Eligibility Criteria: Membership in the Northeast Seed Network is open to everyone interested in conserving and restoring native plant communities. Whether you are a small or large grower, researcher, end user, land manager, Indigenous group, community-based entity, or an individual citizen, there is a seat for you at the table. We welcome all who share our commitment to increasing the availability and use of ecologically appropriate native seed and plant materials. Joining the Network is free, with no financial commitment required, ensuring that everyone can participate in building a more resilient and biodiverse landscape.

Roles and Responsibilities: Members of the Northeast Seed Network are encouraged to actively contribute to fostering a community of practice. This includes promoting the Network's values and participating in network-wide meetings, working groups, and committees as capacity allows. We also encourage members to share resources, insights, and information freely with one another, fostering a collaborative and supportive environment that advances our shared mission.

Onboarding Process: To join the Northeast Seed Network, the first step is to fill out our [network directory survey](#) to be listed on the [Ecotype Project's Map](#). This is also where you

can indicate your interest in working groups, committees, or the resources and expertise you can contribute. Once submitted, we will connect you with the appropriate hub or partnership leaders. We also encourage new members to explore our website and video resources to learn more about the Network's mission, structure, vision, values, and purpose. If you'd like a more personalized introduction, we're happy to schedule a call to learn about your work and discuss how the Network can support your efforts.

Core Activities

Convening Committees, Working Groups, and Network-wide Gatherings – NSN organizes virtual and in-person meetings for members and partners to share knowledge, coordinate efforts, and develop guidance and resources.

Hosting and Managing an Online Network Map – Led by The Ecotype Project, the map increases visibility of members and their roles, supporting collaboration, reducing duplication, and highlighting gaps in the seed supply chain.

Communications and Knowledge Sharing – NSN shares news, research, case studies, and resources through 6–10 annual newsletters, social media, and its website.

Educational Programming – The Network supports workshops and training to expand technical knowledge and practical skills in seed collection, storage, propagation, and restoration practices.

Advocacy and Policy – NSN coordinates members to advocate for policies that strengthen regional seed and plant supply chains.

Interfacing with Regional, National, and International Efforts – The Network builds connections with other seed and restoration networks, fostering knowledge exchange, collaboration, and coordinated action.

Regional Strategy Development and Implementation Support – NSN assists partnerships in planning and implementing strategies to strengthen seed and plant availability and regional restoration capacity.

Sustainability and Funding

Funding Mode and Fiscal Sponsorship: The Northeast Seed Network is supported by a mix of grants, private philanthropic donations, and in-kind contributions. This includes financial support from grants and donations, as well as valuable in-kind support from the co-leads, members, and partners, such as staff time and resources, which are essential to the Network's operations and growth. The fiscal sponsorship responsibilities for the Northeast Seed Network

are shared between The Ecological Health Network and the Highstead Foundation, two co-leads and founding partners of the Network.

Resource Sharing: NSN facilitates the sharing of resources—including data, tools, protocols, and best practices—to support learning, collaboration, and regional restoration efforts. Clear attribution and, when needed, formal agreements ensure responsible, ethical, and equitable use of shared materials, fostering trust and collaboration among members.

Ethical Guidelines: The Northeast Seed Network is committed to maintaining ethical and transparent financial practices. This includes ensuring proper stewardship of funds, adhering to all relevant legal and regulatory requirements, and being transparent in our financial reporting. We strive to use all resources responsibly, making sure they are allocated in ways that align with our mission and values. Regular audits and open communication with partners and members are integral to maintaining trust and accountability.

Governance

Risk management: The Northeast Seed Network is committed to identifying and managing potential risks associated with its activities. This may involve assessing the need for insurance coverage, including liability and indemnity clauses, to protect the Network and its members from unforeseen circumstances. We will continuously evaluate and implement appropriate risk management strategies to ensure the stability and safety of our operations.

Key Documents and Amending the Charter: The Northeast Seed Network maintains a set of foundational documents, including this Charter, Operational Guidelines, Partnership Information, Guiding Recommendations, and Strategic Plans. These documents are periodically updated (every 1-3 years) to reflect the evolving needs of the Network. Amendments to these documents require input from the Steering Committee, Advisory Council, and broader membership, with final approval through a majority vote of the Steering Committee to ensure alignment with the Network's values and goals.

Terminating the Network: In the unlikely event that the Network must be dissolved, this decision will be made through a formal vote of the Steering Committee, with input from the broader membership to ensure transparency and accountability. The process will include steps to responsibly wind down operations, transfer resources where appropriate, and honor the contributions of all members.