



# **Nonprofit Leadership: A Sampler of Networks, Fellowships, and Workshops**

**A report from the National Council of Nonprofit Associations and the  
Leadership Working Group of the Nonprofit Congress**

**November 15, 2007**

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## The Background

The National Council of Nonprofit Associations (NCNA) is the network of state and regional nonprofit associations serving over 20,000 members in 41 states and the District of Columbia. NCNA links local organizations to a national audience through state associations and helps small and midsize nonprofits: manage and lead more effectively; collaborate and exchange solutions; engage in critical policy issues affecting the sector; and achieve greater impact in their communities.

The Nonprofit Congress, an initiative of the National Council of Nonprofit Associations and the state association network, empowers individuals and nonprofits to act collectively for positive change. Building on the fundamental belief that nonprofits are vital to society, the Nonprofit Congress is guided by shared values and priorities established by nonprofits in communities across the country.

NCNA formally launched the Nonprofit Congress in 2006 when front line nonprofit staff and allies shared their aspirations and concerns regarding the viability and future of the nonprofit sector. They forged a common identity through in-depth conversations held at Town Hall meetings across the country. Through a national values survey, nonprofit leaders voted for our shared values. These include: dedication to the betterment of the communities we serve, commitment to serve others, serving as a catalyst for change and innovation, and operating with ethics and integrity. At the first National Meeting in October 2006, delegates from across the country discussed and deliberated on the top priorities and began the process of state-level planning addressing one or more of the priorities. The Top Three Priorities are Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness through accountability, best practices, and leadership, Advocacy and Grassroots Community Activities, and Public Awareness and Support of the Sector.

Since the 2006 national meeting, NCNA has been actively involved in efforts addressing the Top Priorities. In the area of leadership we created a Nonprofit Congress Leadership Working Group. The purpose of this document is to share the efforts of the Working Group and provide information and guidance to those building or growing leadership programs.

## The Process

With several research reports detailing the imminent loss of huge numbers of older, established leaders and bemoaning the lack of leadership among younger staff, it would seem obvious that leadership surfaced as a top priority for those in the sector. As such, it garnered a great deal of interest among delegates at the 2006 National Meeting, and a few months later a group was formed to discuss it.

The Leadership Working Group of the Nonprofit Congress began meeting in February 2007 to examine the status of leadership development throughout the sector and attempt to draw conclusions based on what they observed. Initial meetings focused on discussing the scope and magnitude of the “problem” and determining what age group it affected the most. The group discussed “emerging leaders” (those with less than 7 years of experience in the sector), “mid-career leaders” (those with 8 to 15 years experience), and “established leaders” (those with more than 15 years experience) and attempted to focus on one group. After more discussion, it became apparent that though leadership development resources might exist for each group, the resources they could provide each other might be even more valuable. The group concluded that capturing knowledge from established leaders, supporting transitions among mid-career leaders, and growing the leadership capacity of emerging leaders was necessary in terms of maintaining a thriving nonprofit sector. Perhaps even more important however, was getting these people to talk to each other and teach each other what they knew.

The key purpose of the group became gathering information on existing programs of intergenerational knowledge transfer in the sector and then compiling best practices based on the information. The group developed a list of questions to pose to the coordinators of various leadership programs (see Appendix A) and set out to get answers. The bulk of this report is based on interviews and surveys conducted by members of the Working Group. The following reviews describe just a handful of leadership programs across the country. They look at the programs’ purposes; benefits; recruitment and retention strategies; curriculum approaches; setup and requirements; resources; evaluation methods; and lessons learned. See the Executive Summary below for key highlights and suggestions.

These unique programs cater to leaders with various levels of available time, including everything from lunch seminars to two-year fellowships. Some target specific groups of leaders, such as young women or those in a certain geographic area. Many include board as well as management components. A few operate partly or completely online. To some extent, this variety of programs offers a “leadership buffet” from which participants can choose a program to fit their own needs. The participants learn from each other as well as experts in group settings, combining their fresh voices with the institutional knowledge of the sector. The programs described here are constantly evolving as they evaluate themselves, and new ones are being created as well.

We encourage others to test out the advice given below and send us any feedback and additional suggestions you may have.

## The Next Step

The wide variety of programs the group had to choose from proved that leadership development was (and is) happening in nonprofits all around the country (as well as in the corporate and government sectors). However, virtually none of the programs reviewed focused specifically on intergenerational knowledge transfer. With the exception of a few targeted mentoring components, the programs largely focused on training one set of leaders as opposed to creating conversations between leaders of various generations.

Further research indicated that though mentoring is important, it also does not fully address the need for intergenerational dialogue. The Leadership Working Group is now developing curriculum pieces for nonprofits to use in encouraging intergenerational dialogue and building leadership among all staff. These “Regeneration Dialogues” will seek to provide a means for nonprofit staffers of all generations to discuss the organizational, structural, and emotional barriers to true leadership transfer. They will also provide concrete suggestions and methods for building leadership and transferring knowledge within and among organizations. Please stay tuned for that document in January 2008.

## **Executive Summary: Learning From Those Who Have Gone Down the Path**

Eleven programs were reviewed by members of the Working Group (reviews were condensed and combined for this report). Given the diversity of the programs reviewed, it was not possible to quantify the results, so a more qualitative approach was used to summarize the programs. The following points highlight the key programmatic and structural components of these programs in an attempt to provide practical advice to those seeking to build or grow leadership programs. Learning from those who have already done this work helps build on our collective efforts, streamlines learning, allows others to apply tested methods, and saves us from reinventing the wheel.

### **PURPOSE—Programs were assessed by first identifying the motivations and/or reasons for starting/developing leadership programs. These include:**

- Developing leaders who show initiative, listen intently, understand the breadth of perspective on issues, assume responsibility, and exercise sound decision making;
- Diversity and inclusion;
- Meeting community challenges and recognizing opportunities;
- Engaging and supporting future nonprofit leaders;
- Building the capacity of large and diverse networks of young people;
- Promoting an efficient, viable, and inclusive nonprofit sector that supports the growth, learning, and development of young professionals;
- Combating staff turnover and “brain drain” of senior management;
- Strengthening the management capacity of employees;
- Succession planning; and
- Becoming an employer of choice.

### **BENEFITS—Benefits for those participating in leadership programs:**

- Learning to define success;
- Formulating a new or more complete professional identity;
- Gaining access to leaders as well as networks of people and organizations within a location or field;
- An ability to create positive change;
- Building on existing leadership skills; and
- Improving self-development and leadership skills.

### **MODE OF LEARNING—Learning methods in leadership programs:**

- Multiple adult education models, staying away from lectures;
- Networking, including nonprofit, civic, and community leaders meeting at various sites around the state;
- Longer sessions (day, weekend, weeklong);
- Experiential learning including simulations, re-creations, volunteering, group projects, and roundtable discussions;
- Structured plan for learning that is reassessed regularly;
- Seminars on general topics as well as more specific topics based on trainees’ interests;
- Site visits;
- Social opportunities;

- Skills development trainings; and
- Moderated panels of speakers who share their experiences about a specific topic.

### **RECRUITMENT—Recruitment and retention methods:**

- Through various media: public service announcements; newspapers; email; newsletters; websites; and
- Through outreach: word of mouth; alumni referrals; contact with human resources professionals and businesses; referrals through donors, open houses, and those previously interested; building relationships with organizations serving the population you want to reach with the program.

### **PROGRAM ELEMENTS—Setup and Requirements:**

- Commitment to diversity;
- Program should last at least six (6) months and can last up to two (2) years;
- An orientation session at the beginning of the program with all participants and their families if applicable;
- Create a safe space for participants to talk without consequence; and
- Peer-elected advisory council to help make decisions about the program and give participants further leadership opportunities.

### **STAFFING—Staff and funding:**

- At least one full-time dedicated staffer. All senior staff should contribute in some way;
- Gather sponsorships and donations from local businesses, large corporations, members, universities, government, etc.;
- Ask participants to fundraise part of the cost of their participation (provide them with materials and guidance for fundraising);
- Fundraise to gather an endowment for the program; and
- Try to get volunteer presenters or facilitators for the program to cut costs.

### **ASSESSMENT—Tracking and Evaluation:**

- Surveys after workshops and sessions;
- Anecdotal evidence;
- Annual survey of participants;
- Individual self-evaluations;
- Staff evaluations of program's progress; and
- Formal 360-degree evaluations after program cycles are complete.

### **ADVICE—Additional lessons and challenges to address:**

- Allow some flexibility in program structure and timing;
- PLAN, have a clear understanding of the goals of the program before beginning; start by listening to the needs of those participating;
- When communicating, focus on the importance of nonprofits being interconnected with the community, the important and distributive role of established leaders, and the necessity of networking for younger leaders;
- Create two-way streams of dialogue between participants and trainers, always focusing on what is relevant and interesting;
- Allow emerging leaders to identify themselves;
- Create an alumni network for those who have completed the program;

- Rotate the location of different sessions and trainings so everyone has to travel regularly;
- Focus on specific topics during each session (as opposed to making the discussion wide ranging);
- Be mindful of time restraints and short attention spans;
- Committing for the long term is a challenge—there is no “payoff” in the beginning;
- Measuring impact is very difficult: you have to decide what impact you want to demonstrate before you can evaluate the program;
- Training someone to be a leader can lead to changes in his/her life as well as job, and the personal changes can be profound;
- Getting initial commitment from boards is a challenge; and
- Follow up can be difficult.

## Program Reviews

### **Centurions Leadership Program: Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce**

The purpose of the Centurions Leadership Program, launched in 1976, is to prepare a representative cross-section of the community's emerging leaders for their role in shaping the future of Kansas City. Participants come from every segment of industry: corporations, nonprofits, government agencies, and universities. The program is administered by one program manager and one program coordinator employed by the Chamber of Commerce. Current Chamber members and alumni of the program provide support staffing.

The target audience is anyone with an interest in becoming more active in civic matters, as well as emerging leaders in the Kansas City Metropolitan area (a bi-state area that includes 11 counties and over 1.9 million people) employed by organizations that are members of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. The program's mission is achieved by:

- Familiarizing members with current community issues;
- Providing opportunities to meet current and future community leaders;
- Promoting awareness of community resources;
- Exploring diverse areas of the city; and
- Encouraging participants to become civically involved through various projects.

Once accepted into the program, participants agree to a two-year commitment and serve on a task force dedicated to researching a particular community issue or need, such as crime prevention, arts and entertainment, transportation, or poverty. The task forces take advantage of collective knowledge and civic activism to address important issues that affect every person in the community. Participants also elect to apply for membership to a board of their choosing.

Alumni of the program are a vital force in its sustainability. The Chamber encourages alumni to participate with new classes and present service opportunities and networking connections whenever possible.

To increase public awareness of the Centurions Leadership Program, the Chamber of Commerce has identified several successful strategies, including word of mouth (most applicants are referred by current members or alumni), presence at community events/job fairs, and Internet presence via a website. Newspaper advertisements and direct mail were found to be less effective.

Two areas of concern in the functioning of the program are competition and funding. In response to the first, the Chamber recognizes that partnering with similar organizations to establish best practices would eliminate competition for members and repetitive programming. In response to the second, sponsorships are sought to help cover costs.

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## **Emerging Leaders Network: Americans for the Arts**

Americans for the Arts Emerging Leader Network was created in 1999 out of a need to develop the “next 50 years” of leadership. “The...Program works to identify and cultivate the next generation of arts leaders in America. It is an ideal way for new leaders to share their interests with others as they continue to develop their skills and their commitment to the arts. The Emerging Leader Program targets professionals who are either new to the field, with up to five years of experience, or are 35 years of age or younger.”

Its targets are members and staff of member organizations of Americans for the Arts, who are flagged as “emerging leaders” when members join. Thousands of people have been involved at some level since its inception. The goal is to help participants develop a “golden rolodex” of contacts to facilitate future work and collaboration.

A key component of the program is its design: it creates a safe space for emerging leaders to talk without consequence. Young leaders often encounter intergenerational culture conflict and need to be able to talk about it without worrying about the security of their jobs. Leadership opportunities include a peer-elected advisory council that assists with decision-making about the network.

Another key component is its “Creative Conversations,” or annual meet-ups for local emerging leaders. In 2006, 1,200 people attended from 27 states. The “Creative Conversations” allow emerging leaders to develop networks of networks—they get involved at their city level and then broaden out to other cities’ networks.

Emerging leaders are highly transient, and the network nature of the entire program helps keep its participants connected and grounded during their periods of transition. These connections are important in creating cohorts of intergenerational leaders which can then focus on working with other populations.

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## **Future Leaders Development Program: Y.O.U., Inc. Leadership Development Institute**

The Leadership Development Institute is a new initiative, about a year old, within Youth Opportunities Upheld (Y.O.U.), Inc. The Future Leaders Development Program is “Tier II” of Y.O.U., Inc. Leadership Development Institute and is an ongoing program designed to support middle managers’ growth and development. Tier I focuses on the youngest direct-services staff and Tier III is for senior managers moving up to the highest levels in the organization. Y.O.U., Inc. staff is the only audience for this program, which can support 15-20 people at a time.

Y.O.U., Inc. has approximately 550 employees and a budget of over \$30 million. The entire institute involves participation from the training staff, the executive directors, component directors, program directors, and several lower level staff. All directors provide training and mentoring. All trainings are done in-house, with program directors or others providing the training. At least one room has to be devoted to the trainings.

Y.O.U., Inc.’s organizational structure consists of 5 different “components” (departments) within which are several smaller programs. There are three tiers of management: Executive Directors (CEO, CFO, etc.), Component Directors, and Program Directors, with staff under each of them. In the Future Leaders program (Tier II), Component Directors nominate at least one Program Director beneath them to participate. Participation is not mandatory, but the program is presented as an excellent opportunity to learn how to move up in the organization and gain job security.

There are three components to the program:

- Professional Development—including developing a professional development plan with the component director and monthly meetings with a mentor;
- Management development workshops—including budgeting, performance appraisal, and quality management; and
- Enrichment activities—including sitting in on committee meetings and performance reviews, coordinating group projects, and/or attending external management trainings.

The Leadership Institute in general is promoted as a demonstration that Y.O.U., Inc. cares about the development of its future leaders: “Y.O.U., Inc. is committed to developing and enhancing the skills of future managers in the human service field. We accomplish this through a three-tiered Leadership Development Institute that provides Y.O.U., Inc. management personnel with the skills and concepts needed to perform their jobs with optimum efficiency and effectiveness. Management training, enrichment opportunities, as well as individual coaching and mentoring are targeted to three levels of Y.O.U., Inc. managers: the emerging manager making the transition from direct care to being a supervisor; the mid-level manager looking to continue their management skill development, and the upper level manager being groomed for senior leadership positions within the agency.”

The first “classes” of trainees are just exiting the program, so conclusive evaluation has not occurred yet. However, it is worth noting that with the exception of injuries or personal issues not connected to work, no one has yet left or declined to participate in any of the training programs.

As of right now, there are no best practices established, but Y.O.U., Inc. is eager to establish them, especially in regards to the mentoring pieces of the program and the setup of the program. A program like this would not

work as is for smaller nonprofits. It would probably work best if coordinated by an umbrella or “parent” organization with several smaller organizations underneath it.

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## **Leadership Councils/Young Women's Leadership Council: Chicago Foundation for Women**

The Chicago Foundation for Women (CFW) Leadership Councils are divided into 5 distinct interest groups (Asian American, Lesbian, African American, Latina, and Young Women) for the purposes of promoting the foundation's work, to raise funds for the foundation, to help advocate for the special needs of the interest groups, to provide leadership opportunities, and to increase the presence of underrepresented women at tables of power.

The Councils are a resource for knowledge and information about community-based issues and opportunities, how to conduct culturally-sensitive philanthropy, and as an incubator for new leadership in the women's funding movement. In addition, they have become a way to reach out to new potential donors in communities that have gone untapped by the Foundation.

Members are recruited primarily through word of mouth and website information. The membership fee is \$250 per year: half goes toward the specific council's fund, and half goes toward the general operations of the Foundation. Leadership councils are based on individual membership only; there is no organizational membership option. The councils have an annual budget of approximately \$40,000 per year, including staff time and operating funds for events.

The mission of the Young Women's Leadership Council (YWLC) is to build the capacity of a large and diverse network of young women leaders, ages 18-30, by planning and implementing educational programs, events and advocacy initiatives. Members benefit from YWLC resources such as a listserv, membership directory, message board, and priority access to YWLC programs, trainings, and events. Members also have opportunities to serve on other CFW volunteer committees, and to take a leadership role in setting YWLC's priorities and plans. In exchange for these resources, active members are expected to fulfill several responsibilities. These include: promoting young women's interests and issues and providing input to the decision-making entities of CFW through committee involvement and communication with CFW staff and leadership; educating current CFW donors, volunteers, and staff on young women's issues and needs; annual contributions to the YWLC fund and assistance with fundraising; regular attendance at full council and committee meetings; outreach to potential YWLC members as well as program and networking partners; and encouraging and exchanging information about CFW and YWLC programs and events.

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<http://www.cfw.org/NETCOMMUNITY/Page.aspx?pid=276&srcid=287>

## LeaderSpring

LeaderSpring is a two-year practical leadership fellowship for executive directors and senior leaders in nonprofits in the San Francisco Bay Area. The program is driven by the need for a practical nonprofit leadership and management program that is not issue-specific.

The fellowship components consist of an opening day-long retreat, closing day-long retreat, and once a month day-long workshops for 10 months about specific issues that are relevant to running a nonprofit, including financial management, fundraising, goal setting, and board governance. Fellows also complete a week-long residency with a nationally-recognized nonprofit. The target audience is executive directors with at least two years of experience in the San Francisco Bay Area.

A few features set LeaderSpring apart from other programs. First, its participants are able to talk about current management issues in their organizations without fear of retribution. Second, the two-year structure of the program allows fellows to actually utilize skills learned during their workshops. The program is also adaptive and allows fellows to look at themselves as leaders.

The recruitment process is very intentional. The fellows are chosen according to the diversity of their backgrounds, age, and race, as well as the type and size of organizations they come from. LeaderSpring tries to bring together executive directors from different types of organizations and encourages fellows to form professional relationships with people with whom they would not normally work.

Each workshop is evaluated separately, in addition to personal evaluations. LeaderSpring also gives its fellows an opportunity to evaluate any portion of the program informally. The fellows provide suggestions for specific nonprofit management topics they want to learn about; staff management is always an important topic to the fellows. There is also a formal evaluation at the end of the two year fellowship.

LeaderSpring's grant reports and personal relationships with donors demonstrate that the fellowship impacts not only the fellow, but also the fellow's staff, board, constituents, and communities, because they learn to be better leaders personally and professionally. The new peer network established among fellow members also increases collaboration.

The program is staffed by 2 people, with a total of 3 people employed by the organization. Many of the workshop leaders are fellowship alumni. The estimated cost of each fellowship is \$10,000-\$15,000; however, the program is free for the fellows. LeaderSpring receives donations and grants to cover the cost of its programs.

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## **Nonprofit Leadership Program: Minnesota Council of Nonprofits**

Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (MCN) Nonprofit Leadership work involves 5 major components: Nonprofit Leadership Institute, Social Leader Action Networks, Public Policy Cabinet, Informal Networking Groups, and Leadership Tools and Trainings. MCN was very deliberate in planning the components to engage staff in all levels of nonprofits. MCN realizes that though management decisions get made by the Executive Director and Board of Directors, effective nonprofits maintain leadership throughout the entire organization.

The Nonprofit Leadership Institute is an intensive learning experience for a select group of participants. The Institute is grounded in the theory that by utilizing their networks, nonprofits can better accomplish their missions and build better communities. MCN has identified two cohorts of participants: Senior Managers (anyone responsible with guiding and making decisions about the direction of an organization) and Strategic Connectors (anyone “connecting” the organization and key stakeholders). The format is an 8-month-long training that starts with a 2½-day retreat. Each Nonprofit Leadership Institute has a maximum limit of 25 participants. The cost is \$1,750 for MCN members and \$2,250 for nonmembers. MCN has been able to work effectively with foundations to secure scholarship funds for participants.

The Social Leader Action Network is designed to bring together nonprofits and their leaders, along with civic and community leaders within a geographic area, to work on larger community issues. Currently, MCN has two sites: the St. Paul Eastside and Dakota County. The St. Paul Eastside has 15 organizations involved with participants. Dakota County has 15 organizations involved.

The Public Policy Cabinet is a regular convening of Minnesota nonprofit leaders active in legislative advocacy at the state and federal levels, from arts to human services and the environment. The Cabinet provides a forum for strategy, coalition formation, and information exchange. There are currently 75 organizations involved.

Informal Leadership Networks provide a venue for nonprofit leaders to meet with their peers and share questions, concerns, and opportunities. These networks are free and open to anyone working in a nonprofit, usually accommodating 10–60 people depending on the topic. Topics are determined at the beginning of the year and are posted on the website. Participants help determine which topics will be presented each month.

Leadership Tools and Trainings reach a wider audience of nonprofit personnel, through events that focus on building leadership and management skills across a number of program areas. From a Leadership Conference to specialized workshops and other large events, MCN presents practical methods to strengthen organizations and their leadership. Participation can range anywhere from 250–1,500.

Participants have been very happy that they can access MCN in many different ways. However, one of the hardest groups to work with is board members. Nonprofit executives are very protective of their board members (i.e. sharing contact information) and it makes it difficult to recruit for trainings.

Recruitment is done through MCN’s newsletter, email blasts, website and word of mouth. MCN also advocates for the other Leadership Programs in Minnesota by creating the “Guide to Leadership Programs.”

Almost two years were spent on research and design for the Nonprofit Leadership Program. The two largest components are the Leadership Institutes and the Social Leader Action Networks. The Leadership Institute itself costs around \$125,000 to implement. Many of the smaller components are not as time-intensive and take

less staff time, with the exception of the Leadership Conference. Planning takes about 6 months for the day-long event.

Within a year, MCN will review participant feedback and make changes as needed. When creating a program, organizations should be very thoughtful as to who their audience is as well as what their capacity is for reaching that audience. The necessity of planning cannot be emphasized enough. If you have staff members who are representative of the target audience, ask them for their input as well. Anytime an organization launches a new program, it is very costly and may not get a good return on investment the first year. Make sure your organization is in it for the long term.

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## Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program

The Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program was created in 1983 through a Kellogg Foundation grant and is based on the Foundation's model of leadership development. The program is focused on developing leaders for the community. The original focus was on rural and agricultural communities, but the program is now trying to balance urban and rural participants. At this point, the program does not specifically focus on the nonprofit sector or on certain age ranges of participants. It is open to almost anyone, as long as they are a leader or have the potential to lead in their communities.

The main methods of recruitment are word of mouth and alumni referrals. Other sources are PSAs, newspapers, outreach to human resources professionals and businesses, referrals through donors, open houses, and people previously interested (the program maintains a waiting list and contacts these people when slots open up in the program).

Once interested, potential participants applying for a place in the program must submit 3 letters of reference and fundraise about a third of their participation cost (for practical learning reasons as well as to offset the costs). The program requires about 55 days over 2 years. It starts with an orientation which includes partners and/or family members. Subsequently, there are 8 in-state seminars for 3 days each (Tuesday-Friday) including classes and cultural activities all day. The locations of sessions and trainings are rotated so everyone has to travel regularly. The program also includes a one-week visit to Washington, DC, a one-week visit to another region/state (home-stays with other leaders are typical), and an international component of 2 weeks in another country.

Each class accommodates up to 35 people from all over the state. The program has an agreement with the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension which provides access to academics and notable leaders. Using a variety of education methods works better than traditional lectures. Methods include tours, storytelling, experiential learning, reading, self-reflection, simulations and re-creations, some lecture, webinars, and site visits. In addition, by including family members in orientation, it helps the participant feel more comfortable and allows the family to see what is involved so they can understand the program better. The program strives to create a "safe" environment in which people can learn but also get "pushed" outside their box. It also builds confidence and courage in taking on leadership roles.

There is extensive evaluation of the program, both in the smaller pieces and in its entirety. All seminars, programs, site visits, etc. are reflected on by participants and staff each year. One benchmark of evaluation is if participants come away with action plans for the future. A total in-depth evaluation of the entire program is performed every 5 years. The evaluation focuses on participants, employers, alumni, people who knew participants before and after the program, spouses, and families. Each year, a new curriculum is developed based on reevaluated goals and objectives.

After the original grant, the program established an endowment to fund future work. The program also receives money from the university system, state legislature, and through regular fundraising. Currently, the annual budget is \$350,000 with 3½ staff people. Almost all seminar chairs and presenters are volunteers.

The program faces both philosophical and logistical challenges. For one, though a person may be trained as a leader for their current career, they may leave that job (which sponsored their participation) in order to do something "bigger and better." For another, the state is large, making traveling potentially burdensome.

Finally, it is difficult to measure impact. It is necessary to decide what impact to demonstrate before evaluating the program.

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## **Young Nonprofit Professionals Network (YNPN) and San Francisco Bay Area Chapter**

YNPN is a nonprofit grassroots association that engages and supports future nonprofit leaders through professional development, networking, and social opportunities. From its beginnings in 1997 as a small gathering of peers in San Francisco, YNPN has grown through word-of-mouth and local volunteer leadership teams to include over 10,000 members and affiliate chapters in San Francisco, New York City, Washington, DC, and Chicago, as well as over a dozen emerging chapters in other cities across the nation. This rapid growth reflects the great demand for support and resources within a population that is critical to the future of the nonprofit sector.

The mission of YNPN and its national network of affiliates is to promote an efficient, viable, and inclusive nonprofit sector that supports the growth, learning, and development of young professionals. Unlike other organizations and projects focusing on the “next generation” of nonprofit leaders, YNPN is operated entirely for and by these emerging leaders, at both the local chapter and national levels. Local chapters engage and support future nonprofit and community leaders through professional and leadership development, networking, and social opportunities designed to help young professionals become effective contributors to their organizations and the nonprofit sector.

YNPN advertises openly to all young professionals working in the sector in geographic proximity to each of their chapters. There is no explicit commitment level, except to serve on a local board, which is approximately 5-7 hours per month. To gain critical momentum for a chapter, a board needs at least 7-10 members, and regular attendance of 30 or more people at events.

Currently the program is run on a volunteer basis, with occasional small grants for local chapters, or in-kind gifts. The national organization budget is around \$20,000 this year, with an ideal budget of \$60,000. To be sustainable for the long-term, sufficient funding for a staff person and IT infrastructure will be necessary. Local chapters can likely continue to exist on a volunteer basis with more support from the national organization.

YNPN of the San Francisco Bay Area (SFBA) has a Career Development Committee which holds 6 events per year, once every other month. At these events there is a moderated panel of speakers who share their experiences about a specific topic, such as management and supervision, after which the group breaks into roundtable discussions. There is also time for networking at the beginning of the workshop.

This group is driven by leadership—the desire of attendees to work on their own individual development and to promote a good working nonprofit. The program was started in 1998 and the roundtable discussion component was added in 2005. Each event serves 15-20 participants, with 4-5 panelists and one moderator. A total of 200 people are served each year.

Participants are recruited through e-mails to the YNPN San Francisco Bay Area listserv. The speakers are chosen based on the workshop topic and their experiences in the sector. The goal is to pick a diverse group of speakers for each topic with a range of years of experience in the sector. These speakers are identified by the Career Development Committee and the Advisory Board.

The cost of attending an event is \$7 for YNPN SFBA members and \$10 for non-members. The Career Development committee meets once a month to plan each workshop. There is no systematic measurement process for evaluation. Evaluations are completed after each workshop; the results are tallied and discussed at

the committee meeting following the event. The committee discusses components that should or should not be kept in the workshops, such as the networking portion, or ways to introduce event attendees.

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## **YSN.com (Your Success Network)**

YSN.com – Your Success Network is an online network supporting young people globally as they transition from home and school into the real world, make some of the most important strategic decisions of their lives, lay the foundation for their careers, and formulate their new adult/professional identity. YSN is focused on creating real solutions and offering tangible value with every interaction.

The most successful strategy has been creating two-way, online streams of dialogue, always focusing on what's relevant and interesting, and giving people a platform to freely express who they are and what they're most passionate about. YSN has been building relationships with some of the top youth and professional organizations in the world for well over a decade. These organizations have been a tremendous resource not only in helping forge partnerships to leverage each other's efforts to recruit and impact the greatest number of people, but also in cross-promotion of all different types of initiatives. YSN also works with universities, career centers, major corporations, government, and media organizations, which helps increase exposure on all levels.

YSN creates a bridge between the youngest professionals and those who are far more experienced in their fields through the YSN Answers section and new virtual Mentoring platform. The site requires a simple online registration process in order to access the full line of resources, as well as other members (though anyone can visit and view the page without a login). Regarding optimal participant numbers, because YSN an online platform, it can serve a few hundred as easily as several million. The ideal number is probably a few hundred thousand. The impact of YSN is communicated in a variety of ways, the most profound being the actual profiles that people build on the site. They speak volumes about the quality and enthusiasm of the members. Proving an impact in the lives of our users is something that YSN largely has to rely on user and database statistics to determine. The more activity increases, the more value it is creating. One example might be average page views and average user time on the site. Those are important markers to track engagement, though there are dozens that we are tracking on an ongoing basis.

YSN also tracks responsiveness and impact based on feedback sent in letters and emails. Regarding more concrete metrics for tracking success, YSN is actively working on identifying the best indicators given the broad range of resources offered and how intangible many of the most impacting benefits actually are (i.e. confidence, improved self awareness, industry knowledge, etc.).

Best practices for YSN come from the social networking world, the interactive media space, and online content providers, as well as some educators and nonprofits. It is constantly gathering information from those sectors to improve offerings and practices.

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## Appendix A: Questions for Reviewing Leadership Programs

1) General information: What type of program/activity is this? What organizations are involved? Who are the target audiences? How many people are served?

2) Key lessons learned: What are the most successful activities/strategies? Least successful?

3) Recruitment: How are young professionals, mid-level professionals, and/or established leaders recruited?

4) Participant requirements: What level of commitment do participants need to make? What is the optimum number of participants for the program/activity to be successful?

5) Resources and timeline: How much money, staff capacity, and other resources are needed to replicate this program/activity? How long did it take to launch this program/activity?

6) Communications: How is the case made about the importance and impact of the program? Please include specific language and/or talking points.

7) Tracking and evaluation: Does the program track or evaluate its outcomes? If so, how?

8) Best practices: Is there a need for best practices regarding this type of program/activity? If so, what should be included in best practices? How should they be used?

9) Other information: What drives the program? (For example, staffing shortages, funders, leadership, etc.) Anything else that might be helpful to others involved in this work?

Links and materials: Please list relevant website links and/or attach written materials.