

**Faculty Research Initiative Grant 2009 Program Cycle  
Disbursement of Grant Money:  
Budget Reports & Progress/Final Project Reports**

Office of Faculty Research & Sponsored Programs  
Center for Research Support  
Walden University

Final Project Report

Evaluating the Impact of Community Leadership: Researching Leadership Development  
Outcomes  
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**A. Aims**

The Aims of the research conducted under this grant were:

Aim 1: Identify common core values, key learning outcomes, and the theoretical and conceptual constructs that emerge from the instructional approach for the three leadership development programs selected for this study.

Aim 2: Explore to what extent leadership development programs have had a positive influence on regional economic development indicators and the extent to which leadership development programs have had a positive influence on community trusteeship.

Aim 3: Correlate leadership development program participants' perceptions of their learning outcomes with responses from their supervisors and the senior leaders of sponsoring organizations.

Aim 4: Compare the results of our research analysis for each of these case studies across the leadership development programs selected for this study.

**B. Studies and Results**

Describe the research activities completed and the results obtained. Include negative results.

Research Activities:

Electronic surveys to alumni (program graduates) and program participants –

Electronic surveys were developed and distributed to the program alumni (program graduates) and current program participants. Conference calls were held with the executive directors of each program and the research collaborators to refine the content of the surveys. While the three programs share many similarities, the geographic and demographic differences prompted revisions in the surveys so that wording would be relevant for all

recipients. One example is a discussion that was held about the use of the word “community” versus “region,” because one program (Leadership Northwest Indiana) considers itself a regional effort, consisting of several separate towns and communities. Other programs (Leadership South Bend/Mishawaka and Leadership Lynchburg) recognize more of a community focus. This collaborative effort to design the electronic surveys and interview protocols is a result of the research in itself because it illustrates the process and outcomes of a university/community partnership in research. While only anecdotal evidence is available, it is the conclusion of Dr. Garfield and Dr. Schoch that this collaboration had a positive impact on the validity of the surveys as well as a positive impact on the working relationship between the researchers and the staff at the research sites. Without this initial collaboration, we believe the research collaborators (program directors) would have been less invested in the research process and less receptive to both the results and the overall effort. This is unintended outcome—something that happened that we did not anticipate or consciously plan for—illustrates the value of collaboration at all levels in any research or program evaluation effort. Stufflebeam’s Context-Input-Process-Product (CIPP) Evaluation Model Checklist (as used as the framework for this research) supports this as well in his section on Contractual Agreements. (Western Michigan University, The Evaluation Center, <http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/>)

An electronic survey was distributed to program alumni on March 31, 2010 to a total of 1,365 recipients across the three leadership development programs. A total of 451 responses were received, for a 33% response rate, with responses fairly evenly distributed across the three programs.

A separate electronic survey was sent to current program participants. Like the alumni survey, this survey was combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions, but contained more open-ended questions. Total responses for the participant survey were 65: 19 in Lynchburg; 27 in Northwest Indiana; 19 in South Bend/Mishawaka. There are approximately 35 participants in each program at any one time, so this represents a response rate of a little over 60%.

Interviews, focus groups –

To gather qualitative data and supplement the quantitative data gathered in the electronic surveys, focus groups and interviews were conducted at each program site. Two sites scheduled 90-minute small group interview sessions throughout the day for two consecutive days, rotating the interview sites for the convenience of the interviewees. At the third site, scheduling sessions in the early morning or late afternoon worked better for the organization and the interviewees. For the most part, interviewees were program alumni, although some employers, community stakeholders, and current participants were involved as well. These sessions provided the opportunity for open, candid discussions about the intent, process, outcomes, and opportunities for improvement within the programs. The questions posed by the interviewers followed the phases of the CIPP evaluation model.

Observations of program activities and board meetings were conducted at all sites at periodic intervals throughout the research project in order to collect information about a variety of

administrative processes (e.g., strategic planning, alumni event planning, curriculum development, recruiting and selecting program participants) and the general nature of program approaches. The researchers were privileged to be welcomed openly and warmly into these sessions and worked to not be intrusive in the program process.

#### Overall results:

The results reveal that the leadership development programs provide a valuable orientation to the communities for the program participants, often in terms of networking and providing opportunities for contact with other key leaders in their local town, community, or region. These programs do not prepare individuals for leadership within their own organization, school, business, or other entity, but are designed to heighten participants' civic awareness and prepare them for leadership roles in the local community. It was difficult for alumni (program graduates) or program participants to quantify outcomes from participation in the program, but some interview responses indicated that they gained opportunities (such as advancement in their place of employment, membership and leadership positions on non-profit boards, and local public office) as a result of their involvement.

The intent of this research was to focus on the impacts and outcomes of these leadership development programs, not to measure participants' general satisfaction. The programs themselves measure overall satisfaction at the conclusion of each session and program year. However, comments were made in interviews that indicate program graduates' high level of satisfaction with the program sessions. Supporting this high level of satisfaction in the programs' catchment areas is the fact that there are always waiting lists for individuals wanting to enroll in the programs, and one program has started a second program cycle to accommodate the increased interest—all of this is without formal marketing or program advertising.

### **C. Significance**

#### Findings:

As noted above, each program enjoys a high level of satisfaction within the community or region it serves, and alumni and participants note the benefits to their own personal and professional development, and to their organizations from their participation. While it is difficult to ascribe clear quantitative results to program participation in terms of economic, educational, health care, or other changes in the community, stated outcomes range from increased general awareness of community needs and resources to increased membership on nonprofit (and other) boards by program participants. Others have been encouraged to become involved in local politics, such as school board elections or county council races as a result of their involvement. Many alumni attribute their increased skills in areas such as project management, team work, team building, and collaboration to their involvement in the program. Further, these skills were developed during work on projects that have provided both short- and long-term benefits to the economic growth of local communities. This indicates a clear, if not direct line-of-sight benefit to the programs and the individuals' investments of time and money.

Significant findings also relate to key factors affecting the sustainability of each of the three programs in the study and are beginning to be reflected in the strategic plans for these programs. For example, as a result of this research, Leadership Lynchburg understands that a primary market for its leadership development curriculum includes high potential employees who have earned associate and technical degrees. These individuals—usually employed in supervisory and lower management level positions—attain the greatest personal and professional achievements as a result of participation in Leadership Lynchburg. Leadership Northwest Indiana recognizes that the greatest impact of its program on alumni achievement is evident in participants’ awareness of regional economic development issues and engagement at the regional level. This is significant, given the proximity of this program to Chicago, yet its desire to develop its own identity as an economic region. Leadership South Bend/Mishawaka learned that its social networking and efforts to maintain meaningful connections among alumni result in increased civic engagement among those who participated in its program. All three programs see the alumni connection to the program as significant after graduation, although they differ in their focus on maintain and utilizing alumni relationships.

Finally, as noted earlier, there are clear implications for university/community/organization partnerships in research from this work. These were not intended outcomes of this research, but can easily be inferred and carried forward to future projects.

#### Plans for dissemination of research results:

This research, both process and outcomes, has been shared and will continue to be shared in the following ways:

January 2010

“Evaluating the Impact of Community Leadership: Researching Leadership Development Outcomes”

Poster Session for the Walden University 2010 Winter Research Symposium (Dallas, TX)

February 27, 2010

“Evaluating the Impact of Community Leadership: Researching Leadership Development Outcomes”

Presentation to the Tobias Multi-Sector Leadership Forum (Indianapolis, IN)

July, 2010

“Evaluating the Impact of Community Leadership: Researching Leadership Development Outcomes”

Round table discussion for the Walden University 2010 Summer Research Symposium (Minneapolis, MN)

October 30, 2010

“Community Leadership Development: Researching Leadership Development Outcomes”

Presentation at the 12th Annual International Leadership Association Global Conference  
(Boston, MA)

March 4, 2011

”Evaluating the Impact of Community Leadership: Follow-up and Summary of Results” Poster  
Session for the Tobias Multi-Sector Leadership Forum (Indianapolis, Indiana)  
Randall L. Tobias Center for Leadership Excellence, Indiana University

April 11, 2011

“Evaluating and Ensuring the Success of Leadership Development”  
Roundtable Discussion at the 116th Annual Conference of the Higher Learning Commission of  
the North Central Association (Chicago, Illinois)

Publication of research findings is planned for *Leadership Quarterly*, *Leadership Excellence*, the  
*Journal of Leadership Studies*, and Walden University’s new journal sponsored by the Richard  
W. Riley College of Education and Leadership.

While sharing of this research with the academic and broader communities is important, the most  
important sharing of research results occurs with the client organizations. It is these  
organizations which hope to use the results of the research to learn more about the outcomes of  
their programs and identify opportunities for improvement. This, again, is consistent with  
Stufflebeam’s CIPP intent: “The concept of evaluation underlying the CIPP Model and this  
checklist is that evaluations should assess and report an entity’s *merit* (i.e., its quality), *worth* (in  
meeting needs of targeted beneficiaries), *probity* (its integrity, honesty, and freedom from graft,  
fraud, and abuse), and *significance* (its importance beyond the entity’s setting or time frame),  
and should also present *lessons learned*.” (CIPP Evaluation Model Checklist, (Western  
Michigan University, The Evaluation Center, <http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/>)

These important presentations have been made (or soon will be made) to the leadership of the  
collaborating organizations. Dr. Garfield presented a summary of the findings to Leadership  
Lynchburg stakeholders, including the Lynchburg (Virginia) Chamber of Commerce Board of  
Directors November 11, 2010. Kurt Schoch made a presentation to the South Bend/Mishawaka  
program leadership March 11, 2011, allowing the board to focus on key themes in the data which  
will potentially impact changes in program activities or structure. Kurt will also present the  
findings to the Leadership Northwest Indiana Board at a session to be scheduled in June, 2011.

#### **D. Plans**

Previous sharing of the research has been summarized above.

Future plans include sharing the research in publications such as *Leadership Quarterly*,  
*Leadership Excellence*, the *Journal of Leadership Studies*, and Walden University’s new journal  
sponsored by the Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership.

Concurrent and future research includes partnering with a fourth leadership development program, Leadership Bartholomew County (LBC), located in Columbus, Indiana. This organization asked to become involved after the presentation that was made to the Tobias Multi-Sector Leadership Forum in Indianapolis in February, 2010. This organization recently sent surveys to its alumni that mirror the surveys sent to the other three programs, allowing for comparisons to the three original programs. Interviews and focus groups will also be conducted with LBC, modeled after the sessions conducted for Leadership Lynchburg, Leadership South Bend/Mishawaka, and Leadership Northwest Indiana.

Exploratory conversations are scheduled with David DeCoursey, Executive Director of Leadership Greater Chicago, and Ricardo Millett, who was Director of Evaluation at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation when the Kellogg scan of 55 leadership development programs was undertaken in 2001 to pursue additional funding and research opportunities.

We thank you for the opportunity to conduct this important research with the support and endorsement of Walden University.

Janice Garfield, Ph.D.     Kurt Schoch, Ed.D.