



Neighborhood Leadership Programs' six-month leadership training evaluation

Summary of participant feedback in 2011

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Background

Neighborhood Leadership Programs overview

The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation's Neighborhood Leadership Programs (NLP) has supported and worked to grow the leadership capacity of those who live, work and/or volunteer in St. Paul's neighborhoods since 1995. NLP reflects a shared, collaborative leadership model and the philosophy that all people can be leaders. NLP's purpose is to develop and sustain a healthy and thriving community.

Six-month leadership training

In the six-month leadership training, participants come together twice per month to build knowledge, skills and connections for effective neighborhood leadership. Typically, there are 30 people involved in the course. Participants engage with each other throughout the six months and are also paired with coaches. The six-month training is designed for community members who want to: 1) gain greater insight and awareness of themselves; 2) develop additional skills and build working relationships with others; 3) enhance commitment and engagement in meaningful action in the community; and 4) expand knowledge of community history and learn how it can inform actions today.

In 2011, the Arts and Cultural Heritage Partnership Fund provided NLP and the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) the opportunity to work together. MHS's goal for the collaboration was to build awareness and use of MHS resources among the full diversity of Saint Paul community members. NLP's goal was to teach participants how to more effectively draw on the history and the many strengths inherent in their community – both past and present – in order to successfully engage a diverse range of people to take action on community issues. Sessions integrating the historical resources and lessons took place at both the Wilder Foundation and at the Minnesota History Center.

Training participant characteristics

The 35 participants who began the six-month training primarily consisted of women (80%) between the age of 25 and 49 (74%). In terms of race/ethnicity, 49 percent of participants identified as White, 23 percent as Black or African, 17 percent as Asian, 9 percent as Hispanic, and 3 percent as Native American. One person (3%) identified their race/ethnicity as “unknown.”

1. Participant demographics (N=35)

Gender	
Women	80%
Men	20%
Age	
18-24	14%
25-49	74%
50-64	11%
Race/ethnicity (more than one response possible)	
White	49%
Black/African	23%
Asian	17%
Hispanic	9%
Native American	3%
Self-identified as "Unknown"	3%

Note. The total varies from 100% for age due to rounding and for "race/ethnicity" due to multiple responses.

Evaluation design

This evaluation was designed to look at the impact of NLP's six-month leadership training on participants' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors. To this end, Wilder Research and NLP staff created three surveys to administer to participants. As was done in the past, a paper pre-survey was administered at the beginning of programming and a paper post-survey was administered during the final training session in order to assess changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In addition, this year a third component, a follow-up survey, was added to assess impact on behavior. The follow-up survey was delivered on-line and via phone interview approximately two months after the end of the training.

Of the 35 participants who began the six-month training in 2011, 28 (80%) completed both a pre-survey and a post-survey.¹ Twenty-seven completed the follow-up survey, for a response rate of 77 percent for this specific component.²

¹ Relative to the 32 people who completed the training, the response rate is 88 percent.

² This is a response rate of 84% if one considers only participants who completed the program.

Participant pre-survey data was entered into a spreadsheet by NLP staff and the results calculated by the software. Post-survey data was tallied by NLP staff. Data from follow-up surveys were either entered on-line by the respondent or by the Wilder staff person conducting the phone interview and analyzed by the on-line survey program. In all cases, results were given to Wilder Research staff for reporting.

This report summarizes the feedback of the 28 participants that completed both a pre-survey and post-survey and the 27 participants that completed a follow-up survey. First, key findings from the evaluation are highlighted. Then, the full results are presented, beginning with outcomes and then satisfaction. Following the results, recommendations are provided.

Key findings

The following are key findings from the feedback of the 28 participants that completed both a pre-survey and post-survey and the 27 participants that completed a follow-up survey follow.

Participant outcomes

Intended and actual community action

- At post-survey, 86 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” they are committed to participating in neighborhood or community projects (compared to 59% at pre-survey) and 75 percent “strongly agreed” they are interested in seeking out leadership positions (compared to 50% at pre-survey).
- At follow-up, 93 percent of respondents said, as a result of the leadership trainings, they are more likely to take action on an issue that is affecting their community.
- 93 percent of respondents at follow-up said they had been involved in a community activity or event in the two months since the leadership trainings. Of these 24 respondents:
 - 92 percent (representing 81% of all respondents) reported using an approach that allowed them to more effectively work with people from different backgrounds or cultures than their own
 - 92 percent (representing 81% of all respondents) said they built relationships with individuals or organizations in order to more effectively reach diverse communities.
 - When asked to what extent what they learned in the leadership training helped them use these strategies, 77 percent said the leadership training “helped a lot.”

Self awareness and perceived readiness

- At post-survey, 75 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” they are aware of their own values and leadership style, an increase from 25 percent at pre-survey.
- 79 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” at post-survey that, compared to when they started the training, they are more aware of their potential usefulness as a community leader.

- At post-survey, 64 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” they feel confident to take on leadership roles in their community, compared to 23 percent at pre-survey.
- Similarly, 64 percent “strongly agreed” at post-survey that they feel better prepared to help their community now than when the training began.

Interpersonal skills and knowledge

- At post-survey, 75 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” that, compared to when they started the training, they are better able to work with people who are different from them.
- At post-survey, 68 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” that they better understand the value of diverse opinions, viewpoints, and approaches now than prior to the training.
- 64 percent “strongly agreed” at post-survey that they are more aware of other people’s perspectives on community issues.

Social support

- At post-survey, 64 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” they are able to ask for and receive support around their community work, compared to 39 percent at pre-survey.
- At post-survey, 89 percent “strongly agreed” they have people they can talk with about community and leadership issues, compared to 32 percent at pre-survey.
- By follow-up, 93 percent of respondents said they had built relationships or joined organizations or networks that support their community work since the start of the leadership training.

History-related outcomes

- The percentage of respondents who “strongly agreed” they are familiar with the resources that are available through the Minnesota History Center increased from 7 percent at pre-survey to 64 percent at post-survey.
- At pre-survey, 18 percent of respondents had been to the Minnesota History Center in the past year. In comparison, during the six months of NLP leadership training, 54 percent of participants visited the Minnesota History Center or another history site (not including training-related visits). By follow-up, 73 percent of respondents had been to the Center or another site since the training began.

- At pre-survey, 14 percent of respondents had used the Minnesota History Center as a resource for their community work in the past year. The Minnesota History Center was used as a resource for community work by 32 percent of respondents during the six-month leadership training, increasing to 44 percent by the time of follow-up.
- At follow-up, 24 respondents had been involved in a community activity or event since the end of the training; 96 percent of these respondents (representing 85% of all respondents) said they had considered the history of the community in determining what approach to take to an issue. Seventy-four percent said that what they learned in the leadership training helped them “a lot” in considering the community’s history.

Participant satisfaction

All of the following satisfaction ratings were collected at post-survey.

- All respondents “strongly agreed” NLP staff were sensitive to the different backgrounds of participants and provided a safe space for group members to participate and share their opinions.
- 89 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” that what they learned in NLP will help them to be more effective in their community work.
- 82 percent “strongly agreed” they were satisfied with the quality of the trainings and the written materials were useful.
- In terms of the helpfulness of individual training sessions, the “Intercultural communications and conflict fluency” session was rated “very helpful” by the largest percentage of respondents, followed by the “Personal values and community work” session.
- The three sessions rated “very helpful” by the lowest proportion of respondents were: “Navigating district councils and city and county government,” the opening retreat,” and “Sustaining the journey: Reflecting on lessons learned and preparing for the future.”
- Respondents were also asked to rate the helpfulness of the individual history lessons. “Uncovering Rondo” was rated “very helpful” by the largest percentage of respondents, followed by the “Open House” exhibit and “History Happens Here.”
- Two of the history lessons, the “Minnesota 150” exhibit and the tour of the MHS website, received “very helpful” ratings from less than half of respondents.

Participant outcomes

To assess whether the NLP six-month leadership training achieved its intended outcomes, in the pre-survey and post-survey, participants were presented with statements related to the knowledge, skills, behavioral intentions, and supports needed to be a community leader and asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that each statement was true for them. In some cases, the question was asked at both the beginning of programming (pre-survey) and the end of programming (post-survey), so final responses could be compared against a baseline. In other cases, respondents were asked only at the end of programming to consider retrospectively what, if any, change they had experienced. In the follow-up survey conducted approximately two months after programming, respondents were asked about changes in their community work resulting from their training through NLP.

This section summarizes the outcomes of the six-month leadership program from participants' self-reported data. First, outcomes related to community activity are presented, followed by self-awareness and perceived readiness in regard to leadership, interpersonal knowledge and skills, social support, and knowledge of community needs and resources. Finally, history-related outcomes, resulting from the new component of the NLP leadership training, are discussed.

Intended and actual community action

Intention to take action

In terms of intention to take action, at post-survey, 86 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” they are committed to participating in neighborhood or community projects (compared to 59% at pre-survey) and 75 percent “strongly agreed” they are interested in seeking out leadership positions (compared to 50% at pre-survey, see Figure 2). In addition, 82 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” that, when they take action, they are more committed to working with others. All or all but one of the remaining respondents “somewhat agreed” with each of these statements. Similarly, at follow-up, 93 percent of respondents said, as a result of the leadership trainings, they are more likely to take action on an issue that is affecting their community.

2. Outcomes: Intention to take action in the community (N=28)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I am interested in seeking out leadership positions (such as on committees or boards.)				
Pre-survey	50%	43%	4%	4%
Post-survey	75%	21%	4%	0%
I am committed to participating in neighborhood or community projects.				
Pre-survey	59%	41%	0%	0%
Post-survey	86%	14%	0%	0%
I am more committed to working with others to address common issues.				
Pre-survey	NA	NA	NA	NA
Post-survey	82%	18%	0%	0%
As a result of the leadership training, I am more likely to take action on an issue that is affecting my community				
	Yes		No	
Follow-up (N=27)	93%		7%	

Note. For items only asked on the post-survey, N/A is written in cells in the pre-survey row. The total for each row may vary from 100 percent due to rounding.

At post-survey, respondents were asked to write one thing they learned from the leadership training that they will use in their community work. Individual responses were grouped into categories. Respondents most commonly said they planned to use the facilitation and/or conflict resolution skills the learned in the program. As one respondent wrote,

The most valuable training I took away was about conflict resolution and how to work in conflict. [I learned] helpful resources and information that guides my day-to-day interactions with others...

Several respondents said they would use in their community work what they learned about understanding differences among people and being sensitive to and accepting of others. They discussed the importance of proactively learning about the different perspectives in their community and then using what they learned to shape their communication and planning.

Actual community action and helpfulness of trainings

At follow-up, respondents were asked if they had been involved in any community activities or events in the six weeks since the leadership trainings; 93 percent said they had (see Figure 3). Of the 24 respondents who had been engaged in a community activity 92 percent (representing 81% of all respondents) reported using an approach that allowed them to more effectively work with people from different backgrounds or cultures than their own. In addition, 92 percent (representing 81% of all respondents) said they built relationships with individuals or organizations in order to more effectively reach diverse communities. When asked to what extent what they learned in the leadership training helped them use these strategies, 77 percent said the leadership training “helped a lot” and 18 percent said it “helped a little.”

3. Outcomes: Community action and helpfulness of leadership trainings

Community action	Percent of respondent who took action (N=28; 24)*	For those who took action, how helpful was what they learned in leadership training (N=22)**		
		Helped a lot	Helped a little	Did not help
Has been involved in any community activities or events	Yes 93%	N/A		
Used approaches that allowed them to more effectively work with people from different backgrounds or cultures than their own.	92%	77%	18%	5%
Built relationships with individuals or organizations in order to more effectively reach diverse communities.	92%	77%	18%	5%

* The N for “involvement in any community activities or events” is 28. The N for the remaining cells in that column is 24 (the number of people who said yes, they have been involved).

** The N represents the number of people who said they took the specific action listed.

Self awareness and perceived readiness

NLP’s goals include increasing participants’ awareness of their leadership style, their personal values, and their potential usefulness as a leader. At post-survey, 75 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” they are aware of their own values and leadership style, an increase from 25 percent at pre-survey (see Figure 4). Seventy-nine percent of respondents “strongly agreed” that, compared to when they started the training, they are more aware of their potential usefulness as a community leader. In both cases, the remainder of the respondents “somewhat agreed” each statements is true.

NLP also strives to build participants’ confidence in their ability to lead. At pre-survey, 29 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” they feel confident to take on leadership

roles in their community (see Figure 4). This increased to 64 percent at post-survey. Similarly, 64 percent “strongly agreed” they feel better prepared to help their community now than when the training began. In both cases, the remaining respondents “somewhat agreed” with both statements.

4. Outcomes: Self-awareness and perceived readiness (N=28)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I am aware of my own personal values and leadership style.				
Pre-survey	25%	68%	4%	4%
Post-survey	75%	25%	0%	0%
I feel confident to take on leadership roles in my community.				
Pre-survey	29%	57%	11%	4%
Post-survey	64%	36%	0%	0%
I am more aware of my potential usefulness as a community leader.				
Pre-survey	NA	NA	NA	NA
Post-survey	79%	21%	0%	0%
I feel better prepared to help my neighborhood or community.				
Pre-survey	NA	NA	NA	NA
Post-survey	64%	36%	0%	0%

Note. For items only asked on the post-survey, N/A is written in cells in the pre-survey row. The total for each row may vary from 100 percent due to rounding.

Interpersonal skills and knowledge

The ability to work successfully with people is clearly critical to effective leadership. In regard to interpersonal skills, at post-survey, 54 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” they have interpersonal communication and conflict resolutions skills, increasing from 25 percent at pre-survey (see Figure 5). All but one of the remaining respondents at post-survey “somewhat agreed” they have these skills. Also, 75 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” that, compared to when they started the training, they are better able to work with people who are different from them.

NLP emphasizes the importance of inclusivity and respecting diversity in interpersonal efforts. In line with this focus, 68 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” that, compared to when they started the training, they better understand the value of diverse opinions, viewpoints, and approaches and 64 percent “strongly agreed” they are more aware of other people’s perspectives on community issues. The remaining respondents “somewhat agreed” with these statements.

5. Outcomes: interpersonal knowledge and skills (N=28)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I have interpersonal communication and conflict resolution skills.				
Pre-survey	25%	61%	11%	4%
Post-survey	54%	43%	4%	0%
I am better able to work with people who are different than me.				
Pre-survey	NA	NA	NA	NA
Post-survey	75%	25%	0%	0%
I better understand the value of diverse opinions, viewpoints, and approaches.				
Pre-survey	NA	NA%	NA	NA
Post-survey	68%	32%	0%	0%
I am more aware of other people's perspectives on community issues.				
Pre-survey	NA	NA	NA	NA
Post-survey	64%	36%	0%	0%

Note. For items only asked on the post-survey, N/A is written in the pre-survey row. The total for each row may vary from 100 percent due to rounding.

Social support

In regard to social support, at post-survey, 64 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” they are able to ask for and receive support around their community work at post-survey (compared to 39% at pre-survey), with the remaining respondents “somewhat agreeing” this is true. Eighty-nine percent “strongly agreed” they have people they can talk with about community and leadership issues, compared to 32 percent at pre-survey (see Figure 6). All but one of the remaining respondents “somewhat agreed” they have people to talk to. In addition, half of respondents at post-survey “strongly agreed” and 43 percent “somewhat agreed” they had stronger relationship with people in their neighborhood or community than they did prior to the trainings. By follow-up, 93 percent of respondents said they had built relationships or joined organizations or networks that support their community work since the start of the leadership training.

6. Outcomes: Social support (N=28)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I am able to ask for and receive support around my work or volunteering in the community.				
Pre-survey	39%	46%	11%	4%
Post-survey	64%	36%	0%	0%
I have people I can talk with about community & leadership issues.				
Pre-survey	32%	46%	18%	4%
Post-survey	89%	7%	0%	4%
I have stronger relationships with people in my neighborhood or community.				
Pre-survey	NA	NA	NA	NA
Post-survey	50%	43%	4%	4%
Since the start of the leadership trainings, I have built relationships or joined organizations or networks that support my community work.		Yes		No
Follow-up (N=27)		93%		7%

Note. For items only asked on the post-survey, N/A is written in the pre-survey row. The total for each row may vary from 100 percent due to rounding.

Knowledge of community needs and resources

At post-survey, 54 percent of respondents said they “strongly agree” they are familiar with resources that are available in their community and 36 percent “strongly agreed” they are knowledgeable about their community’s needs and challenges, both increasing from 21 percent at pre-survey (see Figure 7). The remaining respondents “somewhat agreed” with these statements.

7. Outcomes: knowledge of community needs and resources (N=28)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I am knowledgeable about my community’s needs and challenges.				
Pre-survey	21%	61%	18%	0%
Post-survey	36%	64%	0%	0%
I am familiar with resources that are available in my community.				
Pre-survey	21%	43%	25%	11%
Post-survey	54%	46%	0%	0%

Note. For items only asked on the post-survey, N/A is written in cells in the pre-survey row.

History-related outcomes

Awareness and use of the Minnesota History Center

A key part of including history in the six-month training was introducing participants to the Minnesota History Center and its resources. The percentage of respondents who “strongly agreed” they are familiar with the resources that are available through the Minnesota History Center increased substantially, from 7 percent at pre-survey to 64 percent at post-survey (see Figure 8). All but one of the remaining respondents, at post-survey, said they “somewhat agreed” they are familiar with the resources available.

8. Awareness of Minnesota History Center resources (N=28)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Missing
I am familiar with the resources that are available through the Minnesota History Center.					
Pre-survey	7%	11%	21%	61%	0%
Post-survey	64%	32%	4%	0%	0%

Respondents were also asked about their attendance at the Minnesota History Center and other historical sites. At pre-survey, 18 percent of respondents had been to the Minnesota History Center in the past year, and an additional 43 percent of participants had been to the Center over a year ago (see Figure 9). In comparison, during the six months of NLP leadership trainings, 54 percent of participants visited the Minnesota History Center or another history site (not including training-related visits). By follow-up, 73 percent of respondents had been to the Center or another site.

Information was also provided as to whether respondents used the Minnesota History Center as a resource for their community work. At pre-survey, 14 percent had done so in the past year, and 4 percent had over a year ago. The Minnesota History Center was used as a resource for community work by 32 percent of respondents during the six-month leadership training, increasing to 44 percent by the time of follow-up.

9. Use of the Minnesota History Center (N=28)

Pre-survey responses	Yes, in the past year	Yes, more than a year ago	No, never
Have you ever been to the Minnesota History Center?	18%	43%	39%
Have you ever used the Minnesota History Center as a resource for your community work?	14%	4%	82%
Post and follow-up survey responses	Yes, since the program started	No, not since the start	
Since the start of the program, have you visited the Minnesota History Center or other history sites outside of NLP sessions			
Post-survey	54%	46%	
Follow-up survey	73%	27%	
Since the start of the program, have you used the Minnesota History Center as a resource for your community work			
Post-survey	32%	68%	
Follow-up survey	44%	56%	

Use of history in community work

The percentage of respondents who believed that understanding a community or cultural group's history is important to effectively creating change was high at pre-survey, 89 percent, and remained the same at post-survey (see Figure 10). At follow-up, 96 percent of the 24 respondents who had been involved in community activities since the end of the training (representing 85% of all respondents) said they had considered the history of the community in determining what approach to take to an issue. Seventy-four percent said that what they learned in the leadership training helped them "a lot" in considering the community's history and 22 percent said it helped "a little."

10. Use of history in community work (N=27-28)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Missing
I believe understanding a community or cultural group's history is important to effectively creating change.					
Pre-survey	89%	11%	0%	0%	0%
Post-survey	89%	7%	0%	0%	4%
	Percent of respondent who took action (N=24)*		For those who took action, how helpful was what they learned in leadership training (N=23)**		
Community action at follow-up	Yes		Helped a lot	Helped a little	Did not help
Considered a community's history in determining what approach to take to an issue	96%		74%	22%	4%

* The N represents the number of respondents who had engaged in a community activity or event in the six weeks between post-survey and follow-up survey.

** The N represents the number of people who said they took the specific action listed.

In the post-survey, respondents were asked what role understanding history can play in community work/leadership. Individual responses were grouped into categories. Respondents most commonly said that understanding history is important because: it provides a context for understanding people's perspectives and behaviors; it can help build empathy and common goals and, thus, bring people together; and it can strengthen a community/community leader's ability to envision, plan for, and create change.

Respondents were also asked to name one thing they learned about history or the Minnesota History Center that they will use in their community work. Individual responses were grouped into categories. Responses primarily fell into one or both of two categories: intent to use the resources at the Minnesota History Center and incorporating the fact that history affects people's perspectives into community work.

Many respondents said they plan to use Minnesota History Center resources to inform their work. In their comments, several respondents emphasized the variety of resources available at the Center, including maps, books, and classes. Others appreciated that the Center had information specific to their community, their neighborhood, their city, and/or a specific issue of interest to them. A few respondents also expressed interest in connecting other community members with the resources available. As one respondent stated,

I learned so much about the [Minnesota History Center (MHC)]! I had no idea what the MHC was about until the NLP sessions. I can use the knowledge that I gained about neighborhoods and cultures in my community work. I can also recommend the different services that MHC provides to community members and be an advocate for MHC.

Learning the affects that history has on people’s perspectives and how history can inform community change efforts was also cited by many respondents as something they will apply to their community work. Respondents talked about the important role history plays in providing context to community member’s perspectives and experiences. Respondents discussed ways in which understanding history has or will improve their communication with community members, their framing of community issues and goals, and their strategies for creating change. As one respondent noted, “Learning the history [of Saint Paul] has helped me outreach into the community in a different way.”

Participant satisfaction

Satisfaction with the six-month leadership training

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the six-month leadership training. Overall, respondents were satisfied with the training. All respondents “strongly agreed” NLP staff were sensitive to the different backgrounds of participants and provided a safe space for group members to participate and share their opinions (see Figure 11). In addition, 89 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” that what they learned in NLP will help them to be more effective in their community work. Also, 82 percent “strongly agreed” they were satisfied with the quality of the trainings and the written materials were useful. The remaining respondents “somewhat agreed” these statements were true.

11. Satisfaction with NLP (N=28)

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
The staff were sensitive to different backgrounds of people in the group.	100%	0%	0%	0%
The staff provided a safe space to participate and share my opinions.	100%	0%	0%	0%
I am satisfied with the quality of the trainings.	82%	18%	0%	0%
The written materials I received in the trainings are useful.	82%	18%	0%	0%
What I learned in the trainings will help me be more effective in my community work.	89%	11%	0%	0%

Helpfulness of specific training sessions

Along with their overall satisfaction, respondents were asked to rate the helpfulness of each individual training sessions. The “Intercultural communications and conflict fluency” session was rated “very helpful” by the largest percentage of respondents (85%), followed by the “Personal values and community work” session (68%; see Figure 12). All but three of the remaining sessions were rated “very helpful” by between 50 and 60 percent of respondents. The three sessions rated “very helpful” by less than half of respondents were: “Navigating district councils and city and county government” (46%), the opening retreat (44%), and “Sustaining the journey: Reflecting on lessons learned and preparing for the future (49%).

12. Helpfulness of specific sessions

	N	Very helpful	Helpful	A little helpful	Not helpful
Intercultural communications and conflict fluency	27	85%	7%	4%	4%
Personal values and community work	28	68%	29%	4%	0%
Leading with others: You can't do it alone!	25	60%	36%	4%	0%
Discovering the richness of our community's history	28	57%	32%	11%	0%
Participatory meeting facilitation	28	57%	32%	7%	4%
Understanding conflict and conflict resolution	25	56%	36%	8%	0%
Action planning for community work and team building	25	52%	40%	8%	0%
Working inclusively in neighborhoods	26	50%	42%	8%	0%
Navigating district councils, city, and county government	24	46%	42%	13%	0%
Opening retreat	27	44%	56%	0%	0%
Sustaining the journey: Reflecting on lessons learned and preparing for the future	25	40%	48%	12%	0%

Note: The total for each row may vary from 100 percent due to rounding.

Respondents also were asked what they liked best about the leadership training. Individual responses were grouped into themes. The most commonly cited theme was the wide range of ideas and activities the training offered, as well as the diversity of people who attended the training. In terms of the content of the trainings, many respondents appreciated the wide range of topics covered, the variety of activities used to promote learning, and the use of multiple speakers with expertise in different areas. Respondents also liked the diversity among participants. As one respondent stated,

[I liked best] the diversity of trainings and trainers who are local and can understand the issues within the Twin Cities. Also, the diversity of the cohort including what kinds of work each participant does...

Overlapping with the above theme, several respondents most liked the interaction with other participants, as well as with coaches and presenters. Respondents found the group interaction both enjoyable and educational. For example, a couple of respondents noted that they learned about working with people from other cultures from being part of a group of participants from different backgrounds and in different roles currently.

Another common response to what respondents most liked about the training was the NLP staff that facilitated the trainings. Respondents appreciated NLP staff's expertise about leadership, thoughtfulness in putting together the program, skillful facilitation, and enthusiasm for the topic and about the participants. As one participant stated,

I can actually watch and see from session to session the way [the staff] so thoughtfully put things together so it was building a foundation for a next step. [The staff] gave the extra push; the encouragement to go the extra mile.

Less common responses to what participants most liked about the training (each cited by between one and three people) included: specific training sessions/topics, specific speakers, the Minnesota History Center, and the application of the trainings to everyday life.

Helpfulness of history components

Respondents were also asked to rate the helpfulness of the individual history lessons. “Uncovering Rondo” was rated “very helpful” by the largest percentage of respondents (83%), followed by the “Open house” exhibit and “History happens here” (68% each; see Figure 12). Sixty-four percent of respondents said “They chose Minnesota” was “very helpful” and 57 percent said learning about the Minnesota History Society resources and exhibits was “very helpful.” Two of the history lessons, the “Minnesota 150” exhibit and the tour of the MHS website, received “very helpful” ratings from less than half of respondents (44% and 30%, respectively).

13. Helpfulness of individual history lessons

	N	Very helpful	Helpful	A little helpful	Not helpful
<i>Uncovering Rondo</i>	24	83%	17%	0%	0%
<i>Open House</i> exhibit (retreat)	28	68%	32%	0%	0%
<i>History Happens Here</i> – changes in community	28	68%	32%	0%	0%
<i>They Chose Minnesota</i> – immigrants	28	64%	36%	0%	0%
Learning about Minnesota History Society resources and exhibits	28	57%	32%	7%	4%
<i>Minnesota 150</i> exhibit	27	44%	41%	7%	7%
Tour of the Minnesota History Society website	27	30%	59%	7%	4%

Note: The total for each row may vary from 100 percent due to rounding.

Suggestions for improvement

Respondents were asked for one or two suggestions on how to improve the six-month leadership training. Individual responses were grouped into categories. Many of the suggestions involved the use of time, although there was little agreement about what specifically should be changed. A couple of respondents thought the sessions should include breaks. A couple suggested that the group meet an additional weeknight, instead of on Saturdays. Other suggestions included holding the training over a longer period of time (i.e., more months), holding sessions over a shorter period of time (i.e., fewer months), meeting every week, ending the weekday sessions a half hour earlier, and planning longer sessions when necessary to allow the group time to ask questions of speakers and/or to make sessions less rushed.

Another theme involved providing respondents more opportunities to apply what they have learned to their specific interests/situations. Ideas included providing out-of-class assignments that will help participants become more familiar with their communities and providing time at the Minnesota History Center for participants to complete a research project.

Other suggestions, each endorsed by one or two people, included: do not spend participants' time graduation planning, give pronunciation of people names on their name tents, hold the retreat in a different location than the regular meetings, have the coaches participate in the beginning of the training so participants can learn more about them, use more movies to provide a break from all of the talking, make the font on visual materials larger, and make the training content less basic.

Recommendations

The following recommendations, based on the findings of this evaluation, are presented for consideration by NLP staff.

- The NLP leadership trainings appear to be (based on respondents self-report) successful in building respondents' commitment to and participation in community leadership and in assisting participants in developing a support network for their community work. It is important to maintain the components of programming that support these outcomes.
- Many respondents appreciated the diversity among the training participants and the opportunities to work with and learn from each other. Continue selecting participants that differ in their backgrounds and in their current situations to help participants build their knowledge and skills around diversity during the training.
- The history component increased respondents' use of the Minnesota History Center and their consideration of a community's history in their community work. Continuing the history components of the training will be critical to achieving these goals in the future.
- Respondents tended to report less growth in their understanding of their own communities and several respondents said they wanted to learn more. Consider having more assignments and activities focused on this goal. For example, assigning homework that will encourage participants to learn more about their community's resources and/or interact with other community members and having participants do research on their community at the Minnesota History Center may be helpful.
- Respondents were also interested in having the opportunity during the training to apply the knowledge and skills they are learning. Consider if it makes sense to have a project that participants can work on as part of the training to hone their skills, while providing assistance to a community.
- Identify and implement ways to improve the sessions (i.e., "Navigating district councils and city and county government," the opening retreat, and "Sustaining the journey: Reflecting on lessons learned and preparing for the future) and history components (i.e., The "Minnesota 150" exhibit and the tour of the MHS website) rated "very helpful" by the lowest proportion of respondents.
- Consider periodically offering the training series with sessions meeting more often for a shorter period of time and/or without weekend sessions in order to attract participants for whom the current schedule doesn't work.