



# The Leadership Development Program for Women Executives in Underserved Communities

Evaluation Findings

June 2007

## table of contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Project Description.....	1
Project Evaluation.....	4
Organization of this Report.....	4
<b>2. Methods and Participants.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Surveys.....	5
Interviews .....	5
Case Studies.....	6
Other Evaluation Activities.....	6
Strengths and Limitations .....	6
<b>3. Perspectives on Being a Woman ED.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Becoming an Executive Director .....	8
Challenges Faced by Women Executive Directors .....	8
Expectations for the Program .....	10
<b>4. Leadership Development Program Outcomes.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Leadership Skills.....	13
Management Skills .....	15
Job Satisfaction.....	18
Planned Tenure .....	22
Organizational Impacts .....	23
<b>5. Case Studies of Program Participants.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Sandra’s Experience .....	25
Carmen’s Experience .....	26
Hazel’s Experience .....	27
Carol’s Experience .....	29
Emily’s Experience .....	30
Lisa’s Experience .....	31
<b>6. Overall Satisfaction with the Program.....</b>	<b>33</b>
Overall Satisfaction .....	33
Usefulness of Workshops.....	34
Usefulness of Leadership Circles.....	36
Usefulness of the Stipends .....	38
General Recommendations for Improvement.....	38
<b>7. Discussion and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>39</b>
Discussion.....	39
Recommendations .....	40

# Executive Summary

**T**he Leadership Development Program for Women Executives in Underserved Communities was inspired by several research studies conducted by CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, a nonprofit consulting, training and research firm focused exclusively on the nonprofit sector. These studies include *Daring to Lead: Nonprofit Executive Directors and Their Work Experience* (2001); *On the Rise: A Profile of Women of Color in Leadership* (2002); and *Securing the Safety Net: A Profile of Community Clinic and Health Center Leadership in California* (2003). Collectively, these studies have shown that most current executive directors experience a high level of work stress, have limited access to peer support and training resources, and are at high risk for burnout from the sector.

Findings also point to the need to develop strategies for supporting and retaining leadership talent in the nonprofit sector. In response, CompassPoint partnered with the Missouri Foundation for Health to develop and test a 12-month, intensive leadership learning path tailored to women nonprofit executives, with additional funding support from the United Parcel Service Foundation and the Walter & Elise Haas Fund.

The project structure and process were as follows:

**Project Sites and Eligibility.** The pilot program was implemented with 24 women executive directors (EDs) leading nonprofit organizations reaching underserved communities in the San Francisco Bay Area and Missouri. Eligibility for project participation was limited to women EDs managing organizations with two to twenty full-

time-equivalent paid staff. In the Bay Area, participation was limited to women of color. In Missouri, participation was limited to EDs working at an out-state (i.e., non-metropolitan) or rural Missouri health organization serving a predominantly underserved population. Finally, a financial commitment of \$250 was required of all participants.

**Leadership and Management Workshops.**

CompassPoint organized quarterly one-day workshops aimed at providing skills-building opportunities and fostering the development of a learning community among the two cohorts. Topics covered included basic executive functions such as governance and strategic planning, financial management and accountability, human resources, and fundraising.

**Leadership Circles.** Women EDs participated in seven executive Leadership Circle sessions. Leadership Circles are a model of peer-based coaching based on a process known as action-learning, or the idea that people learn best by reflecting on actions, questioning insights and taking new actions. These sessions, which involved six participants each and were led by a trained facilitator, focused on helping participants identify goals and resolve individual challenges, while also obtaining skills to coach one another.

**Professional Development Stipend.** All participants were provided with an award of up to \$1,500 in professional development funds to support the pursuit of additional leadership or professional development activities as determined by each cohort member.

## About the Evaluation

CompassPoint contracted with Harder+Company Community Research, an independent social research firm based in California, to conduct an external evaluation of the Leadership Development Program. The evaluation used a mixed methods approach (i.e., both quantitative and qualitative methods) and relied on both primary and secondary data, as described below.

**ED survey.** The survey was administered at three points in time: entry into the program (baseline), at six months (midpoint post-test), and at completion of the 12-month program (final post-test). The survey consisted mostly of closed-ended questions asking EDs to self-assess their confidence and abilities in several areas, including leadership and management skills, and ability to maintain good relationships with their staff and Board. All 24 EDs responded to the baseline and final surveys, and all but one completed the midpoint survey.

**ED Interviews.** Twenty-three EDs participated in semi-structured telephone interviews one month prior to program completion. The questions focused on the benefits and challenges of the workshops, Leadership Circles and professional development stipend; accomplishments that resulted from their participation in these activities, overall satisfaction with the program including CompassPoint's administration of the project, and recommendations for improvement.

**ED Case Studies.** Six EDs participated in case studies of their program experience. The intent of the case studies was to provide an in-depth illustration of six different ED experiences with the leadership development program. Each case study consisted of an extended interview with the ED upon completion of coaching (i.e., questions were added to the regular ED interview).

In addition to these methods, Harder+Company held regular debrief sessions with CompassPoint staff either in person or via phone conference to learn more about program implementation, including interim successes and challenges. During these sessions, Harder+Company provided feedback to CompassPoint based on interim evaluation findings.

## Being a Woman ED

The women EDs who participated in the Leadership Development Program were drawn to their positions for a number of reasons and believe they bring important assets to their executive roles. At the same time, a majority confront challenges related to gender and ethnic stereotypes in the course of their professional work. Many women discussed feelings of not being taken seriously due to their gender, and some described encountering an “old boys club” mentality. Several women perceive there to be differences in leadership styles between men and women, coupled with lower levels of acceptance for women's leadership styles. For women of color, issues related to gender were often compounded by ethnic stereotypes, with some feeling that they have to “exceed others' expectations” in order to overcome people's assumptions about their executive capacities. In addition to these issues, many women discussed struggling to maintain balance between their work and home lives.

## Program Outcomes

The evaluation also explored the extent to which the Leadership Development program resulted in key intended outcomes related to increased management and leadership skills, enhanced job satisfaction, and increased intention to remain executives in the nonprofit field. A summary of results for each of these areas is presented below.

**Leadership Skills.** Women exhibited statistically significant improvements in their reported ability to exercise leadership on a daily basis, to move their organization toward achieving its goals, and to resolve conflicts. They also reported significant changes in self-ratings of their ability to manage people. During interviews, participants described growth in their ability to encourage and coach others to achieve goals, increased confidence in their leadership skills, and realization of the importance of self-care as it relates to leadership.

**Management Skills.** Program participants reported statistically significant improvements in their reported ability to ensure staff and Board members complete tasks in a timely manner and in their ability to delegate responsibilities to others. A majority of participants rated statements concerning their relationship with staff and Board members highly at baseline, though there was movement toward improvement by post-test.

**Job Satisfaction.** Participants rated their job satisfaction fairly high on the baseline program survey, leaving little room for improvement. However, data from the interviews suggests that the program had a positive impact on participants' job satisfaction by giving them more confidence and skills to do their job. Women also exhibited positive, though not significant, improvement with regard to their ability to manage stress. The number of EDs who reported feeling effective at balancing the demands of their personal and professional lives and the number who felt that they had peers to turn to for support increased significantly over the project period.

**Planned Tenure.** Interview findings suggest that many women felt the program increased their planned tenure as nonprofit EDs.

## Overall Program Satisfaction

Overall, EDs widely agreed that the Leadership Development Program met and often surpassed their expectations, and all participants strongly felt that the program should be replicated in the future for other women executives. Participants were generally pleased with all three of the program components. The Leadership Circles provided a particularly compelling forum for many women in terms of reducing their sense of isolation, talking through individual problems and brainstorming solutions, and providing a confidential forum for learning from other peers. There were a couple of participants, however, whose comments suggested they would have preferred less peer interaction and more training. However, this did not appear to be the case with the majority of participants. Participants made a number of suggestions for how the Program could be improved, some of which are reflected in the recommendations below.

## Recommendations

- **Consider supplementing the program by providing participants with individualized assistance and support.** Some participants expressed a desire for support beyond what could be provided in a group setting. This could be done as a discrete component of the program which all participants receive, or through a pool of technical assistance funds available to particular EDs that is managed by CompassPoint.
- **Continue to tailor programs to the individual needs and priorities of particular cohorts of women.** Demand for the program varied among the two sites, with a larger number of newer EDs applying to participate in the Bay Area relative to more seasoned EDs in Missouri. Customizing the program and workshops appeared to have worked well.

- **Consider a peer training option which would integrate workshop content with open discussion opportunities.** Participants expressed a desire to integrate materials and themes from the workshops into their discussions with each other. Suggestions included scheduling open discussion as part of the workshops or making time within the Learning Circles to explore workshop content.
- **Facilitation of Learning Circles should incorporate and support flexibility in the Learning Circle model.** Some participants felt that open information sharing and advice giving was prohibited by the Learning Circle model, but felt that these types of information exchange would have been useful. For example, less experienced EDs indicated that they would have appreciated learning from more seasoned executives who had confronted similar challenges previously in their careers.
- **Provide more explicit training to EDs regarding how to coach others.** Some participants expressed a desire to learn more about coaching in order to employ this method effectively within Learning Circles. In addition, participants appeared to have applied the coaching model used in Learning Circles with staff of their own organizations, suggesting that such training may have benefits both within and outside the Program.
- **Provide resources to support the sustainability of networks created through the Program.** Participants are eager to sustain the relationships and networks they build through the program. However, Program staff could probably provide important support for sustainability through the creation of a listserv for participants, cohort “reunions,” or convening participants to facilitate a session on their own.
- **Conduct additional research regarding how job satisfaction and stress relate to ED tenure.** The Program was designed in response to burnout among nonprofit EDs. In light of this, it is interesting that participants rated their job satisfaction fairly high at baseline. It also appears that the Program did little to alter the amount of stress experienced by participants, while it did change the ways in which participants cope with stress.
- **Conduct follow-up research to explore the long-term results of this Program.** Follow-up interviews or a web-based survey of participating EDs could provide important insight into the long-term outcomes of the Leadership Development Program, including the sustainability of networks created and ED job satisfaction and tenure.

# 1. Introduction

The Leadership Development Program for Women Executives in Underserved Communities was inspired by several research studies conducted by CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, a nonprofit consulting, training and research firm focused exclusively on the nonprofit sector. These studies include *Daring to Lead: Nonprofit Executive Directors and Their Work Experience* (2001); *On the Rise: A Profile of Women of Color in Leadership* (2002); and *Securing the Safety Net: A Profile of Community Clinic and Health Center Leadership in California* (2003). What these studies have shown is that most current executive directors came to their positions with little formal preparation for the wide variety of administrative capacities and leadership demanded of them. They are under high stress and experience feelings of isolation. They are eager for sources of training and support that address their daily on-the-job challenges. Peer support networks are highly desired, but rarely available.

The outcome of high stress coupled with low support is burnout. A relatively small minority of surveyed executives said they would seek another chief executive officer position when they leave their current one. The result is “leadership lost”; two-thirds of nonprofits seeking a new executive end up hiring someone who has never done the job before, and the cycle of stress and burnout is continued. Furthermore, women significantly outnumber men in nonprofit jobs at all levels. This is particularly true in under-resourced and underserved communities, where the normal nonprofit stressors are exacerbated. These women executives typically face challenges greater than those of their male counterparts. Findings from all of these studies point to the need to develop strategies for supporting nonprofit leaders, particularly female nonprofit executives, in order to support the effectiveness and sustainability of nonprofit organizations.

## Project Description

In response to these study findings, CompassPoint partnered with the Missouri Foundation for Health to develop and test a replicable, 12-month, intensive leadership learning path tailored to women nonprofit executives, with additional funding support from the United Parcel Service Foundation and the Walter & Elise Haas Fund. Core components of the model, which are described in further detail below, included: (1) quarterly leadership and management workshops; (2) executive leadership circle sessions; and (3) a professional development stipend. In addition, a closing luncheon celebrated participant accomplishments and provided an opportunity for feedback and reflection on lessons learned.

## Project Sites and Participants

The pilot program was implemented with 24 women executive directors (EDs) leading nonprofit organizations reaching underserved communities in the San Francisco Bay Area and Missouri. Eligibility for project participation was limited to women EDs managing organizations with two to twenty full-time-equivalent paid staff. However, there were some additional restrictions specific to each of the pilot sites. In the San Francisco Bay Area, participation was limited to women of color working in nonprofit organizations. The San Francisco Bay Area cohort focused on EDs of color due to the fact that women EDs of color in San Francisco overwhelmingly (75%) lead organizations that serve people of color, that are staffed largely by people of color,

and where women of color are a significant presence on the board (*On the Rise*, 2002). In Missouri, participation was limited to EDs working at an out-state (i.e., non-metropolitan) or rural Missouri health organization serving a predominantly underserved population. For the purposes of this project, underserved communities were defined as those for which services are not available, are inaccessible, lack coordination and continuity, or are culturally inappropriate. Finally, a financial commitment of \$250 was required of all participants.

## Leadership and Management Workshops

CompassPoint organized quarterly one-day workshops aimed at providing skills-building opportunities and fostering the development of a learning community among the two cohorts. Topics covered included basic executive functions such as governance and strategic planning, financial management and accountability, human resources, and fundraising. The CompassPoint offerings were grounded in the belief that the most effective learning opportunities start with an assessment of the learner's skills and aptitudes, build skills from that asset base, and include significant elements of peer learning and support. Thus, the leadership and management workshops were presented in a coaching format, as opposed to a didactic classroom model, and to a cohort comprised of peers.

Workshop implementation varied by site. In Missouri, each workshop focused on one particular content area only (i.e., financial management, governance, etc.). In the San Francisco Bay Area, this plan was revised due to the fact that this cohort included a large number of new EDs with less years' experience in the nonprofit sector. In order to meet the immediate needs of this cohort, staff of the Leadership Development Program decided to present content from multiple areas (i.e., governance, financial management, fundraising) at each workshop, rather than segmenting the content across workshops. This provided the opportunity for EDs to obtain practical skills in each training area throughout the duration of the program. In addition, San Francisco Bay Area participants attended a Women Executive Directors of Color (WEDOC) Forum in lieu of one of the four workshops. This decision was made in order to facilitate networking of cohort members with a larger association of women EDs of Color in the Bay Area.

## Leadership Circles

Women EDs also participated in seven executive Leadership Circle sessions. Leadership Circles are a model of peer-based coaching based on a process known as action-learning, or the idea that people learn best by reflecting on actions, questioning insights and taking new actions. These sessions, which involved six participants each and were led by a trained facilitator, focused on helping participants identify goals and resolve individual challenges, while also obtaining skills to effectively coach one another. Essentially, the Leadership Circles offer participants emotional and moral support in a safe and confidential setting with empathic peers.

## Professional Development Stipend

All participants were provided with an award of up to \$1,500 in professional development funds to support the pursuit of additional leadership or professional development activities as determined by each cohort member.

## Characteristics of Executive Director Participants

Twenty-four EDs were selected to participate in the project – 12 from Bay Area nonprofits and 12 from rural or out-state Missouri nonprofits. All 24 completed the leadership development program. Characteristics of participants and their organizations are presented in Exhibit 1. A majority of Bay Area participants had been in their current position for less than one year, while a majority of Missouri EDs had been in their positions for two or more years. Bay Area EDs tended to have less experience working in the nonprofit sector overall as well. In terms of ethnicity, the Missouri cohort consisted of almost all White participants (92 percent), while the San Francisco Bay Area cohort consisted entirely of women of color in keeping with aforementioned eligibility restrictions.

Exhibit 1: Characteristics of Participating EDs

CHARACTERISTIC	MISSOURI	SF BAY AREA	TOTAL
<b>Total years in current position (n=24)</b>			
<1 year	17% (2)	58% (7)	38% (9)
1 – 2 years	8% (1)	17% (2)	13% (3)
2 – 3 years	33% (4)	-- (--)	17% (4)
3+ years	42% (5)	25% (3)	33% (8)
<b>Total years worked in nonprofit sector (n=22)</b>			
< 5 years	36% (4)	27% (3)	32% (7)
6 – 10 years	46% (5)	27% (3)	36% (8)
11 – 15 years	-- (--)	18% (2)	9% (2)
16 – 20 years	18% (2)	18% (2)	18% (4)
20+ years	-- (--)	9% (1)	5% (1)
<b>Type of Organization (n=24, check all that apply)</b>			
Human Services	75% (9)	33% (4)	54% (13)
Education	25% (3)	67% (8)	46% (11)
Health	75% (9)	8% (1)	42% (10)
Community Development	8% (1)	33% (4)	21% (5)
Youth	-- (--)	33% (4)	17% (4)
Government	8% (1)	8% (1)	8% (2)
Arts / Humanities	-- (--)	8% (1)	4% (1)
<b>Agency Budget</b>			
<\$250K	17% (2)	17% (2)	17% (4)
\$250 – 499K	25% (3)	25% (3)	25% (6)
\$500 – 999K	33% (4)	33% (4)	33% (8)
\$1 to 2 million	17% (2)	17% (2)	17% (4)
> \$2 million	8% (1)	8% (1)	8% (2)
<b>ED Race/Ethnicity</b>			
African American	8% (1)	17% (2)	13% (3)
Asian / Pacific Islander	-- (--)	25% (3)	13% (3)
Latino	-- (--)	33% (4)	17% (4)
White	92% (11)	-- (--)	46% (11)
Mixed	-- (--)	25% (3)	13% (3)

## Project Evaluation

The evaluation of Leadership Development Program for Women Executive Directors in Underserved Communities was conducted by Harder+Company Community Research, an independent social research firm based in California. The purpose of the evaluation was to identify outcomes of the Program for participants and their organizations and to identify how the program contributed to those outcomes.

The evaluation findings will prove useful for several audiences:

- EDs interested in leadership development will gain a better sense of what this experience entails.
- Nonprofit technical assistance/capacity-building organizations that wish to develop similar leadership development projects will find the evaluation findings informative.
- Funders wanting to support similar leadership development projects will be informed about the impacts that such support can achieve.
- Senior staff, managers, and Boards of Directors looking to incorporate leadership development into their organizations will find answers to how this might affect their organizations.

## Organization of this Report

Chapter 2 of this report describes the questions that guided this evaluation as well as the research methods and their limitations. The third chapter summarizes data collected regarding what drew program participants to ED positions, the challenges they face in their professional lives, and their expectations for the Leadership Development Program. Chapter 4 presents information regarding the degree to which the program achieved its intended outcomes. This is followed by a chapter containing case studies that illustrate the variety of experiences and outcomes that different EDs had with the Leadership Development Program. The sixth chapter describes participants' overall satisfaction with the project as well as their satisfaction with specific project components. It also includes participants' recommendations for program improvement. The conclusion includes a discussion of the findings as well as issues pertinent to program replication.

## 2. Methods and Participants

The evaluation was designed in order to explore the following key evaluation questions:

- What kinds of interests are important to women EDs? What kinds of issues and barriers do they encounter?
- To what extent did the program achieve the following intended outcomes (i.e., improved management skills, improved leadership skills, enhanced job satisfaction, and intention to remain in the nonprofit field)?
- How satisfied were participants with the program overall, as well as with the individual program components (i.e., workshops, Leadership Circles, stipend)?
- What types of considerations are important in terms of replicating this model of group-based leadership development with women EDs?

To address these questions, the evaluation used a mixed methods approach (i.e., both quantitative and qualitative methods) and relied on both primary and secondary data. The design included a survey completed by the participating EDs, semi-structured interviews with EDs, and case studies of six EDs, as described in detail below.

### Surveys

EDs completed a self-administered written survey at three points in time: upon entry into the program (baseline), at six months (midpoint post-test), and upon completion of the 12-month program (final post-test). The survey consisted mostly of closed-ended questions that asked EDs to self-assess their confidence and abilities in several areas, including leadership skills, management skills, and ability to maintain good relationships with their staff and Board of Directors. The instrument also included questions related to job satisfaction.

All 24 EDs completed the leadership development program and participated in data collection. The timing of data collection was staggered across the two sites due to a four-month difference in program start dates. Specifically, the San Francisco program commenced in January 2006, while the Missouri program launched in April 2006. All 24 EDs responded to the baseline survey. All but one participant completed the midpoint survey six months into the program, due to health issues. Twenty-four participants completed the final survey at program completion.

### Interviews

Harder+Company conducted in-depth semi-structured telephone interviews with all participating EDs one month prior to program completion. The questions focused on the benefits and challenges of the workshops,

Leadership Circles and professional development stipend; accomplishments that resulted from their participation in these activities, overall satisfaction with the program including CompassPoint's administration of the project, and recommendations for improvement.

Interviews were conducted with 11 Bay Area EDs in November 2006 and with 12 Missouri EDs in February 2007. To ensure a good response rate, all EDs were contacted by telephone or email at least five times to schedule an appointment. One ED did not participate due to health issues at the time that the interviews were conducted.

## Case Studies

Six EDs agreed to participate in case studies of their program experience. The intent of the case studies was to provide an in-depth illustration of six different ED experiences with the leadership development program. Each case study consisted of an extended interview with the ED upon completion of coaching (i.e., questions were added to the regular ED interview). These interviews were sometimes supplemented with interviews involving a staff or Board member at the ED's organization. In these cases, board and staff members to be interviewed were chosen by the ED.

## Other Evaluation Activities

In addition to the survey, interviews, and case studies, Harder+Company held regular debrief sessions with CompassPoint staff either in person or via phone conference to learn more about program implementation, including interim successes and challenges. During these sessions, Harder+Company provided feedback to CompassPoint based on interim evaluation findings. The evaluation team also attended kick-off workshops at each site and reviewed relevant program documents such as project manager reports and workshop evaluations.

## Strengths and Limitations

The evaluation design's strengths include the following:

- The sample size for the ED interviews was adequate, which allowed for both describing a range of ED experiences as well as identifying commonalities among experiences.
- The case studies helped to illustrate the process and outcomes of the program in a way that reflects the lived experience of the EDs.
- The quantitative survey helped to illustrate, in concrete terms, the possible outcomes of leadership development programming at the individual and organizational levels.
- The study employs a quasi-experimental research design whereby data is collected at baseline, midway through the program and at the end of the program. This design is stronger than studies that collect data retrospectively only.

Limitations include the following:

- Although nearly all EDs participated in the survey, the sample size may have been too small to detect impacts in some areas.
- The evaluation did not include a longitudinal component to assess whether EDs who participated in the program remained at their jobs or within the nonprofit sector longer as a result of the programming.
- The evaluation primarily relied on data self-reported by participants. As a result, findings may have been affected by response bias, the tendency of respondents to answer questions in the way they think the interviewer wants them to answer rather than according to their true beliefs.

## 3. Perspectives on Being a Woman ED

This section of the report summarizes data collected regarding what drew program participants to their ED positions, the challenges they face in their professional lives, and their expectations for the Leadership Development Program for Women Executive Directors in Underserved Communities. Findings are drawn primarily from qualitative interviews with program participants, as well as baseline survey data.

### Becoming an Executive Director

During interviews, program participants were asked to identify what drew them to become an ED of a nonprofit organization. Women cited a variety of reasons, including wanting to make a difference in their communities (n=5), being recruited into the position (n=5), having founded the organization they were currently directing (n=4), and seeing it as a natural progression in their professional life (n=4). Women also self-identified a number of assets they bring to this role through the baseline survey. One-third (n=8) discussed their passion and commitment related to the work they do. Many also talked about their field experience (n=7) and familiarity and connection with the communities served (n=5) as important assets. Other assets mentioned included strong management skills, an ability to work with different people and organizations, and a collaborative approach to bringing people together.

### Challenges Faced by Women Executive Directors

During interviews, participants were asked to describe some of the particular challenges they face as women EDs. Women identified a number of challenges. First and foremost among these was dealing with other people's assumptions and stereotypes related to being a woman (n=12) and/or being a person of color (n=6). A total of 15 out of the 23 interview participants highlighted challenges in at least one of these areas.

#### Struggling against Gender Stereotypes

Many women discussed feelings of not being taken seriously due to their gender, with Missouri participants in particular described the existence of an “old boys club” mentality. One person commented, “Just from being a woman, there’s a credibility issue. Sometimes men might not listen to you, no matter what you have to say.” Several women described the ways in which this dynamic played out with board members. One of the Missouri participants observed, “As a woman, sometimes I feel like the board might not listen to you as much as if the ED were a male. It’s harder to get the meeting together and be taken seriously.” Other women talked about challenges associated with supervising male staff. One explained, “It’s hard for males to accept the leadership of a female and having a female being a top dog. In my relationships with male staff, I felt those dynamics.”

Several women perceive there to be differences in leadership styles between men and women, coupled with lower levels of acceptance for women’s leadership styles. One commented, “Women are constantly underestimated, in terms of not having decisions respected and... having a different style from what people

expect from an ED. In my case, I'm a very a good listener and some people conclude that I don't have an opinion or that I'm not assertive, when in actuality, I'm gathering data and formulating responses to particular situations." A couple of participants suggested that women tend to be more collaborative in their leadership style relative to their male counterparts, which is not viewed as authoritative enough. One observed, "We tend to be more collaborative, to own up to our mistakes. In working with males, they don't operate according to those rules. Women tend to approach leadership in a different way."

Three women felt that prejudices associated with gender affected their level of compensation as EDs. One commented, "If there were a man in my position with as much responsibility as I have, he would be paid quite a bit more." Another expressed a similar sentiment, stating that, "The ED before me was a White man. He really wasn't nearly as experienced as I was in knowing about the organization. I've been called to task more than he was, but he was paid twice as much." The third agreed, adding, "If there were a man in my position with as much responsibility as I have, he would be paid quite a bit more. I have my Master's, years of experience, and if they had to go out and replace me with a man, he'd be paid more."

In contrast to the comments highlighted here, there was one participant who expressed the opinion that being a female ED was less challenging relative to her prior experience in the for-profit world. She commented, "When I was in the for-profit arena, that's really more of a man's world. And, being in a pretty large group of executives, the men were treated differently. The camaraderie, the slap on the back, 'Let's go play golf.' It's really like that! And the women, we were just second class citizens." Based on her experience, she appreciated the transition to a sector that she viewed as more accepting of women's leadership.

### Struggling against Ethnic Stereotypes

For women of color, issues related to gender were often compounded by ethnic stereotypes. One person explained, "It's a challenge [being the only African American female ED]. There are differences in what I have to face that other women never have to face." Another individual described the ways that other people's stereotypes affect how she is received in public forums. She commented, "Oftentimes, when people see a young woman of color, they assume that you don't run an organization. I've gone to events with my assistant, who is White, and people direct information or questions to her... People will make that assumption and they're surprised to realize that I'm the ED." Another described similar experiences, stating that, "In the communities I work, there are very affluent White people and poor Latinos, so people don't expect to see a Latina in this role." A third described her challenges in working with funders in this regard. She stated,

*If you're a woman of color, you definitely run into funders for whom it's hard that I'm a woman and a person of color. I don't communicate in a way that they can feel and the nature of funding is based on relationships. If the people funding you are White and you're not able to communicate in a way that elicits trust and confidence as much as someone they feel more comfortable with, it's difficult to get the funding.*

Two women of color described feeling that they have to "exceed others' expectations" in order to overcome stereotypes and assumptions about their executive capacities. As one succinctly stated, "I have to double prove. Because of my ethnicity and because I'm a woman, I feel I always have to prove myself."

Finally, one individual lamented a lack of role models for women executives of color in her organization. She explained, "There are not a lot of mentors and role models within the institution I work with that have these

types of experiences, and more specifically as a woman of color... It is a challenge to be the only woman of color at a management level within my organization.”

### **Balancing Personal and Professional Lives**

Another challenge described by a number of women (n=5) was struggling to meet the demands of both their home and their work lives. As one ED stated, “It’s a challenge to be a woman and have all my household responsibilities and still put in the time that this job requires of me.” A couple of EDs commented that, although men face challenges in this arena as well, it is harder for women to balance these demands because more is expected from them in terms of their home responsibilities. One explained, “The balance between family and serving in a leadership role, where you’re the one who has to be where the buck stops. Men have this issue, too, but it’s harder when you’re a mother and a wife.” Another agreed, commenting that, “There are issues of demand from family and work. There’s no way to alleviate it, so it’s more responsibility. I have a very supportive family, but someone still needs to buy the groceries.” Another participant suggested that these pressures carry an emotional weight. She observed, “We’re still drawn to be the women who address the issues at home, with children, being a good wife. That’s still very real.” Challenges in this area were more frequently mentioned by Missouri (n=4) than Bay Area participants (n=1).

Other challenges mentioned by women included getting people to understand the importance of nonprofit work, staying vision-focused with respect to their organization, and lack of preparation for the diverse set of roles and responsibilities that come with being a nonprofit ED.

### **Expectations for the Leadership Development Program**

During interviews, program participants were asked what they hoped or expected to gain from the Leadership Development Program. As described in detail below, the EDs articulated a number of hopes and expectations for the program. Many of these hopes and expectations centered on relating to peers in the program, such as networking, learning from the experience of other women executives, and having access to a support system. The opportunity to build practical skills was also mentioned by many participants.

#### **Connecting with Peers**

Almost half of participants (n=10) indicated that they hoped to network with other nonprofit EDs as part of the program. As one person explained, “Networking was very important to me, to meet more women. Relationships move everything forward.” Participants in the San Francisco Bay Area cohort were particularly interested in networking with other women of color who run nonprofit organizations. One commented, “I hoped to meet and expand my network of other women of color EDs... I had been in leadership development groups before this one, but I was excited that this group focused on women of color.” Similarly, another stated, “I expected to be able to start my network of resources and contacts within this field – specifically making a connection with other women executive directors of color.”

Several participants (n=4) described hoping to learn from the experiences of others holding similar positions in the nonprofit field. One participant explained, “I wanted to get feedback about the challenges I’m facing, and hear stories about how people are doing their jobs and what kind of challenges they are facing. I was looking

forward to learning by listening to examples and sharing my own experiences and getting feedback.” Another ED described looking forward to learning from other women with more years of experience. She observed, “I thought it would be good... to have the opportunity to learn from other people, to sit down with other EDs who are more experienced and hear what other people are going through.” Another agreed, and also expressed a desire to contribute to the experience of others in the program. She commented, “I hoped to be around peers who would have varying degrees of experience that I could draw on and hopefully contribute to someone else’s perspective.”

Other participants (n=4) expanded upon this notion of connecting with peers by talking about their need for a shared support system with other women professionals. One observed, “[I wanted] support. I really felt lost. I had taken all kinds of courses, but I really felt that I needed support and to talk to other EDs because it is really lonely at the top.” Similarly, another stated, “The number one priority was to break through my isolation. I felt isolated as an ED, and there was no place to talk about things I was experiencing, things that had a gender or racial component. I wanted to have some support to talk about issues that are kind of taboo, things you were experiencing as an ED.”

### **Building Core Nonprofit Management Skills**

Aside from expectations related to peers, a substantial number of the EDs (n=9) discussed their expectation that they would gain practical skills related to managing a nonprofit organization through the program. One commented, “I was looking to expand my knowledge and skills around navigating the nonprofit structures, especially with the governing board, tools and resources, how to guide a board, differentiating my role from theirs.” Another said she hoped “to enhance my skills in the key responsibilities I have, such as defining mission and vision; working with the board; and recruiting, retaining and mentoring staff.”

Several EDs (n=4) described being new to their positions and really needing to learn the basics of nonprofit management. One commented, “When I was promoted to director, I had no experience in nonprofits prior to coming here, and I definitely didn’t have experience in nonprofit leadership. I was looking for some guidance on how to be a leader in this sector... and for specific information, like the financial planning and fundraising.” Similarly, another stated, “This is the first time I’d been an ED, so I was seeking any kind of direction I could get about managing a nonprofit.”

In addition to the interviews, the baseline survey offered an opportunity to identify the types of content areas that were important to program participants (Exhibit 2). When asked to prioritize different content areas they would like to get out of the leadership development program, a majority of women (83 percent) rated management skills as “high priority.” This was followed by leadership skills (75 percent) and time management (63 percent). With the exception of stress reduction, San Francisco Bay Area participants prioritized all remaining topic areas comparatively higher relative to Missouri participants. Only one Bay Area participant ranked stress reduction as a high priority.

Exhibit 2: Content Areas Prioritized by Program Participants

<b>Content Area</b>	<b>Missouri</b>	<b>SF Bay Area</b>	<b>Total</b>
Management skills	75%	92%	83%
Leadership skills/confidence	58%	92%	75%
Time management	58%	67%	63%
Relationships with staff/Board	33%	50%	42%
Personal/professional balance	33%	25%	29%
Stress reduction	25%	8%	17%

## 4. Leadership Development Program Outcomes

In addition to documenting the interests, challenges and priorities of women EDs, the evaluation also explored the extent to which the Leadership Development program increased participants’ management and leadership skills, enhanced their job satisfaction, and affected their intention to remain executives in the nonprofit field. This section provides information related to measurement of these key intended outcomes, as well as information about additional program effects. Results from both the quantitative surveys and the qualitative interviews, which are presented in this section, provide additional insight with regard to how these outcomes were achieved.

### Leadership Skills

One indicator of a successful Executive Director is strong leadership skills, or the ability to exercise influence over groups of people. Leadership covers the interpersonal aspects of an ED’s job including change, inspiration, motivation and influence. It requires skills in communication, effective decision-making, negotiation, and the ability to engage strategically with staff and Board members. Many EDs reported substantial development in this area.

According to survey results, there were statistically significant improvements in the ability of EDs to exercise leadership on a daily basis, to move the organization toward achieving its goals and to resolve conflicts within the organization (Exhibit 3). Survey results also indicated a trend toward improvement in EDs’ confidence to exercise leadership in the face of challenges and obstacles. Much of the improvement in the leadership area was realized early in the program, between pre- and mid-surveys. Nevertheless, the proportion of EDs who reported feeling confident in their leadership skills continued to increase throughout the program.

Exhibit 3: Changes in Leadership Skills

Percent who felt “confident” or “very confident” in the following areas:	Baseline	Post-Test	p Value
<b>Ability to resolve conflicts within the organization</b>			
All participants	10 (42%)	22 (96%)	.00*
San Francisco Bay Area	6 (50%)	10 (91%)	--
Missouri	4 (33%)	12 (100%)	--
<b>Ability to move the organization toward achieving its goals</b>			
All participants	12 (50%)	20 (87%)	.01*
San Francisco Bay Area	4 (33%)	9 (82%)	--
Missouri	8 (67%)	11 (92%)	.13
<b>Ability to exercise leadership on a daily basis</b>			
All participants	15 (65%)	21 (91%)	.03*
San Francisco Bay Area	5 (46%)	9 (82%)	.08
Missouri	10 (83%)	12 (100%)	.14

<b>Ability to exercise leadership in the face of challenges and obstacles</b>			
All participants	16 (67%)	23 (100%)	--
San Francisco Bay Area	7 (58%)	11 (100%)	--
Missouri	9 (75%)	12 (100%)	.06

-- Test results not valid due to expected cell size count less than 5.

\* Statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

The surveys also asked EDs to rate their communication and people management skills. Between baseline and post-test, the percentage of EDs who agreed to the statement, “I’m good at managing people,” significantly increased from 33 percent to 73 percent (Exhibit 4). Executive Directors in the Missouri cohort were more likely to report that they have good communication and management skills compared to EDs in the San Francisco Bay Area, although the difference was not statistically significant.

Exhibit 4: Changes in Communication and People Management Skills

<b>Percent who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the following statements:</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Post-Test</b>	<b>p Value</b>
<b>I'm good at managing people</b>			
All participants	8 (33%)	16 (73%)	.01*
San Francisco Bay Area	2 (17%)	5 (50%)	.10
Missouri	6 (50%)	11 (92%)	--
<b>I have good communication skills</b>			
All participants	17 (71%)	19 (86%)	.20
San Francisco Bay Area	6 (50%)	7 (70%)	.34
Missouri	11 (92%)	12 (100%)	.31

-- Test results not valid due to expected cell size count less than 5.

\* Statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

During interviews, participants were asked to identify what new leadership skills, if any, they gained through their participation in the program. Many women (n=6) discussed improvements in their ability to encourage and coach others to achieve goals, building off the strengths-based management paradigm presented during the workshops. One person explained, “I learned more about motivating staff – looking at people’s strengths and weaknesses and allowing them to work within those. I learned to step back as a leader and assess people’s skill-set and design a workplan that works best for them rather than a plan that works best for me.” Similarly, another commented, “I’ve learned not to exceed expectations of volunteers. As a leader, being able to guide them to where they’re more productive as volunteers, and learning how to give the right amount of praise to volunteers.” A few individuals talked about applying the coaching skills they learned during the Learning Circles with their own staff. One observed, “One thing I was able to do was hone my listening skills and use those types of approaches in terms of listening and asking questions that didn’t necessarily provide solutions. I was able to apply it with my own staff.”

Many women (n=6) described how the program helped them to feel more comfortable and confident in their leadership role. One individual explained, “Some of the things really helped me to gain confidence around my own abilities, and really allowed me to confidently lead my organization, as well as confidently interact with governing board members, and build confidence around how the nonprofit world works. I have the confidence to do the job well, and it reiterated the role I play within the organization – what I have control over and what I don’t.” Similarly, another indicated that the program helped her appreciate “that my own individual style didn’t have to meet the expectations of other people.” The concept of strengths-based

management also affected some individuals' confidence regarding their personal ability to be a leader. One explained, "One of the things it helped me understand... is that you don't have to be a "10" at every component of a leader, but what you need to do is surround yourself with people who have different strengths." Another agreed, stating that,

*It helped me define for myself what kind of leader I am, and it really helped me when we're talking about strengths—being able to identify strengths in myself, and where I didn't have the strengths, look for that or bring that out in my associates. It helped me feel like I didn't have to do it all myself, because no one is strong in everything. So I learned how to delegate and let that be okay.*

Many women (n=6) also described how the Leadership Circles in particular helped them to realize the importance of taking care of one's self and how this was related to effective leadership. One participant observed, "It made me understand that if I don't take care of myself first, I can't do anything else." Another person agreed and added, "Something that was reiterated for me was being able to see where I was out of balance, how to gauge where I was, if I felt overwhelmed, whatever I was feeling at that time."

## Management Skills

The evaluation also explored the extent to which the Leadership Development Program improved participants' skills in management, or the process of setting and achieving organizational goals through planning, organizing and directing resources. Findings are organized by the following topic areas: 1) task completion and productivity; 2) interactions with staff; and 3) interactions with board members.

### Task Completion and Productivity

EDs reported greater effectiveness in their abilities to ensure that tasks are completed in a timely manner throughout the program (Exhibit 5). Statistically significant improvements included their effectiveness at ensuring staff members complete tasks in a timely manner and that Board of Directors also complete high priority tasks in a timely fashion. Most of these improvements were realized within the first six months of the program. EDs also reported statistically significant increases in their effectiveness in delegating tasks and responsibilities. Many of these gains were realized in the last six months of the program. Although some EDs reported improvement in their personal ability to complete high-priority tasks in a timely manner, these findings were not significant.

Exhibit 5: Changes in Effectiveness Regarding Task Completion and Productivity

Percent who felt "effective" or "very effective" in the following areas:	Baseline	Post-Test	p Value
<b>Completing high-priority tasks in a timely manner</b>			
All participants	17 (71%)	21 (91%)	.08
San Francisco Bay Area	8 (67%)	10 (91%)	.16
Missouri	9 (75%)	11 (92%)	.27

<b>Ensuring that staff members who report to you complete tasks in a timely manner</b>			
All participants	7 (29%)	20 (87%)	.00*
San Francisco Bay Area	2 (17%)	8 (73%)	--
Missouri	5 (42%)	12 (100%)	--
<b>Being productive with your time at work</b>			
All participants	13 (54%)	18 (78%)	.08
San Francisco Bay Area	4 (33%)	7 (64%)	.15
Missouri	9 (75%)	11 (92%)	.27
<b>Ensuring that the Board of Directors completes high-priority tasks in a timely manner</b>			
All participants	4 (17%)	14 (61%)	.00*
San Francisco Bay Area	1 (9%)	6 (55%)	--
Missouri	3 (25%)	8 (67%)	.04*
<b>Delegating tasks and responsibilities</b>			
All participants	8 (33%)	17 (74%)	.01*
San Francisco Bay Area	3 (25%)	8 (73%)	.02*
Missouri	5 (42%)	9 (75%)	.10

-- Test results not valid due to expected cell size count less than 5.

\* Statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

At baseline, a smaller proportion of Bay Area EDs reported feeling effective in being productive with their time at work compared to Missouri EDs. The difference was statistically significant. After program participation, the difference was no longer significant. There was a significant increase in the number of Bay Area EDs who felt effective in delegating tasks. Similarly, the number of Missouri EDs who felt effective in ensuring that their Boards of Directors complete high priority tasks significantly increased from 25 percent to 67 percent.

### Interactions with Staff

EDs reported positive working relationships with their staff at both baseline and post-testing. Over 80 percent of EDs “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they have a good relationship with staff, work effectively with and feel valued by their staff, and feel supported by their managers (Exhibit 6). In general, Missouri EDs were more likely to agree to positive statements regarding their relationships with staff, compared to San Francisco Bay Area EDs. In addition, the number of EDs who agreed that they have a good relationship with their managers and feel valued by their staff actually declined slightly among Bay Area EDs.

Exhibit 6: Changes in Staff Interactions

<b>Percent who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the following statements:</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Post-Test</b>	<b>p Value</b>
<b>Overall, I work effectively with my staff</b>			
All participants	17 (71%)	19 (83%)	.34
San Francisco Bay Area	7 (58%)	7 (64%)	.80
Missouri	10 (83%)	12 (100%)	.14
<b>I have a good relationship with my managers and other staff that report to me</b>			
All participants	18 (75%)	20 (87%)	.30
San Francisco Bay Area	9 (75%)	8 (73%)	.90
Missouri	9 (75%)	12 (100%)	.06

<b>I have the support of my managers and other staff that report to me</b>			
All participants	16 (67%)	19 (83%)	.21
San Francisco Bay Area	6 (50%)	7 (64%)	.51
Missouri	10 (83%)	12 (100%)	.14
<b>I feel valued by my staff</b>			
All participants	19 (79%)	19 (83%)	.76
San Francisco Bay Area	9 (75%)	7 (64%)	.55
Missouri	10 (83%)	12 (100%)	.14

During interviews, EDs described different ways in which the program had affected their relationships and oversight of staff. Some reported training staff in the coaching techniques they learned through the Learning Circles, while others reported success using the strengths-based management approach as described previously. One explained, “I learned how to be better in my supervision, how to ask better questions, how to have staff develop their own plans of action. I was doing a lot of it for them and we came up with more collaborative plans of actions.” A few people reported that they have better communication with their staff and are able to run meetings more effectively.

### Interactions with Board of Directors

Similar to their relationships with staff, EDs also reported positive working relationships with their Boards of Directors at both baseline and post-testing (Exhibit 7). As much as 96 percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they have good relationships with their Boards of Directors and felt that their Boards were supportive of their leadership. There was minimal variation in EDs’ responses by cohort, though the number of Bay Area EDs who agreed that their work positively challenged them declined between baseline and post-test.

Exhibit 7: Changes in Interactions with Boards of Directors

<b>Percent who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the following statements:</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Post-Test</b>	<b>p Value</b>
<b>Overall, I work effectively with the Board of Directors</b>			
All participants	18 (75%)	20 (87%)	.30
San Francisco Bay Area	8 (67%)	9 (82%)	.41
Missouri	10 (83%)	11 (92%)	.54
<b>I have a good relationship with the Board of Directors</b>			
All participants	22 (92%)	22 (96%)	.58
San Francisco Bay Area	10 (83%)	10 (91%)	.59
Missouri	12 (100%)	12 (100%)	n/a
<b>The Board is supportive of my leadership</b>			
All participants	21 (88%)	22 (96%)	.32
San Francisco Bay Area	10 (83%)	10 (91%)	.59
Missouri	11 (92%)	12 (100%)	.31
<b>I feel valued by my Board of Directors</b>			
All participants	19 (79%)	20 (87%)	.48
San Francisco Bay Area	10 (83%)	9 (82%)	.92
Missouri	9 (75%)	11 (92%)	.27

During interviews, EDs discussed ways in which the program had affected the way they work with their board. Some felt the program led to better communication with their board. One woman commented, “The board was very top down and the program helped me develop a more collaborative style and more transparency in our relationship. It became apparent to me what I could be transparent about.” Others felt that the program helped them understand the role of the board more clearly. Still others talked about being able to involve the board in supporting the organization more effectively as a result of what they had learned. One individual explained, “I learned skills around strategic planning and was able to take that on and utilize it with board development. I am working with my board on utilizing other types of tools to guide them in their development – reporting tools like dashboard which shows where we are in reaching our goals and performance indicators.”

## Job Satisfaction

As mentioned in the introduction of this report, the Leadership Development Program was designed in response to several studies suggesting that EDs are under high stress, experience feelings of isolation, have limited access to professional development and support opportunities, and often plan to leave the sector. Consequently, the evaluation examined changes in participant job satisfaction, feelings of stress and burnout, ability to balance personal and professional responsibilities, feelings of support versus isolation, and planned tenure in the nonprofit sector.

### Overall Satisfaction

All EDs in the Missouri cohort and a substantial majority of EDs in the San Francisco Bay Area cohort “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they enjoy their jobs and that their work is meaningful (Exhibit 8). Twenty-one EDs also agreed that their work positively challenges them at both intervals. There was no difference in EDs’ attitudes and beliefs about work by cohort and only minimal variation between baseline and post-test. However, it is important to note that the number of Bay Area EDs who agreed with each of the three statements related to work satisfaction declined by one participant between baseline and post-test.

Exhibit 8: Changes in Work Satisfaction

Percent who felt “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the following statement:	Baseline	Post-Test	p Value
<b>Overall, I enjoy my job as Executive Director</b>			
All participants	22 (92%)	21 (91%)	.97
San Francisco Bay Area	10 (83%)	9 (82%)	.92
Missouri	12 (100%)	12 (100%)	n/a
<b>My work is meaningful</b>			
All participants	24 (100%)	23 (100%)	n/a
San Francisco Bay Area	12 (100%)	11 (100%)	n/a
Missouri	12 (100%)	12 (100%)	n/a
<b>My work positively challenges me</b>			
All participants	21 (88%)	21 (91%)	n/a
San Francisco Bay Area	10 (83%)	9 (82%)	.92
Missouri	11 (92%)	12 (100%)	.31

\* Statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

Despite these survey findings, a majority of women (n=17) did report that the program had a positive impact on their job satisfaction during interviews, as illustrated by the following comments.

- *I loved my job before, but when you feel even more confident and connected, it makes you even more effective and more satisfied.*
- *Yes, it had an impact on my level of job satisfaction because I feel like I'm doing a better job.*
- *[My level of satisfaction] has gone to the roof. I feel I'm not working in a silo. I actually have work that is making a difference, and I feel I have the skill set and I'm not floundering; when I get stuck, I pick up the phone and call my network of women, my resource pool.*
- *I'm much happier now, much more jazzed. I feel much less isolated, like I'm part of something. As an ED you feel part of a community effort, but I'm now feeling a part of being a woman leader.*

In keeping with the survey findings, five women reported that the program did not affect their level of satisfaction, as it was high already. Finally, there was one person who resigned during the course of the program due to her realization that she was dissatisfied with her job. However, she indicated that without the program, she would have resigned earlier and it would have been a much more stressful process. She explained, “I probably wouldn’t have made it through last year without the program. I probably would’ve resigned long ago. It gave me hope, and some things got better, but other things didn’t and I realized I wasn’t going to be able to change them.”

### Job Stress and Burnout

One-third of participants reported that they “often” or “always” felt their job responsibilities were more than they can handle at baseline. Although not statistically significant, the percentage of EDs who reported this decreased from baseline to post-test (Exhibit 9). The number of EDs who rated their job-related stress as “high” or “very high” generally decreased over time, from 61 percent at baseline to 50 percent at post-test. However, within the Missouri cohort, the number of EDs who agreed with this statement actually increased by one participant from baseline to post-test. In regards to feeling burned out, approximately one-fifth of EDs reported that they “often” or “always” feel burned out at both baseline and post-test.

Exhibit 9: Changes related to Stress, Burnout and Workload Responsibilities

Percent who answered “often” or “always” to the following:	Baseline	Post-Test	P Value
<b>How often do you feel your job responsibilities are more than you can handle</b>			
All participants	8 (33%)	4 (17%)	.21
San Francisco Bay Area	5 (42%)	2 (18%)	.22
Missouri	3 (25%)	2 (17%)	.62
<b>My job related stress is high or very high</b>			
All participants	14 (61%)	11 (50%)	.46
San Francisco Bay Area	7 (64%)	3 (30%)	.12
Missouri	7 (58%)	8 (63%)	.67

<b>How often do you feel burned out</b>			
All participants	5 (21%)	4 (17%)	.76
San Francisco Bay Area	3 (25%)	2 (18%)	.69
Missouri	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	n/a

Although not statistically significant, the proportion of participants who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they can effectively manage stressful situations increased from 63 percent at baseline to 83 percent at post-test (Exhibit 10).

Exhibit 10: Changes in Ability to Manage Stressful Situations

<b>Percent who felt “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the following statement:</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Post-Test</b>	<b>p Value</b>
<b>I feel I can effectively manage stressful situations</b>			
All participants	15 (63%)	19 (83%)	.12
San Francisco Bay Area	6 (50%)	8 (73%)	.27
Missouri	9 (75%)	11 (92%)	.27

\* Statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

During interviews, a majority (n=16) of women described ways in which the program positively affected how they cope with stress. Some examples are highlighted below.

- *I think that the way I cope with stress changed. The program provided me with the ability to check myself every now and then and know that these things are part of the job. Stresses won’t go away, but it put where the organization is in perspective in the way other organizations and other challenges my peers have communicated. I’m not the only one; everyone is in the same boat.*
- *In the past, I have tried different ways to cope with stress, through time management and understanding what I have control of and what I don’t have control of. The program helped me more to see what I control and what I don’t, and being okay when things are not perfect.*
- *I just feel more connected and a little more competent in my job, so when a stressful situation comes up, I can think, “It’s going to work out some way” and I don’t get bogged down by it. Hearing the experiences of the other ladies helps.*
- *The stress is going to be there, because we are so small with a huge volume of work. But my ability to cope is a lot better. Just knowing that there are resources, someone you can talk to helps. Our circle leader has taught me that when you get so stressed, you don’t do a good job anyway, so do something else for 15 minutes and go back to it.*

### Balancing Personal and Professional Responsibilities

The number of EDs who reported that they felt effective at balancing the demands of their personal and professional lives increased significantly following twelve months of program participation (Exhibit 11), which is important in light of the fact that women EDs see this as one of the major challenges they face in their work.

Exhibit 11: Changes in Ability to Balance Personal and Professional Responsibilities

Percent who felt “effective” or “very effective” in the following:	Baseline	Post-Test	p Value
<b>Balancing the demands of your personal and professional life</b>			
All participants	7 (30%)	13 (59%)	.05*
San Francisco Bay Area	3 (25%)	6 (60%)	.10
Missouri	4 (36%)	7 (58%)	.29

\* Statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

### Sense of Support versus Isolation

Women’s access to peer support and information improved throughout the program according to the survey data. Results showed statistically significant increases in the number of EDs who agreed with the following statement: “I have peers in my field that I can turn to for support and information that will help me” (Exhibit 12). Much of the gain was realized by mid-survey.

Exhibit 12: Changes in Feelings of Support

Percent who felt “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the following statements:	Baseline	Post-Test	p Value
<b>I have peers in my field I can turn to for support and information that will help me</b>			
All participants	12 (50%)	22 (96%)	.00*
San Francisco Bay Area	3 (25%)	10 (91%)	--
Missouri	9 (75%)	12 (100%)	.06

-- Test results not valid due to expected cell size count less than 5.

\* Statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

EDs also reported statistically significant decreases in the number of EDs who “often” or “always” felt isolated in their work (Exhibit 13). At baseline, EDs in the San Francisco Bay Area cohort were significantly less likely to report having peers that they can turn to than EDs in the Missouri cohort. By post-test, over 90 percent of EDs in both cohorts reported that they have peers that they can turn to for help. Despite having more peers compared to San Francisco Bay Area EDs at baseline, Missouri EDs were equally likely to report that they “often” or “always” felt isolated in their work. At post-test, none of the Missouri EDs selected these responses.

Exhibit 13: Changes in Feelings of Isolation

Percent who answered “often” or “always” with the following statements:	Baseline	Post-Test	p Value
<b>How often do you feel isolated in your work</b>			
All participants	10 (42%)	2 (9%)	.01*
San Francisco Bay Area	5 (42%)	2 (18%)	.22
Missouri	5 (42%)	0 (0%)	--

-- Test results not valid due to expected cell size count less than 5.

\* Statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

These findings were confirmed by the qualitative interviews, in which a majority of participants (n=21) reported that the program had a positive affect on their sense of emotional and moral support. One individual observed, “The members provide me with emotional support. It wasn’t just a work-related thing. I was able to

engage with them on a deeper level, and be open and honest about my feelings. They were key in providing emotional and moral support around decision-making.” Another person agreed, and talked about how the support she received extended outside of the program. She explained, “I could go there to talk about professional and personal issues, and they supported me in times where it didn’t feel I could make it through the rest of the week. They also let me know that anytime I wanted to talk, to give them a call or to go visit them and have lunch and there was support outside of circle.” For many women, just knowing that there were others facing similar challenges helped to reduce their sense of isolation. As one person described, “I just had a feeling and sense of camaraderie with the rest of the group. Knowing that there were others experiencing similar things reduced my sense of isolation.”

A majority of women reported that they were planning to stay in touch with other program participants. Some reported that they plan to set up a time to meet monthly as a group, while others plan to stay in touch with their group via email. Others reported that they have already established friendships with individual program participants and see them outside the program. As one person commented, “I feel like we’re family. We attend each other’s events and celebrate each other’s great successes. For those that need help and support; it’s just spilled into friendships outside of the Program. There’s a deeper connection.” Despite these good intentions, some women in the Missouri cohort noted the difficulty of staying in touch due to issues of geographical dispersion.

## Planned Tenure

The interviews shed light on how the program influenced participants’ intention to remain in the nonprofit field as an Executive Director. Many women (n=7) reported that the program had a positive influence on their desire to remain in the sector. For example, one woman commented, “It’s encouraged me to remain an ED. I wasn’t planning to leave soon, but seeing that there are women who’ve been EDs for 10-15 years, I realized it was possible.” Another commented, “I wasn’t thinking of leaving, but I was on the edge of burnout after only one and a half years. I knew something had to change because it didn’t feel sustainable. Now it feels sustainable. This was an important way to get, learn and grow, and to know that I can get something out of this as well as give.” A number of other women (n=6) reported that they already intended to remain but that the program helped validate this decision. One explained, “I would be [staying in this position] anyway, but the program has given me more tools to feel more effective in this field. It’s given me encouragement.”

There were a few women who said that the program provided them with more information to make the decision about whether to stay or leave the position. One reported, “It’s allowed me to better understand what I’m getting myself into. It provided me with the tools to be able to do that successfully, if I decide to work in this type of organization. It hasn’t swayed me one way or another, but rather stabilized me.” Another person observed, “Part of me questions whether to continue being part of the nonprofit sector, and I think it has to do with what I’m going through with this particular organization and with a particular staff person. My quality of life is what I need to prioritize. It’s been a year I’ve been an ED, and I’ve questioned it. The program opened up my eyes about what are my priorities and what’s important for me.”

## Organizational Impacts

In addition to exploring the key intended outcomes discussed above, the survey also included questions related to the effect of program participation on women’s organizations. According to survey results, the percentage of EDs who had clearly defined visions for their organizations significantly increased from 54 percent at baseline to 87 percent by post-test (Exhibit 15). Much of the change occurred within the first six months of program participation. Approximately, 83 percent of EDs agreed to this statement at mid-survey. There was also a statistically significant increase in the proportion of EDs who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” to the following statement: “The organization has clearly articulated strategies or action plans for achieving its goals.” Much of the improvement in this area was realized in the second half of the program.

Exhibit 15: Changes in Mission, Vision and Goals

Percent who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the following statements:	Baseline	Post-Test	p Value
<b>The organization has a clearly defined mission statement</b>			
All participants	20 (83%)	20 (91%)	.45
San Francisco Bay Area	9 (75%)	8 (80%)	.78
Missouri	11 (92%)	12 (100%)	.31
<b>The staff, the Board, and I are aligned with the organization’s mission</b>			
All participants	19 (79%)	19 (83%)	.76
San Francisco Bay Area	8 (67%)	8 (73%)	.75
Missouri	11 (92%)	11 (92%)	n/a
<b>I have a clearly defined vision for where the organization is headed</b>			
All participants	13 (54%)	20 (87%)	.01*
San Francisco Bay Area	7 (58%)	9 (82%)	.22
Missouri	6 (50%)	11 (92%)	--
<b>The organization has clearly articulated strategies or action plans for achieving its goals</b>			
All participants	11 (46%)	18 (78%)	.02*
San Francisco Bay Area	7 (58%)	8 (73%)	.47
Missouri	4 (33%)	10 (83%)	.01*

-- Test results not valid due to expected cell size count less than 5.

\* Statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

Missouri EDs were less likely to have clear organizational visions and strategies at baseline, compared to San Francisco Bay Area EDs. Yet by post-survey, the proportion of Missouri EDs reporting that their organizations had clearly articulated strategies significantly increased from 33 percent to 83 percent. There was also a trend among Missouri EDs toward having more clearly defined visions for their organizations.

EDs also reported statistically significant increases in the areas of clear decision-making processes, existence of grievance procedures for staff and having clearly defined roles and responsibilities for staff (Exhibit 16). Changes in organizational decision-making processes and grievance procedures occurred mostly within the first six months of program participation, while staff roles improved throughout the program.

Exhibit 16: Changes in Organizational Infrastructure

Percent who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the following statements:	Baseline	Post-Test	p Value
<b>The organization has written policies and procedures</b>			
All participants	15 (65%)	22 (96%)	--
San Francisco Bay Area	5 (42%)	11 (100%)	--
Missouri	10 (91%)	11 (92%)	.95
<b>The organization's personnel policies include a clearly defined grievance procedure for staff</b>			
All participants	13 (54%)	19 (83%)	.04*
San Francisco Bay Area	4 (33%)	9 (82%)	--
Missouri	9 (75%)	10 (83%)	.62
<b>The roles and responsibilities of all staff are clearly defined</b>			
All participants	11 (46%)	19 (86%)	.00*
San Francisco Bay Area	4 (33%)	8 (73%)	.06
Missouri	7 (58%)	11 (100%)	--
<b>The organization has a clearly defined decision-making process</b>			
All participants	6 (26%)	17 (74%)	.00*
San Francisco Bay Area	2 (18%)	8 (73%)	.01*
Missouri	4 (33%)	9 (75%)	.04*

-- Test results not valid due to expected cell size count less than 5.

\* Statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

Compared to Missouri organizations, San Francisco Bay Area organizations were less likely to have personnel policies that included grievance procedures for staff at baseline. The difference was statistically significant. At post-test, over 80 percent of organizations from both cohorts had these procedures in place. San Francisco Bay Area organizations were also less likely to have written policies and staff roles at baseline compared to Missouri organizations. By post-test, survey scores from both cohorts closely mirrored one another. Interestingly, the number of organizations with clear decision-making processes significantly increased within both cohorts.

## 5. Case Studies of Program Participants

The case studies are designed to illustrate the variety of experiences and outcomes that different EDs had with the Leadership Development Program. Each case study focuses on a particular area or areas where the program did or did not have an impact, and not on the entirety of the ED's experience. All names of EDs are pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

### Sandra's Experience

Sandra started participating in the Leadership Development Program with an understanding that it would provide training on subjects of greatest professional interest to participants. Although she initially was a bit concerned about the potential group dynamics she would encounter, she easily acclimated to the group and to the wealth of information presented. Overall, Sandra felt the project “definitely exceeded” her expectations and “certainly raised [her] level of performance.”

During her time with the project, Sandra and her organization faced several challenges including budgeting, effectively working with the board, and employee management. In each instance, Sandra was able to take the lessons learned and feedback from the other participants to address challenges successfully. In the case of the organization's budgeting process, Sandra was able to transform a budget that was “not user-friendly for grant proposals” to a “high-level, comprehensive budget” using the information learned and guidelines offered. As she explained, “It gave me the courage and confidence combined” and was especially helpful for someone like her who “isn't so detail oriented.”

Sandra also noted that the leadership circles provided her with an opportunity to get feedback and “see things as they were.” Having the impartial perspective of professional counterparts was helpful particularly in dealing with interpersonal issues because “there's really nobody you can ask— you can't talk to the staff or board” about other people associated with the organization. For example, Sandra needed to face the difficult task of confronting employee performance and discipline issues. As she described, “The challenge was facing the reality that I had an employee who was low functioning and had to depart.” After telling her story and responding to key questions from the leadership circle, she was encouraged to see the employee's level of functioning from a donor's perspective and to evaluate whether the employee's work was a good investment in donor dollars. Ultimately, Sandra was able to follow through and replace the low-functioning employee with one who was high performing and a “perfect match” with the organization. Similarly, she was able to address some of the key challenges of working with the board in a more effective manner. In part, this was a direct result of receiving coaching from the leadership group, which helped to “clear her vision” and see the situation correctly. Sandra plans to continue to utilize the network of women from her leadership circle to get feedback, which she considers vital for leaders.

Ultimately, Sandra feels her participation in the project gave her the tools for better performance and leadership as well as a “positive outlook in my future in the not-for-profit world.” She believes that, with continued effort, she will be able to sustain the lessons learned and considers the project to have been an “outstanding leadership and training experience.” Not only did it provide an opportunity to better herself and

her skills, but it represented a “huge investment” in her organization that will be reflected in their “ability to work in the community in the future.”

## Carmen’s Experience

Carmen began the leadership program during a time when her organization was facing substantial financial challenges. As the months went by, the board and Carmen tried several strategies to ensure that the organization would stay afloat during their planning phase. Downsizing the organization was one of the last options. Consequently, for the last six months of the organization’s existence, Carmen ran the organization with the sole support of her board and not staff.

Throughout the organization’s struggles, Carmen continued to participate in the Leadership Development Program and implemented what she could during the organization’s struggling period. According to Carmen, the leadership program proved to be an indispensable support mechanism as she realized that the organization that she had devoted so much energy and time into was unfortunately going to shut its doors. Carmen asserted that one of the program’s highlights was the support she received from the network of peers during the organization’s struggle. She commented, “The program helped because I knew that I had peers specifically in the small group [leadership circles]. I had folks that were there and [were] just supportive. It made me feel like a leader when the organization I was the leader of was closing down.”

While undergoing tremendous stress in trying to sustain an organization, Carmen hoped the Leadership Development Program would help her build a solid network of women EDs of color. Through the leadership circles Carmen was able to become part of a network of individuals she could rely on. Her peers provided the support she needed as she faced a difficult transition in her career. She stated, “One of the most impactful things was that people were rallying behind me no matter what. I thought it was amazing and that attests to the relationships I formed in the program. I think it’s one of the better types of relationships I have been able to build within a program like this.”

While the networks and connections Carmen formed with other participants were invaluable, the skills she received from the workshops were not as satisfying. As she expressed, “I think the relationship-building was one of the more important things I got out of it rather than specific skills.” Carmen further explained that the workshops might not have been as useful to her given that she had been involved in another leadership program that focused on strengthening the skills covered in the workshops.

One area of the workshops that did prove to be beneficial during her organization’s challenging times was the financial management and leadership piece. Carmen was able to develop her skills in this area significantly. Carmen has been able to offer the skills she learned through the Leadership Development Program workshops in subsequent conversations she has had with members of the organization’s board that are having discussions about re-opening the organization. Carmen has been able to share with them important financial management strategies that were not in place prior to the organization’s closure. She commented, “Financial leadership was pretty eye opening. I can take it away and know that in another organization I have that skill.”

Carmen also observed that it would have been useful to incorporate specific time during both the workshops and leadership circles to share insights with other participants in an open space to engage in “free flowing

discussions.” According to Carmen, the leadership circles limited the opportunities for rich dialogues as most participants were trying to get used to the process. From previous encounters with other leadership circles, Carmen was familiar with the format yet she continued to struggle with it herself. She wondered what her perception of the format would have been had she not had prior experience with the method. She explained, “I was somewhat familiar with it [leadership circles] and I guess going in knowing I could see the purpose of it, but I am wondering if I would have bought into it if I would have come with no previous experience.”

In response to the leadership circles, Carmen noted that she would have preferred to have the leadership circles be composed of a mixture of more experienced and less experienced EDs. This would allow for more engaging conversations and would have led to a more conducive learning environment. As an alternative, Carmen suggested having more time for the larger group to meet as a whole in an atmosphere that supported free flowing dialogue.

According to Carmen, one of the most interesting insights that came out the leadership circles was the notion that women of color struggle tremendously with being stern and directive towards staff and board members. From her experience, Carmen observed that women of color who find themselves in positions such as that of EDs are often more concerned about how they relate to staff. Carmen felt this was a constant theme that surfaced throughout the issues brought up in the leadership circles. Additionally, she thought this was an excellent subject to bring up in such circles as it had no clear answer but evoked an excellent exchange of ideas. She explained, “I thought that was a really good piece [struggle with being directive] that challenged us in a very good way because it was an ongoing process. We were able to take baby steps and keep those conversations alive knowing it wouldn’t change over night.

Carmen’s most poignant moment came from her realization that over the course of the last year and her involvement in the Leadership Development Program she had learned more than she thought she had. She stated, “I came out of it [Leadership Development Program] knowing that I know more now than I thought I did.”

## Hazel’s Experience

During the past ten years, Hazel’s organization has grown from an all-volunteer grassroots movement to a comprehensive agency responding to a wide range of community needs. As her agency has continued to grow, it has now entered into a period of transition, particularly in the area of funding. Hazel explained, “We’re transitioning from being grant-based to fee for services. This is like creating a whole new organization.” She stressed that her participation in the Leadership Development Program exceeded all of her expectations and provided information that was vital during her organization’s transition. She reported, “I learned things that I absolutely had to know in order to transition — especially the financial aspects. The information was so timely — just the thing you had to know at just the right moment. Without that knowledge, the transition could have been disastrous.”

When the project participants started working on the financial component of the training, Hazel realized that her agency needed to restructure its financial department. Working on these issues with the other participants helped her to manage the transition with the staff more effectively, in terms of both the psychological issues associated with change and developing appropriate billing processes. This transition required training the staff

to do paperwork on top of their already very difficult and intense job responsibilities and encompassed “two months where we really didn’t like each other.” Within the next few months, Hazel predicts that her organization will have “accomplished a great feat” by addressing this challenge and believes that they are already doing better and more sustainable work with fewer staff.

Another issue that Hazel addressed during the project was to “embrace who I am” and better appreciate her abilities. As she noted, “We’re a faith-based organization, and we still have a hard time getting invited to the table, especially on the federal and state level. I really saw that I had been the ‘little-faith based person’ asking for permission to come to the table.” Through the support of the leadership circle, Hazel was able to recognize that she and her organization “didn’t have to prove who we are; we should embrace who we are. We had already proven our work over the past ten years. The theme for me was discovering who I really am.” Ultimately, Hazel feels that her participation has given her “more courage to try new things to enhance our work and the field.” She is interested in trying to have a greater influence and to “impact a larger arena” by sharing her experiences through writing and speaking in other states.

Similarly, Hazel considered that the workshop on becoming a “strength-based organization” had an immediate and huge impact. She explained that not only did her agency immediately incorporate this perspective with the staff, but that they also are using it with their clients. One of her staff members commented that the staff now sees themselves differently and that, “We work on our strengths rather than our weaknesses.” Hazel felt that one unexpected lesson that she learned was “realizing the power that I have as a leader” and how to use that power to strengthen the work of her organization. Her employee agrees that Hazel has grown as a leader and is now more confident in standing by the decisions she makes. For example, Hazel is now working more directly with the agency’s male clients in a role that she previously felt was more appropriate for men. As her employee states, “She’s taking on the challenge, saying, ‘I am in charge and you will hear me.’”

Because Hazel works in an extremely rural area of Missouri, she was particularly appreciative of having the opportunity to share experiences with peers. She felt “empowered by being a part of a group” and realizing that other women were facing similar experiences. She noted that, “We just don’t have that, especially in rural areas.” As one of her staff members described, “Not only did [the project] get her out and involved with other people who were her counterparts, she also saw that she wasn’t the only one. She saw that the others had issues in common, were doing the same things that she was doing, facing the same struggles, and wanted to go forward. They were a support group for one another.” Although Hazel is concerned that staying in contact as a group will be a challenge without the project’s presence, she insisted that, “We’re going to find a way somehow to stay together.” She emphasized how the “peers have impacted each other” and that “we still need to continue to support each other.”

Hazel and her employee both agreed that her participation with the project had a significant impact on her individually as well as for the staff and board members. Hazel was committed to sharing the lessons learned with others and said that, “It didn’t take long for [the board] to understand that I was coming back with some really valuable information.” Her staff member observed, “Whatever she learned, she brought it to the table and showed us.” As she explained, “I got all the benefits from her training” through secondhand experience. The staff member also noted Hazel’s willingness to try a new plan or project to benefit the organization and that now the board is “more involved than ever before” because of her leadership. When asked to summarize her experience with the project, Hazel answered, “life-changing, empowering, and enlightening.”

## Carol's Experience

The reception area bustles with the activity of staff preparing for upcoming presentations and trainings. Discussions of upcoming activities permeate the reception area decorated with vibrant colors and images of organizational accomplishments. As the new executive director, Carol has been overseeing the daily operations of this dynamic organization while acclimating to the new position and environment in which she has immersed herself. Since taking over as ED, Carol has had limited opportunities to reflect on the challenges she has encountered in her new role. Carol hoped that the Leadership Development Program would provide her with an opportunity to interact with other women EDs of color to share experiences that would prove useful to her in her new position.

Coming from an academic background focused on theory, Carol enthusiastically anticipated the practical trainings and Leadership Circles that were part of the program. She yearned to receive practical information in order to bring back that knowledge to her organization. Most of all, Carol looked forward to interacting with other women EDs and learning from their experiences. As Carol expressed, "What was important and useful was hearing how more experienced [women] EDs would address challenges."

Although Carol was satisfied with the program overall, she wondered whether it would have benefited her to wait a year to participate in the program while she settled in her new position as ED:

*If you are running like crazy and then you go into a room, it's hard to switch gears. That raised the question of whether it would have been better to wait a year for the program because I was taking over as executive director at the same time.*

Carol noted that due to her limited experience as an ED, she would have appreciated having more direction from both program staff and fellow peers in the program. Carol wanted "access to more senior [EDs]" to engage in free flowing conversations regarding the challenges they faced and the steps they engaged in to address similar situations. While Carol craved the opportunity to interact with more experienced staff, she also enjoyed the sense of comfort that she experienced in the Learning Circles from other less experienced women EDs. She observed, "It was comfortable to hear from other less experienced [women] executive directors that it was a challenge because you felt a certain bond."

Carol described the Learning Circles as useful and empowering. According to Carol, the Learning Circles taught her and peers how to ask open-ended questions that helped them focus and be clear about the issues they faced. Moreover, clarifying the issues brought by each participant helped identify the degree of control each participant had over situations and the steps to take. Carol recalled, "To refrain and ask more generic questions, you elicit the person to reflect on their own situation." Despite the usefulness of the Learning Circles, Carol continued to stress the importance of having more opportunities to engage with more experienced EDs. She stated, "The Learning Circles empowered you to find your own answers, but if you have limited background you don't have many resources and you need that. I kept on craving to listen to the more senior people in the room."

While Carol would have enjoyed receiving added interaction and support from more experienced EDs, she identified several new skills and insights she acquired as a result of her participation in the Leadership Development Program. These skills and insights would be extremely valuable as she continued in her position

as executive director. One of the most important insights she identified was having “down time” for herself. She described the need to incorporate a balance between your job and personal life which was something she had not practiced routinely during her first months as executive director. As Carol explained, “No matter how crazy it is at work, you’re not going to last if you don’t figure out a way to rest.”

Learning how to have a balance between her work and personal life also helped her learn how to delegate tasks. By listening to the experiences of others and program staff, Carol understood she couldn’t do it all and her staff was there for support. Carol also recognized the importance of communication. She realized she had to learn how to communicate in a different way. She went on to explain how for women it is sometimes difficult to be directive and there are times when it is needed. Carol explained, “There are times when I need to exert a different type of sense of myself or that there is that type of self that hasn’t had a voice – how to mix those personalities [and understanding] that leadership is more complicated than just one theory.”

## Emily’s Experience

When Emily began participating in the Leadership Development Program, she was excited to “create a support network and to build skills at the same time.” One of the major benefits was not only the excellent training and facilitation received, but also “that there were so many wonderful relationships established.” For Emily, her participation has encouraged her professionally and given her “a network of people” that she can turn to. She noted, “It helped me to know that there are lots of other people who feel the same way and that we have to learn as we go.” Emily commented that she has heard “nothing but rave reviews” from the other participants because the project “enhanced our skills and helped us to build a network of people that we feel comfortable approaching about our challenges.” She further described “the great level of trust” among the group and said that it was “more than that, it was of care and concern.” She believes that she could call any of her group with “a problem and they would empathize.”

One of the challenges that Emily worked on during the project was related to effectively structuring her board. As she stated, “I can remember us having a number of conversations about board challenges. You learn so much from your co-participants, not just the facilitators.” It helped her to have “other people in similar roles [to] turn to for problem solving.” The leadership circle would ask questions to help Emily “rethink how the board was currently structured — where were the gaps” and what she wanted the board to look like and do differently. Rather than giving her the answers, the leadership circle helped her to come up with her own solutions. Emily explained that after discussing the board restructuring with other participants, “it became clear that we needed people capable of doing fundraising. Before, the board members were mostly from partner organizations with little familiarity with fundraising.”

Through the process in the leadership circle, Emily was able to identify the types of people and professions that needed to be represented on the board, including individuals with experiences in finances and publicity. One board member believed that the organization was at a “crucial place in terms of board development” and that Emily was able to “clarify a change in direction that our board needed to go.” Emily feels that the restructuring of the board has been very successful and that the board is now much stronger. She noted that she was “pleased with the people we were able to recruit” and that they now have members who are “more seasoned with dealing with fundraising” and that they also have better geographic representation. Her board member

agreed and said that they now “have four or five new board members who are probably more typical with where we’re trying to go.”

In addition to adding new members to the board, the board member felt that Emily’s participation in the project gave her “more boldness to communicate effectively” and to “clearly communicate her needs and what the organization needs to be successful.” Although Emily thinks that the new members may be a bit overwhelmed learning about all of the organization’s activities, she welcomes the “opportunity to have new people with new ideas on board.” She noted that her participation with the Leadership Development Program has “increased the awareness of our board a great deal about what their function is” and that she and the board are preparing to develop strategic plans for the next year as well as for the next three and five years. Her board member believes that the organization is now able to make plans for long-term sustainability in part due to the training that Emily received.

Because Emily’s organization operates in a very rural, isolated area with tremendous poverty and few “corporations or wealthy individuals who can make donations,” funding is always a challenge. Emily knew that their funding strategy, which had been primarily grant-based, had to change. She stressed that, “we have to develop a donor base and increase awareness of what we do.” Several of the other program participants were also facing similar issues related to financial management and sustainability. As Emily explained, “Many of the start-up grants were ending, so we talked about different strategies that people were using. We all have different knowledge; that’s the benefit of being able to network and share.” Although the participants were all searching for new funding sources, Emily emphasized that the participants were not competitive among each other and all felt very comfortable trading ideas.

One fundraising strategy that Emily employed was to ask each board member to identify potential donors, which has already resulted in some new donations. Another board member is helping to organize a joint fundraiser with two other community-based organizations to highlight the organization’s work to a larger audience as well as to potential donors. A major success from these efforts was the recent donation of a building. Because Emily does not have a background in nonprofit management, she feels it will be challenging to continue developing new fundraising strategies without the support of the project. She hopes that there will be ways to sustain the learning opportunities and that project participants may be involved in future training activities. Emily considered her experience to be an “exceptional growth opportunity” and is hopeful that she and the other participants will continue their support network.

## Lisa’s Experience

Brown grocery bags topped with an assortment of seasonal fruits and vegetables line the hallway leading to Lisa’s office. The grocery bags are part of an innovative program that started in proximity to Lisa’s transition from program director to executive director of the organization. Lisa looked forward to the added support she hoped to receive from the leadership program and interchange of ideas with other women EDs of color facing similar challenges. Specifically, Lisa was eager to learn about financial management in hopes of bringing it back to her organization.

Prior to her involvement with the leadership program, Lisa felt that in order to be an effective leader of her organization she needed to be an “expert” in every topic related to her organization. Through the training

workshops she realized that her role was to guide staff as they became experts in specific topics related to the organization. She observed, “Before I thought that I needed to be an expert at financial management, accounting, and all other aspects of running the organization if I was the executive director. Through the trainings I learned that I needed to possess some knowledge but the staff were the real experts and my job was to be more of a guide and that gave me confidence.

A board member that works closely with Lisa confirmed the outstanding contribution she has made to the organization’s financial management, board development, and staff management. Moreover, the board member noted Lisa’s overall improved confidence as executive director which helped strengthen the organization. The board member explained in detail: “If you can build the skills and confidence of the executive director – everyone will benefit from it. She has already shown that by supporting and building the infrastructure of the organization, which is where she needs to focus, and that is something that this program has given her.”

Through the leadership circles Lisa also learned how to engage her staff in the overall mission of the organization and adapt to their individual learning styles. Lisa explained that although she felt the leadership circles did not accommodate her particular learning style she was still able to get something from the experience. Through the leadership circles she realized that an important aspect of leadership includes being able to mold to people’s different learning styles. Lisa reflected on her own approach and incorporated this new insight into her daily interactions with staff and board members. She commented, “Because of the structure of the leadership circles I learned that people have different styles of learning and that as an executive director it is good to accommodate to those styles. Before when I had meetings with staff it was all done in my own style and now I can adapt to the staff’s individual style.”

While Lisa had several positive experiences she was able to apply directly in her new position as executive director, she felt the program could do more to support women of color more effectively. Lisa discussed that the workshops proved to be extremely helpful but they were “too short” and the time allowed for discussion of the issues raised during the workshops was also limited. She would have appreciated to have a space immediately following the workshops where participants could engage in an open discussion on how the topics discussed affected their individual organizations.

Lisa also felt that the issue of race was not properly addressed. At the onset of the program she envisioned race and its impact on their work would have been a central theme running throughout the program, yet she was surprised that it was never directly addressed. As Lisa explained, “I assumed that because it was a program with women of color we would address how race impacts our work and our lives but we never touched on this.”

## 6. Overall Satisfaction with the Program

This section of the report summarizes data regarding participants overall satisfaction with the project as well as their satisfaction with the workshops, Learning Circles and professional development stipend. It also includes participants' recommendations for program improvement.

### Overall Satisfaction

Overall, a majority of EDs (n=19) widely agreed that the Leadership Development Program met and often surpassed their expectations. Some representative comments include the following:

- *My expectation was primarily what has happened: the availability to really share, and to have guidance on problems. To be in a forum where you could open up and discuss and get solutions that you couldn't with your Board or your members. These expectations have been met.*
- *All my expectations have been met. They've done a lot to teach us different methods of fundraising, and differences in explaining your organization – explaining who you're serving instead of what you do, bringing it back to the recipients and not just the organization. It's been very helpful.*
- *It has exceeded my expectations. I had underestimated the value of networking with other EDs of color, and knowing I could contact other women. I had high expectations in terms of quality and all of the speakers were knowledgeable and informative.*
- *[The Program was] above and beyond my expectations. I expected to learn new things, but I didn't expect to learn things that would be so life changing for myself and my organization.*
- *It has exceeded my expectations. It's an amazing program. The entire group has been available, knowledgeable, supportive, and the wealth of other women in the same situation has been phenomenal – that resource [of women EDs] has been amazing and vital.*

There were a small number of EDs (n=4) who expressed that the program met their expectations in some areas, but not in others. One wished that she had gotten more specific help in the area of fundraising. She explained, "In the area of fundraising, that hasn't quite helped; I'm not sure what I'm looking for, but it was not as helpful as I thought it would be, maybe because fundraising is just so challenging." Another participant commented, "A lot of [the information presented in the workshops] was a repeat for me; it didn't reflect what I needed. There was a lot of fundraising information that was presented and that were not compelling for me."

Finally, two EDs indicated that they were hoping to obtain more individualized support from the Program. One would have liked to have had more time for consultation with CompassPoint staff. She indicated, "I also was hoping it would take it to another level where we would receive consultations from CompassPoint's experts. They say we're experts, but we're learning as we're going and we make mistakes. It would be good to have coaching or consultation to lead us or guide us. I wish it went that extra step." The other participant felt that there was not enough time for individual participants to discuss their specific issues with each other. She commented, "The trainings were too short and there was no time to discuss the individual issues of the participants. There was no time built into the agenda to talk about the specific issues that people were having

and to get feedback. There was only a lot of information but no time to talk about how it related to your own situation.”

All participants, including those who indicated that not all of their expectations were met by the program, strongly felt that the program should be replicated in the future for other women EDs. One of the Missouri participants commented, “The quality of training that is available to people in my position is limited, not very accessible and not very exciting. This quality of this program, it being so applicable, and the connections with the other women... I think it would energize anyone who’s selected for something like this.”

Many of the San Francisco Bay Area participants agreed, and described the importance of programs tailored to women EDs of color. One individual explained, “[This program] fills the void of support and training for women of color who are EDs. The majority of people served by nonprofits are people of color. There’s high burnout among women because there’s lack of trainings. We have more struggles to be effective and to be taken seriously and we are operating in isolation, usually in agencies that are struggling the most.” Another observed,

*[Through the program,] you learn that management encompasses so many elements in terms of planning and delegating. We as women of color don’t want to show that you can’t do something, but I learned that it’s okay to acknowledge that you don’t understand something and that it’s okay to delegate it to someone else that might do it better or have the skills to do it more effectively. You don’t have to come in with all the answers, though women of color feel they are expected or pressured to have all the answers. When we sat together, we talked about how we’d work and work because we didn’t want it to appear that we were not qualified. The challenge became, ‘How do you handle the perception that you shouldn’t be here [as the ED]?’ [I learned] that you go in and bring your knowledge, and if you don’t have it, you tap into your resource pool.*

## Usefulness of Workshops

All but one participant reported that the workshops provided as part of the Leadership Development program were very useful. One person commented, “They all had phenomenal exercises and challenged you to think. I call it ‘talking heads’ sometimes, where you can almost go to sleep because someone’s lecturing. These trainings were not that way. Each individual that presented brought forth exercises and challenged us to bring out the information.” Another agreed, and commented, “They were very useful. They provided a good foundation to understand how a nonprofit organization functions. It’s a place to start with guiding me in terms of the tools that are available out there and that I could refer to.”

When asked to describe which subject areas covered in the training were most useful, the three trainings most frequently mentioned by participants were: finance, (n=16), strengths-based leadership (n=9), and board and governance (n=7). Participants were particularly appreciative of the training on financial management and described being able to apply immediately what they had learned to their organization. One person commented, “The financial leadership training was great. I was able to see the larger organizational level picture – being able to know financial reports and being able to read it very quickly in terms of the financial health of the organization; looking at profit and loss statements quickly, balance sheets, and being able to know the difference between the documents and understand it.” Another person agreed, commenting that, “The training on financial management and leadership was very good. They did a really good job of breaking things

down, even if people didn't have financial background. I can apply [what I learned] specifically to our budget, what to do in an audit of the organization, how to present financial information as far as grant making." A third person added, "I came back from the financial management workshop and restructured our whole financial department. Using the book they gave us, there's a chart in there that shows the duties [of different staff] and it was an 'Aha!' moment that completely changed the stability of the organization."

When asked which content areas were least helpful, a majority of participants (n=16) reported that all of the workshops were helpful in some way. However, a small number of people expressed dissatisfaction with the fundraising (n=3), financial management (n=2) and board (n=1) workshops. In general, these folks either felt that the training information wasn't applicable to their organization or that they already knew the content area well.

When asked how the workshops could be improved, participants made the following suggestions:

- **Increase the length of workshops (n=6):** Many participants suggested increasing the length of workshops in order to cover more information. One San Francisco Bay Area participant explained, "I know that we only meet half-day and it seems like a lot, but I would've liked to have them be longer. It's a drive anyway for those who work further away. If we're going to drive this far or commute this far, we should spend more time. We were running out of time and things were hurried." A Missouri participant agreed, and added, "I felt like we always needed more time, but that's hard to do because of where people are located throughout the state. The first session we had was a day and a half, and that might have been worthwhile to do for the others."
- **Include opportunities for open discussion as part of the workshops (n=4):** Several participants expressed a desire to engage in open discussion as part of the workshops in order to explore individual issues participants were facing that were related to the content being presented. One person explained, "There should be more of a good mixture of practical training and a sharing or non-skill oriented portion of the workshops." Another agreed, stating that, "A lot of the trainings were introductory information. For example, with management styles, I wanted time to really talk more about particular management styles. Things were presented, but we didn't have time to discuss it fully. For instance, I wanted to know, 'What does it mean to have a particular management style? How do you adapt styles to be culturally competent?'"
- **Provide more training opportunities (n=3):** Some participants felt that they got more out of the training opportunities relative to the Learning Circles, and would have liked to have spent more program time in workshops.

Additional suggestions made by individual participants included using more case studies as part of the learning model, allowing participation by staff members, making training materials available to those who missed a workshop, and giving participants homework assignments.

## Usefulness of Leadership Circles

All but two participants found the Learning Circles to be very useful. Many women discussed the importance of the Circles as a confidential forum to talk through individual problems they were facing both personally and professionally. Representative comments included the following

- *It allowed me to be open and honest, to have a place where I wasn't being judged and could communicate and verbalize challenges I was having.*
- *It was an opportunity to talk about personality issues and things I would not feel comfortable to talk about in my community. It provided a free forum and you knew that the information was not going anywhere out.*
- *We were able to get to know each other, both the personal and professional challenges. It was wonderful. In an ED role, it's hard to have others in the same level and discuss openly and have them understand your experience. The [leadership circles] provided an even playing field where you can confidentially share and feel safe and receive feedback.*
- *When you're sitting with peers who go through the same things and have different degrees of experience...it helps to get an objective perspective on things. I feel like [in the circles] there's a freedom to vent and talk about insecurities that you can't share with your staff but you can share with your peers because they're not working with you or looking to you to lead.*
- *It developed a forum where you could talk about problems confidentially. In any nonprofit, you're facing challenges every day, and sometimes you have nobody to talk to because you can't talk to your employees or board about it... In the circles, you can open up everything that's bottled up. The release allows you to be able to do your job better.*

As described previously, the Learning Circles helped reduce the sense of isolation that many women described feeling. One person observed, "The whole issue of isolation... Women of color are reluctant to reach out for help because we think we have to do it all. Reaching out and peer feedback is helpful and essential. Helping each other think through options, listening to each other and realizing that the growth was our own, but we could support each other. It was validating to realize I'm not alone. I don't have to do it all myself. It helped me get out of my own little box."

Participants also appreciated the opportunity to talk through people's individual problems and help brainstorm about potential solutions. One person explained, "With the smaller group, you can pay more attention to one person's needs and talk through them." One person felt that this created more accountability for her to address challenges she was facing in her work. She commented, "The small groups encouraged me to come up with action steps before the session was over. Before, I would just bring up an issue. But, within the group, I felt accountability because I wanted to report back at the next circle that I followed up on some things, on the action steps."

When asked to identify how the Learning Circles could be improved, several participants (n=5) suggested that there should be more flexibility in the application of the model (n=5). For example, several of the San

Francisco participants expressed a desire to share information and to give or receive advice. One person explained, “The circles were based on asking questions, versus giving information, and maybe a forum that would be more useful would be a combination of asking questions and giving information – a little more feedback, versus questioning only.” Another agreed, and added, “My suggestion would be just not having too many restrictions. Maybe ask for room for individuals to ask for advice, and allowing room to diverge from the model if it’s not working for the individual.” A Missouri participant noted that there were tensions within her group regarding when it was okay to deviate from the model, but she found these deviations helpful. She observed, “There have been tensions about coaching techniques and if we would deviate, we would feel guilty. Maybe they should clarify that. Sometimes we would give advice and you’re not supposed to do that in coaching. But it could be resources or sharing experiences. It wasn’t clear what we should and shouldn’t do, but what we did was great, so maybe it needs to be spelled out.”

Other suggestions offered by participants included the following:

- **Provide training regarding how to coach others (n=2):** Two participants felt that the Learning Circles would have been more effective if participants were given more training in how to coach others. One explained, “Before beginning the circles, we need to receive a training on coaching, because I found when we were in circle, we were often wondering, is this a coaching question or an advice question? Many of us are used to doing advice, so a preliminary training before starting would be good.”
- **Use each session to explore a pre-planned topic or theme (n=5):** Many women indicated that they would have liked to use the circles to explore particular themes or topic areas that were known ahead of time. One person explained, “We talked about how if we all came in with a certain area [subject] that we were all going to talk about each circle, like we were all going to talk about personnel issues, financial issues—if we had more of a focus for each meeting, we could be better prepared to help each other.” Another agreed, stating that, “It was interesting that we were allowed to bring a problem to the group to discuss, but maybe we could have alternated that with the facilitator coming with an issue and letting us talk about how we would deal with it.”
- **Institute a buddy system in order to encourage full participation (n=2):** Two participants suggested creating a buddy system whereby participants could check in with each other to make sure they were planning to attend the meeting and to talk through what they were going to discuss ahead of time. One circle actually did this and found that it improved attendance.
- **Increase the length of individual sessions (n=2):** Two participants expressed the opinion that Learning Circles should be longer in order to have enough time to work through the issues being discussed at each session.
- **Increase the number of Learning Circles held as part of the program (n=2):** As one person stated simply, “I wish we could do more of them.”

Additional suggestions made by individual participants included bringing the different cohorts together to network, assigning homework, providing meeting reminders, allowing participants to recommend facilitators and providing clearer information up front about the purpose and format of the Learning Circles.

## Usefulness of the Professional Development Stipends

As mentioned previously, all participants were provided with an award of up to \$1,500 in professional development funds to support the pursuit of additional leadership or professional development activities as determined by each cohort member. During interviews, participants were asked to identify how they used these funds and what impact, if any, these funds had. Women reported using these funds to pay for a variety of things including additional training and education; technology-related items (i.e., computers, hardware, software), conference registration and travel fees; private coaching sessions, self-care (i.e., massages or gym memberships); smart phones; and books. In general, women were very pleased to be provided a stipend for their participation, with one person calling it a “wonderful surprise.”

## General Recommendations for Improvement

In addition to asking for how to improve the workshops and Learning Circles, women were asked to provide any general recommendation for improvement of the Leadership Development Program. In response, many of the Missouri participants described issues relating to the distance they had to travel for the program. One person explained, “The location was really my only obstacle to really be able to take part in all the sessions. Driving to St. Louis and back is a day and a half trip.” Although participants felt that the program was worth it, they would have liked a more accessible location.

As described previously, some individuals (n=4) expressed a desire for more one-on-one coaching and individualized support as part of the program. One person commented, “Senior CompassPoint people should have pockets of funds so that they can work with participants individually. They have their own pocket of expertise and resources to help that person, so they could go in depth and help the individual and the organization as a whole.” Another person who was facing a particularly challenging time at her organization discussed her need for more in-depth support. She explained, “I was distressed about what was going on in my organization and figuring out what my role is and what my abilities are and what I can bring to the situation. The program did provide support, but I think I needed more.”

Two of the San Francisco Bay Area participants expressed the opinion that the program should have been more tailored or customized to the needs of women EDs of color. One commented,

*Although we were all women of color who were EDs serving primarily women of color in our communities, I don't feel like those issues were addressed. What does it mean to be a woman of color? We all came together under that premise, but we never really addressed it. In our small groups or in our trainings, we didn't touch upon that. We didn't talk about any racial dynamics encountered by women of color. For example, what does it mean to be a woman of color handling money? What's the stereotype of women of color EDs? How do we deal with the assumptions that women of color can't run an organization as effectively as white men?*

Additional suggestions made by participants included making the program longer, providing information on communicating with staff and board members, providing people management training, and targeting the program to newer EDs. Women also identified a number of topic areas they would like to see covered in more detail including grantwriting, evaluation, branding and marketing, community assessment, dealing with turf issues among nonprofits, staff recruitment and retention, public speaking, and use of technology.

## 7. Discussion and Recommendations

This final section includes a discussion of findings from the evaluation and recommendations for the future. Inclusion of two different pilot sites and target populations allowed for comparison of the model across sites and participants, and provided lessons learned for future replication of this model in different communities. This perspective is incorporated into the following findings and recommendations where relevant.

### Discussion

The Leadership Development Program for Women Executive Directors served two very different cohorts of women. This was due in part to differences in eligibility across the two sites. Specifically, participation was limited to women EDs of color in the Bay Area and to women EDs working in non-metropolitan or rural areas in Missouri. A majority of women in this latter group were white. The two cohorts also differed in terms of their work experience. On average, Bay Area participants had been in their ED positions and in the nonprofit sector for less time than participating Missouri EDs. These differences resulted in modifications to the program design that allowed Bay Area participants access to a mix of skills needed for running a nonprofit at each workshop, as opposed to focusing on one topic area per quarter. This seemed to work well for participants.

While the two cohorts shared a number of challenges in common, they also faced unique issues. For Bay Area participants, being a woman ED of color presents a number of special challenges with respect to having your leadership recognized and valued by others in the community. Several women described feeling that they have to work harder in order to exceed the expectations of others. In some cases, women feel pressured to be extremely self-reliant in overcoming these and other challenges in their work as opposed to seeking outside help or support. The opportunity to connect and learn from peers struggling with similar issues, as well as the material on strengths-based management, appears to have been particularly powerful for overcoming some of these issues. In addition, there were some women who would have liked to address issues related to being a woman of color more directly through the program.

In Missouri, women EDs described how geographic dispersion makes it difficult for them to connect with peers and other resources that would help them in their work. Missouri EDs were also more likely to report difficulties balancing professional responsibilities with personal responsibilities related to being a mother and wife. Women clearly appreciated the opportunity to come together with others doing similar work to talk through specific issues faced and to gain practical skills related to governance, nonprofit finance and fundraising. At the same time, it is less clear whether the Program will leave behind a sustainable peer network due to challenges associated with the geography of this state's rural communities.

According to both survey and interview data, the Leadership Development Program achieved several of its intended outcomes, as described below:

- **Leadership Skills** – Women exhibited statistically significant improvements in their reported ability to exercise leadership on a daily basis, to move their organization toward achieving its goals, and to

resolve conflicts. They also reported significant changes in self-ratings of their ability to manage people. During interviews, participants described growth in their ability to encourage and coach others to achieve goals, increased comfort with and confidence in their leadership skills, and realization of the importance of self-care as it relates to leadership.

- **Management Skills** – Program participants reported statistically significant improvements in their ability to ensure staff and Board members complete tasks in a timely manner and in their ability to delegate responsibilities to others. A majority of participants rated statements concerning interactions with staff and Board members highly at baseline. However, there was some movement toward improvement between baseline and post-testing.
- **Job Satisfaction** – Participants rated their job satisfaction fairly high on the baseline program survey, leaving little room for improvement. However, data from the interviews suggests that the program had a positive impact on participants’ job satisfaction by giving them more confidence and skills to do their job. Participants also exhibited positive, though not significant, improvement with regard to their ability to manage stress. The number of EDs who reported feeling effective at balancing the demands of their personal and professional lives and the number who felt that they had peers to turn to for support and information increased significantly over the project period. Qualitative data confirm that the program positively influenced EDs in these areas.
- **Planned Tenure** – Findings suggest that the Program had a positive impact on ED’s planned tenure, either because it increased their desire to stay in the field, it confirmed an already existing desire, or it provided them with information they needed to make a decision regarding whether they should remain in the field.

Overall, EDs widely agreed that the Leadership Development Program met and often surpassed their expectations, and all participants strongly felt that the program should be replicated in the future for other women executives. Participants were generally pleased with all three of the program components. The Leadership Circles provided a particularly compelling forum for many women in terms of reducing their sense of isolation, talking through individual problems and brainstorming solutions, and providing a confidential forum for learning from other peers. There were a couple of participants, however, whose comments suggested they would have preferred less peer interaction and more training. However, this did not appear to be the case with the majority of participants. Participants made a number of suggestions for how the Program could be improved, some of which are discussed again below.

## Recommendations

The following are recommendations for consideration should the Leadership Development Program be replicated based on findings from data collection involving program participants as well as quarterly debrief sessions with Program Staff.

- ✚ **Consider supplementing the program by providing participants with individualized assistance and support.** This could be done as a discrete component of the program which all participants receive, or

through a pool of technical assistance funds available to EDs who are struggling with particularly difficult issues that is managed by CompassPoint staff.

- + Continue to tailor programs to the individual needs and priorities of particular cohorts of women.** Demand for the program varied among the two sites, with a larger number of newer EDs applying to participate in the Bay Area relative to more seasoned EDs in Missouri. Customizing program implementation and workshop selection based on the characteristics and needs of the two different cohorts appeared to have worked well for the two cohorts. In addition, for programs focused on women EDs of color, findings suggest a need to find ways to address particular issues faced by these women directly through program content.
- + Consider a peer training option which would integrate workshop content with open discussion opportunities.** Participants expressed a desire to integrate materials and themes from the workshops into their discussions with each other. Suggestions included scheduling open discussion as part of the workshops or making time within the Learning Circles to explore workshop content. In addition, having Learning Circle facilitators attend workshops could provide important continuity across the two learning opportunities.
- + Facilitation of Learning Circles should incorporate and support flexibility in the Learning Circle model.** Some participants felt that open information sharing and advice giving was prohibited by the Learning Circle model, but felt that these types of information exchange would have been useful. For example, less experienced EDs indicated that they would have appreciated learning from more seasoned executives who had confronted similar challenges previously in their careers.
- + Provide more explicit training to EDs regarding how to coach others.** Some participants expressed a desire to learn more about coaching in order to employ this method effectively within Learning Circles. It took time for some participants to fully grasp this model within the context of the Learning Circle. In addition, participants appeared to have applied the coaching model used in Learning Circles with staff of their own organizations, suggesting that such training may have benefits both within and outside the Program.
- + Provide resources to support the sustainability of networks created through the Program.** Participants are eager to sustain the relationships and networks they build through the program. However, Program staff could probably provide important support for sustainability through the creation of a listserv for participants, cohort “reunions,” or convening participants to facilitate a session on their own (as was done with one of the Learning Circle cohorts). This is particularly important for the Missouri cohort who faces geographical challenges in terms of network sustainability.
- + Conduct additional research regarding how job satisfaction and stress relate to ED tenure.** The Leadership Development Program was designed in response to findings that the combination of high stress and limited access to support resources experienced by nonprofit EDs results in burnout. In light of this, it is interesting to note that participants rated their job satisfaction fairly high at baseline. It would be interesting to explore the concept of job satisfaction in greater depth by exploring participants’ satisfaction with their personal job performance versus various duties and functions

expected of an ED. It also appears that the Program did little to alter the amount of stress experience by participants, while it did change the ways in which participants cope with stress. Finally, leadership development programs can act as a catalyst for some individuals to leave their organizations. It would be interesting to explore the extent to which such individuals self-select themselves into programs.

- ✦ **Conduct follow-up research to explore the long-term results of this Program.** Follow-up interviews or a web-based survey of participating EDs could provide important insight into the long-term outcomes of the Leadership Development Program, including the sustainability of networks created and ED job satisfaction and tenure.