

LLC Focus Group Learning About The Potential Role of Leadership Development Strategies for Increasing Leadership Opportunities for People of Color

Framing Assumptions

Our inquiry assumes that:

- People of color are underrepresented in leadership positions in the non profit sector, and especially in large organizations with sizeable budgets.
- Diversification of the non-profit sector will have positive outcomes.
- Leadership development programs can help to increase leadership opportunities for people of color.

We are not assuming that:

- Non profit organizations with leadership representation of the communities served will have equitable access to resources and power.
- Leadership within non-profit organizations is the only or best way for people of color to exercise increased influence over community agendas.
- People of color would want leadership positions in many non-profits that have a history of paternalism, bureaucracy, or racism.
- Leadership development strategies alone can address the legacy and multiple manifestations of institutionalized racism.

What obstacles limit leadership opportunities for people of color?

Manifestations of Institutionalized, interpersonal and internalized oppression

- Disparity of opportunity to access of education and training programs
- Exclusive networks that recruit and perpetuate white leadership
- Discrimination in recruitment, selection and advancement
- Unwelcoming, exclusive or hostile environment
- Internalized oppression and lack of self-confidence
- Exclusive dominant culture model of leadership
- Leadership associated with abuse of power and suspicion
- Lack of role models, mentors and success stories
- Disempowerment: loss of faith in the opportunity to make a difference
- Economic Status: Cannot afford unpaid internships, low paid, unstable jobs

Contributing problems intrinsic within the non-profit sector

- Low salaries
- Limited career paths (mud ceiling)
- No leadership term limits or transition programs (gate keepers)
- No mid management leadership development
- Leadership imported from outside the community
- Non-profits financially unsustainable
- Little networking and limited to ED's
- No transparent, effective mechanism for recruitment and promotion
- Time demands time incongruent with cultures of whole person and work/personal life balance
- Product trumps process
- Undemocratic governance structures
- Risk taking not encouraged

Organizational Challenges

- Resistance to change
- Normative model of leadership is a given and people with resources are more comfortable operating within this model. Dominant culture does not tap the talents of people of color.
- Legacy of racism: predominantly white staff and board
- Diversity of participating individuals mistaken for an authentic shift from the dominant culture

What leadership development practices increase leadership opportunities for people of color?

Mentoring: Need to expand quality and quantity of opportunities

Networking/Relationship Building

- Network for sustained support and peer learning
- New networks that increase access to resources/opportunities
- Increased access to existing networks

Cultural Competence of the Leadership Program

- Diverse Staff and Board
- Culturally appropriate leadership model
- Integration of cultural context
- Promote, create visibility of different cultural leadership models

Leveraging Opportunities

- Increased Exposure
- Enhanced prestige through program affiliation
- Access to new financial resources

Skills Development

- Policy
- Management
- Identify/articulate different cultural models of leadership
- Multiculturalism/Interethnic capacity/boundary crossing
- Multi-racial coalition building and collaborative approaches
- Balancing identity group interests, organizational priorities and broad community agenda
- Self assessment tools and individual learning objectives

Whole Person Development (Inside out approach in a safe environment)

- Healing: Addressing internalized oppression/historical trauma
- Reaffirming cultural identity
- Opportunity for reflection and attention to self-growth
- Attention to financial competency and resources
- Develop confidence

Program Design

- Emphasis on experiential learning: Learning through action
- Internships/study trips/collaborative projects
- Emergent Design: Participants develop program to meet their needs
- Retreat opportunities off site: Break for reflection
- Cultivate peer learning community
- Being in community with other people of color

Intentional Recruitment

- Diverse Selection Team/Selection of Diverse Cohort
- Programs specifically for emerging leaders (Fieldstone)
- Community invitation and community nomination process
- Proactive and creative recruitment to create new pipelines
- Allow for self-nomination
- Recognize youth as current, not 'future' leaders

Financial support/Awards

- To support entrepreneurship in starting new programs/projects
- To address the needs of the whole person
- For action learning

Organizational Strategies:

- Anti-racism training within an organization

Perspective: Cultural, paradigm shifts take time

Emergent Questions

1. How can we increase the access to and quality of mentoring relationships?
2. Are we paying enough attention to providing leadership development and networking opportunities to mid management?
3. Should more leadership resources be directed to entrepreneurial efforts that support people of color in starting new organizations?
4. Should leadership developments target board diversification?
5. How can we help long term non-profit leadership transition, is this a leadership function?
6. How can we open up the current model of leadership situated within organizations that operate from a deficit model of communities to one that supports self-reliance and interdependence in leadership?
7. What if we developed a clear articulation of elements of the dominant/corporate leadership model and invited other communities to share their models?
8. What if we broaden the leadership model to include learning models?
9. What if we are able to “show” a wide range of cultural leadership models?
10. What if leadership emerged from community solving processes and shifted based on the roles assumed in taking on different problems?
11. How can we provide more opportunities for leaders to work with leaders of color from different organizations and fields?
12. Do we want people to lead in existing organizations taking up prescribed issues in prescribed ways instead of supporting their leadership in the things that interest them?
13. What can we learn from the corporate sector and other fields?
14. How can we be the change we want to support?