

Leadership Learning Community

Program and Organizational Assessment

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I. Executive Summary

The Leadership Learning Community (LLC) is on the cusp of making one of the most difficult transitions an organization can attempt: the move from start-up to thriving organization. A startup organization is usually the realization of one person's guiding idea. Startup boards usually consist of friends or long-time allies, the staff is small, and responsibilities and accountabilities are not well defined. A start-up usually seeks to fit a specific niche or need in a given field or in relation to a specific issue. Funding is scarce and often project-based. Most startups don't survive long. Some groups never leave the startup phase and proceed as an ongoing realization of its founder's initial vision and then dissipate when the founder moves on. A few groups – always with difficulty – make the transition to stable organizations. These groups develop an infrastructure and mission beyond the founder's vision and leadership, develop a stakeholder base to which they become increasingly accountable, build diverse boards that bring specific resources and oversight to the organization -- all of which make the organization able to accommodate new issues and challenges, which in turn brings increased general support and sustaining funding.

LLC, most commentators believe, is on its way to becoming this type of thriving organization. Its path and chances of success are made simultaneously easier and more challenging by the ethics and culture LLC brings to its work. LLC's explicit practices of inclusion, generosity, generativity, and responsiveness are highlighted by all its stakeholders as instrumental to its status and success. They also comment on the difficulty in this professional, social, and economic climate of scarcity and contest of insisting on this ethos. While supportive in principle of LLC's vision, some stakeholders need help in connecting it to the on-the-ground-practice of leadership and leadership development in situations dominated and even riven by conflict and competition. While LLC's constituents, especially the

more active ones (such as the evaluation circle), understand and are inspired by the self-organizing impetus and methodologies of LLC, the absence of narrow structure and mission sometimes causes LLC circles and other projects to lose direction and to dissipate. Because LLC and its satellite groups eschew rigid administration and promote self-organization and fluid leadership arrangements, its members and population fluctuates dramatically. People come and go, unsurprisingly, depending on what interests them and is useful to their current work.

In thinking about LLC's organizational and program development it is important to note that during LLC's short lifetime, the nonprofit sector, and leadership development programs in particular, has seen a dramatic programmatic and funding contraction. This trend has begun to reverse itself in the last several months, but the ranks of top leadership program administrators and funders remain thin and considerable capacity has left the field.

This scenario increases LLC's role and relevance to its various constituencies. Many respondents in our interviews and survey note that LLC is the place they depend on to meet others in the field and to meaningfully discuss different approaches, methodologies, and practices of leadership and leadership development. These conversations occur in a turbulent context in which notions of leadership itself is under increased scrutiny. What is leadership? What are leaders and how can we identify successful leadership? Is it trait-based? Skills-based? Process-based? How can and should leadership be developed? Why is it important? Leadership to what end? Despite proliferating studies on the subject and contexts of leadership, these and other questions are increasingly discussed by a range of professionals, and hence grow more rather than less complex. Because leadership cuts across all aspects of our personal and professional experience, its analysis and performance impinges on our personal stories, organizations, civil society public spheres, and civic institutions. LLC is informed by and informs all of this discussion.

In addition to these programmatic and theoretical issues, LLC will in the short term continue to contend with organizational capacity issues, especially resource development. The staff and board have mobilized this year to give LLC some breathing room, and increased attention on fee-for-service revenue is welcome, though this limits the time staff can devote to LLC's own programming and administration.

In short, LLC is at a crucial cross-road in its development. It has accumulated a solid record of accomplishment and reach, and has, we believe, become a singular and necessary organization in the leadership development field. No other group does what LLC does. With additional inputs, LLC has the staff and vision to build on this record and negotiate the next three-to-five years by becoming increasingly stable, resourceful, and innovative.

II. Methodology

In this assessment, our task was to provide a snapshot of LLC in this moment between startup and stable organization. This meant soliciting feedback from LLC's stakeholders on the quality and usefulness of their interaction with LLC, and determining what further offerings LLC could provide to an expanding field. Our methodology included document analysis, an online survey sent to the entire LLC membership, telephone interviews with selected LLC stakeholders, attendance at Creating Space, and convening of select New York regional circle members. We worked closely with LLC's executive director to identify a representative group of individuals to interview, to formulate survey and interview questions, to convene individuals to contribute to case study discussion, and to solicit feedback from select members of the LLC community, particularly those with evaluation expertise, to enhance the development of this evaluation process.

This range of data yielded a multi-perspectival portrait of LLC, its products and activities, and its organizational integrity and capacities. Once these findings were collected and synthesized, major themes were identified and analyzed in comparison with organizational documents outlining LLC's mission, approach, and theory of change. Recommendations stem from these thematic findings.

This report is long. Many of the findings sections overlap in theme and discovery, and the reader is invited to skim and invest in the genre of findings she or he prefers. The document's totality offers a multi-perspectival portrait of LLC from the vantage point of its diverse constituents. In this way, evaluators play a cipher role in organizing information received from stakeholders and transmitting it to LLC. While we have some substantive expertise in the areas of leadership development, for the most part we are outsiders to LLC. Therefore, our insights stem only from what we learned through the assessment process, and our recommendations are only suggestions for possible action by the organization.

III. LLC: Background and Philosophical Approach

Organizational History

The Leadership Learning Community had its origins in the mid-1990s as an idea to network diverse nonprofit, philanthropic, and academic leadership development and research programs for the purposes of cross-sector discussion and learning about notions of leadership itself, and about the fields and infrastructure of leadership development programs. This idea, though no doubt informed through dozens of conversations, was largely the inspiration of Deborah Meehan, a former fellow of the Kellogg National Fellows Program. The methods and ethos of the Kellogg program -- personalized experiential learning, theoretical and practical skills building, and group networking -- significantly define LLC's culture and vision. The *LLC History and Timeline* found on the Web site narrates this story of careful development through relationship building and inclusion.

Though modeled on the design and purpose of a philanthropic affinity group, LLC pursued a more ambitious spectrum of stakeholders, seeking scholars and other leadership development administrators as active members, in addition to the leadership managers and donors active in the nonprofit sector. While most foundation affinity groups work to create a cloistered space for funders to meet, speak, and share pertinent but privileged knowledge, LLC from the outset sought to provide the entire field with tools, information, training, and cross-sector networking and collaboration opportunities. It also focused on the creation of a culture that encourages reciprocity and collaboration among funders, academics, and practitioners to engage in collective learning and the development of shared resources. This broad-based engagement meant that LLC's particular structure and niche was occasionally mysterious to some stakeholders – most critically, to funders. Nonetheless, LLC's careful buildup to launch included enrolling prominent foundation leaders as co-architects and early supporters. Many of these original organizational pillars remain as board members and key advisors, lending entrée and cache to LLC.

From the outset, LLC's programming, operations, products, and community building, has centered around an ethic of "openness, service, diversity, sharing, reflection, deep learning, integration of theory and practice, and a willingness to lead and follow." This expansiveness places LLC outside the mainstream of analogous groups and beyond the institutional categories and ways of doing business of most organizations, which tend to hoard, exclude, and compete against others in their market or field. To some, as we will see in detail in the findings below, LLC's ethic of generosity seems confusing and even a bit sentimental. To others, it is the invaluable free space to collaborate, share with vulnerability, and experiment.

In sum, LLC is a unique organization in the leadership development field, locating itself at the intersection of many professional sectors. In addition, LLC is

modeling its own ethic of leadership within the field. These are ambitious and worthy strategies, and reflect the turbulent, though fertile, field of leadership analysis and practice.

IV. Assessment Findings

LLC's ecumenical approach toward leadership and leadership development is well supported by the latest literature. LLC's challenge has been to create products and programs that speak to and benefit the field widely. The interviews we conducted with LLC stakeholders, the survey sent to all LLC members, and the case studies all offer commentary and insights into the ways LLC serves its base.

A. Interview Findings

Though the interviews were structured through a protocol (see attached Appendix VIII), our conversations were often quite wide-ranging. The sum of our interviews is organized here around four interconnected themes and outputs: LLC's Culture and Relation Building, LLC's Knowledge and Learning Development, LLC Circles and Web site, LLC's Organizational Process and Structure.

Leadership Learning Community's Culture and Relationship Building

Key Successes:

- LLC provides an affinity group function to the fields of leadership development in the independent sector;
- Through its mission and vision, LLC provides rich opportunities for people to connect at a variety of levels, encouraging collaboration, honest interaction, and generosity of information and spirit;
- LLC provides unique networking venues for the leadership development fields;
- LLC's culture promotes inclusively and personal risk-taking;

- Through its pluralistic and generative culture, LLC connects stakeholders with new resources;
- LLC's ethos takes participants beyond their professional identity, thus leveling hierarchies, especially among funders and grantseekers.

The Leadership Learning Community comprises mainly leadership development program staff and their programs' funders. Academics, independent scholars, and consultants occupy a smaller but still prominent proportion of LLC's society. Those who find reward in LLC's ethos and programming are individuals who feel secure, and even "liberated" in its expansive intellectual culture and its accommodation of diverse approaches to the work and methodologies of leadership development. One interviewee summarized the enthusiasm we heard from many regarding LLC's approach:

I feel like I've been on every side of the leadership field – former fellow, funder, and leadership development program manager – and I had grown a little cynical of these siloed networks and their conversations. LLC was, and is, the one space where I encounter people willing to consider new ideas and perceptions from all aspects of the field. We don't always agree with one another, but there is nowhere else where a funder, program manager, and an academic can talk freely without protecting turf or feeling embarrassed for not knowing everything....I especially appreciate the exchanges with academics and thinkers. Their views on leadership take me places I would never go otherwise, and though I sometimes think they are divorced from reality, at least my reality, I get huge benefit from hearing about their work and how they consider my work...LLC, and especially Deborah, not only creates the space and events for these groups to come together, but also creates the atmosphere for us to engage in a more honest and sharing way, even if it is sometimes uncomfortable.

Many commentators spoke of the ways that LLC avoids the sometimes stilted and arid atmosphere of their other professional associations and gatherings. "[Have] you ever been to a Council [Foundation] session or some other funder event on leadership development?" said one interviewee. "These are supposedly the field's leaders and advocates, and yet the air in the room is usually dead and suffocating. Most participants are either posturing or protecting. At something like Creating Space, the air is alive, and participants

are engaged in a more complete and honest way. The atmosphere may border on the touchy feely sometimes, but I'll take that over the usual funder meeting anytime." Another commentator said that in its own community development, LLC "self-selects for generosity and intellectual adventurousness....That's why LLC attracts the field's leaders."

Such an approach is inevitably pluralistic and multi-perspectival, and hence sometimes also noisy and free-flowing, as the search for common ground and understandings may require more effort than with mono-culture or mono-method communities. Some stakeholders, for example, want LLC to focus on leadership as a conduit for social change, others have a non-ideological interest in leadership as it relates to organizational development, still others think increased emphasis should be put on the intra-personal connection between leadership and spirituality. Every interviewee mentioned the unique psychosocial atmosphere LLC creates in its gatherings. Whether positively referred to as the integration of "head and heart" or "mind and soul," or pejoratively described as "touchy feely," respondents noted the directive ways LLC connects people, and thus expands opportunities and levels of relationship building. This ethos is especially important given the power dynamics operative at events that include funders and grantseekers. By encouraging participants to engage in ways outside their professional standing, some of the hierarchy and other obtrusive inequalities are dissipated. One interviewee, a funder, summarized his constructive ambivalence this way, "To be honest, my gender/ethnicity/personal disposition profile would make me the least comfortable person in any group when the meeting includes such 'touchy feely' moments, and I admit to feeling duly uncomfortable sometimes at Creating Space. Yet I see the value in moving beyond the comfortable, and I almost always learn new things about myself, about my colleagues, and – most importantly – about leadership and leadership development." Many respondents spoke of the profound levels of reciprocal trust that LLC fosters through its programming and leadership.

Overall, nearly all respondents felt comfortable bringing their particular interest and point of view into LLC's culture and conversations. This is a significant accomplishment, and demonstrates the salience of LLC's generative mission and vision.

Most interlocutors felt that LLC was moving toward finding the right balance between the intellectually rigorous and the emotionally and spiritually adventurous. Some would still like to see more applied research flow through LLC's programming, but no one wanted to eclipse the powerful experiential dimension of its culture and relationship building priorities.

There was little consensus from respondents in identifying the constituencies who are under- or over-represented in LLC's community. Except for funders, many thought their own cohort was under-represented. Several interlocutors felt there should be more leadership development participants, fellows, and alumni of such programs active in LLC's universe. Some recall that there were more academics involved during LLC's launch, but the number has slowly dwindled. A few respondents felt LLC's culture would benefit from more skepticism and critical inquiry. Several people mentioned the need for more young people. Some thought it would be good to have more participation from the corporate leadership development world, since their perspective is both very practical and missing in LLC's conversations. Others felt strongly that LLC's culture would be adversely changed by their increased presence. Some interviewees noted that most funder participants were program officers or, on occasion, program directors, and that a more senior foundation presence, e.g. at the vice president level, would be advantageous both for LLC and its members. Generally, respondents felt this networking forum was the most valuable and attractive opportunity LLC provides its stakeholders.

Most respondents thought LLC was working on and gradually succeeding at gaining wide-ranging diversity among LLC's membership. Nonetheless, the

average LLC member – especially among active members – is still likely to be a white, middle-aged, female.

Regarding **Creating Space**, for example, some interviewees said there were too many experts and “leadership development elites” who speak in exclusive ways that alienate those who are not insiders (the aforementioned silo problem). On the other hand, some thought there should be more academics informing LLC’s work, and thought there is a need for “hard [conceptual] thinking” to offset assumptions about leadership based on anecdotal information or personal experience. Others thought more “real world” grassroots experience and thinking about leadership should ground LLC’s conceptual, ideological, and programmatic priorities. This seems like a healthy set of tensions, and one that LLC’s ethic of openness and mutual respect is well-suited to mediate productively.

Finally, it should be noted that many interlocutors said that LLC’s culture emanates specifically from Deborah’s own personality, leadership, and vision. “I’m pretty sure LLC wouldn’t in any way resemble its current form without [her] leadership,” said one commentator summarizing the views of many. “This is her life’s work....Her commitment to a practice of collaboration, shared learning, and self-organizing work is what makes LLC distinctive from other groups.”

In sum, almost all stakeholders value LLC’s expansive and pluralistic culture and programming. While some members and program participants are occasionally stretched beyond their comfort thresholds, most believe these experiences are both unique and valuable. In the end, as will be discussed below, LLC stakeholders are practical and want increasing tools, skills, knowledge, and networks from LLC.

Knowledge and Learning Development

Key Successes

- LLC provides a wide-open information and tool delivery forum for leadership development stakeholders;

- Through its programs and products, LLC is especially adept at creating *learning development* rather than *knowledge development*. The former is the condition for the possibility for the latter;
- As a learning developer, LLC lifts the sophistication and erudition of its community and outside audiences;
- As a convener, LLC gives platforms and cache to knowledge developers across the leadership development field, including grassroots practitioners, independent consultants, and scholars;
- A key area in which LLC is engaged in knowledge development is in the area of evaluation, undertaken by the evaluation circle.

Intrinsic to LLC's mission is its role as a conduit for new research, reflection, and information about leadership development fields. Many commentators note that LLC's activities are primarily knowledge synthesis and dissemination rather than knowledge development. Creating Space, the circles, and the Web site are forums for knowledge emergence, coalescence, and, later, dissemination.

An early LLC organizational goal was to provide a central and accessible database serving the entire leadership development field. This "project was much easier to conceive than to realize." Nonetheless, the knowledge that LLC provides access to, usually via the Web site, is highly valued by its community.

One area in which LLC is very much a leading knowledge developer is evaluation. The evaluation circle is undertaking and disseminating nuanced and adaptable assessment methodologies under a variety of circumstances. This project plays entirely to LLC's strengths and niche: it is cross-sectoral, conceptually subtle and sophisticated while being informed by grassroots and practical inputs, the product of self-organizing and collaboration, and is being shared with the broader field at every step in its development and elaboration. The evaluation circle is an illustrious example of LLC's potential and achievements relative to its mission and vision.

Put a different way, LLC is more about learning development than knowledge development. The product of learning includes the process and experience of those engaged in the development of knowledge.

In sum, LLC finds its most comfortable and fruitful role when it is the condition and conduit for knowledge to emerge and find common understanding and advocacy – i.e. for learning development. The circles and other subgroups can thus take advantage of LLC’s fertile processes to undertake the development of knowledge, confident that through LLC’s many formal and informal distribution channels, new knowledge will find a ready audience. This “open source” intellectual and pragmatic work draws on the ethic of generosity and self-organizing collaboration that is LLC’s hallmark. The evaluation circle is a perfect example of this ethic in action, in which the organization’s process and products intersect to create knowledge that is new and applicable to a variety of leadership development workers. These interchanges are thus *transformational* rather than *transactional*.

LLC Circles and Web site

Key Successes

- Provides opportunities to bring together divergent perspectives, professional backgrounds, and networks;
- Catalyzes and disperses emergent wisdom;
- Has generated collaborative projects and programs;
- Models LLC’s collaborative and self-organizing ethos;
- Connects the range of leadership development workers on ongoing basis.

LLC has two arenas for community building and knowledge development: the events – including Creating Space and the circles, and the Web sites and various

cyber venues. Creating Space (CS) is the most successful LLC product, and is the way most stakeholders enter and intersect with the LLC community. While people come for practical reason, namely to network, most commentators report, again, that due to LLC's culture, participants' interactions are powerful and transformational, rather than circumscribed and narrowly transactional. LLC's higher purpose of professional generosity, personal vulnerability, and an adventurous commitment to exploring leadership and its development in all forms define CS. The case study below investigates these in detail, so we will defer further commentary here. Suffice it to say that if LLC contributed nothing else to the independent sector leadership development field than Creating Space, it would nonetheless be a valuable organization deserving of support.

The learning circles are a more mixed story. We have noted the exceptional fluidity, performance, and self-organizing acumen of the evaluation circle. These attributes are missing to greater and lesser degrees in the regional circles. Some, like the Bay Area circle and the Minnesota circle, have fared better than, for example, the New York circle. The case study below on the New York circle describes difficulties faced by all the regional circles. Though circle participants see the value in meeting to share information and resources, and are willing to collaborate on projects or events where mutually advantageous, these wishes have not translated into an ongoing sense of purpose, commitment, or organizational infrastructure. Circles' membership was often inconsistent, and many described the enervating requirement "to start over each meeting because the people in the room for this meeting are different than those who attended the last meeting." Circles rarely congealed around a compelling mission or a supporting administrative process whereby meeting agendas would be set, sites secured, minutes taken, and follow-up performed. In short, the self-organizing promise of the circles has failed to materialize in a sustained way. Commentators cited the lack of discrete funding, and LLC guidance, administration, and facilitation as reasons some circles lose momentum or falter. "Everyone is overwhelmed by what they have to accomplish day-to-day," said

one program manager, “to add even one more meeting is asking a lot of people, especially when the agenda and purpose are not always clear. But if these meetings could provide me with shortcuts, best practices and practical knowledge that I can use to improve my own work, I would make the time....Practicality is everything.”

Nonetheless, several circle participants – from Boston, Bay Area, Minnesota, and Washington D.C. – express enthusiasm and appreciation for social aspects provided by their regional circles. “The networking is the most useful,” said a D.C. circle member. “We [circle members] occupy different positions and locations in the leadership universe, and the circle meetings provide valuable information, ranging from new scholarship and literature, to funder news, to pure gossip.” More direction and administrative assistance from LLC would result in stronger regional circles with more constant membership, and perhaps the development of collaborative projects and funding requests would yield sufficient cohesion and momentum to carry the regional circles in the desired direction. Another idea suggested by several respondents was to consider a national office/local chapter model.

Web site:

Aside from CS, LLC’s Web site is widely held to be its most useful product and service to the field. “It is a goldmine of information, tools, and other valuable products. I use it all the time,” said a respondent. While not the exhaustive clearinghouse and database originally considered, the Web site, “is improving rapidly...[in] the last few months it seems transformed.” A respondent who admits to not using the Web site much due to the time it takes to navigate, nonetheless says it is “the best manifestation of LLC’s ethic and organizational culture...It is like a community project, in which everyone is invited to adopt or contribute to whatever is up there.” Another frequent visitor to the site said, “I probably send a new person there every week....Aside from knowing Deborah, the Web site is probably the first contact many outsiders have with LLC.” As the

survey shows, most visitors use the site to locate members' contact data, and to download documents and tools. Relatively few members post on the site, or participate in listserves and other interactive opportunities.

On the other hand, the majority of respondents felt the site was difficult to navigate. "It's hard to find things, so I don't go there much, even though I know if I hunted around I'd find useful information." Other comments included, "a pain to use," "poorly organized," "uninviting," and "unprofessional." In short, while everyone valued the contents of the site, almost everyone also agreed that it has reached the size in which its formal structure has been overwhelmed. An information organization specialist or librarian could be retained to reorganize the interface and arrangement of the site's contents. Further, respondents thought a monthly email sent to all LLC members notifying them of Web site additions and updates would produce more traffic and easier use. Some respondents thought a bibliography or detailed table of contents would help expedite searches and thereby reduce time required merely to find what the visitor is searching for.

LLC's Organizational Process and Structure

Key Successes

- LLC is moving successfully from startup to thriving organization;
- LLC has instituted its guiding vision into its relationships, products, and programming;
- In its mission and vision, LLC has filled a niche in and introduced a field to the independent sector that was previously empty;
- For a startup, LLC has an exceptionally strong board and core staff;
- Despite a difficult philanthropic climate, LLC has been able to raise a significant operating budget, and has a diversified resource development plan that includes grants, individual donors, and fee-for-service contracts.

While achieving remarkable success in its first few years given the funding climate and its ambitious mission and vision, LLC has until recently been

somewhat under-staffed and under-resourced. Typical for a founder, Deborah has had to wear the hats of fund raiser, organizational executive, project and program manager, marketing chief and public face, convening facilitator, and a host of other roles and responsibilities. “Deborah needs to clone herself,” said a long-time LLC participant. But LLC has carefully developed its team, and with increased funding, these staff members are assuming more front-line duties and building their capacity. In addition, LLC has identified experienced consultants and part-time staff that can be brought in as soon as funding allows.

Regarding LLC as a whole, interviewees noted growing organizational structure developing as the organization matures. Its products, programming, and materials have all grown more substantive and integrated. Most respondents felt the organization effectively models its guiding ethic of inclusion and pluralism, but many felt too that the next five years will require increasing degrees of “groundedness, branding, and program focus.” The “leadership field is in its own phase of change,” said one funder, “increasingly it is initiative specific, and funders are becoming providers....LLC will require a range of collaborations and diversified funding to sustain its programming.”

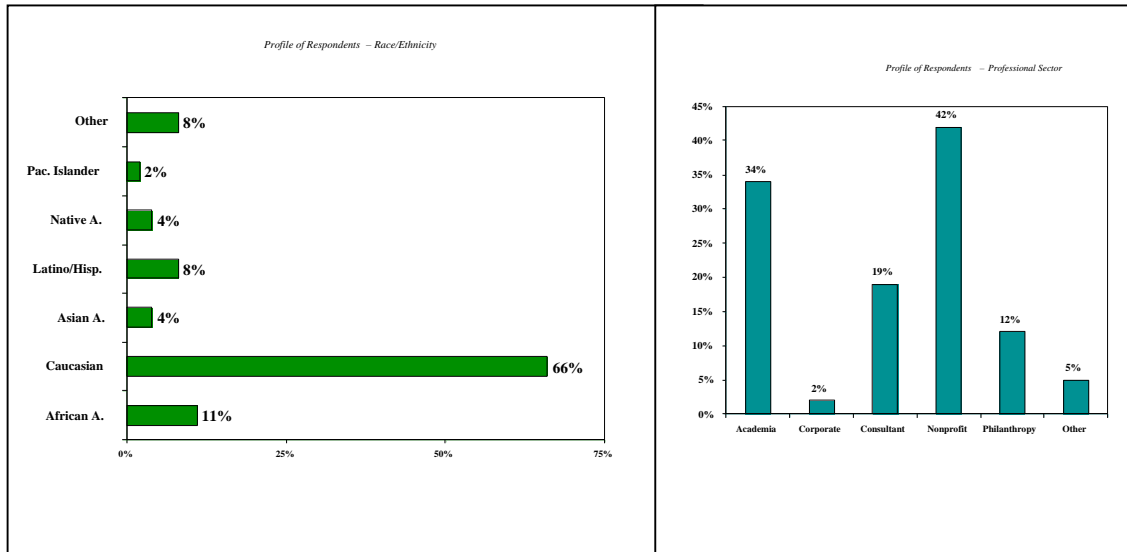
B. Survey Findings

The survey component to this evaluation was developed in consultation with Deborah and Claire Reinelt. It was piloted with 12 individuals (7 responses), revised, and sent to 701 members of the LLC community. This survey was administered online using Zoomerang technology and sent through e-mail with a link to the survey site. The survey response rate was 15% (108 of 713).

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Most respondents fall within the 35-55 and older age group -- mid-career to more seasoned professionals. Almost three-quarters (74%) are female, and two-thirds are white. More than three-quarters work in nonprofit organizations and

academia, largely focused in the areas of leadership, social justice, education/youth, and community development.



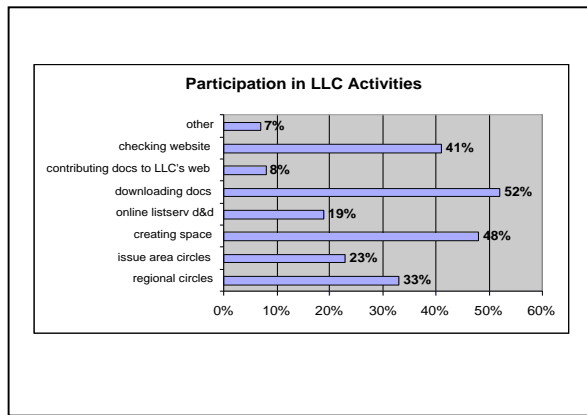
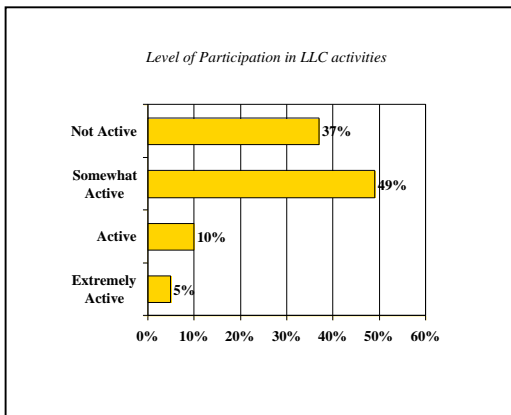
LLC Recruitment and Membership Status of Respondents

The majority, (54%) of respondents said they are LLC members, with the highest response from San Francisco regional circle (16%) and evaluation circle (18%) participants. Most respondents got involved in 2001 (29%) and 2004 (31%), perhaps highlighting how LLC's core constituency mainly includes those who bought in early, and new members. Individuals said they got involved mostly for networking and learning opportunities, many initially referred by Deborah, board members, and colleagues at nonprofit organizations and foundations (e.g., Annie E. Casey, De Pree Leadership Center, Open Society Institute, Kellogg Foundation, etc.)

Participation in LLC Activities

When asked how they participate in LLC activities, about half of respondents said they download documents from the Web site and attend Creating Space. About a third check the Web site regularly and participate in regional circles. About a

quarter participate in issue circles and online listserv dialogue and discussion. Less than 10% upload documents to the Web site. When asked more specifically how they have contributed to LLC, a little more than a third of respondents said they have created profiles on the LLC Web site, and about a quarter have recommended/shared resources on the Web site, shared evaluation findings in a variety of ways and settings, offered sessions at Creating Space, and/or offered to showcase learning in LLC circles. Overall, when asked to characterize their level of participation in LLC activities, about half described themselves as “somewhat active.” Remaining respondents described themselves as “not active” (37%), “active” (10%), and “extremely active (5%).



Relationship Building through LLC

One reason for LLC’s founding was to provide and centralize relationship building and networking opportunities among those who run, fund, and study leadership development programs. When survey respondents were asked how LLC contributes to their relationship building experiences in the field, two-thirds reported that LLC had facilitated the development of relationships for them, with half saying that their participation in LLC developed and strengthened their relationship with at least five other people. Twenty-one percent of respondents said that they had solidified or gained more than 10 new relationships. Further, several respondents said that as a result of these relationships, new programs and projects have been developed, existing programs and projects have been

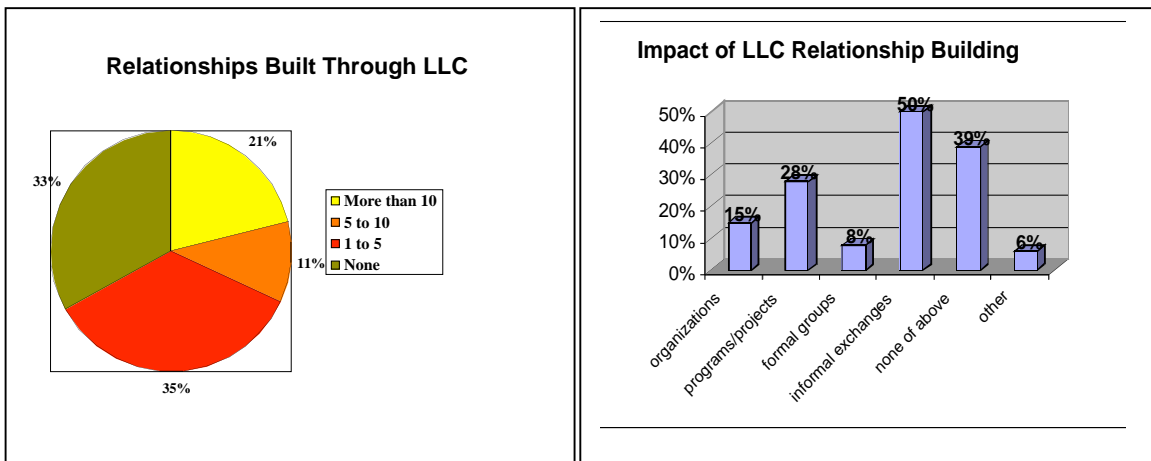
strengthened, and new organizations and formal groups have been formed. While many of these exchanges may be informal, respondents said LLC has facilitated increased opportunities for communication and sharing of resources that is valuable personally and professionally to participants. In their own words:

“Currently established a contact with a leadership development researcher. We are meeting to discuss the LLC and concept paper I’m crafting for research through my organization. This relationship was created through initial exploratory conversations over e-mail about LLC Boston.”

“I’m hoping to develop a project with Compasspoint, and I met the right person at a LLC meeting...”

“Information from LLC has contributed to our program designs [and in turn affect[ed] the organization...connected [us] with experts and consultants that we have partnered with in implementing some of our capacity building strategies.”

“Advising on creation of a fellowship alumni structure.”



Value of LLC to Field of Leadership Development and Research

When asked about LLC’s value to the field of leadership development and research, 96% of respondents said that LLC adds value, with 29% saying LLC is very valuable to the field. Eighty-five percent noted that the opportunities for learning exchanges, knowledge development and building relationships that LLC

provides are important outcomes to LLC's work. They also provided other examples of LLC's value to the field, particularly as an advocate for leadership development, and as a bridge builder (helping to manage political alliances). Perhaps the greatest value of LLC to the field that respondents noted is the culture it promotes, one which models an ethic of generativity, abundance, and cooperation, rather than one of scarcity and competition as an important aspect of social change. One hundred percent of respondents said that LLC has successfully expressed and modeled a way of working and engaging that supports this ethic. They recognized LLC's value in this regard, but noted the difficulties in promoting and perpetuating this culture:

“External funding pressures for individual program sustainability are a competing force.”

“I think this is a difficult concept to get buy-in for,[especially] in some areas where proprietary concerns are raised.”

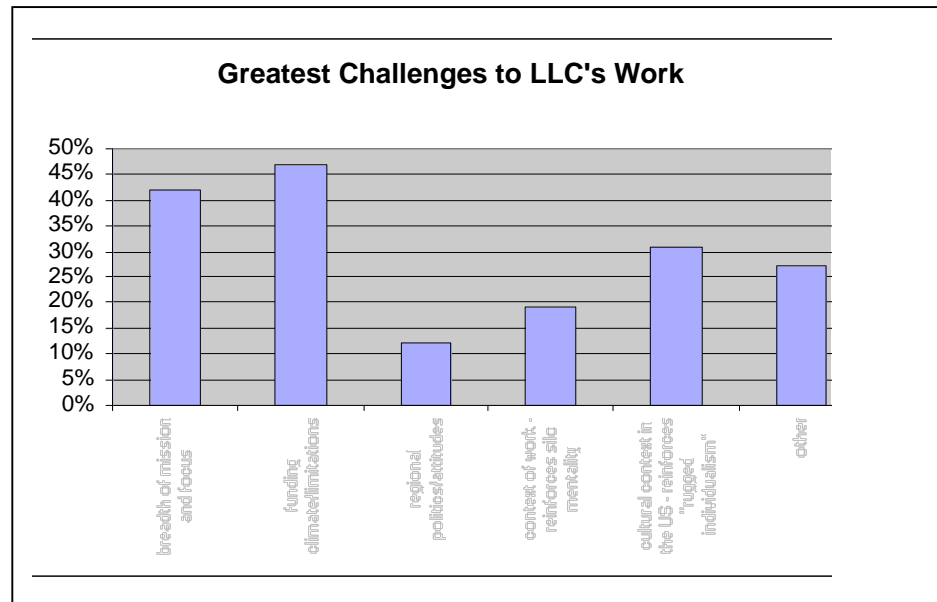
“I do think that LLC has modeled this, but I think that the relative lack of resources available through the organization is disappointing. I would like to see more proactive attempts to get evaluation instruments & results publicly available.”

“LLC bids on small research projects with other LLC members. This makes LLC's role unclear. Its not a good idea to compete with other members who make a living on consulting for example. Additionally, its not a good idea for LLC to favor certain members of the group by engaging them in these services.”

“This is a hard group to connect with.... it's dominated by the Bay Area group and some on the west coast... those of us in 'flyover country' have a hard time connecting. Believe it or not, we do have things to offer in this part of the country.”

Respondents also highlighted challenges to LLC's work, with almost 50% citing funding limitations, more than a third noting the “silo mentality” and “rugged individualism” tendencies that dominate personal and professional interaction in the U.S., and more than 40% noting the exceptional breadth of LLC's mission and focus. Some respondents had additional thoughts on impediments to LLC's

success, including stating that leadership development is not a field that “outsiders” understand and support, and that many volunteers have difficulty finding time to contribute.



C. Case Study Findings:

A. New York Learning Circle and Creating Space

Regional Learning Circles: A Case Study of LLC New York

LLC’s organizational culture and products all seek to create a critical mass of leadership developers who share ideas and resources to strengthen their potential social impacts. Even before becoming a formal organization, LLC employed learning circles to strengthen collaborative learning, knowledge development, and practice among those who run, fund, participate in, and study leadership development. The term “circle” was defined as “people who work together for a common purpose within LLC.”¹ The circle approach was chosen

¹ As outlined in LLC’s “An Organizational Proposal,” prepared for the Board in February 2001.

for its resonance across cultures and history as “places where people...talk, celebrate, problem solve, sing and tell stories, and...govern themselves.” The circles were also selected by LLC for their practical application to adult social change work. This format has been successfully employed in adult learning situations and across a number of movements as an effective means for community-based teaching and learning.

LLC learning circles are organized around regional proximity, topic, and practice. We examined the New York regional circle to assess the functionality, strengths and weaknesses, and potential opportunities of the circle approach. On May 17, 2004, the evaluators convened a small group of New York metro area learning circle participants to discuss the circle’s history, and major challenges and opportunities moving forward.

History of LLC New York

In Summer 2001, the New York LLC regional circle kicked off its first meeting, convening about 25 leadership development funders, program directors, and scholars at the Rockefeller Foundation to introduce the LLC concept and explore regional interest in collaboration and collective learning. Deborah Meehan actively recruited participants. Attendees included representatives from: Urban Fellows, National Urban Fellows, Public Allies, Synergos, the City of New York, Open Society Institute, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Blue Ridge, and the Echoing Green Foundation. Attendees participated in what LLC calls an “open space” to discuss the benefits of being part of LLC’s efforts. Breakout discussions were also held on various topics, including curriculum issues, alumni development, and the use of technology in leadership development programming. Several sub-groups developed from this meeting, including a group focused on strengthening alumni efforts, as well as a group focused on improving technical assistance for leadership development program fellows.

A second meeting was held at the Rockefeller Foundation in the late Fall/Winter 2001 focused on sharing lessons learned on achieving a sustainable alumni network development. Approximately 25 individuals participated. Several representatives of groups, including Public Allies, Coro, and LLC, were invited to the meeting as speakers. Learnings from this meeting fed into a document that was created by and circulated among LLC regional circles across the country, with members in each region sharing lessons on working with leadership program alumni.

A third meeting was held in the Winter/early Spring 2001-02 at the Open Society Institute to discuss the potential for cross-alumni development opportunities in the region. Approximately 12-15 individuals participated. Discussion from this meeting also catalyzed the development of a steering committee of 4-5 people that formed to plan a leadership program cross-fellow alumni development event among New York LLC programs.²

A fourth meeting was held at the Rockefeller Foundation in Fall 2002 focused on technology development to support leadership programming. Approximately 8-10 individuals participated. Debra Deruver, the former technology staffperson at LLC, facilitated a discussion on effective use of technology in leadership development programs. While planned as a one-time event, some members, such as Alvin Starks, initiated e-newsletters that are still circulated to the LLC listserv.

A fifth meeting was convened in Winter 2002-03 to bring together New York area LLC board members in a discussion asking why New York circle efforts were struggling to gain momentum, and what could be done to ignite regional circle efforts in New York – specifically what role could area board members play in this process. Three to five individuals participated in this meeting. A sixth meeting

² This group has convened on occasion since that time, however the event has not occurred.

was convened in Fall 2003 to discuss evaluation methods – lessons learned, best practices, and promising new approaches – for leadership programs.

Since that time, the New York LLC circle has been dormant. As LLC's New York circle Web site says, at this point the circle is more of a loose network of about 50 people interested in leadership programs than a learning circle meeting regularly and working on unified projects.

Lessons from the New York Area Regional Circle Development

Structural and Resource Factors Contributing to the New York Circle's Development.

LLC's New York area learning circle has convened only six times in almost four years with on average about 15 individuals participating. When founded, it was hoped that certain circle participants, typically LLC board members living in the region, would take the lead in organizing and convening meetings. Initially, it was intended that members would share the meeting planning responsibility whereby volunteers would collaboratively drive the work and form rotating planning committees. However, despite good intentions, this informal and fluid management structure has not produced ongoing meetings and increased collaboration. Without Deborah's regular and catalyzing presence, the New York circle has gradually dissolved.

Those participating in the New York circle focus group cited lack of infrastructure, dedicated staff, and funding as key challenges to the circle's momentum and successful development. In particular, they noted that limited resources made it difficult to attract attendants. For example, meeting participation thinned when events were not convened at foundations. Circle members also underlined the need for a conversation catalyst (to find topics of conversation interesting to a broad group), a coordinator (to organize the meeting), and a facilitator (to serve as a neutral voice to mediate multiple ideas and agendas). In short, they spoke of

a lack of administrative leadership. They also spoke of lack of clarity on the administrative support from LLC's national office.

Dissonance Between LLC's Organizational Culture and the Typical Workplace Context.

While the idea of collective learning and collaborative practice resonates for many, LLC's culture promotes a way of "doing business" that is different from what many individuals and institutions are used to and expect. Put pejoratively, LLC's language can be considered soft or "touchy feely" to many. Some of the New York circle participants interviewed talked about the language and cultural dissonance that they have experienced in becoming part of LLC. They talked about how the style and methods used, such as the "open space," open agenda quality of meetings is different from the way in which people come together in other contexts. They felt that this way of communicating is not something that individuals experience in the workplace, especially in New York City, which, generally speaking, has a culture of competition, limelight- and celebrity-seeking, and general resource scarcity. LLC's rhetoric and ethos promoting trust, generosity, and a degree of personal and professional vulnerability conflicts with the ways business is done in the Northeast. This may be a participation inhibitor for some, particularly at the outset.

Learning Circles...for What?

Again, despite general comfort with the concept of collaboration and collective learning, those contributing to the case study suggested that no driving consensus has emerged regarding the purpose and potential impact of convening regular New York metro area circle meetings. Furthermore, individuals have come to the table with different assumptions and interests. Some have come seeking networking opportunities. Others have wanted to find additional technical assistance opportunities for their fellows/ program participants. Still others have been interested in showcasing their efforts among regional players.

This plurality of interests, combined with the circle's structural limitations, including lack of resources to capture proceedings, share best practices, and pursue research and pragmatic project innovations that come up in meetings, has made developing the New York learning circle difficult.

Multiple Hats of Participants.

Those contributing to the case study suggested that New York metro area leadership development professionals wear a lot of hats in their work. Like other leaders in the independent sector, program directors are expected to participate in multiple networks that place enormous demands on their schedules, and must be attended to in addition to everything else they do for their organization and program. LLC, therefore, is competing for time among individuals who are already overstretched. This means that to be compelling, the learning circle must present a clear and ongoing value to its participants, and some individual or small group of individuals must assume leadership and administrative enterprise.

Different Agendas, Interests, and Politics.

A number of those interviewed said that political differences have inhibited the circle's development and identification of activities. They cited differences in the needs, resources, and political orientation of various programs and their participants. For example, when the group tried to convene a cross-alumni event, some regarded this as a social and a networking opportunity. However, others pushed for making the event a political collective action opportunity. Even when some consensus was established toward making it an advocacy event, conflict emerged over activities and invited speakers. For example, when it was suggested that the new (Republican) mayor address the group, certain group members objected, saying, "my fellows won't come!"

In sum, without strong and steady leadership, and a higher purpose that can override the dissembling effect of time scarcity and every variety of cultural and

ideological difference, the circle – as with so many coalitions and networks – will fail to thrive.

Who Participates?

Those participating in the case study suggested that one of the problems with participation is the open question of who is invited? For example, fellows have not been a part of the design despite the potential value of their insights, especially in discussions concerning, for example, the development of fellowship alumni activities. However, with broader participation and points of view come increased mission, leadership and administration, and cultural complexities. The power dynamics are difficult enough between funders and program directors. Adding fellows would make meetings and conversations both more difficult to manage and potentially quite rich and energizing. Leadership and its facilitation and development would be discussed differently.

Questions such as these are not only issues for LLC and its circles to consider, but also changing norms within the entire field of leadership development. Indeed, LLC's struggles seem to mirror a changing context where there is no field-based consensus to inform and ground its efforts.

High Level of Turnover in Field

Adding to the difficulties in establishing a thriving New York circle has been the high levels of turnover in the leadership field in the New York area and across the country since 2000. Both within philanthropy and the nonprofit sector, leadership programs were downsized or cut altogether, and available funding contracted significantly. Some interviewees felt that this turnover is of minimal consequence and may in fact enrich the discussion by broadening the perspectives at the table, especially since the last 12 months has seen a renewed interest in leadership and its development. However, the larger question is focused on the purpose of the circle activities, and the resources available to implement the circle activities to achieve that purpose.

Cache, Competition, and Credit.

The majority of those contributing to the case study said that in the New York metro area, 3 C's - cache, competition, credit - are often priorities. As such, recognition is important, and risk aversion is prevalent. In a group or situation where there is a lack of clarity about the group's mission and scope of work, interviewees suggested that many people will opt out rather than take a chance that does not quickly bring recognition. Individuals are used to working in isolation, rather than in the context of a broad field, and when they do engage one another, it is usually in competition. They cite as evidence the circle's contentious group dynamics over the last several years, and the abiding power imbalance between large, well-funded groups and the smaller groups.

While this is not necessarily a regional difference, and commitment issues may also relate to constraints on people's time, these facts were noted by participants as something to consider as the group evolves.

B. Creating Space: LLC's Annual National Meeting

Introduction

Creating Space (CS) is not your typical independent sector conference, as those who organize and participate in the annual gathering reiterate time and again. Since the first meeting in 1998, CS has evolved into a facilitated, multi-day discussion around a particular leadership development theme. A diverse group (LLC staff, funders, consultants, new and long-time participants) comes together as a design team months in advance to shape the structure and content of the gathering, which is divided between large group ("Open Space") and small group discussions. The event is geared toward those who run, fund, and study leadership programs, broadly defined. Generally, discussion in the Open Space involves a participant inviting group discussion around a specific issue or topic.

Small groups are convened by conversation catalysts who share their thoughts on a particular leadership-related subject area, and help organize a small group discussion. The goals of the convening are relationship building, individual learning, and collective knowledge sharing among those in the leadership development field.

Almost anyone attending Creating Space will say that this description fails to capture the essence of the event. What is Creating Space, really? How has it evolved over the years? Has it effectively helped LLC to achieve its mission? What has worked and what could be strengthened to improve CS? These are some of the key questions addressed in this case study. The intent of this analysis is to shed light on the development of CS – its successes and challenges, and opportunities for future growth and impact.

Creating Space Case Methodology

On May 13-15, 2004, one of LLC's evaluators attended Creating Space V in Marlboro, Massachusetts. She attended both Open Space and breakout discussions, including a session hosted by Leadership for a Changing World (entitled *Participatory Research as a Tool for Leadership Development*) and a facilitated Evaluation Learning Circle session. Over the course of three days, she engaged in a number of informal conversations with participants, from board members to LLC members and new attendees. She also engaged in several more formal conversations with LLC's executive director and the CS facilitator, and convened with them to craft some CS assessment questions that were distributed at the final CS session. After the gathering, evaluators reviewed documents available on LLC's Web site regarding CS to fill knowledge gaps on the evolution of CS since its first session. Finally, data was extracted from this year's CS assessment, LLC evaluation interviews and survey responses, and evaluator notes from conversations with CS participants.

The History of Creating Space

Creating Space I: In March 1998, the first Creating Space Conference was held, organized by the Burns Academy of Leadership and funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. About 20 leadership program directors and representative alumni participated. The purpose was threefold: to share information, resources, and lessons; develop ongoing mechanisms for continuous learning and exchange; and explore opportunities for cross fellowship alumni collaboration. The gathering combined structured workshops (on topics of program design, technology, diversity, evaluation) with Open Space, (where participants organized themselves around topics of leadership and spirituality, race, gender and class, and alumni organizing.) There was consensus among participants as to the value of the experience and the need to continue this work.³

Creating Space II: In May 2001, Creating Space II was held in Kauffman Foundation. About 90 individuals participated. The purpose was to bring the community together to: share work in “cluster” areas that had been explored in the months following since CS I (evaluation, alumni, diversity), broaden exchange of best practices and resources, introduce the beta version of LLC’s Web site, and develop a learning agenda for LLC community members.⁴ The gathering included circle sessions to advance learning in several areas critical to leadership development. It invited participants to share the experiences and resources of this community as a way to deepen their own work (e.g., in alumni development, bridge leadership, inner work and self-reflection, evaluation, and web development and technology.) It included affinity gatherings designed to allow those working in aligned fields to come together for a more focused exchange of lessons and resources (bringing together foundation representatives, those interested leadership praxis, community leadership programs, youth leadership programs, and training for learning circle leaders). It also incorporated time for Open Space, reflections, and invited participants to experience a “Knowledge Café” - a tool for facilitating dialogue that reaches

³ Excerpted from “An LLC History and Timeline” available on LLC’s Web site in the “About” section.

⁴ Ibid.

deeper questions around leadership development. Kathryn Allen was the keynote speaker, engaging the group in a discussion on “The Learning (R)evolution: Moving from Individual Intelligence to Collective Wisdom.”⁵

Creating Space III: In April 2002, *Creating Space III* was held in Leesburg, Virginia. About 100 individuals participated. The theme organizing this meeting was “What if leadership is the space between us?” The café approach and community inquiry activities were used to explore leadership that resides among people and is not simply experienced by individuals. The structure included both time for Open Space discussion (where members of the community self-organized around passions, questions, and practice) and structured learning on topics (building bridge leadership capacity, community leadership, diversity and leadership, fellowship/alumni sustainability, the inner work of the leader, leadership coaching, leadership evaluation, linking theory and practice, and technology and virtual learning.) Meg Wheatley was the keynote speaker, engaging the group in a discussion on “Building Global Leadership Capacity Through Communities of Practice.”⁶

Creating Space IV: In May 2003, *Creating Space IV* was held in San Francisco. About 120 people participated. The theme of the gathering was “How Do We Become More Reflective Leadership Development Practitioners, Individually and Collectively?” Three keynote learning catalyts were featured: Stewart Kwoh of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (“How Can We Develop Boundary Crossing Leadership Capacity”); Angela Glover Blackwell of PolicyLink (“How Can Leadership Development Practitioners Engage Communities of Color in Policy Change”); and Meg Wheatley of the Berkana Institute (“Building Capacity as a Community of Learners and Sustaining the Learning, Work and Community.”) A variety of working sessions and learning circles were hosted by

⁵ From LLC’s 2001 meeting agenda available on its Web site in the “Creating Space, 2001 Meeting” section.

⁶ Excerpted from the information available on LLC’s Web site in the “Creating Space, 2002 Meeting” section.

leadership researchers, funders, and program developers (e.g., Stone Circles, LEAD International, Center for Reflective Community Practice, Berkana Institute, PolicyLink, Schott Foundation) on topics ranging from “What is the role of inner work in leadership?” to “How can we support non-traditional social justice leadership to create change?” Again, Open Space technology was incorporated.

Creating Space V: In May 2004, *Creating Space V* was held in Marlborough, Massachusetts. About 120 individuals participated. The theme of the gathering was “What Are We Learning About the Role of Leadership Development in Social Change?” The agenda included community contribution sessions, Open Space, Learning Circle discussions, Conversation Catalysts sessions (Nelson Johnson of the Beloved Community Center, Ditra Edwards of LISTEN), and several informal community building activities. The design team described this year’s focus as the following: “Participants in the Leadership Learning Community across diverse experiences and perspectives, share a deep hope or belief that leadership can help to bring about a transformation of society. Collectively, we invest in supporting and developing leadership across a range of specific and broad social issues, e.g. the environment, health care, the welfare of families and children, violence prevention, poverty, the social justice system, globalism, hunger, and education reform. The moral, human, and financial costs of current U.S. foreign policy are creating new challenges for leadership on all of these fronts compelling us to expand and build our collective capacity to meet these needs. In this spirit, *Creating Space V*, the national meeting of the LLC, will focus the learning of the community around the lessons from our collective experiences about how to support and develop effective social change leadership....”⁷

Lessons from the Evolution of Creating Space

Structure Increasingly Supports an Open and Collective Learning Environment.

There was significant consensus that the design team in recent years has succeeded in structuring CS to support opportunities for people to connect, share

⁷ Excerpted from the *Creating Space V* Web site.

knowledge, explore new areas of learning, and engage in practice-based learning development. While the format may need to be adjusted to attract new participants, and some individuals will always argue for more or less structure, overall, most people attending multiple Creating Spaces agreed that LLC is getting better at designing CS in a way that is interactive and creative, yet not unwieldy. They noted the difficulty in balancing the “intellectual” with more “touchy feely” activities, and how structure is important to allow for this balance to take place – so that it supports a level of intimacy that builds relationships, while providing for value-added learning opportunities.

Unlike the regional circles, where limitations in infrastructure, staffing, and funding have been cited as obstacles to the work, Creating Space is well resourced, with staff, volunteers (the Design Team), funding, and a paid facilitator who provides critical coordinating support. The result is a series of ever more successful gatherings.

CS Catalyzes a Process of Connection, Dialogue, Idea Creation, Shared Learning and Knowledge Development, and Reflection and Renewal.

Many of those surveyed at this year’s CS mentioned how they left with “lots of new ideas percolating,” or “brimming over with imagination” from the conversations and relationships that they had developed. While some people have specifically related *what* they learned, most have shared how the *process* has created an environment of openness to learning and praxis.

Many of those attending CS describe the gathering as “an energizer,” as providing “freedom to put out new ideas and theories,” as a “space to reflect,” to “just be,” and explore new ideas and possibilities. They also characterize their learning as becoming more open to and aware of what others are doing in leadership development, and they leave feeling that working together would translate into more individual learning, and further develop their collective and field-level learning and knowledge development.

CS Strengthens Connections, Sharing, and Partnering among Leadership Developers while Enriching the Wisdom of the Group.

Many recent participants noted that attending CS makes them feel part of a “field” or “community” that is focused on developing the edge of leadership development. LLC’s engagement philosophy, which Kim Hsieh notes in her report on the 2003 Creating Space, is “...that each person is both a teacher and a learner, and that through open and honest sharing of each person’s knowledge, the community and its members will enrich their individual and collective wisdom about the theory and practice of leadership development.” This way of sharing and connecting is at the heart of the Creating Space annual gathering. The success of this approach is validated by a number of people attending CS over the years. In their own words:

“The other thing that I have observed consistently happening at Creating Space (and I believe that this is what LLC does best) is the creation and nurturance of the fertile ground that makes it possible for people to make meaningful connections which can only lead to significant and powerful collaborations - indeed boundary crossing at work!” - Pauline Vela, Creating Space Project Manager

“This has been a rich and awesome opportunity to connect with and learn from others who have passion around issues that are fundamental to our future on the planet. I appreciate the amazing group of folks who have gathered here, the powerful synchronicities that are emerging and my feeling that we are rising for the greater good.” - CS V Participant

Participants also noted how CS opens doors for important collaborative opportunities among leadership developers:

“The networking with other programs provided new ideas and a possibility to strengthen our ties to our funder.” - CS V Participant

“The possibility of cross-alumni networking/collaboration is very exciting and the goal of my participation.” - CS V Participant

Participants Often Lack Consensus on Definitions and Language.

Given the diversity of attendees, participants come to CS with their own epistemologies and technical vocabularies. Even fundamental concepts/terms as *leadership, social change, community, systems change*, etc. find room for critical commentary and contest. Some attendees have suggested that increased attention to the development of common definitions among participants to ensure increased communication and deeper shared learning would make some of these conversations more fruitful. For example:

“Some of the diversity of programs/perspectives seemed a bit homogenized by leadership language/frames used. Like translating academic theses to communities, I wonder if we can’t communicate in more plain language.” - CS V Participant

Some suggest that the language of leadership is value-laden and that these ideological connotations need to be surfaced so that shared community values can be determined to support the definitions of key terms. This is difficult (but not impossible) to address in a group that seeks to embrace diverse stakeholders engaging complex issues – including leadership itself. Others suggest the language issue appears because LLC’s way of thinking, talking, and being ranges outside the traditional professional and workplace norms. People may not be used to interacting and communicating in this pluralistic fashion with other professionals. In short: the conceptual and terminological controversies are difficult but (almost) always substantive and rewarding.

Creating Space...for What? Some Questions Regarding the Substance of CS.

Despite feelings of increased connectivity, some people walk away from CS asking what they gained beyond relationships and some highly conceptual learning and knowledge development. A number of participants have indicated that more time should be spent on substantive, practical work in both the small and large group settings. They want more opportunities for substantive analysis of leadership-related issues, and application to specific real world situations.

Outreach and Follow-up to CS is Limited.

As with the regional circle activities, a number of individuals suggested that it might be helpful to consider how to expand involvement in CS to other groups, particularly among grassroots practitioners, such as youth leadership developers and even their program participants and alumni. As one person put it:

"...[LLC] needs to find a way to throw the doors open to this conversation to a much broader audience. Democratize it. Think who could benefit from this conversation. How do we throw out the conception of expertise and value every voice? What would a gathering look like that could involved all those people?" - CS V Participant

In addition, almost all of those attending LLC this year said they heard about CS via word-of-mouth. A co-worker, friend, boss, staff of various leadership programs, LLC board members, LLC staff, and existing LLC members shared the news about the gathering. Perhaps more targeted outreach would increase the turn-out from both new and old participants.

Further, some board members have highlighted the limited follow-up to CS participants. They have expressed interest in knowing why some people continue to be involved in LLC beyond CS, and why others drop off. Lack of follow-up with attendees likely contributes to people drifting away. Given the multiple demands on people's time, and other contextual forces that pull professionals in many directions, they need ongoing incentives to stay connected and involved.

Balancing Form and Function is a Constant Challenge.

As Kim Hsieh points out in her report on the 2003 CS, LLC must be cognizant that Creating Space, and in many ways, LLC's activities in general, must grapple with the tension that exists between substantive learning and relationship building, structured and unstructured spaces, philosophical and practical learning. The very nature of LLC's work requires constant awareness of these struggles, and a commitment to seek a balance, whereby the tension is healthy and generative, and helps LLC achieve its mission. A central challenge facing CS

is how to stay philosophically grounded in its theory of engagement in the structure of the gathering.

In sum, there was broad agreement among the interviews, survey, and case studies as to the strengths and opportunities for LLC's organizational culture, service to constituents, and programming and products.