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Growing Leaders to Enhance Civil Society: Assessing the Contributions of Leadership Newark

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Executive Summary

Leadership Newark (LN) is a nonprofit organization devoted to furthering the economic, social, and political development of the city of Newark, New Jersey, by providing learning opportunities for present and future leaders through classroom seminars and real-world professional partnerships. Now in its fourteenth year, the program brings together a group of talented professionals who learn how to collaborate in order to galvanize public will toward a common vision for Newark. In autumn 2011, the board and executive staff of LN asked Dr. Roland V. Anglin of Rutgers University to construct an assessment methodology that would measure the impact of the program. The board and staff felt a strong need to document the organization's accomplishments, and they commissioned Dr. Anglin and his team to complete an extensive survey of its alumni and other stakeholders to determine feelings towards the program and what specific knowledge and skills were gained.

The findings from the survey are as follows:

- Most alumni and stakeholders live either in Newark or within a short commute from the city (less than twelve miles). Of those who live in or near the city, most have lived in Newark at one time.
- Most stakeholders (Community Leaders and Community Leadership Initiative Partners) describe themselves as midlevel or senior management in nonprofit and public sector organizations. A strong majority of these stakeholders said that they spend at least 50% of their professional time directly helping to create a better future for the city of Newark and its citizens.
- Leadership alumni reported that “deep engagement” in Newark’s public affairs grew from about 18% before the program to more than 45% after the program, and virtually all alumni experienced at least some increase in their knowledge of and engagement with Newark’s public affairs after completing the program.
- The alumni also reported significant increases in their social and cultural engagement within Newark, and more than 86% indicated that their engagement would continue over the next ten years.
- Overall, alumni reported that they felt a strong level of personal growth through exposure to training competencies (selected by 70% or more of respondents as “strong outcomes”) such as team building, engaging others in decision making, and listening to others reveal how the fellowship program brings diverse talents together and teaches them to collaborate effectively.
- LN alumni take away important public service experience and training that they use in serving Newark and other municipalities such as gaining a better understanding of urban economic development and public education finance, health care, and service delivery.

The project described here is the result of an extensive needs assessment and survey conducted by the Rutgers team in consultation with LN leadership. While many of the questions in these surveys were the same or similar, it was necessary to survey alumni and the two main stakeholder groups—Community Leaders and Community Leadership Initiative Partners—separately in order to properly assess their unique perspectives. These surveys were conducted in early 2012, and the results were analyzed through the summer of 2012. This report summarizes the survey findings and presents their significance.

“Since its inception in 1998, Leadership Newark has functioned as a crucial training ground for a new generation of civic leaders throughout Newark. The impact the program has had on our great city is incalculable. With over 300 graduates now filling leadership positions in the city’s administration, legislature, and judicial system, not to mention dozens of organizations throughout the city, Leadership Newark’s legacy is inextricably linked to Newark’s cultural and socioeconomic revival. There is no question that as a city, Newark is in a far better position than it was before Leadership Newark existed, and that is a great testament to the positive influence of the program and its graduates.”

*Mayor Cory Booker
Mayor, City of Newark*

Background

Leadership Newark (LN) is a fourteen-year-old program aimed at strengthening the city of Newark’s civic infrastructure. The program, which is built on a two-year experience of exploring and enhancing public policy in and for Newark, has prepared more than four hundred adult participants (commonly referred to as program Fellows) to play valuable roles in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Since its inception, LN has recruited fourteen classes and graduated twelve.¹ LN creates a network of established and emerging leaders, with the concept of servant-leadership as its central organizing principle.²

Leadership Newark accomplishes its mission by preparing the next generation of leaders with the skills and knowledge needed to exert positive influence in sectors important to the social, cultural, and economic development of Newark. Currently, about 20% of the participants are in the nonprofit sector, 17% in business/corporate, 14% in education, 12% in law, 11% in government, 10% in health care, and 15% spread across the fields of architecture, law enforcement, and the arts. The median age range is between 27 years old and 35 years old, with outliers on both sides. These are

individuals in the prime of their careers, mobilized to become engaged as community activists. About 85% of LN alumni work in Newark, and 47% of the entire network (participants and staff) reside in Newark.

Specifically, the program consists of public policy enrichment seminars augmented by skill-building and team-building sessions. The seminars, which are held once a month for one year, encourage interaction and exchange among the Fellows. LN guides Fellows on measures to influence positive change for specific issues and problems. The managers of the program help Fellows feel empowered to develop a common vision for the future and to collaborate on that vision through nonlinear thinking, teamwork, and recognizing the importance of diverse voices collaborating for social and economic development.

Fellows in the second year of the program are expected to put into play what they have learned the first year in the form of service to and for local community-based agencies whose mission is to better the city of Newark and its population. Ideally, projects and initiatives are ongoing and will be maintained by the partnering organizations or agencies (called Community Partners). The project phase, entitled the Community Leadership Initiative (CLI), requires each project team to produce a written paper and organize a formal presentation. It is expected that the projects will result in lasting

1 At the time this report was written, two classes were in the process of completing the program.

2 Servant-leadership is the concept of first serving others, then leading others, as a way of improving the common good.

benefits to the community. Ideally, the projects also bridge gaps in existing services and foster new partnerships, resulting in positive systemic changes for the Community Partners.

“Not only did I learn an amazing amount about Newark as a municipality, its complexities and how so many of the different departments work, but I also was able to improve my own professional skills. I met some extraordinary people and have been able to tap into a remarkable network of people who live, work, and care about Newark. I am proud to be a Leadership Newark Fellow.”

**Holly Kaplansky
Owner, Minuteman Press
Leadership Newark Class of 2010**

Reason for the Assessment

In autumn 2011, the board and executive staff of Leadership Newark asked Dr. Roland V. Anglin to construct an assessment methodology that measures the impact of the program’s effectiveness. The board and staff felt a strong need to quantify the accomplishments of LN’s fourteen years of service to the city of Newark.

Leadership programs such as the one under study are notoriously difficult to evaluate using standard social science techniques. There is no accepted way to show the impact of an organization such as Leadership Newark. Thus, it was necessary at the outset to formulate a customized metric for assessment. From discussion with LN, the Rutgers team determined that the goal of the assessment would focus on:

1. Measurement of the perceived impact of Leadership Newark on the leadership trajectory of individuals who have participated in the program.

2. Measurement of the perceived impact (or, at the very least, the influence) of Leadership Newark on the civic development of Newark (as defined by the mission of LN).

Methodology

Because the goal of the Leadership Newark survey was to gain the broadest picture possible of the program’s accomplishments and effectiveness, its design is based on a three-pronged assessment methodology:

- Survey of Participants: A look at the types of people who have been LN Fellows.
- Survey of Participant Impact on the Civic, Economic, and Social Development of Newark: An assessment of what the Fellows have gained from the program and given back to the community.
- Survey of Stakeholders: An overview of Community Leaders and Community Leadership Initiative Partners, and what they think of the Leadership Newark program and its alumni.

Each survey addressed specific types of individuals within the program, including program alumni and stakeholders. While many of the questions on these surveys were the same or similar, we felt that it was necessary to assess the responses separately in order to get an accurate view of how the different groups of people within LN perceive the effectiveness of the program.

Survey of Participants

This survey taps mutually agreed-on dimensions of personal growth and leadership development and how participation in Leadership Newark

shaped or changed these dimensions for participants. The instrument encompasses items developed specifically for the project as well as items culled from existing survey instruments. The survey measures the elements of personal growth and leadership development of the participant that are most relevant to his or her organization's mission and profile.

Survey of Participant Impact (Community Leaders)

While the Survey of Participants measures the effect of the program on personal leadership development and growth, the assessment protocol also recognizes that participants have made contributions to Newark in many different ways. It is important to capture this impact in a way that can tell a compelling story. To do so, the Survey of Participant Impact identifies several case studies that highlight how program participants have made an impact through the projects required for graduation. Please note this is not a survey of the organizations where LN participants conducted their projects, which comes in a later phase.

Survey of Community Leadership Initiative Partners

The final survey was delivered to key stakeholders, defined as leaders from the political, public, and private sectors in Newark. This survey was shorter and more limited in scope. This survey presents key elected officials, private sector leaders, and leaders of nonprofit organizations who have sponsored Leadership Newark projects with a questionnaire designed to gauge perceptions of LN impact. The base contact list for this survey included leaders who have personally participated in the CLI program over the years.

The surveys, which were designed according to recognized survey research practice, ranged from sixteen to twenty-five questions each and included a comments section at the end for free-form remarks. Given costs and time constraints, e-mail

delivery was the most feasible way to distribute the three surveys. The Rutgers team composed a pre-contact letter (sent via e-mail) to potential respondents explaining that a survey link would follow in an e-mail. Leadership Newark was responsible for sending the letter and for providing the list of e-mail addresses for the survey.

Response Rates

Survey 1 (Participants) was sent to alumni of the LN program. The survey was sent to 302 people from a list provided by LN; there were 191 responses (63% response rate).

Survey 2 (Participant Impact) was sent to funders, public and private sector leaders, and volunteers. The survey was sent to 70 people from a list provided by LN; there were 23 responses (33% response rate). The lower rate of response can be explained by the greater diversity of individuals in this group, some of whom have less-personal ties to the program.

Survey 3 (Community Leadership Initiative Partners) was sent to those who hosted LN Fellows. The survey was sent to 14 people; all 14 responded (100% response rate). This high rate of response mirrors the commitment of the instructors who make the program function.

Individuals within the LN program—alumni and hosts—exhibited the highest response rates. The group of stakeholders consisting of leaders and volunteers in Community Partner organizations had the lowest response rate of the three groups, most likely because, on average, they have a less direct association with LN. Still, a 33% response rate yields statistically significant results.

Demographic Results

Below, demographic results are shown for each of the three survey groups. These are drawn directly from the survey responses and are calculated as percentages, allowing for an evenhanded analysis.

Survey 1 (Participants)

One of the most evident conclusions made about the LN alumni is that they have close ties to Newark. Most alumni live either in Newark or within a short commute from the city. When asked if they currently live in Newark, 40% (76 responses) said “Yes,” while another 28% (53) live within twelve miles of Newark. While it is true that 114 out of 190 individuals (60%) do not currently live in Newark, 61 said that they had lived in Newark in the past. This brings the total of individuals who currently live or have lived in Newark to 137, or 72% of the surveyed population.

In addition, 60% (115) of respondents said they currently work in Newark. Thus, most alumni of the program pursue professions within the city.

Survey 2 (Community Leaders)

The same can be said of the Community Leaders as of the alumni: most live and work in Newark. Of those surveyed, 65% (15 responses) live in or within twelve miles of Newark. If they do not currently live in Newark, 30% (7) have done so in the past. About 57% (13) currently work in Newark.

Most respondents in this group, which consists of Community Partners, are seasoned professionals either in nonprofit or public sector organizations. Nearly half of the respondents (47.8%, 11 people) described their occupation as “senior nonprofit leader.” Some 22% (5) selected “private sector leader in a mid- to senior-level position in the organization.” While the remaining respondents

hold mid- to senior-level positions or are entrepreneurs, interestingly, no elected officials or educators responded to the survey.

Members of the group do, however, see themselves as contributing directly to the welfare of Newark in their professions. About 44% (10) said they spend the majority of their work time (more than 70%) directly helping to create a better future for the city of Newark and its citizens, while 13% (3) said they spent a great deal of their work time (around 50%) helping to create a better future for Newark. That means that a total of 94% of this group spends at least half of their professional time contributing directly to the Newark’s welfare.

From these data, it is clear that most of LN’s Community Partners are not only living and working in Newark but also see themselves as directly contributing to the future of the city.

Survey 3 (Community Leadership Initiative Partners)

The Community Leadership Initiative Partners are, statistically speaking, the most connected to Newark. Nearly 79% (11 respondents) live in or within twelve miles of Newark, and 29% (4) of those who do not currently live in Newark have done so in the past. Some 64% (9) work in Newark.

Half of the respondents described their occupation as “senior nonprofit leader.” Forty-three percent (6) said they spend the majority of their work time (70% or more) directly helping to create a better future for the city, 21% (3) said they spend a great deal of their time (about 50%), and another 21% said they spend at least some of their time helping to create a better future for Newark. What this shows is that the majority of host respondents have a connection with Newark, personally and/or professionally. Moreover, they see themselves as contributing professionally to the welfare of the city. Their overall dedication and optimism is also evident in the 100% response rate for the survey.

Knowledge of and Engagement with Leadership Newark

This portion of the survey focuses on specific benefits the alumni derived from the two-year program. These benefits, we hoped, would include tangible professional leadership skills, wide knowledge of public affairs in a municipality such as Newark, and a broad array of interpersonal skills that are typically brought to bear in the diverse, team-oriented environments of public service.

Survey 1 (Participants)

This part of the survey reveals a high level of engagement in Newark affairs among LN alumni. On average, they had a moderate degree of engagement before the program and significantly higher level of engagement afterward. This conforms to expectations; their prior interest in Newark is what drew them to the program and enabled them to achieve higher levels of engagement as their learning progressed.

The alumni were asked to rate their knowledge of Newark's public affairs. Their responses showed, overall, a significant increase in knowledge thanks to the program, and this increase occurred even though most Fellows came into the program with at least some knowledge. Specifically, 72% of respondents (138) indicated that they had "some knowledge" of public affairs in Newark before participating in the LN Fellowship. This grew to 81.2% of respondents (155) indicating a "deep knowledge" after participating in the LN Fellowship. With more than 80% of respondents indicating a "deep knowledge" of Newark public affairs upon completion of the program, it is clear that their perception of gained knowledge is quite high. Because most of these individuals (60%) currently work in Newark, there is good reason to believe that their assessment of their knowledge is accurate.

They were then asked about "engagement,"

"When I think of Leadership Newark, I think of a network of community and civic leaders who commit two years to learning and refining their leadership skills in public policy, and the rest of their lives devoted to making the greater Newark community stronger."

**Fernando Acevedo Jr.
Principal, Irving Lexington, LLC
Leadership Newark Class of 2008**

or the degree to which the alumni involve themselves in Newark's public affairs. When asked to describe their participation in Newark public affairs before participating in the LN Fellowship, 45.0% (86) responded they had "some engagement," while 36.6% (70) had "no engagement." Only 18.3% (35) responded "deep engagement." After the program, people answering "deep engagement" increased significantly to 45.5% (87)—an increase of about 250%. About 52% (100) answered "some engagement," while "no engagement" dropped to 2.1% (4). The trend in all three of these response categories indicates growth in engagement after completing the program.

It was also important to measure engagement in the social and cultural life of Newark, and the same trends were seen. Nearly half (89) were "somewhat engaged" in the social, economic, and/or cultural development of Newark before participating, while 30.4% (58) were "very engaged" and 23.0% (44) were "not engaged." After participating in the program, 59.2% (113) of respondents said they were "very engaged," while another 36.1% (69) were "somewhat engaged." Only 3.1% (6) said they were "not engaged." These numbers are made more impressive when we consider that many individuals (32%) live more than twelve miles outside of Newark, so their engagement in Newark's social and cultural life requires active effort.

Furthermore, this commitment to the social and cultural life of Newark is long-term. Nearly 87%

(166) of respondents see themselves engaged in the social, economic, and/or cultural development of Newark over the next ten years.

All of these data paint a picture of the LN alumnus as knowledgeable about and engaged in the public, social, and cultural affairs of the city of Newark, and as planning to remain so for the foreseeable future.

Survey 2 (Community Leaders)

The survey confirmed what was anticipated about LN's Community Partners: they are knowledgeable about and engaged in the affairs of Newark. All 23 respondents had at least some knowledge of Newark public affairs: "deep knowledge" 56.5% (13) and "some knowledge" 43.5% (10). (This group, obviously, was not asked to rate its knowledge before and after the program.)

Further, around 83% (19) were at least somewhat engaged in Newark public affairs, evenly split between "deep engagement" 43.5% (10) and "some engagement" 39.1% (9). Only 17.4% (4) chose "no engagement."

Approximately 70% of respondents see themselves as engaged in the social, economic, and/or cultural development of Newark over the next ten years. When asked to elaborate on their

engagement over the next ten years, 17 people responded. Most indicated their job title or the policy area they are interested in (such as education). Of those who indicated a decreased involvement, several gave retirement as a reason. The write-in answers confirm that these are dedicated individuals whose engagement in Newark's affairs is tied to their professions.

Survey 3 (Community Leadership Initiative Partners)

The group of Community Leadership Initiative Partners exhibits high engagement in Newark affairs as well. All 14 respondents had at least some knowledge of Newark public affairs, evenly split between "deep knowledge" (7) and "some knowledge" (7). When asked to describe their participation in Newark public affairs, over half (57%) said "some engagement," and another 36% said "deep engagement." Only one respondent had "no engagement."

All hosts surveyed see themselves as engaged in the social, economic, and/or cultural development of Newark over the next ten years. Thus, the interest and dedication of the hosts appears to result from their strong engagement in the welfare of the city itself.

Comments from Community Leadership Initiative Partner respondents:

"As an Essex County resident and participant in government and philanthropic affairs in the city, I have been engaged in the social and economic development of the city since the late 1970s. I see no reason not to continue my participation."

"As the owner of an art gallery, we have participated in many cultural events in the Newark community."

"The ability to supply a safe place with caring adults to guide and direct our children is done by providing strong programs and doing much more collaboration with other groups that have the same mission as we do."

"The cultural, social, and economic welfare of the city directly impacts the lives of the more than 3,000 residents that my organization serves. In addition, as a resident of the city, I am impacted."

Effectiveness of Leadership Newark

The first two parts of the survey should assure LN leadership that its alumni and stakeholders have deep personal and professional ties to Newark, and that most of them actively contribute professionally to its welfare. In the remainder of the survey, we look at how they perceive the effectiveness of the fellowship program in preparing them for work in the public sector.

Because this portion of the survey measures what and how well Fellows learn from the program, it was asked only of the first group, participant alumni. The alumni group was asked a series of questions that document what they thought about the learning methods and impact of the program. Below, the responses to these questions are tallied and interpreted.

Alumni were first asked, “Which learning methods were utilized in the Leadership Newark program curriculum?” From a list of four possibilities, respondents could select as many methods as they felt applied. Nearly 97% of respondents said visiting and learning from different organizations that impact Newark’s social and economic infrastructure applied. Workshops and seminars were also chosen by 97%.

The third most chosen method was reading assignments, with approximately 80%. Coaching from leadership staff was selected by roughly 76% of respondents.

While all of these methods were in frequent use, the most common learning methods involved close interaction with visitors from Newark organizations and the applied workshops. The other two methods, reading and mentoring, formed a second tier of value some 20 percentage points below the first two.

After understanding what learning methods were used we measured the perceived value of the four learning methods. Visiting and learning from different organizations that impact Newark’s



social and economic infrastructure was a very popular teaching method. Approximately 75% (144) of alumni thought it was “very important,” while another 23% (44) saw it as “important.” Nearly everyone felt that this method was effective.

Workshops/seminars were also an effective teaching method. Sixty-seven percent (128) of respondents indicated that they were “very important,” and 29.3% (56) chose “important.” As with visiting organizations, nearly everyone experienced workshop teaching and nearly everyone felt it was effective.

Coaching from leadership staff did not receive as large a response as the first two but was still favorable. Approximately half responded that coaching from leadership staff was “very important.” Another 32.5% (62) of people thought it was “important,” and 9.9% (19) responded “neutral.” Thus, while only three out of four Fellows experienced coaching, most felt that it was effective. It may be of concern, however, that nearly 10% gained no value

from individual coaching, which is the most individualized learning method used.

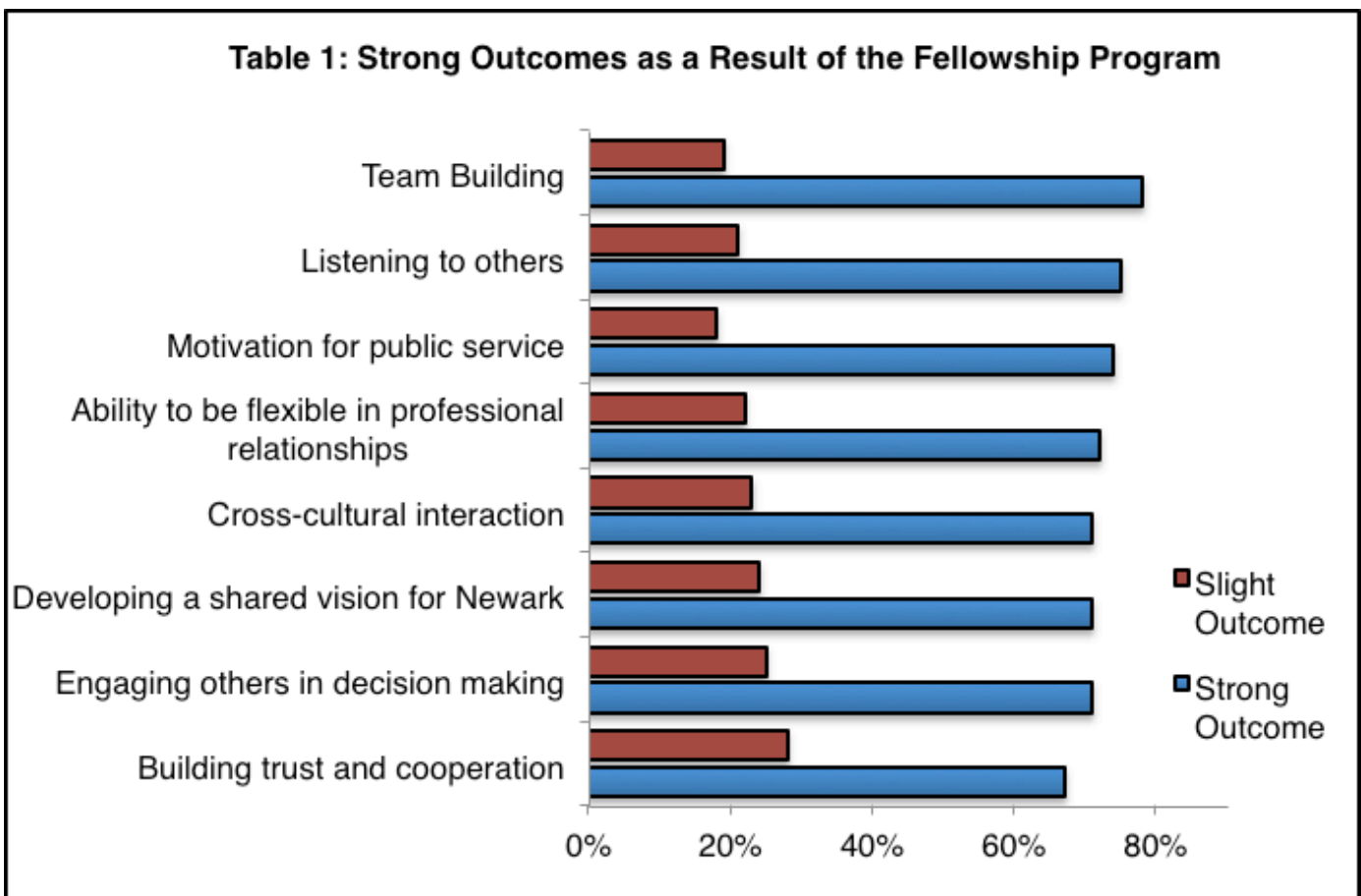
About three out of four Fellows were given reading assignments, and while 32.5% (62) felt they were “very important” and 41.4% (79) “important,” a large number (17.8%) were “neutral” about readings. Relatively speaking, Fellows preferred hands-on workshops, coaching, and direct contact with visiting organizations to textbook readings. This does not mean that readings have less value than other methods, but only that some students gain less from readings than others.

Leadership Newark aims to directly and indirectly build a number of leadership competencies. Respondents could choose from more than twenty-five different competencies and rate them as either “strong,” “slight,” or “not an outcome.” While all selections got at least a few checks, several

stood out as having strong positive outcomes as a result of the fellowship program. These responses can be found in Table 1.

From Table 1 we see that these outcomes create a sense of interpersonal growth on a professional level. Competencies such as team building, engaging others in decision making, listening to others, and several similar outcomes reveal how the fellowship program brings people with diverse talents together and teaches them to collaborate effectively. Collaboration and flexibility are important skills for modern professional environments in both the public and private sectors. Other competencies such as motivation for public service and developing a shared vision for Newark show that the lessons are being focused on real issues at the municipal level.

Other outcomes appeared with slightly less



frequency but were still indicated as significant positive outcomes. For the most part, respondents felt that their Leadership Newark program experience produced a measurable outcome in just about every category. No competency had less than a 50% response indicating that it was strong or slight outcome. The lowest-ranked category was “financial management,” in which 38% said that it was not an outcome of the experience. This was the only time an outcome was less than 75% (strong or slight), probably because it involves a specific kind of skill rather than the general skills associated with outcomes like “team building” and “flexibility.” These data can be compared and combined to tell many narratives. For example, the responses to “working together” and “motivation for public service” directly validate the mission of Leadership Newark. The high responses to “listening to others” and “cross-cultural interaction” suggest a greater ability to handle the more diverse makeup of public sector organizations. The overwhelming majority of Fellows perceive personal growth in broad interpersonal skills that can be adapted to many profes-

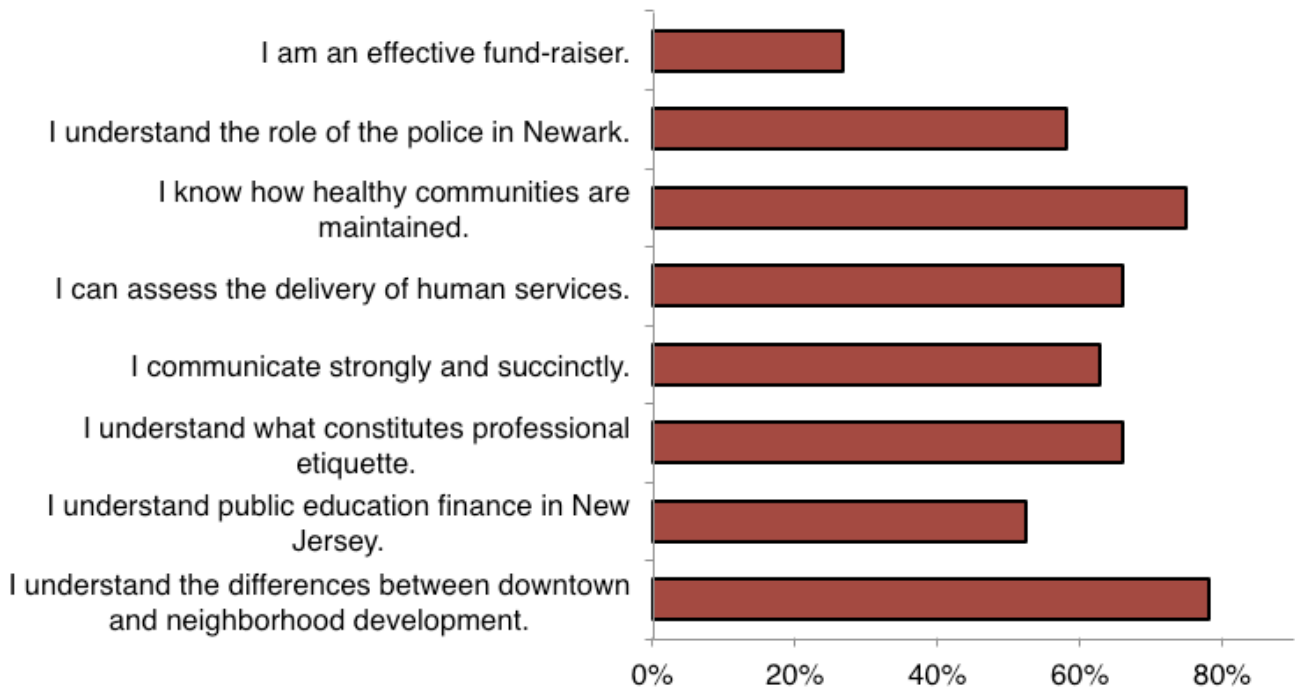
sional environments.

We then moved on to explore specific outcomes Fellows associated with the program. This was done using the following question: “Due to my experience in Leadership Newark... (please check all that apply).” This question solicits a broad range of outcomes related to specific types of knowledge and appreciation, answered in yes-or-no fashion. The following table illustrates the responses to nine different outcome choices.

These results are enlightening in that for almost every question, more than 50% of respondents believe that they gained knowledge or understanding named in the question as a result of their experience with Leadership Newark. The large number of positive responses to skills as varied as understanding professional etiquette and being able to assess the delivery of human services suggest that Fellows gain many other skills and appreciations as well.

If there is any area underdeveloped in the program, it may be fund-raising. “I am an effective fund-raiser” was the only option the majority of

Table 2: Specific Outcomes Associated with the Program



LEADERSHIP NEWARK COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE PROFILE

The Marion P. Thomas Charter School enrolls more than 600 students in grades pre-K through 8. Its mission is to provide a stimulating academic environment that prepares its students for higher education and teaches them how to be agents of positive change in their community. In 2005, a team of Leadership Newark fellows developed an inventory of appropriate feeder high schools for the charter school's first graduating class. In 2007, the LN team developed a service learning curriculum for their students.

“When we hosted Leadership Newark, their project was to create a curriculum and program to prepare a group of forty eighth-grade students for high school. The LN team, which consisted of about five or six Fellows, was a diverse group that had corporate experience, and their professional perspective was helpful because sometimes educators get so mired in the educational aspect that we don't see what the outside world is looking for. Having people who were not educators was a good thing because it brought more depth of vision to what we all brought together.

The LN team taught our students how to go on interviews, write essays, and go through the application process at the high school level, which is very similar to what they would have to do to get into college. There was, of course, a double meaning for us in preparing the children, as we honed our own professional skills.

It was a wonderful experience. They created a twelve-month program that started in the summer. They taught students how to articulate their experiences in a way that would help to distinguish their applications and favorably impress admissions officers. They also made the students conscious of body language and other elements that can get you a job or into a program, or in this case into high school.

The project was a godsend. It helped us at the school to think critically about strategies for preparing kids to communicate effectively. Not having anyone internally to do the job, this was like having an extension of our staff.

The program helped us beyond its original goals because it made us think about whom we would have to hire to perform this function on an ongoing basis, and what that job would look like, and what the tasks and duties would look like over the course of a year for that person. The LN program became a template for us to not only get through that class of students, but to create what is now our Director of Placement and Alumni Affairs. We then rolled it back to prepare sixth and seventh graders for that process.

The LN project turned out to be “the gift that kept on giving.” It has now morphed into other programs. Using it as a template, our school now has a foundation that gives children scholarships to go to high school, and we now have had three classes who have graduated into college. We have used the LN template for multiple other projects, such as to set up the interview process, the application process, and the screening process for students and alumni.

Further, we feel that the project has had an impact on the civic life of Newark. We're a community-based school in Newark. Our mission is to develop the city of Newark, with education as our main strategy to do it. The Leadership Newark help has been instrumental in meeting our mission. Evidence of their impact is that the majority of students eligible for college have gotten acceptances. When they go full cycle through college and enter work force, we will receive our return on investment. We believe in Leadership Newark '200 percent.’”

Dr. Karen Thomson (LN '08)
Chief Executive Officer
Marion P. Thomas Charter School

people did not check, with nearly 75% of the respondents feeling that Leadership Newark did not help them to become effective fund-raisers. It is not currently the mission of LN to develop fund-raising skills, but this may be a worthwhile seminar topic in the future.

Perception of Leadership Newark Participants

In this section of the survey, participants and stakeholders were asked about how they perceived the effectiveness of the program in many specific categories. It is interesting to compare participants' responses to those of the stakeholders.

Survey 1 (Participants)

Alumni were asked twelve questions designed to determine how their experience increased

their knowledge and skills directly related to the affairs of the city of Newark. They had to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with these statements (“strongly agree,” “agree,” “somewhat agree,” “neutral,” “somewhat disagree,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree”).

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed with these twelve statements. The net agreement (strongly agree, agree, or somewhat agree) was nearly 96% for each statement. No more than four people ever picked a form of disagree for any of the statements. In fact most people “strongly agreed” with the statements. Clearly, participants in the program take away a significant understanding of Newark’s operational challenges, as well as strong leadership skills. These results help to validate LN and are testaments to its success.

Around 91% felt that Leadership Newark

Table 3: Statements Given to Fellows to Determine How the Fellowship Increased Their Knowledge and Skills of Newark Affairs

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Leadership Newark has allowed me to connect with the people that will help me to become an influential change agent in and for Newark.” • “Leadership Newark has allowed me to connect with the resources that will help me to become an influential change agent in and for Newark.” • “Because of my Leadership Newark experience, I am more actively involved in projects and activities that are vital to the social, economic, and/or cultural improvement of Newark.” • “Leadership Newark has played a key role in helping me to understand the policy challenges faced by Newark policy makers as they pursue revitalization of the city.” • “My Leadership Newark experience has helped me to grow as an informed citizen.” • “My Leadership Newark experience has helped me to grow as a professional.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I have applied the learning gained from my Leadership Newark experience in the service of Newark’s social, economic, and/or cultural revitalization.” • “My participation in Leadership Newark has given me the knowledge, tools and contacts to help in the revitalization of Newark in the next ten years.” • “Leadership Newark has helped me to expand my professional network.” • “I would recommend Leadership Newark to others.” • “The skills and resources I gained through my experience with Leadership Newark outweigh any time and financial costs associated with it.” • “Leadership Newark is an important program.”
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allowed them to connect with the resources needed to become an influential change agent for Newark. Eighty-three (43.5%) people felt strongly about this compared to only 36 (18.8%) who somewhat agreed with the statement.

Survey 2 (Community Leaders)

Community Partners were then asked about their perception of program alumni. They were asked, “Please select the option that best describes your knowledge of the role and impact of Leadership Newark graduates in Newark public affairs.” “Aware,” was selected by 78.3% (18) of the respondents, while 21.7% (5) selected “Not Aware.” With three out of four of the partner organizations actively aware of the contributions of the graduates, we can infer that Fellows form productive professional relationships and acquaintances that continue after the program ends.

Next they were asked to describe their outcomes from the program. Eighteen people responded to this question. Nine people believed Leadership Newark graduates play an important and positive role in Newark public affairs, while the other nine people believe Leadership Newark graduates play a steady positive role in Newark

“When my CEO nominated me to participate in the Leadership Newark program, I was very reluctant because I thought it would place much demand on my time. I graduated from the program in 2003 and I find myself not ready to sever ties because the training turned out to be a good investment for my personal and professional growth.”

**Stella Osemwegie,
PhD., LPC
Director, In-Community
Services at Youth Consultation Services
Leadership Newark
Class of 2003**



public affairs. Not only are the partners aware of the impact of the graduates, but they also have a strong positive perception of that impact.

Finally, the Community Leaders group was asked to indicate in what capacity they support Leadership Newark. They were given four options and asked to select all that apply. Eleven respondents lend financial support through their organization or individual donation. Twelve respondents lend in-kind support (volunteer time/participating on a panel) of the program.

Eleven public, private, or nonprofit sector leaders who recognize the value of Leadership Newark have advocated for its role in building Newark’s civic capacity.

The strong showing in financial support and participation is encouraging, as is the support of these leaders as advocates in their professional spheres of influence.

Concerns and Recommendations of Respondents

To offer a summative analysis of the surveys, the concerns and recommendations expressed in the write-in responses among the three groups were analyzed. Each group, at the end of the questionnaire, was asked to offer both the positive aspects of the LN Fellowship and the areas in want of improvement. Their comments provide

useful insights to consider as the program moves forward.

“Leadership Newark was my entry point to understanding the importance of civic engagement, and since completing Leadership Newark I have comitted most of my life to public service. I am grateful for the education and the network of amazing professionals.”

**Vaughn Crowe
Senior Program Director, MCJ Amelior
Foundation
Leadership Newark Class of 2006**

Participants

The final question on the survey questionnaire asked alumni to comment on the “most and least helpful” aspects of the LN Fellowship program, and to suggest ways in which to benefit future participants. Comments, almost all of them laudatory, came from 147 individuals.

Among the criticisms, the most common type had to do with specific education opportunities and methodologies that could have been emphasized more or conducted differently during the two-year program. For example, one alumnus would have preferred an emphasis on “long-term volunteer placement, as opposed to job placement.” Another would prefer less on the “Newark curriculum” and more on “personal development of key leadership skills.” The latter comment reflects a Fellow who perhaps wanted a more general leadership seminar rather than a program devoted to developing professional roles in the municipal public sector, specifically Newark. But this misconception occurred infrequently and was more than balanced by other students who wished for a “more intensive program that provided a deeper understanding of the issues

and the various public policies that affect them.” Comment of this type—and there were many specific ideas mentioned by only one person—reflect the individual needs and desires of the alumni involved. But criticisms of the curriculum appeared in only about a third of the comments, and they reflected a desire for more and higher quality of things the students already liked.

An interesting critique that appeared multiple times had to do with a desire for stricter admission standards for students. One respondent would have liked “better recruitment and a higher caliber professional/community development leader across the class,” as well as “more stringent enforcement of attendance rules.” That some students are more engaged than others creates, in another person’s view, an environment that “disproportionately places decision making and work weight on the more involved participants.” One person even commented: “Team members who did not contribute were not held accountable for their lack of work and were



given full credit even though they did nothing.” Of all the criticisms of the program from alumni, lack of accountability for those few Fellows who are not actively engaged is the most disturbing, and perhaps the one that could be addressed most directly for the future with stricter student guidelines.

Finally, the alumni voiced concern over the cost of the program. Some Fellows had to pay for the program out of their own pockets, and one commented that the cost has gone up so much since he was enrolled that he would not be able to pay for it today. Several alumni suggested a scholarship program based on financial need.



Community Leaders

More than 80% of the Community Partner respondents provided us with comments and helpful advice when asked to elaborate on “ways that Leadership Newark has had an effect on the city of Newark,” and what is “most and least helpful about the Leadership Newark program.”

On the positive side, a common theme for most comments was the fact that the program did help create leaders who are serving Newark moving forward. The program fosters leadership and introduces Fellows to networks of professionals with whom they can work and collaborate. A typical answer: “Leadership Newark provides a forum for

emerging leaders to become aware of issues, engage in dialogue, and begin to form cross-industry and multi-perspective solutions to the challenges of the Newark community. Leadership Newark accelerates the skill development of community-based leaders, and through them, our entire community.” One respondent commented that the LN experience “created a network of activists who share—to an extent that varies among them—a perspective on the issues confronting the city.” A further comment sums up the benefits nicely: “If you examine the list of alumni and their current placement, you find that they are leaders across the city, in all sectors. And thanks to their relationships with one another, formed through LN, they break down barriers and promote collaboration.”

The respondents in this group were also forthcoming with their constructive criticisms and recommendations. One of the most common weaknesses noted had to do with the limitations of the current program’s financial resources. One respondent wrote: “LN needs support to improve its program and modify its services to the city by expanding its partnerships and working to stay relevant to the needs of the community it serves.” Another pointed to the increased value in “having greater and more reliable resources [that] would magnify the influence of Leadership Newark.” While it may not be possible to increase funding to satisfy the loftiest goals of the program, LN should consider that some of the problem may be a matter of promotion. As one individual pointed out: “[LN’s] availability as a good-faith host and facilitator does not come across as prominently as its history of leadership development warrants.” This echoes the comment of an alumnus who called for “better branding” of the program.

Community Leadership Initiative Partners

This group, the Community Leadership Initiative Partners, had great things to say about the

program, as has already been shown. But when asked about what is “most and least helpful about the Leadership Newark program,” few offered criticisms. Only half of the respondents (seven individuals) wrote in a comment to this question, and six of seven focused on the “most helpful” aspects only. Only one person indicated a weakness, and did so only after writing a positive comment: “I believe that many of the participants are not in the city for the long haul and that support for the city and its residents will dissipate when the current city administration ends.” Interestingly, this mirrors a comment made by one of the Community Partners about the same question: “I recently became aware of an individual who had never worked in Newark or lived in Newark, nor have they ever worked or volunteered in Newark, but was planning to move to Newark in Sept. 2011. This person applied to Leadership Newark and was accepted. Given this, I don’t understand how the organization is committed to cultivating leaders in Newark. One would think that in order to qualify for Leadership Newark, a viable candidate would have to some record of service and/or leadership in the city.” While it is impossible to comment on the specific case to which this writer refers, the two comments together suggest a perception among the stakeholders and Fellows that fellowship participants should have a demonstrable commitment to Newark in order to take advantage of its resources. This commitment could go a long way to ensure that Fellows are actively engaged in the two-year program and contribute responsibly to all activities.

Conclusion

Leadership Newark can be proud of its fourteen-year history and of the many Fellows who have gone on to be important contributors to the public affairs of Newark and other municipalities. The survey confirms that a majority of LN alumni continue to be actively engaged in Newark’s politi-

“Leadership Newark gave me the opportunity to meet key decision makers and to think strategically about how to solve complex problems with a diverse group of Fellows all eager to see Newark emerge as a great place to live, work, and raise a family.”

**Irene Cooper-Basch
Executive Director, Victoria Foundation
Leadership Newark Class of 2005**

cal, social, and cultural life, even a decade or more after completing the program. Responses from the alumni and the teaching staff, as well as from the Community Partners, indicate the measurable gains that program participants make, not only in public administration knowledge but also in the collaborative and team-building skills that are indispensable in modern public sector organizations.

LN leadership can be confident that the fellowship program is increasing knowledge of and engagement with Newark’s public affairs. The alumni survey discovered that “deep engagement” in Newark’s public affairs grew from about 18% before the program to more than 45% after the program, and virtually all alumni experienced at least some increase in their knowledge of and engagement with Newark’s public affairs after completing the program. These alumni also reported significant increases in their social and cultural engagement within Newark, and more than 86% indicated that their engagement would continue over the next ten years.

In terms of the specific knowledge and skills gained within the program, alumni gave some enlightening answers. Overall, the competencies they gained share a sense of interpersonal growth on a professional level. Strongly indicated competencies (selected by 70% or more of respondents as “strong outcomes”) such as team building, engaging others in decision making, and listen-

LEADERSHIP NEWARK COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE PROFILE

Since 2003, Newark Now has been devoted to providing Newark residents with the tools, skills and support to transform their neighborhoods. Starting with seven grassroots organizations, Newark Now has become an important intermediary that partners with many other grassroots organizations, municipal government, and the philanthropic community. One such organization, Fathers Now, aids fathers in developing a stronger commitment to fatherhood, better parenting skills, and more employment potential. Fathers Now targets men who are struggling with recent loss of jobs or home, or who are returning from incarceration.

“LaVar Young enlisted the Leadership Network team to develop a business plan that would enable the participants in the Fathers Now program to find gainful employment despite having a criminal record.

Our Fathers Now program had been in operation for two years. As we looked forward, we wanted to empower our men more than we were able to, and find more employment opportunities. We began to thinking internally about how a business managed and operated entirely by our graduating fathers would look. None of us on staff had the business background to put together something like this.

So, when Leadership Network reached out to Fathers Now, it was great timing. They asked us whether we had a project that LN could take on. We applied with a project to create a business plan for entrepreneurship and social innovations through a maintenance company for the Fathers Now program. Our application was accepted. We met three or four times with LN, and gave them an idea of what the program was about. LN then spoke with our graduates and participants. Fathers Now told them what we wanted to see and why we thought it would be helpful for the population we work with. LN took it on from there.

Their finished product included: 1) a business plan, 2) a go-to manual on how to get the business started, 3) an overhead costs estimate (how much it would cost to start), and 4) materials marketing. We were impressed with how much they incorporated into the plan

After we had the finished product and plan, we still needed to raise the funds to get the program started. This was hard to do because of the weak economy, which made potential funders want to fund actual programs and not startups—especially those that worked with the ex-offender population.

It took about four to five months of researching viable options to get the program off the ground. Finally we came upon Rutgers University and PSE&G, which had recently launched the Rutgers and PSE&G Social Innovations Fund. A two-day conference was held in early 2012 at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. Rutgers and PSE&G determined that Newark Now could receive funding if we put together a great business plan. LN’s employment specialist took it from there. As a result, in July of this year, we were announced as the first place winners. We were awarded \$82,000 in startup money to get the business concept off the ground. Of this we are very excited and proud.

None of this would have been possible without the help of Leadership Newark and the project team that took on our project and brought it to life for us. From Fathers Now’s perspective it was just a vision and an idea. LN put pen to paper and gave us the master plan to go out and get it done.”

LaVar Young
President & CEO
Newark Now

ing to others reveal how the fellowship program brings diverse talents together and teaches them to collaborate effectively. Other competencies such as motivation for public service and developing a shared vision for Newark show that the lessons are focused on real issues at the municipal level.

The survey also determined that LN alumni take away important public service skills that they can use in serving Newark and other municipalities. Abilities such as understanding the differences between downtown and neighborhood development, understanding public education finance in New Jersey, knowing how to assess the delivery of human services, knowing how healthy communities are maintained, and understanding the role of the police in Newark were all rated as important learning by 70% or more of alumni.

Survey results also indicate that LN alumni form strong professional relationships during the program. Nearly every alumnus gave a strong affirmation to the following program outcomes: connecting with people influential to the future of Newark, connecting with resources influential to the future of Newark, becoming more actively involved in the economic and social/cultural life of Newark, understanding the policy changes affecting the revitalization of Newark, and growing as an informed citizen.

The high degree of positive outcomes among alumni indicated by the survey was borne out in the responses of stakeholders when asked their opinion of their students after leaving the program. More than three out of four stakeholders indicated that they were aware of the work of their

students after the program and felt that they were contributing to positive change in Newark. These stakeholders are themselves showing significant support for LN in the form of financial donations (personal and institutional), volunteering time, and advocating for LN in their professional spheres of influence.

The survey shows that the learning methods currently employed in the LN Fellowship program are all of value. Even though most students prefer the guest seminars from visiting organizations and the hands-on workshops, reading assignments and mentoring play an important role as well. The only perceived weak area we discovered is in the



perception that students are not held to strict accountability standards, leading to unequal participation in the various activities. But complaints of any kind were few, and the write-in comments from all groups involved—alumni, hosts, and Community Partners—are strongly positive. They reflect a clear impression of

the two-year program as a career-enhancing, if not life-changing, experience.

Finally, this survey afforded the Rutgers team the opportunity to hear the personal stories of numerous alumni and representatives of many host organizations. Their personal testimonials are, in effect, the most compelling evidence of the positive and lasting contributions of LN to the city of Newark. This report quotes only a representative selection of the many enthusiastic endorsements of the program we were able to collect during the course of the survey.

About the Center

The Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies is a signature effort by Rutgers University to focus the intellectual talent and resources of the institution in service to Newark and its surrounding region and beyond. Housed in the School of Public Affairs and Administration at Rutgers-Newark, the Cornwall Center encourages and conducts relevant research and hosts learning opportunities aimed at improving the cultural, social, and economic development of the community, city, and region in which the Center resides.

The Center is named after the late Joseph C. Cornwall, a widely respected civic leader and the founding Chair of The Fund for New Jersey. Mr. Cornwall devoted much of his career to advancing the welfare and quality of life for New Jersey's citizens. To recognize Mr. Cornwall's civic and philanthropic accomplishments, the Fund for New Jersey established an endowment to support and perpetuate the Center and its mission to improve the lives for people who live in cities and the surrounding metropolis.



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