

U-LEAD: PROVEN RESULTS FOR INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITIES

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Introduction

If communities are to compete successfully in the changing global, social, political and economic realities, they must have leaders who understand complex issues, listen to diverse beliefs and values, and make thoughtful decisions. U-Lead programs couple land-grant University resources with organizations and communities interested in leadership education. Together, they develop confident, effective leaders through enhancing their knowledge and decision-making skills.

The workshop will explore:

- ★ What are Participant Benefits – how do emerging and existing leaders as well as their organizations and communities benefit?
- ★ What is U-Lead – what is the program & how are impacts & outcomes measured?

Background

U-Lead programs are a priority program of the Leadership and Civic Engagement Area, Community Vitality & Development Unit, University of Minnesota Extension Service, in partnership with the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs (HHH). Research based content about effective policy development, group dynamics, management strategies, organizational and community planning is from the nationally acclaimed Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. Issues expertise accessible through the University of Minnesota includes economics, housing, agriculture, land use and natural resources, etc.

Currently, programs are delivered by eight Extension Educators on state/federal funds in regional centers and two educators on local and/or grant funding. Their title is Leadership & Civic Engagement Educator. Other programs they deliver are U-Facilitate and Civic Connections. U-Lead programs began in 1986 with the hiring of one leadership program coordinator and a part-time contract at the Reflective Leadership Center, HHH.

How it works

U-Lead is grounded in Transformative Education theory (Mezirow, 1978, Boyd, 1988, Cranton, 1994), emphasizing the importance of reflection, critical thinking, creating a community of knowledge, a safe learning environment, and participant responsibility. In addition, U-Lead draws directly from the leadership theories of former and current University of Minnesota scholars Robert Terry (***Authentic Leadership***, 1993, and ***Seven Zones for Leadership***, 2001), and John Bryson and Barbara Crosby (***Leadership for the Common Good***, 1991 and second edition, 2004). Additional research and program delivery methods are drawn from regional and national professional networks.

Program tools include: *U-Lead Program Management and Evaluation Guide*, *Civic Leadership Assessment* (2004), *Leadership for the Common Good* CD-Rom (2004), and *Authentic Leadership Resources* (CD-Rom to be completed in 2005). These resources include program design and development templates, evaluation templates, needs/interest assessment tools, curriculum development (handouts, Power Point presentations, exercises, reading lists, etc.)

Delivery of U-Lead programs have clustered into two categories –

Leadership Cohorts (groups of 20-40 persons, meeting together 6-12 times, over a time period of 10-18 months) and

Leadership Workshops (one-time groups of 20-30 people, meeting 4 - 8 hours in length (most frequent) or in 2-3 day workshops (less frequent)).

Results to date

In 2004, 2,903 people from 389 organizations participated in **Leadership Workshops** and 275 people participated in six **Leadership Cohorts**. Evaluation measures **learning outcomes at workshops** and **behavior changes for cohorts**.

Workshops that measure learning outcomes utilize a retrospective methodology, using an end-of-event form where participants rate their knowledge changes before the program and after the program. These learning outcomes include: Effective Leadership in the 21st Century, Building Exceptional Personal Leadership, Cultivating Civic Leadership, Enhancing Ethical Leadership, Making the Most of Your Team, Navigating Conflict and Communication Challenges, Stimulating Visionary Leadership, and Understanding Trends and Realities.

Following the workshop either the educator or a data analysis center provides a data report. Results are shared with the program sponsors and internal stakeholders (supervisor, program team etc.). For state and federal reporting, annually data is compiled across site and from all educators so a collective impact can be seen.

Example of Learning Outcome of Workshop: **Enhancing Ethical Leadership** (n=13, 3 hour workshop)

Rate your knowledge of the concept from 1 (poor) to 4 (good) both before and after this workshop.

Concept	Before	After	Change
Conceptual & practical aspects of ethical leadership.	2.54	3.54	1.0
Strategies for resolving personal and organizational ethical dilemmas.	2.69	3.62	.92
Awareness of ethical leadership resources and information.	2.00	3.46	1.46

Cohorts utilize in depth evaluations of community leadership program to find behavior changes. Two studies of over 300 graduates show clusters of five measurable, significant outcomes including:

- Civic engagement – increased, effective civic participation
- Personal growth and self-efficacy – a greater sense of being able to make a difference and use leadership time wisely
- Community commitment – strengthened commitment to make their organization effective and/or their community a better place to live
- Community knowledge – greater knowledge of needs, resources and policy options
- Shared future and purpose-more work toward shared visions and purposes.

In addition, gains were demonstrated in 42 skills areas. The top ones included better understanding of how new ideas were adopted & what steps were needed to obtain broad-based support. They considered themselves well qualified to take action on public issues and had a sense of mission in their lives.

These results were similar to those found in Missouri after they evaluated leadership program graduates. We use the Community Leadership Assessment as a pre-test/post-pre-test instrument developed by Dr. Kenneth Pigg, University of Missouri-Columbia. Phase one survey used the long research form of Dr. Pigg. Following factor analysis, a modified short form is now been used.

Outcomes (that are snapshots of 2004) include:

- Participants in leadership cohorts average 3.4 memberships each; thus, 1,190 organizations benefited from leadership training.
- One cohort group project resulted in their finalist status for National Star City.
- Two counties developed shared vision statements & framed political platforms that represented multiple jurisdictions.

- After leadership training related to public participation processes, Minnesota was 4th in the nation to secure funds for environmental programs.

Conclusions and Future Implications

U-Lead is a mature program that has proven results for individuals, organizations and communities. We intend to continue to make program improvements, including launching a web-based portal for a continuing learning system for program graduates.

References

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