

Leadership Learning Community
Cross-Program Alumni Collaboration Pilot
Executive Summary
August 2004

The ***Leadership Learning Community*** is a national organization that connects the learning, practice and resources of leadership development program staff, funders and scholars. Through our collective learning and activities we strive to better develop leadership that can transform society. LLC grew out of early leadership alumni organizing efforts and has always been committed to learning and practices that engage sustainable networks of alumni within and across specific fellowship programs.

At LLC's national meeting in 2002, Creating Space III, there was a strong mandate from leadership programs and funders to build the potential for a national network of alumni by strengthening each leadership programs' capacity to effectively engage their graduates in sustainable networks.. The LLC conducted several learning sessions with over a dozen leadership programs to mine lessons and innovative practices that support the sustainability of fellowship networks. The results of this learning are available on the LLC website (www.leadershiplearning.org/pools/alumni/). During the LLC national meeting, Creating Space IV, May 2003, participants in the Sustainable Networks Circle sessions decided to begin actively building relationships across programs around some joint ventures.

LLC has convened a group of alumni and program staff representing twelve leadership development programs nationwide to identify and coordinate opportunities for collaboration across programs. The decision was made to select 12-15 alumni organizations and initiatives of the more than 100 programs in the LLC in order to start this work on a more manageable scale that will enable us to explore more organic opportunities to organize collaborative activities, pool funding and connect technology. The work was launched with the expectation that this pilot group will serve the broader field of alumni efforts by demonstrating early successes and strategies that can be taken to scale. In the final segment of the pilot, participants will be supported in a planning process to develop a proposal for a broad and inclusive network that translates lessons and build on successes. The first meeting of the pilot took place in Oakland, CA from March 4-6, 2004.

Leadership programs selected for participation represent a diversity of geographic regions and a range of issues. Each program participating has begun a significant effort to engage their alumni community. Of the twelve programs participating and eight represented at the initial convening, there was a fairly equal division between foundation-sponsored efforts and non-profit run leadership programs. There were common challenges related to engaging alumni across the experiences of all programs. There were also challenges that were unique, and often defined by the type of program, e.g. whether they were foundation sponsored, the particular issue area and initial structure. Participants spent time learning about each others programs in order to better understand and appreciate the diverse contexts and objectives of each program. One commonality among all programs was the tendency to serve alumni of that particular program—in select cases involving foundation-sponsored leadership programs, there had been some early efforts to collaborate through open invitations to alumni events

While discussing alumni collaboration issues in some depth, participants identified possibilities for collaboration, key questions and points of learning that would support positive outcomes for the cross program alumni project and benefit leadership development programs nationally. One popular suggestion was to create a virtual progressive marketplace that could connect leadership program “graduates” with training and influential career opportunities. The group supported the idea of focusing on those most interested in alumni activity and networking as an important strategy for creating intellectual capital and pioneering some important first steps. The operating premise is that if you focus where there is energy you will have the greatest success and those successes will bring along those who have more reservations.

The group expressed a commitment to collaboration across alumni programs that would build learning for the field, implement cross program alumni activity invitations, and test network mobilization in a couple of regions. Regional meetings occurred on the East Coast in May of 2004, and are scheduled for September of 2004 in the San Francisco Bay Area, and the entire group will reconvene in early October 2004 to extract the learning of the first six months, to continue developing strategies and shape plans for connecting the ideas and energy of thousands of leadership program alumni.