



NEIGHBORWORKS TRAINING INSTITUTE

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WAVES OF LEADERSHIP



Investing in Leadership: *Solutions that Advance Nonprofit Excellence*

A NeighborWorks® America Solutions Lab

Take Home Action: Share these questions with colleagues who are working in leadership development for residents, board members, people managers and senior leaders.

The following questions are applicable to each of the four stakeholder groups.

Organizational Culture and Retention

1. What aspects of organizational culture help talented leaders of this stakeholder group stay and grow?
2. How can organizations make leadership development for this stakeholder group a priority when facing urgent operational demands?

Chief Executive/Senior Executive-Focused

1. What leadership skills are becoming more important for each stakeholder group as the operating environment grows more complex?
2. How do you ensure leadership knowledge and relationships for each stakeholder group are not concentrated in one person?

Cross-Sector & Future-Oriented

1. Three years from now, what would success in leadership development for this stakeholder group look like?
2. What is one bold idea for strengthening leadership in affordable housing and community development that we should explore?
3. What partnerships could help expand leadership opportunities for this stakeholder group across the sector?

The following questions are sorted by stakeholder type.

Resident Leadership Development

1. How do you create a sense of safety, belonging and trust among community members?
2. Have you used any creative methods for amplifying resident stories & community voice? What have they revealed about residents' aspirations or priorities?
3. How do you create a pipeline of potential new leaders? How do you go beyond the "usual suspects?"

4. Do you implement (or participate in) leadership development programs? What has proven successful? What challenges have you encountered?
5. How do you provide leadership experiences or skill building for young people?
6. How do you sustain engagement and avoid burnout for existing leaders?
7. How do you support neighborhood associations, advisory councils, or other community groups?
8. What processes or structures do you use to facilitate resident decision making?

Board Leadership Development

1. Where does the board find new board members? What are the skills, experiences and talents the board needs for the next five years?
2. How do your board member recruitment practices inform board leadership development?
3. What role does board orientation play in leadership development?
4. What role does board culture play in leadership development?
5. What role does the board self-assessment play in leadership development?
6. How often are learning opportunities provided for the full board? How are topics determined?
7. What leadership development opportunities outside of the boardroom and/or outside of the organization are made available to board members?
8. How do we ensure all board members gain confidence in areas like financial oversight and risk?
9. How are board officers selected? How is knowledge transferred to incoming officers?
10. How do you sustain engagement and avoid burnout of existing board members?

People Manager Leadership Development

1. How does your program build participants' confidence? How is that measured?
2. What career ladders have you created, perks do you offer, and culture created to retain staff?
3. Where are you finding new professionals? What are the skill sets/traits you are looking for?
4. How does your program invest in leadership development? Do you have an internal professional development training program and/or access external programs?
5. How do you facilitate expansion of professional networks for your participants?
6. What methods do you use to build knowledge and competence?
7. How do the participant supervisors engage in the program? Do they have professional development plans? What support do you provide?

8. What is a reasonable per person cost to participate in a leadership program that runs 10-12 months? How much would your organization be willing to cover?
9. How do you onboard and provide continuing professional development to staff?
10. Do you enable current staff to move into new positions in the organization across departments or vertically, and how do you support these transitions?
11. What challenges do you encounter with providing staff development and support?

Leadership Pipeline and Talent Development

1. Where does your organization currently identify future leaders?
2. What signs tell you that someone is ready for greater leadership responsibility?
3. How do you create opportunities for staff to lead before they have formal leadership titles?
4. What experiences accelerated your own leadership growth the most?
5. How can organizations develop leaders when budgets and staffing are tight?
6. What leadership capabilities will be most important for the next generation of affordable housing and community development leaders?
7. How can we better support leaders from underrepresented backgrounds in moving into executive roles?
8. What role should mentorship play in leadership development, and how can it be strengthened?

Senior Leader Leadership Development

1. What leadership capacity does your organization most need now? What will it need in 3-5 years?
2. What is the cost of not investing in leadership development right now?
3. Where is insufficient leadership capacity already limiting your organization's effectiveness, growth or ability to respond to change?
4. When resources are tight, is leadership development a genuine organizational priority rather than something that is postponed? If it's a priority, what structures or policies can you create that will ensure it stays a priority? What should and should not be sacrificed for the sake of leadership development? How would you place it in relation to other priorities?
5. How do you decide which leadership development investments are worth making—and who should receive them?

6. To what extent, if at all, are people that learn new leadership approaches able to implement them when they return to your organization? Why or why not? What examples have you seen of people coming back from some type of learning and implementing what they learned?
7. How do you know whether a leadership-development investment has made a difference to the individual, the organization and/or the communities you serve?
8. Where does your organization currently have too much leadership responsibility concentrated in one person or a small group of people?
9. Even when there is no immediate promotion/advancement available, how can you try to keep your highest-potential employees?
10. How candidly is your organization addressing succession for the CEO and other essential leaders? What makes those conversations difficult?
11. What leadership development approaches have you tried that worked particularly well? What made it work?
12. What leadership behaviors are currently rewarded in your organization -- both on paper and in reality? Are those the behaviors you want to be rewarded? Are those the ones you need going forward?
13. Where might senior leaders themselves be an obstacle to developing leadership more broadly?
14. What is one action you can take in the next 90 days?
15. Whose involvement or support will be necessary to make that action possible?