

How Can We Target Our Leadership Development Support?

It can sometimes be difficult to pinpoint the leadership capacity needs of grantees and develop strategies to effectively address them. By listening closely, considering the full context in which nonprofits operate and clarifying desired goals, grantmakers can find ways to improve their support for nonprofit leadership. This piece outlines a framework to help guide grantmakers' thinking about the different levels and domains leadership development support can cover.

Leadership development is one of the best ways grantmakers can invest in the problem-solving capabilities of individuals, organizations and communities. There is no single model of leadership development that is appropriate for all organizations or circumstances, so grantmakers need to clarify leadership development objectives and select approaches that best meet grantee needs.

Defining Leadership Development

Traditionally, the field of leadership development has focused on developing the abilities of individuals, but as we broaden our understanding of the role and importance of leadership, we are focusing more on the leadership of organizations and communities. Rather than building individual performance, we seek to build group performance. To do this, we must focus our leadership development approaches a bit differently — on the development of skills necessary for understanding and adapting to the context of an organization's work and for building and managing external and internal relationships.

For more on this topic, see [*Investing in Leadership, Volume 1: A Grantmakers Framework for Understanding Nonprofit Leadership Development*](#), (Washington, D.C.: GEO, 2005) and [*Investing in Leadership, Volume 2: Inspirations and Ideas from Philanthropy's Latest Frontier*](#), (Washington, D.C.: GEO, 2006).

Leadership Investments Framework

The following matrix is a tool for understanding and mapping the purpose(s) of leadership support and capacity-building activities. Since its original publication, it has been used by GEO members to help guide conversations about the parameters and design of capacity building approaches.

	Individual Capacity	Organizational Capacity	Collective Capacity
For Individuals	<p><i>To build the capacity of individuals to contribute to society.</i></p> <p>Sample Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General leadership skills (such as communication, cultural awareness) • Reflection, sabbaticals • Rewards, recognition • Personal values and vision work 	<p><i>To build the capacity of individuals to lead organizations.</i></p> <p>Sample Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management training • Coaching • Peer exchanges • Job challenges • Internships or field assignments 	<p><i>To build the capacity of individuals to collaborate with others.</i></p> <p>Sample Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative skills training • Networking activities • Team or group projects • Seed money for joint projects as part of leadership programs
For Organizations	<p><i>To build the capacity of current or future staff to be effective in their jobs.</i></p> <p>Sample Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training and continuing education • Staff development plans • Field-based fellowships or training • Pipeline programs (for minorities, young leaders, etc.) 	<p><i>To build the capacity of organizations to deliver upon their missions.</i></p> <p>Sample Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational assessments • Facility expansion and improvement • Technical assistance and consulting • Technology improvements • Leadership transitions 	<p><i>To build the capacity of organizations to work together toward common goals.</i></p> <p>Sample Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convening opportunities • Association membership • Advocacy • Collective action
For Geographic Communities	<p><i>To build the capacity of community residents to serve in leadership roles.</i></p> <p>Sample Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fellowships • Local training programs • Grassroots and community organizer training 	<p><i>To build the capacity of organizations by supporting the “infrastructure” of the sector.</i></p> <p>Sample Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management support organizations • State associations of nonprofits • Organizational standards (usually statewide) 	<p><i>To build the capacity of the community to work together toward common goals.</i></p> <p>Sample Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community leadership and problem-solving programs • Cross-sector collaborations and alliances

Framework Definitions¹

Levels of Framework:

The levels that run horizontally across the framework correspond to the *where* and *who* of leadership capacity building at these levels:

- *The individual level.* At the individual level results may be noted in who participates in the intervention, how leaders behave, who leaders interact with and what leaders do.
- *The organization level.* At the organization level results may be noted in how work gets done, who participates in organizational decision making, how change and innovation happen, and how partnerships and alliances are formed.
- *The geographic community level.* At this level results may be noted in who participates in civic decision making, how cultural boundaries are crossed, how well organizations serve the needs of the geographic community, and how knowledge and learning is shared among community members.

Domains of Framework:

The framework also has domains that run vertically along the framework grid which correspond to the *what* and *how* of a leadership development approach, in these buckets:

- *Individual capacity.* Individual capacity includes self-awareness and consciousness, leading responsibly, building and bridging networks, and creativity and entrepreneurship.
- *Organizational capacity.* Organizational capacity includes inspiring and leading others, managing and delivering on the mission, responding to community needs, and identifying standards and practices for a field.
- *Collective capacity.* Collective capacity includes working together respectfully and responsibly, finding common ground, working towards shared goals and generating, synthesizing and disseminating knowledge.

¹ Descriptions of this framework were excerpted from "[A Guide to Using the Leadership Investment and Evaluation Framework](#)," by Claire Reinelt, Leadership Learning Community, 2009.

Hearing from grantees about leadership capacity

There are a variety of tools that grantmakers can leverage in order to learn what grantees see as the leadership capacity needs of their organization and the broader community. These tools include grantee surveys, grantee focus groups, one-on-one interviews with grantees, facilitated group meetings or grantee convenings and grantee participation in board and staff discussions.

Conclusion

Grantmakers who care about nonprofit results need to invest in the people and organizations doing the work. We need strong and consistent nonprofit and community leadership to face the challenges we seek to overcome. Knowing how, who and what to target with our leadership development efforts is not always easy, so grantmakers need to continuously reassess the goals for our support against what we are providing to grantees and partners.