Emerging Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations:

Myths, Meaning, and Motivations

AMERICAN EXPRESS

Leadership Academy

Center for Creative Leadership

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Since 2008, the American Express Nonprofit Leadership Academy has been developing emerging leaders in the nonprofit sector. In 2010, American Express and the Center for Creative Leadership embarked on a research effort to advance the understanding of, and to promote excellence in the field of, nonprofit leadership by focusing on the needs of emerging leaders. Two interlinked research projects were conducted. Survey and narrative data were gathered from current and emerging nonprofit leaders. Below are the critical themes from this work.

- Overall, individuals at every level feel a sense of purpose in the work they do. However, individuals at lower levels are more concerned about pay than are those at higher levels.

- Fewer individuals are willing to take it on faith that they are making a positive difference; they want tangible evidence of the difference they and their organizations are making.

- Individuals may be more married to a cause than they are to an organization. The new workforce is willing to change organizations if they do not believe they are having an impact.

- Clear organizational structures and hierarchy are seen as useful to the extent that they contribute to development, career progression, learning opportunities, and regular feedback. However, when structure and hierarchy created obstacles to doing the work or were too inflexible to allow for work/life balance accommodations or inhibited creativity, structure and hierarchy were viewed negatively.

- Individuals may be more willing to stay with an organization if there are learning and development opportunities; or, conversely, to leave if learning and development opportunities are not prioritized by the organization and its leaders.

- We need to expand how we think about talent development and utilization to include a sectorial perspective and find ways to support it at that level.

- With the increase in mobile technology use (such as smartphones) the lines between work time and personal time are often blurry. Individuals, particularly younger workers, increasingly have the desire to choose how they manage the boundaries between work and nonwork roles, relationships, and responsibilities.

Nonprofit organizations seek to create public good. They foster community engagement and civic participation. They respond to community needs that may not always represent a for-profit market opportunity and may not be best served through a for-profit approach. As we are increasingly interconnected and seek to tackle shared challenges, nonprofit organizations play an important role in our society and as the need for that role is growing, so, too, is the sector. According to a 2009 report (Wing, Roeger, & Pollak) between 1997 and 2007 the number of registered nonprofit organizations grew by 30 percent and reporting nonprofits grew by 60 percent.

Much has been written about nonprofit leaders. To share a bit about our perspective, we want to answer two seemingly simple questions: what is leadership and who are leaders? The field of leadership contains an abundance of leadership definitions; almost all of them are true, to some extent and in some contexts. Leadership is not produced by a person; it is something people create together. For our purposes we define leadership as the roles and processes "that facilitate setting direction, creating alignment, and maintaining commitment in groups of people who share common work (Van Velsor, McCauley, & Ruberman, 2010, p.2). In short, leadership results in direction, alignment, and commitment. Our firm belief is that everyone engages in leadership at some point in time and, therefore, everyone has the potential to be a leader. Leaders may operate from formal leadership roles (for example, an Executive Director of a nonprofit organization) or informal roles (for example, a community volunteer who is widely depended on for advice and support). The phrase "common work" is used as a way to define the focus of where leadership happens. It may or may not be within the same organization or the same community. Common work could be a specific project with a short-term clearly defined goal or something more expansive, like improving global water access and quality. The processes by which direction is set, alignment created, and commitment maintained can look very different depending on context. The processes may be hierarchical or fluid and, in some cases, there may be very little agreement about how leadership should be enacted.

In 2010, American Express and the Center for Creative Leadership embarked on a research effort to advance the understanding of, and to promote excellence in the field of, nonprofit leadership by focusing on the needs of emerging leaders. Our organizations hosted a research symposium on November 5, 2010, at the American Express headquarters in New York City. The goals of the symposium were to better understand issues affecting the growth and development of emerging leaders in the nonprofit sector and to determine what additional research would help the sector to navigate the challenges ahead. The group discussed the current state of and challenges facing nonprofit leaders in order to identify critical areas where more information would be most helpful. **The specific questions addressed included:**

- How are emerging leaders defined?
- What are the critical contextual issues that affect emerging leadership in nonprofits?
- How are emerging leaders being identified for leadership opportunities?
- What is currently available for developing the leadership skills of these emerging leaders?
- What gaps exist in supporting the success of this new leadership?

The group initially sought to define emerging leaders and found the task more difficult than imagined. Emerging leaders does not necessarily mean young leaders or leaders from a specific generation.
The group finally determined that the following characteristics best defined emerging leaders in nonprofits:

- Working in a nonprofit organization

- 5-15 years of experience in the nonprofit sector (though we also recognize that leaders with significant experience in other sectors may transfer into the nonprofit sector and they would also be seen as emerging leaders); and there may be young people who found new nonprofits who are both "emerging leaders" by age but "leaders" by position/role)

- Potential for assuming higher levels of leadership responsibility

- Desire for assuming formal leadership roles

- Demonstrated commitment to the nonprofit field/social impact [this commitment could be to a specific cause (e.g., breast cancer treatment), a general cause (e.g., health access), a geographic area (e.g., New York state), etc.].

As a result of our discussion, two interlinked research projects were conceived. In the first project, the World Leadership Survey (WLS) was administered to nonprofit leaders and combined with data already gathered from for-profit leaders. The survey gathers information on trends in leadership, as well as issues that leaders have to deal with every day such as what employees want in their leaders, trust and ethics in effective organizations, employee engagement and retention, generational differences, and attitudes about work. These data are used to pinpoint the primary issues facing nonprofit leaders today. Because of the size of the database, we also examine differences in experiences and expectations among generational cohorts of leaders and compare responses from nonprofit leaders with those from for-profit leaders. The second research project used narrative approaches to gather leaders' perspectives, in their own words, about their experiences and expectations. Combining these data sources and examining them in the context of other research sheds light on emerging leadership challenges, in order to identify practical recommendations.

GENERATIONS DEFINED

Silent Generation	Born 1925 - 1945
Early Boomers	Born 1946 - 1953
Late Boomers	Born 1954 - 1963
Generation Xers	Born 1964 - 1980
Millennials	Born 1981 - 2000

Purpose of This Report

This report contributes to the understanding of, and conversation about, how to develop emerging leaders in the nonprofit sector. It is a multifaceted undertaking. Leadership and leadership development can occur in small ways, but if the intent is for the nonprofit sector to achieve greater collective impact (and we believe that it is), there is much work to be done primarily because of the growth of the sector and the complexity of challenges addressed. The good news is that we see shifts taking place that position the sector for greater impact, though we are not blind to the significant challenges facing the sector.

We have written this report to be accessible to multiple audiences. While this report is informed by research, we did not set out to write a research report. We identified the critical stakeholder groups that we thought were essential to include in a conversation about developing and supporting effective leadership in the nonprofit sector. **This report is intended to speak to these multiple audiences, including:**

- Current Nonprofit Leadership (including Executive Directors, Boards, etc.);

- Emerging Nonprofit Leaders;

- Providers of Leadership Development for Nonprofit Organizations;

- Funders of Nonprofit Organizations.

The nonprofit sector is extremely diverse in terms of the organizations it encompasses and the work it undertakes. Some nonprofit organizations are brand new; some have been around for decades. The National Center for Charitable Statistics developed the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities Core Codes classification system which divides nonprofit organizations into 26 major groups under 10 broad categories (including Art, Culture and the Humanities, Education, Environment and Animals, Health, Human Services, etc.). Within these varied categories, there are similarly varied organizations. The organizations may focus on activities such as research, direct service, advocacy, and technical assistance, or a combination of the above. Some have only a handful of staff; some employ thousands of people. Operating budgets range from a few thousand dollars to millions of dollars. It is difficult to make statements that are true for all nonprofits. Thus, while we make generalizations about the state of and demands on the nonprofit sector, we realize that not everything is true in every instance. One statement we are positive is true across all nonprofits is that effective and sustained leadership is vital to effectiveness.

The world is increasingly interconnected and dynamic. Leadership sits in the middle of the churn – both driving trends and being affected by them. While the sector has access to an energetic, passionate, and creative workforce and to new tools, there are also challenges that make it difficult for organizations and their leadership to flourish. William Ashby's (1956) Law of Requisite Variety suggests that for organizations to effectively adapt and cope with a complex environment the variety of its internal order must match the variety of the environmental constraints. While for-profits face similar challenges, many nonprofits do not have the access to resources to enable them to cope with the pace and scale of change. In addition, the strategies that work in for-profit organizations may not fit as well in the nonprofit sector. As nonprofit organizations and their leaders look to the future, there are opportunities as well as challenges associated with these trends that we will explore in more depth to help nonprofit organizations continue to succeed. These trends were identified by the research team through a facilitated conversation about their experiences in the nonprofit sector, and what is specific to the nonprofit sector.

Changing Technologies

Every generation has probably had the impetus to better serve and improve the world around them. The motivation to have an impact isn't new. The tools and resources available now, however, are different. In recent years, nonprofits have been on the leading edge of new technology in order to raise awareness, mobilize stakeholders, and build community. For example, using database and communication technology, the National Marrow Donor Program's Be the Match registry gathers information about volunteers willing to donate bone marrow and connects them with patients, doctors, and researchers on a scale hard to imagine 30 years ago. CaringBridge provides free websites that connect people experiencing a significant health challenge to family and friends. The Generation Project connects young donors and their gifts directly with teachers and students in need. Technological advancements are changing the type of work nonprofit organizations engage in, and how they accomplish the work that they may have been doing for decades.

Diverse Stakeholders

Many for-profit entities are primarily concerned with shareholders, customers, and employees. Nonprofits, on the other hand, must engage with a far more expansive set of stakeholders, all of whom are seeking different relationships and connections with the nonprofit. Figure 1 illustrates the stakeholder wheel of a Chicago area nonprofit. This organization considers not only its clients and employees as stakeholders, but also its donors (individual, foundation, and corporate), the local government entities, various boards/committees, volunteers, and others as its key stakeholders.

FIGURE 1. SAMPLE STAKEHOLDER WHEEL

Nonprofit leaders must learn to effectively navigate and build consensus amongst its multiple and diverse stakeholders. Boards of nonprofit organizations are almost always volunteer or associated with minimal compensation. The diverse nature of nonprofit organizations creates the need for a diverse matrix of skills, experience, and perspectives in individual board members. Nonprofit boards are not always clear about how they can best contribute to the organization's growth and direction.

Nonprofits also often have a volunteer workforce who does not depend on the organization for income and may choose to leave at any time. These volunteers provide a critical human resource to the nonprofit. Their motivations are varied and the rewards they are seeking are as different as the individuals themselves. Nonprofit leaders need to place a priority on attracting and retaining volunteers as well as staff.

Funders or donors may also have their ideas about how the organization should be led, and how their funds should be used to support the mission.

The ability to provide leadership in the context of diverse stakeholder groups is important for nonprofit executives and board members. Donors are increasingly more sophisticated and more "empowered" in their philanthropy. There are many competitors for their generosity and nonprofit leaders must be able to articulate the impact those donations have on the mission.

Measuring Impact

Measuring social impact is more complex than measuring profits and losses. A nonprofit organization can monitor and demonstrate effort, but measuring the impact of that effort is more challenging. Measuring the number of meals served is easier than demonstrating a reduction in the prevalence of hunger in a community.

Contributing to this challenge is the fact that sustained, measureable social impact takes time to evolve. The time horizon for change in the nonprofit sector can often be longer term than in the for-profit sector. The chain of impact may begin with providing a resource to, or service for, an individual or group, but the desired change is often at the societal level and it can take time to create that level of change. Furthermore, the issues addressed by nonprofits are often complex and driven by multiple factors – political, environmental, personal, and social. It is hard to link social impact to a "cause" related to work done by a nonprofit organization.

The nonprofit funding environment does not always support measuring social impact. Given the relatively low success rate for medical experiments, it is reasonable to assume that the success rate for nonprofit interventions may also be low. Defining and working towards success requires sustained effort and that can be expensive. In addition, it is difficult to adopt a "fail soon, fail often" approach when funding is riding on success and competition is high. Finally, as mentioned above, nonprofit leaders answer to a large number of stakeholders. These stakeholders all have different motivations and, thus, different expectations and measures of success. Defining, measuring, and communicating social impact with multiple stakeholder groups is a complex and substantial undertaking.

Combining Effort

The current economic climate has encouraged many conversations and predictions about mergers and partnerships in the nonprofit sector. Many stakeholders, particularly funders, are suggesting that nonprofit organizations work more closely together. There appear to be two main motivations for this. One motivation is to reduce costs. By joining forces, some nonprofits can realize cost savings through shared resources and better (bulk) pricing. Outsourcing functions is another option. Some nonprofits are pooling funds to hire a bookkeeper or human resource functions. A strong example is the rise of cooperatives across the country. In Chicago, for example, the Back Office Cooperative has brought together mid-sized social service agencies to leverage scale and best practices to drive down back office costs (http://www.backofficecoop.com/). In Pittsburgh, the CD Collaborative is a voluntary association of seven organizations committed to open communication and coordination about their individual projects in four target neighborhoods; other groups like the Greater Philadelphia Urban Coalition and the Tides Center serve as fiscal sponsors and provide the "umbrella" under which smaller nonprofits can find needed services. A concern raised in our research was that two organizations may be able to get more money independently, so partnering may not increase resources but rather have a negative effect. The second motivation is that substantive social impact requires big, coordinated effort. It is unclear what shape the combination of efforts will take. Nonprofit staff and boards may be reluctant to let go of the identity of a nonprofit and, thus, not consider merger as an option. One positive outcome of this trend might be a higher coordination within the nonprofit sector, and between nonprofit organizations and other sectors.

Lacking Human Resource Support

While some nonprofit organizations have sophisticated human resource (HR) systems, many do not have dedicated HR functions or trained HR staff. HR professionals could assist nonprofit organizations with hiring, role clarification, staff development, compensation policies, and performance management. Because HR tends to be underfunded, nonprofit organizations may struggle with identifying the skill set and experience needed, conducting a thorough search for the right fit, and providing onboarding for new staff. Tracking the paid and volunteer workforce and providing adequate training and oversight are among the roles for HR. Some foundations, like Taproot, are specifically focusing on closing this gap.
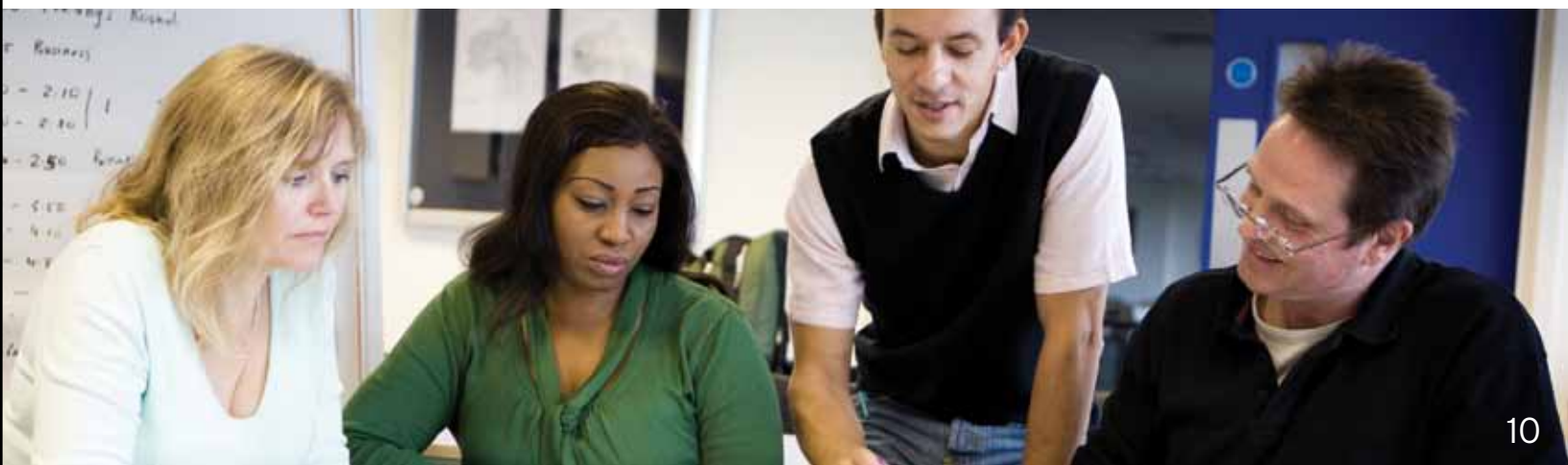
Work-Life Fit Expectations

The rise of new technologies and new organizational forms supports and enables a shift towards a more flexible workforce. With increased technical connectivity, there is an increased expectation that individuals can be available or working anywhere, at any time. Technologies simultaneously increase the fluidity of modern life and provide a mechanism for managing the fluidity of the modern life. The increasing diversity of the workforce and changing social norms also contribute to shifts in expectations about how work and nonwork roles and responsibilities are managed. Finding new ways to help organizations and the workforce to be productive and effective in the midst of these changes will be a growing challenge for nonprofit leaders.

Blurring Boundaries

The boundaries of the nonprofit sector have also blurred as new organizational forms have developed, such as the low-profit limited liability companies or L3Cs, Certified B Corporations, and social enterprises. Younger leaders are concerned with solving social problems through their work and less interested in the organizational form of their employer. Time will tell if these new forms are enduring, but the rise of new ways of thinking about organizations suggests that for-profit and the nonprofit sectors are not fully addressing today's challenges and harnessing today's opportunities.

Need for Development

A 2006 report about a forthcoming leadership deficit in the nonprofit sector (Tiereny) put a spotlight on the growing need for leadership and leadership development. The notable dip in the economy has people working longer than expected and helped to quell the exodus, but the need for leadership development has not subsided as jobs are being created within the sector (Simms & Trager, 2009). There is greater recognition of the importance of distributed leadership rather than a single leader, and of having leaders that are diverse in multiple ways. Thus, new leaders and new kinds of leadership are called for.

The need for leadership development in the nonprofit sector isn't something that is highly contested. So why isn't it happening? One issue is the perception that there's no time for it. Staff members tend to have overloaded schedules, and providing direct services tends to be why staff members are employed and what they are expected to do. Engaging in development is perceived to be time away from working on the mission. Funders and boards often reinforce this notion by focusing funds on direct service. Uncertain revenue streams for some nonprofits put the focus on generating or maintaining funding (in order to keep operations going), rather than engaging in activities that have a longer-term horizon. It can be difficult for nonprofit organizations to defend expenditures related to overhead and capacity. In addition, there is often not dedicated HR staff to help identify appropriate professional development opportunities, or learning paths, for all levels of the organization. Without stronger HR systems, nonprofit organizations will not be able to be learning organizations attracting and retaining the best and brightest workers to meet their missions.

In this section, we examine the nonprofit sector from a workforce perspective to gain insight into what motivates the workforce, how people feel about their work, and what changes they'd like to see. We rely more heavily on the data we gathered using three different techniques: survey, focus groups, and appreciative inquiry interviews . Our quantitative data suggests that more commonality exists between generations than not — many differences disappear after accounting for age, career level, and other factors. In most cases our observations apply to all generations, but we call out ones that were particularly relevant to younger generations.

In this section we focus on the themes we explored through our research. Overall, respondents indicate that they are committed to their organizations, satisfied with their jobs, content with their pay, and, in general, do not intend to turn over. People are drawn to nonprofit work because of their passion for the mission. People generally agree that they feel supported by their organization and boss, that their organization is socially responsible, and that organizational politics isn't a major issue. People generally feel there is management support for family, but they still experience work-family conflict and perceive there to be moderate career consequences for making use of available family-friendly programs.

Motivation and Pay Satisfaction

Overall, there is a sense of purpose at every level. Respondents report higher levels of intrinsic and identified motivation than extrinsic and introjected motivation. This should please employers, managers, and bosses because intrinsic motivation (finding joy in your work) and identified motivation (feeling driven to achieve goals) are closely associated with productivity, engagement, and innovation (Amabile, 1983; Bono & Judge, 2003). At the same time, people at lower levels are more concerned about pay than are people at higher levels (see Figure 2). This suggests that there may be a threshold under which pay increases in importance. While we do not know the cause, we speculate that pay for some hourly and entry level nonprofit employees may not allow them to be financially independent. While working in an area that is rewarding intrinsically may be emotionally fulfilling, the emotional fulfillment is more difficult to experience when you feel financially unstable. For example, if an individual is worried about paying rent and paying bills, meaningful work is unlikely to be enough to keep him or her happy. Once that threshold is met, pay may become less important. For example, nonprofit executives are among the most satisfied with pay, which may be the result of having meaningful work as well as adequate compensation. Conversely, it should be noted that Simms and Trager's (2009) research suggests that inadequate compensation remains a barrier for attracting leaders to the nonprofit sector. Data about work satisfaction suggest that the intrinsic rewards of nonprofit work could be further leveraged.

FIGURE 2. SATISFACTION WITH PAY BY PROFIT STATUS AND ORGANIZATION LEVEL
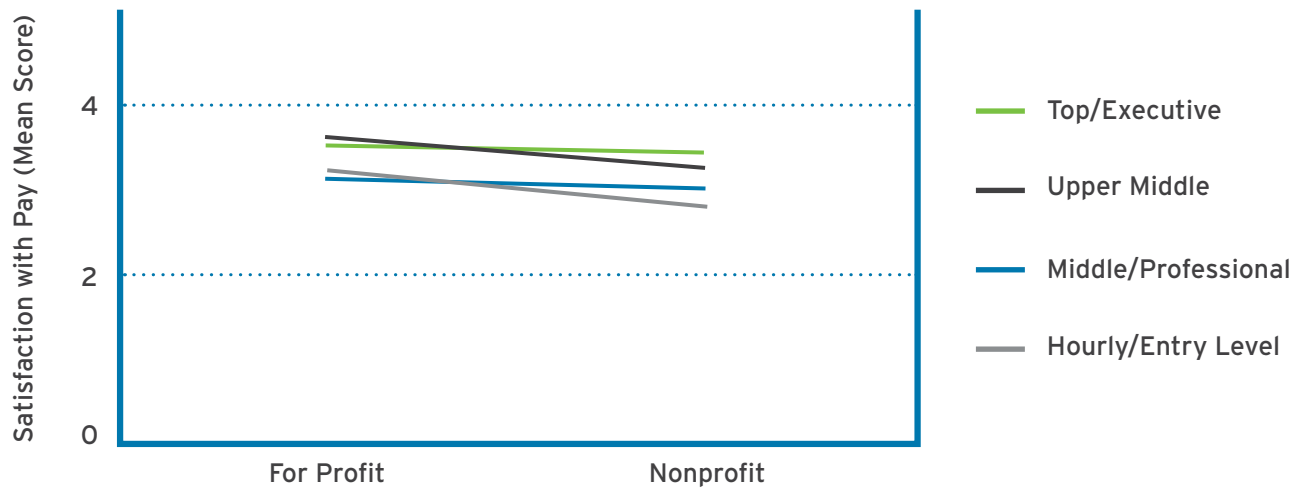
The Importance of Impact

People want to see the impact of their organization's work and of their work specifically. It is not just a matter of working for an organization that has an impact, but also seeing the value and impact of the specific work they are doing. It also appears that the conversation about impact, in general, is getting more sophisticated. Fewer people are willing to take it on faith that they are making a positive difference; they want tangible evidence of the difference they are making, and to understand the bigger picture of how diverse elements come together to make a difference or to solve a social problem.

Turnover

Regardless of whether they worked in the for-profit or nonprofit sector, Millennials were slightly more likely to say that they intended to leave their organization, or turnover, than were older generations (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. INTENTION TO TURNOVER
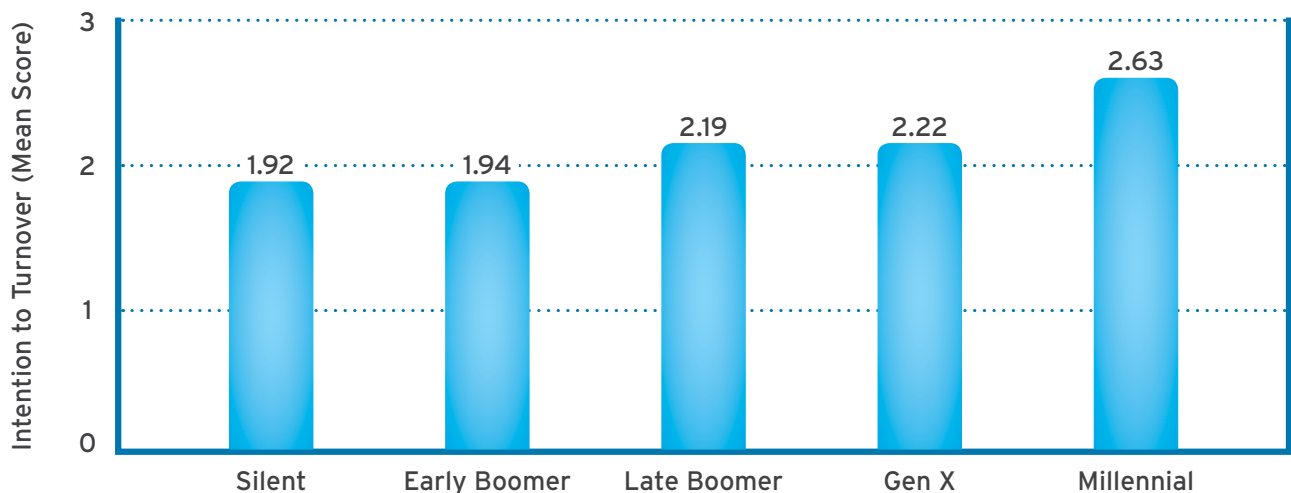
This is consistent with results from past research which shows that younger people (regardless of generation) are more likely to change jobs than are older people. Comments from the focus groups and interviews suggest that, in this case, Millennials thinking about changing jobs may be linked to the desire to have and see an impact in a way they do not in their current position (as indicated above). Results from the focus groups suggest that within the nonprofit sector, people may be more married to a cause than they are to an organization. Said one Millennial, "Today's college graduates are not looking for a career, but looking for the experiences that will enable them to move from job to job." Echoed an MBA Millennial, "We are transient. We move. We are generalists." With this focus on the cause comes a willingness to change organizations if a person does not believe he or she is having an impact they believe they could in another job.

Learning

There is a strong desire for greater learning and development opportunities. Classroom and technology-enabled learning opportunities that result in degrees and credentials remain important, but there is a real desire for hands-on learning that is clearly transferrable to the workplace. In one of the student focus groups, students expressed that they wanted regular opportunities to learn. The students wanted opportunities to be innovative and creative. They appreciated environments where they had the freedom and flexibility to gather input and develop solutions. One student said "I can't imagine being in a place for 15 years. What motivates me is to learn new things and do new stuff; but I don't believe an organization can keep reinventing itself to offer me new things. If I'm not learning, I lose my motivation. I want to be married to a cause, not an organization." People of all generations want to be mentored, and they also want to mentor others. This desire to learn and develop could be a significant asset for nonprofit organizations if fully leveraged. Given the limited staff and scope of some nonprofit organizations, figuring out how to keep talented people in the sector may, at times, be more beneficial than trying to keep them in an organization.

> "I can't imagine being in a place for 15 years. What motivates me is to learn new things and do new stuff; but I don't believe an organization can keep reinventing itself to offer me new things. If I'm not learning, I lose my motivation. I want to be married to a cause, not an organization.
>
> *Focus Group Participant*

Structure and Flexibility

Emerging leaders desired both structure and flexibility in the workplace. What initially appeared paradoxical could be easily explained. Clear organizational structures and hierarchy were useful when they contributed to development, career progression, learning opportunities, and regular feedback. When organizational structures and hierarchy created obstacles to doing the work or was too inflexible to allow for work/life balance accommodations or inhibited creativity, they were viewed negatively. Younger generations (Gen Xers and Millennials) feel they have more work-family conflict than older generations do (Baby Boomers and Silents), and younger generations believe there are greater consequences for making use of available family-friendly programs. They believe that technology can be used as a strategic tool to increase efficiency and to improve work-life balance, but they also had to be able to disconnect from work (which was problematic for them). With the increase in technology use (e.g., carrying Blackberries and email accessible at home) the lines between work time and personal time are often blurry. Technology is part of the problem, and many believe that it is going to be a critical part of the solution as well. Something interesting that we noticed was that Generation Xers sometime feel caught in the middle; "struggling" as one woman commented "to find a strong and distinctive voice" Generation X is the first generation that is smaller than the preceding and subsequent generations. By and large, Baby Boomers run the organizations, and Millennials are the new hires who are making a lot of noise. Gen Xers have to make sure the work gets done, while managing the conflicts between the people at the top (primarily Baby Boomers) who know how they want things done. The new hires (primarily Millennials) think they know how things should be done and are frustrated that they can't get the organizations to shift to do work in the way they think would be most effective. Said one Gen Xer, "In my mid-30's, I am stuck in the middle." Another agreed, "The 'sandwich' generation doesn't leave without a paycheck and I'm jealous of the younger generation who is not worried about financial security. Their freedom is amazing."

Based on our interpretation of the available information, we developed the following recommendations. We organized our recommendations by key themes which are not mutually exclusive. These recommendations include some easy, low-cost ideas, but some require a significant shift within the sector and among those depending on and supporting the sector. A 2011 report from CompassPoint and the Meyer Foundation (Cornelius, Moyers, Bell, Brown, & Scott, 2011) indicates that 46 percent of nonprofit executives indicated their organization had cash reserves that would last fewer than three months. Investing in capacity when it is unclear that the organization will be able to cover expenses and maintain operations is seemingly counterintuitive. However, a myriad of reports indicate such an investment is exactly what is required (American Express NGen Fellows, 2011; Enright, 2006; Simms & Trager, 2009; Tiereny, 2006).

Foster Learning and Build Talent at All Organizational Levels

People desire more learning and development opportunities. People may be more willing to stay with an organization if there are learning and development opportunities; or, conversely, to leave if learning and development opportunities are not prioritized by the organization and its leaders. Our qualitative data suggest that rising nonprofit leaders emphasize experiential learning and skill building, not just getting a degree or earning credentials. The need for talent within the sector is great. The nonprofit sector is tackling some of the most complex issues facing our society and, in many cases, doing so with inadequate resources and infrastructure. Fostering learning and building talent at all levels is essential to attracting and retaining talent, and to the effectiveness of organizations and the sector overall.

While some learning and development opportunities are low or no cost, there is a need to invest more in staff and in the talent development function overall. Often investments are too expensive for an organization, and/or frowned upon by boards and funders. Finding ways to demonstrate the value and importance of investments in talent, especially as it relates to mission fulfillment, is critical to increasing the priority of these expenditures among nonprofit leaders and funders.

Current Leadership

- Understand the talent available to the organization. Identify if staff members are being underutilized or incorrectly utilized.

- Discuss the importance of investing in talent with the board. Seek to prioritize investments in learning budgets, and to identify ways the board may be able to help advance learning (such as serving as mentors to staff).

- Provide systematic approaches for learning and cultivate a culture of growth and development. Engage in strategic risk taking so individuals can learn by experience and share their learning.
  Specific ideas include:

  - Develop people through challenging assignments (*Developmental Assignments: Creating Learning Experiences without Changing Jobs* by McCauley is a good resource for this). Give individuals explicit responsibility and accountability over tasks, clients, people, and/or decisions.

  - Examine and attend to the training needs of boards and volunteers (resources from organizations like BoardSource and the Center for Nonprofit Management may be helpful).

  - Use evaluations as opportunities to reflect and learn about what is working and what could be improved. Link learning to having an impact. Host collective discussions in which reflection and action are the norm; reinforce strategic thinking and systemic approaches, and articulate the benefits in terms of impact and efficiency.

- When possible, promote regular individual feedback and invest in performance systems.

- Create skillshare opportunities that are energizing and informative for staff. Involve staff in cross-functional/interdisciplinary teams to tackle strategic issues.

- Create opportunities for mentoring, including providing training for supervisors to become better mentors. [The American Express NGen report provides helpful information on this.]

- Leverage training opportunities as a way to share the organizational vision and create alignment of effort towards impact.

Emerging Leaders

- Identify a personal board of directors, committed to helping you be successful. Look for opportunities outside the organization to take on leadership responsibilities (e.g., as a volunteer or board member).

- Seek to understand the organization from different functional perspectives. Interview leaders within your organization and other organizations about their role. Ask them to help you understand your organization and how work gets done.

- Take charge of your experiences by asking for stretch responsibilities, seeking mentors, and being a mentor.

- Frame your talents in a manner that demonstrates your value to your organization, and ask for development opportunities to hone or gain skills and experiences.

Funders

- Fund opportunities for people to learn. For example, provide funding for mentoring, coaching, training programs. Invest in multi-organizational leadership development and in organizational exchanges.

- Make it a requirement that more than one staff member per organization participates and that these members represent different levels of the organization. This approach will allow you to create leadership development opportunities beyond the Executive Director level.

- Look for opportunities for skill transfers between organizations and across sectors. The Taproot Foundation and United Way's loaned executive program are examples of this.

Foster Learning and Build Talent in the Sector

Careers are incredibly fluid; individuals are likely to change jobs and change organizations multiple times during the course of their working life. Fostering learning and building talent within the sector is important to keeping talented individuals in the sector, and to enhancing the effectiveness of the sector overall. This issue is particularly difficult because it is hard for organizations to invest in training and development at all, and a fluid workforce makes the investment seem even more like a risk. Why invest in someone who may be gone in two months? But the reality is people do change organizations. In some cases, that may be the only way for someone to advance his or her career and to have access to new learning opportunities. Expanding how we think about talent development and utilization to include the sectorial perspective, and finding ways to support it at that level, is important to achieving the big impact often sought.

Current Leaders

- Create strong performance measurement systems to articulate, acknowledge, and reward individual and collaborative contributions to impact.

- Continue to access talent even when that person is no longer part of the organization. Use positive turnover to create ambassadors of your organization who may direct an infusion of new talent to your organization. Keep your door open and stay connected to talented staff. For example, many corporations create "alumni networks." Perhaps this is an opportunity to keep former employees connected to the organization through technology, annual events, etc.

- Be part of and contribute to sector-based networks (see the work of June Holley at http://www.networkweaver.com/ and Beth Kanter at http://www.bethkanter.org/the-networked-nonprofit/)

Emerging Leaders

- Be open and honest about your learning expectations and look for opportunities within the sector.

- Create a broad network that includes individuals working in a similar area but at other organizations.

- Don't let a negative experience in one organization tarnish your view of the sector.

Funders

- Fund and/or host learning circles to strengthen and document learning within the sector.

- Fund issues or causes that cut across organizations.

- Support the flow of talent within the sector, and seek ways to help organizations build and maintain connections to talented individuals.

- Fund talented individuals to attract them to and keep them working on important causes.

Leadership Developers

- Identify cross-organizational learning topics and engage community leaders from across the nonprofit sector to share effective practices.

- Create resources that identify and support effective practices.

- Explore technology-based delivery mechanisms to reach a larger spectrum of leaders.

- Encourage team-based learning.

Adapt to Changing Work and Workplace Expectations

A shift to a more knowledge-based economy and the advance of mobile technologies has changed the definitions and processes of productivity. It is possible to work from different locations and to work nonstandard hours, and be highly productive. It is also possible to work nonstop and to burn out; working more doesn't always lead to achieving more, and there are negative consequences to consider. Many people struggle with how to best manage work and nonwork roles and responsibilities. Expectations about productivity and about how work gets done may not be clear or shared. Individuals, particularly younger workers, increasingly have the desire to choose how they manage their life. For example, one employee may want to work fixed hours in an office setting in order to protect personal time, and another may want to work from home or work nonstandard hours in order to blend roles more fluidly. No one way of working is a good fit for everyone. Said one MBA student, "We want the flexibility of when and how we work – at home, in the office, variable hours, etc."

There is a desire for flat organizational structures that allow for fluid exchanges, that is contrasted with a desire for career progression and a clear path for advancement. Leaders are called on to find ways to reconcile these seemingly conflicting perspectives. A Gen Xer participant stated, "We are conflicted. People want a hierarchy so they know how to advance, BUT want the freedom to innovate."

Current Leaders

- Set appropriate boundaries and expectations. Communicate clear policies, including performance expectations and the where, when, and how work is flexible – or if it is not.

- Focus on the impact and quality of work – not just the hours worked. Examine the assumption that working long hours is a proxy for organizational commitment, or is necessary for one to pay one's dues.

- Make sure talent (including you) is able to retain their health. Pay attention to managing the emotional and physical impact of working long hours. Know and be sensitive to signs of burnout in yourself and others.

- Be a role model for paying attention to one's well-being as an aspect of achieving sustainable impact. Alternatively, communicate that you may not be modeling work/life balance in way that will work for everyone, but you are choosing to work the way you want to (for example, you may choose to work longer hours because you have a higher level of responsibility or you have fewer family demands, etc.).

- Develop succession plans across the organization and be clear about possible career paths and what it takes to move forward.

Emerging Leaders

- Understand how you can be most productive. Experiment with different ways of working to determine what works best for you. When possible, negotiate to work in the manner that is most productive and energetic for you.

- Recognize and address issues of potential burnout. Although it is often important to prove yourself, you also have to think about creating patterns of work that are sustainable.

- Talk to formal leaders about appropriate boundaries and expectations (get realistic information about what is required and what is flexible in your job).

Funders

- Support organizational structures and operational needs, including succession planning funds, sabbaticals, fellowships, cross-training, etc.

- Support technological innovations that will enhance organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

Leadership Developers

- Provide opportunities and support for leaders to determine how they work most effectively and how to support different ways of working to help others be as effective as possible.

Measure, Communicate, and Connect to Impact

People want to have and to see an impact. They want to see the impact of their organizations and of their work specifically. People may leave an organization if they believe the organization is not having a sufficient impact, or if they believe their personal impact is negligible. Conversely, being able to see and to contribute positive impact in an area about which they care deeply can be extremely motivating. Younger leaders are particularly concerned with the impact of the work they do. Quotes from Millennials included, "The results keep you going" and "I need the ability to SEE the impact I am having." As mentioned above, the impact of nonprofit work can be very difficult to measure, making this a difficult expectation to meet. However, more can be done to connect the work of individuals to the mission and impact of an organization, and more can be done to articulate and measure the impact of nonprofits and groups of nonprofits working together.

It is important to keep in mind that evaluation data has been, and can be, used to cut funding – and there is a need for greater stakeholder clarity, alignment, and transparency about evaluation process and purpose. If people are scared to seek information about and to be honest about what is and isn't making a positive difference and why, the sector will be hampered in its efforts.

Current Leaders

- Focus on outcomes and impact in discussions with diverse stakeholders. These discussions should examine current outcomes/impact and seek ways to create improvement (in other words, engage in impact-driven learning).

- Don't limit yourself to the metrics funders ask to see. Seek tools to define and measure organizational impact and, where appropriate, the impact of collaborative work with other organizations.

- Use measurement to make the impact case not just to funders but to all stakeholders, including employees, volunteers, clients, donors, and others.

- Help employees create connections between performance goals and the goals, objectives, and strategies of the organization. Talk to individuals about the type of impact they want to create, and link the outcomes of their work to impact so impact is the focus of the work.

- Provide regular positive recognition and feedback about the impact you see individuals and teams having, and the impact the organization is having. Not all employees understand or see the impact of their work. Employees may appreciate both private and public recognition.

Emerging Leaders

- Learn about ways to measure impact.

- Understand the depth and breadth of impact you want to have in your work.

- Make the connection between your work and the mission of the organization. Help other stakeholders make the same connection for themselves.

Funders

- Support organizational efforts to articulate impact and measure impact, both at the organizational level and within the sector generally. This support could help shape partnerships/collaboration/cooperation within the sector.

- Support the development of staff to determine what data to collect, how to collect data systematically, and how to use data. For example, incorporating appropriate methods and tracking systems that collect data on a regular basis.

- Frame the measurement of impact as a learning exercise and use it as such. This approach would include accepting negative measurement and support strategic risk-taking, as well as acknowledging and celebrating the success of grantees learning and achieving impact.

- Fund research about what works, where it works, and why it works. Promote the development and use of evidence-based best practices.

Leadership Developers

- Help leaders articulate a specific vision for impact and how that vision can be achieved.

- Assist leaders in developing practices they can use to help engage people through the desire to have impact.

- Work with leaders to create or have access to tools that effectively measure the impact of their organization, and assist them in implementing a measurement culture into their organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The list below is not exhaustive; it is merely our thoughts about what kinds of research would be helpful to the field in order to understand and move towards impact.

- Design and test talent exchange models between for-profit and nonprofit organizations.

- Identify career models emerging in the nonprofit sector. Do nonprofit leaders derail for different reasons than for-profit leaders?

- Understand why people are drawn to and stay with an organization, and why people leave organizations in the nonprofit sector. What features about the organization or about the sector motivate their decisions?

- Ask young leaders what they think about their leadership identity and leadership in general.

- Examine the trade-offs between growth/learning opportunities, impact, pay, work flexibility, work-life balance for career choices. What are the higher priority items and for which groups?

- Examine ideas for how to infuse learning in low-cost but effective ways.

- Understand the experience of Generation-Xers and why it is important to pay attention to them.

- Interview people who have left (or joined) the nonprofit sector about their decision, and examine the differences in responses for individuals working in the for-profit sector versus the nonprofit sector.

- Study the collaboration and interdependence of nonprofit organizations.

- Examine how new organizational structures impact the outcomes of nonprofit effort.

- Assess the impact of different approaches to board training.

- Profile successful learning organizations. What does the organization do? How does it happen?

- Interview thought leaders to develop new ways of thinking about investments in training and development in the nonprofit sector.

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World Leadership Survey

The World Leadership Survey has continued to collect data online in English since its inception in March 2008, and began collecting data in twelve additional languages in March 2009. Participants in the research come through partner organizations, interested individuals, and enrollment in CCL programs. Participants fill out a survey online that is hosted by Clear Picture Corporation and takes them approximately 20 minutes. In thanks for their participation, participants receive a free CCL Guidebook to download immediately upon completion of the survey. Questions about the survey are sent to the World Leadership Survey email account at WorldLeadershipSurvey@ccl.org. The sample for this report was collected from January 2008 through March 2011. **This sample includes:**

- A total of 3,874 respondents from the United States, with 1,054 respondents from nonprofit organizations and 2,820 from for-profit organizations.

- Respondents' companies ranged from very small (1 to 9 employees) to very large (10,000 or more employees) with the vast majority (79%) coming from companies with at least 100 employees.

- 50% of the respondents were male.

- 82% of the respondents were white and approximately 6% were black, 4% were Asian, and 8% were either Hispanic, multiracial, or a category not defined.

- 2% are from the Silent Generation (born 1925-1945), 14% are Early Boomers (born 1946-1953), 30% are Late Boomers (born 1954-1963), 50% are Gen Xers (born 1964-1980), and 3% are Millennials (born 1981-2000).

- Most respondents were managers or professionals: 31% of the sample indicated that they are in Top (C-level) or executive roles, 24% upper management, and 25% middle management and professional, and 4% were first level or hourly positions.

It is important to note that this is not a random sample of North American managers or employees and, therefore, it is not representative of the population. Our sample consists of people who are employed and who were willing to take 20 minutes of their own time to participate.

Appreciative Interview

Praxis designed and facilitated three groups based on appreciative inquiry methods, an approach developed by David Cooperrider and others at Case Western Reserve (1995).

- We developed interview protocols based on the thematic areas determined through discussions with our CCL project partners.

- In the context of an introductory framework, participants were provided with instructions about how to conduct interviews with their peers while taking notes.

- Participants were given 30 - 40 minutes to engage in paired interviews and then asked to fill out a "summary sheet" to highlight the critical aspects of their interviews. They were also engaged in a thematic "sense-making" discussion which took place between 30 and 60 minutes in the full group, and was taped.

- After the sessions, the interview notes and the summary sheets were typed up as were any notes taken by facilitators. These findings reflect interview and summary notes written by the participants, and transcripts of the discussions as well as our discussion notes.

The three groups included 38 participants and were held at the University of Pennsylvania (U. of P.).
Participants included:

- Group One: This group included 17 MBA students. All were between 24 and 33 years old. There were 10 women and 7 men. The students had been involved as volunteers with nonprofit-board placements throughout the 2nd year of their MBA education.

- Group Two: This group included 9 students. All were between 24 and 30 years old. There were 7 women and 2 men. These students were part of the Nonprofit Leadership Program (NLP), School of Social Policy, U. of P. The students all had backgrounds in nonprofit work and had done nonprofit internships during the year.

- Group Three: This group included 13 participants. All were between 24 and 60 years old. There were 12 women and 1 man. Participants were multi-generational Nonprofit Community Leaders from a range of Philadelphia-based nonprofits. We invited nonprofit leaders from across the age spectrum in an effort to test ideas about what was similar and unique to different generations about engaging in mission-driven, nonprofit work.

The Center for Nonprofit Management at the Kellogg School hosted three focus groups with an approach similar to that described by Richard Krueger and Mary Anne Casey in their book *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (2000). The Center also hosted a small group conversation. All of the groups used a similar protocol to guide the conversation.

- **Group 1:** This group included 12 Chicago area nonprofit leaders engaged in the nonprofit sector as paid staff or board members who participated in Kellogg School Center for Nonprofit Management executive education programs. The group included Millennials, Gen Xers, and Boomers. They were asked to share their views on leadership in the sector. As engaged leaders, they brought a diversity of perspective on the issues.

- **Group 2:** This group included 5 Chicago area nonprofit leaders from the Young Nonprofit Professional Network. All of the participants were actively engaged in the nonprofit sector at various levels of responsibility. This group included 4 Millennials and 1 Gen Xer.

- **Group 3:** This group included 6 Kellogg School of Management MBA students. All of the participants were Millennials and had a variety of experience in the nonprofit sector as volunteers or board members. They were all participants in the Kellogg Board Fellows Program which places graduate students on the board of Chicago area nonprofit organizations for a year.

- **Small group conversation:** This conversation was held with two members of the Center for Nonprofit Management administrative team. Both were Millennials and represented different perspectives on the nonprofit sector, in that one had a nonprofit background and the other for-profit.

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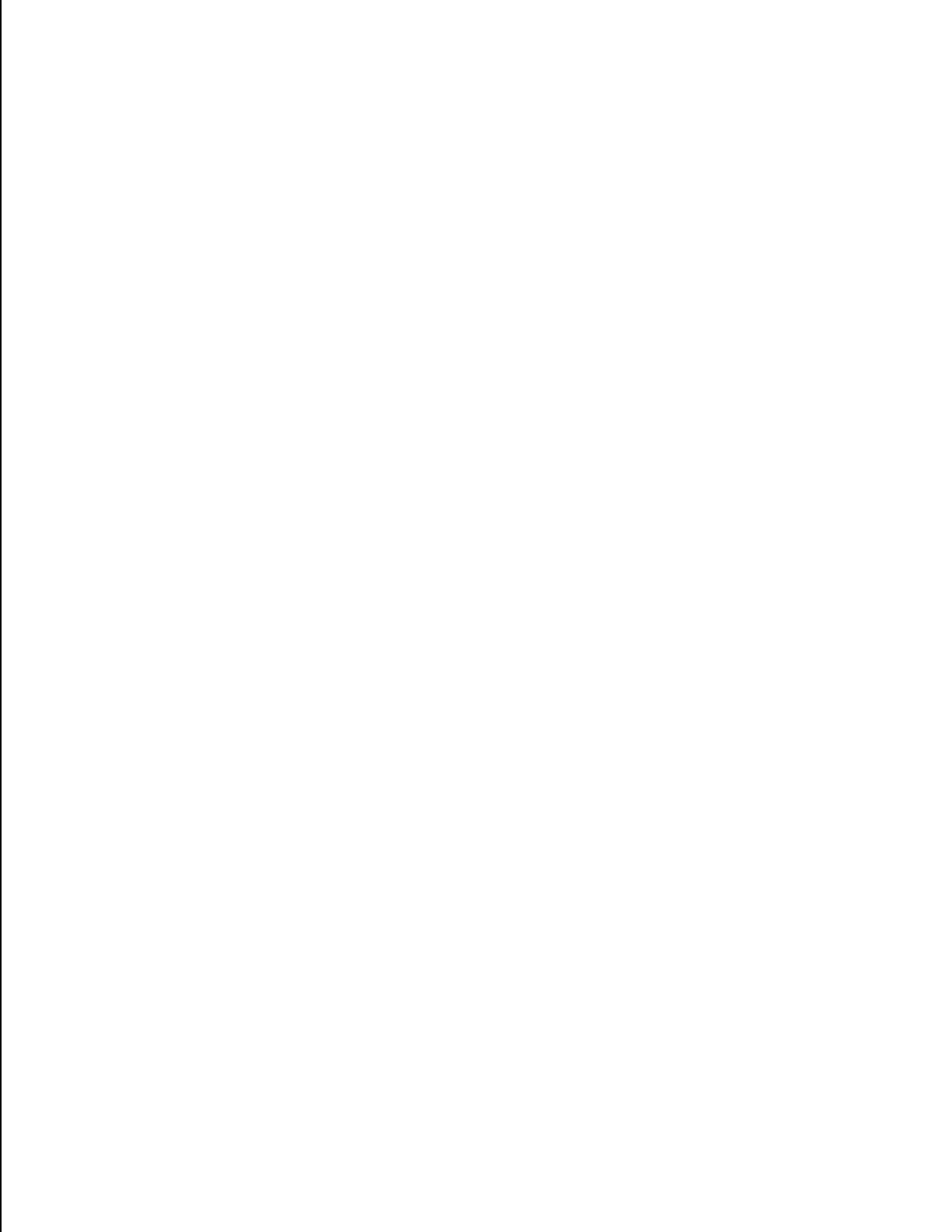
American Express: Developing New Leaders for Tomorrow

One of American Express' three platforms for its philanthropy is Developing New Leaders for Tomorrow. Under this giving initiative, which recognizes the significance of strong leadership in the nonprofit sector, American Express is making grants focused on training high potential emerging leaders to tackle important issues in the 21st century. The American Express Leadership Academy is the signature program of the Leadership giving theme that develops the finest emerging leaders who are dedicated and poised to be at the helm of the nonprofit sector. Since its inception, the program has expanded to include three additional partners and is now international in reach.

About the Center for Creative Leadership

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) is a top-ranked, global provider of executive education that accelerates strategy and business results by unlocking the leadership potential of individuals and organizations. Founded in 1970 as a nonprofit, educational institution and focused exclusively on leadership education and research, CCL helps clients worldwide cultivate creative leadership - the capacity to achieve more than imagined by thinking and acting beyond boundaries - through an array of programs, products and other services. Ranked among the world's Top 10 providers of executive education by Bloomberg BusinessWeek and the Financial Times, CCL is headquartered in Greensboro, N.C., with offices in Colorado Springs, Colo.; San Diego, Calif.; Brussels; Moscow; Singapore; Pune, India; and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Its work is supported by 500 faculty members and staff.

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