

Enriching Lives



**Arts Leadership  
Initiative  
Evaluation Report**

## ■ Foreword

**Laura Zucker, Executive Director  
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At the turn of the millennium there was a strong sense that a sea change was imminent in the arts community. Many of the founders and leaders of successful arts organizations launched in the 1970's and 1980's were entering new phases of their lives, either transitioning into new careers or preparing to retire. The Arts Commission began to consider two questions:

- From what source would new leaders of these organizations come?
- How would these new leaders get the training and development needed to assist them in their jobs?

The Arts Commission determined two primary methods to support the arts community in leadership development:

- Encourage young people to look at careers in nonprofit arts administration;
- Provide education and leadership development opportunities for current and future leaders.

In the summer of 2000, with visionary support provided by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Arts Commission launched the Los Angeles County Arts Internship Program to encourage young people to consider a career in arts administration. Based on the Getty Foundation's successful Multicultural Undergraduate Internship Program, and with key support from the Getty Foundation, the Internship Program has already produced graduates ready to move into arts administration careers.

To support current and future leaders, the Arts Commission undertook a two-fold strategy. We initiated a dialogue with the greater arts and education communities to explore the development of a graduate program of study in nonprofit arts administration. Southern California has been without such a program for several years. Recently the Claremont Graduate University has established a program for individuals

interested in graduate studies in this area. Our second strategy was to launch the Arts Leadership Initiative in 2001.

Under the guidance of its program director, Andrew Campbell, the Arts Leadership Initiative (ALI) was not designed to supplant the pursuit of graduate education in arts administration and leadership, but to support those people already in leadership positions who might be in need of professional development. As Terry Wolverton writes in the evaluation findings, "Many [arts leaders] came to their positions out of a love for an art form or the commitment to fill a need in a particular organization. [They] were not trained for the job they are asked to perform or initially do not possess all the skill areas they are called upon to utilize."

ALI also dovetailed nicely with the growing interest of the Arts Commission in providing key technical assistance to mid-size budget arts organizations with a focus on sustainability and capacity building. For more than twenty years, the Arts Commissioners have championed technical assistance initiatives, primarily delivered as individualized organizational consultancies. The shift to ALI was a major policy decision for the Arts Commissioners in redirecting technical assistance support. As we looked at the more successful organizations participating in the mid-size grant program, they seemed to possess three things: a strong commitment to mission; quality programs to support the mission; and committed leadership. The Arts Commission believed ALI could augment its grant dollars, increasing the effectiveness of that support through the development of strong leaders. The ALI is distinctive among nonprofit arts capacity building efforts in that it invests in individuals rather than systems and structures.

Through its unique menu of opportunities, the Arts Commission believed ALI would assist leaders to address their current issues and challenges through a supportive, peer-mentoring model. The ALI would further provide them with an opportunity to deepen their leadership development experience through an individually

designed study trip or participation in a national leadership training program. Although leadership depends upon the exercise of many individual skills, it is also an art that can be studied and practiced with experienced peers.

We are pleased to report that our efforts to implement the Arts Leadership Initiative have been successful. Each August after the program year, I attend a debriefing session at which the participants discuss the impact of the program. I am always moved by the power of the group to support and sustain its individual members. While participants report more confidence in their leadership, it is the palpable sense of community that is particularly meaningful. I can almost hear a collective sigh of relief from these individuals who feel they are no longer toiling in isolation. These leaders now have a strong group of peers to whom they can turn for advice and counsel, with whom they can foster collaborations and share resources, ideas, and strategies. The building of such collegiality insures that professional development of these leaders continues once the formal program is completed, and enriches the arts as a whole.

## ■ Executive Summary

### Overview

In 2001, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission launched a three-year (2001–2004) project to overhaul its program of technical assistance to mid-size nonprofit arts organizations<sup>1</sup>. Drawing on a number of successful models in the field, most prominently that pioneered by the Fieldstone Foundation, the Arts Commission originated the Arts Leadership Initiative (ALI).

This evaluation, conducted during the course of the second and third years of the program, seeks to answer the question:

**“Can a program of professionally facilitated peer counseling, augmented by additional opportunities for executive learning, serve to increase the**

**leadership capacity of Executive (and Artistic) Directors of non-profit arts organizations, and with what effect on the organizations themselves?”**

### History of the Arts Leadership Initiative (ALI)

The Arts Leadership Initiative has evolved and changed with each of its three years of operation. In its initial year, 2001–2002, the program was new, and neither the program director nor its participants had a clear idea of what to expect from it. By the end of the program, everyone felt they had gained something but, due to unclear expectations and disparate levels of management experience among group members, not everyone felt bonded to the group.

In year 2002–2003, care was taken to create a more homogeneous group with regard to budget size and experience in leadership. Having completed a full program cycle, the ALI program director was in a much stronger position to articulate the expectations of participants, and by the conclusion of the year, the group reported not only great individual progress but also the commitment to continue as a group.

In year 2003–2004, organizations that were in the lower range of the large budget designation of the Arts Commission’s grant program<sup>2</sup> were included in the ALI. The leader of one mid-size organization expressed appreciation at the opportunity to interact with leaders of organizations with larger budgets.

In its first three years, the ALI processes—from selection of participants to the activities in which they engage—have undergone refinements that have enhanced the experience of the leaders who participate. The ALI now stands as a tested model for fortifying professional leadership within the nonprofit arts community, a model that yields demonstrated results.

<sup>1</sup> Defined by the Los Angeles Arts Commission Organizational Grants Program as organizations with annual budgets from \$100,000 to \$800,000.

<sup>2</sup> Over \$800,000.

## Program Components

Participants are selected by staff from among successful applicants to the Arts Commission's Organizational Grants Program (OGP), based upon their grant review scores. Grantees are invited to participate in the ALI, and receive additional funding to do so. There are three primary features of the ALI program:

### EXECUTIVE LEARNING GROUP

ALI participants (either Executive or Artistic Directors) gather monthly for a six-session Executive Learning Group (ELG), providing peer coaching under the professional guidance of a facilitator experienced in the Fieldstone Foundation's ELG model. The Arts Commission offers some ongoing support to groups who wish to continue meeting once the formal sessions are complete.

### ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

ALI participants are further funded for an Organizational Development Grant, which might include a study trip, enrolling in a conference or another leadership development program, or the hiring of a consultant. While participants have made various choices regarding this activity, more than half the grantees have chosen to attend the highly regarded Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders—Arts, a two-week intensive program at Stanford University, a partnership between National Arts Strategies and the Stanford Graduate School of Business (GSB) Center for Social Innovation.

### FREE WORKSHOPS

All OGP recipients' staff and board members are eligible to take free workshops in a variety of management skills offered by the Center for Nonprofit Management.

## Characteristics of Participants

Thirty-one Executive, Artistic, and Managing Directors of mid-size arts organizations have participated in the ALI. Thirty of them completed the full program. Ten

are founders of their organizations. Forty-eight percent are serving in their first leadership position in an arts organization. Twelve are male; nineteen are female. Twenty-two are of Euro-American origin; nine are people of color. The largest representations of disciplines are in arts education (eight) and theatre (seven), followed by visual arts (six), instrumental music (three), and choral music and multidisciplinary (two each). Dance, literary arts, and media arts organizations were represented by one apiece.

## Evaluation Methods

The Arts Leadership Initiative was evaluated by Terry Wolverton/Consult'Her, an independent management consultant. During the initial year of the ALI (2001–2002), another consulting firm was contracted to evaluate the program. As the second year got underway, it was determined that a different approach to the evaluation was needed, and Wolverton was contracted at the beginning of 2003, with the request that this evaluation encompass the first three years. This evaluation does not attempt to include the findings of the earlier consultants. Instead, participants in the first year of the ALI were interviewed retrospectively about their experience.

Among the evaluation activities employed were:

- Interviews with participants, conducted 9 months after wrap-up meeting;
- Interviews with Board and staff members of participant organizations;
- Interviews with Program Director and Executive Learning Group facilitator;
- Survey of Objectives Measures of Organizational Strength, conducted 12 months after wrap-up meeting.
- Observation of an Executive Learning Group session
- Facilitation of wrap-up meeting for Executive Learning Group participants, conducted at the conclusion of their study grants;
- Survey of Leadership Capacity, pre- and post-test conducted 9 months after wrap-up meeting.
- Survey of Organizational Impact, pre-test conducted

during the second month of the program and post-test conducted 3 months following the sixth ELG session wrap-up meeting;

- Survey of Organizational Strengthening, conducted monthly during the course of the six ELG sessions.
- 4 Case Studies
- Comparison between attrition of ALI leaders and leaders of other Arts Commission-funded organizations of similar budget size during the same time period.

## Findings: Strengthening Leadership

### CLAIMING THE MANTLE OF LEADERSHIP

Involvement in the Arts Leadership Initiative provided, for many of the participants, an altered sense of their role and responsibilities within the organization. They reflect a new understanding of the importance of maintaining a vision, motivating and inspiring others, and helping the organization to move forward toward its goals.

### POSITIVE REFLECTION

Many arts leaders were not trained for the job they are asked to perform or initially do not possess all the skill areas they are called upon to utilize. ELG participants found great sustenance in the reflections of themselves as doing a good job and in validating their own expertise as they shared it with others. Several report improved confidence as an unintended outcome of their involvement.

### RELIEVING ISOLATION

Many executive directors work in isolation. The demands of the job often discourage opportunities to interact with other organizational leaders. Although they work closely with their boards and staffs, they may feel unable to be completely candid with either group regarding their deepest concerns, doubts, or perceived shortcomings. Within the Executive Leadership Group, participants felt safe to exchange this kind of information, and were rewarded with validation that the problems are universal, support to address them, and concrete suggestions of strategies with which to do so.

### SELF-CARE AND SELF-PRESERVATION STRATEGIES

The daily demands of running a nonprofit arts organization can create a climate of stress and, in the absence of careful planning, a cycle of crisis management. Burnout occurs, reducing effectiveness and resulting in leadership attrition. Staff turnover, especially at management and leadership levels, is one of the key issues that undermines organizational sustainability. Executive Learning Group participants supported one another to take better care of themselves, to negotiate reasonable compensation, and to focus their energies on those tasks that they could uniquely perform.

### LEVEL OF INVESTMENT

There was one additional area for which we surveyed, and in this area, we found the ALI had little impact. The reason, however, was that leaders came to the program with such a high investment already there was little room for improvement. This area pertains to the leader's investment in the mission and vision of the organization and the satisfaction derived from working to fulfill these. It is this investment that often motivates a leader to continue working with an organization despite relatively low levels of compensation and in the face of sometimes extraordinary challenges.

## Findings: Strengthening Management Skills

### PLANNING

While leaders did not need to be convinced about the importance of planning, many found the demands of day-to-day operations overwhelmed their time and left little opportunity for thinking about the big picture. Participation in the ALI helped to convince these directors that devoting time to planning was one of their most important responsibilities as a leader, and several took the problem-solving methods used in the ELG back to their organizations to use in staff meetings and board retreats and in strategic planning.

## DELEGATION

As they began to delegate, many leaders began to see that not only was their workload lightened, but also that staff appreciated being trusted with greater levels of responsibility. Many leaders went back to their organizations after ALI and redefined job descriptions, clarified responsibilities, developed or refined organizational charts, and eliminated duplication of effort.

## WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH STAFF

During the course of ALI, many participants recognized the importance of better utilizing and managing their staff resources. From adding positions to improved hiring practices (and increased ability to fire staff who are not serving the organization), from making sure all staff understand the big picture to conducting better staff meetings, leaders utilized the lessons of the program to strengthen the staff team.

## WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH BOARD

One of the most intractable problems faced by many nonprofit organizations is the difficulty of working with a board of directors. A presentation by ELG facilitator Dan McQuaid on the Life Cycles of Organizations (including the life cycles of boards) proved enlightening for many of the participants, who were able to see some of the issues with their own boards as having less to do with personalities and more to do with the organization's place in its development process. Sharing this model with board members often led to productive assessment and adoption of needed changes, from restructuring to rotation. Among organizations participating in 2002–2003, leaders report an impressive 43% improvement in their relationship with the Board and a whopping 50% improvement in Board empowerment and effectiveness.

## Findings: Strengthening Organizations

### ATTRITION

Reducing attrition among arts leaders is an important way to impact the health of the field. Among thirty-one (31) ALI participants evaluated between July 1, 2001 and June 30, 2004, four (4) or 12.9% had resigned their positions.

A study of fifty-three (53) other Arts Commission OGP grantees (of similar budget size) over the same period of time showed that nineteen (19), or 35.8% of those organizations had experienced leadership turnover during that same period of time.

While it is true that only top-ranked organizations are chosen to participate in the ALI, this comparison is still dramatic. Leaders participating in the ALI are nearly three times more likely to remain in their positions than those leaders who have not received the benefit of this program.

### ASSESSING AND ADDRESSING ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS

In the final year of the evaluation (2003–2004) the evaluator introduced an instrument designed to better measure organizational strengthening as a result of the ALI. Leaders were asked to identify a specific aspect in their organizations with which they hoped to effect improvement, and to establish a measurable objective. Five months after the final ELG session, leaders were asked to assess whether the improvement had been realized and the objective met.

Results indicate that one leader (9%) *fully achieved* the objective; three (3) leaders (27%) made *significant progress* toward their goal, and four (4) leaders (36%) made *some progress* toward their stated objectives, thus bolstering the benefit to organizations as a whole. In sum, eight (8) leaders (72%) achieved some measure of progress in strengthening an aspect of their organizations.

## Findings: Organizational Development Grants

Organizational Development Grants provide an opportunity for further learning for participant leaders. In each of the three pilot years, approximately half of the participants made the choice to attend the Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders—Arts, a two-week intensive program at Stanford University, a partnership between National Arts Strategies and the Stanford Graduate School of Business (GSB) Center for Social Innovation.<sup>3</sup> This program offers a rare opportunity for arts leaders to further their professional development, share collegial insights with their peers in all arts disciplines, and build a network with arts organization leaders from across the United States.

Another nine leaders over the three years chose to use their grants to travel to attend conferences and to observe model organizations in their disciplines. The value derived from these trips included strengthening networks and benchmarking. Many found other organizations extraordinarily generous in making transparent their processes, policies, even their books.

In 2003–2004, two leaders chose to use their funds to engage consultants. Both directors were planning to submit their resignations and wanted to involve other staff or board in the consulting process to ease their transition. While this was likely an appropriate choice in these cases, the purpose of the organizational development grants remains to provide opportunity to look outside one's particular organization for models and

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<sup>3</sup> Fifty applicants per year are chosen to participate. Applicants must be nominated by a funder who agrees to pay a portion of the tuition. LACAC nominates and funds ALI participants to attend.

best practices.

## Recommendations

Leaders of arts nonprofits are unquestionably strengthened by their participation in ALI. From feeling greater confidence to assume the role of leader and a better understanding of what that entails within their particular organization to gaining additional management skills and knowledge of best practices, leaders return to the field with an increased sense of the contribution they can and do make. So much is going right with this program, the recommendations are more toward continuing or strengthening than with an eye to changing elements of the program:

- Continue to look for ways for leaders to apply the lessons of the program within their organizations. Incorporate a regular process of asking leaders how they will do so and with whom they are sharing the information. This goes a long way toward easing concerns about transition and the loss of knowledge when the leader moves on.
- Continue to invite leaders to identify a concrete problem within their organization at the outset of the ELG, to establish a goal and objective for change, and encourage them to utilize each session to achieve these objectives. This allows leaders to make a practical application of their learning in a way that is transparent to all.
- Continue to utilize the Survey of Leadership Capacity to evaluate individual progress.
- Consider opportunities to better incorporate others from the organizations into the process—perhaps a reception for Board members when the ALI grants are announced.

# Los Angeles County Arts Commission Arts Leadership Initiative Evaluation Report

*“Executive Director’ is a very lonely position. Not too many people understand {the pressures and challenges.} In the ALI, we created a group built on mutual respect and care. There’s not a problem one of the ten of us can’t solve.”*

— Participant, Arts Leadership Initiative

## ■ Overview

For years, funders of the arts have considered the issue of how best to support mid-size nonprofit arts organizations<sup>4</sup>. Most often, these organizations have a substantial track record, a critical mission, a quality product, and a solid audience base. Yet a combination of internal deficiencies and external obstacles keep many mid-size arts organizations struggling for sustainability. While conventional technical assistance, provided via workshops or relatively short-term consultancies, have helped organizations to address specific management issues, the results of such efforts have sometimes proved difficult to institutionalize and sustain.

In 2001, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission launched a three-year (2001–2004) project to overhaul its program of technical assistance to these organizations. Drawing on a number of successful models in the field, most prominently that pioneered by the Fieldstone Foundation, the Arts Commission originated the Arts Leadership Initiative (ALI).

<sup>4</sup> Defined by the Los Angeles Arts Commission Organizational Grants Program as organizations with annual budgets from \$100,000 to \$800,000.

This evaluation, conducted during the course of the second and third years of the program, seeks to answer the question:

“Can a program of professionally facilitated peer counseling, augmented by additional opportunities for executive learning, serve to increase the leadership capacity of Executive (and Artistic) Directors of non-profit arts organizations, and with what effect on the organizations themselves?”

## ■ History of the Arts Leadership Initiative (ALI)

The Arts Leadership Initiative has evolved and changed with each of its three years of operation. In its initial year, 2001–2002, the program was new, and neither its director nor its participants had a clear idea of what to expect from it. The program began just weeks after the catastrophic 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon when the entire nation was in shock and leaders were still trying to make sense of what those events might mean for their organizations and communities. Within this group, there was a vast range of experience (from thirty-plus years to one month) and considerable variation in budget size. By the end of the program, everyone felt they had gained something, but not everyone felt bonded to the group. More experienced leaders believed they had given more service to those with less experience, but had lacked the models they needed to learn from. In the end, only one participant expressed the commitment to continue meeting with the group as a whole. Additionally, interviews with staff and board members revealed that the learning from ALI had not been passed along to others in the organization; this is reasonable, given that leaders were never asked to do so, but served to weaken the potential impact of the program on the organization as a whole.

In year 2002–2003, care was taken to create a more homogeneous group with regard to budget size and experience in leadership. Having completed a full program cycle, the ALI program director was in a much stronger position to articulate the expectations of participants, and by the conclusion of the year, the group reported not only great individual progress but also the

commitment to continue as a group. The idea of sharing ALI learning with others in their organizations was raised for the first time at the group's wrap-up meeting, and subsequent interviews with board and staff demonstrate that many of the leaders did make an effort to introduce processes and share handouts from ALI.

In year 2003–2004, organizations that were in the lower range of the large budget designation of the Arts Commission's grant program<sup>5</sup> were included in the ALI. The leader of one mid-size organization expressed appreciation at the opportunity to interact with leaders of organizations with larger budgets. There seemed to be a higher level of expertise overall among members of this group, as evidenced by the high assessments many gave on their pre-test leadership surveys. This was the first group in which the evaluator had the opportunity to design evaluation instruments in advance of the program, and three instruments were introduced:

- Survey of Leadership Capacity, designed to capture changes within the leaders and their working environments. This was easy to administer and brought the most complete results.
- Survey of Organizational Impact, designed to ask leaders to identify a goal and measurable objective to improve their organizations, which could then be measured upon conclusion of the project. This was not fully integrated into the program itself, so that the instrument was not fully explained when it was distributed (what *is* a measurable objective?), nor were the participants reminded to refer to their goals in subsequent sessions, thereby diminishing the effectiveness of this instrument.
- Survey of Organizational Strengthening, was designed to be completed monthly after each ELG session. It asked leaders to reflect on how they would take the learning from that session back to their organization and with whom they would share it. Although post-program interviews were not conducted with this group, the discussion at the

wrap-up meeting made it clear that leaders were active in sharing and applying ALI lessons throughout their organizations.

Surveys can be found in the appendix of this online version of this report on pages 25–26.

In its first three years, the ALI processes—from the selection of participants to the activities in which they engage—have undergone refinements that have enhanced the experience of the leaders who participate. The ALI now stands as a tested model for fortifying professional leadership within the nonprofit arts community, a model that yields demonstrated results.

## ■ Program Components

Participants are selected by staff from among successful applicants to the Arts Commission's Organizational Grants Program (OGP), based upon their grant review scores. Grantees are invited to participate in the ALI, and receive additional funding to do so. There are three primary features of the ALI program:

### Executive Learning Group

ALI participants (either Executive or Artistic Directors) gather monthly for a six-session Executive Learning Group (ELG), providing peer coaching under the professional guidance of a facilitator experienced in the Fieldstone Foundation's ELG model. The Arts Commission offers some ongoing support to groups who wish to continue meeting once the formal sessions are complete.

At each of the six daylong ELG sessions, participants are encouraged to share openly about the successes and difficulties faced by their organizations (all attendees are pledged to confidentiality). Leaders gain tremendous value from hearing that others face the same problems as they do, and from learning alternative approaches to addressing those problems.

The facilitator also uses a portion of each session to present information about a specific aspect of non-

<sup>5</sup> Over \$800,000.

profit management, including Life Cycles of Organizations, Board Development, Strategic Planning, and Leadership Styles.

In addition, at all but the first session, two participants at each meeting present a specific problem within their organizations for group consideration, using a brainstorming model (SWOT<sup>6</sup> analysis) presented by the facilitator. This activity allows participants to share knowledge and experience with one another, and to consider alternative solutions to each problem posed, as well as to develop problem solving skills and methodology to take back to their organizations.

## Organizational Development Grants

ALI participants are further funded for an Organizational Development Grant, which might include a study trip, enrolling in a conference or another leadership development program, or the hiring of a consultant. While participants have made various choices regarding this activity, more than half the grantees have chosen to attend the highly regarded Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders—Arts, a two-week intensive program at Stanford University, a partnership between National Arts Strategies and the Stanford Graduate School of Business (GSB) Center for Social Innovation.

## Free Workshops

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<sup>6</sup> Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. In this process, a leader had the opportunity to present first the organization, its mission and its programs, followed by the presentation of whatever problem he or she was hoping to address. The group then considered the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, while the leader listened. One group member acted as the Scribe to record the ideas being put forward, and another acted as an Observer, watching but not participating in the process. At the end the Observer reported what he/she had witnessed, and the leader could also respond to the analysis generated.

## Characteristics of Participants

Thirty-one Executive, Artistic, and Managing Directors of mid-size arts organizations have participated in the ALI. Thirty of them completed the full program. Ten are founders of their organizations. Forty-eight percent are serving in their first leadership position in an arts organization. Twelve are male; nineteen are female. Twenty-two are of Euro-American origin; nine are people of color. The largest representations of disciplines are in arts education (eight) and theatre (seven), followed by visual arts (six), instrumental music (three), and choral music and multidisciplinary (two each). Dance, literary arts, and media arts organizations were represented by one apiece.

## Evaluation Methods

The Arts Leadership Initiative was evaluated by Terry Wolverton/Consult'Her, an independent management consultant. During the initial year of the ALI (2001–2002), another consulting firm was contracted to evaluate the program. As the second year got underway, it was determined that a different approach to the evaluation was needed, and Wolverton was contracted at the beginning of 2003, with the request that this evaluation encompass the first three years. This evaluation does not attempt to include the findings of the earlier consultants. Instead, participants in the first year of the ALI were interviewed retrospectively about their experience.

Evaluation activities consisted of:

### 2001–2002 ALI PARTICIPANTS

- Research on participants (grant applications, project reports, etc.);
- Meeting with previous evaluation consultants;
- Interviews with participants, conducted 9 months after wrap-up meeting;
- Interviews with Board and staff members of participant organizations;
- Interviews with Program Director and Executive Learning Group facilitator;

**Table 1: Characteristics of Participating Leaders**

		2001–2002	2002–2003	2003–2004	TOTAL	%
<b>Job Title</b>	Artistic Director	0	2	1	3	10%
	Executive Director	8	7	6	21	68%
	Managing Director	2	1	3	6	19%
	Chief Operating Officer	0	0	1	1	3%
<b>Service to the Field</b>	Founder of Organization	3	6	0	9	29%
	Number of Years at Organization*	4 mos–20 yrs 6.7 average	2 mos–17 yrs 6.8 average	1 yr–12 yrs 4.9 average	6 yrs average	
	First time in arts leadership job*	5 of 9	5 of 9	4 of 11	14	48%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	4	4	4	12	39%
	Female	6	6	7	19	61%
<b>Cultural Background</b>	African-American	3		1	4	13%
	Asian-American/ Pacific Islander	1	1	1	3	10%
	Euro-American	6	8	8	22	71%
	Latino	0	1	1	2	6%
<b>Discipline</b>	Arts Education	1	4	3	8	26%
	Dance	1	0	0	1	3%
	Literary Arts	1	0	0	1	3%
	Media Arts	0	0	1	1	3%
	Multidisciplinary	1	1	0	2	6%
	Music-Choral	1	1	0	2	6%
	Music-Instrumental	1	2	0	3	10%
	Theatre	2	1	4	7	23%
	Visual Arts	2	1	3	6	19%

\* Not every ALI participant provided this information.

- Survey of Objectives Measures of Organizational Strength, conducted 12 months after wrap-up meeting.

**2002–2003 ALI PARTICIPANTS**

- Observation of an Executive Learning Group session
- Facilitation of wrap-up meeting for Executive Learning Group participants, conducted at the conclusion of their study grants;
- Interviews with participants, conducted 9 months after wrap-up meeting;
- Interviews with Board and staff members of participant organizations;

- Survey of Leadership Capacity, pre- and post-test conducted 9 months after wrap-up meeting.
- Observation of a session of the group, which has continued meeting on a quarterly basis.

**2003–2004 ALI PARTICIPANTS**

- Observation of an Executive Learning Group session
- Facilitation of wrap-up meeting for Executive Learning Group participants, conducted at the conclusion of their study grants;
- Survey of Leadership Capacity, pre-test conducted during the second month of the program and post-test conducted 3 months following the sixth ELG

- session. wrap-up meeting;
- Survey of Organizational Impact, pre-test conducted during the second month of the program and post-test conducted 3 months following the sixth ELG session wrap-up meeting;
- Survey of Organizational Strengthening, conducted monthly during the course of the six ELG sessions.

#### OVERALL PROGRAM

- 4 Case Studies
- Comparison between attrition of ALI leaders and leaders of other Arts Commission-funded organizations of similar budget size during the same time period.

### Effectiveness of Evaluation Methods

Due to the switch in evaluators as well as the natural evolution of the program, it was not deemed optimal to use the same methods to evaluate each of the three years of the project. While such consistency of methods is desirable, it is preferable to refine methods to produce the best data. An Interim Evaluation Report, produced in September 2003, revealed some gaps in the data that led to the abandonment of one evaluation instrument (Objective Measures of Organizational Strength) and the creation of three new instruments that were used with 2003–2004 participants (see pages 25–26 for Appendices A–C). The Leadership Capacity Survey was also used to retrospectively pre- and post-test the 2002–2003 group, but not the 2001–2002 participants (evaluator felt that too much time had passed with this group to get an effective pre-test.) The positive results of this evolution in methodology are some solid recommendations for future ongoing evaluation of the program by Commission staff.

While anecdotal evidence suggests that organizations were strengthened through their leader's participation in the ALI, quantitative proof of this remains elusive.

There are two primary reasons for this:

- The emphasis of the ALI program itself was on the individual experiences of the leaders. Participants were not asked to identify and track factors within their organizations that would yield this kind of data.

- The first three years of the program of the ALI took place in the period immediately following the 9/11/01 attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., followed by an economic downturn. This has created severe challenges for arts organizations of all budget sizes. This is but an extreme example of the numerous external, as well as internal factors beyond staff leadership that determine the overall health of any nonprofit organization.

Finally, both the pre- and post- Leadership Capacity Surveys were given to participants from 2002–2003 after their completion of the ALI (the pre-test was administered retrospectively), whereas the 2003–2004 participants took the pre-test at the beginning of the ALI and the post-test upon completion. What's notable is that 2003–2004 participants ranked themselves much higher in the pre-test than did the 2002–2003 group, thus showing a smaller ratio of change between pre- and post-test scores. While it is possible that the 2003–2004 leaders were simply more skilled than the previous year's, it may also be that having completed the ALI, the 2002–2003 leaders had a different perspective from which to assess their weaknesses at the outset of the program.

### Findings: Strengthening Leadership

Information in this section is based on interviews conducted with 2001–2002 and 2002–2003 participants (for interview questions see Appendix D on page 27). The positive impacts of the program most frequently cited were relief from isolation, a positive reflection of their abilities, a willingness to see themselves as leaders, and the adoption of strategies to better care for their personal and professional needs. Most strikingly, participants were affirmed in their perception of themselves as leaders.

**Table 2: Exercising Leadership**

Statement	Mean Pre-participation Level of Agreement		Mean Post-participation Level of Agreement		Percentage Change	
	02–03	03–04	02–03	03–04	02–03	03–04
Ability to identify the strength of others, and elicit and utilize those strengths to benefit the organization.*	2.85	3.05	3.2	3.3	12%	9%
Awareness of resources for providing expertise I may not possess and willingness to utilize these resources.*	2.65	2.3	3.55	3.2	40%	38%
Ability to exercise leadership in the face of obstacles and challenges.*	2.75	2.8	3.45	3.4	25%	19%
Ability to resolve conflicts within the organization.*	2.5	2.8	3.25	3.4	30%	15%

\*On a scale of 1–4, where 1 = “Not at all effective” and 4 = “Very effective”

## Claiming the Mantle of Leadership

*“Previously I saw myself as an administrator, but not the leader of the organization. Now I see that someone needs to lead the team—board, staff, and volunteers.”*

*“The program changed my idea of leadership. I used to think it was all about consensus; now I see how important it is to maintain the vision.”*

*“I learned I needed to listen more, to make other people feel part of the team.”*

*“I defined myself as a leader.”*

Involvement in the Arts Leadership Initiative provided, for many of the participants, an altered sense of their role and responsibilities within the organization. They reflect a new understanding of the importance of maintaining a vision, motivating and inspiring others, and helping the organization to move forward toward its goals.

Information from the interviews was reinforced by data from a survey administered to 2002–2003 and 2003–2004 participants.

## Positive Reflection

*“Interacting with other leaders helped me to feel more confident about my own abilities.”*

*“I gained a greater appreciation for the skills I already had.”*

*“I learned I am a very good leader.”*

A large number of leaders of arts organizations did not have arts administration as their intended career. Many came to their positions out of a love of an art form or the commitment to fill a need in a particular organization. Many arts leaders were not trained for the job they are asked to perform or initially do not possess all the skill areas they are called upon to utilize. Problems within organizations can sometimes appear insurmountable, and sometimes leaders feel inadequate to solve them.

In interviews, both 2001–2002 and 2002–2003 ELG participants found great sustenance in the reflections of themselves as doing a good job and in validating their own expertise as they shared it with others. Several report improved confidence as an unintended outcome of their involvement.

## Relieving Isolation

*“Bonding with other executives was the greatest unexpected outcome of the program.”*

*“{Before ALI} I didn’t think I had any peers. I learned that my problems are shared problems.”*

*“{ALI} functioned as a support environment. I still feel that way; I still call them.”*

Many executive directors work in isolation. The demands of the job often discourage opportunities to interact with other organizational leaders. Although they work closely with their boards and staffs, they may feel unable to be completely candid with either group regarding their deepest concerns, doubts, or perceived shortcomings. Within the Executive Leadership Group, participants felt safe to exchange this kind of information, and were rewarded with validation that the problems are universal, support to address them, and concrete suggestions of strategies with which to do so. Members of the 2001–2002 ELG have kept up frequent interaction among and between them, and several have

served in a consulting capacity to other ELG participant organizations. The 2002–2003 ELG continues to meet quarterly.

## Self-Care and Self-Preservation Strategies

*“I saw that service to others could include service to self.”*

*“I learned that it’s okay to treat arts administrators like human beings! At Stanford, we were treated like corporate executives.”*

*“The artistic director and I both sat down and re-arranged the schedule to give ourselves time off; I learned I didn’t need to work 14 hour days.”*

*“I was considering resigning when the program began. Without the ELG, I wouldn’t have stayed.”*

*“We should not be volunteering our time. The organization has to get used to raising money to pay professional salaries.”*

The daily demands of running a nonprofit arts organization can create a climate of stress and, in the absence of careful planning, a cycle of crisis management. Executives often feel no matter how hard or long they work, they always fall short of meeting the monumental needs of the organization. Burnout occurs, reducing effectiveness and resulting in leadership attrition. Staff turnover, especially at management and leadership levels,

**Table 3: Balance**

Statement	Mean Pre-participation Level of Agreement		Mean Post-participation Level of Agreement		Percentage Change	
	02–03	03–04	02–03	03–04	02–03	03–04
My life is well balanced between my personal and professional needs.**	2.05	2.4	2.75	3.0	34%	23%

\*\* On a scale of 1–4, where 1 = “Strongly disagree” and 4 = “Strongly agree”

**Table 4: Exercising Leadership**

Statement	Mean Pre-participation Level of Agreement		Mean Post-participation Level of Agreement		Percentage Change	
	02–03	03–04	02–03	03–04	02–03	03–04
Ability to communicate the mission and vision in a way that inspires others.*	3.5	3.2	3.65	3.3	4%	3%
My work is meaningful.**	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.8	0%	3%
My work benefits me beyond what I am paid to do.**	3.9	3.5	3.8	3.7	-2%	6%

\*On a scale of 1–4, where 1 = “Not at all effective” and 4 = “Very effective”

\*\* On a scale of 1–4, where 1 = “Strongly disagree” and 4 = “Strongly agree”

is one of the key issues that undermines organizational sustainability. Executive Learning Group participants were surprised and relieved to learn that they didn’t have to “do it all” and they didn’t have to do it all the time. Participants supported one another to take better care of themselves, to negotiate reasonable compensation, and to focus their energies on those tasks that they could uniquely perform.

The benefits of this were notably demonstrated by data from a survey administered to 2002–2003 participants, where respondents reported significant improvements in balance between personal and professional life.

### Level of Investment

There was one additional area for which we surveyed, and in this area, we found the ALI had little impact. The reason, however, was that leaders came to the program with such a high investment already there was little room for improvement. This area pertains to the leader’s investment in the mission and vision of the organization and the satisfaction derived from working to fulfill these. It is this investment that often motivates a leader to continue working with an organization despite relatively low levels of compensation and in the face of sometimes extraordinary challenges.

## Findings: Strengthening Management Skills

The data in this section comes from a survey (pre- and post-tested) of 2002–2003 and 2003–2004 ALI participants, as well as results of interviews from 2001–2002 and 2002–2003 participants. Findings show significant levels of improvement in planning, delegation, and time management, and in communications with staff and board.

### Planning

*“It was great to have time away from the office to think through issues.”*

While leaders did not need to be convinced about the importance of planning, many found the demands of day-to-day operations overwhelmed their time and left little opportunity for thinking about the big picture. Others observed that the planning methods utilized within the organization were unstructured or yielded results that were hard to implement.

Participation in the ALI helped to convince these directors that devoting time to planning was one of their most important responsibilities as a leader, and several took the problem-solving methods used in the ELG (SWOT

analysis) back to their organizations to use in staff meetings and board retreats and in strategic planning.

## Delegation

*“It’s not lonely at the top if you are sharing the space.”*

*“Now I tell my staff, don’t just come to me with a problem; come to me with your ideas for solutions.”*

As a result of involvement in the ELG, many participants found they had inadvertently helped to foster their own sense of overload by holding too tightly to tasks that could be performed by others or by not disclosing organizational problems and inviting staff to offer possible solutions. As they began to delegate, many leaders began to see that not only was their workload lightened, but also that staff appreciated being trusted with greater levels of responsibility. Many leaders went back to their organizations after ALI and redefined job descriptions, clarified responsibilities, developed or refined organizational charts, and eliminated duplication of effort.

## Working Relationship with Staff

*“I’m working to promote communication as one of our organization’s core values.”*

*“I’ve become a better teammate, as well as a leader.”*

During the course of ALI, many participants recognized the importance of better utilizing and managing their staff resources. From adding positions to improved hiring practices (and increased ability to fire staff who are not serving the organization), from making sure all staff understand the big picture to conducting better staff meetings, leaders utilized the lessons of the program to strengthen the staff team.

In 2002–2003 and 2003–2004, participants were actively encouraged to share the information gleaned from the program (while keeping the confidentiality of their fellow participants), with their staff and board, and in so doing, deepen the impact of the program on the organization.

**Table 5: Planning, Delegation, and Time Management**

Statement	Mean Pre-participation Level of Agreement		Mean Post-participation Level of Agreement		Percentage Change	
	02–03	03–04	02–03	03–04	02–03	03–04
Engagement in planning in order to both anticipate and shape what’s to come. *	3.5	3.2	3.65	3.6	4%	14%
Productive management of time; efforts concentrated on those tasks I am best or uniquely equipped to perform; delegation of tasks to others.*	2.45	2.8	3.4	3.3	39%	20%

\*On a scale of 1–4, where 1 = “Not at all effective” and 4 = “Very effective”

## Working Relationship with Board

*“I encouraged my Board members to take advantage of the free workshops at the Center for Nonprofit Management. This exposed them to best practices.”*

*“Developing committees with Board leadership has helped to engage board members in a meaningful way. They feel more connected, are more active, and express a greater sense of ownership.”*

One of the most intractable problems faced by many nonprofit organizations is the difficulty of working with

a board of directors. A presentation by ELG facilitator Dan McQuaid on the Life Cycles of Organizations (including the life cycles of boards) proved enlightening for many of the participants, who were able to see some of the issues with their own boards as having less to do with personalities and more to do with the organization’s place in its development process. Sharing this model with board members often led to productive assessment and adoption of needed changes, from restructuring to rotation.

While this data is not replicated in 2003–2004, among the organizations participating in 2002–2003, leaders

**Table 6: Working Relationship with Staff**

Statement	Mean Pre-participation Level of Agreement		Mean Post-participation Level of Agreement		Percentage Change	
	02–03	03–04	02–03	03–04	02–03	03–04
Development of a productive working relationship with staff.*	2.75	2.8	3.55	3.4	29%	31%
Staff members feel empowered and effective in their roles within the organization.**	2.8	3.1	3.4	3.4	21%	11%

\*On a scale of 1–4, where 1 = “Not at all effective” and 4 = “Very effective”  
 \*\* On a scale of 1–4, where 1 = “Strongly disagree” and 4 = “Strongly agree”

**Table 7: Working Relationship with Board**

Statement	Mean Pre-participation Level of Agreement		Mean Post-participation Level of Agreement		Percentage Change	
	02–03	03–04	02–03	03–04	02–03	03–04
Development of a productive working relationship with Board. *	2.1	3.1	3.0	3.2	43%	4%
Board members feel empowered and effective in their roles within the organization..**	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	50%	4%

\*On a scale of 1–4, where 1 = “Not at all effective” and 4 = “Very effective”  
 \*\* On a scale of 1–4, where 1 = “Strongly disagree” and 4 = “Strongly agree”

report an impressive 43% improvement in their relationship with the Board and a whopping 50% improvement in Board empowerment and effectiveness.

## ■ Findings: Strengthening Organizations

### Attrition

The loss of qualified leadership is a challenge to any arts organization. Reducing attrition among arts leaders is an important way to impact the health of the field. Among thirty-one (31) ALI participants evaluated between July 1, 2001 and June 30, 2004, four (4) or 12.9% had resigned their positions.

A study of fifty-three (53) other Arts Commission OGP grantees (of similar budget size) over the same period of time showed that nineteen (19), or 35.8% of those organizations had experienced leadership turnover during that same period of time.

While it is true that only top-ranked organizations are chosen to participate in the ALI, this comparison is still dramatic. Leaders participating in the ALI are nearly three times more likely to remain in their positions than those leaders who have not received the benefit of this program.

During interviews, at least two ALI participants stated that they had been intending to leave their organizations; one had even applied for other jobs. Both directly credited the ALI with their decisions to remain.

Although it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to follow either of these individuals into their next phase of productivity, or to track the subsequent progress of their organizations to determine whether the benefits of the ALI have become institutionalized, anecdotal reports show that many of these leaders remain in the field, either taking on another executive position,

moving to a program position, or establishing a consulting practice to the field. This suggests that benefits gained through the ALI will continue to be utilized within the arts community.

It is important to state, also, that no leader was encouraged to remain in a position that was unsatisfying or unproductive. The ALI was above all dedicated to leaders feeling fulfilled and effective in their roles.

**In investing in the Arts Leadership Initiative, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission has made the decision to nurture the development of individuals. This has been cited by many participants as one of the great and unique gifts of the ALI program.**

For others, the opportunity for re-evaluation provided by the ALI meant not resigning their positions, but redesigning their work process or job description in order to create a more rewarding situation that would allow them to continue to remain at their post.

### Assessing and Addressing Organizational Problems

*“If not for the ELG, my organization wouldn’t be here.”*

While interviews yielded some anecdotal information about the benefit of the ALI program to organizations, in the final year of the evaluation (2003–2004) the evaluator introduced an instrument designed to better capture this information. During the second sessions of the ELG, leaders were asked to identify a specific aspect in their organizations with which they hoped to effect improvement, and to establish a measurable objective. Five months after the final ELG session, leaders were asked to assess whether the improvement had been realized and the objective met.

**Table 8: Organizational Impact 2003–2004 Participants**

ORG	GOALS	OUTCOMES
#1	Empower board chair to lead company planning process; chair will set agenda and lead conversation	Not achieved
#2	Board understands/embraces role and responsibilities re: governance and fundraising. Improved giving by trustees. Policies and procedures for staff in place and followed.	Some progress.
#3	By August 2004, written policies for HR, art acquisition & sales, loans, space rental, financials, etc.	Significant progress, not yet complete
#4	Information not available	Information not available
#5	Planning, evaluation, and post-mortem sessions scheduled and conducted. Evaluation results & teacher/artist feedback.	Significant progress toward a different goal
#6	Establish active board committees for fundraising, finance, personnel, and nominations. Board hire mediator to work with internal conflicts.	Some progress
#7	Have 5 new partnerships to decrease costs and/or earn income in the amount of \$5000.	Objectives met
#8	Increase contributed income; expand donor base including new foundation sources.	Some progress
#9	Develop 5-year plan. Review/revise mission. Establish board fundraising goals. Update employee handbook. Add administrative support staff.	Not achieved
#10	10% increase in attendance & membership. 15% increase in contributed income.	Significant progress
#11	Transform Board from developing Board to governing Board.	Some progress

There were some problems with the administration of this instrument (for example, many leaders apparently did not understand what a *measurable* objective is), the results indicate that one leader (9%) fully achieved the objective; three (3) leaders (27%) made significant progress toward their goal, and four (4) leaders (36%) made some progress toward their stated objectives, thus bolstering the benefit to organizations as a whole. In sum, eight (8) leaders (72%) achieved some measure of progress in strengthening an aspect of their organizations. One (1) leader did not set an objective; one (1) left the organization because there was no support for achieving the stated objectives; and one (1) did not make progress because there was no reminder given during ALI to focus on the objective.

## ■ Findings: Organizational Development Grants

*“Prior to my attendance {at EPNL-Arts} I had considered leaving the field of arts management due to burnout and exhaustion. My attendance has given me a fresh outlook and reinvigorated my spirit and made it possible for me to continue.”*

Organizational Development Grants provide an opportunity for further learning for participant leaders. In each of the three pilot years, approximately half of the participants made the choice to attend the Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders—Arts, a two-week intensive program at Stanford University, a partnership between National Arts Strategies and the Stanford

**Table 9: Organizational Development Grant Utilization**

	2001–2002	2002–2003	2003–2004
Attended Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders at Stanford	5	6	5
Designed a study trip to visit other organizations	3	4	2
Used funds to hire a consultant			2
Did not utilize funds	2 *		2

\* These individuals resigned their positions before the Study Grants were underway.

Graduate School of Business (GSB) Center for Social Innovation.<sup>7</sup> This program offers a rare opportunity for arts leaders to further their professional development, share collegial insights with their peers in all arts disciplines, and build a network with arts organization leaders from across the United States. Participants gain a richer understanding of how to integrate organizational mission with economic strategy, extensive interaction and exchange of ideas with the world’s leading faculty, an improved ability to evaluate the rigor and relevance of new management ideas and concepts, and a personal plan of action for addressing key organizational and strategic challenges.

*“...the level of expertise of the participants was staggering. This opportunity has provided me with a new circle of colleagues to act as a source of information...”*

*“The program encouraged risk taking, thinking outside the box. I reopened myself to possibilities I had ruled out because of fear of failure.”*

*“I came back from Stanford committed to feed the culture of my organization, to encourage staff risk taking, creativity, and ownership, to encourage others to become leaders.”*

Another nine leaders over the three years chose to use their grants to travel to attend conferences and to observe model organizations in their disciplines. The value derived from these trips included strengthening networks and benchmarking. Many found other organizations extraordinarily generous in making transparent their processes, policies, even their books.

*“As a result of studying best practices in touring, we restructured our contracts with artists. The things I learned saved us at a very tough time.”*

*“I spoke to staff about the process of transition with their founding artistic director. We’re beginning to look at that issue in my organization.”*

*“I visited five other companies in New York and San Francisco. I was able to pass on a lot of learning from ALI. And we’re planning a national conference for next year.”*

In 2003–2004, two leaders chose to use their funds to engage consultants. Both directors were planning to submit their resignations and wanted to involve other staff or board in the consulting process to ease their transition. While this was likely an appropriate choice in

<sup>7</sup> Fifty applicants per year are chosen to participate. Applicants must be nominated by a funder who agrees to pay a portion of the tuition. LACAC nominates and funds ALI participants to attend. For more information about the program, go to <http://www.artstrategies.org/epnl-arts.htm>.

these cases, the purpose of the study grants remains to provide opportunity to look outside one's particular organization for models and best practices.

In 2001–2002, two individuals did not utilize their study grants. Both had already resigned their positions before the study grants began. In 2003–2004, two leaders did not utilize their study grants due to feeling overloaded in their job responsibilities during the time the study grants were offered.

## ■ Case Studies

### Overview of Case Studies

The case studies are designed to present a spectrum of the experiences of participants in the Arts Leadership Initiative. They are derived from interviews with participants and, in the case of the 2002–2003 ELG continuation group, with observation of one of their meetings. All names of the leaders are pseudonyms to preserve the agreement of confidentiality.

#### Eric's Experience

2001–2002

Eric had been on the job as co-executive director of a visual arts organization for just one month when the ALI began. The organization had been through its share of upheaval prior to his tenure; it had moved from its location in a prosperous beach community to Skid Row, lured by the promise of more space and a subsidized rent from a developer touted with helping to create a downtown renaissance. Unfortunately, the organization's audience was less willing to follow on this pioneering adventure, and as revenues declined, the developer was resistant to offer additional subsidies. The Founding Director had left the organization suddenly, citing exhaustion. Eric had never before served in an Executive Director position. Few in the arts community were optimistic about the organization's prognosis.

Facing a budget crisis, Board attrition, and the need to immediately relocate the organization's facilities, Eric wasn't sure he even had the time to attend ELG meetings. What he found instead was a mentorship by nine other nonprofit leaders, many of who had, in their more lengthy careers, successfully addressed some of the same challenges Eric's organization was now up against.

The other leaders in his group encouraged Eric to focus first on the bottom line. "I used to feel like somehow we had to do everything for everybody; now I know the health of the organization comes first. The other leaders taught me a business mindset, 'No cash, no company,' and gave me the courage to cut programs that had no funding."

This Director took the knowledge and advice gleaned from the ELG and applied it; today the organization not only survives but also has refocused its mission, streamlined its programs, and increased its annual operating budget. "If not for this program," Eric insists, "the organization wouldn't be here."

#### Carla's Experience

2002–2003

Carla was one of the leaders who chose to design her own study trip, rather than attend the Stanford program. The director of a musical ensemble, Carla arranged to spend three days visiting the country's most successful resident ensemble to see how they managed the organization, how they handled touring, and when they engaged the services of the public relations consultant.

The host organization was incredibly generous; Carla had the opportunity to meet with the head of every department. The Executive Director made available budgets and financial statements for Carla's review.

"I thought I'd be depressed," recalls Carla. "After all, their budget is \$5 million dollars." Instead, she saw that this organization's challenges were similar to her own.

“Their overhead is higher; we all face the same fundraising challenges, and those of a shrinking audience base. But also, we’ve recorded more; we’ve done more than one radio series.”

After her visit, she received a letter from the Executive Director saying they’d learned as much from Carla as she’d learned from them. This, and the benchmarking she was able to do on her visit, reaffirmed her confidence in the management practices she’d been using.

Four months later, Carla’s ensemble went on tour. She encountered difficulty with some of the players, and based on her study trip, she made decisions about how to renegotiate their contracts.

During the tour, Carla took the time to visit a similar ensemble in Amsterdam. “They too had lost some of their core players, and were willing to share with me how they’d handled it. They encouraged me to work differently with our musicians. They were also eager to ask us about how we work in arts education.”

The upshot, Carla says, is that she was able to forge personal relationships with these other institutions, and in both cases, the dialogue has continued.

## Pauline’s Experience

2003–2004

Before coming on board as the Chief Operating Officer for an art museum, Pauline had spent twenty-two years in the business world. Accustomed to a six-figure income at a thriving company, Pauline was tired of the constant traveling.

“I wanted to do something I loved.”

She had a background in the arts. When she saw an ad for a position at the museum, she applied. Nobody told her that she would be the third person to hold the position that year.

“I would never have done this if I’d known what I was getting into,” she asserts. She wasn’t prepared for the long hours, or the lack of basic office equipment.

“What did they mean I couldn’t have my own printer?” After a long career in business, Pauline found herself shocked at the level of disorganization, and the lack of controls and accountability.

“Every night I went home and wanted to quit,” she recalls. “Everyone was over budget, no one was meeting projections. The staff was tremendously resistant to my attempts to direct their efforts. It was impossible to move forward.”

One of the things the ALI gave her was the ability to distinguish problems that were unique to her organization from those that are endemic to nonprofits. For instance, she came to understand that because salaries at arts nonprofits are low relative to the business world, the needs of staff for training is the norm, not the exception.

The greatest change since ALI, she maintains, is that her staff now works as a team. “We’ve done some strategic planning, informed by the ALI processes, and now everyone is focused on the same goal—to bring more visitors to the museum.”

After Pauline’s Study Trip to the Stanford program, the museum founder was so impressed with the breadth of her knowledge that he promoted her.

“Before ALI,” she says, “I’d grown desperate. I’d gone on interviews for other jobs.” She’s no longer thinking of leaving. “I’m full of optimism for our organization. I know it has a bright future and that I can contribute positively and significantly. It makes all the hours worth it!”

## After ALI: the Class of 2002–2003

While participants in all three years greatly benefited from the ALI program, the Class of 2002–2003 is the group that experienced the greatest collective bonding. While there are factors that may have contributed to this—from a budget standpoint, the organizations were fairly homogeneous and, as this was the second year of the program, the expectations of individuals could be more clearly shaped at the outset—there is no quantifiable measure to explain the depth of affection and respect these participants developed for one another.

The group has continued to meet every 2–3 months since the wrap-up meeting in August 2003, sometimes visiting one another's organizations, other times gathering at a site arranged by the Arts Commission. They have evolved a structure of collaborative facilitation of each meeting ("So we have the excuse to go to lunch with someone in order to plan the meeting!" quips one of the participants.) They've retained the ritual of "Peaches and Pits," which is a process for reporting on progress and setbacks within their organizations, and continue to engage in problem-solving and the sharing of referrals. At a meeting attended by the evaluator, people traded useful websites as sources for volunteers and for Board members, and one participant profusely thanked another for providing a lead to a great auditor.

But the bonds have transcended the professional, and deepened into strong friendship. One of the leaders in this group passed away quite unexpectedly; another had experienced a profound family tragedy. When the group assembled for its regular meeting, the first hour of the meeting was devoted to a memorial tribute, complete with flowers and photos of the departed and time devoted to remembrances and storytelling. One member in the group is a musician who performed a moving tribute to her fallen colleague.

Then the meeting transitioned into its regular business, in this case, the presentation of a problem-solving technique that two leaders had learned at Stanford, focused not on a single organization but on a shared

problem throughout the arts community: the need for advocacy. This suggests that participants not only use the lessons of the ALI to better lead their own organizations, but to assume leadership in the arts community as a whole.

## ■ Recommendations

Leaders of arts nonprofits are unquestionably strengthened by their participation in ALI. From feeling greater confidence to assume the role of leader and a better understanding of what that entails within their particular organization to gaining additional management skills and knowledge of best practices, leaders return to the field with an increased sense of the contribution they can and do make.

So much is going right with this program, the recommendations are more toward continuing or strengthening than with an eye to changing elements of the program:

- Continue to look for ways for leaders to apply the lessons of the program within their organizations. Incorporate a regular process of asking leaders how they will do so and with whom they are sharing the information. This goes a long way toward easing concerns about transition and the loss of knowledge when the leader moves on.
- Continue to invite leaders to identify a concrete problem within their organization at the outset of the ELG, to establish a goal and objective for change, and encourage them to utilize each session to achieve these objectives. This allows leaders to make a practical application of their learning in a way that is transparent to all.
- Continue to utilize the Survey of Leadership Capacity to evaluate individual progress.
- Consider opportunities to better incorporate others from the organizations into the process—perhaps a reception for Board members when the ALI grants are announced?

As a special note, the leaders who participated in each of the three years of the ALI expressed a deep gratitude for the opportunity, acknowledging the leadership and vision of the Arts Commission. Leaders recognize it as a unique opportunity, and more than a few of them have described it as “life-changing.”

## ■ Acknowledgements

When the Arts Commission began to look at the challenge of developing leadership in the nonprofit arts community in Los Angeles County more than four years ago, it was supported in this effort by numerous individuals and organizations.

The National Endowment for the Arts, which provided us with a grant to launch the Arts Leadership Initiative Program and to conduct the evaluation.

The Fieldstone Foundation for allowing us the use of their Executive Learning Group program model: Janine Mason Barone, Executive Director; Mary MacIntyre Hamilton, former National Director, Leadership Network.

Dan McQuaid, who has brought great expertise in his role as facilitator of the Executive Learning Group. Dan participated in the Fieldstone Foundation’s ELG over ten years ago and for the past five has been a facilitator for several ELG groups in the Western United States.

Terry Wolverton, who, midway into our three-year study, came on board as our evaluator and found appropriate methods to assist us in looking at the impact of ALI.

National Arts Strategies for encouraging the nomination of our ALI participants to their Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders-Arts (and providing substantial scholarships for those selected): Russell Willis Taylor, President and CEO; Ed Martenson, EPNL-Arts Program Director.

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The Cultural+Planning Group (David Plettner and Mark Anderson, principals) for their early support and advice on developing the ALI.

The thirty-one leaders who have participated in the program during the first three years and have been generous and helpful in providing us with feedback.

Andrew Campbell, the Director of Organizational Development for the Arts Commission who has guided this program since its inception.

## ■ Appendix A

### Los Angeles County Arts Commission Arts Leadership Initiative

#### LEADERSHIP CAPACITY SURVEY

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions regarding your current position within your organization. Follow-up surveys will be used to measure changes throughout the coaching process. Please reflect carefully on your own experience and please be completely honest in your responses. Only in this way can we measure the true impact of the ALI program. Be sure to turn the page for additional questions.

Please indicate your effectiveness in the following areas, choosing a rating from 1 to 4, as defined below.

1. Not at all effective    2. Sometimes effective    3. Usually effective    4. Very effective

1. Ability to communicate the mission and vision in a way that inspires others.
2. Engagement in planning in order to both anticipate and shape what's to come.
3. Productive management of time; efforts concentrated on those tasks I am best or uniquely equipped to perform; delegation of tasks to others.
4. Ability to identify the strength of others, and elicit and utilize those strengths to benefit the organization.
5. Development of a productive working relationship with Board of Directors.
6. Development of a productive working relationship with staff.
7. Awareness of resources for providing expertise I may not possess and willingness to utilize these resources.
8. Ability to exercise leadership in the face of obstacles and challenges.
9. Ability to resolve conflicts within the organization.

1. Strongly disagree    2. Disagree    3. Somewhat agree    4. Strongly agree

10. Staff members feel empowered and effective in their roles within the organization.
11. Board members feel empowered and effective in their roles within the organization.
12. My work is meaningful.
13. My work benefits me beyond what I am paid to do it.
14. My life is well balanced between my personal and professional needs.

*Thank you!*

## ■ Appendix B

### Los Angeles County Arts Commission Arts Leadership Initiative

#### ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT SURVEY

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

We ask that you identify a circumstance within your organization that you believe enhanced leadership skills will help you to improve. We ask that you establish a measurable goal for this improvement (EXAMPLE: *currently, none of 15 Board members makes an annual contribution to the organization. Upon completion of this project, at least seven Board members will make a contribution of \$500 or more.*) Upon completion of the ALI, we will survey you again to determine the degree of improvement that was achieved.

1. What circumstance within your organization do you believe can be positively affected by enhanced leadership?
2. What is the measurable goal you would like to set for improvement by August 2004?
3. What evidence can be provided to demonstrate the degree of improvement achieved?
4. How will achieving this goal strengthen or otherwise benefit the organization?

## ■ Appendix C

### Los Angeles County Arts Commission Arts Leadership Initiative

#### ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHENING PLAN

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete one of these forms after each of the remaining ELG sessions AND after your Study Grant is complete.

Session Topic(s):

1. With whom in your organization will you share the information gleaned from this session?
2. What methods will you use to share the information (e.g., informal discussion, formal presentation, email memo, photocopied handouts, etc.)  
By when will you do this?
3. What changes, if any, will you implement in your own work procedures as a result of this session? By when will you do this?
4. What changes, if any, will you propose to implement in your organizations' procedures? By when will you do this?

## ■ Appendix D

### Los Angeles County Arts Commission Arts Leadership Initiative

#### PROTOCOL FOR ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS WITH ELG/ALI PARTICIPANTS

1. What is your definition of leadership?
2. What behaviors or qualities characterize leadership?
3. Have your ideas about the above changed since your participation in the ELG?
4. How would you rate yourself in terms of the behaviors or characteristics you outlined in question number 2:  
—before participating in the ELG?  
—after participating in the ELG?
5. What, if any, changes did you implement in your own work process or style as a result of participating in the ELG?
6. In what ways, if any, did these changes affect the organization you lead?
7. What, if any, changes did you implement in your organization as a result of participating in the ALI?
8. What, if any, results have you seen from implementing these changes?
9. What was your problem that you presented for the group's brainstorming?
10. Have you made efforts to elicit leadership from other board or staff within the organization? If so, what steps have you taken and what have the results been?
11. What's the most important thing you learned from another organizational leader during the process?
12. What's the most important thing you learned from the facilitator of the process?
13. What's the most important thing you learned from your study grant?
14. Which of your intended outcomes did you achieve?
15. Were there any unintended outcomes that you achieved?
16. Did the process impact any other area(s) of your life?
17. If you wanted to improve on this program, what would you do?

## ■ Implementing an Arts Leadership Program

Recommendations from Andrew Campbell,  
Director of Organizational Development,  
Los Angeles County Arts Commission

If you were encouraged by the results you read about in this study and were wondering how you might go about implementing a similar program, here are some thoughts to consider.

### RESEARCH

In launching the Arts Leadership Initiative, we spent considerable time in the year 2000 conducting a survey of arts and nonprofit leadership programs. For any organization looking to provide this service to the field, I would recommend undertaking a similar survey. Much no doubt has changed since our examination in 2000.

During the research phase, we reviewed a great deal of information on the Internet about various leadership development or executive training programs. We also met or spoke by phone with several program managers who are running successful programs. As we were honing in on the Fieldstone Foundation's Executive Learning Group model, I was even invited to sit in on a couple of day-long sessions at the Fieldstone Foundation offices to get a sense of how the program worked first-hand. Among the other programs we reviewed were Coro Southern California's Leadership Program, the Eureka Fellowship program (which served as a model for the study trip component of the Organizational Development Grant program), W.K. Kellogg Foundation leadership program, and the Whitecap Foundation's Executive Management Academy. Each program contained wonderful aspects and, as a result, we developed a three-pronged approach to the ALI: providing peer interaction, coaching, and problem-solving through the Fieldstone Foundation's Executive Learning Group model; an "independent study" approach similar to the Eureka Fellowship model; and skill-building through scholarship support to attend seminars at the Center for Nonprofit Management.

### EVALUATION

At the end of each year of the program, we knew we had accomplished something significant in the professional (and sometimes personal) lives of the people participating in the program. However, what that something was, was not always easy to quantify.

Although we brought on a team of evaluators from the outset, we struggled to establish clear goals and to define measurable outcomes for the participants' organizations. As often with new programs, we built the evaluation methodology while implementing it. The open-ended approach we took allowed the program the flexibility to let it define itself and come to be what it has become.

Terry Wolverton has provided some recommendations in the report, as well as samples of the evaluation instruments she utilized (see online version at [www.lacountyarts.org](http://www.lacountyarts.org)), that may be helpful to you as you begin a similar program.

### FACILITATOR

At the time we were planning the Arts Leadership Initiative, the Fieldstone Foundation had become interested to share its Executive Learning Group model with other foundations and funders. The Fieldstone Foundation generously allowed us free use of the program with one stipulation: that they would approve the facilitator. This was more critical than I realized at the time. They chose Dan McQuaid, a seasoned facilitator of the Fieldstone Foundation's ELGs. The facilitator of the ELG program must fulfill many roles—teacher, leader, sage, coach, and more often than not—therapist. It's not for nothing that Dan spent many years as a therapist, as well as the founder of a nonprofit that he ran for twenty years. His credibility as "one who has walked in their shoes" adds a significant dimension when dealing with the executives who make up the learning group.

### STAFF TIME

Be prepared to spend a lot of staff time on this program. As we begin our fourth year of the program, many systems are in place to make the process more time-efficient, but nevertheless there are logistics and facility arrangements that must be made, binders that must be prepared, evaluations to complete, consultants to monitor and, particularly in regards to the Organizational Development Grant, paperwork. For each of the ten participating leaders, an individual study plan must be created.

I also sit in on all of the ELG sessions. This is six full days, but the time invested is particularly valuable in what I am able to learn of the people and organizations that are at the table. The knowledge I gain is put to use in developing future programs and/or assisting the participants in developing appropriate individualized learning opportunities. It also serves to bring together, in a more intimate way, the Arts Commission and the organizations it is there to serve.

### Inquiries

For more information about the program, the evaluation, or ideas for implementation, please contact me at [acampbell@bos.co.la.ca.us](mailto:acampbell@bos.co.la.ca.us) or 213/974-1343.



[www.lacountyarts.org](http://www.lacountyarts.org)



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*The National Endowment  
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Initiative Program and to  
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