Shared Leadership

Civic
Organization
Conflict
Visioning
Networking
Mobilizing
Colloboration
Evaluation
Community
Planning
Decision Making
Organizational Practices
Teamwork
Controversey
Information Exchange
Agenda
Trust
Groups
Goals
Partnerships
Faciliation

- Agree and Strongly Agree
- Disagree and Strongly Disagree

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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leadership development represents a key aspect of community and organizational building processes. Leadership is necessary to stimulate people to think critically and to identify problems and new solutions to achieve current and future goals. However, the way we view and approach leadership development is not always consistent with the nature of our changing world. Communities and organizations are faced with challenges of a global magnitude requiring more creative visioning for community building and sustainability. Devolution and reduction in financial resources to local communities necessitate maximizing the use of existing assets. Community and organizational change can not be adequately dealt with by any one individual, public agency, organization or private firm (Miller et al. 1990). Organizational and community decisions and actions is not about individual behavior, but rather an outcome based on structural characteristics and ongoing relations among those involved (Ryan 1994). *The pressures to innovate and find better ways of doing things to improve the quality of life communities experience point to the need to redefine and expand traditional ways of problem solving.* If we believe that communities and organizations are open, dynamic systems that are constantly exposed to and reacting to change, then we need approaches to leadership development that will facilitate this changing environment. It is new information that keeps these systems off balance, challenges the status quo, and offers opportunities for growth (Wheatley, 1999).

Despite advances in leadership literatures over the last decades, leadership development programs continue to invoke the narrow lens of old models. Many of these program models strive for equilibrium and stability. Others, while rejecting individualistic assumptions, are void of tools that help move leadership forward. As a result, leadership development focuses on control strategies rather than processes that expect and integrate change (Wheatley, 1999). What is needed is an approach to leadership that "link not rank" people in the interaction process (Van Nostrand, 1993: xviii). In other words, leadership does not reside in the position of a specialized individual but in the connectedness among multiple individuals who are linked within communities, in organizations and across networks. Spears argues that clinging to old models keeps power in the hands of a few and limits civic engagement (Spears 1998). Kotter (1990) contends that old models produce consistency and order to manage control—rather than motivation and movement to adapt and embrace change. What is needed are new models of leadership development that address these complex issues and create a new organization climate and culture. In a world of relationships, it is the positive connecting patterns among people and shared information that are sources of creative possibilities. When the information of multiple individuals is linked, and shared openly, the networks and the organization they are part of build self –knowledge and the capacity to respond quickly and appropriately to change. Leadership development programs that focus on working relationships to cooperatively seek new information and work to solve complex problems are more likely to have a shared vision and collaborative goals towards a better future (Miller, et al. 1990).

A NEW PARADIGM: SHARED LEADERSHIP

Bennis (1989:12) describes the modern world as being one where:

> ...environment encroachments and turbulence,…the fragmentation of constituencies…multiple advocacy, win-lose adversarial conflicts between internal and external forces…has led to a situation where our leaders are 'keeping their heads below the grass.'

Perhaps the most influential thinker and writer on leadership, Burns (1978) calls for what he says is the most potent form of leadership, transforming leadership. He contends that the new form for

leadership is "a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents…Moral leadership emerges from, and always returns to, the fundamental wants and needs, aspirations and values of the followers" (Burns 1978:464). The meaning behind Burn's statement is that organizations [and communities] must place a higher degree of importance on the roles people assume than on the positions they hold. Transformational leadership focuses on higher order, more intrinsic, and ultimately moral motives and needs. The process of leadership must be linked to informal as well as formal networks—whereby ties among diverse groups are linked to motivate people to act (Allen 1995, Kotter 1990). Hence, leadership becomes an emergent process—one that is dynamic, inclusive, interactive and transforming. It is also contextually grounded with specific identifiable practices that give meaning to everyday life. Understanding leadership from this perspective embodies interpersonal connections and mutual obligations for problem solving.

We define this perspective as **Shared Leadership**—*a strategy for change that is inclusive of those committed to working collectively for the common good through understanding of the values and vision for a better community.* Thus, shared leadership is responsive to problems of the public commons. It requires social action in search of solutions for the common good (Bryson and Crosby 1992). This alternative view sees leadership as interactive, dynamic and empowering whereby participants in an active and inclusive process collectively question, challenge and problem-solve about the social, political and cultural nature of organizations and communities.

The idea of shared leadership moves away from an individualistic paradigm to one that is about achieving a shared vision and mission and less about titles and positions. The issue is that **leader development** is based on egotistic assumptions about the individual, while **leadership** development is a shared group process based on assumptions of

the collective (see Ryan 1994). Hence, shared leadership development is about practicing group relationship building skills in organizations and communities in order that the entire group has the capacity to construct good solutions to shared problems.

> We define **shared leadership** as *the co-creation of an environment by a group of individuals, organizations, and communities with the intent to accomplish a common vision and collaborative goals.*

Shared leadership occurs as the networks that group members have converge and focus collective energies, skills, and knowledge on an issue, goal or problem. Through the iterative connections among people, organizations and communities, they co-create an environment that is conducive to strategic visioning, building trust and open dialogue. For these interactions to solve problems there must be a sense of working towards co-creating the environment—whereby the organization and community climate and culture are transformed.

SHARED LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

Co-creating communities

A co-creating framework uses webs of influence rather than chains of command to mobilize resources and is inclusive of those traditionally left out of the process. Wheatley (1999) suggests that the more freedom individuals have in self-organizing, the more order will occur if everyone has a clear sense of identity in the organization/community. Everyone feels like a partner in the system.

In a community or organization, it is collaborative relationships that make shared leadership work. These are not relationships of like organizations or people agreeing with each because they share identical perspectives. Rather, it is the respectful interactions of differing viewpoints and understandings. *In collaborations people exchange their differences, affirm their*

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commonalities, and negotiate how they are going to achieve their common vision. People come to the table of leadership as equals—sharing resources and power. The expression of a vision or direction has its genesis in the needs of the community and comes from the new ideas discovered through shared meaning and collective ownership. Shared leadership serves as the social glue for the community building process. It moves social capital forward and builds a civic structure that gives communities capacity to solve their problems.

Thus, shared leadership acts in the following ways:

- individuals come together to set clear intent for the group
- individuals negotiate how they are going to work together to accomplish that clear intent
- individuals build self -knowledge about each other, their organization, the community, and the environment by deliberate listening, observing, and learning
- individuals are able to co-create their environment because of the web of relationships each bring to the organization
- new connections are continuously built by the group

The outcomes of shared leadership

The goal of any leadership development program is to help individuals learn how to work with their community or organization to undertake a set of goals that achieve a vision or mission. The expression of a vision or direction has its genesis in the needs of the community. The vision comes from the new ideas discovered through shared meaning and collective ownership and gives direction to the community building process. For communities the vision usually centers on attributes of self-defined quality of life; for organizations the clear intent is set forth in the group mission statement.

Central to the concept of shared leadership is the question: leadership for what? In a shared leadership model, leadership skills are not embedded in the individual but in group relations which seek to accomplish community or organizational goals. The unique vision, mission, and goals of each group hold the answer to the question. Once the shared goals and expectations of the group are clear, then members can integrate technical skills with the construction and expansion of social relationships to increase organizational and community capacities.

Organization's capacity for healthy relationships:

1. How do people listen and speak to each other?
2. How do they work with diverse members?
3. Do people have free access to one another?
4. Are people trusted with open information?
5. Are organizational values evident? Or do people give lip service and do something else?
6. Is collaboration honored?
7. Can people speak truthful to each other?

Thus, the measurement of effective shared leadership is how well the group or community moves toward their vision. Wheatley (1999) suggests seven questions for benchmarking progress toward an effective organization. These questions find their parallel in civic structure theory (Morton 2001) whose elements include interactions among multiple groups, communication (the free exchange of information) and structural pluralism (opportunities for multiple perspectives to be expressed).

SKILLS AND PRACTICES OF SHARED LEADERSHIP

Individuals who undertake to share leadership with others do the following:

1. Articulate consistent, clear messages that align with the shared mission/vision which others can use to guide their behaviors

2. Seek the big picture in the midst of details and chaos, searching for the larger patterns

3. Recognize process structures and kinds of connections/relationships

4. Accept and use disequilibrium and change as sources of creativity and energy. "The search for organizational equilibrium is a sure path to organizational death" (Wheatley, 1999:76).

5. Embrace new forces and new information that continually change the situation and how others respond

6. Practice the principle of subsidiary-allocating authority for decision making to those closest to the decision (Terry, 1995)

7. Develop strategies to "work with the forces of change" (Wheatley 1999:137) rather than resist them

8. Know that power is relational, not positional and thus cultivate connections among others. "...power in organizations is the capacity generated by relationships" (Wheatley 1999:39).

9. Spend time listening and observing relationships and interactions among people, organizations, and their environment in order to see and understand the connecting patterns

10. Expect that the organizational/community system and environment will continually influence each other in spiraling feedback loops thus co-creating each other

11. Use planning strategies that have room for "just in time" reflective responses to the unexpected (which always happens)

    *This means practice strategic thinking and strategic visioning not strategic planning.

    *Just-in-time strategies include being prepared for change/expecting change and engaging for the moment while visioning for the future.

12. Respect others' uniqueness

13. Learn to recognize critical conditions for change (vs. focus on critical mass)

14. Allow for flexibility in leadership roles, recognizing that people and roles are not fixed entities, but are dynamic-changing as they gather new information, interconnect with others, and reinterpret their environment

15. Understand that information is dynamic and needs to freely circulate since it is the "nourishment" (Wheatley 1999:101) by which workers/citizens are able to intelligently self-organize their work.

Allen, Beverlyn Lundy, Lois Wright Morton, and Tianyu Li. 2003. Shared Leadership. Rural Development Initiative RDI-125, Iowa State University, College of Agriculture.

THE PRACTICE OF SHARED LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC AGENCIES AND VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

Shared leadership skills are necessary to public agencies and private voluntary organizations if they are to effectively serve their communities and accomplish specific organizational goals. However, many groups do not know whether their volunteers or employees have these skills. Without this knowledge, it is difficult to identify skill development strategies and training that could lead to stronger shared leadership skills and increased capacity to solve group problems.

Research study

In 2002 an assessment instrument was developed (see Appendix A) and pilot tested to benchmark and track shared leadership skills within groups. Then, 578 groups and agencies were selected from within the 114 communities randomly sampled from Iowa communities by the Iowa State University Rural Development Initiative (RDI) in 1994 and 1997. These 114 communities were derived from a 1994 random selection of one rural community (pop. 500-10,000 and not contiguous to metropolitan center) from each of Iowa's 99 counties and a 1997 random selection of 11 cities from Iowa's 22 small cities (pop. 10,000 to 50,000), and four of Iowa's eight metropolitan cities with populations over 50,000 (see Besser, et al. 1998).

In this study of shared leadership seven types of public agencies and non-profit organizations were purposively identified to be surveyed. These types were selected to represent community groups that are frequently found in small and medium sized communities and included: fire and rescue services, the United Way, churches, Community Empowerment Boards, Chambers of Commerce, Soil and Water Conservation District Office, and Office of Human Services. Several of the 114 communities did not have all types of groups (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Community Empowerment Board or United Way). Some towns did not have Chamber of Commerce; if they had an economic

development committee the chairperson was surveyed. Community Empowerment Boards are regional and not found in every community. Simple random sampling procedures were applied when more than one office was present in the town for one type of organization, for example, fire and rescue services and churches. Surveys were addressed to the positional leader of the group (e.g. executive director, pastor, commissioner chairperson, or program coordinator). A total of 578 groups were surveyed consisting of 111 fire and rescue services, 34 United Ways, 111 churches, 61 Community Empowerment Boards, 66 Chambers of Commerce or economic development committees, 98 Soil and Water Conservation District offices, and 97 Offices of Human Services.

The Dillman (2000) three phase mail survey method was used. A cover letter and 4 page questionnaire consisting of 31 closed end questions were sent in May, 2002. Two weeks after the initial mailing, postcards were sent to everyone thanking those who had already returned their questionnaires and asking participation from those who hadn't. Two weeks after the postcards, replacement questionnaires were sent to those who had not yet returned original questionnaires. Altogether, 320 of the 578 questionnaires sent out were completed and returned, yielding a return rate of 55 percent.

Benchmarking shared leadership practices

Results from this survey offer benchmarks for understanding the extent to which shared leadership practices are occurring in some Iowa groups and organizations. Our findings are clustered into five conceptual areas: 1) mission, goals, planning, and evaluation 2) communication flows, 3) trust relationships, 4) decision making, and 5) community networks.

Mission, goals, planning and evaluation

Positional leaders who were surveyed (See B1 in Appendix B) overwhelmingly reported that their group have a shared, clearly understood mission (74.9 percent) and agreement on goals and

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objectives (69.4 percent) (Figure 1). Over 50 percent said they have well developed organizational plans that are followed; conversely almost 14 percent said they do not have well-developed plans.
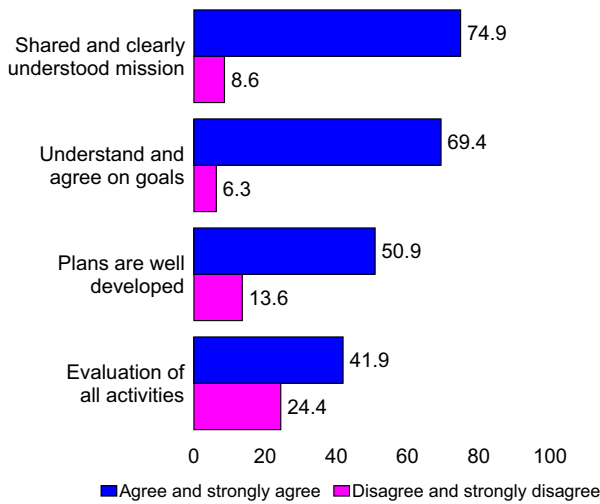

Figure 1. Missions and Goals*

Almost 42 percent of the leaders reported that they have built evaluation into most of their activities. A little over 24 percent say they do not have evaluation follow-up for their activities.

Communication flows

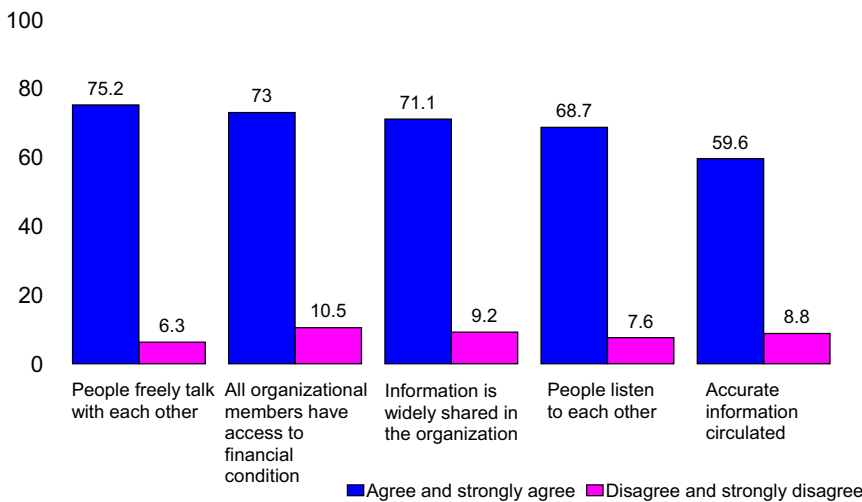Five items represent the patterns of communication which exist in the surveyed organizations (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Communication Flows*

People freely talk with each other regardless of organizational positions and information is widely shared across the organization offer a measure of transparency of the communication network. Over 70 percent of the group position leaders think that information in their organization is widely shared. Further, sensitive information such everyone in the organization having access to the group's financial condition is generally shared (73 percent). About 60 percent say the quality of information that circulates among group members is usually accurate. Lastly, communication cannot be successful unless there is a listener. Leaders, in general, think that people in their group listen to each other (68.7 percent).

Trust relationships

Trust relations among individuals are essential for effective communication and organizational capacity to solve group issues. Four questions represented trust relational practices: members trust each other, differences of opinion among members are encouraged and respected, conflict keeps us from doing anything, and people have free access to each other (Figure 3). According to group leaders, trust relations are strong in their organization. People have free access to one another (86.4 percent); members trust each other (66.3 percent), and conflict is not a barrier to accomplishing the group's goals (74.6 percent). Further 67.7 percent report that differences of opinion among members are encouraged or respected.
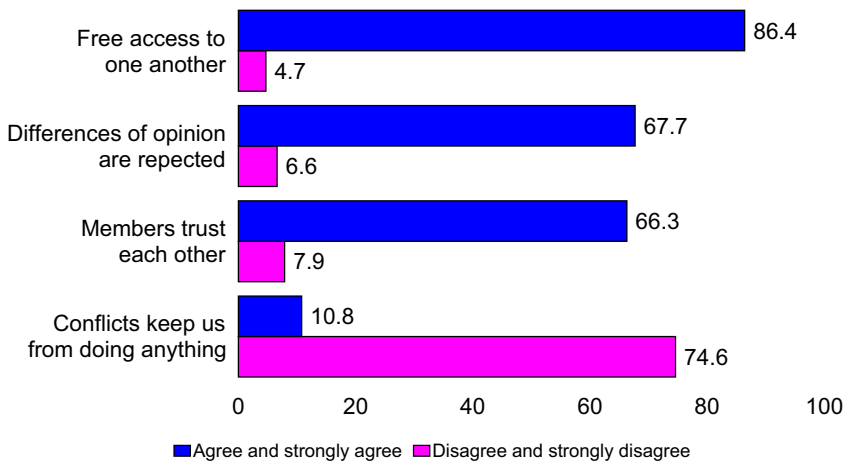
Figure 3. Trust Relationships*

Decision making

Decision making practices reflect the kind of leadership within a group and the level of member involvement in guiding the direction of the group. Leaders were likely to report that members are highly involved in decision making (67.4 percent) (Figure 4). Further, a little more than half (57.8 percent) say that groups at every level are involved in decision making. This suggests that decisions are likely to be shared among group members. Lastly 69.1 percent of the surveyed leaders say that their groups' leadership is effective and shared when appropriate.
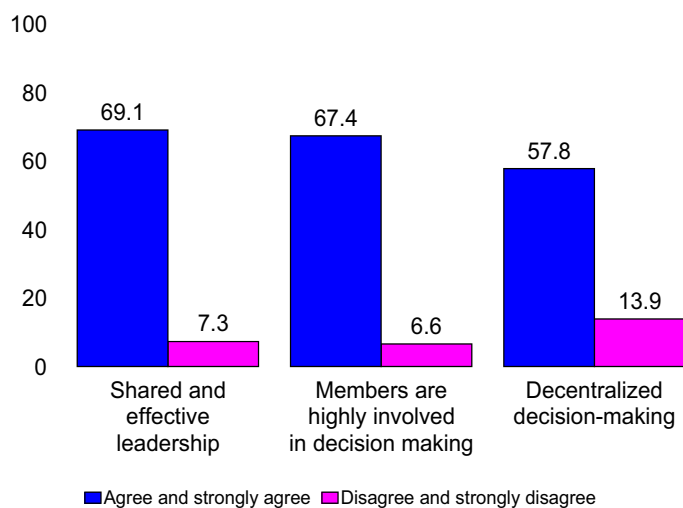

Figure 4. Decision making*

Community networks

Community relationships outside the group bring in new information and resources that build the capacity of the group to innovate. Almost 68 percent of the leaders report strong networks to the greater community through collaboration; 7.9 percent say that collaboration with other organizations does not occur frequently (Figure 5). Forty-six percent report that group information is widely shared across their community; 13.2 percent report that information is not widely shared.

Shared leadership training needs

Many groups and organizations have clear missions and goals, strong trust relations, communicate well within the group and across their community, and practice shared leadership (see Appendix C). Figure 6 offers a summary of paid and volunteer staff training needs as reported by the group director or chairperson. More than one-third of surveyed positional leaders perceive that paid and volunteer staff need leadership skills and greater competency in mobilizing resources such as people, dollars, and time. Other high priority skill training needs for paid staff are technology and information systems (33.2 percent), building teamwork within the organization (32.3 percent), visioning the

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future of the organization (29. 7 percent), and evaluating programs (29.7 percent). More than a quarter of the leaders think that paid staff need skills in managing conflict (28.8 percent), building partnerships within the community (27.2 percent) and greater communication and information exchange capacity (25.3 percent). Other paid staff skills that were identified as training needs are evaluation of group processes (18.7 percent), group facilitation skills (18.4 percent), decision making processes (15.5 percent) and meeting skills (12.7 percent.).
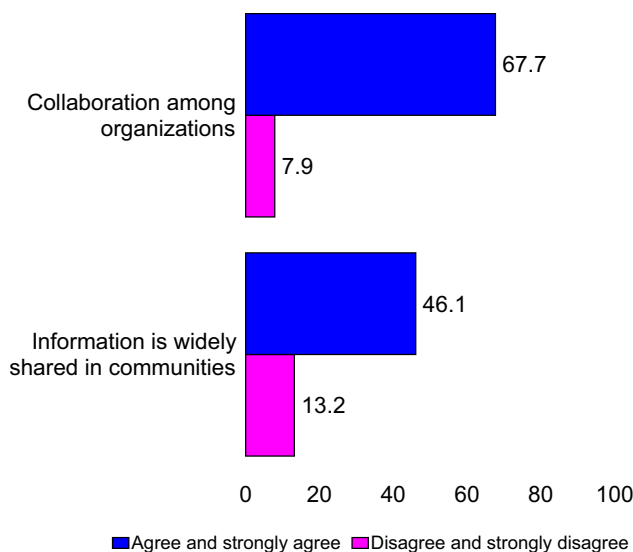

Figure 5. Community Networks*

Overall, respondents were more likely to identify volunteer training needs as greater than paid staff training needs. This is not surprising since paid staff are usually hired for specific skills. Volunteers bring energy and passion for the mission but not necessarily specific skills needed to accomplish all facets of the group mission. A large number of positional leaders perceived that their volunteer staff need skills in visioning (38 percent), building teamwork (34.5 percent), building partnerships within the community (34.2 percent) and communication and information exchange (28.5 percent). Other skills that leaders thought their volunteers needed were evaluation of programs (29.4 percent), managing conflict (25.9 percent), decision making (23.7 percent), and skills in technology and information systems (24.1 percent). Fewer leaders viewed group facilitation (20.9

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percent), meeting skills (18.4 percent) and evaluation of group process (19.3 percent) as needed skills for their volunteers.

CONCLUSION

This assessment of group and organizational shared leadership offers a snapshot of how a number of public agencies and private organizations see their current leadership practices. Much more research is needed to fully understand the shared leadership practices and the relationships among these

practices, effective groups, and capacities to solve group and community problems. However, our findings do provide guidance to Extension leadership programs that target community agencies and organizations.

Why does shared leadership work?

We live in a participating universe, we each are in relationships with information, people, events, ideas and life (Wheatley, 1999). People want to participate in the process of creating and building something meaningful. Relationships matter to people, it is the
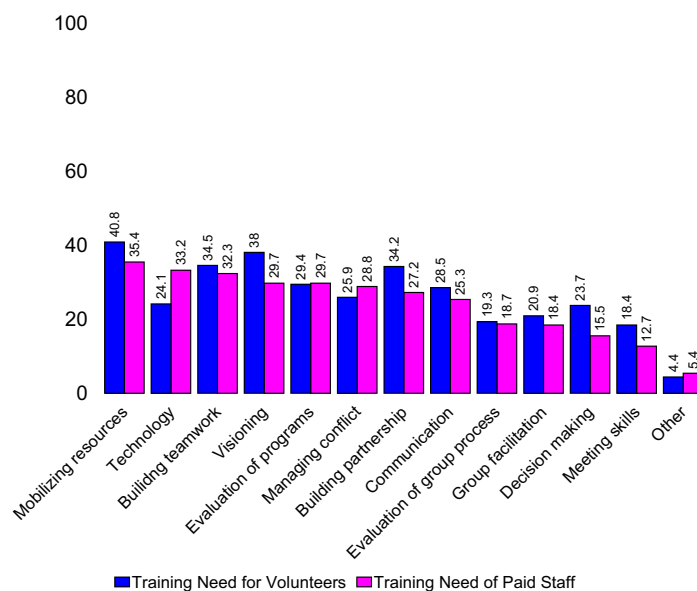

Figure 6. Training Needs: Paid Staff vs. Volunteer Staff*

connections they have with each other that motivate and give meaning to life. Participation engenders ownership, commitment and "emotional investment."

Under the traditional model of leadership, it is the leader's responsibility to make decisions and take responsibility for successes and failures. All knowledge and information is expected to find its way to the leader to make all knowing, wise decisions. In this complex world, this expectation sets the organization and the designated leader up for failure. In the shared leadership model information is freely and extensively shared, and people are trusted to make sense of the information because they know their jobs and the organizational purpose (Wheatley, 1999). It is not the leader's responsibility to deal with piecemeal problems and tasks but everyone's responsibility to take the information from the system that is needed. They can fix the problem that they have knowledge and capacity to deal with or bring it back to a larger group for solutions. Under a shared leadership framework, it is not the leaders' responsibility to protect information along restricted pathways, because information is open and freely circulating. This transparency also is a deterrent to gossip and rumor, as people will make up information if they don't have it.

*Figures do not add to 100%; neutral responses are not included.

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2002 Leadership Survey

Please circle the number that best represents your opinion of <u>your</u> organization on the following statements.

Organizational Practices

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. We have a shared and clearly understood mission...	1	2	3	4	5
2. Members understand and agree on goals and objectives	1	2	3	4	5
3. People freely talk with each other regardless of organizational positions	1	2	3	4	5
4. People listen to each other	1	2	3	4	5
5. People have free access to one another...................	1	2	3	4	5
6. Information is widely shared across the organization	1	2	3	4	5
7. Information is widely shared across the community ..	1	2	3	4	5
8. All organizational members/employees have access to the group's financial condition...................	1	2	3	4	5
9. Collaboration with other organizations occurs frequently	1	2	3	4	5
10. Differences of opinion among members are encouraged and respected	1	2	3	4	5
11. Members are highly involved in decision making	1	2	3	4	5
12. Conflict keeps us from doing anything	1	2	3	4	5
13. Information that circulates among members is usually accurate	1	2	3	4	5
14. Members trust each other...	1	2	3	4	5
15. Groups at every level are involved in decision making	1	2	3	4	5
16. Organization plans are well developed and followed	1	2	3	4	5
17. We have built evaluation into most of our activities...	1	2	3	4	5
18. Leadership is effective and shared when appropriate...	1	2	3	4	5

Leadership Training Needs

19. Does your organization have these **paid staff leadership positions**? (Circle as many as apply.)

    a. Director/Pastor

    b. Associate Director/Associate Pastor

    c. Program Coordinator

    d. Other positions (specify):

    e.

    f.

20. Does your organization have these **volunteer leadership positions**? (Circle as many as apply.)

    a. Director/Program Coordinator

    b. Board of Directors

    c. Chair of the Board

    d. Committee chairs (how many?)

    e. Other volunteer leader positions (specify):

    f.

    g.

21. Below is a list of leadership skills and competency areas. Please circle those you think your organization's **paid staff** need.

    a. communication and information exchange

    b. technology and information systems

    c. managing conflict and controversy

    d. building teamwork within the organization

    e. building partnerships within the community

    f. group facilitation skills

    g. basic meeting skills (convening meetings, organizing group activities, setting agendas)

    h. decision making processes

    i. evaluation of programs

    j. evaluation of group processes

    k. visioning

    l. mobilizing resources (people, dollars, time, etc.)

    m. other (please specify):

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22. Below is a list of leadership skills and competency areas. Please circle those you think your organization's **volunteer leaders** need.

    a. communication and information

    b. technology and information systems

    c. managing conflict and controversy

    d. building teamwork within the organization

    e. building partnerships within the community

    f. group facilitation skills

    g. basic meeting skills (convening meetings, organizing group activities, setting agendas)

    h. decision making processes

    i. evaluation of programs

    j. evaluation of group processes

    k. visioning

    l. mobilizing resources (people, dollars, time, etc.)

    m. other (please specify):

Organizational Structure

23. What is your main service area? (**Circle only one**.)

    a.   Health

    b.   Education

    c.   Civic

    d.   Recreation

    e.   Culture and Arts

    f.   Religious

    g.   Environment

    h.   Fire Protection/EMS

    i.   Chamber of Commerce/Economic Development

    j.   Human Services

    k.   Other (specify):

Please turn to next page.

24. How many members are in your organization?

25. How many paid employees does your organization have?

26. How many years has your organization existed?

27. What times and days of the week are best for **paid staff** to attend training?

   Days: Mon.   Tues.   Wed.   Thurs.   Fri.   Sat.   Sun.

   Time: Morning   Afternoon   Evening

28. Please circle the days of the week and the time that are best for **volunteer staff** to attend training.

   Days: Mon.   Tues.   Wed.   Thurs.   Fri.   Sat.   Sun.

   Time: Morning   Afternoon   Evening

29. What is your position in the organization?

30. How long have you been in this position?   years

31. Your gender (please circle):   Male   Female

Other comments you'd like to make:

Please return to:
Beverlyn Lundy Allen
303 East Hall, Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011-1070
by May 15, 2002.

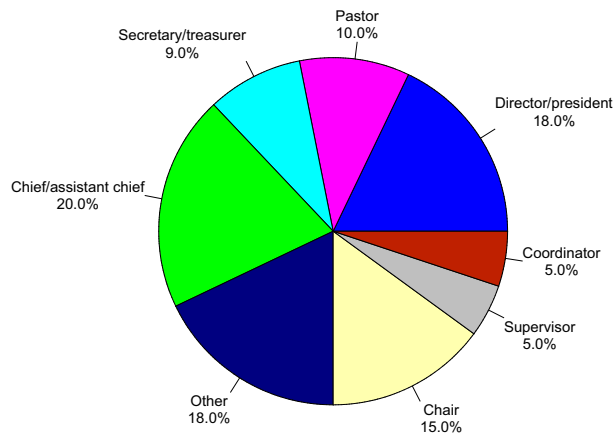**Thank you.**

Appendix B

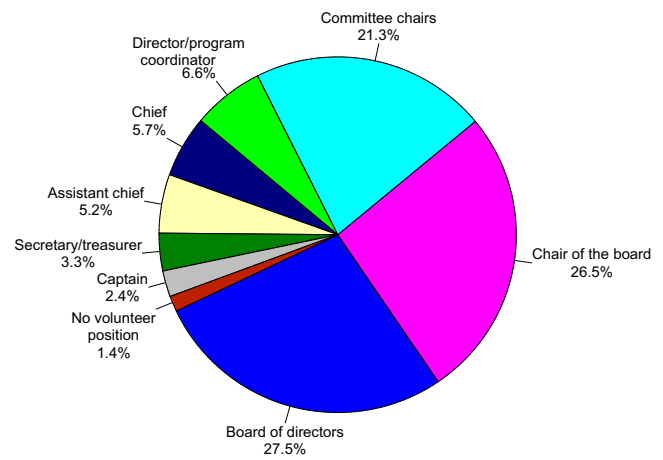

Figure B1. Survey Respondent's Position in Organization

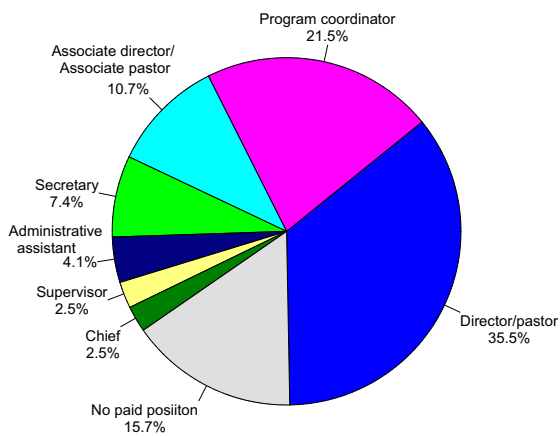Figure B2. Volunteer Staff Leadership Positions in the Organization

Figure B3. Paid Staff Leadership Positions in the Organization

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1 Free access to one another
2 People freely talk with each other
3 Shared and clearly understood mission
4 All organizational members have access to financial condition
5 Information is widely shared in organization
6 Shared and effective leadership
7 Understand and agree on goals
8 People listen to each other
9 Differences of opinion are respected

10 Collaboration among organizations
11 Members are highly involved in decision-making
12 Members trust each other
13 Accurate information circulated
14 Decentralized decision-making
15 Plans are well developed
16 Information is widely shared in communities
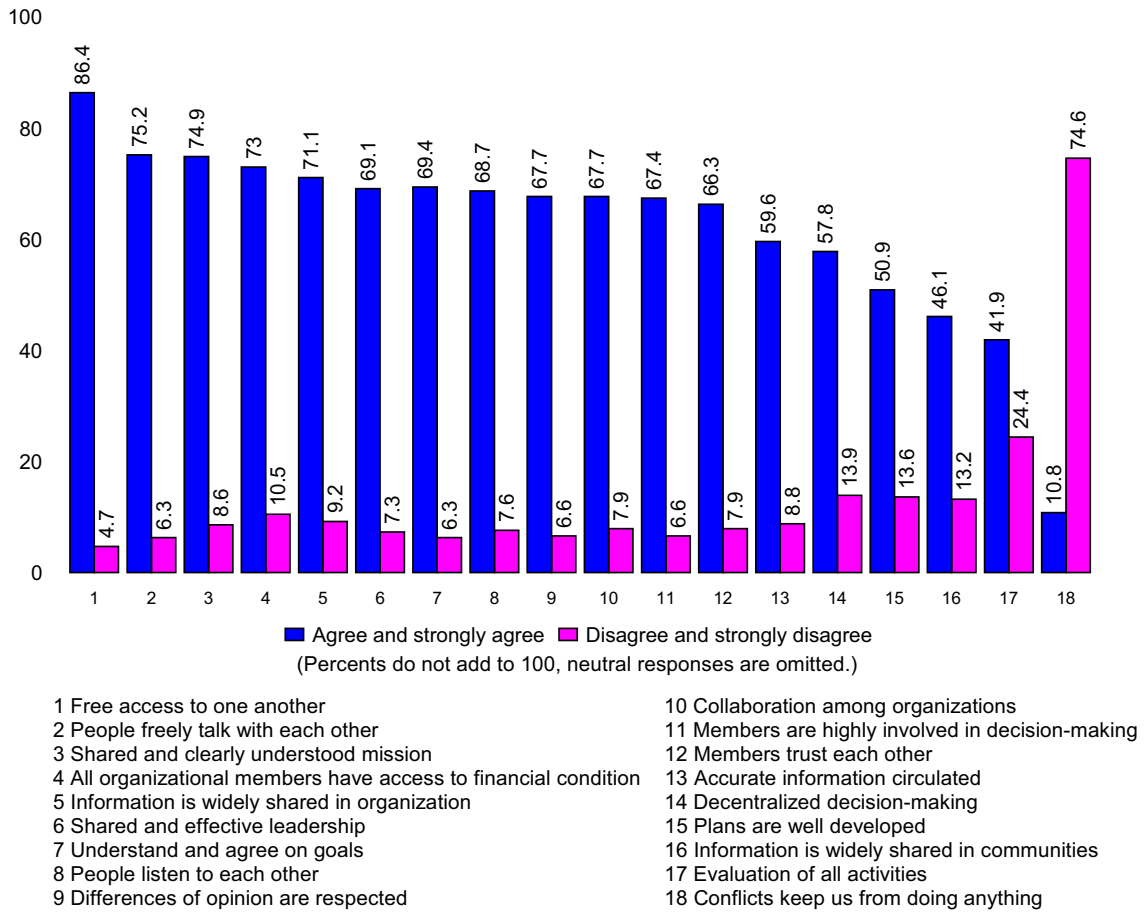17 Evaluation of all activities
18 Conflicts keep us from doing anything

Figure C1. Organizational Practices