

CFLeads COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Community Leadership Networks (CLNs) are action-oriented, cumulative, peer-learning networks for groups of community foundations that want to work together to improve their practice of community leadership.

Philosophy

The CLN model reflects a belief that much of the knowledge base for community leadership lies within and must be created by community foundations. CLNs provide sustained forums for groups of community foundations to work together to build their capacity, explore new approaches, and share promising practices.

Network Make-up

- Teams from 6-12 community foundations
- 2-6 person teams made up of CEO and at least one board member
- Organized around a region, issue, community foundation attribute or level of experience with community leadership

Network Elements

- 3 2-day institutes held in a retreat setting
- 12-14 month timeframe
- Content customized to the interests and most pressing challenges facing the cohort
- Structured work around a community leadership issue of each foundation's choosing

Institute Format

- Presentations on community leadership practice by community foundations from inside and outside the CLN
- Presentations by outside content experts
- Structured peer advising
- Informal time for networking
- Team action planning time
- Regular team action plan updates

Framework for Community Leadership

The basis of the CLN is the *Framework of Community Leadership by a Community Foundation*. The *Framework*, developed by the National Task Force on Community Leadership, a group of community foundations and other philanthropic leaders convened by the Council on Foundations' Community Leadership Team and CFLeads, provides a definition of community leadership by a community foundation and lays out a number of building blocks that describe the key elements that are in place for a community foundation to fully realize its community leadership potential. The *Framework* guides the content of the CLNs.

What Participants Say about the CLN

- 92% of participant groups from the pilot CLN say that CLNs are an effective strategy for helping community foundations at different points in their community leadership development to build capacity to practice effective community leadership
- 89% would choose to take place in a CLN *again*. Board participation, peer-learning as well as the exposure to new tools, concrete techniques and best practices were cited as valuable elements of the CLN.
- 91% said that the CLN facilitated progress in a broad number of areas that have the potential to deeply impact their community leadership work.

“I learned of the unbelievable potential community foundations have to make significant impact in the communities they serve.”

“THE best learning experience possible.”

“This has been one of the most powerful experiences I have had during my work with the foundation.”

“I found the sessions to be very beneficial to our foundation and to me personally to strengthen my community leadership skills. I would strongly recommend that each foundation participate in a CLN at some point.”

“This type of peer learning is great in that as the participants change, insights and opportunities also change. Great learning and engagement model for those trying to implement leadership efforts in their communities.”