



LEADING FOR CHANGE

A REPORT ON THE CANADIAN WOMEN'S FOUNDATION
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE PILOT PROGRAM

FEBRUARY 2017





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Note: Although the quotes included in this report come from program participants, they are paired with stock images.

INTRODUCTION

OUR BEGINNINGS

The Canadian Women's Foundation (the Foundation) has been on the frontier of women's economic development for 25 years. As Canada's first and only foundation for women and girls, the organization has directly supported community programs that focus on self-employment, skilled trades and job training as strategic responses to help women and their families transition out of poverty, and into confidence and leadership.

In 2012, the Foundation partnered with Francis Xavier University's Coady International Institute (Coady) to launch the **Canadian Women's Foundation Leadership Institute** as a three-year pilot program to build the capacity of emerging and mid-career female leaders working in the non-profit women's sector across the country.

The goal of the Leadership Institute has been to support women leaders working in economic development to strengthen their individual leadership capabilities and take on greater leadership roles within their organizations and communities, with the ultimate and long-term goal of mobilizing positive social and economic transformation for women across Canada.

The third year of the pilot was completed in 2016, and evaluation data from each year have been compiled and analyzed. The following document highlights the activities of the Canadian Women's Foundation Leadership Institute pilot program, as well as its achievements, successes and lessons learned. As well it discusses the exciting opportunities for rolling out the next phase of this innovative, one-of-a-kind women's leadership development program, a program that is poised to make a significant impact in transforming socio-economic condition and lives of girls and women in Canada.

Published by:

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Toronto ON Canada M5H 2L3

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The Canadian Women's Foundation

is Canada's first and only national public foundation dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls through economic and social change.

THE NEED FOR A WOMEN-CENTERED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Poverty rates are shocking among Canadian women. One in seven women currently lives in poverty, with certain groups hit particularly hard. Consider the social groups most affected:

- 37% of First Nations women (living off reserve)
- 23% of Metis and Inuit women (living in the provinces)
- 28% of visible minority women
- 33% of women with disabilities
- 21% of single mothers

A joint 2004 research venture between the Canadian Women's Foundation and the Canadian Women's Community Economic Development Council focused on women and community economic development (CED) in Canada. The report cited several compelling reasons to invest in CED programs focused on women, as a way to enable low-income women to realize their individual and collective potential and to effect positive and long-term changes in their lives and circumstances.

In that same report, those who work with women as CED practitioners – the majority of them women working in the non-profit sector – identified “limited opportunities... to gain further training and to exchange and network with colleagues” as one of their main challenges. Additional studies confirm that women in this sector are not supported to step up fully into their leadership potential so they can effect the greatest change.

There is strong rationale for having a program focused on Canadian women's leadership in the non-profit sector. To start, current leadership within the sector is shifting. As leaders and founders begin to retire or move into new career spaces, there is an identified need to build up capacities of the next generation, readying them to take the sector forward and to steer domestic women's rights movements.

This reality, known as the “leadership gap,” is due in large part to the retirement of baby boomers and is a very real concern and threat to the non-profit sector and women's sector in Canada.

At the same time, the funding environment for women's services has changed dramatically. With decreased government investment, increased competition for funding and donors, and ongoing fundraising challenges, leaders require new and evolving skills to work successfully in an ever-changing and complex environment. Moreover, women's organizations have identified the imperative for women-centered leadership training, particularly in managing change, promoting sustainability, and creating space for innovation. The demographic and social context in Canada has changed significantly and, ultimately, organizations need to increase both their adaptive capacity and their inclusiveness to address this shifting context.

In order to move the greatest number of women out of poverty, ongoing work is required to strengthen the CED sector and organizations that provide services to women living on low incomes. This includes succession planning and building the leadership capacity within women's organizations across the country so that they are poised for continued success and impact.

The Canadian Women's Foundation recognized that a women's leadership institute would have a profound multiplier effect, supporting participating leaders to step fully into their leadership, and to strengthen programming and responses offered to the most disadvantaged women in their communities.

“There is no greater force for change, for peace, for justice and democracy, for inclusive economic growth than a world of empowered women.”

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka,
UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women

PARTNERING WITH COADY INSTITUTE

In alignment with this identified need, and as part of its economic development strategy and overall mission, in 2011 the Canadian Women's Foundation decided to strategically invest in a women's leadership development institute in partnership with a training partner that would be best positioned to design, implement and evaluate a high quality, high impact three-year pilot program.

Following a proposal submission and selection process, the Foundation chose to develop the program with the Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University, based in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Building leadership capacities through its programming since 1959, the Coady International Institute is a world-renowned centre of excellence in community-based development and leadership education.

In recognition of its firm commitment to and strategic focus on advancing women's social, political and economic empowerment, Coady launched the International Centre for Women's Leadership in 2011, a logical home for the Foundation's program. The Centre is a unique focal point for dedicated and quality education, partnership, network building and action-oriented research on women's leadership and empowerment, offering other dedicated programs for women in the global South as well as First Nations, Métis and Inuit women in Canada.

Initial research and needs assessments by both the Canadian Women's Foundation (2008 and 2011) and Coady Institute (2012) involving key stakeholders affirmed a strong interest in a women's leadership program, particularly among emerging leaders.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM DESIGN

With the research and needs assessment work complete, the pilot leadership development initiative was designed to build the leadership capacity of three cohorts of up to 25 emerging and mid-career women leaders working on community economic development (CED) issues in the women's charitable and non-profit sectors across the country.

The one-year program model was developed using an innovative and blended approach to asset-based and women-centered leadership development focused on **three key pillars**:

- Personal leadership skills development
- Organizational development to strengthen and lead effective organizations and
- Community development and policy and advocacy skills to create or contribute to social change

Key elements of the program design include:

- Individual leadership self-assessments, along with the development of applied leadership action plans that participants are required to apply directly within their own organizations over their year of involvement in the Institute
- A nine-day intensive in-class residential learning at Coady at the outset of the Leadership Institute in May/June
- Approximately three days of applied learning and action per month from September to April, which include:
 - Participating in different online distance learning modules each month featuring webinars and other forums including peer-to-peer sharing and learning
 - Completing specific individual and group work assignments
 - Implementing organizational leadership action plans within each woman's organization
 - Working with mentors and coaches
- A final five-day in-class residential learning the following May/June that integrates all the learning elements over the year, facilitates discussion on broader systems change, and helps participants identify their leadership action plan moving forward following graduation

In addition to taking part in the residential learning and distance learning components, participants were expected to demonstrate increased leadership potential within their organizations and apply their learning on the job. They were also required to assess their participation in the Institute and reflect on their learning experience.

As part of the process, each participant developed and managed an organizational capacity-building grant that connected the leadership goals articulated in her learning plan to actual capacity building activities in her workplace. The Canadian Women's Foundation contributed \$1,500 towards this matching grant. The leader's employer was also required to match this contribution. As a result, program participants applied \$3,000 to leadership development work within their organizations.

In summary, this is a unique leadership development program model which integrates several best practice components into its design, including a distinct focus on women-centered leadership, applied learning, access to an organizational capacity matching grant, mentoring, coaching (technical assistance), and a heavy focus on peer-to-peer learning and networking.

THE THEORY OF CHANGE

The program was initially based on a “theory of change” (a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context) that proposed that if emerging and established women leaders in the field of economic development were given an opportunity to enhance their skills and knowledge, they would contribute to more effective practices within the organization, as well as improve services and program delivery to clients and communities.

The immediate outcome was intended as stronger, more self-aware women leaders, with intermediate outcomes focused on stronger women leaders within their jobs, organizations, communities and sector. Ultimately, women leaders would contribute to effective practices and responses within their organizations, resulting in better service delivery to clients and communities.

A more comprehensive theory of change was introduced for the program in early 2014. While the goal at the individual level remained essentially the same, the revised theory of change elaborated on organizational and sectoral level outcomes.*

TARGET CONSTITUENCIES

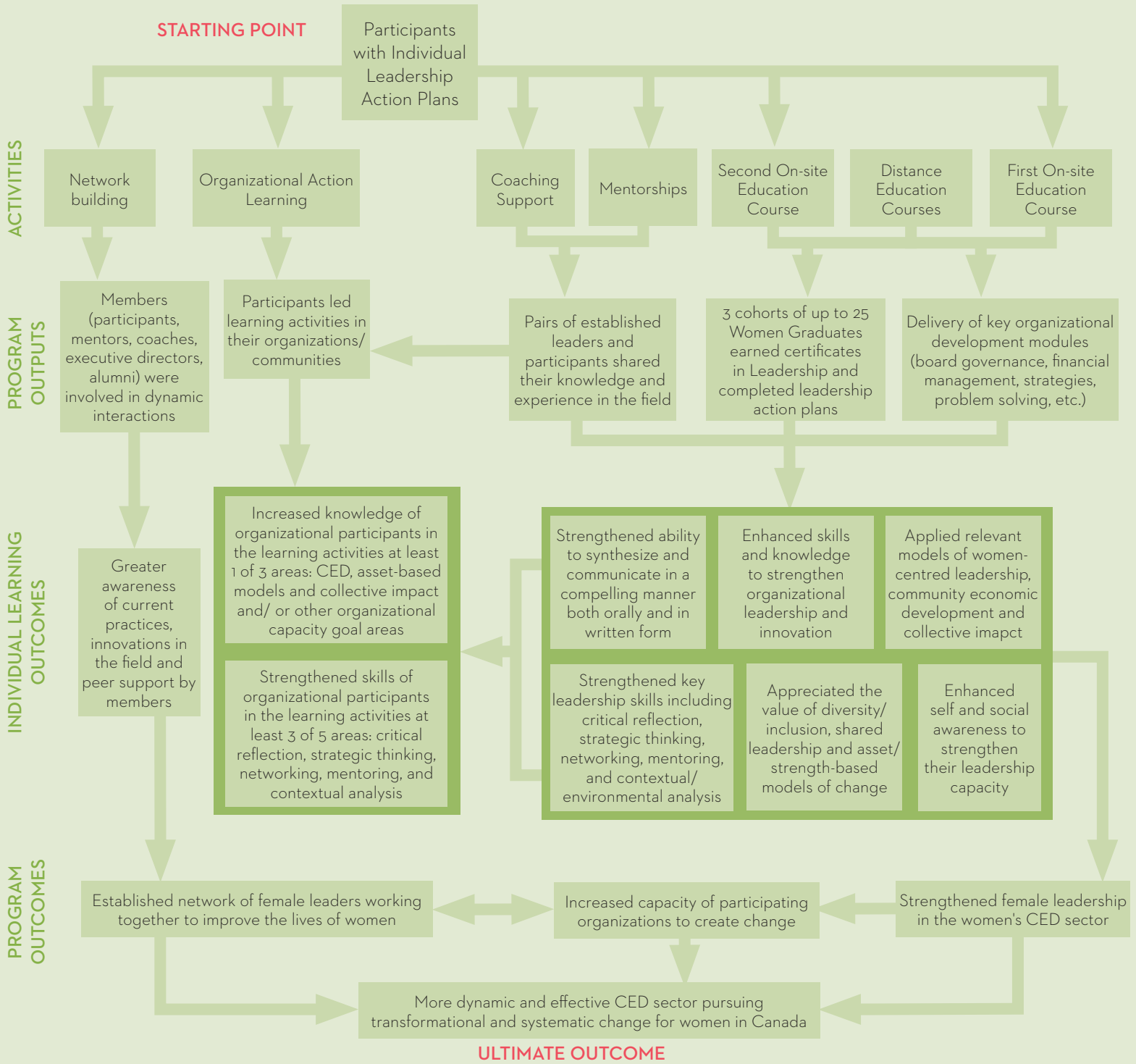
The program was designed for women leaders working in non-profit and charitable organizations, with a focus on women and community economic development. An overarching principle that guided the recruitment and selection process was a deep commitment to reaching out and engaging a diversity of women leaders from many backgrounds, cultures, experiences, organizations and regions of the country.

In the vast majority of cases, the women selected represented organizations with explicit mandates to serve women and girls. In all cases, chosen participants worked in some focused way to support social and economic change for women in their communities.

For the first cohort, a minimum of three to five years of leadership experience was one of the criteria for selection. This was reduced to three years for subsequent cohorts partly to attract a larger number of applicants. While the program was aimed at “emerging” leaders and mid-career managers, a key focus was on women who demonstrated a commitment and desire to step into senior leadership positions.

* See Foundation's Leadership Institute Theory of Change figure on next page.

FOUNDATION'S LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE THEORY OF CHANGE



CORE PROGRAM CURRICULUM

Over the course of the three cohort years, the curriculum evolved to encompass comprehensive and integrated content designed to build individual, organizational and community or sectoral-level leadership capacities. By Cohort 3 (2015-6), the curriculum included the following components:

CURRICULUM

First Residency (9 days):

- Leadership panel
- Group and self care
- Gender, power analysis and intersectionality
- Leadership models and personality
- Mentorship
- Listening, communication, conflict management and emotional intelligence
- Orientation to online and distance learning
- Theory of Change
- Introduction to Collective Impact
- Case study work (CED): conditions across cases that led to systems change
- Organizational change: beginning our strategies with peer feedback
- Asset mapping
- One-to-one meetings with lead facilitator

Online/Webinar Learning:

- Strategic clarity
- Participatory strategic planning
- Collective Impact
- Governance
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Organizational change
- Social enterprise
- Human resources
- Resource development and diversification
- Group work on assertive communication (optional)
- Group work on grant writing (optional)
- Conflict management and resolution
- Women's economic empowerment
- Financial management
- The art of managing online media and effectively promoting your work/cause

Final Residency (5 days):

- Reflections on personal/professional goals
- Reflections on organizational projects
- Presentations on organizational capacity building projects or sector/contextual analysis
- Systems change models, entry points and moderated group work by women in the class
- Action planning
- Asset mapping and partnership mapping
- Telling our stories going forward



“The grant activities provided me with the knowledge and capacity to confidently lead organizational change and to teach others how to achieve effective change... I now have the knowledge, experience, and capacity assist local members and Indigenous women across the province who want to create change within their communities, build their leadership skills and confidence, and have access to a knowledgeable role model with relevant experience.”

Cohort 3 graduate

PILOT PROGRAM OUTCOMES

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

In total, 71 dynamic and well-positioned women from across Canada’s non-profit women’s sector graduated from the Institute’s pilot program.

These alumni, representing the strength of women’s movements across the country, are now well connected to the Foundation’s and Coady’s rich and vast networks of influence. They have gained valuable leadership skills, experiences and competencies while building their own organizations’ capacities, resilience and strength. And many have stepped up and participated in broader leadership roles in their sector and in their own communities as change agents and advocates for women and girls.

In addition, a strong set of more than 50 mentors and coaches engaged in the program also now form part of the Canadian Women’s Foundation Leadership Institute’s network of leaders and champions for change.

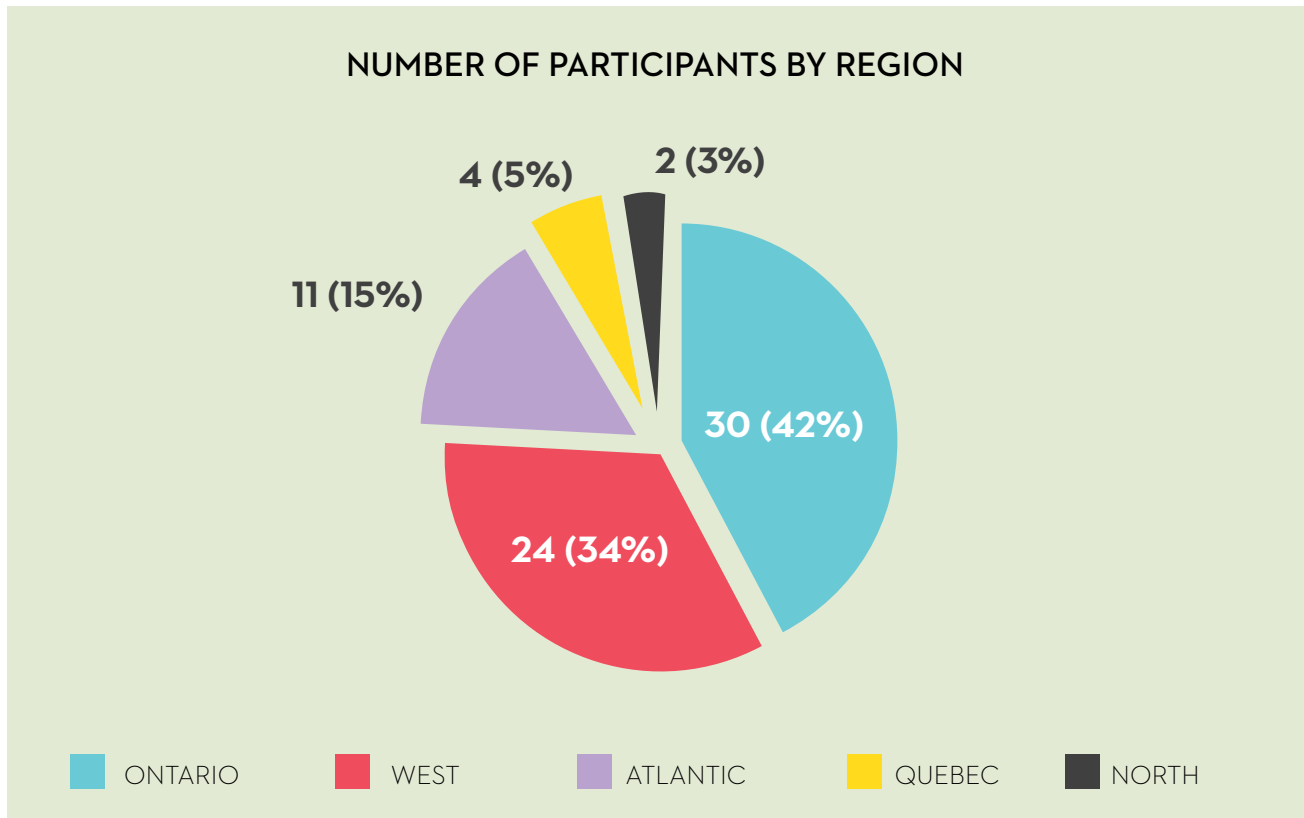
The following charts show the demographic breakdown of our pilot program participants.

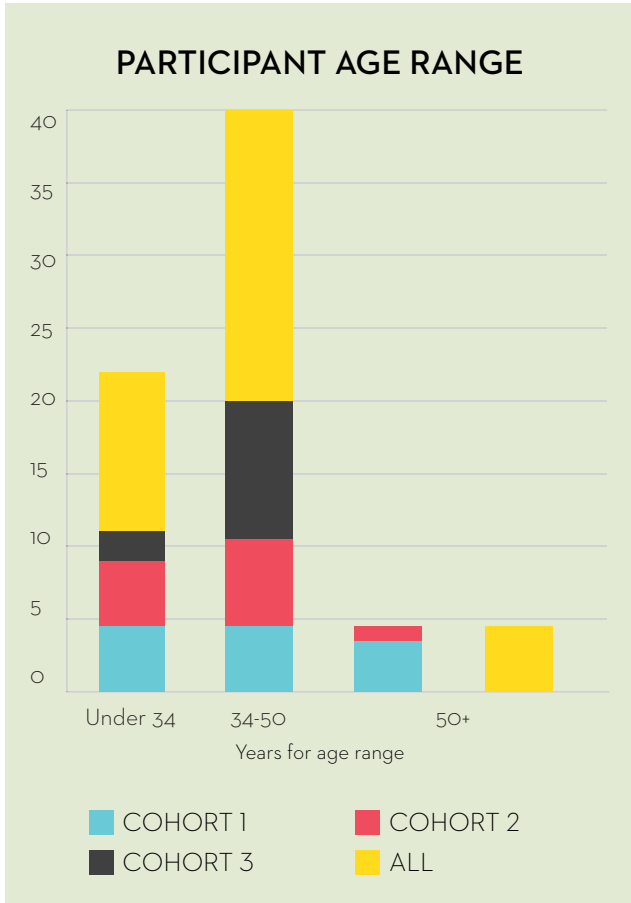
A range of criteria was considered when constructing each cohort. Participants were selected to reflect a rich but balanced geographic representation of the country. Of the 71 graduates, 42.2% have come from Ontario; 34% from Western provinces; 15% from Atlantic provinces; 5% from Québec and 3% from the North.

Nunavut and the Northwest Territories were the two territories missing from the three cohorts.

Based on self-identification, as well as analysis of participant location, 19.7% of participants represented rural areas, with the clear majority in urban spaces including mid-sized or large cities.

The median age for all three cohorts (calculated by the age of participants at the start of their cohort)

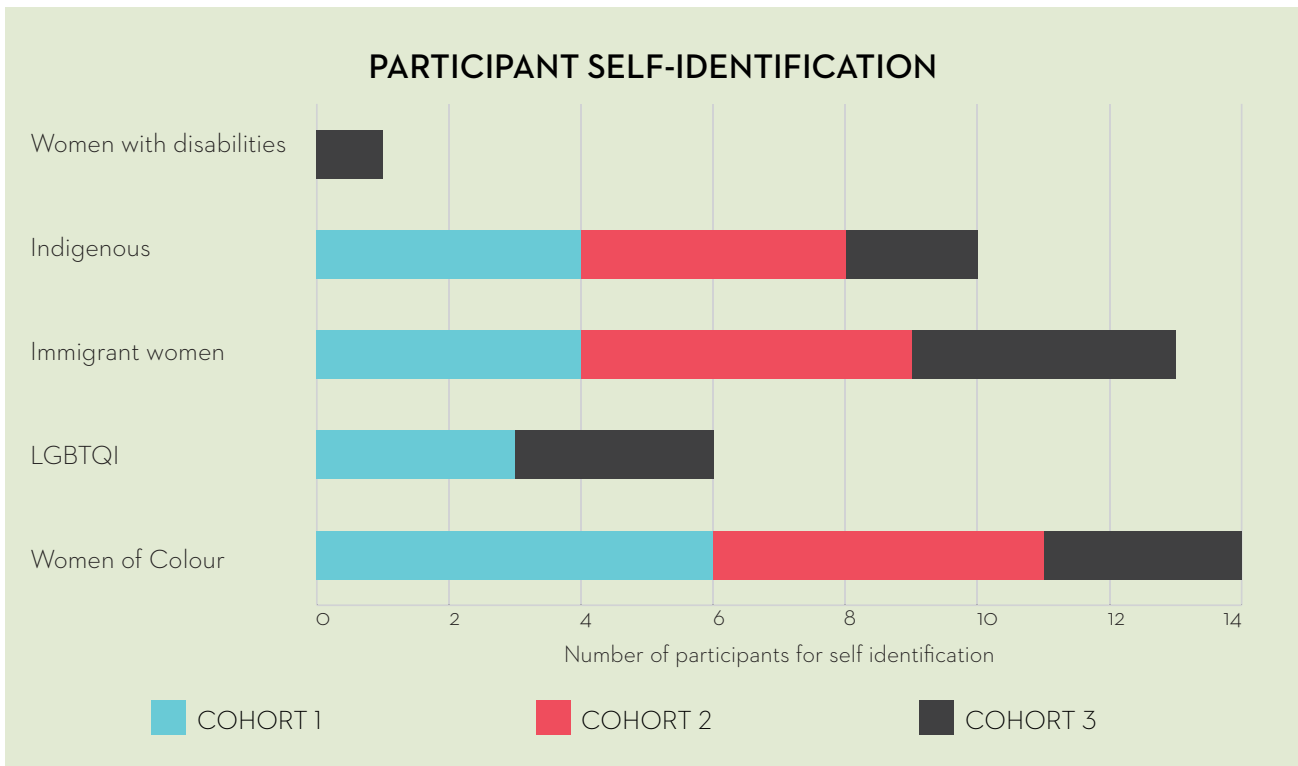




fell between 38 and 41 years of age. The diagram to the left shows the spread of age groups in each cohort, with 31% falling into a “youth” demographic (under 34 years), 56% at mid-career levels (34 to 50 years), and 13% at a more advanced stage of their working life (50 years plus). The third cohort had the least age spread, with all participants in the age range of 30 to 46.

The program selection committee was also guided by criteria which ensured broad cultural diversity and a diversity of backgrounds including indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit), women of colour, immigrant women and women who identify as LGBT or living with a disability.

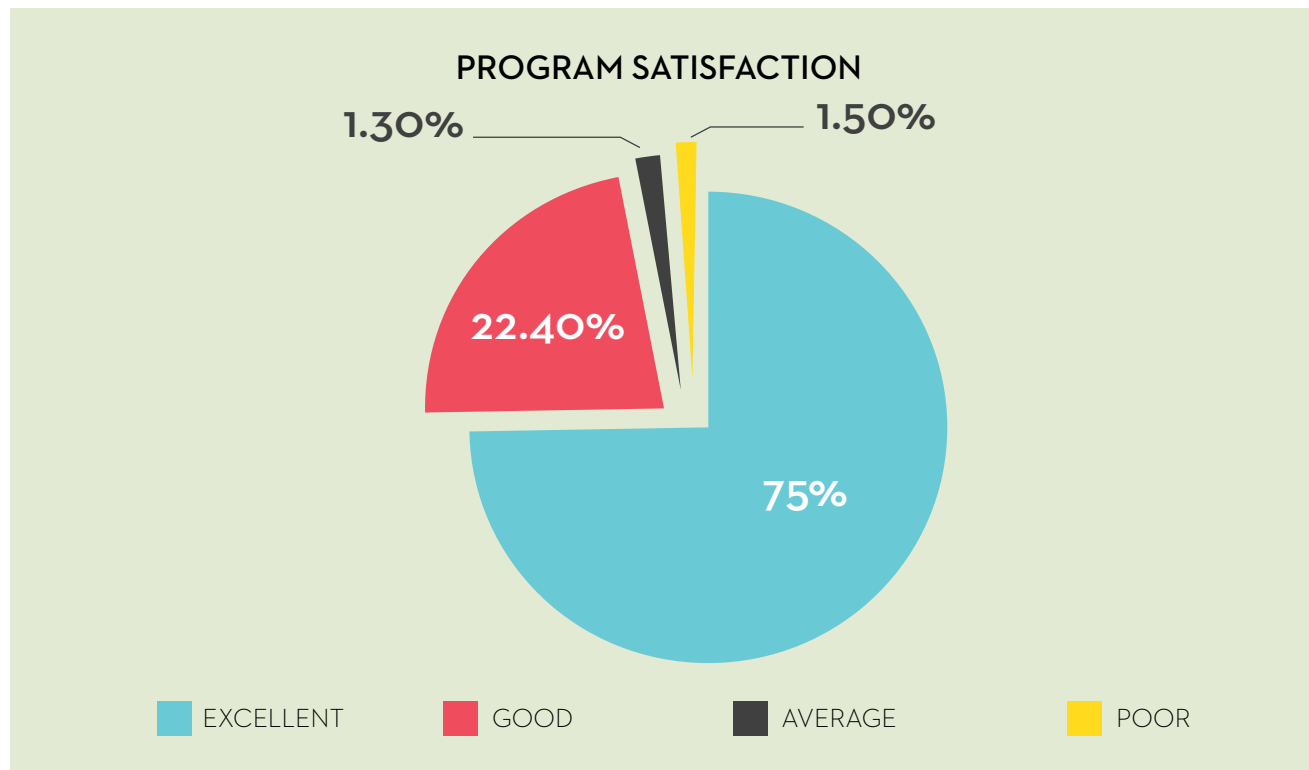
The table below is a visual representation of participant self-identification for each cohort, with some women highlighting more than one background. Notably, indigenous women comprised 14% of the total graduates; 18% identified as immigrant women; and 20% identified as women of colour. While focused outreach was done to target women with disabilities, only one woman self-identified in this way.



OVERALL PROGRAM SATISFACTION

Feedback received by all three cohorts was overwhelmingly positive and constructive, indicating a *consistently high satisfaction* with the program curriculum and delivery. Incredibly, 75% of the participants across all cohorts rated the program as excellent, with 22.40% rating it as good, and 1.3% as average, and 1.5% as poor. Overall, 97.40% of the participants described the program as good to excellent.

Equally important is the degree that participants found the content to be useful and relevant to their work and capacities as leaders. Following on-site residencies, cohorts ranked the utility of the content as noted above, as well as their satisfaction with Coady's facilitation overall.

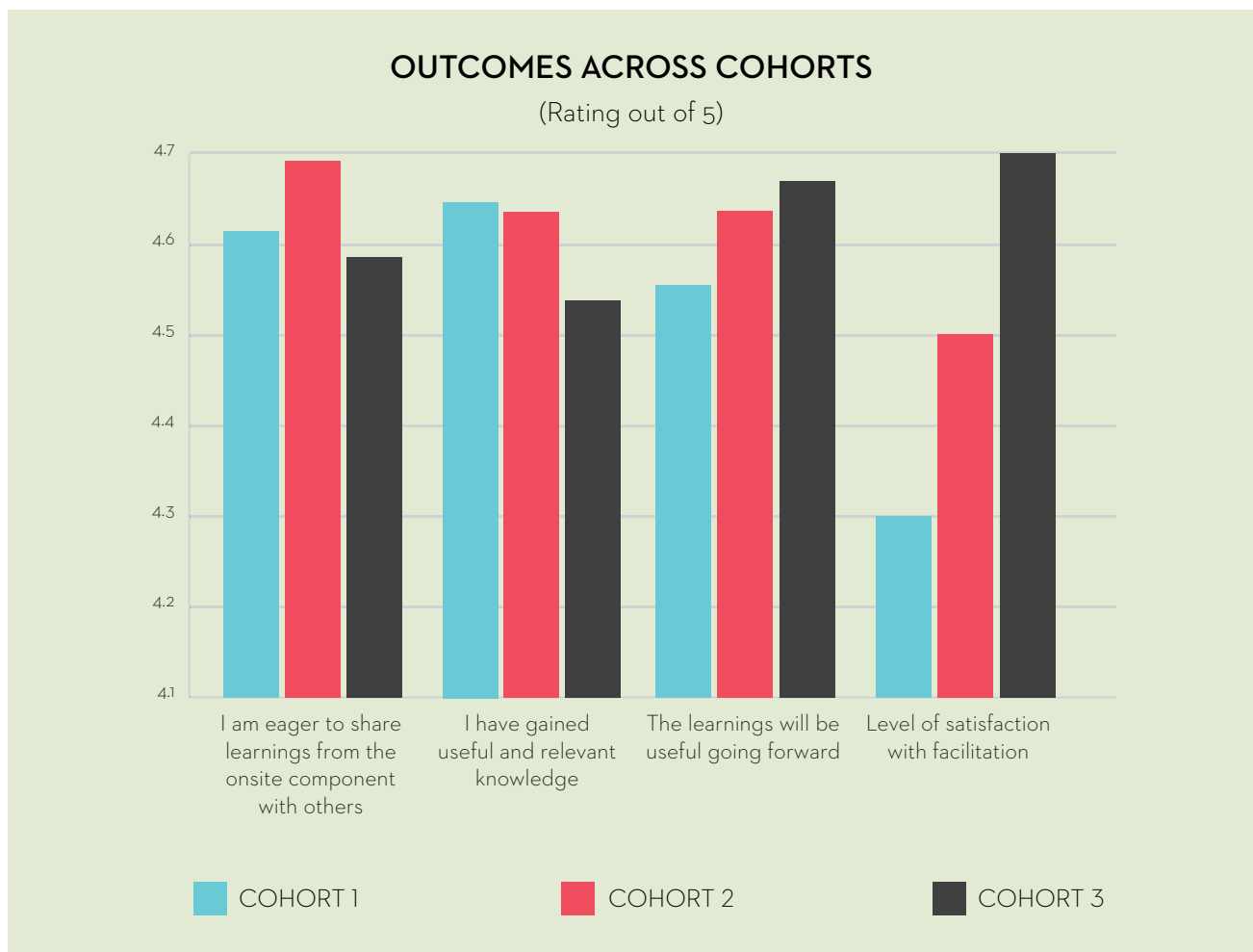


In terms of sharing, all the cohorts ranked their eagerness to share what they learned with others between 4.58 and 4.68 out of 5.

In terms of rankings, leaders further agreed that they gained useful and relevant knowledge and that their learnings would be useful going forward with scores across cohorts ranging from 4.54 to 4.67 out of 5. Scores for facilitation increased cohort

to cohort as the Leadership Institute brought in more skilled facilitation and adjusted its in-class approach to meet the needs of the distinct cohorts. Remarkably, the score for facilitation in cohort 3 was 4.7 out of 5.

These scores are exceptionally high and speak to the level of excellence that the Leadership Institute achieved in terms of curriculum design and delivery.



SUCCESS FACTORS

In their evaluations, graduates noted the following as critical to the program's success:

- The **three-pronged leadership approach** on individual, organizational and sector
- The leadership action plan resulting in **tailored and flexible action learning**
- The tremendous value of **connecting** with other participants with similar needs, programming interests and **aspirations** for the sector and learning from their experiences – this **peer learning** is seen to be central to the program's success
- Depth of shared knowledge pertaining to **women-centered leadership** and to the sector, with a special focus on **gender analysis**
- **Distance learning** which supported organizational leadership learning and a greater understanding of systems change work
- **Expertise** of the facilitation and program team (both Coady and the Canadian Women's Foundation)
- The Foundation's support on several levels, including **grant giving** and connections
- The women's sense that they secured the confidence, resources and experiences to carry out their work as **change agents** and to step up increasingly in their leadership roles

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES ACROSS THE 3 PILLARS

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

When women joined the program, they came with a deep interest in learning and growing as individuals, along with a desire to build stronger organizations and be part of broader transformation in their sectors and communities. Using their leadership action plans as a guiding tool, leaders established a broad spectrum of goals. Some of these objectives included developing personal skills and leadership capacity, creating succession plans, engaging in participatory strategic planning processes, mobilizing fundraising strategies, working through a theory of change and collective impact, and engaging the community in change processes.

Through formal and informal evaluation, participants reported that the Canadian Women's Foundation Leadership Institute had provided them with a transformative and life changing opportunity to develop skills, systems, relationships and networks. They gained the confidence and leadership capacity to move into increasingly challenging positions in their organizations and communities.

In terms of personal skills and individual leadership development, the women across the three cohorts highlighted the following key gains:

- The creation of a community of practice
- Improved knowledge and management skills
- Self-care and personal and professional boundaries
- Increased confidence, negotiation skills, conflict resolution and emotional intelligence
- An opportunity to become more involved, apply leadership skills and step into new leadership roles within their organization and the broader community (speakers bureaus, coalitions, etc.)
- Enhanced communication and networking skills
- Increased efficiency

Repeatedly, graduates described the Leadership Institute as a unique and incredible opportunity to network with other women across the country, to take the time to reflect on and enhance leadership capabilities, and to access experts, facilitators and resources that enhanced their expertise and connectivity. While medium and longer term outcomes will not be seen for some time to come and will be multiplied as more participants become involved in the process, it is clear that the pilot is already having a tremendous impact on the participants and their organizations.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

In addition to the significant gains noted at the individual level, important outcomes have also been documented at the organizational level, through both capacity building and through participants acting as catalysts for change. Many of these outcomes are a result of the Foundation's capacity building grants which supported focused organizational processes, resulting in concrete deliverables as well as deeper knowledge and skill transfer among leaders and their teams.

Most program participants noted great strides with respect to organizational capacity building including:

- Opportunities for staff to learn new skills and undertake team building
- Increased ability to make or meet strategic goals, including asset mapping and visioning
- Development of critical organizational documents/policies
- Succession planning for staff
- Creation of fund and resource development strategies, resources and tools
- Facilitation and development of stronger staff interactions
- Improved communications
- Recognized opportunity for collaborations across sectors, as well as skills for building networks and partnerships

Organizational leaders and supervisors (such as Executive Directors or other key contacts for each participant's organization) were also surveyed over the course of the pilot program to assess what effect the program was having institutionally. The feedback was consistently favourable, particularly where strong synergies could be found between individual learning goals and organizational priorities. Three organizations have also benefitted from staff participation in more than one cohort, which has deepened capacity.

Organizational impacts scored 54% in Cohort 1, 82% in Cohort 2, and 91% in Cohort 3, reflecting refinements and adaptation of the curriculum design and delivery over time to increase the emphasis on organizational leadership. The Leadership Institute is clearly on the right track for achieving its desired longer-term outcomes.

COMMUNITY/SECTORAL/SYSTEMS LEVEL

While it is still early for measuring the impact at a systems level, there are some initial signs of success that are aligned to the theory of change and that further build on organizational outcomes achieved to date.

At a community or sectoral level, some of the outcomes cited include:

- The creation of a community of practice
- A partnership strategy that has enhanced coordination of services in one region
- Change management training for member organizations across one province
- A strategic plan to advance the work with women and communities throughout Northern Ontario
- The provision of mediation services across a large region of the Yukon

The next step is to ascertain the extent to which these women and organizations can ensure the sector remains resilient, capable of transformation, effective and vibrant, and compelling in terms of attracting others to support important social and economic change work for women.

Going forward the Leadership Institute will track leadership advances over time and the degree to which this program attracts, sustains and supports leaders to make meaningful change at the broader systems level. In the next iteration of the Institute, more focus will be placed on leadership as it relates to community work and systems change. A key part of this is ensuring the Institute's broader network is alive and mobilized.

IMPACT STORIES

Building individual and organizational capacities leads to greater systems change. Some examples from a few of our Leadership Institute graduates:

Katherine Alexander, Executive Director of the Elizabeth Fry Society in Whitehorse, leveraged the capacity building grant provided through the Leadership Institute to source additional funding that enabled her to complete a Family Mediation Certificate through the Justice Institute. She is currently implementing the first steps in a longer term strategic vision to pivot her organization to offer much needed legal services in criminal and family mediation, with the goal of increasing access to justice, lowering incarceration rates, and de-escalating domestic conflict among the primarily indigenous population the organization serves.

Indu Krishnamurthy, now Assistant Director of ACEM (Montreal Community Loan Fund) in Montreal, Quebec, was named site Coordinator for a Government of Canada pilot program providing microcredit for professional immigrants while in the Leadership Institute. Indu says her participation helped to support her leadership skills for success. Four years later, the microcredit project at ACEM has provided over 315 loans for 260 people, with 30% of clients having acquired their Canadian accreditation and nearly 50% now working in their field of competency or in a related field.

Carolyn Henderson, Site Coordinator for The Centre for Skills Development and Training in Burlington, Ontario, partnered with another community organization to roll out a project which took employment support services off site into a low-income neighbourhood. This resulted in the creation of a more accessible service and built close working relationships with other community organizations.

Sultana Jahangir, Executive Director of the South Asian Women's Rights Organization in Toronto, used capacity building funds to help train women and girls in the South Asian community to become leaders and advocates. She simultaneously worked with UNIFOR to train South Asian women workers to self advocate against workplace harassment and abuse and to organize to promote their rights.

France-Emmanuelle Joly, Executive Director of the Vancouver Women's Health Collective, worked with a PhD student and board member to research the mandate of her organization and whether they and other organizations in the East Hastings area of the city were serving women in the way they needed. Having wrapped up this work, she is using the feedback to help inform organizational planning, and looks forward to sharing the content sector-wide.

Debbie Scallion, Respectful Relationships Coordinator for the Quesnel Women's Resource Centre in Quesnel, BC developed an anti-oppression, rights-based program for children in grade school. Starting with the basic principles of respect and communities of care, her goal was to roll this program out throughout the school board. She received support from both the teacher's union and parents.

Kendra Strong-Garcia, Senior Director of Programs with the YWCA Regina, focused her project on the creation of anti-oppression training aimed to end violence and racism directed toward indigenous, Métis and Inuit peoples. She piloted it in her organization and now aims to share it with other YWCAs across the country.

RESULTS OF THE MENTORING COMPONENT

A *mentorship* is a trust relationship that aims to support the mentee to realize her aspirations and potential. At the Leadership Institute, these aspirations were defined and predetermined by the individual and organizational leadership outcomes that each leader outlined in her leadership action plan. Mentors were then matched strategically with appropriate leaders to provide support on a one-to-one basis to support each leader's learning journey.

Mentors committed to an ongoing relationship with a participant for a minimum of six months. They volunteered their time for the program, offering support and advice to the leaders in all aspects of their lives including professional goals, work-life balance, managing change and developing skills. Mentors provided coaching and training and some drew on other specialists, mentors and role models to support the mentee. Ultimately, the mentor's key role was to be an empathetic and patient listener, providing advice and honest, constructive feedback to their mentee. The average time mentors provided support to the women leaders was two to three hours per month.

The Institute was fortunate to have the support of 43 mentors throughout the pilot program, five of whom provided mentorship for two cohorts and six who provided mentorship for all three cohorts. While mentors for the first cohort were predominantly contacts of the Foundation, the Coady team identified most mentors for the second and third cohorts, bringing on a new range of experts to complement those already identified.

Over the program period, feedback received from the mentors was very positive as well as constructive. Evaluations conducted at the end of each cohort demonstrated an overall satisfaction with the way in which mentors were matched with mentees.

Moving forward, the mentors suggested a few key improvements: to begin the mentor/mentee matching earlier in the program and make it optional based on the unique needs of the leaders; to recruit a broader selection of mentors representing different regions so that where possible they could be matched based on location and meet in person; and to be provided additional access to program materials and involvement in the program, including participating in orientation and training.

RESULTS OF THE COACHING COMPONENT

In this program, coaching is defined as a relationship where a professional provides *technical support on a specific topic or process* along with strategies to address specific and concrete challenges or opportunities in the workplace. Coaches contribute their analytic and problem-solving skills to real-time situations faced by learners in their respective organizations.

Coaches worked on specific technical assignments with a select number of participants each year. They brought a wide variety of expertise to coaching assignments, including human resource management, marketing and communications, change management, financial expertise and budgeting, resource development, program management, career coaching and leadership development.

The number of coaches ranged from five to ten per year over the three-cohort period. During the last two cohorts, some coaches supported groups that varied in size from two to ten.

Overall, the coaching component was highly evaluated by both the coaches and the participants. When surveyed, matches received an average of 4.75 out of 5 for being a good match and a 4.5 out of 5 for the quality of the content of discussions and technical assistance received. Coaches and participants also felt well supported through the process with appropriate orientation and check-ins (4.5 out of 5).

Some changes are recommended for this aspect of the program, including adding more group coaching, starting the coaching matches and process earlier in the program cycle, and expanding the overall pool of coaches.

FEEDBACK FROM SUPERVISORS AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS

Supervisors and organizational leads of the participants' organizations were surveyed at the end of each cohort year. Evidence and outcomes were most clearly captured in Cohorts 2 and 3, with a response rate of approximately 67%.

Overall, the supervisors who responded were grateful to have been involved with the program and were very satisfied with the development experienced by the participant and the organization alike. The respondents reported that the program was well organized and benefited individual participants as well as the organizations as a whole.

Program coordination received high ratings, with average scores of 4.41 out of 5 for clearly defined objectives; 4.35 out of 5 for established roles and responsibilities; and 4.12 out of 5 for support services.

These responses were very encouraging – the organizational contacts cited the pace of the program, the relevance and applicability of the teachings, the networking opportunities and the Coady staff as the most effective aspects of the program. Suggestions moving forward included a more hands-on approach to implemented learned theories and improving the participant's capacity to stay connected post-graduation.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY GRANTS

Over the course of three years, 71 women received a total of \$108,000, awarded by the Foundation. These funds were then leveraged through the leaders' organizations for matching grants each of \$1,500, resulting in a total investment of \$216,000 in the 68 unique organizations in which the women leaders worked.

The grants provided funding to enable the women leaders to access resources and supports and gain leadership experience and on-the-job knowledge. Without a doubt, the organizational capacity grant component of the Leadership Institute is an important element of its success.

Notably, 100% of all the participants across all three cohorts reported the grant helped them to achieve their personal leadership development goals. Also of note, 87% of Cohort 1 reported that the grant helped them build organizational capacity, with 100% of Cohort 2 and 87% of Cohort 3 describing the same.

NETWORKING AND ONGOING LEARNING

One of the critical components to the program's success is the extent to which graduates remain connected after completing the Leadership Institute program, through the establishment of an animated network of female leaders working in the sector. While cohorts are individually well connected, both the Foundation and Coady are making strides to support their connection across cohorts and in shared regions.

Specifically, the Canadian Women's Foundation has launched an alumni network strategy based on feedback from the graduates. A theory of

change has been created to define and articulate the Foundation's intended and ultimate impact in launching the alumni engagement strategy. The Foundation has developed a menu of engagement opportunities that presents a variety of approaches, connections and varied ways to engage across different durations. These include:

- Engaging alumni as ambassadors and advocates of the Leadership Institute, and drawing on their experiences going forward through guest speaking, distance/online learning activities and the design of case studies
- Inviting alumni to sit on key committees of the Canadian Women's Foundation, including the Economic Development Advisory Committee
- Actively engaging alumni in emerging policy work
- Linking alumni to speaking opportunities in the community and with the media
- Providing action grants for alumni to initiate collaborative projects (pending available funding)

In addition, the Coady Institute has developed its own alumni strategy for program graduates, and together, the Canadian Women's Foundation and Coady are working jointly to identify cross synergies between the two strategies.

Ultimately, the Foundation aims to involve and engage the alumni – as well as the Leadership Institute's mentors and coaches – in change activities that further the wellbeing, resilience and independence of women and girls from coast to coast.

“Your program not only boosted our program and our relations with the community, but also the morale of our staff participant. She went from having very little understanding of CED, to developing a full-blown CED initiative that engaged more than 50 community members!

Thank you so much for such an incredible program!”

Executive Director of Cohort 2 graduate

VALUE PROPOSITION OF THE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Based on continuing research of leadership development programs offered to women in Canada, the Foundation and Coady have discovered that the Leadership Institute is distinct and unique. There are several short and longer-term programs that focus on individual leadership, and some that are specifically for women. However, these programs focus primarily on personal and professional skill building. While this is an essential component, the programs do not integrate capacity building at organizational and sectoral levels and do not seek to advance outcomes at these levels. Nor do any of the programs have such a rich mix of best practice components within them.

The Canadian Women's Foundation Leadership Institute remains not only unique in its focus on women's leadership in community economic development and the women's non-profit sector here in Canada, but also in its comprehensive curriculum and design. The program's value proposition is essentially that it develops each woman's individual and personal leadership while supporting her to strengthen the capacity of her own organization, and increasingly engage in larger sectoral and community-based transformation.

To this end, graduates highlighted the unique value of the program in awakening them to the importance of developing leadership competencies, engaging in participatory processes, attaining skills to build capacity – including succession planning – within their organizations, the power of networking, and working collectively for sectoral and community change.

Measuring social return on investment (SROI) has not yet been assessed. However it will be a key component in measuring the impact of the Leadership Institute over time. In the next iteration of the Institute we will begin to collect longitudinal data on SROI, factoring in tangible social and economic improvements overall – not just to participants but also to participating organizations (including the impact of the organizational capacity building grants), as well as broader sector benefits.

Over time, and with this longitudinal data, the value of leader participation is sure to outweigh the initial investment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTORAL FOCUS AND KEY CONSTITUENCIES

It is recognized that many women are underrepresented in leadership roles due to layered marginalization. The Foundation and Coady are committed to continue to represent an intersectional analysis in curriculum as well as in the review of potential candidates for the program. This includes, but is not exclusive to, indigenous women (First Nations, Métis, Inuit), women who are minority women, women living with disabilities and single parent mothers.

When the call for applications was launched for the final cohort in 2014, there were more than 1,200 unique visits to the information page for the program on the Coady website. Going forward, we have an opportunity to convert this initial interest into strong demand for the program across the country. This can be done with careful attention to the following areas:

Expanding the program beyond women leaders working in the community economic development sector:

Practitioners define CED broadly and variably across the country. Many women doing CED work do not define their work with this lens and automatically pull themselves out of the running.

It is recommended that the scope of the program include emerging women leaders in the women's non-profit sector **more broadly**, while still ensuring a strong CED content focus. Consistent with discussions with the Foundation, there is a clear demand for leadership development for women leaders working on broader women's and girls' issues including violence against women, girls programming, as well as responses that support young women in Canada.

In its next iteration, the Institute will move beyond CED and more inclusively reach out to other women leaders in the non-profit sector serving women and girls.

Clarifying level of participant experience:

During the first residency, at least a handful of participants remarked that they were unsure as to whether they belonged in the program based on their level of experience, expertise and position in their organization. The next phase of the program will ensure increased clarity on the expected level of participant leadership experience, as well as help women leaders understand the value and rich diversity that they bring to the table in order to more fully promote peer learning.

Organizational support:

Some women do not have the full support of their organizations to take the time to participate fully in the Institute. Coady and the Foundation will continue to ensure that organizations understand the expectations of the program and are also consulted regularly regarding the participating women's needs and interests. Organizational participation throughout the program will continue to be critical to achieving longer-term outcomes.

SCHEDULE AND RESIDENCIES

Going forward, two changes to scheduling are proposed.

First, an adjustment is recommended to the timing of the program to avoid the summer lag which occurs between the first residency and the beginning of distance learning sessions in the autumn. The significant break over the summer impacts the momentum the women gain during the first residency. Going forward, the Learning Institute should begin in late September or October and end in late May or June of each year. This change in timing will not impact the existing level of curriculum covered in the program and will provide three months for post-program evaluation, commencement of alumni network engagement and enhancements for the next cohort.

The second change involves extending the initial residency by one to two days. Self care is a critical component of sustainable and successful leadership. When participants take part in the first residency of the program, it is often the only time they have to fully reflect on their own leadership growth and focus on personal and professional development. The residency program days are full and exciting and participants need space and time to absorb what they are learning. They also need time to engage with one another outside of a facilitated process.

This recommendation would extend the nine-day residency to ten days over two weeks, allowing the women to have a weekend off in between the two five-day segments of learning. This would also allow facilitators the time needed to adjust the program based on participant expertise and experience, and as needs emerge. This change is expected to greatly enhance the quality of content and exchange in each cohort.

OTHER CORE PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS

The Canadian Women's Foundation and Coady have built a solid program using a blended learning and transformative adult education approach, which has both the breadth and depth, required for non-profit women leaders to excel. This is a model that is flexible and bridges theory with practical hands-on skill building. Going forward, the core program will be further strengthened by addressing the following key areas:

- *Enhancing marketing, recruitment and selection processes* to more effectively promote and market the program sector-wide. We will select participants from organizations that have the ability to support them throughout the duration of the program, and continue to refine the selection process to ensure that cohort makeup is diverse and represents women ideally poised to step into greater leadership positions.
- *Continuing to adapt and refine the curriculum* to build individual, organizational and community or sector-level leadership capacities. This includes a continued focus on women-centered leadership with a gender lens, as well as leveraging peer-to-peer learning and the use of case studies and contextual learning. It also involves maximizing the use of online education best practices. With an intent to expand the focus of the program beyond community economic development to other streams of work, additional content focused on key Foundation and Coady thematic areas is recommended, as well as advocacy, policy development, and participatory research.
- *Enhancing coaching and mentoring* by increasing the mentor and coach pools, initiating these matches earlier in the program cycle, supporting face-to-face meetings where possible, expanding group coaching opportunities, and engaging coaches and mentors more broadly in the Institute and alumni network.
- *Exploring increasing the amount of funding* provided for the organizational capacity grant as well as allocating these grants earlier in the program cycle. This also involves ensuring the women are supported effectively with the autonomy and authority in their organizations to undertake capacity building work.
- *Continuing to build, enhance and invest in alumni network activities* and opportunities so the women continue to network, share, learn and mobilize collective work.

“Thank you for delivering a program that authentically embraces the reality of the lives of the women who are participating and for content that is actually relevant to the work we are doing... **We have a plan.** We are ready to **make change happen** for ourselves and for women in Canada.”

Arlene MacDonald, Cohort 3 Graduate

CONCLUSION

CELEBRATING OUR SUCCESS: LOOKING AHEAD

In its three-year pilot phase, the Canadian Women's Foundation Leadership Institute has delivered an one-of-a-kind program that has garnered strong, positive outcomes.

The Canadian Women's Foundation and Coady Institute have developed a flourishing partnership and both organizations are committed to a shared vision for the Leadership Institute. This partnership has resulted in a unique and distinct leadership development model that is effectively building women's leadership capabilities in the Canadian non-profit women's sector. The Leadership Institute is central not only to both organizations' overall mission and vision, but also to the evolution of women's leadership and systemic change for women across Canada.

When investments are made in strong women leaders, those women will mobilize and lead change for women and girls. The Canadian Women's Foundation Leadership Institute is poised to have a tremendous impact on the socio-economic status of women across Canada.

The 71 women leaders who participated in the program and embraced their leadership journeys with passion, dedication and a commitment to excellence have been at the very heart of this initiative's accomplishments.

The Foundation and Coady are grateful for the ongoing support of everyone involved in the program – including our skilled facilitators, mentors, coaches, participating organizations, corporate sponsors and individual donors – who understand the value of this unique educational opportunity and the potential for social and economic change that it creates.

Having developed a program of choice for women leaders in Canada, the Canadian Women's Foundation and Coady must sustain the momentum and collectively mobilize the next iteration of the Canadian Women's Foundation Leadership Institute. No other players in Canada have demonstrated this substantial and targeted investment in women's leadership in the non-profit sector.

Based on the evaluation feedback highlighted in this report, the Foundation and Coady are moving forward to integrate the learning and recommendations, and anticipate even greater individual, organizational and systems-level results moving into a new phase of implementation.

The next stage of this work involves securing the necessary funding for the Institute over many years. The Canadian Women's Foundation is actively engaged in program planning and fund development to secure support for rolling out the program full-time in 2018.

With the collective commitment of its partners and supporters, the Canadian Women's Foundation Leadership Institute will continue to build on its success and impact by developing an ever-growing network of resilient, dynamic and action-oriented women change leaders from coast to coast to coast – leaders who will help transform the socio-economic status of women, families and communities for the benefit of all Canadians.

“There is no development strategy more beneficial to society as a whole – women and men alike – than the one which involves **women as central players.**”

Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General





For more information about the Canadian Women's Foundation Leadership Institute Pilot Program please visit canadianwomen.org