



Designing a Rural Leadership Program and Curriculum

by Ronald J. Hustedde and Angie Woodward

Introduction

Many social scientists, business leaders, and others recognize that the key to addressing rural problems is the “capacity building” of local leaders and citizens. Capacity building means enhancing the potential of local people to solve problems. It means engaging citizens and organizations to identify needs, resources, and opportunities. Capacity building is the heart of leadership education. Without capable leaders, local communities are

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prone to inertia, decay, and manipulation. In contrast, communities that nourish diverse leadership are more likely to have a vision of what they want to become and know how to get there. As a result, quality of life and the physical, social, and economic well-being of citizens are enhanced.

This guide demonstrates some concepts of leadership and provides direction for rural communities that want to build effective local programs to nourish leaders.

Most critics of leadership education suggest that little thought is put into the outcomes of leadership programs. They contend that leadership education is merely a schedule of interesting and entertaining activities that do little to change the behavior, attitudes, ideas, or skills of the participants. This guide will assist communities attempting to build a leadership curriculum that has impact.

What is a leader?

The Traditional Leader

A good leader used to be viewed as hero or heroine. This heroic leader often had the markings of a saint or was a wealthy benefactor who influenced and inspired others to solve problems and achieve goals. Business and corporate managers were often looked on as the embodiment of leadership. Followers of traditional leaders often were passive and did not share the leader’s power. Today’s social scientists and leadership educators question this traditional view of leadership because it is based on assumptions of people’s powerlessness and lack of vision or inability to master the forces of change. They argue that the assumption of the “great man” or “great woman” as leader no longer holds true.

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The New Philosophy of Leadership

An emerging philosophy of leadership has been dubbed *post-heroic* leadership. Most innovative organizations in America, including those in rural settings, have replaced the individual leadership philosophy with one centered on community building and shared leadership for two major reasons. First, the growing complexity of problems in rural communities does not lead to easy solutions. A leader cannot assimilate the amount of information available to address problems. So, he or she needs to rely on the experience of each member of the organization or community. Second, a growing percent-

age of people in communities and organizations are no longer content to behave as docile followers but want to share responsibilities and decisions.

Defining the New Leader

There are many ways to define this new leader. Leadership educator Robert Greenleaf talks about the *servant-leader*. The servant-leader works for the common good. He or she attempts to empower and encourage others to work together in ways that strengthen and transform communities. The servant-leader fosters, strengthens, and sustains vibrant and diverse leadership in the community.

How Are Servant-Leaders Nourished?

There are three major ways servant-leadership is nourished:

1. **Mentorship.** Many leaders nourish potential leaders or followers through individualized mentorships. They guide and educate them to be effective servant-leaders. They provide experiences that allow potential leaders to learn from their mistakes as well as their successes. Mentors may vary in their experience, patience, and time available to nourish new leaders. The mentorship needs of budding leaders may vary too. Most communities do not have a structured mentorship program.
2. **Self-study and Practice.** Some individuals driven to be leaders engage in a lifelong study of leadership. They learn about leadership by participating in civic groups and organizations. They observe existing leaders. They attend workshops to correct their perceived deficiencies and accent their strengths. They actively seek advice from others and reflect on what they learn. Leadership self-study and practice is often time consuming and may lack discipline and focus.
3. **Community Leadership Program.** An effective way for communities to nourish and sustain servant-leaders is to develop a community leadership program. These programs generally last from six months to one year. Some last several years with updates for program alumni. At their best, these programs truly prepare people to be servant-leaders. At their worst, they merely reinforce the traditional leadership paradigm or provide activities that may be interesting but do little to build and nourish servant-leaders. This guide is intended to assist communities that want to create local leadership programs.

The Community Leadership Program

Who Should Take Part in a Community Leadership Program?

Ideally, people involved in a community leadership program come from all walks of life. They reflect the diversity of the community. Men and women. People from

different races, classes, social backgrounds, career paths, and community service. The shared experiences and networking that takes place in a community leadership program creates a cadre of dedicated people who want to make a difference. If a key group is not represented, the program risks fostering community divisions or the traditional view of leadership.

Is There a National Model for a Rural Leadership Program?

Many models exist; however, only one example is highlighted here. Michigan State University Extension Service created a task force to develop a vision for its community action leadership development efforts. The task force's vision is focused on "the development of energized communities of co-leaders and co-learners committed to concerted action for a collective vision." The Extension Service identified four forces to shape its leadership programs: community, vision, learning, and action. Michigan State wants to:

- develop leadership programs that foster trust, respect, and appreciation of diversity in the community;
- help community members develop a vision of what they want to become;
- stimulate learning communities where people expand their collective thinking and learn together;
- stimulate action and encourage "leadership by doing."

The Michigan State goals are used as a guide for leadership program activities. These goals may or may not be appropriate for your community. Nevertheless, it is important to establish clear goals for your leadership program and structure activities around them.

Are There Other Philosophies to Guide the Direction of a Community Leadership Program?

The National Association for Community Leadership offers another way to look at leadership. It suggests basing leadership programs on the concept of "community trusteeship." Trustees are individuals who hold the "community in trust." They take responsibility for and act on behalf of the common good. Community trustees are rooted in the past, present, and future. They find meaning in the past. They understand the conflicting voices, values, and beliefs of today's diverse community. They work with others to envision a preferred tomorrow and achieve that dream. The servant-leader makes an active and caring commitment to the community.

What Attitudes and Beliefs Should Be Nurtured in a Leadership Program That Emphasizes Community Trusteeship or Servant-Leadership?

The National Association of Community Leadership says community trustees can be nourished to:

- **know** themselves;
- **care** about quality of life in the community;
- **be** stewards of the community and its resources;
- **serve** the common good;
- **listen** to the diverse voices of the community frequently advocating contradictory ideas;
- **appreciate** community diversity;
- **nurture** the ability to see things as interconnected and whole;
- **define** and **articulate** a community's concerns;
- **dream** with others and cooperate to realize the dream;
- **use** their skills and leadership abilities to make the community and individuals better, wiser, more talented, more productive, and happier citizens;
- **reflect** with others about community successes, mistakes, visions, and new directions;
- **lead** with passion.

Communities must decide what kinds of attitudes and beliefs should be emphasized in the leadership program. They may not be able to achieve all of them.

How Can These Attitudes and Beliefs Be Nourished?

There are many ways to nourish these attitudes in a leadership program. For example, leaders can learn to “know themselves” in at least four ways:

1. keep journals describing what they have learned about themselves and how they behave in group settings;
2. observe how they behave in difficult role-playing situations;
3. take personal inventories of their leadership styles such as the Myers-Briggs analysis;
4. get feedback from groups, mentors, and fellow participants. Leadership educators should draw on their own creativity and that of others involved in leadership design to nourish attitudes and beliefs that benefit participants and the community.

What Should Be Taught in a Local Leadership Program?

Ask the community several questions before deciding on a curriculum:

1. What is the community's preferred future or vision?
2. What kinds of leaders are needed to get there?
3. What knowledge about local issues or problems should the leaders have?

4. What public skills should the leaders learn?
5. What should the leaders understand about community history and diversity?
6. What outcome is expected from the leadership program? What action should it generate?
7. How will long-term effectiveness of the program be evaluated?

What Knowledge about Local Issues Should Be Taught in a Local Leadership Program?

At their worst, leadership programs cram in too much information about local issues, leaving participants overwhelmed and frustrated. Focus on several key issues and treat them well. Participants should understand how the community is pulled and tugged in different directions by certain issues and explore how some of those differences might be reconciled. When discussing an issue, draw on the knowledge and ideas of the participants as well as local leaders and technicians, scholars, and policy makers from within and outside the community. Minimize

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the lecture format because it is not the most effective method for teaching adults. Also avoid debate (pro versus con) because it can merely divide participants into opposing camps. Suitable formats include simulations or role plays, on-site discussions, panels with open-ended questions, and personal interviews with those who see the issue from various angles. In other cases, participants could listen to conflicting voices, learn to reframe the issue into a problem statement, and explore trade-offs associated with three or four alternative solutions to the problem. In such a setting, they learn critical thinking skills in addition to the issue.

What Public Skills Should Participants Learn?

The answer depends on skills participants bring to the leadership program and what the community wants them to learn in order to make a difference. Current literature tends to emphasize visioning, or citizen-based futuring, as a key leadership skill. **Visioning** involves bringing together citizens from many backgrounds to dream about

the preferred future of their community and work together to implement their goals. Several visioning or futuring methods can be taught in leadership programs.

Other essential public skills also can be taught:

Active listening leads to understanding others' self-interests, recognizing your own self-interest, and not letting it get in the way of hearing someone else's ideas.

Collaboration trains participants to work effectively with other groups and organizations that have stakes in particular issues. Collaboration creates new opportunities, demands, and problems.

Conflict resolution helps people find solutions everyone can *live with*.

Deliberation means thinking through the public policy choices on an issue. Leaders and citizens learn to weigh economic, social, political, and other trade-offs associated with policy alternatives.

Evaluation teaches participants how to determine what worked or what could have worked better at public meetings, events, or actions.

Facilitation demonstrates how to lead meetings more effectively in order to stimulate efficient decision making, group ownership, creativity, and action.

Imagination prompts participants to encourage resourcefulness and open-mindedness in order to invent different ways of solving public problems.

Interviewing teaches how to ask probing questions in order to learn about others' self-interests and concerns.

Negotiation involves finding solutions everyone can live with by expressing your self-interests, learning about others' concerns, and exploring alternative solutions.

Power analysis determines who holds the power on a particular issue, why they have the power, and what can be done about it.

Strategic planning involves nurturing citizens to create a work plan to carry out a desired action.

Team building illustrates the characteristics of effective teams and how to build and sustain a team.

Vigilance teaches participants to move beyond crisis management to a long-term focus on problems and issues that involves flexibility as well as commitment. Vigilance can be taught through case studies and interviews with key leaders and groups.

Volunteer management involves recruiting, training, and nourishing volunteers in the community and examining what volunteers expect of leaders.

Citizen mobilization, networking, working with the media, public speaking, and problem-solving techniques also can be taught in leadership programs. Draw on educational resources from within and outside the community.

What Should Be Taught about the Community's History and Diversity?

Each community is rooted in a place with a unique natural environment and a diverse group of people with a past, present, and future. Each community has a unique economic, cultural, artistic, and political make-up. Leaders should understand the uniqueness of the commu-

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nity and its societies. Do not overlook the richness of the community's ethnic, racial, and economic groups. This diverse base can create a more stable and satisfying quality of life for everyone, or it can be divisive. Most leadership programs help participants understand the community's system of governance and how it works.

After some clear educational goals are developed, identify activities to meet those goals. Educational formats might include a forum with local historians, visits to minority churches, interviews with elected officials, or a walking tour of local neighborhoods or schools. In some cases, leadership participants are divided into teams and asked to photograph the community's history, diverse peoples, or economic structures. Participants have designed slide shows to trigger discussions about the community's past, present, and future.

What Should Communities Expect from a Local Leadership Program?

The answer depends on the expectations of those designing the leadership program and its participants. It is important to develop a vision and goals based on that vision. Goals need to be clear but not overly ambitious. Although participants may learn a great deal, there is no guarantee they will make an immediate difference or ever bring about change. Some participants will immediately use their skills, knowledge, and attitudes in the community. Others will move into leadership roles more gradually. Some communities build practicums into their leadership programs to encourage involvement in community issues and problems.

What Is a Leadership Practicum?

A leadership practicum is a way to learn leadership *by doing*. Program participants might design individual or small group practicums with assistance from a community mentor. In some cases, the entire leadership class develops its own practicum. These practicums put leadership skills and knowledge about issues or the community into practice. They are more about learning than doing. For example, if a leadership class paints a school, it is

doubtful they will learn anything new. However, if they involve school children or parents in identifying issues about the school's appearance and work with them to address these issues, they will use their leadership skills.

While leadership practicums can be useful to participants and the community, they can be difficult to manage. Some programs have difficulty locating mentors to guide and work with participants. Little reflection or learning takes place even though the activity is accomplished, and practicums become busy work with minimum impact. In other cases, program participants find practicums too demanding for the limited time frame of the leadership program. Hence, some leadership programs encourage their alumni to develop practicums. The question of whether or not to have a practicum depends on the resources and energy of the individuals directing the program and the program goals.

What Does a Balanced Curriculum Look Like?

There isn't a standard curriculum that fits all communities. First, clearly define the vision and educational goals of your leadership program. Without clear goals, leadership programs fall into the trap of being a set of interesting activities that have little impact. Ideally, program participants learn about several local issues in depth and develop public skills in visioning, facilitation,

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team building, and conflict resolution. They also learn about themselves, the diversity of their community, local governance, and leadership concepts such as servant-leadership and community trusteeship. Program goals may also include an opportunity to learn leadership by doing through a practicum. Practicums should be more than mere activities. They should be learning experiences. The bottom line is that the community, program designers, and participants should decide the educational goals of a leadership program then plan activities that meet those goals.

How Long Does a Typical Leadership Class Take?

Classes usually range from six to nine months with one- or two-day meetings every month. Frequently, they begin and end with a two- or three-day retreat. Leadership programs should be tailored to the needs of the individual community. For example, an Orlando group conducts three leadership programs each year.

How Many People Take Part in a Leadership Program?

They range from 10 to 50 people. In some cases, you may wish to invite the broader community to take part in special learning activities.

How Are People Recruited?

Recruitment goals should be clear. Do you want to attract seasoned leaders, budding ones, or a mixture of both? Why? How can you attract recruits who reflect the diversity of your community and will make an intentional commitment to learning? What is your attendance policy? After these and other questions are answered, the recruitment team contacts key groups in the community to assist in their recruiting goals. Relying exclusively on newspaper advertisements or brochures will not lead to recruitment success. Many programs have selection teams that choose people who will benefit the most from the program.

What Happens after People Complete the Leadership Program?

Most likely, participants will develop a closer working relationship with each other to effect community changes. Some leadership programs involve alumni in designing and teaching future leadership programs. In other cases, special learning activities or *action* programs involving alumni occur. The intent of "what happens afterwards" should be clear to everyone involved. If there are many expectations, potential recruits may hesitate to join the program. If there are limited expectations, the community may not readily buy into the program. Ideally, both participants and the community should benefit from a leadership program.

Reference Materials:

- Community Trusteeship Manual, Taking Leadership To Heart*, National Association for Community Leadership, 200 South Meridian St., Suite 340, Indianapolis, IN 46225.
- Greenleaf, Robert K., *The Servant As Leader*, Indianapolis, IN: The Robert K. Greenleaf Center, 1991.
- Hustedde, Ronald J., "Developing Leadership To Address Rural Problems," in Norman Walzer (ed.) *Rural Community Economic Development*, New York: Praeger Press, 1991.
- Rost, Joseph C., *Leadership For The Twenty-First Century*, New York: Praeger Press, 1991.
- Senge, Peter M., *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1990.
- Vandenberg, Lela, and Sandman, Lorilee R., *Community Action Leadership Development*, East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Extension Leadership Series No. 95-01, March 1, 1995.

Other Valuable Resources for a Rural Leadership Program:

Leadership Education Training Manuals:

Building Local Leadership: How To Start A Program for Your Town or County, Heartland Center for Leadership Development, 941 "O" Street, Suite 920, Lincoln, NE 68508. Phone: (402) 474-7667.

Community Trusteeship Manual, Taking Leadership To Heart, National Association for Community Leadership, 200 South Meridian St., Suite 340, Indianapolis, IN 46225. Phone: (317) 637-7408.

Community Voices (4 volumes) Introduction to Program and to Participatory Training, Program Implementation Guide, Participatory Training Guide For Community Co-Facilitators, Volumes 1 and 2 (and video to accompany co-facilitators guide), North Carolina A&T University, Community Voices Program, Cooperative Extension Programs, P.O. Box 21928, Greensboro, NC 27420-1928. Phone: (910) 334-7008.

Developing Community Leadership, The EXCEL Approach, University of Missouri College of Agriculture, 723 Clark Hall, Columbia, MO 65211. Phone: (314) 882-8393.

Rural Futures Program: A Guide For Trainers, MDC, Inc., 1717 Legion Road, P.O. Box 2226, Chapel Hill, NC 27514. Phone: (919) 968-4531.

South-Link 2000, Leadership Development in the South, Measure by Measure, and *Heading Home*, Southern Growth Policies Board, P.O. Box 12293, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709. Phone: (919) 941-5145.

Understanding Community Leadership: A Community Leadership Development Training Manual For Instructors, Fanning Leadership Center, Hoke Smith Annex, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-4350. Phone: (706) 542-1108.

Supplemental Resources for Rural Leadership Programs in Kentucky

University of Kentucky Extension Specialists with Backgrounds in Leadership Education:

Jerri Cockrel, Home Economics Extension

Lori Garkovich, Sociology

Ron Hustedde, Sociology

Tom Ilvento, Sociology

Craig Infanger, Agricultural Economics

Larry Jones, Agricultural Economics

Richard C. Maurer, Sociology

Martha Nall, Program & Staff Development

Roger Rennekamp, Program & Staff Development

Wendy Stivers, 4-H & Youth Development Programs

Some Key Leadership Education Groups in Kentucky

Brushy Fork Institute

CPO 35

Berea College

Berea, KY 40404

(606) 986-9341, ext. 6838

Contact: Peter Hille, Director

Purpose: Brushy Fork views leadership as a team concept. It is committed to developing strong team leadership in Central Appalachia. Groups of 10 to 15 people from a county are chosen to train with other teams. After the initial workshops, each group applies its leadership skills on a county-wide project.

Brushy Fork publishes a newsletter and a directory of associates that lists its trained leaders and expertise.

Commonwealth Fellows UK Appalachian Center

110 Maxwellton Court

Lexington, KY 40506-0347

(606) 257-8264

Contact: Lance Brunner

Purpose: To strengthen the leadership skills of selected emerging leaders through a series of weekend workshops. Participants are asked to reflect on their regional heritage, learn more about Kentucky issues, and become more effective communicators and leaders. Participants are also asked to develop a local community project.

Family Community Leadership (FCL) Program University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service

205 Scovell Hall

Lexington, KY 40506-0064

(606) 257-3888

Contact: Jerri Cockrel, FCL Coordinator

Purpose: To empower volunteers to take charge of their communities, especially with issues that relate to family and community through a 30-hour training program. Annual updates are available for graduates of the program. Grants are available for the 30-hour FCL Institute and other creative programming in your county or area or on a statewide basis.

Kentucky Cattleman's Association Leadership Development Program

733 Red Mile Road

Lexington, KY 40504

(606) 233-3722

Contact: John Stevenson

Purpose: To develop leaders who have a diverse awareness of the issues facing the cattle industry and agriculture. Partnerships of Extension agents, specialists, and local leaders are encouraged.

Kentucky Natural Resources Leadership Institute

205 Thomas Poe Cooper Bldg.
Lexington, KY 40506-0073
(606) 257-2943

Contact: Jennifer Thompson, Program Director

Purpose: To develop leaders who can help groups move beyond conflict and towards consensus building and problem solving for contentious environmental issues. The program is structured around five three-day seminar sessions at different locations around the state. NRLI participants also travel to Washington, D.C., to discuss policy aspects of environmental issues.

Kentucky Women's Leadership Network

Carnegie Center
251 W. Second St.
Lexington, KY 40507
(606) 252-5258

Contact: Betsy Nowland-Curry, Executive Director

Purpose: To serve as a mentoring and support network for established women leaders across the state, enabling them to be more effective and respected leaders.

Leadership Kentucky

P.O. Box 1172
Frankfort, KY 40602
(502) 695-1102
(502) 695-6824 (FAX)

Contact: Angie Woodward, President

Purpose: To strengthen the leadership skills, information resource base, and networking capabilities of selected local and regional leaders to become more effective local or statewide leaders.

Philip Morris Agricultural Leadership Development Program

S-129, Agricultural Science Bldg.-North
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 40546-0091
(606) 257-4773

Contact: Pam Poe

Purpose: To develop the leadership skills of a select group of young burley tobacco growers and agribusiness persons through a unique two-year program offering intensive study and travel experiences.

National Resource Organizations in Leadership Education:

Association of Leadership Educators (ALE)

c/o Palmetto Leadership
Clemson University
211 Barre Hall
Clemson, SC 29634-0355
(803) 656-0196

Contact: Chris Sieverdes, Treasurer

Purpose: To be the premier organization for professional leadership educators; multi-discipline base of leadership. ALE holds an annual meeting first week in July.

Center for Creative Leadership

500 Laurinda Drive
P.O. Box P-1
Greensboro, NC 27402-1660
(919) 288-7210

Purpose: To encourage and develop creative leadership and effective management for the good of society overall. Conducts training programs and publishes a free quarterly newsletter, *Issues and Trends*. Published a 1990 leadership directory, *Leadership Education 1990 A Source Book* by Miriam B. Clark and Frank H. Freeman.

Community Development Society

1123 N. Water Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(606) 276-7106

Purpose: To promote excellence in community development research and practice; publishes a biannual journal, a quarterly newsletter, and several "how to" publications. CDS holds an annual meeting the third or fourth week of July. A Kentucky chapter of CDS formed recently.

National Association of Community Leadership

200 South Meridian St., Suite 340
Indianapolis, IN 46225
(317) 637-7408

Contact: Wendall Walls

National Clearinghouse for Leadership Education

University of Maryland at College Park
1135 Stamp Student Union
College Park, MD 20742-4631
(301) 314-7168

Contact: Susan Jones

Purpose: To provide a central clearinghouse for educational resources and materials for leadership educators. Includes tri-annual newsletter, access to leadership resources, a comprehensive leadership bibliography, and a membership directory. A leadership scholar series is sold at a reduced price to members.

National Extension Leadership Development (NELD)

Agric. Administration Bldg.
2120 Fyffe Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1084
(614) 292-3114

Contact: Jo Jones

Purpose: To conduct leadership programs for selected individuals in various levels of management or in lay leadership roles within the Cooperative Extension Service. NELD also maintains a lending library of videos, tapes, books, and other materials.

Journal:

The Journal of Leadership Studies

Published by Baker Colleges of Michigan

Center for Graduate Studies

1050 W. Bristol Road

Flint, MI 48507

(810) 766-4105

Contact: Stephen L. Williams, Editor (about submitting papers)

Purpose: The journal is published quarterly for all who teach, study, or practice leadership.

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