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**Leadership Academy 2018**

**Action Learning Project Summary**

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**Leadership Academy Class: 2018**

**Project Title:** Cultivating Leadership From Within: Leveraging Leadership Academy to Create an Engaged Pipeline of Future Leaders for NCDA

**1-sentence Project Summary:**

Survey ten years of LA participants on experiences and outcomes in order to leverage data from participant responses to make recommendations on how to strengthen not only the Leadership Academy program but also as to how NCDA can support LA alumni in pursuit of leadership roles.

**Objectives of Project:**

Our goal is to examine previous LA participants to evaluate their experience and resulting engagement with NCDA as a whole. In addition we will develop recommendations for how to improve the existing program and outline how current NCDA leaders can encourage and support LA graduates to pursue leadership roles.

**Connection to** [**NCDA Long-Term Plan**](https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/asset_manager/get_file/130687?ver=6441)**:**

Maintain and strengthen a vibrant organization through Leadership Academy that represents goals of diversity and engagement

**Project Description:**

For our project we contacted Leadership Academy participants from the past ten years and conducted telephone surveys to gauge why they became involved with LA, the nature of their experience in the program and whether their participation resulted in a leadership role within the organization post-academy. We then analyzed the responses to identify key trends in response data, which we have used as a baseline for our recommendations.

**Results:**

We reached out to all former participants of Leadership Academy via email based on contact information provided from NCDA HQ. We achieved 40% participation rate from past participants, class years 2007-2017.

Of those who participated our survey included (but was not limited to) the following results:

* 67% of participants came to LA on their own (self-initiated) while 33% were “recruited” or encouraged by existing NCDA members to apply.
* The primary reasons for wanting to participate included professional development, involvement at a national level (moving from state CDA to NCDA), and networking.
* 49% of participants say they became more involved with NCDA after LA while 9% withdrew or decreased involvement and 11% had no change in involvement.
* Overall, we found that 84% of LA participants pursued a leadership role. Of those who pursued leadership roles, 1/3 pursued involvement with their state CDA while the remaining 2/3 joined either an NCDA Committee Leadership or Board role.

**Recommendations:**

*Note: Our recommendations stem from the trends we identified in the open-ended responses/comments portion of our survey with LA alumni. Our goal is to ensure a consistent program for future LA classes using both existing materials and new.*

**For implementation:**

* Award CEUs to participants (professional development benefit)
* Exit survey of all participants each year to evaluate what is working and what is not.
* Evaluate possibility of hiring a dedicated LA Program Coordinator to oversee LA Academy, to create consistency year-over-year in communication, enhance professional development opportunities, and ensure effective coordination of program.
* Consider revising mentorship model. LA participants paired with a project mentor AND an organizational mentor post-LA to help encourage leadership roles/involvement.

**For follow-up projects or activities:**

* Develop a series of webinars to be used each year by committee to cover basic topics, including:
  + Baseline/overview of NCDA- organization values, history, goals.
  + Pathways: what are the leadership roles available in NCDA and how does one pursue them?
  + Leadership skill development. Examples include: budget and legal issues of NCDA/committee management/leading in a non-profit setting/balancing professional and volunteer roles
* Create online platform for LA interaction and to house LA content (webinars, project guidelines etc.). This could be built similar to an online course and refreshed yearly for the new class.
* Establish a reoccurring LA alumni meet-up at national conference/ reunion space for past participants to connect and share.
* Leverage National Conference to acknowledge and promote LA program/participants/projects. Promote LA program and presentations (bigger meeting spaces, recognition during opening/closing sessions etc.) and require attendance/participation of NCDA leadership, board members, committee leads.
* Update LA program marketing: social media, testimonials, brochures and materials.

**For related committee, constituency, or task force work:**

* Leverage existing materials to manage timeline and communication for LA classes. Develop new content in the form of webinars that can be used each year to educate/inform each new class of LA. Explore possibility of an online platform to house this content.
* Develop outreach program for alumni. This might include management of a LinkedIn group with all LA alumni, a national conference “reunion” social hour each year, and/or a commitment to serve within committee of choosing for a two-year term within 5 years of participating.
* Create a continuum for LA projects: develop a system to create follow-through for project recommendations. This could include the option to continue the project of a previous class and bring it to fruition or oversight from LADC to ensure projects that reflect NCDA priorities are brought to fruition through committees, task forces, etc.
* Consider a LA reunion program or moving LA Academy and subsequent presentations to a smaller NCDA PDI throughout the year where participants would have more exposure to the Board in a smaller setting (vs. the hurried pace of the national conference).

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