



Purpose

The Cleveland Leadership Center's (CLC) community impact survey was designed to investigate the long-term learning and behaviors resulting from participation in CLC programs. The results were achieved by examining current alumni involvement and behaviors in their professional organizations and in their community involvement to determine if they intersect with CLC organizational outcomes of civic understanding, relationship building, collaborative leadership, and civic readiness. The survey also sought to explore what sort of lasting impact CLC programming has on participants, organizations, and the community, and provide insight into long-term behavioral effects of alumni in the community.

Method

The survey was conducted in October 2022; 728 surveys were opened (a 15% response rate from alumni we were able to reach to invite to take the survey). Outreach was conducted via email and mailing. All alumni who were at least one-year post-program were eligible to take the survey. Alumni from all CLC programs responded, the majority being alumni of Cleveland Bridge Builders, Leadership Cleveland, or Civic Leadership Institute. The majority participated in one CLC program, with 25% participating in two or more. Most had participated in programs between 2010 and 2021, though participants from 1978 through 2009 were also represented in the sample. The age of respondents ranged from under 20 to over 71 with an even spread of ages within that range. Of the respondents, 60% identified as female, 40% as male; and 73% identified as White and 27% identifying as BIPOC.

As in past years, CLC worked with Dr. Robert Gleeson, the Albert A. Levin Chair of Urban Studies and Public Service at the Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University, to review and interpret findings. In addition, CLC had the opportunity to partner with Third Floor Research through the Kansas Leadership Center and Kansas State University's Staley School of Leadership Studies on data analysis, interpretation and research support as we work to understand our organizational impact.

Key Findings

- CLC was interested in whether their alumni perceive that their CLC engagement increased their confidence and ability to positively influence their community, and asked respondents the extent to which they agree with the statement, "I feel confident and capable in the community as a result of my Cleveland Leadership experience." A strong number of CLC alumni (79.9%) agree that they feel confident and capable in their community as a result of their CLC experience.
- In alignment with their mission, CLC was interested in learning how CLC alumni work to make a positive community impact. CLC alumni were most likely to respond that they volunteer (80.9%), followed by serving on a committee (71.9%) and serving on a board (67.8%).



Cleveland Leadership Center's mission is to build a continuum of civic leaders committed to our community's excellence by serving as a catalyst for civic engagement.

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- CLC alumni report that their CLC experience was most likely to shape their attitudes about leadership in the community (76.9%) and leadership practices and behaviors in the community (75.7%).
- Over 800 different organizations, initiatives, or causes were identified by alumni as the community spaces in which they invest their time and energy.
- Data from this survey and both previous ones suggest that CLC alumni are consistently much more likely to volunteer than are other members of the general adult population. Respondents reported spending 15.6% of their time in volunteer activities, far above the estimated 9.8% of adults Americans who volunteer.
- Respondents overwhelmingly agree that they:
 - Stay informed about Cleveland’s civic assets, issues, and stakeholders (90.7%)
 - Think critically about how the relationships of the above impact the health of the community (87.7%)
 - Use what they know about the community to envision Cleveland’s future (79.5%)
 - Seek opportunities to form relationships with people from a variety of backgrounds (90.3%)
 - Actively listen to understand diverse perspectives and opinions of others (96.9%)
 - Interact regularly with people who are different from them (79.7%)
 - Expand their network by building meaningful relationships with others (87.5%)
 - Find the most appropriate ways to contribute their strengths as a leader (86.6%)
 - Their actions as a leader are consistent with their values and personal vision (96.1%)
 - Accept they have a personal responsibility to the community (93%)
 - Find community engagement opportunities that reflect their interests and abilities (84.7%).
 - Work strategically with diverse community stakeholders to effect positive change (72.2%).
 - Believe people can make a difference in their community regardless of position or status (94.2%)
 - Inspire others to make a difference in the community through their attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs (78.4%)
- Further, almost equal or higher percentage of respondents indicate that their CLC experience impacted their current level of agreement with these statements.
- However, 59.5% reported agreeing that they take risks and persevere in the community, even when there is a chance of failure, with 62.7% reporting that their CLC experience impacted their





agreement. This is a key item to note. While alumni believe people can make a difference and work to inspire others, taking risks in the face of failure remains a daunting prospect.

- The 2022 survey added four new questions informed by feedback alumni provided in focus groups that followed up the 2019 survey. The open-ended questions explored four areas: leadership skills during community transitions, skills needed for the evolving COVID era, social media leadership skills, and building regional collaborative leadership. Networking, Passion, Communication, Collaboration, Strategy, Vision, Flexibility, and Listening were the primary themes that emerged from all responses to these questions.
- The findings of this survey are consistent with previous surveys. The remarkable continuity in the responses gives strong evidence that CLC program alumni do indeed share widespread positive attitudes about the importance of the core learning goals that are included in CLC programs.

Opportunities

The open-ended responses suggest there is an opportunity for CLC to expand their education and continue development of their programming:

- For instance, the first is to note the emerging support for alumni programming to keep alumni engaged and see their peers. The continued mentioning of network and collaboration bring forth the need and interest in continued connection.
- The second could be opportunity to expand the curriculum that is long standing. The social media conversation brings forth an opportunity to create a new section of leadership development which is unique and critical to the future of social justice work.
- Another suggestion includes creating clear and direct definitions for key terms and concepts identified as themes in the qualitative sections that alumni can take with them. This will inform the community conversation while bringing a unifying language to community engagement work. It would be a chance to create another layer of impact while directing that conversation.
- Alumni did have pushback and challenge for the way in which CLC touches on community issues centered diversity and inclusion. The call for CLC to engage in tough conversations that direct the social movements in this way was evidenced throughout the qualitative anecdotes. With the programs existing in CLC, this could be an ideal time to explore the current curriculum and enhance content to match the call coming from alumni.



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Cleveland Leadership Center Guiding Framework

The Cleveland Leadership Center’s evaluation process was developed as a systemic, sustainable approach to gain an understanding of how CLC programs impact participants. Evaluation informs the ongoing design of the organization’s offerings to optimize efforts to create a continuum of committed community leaders in Cleveland.

Cleveland Leadership Center program curricula are designed to achieve the four clearly defined guiding framework outcomes, which are collectively aimed at achieving the organization’s mission.



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