



A FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT



Center for Leadership Development

### **About the AED Center for Leadership Development**

The AED Center for Leadership Development strives to facilitate the emergence, growth, and support of effective leadership at all levels of society. Our expertise lies in the design and delivery of high quality, comprehensive leadership development programs, with an emphasis on learning, creativity, and networking. Staff are literate in a broad range of theoretical constructs, best practices, resources and tools that can be applied to build and launch new initiatives or to strengthen existing efforts. We understand the importance of strategic partnerships in planning, implementing, and evaluating all of our work. The Center has a solid record of advancing opportunity, equity, and inclusion to assure that the leadership of the future has major impact and is diverse in all respects.

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DEVELOPMENT

Ken Williams





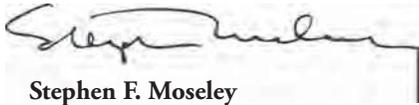
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## FOREWORD

AED is pleased to present this thought provoking essay from Ken Williams on leadership development. Fresh ways of cultivating courageous, imaginative, and effective leadership are necessary if we are to realize the critical, lasting changes that respect and honor human dignity. Extreme poverty, discrimination, and lack of opportunity are still major challenges that the human family faces as the world becomes more interconnected and reliant on the sharing of information and resources. Our society needs leaders of every kind, and in every place, to step up and do their part to build and heal our relationships and to protect and renew our planet.

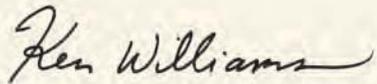
At AED, we are committed to embedding leadership development in all of our work. We believe that our role, as a global nonprofit, is to encourage every person we touch to value every person they touch. And that really is the essence of leadership. This essay provides an original framework for comprehensive leadership program design, as well as some tools for reflection. We hope that it influences your thinking and commitment to fostering the growth of those you serve and support. We look forward to hearing from you.



**Stephen F. Moseley**  
President and CEO  
Academy for Educational Development

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author thanks the many individuals who have influenced his thinking and served as role models of great leadership in his life: Robert Sokolowski, the thought leader; Michael Clay, the advisor; Sandra Lauffer, the mentor; Bonnie Barhyte, the encourager; Natalia Lopez, the caring ally; our New Voices Fellows, the courageous activists; Bruce Rashbaum, the ethical physician; and the author's family and friends. Appreciation goes also to our design team, Melanie Yu, Anne Quito, Brian Lemen, Brian Campbell, and Jill Vitick, as well as our copy editor Kaaren Christopherson, the team that brought the publication to its finish line. Leadership development is increasingly becoming a profession, though leadership is not. I hope that anyone who cares about improving our world – especially about creating opportunity, addressing inequity, and healing communities – will find something here worth taking to heart.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Ken Williams**  
Senior Technical Advisor  
AED Center for Leadership Development



## I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership and leadership development are popular topics today. It seems as though there is a new book on leadership every day, often with the latest adjective for what leadership is all about: charismatic leadership, connective leadership, adaptive leadership, transformational leadership, and so forth.<sup>1</sup> The theoretical frameworks are powerful and compelling, but it is difficult to decide “which school to follow,” if one should choose to do so. There is yet to emerge a “meta-” or “grand unified theory” that brings everything about leadership together into a coherent whole.<sup>2</sup>

Concurrent with the construction of leadership theory, leadership development has emerged as a practice, with programs, consultants, reports, and networking opportunities proliferating. There is tremendous variety in what the managers of leadership programs have to work with, and view as relevant and essential. It is hard to keep track of the latest innovations and newest tools of the trade.<sup>3</sup>

Philanthropy is clearly interested in leadership development. One need only look at the objectives of national, community, and issue-based fellowships; the provision of support for skills-based training and executive coaching; and recent publications

from Grantmakers for Effective Organizations and the Ford Foundation’s *GrantCraft*. One also sees evidence of growing concern among foundations about intergenerational dynamics and leadership transitions, as some of the Baby Boomers attempt to retire, often with great difficulty.<sup>4</sup>

“LEADERSHIP IS THE CONTEXTUAL AND ADAPTIVE PROCESS OF EFFECTIVELY ENGAGING ONE ANOTHER TO ACHIEVE MEANINGFUL CHANGE BASED ON VALUE. IT IS THE RESOURCEFUL ART AND SCIENCE OF CREATING A LEGACY TOGETHER.”

– KEN WILLIAMS –

Given the reality of limited resources, it is critical that investments in and approaches to leadership development are

built on a foundation of knowledge, curiosity, empathy, and passion for meaningful change that is based on value. Ultimately, leadership development is about getting opportunities and resources to people who can contribute, in inspiring ways, to the success of our organizations, communities, fields, nation, world, and species. It is an engaging process that blends both art and science with hope.

For about 15 years, I’ve been puzzling about what makes a good leadership development program. I have had the honor of serving as National Field Director for a federal child health program (Emergency Medical Services for Children), through its national resource center, and then as the director of a national social justice fellowship program, New Voices, an initiative funded by the Ford Foundation. Both programs emphasize the

importance of forming a collaborative community, acquiring knowledge and skills, addressing inequity, and facilitating the changes that can save lives or improve the quality of lives.

Simultaneously, I've been scavenging for good ideas, resources, and contacts by networking at national conferences or gatherings, such as the International Leadership Association, Leadership Learning Community, and Linkage, Inc., Best Practices in Leadership Development Summit. I'm inspired by my colleagues in the field, and these meetings help me to rethink, revamp, and retool. Because the leadership development field is still relatively young as a profession, there is always something new to be excited about, or fascinated with, and an opportunity for a new partnership around every corner.<sup>5</sup>

In the eighties, I got my academic training as an aspiring "phenomenologist." By that I mean that I was a philosophy major and was interested in finding better ways to describe and make sense of the deep structures of the human opportunity.<sup>6</sup> I struggled with choosing between the ivory tower and the common square. I realize now that that is not a choice one has to make. I have found amazing people in the leadership development field, inspiring leaders in their own right, who are searching intently, productively, reflectively, and collectively for answers to fundamental questions, for the theoretical frames and practical solutions that can help program participants and community members grow and achieve ambitious goals together.<sup>7</sup>

Over the past two years, I have had the gift of taking a closer look at what is going on today in the field of leadership development. Through a planning grant from the Atlantic Philanthropies, I reviewed a sample of recent literature on leadership development. An end product of this effort was AED's new publication, *Nonprofit Leadership Development: An Annotated Bibliography*. The bibliography presents about 70 resources under the interrelated headings of leadership theory, leadership development, assessment tools, mentoring and coaching, next generation leadership, transition and succession, and program evaluation. It is by no means comprehensive (as that would be impossible), and there are some gaps that we recognize and aim to tackle at a later point. We hope that the bibliography contains resources of interest and value to those who invest in, design, manage, and/or evaluate leadership programs.<sup>8</sup>

With additional support from AED, I was also able to attend two key conferences on leadership development, the Linkage, Inc., Best Practices in Leadership Development Summit and the annual conference of the International Leadership Association. The combination of the literature review, networking at conferences, and continuing to direct the New Voices program, which focuses on human rights, was helpful, because it gave me a chance to reflect on some of the things that are happening in the corporate

sector, at universities, and in communities and practice areas. Meanwhile, AED has been designing and implementing a leadership program for its own employees, and I have been pondering ways to strengthen that effort.

## II. CONSTRUCTING THE WHEEL

While at the Linkage, Inc., Best Practices Summit, I noticed some innovative ideas in the corporate sector, but also gaps in the leadership development strategies of some of the well-capitalized companies with household names. I thought that some of the grassroots groups I've seen in action over the years are more creative and effective in preparing and supporting leaders, in part because they are often more holistic and do not tend to reduce leadership to a limited set of skills and behaviors. Thinking about the various models I've seen over the years, I began to work on a schematic for designing a comprehensive leadership development system that could bring greater clarity to what is going on and to what is possible. For about a month, I wrestled with this framework, going back and forth with our creative graphic design team.

The end result or product of this effort is what we are now calling “the wheel.” The wheel is a flexible *tool* for designing new leadership programs and a *lens* for analyzing and improving existing ones. It can also influence evaluation processes that look at the factors and assumptions about factors that can contribute to the attainment of specific outcomes. The wheel is a stimulus for getting advice throughout the process of program design, implementation, improvement, and evaluation.

The wheel has ten components. Each is a broad strategy, “idea space,” or set of opportunities and experiences that helps group information, tactics, tools, resources, exchanges, and other vehicles for development.<sup>9</sup> The ten considerations are:

- inspiration
- exposure
- synergy
- accountability
- integration
- practice
- connectivity
- attention
- creativity
- positioning

Each element can serve as a grip in the program design process and as a focal point for exploration and dialogue about what matters in the leadership program or system.<sup>10</sup> That conversation itself, about what is most essential, important, or beneficial, should take place concurrently with the program, and not just at the beginning or end. It is foolish, also, to try to base every design decision on statistical evidence about correlations, if it is always possible, necessary, or even ethical to do so, since we are now just at the frontier of trying to generate that evidence.<sup>11</sup> History is more robust than mathematics, and does not often proceed in predictable algebraic, geometric, or syllogistic fashion, particularly at a time of global interconnection when every moment brings new opportunities, synergies, and breakthroughs.<sup>12</sup>



Diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural fluency are cross-cutting themes.

Created by Ken Williams, Senior Technical Advisor, AED Center for Leadership Development, 2008.

LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS ARE  
NURTURING SPACES FOR  
EXPLORATION AND EXCHANGE,  
INCUBATORS FOR DECISIONS  
AND CHOICES, AND PLATFORMS  
FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION.

A single bit of information, a contact made or a relationship forged, a new idea, a distinction or framework, an opportunity — all of these things can change someone's life. In fact, they can change the whole world. Leadership programs are nurturing spaces for exploration and exchange, incubators for decisions and choices, and platforms for collective action. In constructing and justifying a program, there are many judgment calls. One's theory of

change should be grounded in a reflection on one's own narrative, analyzing turns and milestones in history, reviewing whatever quantitative and qualitative data are available, and input and feedback from people of varying backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.

To quickly give you a sense of the meaning of the wheel, I will touch briefly on each component. **Inspiration** refers to the profound impact on a program participant of role models, narrative, compelling data, and personal experiences. These are all elements that can inspire a person to take action. **Integration** means reflective practice — becoming more aware of one's beliefs, values, interests, strengths, passions, and sources of enjoyment. It is about becoming a whole person who is able to deploy one's full self effectively. Concern about the level of **attention** that a program participant is receiving acknowledges the gains a person can realize from good supervision, mentoring, coaching, peer support, and consultation or technical assistance. We know already, of course, the importance of attention in the development of children. The same is really true for all of us, from cradle to grave. We can all benefit from an empathetic attention that is honest, constructive, and supportive.

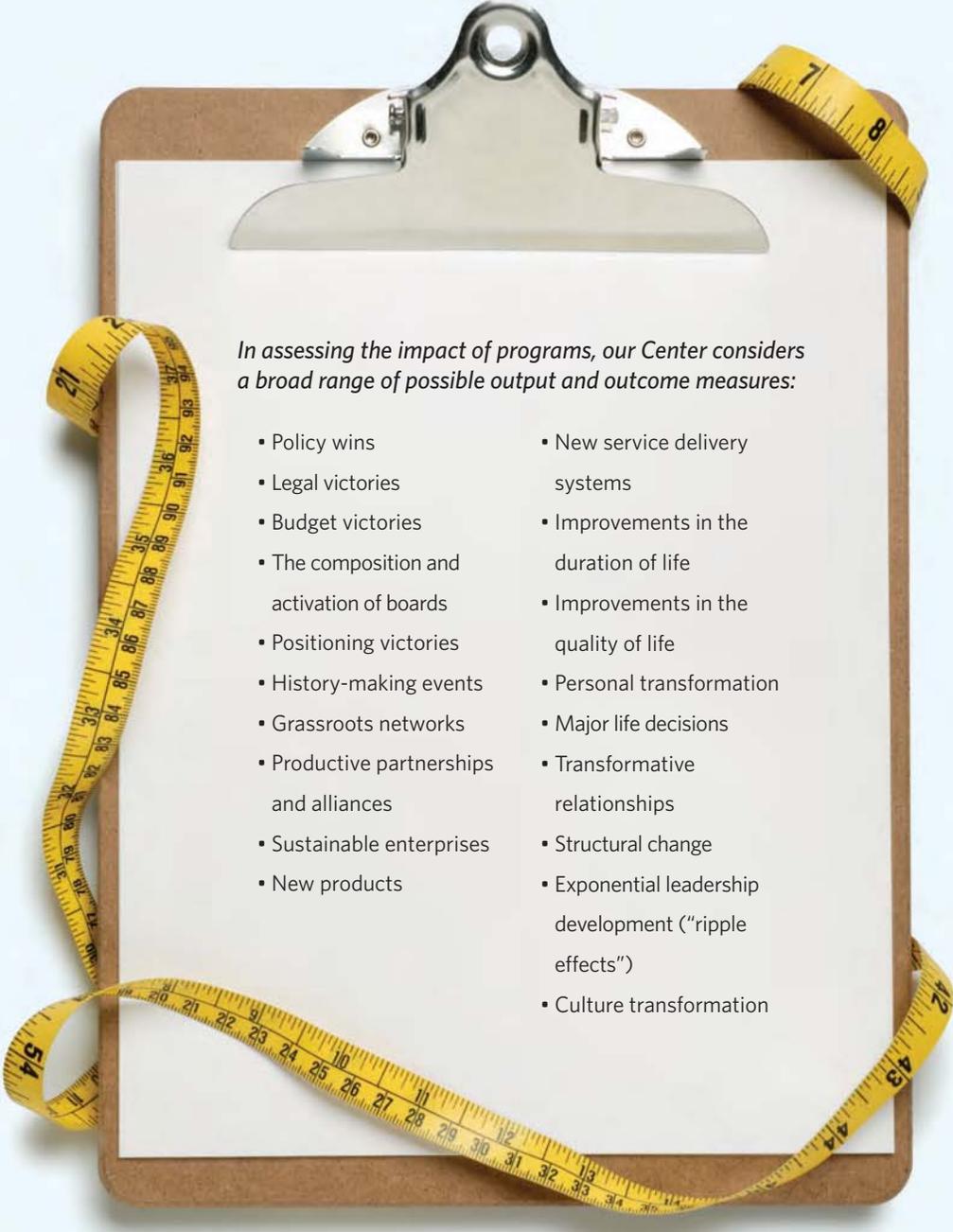
**Exposure** is obtained through shadowing and educational opportunities — taking a class, for example, that introduces a participant to the pressing issues in a field or to new perspectives. Another form of exposure is travel to other communities through site visits and exchanges. We know how much these experiences can contribute to a person's development. We administer an international visitors program, funded by the State Department. The activity welcomes leaders from all over the world for networking with and learning from experts and best practices in the United States. "Virtual travel" to Web sites and vicarious exploration of history and culture through film can be mechanisms for exposing program participants to new ideas, frameworks, information, and perspectives. Our emphasis on **practice** incorporates the use of

simulations and role plays, supporting participants in trying out new leadership behaviors and approaches. Here we state that it is not enough to learn about leadership competencies and effectiveness, to have read a book or to have gone through an assessment process. Successful leadership development entails practicing new behaviors and developing new habits, becoming more comfortable with the stresses and strains of leadership, as well as the pleasures and sense of pride. The dimension of **creativity** registers the leader's role in designing solutions to problems and launching new enterprises that are based on the creative breakthroughs that are often greater than incremental innovations. Leaders can also engage artists strategically, as well as their own personal creativity, in advancing and strengthening their work. **Synergy** focuses on teamwork and collaboration. It is the relational and partnering side of leadership. It reflects alliances, and it builds on human and institutional interdependencies. **Connectivity** is achieved through strategic networking, leveraging technology — as we see with list-servs and social networks — and staying on top of the major news and important information that are pertinent to the leader's work. Broad band access will be an important part of the infrastructure for future leadership development, as it is a critical factor in the complex equation for ending disparity.

**Positioning** means attaining formal or informal authority, credence, influence, and support. Here we acknowledge that everyone in society is “in a position” of some sort, whether low or high, powerful or marginalized, respected or devalued. The ability to create or facilitate opportunities and direct the flow of resources is also a sign of one's position. It is encouraging when one of our participants who values and desires to serve others, attains a position of influence. Much of our work at AED is about repositioning those whom we serve within the context of civil society and the global economy. **Accountability** relates to the leader's ethic, his attunement to applicable law, and the conscientious stewardship of resources. It means that the leader is bringing about changes and gains that are beyond the financial and opportunity costs of a program to the larger society. It also means a responsibility for results and for sharing lessons learned. The “Wheel,” as I hope you can see, is a robust and stimulating framework for both designing new leadership programs and analyzing existing ones.

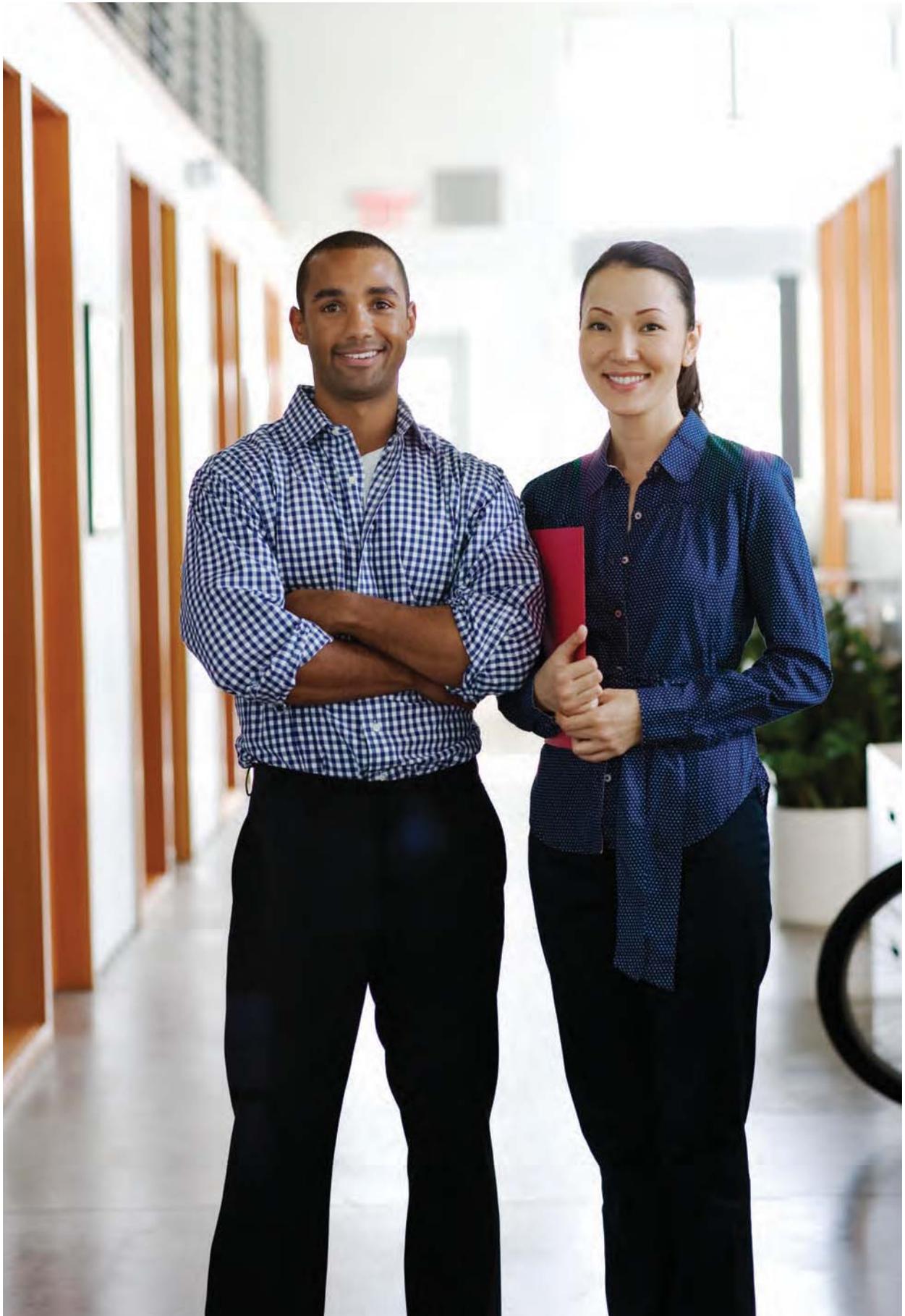
### III. OPPORTUNITY, DIVERSITY, AND EQUITY

In addition to the ten components of the wheel, there are the cross-cutting themes of identity, diversity, equity, inclusion, and “cultural fluency.”<sup>13</sup> These can animate the whole body of the program. I think that a leadership development initiative can very easily turn into a sham or a fraud if it does not in some way tackle the “isms” (e.g., racism, sexism, class-ism, ableism, ageism, heterosexism, nationalism, etc.), the questions of privilege, prejudice, superiority, discrimination, dominance, and indifference. The constructs and differentiation of gender, race, class, orientation, disability, origin, culture, and so forth often play a leading role and driving force in our lives. Appreciating the dynamics and the intersections of these frames is strategic. Responding to their impact is a moral



*In assessing the impact of programs, our Center considers a broad range of possible output and outcome measures:*

- Policy wins
- Legal victories
- Budget victories
- The composition and activation of boards
- Positioning victories
- History-making events
- Grassroots networks
- Productive partnerships and alliances
- Sustainable enterprises
- New products
- New service delivery systems
- Improvements in the duration of life
- Improvements in the quality of life
- Personal transformation
- Major life decisions
- Transformative relationships
- Structural change
- Exponential leadership development (“ripple effects”)
- Culture transformation



imperative, especially if we believe in the worth of people. A program that lacks any consideration of the various forms of identity, not only as social, political, economic, and cultural constructs, but as fertile “idea spaces” in their own right, is missing out. Leadership development is about creating conditions in which people can help one another understand both people and things and overcome misunderstanding as well.<sup>14</sup>

The most powerful algorithm for leadership development is the formation of a diverse community of participants. Diversity, understood broadly, will be recognized as the most critical and nourishing ingredient in tomorrow’s leadership development. In fact, nothing has proven more powerful in our own leadership development work than connecting people with different experiences, perspectives, tasks, and approaches to achieving change. Program participants who share this opportunity to learn from and collaborate with one another in community, where there is individuation without individualism, never forget the experience and will look for it for the rest of their lives. Diversity, not only in terms of “the numbers,” but in terms of the transformative relationships, is both a starting point and an outcome of a great program, especially if one hopes to assure the long-term sustainability of change, and of those who will lead the change. Since a core element in an authentic leadership development program is reflective conversation, the composition of the cohort, “who is in the room,” is tremendously important to reflect upon and justify.

In the future of leadership development, it will be even safer for participants to share their perspectives and experiences about identity factors and to seek greater understanding, with due regard for personal needs and boundaries, and sufficient time to process. It will be easier for program participants to learn about the dimensions, twists, and quirks — the history, data, and cultural dynamics — associated with each form of identity. How is gender similar to, yet different from race? One need only think about the conversations that took place, and the choices that were made, during the 2008 election, as Hillary Clinton and Barak Obama sought the nomination for president. There was a struggle between those who thought that identity factors such as gender and race should matter, particularly given the current inequitable state of affairs and the evocative and transformative power of symbol, and those who felt that they should not have any bearing at all.

Is there such a thing as “straight privilege”? Should people with disabilities be identified in more positive terms such as “resilient people” or “people of courage”? How do we overcome the notion or prejudice that individuals without formal education are less intelligent than those who have it? Do our recent immigrants feel welcome and valued?

Is one identity construct more fundamental or primordial than the others (e.g., culture, gender, race, class)? Should we try to avoid focusing on the comparative suffering of groups based on identity (e.g., whether people of color suffer more than lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people; urban more than rural folks; blind people more than deaf people, etc.)? And where and how do these frames of identity intersect or congeal in significant ways?

Exploration of the dynamics of opportunity and equity are part of the connective tissue in rich leadership development practice. There is sufficient time and space for reflection, sharing, familiarization, and inspiration. Otherwise, you can easily end up with management training in disguise as a leadership development program. Leadership development advances when it honors people's backgrounds and experiences, yet helps participants avoid reductionism (only viewing this person as a black woman or this one as a gay man) and the expectations of representation. It is important to make a sustained effort to appreciate what people enjoy, are interested in, are passionate about, and where their strengths lie. Leadership development is largely about helping people discover and build on the foundations of what matters most to them.<sup>15</sup>

#### IV. HOLISTIC APPROACHES

Many people are looking for opportunities to participate in programs that are holistic and don't expect them to "check major parts of themselves" at the door. We see this especially with the desire that is often expressed by our program participants for some time and space to discuss healthy balanced living and spirituality. It does little good for a participant to learn how to speak in public if he or she doesn't have the energy or motivation to do so, or lacks the time and wherewithal necessary to develop a vision and message that is compelling and deeply rooted in beliefs, values, and experiences.

I've puzzled over this question of what it means to be holistic. On one side of the equation is one's view about the structure of the human person, or one's cultural frame of reference. In the United States, one hears, in common parlance, of faculties or capacities such as mind, heart, spirit, conscience, will, and body. Correlated or connected with these powers are values such as truth, compassion, freedom, beauty, justice, love, good, health, strength, flexibility, and the wisdom that ties it all together. Holistic leadership development can help people integrate, make greater sense to themselves and one another, eliminate contradictions, manage tensions, and deploy their full selves. Most of us tend to "lead" from a dominant part of ourselves. One person approaches things primarily from an intellectual vantage point (mind?). Another is known primarily for caring about others' suffering (heart?). One frequently helps the group celebrate and renew itself (spirit?). Another asks the community to think about the justice of relations within the group and not just externally (conscience?). Then there is the one encouraging everyone to eat raw foods and do yoga, or take a jog in the morning (body?).<sup>16</sup> It's great when you have a little of all of this going on.

With respect to spirituality, we are talking especially about the desire for freedom from draining or demoralizing limitations, the quest for something beautiful with which to be enamored or dedicated to, and looking for underlying unities and starting points for one's life. Metaphors, symbols, rituals, and stories can be a very powerful part of the sharing in a leadership program and exploring one's sense of a finish line or hoped for cycle of recurring opportunities and experiences. The Buddhist shares what it means to her to cross over to or from the "shore," and to attain wisdom through emptiness or self-less compassion.<sup>17</sup> A Christian speaks of love and articulates his vision of the "final banquet" and who is at the table.<sup>18</sup> The Jew considers her God to be "a rock" and a source of refuge, and is journeying to a new notion of "the promised land."<sup>19</sup> The Muslim talks about the "garden" of peace and enjoyment that will serve as a reward to those who have fought for justice.<sup>20</sup> The Hindu explains how he honors the divinity or *Bráhma*n within everyone.<sup>21</sup> The Taoist speaks of balance, harmony, energy management, and vitality.<sup>22</sup> The Native American shares his "medicine."<sup>23</sup> The African exemplifies "Ubuntu" or humanity to all.<sup>24</sup> Participants of other faiths chime in. The agnostic is curious and listens attentively. And the atheist has good taste, somehow remains generous, and prefers a little sarcasm over cynicism.<sup>25</sup> People talk about the traditions they want to preserve and the culture they want to create. Faith, religion, and science become resources for leadership development and community, rather than contests for supremacy. It is a luxury to share at this level and to afford it the trust and patience it requires. The patient, empathetic, deep listening is often what sets a leader apart from a manager. Those who find a community that is this open and supportive may feel like a baby resting safely in its mother's arms. It is an incredible gift!

## V. THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF INSTITUTIONS

Like our faith traditions and religious institutions, our colleges and universities must also be viewed as resources and held accountable for the contributions they can make to sustainable leadership development and support. Outside campus borders, professors and students, coming from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, can share information about sources of data, offer emerging frameworks and useful distinctions, build the confidence of program participants, and help program design teams assure rigor and due diligence around program content. They can do this in humility, with curiosity and openness to influence, without trying to control everything for the sake of ego or recognition as an expert ("peacock leadership"). After all, the democratizing of knowledge through the Internet and other forms of media, strategic applications of the lens of historical consciousness, and the flattening of hierarchies through battles for mutual respect and appreciation, have been weakening elitism in some contexts.<sup>26</sup> Smart programs are based on the assumption that valuable truth can come from anyone, whether that person is a professor or someone fresh out of prison (the two, of course, may overlap). Meanwhile, boards of colleges and universities need to revisit what they consider to constitute a valuable education, to have merit in a professor's curriculum *vitae*, and strive to become not only research institutions and publishing factories, but also *communities of wisdom*.<sup>27</sup>

Our corporations can also demonstrate exemplary leadership for society, through the reform of governance structures and the creation of synergistic relationships across traditional boundaries to address the deleterious aspects of individualistic run-away capitalism.<sup>28</sup> Defining “what makes a good company” is an extremely important conversation when articulating mission, vision, strategic directions, and operations systems. Businesses are responsible for the value they add to society at large and not just for the profit they convey to a select group of shareholders. Balanced scorecards that measure overall performance in more than financial terms are an important management innovation.<sup>29</sup> But they only become *leadership tools* when they are designed, approved, improved, and evaluated through structured, inclusive dialogue. Corporate boards and executives need to wrestle more with this ethical process of defining and communicating what success looks like.

The nonprofit sector continues to play a critical role in developing leadership of almost every type and for almost every purpose. Increasingly though, I hear about the concern of activists and grassroots community members about issues of privilege, accountability, performance, and cost structures. The term “nonprofit industrial complex” has been gaining ground in some of the more radical circles. Funders are also worried about outcomes and “return on investment.” Meanwhile competition for public attention and financial support is every bit as feverous in the nonprofit arena as one sees in the

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corporate sector. Pressure to win grants and contracts on the basis of price points, while skimping on program quality or employee well-being, is rampant. Once again, the composition and engagement of boards; talent recruitment, development, and encouragement; strategic partnerships; and the use of well-funded, innovative performance measurement systems are essential. Every nonprofit should work hard to build a compelling case for its existence, demonstrate the value of its

contributions, and be known for more than its aspirations and anecdotes. It should faithfully listen and be accountable not only to those that pay its bills, but to those it aims to serve. Meanwhile, funders must carefully scale their expectations to the resources they provide, collaboratively define minimum standards for performance, and help with sharing the dreams and telling the stories of their grantees.

Government has several special roles to play in this whole process of developing respectable leadership throughout society: a) analysis and reporting on the composition of public

leadership; b) fostering mechanisms for inclusion, transparency, and accountability; c) convening groups for networking and exchange, exploration of ideas, and dialogues about issues and challenges; d) encouraging the formation of strategic partnerships; e) facilitating ongoing public discourse and political decision making around quality of life definitions and standards; f) funding research, peer-reviews, and participatory evaluations; g) establishing clearinghouses and technical assistance centers; and h) creating opportunities and channeling resources to address the inequities and disparities that are deemed intolerable by an informed and empathetic citizenry.

## VI. POWER, INFLUENCE, AND DEMOCRACY

In authentic leadership development, we cannot escape the complex dynamics of disparate power, respect, and resources. Participants often want to talk about what power is, who has it and why, how they're using it, and whether and how to get more of it to apply to good purpose.<sup>30</sup> A great program looks at power through social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental lenses or frames of reference. Ideally it also helps participants gain confidence in their abilities to analyze structures and systems, exercise power constructively, assume positions of facilitative leadership (where occupying a powerful position does not necessarily mean holding office), and attempt to influence the story of governance and the shape of policies and budgets. Concurrent with the conversations about power dynamics, the participants and program alumni should themselves be empowered to partner in the design, implementation, improvement, and evaluation of the leadership program, with due regard for available resources, time, and the needs and interests of individual participants and of the group as a whole. Venues for input, feedback, and building consensus at strategic moments are essential. Even so, program staff should not disengage or abdicate responsibility for design processes and outcomes, but should instead conduct research, seek consultation, strive to enrich, play devil's advocate, put a check on dominant personalities and parochial interests, and occasionally make some tough decisions when necessary to moving forward, with as much love and justice as one can.

This brings us to the topic of collective leadership, which is a strong theme in the discourse of today's leadership development community. On the one hand, it is generally accepted that not all decisions can be made collectively. Everything would get bogged down in a sea of process. Likewise, it is commonly acknowledged that everyone's valuable view does not have equal probability of validity, when taking into consideration levels of familiarity, mastery, and craft. But facilitative leaders can take conscientious steps to honor respectful debate, avoid force, maximize input, and build consensus. Where possible, major moves can be approved by votes or score-and-rank systems that measure the center of gravity of groups. In between the launches of major pieces of shared work, wise leaders rely on credibility, mutual respect, persuasion, openness to influence, and the authorization of governing bodies and stakeholders.

Democracy, within society and organizations, is a goal and a process based on a belief in ontological equality, that no one is inferior to another by nature. Such a view can be grounded in spirituality, anthropology, phenomenology, historical arguments, physics, chemistry, DNA theory, and a lack of evidence to the contrary. Social, political, economic, and cultural equality are deserving goals that reflect a commitment to valuing one another in meaningful or substantial ways. In our imperfect world, this means that leadership involves difficult processes of wrestling, judgment calls, negotiations, compromises, and situations that call for creativity. Leaders often have to find creative ways to toggle between the circles of trust building, sharing, and consensus building and the directional arrows of forward movement.

### VII. THE SPECIAL ROLE OF THE ARTS

Powerful leadership development is also permeated by the arts. You can discover and share truth, as much through film, narrative, theater, poetry, music, cooking, and the fine arts as you can through training and text. For example, a very inspiring vision of race relations or healthy gender dynamics can be communicated through dance. Artists can bless a program with stimulating and enriching content for consideration and appreciation, and participants can access their own depths through creative expression. This does not mean reducing everything to finger painting or molding clay, however beneficial those activities may be. But by engaging the senses, people can help one another develop broader and deeper sensibilities. Members of the community can explore the beauty they desire to find or construct in the world, and the ugliness they can no longer tolerate. The arts can help us connect emotionally with the work of leading and following. They can challenge, move, encourage, and heal us. Leaders who carry the arts in their backpacks and forge alliances with artists demonstrate resourceful brilliance. The sharing of our arts, our treasures, can also help us get out of flat or “two dimensional views” of one another and see the other sides.

### VIII. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Perhaps the most uncharted territory in leadership development practice today is its intersection with contemporary science. Should leadership programs include conversations about the significance of evolutionary theory, brain development, DNA, the chemical composition of the body, the ability to extend life, relativity theory, quantum mechanics, the abuse of science through advanced weapons development, etc.? Should leaders care that there is speculation that there may be ten dimensions to space, in addition to one for time?<sup>31</sup> Most of all, how does one

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DEMONSTRATE RESOURCEFUL  
BRILLIANCE.



ground ethics when science at its furthest frontiers is governed largely by mathematics and analogy? The advances of the sciences are provocative, influential, and perplexing (even to the scientists themselves). The inaccessibility or unintelligibility of the scientific method and its findings to many common folk leads to ethical questions with which leaders must sooner or later reckon. What is the right balance of power or equilibrium (if any) among scientists, politicians, religious leaders, and other stakeholders and influentials, and how do we better manage the tensions and the conflicts among these groups? The openness, empathy, and curiosity that are needed in facilitating these larger conversations about humanity's objectives are precisely the virtues we need in our prominent leaders today.<sup>32</sup>

One other potentially valuable resource for leadership development is emerging technology. By way of example, in addition to computer hardware, there is an increasing number of cost-effective Web-based or downloadable software solutions for making connections, sharing information, facilitating collaboration, telling stories, and much more. On the one side are the tools and the applications, which stimulate curiosity and a sense of wonder. What is a portal? blog? wiki? Webinar? vodcast? podcast? screencast? social network? social bookmarking? RSS feed? bulk texting? mashup? On the other side are the functional needs of groups, organizations, and communities. They wonder whether and how they can find accessible solutions, with intuitive interfaces and useful functionalities, to address specific needs and challenges. What is the best solution for learning? Strategy development? Board engagement? Budgeting? Donor development? Community organizing? Popular education? Data collection? Performance measurement? And so on. Then there is the challenge of figuring out how best to teach the new applications, in culturally and age appropriate ways, and incorporating the arts and multi-media approaches. It is possible, for example, to use short videos from sources such as Common Craft, Truveo, and HowCast, simulations through Adobe Captivate or Camtasia, games, comics, tip sheets, and exercises to help participants get oriented to the tools.<sup>33</sup> One can also use the technologies themselves in creative ways to teach the technologies, a blog on blogs, a wiki on wikis, and so forth across platforms. In other words, one need not rely only on manuals and excess text to facilitate the learning process. Furthermore, it adds color and texture and inspiration to share examples of how gadgetry and software can be used in smart ways, across the digital divide.<sup>34</sup>

## IX. THE USE OF SPACE AND TIME

Access to broadband and the segmentation of cyber-space into virtual worlds are only recent examples of how divides and the divides within divides can serve as frames and raw materials for leadership development. In the New Voices program, we have taken note of divides of every form, such as geography. We have had participants from dozens of communities spread throughout the United States. In addition, about

a fifth of our Fellows are immigrants, hailing especially from Latin America and Africa. In the course of the community's exchange, and those of our National Advisory Group and grant selection panels, we have had discussions about "geographic privilege," how opportunities and resources can be concentrated spatially, and how individuals can be made to feel as though they literally don't belong or fit in. This can be true whether one is looking through the lenses of regions, coasts, cities, suburbs, towns, villages, blocks, floors, rooms, and even sections of buses. Space matters. What can be more fundamental than making someone feel welcome? How space is studied and organized within a leadership program can be significant. Even personal space and conscious or subconscious acts of distancing, and the avoidance of intimacy, are sometimes worth discussing, when people are interested and willing.

Some participants will struggle less with the divides associated with space, and more with those associated with time, the time they have to address their own needs and those of others, to tackle challenges, to pursue interests and goals, and to spend with one another and those they care about. Is there a difference between time management and *time leadership*? And does leadership always have to be a "race against the clock"? They may wonder when and why a sense of urgency must overtake a sense of readiness. They may look into ways that people, due to expectations associated with constructs such as gender, race, class, occupation, and disability, have less available time than others, to do the things they really want to do, to rest and relax, even to read and play with their kids. Is there such a thing as "the privilege of time"?<sup>35</sup>

This brings us to the topic of death, which is often the conscious or subconscious horizon for leadership. In leadership development at the frontier, it will be *okay* to have honest conversations about death — including, of course, who is dying and why they are dying. Death is the one experience that all of the participants in a program will have been affected by in some way and can anticipate, yet it is the trillion pound elephant in the room, and in polite society as well. This brave conversation need not disorient, depress, or overwhelm us. It can help us understand ourselves and one another and social, political, economic, and environmental dynamics. It can connect, soften, and motivate us. We can also have the deeper dialogue about what we mean by "quality of life" and what it is that gives us purpose and comfort. No one should be forced to have this conversation, of course. It is a matter of interest and readiness. However, fairness and forward motion require that generativity (what we can give *birth* to), vitality (how we can gain and transfer energy), courage (striving to overcome debilitating fears and defending people from harm), and healing (changing deep wounds into active wisdom) deserve more time than death, not only for the sake of mood, but because leaders and followers are always people of hope who have an enduring sense of adventure and a sense of humor that can vanquish evil.

Speaking of hope and vitality, it's a responsibility, pleasure, and honor to talk with our children about leadership. Usually the exchange will gravitate toward four basic notions: Leadership is caring about others, trying to make things better, never working alone, and possible for everyone. The wonderful thing is that kids can always give examples of how, by this or other basic definitions, they are leaders in their own right *today and not just tomorrow*. We have to help our children and youth feel worthy as participants in processes of achieving change that is based on valuing one another. Our kids have curiosity, ideals, passion, wisdom, resilience, and creativity, and can show us how to play and enjoy each other's company. In that regard, they are some of our best and most motivating leaders.

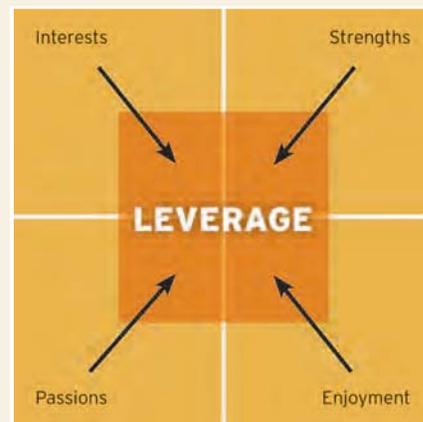
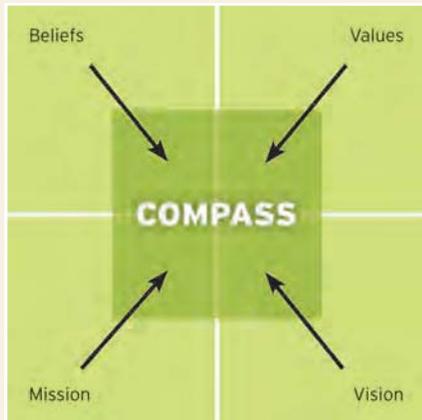
## X. CONCLUSION

Investing in leadership development is a strategic way to use limited resources to create opportunities and resources that will:

- help people open up
- accelerate learning
- forge transformative relationships
- achieve mutual understanding
- build on untapped strengths and address the weaknesses that get in the way of effectiveness
- make major life decisions and tough choices
- create and apply solutions together
- actualize the potential of participants to contribute and to facilitate the contributions of others to human welfare

Leadership development is a way to catalyze personal growth and structural change, through a set of opportunities and challenges, a support system, and enriching companionship. When practiced with care, leadership development and its associated support are the gifts that keep on giving, when ideas and programs fall to the wayside, and the beauty of human dignity is cherished all the more.<sup>36</sup>

## APPENDIX A: FRAMEWORKS FOR REFLECTIVE PRACTICES



APPENDIX B: KEY SOURCES OF POWER\*

Beauty\*\*

Talent	Positional Authority	Influence
Relationships	Integrity/ Reputation	Knowledge
Wisdom/ Sensibility	Resources	Courage/ Determination/ Purpose

\*These elements of a taxonomy of power are in random order. I do not suggest here any sequence or priority, though I believe that integrity is probably the leader's greatest asset.

\*\*As a source of power, beauty is truly in a league of its own!

## ENDNOTES

1. The use of the word "adaptive" here is a nod to Ronald Heifetz, author of *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2002.
2. The most ambitious scholarly attempt at a theoretical synthesis is recorded in Goethals, George R. and Sorenson, Georgia L.J., *The Quest for A General Theory of Leadership*. Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2000.
3. A good place to look for and hear about innovations in the field of leadership development is the annual conference of the International Leadership Association.
4. See Joslyn, Heather, "A Growing Leadership Gap: Need for qualified executives persists even as charities trim staffs." *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, April 23, 2009, pp. 29-31. On the construction of leadership pipelines, see the works of Francis Kunreuther ([www.buildingmovement.org](http://www.buildingmovement.org)) and American Humanics ([www.americanhumanics.org](http://www.americanhumanics.org)). Refer also to Williams, Ken. *Mentoring the Next Generation of Nonprofit Leaders: A Practical Guide for Managers*. Washington, D.C.: AED Center for Leadership Development, 2005. Download from [www.aed.org](http://www.aed.org). And *Are You Mentoring for Social Justice?* Kivel, Paul. Oakland: Paul Kivel and Associates, 2004, 33 pages. Download from [www.paulkivel.com](http://www.paulkivel.com).
5. The promise of collaboration among leadership programs is as much one of connecting our participant networks as it is a matter of improving program quality.
6. For an orientation to the school of phenomenology, see Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000. This is not the place for a full explanation, but I think that leadership scholars could explore ways to use Sokolowski's other works as a point of reference for constructing leadership theory. See *Presence and Absence: A Philosophical Investigation of Language and Being*; *The Phenomenology of the Human Person*; *On Moral Action*; and *Husserlian Meditations*. Of particular note for a theory of leadership is his treatment of the declarative, as well as the formative power of conversation. A phenomenological analysis would look not only at the nature or essence of leadership, but what it is to develop leadership in and through a community or polity; reflection on the properties, actions, and perspectives of the facilitators or agent(s) of leadership development; and issues of verification.
7. The Leadership Learning Community, based in Oakland, for example, has been a pioneer in facilitating the exchange of information, ideas, and resources among leadership programs. Visit [www.leadershiplearning.org](http://www.leadershiplearning.org). I'm also impressed with the work of the Leaders for a Changing World program. See [www.leadershipforchange.org](http://www.leadershipforchange.org).
8. A PDF version of the annotated bibliography can be downloaded free of charge from the publications section of the AED Web site at [www.aed.org](http://www.aed.org).
9. I first read about the term of an "idea space" in Richard Ogle, *Smart World: Breakthrough Creativity and the New Science of Ideas*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2007. An idea space is "a domain or world viewed from the intelligence embedded in it, intelligence that we can use - consciously or not - both to solve our everyday problems and to make the creative leaps that lead to breakthroughs." (Pg. 13)
10. At AED, we are exploring ways to apply "the outer ring" of the wheel to construct innovative and resourceful approaches to supporting development *in general*: personal and professional development, parenting, team building, organizational capacity building, community development, strengthening civil society, and more.

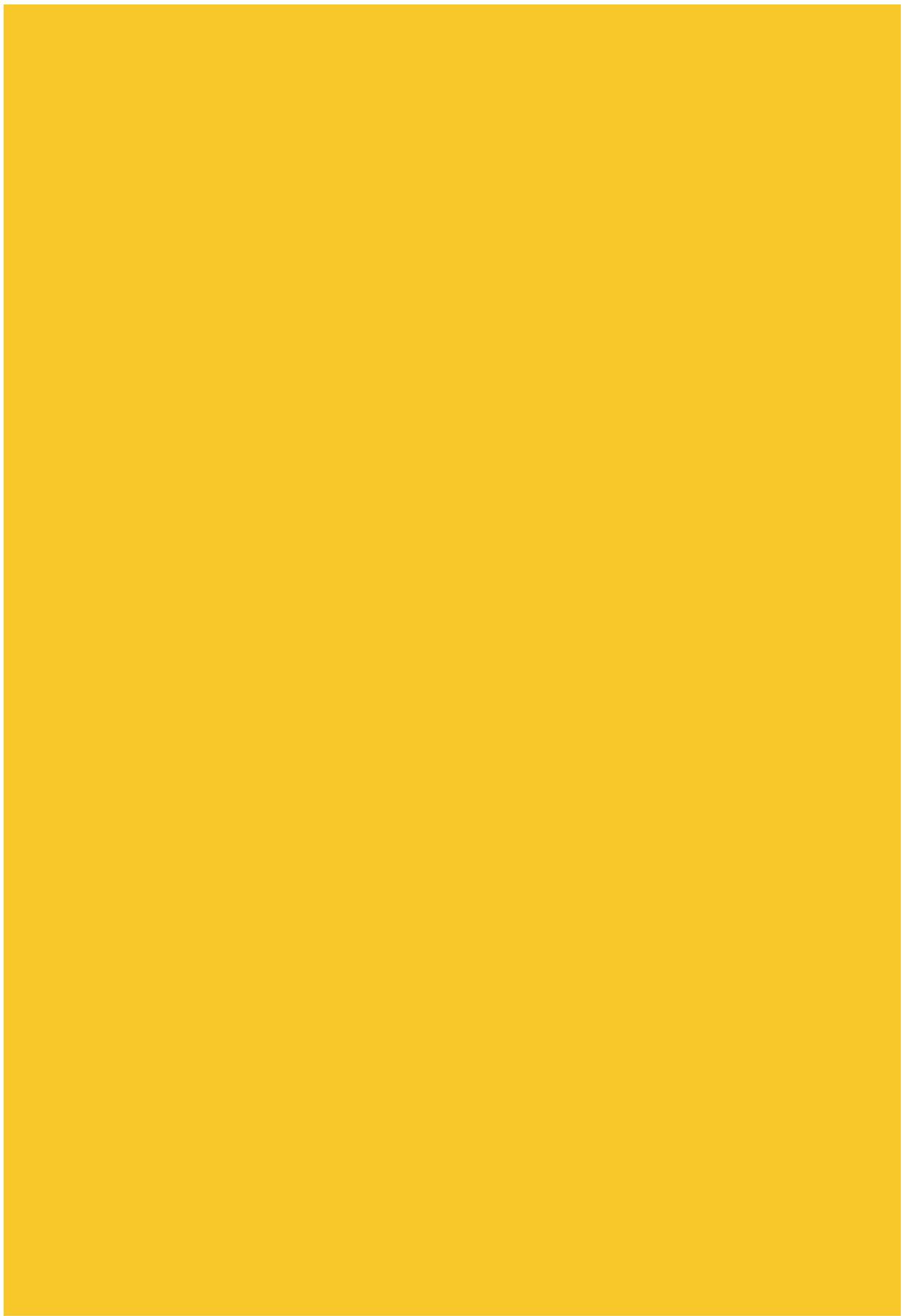
11. Ideally, the community will enthusiastically “own” the program outcome measures as a shared set of objectives, and not just as a condition for funding. We have known some leadership program participants who were concerned, when the topic of evaluation arose, about the possibility of being treated as “lab rats in an experiment.” Care is needed to avoid misunderstanding and just resistance. Though an experimental design with control groups and randomization may not be feasible or appropriate, it is still possible to craft a sound theory of change and a credible logic model.
12. The tool or lens can be used as a frame for telling history (What followed and contributed to what?) and for projecting a pathway into the future (What steps should we take to increase the probability of success?) In other words, it need not be viewed as static or “essentialist.” I had a stimulating conversation with John Dentico of LeadSimm ([www.leadstimm.com](http://www.leadstimm.com)), and it occurred to us that the wheel could be used to generate hindsight, insight, and foresight.
13. The term “cultural fluency” was introduced to me by Pamela Paul, our vice president and director of Professional Development and Diversity. It is a term that some believe can be helpful to use in diversity work because it generates less anxiety, defensiveness, and minimalism than does “cultural competency.” See United Nations Population Fund, *The State of the World Population, 2008*, Chapter 7, “Reaching Common Ground: Culture, Gender, and Human Rights.”
14. Ogle’s interesting notion of embedded or off-loaded intelligence within idea spaces, must be counterbalanced with a recognition of the fact that there are also zones of “embedded ignorance” — problem areas where setbacks are too common due to entrenched interests.
15. For a look at some of the tools we use to facilitate reflective practices, see Appendix A.
16. I’m sketching here, in a very preliminary way, a line of thinking about the construction and interpretation of personality that I think is stronger than the Myers-Briggs. I anticipate publishing a piece on the topic of personality in the near future.
17. *Dhammapada* VI: 86, translation by Harischandra Kaviratna and *Vimalakirti Sutra* 24, translation by Burton Watson. Also the *Lotus Sutra*. The citations here and elsewhere are meant to be suggestive rather than definitive or stereotypical. For example, some Buddhists would deny that there can even be a shore.
18. Cf: Matthew 22:1-14, Luke 24:28-35, John 6.
19. Psalms 31, 46, and 71.
20. A common metaphor in the Koran; see chapters 3, 4, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 31, 37, 55, 56, and 61.
21. See, for example, *Upanishads*, translation by Patrick Olivelle. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996 and *The Concise Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, translation by Swami Venkatesananda. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.
22. See the *Book of Chuang-Tzu*, translated by Martin Palmer. New York: Penguin Books, 1996; *Wen-Tzu: Understanding the Mysteries*, translated by Thomas Cleary. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1992; and Eva Wong’s *Lieh-Tzu*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1995. With respect to the Taoist tradition, I think that leadership programs rely too heavily on the Lao Tzu (*Tao Te Ching*), at the expense of other great sources.
23. In the work of an impressive organization, Americans for Indian Opportunity, the facilitators encourage participants across cultures and traditions to access and share their “medicine,” which is that which gives them strength, courage, and inspiration. The group has a practice area around fostering leadership within, and exchanges and partnerships between, indigenous communities.

24. Ubuntu (“humanness”) is the African idea that a person is a person through other persons and that our concern for others defines who we are. In the Southern Africa Leadership Program, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and managed by AED, the participants explore ethics and the meaning of cultural values such as “Ubuntu.”
25. See [www.ethicalatheist.com](http://www.ethicalatheist.com)
26. One need only think of the impact of the growing “popular education” movement, in which communities are recognized as intelligent, regardless of education level. In challenging academia, I do not mean to endorse anti-intellectualism. Just the opposite. What could be brighter, and ultimately more fruitful, than greater exchange between the academic and the “common citizen”? I am reminded here of Kurt Lewin’s saying that “There is nothing so practical as a good theory.”
27. The flow of faculty can go both ways, with community leaders introduced in the classroom, not as a dog-and-pony show, but to share stories of challenge, courage, innovation, excellence, and wisdom. This is possible, in some way, for every subject area. Theory needs its grounding and theorizing its purpose.
28. I’m going to abstain here from commentary on the debate about socialism vs. capitalism, but just to say that these discussions often seem rushed, poorly framed, and overly polemical to me. *On the other hand*, they are the perfect fodder for leadership development, for reflective practices, and cohort- or community-based conversation. I recently learned that popular education facilitators tend to define capitalism as the advantage of a relatively small, privileged wealthy elite that owns a disproportionate, and not fully merited, amount of our world’s economic and cultural assets, and has undue political power, at the expense and through the exploitation of hard working, innovative low-income people. See the youth organizing curriculum of the School for Unity and Liberation in Oakland, CA.
29. For more on balanced scorecards, see the works of Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton.
30. For a look at a tool we use to facilitate discussions of power, see Appendix B.
31. I’m alluding to M-Theory (superstring). See Brian Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos: Space, Time, and the Texture of Reality*. New York: A.A. Knopf Publishing, 2004.
32. The most thoughtful scholar on this topic of the intersection of leadership development and the sciences is Margaret Wheatley. See *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999.
33. AED does not endorse a particular hardware or software product. These are only intended as examples.
34. There are many other tools and technologies that merit investment besides computer hardware and software to address people’s needs and challenges. See Academy for Educational Development, *Small Technology - Big Impact: Practical Options for Development*. Washington D.C.: Academy for Educational Development, 2009. AED has an emerging practice area around the intersections of leadership and Web 2.0 and 3.0.
35. With respect to managing time, some leadership program participants will be frustrated with and rebel against time restrictions and inflexible agendas. Others will feel that it is important to stay on schedule. It is good to try to have a process in advance for working out these conflicts.
36. I apologize to those who would prefer I not privilege humans over plants, animals, and other beings. See The Federal Ethics Committee on Non-Human Biotechnology, [www.ekah.admin.ch/en](http://www.ekah.admin.ch/en).











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