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**Developing Girls' & Women's Leadership**



**June 2009**



of The Greater Cincinnati **FOUNDATION**

# Background

In 2008 when the Developing Girls' & Women's Leadership Project was launched, it was clear that to move leadership forward on any significant scale there were three key issues impacting the continued growth and expansion of women's leadership:

- Most of the leadership programs, as well as activities like internal women's programs at major corporations, are functioning in isolation. There is little cohesion or synergy between what exists.
- There are gaps between what is available and what is needed. For example, if you are a woman looking for a mentor and you are not at a major corporation that has such a program there is no place for you to turn. Research has shown that a mentor is very important to helping a woman move up the leadership path.
- The number of women impacted by the existing programs is relatively small. We are not going to move women's leadership forward in any significant way with 20-50 women impacted annually by a program.

The objectives for this stage of the Developing Girls' & Women's Leadership Project are to:

- Conduct an assessment of existing Greater Cincinnati leadership programs to identify needs and gaps.
- Create a set of community recommendations to move women and girls leadership forward.
- Raise funds to support leadership development programs for women and girls.

Assessment process:

- Conducted an assessment of 48 existing Greater Cincinnati women/girl leadership programs to identify the scope, needs and gaps. The analysis included 29 business programs and 19 non-profit programs
- Assessment survey encompassed 20+ questions including: program mission; number of women/girls served annually; measurements used to assess the program; whether male/female leadership styles are specifically discussed; whether senior executives are involved/supportive (and how); greatest challenges to the success of the program
- Reviewed six best-in-class programs regionally and nationally to identify best practices to include in our recommendation.

# Project Findings

- Although the program owners believe they incorporated all aspects of leadership skill development, the programs in most instances touched upon the subjects informally and did not include specific development activities for these areas. In addition, among the corporate programs we researched, the vast majority had a primary emphasis on business development/networking rather than individual professional development and were in essence marketing events.
- There are strong programs for high school girls primarily in single-sex parochial schools.
- There is a gap for women in their late 20s/early 30s — after they have learned the technical skills of their job and are ready for a leadership role and for expansion/honing of their own leadership skills.
- There is a continued gap in senior-level women (consistent with findings from the Women's Fund's *Women in the C-Suite Study*, 2007).
- Only 25% of programs included any comparison of men's and women's leadership styles.
- Almost all programs function in isolation with no direct connection to or collaboration with other women/girls leadership programs.
- Many programs in corporate settings are open to men (and may have a small number of male participants) primarily due to a concern that a single sex program may be seen as discriminatory.
- Anecdotal information indicates that participation by women/girls of color is very low in most programs. A reflection of the lack of diversity among employees and in particular, employees at management level.

# Community Recommendations

**Critical leadership factors:** For the region's efforts to have more success, all programs and activities must embrace the following critical factors for developing women in leadership.

- Include in new/existing programs a complete array of skill-specific activities, exercises and goals that help participants build leadership skills. Include use of an individual skill assessment tool to identify participant needs.
- Include explicit training on gender-specific leadership styles to assist women in maximizing the strengths of their own style and understanding how to successfully interact with the realities of a primarily male industry and/or executive team.
- Include flexibility for modifications needed for individual differences in culture, experience and background. A "onesize fits all" leadership program is not likely to meet the needs of a diverse workforce to enhance the opportunities for women of color.
- Include greater involvement of senior level men in understanding, supporting, promoting and endorsing the link between stronger financial performance and the full development of internal female talent.

**Community implementation recommendations:** the following four recommendations were developed:

- Create programs for emerging career women (women who have proven their technical proficiency and are ready for their first or second management opportunity). Emphasis would be on personal leadership skill development – emotional intelligence; personal publicity/self-promotion; negotiation skills; risk taking; and self-confidence.
- Create a regular forum for corporations/organizations to share best practices for, accomplishments and the challenges of women/girls leadership in the region. In addition, identify opportunities for connecting, collaborating and creating continuity to ensure all aspects of female leadership development are successfully addressed.
- Create a best practices toolkit for corporations. The toolkit would include a business case model for the value and benefits of developing female leadership; an assessment tool to evaluate effectiveness/direction of current female leadership programs; individual skill assessment and follow up assessment to track results of program; diversity curriculum; and best practices drawn from successful programs in other corporations.
- Create a best practices toolkit for middle and high school girls. Gather best practices from existing middle/high school programs including curriculum, student perception/knowledge pre-assessment tools, self-evaluations, post-assessment tools, activities and lesson plans. Include opportunities for girls to be mentored and to shadow role models in various industries (in particular non-traditional industries) and at varied levels of seniority. Internships and peer-mentoring opportunities should also be included.

## Organizations Participating in Survey

### Corporate Programs

100 Wise Women (a collaborative program initiated by Deloitte & Touche)

Barnes Dennig & Company

Cintas

Deloitte & Touche

Dinsmore & Shohl, LLP

Duke Energy

Frost Brown Todd

GE

Thompson Hine

Turner Construction

*\*13 other major corporations were contacted who indicated they had no specific program for developing women's leadership*

*\*3 major corporations did not respond to the survey*

### Non-Profit Programs

Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber – WE Programs

YWCA – Rising Stars, Board Leadership, Career Women of Achievement, Rosie's Girls Girl Scouts

Cincinnati Youth Collaborative

Dress for Success

Boys & Girls Clubs

SOAR

Commercial Real Estate Women

National Association of Women in Construction

### Schools

University of Cincinnati

Xavier University

McCauley High School

Mount Notre Dame

## Resources

**“A Business Case for Women,” *The McKinsey Quarterly*, September 2008**

**Authors: Georges Desvaux, Sandra Devillard-Hoellinger, and Mary C. Meaney**

A qualitative and quantitative report on the competitive business advantages that can stem from hiring and retaining women. Shows a correlation between high numbers of women in senior management roles and a stronger financial performance.

***The DNA of Women Leaders*, Aurora and Caliper, April 2005**

A research study that identified the similarities in personal traits among senior business women in the U.K. and the U.S. Five key facts came from the analysis including the overall observation that women leaders typically had the exhibited the following characteristics – “assertive, highly urgent, persuasive, collaborative, intelligent risk-takers”

**“Centered Leadership: How Talented Women Thrive,” *The McKinsey Quarterly*, September 2008**

**Authors: Joanna Barsh, Susie Cranston, Rebecca Craske**

Centered Leadership offers a model for leadership development based on in-depth research of top women leaders across the world.

# The Women's Fund

The Women's Fund of The Greater Cincinnati Foundation strives to improve the quality of life for women and girls by making grants to area nonprofit organizations. The fund provides a means for individuals interested in women's issues and programs to make charitable contributions to build a permanent endowment.

## **Our Agenda for the future (from the PULSE Study):**

- Close the gap – Reduce disparities faced by women of color, women in poverty and women heading households alone.
- Grow strong girls – Increase opportunities for girls to connect with their families, peers, school and community.
- Develop women leaders – Lead collaborations that increase leadership development, networking and mentoring.
- Assess progress – Support opportunities to improve the collection of gender-specific data.

## **Our mission**

To transform the lives of women and girls in Greater Cincinnati through fund raising, grant making, research and advocacy to make our community a national leader in creating opportunities for women and girls.

## **Our vision**

To be a primary force enabling women and girls to take their place as equal partners in the creation of a just and sustainable community.

## **Our guiding principles**

Systematic Change – Collaboration – Multigenerational Philanthropy

## **Our role in the Developing Girls' & Women's Leadership Project:**

- Be a knowledge expert.
- Provide the overall community direction – in this case the development of a strategic community plan to move women and girls leadership forward.
- Convene the "players" – in the case of leadership that includes the non-profits, corporations, funders, and women who will support this work and may be directly impacted by this work.
- Gather and distribute targeted funding through grants to address this issue based on the direction and findings of the strategic community plan.

### Thank you!

The work of The Women's Fund would not be possible without the time and talents of our volunteers and the generous support of our donors.

Raw data is available on request. Contact Vanessa Freytag, Executive Director of The Women's Fund, 513-768-6123 or [freytagv@gcfdn.org](mailto:freytagv@gcfdn.org)

For more information on PULSE, other initiatives or to donate to the Women's Fund go to [www.cincinnatiwomensfund.org](http://www.cincinnatiwomensfund.org)

If you are interested supporting the work of The Women's Fund send your donation to:

The Women's Fund  
PO BOX 5200  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45201-5200



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