

NGL: Reflections on a Leadership Development Program Evaluation

By Margaret Berkey

The **Next Generation Leadership program** was created by the Rockefeller Foundation over seven years ago to bring together leaders from diverse communities who shared a desire to work collaboratively on challenges to democratic ideals. In 2003 OMG served as evaluators of the NGL program and recently published a report describing the evaluation findings and providing recommendations for the program. Designed for a series of cohorts, NGL was based on a formal curriculum for each group that

included convenings and site visits, readings on subjects such as building democracy, race and economic equality, globalization, and transforming leadership, with occasional guest speakers, and collaborations on challenging projects in their communities funded by the NGL Solutions Fund. An international site visit to either Mexico or South Africa was an important part of the fellows' experience, where they'd meet with local leaders to explore issues of democracy and social justice within that country's social, economic, and political structures.

With the program having now concluded its funding cycle and on to a new phase, we caught up with Surita Sandosham, formerly manager of NGL and the Associate Director of Working Communities at the Foundation, to get her thoughts on the program, the evaluation, and what's in store for NGL. OMG's Co-Director Manuel Gutiérrez, who led the OMG evaluation, provides his perspective on the evaluation and how particular methodologies can be useful in leadership development programs.

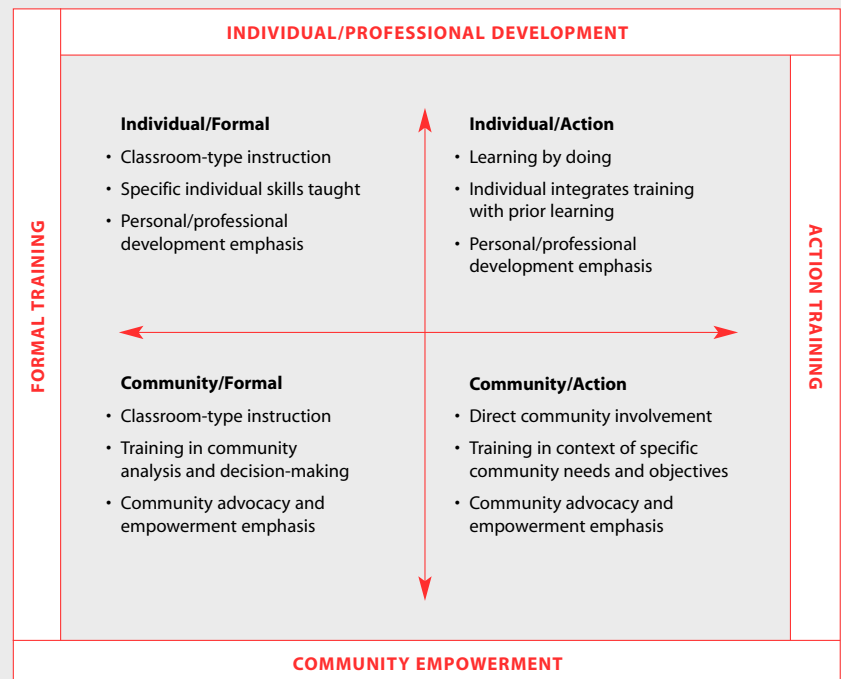
"You know, the Rockefeller Foundation created NGL in 1997 with some specific objectives. This was an operating program within a grantmaking foundation, so everyone knew it would not last forever within a foundation setting," says Surita Sandosham.

Because of this, she says, evaluation was built in from the beginning. After NGL's first two years, researchers at Brandeis University were asked to conduct an evaluation to see if the program was being carried out according to the Foundation's objectives, and to see what might need to be changed in order to get back on course. Since some adjustments were deemed necessary to meet the vision, the fellows were invited to join program staff in the decision-making. The NGL curriculum, for example, was revised considerably as a result of the Brandeis evaluation and the early feedback from fellows.

But beyond the early fine-tuning, the need for more evaluation was clear since, Sandosham says, the Rockefeller Foundation staff were also very interested in what accomplishments, or short-term outcomes, had been made to date. "At Rockefeller, we wanted to know what learning was taking place—and externally, we wanted more learning that would be useful for other leadership programs, for the fellows, and for those interested in evaluating these kinds of programs."

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LEADERSHIP PROGRAM TYPOLOGY



Gutiérrez has developed the above typology to differentiate leadership development programs along two essential dimensions: change strategy focus and learning approach. Within this typology, OMG considers NGL to be primarily an Individual/Action type of program, although it has distinct elements of the Community/Action type.

"With the pathway mapping approach, we play different roles—we make connections, we synthesize, we challenge, we apply rigorous thinking—and out of that process comes a clear articulation of the theory of change. It becomes a framework for the evaluation—the logic behind the program's goals and objectives, the anticipated outcomes, and the indicators of change—the things we need to look for."

—MANUEL GUTIÉRREZ

(NGL continued from cover)

EARLY STEPS TO LEARNING

Given these objectives, OMG began the subsequent NGL evaluation using a "pathway mapping" approach, a methodology that helps articulate the program's theory of change and the pathways that lead to expected short-term, interim, and longer-term outcomes as a result. These are then presented in a logic model—a visual "map" to help make clear the connections between assumptions, program actions, and outcomes.

"It's a critical approach for doing program evaluation, and specifically for evaluations of leadership development programs, as these types of programs can be based on different theories of personal development and can have very different objectives," Manuel

Gutiérrez explains [illustrated in the Leadership Program Typology figure on page 1]. "What we do in eliciting the theory of change is to surface program assumptions that have not been articulated before, that are sometimes implicit or not well-highlighted. Our process is to engage with stakeholders—funders, program staff and program participants—to bring these out and represent different viewpoints. A pathway map represents a synthesis of the program's theory of change, but in addition, it's a visual aid that enables program stakeholders to see how change can come from their theory and decision-making."

With this logic model in hand, program staff gain an important tool for their ongoing planning and program evaluation, figuring out mid-course corrections, implementing the program and describing it to others, and tracking outcomes.

NGL EVALUATION YIELDED MORE LEARNING THAN EXPECTED

Rockefeller program staff learned more than they expected about NGL's program from the evaluation, recalls Surita Sandosham. "We had this vision to create an alumni network—but we were surprised by how people were using it. We had some anecdotal evidence about how it was working but the OMG evaluation really helped bring this out. The fellows went ahead and did things together outside the formal structure of NGL—which was great to see. We set up the listserv and the Solutions Fund but we found beyond this they were contacting each other and drawing on each other's skills and expertise. So we discovered all this in the evaluation and it was a very pleasant surprise."

Sandosham goes further, offering her perspective on evaluation in the context of leadership programs in general. "To be honest, in this field we're still in the process of learning how to do this work—evaluating these programs. We should be very open about the challenges and share these with others. Outside of the leadership field, we should look for where there are other examples of qualitative evaluation to see how this has been done and to create more learning."

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Bottom: NGL fellows participate in a panel discussion during the North Carolina site visit, 2003.

Top: Surita Sandosham, former manager of NGL and Associate Director of Working Communities at the Rockefeller Foundation.

(Photos courtesy of the NGL Alumni Network)

"As a former fellow, I know that programs like this—that bring together diverse communities and backgrounds—are important and valuable. That's very difficult and not everyone knows how to do it. But NGL provided a model and I'm very proud of that."

—SURITA SANDOSHAM

LETTER FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS



From the time of its founding 16 years ago, OMG has strived to use applied research principles and innovative tools to assist foundations and non-profit organizations in the development, implementation, and evaluation of effective social change strategies. Back in those days our work clustered around community development and arts & culture projects. Through the years, we expanded those areas to include work in the environment, children, youth and families, and human services. Leadership development and communications are two more recent substantive additions.

During these 16 years, we have continued our tradition of being on the forefront testing and applying new research theories and methods. Throughout these endeavors, OMG staff have drawn upon our collective experience in capacity

building, organizational development, systems change, and customized tool development in seeking to bring out the best learning in both mature and emerging nonprofits.

We continually look for opportunities to develop and/or refine tools that support our work and engage our clients in the learning process. In the 1980's, we were among the first researchers to incorporate GIS applications, which at the time painstakingly used pens and plotters, to analyze neighborhood demographics and patterns of physical characteristics. More recently, we have relied on online surveys to capture, quickly and efficiently, data from program participants, foundation grantees, and organizations forming part of coalitions. We have also used network analysis to understand, through surveys and graphical analysis, patterns of knowledge and

resource exchange and dissemination. In addition, we have incorporated narrative inquiry techniques into a number of evaluations to describe neighborhood collaborative processes. Finally, we take pride in the pathway mapping tools—print and computer-based—that we have developed to help articulate a project's or an initiative's theory of change.

In leading our own organization over the past 18 months, we co-directors have been applying the same organizational learning principles to OMG as well, and as a result we have taken on some challenges to strengthen our own organization. During that time, we have taken significant strides in refining our marketing strategies, project management, and internal staffing. Also, in the fall of 2003, we reconfigured our financial systems and streamlined our project accounting procedures.

Our project managers are already reaping some of the benefits of all of this work and we expect to see more efficiencies result soon in the administrative side of what we do.

With our planning and transition work proceeding well, we feel very excited and confident about our current organizational direction and we look forward to continuing to engage in relationships that support innovative solutions for social change.

GERRI SPILKA
MANUEL GUTIÉRREZ

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EVALUATION VS. RESOURCES: THE DELIMITING FACTOR

Gutiérrez discusses how evaluation can support leadership development programs, providing funders with evidence of outcomes. “You can’t really show direct cause and effect but you can show a preponderance of evidence that points to a link between the outcomes and the theory of change, especially when different data sources are used. This is where multiple methods helps—case studies, organizational assessments, and even community studies. But it comes

down to an issue of resources. We can’t always do *all* of these studies, given the constraints of time and funding. In our work as evaluators for other leadership programs—the Ford Foundation’s Leadership for a Changing World (LCW) and the Eisenhower Fellowship programs, we have used pathway mapping and data gathered from multiple sources to examine program outcomes. Whether the evaluation is multi-year like LCW or shorter-term, we find this evaluation approach to be very successful in generating valuable data.”

Sandosham stresses that, while resources can certainly limit this work, “Not having enough money is really an excuse for not doing more evaluation. I really think we—the funders, program staff and evaluators—haven’t been as creative as we could be in finding new ways to do these challenging evaluations.”

Gutiérrez believes that with the right framework in place, smaller-scale evaluation can sometimes be effectively undertaken by internal staff or other program stakeholders. “There are always resource limitations,

and whether or not a formal evaluation is conducted, program staff should engage in articulating their theory of change for the program, and developing a logic model—this is really important in terms of gaining clarity about activities and expected outcomes.” A self-assessment can then follow.

A NEW LIFE FOR NGL?

In partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation, the fellows are building an alumni network to continue the momentum they created through the program. “When we started to think about this, though, we knew that unless the people involved bought into it, the NGL relationships could just end,” notes Sandosham. “The five cohorts (a total of 120 fellows) were completed, and everyone knew it wasn’t going to go further within Rockefeller. To get it off the ground, Darren Walker from the Foundation and I convened representatives of the network. The Evolution Group framed it and talked about what the partnership would look like if it continued.” After the group reviewed a number of potential partners, the Research Center for Leadership in Action at NYU’s Wagner School of Public Service was identified to host

the network and take it to another level through its well-regarded research frameworks.

The partners are committed for another two and a half years, “so the fellows are looking at next steps for the network, building off the work that they did in individual cohorts and learning now how to operate as a network. This is a bridge to the next level. To continue, they’ll have to raise the money that will support their activities, so this will be a new learning agenda for them,” she says.

To read the full evaluation report, visit www.omgcenter.org/learning2.html. A printed copy can be obtained by contacting Amanda Bergson-Shilcock (Amanda@omgcenter.org). For more information about OMG’s evaluations of leadership development programs, please contact Co-Director Manuel Gutiérrez (Manuel@omgcenter.org).

Resources:

NGL ALUMNI NETWORK
www.nglnet.org

ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION
www.rockfound.org

LEADERSHIP LEARNING COMMUNITY
www.leadershiplearning.org

“We’re looking to expand our toolbox in terms of methods to measure personal transformation in leadership programs and assessing the role of alumni networks in strengthening and supporting personal transformation. For some of our evaluation projects we’re using network analysis as a tool. In the future this might be a way to test out some assumptions about personal transformation—how connections are made and what they can lead to.”

—MANUEL GUTIÉRREZ

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATIONS

As part of the evaluation, OMG collected data to assess impacts on personal transformation as a result of NGL. For this article, we followed up with two of the fellows to provide some examples of what they felt were most important in their experience.

“If I hadn’t been a part of NGL I would never have run for city council. Through my work I’d been advocating for a long time to arts people that they should get involved in the political process—stop being the victim and start taking part in the decision making. Then I saw that right in my own town, there was a very divisive series of events with our local government—and I felt like a bit of a hypocrite for not getting involved.

I had never seen myself as a leader outside my own field, but the people in my cohort helped me see I could exercise leadership in another venue. So, running for city council—you really have no idea what it’s going to be like until you get started. It’s very tough! But I won, and it’s interesting. It’s an intellectual as well as a personal challenge. I’ve had a lot of encouragement, though—my NGL cohort has been really supportive.”

—KATHRYN DE NOBRIEGA

“The NGL relationships have been really important—they’ve pushed me in specific directions in my work with my organization, stone circles. They’ve helped me understand how to position the organization—people who’ve seen the value in what we’re doing and challenged me to think larger about the impacts we might have.

There’s been a lot of collaboration through NGL too. We’re the fiscal agent for a collaborative project right now on sustainable activism—and we were asked to do this by some other fellows.

I thought we had incredible energy and cohesion in our cohort and it created this space that was so supportive and at the same time, challenging, which I think is unique. I also think there’s a huge value in including voices from all sides. Some of my biggest gains came from my interactions with those whose beliefs were very different from mine.”

—CLAUDIA HOROWITZ stonecircles.org

OMG notes

Project Director Marcela Gutiérrez-Mayka participated in a panel discussion at the Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO) conference, *Aligning for Results*, in Seattle this spring. Marcela’s discussion focused on new ways to use network analysis for planning, grantmaking and evaluation. The panel of three also included program officers of the Fannie Mae Foundation and the Wallace Foundation discussing “A New Way to Change the World: Discoveries, Breakthroughs and Surprising Results through Evaluation and Program Design.” For more about GEO, visit www.geofunders.org.

OMG’s article “Real Solutions in Real Time” appeared in the January/February issue of *Shelterforce* magazine. Author Monica Steigerwald, former project manager, discussed how ten SEACorp CDCs created a community of practice for peer learning and knowledge building. Find it online at <http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/133/seacorp.html>.

Co-Director Gerri Spilka contributed an article entitled “On Community-Based Evaluation: Two Trends” to the Harvard Family Research Project’s tenth anniversary issue of *The Evaluation Exchange*. As one of a dozen reflections on the major trends and challenges the evaluation profession has grappled with and advanced within the last decade, Gerri’s article discussed the progress and the remaining difficulty comprehensive community change evaluations have in identifying appropriate outcomes. To read the article, go to www.gse.harvard.edu/~hfrip/eval/issue24/theory.html.

Manuel Gutiérrez participated in a panel discussion at the May conference of the Leadership Learning Community, held in Marlborough, Massachusetts for funders and researchers. The two-part panel explored what we are learning about how leadership is supported through both community organizing and leadership programs, and approaches and dilemmas in the evaluation of leadership programs.

OMG Projects and People

NEW EVALUATIONS

For the **W. K. Kellogg Foundation**, OMG is conducting a multiyear cluster evaluation of the **Networks for Rural Policy Development** cluster (NRPD). Interested in learning about the role of non-profits in rural policy work, Kellogg selected the Central Appalachian Network as a pilot. Each organization in the network is receiving a three-year grant to work on its selected local and/or state economic development issue, and they are also receiving support to work together on a regional economic development issue. In addition, Kellogg is supporting five national associations engaged in the work of local government and three media organizations to develop their own communications strategies and to build strategic alliances with each other and with the CAN members. OMG's evaluation, led by Co-Director Gerri Spilka, is well underway, having completed the first round of interviews and network analysis to understand how participants are learning to utilize key contacts. As a result of the first year's work, OMG has just hosted a two-day meeting in Charleston, WV to help the participants utilize each other's policy know-how and connections.

OMG is in the early phase of a grantee learning cluster evaluation for the **Marguerite Casey Foundation** in Seattle. The project is unusual in that OMG is one of four teams of evaluators engaged by MCF to assess four parallel learning clusters made up of "cornerstone" organizations that have the leadership potential to foster movement building around social justice issues. Marcela Gutiérrez-Mayka is leading this

18-month evaluation. Designed with a strong documentation component, the project involves a series of convenings and other activities to create a learning community for the grass-roots grantees. OMG is evaluating cluster outcomes for the Foundation.

For the **City of Philadelphia's Department of Human Services**, OMG recently completed a formative evaluation of its pilot program, **Achieving Independence Center**, based on a one-stop center model to prepare youth transitioning out of the foster care system to live independently. The evaluation encompassed the planning phase leading to the opening of the center, and the first year of service delivery to a target population of 500 eligible youth between the ages of 16 and 21. The mostly qualitative methodology included gathering data from center-based service providers, DHS leadership, advisory groups and participating youth.

EVALUATION OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Led by Co-Director Manuel Gutiérrez, OMG staff are conducting a ten-month evaluation of the **Eisenhower Fellowships**, launched in 1953 in honor of President Dwight Eisenhower as a means of promoting international understanding, personal growth, and leadership development through the exchange of information, ideas, and perspectives among emerging leaders. This project expands OMG's evaluation work in the leadership field, as it provides an unparalleled opportunity to examine the impact of this international program on fellows from 82 different countries. OMG is using a mixed-methods evaluation design, including stakeholder interviews, case studies, and an on-line survey.

OMG has entered the second phase of our multiyear evaluation of the **Leadership for a Changing World (LCW)**, a national leadership recognition program sponsored by the **Ford Foundation**. Awardees receive \$100,000 over two years to support their program work and an additional \$15,000 in funding for learning activities that advance their efforts. Over a two-year period, these leaders participate in semi-annual program-wide meetings designed to share learning on leadership and program challenges and to explore new opportunities to develop their programs and further their leadership skills. For this phase of the program, OMG's evaluation is focusing on the design, development, and management of the program; leader support program activities and impacts; strategic communications program activities and impacts; and an assessment feedback and reporting process.



PHILANTHROPIC ADVISING

For the **William Penn Foundation**, OMG is **developing an RFP and cluster plan** to promote sustainable watershed assets along the Schuylkill River. In support of the Foundation's Environment & Communities Program, OMG is advising the Foundation on the development of a cluster concept and practical roadmap that emphasizes the importance of linking watershed demonstration projects to policy work for scale and sustainability.

OMG completed work with the **Heinz Endowments** to help the **Arts and Culture Program** staff develop a full program evaluation plan and logic model. In support of the Endowments' efforts to be more outcomes oriented, OMG worked closely with the Arts and Culture staff to determine appropriate outcomes, indicators, cluster evaluation strategies, and how best to integrate evaluation throughout the program. OMG did similar work for the Endowments' new area of Civic Design grantmaking, an interdisciplinary program to promote quality civic design in the Pittsburgh region.

PEOPLE

After 11 years with OMG, senior project director **Lisa Nutter** left us at the end of 2003 to become the Senior Director of Research and Planning for Philadelphia Academies, Inc. where she will use her many talents to directly shape career-oriented high school programs to better prepare young people for the future. Also departing was long-time project manager **Bonita Stowell** who relocated to New York, joining the new Wagner School Research Center for Leadership in Action at NYU as its Associate Director. **Monica Steigerwald** accepted a new position as Development Director of Mastery Charter High School in Philadelphia, and **Kennard Wing** has become an independent consultant. **Susan Havey**, OMG's former business manager, is applying her expertise to a new position at Urban Ventures Group. We wish them all well in their new endeavors, and have already crossed paths with many of them.

We also warmly welcome several new staff and board members who are bringing their wonderful talents and experience to OMG. **Victoria Dougherty** came to OMG from the Connecticut Policy and Economic Council in Hartford last summer as a project manager, and **Tania Tasse**, project manager, also relocated here about the same time from Princeton, where she was a Human Services Research Analyst at Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. More recent additions



to the OMG team include new project coordinators **Shawn Mooring**, previously with Public/Private Ventures and the Ford Foundation, and **Meg Guk**, formerly with Temple University's

Center for Intergenerational Learning. In addition, OMG welcomes two new members of our board of directors: **Frank Furstenberg**, Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, and **Carla Dickstein**, Senior Program Officer of Coastal Enterprises, Inc. in Maine.



Top left: Contained farm waste treatment in Berks County, PA, a targeted area for the Schuylkill River Watershed Restoration strategy.

Above and near left: Marguerite Casey Foundation grantees participating in a learning cluster convening, facilitated in June by OMG at Rex Ranch in Arizona.

The OMG Center for Collaborative Learning



The **OMG Center for Collaborative Learning** provides a range of consulting services to philanthropic institutions and nonprofit organizations that address quality of life issues in mostly urban communities. Established in Philadelphia in 1988, OMG works with foundations, organizations and the public sector throughout the country to develop innovative solutions to difficult challenges through program evaluation, strategic planning, organizational development and other supports. We rely on a collaborative action research approach that builds new learning and problem solving capacities with our clients and also contributes knowledge to the fields in which we work. Areas of established expertise include community development and community building, urban open space policy, education reform, arts and culture programming, and initiatives for children, youth and families. For more information about OMG, please visit our website at www.omgcenter.org.



Top: Gerri Spilka, Manuel Gutiérrez, Rick Baron, Marcela Gutiérrez-Mayka, Victoria Dougherty, Jennifer Alleva
Bottom: Tania Tasse, Shawn Mooring, Sheetal Matani, Meg Guk, Steve Schuler, Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, Elisabeth Levy

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