

# Ladder to Leadership: Developing the Next Generation of Community Health & Healthcare Leaders

CASE STUDY



## CHALLENGE

Many nonprofit agencies that provide community health services are facing challenges: potential gaps in leadership, workforce shifts caused by external forces, and a need for creative, bold strategies to maintain quality care and services with limited resources. This leadership deficit is one of the biggest issues facing these organizations. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving health and healthcare, wanted to take steps to address this problem.

RWJF wanted a customized program that would target emerging leaders of nonprofits and government agencies in efforts to improve health and healthcare in vulnerable communities across the U.S.

**CLIENT:** Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

**LOCATION:** Princeton, NJ

**SIZE:** 270 employees

***“The [Robert Wood Johnson] Foundation has a 40-year history of supporting the development of ‘human capital,’ but we have supported little on increasing the leadership capacity of health-related nonprofits at the community level. We saw this as a gap in our portfolio, as the nonprofit level is where a lot of change happens.”***

*Sallie George, RWJF Program Officer*

## SOLUTION

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation awarded a \$4 million grant over 4 years to the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)<sup>®</sup> to design and manage a new program, **Ladder to Leadership: Developing the Next Generation of Community Healthcare Leaders (LTL)**. CCL developed a 16-month leadership development curriculum for 219 early-to-mid-career professionals, focusing on developing leadership skills related to bringing about organizational change; adapting innovations from other fields; creating more client-focused services; and working across internal and external organizational boundaries.

The program promoted cross-organization collaboration and encouraged innovation and community visibility to tackle health and healthcare issues more effectively. A total of 8 communities were chosen for participation based on poverty levels, the size of immigrant and minority populations, readiness of organizations in the communities to collaborate, and the potential for impact.

The cohorts included professionals who represented a diverse group of health and healthcare nonprofits serving a variety of needs. Also represented were organizations providing family planning, treatment for mental illness and addiction, independent living support for older adults, and resources for victims of abuse.

### Key Program Objectives:

- » Develop leadership skills among emerging leaders in health-related nonprofit industries, and increase visibility for higher level leadership roles.
- » Increase effective collaborations and joint implementation of activities between community-based organizations.
- » Increase peer support among Fellows.
- » Encourage innovative and effective approaches to health and health-related challenges.

The comprehensive, 16-month LTL program was comprised of proven methods for leadership development, including 360-degree assessments; interactive and experiential learning sessions; and one-on-one coaching opportunities. A key component of the training was action learning, where Fellows formed small teams to create projects to address a healthcare issue in their community. The action learning process provided a laboratory for the Fellows to practice their leadership skills and to develop new ideas for addressing health-related challenges.

“Through the program’s curriculum, we hoped [participants] would gain more confidence in their ability to lead regardless of their formal position, be able to think more strategically, learn to collaborate effectively so they would be able to take on additional leadership roles in their communities, and tackle tough issues,” said Sallie George, RWJF Program Officer.

## RESULTS

LTL generated results that were real, enduring, and powerful. A survey of Fellows indicated improvement in all areas of individual effectiveness assessed at the conclusion of the program. Similarly, the people who worked closely with the Fellows also reported significant improvement in their leadership abilities.

A year after the completion of the 16-month program, there was evidence that the impact was sustained. Fellows reported greater job responsibilities in their organizations – **29% had received a promotion**, and another **37% had taken on additional duties**. While the primary focus of the program was on individual leadership behaviors, there was also evidence of LTL’s impact on communities.

### COMMUNITY RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS:

91%

reported an increased ability to identify health-related needs in the community

92%

reported an increase in ability to identify health-related resources in the community

72%

reported an increase in leading collaborative community projects

### LASTING IMPACT

To commemorate 10 years of working with RWJF to provide leadership development to hundreds of participants, CCL conducted an impact report.

99%

of participants indicated that program content was highly relevant to their work

92%

of participants feel the program increased their ability to use feedback to make changes

Learn more about the 10-year impact report [here](#).

Recognizing Ladder to Leadership’s impact, the [Community Memorial Foundation](#) worked with CCL to adopt the program for their grantees. Their LTL participants have also consistently shown an increase in key outcomes, including effectiveness on collaborative projects (86%) and work-related social networks (78%).

### PARTNER WITH US

We understand how community-led and community-based initiatives can help build a foundation for real change and greater transformation. We can partner with your organization to create customized leadership solutions that allow you to expand your impact and the meaningful work you bring to the world.

Learn more: [ccl.org/foundations](https://ccl.org/foundations)

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)<sup>®</sup> is a top-ranked, global, nonprofit provider of leadership development. Over the past 50 years, we’ve worked with organizations of all sizes from around the world, including more than 2/3 of the Fortune 1000. Our cutting-edge solutions are steeped in extensive research and our work with hundreds of thousands of leaders at all levels.

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