Leveraging Leadership in Community Agriculture

CLIENT PROFILE & CHALLENGE

Founded in 1953 by one of the early leaders of the 3M Company, the McKnight Foundation has innovation embedded in its approach to philanthropy. The foundation has approximately $2.4 billion in assets and grants about $90 million a year to advance a more just, creative, and abundant future where people and the planet thrive.

Their Collaborative Crop Research Program (CCRP) is based on the vision of a world in which all people have access to the nutritious food they need on the terms they can afford, and where food is sustainably produced in ways that protect local resources and respect cultural values. To achieve this vision, CCRP wanted to foster a transformation in key stakeholders within the CCRP West African communities of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. Their focus was to improve food security and nutrition for smallholder farming families in these 3 countries, which rank among the world’s poorest and are home to millions of people who are malnourished and food insecure.

McKnight wanted to develop the leaders of the CCRP West Africa community of practice (CoP) who needed to enhance not only their technical agricultural and business skills, but also their leadership and communication skills, ability to cross sectoral boundaries, and effectiveness working in teams, with a special emphasis placed on gender equality and social identity. Women form a core part of the agricultural workforce, and increasing the participation of women in the process of leadership is critical to leverage their unique perspectives and insights to take more sound, sustainable decisions and actions.
SOLUTION & RESULTS

CCL designed a 4-year, multi-country initiative using a holistic approach following a discovery phase. Our staff interviewed future participants during a field visit to Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger to hear their insights and identify skill gaps to help build a learning journey. The leadership development design was simultaneously personalized, social, and contextualized. We wanted to gain insights into the larger life story of the people we were going to serve, see the world as they saw it, and know what truly mattered to them. The key components of the learning journey included:

» A 4-day, face-to-face Leadership Essentials program delivered to groups of 24 participants in the 3 countries
» A 5-day, face-to-face Leadership Essentials Train-the-Trainer program delivered to the 8 most motivated and qualified participants from each country
» Ongoing coaching
» Digital learning opportunities
» Self-assessments
» Simulations

For the first phase of the initiative, CCL trained 144 participants; 47 of these participants were then trained as trainers to deliver leadership-focused trainings in the second phase. All participants went on to train a total of 9,385 community members and colleagues.

This initiative generated 3 levels of impact as reported by participants, community members, and principal investigators:

» Personal: an increased sense of self-awareness, a more positive affect (confidence, pride), and new habits and behaviors (such as feedback seeking and giving or experimenting more.)
» Interpersonal: a positive change in the quality of relationships with others.
» Contextual: the establishment of new, shared practices that increased communication, collaboration, decision-making, and trust.

Community members also reported that the leadership training given by participants allowed women to speak up more and participate equally in the collective decision-making.

BY THE NUMBERS (Participant ratings on a 1-5 point scale for the Train-the-Trainer program)

- 4.7 - Overall program satisfaction
- 4.7 - Impact the training had on you
- 4.8 - Identifying strengths and weaknesses related to non-verbal communication
- 4.7 - Identifying all necessary steps to facilitate leadership content
- 4.8 - Having all the tools to manage your facilitation
- 4.9 - Co-facilitating a 45-minute module

PARTICIPANTS SAY

"I was able to achieve some objectives that I had in mind and didn’t think I was capable of achieving. I am no longer afraid to face people regardless of the social situation. I always feel positive and I only think about moving ahead.”

"I have noticed that I have become someone who is able to guide and inspire others. I can also lead initiatives and other colleagues toward a collective direction and action.”

"I tolerate more differences (of opinions, perceptions, actions) as I tell myself that we think and act differently because of our social identities.”

Read the full client case study here.

PARTNER WITH US

At CCL, 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