

AN EVALUATION OF LEADERSHIP VA



**LVA Evaluation Group
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This evaluation was conducted by a team of volunteers who each brought their unique skills and abilities to the effort. Each contributed to the study in addition to their regular responsibilities.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An evaluation team was convened at the request of the VA Learning University (VALU) Steering Committee and the Leadership VA (LVA) Board of Trustees to analyze various aspects of the LVA Program. Among other tasks, it was charged with (1) identifying program outcomes in consultation with the LVA Board of Trustees and key program stakeholders, (2) evaluating the extent to which the program outcomes are achieved, (3) developing recommendations concerning structure, governance, curriculum changes, and post-graduation experiences, and (4) considering the viability of an “LVA Junior” type program to enhance the succession planning efforts of the agency.

The group developed the following proposed outcomes which were used as a framework for the evaluation:

1. Improve each participant’s leadership skills such that their measured leadership competency is significantly higher at completion of the program, and continuously improves over time, than when entering the program.
2. Expand each participant’s network of professional contacts such that their interactions outside their immediate professional circle are significantly wider at completion of the program, and continuously improves over time, than when measured at the beginning of the program.
3. Improve each participant’s knowledge of the department’s internal and external environment and program challenges such that their organizational knowledge is significantly greater than when entering the program.
4. Improve each participant’s learning and self-development skills such that their application of learning and self-development is significantly greater at the completion of the program, and continuously improves over time, than when entering the program.
5. Improve each participant’s team building skills such that the quality of their team development and interactions is significantly greater at completion of the program, and continuously improves over time, than when entering the program.
6. Participants make significant career progression in terms of income/grade level and movement into positions of greater challenge and responsibility after completion of the program.
7. Participants contribute to the mission of VA by remaining employed in the agency for a significant time period following completion of the program.
8. Contribute to the demographic, geographic, organizational, and professional diversity of VA’s leadership.

Recommended outcomes

During the course of the evaluation and after further consideration, the group agreed that, looking in retrospect, it would be more semantically correct to state that these items were *phrased* as objectives rather than outcomes, even though intended to serve as outcomes. However, the report will continue to refer the original eight items as “proposed outcomes.” The following constitutes a more appropriate rephrasing in terms of outcomes, which should serve as the framework for subsequent study of the program:

For graduates:

1. Higher leadership competency.
2. A wider network of professional contacts.
3. Greater knowledge of the department’s internal and external environment and program challenges.
4. Higher learning and self-development competency.
5. Higher team building competency.
6. Greater career progression in terms of income/grade level and movement into positions of greater challenge and responsibility.
7. Longer continuous employment tenure with VA.

For VA:

8. Greater demographic, geographic, organizational, and professional diversity of VA’s leadership cohort.

Success in achieving outcomes 1-6 should be measured in relation to the participants’ competency or status after the experience compared with before LVA. The outcomes are not cost-neutral, and should be accordingly prioritized in the management of the LVA program.

Analytical strategies

The group subsequently developed the following analytical strategies for conducting its evaluation:

1. Interview key stakeholders, including program founders, program managers, top agency leadership, including the LVA Board of Trustees, veterans service organizations, and LVA alumni.
2. Analyze existing LVA 1999 participant session evaluation data.

3. Observe an LVA 2000 session.
4. Survey electronically LVA past participants.
5. Conduct a benchmarking study of public and private sector leadership development programs.

Overall findings and conclusions

- The program is generally meeting all proposed outcomes, but there is considerable room for improvement in particular areas.

- The founders stressed in the interviews that development of leadership skills was a foundation of the LVA program. Support for the importance of this outcome was also provided by the interview data. Yet, the participant evaluations, the session observations, and the survey data all revealed that leadership skills development has been relatively underemphasized in the LVA program.

- The proposed outcomes, although broadly supported, are not equally achieved by means of the LVA program. Based on the data contained in this report, LVA appears more effective in expanding the participants' professional networks, improving participants' knowledge of VA's internal and external environment, and contributing to the diversity of VA's workforce. LVA appears to be less effective in developing leadership skills and enhancing career development.

- Participant career progression enjoys moderate support as an outcome but was neither an intended nor unintended consequence of the program.

- No internal VA program, including LVA, can comprehensively serve all the department's leadership development and succession planning needs. This follows the basic pattern of leadership development in the Federal programs studied.

- Leadership training for lower-graded employees (below GS-13) and post-LVA follow-up education appears to be adequately provided by existing structures such as the Leadership VA Alumni Association (LVAAA), external executive education programs, and local management of training.

Benchmarking study findings

- It is readily apparent that LVA has been heavily influenced by the Leadership Atlanta model in its class size, governance structure, post-graduate experience, curriculum design, and educational objectives.

- All organizations studied, both public and private, offer alternatives to the current model for consideration and have program features that might be both applicable to LVA

and carry the potential for program improvements. Such considerations should take into account those core aspects of the current LVA design which show themselves to be successful (and should not be changed) and fresh, new ideas which have the potential of adding to the quality of the program.

- Both Federal programs studied utilize the executive core qualifications (ECQ) as defined by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) as a framework for their programs (Appendix B).

- Of the five public and private programs benchmarked, three made data on class size available. Additionally, the documentation of numerous public and private leadership development programs were reviewed and scanned for class size data. Of all this data so obtained, class size varies from a low of 30 to a high of approximately 70.

- Program length (where data were available) varies from a low of 12 months to a high of 2 years.

- For the Federal programs, grade levels of the participants ranged from GS-13 to GS-15. SES members and lower graded personnel were respectively provided separate training and development tracks via various mechanisms.

- “Action learning” (learning by doing) in the form of developmental assignments as a concept is strongly promoted in all programs studied.

- Skill development, particularly leadership skill development, is emphasized in all programs studied.

- Comprehensive evaluation and measurement of training outcomes at the satisfaction, learning, behavioral, and organizational levels are heavily emphasized in the private sector programs. Techniques used include the 360-degree feedback survey and measures of cost savings, effectiveness, and productivity increases generated by group and individual development projects.

- The following application and selection processes are promising practices:

- Rating and ranking of applications using a uniform crediting plan
- Ensuring a culturally diverse selection panel membership
- Expressly requiring applicants to assert their qualifications in terms of the OPM ECQ leadership competencies as part of the application instructions
- Expressly requiring applicants to assert their achievements in terms of outcomes (results) as part of the application instructions.

- Coaching and mentoring of participants are significant best practices in the programs studied.

Survey of past participants findings

- There is mild internal inconsistency between the respondents' ranking of the outcome "As a result of attending LVA, my network of professional contacts significantly expanded" in the middle (4th) of the ten outcome-related questions and an enhanced professional network as the most frequently cited personal benefit from participation in LVA. The difference may possibly lie in respondents perceiving networking as a particularly prominent benefit of LVA, but may have simultaneously had more misgivings about the scope of its effectiveness.

- The second most frequently cited personal benefit – expanded knowledge of the internal VA environment – is roughly consistent with this outcome being ranked most highly in terms of effectiveness.

- African American respondents as a group expressed the least confidence that their leadership skills had been improved by the program. Other non-white respondents as a group expressed the greatest confidence that their leadership skills had been improved by the program.

- Later LVA class years perceive a greater effect for their participation in LVA on the expansion of their professional network than do earlier LVA class years.

- Somewhat surprisingly, given the commitment to the Department LVA tends to engender, retention was ranked lowest relative to the other proposed outcomes.

- Leadership development, team-building skills, self-development skills, and career progression are relatively low-ranked outcomes in terms of effectiveness among respondents.

- LVA is perceived by respondents as effective in achieving diversity within the organization.

- Survey data was supportive of the conclusion that the core LVA curriculum is highly effective in meeting some program outcomes. The same data was also supportive of the conclusion that in order to address all program outcomes, the curriculum should be augmented.

- Survey data was also supportive of the conclusion that more action-learning/learner engagement techniques should be incorporated into the existing curriculum. Participants place a great value on learning about the internal environment of VA, but do not prefer to be "lectured to" in the process.

- Respondents were predominantly satisfied with class size; a notable minority (13%) indicated class size was too large.

Recommendations

1. LVA should contain built-in means to measure achievement of the eight proposed outcomes. These measures should be used to provide the framework for ongoing evaluation of the program's impact at the participant satisfaction, learning, behavioral, and organizational impact levels. Maximum use of available participant demographic information from VA's PAID system should be made to support these measurement efforts.

2. LVA should complement, not substitute for, other leadership development activities. Other leadership development programs within VA itself (such as VHA's Healthcare Leadership Institute, or VBA's LEAD Program) or external to VA (such as the Federal Executive Institute) should serve as complements to LVA.

3. The LVA curriculum should provide more leadership skills development. The appropriate frame of reference for development of leadership skills is OPM's SES (Executive Core Qualifications) Leadership Competencies (Appendix B).

4. The LVA curriculum should incorporate more action learning techniques. Assigning actual projects to class participants would be beneficial. If this is done, care should be taken to carefully select and support the projects and the team members. If projects cannot be incorporated into LVA itself, LVA graduates should be considered for project teams being put together by the Department and the administrations.

5. The LVA curriculum should place a greater emphasis on career development.

6. Curriculum changes should be implemented with due caution for avoiding the disruption of an already highly effective design.

7. When considering improvements to LVA's structure and processes, maximum attention should be paid to its governance structure and processes. In particular, the LVA Board of Trustees should become more involved in the overall affairs of the program.

8. Neither the need for a supplemental lower-graded LVA program nor a new LVA postgraduate program is supported by the data collected and analyzed in this study. However, appropriate policies should be considered to both coordinate and integrate supplemental leadership development training with the LVA program. Such coordination and integration should include importation of those aspects of LVA which are particularly beneficial to complementary programs, where practical and applicable.

9. Class size has achieved an upper limit at 70, and should not be increased.

10. The LVA selection process should use uniform criteria to rate and rank applicants (i.e., criteria and standards for selection which are commonly and evenly applied across the entire department, with allowances for minor variations according to specific needs of sponsoring organizations). Design the application so that it systematically collects the information on which ratings will be based. Furthermore, revise the LVA application process so that applicants are expressly informed regarding the criteria by which applications

will be rated. Implement the OPM leadership competencies as the framework for those standards, with due regard for the unique and specific interests of VA leadership development, as well as the varying developmental levels of applicants according to their grade.

11. Establish a baseline and built-in data collection system for evaluation of the program beyond the level of participant satisfaction. For example, learning and behavior can be measured by use of a “360 degree” survey instrument; organizational impact can be measured by requiring participants to contribute to action learning projects which benefit the organization, and analyzing the outcomes of these projects. Such projects should include participants mentoring lower-graded personnel. Furthermore, this assessment process should foster the development of action plans for self-development and learning for use by participants.

12. Include coaching and mentoring of participants in the curriculum. “Group coaching” (rather than one mentor to one participant) may be the most practical way to implement this recommendation.

13. The LVA Board of Trustees should consider whether LVA should continue to be open to SES-level participants, or whether LVA should be limited to developing participants at the general management (GS-13 to GS-15) level, as suggested by the findings of the benchmarking study.

I. INTRODUCTION

On November 9, 1999, the VA Learning University (VALU) Steering Committee requested the establishment of a study group to analyze the status of the LVA Program and make appropriate recommendations for the program by:

- Identifying current outcomes for LVA graduates and how they are measured.
- Examining the LVA organizational structure.
- Examining LVA class size.
- Exploring potential post-graduation programs.
- Exploring possible changes to current outcomes.

This charter was further focused and recast into the following eight questions to be addressed by the report:

1. What are the current LVA outcomes and how are they assessed? What changes in outcomes or the respective assessments are recommended?
2. How is LVA currently structured, governed, evaluated, funded, and staffed? Identify changes that are recommended as a result of the analysis.
3. Is the current focus of the curriculum acceptable? If not, what changes are recommended, and why?
4. Should the LVA Class size be increased from 70 to 80? What is the optimum class size for LVA Classes?
5. Should LVA have two Classes of 70 participants (and/or any other recommended size) per year?
6. If changes in class size or frequency are recommended, what modifications to the selection/slot allocation processes are necessary?
7. What new VA post LVA graduation experiences/programs should LVA graduates be eligible for?
8. Should an "LVA Junior" program be created for employees below GS-13? If so, what aspects of LVA could be incorporated, and what steps may VA take to implement such a concept?

The study group was charged with developing an independent report of recommendations and a justification for each recommendation for the LVA Program, to be submitted to the Steering Committee Chairperson no later than January 7, 2000. The guidance for the Focus Group included access to information on LVA history, and the suggestion that the group may wish to research other agency or company leadership development programs for comparison.

The study group delivered its report timely on January 7, 2000, and received feedback on the report from the LVA Board of Trustees, resulting in the development of the following formal in-depth program evaluation plan:

1. Begin baseline data collection for use in a more in-depth program evaluation commencing in Phase II, to include survey (self-rated SES core competencies instrument) of the LVA 2000 class.

Data collection was to begin as soon as possible to establish a “pretest” condition for LVA 2000 participants. This baseline data can be compared with future longitudinal observations of participants in “panel study” fashion.

The Evaluation Group chose not to pursue baseline data collection due to the impracticality of establishing a valid comparison group.

2. Query of key stakeholders and survey of past LVA participants to establish a set of program outcomes for LVA and obtain other interesting data, all for use in the early stages of program evaluation and to frame the more in-depth program evaluation to come.

Five categories of stakeholders: LVA founders, VA leaders, LVA program management, LVA Alumni, and VA External Stakeholders were interviewed to assist in establishing proposed program outcomes. The results of this inquiry are contained within Section II of this report.

3. Conduct a benchmarking study which will address the LVA Board of Trustee’s interest in several programmatic issues outlined above, such as the application and selection process.

The group selected two private sector benchmarking partners: Johnson & Johnson and Motorola. The group also selected three public sector benchmarking partners: NASA, the Social Security Administration, and Leadership Atlanta. More information on the selection process is provided in Section VI of this report.

4. Using benchmarking and other techniques, explore the feasibility, usefulness to VA’s leadership development goals, and preliminary design of an “LVA Junior” program, and the role of LVA and any proposed “LVA Junior” program in the larger picture of leadership development within VA.

The group sought to discover best practices for how other organizations, especially other public agencies, conduct formal leadership development. The results of this inquiry are also discussed in Section VI of this report.

In addition to these efforts, in the course of their discussions, the evaluation group agreed to perform the following:

1. A survey of past LVA participants. The purpose of the survey was to obtain feedback from past participants on the effectiveness of the proposed outcomes and other aspects of the program, including class size. The results and analysis of the survey are contained in Section VII of this report.

2. *Analysis of existing LVA Class of 1999 participant session evaluation data.* The purpose was to analyze perceptions of the effectiveness of the proposed outcomes and various program features. The results of this analysis are contained in Section III of this report.

3. *Observations of the LVA 2000 Philadelphia session.* The purpose of these observations was to collect additional data regarding the effectiveness of the proposed outcomes and various program features. The analysis of these observations is contained in Section IV of this report.

The overall results of this more in-depth evaluation effort are found in Section VIII of this report.

II. INTERVIEWS

Methodology

Interviews were employed as part of an over all evaluation strategy for the following purposes:

1. To obtain program stakeholder feedback on the quality of the proposed outcomes.
2. To obtain program stakeholder feedback on important programmatic issues, such as class size and the advisability of establishing an LVA program for employees below the grade of GS-13, and appropriate emphases for the LVA curriculum.

Interviews were conducted with five categories of interviewees; four program founders, eleven high-ranking VA officials, all of them LVA Board of Trustees members, two LVA program managers, two LVA Alumni Association officials, and two veterans service organization officials, for a total of twenty-one interviewees. Persons in each of the five categories were asked a tailored set of questions as depicted in Appendices C through G. The questions centered around a set of proposed program outcomes developed by the LVA Evaluation Group and also asked interviewees to rate and comment upon various aspects of the program, including class size, curriculum, the application and selection process, and program governance and structure. Interviewees were also asked for their views on the desirability of expanding the program to provide a curriculum tailored for lower-graded employees.

In preliminary benchmarking efforts, the group noted that the 27 leadership competencies published by the Office of Personnel Management (clustered by 5 Executive Core Qualification Groups) served as best-practice framework for leadership development in Federal agencies. In order to determine an appropriate direction for leadership development within the LVA curriculum, the evaluation group asked interviewees to select ten competencies from the following list which most represent the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they expected participants to learn from LVA:

LEADING CHANGE

Continual Learning
Creativity and Innovation
External Awareness
Flexibility
Resilience
Service Motivation
Strategic Thinking
Vision

LEADING PEOPLE

Conflict Management
Cultural Awareness
Integrity/Honesty
Team Building

RESULTS DRIVEN

Accountability
Customer Service
Decisiveness
Entrepreneurship
Problem Solving
Technical Credibility

BUSINESS ACUMEN

Financial Management
Human Resources Management
Technology Management

BUILDING COALITIONS/COMMUNICATION

Influencing/Negotiating
Interpersonal Skills
Oral Communication
Partnering
Political Savvy
Written Communication

Interview data were compiled and a content analysis (Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer, 1994) of the qualitative data was performed. Commonality among responses within interviewee categories was noted whenever two or more interviewees made the same or closely similar remarks. Conclusions were appropriately drawn wherever such commonality was found. Where Likert-type (graduated scale of 1 to 5, with 5 representing the most favorable rating and 1 representing the least favorable) numerical ratings were called for by the interview question, such ratings were averaged to provide a consensus endorsement when the average was equal to or greater than 4.0. The specific findings from this analysis appear below.

Summary of common interview findings

The following subject areas included findings by more than one interviewee category. A chart is provided to depict comparisons:

Subject Area	Interviewee Category	Findings
Important Issues Facing VA/Most Prominent Challenges Facing VA	Founders	The two most important issues facing VA leaders are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The shift in veteran demographics. 2. Changes in technology.
	Leaders	Leaders interviewed cited as the most prominent challenges facing VA: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dramatic change. 2. The aging veteran population. 3. Succession planning. <p>Interviewees were mixed on how to prepare leaders to meet these challenges.</p>
	External Stakeholders (VSOs)	Quality of health care is a critical issue area.
Leadership Development	Founders	Teaching leadership skills to LVA participants is an important approach to meeting future VA challenges
	Leaders	VA leaders interviewed most often said that the role of LVA should be [among other roles] developing leadership skills.

Subject Area	Interviewee Category	Findings
Quality of the Proposed Outcomes	Founders	<p>The following four outcomes most closely match the original intent of the program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outcome 1 (developing leadership skills). 2. Outcome 2 (developing the professional network). 3. Outcome 3 (improving internal/external environment knowledge). 4. Outcome 5 (improving team building skills). <p>The outcomes proposed are still preferred over the next 5-10 years.</p>
	Leaders	<p>Six of eleven leaders concurred with all eight of the proposed outcomes. Two of the remaining five endorsed them with allowances for minor changes or modifications</p> <p>Six of eleven leaders gave their unqualified support of all outcomes for the next 5-10 years. Three of the remaining five also supported all outcomes, with some reservations.</p>
	External Stakeholders (VSOs)	<p>Veteran advocacy is an important outcome of LVA.</p>

Subject Area	Interviewee Category	Findings
The Most Relevant Leadership Competencies for LVA	Founders	<p>The four most relevant (selected by 3 or more interviewees) of the 27 OPM SES leadership competencies for LVA are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexibility. 2. Vision. 3. Team building. 4. External awareness. <p>Ten others which were selected by 2 interviewees are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resilience. 2. Service motivation. 3. Customer service. 4. Problem solving. 5. Interpersonal skills. 6. Continual learning. 7. Creativity and innovation. 8. Cultural awareness. 9. Accountability. 10. Technology management
	Leaders	<p>The most relevant leadership competencies for LVA are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continual learning 2. Creativity and innovation 3. Customer service 4. Influencing/negotiating 5. Partnering 6. Team building 7. Interpersonal skills 8. Political savvy 9. External awareness 10. Integrity/Honesty 11. Cultural awareness

Subject Area	Interviewee Category	Findings
The Most Relevant Leadership Competencies for LVA (cont'd)	Program Management	<p>The most relevant leadership competencies for LVA are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Service motivation 2. Customer service 3. Influencing/negotiating 4. Interpersonal skills 5. Partnering
	Alumni	<p>The most relevant leadership competencies for LVA are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Service motivation 2. Customer service 3. Influencing/negotiating 4. Interpersonal skills 5. Partnering
	External Stakeholders	<p>The most relevant leadership competencies for LVA are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creativity and innovation 2. Service motivation 3. Team building 4. Accountability 5. Customer service

Subject Area	Interviewee Category	Findings
Achievement of Outcomes	Leaders	<p>The outcome most effectively achieved over the years by the LVA program was:</p> <p>Outcome 2: Expanding the professional network of participants.</p> <p>Other prominent outcomes in terms of effectiveness (greater than 4.0 on average Likert ratings) were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outcome 3: Improving participants' knowledge of the department's external and internal environment. - Outcome 5: Improving participants' team building skills. - Outcome 8: Contributing to diversity
	Program Management	<p>LVA has most effectively addressed the following outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outcome 2 (expanding the professional network). 2. Outcome 3 (improving internal/external environment knowledge). 3. Outcome 5 (improving team building skills). 4. Outcome 7 (participant retention). 5. Outcome 8 (promoting diversity).

Subject Area	Interviewee Category	Findings
Achievement of Outcomes (cont'd)	Alumni	<p>LVA has been most effective in achieving the following outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outcome 2 (developing the professional network). 2. Outcome 3 (improving internal/external environmental knowledge). 3. Outcome 8 (contributing to diversity).
Curriculum	Leaders	<p>The most effective LVA program feature in the opinion of the leaders interviewed is the curriculum itself. The least effective feature is governance of the program.</p> <p>No dramatic changes to the core LVA program are advisable at this time.</p> <p>Lifelong learning should receive the maximum possible emphasis in the LVA curriculum.</p>
	Program Management	<p>The most effective aspect of LVA's organization and design is the curriculum itself.</p> <p>LVA's greatest strength is the comprehensive overview it provides of the department.</p>
A Separate LVA Program for Lower Graded Participants (Below GS-13)	Leaders	No separate LVA program for lower graded participants (below GS-13) should be instituted.
	Alumni	A separate LVA program for lower-graded participants is a good idea.

Subject Area	Interviewee Category	Findings
LVA Post Graduation Follow-up	Leaders	No formal post-graduation follow up program should be instituted for LVA participants.
	Program Management	LVAAA is a good post-graduate program and already exists.
LVA Governance	Program Management	The LVA Board is not as actively involved in the management of LVA as desirable.
	Alumni	LVA needs more funding/budgetary support

Founder interview findings

The following table depicts the findings from interviews with four founders of the LVA program and the basis for those findings:

Subject Area	Findings	Basis for the Findings
Important Issues Facing VA	The two most important issues facing VA leaders are: 1. The shift in veteran demographics. 2. Changes in technology.	Both issues mentioned by two of four interviewees in answer to question on critical challenges faced by VA.
Meeting Future VA Challenges	Teaching leadership skills to LVA participants is an important approach to meeting future VA challenges.	This issue mentioned by two of four interviewees in answer to question on how to prepare leaders to meet challenges.

Subject Area	Findings	Basis for the Findings
How Well the Proposed Outcomes Match the Original Intent of the Program	<p>The following four outcomes most closely match the original intent of the program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outcome 1 (developing leadership skills). 2. Outcome 2 (developing the professional network). 3. Outcome 3 (improving internal/external environment knowledge). 4. Outcome 5 (improving team building skills). 	<p>These four outcomes scored above 4.0 on a 1 to 5 Likert ranking scale when averaging the individual ratings of interviewees:</p> <p>1 = 4.5 2 = 4.3 3 = 4.25 5 = 4.25</p>
Appropriateness of the Proposed Outcomes for the Future	<p>The outcomes proposed are still preferred over the next 5-10 years.</p>	<p>- Three of four interviewees agreed with this statement without qualifications.</p> <p>- One added the qualification that the mission could change in that time frame, causing a change in the preferability of one or more outcomes.</p>

Subject Area	Findings	Basis for the Findings
<p>The Most Relevant Leadership Competencies for LVA</p>	<p>The four most relevant (selected by 3 or more interviewees) of the 27 OPM SES leadership competencies for LVA are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexibility (3). 2. Vision (3). 3. Team building (3). 4. External awareness (3). <p>Ten others which were selected by 2 interviewees are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resilience. 2. Service motivation. 3. Customer service. 4. Problem solving. 5. Interpersonal skills. 6. Continual learning. 7. Creativity and innovation. 8. Cultural awareness. 9. Accountability. 10. Technology management 	<p>A frequency count of competencies cited in each interviewee's list of the top ten competencies.</p>

VA leadership interview findings

The following table depicts the findings from interviews of various officials within the VA leadership structure who are also LVA Board of Trustees members.

Subject Area	Findings	Basis for the Findings
Role of LVA in Supporting the Mission of VA	<p>VA leaders interviewed most often said that the role of LVA should be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing leadership skills. 2. Promoting continuing education. 3. Promoting the "One VA" concept. 	<p>- 3 of 11 interviewees cited leadership skills when asked what role LVA should be playing in supporting the agency's efforts to pursue its mission and vision.</p> <p>- 3 of 11 cited promoting "One VA."</p> <p>- 2 of 11 cited continuing education.</p>
The Most Prominent Challenges Facing VA	<p>Leaders interviewed cited as the most prominent challenges facing VA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dramatic change. 2. The aging veteran population. 3. Succession planning. <p>Interviewees were mixed on how to prepare leaders to meet these challenges.</p>	<p>- 4 of 11 interviewees cited dramatic change when asked about critical issues or challenges that have to be faced in VA.</p> <p>- 4 of 11 cited succession planning.</p> <p>- 3 of 11 cited the aging veteran population.</p>

Subject Area	Findings	Basis for the Findings
Achievement of Outcomes	<p>The outcome most effectively achieved over the years by the LVA program was:</p> <p>Outcome 2: Expanding the professional network of participants.</p> <p>Other prominent outcomes in terms of effectiveness (greater than 4.0 on average Likert ratings) were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outcome 3: Improving participants' knowledge of the department's external and internal environment. - Outcome 5: Improving participants' team building skills. - Outcome 8: Contributing to diversity. 	<p>These five outcomes scored above 4.0 on a 1 to 5 Likert rating scale when averaging individual ratings of the interviewees:</p> <p>Outcome 2 = 4.66 Outcome 3 = 4.22 Outcome 5 = 4.25 Outcome 8 = 4.22</p>
Appropriateness of Proposed Outcomes for the Future	<p>Most leaders gave their unqualified support of all outcomes for the next 5-10 years.</p>	<p>- 6 out of 11 interviewees gave their unqualified support of all outcomes for the next 5-10 years.</p> <p>- 3 out of the remaining 5 also supported all outcomes, but with reservations. Specific reservations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concern that development of “business acumen” be added to the list of program outcomes - Outcome #6 (career progression) is the most questionable of the eight proposed outcomes

Subject Area	Findings	Basis for the Findings
Curriculum Effectiveness	The most effective LVA program feature in the opinion of the leaders interviewed is the curriculum itself. The least effective feature is governance of the program.	Curriculum scored 1.88 when averaging the individual rank ordering (1 to 4, with 1 being the highest) of four program features, the highest average ranking of the four features.
Class Size	The LVA class size is too large.	3 of 11 leaders interviewed expressly cited class size as being too large.
Application and Selection Process	The application and selection process <i>maybe</i> flawed and should be studied further	3 of 11 leaders interviewed expressly cited problems of various kinds with the application and selection process. No consensus was expressed on the nature of the problems.
The Most Relevant Leadership Competencies for LVA	<p>The most relevant leadership competencies for LVA are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continual learning 2. Creativity and innovation 3. Customer service 4. Influencing/negotiating 5. Partnering 6. Team building 7. Interpersonal skills 8. Political savvy 9. External awareness 10. Integrity/Honesty 11. Cultural awareness 	Based on a frequency count, interviewees most often cited these competencies in their individual list of the top ten competencies.

Subject Area	Findings	Basis for the Findings
A Separate LVA Program For Lower Graded Participants (Below GS-13)	No separate LVA program for lower graded participants (below GS-13) should be instituted.	<p>- 5 of 11 leaders interviewed voiced an unqualified opposition to a separate LVA program for lower grades.</p> <p>- 2 of the remaining 5 voiced qualified opposition, with the most common reason cited for opposition being availability and desirability of locally managed continuing education for these employees.</p>
LVA Post Graduation Follow-up	No formal post-graduation follow up program should be instituted for LVA participants.	7 of 11 leaders interviewed voiced either qualified or unqualified opposition to a formal post-graduation follow up program for LVA participants. The most common reason for the opposition was the existence of LVAAA and programs such as the Federal Executive Institute (FEI) which provide opportunities for follow-on developmental experiences.
LVA Program Management	The current LVA Executive Director is a valuable asset to the LVA program.	2 interviewees expressly endorsed the performance the LVA Executive Director. This official was cited as bringing energy and passion to the presentation of the program.
LVA Curriculum Design	<p>No dramatic changes to the core LVA program are advisable at this time.</p> <p>Lifelong learning should receive the maximum possible emphasis in the LVA curriculum.</p>	<p>- 3 interviewees expressly endorsed the continuance of the LVA program in substantially its current form.</p> <p>- 2 leaders interviewed expressly cited lifelong learning as a critical aspect of leader development.</p>

Program management interview findings:

The following table depicts the findings from interviews with one current and one former official associated with the management of the LVA program and the basis for those findings:

Subject Area	Findings	Basis for the Findings
Prominent Aspects of the LVA Experience	The salient aspects of LVA are internal awareness of VA and knowledge of internal VA leadership processes.	Both interviewees expressed internal awareness of VA and knowledge of internal VA leadership as part of the description/definition of the LVA experience.
Achievement of Outcomes	<p>LVA has most effectively addressed the following outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outcome 2 (expanding the professional network). 2. Outcome 3 (improving internal/external environment knowledge). 3. Outcome 5 (improving team building skills). 4. Outcome 7 (participant retention). 5. Outcome 8 (promoting diversity). 	<p>These five outcomes scored above 4.0 on a 1 to 5 Likert rating scale when averaging individual ratings of the interviewees:</p> <p>2 = 5.0 3 = 5.0 5 = 4.0 7 = 4.0 8 = 4.5</p>

Subject Area	Findings	Basis for the Findings
Curriculum Effectiveness	<p>The most effective aspect of LVA's organization and design is the curriculum itself.</p> <p>LVA's greatest strength is the comprehensive overview it provides of the department.</p>	<p>Curriculum scored 2.0 when averaging the individual rank ordering (1 to 4, with 1 being the highest) of four program features, the highest average ranking of the four features.</p> <p>Both interviewees cited this feature when asked their opinion on the strengths of the LVA curriculum.</p>
LVA Governance	<p>The LVA Board is not as actively involved in the management of LVA as desirable.</p>	<p>Both interviewees expressed this opinion when asked their satisfaction with the LVA governance process.</p>
The Most Relevant Leadership Competencies for LVA	<p>The most relevant leadership competencies for LVA are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. External awareness 2. Team building 3. Influencing/negotiating 4. Interpersonal skills 5. Oral communication partnering 6. Political saavy 	<p>Both interviewees cited these competencies in their individual list of the top ten competencies.</p>
LVA Post Graduation Follow-up	<p>LVAAA is a good post-graduate program and already exists.</p>	<p>Both interviewees expressed this opinion when asked about the advisability of a formal post graduation follow-up program for LVA.</p>

VA alumni interview findings

The following table depicts the findings from interviews with two LVA alumni:

Subject Area	Findings	Basis
Achievement of Outcomes	<p>LVA has been most effective in achieving the following outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outcome 2 (developing the professional network). 2. Outcome 3 (improving internal/external environmental knowledge). 3. Outcome 8 (contributing to diversity). 	<p>These 3 outcomes scored above 4.0 on a 1 to 5 Likert rating scale when averaging individual ratings of the interviewees.</p>
Appropriateness of Proposed Outcomes for the Future	<p>The outcomes proposed will be pertinent for LVA over the next 5-10 years.</p>	<p>Both interviewees expressed agreement with this statement.</p>
Curriculum Effectiveness	<p>The most effective aspect of LVA's organization and design is the curriculum itself.</p>	<p>Both interviewees ranked curriculum first among the other choices given.</p>
The Most Relevant Leadership Competencies for LVA	<p>The most relevant leadership competencies for LVA are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Service motivation 2. Customer service 3. Influencing/negotiating 4. Interpersonal skills 5. Partnering 	<p>Both interviewees cited these competencies in their individual list of the top ten competencies.</p>
A Separate LVA Program for Lower Graded Participants (Below GS-13)	<p>A separate LVA program for lower-graded participants is a good idea.</p>	<p>Both interviewees expressed this viewpoint.</p>
LVA Governance	<p>LVA needs more funding/budgetary support</p>	<p>Both interviewees offered this comment unsolicited.</p>

External stakeholder (VSO) interview findings

The following table depicts the findings from interviews with two Veterans Service Organization (VSO) officials:

Subject Area	Findings	Basis
Appropriateness of the Proposed Outcomes for the Future	Veteran advocacy is an important outcome of LVA.	Both interviewees expressed this opinion.
Important Issues Facing VA	Quality of health care is a critical issue area.	Both interviewees expressed this opinion.
The Most Relevant Leadership Competencies for LVA	The most relevant leadership competencies for LVA are: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Creativity and innovation2. Service motivation3. Team building4. Accountability5. Customer service	Both interviewees cited these competencies in their individual list of the top ten competencies.

Conclusions

- One of the original intents of the LVA program, according to the founders, has been leadership skill development. According to other categories of interviewees, this focus has waned.

- Current VA leadership agrees that LVA should play a role in developing leadership skills of participants. One of the program managers observed that LVA should be both a leadership enrichment and a leadership development program, but whether or not that takes place depends on the will of VA's leadership to make it happen.

- The program outcomes proposed by the evaluation group were largely endorsed by all categories of participants, both now and for the 5-10 year time horizon. However, relatively weaker support was enjoyed by Outcome 6, Career progression of participants, and Outcome 7, Retention of participants.

- Most interviewees, regardless of category, agreed LVA was most effective in achieving Outcome 2, Expanding participants' network; Outcome 3, Improving participants' knowledge of VA's internal and external environment; and Outcome 8, Contributing to diversity.

- In general, none of the participant categories viewed the program as being highly effective in achieving Outcome 1, Developing participant leadership skills; Outcome 4, Improving participants' learning and self development skills; and Outcome 6, Achieving career progression. This stands in contrast to the support for all outcomes in general and the especially strong support expressed for Outcomes 1 and 4.

- Most interviewees, regardless of category, agreed that curriculum was the strongest feature of the LVA program, albeit with room for both improvement and augmentation. Governance, by contrast, was viewed as a relatively weak feature by most participants.

- The five most relevant leadership competencies for the LVA program across all categories of interviewees are:

- Team building (cited by 4 out of 5 interviewee categories)
- External awareness (cited by 3 out of 5 interviewee categories)
- Influencing/negotiating (cited by 3 out of 5 interviewee categories)
- Interpersonal skills (cited by 3 out of 5 interviewee categories)
- Partnering (cited by 3 out of 5 interviewee categories)

- Neither the need for a supplemental lower-graded LVA program nor a new LVA postgraduate program is supported by the interview data collected and analyzed.

Recommendations

- LVA should contain built-in means to measure achievement of the eight proposed outcomes. These measures should be used to provide the framework for ongoing evaluation of the program's impact at the participant satisfaction, learning, behavioral, and organizational impact levels. Maximum use of available participant demographic information from VA's PAID system should be made to support these measurement efforts.

- When considering improvements to LVA's structure and processes, maximum attention should be paid to its governance structure and processes. In particular, the LVA Board of Trustees should become more involved in the overall affairs of the program.

III. PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS

Background

The LVA Executive Director has been collecting and maintaining participant session evaluation data on a yearly basis beginning with the LVA 1998 class. The data is composed of satisfaction ratings provided by LVA class participants on a scale of 1 to 5 and narrative comments organized into categories of “positive” and “negative.” This data represents a ready, built-in store of data which can be used to measure participant reactions to LVA classroom sessions and other scheduled events. The Evaluation Group agreed that this was a valuable source of information which could prove supportive to an in-depth evaluation effort. The LVA 1999 data was analyzed in order to answer the specific evaluation questions listed below, including:

1. Any relationships which may exist between participant satisfaction with a given session or event and the outcome(s) the session or event ostensibly sought to achieve.
2. Any relationships which may exist between participant satisfaction and certain features/aspects of the LVA curriculum. Features were categorized according to standard categories found in the literature of adult learning.
3. A rank ordering of sessions and events in terms of participant satisfaction (see Appendix H).

Methodology and findings

Participant evaluation involves having participants rate on a Likert scale (of 1 to 5 with 5 representing the highest level) their satisfaction with the various events and activities which take place during the each of the four week-long sessions. Participant evaluation data was analyzed according to the following scheme:

Evaluation Question	Methodology	Finding
1. What was the average overall participant satisfaction rating for all 116 rated LVA 99 sessions?	Compute the numerical average of all participants ratings for each event.	The overall satisfaction rating for all 116 sessions in the 1999 LVA class was 4.44.

<p>2. What was the most frequent session feature in LVA 99 and the rank ordering of the other session features for frequency?</p>	<p>Frequency count of prominent session features and rank ordering of the frequencies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Action (experiential) learning 2. Builds from life experience 3. Addresses proficiency gap to perform in a role 4. Social networking 5. Addresses peculiar needs of the public service 6. Addresses peculiar needs of leadership development 7. Lecture/speaker(s) 8. Video or other audiovisual technology 9. Use of humor 	<p>The most frequent session feature in the 1999 LVA class was Lecture/speaker.</p> <p>For all 116 sessions, the rank ordering based on frequency was as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/speaker (83) - addresses needs of public service (65) - video or other audiovisual technology (49) - leadership development (31) - action learning (24) - building from life experience (22) - social networking (20) - addresses proficiency gap to perform in a role (18) - use of humor (14)
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<p>3. What outcome was most frequently addressed in all 116 rated sessions, and what was the rank ordering of the other outcomes for frequency?</p>	<p>Frequency counts of outcomes prominently addressed by session features and rank ordering of the frequencies</p>	<p>The most frequently addressed outcome was Outcome 3: Improve each participant's knowledge of the department's internal and external environment and program challenges.</p> <p>For all 116 sessions, the rank order based on frequency was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outcome 3 - Improve departmental knowledge (73) - Outcome 2 - Expand participants' network of contacts (38) - Outcome 1 - Improve participants' leadership skills (31) - Outcome 4 - Improve participant self-development skills (13) - Outcome 7 - Participant retention (13) - Outcome 5 - Improve team building skills (11) - Outcome 8 - Contribute to diversity (2) - Outcome 6 - Participant career progression (0)
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<p>4. What outcome was most highly associated with participant satisfaction? What outcome was least highly associated with participant satisfaction?</p>	<p>For each outcome, ratings for sessions associated with those outcomes were averaged. The highest average indicates the outcome most highly/least associated with participant satisfaction.</p>	<p>The most highly associated outcome was Outcome 7 – Retention (average rating = 4.705, more than 2 std. dev. above the mean of outcome average ratings).</p> <p>All other outcomes were less than one std. dev. above or below the mean of outcome average ratings.</p>
<p>5. What session feature was most highly associated with participant satisfaction? What session features were least highly associated with participant satisfaction?</p>	<p>For each feature, ratings for sessions associated with those features were averaged. The highest/lowest average indicates the feature most highly/least associated with participant satisfaction.</p>	<p>The session feature most highly associated with participant satisfaction was Use of humor (average rating = 4.636, approximately 2 std. dev. above the mean of feature average ratings).</p> <p>The least associated features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Addressing particular needs of the public service (average rating = 4.394) - leadership development (average rating = 4.397), - both of the above are approximately 1 std. dev. below the mean of feature average ratings

<p>6. What were the ten most highly rated sessions?</p>	<p>Rank ordering of average session ratings</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Philadelphia: Clinical Presentations - Surgery (5.0) 2. Baltimore: National Cemetery Administration - The Final Question (4.98) 3. Washington: Changing of the Guards - Wreath Laying (4.98) 4. Washington: Arlington Cemetery Tour (4.95) 5. Washington: Luncheon and Keynote Address: Senator Max Cleland (4.94) 6. Baltimore: Welcome Home: The Veteran Experience in America (4.92) 7. Philadelphia: LVAAA Picnic (4.89) 8. Washington: My Years as a POW (4.89) 9. Williamsburg: Introductions and Overview (4.89) 10. Philadelphia: Phillies Baseball Game (4.88)
<p>7. How skewed are the session ratings?</p>	<p>Computation of mean session rating distribution skew</p>	<p>The distribution of the ratings are negatively skewed by a factor of -0.84491. This means that the preponderance of the scores are above the mean score, toward more positive values. Given the natural tendency for numbers to normally distribute around a mean, this is an indication of a bias on the part of the participants to rate sessions favorably.</p>
<p>8. What was the average number of positive comments per session?</p>	<p>Computation of mean number of positive comments</p>	<p>The average number of positive comments per session was 23.00862</p>
<p>10. What was the average number of negative comments per session?</p>	<p>Computation of mean number of negative comments</p>	<p>The average number of negative comments per session was 7.543103</p>

Conclusions

- Participants are well satisfied with LVA, but the skew of the evaluation score distribution indicates they have a bias toward rating sessions favorably.
- In terms of session hours spent, LVA relies most heavily on lecturers/speakers as a medium of learning delivery. Other learning delivery methods are better received by the participants in terms of their satisfaction, especially when humor is employed. Action learning, social networking, and addressing general proficiency gaps all had higher average satisfaction ratings.
- A prominent feature of LVA is addressing the specific needs of public servants in an agency-tailored way. This feature is strongly associated with LVA's most heavily addressed outcome in terms of session hours spent, improving each participant's knowledge of the department's internal and external program challenges. This feature is not as well-received by participants in terms of their satisfaction in comparison with other program features, most likely due to an overemphasis on lecture as a medium of delivery.
- Leadership development, by contrast, is a relatively underemphasized feature of LVA. Out of 116 sessions, only 31 address this need in a significant way. When it is addressed, it is not as well received by the participants as other program features, in terms of their satisfaction.
- Participant career progression is virtually ignored as a program feature.
- The Leadership Soapbox is the "richest" experience, as it has the most features (commensurate with a multimedia approach to learning) and addresses the most outcomes. This activity is relatively well-received by participants as well, in terms of their satisfaction.
- Various networking and entertainment activities, by contrast, were highly rated in terms of participant satisfaction but were limited in the learning features and outcomes addressed.
- Most events incorporating some sort of action learning approach (broadly defined as activities which physically engage the participants) were highly rated in terms of satisfaction. Two exceptions to this general trend was the class meetings and the clinical presentation on Primary Care in the Philadelphia session, which were rated relatively low.
- The outcome most highly associated with participant satisfaction was the agency retention outcome. This suggests that LVA participants are receptive to this learning objective, increasing the likelihood of its effectiveness.

IV. PHILADELPHIA 2000 SESSION OBSERVATIONS

Methodology

Observations were employed as a fieldwork data collection strategy (Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer, 1994) to support the in-depth evaluation. An observation guide (Appendix I) was constructed to focus session observations on along two primary dimensions: session content; i.e., objectives, themes, and ideas, and session processes; i.e., methods and approaches. Content was specifically linked to proposed program outcomes in order to assess which session events addressed one or more proposed outcomes, and which particular outcomes the session addressed. Process was described in terms of quality factors, such as the dryness or liveliness of presentations, effectiveness in achieving objectives, and recommendations for improvement.

Specific findings

Evaluation Question	Finding
1. What was the most frequent outcome-oriented event feature in LVA 2000 Philadelphia?	The most frequent outcome-oriented feature in LVA 2000 Philadelphia was: Builds participant knowledge of VA and its environment.
2. What was the rank ordering of the other event outcome-oriented features for frequency?	For all 42 observed sessions, the rank ordering based on frequency was: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Builds participant knowledge of VA and its environment (13)- Participant networking and Building a sense of loyalty to VA (tied at 11)- Building participants' team building skills (8)- Building participants' learning/self development skills (6)- Building participants' general leadership skills (1)
3. What events failed to accomplish their objectives?	None were noted to have failed in accomplishing their objectives.

<p>4. What number of presentations were designated as dry, lively, organized, disorganized, interesting, dull?</p>	<p>For all 10 presentations observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 were observed as dry - 5 as lively - 9 as organized - 1 as disorganized - 10 as interesting - 0 as dull
<p>5. What aspects of events were considered most effective in meeting event objectives?</p>	<p>Each item was cited in a single instance as effective by the observer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - historical summary - icebreakers - refreshments - concise/crisp presentation - primer for participants - media/audiovisuals - group dynamics - current program information - excellent training room - summarization of the event - visuals, interviews, videotapes, musical entertainment - rotation of leaders
<p>6. What aspects of events were considered least effective in meeting event objectives?</p>	<p>The following items were cited by the observer as least effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - crowding (mentioned twice) - lengthy presentation (mentioned once) - unclear introduction of speakers (mentioned once)

<p>7. What recommendations for improvements were offered?</p>	<p>The following recommendations were offered by the observer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand space where crowding tends to occur (networking center, dinner at the Great Hall of Pennsylvania Hospital) - For soapboxes, remind introducers not to dwell on themselves, but to use the allotted 3 minutes on the introducee; - Use more than one presenter (history of veterans benefits) - Make sure material presented is up to date
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Conclusions

- The observations supported the finding from the participant evaluations that Outcome 3, Improving each participant's knowledge of the department's internal and external environment and program challenges, is the primary aspect of the LVA program, and that Outcome 1, Development of leadership skills, is relatively underemphasized.

V. BENCHMARKING AND BEST PRACTICES: PREVIOUS STUDIES

Over the past four years, a variety of organizations have conducted a series of benchmarking studies to identify best practices in the area of leadership development and succession planning. The National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA), the American Productivity and Quality Council (APQC), the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) and the Corporate Leadership Council all conducted studies that made the work of the LVA Evaluation Group easier. In addition, a number of books such as *Building Leaders* by Jay Conger and Beth Benjamin, *Leadership by Design* by Albert Vicere and Robert Fulmer, and *The Handbook of Leadership Development* by the Center for Creative Leadership also shaped the thinking of the LVA Evaluation Group.

By benchmarking and identifying best practices the LVA Evaluation Group hoped to identify ideas for improving LVA and for helping to understand how LVA could fit into VA's leadership development efforts. The Evaluation Group also hoped to develop ideas for pre-LVA and post-LVA programs. VA's demographics and the projected retirements of VA leaders during the next three to five years made the gathering of such information even more critical

Findings in Previous Studies

There were three important threads that the LVA Evaluation Group discovered during its review. The first is a trend towards building pools of leaders. Because of losses, downsizing, and projected retirements, organizations have determined that they cannot afford to develop only a few. They have to accelerate and expand the development process of their leaders. In terms of LVA itself, this lesson has limited value, because the program has such a small role to play in leadership development for VA as a whole; however, it does underscore the importance of addressing leadership development in the context of overall Departmental workforce planning.

A second important trend apparent in other organizations is the importance of experience and project assignments to reinforce learning. Theory has its value, but the application of theory to the real world and the practice of business are essential.

A third trend is the recognition that individuals who are undergoing leadership development need support. For this reason, mentoring and coaching are key pieces of any leadership development effort. Leaders in the organization must take time to guide those following behind them and help ensure that they receive the support they need to be successful.

The Major Studies

In 1997, the National Academy of Public Administration published *Managing Succession and Developing Leadership: Growing the Next Generation of Public Service Leaders*. In this

study, NAPA identified eight succession management principles common to benchmark organizations:

- Top organizational leaders are personally involved and deeply committed.
- Succession management processes are relatively simple and flexible and are integrated with strategic plans to identify and develop leaders who meet evolving organizations needs.
- Succession programs are owned by line managers, supported by HR staff, integrated into HR processes, and consistent with the organization's culture.
- A pool of high-potential leaders is identified early and developed rather than relying on a slate of replacements for current positions.
- Leader competencies are identified and regularly reviewed/updated as candidates are assessed and developed against those competencies.
- Reviews to identify high-potential candidates and developmental measures, and to assess process, occur regularly, involving all levels of the organization.
- Leader development uses three complementary means: varied job assignments, education/training, and self-development.
- Senior leaders identify developmental goals for individuals and managers, expect them to achieve the goals and hold them accountable.

Subsequent studies further developed these ideas.

In 1999, the American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC) and the American Society of Training and Development published *Leadership Development: Building Executive Talent*. The study's purpose was "to identify and examine, innovations, best practices and key trends in the area of leadership development and to gain insights and learning about the practice involved." The following are the study's key findings:

- Leadership development is closely aligned with, and is used to support, the business strategy of the organizations.
- The corporate leadership development process does not try to handle all of the learning needs of executives within the organization. It focuses on core issues such as values and strategic change that are vital to the entire organization, while the business units focus on challenges specific to their operations.

Identified best practices:

- Organizations carefully build leadership development teams by emphasizing the importance of both human resources development and business experience.
- In order to establish and maintain initial success, leadership development processes are internally focused and externally aware.
- A majority of organizations have identified leadership competencies or at least tried to define characteristics and qualities of future leaders.
- Organizations grow leaders as opposed to buying them.
- Organizations focus on getting the right people into the right program.
- Action, not knowledge, is the goal of leadership development processes.
- Technology can be useful for knowledge dissemination but cannot replace the important act of bringing leaders together to deepen the learning experience.
- The leadership development process is linked to the organization's succession planning efforts.
- The leadership development process is a symbiotic tool of effective leaders.
- Organizations always assess the impact of their leadership development process.
- Organizations' leadership development processes are costly undertakings but are seen as worthwhile investments.

In 2000, APQC published another benchmarking study, *Developing Leaders at All Levels*. Its purpose was simply to identify best practices in developing leaders at all levels. The following are the study's key findings regarding such best practices:

- Organizations recognize leadership as a key component of jobs at all levels in the organization.
- Organizations define leadership as a set of competencies that guide leadership development at all levels.
- The leadership competencies of organizations uniquely fit the organization, its particular strategy, and its business model.
- Organizations seek "hire-to-grow" leaders at all levels.

- Responsibility for leadership development at all levels is shared with the individual employee.
- The key leadership development process is manager-as-coach.
- Developing leaders use individual development plans that guide and commit them to growth and progress.
- “Big-ticket” leadership development processes, such as external coaching, action learning and external executive programs are reserved for more senior leaders and those deemed high potential.
- Organizations widely use 360-degree feedback (multi-rater, upward feedback) as a leadership development tool.
- Organizations use leaders to teach leadership.
- The evaluation method most frequently used at best-practice companies is forming a clear, logical link between the leadership development process and business results.
- There is close communication, both formal and informal, between those who design and deliver leadership at all levels and the sponsors of the efforts.
- Leadership processes include communication with potential leaders at all levels, not just with corporate sponsors of the effort.

These studies provide the basic information on the best practices in leadership development. They indicate that organizations have recognized the importance of tying leadership development efforts at all levels with business results, have encouraged participants to share in the responsibility for learning, involve current leaders in developing future leaders, and use assessments to help participants understand their developmental needs. In addition, for those individuals being developed for higher-level leadership positions, organizations will employ action learning and mentoring as part of the learning experience. This discussion will, however, focus on those practices that have potential application to Leadership VA. Other studies cited in this report have identified best practices that VA may consider for future leadership development efforts.

Elements of Leadership Development Programs

The Evaluation Group’s review of a wide variety of programs found that leadership development programs have common elements. The Center for Creative Leadership in *The Handbook of Leadership Development* has identified three elements that are common to successful leadership development efforts. They are:

Assessment: Throughout the process, participants receive feedback on their development through the use of validated assessment tools. The tools not only help the participants identify areas that need to improve, but they also provide a way to measure future development. If the assessment tool involves input from a variety of sources (e.g. 360° feedback from supervisors, peers and subordinates), the participants begin to see how their actions affect other people and the results they are trying to achieve. In addition, organizations use assessment tools to measure the results, or outcomes, of their leadership development programs.

Challenge: If assignments or learning activities are too comfortable, individuals do not have the opportunity to stretch and grow. Organizations may ask participants to use and learn skills not required in previous positions, or to achieve difficult goals. Leadership development programs should provide the participants with the opportunities to face conflict, question old habits, assume new roles, and perhaps face hardships. Organizations deliberately use difficult experiences and assignments to develop leaders who are able to learn and are adaptable.

Support: If developmental activities stretch individuals and are, at times, difficult, the organization provides them with individuals who can help them analyze what is happening and deal with the situations they may be facing. Mentors, supervisors or coaches help keep things in perspective, provide encouragement, make suggestions for dealing with problems, and celebrate successes. They are key to the development of leaders within an organization. These individuals also model the behaviors that the future leaders should practice.

The Center for Creative Research, since its inception over 20 years ago, has spent time meeting with effective managers and executives to determine if there are any “capacities for enabling leadership that are developable.” In the Handbook for Leadership Development, the Center has identified the following capacities “that leaders can, and must learn, over time.”

- Self- awareness
- Self- confidence
- Ability to take a broad, systemic view
- Ability to work effectively in social systems
- Ability to think creatively
- Ability to learn from experiences

The Center stresses that, based on its research, to develop these capabilities a person must first realize that there is a need for improvement and then must identify the skill or capacity he or she wishes to develop. Finally, the person must practice this skill for some time, before he or she will develop the confidence that he or she can effectively use this skill.

To successfully help individuals learn, grow and develop leadership capacities, the Center for Creative Leadership suggests the following strategies to enhance this process:

- Create a variety of developmental experiences that each provide assessment, challenge, and support;
- Enhance people's ability to learn from experiences; and
- Use an approach that integrates the various developmental experiences and embeds them in the organizational context.

These general guidelines provide a framework for reviewing Leadership VA and providing a better way to assess the context in which it currently exists. The best practices and guidelines we have identified will help provide ideas and suggestions for improving Leadership VA and for outlining the possible leadership development framework in which it could exist in the future.

VI. BENCHMARKING AND BEST PRACTICES: LVA EVALUATION GROUP

Best Practice Organizations

The LVA Evaluation Group established the following criteria for selecting organizations to highlight in the report.

- VA is an organization that focuses upon its mission – “To care for him who shall have borne the battle and his widow and his orphan.” Service to veterans is a passion in VA that creates a strong emotional quality permeating VA’s organizational values. The study group wanted to find organizations that had a strong mission that inspired their members and permeated the organization’s value system.
- Organizations having a business or a function similar to those found within VA should be included in the report.
- Because the previous benchmarking studies demonstrated the key role action learning played in the development of leaders, programs that incorporated real projects and experiences to reinforce learning would be included in the review.
- Key to LVA is its emphasis upon building a VA community where its members understood and valued its diversity. Organizations that created such a community were to be included in the study.
- Benchmarking partners should include examples of federal organizations that successfully used the Office of Personnel Management’s Executive Core competencies.
- Because “what gets measured, gets done” and because accountability for outcomes is critical in any government program, the LVA Evaluation Group wanted to highlight organizations that measured the effectiveness and quality of their leadership development programs. A focus upon results and outcomes would be a key factor for inclusion in the review.
- Succession planning was also an important factor for inclusion in the review. Organizations that had tracking systems that monitored the progress and advancement of future leaders were also to be included in the report.

The Evaluation Group considered a wide range of organizations in the public and private sectors. Using these criteria, the Group selected Johnson & Johnson, Motorola, the Social Security Administration, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and Leadership Atlanta.

Best Practice Organizations – Private Sector

Johnson and Johnson

(Sources: Linkage, 2000 and APCQ, 1999)

Location: New Brunswick, New Jersey

Type of Business/Organization: *Healthcare products*

Its products fall into three categories: consumer, professional, and pharmaceutical. Brands include Tylenol, Band-Aid, Motrin and Ortho-Novum.

Number of Employees: 94,000 operating in 180 companies and selling products in 175 countries.

Origins and Background of the Organization’s Leadership Development Program

Johnson & Johnson uses three basic principles to guide its business: commitment to the “Credo,” commitment to decentralized management and commitment to the long term.”

The “Credo” which Robert Wood Johnson created in 1943 (Attachment One) keys the organization together. It “describes the organization responsibility to the key stakeholders, who include the customer, the employees, the community, and the stockholder.” Johnson believed “that by putting the customer first and focusing on he the employees and the communities” in which the company operated J&J would take care of the stockholder’s interests.

In 1996, Chairman of the Board Ralph Larsen stated: “As you look at our grown projections over time, we’re going to need more and more leaders. Leadership is the biggest single constraint to growth at Johnson & Johnson, and it is the most critical business issue we face.” Johnson & Johnson then began an effort to strengthen its leadership. Line management owned the effort, while Human resources provided support by deploying systems and processes designed to attract, develop and retain a high performing talent pool.

Johnson & Johnson used its Credo to develop its Standard of Leadership, which forms the basis of its leadership development efforts (Attachment 2). Line management developed and senior executives tested the Standards of Leadership. What is significant is that the “standards are interrelated and driven by Johnson & Johnson’s focus on the Credo and business results (APQC, 1999).”

In addition to the competencies, J & J has Leadership Development principles that are considered critical success factors for this effort. The Best Practices in Organizations and Human Resources Development Handbook states they are:

1. Leadership development is a key business strategy.

2. Leadership excellence is a definable set of standards.
3. People are responsible for their own development.
4. J & J's executives are accountable for developing leaders.
5. Leaders are developed primarily on the job.
6. People are an asset of the corporation.
7. Human resources support is vital to the success of leadership development.

What distinguishes Johnson & Johnson is the effort it has placed on aligning its leadership development efforts with its basic operating values and its strategic vision.

Coverage

Johnson & Johnson has entry level leadership development programs for new hires in Financial Management and Information Resources Management. Johnson & Johnson hires individuals, who have leadership potential, with master's degrees in these technical areas.

Johnson & Johnson also has internal programs for its leaders. In Johnson & Johnson the corporate level does not decide who should attend program sponsors who are in charge of the operating companies make these decisions.

Executive Conference III focuses on senior executives and management boards, while the Executive Development Program focuses on advanced managers. This report will include information on the Executive Conference Program (Linkage 2000).

The Executive Conference Process

The Executive Conference is not an event; it is a process that helps J&J focus on learning while working on real business issues. It uses "action learning," which means participants expect to achieve tangible progress on a business issue as well as to advance their learning. The objective of the Executive Conference process is to have participants experience leadership on three levels.

Leadership on a personal level

- a) Develop a personal improvement plans that looks at gaps in comparison the to the leadership model
- b) Follow-up meetings with boss and others
- c) Follow up a year later with second 360-degree survey focused on targeted areas

- d) Assimilate individual leadership development feedback while working a multidisciplinary team comprised of individuals from dispersed geographic areas.

Leadership Development on an Organizational Basis

- e) Both leading “my management team” and leading across organizational boundaries
- f) Practice personal leadership within a business context
- g) Develop a team action plan that addresses a business issue while applying the leadership model
- h) Achieve a measurable result within 90 days

Leadership Development through Credo values and Culture

- i) Led by top executives
- j) Reinforce Credo Values
- k) Provides critical decision-making “guideposts”
- l) Supports today’s new realities of doing business across boundaries

Selection of Business Issue and Participants

The Executive Conference uses action learning, which has teams focus on a specific business problem. Each conference has a theme, which is its focus. Each team deals with a different business issue and is tasked with presenting a solution to address the challenge at the end of the team workshop experiences.

The sponsor plays a key role and makes a variety of key decisions which include:

- What business issues will the teams address?
- Who will be the team leader?
- Who should be the other members of the team?

The sponsor selects the problems each team will work on. The sponsor also selects the team leaders and the members of each team. The sponsor does not select intact work teams, but selects team members from different organizations and from different geographic locations.

Components of the Executive Conference

What is unique about this conference is the way in which Johnson & Johnson integrates the business project, its assessment process that is built upon its Leadership standards, its focus on individual responsibility to act upon developmental needs, and its interest in results at both the organizational and individual level. The conference’s message and purpose is consistent and aligned with Johnson & Johnson’s Credo. It expects its leaders to model behavior in line with its Credo and standards and to produce results that

will move Johnson & Johnson forward. The four phases of the Executive Conference process illustrate this consistency.

Four Phases of the Executive Conference Process

Pre-session - Four Months Prior to Session

Identify the critical business issues to be addressed
Identify the participants
Form business project teams
Initiate the 360-degree survey process
Perform initial research of best practices surrounding each business issue

Core session – 5-day conference

Standards of Leadership and Personal Leadership development
Credo values
Creating substantially business changes

Follow-up Event –three months following the core session

Business project teams provide feedback in initial impact of their recommendation

Mini-Survey process – Nine to 12 months from core session

Participants survey and receive feedback on identified developmental areas

Furthermore, the conference focuses upon action and producing results. It requires the participants to not only go through the assessment, but to model behavior that demonstrates a willingness to learn and improve. Integrated into the conference process is a focus on the individual that is aligned to its vision and strategy.

Leadership Development at the Individual Level – The 360-Degree Assessment Process

Johnson and Johnson has a 360-degree assessment process it uses in its Leadership development programs. This assessment is anchored in the behaviors found in the Standards of Leadership. This process's key operating principles are:

- It is a tool for development and not performance or assessment;
- The individual would receive the following type of data:
 1. The certification process self ratings
 2. Direct reports feedback

3. Feedback from peers and others

- The data belongs to the individual since development is the focus of the instrument. No one in the organization has access to individual data.

Johnson and Johnson was concerned about how the 360-degree process would be used. It therefore, established a certification process for those involved in the process. The certification process targets three groups.

Human Resource managers supporting individual operation companies
Learning services, the Internal J&J Organizational Effectiveness consulting team
External consultants supporting units in specific leadership change efforts

To ensure there was a successful deployment of the 360-degree assessment process, the certification process covered organizational readiness and provided an orientation to the process. The certification process also covered implementation fundamentals that include:

- The 360- degree administrative process
- Data intervention and feedback
- Coaching and the follow-up process
- Working with intact teams
- Working with functional groups.

The certification process was two days long. From Johnson and Johnson's 's standpoint, the certification process was designed to provide guidance so Johnson and Johnson maintained the assessment's integrity while ensuring a successful implementation. (Linkage, 2000)

What Johnson & Johnson has done is to take the assessment process and integrate it into the Executive Conference Process. The participants are aware of the 360-degree process before, during and after the conference.

Phase 1 – Pre-conference

Instruments are distributed, returned for processing using an outside organization. The outside organization generates reports.

Phase 2 – Conference

The participants receive the feedback reports.

The participants attend a workshop so that they will understand the data, identify themes or patterns, identify gaps and understand strengths and weakness.

Phase 3 – Post Conference (30 days)

The participants receive coaching by phone to review potential themes and to develop action plans for changes. This process engages the direct reports and peers who provided feedback. The participants learn a process by which they thank those who provided the feedback, discuss what the feedback process showed you, and involved those who provided feedback in providing suggestions for improvement. They also are told how to solicit feedback on progress from those who provided feedback.

Phase 4 – Post Conference (180 days to 1 year)

Johnson & Johnson conducts a small survey to assess the degree of change. This is part of the evaluation process.

What is also significant Johnson & Johnson provide the participants with support and encouragement after the conference is over. If the project teams have to produce a result, individuals are also asked, using the data from 360-degrees assessment, to take action and produce results.

The Executive Conference does not end after the main session ends. The conference emphasizes action learning and has in place an extensive support effort that encourages the participants to follow through on their action plans. It uses written reminders and a survey process. (Linkage, 2000)

Written reminders

Initial Follow-up letter

It is sent three months following the core session. It asks the participants to engage those who had provided feedback in the development process and to provide ongoing progress reports.

Second Follow Up Letter

This letter is sent 6 months after the core session. It is a "check in" that asks the participants to do a self-assessment of progress in the areas they had slated for improvement. It also encourages the participants to continue to do checks of their progress with direct reports and peers.

Third Follow Up letter

It is sent 9 months after the core session. Again it reminds the participants to do progress checks with direct reports and peers. It highlights the link between follow-up and the impact on improvements. It also discussed the importance of teamwork and peer relationships for future leaders.

Fourth and Final Letter

This is issued one year from the core session. It asks the participants to reflect on their areas for improvement. It also reminds them that on-going support is available.

Mini Survey Process

The Mini Survey process helps the participants see if the assessment, feedback and coaching process has improved their leadership effectiveness. After 6 to 12 months from the core session, the participants ask those who had provided initial feedback to provide them with feedback on their progress. The survey focuses on:

- Whether or not the individual responded to the feedback
- The degree to which the individual followed up
- The degree of change in leadership effectiveness
- The degree of change in the areas marked for improvement.

The evaluation process of the program shows that the follow-up process contributed to the perceived increase in leadership effectiveness. The Mini Feedback process provides information on the leadership effectiveness of participants. It shows that the follow-up process helped contribute to the improved effectiveness of the participants. The evaluation data also show that there were improvements in the areas the participants selected for improvement. This data provides Level 3 or behavioral information for the evaluation process.

Because the Executive Conference uses action, Johnson and Johnson has also been able to assess the business impact of the program. It used an interview process of stakeholders and of program participants. It was able to establish positive results for individual leadership learning, team leadership learning and organizational leadership learning. In addition, the survey process also had a positive impact on business results, since the projects the teams had worked on impacted the actual products and services Motorola provides.

Lessons Learned

The Best Practices in Organizations and Human Resources Development Handbook identified the following lessons learned from the Executive Conference process that Johnson and Johnson uses.

- Johnson and Johnson, by building a business context for the process build participant buy-in, facilitated team problem solving and ensured successful outcomes. The project helped the participants to focus on an issue important to the organization.

- It is important to quickly approve the business issue identified for the program. In addition, the timely acceptance or rejection of a team's solution is critical. The sponsor needs support in making this happen.
- Johnson and Johnson believes more attention should be paid to follow-up events after the core session is over. It is important to build accountability for implementation of initiatives. It is also important to publicly recognize and celebrate the teams' outcomes and learning. It is also important to tell the participants know about the outcomes of their projects and to share any thing that was learned from the initiative. Even a project that was not accepted has critical learning that could benefit the organizations.
- It is essential to plan for successful leadership development outcomes. Key decision-makers that determine the fate of the project need to be involved. It is also important to select and focus on the 2 or 3 key business solutions and implement them.
- Adding time for discussion would strengthen the conference. There is a need to reflect upon, challenge and question the solutions or planned presented. Those reviewing the solutions or projects should model the behaviors that the participants should use.
- It is important to facilitate the implementation of all follow-up activities after the core session. They do not just happen.

Motorola

(Sources: Linkage. 2000 and Corporate University Review, 2000)

Location: Schaumburg, Illinois

Type of Business/Organization: *Provides wireless communications technologies, semiconductors and advanced electronic systems*

Number of Employees: More than 150,000 found in 20 countries. It has sales and service facilities in 1,100 locations in six continents

The Global Organization Leadership Development Process (GOLD) (Linkage, 2000)

GOLD is a program found in the Messaging Systems Products Groups. It illustrates how a group within Motorola has used the action learning process and tied it to its strategy. Those nominated for GOLD are on a list of recognized high potential. They are in their early thirties and older. They come from all regions of the business and from all functions.

Approximately 30 to 35 participants are in each session. Each session covers a three-month period and has 21 training days. Each session is held in a different location to provide a better picture of the global characteristics of the company. At each site (Asia, the United States and Europe), the participants have the option of receiving an optional cultural orientation session for participants who could arrive early; it lasts one day.

Throughout the sessions, General Managers from across the Messaging Systems group come to the sessions to discuss business issues with the participants. Their discussion of strategy and initiatives form a common thread throughout the following three phases of the program.

Part 1 – Leading the Institution

- Leading by vision
- Alignment of vision and strategy
- Transcultural competency

This part helps bring the group together and focuses on eliminating barriers. The sessions emphasize the need to eliminate silos and work in teams that cross natural boundaries of function, gender, region and culture. Cross-cultural teams are formed that have to work together under time pressure to accomplish tasks. Facilitators work with the teams to help them identify the learning gained from the exercises. It focuses on leadership, collaboration and innovative thinking. Time is also spent discussing vision and strategy.

Part 2- Managing the Global Corporation

- Global transnational strategy
- Strategic thinking tools
- Customer focused marketing

This phase takes place in the United States at a site where Motorola does not have an office. It focuses on strategic planning and developing customer-focused strategies. During this session, the participants work on issues that deal with such things as forming and implementing global and divisional strategies. They learn how to develop tools for the effective use of resources and knowledge of architecture development and marketing programs. They also deal with leadership issues such as sharing and spreading innovations and increasing efficiency in the organization. They also spend a great deal of their time working on geographically and functionally diverse teams that work through a customer-focused marketing simulation.

Part 3-Leading organizational transformation

- Leading change
- Team Building
- Individual Leadership Style

In this phase the program focuses on personal leadership as well as strategic organizational leadership. A basic piece of this component is the completion of a 360-degree assessment on all the participants. In addition, the participants do a work group culture analysis and begin analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of their work groups. They then develop personal action plans working individually with facilitators and with members of their group. Part of the action planning process included identifying the support they will need to accomplish their plans.

Other Distinguishing Practices and Elements of the GOLD Program

Faculty

The GOLD program uses a combination of internal and external faculty. Time is spent selecting, educating and managing the faculty for this program. All faculty members meet together to discuss material to be used for the course. The goal is to present a seamless program to the participants. Care is taken to ensure that the modules build upon each other. A real effort is made to align course content with the business strategy and objectives of the MSP group.

Action Learning

The program is designed to have the participants apply what they learned from the faculty. Application is immediate and does not occur only after the three-month program is over. All participants had to work on a team that focused on a project that was called a “Business Challenge.” Team size varied with the project.

Team composition was also a critical factor. Teams rarely had team members taken from the same office. Most teams also had members from two or more countries and from three or more functions. This helped the team members to develop an understanding of people from different parts of the worked and from different functional areas.

The participants also did not select their own project for the Business Challenge. The General Mangers selected the projects, and they were told to select strategic business issues that kept them awake at night. Prior to the GOLD session, the General Managers who had selected the business challenge briefed the action teams. If possible, the briefing included supervisors of the team members so that they would understand the problem being faced and would understand that the project was an important business priority.

The faculty integrated the projects into the curriculum by introducing information, skills building sessions, tools and techniques the teams could use on their projects. The teams were not given time to work solely on their projects; they were expected to integrate the projects into their regular workload. The time needed to complete the project varied and the teams were expected to continue working on the project after the completion of the program.

GOLD Miner – a Leadership Development Tracking System

A key component of the GOLD process is GOLD miner, which is a database of alumni and a leadership development tracking system. The database tracks alumni in terms of “job rotation, expatriated assignment, cross-function experience and promotion.” When a General Manager needs to identify leaders for new opportunities or projects, he or she can go to the database.

Evaluation

The GOLD process has an evaluation strategy with three components– during and post-training evaluation, transfer evaluation and impact evaluation

During and Post-training Evaluations

During the course, the evaluation process was proactive.

- Participants provided daily feedback for the first two presentations by any instructor. This helped the instructors make adjustments by focusing in on strengths and areas for improvement. This helped the instructors make real time changes that did not have to wait until after the course was completed.

- Participants completed a survey that identified “the most meaningful learning, what they planned to take back and apply back in their organizations, and the impact of the module on their leadership behaviors.
- Instructors became involved in self-evaluations. They were asked to look at such things “as how well the material related to the participants’ work roles, the effectiveness of learning activities, the value of pre-reading and whether learning objectives were met.
- The instructors, the design team, the CEO, and General Managers received a report within forty –eight hours.

After the course, the post-training evaluation continued. The participants received an overall assessment survey on the course two months after completing phase three of the training session. It asked participants to assess each module in relation to the other modules and to the overall goals of GOAL. It also focused on such things as “post-training networking between participants, the level of support from the General Managers and from immediate supervisors, application to the Business Challenges of the tools and skills learned in training and as assessment of GOLD as a valuable investment...”

Transfer Evaluation

The organization wanted to assess the degree to which business skills were learned from the training and through the projects transferred to the work environment. Were the participants applying lessons learned from the class and the projects to leadership on the job?

To do this, prior to the end of the session, the Business challenge team prepared action plans. Three months after GOLD, the evaluation contacted each team to discuss progress and the application of training to the project. Since the teams had to manage the projects within their regular workload, the effective of the team’s planning and its ability to apply the training and information they learned through GOLD could be reviewed.

The progress of all the teams was reviewed annually. A member of the design team would meet with each team to review progress, to discuss problems, and to determine how GOLD helped them with the project and with developing their leadership skills. During the second annual review, they developed a range of implementation stages against which the teams could be assessed. Those projects that were successful and resulted in changes that moved Motorola forward were considered to have shown a transfer of GOLD learning to a strategic business issue. This type of assessment of a project in the real world in relation to the classroom experience has provided a valuable tool for the assessment of transfer of knowledge. A report on knowledge transfer is shared with senior leaders throughout the organization.

The transfer evaluation also looks at the effectiveness of globally diverse teams and of sending the participants to different parts of the world for training. The group’s

effectiveness in establishing a network was also review. In addition, demographic data about the movement of GOLD participants throughout the company was also monitored and reviewed. It was shown that participants were often selected for assignments because of their GOLD experience.

Impact Evaluation

This part of the evaluation looked at the outcomes of the projects. This looked at such things as cost savings, improvement of effectiveness and improvement of productivity.

Lessons Learned

Here are a few of the lessons that the organization learned from the GOLD process (Linkage, 2000):

Commit to the continuous involvement of management.

Senior leaders and managers were visibly involved in all aspects of GOLD from the initial design to the evaluations.

Undertake a thorough needs assessment.

GOLD did not just happen; it was planned.

Link dealership development to critical business issues.

The GOLD process is grounded in the business. The business issues set the stage that makes the learning more real and more important to the organization and the participants.

Look beyond the established approaches.

This organization let the business issues drive the design of the program and not a set of competencies. Using action learning in the program made the process a very important business strategy for the organization. It actually allowed the participants to help shape the company's future.

Allow the intervention to develop incrementally.

The GOLD process evolved over a period of years. The General Managers were involved in the process and in the changes made in the process. The organization learned from each offering of the process.

Use best-in-class faculty.

Evaluate continuously.

Best Practice Organizations – Public Sector

Social Security Administration

(Source: SSA Program Documentation)

Location: Baltimore, Maryland

Type of Business/Organization: *Federal Government Agency*

Background

One of SSA's five strategic goals is "to be an employer that values and invests in each employee." To achieve this goal, SSA is pursuing the following objectives (among others):

- To provide the necessary tools and training to achieve a highly skilled and high-performing workforce.
- To create a workforce to serve SSA's diverse customers in the 21st century.

To better understand how to pursue these leadership objectives, back in 1997, SSA examined the demographics of its workforce and identified an employee retirement wave in which nearly 80% of its managers would be eligible for some form of retirement by 2002. To ensure that SSA remains a world-class organization with talented leaders, it is identifying and developing leaders at every level while it continues to offer a wide array of training opportunities for all managers.

SSA spent considerable time and effort developing a comprehensive strategy to ensure SSA is well-positioned for the future. As a result, national leadership programs were created.

The SSA SES Candidate Development Program (SES CDP)

Since filling the SES ranks was the first priority for SSA, this program was implemented in 1998. Thirty-six candidates were selected. The program ends in July, 2000. This is the first SES candidate development program SSA has sponsored as an independent agency.

The SES CDP is centered on developing skills and experience in the five OPM SES Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs):

Leading Change
Leading People
Results Driven
Business Acumen
Building Coalitions/Communications

Program candidates must identify training and developmental experiences to strengthen their ability to perform in the SES competencies. A core training curriculum is also designed to strengthen these competencies.

Other National Career Development Programs

To instill leadership skills in employees at levels below SES candidacy, SSA has implemented other national career development programs. All of these programs are based on competencies which are derived from the SES qualifications to ensure the consistent development of our potential leaders in these key skill areas. The specific competencies may change, as necessary, to ensure they support the agency's strategic needs.

Typical features of these national programs include:

- Participants are in the program for two years and receive a temporary promotion (with at least 51% of their developmental assignments at the higher level).
- Each participant prepares (for approval) an individual plan for his/her development.
- Each plan includes developmental assignments in various parts of SSA's organization and may include assignments with other agencies or with organizations outside the Federal Government.
- All participants attend various core training classes to ensure a common educational base.
- Participants select additional training classes to further their individual development.
- Progress is discussed with a higher-graded mentor, who also counsels the participant in assignment selection and assists in career planning.
- Generous support is offered by top agency executives, who provide meaningful developmental opportunities, serve as mentors, and actively help develop the program participants.

The Advanced Leadership Program

The Advanced Leadership Program (ALP) is a 2-year competency-based program which offers on-the-job training, classroom training, self-instructional training, rotational developmental assignments and other planned developmental experiences.

Participation in the program will provide the opportunity for candidates to expand their career perspectives, enhance their leadership potential and prepare them for specific target jobs as SSA leaders. The ALP is designed to develop a cadre of employees who have the competencies necessary to perform effectively at their current level, and a foundation to build on for the next level of leadership within the framework of the Agency's mission, vision, and core values. Concurrently, through a series of developmental assignments and training, the candidate is able to achieve individual development and growth.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

(Source: NASA program documentation)

Location: Washington, D.C.

Type of Business/Organization: *Federal Government Agency*

Background

The NASA Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP) offers individuals a structured approach to preparing for recurring openings in the SES. Designed to meet NASA's projected needs and management values as well as Office of Personnel Management (OPM) merit principles and requirements, this program provides a series of intensive developmental experiences for people who are judged to have high potential for assuming executive responsibilities. These experiences, normally to be completed over a period of 12-18 months, include formal courses and seminars, work assignments, and individual mentoring from current SES members. While the SESCO is expected to be an important source of candidates for SES positions, successful completion of the program does not guarantee selection for such a position.

Purposes

The SESCO has several purposes:

1. Development of a cadre of highly qualified men and women representative of the diversity of the work force to fill NASA SES positions, which are anticipated to be primarily in engineering and science, and primarily at NASA field centers;
2. Development of each participant's competencies necessary for performance in SES positions;
3. Orientation of participants to the organization and operation of NASA at executive levels; and
4. Broadening each participant's understanding of the NASA programs, missions, values and management issues.

The principal focus of the competency development referred to in item 2 above is the five areas of Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) required by the OPM for appointment to the SES. They are:

- Leading Change
- Leading People
- Results Driven
- Business Acumen
- Building Coalitions/Communication

Nomination and Selection

Eligibility. During the period designated by the SESCO DP announcement, applications are accepted from all qualified individuals within the civil service. Applicants must have at least one year of experience in a senior position (GS-14/15 or equivalent). While selections are predominantly made from among GS-15s, applications from outstanding GS-14s are also considered. Any selectees with experience no higher than GS-14 or equivalent are required to participate in more extended development activities.

Selectees who are serving in career or career-type appointments retain the grade, pay, and status of their current positions while completing their developmental assignments. Participation in the SESCO DP does not preclude selection for other SES or non-SES positions for which an employee may apply during the program.

Selectees who are serving in other than career or career-type Federal appointments receive an excepted service appointment under Schedule B with a term not to exceed three years. It should be noted that a Schedule B appointment does not confer career tenure. A Schedule B selectee's assignments must be for developmental purposes connected with the SESCO DP. Candidates serving under Schedule B appointments may not be used to fill a regular position on a continuing basis.

To be eligible for consideration, applicants must be willing to accept temporary developmental assignments which involve organizational, functional, and/or geographic mobility. Ultimate placement in an SES position may require permanent relocation to a different geographic area. Applicants for the SESCO DP therefore must submit a signed Geographic Mobility Agreement with their application.

Application process. Interested individuals must submit the following four items:

1. Application for Federal Employment (OF-612) or a Resume providing the information specified below as a minimum.
2. Copy of most recent performance appraisal
3. Applicant Summary Statement
4. Signed Geographic Mobility Agreement

Minimum information that must be contained in a Resume:

- Vacancy number
- Full name, mailing address, day and evening phone
- Social Security Number
- Citizenship status
- Reinstatement eligibility
- Job series, grade and dates of highest Federal civilian grade held
- Education information for high school and above including school name, city, state, dates attended and date of diploma/degree, major(s), type of degree(s), and credit hours earned
- Work experience in the following format: job title (title, series, and grade if Federal), duties and accomplishments, employer's name and address, supervisor's name and work phone, starting and ending dates, hours per week, and salary
- Indicate if we may contact your current supervisor
- Training, skills, honors, awards, membership in professional/honor societies

Evaluation and Selection. Applications from qualified NASA installation civil service employees are rated and ranked by local screening panels, using a uniform NASA crediting plan. Applicants from other Federal agencies are rated by panels at Headquarters. Each installation establishes lists of Highly Qualified Candidates at the GS-15 and GS-14 levels. These lists and applications are forwarded to Headquarters. Consolidated lists of Highly Qualified NASA employees and other Federal employees at the GS-15 and GS-14 levels are forwarded to the NASA Executive Resources Board (ERB) for final selection.

Cultural diversity is represented in panel membership to the fullest extent practicable. Panel members may be drawn from other NASA installations or other Federal agencies. In making its selections, the ERB takes into account projected staffing requirements and may consider the availability of high quality SES candidates from other staffing authorities as well as the SESCO in determining the number and occupational mix of SESCO selections.

SES Candidate Development

Mentors

Each SESCDP candidate has a mentor, who is a current member of the NASA SES willing and able to provide continuing advice, guidance, and evaluation. The specific responsibilities of mentors regarding the Individual Development Plan, mid-term, and final program reports, and the annual performance appraisal, are noted in the appropriate sections that follow. The mentor's role is also to provide the ongoing insights, encouragement, and support needed by an individual going through an intensive developmental experience involving significant changes and stresses.

Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Part 1 - The first part of the IDP includes sections I, II, and III, which will be utilized for planning development in the areas of management and leadership. These plans for leadership development are to enhance the five Executive Core Qualifications. The candidates' experiences and accomplishments should be considered as well as the candidates' personal goals. With their mentors, the candidates will prepare a preliminary outline of these sections containing development activities, such as work assignments, training, and education, which they believe they need to attain the competencies required for successful performance in the SES.. As a minimum, Part 1 of the IDP must include the experiences described under Core Activities below. Following an assessment of executive core qualifications which is conducted at the first of two NASA Seminars described below, the candidate and mentor review and revise the preliminary IDP and obtain the concurrence of the appropriate senior management official. The IDP is then reviewed by the NASA Training and Development Division for completeness and compliance with OPM and NASA requirements and is submitted to the Chairperson, ERB for final approval.

Part 2 - The second part of the IDP (section IV) will be utilized for developmental and/or academic activities of a technical nature and may include activities that are specific to the candidate's background, experience, and education. These technical developmental requirements will be supplemental to the training/activities designed to strengthen leadership qualifications. Part 2 of the IDP must be completed and signed prior to attending the SESCDP Orientation Program. The IDP serves as an important guide and measure of progress throughout the program and if circumstances warrant the addition, deletion, or significant modification of planned activities, candidates are encouraged to discuss such changes with their mentors, management, and the NASA Training and Development Division and submit revisions to the ERB for approval.

Core Activities. The following core activities are the minimum requirements for successful completion of the SESCDP:

1. Developmental Work Assignment(s). Successful completion of either:
 - one developmental work assignment at least 120 days in length; or
 - two developmental work assignments each at least 60 days in length.

2. Interagency Executive-Level Training.
 - No less than 80 hours in a formal, approved interagency executive-level training experience. The NASA Training and Development Division informs SESCDP candidates of the approved courses.

3. NASA Seminars.
 - A one-week program of orientation and assessment of candidates' executive competencies. The resulting information gained from the assessment is to be used to develop a series of intensive development experiences that will be included in the IDP.

 - A one-week mid-term seminar providing exposure to new concepts, skills and perspectives.

 - The two-week NASA Management Education Program (MEP) **or** Managing the Influence Process (MIP) is encouraged for SESCDP candidates who have not yet attended.

Documentation

In addition to preparing an IDP as discussed above, candidates and their mentors are required to submit interim reports for those on an extended program (more than 365 days) and final reports to the NASA Training and Development Division which will be forwarded to the ERB for approval. The Training and Development Division will notify those for whom an interim report will be required. Work assignment supervisors are also required to submit evaluations of the performance of SESCDP candidates temporarily assigned to them for developmental purposes on the completion of those assignments.

These reports should briefly but specifically detail accomplishments toward established objectives and the demonstration of the ability to assume executive responsibilities. Interim reports should emphasize progress in completing planned activities and any experiences or insights which indicate the need for changes in the IDP. The Manager, Leadership and Management Development reviews candidates' interim reports and forwards them to the ERB. Final reports should emphasize the degree of readiness of the candidate for placement in the SES based on the completion of the program and the attainment of executive competencies.

The NASA Training and Development Division staff notifies candidates and mentors when interim reports are to be submitted and requests reports from work assignment supervisors when developmental assignments are completed. Final

reports may be submitted any time after all planned activities have been completed. Interim reports are submitted to the NASA Training and Development Division through the appropriate management official. Final reports are submitted to the Agency Executive Personnel Branch (FPE) through the appropriate management chain. FPE will prepare the final packages for ERB and OPM approval.

Funding

SESCDP funding is shared by the home organization, the organization(s) hosting developmental assignments, and the NASA Training and Development Division. The home organization continues to pay salary and benefits. Host organizations pay travel and per diem expenses for trips incident to the developmental assignments. The Training and Development Division pays travel and per diem expenses for core activities, including travel to and from NASA Seminars, interagency and other training events, and developmental work assignment(s) at host installation(s).

Per diem authorizations are governed by Federal regulations and NASA policies for geographic areas and duration of travel status.

Leave during work assignments at other installations

Official time and attendance records are maintained at the candidate's home installation, but leave should be requested of and approved by work assignment supervisors during those segments of the program. Per diem is continued during periods of sick leave not exceeding 14 consecutive working days, but is discontinued during periods of annual leave exceeding four hours.

Performance appraisal

SESCDP candidates and their supervisors should review their annual performance plans and consider revising them to take into account their SESCDP obligations. Developmental work assignments are appropriately included in performance plans as non-critical elements. In these circumstances, the rating official receives a copy of the work assignment supervisor's evaluation of the SESCDP candidate's performance in that assignment for consideration in making the overall rating.

Certification

After the SESCDP candidate has completed the activities set forth in the IDP, the ERB will review the record and decide whether to make a recommendation for certification to the SES Qualification Review Board (QRB), administered by OPM. If the candidate is not recommended by the ERB, participation in the SESCDP is terminated and the candidate is notified, in writing, of the basis for the decision. This (or a candidate's decision to withdraw from the program at any time) does not preclude the candidate from applying directly for SES positions. If the

candidate is recommended by the ERB and approved by the QRB, the successful SESCDP graduate is eligible for noncompetitive placement in any SES position for which he or she meets the technical qualifications. (Within NASA, however, the policy is that all career SES entry positions will continue to be competed through the SES vacancy announcement process.)

Executive Core Qualifications

(Required by the Office of Personnel Management for Certification and Appointment to the Senior Executive Service.)

Future Senior Executive Service (SES) members face special challenges. They must be skilled leaders as well as information managers. Executives will find management information systems and other technological resources invaluable as they tackle strategic planning within their organizations. In addition, executives will play key roles in the new Federal environment of employee/management partnerships. The following is excerpted from OPM's "Guide to Senior Executive Service Qualifications":

The law requires that the executive qualifications of each new career appointee to the Senior Executive Service (SES) be certified by an independent Qualifications Review Board based on criteria established by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) describe the leadership skills needed to succeed in the SES; they also reinforce the concept of an "SES corporate culture." This concept holds that the Government needs executives who can provide strategic leadership and whose commitment to public policy and administration transcends their commitment to a specific agency mission or an individual profession.

Executives with a "corporate" view of Government share values that are grounded in the fundamental Government ideals of the Constitution: they embrace the dynamics of American Democracy, an approach to governance that provides a continuing vehicle for change within the Federal Government.

OPM has identified five fundamental executive qualifications. The ECQs were designed to assess executive experience and potential, not technical expertise. They measure whether an individual has the broad executive skills needed to succeed in a variety of SES positions -- not whether he or she is the most superior candidate for a particular position. (This latter determination is made by the employing agency.)

Successful performance in the SES requires competence in each ECQ. The ECQs are interdependent; successful executives bring all five to bear when providing service to the Nation.

The basic definition for each ECQ is supplemented by Key Characteristics, which are the activities or behaviors associated with the ECQ. Candidates should use these as guideposts as they describe relevant experience. This experience may be reflected through professional and volunteer work, education and training, awards, and other accomplishments, in addition to Federal Government service. Candidates

do not need to address all of the Key Characteristics under each ECQ. The goal is to show an overall record of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to succeed in the SES.

Leadership Competencies, shown at the end, are the personal and professional attributes that are critical to successful performance in the SES. They are based on extensive research of Government and private sector executives and input from agency Senior Executives and human resources managers. A well prepared ECQ statement reflects the underlying Leadership Competencies (e.g., "Leading Change" reflects creativity and innovation, continual learning, external awareness, etc.) Experience and training that strengthen these Leadership Competencies will enhance a candidate's overall qualifications for the SES.

City of Atlanta

(Source: Program Documentation)

Name of Program: Leadership Atlanta

Location: Atlanta, Georgia

Type of Business/Organization: *Major Municipality*

Background

Leadership Atlanta was identified for benchmarking because it is the program upon which the original founders based their design of the LVA program (Senator Max Cleland, then Administrator of VA, was a graduate of the program). This allows for a greater understanding of the “roots” the LVA program.

Originally a program of the Chamber of Commerce formed by a group of concerned citizens to address the growing need for a trained cadre of committed young leaders.

Leadership Atlanta supports community building by inspiring leadership committed to service to the common good, while at the same time imparting to participants what makes Atlanta unique.

The class size is approximately 70 persons annually. Participants are charged \$2,000 each in tuition. Class composition is men and women whose collective background reflects the diversity of Metro Atlanta.

Program participants:

- Grow in awareness and understanding of the challenges and issues facing the community.
- Develop valuable contacts and a communications network within the community.
- Ready themselves for other leadership opportunities, in their careers and in the community.

Employers and Sponsoring Organizations are expected to:

- See the immediate benefit from the broadened perspectives and enhanced potential of program participants.
- Open doors for greater corporate/organizational community involvement and visibility.
- Create additional opportunities to influence positive change and impact quality of life in the community.

The community is expected to:

- Experience the immediate benefit from increased community involvement on the part of the participants.
- Reap future benefits from the collective commitment to effective leadership by the graduates of Leadership Atlanta.

Alumni Program

The Leadership Atlanta experience does not end at graduation. An active alumni organization provides a continuing forum for graduates and a mechanism for maintaining contacts. Volunteer planning committees arrange educational, social, and project activities for fellow alumni several times each year. Alumni are also actively involved in recruiting new Leadership Atlanta participants, planning their program curriculum, and the selection of each class.

Mission

The mission of Leadership Atlanta is to build community by inspiring leadership committed to service.

Core Values

- Appreciation for diversity
- Commitment to seeking common ground and pursuing common goals
- Commitment to inclusion of all perspectives in decision making and debate
- Affirmation of individual responsibility within community
- Openness to sharing, learning and seeking solutions
- Recognition of mutual interdependence
- Recognition of the essentiality of cross-sector (business, government, non-profit, religious) - Involvement and collaboration

Objectives

- To be an organization of excellence that builds and serves leadership
- Building personal relationship based upon mutual respect and trust
- Providing information and insight into major issues, problems, and opportunities
- Providing a forum for candid discussion of important issues, for hearing different perspectives, and for learning from each other
- Transmitting the legacy of leadership to a new generation
- Enabling the creation of new ideas and initiatives to address major challenges
- Linking members to new and existing initiatives that address important community needs

Nomination Process

An individual may nominate him/herself, or may be nominated by any alumnus of Leadership Atlanta. Corporations/organizations may also nominate an applicant but may only nominate one candidate per year. Deadline for nominations is January of each year and candidates will receive full-applications in February.

Organizational Structure

Leadership Atlanta is headed by an Executive Director, assisted by a Program Coordinator. It is governed by a Board of Trustees.

Curriculum Structure

Leadership Atlanta contains the following curriculum modules, which are roughly evenly spaced over the course of a 12 month period:

Orientation (1 day)

Fall Retreat (3 days)

Primary emphasis: networking, leadership, and team building.

Racism (2 days)

Public Safety and Criminal Justice (1 day)

Urban Exposure (1 day)

Education (1 day)

Quality of Life (1 day)

Power in Atlanta (1 day)

Spring Retreat (2 days)

Primary emphasis: reflection on individual and collective experiences, call to responsible action beyond the Leadership Atlanta year.

Benchmarking study findings

- It is readily apparent that LVA has been heavily influenced by the Leadership Atlanta model in its class size, governance structure, post-graduate experience, curriculum design, and educational objectives.

- All organizations studied, both public and private, offer alternatives to the current model for consideration and have program features that might be both applicable to LVA and carry the potential for program improvements. Such considerations should take into account those core aspects of the current LVA design which show themselves to be successful (and should not be changed) and fresh, new ideas which have the potential of adding to the quality of the program.

- Both Federal programs studied utilize the executive core qualifications (ECQ) as defined by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) as a framework for their programs (Appendix B).

- Of the five public and private programs benchmarked, three made data on class size available. Additionally, the documentation of numerous public and private leadership development programs were reviewed and scanned for class size data. Of all this data so obtained, class size varies from a low of 30 to a high of approximately 70.

- Program length (where data were available) varies from a low of 12 months to a high of 2 years.

- For the Federal programs, grade levels of the participants ranged from GS-13 to GS-15. SES members and lower graded personnel were respectively provided separate training and development tracks via various mechanisms.

- “Action learning” (learning by doing) in the form of developmental assignments as a concept is strongly promoted in all programs studied.

- Skill development, particularly leadership skill development, is emphasized in all programs studied.

- Comprehensive evaluation and measurement of training outcomes at the satisfaction, learning, behavioral, and organizational levels are heavily emphasized in the private sector programs. Techniques used include the 360-degree feedback survey and measures of cost savings, effectiveness, and productivity increases generated by group and individual development projects.

- The following application and selection processes are promising practices:

- Rating and ranking of applications using a uniform crediting plan
- Ensuring a culturally diverse selection panel membership
- Expressly requiring applicants to assert their qualifications in terms of the OPM ECQ leadership competencies as part of the application instructions

- Expressly requiring applicants to assert their achievements in terms of outcomes (results) as part of the application instructions.

- Coaching and mentoring of participants are significant best practices in the programs studied.

Recommendations

- The LVA selection process should use uniform criteria to rate and rank applicants (i.e., criteria and standards for selection which are commonly and evenly applied across the entire department, with allowances for minor variations according to specific needs of sponsoring organizations). Design the application so that it systematically collects the information on which ratings will be based. Furthermore, revise the LVA application process so that applicants are expressly informed regarding the criteria by which applications will be rated. Implement the OPM leadership competencies as the framework for those standards, with due regard for the unique and specific interests of VA leadership development, as well as the varying developmental levels of applicants according to their grade.

- Establish a baseline and built-in data collection system for evaluation of the program beyond the level of participant satisfaction. For example, learning and behavior can be measured by use of a “360 degree” survey instrument; organizational impact can be measured by requiring participants to contribute to action learning projects which benefit the organization, and analyzing the outcomes of these projects. Such projects should include participants mentoring lower-graded personnel. Furthermore, this assessment process should foster the development of action plans for self-development and learning for use by participants.

- Include coaching and mentoring of participants in the curriculum. “Group coaching” (rather than one mentor to one participant) may be the most practical way to implement this recommendation.

- The LVA curriculum should incorporate more action learning techniques. Assigning actual projects to class participants would be beneficial. If this is done, care should be taken to carefully select and support the projects and the team members. If projects cannot be incorporated into LVA itself, indicate that LVA graduates will be considered for project teams being put together by the Department and the administrations.

- LVA should complement, not substitute for, other leadership development activities. Other leadership development programs within VA itself (such as VHA’s Healthcare Leadership Institute, or VBA’s LEAD Program) or external to VA (such as the Federal Executive Institute) should serve as complements to LVA.

- The LVA Board of Trustees should consider whether LVA should continue to be open to SES-level participants, or whether LVA should be limited to developing participants at the general management (GS-13 to GS-15) level.

Miscellaneous

The Evaluation Group made additional inquiry into several leadership development programs within various public and private sector organizations with respect to class size. This inquiry generally supported the findings, conclusions, and recommendations delineated in this report with respect to class size.

VI. SURVEY OF PAST PARTICIPANTS

Background

The Evaluation Group considered a survey of past LVA participants to be a key element of an in-depth evaluation which promised to provide valuable feedback on the proposed outcomes, program features, class size, and other variables. An electronic survey (Appendix K) was transmitted to each past LVA participant with a known electronic mail address (total population = 942). A total of 327 completed surveys were received. This represented a response rate of 34.7%, lower than expected. The most likely cause of this low response rate was technical difficulties encountered by various respondents in receiving the executable electronic survey file through various forms of computer virus shielding. Given the ready explanation, there is not a particular concern regarding the low response rate.

Methodology

The data was collected and analyzed using the following techniques:

1. Chi Square test of the independence of categorical variables (looks for the existence of a relationship between two variables of interest).
2. Fisher's Exact test of the independence of categorical variables. (looks for the existence of a relationship between two variables of interest).
3. Spearman's Rank Order Correlation (looks for the existence of a relationship between two variables of interest).
4. Mean scores of outcome-oriented responses (enables a rank ordering of these responses).

Respondent demographics

The following statistics provide a picture of the characteristics of the 327 respondents:

Statistic Description	Survey Respondents	All VA General Schedule GS-13 and above (where data applicable/available)**
Median class year	LVA Class of 1993	-
Mode class year	LVA Class of 1999	-
Median and mode pay grade at selection	GS-14	-
Percent currently employed in Government	99.4%	-
Median and mode current pay grade	GS-15	GS-13***
Median and mode salary range	\$90,000 - \$119,999	-
Median and mode age range	50-54 years	-
Gender percentages	35% female/65% male	34% female/66% male****
Race percentages	0.6% American Indian or Alaska Native, 3.0% Asian, 11% Black or African American, 0.9% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 80.1% White, 3.4% Some Other Race*	0.6% American Indian or Alaska Native, 2.9% Asian/Pacific, 9.1% Black or African American, 84.1% White, 3.2% Some Other Race***
Ethnicity percentages	6.4% Hispanic or Latino, 89.9% Not Hispanic or Latino*	3.1% Hispanic 96.9% Other than Hispanic***

*Percentages for "no response" not calculated.

** Does not include Title 38 equivalents.

*** 10/00 data

**** 12/31/99 data

Findings: perception of class size

Respondents were provided three options in response to the question: "My LVA class size was:"

Too large
About right
Too small

285 respondents (87%) selected “about right.” 41 respondents (13%) selected “too large.” 1 respondent selected “too small.”

Findings: relationships between variables

All ratios are approximate.

Findings: relationship		Basis for Findings
Variable	Variable	
Race	Leadership Skills	<p>- Chi Square analysis revealed these two variables are associated at the $p \leq .10$ level of significance (meaning the probability of making a mistake in suggesting that there is an association between these variables – they covary or “run together” to some degree beyond whatever relationship could occur due to random chance – is equal to or less than 10%, assuming the sample is representative of the population)</p> <p>- African Americans agreed or strongly agreed their leadership skills had improved as a result of LVA at a ratio of 3 for every 1 respondent who neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.</p> <p>- Whites agreed or strongly agreed their leadership skills had improved as a result of LVA at a ratio of 4 for every 1 respondent who neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.</p> <p>- Other non-whites agreed or strongly agreed their leadership skills had improved as a result of LVA at a ratio of 25 for every 1 respondent who neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.</p>

<p>Ethnicity</p>	<p>Learning/self-Development Skills</p>	<p>- Both a Chi Square analysis and a Fisher's exact test revealed dependence between these two variables at the $p \leq .05$ level of significance (meaning the chance of erring in suggesting that these variables are associated beyond what could be attributable to random chance is equal to or less than 5%, assuming the sample is representative)</p> <p>- Non-Hispanics agreed or strongly agreed their leadership skills had improved as a result of LVA at a ratio of 2 for every 1 respondent who neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.</p> <p>- Hispanics agreed or strongly agreed their leadership skills had improved as a result of LVA at a ratio of 10 for every 1 respondent who neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.</p>
<p>Participant's pay grade at time of selection for LVA</p>	<p>Knowledge of VA Programs</p>	<p>- Both a Chi Square analysis and a Fisher's exact test revealed dependence between these two variables at the $p \leq .05$ level of significance (meaning the chance of erring in suggesting that these variables are associated beyond what could be attributable to random chance is equal to or less than 5%, assuming the sample is representative)</p> <p>- Lower graded participants (not GS-15 or SES) agreed or strongly agreed their knowledge of VA programs had improved as a result of LVA at a ratio of 11 for every 1 respondent who neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.</p> <p>- Upper graded participants (GS-15 or SES) agreed or strongly agreed their knowledge of VA programs had improved as a result of LVA at a ratio of 5 for every 1 respondent who neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.</p>

Participant's pay grade at time of selection for LVA	Career progression	<p>- Both a Chi Square analysis and a Fisher's exact test revealed dependence between these two variables at the $p \leq .05$ level of significance (meaning the chance of erring in suggesting that these variables are associated beyond what could be attributable to random chance is equal to or less than 5%, assuming the sample is representative)</p> <p>- Lower graded participants (not GS-15 or SES) agreed or strongly agreed their career progression had been enhanced as a result of LVA at a ratio of 1 for every 1 respondent who neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.</p> <p>- Upper graded participants (GS-15 or SES) agreed or strongly agreed their knowledge of VA programs had improved as a result of LVA at a ratio of 1 for every 2 respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.</p>
Participant's current pay	Career progression	<p>- Both a Chi Square analysis and a Fisher's exact test revealed dependence between these two variables at the $p \leq .05$ level of significance (meaning the chance of erring in suggesting that these variables are associated beyond what could be attributable to random chance is equal to or less than 5%, assuming the sample is representative)</p> <p>- Lower graded participants (not GS-15 or SES) agreed or strongly agreed their career progression had been enhanced as a result of LVA at a ratio of 1 for every 2 respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.</p> <p>- Upper graded participants (GS-15 or SES) agreed or strongly agreed their career progression had improved as a result of LVA at a ratio of 1 for every 1 respondent who neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.</p>

Participant's current salary	Career progression	<p>A Spearman correlation analysis revealed a positive correlation between these two variables of .2084 (as salary increases, perception of career progression tends to increase).</p> <p>This result is intuitively expected, as salary level is a reflection of career progress.</p>
Participant's LVA class year	Expansion of professional network	<p>A Spearman correlation analysis revealed a positive correlation between these two variables of .1026 (for later LVA class years, the tendency is for participants to have a greater perception of an expanded professional network).</p>

Findings: outcome-related survey questions

In addition to the above findings, the data revealed that the outcome-related question with the highest average score for perception of attainment was “As a result of attending LVA, my knowledge of the Department’s internal environment significantly improved.” The rank ordering of the ten outcome-related questions appears in the chart below.

Rank order of Average Scores	Question
1 st	As a result of attending LVA, my knowledge of the Department’s internal environment significantly improved
2 nd	My LVA class consisted of a representative mix professionally, racially, ethnically, geographically, and in gender.
3 rd	As a result of attending LVA, my knowledge of VA program challenges significantly improved.
4 th	As a result of attending LVA, my network of professional contacts significantly expanded.
5 th	As a result of attending LVA, my knowledge of the Department’s external environment significantly improved.
6 th	As a result of attending LVA, my leadership skills significantly improved.
7 th	As a result of attending LVA, my learning and self-development skills significantly improved.
8 th	As a result of attending LVA, my team building skills significantly improved.
9 th	As a result of attending LVA, I have made significant career progression.
10 th	As a result of attending LVA, my employment with VA continued much longer than if I had not participated in the program.

Findings: narrative comments

The survey also used open-ended questions to invite respondents to comment on three areas: improvements to the LVA curriculum, organizational benefits obtained by LVA, and personal benefits conferred by LVA on the participants themselves. A content analysis of these comments revealed the following themes to be most prevalent comments from more than one respondent in each of the three areas. They are listed in order of the frequency with which they appeared in the comments of survey respondents.

Participant benefits. These comments were elicited by the question: “For you personally, what was the most beneficial aspect of your participation in LVA?”

1. Developed a professional network (206 comments)
2. Gained knowledge about VA’s internal environment (91 comments)
3. Exposure/broad perspective (30 comments)
4. Personal inspiration/sense of renewed commitment (16 comments)
5. Gained knowledge about VA’s external environment (16 comments)
6. Gained a “One VA” perspective (13 comments)
7. Enhanced career (5 comments)
8. Gained communication skills (4 comments)
9. Met top VA leaders (4 comments)
10. Improved self-esteem (4 comments)

Organizational benefits. These comments were elicited by the question: “In your opinion, what was the most beneficial aspect of LVA for the organization?”

1. Building a professional leadership network/cadre (102 comments)
2. Building a cadre of knowledgeable/trained/educated leaders (85 comments)
3. Contributing to the concept of “One VA” (47 comments)
4. Building a cadre of mission-committed leaders (26 comments)
5. Providing a department-wide leadership development program (20 comments)
6. Succession planning (17 comments)
7. Knowledge transfer (8 comments)
8. A vehicle for human resource development (8 comments)
9. Diversity in leadership (7 comments)
10. Organizational learning (5 comments)
11. Higher morale (5 comments)
12. No benefits/negative benefits (3 comments)
13. A leadership testing ground for the organization (2 comments)
14. Improved organizational performance (2 comments)

Curriculum improvements. These comments were elicited by the question: “If you could change any one thing about the LVA curriculum, what would it be? Please explain.”

1. Little or no change recommended (83 comments).
2. More group discussion/less lecture/more “action learning” (48 comments).
3. More emphasis on learning VA’s internal environment (37 comments).
4. More leadership development (33 comments).
5. More emphasis on learning VA’s external environment (21 comments)
6. Lengthen the LVA curriculum (16 comments)
7. Enhance/strengthen networking (8 comments)
8. Reduce the LVA class size (6 comments)
9. More emphasis on self-development/self help (6 comments)
10. Shorten the LVA curriculum (5 comments)
11. More emphasis on career progression (5 comments)
12. Greater opportunity to meet top VA leaders (5 comments)

13. Not enough coverage of legal issues (3 comments)
14. Additional/greater emphasis on post-graduate activity (3 comments).
15. Include coaching/mentoring as a feature (3 comments)
16. Reduce communication training (3 comments)
17. Not enough coverage of benefits issues (2 comments)
18. Stratify/tailor the program by grade level of the participants (2 comments).
19. Less emphasis on socializing and alcohol (2 comments)
20. Enhance racial/ethnic diversity (2 comments).

Overall survey findings

- There is mild internal inconsistency between the respondents' 4th highest average ranking of the outcome "As a result of attending LVA, my network of professional contacts significantly expanded" and enhanced professional network as the most frequently cited personal benefit from participation in LVA. The difference may possibly lie in respondents perceiving networking as a particularly prominent benefit of LVA, but may have simultaneously had more misgivings about the scope of its effectiveness.

- The second most frequently cited personal benefit – expanded knowledge of the internal VA environment – is roughly consistent with this outcome being ranked most highly in terms of effectiveness.

- African American respondents as a group expressed the least confidence that their leadership skills had been improved by the program. Other non-white respondents as a group expressed the greatest confidence that their leadership skills had been improved by the program.

- Later LVA class years perceive a greater effect for their participation in LVA on the expansion of their professional network than do earlier LVA class years.

- Somewhat surprisingly, given the commitment to the department LVA tends to engender, retention was ranked lowest relative to the other proposed outcomes.

- Leadership development, team-building skills, self development skills, and career progression are relatively low-ranked outcomes in terms of effectiveness among respondents.

- LVA is perceived by respondents as effective in achieving diversity within the organization.

- Survey data was supportive of the conclusion that the core LVA curriculum is highly effective in meeting some program outcomes. The same data was also supportive of the conclusion that in order to address all program outcomes, the curriculum should be augmented.

- Survey data was also supportive of the conclusion that more action-learning/learner engagement techniques should be incorporated into the existing curriculum. Participants place a great value on learning about the internal environment of VA, but do not prefer to be “lectured to” in the process.

- Respondents were predominantly satisfied with class size; 13% indicated class size was too large.

Recommendations

- The LVA curriculum should provide more leadership skills development. The appropriate frame of reference for development of leadership skills is OPM’s SES (Executive Core Qualifications) Leadership Competencies (Appendix B).

- The LVA curriculum should incorporate more action learning techniques. Assigning actual projects to class participants would be beneficial. If this is done, care should be taken to carefully select and support the projects and the team members. If projects cannot be incorporated into LVA itself, LVA graduates should be considered for project teams being put together by the Department and the administrations.

- The LVA curriculum should place a greater emphasis on career development.

- Curriculum changes should be implemented with due caution for avoiding the disruption of an already highly effective design.

VII. OVERALL FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall findings and conclusions

- The program is generally meeting all proposed outcomes, but there is considerable room for improvement in particular areas.

- The founders stressed in the interviews that development of leadership skills was a foundation of the LVA program. Support for the importance of this outcome was also provided by the interview data. Yet, the participant evaluations, the session observations, and the survey data all revealed that leadership skills development has been relatively underemphasized in the LVA program.

- The proposed outcomes, although broadly supported, are not equally achieved by means of the LVA program. Based on the data contained in this report, LVA appears more effective in expanding the participants' professional networks, improving participants' knowledge of VA's internal and external environment, and contributing to the diversity of VA's workforce. LVA appears to be less effective in developing leadership skills and enhancing career development.

- Participant career progression enjoys moderate support as an outcome but was neither an intended nor unintended consequence of the program.

- No internal VA program, including LVA, can comprehensively serve all the department's leadership development and succession planning needs. This follows the basic pattern of leadership development in the Federal programs studied.

- Leadership training for lower-graded employees (below GS-13) and post-LVA follow-up education appears to be adequately provided by existing structures such as the Leadership VA Alumni Association (LVAAA), external executive education programs, and local management of training.

Benchmarking study findings

- It is readily apparent that LVA has been heavily influenced by the Leadership Atlanta model in its class size, governance structure, post-graduate experience, curriculum design, and educational objectives.

- All organizations studied, both public and private, offer alternatives to the current model for consideration and have program features that might be both applicable to LVA and carry the potential for program improvements. Such considerations should take into account those core aspects of the current LVA design which show themselves to be successful (and should not be changed) and fresh, new ideas which have the potential of adding to the quality of the program.

- Both Federal programs studied utilize the executive core qualifications (ECQ) as defined by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) as a framework for their programs (Appendix B).

- Of the five public and private programs benchmarked, three made data on class size available. Additionally, the documentation of numerous public and private leadership development programs were reviewed and scanned for class size data. Of all this data so obtained, class size varies from a low of 30 to a high of approximately 70.

- Program length (where data were available) varies from a low of 12 months to a high of 2 years.

- For the Federal programs, grade levels of the participants ranged from GS-13 to GS-15. SES members and lower graded personnel were respectively provided separate training and development tracks via various mechanisms.

- “Action learning” (learning by doing) in the form of developmental assignments as a concept is strongly promoted in all programs studied.

- Skill development, particularly leadership skill development, is emphasized in all programs studied.

- Comprehensive evaluation and measurement of training outcomes at the satisfaction, learning, behavioral, and organizational levels are heavily emphasized in the private sector programs. Techniques used include the 360-degree feedback survey and measures of cost savings, effectiveness, and productivity increases generated by group and individual development projects.

- The following application and selection processes are promising practices:

- Rating and ranking of applications using a uniform crediting plan
- Ensuring a culturally diverse selection panel membership
- Expressly requiring applicants to assert their qualifications in terms of the OPM ECQ leadership competencies as part of the application instructions
- Expressly requiring applicants to assert their achievements in terms of outcomes (results) as part of the application instructions.

- Coaching and mentoring of participants are significant best practices in the programs studied.

Survey of past participants findings

- There is mild internal inconsistency between the respondents’ ranking of the outcome “As a result of attending LVA, my network of professional contacts significantly expanded” in the middle (4th) of the ten outcome-related questions and an enhanced professional network as the most frequently cited personal benefit from participation in

LVA. The difference may possibly lie in respondents perceiving networking as a particularly prominent benefit of LVA, but may have simultaneously had more misgivings about the scope of its effectiveness.

- The second most frequently cited personal benefit – expanded knowledge of the internal VA environment – is roughly consistent with this outcome being ranked most highly in terms of effectiveness.

- African American respondents as a group expressed the least confidence that their leadership skills had been improved by the program. Other non-white respondents as a group expressed the greatest confidence that their leadership skills had been improved by the program.

- Later LVA class years perceive a greater effect for their participation in LVA on the expansion of their professional network than do earlier LVA class years.

- Somewhat surprisingly, given the commitment to the Department LVA tends to engender, retention was ranked lowest relative to the other proposed outcomes.

- Leadership development, team-building skills, self development skills, and career progression are relatively low-ranked outcomes in terms of effectiveness among respondents.

- LVA is perceived by respondents as effective in achieving diversity within the organization.

- Survey data was supportive of the conclusion that the core LVA curriculum is highly effective in meeting some program outcomes. The same data was also supportive of the conclusion that in order to address all program outcomes, the curriculum should be augmented.

- Survey data was also supportive of the conclusion that more action-learning/learner engagement techniques should be incorporated into the existing curriculum. Participants place a great value on learning about the internal environment of VA, but do not prefer to be “lectured to” in the process.

- Respondents were predominantly satisfied with class size; (13%) indicated class size was too large.

Recommendations

1. LVA should contain built-in means to measure achievement of the eight proposed outcomes. These measures should be used to provide the framework for ongoing evaluation of the program’s impact at the participant satisfaction, learning, behavioral, and organizational impact levels. Maximum use of available participant demographic information from VA’s PAID system should be made to support these measurement efforts.

2. LVA should complement, not substitute for, other leadership development activities. Other leadership development programs within VA itself (such as VHA's Healthcare Leadership Institute, or VBA's LEAD Program) or external to VA (such as the Federal Executive Institute) should serve as complements to LVA.

3. The LVA curriculum should provide more leadership skills development. The appropriate frame of reference for development of leadership skills is OPM's SES (Executive Core Qualifications) Leadership Competencies (Appendix B).

4. The LVA curriculum should incorporate more action learning techniques. Assigning actual projects to class participants would be beneficial. If this is done, care should be taken to carefully select and support the projects and the team members. If projects cannot be incorporated into LVA itself, indicate that LVA graduates will be considered for project teams being put together by the Department and the administrations.

5. The LVA curriculum should place a greater emphasis on career development.

6. Curriculum changes should be implemented with due caution for avoiding the disruption of an already highly effective design.

7. When considering improvements to LVA's structure and processes, maximum attention should be paid to its governance structure and processes. In particular, the LVA Board of Trustees should become more involved in the overall affairs of the program.

8. Neither the need for a supplemental lower-graded LVA program nor a new LVA postgraduate program is supported by the data collected and analyzed in this study. However, appropriate policies should be considered to both coordinate and integrate complimentary leadership development training with the LVA program. Such coordination and integration should include importation of those aspects of LVA which are particularly beneficial to complementary programs, where practical and applicable.

9. Class size has achieved an upper limit at 70, and should not be increased.

10. The LVA selection process should use uniform criteria to rate and rank applicants (i.e., criteria and standards for selection which are commonly and evenly applied across the entire department, with allowances for minor variations according to specific needs of sponsoring organizations). Design the application so that it systematically collects the information on which ratings will be based. Furthermore, revise the LVA application process so that applicants are expressly informed regarding the criteria by which applications will be rated. Implement the OPM leadership competencies as the framework for those standards, with due regard for the unique and specific interests of VA leadership development, as well as the varying developmental levels of applicants according to their grade.

11. Establish a baseline and built-in data collection system for evaluation of the program beyond the level of participant satisfaction. For example, learning and behavior can be measured by use of a "360 degree" survey instrument; organizational impact can be

measured by requiring participants to contribute to action learning projects which benefit the organization, and analyzing the outcomes of these projects. Such projects should include participants mentoring lower-graded personnel. Furthermore, this assessment process should foster the development of action plans for self-development and learning for use by participants.

12. Include coaching and mentoring of participants in the curriculum. “Group coaching” (rather than one mentor to one participant) may be the most practical way to implement this recommendation.

13. The LVA Board of Trustees should consider whether LVA should continue to be open to SES-level participants, or whether LVA should be limited to developing participants at the general management (GS-13 to GS-15) level, as suggested by the findings of the benchmarking study.

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