

Action Learning Projects

crafting solutions to community dilemmas



WHAT IS ACTION LEARNING?

Action learning brings together a diverse team of “untainted” non-experts to explore a complex problem through a fresh set of eyes. In Leadership Winston-Salem, projects are solicited from community organizations, and teams of 6-8 leaders focus on both a deliverable and the leadership learning process itself through inquiry, reflection and feedback. A team coach works with each team to ensure that the leadership learning takes place along with the work on deliverables.

Class participants invest themselves in these projects, often experiencing a personal connection with their partner agency that extends beyond the end of the project.

Partner agencies reap valuable benefits from this process – not only in the formal results of the project team’s work but also in the increased personal investment in the agency’s work by the project team and the increased visibility of the agency among all members of the class. This occurs on closing day when project teams report out to the class and the partner agencies. Project teams generally also present to the agency’s board of directors on their results.

HOW DO I TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY?

Simply complete a project description form available at www.leadershipws.org and email it to program@leadershipws.org.

Better yet, attend an information session at Leadership Winston-Salem to learn more about what makes a good project and brainstorm project possibilities with Action Learning Committee members. Visit www.leadershipws.org to find out when the next information session will be held and to register.

The Action Learning Committee will review project descriptions and communicate with each agency regarding whether the project is a good fit. If the project meets the criteria, the incoming class will select 7 projects to work on, and we will contact you in late October.

Action Learning

provides a leadership laboratory for teams and substantive, actionable deliverables for project partners.

WHAT’S EXPECTED OF ME AS A COMMUNITY PROJECT PARTNER?

If your project is chosen by a team, you need to ensure the team has a consistent contact who is a decision maker for the agency. Your role will not require much time after the initial meetings with the team but would include the following:

Communication

- Being available to team members via telephone/email;
- Attending team meetings periodically during the 7-month project period, generally at the team’s request.

Access to Information

- Providing access to the organization’s staff resources and pertinent materials, if applicable;
- Assisting the team with networking with other potential resources for information.

Partnering

- Providing constructive and practical feedback throughout the process;
- Understanding that participants are volunteering time during an intense program schedule.

Project partners will also meet with each other and LWS leadership periodically during the 7-month period to discuss progress and will attend the final presentation by the team on closing day.

We were very satisfied with the outcome of our project which was to give our children and families more global exposure. Our team expanded this goal and provided many other useful resources to our Head Start families.

– Marcy J. Sheets, Family Services, Inc./Head Start

Group looked at our issue with a fresh set of eyes and challenged our "because that's the way we have always done it" mentality. They were flexible and conformed to our schedule and always gave us enough lead time to answer their questions without an unreasonable deadline.

– Chuck Kraft, Smart Start of Forsyth County

The Winston-Salem Symphony's Action Learning Team did an excellent job of providing deliverables that produced ongoing benefit and results. Their approach was thorough and very well organized, and they did an outstanding job summarizing the project and presenting results to the Symphony's Marketing Committee and Board of Directors. I highly recommend both participation in Leadership Winston-Salem and hosting an Action Learning Team!
–Merritt Vale, Winston-Salem Symphony

WHAT MAKES A GOOD ACTION LEARNING PROJECT?

Good Action Learning projects:

1. Should enhance the team's understanding of practical leadership while striving for results that are of benefit to the community.
2. Can be from any field; for example, education, regional planning, human services, economic development, the arts and culture, etc.
3. Should provide opportunity for research, planning, creativity, collaboration and negotiation skills.
4. Should be "do-able" between November and May by a small team working together for an average of 20-25 hours, resulting in a realistic end product or recommendation.
5. Are not partisan or religious in nature.
6. Are not related to direct fund raising.
7. **Must be funded by the project partner if funds are required.**

EXAMPLES OF ACTION LEARNING PROJECTS

Downtown Health Plaza	Develop Provider Process: Assist in developing a seamless process for providers to refer patients to the correct source for needed medications.
Family Promise of Forsyth County	Develop Partnerships: Assist in developing community partnerships to provide financial counseling and education to homeless families striving to be self-sufficient.
Forsyth County Aging Services Planning Committee	Recommend County-Wide Plan to Promote Activities for Older Adults: Evaluate existing resources; understand what seniors want and would use; recommend options for county-wide program that successfully engages older adults to adopt healthier lifestyles.
FCDSS LINKS Program	Program Development Guide & Focus Groups: Facilitate focus groups in addition to researching and developing guidelines for development of an effective mentoring model for older youth in foster care.
Habitat for Humanity ReStore	Process Review & Improvement: Review current flow of donated materials from receipt to sale and recommend improvements in process and equipment.
Hospice & Palliative Care Center	Strategies for Increasing Access to Hospice Care Services: Assist the organization in identifying barriers to earlier referrals to hospice care and offer recommendations and strategies to address those barriers and misconceptions in order to provide more people with the full benefits of hospice care.
Smart Start of Forsyth County	Strategic Plan for Services to Improve Childcare Provider Education & Retention: Conduct information gathering from educational service and childcare providers to identify efficient, effective and equitable methods for subsidizing and supporting childcare provider education and retention.
Winston-Salem Symphony	Promote Cultural Awareness: Create plan promoting awareness and ticket sales among non-traditional audiences.