



Toronto Neighbourhood Centres  
Community Development Renewal Initiative

Transferable Strategies & Case Studies  
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## Applying Leadership Training to CD

### Issue:

How can peer leadership training contribute to community development?

### Background:

Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre (DPNC) developed a leadership development program in 2005 as a way to meet one of their strategic priorities of “improving quality of life in community through enhancing capacity to address systemic issues”. Their leadership development program, Vision into Action, was created to increase the capacity of local residents to engage in community-based strategies to address systemic issues.

The curriculum involves a series of workshops designed to build upon individual leadership skills to enable emerging leaders to collaborate in analyzing and addressing community issues.

### Solution:

Each year, small changes have been made to the Vision into Action curriculum. In 2006, the curriculum focused on fostering community leadership skills to address systemic issues. Funding was secured from The Ontario Trillium Foundation and United Way Toronto to design and implement this leadership program.

Sessions focused on critical thinking, cultural competence, group work, conflict resolution, leadership and participation, outreach, running meetings, decision making, action planning, advocacy, and promoting community leadership. Almost all sessions were facilitated by DPNC staff and a few involved individuals from outside agencies.

In addition to attending the workshops, participants were required to apply the skills they were learning throughout the workshop. Participants formed teams and developed a hypothetical project to address identified community issues related to session topics. To complete the program, participants were all expected to take part in a volunteer placement in one of DPNC’s community development projects.

## **Results:**

Community members had the opportunity to enhance their leadership skills and apply skills to real issues in their community.

Participants gained skills to take leadership roles in community and become motivated to engage in collective efforts responding to local concerns.

Participants learned about many of the diverse competencies necessary for transformative community leadership.

Participants built relationships and collaborated with other community leaders and DPNC staff.

Leadership development contributed to building community capacity for community development and also supported program and Board community development involvement.

## **Analysis:**

An **applied leadership development program** builds capacity for local residents to develop their leadership skills, and at the same time supports them to see how applying these skills can mobilize others and create change. It nurtures relationships between leaders, community members and local groups and agencies, creating a basis for defining and engaging in collective action.

## **Reflections/Conclusions:**

The Vision into Action program is one several engagement and leadership development initiatives that DPNC is using to build community capacity and to support program and Board work on systemic issues. Other innovative elements include hosting “University in the Community” continuing education courses for community members, and the “Arts for All” initiative that links community arts to promote social creativity and transformations. In each of these activities, staff members are encouraged to play a facilitative role to promote learning and build awareness among community members.

## **Contact:**

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