

# Part II

## Public Leadership and Collaboration

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## Developing Public Leaders in an Age of Collaborative Governance

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“Collaboration,” “collaborative governance,” and “collaborative public management” have become central to the language of public administration. A casual review of recent public administration literature in journals such as *Public Administration Review* and *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* finds dozens of articles on collaboration and network management. The theme of the 2007 conference of the American Society of Public Administration was “Monumental Possibilities: Capitalizing on Collaboration.” Indeed, a paradigm shift is taking place in public administration. The image of public administration as Weberian hierarchy is giving way to an image of the interorganizational network; an emphasis on command-and-control is being eclipsed by collaborate-and-connect. This, of course, is not unique to public administration, but rather is part of larger global trends that transcend sector and place (Friedman 2005).

So what does all this mean for public leadership? What does public leadership<sup>1</sup>—as practiced by public managers—mean in this age of collaborative governance? And more to the point of this volume, what competencies should be at the forefront of efforts to develop collaborative public leaders? Does a collaborative context require additional or enhanced competencies, or are standard organizational leadership competencies sufficient?

Historically, the field of public administration has paid too little attention to the topic of leadership (Terry 2003; Fairholm 2004; Morse, Buss, and Kinghorn 2007). This is particularly true for interorganizational leadership in the public sector. Most contemporary treatments of public leadership—research and professional development—emphasize *intra*-organizational leadership (e.g., Behn 1998; Terry 2003; Van Wart 2005). In other words, the focus of leadership development in public administration is on *leading organizations*. However, today’s public managers “often must operate across

organizations as well as within hierarchies” (Agranoff and McGuire 2003, p. 1), meaning organizational leadership, while necessary, is not sufficient. We must now consider how to develop collaborative or *interorganizational* public leaders.

In this chapter, I highlight contributions from research on collaborative leadership—mostly from civic and private sectors—and collaborative public management, to consider what personal attributes, skills, and behavioral competencies are needed for public leadership in a collaborative context, for leadership across boundaries. I begin with a brief discussion of the concept of collaborative governance, follow with the research on collaborative management and leadership, and then highlight competencies that seem to stand out as different from those identified for organizational leadership.

### **Collaborative Management and Governance**

The December 2006 special issue of *Public Administration Review* on “Collaborative Public Management” highlights a somewhat dramatic shift in emphasis away from the management and leadership *of* public organizations to management and leadership *across* organizations. A focus on hierarchy is giving way to a focus on networks and other forms of interorganizational partnerships. O’Leary, Gerard, and Bingham (2006) define collaborative public management as:

a concept that describes the process of facilitating and operating in multiorganizational arrangements to solve problems that cannot be solved or easily solved by single organizations. Collaborative means to *co-labor*, to cooperate to achieve common goals, working across boundaries in multisector relationships. Cooperation is based on the value of reciprocity. (p. 7)

This understanding of collaborative public management grows out of a larger stream of scholarship on an expanding, if still muddled, notion of governance.

The term governance has come to be understood by many as the subject of public administration. Generally speaking, it is a term to describe how the public’s business is accomplished. The so-called steering of society is viewed as a collective accomplishment of many actors—public and private—as opposed to a traditional view that equates governance with government. Frederickson and Smith (2003) explain that governance “refers to the lateral and interinstitutional relations in administration in the context of the decline of sovereignty, the decreasing importance of jurisdictional borders, and a general institutional fragmentation” (p. 222). Agranoff and McGuire (2003) explain

“governance as involving multiple organizations and connections that are necessary to carry out public purposes” (p. 21).

Growing out of this broad understanding of governance is a call for collaborative governance, or rather a recognition that effective governance is the product of collaboration. Collaboration includes the variety of ways public organizations work across boundaries. Crossing organizational, jurisdictional, and sectoral boundaries has always been part of public management and governance, but the recent emphasis on collaborative governance and collaborative public management recognizes that the frequency of such interorganizational efforts has dramatically increased and is likely to continue to increase. Furthermore, there is a growing normative preference for collaborative efforts that transcends philosophic orientations. Indeed, collaboration is at the center of New Public Management (Kettl 2005) as well as the alternative, critical perspective that has been named New Public Service (Denhardt and Denhardt 2003). While the former may emphasize market values and the latter community values, in practice, both correspond with an increased focus on networks, partnerships, and collaboration.

All this is not to say that hierarchy and intra-organizational leadership are no longer important. On the contrary, it is likely that working effectively in an interorganizational environment requires even more intra-organizational management and leadership. At the very least, research on networks finds that public managers still spend most of their time “working within the hierarchy” (Agranoff 2006, p. 57). Agranoff’s (2006) study of public managers across fourteen “public management networks” revealed, “there is a premium on the ability to understand and function across boundaries, but this skill has not necessarily replaced the need for internal skills” (p. 57).

But the context of public management is clearly changing. Boundaries are more permeable, and “network” seems to better describe the operational environment of today’s public manager than does “hierarchy.” We live in an age of collaborative governance, in which the so-called steering of society is now, more than ever, a process that includes the public, private, and civil sectors together, and not simply a monolithic public sector.

### **Collaborative Leadership**

The research on collaboration, particularly collaboration for public purposes, is consistent in recognizing the significant role of leadership in the success or failure of collaborative endeavors. Linden’s (2002) study of collaboration in government and nonprofit agencies concluded that “leadership makes a huge difference” (p. 146). Similarly, Luke (1998), following the work of Crosby and Bryson (2005), found that in today’s interconnected world, public leadership

(which he distinguishes from organizational and public sector leadership) is essential. Public leadership “is a type of leadership that evokes collaboration and concerted action among diverse and often competing groups toward a shared outcome” (Luke 1998, p. 33).

Leadership for collaboration is different from traditional notions of leadership that are organizational (hierarchical) and ultimately about authority and motivating “followers.” Collaborative leadership is about partnership and mutual learning. It emphasizes shared power or “power-with” rather than “power-over” (Follett 1924). It is leadership from the middle as opposed to the top. Thus, the argument here is that yes, there are additional competencies required for effective leadership across organizations.

Several scholars have articulated models of collaborative—sometimes called “facilitative”—leadership directly applicable to public managers. Chrislip and Larson (1994), Chrislip (2002), Luke (1998), Linden (2002) and Crosby and Bryson (2005) all discuss leadership from a collaborative governance perspective. The focus is on leadership as a process of pulling stakeholders together to solve public problems, and thus none of them are explicitly public sector. Put another way, rather than thinking of leadership in terms of accomplishing organizational objectives, these authors focus on solving public problems. Thus, “collaborative” leadership is exercised across all sector, and “public” leadership, in this respect, is not confined to government organizations.

The task here is to distill out specific leadership competencies that apply to the collaborative context. Numerous attributes, skills, and behaviors—collectively referred to as competencies—have been identified for public organizational leadership. Van Wart’s excellent *Dynamics of Leadership in Public Service* (2005), for example, describes in some detail ten traits, six “meta-skills,” and twenty-one behaviors, to total thirty-seven competencies for developing organizational leadership in the public sector (see Table 6.1). Most or all are generic competencies that cut cross all sectors; however, Van Wart is deliberate in tailoring his message to a public administration audience.

Van Wart’s “Leadership Action Cycle” and competencies included therein (summarized in Table 6.1) constitute the baseline for thinking about what competencies are required for collaborative leadership. Clearly, many of the traits, skills, and behaviors are as applicable to leading in an interorganizational setting as they are within organizations. The task is to determine what additional competencies are required for the collaborative context. To do this, we turn to the literature on collaboration and collaborative leadership, as well as literature within public administration coming to be known as “collaborative public management.”

There are many recently published works that discuss the process of

Table 6.1

**Public Organizational Leadership Competencies**

Traits	Skills	Behaviors
Self-confidence	Communication	Task-oriented
Decisiveness	Social skills	Monitoring and assessing work
Resilience	Influence skills	Operations planning
Energy	Analytic skills	Clarifying roles
Need for achievement	Technical skills	Informing
Willingness to assume responsibility	Continual learning	Delegating
Flexibility		Problem solving
Service mentality		Managing innovation and creativity
Personal integrity		People-oriented
Emotional maturity		Consulting
		Planning and organizing personnel
		Developing staff
		Motivating
		Building and managing teams
		Managing personnel conflict
		Managing personnel change
		Organization-oriented
		Scanning the environment
		Strategic planning
		Articulating the mission and vision
		Networking and partnering
		Performing general management functions
		Decision making
		Managing organizational change

*Source:* Drawn from Van Wart (2005).

collaboration for public purposes<sup>2</sup> and, to varying degrees, requirements of leadership for collaboration. Table 6.2 summarizes and synthesizes several different models of collaboration into a generic overview of the collaborative process. This overview implies some of the competencies that fall outside the standard competencies for organizational leadership. The key element to consider is that in a collaborative process, no one is really “in charge,” and power and authority are shared. Thus, a “leader” in a collaborative process does not have the positional authority and built-in “followers” that the same individual would have in his or her organization.

The process sketched in Table 6.2 illustrates a remarkable amount of consistency across different treatments of collaborative processes. Most scholars identify specific prerequisites that need to be in place before the process can begin. One of the most important prerequisites is the presence of a champion, a catalyst or sparkplug, or rather a leader. The next phases of the process,

Table 6.2

### The Process of Collaboration

1. **Prerequisites**  
 Boundary-crossing problem or opportunity  
 Complex problem that requires “adaptive work”  
 Shared-power environment  
 At least some willingness to work together  
 A “sparkplug” or “catalyst” to initiate process
2. **Convening**  
 Identifying stakeholders  
 Issue framing  
 Getting stakeholders “to the table”
3. **Exploring and Deciding**  
 Choosing an appropriate process and facilitator  
 Reframing the problem (or opportunity) as a group  
 Identifying shared interests and desired outcomes  
 Exploring and identifying strategies  
 Identifying and gathering additional information necessary for decision making  
 Forging agreements
4. **Doing and Sustaining**  
 Building support outside the group  
 Appropriate institutionalization  
 Monitoring outcomes  
 Network facilitation to maintain and strengthen commitment

*Sources:* Drawn from Gray (1989); Heifetz (1994); Luke (1998); Chrislip (2002); Linden (2002); and Crosby and Bryson (2005).

from convening through determining the appropriate institutional mechanism and maintenance of the partnership, can all be viewed as tasks of collaborative leadership. These tasks are specific leader behaviors supported by certain attributes and skills.

Several works specifically discuss competencies for collaborative leadership, both within and without the field of public administration. I include in this the path-breaking work of Agranoff and McGuire (2001, 2003) who use the broader term of management—as in network management. While the differences and relationship between management and leadership (see Chapter 4) are subject to debate, it is apparent that many features of collaborative “management” are actually leadership behaviors. Management behaviors can be thought of as operational, concerned with the “three E’s” and so on. Leadership is about adaptation and change. Certainly, leaders must manage, and managers must lead. Here we focus on the leading aspect.

As mentioned, many competencies span organizational and interorganizational leadership. For example, the service mentality discussed by Van Wart (2005) is consistently mentioned as a trait of collaborative leaders. Certainly,

Table 6.3

**Collaborative Leadership Competencies**

Attributes	Skills	Behaviors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative mindset</li> <li>• Passion toward outcomes</li> <li>• Systems thinking</li> <li>• Openness and risk taking</li> <li>• Sense of mutuality and connectedness</li> <li>• Humility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-management</li> <li>• Strategic thinking</li> <li>• Facilitation skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder identification</li> <li>• Stakeholder assessment</li> <li>• Strategic issue framing</li> <li>• Convening working groups</li> <li>• Facilitating mutual learning processes</li> <li>• Inducing commitment</li> <li>• Facilitating trusting relationships among partners</li> </ul>

the six meta-skills are all applicable to leading across boundaries. But there are some competencies that are either unique to the collaborative environment or at least expand significantly on the organizational competencies identified in Table 6.1. These competencies, summarized in Table 6.3, represent a starting point for thinking about what additional elements of leadership development are needed for collaborative governance.

Following Van Wart (2005), I organize the competencies in terms of attributes (Van Wart uses the term “traits”), skills, and behaviors. A simple content analysis of related literature<sup>3</sup> identified dozens of competencies. Those already included in Van Wart’s summary of public organizational leadership competencies (either exact wording or different wording but same meanings) were taken out.<sup>4</sup> The remaining competencies, summarized in Table 6.3, represent a starting point for articulating the enhanced or additional attributes, skills, and behaviors needed for collaborative leadership in the public sector. What follows is a brief discussion of these competencies.

***Personal Attributes***

In this section, I discuss several personal attributes that have been identified in the research as contributing to effective collaborative leadership. I use the term attribute rather than the more commonly used term trait because trait connotes a fixed characteristic; something that is inborn and not subject to change (think genetic traits). To speak of leadership traits implies that “leaders are born, not made.” Speaking of a personal attribute seems to be less restrictive. A personal attribute is a characteristic quality, but not necessarily one that is hardwired or fixed.

The way attribute is used here, however, is interchangeable with the way

Van Wart (2005) described traits. According to Van Wart, traits (or here, attributes) “are all relatively stable dispositions by adulthood.” Yet, “they are all amenable to significant improvement, and a few, to substantial improvement by training and education in specific situational environments” (p. 93).

In scanning the literature on collaborative leadership, several specific personal attributes are identified that clearly stand out from the list discussed in Van Wart (2005) for organizational leaders. One of the most commonly cited attributes is what Linden (2002) refers to as “*a collaborative mindset*” (p. 152, emphasis added). Collaborative leaders “see across boundaries” (Rosabeth Moss Kanter, quoted in Linden 2002, p. 161). They have “a vision of what collaboration can accomplish” (Gray 1989, p. 279). Luke (1998) explains this mindset as “understand[ing] the need to be inclusive and interactive, working across systems and agencies, connecting with other efforts, and involving key networks, partners, and stakeholders to pursue outcomes” (p. 226).

The collaborative mindset means seeing “*connections and possibilities* where others might see barriers or limitations” (Linden 2002, p. 161, emphasis in original). This collaborative mindset is one that understands, values, and seeks out what Covey (1989) describes as the principle of synergy: “You begin with the belief that parties involved will gain more insight, and that the excitement of that mutual learning and insight will create momentum toward more and more insights, learnings, and growth” (p. 264).

Another critical attribute identified across the collaboration literature is what Luke (1998) describes as a “*passion toward outcomes*” (p. 223, emphasis added). This clearly overlaps with the trait Van Wart (2005) labeled “need for achievement” (pp. 103–105). However, there are some important distinctions. As described in Van Wart, need for achievement is based primarily on self-interested motivations of personal advancement or winning. It is a “drive for excellence” that propels organizational leaders toward success (p. 103). Collaborative leaders have a different focus. Their passion or personal desire is “to bring about change and to make a difference” (Luke 1998, p. 223). For them, “the desired result or outcome for the public good becomes the passionate focus and spark that energizes and mobilizes” (Ibid.). Thus, more than having a need for personal and organizational achievement, the collaborative leader is passionate about the common good, about creating public value. That passion is “an emotional spark that mobilizes and sustains energy . . . build[ing] support and trust in an interdependent web of diverse stakeholders” (p. 224). Passion for results becomes a strong motivator for collaborative leaders, giving them “energy and sense of focus” that make them “clearly driven people” (Linden 2002, pp. 152–153).

Collaborative leaders also “see the big picture” and “take the long view.” In other words, they are systems thinkers. *Systems thinking* is both an attribute

and a skill. Senge (1990) explains system thinking as “a discipline for seeing wholes” as well as “a specific set of tools and techniques” (p. 68). Therefore, it is a habit of thinking (or attribute) as well as a set of skills that can be learned. Luke (1998) explains that this habit of thinking involves “thinking about impacts on future generations”; “thinking about . . . ripple effects and consequences beyond the immediate concern”; and “thinking in terms of issues and strategies that cross functions, specialties, and professional disciplines” (p. 222). Jurisdictionally and/or organizationally bound public leaders have many incentives to think short-term and stay internally focused. Being a systems thinker and considering the “forest *and* the trees” (Senge 1990, p. 127, emphasis in original) requires mental discipline and moral courage.

Collaborative leaders are often described as entrepreneurs, and are noted for their *openness and risk taking* (Morse and Dudley 2002; Henton, Melville, and Walesh 2004). Willingness to experiment and take risks is a critical attribute identified by many observers of collaborative leadership (Luke 1998; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002; Henton, Melville, and Walesh 2004). “They are risk takers. They are not afraid of failure” (Henton, Melville, and Walesh 2004, p. 209). Risk taking involves being comfortable with uncertainty, being able to make trade-offs, and “accommodating the unexpected” (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002, p. 101). Luke (1998) describes this attribute as a “committed openness . . . to identifying and testing new and diverse ways to achieve” the desired outcomes that drive them (p. 225). They are willing to be wrong, to revise their thinking, and to “understand that no project, program, or policy should be seen as final or definitive” (pp. 224–225).

A strong undercurrent in most treatments of collaborative leadership that receives very little explicit attention has to do with the leaders’ psychological connection with others. I label this a *sense of mutuality and connectedness* with others. This attribute is expressed in its ideal form in Buber’s *I and Thou* (1958). Essentially, it is a sense of being in relation to others, of being part of a whole; being a part of, rather than apart from, others. In its deepest sense, this attribute is a worldview reflected in the philosophical pragmatism of George Herbert Mead, William James, and John Dewey, as well as modern-day communitarianism (Etzioni 1996). The work of Mary Follett also speaks to this attribute in a compelling way for a public administration audience (Morse 2006). However, one need not delve deeply into philosophy or social psychology to understand this attribute. The interpersonal quality of mutuality and connectedness can be thought of in terms of perspective taking (“putting oneself in another’s place”) and concern for others (Luke 1998, p. 227). Ability to “understand others’ concerns and perspectives” and ultimately having an “underlying concern for others” is a foundation for the application of collaborative skills and ultimately successful collaborative action (Luke 1998, pp. 226–228).

Trust<sup>5</sup> is a widely recognized factor in successful collaboration. Williams (2002) finds a “consensus that trust must underpin effective relationships at both an individual and organizational level” (p. 116). Clearly, the attribute of personal integrity, identified in Van Wart (2005) and most other compilations of leadership traits, is a component of this trust. But the genuine recognition and understanding of the other that stems from the attribute of mutuality and connectedness also connects in important ways with trust and trustworthiness (Covey 1989).

The “sense of relatedness” and genuine concern for the “larger public good” that runs through all the preceding attributes, “cannot occur without first shifting one’s attention away from a preoccupation with oneself and toward looking outward to relationships and interpersonal networks” (Luke 1998, pp. 226–228). Collaborative leaders have a good degree of *humility*, an attribute Linden (2002) describes as a “strong but measured ego” (p. 154). They “don’t have to grab the headlines for every success. Quite the opposite, they seem to take great satisfaction when they can share credit for accomplishments with many others. Their ambitions are directed more toward organizational success than personal glory” (Linden 2002, p. 154). Collaborative leaders are entrepreneurs, they are ambitious and driven. Yet, at the same time they are humble. Luke (1998) connects this to what psychologists call “ego-strength.” Persons with ego-strength “don’t have the internal motivation to be in charge of everything . . . [there is a] willingness to share credit, which is crucial in forging agreements and sustaining action” (pp. 230–231).

These six attributes appear to be fundamental to effective leadership in collaborative settings. They work in concert with other fundamental attributes that are associated with organizational leadership (see Table 6.1), although in some instances there may be tension between what makes for good organizational leadership and what makes for good collaborative leadership. For example, decisiveness, an attribute prized in organizational settings, might contradict the openness and humility needed for successful collaboration. The need for achievement in personal and organizational terms might be a source of tension with the passion for outcomes for the common good that transcend organizational boundaries. In practice, the public leader is constantly balancing competing personal and organizational commitments.

### *Skills*

We now turn to skills, or “broadly applied learned characteristics,” that appear essential in the practice of collaborative leadership (Van Wart 2005, p. 92). Van Wart’s six “skills” (Table 6.1) are broad categories for a much larger set of skills. For example, “communication skills” include oral, written, and

nonverbal communications, as well as active listening skills—all certainly required in interorganizational settings as much as or even more than within organizations. In like fashion, there are three broad categories or skill sets specifically discussed in the collaborative leadership literature that seem to be *in addition to* the six skill sets noted in Table 6.1. These are labeled here as self-management, strategic thinking, and facilitation (or process) skills.

*Self-management* refers to the ability to prioritize and manage time effectively (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002, p. 102). A very large “self-help” literature is available that places self-management at the center of not only personal effectiveness but leader effectiveness (Covey 1989). In fact, some might consider self-management so basic to management skills in general that it is already included in Van Wart’s (2005) “technical” skill set that includes “basic management knowledge/skills” (pp. 145–147). But this is a stretch. Self-management seems to be a fundamental skill set that stands apart from the others, and while relevant for leading organizations, is particularly relevant when working across boundaries. The personal habits of being proactive, beginning with the end in mind, and putting first things first (Covey 1989) are at the very foundation of what it takes to be a collaborative leader.

*Strategic thinking* covers a wide range of skills that are only partially covered in the “analytic skills” cluster identified by Van Wart (2005) and other lists of leadership skills. Luke (1998, pp. 151–184) offers an excellent discussion of the various components of strategic thinking for collaborative work. He argues that four sets of analytic skills are involved:

- “Framing and reframing issues and their strategic responses.” This means defining problems “in ways that focus attention, stimulate an urgency for action, and provide a framework for the debates on action strategies.”
- “Identifying and defining end-outcomes or desired results.” Multiparty problem-solving efforts are enhanced by focusing on desired outcomes rather than detailing deficiencies. Effective leaders help groups identify outcomes and keep them separate from problems and inputs. They also clarify and “separate end-outcomes from intermediate outcomes.”
- “Assessing stakeholder interest to discover common and complementary interests.” Identifying stakeholders and determining their “goals, concerns, or stakes” is also a key component of the collaborative process.
- “Systematic thinking to reveal interconnections and strategic leverage points.” This refers to the tools and techniques aspect of systems thinking mentioned earlier in this chapter. There are many “visual tools for communicating about and seeing multiple connections and interrelationships.” These include various conceptual “mapping” exercises that can vary greatly in degree of complexity.

Senge's (1990) discussion of systems thinking includes additional insights and tools. Furthermore, Crosby and Bryson's *Leadership for the Common Good* (2005) offers much in the way of skills development in this area, including several exercises and models for stakeholder assessment.

Collaborative leaders also have "knowledge of the process tools" needed "for designing effective collaborations" (Gray 1989, p. 279). Again, Luke (1998, pp. 185–217) offers an excellent discussion of the *facilitation skills* needed to lead "from the middle" and help a diverse group work together effectively. The four primary skills involve:

- Helping the group generate "fresh ideas and new insights." This includes helping a group separate idea generation from evaluation and asking open-ended questions that "inquire and reveal."
- "Coping with conflict." This is a broad skill set within a skill set that is often included in discussion of leadership skills. The skills of principled negotiation articulated in Fisher, Ury, and Patton's *Getting to Yes* (1991) are essential here.
- "Getting a group unstuck and moving the debate forward." More often than not, collaborative groups can run out of steam or otherwise get in a rut. The skilled use of specific interventions can help a group get "unstuck." It is also important to know when it is time to call on an external facilitator.
- "Forging multiple agreements." Luke explains that "public leaders assist in forging agreement in three specific ways: they work to develop a nonconfrontational agreement-building process for selecting multiple strategies; they build larger agreements from smaller ones; and they seek high levels of consensus among diverse stakeholders."

Again, there are many great resources for developing facilitative leadership skills. Schwarz's *The Skilled Facilitator* (2002) is an excellent starting point.

Space does not allow full discussion of these three skill sets. The reader is referred to other works mentioned above that give in-depth coverage of these topics (especially Luke 1998; Covey 1989; Crosby and Bryson 2005; Schwarz 2002). The point to underscore here is that these broad skill sets are for the most part not found in those identified with organizational leadership (see Van Wart 2005). While these three skill sets can clearly contribute to better organizational leadership, they are especially important for interorganizational, or collaborative leadership and, along with the attributes discussed in the previous section, should form the core of leadership development for interorganizational collaboration.

## *Behaviors*

It is important to note that attributes and skills of leaders are relevant inasmuch as they contribute to effective leadership behaviors. Thus, competencies go beyond who you are (attributes) and what you can do (skills)—they also must include what you actually do. In fact, most of the research on collaborative leadership focuses on behavioral competencies, those behaviors or actions actually displayed by leaders in practice. The organizational leadership literature groups leader behaviors into task-oriented behaviors, people-oriented behaviors, and organization-oriented behaviors (Van Wart 2005, p. 157). Descriptions of collaborative leadership behaviors tend to cut across all three meta-categories. These behaviors naturally mirror the general process of collaboration (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.4 summarizes the leader behaviors identified from three different treatments of collaborative leadership. Chrislip and Larson (1994) and Luke (1998) are both broad treatments of collaborative leadership that are cross-sectoral, although each of them specifically addresses public sector practitioners as among their intended audiences. Agranoff and McGuire's research (2001; McGuire 2006), on the other hand, is specifically focused on public managers. The behaviors they identify are in terms of "collaborative public management." They don't distinguish leadership from management, although most of the behaviors they identify fall under what others label leadership.

While many leadership behaviors identified by Van Wart (2005, Table 6.1) overlap with the behaviors associated with collaborative leadership (e.g., team building, environmental scanning, networking, and strategic planning), there are many behaviors that are more specific to the collaborative context. These behaviors include stakeholder identification and assessment, strategic issue framing, relationship development with diverse stakeholders, convening working groups, facilitating mutual learning processes, inducing commitment, and facilitating trusting relationships among partners. It is likely that a more detailed analysis would yield a much longer list of behaviors that stand apart from those associated with organizational leadership (Table 6.1). Therefore, the list discussed here should be considered a starting point only and not a complete account of all the behavioral competencies for collaborative leadership.

*Stakeholder identification and stakeholder assessment* are two behaviors that work in tandem during the initial phases of a collaborative process. Identifying a broad array of stakeholders is "the first step in creating a constituency for change" and precedes efforts to get people involved (Chrislip and Larson 1994, p. 65). However, simply identifying stakeholders is not enough.

Table 6.4

**Collaborative Leadership Behaviors**

Chrislip & Larson	Luke	Agranoff & McGuire
<p><i>Inspiring Commitment to Action</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convincing people that something can and should be done</li> <li>• Convening stakeholders</li> </ul> <p><i>Leading as Peer Problem Solver</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping groups create visions and solve problems</li> <li>• Building relationships</li> </ul> <p><i>Building Broad-Based Involvement</i></p> <p><i>Sustaining Hope and Participation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting and protecting process</li> </ul>	<p><i>Raising Awareness (Issue Framing)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stimulate awareness and emotional concern that problem or opportunity exists</li> <li>• Elevate issue to priority status by creating sense of urgency and “do-ability”</li> <li>• Use “attentional triggers” to expand number of people concerned about the issue</li> </ul> <p><i>Forming Working Groups</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify full spectrum of stakeholders</li> <li>• Enlist core working group members and design multiple levels of participation</li> <li>• Convene first meetings</li> </ul> <p><i>Creating Strategies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build and nurture effective working group</li> <li>• Facilitate mutual learning process</li> <li>• Promote and facilitate strategy development</li> </ul> <p><i>Sustaining Action</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build commitment and political support</li> <li>• Institutionalize cooperative behavior</li> <li>• Network facilitation</li> </ul>	<p><i>Activation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying participants and stakeholders</li> <li>• Tapping resources of those persons</li> <li>• Recruiting potential members</li> </ul> <p><i>Framing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitating agreement on leadership and administrative roles</li> <li>• Helping establish identity and culture for the network</li> <li>• Helping develop working structure for network, including strategic planning</li> </ul> <p><i>Mobilizing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inducing commitment to the joint effort and building support from key players</li> </ul> <p><i>Synthesizing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engendering productive and purposeful interaction among all actors</li> <li>• Facilitating relationships to build trust and promote information exchange</li> </ul>

Source: Chrislip & Larson (1994, pp. 138–141); Luke (1998); Agranoff and McGuire (2001, pp. 289–301); and McGuire (2006, p. 37).

Stakeholders must be assessed in terms of what they might contribute to a collaborative effort, what interests they have in the issue, how they might define the problem (or opportunity), and so on. Effective leadership entails finding the right mix of stakeholders to involve and ways to involve them. There are several helpful frameworks and tools available to help leaders identify and assess stakeholders. The first place to start is Crosby and Bryson's *Leadership for the Common Good* (2005).

*Strategic issue framing* is another key behavior of collaborative leaders. Luke (1998) argues that "effective public leaders do not necessarily promote solutions; they promote problems." They become "advocates for issue emergence," creating a sense of urgency around a particular problem or opportunity (Luke 1998, p. 41). Strategic issue framing involves transforming a condition (a latent problem or opportunity) into a high-priority issue for the public—particularly those individuals and organizations seen as potential partners. Collaborative leaders use a variety of strategies for framing issues, such as leveraging dramatic (or "focusing") events and utilizing the media. They understand that how an issue is framed determines how fast it gets to the policy agenda, who gets involved, and what solutions are identified (Luke 1998, pp. 41–65). Linden (2002, p. 107) refers to this kind of issue framing as "creating high stakes."

Collaborative leaders also engage, on an ongoing basis, in *relationship development with diverse stakeholders*. Linden (2002) calls relationships "the glue to most collaborative efforts" (p. 92). An illustrative example involves the efforts of a U.S. Forest Service administrative officer, Rod Collins, and his "Friday chowders" with colleagues from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Seeing that formal, infrequent meetings between the two agency offices were not productive, he invited his BLM counterparts to meet his team for lunch at a local restaurant. This evolved into a monthly routine for over four years that produced relationships and tangible results (Linden 2002, pp. 101–102). Having chowder together seems almost trivial, but the research is very consistent in identifying these kinds of informal relationship-building efforts as essential and producing powerful outcomes. Indeed, Williams's (2002) study of "the competent boundary spanner" states plainly that "a necessary part of interorganizational working involves building and sustaining effective personal relationships" (p. 115).

*Convening working groups* is another clearly identified collaborative leadership behavior. Interorganizational groups simply do not come into being by happenstance. Bringing the right stakeholders together "to the table" is a critical act of leadership (Luke 1998, p. 67). Although there is no "one best way" to convene a working group of diverse stakeholders, Luke (1998) finds that successful beginnings usually involve a "safe or neutral space for

meetings” and a process perceived as being legitimate or transparent, not “driven by hidden agendas.” Collaborative leaders “pay close attention to first meetings and invest considerable time and energy in the initial process of convening” (p. 81).

After a working group has been convened, a key task of leadership becomes *facilitating mutual learning processes*. This involves “providing leadership to the process . . . setting the tone for the interactions, one that [is] respectful and hopeful” (Wondolleck and Ryan 1999, p. 122, emphasis in original). While the collaborative leader need not (ultimately) be the formal group facilitator, they do play a key role “establish[ing] high standards of communication, deliberation, open-mindedness, commitment, and hard work” for the group (Wondolleck and Ryan 1999, p. 122). The focus for the leader is in ensuring that the group “develop and nurture a deliberative process of mutual learning” (Luke 1998, p. 95). Leaders accomplish this by effectively “establishing and influencing the operating rules . . . [and] prevailing values and norms” of the working group (Agranoff and McGuire 2001, p. 299).

Throughout the process, collaborative leaders can be found *inducing commitment* both within and outside the working group. Leaders must induce commitment of participants early on during the convening stage and continue to induce commitment throughout the process, especially when the commitment level needs to go beyond talk (Agranoff and McGuire 2001, pp. 299–300; Linden 2002, pp. 173–174). Also, in order to sustain action during the implementation phase, commitment must be garnered from key decision makers. Effective commitment building at this stage involves identifying other “champions,” including advocacy coalitions and other power holders who can help in the political process of allocating resources (Luke 1998, pp. 128–131).

Another ongoing collaborative leadership behavior is *facilitating trusting relationships among partners*. This is different than building relationships with partners, although it may involve similar strategies. As working groups come together, differences will naturally surface, and many relationship-based obstacles to collaboration will manifest themselves. Thus, in addition to having good relations with each of the partners individually, the collaborative leader makes efforts to build good relationships among the different actors in the group. Agranoff and McGuire (2001) explained that the leader “seeks to achieve cooperation between actors while preventing, minimizing, or removing blockages to cooperation” (p. 300). Luke (1998) described this as network facilitation. A network facilitator is a “multilateral broker” (Mandell 1984, 1988) that builds a “supportive relationship and strong bonds of trust among partners in the network” (Luke 1998, pp. 143–144).

Of course, much more could be said about each of these behaviors. The

reader may turn to the resources cited in this chapter for more in-depth discussions of each of them. And again, there are likely many other discrete behaviors that could be added to the list here. This list is offered only as a starting point for thinking about the leader behaviors in a collaborative context that is distinct from those identified for organizational leadership.

### *Leadership Styles*

This discussion of competencies would not be complete without a word on leadership styles. In addition to attributes, skills, and behaviors, the study of leadership includes examining various overall “styles” of leadership. Van Wart (2005) reviews the various leadership styles identified in the literature. His “leadership action cycle” model views leader behaviors as being influenced by one’s leadership style combined with specific competencies and the operational environment. Identified leadership styles include “laissez-faire,” “directive,” “supportive,” and “participative” (Van Wart 2005).

The styles literature is very much from the organizational leadership point-of-view, with each implicitly assuming a leader–follower relationship. In other words, one’s “style” refers to general patterns of leader behavior in relation to subordinates, tasks, goals, and so on. While the participative style seems consistent with the “inclusive” style of collaborative leadership discussed in Linden (2002), it may be that leadership for collaboration requires a different style altogether. Bardach’s (1998) study of interagency collaboration identifies “facilitative” and “advocacy” styles that seem to best characterize effective collaborative leaders and also seem to be different from those identified in the organizational leadership literature.

Bardach (1998) notes that the facilitative style is a “kinder, gentler sort, sometimes called *servant* . . . leadership.” He continues, “[A] good facilitative leader is someone with appropriate self-awareness about the nature of the role and a natural gift for diplomacy. It is often someone with a broad-gauge, general background or cross-disciplinary training and experience” (p. 226, emphasis in original). Those with a facilitative style often have “a relatively positive personal disposition . . . perceived as neutral, someone with ‘no ax to grind.’” It is a “consensus-building style” (pp. 226–227).

In contrast, an advocacy style “approaches consensus building in a rallying spirit and carries it as far as it can reasonably do so” (p. 228). The essential difference between a facilitative and an advocacy style is that advocacy leaders have a vision and work with others who support it, while the facilitative leader essentially subordinates to the group (p. 228). In either case, the style of leadership is very different from the normal “top-down” ones that dominate discussions of organizational leadership. The collaborative leader’s style

stems from the attributes discussed above, attributes that engender joint-work and power-sharing.

More research could and should be done to explore the styles of collaborative leaders when they are working in an interorganizational setting versus when they are working within their “home” organizations. Is there a consistent organizational leadership style across collaborative leaders? Is it possible to be a directive leader within one’s organization but a facilitative leader on the outside? These are just a few of the many interesting research questions for studying collaborative leadership as exercised by public managers.

### **Developing Public Leadership for Collaborative Governance**

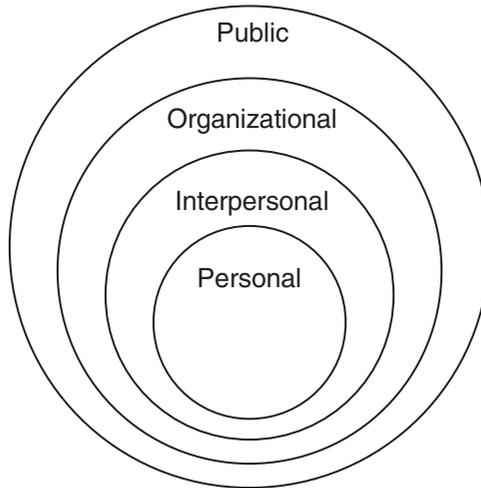
In reviewing the collaborative leadership literature for this chapter, it became apparent that the focus tends to be on tasks or behaviors. In other words, we know a lot about what collaborative leaders do. There is much less written about who collaborative leaders are, what makes them tick, and what attributes form the core of their character.

In considering what the competencies discussed in this chapter mean for public leadership development, two important observations should be made. First, if the aim is to develop public leaders who are better equipped to lead in a shared-power world, in an age of collaborative governance, then we need to start from the inside out. As Marc Holzer discusses in Chapter 2 of this volume, our culture seems to promote an image of leadership antithetical to what I have described as collaborative, or facilitative, leadership. If current or future public leaders are to work across boundaries effectively—creating public value in collaboration with actors across different jurisdictions and even sectors—then they have to have the mindset, the will, or habits of the heart to do so. The leader whose very character is rooted in command-and-control, top-down models of leadership may very well be able to learn the skills of collaboration, but it is unlikely those will be translated into behaviors.

Covey’s (1989, 1990) simple, yet profound, approach to leadership development is called “inside-out.” What he means by that is “to start first with self—to start with the most *inside* part of self—with your paradigms, your character, and your motives” (1990, p. 63, emphasis in original). In other words, if you want to be effective at leading change in an interorganizational setting, that is, a collaborative setting, then you have to *be* a collaborative person. Linden’s (2002) “questions on your collaborative leadership” (p. 165) provide a nice starting point for self-reflection:

- Do you come across as someone who prefers to be the source of all new ideas?

Figure 6.1 Four Levels of Public Leadership



- Do others see you as someone who typically wants to find the answers to problems and challenges on your own?
- How do you react when others' perspective on an issue is very different from yours? Is that an irritation to be avoided? An inconvenience to be overcome? An asset to be used?
- When you are working on an issue with others, how likely are you to ask if there is anyone else with a stake in the issue?
- When you are trying to influence others, how much do you tend to push your own ideas, and to what extent do you use pull to invite others into the discussion?

In an age of collaborative governance, where shared problems and shared power is the norm, the public leader must truly *become* the type of person whom others can trust and respect. A focus on skills or tools will be useless if the personal attributes are not in alignment. The attributes must come first.

Public leaders operate on many different levels. Figure 6.1 is a simple illustration of this concept. Public leadership begins with personal leadership, the realm of what Covey (1989) calls "private victories." This is the realm of personal attributes and how they interface with one's world. The next level is that of interpersonal leadership or how one interacts with others. Leadership enacted at that level influences one's leadership at the organizational level. In other words, effective leadership of organizations is built on many interpersonal interactions. Organizational culture, for example, is developed through

the sum product of countless interpersonal interactions. And organizations that work well “across boundaries” have cultures amenable to joint-work. Thus, effectiveness at the “public” (interorganizational) level is contingent on leadership at the organizational level, and so on.

Ultimately, leadership development for collaboration—the outer ring or “public” level in Figure 6.1—cannot be divorced from organizational, interpersonal, or personal leadership. They are all connected and begin with the self—the personal attributes one develops. This is the second observation regarding how the competencies discussed in this chapter fit into the broader discussion of public leadership development. That is, the inside-out approach can also be a way of thinking of leadership at all four levels. Whether a formal training program, mentoring, or self-reflection, the individual working to become a better collaborative leader can think about the competencies and what they mean at each level of leadership. What does being a collaborative leader mean for my own personal leadership? For my leadership in interpersonal situations? For my organizational leadership? And for my leadership across boundaries “for the common good” (Crosby and Bryson 2005)?

Development of leaders that can successfully lead change and create public value through partnerships and collaboration is of concern for the field of public administration today. This chapter offers a starting point for thinking about some of the specific competencies of public leadership for collaborative governance. Beyond the suggestions above regarding an inside-out approach to leadership development, I leave to others<sup>6</sup> more specific discussions of *how* to develop these leadership competencies in others. Several chapters in this book discuss specific models and experiences regarding the *how* of leadership development. The purpose of this chapter has been to stimulate more thought and discussion regarding the *what*.

## Notes

1. References to public leadership in this chapter will relate to leadership within the context of public administration. While the term can be and is used more broadly to encompass political leadership and even civic leadership, the effort here zeroes in on leadership as exercised by those in the public service.

2. There are many more treatments of interorganizational collaboration in the private sector that are likewise useful—especially the work of Huxham and Vangen (2005)—but not as directly as those that specifically focus on collaboration “for the common good.” The primary difference has to do with interests. In private settings the profit motive and organizational interest are paramount; actors engage in collaboration to further their own interest. In the public sphere, self-interest certainly can be a factor, but the primary force bringing actors together is a shared interest in solving a public problem and/or in creating public value.

3. Although many relevant sources were consulted for this study, the primary sources used here that speak directly to the question of leadership competencies are Bardach

(1998), Luke (1998), Linden (2002), Chrislip and Larson (1994), Sullivan and Skelcher (2002), Straus (2002), Williams (2002), and McGuire (2006). This pool of literature is admittedly not complete; there are hundreds of sources that in one way or another are relevant to collaborative leadership in the public sector. However, these sources seemed relevant, and all, to one degree or another, identify leadership competencies in terms of behaviors and/or attributes and skills.

4. Many competencies identified as key to collaborative leadership are already part of the organizational leadership rubric. Personal integrity, for example, is as important to working within an organization as it is for working outside the organization. Energy and resilience are certainly required for successful collaboration as well. To keep this chapter reasonably short, a discussion of the items of overlap is not undertaken. Rather, the focus is on competencies identified that seem to fall outside the standard ones for organizational leadership.

5. Trustworthiness may also be viewed as a separate attribute. Luke (1998, pp. 233–236) included an excellent discussion of trust and personal integrity. It is not included as a separate attribute here, however, because it seems more of an outgrowth or product of integrity and the sense of mutuality that leads to authentic relationships rather than something that exists independently. In other words, one must have integrity and authentic relationships to build genuine interpersonal trust.

6. The following two chapters are especially good examples of efforts to develop leaders for collaborative governance.

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# 7

## From Local Managers to Community Change Agents

### Lessons from an Executive Leadership Program Experience

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Carl W. Stenberg, Vaughn M. Upshaw, and Donna Warner

Since fall 2003, the Public Leadership faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) School of Government (SOG) has worked on the design and delivery of the Public Executive Leadership Academy (PELA), an advanced leadership program for local managers. PELA serves a diverse audience of twenty-five municipal and county managers, assistant managers, and department heads who aspire to leadership careers in local government and need to hone or develop their communication and collaboration skills. The program's curriculum is unique in its focus on the manager's role as community leader and change agent, and its emphasis on leading and managing in an intergovernmental and intersector context. Participants apply information and insights from class sessions to their "real world" change opportunity back home. To our knowledge, no other university-based public executive leadership program in the United States has this emphasis.

As we reflect on the past two years of experience, we have learned a great deal. The purpose of this chapter is to share these lessons with those interested in developing similar leadership programs. Our focus is on: (1) partnership management, (2) collaboration, (3) curriculum design, (4) team-building techniques, and (5) program evaluation.

#### **Partnership Management**

The School of Government's Public Leadership faculty helps public officials lead and govern their communities and strengthen local governmental

management. We work closely with the professional associations in the state to ensure that our research, consulting, and educational programs meet the needs of our clients. This approach served us well in the design and delivery of PELA. We believe the time devoted to managing partnerships paid significant dividends.

PELA was developed in partnership with the North Carolina City and County Management Association (NCCCMA) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). For several years, NCCCMA wanted the School of Government to launch an advanced professional development program for managers along the lines of the Senior Executive Institute (SEI) offered by the University of Virginia. ICMA was supportive of this initiative, and encouraged faculty to design a program that complemented rather than duplicated SEI, especially since nearly more than fifty managers from North Carolina were SEI alumni.

NCCCMA assisted us in conducting a needs assessment, creating an advisory committee to help design the program's structure, identifying major curricular components, and providing seed money and scholarships. We were able to call on the association for suggestions for managers who could serve as teaching faculty and give us feedback to ensure that what was developed was relevant to the "real world." The association also provided \$10,000 each year toward program support and \$7,500 for scholarships, to make PELA affordable and accessible to managers across North Carolina.

ICMA contributed the services of its Executive Director, Robert O'Neill, as a member of the PELA faculty and advice from other senior staff members, and it agreed to count PELA for 40 credit hours as part of its Voluntary Credentialing Program. For those seeking academic credit, the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill agreed to offer six hours of graduate Continuing Education Units for completion of PELA at a modest additional tuition payment.

The partnerships with NCCCMA, ICMA, and the university were instrumental in building a program that is relevant and responsive. They also have been critical to containing PELA's costs. For the first two years of the program, tuition was set at \$3,000. This amount covered all instructional costs and several meal functions. Travel and accommodations were paid by the participants. NCCCMA's financial support enabled us to discount tuition by \$400 for its members and award scholarships for half of the remainder to managers in smaller and rural communities. Another important factor was that the School of Government contributed faculty and staff without charge. While there was a daily program charge for each participant to help pay for administrative services and parking, the budget did not need to cover salaries and benefits. Similarly, ICMA's staff services were reimbursed for only travel-related expenses.

In addition to collaborating closely with our partners on the program design, several individual managers also were engaged as advisors. Their input gave us confidence that PELA's program design and curriculum would meet the managers' interests and constraints. Our needs assessment and recruitment strategy exemplify some important lessons we learned about collaboration strategies.

### *Needs Assessment*

Regional meetings were held the winter of 2005 with municipal and county managers and assistant managers in eight locations across North Carolina. The primary purpose of the meetings was to hear from professional managers about: (1) major challenges and issues (personal and professional), (2) what was needed to manage these issues, (3) priorities for education and training programs, and (4) design and delivery preferences.

A wide range of challenges and issues were identified, and a number of common topics and themes emerged from the discussions, including manager–governing board relations, economic development, citizen engagement, intergovernmental relations, and change management. To address these challenges, the participants were interested in gaining skills in the following areas: communications, negotiations and conflict resolution, facilitation, collaborative decision making and consensus building, and interpersonal relations. There also was general interest in knowing more about “best management and leadership practices” and the emerging issues impacting North Carolina state and local government.

Participants also shared their views on scheduling sites, technology utilization, and tuition costs. A summary of these meetings was sent to the NCCCMA Executive Committee and to all participants and the PELA advisory committee.

A consistent message heard was the growing complexity of government and the need for managers to work with a wide range of stakeholders within their community and outside their jurisdiction. Public problems such as water and transportation no longer stop at county or municipal boundary lines, and managers find themselves working with other governments, nonprofit organizations, and businesses to craft a vision and plans for the future. This dimension of the manager's role is not new; in fact, during the 1960s an ICMA Future Horizons Committee “concluded that the manager was a community leader who deals with an array of conflicting community values, including issues of representation and equity, and who works in a facilitative style” (Nalbandian and Portillo 2006).

As we assessed this feedback, our challenge was to take an extensive “wish

list” and design a curriculum with components that connected and built on each other within a reasonable instructional period. To help do so, we were advised to distinguish ourselves from SEI and other leadership development programs. We used the model of manager as a community leader and change agent as a guide and designed PELA to emphasize the significant *external* dimensions of the manager’s job. The target audience was senior managers and those designated for leadership positions within their local government. We assumed managers would come to PELA with a basic understanding of their personal leadership style as well as significant experience managing an organization.

### ***Recruitment and Selection***

We received thirty applications for twenty-five slots in the first year. The same number of applications was received for the 2006 session. Table 7.1 provides a breakdown of participants in 2005 and 2006. We anticipated a larger pool of applicants for the program based on the feedback on pent-up demand for leadership training we received during the needs assessment phase. North Carolina’s public managers had expressed a strong interest in having a local government leadership program, but when the program was launched, only a fraction of those eligible actually applied. This was especially troublesome given the relatively sizable pool of managers in the state: 99 of the 100 counties have a county manager, and 206 of the 541 municipalities have a city or town manager.

After reviewing our approach to recruit, we wondered why senior managers—our target audience—were less inclined to apply than junior managers, assistant managers, and department heads. We are developing strategies for gaining feedback from this segment. One consequence of the light response from this audience has been the need to build more personal leadership and organizational leadership content into the program, which is important for participants to master before embarking on community leadership.

Another lesson we learned was that it takes time to get the message out—even when you think you have done a good job of communicating! Despite announcing the PELA rollout at multiple statewide meetings and in professional publications, the marketing materials were disseminated after the Thanksgiving holiday with a deadline for applications set for mid-January. We learned the importance of timing in disseminating promotional materials. Marketing materials mailed during the winter holiday season tended to be lost or overlooked, and with vacation schedules, many people had insufficient time to complete the application and get letters of recommendation (required for assistant managers and department heads).

We also learned the difference between advertising and recruitment. It is one thing to spread the word and quite another to generate participants. We

Table 7.1

**Demographics of PELA Participants in 2005 and 2006**

Demographics	2005	2006
Number of Participants	25	25
Males	20	19
Females	5	6
African American	3	5
Caucasian	22	20
Managers	13	11
Assistant Managers	6	10
Department Heads	6	4
City	18	18
County	7	7
East	4	6
Central	18	16
West	3	2
Other		1*

\*One out-of-state participant from South Carolina

have come to better appreciate the importance of manager-to-manager marketing—at Association events and one-on-one communications between the faculty program director and managers—and plan to more fully utilize this strategy in promoting future programs.

The value of a “champion” in the manager community and among graduates cannot be overstated. Having the program supported and encouraged by other managers and the Association’s leadership is the best way we know to bolster participation. It is their endorsement and what they see as their results that encourage others to attend.

A recruitment strategy is also needed to ensure diversity. Diversity is an important factor in our selection process, and we were generally pleased with the class members’ profiles (see Table 7.1). We sought to have a rich mix in terms of race, gender, municipal and county management, position (managers, assistant managers, and department heads), and representation from the various parts of the state (eastern coast, central piedmont, western mountain, urban, and rural). We learned the importance of using our networks of alumni and association members to help us gain representation from these sectors.

We understand that the face of our state will change dramatically in the next ten to fifteen years as the population grows and current managers retire. We want PELA to be a training ground and a resource for these new managers. Recruiting women and people of color was a particular challenge. Female participants

in years one and two of PELA expressed feelings of being disconnected from their male counterparts, stating what they see as challenges of balancing their work and home given the stresses of a career in local government. An informal discussion and support group of female managers was formed in the second year. We hoped participation in PELA would be a first step to providing female managers and people of color with a cohort to help them to break into what some described as the “old boy” network of managers.

### **Collaboration Considerations**

During the pilot year, PELA was designed in collaboration with a wide range of people. Faculty and senior staff members from the School of Government’s Public Leadership and Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs worked jointly to craft the curriculum. The 2005 planning committee also included faculty from the UNC Department of Women’s Studies, a retired Raleigh assistant city manager who had assisted with the needs assessment, and the director of training from the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts. The committee structure changed in the second year because of the groundwork laid in year one. Collaboration was a central theme underlying PELA and as a faculty we committed to “walk the talk.” In so doing, we learned that collaboration can be difficult and time-consuming.

One of the chief lessons we learned is the substantial time commitment it takes from faculty to both plan and deliver the program. The inaugural program included thirteen days of content over five sessions, and the second year involved fifteen days. The core faculty participated in planning the entire program. This model was a departure from the School of Government’s traditional approach in which a single faculty director takes responsibility for a program’s design, establishes learning objectives and outcomes, and invites faculty to teach specific topics.

The PELA faculty worked collaboratively to establish agendas, design each session, and decide how the program components should build on each other. Core faculty participated in all the PELA sessions too, even when they did not have teaching roles. The benefits realized from this participation were that the core faculty had intimate knowledge of the program, and were thus able to help tie elements together during the leadership dialogues, and in their teaching in subsequent segments of the program. As a result of the extensive groundwork, faculty were seen by participants as accessible and engaged in the total learning experience. The downside of this collaboration was that faculty had to balance their PELA commitment against their other responsibilities such as research, publishing, advising, and other course development and teaching for other clients.

In addition to the faculty time commitment, the collaborative approach required time to sort out roles and responsibilities and to determine how decisions were going to be made. As a result, creation of the design was slowed because many views had to be considered and schedules accommodated to ensure the segments of the curriculum built on each other and had a common thread to tie the pieces together. At times during the first year, it seemed like we were doing “just in time” content development.

In hindsight, we believe the program benefited from the richness of the knowledge and experience brought to the table, and the time commitment was worthwhile. It was especially important to have a representative from the NCCCMA and other non-SOG faculty to bring the “voice of reality” to the design meetings and to be sure the tie between theory and practice was strong.

A core value adopted by the group was that PELA’s content and experience be fresh and focused on real world issues and problems and best practices from across the country. To achieve this objective, public administration leaders at the national and local levels have substantial teaching roles during the program. Participants also value the opportunity to listen and learn from others and to discover that others face similar challenges. Nationally recognized professionals enable participants to see examples of how leaders tackled problems similar to those they face, while academicians offer new tools and techniques to enhance their day-to-day practices.

Developing a new leadership program from the groundup allowed the faculty to experiment with a variety of different approaches to learning. We found adult learning techniques—including respect for participants’ experiences, linking content to relevant work issues, and creating case-based experiential learning—were most effective with this audience. Participants were encouraged from the beginning to use their time in the program to take risks, explore, and experience new approaches and share the wealth of their knowledge and experience with their classmates and the instructors.

### *Participants’ Time Commitment*

Like the program faculty, time was a key factor for PELA participants. An expectation of the program was that participants would attend every session. In addition to having classes during the day, two of each three-day block included evening sessions. Even though marketing materials listed two evening events on the schedule, some participants did not understand that the evening sessions were mandatory and felt the time demands were excessive.

When the participants were in class, the faculty and participants jointly

established ground rules to help create a safe haven for learning. Among the agreements we made with each other were to turn off cell phones and leave behind Blackberries and other office distractions such as e-mail. Faculty understood that managers could not easily escape from the demands of the office, so thirty-minute breaks were scheduled in the mornings and afternoons to allow people to check in with the office, if necessary. However, a number of managers still left class sessions to take cell phone calls.

An important lesson during the first two years of PELA was finding out that we needed to give people more “down time.” Participants felt they had little time to “hang out” with their fellow managers, build their networks, or talk about challenges facing them at home. Others said that they wanted more time to explore the Chapel Hill campus and surrounding area, but that this was impossible with such a tight and demanding program schedule.

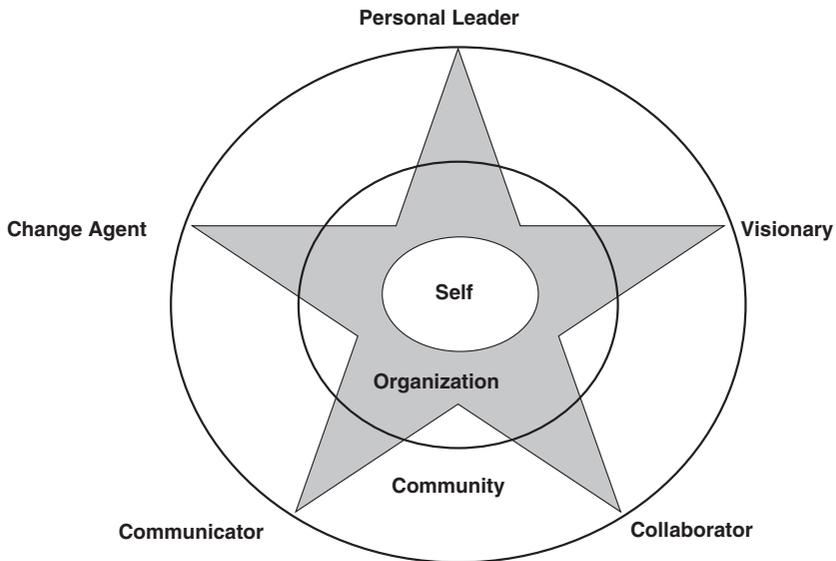
### Curriculum Design

As noted earlier, the purpose of PELA is to help managers become change agents in their communities. The initial outline for the learning outcomes and curriculum evolved from the faculty and their understanding of leadership and community change as well as information gained from senior public managers in North Carolina and our organizational partners. We use the model shown in Figure 7.1 to guide our design.

The outcomes for the program are as follows:

- Understand participants’ strengths and weaknesses as leaders and develop specific skills for personal learning and change.
- Diagnose problems and analyze situations within their organizations and communities.
- Engage elected officials and other leaders to develop a vision for their community.
- Encourage teamwork, community building, partnerships, and collaborative problem solving across jurisdictions and sectors.
- Develop and hone listening and communications skills in working with governing boards and professional staff.
- Assess risks and develop strategies to minimize negative consequences.
- Facilitate change to improve the quality of life in their community.
- Advocate the dignity and worth of public service.<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning, much time and attention was spent in determining the outcomes. We continue to refer to them as we design sessions and evaluate results. The time is well spent in being certain about what we want to deliver

Figure 7.1 **Community Leadership Model**

to our audience. We used the core learning outcomes to determine the specific topics covered in the program. The curriculum planning committee worked to ensure that each of these key outcomes was addressed in one or more sessions during the program. The outcomes also serve as the framework for the evaluation process.

We invested time not only in determining what the program should look like but also in how the program was to be delivered. For the planning committee, incorporating adult learning principles and practices into the PELA experience is a high priority. To address this goal, speakers are encouraged to include case studies or practical exercises in their presentations and to engage the participants by drawing out their personal experiences and leadership lessons. A significant amount of time was spent with each speaker sharing the outcomes of the program and the participant profile. We wanted customized programs that met the learning objectives. We worked with speakers to help them understand how their particular segment integrated with those before it or set the stage for subsequent sessions. As a result, the program sessions are highly interactive, giving participants an opportunity to apply theories to real-world situations and encouraging lively give-and-take among participants and instructors.

One of the initial goals expressed by senior managers was that PELA help build information technology skills among the participants. To address

this interest, the pilot program was designed to include online learning tools. The University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill uses a password protected, electronic platform (Blackboard Academic Suite™) to deliver, support, and enhance course materials. All participants were given a password enabling them to access course documents (agendas, speaker biographies, schedules, reading materials, and presentations).

The experiment did not work well and was not carried forward to the next year. We learned there is a significant time commitment to be made in teaching participants and faculty how to efficiently use the technology. Some local governments did not have the software that would allow them to use it. Some faculty worked with their learning teams via the software and others did not. The information generated by the technology was not used in the classroom, so there was little incentive by students to participate. Participants asked us to go back to sending information via e-mail attachments and to use their time together in the classroom to build teams.

### *Program Content*

The 2005 and 2006 programs were designed as four three-day sessions, beginning on Tuesday and ending on Thursday. Based on our experience as a faculty and feedback from participants, a new residential program format was introduced in 2007. Table 7.2 shows the core components of the PELA curriculum in years one, two, and three.

Virtually all leadership programs face a common constraint—there is too much content to cover in too little time. In this, PELA was no exception. The program faculty used data from the needs assessment to craft a curriculum; but in addition, faculty had their own ideas about what was important to include in a leadership program. As a result, the curricula in the first two years were packed with good material but overly ambitious. Changes were made in years two and three to respond to both the faculty and the participants' suggestions for improvement and to give participants more “breathing room” and time to talk about and integrate the lessons learned from the previous program sessions. Our challenge remains how to maximize the time with participants and not exhaust them. The first year featured day and night programs, which exhausted some participants and presented logistical challenges to commuters. We reduced the number of evening programs to one per session in year two due to feedback.

The manager as community leader encompasses a myriad of skills and talents. Due to the strong response from mid-career and new managers, assistant managers, and department heads (as opposed to senior managers), the program was designed to work on multiple levels—helping managers understand their

Table 7.2

**Curricula for Years 1, 2, and 3 of PELA**

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<b>Session 1. Leadership Challenges and Styles</b>	<p><i>Day 1</i> Orientation to PELA Leading in the Contemporary Governance Environment</p> <p><i>Day 2</i> Leadership Style and Behaviors Dealing with Different Styles and Behaviors Thinking Outside the Box</p> <p><i>Day 3</i> Systems Thinking Social Systems and Trends Stakeholder and Systems Analysis</p> <p><b>Session 2. Building Relationships</b></p> <p><i>Day 1</i> Uses and Abuses of Power and Ethics Communication and Persuasion Skills Motivation and Team Building in Diverse Organizations Managing Across Four Generations</p>	<p><b>Session 1. Setting the Stage</b></p> <p><i>Day 1</i> Orientation to PELA 21st-Century Manager <i>World Café</i></p> <p><i>Day 2</i> The Many Faces of Government <i>The Economic and Demographic Forces at Work in NC</i> <i>Leadership Styles and Behaviors</i></p> <p><i>Day 3</i> <i>Tragedy of the Commons Exercise</i> Systems Thinking</p> <p><i>Day 4</i> Thinking Outside the Box Introduction to Community Projects</p> <p><b>Session 2. Engaging Others in Change</b></p> <p><i>Day 1</i> <i>How Am I Doing? Importance of Feedback</i> Stakeholders and Mapping</p>	<p><b>Session 1. The Dynamics of Change and Implications for Leadership</b></p> <p><i>Day 1</i> 21st-Century Manager The Many Faces of Government Economic and Demographic Forces at Work in the Region Thinking Strategically and Systemically About Your Community Exploring the Connections and Relationships</p> <p><i>Day 2</i> Examining My Leadership Preferences and Styles Leadership in the 21st Century Stakeholder Analysis</p> <p><i>Day 3</i> High-Performance Government: Governing Body and Staff Partnerships Manager's Competencies and Staff-Board Expectations Strategies for Dealing with a Multigenerational Governing Body and Community</p>

(continued)

Table 7.2 (continued)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<i>Day 2</i>	Relationships between Managers and Elected Officials Orienting and Coaching the Board Strategic Thinking, Planning, and Implementation Visioning and Long-Term Perspectives	<i>How Am I Doing? How to Get Feedback</i> Risk Taking Uses and Abuses of Power  <i>Day 2</i> Managing and Motivating in Diverse Organizations Cooking School	<i>Day 4</i> Leadership Styles and Trade-offs Critical Competencies for Local Government Professionals Consensus Building and Conflict Management Strategies Cooking School
<i>Day 3</i>	Experiences in Citizen Participation Diagnosing Power, Coalitions, and Relationship Structures Communicating and Listening in the Community	<i>Day 3</i> Leading and Managing Change Project Groups: Mapping Change Exercise	<i>Day 5</i> Difficult Conversations: Building Trust with Your Board Thinking Outside the Box Taking Risks
<b>Session 3. Working with the Media</b>		<b>Session 3. Collaborating with Your Governing Board</b>	<b>Session 2. Sustaining Your Leadership Through Collaboration</b>
<i>Day 1</i>	Framing and Communicating Your Message Media Communication	<i>Day 1</i> Feedback from Your Board, Staff, and Community Learning Team Meetings Project Team Meetings	<i>Day 1</i> Framing and Communicating Your Message Media Communication
<b>Session 4. Leading Amidst Contradictions</b>			
<i>Day 1</i>	Policy Negotiation and Dispute Resolution Techniques Consensus Building	<i>Day 2</i> Building a High-Performing Governing Body Building a Sense of Community  <i>Day 3</i> Developing Common Goals and Strategies	<i>Day 2</i> Engaging and Empowering Citizens and Community Groups <i>Local Management and Social Equity</i> World Cafe

<p>Developing Sustainable Decisions Community Advocacy and Empowerment</p> <p><i>Day 2</i> Organizational Systems Balancing Policy and Administration Facilitating and Formulating Policy Cooking School</p> <p><i>Day 3</i> Building Coalitions for Organizational Change Taking Risks Making Unpopular Decisions</p> <p><b>Session 5. Leading and Managing Change Inside and Out</b></p> <p><i>Day 1</i> Organized Living in a Disorganized World</p> <p>Stress Management Fitness and Nutrition</p> <p><i>Day 2</i> Finding Time for Adaptive Leadership Leading from the Heart: Living in Balance Skits and Dinner</p> <p><i>Day 3</i> Next Steps: Where Do We Go from Here? Building a PELA Alumni Network Graduation</p>	<p><b>Session 4. Sustaining Leadership into the Future</b></p> <p><i>Day 1</i> Building a Community and Regional Vision Engaging and Empowering Citizens Manager's Role in Regional Visioning Understanding Multiple Media Outlets</p> <p><i>Day 2</i> Developing and Delivering Your Message Project Time</p> <p><i>Day 3</i> Conflict Management Strategies Negotiation and Consensus Building Project Time</p> <p><b>Session 5. Heart and Soul</b></p> <p><i>Day 1</i> Finding Time for Facilitative Leadership Life, Work, and the Pursuit of Balance Fitness and Nutrition</p> <p><i>Day 2</i> Time Management and Organization Skits and Dinner</p> <p><i>Day 3</i> Leadership Dialogue Graduation Lunch</p>	<p><i>Day 3</i> Strategies for Successful Collaborative Decision Making Putting Collaborative Strategies into Ac- tion and Keeping Them Going</p> <p><i>Day 4</i> Wellness for Life Life, Work, and the Pursuit of Balance Skits and Dinner</p> <p><i>Day 5</i> Learning Teams: Leadership Project Debriefings Graduation</p>
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*Note:* Items shown in *italics* reflect content changes from the previous year.

personal leadership, how they manage within their organization and work with their governing boards, and especially how to build relationships and communicate with external partners in their community and region. There was a constant tension in the program to ensure we were giving each dimension the attention and level of skill needed.

On a related note, we learned there is a continuing challenge to “meet people where they are.” PELA’s emphasis on facilitative leadership, adaptive change, and working as a community leader was difficult for participants—especially department heads and newer managers and assistants—who were concerned about internal organizational or personal management challenges such as time and stress management, delegation skills, and effective work team development. The first two PELA classes included a mixture of managers with a range of skill levels, years of experience, and educational and professional training, and the design was intended to encourage participants to learn from one another. For example, veteran managers shared insights about governing board relationships while younger managers talked about managing different generations in the workplace. The faculty had to remain flexible session-to-session to ensure we were adjusting the curriculum to meet the participants’ needs.

In 2005, we used two leadership assessment tools to help connect individual behaviors with relevant course content. The Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B; Consulting Psychologists Press 1996) was used as a way to help participants learn how they interact with others, and this provided a runway for talking about how to work more effectively with senior staff members and governing boards. The Thomas Kilmann Instrument (Consulting Psychologists Press 2001) was used to help people look at their behaviors when faced with a conflict situation. It served as a springboard to talking about how managers engage or avoid conflict in their communities. Participants valued having the opportunity to get feedback on their behavioral styles, but often wanted more time to explore how their behaviors helped or hindered their ability to lead in their organizations and communities. We also learned that, while informative, FIRO-B was not the best instrument for helping managers understand how they relate to change in their communities.

Based on faculty observations and participant feedback, we elected to use the Change Style Indicator (CSI) in PELA 2006 (Musslewhite and Ingram 2000). The CSI better reflected the content of the program and gave participants insights into their own preferences in making change and helped them recognize the value of alternate approaches. We kept the CSI for year three.

Another content change from 2005 to 2006 was the addition of an activity focused on identifying critical competencies for community leadership. Using behavioral competencies from the Career Architect Tool (Lombardo and

Eichinger 2003) and the ICMA's "Practices for Effective Local Government Management" ([www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org)), participants ranked individually, in small groups and as a large group, the knowledge, skills, and abilities they thought were critical for effective community leadership. This exercise enabled the participants to compare their own perspectives on effective community leadership with those of their teams and with the class.<sup>2</sup> Further developing and refining competencies for effective community leadership is included in year three.

We begin the program by providing participants with information about the demographic, social, and economic changes occurring in our region as a way to provide context to think about changes affecting their communities and their role as a leader in the twenty-first century. As stated earlier, managers are living and managing in a time of significant change. It is helpful for them to have a sense of the various forces affecting their communities.

The content designed to help participants establish productive relationships for leading their local government organizations, governing boards, and communities has remained constant. These sessions look at the manager's relationship to his or her staff by exploring uses and abuses of power, building team leadership, and changing organizational culture to overcome obstacles to change. Professor John Nalbandian from the University of Kansas has led day-long sessions on building stronger board–manager relationships, and helping participants understand and learn how to address the growing knowledge gaps between public managers and local elected officials. We have retained and strengthened the presentations and exercises focused on helping managers build stronger relationships in their communities, conduct effective public meetings and community forums, work with the media, and engage citizens through community advocacy and empowerment activities.

Although the sequence of content differed in years one and two, by the fourth session, the goal was to begin integrating tools and strategies for working internally (with organizations and boards) and externally (with community partners and citizens) to effect community change. A second conceptual model (Figure 7.2) was developed that visually conveys the interdependence of these various components in community leadership as well as the concepts covered in the PELA curriculum supporting these dimensions. The model was designed to help participants better understand the relationships between their community context, their own leadership knowledge, skills and abilities, their organizations and governing boards, and their communities

In each of the first two years, the final PELA session emphasized, "Heart & Soul," drawing on the core text, Heifetz and Linsky's *Leadership on the Line* (2002). Because local government leaders often work long hours in full view of the public's eye, many managers indicated they neglected to take

Figure 7.2 **Community Context Model**

care of their personal needs. To address this problem, the conclusion of the PELA experience emphasized personal management skills, such as time and stress management as well as techniques for improving nutrition and exercise and work life balance. In addition, the final session provided participants feedback on their individual projects and time to reflect on their experience in the PELA program.

Participants evaluated the 2005 and 2006 programs at the end of each day as well as several weeks after graduation. The next sections describe the processes that were used and the feedback received. More lessons from participants about projects and case study assignments appear in the evaluation discussion below.

### **Team-Building Approaches**

All the PELA sessions included team-building opportunities (including nonclass leadership experiences, the use of learning teams, and faculty as coaches). Evening sessions were an important component of the PELA learning experience and served to both accomplish and reinforce the PELA learning objectives to encourage teamwork, community building, partnerships, and collaborative problem solving across jurisdictions and sectors. Faculty designed the pro-

grams with the goal of providing a fun and creative way to integrate, enhance, and supplement concepts introduced in classroom-based sessions. A second goal was to provide participants with a customized learning experience, which demonstrated particular attention to their unique needs.

Given the stress of public service, the program aimed to create environments and events that built trust among participants and establish a network, which in turn enhanced sharing and learning in the classroom environment and acknowledged and reinforced their commitment to serving others. The evening programs were among the most highly rated by participants for the balance of learning and networking opportunities.

A sample of the activities from the first two iterations of PELA included:

1. A welcome dinner and reception on the evening before the program began provided participants and faculty with an informal chance to get to know each other and establish the network and learning environment that would prove crucial over the course of PELA.
2. A discussion of Machiavelli's *The Prince* using the Socratic method challenged many participants to reflect and think about power in ways that they never had before, leading to insights on how they use power to exert control on their boards and staffs.
3. The public nature of managers' work is like "life in the fishbowl." The program devoted an evening in a relaxed environment, giving participants a safe forum to discuss the fact they have little or no private space. Session evaluations revealed that participants greatly valued the chance to talk about the challenges they and their families face living in the public eye.
4. An evening session was held at a cooking school to provide a tangible illustration and application of how they work in a team, make decisions, delegate, and collaborate (or not). Insightful observations included "I undertook activities I never had before," "I realized how many hidden talents people have if you give them the chance to lead," and "I realized I did not want to share and I tried to hoard resources—well, at least the mushrooms—and I see that I may also do that with my staff."
5. PELA ended with an exercise incorporating risk taking, trust, reflection, and creativity. Teams were provided a box full of costumes and instructed to prepare a five-minute skit on what they learned from PELA. This chance to reflect in a lighthearted way provided a chance for participants to share important messages, learning, and laughter. This final session demonstrated the strength of the trust in the network they had created.

6. “Leadership Dialogues” that were conducted each morning provided a helpful technique to begin each session and to discuss and integrate the evening events. During these “dialogues,” participants debriefed the previous night’s experiences, asked questions, shared their “ah-has,” and connected with or challenged the concepts introduced the day before.
7. In 2006, we held a half-day alumni reunion during the final session. The program featured John Nalbandian and Bob O’Neill speaking on the topic of “Professionalism in Local Government Management.” While the program was well received, participants did not want to share class time with graduates, so future reunions will be free-standing events at the summer conference of the managers association.

### *Learning Teams and Faculty Coaches*

An essential part of the PELA learning experience was participating in learning teams. All of the PELA participants were assigned to learning teams of five members as a way to help foster networks across the group. Each team had a mix of gender, municipal, and county officials, and geographic base. One of the first assignments was for each team to name itself. These five-member learning teams served as a mechanism for networking, building trust, providing each other feedback, and offering advice and support for individual and community leadership challenges. In 2005, each learning team had a faculty advisor, someone who worked with the group consistently over the course of the program and who was a coach or resource, as needed. In 2006, faculty played a supportive role, encouraging more student leadership initiative within the learning teams. On reflection, the 2005 model provided more substantive focus and facilitated interaction, and we decided to return to using faculty advisors in 2007.

### **Program Evaluation**

The evaluation design for PELA’s first two years was created to provide feedback on both formative and process measures. We plan to follow PELA participants over time to gain more information about the outcomes of their participation on their work as local government managers and the impact of their leadership in their communities. The evaluation design for the first and second years included the following components:

- pre- and a retrospective post-evaluation on PELA learning objectives;
- standard evaluation instruments distributed at the end of each day to

Table 7.3

**Pre-evaluation Data from PELA 2005 and PELA 2006**

	Rate Your Knowledge, Skill, and Abilities Level	
	At Start of PELA 2005	At Start of PELA 2006
PELA Learning Objectives	(n = 25)	(n = 25)
1. I know myself as a leader	5.4	4.7
2. I take a broad, systemic view of issues affecting my community	5.4	5.4
3. I engage key stakeholders in creating a vision for my community.	4.6	4.7
4. I encourage teamwork, community building, partnerships, and collaborative problem solving across jurisdictions and sectors	5.8	5.2
5. I develop and hone listening and communications skills in working with governing boards and professional staff	5.1	4.8
6. I assess risks and develop strategies to minimize negative consequences	5.4	5.0
7. I facilitate change to improve the quality of life in their community	5.3	5.0
8. I celebrate the dignity and worth of public service	5.6	5.2

Rating for each item was on a Likert Scale from 1 (low) to 7 (high).

capture key learnings and identify the content most applicable to participants' practice and areas for improvement;

- specific evaluation questions for each program topic asking participants to rate how well the presenter addressed stated objectives for the topic and to rate the quality of the instruction;
- focus groups with participants in the final session (year one only); and
- follow-up, individual interviews with PELA participants.

***Pre-Evaluation and Retrospective Post-Evaluation***

At the first PELA session, all participants were asked to rate their knowledge, skill, and ability for each of the major program objectives. Table 7.3 summarizes pre-evaluation data from the first two years of PELA. Participants in the first cohort (PELA 2005) rated their knowledge, skills, and abilities at the start of the program higher than participants in the 2006 cohort on all but one item—engaging key stakeholders in creating a vision for the community.

After the program, participants rated themselves on these same measures

and reflected back on their knowledge skill and abilities at the outset of the program using a retrospective post-evaluation or a “post-then-pre-evaluation” design. Asking participants to retrospectively rate their knowledge, skills, and abilities provides a better yardstick for interpreting the differences between perceived skills before and after the program because it minimizes the “response-shift bias” typically associated with self-reported pre–post test designs (Rockwell and Kohn 1989). The results of the retrospective post-evaluation appear in Table 7.4. At the end of the program, 2005 and 2006 PELA participants rated their initial knowledge, skills, and abilities lower than they had at the outset of the program. Similarly, 2005 and 2006 PELA participants reported that they had increased their knowledge, skills, and abilities on every measure. The differences between their perceived knowledge, skills, and abilities at the beginning and at the end of the program were statistically significant at the  $p > .001$  level or higher. These results illustrate that participants thought they knew a lot about themselves and how to be strategic community leaders prior to attending the program. After attending the program, these participants realized they did not know as much coming in as they thought they did, and improved their community leadership as a result of participating in PELA.

### *Daily Evaluations*

Daily evaluation results were used by the program faculty to debrief each day’s program and to identify areas to be addressed in the following day or session. Summaries of the feedback on specific presentations were provided to the individual faculty members following their participation. We found this rapid feedback particularly helpful in guiding adjustments making just-in-time changes to the program. For example, daily feedback let us know if there were particular concerns within the group or points needing additional clarification, or if things were going especially well. We also used their feedback to talk with presenters after the program, letting the presenters know what they did well and what needed improvement. Those who did not meet our learning objectives, or missed the mark with the participants, learned of this and in some cases were not invited back the following year.

### *Focus Groups*

External evaluators were engaged to assist with focus groups the first year and call participants after the program for in-depth follow-up interviews in both the first and second years. The focus groups were integrated into the final session of PELA in year one to ensure that all participants had a chance to provide feedback on their experience. Since marketing for the 2006 program

Table 7.4

**Comparison of PELA 2005 and PELA 2006 Retrospective Post-evaluation**

PELA Learning Objectives:	Rate Your Knowledge, Skill, and Ability Level <sup>a</sup>				
	2005 PELA <sup>b</sup>		2006 PELA <sup>c</sup>		
	Retrospective to Start of PELA 2005 (n = 15)	At the End of PELA 2005 (n = 15)	Retrospective to Start of PELA 2006 (n = 15)	At the End of PELA 2006 (n = 15)	
		Difference		Difference	
1. I know myself as a leader	4.53	6.13	4.33	5.67	1.34*
2. I take a broad, systemic view of issues affecting my community	4.53	5.93	4.73	5.80	1.07*
3. I engage key stakeholders in creating a vision for my community.	4.33	5.93	4.40	5.53	1.13*
4. I encourage teamwork, community-building, partnerships, and collaborative problem-solving across jurisdictions and sectors	5.07	6.33	4.60	5.80	1.20*
5. I develop and hone listening and communications skills in working with governing boards and professional staff	4.33	5.93	4.53	5.93	1.40*
6. I assess risks and develop strategies to minimize negative consequences	4.93	6.00	4.87	5.73	0.86*
7. I facilitate change to improve the quality of life in the community	4.60	6.00	4.73	5.87	1.14*
8. I celebrate the dignity and worth of public service	4.93	6.60	4.93	5.87	0.94*

\*Significant at the .001 level or higher using a t-test paired for two sample means.

<sup>a</sup>Rating for each item was on a Likert Scale from 1 (low) to 7 (high).

<sup>b</sup>2005 PELA participants completed the retrospective post-evaluation on the last day of the program.

<sup>c</sup>2006 PELA participants completed the retrospective post-evaluation six months after the program.

was scheduled to commence two months following the end of year one, the planning committee wanted timely feedback and information from first-year participants to incorporate into the following year's program marketing, design, and schedule.

Focus group questions also invited feedback on the program structure. Generally, participants were happy with the schedule and Institute of Government location, and did not support moving to a week-long or two-week-long schedule. Participants said they liked the Tuesday to Thursday format and appreciated being able to return to work in their home offices on Mondays and Fridays.

Focus groups were also asked about the quality of administrative and faculty support during the program. Without exception, participants reacted positively to the level and quality of administrative and faculty support. They also said the opportunity to network with other managers was a significant benefit of participating in PELA.

In general, participants felt the value of PELA came in two distinct areas. One was in personal development, which they considered to be a part of leadership training. Several participants gave examples of how they used concrete skills learned in PELA in their day-to-day work. Being separated from their work environment made PELA a "safe" place for managers to consider their life-work-leadership issues. Second, participants enjoyed the opportunity to meet with peers and develop personal and work networks. Coming away from the program, most hoped they would be able to continue their relationships in some way in the future, and recommended annual get-togethers as a part of a PELA alumni program.

We also wanted participants' input on logistical issues such as the application process, meeting space, overnight accommodations, food, and transportation issues. Overall, the participants were comfortable with the application process, although many wanted more detail on the content and structure of the program. They liked having a variety of foods, both familiar and new, and enjoyed the hotel and meeting facilities at the School of Government on the UNC campus. The only drawback to the meeting location was that there was not enough free time to enjoy being in Chapel Hill or on campus. Our location is a wonderful asset, but the program did not take full advantage of it due to the demanding instructional schedule.

### *Follow-Up Interviews*

In the months following the final sessions, year one and two of PELA, an external evaluator conducted follow-up telephone interviews. Participants were specifically asked what they found most useful as a result of attend-

ing PELA, how their participation in PELA influenced their leadership practices, and how PELA affected their ability to bring about change in their own communities.

When participants in the first and second years were asked, “What did you gain from your PELA experience or find most useful?” the most common response was they benefited from the networking with other senior public managers and the faculty. In addition, they said being able to hear from opinion leaders in the profession helped them gain perspective on how to work differently with their communities, governing boards, and other organizations. First-year participants spoke about the benefit of learning to “step back and look at the big picture,” while second-year participants commented on the value of taking “cultural differences into consideration.”

Participants were asked what they wanted more of or less of in the program. Responses from both the first and second year reflected a desire for more “real world applications” and more opportunities to hear from “outside speakers” and “experts.” The things people wanted “less of” included mandatory evening sessions, formal lectures, and theoretical sessions.

One of the unique aspects of the PELA curriculum is the inclusion of sessions to help people access their creativity. Several participants in the first and second years wanted more time to explore this topic and said it should definitely remain a part of the PELA program, while others reported the creativity sessions were too “touchy-feely” and poorly integrated into the rest of the program. A session focused on systems thinking also yielded mixed reactions with participants from both years, reporting that the sessions were either too complex or too simplistic and they would have liked to have spent less time on this topic.

Participants from years one and two were asked: “Has your leadership changed as a result of PELA, and if so, how?” The overwhelming majority of participants reported that their leadership had changed. In terms of *how* PELA had changed their leadership experience, participants most often indicated they were:

- more reflective on their own personal strengths and weaknesses as a leader;
- better able to understand others (employees, board, citizens, community partners); and
- better able to step back and take a broader perspective on issues facing their organizations and communities.

Following PELA, first- and second-year participants were asked: “How has PELA affected your daily work, your interactions with your board, your

staff and your ability to bring about change in your community?” Participants said that following PELA they were more likely to:

- Communicate with staff more effectively;
- Engage staff more often in decision making;
- Better understand board members’ expectations and perspectives;
- Be more confident working with members of the board;
- Build consensus with key stakeholders about community issues;
- Use media and communication tools with the public more effectively;
- Be able to see the big picture; and
- Take a more collaborative approach to complex issues.

Participants in the first year were equivocal about the benefits of the PELA community-application project, with many stating they got less out of the experience than they hoped. Some suggested the following improvements be made: making sure the project is completed during the course of the program, issuing clearer project guidelines in advance, and providing more faculty involvement in project selection. Because the project was focused on community, rather than organizational change, some participants felt that pursuing their project would put their personal or professional reputations at risk and that such projects were more appropriate as a learning exercise for PELA than as something to be implemented in the real world.

Based on feedback from the first year, the second-year participants were not required to do a community-application project. Instead, second-year participants were asked to write a series of reflective case studies on how the concepts and strategies that were taught in PELA applied to their work. In response to questions about the value of the case studies, half of second-year participants reported they benefited from applying PELA principles to their real work and reflecting on how they might use the concepts in their actual work. The other half suggested the case studies be (1) reduced in number or dropped altogether, (2) standardized so everyone uses the same situation rather than their own experiences, or (3) better integrated into the class and small group discussions. As a result of these reactions, a modified community-application project was reintroduced in the 2007 program.

Because the focus groups were dropped in the second year due to scheduling pressure, a few questions about reading assignments were added to the post-program interviews. Overall, the second-year participants agreed there was “too much reading” but thought the readings were relevant. Some participants suggested making some readings “mandatory” and others were “recommended” to help people better focus their attention on critical information. Eighteen of twenty second-year participants agreed that the primary text,

*Leadership on the Line* (Heifetz and Linsky 2002), should remain a part of the core curriculum because it was helpful and relevant to their work as public managers.

At the close of the interviews, the external evaluator asked if participants had other comments for the PELA faculty. Most often, first- and second-year respondents indicated that the program and the faculty were “great” or “wonderful.” Some of the feedback from first-year participants focused on technical aspects of the program, such as start times and availability of program materials. But the predominant theme emerging from the first year’s group was that the PELA experience was worthwhile and would pay dividends for many years, and they wanted to be involved with the program in the future. They suggested holding a half-day annual reunion, with a substantive program and speaker, as the preferred way to reinforce their network. They did not favor a newsletter or list-serve.

Similarly, second-year participants enjoyed having a chance to network with managers from a variety of jurisdictions and thought the informal activities, such as the cooking school, dinner events, and open dialogue sessions, contributed to improved interactions during the class itself. Both first- and second-year cohorts complimented the commitment and energy of the staff and faculty involved with the program. A number of people said the program faculty were “enthusiastic,” “personable,” and “invested in the students.”

### **Year Three: A New Format**

For the 2007 program, we will continue to integrate the sessions and give participants time to absorb and reflect on the content. We plan to strengthen the leadership-style-assessment components of PELA, using a variety of leadership-assessment instruments. We will deepen the focus on the manager as community change agent by expanding on the skills required to create a community vision and models and lessons learned from those in the field who are working across jurisdictions and collaborating on regional projects. We have added a session on social equity to raise awareness of the manager’s role in ensuring fairness in service delivery and program responsiveness.

We have substituted Jeffrey Luke’s book *Catalytic Leadership* (1998) as the core reading to help operationalize the three-part community context framework in the PELA curriculum—building leadership skills, fostering strong organizations and boards, and creating positive community relations (see Figure 7.2). *Leadership on the Line* will also continue to be used, and selected chapters from it are included among the readings.

Sustainability is a key issue facing leadership development programs. At the outset, ICMA staff and other advisors cautioned that single state-based

programs usually exhaust their market within a few years. In the second year, we accepted an application from a manager outside of North Carolina as a way to “test the water.” The ICMA staff also encouraged us to maintain our emphasis on managers, assistants, and key department heads, and not to open the program to middle managers to fill the available seats. In 2007, information about PELA and application materials were sent to the presidents of managers associations in the southeastern region as well as to selected SEI graduates. For 2008, a national recruiting strategy will be developed, including sponsoring a booth at the ICMA annual meeting.

The 2007 program was designed as a residential experience with two one-week sessions in August, and a two-week break in between. The curriculum was not significantly altered, but it was planned for delivery in a more condensed and integrated manner. This new format was adopted for the following reasons. First, one of the problems with spreading the program over seven months was the need for faculty and participants to devote time to reconnecting with material covered in previous sessions, which made threading and integration of content challenging. Second, with a program spread over seven months, the bonding and networking that are important benefits of leadership experiences were slow to develop. Third, the participants were often distracted by cell phone and Blackberry messages from the office, especially during the first two of the 2005 and 2006 sessions held in March and April, which competed with budget season in terms of a participant’s time and priorities. We hope moving the program to the summer, when the pace of office business is relatively slower, will likely increase attention span and reduce distractions. Fourth, housing the program and the participants in the UNC School of Business’s executive education facility will promote the retreat atmosphere critical for reflective practitioners’ learning and will provide an environment more conducive to leaving the office behind. Fifth, a condensed format allows for more efficient use of faculty time. PELA faculty have several other responsibilities, including teaching in the MPA program and leadership training for elected officials and local government managers. Finally, a compressed summer format should make the program more appealing to out-of-state managers, who will be needed to sustain PELA.

The new format required raising the tuition to \$4,000, which includes all instructional, housing, and meal costs. However, a financial analysis by PELA faculty revealed this amount to be comparable with total participant expenses for each of the two previous years, since participants paid separately for accommodations and several meals. The North Carolina City and County Management Association continued its financial support for the program, enabling us to discount the tuition by \$500 for members and to offer scholarships. It will be interesting to gauge the response since some of the

steps to sustain the program conflict with feedback we received during the needs-assessment phase.

In conclusion, the first two years of PELA offered a rich variety of learning opportunities for the program faculty and course development team. These ranged from the simplistic “No more hummus for breaks!” to the complexities of integrating and threading session content and working together as a team. We gained a deep appreciation for the sacrifice and commitment the local government managers make on the behalf of the citizens of our state.

There are two significant general lessons from the early PELA experience. The first lesson has to do with realizing the benefits of using a distinctive conceptual model to anchor and guide how the curriculum relates the complex community leadership roles with their managers personal and organizational leadership styles and strategies. This effort was also important in distinguishing PELA from other public leadership programs. The other lesson is the need to keep the program fresh and relevant by remaining in close contact with partners in the field, getting regular feedback from participants and graduates, and experimenting with new substantive topics and formats. With its unique approach to community leadership, PELA promises to be an essential component of the continuing education series for public managers in North Carolina and other states for years to come.

## Notes

1. Recent research has demonstrated the organizational value added of an enhanced level of public service motivation (Moynihan and Pandey 2005). The program overall helped reinforce the value of public service and develop commitment.

2. In 2006, PELA participants received a descriptive list of seventy-nine behavioral competencies. Each participant was asked to rate each competency as “high,” “medium,” or “low” for community leadership. Individuals then worked with their learning teams to reach a group consensus on critical competencies for community leadership. For the whole group, the competencies with the highest rankings in 2006 were dealing with ambiguity, approachability, political savvy, command skills, priority setting, composure, conflict management, decision quality, delegation, building effective teams, ethics and values, understanding others, hiring and staffing, managing vision and purpose, governance and political leadership, integrity and trust, citizen participation, facilitative leadership, listening, engaging people [creating public forums and arenas], building commitment and political support, and negotiating.

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# 8

## Preparing MPA Graduates to Serve as Intermediaries in Community Building and Public Engagement

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Ruth Ann Bramson

In 2004, the faculty of the public management department at Suffolk University in Boston made several curricular changes in the Master's in Public Administration (MPA) program to assist our graduates in grappling with a confluence of trends that impact community problem solving—governmental downsizing and decentralization, demands for greater stakeholder participation in decision making, increasing reliance on partnerships to address public problems, and, at the same time, a decline in many traditional forms of civic engagement. The department added a new course in collaborative leadership to the required core curriculum for all students receiving the MPA degree, we increased our course offerings in civic engagement, and we introduced an MPA specialization in Community Leadership and Public Engagement.<sup>1</sup> This chapter has three primary aims. The first is to present the rationale behind the curricular changes in the Suffolk MPA program. Second, the chapter describes the approach that the Suffolk University public management department is currently taking to prepare graduates in community leadership and public engagement. Third, the chapter discusses some of the questions, opportunities, and challenges our department has encountered in the process of making these program changes.

There is a young but crucial movement within public administration to reexamine the role of the public and public managers in policy making and implementation by looking at legitimate ways of engaging citizens more actively in deliberating about and solving community problems (Reich 1988; Thomas 1995; Behn 1998; Frederickson and Chandler 1984; Cooper 1991; Fox and Miller 1995; Wamsley and Wolf 1996; Nalbandian 1999; King and Stivers 1998; Denhardt and Denhardt 2003; Box 1998). This seems to be happening for a number of reasons. First, many scholars, officials, and thoughtful

citizens have expressed concern about the health of American democracy and civic life (Buss and Redburn 2006; Barber 1984, 1998; Mansbridge 1990; Pateman 1970; Sandel 1996; O'Connell 1999; Mathews 1994; McSwite 1997). The need to strengthen community has become a persistent theme, with commentators from various disciplines and political perspectives focusing on different aspects of community in America (Bellah et al. 1985, 1991; Etzioni 1988, 1995; Wolfe 1989; Putnam 2000; Buss and Redburn 2006).

Second, there is increasing recognition that traditional hierarchical and bureaucratic approaches to public problem solving are no longer working. Today's public leaders are learning they must reach beyond their organizational boundaries and engage a much broader group of stakeholders to create sustainable strategies to address complex interconnected problems (Stone 1989; Frederickson and Smith 2003; Luke 1998; Linden 2002; Bryson 1992; Denhardt and Denhardt 2003).

And third, discourse theorists have sought to reconceptualize public administration through changes in how people talk and relate to one another in the policy-making process. This has bolstered interest in the underutilized approach to policy making known as public deliberation (Farmer 1995; Fox and Miller 1995; Reich 1988; McSwite 1997; Yankelovich 1999; Mathews 1994; Forester 1999).

### **Civic Engagement Needed**

Many social observers have expressed alarm as fewer Americans vote, participate in civic life, or involve themselves in voluntary organizations that meet regularly. Voting rates have dropped about 25 percent since the 1960s, and the proportion of people who tell pollsters that they "trust the federal government to do what is right" has fallen from three-quarters in the early 1960s to less than a third at the turn of the twenty-first century (Skocpol and Fiorina 1999). In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam (2000) points to a decline in institutions such as clubs, professional groups, and other forms of communal and associational life. Recently, there have been numerous calls for reinvigorating the role of citizens in governance and in community problem solving, including from those within the profession of public administration (Frederickson and Chandler 1984; King and Stivers 1998; Box 1998; Buss and Redburn 2006). King and Stivers (1998) assert that public administrators should use their discretionary authority to foster collaborative work with citizens in deliberating, making decisions, and implementing public policy. Some even argue that the key role for public administrators today is to build community and encourage citizen involvement in public decision making (Nalbandian 1999).

## Public Managers are Key to Community Leadership and Public Engagement

If citizens are to be engaged in tackling public problems, public managers must help to make it so. By virtue of their positions, public managers have significant resources for playing an intermediary role in community problem solving.<sup>2</sup> Intermediaries may assume roles as facilitators, mediators, public process designers, organizers, coalition builders, capacity builders, public educators, as well as others, especially at the local community level.

Whether community involvement is procedurally required or generative, it is typically public managers who do the work of designing and implementing public involvement processes. Elected public officials, as well as other community leaders, have a crucial role as advocates for community engagement. Elected officials may request that a process be initiated, but it is generally public managers who make it happen. They can either use their authority to limit the role of the public to appearances in pro forma public meetings, which happens far too often, or they can design and implement processes crossing organizational and sector boundaries and engage diverse community members in the hard, noisy, and messy work of collective problem solving. Public managers also have staying power. Unlike elected officials who come and go with the election cycle, public managers typically stay in their positions for many years. Many public managers also share a common knowledge base and expertise gained in public administration programs and have opportunities for ongoing professional training to keep their skills current (Frederickson 1997a).

Christopher Gates (1996) of the National Civic League observed that, “the local city official or manager of the future is increasingly seen as a catalyst and facilitator of broad efforts by many different groups or individuals not as a stand alone problem solver” (p. 4).<sup>3</sup> William Ruckelshaus described this catalytic approach well in his 1996 Webb Lecture at the National Academy of Public Administration when he presented four or five instances in which public administrators stepped back from their accustomed roles and served as facilitators and supports, while citizens directly affected by a complex environmental problem hammered out solutions, that all, or most, could accept. He then went on to observe: “Historically, public administration has prided itself on its ability to apply the tools of rationality to complex problems. . . . I think that in the future many decisions will, rather, emerge from the sort of group processes I have been talking about. . . . The role of the public administrator will be largely to foster the process and make sure that it has technical support” (Ruckelshaus 1996, p. x).

## The Will/Skill Dilemma

To engage the public in community problem solving, public managers must believe it is important to do so and have the knowledge and skills to become effective intermediaries. The failure of public managers to engage community members in deliberation regarding public problems falls into the category of intractable problems that Daniel Yankelovich (1999) has called “will/skill dilemmas.” Yankelovich writes, “Some problems resist solution because the will to solve them is lacking. Others resist solution because the knowledge to solve them is lacking. The worse kinds of problems are those cursed with a lack of will and a lack of skill, creating a vicious cycle. The skills remain undeveloped because of low motivation and motivation doesn’t kick in because of lack of skills” (1999, p. 158).

Public managers face a will/skill dilemma in regard to public engagement. Many public managers are skeptical about whether the public has the knowledge, interest, and civic commitment to contribute anything of value to the public problem-solving process. From the apolitical rationalist point of view, the public’s inferior level of information, relative to that of experts and professionals and the public’s tendency to judge issues based on moral values, introduces random levels of subjectivity and misinformation into what they believe should be an objective and fact-based process. Engaging community members in public problem solving also requires knowledge and skills that have not traditionally been part of the preparation for careers in public administration, such as change management, systems thinking, community organizing, group process and facilitation, leadership, conflict resolution, and interpersonal skills (Luke 1998; Bryson 1992; Mathews 1994; Frederickson 1997b). This double bind leads to inaction and blocks the effort to engage community stakeholders in public problem solving.

This will/skill dilemma presents big challenges for public administration as it is currently constituted. Despite the need for public administrators to be more than technical experts, the curricula of many graduate programs in public administration, including Suffolk University, have centered on technical preparation in such areas as personnel management, administrative law, finance, budgeting, and program evaluation. These knowledge and skill areas are necessary but not sufficient for today’s public managers.

### Early in the Learning Process

Unfortunately, while many academics and other opinion leaders have made a compelling case for civic engagement and for public managers as key agents in community problem solving, the effort to develop, document, and test new

structures, processes, and norms is still in its infancy. We are at a very early stage of our process of learning what it means to prepare public managers for an intermediary role. We do not even have consistent language yet for this new way of doing business. Research on the goals, structure, and outcomes of collaborative public problem solving is limited, but we do have stories.

There are hundreds of case studies from communities all across the country, as well as internationally, where public professionals, primarily at the local level, are providing stakeholders with the opportunity to learn about the technical and political facets of policy options and creating opportunities for them to discuss and evaluate these options and their likely consequences, according to their own values and preferences. Through communal deliberation, decision making, and action, they are working with community members to address crime problems, school problems, environmental problems, and problems of ethnic and racial conflict, as well as many others. Can we share these case studies and engage our students in learning from them? Can we create learning experiences for our students that will help them to build both the will and skill to be intermediaries, facilitators, and community capacity builders? Can we develop an educational framing to assist public managers in thinking about when and how to involve community members in public deliberation and multistakeholder decision making? Can we help our graduates negotiate the complexities of community partnerships and alliances? Can we accelerate the emergence of this new model of public administrator?

These are some of the questions that faculty members in the public management department at Suffolk University asked themselves while conducting a yearlong curriculum review in 2002–2003. That discussion, along with a literature review, interviews with scholars and practitioners, a study of other MPA programs and a review of syllabi from other institutions, focus groups with current and former students, and a dialogue with colleagues in other departments of the university, led us to the decision to add a required course in collaborative leadership to our core curriculum for all MPA and Master of Health Administration (MHA) students, to increase our course offerings in community engagement, and to pilot a specialization in community leadership and public engagement for MPA students interested in providing guidance and technical assistance to public and nonprofit organizations on multistakeholder problem solving.

### **Recent Suffolk Curriculum Changes**

Suffolk University is an urban university located at the top of Beacon Hill in Boston, between the Massachusetts State House and Boston City Hall. The public administration department is housed in the School of Management

along with undergraduate and graduate business programs. The Suffolk MPA program enrolls approximately 200 students, the majority of whom are part-time graduate students working in local, state, and federal government and nonprofit organizations, especially health care. Most classes are offered in the evenings and on Saturdays. Students who graduate with a straight MPA degree take fifteen three-credit courses; those who choose to graduate with a specialized MPA degree take an additional two courses for a total of seventeen three-credit courses. Currently, we offer four specialized degrees: state and local government, health care administration, nonprofit management, and, most recently, community leadership and public engagement.

In the process of deciding to introduce a new specialized MPA degree in Community Leadership and Public Engagement, our faculty had extensive conversations about our program, its identity, and its future. We had lively discussions about our individual philosophies regarding public administration and about personal and professional values and goals. Some colleagues questioned whether taking leadership by being a convener and facilitator in the policy-making process is a constitutionally proper role for a professional administrator. Public managers *must* lead, countered other department members (reflecting Robert Behn and others), because our current policy making process is broken and they are in a position to make it more democratic, at least potentially. Others argued, following Cooper (1991) and Frederickson (1997a), that public administrators are, properly, representative citizens who are employed by their fellow citizens to do the work of citizenship on their behalf, by reinforcing communal values and democratic processes. Several colleagues saw public deliberation and community problem solving as unrealistic and too removed from the machinations of the political process, especially in a part of the country dominated by strong mayor governments.

Faculty members questioned whether there was a market for a specialized MPA degree, which, unlike our other specialized MPA degrees, was not focused on a sector such as state and local government, health-care management, or nonprofit management, but rather on a body of process-oriented knowledge and skills that cuts across all sectors. Our focus groups with alumni and government, health care and nonprofit executives led us to believe that question could be answered affirmatively.

Underlying our differing views and priorities, we found a shared concern on the part of our faculty, that in order to address the complex interrelated problems facing organizations and communities, all of our graduates need leadership competencies for working collaboratively with multiple stakeholders. The best public managers have probably always operated this way: our students need to learn from the “best processes” that they have employed. We also need to bring together what has been learned in other fields, such

as organizational development, systems thinking, and conflict resolution, about participative decision making in order to make policy making more democratic and more effective. We decided we want our program to provide graduates with a theoretical framework and practical skills for designing and implementing deliberative democratic processes and collaborative problem solving. We have taken the steps below to implement that decision.

### **New Core Course on Leadership Strategies for an Interconnected World**

We agree with Robert Behn (1998) and others who argue that public managers are obligated to lead because the U.S. system of governance is facing basic failures that public managers can help to correct (Denhardt and Denhardt 2003; Frederickson 1997a). Beginning in spring 2004, Suffolk University began requiring that all MPA students take a course that presents a collaborative leadership model, called *Leadership Strategies for an Interconnected World*. The decision to add this new course to our required core reflects recognition that public policy is increasingly being made through the interaction of many different interest groups and organizations with overlapping and often competing goals (Denhardt and Denhardt 2003; Luke 1998; Bryson 1992). Getting things done requires leadership to bring together diverse individuals and groups from multiple institutions, sectors, and jurisdictions in a collaborative manner. We decided all of our students, regardless of whether they worked in government, nonprofit organizations, or health care, needed to build knowledge and skills in collaborative leadership; therefore, we made this a required course in both MPA and MHA programs.

The course introduces a facilitative or collaborative model of leadership and applies it to the handling of societal problems in a system of distributed governance that requires partnerships among government agencies, nonprofit service providers, businesses, neighborhood groups, and educational institutions. Students are introduced to what Jeffrey Luke (1998) calls the tasks of catalytic leadership. Through readings, written and video case studies, experiential exercises, group work, and reflective writing, students are provided with opportunities to build knowledge and skills related to these leadership tasks.

Engaging the public in the collaborative process can be a risky and time-consuming activity. There is no guarantee it will succeed. People need commitment and drive to step out into the unknown. Having a sense of purpose helps public managers take unavoidable setbacks and failures in stride. In our new student orientation, held each September, we engage students in an appreciative inquiry process designed to help them identify personal and

professional aspirations and goals. This new leadership course builds on the work done in the orientation by challenging students to do some hard thinking about their own values and priorities and how they define their purpose as public service professionals.

Much of the course is devoted to the dynamics of partnerships and alliances through the analysis of case studies and reflection on what it means to play a go-between role in public problem solving. By requiring that all MPA students take a course in collaborative leadership as part of the core curriculum, the precedent is set that all of our students need to understand this new way of doing business, can reflect on what it means in their own professional environment, and have an opportunity to develop and practice collaborative leadership skills.

### **MPA Specialization in Community Leadership and Public Engagement**

In spring 2004, Suffolk University began offering students seeking the MPA an option to pursue a specialized degree in Community Leadership and Public Engagement. Our goal in creating this degree is to provide a course of study that will prepare public service professionals with the specialized knowledge and skills to design, facilitate, and evaluate participative public processes and multistakeholder decision making. Students who choose the Community Leadership and Public Engagement specialized degree are those who wish to build a particular set of competencies that they can bring to careers in local, state, or federal government; international development; nonprofit organizations; or consulting.

If we want to engage the public more effectively in community problem solving, our public and nonprofit organizations are going to need people with the knowledge and skills to design, implement, and evaluate these processes. In 1999 and 2000, forty-two in-depth interviews were conducted with public managers, including many city managers, who are utilizing deliberative public processes in their communities. Almost without exception, the study participants said they had relied on a methodology developed elsewhere, such as Study Circles, or had worked closely with an outside consultant over an extended period. The overwhelming majority of the interviewees said they had no one on their staffs with knowledge of models for participative public decision making nor did they have the ability to design and guide the organization in implementing and evaluating such a process (Bramson 2000). This specialized MPA degree seeks to address this deficit by preparing a cadre of public service professionals with the advanced knowledge and skills to serve as coaches, consultants, and resources on democratic public processes for their organizations and communities.

In developing this new degree, the public management department went through a process of identifying what we believed to be the key content and skill areas needed for expertise in community leadership and public engagement. We found that many of our colleagues had academic and professional experience and interests, of which we were not fully aware, that would support this new specialization. We also reviewed our current course offerings to determine how they might support the new program. For example, if public managers are to function as catalysts and community capacity builders, they need a firm grounding in theories of democratic citizenship and in the history and political context of public administration. This is covered in Foundations of Public Organizational Administration, an entry-level required course for all MPA students. Community facilitators also need to understand the theories and practices of organizational development and change management. Organizational change management is the major focus of another required core course, Organizational Effectiveness in Government. Issue analysis, the analysis and communication of data, performance measurement, program design and evaluation, and strategic planning are other knowledge areas that are important for community problem solving and are taught elsewhere in our core curriculum.

The curriculum for the Community Leadership and Public Engagement specialized MPA degree takes a multidisciplinary approach. For example, from political science, we look at the role of citizen as it was conceived by the Founding Fathers and as it is being practiced today. From sociology, anthropology, and psychology, we draw concepts regarding community building, community organizing, and community problem solving. From organizational development, we draw practices and principles for implementing change and for involving whole systems in participatory processes. We agreed that students who specialize in community leadership and public engagement should be able to demonstrate:

- a theoretical understanding of leadership models, community organizing, issues of democracy versus bureaucracy, change management, conflict resolution, public communication, strategic planning, group process, and systems thinking, as they apply to bringing together diverse parties in communities to forge new solutions;
- the ability to work with a group to analyze a community issue and to design a process for engaging multiple stakeholders, resolving disputes, implementing changes, and evaluating results;
- the ability to analyze a participatory governance process in terms of its ability to advance democratic values such as equity, accountability, transparency, effectiveness, and representation;

- an advanced level knowledge of models and methods for large and small group democratic processes; and
- concern for democratic values and their role in enacting those values.

## **Two New Courses Support Specialized Degree**

Two new courses—Civic Innovation and Community Governance and Group Theory and Facilitation Practice—have been added to the curriculum to support this new specialized degree.

### ***Civic Innovation and Community Governance***

Across a wide range of policy arenas, proponents of community engagement are developing innovative programs that apply deliberative democratic practices to public problem solving (Sirianni and Friedland 2001; Fung and Wright 2003). In this course, students examine cases that are drawn from areas as diverse as policing, restorative justice, public education, urban governance, youth development, civic journalism, environmental regulation, health care, community visioning, and international development. In each case, practitioners have developed institutional arrangements that engage the participation of ordinary citizens, empower groups made up of citizens and public servants, and hold these groups responsible for producing and measuring outcomes. Students analyze these programs, in detail, focusing on their goals and outcomes in terms of advancing the values of participation, fairness, deliberation, accountability, and effective governance (Fung and Wright 2003).

### ***Group Theory and Facilitation Practice***

To effectively engage stakeholders in public problem solving, public managers need the ability to design and manage participative processes that assist community members in building a shared notion of the public interest. This new course is designed to integrate the theory and practice of group facilitation, with a particular focus on public participation. Students have “hands-on” opportunities to develop and demonstrate the competencies that are necessary to create arenas and to facilitate processes in which stakeholders can engage with one another in addressing public concerns. Coursework provides an overview as well as specific practice in participative process design, techniques, and tools for involving various stakeholders in defining problems, formulating policies or plans, making decisions, and implementing them. The course does not set forth a comprehensive theory of group facilitation. Instead, it describes

a set of core values and congruent principles—elements of a theory—and shows how to use various methods to apply the principles in practice with both small and large groups. The course is taught by two instructors who provide students with extensive coaching. Specific methods covered include Institute of Cultural Affairs group facilitation methods, future search, open space technology, and appreciative inquiry, as well as others.

### **Other Components of the Specialized MPA Degree**

In creating this new specialized degree, we have brought together several courses that have been offered in the public administration department and in other departments of the university for many years. Community and Citizen Empowerment and Alternative Dispute Resolution are public management courses that have each had consistently high enrollments.

#### *Community and Citizen Empowerment*

This course explores the major approaches currently being used in community-building efforts to strengthen community capacity. The course explores strategies intended to build a community's social capital and ways in which community organizing strengthens broader community-building efforts. Students are introduced to asset-based community building and contrast it with problem-oriented approaches. Recognizing that community change begins with changing the way people think and talk about issues, this course introduces students to theories and models for civic dialogue and public deliberation. Students examine such models as National Issues Forums, Study Circles, AmericaSpeaks, deliberative polling, citizens jury, citizen panels, and others. In the course, students develop a framework for public managers who are designing a public participation process and considering how much influence to share with the public, who to involve from the public, and how to choose among specific forms of public involvement.

A key component of the course involves students in leading an organizing project in connection with various institutions involved in community capacity building in the greater Boston area or on campus. The organizing projects involve students organizing other people to join them in achieving a clear outcome by the end of the semester.

#### *Alternative Dispute Resolution or Conflict and Negotiation*

Engaging citizens in community problem solving requires public managers to have knowledge and skills in negotiation and conflict resolution. Coursework

in alternative dispute resolution or negotiation is required of all students in this specialized degree. In the Public Management Alternative Dispute Resolution course, students learn guidelines for designing a dispute resolution system that will help handle conflicts effectively on an ongoing basis and avoid the damaging costs of attorney's fees, lost productivity, and emotional injury. Students examine key questions to be answered when analyzing a dispute and principles of dispute system design, such as designing procedures that encourage disputants to return to negotiation. Distinctions are made among negotiation, mediation, and arbitration, and each is explored extensively. Dispute resolution is discussed in settings that involve labor–management disputes, environmental issues, community disputes, construction claims, and business disputes. Special attention is paid to multistakeholder negotiations and public disputes.

Students also have the option of substituting a Master of Business Administration or MBA course in the theory and practice of negotiation for alternative dispute resolution. This course emphasizes that effective negotiation involves a combination of analytical and interpersonal skills. Analysis is important because negotiators cannot develop sound strategies without an understanding of the context of the situation, the interests of all parties, and the range of possible options. Interpersonal skills are important since negotiation is fundamentally a process of communicating, building trust (or not), and mutual persuasion.

### **Multidisciplinary Electives and Practice-Oriented Capstone**

To examine the issue of public engagement in community problem solving through the eyes of scholars in various disciplines and fields of study and to gain knowledge and skills not included in the public administration curriculum, students in this specialized degree are encouraged to take selected electives in other departments of the university. For students in this program, the capstone course, which is required of all MPA graduates, takes the form of either an internship (for pre-professional students) or a practicum seminar (for in-service students) and is designed to provide opportunities for mentoring, experiential learning, working on real community problems, and reflection-in-action (Schon 1983).

### **Unique Approach or Repackaging?**

The content of the courses in this specialization is not unique to the Suffolk program. Other MPA programs offer courses in conflict resolution, community organizing, collaborative leadership, and public participation methods.

In bringing these content areas together in this specialized degree, we are arguing that the public arena needs people with expertise that incorporates and builds on processes from organizational development, conflict resolution, community organizing, and group process and systems thinking, who can serve as intermediaries, facilitators, and change agents in public problem solving. To overcome the will/skill dilemma, public organizations need individuals whom they can turn to for assistance and who are grounded in democratic theory with knowledge and experience regarding the “who,” “when,” and “how” of civic engagement. To do this important work, we think people need an integrated course of study, not just scattered electives to develop the level of knowledge and skill and the confidence needed. They also need a chance to practice what they learn both in the classroom and in the community.

Developing a curriculum that prepares public management students to function as skilled intermediaries and facilitators in collaborative community problem solving takes our department to new and challenging territory. Our goal is to develop an educational framing for some practical guidance for public managers in thinking about when and how to involve citizens in public deliberation and multistakeholder decision making—a framework for practice. But skilled practice involves artistry as well as a theoretical framework. Can the interpersonal and communication skills necessary to be an effective community facilitator be taught? Will we need to develop teaching methods different from those usually found in graduate education to help community facilitators develop artistry through reflection-in-action? As we seek to teach our students to be reflective practitioners as community facilitators, how can we be more reflective practitioners in our own teaching?

Although this specialized degree program is less than one year old, members of the public management department faculty say that our focus on developing community change agents is having the effect of changing us. Our curriculum discussions provided us with a setting for dialogue about the core questions of public administration: Who are we? What is our core purpose? What is most meaningful and important about what we do? As we shared our basic assumptions and weighed options together, trust levels rose. We are a public management program that is housed within a school of business. This new specialized MPA degree, and the process we went through to develop it, has helped our department to clarify its purpose and role within the university. We are working more effectively across our own boundaries, collaborating with colleagues from other departments in the university to transcend turf issues and to create a multidisciplinary program. We have also strengthened long-time community

partnerships and built new ones as we seek opportunities to give students hands-on experiences linked to class work. In some interesting ways, our internal process seems to be paralleling what we are seeking to create in the community at large.

This new specialized degree is influencing the way in which some of our courses are taught. For example, our budgeting course now includes cases involving participative budgeting; in the statistics course we decided we needed to send students into the community to conduct a program evaluation. It is also impacting hiring decisions; we expect to be adding new faculty to buttress our resources in organizational and community development in the near future.

The further we go in developing this new specialized degree program, the more conscious we are of how much more needs to be done. Public service educators who are committed to accelerating the emergence of a new brand of facilitative catalytic public managers need to be brought together to learn from one another and to promote the design, development, assessment, and dissemination of innovative learning methodologies and approaches. We need resource banks for sharing syllabi, readings, case studies, films, websites, and simulations, and developing and supporting research agendas.<sup>4</sup>

Public professionals have always been involved in the process of making public policy. But if policy making is to be made more democratic, public managers must overcome the will/skill dilemma that currently blocks them from providing leadership as community conveners, facilitators, and intermediaries. To mobilize the will to engage key stakeholders and the general public, the public manager must begin with himself or herself, with his or her own commitment to democratic values, and with a sense of personal purpose. Addressing the skill problem involves providing public managers with models, processes, theoretical frameworks, and practical experience for engaging the public in collaborative problem solving. Can we overcome these obstacles to democratic public problem solving? Can public administration rise to the challenge? We certainly hope so. Our democracy's future might depend on it.

## Notes

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## **Appendix 8.1. Courses for a Specialization in Community Leadership and Public Engagement**

### ***Civic Innovation and Community Governance***

In this course, students examine a variety of civic innovations that apply deliberative democratic practices to public problem solving by bringing together diverse parties across a variety of policy areas to forge new solutions.

### ***Community and Citizen Empowerment***

This course focuses on the theory and methods for community organizing, community development, and community learning, and explores ways that empowered citizens can bring about social and economic change.

### ***Group Theory and Facilitation Practice***

This course is for those who wish to increase their knowledge of group theory and build skills for designing processes to facilitate complex situations involving community. The course provides opportunities for practice and feedback and for reflection that integrates knowledge and application.

### ***Alternative Dispute Resolution***

This course reviews all areas of alternative dispute resolution: mediation, arbitration, negotiation, and conciliation, with an emphasis on resolving public disputes.

### ***Conflict and Negotiation***

This course emphasizes the theory and skills of win-win negotiation.

Four community leadership and public engagement elective courses selected from the following:

Public Liaison Strategies	Systems Thinking
Administrative Strategies of Local Government	Communicating for Results
Ethics and Management	Organizational Development
Client and Community Relations	Reflection and Dialogue
Leadership and Decision Making	Interpersonal and Intercultural Communication
Governmental Decision Making	E-Community and the Digital Divide
Urban Politics and Government	Political Communication
Community Advocacy	Crisis Management
Politics and the Media	Managing Diversity
Topics in Democracy	Restorative Justice
The Internet and Politics	
Consultation	

1. “Engagement” means that the people who are involved in a problem have a responsibility to work with others of differing views to try to devise a solution that will work and that will be accepted by most of those affected (See for example Widener University’s approach to civil engagement in the Philadelphia metro region, [www.widener.edu/edi/Widener](http://www.widener.edu/edi/Widener)).

2. Intermediaries, as used here, refer to people and institutions who connect, support, and assist others in becoming more effective.

3. The term “catalyst” literally means an agent that initiates or speeds up a chemical reaction without itself being used up in the process (Webster’s New World Dictionary).

4. There are a few noteworthy resources online: The Collaborative Democracy Network, [www.csus.edu/ccp/cdn/](http://www.csus.edu/ccp/cdn/), collects relevant syllabi; the new E-PARC website (Program on the Analysis and Resolution of Conflicts, The Maxwell School at Syracuse University), [www.maxwell.syr.edu/parc/eparc/](http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/parc/eparc/), includes syllabi, case studies, and simulations; and the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation site indexes numerous resources that are useful for classroom use [www.thataway.org](http://www.thataway.org)

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