



## Year Two Evaluation Report Executive Summary

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The Mel King Institute for Community Building fosters vibrant and thriving Massachusetts communities by advancing the skills, knowledge and leadership ability of professional practitioners and volunteer leaders in the community development field. The King Institute leverages collaborative educational partnerships that increase access, encourage innovation, and promote and institutionalize systemic success. The Institute is designed to bring community development professionals and volunteers the skills they need to be effective in their positions in the community. To reach its goals, the Institute sponsors trainings, serves as a clearing house, and provides technical assistance.

The Institute is committed to evaluation and continual learning. In the fall of 2009, the Steering Committee invested in the development of an evaluation system that could provide it with feedback from participants and organizational leaders about the Institute's impact. The system includes a logic model which describes the Institute's theory of change, survey questions and instruments, and an overall evaluation plan. At the conclusion of the first year of operations, the Institute's evaluator Diane Gordon presented a report to the Steering Committee in September 2010. For the second year of operations, an expanded evaluation scope included interviews of students and supervisors. A Year Two Evaluation report was presented by Diane Gordon to the Steering Committee in September 2011.

### **SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

The Evaluation examined the impact the Institute had on individual students and the organizations they represent. Nineteen courses held from July 2010 through July 2011, attended by 263 participants, were evaluated. Of the 263 participants, a total of 227 completed an evaluation at the time of the course (86% response rate.) This is comparable to the Year One response rate (87%).

In Year Two, there was a greater balance between the percentage of staff and managers participating in workshops (32% and 35% respectively) and an increase in the number of Board members and other participants, as compared with the profile in Year One. The number of participants under 40 more closely matched the number over 40 in Year Two (53% under 40, 47% over 40), as contrasted with Year One in which 66% were under 40 and 34% were over 40. The racial distribution was similar when comparing Yr 1 and Yr 2, but in Year Two, there was an increase in the number of Blacks, Asians, and those reporting 'other race' than in Year One. Finally, in Year Two there were more participants from outside of Greater Boston - 42% other Massachusetts; 50% Greater Boston, as contrasted with Year One in which only 33% of participants came from outside of the Greater Boston area. (Both years had 8% of participants from Rhode Island.)

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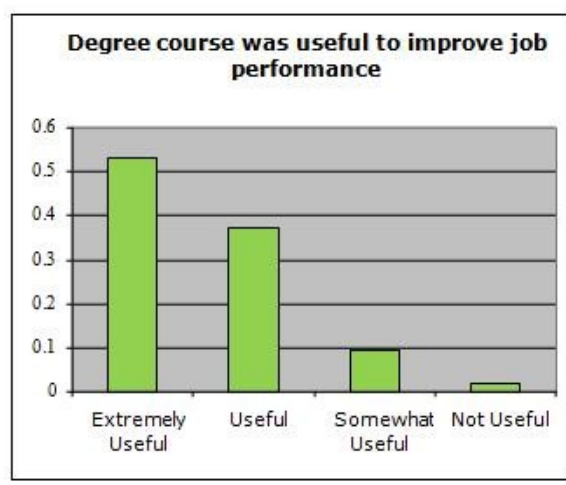
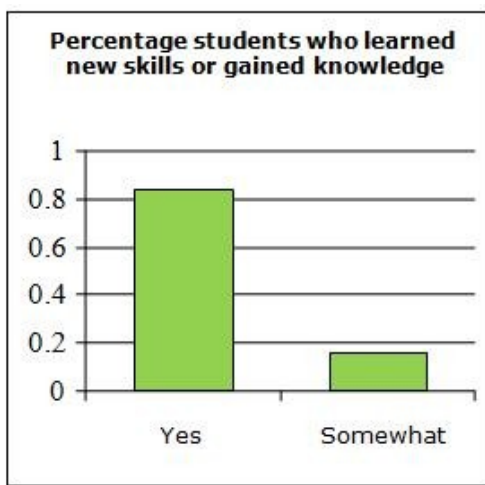
## SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

The King Institute collected data on both process and impact outcomes.

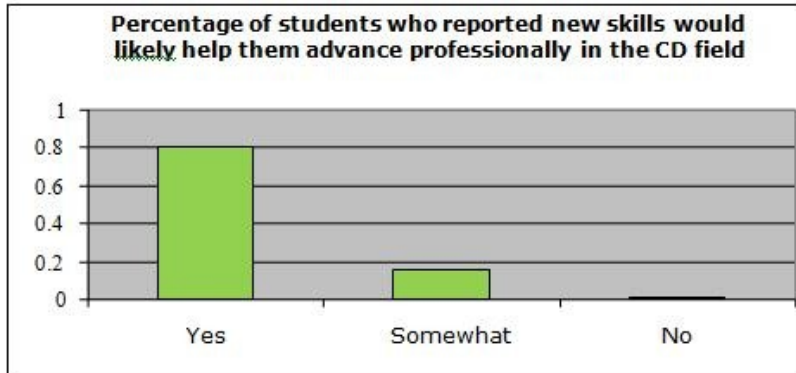
**Process outcomes:** To measure the quality of the courses, the instructors, and the Institute's management, participants answered a series of questions measuring satisfaction levels. Overall, satisfaction ratings are very high. All but a few either strongly agreed or agreed that the presenters had expertise and knowledge in the subject area, that the training was well organized, and the King Institute registration process was easy to manage. While this is not an indication of long term impact which is a key to the King Institute's success, it is vitally important that the Institute have a high rate of 'customer' satisfaction' – survey results confirm this to be the case. General feedback from the follow-up interviews concurred with this conclusion. Comments highlighted the following:

- Highest quality of trainers and programs, including nationally renowned and respected leaders in the field
- High quality instructional techniques
- Curriculum that meets the needs of the audience
- Extremely affordable
- Diversity of topics
- Easy access
- Highly practical

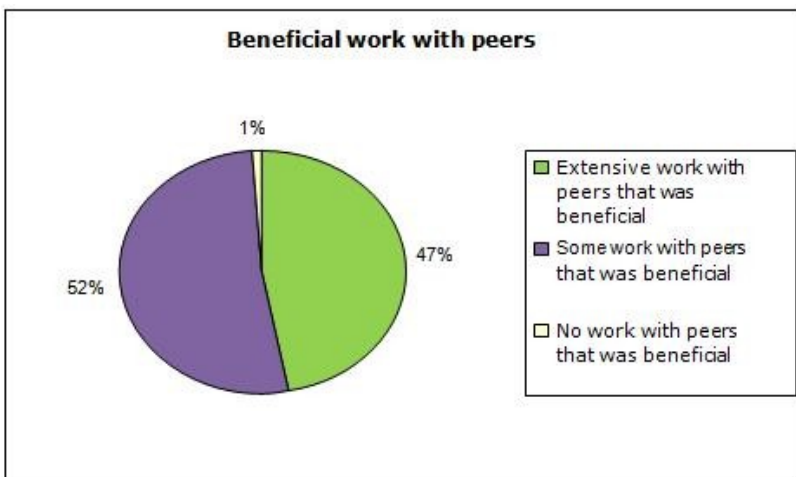
**Impact outcomes:** The King Institute's evaluation examined the degree that participants learned new skills, applied those skills or knowledge to improve their job performance, gained access to new knowledge from their peers, and ultimately, if the new tools facilitated improvements in organizational effectiveness and impact. Data was collected immediately after the conclusion of the training. In addition, 17 people (participants and supervisors) were interviewed to ascertain the longer term impact of the courses. Overall, the responses to the training workshops were very positive. Highlights include:



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Feedback reported through the follow-up interviews indicated that the level of confidence in performing job functions grew (both from the perspective of the student and from his/her supervisor), and that participants applied and practiced the new skills or knowledge gained to improve performance and help the organization to increase their impact. The ability to incorporate lessons learned was enhanced when there was a close alignment of the subject matter with the staff member's work, when more than one staff member attended the course (especially if the Executive Director or supervisor was in attendance), and when there was an opportunity for peer support after the workshop through the MACDC peer support network or other means. Furthermore, the affordability and easy access to high quality courses through the King Institute has led to a greater investment in professional development.



## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In its second year of operations, the Mel King Institute for Community Building met nearly all of its planned outcomes and received high praise from participants across a spectrum of courses. Nearly 90% of the students submitted an evaluation at the conclusion of the course, a very high rate of return. By implementing a new evaluation methodology that sought follow-up responses from both participants and supervisors, the King Institute has been able to learn about its results from a longer vantage point.

The King Institute continues to serve a relatively diverse audience of students across age, race, and geography. The quality of the instructors, the course material and curriculum, and the organization of the training programs are all rated as very high and praised as affordable and practical to immediate applicability. Nearly all participants reported that they gained access to applicable tools and knowledge, felt the course material was useful, and at the end of the course, thought that the new skills would be helpful in advancing professionally in the community development field. Many participants also reported that they were able to practice and apply the new knowledge to improve their performance, and that their organizations were able to apply and adapt best practices in order to become more effective organizations.

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Participants responding to the evaluation survey and in the follow-up interviews offered several suggestions for ways to further the impact of the Institute. Those included:

- Increase the impact at the organizational level by encouraging multi-staff teams to attend trainings together, include the Executive Director and/or supervisors when feasible, and work directly with Executive Directors to increase their understanding of the benefits of participation in King Institute workshops.
- Consider methods to closely match the content and rigor of the course with the expectations of the students. This can be addressed through greater specificity in the course descriptions, prerequisite requirements, and/or direct communication with the students prior to the workshop.
- Consider its role in the field of peer support and technical assistance. There is an apparent need for deeper and more advanced peer support, and for follow up technical assistance to individuals and organizations to help them implement the ideas they learned in the courses. The King Institute may want to consider how it can work with MACDC and others to address this need.

### **Other suggestions included:**

- Provide more advanced courses on a variety of topics
- Consider offering opportunities for cross-training workshops for organizers and real estate development staff
- Increase offerings focused on Boards of Directors
- Strengthen connection with academic institutions
- Expand beyond CDCs into the broader community development field
- Consider the King Institute's relationship with other initiatives and other training programs

The Mel King Institute Steering Committee reviewed the report and its recommendations in September 2011, and is considering future efforts to even further its impact during its third year of operations.

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The Mel King Institute for Community Building is a collaborative program of the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and other public, private, and nonprofit community development partners.