Module 4.0 Leading in Context – Who Will Lead the Organization?

4.1 Leadership Competencies
- There is no consensus answer to what makes a great nonprofit leader. Different sources use different language and labels to describe the competencies required for leaders to be successful. However, many sources agree on three key categories that provide a starting framework for thinking about the attributes that make a great leader.
- The first category of competencies are General Leadership Competencies. These are the basic qualities of an effective leader that tend to be consistent across fields and roles. While leadership experts differ in how they talk about these qualities, they largely fall into three buckets:
    - Leading the organization,
    - Leading others, and
    - Leading oneself.
- The relative importance of these buckets and their contents might vary by the needs and context of the organization, but a successful leader will likely have strong qualities across all three.
- The second category, Context-Specific Competencies, are the skills and expertise leaders need in order to lead within a specific field or role. Many believe these are the most critical attributes: In a survey of over 400 nonprofit leaders, context-specific experience was the most commonly mentioned attribute for what senior managers need to achieve organizational outcomes. Our research uncovered three types of field-specific, or functional, competencies that are important:
    - Knowledge and expertise in the specific field of work: For instance, a leader working for a juvenile justice organization may be more successful if they understand and have connections to the juvenile justice system they are seeking to influence. Similarly, to be successful leading an organization focused on ending climate change, one will need to understand the science and politics behind the issue.
    - Specific skills demanded by the context of the field or organization: A leader in the reproductive health field will likely need to be skilled in advocacy while an organization that has been consistently struggling will need a leader with expertise in turnarounds.
    - Role-specific competencies: These are the technical skills leaders need in order to perform their functional roles. For instance, a chief development officer should have expertise in fundraising while a chief financial officer will need an accounting and financial management background.

- The final category important for being an effective nonprofit leader is Core Values and Beliefs. Two dimensions emerged from research:
  - Fundamental beliefs and values consistent with the organization's theory of change: For instance, a leader of a progressive education reform organization will need to fundamentally believe and demonstrate a commitment to the idea that all students can achieve.
  - Values and behaviors consistent with the culture of the organization: A great nonprofit leader needs to endorse and embody the fundamental values of the people they lead. For instance, an organization seeking to promote diversity and inclusion will need a leader who is committed to and prioritizes racial equity.
- What's clear from the research is that what makes a great leader heavily depends on the context in which the individual leads. There is no one-size-fits all definition. Nonprofits and field leaders should develop definitions of great leadership tailored to their needs—based on the issues, priorities, values, and context in which they work. This framework provides a solid starting point for developing those definitions as well as the talent strategies and processes organizations need to meeting their goals today and in the future.

4.2 Leadership Skills for Disability Advocacy and Policy Reform Organizations
- Liz Weintraub, CQL Quality Enhancement Specialist, says "When I think of a leader, I think of someone who has a strong personality and who will stand up for what she or he believes in. A leader is someone who also will stand back and quietly watch someone try before they come and help. I think it is important for people with disabilities to be given the chance to gain these skills if they want to be a leader. Having leadership skills can help with confidence, developing relationships, being proud, and feeling good about what you can accomplish. It can also create a feeling of belonging to a community and contributing a meaningful idea to the discussion or cause. It can help you also feel empowered and powerful." (article attached)

4.3 Challenges to Nonprofit Leadership
- One area where nonprofits are not growing is in the development of leaders. Without strong and effective leaders, nonprofits will not continue to grow and prosper. Funders, both grant funders and individual donors, expect that organizations will be run by strong leadership. Nonprofit leaders need leadership skills to effectively manage the myriad of issues, personalities and challenges they will encounter in their daily jobs. One of the biggest gaps in leadership development amongst nonprofit professionals is how to lead ethically.
- The second leadership challenge facing nonprofits is that most of the leadership development programs we encourage our leaders to participate in are not actually developing leaders. Instead, they are developing managers. A manage is someone who implements systems, processes and coordinates them while a leader is someone who inspires and motivates those around him/her. A good leader is someone that others want to follow, someone who guides others and is influential. An important note, then, if it is our

goal to develop leaders, we need to make sure that we are developing ethical leaders to protect the entire nonprofit sector.

- The third leadership challenge facing today's nonprofits is a lack of succession planning. Many of today's leaders are in their 50's and 60's and will soon be wanting to retire. Unfortunately, the sector has not done a good job of developing future leaders who can step into these positions. Nonprofit leaders and their boards need to spend some time developing a succession plan that will take the organization into the future.

4.4 International NGOs/DPOs Characteristics

- International Non-Government Organizations specifically, Disability Peoples Organizations have essentially the same fundamental structure as a non-profit. DPOs can operate on a national, regional and grass roots level. Leadership competency is paramount to managing a sustainable DPO as in any other non-profit.
- The role of organizations of disabled people
  - Self-representation - "A voice of our own" (DPI motto)
    - Considered to be the most fundamental issue and defining characteristic of the disabled person's movement, disabled people's organizations are those controlled by a majority (51%) at the board, membership and staff leadership levels.
    - Disabled people's organizations believe that people with disabilities are their own best spokespersons. Premise is the backbone of the movement. For too long, medical and social work professionals, and extended families, have spoken for people with disabilities. In the words of Ed Roberts, a disabled American and co-founder of World Institute on Disability, "...when others speak for you, you lose." (Roberts, 1983, p. 7)
  - Identifying grassroots needs
    - Organizations of disabled people arise in response to a group of people's perception that there are barriers to participation for disabled people in society that need to be addressed. These organizations are based on the needs and aspirations developed by the disabled grassroots community.
  - Representations to government service providers, and U.N. bodies
    - "Nothing about us, without us" defines the philosophy behind the DPO movement which promotes self-advocacy and coordination of effort among DPOs of various disability communities to address inclusion of everyone.
  - Evaluating and monitoring services
    - People with disabilities know best what programs and services are needed to address social and attitudinal barriers and to facilitate equal access and inclusion in all aspects of society.
  - Self-development
    - Organizations of disabled people play a role in the development of disabled people's skills in the negotiation process, organization, management, and

proposal and letter-writing. They also provide a forum for mutual support, while the above skills are being developed.

- Mutual support and solidarity
    - Organizations of disabled people, at all levels, is a vehicle for mutual support and solidarity. Disabled people who belong to these groups find that they have a common purpose, that of promoting their right to live as citizens in society. This common purpose engenders feelings of mutual support and solidarity in a common cause.
- Vehicle for self-help projects
    - Independent living centers (ILCs) were an outgrowth of the self-determination movement of persons with disabilities. The first centric was initiated in Berkeley, California in the early 1970's when, after graduating some disabled students realized that once they left the university they would no longer have access to the services they depended upon in order to live in the community. They required such services as attendant care and accessible transportation. To solve this problem, they organized cooperatively to guarantee the provision of the services they required.

- Roberts, Ed, "When others speak for you, you lose", In 'When Others Speak for You, You Lose': Proceedings of the First National Assembly Disabled Peoples' International (Australia), Melbourne, and January, 1983.
- Enns, Henry, "The Role of Organizations of Disabled People: A Disabled Peoples' International Discussion Paper" 1997.