EUREKA! LEADERSHIP PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT

SOCIAL DATA INSIGHTS

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Executive Summary

Infopeople contracted with Social Data Insights (SDI) to conduct both a formative and summative evaluation with the goal of examining the Eureka! Leadership Program in its entirety. Drawing upon expertise in evaluation studies and the library field, SDI carried out a mixed-methods, multiple source study. The key goals were to identify the Eureka! Leadership Program's impact on Fellows, their libraries, and their communities; strengths and weaknesses; areas for improvement; and components which need reviewing and retooling. In addition, SDI also identified the potential ways Eureka! could be extended with the goal of facilitating improved leadership development for California libraries.

Methodology

SDI conducted a multifaceted evaluation with data collection from all of the program's primary constituencies, employing a multi-method design which included online surveys, telephone interviews, and an online focus group. The goal of the design was to provide data that was scientifically credible, convergent, and actionable.

The determination of program success relied on multiple indicators ranging from short term to long term outcomes. These included behavioral observations of the Fellows by Directors/Supervisors, self-reported behavior by the Fellows, and Fellow attitudes and evaluations of their own skills and confidence as leaders.

SDI conducted 70 interviews (19 with Fellows, 17 with Mentors, 7 with Infopeople staff and facilitators, and 28 with Directors/Supervisors). A total of 113 Fellows (69%) and 44 Directors/Supervisors (53%) participated in online surveys. An online focus group was conducted on April 26, 2013 with 10 Fellows, who were recruited from a question included in the online survey.

Eureka! Components

Eureka!'s program components set it apart from other leadership training programs through its unique approach of ongoing training and support. While other leadership programs may provide an "Institute" approach, Eureka! extends the leadership development process though the use of various program components, including ongoing programming, continuous networking and having Fellows complete a Community Project through their library. The Encore and Anniversary events, online options such as Facebook groups and a listserv, ongoing webinars, as well as informal gatherings at conferences and other events ensure continued interaction among the members of the group and also with the Mentors, Institute facilitators, and Infopeople staff.

Overall, Eureka! works because of the interwoven support of the various components. Eurekans view the program components quite positively. A majority of Fellows (2/3) would not change any aspect of the program. The Institute is integral to the program, with the Mentors having a tremendous impact on the effectiveness of the program, especially the Institute. Interactions in Mentor Moments are without question the most useful component of the Institute; 84% of Fellows consider Mentor Moments extremely or very useful.

Over half (52%) of Fellows consider the major strength of the Eureka! program the ability to join a community of colleagues from all over the state of California. Virtually all Fellows surveyed could list five individuals from the Eureka! Leadership Program with whom they stay in touch.

Infopeople Staff and Institute Facilitators are clearly effective and integral to success. Feedback about the Infopeople staff and facilitators is overwhelmingly positive. They are seen as supportive, helpful, knowledgeable and reassuring.

Community Projects provide a challenging leadership experience and impact communities. Fellows directly apply what they've learned and also gain valuable experience in project management, grant writing, and community outreach. The Community Projects benefit the Fellow as leadership training activities but have radiating effects beyond, including the establishment of new library services, programming, and outreach, as well as awards and media attention for the library.

Areas of improvement for the components are covered in the Recommendations. The least useful components included: journaling (only 11% found it useful), daily action planning (19%), the Welcome Webinar (32%), and support groups (35%). The Eureka! Anniversary is useful, but some elements may need revisiting, especially the poster session and a lack of constructive feedback.

Outcomes

SDI identified multiple sources of evidence, which demonstrate that Eureka! positively impacts the Fellows:

- The major outcome of Eureka! is an increase in Fellows' confidence to lead. Their management and team leadership skills visibly increased and most Fellows' career paths have been facilitated by Eureka! through a variety of routes.

- Roughly half of observers report that the Fellow's participation positively impacts other library staff by increasing their leadership orientation and positively impacts the library and patrons through the Community Project.

Community Projects

The Eureka! Community Projects are completed at a high rate (90-92%) and generally meet their goals. They provide a variety of positive challenges to the Fellows. A fifth (19%) of Fellows applied for supplemental funding for the project, which provided an additional tangible benefit to the library and to the Fellow.

Eureka! Network

Most Fellows clearly appreciate and utilize the Eureka! network. They have ongoing relationships and contact with multiple Fellows and Mentors. Most Fellows (73%) have turned to their Eureka! network for support and insights regarding problems or challenges they have encountered in the library.

Leadership Abilities and Confidence

Fellows are most confident in areas associated with their Eureka! project: project management skills, the ability to deal with resource limitations, and being able to articulate plans for change.

Fellows are also confident about their ability to form positive relationships within the library and to work with colleagues to innovate and lead change efforts. Fellows are far less confident about dealing with policy challenges and resistance within their organization as well as their abilities to navigate other organizational hurdles. Fellows from suburban libraries are more confident (average = 5.10) in their leadership than those from urban libraries (average = 4.76).

Leadership Within Library
Roughly two-thirds of Fellows (65%) lead a team or committee. Most take on a leadership role in their day-to-day work and display a positive orientation to change and taking risks. They are involved in project leadership, internal collaboration, and expanded responsibilities.

Upward and Onward
Roughly half (36-45%) of the 2008-2011 Fellows have been promoted. Most Fellows that were promoted (90%) credit Eureka! to some degree for their promotion.

Participation in Library Organizations and Committees
Most Fellows (63%) are members of a library association such as the CLA or ALA, and serve on at least one association committee. A third of Fellows on committees lead that committee.

Exhibiting Positive Change
Directors/Supervisors report that Fellows do have a positive change as a result of participation in Eureka!, which extends to their career trajectory. They also report positive radiating effects on the library from Fellows' participation.

Focus Group Analysis
After conducting Fellow interviews and an online survey, SDI held a focus group of 10 Fellows to deeply examine certain aspects of the Eureka! Leadership Program. The following is a summary of that discussion.

Eurekans Think of Themselves as Leaders with an Elite Status
Fellows are consistently positive about their identity as Eurekans. The elite perception emerges from the shared experiences during the Institute, Encore, and Anniversary events as well as an intimate, working connection with an elite network. It can a double-edged sword: important to the cohesion and positive commitment by Fellows -- but a potential barrier to collegial relationships and to library colleagues in other California organizations that are not currently part of the Eureka! network.

Most Essential Elements of Eureka!
Eureka! is not reducible to a single component. However, several key elements of significance bubbled to the surface throughout our evaluation, including:

- The Community Project
- The Mentors
- The Institute, including the retreat experience, and
- The Fellows' connections to library leadership and the Eureka! network.

Several Components Viewed as Less Useful

Echoing other data in the evaluation, Fellows do not consider journaling during the Institute of practical use. Given the exhaustive nature of the Institute, it could be eliminated. The majority of the Fellows in the focus group recommended that the performance activities on the last night of Institute could be eliminated. Also reflecting data collected elsewhere in the evaluation, support groups at the Institute were not considered effective. Fellows also mentioned the Learning Group team-selection and influence-lineup activities, underscoring concerns raised elsewhere in the evaluation data.

Effective for Most Libraries

The barrier to the participation of a greater diversity of libraries (such as rural) is primarily logistical, involving the resources required to send a Fellow and support their participation throughout the Program. Fellows struggle when administrators are resistant to change, passive, or unwilling to take risks.

Enthusiastic Support for a "Eureka! 2"

The event could focus on specific skill training such as pertaining to management, outreach in the community, and negotiating the political landscape. Fellows would like to see opportunities for greater connections across cohorts. The event should be shorter than the Institute. Some Fellows would like to see updates from Mentors and peers on accomplishments and efforts since the original event.

Eureka! Changed Me and My Library

Fellows gain clarity in their careers, confidence and self-insight. Their libraries have a greater openness to innovation and collaboration, and a greater involvement by staff.

Recommendations

It is clear that Eureka! is an exemplary leadership program that is making a difference in the lives of its Fellows and Mentors, and achieves the goals of developing library leaders and advancing the impact of California libraries in their communities. These recommendations, therefore, should be seen as mainly suggestions to fine-tune this successful multi-faceted program. With many moving parts, there are always a few that need oiling from time to time.

Our full recommendations are specified in the Recommendations section. To summarize the major points, we advise that Infopeople should consider doing the following:

- Develop communications to better explain the expectations, the transformational aspects, and the ongoing commitment of the Fellow's library and distribute to both the Fellow's supervisor and library director.
- Create a more systematic approach to Mentor selection, orientation, and training. Also, formalize a mechanism by which Mentors remain in contact after the Institute. Include additional Mentor training.
- Deemphasize journaling activity and daily action planning activities in the Institute. Review current Institute activities and curriculum for any outdated material.

- Identify possible sources of urban-suburban differences. In lieu of the support groups – which are limited in their effectives – consider a community type group.
- A challenge for Eureka! is to increase the diversity of participating libraries. The program should consider – for one or two cycles – minimizing the number of Fellows from library systems which have already had several Fellows in the past.
- Provide rural librarians with a coach to assist with application process, to encourage them and give them feedback on the essay. Accept eight rural to mid-size applicants each year, allowing for one learning group that can support each other through the Institute and allow those with similar backgrounds to form a cohort and bond to eliminate the feeling of being isolated at their smaller libraries.
- Develop 2-3 models for a Eureka! Two and test them with a sample of Fellows and Directors.

Conclusions

The results of this evaluation indicate that the Eureka! Leadership program is successful and is contributing to the development of strong leadership in libraries in California. Fellows are demonstrating leadership within their libraries, are being promoted, and are being tasked with leading groups in professional organizations.

Various Eureka! components have a strong impact on the development of the leadership skills of Fellows and also a strong impact on their libraries and their communities. Overall strengths of Eureka! include the Mentors, the Community Project, and the Network of peers and mentors, which is regularly used for professional guidance.

In light of the positive achievements of the program, there are elements in Eureka! that merit review and potential revision. These recommendations represent a fine-tuning of this successful multi-faceted program.

It is, of course, impossible to specifically know how the career paths and leadership skills of the Eureka! Fellows would have progressed if they had not participated in the program. It is clear, however, that Eureka! represents a worthwhile investment of time and money for the program participants, for Infopeople, for the funding sources, and for libraries and communities in the state of California.