

**Leadership Wisconsin**  
**LISTENING SESSION SUMMARY**  
**February 27, March 1 and 2, 2017**

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Leadership Wisconsin held three listening sessions for alumni and former board/staff to discuss our future directions. This was the first step and there will be additional opportunities created to gain their ideas and input. The main themes that emerged are as followed.

- Innovative Curriculum Ideas and Market Niches we might consider as we look at our audiences and addressing the constraints of the current program model.
  - Value of the WRLP/LW experience to them as leaders, and what they think remains important to consider in future models.
  - Value-added for Alumni of WRLP and LW as we move into the future.
  - Partners to consider as we move into the future.
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**INNOVATIVE CURRICULUM IDEAS AND MARKET NICHES:**

- Consider categories of programming such as:
  - Category 1 - general awareness and exposure to leadership and issues
  - Category 2 - professional leadership training
  - Category 3 - focus on individual passions and experiences
- Consider ways for people to flow in and out of the program/experience
- Start with a key topic and build off that through the program and on into the international travel. Give them something tangible to put in place when they graduate.
- Like the idea of letting participants choose the issue - great way to let them focus on their strength.
- Consider identifying skills that people want to work on and then build topical seminars around this.
- Our value proposition should include leaders bringing back what they learn to impact community.
- Want a program that builds new skills, a program that helps one shape policy around issues that matter to the individual or their organization. What can we offer that no one else is doing?.

- Explore helping leaders *take a "wicked problem" and slice it* into a clear issue to bring policy to the table.
  - A travel seminar that does this would be great.
- We need to focus on building skills in crucial conversations, challenging comfort zones, and being an influencer.
- What role could we play in creating a *statewide association of leadership programs*? We could offer curriculum, networks, joint events, programs for members...
- There isn't a *public sphere* anymore and that is a critical role for us.
- We can help people learn about the system (association, private, public). All are critical and needed for a democracy. We could use this to frame all of our activities.
- Can we create a "cash cow" to feed into and subsidize the Signature Program.
- *Private sector would find value in pre-packaged programs*. This could free up their staff time from planning development experiences and rather work with Leadership Wisconsin for this.
- Concern that if we take away the Signature Program then Leadership Wisconsin will blend into the landscape of all other programs. UW-Milwaukee Continuing Education has downsized a lot too...they have 4-5 leadership programs that reach out to target audiences. We need to be careful not to lose our *unique brand*.
- Could we turn this into a *certification* and raise it way above local programs? Could we market to the private sector that this program *"develops your next CEO"*?
- Consider this (LW experience) to be his masters degree. CEUs are not worth anything so consider moving to a different part of the university and making this a degree.

### VALUE OF THE WRLP/LW EXPERIENCE:

- Note: Signature Program is not a term that is commonly recognized or used by alumni of Group XIII or prior.
- Learning about parts of the state, seeing self as larger than your own community, and *seeing self as able to influence issues in the state* not just in your community.
- Camaraderie of the group and the importance of the bonding that happens.
- Recall the bonding experience of canoeing together and learning one another's story. This built trust.
- Value of the time "around the edges" of the formal programming when they connected with one another.
- Learning with a *cohort* was valuable.

- Intangible results of forcing a group who doesn't agree on much to come together to *find common ground and recognize that issues are multifaceted.*
- Important to recognize that some relationships did not form until 9 months into the program (*deep relationships take time*).
- Need the 2-year length of time to build relationships.
- Face-to-face is critical to interaction.
- Rural and urban mix of the participants - state needs these *opportunities to understand other perspectives.*
- Working with others from diverse backgrounds helped us get beyond our own viewpoints.
- Age and geographic diversity of fellow program participants.
- The program helps people *redefine their viewpoints.*
- The program pushes people into places they don't want to go and this is good.
- Diversity of group was valued and opened his eyes related to each topic.
- Development of *awareness of self and others* was critical.
- The international experience was key.
- *International seminar was huge to breaking down barriers, understanding differences...*if weren't for LW I wouldn't have forged out on my own with international travel.
- Value of Leadership Wisconsin is extremely high. Would hate to see this value dropped.
- It was a *life-changing* curriculum that took time to understand. There is no way a 9-month or 1-day experience can have similar impact.
- D.C. Seminar was incredibly valuable (ex. seeing different sites and meeting their representative).

### VALUE-ADDED FOR ALUMNI:

- How do we *do more with the alumni* and capitalize on what they are achieving/doing?
- We need to keep people in the loop and proud to have been graduates. We need to do a better job of tapping our alumni and providing them spaces for new levels of leadership.
- As an alumni, I am not likely to pay for a 1-day thing.
- If we change "the" program don't call it Leadership Wisconsin because others will not have earned the same designation alumni.

- Loss of the Alumni Association over the last few years should be looked at. We have 30 years of *graduates that need a conduit*. The annual conference did not meet alumni needs so what will?.

## PARTNERS:

- Explore our connections and possible collaborations with Rotary Clubs, Sister Cities and Friendship Force International (sp. Related to International programming).
- Other partners/audiences could include entities like agricultural fraternities; need to *carefully consider pricing structure* and go to the market to see what will work.
- Partner with Wisconsin Public Radio and other organizations. We have done Phase I - built a statewide network of leaders.
- We need to partners with associations that are established (vs. having one-off coffee conversations with individuals) in order to identify talent for the pipeline. We need to *design and develop the talent pipeline*.
- Ask County Boards to nominate an individual from their county for the program.
- Love the concept of *building on the learning of graduates of local leadership programs*.
- The approach of working with graduates of local leadership programs would require us to be quickly adaptable.
- Work to get two graduates from each partner's program.
- Connect to existing programs and have them send one person to LW immediately after graduating. Have them feed us people and maybe even tuition.
- *Seek input from those that attended past LEAD Trek events* as we move forward.

## OTHER:

- The letter sent to alumni communicated urgency.
- The need for a different more financially stable model has been discussed for a number of years by the Board of Directors so it is no surprise action is necessary. *This is an exciting thing to explore*, not a negative.
- We need to encourage people to *have faith in the messy process of learning*.
- Ambivalent to catering to the needs of business. Community leadership is not the same as business leadership.
- Would hate to see the Signature Program taken away to serve everyone.

- On the right track regarding the challenges of the Signature Program. It is too long for many employers to commit employees to - they want on-demand learning and a shorter experience (ex. 25-30 days rather than 56).
- My employer paid 100% of the tuition and time of to participate in Leadership Wisconsin. Today this would not be allowed - we are seeing a trend in business that in the past may have allowed people to participate but now online opportunities or single day learning are what we are seeing in the industry.
- The current numbers in the program tell us something needs to change.
- Really worried that this will digress to online.

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THANK YOU to those who joined us for the conversations!