



ALLIES Final Year Leadership Report: Part 2, Qualitative Summary

by

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Executive Summary

VALUEUSA and Research Allies for Lifelong Learning released the [final year key quantitative findings](#) of the Adult Learner Leadership in Education Services (ALLIES) evaluation in September (Patterson, 2016). This report is the second in a series of final ALLIES reports. The first report highlighted the growth in skills and perceptions that 133 adult learners experienced between rounds of data collection. The current report's comparisons focus on survey comments on gains and contributions 80 participating adult learner leaders reported making in leadership projects. Many of these leaders were English language learners; their words are presented here as they wrote them. Adult learners are given pseudonyms to acknowledge their uniqueness as individuals without violating confidentiality of their identities. The report also shares insights on learner gains and contributions from 21 staff members.

Following training in leadership from VALUEUSA, participating adult learners and staff identified, planned, and implemented a leadership project. Twelve groups undertook leadership projects of one of three types: fundraising, awareness, or communications. Five fundraising projects generally had as a goal raising funds to benefit the program or purchase needed materials. Raising awareness was the goal of five leadership projects, which focused on outreach, local neighborhoods, or staff awareness. Two projects focused on communications, either in the program or in the community.

The vision VALUEUSA had for the ALLIES evaluation projected that adult learners would gain knowledge and skills by participating in leadership training and project activities. In addition to growth in leadership skills, VALUEUSA anticipated adult learner leaders would show growth in skills in collaboration, organizational skills, knowledge of the organizational structures in adult education programs, communication skills, and overall critical thinking skills.

Participant Changes

As they wrote about their experiences, learner leaders described a wide range of changes in action or behavior, in knowledge or skills, or in attitudes or feelings. Changes in actions or behaviors included: getting involved, helping with specific project activities, sharing opinions and ideas, getting organized, or applying previous knowledge in new ways. About getting involved, adult learner Hermione wrote, "I learnt that to be a leader you have to participate in projects, and also have to be a strong leader in what you do, to build your project." Leadership projects that focused on outreach offered further opportunities for adult learners to help in specific ways. Enrique explained, "We help the project this [year] contributing with the distribution and publishing of pamphlets and flyers in our city and community and inviting [friends] to be tutors."

At meetings and throughout the course of their projects, adult learner leaders learned to share their opinions and ideas. "You need to [speak] up and say what's on your mind," wrote Jake, who worked in an awareness project. During her fundraising project, Lorene shared, "I learned how to work together. To come in with ideas and conclusions to get help for the thing we would need." Working in a leadership project required organization. Beatriz noted that she "learned how to become a leader. How to plan events [and] organize papers." Rufia, a leader in an awareness project, applied previous knowledge in new ways. "I learned how to work in a group and how to manage a group of people." She also "learned about the organization by participating in the leadership project in the past year."

Other changes in action or behavior include finding voice, listening to and respecting others, telling others about the program, and teaching or mentoring others. For a few learners, finding voice was part of actively engaging in outreach, either within the program or externally. "I stood and told the rest of the students about what we were doing," wrote Eleanor, as she worked on a fundraising project. "I learned how to communicate with others." She added that she realized "that I have a voice in my community. And I learned how to make my opinion count and my voice heard." In a separate fundraising project, Marcie learned "how to listen to others [and] pay attention to details, not putting away others' idea." Part of learning respect is to value the important contributions others can make to a group. She noted that "[everyone] is very important in discussion...Also it is very [important] to be respectful to other and don't let others feel less important."

"I learned that I have a voice in my community. And I learned how to make my opinion count and my voice heard." -- Eleanor

In some leadership projects, outreach to other adult learners or to the community in general was explicitly part of an awareness effort that the group had decided on; in others, sharing about the program was an added benefit of the project work. For example, Antoinette explained how she contributed "to the leadership project in the past year by putting the word out that the program really is a great program." As part of their leadership projects, several adult learners described taking on a role as peer tutor or mentor. Patricia saw her mentoring role as helping "classmates and student council members to being involved in our project." She observed, "Trying to help others and teaching/guiding other people usual[ly] helps you to learn or reinforce what you are trying to teach or transmit."

Adult learners reported gaining collaboration skills. Francesca emphasized sharing responsibilities during collaboration: "I learned how to share [responsibilities]... with others, and together make a [successful] work." Gaining organizational skills was the most prominent theme among learner leaders. Many described how they learned to organize themselves, put their ideas in order, and plan components of the project step by step. Not only did they learn how to organize themselves and the project, but many learned more about how the program was organized and how to work within its structure. During his project, Chase "learned to get a problem solved or to make changes that you have to find out [who's] responsible for the change and get as close to the source as you can to make those changes happen."

Encouraging others to share ideas and opinions was another skill participants gained during their projects. Michael emphasized knowing "how to listen to other [people's] ideas and work with others." His peer on the same project, Ridge, remarked, "It helped me open my eyes to see that [everybody's] opinions actually do matter." Participating adult learners described learning skills that contributed to how they might continue to learn in the future, such as getting experience in new areas of learning, learning to work with others, learning about the environment, and learning to use a computer. Teresa wrote about gaining experience in their fundraising project: "I gained knowledge... I gained experience."

As adult learner leaders changed behaviors and gained skills in leadership projects, many reported changes in their attitudes. These attitudinal changes seem to reflect the depth of experience learners went through while participating, and they speak to the richness and meaningfulness of the project interactions and activities. Learners reported insights on collaboration and gains in confidence. Wyatt, for example, gained new insight into making compromises while collaborating with others in the center: "I learned how important compromising can be."

An instructor on a communications project wrote, “Our students gained and learned many things from this project, but I think the most important thing they gained was confidence about what they could do.” Leader Patricia’s self-confidence soared as she was selected as adult learner of the year in her state and won a nursing scholarship: “So I learnt how far you can go when you are committed to reach your goals.” Nicole realized gains in self-confidence during a fundraising project: “I gain a lot of confidence in school and the work place knowing that I can achieved anything through hard work.”

In addition to changes in attitudes, many adult learners experienced changes in their feelings as they worked on leadership projects – feelings about the adult education program, about leadership in general and the project specifically, and about themselves as leaders. Several adults expressed gratitude for the program or strove to give back by sharing their feelings about the program with others. Edward was eager to “tell others about the program, how important it is and much they can [achieve].” Bertha had strong feelings about her project. “Our project was amazing. [It’s] still happening,” she gushed. “I’m so happy to be part of our newsletter.”

Effects in Programs and Workplaces

Changes in behavior, in knowledge or skills, in attitudes or feelings can be anticipated to explain effects occurring in leadership projects. Effects explain the circumstances surrounding the outcomes of leadership projects. One important effect was extra funding for the program. Chad related that his leadership group “worked together to organize an [awareness] event to help gain funding for the center.” In Betsy’s fundraising project, as she “got donations” to refurbish the center, she learned “how to help our school.” Another effect adult learners described on their programs was an infusion of new ideas from adult learners. In Anna’s leadership project she contributed “ideas to help the program.”



“I gained better performance at work... I am happy to be manager now.” -- Jorge

Although most leadership projects did not explicitly relate to employment or workforce preparation, adult learners described how gains from leadership projects spilled over into helping them get jobs, work with or manage others on the job, and build businesses. Jorge felt he gained “better performance at work.” He added, “I am happy to be manager now” at his workplace. Another benefit adult learner leaders noticed from their leadership projects was group cohesiveness. Adults cited the benefits of teamwork and the closeness they felt. Paz remembered, “It is very necessary [to have] the

communication to work in a good team and obtain good results.” The soft skills learned in leadership projects connected with useful workplace skills for these learners.

Evaluation

As they reported gains and contributions, adult learner leaders more often evaluated their experiences positively than negatively. The themes presented in this report offer much detail and description of the rich experiences that adult learners underwent in leadership projects. Even though many learners appeared to struggle with writing in English or with communicating their points clearly, most participants had much to say and many insights to share. Their writing was positive overall and communicated how meaningful leadership projects tended to have been to their peers and themselves.

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For more information about the ALLIES evaluation or report series, please e-mail Dr. Margaret Patterson at Margaret@researchallies.org.

ALLIES Final Year Leadership Report

Part 2, Qualitative Summary

Introduction

In September 2016 VALUEUSA and Research Allies for Lifelong Learning released the [final year key quantitative findings](#) of the Adult Learner Leadership in Education Services (ALLIES) evaluation (Patterson, 2016). It highlighted the growth in skills and perceptions that 133 adult learners experienced between rounds of data collection. This report is Part 2 of a series of final ALLIES reports. Comparisons in this report focus on comments about gains and contributions of 80 learner leaders in participating programs, that were self-reported in surveys. Many leaders were English language learners; their words are presented here as written, with editing only for legibility. They are identified by pseudonym to preserve their confidentiality. The report also shares insights on these topics from 21 staff members.

Participating adult learners were asked in the ALLIES survey, “What did you learn or gain personally from participating in the leadership project in the past year?” and “How did you contribute to the leadership project in the past year?” These open-ended questions provided them an opportunity to reflect on their experiences with leadership without being limited to structured survey items. Although the emphasis in the question, particularly the first question about what they learned or gained, was on their personal experience as an individual, many adult learners focused on their collective experiences in the group, in the program, or in external settings, such as the workplace, community, or family.

Following training in leadership from VALUEUSA, participating adult learners and staff identified, planned, and implemented a leadership project. Twelve groups undertook leadership projects of one of three types: fundraising, awareness, or communications. Five programs supported fundraising projects; these leadership projects generally had as a goal raising funds to benefit the program, purchase needed materials, and support the program or the community in some way. Raising awareness was the goal of five other leadership projects; these projects focused on community outreach, awareness of the program in local neighborhoods, or staff awareness. Two projects focused on communications, either within house or in the community. Specific leadership project descriptions are shared by program and type in Table 1. A thirteenth program participated in training but did not develop a leadership project.

Table 1. ALLIES Leadership Project Descriptions by Type

Program / Project Type	Description
Fundraising	Adult learners:
1	Organized a garage sale to raise funds, refurbished their center, spoke at fundraising events, and developed and implemented a new orientation process for future learners
2	Strengthened their student council, raised funds through yard and bake sales to benefit family literacy program, and supported development of a bike path
3	Established an ongoing can recycling program to raise funds for family literacy books
4	Raised funds for books and calculators through food sales and raffles, visited classes to gain support, and practiced public speaking
5	Planned and attended the center’s silver anniversary gala, sold tickets, and distributed fundraising packets

Program / Project Type	Description
Awareness	
6	Conducted outreach at community events and churches, recruited tutors to reduce waiting lists, and practiced public speaking
7	Planned and organized an open house for community awareness of literacy and English language learning and their program, and made and distributed flyers
8	Raised program awareness, sought tutors, and developed plans for individualized instruction to support learning
9	Had a goal of raising community awareness about their program but project was not implemented
10	Developed a policy about use of headphones and cell phone use in the program and raised staff awareness of adult learner support needs
Communica- tions	
11	Developed and distributed a book of immigrant stories, got funds from town council to support production, and shared the book with the mayor and state governor
12	Created, wrote, illustrated, and published a newsletter and yearbook to enhance staff-learner communications, strengthened their student council, and visited classrooms to encourage learning

For more information on the participants and qualitative methods used in this summary, please see the Appendix.

Participant Changes in Action or Behavior during the Leadership Project

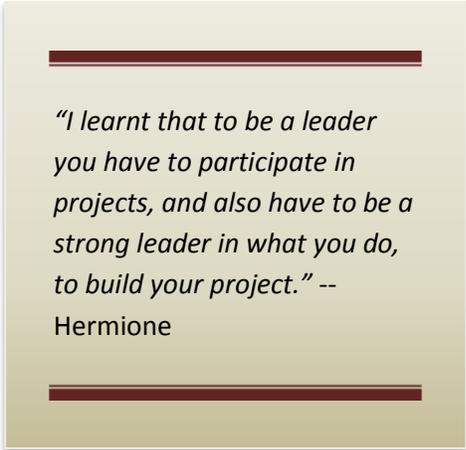
Qualitative data were first organized to identify changes that participants experienced. Changes were organized into four initial logical classifications of processes (Patton, 2002): changes in action or behavior, changes in knowledge or skills, changes in attitude, and changes in feelings. The first group of changes noticed was also the largest – 125 excerpts describe changes in action or behavior that adult learners made while participating in the leadership project. These actions or behaviors included actions internal to leadership project groups, communications behaviors, and actions external to the groups.

Several actions were internal to groups in leadership projects. These actions included group members getting involved, helping with specific project activities, participating in meetings, getting organized, and applying previous knowledge in new ways. Communications behaviors changed around sharing opinions and ideas, finding voice, and listening to and respecting others. Leadership group members also made changes in their external actions, such as raising funds, telling others about the program, and teaching or mentoring others. A last change in action or behavior was a change in goal or orientation.

When data were disaggregated, different changes in action or behavior occurred (see Appendix for more detail on disaggregation). Learners in Florida and Colorado noted changes occurring most frequently. More often than men, women tended to get involved, get organized, apply previous learning in new ways, change goals, find voice, raise funds, and participate in meetings and activities. Adults who were 40 and older tended to apply previous learning in new ways, change goals, and tell others about the program more than younger adults. Learners near the end of the program tended to get organized, raise funds, apply previous learning in new ways, change goals, and mentor others more than learners at

other progress levels. College-bound learners reported changes in action or behavior similar to those near the end of the program, more often than learners with other aspirations, and they also tended to find voice more often. Adults with outstanding leadership self-ratings tended to get organized and involved, listen to and respect others, apply previous learning in new ways, change goals, tell others about the program, and mentor others more than learners with lower leadership ratings.

Actions Internal to Leadership Groups. One of the first changes internal to leadership groups that most participants reported making was getting involved. Becoming involved in her



"I learnt that to be a leader you have to participate in projects, and also have to be a strong leader in what you do, to build your project." -- Hermione

fundraising project implied seeking new experiences, per Josefa: "[I got to] experience... how [to get] more involved in the community." The chair of the board in Josefa's program observed that during the fundraising project adult learners learned "how to work with one another [and how] to work with members of the community." To Josefa, having new experiences meant participating in the project, building it, and sharing it with others. "I learnt that to be a leader you have to participate in projects, and also have to be a strong leader in what you do, to build your project," wrote Hermione, a learner in another fundraising project.

Some adult learner leaders, in getting involved, took very active roles in their respective leadership projects. Lacey described how she got involved in an awareness project: "I stepped up and took over writing things down. [I] wrote the next meeting day down and reminded people. [I] helped get to everything on [our] list to talk about."

In a communications project, per their instructor, adult learner leaders "volunteered their personal time... and they showed up at crucial events." Candace joined the student council and served as an officer. One of her peers in the same project, Patricia, wrote, "by being part of the Student Council, I was [an officer], and I always tried to help my classmates and student council members to [be] involved in our project in some way." The project coordinator explained, "The students that participated in a committee or as an officer gained many skills such as team work, planning, parliamentary procedure, note taking, professional vocabulary, [and] advocating for their needs..."

Outreach was another way adult learner leaders got involved. Louise, from an awareness project, wrote, "My contribution to the leadership [project] in the last year, was getting [involved] in [taking] flyers to places around the neighborhood..." Yasmina, from the same awareness project, added "I [worked] in the open house project. We made flyers and [brochures] last year and it was profound competent." Cecile, from a separate communications project, pointed to the social aspects of getting involved: "I met new people [and] made new contacts."

Becoming involved might be as simple as making donations or keeping a classroom in shape. "I contribute with time / organize and prepared the food we were selling," related Bella about a fundraising project. "My contribution to the program is to ... Donate hand towel. Keep the black board

clean. If I get pen or pencil I will share with [others],” wrote Marcie, about a separate fundraising project. Her peer, Nicole, added that she helped in selling tickets for a fundraiser as well as with teaching: “I have taken a leadership role in getting our tickets to be sold for our [event] and help a few [students] with their assignment.” Martina, in yet another fundraising project, described her role as “filled with forms or papers.” One of her peers, Carolina, saw her involvement as “helping my classmates with time and [bringing] material to the events.”

Getting involved for one learner meant simply playing a part in making things happen. In a fundraising project, Shirley admitted, “I am not a leader, but I have [learned] that you have to play a part in the project so that everything can go easy. “ Even participating in the ALLIES evaluation itself was getting involved. Kaitlyn, a young woman from an awareness project, wrote: “I contributed to the leadership project by taking surveys and assessments.”

In describing a second change in action internal to leadership groups, some adult learners wrote about specific activities that they helped with in a leadership project. Rufia, in an awareness project that hosted an open house, wrote, “I was the host of the program. I did [work from] open to end of the program by hosting.” Two young adult learners on an awareness project helped by authoring stories for a book the group collaborated on. Ahmed stated, “I wrote my story which is included in the book.” His peer, Diana, added, “I wrote my story for the book.”

In a communications project, Patricia, related, “I worked on getting done our [student] newsletter.” Part of the newsletter effort meant setting up a contest to involve adult learners. “[A writing] contest was included to invite every student in our different locations.” Her peer, Bertha, enthused, “We made it happen with our [newsletter]. We had a [Yearbook]. I learn a lot and even start a yearbook for our school.”

“We help the project this [year] contributing with the distribution and publishing of pamphlets and flyers in our city and community and inviting [friends] to be tutors.”

-- Enrique

Leadership projects that focused on outreach offered further opportunities for adult learners to help in specific ways. A tutor in an awareness project explained how adult learners in her program “gave their time to recruit new tutors to the program.” Alma described her role in this awareness project as “[finding] places [to recruit tutors] and distributing pamphlets.” Her peer, Imelda, added, “I try to help with found a tutor.” Their peer, Enrique, explained, “We help the project this [year] contributing with the distribution and publishing of pamphlets and flyers in our city and community and inviting [friends] to be tutors.”

Leadership projects for fundraising purposes created opportunities for adult learner leaders to plan and to donate time and materials. Adults involved in these leadership projects described a variety of efforts designed to make the fundraisers as successful as possible. “I donate my time and fruit for sale [for a] bike path [fundraiser],” wrote Niecy, about a fundraising project. Her peer, Rosa, stated, “I take notes of the people who [attend] the sales and yard

sales.” Another peer, Herlinda, saw her role as to “Help make decisions on activities that [we] were going to have such [as] in [planning for a new] bike path.”

In a separate leadership project, Elena wrote that she “learned... to made [events happen by] making signs for yard sale.” Two of her peers, Betsy and Gloria, “got donations” and participated actively. “In the project I was in the [meetings] and [worked on] the day of sale [at] the yard sale.” Their program director summarized, “All involved contributed to the project in some way. Some got items donated, some worked the sale, [and] some were in charge of advertising...Learners completed all of the project on their own.” Another staff member wrote, “...They contributed on all [of] the project... [It made them] feel more [a] part of this program.”

A third change internal to leadership groups was participating in meetings. Getting leadership projects up and running required many meetings. Many adult learner leaders felt they contributed by taking an active role in meetings. “I have [contributed] by attending meeting about our learning center,” wrote Nicole, in a fundraising project. Wyatt, in an awareness project, believed he contributed by “attending the meetings and discussions when we had them and participating in those events.” Frederica and Delia, in a communications project, both wrote: “I came to the meeting and I supported [the] project.” Two women in a fundraising project wrote about their contributions to meetings: “I contribute to coming to the meeting and participate in projects that the leadership project give to the group” (Wanda); “I went to meetings, I did all that was asked to make our project a [success]” (Blanca). Their peer added, “I participated in most of the meetings that we held each week.”

In a communications project, the program director noted that adult learners such as Diana “spoke to groups,... [gave] ideas, [and ran] the meetings.” Diana stated, “I went to the meeting” in preparing to contribute to the project’s book. Two women from a fundraising project described their meeting experiences: “I participated in the meetings to organize the event,” wrote Teresa. Josefa added “I participated in meetings[,] organized by separating items, donating, [and] putting prices time of the day yard sale.”

A fourth way leadership groups experienced internal change was getting organized. Working in a leadership project required organization, which implied both the learner leaders organizing their own lives and activities as well as the activities of the leadership project itself. “[I’ve] learned how to be organized,” admitted Ahmed, through his communications project. From their fundraising project, two

participants described what they learned about organization.

When organizing himself, Edward learned “how to [participate] in activities.” Hermione wrote: “I [learn] to be well [organized] in any thing I do. You learn to plan your schedule ahead a time.”

In another fundraising effort, two women noticed a connection between group work and organization. Rosa decided to “organize meetings for the sales.” She believed she learned “how to [communicate], organize, and [work] as a

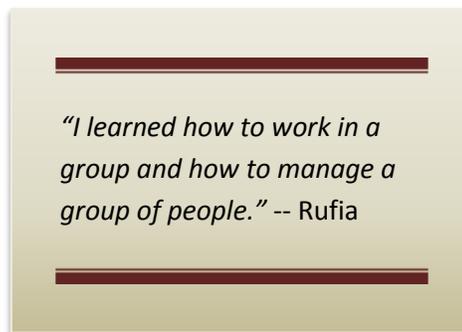
“I learned how to become a leader. How to plan events [and] organize papers.” -- Beatriz

team.” Her peer Niecy wrote that in their group she “learned to organize events to raise funds for the program and do my best to get better results.” Their peer, Beatriz, added that she “learned how to become a leader. How to plan events [and] organize papers.”

An awareness leadership project helped several adult learners with organization skills. Per their program director, “Learners planned an Open House as their project... Learners took full leadership of the project from beginning to end.” Two of the leaders in this project talked about their roles. “With help of the staff some [students] organized an [event] to present the different programs that the Department of Literacy is already offering the community,” wrote Orlando. “I did [organize] all the members for the meeting and also I did [organize] the open house event,” wrote Rufia about her role in the same project. One of their instructors remarked, “They did everything themselves, with ...[minimal] input from staff. [Orlando] was the key person in this matter.” Noting that other adult learners took on leadership roles in the project, the instructor concluded, “I saw their skills come out in a new way, that I would not have learned about them, if not for the project.”

The last type of internal change was learner leaders applying previous knowledge in new ways. When asked what she learned during a communications project, Katya replied simply, “I don’t have... work [as an employee]. I always having [my] own business. [So now I know] I’m my yourself leader!” She had learned to see her business ownership in a new way, as leadership. Bella, in her fundraising project, applied previous knowledge of spending money to learning to “manage money [and] work under [budget]” in the project. Working in a communications project, Diana strengthened her English skills in a new way, “[helping] me to practice my second language English [writing] and [speaking].”

Rufia, who participated as a leader in an awareness project, wrote, “I learned how to work in a group and how to manage a group of people.” She also believed she “learned about the organization [a library] by participating in the leadership project in the past year.”



“I learned how to work in a group and how to manage a group of people.” -- Rufia

Alma, an elderly woman in an awareness project, described contacting businesses in a way she had not needed to previously: contacting “the managers of different stores or services.” Her peer, Lourdes, a middle-aged woman, wrote about new ways of communicating with people through the awareness project. “I talk about other people. You know other people. You meet other people.” Their tutor noted that they learned “how to develop communication skills and influence people on their ideas.”

Communications Behaviors. The second type of change in action or behavior was in how they communicated within the leadership group. At meetings and throughout the course of their projects, adult learner leaders learned to share their opinions and ideas. “You need to [speak] up and say what’s on your mind,” wrote Jake, who worked in an awareness project. In a fundraising project, wrote Araceli, “I [participated] and gave my opinion.” A learner in a separate fundraising project,

Francesca, stated, “I learned how to share... opinions with others.” During her fundraising project, Lorene shared, “I learned how to work together. To come in with ideas and conclusions to get help for the thing we would need.”

Having opinions was often closely related to sharing ideas. In his awareness leadership project, Chase believed he contributed “by attending scheduled meetings and sharing my opinion.” At one of those meetings he “suggested [an] idea for online tutoring” in the program. In the same project, Ridge “helped come up with a solution for our individual learning in GED [test preparation].” Their

peer, Michael, believed part of his role meant “sharing ideas, talking to possible future resources.” For a fundraising project, Eleanor “suggested many ideas.” Youssef, in a communications project, enthused, “Honestly I tell [you], [I] learn so many things... even I share my idea to anybody else.”

In a separate communications project, wrote the project coordinator, adult learners “contributed their skills, their ideas, their time, and their friendship.” Manuela, one of the adult learner leaders in the project, found that “it’s very important [to] think first and then develop and support your ideas.” Her peer Patricia shared her ideas about the advantages of getting others involved in the communications project: “By helping to get our Student Council going on, getting new members, and sharing what they may get if [they] work on a project.” One of their instructors in the project added, “They talked with learners in other programs and compared ideas. They were delighted to get more input from other perspectives in order to stretch their horizons.”

Another communications change was finding voice. Participation in the leadership project appeared to help many adult learners find a voice, many for the first time. In a fundraising project, Araceli wrote that she learned to “speak with other people [and] more participate.” As part of a separate fundraising project, Elena became “more involved” and learned “more to say my opinions.”

“I stood and told the rest of the students about what we were doing. I learned that I have a voice in my community. And I learned how to make my opinion count and my voice heard.” -- Eleanor

“I learned how to work together. To come in with ideas and conclusions to get help for the thing we would need.” -- Lorene

For a few learners, finding voice was part of actively engaging in outreach, either within the program or externally. “I stood and told the rest of the students about what we were doing,” wrote Eleanor, as she worked on a fundraising project. “I learned how to communicate with others.” She added that she learned “that I have a voice in my community. And I learned how to make my opinion count and my voice heard. “

In a communications project, their instructor remarked, adult learners “broke out of shyness in order to lead other students.” Bertha, one of the adult learners, visited “every class and to let them know how important

we all are to each other. We are the voice to speak up.” Her peer, Patricia, found her voice as she went to a state conference for the first time and “practiced to speak up in front of a large group of people.”

Ahmed contributed to his local communications project by speaking about the project through interviews in media. “I was several times [quoted] in [the] newspaper,” he wrote, “including in [two communities].” In addition, “I spoke to the radio, [a nearby] museum, Rotary club, Lion’s club,” and at two local library events.

Learning how to respect and listen to the thoughts of others in group projects was a last change in communications behavior that many adults described. During her fund-raising project “[I learned to] listen to my colleagues with some ideas,” wrote Martina. Her peer, Beatriz, described how she also learned to “listen to other people respond.”

In a separate fundraising project, Marcie learned “how to listen to others [and] pay attention to details, not putting away others’ idea.” Part of learning respect is to value the important contributions others can make to a group. She noted that “[everyone] is very important in discussion...Also it is very [important] to be respectful to other and don’t let others feel less important.”

“Everyone is very important in discussion...Also it is very important to be respectful to other and don’t let others feel less important.” -- Marcie

Being able to listen went hand in hand with collaborative activities in group projects. In an awareness project, Michael felt he learned about listening as part of collaborating: “How to listen to other [people’s] ideas and work with others.” An officer in a student group, Candace, believed she learned “to be [a] good listener [as she served as a] student council member at this school.”

Actions External to Leadership Groups. Once adult learner leaders made changes in their internal behavior and developed communications behaviors, they also made changes in external actions. They raised funds, told others about the program, and taught or mentored peers. Adults in fundraising projects supported their programs through selling tickets, collecting donations, and pitching in at yard sales and other events they helped organize. They contributed by “helping to sell” (Elena), “by giving [my opinion] and selling ticket” (Kenesha), and “by selling tickets for the adult center” (Hermione). Nicole directly connected leadership with selling tickets for a gala her fundraising group planned to celebrate the center’s anniversary: “I have taken a leadership role in getting our tickets to be sold for our gala.”

Other adult learners helped raise funds through donations. For the gala project, Janelle, contributed by “coming to the class [and collecting donations] for the program.” Betsy wrote, “I got donations” for another program’s fundraising project to refurbish its building. In addition to selling tickets and collecting donations, adult learners helped organize events such as yard sales and food sales. Beyond organizing these events, they participated by contributing items for sale, baking, setting up booths, pricing and selling items. For the building refurbishment project, Teresa helped “[organize] the event. I came to the yard sale to take my responsibilities and my role in the yard sale.” Her peer, Paz,

not only contributed merchandise that could be sold but also bought items that other adult learners donated. Paz wrote that she contributed by “collecting items to [sell] in the yard sale and I bought it.”

Adult learners described putting in substantial time organizing and carrying out activities to raise funds. In her fundraising project, Bella, described her role in selling food for adult learners to purchase during class hours at her program’s campus: “I contribute with time.” Another leadership project had as its goal raising funds for enhancing features in the program and in the surrounding community, including a new bicycle path. Niecy, wrote that “to raise funds for the program... I [donated] my time ... for the yardsale.” Her peer, Rosa, added that she also “[organized] meetings for the sales. I helped to [sell] fruit. I helped in the yardsale.”

Another action external to the leadership group was telling others about the program. In some leadership projects, outreach to other adult learners or to the community in general was explicitly part of an awareness effort that the group had decided on; in others, sharing about the program was an added benefit of the project work. “I contribute by inviting other [people] to come,” wrote Jean Luc, an adult learner in a communications project.

In a fundraising project, for example, Antoinette explained how she “[contributed] to the leadership project in the past year by putting the word out that the program really is a great program.” In a separate fundraising project, two middle-aged adult learners wrote about their roles in telling others. Edward believed his role was to “tell others about the program, how important it is and much they can [achieve].” His peer, Marcie, stated that her “contribution to the program is to pass the word to other[s] about this facility.”

“I contributed to the leadership project in the past year by putting the word out that the program really is a great program.” -- Antoinette

Most adult learners who got out the word about the program, however, did so in leadership projects focusing on awareness. In a library awareness effort, wrote Orlando, “some student[s] designed a flyer with the information ...[on] the [different programs in]... the community.” The program’s director believed that adult learner leaders “prepared promotional materials [and] disseminated the information as best as possible.” Orlando’s peer Louise saw distributing flyers as her role: “My contribution to the leadership [project] in the last year,” she wrote, was distributing flyers throughout the neighborhood “to let [other foreign-born] people like me to know about it.”

In an awareness project designed to recruit tutors, adult learners learned “how to participate in a team to accomplish a goal. How to plan, implement, and manage a project,” stated one of their tutors, who believed they gained a “sense of accomplishment.” The tutor added, “They brought their ideas, experience and desires to the discussions and decision-making.” Three adult learners in the project wrote about telling others about the project: “I went to a group and told them about the project,” wrote Lourdes. Leona “learned to invite [volunteers]. I spoke at my church [and] I invited [volunteers].” Three

volunteer tutors accepted her offer. Imelda, too, tried “to help with found a tutor” through her outreach.

A last change in behavior outside the leadership group was teaching and mentoring others. As part of their leadership projects, several adult learners described taking on a role as peer tutor or

“Trying to help others and teaching/guiding other people usually helps you to learn or reinforce what you are trying to teach or transmit.” -- Patricia

mentor. In a fundraising project, Nicole related, “I have taken a leadership role in ... help a few [students] with their assignment.” Jake felt the responsibility of leadership keenly as he mentored other adult learners in an awareness project: “I made [sure] that people [know]that [when they] follow you [it means] that [you’re] good at leadership.”

Oona, a young woman in a communications project, described her role as mentor: “helping the student[s] that they need help.” Two of her middle-aged peers mentored and taught others also. Patricia saw her role as “helping to get our Student Council going on, getting new members, and sharing what they may get if [they] work on a project.” Her fellow officer on the student council, Bertha, added, “And helping each person in any need they needed for our GED learning... I [personally] help everybody.” For these adult learners, teaching and mentoring was an important part of leadership.

During their leadership projects, some learners changed a personal or academic goal or their orientation toward growth. In an awareness project, Alma learned to “apply for a job.” Bertha wrote about new goals she set for herself: “I’m almost there for my GED and I’m on my way happening soon... I want to go to college.” Her fellow officer in the communications project, Candace, “[learned to be] also student council member at this school.” She saw her “attendance improve” and noted going to “our first conference [in the] USA”, a VALUEUSA Leadership Institute, with her peers from the project. One young adult learners experienced a shift in his orientation toward growth. Youssef, who was heavily involved as a leader in a communications project found it transformative: “So from that learning experience I change my way of life.”

Participant Changes in Knowledge or Skills during the Leadership Project

The vision VALUEUSA incorporated into the ALLIES evaluation projected that adult learners would gain knowledge and skills by participating in training and project activities. In addition to growth in leadership skills, VALUEUSA anticipated adult learner leaders would show growth in skills in collaboration, organizational skills, knowledge of the organizational structures in adult education programs, communication skills, and overall critical thinking skills. The second largest number of comments, with 98 excerpts, centered on changes in knowledge or skills that adult learner leaders experienced. It is perhaps not surprising that collaborative, organizational, and communication skills are prominent in the themes that resulted from analyzing their responses to questions about learning and contributions. In addition to projected gains in these areas, adult learners also described how they grew their skills in less anticipated ways: on the job, in English, citizenship, lifelong learning, parenting, and coaching others.

Breakouts by group in changes in knowledge or skills are informative. Adult learners from Connecticut, Kansas, and Colorado reported these changes at higher rates than adults in other states did. Men more frequently reported changes in communication skills, critical thinking skills and leadership skills than women did. Adult learners 40 years and older noted changes in communication and critical thinking, whereas younger adults reported changes in collaboration, leadership skills, organization, and lifelong learning skills. Adult learners near the end of the program reported changes in group collaboration, effort, and respect more often than those at other progress levels. Those with immediate college aspirations noted changes in collaboration, communication, and leadership skills, while those who wanted a better job next reported changes in critical thinking, English language, organization, and lifelong learning skills. Participants with high leadership ratings reported changes in organization and leadership skills.

Leadership skills. Some adult learners who participated in leadership projects described learning leadership skills in general. In leading a communications project, Youssef pointed to the benefit of gaining knowledge overall while learning leadership skills: “still I am happy to [be] a leader [in] the project because [I realized] I will get knowledge.” Youssef was one of a handful of leaders in his project. One of Youssef’s instructors wrote, “We had several students who were willing to head up a committee. One student was our facilitator and conducted all our meetings. Another student was willing to be in charge of our fund raising committee, and another student looked into finding printers...”

Lacey wrote that the awareness project “helped with my leader skills.” Elena noted that the fundraising project she participated in helped her “To get more experience about [leadership].” Two adult learners in a fundraising project believed it enabled them to “learn how to understand how to be a good leader in society” (Marcie) and “how to [organize yourself] more about leadership and how to [participate] in activities” (Edward).

Collaboration skills. Other adult learners noticed that they gained skills in collaboration. They mentioned learning how to work together (Lorene), in teams (Manuela and Rosa), or as a group (Carolina and Desiree) repeatedly. In Desiree’s communications project, one of her instructors noted, adult learners learned “about working together.” Their program director believed the project taught them teamwork. Bella stated, “I learned how to work in a group [and to] work as a team player.” Her peer, Blanca, wrote, “I learned about the importance to work in group to decide how to resolve any problem.”

For Candace, playing her part meant “[gaining personally by participating] in student council at [name of program].” Francesca emphasized sharing responsibilities during collaboration: “I learned how to share [responsibilities]... with others, and together make a [successful] work.” Duong saw the value of mutually evaluating experiences, in addition to sharing roles and responsibilities: “[We] need to share with other[s],

“I learned how to share responsibilities... with others, and together make a successful work.” -- Francesca

[discussion and evaluate our] experience.”

Organizational skills. Gaining organizational skills was the most prominent theme among adult learner leaders. Many described how they learned to organize themselves, to put their ideas in order, and to plan components of the project step by step. Not only did they learn how to organize themselves and the project, but many learned more about how the program was organized and how to work within that structure. As part of her awareness project, “I learned more [profoundly] about the project in detail also,” admitted Louise.

In a separate fundraising project, a program director noted, learners “organized and planned.” The chair of their board believed they learned “how to organize a fund raiser... [They] solicited items for a garage sale and arranged to have food available for customers visiting the sale. [They] organized and priced items [,] worked the day of the sale[, and] arranged for unsold items to be taken care of.” In this project, Josefa gained “experience, how to organize”, and her peer Paz wrote, “I learned more organization.” Their peer Betsy added, “We [learned] how to put thing in [order].” Two other peers from the same project learned “more about how to organize everything step by step” (Gloria) and “how to [organize] a project from the beginning until the end” (Teresa).

Adults also focused on learning how projects could be organized. Carolina organized the project and assigned organizational tasks to others in her group: “I learned how to work in groups of *organizada* formally giving each task to ORGANIZE things right.” Anna wrote simply yet emphatically that she gained knowledge to “ORGANIZE.” “I [learned] about the steps for [making] a [project],” wrote Diana about her communications project. One of Diana’s instructors added, “Time management was another important skill we worked on. Students need to understand the importance of planning a schedule of when things should be done...” Planning was an essential skill to many: “plan for doing a project” (Martina), “plan events and how to organize papers” (Beatriz), “organize events” (Niecy), and “plan events, to resolve problems” (Luz) were skills participants remembered learning.

“...To get a problem solved or to make changes that you have to find out who’s responsible for the change and get as close to the source as you can to make those changes happen.” -- Chase

Planning events became a new concrete skill for Julia: “[I learned to do] many things how to decorate at parties and much more.” One of Ahmed’s instructors described how adult learners on their communications project learned “how to take a project from start to finish.” Ahmed remarked on follow-through in planning: “[I’ve] learned how to finish what I have started.”

Part of the learning experience involved finding out how the program was structured and how to work within that structure to make changes happen. Leona “learned more about the program.” Janelle also gained knowledge “about how the program work[s,] who is the sponsor and who is in [charge] of the program.” During his separate

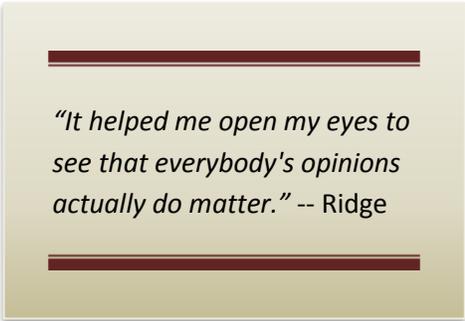
fundraising project, Chase “learned to get a problem solved or to make changes that you have to find

out [who's] responsible for the change and get as close to the source as you can to make those changes happen."

Orlando found he "learnt a little more about the organization of the program and more about the people that are involve[d] in the program." The director of his program "expected learners to gain foresight into how they can take active roles in the program's development," she explained. "Learners understood that program staff wanted them to develop and manage projects with little assistance from the staff." Orlando also found that he "became aware of some problems that affect this program and [its] limitations" as part of the learning process.

Communication skills. Gaining skills in communicating with others was another theme of importance to many adult learners (Chad, Rosa, Eleanor, and Saeda). Saeda added that communicating with others helped her solve problems: "I [learned a] lot, to communicate with others, to know how to fix everything by myself." Adult learners described gaining both speaking and listening skills, though most emphasized their growth in listening. "I've learned the interaction with my teachers and colleagues," related Jean Luc. Candace pointed out that the project helped her "to speak well, be [a] good listener." "I [learned] much to hear - I learned a lot in listening..." wrote Yessica.

Encouraging others to share ideas and opinions was another skill participants gained during their projects. Ofelia gained from "[hearing peer] opinions as to events in groups." Knowing "other's people experiences" was a gain for Cecile. One of Cecile's instructors added, "We were grateful when students told us their opinions...It was important for [adult learners] to learn how to listen to one another's opinions and how to give feedback without offending someone else." Luz learned "to share different opinions," and her peer in the same project, Francesca, added, "...and together make a [successful] work." Ridge, remarked, "It helped me open my eyes to see that [everybody's] opinions actually do matter."



"It helped me open my eyes to see that everybody's opinions actually do matter." -- Ridge

Adult learner leaders described communicating in specific ways and contexts. "[I learned] speak and do are same," realized Duong. Heath gained a new skill in communicating about his fundraising project: "I contacted the recycling place." During a communications project, adult learners "wrote their immigration story and talked about their story in public," explained one of Ahmed and Antoine's instructors. "They learned more writing skills, more reading skills, [and] how to talk in public." Ahmed stated, "[I've] learned how to write a project (Book)... [and] how to speak in a public [setting]." His peer Antoine learned "how to approach new people." In an awareness project, Leona "learned to invite [volunteers]." And her peer, Lourdes, experienced going "to a group and [telling] them about the project." Their peers Imelda and Alma enthused, "I can now speak with the people and I feel more [comfortable]" and "[I can] express myself without [difficulty]", respectively.

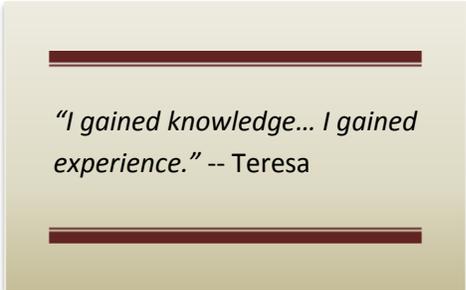
Job skills. Several participants recalled gaining skills relevant to the workplace. “The project [helped] me a lot to obtain the necessary skills to ... have a job in [this county],” wrote Enrique. Learning “to plan your schedule” helps adults with “any [business] you plan to open,” wrote Hermione. Jorge believed he gained “better performance at work” from the project. “I am happy to be manager now.” Bertha attributed blossoming at work, mentoring co-workers, and earning bonuses for outstanding sales to her communications leadership project.

English language skills. Since most adult learners in the leadership projects (57 of 80) were English language learners, some were apt to notice growth in their own English skills as they worked on leadership projects. As one of the instructors in a communications project observed, “Important skills they improved were speaking, writing, and listening in English.” About gains from their projects, Herlinda and Alma both wrote, “Improve my English.”

Even more specifically, Ari perceived “my listening & speaking get progress & my [grammar] get [grown up].” Ari’s instructor on the communications project believed adult learners “expressed delight in learning new skills such as writing for our newsletter...” Gloria saw her language skills as hindering full participation in fundraising: “I believe that only 50% [of the time I] contributed mostly in English...” In her awareness project, Tina observed a connection between learning English and participation in leadership: “I think I can learn more English in the leadership project... [it improved] my English level... I [made an effort] to follow the course. It is important for me.”

Citizenship skills. Two adult learners, Enrique and Josefa, wrote about a connection of leadership with citizenship skills. For Josefa, the connection came in the form of civic involvement, but Enrique gained skills to pass the US citizenship examination. In her fundraising project, Josefa learned “how [to get] more involved in the community.” Enrique remarked, “The [awareness] project help me a lot to obtain the necessary skills to get my citizenship.”

Lifelong learning skills. Participating adult learners in four separate fundraising projects described learning skills that contributed to how they might continue to learn in the future, such as getting experience in new areas of learning, learning to work with others, learning about the environment, and learning to use a computer. Josefa and Teresa wrote about gaining experience in their fundraising project. Teresa stated, “I gained knowledge... I gained experience.” “Personally [the fundraising] LEADERSHIP project has helped me as learning,” wrote their peer Lucia. Their program director remarked, “I think they learned that they could guide their learning.”



“I gained knowledge... I gained experience.” -- Teresa

In a separate fundraising project focused on recycling, Heath and Marta learned about the environment. Marta remembered, “I learn new things like a lot about [how to] recycle.” “I learned that recycling saves a lot of cost for the landfills,” explained Heath. Edward “also [developed] educational skills” in a third fundraising leadership project. In the fourth fundraising project Herlinda learned “How to use a computer”, thus “helping my reading.”

Still other adult learner leaders described the role of learning in their future learning experiences. A gain from her awareness project, wrote Bertha, was learning. "Learn, and still learning. I do a lot of reading. I'm almost there for my GED [test]" Bertha's project coordinator noticed that adult learners gained many skills which could be considered applicable to future learning, such as note taking, sentence structure, and time management.

Candace in the same project appeared excited about attending "our first leadership conference [that VALUEUSA] hosted in San Antonio, TX." Five leaders from their project presented a workshop on their adult learner leadership project at VALUEUSA's leadership institute in 2015, which Patricia described enthusiastically as "a great experience." Leaders from that project expressed wanting to attend future conferences to continue learning.

Teaching or mentoring skills. In her role as officer on a student council that developed a communication project, Patricia learned to mentor others. In Student Council, Patricia encouraged other adult learners to become "involved in our project in some way," she wrote. Patricia also perceived herself as gaining teaching skills as she reached out to peers in the project. "Trying to help others and teaching/guiding other people [usually] helps you to learn or reinforce what you are trying to teach or transmit."

Participant Changes in Attitude during the Leadership Project

As adult learner leaders changed behaviors and gained skills in leadership projects, many reported changes in their attitudes. Adults generally reported attitudes changing their orientation from the negative (or neutral) to positive. These attitudinal changes seem to reflect the depth of experience learners went through while participating, and they speak to the richness and meaningfulness of the project interactions and activities. Learners reported new-found respect for opinions and ideas, insights on collaboration, and gains in confidence.

When disaggregated by groups, participants from Connecticut and Kansas, men, adult learners 40 and older, and adult learners near the end of the program more often reported changes in attitude. Participants planning to take an HSE test next reported more frequently new-found respect for opinions and ideas and gains in confidence. Adult learners with average or below leadership self-ratings noted gains in confidence more often than their peers with outstanding leadership self-ratings.

New-found respect for opinions and ideas. Several adult learners described gaining a new-found respect for others' ideas and opinions. Part of showing that respect was listening to peers carefully and thoughtfully. Beatriz gained an understanding of "how to ... listen to other [people's responses]" in a fundraising project. "Everyone have an [opinion] and it's [important] to listen to each other," emphasized Kenesha about a separate fundraising project. She repeated, "I learn its [important] to listen to each other."

Referring to a third fundraising project, Antoinette found, “I have [gained] a lot of respect.” Ridge gained respect for his peers’ opinions as he worked with them on an awareness project in his community. “It helped me open my eyes to see that [everybody’s] opinions actually do matter.” Part of respecting others and listening was understanding the journeys others were on; Cecile reported learning about “knowing [other people’s] experiences” in her awareness project.

“I learned some insight into how the place worked and how the staff held [their] opinions... I learned how important compromising can be.” -- Wyatt

Insights on collaboration. A first insight on collaboration related to how adult learners perceived their own learning centers and the staff in the center. Wyatt wrote about the center where he worked on an awareness project, “I learned some insight into how the place worked and how the staff held [their] opinions.” The director of Wyatt’s program added that while collaborating adult learners “realized that leadership is hard and a big responsibility.” Wyatt gained new insight into making compromises while collaborating with others in the center: “I learned how important compromising can be.”

As part of a fundraising project, Janelle gained insights on collaborating in groups. In Janelle’s leadership project, she realized “how [important] it is for people to get involve [and] work together in [a group].” Paz and Lucia worked together on the same fundraising project. They each pointed out somewhat different insights on collaboration. Lucia wrote about how collaborating in the project impacted her personally: “Personally LEADERSHIP project has helped me as ...working with others.” Paz emphasized the importance of communication in collaborating successfully, finding “it is very necessary the communication to work in a good team and obtain good results.” Their program director believed that as adult learners worked on the project, “They learned to ask for what they needed and to ask questions... they are taking more pride in the program.”

Gain in confidence. An instructor on a communications project wrote, “Our students gained and learned many things from this project, but I think the most important thing they gained was confidence about what they could do.” Patricia, Rogelia, and Duong worked together on another communications project, which helped learners toward “some higher level of confidence,” per the project coordinator. All three learner leaders pointed to gains in confidence. Duong perceived his own gains in “character [and] prestige.” Rogelia wrote that she learned “to be more self-confident” as she participated in the project. Patricia’s self-confidence soared as she was selected as adult learner of the year in her state and won a nursing scholarship: “So I learnt how far you can go when you are committed to reach your goals.” One of their instructors on the project reported adult learners “said they gained confidence they did not have before.” Another instructor believed learner leaders gained “confidence in their abilities and pride in their accomplishments.

“What I gain personally as a leader,” she remarked, “I gain a lot of confidence in school and the work place knowing that I can achieved anything through hard work.” -- Nicole

The project coordinator of an awareness project saw that learners “gained confidence, team work, initiative, positive self-esteem and responsibility... [as they] spoke in front of groups, visited local churches so they could get more volunteer tutors, [and] attended community events.” One of the leaders in the project, Alma, reported learning to “Be more [confident]. Also: [feeling] confidence in getting in contact with the managers of different stores or services” was a gain for her.

A program director from a fundraising leadership project believed, “Learners gained self-confidence.” Jorge, who participated in this project, thought he gained “more confidence in speaking, reading, listening.” Nicole realized gains in self-confidence from working hard and making achievements during a separate fundraising project: “What I gain personally as a leader,” she remarked, “I gain a lot of confidence in school and the work place knowing that I can achieved anything through hard work.”

Participant Changes in Feelings during the Leadership Project

In addition to changes in attitudes, many adult learners experienced changes in their feelings as they worked on leadership projects – feelings about the adult education program and learning there, about leadership in general and the project specifically, and about themselves as leaders. In contrast to changes in attitude, changes in feelings tended to represent learner emotions rather than orientation. Adults from Texas and Connecticut reported more changes in feelings than their peers in other states, as did women compared with men. Adult learners under 40 noticed changes in their feelings about themselves. Participants near the end of the program observed changes in feelings about the project and themselves. Adults aspiring to keep their jobs reported changes in feelings about themselves and leadership. Adult learner leaders with outstanding leadership self-ratings saw changes in themselves, their feelings about the project and about leadership.

Feelings about the adult education program. Several adults expressed gratitude for the program or strove to give back by sharing their feelings about the program with others. On a fundraising project, Edward was eager to “tell others... how important [the program] is and much they can [achieve].” In another fundraising project, Antoinette observed that “the program really is a great program.” Following her communications project work, Saeda expressed feelings of gratitude: “I thank you for this center.”

Feelings about leadership. A few adult learners indicated that being in the leadership project inspired them, either to recognize their own feelings of responsibility as leaders or to take on a leadership role even more. Twins Jake and Lacey worked on an awareness project. As a leader, Jake felt the responsibility of having others follow him: “I made [sure] that [having] people that follow you mean[s] that [you are] good at leadership,” he wrote. Lacey felt ready to take on even more leadership responsibility: “I want to be a leader more,” she stated.

Youssef felt happy about leadership and learning as a leader in his communications project. “Still I am happy [to be] a leader to the project,” he explained, “because I will get knowledge.” Marcie felt ready to take on a leadership role in her community, stating that her fundraising project taught her “how to understand how to be a good leader in society.”

“Our project was amazing. [It’s] still happening.... I’m so happy to be part of our newsletter.” -- Bertha

Feelings about the leadership project. Feelings about the leadership project ran high for several adult learner leaders. “About my participation in the project I have a good experience,” enthused Diana, an adult learner in a communications project. Ari, in a separate communications project, felt a new appreciation for leadership. He wrote that the leadership project “was very good... [especially I] have [come] to [appreciate] leadership.” His peers Bertha and Oona shared his enthusiasm for the project. Oona wrote, “It was good and organized, helping the student that they need help.” Bertha had strong feelings about their project. “Our project was amazing. [It’s] still happening,” she gushed. “I’m so happy to be part of our newsletter.”

Other adult learner leaders appeared to feel invested in the leadership project and put in tremendous effort to make it happen. Based on her positive experience in another awareness project, Imelda felt prepared to influence others with her ideas. “I have a few [ideas] about what is the best for the project and student[s],” remarked Imelda about the project.

Feelings about self. A final change in feelings that participants described was about themselves. They described feelings of respect, reduced fear, and courage. From Antoinette’s leadership experience in a fundraising project, she realized, “I have [gained] a lot of respect.” She added, “I’ve... learned to stay [focused] on my goals.” Imelda, who felt encouraged to influence others as noted above, felt she conquered her fear of speaking up. “I used to feel afraid,” she wrote. “I can now speak with the people and I feel more [comfortable].”

Effects from the Leadership Project

Changes in behavior, in knowledge or skills, in attitudes or feelings can be expected to explain effects that occurred in leadership projects. Since control adult learners were not involved in leadership projects and therefore did not answer questions about gains or contributions, effects that participating adult learners noticed do not reflect the intervention per se and causality should not be inferred. Rather they explain the circumstances surrounding the outcomes of leadership projects. Results are organized into effects occurring on programs, participant workplaces, families, the leadership group, and individual adult learner leaders.

Effects on programs. Participants from Connecticut, women, and adults 40 and older tended to notice effects on a program more often than their counterparts. Adults who were near the end of the program saw effects related to fundraising, general program support, and planning more frequently. Learners with average or below leadership self-ratings saw program effects of fundraising more often,

and those who aspired to keep their jobs noticed program effects related to recruitment more frequently.

"I contributed ideas to help the program." -- Anna

"I got donations... I learned how to help our school." -- Betsy

Adult learners in four programs with fundraising emphases observed effects on their respective programs. One important effect was obtaining funding for the program. Chad related that his leadership group "worked together to organize an [awareness] event to help gain funding for the center." In Betsy's fundraising project, as she "got donations" to refurbish the center, she learned "how to help our school."

Another effect adult learners described on their programs was an infusion of new ideas from adult learners. In Anna's leadership project, she contributed "ideas to help the program." Lorene wrote about her group's fundraising project: "I contribute by working together to help come up with ideas on how to put a project together that will give us help on what we need [for our family literacy program]." These ideas helped not only the program but potentially the greater community. She saw that her group of adult learners working together on the leadership project "will help ourselves and [ultimately] help ...our community."

Effects on workplace. Although the projects did not explicitly relate to employment or workforce preparation, adult learners described how what they gained in their respective leadership projects spilled over into helping them get jobs, work with or manage others on the job, and build businesses. An effect of their awareness project for peers Alma and Enrique was employability skills. Both described gaining skills to apply for a job. Enrique wrote, "The project [helped] me a lot to obtain the necessary skills ... to have a job in [my] county."

Participating adult learners who already had jobs noticed effects on their workplace skills, particularly in working with others. Leonel found that from his communications project "I [am] learning to [understand] the [coworkers]."

Adult learners also noticed that learning leadership skills in the project could translate into the opportunity to lead at work. Jorge and Gloria worked together on a fundraising project to refurbish their center. Gloria wrote, "I have been the leader *hente* [for] my colleagues [at] work, ORGANIZE issues, *investigacioner*, and give each assignment." Jorge felt he gained "better performance at work." He saw the connection of the soft skills learned in leadership projects with useful workplace skills. He added, "I am happy to be manager now" at his workplace.

Nicole and Hermione, who collaborated on a fundraising project, saw increased workplace confidence and time management, respectively, from their project. Nicole stated, "As a leader[,] I gain a lot of confidence in ... the work place knowing that I can achieved anything through hard

"I gained better performance at work... I am happy to be manager now." -- Jorge

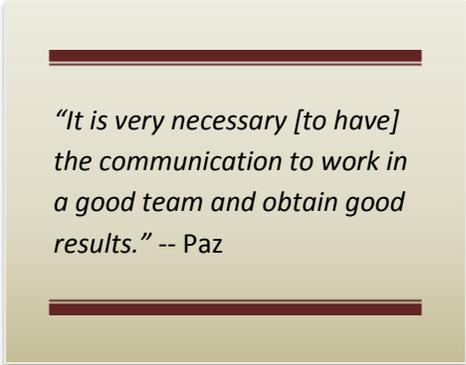
work.” Hermione felt the project helped her manage her time better to start a business: “[Planning a schedule] make it easier for ... any [business] you plan to open.”

Effects on family. Several adult learners noticed effects on their families from the project. Lorene thought that working together on the leadership project “will help ourselves and [ultimately] help our family.” The director of Lorene’s program added, “[Our adult learners] designed a project that also was important to the community and to their children.”

Siblings Antoine and Desiree saw intergenerational benefits as they helped their parents write an immigration story for an awareness project. Desiree remembers “[helping] my parents by [writing their] story in French” so that it could be translated for use in a project book. From her awareness project Imelda believed she gained by reading to her son and being able to “speak with his teacher frequently” in school.

Effects on group. Adult learners from Florida, in contrast to adults in other states, and men (rather than women) tended to notice effects on the leadership group most frequently. Adults under 40 saw effects on the group in terms of collaboration, help, and respect more often than did their older peers. Participants near the end of the program and those who aspired to a better job noted effects of group collaboration, effort, and respect more frequently. Adults with lower leadership ratings saw effects of group effort more often.

One benefit adult learner leaders noticed from their leadership projects was group cohesiveness. Anna, Rosa, and Francesca pointed to the cohesiveness and teamwork of the group as they decided on and developed a fundraising project. To her project teammates Anna contributed “planning the events to live with them as my companions.” Rosa added learning “how [to get] working as a team.” Francesca gained “how to share [responsibilities] and opinions with others, and together make a [successful] work.”



“It is very necessary [to have] the communication to work in a good team and obtain good results.” -- Paz

Adult learner leaders in another fundraising project, Paz and Yesenia, also described their closeness to their fellow group members. Yesenia remarked on “the participation of people who need each other.” Paz remembered, “It is very necessary [to have] the communication to work in a good team and obtain good results.”

Marta and Hermina saw advantages of making group decisions in another fundraising project. Marta learned “how to work in group. Have a team[.] Take [decisions] together.” Hermina observed, “We also as a group decided on recycling as our leadership project.” Their program director summarized, “This project gave the students an opportunity with decision making, organizational skills, working together with peers... The learners decided, implemented, and continued the entire project.”

Adult learners from other projects also saw the value of working together. In her fundraising project, Araceli recalled, “I worked very hard with my classmates. I participated...” From his awareness project, Chad learned “communicating with others[,] to put [together] a project, by working [together].” In Duong’s communications project, he saw a need “to share with [others, discussion and evaluate] experience.”

Effects on individuals. Earlier sections of this report described leadership effects on their own lives that individuals reported, such as gains in confidence and critical thinking. Other adults reported personal growth and a new desire to help others. Adult learners from Florida and Texas observed individual effects most often. Women, adults under 40, and those aspiring to keep their jobs tended to notice personal gains more often than men, older adults, and those with other aspirations.

Concerning personal gains from the project, Candace wrote, “I... [gained personally when I] participate in student council.” Josefa noted personal growth in experience, and Alma gained her citizenship. Kaitlyn believed she learned “new social interaction skills.”

A final effect on individuals was a new or renewed desire to help others. As a new leader, Lacey wanted “to be a leader more and help people more.” Patricia, a student council officer, continued to “help my classmates... by helping to get our Student Council going on, getting new members...” Oona was prepared to continue helping: “I still can help for the people [who] need my help.”

Participant Evaluation of the Leadership Project

Participant positive or negative evaluation of experiences with the leadership project was a third way coded data were classified. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) suggest this coding for qualitative data that “assign judgments about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policy” (p. 76). In ALLIES, 31 adult learners commented on evaluation; 20 learners evaluated experiences positively and 11 evaluated their participation negatively. Seven themes from positive evaluation excerpts were coded:

- 1) Participating in the project was a positive experience
- 2) Collaborating made the project successful
- 3) Participant was happy with the knowledge gained
- 4) Learner’s voice was heard
- 5) Doing the leadership project boosted learning English
- 6) The leadership project helped the family or community
- 7) The participant was thankful for the program

Adult learners who evaluated positively most often noted that participating in the project was a positive experience overall. “About my participation in the [communications] project I have a good experience,” wrote Diana. In a separate communications project, Ari found the leadership project “was very good... [especially I] have [come] to [appreciate] leadership.” To evaluate their experience, participating adult learners used words such as “happy” (Bertha), “good working” (Saeda), and “helped” (Lacey). One of Ari, Bertha, and Saeda’s instructors explained, “Learners started a newsletter and yearbook, and they were very active in encouraging other students, which has promoted greater retention, camaraderie, and achievement.” As described by Yasmina in an awareness project, “[The

director told] me to do the open house. I worked with the group. We made [brochures] and flyers. And we advertised. It was a great experience.”

“[The director told] me to do the open house. I worked with the group. We made [brochures] and flyers. And we advertised. It was a great experience.” -- Yasmina

Collaboration was another theme within positive evaluation of leadership projects. “By helping and agreeing with what we had in front of us to do,” Shirley perceived a contribution to her fundraising leadership project. One of her peers, Blanca, contributed by participating “in projects that the leadership project give to the group.” In an awareness project, Cynthia came to enjoy collaboration in a group: “I participated in group [activities]... I like group [activities].” One of Cynthia’s instructors added, “[Our adult learners] learned to work as a team to achieve a team goal.” A participant in a communications project emphasized the “we” of group collaboration: “We made it happen too. We [went] to all the

center in person to take pictures of all our five + six GED center.... It happen[ed] and we still made it happen.” (Bertha).

Adult learners who were happy with the knowledge they gained wrote about learning leadership skills (Lacey), as well as how to teach others what they had learned (Patricia). They used phrases such as “helped me open my eyes” (Ridge), being “on my way, happening soon” (Bertha), and “I change my way of life” (Youssef) to describe what the knowledge gained meant to them. Participants gained knowledge “that I can [achieve] anything through hard work” (Nicole), that “any step in the right direction gets things moving forward” (Chase), and about “how far you can go when you are committed to reach your goals” (Patricia).

Having their voice heard was part of a positive evaluation for some adult learners. Candace wrote, “[In the] first new [leadership]... class [we learned] our voice[s] matter... [The project] help me to speak well, [be a] good listener, voice my opinion.” Patricia recalled, which contributed to her winning a state award and a college scholarship.

A small number of learners evaluated the leadership project positively in that it boosted their English language learning or helped their family or community. Participants emphasized how being in the leadership project boosted learning English, especially speaking skills. Candace believed participation helped her “to speak well.” Other participants perceived that the leadership project helped them be a valuable member of their family or community. Eleanor stated, “I learned that I have a voice in my community.” Working together with other leaders, Lorene believed, “will help ourselves and ultimate help our family and our community.”

“So from that learning experience I change my way of life.” -- Youssef

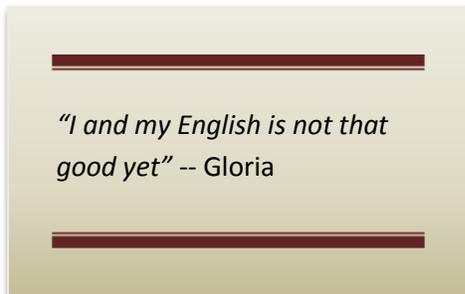
Adult learners who evaluated the leadership project negatively referred to issues reflecting one of four themes: little or no involvement in the project, not being a leader, poor attendance, and their project did not teach speaking. Seven of the 11 excerpts pointed to adult learners' minimal involvement.

Learners wrote that they hadn't participated, didn't work on the project, or didn't contribute. Elvira did not participate in an awareness leadership project. Her peer, Emily, did not remember the leadership project at all a year later. One of their instructors noted, "In my opinion, it did not go well." Their program director wrote that the effort was "not really an enriching experience given our ultimate lack of a project." An instructor on a separate awareness project with poor participation observed that

"there seemed to be little 'buy-in' from the learners on this project. They all seemed internally focused, as opposed to being focused on the learning community... or serious issues that they even wanted to address. They seemed to just go through the motions in order to receive the awards card... I believe [the lack of focus] was a big factor in there being so little interest."

One adult learner (Oona) who did not want to be a leader stated, "But I don't be a leader. I still can help for the people need my help but [just] don't want that position. I wasn't participating [in] any leadership [position]." Oona's project coordinator added, "Many students were unable to make a commitment to a project, but any amount of involvement was beneficial."

The participant who wrote about poor attendance (Chad) wrote that "not many students stuck around" in the program. An instructor in the same program agreed: "Participation significantly dropped off." The instructor pointed to "adult learners' responsibility / accountability in their participation (or lack thereof)" rather than placing responsibility on the staff or the program. She wrote, "Perhaps the [VALUEUSA] Project needs to look at how they teach / inform students on their relevance."



Two final negative comments about speaking English were: "I learned a lot in listening, but I need to talk" (Yessica) and "I and my English is not that good yet" (Gloria). Gloria described only being able to contribute "50%" of the time because of low English speaking skills.

When positive evaluation comments were disaggregated by group, men, adults 40 and older, adults from Kansas and Texas, learners near the end of the program, those with college aspirations, and self-rated outstanding leaders tended to make positive evaluative comments. Men tended to be happy with the knowledge they gained, to note that their voice was heard, and to perceive a boost in learning English more than women. Adult learners with college aspirations tended to especially note they were happy with the knowledge they gained through the leadership project. Self-rated outstanding leaders pointed to the boost in learning English and perceived that collaboration among group members made the project successful.

In further disaggregation of negative evaluations, women, adults 40 and older, adults from Colorado and Texas, learners who just started in the program, learners with HSE test aspirations, and self-rated average or below leaders tended to evaluate more negatively than their counterparts. More specifically, those with HSE test aspirations and self-rated average or below leaders indicated little or no involvement in the project. Other disaggregation associated with negative evaluation was not feasible because of limited response.

Causation

A last way data were coded contributed themes of causation. Causation coding “extracts attributions or causal beliefs from participant data about not just how but why particular outcomes came about” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 79). Specifically, it contributes more information to discern processes, interrelationships, and complex influences surrounding leadership. In ALLIES data, 16 excerpts dealt with causation. Two of the most frequent themes touched on responsiveness and planning. Other less prevalent themes considered the sequences of causation associated with benefits of hard work, learner voice, and working in groups to solve problems or help family or community.

Group disaggregation indicates Florida adult learners and adults 40 and above tended to see causal ideas and influences in their projects more often than their younger counterparts and those from other states. Women, participants with lower leadership self-ratings, and those who were unsure of future goals tended to observe responsiveness leading to success more than men, leaders with outstanding leadership self-ratings, and those with defined aspirations. Adult learners near the end of the program noticed planning ahead as benefitting the project more frequently than peers at other progress levels.

The first causation theme looks at learner responsiveness as leading to success of the leadership project. Leona, in response to an awareness leadership project, learned how to recruit volunteers and did so successfully at a local church. “I invited [volunteers to tutor] and 3 [accepted].” Participating in meetings and being responsive to the needs of the project also led to success, per another learner. “I went to meetings,” wrote Eleanor. “I did all that was asked to make our project a [success].” In at least one instance responsiveness and project success also led in turn to success in other facets of life. Participating in the project, going to meetings, speaking out, and reaching out to the community “will help ourselves and [ultimately] help our family and our community”, stated a participant (Alma).

“I invited [volunteers to tutor] and 3 [accepted].” -- Leona

Working in the project “will help ourselves and [ultimately] help our family and our community” -- Alma

“ORGANIZE things right and everything goes well as we want” -- Carolina

Three participants saw planning ahead, a second theme under causation, as benefitting the project and its outcomes. A first step in planning for one learner (Anna) was “planning the events to live with them [other learners] as my companions.” Getting organized was also essential to the project: “ORGANIZE things right and everything goes well as we want,” wrote Carolina. Reaching consensus on how to proceed with the plans also supported the chances of a successful project, per Shirley. “By helping and agreeing with

what we had in front of us to do”, this learner and others in the same group contributed to a fundraising project. The result? “Making the project even easier to go forth.”

Other causation-related reflections adult learner leaders made centered on the benefits of hard work, learner voice, and working in groups to solve problems or help family or community. Nicole, a learner from a fundraising project, wrote about a connection between hard work, confidence, and achievement: “What I [gained] personally as a leader...[was] a lot of confidence in school and the work place knowing that I can achieved anything through hard work.” For Nicole, starting with hard work and making achievements led to greater self-confidence, not only in the adult education program but also on the job.

Two participants wrote about what happened when they found voice. Another leader in the tutor recruitment effort (Lourdes) saw the sequence of causation leading from her action to her voice to response of others to action of others. She told a group “about the project and [they listened] to me and came to tutor.” A learner leader who participated in a recycling effort to raise funds (Eleanor) noticed the sequence as first involving learning about voice, then her action leading to voice and to further action: “I learned how to [communicate] with others and I learned that I have a voice in my community. and I learned how to make my opinion count and my voice heard.” For this leader, the learning process stood out more than the response of the community.

Sequences of causation surrounding collaboration were also described in participant writing. Another participant in the recycling effort (Lorene) noticed what she learned about collaboration led to her action of sharing ideas in a group setting, and the group’s action in turn led to the group receiving a response from the community. “I learned how to work together. To come in with ideas and conclusions to get help for the thing we would need. That will help ourselves and [ultimately] help our family and our community.” Lorene further noted that in addition to sharing ideas, she helped plan the fundraising project itself: “I contribute by working together to help come up with ideas on how to put a project together.” A participant in the same project (Blanca) noticed a similar connection of learning with collaboration and action, this time for solving problems. “I learned about the importance to work in [a] group to decide how to resolve any problem.”

“I learned about the importance to work in [a] group to decide how to resolve any problem.” -- Blanca

As a final reflection on collaboration, a learner leader of a communications project saw the sequence of causation as starting with the action of sharing ideas with others leading to learning and gaining knowledge, which this young man found life changing. “Honestly I tell [you], [I learned] so many things even [as] I [shared] my idea to anybody else. So from that learning experience I change my way of life [...] still I am happy [to be] a leader to the project because I will get [knowledge].”

Conclusion

Adult learners responded in numerous ways about their gains, experiences, and contributions in leadership projects. The perceptions or notations of the adult learner explain how he or she perceived changes, effects, or causes and how he or she evaluated leadership as positive or negative. As they wrote about their experiences, learner leaders described a wide range of changes in action or behavior, in knowledge or skills, or in attitudes or feelings. Participants noted numerous effects on programs, workplace, family, groups, and individuals. They more often evaluated their experiences positively than negatively. Themes on causation touched on responsiveness and planning, the benefits of hard work, learner voice, and working in groups to solve problems or help family or community.

The themes presented in this report offer much detail and description of the rich experiences that adult learners and staff underwent in their projects. In fact, the amount of material they offered in response to two brief questions is striking. Even though many appeared to struggle with writing the English language or with communicating their points clearly, most participants had much to say. Their writing was positive overall and communicated how meaningful leadership projects tended to have been to their peers and themselves.

At the same time, their words offer many “lessons learned” which could be considered as topics of discussion for future planning purposes. VALUEUSA and prospective leadership sponsors are encouraged to review these qualitative findings to answer questions they may have about the nature of projects, the roles learner leaders and staff take, and how to prepare future learners to get started as leaders. Prospective leaders could read these peer experiences together and discuss them as they organize themselves and plan ahead.

An instructor in an awareness project summarized these qualitative findings insightfully as she made her own statement about the leadership project she supported. She remarked:

I learned that adult learners are very efficient, effective and productive leaders. When they are brought together in an organized way, they can put themselves into committees, plan, decide and act on projects, and get the job done (sometimes more effectively than staff and certainly with much more enthusiasm).

The qualitative findings are offered, then, in this same spirit, with a hope that future learner leaders may benefit from what their predecessors gained, as they enthusiastically seek to “get the job done” in leadership.

References

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Appendix: Qualitative Method

Eighty (80) participating adult learners and 21 participating staff responded to questions on learner gains and contributions. Adult learners are given pseudonyms (see Table A1) to acknowledge their uniqueness as individuals and describe their key demographic characteristics without violating confidentiality of their identities. Learners who are native speakers of English are identified in italics in Table 2; all other adult learners in the table are English language learners. Staff members correspond to the projects of the adult learners and are designated in the narrative by their primary program role.

Table A1. ALLIES Participating Adult Learners by Gender, Age, and Leadership Project Type

Project Type	Gender	Young	Middle-Aged	Elderly
Fundraising	Women	Beatriz, Julia, Herlinda, Marta, Hermina, <i>Antoinette</i> , Bella	<i>Betsy</i> , Gloria, Elena, Josefa, Paz, Lucia, Teresa, Anna, Carolina, Francesca, Rosa, Martina, Luz, Niecy, Ofelia, <i>Lorene</i> , <i>Shirley</i> , <i>Eleanor</i> , Blanca, <i>Wanda</i> , Araceli, <i>Nicole</i> , <i>Marcie</i> , <i>Hermione</i> , <i>Kenesha</i>	Yesenia, <i>Janelle</i>
	Men	[none]	<i>Jorge</i> , <i>Heath</i> , <i>Hector</i>	[none]
Awareness	Women	<i>Kaitlyn</i> , <i>Emily</i> , <i>Lacey</i> , <i>Cynthia</i> , Rufia	Elvira, <i>Lourdes</i> , Yessica, Leona, Imelda, Tina, Yasmina	Alma, Louise
	Men	<i>Chad</i> , <i>Ridge</i> , <i>Jake</i> , <i>Chase</i> , <i>Michael</i> , <i>Wyatt</i>	Orlando	Enrique
Communications	Women	<i>Desiree</i> , Oona	Diana, Cecile, Delia, Katya, Frederica, Saeda, Bertha, Patricia, Rogelia, Manuela, Sofia	<i>Candace</i>
	Men	Youssef, Ahmed, <i>Antoine</i>	Jean Luc, Leonel, Ari	Duong
Total	Women	14	43	5
	Men	9	7	2

Note: All adult learner names have been changed to preserve learner confidentiality; pseudonyms in *italics* designate native English speakers.

Adult learners responded in phrases and sentences that were captured in 13 groups of codes, as displayed in Table A2, and in 427 excerpts overall. Qualitative data were coded in Dedoose 7.5 and organized in three ways: logical classification of processes (Patton, 2002) involving changes that participants experienced (4 code groups) and effects that participants noticed (6 code groups), positive or negative evaluation (2 code groups; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014), and causation (one code group; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). All three ways encompass the perceptions or notations of the adult learner – that is, how he or she perceived the causes, changes, or effects and how he or she evaluated the experiences as positive or negative.

Table A2. Major Code Groups for ALLIES Participant Final Year Gains and Contributions

Organization Method	Major Code Group	Specific Codes (N)	Excerpts (N)
Changes	Action or Behavior	13	125
	Knowledge	13	98
	Attitude	9	21
	Feelings	5	20
Effects	Group	1	40
	Individual	9	50
	Peers outside Group	1	5
	Program	4	14
	Workplace	1	6
	Family	1	4
Evaluation	Positive	7	29
	Negative	4	11
Causation	Causation	8	16
Total		76	427

Where enough participating adult learners commented in areas of changes, effects, evaluation, or causation to make disaggregation feasible, differences were analyzed. Demographic disaggregation occurred by participant gender (women or men), age group (less than 40 years or 40 years and older), and state (i.e., CO, CT, FL, KS, NJ, or TX). Data were further disaggregated, when feasible, based on items collected in the ALLIES survey: progress made in the program (just started, about halfway through, near the end, or already finished), priority aspiration (keep a job, get a better job, take an HSE test, go to college or university, or not sure yet), and leadership self-rating (1-8 for average or below leaders or 9-10 for outstanding leaders).