



IN THE BUSINESS OF NONPROFITS

CLEAR Circles: Learning Circles of Nonprofit Executive Directors and Emerging Leaders

For more than eight years, The Nonprofit Center has facilitated a new approach to leadership growth and development for both executive directors and for future non-profit leaders. These "CLEAR Circles" (Cultivating Leadership Excellence and Responsibility) create an ongoing peer group to freely discuss issues that other nonprofit executive directors (or emerging leaders) best understand.

They are for professionals who want to participate in a personal brain trust where they can jointly problem-solve among peers who are equally committed to increasing their leadership capacity.

We have successfully applied this model to executive directors at all experience levels to newer executives, senior staff reporting to the executive director and women leaders in organizations serving women and girls (through the Valentine Foundation.)

CLEAR Circles consist of seven or eight individuals who meet monthly for two hours over eight months, with a professional facilitator. Discussion is driven and shaped by group members, with the goal of helping each other achieve goals through an action learning experience. Problem-solving, professional development and peer support are all by-products emerging from this confidential, supportive environment. CLEAR Circles can be geographically-oriented and built on a rolling calendar, depending upon interest. In other words, you can help us start a CLEAR Circle in a preferred location.

For Emerging Nonprofit Leaders

If you're paying attention, you're aware of the coming leadership gap in the nonprofit sector. Studies indicate that by 2016, we will need to attract and develop 640,000 new senior managers to replace departing leaders. That's 2.4 times the current number currently employed in those roles. The Nonprofit Center's own survey found that 71 percent of our current leaders plan to exit their jobs in the coming year. So where will tomorrow's nonprofit leaders come from? How are they being prepared to take over these formidable responsibilities? The future of the nonprofit world really lies in the answers to these questions.

We are addressing this looming problem through programs designed to develop and nurture potential future leaders and if you are an executive or board member committed your organization's survival, you need to be developing its "bench strength," by supporting emerging leaders while there's still time. And if you are part of this next generation, you need to be committed to developing the skills, strengths and leadership attributes that will guide the organizations you will serve.

CLEAR Circles for Emerging Leaders evolved from the cutting-edge program The Nonprofit Center first developed to provide a unique forum for executive directors to jointly problem-solve, brainstorm and support each other. We have now taken this concept a step further with CLEAR Circles for Emerging Leaders.

Our leaders are among the top two resources (after funding, of course) we depend on to fulfill our missions. The greatest gift you can give to ensure your organization's future is to create a legacy of leadership by fostering its future leaders.

And if you are possibly among the next generation of nonprofit leaders, you owe it to yourself to be prepared for the responsibilities that may await you. Your participation once a month for eight months in a CLEAR Circle of your peers, directed by a trained facilitator, will help empower you with the insight, confidence and problem-solving skills that will serve both you and your organization.

For more information about CLEAR Circles for current or future leaders, contact The Nonprofit Center at 215-951-1701, nonprofitcenter@lasalle.edu or read more on our website.