Leadership Development for Local Government Executives: Balancing Existing Commitments and Emerging Needs

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Abstract

This paper examines the question of how leadership development in local government can address contemporary competencies that correspond with collaborative governance. The ascendance of collaborative governance across the field of public administration necessitates a rethinking of what the core competencies of public managers are and how they might be developed. Here we identify some of these core leadership competencies and examine the extent to which local government executives need to better develop them. We then turn to two local government executive development programs to explore different approaches to training for these emerging competency needs and the impact of those approaches on collaborative competency development.
Introduction

Here at the 100th anniversary of Frederick Taylor’s seminal work, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), we observe how much the conception of leadership has changed. Our understanding of leadership has evolved as core themes like motivation, performance, and human interaction have developed and become more sophisticated (Yukl 2010). “Great man” or “trait” theories were over time replaced by more complex, behaviorally-based theories of leadership. However, the traditional notion of leadership as focusing on leaders (usually in positions of authority) and followers, almost always in an organizational context, remains dominant in both popular conceptions of leadership and in programs that seek to develop leaders.

What characterized leadership in 20th-century organizations shaped by Taylor’s scientific management paradigm contrasts with emerging, contemporary organizational priorities of the 21st century. Today’s leadership context, particularly in the public sector, is interorganizational. In public administration in particular this shift corresponds with an emerging collaborative governance paradigm that is decentering the field, taking it away from a focus on hierarchy, toward a focus on networks and partnerships—what is happening across organizational boundaries.

While it is important to understand how the definition of leadership has transformed over time, it is equally important to also consider the connected task of developing leaders. Iles and Preece (2006) highlighted this need by noting that public leadership development programs must expand their efforts to build the competencies that create value both within organizations and beyond. The influence of collaborative governance on leadership competencies is a topic we have considered previously (Getha-Taylor 2008; Morse 2008) and continue in this work. While identifying such competencies is important, considering how these align with leadership
development program components is necessary to assess training gaps and opportunities for improvement.

The transition from leading within organizations to leading beyond them places new demands on leadership development training programs. Despite valuable guidance regarding leadership development *within* public organizations (see Van Wart 2003; 2011), important questions remain on balancing traditional (organizational) approaches with new (interorganizational) demands. Drawing upon the growing body of literature on collaborative competencies as well as the expansive literature on leadership development, this paper draws on experiences and data from two local government leadership development programs at varying stages of implementation to address the call to develop leaders who can achieve results both within traditional organizational structures and also across organizational and sectoral boundaries.

This paper utilizes program-specific information to offer insights and respond to the question presented in Getha-Taylor et al. (2011): “Which programs, strategies, and curricula are most appropriate to build and nurture leadership skills for public leadership ‘across boundaries?’” We first review some of the literature on these emerging “collaborative” competencies and present data that supports the many arguments calling for the development of these competencies in public leaders. We also ask how training curriculum ought to adapt to balance existing and emerging leadership development priorities. We do so by presenting insights from two local government executive programs in North Carolina and Kansas. We then examine data collected from program participants to see what it tells us about which programmatic components are best suited to develop collaborative leadership competencies. We
conclude with some discussion of the implications of this research and offer advice for others engaged in training public sector executives.

**Balancing Existing and Emerging Leadership Development Priorities**

In 2011, the public sector continues to face substantial cutbacks. Severe economic pressures are reshaping expectations for public service and the individuals who provide such services. In the authors’ states of residence, for instance, recent headlines illustrate the impact. In Kansas, overall budget cuts of 5-6% are expected and will hit hardest at the local level. Senator Carolyn McGinn summarized the bare bones budget as a catalyst that should “wake up a population of individuals that are going to find out what services government provides because there’s going to be a lot of these services that are no longer there,” (*Kansas City Star*, May 11). Meanwhile, in North Carolina, efforts to reconcile the state’s projected budget gap of $2.5 billion will come largely at the expense of school funding, which would “decimate public education,” (*WRAL*, May 4).

These are by no means isolated examples. Unfortunately, particularly at the local level, governments across the nation are faced with severely limited resources and also increased demand for services (*Okubo 2010*). Rising demand for critical local services such as public safety and health services will require job growth, a priority that will undoubtedly be challenged by budgetary constraints (*Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010*). Given these conflicting forces of increased demand and decreased capacity, public employees are stretched and stressed. In a recent public forum, for example, public employee Karin Gallo, asked President Obama what he would do if he were in her position: expecting a child, building a home, working for government, and in danger of losing her job. Obama used the opportunity to publicly defend public employees and the service they provide at the federal, state, and local levels (*CBS*, May 12). This
underscores the vital importance of both creative solutions to pressing governance problems and also the development of leaders to guide such solutions in local government.

Understanding the ways in which public organizations cultivate leaders who can successfully address the complex challenges of the 21st century is a priority (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2006). Regrettably, as Light (2011) laments, leadership is still mostly taught using the “great-man theory” although the reality of public leadership today rests on a foundation of “collective” leadership. While traditional models of leadership development help clarify the challenges of leading within organizational boundaries, the demands associated with working across organizational and sector boundaries to address shared challenges requires new leadership paradigms (Linden 2010). Connected to this, the ways in which we define public leaders and associated leadership competencies requires innovative training techniques that also reflect the transformation of governance (Morse and Buss 2008).

The transformation of government-centered problem solving to boundary-spanning collaborative governance illustrates the challenge of leading in the 21st century. Complex problems and resource interdependence highlight the inadequacies of antiquated organizational structures and also the need for new forms of leadership. Working effectively today requires new paradigms, reformed cultures, and training to support these goals. As noted by Marsh (2010), “the number one challenge for public, not-for-profit and for-profit organizations is leading beyond boundaries” (546). This challenge is reflected in the transformation of leadership study and practice over time (see Van Wart 2009). As noted by Siegel and Siegel (2007), the “interdependence, complexity, convergence, cosmopolitanism, and connectedness” that characterizes the 21st century world is not entirely new; what is new is the speed of change.
Related to this, the expectation for individual and organizational transformation is also accelerated.

Scholarship and practice together note the ways in which leadership must adapt to changing mandates, expectations, and climates. So too should leadership development adapt accordingly. The traditional model of leadership development, focusing on leading within bounded hierarchy and via command-and-control must be moderated with an additional focus on collaborative problem solving, working in flattened structures, and incentivizing behavior in new ways. As public managers work across boundaries to solve complex public problems, the ways in which they lead will be influenced by this changing context. Conflict resolution, engaging the public, and balancing ethical priorities will all be influenced by the new landscape of public leadership (O’Leary, Bingham, & Choi 2009).

The study of leadership and leadership competencies is often considered generically and broadly to span organizations and sectors (see Yukl 2010). However, notably absent from such treatments is a focus on leadership development at the local government level. Yet, it is at this level where the exercise of public leadership (or the lack thereof) is perhaps most evident to citizens. Further, it is at this level, where leadership is needed most acutely given the service demands and prevailing negative perceptions of public service (cityhallfellows.org). This paper addresses this challenge by examining two separate efforts designed to cultivate leadership skills in local government managers. The (North Carolina) PELA program and (Kansas) SLT program integrate traditional leadership development models with contemporary content delivery approaches. First we turn to the question of what leadership competencies are associated with this emerging collaborative governance paradigm.
Considering Emerging Leadership Competencies and Collaborative Skills

Understanding of competencies for public leadership is beginning to catch up with our knowledge of collaborative management and governance. Getha-Taylor’s (2008) study of high performers’ scores on OPM’s Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) found that the most significant competencies for collaborative effectiveness are (a) interpersonal understanding, (b) teamwork and cooperation, and (c) team leadership. These results are significant in that stand in contrast to what OPM identifies as key competencies for building coalitions. U.S. OPM identifies (a) political savvy, (b) negotiating/influencing, and (c) partnering as critical to building relationships outside an employee’s organization. Although there is a shared emphasis on team leadership both in Getha-Taylor’s findings and in OPM’s list of ECQs, OPM’s focus on organizational awareness and relationship building as the primary keys to collaborative success were not supported by her findings. Instead interpersonal understanding and teamwork/cooperation are found as keys to collaborative effectiveness.

Morse (2008) examined the question of collaborative competencies by comparing what the literature on collaborative leadership identifies as competencies and compared that with an exhaustive list of competencies for “public service leadership” (meaning, administrative leadership or leadership in public organizations) identified by Van Wart (2011). Those competencies that were in addition to the ones identified for organizational leadership was presented in terms of “attributes, skills, and behaviors,” similar to how Van Wart organizes competencies in his work. Attributes include systems thinking and a sense of mutuality. Skills include strategic thinking and facilitation. Behaviors include stakeholder identification, issue framing, and facilitating mutual learning processes. A summary of “collaborative competencies” is found in Table 1 below.
Other scholars in public administration have given attention to the identification of strategies and related competencies for collaborative governance. One example is a recent book on networked government which is closely aligned with conceptions of collaborative governance (Koliba, Meek, and Zia 2011). The authors’ strategies for network management are similar to the other works of collaborative competencies: oversight; mandating; providing resources; negotiation and bargaining; facilitation; participatory governance / civic engagement; brokering; boundary-spanning; and systems thinking. Bingham, Sandfort, and O’Leary (2008) similarly outline what they refer to as the “capabilities” of “collaborative public managers.” Included in their list are items such as network design, meeting facilitation, conflict management, and evaluating outcomes.

Perhaps the most exhaustive work to date on collaborative competencies is the result of a working group of the University Network for Collaborative Governance (UNCG) created the “Draft Collaborative Competencies for Public Managers and Planners” (2010). In 2009 the working group conducted an extensive review of numerous sources of competencies for leadership and collaboration including the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Executive Core Competencies, the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), the Cooperative Extension System, and the Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership in British Columbia. This work is the most extensive and thorough examination to-date on competencies specifically for collaborative governance. Table 2 presents a summary of the competencies list.
While the “leadership and management skills” category includes much of what is unique about leadership in collaborative contexts and other categories may apply more broadly to generic leadership (e.g. communications skills or integrity), we find that the UNCG work is consistent with what the other research on leadership competencies for collaborative governance. In addition to what we might call traditional leadership attributes and skills we see a new emphasis on situation assessment and what might be termed as “process” and “design” skills.

There is certainly nuance and ambiguity to be found in any distillation of collaborative competencies versus traditional competencies. However, at the core there is a set of behaviors (and related attributes and skills) that revolves around understanding and identifying stakeholders, convening them, designing appropriate processes for them, facilitating agreements amongst them, designing appropriate governance arrangements for agreements reached, and keeping them together to implement what is decided. Working with external stakeholders in this fashion is clearly a different set of activities and requisite competencies than goal-oriented organizational leadership. But while there is an emerging agreement on the nature of this expanded set of competencies, it remains to be seen how best to develop those in others.

One natural question at this point is whether current public leaders already have these competencies. There are numerous calls for developing this new set of competencies in public (administrative) leaders, based on an assumption that their skill-set is by-and-large intra-organizational. Data from the PELA program (discussed in more detail below), suggests that the assumptions are correct. PELA participants in the most recent four years (2007-2010) were asked...
to fill out a self-assessment based on a list of statements. Some of the questions had to do with leadership generically while others were more closely aligned with specific collaborative competencies. As Table 3 demonstrates, scores on explicitly collaborative statements scored lower than those more generic leadership qualities.

<<Table 3 Here>>

**How to Develop these Competencies in Others**

Day (2000) contrasts approaches by thinking of them in terms of 1) leader development, and 2) leadership development. It is the former that represents the more traditional individual-focused training efforts centering on personal knowledge, power, and self-awareness, while emerging needs highlight the value of the latter. Leadership development contrasts with leader development by focusing on the social and relational aspects of leading. While leadership classrooms remain popular, Day emphasizes a new view of leadership development that extends beyond training sessions to networking, action learning, and mentoring.

Day chronicles the evolution of contemporary leadership development, including the refining of methods to address changing leadership needs: “Developing individual leaders without concern for reciprocal relations among people or their interactions within a broader social context ignores the research demonstrating that leadership is a complex interaction between individuals and their social and organizational environments” (605). As part of this transition, Day notes the importance of action (project-based) learning and peer development opportunities (mentoring, networking) as part of contemporary leadership development programs.
Bingham, Sandfort, and O’Leary (2008) argue that collaborative public management requires both new methods and revised content that balances the need for knowledge and the need for application. They submit that the new competencies required for effective collaborative management are best learned through “active and experiential learning” (283). Both PELA and SLT leadership development programs provide hybrid instructional methods that include traditional and contemporary approaches.

**Considering Development of and Evaluation of Expanded Competencies**

The foundation of contemporary training and development efforts is adult learning theory. As Berman et al (2010) note, this theory “emphasizes the extensive experiences of adults, interest in self-improvement and problem solving, and preferences for active participation and exercise of some control in learning,” (279). Thus, traditional models of instruction are less suited to the needs of adult learners. As noted by Mezirow (1997), it is only through critical reflection, engaging with new groups, experiencing other cultures that we can begin to become self-aware and transform “interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of view,” (7). Adult learners need to master new content, but they must also consider the ways their own assumptions influence that process. Also, they must learn to recognize other frames of reference and also learn to work with others to solve problems and accomplish shared goals.

In the context of public management specifically, Denhardt (2001) considers the various developmental needs and managerial skills that are most relevant to students and practitioners. A key component of Denhardt’s analysis centers on the development of “interpersonal” skills that rest on an understanding of others as well as personal self-reflection. This treatment considers the various ways of developing these critical needs, including the value of traditional, classroom-style instruction as well as experiential learning opportunities. This focus helps to illustrate
Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle, which includes experience, observation, abstraction, and experimentation. Contemporary approaches that illustrate the cycle components are expected to contribute to improved learning outcomes as a result. A remaining question centers on how best to evaluate this development, however.

Evaluation of training outcomes is critical at the local level. Especially in a time of decreased resources, the investment of scarce dollars into training programs is scrutinized. It is estimated that local government leadership training programs are offered in less than half of all states (govleaders.org) but with a streamlined workforce and increased demands, training could not be more important. Regrettably, as a result of the economic recession, funding for training has been restricted (Ammons and Fleck 2010) or eliminated altogether (Johnson 2010) in many local governments. To help fill this need, organizations such as the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) offer training sessions around a variety of broad development needs. While valuable, such programs necessarily cannot speak to the specific context of each individual’s jurisdiction, including the unique collaborative challenges or opportunities.

Noting the unique needs of public employees, the ways in which local governments approach training and development efforts should reflect both adult learning priorities and contemporary developmental needs. While program specifics vary widely, there are some shared themes found across programs, including: legal issues, building teams, communication, motivation and coaching, customer service, conflict resolution, delegation, feedback and performance appraisal. Traditionally, the evaluation of such programs centers on reactions to the training experience. Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) encourage program evaluators to move beyond reaction only evaluation to evaluate higher-order outcomes, including: learning, behavior, and results. One specific learning objective used in other leadership training programs
(as discussed in Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2006) is improved individual self-awareness, which is assessed via reflection and self-assessment.

**Research Context: Two Leadership Programs, Reflective of Evolution**

This study draws on data from two local government leadership development programs to better understand aspects of collaborative leadership development. Both programs highlight competencies that fall outside the sphere of traditional (organizational) leadership, demonstrating inclusion and, in the case of PELA, a sole focus, on community or collaborative leadership. The two programs illustrate emerging training and development approaches that emphasizes adult learning theory and contemporary instructional models.

**The Public Executive Leadership Academy (PELA)**

The Public Executive Leadership Academy (PELA) is two-week, residential leadership program run by the UNC School of Government for local government managers, assistant managers, and department heads. Its development was a direct response to demand from local government managers in North Carolina for their own senior-level leadership program. The program was launched in 2005 and has been offered annually since then. The average cohort size is 25.

PELA is distinctive for its focus on “community leadership” and consideration of local government managers as “change agents” in their communities (Stenberg, Upshaw, and Warner 2008). This focus on community (or collaborative) leadership was not a reflection of what was happening in the academic literature, however. Rather, it was in response to specific direction from the North Carolina City and County Management Association (NCCCMA), whose representative’s initially approached the School of Government about developing such a program.
Representatives from NCCCMA and ICMA worked with School of Government faculty to design the program, and the community/collaboration focus emerged from those interactions. Additionally, regional focus groups were held with municipal and county managers from across North Carolina to ascertain their major challenges and issues, what they feel they needed to manage those issues, priorities for training programs, and program design preferences (Stenberg, Upshaw, and Warner 2008, 102-3). Several collaborative governance-related themes prominently emerged in these discussions, including specifically intergovernmental relations and citizen engagement. Skills identified included facilitation, conflict resolution, collaborative decision making, and communication. These results were consistent with trends in the field identified by Nalbandian (1999) and competencies cited above.

PELA was designed around these collaborative competencies and advertised as a mid to senior level leadership program focused on community leadership (as opposed to other programs’ focus on organizational leadership). Modules on situation assessment, stakeholder analysis and engagement, group facilitation, and group decision-making and creativity form the core of PELA’s curriculum. The skill development components are framed within several context-setting sessions on the changing nature of local governance, community values, and social equity. Additionally, a 360 degree assessment on “community leadership competencies” (filled out by participants and their colleagues within their organization as well as in the community) is used to help participants identify areas of strength and needed improvement. Concepts and skills are applied throughout and after the program in a “community change project” identified and spear-headed by participants.
Supervisory Leadership Training (SLT)

The Kansas Supervisory Leadership Training (SLT) program is a three-day session designed by the University of Kansas’ Public Management Center (PMC) specifically for mid-level public managers. The PMC is the “professional development arm” of the University of Kansas’ Department of Public Administration. The PMC manages a variety of professional development programs, including the Certified Public Manager program, the Emerging Leaders Academy, and customized courses as requested.

The SLT program curriculum provides instruction on diverse supervisory topics that span individual leadership development (including leadership styles) organizational challenges (such as conflict management, teambuilding, and performance appraisal) as well as collaboration. Content is delivered via a variety of instructional tools and techniques, including: lecture, multimedia presentations, self-assessments, group discussions, scenarios, and (optional) follow-up peer consultations.

While the SLT program is available for cities throughout Kansas, this investigation centers on data collected from sessions offered in 2010-2011 for managers from a single Kansas city. The city’s mid-level managers (total of 167 at the start of program) were enrolled in the SLT program. Eight SLT sessions were scheduled over the course of nine months to average approximately 20 participants at each training session.

We now turn to data collected from program participants to explore how local government managers understand this changing landscape and the resulting demands in terms of individual competencies. Further, we explore the extent to which these programs and the methods employed impact participants’ confidence in working in collaborative contexts.
Data and Methods

This investigation presents original quantitative and qualitative data to explore the research goals presented above. The quantitative analysis centers on the Kansas Supervisory Leadership Training program evaluation. The methodology adopted is the switching replications approach (Trochim and Donnelly 2007) that allows for members of a single group (mid-level managers from a single city) to act alternatively as treatment and control groups. For the purposes of this investigation, treatment is participation in the leadership development program. Individuals in the treatment group completed the training as of March 2011. A survey was administered following the March training and ended prior to the start of the April training session. Members of the control group had not completed the training session as of March 2011, but are scheduled to participate later in 2011. The switching replications methodology is particularly well-suited for this instance as it allows equality in program participation (i.e., all are able to receive the benefits of the “treatment”) and by spacing out the participation over time, equivalent comparison groups are created in the process (Trochim and Donnelly 2007).

Significant qualitative data was also obtained from interviews with a sample of PELA participants from the first five years of the program (n=49). The insights from these interviews shed light on the long-term impact of training and also provide avenues for further investigation.

Findings

PELA program evaluation questions served as framework for the SLT leadership evaluation and were included items in the SLT survey. PELA evaluation data from the first two years revealed statistically significant increases on all dimensions among program participants (Stenberg, Upshaw, and Warner 2008, 121). The SLT program evaluation offered an opportunity for comparison by utilizing the same questions for a control and treatment group. This investigation
revealed significant differences between the groups on two dimensions: self-awareness and value of public service. Considered together, the data suggest that leadership training can have both long-term benefits for participants (PELA evidence) and that those who participate in similar programs illustrate significantly higher levels of self-awareness and commitment to public service (SLT data).

Unlike the PELA program responses that illustrated significant differences on all measures, the SLT program (which is focused on supervisory leadership skills with a secondary focus on collaboration) illustrates an impact on only two measures (see Table 4 below). This finding suggests that if collaboration is an emerging leadership requirement, a more dedicated focus will be necessary in training sessions in the future.

<<Table 4 Here>>

Besides the PELA evaluation questions, the SLT evaluation survey included 14 additional questions related to collaboration. The results reveal that generally, those who participated in the training indicate stronger agreement with questions related to the value of collaboration. Two items distinguish the treatment and control groups. First, those who participated in the training session illustrate a significant difference in regard to the perception of collaboration as a requirement for getting the job done. They are more likely to recognize collaboration as a work requirement. Second, those who participated in the training session illustrate a significant difference in regard to the value of collaboration. They are more likely to agree that collaboration is worth the extra effort involved.
Both PELA and SLT include peer group consultation as part of their programs. The inclusion of this pedagogical approach is based on an assumption that group collaboration, as part of the program, will lead to improved learning outcomes in terms of collaborative competencies. While the peer groups (called “learning teams”) are a mandatory part of PELA, the SLT evaluation effort allows participants to (voluntarily) engage in peer groups to collaboratively examine organizational challenges, consider decisions jointly, and address shared managerial concerns.

This presents an opportunity to investigate the ways in which a contemporary instructional method (peer group consultation) influences attitudes about collaboration. The results from this investigation are mixed and surprising. While those who participate in peer groups were significantly more likely to agree that collaboration is worth the extra effort involved, mean responses indicate that they were less likely to agree that the input of their peers matters when making important decisions. While this second finding is not statistically significant, it is surprising and is worth additional investigation.

As noted previously, the role of reflection and self-assessment is considered a way to examine individual development. For the purposes of this investigation, the SLT survey provided an opportunity for participants to indicate their personal level of effectiveness related to collaboration. For those who perceive themselves as above average in terms of collaborative
ability, they are significantly more likely to indicate the importance of developing listening and communication skills, which can be considered an emerging competency area for leadership development.

<<Table 7 Here>>

Connected to this point, there exists a strong positive relationship between individual self-assessment of collaborative skills and questions related to two emerging leadership competencies: self-awareness (“I know myself as a leader,” correlation coefficient: .347**) and listening/communication (“I develop and hone listening and communication skills,” correlation coefficient: .490**). This relationship exists among treatment group members but is not illustrated among control group members, suggesting a training impact.

Qualitative data collected from interviews of forty-nine PELA participants from the first five cohorts also supports, at least somewhat, the idea that collaborative competencies can be developed in executive leadership development program settings. Participants were asked which aspects of the program participants valued most and what impact the program has had on them with at least one, and up to four, years of time passing after their participation. The interview data found PELA participants maintaining very positive impressions of their experience and almost uniformly saying it was a beneficial investment of their time with real impacts on how they lead in their organizations and communities.

Questions regarding what participants felt they gained from the program and how they perceive their leadership has changed since then yielded some interesting insights into what participants value most. The strongest theme from these questions has to do with participants
feeling they understand different points of view better, are better listeners, and generally “deal with people better.” Participants consistently cited a change in how they view and appreciate others, implying that their style is less directive and more relation-based, consistent with working in collaborative settings. Additionally, there are many references to “seeing the big picture.” Another dominant theme was recognition by participants they their facilitation skills have been improved and utilized.

While specific mention of interorganizational collaboration was not a prominent theme from the interviews, there were some specific mentions of note in response to “has your leadership changed as a result of PELA, and if so, how?” The following comments illustrate participants’ feelings of changes in their leadership oriented toward collaborative governance:

- “I can more effectively lead through collaboration.”
- “Able to view issues from … the community's frame of mind.”
- “More aware of the shared aspect of leadership with shareholders.”
- “More in tune with how to engage the public with projects before those projects are too far along.”
- “Meeting facilitation; more effective meetings.”

While these statements are not generalizable they do reflect recognition by program participants in changes in their leadership toward a more collaborative approach.

In short, the interview data strongly suggests congruence between participant’s self-reported “take-aways” and the intent of the course to develop collaborative competencies consistent with the changing nature of public leadership. The data confirms that participants appreciate and recognize the importance of developing those collaborative skills. It also confirms
that experiential learning methods, including case studies, role-playing activities, and applied learning projects are effective tools for developing those skills in learners.

**Discussion**

This investigation provides an opportunity to consider three related questions that impact both scholarship and practice: 1) How should training curriculum adapt to balance existing and emerging leadership development priorities? 2) Which programmatic components are best suited to develop collaborative leadership skills? 3) What are the most appropriate methods to evaluate the varied expected outcomes of collaborative leadership development programs?

Our study illustrates two approaches to development that yield varied outcomes. PELA participant feedback illustrates individual growth on all relevant measures over time. Comparatively, data from the SLT participants does not illustrate the same pattern. The distinctions between the PELA collaborative leadership development program and the SLT supervisory leadership program are notable, given these findings. The PELA program centers exclusively on the development of collaborative/community leadership skills, while the SLT program includes collaboration as a topic area within a broader supervisory skill curriculum. Despite similar instructional methods, the SLT participants did not illustrate similar developments regarding attitudes toward collaboration. This suggests that if collaboration is indeed a critical learning objective, training and development efforts should be more fully focused on that specific outcome.

Second, while innovative program delivery methods are emphasized by the literature, the findings from this research offer mixed support for the claim that active (and/or peer) learning results in improved collaborative learning outcomes. While the PELA participants’ qualitative feedback speaks to the value of these approaches, the SLT data does not offer similar support.
Potentially, the influence of time is key to explaining these findings. While the SLT survey data captures impact over a period of weeks or months, PELA feedback offers the benefit of extended reflection and application of lessons learned.

Finally, considering the ways in which we evaluate learning outcomes, particularly those related to collaborative leadership development, is an ongoing priority. As Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) note, evaluating training programs typically begins and ends with reaction assessments. Both PELA and SLT evaluation approaches offer improvements and provide insights on how best to evaluate outcomes. In the SLT example, we gain insights on the relationship between self-assessment and emerging leadership competencies. While the validity of self-assessment may be questioned (Fox and Dinur 1988) there is evidence from psychological studies to suggest that self-assessments can serve as predictors of performance (Shrauger and Osberg 1981). Thus, findings from our investigation suggest that higher perceptions of collaborative ability may contribute to improvements related to collaborative leadership skills.

There is strong support in the literature for an emerging set of competencies around collaborative governance that are distinct from those traditional leadership competencies rooted in hierarchy and formal authority. Evidence from two leadership development programs discussed here suggests that local government leaders do see deficiencies in these competencies and that programs that include or even focus on these competencies can lead to improvements in those competencies among participants. Results for the impact of specialized learning approaches, like the use of peer consultation groups, is mixed, suggesting that perhaps these additional competencies can be developed in similar fashion as other adult learning approaches. It also suggests we need more careful study of leadership development programs, their overall
impacts on leadership competencies and behaviors and the specific impact of pedagogical tools such as peer groups, role-playing activities, case studies, etc.

As collaborative governance continues to coalesce into a dominant framework or even paradigm for public administration generally and local government specifically, we need to pay ever more attention to the leadership development needs of those individuals that enact collaborative governance. This study is a first step in this direction and it is the hope of the authors that others will contribute to better understanding “which programs, strategies, and curricula are most appropriate to build and nurture leadership skills for public leadership ‘across boundaries’” (Getha-Taylor et al 2011).
References


Tables and Figures

Table 1: Collaborative Leadership Competencies (Morse 2008, 85)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
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<tr>
<td>● Collaborative mindset</td>
<td>● Self-management</td>
<td>● Stakeholder identification</td>
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<td>● Passion toward outcomes</td>
<td>● Strategic thinking</td>
<td>● Stakeholder assessment</td>
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<td>● Systems thinking</td>
<td>● Facilitation skills</td>
<td>● Strategic issue framing</td>
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<td>● Openness and risk-taking</td>
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<td>● Convening working groups</td>
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<td>● Sense of mutuality and connectedness</td>
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<td>● Facilitating mutual learning processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Humility</td>
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<td>● Inducing commitment</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>● Facilitating trusting relationships among partners</td>
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Table 2: UNCG Collaborative Competencies (UNCG 2010)

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS
(1) Strengthening Collaborative Leadership (e.g. collaborative leadership styles, entrepreneurialism and risk-taking)
(2) Planning, Organizing and Managing for Collaboration (e.g. process design, designing governance structures, engaging stakeholders)

PROCESS SKILLS
(3) Communicating Effectively
(4) Working in Teams and Facilitating Groups
(5) Negotiating Agreement and Managing Conflict

ANALYTIC SKILLS
(6) Applying Analytic Skills and Strategic Thinking (e.g. situation assessment, understanding political and legal context of collaboration)
(7) Evaluating and Adapting Processes

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SKILLS
(8) Integrating Technical & Scientific Information
(9) Using Information and Communication Technology

PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY
(10) Maintaining Personal Integrity and Professional Ethics
(11) Self Knowledge and Reflective Practice
### Table 3: PELA Participant’s (2007-2010) Baseline, Self-Reported Competencies (n=92)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean Normed Score</th>
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<td>I am widely trusted</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pursue work with energy and drive</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I put the public good first</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I convene stakeholders and secure agreement for collective community action</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find multiple champions for change</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I build constituent support and citizen coalitions</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I identify the full spectrum of knowledgeholders and stakeholders</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enlist different groups and organizations appropriately to address issues or problems</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: SLT Survey Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Treatment Group n=62</th>
<th>Control Group n=60</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I know myself as a leader.</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.025*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I take a broad, systematic view of issues affecting my community.</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I engage key stakeholders in creating a vision for my community.</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>.511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I encourage teamwork, community building, partnerships, and collaborative problem solving across jurisdictions and sectors.</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I develop and hone listening and communication skills.</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I assess risks and develop strategies to minimize negative consequences.</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>.458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I facilitate change to improve the quality of life in our community.</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I celebrate the dignity and worth of public service.</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>.013*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5: SLT survey, collaboration-related questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Treatment Group n=62</th>
<th>Control Group n=60</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Collaboration within our organization is critical to achieving our vision, values, and mission.</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>.184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Collaboration within the City needs improvement.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>.544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Improved partnerships with organizations and individuals outside of our organization would help us meet our goals.</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My job requires me to collaborate with other departments frequently.</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.049*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A significant amount of my work week is spent on collaborative efforts.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I would describe my previous collaborative experiences as positive.</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. We achieve improved results when we work collaboratively.</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Collaboration is worth the extra effort involved.</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>.042*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I can trust the people I collaborate with to do a good job.</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I rely on collaboration to get the job done.</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>.690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Collaboration will be even more necessary in the future.</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I actively seek the input of others to make better decisions.</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The input of my peers matters to me when making important decisions.</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>.603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The input of my supervisors matters to me when making important decisions.</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>.884</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6: SLT survey, peer group versus no peer group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Peer Group Follow-up (n=51)</th>
<th>No Peer Group Follow-up (n=71)</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Collaboration within our organization is critical to achieving our vision, values, and mission.</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>.678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Collaboration within the City needs improvement.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>.841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Improved partnerships with organizations and individuals outside of our organization would help us meet our goals.</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My job requires me to collaborate with other departments frequently.</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A significant amount of my work week is spent on collaborative efforts.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I would describe my previous collaborative experiences as positive.</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>.948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. We achieve improved results when we work collaboratively.</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Collaboration is worth the extra effort involved.</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.057*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I can trust the people I collaborate with to do a good job.</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>.904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I rely on collaboration to get the job done.</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>.184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Collaboration will be even more necessary in the future.</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I actively seek the input of others to make better decisions.</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>.990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The input of my peers matters to me when making important decisions.</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The input of my supervisors matters to me when making important decisions.</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Self-Assessment: Above Average Collaboration Ability</td>
<td>Self-Assessment: Below Average Collaborative Ability</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I develop and hone listening and communication skills.</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>