

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leadership South Dakota conducted a survey of Leadership South Dakota program alumni in September- October 2019, who participated in the program over the past five years, 2014 to 2019. The survey was designed to elicit responses



from alumni regarding their professional and personal lives since participation in the Leadership South Dakota program, focused on understanding the level of impact the program has had on participants' social change. Findings from this survey will inform future planning and recruitment for the Leadership South Dakota program, as well as opportunities for funding allocation to support the sustainability of the program. Dr. Rick Melmer, Director of Leadership South Dakota program, identified a need for a five-year review of the Leadership South Dakota program and its participants.

Planning

Dr. Melmer and Lori Oster, Leadership South Dakota Alumni & Operations Coordinator, collaborated with SLM Consulting, LLC to determine the overall goal of the survey data. SLM Consulting, LLC, located in Sioux Falls, SD and experienced with research and evaluation methods, contracted with the Leadership South Dakota program to develop, disseminate, and analyze the alumni survey data. Guided by the mission of the Leadership South Dakota program, "Leadership South Dakota prepares and promotes future leaders in the state with the knowledge and skills they need to lead South Dakota into the future", the survey was designed to elicit feedback from alumni to help understand the impact individuals have made in their community and state.

Survey

The survey was designed around key concepts focused on garnering feedback about alumni regarding demographics, Leadership South Dakota Experience, Social Change Wheel and Engagement, the impact Leadership South Dakota has had on alumni, as well as suggested opportunities for improvements to the Leadership South Dakota program. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze the data.

Results

105 alumni completed the survey, with a 55% response rate. Classes 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 had a higher percentage of respondents by class year. Survey findings show changes in

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Social Wheel Behavior activities prior and after participation in the Leadership South Dakota program that are statistically significant, including engagement community organizing, community and economic development, community development, socially responsible behavior, and charitable volunteerism. Engagement in social entrepreneurship and voting and political activities is limited. The impact of the Leadership South Dakota on respondents is largely positive, with 27.6% reporting moderate impact and 33.3% reporting extreme impact.

Experiences that respondents reported as impactful include diverse experiences including Kyle/Pine Ridge, the South Dakota Women's Prison, Ellsworth Airforce Base, Pierre, and Hutterite Colonies. Also, respondents noted the impact and value Dr. Melmer had on their learning experience as a speaker, leader, and director of the program. Also, respondents could enhance and build leadership skills by participating in this program, including confidence, communication, networking, expanding perspective, listening, and self-reflection.

Conclusion

An assessment of the Leadership South Dakota program since it was launched in 2014 highlights strengths of the program as well as opportunities to enhance the lasting impact the Leadership South Dakota program has on alumni. The comprehensive, interactive design of the Leadership South Dakota program offers various components that alumni identified as having a lasting impact on their personal or professional lives, including speakers, networking with classmates, build leadership skills through training and education, diverse location of sessions, learning activities, or the overall program.

Opportunities to expand or improve the Leadership South Dakota program center the design of program, including topics discussed, learning activities, speakers, expand to sessions to rural and reservation communities, as well as address alignment of program content and participant demographics. Engagement of alumni is a challenge, evidenced by attendance at alumni events and a low response rate for this survey from classes. Additional steps to assess alignment of the Leadership South Dakota mission and vision with participants accepted into the program can help align programming and build capacity for future leaders.