Leadership Training Boosts Confidence and Involvement

The situation
Communities deal with multiple issues surrounding their vitality and sustainability that demand good leadership. By increasing the confidence and involvement of existing and emerging leaders, communities can be strengthened and more responsive to local issues.

Extension response
The NDSU Extension Service provides multiple leadership programs, both short and long term. These programs help individuals develop leadership-related skills such as becoming better communicators, managing conflict, and taking action on local issues to make a difference. Extension programs developing leaders include the two-year Rural Leadership North Dakota program that is designed to prepare and develop effective leaders to strengthen rural North Dakota as well as the 18-month Horizons program that delivers education, coaching and activities to broaden and deepen the leadership base to address difficult issues rural communities face. Other extension programs developing leaders include the 4-H Ambassador Program and local county-driven leadership programs.

Impacts
Surveys and interviews were used to evaluate overall changes in confidence levels and organizational involvement of participants in Extension leadership programs. A confidence and engagement survey administered to participants in these programs showed a statistically significant change in confidence levels from before to after leadership programs. On a four-point Likert scale (1=not at all confident, 4=very confident), the following table describes the change in a select group of items. All survey items showed a significant positive change from before the training to after.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean Score Before</th>
<th>Mean Score After</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I could do as good a job in public office as most people</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>3.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am a positive role model to others</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>3.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe that my opinion matters</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>I plan to take on new leadership roles</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>3.32</td>
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In addition, participants were asked to share the number of volunteer organizations they were involved in and had leadership roles in before and after leadership training. Before training, individuals reported being involved in 3.6 organizations, while after they indicated they were involved in 4.6 organizations. They also held leadership roles in more organizations with a mean score of 2.1 before and 2.7 afterwards.

Feedback from Participants
“I am considering running for the ND State Legislature”.

“I have become more confident in myself and have learned that being vocal doesn’t make me heard. Finding the facts and listening to the silent message has helped me.”

“I am more outgoing, more confident and more willing to take the lead to effect more change.”

Contacts
Lynette Flage
Community Leadership Specialist
701-265-5200
lynette.flage@ndsu.edu

Marie Hvidsten
Rural Leadership ND Program Director
701-231-5640
marie.hvidsten@ndsu.edu

Rachelle Vettern
Leadership & Volunteer Specialist
701-231-7541
rachelle.vettern@ndsu.edu