



MUTUAL  
HOUSING  
ASSOCIATION  
of Greater Hartford, Inc.

*Revitalizing neighborhoods & building success*

# Leadership Academy

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## Evaluation Report 2012-2013

Submitted To:  
**Hartford Foundation for Public Giving**

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## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

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### OVERVIEW OF ORGANIZATION

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Mutual Housing Association of Greater Hartford, Inc. is a non-profit organization committed to providing and managing quality affordable housing to low and mixed income families in Greater Hartford. It was created in 1988 when residents, corporations and community organizations came together in partnership to encourage a model of affordable housing that allowed residents of the properties to be equal partners in the organization and to serve on its Board of Directors. In keeping with its tradition of resident participation, Mutual Housing created a leadership academy to provide interested residents with the training to become effective leaders at Mutual Housing and in their communities. As of 2011, the resident leadership program has expanded to include non-Mutual Housing residents of the Greater Hartford area.

### THE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

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The Mutual Housing Leadership Academy's Resident Leadership Program is a 12-week training program in leadership development for residents of the Greater Hartford area. Over the course of the 12 weeks, residents participate in a series of workshops and panel discussions based on the NeighborWorks America curriculum designed for training emerging leaders. Some of the topics covered in the course include, but are not limited to the following: team building, leadership development, community asset mapping, project development, public speaking, as well as recruitment and retention. The fundamental skills gained in the program are critical for any leader no matter the environment and can be used at work, home, school or the community.



During the course of the program, the resident leaders are given an opportunity to put into practice the skills they have just acquired by means of a team project. The residents who have formed into a leadership team are expected to develop and execute a community project before the end of the 12 weeks. Their project must address a need in the community and should include strategic partnerships whenever possible. Our participants have always risen to the

challenge and successfully coordinated family fun days, health and women fairs, workshops

on increasing parental involvement in the schools and sexual education for young adults, as well as presentations on childhood obesity and cultural diversity to name a few. There is great diversity in the issues that groups choose to pursue, but in all cases participants achieve the same results. They work together as a group, build and strengthen their networks in the community, and increase their confidence in their abilities to accomplish an objective that brings about change for their communities.

In addition to the different workshops and the task of completing a community project, participants benefit from spending one-on-one time with the facilitator in goal setting sessions where the participants focus on a personal or professional development goal. Many participants have reported these sessions as being helpful in their pursuit of goals such as furthering their education or setting financial goals.



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## EVALUATION QUESTIONS & DATA COLLECTION

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In thinking over the Leadership Academy, three questions arose:

- How and to what extent are participants progressing toward desired outcomes?
- What are the participants' perceptions of the Leadership Academy?
- To what extent did the Leadership Academy attain its goals?

In order to answer those questions, we developed a dual pronged approach of administering surveys at the last session of the Leadership Academy and then following up with phone interviews 6 months and 12 months later.

### SURVEYS

On the last class session of the Leadership Academy, the participants were provided a seven question paper survey that combined both close ended and open ended questions. The participants were asked to rate their overall experience in the program as well as about their skill development and they were also asked to identify what they liked the most and least about the course. Lastly, they were asked if they would recommend the program to others. The survey included both close-ended questions and two open-ended questions.

## INTERVIEWS

Six months after the Leadership Academy participants graduated, they were contacted for an interview administered over the phone. The open-ended questions focused on the participants' lives since they finished the Leadership Academy. Further, the interview also asked if they would recommend the program and whether they would be interested in being part of the Leadership Academy Alumni Association. The interview consisted of 10 questions.

## KEY FINDINGS

### SURVEY

There were 14 surveys returned (which was everyone in the class) following the November 2012 Leadership Academy graduation. The survey asked eight questions, six of which were close ended and two of which were open ended.

When asked about the overall experience with the leadership training program, all respondents (100%) provided positive marks with “*good*” or “*excellent*.” A total of 71 percent thought their overall experience was *excellent*, while 29 percent thought their overall experience was *good*. Please refer to Table 1 below for more details on the overall program experience.

TABLE 1: Response to Overall Program

1. Overall experience in the program (n=14)		
	Good	Excellent
Overall experience	29%	71%
	4	10
Preparedness of Instructor	0%	100%
	0	14
Usefulness of materials	29%	71%
	4	10
Level of support from instructor	14%	86%
	2	12

When asked about specific skills they learned during the training program, all respondents stated they *somewhat developed* or *developed* four of the skills (Project Management, Ability to Work in a Team, Group Decision-Making, Leadership). The remaining five skills (Confidence in Public Speaking, Identifying Community Resources, Making Community

Connections, Community Organizing, Active Listening) had one or two respondents who thought they did not develop that skill during the leadership development training. Please refer to Table 2 below for more details on the specific skills.

TABLE 2: Response to Specific Skills Developed

2. Skill Development (n=14)		
	Did not Develop	Somewhat/ Developed
<b>Project Management</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	0	14
<b>Ability to Work in Team</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	0	14
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	0	14
<b>Group Decision-Making</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	0	14
<b>Identifying Community Resources</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>93%</b>
	1	13
<b>Making Community Connections</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>93%</b>
	1	13
<b>Community Organizing</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>93%</b>
	1	13
<b>Active Listening</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>93%</b>
	1	13
<b>Confidence in Public Speaking</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>86%</b>
	2	12

All respondents indicated that as a result of the leadership development training program, they were more likely to get involved with the community in the future and all respondents also indicated they would recommend the program to others.

When asked what they liked best about the leadership training, the responses were varied but certain themes were repeated. **Half the respondents cited the activities or materials used to teach certain skills as what they liked best.**

**Half the respondents cited a personal growth in themselves as what they liked best.** Although the actual words were different, the sentiments were very similar. For example, one person wrote:



*“The leadership academy helped me discover skills I thought I did not possess and enhanced the skills I had. It also broadens my views and approach on how I think about things. The leadership training gave me tools to be confident in my endeavors. The program open lock doors in my life, informed me of relevant information that will catapult me into my destiny.”*

Another respondent wrote this about the best part of the training:

“The academy taught me that leadership is so much more than just bossing people around. It’s about being a positive influence and living life to the fullest so that you can teach others to do the same.”

The survey also asked for feedback on what aspects of the training needed improvement. Only 12 people responded, but half of those responses referred to the logistics of the course, such as the time it met or the length of the classes or the length of the entire program. Some people felt a longer leadership training program or more classes would be useful. One person wrote, “From my perspective [sic], the only shortcoming I see this program had was the three hours, one day per week when the class convenes. It think that for a program like this and what it had to offer should be held at least 6 hours per week.”

Two people responded that no change was necessary, and two people responded that either exposure to alumni or a mentoring experience could be an improvement.



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## INTERVIEW

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The May 2012 class of Leadership Academy graduates were contacted in December 2012, approximately six months after they completed the program. Of the 17 graduates, 12 were successfully interviewed. Below are the key findings:

**The majority of interviewees have reported that they’ve been actively engaged in the community since graduating and have even taken on some leadership roles in their respective communities, be that school, work or community based organizations.**

Some have even started their own programs/initiatives. For example: One of our graduates has partnered with the Blue Hills Civic Association to combat childhood obesity by coordinating a “Let’s Move Project” based on the work done by First Lady Michelle



Obama. One other student has gathered with other individuals at her church and now offers a bible study program for women. Another student has sponsored Recovery Dances for her community. The recovery dances are opportunities for people in recovery to socialize in a sober and fun environment. She plans to use the proceeds from the entry fee to open up her own sober house someday.

For the two interviewees that reported that they were not actively engaged in the community, they stated that it is a result of their busy schedules. They have decided to further their education and work on their personal and professional development goals before assisting the community.

**When asked about their personal goals which they set during the Leadership Academy, interviewees provided a variety of answers but all said they have made progress.** A little more than half of the alumni interviewed had set the goal of returning to school or furthering their education. All of those interviewees reported that they are currently enrolled in a diploma/degree seeking program. The remaining people who were interviewed set financial, housing, or other personal development goals like being more actively engaged, losing weight, or improving skills like public speaking. A few reported that it was self-motivation and determination that helped them achieve their goal while others stated that it was the academy's support and skill-building that helped them attain their goals.



**When asked about the ways in which the Academy increased their personal and professional development, a majority of the interviewees stated that the Leadership Academy had increased their personal and professional development.** For example, they stated that in terms of personal development they: gained more confidence, increased their ability to speak publicly, became more committed to a life of service, and better understood how to engage their communities and how to utilize the assets/resources in their communities. For some of the interviewees, the Leadership Academy helped them with their professional development by helping them to be more professional, work better with others who are different from them, increase their time management skills and speaking/presentation skills. One interviewee said, "In the working world it has increased my professionalism. It did help me to get a job in Volunteer Services. Being professional and having the right attitude helps. People noticed that so they hired me."

Another question that was asked what about how Mutual Housing could support them as new leaders. The graduates indicated that the best way Mutual Housing could support them as community leaders would be to offer them additional training, funding, and opportunities to network. They also suggested helping them to cross-promote their programs among their peers. One way Mutual Housing tries to support the graduates is through the Leadership Academy Alumni group. A total of 9 out of 12 alumni interviewed stated they would like to participate in an Alumni Association to further their connections,



training, and aid in the development of future leaders. They reported that they wanted to continue to be in service to the community. Of the three respondents who were not interested in the Alumni Association, two said it was because they did not have the time available to participate. The one remaining respondent had some doubts about the earnestness of her classmate but stated, “I would be willing to put my head in to check it out, but I want to be surrounded by people with true motives of service.”

When asked if they have recommended the program to others, all but one stated that they had. The one who did not recommend the program said it was because she was unaware that the program was continuing. Further, all of the interviewees who recommended the program said that they thought the program was a good training. They also stated that they benefitted from the learning experience and thought others would benefit as well. One respondent stated, “It has helped me tremendously in my goals and in my life and it can help others as well.”

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## CONCLUSIONS

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### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

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The Leadership Academy, now in its fifth year, continues to provide needed learning opportunities to a small group of Greater Hartford residents. The participants are overall very pleased with the program and recommend it to others. Although some skill areas were less developed in some participants, overall, the data indicates that the participants are learning and growing through the program and in general are becoming more engaged in their communities. In addition, the participants continue to be engaged in their community even after finishing the course. This data showed that the Leadership Academy produces a lasting impact in those who complete the program. One of the themes that kept appearing during the interview was that program graduates were incredibly busy and many were pursuing education which made it difficult to achieve the levels of community engagement that they had hoped to achieve.



## RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS

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Based on the data we collected from our evaluation tools, there are a few things we identified as action steps.

- 1) We will continue to survey each cohort of program participants as they finish the program. We will also conduct follow up interviews at 12 months of the people who were interviewed at 6 months to see what might have changed in the preceding 6 months.
- 2) Since some of the feedback focused on logistics and course planning, we will survey the participants separately on just those items, such as the preferred length of each class, the preferred amount of classes, and the arrangement of topics and activities.
- 3) We will look at adding a module to the program on mentoring and networking as a way to address the desire of some participants to have more connections and longer term relationships.

The core of the Leadership Academy will remain unchanged as we head into the next program cycle, yet certain alterations will be considered to take into account the feedback we have received. Some next steps for consideration will be:

- Continue offering program twice a year to Greater Hartford residents
- Survey participants on course logistics
- Consider adding a Networking/ mentoring module to Leadership Academy curriculum or providing space for networking/mentoring
- Rethink the approach to teaching the skill areas where some people indicated they “did not develop”
- Provide support for those pursuing education after they graduate from the program

## NEXT STEPS FOR EVALUATION

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With the skills we have learned through the Building Evaluation Capacity program, we are equipped to expand our evaluation toolkit. We will continue to evaluate the Leadership Academy, surveying the participants on the program at the last class. In July, we are planning to conduct an evaluation of our residents’ satisfaction with a Resident Satisfaction Survey administered to all 406 households in our properties. In addition, we will be surveying our staff on their employee satisfaction in early summer, as a way to understand where as an organization we are succeeding and where we are failing our staff. Further, we will be using our evaluative thinking skills to assess our Board of Directors in order to understand any gaps in experience or areas for growth.

With what we have developed during the 18 month Building Evaluation Capacity program, we are excited to continue developing our evaluative thinking, especially as it relates to our programs and services. We are committed to ensuring we are meeting our mission and measuring the impact.

## ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

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The findings from the 2012 Leadership Academy program evaluation demonstrate that the program is advancing towards desired outcomes of increased engagement and increased personal development. We now have data to provide concrete evidence of the value of the Leadership Program. However positive the results are regarding the participants' perception of the Leadership Academy, we do have areas to improve on and expand. In addition, the program, although making a difference in people's lives, is only affecting a very small group. As we plan for the sixth year of the Academy, we will strongly consider how we can use the evaluation data to increase our marketing of the program to attract more participants and achieve even more positive change in the community.

