

Mel King Institute for Community Building
Final Evaluation Report
Year Four: July 2012 – June 2013

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Executive Summary

The Mel King Institute for Community Building fosters vibrant and thriving Massachusetts communities by advancing the skills, knowledge and leadership ability of professional practitioners and volunteer leaders in the community development field. The King Institute leverages collaborative educational partnerships that increase access, encourage innovation, and promote and institutionalize systemic success. The Institute is designed to bring community development professionals and volunteers the skills they need to be effective in their positions in the community. To reach its goals, the Institute sponsors trainings, serves as a clearing house, and provides technical assistance.

As in each of the prior years, the Institute commissioned an evaluation of its program during the 4th year of operation – July 2012 – June 2013. Data for this evaluation was drawn from workshop evaluation forms and follow-up interviews with seventeen individuals (staff, board, and Executive Directors) to explore the Institute’s impact on organizational performance. During the period July 2012 through June 2013, 20 courses were offered attended by 371 individuals. 296 day-of- surveys were completed reflecting an 80% response rate. Demographic analysis confirms that the King Institute continues its tradition of serving a diverse population of students along numerous dimensions (age, race, geography, and position.)

Participants overwhelmingly praise the Institute’s quality, affordability and accessibility. Many CDCs rely on the Institute as their primary professional development vehicle. Contact with peers during the workshops is sustained afterwards through individual initiative and through the MACDC peer to peer network. These interactions continue to prove highly effective at building knowledge across the CDC community about best practices and sustaining relationships that support organizational and community progress.

Highlights of the evaluation include:

- 98% of participants rated the presenters as of high quality.
- 90% of participants said they learned new tools or gained knowledge that would be applicable to their position.
- Concrete examples were provided by participants as to how they will apply these skills including in technical areas of real estate development and financing to improved capacities in facilitation, organizing, communication, and critical thinking.
- Both staff participants and their Executive Directors noted instances of improved job satisfaction, confidence, and professional development after taking MKI courses.
- 80% of participants said that the skills they learned would help them advance professionally.
- Follow up interviews illustrated that the Institute is having an impact on organizational performance. While it is challenging to directly attribute organizational gains to a specific course, respondents concurred that the King Institute is an important component in building capacity across staff, managers, and board members, and is thereby contributing to improving results in the community.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview to the Program and the Evaluation

The Mel King Institute for Community Building fosters vibrant and thriving Massachusetts communities by advancing the skills, knowledge and leadership ability of professional practitioners and volunteer leaders in the community development field. The King Institute leverages collaborative educational partnerships that increase access, encourage innovation, and promote and institutionalize systemic success. The Institute is designed to bring community development professionals and volunteers the skills they need to be effective in their positions in the community. To reach its goals, the Institute sponsors trainings, serves as a clearing house, and provides technical assistance.

The Institute is committed to evaluation and continual learning and as such, developed a theory of change illustrated in a Logic Model during its first year and has commissioned an evaluation for each of its four years of operations. During Year Four (July 2012 – June 2013), the King Institute sought an evaluation that could both look at the immediate results achieved by its courses and also to examine deeper impact on the organizations which have sent staff, volunteers, and board members to courses. For this evaluation surveys administered at the end of each course were reviewed, coupled with follow-up individual interviews. Interview questions were designed to follow the anticipated outcomes as identified on the Logic Model. Individuals were selected to ensure a diversity of perspective with regard to their position, the size and location of the organization, and the number and types of courses individuals attended. The initial target for interviews was 31; 17 individuals participated in the evaluation (55% of the target.) Interviews are confidential – findings are offered in the aggregate and quotes are not attributed to any one individual. (A list of interviewees and questions are in the Appendix.)

Note: While this evaluation is solely focused on the King Institute’s training program, it also sponsors an Innovation Forum – two were held in 2012-2013, and this year the Institute explored CDC – Academic Partnerships to understand more about how CDCs and the academic community are working together. A report on Academic Partnerships was issued in May 2013.

1.2 Summary of courses

During the period July 2012 through June 2013, 20 courses were offered attended by 371 individuals. 296 day-of- surveys were completed reflecting an 80% response rate. This compares with prior years where on average 81%-87% of participants completed a survey.

	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Number of Courses Analyzed	9	19	24	20
Number Total Participants	157	263	462	371
Number Total Evaluations Reviewed	137	227	376	296

The following courses were reviewed for this evaluation:

Course and Date	Attendees	Survey Responses
Undoing Racism Community Organizing Workshop: September 20, 2012-September 22, 2012	40	39
Rental Housing Development Finance: October 2, 2012- October 4, 2012	29	24
Exploring the Crossroads of Community Development and Public Schools: Where Do We Fit In? October 23, 2012	7	6
Bypassing Burnout: A Stress Reduction Workshop October 26, 2012	4	4
Introduction to Community Economic Development November 28, 2012	18	15
Basics of Community Organizing; November 28, 2012	13	11
Finding the “Best” Candidate: A Recruiting and Hiring January 10, 2013	7	7
Bypassing Burnout 2: A Stress Reduction Workshop February 7, 2013	12	11
Group Facilitation: Bringing Community Meetings to Life March 1, 2013	13	12
Popular Education Lab; March 15, 2013	6	6
CHAM: The Basics Steps of the Affordable Housing Process March 26, 2013-March 27. 2013	18	18
Introduction to Census Data: Finding the Numbers You Need April 1, 2013	6	6
Basics of Community Organizing-Boston Foundation April 10, 2013	21	20
Best Practices in Evaluation for Small Business Development Programs; April 22, 2013	20	14
Retail and Commercial Space in Mixed-Use Affordable Housing Projects May 14, 2013	45	35
Finances for Entrepreneurs and their Families May 22, 2013	19	13
Engaging Constituents for Community Impact June 12, 2013	16	16
The Right Message for The Right People June 13, 2013	14	9
Leadership Works June 22, 2013	13	13
Roxbury Leadership Summit June 29, 2013	50	17

Section 2: Demographic Analysis

The evaluation looks at the participants from a number of perspectives – organizational affiliation, geography, age, race, and position in their organization. In order to accurately reflect the participant profile, participants are only counted once for the purposes of the demographic analysis even though some attended more than one training. [A full set of demographic and evaluation data charts are presented in a separate document.]

2.1 Geography

The Mel King Institute continues to serve participants from across the state. In the current year, 58% of the participants are from Boston, with the balance disbursed among a number of cities and towns in Greater Boston and in other parts of the state. Last year, there was an increase in participation from the Greater Boston area, which is consistent with the current year. Year Two saw the greatest participation from outside of the Greater Boston area. On average, 64% of participants are coming from Greater Boston, 31% from other areas of the state, and 6% from outside of the state.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	4- Yr Average
Greater Boston	59%	50%	71%	74%	64%
Other MA	33%	42%	26%	23%	31%
Other States	8%	8%	7%	3%	6%

2.2 Age of Students

In Year Four, 67% of students were under the age of 40. The largest percentage of students are between 26-39 – a higher percentage than in prior years.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	4-Yr Average
Under 25	29%	25%	23%	24%	25%
26-39	37%	28%	30%	43%	35%
40-54	27%	17%	27%	19%	23%
Over 55	7%	30%	13%	14%	16%

2.3 Race of Students

The breakdown by racial groups in Year 4 is nearly identical to Year 3. When looking at the distribution along broader categories of White and People of Color - 56% of students describe themselves as White, and 44% are People of Color. This compares favorably with the racial demographics for Massachusetts according to the 2010 census. However, as with the age distribution, research on the demographics of the CDC field would be needed to understand how the student body of MKI compares with the profile of the CDC community.

Mel King Institute Racial Demographics						Massachusetts
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	4-Yr Avg.	2010 Census Data
White	65%	68%	56%	56%	61%	76.4%
Black	12%	13%	21%	20%	17%	7.8%
Latino	18%	11%	12%	13%	14%	9.9%
Asian	3%	4%	5%	7%	5%	5.6%
Other	2%	4%	3%	4%	3%	2.0%

2.4 Positions

In Year 4 there was an increase in the percentage of staff in attendance and a decrease in the number of board members. This may be attributable to the fact that in Year 3 the King Institute offered several courses specifically targeted to board members. This year there was also a marked increase in the number of people who checked 'other' – which is difficult to interpret without an individual look at each name, but could illustrate that many of the people who participate in King Institute courses wear numerous 'hats.'

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	4-Yr Average
Staff	55%	32%	35%	42%	41%
Manager	40%	35%	29%	28%	33%
Americorps	3%	18%	17%	14%	13%
Board	0%	5%	11%	5%	5%
Other	4%	10%	8%	11%	8%

2.5 Organizational Affiliation

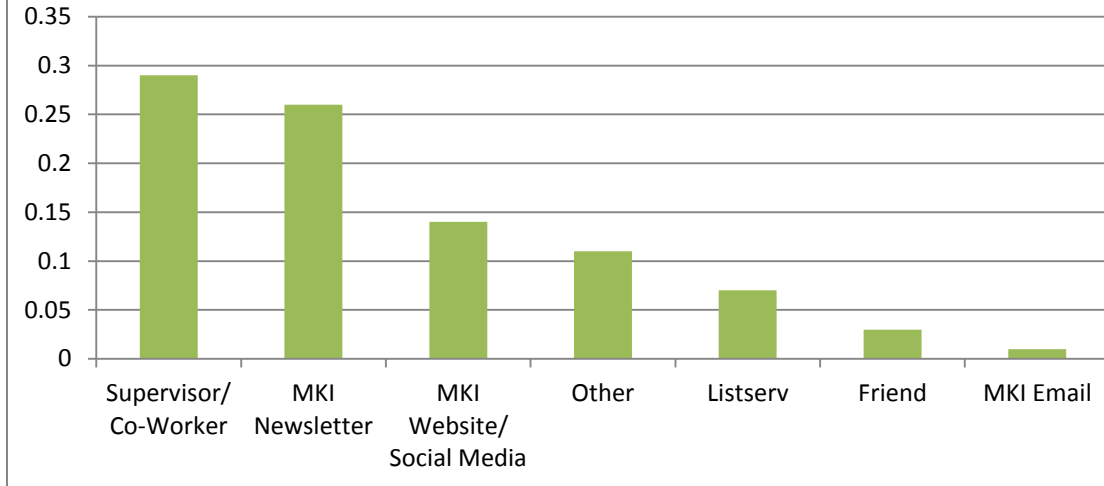
The representation from MACDC members is consistent from Year 3 to 4. This year, there was an increase in participants from other entities (quasi, public, for-profit, university, other) and a decrease from other nonprofits. (Comparisons with Year 1 and Year 2 are not offered because the question was not asked in the same manner.)

	Year 3	Year 4
MACDC Member	36%	38%
Other Nonprofit	43%	35%
Other Entity	21%	27%

2.6 Marketing

As part of the day-of-survey, participants indicate one or more ways they heard about a particular event. Almost 30% of students responded that they learned about the training from their supervisor or co-worker and 26% said they heard about it from the MKI Newsletter. During the interviews, Executive Directors confirmed that the newsletter is an easy to access tool, which many forward immediately onto their staff, encouraging them to participate in upcoming events.

How Participants Heard of MKI Training: Year 4



Section 3: Evaluation Findings – General and Process Outcomes

The evaluation process examines outcomes along three dimensions – **process outcomes** that are used to evaluate satisfaction levels during the training program itself, **outcomes for individuals** that are used to measure the impact the training has had on building the skills, knowledge, and overall abilities of participants that can enhance job performance, professional development, and advancement, and **outcomes for the organizations** that are used to identify the impact the training has had on organizational performance and effectiveness.

3.1 General Feedback

The King Institute continues to generate positive feedback from participants, supervisors, board members, and executive directors. As in past years, participants commented on three key benefits of the King Institute – quality, affordability, and accessibility.

“I am very impressed with what it does and why it does it and how it is set up. The quality of the presenters is high. I am happy with the general structure.”

“I am very excited about the current offerings. Anything that fosters community—increases networking and capacity is great.”

The King Institute’s affordability continues to be a salient selling point. CDC’s value the King Institute as an affordable professional development vehicle for entry level newer staff and more seasoned professionals alike.

“MKI is local and reasonable; it is like having a college without walls. Because it is very affordable, it allows us to send multiple staff members.”

“The strength of MKI is that it is the go to place for getting understanding of community development industry and also to front load training when people come on at first.”

“So local, so inexpensive – can go repeatedly. I don’t know where we would go if not for MKI. It is easy to incorporate MKI into our work load.”

The Institute’s communication methodology was praised by many interviewees.

“I like the email bulletin – I don’t have to find it on a buried website. If it crosses my screen, it is easy to click and sign up.”

“When the catalogue for training comes out they are lining up to sign up – asking me about where we are with the training budget, they are not looking at national training programs -- they are looking at MKI.”

Peer to peer contact was stressed by many as key feature of the King Institute’s success, especially given the relationships that are started in the workshops and continued afterwards. *“I can pick up the phone and bounce off an idea. This has had a huge impact for me.”* A participant summed up the sentiment of many. *“One of the greatest benefits is the relationship and connections fostered with other professionals, activists, organizers. It helps us feel that we*

are part of a larger movement, and get a broader view of what is happening in the field. It is a source for inspiration.”

3.2 Process Outcomes

Process outcomes measure individual participant satisfaction levels based on their experiences during the actual day of training.

Quality of Presenters

Across all courses and all four years, participants consistently rate the presenters as of high quality - *The presenters were clear, had expertise and knowledge in the subject area, and had an effective presentation style.* 98% of participants attending a course either agreed, or strongly agreed with this statement.

“The instructor’s approach was moving and engaging; they did a wonderful job educating us. They embodied the anti-racist perspective in a way that was authentic and personable. I like that it felt comfortable and uncomfortable moments were broken up by humor.” Undoing Racism

“Harry and Kevin were wonderful and had a tremendous amount of expertise to share, very clear and knowledgeable.” Basics of Community Organizing (November and April)

“Very knowledgeable, presented very clearly and accessibly; Rachel was fantastic! Exceeded expectations; Always made relevant and important points; It was a pleasure to learn from such a seasoned professor.” Introduction to Community Economic Development

“Gena’s enthusiasm and openness are contagious. She gave us strategies on reducing stress in our lives and in work situations; Really friendly and created a safe space effectively.” Bypassing Burnout 2

The follow-up interviews confirmed the quality of the courses. One Executive Director stated, *“We have a higher level of trust in MKI that they will have quality trainings [than other national training programs.] We have the brain trust in Boston and MKI/ MACDC have done a great job cultivating quality facilitators in the field.”*

Participants also shared feedback about ways the presenters and the training might be improved, including taking conversations to a deeper level, balancing the needs of novices and more advanced students, and making some presentations more succinct.

Training Content and Format

The King Institute is interested in feedback on the content and format of the workshops. 64% of respondents strongly agreed and 35% agreed that the training content, format and flow were conducive to their learning.

Participants commented on the pace of the workshop and the timeframe. Most thought that there was a good use of the time and the atmosphere created was open and conducive to dialogue. In a few courses, participants suggested that time management could have been improved. As in past evaluations, there were varied comments on the amount of small group

work – for some participants the time dedicated to small group work is appropriate, while others want more and some want less.

Other suggestions offered on the training format included:

- Instructors should ‘model’ practices being taught in the course
- Use more case studies and concrete examples
- Increase the time working through the materials
- Provide reading materials before the course
- Request participants to complete a prep sheet prior to the course
- Use more non-verbal opportunities for expression

Logistics

63% of participants strongly agreed and 36% agreed that the site and the logistics were conducive to the groups learning. Only three people across all of the courses disagreed, illustrating that the King Institute continues to do an excellent job of organizing training programs that are conducive to the groups learning. Comments shared praised the convenience of the facility, the quality of the food, and the layout of the space. There were also some negative comments about the space, the temperature in the room, and the use of break time.

“I think everyone would agree that the space was tight as far as room for seating, etc. and also it was very hot.” Undoing Racism

“Site was too small – the training was organized, but not a great venue/room.” Rental Housing Finance

“Just a few more breaks during the day would have been better.” Group Facilitation

“Staying in one room was a difficult and parking was a challenge.” Intro to CED

“Need more break time to network.” Best Practices Evaluation Small Business Programs

Section 4: Evaluation Findings – Impact Outcomes

The King Institute is interested in helping participants learn new skills and then apply those practices to improve their performance and ultimately, to improve organizational effectiveness. The following outcomes were prioritized from the Logic Model.

- Participants gain access to applicable tools and knowledge
- Participants increase knowledge and skills for job performance and professional development
- Confidence grows to try new skills and take risks
- Participants practice and apply new knowledge and skills at CDC
- Job Performance in new practice areas improves
- CDC applies and adopts best practices from training
- CDC improves practices and becomes more effective organization
- CDC increases ability to retain effective staff and attract new hires

This evaluation report examines results from the current year programming as measured against the desired outcomes stated above.

4.1 Usefulness of the Curriculum

One of the first measures the King Institute looks at pertains to the usefulness of the curriculum for the participants. This evaluation confirms that the Institute continues to offer material that participants find useful in strengthening their current work. In the survey completed immediately following the workshop, participants rank each major part of the course according to its level of usefulness. When examining responses to see what percentage thought that all of the material was either *Extremely Useful* or *Useful*, every course rated above 80%, with 16 out of the 20 courses rating above 90%.

The courses where over 60% of respondents thought that on average the material was *Extremely Useful* were Rental Housing Development Finance; Undoing Racism; Basics of Community Organizing; Popular Education; Community Economic Development, the Hiring Clinic, Retail & Commercial Space in Mixed Use Affordable Housing Projects; The Right Message for the Right People; the Roxbury Leadership Summit; and Introduction to Census Data.

4.2 Learning and Applying New Skills

Learning New Tools or Knowledge

All participants reported that they learned about new tools or gained knowledge that would be applicable to their position. This is consistent with all of the prior years of the King Institute. In Year 4, 90% of participants responded “Yes;” in prior years, an average of 84% - 86% said “Yes.”

The courses with the highest ratings (over 90% said Yes) were: Rental Housing Development Finance, Basics of Community Organizing (November), Hiring Clinic, Group Facilitation, Popular Education Lab, Beginner Census Data, Engaging Constituents, The Right Message for the Right People, and Finances for Entrepreneurs and their Families.

Through the follow-up interviews, participants and Executive Directors shared specific skills that were learned and were applicable to the individual’s job performance including real estate development, asset management, program finances, and facilitation. Many people also noted that participants built their knowledge in areas *outside* of their immediate job functions, thereby enabling them to better understand their colleague’s work and build a more holistic appreciation of the CDC’s larger mission and strategies. This increased knowledge has contributed to enhanced organizational effectiveness.

“The course brought home to us how to think about our finances and helped us recognize the areas that we need to work on in understanding our own balance sheet. No one was looking at it too closely, so you couldn’t tell whether an entity was making, losing, or a draw on money. We are now in the process of looking at these individually to see where the threads go. This is going to help us take a hard look at what we have and what to do with it.” Executive Director

For Executive Directors or staff in new positions, the trainings offered an important opportunity to improve levels of skill and performance.

“As a new Executive Director, I needed some basic skills in real estate development so I could do a better job overall. The course was simple to understand even though I thought it would be more complicated. I now have a better understanding of the phases of developing a project and of accounting and real estate terms and how to marry the two.”

“I was at a loss about how to manage real estate development financing. Mat taught us about how to manage sub-contractors, architects, our role as a lead agency, and other areas I needed to know for my position.”

“I am taking 101 Financial Management of Properties which will be helpful in my new role. It is a good way to give me concrete skills in a new area where I have to retool.”

“King Institute courses helped us get over learning curves for newer staff. They learned the best practices in their field.”

In addition to staff, Board member’s reported an increase in knowledge and skills, including:

- Broader understanding and knowledge of how to engage community representatives in the decision making of the organization
- Greater overall awareness of what the organization does
- Able to ask better questions about real estate development
- Use of appropriate terms especially around finances and real estate portfolio

“I understand our role better, our limits better in terms of knowing what we are to manage and what we need to let staff run for themselves.” Board member

Application of New Skills and Knowledge

Participants were asked to provide examples of how they might apply what they’ve learned to improve their work or help their organization. Examples range from technical aspects of the work such as enhanced skills in real estate development financing to improved capacities in facilitation, organizing, and critical thinking. The follow-up interviews also gathered data points on how skills and knowledge were applied. A common comment was *“It was more than I expected to learn; very applicable to my work.”* The King Institute’s applicability was referenced in five areas.

1. Courses helped to open up a participants’ way of thinking about their work and more broadly, the community and the CDC field. New ideas were learned that are immediately applicable to their work.

“It was helpful to foundationally, re-organize my way of thinking and allow me to re-conceptualize how my work can make a difference in this struggle.” Undoing Racism

“This training helped me to bridge the gaps and think beyond the “circles/networks” I currently work with.” Roxbury Leadership Summit

"It is extremely helpful for me to be able to vet some of the ideas we are trying in Lawrence and get reactions from others; to partner with LPS and other local groups to identify ways to increase parent/community engagement." Exploring the Crossroads

"I can help tenants in commercial space – will look at the business different." Retail and Commercial Space in Mixed Use Affordable Housing Projects

2. Participant's improved knowledge has led to stronger communication skills and a better ability to fulfill their roles. Participants noted that they felt they could speak more knowledgeably about a variety of topics, and that this in turn would improve their ability to communicate with and work with other staff, consultants, and external stakeholders. A board member echoed this point by stating that *"the knowledge gained here will help me better understand one of the key aspects of our organization's operations and mission and hopefully provide better advice as a board member."*

"I can offer input to my colleague that's educated based versus personal opinion that has no backing of success."

"This course will be helpful as I re-design our accounting structure but particularly to understand the process in order to talk intelligently with my co-workers."

3. Specific applications of skills were noted by many people throughout the evaluations. These include fundraising, donor identification, website development, marketing, communication, networking, evaluation and outcome measurement, mapping and data analysis, real estate development and financing and commercial development.

"This will help me be more efficient in my position exploring maps and analyze the data within each; I know how to navigate census data to determine community needs and apply for funding." Introduction to Census Data

"Leadership recruitment, training, and rotation. These new skills and knowledge will help to tighten our time management and focus." Basics of Community Organizing

"More pre-organization for meeting. Helping stay on topic despite different personalities. Engaging people in different roles." Group Facilitation

"I'll be able to better communicate and problem solve with HUD when looking to recapitalize and preserve HUD-assisted housing." Rental Housing Finance

4. Courses were seen as a motivator for professional and personal development.

"It has inspired me to do better program management and program innovation; I have more tools for critical thinking about our programs." Intro to Community Economic Development

"We can have a more vibrant education and leadership development program by involving members more. We can improve trainings to be more empowering where people truly develop a sense of passion and mastery." Popular Education

"I imagine using them to promote stronger work/life balance in order to bring a better self to work. I also plan to encourage my team to practice self-care." Bypassing Burnout

5. Participants noted how the courses were applicable in achieving higher impact on their organization as a whole.

"This workshop helps me think about the structure of the organization and how community engagement could be implemented to benefit our decision-making as well as to help our community grow." Engaging Constituents for Community Impact

"I will consider restructuring org chart, adjusting language to better include/engage constituents, more innovative models for constituents engagement." Engaging Constituents for Community Impact

"[The course helped to] strategically advance the goals of becoming a racial justice organization." Undoing Racism

"We will have a much more effective hiring process, clearer job descriptions." Hiring Clinic

4.3 Personal and Professional Development

Growth in Job Satisfaction and Confidence

Individuals who attended training as well as their supervisors commented on the increase in confidence and satisfaction.

"I always come back with a few new ideas on how to implement things. This helped my confidence because it gave me a tool kit."

"I've noticed that the staff return from training with new ideas to try. It builds their confidence too." [Executive Director]

"She is on the small business loan committee, is asking good questions and has become more confident." [Executive Director]

Others were not sure whether the King Institute contributed to increased levels of confidence for themselves. One person stated it aptly:

"Level of confidence? I can't see it. This is a not a negative of MKI. I did feel better from the courses – better language of the work, I knew little about real estate, I better understand the questions being asked of me, and am able to ask better questions, but that is different from increased confidence to take risks."

Another participant noted that her experience on the job had the most impact on her growing professional development and confidence level. When asked if the training was a factor, she noted, *"Maybe on some level. It did give me the knowledge that I have professional development behind what I do which in itself did give me more confidence in my work."*

Improvements in Job Performance

Knowledge has been applied effectively across the spectrum of courses. For novices and seasoned professionals alike, the King Institute has added-value to their professional development.

One Executive Director said he has “*witnessed an improvement in meeting facilitation and improved performance.*” He also pointed out that the King Institute was the launching pad for further advancement.

“I’ve also seen improvement in our real estate staff – he came out of this with increased knowledge, and learned what he didn’t know. Now we are paying for him to go to Wentworth on construction management. We wouldn’t have done this without the first go round at MKI.”

“I see staff have stronger applied skills in managing program finances and understanding the overall financial picture of the organization.”

“When they came in, they were not community organizers – they didn’t have the skills. MKI helped them learned that job -- we rely on MKI to provide the training that we need as an organization.”

Executive Directors noted improved performance, maturity, and increase in expertise that occurred in part as a result of the MKI trainings.

“When I first met him he didn’t have leadership skills – I saw discipline but not the level of leadership and his ability to organize things. The result of these courses has shown up in his current skills. He has grown to become a real leader in the community.”

For some of the more seasoned professionals who attended training, it was less clear whether the MKI course “*created measurable improvements in what I do.*” One person stated, however, that “*I learned things I now do better*” or in other words, it was an opportunity to “*fine tune things together*” and hear new ideas and different perspectives from colleagues.

“We have long term experienced staff here so the course didn’t have a direct impact on job performance [which was already very high] but it was still valuable.”

“I don’t come to this as a beginner but there is a lot of value in being in the room with people who are struggling with the same things. When any one of us says something you can see the heads nod - you are not alone and we learn from each other.”

Professional Advancement

In Year 4, 80% of respondents said that the skills would help them advance and another 15% said Somewhat. Only ten people in total across all courses felt that the skills would not help them advance.

The courses with the highest ratings (over 90% said Yes) were: Rental Housing Development Finance, Basics of Community Organizing (November), Intro to Community Economic Development, Group Facilitation, and Popular Education Lab. The courses where more than one person answered the question as No were: Undoing Racism, Bypassing Burnout, and Basics of Community Organizing (April).

4.4 Improved Organizational Performance

Measuring the direct impact the King Institute has on improved organizational performance is difficult because there are many factors that contribute to organizational successes and failures. When asked this question as part of the follow up interviews, an Executive Director responded, “*Yes – it has improved organizational performance. Part of our ability to progress*

is having engaged and happy staff people. This is the best tool that we have.” Another interviewee noted, *“It has had an impact but I’m not sure to what degree.”*

Another Executive Director said he felt that his instinct was to say ‘yes’ it has contributed to improved organizational performance but that it is difficult to separate it apart from the individual impact. He went on to say that MKI is an *“important part of the mix for us – an accumulation of individual impact.”*

As was noted earlier, this is a similar challenge as to whether the Institute’s training can be directly linked to performance improvements, especially when many people come to the Institute as veteran professionals. Yet, even though this evaluation process cannot definitively prove cause and effect, many of those who attend the Institute articulated specific instances of improved performance both on the individual and the organizational level.

“The training has literally transformed how the board governs. There is a different level of honesty with my board. It changed the work of the board - deepened the level of the engagement, there are agreements about how to best govern and lead; the board now has its own workplan and they are held accountable for it.”

“MKI courses helped us to grow our loan fund. We now have a whole menu from start up to advanced business development.”

“I’ve seen a big difference in how the board has behaved. When I first got here, they could get distracted, or tried to fix things that were staff business, now they are working harder at staying at a strategic level.”

“I hope this will be the beginning of a dialog within the organization about elevating the role of organizing for organizing sake.”

“It gave us the environmental scan and helped us understand where we fit into this model. It helped shape the way we are thinking about our work.”

“By working with other CDCs and hearing about their work, we started to find ways to integrate leadership development with youth which led to a multi-year effort.”

Given that the King Institute is local, affordable, and high quality, many organizations send participants from across the organization to attend the same training. Several interviewees noted the result of cross-training is enhanced organizational capacity to work together as a whole, breaking down traditional silos and building staff cohesion.

“The King Institute has contributed to building our overall staff capacity. It is not just about individual skills – it is inspiring us to do a better job as a group. We could come back and process information together – it gave us a shared reference point.”

“The finance staff went to real estate courses. They are more comfortable with the work overall. Cross fertilization has been important -- connecting their discipline, they don’t feel as walled off and isolated. I’m pushing this so that staff/ managers understand the whole picture and what others are doing.”

Impact on ability to retain effective staff and attract new hires

Executive Directors were asked if they thought the King Institute had any impact on their ability to either attract and/or retain effective staff. Many commented that they use the King Institute as their primary vehicle for professional development and the fact that they can afford to send as many staff as wish to attend is an attractive feature.

“We spend our training budget at MKI – I want staff to feel they are supported. I find the content really relevant to what we are doing. With MKI, we are getting the biggest bang for the buck.”

The MKI has been a significant part of CDC’s professional development program. Executive Directors commented that if were not for the Institute, they would not have been able to afford such high quality training or provided training opportunities for as many staff and members.

“We have not been very good at having a coherent staff development plan so the King Institute has become integral. It is just so available and accessible to people – which makes it especially important in the absence of a plan. Our staff has done more of this than anything else.”

“When we get upcoming courses, we go through the list and proactively say to staff which ones they should take. Everyone has taken at least one, many have gone multiple times. We feel connectivity to MKI and have had a positive experience with MKI.”

“One of the good perks we like to offer is good professional development. MKI is extremely helpful in this regard, consistently and affordably offer a good experience in training.”

As to whether it contributes to staff retention, an Executive Director commented that the training, *“makes people happier because we can offer this – they are more refreshed and engaged in their work.”* Yet others had a general impression that it has had an impact but found it difficult to pinpoint causality.

“I imagine it having a positive impact on attracting new staff. We haven’t consciously sold it to new employees, but we do attract people who want to learn and grow, and the King Institute has helped to retain staff definitely by providing outlets for learning and growing beyond just working. The staff have gotten specific things out of individual courses.”

4.5 Other Outcomes: Peer to Peer Interaction

Another area of focus for the Institute is to foster learning among peers, and to encourage follow up among peers in sharing best practices and strategies. The outcomes pertaining to this area include:

- Participants gain access to learning from and with peers
- Sharing of skills/ knowledge, relationships among peers grows

At the end of the training, participants comment on the degree to which the course offered an opportunity to work with peers. The Year 4, 44% of respondents said that during the training they had an extensive amount of time to work with peers that they found beneficial to their learning, and 53% said they had the opportunity for some work with peers that was beneficial. Answers to this question vary based on the nature of the class and whether peer interaction is an integral part of the curriculum.

The courses where more than 60% of respondents answered *Extensive* were Exploring the Crossroads, Bypassing Burnout 2, Basics of Community Organizing, Popular Education, Leadership Works, and the Roxbury Leadership Summit. The courses where under 33% of respondents answered *Extensive* or where one or more people said *None*, included Undoing Racism, Bypassing Burnout, Hiring Clinic, Best Practices in Evaluation for Small Business Development, Intro to Community Economic Development, Finances for Entrepreneurs and their Families, and Retail & Commercial Space in Mixed Use Affordable Housing Projects. [Comments on the day-of-survey illustrate this point. For some of these courses listed, participants shared their desire for more peer interaction.]

Meeting with peers and learning from seasoned professionals was noted as a key feature of the King Institute's success.

"It is a nice chance to get to see people from different organization and learn together."

"It has been very valuable to get people with similar challenges and skills in the same room, working on the same kinds of problems."

For those participants who also attend MACDC peer groups, the connection between the King Institute courses and this network is highly valued and seen as an added plus.

"We rely on the peer groups as a forum to continue the discussions. I know someone at every CDC and can pick up the phone can give them call."

Section 5: Recommendations from Participants

5.1 General Suggestions

Participants offered recommendations to the King Institute which included:

- Develop a year-long catalogue so that organizations can plan ahead and incorporate the training into their workplan development
- Continue to offer basic courses for newer people but also offer more advanced courses for seasoned professionals including using the study group format/ case studies from participant's organizations
- Develop new topics on emerging themes and issues the community development field is grappling with
- Train the trainer – many people are seasoned and want to learn how to replicate training in their communities
- Increase connection with universities and academic community

5.2 Future Course Suggestions from Year 4 Evaluations

1. Offer more advanced level courses

- Rental Housing Development Finance
- Community Organizing
- Economic development
- Real estate development/project management

- Undoing Racism
- Roxbury Leadership Summit
- Outcome measurement and data collection and analysis
- Commercial and Mixed Use Real Estate development

2. Additional trainings targeted to Boards of Directors

- Board development/cultivation, volunteer organizing & management, Board – Executive Director – Founder dynamics/division of roles

3. Technical/ Real Estate/ Financial Development Course Suggestions

- Information management
- Low income tax credits
- Bond financing
- Construction management and design management
- Brownfields remediation
- Urban Planning
- "How-to" of one stops

4. Community organizing and related skills

- Public speaking skills
- Facilitating small discussion groups
- Interface between education and CDCs; understand options for engaging with local public schools
- Popular education case studies
- Retaining and motivating community members to become involved in community programs
- Community engagement for government agencies
- Advocacy and coalition building
- Intergenerational community building
- Insider/outsider dynamics of working in communities particularly around race, gender, class

5. Organizational Development/ Fundraising/ Communication

- Fundraising/development strategies; annual appeals; beginning and intermediate grant writing
- Meeting facilitation, and combating conflicting interests to reach a common goal; dealing with power struggles/differences within your organization
- Media/social media; communications, action media; software/ technical options; info-graphics and design
- Conducting interviews
- Cultural competency/awareness
- Incorporating the impact of racism into all trainings

6. Community Issues

- Philanthropy's role in CED
- History of community development in Boston
- White privilege and working with communities/populations of color
- Immigration training-working with immigrant populations & learning about immigrant experience; Working with refugees
- Community health initiative

7. Other Topics

- Training on services/human service providers contracts
- Financial coaching skills
- Financial counseling
- Advanced computer skills and entrepreneur training
- Social media for entrepreneurs
- Dealing with mentally ill residents

8. Personal Development

- Regular meditation classes
- Intro to yoga
- Mindful based training

Section 6: Conclusion

The King Institute has successfully completed its fourth year of operations. With only a few exceptions, participants continue to praise the high quality of the presenters, the skills and knowledge they have gained, and the direct applicability of the course work to their own performance as well as the impact on increased organizational effectiveness. The follow-up interviews with staff, managers, Executive Directors, and board members illustrates the lasting effect of the King Institute on the people and organizations who choose to use this as an incredibly valuable resource to the community development field. Improvements were noted in the Board effectiveness, staff confidence and performance, and organizational impact.

"Keep up the great job!"

"I am endlessly impressed with how complex CDCs are. They are unique in what they do. I enjoy being a part of this network, and it is great the Institute can be there to help the CDCs."

"I've been impressed with what seems to be the breadth of partnerships they have achieved - some of it is Shirronda - she is always seeking out and finding partnerships, co-sponsorship opportunities and making something happen."

"By using effective stress-relief strategies—my personal and professional life will improve; I am hoping to apply these skills to make me a happier, stronger person in my job and life."

"I am always impressed with the variety -- it is a vibrant operation."

Section 7: Appendix

List of Interviewees

Angela Kelly, Madison Park Development Corporation, Assistant Director Community Action
Aspasia Xypolia, Viet-AID, Director of Real Estate Development
Christine Green, Dorchester Bay EDC, Board Member
Danny LeBlanc, Somerville Community Corporation, Executive Director
Dave Christopolis, Hilltown CDC, Executive Director
Dharmena Downey, Fenway CDC, Executive Director
Ellen Mason, Fields Corner CDC, Board President
Jean DuBois, Dorchester Bay EDC, Executive Director
Kristin Anderson, North Shore CDC, Chief Program Officer
Lilly Jacobson, Fenway CDC, Community Planning Associate
Marc Dohan, Twin Cities CDC, Executive Director
Meridith Levy, Somerville Community Corporation, Deputy Director
Michelle Green, Dorchester Bay EDC, Chief Operating Officer
Mike Northcutt, North Shore CDC, Executive Director
Nelson Butten, Lawrence CommunityWorks, Co-Executive Director
Seth Isman, Hilltown CDC, Economic Development Director
Steve Hart, Worcester East Side CDC, Housing Director

Evaluation Protocol: Participant and Supervisor Interviews

Section I: Outcomes for Individuals

1. How useful and applicable are the knowledge and/or skills you gained at the training to your work? Be specific and give examples
2. How frequently have you practiced or applied new skills or knowledge that you gained at the training? Be specific and give examples.
3. Have you adopted new practices gained from skills you learned at the training as a standard part of your job? Be specific and give examples.
4. Has your level of confidence in your job or your willingness to try new tasks or take on new risks changed as a result of the training sessions you attended?
5. Has your job performance improved because of skills or knowledge you gained at the training? (If supervisor, get feedback; if student, ask about their self-perception and then the perception of supervisor if available through a recent evaluation or similar.)
6. Has your satisfaction level with your position because of the training? Has your interest in staying in your position or at your organization been impacted?

Section II: Outcomes for the Organization

1. Have the best practices or lessons/ skills learned by you and others (if applicable) been targeted in a specific or strategic way within your organization? If so, in what ways?

2. Have the best practices you learned about at the training been more broadly adopted by your organization? Have they been integrated within the organizational structure or work? Be specific and give examples.
3. If so, have these practices helped to improve overall organizational performance? How/ in what ways?
4. Due to your and other's participation in MKI training, if applicable, do you think your organization has improved its ability retain employees or to attract new employees due to its commitment to professional development?
5. Do you believe that your organization has greater capacity to deliver on its mission of community building as a result of your participation in MKI training sessions? (such as improved ability to meet mission, engage constituents, expand efforts, achieve concrete benefits for the community, other) Be specific and give examples.

Section III: Peer Learning

1. What rough percentage of your learning at the course(s) would you attribute to learning from and interaction with your peers at the session?
2. To what degree have you continued to learn from/ connect with peers? Have you had useful communication with peers since the training? Specify
3. Have you benefited in some way from sharing resources, tools, knowledge, or other communication with peers? Have you improved your own practices based on something you learned from your peers?
4. Has your organization become more effective based on sharing knowledge/ tools etc. with peers at or after the training?

Section IV: Improvements/ Future

1. In what areas or ways should the King Institute change to make improvements to how or what they offer?
2. What other courses should the King Institute consider offering?

Anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your participation!