

Spotlight on ILA Institutional Members

ILA Members are doing amazing leadership work around the world, from starting new degree programs to nurturing young people who make a difference, from running innovative workshops and seminars to fostering organizational change. We are pleased to shine an ILA spotlight on the programs of our members. If you would like to nominate yourself or another ILA institutional member to be featured on these pages, please contact ILA at ila@ila-net.org.

Spotlight on The Results Leadership Group:

Infectious Leadership

A fractal is a pattern that is similar at every level of magnification – like a snowflake. At the heart of the work of the Results Leadership Group (RLG) is what might be thought of as a fractal: the concept of starting at the end. “RLG works to ‘infect’ public and nonprofit agencies and communities with this fractal,” says Phil Lee, president of RLG. “You can start anywhere because the concept can be applied by anyone at any level in an organization or community and then, if all goes well, it multiplies.”

Outcomes and results have, of course, been in vogue for years. What distinguishes RLG, says Lee, is that RLG takes the fractal to its logical “end,” which is those conditions of well being we want for our communities, ends that inherently transcend individual agencies and programs. “As far as we know, every other version of outcomes frameworks begins and ends within the walls of the agency or program,” says Lee. “We find that when we talk about starting at the end and the end is bigger than the agency or program, it turns much of the public and nonprofit sector on its head,” says Lee. “All of a sudden agencies and programs are not ends unto themselves, they are means.”

From this perspective, the notion of leadership becomes a paradox – do leaders who put their organization first violate the principle of starting at the end because the “end” is larger than their organization? What is a leader to do?

“One thing we know,” says Lee, “is that ‘Trying Hard is Not Good Enough,’” citing the title of the book of his good friend and RLG affiliate, Mark Friedman. Friedman has been “infecting” organizations and communities nationally and internationally for the last 12 years. Friedman’s book describes the outcomes framework at the center of RLG’s work: “Results Accountability” or “Results-Based Accountability.” The title refers to the importance of not only getting results for agency clients but also achieving community conditions of well being – and reconciling the two.

“Results Accountability is the only outcomes framework that systematically distinguishes between accountability for the clients of an agency and accountability for whole populations,” says Lee. “That distinction fundamentally changes the accountability paradigm,” adds Lee, “because it presumes participation in strategy development at a level that transcends individual agencies and, significantly, it presumes that the interests of the



Results Leadership Group President Phil Lee and associate Dr. Jolie Bain Pillsbury share a happy moment before co-facilitating a session on the core methods of Results Based Facilitation.

agency will be subordinated to the larger ‘ends.’”

“Results Leadership’ is the combination of skills and knowledge necessary to achieve measurable results for both the community and clients,” says Lee. Results Leadership is the capacity both to work with peers to define the strategies to achieve community results and to lead an organization in carrying out its role within the larger, community-wide strategy. One very important skill is distinguishing between the two kinds of accountability and knowing which account-

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ability conversation you are in, says Lee. Another skill is facilitating a “results-based” conversation (i.e., asking the right questions) so that decisions will be “data-driven.” And, of course, the ability to work collaboratively is indispensable.

Leadership was key when the Maryland General Assembly applied Results Accountability to early care and education, with support from Friedman and Lee. Over the course of two years, a handful of legislators implemented joint budget hearings on “School Readiness” and, in collaboration with the executive branch, a dynamic state superintendent of education, advocates, nonprofits, and the business sector, framed a statewide strategy to improve school readiness in Maryland. Central to the effort was the establishment of an annual assessment of the readiness of kindergarteners that is now a national model. In six years, the percent of children entering school fully ready in Maryland has increased from 49% to 67%.

More recently, the Maryland General Assembly’s Joint Committee on Children, Youth and Families, with assistance from Lee and RLG CAO Adam Luecking and working with the Maryland Children’s Cabinet, is utilizing Results Accountability to improve the percent of babies born healthy and the percent of healthy children in Maryland.

10. Why does RLG talk in terms of “infecting” agencies and communities? “Our theory of change borrows from Chris Argyris and Peter Senge,” says Lee. “We find that when the mental model changes the rest follows. Conversely, we find that when people do not internalize the mental model, micro-management and

other forms of ‘top-down’ change management seem to fail -- the ‘aha’ is both powerful and essential.”

Friedman, Lee and their associates have worked in almost every state, with numerous federal agencies, and Results Accountability is being used in at least ten countries outside the U.S. Recently, Friedman has worked in New Zealand, the Netherlands, Australia and Great Britain. In Great Britain, many of the 150 local authorities are using Results Accountability (or Outcome Based Accountability as it is known in the U.K.) to implement the Every Child Matters reform agenda for Children and Family Services. There are a growing number of U.K. success stories, including the city of Newcastle where they succeeded in reducing the rate of 16 to 18 year olds “not in education employment or training” from 15% to 8.2% in three years.

Of course, Friedman and Lee would like to see an epidemic in the application of Results Accountability and Results Leadership; for now, they will continue to provide strategic infections and nurture the fractals.

RLG consults, trains, and coaches in Results Accountability, Results-Based Budgeting, Results Collaboration, Results-Based Legislative Hearings, Results-Based Facilitation and related topics, such as Storytelling, Negotiation, and Persuasion. RLG also recently produced a new DVD in which Friedman presents the principles of Results Accountability, available at www.resultleadership.org.



Penny Griffiths, of the Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative, discusses engaging community partners in reducing the homicide rate in Washington D.C. at the 2006 Results Accountability Conference.



Mark Friedman convenes a group of government and non-profit leaders on how to implement Results Accountability at the 2006 Results Accountability Conference at the University of Maryland.