

# Learn & go • evaluation

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## introduction

This independent evaluation of the Learn & Go (L&G) program that ran from September to November 2008 was commissioned by Vibrant Communities to get a sense of what worked well and what needs changing in future.

The evaluation is based on one-on-one interviews—primarily conducted by phone—over a month-long period from mid-January to mid-February 2009. Interviewees were run through a brief confidentiality statement prior to the interviews, which assured them their individual answers would be kept confidential by summarizing their thoughts along with others and without identifying their name. Because there were very few males interviewed respondents' gender has not been identified to ensure they remain anonymous – throughout the report *he* or *she* is replaced with *s/he* and *her* or *his* is replaced with *her/his*.

Someone from every aspect of L&G except its steering committee was interviewed. The list of completed interviews is included below. In most cases not everyone approached for an interview (target) was available. The total for each group is also indicated.

	Completed	Target	Total
<b>Participants</b>	18	27	27
<b>Mentors</b>	1	2	4
<b>Partners</b>	2	4	12
<b>Staff</b>	2	2	2
<b>Workshop Leaders</b>	4	5	9
	<b>27</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>54</b>

Not all participants answered each question so numbers vary but percentages are offered in every case.

Comments from interviewees have been included throughout because they give life to the document. Participants' experiences are front and centre because it is key that L&G works for them. Comments from the majority as well as the minority are offered. Comments that represent the minority's opinion are important to consider to help the program—as much as is possible—work for everyone.

In the following pages the evaluation is organized around sections and subsections that outline the successfulness of specific aspects of the program. Overall L&G appears to have been a great success with 100% of interviewees wanting the program to continue. Suggestions for improvements can be found throughout but are generally minor in nature. More major recommendations include:

- Address the space and childcare issues at the Crescent Valley Resource Centre (CVRC).
- Structure the project phase more to ensure participation and a more equal distribution of tasks.
- Examine the scope of projects and scale back those that are too large for the time and resources available during L&G.
- Ensure mentor's connect with their group and their role is properly explained at the beginning.
- Have some form of follow-up (or even continued support) for projects that are incomplete at the end of L&G.
- Think about ways the program could accomplish its goals while also addressing the lack of money that keeps participants living in poverty.

## general

### L&G • length

The majority of participants (70%, 7 out of 10) liked the length of L&G (September to November). The staff were split on this with one in favour (50%, 1 out of 2).

### L&G • size

Nearly all participants (94%, 17 out of 18) thought the size of L&G was appropriate—neither too many nor too few participants—because everyone had an opportunity to speak and ask questions and they could hear each other well. One staff member (50%, 1 out of 2) thought the size worked well while the other thought there were more people at CVRC than the space could accommodate. All of the workshop leaders (100%, 3 out of 3) were happy with the number of participants at their workshops saying that any more than 15 limits their ability to be interactive.

### L&G • recruitment

#### How participants heard about L&G

- Program coordinator (44%, 8 out of 18)
- Group they were involved in (28%, 5 out of 18)

- Word-of-mouth (22%, 4 out of 18)
- Flyer (6%, 1 out of 18)

#### Participants' recommendations for advertising

- Door-to-door (24%, 6 mentions out of 25) because the coordinator was so enthusiastic and the program could be explained in person.
- Radio (24%, 6 mentions out of 25).
- Flyers (20%, 5 mentions out of 25).
- Word of mouth (12%, 3 mentions out of 25).
- All methods (12%, 3 mentions out of 25) because it is important to use a variety of recruitment strategies to ensure a diversity among participants.
- Television (8%, 2 mentions out of 25).

#### Participants' suggestions for other forms of advertising

- Newspapers
- Information booths in McAllister Place and Brunswick Square.
- Channel 10 on television.
- Resource centres.
- Church bulletin boards.
- The Resource Centre for Youth (TRC) and Department of Social Development websites.
- *Around the Block* (the community newspaper)

- Regional and St. Joseph's Hospital bulletin boards.
- Doctor's offices and clinics.
- Community Health Centre.
- Notices with income assistance cheques.

One staff member thought it would have been helpful to spend more time recruiting in the neighbourhoods – going to community meetings recruits those who are already engaged but a whole different group of people can be reached by going out in the neighbourhoods. She thought in future it would be beneficial to pay past participants (or offer in-kind support) to go out for a day in the neighbourhoods to spread the word – they would be great advocates. Another staff member mentioned that they got a lot of phone calls and emails from the flyers.

### Phases • additions

None of the participants (0%, 0 out of 18) thought L&G needed any additional phases outside the workshops, projects & presentations.

One participant said they could not have done the program without the workshop phase because it gave participants experience and confidence before the

presentations. S/he also thought they were in a good sequence, starting out with the basics.

## supports

### Supports • childcare

All of the participants (100%, 4 out of 4) who required childcare thought what was provided worked well. Three of these participants (75%, 3 out of 4) said they would have still been able to participate had it not been provided. A staff member and workshop leader mentioned a problem with onsite childcare at CVRC. They felt the facilities were too small, especially for the children with special needs and there was an incident as a result.

### Supports • transportation

All the participants (100%, 14 out of 14) who required transportation thought what was offered worked well. They liked that they were given bus tokens in advance of the meetings. Some liked that the bus schedule was convenient or that they did not have to walk far to get to/from the bus. One participant said the only downfall of the program was that the bus did not run after the CVRC evening workshops but

added that the coordinator still made sure they had a way home via taxi. Most of the participants (86%, 12 out of 14) said they would have still been able to participate if transportation had not been provided. One participant mentioned that s/he walked there so s/he could save the bus tokens to get groceries and to get to doctors appointments. One staff member explained that if the workshops had fallen within a calendar month they could have given participants a monthly bus pass as an incentive that they could have used outside of L&G.

### Supports • honourarium

#### Participants

Most of the participants (83%, 15 out of 18) said the \$100 honourarium made a difference for them. It helped one participant pay a late bill, another found it especially helpful at that time of year (just before Christmas), one participant said it made a difference for food and clothing, and another said it was nice to see the program appreciated their work.

One participant thought everyone should have received some of the honourarium each week instead of having to wait until the end because they were living on such limited incomes. Another participant felt the

honourarium was not explained well at the beginning as several thought they would receive the honourarium after attending 5 workshops instead of at the end of the program. One participant said s/he spent \$100 getting ready for the project's presentation so the honorarium just reimbursed her/him for out-of-pocket expenses related to promoting and holding meetings.

The majority of participants (64%, 9 out of 14) thought the amount was fair especially because food was supplied at every meeting. Four participants thought the amount was too low, one suggested upping it to \$150 and another to \$200 – they felt it was not enough for all the work and time they put in. However, all of the participants (100%, 18 out of 18) said they would have participated even if the honourarium was not provided.

#### Workshop Leaders

All of the workshop leaders (100%, 3 out of 3) were pleased to receive the honourarium. One said it showed that what the participants were doing was worthwhile and appreciated, and noted that it did not have to be a certain amount or even monetary (it could have been a small token). Another said the amount was appropriate for the time spent at the

workshops but did not cover the many hours needed to prepare, though s/he did not mind giving back to the community in this way.

*Note: only 3 of the 4 workshop leaders who were interviewed were asked the full set of interview questions, the 4th was just asked for general comments/suggestions.*

### **Mentors**

The mentor said the honourarium was not important to her/him and s/he would have mentored regardless.

## **Supports • other barriers**

Most participants (83%, 15 out of 18) said there were no other barriers—outside of childcare and transportation—that made it difficult to participate. One participant found her/his shyness to be a significant barrier and two others had a problem with the accessibility of the location and the frequency of meetings (covered elsewhere).

## **workshops**

### **Workshops • timing**

#### **10 AM**

All the participants and workshop leaders liked the timing of the morning workshops.

#### **6:30 PM**

The majority of participants (89%, 8 out of 9) and workshop leaders (67%, 2 out of 3) found the timing of the evening sessions convenient. One workshop leader advised against holding an evening session because energy levels were lower than the morning session because participants were tired and anxious to wrap-up for the day.

### **Workshops • location**

#### **TRC**

All of the interviewees except one found the TRC to be a good location (staff 100%, 2 out of 2; participants 89%; 8 out of 9, workshop leaders 100%, 3 out of 3). Participants said there was enough space to move around and still hear what was going on, it was within walking distance or otherwise easy to get to, and they were familiar with the location beforehand. One participant found the bathrooms there were not very accessible. Participants suggested

two alternate locations: the Community Health Centre and a location closer to the South End (like Centenary Queen Square).

#### **CVRC**

All the participants (100%, 9 out of 9) found CVRC to be a convenient location. None of the staff (0%, 0 out of 2) and one-third of the workshop leaders (33%, 1 out of 3) thought CVRC was a suitable location. Participants liked the location because it was within walking distance or close by, the room was big enough with long tables, the bus went right there, and they were familiar with the location beforehand. Those that did not like the space thought it was too small and did not have a good layout (2 rooms separated by an archway). One staff member commented that those further away from the speaker had a hard time hearing, which frustrated some participants. Another mentioned that the evening bus schedule was not convenient and onsite childcare could not be offered. One workshop leader said that it is important to hold these types of sessions in the neighbourhoods but the CVRC was not ideal. S/he thought in future another space should be used or it should be configured differently. One participant found the CVRC was not easily accessible because her/his child was in a stroller and there was no elevator. One participant suggested

somewhere in the Uptown as an alternate location for the evening session.

## Workshops • frequency

Most participants (89%, 16 out of 18) liked the frequency of the workshops. Only one of the staff (50%, 1 out of 2) thought the frequency was good. One participant said s/he did not like having the meetings back to back at CVRC on Wednesdays and Thursdays. One staff member thought the frequency kept participants engaged and may have encouraged some bonding between them. The other thought they could have used an extra day a week to cover all the information.

The majority of workshop leaders (67%, 2 out of 3) were pleased with the frequency of their workshops (two in one day or on separate days). One workshop leader found holding two in one day to be difficult.

## Workshops • length

The majority of participants (67%, 12 out of 18) thought the length of workshops—1.5 to 2 hours—worked well. None of the workshop leaders (0%, 0 out of 3) found the length sufficient. The staff were split on the suitability of the length with only one in

favour (50%, 1 out of 2). Those that liked the length thought it provided time to enjoy a break and an opportunity for everyone to speak. Workshop leaders said they would have preferred 3 hours—or a full 2 hours not including breaks and other interruptions—especially because this was a one-time session. They also suggested if the organizers have a number of information items to cover with participants they should do so before the scheduled start of the workshop to avoid cutting into the workshop time. One staff member stressed the need to have a planned break in future noting that not every workshop had a break and participants were not always comfortable bringing up the need for one.

## Workshops • helpfulness

All of the participants (100%, 18 out of 18) found the workshops helpful.

## Workshops • favourite

Participants' favourite workshops were:

- Working with the Media (20%, 6 out of 30)
- Using Your Vote (17%, 5 out of 30)
- Team Building (17%, 5 out of 30)
- Listening and Sharing (13%, 4 out of 30)
- Public Speaking (13%, 4 out of 30)

- Telling our Stories (10%, 3 out of 30)
- Wrap-up Session (7%, 2 out of 30)
- Running a Meeting (3%, 1 out of 30)
- Getting Funding (0%, 0 out of 30)

*Note: some participants mentioned more than one workshop.*

## Workshops • amount

Most participants (72%, 13 out of 18) thought there was just the right number of workshops. One participant (6%, 1 out of 18) thought there were too many and the remainder (22%, 4 out of 18) would have liked more. Suggestions for additional workshops include:

- One for the younger participants on resume writing and how to approach employers.
- How to get the community involved in a project that requires neighbourhood backing.
- Another workshop on getting organized for the projects before the 2nd phase.

## Workshops • leaders

All the participants (100%, 17 out of 17) were pleased with the workshop leaders. Participants thought they were good teachers, always ready to help out and answer questions, friendly, and knew what

they were talking about. One participant said s/he was glad they used layman's terms. Another tried to contact a few of them for support and feedback but did not hear back. Both staff members (100%, 2 out of 2) were pleased with the workshop leaders.

## Workshops • format

The majority of workshop leaders (67%, 2 out of 3) liked the format of the workshops. The other workshop leader would have preferred the food was not on the table during the workshop because it caused a lot of distractions and was not conducive to learning. S/he recognized that food is important because it is often why participants attend but thought it should have been saved for a break.

## Workshops • suggestions

### Participants

- Have more young people—in their teens & 20s—at the morning session.
- Have healthier snacks at the workshops for those with special diets like diabetics.
- The Getting Funding workshop could have been more in-depth.

### Staff

- The information in the Getting Funding workshop was too overwhelming and probably intimidating for some.

## projects & presentations

L&G participants worked on four projects during the program: A Transitional Inclusive Shelter, Restoring Taylor Park Ball Field, Saving Lives in the Courts, and Transportation for Youth to the TRC.

## Projects • selection

Three-quarters of participants (75%, 12 out of 16) were happy with how projects were selected. A number of participants said the project was the reason they joined L&G. A few others said the project was not their first choice (they wanted to work on a different topic but no one else was interested), they were hoping for more to choose from, or they thought the choice should have been made earlier in the program.

## Projects • length

Only a bit over half the participants (59% 10 out of 17) felt they had enough time to work on their project. One participant said

that because the group set their own meeting dates they could have met more often if they needed more time. A few others mentioned that even though they had to work fast to meet the deadline they were proud they were able to finish on time. One participant suggested adding another week and another recommended extending the length to 6 months.

## Projects • mentors

Most of the participants (88%, 14 out of 16) thought it was useful to work with a mentor. One participant thought that without a mentor their project probably would have had the same outcome but it would have been more difficult to achieve. Another participant mentioned s/he is still working with the mentor. Another found it helpful that if the mentor did not know an answer she knew someone who did. A number of participants thought their mentor helped keep things organized, directed them to resources and information, played the role of a leader, and helped speed things up. They said without a mentor they would not have accomplished what they did, would have struggled more, and it would have been a lot more work. A couple of participants did not find their mentor helpful and one staff member noted that in future they should work harder to resolve any

problems with getting groups and their mentors to connect.

## **Projects • outcome**

Most participants (76% 13 out of 17) were pleased with their project's outcome. The Saving Lives in the Courts group were successful in getting lighting installed and were optimistic about securing fencing in the spring. The Restoring Taylor Park Ball Field group were actively working on a rink at the time of the interviews and were hoping more work would be done once the weather warmed up. The Transportation for Youth to the TRC group was in the final stages of securing their bus pass at the time of the interviews. Overall these groups were excited about the progress they had made. Of the participants who were not pleased with their project's outcome one participant said s/he was not sure what happened with the project and a few participants from the Transitional Inclusive Shelter group thought the group was too large and the project was too ambitious – they thought they should have been encouraged to concentrate on a more achievable project. One participant said s/he walked away from the presentation a bit heavy hearted because s/he did not feel they were going to make any progress. One staff member also thought the project

was too large and suggested it would be better if the group took on something they could achieve. She worried some participants were getting discouraged. Partners also thought this project was too big and that the coordinator should have scaled it back – they felt the participants walked away quite discouraged. One partner said that even if you have the “movers and shakers” it still takes years before you are even ready to make your first presentation for this kind of project. The partners did recognize the benefits of the other projects, in particular one partner commented that the Transportation for Youth to the TRC project was a good idea, achievable, not expensive, and would give participants the confidence to do another project in future.

## **Projects • current involvement**

Not many participants (20%, 2 out of 10) said they were still involved with their project. One participant said s/he has meetings every 2 weeks and is confident the project will not end with L&G. A few others said they are too busy, do not have each other's contact information, or are focusing on another neighbourhood project.

## **Projects • suggestions**

A few participants suggested that in future the project phase meetings should be scheduled in the same manner as those for the workshops because it was difficult to plan around everyone's schedules and participants were not as dedicated for this phase. One participant found it problematic that some members switched between the CVRC and TRC sessions. A few others suggested that someone should have been appointed (like the coordinator) to ensure tasks were divided equally. A few participants found that other members “took over” the project by taking it in another direction and not providing an opportunity for everyone to contribute equally. One participant would have liked better access to technology. S/he said there was no computer access onsite and it would have been useful to have a projector to practice their presentation.

## **Presentations • setup**

Most participants (82%, 14 out of 17) liked the setup of the presentations. One participant liked that s/he got to hear how partners plan things out and said it was a very powerful night and the energy in the room was amazing. Another participant

liked the way the tables were set up because it made presenting less intimidating. Another suggested it would have been better if participants had a chance to attend all the presentations. A couple of participants wished each group member had been given the opportunity to present.

## **Presentations** • **partners' support**

Nearly all participants (94%, 16 out of 17) were pleased with the support offered by the partners at the presentation. Of those that were not pleased one participant would have liked to see the partners lend their services to the project and another was very disappointed that one of the partners said their project would not work without specifying why.

## **Presentations** • **suggestions**

One participant thought there should have been a bigger space for their presentation. Another said s/he would have liked more opportunities to present to the partners, that way the group could work on their suggestions and continue to present and make changes until the project was complete. S/he also thought it would have

been good to have one of the partners working with them to help implement their project.

**Note: Overall the largest group with the biggest task—the Transitional Inclusive Shelter group—had the lowest level of satisfaction for these topics, while generally the other groups seemed pleased with the process and their project's outcome.**

**mentors, partners, staff & workshop leaders**

## **L&G** • **staff**

Nearly all participants (94%, 17 out of 18) were pleased with the work of the L&G staff (project coordinator & assistant coordinator). They thought the staff were wonderful, awesome, enthusiastic, helpful, and phenomenal! They said the staff really knew their job and always made sure participants had everything they needed. A few commented specifically about the coordinator saying she made everyone feel very welcomed, was not intimidating, was understanding and compassionate, and easy to talk to. One participant stressed the importance of having staff like this for the program. The remaining participant had a

problem with the coordinator's crowd control of the younger participants as well as one of her interactions with a workshop leader.

Both of the staff members (100%, 2 out of 2) were pleased with the support of the other, noting that they worked well as a team. Both (100%, 2 out of 2) were also pleased with the support offered by the steering committee saying that they were a great sounding board, provided helpful feedback at regular meetings, and were only ever a phone call away. Both staff (100%, 2 out of 2) said they enjoyed the many different aspects of their role. One stressed the importance of her role as a relationship builder because the workshop leaders changed each week and the participants needed a familiar face. The other said she loved the challenge the role provided and learned a lot.

Both staff (100%, 2 out of 2) said they put in more time than was anticipated, particularly during the workshop phase, but neither seemed to mind, saying they enjoyed the work.

All the workshop leaders (100%, 3 out of 3) were pleased with the support offered by the staff noting how helpful they were in arranging a space for them to photocopy

materials. One workshop leader said s/he would have liked more phone—as opposed to email—communication leading up to the workshop.

The mentor said they did not have contact with the assistant coordinator but that her/his dealings with the coordinator were good, though some days it was easier to reach her than others but she was helpful in getting ahold of hard to reach participants.

## **L&G • mentors**

The mentor thought the length of the mentoring phase was too short. S/he felt the time commitment was reasonable and was not any more than expected. S/he thought it was useful for the group to work with a mentor saying the group would have managed on their own since they had done a lot of research but her/his guidance and assistance with organization was a help. The mentor thought the main skills the participants gained/improved from the mentoring were presentation skills (some were very nervous beforehand), creating linkages with partners, and time management.

## **L&G • partners**

Both partners (100%, 2 out of 2) said the presentation format worked well because it encouraged dialogue. Both (100%, 2 out of 2) also felt they got enough information about the project from the presentation and had enough time to discuss it. One partner said considering this was not something the presenters had much experience with they did very well. The other said the level of detail was sufficient for an initial presentation but more details would be required to move forward. They felt the Restoring Taylor Park Ball Field and Transportation for Youth to the Teen Resource Centre groups were prepared for their presentation but one partner thought the Transitional Inclusive Shelter group could have done a bit more research and said if they were serious about starting a shelter they would not have been ready for a presentation at that point. *(Note: a partner who attended the Saving Lives in the Court presentation could not be reached for an interview.)* One partner said the most effective thing about the presentations was the participants' ability to engage them – the presentation relayed what the project was about while the discussion relayed how to go about the project. Both partners (100%, 2 out of 2) said they found the presentations

compelling and liked that individuals living in poverty were addressing these issues. They found this very realistic and sincere and noted that delivering solutions to people living in poverty usually does not work, but engaging them in the solution often does. Both partners (100%, 2 out of 2) thought the presentations were a worthwhile way to learn about community projects and that they work better than reports which are easy to ignore. Both partners (100%, 2 out of 2) thought their feedback helped the projects.

Both staff (100%, 2 out of 2) were pleased with the support offered by partners at the presentations. One staff member said going into the presentations she expected them to be more distant but they were more like allies.

## **Participants • efforts & varying skills**

Both staff members (100%, 2 out of 2) said they were happy with participants' efforts and participation in L&G. One staff member said some talked out of turn but not overwhelmingly so and there were some personality clashes but there was also bonding in ways that surprised her. The other staff member said in future they

should try to encourage the quiet participants to speak up a bit more. All of the workshop leaders (100%, 3 out of 3) were pleased with participants' efforts and involvement in their workshop. One workshop leader said that shyness was only an issue for some and noted that people learn best when they care and are not being forced to learn, which is what is great about L&G. The mentor was pleased with participants' efforts and participation saying that the ones who showed up and participated were stellar and although there were some who were not as outgoing they warmed up and showed growth in the end.

Both staff members (100%, 2 out of 2) said they were able to accommodate the participants regardless of varying skills, knowledge or literacy levels noting that if anybody had a problem they addressed it and participants also helped each other out – if someone did not read well another would jump in. They noted that there was a wide range of abilities but this did not cause problems. All the workshop leaders (100%, 3 out of 3) said they were able to accommodate the participants regardless of varying skills, knowledge or literacy levels by: making sure everything they passed out was written at a very basic level, going over the material with them, building the workshop around participants'

contribution to the discussion, and by finding out the participants' background prior to the workshop to help determine vocabulary level, the amount of information to deliver, and content. The mentor said s/he was able to accommodate the participants by taking extra time for those who had more questions.

## **Learnings • mentors, partners, staff & workshop leaders**

### **Mentors**

The mentor said the main thing s/he took away from the experience was the satisfaction of knowing that s/he helped participants move through a process they were passionate about.

### **Partners**

One partner was very impressed with the respectful relationship between the coordinator and the participants. The other said one of the presenters really made an impression on her/him because s/he had a good presence, spoke well, was very forceful, and seemed to take on the role of the group's leader.

### **Staff**

One staff member said the main thing she took away from the experience was not to

underestimate individuals' capabilities. The other said she learned a lot from some of the participants especially those who were homeless at the time. She said listening to their stories changed her and showed her what inner strength is.

### **Workshop Leaders**

Workshop leaders said the main things they took away from the experience were how many people are interested in proving themselves and working together to improve their communities and that it was an opportunity for both participants *and* workshop leaders to learn.

## **Reason for involvement • mentors, partners, staff & workshop leaders**

### **Mentors**

The mentor said s/he wanted to mentor for L&G because it was an opportunity to work with people in the community and to share her/his knowledge.

### **Partners**

One partner said their reason for getting involved was because they like giving back to the community.

## Staff

Staff said they wanted to work for L&G because it was a learning experience, to meet new people, and because of a passion for poverty reduction work.

## Workshop Leaders

Workshop leaders said they wanted to run a workshop for L&G: to share their knowledge on the subject matter, it is something they enjoy doing, they think there is a lack of knowledge on the topic in the priority neighbourhoods, and because they like to see the “lightbulb moments” when people living in poverty realize that is *not* who they are.

## impacts & outcomes

### Participants • reasons for joining

Participants gave a number of reasons for joining the program including to:

- Bring awareness to the devastation of homelessness.
- Substitute for what s/he was not learning in school.
- Get more skills on how to speak out and learn where to go if you want to accomplish something.

- Change things because so many things are wrong and s/he thinks teens should change things too not just adults.
- Find out how to get people to understand what s/he is doing in the community and to get the basics on how to organize programs.
- Help make change in the community.
- Use what s/he learned from the workshops to help someone else.

### Participants • expectations

All the participants (100%, 14 out of 14) said L&G met their expectations. One said it was beyond her/his expectations and did not realize it would make such a huge difference.

### Participants • main skills

Most participants (86%, 12 out of 14) said they learned or improved skills through L&G. Some of the skills included: improving spelling and reading, listening to others and the importance of sharing, how to work in groups, independence, coordinating events, how to use their voice/story, and how to approach issues without getting a temper. One participant said s/he learned which officials (MLAs, councillors, etc.) to go to for which issues and this has

already had an impact on her/his volunteer commitments. A couple of participants mentioned that they already had a lot of the skills from involvement in other activities. The staff noted that the program brought out a lot of different things in participants, things the participants never realized they had – participants who felt powerless before gained a sense of empowerment from speaking out.

### Participants • impact

Most participants (78%, 14 out of 18) said L&G had an impact on their life including:

- S/he is happier, has better self-esteem, is more outgoing, and is not afraid to ask questions anymore. S/he met some very nice people and keeps in contact with a few of them. A lot of her/his friends say s/he has come really far as a result of L&G. Before s/he was a very shy person, s/he hardly ever spoke out about anything, and was very scared to go to a job interview and now s/he has a job. L&G brought out a lot that s/he did not think was possible. S/he’s thankful for the program.
- S/he is applying for jobs s/he never would have before because now s/he feels s/he has the required experience, which will help her/him move out of poverty. S/he has an improved sense of

self-worth and self-confidence. S/he has gained so much experience from L&G s/he is amazed and blown away by it!

- L&G helped her/him take the last step s/he needed to get a job.
- Has a little more confidence in what s/he does at work.
- Before the program s/he was depressed, it was a good way to get involved and motivated again.
- Now s/he knows if s/he wants to make another change s/he does not need to be a “high up person” to do it, s/he has the necessary skills.
- Joined another community program (4 participants).
- Has more awareness.
- It made her/his life really good - now s/he knows s/he can do the projects at school because s/he has the background.
- The teens in the neighbourhood value her/him more because they know s/he wants to help them.

The staff also commented on the impact on participants noting that one enrolled in a program part way through L&G to get off drugs and a couple others moved from a homeless shelter into a rooming house.

## moving forward

### L&G • success

#### Participants

All of the participants (100%, 18 out of 18) said that L&G’s goal to give participants the skills to make changes in their neighbourhood was achieved for them and that the program was a success. Two participants said they are already putting these skills to work for another community project. Another said L&G was one of the best things that ever happened to her/him.

#### Mentors

The mentor thought some participants could continue this type of work without L&G, while others would need the support of the program.

#### Partners

One of the partners (50%, 1 out of 2) thought L&G was successful and achieved its goal. The other partner said this goal was only partially achieved and that if participants were going to continue with this sort of thing they would need more mentoring and to work on their presentation skills.

#### Staff

Both the staff members (100%, 2 out of 2) thought L&G’s goal was achieved and the program was a success.

### L&G • continuation

#### Participants

All the participants (100%, 18 out of 18) said L&G should continue. One participant said s/he wishes everyone in the neighbourhood could take it because it gives people experience, knowledge, and a sense of self-worth. S/he said it gives people in the priority neighbourhoods—who often feel hopeless and unable to make change—a sense that they can do something. Another participant said s/he is aware of a number of people who want to join. Another said it gives participants a chance to have an opinion and to get others to realize what they are going through and how to deal with it. One participant simply said: Keep doing this! A number of participants said they would take the program again if they could.

#### Mentors

The mentor thought L&G should continue, with a few tweaks here and there.

### **Partners**

Both partners (100%, 2 out of 2) said L&G should continue.

### **Staff**

Both staff members (100%, 2 out of 2) thought L&G should continue. One said there are so many amazing people out there that have a lot of wonderful ideas for creating change.

### **Workshop Leaders**

All the workshop leaders (100%, 3 out of 3) said L&G should continue. One thought the program should be given the opportunity to grow, saying it has all the basics it needs and is on the right track.

## **L&G • future involvement**

### **Participants**

All participants (100%, 18 out of 18) thought there should be a role for past participants in running future L&Gs. The role could include: explaining to new participants what the program is like, getting groups who were successful with their project to tell new groups how they were able to succeed, forming an advisory group, giving presentations, and volunteering generally.

### **Mentors**

The mentor said if L&G continues s/he would be interested in mentoring again as long as s/he has the skill set for the particular project.

### **Partners**

Both partners (100%, 2 out of 2) said if L&G continues they would be interested in being involved.

### **Staff**

Both of the staff (100%, 2 out of 2) said if L&G continues they would be interested in working for the program. One staff member explained that the program helped her prepare for her own chapter ahead and that she has already used what she learned elsewhere.

### **Workshop Leaders**

All the workshop leaders (100%, 3 out of 3) said if L&G continues they would be interested in holding another workshop.

## **L&G • celebration**

### **Participants**

The participants enjoyed the celebration. They said it provided a sense of accomplishment and was a good chance to find out how the other projects were doing.

They also said it was a good opportunity to meet the participants in the other session as well as a nice way to say goodbye to those that attended with them. They thought it was a good way to finish off the program. One participant said s/he would have liked the workshop leaders to say a few words and another said s/he wished one of the partners had been at the celebration and that they had taken a group picture.

### **Workshop Leaders**

One workshop leader thought in future others involved in Vibrant Communities—like the members of the Leadership Roundtable—should attend to show their support. Another commented that it was wonderful to see how people had connected with each other and with the staff – It was great to hear the kind words and see the hugs.

## **L&G • recommendations**

### **Participants**

- Hold sessions in the other priority neighbourhoods to get more people involved.
- Continue to mix residents from different neighbourhoods so they know they are not alone in their struggles (also mentioned by a staff member).

- Try again for a session on the West Side (also mentioned by a staff member and a workshop leader).
- Organize something so participants can find out how the other projects made out in the end.
- Have more male participants.
- Have a program just for teens (also mentioned by a staff member).
- Hold a second phase for the first group.
- Have permanent job placements through L&G, even if only part-time.

### **Mentors**

- Properly explain the mentorship role at the beginning to both mentors and participants. S/he thought the mentor's role was to be a sounding board, to let the group know what resources exist, and to encourage them to share their opinions, but it was less a mentorship role and more a leadership one. The expectation that mentors would followup on the project after the program ended should have also been addressed at the beginning.
- Structure the project phase more to ensure participation because not every group member showed up to every meeting.

### **Partners**

- The mentors need to continue with the groups that are undertaking large-scale projects.
- The mentors should look at the scope of the projects to make sure they are attainable. If they are not it sets the participants up for disappointment.

### **Staff**

- Have someone in place after the presentation to follow each group's project through its next steps in order to keep the momentum going. The mentors might be able to play this role but if so they should be approached about this in advance.
- The groups need to tap into in-kind services more to help their projects along.
- Recruit participants from the city's outskirts: Grand Bay-Westfield, Quispamsis, etc.
- Irving Oil (the funders) should have a hands-on role like attending a session to meet the participants and see how they feel about the program.

### **Workshop Leaders**

- Recruit people who have been through a number of community programs as presenters in future – it is good for residents to hear other residents present

(peer leadership).

- Ensure an opportunity for follow-up with workshop leaders is built into the program – the workshop can be overwhelming to some participants (especially those new to the topic) because it is only held once.
- One of the biggest challenge for people living in poverty is that they do not have enough money – the most important thing to address is this lack of money that keeps them living in poverty. In future L&G should help participants learn how to make changes in their neighbourhoods while at the same time putting money in their pockets. The projects could be focused on something like an apprenticeship program or even some form of business/community development program like social enterprises.



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