

Running head: COMMUNITY BASED CIVIC LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Community Based Civic Leadership Programs:

Current situation, direction, and future Challenges.

Tarek Azzam and Ronald Riggio

Kravis Leadership Institute: Claremont McKenna College

Abstract

This report will focus on the development and operational practice of civic leadership programs within California. The intention is to provide a clearer understanding of how civic leadership programs are shaped and structured. This paper will also offer a glimpse into the status of civic leadership programs within California. The report will cover a variety of topics such as the types of programs, curricular practices of programs, major issues facing programs, occupational make up of participants, and many other topics.

Community Based Civic Leadership Programs:

Current situation, direction, and future Challenges.

Civic Leadership programs aim to train future and current leaders in the skills necessary to serve the local and global community. These programs attempt to foster an understanding of the events and people that shape a community while providing the skills to be effective leaders. This is done with the intention of inspiring citizens to step forward and assume leadership roles within the community. This notion of civic leadership has been defined as:

The ‘art and science’ of leading in the public arena where one engages in the affairs of society through public advocacy, debate, education, and the fostering of dialogue and group reflection. Civic leadership promotes critical thinking in the public arena and an examination of new alternatives and paradigms. (Reed, 1996, p. 100).

The steady rise of civic leadership programs points to the perceived importance of having increased numbers of trained civic leaders within the community. Some evidence indicates that communities with strong civic engagement and strong local leadership tend to have lower crime, better schools, and effective government institutions (Putnam 1995; Rossing, 1998)). Typically, these cities have a strong sense of community and personal ownership. Fostering these feelings of civic respect and ownership has been a challenge to many local cities and governments, and the growth of civic leadership programs may be one important step in enhancing a sense of community.

Most civic leadership programs have had a relatively recent emergence in the United States. The earliest known program is Leadership Inc. in Philadelphia that began in 1959

(Moore, 1988). Different sources give different reasons and historical factors that contribute to the creation of civic leadership programs. Many stories attribute the formation of civic leadership programs to the race riots that were ravaging the country in the 1960's (CLA, 2000). These programs started as a way to bring the community together by trying to create a mutual understanding of the issues and problems facing the community.

Other stories attribute the formation of leadership programs to a severe lack of leaders within the community. A dramatic example of such a case occurred with a tragic plane crash that was carrying most of Atlanta's young leaders (Fredricks, 1998). This event created a leadership vacuum within the community and spurred members of the community to form Leadership Atlanta to help fill vacant leadership roles and to avoid a similar situation. Although this case is extreme and rare, many communities report that they are finding it harder to locate capable leaders to assume responsibility and help guide the community.

The value of civic leadership programs is hard to gauge due to the unique nature of individual programs. Each program contends with different issues, different populations, different budgets, different approaches to training leadership, and many other significant differences. Although the differences between programs maybe large, some preliminary research on the effectiveness of civic leadership programs found some evidence of positive long-term impact (Daugherty & Williams, 1997). Daugherty and Williams (1997) conducted a longitudinal study of graduates of leadership programs and observed that alumni were still active in the community three years after completing the programs. Interestingly they also found that the impact of these programs went beyond the

graduates. For example, non-graduates were found to use the methodology and curriculum of graduates of the leadership programs. There seemed to be a transfer of knowledge from graduates to other people when they interacted in various situations. This led to overall improvement in the execution and formation of community projects.

Today, the number of community leadership programs is on the rise. Currently more than 700 community programs are operating in nearly all regions of the United States (Community Leadership Association 2001 ; Fredricks, 1998). Many of these programs were formed in or were closely affiliated with the local chambers of commerce. Many of these programs were started by individuals who either have participated in other civic leadership programs or have had some informal contact with other leadership programs.

There is a national organization for civic leadership programs called the Community Leadership Association (CLA). This organization has over 400 members and holds an annual conference for civic leadership program directors, and other interested parties. CLA also provides informational resources for emerging and current programs by publishing a civic leadership program guide for individuals or programs that are interested in how to create, operate, and maintain a civic leadership program. In California, the major association is the California Association of Leadership Programs (CALP). This association is well known among most civic leadership programs within California and is well established among the programs. These associations coupled with contact between other leadership programs in close proximity yield a close-knitted community of programs who try to share their efforts and experiences.

Leadership development in civic leadership programs

At their core, civic leadership programs have much in common with other leadership development programs, with the main distinction being the direct involvement of the participants with the community. Over 85% of all leadership training programs use formal classroom instruction (Day, 2000). This method alone does not take into account past research that sees leadership as a complex interaction between the leader, the organization, and the social environment (Fiedler, 1996).

Leadership development could be seen as a process that requires both social and contextual interactions coupled with formal training (Day, 2000). The use of social systems coupled with individual training can help to build commitments and establish a relational network among members of an organization or community (Wenger 1998). Through this process, individuals will have the opportunity to learn through social interaction in relevant contexts. They will learn from their work and not be removed from their work to learn. This can ultimately lead to better retention and application of what is learned (Wilson, 1993; Dotlick & Noel 1998).

Individuals should be encouraged to understand and practice leadership development in their work. To achieve that an environment needs to be created where individuals are able to help and support each other, create social networks, and work towards relevant objectives. Each individual is considered a leader working together in a social setting and building relationships and commitments with other members of the community (Day, 2000).

Almost all civic leadership programs provide participants with the opportunity to interact with the community while attending formal leadership training. This difference

from other leadership programs can provide a distinct advantage for leadership development. Many civic leadership programs encourage participants to engage with the community and use what they have learned to work on or discuss solutions to problems facing the community. This engagement process can facilitate the learning process by providing a relevant context, and can help establish social networks between the participants and the community.

Most Civic leadership programs (approximately 76% of programs) tend to structure their curricula using both formal classroom training (*instructional approach*) and exposure to community organizations, and prominent community members (*orientation approach*) to facilitate the learning process. An important question is how effective each of these methods are in fostering leaders, and how they work in combination. A brief description of each approach is provided.

The *Orientation approach* is an approach that is focused on orienting participants to the functions of the community and introducing them to different leaders within the community. The program curriculum is normally divided into different topics. These topics can cover areas in the community such as history, culture, education, law, government and economy. For example, on government day participants could spend a session meeting with the mayor, touring the local city hall, and meeting with various decision makers. For the law topic day, participants may meet with the head of the police, go on a police “ride along”, and visit the local jails. For the education topic day they may meet the superintendent of schools and visit different schools. The philosophy of these orientation programs is that interactions with community leaders can implicitly teach

participants leadership skills and provide participants with a better understanding of the community.

The *Instructional approach* is focused on teaching participants leadership skills through courses and structured lessons. Many of these programs hire leadership consultants (they are usually either academics or independent consultants) to train and instruct participants in leadership skills. For example, common topics covered would be leadership styles, developing personal as well as team communication skills, and effective leadership strategies. Many of these programs include team-building exercises such as weekend retreats and the completion of a team building “ropes course”. The philosophy of these programs is that leadership is a skill that can be learned in a controlled setting, and then be applied to the actual civic community.

Methods

Participants

Seventy-three civic leadership program directors/administrators were interviewed about their particular program. All participants were located in California.

Materials

The survey instrument was administered using semi-structured interviews with the leading figures in each program. If the director was not available, other knowledgeable sources from within the programs were interviewed (such as a board member, vice presidents, or events coordinator). The interview questions addressed the following topics:

Year of establishment

Tuition to attend the program

Funding Sources

Number of current students

Occupational backgrounds of participants past and present

Curricular focus (Orientation vs. Instructional)

Number of meetings per year and time spent during each meeting

Homework assignments or projects assigned

Number of alumni and alumni follow-up

Number of full/part time staff working for the program

Communication with other civic leadership programs, and

Major issues and concerns facing the program

Internet websites and brochures produced by the programs were also used to gather further information about each program.

Design and Procedure

Participates and programs were identified using multiple search methods such as Internet web searches, phone directory search, and contact with the local chambers of commerce. Augmenting the search were programs that were identified using the member roster of the California Association of Leadership Program (CALP) and the national Community Leadership Association. These sources provided further information about the presence of many civic leadership programs within California. The search yielded 83 programs of which 73 were surveyed. The survey was administered using a semi-structured interview through the telephone. Each interview was approximately 45

minutes in length. A few programs were given and responded to the questions through electronic mail.

Results

Interview data

Number of years in existence. Many California civic leadership programs are relatively new. The spread of civic leadership programs in California started in 1980 with Leadership Stockton as the vanguard program. The data and searches indicated that the mean age of the programs within California is approximately 11.4 years ($SD=5.7$) with a total n of 73 programs (Figure 1). The oldest was Leadership Stockton at 22 years and the most recent being programs beginning in 2002, such as Leadership Connection (Apple Valley) and Carlsbad Chamber University (Carlsbad). Figure 1 illustrates the number of programs at each particular age.

Tuition & Funding sources. The most striking aspect about tuition was the great amount of variance between programs ($M=\$899$, $SD=548$). Some programs such as the Santa Ana Leadership Initiative and Leadership Coalinga offered their programs free of charge. These programs depended heavily on community sponsorships (e.g. Leadership Coalinga is mostly funded by Fresno County and local business), grants from local or national foundations (e.g. Santa Ana Leadership Initiative receives a grant from the Kellogg foundation), fundraising events, and volunteer services.

The most expensive programs had tuitions of \$2,000-\$4,500. Most of these programs included scholarships to help their participants with the tuition. These programs were normally located in large metropolitan cities in California. Due to their locations,

these programs had access to a relatively large population base. They also depended on grants and sponsorships (these includes small business and large corporate sponsorships) to provide further funding. Figure 2 illustrates the number of programs at each tuition level (n=63).

Funding Sources. Civic leadership programs find funding from different sources. Presented are the top six funding sources mentioned during the interviews. Community sponsorship was the top funding source for civic leadership programs, with 51% of the programs interviewed saying that they receive in-kind donations from local business, corporations, and volunteer help from the community. Active fundraising was also a major source of revenue, with 25% of programs engaging in events such as dinner parties, auctions to raise money, and various other fundraising events.

A substantial number of programs (21%) were also receiving grants from foundations such as the Kellogg and Harden foundations. The Chambers of Commerce are also an important source of funding with 15% of programs receiving some monetary compensation from their local chambers. (Note: many of the chambers do not offer money, but other valuable services such as workspace, staffing, and access to equipment such as computers, phones, and Internet access to many of the leadership programs).

Only 8% of civic leadership programs receive some funding from their alumni dues, if they happen to have an alumni association or some organization or club to keep the alumni involved. Some programs (18%) are able cover all of their funding needs from tuition alone. (Note: that these percentages do not add up to 100 because many programs

use multiple methods to find funding). Figure 3 illustrates the frequency of each funding method.

Many programs use multiple funding sources, only 3% of programs rely solely on tuition as their only funding source, while approximately 66% of programs use one additional funding source (besides tuition) to run their programs, 27% use two additional funding sources, 4% use three or more additional funding sources. The level of funding available is heavily dependent on the location of programs. Programs such as Leadership Sunnyvale have access to major corporations such as Yahoo, Netscape, and AMD who have provided financial support. Other programs may not have the same corporate opportunities but they tend to have high levels of community commitment to supplement their needs. These programs tend to utilize small local businesses and fundraising events to help sustain the ongoing program. Figure 4 shows the breakdown in percentage points of programs that use multiple funding sources (broken-down by number of sources).

Class size and occupational makeup of participants. The class size of civic leadership programs can vary depending on the size and resources available to the particular programs. The mean for participants per class was 26 (SD=11.42) across 73 programs. This number varied from 9 participants to up to 54 participants per class. However, this number fluctuated from year to year for most programs. Many of the program directors said that enrollment numbers are dependent on factors such as advertising, community involvement, and the economic condition of the area.

The survey also shed some light on the occupational background of participants. We were interested in finding how involved different occupational sectors were in

community leadership programs. The Survey revealed that approximately 27% of participants came from the government/public sector. This category encompassed individuals who work for or are affiliated with government/public institutions such as public schools, fire and police departments, City halls, public hospital officials, etc.

The private sector accounted for 48% of participants. This sector included large and small business owners, and individuals coming from corporations. Participants from the non-profit sector accounted for 23% of enrollment. This sector included participants from organizations such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and many small local charity and service organizations. The remaining 2% of participants came from individuals who were either retired or local community activists. The figure 5 provides an illustration of the different divisions.

The occupational background of the participants did vary from area to area. This again was related to the local demographics of the city or town. Many of the program directors interviewed said that they try to strike a balance during the application process. They wish to attain an even mix of backgrounds and experiences to increase the chance of learning from each other's knowledge. Many program directors are faced with problems of acquiring a sufficient applicant pool to create this kind of balance. Overall, effort is made to ensure some representation from as many areas as possible

Curricular Focus and Home Work. As mentioned earlier, one the objectives of this survey was to find out how civic leadership programs approach leadership development and training. Directors were presented with a brief description of the orientation and the instructional approach (the descriptions were based on the explanation given in the

description and definition section of this report) and were asked if they had a combination of both approaches or if they did one or the other exclusively.

Preliminary results indicated that 75% of programs surveyed used a combination of both orientation and instruction as part of their curriculum. Each program had a different degree of emphasis on each approach. Some programs included an instructional classroom session at the end of every meeting. Others dedicated a full day to instruction while leaving the remainder of the meetings for orientation.

The degree or level of emphasis of each approach in the combination programs varied greatly. Directors were asked to estimate the percentage of time dedicated to each approach. Results indicated that the amount of time spent on the instructional approach ranged from 10% to 50%. Overall, the orientation approach was incorporated in almost all of the civic leadership programs surveyed.

There were two relatively new programs Carlsbad Chamber University (just completed their first year in 2002) and Leadership Carpinteria (started in March 2002) that were spending 100% of their time on the instructional approach. These programs offered classes in leadership related topics to interested participants. Some topics included in these programs are: leadership styles, communication skills, conflict resolution, etc. This is a relatively new trend within California's Civic Leadership programs and more attention will be given to this trend as it develops. Figure 6 illustrates the division of approaches amongst California programs.

Number of Meetings. Civic leadership programs tended to run from 9 to 12 months, typically meeting once a month. The mean number of meetings per year for each program

was 10 (SD=2.9). Some programs (approximately 15%) also include a 2-day weekend retreat as part of their offerings. Each meeting usually lasts about 8 hours, this number varied depending on the topics covered and the resources available. Many of the programs have topic days that focus on specific areas of the community. Topics covered can include: education, economy, government, law, history and culture. The day for most programs begins in the morning with an introduction to the topic and the events of the day. Typically, the mornings are spent touring relevant locations and interacting with leading members of the topic area (i.e. education, police, government etc.) For example, during Leadership Modesto's health care day participants would meet in the mornings with the chief executive officer from Memorial hospital Association, learn the history of health care, and discuss ethical issues in the health care field.

Depending on the programs' curricular focus the remainder of the day may be spent on orientation (continuing the tours and meetings with topic leaders) or instruction (classroom instruction regarding a leadership related topic). (Note: this description is an aggregate of many programs and that there are differences between programs). (find examples)

Other programs, such as Leadership Salinas, offer their sessions during a 20-week period with meetings held once a week. Some other programs run as long as two years. For example, Leadership Clovis offers a two year program where the first year is an introductory year to the community, offering various orientation opportunities to participants. The second year participants choose a community issue or problem, then plan, and implement a community-focused project to attempt to alleviate the problem.

Number of Alumni and Alumni Follow-up. The number of alumni for each program was almost completely dependent on the number of years since the establishment of the program. The mean number of alumni was about 305 alumni. Typically, the programs with the largest number of alumni also tended to be located in large metropolitan cities. Programs such as Lead San Diego and Leadership San Francisco have more than 800 graduates from their programs.

Regardless of the number of alumni, many programs are faced with the challenge of keeping their alumni connected and informed about the events in the community. Almost 76% of civic leadership programs have some form of alumni follow-up using different methods. During the interviews we found that 22% of programs use monthly or quarterly newsletters to keep alumni informed, 23% of programs also use various social events such as dinners or luncheons or even annual Christmas parties to stay connected with their alumni. Almost 16% of the programs surveyed have an alumni association that has monthly meetings, tries to work on long-term community projects, helps raise money for the leadership programs (through dues or fundraising) and/or helps to decide on the events and curriculum of future leadership classes. Almost 16% of civic leadership programs have a yearly class reunion. 13 % of programs also invite past alumni to join the steering committee to direct the future course of the leadership program. 8% of programs invite alumni to continue their leadership learning by taking refresher courses about leadership. 3% of programs have an annual alumni retreat, and 4% provide volunteer opportunities through the leadership program as a way to keep them involved in both the community and the leadership program. (Note: that many of the programs use different combinations of the different types of alumni follow-ups).

The involvement level of alumni was a major concern facing many leadership programs. Many programs attempt to keep the alumni involved by having them participate in future and current classes and events either as instructors or as consultants to the incoming classes. In almost all of the programs, there was at least one alumni on the board of directors for many of these programs.

Staff and Networking. One of the major concerns for most leadership programs is the shortage of paid staff to help run and organize the program. The typical number of either full time or part time staff member is about one. Many of the programs rely heavily on volunteers to aid with day-to-day operations. Usually the only paid staff person is either the director of the program, or if run from the chamber of commerce, the person whose main job description includes part time work on the local leadership program. In many instances, paid employees are faced with the task of conducting the program with minimal assistance. In some cases, such as leadership Santa Barbara County, volunteers run the entire operation with no paid staff. These programs like many others rely on the in-kind donations of the community.

As for contact with other leadership programs, a majority of the programs (68%) indicated that they are or have been in contact with other leadership programs and other similar organizations. Many are in contact with other programs that are proximally close. There is also wide recognition of the California Association of Leadership Programs (CALP) and the Community Leadership Association (CLA) amongst the programs surveyed.

Major challenges facings civic leadership programs Several key issues tended to dominate the list of challenges facing civic leadership programs. The most frequently

mentioned challenge was funding, with 48% reporting that they were having problems finding enough funds to operate their programs. Some programs were having problems recruiting enough participants due to small populations in their area or a lack of awareness of and interest in civic leadership programs. These programs typically had problems with creating a diverse and balanced class from the applicant pool. Many programs wished to create more diversity in their selection process but were hindered by the relatively small applicant pool. Having enough resources (including staff and time) to run the program effectively was also a major issue mentioned by a number of program directors.

Other important issues that were raised by program directors were the lack alumni and community involvement in the program. This issue could be considered one of the most challenging and crucial to any civic leadership programs. The fact that these programs have little community support can hinder the development and experience of the participants. Although this issue was mentioned explicitly by only seven of the California programs, it is still an important problem for civic leadership programs in general. A related issue is the difficulty in getting alumni to stay active in the community and in the program. Most programs have tried to address the problem through a series of different alumni follow up programs that were discussed in an earlier section.

On the other end of the spectrum, approximately 11% said that they had no problems or issues that they are dealing with. These programs said they were well funded, had a good applicant pool to draw from, and had a good deal of sustained interest from the community and alumni. Figure 7 presents an illustration of the major issues and the number of programs that mentioned each issue.

Discussion

This report focuses on the type, number, and status of civic leadership programs within the state of California. The intent of the report is to determine how pervasive the types of programs are, and to begin to understand their various missions, structure, and the impact they have on the surrounding communities. While this report provides some basic information, more work needs to be done in order to present a fuller picture of what makes these programs effective as well as understanding their impact. Many programs engage in the process of self-evaluation. This is usually done by surveying alumni and current students and asking them to highlight what was learned and provide suggestions for improvement. Although this method has yielded helpful feedback for individual programs, no one has looked at the impact of civic leadership programs on a more widespread basis using a standardized method, and comparing across programs. There are many difficulties in trying to compare these programs. Each program is somewhat unique in the way it operates, in how it structures its curriculum, and the population it serves. However, a standardized evaluation and comparison of civic leadership programs will yield many benefits.

First, knowledge from such a study could ultimately lead to the development of best practices and best structures for civic leadership programs. This kind of information could prove extremely helpful in optimizing the impact and effectiveness of these programs in developing new leadership within the community. The difficulty of finding such information would lie in aggregating the various differences between different programs to find the best possible combination for all programs. As was mentioned earlier, each program operates in a unique environment and has unique needs and

resources, but the benefits of having a general guiding principle of operations can contribute to program success.

Second, a standardized study of civic leadership programs could help identify the best curricular approaches or combination of approaches for training community leaders. Looking at what elements work best from both the instructional and orientation approaches would provide relevant information about leadership development and the best sort of curriculum.

Third, an evaluation of alumni across various leadership programs may also provide valuable insight into how leadership programs affect alumni and what are the best ways to keep alumni connected. All of this information would prove valuable in determining the impact of civic leadership development, and in determining the sustainability and evolution of civic leadership programs in their respective communities.

Summary

The relatively recent growth and seeming explosion of civic leadership programs in many communities has sparked an interest in these programs and the way they approach leadership development. (Note: future research will expand the focus to examine civic leadership programs nationally). Due to the community involvement and focus, these programs contain certain advantages that other leadership development programs do not. For example, many of these programs provide the opportunity to network with other members of the community and with current community leaders. This provides an important stepping-stone for incoming leaders. The networking opportunities may provide participants with the connections and information needed to get things accomplished. Moreover, unlike many executive leadership-training programs, which are

focused primarily on individual development, the focus of civic leadership is on the community and solving the problems that exist within it. This can serve as a source of motivation and inspiration for students in civic leadership programs.

Looking at civic leadership programs within California, we know that they are relatively new and are running on limited resources. Many approach civic leadership development by combining knowledge learned from the classroom with knowledge gained from interacting with the community. These programs attempt to attract a wide range of participants from different backgrounds and experiences. They also have a relatively large number of alumni. Most programs utilize different methods to tap into their alumni and use them as a potential resource. All programs attempt to act as instruments of positive change within their perspective communities. The potential for change and improvement is greatest when the opportunities and community involvement are also present.

The impact of civic leadership programs will be even more felt as the demand for local leadership increases. The potential for these programs to be instruments of change and improvement within the community is very high. Civic leadership programs will begin to grow and find themselves in many local communities. As they grow many of these programs will need to find sources of support and information in order to develop something that is both effective and that can fit the needs of their community. More attention will have to be given to this area of study in order to better understand and help in the development of these new and old ventures into community leadership.

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Executive Summary

The presence of civic leadership programs is being felt throughout many parts of the United States. With over 700 programs around the nation, these programs are beginning to influence the local communities they serve. Little attention has been given these programs due to their recent emergence in the late 1960's and the difficulty involved in studying them. This difficulty is due to the unique of each program. This paper aims to provide a glance into the current situation of civic leadership programs within California.

Civic leadership programs aim to train and aid emerging leaders from the community. orientation to the community is a major part of most civic leadership programs. they

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Frequency distribution of age of Community Leadership Programs in California.

Figure 2. Frequency of civic leadership programs at each tuition level.

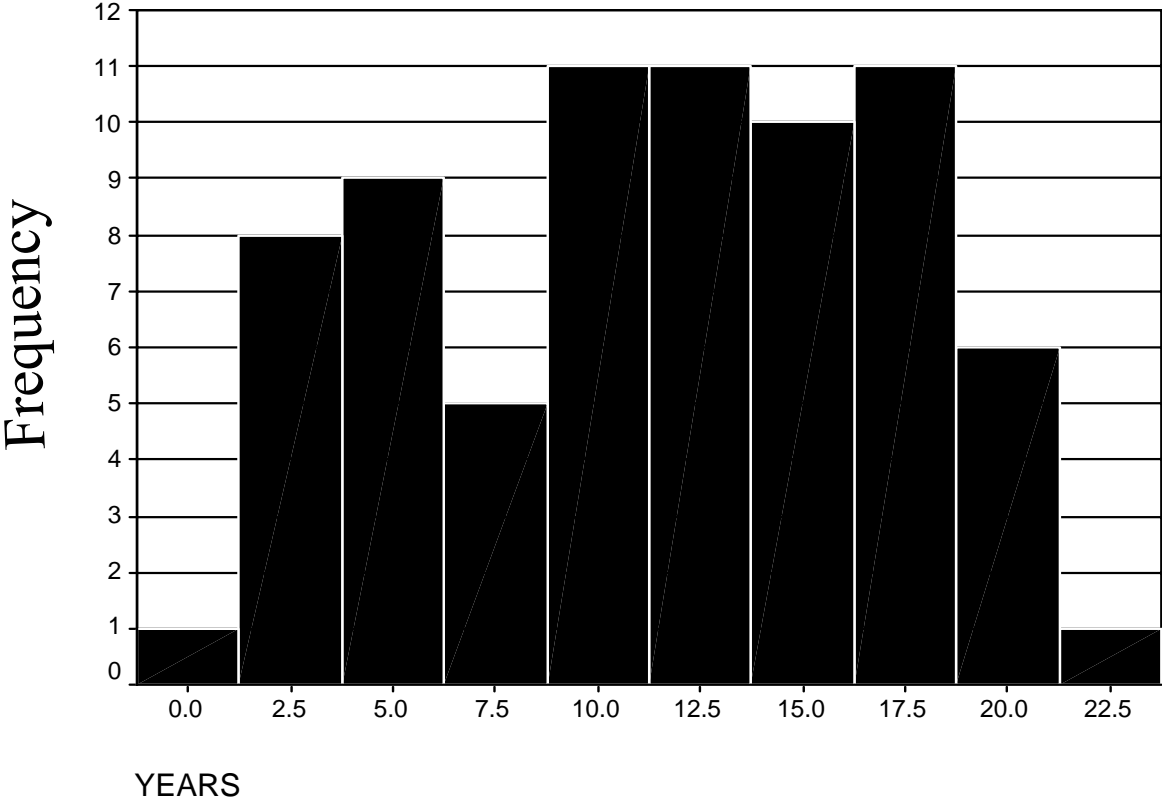
Figure 3. Frequency of civic leadership programs at each different funding source.

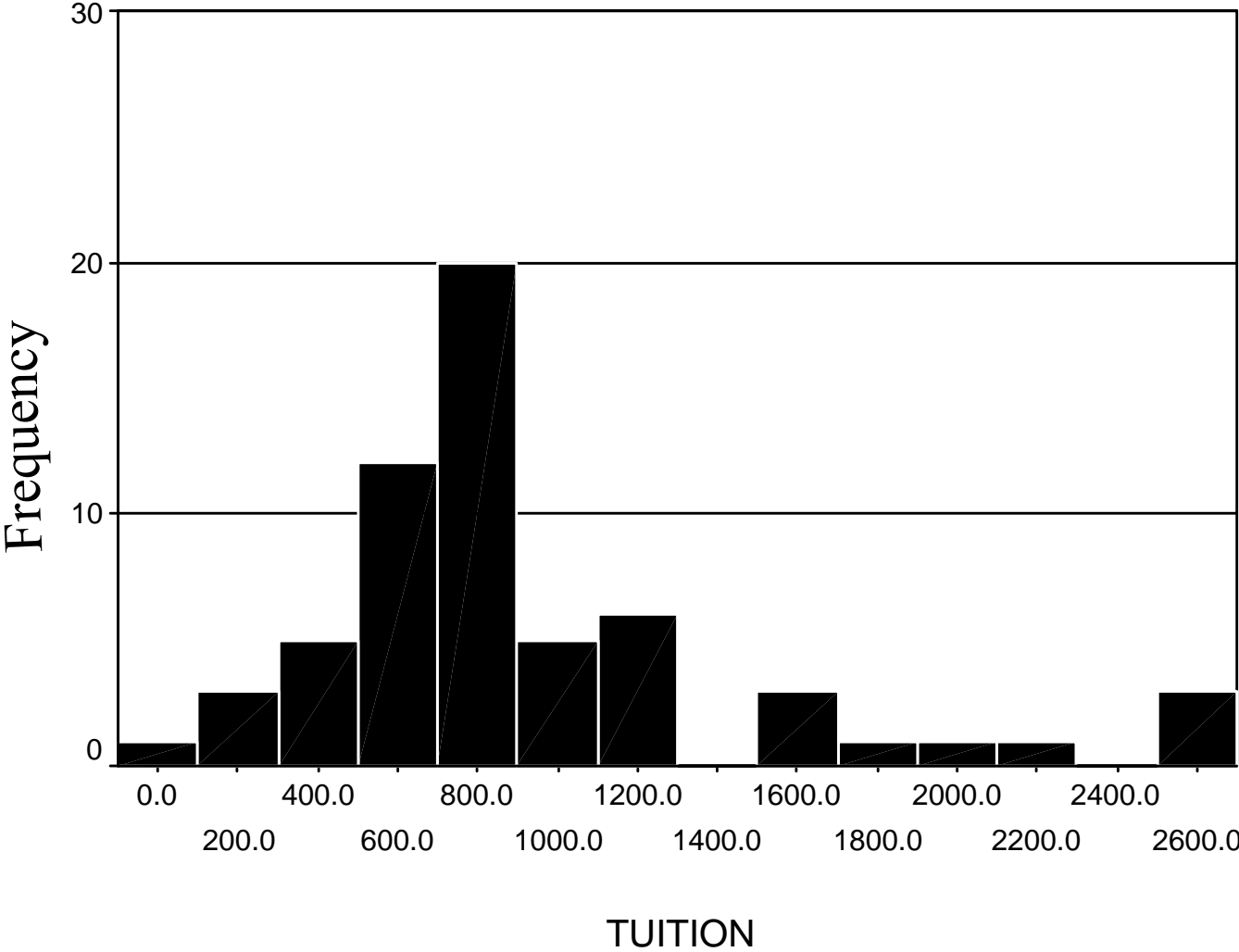
Figure 4. Percent of programs that use multiple funding sources (broken down by number of sources)

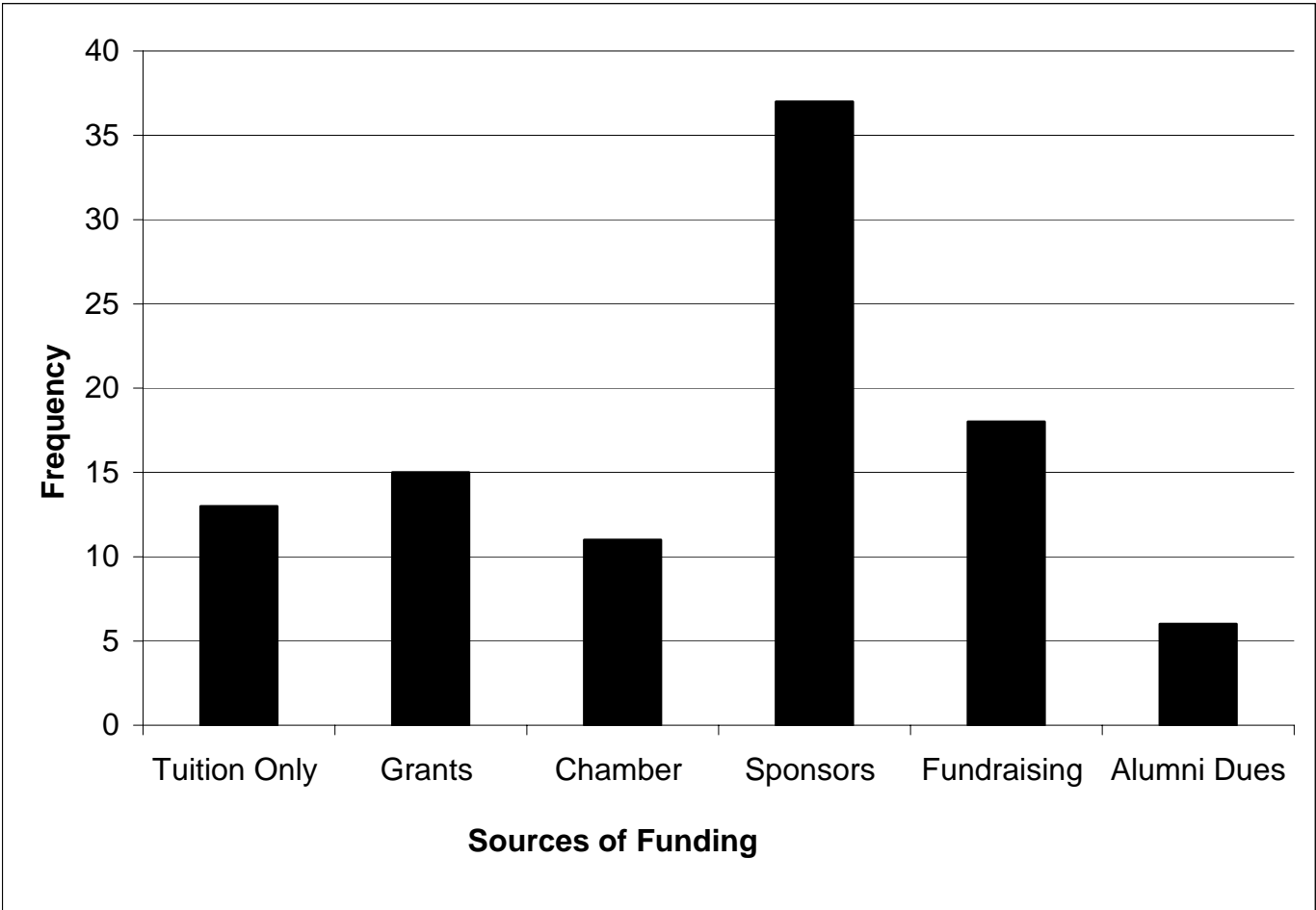
Figure 5. Occupational background of civic leadership participants broken into proportionate segments.

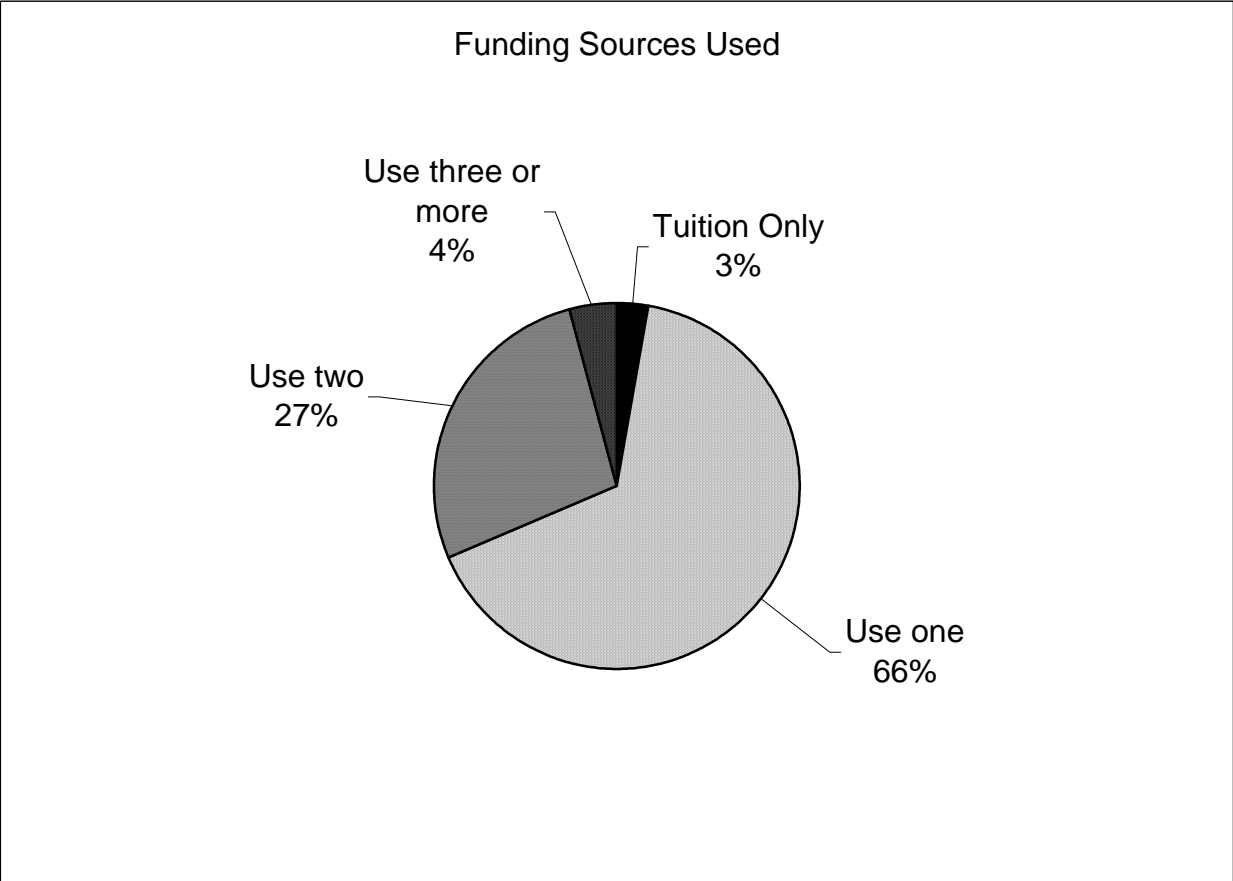
Figure 6. Percentage of programs that follow the orientation approach, instructional approach, the combination of both.

Figure 7. Frequency of civic leadership programs at each of the different challenges facing programs.

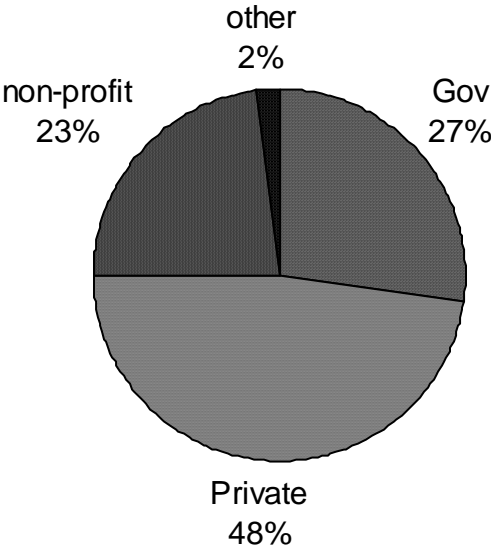








Occupational Breakdown



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