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**The Effects of Leadership Development:  
Individual Outcomes and Community Impacts  
A U-Lead Impact Study**

**Stephanie Lott  
Scott Chazdon**

University of Minnesota  
Extension Center for Community Vitality  
433 Coffey Hall  
1420 Eckles Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55108-6070  
[www.extension.umn.edu](http://www.extension.umn.edu)

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# Project Summary

University of Minnesota Extension conducted this U-Lead Impact Study in spring 2008 to evaluate three of its leadership development initiatives known as U-Lead programs. The programs chosen for this evaluation were: Red River Valley Emerging Leaders Program (ELP), Minnesota Agricultural and Rural Leadership Program (MARL), and the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Leadership Institute (MASWCD).

We conducted this U-Lead Impact Study to assess the long-term effects of these leadership development programs. More specifically, Extension sought to document the degree to which past participants had an impact on their organizations and communities as a result of U-Lead participation.

The research design for this U-Lead Impact Study was qualitative, using a semi-structured interview protocol based on the Community Capitals Framework (Flora, Flora and Fey, 2004; Emery et al. 2007). We used this method to encourage past graduates of the three U-Lead programs to tell stories about the effects of their leadership involvement on areas of community capital.

Following are key findings from this U-Lead Impact Study:

- U-Lead programs make significant contributions to participants' personal development and to community capital. U-Lead programs thereby strengthen individual lives and promote the vitality of communities and organizations.
- A modified version of the Community Capital Framework, the University of Minnesota Extension Outcomes and Impacts Framework, is a useful tool for understanding the link between personal-level outcomes and the community and organizational-level impacts of U-Lead programs.
- Common interview themes show a clear progression from development of knowledge, skills and attitudes following participation in leadership workshops, to individual behavioral outcomes (changes in both public and private individual behavior) and finally to results—tangible improvements in communities and organizations. These results are evident in five domains of impact targeted in this study: social, political, financial, built and natural environmental, and cultural.

This report reviews research findings and offers the following recommendations:

- In order to appropriately measure the outcomes and impacts of U-Lead programs, evaluation tools must be modified to take into account the particular context of each program.

- A common U-Lead program identity should be strengthened because it enhances program unity and provides structure for future leadership evaluations.

# Introduction and Purpose

Much of the literature discussing leadership evaluation focuses either on a leadership program's training and curriculum or on the personal development of an individual participant. More recent research in this field has shifted from studies modeled on understanding personal-level outcomes to those directed at evaluating impacts on areas beyond the individual. This-U-lead Impact Study contributes to this body of literature by documenting the link between larger-scale impacts to their origin in individual-level outcomes. The reference point for understanding this connection is implementation of Extension's Outcome and Impact Framework.

This report is designed to provide information on the impact of University of Minnesota Extension leadership development programs on participants' organizations and communities. The key research question addressed in this study was:

- To what degree have past participants of U-Lead programs had an impact on their organizations and communities through their leadership roles?

The assessment tool used to answer this question was a semi-structured interview protocol based on the Community Capitals Framework and the related University of Minnesota Extension Impacts and Outcomes Framework. This study identified outcomes in four areas—individual knowledge, skill, attitudinal, and behavioral, as well as impacts in six areas—social, political, financial, built and natural resources, and cultural.

# Organization of this Report

This report is organized into five sections and two appendices:

- Section I provides background information on the three U-Lead programs chosen for evaluation.
- Section II describes our approach to leadership evaluation, including discussion of the Community Capitals Framework and explanation for the preferred use of the University of Minnesota Extension Impacts and Outcomes Framework. This section also includes a description of our approach to leadership evaluation and of the progression of U-Lead outcomes leading to impact.
- Section III outlines the methodology and design of the evaluation tool used to produce this report.
- Section IV describes this study's research findings and the four categories of common interview themes: program expectations, knowledge, skill and attitude outcomes, individual action outcomes (private and public behavioral changes) and community and organizational impacts.
- Section V concludes the report and offers recommendations for both future evaluations and suggestions for improving and uniting U-Lead programs.
- Appendix A contains supplemental interview data not included in the main body of this report.
- Appendix B provides a suggested revised interview protocol modeled on our approach to leadership evaluation using Extension's Outcomes and Impacts Framework.

# I. U-Lead Programs

The University of Minnesota Extension's community leadership program, known as 'U-Lead,' was launched in 2003 to brand all of Extension's leadership programs for greater visibility (Scheffert, 2007). The primary purpose of U-Lead programs is to engage with organizations and communities "to generate confident leadership and informed action on public issues" by providing resources and opportunities that "foster commitment for leadership roles, enhance the competency of leaders, and strengthen organizations and communities" (Scheffert 2007: 176). The curriculum of U-Lead programs is based on a dynamic leadership education framework that includes training in six core areas of leadership: Personal/Trait Theory Leadership, Situation/Team Leadership, Organizational and Positional Leadership, Power and Political Leadership, Visionary Leadership, and Ethical Leadership (Boyce 2006).

Although the three programs examined in this study fall under the umbrella of U-Lead programs and are all based on the same leadership education framework, they are in fact, quite different from one another. The programs are organized with separate curricula administered in very different contexts with varying levels of intensity. In general, each U-Lead program attracts and recruits members of Minnesota's agricultural and natural resources sectors, as well as local government, but the target participant group is specific to each program.

**The Red River Valley Emerging Leadership Program (ELP)** is a public/private partnership between University of Minnesota Extension and the Northwest Minnesota Foundation.

The program emerged from the long-standing King Agassiz Award Program, which in 1961 began recognizing contributions made by the men of northwest Minnesota's agricultural community. In 1985 that effort evolved into the Emerging Leadership Program to include the wives of men in the King Agassiz Program. Today ELP is unique because of its focus on developing the leadership skills of couples from the 19 Minnesota counties served by the Northwest Minnesota Foundation and the West Central Initiative.<sup>1</sup>

ELP's agenda focuses on rural issues related to agriculture and natural resources, with the dual objective of providing opportunities for individual leadership development and creating a regional network of community leaders. The five-month program consists of three 12-hour training sessions in communities in the region, plus a three-day session at the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul. At the completion of the program, each graduated couple is expected to recruit next year's couple from their respective county and lead fund development initiatives in their county to support the program. In addition, one couple is chosen each year by their

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<sup>1</sup> ELP serves the following Minnesota counties: Becker, Clay, Clearwater, Douglas, Grant, Kittson, Lake of the Woods, Mahnomon, Marshall, Norman, Otter Tail, Pennington, Polk, Pope, Red Lake, Roseau, Stevens, Traverse, and Wilkin.

fellow classmates to serve as ambassadors, providing mentorship and leadership for couples in the subsequent class.

**The Minnesota Agriculture and Rural Leadership Program (MARL)** is a public/private partnership between the Southwest Minnesota State University Foundation and University of Minnesota Extension. MARL emphasizes the development of highly-skilled, future-oriented agricultural leaders who are trained to make impacts at local, state, national and international levels. The program focuses on recruiting agricultural leaders from rural Minnesota who have exhibited, in varying degrees, an active and engaged leadership life in their communities. Potential participants are typically involved in either the production side of agriculture or in businesses, civic governments and organizations related to rural agriculture. MARL is perhaps the most time-intensive and aggressive U-Lead program. The two-year program consists of three phases of concentrated leadership training: nine 3-day seminars in various Minnesota communities, a one-week study tour in Washington D.C., and a 2-week international study tour.

**The Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) Leadership Institute** operates in cooperation with University of Minnesota Extension and the Minnesota Natural Resources Conservation Service

(MNRCS). The majority of the 2004-2006 cohort groups interviewed for this U-Lead Impact Study was composed of employees and board members of MASWCD; others interviewed represented the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (MBWSR) and the (MNRCS). At the time of their participation, the leadership program lasted 16 days, with eight 2-day sessions held in various Minnesota communities over 18 months. The MASWCD Leadership Institute has since modified this schedule and expanded it to include 19 total days of training, as well as a national trip. Currently, cohorts participate in seven sessions composed of four 2-day sessions and two 3-day sessions located throughout Minnesota. There is also a five-day session held in Washington D.C.

The MASWCD program differs from MARL and ELP in that it focuses on the development of leadership skills specifically for employees, supervisors and board members of organizations associated with Minnesota's soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) and their closest state and federal partners. The focus is more on organizational leadership than on community capacity-building. It's important to recognize the crucial difference in program scope between MASWCD and the other two programs (ELP and MARL) when analyzing research findings for the MASWCD program presented in this U-Lead Impact Study.

## II. Our Approach to Leadership Evaluation

In order to measure the impacts that U-Lead programs may have on communities and organizations, interview questions were designed to capture responses about individual participation in areas of community capital. The questions were purposefully centered on the areas of social, political, financial, built- and infrastructure, natural resources and cultural capital so that U-Lead’s community and organizational impacts would be more easily identifiable.

Emery and Flora use the term “capital” to refer to a situation in which existing resources are invested to create new resources (Flora, Flora and Fey 2004: 9).

Extension has modified this term and refers to community capital areas as “domains of impact.” The slightly altered definitions of Emery and Flora’s community capital areas reflect a more specific purpose for identifying the end results of Extension’s evaluation studies (Chazdon et al. 2007).

For the intentions of this report, a hybrid of definitions offered by both the Community Capitals Framework (see Table 1) and Extension’s Outcome and Impact Framework (see Table 2) will be used in the section titled ‘Research Findings’ to define areas of impact.

**Table 1. Community Capitals Framework**

Community Capital	Description (Flora, Flora, and Fey, 2004)
Cultural Capital	Includes values and approaches to life that can have both economic and non-economic implications. Cultural capital can be thought of as the filter through which people live their lives, the daily or seasonal rituals they observe, and the way they regard the world around them. The socialization process serves to transmit values and cultural capital from a group (often the elite) to its members (thereby excluding other).
Human Capital	The skills and abilities of each individual within a community. Human capital includes potential abilities and acquired skills; both formal and informal education contribute to human capital. One’s physical and mental health and leadership activities are also part of human capital.
Financial Capital (Built Capital)	Money used for investment (to create additional value) rather than consumption. Financial capital is important for communities and individuals therein because it can be transformed into built capital. Examples of built capital are factories, schools, roads, restored habitat, and community centers – all of which contribute to creating other types of community capital.
Natural Capital	Refers to the landscape, air, water, soil, and biodiversity of both plants and animals. It can be consumed or extracted for immediate profit, or it can be sustained and nurtured as a continuing resource for communities of place.
Political Capital	The ability of a group to influence the distribution of resources within a social unit, including help defining what resources are available and who is eligible to receive them. Political capital includes organizations, connections, voice and power.

**Table 2. Extension’s Outcomes and Impacts Framework**

Domain of Outcome or Impact	Description (based on Chazdon et al, 2007)
Human Capital Outcomes	Change in knowledge, attitudes, or skills among participants served directly by a program.
Behavioral Outcomes	Change in behavior or action among participants served directly by a program.
Social Impacts	Strengthened or expanded connections among people, groups and organizations.
Health, Food and Nutrition Impacts	Increased ability of families, organizations, communities, or sectors to promote physical and mental well-being.
Political Impacts	Increased ability of families, organizations, communities, or sectors to access and mobilize public resources.
Cultural Impacts	Strengthened ability of families, organizations, communities or sectors to support, celebrate and transmit knowledge of diverse worldviews to future generations
Financial Impacts	Increase in private and public wealth that is invested in the well-being of families, organizations, communities, or sectors.
Building and Infrastructure Impacts	Improvement of structures and infrastructures that contribute to the well-being of families, organizations, communities, or sectors.
Natural Resources Impacts	Strengthened ability of families, organizations, communities, or sectors to protect landscape, air, water, soil and biodiversity of both plants and animals.

In developing this report, we learned that a more holistic approach to an evaluation of U-Lead programs was needed in order to critique information pertaining to community and organizational impacts. In fact, we found that larger-scale impacts could only be identified after first analyzing and considering data related to individual outcomes. During this process, it became apparent that although the Community Capitals Framework was useful for providing definitions of impact areas, Extension’s Outcome and Impact Framework was more helpful for understanding the effects U-Lead programs have on *both* individual lives and the larger community. Using Extension’s framework proved a benefit in that the interview data reflected the flow of categories from individual-level outcomes to domains of community capital impacts.

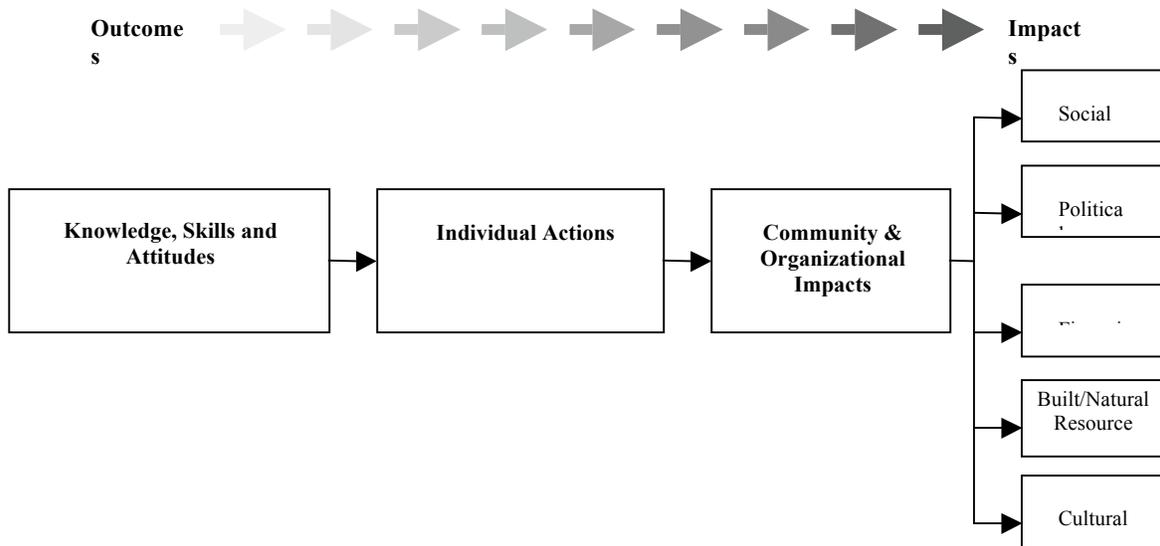
More specifically, interview data that pertained to personal growth and development could easily be organized using the Extension framework’s definition of knowledge, skill and attitude outcomes. In addition, changes in U-Lead participants’ private and public behavior (including increased and/or more in-depth leadership involvement) correlate with Extension’s individual action outcomes; interview data elicited from community capital questions mirrored the domains of impact provided by the Extension framework.

Most important, this U-Lead Impact Study yielded evidence of a causal link between individual outcomes and community and organizational impacts, thus following the progression of Extension’s categories leading from outcomes to impacts. Our

approach to leadership evaluation based on Extension's Outcome and Impact Framework is outlined below in Figure 1. Later, in the conclusion of this report, a

detailed model expands this framework to more accurately reflect the research findings of this U-Lead Impact Study (see Figure 3).

**Figure 1. U-Lead Impact Study Approach to Leadership Evaluation:  
The Progression of Outcomes Leading to Impacts**



### III. Methodology

#### *Research Design*

This U-Lead Impact Study relied on qualitative methods to document experiences of past program participants in Extension’s leadership development programs. We started by conducting a review of literature on current leadership program evaluations in order to gain background information on the types of assessments used when evaluating community and organizational impacts (Gutierrez et al. 2005; Gutierrez and Stowell 2004; Reinelt et al. 2003; Emery et al. 2007). We then developed a semi-structured interview protocol to include a series of questions concerning the following topics: program activities and program skills, personal outcomes, alumni relationships, and community and organizational impacts. The latter category was developed using the Community Capitals Framework.

Once an interview guide was created, it was first reviewed by a U-Lead Impact Study Advisory Team and then

administered to a test sample of alumni from a cohort not included in the sample groups chosen for this project. This stage of the research design was helpful in obtaining suggestions from both Extension employees and former participants familiar with U-Lead programs; we then made minor adjustments to the style and wording of the interview protocol to improve user-friendliness<sup>2</sup>.

#### *Sample*

Three cohort groups from ELP and two cohorts, one each from the MARL and MASWCD program, were selected to participate in this U-Lead Impact Study, with Extension employees who oversee these U-Lead programs providing names and contact information of approximately 270 participants from these seven cohort groups. We then randomly selected 73 names from this sample as possible study participants and sent letters and consent forms to 71 names requesting their voluntary participation in this U-Lead Impact Study<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> One major adjustment to the interview guide made after the three test interviews was removal of the words ‘U-Lead programs’ in the introduction to the protocol. We found that the term ‘U-Lead’ was unfamiliar to interviewees, so we replaced it with the name of a specific U-Lead program.

<sup>3</sup> Two names were omitted from the selected samples of both the MASWCD and ELP programs—one due to a lack of consistent participation and the other because of extraneous circumstances. Letters and consent forms were only sent to 71 graduates.

The selected participants were then telephoned to request a 30-45 minute phone interview at a future date and time with an Extension researcher for the purpose of talking about their experience in one of the three U-Lead Programs. Ultimately, 42 graduates of the U-Lead programs agreed to participate in the study,

and 15 ELP, 13 MARL and 14 MASWCD phone interviews were completed.<sup>4</sup> After that we transcribed the interviews, coded responses by common themes and organized information for analysis using Microsoft Word. Interviewees were given alpha-numeric codes in this report to protect their confidentiality.

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<sup>4</sup> One past participant of the MASWCD program requested to do the interview via e-mail. We then e-mailed the interview protocol to the participant, who completed and returned responses to the researcher who chose to include the results in the data pool. The other 13 MASWCD interviews were completed via telephone.

## IV. Research Findings

Although we initially sought to gather specific information about the effect of U-Lead programs at the community and organizational levels, data obtained from the interview responses about personal-level outcomes became invaluable to an understanding of these larger-scale impacts. The information on knowledge, skill and attitude outcomes and individual action outcomes laid the groundwork for understanding the links between personal-level outcomes and community and organizational impacts and was thereby crucial to this report's findings. This results in a much more holistic understanding of program effects on individuals' personal lives and the lasting contributions Extension is able to make in communities and organizations (see Figure 3).

We identified common themes from U-Lead program participants using our model of leadership evaluation. These themes, however, were affected by a program's specific context, and interview results reflect the differences in learning objectives and target audiences of each program. For example, graduates of the

MASWCD program are either supervisors or employees of Minnesota's soil and water conservation districts and were more likely to discuss the interview topics in terms of work-related learning goals and objectives specific to SWCDs. Furthermore, we assumed that married couples in ELP approached these same issues differently given the context of their program, while MARL participants, most of whom have proven records of active leadership prior to entering the program, likewise responded to questions from another point of view. It is important to acknowledge these unique program characteristics when reviewing the interview themes.

Responses from the interview questions were organized into common themes related to program characteristics, individual skill, knowledge and attitude development, cognitive and behavioral growth, and community capacity development. These common themes correspond, for the most part, with the outcomes and impacts shown in the Extension framework and fall under the following categories:

- **Program Expectations:** This category includes general program information, program activities and participants' expectations for a U-Lead program. Such background information is helpful when considering specific issues related to each leadership development program. While this category does not reflect a particular outcome listed in the Extension framework, information provided here has implications for understanding other areas of U-Lead program outcomes and impacts and informs some of the recommendations offered in the conclusion of this report.
- **Knowledge, Skill and Attitude Outcomes:** This category relates to the themes of personal growth and transformation developed among U-Lead participants. The effects that U-Lead programs have on knowledge, skill and attitude development can potentially influence the domain of individual action outcomes and as such, are the mechanisms that lead to large-scale organizational and community impacts.
- **Individual Action Outcomes:** Two intertwined thematic categories relate to individual action. The first pertains to behaviors affected by involvement in a leadership development program. This category encompasses the more subtle, private behavioral outcomes that include changes made to the individual and for the individual. The second category is composed of more tangible, public behavioral outcomes that surface as actions in the form of new leadership roles and responsibilities for the benefit of a wider audience. Developments in both the private and public levels of individual action outcomes lead to impacts in the domains of community capital.
- **Community and Organizational Impacts:** This category encompasses the effects that U-Lead programs have on the areas of community capital. The themes elicited from community capital questions were easily identifiable because specific interview questions were designed to elicit responses about the following domains: social capital, political, financial capital and in a combined category used specifically in this report – the area of built and natural resource capital.

### *Program Expectations*

While an assessment of leadership development program characteristics was not the initial research focus for this project, it is important to include some data we obtained on that subject.

Generally speaking, when participants were asked to describe their initial expectations

and motivations for participation in a U-Lead program, the majority of these responses conformed to the descriptions and learning objectives advertised by each program (see Table 3). For example, both MARL and MASWCD participants expressed a great deal of interest in learning new leadership tools, different styles of leadership and how to increase

their leadership involvement. However, since MASWCD participants are employees and supervisors of Minnesota's soil and water districts, it is not surprising that these interviewees expressed an interest in leadership development *within the workplace*. MARL interviewees expressed this interest in a more general context.

**Table 3. U-Lead Participant Expectations/Goals**

<b>Responses were coded into the following categories</b>	<b>% of ELP Respondents</b>	<b>% of MARL Respondents</b>	<b>% of MASWCD Respondents</b>	<b>Total % of U-Lead Respondents</b>
Gain awareness/knowledge of leadership tools, skills and styles and/or improve/increase leadership involvement	20%	69%	43%	43%
Meet new people/network	20%	15%	29%	21%
Little knowledge of program/no clear goals	47%	0%	14%	21%
Improve communication and/or public-speaking skills	7%	15%	29%	17%
Broaden knowledge of issues affecting other communities/gain perspective of different areas	7%	0%	0%	2%
Broaden knowledge of agricultural/natural resource issues	0%	31%	21%	17%
Career development	0%	8%	14%	7%
Personal growth and development (gain self-confidence, become more outspoken, etc...)	20%	23%	14%	19%

N=15 ELP, 13 MARL, 14 MASWCD and 42 U-Lead Program respondents (because some answers corresponded to more than one response category, the total number of all percentages exceeds 100).

In contrast to MARL and MASWCD, many ELP interviewees said they had little knowledge of the program and therefore, no clear goals or expectations. At times, responses even showed some confusion prior to participation in ELP about its similarity to its predecessor, the King Agassiz Award Program. One explanation for some participants' lack of clear goals or expectations might stem from ELP's selection process. Unlike MARL and MASWCD where participants go through an application process, ELP participants are selected or nominated by graduates of the previous class. So, while an application process suggests familiarity with the program, it's possible that couples who are nominated or selected by others actually know very little about the program. It's important to keep this in mind when reviewing data in Table 3.

Conversely, while other participants were knowledgeable and held some expectations for ELP, they were split in their motivations for program engagement. Like MARL and MASWCD, some ELP graduates expressed an initial interest in learning leadership skills and increasing their levels of leadership involvement, whereas others were more interested in personal development and growth and in meeting new people.

A participant's knowledge and awareness of a U-Lead program, as well as the related issue of the public's acknowledgement of U-Lead programs, is a recurring theme expressed by interviewees with implications for other areas of outcomes. An examination of interview questions in which participants were asked if their experience in a U-Lead program affected others' perceptions of them as leaders clarifies this point.

Results in Table 4 show that MARL participants feel a significant change in other people's perceptions of them as a leader. One explanation is that the MARL program recruits the kind of participant who is already, to some degree, a leader in the community. Another explanation, however, could be that the general public has more knowledge of MARL than of other programs. One MARL graduate addresses this issue in the following comment:

*Yeah, I think it did [change]. I think people are starting to become more aware of MARL and what it stands for and what it is all about and someone who has made the commitment to go through it – I think people appreciate that (MARL 2).*

**Table 4. Percent of Participants who Responded that U-Lead Participation Affected Other People's Perceptions of Them as a Leader**

ELP	MARL	MASWCD
53%	92%	36%

N=15 ELP, 13 MARL, 14 MASWCD respondents

ELP interviewees were split between those who felt there was a change in others' perceptions and those who did not feel that way. The following comment from an ELP interviewee makes a connection between public acknowledgement and awareness of a program and the degree of positive change in how others perceive participants as leaders:

*The only example I know of that would probably be directly tied to that is that our ministers in our church have asked us to do a few more things. They were aware that we were going through the training and saw our picture in our paper and asked us about it. I know that they asked my wife to be on a board at church because of her involvement with it (ELP 3).*

In the following comments, other ELP interviewees said there was no change in others' perception of them as leaders because of a lack of public awareness of the program:

*I honestly don't think that besides the people who have lived here forever where it has been this legacy to get this King Agassiz – this leadership (ELP), I honestly don't think that most people know what it is (ELP 1).*

*Probably not so much around here because not so many people knew about it to regard it or respect it. At the time that we went, we were only the fourth couple to ever go from our county...so there's no history of the program, nobody has ever heard about it and there's just not any recognition of it down here (ELP 13).*

It is clear from Table 4 that MASWCD interviewees were the least likely to believe that other people's perceptions had changed. Because this is an organizational program, it is not surprising that public knowledge was not a factor in their responses. Those who responded positively described any changes in others' perceptions as occurring within a particular work-related audience. For example, one MASWCD interviewee representative of this group said, "I think probably with the people I went through the leadership with, after going through the process with them, I think it gave us an understanding of what we were like as individual leaders" (MASWCD 4). Another specified the context of work when he said that his soil and water board and fellow co-workers perceived him differently as a leader (MASWCD 8).

Responses to questions concerning program curriculum have been included in Appendix A of this report. The data provided here is informative for two reasons: 1) It outlines important issues to consider when proceeding with the evaluations of such diverse programs, and 2) It informs aspects of research findings made in other areas of this report.

### ***Knowledge, Skill and Attitude Outcomes***

In Extension's Outcomes and Impacts Framework (Table 2), individual outcomes focus on the cognitive development of the abilities of a U-Lead participant in the areas of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Common interview themes in this category address responses pertaining to an increase in self-confidence, a broadening of leadership knowledge base and defining life goals.

In one instance, interviewees were asked to tell a story about how they applied skills learned during the programs to make changes in their lives. Responses show that they were able to transfer skills and knowledge acquired to make positive changes. The following quotations are representative of comments from MARL and ELP participants:

*In one of the sessions that we had, there was a speaker who came in and talked about conflict management, like meeting etiquette and handling touchy situations and how to be a mediator. At the time, I was doing a lot of meetings and after that session, I*

*thought, this is what I could do, this might be helpful in the future' (MARL 3).*

*It actually helped me with the advancement of what we were doing around the farm here because it gave me a lot more confidence in making not only the day-to-day decisions but decisions for the financial future and the direction we thought we should be heading...And then it kind of gave me a little more encouragement, too, because there were a couple of times when I did change over to different things and it did help me present myself better to people when I was looking [for jobs] to say, 'hey, are you guys looking for help?' or 'do you have an application? I'd like to fill one out and work for you' (ELP 9).*

The responses of MASWCD participants also provide evidence of the applicability of U-Lead skills and knowledge, but, as mentioned previously, most of their responses concern changes made in the work setting. The following remark was characteristic of MASWCD interviewees:

*There have been times when I've used the skills dealing with people on other boards that I'm on. I had a board member e-mail me after a board meeting a month ago that she felt I was being rude to her. I'm generally the sort of person who would rather*

*ignore a problem and hope it goes away, but this seemed to be the type of situation where I promptly replied and confronted her and said, 'I'm sorry you feel that way' and I explained my position...the skills I learned in the leadership program helped me with that situation. This particular thing was conflict resolution and I was pleased with the outcome (MASWCD 12).*

In addition to acquiring skills and knowledge, many participants experienced a change in attitude. For example, a number of U-Lead graduates expressed a greater perception of themselves as leaders—85 percent and 86 percent of MARL and MASWCD interviewees, respectively.

MARL interviewees often expressed this change in terms of an increase in self-confidence. The following quote is typical of MARL comments:

*I guess it gave me confidence and also confidence that maybe I had the ability to do more leadership things...I am a very strong introvert so I always thought leaders had to be extroverts – in front of everybody. On the introvert scale, I was way off the end, so I guess that's one thing that MARL did teach me—is that*

*even strong introverts can be good leaders (MARL 1).*

MASWCD interviewees were not as descriptive in their responses as MARL participants, but nonetheless echoed a similar increase in self-confidence. Although one MASWCD interviewee at first expressed some uncertainty about the ways in which his self-perception changed, he later replied, “I suppose it made me more outgoing in a group setting, more comfortable speaking, and more comfortable giving my opinion than when I started” (MASWCD 2). Another interviewee stated, “Things haven’t changed a whole lot. I’m still in the same position I was in but I guess just your outlook and stuff, I guess that changed” (MASWCD 6). Another responded, “I guess it did help me as far as seeing myself in more of a leadership role instead of a follower” and one simply replied, “I think I’m more confident in myself” (MASWCD 8, MASWCD 14).

In contrast to both MASWCD and MARL, less than half of ELP interviewees experienced a change in their self-perception as leaders; again, their responses were within the context of self-confidence, noted in the following remark—which also provides evidence of impacts made within the domain of political capital:

*Yes, I would say definitely it did, and I do believe that we left with a lot more confidence. I think the greatest area we benefited from was legislatively.*

*I think sort of going through the process and the things that we learned about through the program and visiting with our legislators has made it really easy to be involved with our legislators from that point on (ELP 13).*

On the other hand, 60 percent of ELP interviewees stated explicitly that a change did *not* occur. A possible explanation for this may lie in the type of participant recruited for this U-Lead program. ELP is designed for couples to attend together and it is quite possible that when entering the program, these couples bring with them the power dynamics of their marriages. Some participants may feel constrained in the ways in which they can develop as individual leaders because of these existing parameters. The following two responses provide examples on the degree that this “couple” issue may be a factor in limiting the development of a participant’s self-perception as a leader.

*No. I don’t think so. I think I kind of knew where I stood, and I don’t think it changed me. I maybe understood more about my husband so that kind of helped (ELP 2).*

*I don’t think it did. I’ve learned from some of it but I don’t know that it did [change]. See, I’m not much of a leader. My husband is the leader. It didn’t change anything for me (ELP 12).*

A related question asked participants to share changes that occurred in their personal leadership visions. Common responses again pointed to skill, knowledge and attitude developments made in the area of human capacity: 79 percent of ELP participants, 77 percent of MARL participants and 79 percent of MASWCD participants answered that they had experienced a change in their personal vision for leadership.

The most common response reflected a broader understanding of the different kinds of leadership approaches. One MASWCD respondent said, “I now know that anyone can be a leader – not just those bold people who were born natural leaders” (MASWCD 14). Another MASWCD interviewee commented that “the training has probably showed me that there are multiple ways and multiple types of leaders and they can all be effective” (MASWCD 2).

Similarly, MARL and ELP participants described the effects of this broadened knowledge on their change in leadership vision. The following comments were characteristic of their responses:

*I see leadership in a lot of different formats – not just the high-profile formats, so in that respect I think it has changed. The stay-at-home mom who is doing her thing all day and is probably not getting the accolades someone else is out in the public scene – is actually being a phenomenal leader, so I guess it has just broadened my definition of leadership” (ELP 7).*

*I think it kind of goes back to empowering people, and I think that in a lot of ways my initial perception of leadership was from the top-down and going through the MARL program, you start to see that leadership is developed from the bottom-up” (MARL 13).*

A second common response concerned personal goal definition and aspirations. For example, one ELP interviewee said, “I think we probably have higher goals than we did before. We are maybe a little more apt to believe that we could accomplish a lot more than we probably did before” (ELP 13). The following statements echo similar responses from participants of other U-Lead programs:

*Before the MARL program, I was just doing what seemed right, like I didn’t have a plan...but I think MARL made me realize that I am the type of person that wants to be in a leadership position and involved in different activities. So, as a personal vision, I think it just became more clear that I want to pursue leadership roles... (MARL 3).*

*[MASWCD] made me realize that you need to look to the future and have some goals in mind. You might not come out with exactly what you were hoping for when you set those goals, but at least you did something to work towards (MASWCD 4).*

The common responses elicited from questions about changes in self-perceptions and personal leadership visions pointed to individual growth in the area of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The effects of U-Lead programs on the domain of knowledge, skill and attitude outcomes were most notable in the development of self-confidence – a recurring theme with profound results on participants’ leadership growth. Other common themes, reiterated time and time again, had more to do with the ability of participants to define their personal goals and life directions. Still other themes focused on a broadened knowledge base acquired from specific aspects of leadership training. The effects

that U-Lead programs have in the area of knowledge, skill and attitude development can be thought of as the fundamental building blocks to subsequent areas of growth and development within the domain of individual action outcomes.

### ***Individual Action Outcomes***

Individual action outcomes refer to changes in personal behavior that occur in both the private and public lives of an individual U-Lead participant. The private domain of individual action includes the less obvious behavioral outcomes of a leadership development program that an individual internalizes and applies to his/her life for the purpose of personal development and life enhancement. Such outcomes are evident in behavior changes made in an individual's private life (to the individual, for the individual). The effect of U-Lead participation on a participant's ability to react and cope with a major life challenge is an example of this type of outcome. Likewise, a participant's increase in intentional risk-taking is symbolic of a personal transformation occurring within the more private realm of an individual's life but also represents the potential that these types of changes hold for prompting deliberate action-oriented behavioral outcomes that take place in a more public arena.

The public domain of individual action outcomes applies to individual behavioral changes that occur externally rather than internally; they include settings and audiences beyond the individual. In this

capacity, individual action refers to the effects that U-Lead participation may have on an individual's ability and willingness to take intentional risks in the arena of new public roles and responsibilities. Perhaps these are the more tangible manifestations of the effects that a U-Lead program can have on an individual's behavior.

### **Private Behavior Change**

One visible effect of the support and encouragement provided by U-Lead programs is improved ability to cope with life challenges and a greater willingness to take appropriate risks. Behavioral outcomes such as these offer evidence of the transformations that occur within the private realm of an individual's life. Therefore, recognition of increased coping ability and risk-taking capability help to gauge the impact of U-Lead programs on the development of an individual's sense of self.

ELP interviewees, for example, emphasized that developments made in the areas of skills and knowledge actually led to an increased ability to navigate life challenges. One participant pointed out that the program helped with aspects of spousal communication skills: "As far as that personality test, a lot of the things that my wife and I handle differently, we can understand where each other is coming from and how different things are much more of a priority to us just because of our personalities" (ELP 6). Another ELP interviewee remarked that his increased self-confidence helped him conquer his fear of public-speaking (ELP 9). In turn,

broader awareness gained during the ELP program influenced one couple's leadership outlook and leadership commitment:

*I would say that Emerging Leaders steered us to be not as afraid of the time commitment [of leadership]. I guess it's changed the way we thought about it a little bit in that we are trying to improve the community for our kids and that helps to justify us to be away from the kids overnight or take time away from them to do leadership work...we're proud of the fact that we are trying to improve things (ELP 11).*

MARL participants agreed that their program participation had affected behavioral outcomes involving personal challenges. One MARL interviewee cited a more positive outlook and increased ability to focus when confronted with a challenge (MARL 3). Another said he feels he is now able to "negotiate with people" better because he has new ideas and more information on how to handle people (MARL 5). Another interviewee replied, "I communicate better with my spouse and my kids and I try to *show* leadership rather than demand it" (MARL 6).

The above examples illustrate that several respondents spoke about what were essentially changes in the area of knowledge, skill and attitude outcomes but described these in ways that related to behavioral changes within the scope of their individual lives. Thus, they provided

evidence of a link between developments made in the area of knowledge, skill and attitude outcomes and those made in the area of (private) individual action.

Responses related to intentional risk-taking elicited behavioral outcomes similar to those described above but also included discussions of more visible and public actions. Themes common to participants were (1) willingness to risk involvement in new leadership positions; (2) the ability to express or 'risk' voicing their opinion; and (3) a general willingness to try new things without fear of failure.

One ELP interviewee said he is "trying new things" like volunteering to be in a management-style position with the Special Olympics. Prior to ELP, he "wouldn't have taken that leap," he says (ELP 3). Likewise, a MARL interviewee responded by simply stating that his "taking a run at the Republican endorsement is a big risk" (MARL 2). An MASWCD participant found that the program helped her risk applying for a new soil and water position with more responsibilities.

Taking the risk to voice one's opinion is another behavioral outcome developed through participation in U-Lead programs. This change in behavior, however, was more common among ELP and MASWCD interviewees. For example, one ELP interviewee said it doesn't bother him to express an opinion in front of a crowd anymore. After the program, this participant became more vocal even in a situation where he believed his comments

would be “shot down by others” (ELP 6). Another ELP interviewee admitted:

*It goes back again to that confidence level. I wouldn't have risked going in and feeling like I was unheard in the superintendent's office or that one little voice out here in rural Minnesota could make an impact down at the legislature. To me, those are risks but they are worth taking because I had gotten the confidence through the program” (ELP 7).*

An MASWCD participant made a similar comment, noting that he “was not afraid to throw ideas out there, and if they get shot down, they do, and if they don't get shot down then that's something you can move forward with” (MASWCD 8).

All participants addressed the more general theme of overcoming the fear of failure, which was perhaps best summarized by one interviewee who said, “if I try something new, I don't feel apprehensive about failing. It seems that you work even harder to *not* fail” (MASWCD 14). Another respondent agreed:

*You learn that if you fail, it's ok. You learn from every experience and so if it doesn't happen to work out up to where you planned, it doesn't mean you failed. You sometimes learn that you have to take a different path (MARL 4).*

One notable MARL theme was the role that relationships formed during the program – bonding networks – played on both a participant's ability to navigate life challenges and to take risks. A MARL participant stressed the importance of these networks on helping him cope with a personal health crisis soon after graduating from MARL (MARL 11). Another MARL interviewee agreed:

*I think it encourages you to take risks because you don't think it is as much of a risk as it was before because you've got this network and because you've got this wealth of knowledge. It's just not that much of a risk because there are people you can talk to on almost anything that you want to try (MARL 9).*

The preceding section focused on common interview themes that relate more to behavioral outcomes within the private domain of an individual's life, although some examples did reveal evidence of overlap between the public and private domains suggesting that these categories are not mutually exclusive. The following section discusses how these internalized behavioral outcomes can influence more externally-recognized actions that eventually lead to community and organizational impacts. These are public individual actions manifested in new roles and responsibilities.

## Public Behavior Change

Participants in all three U-Lead programs became more involved in leadership activities, but only a few participants did this by taking on new positions and new responsibilities. Others augmented the roles and responsibilities they already had.

This section includes descriptions of factors involved in participants taking on new roles and responsibilities, as well as factors strengthening their positions in existing roles. The roles and responsibilities will be discussed in terms of these positions' sector-type and geographical scope.

The settings and 'reach' of new positions and/or responsibilities differ from program to program. This is not surprising, however, given that these programs are themselves different in scale and scope.

Table 5 has been divided into four categories: (1) participants who increased their leadership responsibilities; (2) participants who took on *new* leadership roles and/or positions; (3) participants who *both* increased their leadership roles *and* responsibilities; and (4) participants who *did not* take on any new role or responsibility.

Table 5 shows that over half of MARL participants solely took on new leadership positions, while other participants were split between those who increased both their leadership roles and responsibilities and those who only experienced an increase in responsibilities. The following statements, which identify settings and scopes of new positions, are representative of MARL participants:

Table 5. New Leadership Roles and Responsibilities by U-Lead Programs			
Area of Change	ELP	MARL	MASWCD
New Responsibilities	20%	23%	7%
New Leadership Positions	53%	54%	36%
<b>Both</b> New Responsibilities and New Roles	27%	23%	21%
<b>No</b> New Responsibilities and <b>No</b> New Roles	0%	0%	36%

N=15 ELP, 13 MARL, 14 MASWCD and 42 U-Lead Program respondents

*I have always been involved in the community and in different leadership roles, but what I was in before were your typical organizations like the Lions Club and the fire department. Since MARL, one of the things that we've done from scratch is we've started a community foundation...I guess I might not have been willing to start something completely different, but I got involved in it from the start and it has really worked out well” (MARL 9).*

*Prior to MARL, I was on the school board so most of my volunteering and leadership things were around that and with my church. After MARL, I chose to do more agricultural leadership. I joined the Farm Bureau, Minnesota Corn Producers, and Soybean Growers. I'm on the Board of Directors for Farm Bureau of [the] county, I'm the Promotion and Education Coordinator for our county and I'm on the State Board for Promotion and Education” (MARL 7).*

A good example of someone who did not necessarily increase his involvement in new organizations and new roles but who obviously increased his effectiveness as a leader by taking on new responsibilities is quoted here:

*At the time of MARL, I was already on the staff of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association and had been involved somewhat with the orientation of new board members. After going through the MARL program, I began to work more in that area with board orientation and working with county corn grower groups. My job description didn't change...but I had more of that kind of 'helping our leaders be more effective' type role (MARL 8).*

Table 5 shows that a slightly higher percentage of ELP participants took on *both* new leadership roles and responsibilities. Some of the more representative responses from the ELP sample are noted below:

*I took on more of a leadership role in Special Olympics. My official title is Head of Delegations. I hadn't done anything before [ELP] with that other than watch my son be involved in it, but that's changed...I think it gave me more confidence in what I was doing, that I could actually do something like that. After going through something like that [ELP], I realized that everybody has the ability to do it (ELP 3).*

*I don't know if I've been on any more boards, but my role has changed more into a leadership role instead of a board member. Before I was just a regular member, now I'm the chairman or president of three different boards (ELP 6).*

MASWCD participants were less apt to take on new leadership roles or responsibilities than either the participants from MARL or ELP. By now, it has been established that MASWCD is an organizational program directed at the employees and supervisors of Minnesota's soil and water districts and this fact must be taken into account when looking at the figures presented in Table 5. Upon entering MASWCD, participants are not necessarily looking to be community leaders and are more likely to develop their leadership skills for use in the workplace.

When asked about new responsibilities, one interviewee said simply that he “could not think of anything outside of work” but then went on to describe his volunteer work with a soil and water watershed partnership project (MASWCD 2). Two interviewees have also taken positions on the Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees Board. Another respondent mentioned his role as head of the soil and water cemetery work group committee, and then added that he is “even taking a

stronger role with family and friends – just feeling more confident with different things” (MASWCD 4). The following MASWCD participant also gave an example of different sectors where he has taken on new leadership responsibilities:

*I just kind of stepped up to the plate in Pheasants Forever. I was an innocent bystander for most of the meetings and now I'm kind of one of the chairs, so it has allowed me to dive in to more of that organization which is nice instead of taking the stand-back approach and letting everyone else do the work. I guess at work, too...our area is in charge of setting up the convention and getting the speakers lined up which is typically not my forte; I'm a field guy but I got onto the planning committee (MASWCD 13).*

Clearly, the leadership roles and responsibilities of the three groups of program participants vary in terms of sector-type and reach. Although MARL and ELP exhibit similar distributions regarding the sector of new positions, they differ in terms of geographical reach. ELP is a regional leadership program in northwest Minnesota, whereas MARL is a state-wide program with both national and international components. The MARL program aims to develop leaders within a wider scope, as explained by the following interviewee:

*I think what it did was opened up possibilities in a larger scale than what I had previously. It made me realize that I can be effective at a larger scale than just local. I kind of knew I'd become more effective at the state-level but even moving into the regional and national level. I have a better understanding of what goes on in the international, more global perspective (MARL 12).*

It is clear from the interview excerpts above and the results in Tables 6 and 7 that MARL participants experience a greater range of (public) action-oriented outcomes. To a lesser extent, ELP demonstrates this same range. However, most of the new roles and responsibilities acquired by MASWCD participants occur in the workplace within the realm of local soil and water districts. Again, this is indicative of the intent of the MASWCD leadership

development program. If this program's agenda were directed toward the community rather than the organization, the information presented here would be problematic. Since this is not the case, one should be careful not to compare across all programs without understanding the nature of MASWCD.

The information provided here about individual action outcomes was organized into two related categories: private behavior changes and public behavior changes. We should point out that while it would be easy to simply measure community capital by linking a given leadership position sector with a particular domain of community capital, quite often the connection can also be drawn between the development in individual behaviors (e.g., voicing one's opinion) and domains of impact (e.g., political capital). These more subtle changes in behavior cannot be overlooked and are one of the foundations from which impacts are made in the scope of community and organizational landscapes.

<b>Table 6. Sector Distribution of New Leadership Roles and Responsibilities</b>			
<b>Sector</b>	<b>ELP</b>	<b>MARL</b>	<b>MASWCD</b>
Civic	27%	38%	0%
AG	33%	38%	0%
C.org	40%	46%	21%
W.org	7%	15%	57%
<p><b>Civic:</b> New roles and responsibilities related to town boards, school boards, city council, etc.  <b>AG (agricultural organization):</b> New roles and responsibilities related to the agricultural sector (Minnesota Pork Producers, Minnesota Corn Growers Association, 4-H Clubs, etc.)  <b>C. org (community organization):</b> New roles and responsibilities in a wide-range of community organizations, such as church groups, Special Olympics, Lions Club, community foundations, museums, etc.  <b>W. org (work organization):</b> New roles and responsibilities related to places of employment.</p>			

N=15 ELP, 13 MARL, 14 MASWCD and 42 U-Lead Program respondents (because some answers corresponded to more than one response category, the total number of all percentages exceeds 100).

<b>Table 7. Geographical Scope of U-Lead Programs' Leadership Roles and Responsibilities</b>			
<b>Scope or 'Reach'</b>	<b>ELP</b>	<b>MARL</b>	<b>MASWCD</b>
Local	73%	77%	64%
Regional (County)	15%	46%	29%
State	20%	38%	7%

N=15 ELP, 13 MARL, 14 MASWCD and 42 U-Lead Program respondents (because some answers corresponded to more than one response category, the total number of all percentages exceeds 100).

## ***Community and Organizational Impacts***

### **Social Impacts**

Emery and Flora describe social capital as “the connections among people and organizations or the social ‘glue’ that make things, positive or negative, happen” (Emery and Flora 2006: 21). Extension expands on this definition when describing the domain of social networks as “the networks based on trust and reciprocity among people and organizations” (Chazdon et al. 2007). According to the outcomes and impacts framework, social networks are further described as *bonding* networks that provide security, *bridging* networks that expand opportunity, and *linking* networks that mobilize resources.

The development of bonding networks in the form of establishing professional and personal connections is an important and long-lasting benefit of participation in U-Lead programs. Since all three programs are designed as cohort programs with attendees moving through [the leadership process] as a group, it is reasonable to assume that participants of all programs would experience an increase in their

personal and/or professional networks – and that was indeed, the case. Many participants spoke about new professional connections and identified their fellow classmates as important resources for information, while others reported formation of life-long friendships.

Another important question asked to what extent participants shared with others the knowledge gained from the U-Lead program experience. This question refers to bridging and linking networks.

Responses varied by program and provide information on the types of connections built between U-Lead program participants and members of the general public. Types of sharing are designated by the categories ‘formal’ and ‘informal,’ and acknowledge, in some cases, the audiences with whom participants shared this knowledge.

A summary of the results in Table 8 shows that MARL participants were very active in their endeavors to share what they learned and did so in both informal settings with family and friends and in more formal arenas through presentations given to different audiences.

<b>Table 8. Percent of Participants Who Shared Knowledge Gained from U-Lead Program with Others</b>			
<b>Type of Sharing</b>	<b>ELP</b>	<b>MARL</b>	<b>MASWCD</b>
<b>Formal</b>	20%	8%	0%
<b>Informal</b>	67%	15%	64%
<b>Both Formal and Informal</b>	0%	77%	14%
<b>Total Sharing</b>	87%	100%	78%

N=15 ELP, 13 MARL, 14 MASWCD respondents

In a previous discussion about public acknowledgement of U-Lead programs, it was observed that MARL interviewees were more apt to enjoy public recognition of their leadership efforts and accomplishments due to a higher level of public awareness of the MARL program. This study contains additional evidence that linking the development of social capital with program outcomes discussed earlier (e.g., public recognition of graduates as leaders). The following quotes from MARL participants provide examples of the level of impact within social capital:

*Promotion of the program is pretty important. The height of the program is the two-week international tour so once we get back from that, we are really encouraged to talk to anyone and everyone about that – like get in the paper, things like that. So, that was done with two to three local newspapers. I have been to Farm Bureau to talk about my MARL trip and then to*

*Kiwanis, too, to talk about the trip but also the program, as well (MARL 3).*

*I talked to groups from elementary school to high school to civic groups. I talked about our trip to China and about what's happening in China and how that is going to affect our economy and our standard of living – it has huge implications for our society so I did a lot of that – public-speaking to different groups about our trip to China and as part of that, what MARL was about (MARL 9).*

The MARL program has developed a solid approach to program promotion that integrates the development of social capital with the continued development of program skills and general program recognition. MARL graduates demonstrate their newfound confidence by networking and making presentation to groups from

various backgrounds. Besides being an effective marketing tool for the program, formal sharing allows the general public to gain knowledge and awareness of MARL, which, in turn, fosters respect and recognition for future MARL participants. The following remark about one MARL participant's new leadership position is a glowing example of this synergy:

*I got more confidence going in and people know that I've been in it [MARL]. That's how I got the Extension position – the guy who called me knew that I was in the MARL program and he said, 'with your experience, we're looking for some strong leadership in [the] county (MARL 5).*

ELP and MASWCD interviewees shared their knowledge and learning gained from their U-Lead program experience to a lesser degree with the general public. A focus on brand recognition of ELP and MASWCD would increase and align public recognition of those programs with that of the MARL program.

Interview responses showed that bonding networks among U-Lead program participants are strong; all participants agreed that their professional and/or personal networks have expanded. It is not surprising that participants of a leadership program would all agree that their networks have expanded due to the cohort structure of each program. Therefore, in order to simplify social capital data in this report,

this information has *not* been included in Figure 2 on page 38. Rather, social capital impacts in Figure 2 are represented by the information displayed in Table 8 measuring participants sharing of knowledge with others. Although this data demonstrates some degree of impact in the domain of social capital, it may not be a strong indicator of such.

The revised interview protocol in Appendix B includes a two-part question about social capital and network-building. Part 1 of the question is designed to elicit responses about how program participation helped to expand an individual's own personal and professional networks. Part 2 asks about a participant's effort to build and strengthen networks among people in their organizations and communities. This follow-up question specifically addresses a participant's level of activity in building social capital after program participation and is more closely related to the definition of social capital put forth by Emery and Flora that emphasizes social capital as "the 'glue'" that make things happen (Emery and Flora 2006: 21).

### **Political Impacts**

Extension defines the political impact domain as, "the ability of families, organizations, communities, or sectors to access and mobilize public resources" (Chazdon et al., 2007). For this report, it is also helpful to turn to Emery and Flora's definition which emphasizes "the ability of people to find their own voice and to engage in actions that contribute to the well being of their community" (Emery and

Flora 2006: 21). The courage to express one’s opinion has already been described as a private individual behavioral outcome, and it is also important to understand this kind of behavior as an impact. Many interviewees talked about an increase in self-confidence that helped them reach out to political leaders; some mentioned a new awareness and knowledge of the political process; and a few participants even felt motivated to apply their increased self-confidence and new knowledge to run for political office.

A question specifically related to political capital asked participants if they have become more involved in community decision-making and policy-making since completion of a U-Lead program. It is evident from the responses shown in Table 9 that U-Lead programs have made impacts in the domain of political capital.

The following comments are representative of participants who became more involved in community decision-making and policy-making issues:

*I would say indirectly, yes, because I actually had more confidence to go in and speak to the superintendent about issues and concerns that I had and things were changed. I’ve actually called legislators and senators after the program which I never, ever would have done prior” (ELP 7).*

*I think not so much locally but more on the state-level. For example, we had flooding in my area last fall, and so I became more involved in calling the state. I guess I’m more involved in voicing my opinion on legislative processes and that kind of thing. So, if there is some issue, I’ll write them or call their office and them what I want, and before MARL, I would not have done that (MARL 7).*

Table 9 shows that 64 percent of MASWCD participants said they did *not* become more involved in community

<b>Table 9. Percent of U-Lead Participants Who Increased Involvement in Policy-Making and Decision-Making</b>		
<b>ELP</b>	<b>MARL</b>	<b>MASWCD</b>
60%	54%	36%

N=15 ELP, 13 MARL, 14 MASWCD respondents

decision-making and policy-making. This is somewhat surprising because soil and water employees and supervisors are publicly elected, and one might expect these participants to have a greater level of impact in the area of political capital. Of those who did report increased political involvement, one interviewee replied, “I have attended public input meetings and I’ve given some presentations at public input meetings as well” (MASWCD 1). Another MASWCD participant said, “With the sanitary district, we have – as far as putting different policies together assessments and user-charges and things like that” (MASWCD 3).

Again, these examples indicate a path of leadership development from private behavior change (self-confidence) to public individual action (risking voicing opinion) to community and organizational impacts – in this case, within the realm of political capital.

### Financial Impacts

Using Extension’s Outcomes and Impacts Framework, the financial impact domain

refers to “private wealth that is invested in the well-being of families, organizations, communities, or sectors” (Chazdon et al. 2007). The ability to access financial resources, such as participation in community fundraising or grant-writing efforts seemed to be a challenge to most participants of U-Lead programs.

Generally speaking, U-Lead program participants’ impacts on financial capital are minimal compared to those in other areas of community capital – however, they are still significant (see Figure 2). Table 10 reveals that less than half of MARL participants were able to access financial resources for the benefit of their communities or organizations; the numbers of ELP and MASWCD participants able to do this were even less, at 33 and 36 percent, respectively. One explanation is that participants are simply confused by the steps needed to achieve the development of financial capital. A MARL interviewee said that accessing financial resources “has been very difficult” and another commented, “that’s one of the things that still puzzles me” (MARL 12, MARL 6).

**Table 10. Percent of U-Lead Participants Able to Access Financial Resources**

ELP	MARL	MASWCD
33%	46%	36%

N=15 ELP, 13 MARL, 14 MASWCD respondents

Some MARL respondents who have been able to access financial resources provide examples of how they have done this through raising money on their own, as well as acquiring resources to help the process along. The following quotes are representative of MARL interviewees who are making financial capital impacts:

*I went out and raised money for book bundles. We gave book bundles to 13 libraries...We went out to different local organizations and asked for this money from the corn growers and the beef producers, the ethanol plant, the Farm Bureau and even got some from our electric company and we applied for a grant from the Round-Up Company. I'm doing the same thing with the 911 simulator [safety project] that I'm working on. I went to the fire departments and I'm talking to all of the fire chiefs and I'm raising the money. That's about a \$2,300 project and I think we're just under \$1,600. And the fencing project [for farmers of flood damage] – [town a] FFA donated \$6,000, [town b] gave us \$1,250 and [town c] gave us \$800, plus we had some individuals who sent checks and donated the posts and some of the wire” (MARL 5).*

*For our [community] foundation, we tapped into the Southwest Foundation Initiative Fund and we got talking to those people, and we found out that if we raised \$25,000, they would match it with \$25,000 and they manage the money for us and provide us with all of the tax counseling and help with donors. It's a great resource...now we're taking grant-applications and then we'll review the applications and try to make our rewards by mid-June” (MARL 9).*

It's noteworthy that participants who were able to raise money from various community and agricultural organizations had also given five formal presentations after completing the MARL program. A causal link between level of sharing program knowledge and ability to raise money cannot be proven from this data, but it is an interesting point to consider.

Although ELP participants expressed less success in accessing financial resources, it is apparent that they are taking beginning steps toward this goal. For example, one ELP participant said, “I remember being exposed to the West Central Initiative and the Blandin Foundation, and I remember hearing about a lot of those through Emerging Leaders” (ELP 1). A second

interviewee said that although he has not yet written any grants, he has started to look for some and is “more aware of that avenue of doing things” (ELP 3). One interviewee who has made an impact in the domain of financial capital shared the following comment:

*We’re involved somewhat in Special Olympics fundraising but that might be more with helping someone else’s set-up but with our Downs Syndrome Support Group, we do some fundraising there and we’ve recently had a grant from a local charity or an endowment where they give out money. We’ve received it twice and both of those have happened after we’ve been through this program (ELP 3).*

Similar to other areas of MASWCD outcomes, these participants have primarily developed financial capital within their organization. However, one individual who made an impact at the community level provided the following example:

*I can’t take full credit for it but the art center endowment thing has happened since I’ve been the chair and we’re moving forward with it. We’ve actually had someone who grew up here...she came to us with \$20,000 last summer and said, if you can raise \$25,000 by the end of 2008, I’ll match it will another \$100,000... (MASWCD 12).*

One way U-Lead programs could augment impacts on financial capital would be to increase grant-writing training. Participants could go through the actual grant-writing process as a team by being placed in small groups with others of similar interests. Additionally, past U-Lead participants who have been successful in grant-writing and fundraising could be invited to share their stories.

### **Built/Natural Resource Impacts**

In both the Community Capital Framework and Extension’s Outcomes and Impacts Framework, built and infrastructure capital is an area of impact separate from natural resource capital. The interview protocol for the U-Lead Impact Study was designed to measure these areas of impact in one question, thus combining the responses to reflect a common domain called ‘built and natural resource capital.’ This domain would include such activities as community beautification projects, conservation management efforts, wind-power development, and tree-planting initiatives.

Figure 2 (on page 37) shows that 47 percent of ELP interviewees and 54 percent of MARL respondents have participated in community and natural development projects since completing the program. MASWCD participants reported less impact in the area of built and natural resource capital, with only 36 percent of participants involved in community development projects.

Most of the responses involved participation in park and recreation projects, such as building new playground equipment (ELP 7). Other projects fit into categories of community beautification or general infrastructure development. Comments on these projects follow:

*The first thing that popped into my head would be the flood project that we're working on here with [the] watershed. We're working hard to effect what the wildlife managers are working on for flood control (ELP 11).*

*We did a community beautification project. We participated in some of those meetings that were happening. We were a host family to some of those folks who came in to help us with that process to help make our town more attractive and more appealing to guests and residents (ELP 13).*

The following excerpt from a MARL interview reflects that participant's impact on financial capital and in the domain of built and natural capital and points to the "view that all capitals are interconnected" (Fey et al. 2006: 7).

*Yes, I have. We are in the process of working on some hiking and biking trails that we're trying to get organized. Where I live in southwestern Minnesota, we're in the*

*center of all of the wind power development and we're trying to develop a wind tower trail that we could use to hike and bike. There are little things, too. We need some new welcome signs in the community, so we had a benefit this winter and we raised about \$7,500 to build two new welcome signs for our community and we're going to be able to build them (MARL 9).*

Again, the fact that the scope of the MASWCD program does not include the community partly explains a reduced impact in the domain of built and natural capital. It's also possible that MASWCD participants are engaged in community development initiatives through their jobs. If they have already been involved in projects related more specifically to natural resource capital, they would be less likely to report a change or increase occurring after the program. Either way, it's interesting that MASWCD interviewees did not clarify this point when asked about their involvement in community development projects.

One MASWCD interviewee has combined his job in soil and water with an effort to build natural resource capital (in addition to social and cultural capital) as described in the following quote:

*I volunteered to come into the fourth grade classroom at our local school and I brought in our district manager who is our tree specialist and enlisted the local DNR forester, and so we all came into the classroom and helped teach fourth graders why trees are important...we actually did a tree planting in memory of one of their classmates who died from cancer and I told them, 'ok, you know about trees so now we're going to plant one'...When they graduate from sixth grade, we are hoping to plant another one....There are 10 schools in the county and I would love it if all 10 schools would say, 'we heard what you are doing, why don't you come to our school' because that is our chance to say, this is what soil and water districts do and this is what you can do at home (MASWCD 9).*

Interview data shows overlap between the domains of community development projects and financial capital. "Each form of capital has the potential to enhance the productivity of the others" and in this instance money and projects go hand-in-hand when talking about achieving impacts at the community level (Flora et al. 2004: 71). In order to physically build, create, and enhance a community's infrastructure and surroundings, it is necessary to have the funds and resources available [which could be one reason why data from these areas of community capital is so similarly represented between each distinct program

in Figure 2]. Suggestions for increasing U-Lead program impact in financial capital will no doubt have an effect on the level of impacts made in the area of built and natural resource capital.

### **Cultural Impacts**

The cultural domain of impact used in Extension's framework is defined as the "ways that distinct worldviews are supported and celebrated within families, organizations, communities, or sectors, combined with limitations on the ability of privileged groups to maintain advantage" (Chazdon et al., 2007). The question concerning cultural capital used in the interview protocol for this project, however, did not specifically ask interviewees about their efforts to promote cultural diversity in community festivals and events. Therefore, little evidence was provided to support an understanding of the possible limitations encountered by privileged community groups in efforts to maintain advantageous representation in community events and festivals. Instead, the question used in the interview guide referred more closely to the indicators of cultural capital described by Fey and others in an evaluation of community and economic development where this domain was measured through an analysis of community traditions, festivals and local history (Fey et al., 2006). The revised interview protocol included in Appendix B takes this oversight into account by offering an alternative question that asks specifically about the issue of inclusiveness.

Seventy-three percent of ELP interviewees are involved in leadership capacity with cultural events and festivities. Similar to its impact in other domains, the MARL program represents an almost even split between those who are and are not involved in cultural activities. MASWCD participants had the least impact in the area of cultural capital, with only three of the 14 interviewees responding positively.

The most frequently cited example by ELP participants in the domain of cultural capital concerned involvement in county fairs and community festivals. Representative comments of those participants are listed here:

*We're a big 4-H family, so we've done a lot of programs for 4-H community events. We had an all-school reunion – just different things like that. I emceed programs a few times, so yes, I would say a lot of things like that. It's something that I've been heavily involved with all of my life, so I think I would have to put in a note that Emerging Leaders probably enhanced that part of my life but I've always been active in it (ELP 8).*

*I was a parade person for our local [town] festival. Our farm sponsors our county fair and*

*we also sponsor [the town] festival. We do the ADA booth and serve milk. We also do a kindergarten and pre-school tour to our farm. We get the preschool and kindergarten classes to come out from our area schools. They get a kick out of it. We put the tractor in the front lawn and they get to sit in it and dig their hands in five gallon feed buckets (ELP 13).*

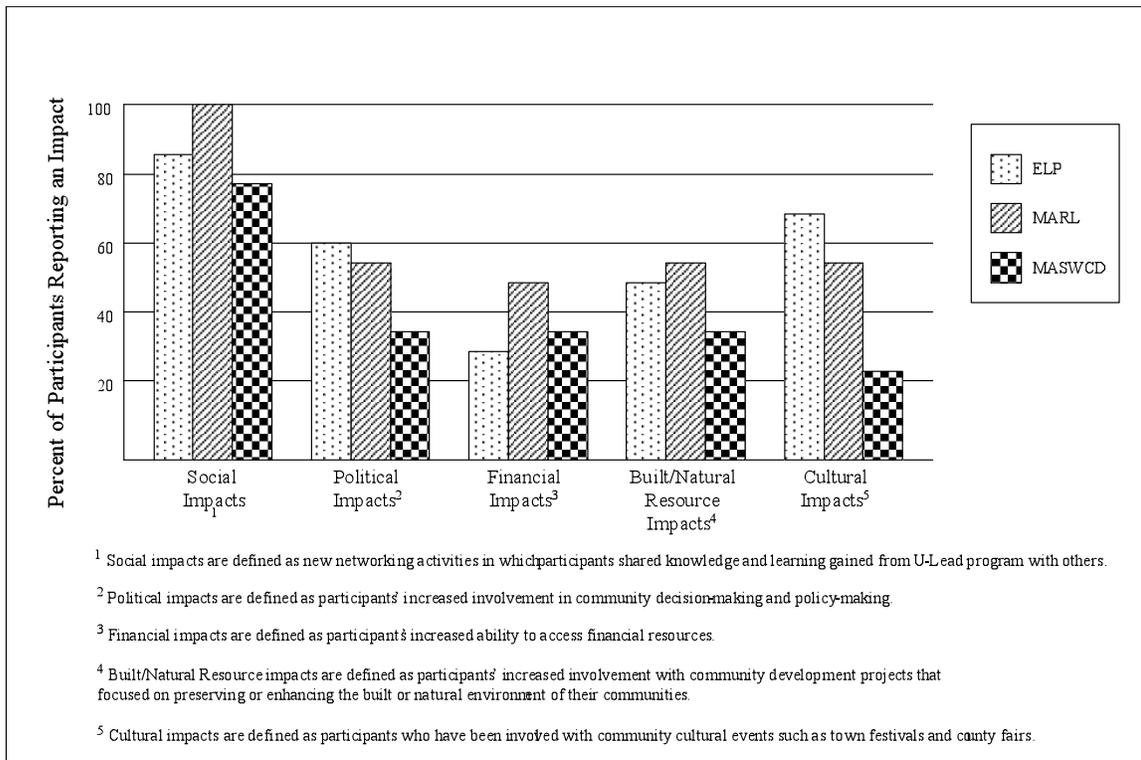
Although MARL interviewees expressed less involvement in community cultural events than ELP participants, they did provide good examples of the development of cultural capital in their communities. One interviewee, for example, described his involvement in his county's historical society and a regional 'living' history museum, as well as his work encouraging school group visits to both these museums. (MARL 1) Another voiced the participation in county fairs more common to the ELP group when he mentioned his involvement with the commodity contest at his county fair through the Farm Bureau. (MARL 5) One MARL interviewee participated in an Earth Day community art collaborative and another helped organize a Father's Day street dance to raise money for the fire department; this individual also was involved in planning and expanding an annual horse show (MARL 7, MARL 9).

Only 22 percent of MASWCD interviewees reported involvement in a cultural capacity through community events and activities. Two of the three interviewees worked on projects conducted through their soil and water districts, such as giving tours and presentations at county fairs and working on community festivals. The third interviewee described participation in cultural events in terms of his work with a community art foundation and through his involvement with a singing group.

### Comparison of Community and Organizational Impacts

The interviewee responses provide evidence of how U-Lead programs affect impacts in communities and organizations. Figure 2 shows the overall distribution of the impacts that participants have had in the domains of community capital as a result of their experience in one of Extension’s leadership development programs.

Figure 2. Community and Organizational Impacts



## V. Conclusion and Suggested Recommendations

The data and supporting responses from this U-Lead Impact Study offer sufficient evidence that Extension's leadership development programs have achieved positive results in the area of individual outcomes, as well as measurable strides in organizational and community impacts. These results stand alone as important findings, but they are even more significant considering the influence that these outcomes have on larger-scale impacts. Unlike other leadership program evaluations that report difficulty in measuring community-level impacts<sup>5</sup>, one strength of the approach used in this U-Lead Impact Study was the ability to establish a clear trajectory from the development of knowledge, skill and attitude outcomes and individual action outcomes to community impacts measured in the five domains of community capital.

Our approach to leadership evaluation is based on Extension's Impact and Outcomes Framework, but these research findings support modifications to this framework resulting in a new model showing the effects of U-Lead programs on individual outcomes and community and organizational impacts. The new U-Lead Program Outcomes and Impacts Model, presented in Figure 3 (on page 41, closely examines the progression of individual outcomes leading to community and organization impacts, while recognizing the distinction between public and private domains of individual action outcomes and providing specific examples of outcomes

and impacts elicited from interviews with past U-Lead program participants.

This U-Lead Impact Study has contributed to the field of leadership evaluation and community development by using the Community Capital Framework in the research project design. This new model reflects the synergy between individual-level outcomes and community and organizational impacts. Thus, it clearly identifies the particular outcome and impact areas affected by Extension's leadership development programs and can be used to inform and frame the design of interview protocols used in future leadership evaluations.

The different contexts, learning objectives, training approaches and targeted audiences of each U-Lead program present challenges to a streamlined evaluation and address future evaluation issues. Currently, MASWCD focuses on the leadership development of soil and water district employees. Although the information in this report provided ample evidence that the learning objectives of this program were met, one important point to consider is how to incorporate an understanding of the unique scope of the MASWCD program in future evaluations. MASWCD focuses on developing and strengthening leadership within an organization rather than on developing leadership in a wider community. In order to address different program objectives and the intended audience of program participants, interview

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<sup>5</sup> Manuel Gutierrez et al., *Next Generation Leadership Program: Final Assessment Report*. OMG Center for Collaborative Learning, 2004.

questions may need to be revised to illustrate organizational specific impacts.

That said, however, an additional and related point to consider is whether MASWCD should broaden its intended scope of impact by including larger community impact objectives within its existing organizational-focused framework. This can certainly be accomplished, and indeed was, by the interviewee who started a tree planting project at his local schools—thereby sharing his knowledge of soil and water conservation with members of a young population to create cultural, social and natural resource capital. Perhaps the strength of MASWCD lies in its potential to access and build on its existing resources to make larger-scale impacts that stretch the limits of its current parameters and address the needs of a greater audience.

Ideally, interview protocols could be applied for use in evaluating both types of Extension’s leadership development programs – those with a more narrow focus directed at organizational leadership development and those with a broader focus aimed at cultivating community leadership. Certain interview questions may need to be altered in order to tease out the responses of a particular program demographic. Although MASWCD and other similar Extension leadership programs, such as the Association of Minnesota Counties or the Leadership Academy for Rural Public Health, focus on the entity of an organization as the forum for leadership development, community impacts – channeled through particular

program outcomes – would be expected as these are all *public* organizations.

It’s clear that the MARL program is designed with the intent of strengthening the leadership scope of its participants by both encouraging involvement in new leadership positions at the regional and state level and by increasing cross-cultural awareness and understanding through the international study tour. Evidence from this U-Lead Impact Study suggests that MARL has been successful in the degree to which its individual action outcomes have been realized. However, it is curious that many MARL interviewees did not directly talk about their two-week international study tour experience. However, when sharing their MARL experiences with others, participants often indirectly mentioned their trip abroad in reference to giving presentations or slide-shows to community organizations. Although one MARL participant seemed moved by his new knowledge and awareness of the implications of Chinese agriculture for the future of Minnesota’s agricultural industry, he did not clearly articulate any effects of the international study tour; in general, it was surprising that this topic was brought up so few times. Even though the international study tour was not identified as an assessment need for this study, it might be important to ask direct questions regarding MARL participants’ lasting impressions of their international experiences.

Appendix B includes a revised interview protocol based on Extension’s Outcomes

and Impacts Framework and on the related progression of outcomes leading to impacts shown in Figure 1 of this report. The suggested interview guide focuses on areas of outcomes and impacts by probing interviewees to consider the potentially connective effects U-Lead programs have on 1) an individual – in the areas of knowledge, skill and attitude development, as well as individual action outcomes, and 2) on the impact domains of community capital.

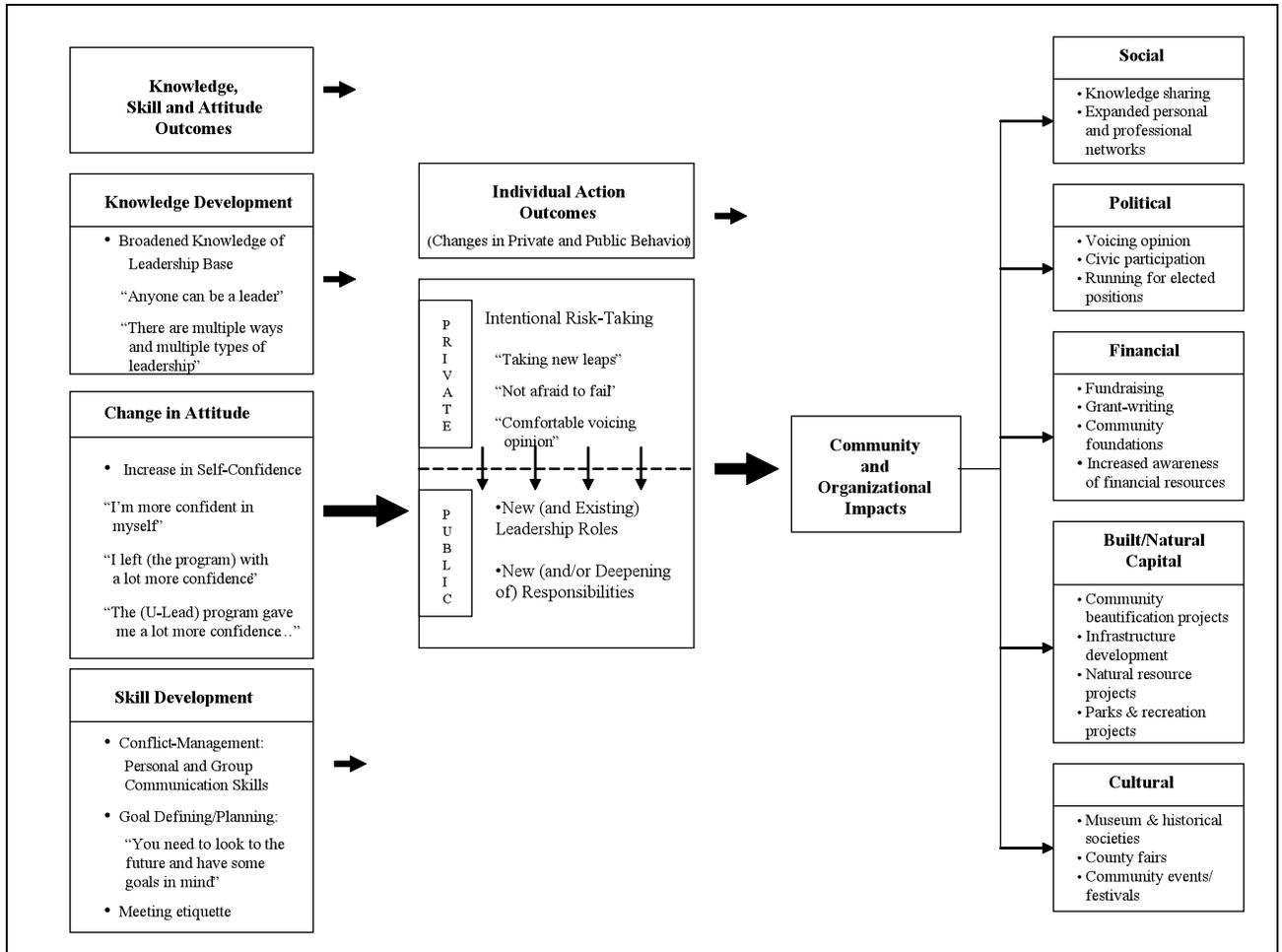
Future evaluation tools will need to elicit specific factors that motivate individuals to engage in a leadership program. A question addressing motivation is included in the revised protocol. In addition, future interview protocols (including the wording of interview questions) will want to stay close to the definitions of the domains of community capitals stipulated by Extension's Outcomes and Impacts Framework and the Community Capital Framework. Although the original protocol intended to do just that, some changes have been made to account for a lack of consistency between the community capital definitions and the respective interview questions that address each domain. For example, in the revised interview protocol a question about social capital specifically asks about the degree to which participants are actively strengthening the social bonds of their communities and organizations. Likewise, an additional cultural capital questions addresses participants' efforts to promote diversity and inclusiveness in their community.

We have also made other modifications to

the revised protocol. A question has been added that addresses health impacts, a topic that was overlooked in the original interview design. Likewise, the initial protocol asked respondents about built capital and natural environment impacts in the same question – they are now two separate questions. We have made additional changes to the revised interview protocol so the evaluation tool can address specific scopes of two different styles of leadership programs. The wording of certain questions clearly references communities *and* organizations in order to encourage members of organizational-focused leadership programs, like MASWCD, to connect with the question and identify outcomes and impacts made through the channels of their organization. Moreover, the language used in the interview questions has also been adapted to address both participants' *new* involvement in a particular activity or leadership effort, as well as an increase in *existing* involvement.

Although the future of U-Lead programs is an important consideration and one with implications for conducting successful leadership evaluations, this report's research findings provide evidence that, at present, U-Lead programs make significant contributions to both individual-level outcomes and community and organizational-level impacts. Furthermore, it is clear that past participants of U-Lead programs were affected by program participation at these two levels, supporting the claim that U-Lead programs strengthen individual lives and promote the vitality of communities and organizations.

**Figure 3. The U-Lead Program Outcomes and Impacts Model**



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# Appendix A: Supplemental Interview Data

## Program Outcomes

<b>U-Lead Program Activity Effectiveness at Developing Skills</b>			
<b>Responses were coded into the following categories:</b>	<b>% of ELP Respondents</b>	<b>% of MARL Respondents</b>	<b>% of MASWCD Respondents</b>
Personality tests	<b>53%</b>	15%	7%
Group activities	27%	0%	<b>43%</b>
Visit to Minnesota State Capitol/In-state site visits	40%	15%	N/A
Speakers and lectures	13%	23%	7%
Group discussions	13%	15%	21%
Public-speaking activities and/or media training	0%	<b>62%</b>	0%
International travel experiences	N/A	15%	N/A
Trip to Washington D.C.	N/A	15%	N/A
Effective meeting agenda and operation training	0%	8%	0%
No specific activity mentioned	0%	8%	29%

N=15 ELP, 13 MARL and 14 MASWCD respondents (because some answers corresponded to more than one response category, the total number of all percentages exceeds 100)

## Social Impacts

<b>Percent of U-Lead Participants Who Encouraged Leadership in Others</b>		
<b>% of ELP Respondents</b>	<b>% of MARL Respondents</b>	<b>% of MASWCD Respondents</b>
87%	100%	79%

N=15 ELP, 13 MARL and 14 MASWCD respondents

## Alumni (Bonding) Networks

<b>Percent of U-Lead Participants Involved in Project Collaboration with Fellow Alumni</b>		
<b>% of ELP Respondents</b>	<b>% of MARL Respondents</b>	<b>% of MASWCD Respondents</b>
13%	77%	43%

<b>U-Lead Participation in Formal and Informal Alumni Activities or Events</b>			
<b>Responses were coded into the following categories:</b>	<b>% of ELP Respondents</b>	<b>% of MARL Respondents</b>	<b>% of MASWCD Respondents</b>
Formal Activities	33%	39%	0%
Informal Activities	20%	15%	64%
Both Formal and Informal	0%	46%	0%
Participation	53%	100%	64%

# Appendix B: Revised Interview Protocol

## Background Questions

1. What community do you live in and what year did you participate in the [U-Lead] program?
2. What were your expectations for participating in the [U-Lead] program and how did you see yourself using this training?
3. Why did you choose to be part of the leadership program – was there a specific event or situation that motivated you to participate in the [U-Lead] program?
4. Can you tell me about an activity or part of the program that best helped you to develop as a leader?

## Knowledge, Skill and Attitude Outcomes

5. During participation in the U-Lead program, did you broaden your knowledge of different types and styles of leadership?
6. Thinking back to the time of your leadership experience, what specific skills did you develop during the program training? How did you apply these skills to make any changes in your personal or professional life after completion of the program?
7. Did your experience in the leadership program change how you see yourself as a leader?
8. Do feel that others in your community or organization think of you more as a leader after completion of the program than they did before you entered the program?
9. Did you experience an increase in self-confidence after participation in the leadership program? If so, how did this self-confidence affect areas of your personal and professional life?
10. How did your experience in the leadership program affect your coping skills when faced with difficult or challenging situations?

## Individual Action Outcomes

11. Since completion of the program, have you noticed any changes in your behavior or have you thought that you reacted differently to situations within your personal or professional life?

12. In what areas of your personal or professional life have you taken risks and how has the leadership training helped you prepare for risk-taking?

13. Before participation in the leadership program, what organizations – including work organizations – were you involved with and what types of responsibilities did you have? Did you experience an increase or change in these responsibilities after completion of the program?

14. Since completion of the program, have you taken any new informal or formal leadership positions within your community or within your work organization? Had you not participated in the leadership program, would you have taken these new roles?

### **Community and Organizational Impact Questions**

15. Did your experience in the leadership program help to expand or deepen your personal, social or professional connections? Did your experience in the leadership program encourage you to strengthen networks among people and organizations in your community?

16. Since completion of the program, have you shared the knowledge and learning gained from your experience with others (this could be formal sharing such as making presentations or informal sharing such as discussions or conversations with family, friends and co-workers)?

### **Political Impacts**

17. Since completion of the program, are you more comfortable voicing your opinion to political or public leaders?

18. Since completion of the program, have you become involved or increased your participation in organizational or community decision-making?

19. Since completion of the program, have you run or considered running for public office?

### **Financial Impacts**

20. Since completion of the program, have you become involved or been more successful with fundraising efforts or grant-writing projects for the benefit of your community or organization?

21. Do you feel more knowledgeable about where to find information about financial resources available to the public after completing the U-Lead program?

### **Built Impacts**

22. Since completion of the program, have you become involved or increased your participation in projects that focused on enhancing or preserving the built environment (such as historic preservation, community beautification projects, park and recreation projects or infrastructure development)?

### **Natural Environment Impacts**

23. Since completion of the program, have you become involved or increased your participation in conservation efforts aimed at protecting natural resources?

### **Cultural Impacts**

24. Since completion of the program, have you become involved or increased your participation in community cultural events such as theater and music events, festivals, celebrations or county fairs?

25. Since completion of the program, have you become involved in or increased efforts to promote diversity in your community or organization (e.g., people of different ages and of different cultural and economic backgrounds)?

### **Health Impacts**

26. Since completion of the program, have you become involved in or increased efforts to promote the physical and mental well-being of your community or organization (such as tobacco reduction, drug prevention, or wellness and nutrition efforts)?