

ADA 25 Advancing Leadership: Impacts on the 2017 Cohort Final Report



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Executive Summary

This executive summary presents the recommendations that were developed as part of this report. Following each recommendation is a short justification that summarizes findings from the evaluation that explain the development of the recommendation. The recommendations are classified into four broad categories: successful improvements from the inaugural retreat, retreat content, logistics, and ADA 25 Advancing Leadership programming. There is not a specific recommendation for obtaining funding, although UIC acknowledges the recommendations noted below depend on budget and other resources. For instance, recommendations about specific timing or locations of the retreat are largely dependent on in-kind donations of space.

Successful Improvements from the Inaugural Retreat

All of the changes implemented between the 2015 and 2017 ADA 25 Advancing Leadership training retreats were large improvements over the previous year. There were not any negative comments about any of the changes that were made. We recommend especially to maintain the following changes to the extent possible, depending on availability of budget and other resources.

1. Future retreats should keep the multi-part format. Feedback from Fellows, the facilitation team, and other stakeholders, including ADA 25 Advancing Leadership staff was overwhelmingly positive about holding the retreat across multiple weekends with several weeks in between. One Fellow was surprised to learn that the inaugural retreat had been conducted over one longer weekend, and appreciated having two shorter weekends with time in between to think in more detail about plans for future leadership.
2. Continue with the current facilitation team. Fellows rated the facilitation team very highly and had only good things to say about the facilitators in the interviews. Likewise, other stakeholders were very happy with the facilitators and how they ran the retreat. The facilitation team also seems to value feedback and is looking for ways to improve experiences in the next year.
3. Hold retreats early in the year. Most stakeholders agreed that early in the year is a good time to hold the retreat. One of the Fellows made the point that having the retreat early in the year is a good strategy because it is when

a lot of people make plans and goals for the year, and the retreat can help with that.

Retreat Content

It is difficult to make recommendations about specific content modules that were presented at the retreat because some were extremely important to a few Fellows, while other modules were equally as important to other Fellows. Without getting into those details, three broad recommendations for content at the retreat are:

4. Having more flexibility and time for discussion as part of the retreat is essential. Many of the inaugural Fellows recommended open time to talk with one another, and the new facilitation team made a point to incorporate “Open Space” into the retreat design. Open Space was consistently one of the highest rated modules of each day of the retreat. Fellows appreciated being able to talk with one another and get feedback on ideas in a way that was not completely structured. It is important to have this time at the end of the day to aid in processing material that was discussed during the day.
5. Develop a feedback loop for Fellows from the facilitation team, especially regarding the interim work and their personal leadership plan. Many of the Fellows expressed some frustration that assignments/work completed between the first and second sessions was not specifically discussed during the retreat. Receiving feedback from one another and from the facilitation team on that work and their personal leadership plan was an important step. The Fellows indicated that they appreciated receiving feedback from other Fellows, but that there was and not much opportunity to receive feedback from the facilitation team. Developing a feedback loop seems important, and that feedback loop could be time at the retreat to discuss those activities in a small group with one of the facilitators, or the facilitators could read them following the retreat and provide feedback to the Fellows on a personal basis, either through a phone call or by email.
6. Make the content as practical as possible. The significant changes in the baseline and follow-up surveys related to practical aspects of leadership, such as networking and working with other people with disabilities. The

retreat should build on its strengths and include more opportunities for practical skills. Several Fellows specifically noted a desire for additional work on networking, especially with other leaders in Chicago and with people without disabilities.

7. Develop a central repository for retreat and supplemental materials. Several of the Fellows noted that it would be nice to have an electronic central repository for materials, including material that could be supplemental to the retreat (e.g. additional material on topics such as disability history or disability studies). Fellows were interested in additional profiles of leaders/role models with disabilities, such as local (Chicago-based) leaders and Fellows from previous cohorts. The Fellows suggested using an online drive, such as Dropbox or Google drive.

Logistics to Consider

The Fellows and other stakeholders had opinions about logistics for future retreats. While the logistics that were important to an individual Fellow varied from person to person, a few things did emerge.

8. Have retreats in a centrally-located space in downtown Chicago. Depending on the availability of donated space, Fellows prefer having the retreat in downtown Chicago rather than in the suburbs (Naperville). Specific preference was expressed for the meeting space at the Microsoft Center. A downtown location had symbolic importance to many stakeholders as it represents the “heart” of the city; developing leaders with disabilities in that setting reflected the credibility and status of participation in ADA 25 Advancing Leadership.
9. Ensure program accessibility. While there were not many complaints about accessibility during the retreat, to the extent possible, ADA 25 Advancing Leadership staff should strive to ensure that the entire retreat is as accessible as possible. Examples mentioned by the 2017 cohort included: microphones too heavy for some to hold, lack of space to move around for wheelchair users, and poor acoustics (the last two examples were in regard to the meeting space at the Hyatt Regency Chicago). Specific examples mentioned where accessibility was ensured was use of Google Docs, in

addition to the large flip charts, that everyone could access online.

Recommendation is to make those files available in a central repository (see recommendation 7).

ADA 25 Advancing Leadership Programming

Feedback below links the experience at the retreat to additional ADA 25 Advancing Leadership programming aimed to support the work of the retreat.

10. Have an event with time specifically designated for new Fellows and alumni Fellows to meet and mingle before the retreat. Many Fellows indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to meet with prior Fellows during the retreat. However, they were too scripted to be able to talk about individual experiences, or there was not enough time. It is recommended ADA 25 Advancing Leadership arrange an event for Fellows to meet as a cohort as well as to meet members of past cohorts. This session should be only loosely organized, with brief introductions and then time/space for the Fellows to interact with one another without other stakeholders present.
11. Develop and communicate expectations regarding participation in the retreat and additional ADA 25 Advancing Leadership programming. Some of the Fellows noted that they did not have any expectations going into the retreat because they were not sure what to expect. One of the staff that was interviewed also commented that they were surprised that the Fellows did not have more expectations about their own leadership. This recommendation is closely related to the use recommendation, and facilitating meetings between new and alumni Fellows could help to show the different paths that Fellows take after participating in the ADA 25 Advancing Leadership program. One Fellow suggested that a short 3 to 5 minute video that shows the experiences of past Fellows would also be a good option. This could be used both when Fellows apply to the program and leading up to the retreat to show what is expected of fellows in regard to participation, and also what Fellows can expect from the program (with a focus on how previous Fellows have taken advantage of opportunities made available to them, rather than the program doing something for Fellows).

12. Continue monthly newsletter and use Facebook more than LinkedIn. Many of the Fellows appreciated the monthly newsletter to update them on events and opportunities through ADA 25 Advancing Leadership. Many also noted that they did not always read each email, but were more likely to read the monthly update. The vast majority suggested using Facebook more than LinkedIn to share news, opportunities, and events because they logged into Facebook more frequently than LinkedIn.
13. Continue to build the Civic Connections Project and Mentoring Project. Many Fellows think of the retreat as a discrete program, rather than as part of the year-long ADA 25 Advancing Leadership. It is recommended to find a way during the retreat to make an explicit link between the retreat and other ADA 25 Advancing Leadership events (see also recommendation 11 about expectations for them to be involved in events throughout the year). [Note: the one year follow-up evaluation for the 2015 cohort showed better outcomes for people who were involved in and attended additional activities beyond the retreat.] The Mentoring Project presents a good start as it engages Fellows throughout the year. However, there was little time for Fellows to be able to evaluate this project as many of them had not met with their mentors. Results from the baseline and post-retreat surveys showed significant increases in whether Fellows felt that they had opportunities for growth in the future, and both the Civic Connections Product and Mentoring Project are opportunities to further contribute to the future growth of Fellows.
14. Continuously evaluate outcomes for Fellows. While the outcomes and findings in this evaluation are very favorable towards the ADA 25 Advancing Leadership program, a longer-term evaluation would strengthen those findings. With only about two months between the retreat and the last part of the evaluation, many of the Fellows had not had time to join a board, commission, or other leadership position. It is important to follow up with them after one year, similar to what was done for the first cohort, to determine the longer-term impacts of the program.

Introduction

ADA 25 Advancing Leadership originally began as a legacy project of ADA 25 Chicago, a year-long commemorative initiative of the Chicago Community Trust to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the signing of the ADA into law by leveraging new commitments to inclusion. The mission of ADA 25 Advancing Leadership is to build a pipeline and network of leaders with disabilities who are deeply engaged in the civic life of the Chicago region and advancing in their careers — consistent with the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)., and consists of three parts:

1. The **Leadership Institute**, a leadership training/retreat for a competitively selected class of emerging leaders with disabilities focusing on developing leadership and disability identity.
2. The **Civic Connections Project**, through which ADA 25 Advancing Leadership staff actively work to connect members to civic leadership and professional advancement opportunities in the region.
3. The **Members Network**, which offers scholarships to disability and civic-focused educational and networking events, opportunities to engage with the Fellows cohort, serve as mentors, and more. A portion are invited through application process for the Leadership Institute and others are identified and invited by the ADA 25 Advancing Leadership Executive Committee. .

The first cohort of 16 Fellows participated in the inaugural Leadership Institute (referred to as the “retreat” in this report) in December 2015 and additional events of ADA 25 Advancing Leadership developed in the months that followed. The second cohort of Fellows participated in the retreat in early 2017. The content and format of the retreats changed substantially between 2015 and 2017, based on lessons learned from the 2015 cohort. These lessons are reviewed in the next section, followed by a brief description of how the retreat was modified for the 2017 cohort.

Lessons from the 2015 Cohort

In December 2015, ADA 25 Advancing Leadership held its first leadership retreat as part of its ongoing program to help develop and provide connections for people with disabilities interested in civic leadership in the Chicago area. The Institute on Disability and Human Development (IDHD) conducted a comprehensive evaluation that focused on the retreat for the first cohort of 16 Fellows, including pre-and

post-surveys, interviews with Fellows and other stakeholders, and participant-observation from one of the evaluators. The full evaluation report, including one-year follow-up regarding the retreat and participation with the wider ADA 25 Advancing Leadership program, can be found at <https://uofi.box.com/v/ADA25-2015Cohort>. The evaluation team developed 11 recommendations to consider for the next iteration of the retreat and for continued engagement with ADA 25 Advancing Leadership:

1. Include employment as an outcome: although civic leadership is the focus of the program, Fellows experienced other professional leadership development that is important to note.
2. Establish accommodations and attendance policies to clarify what is expected of Fellows and what the Fellows can expect from ADA 25 Advancing Leadership regarding accommodations.
3. Develop future plans for Civic Connections to help connect the retreat with other events that ADA 25 Advancing Leadership holds throughout the year.
4. Have a facilitator with a disability who is a core component of the development and delivery of the retreat content.
5. Prepare facilitators for the diversity of disability, especially with regard to understanding the various experiences with disability, such as the time that it takes for people to communicate with different accommodations and interpreters.
6. Ensure sensitivity to diversity in all sessions not only with regard to disability, but with regard to racial and other demographic identities and the way that those identities intersect.
7. Integrate disability into the curriculum so that it is the base of the curriculum rather than interjected into a training curriculum that already exists.
8. Ensure flexibility in the curriculum; the training should not only be about “teaching” and delivering concrete content, but it should also emphasize applying concepts to real life situations and allowing “open space” for the Fellows to ask questions and interact with one another.
9. Prepare pre-training materials that introduce training content to help reduce the amount of time spent in the retreat on introducing core content that the

Fellows can review ahead of time. This pre-work should be discussed directly in the training retreat.

10. Move the timing of panels so that Fellows have additional opportunities to interact and build rapport early in the retreat, which will make the panels more lively and useful.
11. Consider options for the logistics of retreats, including various locations, other times of the year, and the length of time required for the retreat, while paying attention to availability of in-kind donations.

Changes to the 2017 Retreat

In response to those recommendations, the 2017 retreat was significantly revised in form and function. The changes can be described around four main areas:

1. **ADA 25 Advancing Leadership.** Some of the changes focused on the retreat but others focused on the ADA 25 Advancing Leadership program as a whole. Specifically, the program developed written procedures and policies on attendance at future retreats for the Fellows, along with a plan for providing support for accommodations at autonomous quarterly meetings of the Fellows for one year following participation in the retreat. In addition, the program further developed their plans for the Civic Connections part of the program and worked to integrate those plans into the curriculum of the retreat.
2. **The Facilitation Team.** A new facilitation team was contracted with to develop and deliver the 2017 retreat. The new facilitation team included a person with a disability as a primary facilitator, who was involved in the disability community nationally for many years. The facilitation team included disability in the retreat design and curriculum, and intimately understood issues that people with disabilities face.
3. **The Curriculum.** The new facilitation team developed an entirely new curriculum for the 2017 retreat. Kenfield-Shreve and ADA 25 Advancing Leadership convened a Design Team consisting of 20 stakeholders, including staff and a few inaugural Fellows, who met three times in 2016 to discuss essential components for the training curriculum, with a specific focus on how

disability fit into the components and how recommendations from the 2015 class would be integrated in a new design. For example, the new curriculum design reflected the need for flexibility by incorporating “open space” into each day to allow time for more free-flowing discussions and other questions that came up throughout the day.

4. **Logistics.** Logistics for the 2017 retreat were drastically different than those for the inaugural 2015 retreat. Most notably, timing of the retreat was changed. While the 2015 retreat was held across four days in December, the 2017 retreat was moved to early 2017 to avoid having a holiday break immediately following the retreat. In addition, the 2017 retreat was split into two parts, with several weeks between the two parts. These changes allowed the Fellows to apply the content of the retreat to the “real world” and return to the retreat to discuss their experiences. The new facilitation team also developed pre-retreat materials and assignments that were explicitly used during the retreat to engage with the leadership content and theories that were discussed.

Evaluation Design and Data Collection

The Evaluation was designed to provide information on (1) the content and logistics of the leadership training retreat and (2) the impact of the leadership training retreat and ADA 25 Advancing Leadership as a whole on the 2017 Fellows’ leadership plans and practices. The specific questions that guided the evaluation were:

Leadership Training Retreat

- What did the Fellows feel was most beneficial about the training retreat?
- What suggestions do the Fellows have for future training retreats?
- To what extent did Fellows build relationships with each other as well as with external entities?
- What aspects of the curriculum were helpful and effective, and why?
- How did the Fellows feel about the logistics of the retreat (e.g. did it run smoothly? Was the length of time appropriate? Etc.)? What worked, what didn’t, and why/why not?

Impacts on Fellows

- How did participation in the training retreat impact disability identity, leadership skills, attitudes towards leadership, and the leadership plans of Fellows?
- How did participation in the training retreat impact the leadership activities of Fellows, in particular, did they join or apply to civic leadership positions, such as boards or commissions?
- What barriers do Fellows face with regard to increased participation in leadership positions?
- What suggestions do Fellows have for how ADA 25 Advancing Leadership can continue to support their leadership activities?
- What, if any, were the other outcomes attributed to the program such as career or employment advancement?

The methods used to collect data to address these questions included pre-and post-surveys, training evaluations, and interviews with stakeholders. These are described below.

Pre- and Post-Surveys

In early January 2017, a few weeks before the leadership training retreat, each Fellow was asked to complete a short survey online. It contained questions on demographics, employment, past training, civic leadership, and scales that have been published in literature to assess a person's disability identity, comfort with leadership activities, and attitudes towards leadership. A shortened version of this survey was completed by each Fellow in the last week of April and the first week of May 2017, almost two months following the retreat. This survey contained only the same scales that were used prior to the training. By matching pre- and post-training responses, the evaluation team can assess whether the training had an impact on these aspects of leadership and identity. All 16 Fellows who participated in the training completed the pre-survey, and 15 completed the post-survey.

Many of the measures used in the pre- and post-training surveys were developed by the evaluation team in consultation with ADA 25 Advancing Leadership Chicago staff members. These cover general concepts about attitudes towards personal future and leadership skills and are the same as those used in the evaluation for the 2015 cohort.

Two of the scales used in this training are based on previous research. One scale asks whether a person believes statements about their comfort with leadership activities are absolutely false or absolutely true; those measures are based on research conducted by Bobbio and Manganelli.¹ The questions about disability identity were originally developed by Carol Gill and modified slightly by the evaluation team, Carol Gill, and ADA 25 Advancing Leadership Chicago in order to fit this evaluation. Dr. Gill was a facilitator for the 2015 retreat, an advisor on the 2017 design process and an expert in disability identity.

Training evaluations

Within a week of completion of the training, each Fellow was also asked to complete an evaluation of the training itself. This was done through an accessible online survey containing questions specific to each training topic, logistics of the training, and assessments of the facilitators. Each aspect could be rated quantitatively and comments could be left for each aspect. The survey also included open-ended spaces for the Fellows to identify their favorite part of the training, their least favorite part of the training, and suggestions for improvement of the training.

Because there were two parts to the retreat, there were two training evaluations. 15 Fellows completed each training evaluation online.

Interviews

The evaluation team also conducted individual interviews with both the Fellows and staff members associated with the training (including the facilitators, staff from ADA 25 Advancing Leadership, and other stakeholders who were instrumental in planning and advising development of the leadership training retreat and/or other activities of ADA 25 Advancing Leadership). The interviews were conducted by a team of graduate students with advanced training on performing interviews for research/evaluation.

The interviews were completed in May 2017. Nine staff members or other stakeholders participated in the interviews and seven of the Fellows participated. In

¹ Bobbio, A. & Manganelli, A. M. (2009). Leadership self-efficacy scale: A new multidimensional instrument. *TPM-Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology*, 16(1), 3-24.

addition, one person who was both a Fellow and a staff member of ADA 25 Advancing Leadership participated, for a total of 17 interviews.

Staff and Fellows were asked different, albeit similar, questions that were intentionally broad and allowed the interviewee to talk about aspects of the retreat and program that were most important to them, including suggestions for future changes to the program, feedback that they had or had heard from others, hopes and goals for the future of ADA 25 Advancing Leadership, lasting impressions of the training, and future goals and needed supports. These interviews averaged about 45 minutes.

Importance of Including People with Disabilities in Chicago-Area Leadership

The staff members who participated in an interview following the 2017 leadership retreat were asked about why it was important to include people with disabilities in Chicago-area leadership roles and the barriers people with disabilities faced with respect to inclusion in the leadership community. Most of the staff discussed how people with disabilities are underrepresented in the community as a whole, including leadership. If more people with disabilities were involved in leadership that would increase visibility of people with disabilities in general.

The interviewees noted that stigma and discrimination were primary reasons that people with disabilities are underrepresented in leadership roles. Most people still view disability in terms of charity or medical models, and they don't understand what people with disabilities can contribute to society. These attitudinal barriers, along with physical access barriers, make it harder for people with disabilities to access leadership positions.

In order to facilitate involvement of people with disabilities in leadership, the interviewees stressed that the voices of people with disabilities need to be more vocal/visible in society. Specifically with regard to leadership, they felt that additional role models and mentoring for people with disabilities could also facilitate increased involvement. ADA 25 Advancing Leadership was developed to help facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities in Chicago-area leadership.

2017 Cohort Demographics

Table 1: Fellow Demographics (n=16)		
Demographic	Number	Percent
Gender (n=14)		
- Male	5	35.7%
- Female	9	64.3%
Race (n=13)		
- White	10	76.9%
- Black	2	15.4%
- Asian American	2	15.4%
- Other (Mixed Race)	1	7.7%
Hispanic Origin	2	15.4%
Disability Type (n=15)		
- Blind/Visually Impaired	1	6.7%
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing	2	13.3%
- Intellectual/Cognitive	1	6.7%
- Mental health	3	20.0%
- Mobility disability	7	46.7%
- Physical disability	4	26.7%
- Learning disability	1	6.7%
- Autoimmune Diseases/Chronic Tension	1	6.7%
LGBTQ	3	18.8%
Employed (n=15)	13	86.7%
Current Board Involvement	5	38.5%
Age (n=14)	Mean: 35.7; Range: 25-65	
Data Source: Pre-Training Survey of Fellows and Applications		

Table 1 shows the demographics of the 16 Fellows as reported on the pre-retreat survey. A few of the Fellows chose not to answer one or more of the demographic questions. For example, two people chose not to identify with a gender. Of the 14 people that did identify, nine (64.3%) were female and five (35.7%) were male. Only 13 Fellows responded to the question about race. The majority were white (10 of the 13, 76.9%), and two people each identified as Black and Asian American (15.4%). One person identified as mixed race (7.7%), and two Fellows also indicated that they were of Hispanic origin (15.4%). [Note: Fellows could identify with more than one race, so these numbers add to more than

100%]. The ages of the 13 Fellows who provided their age ranged from 25 years to 65 years, with a mean of 35.7 years. Three Fellows (18.8%) identified as LGBTQ.

The Fellows identified with one or more of eight disability types. The largest disability type group was mobility disability, reported by seven (46.7%) of the 15 Fellows that answered this question. The second largest disability type was physical disability (other than a mobility disability), which was reported by four Fellows (26.7%); followed by mental health disability (three Fellows, 20%) and Deaf/Hard of Hearing (two Fellows, 13.3%). One Fellow each (6.7%) identified with a

Blind/Visual Impairment, Intellectual/Cognitive disability, Learning disability, and Autoimmune Disease/Chronic Tension.

15 Fellows responded to the question about their employment status. Of these 15 respondents, 13 (86.7%) were employed. The Fellows were split evenly across the for-profit and non-profit sectors, with six Fellows (46.2%) working in each; the other Fellow worked in the government sector. 10 of 13 Fellows provided additional information about their employer, and the majority (6, 60%) were employed in health and human services, followed by banking (2, 20%), and one each for civil service and advocacy. The length of time that the Fellows had worked for their current employer varied, with 12 of the 13 having been with their current employer for one or more years, 6 of the 13 for three or more years, 4 for six or more years, and 2 for 10 to 20 years.

Five (38.5%) of the Fellows reported having a civic board or commission position when they were accepted into ADA 25 Advancing Leadership. All five described disability-related board or commission service, either in the type of role taken (increasing accessibility to theaters or advocacy in the community for mental health) or the type of organization (Fair Housing Alliance, mental health, Little People of America, Ms. Wheelchair America board). Their roles included strategic planning, development, fundraising, improving accessibility for people with disabilities, and state coordination.

Fellows' Strengths and Weaknesses

Prior to the training, the Fellows were asked to describe their leadership strengths and weaknesses. With regard to leadership strengths, some common themes included life experience with disability, substantive professional knowledge, social skills of working well with others and relationship-building across multiple perspectives, communication and decision-making skills especially in group or crisis settings, and personal values of pride, honesty, empathy, humility, and leading by example. Three fellows related their personal experience with disability to their leadership strengths.

With regard to weaknesses, common themes included effectively communicating (both speaking and listening), self-advocacy or self-promotion, and appropriately responding to challenging or unfamiliar people and tasks. For example, one Fellow

mentioned “getting frustrated when others aren’t doing their part” and another indicated weakness “communicating with [the] non-disability population.” Many of the Fellows also noted that they often took on too many responsibilities and had “trouble shutting off work.”

Fellows’ Leadership Activities and Plans

The vast majority, all but one, of the Fellows wanted to take on new leadership activities. They identified activities in both professional and personal interest areas, and included a disability focus in each. In the professional arena, the activities included communicating effectively with larger crowds, developing board and professional connections, leading/supervising and guiding groups or employees, patient advocacy for survivors of sexual violence, and developing a program to increase the number of people with disabilities in the workplace. On the personal interest side, the activities included organizing around ADA compliance, bridging the gap between people with disabilities and other communities, increased involvement in disability-related organizations and government, intersectionality development, fundraising and business development, and sitting on a corporate board to support advocacy for disability awareness.

Prior to participating in any training, Fellows identified factors preventing them from being involved in these leadership activities. The responses fell into several themes: communication skills, professional constraints on opportunities and exposure, knowledge of where and how to find resources and opportunities, and networks that are small or lacking corporate board decision makers. Only three Fellows identified their disability as having a role in the factors preventing involvement in leadership activities.

Retreat Content, Delivery, and Logistics

Pre-Retreat

Prior to participation in the retreat, the Fellows were asked to describe communications they had received from ADA 25 Advancing Leadership, including their satisfaction with the communication leading up to the retreat and whether there was any information they wished they had received prior to the training retreat. All 14 of the Fellows that answered the question about communication prior to the retreat indicated that they were highly satisfied with the level and amount of

communication. One of them described the communication as “excellent” and another called the communication “fantastic.” The only information that the Fellows hoped for was a detailed schedule or agenda, which was expressed by two of the Fellows. Additionally, one Fellow noted that they had been waiting for the leadership practices inventory assessment so that they could complete it well ahead of the retreat.

Training Content

The training content was developed from the ground up by the facilitators with input from ADA 25 Advancing Leadership and guided by a design team of 20 members, including inaugural Fellows. The facilitation team and design team used the 2015 evaluation to develop ideas and priorities for the 2017 retreat. During the individual interviews, both sides acknowledged that there were some disagreements during what was an intensive, well-thought-out, and iterative process. Those who developed the content used input from experts in leadership development, experts in disability identity/studies, leaders with disabilities, and the previous cohort of Fellows. After the training content was developed, stakeholders felt that the process would not have developed the way it did without disagreements and compromises between the facilitators and ADA 25 Advancing Leadership staff.

Part I

Part I of the retreat was three days long. Each of the days was organized around a central theme: Day 1 – “Who Am I?,” Day 2 - “Who Are You? And how do we build relationships with one another?,” and Day 3 - “Who are we? And how do we lead in organizations?” Part I of the retreat was held at BMO Harris with lodging at the Marriott in Naperville, a suburb of Chicago.

Within three days of the end of the first part of the retreat, the Fellows were asked to complete an evaluation that asked about the value of each part of the training, what they found the most valuable and what they thought was the least valuable, assessments of the logistical aspects of the retreat, and suggestions for the second part of the retreat. Table 2 shows how the Fellows rated each of the 18 content modules that were split across the first three days of the retreat. Ratings are from 1 (not valuable) to 7 (very valuable). The table shows the number of Fellows who responded with each rating for each module, as well as the mean

rating for the 15 Fellows. Simple comparisons of the mean can be used to identify which modules are the most valuable and least valuable to the Fellows.

On average, each of the 18 modules was rated more than “somewhat valuable” (5) and eight modules were rated above “valuable” (6). “Open Space” was a part of all three days, and it was the most highly rated module each day, except for the second day, where it was the second most valuable, only slightly behind “conflict management” (6.27 compared to 6.20). This is noteworthy because the 2015 Fellows cohort stressed the need for more open space in the 2015 retreat, and the facilitators and organizers responded to that suggestion in a positive way so that the open space they did provide was highly valuable to the Fellows.

Table 2: Fellows Ratings of Retreat Part I Content Modules (n=15)

Content Module	Rating: 1 (Not Valuable) to 7 (Very Valuable)							
Day 1 Modules	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean
- Preparation Work Pre-retreat	0	0	1	0	7	4	3	5.53
- Understanding One’s Type (Myers-Briggs)	1	0	1	1	2	3	7	5.67
- Disability History and Identity	0	0	0	2	4	0	9	6.07
- Open Space	0	0	0	2	2	3	8	6.13
- Social Dinner in Small Groups at Marriott	0	0	2	1	4	4	4	5.47
Day 2 Modules	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean
- Appreciative Inquiry (Effective Leader)	0	0	0	2	4	7	2	5.60
- Trust Building	0	0	0	3	4	4	4	5.60
- Conflict Management	0	0	0	0	2	7	6	6.27
- Traditional Disability Paradigm	0	0	0	0	6	4	5	5.93
- New Socio-Political Paradigm	0	0	0	0	4	6	5	6.07
- Open Space	0	0	0	2	1	4	8	6.20
- Leadership Panel With Dinner	1	0	0	0	3	5	6	5.93
Day 3 Modules	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean
- Leadership Practices of Kouzes and Posner	0	0	0	1	2	6	6	6.13
- Influencing Styles and Scenarios	0	0	0	1	2	6	5	6.07
- Thinking About Organizations	0	0	0	4	5	2	4	5.40
- Case Studies	1	0	0	2	5	3	4	5.33
- Preparing for Retreat #2	0	0	0	1	5	5	4	5.80
- Open Space	0	0	0	2	0	4	9	6.33
Data Source: Pre-Training Survey completed by the Fellows * (n=14)								

Aside from “open space” the modules that the Fellows found most valuable were conflict management (6.27), leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner (6.13), and influencing styles and scenarios (6.07) which were all more practical to the Fellows’ leadership experiences. The Fellows also rated several of the modules specific to disability highly, such as the module on disability history and identity (6.07) and the new socio-political paradigm (6.07).

Conversely, the modules that were the least valuable to the Fellows were case studies (5.33), thinking about organizations (5.40), social dinner in small groups on day 1 (5.47), and preparation work pre-retreat (5.53).

For each Part I Module rating, Fellows had an opportunity to provide open-ended explanations for their ratings of the overall value of each module. Comments and suggestions were not very comprehensive or illustrative of the ratings, but do provide some insight into the modules that were not ranked highly. For instance, one person rated the case studies module as low as possible (1) but indicated that they did not remember doing this module. If that rating were disregarded, the case studies module would still be rated lowly, at 5.62.

One of the Fellows noted that they rated the module on thinking about organizations low because the explanation was rushed and they felt that the entire module “should have been scrapped.”

The social dinner on the first night was not rated highly because of the food and the service that the group received, not the idea of having a social dinner itself. One of the Fellows indicated that it was one of their “favorite parts,” while another appreciated getting together in a small group and interacting. One of the Fellows expressed desire for a more structured icebreaker to initiate the interactions.

A few of the Fellows provided comments on the pre-retreat preparation work. One of them wanted to have the materials more in advance so that there was more time to view them before the retreat. Another “wished we talked more about our readings.”

Another comment of note was that one Fellow found the Sexual Harassment case study scenario inappropriate, although the “influencing styles” module did not have any negative ratings.

Part II

Part II of the retreat was two days long, again with the days organized around a central theme: Day 4 - "How do I tell someone about who I am clearly and effectively to obtain a leadership position?" and Day 5 – "Where do I and my cohort go next?" The retreat was held at the Microsoft Center in Chicago on Day 4 and in a meeting room at the Hyatt Regency Chicago on Day 5. Lodging accommodations were also at the Hyatt Regency Chicago on the evening of Day 4.

All of the content modules from Days 4 and 5 were rated over 5.0 ("somewhat valuable"). See Table 3 for ratings of each module. On Day 4, the Fellows found the networking roundtable (6.53) the most valuable module of the retreat. Ten of the 15 Fellows indicated that they found that module "very valuable." One Fellow explained that the roundtable had a "great choice of people to network with." Another module that was highly rated was the Leadership Summary and Plan Work (6.40) on the last day of the retreat. All of the Fellows found each of those two modules at least somewhat helpful.

The other modules had at least one Fellow who rated the module "neutral" or not valuable to some extent. The lowest rated modules were Leadership Opportunities Brainstorming (5.27) on Day 4 and Continued Development Needs on day five (5.13). One of the Fellows explained that they wished that the brainstorming session was more practical about how to get started with those ideas, and another Fellow wanted to have a list of opportunities and organizations to get started with leadership. Two of the Fellows felt that the Continued Development Needs module was treated as a footnote rather than a valuable exercise, while a third Fellow asked, "where is it going to go from here? Our retreats are over."

Content Module	Rating: 1 (Not Valuable) to 7 (Very Valuable)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean
Day 4 Modules								
- Appreciative Inquiry (Value Added)	0	0	1	2	3	8	1	5.40
- Personal Speeches with Feedback	0	0	0	1	4	2	8	6.13
- Networking Roundtable	0	0	0	0	2	3	10	6.53
- Leadership Opportunities Brainstorming	1	0	0	5	2	2	5	5.27
- Dinner Party With Creative Presentations	0	0	2	2	3	3	5	5.47
Day 5 Modules	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean
- Appreciative Inquiry (Dreams of Achievement)	0	0	0	1	5	7	1	5.53
- Leadership Summary and Plan Work	0	0	0	0	2	5	8	6.40
- Speed Mentoring with Former Fellows	1	0	0	1	2	5	6	5.87
- Continued Development Needs	1	1	0	2	3	5	3	5.13
- Close of the Second Leadership Institute	0	0	0	1	2	5	7	6.20
Data Source: Online Training Evaluation completed by the Fellows								

Interim Work Assignments

In the weeks between each part of the retreat, the Fellows were asked to complete a number of tasks to build on the training content learned in Part I and prepare for Part II. The Fellows were asked in the evaluation following Part I to indicate to what degree they understood the interim work assignments (Table 4) and then to rate how useful those assignments were (Table 5, data collected at the end of Part II of the retreat).

Table 4: Fellows Understanding of Interim Work Assignments (n=15)

Assignment	Rating; Very Unclear (1) to Very Clear (5)					Mean (n=15)
	1	2	3	4	5	
Contact Mentors	0	0	0	9	6	4.40
Journal At Least Once A Week	0	0	4	8	3	3.93
Gather Data About Leadership to Bring In As Resources for Sharing	1	1	4	7	2	3.53
Conduct Two Information Interviews With Leaders You Admire	0	0	1	7	7	4.40
Make Contact With Your Small Work Group By Email At Least Twice	0	0	3	8	4	4.07
Begin Work on Leadership Summary and Plan	0	0	7	4	4	3.80
Prepare 3-Minute Introduction of Yourself in a Particular Leadership-Seeking Situation	0	0	2	6	7	4.33
Think About the Type of Leadership Position You Want	0	0	5	5	5	4.00

Data Source: Training Survey completed by the Fellows

The Fellows indicated that they were more than clear (average above 4.0) for five of the eight assignments while the assignments to journal at least once a week, gather resources on leadership to share, and begin to work on a leadership summary plan were less clear. The assignment to gather resources on leadership to share was especially unclear with an average rating of 3.53, with one Fellow saying they were “very unclear” and another “unclear” about what was expected.

Two of the assignments that were the most unclear, journaling and gathering resources on leadership to share, were also among the assignments that Fellows found least useful. Journaling was not rated as “very useful” by any of the Fellows, while each of the other assignments had multiple Fellows who found it very useful. The Fellows were generally positive about the assignment to contact mentors, with 12 of 14 Fellows rating that assignment as either useful or very useful. The other two Fellows said they found this activity “not useful.”

The other assignment that was unclear to the Fellows was to begin work on the leadership summary and plan. However, this was also rated as one of the more useful assignments. Other assignments that the Fellows found the most useful related to their own relationship with leadership, including preparing a three minute

introduction of themselves, thinking about that type of position they want, and gathering information on leadership by conducting interviews with other leaders.

Assignment	Rating; Not Very Useful (1) to Very Useful (5)					Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	
Contact Mentors	0	2	0	5	7	4.21
Journal At Least Once A Week	0	2	7	5	0	3.21
Gather Data About Leadership to Bring In As Resources for Sharing	0	1	5	7	2	3.67
Conduct Two Information Interviews With Leaders You Admire	0	1	0	7	6	4.29
Make Contact With Your Small Work Group By Email At Least Twice	0	0	5	5	4	3.93
Begin Work on Leadership Summary and Plan	0	0	1	8	4	4.23
Prepare 3-Minute Introduction of Yourself in a Particular Leadership-Seeking Situation	0	0	0	8	6	4.43
Think About the Type of Leadership Position You Want	0	0	1	6	7	4.43

Data Source: Training Survey completed by the Fellows

Following the second part of the retreat, several Fellows expressed a desire to use the interim work assignments more explicitly in the second part of the retreat. One of them suggested that time be set aside to share interesting findings from interim work with other Fellows.

Missing Content

Following the training, the Fellows had several suggestions for content that they felt was missing from the retreat. One of the most frequently mentioned areas that Fellows wanted more of was disability-related and disability-specific content, such as information on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), requesting accommodations, disability disclosure in the boardroom, and more on disability identity (especially invisible disabilities). They also felt it would be helpful to have more opportunity to hear stories from other leaders with disabilities and prior classes of ADA Fellows.

The Fellows also wanted more practical skill-building exercises. Ideas included more role-playing, challenging concepts and theories, and problem-solving or case studies with constructive criticism. A few Fellows also suggested additional leadership challenges. Suggestions included content on selling yourself/supporting

your case, learning personal strengths and weaknesses, and tools and resources for coping with adversity and overcoming challenges.

- Other recommended additions to the retreat represent activities that are planned by ADA 25 Advancing Leadership, but had not yet been experienced by the Fellows. Follow-up evaluation later in the year would be helpful to determine whether Fellows still thought that this content was missing from the program overall: While Fellows were happy with panels and the facilitation team, a couple of them also expressed desire to have more people of color as examples of leadership and with whom to network. They also suggested involving additional senior leaders in the civic community, such as CEOs or board chairs, especially those who are outside of the disability community. A final theme with respect to suggestions that the Fellows had for content that should be included was more practical opportunities for networking and developing leadership connections. Some of the Fellows wanted more of an opportunity to network with groups looking for leaders with a disability or wanted practical instruction on how to find a board and what to do once a board position was secured.

Logistics

Part 1

Table 6 shows how the Fellows rated aspects of the logistics of the first part of the training, including their assessment of the facilitation team. The Fellows were also given the opportunity to explain their ratings for each of these aspects.

Aspect	Rating: 1 (Very dissatisfied) to 7 (Very Satisfied)							Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Overall Effectiveness of the facilitation team	0	0	0	0	1	6	8	6.47
Your lodging experience at the Marriot	0	1	1	1	1	3	8	5.87
Your food and meals at the retreat	1	1	1	1	5	4	2	4.87
The transportation at the retreat	0	1	1	2	1	2	7	5.64

Data Source: Online Training Evaluation completed by the Fellows

The facilitation team was rated extremely highly (6.47), with each of the Fellows indicating that they were satisfied to varying degrees with the facilitation team. More than half (eight of the 15) said they were "very satisfied," the highest possible

rating. The Fellows noted that the facilitators were very knowledgeable and presented in a relatable way. One person suggested that while the facilitators were encouraging, they could have been more critical.

ADA 25 Advancing Leadership staff were also complimentary of the facilitation team. Together they made a great pair, with one of the facilitators great at “commanding the room” while the other was good with one-on-one counseling exercises. Together they worked well in front of a group, delivered information well, and created an environment where Fellows were excited about learning together.

There was more variation in ratings of the other aspects of the logistics of the first part of the retreat, so the average rating was lower. 11 of the 15 Fellows were either satisfied or very satisfied with the lodging experience at the Marriott, although one person each was dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, and somewhat satisfied. Two of the more negative ratings were from people with mobility disabilities who explained that the beds were uncomfortable and very high, and one was surprised that the doorman did not offer assistance with luggage.

The food in the meals at the retreat rated on average just less than “somewhat satisfied” (4.87). A couple of the Fellows noted that they wanted more variety in the choices available, especially at lunch and breakfast. However, the Fellows did not complain about the amount of food available to them, and one said, “I was full all the time!”

The transportation that was provided during the first part of the retreat was satisfactory to 10 of the 14 Fellows that responded to this question. Two Fellows were neutral, while one was dissatisfied and one was somewhat satisfied with the transportation provided. The Fellow who was dissatisfied said that “the shuttle was too slow” and thought it would be useful to have more shuttles available. Two of the Fellows also noted a specific incident where they felt that the driver took an unnecessary risk. ADA 25 Advancing Leadership staff agreed that transportation was the biggest challenge, both in the way of identifying accessible transportation and with the wait time for that transportation to arrive. They described transportation as “the biggest logistical headache” of the retreat.

Part 2

Table 7 displays how the Fellows rated the logistics of the second part of the retreat. Once again, the facilitation team was rated extremely highly (6.60) with all of the 15 Fellows indicating that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the facilitation team. One Fellow commented, “Outstanding facilitators; I was surprised to hear they hadn't done this session before as they were well prepared and organized!”

The Fellows preferred the meeting space at the Microsoft Center (6.33) more than the space at the Hyatt Regency (5.40). They described the space at the Hyatt Regency as small, cramped, and hard to navigate. One person who was hard-of-hearing noted that the room had very poor acoustics.

Aspect	Rating: 1 (Very dissatisfied) to 7 (Very Satisfied)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean
Overall Effectiveness of the facilitation team	0	0	0	0	0	6	9	6.60
Your Meeting Space at the Microsoft Center	0	0	0	0	1	8	6	6.33
Your Meeting Space at the Hyatt Regency	0	1	2	0	3	5	4	5.40
Your Lodging at Hyatt Regency Chicago	0	0	1	0	1	6	7	6.20
Food and meals at the retreat	0	0	1	1	5	4	4	5.60

Data Source: Online Training Evaluation completed by the Fellows

The Hyatt Regency Chicago rated higher than the hotel used in the first part of the retreat. 13 of the 15 Fellows were either satisfied or very satisfied with lodging at the Hyatt Regency, and the Fellows did not make any negative comments about their experience in the hotel or the accessibility of the rooms. In fact, one Fellow noted that the rooms were “extremely ADA compliant.”

Food and meals at the second part of the retreat rated better than food and meals at the first part (5.60 versus 4.87). Eight of the 15 Fellows were either satisfied or very satisfied with the food at the second part of the retreat. One of the Follows commented that there was “always so much food!” Another Fellow suggested that there should have been non-meat options for people who were practicing Lent. ADA 25 Advancing Leadership did ask Fellows prior to the retreat about their meal preferences, and this Fellow may not have realized that the retreat was during Lent.

Locations

The Fellows provided feedback on the locations used for the retreat, with most of the responses focusing on the second part of the retreat. Overall, the Fellows liked being centrally located in the Downtown Chicago area, near public transportation. Several of the Fellows noted that the Microsoft/Aon Center's elevators required some explaining, but really appreciated the space after locating it. Several of the Fellows mentioned that the pedway between the Microsoft Center and the Hyatt was difficult to navigate, especially for people using manual wheelchairs, because of the carpeted surfaces, slopes, and longer distance than expected. While some of the Fellows indicated that the first part of the retreat, in a suburban setting, was also held at places that they liked, they preferred the Downtown Chicago setting.

Timing

Immediately after completing Part 2 of the retreat, the Fellows provided feedback on whether it worked to attend the retreat training early in the year or whether they preferred another time in the year. Of the 14 Fellows who responded, the majority (11 of 14) said that early in the year was better for them. They explained that it is generally a slow time with their employment, appreciated that it was after the holidays, and thought that early in the year was an ideal time to set goals for the coming year. However, three Fellows expressed concern with transportation in Chicago's winter months, where inclement weather can make transportation more difficult. The Fellows who indicated that they prefer another time of the year all suggested later in the spring or summer when the weather was less likely to complicate travel. One Fellow suggested starting earlier in the week on Sunday or Monday to avoid work-related travel fatigue at week's end.

Overall Assessments of the Retreat

Expectations and Next Steps

Table 8 displays how well the Fellows thought that the retreat met their expectations and whether they understood the next steps needed for their personal leadership plan. For each part of the retreat, all of the Fellows agreed to some extent that the retreat met their expectations. Part II of the retreat met expectations slightly more than Part I (6.27 versus 6.08).

Table 8: Fellows’ Ratings of Retreat Expectations (n=15)

Content Area	Rating: 1 (Strongly Disagree) – 7 (Strongly Agree)							Mean (n=13)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Session I met or exceeded my expectations	0	0	0	0	3	6	4	6.08
Session II met or exceeded my expectations	0	0	0	0	2	7	6	6.27
I know what are the next steps I need to take to achieve my leadership plan.	0	0	0	0	4	7	4	6.00
Data Source: Online Training Evaluation completed by the Fellows								

Furthermore, all of the Fellows indicated that they agreed that they knew the next steps in their leadership plan. Four Fellows somewhat agreed, seven agreed, and four strongly agreed with this statement. This suggests that the retreat helped the Fellows develop a leadership goal and identify steps to take to meet that goal.

The Fellows were asked again in the May interviews whether they felt that the training retreat met their expectations, and all agreed that it did. However, three of the nine also noted that they did not have any expectations going into the retreat, or were not sure what to expect. Many Fellows expressed appreciation that ADA 25 Advancing Leadership staff were very communicative prior to participation in the retreat, but they wanted to have been told what to expect in the retreat more explicitly. One Fellow suggested a three to five minute video to give potential Fellows “a sense” or a “window” to what they should expect.

A few of the stakeholders were surprised that the Fellows did not have more expectations about what they wanted to learn and what they hoped and wanted to do in the future. Additionally, stakeholders expressed some frustration that not all Fellows understood that they were expected to seek out a leadership role for themselves. This miscommunication could be better expressed for future Fellows by having a document that clearly states the expectations that Fellows should have for themselves and for their experience during the retreat.

Most Valuable Aspects of the Retreat

The Fellows were asked about the most valuable aspects of the retreat to themselves personally. Similar to the 2015 cohort, nearly every Fellow discussed the importance of meeting other people with disabilities in their cohort and being able to work with them, both professionally and to develop friendships. They

enjoyed hearing about one another's experiences and getting feedback from their peers.

As noted in the training content section of this report, a few Fellows also found specific modules of the retreat to be among the most valuable parts of the retreat. These typically varied by individual, although modules about the models and styles of leadership were valuable among several Fellows. Those also found activities geared towards effective networking and making contacts with other leaders among the most valuable parts of the retreat.

"Every participant was so unique and made a valuable contribution to the retreat. I will certainly be keeping in touch with them for years to come. The whole experience was tremendously empowering and one that I will treasure forever."

- Fellow, Post-Retreat Survey

The "open space" was also seen as a valuable part of the retreat. The Fellows appreciated being able to use the space to ask questions and have additional conversations. This is noteworthy because "open space" was missing from the inaugural leadership retreat and was added for this retreat based on prior feedback.

Least Valuable Aspects of the Retreat

The Fellows were also asked about what they thought the least valuable aspects of each part of the training were. For the first part, individual Fellows explained that they found certain content modules to be the least valuable. However, there was not a clear consensus on which module was the least valuable, they primarily depended on the Fellow's personal interests and thinking about leadership theory. (Please refer to "Training Content" on page 11 for a comparison of how the content modules were rated).

A few Fellows felt that some of the leadership material was presented too quickly. They mentioned wanting more context for each module and additional time to reinforce the concepts that were being taught and how they relate to one another. One Fellow also mentioned wanting additional "time alone to research and reflect on the case studies" and leadership content in general.

Additionally, a few Fellows noted two logistical issues that could be improved. One concerned the availability of technology and audio video in the retreat. They felt that too much time was spent with this equipment and that it hampered people who use wheelchairs from participating more because microphones were out of reach and too heavy.

Other Fellows did not think there was enough practical information in the retreat. In particular, they wanted additional structure and input on how to create a civic leadership vision and plan. Another noted that it would have been helpful to provide information on organizations that were looking for leaders with disabilities

Several Fellows thought that the interaction with Fellows from the first cohort for the luncheon and speed mentoring was the least valuable part of the second part of the retreat. Although people said that they generally enjoyed it, there was not enough time for substantive conversations or networking. They wanted more time with previous Fellows and to be matched more closely with current interest.

Still, most Fellows had a difficult time identifying what they thought was least valuable. One Fellow commented, "I really did enjoy all aspects of the retreat," which is fairly representative of how most Fellows felt.

Overall Value of the Experience

Immediately following each part of the training retreat, the Fellows were asked about the overall value of their experience at the retreat, considering both the most and least valuable aspects. All but one was effusive in describing the positive impact that the retreat had on their leadership. Many Fellows talked about the incredible value of being able to network with other people with disabilities and learning practical skills that they can put into practice for furthering their leadership goals. The Fellows felt that the retreat was informative in terms of content on theories of leadership, but also applying those theories to themselves to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and how to work better with others.

"The retreat holds great value for becoming an effective leader. It's giv[en] me tangible tools and strategies to implement in my pursuits."

- Fellow, Post-Retreat Survey

Only one Fellow had a slightly negative view of the overall value of the experience. That Fellow wanted more practical information and sharing of experiences rather than so much theoretical content. That Fellow wanted the facilitators and other Fellows to be more critical of one another with less “handholding.”

Message for Potential Funders

Following the second part of the retreat, the Fellows were also asked how they would describe ADA 25 Advancing Leadership to potential funders. These responses mirrored responses about the overall value of the experience. Every single Fellow who responded to this question indicated that they would tell potential funders about how unique and important the program was to them. Words such as “transformative,” “revolutionary,” “excellent,” and “empowering” were routinely found in the information provided by the Fellows. Many Fellows “appreciated the self-directed nature of the program [which] nurture[d] interests and connect[ed] that self-exploration and knowledge with potential opportunities in which a person’s strengths might be used” (Fellow, immediate evaluation of Part 2 of the retreat).

The experience was “unique in a way critical to developing as a leader with a disability ... Planning is incredibly thoughtful and thorough while seeking feedback to improve it ... Supporting this program supports a new generation of leaders who are passionate, capable, and connected to creating real change.”

- Fellow, Post-Retreat Survey

Both the Fellows and various staff who participated in an individual interview echoed many of these statements. Both groups talked about the sense of empowerment and opportunities to build knowledge that Fellows get from the program. They also stressed the unique nature of the program as there are not other leadership programs that focus on civic leadership for people with disabilities.

“A unique and innovative ... a space of empowerment and has provided civic advancement and community for the people who have participated. Not only does it meet its goals in advancing leadership but more importantly, it builds and creates community among participants.”

- ADA 25 Advancing Leadership Staff, Interview

Suggestions for Future Retreats

When asked about their suggestions for future retreats during the follow-up interviews, the Fellows reiterated much of the information they shared about their least favorite parts of the retreat, specifically content that they did not find as valuable as others, which typically varied by individual interests. However, one thing that did emerge related to the amount of information and the time provided in the retreat. Several people thought that the amount of content would be better spread out over three weekends instead of two, so that each session could be shorter. In general, they reiterated the need for flexibility in the schedule so that breaks were not scheduled as concretely.

Another suggestion that was raised by a few Fellows regarded the interim work. They wished that the interim work they completed was specifically discussed in the second part of the retreat. Others suggested that the amount of work during the interim period could be cut, while another valued the work expected of them and wanted more feedback on that work from the facilitation team.

A couple of Fellows also suggested a more centralized way to communicate about pre-work and interim work. One suggestion was to use a central online data storing drive that all the Fellows could access to download material or to have a private website to coordinate this.

The other suggestions were specific to individuals and no other themes emerged. A few suggestions that Fellows had included:

- More material on disability arts and culture.
- More material on storytelling.
- Opportunities to get to know other Fellows before working as a group during the retreat.
- More examples of leaders with disabilities and their perspectives.

- Improvement of the technology available. For example, one Fellow discussed having microphones that did not need to be held as not all Fellows could do that.

Impact of ADA 25 Advancing Leadership on Fellows' Leadership

Pre-and Post-Surveys

Table 9 shows results from surveys completed by the Fellows before participation in the retreat and several weeks following participation. In order for change to be significant, the p-value must be less than .05, otherwise any differences are within the standard error.

Only one question showed a significant change; Fellows were more likely to agree that they have opportunities for growth following the retreat (3.36 versus 3.93 on a scale from 1 to 5, $p=.046$). This finding suggests that the retreat had a significant impact on the Fellows' feelings that there were opportunities for them to grow in leadership, which is a primary reason for having ADA 25 Advancing Leadership. Another noteworthy change was in whether the Fellows felt that they could network with people with disabilities, which increased from 4.27 to 4.64 on a scale from 1 to 5 ($p=.102$, which can be considered marginally significant). With such a small cohort of Fellows and the relatively short time between pre- and post-surveys, it is not surprising that there were not more significant differences.

Scale – Variables	Pre Score	Post Score	p-value
Comfort with Leadership Activities: Very Uncomfortable (1) to Very Comfortable (7)	6.22	6.00	.366
- Working with People from Different Backgrounds	6.53	6.36	.496
- Giving a Presentation	6.00	5.64	.439
- Telling a Personal Story	6.13	6.00	.666
True/False (Leadership): Absolutely False (1) to Absolutely True (7)	5.37	5.66	.272
- Identify Strengths and Weaknesses	5.47	5.64	.763
- Confident in the Ability to Get Things Done	5.93	5.93	1.000
- Make the Best Out Of Situations	4.53	5.14	.201
- Can Help a Group Reach a Target	5.53	5.71	.386
- Affirm Personal Beliefs in a Group	5.40	5.86	.262
Agree/Disagree Personal Future: Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)	3.97	4.07	.655
- Able to Network with People with Disabilities	4.27	4.64	.102
- Able to Network with People without Disabilities	4.20	3.93	.180
- Have a Strong Support System	3.93	3.79	.414
- Can Foster Diversity in the Leadership Community	4.07	4.07	1.00
- Have Opportunities for Growth	3.36	3.93	.046
Disability Identity: Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)	3.96	3.99	1.00
- Have Many Strengths Because of My Disability	4.60	4.71	.180
- People with Disabilities Have Made Major Accomplishments	4.67	4.57	.317
- Happy to Be a Person with a Disability	4.00	4.07	.655
- Disability Is an Important Part of Who I Am	4.27	4.50	.655
- Other People Generally Respect People with Disabilities	2.47	2.14	.234
- I Belong to the Disability Community	3.73	4.00	.480
- I Want to More Closely Belong the Disability Community	3.93	3.93	1.000

Data Source: Pre-Training and One-Year Follow-Up Surveys completed by the Fellows

Fellows' Leadership Plans

As part of the leadership training retreat, each Fellow created a personal leadership plan. During the interviews, all but one Fellow could identify steps that they had taken to follow their leadership plan, which often included incorporating

values from the retreat into their daily leadership work. The Fellows also noted how they appreciated feedback from their cohort to help develop their personal leadership plans and indicated that they planned to continue to seek input from other Fellows. Specifically with regard to their plans, Fellows noted making connections that helped with their plans (see section below) and increasing their self-awareness with regard to their strengths, weaknesses, and confidence.

All but one of the Fellows (who was not sure yet) indicated that they wanted and needed continued support. The continued support included continued contact and information/resource sharing with mentors, their Fellow cohort, and ADA 25 Advancing Leadership staff and programs. They wanted additional networking opportunities and ways to stay connected as a group. While it was too early to assess whether they would receive this continued support from the other Fellows in the cohort, the Fellows indicated that they plan to stay connected with one another and the ADA 25 Advancing Leadership program as a whole.

The facilitators noted that they saw improvement in the leadership skills, energy and enthusiasm, and plans for going forward amongst the Fellows as a result of the retreat.

Mentoring

Each Fellow was assigned a mentor to connect with following the leadership training retreat. It had only been almost two months following the training retreat until the personal interviews, so many Fellows indicated that it remains to be seen how valuable the mentorship program would be. A few Fellows who were prepared to assess the mentorship program described it as “very valuable” or “very helpful.”

Although the mentorship program was only just beginning, a few Fellows had suggestions for how to improve it for the future. These primarily focused on ways to network and get to know mentors. Specifically, several Fellows thought it would be helpful to have mentors be involved in the retreat in some regard, even if it is a small part of the retreat. One person noted that while the mentor worksheet was helpful, it would also be nice to have some transparency about how Fellows are matched with mentors and for the Fellows to have a better understanding of who the possible mentors are.

Civic Connections

Of the eight Fellows who participated in a follow-up interview, the majority (six) reported a connection with someone in the community as a result of participation in ADA 25 Advancing Leadership. These connections include a theater group, two nonprofit groups that support people with disabilities, community leaders, and a work-related project on disability resources. The connections were made through the mentors they were assigned, their Fellow cohort, ADA 25 Advancing Leadership staff, or through the interim work activities required as part of the retreat.

Following the retreat, two Fellows noted that they had been approached/contacted by community groups because of their participation. Three Fellows have identified a board or commission that they are interested in joining and three Fellows have approached an organization about a volunteer position. A couple of other Fellows have been connected with representatives from area boards and commissions, but have not applied yet to be on that board.

The Fellows also discussed barriers to being more involved in making more connections. The largest barrier was time. Others mentioned that they were concerned with identifying the right board or leadership position to pursue rather than just accepting any leadership position that they could find. A couple of Fellows described trying to obtain the experience that they need to find a board, especially a larger, established board, where they may lack the experience necessary. One Fellow suggested that it would be helpful to have a list that could be shared amongst the Fellows to help identify opportunities. Only two of the Fellows mentioned disability as a barrier to making connections and being more involved.

Continued Connection with ADA 25 Advancing Leadership

Following participation in the leadership training retreat, the Fellows are expected to remain engaged with ADA 25 Advancing Leadership programming in the year following. ADA 25 Advancing Leadership shares information on the events and opportunities in a variety of formats, including email, a monthly email newsletter, their website, and on their LinkedIn and Facebook pages. The Fellows were asked as part of the follow-up interview in May whether they intended to attend or participate in any of those events, and they were asked about communication with ADA 25 Advancing Leadership.

The vast majority of Fellows described those communications as very effective or effective. Most indicated they preferred email as a method of communication, and several noted that they especially liked the monthly newsletter. Overall, more of the Fellows preferred the Facebook page to LinkedIn, explaining that they do not visit LinkedIn as frequently. There were a few suggestions for how to improve those communications. One Fellow emphasized the importance of ensuring that email lists are accurate and include everyone; that Fellow had discussed an event with another Fellow who had not received an email about the event. Other Fellows suggested that the ADA 25 Advancing Leadership website have a calendar with upcoming events so that it is a central repository for information; Fellows did not mention that website as a way that they stay in communication with the program. Other fellows also wanted a more central repository for information, such as a “drop box” style place to share files and information with one another, including more details on what will happen at events and biographies of the speakers and hosts. A few others wanted to receive less frequent emails and suggested that the monthly newsletter be expanded with more detailed descriptions of events. They felt that they were more likely to read one email per month rather than receiving multiple, more fragmented communications throughout that month.

All of the Fellows who participated in an interview indicated that they will absolutely or definitely be attending member events. All of the responding Fellows plan to attend these, but varied in their explanations for why or why not. At least half of the Fellows would attend for the educational benefit (either using what’s been learned or continuing to learn), and a couple Fellows would attend for the networking opportunity.

The Fellows were also expected to make contact with their small groups following participation in the retreat. At the time of the interview, half of the Fellows reported contact with their small group by email, and have not had contact with the small group but had been in contact with the larger group through Facebook, email, or other sponsored events.

Lack of time was the primary reason for not attending more member events or the lack of communication with small groups. Lack of time includes both conflicts with employment obligations during the day or not feeling that they had enough

time to be able to engage more often. One Fellow said, “time is at a premium, if I had more time, I would be more proactive.”

Strengths of ADA 25 Advancing Leadership

During the follow-up interviews with staff, they were asked about what they felt were the strengths of ADA 25 Advancing Leadership in general. One of the major themes in this area was about the uniqueness of the program. In particular, the facilitators emphasized that the material delivered throughout the retreat was something that Fellows would not be able to get in other places. They, along with other staff/stakeholders, emphasized the importance not only of that material, but also the importance of designing the program around disability, with the input of people with disabilities, specifically for people with disabilities.

The other strength that was mentioned often was the importance of having backing from the Chicago Community Trust. They “have huge numbers in this town” because they are able to help advertise and reach other leaders with influence in the Chicago-area.

Challenges for ADA 25 Advancing Leadership

The staff were united that continued funding was the biggest challenge to the program. Having more funding would increase the amount of programs/events that ADA 25 Advancing Leadership would be able to offer. Stakeholders talked about the desire to provide additional support, education, and networking opportunities to Fellows, to make the program more full-time. They also discussed the importance of increasing the number of Fellows with disabilities who can participate in leadership retreats.

They also discussed the importance of the other programs that are part of ADA 25 Advancing Leadership, especially the Member Network and the Civic Connections Program. ADA 25 Advancing Leadership staff continues to build these efforts to allow Fellows (and other members) to take advantage of opportunities presented to them. The hope was to continue to build a pipeline of emerging leaders with disabilities to connect with civic leadership positions, although the staff was also quick to emphasize that they can make “nothing more than a connection” and that it was up to Fellows/members to make an effort to make something from those connections. Increased advertising and awareness of ADA 25 Advancing Leadership

as a whole was seen as especially important because often people only think of that program as the leadership retreat, not as an entire year of programming for Fellows as well as people in the member's network.

"Augmenting the mentor program is really important. Getting them access to networking, strategic networking, also for them to stay together as a group and learn and support each other as peers. They all came into this program under one objective and the more they can work and stay together, that will be very powerful for many of them."

- ADA 25 Advancing Leadership Stakeholder, Interview

Several staff noted the importance of longer-term evaluation and tracking of the impact of ADA 25 Advancing Leadership on the Fellows. The facilitators wanted to see additional measurement of the energy, confidence, assertiveness, knowledge, and actions of Fellows as it relates to their leadership plans. This could be a one-year follow-up survey of the Fellows, asking the same questions as were asked in the pre- and post-surveys in this evaluation, similar to what has been done for the first cohort. Another important measure to track is the number of leadership positions obtained, which is something that ADA 25 Advancing Leadership staff track internally when they are made aware of these successes. One ADA 25 Advancing Leadership staff member noted that many of the Fellows "are truly emerging. It will not be overnight" that we see positive outcomes with regard to leadership positions for each of them.

Recommendations

This section presents the recommendations that were developed as part of this report. Following each recommendation is a short justification summarizing findings from the evaluation to explain why that recommendation was developed. The recommendations are classified into four broad categories: changes to maintain, retreat content, logistics to consider, and ADA 25 Advancing Leadership programming. There is not a specific recommendation for obtaining funding, although the recommendations that are noted below are tied with funding. For instance, recommendations about timing or locations of the retreat are largely dependent on in-kind donations of space.

Changes to Maintain

Several of the changes implemented between the ADA 25 Advancing Leadership training retreats first and second cohorts were large improvements over the previous year. These changes should be maintained to the extent possible with funding.

1. Future retreats should keep the multi-part format. Feedback from Fellows, the facilitation team, and other stakeholders, including ADA 25 Advancing Leadership staff was overwhelmingly positive about holding the retreat across multiple weekends with several weeks in between. One Fellow was surprised to learn that the inaugural retreat had been conducted over one longer weekend, and appreciated having two shorter weekends with time in between to think in more detail about plans for future leadership.
2. Continue with the current facilitation team. Fellows rated the facilitation team very highly and had only good things to say about the facilitators in the interviews. Likewise, other stakeholders were very happy with the facilitators and how they ran the retreat. The facilitation team also seems to value feedback and is looking for ways to improve experiences in the next year.
3. Hold retreats early in the year. Most stakeholders agreed that early in the year is a good time to hold the retreat. One of the Fellows made the point that having the retreat early in the year is a good strategy because it is when a lot of people make plans and goals for the year, and the retreat can help with that.

Retreat Content

It is difficult to make recommendations about specific content modules that were presented at the retreat because some were extremely important to a few Fellows, while other modules were equally as important to other Fellows. Without getting into those details, three broad recommendations for content at the retreat are:

4. Having more flexibility and time for discussion as part of the retreat is essential. Many of the inaugural Fellows recommended open time to talk with one another, and the new facilitation team made a point to incorporate "Open Space" into the retreat design. Open Space was consistently one of

the highest rated modules of each day of the retreat. Fellows appreciated being able to talk with one another and get feedback on ideas in a way that was not completely structured. It is important to have this time at the end of the day to aid in processing material that was discussed during the day.

5. Develop a feedback loop for Fellows from the facilitation team, especially regarding the interim work and their personal leadership plan. Many of the Fellows expressed some frustration that assignments/work completed between the first and second sessions was not specifically discussed during the retreat. Receiving feedback from one another and from the facilitation team on that work and their personal leadership plan was an important step. The Fellows indicated that they appreciated receiving feedback from other Fellows, but that there was and not much opportunity to receive feedback from the facilitation team. Developing a feedback loop seems important, and that feedback loop could be time at the retreat to discuss those activities in a small group with one of the facilitators, or the facilitators could read them following the retreat and provide feedback to the Fellows on a personal basis, either through a phone call or by email.
6. Make the content as practical as possible. The significant changes in the baseline and follow-up surveys related to practical aspects of leadership, such as networking and working with other people with disabilities. The retreat should build on its strengths and include more opportunities for practical skills. Several Fellows specifically noted a desire for additional work on networking, especially with other leaders in Chicago and with people without disabilities.
7. Develop a central repository for retreat and supplemental materials. Several of the Fellows noted that it would be nice to have an electronic central repository for materials, including material that could be supplemental to the retreat (e.g. additional material on topics such as disability history or disability studies). Fellows were interested in additional profiles of leaders/role models with disabilities, such as local (Chicago-based) leaders and Fellows from previous cohorts. The Fellows suggested using an online drive, such as Dropbox or Google drive.

Logistics to Consider

The Fellows and other stakeholders had opinions about logistics for future retreats. While the logistics that were important to an individual Fellow varied from person to person, a few things did emerge.

8. Have retreats in a centrally-located space in downtown Chicago. Depending on the availability of donated space, Fellows prefer having the retreat in downtown Chicago rather than in the suburbs (Naperville). Specific preference was expressed for the meeting space at the Microsoft Center. A downtown location had symbolic importance to many stakeholders as it represents the “heart” of the city; developing leaders with disabilities in that setting reflected the credibility and status of participation in ADA 25 Advancing Leadership.
9. Ensure program accessibility. While there were not many complaints about accessibility during the retreat, to the extent possible, ADA 25 Advancing Leadership staff should strive to ensure that the entire retreat is as accessible as possible. Examples mentioned by the 2017 cohort included: microphones too heavy for some to hold, lack of space to move around for wheelchair users, and poor acoustics (the last two examples were in regard to the meeting space at the Hyatt Regency Chicago). Specific examples mentioned where accessibility was ensured was use of Google Docs, in addition to the large flip charts, that everyone could access online. Recommendation is to make those files available in a central repository (see recommendation 7).

ADA 25 Advancing Leadership Programming

Feedback below links the experience at the retreat to additional ADA 25 Advancing Leadership programming aimed to support the work of the retreat.

10. Have an event with time specifically designated for new Fellows and alumni Fellows to meet and mingle before the retreat. Many Fellows indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to meet with prior Fellows during the retreat. However, they were too scripted to be able to talk about individual experiences, or there was not enough time. It is recommended ADA 25 Advancing Leadership arrange an event for Fellows to meet as a cohort as

well as to meet members of past cohorts. This session should be only loosely organized, with brief introductions and then time/space for the Fellows to interact with one another without other stakeholders present.

11. Develop and communicate expectations regarding participation in the retreat and additional ADA 25 Advancing Leadership programming. Some of the Fellows noted that they did not have any expectations going into the retreat because they were not sure what to expect. One of the staff that was interviewed also commented that they were surprised that the Fellows did not have more expectations about their own leadership. This recommendation is closely related to the use recommendation, and facilitating meetings between new and alumni Fellows could help to show the different paths that Fellows take after participating in the ADA 25 Advancing Leadership program. One Fellow suggested that a short 3 to 5 minute video that shows the experiences of past Fellows would also be a good option. This could be used both when Fellows apply to the program and leading up to the retreat to show what is expected of fellows in regard to participation, and also what Fellows can expect from the program (with a focus on how previous Fellows have taken advantage of opportunities made available to them, rather than the program doing something for Fellows).
12. Continue monthly newsletter and use Facebook more than LinkedIn. Many of the Fellows appreciated the monthly newsletter to update them on events and opportunities through ADA 25 Advancing Leadership. Many also noted that they did not always read each email, but were more likely to read the monthly update. The vast majority suggested using Facebook more than LinkedIn to share news, opportunities, and events because they logged into Facebook more frequently than LinkedIn.
13. Continue to build the Civic Connections Project and Mentoring Project. Many Fellows think of the retreat as a discrete program, rather than as part of the year-long ADA 25 Advancing Leadership. It is recommended to find a way during the retreat to make an explicit link between the retreat and other ADA 25 Advancing Leadership events (see also recommendation 11 about expectations for them to be involved in events throughout the year). [Note:

the one year follow-up evaluation for the 2015 cohort showed better outcomes for people who were involved in and attended additional activities beyond the retreat.] The Mentoring Project presents a good start as it engages Fellows throughout the year. However, there was little time for Fellows to be able to evaluate this project as many of them had not met with their mentors. Results from the baseline and post-retreat surveys showed significant increases in whether Fellows felt that they had opportunities for growth in the future, and both the Civic Connections Product and Mentoring Project are opportunities to further contribute to the future growth of Fellows.

14. Continuously evaluate outcomes for Fellows. While the outcomes and findings in this evaluation are very favorable towards the ADA 25 Advancing Leadership program, a longer-term evaluation would strengthen those findings. With only about two months between the retreat and the last part of the evaluation, many of the Fellows had not had time to join a board, commission, or other leadership position. It is important to follow up with them after one year, similar to what was done for the first cohort, to determine the longer-term impacts of the program