

CHANGE LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT METHODOLOGY

Phase 1

The National Science Foundation (NSF) funded Phase 1 of the project, where we engaged 76 individuals, including faculty leaders, program directors, project coordinators, department chairs, deans, associate deans, provosts, associate provosts, and campus presidents in a Delphi approach study. A Delphi approach involves gathering data from individuals who have a unique experience and can provide insight into a process (Kezar & Maxey, 2016). We convened individuals in a workshop held in July 2019 to conduct the study, starting with a survey they filled out prior to attending and then reviewing their findings at the event for further insight. Two goals of this workshop were (1) to identify and define leadership competencies that contribute to implementing, scaling, and sustaining campus change initiatives and (2) to outline the leadership resources that would facilitate the development of these competencies.

The 76 leaders at this workshop represented 37 different institutions, ranging from large research universities to public comprehensive institutions, minority-serving universities to smaller private colleges. Participants were recruited using purposeful sampling to identify leaders who 1) had led systemic change efforts, 2) held positions of department chair, dean, provost, or president (or some other formal leadership role), and 3) represented different four-year institutional types. The original NSF workshop resulted in the creation of a change leader moves taxonomy and outline of an ecosystem model of change leadership. Through deductive analysis we further explored connections from the reviewed literature around leadership and change in higher education (Boyatzis, 1998). This work resulted in the initial draft of the Change Leader Moves categories and the Toolkit.

Following the workshop, we held 6 focus groups (with approximately 8-10 individuals each) with leaders from national associations and organizations to review the draft toolkit we developed at the workshop. Some of the workshop participants also participated in one of four in-person workshops from 2019-2020 in which they utilized the CLT with campus teams engaged in change, and we conducted surveys obtaining feedback of their experience. A total of 56 people provided feedback to validate the initial change worksheets and toolkit. Thus Phase 1 involved 132 campus leaders through the Delphi approach workshop and focus groups.

Phase 2

Phase 2 research was funded by the Gates Foundation and took place from 2021-2023. The goal of Phase 2 was to ensure that the CLT resonated with leaders serving at different types of institutions, working on different types of change projects, and from different units across campus. We conducted 7 focus groups (with approximately 5-6 leaders in each) with 38 leaders in total. Our Phase 1 research had primarily engaged leaders in academic

affairs and did not include a large number of community colleges and minority serving institutions. Phase 2 participants were also recruited using purposeful sampling, with an eye towards including more leaders who were not in academic affairs roles, leaders from community colleges, and leaders from MSIs (Kezar, 2018). We developed a recruitment list of national associations, intermediaries, and past participants from Phase 1 to recruit leaders who 1) had led or were involved in systemic change efforts, 2) represented various units/roles within higher education that were not present in our initial research (i.e. student affairs, business affairs), 3) held different positional roles (i.e. senior level, mid-level, grassroots level) at their campus, and 4) represented different institutional types, being mindful to include institutional types we had not yet included (e.g., community colleges and minority serving). We conducted 90-minute focus groups with leaders in specific clusters, for example student success initiative leaders or community college leaders. During these focus groups, the leaders were presented with an overview of the ecosystem model, change leader moves, and main tools/worksheets so they could provide critical insight. Questions revolved around presentation of toolkit, content, actualization of the tools, and overall clarity and function. We used deductive and inductive analysis to explore themes from the reviewed literature in relation to leaders' insight (Boyatzis, 1998). The goal of this phase of research was to fill in gaps and ensure that the concepts and the toolkit worked across these new types of institutions, new change initiatives and additional units. Our research continued to show that the concepts worked across context, unit, and type of change engaged.

After the toolkit was validated again, we engaged several campus change teams in a 3-series webinar and workshop series to take a deep dive into the change leader moves, context and levers in the context of their change projects. We received qualitative feedback on ways to clarify some of the worksheets and toolkit language from these workshops. Lastly, we sent the updated CLT out for external review to various leaders who are well-versed in change leadership work. The feedback provided was adapted into the first major published version of the CLT.

Phase 3

Our Phase 3 research was funded by the Sloan Foundation from 2023-2024. In this phase, we developed a curriculum for a 5-session virtual professional development course designed to support leadership teams as they used the CLT to plan for a systemic change on their campuses. We engaged 12 teams from institutions across the country, several of whom were engaged in Sloan-funded projects around promoting equity in STEM graduate admissions, in the course and the toolkit. These 12 teams were made up of 66 leaders who worked through each of the worksheets in the toolkit and ultimately developed change leadership plans to guide their desired change projects. We conducted evaluations of both the course and the toolkit itself, using surveys, focus groups, and participant observations. The surveys asked about each component of the toolkit, as well as the overall conceptual model underpinning it (the ecosystem model of systemic change leadership). We asked specifically about the clarity, ease of understanding, and usefulness of each component and used

descriptive statistics to analyze the results. The vast majority of participants agreed that the worksheets were clear and easy to understand (79%-88%) and useful (84%-95%), and more than 90% of participants rated the overall CLT as clear, easy to understand, and useful.

We also conducted 4 focus groups with 18 leaders across 11 of the 12 participating campuses, as well as participant observations of each session. Similar to our earlier research, we used thematic analysis to analyze this qualitative data (Boyatzis, 1998). Overall, participants described how the ecosystem model and the toolkit helped them learn a new way of thinking about change leadership and that they were able to apply this framework to many different professional scenarios. They also described many changes they were able to make as a result of engaging with the toolkit, even in the short five month timeframe that we engaged with them. Because the toolkit is intended to support systemic change, which is deep, long-lasting second-order change (Senge, 1990), we expect that additional evidence of its efficacy will become evident as these changes come to fruition in 2-5 years (Kezar, 2018).

References

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