

VENTURE
LEADER
LAB

CASE FOR SUPPORT

A Community of Practice
Democratizing Access to
Capacity-Building for Nonprofits

2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS



OVERVIEW	03
DNA OF EFFECTIVE LEADERS	04
STRONG NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP IS NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER	08
EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP SEEDS IMPACTFUL SOCIAL CHANGE	12
ADVANCING BOLD MISSIONS FOR GREATER EQUITY AND JUSTICE	14
LEARN MORE ABOUT VENTURE LEADER LAB	16

OVERVIEW



THE NONPROFIT SECTOR IS THE THIRD LARGEST WORKFORCE IN THE UNITED STATES.



Most nonprofits fail within 10 years.



Venture Leadership Collective has spent over nine years building nonprofit capacity & boosting impact.

The nonprofit sector employs 10% of US workers, making it the third largest workforce in the country¹. Making up nearly 6% of the country's annual GDP², over 1 million US nonprofits today seek to dismantle social injustice at the local and national level.

The fight for justice requires endurance, as most solutions demand intergenerational persistence. Yet, far too often, nonprofits lack the capacity and expertise to achieve their missions. Many struggle to thrive and live “paycheck to paycheck” year over year. In fact, only 50% of nonprofits succeed, and **most of those fail within 10 years**³. What if we could optimize the lifecycle of most nonprofits and change the trajectory of opportunity for countless Americans?

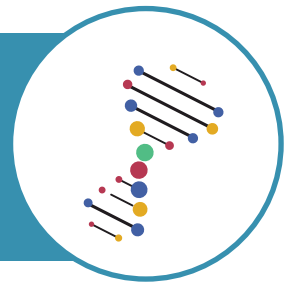
In 2015 we founded a sister company, [Venture Leadership Collective](#), aimed at building capacity in nonprofits through an infusion of expertise, mostly through embedding talent into organizations for an average of 12-18 months at a time. In just nine years, we have served 200+ nonprofits across the country in an intimate way and have learned how to boost impact performance and operational sustainability, needed to achieve long-term missions.

¹U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.). Nonprofit Sector Research Data. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/bdm/nonprofits/nonprofits.htm>

²McCambridge, Ruth and Nathan Dietz. “Nonprofits in Recession: Winners and Losers.” Nonprofit Quarterly. March 19, 2020.

³National Center for Charitable Statistics. (n.d.). <https://nccs.urban.org/>

THE DNA OF EFFECTIVE LEADERS



We Understand the DNA of Effective Leaders.

Venture Leader Lab (VLL) is a dynamic platform designed for the professional development of nonprofit leaders. It offers specialized virtual “rooms” tailored to various organizational needs, such as financial literacy, talent and culture building, fundraising, program implementation, and board management. Many of these resources are sponsored by generous funders, ensuring that high-quality support is accessible to all.

VLL employs a multifaceted approach to foster leader growth, integrating resources, courses, live consultations, and active communities of practice. Join us at VLL to enhance your leadership skills and drive meaningful impact within your organization and community.

At Venture Leader Lab, we believe that leadership is not just about skills or titles—it’s about embodying qualities that drive meaningful change. Our approach to leadership development goes beyond traditional training by emphasizing a holistic and intentional practice that prepares leaders for the dynamic challenges of the nonprofit sector. We have identified the key ingredients that shape effective leaders who can seed impactful social change and advance bold missions for equity and justice.





Six Key Ingredients of Good Leadership



Strategic Vision: A great leader possesses a clear and compelling vision that serves as a North Star, guiding the organization through complexities and uncertainties. Leaders must be able to articulate this vision, ensuring that every action taken is aligned with the broader goals of the organization.



Emotional Intelligence (Internal and External): Leaders must have a deep understanding of their own emotional landscape and the ability to empathize with others. Internal emotional intelligence involves self-awareness, managing personal biases, and embracing a growth mindset. External emotional intelligence is about reading others' emotions, adapting communication styles, and building strong relationships.



Relational Savvy: Effective leaders know how to foster collaboration and break down silos within the organization. They skillfully manage conflict, mentor team members, and cultivate high-functioning teams that work towards a unified vision. This relational capability extends beyond the organization to include engaging the community and stakeholders.



Thought Leadership: Leaders are not only champions of their organization's mission but also advocates for broader systemic change. They use their voice to influence public discourse, push for policy changes, and represent the nonprofit sector with credibility and sincerity.



Universal Expertise: In the nonprofit space, leaders must be well-rounded and knowledgeable across various domains—such as program management, finance, development, and board governance. This “executive generalist” approach ensures strategic alignment and operational efficiency throughout the organization.



Strategic Mindset: Leaders must balance attention to detail with a big-picture perspective. They should be able to “zoom in” to address specific issues while also “zooming out” to ensure that all actions align with long-term organizational goals. Strategic thinking is anchored in data-driven decision-making and future-oriented planning.



Critical Gaps in Nonprofit Leadership

We discovered that while a few nonprofits arrive at their obsolescence through mission attainment, or others appropriately merge with another entity, most fail because of critical gaps in the field, including but not limited to the following:



A Lack of Executive Generalists



A Need to Practice Leading Intentionally through Change & Growth



An Imperative to Rely on Rigor & Accountability for “Social Profit” Businesses
(vs nonprofits)



Inaccurate Representation of the Communities Served



Overly Reactive Cultures
(vs Proactive & Intentional Models for Change)



After a year of design, we now launch the Venture Leader Lab

a tech-enabled community of practice that will democratize access to capacity-building and expertise for nonprofits.

The Venture Leadership Lab will have a ripple effect at both the micro (personal leader) and macro (organizational) levels.

PARTICIPANT OUTCOME

Increased number of skilled nonprofit leaders, specifically increased BIPOC executive generalist acumen who will have the capacity to utilize a holistic lens that can be leveraged across a variety of nonprofit organizations across the sector. VLL members will develop:

- Mastery of practice
- Executive acumen
- Personal alignment to social impact
- Social capital for continued development

Overall, the Venture Leadership Lab's comprehensive approach ensures that leaders are well-prepared to advance social change, both in their personal capacities and within their organizations, leading to broader, more impactful improvements for the social sector.

PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATION OUTCOME

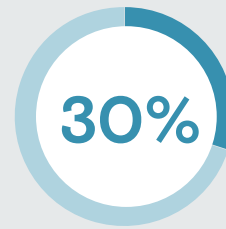
At the macro level, VLL will result in more effective nonprofits, which will demonstrate:

- Rigor and accountability to impact
- Competent social sector talent
- Skilled BIPOC representation in leadership roles
- Scalable organizations closing equity gaps

STRONG NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP IS NEEDED NOW, MORE THAN EVER



With all of the growth of the nonprofit sector, only **50% of nonprofits succeed, and within 10 years, 30% cease to exist entirely.** For some, it may be a case of a nonprofit shutting its doors after a community crisis has been resolved. But in most cases, there are critical gaps in the field.



Nearly a third of nonprofits fail within 10 years.

Critical Gaps in Nonprofits

A LACK OF EXECUTIVE GENERALISTS



As opposed to the nonprofit leaders who are Specialists in one particular skill area (programs, finance, fundraising), the Generalist comes to their role with exposure to different sectors (often nonprofit and for-profit experience), as well as strategic and tactical knowledge. Nonprofits without a Generalist often struggle with a high-level understanding of how various departments intersect. Generalists are known for being goal-oriented, data-driven, with high emotional intelligence, and often contribute critical outside-the-box thinking to the leadership team.

A NEED TO PRACTICE LEADING INTENTIONALLY THROUGH CHANGE AND GROWTH



A repeated cycle of crisis management occurs when there is a lack of strategic planning and decision-making around an organization's North Star and little to no succession planning. While attending to urgent problems, nonprofit leaders conflate community crises with organizational crises. The two are not synonymous. Periods of organizational change, transition, and extremes (crises and/or growth) can chisel away at leadership; additionally, organizations often become overly dependent on a singular leader and can become complacent about decentralizing decision-making and power more broadly within the senior leadership team.



RIGOR & ACCOUNTABILITY ARE NOT TOP OF MIND



Nonprofits largely operate in a capitalistic framework for business but without the guidance of a profit metric as a proxy for results and efficiency. Nonprofits need to articulate their equivalent of a “money-metric” or a North Star to help them create momentum and operational efficiency in advancing their missions. **Long-term missions and visions are often not sufficient for accountability because there is too much focus on indicators of effort instead of results of enduring change.** A lack of organizational accountability quickly translates to a lack of accountability in roles (from the board to the front-line staff).

REACTION VS. INTENTION

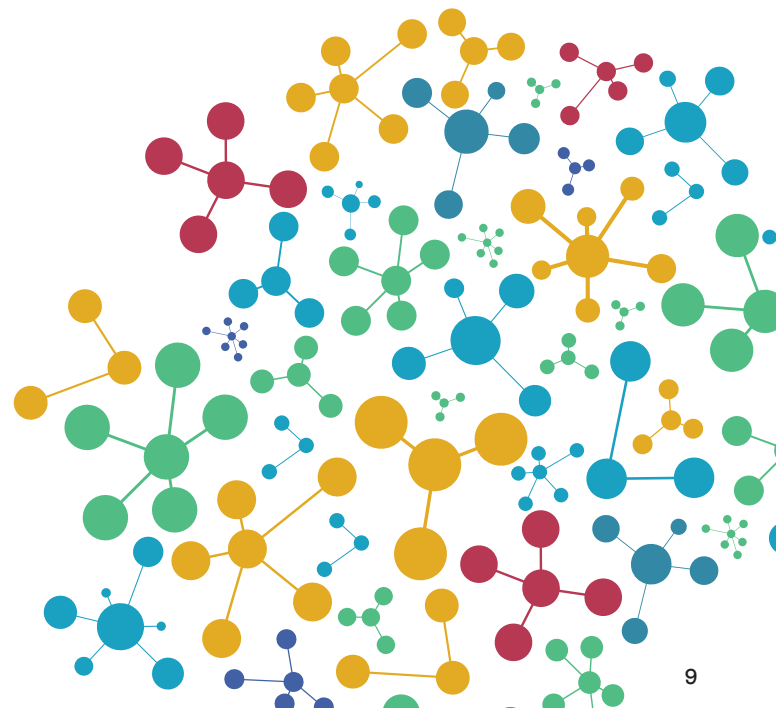


Finally, Venture Leader Lab will **shift the tendency among nonprofits to react to community issues rather than leading with intention.** This shift will help nonprofits avoid mission drift during difficult inflection points or periods of transition.

NONPROFIT LEADERS RARELY REPRESENT THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE



Despite years of efforts to become more inclusive and diverse, **the majority of nonprofit leaders are white and male, while the majority of the nonprofit workforce is female and people of color,** according to a 2023 Candid Study of nonprofits in New York City. Few nonprofits have executives or board members with lived experience that relates to their mission. Furthermore, BIPOC leaders are more likely to experience burn-out and are more likely to transition out of their roles due to a lack of support, both internally and externally, towards Venture Leader Lab seeks to eliminate the practice of “learning by fire,” which contributes to burnout and high rates of staff turnover at all levels. By supporting nonprofits in conducting regular self-assessments at both the organizational and staff levels, we can begin to cultivate a culture of excellence that revolves around advancing the mission.





VENTUR LEADER LAB OFFERINGS

The Lab (VLL) is designed to foster the development of nonprofit leaders through

a multifaceted approach that integrates resources, courses, live consultations, and communities of practice.

TAILORED RESOURCES

Curated Knowledge Base: The platform offers a wealth of resources, including research papers, case studies, best practice guides, and toolkits. These resources are tailored to address the unique challenges faced by nonprofit leaders, especially those from BIPOC backgrounds, and provide actionable insights into effective leadership and organizational management.

Templates and Frameworks: Practical templates and strategic frameworks assist leaders in structuring their work, evaluating impact, and implementing best practices in their organizations. This hands-on support enables leaders to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts.

COURSES

Skill-Building Modules: Courses are designed to enhance both the technical and interpersonal skills of leaders. Topics might include strategic planning, financial management, fundraising strategies, and advanced leadership techniques. These courses are structured to build executive acumen and mastery of practice.

Customized Learning Paths: Recognizing the diverse needs of BIPOC leaders, the platform offers tailored learning paths that align with individual goals and organizational needs. This personalized approach helps leaders gain expertise in areas most relevant to their roles and contexts.

Certifications and Credentials: Completion of courses and demonstrating mastery can lead to certifications that not only bolster the leader's resume but also signal their expertise and commitment to the sector. These credentials can enhance their professional credibility and open doors to new opportunities.

LIVE CONSULTATIONS WITH ON-CALL EXPERTISE

One-on-One Mentorship: Leaders have access to experienced mentors and consultants who provide personalized guidance and feedback. These interactions help address specific challenges, refine strategies, and navigate complex situations effectively.

Group Workshops and Seminars: Live sessions with experts cover current trends, emerging practices, and advanced topics in nonprofit leadership. These workshops foster real-time learning and allow for immediate application of new concepts.

Problem-Solving Sessions: Leaders can engage in problem-solving consultations where they present their organizational challenges and receive targeted advice and solutions from experts. This hands-on approach accelerates learning and problem resolution.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Peer Learning Groups: VLL facilitates the creation of peer learning groups where leaders can share experiences, exchange ideas, and collaborate on solving common issues. This collective wisdom helps deepen understanding and build a supportive network.

Thematic Communities: Specialized communities focus on particular aspects of nonprofit work, such as racial equity, fundraising innovation, or organizational scaling. These groups provide a space for in-depth exploration and development of niche skills. VLL can accommodate closed cohorts of select participants and/or grantees.

Networking Opportunities: The platform hosts virtual and in-person events that enable leaders to connect with peers, mentors, and industry experts. These connections foster social capital, which is crucial for career development and organizational growth.



EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP SEEDS IMPACTFUL SOCIAL CHANGE



Through intentional and targeted efforts to strengthen the skills of emerging nonprofit leaders, our social sector will thrive. Venture Leader Lab believes that accessible practice-based resources and connections for nonprofit leaders will enable them to effectively operate and grow their organizations. Layered opportunities to learn from curated communities of practice will strengthen the social impact at large.

Of note, the VLL will be more accessible to smaller nonprofits that cannot typically afford intensive capacity building in start-up mode.

COMPARING THE OPTIONS:

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES

Executive Education Programs:

Costs range from **\$5,000 to \$20,000** per program. Durations are often short-term, a **week to a few months**. Offers intensive training but **no ongoing support**.

Nonprofit Sector Training: Akin to Nonprofit Leadership Alliance or the Center for Nonprofit Advancement, programs can vary widely. Costs range from **\$200–\$3,000**. Offers individual courses. **No ongoing support**.

Online Learning Platforms: Akin to Coursera, LinkedIn Learning, and edX offer courses ranging from free to a few hundred dollars per course. Annual subscription models cost **\$300 to \$1,000** annually. Typically **doesn't offer personalized consulting or a robust community of practice**.

SIMILAR MEMBERSHIPS

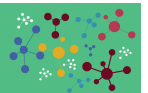
Professional Membership

Organizations: Memberships in organizations like Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) or the American Management Association (AMA), range from **\$200 to \$1,000** annually. **Offers networking opportunities**, access to resources, and some discounts on conferences. **Lacks depth of live personalized support**.

Leadership Development

Programs: Programs such as those offered by The Leadership Institute or similar entities, can range from **\$2,000 to \$10,000** annually. Offers **workshops, coaching, and peer learning**. Narrow focus on leadership skills **without a broader nonprofit focus**.

VENTURE LEADER LAB



Comprehensive Support: For a monthly fee of **\$292**, the Lab offers a **wide range of services**, including resources, courses, live consultations, and communities of practice. This comprehensive approach is **more extensive than many individual programs**. Unlike one-off workshops or courses, the Lab provides **ongoing support throughout the year**.

Targeted Focus: The Lab's specific **focus on nonprofit leaders addresses unique needs** and provides tailored support, which might not be as targeted in other programs.

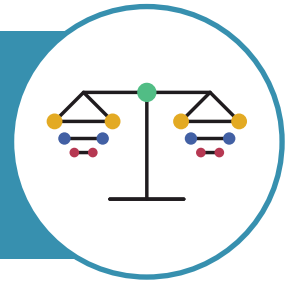
Networking and Social Capital: Access to a **network of peers, mentors**, and experts can provide significant long-term value, enhancing both professional growth and career opportunities.



Simplified Comparison Chart for Nonprofit Leader Programs

PROGRAM TYPE	INVESTMENT	DURATION	CUSTOMIZED SUPPORT	CURATED COMMUNITY
Executive Education Programs	\$5,000–\$20,000	Short Term / Weeks to Months	Varies	Varies
Nonprofit Sector Training <i>Nonprofit Leadership Alliance or the Center for Nonprofit Advancement</i>	\$200–\$3,000	Single Course	Little to none	Little to none
Online Learning Platform <i>Coursera, LinkedIn Learning, & edX</i>	\$300–\$1,000	Short Term / Weeks to Months	Little to none	Little to none
Professional Membership Organizations <i>Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) or the American Management Association (AMA)</i>	\$200–\$1,000 annually	Ongoing membership	Access to resources, no personalized support	Select networking opportunities
Leadership Development Programs <i>The Leadership Institute</i>	\$2,000–\$10,000 annually	Ongoing membership	Peer learning & coaching	Lacking nonprofit focus
VENTURE LEADER LAB	\$292 monthly	Ongoing membership	Comprehensive support throughout the year	Targeted nonprofit community, access to network of peers and mentors

ADVANCING BOLD MISSIONS FOR GREATER EQUITY AND JUSTICE



Venture Leader Lab is a member subscription platform to a human-led, tech-enabled community of practice that supports nonprofit practitioners around the country and provides space for exchanging tools, resources, and best practices.

Venture Leader Lab will build nonprofit leadership in **three distinct areas of focus**:



ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

- Facilitate practice-based mastermind sessions on topics such as fundraising, capital campaigns, talent audits, theory of change, measuring impact, etc. These sessions will feature cohorts of nonprofit leaders engaging in expert-led deep dives.
- Provide a curated digital library of resources, tools, and templates and a vetted list of consultants who can provide individualized support;
- A platform for information exchange; and
- Search tool room for members to find additional high-quality resources and talent.



INDIVIDUAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

- Create curated events and weekly professional and personal development exercises to cultivate and hone critical soft and hard leadership skills necessary for optimal organizational effectiveness;
- Customized executive coaching geared towards an individual's strengths and needs;
- Social capital for building professional networks; and
- Enrollment in Venture Leader Academy, a three-month virtual course to develop nonprofit professionals' knowledge skills and overall ability to advance their missions.

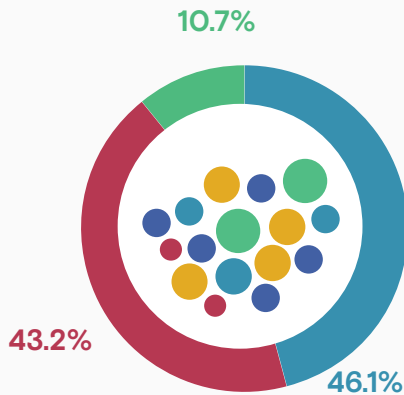


ACCESSIBILITY FUND

As part of our mission to support the development of BIPOC nonprofit leaders throughout the country, VLL is establishing an Accessibility Fund for BIPOC leaders and BIPOC-led organizations to access reduced-fee engagements (ie: interim executive leadership support during an organization's time of transition and targeted supports like strategic planning, impact/Theory of Change development, etc). The Fund will include dedicated resources for BIPOC leaders and equity-focused organizations, along with customized fund development at discounted rates.



THE BUDGET



THREE YEAR LAUNCH BUDGET

Administrative Costs 10.7%

Programmatic Costs 43.2%

Operational Team 46.1%

EXPENSES

The total costs for the initial three years of launching Venture Leader Lab is \$2.907M, annually ranging from \$615,000 in our start-up year to \$1.36M by year three.

STAFFING

Staffing (\$320,000 in year one and expanding to \$575,000 in year three) totalling \$1.3M over three years: salary and benefits for two to three leaders executing VLL across infrastructure and programming.

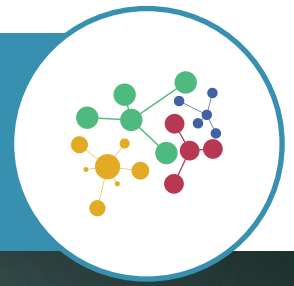
PROGRAMMING

Programming Costs (\$227,000 in year one to \$641,000 in year three) totalling \$1.26M over three years.

Costs include:

- Tools/resources creation
- Content curation/media (social media, videos)
- Data analytics/mapping
- Mastermind/coaching/guest speaker honorariums
- Learning Management Platform
- Website development, collateral, graphic design
- Legal fees
- Member accessibility fund investments

LEARN MORE ABOUT VENTURE LEADER LAB



INTERESTED IN BEING A MEMBER?

Sign up for our mailing list to make sure you don't miss the opportunity for orientation and enrollment. Membership recruitment will launch in June 2025.

INTERESTED IN INVESTING IN VENTURE LEADER LAB?

Contact: Lab@VentureLeader.org to learn more about the business model and engage in a partnership conversation and **DONATE** today here.

TAX ID: XXX-XXXXX

INTERESTED IN PARTNERING WITH VLL TO SPONSOR A THEMATIC COMMUNITY OR ROOM?

If your organization provides specialized trainings that focus on key areas of nonprofit work, such as racial equity, fundraising innovation, and organizational growth – partner with us and expand your reach into our audience!

