

# Learning & Development Pathways: How a Holistic Approach to Staff Development Can Transform Your Organization

**WEBINAR TRANSCRIPT**

# LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS: HOW A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO STAFF DEVELOPMENT CAN TRANSFORM YOUR ORGANIZATION

As a leader of a mission-driven organization, being able to build and support a comprehensive plan for leadership development leads to greater employee engagement and retention. Ensuring that current and future needs in your learning and development strategy are met can help to transform your organizational culture, building trust and connection.

## Walk away knowing:

- How the different components of an organization's comprehensive learning and development pathway work together to deeply impact organizational effectiveness
- What different thought leaders approach is to current and future leadership development needs
- Essential tips on how to begin to create a learning and development strategy for your organization

## PANELISTS



**Leonard Nelson**  
Assistant Director,  
Learning and  
Development  
BakerRipley  
[See Leonard's bio.](#)



**Leslie Wang**  
Associate Director, The  
Center for Philanthropy  
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Rice University  
[See Leslie's bio.](#)



**Gigi Woodruff**  
Founder  
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## MODERATOR



**Alexandra Taylor**  
Senior Consultant,  
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**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Hello everyone, and welcome. Thank you for joining us for this event entitled Learning and Development Pathways: How a Holistic Approach to Staff Development Can Transform Your Organization. My name is Atokatha Ashmond Brew, I am Managing Director of Marketing & Strategic Communication for Nonprofit HR, and I will be your conversation moderator for today. Before we get started, just a brief note about Nonprofit HR.

Since 2000, Nonprofit HR remains the country's leading and oldest firm focused exclusively on the talent management needs of the social sector, including nonprofits associations, social enterprises and other mission-driven organizations. We focus our consulting efforts in the following practice areas: Strategy & Advisory, HR Outsourcing, Total Rewards, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, and Search. We were founded with one goal in mind: to strengthen the social impact sector talent management capacity by strengthening its people.

Today's conversation will be led by Alexandra Taylor, a Consultant on Nonprofit HR's Strategy & Advisory team as well as our DEI team. Joining her for the discussion will be Leonard Nelson, Assistant Director of Learning and Development at BakerRipley; Leslie Wang, Associate Director for the Center of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership at Rice University; and Gigi Woodruff, Founder of Gigi Woodruff & Associates, LLC.

Now, a little about Alexandra Taylor. Alex brings over 20 years of nonprofit experience focused on strengthening organizations around diversity, equity and inclusion; leadership development in staff training; nonprofit operations and talent management; philanthropy; strategic planning; and stakeholder engagement. Prior to joining Nonprofit HR, Alex served as the Vice President of Development and Endowment for the YMCA of Greater Houston, where she served for over 15 years in a variety of roles in philanthropy, social equity, board development and operations. From stewarding donors to see the strengths of a community traditionally viewed as under-resourced to ensuring the equitable investment of funds raised across the region to guiding 25 advisory boards, representing 400 individual board members to embrace best practices around board development, diversity and inclusion, Alex worked to create social equity in all spaces.

And now, I will turn it over to you, Alex, to share a little about Strategy & Advisory and more about today's panelists.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Thank you so much, Atokatha. It's wonderful to be with you all today. I wish I could see everyone, but I know that we are here together virtually. We have a lot to cover today. I want the bulk of our time to be spent hearing from Gigi, Leonard and Leslie and letting you all interact and ask questions, share thoughts and perspectives, concerns, ideas and things you're hopeful for around how we develop our staff. So, I just want to start really briefly by talking a little bit about our Strategy & Advisory practice.

We partner with social sector organizations to support time-bound projects related to learning and development, which we're going to talk about today. We do training, coaching, 360 assessments and the development of organization-wide learning and development strategy. We do that for large, and small and all sizes in between when it comes to the nonprofit sector. We design career ladder frameworks and competency mapping. We provide cultural assessments and HR assessments. We do workforce planning and performance management, both for all staff as well as working with boards of directors, to design performance feedback programs for the CEO and ED role. We also regularly partner with nonprofits in the social sector to provide what we call Strategic Advisory On-Demand Support, which connects an organization to an HR consultant for guidance, advisory and thought partnership in response to their HR needs. That's just a little bit about who we are as a practice.

Today, we're going to do a brief introduction of our panelists here in just a moment. I'm going to frame a little bit of where we're going with the conversation and what we're rooting our conversation in today. Then we're going to spend, like I said, the bulk of our time asking questions, reflecting on quotes, thinking about trends and things that are happening in leadership and learning and development.

We want to be able to hear from you, the audience. So, again, just like Atokatha mentioned, use that question panel to pop in and ask those questions in real time. Atokatha will be monitoring those, and we're going to pause at different points throughout the webinar to give us a chance to respond to those. And just a reminder to use that box as opposed to the chat box. The chat box won't let you get things to us as quickly or as efficiently.

So, right now, I am going to ask our three panelists to come on camera, and I'm going to share a little bit about them as they do, as they come on camera and come into sound. There's Leslie and Leonard and Gigi.

So I'm going to start with Leonard. As you heard, Leonard is the Assistant Director of Learning and Development at BakerRipley, formerly Neighborhood Centers Inc, which is a community development organization ranked in the top 1% of nonprofits in the nation. In this role, he leads the Learning and Development team. Leonard works with the People and Culture team to execute strategic agency initiatives in the areas of organization development, leadership, human resources, appreciative inquiry and training. Prior to joining the team at BakerRipley, Leonard served as a staff member at the YMCA of Greater Houston for 23 years. Thank you so much for being here today, Leonard.

Leslie Wang. Leslie joined the Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership at Rice University in October of 2018 to help launch the Leadership in Action, a certificate program for first-time executive directors and nonprofit professionals who expect to take on that role as the next step. Leslie is a Houston 2000 Teach for America Corps member and a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin where she received an MBA focused in Nonprofit Management. Previously, she served as a Program Officer at Houston Endowment, a private philanthropy in the Greater Houston area. And, she serves on the Board of Texas Partnership for Out of School Time, and maintains a small consulting practice focused on governance strategies for nonprofit organizations. Welcome, Leslie.

And, Gigi. Gigi Woodruff is a compelling and enthusiastic facilitator and consultant, recognized for her ability to engage an audience in dialogue and collaborative learning that advances understanding and commitment to action. Dedicated to developing the whole person, her approach to leadership development has always been rooted in aligning and leveraging personal and professional strengths while deepening one's emotional self-awareness and empathy for those they lead. Until expanding her consulting company to a full-time enterprise in 2020, Gigi was the Director of Leadership Development and Board Governance for the YMCA of the USA where she focused her attention on developing executive and volunteer initiatives to advance leaders' competence and confidence.

All right, we're ready to go. So, what I would like you all to do as part of anything else you want to share about yourself, but sort of framing it with this question. I know that each of you, because I know you, have a real passion and commitment to developing leaders in and across organizations, and specifically nonprofits and in the social sector. So, what was that moment, or series of moments for you, that led you to choose this as your career focus?

And, Leslie, I'm going to start with you.

**Leslie Wang:** All right, thank you so much for having me today. I'm delighted to be here with such a great panel to talk about what really is my passion, which is developing nonprofit leaders. And when you talk about a series of moments, part of it was realizing that that was my passion. I knew that the nonprofit sector was likely where I would spend my time, even coming out of college, that just was the space that felt right to me. But trying to figure out which mission was most important to me, over time I realized that I was kind of mission agnostic. I cared about a lot of issues, but what I would always come back to was the people working in those spaces—finding people really interesting, finding their stories about why they came to work in the nonprofit sector, why they worked so hard, why they gave so much to this space. I just really got interested in the people who make our sector work. But there were really kind of three key moments that made me realize maybe I needed to be working myself in a different space to support those leaders.

The first, I worked at Houston Endowment. I was really lucky to be a Program Officer there for almost a decade and in that role, partnering with different organizations. When I started there in 2006, I started hearing whispers about this upcoming leadership crisis, that we had a number of people in leadership roles, executive directors and CEOs, who were going to be retiring and that we didn't have the next generation of leaders ready for them.

And I was like, "OK! What are we going to do?" And I wasn't hearing any great answers of what we were going to do. There was a lot of concern, but not really a plan. And then, we had the financial crisis and a series of retirements I think went more slowly over a greater period of time than expected, which kind of helped with that crisis. But I never stop thinking about it. What are we doing? How are we going to avoid the next crisis?

And the second conversation that really crystallized it for me was talking to an executive director of a smallish nonprofit, right on the cusp of small to mid-size. She and I were about the same age. I had a young child, I think she was thinking about having kids. And she said, "You know, Leslie, when I meet with other executive directors, I realize that all the rest of them have no children. They either haven't had them yet, they've decided not to have them or they've grown up and they've left the house. I don't know if I can keep doing this job and also have the rest of my life." And that really sat heavy on my conscience, frankly. Are we building a sector that allows people to lead throughout their entire life?

And then, the third was a conversation with another executive director, which is actually what led me to develop the program that I'm running today, where she had made it through the first three or four years of being a first-time executive director and she was exhausted. And she told me, she's like, "I made it. I learned a ton. You know, Leslie, what we really need is a bootcamp for first-time executive directors, because what I have gone through to get where I am now, I would not wish on anybody else."

So those three moments over really a decade were what came together for me to say, "Leslie, you need to put all your time and energy into making sure that we have the talent in this space, and the expertise, and that they feel supported and appreciated in the work that they do."

**Alexandra Taylor:** Awesome. Thank you, Leslie. And I know we're going to come back to some of those themes with some of the questions here in a minute, so thank you for that.

Leonard, I'll let you chat next.

**Leonard Nelson:** All right, thank you Alex. Thanks for having me. I'm not sure that it's a good idea to have Gigi and Leonard on the same call because she's the reason I do what I do today. But, prior to that, I have only had two positions, two roles, two jobs, my entire career. I started off in nonprofit and both have been in the nonprofit sector.

I worked for the YMCA for 23 years and now here at BakerRipley, another nonprofit, community service organization, for five years. But looking back, if you ask my mother or anyone in my family, they would always say, “I knew he wanted to teach. He wanted to be an educator. He wanted to instill in others,” and I got that from my grandfather, who would always tell me to leave people better than I found them. And he goes, “That can happen a multitude of different ways. Sometimes, it's just sitting back and listening. Sometimes, it is giving input, sometimes it is giving feedback and coaching.”

And so, that has always been within me. One, because I love the audience, I love to be in front of a group. But I also like to make sure that staff are being developed, staff from being educated, staff know what a pathway or with a career pathway looks like with the options that are available to them. And so, that pivotal moment for Leonard, that pivotal moment for me, was I was new in my role. I was new in my very first job, and I wanted to grow. I wanted to develop. I wanted to know how operational practices work. I wanted to know what policies were in place. I wanted to know why I was breaking a rule or I was breaking the law when I had not been trained on it, I did not know that that was in place.

And whenever I would go to an executive or my then supervisor to say, “Hey, there's a training happening centered around something that's in my particular discipline, my particular area,” it would always be, “Oh, we don't have the funding for that,” “There's no money for that,” or “Oh, I'll go. You don't have to worry about that, and I'll just bring back that information for you.” And through that, I would get frustrated, and I began to research on my own. I began to seek out other individuals on the team, and have conversations, and network. And I began to hear, “Oh, no, you should be attending this! Why aren't you on that list?” And I got on some lists, and I began to think and take things back to my team and create my own development plans, create my own training plans. Through those pieces, I remember saying, because I do sessions now when I give, especially people managers, those who are in charge of other individuals, I say, “You know what? Think back to that time. We've all had really great managers, and then we really had those not-so-great managers and directors, but you learn from both.”

And I learned, and I took away from those individuals who did not want to invest in me, who did not think about education and creating a career pathway for me, who wanted to hold everything in and not share because they thought, “If I share this, then this person may take my job, they may make me look bad.” And not look on the backside of it saying, “Hey, that's a reflection of me as a manager, as a supervisor, to develop this person so that they can actually move on and I can recommend them for this particular role or for this particular job.”



And so, that was instilled in me early on my first couple of years in employment with a nonprofit. That, one, I want to leave individuals better than I found them, and also if I ever get that opportunity to be in that particular role, I know what not to do. I know how to encourage that employee. I know how to sit across from them and actually say, “What is it that you want to do? What led you here? Let me help you get onto the next pathway,” because one of two things will happen. We’ll either lose them, because we’re not investing time, effort and intention to them, or they’re going to do 50% of the job. They’re not going to show up in that full space.

And so, when I started operating and moving in that space, then things began to happen. I met Gigi, of course, then she was like, “Who created this training plan? We need to do that agency wide for the entire organization,” and that catapulted me into my thinking, because I thought I have to be in the classroom. I’m just going to only work at this and be in this role in this position for a couple of years. And she said to me, “No, you don’t have to leave in order to instruct, in order to develop, in order to make sure that you’re making a difference in the lives of employees that can happen right here with adult learners.” And so, that was that pivotal piece that catapulted me into this position, in this role that I love, day-to-day, in and out, seeing staff grow, develop, thrive and then move on if they need to.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Thank you, Leonard.

All right, Gigi?

**Gigi Woodruff:** How do I top that, right? So, I came into this world of development a little differently. It was more out of frustration in how I was being treated. I was in advertising and then, found a nonprofit as a volunteer to fill my time. I just couldn’t find anything that I felt really passionate about in the work I was doing, so I found volunteerism through an organization. I was shocked at the lack of development opportunity, training, even equipping for a job that we held or that we were given. So, I found what I called back then a scarcity mentality, much like you just heard Leonard reference, that if, “Gosh, if I could equip you, I’m doing something less. I might be hurting myself.”

So I really brought an energy of wanting to shift from nonprofits being unprofessional. It felt that way back then. Now, I’ve been in this business for a long time, some of y’all are really young, but this was back in the ‘80s. And it just felt unfair. It felt like it was OK to be scattered, and half-cocked and not recognizing how important it was for us to be, not just professional but learning on an ongoing basis, and pushing and challenging ourselves in new ways.



So, I moved into operations, thinking that was my ticket in and that I could teach and train with the people that I had. Then, as opportunities came up everybody said, “Well what do you want to do when you're here longer?” I was like, “I want to do something nobody's ever done.” And, 25 years ago, we started our first learning—Leonard actually came through that and took that job later after I was gone from that—but we created our own learning and development opportunity for the organization that then served the community and then, served as a model to the whole organization nationwide, so learning centers and learning development centers.

So, I believe that the heart of all of this and what was in it for me was igniting that love of learning that you just heard referenced in Leonard's presentation. How do we not allow our organizations to say yes or no to what we have the right to learn, right? And back then, the only ticket through was to get on the list to go to training or to be invited. And today, that's not the same thing and so, how do we help create that freedom and that love, ignite the love of learning and move from this idea of training to actually education, learning, applying and growing?

So, yeah. That's how I got into this world and continue to do it, even as I get older. It's the one thing I just cannot walk away from: continuing to try to help people find their very best selves in service to the very best work.

**Alexander Taylor:** Yeah. Oh, beautiful. Thank you all.

And I wanted to give everybody a chance to share how they came into this because I think it helps frame where we're going in the conversation today. And hopefully even just in hearing how people came into this work and specifically, the things that they care most deeply about, you, our participants who we're doing this for or we're holding the space for, are being encouraged and inspired to think about your own role, whatever that is in your organization, and how you can kind of foster some of this, whether you are specifically in a learning and development role, or you're an ED or your program director. Whatever your role is, we want you to be encouraged to start thinking about that.

So, before we keep going into the next set of questions. I'm trying to advance my slides here. There we go. Oops.

Here we go. We wanted to start with a quote and let you all kind of think about this and think about what we're grounding in. So, I, like many of you, probably love Brené Brown and love her perspective on leadership. There are many quotes I could have put up here, but I think the things in here around how it's not about titles, it's not about the corner office, it's about that willingness to step up to put yourself out there, to lean into courage. The world is desperate for braver leaders and it's time for all of us to step up.

And I think we heard that from Leslie, Leonard and Gigi. This is what is undergirding their passion, their work, the reason that they dedicated this, and so much of this is rooted in having trust in your organization and the building of trust, and you're going to hear us reference this. This is a key principle for those of us in Nonprofit HR. This is what we talk about all the time with organizations. We try to spend as much time as possible emphasizing this with organizations that each of us have a role in helping to build trust within our organizations and it is the bedrock and foundation to keep employees engaged and committed through whatever challenges or opportunities you're facing, and we're all facing a lot of them right now. We're going to talk about some of those specifically today.

Think about your teams and all the personalities and leadership styles that are represented in the organization. And the critical piece of all of that, the teamwork, the learning, the collaboration, is trust. So how do we build it? How do we create a culture in which people feel safe, and seen, and heard and respected? All those things. That's what we're talking about today.

Our Founder, Lisa Brown Alexander, at Nonprofit HR, shared a few months ago, that the leaders of today and tomorrow will be engaged, empathetic and equity focused. And we're going to be talking a lot about that today. And a key way to ensure that your leaders are reflecting those competencies is to develop your leadership, is to invest, and that's what we want to talk about.

These pathways that we've already referenced, and are going to be referencing, provide a framework for staff to monitor their professional development and to provide a clear roadmap for how staff can grow and progress in their roles. It solves the needs of individual employees who want to grow in their own roles and develop their own positions in the roles that are already in. It also helps leaders keep a clear eye on the needs of each employee and what their unique strengths are. And then, pathways help organizations as a whole reach their strategic and business goals to advance their missions, and we're going to talk about that, too. Pathways help private organization for the future, fill in skill gaps with current staff, offer greater stability and allow organizations to better forecast and build out their workforce. However, they are not static. And so, one of the things we want to talk about today is that things are always shifting and changing, and we have to be willing to adapt, and learn and grow with our people.

In order to ensure that pathways continue to meet the needs, we have to keep revisiting them regularly. And particularly when strategic plans are being created, we've got to make sure that we're aligned. The refining of that pathway involves dialogue with staff, listening to leadership and responding to changing organizational goals. And when we do this—align it—it makes it easier to find those pathways to both meet the needs of the organization and to carve out time to ensure that they're also meeting the needs of the staff.

And I want to just emphasize, we're going to talk about this as well, regardless of the size of your organization, there is a learning and development, a leadership development, strategy that can work for you. So, I don't want you to be put off. We're going to talk about a scope of things. Sometimes it feels big. Regardless of your size, there are ways for leaders to be developed, and that's part of what we're going to touch on, and we're going to make sure that we talk about that today.

We also just want to make sure that we emphasize the holistic piece of this. It's doing organizational assessments, surveys, interviews and focus groups, reviewing existing policies and procedures, really getting a feel for what your organizational culture looks like. Doing competency development and regrounding in competencies if you already have them. Using a performance management system that's grounded in continuous feedback. Creating learning and development tracks that touch on topics like building trust and core competencies, leading change, effective feedback, conflict resolution, coaching and leading high performing teams, all of those things. Using 360s in a way that helps the staff develop and create their own professional development path. And that really only comes once we sort of have that culture of trust. We're not going to spend a lot of time talking about that today, but that's an important note. Professional development plans, that's a key piece of this. And then, that ongoing manager and leader coaching, that, again, comes after the assessment and training once you've tried to embed a culture of learning and development into that, a continued sort of checking in.

We're going to start with our first question here for whoever would like to start first. Maybe, Leslie, since you were our first one to speak on the last one, if you want, or someone else. Why is the need for management and leadership development particularly critical right now?

**Leslie Wang:** I'm happy to jump-start it and then, perhaps pass to one of my fellow panelists here. Many of the things that you just outlined, of course, I'm excited about and want to dig into further as we go. But when I think about why it's particularly critical, even though it's always been critical, but why it is particularly critical now, I really do think about how the world is offering us so much right now. And it's offering that, both in terms of opportunities and in terms of challenges.

When I first started out making my way in the nonprofit world in my career about 20 years ago, I felt like if you want to do good in the world, you either go into the nonprofit sector or you go into the public sector. Those are kind of the ways. Even in business school, trying to find out more about corporate social responsibility or things like that, those opportunities are very narrow, right? So, if you want to really focus on mission work, then you need to look at one of these sectors.

Then, you're really probably looking at a job in traditional employment. And now what we find, I think, is that, as the pandemic has so painfully highlighted, there are many ways to do this work. There are many places to do this work from. As our opportunities to support important work come across, not just—we don't necessarily need to be employees. We can be volunteers. We can be freelancers. We could be contractors. We can be part-time. We could be in any part of the country serving another part of the country. And so, this idea that there are many, many pathways to have an impact within the sector and then, many pathways outside of that sector, where you can have a B Corp or a low profit, LLC or things like that, where you could maybe not make the tradeoff between financial return and serving the public good. So, I think that there are so many ways that the world offers us right now to make an impact. And that is a reason we want to make sure that we are capitalizing on those and also helping our leaders and our teens feel invested and engaged in the work that we're doing in whatever way that we are doing it.

And I also think that the world is offering us a lot more opportunity to serve. So, whereas maybe in another time, we might have looked at just the issues around us and said, "OK, this is what I'm seeing every day that I want to make an impact on." And now we, again, have the possibility to work on international issues, to work on things across the country from our very own homes. And so, there's just so many possibilities that come out to the wonderful talent and expertise and folks who are interested in doing this work. And how do we make sure that we're not only finding them, but that we're appreciating them, engaging them and growing them?

And the one little note that I'll just leave as I go out is, when I think about pathways, sometimes those pathways are through our organizations for a long career, and sometimes they're pathways through our work for a short period of time, as they go on to their next way to make a change. And so, I think that's another important piece is just recognizing that a lot of us are taking winding roads and that we need to prepare for that, and take advantage of whatever great time and opportunity people are able to give when our paths cross.

I can take that metaphor to the very end.

**Alexandra Taylor:** We can keep using that metaphor throughout this whole thing. It's a good one.

Leonard or Gigi? What do you all think about this question?

**Leonard Nelson:** Well, I think that it's critical, particularly critical right now, because companies realize that in order to survive in today's uncertain, complex and even, I venture out to say, ambiguous environment, they need leadership skills and organizational capacities different from those that helped them succeed in the past. So that roadmap, that plan that got you here, we can't rely on that anymore.

And so, I think that there's a growing recognition that leadership development should not be restricted to a few or those who are close to the C-suite or those executives, because guess what? Those individuals are retiring, and if there hasn't been any system planning in place, companies will be scrambling to find that next leader to find and fill that next role or position. So, for me, it's critical that companies look into educating the next generation of leaders in order to build sustainability.

**Gigi Woodruff:** I couldn't say that better. But to extend a little bit on that, and I think you're—both of you are right on, we also are leading a different world.

We didn't just face a pandemic. We also faced social injustice and we faced economic challenges. We faced unemployment and we faced an employee challenge where people don't want to come back to work in the way we work. So, we are at this precipice of shift and change, that we just can't hope for March 10th of last year, which is when my organization shut down. If we're yearning for last year, we're not doing service to the world that we're in. The world required different leadership skills over the past year. I actually have a joke, and I say, "I'm not reading anything that was written before December of 2020 because if it was written in 2018, there's no way it's relevant to the world we faced," right?

So, the world that's now is, you mentioned a few of them, it's VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity), a military term. It's volatile, it's uncertain, it's complex, it's ambiguous, it's scary, right? And the leadership skills that we have to help people understand and navigate is not just at the top. It's not on the CEOs' head. It's on our boards' head. It's on our operators' heads. It's on the frontline that we're putting at most risk. So, the three competencies if you're studying—and I'm a geek that still studies, I don't know why, I don't have to, but I do—resilience is the number-one competency. How many of you have that in your competency model?

It is about patience and the ability to sit and not try to change something that we can't change yet and just let it ride. And it's about co-creation. It's the ability to come together and recognize, we don't have the answer for today's challenges, and we're going to have to come together to find a way to do that. And even, I mean, that is how we teach management and leadership. By not teaching it, but giving them the responsibility and then, debriefing and coaching and extracting insight from it. You've got to let people fly. And you've got to let people fail. And you've got to let people try.

And we hold these lines so tight to say, "That's not what you do. That's not your job." And we don't have enough people right now to stay in the lanes. We have CEOs running front desk offices. We have CEOs driving busses to daycare. EDs that are out there doing all kinds of things that they never thought they'd do on the pool deck again, right? Whatever it is we do. Serving lunches, making lunches. So, I think the world just handed us the opportunity to step into leading with courage.

And by the way, people tell me all the time in coaching, “I need to build confidence, I want confidence.” You don't build confidence without being courageous. You just don't build confidence without stepping in with courage. Trying something new. That's where confidence comes from. Even if you fail, you know you will learn, and you will be OK. That's confidence.

**Alexandra Taylor:** And that actually leads really well into our next question. Here we go.

So, as we drill in a little bit more into what organizations are facing right now, the hybrid work environment. Like what we're trying to do here today, connecting virtually, trying to encourage each other, help us feel connected, [having] limited resources, budgets that are small, whether you're a smaller organization or a larger organization that's just facing some budgetary uncertainty, there's that question that gets asked sometimes by those in leadership in organizations about the return on investment, right? What is this actually going to do to benefit our business, whatever our business is, or our budget, our bottom line, the organization?

So, whoever would like to jump in and start. How do organizations address this with their learning and development or their leadership development strategy?

**Leonard Nelson:** I would say—I'll take that one—I would say one way I would think to bring more awareness to and to increase internal learning and development is to provide learning sessions and pathways sessions, group sessions and tours of different parts of the company virtually. Yes, in many cases, we are virtual. In some cases, we're doing both. We're in an office. Today, I'm in the office. Yesterday, I worked from home. This will not only make people more aware of the role that they are currently in, or the role that they play within that company, but it can also lead to new ideas and innovation as more of the team becomes exposed to the workings of the overarching business practices for that particular organization or the company.

For example, infusing rotational programs into the leadership, the learning programs, where you're actually connecting with those leaders over those particular teams, divisions, programmatic areas and having them to say, “Hey, this is where I need, this is the next up-and-coming person for me.”

I do new employee orientation twice a month, every month. That means we're bringing new people in, but that also means that some people are exiting the company. But in that session, it never fails. We're virtual now. It used to be a full face-to-face session, but we're virtual now. But when we did, and it still happens today, but when we would do those face-to-face sessions, usually by the first break, when I would give them the first break, I would get bombarded with new hires coming to me saying, “Oh my god, I didn't know BakerRipley did this. I didn't know you guys did this. Is it possible for me to apply for a position in this role?” And that would be day one.

And, so, I would say, because we are a strengths-based organization, we believe that leadership exists on every single level. You don't have to have that title in order to lead. You can lead right where you are, and so, yes, we don't frown at that, but we do have policies and procedures in place. So, we need you to show up in the role that you applied for, at least for this first year, so that you will grow, you will develop, you learn about the culture here. You learn about that. You start networking. You get yourself involved in the engagement opportunities that are out there, so that when it comes time and you do want to make that move, that hiring manager can say to you, "Yeah, I support this 100 percent. They'll be more than a great asset to this particular team, and we have readily prepared this next person to come in and take that individual's space in a rotational program that helps them with resources."

Because we're having these, what I like to call kickoff meetings with the divisional leads to make sure that this is included in their budget. So, it's not just coming from the learning budget, as in, "Oh, we think that this should be coming from Leonard," or "That should be coming from this budget or that piece." But no, we are working in partnership to make sure that what it is that you're delivering on, we're supporting you that in the area of staff development and making sure that you have the right person in the right role in the right fit for that specific position.

And then, the last piece is actually to involve, if you're doing it, and I'm speaking to the rotational program, those key leaders in the strategy meetings so that they actually understand it. I feel like a lot of times, we get pushback, and things don't take place, and challenges come up, and we want to make sure because we use that appreciative inquiry language here, that we want to change that challenge into an opportunity. Well, we're not saying that the challenge isn't there, so after you've gone through, when you pontificated about all of these issues and why this is now, now we need to know, how can it work? What is it that we can put in place?

And so, if we have those meetings and you're sitting across from me, we have this other saying here that individuals' commit to those things that they create, that they help, that they have buy-in into. So now, my name is going to be on this. I don't want to look bad. I want to make sure that I show up. What is my role? And I think that if we involve everyone on every single level, that then, because things are going to change—change is inevitable. Right? So it's not like, "Oh, this just happened." No, we're now in this space, we had to pivot—you know, the keyword that everybody's using through this whole process. We're going to always have to pivot. I think everyone on this call, and in this learning and development, leadership development, role, we've always had to pivot. We've always had to make a change on the drop of a dime because something has happened. This did not fall through. You need to make this shift because something new has changed. And they look to the leadership development team to now embrace those pieces.



So I think that being able to use resources and tools that are within, get buy-in from those business partners and then connect with them and have them being a part of their strategy. Have them playing a role. Have them to actually—what is your knowledge, skills and resources? What are those critical pieces that you know you need for this particular role on your team? What are those leadership competencies that you feel like every single person that comes through this door, that is going to be represented here, has to have? And then, what are those extra ones that we want to create and help evolve in that staff person, because then that's on my side where I can say, "Oh no, I can get them there. I can help you with that." There should be some key skills that every single person that's coming through that door for your particular area possess and own, and then everything else, we can work on.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Awesome. All right, we're going to pause here.

Atokatha, do we have any questions that came in from our participants, from our audience, that we'd like to pose to our panel?

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Hey Alex, and yes, we do have a question. Do you suggest learning and development as a requirement for staff or is it optional?

**Alexandra Taylor:** Who wants to jump in on that one?

**Gigi Woodruff:** Ooh, I'll take a stab at that. I think it is, "Yes, and." It is not an either/or. So I think there are certain jobs in all of nonprofit work that require certain competencies and skills, and some certifications, and some legal requirements. And so, I think you always have to have an eye on the things that are driven by safety or standard, depending on what your nonprofit does, that absolutely has to be mandatory, mandatory.

You can't put people out in youth work without understanding safety, and abuse prevention, and reporting procedures, and thinking about what to do if you have a child who gets sick, or first aid or some of those things are required by state and standard of your org. And if you don't have those, perhaps you should work with another arm of your organization to figure out what those need to be. So those, I think, are required and that is part of leadership development, that's part of your management responsibility. And I think there's a huge differentiation. We need to differentiate between when a person is being caught—there are two times that people learn. It's when they are up against a wall, and they are struggling, and challenged and "oh my god, I'm going to lose my job if I don't do something." And there are times when they are called to passion and great desire.

So, part of our jobs in leadership development, in leadership and supervision, is to help people figure out where they are on that continuum and define the aspiration to actually want to be involved in continuous learning, whether that's through training, certifications, education, MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) online. Just reading is enough, right? Coaching, strategizing. And so, I think if we create the culture of hunger and a culture where we want to be better, then it's not requiring ongoing development as much as it is not getting in their way. So, "Yes and."

**Alexandra Taylor:** Awesome. Thank you.

**Leslie Wang:** I think it's important to genuinely create space for that. It's one thing to say that it's valued or even to pay for it, right? But then there could be issues when someone looks at everything they have on their plate, all that's expected of them, and what's going to fall off. The first is going to be the thing that isn't necessarily directly relevant to their exact job. So, not the required trainings, not the licensure, but that next step of maybe, "It's really interesting, I really love to do this, but I just don't have the time."

And so, when I was thinking about this question, and about that building trust idea within the organization, part of what I've seen be really effective is, even when there's not a lot of money, to be very transparent about how much is available and to work with someone around what is really interesting to them and what resources they might find along a spectrum of price points. And to help them find something, and then support them in doing that. So, in every check-in to say, "How's that course going?", "How's that book going?", "How's that collaborative group going that you're a part of?" And letting them know that if they're having trouble finding the time for that, then, just like any other priority, the supervisor part of your role is to help them reach their goal, move some things off their plate, help them with their priority list, to do that. I think, unless there is that positive reinforcement for something that isn't required, it's very, very easy for it to be something that everyone intends to have happen that just doesn't end up getting the attention it deserves, so deliberately making space.

And I thought of Leonard when he was talking about sharing with the group, putting your name on something, giving that opportunity. And especially if it's a smaller team, right? Maybe you've gone through some professional development and you get to present to the rest of the staff what you've learned and what the takeaways are, and maybe make some recommendations for changes to the organization. So, I think that it's a way to kind of downsize what can happen in a larger organization, to just think about individually supporting professional development and learning goals. And then, making sure that as those take place, the team members have a chance to shine and really share what they've learned.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Fantastic. Thank you, Leslie.

So, we've talked about this next question a little bit. I feel like we've referenced it. So, if the additional things that we haven't already hit on, we've talked about sort of how we engage the other staff, we've talked about what are the required management trainings and what does that additional leadership development look like, when you think about those essential elements of something that's really robust, what are the things that just really stand out to you? It could just be a couple of things, it could be a full spectrum. [I'd] love to hear a little bit of reflection around this.

**Leonard Nelson:** I'll go. Just to name a few, I would say depending on the caliber of company, the companies you're working with, you would need to have executive buy-in so that they are supporting what you're about to roll out or what you're going to have an enhancement to. To piggyback just a little bit, Alex, on that last question from the group, I agree with both Leslie and Gigi, that it's a yes and no. But if you're saying yes, please, please, please, make sure that there are opportunities available for those required learnings.

So, back to the learning and development program within an organization, executive buy-in, I think that that's really important. And that you actually embrace a culture of learning that everyone knows that if you come in, and you are part of this organization, and you join us, you become a team member, here's what you can expect in the areas of learning, within your first year, within your first year and a half—your first one to three years. And that everyone that's here embraces that cultural learning, so it's not a shock when there are elements of things that need to take place, and when there's a new tool that needs to be launched to the agency wide that there's going to be a training, there's going to be a learning component, that's going to accompany that.

What has been resounding for me and for us is that you have sound technology to support everything that you're going to be doing in that space, including and up to tracking, reporting and how reconnecting today that we actually have the technology pieces to support that.

And then, I think the other just basic piece is that we would possibly all agree on is that you have a framework for your curriculum development and that you have some method of evaluation methodology to demonstrate return on investment for those teams.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Perfect. Anything else, Leslie or Gigi that you'd want to add as well?

**Gigi Woodruff:** I'll add to that. The word that stuck out for me in this question is “robust.” I think it's important to know that it has to be robust if it's going to be a meaningful experience of true learning. And so, we sit and think, what's the framework around anything that is a robust learning and development program, so that kind of sounds like it's an ongoing kind of learning.

I think there are some R's, so it's robust, there's rigor, meaning that it's not just a slam dunk. You're not going to have people sitting there, saying, "I didn't learn anything new there. I knew that. I knew that." We don't want people to attend a course, or training, or program or cohort, like you heard Leslie leading, that they said, "Oh, I knew all that, aren't I great." Right? It needs to be one where we challenge, so rigor. It needs to be relevant to today, not looking at data from 2010, right? Even if it doesn't have current data, it just seems irrelevant.

So relevance. I think it requires personal reflection that says, "What am I learning and where have I been on this journey in the past? And what do I know about myself and why am I ruffled by this information?" That's a reflection on what we already believe. And then, I think the other one is responsibility to apply what you're learning. So, you just don't get to go to a training to collect a cert (certification) or to collect a training list. You actually go to learn and transfer the information into your daily work. So those are some of the four of the seven elements that I believe are really important for a robust leadership development. Within any organization, it must be...

So, anyway, those are the ones that have—I've done 27 years of leadership development, and those have always been at the core, and it means I want people to walk out at some point and go, "Oh my god, this is challenging me. I don't know about this, but at the end of it, I want to say that was the best thing I've ever done for me."

**Leslie Wang:** I love those R's. I jotted them all down. I completely agree. I do want to, maybe put on the lens of, again, a smaller or even small to mid-size organization where, especially these days, the idea of a super robust program might feel overwhelming. But I actually think these artists can all apply even in a smaller organization that is maybe starting to put together a framework for this.

What I would throw out there, I think, also, in my experience of talking to different leaders, is that idea of those transparent conversations that build trust about what kind of professional development someone is looking for, there's what the professional development organization needs them to do, but then there's also the question of, what professional development will help you feel valued and engaged as an employee? So, that question of, are you looking to grow within your role? And also, are you looking to grow into your next role?

So, those questions, I think, can really help figure out how to build an individual plan for a particular team member, and then help them figure out maybe what the relevance is to their next role. But especially if you're growing them for within the organization, that can be huge and can help them build that confidence to get ready for that role. And so, really having that conversation, and recognizing that perhaps some people aren't necessarily interested in moving up in an organization, but really do want to continue to grow and engage and develop professionally, even within a role that they enjoy and don't intend to leave and what that might look like for them.

It's really, I think, building in these elements into a customized conversation, based on where you are as an organization and as a team, depending on how ready you are for something more formalized versus maybe getting started with something a little bit more draft-like I guess, or more of a framework to start with.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Fantastic.

So, there was a really good quote here around how we impact all aspects of the business. But I really felt, in particular, Leonard's answer around how you work in partnership with all the areas of your business within your nonprofit, within your social sector organization, really got at a lot of this.

So, audience members, participants, if you want to think a little bit about how you're developing leaders that contributes to business success and start putting some of that in the question box, you can do that. But we're actually going to go to the next question, which is, what do we risk by not investing in our leaders' development?

And I think one of the really interesting things that's going on right now, we are seeing what I keep hearing as termed the Great Resignation. We are losing people. Not just the nonprofit sector, this is happening in organizations across the board. But we're going to focus in on social sector, since that's our audience today. So, feel free to address that and chime in on that. But also, what else are we risking if we don't invest in the development of our leaders?

**Leonard Nelson:** I'll start. And, Alex, I think, for me that's a huge point, organization's risk losing not just their people, but their best people. I'll put the word "best" in front of that, because leaders, as well as your employees, who aren't offered training and development opportunities, they're likely to look for another role at another company that does offer what they're looking for, some sort of ongoing training, and provides some type of support for those individuals to achieve their career goals. Because many of them coming right in first year, like I was, and they have career goals and aspirations. This is going to lead to higher recruitment and training cost, not to mention potential damage to the company reputation, because we love to talk, and when you lose a person, there's an exit interview. But then, there's the real talk that happens with relatives and friends and colleagues and Facebook and social media platforms where everything is lifted out there.

And to piggyback on then losing that best person, that in turn, that company, the organization, is going to struggle then to actually recruit individuals to come into the company. If a company does not provide significant training and development, then recruitment will prove to be a struggle. Potential employees, they immediately identify that they won't be supported and think that it's likely going to be a short-lived experience.

And so, the company expecting performance without providing any type of development opportunities, for me, it's just unrealistic because you want those employees to be engaged on inception. There's a reason that they applied, there's a reason that they wanted to work for that particular company or agency, and if they're not getting those pieces, they're going to exit out. Those prospective employees will take note of how the company appreciates and how engaged that workforce is. And those businesses that put employee engagement high on their list of priorities, tend to find it easier to attract new employees who are qualified, who are passionate, enthusiastic, and it makes recruiting for those positions a breeze for that company.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Thanks, Leonard. Yeah, go ahead, Leslie.

**Leslie Wang:** Gigi, did you want to go first?

**Gigi Woodruff:** No, go ahead.

**Leslie Wang:** I'm going to come at this a little bit sideways, but it's something that I've seen a lot in my conversations with leaders as they're taking on new roles.

I think by not investing in leaders' development, one thing you risk is being surprised when they leave. And you risk the relationship when they leave. So, a lot of times, great people are just going to go. They might find another opportunity, they might get recruited away, and even if what you're offering is fantastic or they love their job, the next opportunity just might be intriguing to them. And I think by having a culture that invests in leadership development, you're automatically on a continuous basis having those conversations about what that leader is looking for, or what that team members looking for, in terms of opportunity and growth. And as much as you can create that opportunity for them, maybe it's not there, maybe they want to become a Chief Financial Officer, and that role is not going to be available to them within your organization at this time. So, they are much more likely to let you know when they are thinking about or preparing to take on a different role. You can have that transition that succession be much smoother. You can protect that relationship, so maybe in the future, when there's an opportunity for them to come back to your organization, then they're interested.

So I think a lot about, and I don't have the exact numbers, Alex, you may have them, what's happening now with the number of roles that people take on. And I do think part of a leadership development program is actually anticipating departures, having time to do those really well and leaving the door open to conversations for people to come back or to send others your way because they really appreciated the time of growth and opportunity they had with your organization.

**Gigi Woodruff:** I can agree with both of that. I'm going to add one other little layer to this. I think the not-for-profit sector, the social sector, has got to stop thinking about “my org” and start thinking about sector, and that we should be able to share leadership. And we should be able to recognize that some people do this really well, and it's not a problem if we work with another nonprofit over here to do something that we do well with them. We might end up sharing leadership, we might end up—we'd advance the sector, as opposed to saying, “You belong to this org.” Right? And that, “Oh, we can't lose you.” There's that scarcity mentality I referenced before.

But it's an abundant world of people, in a world that is so in need. Somebody said “engaged, empathy and equity,” right? I think I heard that from your founder. It's that, how do we recognize that we need each other more than ever now and that we must be building our leadership development strength collectively? That's why people like Nonprofit HR exist, and other organizations like that, that are not afraid to say, “I have a great ED program, executive development,” “I have a great emotional intelligence program,” “I know how to train coaches within an organization,” and to offer that unabashedly to other not-for-profits, especially the smaller ones, so that we leverage the sector in service to the people who are hurting.

That's why we moved to the nonprofit sector. Not because we flail out in the business world, but because we love the work. Right? And so, I just think that there's something, that if we don't do it for ourselves, we just won't continue to flourish and the sector will be more challenged than it is.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Thank you, Gigi. Atokatha, do we have another question right now? Or do we want to wait till we get to our formal Q&A?

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** You do have a couple more questions, I can start with one. How can younger staff, non-executive level staff, advocate for professional development? Examples include tuition reimbursement, larger budgets for professional development, time off for professional development, especially for employees without children?

**Alexandra Taylor:** Who wants to jump in on that one?

**Gigi Woodruff:** I don't think that's really younger people advocating for that. I got a master's at 50, so I mean, I think that's all ages of people advocating for that kind of development. And so, I think it's funny that we frame it in younger people finding a voice in a non-senior leadership role. I think it's a matter of the awakening of the sector to recognize that in order to be competitive enough to keep the brightest and the best, or even attract them, that's not going to be icing. That's going to be essential thread that we find some way—and you know what? We're the philanthropic organization. There are people, and there are funders, and there are grant providers throughout this world who will fund development and opportunity, and tuition support and we need to advocate for that case.



So, whether it comes from the youngest of the young, brand new, it should be part of our development portfolio package, even if it's minor, even if it's \$200 after a class, it is still saying, "I see you, I want to develop you, I respect you and I want you to continue to thrive and grow."

So, I just think it's going to become part of the wallpaper eventually, if we can actually see that it's not about "get in here and just work." Because I had the joke from 37 years ago, I got handed my keys, shown my office and they said, "Good luck!" And that was about what my development plan was for about my first two years until I started getting squeaky. And by squeaky I mean, advocating for it, that this is not right. And I went out and did it myself. I think I sold ads to go to a training someplace, so that I could have the money to go and took vacation. But, nobody's going to stand in the way of people who are hungry for getting what they need. Right? So, how do we make that just part of our wallpaper? This is who we are and that we believe in developing. Even if we have to partner together to do it. Oh, what a unique concept.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Any other thoughts on that question?

**Leslie Wang:** I think that, one thing, if I were just talking to someone one-on-one that I would probably recommend is making sure you set some proof points up for that professional development. So even if it's that you've attended one webinar or one session, today's session, something that you've found really helpful that you're making sure that you're taking that information you gain back to the people on your team and letting them know what you learned and that you found it helpful. And just start building that precedent, as you're someone who commits to that learning and development, you not only participate in it, where you find those kind of free or low price opportunities, but you really bring that back and share it with your team. And then, you can use that to build your case for higher levels of professional development.

So, I think as someone who has a program with tuition tied to it, I'm like, "Yes, you want to advocate for tuition-based programming." But also it's a big leap to something that's pretty expensive for any organization, especially a smaller to mid-size one. So, showing that, you have always taken it, that you've got at least a few examples under your belt of really taking advantage of opportunities, bringing the learning back to your team and showing that return and benefits your organization, I think can set the stage for a more successful ask.

And then, making sure you use that to make the case for a more organizational-wide program. Because if your situation pans out, then you can use that, too, to help support others in their quest for more opportunity, as well.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Fantastic. Leonard, did you have anything else to say about this before we get to our last set of questions?

**Leonard Nelson:** Just a little bit, because I think it's important, because it's fresh on my mind, because we just wrapped up.

I think it should be a part of, for that question, that individual's performance review process. And so, it needs to be included that in this upcoming year, in addition to the goals and objectives that are based for me for the team. And I have some personal things that I would like to accomplish, I would like to go to one workshop, I would like to attend, I would like to return to school.

In that same vein, and also in with that being a part of performance review, that you actually list it out: What can that supervisor do to support you to help you meet the goals? Well, you know what you can do to help me meet the goals? You can help me seek out some avenues to support my continuous education—what tracks, what's available, what money is already here.

And then, I know it comes with the question that you are already in your role but do your research if you're looking to move into a different role or into a different company, different organization, prior to diving in 100%. Those are questions, when we get to that part of the interview, where they ask, “Are there any questions, anything you'd like to ask?” Yes. What does your leadership development program do? How did you guys invest in employees? Is there a way for us to go, if I'm interested in returning to school to get my master's, is there a program? Is there a policy in place that's going to reimburse me? Or pay for a little bit? Or pay for half?

And then, self-promote. I'm a little bit older now than before, but self-promote. Get to know those people, network. When those opportunities come up, don't just sit back and say, “Oh, no, I'm not going to go that.” That's how you're going to meet the people who have a rein on the folks with the money. And so, get to know individuals outside of the scope of your service area, of your team. Get to know others outside of that team, so you can self-promote. You can connect and network, and then get to know the individuals who can actually help and support you, and advocate for you and who can co-advocate with you to get you where you need to be.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Fantastic. All right, we're going to wrap up our time today.

Well, maybe, if I can get to my next question. All right, there we go.

So, we're actually going to go, we're going to look at this quote really quickly, and then we're going to go to another one. I'm going to read this out, and then I want both the audience to be responding—what your thoughts are about these future leadership development trends, where we're headed, what's coming—and then, I would love to hear from Leslie, Leonard and Gigi as well around this.

So, [leadership development] in the future, it's going to be about identifying and developing potential. It's going to be being ready and able to handle all this ambiguity and change that we're experiencing.

And the Center for Creative Leadership, which is a research and education company, has identified these four trends that are probably going to need to be part of future leadership development programs. One is vertical development. So, in the past with, Gigi kind of referenced earlier on, this manager focus, it is very horizontal; fundamental skills and competencies you need to perform right now at the level you're at. That's still important, we're not minimizing that. But [with] the uncertainty and how things are constantly changing, it's going to require a stronger emphasis on our leadership capacity for these more complex roles.

The other piece, the other three things that they called out are individual ownership, which Leonard just talked about. Yes, models rely on organizational structures, like human resources, to sponsor and coordinate, but the strongest benefits are realized when workers are able to determine their own training agenda. And I think each of us could reflect. I heard it in y'all's story, it's in my story as well, what are the spaces and places where I advocated for my own development, where I said, "This is what I really think it would help my organization." It's not just about me. It's about how I'm going to help the organization as well. And so, how do we ensure that we're thinking about that and we're encouraging the voices from our staff to speak up?

That collective leadership. Less hierarchy, more fluidity in the workplace. It's going to require skills that are more widely distributed, Leonard talked about this. Every person in the organization is a leader. Right? We've got to actually start preparing our folks and making sure they have what they need, so they feel like they can act into that.

And then, the innovation. Greater agility and more experimentation needed to meet the demands of this new environment.

So, our last question, kind of building off all this is, what are those things? You can either you can reflect on the things we just shared, Leslie, Leonard or Gigi, or what are other trends and patterns we see coming for leadership development and learning in the future?

**Leonard Nelson:** If there's one thing I think we all can agree on, it's that 2020 didn't quite turn out the way we expected it. It was a year of massive change and I'm speaking from Leonard and then, outward with the organization.

And in fact, the pandemic has fundamentally changed the way we work, how we communicate and the way that we learn. So the L&D, the learning and development, trends are, or should be, or we should be moving, catapulting, to 2022 to be in place to sit to address even changes the more and ensure that we can continue to support organizational performance by taking a more strategic role.

So, I think it's going to be in the areas of increased diversity, equity and inclusion, and centered around learning and development concepts and trainings with that. Making new virtual experiences, not just engaging as an instructor-led, face-to-face. I never thought that at this date that I would have moved all of what we call our cornerstone programs to a virtual learning component. Even me, and I head up the department. I never thought that our cornerstone program would be 100% virtual.

And then, the last thing for me would be upskills and reskilling, if you will. To upskill means, and I think everybody has it, learning skills for the same job or the same job function. And employees have certainly been asked to do this over the course of the last year and a half. So this could mean anything from the same job, and now of doing it remotely, but being able to use those different tools. And we must remain adaptable, because change is inevitable.

**Gigi Woodruff:** I'm just going to add a quick trend around virtual that I have found, and I have been a virtual teacher for 12 years, so last year was nothing new. It's just something we've always done. Especially with very high-level courses, not just a little pedantic things that you can learn through a virtual lens. But I think we have to teach people how to show up differently in the learning exposure virtually than we do when they attend the Zoom meetings. Zoom ruined virtual learning, because we've all learned to just show up and got all these talking heads, that's not a best practice. It's not a best practice to have the camera on an entire class. It's not a best practice to have more than 12 people in a class, or 25, looking at 40 heads as you're sitting there trying to have a learning experience, not letting them talk, hiding behind a camera, not having it on, not knowing how to use any of the tools.

I think we have to refocus on helping people learn how to learn virtually. Because there's a lot of limiting beliefs still that say, "This is essential because we have to do it." But that doesn't mean they're transferring knowledge and being able to apply it. So, I think that's a new trend and pattern that we're going to have to get over our limiting beliefs about it and not just think that marking time is good enough. Marking time in a class is not good enough. And so, you have to have it blended. How do we prepare for class? How do we use class effectively? How did we do class in-between classes to actually apply, and think and reflect?

And now, you've got a true robust learning program, as opposed to just, "I got virtual credit." And you can't take a classroom class and just deliver it online. It's a completely different process and structure of engagement. And so, what do we, as learning professionals, need to do to step up our game so that we understand virtual learning?

**Alexandra Taylor:** Leslie, do you want to speak to this as well?

**Leslie Wang:** You've literally outlined my 2022 to-do list. As we think about, how do we take programs, but now many of us were forced to pivot to virtual, and then how do we generally make these—now that we have the opportunity to expand beyond our local base—how do we make it the most engaging as possible?

For the question, Alex, around trends and patterns, I will be the first to say, I am not the best at forecasting. But I will put out a few, if that helps at all. The first is, I do hope for a more demanding workforce, and I say this across the board. I think that we have been or many, many of us have shown that we can work in different ways, different times, different zones. Some people love to be in the office, some people don't. But I have seen across the sector, people step up in every single way and often step beyond what we all thought was possible.

And I just really want to share my respect and deep gratitude for what everyone has done in order to keep serving, the way that you put it at the very beginning, Gigi, and showing up as your best self to do your best work. And I really do believe that the people in that sector have shown up as the best selves they could possibly be, given what we all have going on in our individual lives, and continue to do the best work. And so, I really do hope that we use this to think more creatively about how we can continue to do the work in the future. Even once we, universe willing, get beyond the bounds of this pandemic.

The other thing I really wish for, I've touched on lightly, is just managing turnover. And I love the way that you put it, also Gigi, of the sector, we talk about the humanity, and compassion and empathy of the sector all the time, and I think there's a way we can both support the sector and support careers by making sure that these pathways through our sector are supported and transitions are done well for the good of all.

And then, the last piece I think is really looking at and analyzing individual career growth strategies. Stepping aside from any traditional ladders and recognizing that there are ways to continue to grow within organizations, within careers, within the sector, that give us a chance to pause and take a breath, do different work, use our brain in different ways and maybe go back onto the ladder we were on before. And so, those are some of my wishes as we move forward that we take from these last couple of years, and really think about what's possible and work together to achieve it.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Fantastic!

Well, before we wrap, Atokatha, do we have some good questions from the audience and from participants that we might want to do a little rapid fire response here in our last few minutes for Gigi, Leonard and Leslie?

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Hi there, Alex, and absolutely. Here's the first one. What tips do you have for fostering a growth mindset among staff?

**Alexandra Taylor:** Who wants to jump in?

**Gigi Woodruff:** I hate going first all the time on these, but I will, just because I think about that all the time. I talk a lot about the difference between fixed and growth mindsets. And I think one of the things is, one, we have to learn to cultivate that as we recruit people. There are ways to identify through people's stories whether they find themselves in a fixed mindset or growth mindset, and I have seen that people can shift. It's not endemic to their personality all the time.

And I believe one of the skills that leaders and supporters, and peers need to have is the capacity to inquire, and coach, and prompt and help people harvest the information and insight that they just got from doing something. Because there's something about turning on someone's curiosity that says, "Hmm, I wonder what was behind that. Hmm, I wonder how that happened. Hmm, I wonder how... Oh, wow, how am I feeling when I did that really well? Oh, how did I feel when I was really crappy and delivered that really poorly?"

So, I think there's a beauty in, it's the gift of inquiry, and it's the gift of listening. And then, helping them to encourage and the appreciative feedback that says, "Yes, I saw that in you," and encourage them to try it again. And so, those are threads. Here's the thing, we do this beautifully to our participants and our clients and we suck at it when it comes to our staff. I mean, why can we not treat our staff as the first team that we count on to deliver powerfully. Right? We treat our members and our clients better than we ever treat our staff.

So, I hope that those skills that we can learn is that, without this, we have to get smaller, and I don't mean just budget size. I mean, we shrink and we can't. The world needs us more now than ever in this sector.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Here's another one. I'm interested in L&D for employees who are also learning, or improving, English or another language for work.

**Alexandra Taylor:** I'm going to let someone jump in on that. Who wants to jump in on that? Leslie, were you getting ready to answer? Or were you just processing?

**Leslie Wang:** I think it's a really intriguing question. My gut would be to, again, in that more coaching and inquiring way, to ask what they're looking for, what they would find helpful and frankly, to be open to that resource maybe being in their home language or their first language versus in the second language. But that's just an off-the-cuff response. In a larger organization, I wonder, Leonard, if you've dealt with that.

**Leonard Nelson:** We have an array of different representation in here, and so, having a learning management system where it speaks different languages. You can actually go in and select that.

You would need to have a coaching feedback session initially, with the hiring manager and then the employee, to actually have that built into their plan, so we know what it looks like on the back side. So that when they are ready to select and issue trainings, that we can issue it to them in a way that it's going to be productive and that they're going to be able to succeed.

We want to make sure that we're setting them up for success, and so those are one of the pieces that takes place during a feedback coaching session for, what is it that you want to do? What is your career pathway? This is what we have in place for you for your first three and a half years here, but, in addition to this, when we get to the bottom portion of that document, where it says "additional learning opportunities," then that's when we want that employee to speak up and say, "Yeah, I'd love to go to some of these things. But can it be in my native language?" Or, "Can it be, where it's scripted? And I can actually see the content closed captioning on the screen?" So a learning management system would be awesome if it's in place to be able to connect with all agency staff.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Yeah. I would just say, too, that one of the beauties of the virtual space is that you can connect with people, sometimes people who are able to train or to help deliver something in another language that may not be on your staff team. If you're a smaller group organization, or you're starting to see that there are other needs within your organization, there's the ability to do that now. And I think that wasn't something we always had, because we may looked right in our geographic area right around us where we were, but now we can connect with other people who are in other cities and other places who may be able to help support some of that. So I think there's the ability to have some creativity around that.



Atokatha, maybe one more question, and then we'll wrap things up.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Yep. One more. Here we go. My organization invests a lot in training, but I keep losing people as soon as they get the skills needed to move to the next level. What can I do, especially regarding my younger employees?

**Alexandra Taylor:** Oh, yeah. We talked about that a little bit, I think, at the beginning. But yeah, are there some things maybe even just in how we're thinking about this? And what, maybe in terms of how we start those conversations, Leonard or Leslie, I think both of you talked about this. So maybe there's some further thinking or thoughts or responses around that specifically?

**Leonard Nelson:** Yeah, for us it depends on the role that the employee has coming in. So, if we're investing a vast amount of money then we have to have an acknowledgement that they're going to actually stay with us for an extended period of time. We have basic tracks, so if you are incoming that goes back to that, should we require training? So, if you're heavily investing in a staff person in a track, there has to be some type of formal commitment on both parts. You can't just milk the cow dry, and get everything that they can get from the agency and then say, "OK, you know what? Got everything here. I'm leaving, I'm going to work over here." So, there has to be that commitment piece.

And then, for the ones who are coming in, there has to be, in layman's term for Leonard, there has to be a carrot; there has to be something for that new employee that's coming in because we see that all the time. I see it all the time here. A new employee, we hire someone, and they're here three months, and then they see, "Oh, I can make \$3 more, or \$2 more, over here. Bye, I'm leaving."

And, so, what is it that we're doing? What is it that we're committing as an agency to say, if you come in, if you stay here, this is what you're going to get as an employee here? So here are your benefits, we call them benefits and perks. Here are the benefits and perks that you will receive as an incoming, entry-level staff being here at this agency, if you're going to remain with us at least for three years.

And that's, of course, not absolute, some are going to leave anyway and do what it is that they need to do. But in many cases, if I can see that I can grow, develop and thrive, I'm actually going to stay here.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Leslie, do you have any reflections on that?

**Leslie Wang:** So, I think, especially if the training involves some kind of certificate with value in the marketplace, it makes a lot of sense to me to have the kind of arrangement that Leonard was describing.

To generalize it a little bit, if we're thinking about onboarding new employees and getting them trained for whatever the role is and they're leaving sooner than expected, one of the questions I always like to ask is, are you having exit interviews? Can you do a full orientation process? Like, let's walk through what that employee's experience was as they started with your organization, and did you really sit down and talk to them about why they're leaving to understand if that is something with the organizational culture or a mismatch between expectations and reality for the hire, and things like that.

So, I think I definitely can understand the uniqueness of a situation where there's a valuable training or certificate that requires investment, where there's some hopping that happens there that you want to avoid. If it's not that situation, where there isn't necessarily that kind of valuable training, but you just invested in onboarding an employee and you're losing them more rapidly than you expect, I think it takes some real reflection on the part of the organization and some investigation to figure out what's going on.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Absolutely, good way to end that. Well, I just want to thank you both. And I want to also just let you know that Gigi, the internet went out at her house. That's the joys of virtual training and the virtual environment. So, she just let us know that she was having some trouble during a thunderstorm coming through. We thank her so much for being present today and sharing, and thank you to Leslie and Leonard as well for your engagement, your thoughtful responses.

I loved all the different perspectives that were present in each of the lenses that you all brought from the state that you sit and now to your past experiences, to where you are seeing things going. We're just thrilled that we were able to host this conversation. I hope for each of our attendees, and those who will be watching the recording later, that there were some insights and some things that you can draw.

And if there's something that we can help with at Nonprofit HR, these are all of the ways that we assist organizations. Some organizations engage us for all of these things. Many organizations pick and choose a few things that they're able to focus on that they feel are most critical right now, but we want to ensure that you all know that we're available. My email address is here, and Atokatha, I think, is going to close us out, and share more contact information and just wrap things up.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** As Alex said, that's all the time we have for Q&A today. Thank you to everyone who attended this webinar. We hope you found it valuable. Thank you, again, to our panelists for leading today's dynamic discussion. There are many, many more webinars coming your way in 2021. Be sure to check out our events calendar at [nonprofithr.com/events](https://nonprofithr.com/events). Also, be sure to complete the feedback survey that will pop up once the webcast has ended. Your comments help us with our planning and can inform topics we cover as well. If you'd like more information about Nonprofit HR and the available services and support mechanisms we have in place to support your organization, please email us at [info@nonprofithr.com](mailto:info@nonprofithr.com) or visit us online at [nonprofithr.com](https://nonprofithr.com). Thank you so much, and we hope you have a wonderful day.