

ELPNO

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Evaluation of the Executive Leadership Program for Nonprofit Organizations (ELPNO) 2023

Report of Findings

Initial Report
March 2023

Executive Summary

The Executive Leadership Program for Nonprofit Organizations (ELPNO) is a professional development program for current and emerging executives and other leaders working in the nonprofit sector. Piloted in 2007, the program offers an engaging format that provides opportunities for peers to translate theory into strategies that are relevant, immediately practical, and useable in their work.

What We Measured

The ELPNO 2023 Planning Committee asked the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at the University of Georgia to assess participants' perceptions of and satisfaction with the week-long program. The evaluation measures participants' on-site response to individual sessions and to the overall program. A pre-post leadership skill/knowledge assessment is also included to identify the change in skills/knowledge associated with nonprofit leadership.

How We Measured

Evaluation forms designed for both individual sessions and the overall program measured participant responses. The surveys included Likert-type scales and open-ended questions for additional feedback. The evaluation report presents responses in various models such as tables reflecting mean scores, charts displaying distribution of responses, and categorized comments to synthesize the information while still maintaining individuality.

Organization of the Report

This report begins with an overview of the ELPNO 2023 program. Next, a brief overview of the evaluation process is provided. Findings are then detailed, including ratings and comments from ELPNO 2023 participants.

Overview of ELPNO

The Executive Leadership Program for Nonprofit Organizations (ELPNO) is a professional development program for upcoming executives and leaders in the nonprofit sector. Piloted in 2007, the program offers an engaging format that provides opportunities for participants to translate theory into practice and concepts into strategies that are relevant, immediately practical, and useable in their work.

ELPNO 2023 is a partnership between the Nonprofit Studies Program in the Andrew Young School for Policy Studies at Georgia State University and the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at the University of Georgia. This collaboration provides cutting-edge content to leaders as they explore proactive methods for improving the effectiveness of their organizations while increasing their own skills.

ELPNO 2023 was conducted at the Fanning Institute in Athens, Georgia from Sunday, January 8, through Friday, January 13, 2023. Twenty-three (23) participants attended and most resided at the conference hotel throughout the week.

ELPNO Faculty

For ELPNO 2023, the Planning Committee selected a mix of skilled faculty, industry leaders, and subject matter experts from American University, Kennesaw State University, the University of Texas at Dallas, the Mandel School at Case Western Reserve University, and the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University. It also includes leading practitioners heading local nonprofits such as re:loom (see Appendix A for a list of program agenda with presenters).

2023 ELPNO Participating Organizations

The ELPNO 2023 class was comprised of 23 individuals representing 21 organizations from Georgia, South Dakota, California, Minnesota, and South Carolina. 7 were CEO's/Executive Directors and 16 were key management staff. Organizational budgets ranged from \$150,000 - \$110,000,000 and organizations employed over 2,300 total employees and are supported by – and support – over 30,000 volunteers.

Organization

Anmed Health Foundation
 Atlanta Community Food Bank
 Aurora Day Camp
 Camp Sunshine
 Coastal Coalition for Children
 Etowah Scholarship Foundation
 Georgia Charter Schools Association
 Georgia Humanities Council
 Georgia Options
 Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education
 HFH Georgia
 Impact46, Inc.
 Jewish Kids Groups
 Junior Achievement of Georgia
 KIPP Metro Atlanta Schools
 MENTOR GA
 New American Pathways
 Range Mental Health Center
 RedefinED Atlanta
 Team Red, White, & Blue

 The Warrior Alliance

Location

Anderson, SC
 Atlanta, GA
 Dunwoody, GA
 Decatur, GA
 Brunswick, GA
 Cartersville, GA
 Atlanta, GA
 Atlanta, GA
 Athens, GA
 Atlanta, GA
 Columbus, GA
 Lawrenceville, GA
 Atlanta, GA
 Smyrna, GA
 Smyrna, GA
 Athens, GA
 Atlanta, GA
 Virginia, MN
 Atlanta, GA
 Santa Barbara, CA
 Rapid City, SD
 Atlanta, GA

ELPNO 2023 Evaluation

The ELPNO 2023 Planning Committee worked with faculty from the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at the University of Georgia to assess participants' perceptions of and satisfaction with the week-long program. The evaluation was designed to measure 1) participants' on-site response to individual sessions, 2) response to the overall program, and 3) increase in knowledge and skill.

To that end, participants received and responded to an electronically delivered pre-survey, including both a pre-skill/knowledge assessment and a series of open-ended questions to collect their expectations for the program. Hard copies of session evaluation forms were distributed to each participant immediately following each session. Participants were asked to complete each form immediately, though some participants returned the completed forms at the end of the same day or the next morning. The overall program evaluation, including the post-assessment of leadership skills/knowledge, was conducted after the final session on the final day of programming. Participants were assured that their ratings and comments were anonymous and that open, honest, constructive feedback was welcome.

The ELPNO 2023 evaluation forms reflected the interests of the program sponsors, who sought specific feedback regarding the following:

Overall program:

- Extent to which participants gained nonprofit leadership knowledge and/or skills
- Extent to which the program was congruent with goals and objectives
- Extent to which the program met learners' expectations
- Perceptions of and suggestions for program processes and future content

Individual sessions:

- Relevance
- Effectiveness
- Usefulness
- Applicability to the participant and their organization

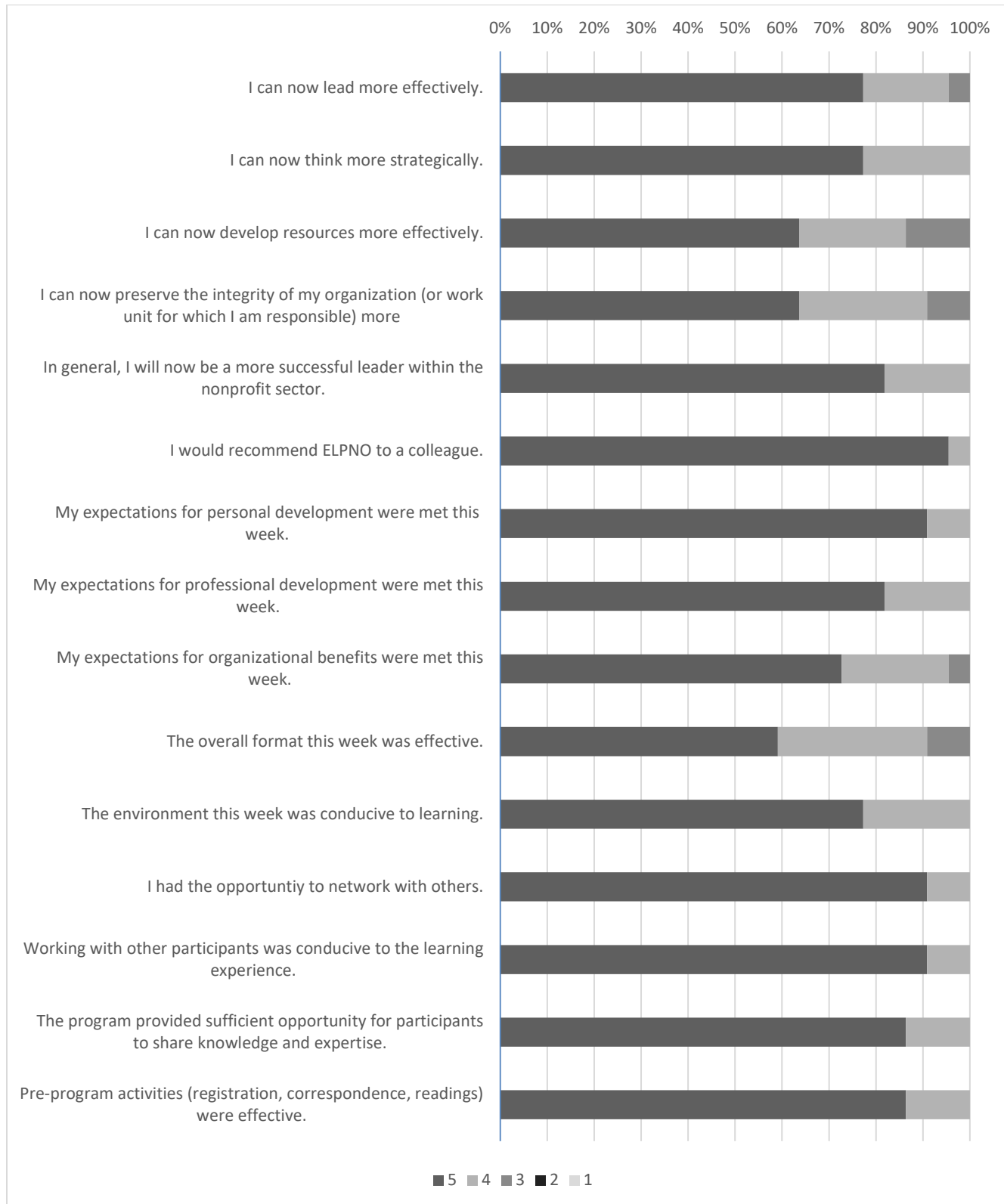
The evaluation forms are included as Appendix B. Likert-type rating scales were used for most items, in which participants were asked to choose “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Disagree”, or “Strongly Disagree” in response to a series of statements relevant to the session’s content, delivery, relevancy, and effectiveness. Both session and program evaluation forms include open-ended questions for participants to provide additional feedback on various aspects of the ELPNO program.

Findings – Overall Program

Table 1: Mean Scores by Survey Item for Overall Program (Scale of 1-5)

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1. I can now lead more effectively.	4.73	0.55	22
2. I can now think more strategically.	4.77	0.43	22
3. I can now develop resources more effectively.	4.50	0.74	22
4. I can now preserve the integrity of my organization (or work unit for which I am responsible) more effectively.	4.55	0.67	22
5. In general, I will now be a more successful leader within the nonprofit sector.	4.82	0.39	22
6. I would recommend ELPNO to a colleague.	4.95	0.21	22
7. My expectations for personal development were met this week (what I wanted to achieve relative to my personal leadership skills and abilities).	4.91	0.29	22
8. My expectations for professional development were met this week (what I wanted to achieve relative to my career goals).	4.82	0.39	22
9. My expectations for organizational benefit were met this week (what I and my employer wanted to achieve relative to business goals).	4.68	0.57	22
10. The overall format this week was effective.	4.50	0.67	22
11. The environment this week was conducive to learning.	4.77	0.43	22
12. I had the opportunity to network with others.	4.91	0.29	22
13. Working with other participants was conducive to the learning experience.	4.91	0.29	22
14. The program provided sufficient opportunity for participants to share knowledge and experience.	4.86	0.35	22
15. Pre-program activities (registration, correspondence, readings) were effective.	4.86	0.35	22

Figure 1: Distribution of Responses by Survey Item for Overall Program



On a 5-point scale, where 1 means “Strongly Disagree” and 5 means “Strongly Agree” or where 1 means “Did Not Meet Expectations” and 5 means “Exceeded Expectations”

Participant Comments on the Overall Program

Five open ended questions were included on the Overall Program Evaluation form:

1. How did your ELPNO experience this week impact you?
2. What else could we have done to maximize your ELPNO experience?
3. What suggestions do you have for improving participant interaction/collaboration?
4. What suggestions do you have for our future marketing of the program?
5. What other comments or suggestions do you have?
6. What three actions will you take as a result of your time at ELPNO?
7. Would you be interested in reconvening with your ELPNO classmates in Atlanta or Athens in six months? If yes, what would you like to spend your time doing?
8. What learning topics would you like to explore during an alumni event for the ELPNO 2023 class?

All participant responses to these open-ended questions are provided in this section. Comments are listed in random order. Comments are shown as written by the participants with minor editing for spelling and punctuation. Respondents' emphasis has been preserved.

Question 1: How did your ELPNO experience this week impact you?

- Provided tools. Provided opportunity to learn from others. Thought provoking conversations.
- The growth of my network - huge! Reminders to flip things on their head and look at them in other ways were so valuable.
- It forced me to take a hard look at my career path and goals for the next 5-10 years and what I need to do or improve upon to get there to make me a confident and in demand leader.
- Changed my perspective on both personal and org thinking.
- It's been a very powerful program. Love the various reflective components.
- It was great. The insights and experience will allow me to lead with greater confidence as a servant leader.
- Re-centered my focus to include intentional priorities as a new ED.
- I gained actionable knowledge that will both ground me and give me courage to make informed but difficult decisions. I felt seen and heard by my cohorts.
- Grew me as a person to want to do more and dig deeper.
- In more ways than I expected. I am thrilled to bring home practical ideas and approaches to continue to grow as a leader.
- In ways I can't even articulate now, but it shifted my thinking on so many things helped me ask new questions and brought things into focus.
- Made me move more out of my comfort zone and share with others. Energy of others produces energy in me.
- I appreciated the time to engage with our cohort. I learned so much from the experiences, challenges, and what they shared.
- Finding common themes in each org was useful. Collaborate approaches to solving actual issues are facing (practice our theory).
- It was timely as I needed a time to break away and be with like-minded peers and experiences in- person training and workshop problems/passions.

- I got to learn some applicable ways to utilize knowledge in building resource materials for others.
- Great networking. Relevant content. Topical issues.
- The experience impacted me by solidifying areas of confidence where I thought I was weak. It has changed and empowered me to speak up more and present solutions to issues I didn't previously share.
- I felt alone as a leader in the nonprofit space and now I feel more equipped and less like I'm stranded on an island.
- It's possible to sum up in an image I'll hold forever: this morning, our last day, I looked in the mirror and marveled that I could've dropped a pound or two in just 5 days. Then I realized I was standing a little taller.
- This experience has impacted me in so many ways starting with knowing that I am not alone in the challenges that I face as a leader. I will work to keep the connections and networks that I have gained through this experience.
- My heart and head are filled with encouragement, renewed energy and new insights I can apply on my leadership journey. So grateful for the opportunity to connect with such wonderful people and leaders.

Question 2: What else could we have done to maximize your ELPNO experience?

- Food was excellent...better coffee?
- Nothing from the content perspective. The days are long and while breaks were given, the material is dense so to have optimal focus for the week (every session) was a challenge.
- I think this could be shortened by a day. Also, more breaks or more broken up presentations/less lectures.
- It was perfect. Very smooth facilitation.
- Everything was First Class!!
- I can't think of anything. It was a week packed full of learning new concepts with tangible tools as well.
- Perhaps incorporate non-academics and practitioners in the sessions.
- I'm not sure that it could have been better.
- Nothing. I love that you took our suggestions and feedback each day to continue to make everyday/session better. Thank you!
- The academic vs. practical content is pretty well balanced but/and the finance/resiliency sessions leaned a little too much into the lecture space.
- I can't think of anything else at this time.
- A little more focus on operations and organizational structures.
- Evaluate some sessions as they could be shorter. Instead of work shopping another nonprofit it would be nice to have that level of oversight.
- Ensured facilitators understood the importance of breaks and recognition that classroom settings are not the norm for us daily.
- I do sincerely think we hit a point of diminishing returns around 3 p.m. every day (after starting so early).
- I can't think of anything else, everything was phenomenal.

- Nothing - you all did an amazing job creating a valuable learning environment. Maybe moving the alumni panel to the day - potentially at the Resilience class time down to create space for that.
- Being a new ED, I would have benefitted from having a glossary of common terminology. On the other hand, I was able to develop a personal list of new terms (acronyms because everyone was careful to explain as we went along).
- Shared the reading materials a little earlier than several days before. Provide resource list of recommended nonprofit leadership books/articles/websites for future reference.

Question 3: What suggestions do you have for improving participant interaction/collaboration?

- Use participation as an opportunity for personal development - not just name the color but how to recognize aspects and work on them here.
- Encouraging or work with facilitators to draw out more participation from the quieter voices in the room who we did not hear as much from.
- I thought our group did great with collaboration and interaction, so no suggestions.
- More intentional table groupings that ensure that everyone works with each participant.
- Maybe being called on to public speak more.
- Topic area to consider might be Leadership Theory and how people align with their personality profile.
- I believe the format is great at ensuring everyone feels comfortable to interact and collaborate.
- Even though we technically had time together during meals and in the evenings, the immersive learning was so exhausting, it was hard to take advantage. I didn't get to network the way I expected.
- More opportunities to use specific issues within our organization to the discussion table.
- Not sure I can think of anything.
- The longer group work sessions were some of the most beneficial so focusing on that could ever further deeper collaboration.
- Understanding we are not all financial but also taking in account the importance.
- More hands on practical break-out of groups focusing on financial and operational health and growth. Maybe use case examples.
- The group-me is a great idea. Consider having cohort events in addition to general ELPNO Alumni events.
- There were moments when a single participant's presence dominated the room. Would have liked to see that facilitated better.
- Extended levels of training based on expertise/desires.
- In group breakouts, setting a timer or having a way to ensure everyone gets a turn to speak.
- I would consider shortening the week by a day or shortening the days by a couple of hours.
- Perhaps more short breaks to keep people more engaged that might not be used to sitting in long settings.
- Put everything on a thumb drive - save the paper and space by not printing everything out and putting it in a notebook.

- No suggestion except continue to reorganize participants each day to encourage us to meet and learn from every other classmate.
- Make sure that we have time to interact with every person in the class. Start the week off with a collaborative activity.

Question 4: What suggestions do you have for our future marketing of the program?

- Pitch points to help us share/market this to others in our communities or networks.
- If there is a nonprofit national ED group, I would advertise there or I would Google 30 organizations from 10 states (all in different sectors of nonprofits) and reach out to the EDs. More labor intensive, but it could cast your net wide.
- Perhaps a reception where alumni can bring a prospective student to learn more.
- Find ways to reach out to rural Georgia leaders. We often feel alone and struggle to know or feel we are confident in our work.
- Social media - past alumni.
- Alumni referral network.
- Lettings us be aware when registration will open for future participants.
- Ask for recommendations of other non-profit leaders from ELPNO Alumni.
- Alumni testimonials.
- Use your alumni to promote on a certain day to cross collaborate within networks on social media.
- In my opinion, I feel this is a well kept secret, so many people would benefit from this program. Additional marketing by way of social media platforms would be great!
- Periodic check-ins with graduates will certainly be a source of follow-up success stories.
- Definitely strengthen your LinkedIn presence. Encourage students to post. Consider sponsoring a chapter meeting for Greater Atlanta, chapter of AFP (or other statewide chapters).

Question 5: What other comments or suggestions do you have?

- Ya'll are awesome!
- Thank you so much for the opportunity. I'm so grateful.
- Amazing experience. Thank you. We as leaders in this field need more opportunities like this.
- Again, rural Georgia leaders and ways to keep them know this program is available.
- Loved the whole week.
- This was a wonderful experience and I am grateful to have been a part of it.

Question 6: What three actions will you take as a result of your time at ELPNO?

(1)

- Take time to ask questions.
- Use board tools.
- Better leveraging of and outreach to my (Mentor Affiliate) peers across the country.
- Confidence in leadership ability.
- I am going to re-evaluate my job responsibilities.
- Utilize many of the tools/skills in my strategic planning for my org.

- Better understand our financial health.
- Execute board of directors development plan.
- Planning to diversify financials.
- Help board move into role.
- Continue to grow and connect.
- Use tools discovered this week as part of strategic planning.
- Unpack what I learned with my CEO (who went to ELPNO 22).
- Share the life cycle of a non-profit organization framework model.
- Intentional goal setting and action planning.
- Financial evaluation.
- Assessing the financial health of our org.
- Pursue more in-depth nonprofit finance PD.
- Review of board/ED relationship, work together to make needed changes.
- I will intentionally take time to reflect on the many lessons learned.
- Apply lens of adaptive and technical change to my work.

(2)

- Commit to personal and professional growth.
- Evaluate and plan for more financial health.
- Financial forecasting and scenarios to guide key decisions for the organization.
- Peel the onion with questions
- I am going to look at how we can ask the right questions to our problems (using a new framework).
- Assess our organization's income health in new ways.
- Better solicit feedback from my clients.
- Align personal development plan.
- Educate board more on governance.
- Set up standards needed.
- Pursue opportunities for continuing education.
- Buy the org life cycle book and use it.
- Utilize the organizational lifecycle ideas in determining our needs to expand our staff and services.
- I look forward to engaging my principles in the peeling onion activity.
- Monitoring of financial health.
- Portfolio diversification.
- Creating resources for our board to clarify their responsibility.
- Check in with cohort members to collaborate.
- Work with finance and BOD to evaluate current opportunities to improve and develop new income stream.
- I will use the insights on how we think and ask questions around hiring in our organization.
- Seek out new board leadership opportunities.

(3)

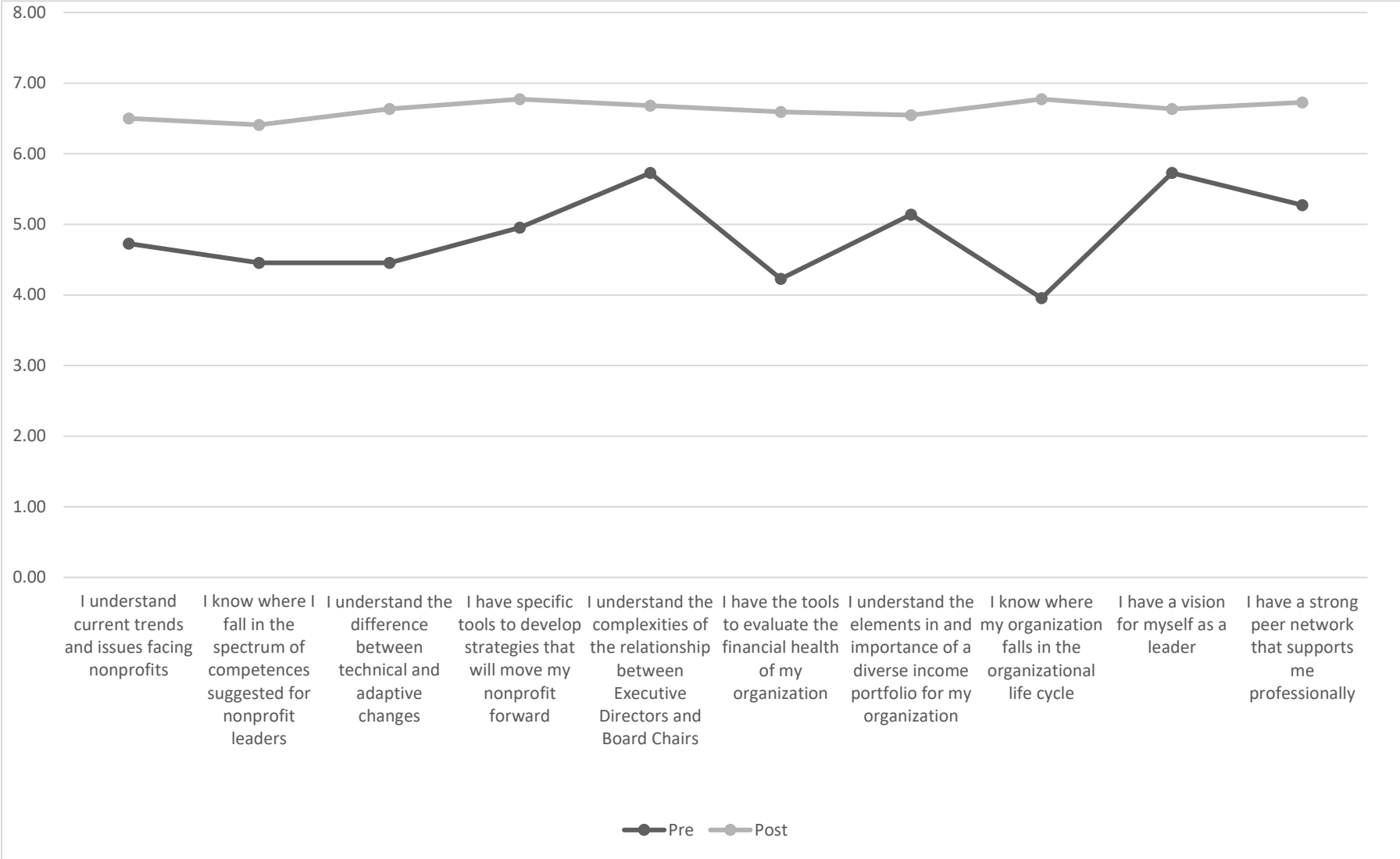
- Lead with humility and curiosity.
- Call on the expertise and resources of my ELPNO peers.
- Work to provide clarity in roles and responsibilities.
- I am going to ask my boss to sit in on board meetings to gain a deeper perspective on the dynamics of a board/how our board operates and governance.
- Use new knowledge of organizational life cycle to assist with inter-staff relations.
- Continue to pursue growth and leadership opportunities.
- Use peel the onion exercise.
- Try to see the big picture from the balcony more - carve out time to do so.
- Find mentor for my specific position.
- Make provisions for my organization to be financially prepared.
- Connect with my ELPNO alums.
- Build a new relationship with a peer for support.
- I plan to gain a better understanding of our board, their level of engagement and governance.
- Push org past the "yes, but..." stage of planning.
- Board engagement strategies.
- Read and share the books received with my office and fellow nonprofit leaders.
- Re-evaluate recruitment strategies.
- I will take care of myself, including scheduling regular time to reflect upon what I've learned this week.
- I will approach the board with more confidence in understanding their role.
- Set up regular lunch with my CFO to further enhance my understanding of financial leadership.

Findings – Pre- and Post-Assessment

Table 2: Mean Scores by Survey Item for Pre-Survey and Post-Assessment of Nonprofit Leadership Skills/Knowledge (Scale of 1-7)

Items	Pre-Survey Mean	Pre-Survey SD	Pre-Survey N	Post-Survey Mean	Post-Survey SD	Post-Survey N	Percentage INCREASE from Pre-Post
1. I understand current trends and issues facing nonprofits.	4.73	1.15	22	6.50	0.51	22	73.0
2. I know where I fall in the spectrum of competencies suggested for nonprofit leaders.	4.45	1.50	22	6.41	0.50	22	70.0
3. I understand the difference between technical and adaptive changes.	4.45	1.74	22	6.64	0.49	22	67.0
4. I have specific tools to develop strategies that will move my nonprofit forward.	4.95	1.13	22	6.77	0.43	22	73.0
5. I understand the complexities of the relationship between Executive Directors and Board Chairs.	5.73	1.03	22	6.68	0.48	22	86.0
6. I have the tools to evaluate the financial health of my organization.	4.23	1.72	22	6.59	0.50	22	64.0
7. I understand the elements in, and importance of, a diverse income portfolio for my organization.	5.14	1.55	22	6.55	0.51	22	78.0
8. I know where my organization falls in the organizational life cycle and understand strategies to move it to the next stage.	3.95	1.46	22	6.77	0.43	22	58.0
9. I have a vision for myself as a leader.	5.73	0.94	22	6.64	0.49	22	86.0
11. I have a strong peer network that supports me professionally.	5.27	1.42	22	6.73	0.46	22	78.0

Figure 2: Change in Mean Scores by Survey Item for Pre and Post Assessment (Scale of 1-7)

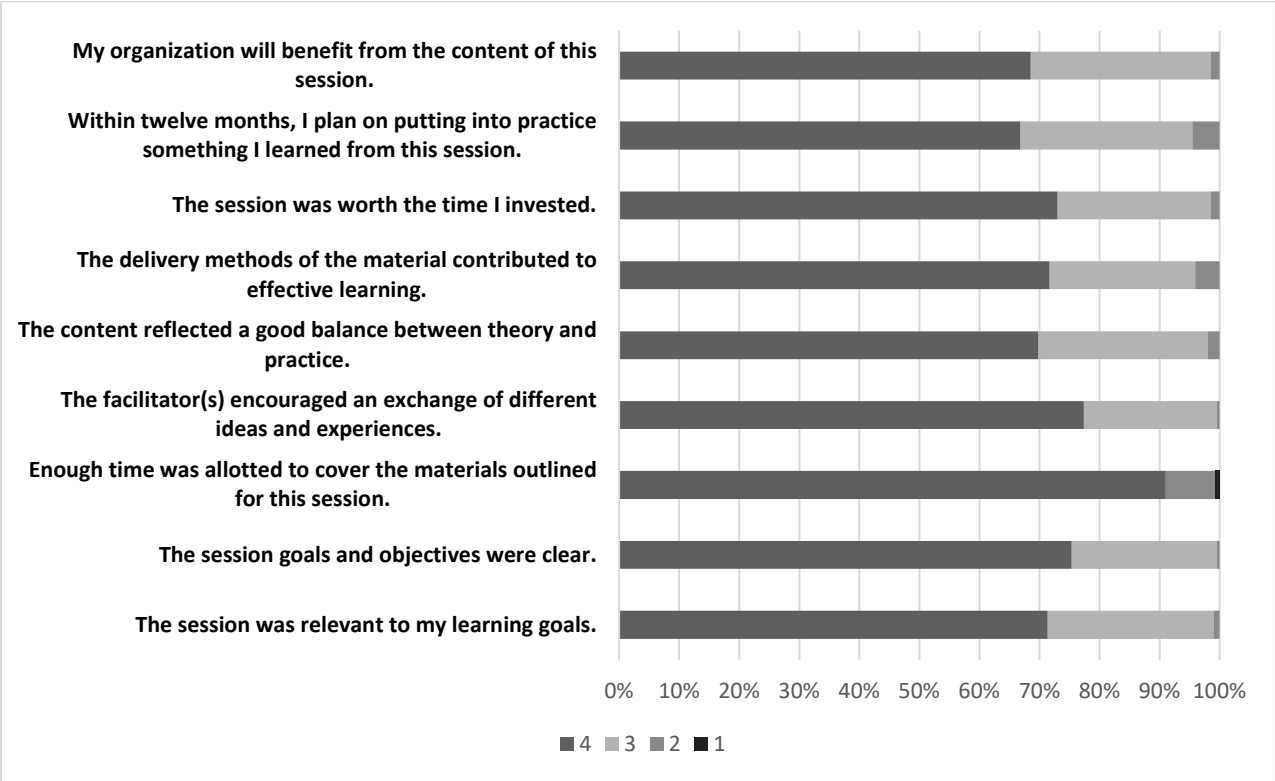


Findings – All Sessions Combined

Table 3: Mean Scores by Survey Item for Individual Sessions, Combined (Scale of 1-4)

Items	Mean	N
1. The session was relevant to my learning goals.	3.70	198
2. The session goals and objectives were clear.	3.74	199
3. Enough time was allotted to cover the materials outlined for this session.	3.55	197
4. The facilitator(s) encouraged an exchange of different ideas and experiences.	3.76	199
5. The content reflected a good balance between theory and practice.	3.68	199
6. The delivery methods of the material contributed to effective learning.	3.66	199
7. The session was worth the time I invested.	3.72	199
8. Within twelve months, I plan on putting into practice something I learned from this session.	3.62	199
9. My organization will benefit from the content of this session.	3.65	198

Figure 3: Distribution of Responses by Survey Item for Individual Sessions, Combined



On a 4-point scale, where 1 means “Strongly Disagree” and 4 means “Strongly Agree”