

# Building Nonprofit Leaders to Bridge the Talent Gap

CASE STUDY



## CLIENT PROFILE & CHALLENGE

American Express is a globally integrated payments company, providing customers with access to products, insights, and experiences that enrich lives and build business success. One of American Express’ 3 platforms for its philanthropy is Developing Leaders. Under this giving platform, American Express funds projects that support leadership development for diverse, emerging nonprofit and social purpose leaders.

Succession planning and employee turnover continue to be key concerns for leaders in the nonprofit sector, as lack of development and growth opportunities are often cited by employees as a reason they leave their nonprofit organization. American Express has devoted significant resources to creating and funding programs that strengthen leaders within nonprofit and social purpose organizations working to solve the world’s biggest challenges.

**CLIENT:** American Express (American Express Leadership Academy)

**LOCATION:** Headquartered in New York, NY

**SIZE:** To date, the American Express Leadership Academy has trained 1,300+ nonprofit and social sector leaders with CCL and 5,400+ including the other Academy partners



**“ Nonprofit and social purpose leaders are at the forefront of the many interconnected challenges our communities face and investing in their leadership development is a key priority for American Express.”**

-Richard Brown, Vice President of Philanthropy, American Express

## SOLUTION

As part of its strong commitment to philanthropy and volunteerism, American Express wanted to tackle the talent crisis head-on. They teamed up with CCL to train emerging nonprofit leaders in the skills needed to move up, take on new responsibilities, and lead their organizations into the future. The result is the American Express Leadership Academy (AELA), a program designed to address the special challenges nonprofit leaders face, including:

- » Building coalitions
- » Leading volunteers
- » Managing limited resources strategically

The Academy provides an immersive week-long training experience which blends both leadership savvy and business acumen to address the growing leadership gap within the nonprofit sector. While CCL works with participants on the skills they need to lead more effectively, nonprofit executives and American Express senior executives speak on a wide variety of topics including career development, strategy, marketing and branding, customer service, and other important issues.

“American Express has demonstrated a strong top-down commitment to the program,” says Tracy Patterson, Director, Nonprofit Sector and the American Express Leadership Academy’s lead faculty. “Engaging with American Express senior leaders has been insightful and informative for the nonprofit leaders who attend.”

Emerging nonprofit leaders from diverse backgrounds and experiences are nominated for this competitive program, which includes key components such as:

- » 5-day program blending leadership savvy and business acumen
- » 360-degree assessments
- » One-on-one executive coaching sessions
- » Experiential activities to practice skills
- » Peer networking and support
- » Road map for ongoing development

The final day of the program is devoted to goal setting and action plans to promote lasting impact.

## RESULTS

Post-course evaluations show the American Express Leadership Academy gets top marks from the emerging nonprofit leaders who attend. Participants report increased influence, better self-awareness, an improved capacity to learn, and gains in their ability to adapt and change.

With CCL and other partners, the initiative has grown to a global program, training world-class leaders in the areas of education, the arts, social services, health, the environment, and more. From 2008 to 2020, American Express hosted more than 160 Leadership Academy programs around the world.

## PARTNER WITH US

At CCL, we understand how community-led and community-based initiatives can help build a nonprofit or foundation for real change and greater transformation. We can partner with your organization to create customized leadership solutions that allow you to expand your impact and the meaningful work you bring to the world.

Learn more: [ccl.org/foundations](https://ccl.org/foundations)

## END OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANT SURVEY RESULTS

96%

Overall Satisfaction

95%

Ability to identify strengths and developmental needs based on feedback

95%

Improved understanding of personality and behavior’s effect on leadership style

93%

Ability to apply skills learned to improve impact on organization’s success

Data collected by CCL from 2018-2020; N=342 respondents

## LASTING IMPACT

In 2018, to commemorate 10 years of working together to provide a nonprofit leadership development experience, CCL conducted an alumni survey with 10 cohorts of AELA participants.

94%

would recommend that colleagues and peers participate in AELA

94%

are still employed in the nonprofit sector

Learn more about the AELA 10-year evaluation report [here](#).

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)<sup>®</sup> is a top-ranked, global, nonprofit provider of leadership development. Over the past 50 years, we’ve worked with organizations of all sizes from around the world, including more than 2/3 of the Fortune 1000. Our cutting-edge solutions are steeped in extensive research and our work with hundreds of thousands of leaders at all levels.

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