



I N S T I T U T E F O R

Leaders **IN** Development

UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

# 10-year Impact Report

*A Survey of Alumni*



## Background

A 2004 survey conducted by the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* confirmed what many fundraising and nonprofit professionals suspected and feared: The job of nonprofit and development leaders had become more complex, more demanding, and less predictable. That resulted in heightened job stress and frequent job turnover. Development professionals in small to mid-size organizations felt disconnected from the profession and experienced a lack of support from their supervisors, board of directors, or trustees. Some funders reported a diminishing quality of proposals and reports as well as a decrease in the overall professionalism of development leaders. The survey also raised concern about the aging out of current development leaders and the need to be intentional about creating a pipeline of future leaders.

To address these problems, Bonfils-Stanton Foundation spearheaded conversations with Denver's "Development Deans," a group of senior professionals who were: effective and happy in their jobs, knowledgeable and proud of the profession, concerned about the pipeline, and willing to invest time and talent with the goal of nurturing of their successors. Drawing from the best existing models of adult education, a group of community partners organized in 2006 to develop a program that invested in mid-career development professionals: the Institute for Leaders in Development (ILD) at the University of Denver.

### Several themes guided their efforts:

- Build a solid support structure with a volunteer mentor pool;
- Offer both individual and group learning experiences;
- Provide a flexible, scalable, and sustainable structure; and
- Honor participants with a respected experience in the community.

**About the Program:** The Institute for Leaders in Development (ILD) at the University of Denver is a unique professional advancement opportunity aspiring to create a sustainable pipeline of nonprofit leaders. The program provides continuing education experiences aimed at promoting longevity, excellence, and leadership in the fundraising field. Currently celebrating its tenth year, ILD has reached a diverse selection of 135 nonprofit leaders representing a variety of organizations throughout Colorado.

**Mission:** The mission of ILD at the University of Denver is to elevate Colorado's nonprofit fundraising leaders by providing professional advancement opportunities that promote longevity in the field and excellence in philanthropy.

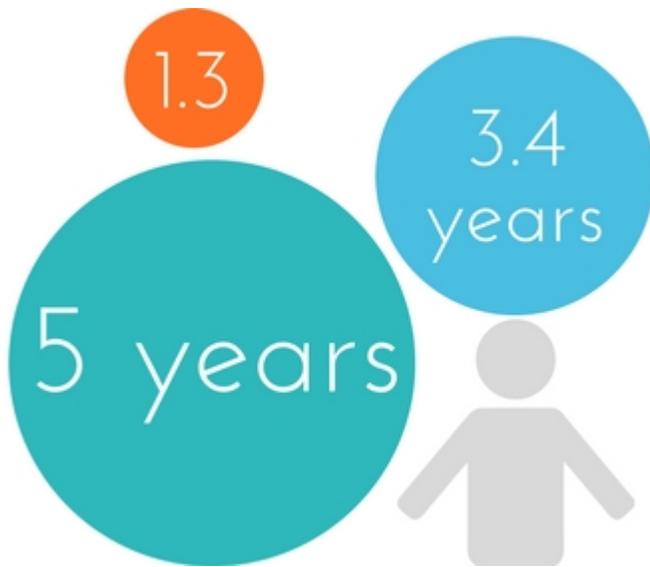
**Vision:** The ILD at the University of Denver is recognized as a thriving network dedicated to elevating the skills and talents of development professionals to preserve and grow the vitality of the philanthropic sector in Colorado.

## Milestones



## The 10-Year Impact Survey

ILD completed the first *Our Impact* report in 2013, receiving responses from 2009 – 2012 graduates. More than 1/3 of alumni responded, which provided valuable insight and feedback. In 2017, at the 10-year milestone, ILD shared the survey once again. Reaching out to graduates from 2009 – 2016, the response rate remained strong. There was a relatively even response rate from each class, which provides a comprehensive overview of program impact to date. The following report highlights the most recent findings around longevity in the field, program satisfaction and leadership development.



Respondents report staying with organizations 48% longer than in 2013

According to the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, the average amount of time a fundraiser stays in his/her job is 1.3 years. The average ILD alum has been at his/her current organization for 5.03 years—nearly four years longer (3.4 years in 2013)! This longevity is key to successful relationship building and fundraising.

## Key Survey Results

**Program Satisfaction:** Our monthly course evaluations indicate a high level of satisfaction with the individual classes. The survey confirmed that alumni are also satisfied with the complete experience as 95% reported that the program met expectations. Nearly two-thirds also agree that participation benefited their organizations.



**Increased Job Satisfaction:** Twenty-eight percent strongly agree and 33% agree that their participation in ILD increased their job satisfaction.

**Committed to Nonprofits & Committed to Development:** Perhaps most importantly, 75% agree or strongly agree that their participation “strengthened my commitment to the development field.” Moreover, 83% agree or strongly agree that their participation “strengthened my commitment to the nonprofit sector.”

**Building Community:** ILD founders strongly felt that building a network of local development leaders was essential to ensuring excellence in the field. Seventy-two percent of respondents noted that their peer network is the most valuable aspect of ILD today (after the program year).

## Alumni Snapshot Fall 2017

### Leadership

65% | Supervise staff.

22% | Received a promotion since participating in ILD.

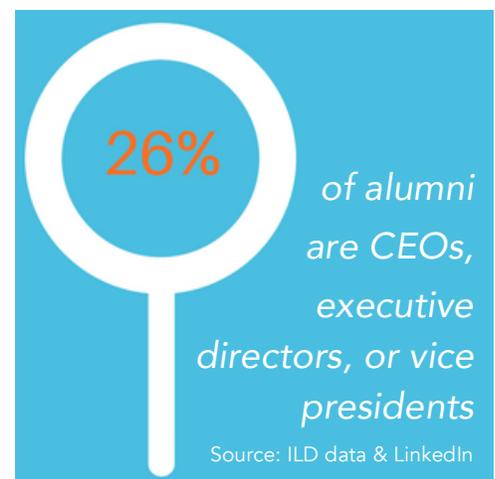
27% | Play a more significant leadership role at work.

### How long have you...

... been working in nonprofit development? **12 years**

... been working for your current organization? **5.03 years**

... been in your current position? **2.36 years**



## Elements of the Program

**The Core Curriculum:** Each year, ILD holds seven classes from early September through April. Teaching methods include lectures, case studies, breakout groups, and guest panels. Topics include the following: Leadership, The Development Plan, Finance for Nonprofits, Board/CEO Relationships, Major Gifts, Planned Giving, and Ethics. The speakers, their expertise, and relevant life stories are clearly valued by the class members. Participants rave about the speaker presentations, as well as the opportunity to meet and network with such exceptional leaders in Colorado's nonprofit community. More than half of respondents ranked monthly classes as the most valuable part of the program year.

### Which classes have proven most helpful?

1. Leadership.
2. Major Gifts.
3. The Development Plan.
4. Planned Giving.

**The Capstone Project:** This is an opportunity to apply lessons learned in classes and mentoring sessions in order to address a need within their organizations. Capstone projects culminate in a formal presentation to a panel of local experts who offer questions, comments, and suggestions. Capstone topics are diverse and have included major gifts and planned giving plans, demonstrating program impact, improving board engagement, fund development through social media plans, endowment growth plans, a moves-management program, and a study of females and philanthropy. Fifteen percent shared that the Capstone project is the most valuable aspect of their ILD experience.

**The Mentor Relationship:** A key component of ILD, mentors play an active role. They meet one-on-one with their mentees monthly to discuss issues in professional development, problem solve, and explore other items relevant to the field or the participant's specific work experience. Participants also work with their mentors throughout the Capstone process. Considerable time is devoted to recruiting, matching, and training mentors each year. Sixty-seven percent believe their mentor network is either very important or important during the ILD year.

## Professional Growth and Job Satisfaction

We asked alumni to share how their jobs have changed since participating in the program.

### Professional Growth

**19%** | Spend more time on major donor relationships.

**27%** | Play a more significant leadership role.

**22%** | Received a promotion.

**20%** | Moved into a supervisory role.

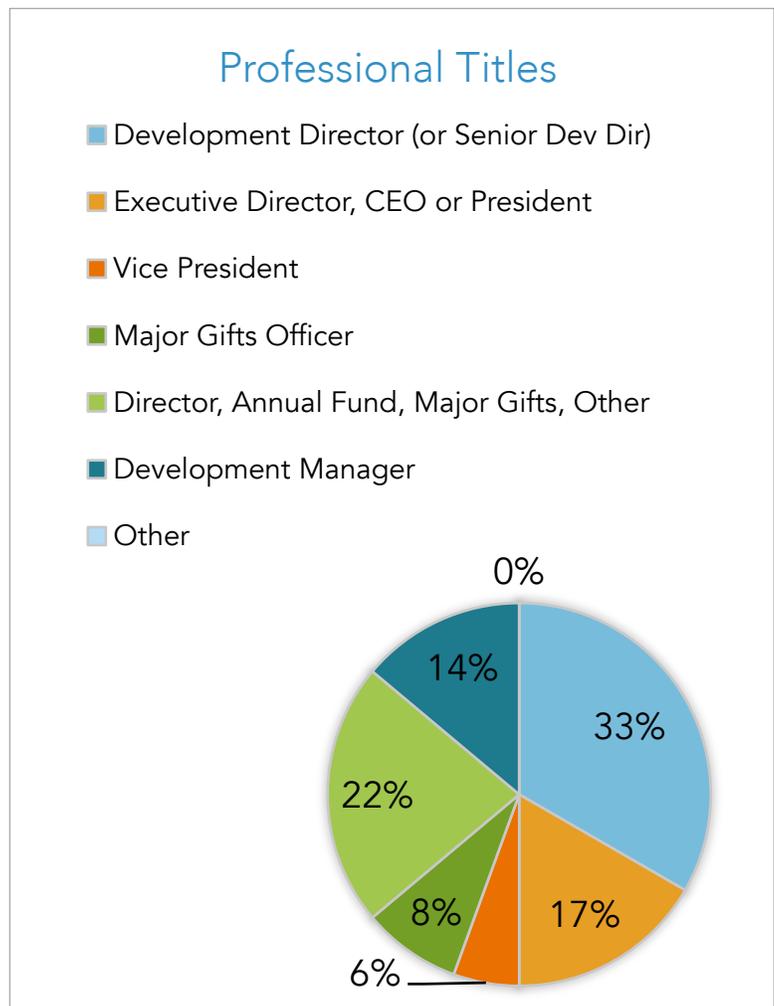
Ninety percent of respondents currently work for a nonprofit organization with a range of professional titles. Development Director and Director of Major Gifts,

Annual Fund, etc. are the most common roles. Seven are currently Executive Directors, Principals or Vice Presidents.

### Transitions

While transitions are commonplace in nonprofit development, ILD alumni respondents stay with their organizations nearly four years longer than the national average. Today, 45% of alumni work for a different organization than they did when they participated in ILD. When asked about why they changed positions, the most common responses were:

- A move to a larger and/or national organization.
- A move into a more specialized role.
- A promotion.
- To be a part of a larger development team.



## After completing ILD, in what ways do you view your position differently?

- “I felt like ILD gave me tools and learning opportunities that I would not have otherwise had access to.”
- “I believe that ILD made me a more well-rounded fundraiser. I learned about several areas of fundraising that I had previously not been exposed to. I then took those areas and applied them for the benefit of my organization.”
- “ILD helped me to hone in on my strengths and take a closer look at what I wanted in my career. The connections I made with my classmates were wonderful - I loved learning from and with my peers.”
- “[ILD gave me] more commitment and dedication to the enterprise of fundraising.”

## Benefits to Employers

Nearly 66% percent of respondents believe that their participation in ILD benefited their organization. In many cases, participant’s capstone projects were used to improve operations, shape campaigns, or otherwise assist with ongoing development efforts. Alumni also noted that they were more knowledgeable and more confident, which made them more successful fundraisers for their organizations.

*“[My employer was] able to invest in me at a low cost. The capstone project was huge for our organization.”*

## In what ways did your participation in ILD change the way your employer views your position?

- “[My employer was] impressed with my capstone project, and how I leveraged that experience to further my own growth as a nonprofit professional.”
- “While I think my employer has always valued my work and me as an employee, I believe my participation in ILD did help me to be viewed as a more valuable 'asset' for the organization. They know that I have a breadth of knowledge in the area of development and can flex to provide support on a variety of projects.”
- “It showed that I wanted leadership opportunities and was willing to complete extra work to do them.”

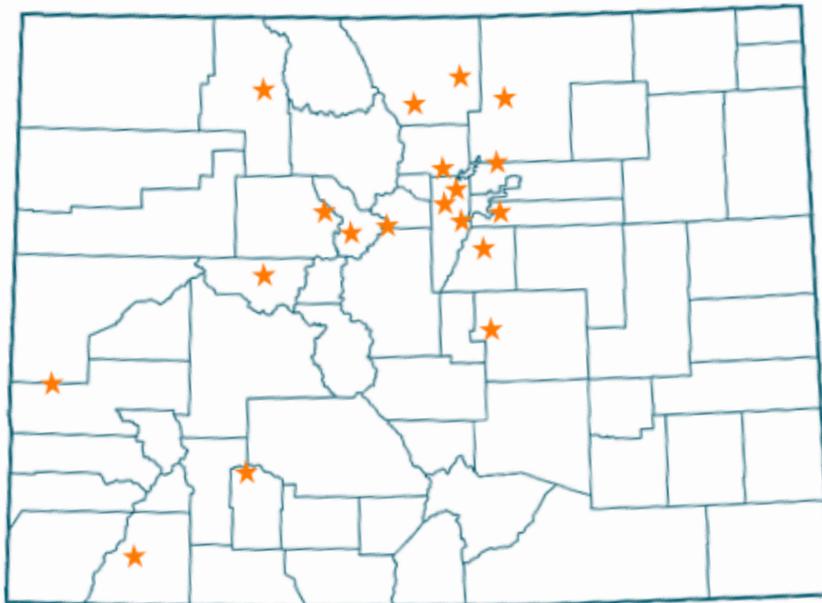
## Demographics

ILD strives to identify participants representing diverse backgrounds, gender, ethnicity, and experience. From a profession primarily female and white, survey respondents follow that arch. The average age of respondents is approximately 40 years old.

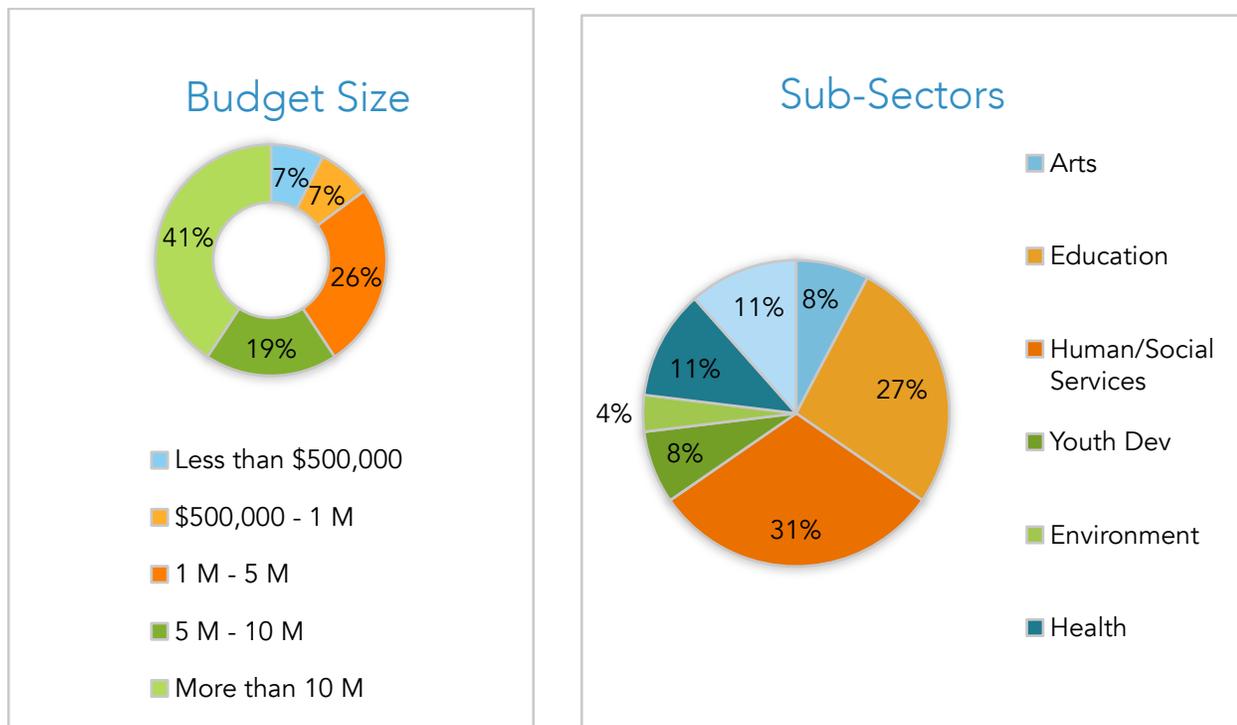
## Diversity

ILD seeks to include all faces of the community while representing the various sizes and missions of our region's nonprofit sector. Over the years, the classes have become incrementally more relative to both gender and race/ethnicity. Diversification remains a challenge that ILD will continue to address. Although the majority of participants are from the Metro Denver area, ILD seeks candidates from throughout Colorado. With funder support, ILD was thrilled to offer a travel stipend to help offset travel costs for selected participants from rural Colorado for two of the past three years. As a result, inquiries from outside the metro area have increased. Participants from Creede, Vail, Montrose, and Aspen have benefitted from this support.

## Communities with ILD Alumni



## Organizations Represented



## Opportunity for Further Research

**Strategic Planning:** Currently embarking on a five-year strategic plan, ILD leadership identified three strategic priorities: a sustainable funding model, meeting the needs of today’s development professionals (remaining relevant), and exploring options for smart growth. Updated data and reflections from more than one-third of the alumni community will help inform the next steps in this effort.

**Measuring Impact from Other Perspectives:** Moving forward, ILD seeks to measure impact from three perspectives: the participant, the organization, and the funding community. The participant/alumni perspective is readily available through existing evaluation tools. Revisiting the ongoing evaluation plan for the next five years may result in subtle changes.

ILD seeks to learn more about its impact on organizations. We believe that having the development staff participate yields tremendous results for the organization as a whole. Anecdotal evidence supports this. The data collected from the alumni perspective provides only one perspective. More data is needed from the broader organization, which could comprise the next research effort.



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