



Exploring the Implementation Gap: Leadership Strength and Development

Using data from the Organizational Priorities and Practices Inventory (OPPI)

Effective implementation of high-quality, rights-based disability services is positively impacted by leadership that is stable, ethical, and intentionally developed at every level of an organization. The **Leadership Strength and Development** are of the Organizational Priorities and Practices Inventory (OPPI) examines how organizations cultivate leadership capacity, sustain organizational direction, and prepare for long-term effectiveness. This category includes seven indicators that together capture effective leadership within organizations: Ethical Leadership, Compelling Leadership, Culture-Enhancing Leadership, Leadership Development, Internal Leadership Succession, Team Leadership, and Resourceful Leadership. Collectively, these indicators reflect how leadership priorities are translated into everyday practices, revealing whether organizations alignment to leadership best practices.

This brief draws on data collected through the OPPI, including responses from 1,171 professionals across disability service organizations nationwide. Respondents represent Executives (10%), Directors (19%), Managers (30%), Frontline Staff (35%), and Other professionals (6%), providing a multi-level perspective on how leadership strength and development are prioritized and practiced across roles.

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By: **Monica Mesa-Alvarez**,
Research & Development
Associate
mmesa@natleadership.org

Questions? Comments? Contact Us!

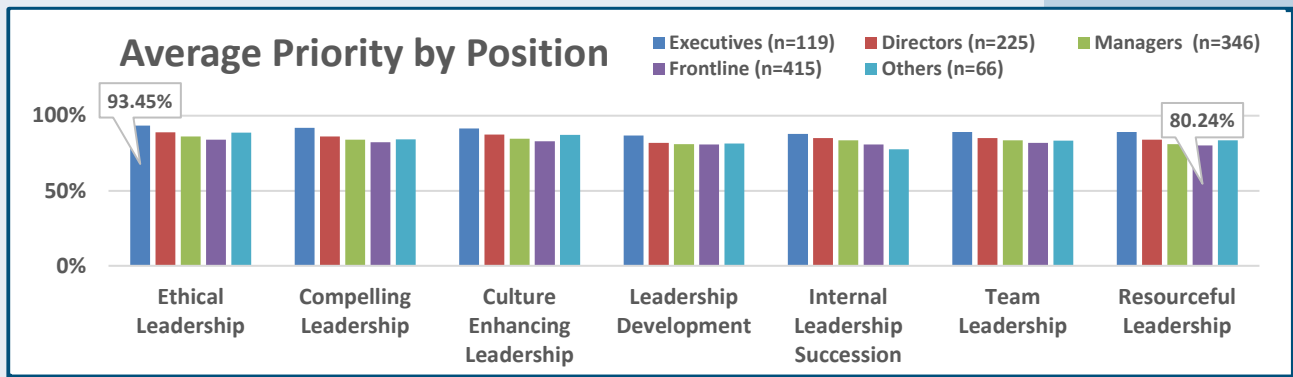
For additional information about the National Leadership Consortium's programs and research, visit www.natleadership.org.

To learn more about upcoming Leadership Institutes or workshops, email Nicole Jones at njones@natleadership.org

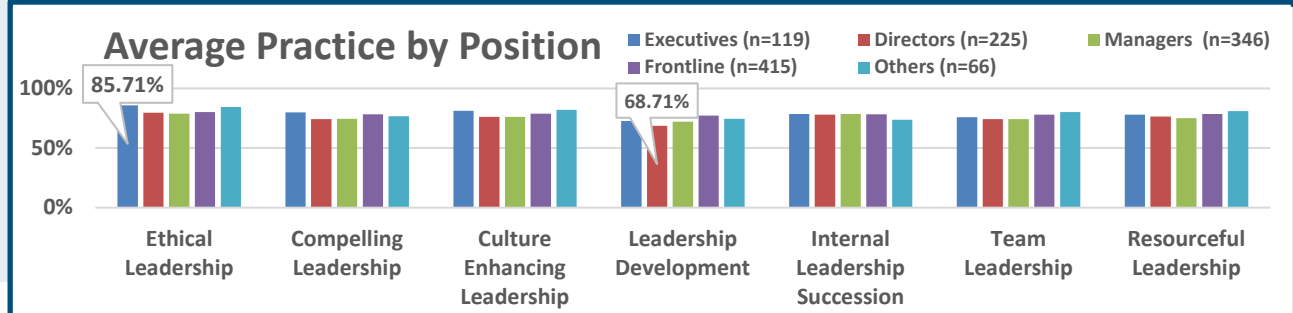
Contact Cory Gilden at cgilden@natleadership.org with questions related to our research.



- **Strong Commitment to Leadership Values:** Leadership priorities were consistently high across all indicators, particularly for *Ethical Leadership* (86.8%) and *Culture-Enhancing Leadership* (85.4%) indicating overall agreement on the importance of principled, values-driven, and inspiring leadership.
- **Implementation Gaps Across Leadership Practices:** Leadership practices lag behind priorities by approximately 6-8 percentage points on average. *Ethical Leadership* (80.5%) and *Internal Leadership Succession* (78.1%) are the strongest practices, suggesting some translation of values into action.
- **Weaker Investment in Leadership Development and Succession:** The lowest practice ratings were observed for *Leadership Development* (73.5%) and *Team Leadership* (76.1%), pointing to limited opportunities for cultivating capacity across levels and supporting collaborative leadership.
- **Opportunities to Strengthen Sustainable and Resource-Ready Leadership:** Gaps in *Resourceful Leadership* and *Internal Leadership Succession* highlight areas where organizations could better prepare leaders to navigate constraints, plan for continuity, and sustain long-term organizational effectiveness.



The chart above shows consistently high prioritization of **leadership values** across all organizational roles. **Ethical Leadership** received the highest priority, particularly among Executives (93.5%), highlighting a shared emphasis on integrity and values-driven leadership. **Compelling Leadership** and **Culture-Enhancing Leadership** were also rated highly across positions, indicating broad alignment in what organizations value in their leaders. In contrast, Frontline rated **Resourceful Leadership** in average the lowest priority rating (80.2%), suggesting more variation in how roles perceive the importance of resource navigation and adaptability. Overall, the chart reflects strong cross-role alignment in leadership priorities, with modest differences by position.



This chart shows moderate implementation of **leadership practices** across organizational roles, with more variation than seen in leadership priorities. **Ethical Leadership** received the highest practice ratings overall, led by Executives (85.7%), suggesting that ethical standards are more consistently enacted than other leadership behaviors. Practices related to **Culture-Enhancing Leadership**, **Team Leadership**, and **Resourceful Leadership** are relatively stable across positions, indicating shared experiences of day-to-day leadership functioning. In contrast, **Leadership Development** shows the lowest practice ratings, particularly among Frontline staff (68.7%), pointing to limited access to leadership growth opportunities across levels. Overall, the pattern highlights an implementation gap: while leadership is widely valued, development and cultivation of leadership capacity are less consistently experienced in practice.



The chart highlights **gaps between leadership priorities and practices** across organizational roles. The largest gaps appear in **Leadership Development** and **Compelling Leadership**, particularly among Executives and Directors, indicating that while these areas are highly valued, they are less consistently implemented in practice. Gaps in **Culture-Enhancing Leadership** and **Team Leadership** further suggest challenges in translating leadership vision and collaboration into everyday operations. These findings highlight a clear implementation gap: leadership is widely prioritized, but development, succession, and day-to-day leadership practices lag organizational intent.

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