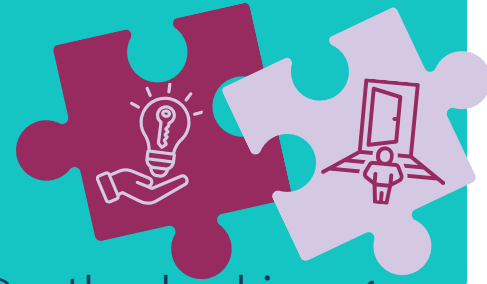


Room to Lead: Continued Support and Opportunity Matter

October 2026 Research Brief

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How continued investment and opportunities to lead relate to organizational impact

Organizations shape whether leaders can keep developing and apply what they learn from professional development and training. This brief uses the Leadership Institute Longitudinal Dataset to examine three connected measures among graduates that explore such impact: **continued organizational investment**, based on the development activities participants reported their organizations supported; **opportunities to lead and contribute**, based on ten questions about their roles, influence, contributions, creativity, and professional growth; and **organizational impact**, based on participants' ratings of the significance of an organizational change they helped influence.

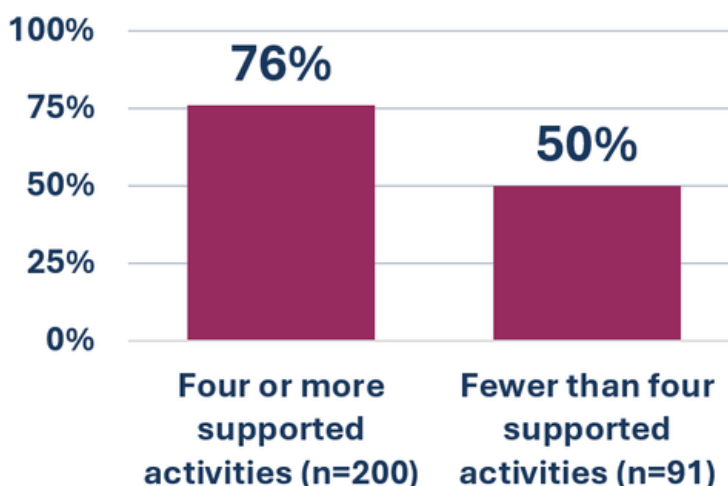
THE BIG TAKEAWAY

Continued employer support and meaningful opportunities to lead positively influence employees' capacity to impact their organizations.

When organizations keep investing in Leadership Institute graduates and create space for their leadership, that investment can extend the Institute's value well beyond the training itself. The result is leadership development that continues to grow and strengthens an organization's capacity for meaningful change.

KEY FINDING I

After training, there is a high organizational impact when organizations **continue investing in leaders**



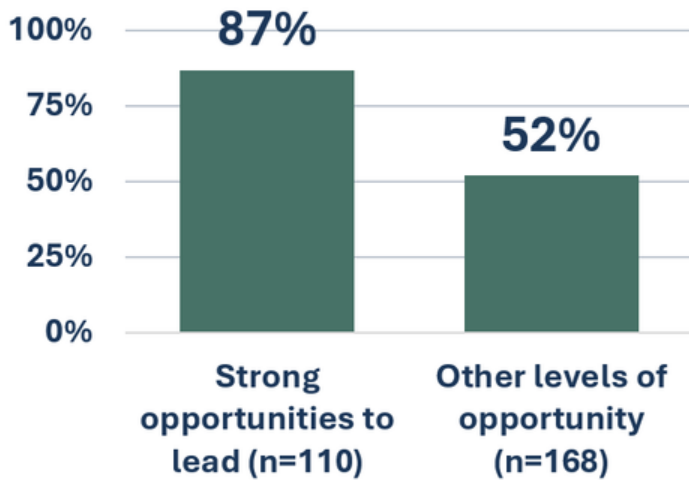
Among graduates whose organizations supported an average of four or more professional-development or disability-field activities, **three out of four (76%) reported high organizational impact**. While only half (50%) of graduates receiving less support reported high organizational impact.

Examples of supported activities include: Conference Participation, Additional Training, Certifications, Professional Memberships, and Presentations.



KEY FINDING II

● After training, organizations see a high impact when they give employees **meaningful opportunities to lead**



Among graduates reporting strong opportunities to lead, contribute ideas, influence decisions, and grow professionally, more than four out of five (**87%**) reported **high organizational impact**, compared with about half (52%) of those graduates that reported fewer opportunities.

Opportunities to lead included:

Contributing Ideas, Influencing Decisions, Using Creativity, Taking Central Roles, Guiding Change, and Professional Growth.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR DISABILITY LEADERS

Disability organizations need leaders who can turn strong values and new ideas into meaningful organizational change. This analysis shows that continued employer investment helps graduates keep developing, while meaningful leadership opportunities give them the trust, authority, and space to put their skills into practice. Implementing these approaches can strengthen organizational leadership and extend the value of professional development opportunities such as the Leadership Institute.

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Questions or comments?

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Are you a data nerd?

Methodology Summary:

<https://bit.ly/RBOCTOBERDATA>

Learn More:

<https://linktr.ee/nlcdd>

WHAT CAN DISABILITY LEADERS DO?

- ✓ **Continue investing.** Support at least four development activities each year, such as conferences, leadership training, certifications, professional memberships, presentations, or applied research
- ✓ **Provide time and resources, not only encouragement.** Offer funding, work time, scheduling flexibility, and coverage so leaders can participate fully
- ✓ **Create real opportunities to lead.** Give employees responsibility for projects, teams, quality-improvement efforts, strategic initiatives, or organizational change, and provide the needed support for success
- ✓ **Bring leaders into important decisions.** Ask for their ideas, include them in planning, and ensure their recommendations receive meaningful consideration
- ✓ **Help employees apply and share what they learned.** Create opportunities to present new ideas, mentor colleagues, test improvements, and connect leadership development to organizational priorities
- ✓ **Check whether the workplace supports their growth.** Regularly ask employees what opportunities they have to contribute, what barriers they face, and what additional support would help them lead effectively.

Have a question or need help accessing this Research brief?

Reach out to Monica: mmesa@natleadership.org

Learn More: <https://linktr.ee/nlcdd> | Reach out to: contactus@natleadership.org

