

RESEARCH REPORT

Leadership Program for Affordable Housing: Evaluation Study

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Executive Summary

1. Background

The leadership program for affordable housing is a multi-sectoral program that was created in the context of the sharp increase in housing costs incurred by Israeli households and the belief that a concerted multi-sectoral effort is required to address the challenge. The program was a collaboration between the Ministry of Construction and Housing and the JDC Institute for Leadership and Governance, together with senior level professional representatives from ten ministries and government agencies, local government, civil society organizations and the business sector. It was implemented under the professional guidance of Dr. Chaim Fialkoff and Dr. Emily Silverman. Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute (MJB) was commissioned to evaluate the program.

The program had two components

- ◆ A process of shared learning about affordable housing and the activities of the various sectors
- ◆ The development of a plan of action to promote affordable housing.

The program goals were:

1. Gaining knowledge and changing views about affordable housing
2. Developing a multi-sectoral perspective
3. Establishing professional contacts and cooperation among the participants
4. Encouraging greater or new efforts on the part of the participants to promote affordable housing
5. Developing collaborative plans of action to promote affordable housing.

In the course of the program, a decision was made to:

- ◆ Shorten the learning stage and the overall length of the program (from 8 to 6 months)
- ◆ Focus the plan of action on formulating guidelines for an affordable housing law. This was in contrast to the initial thinking that there would be several different group projects.

The current report examines the program's implementation and the extent to which the program realized its goals.

2. Study Design

The study combined qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting information and analyzing the findings. This enabled us to present the quantitative findings systematically alongside the interpretations by the participants and members of staff.

The study used four data-collection methods: a self-report questionnaire distributed to the participants at the end of the program; semi-structured in-depth interviews with a sample of participants and staff members at the end of the program; observations of the meetings; and analysis of program documents (Table 1).

Table 1: Data-Collection Methods

Method	Quantity
1. Self-report questionnaire	21 questionnaires completed by the participants
2. Semi-structured in-depth interviews	9 interviews with participants 4 interviews with program staff members
3. Observations	6 observations
4. Analysis of documentation	Various

Most of the closed questions in the self-report questionnaire used a four point scale ("not at all," "to a little extent," "to a great extent" and "to a very great extent"). Unless noted otherwise, the percentages presented in this report relate to the responses "to a great extent" and "to a very great extent."

3. Realization of Program Goals

The study examined the extent to which the participants and members of staff perceived that the program had achieved its goals. We present below the main findings with regard to each of the five goals (see section 1).

3.1 Affordable Housing: Gaining Knowledge and Changing Views

The participants learned about issues related to defining the housing problem and about potential solutions. They were asked if they gained greater knowledge and if the program had led to a change in their views:

- ◆ 50% of the participants reported that they gained greater knowledge on issues related to defining the problem, and 81% on affordable housing solutions
- ◆ 15% to 38% of the participants reported changes in their understanding of various issues related to defining the problem, and 76% changed their views on affordable housing solutions.

They were further asked whether they had developed new views with respect to the ways they themselves could act to promote affordable housing:

- ◆ 37% of the participants reported that they had developed new views.

3.2 Development of a Multi-Sectoral Perspective

The program emphasized the development and strengthening of a multi-sectoral perspective, in light of the perceived need for collective action to address the complexity of the affordable housing issue.

The study examined the impact of the program on two dimensions:

- ◆ Familiarity with the activities of the other sectors and the assessment of their potential benefits
- ◆ Inter-sectoral cooperation:
 - Knowledge of models of inter-sectoral cooperation on affordable housing
 - Assessment of its importance
 - Views on areas in which they themselves could best cooperate with other sectors.

The study found that:

- ◆ Most of the participants reported that the program had broadened their knowledge about what was being done by local government (78%), central government (75%), and the business sector (71%), and to a lesser extent, what was being done by civil society (33%).
- ◆ 71% of the participants reported that as a result of the program, they had changed their views regarding the potential contribution of each sector to promoting affordable housing.
- ◆ 81% of the participants reported that they had gained new knowledge about models for inter-sectoral cooperation and 79% reported that they changed their views about the importance of inter-sectoral cooperation on affordable housing.
- ◆ 58% of the participants changed their views on areas where they themselves could best cooperate with the other sectors.

3.3 Establishing Professional Contacts and Cooperation

The program sought to develop and strengthen professional contacts among the program participants and create practical cooperation among them.

- ◆ All of the participants reported that they had established new professional contacts and/or strengthened existing ties with representatives of the government, and most of the participants had established or strengthened ties with representatives of the other sectors (between 69% and 78%, depending on the sector).
- ◆ 81% of the participants reported that they had held many or very many informal discussions on professional issues with other participants during the program, and 62% found these discussions to be helpful.
- ◆ 17% of the participants reported that they had actually initiated inter-sectoral cooperation as a result – all of them representatives of the government or the business sector.
- ◆ However, 72% of the participants noted that they intended to initiate such cooperation in the future. Furthermore, almost 50% of the participants reported that they had already established cooperation with representatives from their own sector.

3.4 Greater or New Efforts on the Part of the Participants to Promote Affordable Housing

The program sought to influence the way that participants worked to promote affordable housing.

- ◆ 67% of the participants reported that they were planning to change their practices to promote affordable housing as a result of participation in the program.
- ◆ Some 16% of them reported that they were already doing something different to promote affordable housing as a result of participation in the program.

3.5 Plan of Action to Formulate Guidelines for an Affordable Housing Law

As noted, the group decided to focus on a key shared task: formulating guidelines for an affordable housing law. Through a process of five intensive meetings, a joint document was produced: a presentation that included suggested guidelines, unresolved dilemmas and options to consider. It was presented to the director general of the Ministry of Construction and Housing and other senior government officials.

The study examined the view of the participants and the staff members of the extent to which the guidelines are likely to help promote affordable housing.

- ◆ 37% of the participants reported that in their opinion the guidelines would contribute to a great or very great extent to advancing affordable housing.
- ◆ However, there were considerable differences among the sectors: 67% of the representatives of civil society and local government, versus 25% in the business and government sectors.

Those respondents who were more pessimistic gave a number of reasons: not enough consensus on key issues, including among key players and thus the document overly focused on dilemmas and options; elected public representatives who could help promote the bill had not participated in the process; a strategy for promoting the adoption of the guidelines had not been developed; some of the key players became less committed to promoting the guidelines as a result of changes in the broader political environment.

4. Evaluation of Program Implementation

The study examined a broad range of aspects related to the implementation of the program.

4.1 Recruitment of Participants

The participants were recruited under great time pressure, using methods that some of the staff members felt not to be optimal. They felt that this led to a situation in which some of the participants were not best suited to the program and that some were not sufficiently committed. Staff members raised several suggestions to improve the process in the future, such as recruiting participants from the civil society and business sectors by public announcement, conducting personal interviews with all candidates before starting the program, and getting the directors general of the relevant ministries to be more involved in the program.

4.2 Group Interaction and the Degree of Expression of the Different Sectors in the Process

The participants reported that there was open communication and a cross-sectoral team spirit in the group. In their opinion, the factor that most contributed to bringing the participants closer was the way the program was the effective management and facilitation of the discussions. In contrast, the main difficulty, they believed, was inconsistent attendance and changes in the groups' composition during the program.

Opinions were divided as to the extent that the positions of the representatives of the various sectors were expressed – "too little," "appropriate" or "too much."

- ◆ Most of the participants felt that the positions of the representatives of the business sector and local and central government were reflected to an appropriate extent (between 67% and 76%, depending on the sector).
- ◆ 56% of the participants believed that the positions of the representatives of civil society were reflected to an appropriate extent.

4.3 Duration of the Program

Most participants (65%) felt that the duration of each meeting and the amount of time between the meetings were appropriate.

However, only 53% noted that the duration of the program was appropriate, while 37% felt the program was too short.

Many participants noted the importance of continuing the program in order to follow up and promote the implementation of the guidelines. In addition, they felt that the program should serve as an inter-sectoral forum for discussion of affordable housing on an ongoing basis.

4.4 The Implementation of the Shared Learning Stage

The first part of the program was devoted to a process of shared learning about various aspects of affordable housing in Israel and abroad and about the activities of the different sectors and their views regarding affordable housing. The evaluation of this stage focused on the participants' views of the time allocated to various aspects of this process and the extent that they thought some topics were superfluous or had been omitted.

The majority participants noted that an appropriate amount of time was devoted to:

- ◆ Team-building in the group (100%) and getting to know what the other sectors were doing (89%)
- ◆ Shared definitions of the program goals (79%) and the shared definitions of the concept of affordable housing (74%)
- ◆ Learning about affordable housing in Israel and abroad (53%).

The participants reported that none of the topics in the program were unnecessary, but there was a need for more attention to the issue of financing housing needs.

4.5 The Implementation of the Plan of Action Stage

As noted, the second stage of the program was devoted to drafting guidelines for an affordable housing law. 69% of the participants were pleased with the decision to concentrate on the guidelines as the main focus of the program. 50% of them believed that an appropriate amount of time was devoted to this, but 44% felt that the time was too short as a result of the shortening of that phase.

Some of the program participants – and all members of the staff – believed that the group was not well enough prepared for the task with regard to their level of knowledge, trust, and sense of commitment to the program. Some of the reasons given were that not enough time was allocated to shared learning, and that the nature of the task was not known in advance, so they could not prepare for it any earlier.

However, in the final analysis, most of the participants expressed satisfaction with all aspects of the process. Between 84% and 100% of participants were satisfied with the openness of the participants in the discussions, and the chance they were given to express their opinions and influence the product. Between 67% and 72% of participants were satisfied with the level of involvement of the other participants.

4.6 Overall Program Management

The vast majority of the participants (84%-100%) reported that they were satisfied to a great or very great extent with the various aspects of program management: Organization, group facilitation, flexibility in the structure and agenda of the program, responsiveness to participants' requests, and the background/auxiliary materials distributed during the program.

The participants also emphasized their appreciation for the unique contribution of the professional consultants. However, some of the participants noted that the specific expertise of the consultants led them to focus on certain topics such as planning, at the expense of others, such as finance.

Some of the participants felt that sometimes changes were made to the program based on the opinions of a few participants rather than on the input of the entire group.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This section summarizes the main findings.

5.1 Program Goals

The program made efforts to enhance the involvement of each of the participants in addressing the issue of affordable housing as well as promoting cooperation among them.

The participants greatly benefited in most of the areas promoted in the program: deeper and broader knowledge and views on the issue; development of a multi-sectorial perspective; and the creation of professional contacts on which to base further cooperation.

Thus, the program contributed to the development of a strong base for greater involvement and greater cooperation to promote affordable housing.

Many reported that they had plans to expand their efforts. However, in the short time that it was implemented, the program was less successful in converting these plans into actual steps. Thus, the ultimate impact of the program needs to be examined over a longer period.

In addition, to understand these findings it is important to emphasize that in the ongoing strategizing of the program, as it developed, there was a conflict between two very different plans of action:

- ◆ A plan that would emphasize a range of concrete activities that different members of the group could actively contribute to or lead in different collaborative constellations.
- ◆ A plan that, as was actually decided upon, would emphasize one broad shared product that could potentially have a broader overall impact. At the same time, the nature of the product that was chosen addressed the highest level of policymaking and thus its implementation heavily relies on the decisions of the government. It also provided fewer opportunities for many of the members to be actively involved in the actual implementation.

At the end of the program, the group managed to produce a document with guidelines, dilemmas and options to consider that was submitted to the government.

There were considerable differences among the sectors in their assessment of the expected contribution these guidelines to the promotion of affordable housing: most of the participants from the civil society and local government expected a considerable contribution, while the representatives of the government and business sectors were less optimistic.

5.2 Differences in the Views of the Different Sectors

Overall, all sectors benefited from most of the aspects that the program sought to promote.

However, an interesting finding was that the representatives of the business sector reported somewhat less than those from the other sectors that they had benefitted from aspects concerning the gaining of knowledge and changing of views about affordable housing and development of multi-sectoral perspective. In light of this, it is evidently important to give special attention to this sector and its needs in this context.

In addition, as noted, there are distinct differences among the sectors in their appreciation of the contribution of the guidelines developed during the program to the promotion of affordable housing in Israel.

5.3 Management and Implementation of the Program

The participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with the management and implementation of the program, including the process of working on the group product. The contribution of the professional consultants was particularly cited.

Closing Remarks

It is important to note that many participants emphasized that it was important to continue the program in order to promote the implementation of the guidelines and further multi-sectorial cooperation on affordable housing in Israel.

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