

- TITLE** Community Voices—A Leadership Program Making a Difference in Rural Underserved Counties in North Carolina
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<https://joe.org/joe/2009december/a4.php>
- OBJECTIVE** The purpose of this research was to assess the leadership behaviors of the Community Voices Leadership Development Program (CV) graduates and non-CV graduates to determine whether a significant difference existed between the leadership practices of these two groups of leaders within rural communities.

METHODOLOGY

A telephone survey instrument that included the LPI and additional questions was developed and administered to rural leaders in the 12-county North Carolina study area over a 3-month period in early summer of 2007. The interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes. Rural leaders (N=117) were identified by Cooperative Extension personnel as leaders. Sixty-three were participants of the CV program, and 54 were non-CV graduates. A total of 70 people participated in the study. Of this total, 39 respondents were graduates of the CV program (55.7%), while 31 respondents had not participated in the CV program (44.3%); the overall response rate was 60 percent. Three-quarters of the respondents were Caucasian, and nearly 59 percent were female. The average age of the respondents ranged from 46 to 55 years of age. At least 80 percent had a high school education, were married, and had a total family income over \$20,000 per year.

KEY FINDINGS

The author's note: "The LPI was chosen because the five overarching leadership behaviors fit well with the type of leadership needed in rural communities, it is a widely recognized and used instrument, and it is succinct and easy to administer" (p. 3).

The results of the survey, according to the authors, "revealed that the Community Voices Program (CV) had a significant impact on the behaviors or practices of CV graduates. CV graduates were more likely to challenge the process by providing new ways of doing things and seeking challenges. They were more likely to encourage others by finding ways of rewarding people for doing good work, looking for ways to provide credit for what is accomplished, and routinely giving team members appreciation and support. CV graduates, as compared to other leaders, were significantly more likely to inspire a shared vision by finding ways for people to work well together, helping people grow and learn from their community work, and treating people with dignity and respect. Likewise, CV graduates were more likely to seek a shared vision for their community by including as

many opinions as possible in the communities' vision for the future, encouraging others to be open-minded about the future for their community, and using past experiences to create a better vision for the future of their communities. CV graduates served as role models for people in the community by demonstrating how to make progress towards goals one step at a time, clearly stating their views of leadership, and working with others to achieve what the community needs” (p. 8).

The authors conclude: “The study reported here provides evidence that the CV program implemented in rural underserved counties in North Carolina is making a difference in the practices of rural leaders who have undergone the training. Moreover, the results of the study indicate that the CV program is effective at producing leaders with behaviors that are highly desirable” (p. 9).