Managing for Innovation Course Evaluation, 2017

May 30, 2017

NYC Opportunity's Response to the Managing for Innovation Course Evaluation
May 2017

The Managing for Innovation Course (MFIC) represents the NYC Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity's (NYC Opportunity) commitment to supporting implementation partners in strengthening their program management practices.

In 2013, the NYC Opportunity and the CUNY School of Professional Studies (CUNY SPS) created the Program Management Core Competency Model as the base for the MFIC. The Core Competency Model identifies seven areas[1] that effective program managers consistently employ when implementing innovative and evidence-based programs. MFIC is an intensive management training course focused on six of the core competencies and provides a peer learning environment that allows participants and alumni the space to discuss best strategies around program implementation.

Since inception, MFIC has trained nearly 100 participants and supported their ongoing professional development through an active alumni network. Participants are selected for the MFIC through an application process that identifies their interest in developing key management skills to better serve their program. Program participant's supervisors are asked to attend two MFIC sessions: the first session held jointly with participants and a special supervisor session on Leading People and Building Teams. NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS feel that supervisor involvement in the MFIC demonstrates an ongoing investment in the professional development of program participants.

In the course, participants have an opportunity to explore core management concepts and learn from peers in their cohort. Participants can examine their strengths and weaknesses, discuss challenges, and brainstorm solutions in a safe, supportive environment. Learning is reinforced after each session through homework and readings, group coaching, personal goal setting and journaling, and in-course networking opportunities. After completion, participants are invited to join the Community of Practice (COP) – a network for program alumni which includes a LinkedIn group, alumni newsletter, and events for alumni hosted by CUNY SPS and NYC Opportunity to support networking and continued learning.

The Managing for Innovation Course Evaluation report demonstrates that the MFIC effectively builds the foundational skills leaders of community based organizations (CBO) need to effectively administer innovations of the NYC Opportunity. Westat's evaluation indicated that MFIC alumni and their supervisors are overwhelmingly satisfied with the course. Almost all of them have applied lessons from it in their jobs, and more than three-quarters of participants (and 80% of supervisors) say it improved program outcomes. These findings were encouraging as effective program management is critical to the success of anti-poverty initiatives throughout the City.

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[1] The MFIC covers the following six core competencies outlined in the Program Management Core Competency Model: Strategy and Planning, Leading People and Building Teams, Collaboration and Partnerships, Analysis and Decision-Making, Contract Management and Budgeting, and Personal Management. The seventh competency, Program Knowledge is not covered in the course.

Based on the evaluation, NYC Opportunity will look to improve the Community of Practice aspect of the program to make more participants aware of the opportunity and be able take advantage of its potential as a networking opportunity. This will better support the ongoing learning relationships among program alumni.

Building the professional skills of CBO program managers is a long-term investment in ensuring successful, resilient programs throughout the City. As a program with demonstrated effectiveness, the MFIC strategy is one that NYC Opportunity will continue to explore with its partners as it works to build the leadership capacity of critical staff.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The New York City Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity (NYC Opportunity) and their City government agency partners work with more than 200 community-based organizations (CBOs) to pilot and evaluate innovative anti-poverty programs. Partnering with other City agencies and the non-profits that they contract with, NYC Opportunity and the City University of New York School of Professional Studies (CUNY SPS) capitalized on the occasion to develop a management training program to help ensure that leaders in these CBOs had the foundational skills to effectively administer these programs. Together, NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS developed the Program Management Core Competency Model which informed the curriculum for the Managing for Innovation Course (MFIC) which covers six out of the seven competencies outlined in the Program Management Core Competency Model.[2] The six session course teaches NYC Opportunity's core competencies which were designed to help program implementers become more effective in the tools that effective program directors consistently employ when implementing innovative and evidence-based programs. (Competencies include: Strategy and Planning, Leading People and Building Teams, Collaboration and Partnerships, Analysis and Decision Making, Program Knowledge, Contract Management and Budgeting, and Personal Management.) The target populations are NYC Opportunity program implementers at CBO's and directors at partner City agencies. The course is taught by CUNY SPS, which partnered with NYC Opportunity to develop the program and its curriculum.[3]

NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS selected Westat and Metis Associates to complete an evaluation of MFIC. This report contains the results of that evaluation. Note that MFIC is offered both to employees at CBOs and to City Agency Partners. This report only examined the portion aimed at CBO employees. Unless otherwise noted, the findings are from all MFIC participants who provided us with information, across all cohorts at the time of data collection (2013-summer 2016).

We collected several types of data between June 2016 and November 2016, using the following methods:

- Interviews with key NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS staff;
- A survey of MFIC participants (i.e., program managers) from all six program cohorts that had completed the course by Summer 2016, and their supervisors;
- Follow-up interviews with MFIC participants and supervisors;
- One observation of a course session for City Agency Partners;
- A review of administrative data; and
- A review of CUNY SPS course evaluations.

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[2] The six competencies covered in MFIC are: *Strategy and planning*, *Leading people and building teams*, *Collaboration and partnerships*, *Analysis and decision-making*, *Contract management and budgeting*, and *Personal management*. The seventh competency in the Program Management Core Competency Model is *Program knowledge*. It is not covered by MFIC because it is specific to each participant's program area.

[3] A more detailed program overview is provided in the 'introduction' section of this report.

Findings

MFIC alumni and their supervisors are overwhelmingly satisfied with the course. Almost all of them have applied lessons from it in their jobs, and more than three-quarters of participants (and 80% of supervisors) say it improved program outcomes. The only aspect with somewhat negative reviews was the Community of Practice (COP), a newer facet of the course about which many participants were unaware.[4] Others did not fully understand the COP or take advantage of its potential for networking. Below are more detailed findings from each of the sections of the report.

The program was a good fit for participants

Most participants noted that MFIC was appropriately targeted at someone of their background and experience.

- The background of participants ranges from new managers to those with substantial leadership experience.
- Even when classes were filled with participants of varying backgrounds and skill levels, most respondents said the course materials were either *well* (42%) or *very well* (39%) aimed at their background and skill level.
- Supervisors varied in their assessment of whether MFIC was a good fit for their supervisees, based on the participant's experience and the characteristics of the agency. However, they generally noted that MFIC classrooms with participants of varying skill levels and backgrounds were beneficial to participants.
- Most people felt they had the appropriate background and skill set to find value in MFIC.

MFIC participants had an extremely positive overall impression of the course

Participants and supervisors both expressed positive impressions of the course and its instructors. Some details are as follows.

- Ninety-seven percent of those surveyed said their overall impression of MFIC was either *very good* (59%) or *good* (38%). None characterized the course as either *poor* or *very poor*.
- Program participants largely attributed their positive impressions to the course instructors.
- Among supervisors who participated in the supervisor sessions, most found them beneficial. About one-quarter claimed they were not useful.
- Participants cited the coaching activities as particularly helpful, but also gave positive marks to the course lectures and materials used in the classes.
- Many participants interacted directly with NYC Opportunity personnel through MFIC, and valued that experience.

> **97%** of respondents had an overall positive impression of MFIC, with 59% characterizing their impression as *very good,* and another 38% characterizing it as *good*.

MFIC alumni cited personal and program improvements after taking the course

We researched how MFIC participation affected participants' skills, organizations, and career goals. Findings from each are presented below.

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[4] The Community of Practice was introduced in May 2015. The first MFIC cohort began in February 2013.

Many noted that MFIC participation improved their management skills

- Ninety-seven percent of survey respondents reported applying lessons from MFIC in their organization. About half of them said they applied lessons from the section on *Leading people and building teams*, while the other half cited different types of lessons implemented.
- When given the option to cite a portion of MFIC that was least effective, 85% either said *none* or skipped the question.
- To that end, most participants said they gained basic management skills from their participation in MFIC, and their supervisors cited more conscious and intentional management from participants.

97% of respondents applied lessons from MFIC in their organization.

Many said MFIC had positive implications for their programs

- Almost seven in ten participants (69%) reported that MFIC improved their ability to collect data, monitor and evaluate changes, and determine best practices.
- Seventy-six percent of surveyed participants said that their program has had improved outcomes since they were in MFIC. A larger proportion (80%) of supervisors reported improved outcomes.
- Forty-one percent of participants with improved outcomes cited examples related to *Strategy and planning*, and 43% cited examples related to *Leading people and building teams*.
- Two-thirds of participants (66%) and most supervisors (90%) reported that staff retention or turnover had not changed because of MFIC participation.
- Participants stated that stronger or new collaborations with other programs resulted from interacting with other course participants.

After participating in MFIC, **76%** of participants and **80%** of supervisors reported improved outcomes back in their program.

MFIC has affected participants' assessments of their own professional development needs

- Most participants reported that MFIC helped them understand their own professional development needs (81% said that MFIC did this *well* or *very well*).

The recently-created Community of Practice (COP) can be improved

We researched how well participants understood and used the COP after they finished their MFIC participation. The findings indicated some areas for improvement with the COP, including the following:

- Awareness of the COP varied widely among participants, with half of interviewees being aware of COP and only 49% reporting in the survey that they took part in COP activities. When probed about the constituent parts in interviews, a larger proportion were aware of these components, but perhaps just not the label "Community of Practice."
- Participants viewed LinkedIn either negatively or neutrally. Few found it enticing or a boon to COP participation.
- A minority of those interviewed believed the COP was redundant because they were already networking with their peers, outside of the COP.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the New York City Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity (NYC Opportunity) and City government agency partners have worked with more than 200 community-based organizations (CBOs) to pilot and evaluate innovative anti-poverty programs. Over that time, NYC Opportunity created a way to support the professional development of the managers of these programs, understanding that they were in the best position to support program implementation if they had a solid foundation of knowledge and skills. NYC Opportunity and the City University of New York School of Professional Studies (CUNY SPS) identified seven core competencies that effective program managers use, and built its Program Management Core Competency Model[5] around them.

To increase the likelihood of these managers' success in implementing innovations, NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS developed the Managing for Innovation Course (MFIC), which covers six out of the seven competencies outlined in the Program Management Core Competency Model: *Strategy and Planning*, *Leading People and Building Teams*, *Collaboration and Partnerships*, *Analysis and Decision-Making*, *Contract Management and Budgeting*, and *Personal Management*.[6] The MFIC curriculum helps participants strengthen their program management skills and focus on those six competencies.

The course is taught by CUNY SPS, which partnered with NYC Opportunity to develop the course and its curriculum. The course consists of seven full-day sessions, generally two weeks apart. There are currently two types of cohorts: CBO employees who manage the programs under City contracts and their City agency partners. While their curricula are similar, there are some differences. The first sessions for program managers began in spring 2013. Since then, six cohorts (of 15–20 people each) have completed the course. Potential enrollees apply for admission, with the consent of their supervisor. Supervisors are expected to support their supervisee's participation and be an active partner in the training. To that end, beginning in 2014, supervisors were asked to attend two sessions: the first session for program directors and a special supervisor session on *Leading people and building teams*.

In 2015, NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS developed the Program Management Forum Community of Practice (COP) in response to feedback for more forums in which MFIC alumni could network with other graduates. COP provides in-person events, a quarterly newsletter, and a managed LinkedIn group.

NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS asked Westat and Metis Associates to perform an evaluation of MFIC. This report contains the findings of that evaluation.[7] Note that MFIC cohorts have been comprised of both CBO employees and City agency partners. This report only examines the experiences of CBO employees.

This report presents findings from an evaluation of MFIC on a wide range of research questions. These research questions are grouped into seven topic areas (described in detail in Table 1 in Appendix A). The evaluation of MFIC builds on regular participant surveys (course evaluations) that CUNY SPS conducts immediately after course completion and several months later.

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[5] http://www.nyc.gov/html/NYC Opportunity /html/initiatives/resources_forum.shtml.

[6] The seventh competency (*Program knowledge*) was not included because it is specific to each participant's program area.

[7] Since the program's inception, CUNY SPS has also been performing surveys of program alumni. Each cohort was asked questions at three different time periods. We examined all the data from these surveys and incorporated those findings in the report where appropriate.

The MFIC evaluation collected information through multiple methods and data sources between June 2016 and November 2016, including the following:

- Interviews with key NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS staff;
- A survey of MFIC participants (i.e., program managers) from all six program cohorts that had completed the course by summer 2016, and their supervisors;
- Follow up interviews with MFIC participants and supervisors;
- An observation of a course session for City agency partners;[8]
- Review of administrative data (class rosters, plus applications, course materials, and curricula); and
- Review of CUNY SPS course evaluations.

The overall survey response rate was 42.6%,[9] which is sufficient for drawing conclusions and considered high for surveys of this type. We also conducted in-depth interviews with 15 MFIC participants and 14 supervisors, and balanced these interviews across cohorts and two key factors: whether the course of was completed by the program manager and whether the program manager participated in the Community of Practice. Participants interviewed were well-distributed across these factors. While it is always important to note that the qualitative findings are not necessarily representative of *all* MFIC alumni, we are confident that these findings provide useful information about how the course is perceived, its effects on participants and organizations, and suggestions for improvement. Appendix A provides more detail on the evaluation methodology.

Notes on nomenclature. In the text, we generally refer to the program managers who participated in the MFIC sessions as "participants" and their supervisors who recommended them for MFIC as "supervisors." When we asked supervisors about the MFIC participant they recommended, we sometimes referred to the latter as "supervisees." In addition, when we mention "respondents" we are specifically referring to people who answered the surveys; alternatively, "interviewees" refers to people we interviewed. Both groups (respondents and interviewees) can be either managers or supervisors, etc. depending on the context. See Appendix C for a glossary of these definitions.

Generally, when we asked survey or interview questions of managers, we asked them to answer about their supervisee. (For example, when asking about networking, we asked supervisors if the course improved their supervisee's ability to network, not their own ability to network.) However, there are a small number of questions that we asked the supervisors to respond about themselves. (For example, when asking respondents if they had suggestions for additional topics MFIC could cover, we are asking the supervisors themselves for their opinions, not what they think their supervisees think.) In these cases, we have explained in the text that supervisors were answering for themselves; otherwise, they were answering for or about their supervisees.

When reporting on survey and interview responses, we highlight notable differences between participants and supervisors. If no distinction is made, the reader can assume that there was little difference between the responses of

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[8] Our initial plan was to observe a session for CBO employees. However, none were scheduled during the data collection timeframe. So, working with NYC OPPORTUNITY and CUNY/SPS, we identified a MFIC session for City agency partners that provides a similar experience to participants. Our observation was of that session.

[9] We collected survey data from 66 of 155 MFIC participants. Note that not all 66 respondents answered every single survey question; and some respondents skipped certain questions based on prior answers. Because of this, response rates for individual questions may vary.

the two groups. In addition, when reporting percentages, we generally calculate those figures among the people who responded to the question.

Direct quotes are from interviews or surveys. Throughout this document, we provide quotes, offset by quotation marks. These signify direct quotes from either interviews or open-ended survey questions, and are noted as being from MFIC participants, their supervisors, or staff from NYC Opportunity or CUNY SPS. We do not directly attribute any quotes to specific people, to preserve anonymity.

The following sections provide findings on the research questions listed in Table 1. These findings are preceded by the Executive Summary, this Introduction, and followed by Conclusions and Recommendations, as well as two appendices. The findings are presented in the following order (Note: "CTRL+Click" on the text in these bullets will take you to the corresponding section):

- Participant Characteristics and Program Fit,
- Overall Impressions,
- Personal and Program Improvements, including
    - Skills development and application,
    - Programmatic implications,
    - Career histories and plans,
- Communities of Practice: Experience and Outcomes, and
- Recommendations and Future Research.

Finally, we have included three appendices. They are:

- Appendix A. Methodology
- Appendix B: Observation of an MFIC Session on Team and Personal Management
- Appendix C. Glossary of Terms Used in this Report
- Appendix D. References

FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION OF MFIC

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS AND PROGRAM FIT

MFIC is geared towards program directors and program managers who are "responsible for running the day to day of NYC Opportunity -funded programs and ideally they have a staff." CUNY SPS staff described the participants as generally mid-to-high level, but sometimes including lower-level or brand-new managers. Likewise, an instructor described the course as "an opportunity for middle managers in non-profits to develop the skills, abilities, and attitudes that are going to make them effective leaders and managers in the non-profits that they work in."[10] One interviewee thought that the mix of individuals in the course helped to add perspective, noting "…there were people who were doing the same work and sometimes doing it different ways. There were also people who had more experience in other arenas."

MFIC participants had varied management experience before attending the course. Some participants had been program managers for only a few months when they took the course, while others had been managers for up to 10 years. Among interviewees, about half had never managed another program before. These interviewees described themselves in a variety of ways, from being mid-career to being very experienced program managers. Interviewed supervisors generally classified the course participants as slightly less experienced than the participants did, from entry-level to mid-career. Almost all participants also indicated that management had been a career goal of theirs prior to their current position and prior to their participation in the Managing for Innovation Course.

> *"Then it was a room of like-minded individuals that were operating – some were new managers, some had been managers or directors for a while, so I think it was good to be able to come in that kind of arena and share ideas and learn from each other."*
>
> *- An MFIC participant*

MFIC successfully aligned course material to people's background and skill levels; even if the classrooms were not homogeneous (cohorts have generally included participants with a diversity of backgrounds, ranging from new managers to those with leadership experience). Fully 82% of survey respondents said that MFIC materials were either *well* (42%) or *very well* (39%) aimed at their background and skill level. Additionally, in the interviews, MFIC participants and supervisors generally agreed that the course information was relevant and provided insight on how to meet the needs of their staff and the populations they served.

In general, participants became aware of MFIC through former participants, their agency, NYC Opportunity**, and email blasts informing them of the course.** Several participants indicated that they heard about the course from their supervisors, some of whom had also participated in the program. Once they learned about it, participants were attracted to the course for various reasons, including professional growth, eagerness to develop management skills, and the occasion to network. Possibly most of all**,** MFIC was regarded as an "exciting" learning opportunity that would provide tools and strategies to "enhance" their managerial skills and boost their confidence as a supervisor. Speaking to his or her interest in the course, one participant expressed, "I think that just the topic itself, you know, Managing for Innovation, is something that if those that are involved in this profession really want to be successful, I think that we

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[10] Source: promotional video on the Managing for Innovation Course (http://www.nyc.gov/html/NYC Opportunity/html/initiatives/resources_forum.shtml)

have to remain very open and adaptable, and try to learn as much as possible, to really deliver service innovatively." Figure 1 highlights reasons why surveyed participants enrolled in MFIC, which varied because NYC Opportunity does not actually require anyone to take the course.

Figure 1. Why participants enrolled in the course
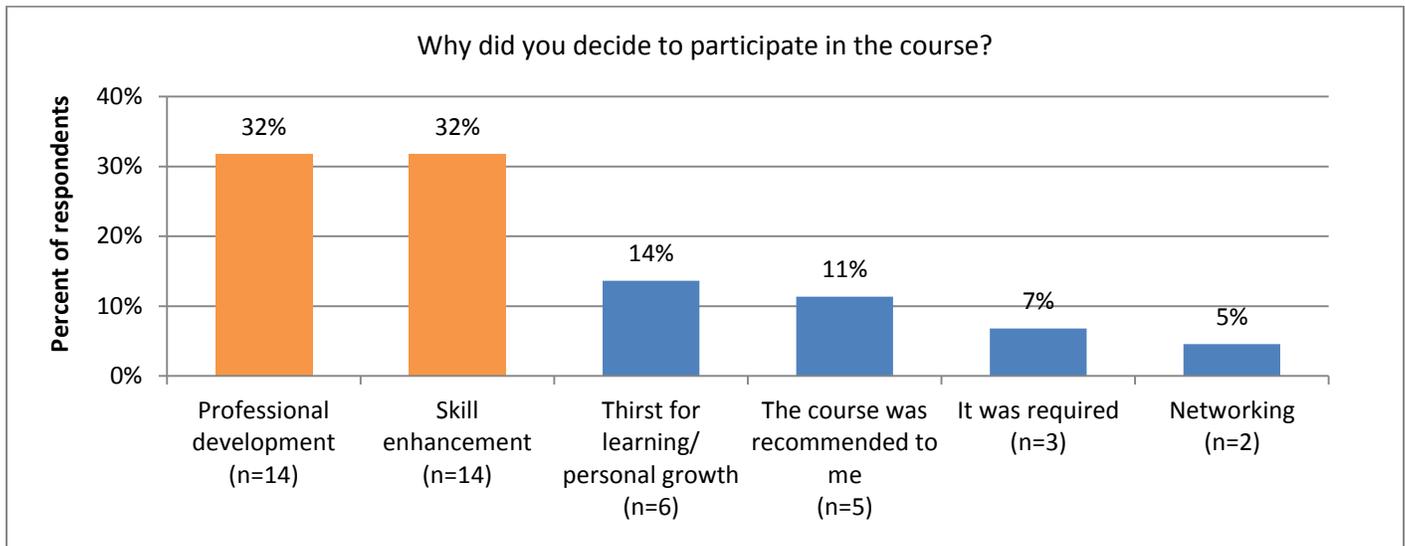
Why did you decide to participate in the course?

Reason	Percent
Professional development (n=14)	32%
Skill enhancement (n=14)	32%
Thirst for learning/ personal growth (n=6)	14%
The course was recommended to me (n=5)	11%
It was required (n=3)	7%
Networking (n=2)	5%

Percent of respondents

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because of rounding, and do not include respondents who did not answer the question.
Source: MFIC survey.
Three survey respondents said they were required to take the course, even though NYC Opportunity does not require participation. This discrepancy is likely because their supervisor required them to take the course.
Throughout this report, figures provide data in orange and blue bars. The bars shaded orange signify the more interesting findings, which are generally described in the text, as opposed to blue bars, which are often not mentioned in the text.

Supervisors played an instrumental role in participants' decision to engage in the course. Participants indicated their supervisors were "supportive" and "encouraging." In describing their supervisor's role, one participant remarked: "she wanted to make sure that I was exposed to those opportunities. So she advocated that I try it." Supervisors offered similar feedback. They thought the course would enhance their supervisee's skills and address certain development areas. In particular, supervisors thought the course would provide insight on how to address programmatic and staffing needs and would offer essential tools to help participants advance their knowledge. According to a supervisor, "[the supervisee was] extremely hungry to improve her skills and become a stronger leader. And so I knew that if she committed to the course, she would give it her all, and get something out of it." Similarly, another supervisor expressed: "It seemed like it would give him some fundamental tools that would help him in his role as a manager."

Most participants unreservedly chose to participate in the course when given the opportunity. Those that had concerns were unsure about the course schedule and the overall time commitment. While supervisors overwhelmingly encouraged participation in the course, the time commitment was a challenge raised by a few. Those who expressed reservations wanted "to respect that [participants are] not, you know, answering emails throughout the day while they're at the training, and that there's also work outside of the training hours."

Consistent with participants, supervisors learned about MFIC from others in their organization who had completed the course, from supervisee email applications, and through conversations with past participants. Supervisors also cited specific organizations, such as NYC Opportunity and the Community Resource Exchange (CRE),[11] as a source of information. Some supervisors were invited to apply for the course through their city agency contacts. As an exception, one supervisor indicated he or she was not given a choice whether to participate, explaining that the City agency which funds their program stated that "this is a training that they wanted us to participate in."

Supervisors noted that whether the course was considered a good fit for each participant depended on participants' own characteristics (including prior professional experience) as well as the characteristics of the organization that employed him or her. During the interviews, supervisors spoke extensively about how participants demonstrated effective organizational skills and had a solid understanding of their organization's values and mission. Supervisors spoke openly about participants' personal characteristics and eagerness to strengthen their leadership skills. But, interviewed supervisors varied in their opinions regarding the optimal experience level for a course participant. One supervisor felt that the program would be a good fit for people who are promoted to manager role without having managerial experience. Specifically, this supervisor indicated the course would be a "good tool" as an opportunity for entry-level managers, to provide these staff with basic concepts and frameworks. In contrast, three supervisors indicated there was value in a varied cohort because everybody could benefit from an opportunity to improve their leadership skills and "think in a different way than just their day-to-day responsibilities."

Supervisors generally felt those they sent to MFIC benefitted from participating in the course. However, they had various opinions about who benefitted the most. One supervisor remarked that it's hard to "…pinpoint exactly who's the right fit" because, regardless of titles, you can have an executive manager who is not very strong in the skills taught in the course and have someone new to managing who is nonetheless very strong. Three supervisors echoed the point made above about the value of a group of participants with mixed ability levels.

In general, both participants and supervisors reported feeling that their organizations were a good fit for the course.
Participants thought the course information was relevant and provided insight on how to meet the needs of their staff and the populations they served. Though many of the participants engaged in similar work, the course provided a unique opportunity for individuals to engage with people who came with different perspectives. Participants also largely believed that they had the flexibility in their organizations to carry out what they learned. Supervisors expressed similar views, indicating that their organizations were a good fit for MFIC because they valued the opportunity to develop their staff's knowledge. One supervisor described the group as a "nice eclectic group" and felt that "it was a great way to see what their struggles are…on different dynamics at different levels."

> *Within my department…there is always a great flexibility for innovation, and for trying new things. So therefore, if, you know, training is afforded, if information is gained, if professional development is done, there is huge encouragement for change.*
>
> - An MFIC participant

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[11] Information about the Community Resource Exchange can be found at http://www.crenyc.org.

Non-Completers

Only 6% of survey respondents (three individuals) reported not completing the course, although 14% (seven people) did not answer the question. According to data provided by CUNY SPS, only 11 participants (out of 155) did not complete MFIC. To gain more information about why these people did not complete MFIC, we included three non-completers in our interviews. Although these interview responses cannot be generalized to all non-completers, they do provide insight into why some did not complete the course. According to those interviewed, the predominant reasons for not completing the course were scheduling conflicts and unexpected personal obligations. Interviewed participants were regretful that they did not complete the course but expressed understanding of the attendance requirements. One respondent remarked, "okay, I missed two, and I think in the beginning they say you can't miss more than two,' and it just kind of fell away, I was like, all right, forget it."

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

Impressions of the Course as a Whole

MFIC participants and supervisors had positive overall impressions of the course. In the survey, most respondents rated their overall impression of MFIC as *very good* (59%), or *good* (38%). No respondents rated their overall impression as *very poor* or *poor* (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Overall impressions of MFIC
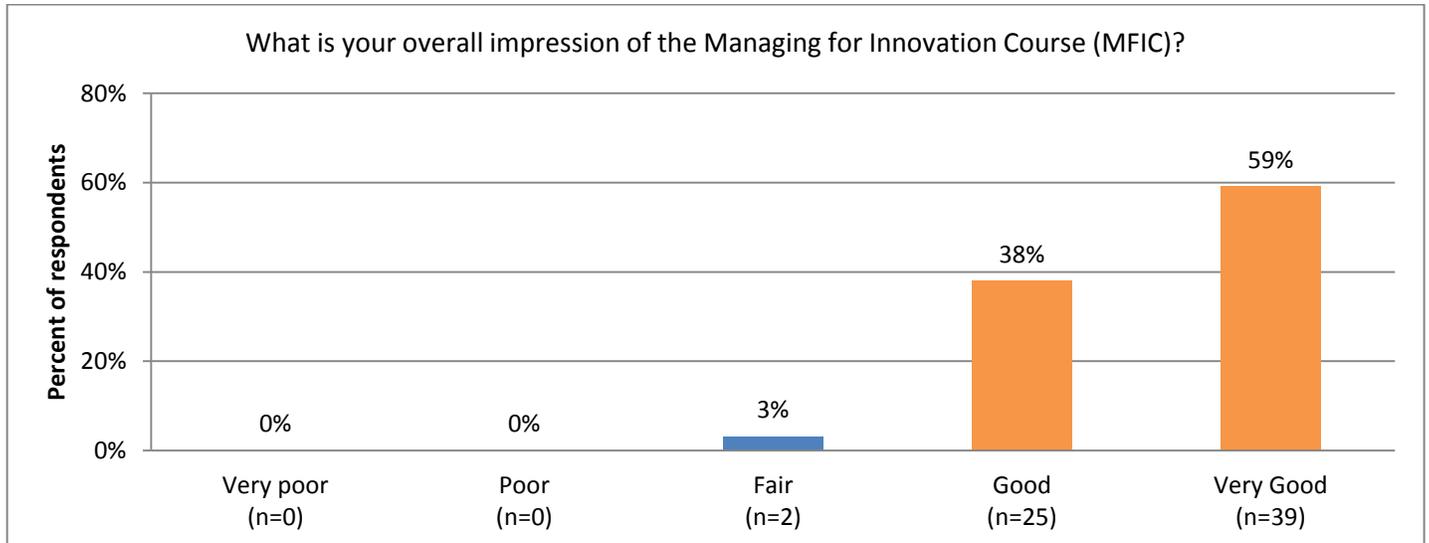
Source: MFIC survey.

These findings echo the feedback CUNY SPS collected after the course. Those data show that across all six cohorts, participants almost unanimously *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that each session topic "taught me new concepts or skills" when completing the post-session feedback forms. Furthermore, over 90% of participants across cohorts either strongly agreed or agreed that each

> *Over **90**% of participants across all six cohorts either agreed or strongly agreed that each session's content was applicable to their role as a program director.*

session's content was applicable to their role as a program director. *Leading people and building teams* and *Personal management* were described as the most applicable topics after the introductory session.

Program participants and supervisors largely attributed their positive impression to the course instructors. Over two-thirds of survey respondents said that their overall impression of the course depended *a great deal* on the qualities of the instructor; another 18% said it *completely* depended on the instructor's qualities. As with the previous survey question, no respondent gave either of the two least-positive answers (i.e., that the overall impression of the course depended on the qualities of the instructor *not at all*, or *very little*). One interview subject noted that those who ran MFIC "...did a really good job of picking the people who they chose to do the training." Another said "the facilitators were just really amazing, and made themselves very approachable, and accessible. I think they did a great job in just kind of acclimating all of us into the group."

Analysis of the CUNY SPS course evaluations found similar results. Over the duration of the program, the course has been taught by six instructors, all of whom were rated very highly in participant feedback. Over 95% of them either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that their instructor presented and explained course materials clearly, and over 98% either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that their instructor demonstrated a satisfactory level of knowledge about the course content. Instructor quality was also identified as a major driver of participant satisfaction; there was greater variation in participant satisfaction according to instructor than there was according to session topic or cohort, signaling the role of the staff in the course experience. However, staff were also identified as responsible for determining each session's balance of lectures, discussions, and exercises, an aspect of the course participants viewed with the most (but still minor) dissatisfaction.

Impressions of the Supervisor Sessions

Supervisors were asked specifically about the supervisor sessions they attended, and the results from those inquiries are below.

Most supervisors who attended the supervisor sessions found them beneficial, with some exceptions. Sixty-four percent of supervisors who answered this survey question reported attending the supervisor workshop on *Leading people and building teams*.[12] All of those who attended reported it to be beneficial. One supervisor reported that "it helped me to redefine what I believed a leader should be, and learn what it can be." Another valued the ability "...to connect with my employee and demonstrate my own commitment to evolving/learning as a manager."

In the interviews, some of the supervisors with less positive impressions explained why they did not find the sessions to be useful. One felt the "...content was kind of elementary, and not necessarily growth promoting, or [did not] particularly provide new information" to the supervisors in attendance. Another supervisor said that the supervisor sessions were not "a good use of my time."

The element that stood out among those interviewed was the inclusion in the course of a personality test. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment was deployed to help supervisors understand their own management and

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[12] Beginning in 2014, supervisors were asked to attend two sessions: the first session for program directors and a special supervisor session on *Leading people and building teams*. This series of survey questions inquired only about the latter.

communication styles and also how best to communicate with their colleagues. Altogether, supervisors described the MBTI assessment as helping them to reflect on their modes of interaction in the workplace.

MFIC Program Experience

MFIC comprises several distinct elements. A review of course materials, course evaluations, and interview findings resulted in the identification of the following as critical elements of the course experience for those enrolled:

1. Direct provision of content through lectures and course materials;
2. Group coaching;[13]
3. Personal goal setting and journaling;
4. In-course networking opportunities; and
5. Chances to interact with and learn from NYC Opportunity.

Each of the course sessions usually included a combination of the first four elements .Settings in which participants could interact with and learn from NYC Opportunity occurred less often, but were found to be equally essential to the overall identity of the program. Participants valued each of these as distinct elements, which were then brought together by the course instructors. Box 1 presents a snapshot of one observed session, where the instructor presented new content on delegation skills and personal management while also encouraging peer sharing and personal growth in a fun and exciting manner.

Participants generally appreciated the coaching activities most. They used the group coaching as a way to network, and noted that even if the group went off-topic, the discussions with their peers were still useful. Interviewees also found the journaling helpful because it forced them to make a change in their practices and reflect on their approach. However, several participants found it difficult to keep up with the journaling activities due to other obligations. Supervisors generally agreed that the most important part of the course for their supervisees was having the forum to collaborate with their peers. There were several networking opportunities throughout the course, allowing them to connect with other participants.

Participants tended to have positive opinions about course lectures and materials as well. Interviewees reacted positively to the inclusion of different points of views in the lectures and the focus on practical knowledge. They viewed the course materials as highly effective, and the textbook "Managing to Change the World" was a most appreciated resource. However, some interviewees noted that the resources covered too many topics, and the materials could have been more concise.

Both participants and supervisors also greatly appreciated interacting and learning from NYC Opportunity through their enrollment in MFIC. Course participants were generally aware of NYC Opportunity before their enrollment and were aware, at least to some degree, that NYC Opportunity was the originating funder of their program. Furthermore,

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[13] Participants are given clear guidelines on how to carry out group coaching, which entails directed conversations focused on practical challenges designed to foster self-reflection and peer sharing. Coaching sessions are led by volunteer leaders from within each coaching group. Participants are asked to identify, during group coaching sessions, concrete actions to take before the next session and are also expected to keep confidential what is discussed. At the close of each session, each coaching group sends a summary to the session instructor and the group participants that includes the "action items" each participant is committed to working on.

NYC Opportunity was found to be very well regarded by course participants. Yet, participants indicated that openings for interaction with NYC Opportunity prior to the course were limited and therefore the prospect of interfacing with NYC Opportunity staff through MFIC became a motivating factor. This sentiment was captured by one participant, who noted that "What really stood out in the course was to see them become part of a small panel to speak from their perspective…and then after that being able to say hello and greet them. That was really awesome. Aside from the course…I don't really get the privilege to be able to able to interface and make that kind of contact."

The course experience was relatively consistent across the six cohorts. Interview, survey, and feedback data indicate that participants in each cohort perceived the course in a way similar to the other cohorts. Across cohorts, there were no substantive differences regarding content or experience.

PERSONAL AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

Skills Development and Application

Completing assignments for MFIC

Course participants generally completed and appreciated their assignments. CUNY SPS staff do not collect assignments, so they do not have an objective way to determine what proportion of MFIC participants do their work. However, based on their observations of how well participants seem to understand that material in class, they infer that most students complete most of their assignments. And the data confirm that hunch. Over half of survey respondents (59%) reported *always or almost always* completing the MFIC's required assignments, and no one reported completing the assignments *hardly ever or never*, which was the lowest option.[14] However, the interviews suggest that participants may have completed different types of assignments at different rates. Participants consistently reported that they most appreciated the group coaching activities and least liked the journaling. While they found journaling helpful to force them to make changes in their practices and reflect upon their work, interviewees said they sometimes did not keep up with the demand for journaling, due to other obligations.

Applying the lessons of MFIC

Almost all respondents said they applied what they learned from MFIC in their organization. Among survey respondents, 97% reported applying the lessons from MFIC in their organization. This includes 98% of participants who self-reported doing this, and 91% of supervisors confirming their supervisees doing this.

> **97**% of respondents reported applying the lessons from MFIC in their organization.

Those who said they applied MFIC lessons were then asked for examples. Eighty-three percent of participants gave an example of something they did, and 100% of supervisors gave an example of something their supervisee did. Of the 56 examples provided, almost one-half (48%) aligned with the core competency of *Leading people and building teams* (see Figure 3). The next most

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[14] Supervisors were not asked this question, because it concerned participants' assignment completion, and supervisors were unlikely to accurately report that information.

frequent types of examples were *Strategy and planning* (13%), *Collaboration and partnerships* (13%), *Contract management and budgeting* (9%), and *Personal management* (9%).[15]

Figure 3. How MFIC participants applied the lessons from their courses
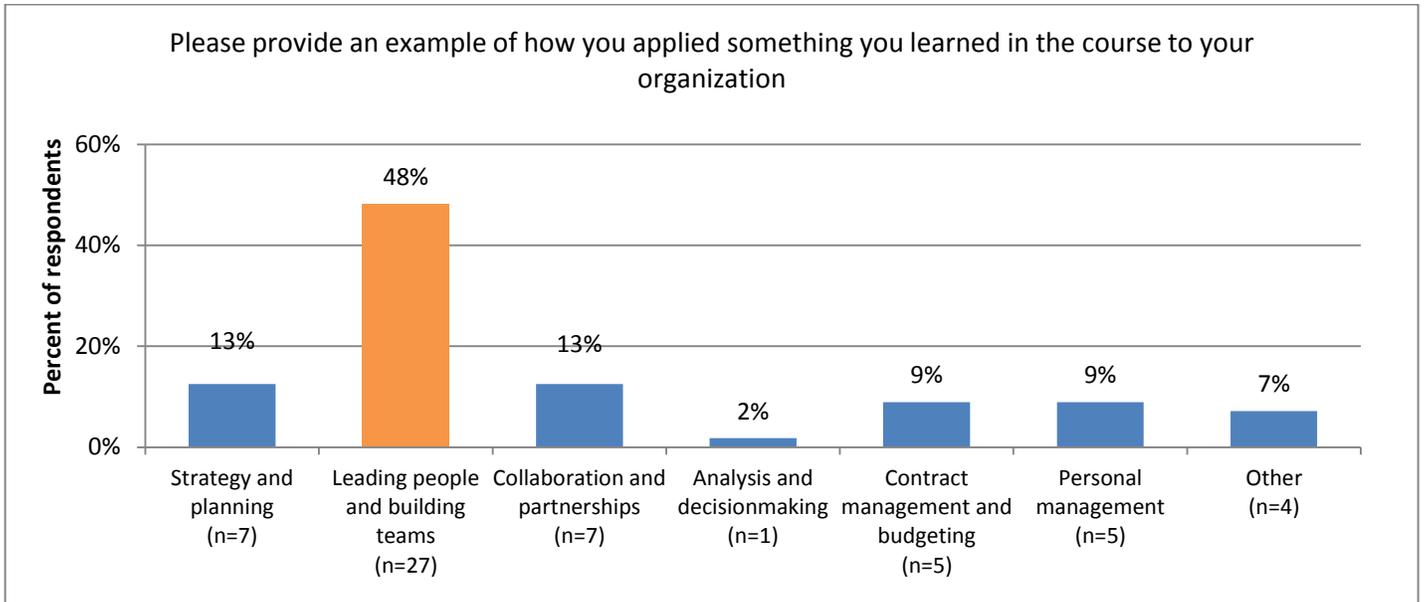
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because of rounding, and do not include respondents who did not answer the question.
Source: MFIC survey.

Aside from specifically citing new practices, participants and supervisors suggested in interviews that **the course helped participants rethink their jobs and become more conscious and intentional about their decisions**. One MFIC participant said the course taught him or her to identify "…other opportunities to work with my team in different ways, and working smarter with them…" A supervisor noted that the course gave his or her supervisee "…sort of a renewed sense of purpose and confidence [and more eager to try] innovative approaches to dealing with [problems]."

> One MFIC participant said the course taught him or her to identify "…other opportunities to work with my team in different ways, and working smarter with them…"
>
> A supervisor noted that the course gave his or her supervisee "…sort of a renewed sense of purpose and confidence [and more eager to try] innovative approaches to dealing with [problems]."

Slightly more than half have implemented new practices at their organization because of MFIC. In addition to asking if MFIC participants had applied what they learned, we also asked them if they had implemented any new practices at their organizations to systematically adopt the MFIC lessons. Among MFIC participants, 64% reported implementing such practices, but among managers, a

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[15] Examples include: (for *Leading people and building teams*) supervising using templates from the course and running more goal-oriented staffing; (for *Strategy and planning*) using the workflow diagram from class to track progress toward goals and being more communicative with staff about progress toward goals; (for *Collaboration and partnerships*) collaborating with other organizations that also participated in MFIC; (for *Contract management and budgeting*) becoming more involved in the agency's budget and using the budgeting framework from the course; and (for *Personal management*) better management of priorities and improving on their own management weaknesses.

plurality (45%) did not know if their supervisees had done so. Of the managers that did report knowing, half said their supervisees did implement new practices, and half said they did not.

Respondents who reported implementing new practices were asked which they used the most. Three of the core competencies were each mentioned about one-quarter of the time (see Figure 4): *Contract management and budgeting* (26% of mentions), *Strategy and planning* (24% of mentions), and *Leading people and building teams* (24% of mentions). In the interviews, participants claimed that they were now more transparent with their teams and cited different ways they provide professional development, which could be considered under the *Leading people and building teams* competency.

Figure 4. New practices MFIC participants implemented after MFIC
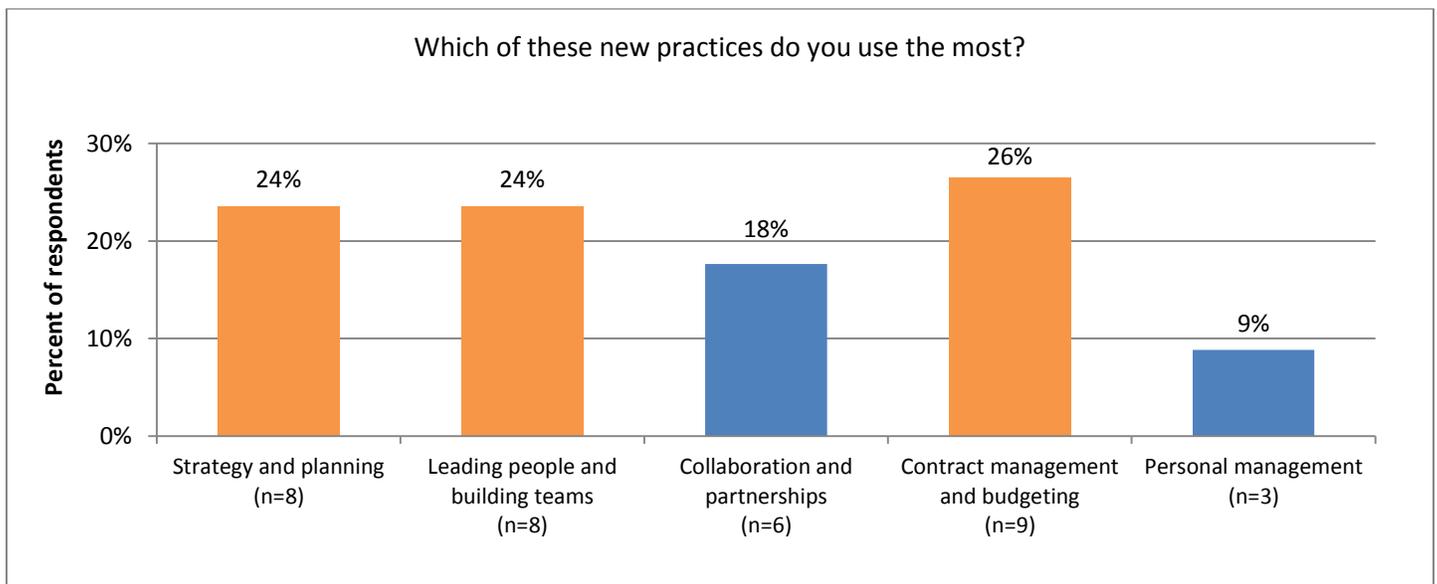
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because of rounding, and do not include respondents who did not answer the question.
Source: MFIC survey.

Budgeting seems to be the most important skill participants acquire, even if they do not consider it transformative.
We asked survey respondents which practices from MFIC they found to be most transformative or effective, and about 64% of respondents asked cited one or more skills. As shown in Figure 4, about half of the skills cited can be classified as *Strategy and planning* and another third as *Leading people and building teams* (both 24%). While no MFIC participants or supervisors cited budgeting as most transformative (see Figure 5), *Contract management and budgeting* was the practice most cited as being implemented after MFIC (as shown in Figure 4). One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that a number of interviewees noted that MFIC improved their budgeting skills, but the budgeting tasks in their organization were performed by different offices.

Figure 5. Practices MFIC participants considered most transformative or effective

Which practices are most transformative and/or effective, and in what ways?
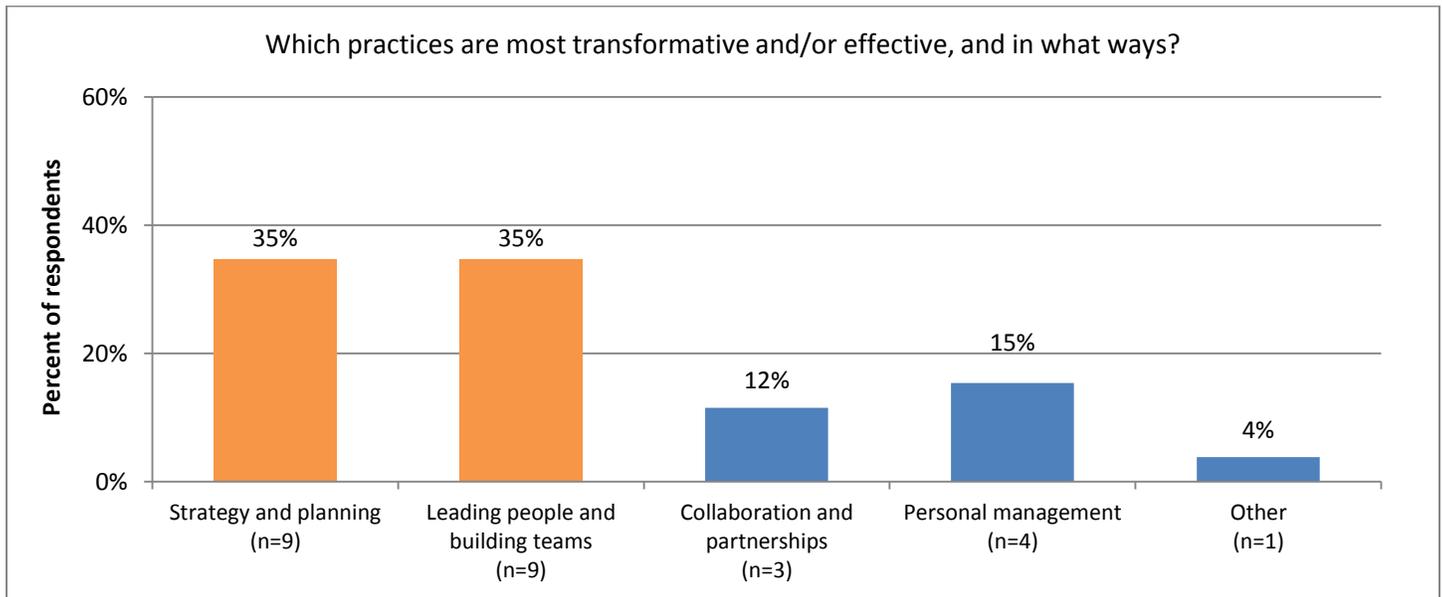
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because of rounding, and do not include respondents who did not answer the question.
Source: MFIC survey.

MFIC participants and supervisors generally value all aspects of the curriculum. When asked which practices from MFIC were least effective, 85% of respondents stated *none* or skipped the open-ended question. Among the small number who did state a least-effective practice, two cited *Strategy and planning* issues, one cited an issue related to *Contract management and budgeting*, and three named other types of practices.

Discontinued practices tended to involve personal management. The practices participants most often discontinued after the course (among the small number of respondents who stopped practices) fell under the *Leading people and building teams* core competency and included things such as replacing micromanagement with delegation.

In the stakeholder interview, the CUNY SPS staff theorized that instead of dropping practices, participants often simply improved upon bad habits, such as not delegating effectively. The survey and interview findings confirm this insight. However, the CUNY SPS staff also cited other challenges that participants sometimes improved upon, such as hiring practices and strategic thinking.

Improving management skills

Many participants gained basic management skills from MFIC. In the interviews, participants and supervisors alike referred to MFIC as a way for participants to gain management skills. A number of supervisors noted that these managers were often program specialists who were promoted without any management training, and they saw MFIC as a good tool to teach entry-level management concepts and frameworks. One participant said that MFIC was literally the first management training he or she had ever been offered. Some of the skills participants gained included learning to understand their staff better and incorporating creative ways to develop and boost staff to achieve their full potential.

One participant said that MFIC was literally the first management training he or she had ever been offered.

Additionally, while some supervisors felt that their supervisees were still a work in progress, **they noticed gains in their ability to be more strategic**. Speaking of how her supervisee improved, a supervisor said: "she has just, you know, a language, words to put to different types of strategies that she uses, that she didn't have before." One participant shared with his or her supervisor that, through the course he or she "learned to be more effective by addressing issues more quickly." As indicated by supervisors, the course improved participants' focus, awareness, and their ability to delegate management responsibilities.

Programmatic Implications

Improved program performance

Most participants report improved program outcomes since participating in MFIC and credit the course with that change. Over three-quarters of participants who were surveyed (76%) reported that their program had experienced improved outcomes since they were in MFIC. When supervisors responded about their supervisees' program outcomes, 80% reported improvements. And a larger group (86%) credited MFIC with strengthening their own ability to improve outcomes at their organization.[16]

When asked to describe how the course contributed to their ability to improve program outcomes, most participants and supervisors provided examples from the core competency around either *Strategy and planning* (41%) or *Leading people and building teams* (43%) (see Figure 6). The most common explanations included giving participants a way to take a step back from their day-to-day operations to examine how they approach their tasks and more self-confident management. For example, one respondent said the course helped him/her find alternative solutions to problems. Others noted that the course gave them the tools to support their staff in meeting goals, learn to delegate, and improve reporting and goal-tracking systems.

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[16] The same number and percent of supervisors said (A) program outcomes improved since their supervisee participated in MFIC, and (B) MFIC contributed to the supervisee's ability to improve program outcomes. However among MFIC participants, only 76% reported improved outcomes (A) while 88% reported that the course contributed to their ability to improve outcomes (B). So, a small number of participants thought that their program's outcomes had not improved, but that MFIC contributed to their ability to improve outcomes. This discrepancy may exist because respondents misinterpreted the question, or because they feel they have a greater ability to improve program outcomes, even though that hasn't yet happened in their program. (The latter is most likely, because a substantial number of these respondents were in Cohort 6, who had just completed the course.)

Please explain how taking the course contributed to your ability to improve program outcomes at your organization.
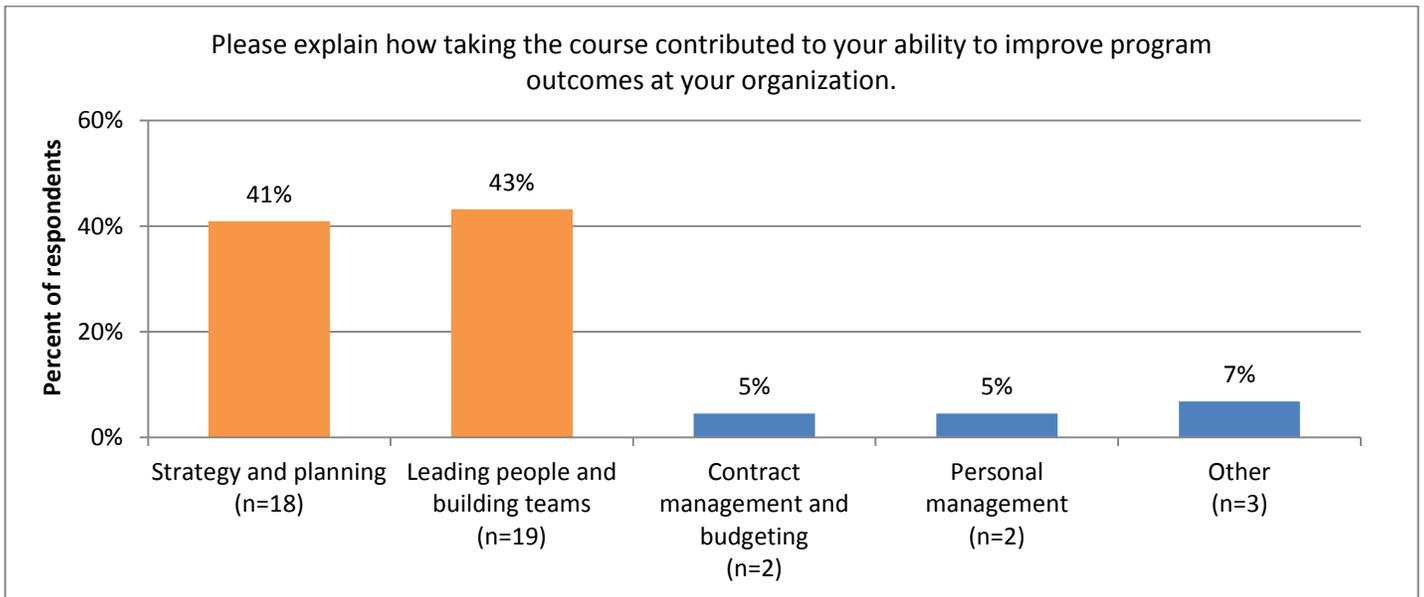
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because of rounding, and do not include respondents who did not answer the question.
Source: MFIC survey.

Interviewees provided additional detail and described these changes in several ways. Some noted benefits resulting from a changed perspective, stating that the course provided a "window" into programmatic and funding areas, and gave them insight into what the agencies wanted or would expect from a management team. Others cited **more tangible effects, such as providing tools to assist program startup and implementation**. One participant reported generating goal sheets for each of his or her direct reports, and another transformed his or her "outcome meetings" into "accountability meetings" in which all participants played a part in meeting the organization's goals.

For a number of reasons, some participants felt they were unable to effect change. Among the six participants who reported that MFIC did not contribute to their ability to improve program performance, they provided various reasons. One felt the new perspective provided by the course would have occurred anyway; and yet another cited a lack of knowledge about the course from his or her supervisor. In the interviews, participants provided a bit more detail about challenges to using their MFIC skills to effect change. They noted that sometimes goals took longer to achieve than expected. Others cited the size of their program, compared to the issue they're trying to face, and noted that it's difficult to have more than a small effect.

Staffing, budgeting, and programmatic changes

Most participants and supervisors reported no change in budgeting because of MFIC. While some respondents cited contract management and budgeting in an open-ended survey question about improved program outcomes, we also specifically asked (later in the survey) if MFIC participation resulted in changes to their agency's budget. In response to this question, only 24% of respondents said they had made budget changes since MFIC. Among them, almost a third cited changing allocations within their budget to reflect new priorities (31%). Another near-third (31%) reported changes to reflect better project management (e.g., more realistically funding line items so they have the resources necessary to

complete the job). Two participants even added their employees to the budgeting process so they would better understand how the programs ran.

Just over two-thirds of participants reported being able to better collect data, note changes, and identify best practices. More than half of participants (69%) reported in the survey that MFIC improved their ability to collect data, monitor and evaluate changes, and determine best practices. Among supervisors, about 30% said their supervisees did this, 30% said they didn't, and 40% did not know.

Interactions between participants and supervisors of different NYC Opportunity programs resulted in some new or stronger collaborations. Examples of this include participants learning more about each other's services to aid in client

referrals and for internship placements. According to those interviewed, not only did participants strengthen the non-specific referral pathways between organizations, they also discussed particular urgent cases when necessary. One interviewee even described the formation of monthly case conference meetings with a counterpart found through the course. Interactions also resulted in shared best practices between organizations. As one interviewee described, "as far as thinking of our clients and the people that we serve, if there's something that we feel like the other program can

She and I connected here, and then we met afterwards on behalf of a proposal that we were submitting, and kind of developed a new collaboration. So that was – I don't think it would have happened without this training.

- An MFIC supervisor

benefit from, we share that information [with each other]." According to two interviewed supervisors, meeting their counterparts at similar programs, and learning about shared challenges, was helpful for identifying solutions. Finally, there one interviewee also described a new collaboration on a proposal among supervisors of different NYC Opportunity programs that only occurred because they had met and talked during the course.

Career Histories and Plans

Shaping participants' career plans

More than six in ten indicated that their participation in the course shaped their future career plans or goals. Seventy-one percent of participants said MFIC shaped their career plans or goals.[17] We asked for more detail from those whose career plans and goals were shaped by MFIC, and 39% of them had or planned a department or positional change.[18] Additionally, just over a third of the participants (35%) planned to enroll in undergraduate or graduate school. Interviewees also indicated receiving promotions or making plans to take additional professional classes or pursue a license relevant to their area of work.

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[17] Only 20% of supervisors said this was true for their supervisees, while a majority of supervisors (60%) reported not knowing if MFIC shaped their supervisee's career plans or goals. However, it seems reasonable that many supervisors may not know if their supervisee's career plans or goals had changed.

[18] Although most interviewees planned to make a departmental or position change, the results described in the previous subsection indicate that, largely, they have not yet done so.

Influence on professional development needs and new professional opportunities

Many participants reported MFIC helping with their professional development needs. Eighty-one percent of participants said MFIC did *well* or *very well* when helping them better understand their professional development needs (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. How well MFIC helped people understand their professional development needs
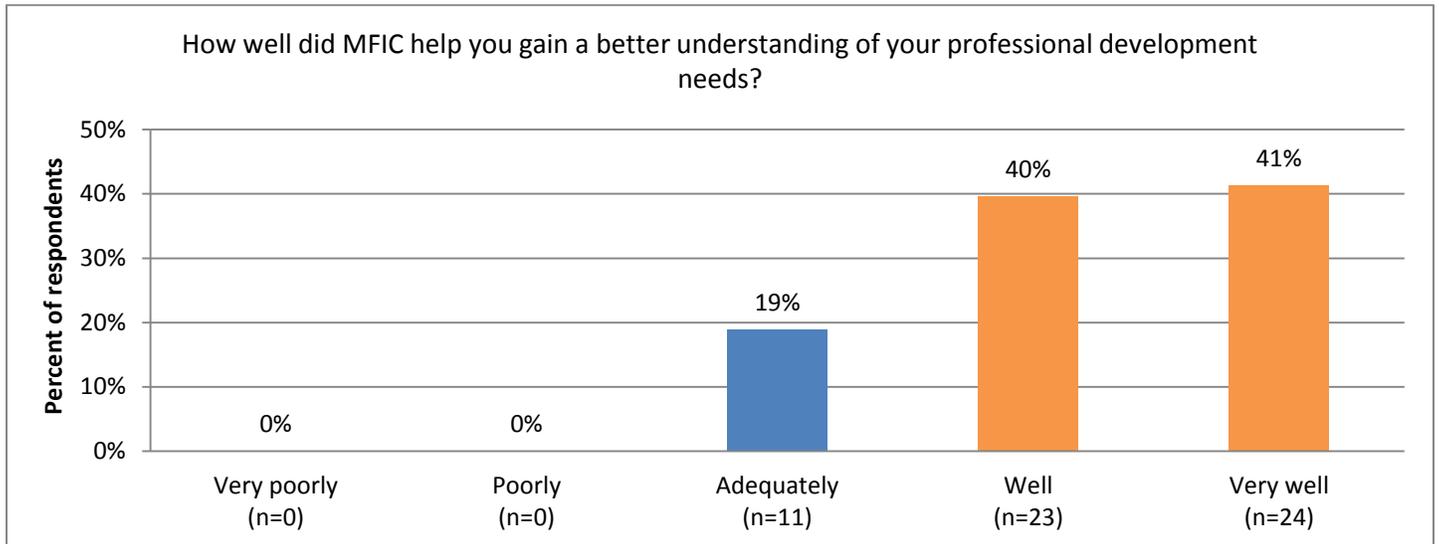
How well did MFIC help you gain a better understanding of your professional development needs?

Response	Percent
Very poorly (n=0)	0%
Poorly (n=0)	0%
Adequately (n=11)	19%
Well (n=23)	40%
Very well (n=24)	41%

Y-axis: Percent of respondents (0% to 50%)

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because of rounding, and do not include respondents who did not answer the question.
Source: MFIC survey.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE: EXPERIENCE AND OUTCOMES

The Community of Practice (COP)—a combination of a LinkedIn group, alumni newsletter, and events for alumni hosted by CUNY SPS and NYC Opportunity —was developed in 2015 in response to alumni requests for more options for networking. It was intended to engage MFIC participants in continued learning and networking. Senior NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS staff described COP events as a "combination of professional development and social opportunities to network" that were formalized because participants engaged in informal networking and making connections throughout the course. NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS staff thought "helping to formalize networking opportunities would be useful for them and also to help each cohort broaden their network by interacting with participants from cohorts different than theirs." Participants' comments and feedback about the COP are summarized below.

Awareness of the COP varied widely among participants. According to the interview findings, only about half of the participants were aware of the COP (only 49% of surveyed participants reported taking part in any COP events). But, other feedback from participants suggests that more of them were aware of some of the COP's constituent elements. Interviewees described emails (likely the newsletter) as well as events (likely the alumni events) without connecting them to the COP overall.

LinkedIn was envisioned by CUNY SPS and NYC Opportunity as the primary mode of communication for the COP. Yet, the use of LinkedIn was at best viewed neutrally by participants and for a substantial percentage was a challenge to their engagement in the COP. Multiple participants spoke to the technological challenge of using LinkedIn as well as a dislike of, or impatience with, social media as a platform for interaction. Furthermore, participant feedback also indicates that the LinkedIn group was not sufficiently enticing for participants. This finding was demonstrated by comments such as: "I know about the LinkedIn, because in the last class that we had, it was mentioned. I will be honest, I'm not on LinkedIn, nor have I created a LinkedIn page." Participants who were members of the LinkedIn group were also more likely to be passive users, checking occasionally for more information without contributing. Furthermore, participant feedback indicates that those interested in *actively* participating in a community of practice might be more receptive to a greater number of in-person networking opportunities than any online platform (Linkedin or a competitor).

> *I don't think it has to do with the LinkedIn, it's just... I'm just not so much into, I guess, the computer stuff, the social media, stuff like that. And, I guess, work, I'm just so overwhelmed, by the time I'm heading home [LinkedIn doesn't seem important].*
>
> - An MFIC participant

In addition to busy schedules, participants also cited difficulty knowing how to network as a reason that they did not participate in the COP. Multiple interviewed participants shared that they would have preferred that the course introduce the COP earlier in the sequence, with "networking 101" since "not everyone is savvy in that way. There are a lot of introverts." By introducing it earlier, participants believed that they would have been more active in the COP activities after the course ended.

Although participants generally appreciated the networking element of the COP, they saw the most value in using it to further the professional development that took place during the course. Interviewees described an interest in using the COP and the LinkedIn group to deliver content for further learning. One participant further thought the postings in LinkedIn should be the responsibility of CUNY SPS and not alumni: "What I'm wondering now is, I wonder if I am part of it, and I just don't see any updates from [the MFIC program]. So it's like, out of my mind…If we know about more training opportunities, if we have more resources for our clientele and consumers, if we have more opportunities of things to send them to, or even for ourselves–or for my staff, that would be great."

Some participants networked with their peers *outside* of the COP during the course and felt confident in their ability to sustain these new relationships once the course ended. In fact, one participant noted that the LinkedIn group seemed "a little bit redundant because we're already connected." Most interviewed participants—across all six cohorts—described networking for both personal and programmatic reasons. Participants reported using these new relationships as a support network and to share employment opportunities, resumes, and strategic advice. Programmatic reasons included sharing program and organizational resources, collaborating to help clients (such as discussing client needs and identifying resources to meet these needs, and working together on the development of internships for clients. (This level of networking outside of the COP may partly explain the reason that participants viewed the COP as less essential for networking and better suited for other purposes.)

Role of NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS in managing the COP

Recognizing that the Community of Practice is under-utilized by participants, interviewees were asked whether increased involvement by CUNY SPS or NYC Opportunity in curating the COP's activities and content would add further value.

For the most part, interviewees either wanted CUNY SPS to be actively involved in the management of the COP or were neutral. Participants did not share any need for the conversations to be private. In fact, responses indicate that participants believed CUNY SPS's involvement would be essential to the desire (described above) for using the COP as a vehicle for content delivery. Interviewees also suggested that CUNY SPS's involvement would lend legitimacy to the resource sharing that would take place, thereby encouraging more participation from course alumni.

Opinions on the role of NYC Opportunity in the COP differed. A sizable portion of interviewees indicated that NYC Opportunity's involvement would be beneficial, but others thought it might have a chilling effect. One interviewee commented that NYC Opportunity's role as funder made its presence even more important: "I think it would add value. Because they are our funder, they can hear and understand our struggles, and if they have ideas on how we can overcome those barriers... So I think it's important they are part of it, so they can know what's going on in the forefront because we're the ones doing the work." Others expressed concern about NYC Opportunity's involvement as some believed it would prevent open discussion, as exemplified by the comment that "[NYC Opportunity is] seen as a funder. You know, if you're in the room, people are going to be not as honest as they want to be, because I think there's consequences and repercussions from being that honest, right?" Other interviewees recognized NYC Opportunity's instrumental value in creating the space for discussion but believed that NYC Opportunity should continue in this capacity with only a behind-the-scenes role. As one participant explained, "I don't necessarily think they need to manage [the conversations]. I think they've created a space. They've given us a space."

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Below are recommendations we developed after analyzing all of the data gathered for this evaluation, followed by two areas for future research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

MFIC Sessions

While most people had very high praise for MFIC, participants and supervisors did suggest several changes. We have highlighted some of them below.

Some alumni noted that they simply did not know how to network. They suggested that as part of MFIC, NYC Opportunity/CUNY add a module on "networking 101," to discuss and practice basic skills of networking.

Participants and supervisors also identified several additional topics to include in the course, such as: grant writing, engaging in difficult conversations or working with difficult personalities, the dynamics of managing up, and the presentation of additional and more detailed case studies that address management challenges.

Community of Practice

MFIC participants, CUNY SPS, and NYC Opportunity representatives agreed that the COP was not flourishing as intended. To that end, we have developed a number of recommendations for improvements to that important component of the program.

First, consider coordinating groups of MFIC alumni based on content area of their program, without regard to cohort. This will allow MFIC alumni to meet people within their field that they might not have taken classes with. According to one participant, this could take the form of "a justice group, a job development group…ways that we could bounce ideas off of each other, things that are working well, things that are not working well."

In addition, CUNY SPS staff suggested introducing the COP before the course ended. They said "[w]e can incorporate it in the program, we have a session on collaboration and partnerships, we could do something around that competency related to community and practice, LinkedIn group, or reaching out to somebody so that it's engrained from the beginning."

Currently NYC Opportunity is not involved in the COP. Some members thought their participation would improve the group, but others felt it might have a chilling effect on discussions. We recommend that NYC Opportunity/CUNY consider allowing NYC Opportunity to participate in the COP in some manner.

Many MFIC participants found LinkedIn a barrier to their participation in the COP. They either did not understand how LinkedIn worked or found it to be cumbersome without much value added. At best, people seemed to be neutral about it–no one we interviewed volunteered that they liked using LinkedIn. We recommend that NYC Opportunity/CUNY reconsider how LinkedIn fits into the COP and whether its function could be achieved through other means. Perhaps simply setting up an opt-in email list would achieve many of the same results, but not scare off participants as much as an unfamiliar website or the creation of a dedicated platform for communication and file sharing.

Also, some suggested that NYC Opportunity/CUNY modify the COP to not only allow for networking, but also continuing education. They felt that the groups could serve as a hub for additional training or refinements to the training provided through the main MFIC sessions. When asked to reflect on the most valuable networking opportunities they have encountered outside of the COP, participants described those that enhanced their ability to deliver services.

IDEAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In addition to the recommendations above, this section notes two areas where future research on MFIC may benefit NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS. Below are descriptions of two of these areas.

A Framework to Measures Return on Investment

One concern raised during the NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS interviews was a desire to quantify the costs and benefits of MFIC. One way of quantifying the cost and benefits is by conducting a return on investment (ROI). Originally, ROI was used to place a value on the payoff of investments; now the concept has broadened to include all types of investments, including training and education (Vikalpa, 2012). The discussion below provides a framework for quantifying MFIC as an ROI. It is informed somewhat on previous research on returns on leadership development investment, like Avolio, Avery and Quisenberry (1010) and Wang, Dou, and Li (2002).

MFIC goals

In the NYC Opportunity interview, we discussed the original purpose of MFIC as a way to get managers of organizations administering NYC Opportunity programs up to a common baseline of management skills. This would free up technical assistance (TA) providers from having to address those concerns when providing TA to these organizations, allowing them ultimately to help improve service delivery. NYC Opportunity also noted that side benefits of MFIC are investing in service providers' professional development, and improving their networking potential.

Inputs and outputs

To calculate an ROI, one must first quantify inputs and outputs. This is difficult in the administration of social services, but not unprecedented (Ibbs and Kwak, 2000; Olsen, 2012; Ryan and Lyne, 2008; Vikalpa, 2012). **We would recommend quantifying the following inputs**, in terms of 1) actual money spent, 2) the costs of people's time, and/or 3) opportunity costs:

- The time MFIC participants spend applying to the course, preparing for the course, and in the course;
- The time their supervisors spend nominating their supervisees for the course, preparing for the course, and in the course;
- The time that CUNY SPS staff spend developing the course, preparing for the course, and administering the course; and
- Any additional costs to run the course, aside from paying for CUNY SPS staff time, which is already counted above (e.g., facilities costs, transportation).

Proposed outputs would mirror the MFIC goals stated above and would include:

- More efficient service delivery from organizations with managers who participated in MFIC (e.g., because of more effective management, budgeting, or strategic planning);
  - o Possibly measured by calculating the cost per person served;
- A better-trained workforce among managers of social service agencies;
  - o Possibly measured through surveys of alumni career advancement or (as an intermediate measure) attainment of additional training, certifications, or degrees; and
- Effects from increased networking;
  - o Possibly measured by noting interactions between members of different organizations, such as:
    - ▪ Partnerships between new groupings of organizations in grant applications;
    - ▪ Organizations merging or engaging in cooperative agreements;
    - ▪ Increased movement of employees between organizations; or
    - ▪ Increased interest in professional groups that cross organizational lines.

Benchmarks

Even after the above factors were considered and data were quantified, the result would be a value for NYC Opportunity's ROI for this program. But that value alone would not provide any context about whether this is a good return or a bad one. So, that value would need to be benchmarked against comparable values, to put it into perspective. We recommend exploring three different possible ways to benchmark any ROI calculations of MFIC.

1. Compare inputs and outputs of organizations before staff participated in MFIC and after;
2. Compare inputs and outputs of organizations with staff who have participated in MFIC to similar organizations in New York City (or other jurisdictions) that do not have staff who have participated in MFIC or a similar program;
3. Identify programs similar to MFIC in other jurisdictions and compare those programs' ROI to that of MFIC.

MFIC as a Competitive Option for Professional Development

NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS senior staff expressed an interest in better understanding how the Managing for Innovation Course compared to other professional development opportunities available to nonprofit managers in New York City. This is an important question worthy of a broader benchmarking effort. However, within the scope of this evaluation we also collected data from interviewed participants and supervisors on this topic.

MFIC's Unique Characteristics

According to participants, the unique characteristics of the Managing for Innovation Course included:

- The comprehensive nature of the **program's core competency model**. Furthermore, the course was considered to be of a longer duration and more intensive than many other options.
- The **direct relevance to the programs being managed** because of NYC Opportunity's role in its development as well as its practical approach to instruction. As explained by one participant, "I think that what was different was, it was a real-world pedagogy. And when I say that, I mean they didn't speak in terms of theory, and application. They really spoke in terms of real work."
- The **course's embedded networking opportunities** (especially with other directors of NYC Opportunity -funded programs).

- **An expectation of innovation due to NYC Opportunity's involvement**. Participants believed that because of NYC Opportunity's involvement the course would be consistent with the agency's focus on innovating programs.
- **Minimal burden compared to the advantages of attending**. A theme of "why not" emerged through participant feedback, implying that the course was seen as without real burden and worth "the risk."

Comparison to Internal Trainings Provided by Attendee's Organizations

Many course participants had an array of professional development provided to them through their own organizations. These opportunities ranged from internal staff dedicated to training staff to tuition reimbursement programs to help staff take courses or become certified in a position-specific skill. Participants also described other external *management*-focused courses that were made available to staff at their organizations. These included the American Express Academy (a leadership training course), Bank of America's Neighborhood Builders Leadership Program, and Robin Hood's Accenture Leadership Coaching. According to participants, the most important difference between the Managing for Innovation Course and these other options, beyond the unique characteristics described in the previous section, was the added value of being able to learn from and network with peers from other NYC Opportunity -funded organizations.

Importance of a Professional Development Credential

NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS senior staff also expressed an interest in exploring whether the lack of a formal credential attached to the course was an important consideration for participants.

Supervisors shared mixed opinions on the importance of earning a formal credential (or academic credit) after completing the course. Some supervisors argued that it was irrelevant because the content is what was important. Furthermore, one supervisor based this view on the belief that a certificate does not reliably indicate a higher quality experience. Other supervisors, however, disagreed. One perspective shared was that the lack of a formal credential from CUNY SPS signaled that the course was of lesser value, or that it could not be added to a resume. However, institutions often offer non-degree courses, which are well regarded in the workspace. Perhaps additional messaging from MFIC staff could make this fact more clear to participants.

Finally, several supervisors explained that the Managing for Innovation Course could be an opportunity for program managers to "make official" the training that they gained through on-the-job workplace experience. According to these supervisors, a common challenge is that their employees have extensive work experience but lack official degrees. As a result, they may be as experienced as someone with a degree but have less standing in the job market. Therefore, the ability to earn a formal credential through the Managing for Innovation Course would help these program managers gain "official recognition" of their embedded workplace learning. Such a credential could be anything from a certificate to credit toward a future degree.

CONCLUSIONS

With few exceptions, most participants and supervisors had a positive experience with MFIC. As noted in the Findings section of this document, they generally found the course was **a good fit for their background**, had **positive overall impressions and experiences**, and found that MFIC had **positive effects on 1) their skills and 2) their programs.** There was one area that many cited for improvement: **the COP**.

MFIC was a good fit for most participants, with many noting that the course took place at the appropriate time in their career. In addition, while there was some variation in participant background and experience, most found this to be beneficial.

Participants and their supervisors were overwhelmingly happy with their MFIC experience. Ninety-seven percent reported a *good* (59%) or *very good* (38%) overall impression of MFIC. Nobody characterized their impression as *poor* or *very poor*. Course instructors were an important factor in that impression. When asked separately about their own sessions, most supervisors reported finding their sessions useful.

Most MFIC participants (97%) applied lessons from the course in their organization. Participants cited *Strategic* planning and *Leading people and building* teams as the most transformative and effective skills they gained from the course. Most participants said they gained basic management skills from MFIC, and their supervisors noted the participants tended to employ more conscious and intentional management after the course.

Most participants said that MFIC had improved their program's outcomes. Sixty-nine percent of participants said that the course improved their ability to collect data, monitoring and evaluate change, and determine best practices.

The COP was most commonly cited as the area with the greatest opportunity for improvement. Half of all participants were aware of the COP or had participated in it. More seem to have known about the events and efforts, just not the name. Regardless, a large number of MFIC alumni did not feel the COP was useful as it was currently designed.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This evaluation answers a number of specific research questions. To do this, we used a mixed-methods approach, drawing from multiple data sources and respondent groups. The methods include:

- Interviews with key NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS staff;
- A survey of MFIC participants (i.e., program managers) from all six program cohorts that had completed the course by summer 2016, and their supervisors;
- Follow up interviews with MFIC participants and supervisors;
- An observation of a course session;
- Review of administrative data (class rosters, plus applications, course materials, and curricula); and
- Review of CUNY SPS course evaluations.

This appendix describes each of these methods in detail. But before that, Table 1 (below) contains a crosswalk that shows which data source we used to answer each of the 34 research questions.

Table 1. Research questions and data-collection methods used

Topic and research question	Data collection method used in answering				
	Surveys	NYC Opportunity & CUNY SPS interviews	Participant & supervisor interviews	Course evaluations
Overall Impressions					
What is your overall impression of the MFIC?	X			X
To what extent does your overall impression of the course depend on the qualities of the instructor?	X			X
To what extent did you feel the material in the course was correctly aimed at your background and skill level?	X			
Have the supervisor sessions been beneficial? If yes, how so?	X		X	
Skills Development and Application					
To what extent did participants complete the required assignments, including the Participant Journal, readings, and homework?	X	X	X	
What feedback would you give CUNY SPS on the assignments?	X		X	
Have participants been able to apply what they learned in readings or from speakers to their programs? And if so, what have they applied and how?	X		X	
Will/do participants implement new practices as a result of their MFIC participation? Which practices are most (and least) implemented? Which practices are most transformative and/or effective and in what ways? Which practices have been least effective?	X	X	X	
Which (if any) practices in use before the course were discontinued by participants as a result of this program?	X	X	X	
In what ways have decision-making skills improved through participation in this program?			X	
Were there other skills gained, aside from those originally intended, that can be attributed to the program?			X	

Table 1. Research questions and data-collection methods used—Continued

Topic and research question	Data collection method used in answering			
	Surveys	NYC Opportunity & CUNY SPS interviews	Participant & supervisor interviews	Course evaluations
Programmatic Implications				
Have program outcomes improved for programs with participating directors?	X		X	
Has this course contributed to participants' ability to improve program outcomes?	X		X	
How so, why? If not, why not?	X		X	
Has staff retention/turnover changed as a result of directors' participation in the course?	X			
Have participants made budget changes in their program(s) as a result of participation in the course? If so, what changes?	X			
Has this course improved participants' ability to collect data, monitor and evaluate changes, and determine best practices?	X			
Cross-Program Collaboration				
Have program directors participating in the program successfully collaborated across programs? If so, how? Has this course improved participants' ability to network with other program directors?	X		X	
Career Trajectory/Goals				
Has MFIC shaped participants' future career plans? Have participants adopted any new career goals as a result of their experience and participation?	X		X	
Did MFIC help participants gain a better understanding of their professional development needs?	X		X	
Has participation in MFIC created new professional opportunities for participants? If so, how?	X		X	
Potential Improvements				
What additional topics should be included in the course?	X		X	
Are there any changes that participants would like to see implemented in future MFIC cohorts/offerings?	X		X	
Were course materials presented in a manner that was helpful and easy to understand?	X		X	
Are there any changes participants would like to see in future course presentations?	X	X	X	
Community of Practice				
What are participants' thoughts on the Community of Practice/alumni activities?			X	
Have Community of Practice activities fostered collaboration? If so how?			X	
For those who completed the training but did not join the Community of Practice, why not?	X		X	
Participation in the Professional Development				
Why did people decide to participate in the training?			X	
For those who did not complete the training, why not?			X	
What are the criteria used to determine who is invited to participate and who is accepted?		X		
What are the characteristics of applicants and participants?		X	X	

Note: The MFIC session observation is not listed as one of the data collection methods in this table because it was only used in Box 1. The research question "How can NYC Opportunity better understand the Return on Investment (ROI) for this program" is addressed in Box 2, and uses information from NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS interviews, as well as interviews with ROI experts and literature. Similarly, the administrative data are not listed as a data source because they were only used to develop survey and interview questions and to answer the last two questions in this table.

DATA-COLLECTION METHODS

Surveys of MFIC Participants and their Supervisors

Survey design

CUNY SPS staff identified 155 people who had participated in the MFIC, either as a course participant or the supervisor of a participant. We developed a survey to ask these people about their experiences, but quickly realized it needed to be broken into six different versions. The first two versions were a participant and a supervisor version. We then noted that CUNY SPS had planned to survey people who were in Cohort 6 (the most recent MFIC cohort) the same timeframe as we were planning to administer the MFIC survey. So, we incorporated the three questions from that planned survey into "Cohort 6" versions of our participant and supervisor surveys, to avoid inundating those people with multiple survey requests. Finally, a small number of people served as both participants and supervisors of participants. To capture their specific situation, we created a survey called the "Double Dipper" survey, which incorporated aspects of both the participant and supervisor surveys. And, since two double dippers were from Cohort 6, we created a "Cohort 6" version of the double dipper survey, too.

The major differences between the surveys is that some questions were slightly reworded to match the respondent's situation, and other questions were skipped if they did not apply. All six surveys followed the basic pattern and asked about the same research questions

Survey response rates

Out of 155 survey participants, we received responses from 66 people, resulting in a response rate of 42.6%. Table 2 provides response information for each of the six surveys and for all the surveys combined. Online surveys tend to have a response rate in the range of 30–40% (Fryrear, 2016), which is slightly lower than our total rate. In fact, researchers have noted that survey response rates have been dropping for over two decades, for all types of surveys (Williams et al., 2016). One author studied nine research articles that examined response rates for online and paper surveys and noted while the average response rate for paper surveys was 56%, the average response rate for online surveys was only 33%. Those online response rates ranged from 20 to 47% (Nulty, 2008).

Table 2. Summary of MFIC surveys, with response information

Survey	Number of surveys administered	Number of surveys returned	Response rate
Participant survey	87	32	36.8%
Supervisor survey	25	3	12.0%
Participant survey, Cohort 6	19	19	100.0%
Supervisor survey, Cohort 6	16	8	50.0%
Double Dipper survey	6	4	66.7%
Double Dipper survey, Cohort 6	2	0	00.0%
Totals	*155*	*66*	*42.6%*

Source: MFIC survey.

High response rates allow researchers to statistically conclude that the survey results accurately reflect the population as a whole. The traditional thinking is that with lower response rates, there is a higher likelihood that nonrespondents are substantially different from those who completed the survey (i.e., low response rates increase nonresponse bias). However, new research indicates that the relationship between response rates and nonresponse bias is not as strong as traditionally thought. A much-cited paper on this topic concluded that response rates do not necessarily correlate with the reliability and validity of survey responses. The author also noted that there is no minimum response rate under which survey results could be assumed to be biased, and no rate above which the results would definitely not be biased (Groves, 2006). Another researcher noted that it was impossible, for any given study, to determine if the response rate indicated bias (Singer, 2006). Similarly, a study of U.S. Presidential election polling found no correlation between bias and response rates (Merkle and Edelman, 2002).

We took several steps to increase response rates. NYC Opportunity sent out an initial email to all 155 potential respondents to alert them to this survey and explain its importance. We then sent an email to potential respondents with a link to the survey and followed up with another email to nonrespondents a week later. One week after that, we sent emails from NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS to the remaining nonrespondents. After one more week, NYC Opportunity staff called each nonrespondent to urge him or her to complete the survey. Finally, Metis staff made one more round of phone calls to the remaining nonrespondents to remind them of the closing date of the survey and ask that they complete it. After each round of reminders, our response rates increased slightly, and after six weeks we closed the survey.

Interviews with Key NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS Staff

We met with key personnel from both NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS, to obtain information on topics related to the MFIC program. In those meetings, we discussed the origins and original concept of the course, how participants are selected, what skills participants obtain in the course, how MFIC participation affects program outcomes, the COPs, and potential improvements to the MFIC. These interviews were conducted in the late spring and early summer of 2016.

Interviews with MFIC Participants and Supervisors

After the completion of the surveys (i.e., in fall 2016), we conducted in-depth interviews with 15 MFIC participants and 14 supervisors. We used survey responses to inform the development of the interview protocols to allow us to probe any topics that respondents discussed in the surveys but did not fully explain. These interviews provided a deeper dive into many of the topics covered by the surveys, but also included some additional topics (as noted in Table 1). For example, the surveys asked respondents if they had experienced any changes in program outcomes after participating in MFIC. The interviews asked people for examples and probed them for reasons for any changes. Participants and supervisors were selected for interviews using a stratified sampling approach based on survey completion and cohort. Effort was taken to ensure distribution across all six cohorts for participants and all three cohorts for supervisors.

Course Observation

In the fall of 2016, our team observed a Managing for Innovation Course session, for City agency partners, on the Personal Management competency. The observation provided important contextual information for the study and used a protocol developed from the Observation Checklist for High-Quality Professional Development (Noonan et al., 2015). The results of that observation are in Appendix B.

Review of Administrative Data

We reviewed class rosters, as well as applications, course materials (i.e., documents used during the course), and curricula to inform the development of the survey and interview questions. We also used these data to help answer the two research questions "What are the criteria used to determine who is invited to participate and who is accepted?" and "What are the characteristics of applicants and participants?"

Review of CUNY SPS MFIC Course Evaluations

CUNY SPS provided us with results from several waves of course evaluations, for the six cohorts of MFIC participants. We used these questions and results to inform our own survey development, as well as our interview protocols. We also condensed the feedback data across cohort, instructor, and session and subsequently analyzed the closed- and open-ended responses. The results of these analyses are presented in applicable report sections.

APPENDIX B: OBSERVATION OF AN MFIC SESSION ON TEAM AND PERSONAL MANAGEMENT

Below is the summary of an MFIC session on team and personal management that the research team observed. The lesson was the second in Cohort 7, and took place on November 2, 2016. Fifteen participants attended (3 male and 12 female). While this report concerns only MFIC sessions for CBO employees, the observed sessions was for City agency partners. We agreed with NYC Opportunity and CUNY SPS that the curriculum was similar enough that the observations would be valid.

Just as the clock struck 1:00pm, one-by-one and in small groups, course participants made their way into the classroom and returned to their seats for the afternoon's session on Team & Personal Management. The session was held in a mid-size conference room at the CUNY School of Professional Studies. Desks were arranged in a semicircle, and positioned in the front of the room was a Smart Board. Along one wall were four large windows overlooking a department store. Participants trickled in and carried on small chatter, while others quietly made their way to their seats. With a large smile, the instructor stood at the front of the room and greeted participants. The instructor began the session by leading course participants in a discussion about task delegation. Transitioning into the first activity for the afternoon, the instructor directed students to the PowerPoint and asked, "What does this picture tell you?" Participants were presented with an image of a king painting lines on a road with the queen beside him, admonishing, "You have to delegate some authority!"

Shortly after, the instructor requested that participants split into groups and address the following question, "Which tasks should you not delegate?" After working in their small groups, the participants reconvened to the large group and shared several tasks that should not be delegated to their staff.

A PowerPoint slide accompanied the discussion, with an image of a delegation cycle. The cycle highlighted four key principles: agree on expectations, stay engaged, create accountability and learning, and adapt to fix the context. As a group, the instructor discussed the importance and applicability of each step. After this group discussion, participants broke into groups of three or four. Once in the groups, participants were instructed to brainstorm and create a list of expectations based on the four guiding principles outlined in the delegation cycle. Each group was assigned one of the four principles and worked on identifying specific strategies that could address their principle. Laughter and excitement filled the room as participants collaborated on their lists. After about 10 minutes, each group shared their list of expectations with class.

For the session's third activity, the instructor asked participants to think about specific tasks he or she will delegate within the next several weeks. One by one, participants shared a task he or she will delegate to other members of their team. Following this brief activity, participants broke into pairs and addressed the following questions: What motivates you to do your job? If there's something missing, what's missing? In pairs (with one group of three), participants shared their individual roles and personal experiences in the field with each other. This activity led into a peer coaching exercise where each pair or group of participants identified a relevant challenge they were facing and with their partner developed possible solutions to implement.

Next, the instructor introduced another activity – a relay race. The topic of this game was "accountability." As presented in the session, according to the Oz Principle, accountability is an attitude of continually asking. In any organization, there are people that demonstrate accountability or do not. An appropriate response to being presented with a challenge might be a response of "I am on it," "Let me help you with that," or "I will make sure we fix this and get right back to you." On the other hand, an inappropriate response might be "It's not my job," "That's not up to me," or "My people dropped the ball." During the relay race, participants were instructed to identify appropriate and inappropriate responses and behaviors. Taped to the white board were two flip charts, at the top of one sheet in big red letters read, "Above," for appropriate behaviors, and on the other sheet in big green letters read, "Below," for in appropriate behaviors. With great enthusiasm, participants left their seats and lined up in the center of the room, forming two groups. Using the metaphor of accountability "line," participants were instructed to write down sentences or phrases that described what staff members say or do when they are above or below the accountability line. One by one, participants eagerly raced to the board and wrote down their sentences – their team members stood in line cheering them on. In the end, participants on the "above the line" team won the race. The excitement of this activity was carried throughout the remainder of the session, as the participants continued sharing "above" and "below" the line examples.

The observed session continued in this manner, with distinct activities categorized by whole-class and small-group work and concluded with the sharing of additional resources, action planning/assigned homework, and evaluation surveys.

APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THIS REPORT

Throughout this report, we use a number of terms in a precise manner. Below is a summary of those terms and their definitions.

Term	Definition
Participant	A program manager from a community-based organization (CBO), who participated in the MFIC sessions; in this evaluation, all participants are CBO employees
Supervisor	A participant's supervisor
Supervisee	A specific participant who works for a supervisor
Respondent	A person who answered survey questions (can be either a participant or a supervisor)
Interviewee	A person who answered interview questions (can be either a participant or a supervisor)

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