

## Three Month Check-in Report Summary- Jessie Ball duPont Fund Leadership Institute March 2011

This is a summary of select testimonials from participants involved in the March 2011 Executive Director/Board Chair Leadership Institute for the Jessie Ball duPont Fund. The two-day Institute focuses on ways the Executive Director and Board Chair can work effectively as a team to (a) develop a working, involved board, (b) strengthen their organization's performance, and (c) create sustainable impact. Through interactive sessions and group work, the ED/Board Chair teams learn new ways to improve their individual and combined leadership skills. With the support of faculty coaches, each team is given time to develop a six-month action plan to address top priority organizational performance and sustainability issues. During the second day, teams share their action plans and receive peer feedback to help them as they consider ways to implement their action plans back home.

"Overall it was a really terrific experience. For us, it was a big priority to engage the board, because the board had historically been very passive and disengaged – at all kind of levels. So for our organization, the timing of the Leadership Institute was perfect. It was a very important kick start for critical work we needed to do. It really hit a sweet spot and was very effective."

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"What really worked first and foremost was that the Leadership Institute dealt with issues that were timely and important for our organization. Secondly, the team coming from the organization is key—the executive director AND the board chair. The Institute would have been valuable even if only one of us had come, but it was much more valuable because we came together, learned together, and worked together. Third, we really worked on the action plan. We took it seriously – even though in many other settings I've felt like this kind of exercise was make-work, but not here. We continued working on the action plan when we returned home. We improved it, and we implemented it. Another key part of the Institute was getting the insights from other groups that have wrestled with our concerns and were further along than we in dealing with them. The breakout groups worked well, and the presenters did a very good job in grounding the larger group conversations in reality. The facilitator listened well and helped thread the conversation for maximum value. It all worked well for us!"

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"I kind of saw the Leadership Institute as my lifeline. This was either going to move us forward or I was going to have to move out. The Leadership Institute gave me more energy, stamina, and determination to move forward and change the board. It made my board chair realize that this is a whole board issue. So it got us on the same page."

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"At the time of the Institute, I had just been on the job three months and the organization was about to close its doors. By attending the Institute, we were given the information and connections to literally save [the organization]. At the Institute, we learned how to apply to Jessie Ball duPont Fund for the operational support grant that has kept us alive. We learned so much, and every objective we've pursued since then with the benefit of the information and coaching we've received has worked, and that has made all the difference. Our board chair has become more engaged and the board is more engaged. We are working with one of the coaches for our strategic planning and fundraising workshop that is coming up later this month. So for us, it was a jump start, a catapult. The timing was perfect and miraculous as far as I'm concerned."

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"For us the Institute was phenomenal. It produced a big change in the way we work and want to work going forward. Now my board chair and I spend more time together, meet more often, not just when there is a problem. We spend more time on strategy and less on reacting to minor problems."