
AchieveMission Talent Initiative

Talent Initiative is an intensive and holistic consulting, coaching and training program designed to build the foundational elements of leadership development and human capital management in high-potential nonprofits and foundations.

The goal: to help organizations build the leadership, culture and structure they need to implement their strategies and drive meaningful social change.

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A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT SOLUTION FOR NONPROFITS OF 40 EMPLOYEES OR MORE

A nonprofit's ability to successfully pursue its mission is almost entirely determined by the capabilities of its people. In fact, the effective management and development of talented staff is perhaps the only way to reliably increase the efficiency, stability, scalability and results of an organization's programs.

Capacity for outstanding performance in high-potential organizations is built with intention; it most readily occurs when the Board, CEO/ED and executive team have established the fundamental principles and core architecture of its human capital management strategy, and take deliberate steps to implement it. Many nonprofit leaders regard human capital-related issues to be among their top priorities, but lack the internal capacity, expertise and resources to address these challenges.

"Human Capital" is the term we use to speak of the people who help an organization advance its mission. We include *everyone*: employees in the field; managers in the back office; executive leadership at headquarters; board members; volunteers—even consultants. In a similarly inclusive way, we use "Human Capital Management" to refer to the wide variety of processes and activities that an organization must successfully undertake: planning, recruiting, hiring, on-boarding, managing, developing, promoting, terminating, compensating, engaging and retaining people. These are activities that a nonprofit must successfully undertake in order to ensure that it can attract and retain Outstanding Talent in the Key Roles required to achieve its strategic goals; that team and individual goals and activities are Aligned and focused on the organization's highest priorities; and that people are supported to Optimize their Performance.



TALENT INITIATIVE

Talent Initiative is a leadership development and human capital management program designed for nonprofits and foundations that are typically at a point of inflection characterized by significant scaling or change. Often led by a dynamic, visionary executive, such organizations face leadership and human capital management challenges particular to their size and stage of development. Talent Initiative is an ideal starting place for organizations

- **Implementing new strategic plans.** Innovative business plans require organizations to reassess their leadership, management, and culture in order to succeed in bold new pursuits.
- **Pursuing rapid growth.** Organizations seeking to scale need to quickly evolve their approaches to managing and developing larger, more complex, dynamic, diverse and distributed teams.
- **Re-envisioning the organization and its future.** New CEOs and COOs often require help in shifting leadership teams, management processes and organizational culture to align with the new long-term visions they bring with them.

IMPACT

Nonprofits facing these challenges—most very exciting and promising—commonly underestimate the scope of people-related issues they will face as they try to align employees' goals and work products to the organization's strategies; identify, attract and retain the right people; and transition the organization to support their strategies. Talent Initiative addresses these issues directly, preparing leaders to anticipate and build the team and organization they need to achieve strategic mission goals.

Nonprofit leaders are also prone to underestimating the direct, positive program and financial impacts that prioritizing human capital management can produce. Program impact increases as the program team strengthens, goals realign to more squarely focus on the desired impact, and the organizational structure and culture increasingly supports improved ambitious results.

Organizations typically also find that their best fundraisers can significantly outperform the average and that unwanted turnover can result in as much as a year's benefit lost. As organizations learn to attract and retain more talented staff, fundraising becomes stronger and more successful.

Finally, stronger and more strategic capital management systems improve operating efficiencies. With stronger talent more tightly focused on key priorities and set up to outperform, organizations can produce more. AchieveMission consultants work with organization leaders to embed new expectations of return on investment in their human capital management planning and measurement.

PROGRAM

The Talent Initiative program engages key leaders from across the organization in the development and initial implementation of a 2-3 year *Strategic Human Capital Plan* specifically designed to address that organization's urgent short-term challenges, while building the foundation for longer-term effectiveness.

Over the course of an average six-month engagement, this work proceeds along four phases as described below. Throughout the process, AchieveMission provides *Targeted Coaching* for two executives, to help illuminate how leadership roles and managerial responsibilities are changing and to help them make the appropriate changes—This coaching, in turn, empowers leaders to help other managers and supports their stewardship of broader change-management processes.

The phases are:

Alignment (about 2-3 weeks)

The first step in our collaboration is to gain alignment between and among our respective teams regarding the expectations, goals, strategies, responsibilities, and timelines related to this entire engagement, and to facilitate input and buy-in from across the organization. We convene a group of representative leaders into a **Human Capital Steering Council**, the group empowered to make informed decisions, track the organization's progress through every step of the program, and ensure that the outcomes are sustained long after this engagement has concluded.

Discovery and Assessment (about one month, overlapping with **Alignment**)

We then gather more detailed information about the organization using a range of approaches, including interviews with key internal stakeholders, an online staff survey, and a review of key documents and HR processes. This information is analyzed to produce a **Findings Report** that assesses the organization against AchieveMission's comprehensive human capital management framework, highlighting where specific investments can close important gaps. In parallel, we guide senior leaders through seminars on best practices in selected areas of human capital management. These trainings enable the team to have a more nuanced understanding of the implications in the *Findings Report* and to participate more fully in a facilitated **Findings Retreat**, where we make preliminary decisions about targeted areas of focus and desired organizational developments.

Strategic Human Capital Planning (about one month, overlapping with **Assessment**)

Just as organizations need strategic business plans to chart the growth of their programs and development of their services, so too do they need internally facing strategic plans to map the associated evolution of their teams and processes. Building on the *Findings Report and Retreat*, AchieveMission works in close consultation with internal stakeholders to develop a detailed **2-3 Year Strategic Human Capital Plan**, a roadmap that details the steps to closing gaps between the organization's current and required capabilities. The *Plan* includes prioritized initiatives, timelines with deliverable plans, change-management approaches, and metrics for measuring impact.

Implementation Launch (3-4 months, overlapping with **Planning**)

Talent Initiative has been designed not only to meet clients' immediate needs but also to position them for further long-term development. Both of these goals are served by having AchieveMission work closely with our clients to directly implement **2-3 High-Priority Projects** identified in the *Strategic Human Capital Plan* for rollout within the first few months. Examples

include restructuring leadership teams; differentiating high-potential employees using talent reviews; developing succession planning strategies; crafting individual professional development plans; cascading strategic goals to departments and individuals; establishing and/or enhancing performance management systems; training managers to be effective coaches; etc.

These early implementation efforts provide visible wins and, building on earlier change efforts, help all employees see human capital management as a core responsibility of the entire organization. This culture-change ripple effect makes subsequent implementations easier, even as it enhances the effect of all existing and new human capital processes, creating the potential for true transformation.

Talent Initiative closes with a **Commencement Meeting** that allows the organization to reflect on its progress and learning over the course of the program. By helping a team to understand the value of the early wins already achieved, and the ongoing impact that the continued implementation of the plan can have, the commencement further builds momentum for continued progress.

Note: Talent Initiative is best suited for organizations with 40 employees or more. Smaller nonprofits and foundations can inquire about **Vice President of Talent On-Demand**, an AchieveMission program designed specifically to meet their needs.

ALUMNI SUPPORT

Alumni of Talent Initiative join other graduates of this program, as well as graduates of other AchieveMission consulting services, in a growing **Interactive Alumni Community**. This community provides valuable continued access to similar-stage and more mature organizations that have also made investments in implementing leadership development and human capital management best practices. Building from a shared foundation of trust and perspective, AchieveMission's team is also available for small or large **Customized Consulting, Coaching and Training Engagements**, most of which are not offered to the general nonprofit sector. Alumni are also invited to participate in longitudinal impact studies and to serve as the subjects of case studies that help them communicate their status as exemplars of best practices within the social sector to funders, peers, employees and potential employees.

THE ACHIEVEMISSION TEAM

Talent Initiative is provided by the highly regarded professionals who deliver all of AchieveMission's consulting, coaching and training services. This team includes respected experts in leadership and human capital management with experience across the private and social sectors. Collectively, our team has overseen more than 1,000 nonprofit consulting engagements and has taught leadership and management at some of the world's most respected academic institutions. Our Partners have led human capital consulting at Mercer and Hewitt, and have overseen global leadership development at General Electric and IBM, companies that have defined world-renowned best practices in these areas. We have coached and developed hundreds of widely respected leaders in the nonprofit and corporate sectors, and have helped lead some of the country's most innovative and influential nonprofit

organizations, including City Year, Citizen Schools, Jumpstart, BELL, Taproot Foundation, Points of Light, Independent Sector, and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

[Consulting team bios](#) can be found at achievemission.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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“The coaching I’ve received from AchieveMission has been crucial to the ongoing success of our organization.”

Morty Ballen, CEO, Explore Schools

“The experience of doing an assessment, creating a plan and then moving toward implementation was exactly right.”

Jessica David, Vice President, The Rhode Island Foundation

“I thought I knew what we were getting into and had high expectations, but what we actually accomplished with AchieveMission had 10 times the impact I expected.”

Paul Minorini, CEO, Boys Hope Girls Hope

“It is clear to me that the team we’re building now is much more capable of delivering on our organizational strategies that it was when we started... “

Deborah DeSantis, CEO, Corporation for Supportive Housing