

Creating an Adaptive Plan

A Bridgespan Leadership Accelerator Program

An online and team-based program for nonprofit organizations who know where they are going, and need a responsive action plan to get there.

Overview

For nonprofit leaders, the future can always seem uncertain. Even if you are clear on the impact you want to have, how can you navigate the challenges that might stand in your way? Creating an Adaptive Plan is designed to help your nonprofit team proactively chart your course forward, even when there is no certainty around the path you will take or how the world around you will change. Your teams will get clear on the priorities and actions that are most critical to your organization's success, and build plans to act – and react – to continually incorporate learnings and mitigate risk.



TEAM WORKSHOPS

Come together as a group for 90 minutes every few weeks to discuss key issues

Total Hours: 10-12
(depending on team size)



INDIVIDUAL ONLINE LESSONS

Log onto our online platform and complete individual assignments before meeting as a team

Total Hours: 10-15



COACHING SUPPORT

Individual and group coaching offered for Project Leads and CEOs

Total Hours: Up to 20 hours
(includes trainings, office hours, and one-on-one coaching)

How Your Team Benefits

Creating an Adaptive Plan will provide you and your leadership team with tools and support to help you develop a "Team Workbook" that includes:

- A concrete articulation of your **two-year destination**
- A list of your priorities as an organization, including the **3-5 priorities most critical to your success**
- An **action plan** to progress priorities in the next 6 months, including how you'll tackle hurdles and react to setbacks.

Program details

Who: Nonprofit leadership teams of 3-6 members (ED/CEO and senior direct reports)

Timing: Two cohorts per year:

Spring: March – June (~10-14 weeks)

Fall: September – December (~10-14 weeks)

Application Deadline: Rolling admissions until cohorts are filled, or *January 31* for Spring cohort and *July 15* for Fall cohort

For more information:

Email us at LeadershipAccelerator@Bridgespan.org

Should Your Team Participate?

The Creating an Adaptive Plan program is for nonprofit executive team of at least 3 members. This program is right for you if your team and organization are:

- Considering changes to elements of how you operate either across the organization, or within a single business unit or program
- Looking to understand how you should prioritize efforts and resources for the next 2 years

Curriculum

Workshop 1:

Agree on your 2-year destination including the impact you aim to achieve, and how your organization will be set up to achieve that impact.

Workshop 2:

Agree on priorities you will need to execute on to reach your 2-year destination and elevate those most unclear or risky, high-stakes or urgent to tackle first.

Workshop 3:

Tackle your biggest hurdles by identifying known and unknown challenges and brainstorming ways to learn, test, and lessen risks.

Workshop 4:

Develop an action plan to move forward on top priorities, including identifying what might go wrong, and naming “Plan B” alternatives.

Why do this work as an executive team?

We believe it’s important to do this work as an executive team for several reasons. First, having alignment on strategy, as a team, ensures that team members are all moving towards the same impact goals when making decisions and setting priorities. Second, these conversations can help build connections and strengthen dynamics within an executive team. Finally, having the full team aligned ensures that the strategic vision does not just lie with the CEO or any one member of the leadership team.

Application Process

Step 1: Complete the Request More Information form on the Leadership Accelerator website, or email us at LeadershipAccelerator@Bridgespan.org.

Step 2: A member of the Leadership Accelerator team will contact you within seven days to schedule a discovery call. We’ll ask you about your organization and team size.

Step 3: If we agree that the program is a good fit, we’ll send you an enrollment form!

Bridgespan Leadership Accelerator

Frequently Asked Questions

How can I be confident that this content will be relevant for my organization?

Over the last two decades, Bridgespan has helped hundreds of nonprofit organizations effectively address key leadership and strategic issues. We have developed our programs in collaboration with a diverse set of global organizations, nonprofit leaders, and sector experts.

Our time-tested tools and innovative learning approaches have helped clients get clear on their strategies, accelerate their impact, improve their decision-making confidence, and empower their teams to prioritize the work that matters most.

We have rigorously tested our Leadership Accelerator programs to ensure that each program is impactful, actionable, and sustainable.

Our proven programs are:

- Widely applicable across organization types and geographies
- Consistently described by teams as among the most powerful tools they developed and continue to use over time

How does Bridgespan bring an equity lens to this process?

Each Leadership Accelerator program integrates an equity lens. In each program, this manifests differently depending on the topic at hand.

Examples:

- **Achieving Strategic Clarity:** The process of designing an Intended Impact and Theory of Change is powerful in helping you articulate and achieve your goals around equity. In the Achieving Strategic Clarity program, you will be asked to think about the impact you want to have and the communities you want to focus on. This is an intentional opportunity to think about the focus that you want to have on historically underserved communities or specific populations.
- **Investing in Future Leaders:** Identifying and prioritizing development areas and drafting development plans for staff are key elements in building a stronger and more inclusive pipeline of leaders within your organization. In the Investing in Future Leaders program, you will be asked to think about how you develop your emerging leaders and ensure your talent development strategy reflects your goals and values. This is a unique opportunity to consider how your talent goals relate to your equity goals.
- **Strengthening the Executive Team:** Equity and inclusion are critical topics for an executive team to consider. In this program, we explicitly integrate equity in a few ways: clarifying whether there are goals on equity and inclusion that are the focus of your executive team; offering suggestions for how your team might take a stronger equity lens in decision-making processes; and including questions around equity and inclusion as part of the conversation on team dynamics.
- **Creating an Adaptive Plan:** In this program you will articulate where you want your organization to be in two years and develop plans on how you will get there amidst uncertainty. As you name your two-year destination, you will discuss how you will center equity in your goals for impact, as well as how your organization will look and operate. For example, you'll consider ways you might further equity in the outcomes you seek, your approach to solution design, and your role in systemic change. You will also be asked to consider ways you might build a more equitable and anti-racist organization by examining your staff and board composition, culture, capabilities, and other internal resources.

What are the prerequisites for teams interested in applying?

Organizations who participate in Bridgespan Leadership Accelerator programs typically have 10 staff members. However, there are some exceptions. If you have a smaller team size and are interested in participating, please reach out to the Leadership Accelerator team to see if the programs might be a good fit.

Teams should be prepared to select a Project Lead who will serve as team lead and receive additional guidance from Bridgespan.

What do you mean by “executive team”?

The executive team, or senior leadership team, is typically the ED/CEO and senior direct reports. You might also include other individuals whose roles can provide unique insight to conversations about target outcomes and approach. If you enroll in the program, we will work with you to help you identify the right individuals to participate. If your executive team is larger than six individuals, please contact us at LeadershipAccelerator@Bridgespan.org to see if this program is the right fit.

What commitment will my team need to make?

Team members should be prepared to:

- Spend ~1 hour per week, for 8-18 weeks (depending on the program and your team’s pace), doing self-study and pre-work
- Come together as a team every other week for ~2 hours to discuss key issues
- In addition, you will designate one of your team members as the Project Lead. Their time commitment will be an extra 15-25 hours over the full 8-18 weeks (see below: “What is the Project Lead’s role?”)

How will I engage my board in this process?

Board members do not typically enroll as participants in our Leadership Accelerator programs. However, we recognize that it can be very valuable to bring your board along as you and your executive team work through critical strategy and organizational issues. We have explicit opportunities for teams to discuss together how to engage board members as a part of the Accelerator programs, and encourage teams to discuss board engagement with their coaches during coaching calls.

How do you select organizations to participate in the program?

Space in our programs is limited. We will select organizations on a first-come, first-served basis, and base our selection on a mutual assessment of whether the program is the right fit for your organization.

Will my team and I have access to Bridgespan support?

We have carefully designed this program such that your Project Lead can help your team navigate the content, make critical decisions, and advance through the process without intensive direct support from Bridgespan. However, teams do have access to Bridgespan support along the way. Project Leads can access 1-on-1 coaching on behalf of their teams, and they can attend weekly group office hours via conference call. In addition, Bridgespan provides ongoing email support and is available for additional coaching as necessary.

What is the Project Lead role?

The Project Lead serves as the glue that holds this learning experience together. The Project Lead's time commitment will be an extra 15-25 hours over the full program. Responsibilities include:

- **Owning the process:** The Project Lead manages the work plan and meeting schedule for the project
- **Facilitating the conversation:** During team meetings, the Project Lead will help to facilitate conversation, ensuring that all voices are heard and helping the group move towards decisions (drawing upon our unique video facilitated Team Summit process).
- **Delivering results:** After team meetings, the Project Lead works closely with the ED/CEO to translate decisions into action.

How should I choose the right person for the Project Lead role?

Important qualifications of a Project Lead include:

- Strong project management and meeting facilitation skills
- Well-established and respected within the executive team
- Reputation for getting things done, ready to put in a couple extra hours when necessary
- Interest in the strategy related to the program topic area
- We typically recommend that EDs/CEOs do NOT serve as Project Leads, due to the time required to play the Project Lead role. However, for the Strengthening the Executive Teams program in particular, there are some cases where it's appropriate for the CEO/ED to play this role. Please reach out to us if you have questions as to who should play this role.

Learn about our Leadership Accelerator programs

www.Bridgespan.org/LeadershipAccelerator