



The National Conference of State Legislatures  
**Legislative Staff Management Institute Alumni Report**  
2018

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## Executive Summary

From 2005 through 2017, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), California State University Sacramento's (CSUS) Center for California Studies, and University of Southern California's (USC) Sol Price School for Public Policy have designed and delivered the Legislative Staff Management Institute in Sacramento, California. LSMI is offered annually and funded through participant fees, the NCSL Foundation for State Legislatures, and USC and CSUS in-kind contributions. Over the last twelve years, LSMI has received one-time or multi-year financial support from Union Pacific Foundation, The Morris S. Smith Foundation, California HealthCare Foundation, and StateNet.

To measure the program's impacts and to gain a better understanding of alumni experiences, long-term applications, and future programming interests, LSMI co-directors surveyed the 460 alumni who attended the Sacramento residency. The survey responses were collected Fall 2017 and incorporated into this report for the January 27, 2018 Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee (LSCC) meetings. The last time that the alumni were surveyed was in 2011.

With a 36% response rate, alumni are very positive about their experiences. As examples, 91% of the respondents agreed that they are "a better leader as a result of attending LSMI," and when compared to other professional training experiences, 98% responded that LSMI was "The Best" (56%) or "Above Average" (42%). Impressively, nearly all alumni (98%) currently use content, practices, or skills presented during their LSMI experience.

Recommendations and support from their supervisors and encouragement from other alumni continue to be top factors for helping staff decide to apply for the program. Leadership skill development is the number one reason in deciding to attend.

With regards to future programming, the respondents are very interested in participating in specially designed programs (95%). In-person programs received the greatest support when offered at a conference or program that they are already attending (76%), as an out-of-state stand-alone program (61%), or in an in-state stand-alone program (58%). Web options received less than 50% interest ratings.

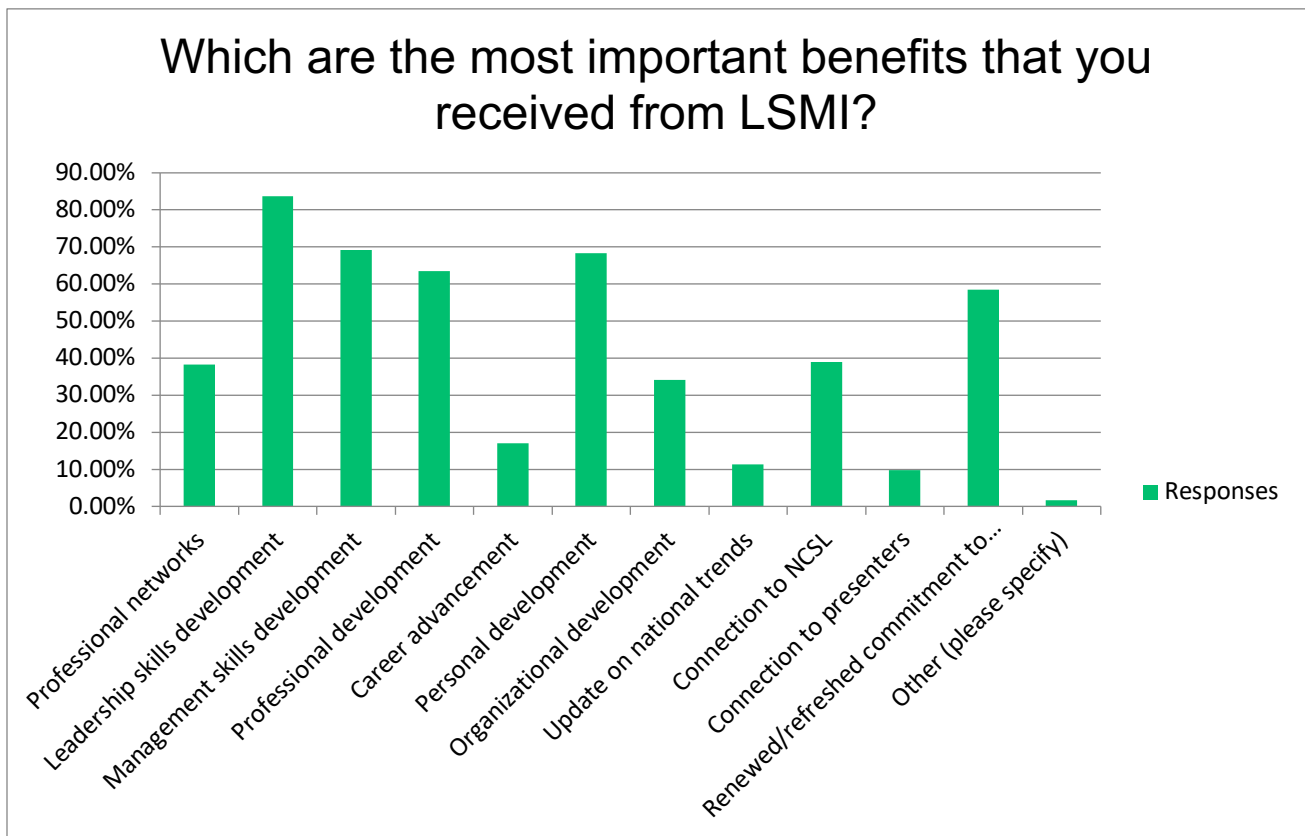
The remainder of this report expands on these findings.

## LSMI Impacts

The alumni reported major impacts as a result to LSMI programming. When asked to what extent they agreed with this statement: “I am a better leader as a result of attending LSMI,” 91% agreed (35% strongly agreed and 56% agreed). Additionally, 23% said their skill development contributed towards a job promotion or additional job responsibilities.

When deciding to apply and attend, two factors mattered: *who* encouraged them to apply and *what* benefits they expected to receive. The *who*: supervisors (63% of the respondents reported “very important”) and alumni (45% reported “very important”) had the greatest influence. The *what*: anticipated benefits revolving around leadership skill development (91%), management skill development (74%), professional development (74%), and personal development (73%) were most important in deciding whether to attend.

In terms of what benefits respondents actually received from LSMI, the same benefits listed above were cited, albeit at slightly lower percentages. In addition, respondents cited renewed/refreshed commitments to their workplaces (58%) and connection to NCSL and professional networks (both at 38%).



In considering how LSMI compared to other professional trainings, 55% responded “the best”; 42%, “above average”; and 3%, “average”.

Of the LSMI content, practices, or skills that they currently use, alumni ranked these three the highest: sessions that revolved around self-awareness and professional development (90%), team dynamics/building (72%), and organizational change and development (59%).

The final question in this section concentrated on three deliverables: the 360-degree leadership assessment, executive spot coaching, and the pre-residency webinar. Both the coaching and webinar were introduced in 2016 as optional and continued through the 2017 program year.

*The 360:* 88% of the respondents found it valuable (the value range is comprised of those responses ranging from moderate to great value), with 46% seeing it as a “great value.”

*Executive coaching:* 86% found it valuable.

*Pre-residency webinar:* 73% found it valuable.

## Future Programming

Respondents were very interested in future programming with 95% responding in favor. When asked about the approach, five options were proposed. Preference was expressed for in-person programming at a conference or program that they are already attending, or as a standalone alumni meeting out-of-state. Fewer than half of respondents expressed interest in webinar options.

Answer Choices	Responses	
In-person at a conference or program that you are already attending	76.27%	90
In-person at an LSMI standalone alumni meeting: out-of-state	61.02%	72
In-person at an LSMI standalone alumni meeting: within your state	57.63%	68
Webinar: only if free	45.76%	54
Webinar: for a nominal cost	30.51%	36

If alumni programming were offered, the top three desirable takeaways included leadership skills development (73%), professional development (64%), and professional networks (61%). Three write-in comments expressed interest in building the session on what was previously presented with a focus on application and participants experiences.

## In Their Own Words

At the end of the survey, alumni had the opportunity to share final thoughts. Comments from the 21 respondents can be clustered together around personal impacts, future opportunities, and general encouragement and observations. Below are their unedited responses.

### Personal impacts

LSMI was a great experience and it made me approach many aspects of my work differently.

It was the best professional development that I have been offered in my nearly 17 years at the Nevada Legislature. I have recommended two people in the past to participate in LSMI, but truthfully, I do not have anyone to recommend until we replace some of the many people retiring currently!!

I consider the LSMI experience to be the best professional development training I've ever attended, and often recommend it to others.

The LSMI was a great experience. The cohort was excellent, presenters were exceptional, and the team organizing the program were extremely professional. Well organized and will be suggesting a highly qualified colleague to apply for the 2018 program.

Without a doubt, LSMI has been the most productive professional development course I have ever attended. I gained insights and perspective on leadership that are invaluable, and found the discussions and interaction at LSMI inspiring and stimulating.

The New Jersey Office of Legislative Services is committed to sending participants to LSMI in 2018 and following years. Due to very high interest in attending LSMI among OLS staff, OLS leadership has an informal process for selecting individuals to apply to LSMI. In deference to my colleagues, I don't want to exclude anyone by including a specific name in question #19, below. Instead, I will simply provide my Executive Director's contact information. Please reach out to her, thanks!

I really enjoyed the program and had the pleasure of keeping those contacts I made there.

I still have my 2015 LSMI binder in front of me, but I just feel that I have not had the opportunity to invoke or apply much of what I learned. I know that is largely my fault, but I just wish there was some sort of regular debriefings or revisits amongst the class. I sounds like you guys are trying to go in that direction. Seems like the Executive Coaching you started doing in 2016 is aligned with those thoughts. LSMI is a great learning opportunity and you guys get so much of the course right! Keep up your good work!

My LSMI experience was rewarding. Would love to send other staff from our office, but current day costs and endless sessions make attending a program on the West Coast prohibitive. I have been surprised that there was zero activity on our class year's listserv.

LSMI was the best professional development program I've attended and I have highly encouraged others to attend.

Thank you for the opportunity. It helps remember the great deal of professional growth acquired at LSMI in Sacramento.

### Future opportunities

After returning from LSMI, I realized that my agency does not adequately support individual professional development and institutional/ organizational growth. There was no institutional will to implement or reinforce any of the skills and competencies that I gained through LSMI. It may help to have some outreach to attendees' sending agencies or a session on fostering institutional buy-in after returning. I am grateful to LSMI for providing skills and development opportunities that would not have been otherwise available to me had I not lobbied hard to attend.

While I found the program helpful and enjoyed my time, I was very disappointed with the lack of follow through regarding post-program communications and methods network with other participants.

I have sought the reading list that was provided on leadership and management and been unable to find it since 2015.

I would like to see a session included during the LSMI on the 360 degree assessment.

### General encouragement and observations

Great program!

Thank you for your dedication to this program!

LSMI is an excellent program.

The team building exercises were very unique!

You guys are the best!

Overall, LSMI was a fantastic experience. I recommend it to anyone who is interested in developing their management and/or leadership skills.

### Conclusion

The Legislative Staff Management Institute's alumni survey demonstrated the long-term successes and impacts that were achieved over the last thirteen years of intensive programming through the collaborative partnership of NCSL, CSUS, and USC. The high response rate, overwhelmingly positive feedback, and applied professional impacts are testaments to its successes. The feedback also reflects the interest and need for future opportunities in continuing leadership development and professional growth under the LSMI umbrella. The information gathered in this study will guide future program recommendations.

## Survey Methodology

The 2017 LSMI alumni survey had three goals. First, the program co-directors wanted a better understanding of the alumni experiences. They wanted to know whether the approach is working and the type of impacts that the program had on participants.

The second goal was to learn about long-term impacts. While annual end-of-residency surveys regularly show that participants have overall positive experiences, what is lesser known is how and which type of sessions are sticking the most. Additionally, two new program components were added in 2016 and 2017: the pre-residency webinar and executive spot coaching. The program co-directors wanted to gain a sense of whether the approach should continue as is, change, or be discontinued.

The third goal focused on future programming. While the co-directors and NCSL partners have received verbal feedback throughout the years, it was unknown what recent interest and support for this type of programming was. Three questions were asked to determine interest and possible program approaches.

The survey design was based off of the Fall 2011 survey with comments and revisions provided by Brian Weberg, Steve Boilard, and Paul Danczyk. SurveyMonkey was utilized for the platform. Once the design was approved, Paul Danczyk emailed it to the 460 alumni who participated in the Sacramento program. The email addresses were taken from their LSMI application.

From that distribution list, 122 emails were rejected (likely due to retirements or shifts in employment), and 14 emails received “out of office” replies. In calculating the 36% response rate, it was projected that the participants who had “out of office” replies could have still seen and completed the survey during the 11-day open time frame (November 2 to 12, 2017). The first email went out on November 2 with a reminder sent on November 9. As of November 13, the survey had 123 responses.

Participants completed the 19-question survey on average in 5 minutes and 17 seconds.

At the end of the survey, four demographic questions were asked, along with recommendations for future LSMI applicants. The respondents included 16 people that attended LSMI during 2005 to 2009; 45 participants during 2010 to 2014; and 62 participants from 2015 to 2017. For gender and ethnic breakdowns: 53% were male/47% female; 75% white, 7% Latino/Hispanic, 5% African American, 3% multi-racial, 3% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% American Indian/Alaska Native, 4% decline to comment, 2% other.

Respondents came from these states, territories, and countries:

Alaska		Kentucky		North Carolina	
0.83%	1	8.26%	10	1.65%	2
Arkansas		Louisiana		Ohio	
6.61%	8	2.48%	3	2.48%	3
California		Maine		Oregon	
8.26%	10	0.83%	1	1.65%	2
Colorado		Maryland		Puerto Rico	
9.92%	12	1.65%	2	0.83%	1
Connecticut		Minnesota		Tennessee	
0.83%	1	3.31%	4	0.83%	1
Georgia		Mississippi		Texas	
1.65%	2	0.83%	1	4.13%	5
Guam		Missouri		Utah	
0.83%	1	0.83%	1	0.83%	1
Hawaii		Montana		Washington	
6.61%	8	0.83%	1	4.13%	5
Idaho		Nevada		West Virginia	
1.65%	2	4.13%	5	3.31%	4
Indiana		New Jersey		Wisconsin	
0.83%	1	3.31%	4	4.13%	5
Kansas		New Mexico		International: Nigeria	
0.83%	1	9.09%	11	0.83%	1