

THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE SURROUNDING THE FUTURE OF NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP has been shaped by the terms *leadership pipeline* and *next generation leadership* and yet it is not clear how these terms are being defined among different groups and what assumptions are embedded in their meaning. Identification and naming are powerful ways to garner support for an issue, and terminology is helpful when it can legitimize action. On the other hand, ill-defined, ambiguous, or unevenly understood terms can hinder our ability to communicate about the topic at hand. As the sector focuses its attention on building better systems to ensure strong future leadership, reallocating funding to support such efforts, and cultivating new leadership talent, it is incumbent upon us to clearly state who we are talking about and to what end we are developing them. Using the data from this study as a basis, we offer the following definitions and explain how they are used in this report:

Leadership Pipeline

THE LEADERSHIP PIPELINE HAS A TWO-PART DEFINITION. FIRST, IT IS A CONDUIT supplying organizations with a viable nonprofit workforce. People enter the pipeline in various ways. For example, a recent college graduate might enter the pipeline in the early stage of her career by taking an entry-level position in a nonprofit. A mid-career person might transition into the nonprofit sector from business or government. Others retire from military service, business, or government and embark on a new career within the nonprofit sector. In all cases, these people have intentionally sought employment in the nonprofit sector and are interested in staying within the sector in the foreseeable future.

In addition to being a path, the *leadership pipeline* is also a process by which individuals gain experience and skills. Though the concept assumes that individuals in the pipeline are advancing, it does not assume that only those who want to be executive directors matter. Developing future executive directors is a critical aspect of the pipeline, but not the only aspect. Nonprofits also need qualified candidates to fill other key management positions. It would be an irresponsible oversight not to acknowledge and support those individuals who are committed to the nonprofit sector, who are experts and leaders in their own right, and who contribute immensely to their organizations' ability to effect social change—but who have no interest in becoming an executive director.

Next Generation Leaders

MOST STUDIES DEFINE NEXT GENERATION LEADERS AS INDIVIDUALS UNDER THE age of 40, and those who conduct these studies are primarily concerned with supporting and developing younger people so they can lead nonprofit organizations in the years to come. However, age is an arbitrary qualifier for determining who might become an organization's next executive director. In pipeline terms, there are younger people in their 20s and 30s who are good candidates for future positions, but it is likely that they will need more work experience before they can be ready. Those with the most experience are likely to comprise the first wave of people ready to take over when current leaders leave. Many of these individuals are people who are in their 40s and 50s who have deep experience and another 20 to 30 more working years ahead of them. While age is an important factor it is not the primary basis of our definition. Instead, we define next generation leaders as those who have demonstrated a commitment to the nonprofit sector and are actively developing their skills and leadership capabilities to hold management positions of all kinds. Furthermore, the qualifier *next generation* does not indicate that someone is not already a leader. On the contrary, many *next generation* leaders are in fact exhibiting leadership each day as they carry out their organizations' missions.