

My Voice. My Participation. My Board: Leadership Training for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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Project Summary

As the self-advocacy movement continues to gain momentum, many organizations are beginning to take note of the importance of including individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities as full members of their governance boards and advisory councils. Individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities often have not had the experiences or opportunities to prepare them for these vital roles. It is because of this gap in knowledge that the *My Voice. My Participation. My Board.* (MVMPMB) Training exists. The MVMPMB program has trained two cohorts of participants with intellectual or developmental disabilities from across the state of Georgia who receive six days of face-to-face training to better understand their personal gifts and talents they can bring to an organization, the roles and responsibilities of boards and board members, and how these basic functions of a board or advisory council. The alumni of the training are equipped with the skills and tools needed to contribute to the work of governance boards and advisory councils for both state agencies and not-for-profit organizations. Three types of data were collected for each cohort to assess the impact of the training: pre- and post-tests of participant knowledge, a training evaluation, and a focus group.

Results

Comparison of pre- and post-intervention performance on the test of knowledge was inconclusive for both cohorts. It appears that the questions on the test included information and concepts that a majority of participants already knew.

A month after the training, a focus group was conducted to determine what the trainees believed they learned, what they felt was important about being on a board of directors, other topics they would like to learn, and several other questions about their experiences in the training. The focus group provided the more details about the impact of the training. When participants were asked about the most important skills and/or personal characteristic of successful board member, the following themes emerged: (1) respect for others; (2) the importance of teamwork; and (3) developing and maintaining trust with other board members.

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My Voice. My Participation. My Board. Curriculum

Part One: Self-Awareness & Self-Advocacy

INCLUDE. CONNECT. TRANSFORM. Members and peer facilitators will be able to identify their purpose for being on a board and the supports needed to be a successful board member

Part Two: Purpose and Components of Boards of Directors and Advisory Councils

THINK. PLAN. DO. Members and peer facilitators will be able to identify the characteristics of an effective board member and ways in which their unique gifts and talents fit in that role.

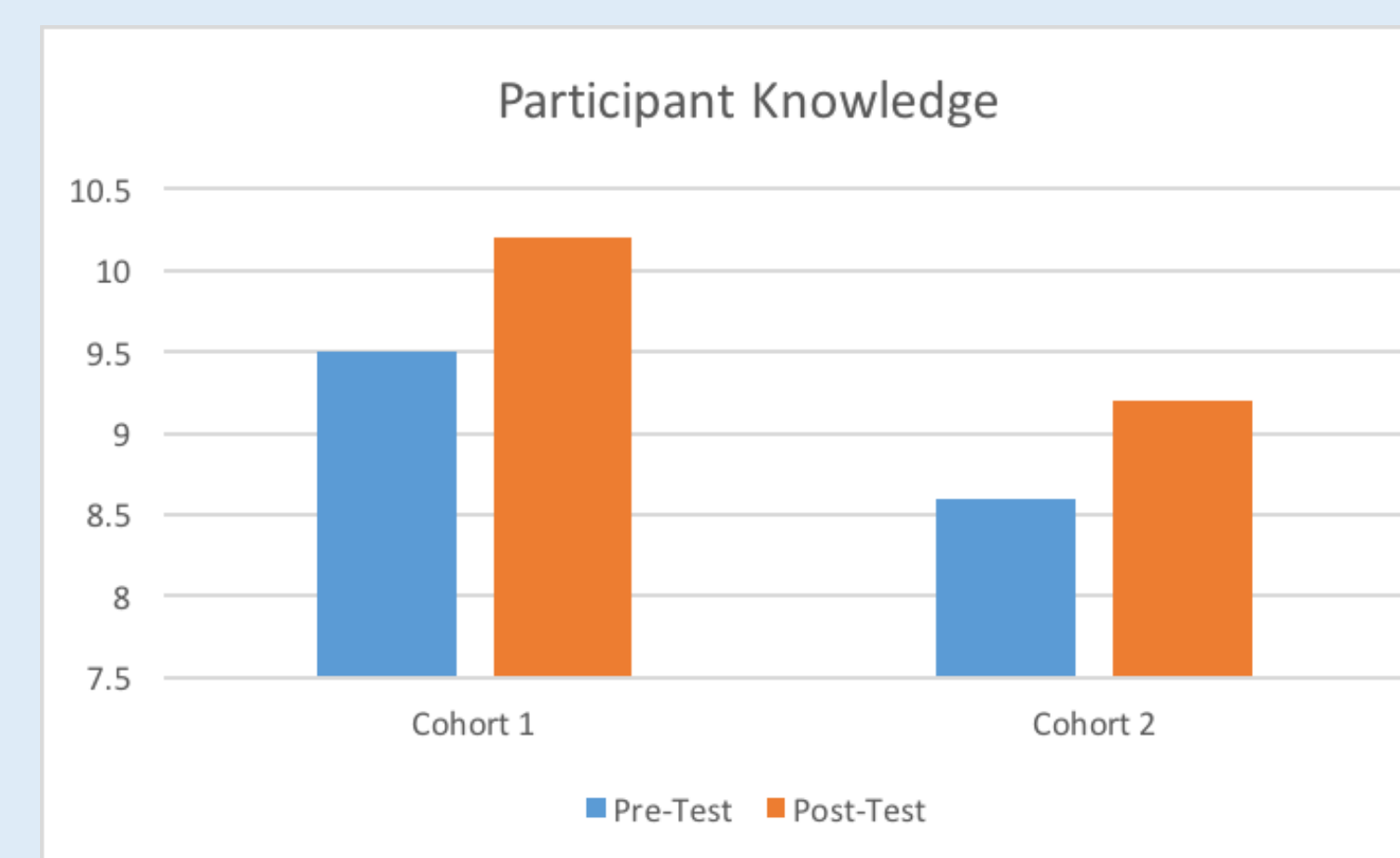
Part Three: Translating Knowledge into Practice

PARTICIPATE. SERVE. EMPOWER. Members and peer facilitators will take the knowledge that they have gained in Part One & Part Two and practice the skills they have learned about.

Table 1: MVMPMB Participant Demographics

Characteristic	MVMPMB Cohort 1	MVMPMB Cohort 2
Gender		
Male	45%	36%
Female	55%	64%
Age Group		
20-29	18.5%	36%
30-39	36%	45%
40-49	27%	19%
50-59	18.5%	0%
Race		
Black/African-American	82%	54%
White	9%	46%
Asian	9%	--

Graph 1: MVMPMB participant knowledge from pre-test & post-test



MVMPMB Alumni Board & Council Involvement

- Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Center for Leadership in Disability, Community Advisory Council
- Institute on Human Development and Disability, Community Advisory Council
- People 1st of Georgia, Atlanta & Fitzgerald
- Georgia Department of Behavioral Health And Developmental Disabilities, Autism Advisory Council
- Atlanta Autism Consortium, Executive Committee
- Autism Plan for Georgia, Advisory Council
- Georgia Department of Education, State Advisory Panel for Special Education

"At the training I learned a lot about how to communicate effectively. I learned that I have a voice and I want to be heard... Networking is very important and I appreciated having time for that."

-MVMPMB Alumni



"It [this training] has shown me how to be a good advocate. People with disabilities need hope. This training does just that."

-MVMPMB Alumni

"For me it was the networking and having the elevator speech which helped me get out of myself and share who I am and what I do with another person. It helped me in my confidence, things like having a firm handshake, which I did already, but being able to look that person directly in the eyes and feel comfortable doing so."

-MVMPMB Alumni



Discussion

The results of the evaluation techniques used to evaluate MVMPMB demonstrates that the training was an effective leadership curriculum for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The goal of creating a cohort of trainees was accomplished. During the focus group, the MVMPMB trainees referred to each other as "family". They continue to meet with each other and support each other as they both inside and outside of meetings. The confidence of the trainees was raised, and they are contributing more to the boards and councils they are part of. The trainees have the information now to be able to ask for support and accommodations.

Future Research

- Replication of the curriculum with a larger sample of participants.
- Include standardized assessment tools (e.g. ARC Self-Determination Scale) as part of the evaluation.
- Observations of trainees in board meetings to assess use of learned skills/behaviors.
- Individual interviews with trainees and board directors/members to evaluate trainees' success and engagement as members of community boards.