

# A Case In Point

## "Experiential Learning Through Our Eyes"

Articles written by students in the Community Leadership Think Tank



*The road to  
community is a  
how-to process for  
engaging  
residents,  
developing  
neighborhoods,  
and  
improving  
community.*

### **H**ow do we get people to get involved in their communities?

There is a frequently asked question amidst theories about the decline of civic participation in U.S. society and the increase in the "bowling alone" phenomenon. It is clear how challenging it can be to create meaningful roles for everyday people in making important decisions about their communities—whether neighborhood, city, state, or country. This Think Tank took a unique approach to the question of how to encourage grassroots community leadership. Students worked side by side with residents of the west side of Salt Lake City by participating in the Westside Leadership Institute (WLI). The WLI is a partnership supported by University Neighborhood

Partners (UNP) that takes an innovative approach to encouraging residents of all different backgrounds (cultural, political, socio-economic, and educational) to become catalysts for positive change in their communities. By working with "on-the-ground" community problems with west side residents, Honors students investigated questions such as: What are the barriers that keep people from participating in local decision-making? What are cultural differences in leadership and organizing? What makes someone a leader? Why do people choose to follow? Honor students discovered the answers to these and other community development questions while collaborating on community projects with real impact.



THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH  
*Honors College*

## WLI PARTICIPANTS

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**The WLI gratefully acknowledges  
the generosity of:**

**GEORGE S. AND DOLORES DORÉ ECCLES  
F O U N D A T I O N**

&





## **Community Work: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly**

*by Tope  
Adeyemi*



**E**ngaging in community work is not only one of the most rewarding experiences one could have, it is also an extremely exciting venture. That being said, like all things worth doing, community work has a good side, a bad side, and an ugly side. I'm going to talk about all three.

### **The Good:**

This is obviously a no-brainer. What could be better than taking a community you're particularly fond of and making it better? A lot of attention is given to national and state-wide policies and campaigns, but few people realize that some of the best work, the work that effects the most people and really improves individual communities, is work that is done at the grass root level. It is the people living and working in those communities

### **The Bad:**

While community work is incredibly fruitful, it is important to realize that it isn't always easy. There are a lot of players in any project that is undertaken, from the team working to ensure the success of the project to the people that will be directly or

indirectly affected by the project. It is important to realize that all of those players have something to gain and something to lose (some more so than others). Therefore, unless steps are taken to earn the trust of the community and to set up a mutually beneficial relationship with as many players as possible, community projects can, and often times do, fail.

### **The Ugly:**

What could be worse than a community project that has failed to achieve positive improvement? A project that leaves the community in a worse off condition. A lot of work is undertaken with the best of intentions at heart, however, as the old idiom goes "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." More important than the intention behind the work, it is the impact that that work has on those involved. If you care about the community and if you want to work to bring about positive change in that community, then careful measures should be done to first research the problem, and possible solutions, as well as evaluate and make adjustments to the project at hand. Now is not the time to resist criticism or critique, rather embrace, to ensure that you're leaving the community better than how you found it.

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING PROJECT Fall 2009**

- Recruited 20 volunteers through community outreach for teaching English language acquisition at Guadalupe Schools and the English Skills Learning Center

## **LET THERE BE LIGHT PROJECT Fall 2009**

- Secured donations for light bulbs and sensors totaling \$1,800 to replace 36 broken lights on 600 West (North Temple to 500 North)
- Secured donations of licensed electricians' time to install the lights
- Distributed flyers to neighbors for outreach and press release

Special thanks to:

**Black & McDonald**

*"We must always remember to be inclusive and not exclusive, you must think beyond your immediate circle of friends and involve all of those who have a stake in having a stronger community." -Virginia Simmons*

## **WINTER WEAR PROJECT Fall 2009**

- 380 people provided with clothing
- 975 pounds of clothes donated
- 1,025 pieces of clothing articles
- 9 different communities impacted

## **FOOD BANK PROJECT Fall 2009**

- Delivery of food boxes to senior citizens
- Distributed 2,300 flyers regarding helpful available resources in the community



## **Engaging Community Partners**

*by Virginia Simmons*

Doing community work alone or in small groups is never as effective as doing it in masses. The responsibility for the strength of a community does not solely rest in the hands of the governing body. While a community council may bear the responsibility for getting out and leading the improvement of a community, the success hinges on the ability to effectively engage partners within the community. As Margaret Mead says, "never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has!". Therefore, groups such as community councils need to branch out of their comfort zones and actively seek to involve all members of the greater community.

When engaging partners within the community, it is important to define the target audiences and to identify the key individuals and organizations that will be paramount to the success of the project you are undertaking. This can be done through designing strategies for those involved, identifying roles and assigning responsibilities, and even developing accountability and evaluation plans. When people and organizations have specific tasks assigned to them, there is a greater feeling of pride and accomplishment in improving the community. When engaging in community work, your strength lies in the numbers involved. The more community involvement you have, the more likely the community is to succeed, as it will then be sustainable and able to grow. Further, the input of the community should not be viewed as a burden, but as an opportunity to strengthen the process.





## A Learning Experience-Dan's Story

by Jiangnan Zhu (Jay)



With a strong interest in learning more about the private nonprofit sector in the United States, I enrolled in the Honors College Think Tank on Community Leadership. Through this opportunity, I have had a chance to know community leaders like Danjuma (Dan) and his wife Danielle Alcala. My learning experience has been enriched by working with them.

In 2005, Danielle started an organization *Because He First Loved Us (BHFLU)* in the hope of helping families from refugee backgrounds adjust to their new life in the USA. Starting from scratch, today

BHFLU.ORG serves thousands of New Americans in Salt Lake City. The organization provides two types of community services: 1. a family mentoring program that pairs families with mentors to help them with employment, finances, food stamps, access to health care, and ultimately leading to self-sufficiency; 2. a tutoring program held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings to help children succeed in school.

Danielle told me that the reason they chose to serve the community is because of their belief in the Bible; they believe that everyone deserves to be loved. Their motivation also comes from the understanding of families from refugee backgrounds who have fled from their homes because of war, violence, or persecution. After years of living in fear and in temporary housing, these families have moved to a new country to start a new life. However, they are soon becoming overwhelmed by finding a job, learning a new language, and struggling to keep their families safe and fed.

Thanks to the Honors Think Tank on Community Leadership, for allowing me to meet and work with Dan and Danielle. This experience helped me gain a better understanding of why people are involved in community service. More importantly, by working with public services such as health care, education, social welfare, and pluralism, these individuals and organizations play a crucial role in the American setting. From my understanding, it is one of the most distinctive and critical features of American life.

*"I want to highlight these individuals in the community because they are active and passionate about community service. I am impressed by their long time effort, commitment and dedication."*  
-Jiangnan Zhu

*Numerous community activists make America a more beautiful country*  
-Jiangnan Zhu

许许多多的社区活动家把美国建设的更美。

人 – people

社区- community

社会 – society

国家 – nation



*"This information [the conference] will make a big difference for a mother looking for answers, for a child with autism who cannot use his voice to ask for help, and for a whole community to love and include people with autism in our society."*

*-Lourdes Flores*



## **A Mother's Story** by Lourdes Flores

**M**y name is Lourdes Flores and I am the mother of 3 beautiful kids. Two of them are affected with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). My first son, Josh, was a beautiful smart baby with tons of personality. However, when he was 18 months old, he stopped talking, eating, following directions, and making eye contact. He would not allow me or my husband to touch him. Those were hard days; I was desperate to find out why he had changed. I asked the pediatrician many times what was affecting my son, but his only response was "boys are like that." From my friends I heard: "he is just a spoiled little brat and a good spanking will fix him." For me, being a Latina, and having a child with challenging behavior, only means one thing: "You are a bad mother." Having a child that runs and yells 24/7 was a good reason for people to stop inviting our family to places. Soon we got tired of negative comments and criticism,

we stopped going to restaurants, parties, and reunions. Finally, when Josh turned 4 years old, he was diagnosed with autism. Since then, I have spent every minute of my time reading and getting informed about autism and its treatments. With the help of Josh's therapists, we designed a 20-hour a week therapy schedule that we follow religiously. Thankfully, within six months Josh began to speak again and started making eye contact. He is now 6 years old and attends a school for kids with high functional autism. With the help and treatment he receives, Josh is a very different child. He reads at a third grade level, is great at math, enjoys rock climbing and has started eating Mexican food. Most importantly though, he is capable of telling us he loves us with a heart melting hug. For my second son Ethan, everything was different. As soon as I saw the signs, I knew autism was possible, and he received help at 18 months old. He was diagnosed with Asperger's, which is one of the 5 different kinds of



*Josh and Ethan.*

*"This picture captures their essence"*  
*-Lourdes Flores*





*“Es muy bueno que nos den información y saber que tenemos a alguien a quien recurrir.” (It is very good to be given information and to know we have somewhere to turn) -Alicia Delgadillo*

*‘Ya tenia mucho tiempo buscando ayuda porque los niños con autismo viven en su propio mundo y los padres los tienen que apoyar y entender.’ (It had been a very long time since I started seeking help because kids with autism live in their own world and parents have to understand and support them) -Maria Elena Lowe*

autism. At 3 years old he is making tremendous progress at school. The right information and treatment makes a difference. Having a child with special needs is challenging and having two, is even more challenging. Living with a child with autism is unpredictable. You can be celebrating a big success one minute, and dealing with a meltdown the next. Parents of children with special needs deserve to know the possibilities and resources available to help their children reach their full potential and make their lives better. Society needs to know about Autism Spectrum Disorder in order to accept and include these individuals and their families. For this reason, when the WLI gave me the opportunity to contribute in any way to the community, I knew an Autism Conference for Latinos would be an effective way to inform members of the community about the disorder and the options for treatment.



**Conferencia De Autismo**

**Día: Abril 17 del 2010**  
**Hora: 8:30 am**

**Lugar: Spectrum Academy**  
**Dirección: 575 Cutler Dr, North Salt Lake**

Ven y aprende más acerca de Autismo, diferentes terapias y servicios disponibles en el Estado.

**Completamente en ESPAÑOL**

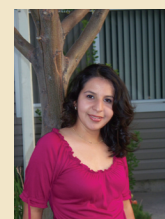
*Es totalmente gratis, no faltes. Se dará refrigerio*

Favor de registrarse al telefono: (801) 414-0693 o via e-mail a: [AutismoUtah@gmail.com](mailto:AutismoUtah@gmail.com)

Para mas información visita:  
**[www.QueEsAutismo.com](http://www.QueEsAutismo.com)**

Organiza: Proyecto Autismo

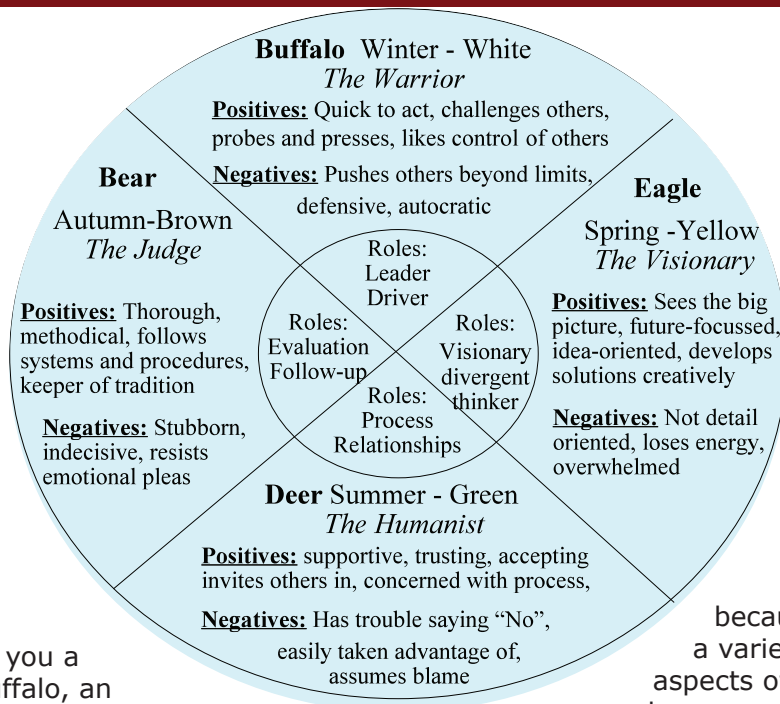
La gráfica del reverso muestra algunas características de las personas con Autismo



Lourdes Flores and Laura Alvarez  
Autism Conference by Proyecto Autismo

## Leadership Personality Types

by Malia McIlvenna



*"The importance of collaboration in a community is based around the idea that many people working together is better than people working by themselves. An individual can instigate a great idea but without the help and support of many, the idea could become too large to accomplish. By working with a variety of people who see contrasting views to a particular dilemma, they are able to consider the differences together, and come up with an overall consensus that will bring about change." -Marcia Homer*

Are you a buffalo, an eagle, a deer, or a bear? Knowing the answer to this question could help you become a better leader. That's because personality can play a role in determining a person's leadership strengths and weaknesses. Maria Garcia, of the Westside Leadership Institute, presented the aforementioned animal representations of leadership types during our fall coursework on how to engage residents to improve community. In brief, buffalos are leaders with a strong sense of control and direction, but may push others beyond their limits; eagles see the big picture and develop solutions creatively, but may lack dependability; deer are supportive and accept others at face value, but may be easily taken advantage of; and bears are methodical and follow systems and procedures, but may be stubborn.

My partner in community work this spring, Jordan Jones, is an amazingly motivated person who is exploding with ideas, and whose deep love for his community drives him to work hard on implementing plans for a stronger community. Jordan is clearly an eagle. I was drawn to be Jordan's partner, in part,

because of a variety of aspects of his eagle personality which I admire, including his vision and divergent thinking. I am a bear. If you know a bear, you know their ability to be analytical and organized may help them to be successful with projects they take on; however, their stubbornness may cause them to resist change, and fail to take on important projects. A bear would benefit from a partnership with an eagle who sees the big picture and welcomes change. The strengths and weaknesses of bears as leaders illustrate one of the many important aspects of building partnerships in community work; increasing the likelihood of success by bringing more skills to your project. For example, a bear who knows they are not easily inspired would benefit from a partnership with an eagle who is driven and determined when implementing a new project. Likewise, an eagle who knows they might become overwhelmed with tasks, might want to partner with a bear who approaches a project cautiously and methodically in order to see it through to completion. Any of the personality types can team up to increase their strengths and overcome weaknesses. Do you know your personality type?



ANGELA



Dear Acknowledging Angela,  
As a longtime reader of your column and a mother of four I have recently been confronted with a personal issue. By personal I don't mean my favorite food or a familial problem, but rather, a problem within my community. My four children have been attending the Dual Immersion

Academy (DIA) on the west side of Salt Lake City for the past several years and I have been very pleased by the outcome of their education. I'm involved in the school's equivalent to PTA but I have noticed that many parents don't feel comfortable or have the time to be involved in the parent association. I know that many parents want to be involved and discuss issues with the school but they just don't have the resources. How can I work to create an environment for parents to discuss their issues, struggles, and concerns with DIA without making them feel uncomfortable?

Sincerely,  
*Not-So-Pushy-Parent*

Dear Not-So-Pushy-Parent,  
Thank you for your commitment to both my column and your childrens' education. It seems that you have suddenly been thrust into the role of an educator. Although this issue might be new to your life, educators across the globe have been continually striving to encourage parents involvement and support their childrens' education. I commend you on your ability to acknowledge that there is a lack of communication between parents. From my perspective, the real issue at hand is that many of the parents want to learn how to be more involved but they don't know how. Many parents are very involved with their childrens' education. From the time they wake up in the morning to the time they go to bed, parents are working and caring for their children. I would suggest hosting an activity at the school to invite parents to come and talk to each other about their issues and concerns. The key is for parents to work together. I suggest hosting a set of three to four workshops for parents. The first workshop being a "get to know you" night in which you get to know what issues and topics parents would like to learn about. Make sure to provide childcare and dinner for these parents; that way it will be an activity they can enjoy. If you let the other parents know that they are being heard and their concerns are being met; you will better be able to strengthen the school, the parent involvement association, and above all,

Best of luck,  
*Acknowledging Angela*



*Many parents at the Dual Immersion Academy want to be involved in the school and community issues but don't have the time and resources to do so. Sonia Trujillo, a mother of four children at DIA, wants to create a series of*



*workshops for parents to come together and freely discuss their desires and concerns with the school.*

## Spring 2010 Projects

### Employment Workshop

*Tope Adeyemi, Joseph Nahas*

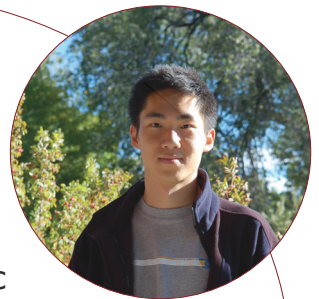
The Burundian population is especially interested in training and employment. On March 7, 2009 a workshop was held providing tips and information on how to effectively search for jobs. These tips included: information dispelling myths surrounding applying for jobs, how to prepare and dress for interviews, how to stay motivated during the search, and resume writing. Forty-seven community members attended the first workshop (including 26 women), who deemed it was a success. Future workshops are planned.



### Informational Resource for Food and Other Services

*Jiangnan Zhu, Danjuma Alcala*

In light of the adverse economic condition, the number of families needing assistance is skyrocketing. The lack of transportation and access to the internet pose challenges for low-income families to get the information and resources they need. Our project was to get accurate information and additional resources for low-income families in Glendale.



### Westpoint Community Council

*Virginia Simmons, Terry Thomas*

The goal of this project was to increase broader participation of community members in local decision making. After working with various community leaders, we have organized neighborhood representatives for the Westpointe Community Council, increasing involvement in the meetings and on the board.

<http://wpccslc.com/>





**Sense Us:  
Identifying Community**

*Malia McIlvenna,  
Jordan Jones*

The goal of Sense-Us is to contribute to the vision of the Northwest Recreation Center in becoming a hub for community life. Through

an on-site survey and focus group, the Sense-Us project gathered input from community members and facility staff to compile a report on the members' interests and goals, including suggestions and feedback for addressing the areas identified.



**Sudanese Driving  
Literacy Project**

*Samuel Pyeka, Vanessa  
Seals*

The purpose of this project is to set up a pre-driving course for the Sudanese Mabaan community in the Salt Lake area. The project was started by Samuel Pyeka in order to support women in his community (including his wife) who are unable to drive. With the participation of the Sudanese leadership as well as interested members of the community, we have raised interest in the project and found a location and materials for the class. The class will take place at Horizonte school and will begin in the summer 2010.

[HTTP://WWW.ESLCENTER.ORG](http://WWW.ESLCENTER.ORG)  
[HTTP://WWW.GUADALUPESCHOOLS.ORG](http://WWW.GUADALUPESCHOOLS.ORG)



**Community  
Involvement in Schools**

*Angela Bunker,  
Sonia Trujillo (see pg. 9)*

**Somali  
United  
Network**

*Marcia Homer, Jeff Young,  
Abdi Sheikh, Ahmed Nurein  
(see pg. 13)*



*"Never doubt that a small, group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."*  
- Margaret Mead

## An Interview with Abdi Sheikh

by Jeff Young

### ***How did it feel to leave your homeland in search of a better safer life?***

"My tears would have filled a whole tea cup, I may or may not remember seeing myself looking at our house in Somalia just before I left. Gazing, I thought of my house as a person whom I loved and cherished. I touched the house's white interior, lying my hands on it for few moments, as if feeling it's heart beating, while feeling my own heartbeat. Then I kissed it, knowing that I may never see it again. I remember, when I walked two miles away from home, I looked back, my eyes tearing while seeing my house was set on fire by militia. This was the moment to say a final good-bye to my homeland. Then every day I prayed that my life would change for the better and one day it did. I currently live in the great state of Utah and enjoy the everyday freedom, education, religious toleration, abundance of food, and most importantly, security."

### ***How did it feel to be in a refugee camp?***

"I did not live in a refugee camp, I came through Cairo, Egypt. Egypt did not have camps, however, I visited some camps around the border of Somalia. Luckily refugees are protected under international law and are given special rights, such as the right to be in another country as a place of safety. Some (not many) are luckier and are offered a place in someone's home. In camps, the people may get some of the services they need, but conditions are still very hard. Many people have to live in small huts made of wood and plastic sheeting or sometimes tents. The camps may be run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). UNHCR is an agency

mandated to protect and support refugees at the request of a government or the UN itself and assists in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country. Its headquarters are in Geneva. Individuals are housed in make-shift sites where they receive only minimal distributions of food and water. The consequences are malnutrition and disease, something that will continue until a better solution is found and the situation improves. The camps try to offer medical care but so many of the individuals are sick and underfed when they arrive. There are so many of them, that it's hard to help them all. Sometimes school is provided for the children in the camps, but there are never enough teachers or supplies for all the children. In addition, the language is different in a new country. In some cases, this makes it hard for even the adults to get a job to support their families or they may not be allowed to work due lack of documentation."

### ***What do you hope for your family now?***

"For me, there is only one place where I can put my hope and where it will never be disappointed, and that is when I put my hope in God. If there was no hope, there would be no life. There is still hope for my family today. We just keep our heads high and never give up."



## Somali United Network

by Marcia Homer

The Somali community is one of the largest New American communities in Utah and includes many diverse sub-groups. This diversity provides rich cultural differences and unique community identities that comprise the Somali community in Salt Lake. Using the *Road to Community* curriculum, some members from the Somali community are working together to develop a Somali United Network, where multiple diverse groups can come together to collaborate on common issues, while at the same time, preserving their unique individual and collective cultural heritage.



*"There can be no vulnerability without risk; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community."*  
- M. Scott Peck

**Marcia Homer, Jeff Young, Abdi Sheikh, Ahmed Nurein**



## View From the Top: Dean of Honors College Reflects on Think Tanks

by Vanessa Seals



*"The think tank has been the most powerful bridge between the work we do in the honors college and the community, providing meaningful ways for community partners to work with our students on issues that really matter."  
-Martha Bradley*

Honors think tanks began six years ago in 2004, by Dean Martha Bradley. The main component of the program is collaboration between students, faculty, and community partners. Since the beginning of the program, there have been think tanks on immigration, religion, global medicine, and radiation, among other topics. "I am hopeful that our students will see the power in collaboration. I have studied community as an academic and as an advocate and think that anything is possible when we work together. The diversity of viewpoints and experience that we bring to the table results in far better and more insightful work than would ever occur individually. There is power in the collective" explains Dean Bradley. Partnership is crucial between the University of Utah and the neighboring community. Partnerships provide an important opportunity for students to gain a new viewpoint on matters affecting the local and global community. "The think tank has been the most powerful bridge between the work we do in the honors college and the community, providing meaningful ways for community partners to work with our students on issues that really matter. They are so excited about the chance (as we all are) to be heard, to be involved and to contribute.

Many of them end up donors or long time friends, but most importantly the students have the chance to work with a broader circle of individuals," says Dean Bradley. Think tanks are part of the Engaged Learning initiative of the Honors College meant to enrich the educational experience with non-traditional learning opportunities. "[The think tank] is non-traditional learning that requires non-traditional formats and experts—we learn from each other," says Dean Bradley. For Dean Bradley, there is intellectual and personal growth that goes on in the context of think tanks. "I have watched individual students and faculty learn about themselves within the context of think tanks. The self-discovery is sometimes immense and powerful. I have had countless conversations with teachers who are astounded at how much they have learned through these processes--faculty who have taught for twenty years feel like they have been renewed or revitalized. It is very exciting to them to discover new strengths in themselves. The same is true for students, many change majors and life dreams--historians become doctors, economists [become] seminarians and so forth. It





literally turns them on or sets them on fire. It doesn't always happen but when it does it is amazing." As a student in the Honors College think tank program, I can attest to the amount of growth and the unique opportunities that are available to students. In the think tank on Community Leadership, I have had the opportunity to not only interact with people from several different countries and cultures, but to formulate and carry out projects to enrich the west side communities and strengthen partnerships with the University of Utah. The

think tank program is an exciting and meaningful opportunity of which all Honors students should take advantage.



Dean Bradley

*"I had always been fascinated by think tanks. I thought it would be so powerful to get together a group of smart young people and set them to work on issues that our communities seem to be struggling with." - Dean Martha Bradley*

## Test your skills on Leadership!

Word Find  
Adaptive Leadership

R	D	B	N	O	I	N	O	I	T	A	G	E	L	E	D
I	E	S	A	B	N	C	O	V	C	O	E	I	V	S	Y
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Authority	Balcony View
Behavior	Challenge
Communication	Cultural Values
Delegation	Desired Condition
Grant Application	Loss
Outcome	Partnership
Press Release	Ripeness
Risk	Role
Strategizing	Tasks
Urgency	Vision



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