

A Case for
LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT



A person in a light blue shirt and dark pants is climbing a vertical crack in a sandstone cliff. They are wearing a helmet and a climbing harness. A rope is visible running down the crack. The background is a vast, textured rock face.

Do you know of someone who feels called to make a difference in the lives of urban youth?

We want to help.

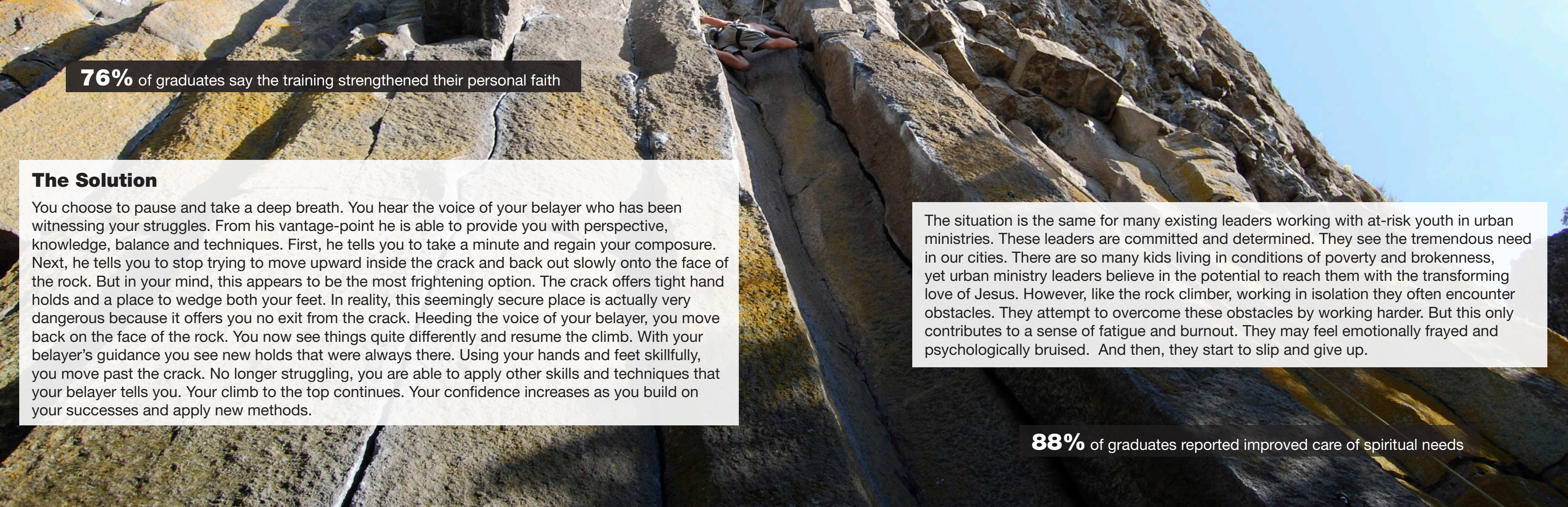
96% have remained in some form of ministry since graduation

90% reported their attitude about ministry improved

The Problem

To illustrate the problems frequently faced by leaders doing urban youth ministry, imagine you are a rock climber facing a very difficult climb. You know the challenges before you, but you are determined to get to the top. You lead the climb up the mountain with another person who is attached below you by a long rope. This person is called the belayer. You both feel confident about your own abilities so you take different paths to the top. After making consistent gains halfway up the mountain, you come to a vertical crack that must be scaled in order to get to the top.

You move into the vertical crack only to realize it will be more difficult than you thought at first. Fear grips you, but you shake it off and dig your fingers and hands deeper in to find a tighter hold. As you struggle upwards, you force yourself deeper into the crack, wedging yourself in because it appears to offer the most safety. Fear grips you again, this time stronger than before. You move deeper into the crack, but your ability to see the face of the cliff decreases. You can only see the crack. Your partner is quite a distance below you and has to wait for you to come out of the crack. So you work harder, struggling and exerting yourself. Your muscles tense up, but you hold on tighter, all while moving deeper inside the crack. The fear of falling returns, but this time it lingers. You've cut your hands on the rocks, which makes it even more difficult to find a good hold that will free you from the situation. You are faced with two options: Continue the cycle of struggle and fear or pause and take a deep breath.



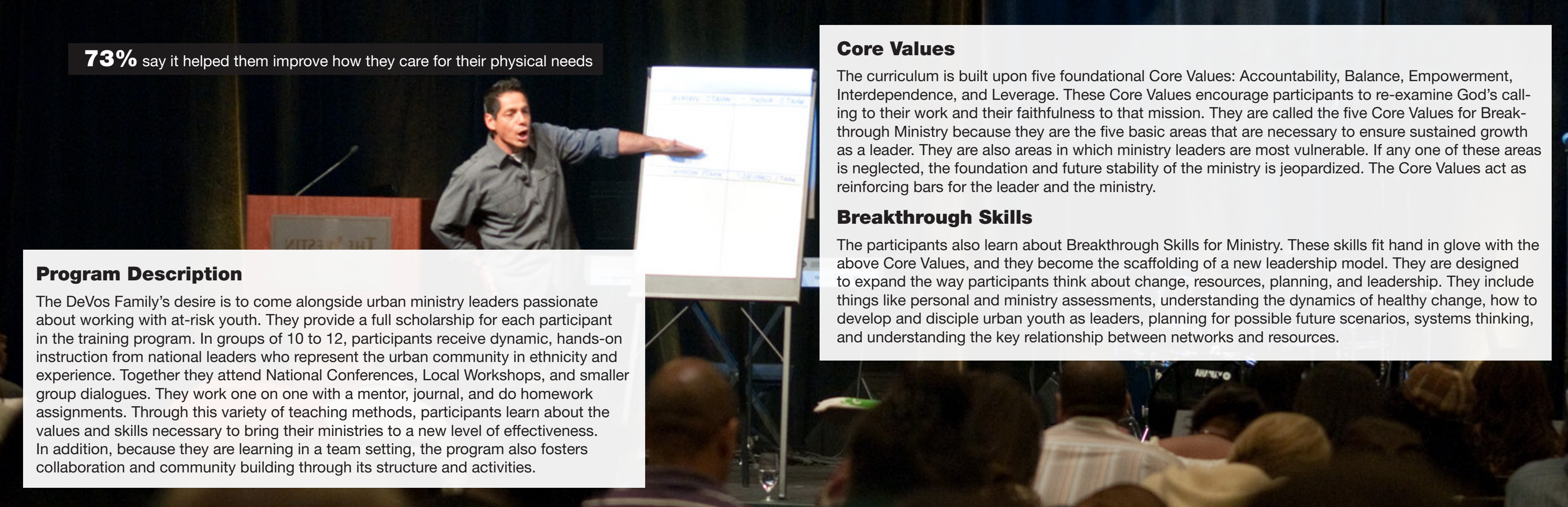
76% of graduates say the training strengthened their personal faith

The Solution

You choose to pause and take a deep breath. You hear the voice of your belayer who has been witnessing your struggles. From his vantage-point he is able to provide you with perspective, knowledge, balance and techniques. First, he tells you to take a minute and regain your composure. Next, he tells you to stop trying to move upward inside the crack and back out slowly onto the face of the rock. But in your mind, this appears to be the most frightening option. The crack offers tight hand holds and a place to wedge both your feet. In reality, this seemingly secure place is actually very dangerous because it offers you no exit from the crack. Heeding the voice of your belayer, you move back on the face of the rock. You now see things quite differently and resume the climb. With your belayer's guidance you see new holds that were always there. Using your hands and feet skillfully, you move past the crack. No longer struggling, you are able to apply other skills and techniques that your belayer tells you. Your climb to the top continues. Your confidence increases as you build on your successes and apply new methods.

The situation is the same for many existing leaders working with at-risk youth in urban ministries. These leaders are committed and determined. They see the tremendous need in our cities. There are so many kids living in conditions of poverty and brokenness, yet urban ministry leaders believe in the potential to reach them with the transforming love of Jesus. However, like the rock climber, working in isolation they often encounter obstacles. They attempt to overcome these obstacles by working harder. But this only contributes to a sense of fatigue and burnout. They may feel emotionally frayed and psychologically bruised. And then, they start to slip and give up.

88% of graduates reported improved care of spiritual needs



73% say it helped them improve how they care for their physical needs

Program Description


The DeVos Family's desire is to come alongside urban ministry leaders passionate about working with at-risk youth. They provide a full scholarship for each participant in the training program. In groups of 10 to 12, participants receive dynamic, hands-on instruction from national leaders who represent the urban community in ethnicity and experience. Together they attend National Conferences, Local Workshops, and smaller group dialogues. They work one on one with a mentor, journal, and do homework assignments. Through this variety of teaching methods, participants learn about the values and skills necessary to bring their ministries to a new level of effectiveness. In addition, because they are learning in a team setting, the program also fosters collaboration and community building through its structure and activities.

Core Values

The curriculum is built upon five foundational Core Values: Accountability, Balance, Empowerment, Interdependence, and Leverage. These Core Values encourage participants to re-examine God's calling to their work and their faithfulness to that mission. They are called the five Core Values for Breakthrough Ministry because they are the five basic areas that are necessary to ensure sustained growth as a leader. They are also areas in which ministry leaders are most vulnerable. If any one of these areas is neglected, the foundation and future stability of the ministry is jeopardized. The Core Values act as reinforcing bars for the leader and the ministry.

Breakthrough Skills

The participants also learn about Breakthrough Skills for Ministry. These skills fit hand in glove with the above Core Values, and they become the scaffolding of a new leadership model. They are designed to expand the way participants think about change, resources, planning, and leadership. They include things like personal and ministry assessments, understanding the dynamics of healthy change, how to develop and disciple urban youth as leaders, planning for possible future scenarios, systems thinking, and understanding the key relationship between networks and resources.



88% say it improved their care for the family

Some unique benefits of the program

Restores personal balance. Research shows* that social entrepreneurs who have successfully launched new initiatives have necessarily spent enormous amounts of personal time and energy in building their successes. As a result, their lives may be out of balance. Leaders will learn how to restore and replenish themselves on a regular basis. Jesus demonstrated the importance of taking time to be refreshed and replenished when he said to his disciples: “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6:31 NIV). This is why workshops are held in out of the way locations with minimal outside distractions. In addition to the skills taught there, the workshops are meant to be a time of reflection and restoration with a community of likeminded people in a healthy, creative environment.

Identifies obstacles to growth. Participants, like the rock climber, may not be able to see the factors that limit their capacity for growth. Assessments, dialogues, and the emphasis on real accountability creates an atmosphere for talking about each other’s limiting factors. In a group setting, the participants help each other find high leverage points for addressing the obstacles identified. Frequently, leaders reach a point in their ministry where they feel like they are not moving forward but aren’t sure what to do about it. In Hebrews 10:24, believers are instructed to “spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” The Initiative will help create a safe space for such growth to occur.

Incorporates systems thinking. The Initiative establishes the need to understand the “big picture” and to see ourselves as part of larger systems. The story of Joseph’s reunion with his family vividly illustrates the importance of seeing the “big picture,” instead of simply reacting to events as they happen (see Gen. 50:20-21). Unfortunately, many ministry leaders become victim of their own tunnel vision and are unable to see how they connect to the church, the family, and the community. In order to really solve spiritual and social problems that confront urban youth, leaders must begin to think critically about the role they play in just one area of a young person’s life. This shift in thinking immediately reveals their interdependence with others. With the myriad of issues facing urban program providers, it is vital that ministries avoid efforts of duplication, identify gaps in services, and invent solutions that restore the whole person to vital relationships that are Christ centered.

*Joe Robinson, “How to Avoid Entrepreneur Overload,” Entrepreneur, April, 2011, www.entrepreneur.com/article



Builds strategic relationships. One of the critical factors inhibiting the growth of effective urban ministries is their access to resources. The Initiative addresses this problem by helping participants explore strategic relationships. These relationships begin with each other. The biblical account of King Xerxes' support of Nehemiah's efforts to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem powerfully illustrates the importance of strategic relationships (see Nehemiah 2:7-8). Each participant is also asked to enlist the help of a mentor who helps keep them focused and has the potential to connect them to additional resources beyond their current networks.

Anchored in the community. A national program alone cannot understand the unique needs of a particular city; however, a local program could benefit from insights gained from broader perspectives. The Initiative is national in scope but anchored in the local community. Some events are national to benefit from the larger group gathering. The national trainers are experienced urban practitioners who have demonstrated sustained success in a particular leadership area. Dialogue sessions and independent studies help with the development of plans as well as trouble shooting their implementation.

Initiates Breakthrough Strategies. The cumulative effect of the Core Values, skills, and relationships is directed at helping the urban youth leader break through to a higher level to serve the growing population of disadvantaged urban youth. Initially, participants will explore areas of breakthrough both in their personal and ministry lives. As skills are introduced, they begin to interlock with a breakthrough planning process that will intentionally promote collaboration and interdependence with other participants. The Initiative defines breakthrough as strategic, significant, sustainable change in the way you live and work. In their final breakthrough plan, participants are challenged to put into operation a strategy for breakthrough leadership: implementing an explicit strategy to build capacity in others for ministry with urban youth.

92% say it improved how they care for their mental and intellectual needs

89% of graduates said that the training helped improve their job performance



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On average graduates increased their ministry to youth by **50%**