

Research and Analysis

A Data Story Created for DVULI

This report was created by the custom research team at Springtide Research Institute. At Springtide, we work hard to translate complex research into everyday language. In this report, we provide you with our findings and our recommendations for moving forward now that you have this data in hand. Enjoy!



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What story does this data tell?

DVULI's original research from 1997 essentially informed a first "phase" for the initiative that established the need for fostering and equipping youth-serving leaders in places of poverty. The learning from the first phase allowed DVULI to create practices that urban youth-serving leaders used to make a considerable impact on underserved populations.

However, the need for DVULI's continued services has grown with the evolution of modern challenges and a rapidly changing world, so this study was tailored to address those needs. This report explores the realities of the people DVULI is serving and will serve in the future. It is informed and advised by the people already served by DVULI. It focuses on helping DVULI know what more needs to be offered to address the challenges that participants are facing and help them to continue to expand their reach.

To design the research project, Springtide conducted six Discovery calls with key stakeholders from the DVULI organization to identify the set of clarified objectives noted below. Springtide then used these objectives to build the research tools, collect the data, and conduct analyses. This report features the key findings that speak directly to the research project objectives.

Objectives

- **Objective 1:** Understand the needs and growth of urban youth-serving leaders
- **Objective 2:** Describe how DVULI has and can continue to help support the lives of urban youth-serving leaders
- **Objective 3:** Identify ways to improve and sustain the DVULI program

Methodology

Focus Groups

The key data gathering method for this study was focus groups. Using lists provided by DVULI, Springtide reached out to City Coordinators, City Liaisons, and alumni asking for their participation in focus groups as well as their recommendations of urban youth workers who had not participated in DVULI programming but would be willing to participate in a focus group. Please note that all City Coordinators and City Liaisons are also program alumni. In the end, Springtide held one focus group with City Coordinators, one focus group with City Liaisons, four focus groups organized by region with DVULI alumni, and another four groups with urban youth workers who had not attended DVULI programming. Focus group participants were offered a \$50 incentive for their participation in a focus group, which was then doubled to \$100 for any DVULI alum who brought in a non-DVULI participant who attended a focus group. In total, there were 10 focus groups held with a total of 45 focus group participants—3 City Coordinators, 5 City Liaisons, 23 alumni and 14 non-DVULI-related.

Survey

As a part of the focus group process, Springtide asked each participant to also complete a short survey. Using a combination of existing measures and original, customized questions, this survey helped identify the demographic make-up of focus group participants as well as gather their preferences on things like modes of learning. In total, 44 people completed the survey following the focus group—27 alumni and 17 non-alumni. Please note that three people identified by DVULI as alumni marked themselves as ‘non-alumni’ on the survey.

Because the interest in the request for focus group participants was so great, Springtide also created a version of the survey for alumni who were not able to participate in a focus group. This survey was essentially the same as the focus group survey, but also included open-response questions that mirrored our focus group questions, so that these individuals could share their point of view as desired. Quantitative data from the 52 people who took the survey for non-participant alumni are shared separately at the end of this report.

Both surveys were launched when focus groups began in late-October 2022 and closed at the beginning of December 2022.

HIGHLIGHTS

Objective 1: Understand the needs and growth of urban youth-serving leaders

Participants believe that it is essential to find ways to relate to and connect with the lived experiences of the youth they serve. While building this connection, practitioners are also challenged by the poverty among the youth they serve, parental buy-in and generational trauma, as well as a scarcity of resources for their programs.

Urban youth leaders remain in this field because it is something they feel called to do and value the growth they see in young people. They also serve as examples of success in their communities and help young people who remind them of themselves. This sense of success and a desire to pay it forward keeps practitioners committed to this work.

Objective 2: Describe how DVULI has and can continue to help support the lives of urban youth-serving leaders

DVULI has undoubtedly had an impact on both the professional and personal lives of its participants.

Practitioners who participated in DVULI report more confidence in the skills required to do this work. As compared to practitioners who did not participate in DVULI, almost twice as many DVULI alumni are very confident in their ability to access local resources, to fulfill their ministry's strategy, and to leverage healthy change for the youth they serve.

Most alumni find the training they received to be exceptionally valuable to their professional life and embody all the core values, especially interdependence, empowerment, and balance, in their work. Many alumni also indicate that DVULI has been a transformative process for their personal lives, particularly interpersonal relationships, personal values/beliefs, and health and wellness.

DVULI has helped participants develop their skills in community-building, self-assessment, and problem-solving. The tools that practitioners continually use in their work include asset mapping and systems thinking. The experiences that DVULI provided that were particularly valuable were the ability to network with like-minded practitioners, connect on a deeper level with other leaders, and to take time to reflect.

Objective 3:
Identify ways to
improve and
sustain the DVULI
program

While many practitioners, alumni and non-alumni alike, have participated in a leadership program outside of DVULI, these programs are far and few between, and typically happen through their workplace or as part of a conference.

Urban youth leaders are typically kinesthetic or visual learners who learn best through in-person or hybrid (in-person and online) experiences.

Alumni, overall, are very satisfied with all aspects of the program (especially the cohort model) but many indicate that the amount of pre-coursework could use some reconsideration. Likewise, most alumni find the training content very relevant to numerous areas of youth ministry, but feel it is least relevant to accelerating change.

The major change that DVULI can make to their current program structure to increase the benefits that alumni receive is providing opportunities for additional collaboration and connection to materials after the program has concluded. Alumni and non-alumni emphasize that there is a need for space to connect with other practitioners beyond the national conferences both locally and virtually because this will allow for practitioners to make a greater impact on their communities. Additionally, practitioners are seeking more training on how to support the youth they work with in terms of trauma and a variety of other practical skills that help mitigate the challenges noted in Objective 1.

RECOMMENDATIONS

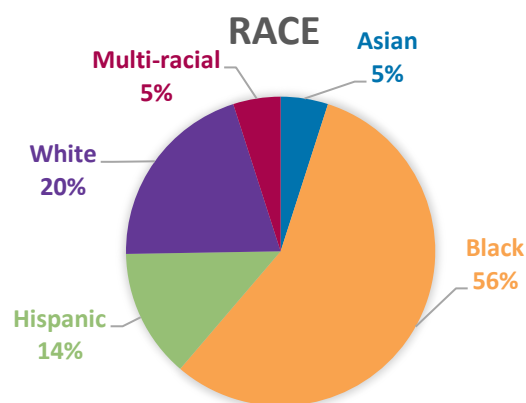
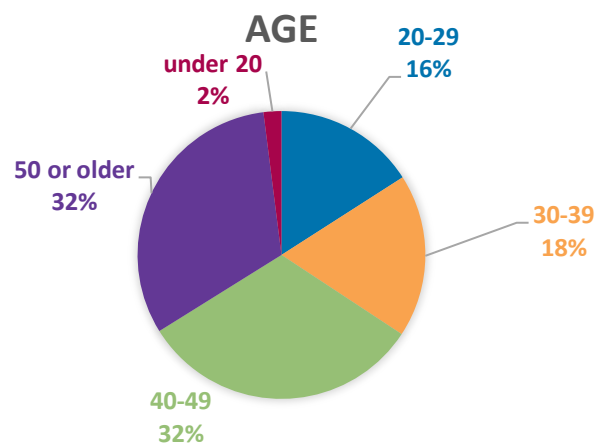
1. Moving forward, DVULI should not remove any of the modules from their current curriculum but should consider including trainings on wellness (i.e., self-care, trauma-informed care), cultural competencies (i.e., poverty simulation and DEI), and administrative needs (i.e., fundraising and collaborative networking).
2. DVULI should also consider expanding their networking opportunities by creating tools that help alumni collaborate and offering more frequent, localized networking opportunities (like the national conferences).
3. DVULI's in-person model appears to align with the learning-mode preferences of this study's participants. If DVULI is looking to shift how they deliver information, combining in-person and online learning is an equally viable option. If programming changes are being considered, the amount of pre-coursework should be examined.
4. For DVULI to increase its reach, DVULI should consider additional marketing strategies when recruiting for new cohorts. DVULI is undoubtedly impacting the practitioners they work with, but many of the non-alumni we spoke to were either unaware of DVULI at the time or lived outside of an area that the program serves.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

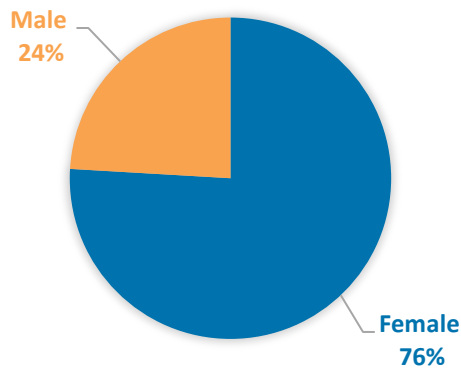
This section shows an overview of the general demographics of the **44 people who participated in the focus group and the follow-up survey**. Demographic data for participants who completed the additional alumni survey (i.e., those who wanted to share feedback about the program but were unable to sign-up for a focus group) are not included in this section. The additional alumni survey was created to gain additional insights into the experiences of program alumni and the current needs of urban youth practitioners rather than to add to the demographic insights gathered in the focus group follow-up survey.

This data can be compared to what is already known about the urban youth worker community to get a sense of who participated in this study. This data can also be used to identify trends and opportunities for improvement. Charts may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

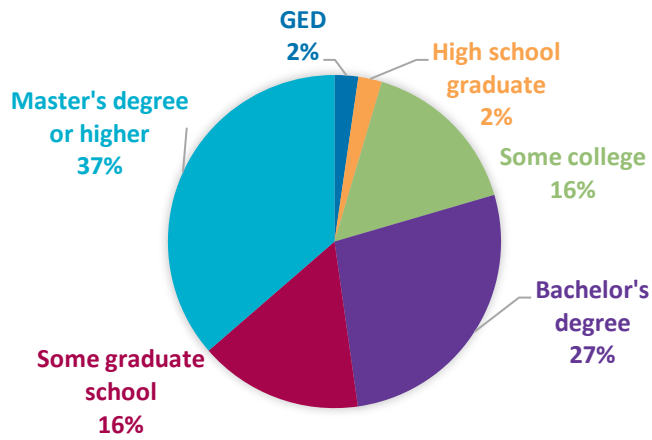
General



GENDER

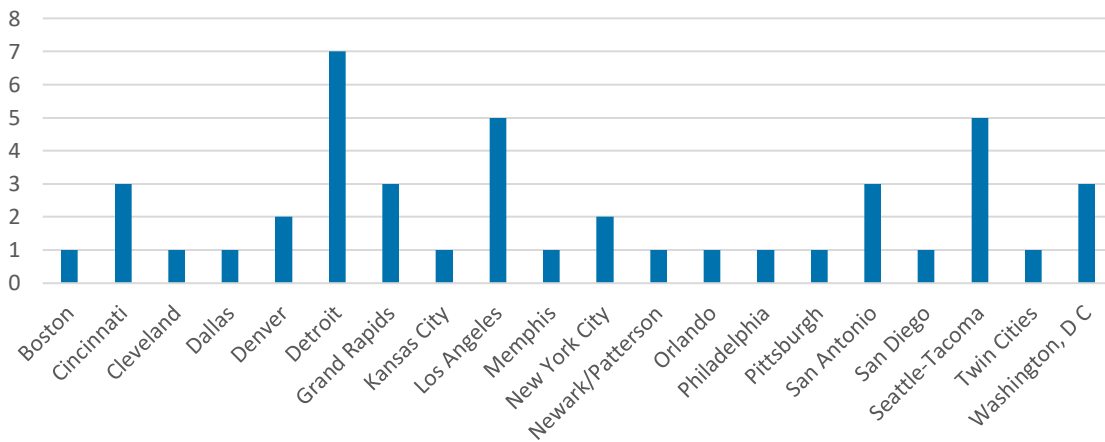


EDUCATION LEVEL

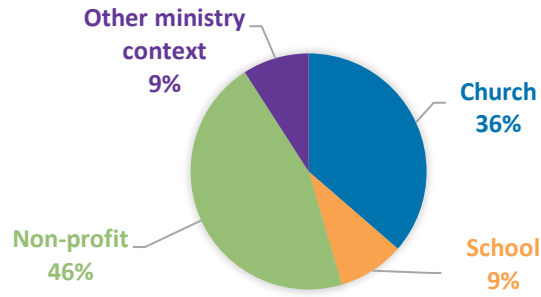


Program-Related

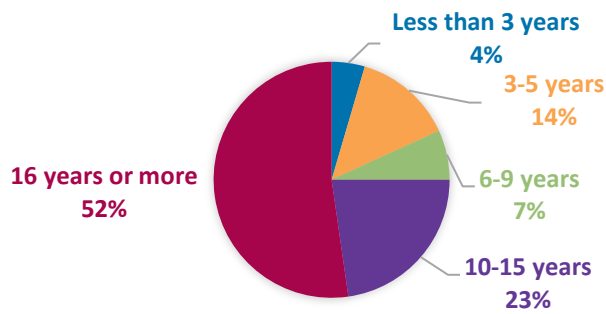
Works in



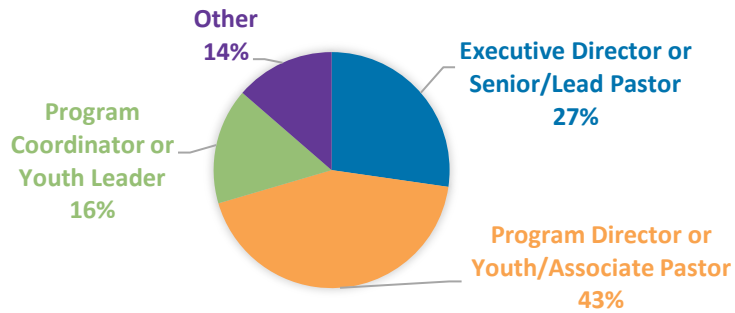
MINISTRY CONTEXT



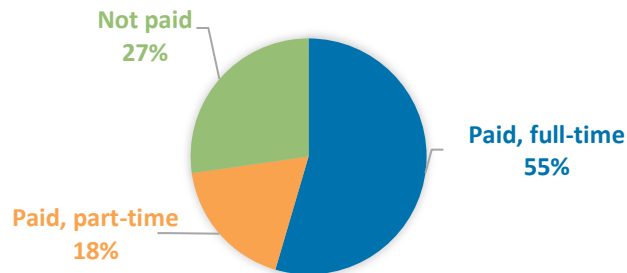
YEARS ACTIVE IN MINISTRY



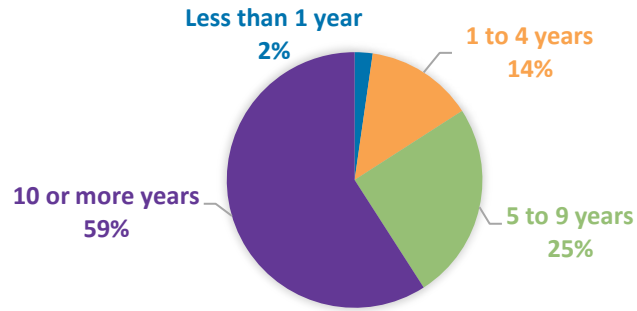
ROLE IN YOUTH MINISTRY



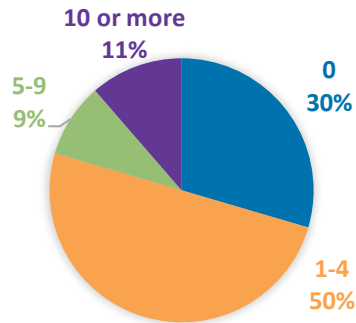
EMPLOYMENT TYPE



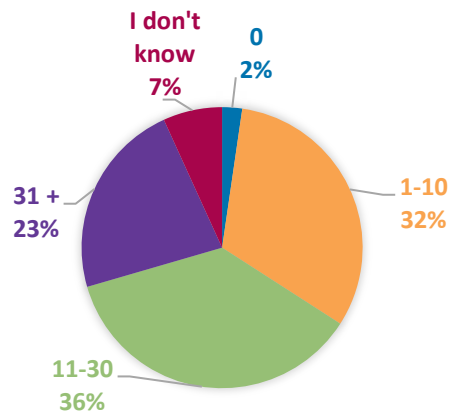
EXPECT TO CONTINUE YOUTH WORK FOR...



SIZE OF TEAM



ANNUAL NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS



DATA STORY

Organized by objective, this section tells the story of how the data led to the highlights and recommendations outlined previously. Each objective concludes with data tables that reveal the percentage of respondents for the survey questions that pertain to that objective. Data may not add up to 100% due to rounding or if the question was designated as “select all that apply.” Due to the structure of focus groups, City Liaisons and City Coordinators do not have their region of participation accompanying their alumni status. While each quote comes from an individual speaker, the attributions are listed by focus group to help maintain confidentiality.

Objective 1: Understand the needs and growth of urban youth-serving leaders

Needs and Challenges

Skills

According to the follow-up survey, all focus group participants place *a great deal* of importance on communication skills (100%), empathy (100%) and relationship building skills (100%). Likewise, almost everyone places *a great deal* of importance on urban youth practitioners utilizing collaboration (98%), problem solving (98%), and self-awareness (98%). The only skills that less than 80% of participants place *a great deal* of importance on are fundraising (59%) and reflective journaling (36%).

Relatability

When discussing the benefits and challenges of working with urban youth, DVULI alumni and non-alumni shared how essential it is to find ways to relate to and connect with the lived experiences of the youth they serve.

“[I like] being able to be at the table, **being able to bring a female energy**, and being able to bring some different perspectives.” – Alumni/City Coordinators

“**I think we're having trouble connecting with the next generation of leaders**, the millennial generation. I'm at the very tail end of Gen X, and I would say there's been some misfires in values and communication with the millennial generation and the older generations in our organization ... We have to crack that nut. [What] we have to figure out is this: Why is there such a disconnect generationally? It is affecting the way that we reach Gen Z and Alpha Generation after Gen Z. I actually see that problem a lot, too.” – Western Region Alumni

“**I come from an urban youth background** ... now I'm in a context where I'm in a totally suburban church. I am the urban person there. For me personally, just understanding that where you come from is very important, and there's a certain aspect of that that a lot people don't have. Bringing [your background] to the forefront, to where you are is very, very important.” – Eastern Region Alumni

“The folks that I've gotten to know over the years and just even helping me, you know, check myself on things, right? Having been from ... a different background than what the people I currently live with and work with have experienced. So that's just been a beautiful gift through the DeVos Initiative where **my perspective has changed and my understanding of culture** and how I belong or don't belong in things and how to enter into things differently.” – Midwestern Region Alumni

Beyond seeking a connection between themselves and the youth they serve, practitioners also see the need to build connections based in relatability and identify with those that support their work.

“**The vast majority of our support comes from people that don't look like us** or organizations or foundations run by people that don't look like the very kids that we're serving. And I think that poses immediate problems because our students, even when they have times where they meet some of the donors through some of our annual giving, one of the things that they learn subconsciously is that the financial support or backing comes from predominantly white America. And I don't think that's a good look for urban youth. Now we appreciate the support, obviously we need it. But I think when you look at some of the mental barriers of many of our youth and/or adults, I think we have to break the barrier that the only people that can support our efforts are people from white America. And so we need to figure out a way, or a challenge that I see is trying to garner support from people that look like the kids that we're serving.” – Southern Region Alumni

Poverty

DVULI alumni, City Liaisons, and City Coordinators note how poverty creates challenges to successful urban youth ministry. City Coordinators and Liaisons discuss the community deficits that accompany impoverished areas, which need to be filled (at least in part) before the necessary work can begin.

“Around 61% of the people in our community live below the poverty line. There's no grocery store around here in walkable distance, and there's only one after-school program that is viable, and they're open Monday through Friday, but once they close, there's nothing for our youth to be able to do. They don't have access to good food, they don't have access to recreation. The only time that they can have fun is if they try to catch a bus that comes once a day ... to go to another community. **They're trapped in a lot of ways, and they're bored and ain't got no money**, so then a negative consequence takes place.” – Alumni/City Coordinators

“I think we have to be very careful of just really being intentional about conversations that we have with parents and not being afraid to call out the elephant in the room. And that can be on a variety of different things from food

inadequacies, to clothes, to just our basic Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, just the basic stuff. **If we can get to the basic stuff, then we can help 'em.**" – Alumni/City Liaisons

Alumni describe how working with urban youth is challenging because of issues the youth are facing such as homelessness and family discord. They discuss the challenges of supporting youth when their charges live in areas with high rates of violence, substance abuse, and racial tensions.

"There was a lot of family discord going on, **a lot of them were facing homelessness, a lot of 'em facing a lot of different barriers that caused them not to be successful** in public education. So, today we've evolved, the agency has evolved into being more intentional with bringing pathways for them to become independent with education." – Eastern Region Alumni

"The clients that I work with and the neighbors that I work with are kind of living on that margin between survival and thriving. And so some days it feels like they're more in that space of they're really thriving. You're seeing those changes, you're watching the light in them come up. And in other times, they're just in that survival mode, and you're in that space with them of just, 'Let's get through today.' There's often crisis that we walk through with the kiddos." –
Midwestern Region Alumni

"The racial tensions that we all lived through daily, but because of what happened, all the recent events, I think that's something that has definitely surfaced a lot of the trauma that the kids had for years. With pretty much all the different communities, from George Floyd and then the hate against Asian Americans, and it just kept going. So, I would add the **racial trauma: that is more on the surface and the kids don't have any guidance.**" – Eastern Region Alumni

"There's some things that are always going to be around, like drug addiction and things that come with poverty." – Western Region Alumni

"I also resonate with the stuff about youth and guns on the street. The other day: a youth that we're connected to had an illegal gun, and he was holding the gun for his friend, and then he ends up being arrested for that. The friend was also one that we'd worked with. I think it's all those things. **It's poverty ... Our gun violence has gone way up. The drugs have gotten really bad,** which is, I think, connected to the national opioid crisis." – Eastern Region Alumni

"Another thing, another immediate goal outside of healthy communities, and I think this falls up under the umbrella of healthy communities, is that **I want to see some financial stability in our community.** I think it's possible for urban excellence in relation to creating generational wealth and not having our

organizations, our programs, our youth being sustained by people that don't look like them. So financial prosperity through generational wealth is an immediate goal that I would love to see in our communities, healthy communities.” – Southern Region Alumni

Non-alumni urban youth practitioners echo these sentiments, describing the biggest challenges as working within the deficits that accompany impoverished areas and identifying the struggles that come with fulfilling the needs of urban youth because neighborhood disorder is compounded by generational ‘curses.’

“We're at the beginning stages of really addressing all the needs, all the poverty mindsets, all the hunger and low-income household families. And then we haven't even talked about spiritual needs, getting them connected to churches, getting them spiritually literate as well as educationally literate. And so, yeah, **the drawback is we're there, but we're not at all times equipped in a lot of different ways.**” – Non-Alumni

“**Another barrier is just generational curses,** generational cycles. We're dealing with not just trauma in students but trauma in parents that have never dealt with their trauma. That's just being passed down. And we're seeing that in the teen-parent program, but we're seeing that in middle schoolers, and they go home to it every single day. So, that's a big barrier for me because I feel like it's almost undoing the ministry that we do every day.” – Non-Alumni

“I noticed a lot of my students suffer with mental health issues that they've felt comfortable to share . I mean some of them haven't shared that. It literally took two years for them to trust us to share about the mental health issues they have help with. There's a lot of domestic abuse I guess because they come from a very toxic environment being raised in the environment of broken homes. **They're literally modeling what was done to them** ... So they're kind of copying that same pattern.” – Non-Alumni

“**We were seeing a larger percentage of youth who are homeless.** Some folks might call it ‘couch surfing’ when they went from place to place to live. But in many cases, they got in that situation because of a disagreement with a parent or sibling or an adult living there in the home.” – Non-Alumni

Parental Buy-In and Generational Trauma

Practitioners emphasize the importance of doing relational work with the families of urban youth. Serving urban youth requires building connections with the parents and guardians of families; however, this is often easier said than done. City Coordinators and Liaisons find there are a lack of resources to support families outside of the ‘cisgender hetero normative’ ideal of family, which creates difficulties for youth workers to make a lasting impact on young people in their communities. Alumni and non-alumni working in the field also echo that building

relationships with families is complicated because of intergenerational trauma and a lack of parental buy-in.

“And I know it's always a question, especially in our church, **how do we get parents more involved?** But part of that is just really understanding the landscape and being able to understand how to navigate ... There's not a lot of resources for single parents. We adapt programming for the cisgender hetero normative family. And so, we don't accommodate for single parents. We don't have resources or accommodate for blended families or whatever we think the normal family structure is. We don't accommodate resources. But, and I think, you know, it's a challenge to navigate in that way, but trying to figure that space out.” – Alumni/City Coordinators

“I think one of the dynamics that makes things so difficult is that **parents want us to be the parent on their behalf** instead of empowering the parent to be the parent. Many of our school districts have switched over to an online model for resources, but our parents are not there yet. So, the district not doing its due diligence to train parents how to access a parent portal, show them how to operate a laptop, how to create an email address so that they can get that information. Those are challenges as well.” – Alumni/City Liaisons

“Some of our students that would come into our youth ministry, when we created a very safe place for them and the relationship was built, they would open up about trauma that happened in their childhood or even challenges of depression and anxiety that they did not feel comfortable enough to share with their parents or didn't feel that they could. And so **it becomes challenging because you have to walk with the parents as well** ... and that's a totally different perspective. And we felt we were burned out because we were trying to do both, and it's very, very challenging.” – Alumni/City Liaisons

“I would add that maybe on some level this ties into a system, but **when you deal with kind of generational traumas, the parents can become a barrier**. Just even something as simple as getting consents to take a summer camp trip. You have parents who may not even be accessible to sign the consent form for a kid that's under 18 and then just other ways in which their own challenges as parents can show up and hinder the work or just compound it.” – Midwestern Region Alumni

“**If you really want to grow and mentor that youth, you need that parent buy-in**. When I look back, where the parents really bought into the program and bought into really wanting to see their child succeed, those are the kids that went on and were successful in college or the kids that got some type of job once they got outta high school to where they could take care of themselves. So, it gets back to that village where we can pour into 'em so much, but you need

that parent to be able to pour into them as well. So, you need that parent buy-in if you really want to grow and mentor that youth.” – Southern Region Alumni

“Families have a new rhythm, and I feel like the last several years that rhythm has shifted. I don’t think, in my context, I have a really great understanding of what the typical family rhythm is because I think what was said about ministering to whole families and, on top of that their communities, if we kind of don't understand those rhythms, what are we doing? You know, how do we effectively serve families in our communities if we don't know some of those rhythms?” – Western Region Alumni

“I've had a lot of conversations where it's like ‘My kid could be doing this’ or ‘They can be working or babysitting for me so I can go work.’ A lot of times youth ministry is not valued. And that comes all the way back down to parent buy-in. **So, if you're not partnering with them, you're losing on a major resource.**” – Non-Alumni

Scarcity of Resources

Urban youth practitioners share that there is a scarcity of resources (money, attention, volunteers) within the urban youth ministry context/community, which results in competition rather than collaboration among organizations in the community. This competition has been and will continue to act as a disservice to urban youth until organizations realize that their cumulative impact is likely to be greater than what any one organization can achieve. Despite this challenge, there is a desire to work together to make lasting impacts on the lives of the young people in their communities, which starts with helping urban youth leaders learn to seek out and access additional resources. Without access to additional resources or help learning how to access existing resources, urban youth practitioners face burnout.

“I think resources are always a challenge and that when **it comes to working with our young people, they get the short end of the stick**, always. And it's always fighting for resources, fighting for capacity, fighting for volunteers, fighting for help. But when it comes down to it, everybody is looking for who's going to stop the issue, who's going to help our young people. And everybody's sitting around asking, ‘Who? Who? Who?’ But it's just a lack of accountability of a community as a whole stepping up.” – Alumni/City Coordinators

“There are organizations in our community that are trying to establish themselves, and in them trying to establish themselves, they're doing it just so they could get grant money. So, it's like this cyclical deal that ends up happening. And what ends up happening a lot of times that I've seen is that, at the end, our community suffers, especially our youth, because **there's so much in-fighting that takes place, because everyone's trying to get resources**, that [the youth] end up getting a short end of the stick. And so, in a lot of ways there are a lot of hopes and dreams and aspirations that'll happen at a leadership level that don't

always matriculate down to tangible things that take place in our community.” – Alumni/City Coordinators

“I say particularly the urban youth, sometimes it's been resources; the lack thereof, whether it's finances or whether it's facilities or just having those right connections to help them and in different ways; one way maybe to have them do something outside of their normal setting and to be able to go somewhere else, and that's not always available. **We don't have a campsite we can just go to and book for next week or expose them to some other things.**” – Alumni/City Liaisons

“I think another thing that is hard is there's generally a lack of value placed on the work, and so that affects funding and then it makes competing for funding a real thing. And so that cuts through collaboration because we all want to prove that our organization is the best at things when we're competing for very limited pots of money. And we know that collaboration is the best way to do the work, but we're all in here trying to prove that what we're doing is the most valuable thing and **collaboration then becomes a threat, perceived as a threat almost, when really it's the best way to serve the kids.**” – Midwestern Region Alumni

“When you do urban ministry, as an organization, we're broke. **We didn't have any money, and so we have to partner with everybody.** Because you know, like our kids need jobs, so I can't pay 'em. So, I gotta work with somebody who does do that. We can't provide counseling. ‘Alright, you do counseling? Alright.’ You know? So just the nature of urban ministry for us made it very conducive to collaboration. Because we didn't really have any options. And I feel like everybody's kind of in the same boat.” – Western Region Alumni

“**We have to drive the van; we have to run the program; we have to raise the money. That stuff burns you out,** especially when you don't get the proper appreciation or whatever for what you're doing—oftentimes you're underpaid. So burnout is another immediate challenge that I see with those of us who work in urban youth.” – Southern Region Alumni

“I think **the biggest barrier on me honestly is funding and money and resources.** It really is one of the top opportunities for us to really serve our kids in the ways that we want to. I think there's a lot of things that don't cost money, but then there's a lot of experiences that, unless you know somebody who knows somebody who knows somebody that can provide that for you, which oftentimes in the urban setting I find it's not, as if those people or money are not as available or those resources and people are gatekept a lot. So to break into those spaces to get those opportunities and get those resources are often a little bit harder because we are trying to find where they are and to get access to those, it takes a certain level of affluency.” – Non-Alumni

“Do I feel like I have the resources or skills to support them? Yes and no. I mean I can love them where they're at. I can try to model to them what healthy parenting looks like. But as far as resources? My ministry is lacking because, you know, I had a student, she's struggling in her relationship, and there's a lot of domestic abuse, and yes, I can report it to the organization, but then I'm not really giving her the tools ... as far as getting her help, I don't know what to do. I don't know where to turn to. And also with students that are struggling with anxiety, they're not really at a place where I could tell them, ‘Okay, well let's pray.’ ... I really don't have the resources for stuff like that.” – Non-Alumni

“I think a lot of turnover and people not staying in this type of work hinders relationships, collaboration. When there's another youth pastor, just the third one ... **it's hard to continue to form those relationships and do good work with people when people are getting tired**, burnt out or having to go find other ways to support themselves and their families.” — Non-Alumni

Joys and Benefits

Participants highlight the joy of being urban youth leaders because they get to see growth in the youth they work with and attend to the work they've been called to do. They also get to be examples of success in their community and help youth that remind them of themselves. This sense of success and a desire to pay it forward is one thing that keeps practitioners committed to this work.

“As long as God is like, ‘I want you in a youth ministry, youth pastor context,’ I'm doing it. I keep feeling like I'm aging out, but God's like, **‘There's more to do.’**” – Alumni/City Coordinators

“I've been serving youth for a very long time. So, I have some that are older now and also moving towards creating their own families and then some who are just coming into high school. So **seeing that trajectory across families, that's my greatest joy** is just seeing young people be empowered to continue to find their gifts and see how God wants to use them in the kingdom in the city. And so just to kind of see them in different places and placement and still knowing that God has very important work for them to do.” – Alumni/City Coordinators

“I'm never going to stop paying it forward. I was that kid—gang-impacted, coming through abuse and molestation—and somebody was there for me, and I made that decision at 17 that I would do that for somebody else. And I haven't stopped for 45 years. [This work] never gets old.” – Alumni/City Liaisons

“I would say it's one of the most challenging and rewarding things that I've been able to do. And it tests like every part of you, but **there's no better feeling or cause to be a part of.**” – Midwestern Region Alumni

“I just love seeing them evolve. I love to see when that light bulb goes off in their head, and they're like, ‘Oh!’ And you're sitting there and you're saying, ‘I've been seeing that all along. Now they finally see it.’ It's just a good experience to see that and to feel it and then to let them know, ‘Hey, you have power and resources within you, and we can help you do whatever it is you want to do, but you gotta see it first. You gotta believe in it first. You gotta take ownership to it. And once you take ownership to it, man, that's a whole new person right there.” – Southern Region Alumni

“And so when I think about my passion for working with youth, urban youth in particular, it's because **when I see them, it is almost like I see a reflection of myself in the mirror.**” – Southern Region Alumni

“I'll say the benefit is being able to provide information and be a support from areas and neighborhoods that I came from and being a testimony of success, being able to show hope in the midst of what can be gloomy situations.” – Western Region Alumni

“I stay because it's a calling. It's something that God has put on my heart, and I know is part of the reason why I'm here. I think that even if you don't come from a faith-based perspective, the people who I know who have been in it and for a long, long term have some sort of calling in some way, shape or form, whether it's to elevate their people or to you know, just give back to society or whatever the case may be. For me, **it's also obviously incredibly rewarding because there is such a big need and just to be able to see someone grow and develop and flourish is, there's nothing better than that.**” – Non-Alumni

Objective 1 Data Tables

How important are the following skills for urban youth leaders? <i>ALL Focus Group Participants (n=44)</i>	Not at all	Somewhat	Very
Communication	-	-	100%
Collaboration/community	-	2%	98%
Problem Solving	-	2%	98%
Empathy	-	-	100%
Time management	-	9%	91%
Relationship building	-	-	100%
Faith	2%	7%	91%
Passion	-	14%	87%
Self-awareness	-	2%	98%
Reflective journaling	5%	59%	36%
Planning	-	9%	91%
Fundraising	-	41%	59%
Trauma care	2%	16%	82%
Taking Sabbath	2%	16%	82%
Youth discipleship	-	9%	91%

After participating in DVULI, how confident do you feel in each of the following areas: <i>ALUMNI from Focus Groups (n = 27)</i>	Not at all Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident
Sustaining myself as a leader	-	19%	82%
Sustaining myself as an individual	-	26%	74%
Evaluating my ministry's strategy	4%	41%	56%
Accessing local resources to fulfill my ministry's strategy	4%	41%	56%
Empowering the youth I serve	-	26%	74%
Working interdependently with others in my community who share a vision for youth	4%	19%	78%
Analyzing the systems that affect youth in my community	-	41%	59%
Leveraging healthy change for the youth in my community	4%	33%	63%
Designing and employing future action plans	4%	37%	59%

How confident did you feel in each of the following areas: <i>NON-ALUMNI from Focus Groups (n = 17)</i>	Not at all Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident
Sustaining myself as a leader	-	52%	47%
Sustaining myself as an individual	-	52%	47%
Evaluating my ministry's strategy	-	52%	47%
Accessing local resources to fulfill my ministry's strategy	29%	58%	12%
Empowering the youth I serve	-	41%	59%
Working interdependently with others in my community who share a vision for youth	6%	47%	47%
Analyzing the systems that affect youth in my community	12%	41%	47%
Leveraging healthy change for the youth in my community	12%	47%	21%
Designing and employing future action plans	6%	59%	35%

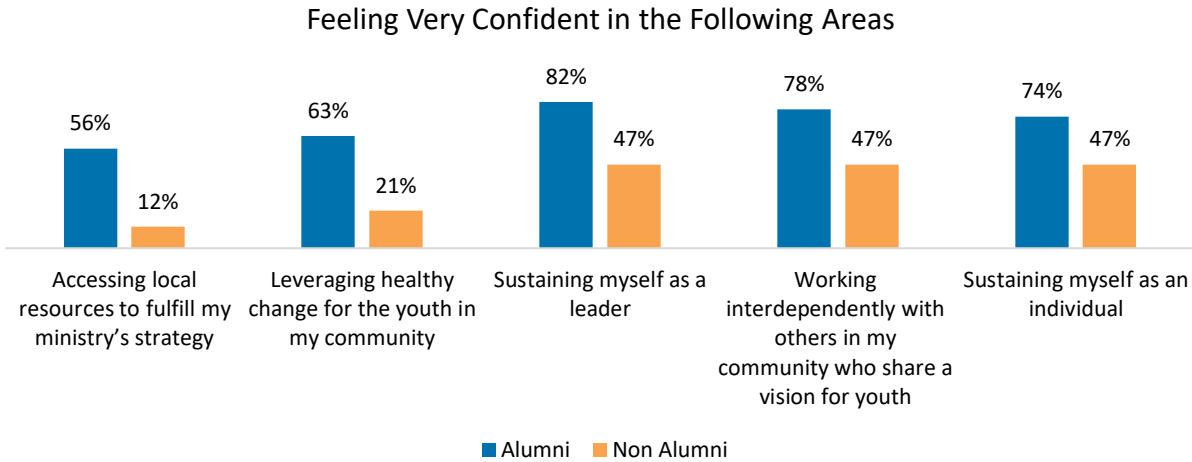
Objective 2: Describe how DVULI has and can continue to help support the lives of urban youth-serving leaders

Impacts of DVULI

Almost all alumni who participated in a focus group indicate that DVULI training is *extremely valuable* in their work life (85%) and are embodying all of the [program’s] core values—interdependence (89%), empowerment (85%), balance (81%), accountability (67%), and leverage (67%)—in their work. Likewise, these alumni also indicate that DVULI training is *extremely valuable* in other aspects of their lives (63%). At least one-half of alumni who participated in a focus group suggest that their faith/religion (55%), family/parenthood (65%), health and wellness (70%), personal values/beliefs (70%), and friendships/interpersonal relationships (80%) were influenced by their participation in DVULI.

The top four skills that alumni focus group participants developed through DVULI include collaboration/community (96%), self-assessment (81%), problem solving (63%), and reflective journaling (63%). The top three most useful opportunities and experiences that DVULI provided for this group were the opportunity to get away and reflect (67%), opportunity to connect at a deep level with other leaders (56%), and networking with like-minded leaders from around the country (41%).

Additionally, alumni who participated in the focus groups were substantially more confident in their ability to do a variety of ministry-related tasks after participating in DVULI than their non-alumni counterparts. As shown in the chart below and in the data tables under Objective 1, at least 25% more alumni feel *very confident* in accessing local resources to fulfill their ministry’s strategy, leveraging healthy change for youth they serve, sustaining themselves as a leader, working interdependently with others in their community who share a vision for youth, and evaluating their ministry’s strategy, than non-DVULI alumni.



General Transformation

DVULI was, overall, a transformative experience for participants' personal and professional lives. City Liaisons and alumni discuss how the program in general, or specific components (e.g., reflective journaling), has made a lasting impact on their personal lives, impacting how they move in the world and how they understand themselves. Likewise, alumni also discuss how DVULI continues to impact the work they do, in some cases, years after completing the program.

“[DVULI] transformed my life in a way that I didn't know was possible, and it transformed every area of it. The way that I pastor, the way that I walk alongside other people, the way that I parent, the relationship with my husband. So it transformed my life holistically.” – Alumni/City Liaisons

“DVULI allowed me to see me before I could see anyone else. And that was huge. That was huge. It was transformative because it was not always about me, but at first it has to be about me in order to make an impact in the city, in others' lives. And holistically, too. It really changed me. And **I'm constantly thinking about workshops and trainings and different things that we had gone through. It was definitely one of the best experiences of my life.**” – Alumni/City Liaisons

“Reflective journaling, if you will, was an eye opener because it forced me to take myself into consideration. And for me, that wasn't a driving motivation. I always felt like, ‘Okay, that's not the Christian thing to do, to think about yourself.’ And so the idea of securing my own mass was not a principle I lived by. Not that I wasn't taking care of myself, it just wasn't a motivating factor. It felt selfish to think of me. And so it was, yeah, the program really just kind of compelled me to say, ‘Wow, yeah, do some reflecting and figure out what your needs are and make sure you're addressing those as well.’” – Midwestern Region Alumni

“My pastor of eight years, my former pastor, he passed away a week or two days after I got back from NC One. My mother's cancer came back, and unfortunately, she passed away two weeks after graduation. And I don't think I would've been able to maintain balance, even sustain balance to this day, ‘cause my mom's been gone for about six months now, had I not gone through and learned the principles of the importance of me being a big rock; it's been life-changing even to the point of deciding to take this time to process. And it was a hard decision. But I also know that I have the tools, and I'm confident that the tools that I've learned through DVULI, after I decided to take 6 months and as my 6 months are coming to a close, I'm ready to come and come with full force because I have the tools, I don't have to figure out where to start. I've even gone back and read through things, and it keeps us sustained ... so **definitely the things that I've learned have greatly, positively impacted me and the ministry I'm connected to.**” – Western Region Alumni

Valuable Education and Training

Urban youth practitioners identify a variety of DVULI programming elements—the core values, systems thinking, and asset mapping—as valuable for their work that should be disseminated to as many leaders as possible.

Core Values Training

Those who work with urban youth and participated in DVULI emphasize the impact of the core values training on different aspects of their lives. City Coordinators and Liaisons emphasize that the five core values—specifically naming balance, empowerment, accountability, and interdependence—have positively impacted how they understand themselves and their calling in the world. Alumni see these trainings as an investment that has given them tools they continually use to bring focus and understanding to both their professional and personal lives.

“I literally just came back from a six-week leave of absence from my position to even further have an understanding about what **balance** looks like and to come up with what are the practical tools for keeping your life balance right. We know we're supposed to have balance, but when it comes to how do you in your personal setting, in your personal life, what things do you need to institute for that? ... It really has radicalized and changed my life, and it keeps getting deeper and deeper and deeper. So, I mean if they take all the rest of it away, I mean I know they won't, but if they had to, may it never be balance.” – Alumni/City Coordinators

“I would echo **balance**, still fail at it, learned about it twice now, still not doing it well. Actually, I was talking to one of my alumni friends from 2009. We were talking about how we still have not learned it, but it's still such a powerful thing that it's the first thing we talk about when it comes to DVULI. I think for me it's just all of the five principles because for me it's just prophetic for the time of my life ... And even as I'm learning to navigate some things in my current life in ministry like that **interdependence**, that **empowerment**, learning to let go and learning to delegate, learning to lean on partners that you're not used to, that has resonated on me recently and really stepping outside my box and just using just some of these frameworks to evaluate just why we do things.” – Alumni/City Coordinators

“I think that for me, when I went through the initiative, it was the national conference one that really broke me down about the core values because I was living **out of balance** and just like many have said, I mean we think we can't handle it all and that's not at all what God wants us to do. So, the core values on **balance**, the core values on **accountability**, **interdependence**, **empowerment**, all of those really play a key in just who we are now growing from that. But again, it had to be called out and brought to our attention and not only called out and brought to our attention, but deep diving into truly what it means.” – Alumni/City Liaisons

“Those core values are such a part of my life to this day ... I can always go back and look at those **five core values**, and I can figure out what’s outta sync, what’s outta balance, what the imbalance is with me. So when I said the investment, it really had to do with me, to make me a better person so that I can continue this service in the capacities that I was engaged in.” – Eastern Region Alumni

“I think just our core values training and definitely—the importance of making sure us, as leaders, that we're okay that we're operating in **balance**. I think you just realize that you can't do this work effectively from an empty cup. If your life is outta balance, if your home life is outta wack then it's going to reflect how you interact with the youth and vice versa. So, I definitely think that's been important for me, being able to put priorities in place to make sure I'm doing things to the best of my capabilities.” – Midwestern Region Alumni

Systems Thinking

City Liaisons, City Coordinators, and alumni continuously discuss how systems thinking helped refine how their organizations approach this kind of work.

“I'm thinking of systems thinking; for our cohort, [that was one of] those ones that kind of everybody galvanized around. I know the system thinking conference was one that was huge and, there was this illustration, [the organizer] had of a feather and [they] made you try to focus that feather that whole exercise. **That one exercise was so beneficial that there were two or three people in our cohort that literally left from there and their whole ministries and what they were doing radically changed.** One guy left his ministry and he started another one using art based off of that illustration. I remember that one was crucial.” – Alumni/City Coordinators

“Systems thinking and being able to walk with people and see everyone as people just because now we are in a place where we're working with youth, but we're working with families holistically. So being able to be there for everyone in their journeys. And **although it's the same journey, it's different perspectives, different outlooks.** The student or the youth can be challenged with something, and the parents are seeing it from a totally different lens. And so being able to be what each one of them need by being present.” – Alumni/City Liaisons

“I think because with the system thinking component, when we went through the whole iceberg, and we just learned how to analyze how we look at stuff and just gaining an understanding of how much we are individually systems working collaboratively in corporate systems and having that framework just helped to process out all of the information that we had learned up to the point. **Honestly, I don't think that there's anything that I would change in terms of the content of the program** because each set of facilitators that we had brought what was needed for the sessions that they took.” – Eastern Region Alumni

“The frameworks that have been mentioned were super helpful because I can just keep going back to those, like the three circles and being able to have that framework constantly. And being able to evaluate ministry as a whole of, ‘Is the strategy too big? We don't have enough relationships or capacity to actually do what we want to do.’ Communicating that to donors or to other people within the organization is super helpful. So the latter, you know, **just having those frameworks that you can just go back to constantly is incredibly helpful.**” –
Midwestern Region Alumni

Asset Mapping

City Liaisons, City Coordinators, and alumni also emphasize the value of asset mapping for identifying resources and creating networks between others that work in the same and adjacent fields.

“I think in terms of what I transfer to other young people directly, the asset mapping piece, definitely, because when students understand historically what has happened in their community and then see those resources, **they have a better idea of the challenges that they face, but that you can make a difference.**” – Alumni/City Liaisons

“The core values, it was a long time ago for me that I went through, but different core values at different times have been helpful. That **balance** one just keeps coming back up, but also **asset mapping** has been helpful with some of the community work we do and now actually need to look at that again with something else that we're working on.” – Alumni/City Liaisons

“There are three or four cohort members who live in and around our community. And so **we really started to try to create a resource network map, like a community assets map**, and just figure out, ‘Okay, what are the assets in our community? What are the resources that we have?’ And we realized that we had a bunch of people with a bunch of skill sets. And I just remember that workshop and all of those things and us really in real time using that right now to create a skill bank, and those things, I know for sure, have been absolutely crucial for us. – Alumni/City Coordinators

Reasons for Not Participating in DVULI

Those who have yet to participate in DVULI outline a variety of reasons for not joining including things like they are too busy, DVULI is not in their city, or they didn't know about it. Knowing the reasons that urban youth-serving leaders have not participated can help DVULI understand how to reach and support the lives of more urban youth-serving leaders in the future.

“**I don't really know that I would have the capacity to add anything else right now.**” – Non-Alumni

“The idea sounds nice but then when I've looked through some of the materials like yeah that doesn't really sound very interesting to me. And then **it is a big commitment when you're just busy.**” – Non-Alumni

“The way I understand it is that there's cities that particularly get picked and I don't know that ours has been picked in a while ... **I'm always more encouraged by an invitation** than by trying to ask for things because I feel like that's a better way of participating with things.” – Non-Alumni

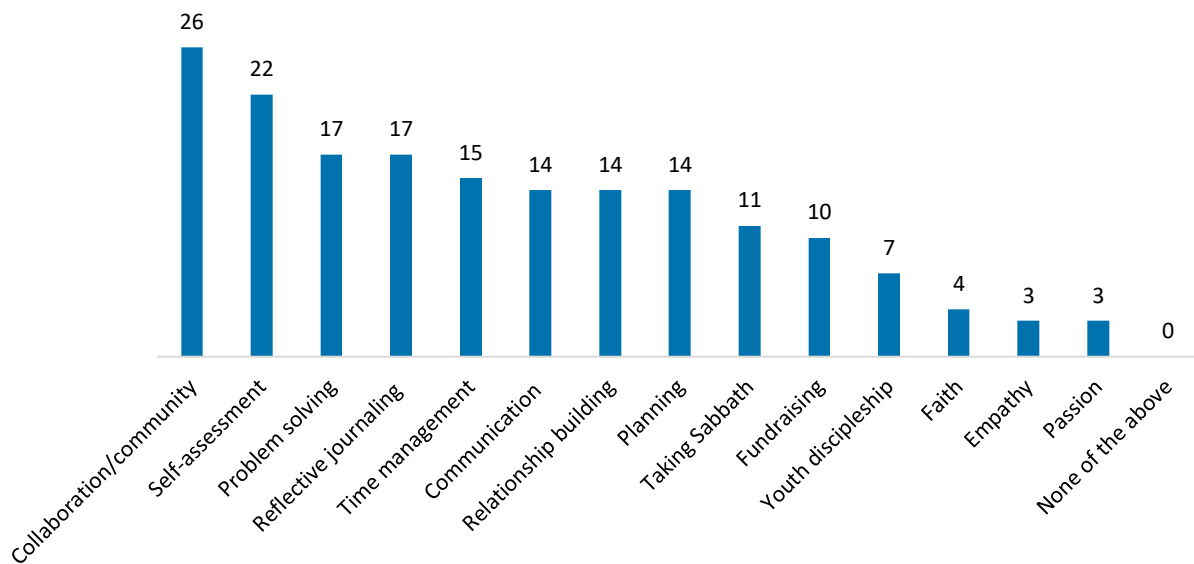
“I haven't participated before because **this is the first time that I heard about it.** So, I think just more marketing or more word of mouth ... I knew of you guys but I didn't know exactly what you guys did, so I think more explaining what you guys are doing would be helpful.” – Non-Alumni

“My only concern being in the state of Michigan, **I have to be very careful of the politics** that go around when it comes down to our young people ... but that's the only reason why I didn't participate because I didn't know a whole lot about the organization.” – Non-Alumni

“I've heard great things about the program. I know that I could learn a lot. I think what was stopping me from doing the program when it came to my city, it was told to me that they come to my city every other year or something like that, so I didn't have a deep understanding of that part. And also **the travel would be hard** for me because I homeschool three little ones, so that's what was keeping me from joining ... I look forward to doing it in the future though if I can.” – Non-Alumni

Objective 2 Data Tables

Skills Developed with DVULI

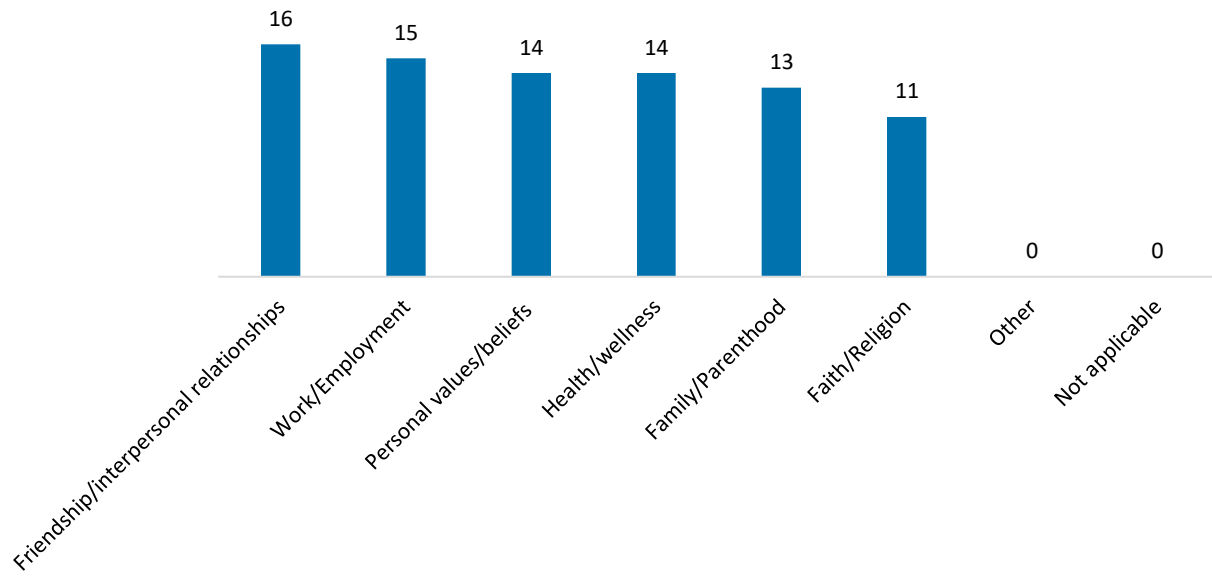


ALUMNI from Focus Groups (n = 27)

What are the top 3 things (trainings, opportunities, and experiences) that DVULI provides that have been most useful for your work?	# Selected
<i>ALUMNI from Focus Groups (n = 27)</i>	
opportunity to get away and reflect	18
opportunity to connect at a deep level with other leaders	15
networking with like-minded leaders from around the country	11
understanding my own unique design	7
understanding that helping others depends first on my own relationship with God	7
practical tools I can use to solve problems	7
hearing from other ministry leaders about real-life challenges	5
continued support/coaching from DVULI liaison	4
feeling cared for and seen by the DVULI team	4
the chance to travel	3
opportunity to earn college credit	0

	Slightly Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Extremely Valuable
<i>ALUMNI from Focus Groups (n = 27)</i>			
How valuable is your DVULI training in your work life?	7%	7%	85%
How valuable is DVULI training in other aspects of your life?	4%	33%	63%

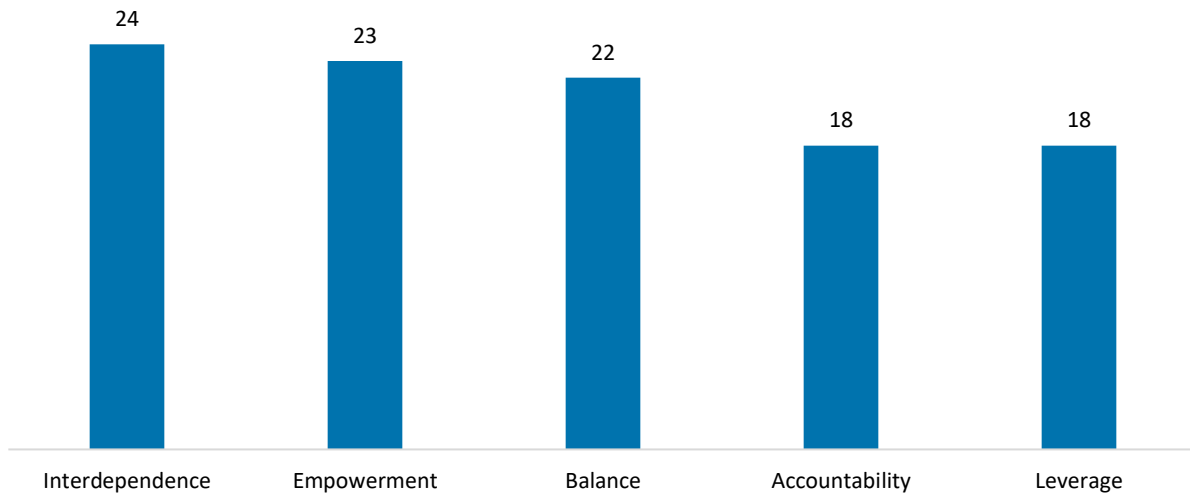
Aspects of Life Influenced by DVULI



ALUMNI from Focus Groups (n = 27)

*Note: only 20 of the 27 alumni answered this question

DVULI Core Values Embodied in Work



ALUMNI from Focus Groups (n = 27)

Objective 3: Identify ways to improve and sustain the DVULI program

Effective Delivery Methods

Around two-thirds of the focus groups participants, alumni and non-alumni, who took the follow-up survey said they have participated in a leadership program outside of DVULI (68%) and would participate in DVULI if a financial incentive was not included (71%).

These urban youth practitioners learn best through in-person (46%) or hybrid, online and in-person (46%) experiences. Most participants are kinesthetic (82%) or visual (73%) learners; but many learn best through auditory (50%) and reading/writing (50%) styles.

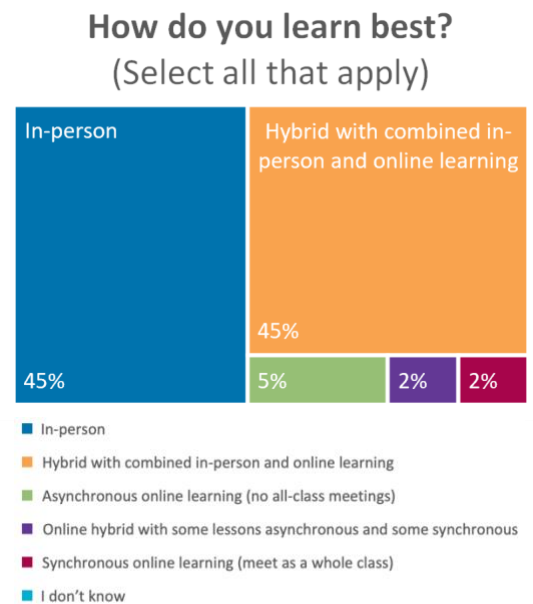
Most alumni who participated in the focus groups indicated they are *very satisfied* with almost all aspects of the program including the cohort model (85%), the time commitment/length (82%), and the number of national conferences (82%). The only aspect of the program that fewer than two-thirds of participants were *very satisfied* with was the amount of pre-coursework (59%).

Likewise, most of these alumni identify the DVULI training content as *very relevant* to the following areas of youth ministry—ministry assessment (85%), core value in health and change (85%), personal assessment (78%) and community youth development (78%). The only area of youth ministry that fewer than one-half of these alumni find DVULI’s training *very relevant* to is accelerating change (48%).

Recommendations for Program Expansion

Collaboration Opportunities

Urban youth workers identify the need for additional opportunities to connect with others. City Coordinators and Liaisons identify the need for space to connect with other alumni beyond the national conferences both locally and virtually because this will allow for practitioners to make a greater impact on their communities. The value and need for additional support and collaboration is echoed by alumni who feel that trainings are best put into practice when peers learn from one another. Likewise, a handful of alumni mentioned the desire for a database or centralized system to learn about and connect with other alumni and organizations doing similar work. This is because many cohort members are no longer in youth work and practitioners have no way to find out who else is doing this kind of work. Non-alumni also discussed the potential growth that can happen in communities where practitioners work together.



“If there was some way for us to have more opportunities to get real moments with organizations and ministries who've been able to put these things in practice, I think it would be beneficial. The two national conferences bring together all of the cohorts in that year, but if there was a way for us to be able to connect, to have a space where we can communicate with another cohort, maybe going through some of these things together. Have some kind of virtual component where we can continue to build on some of those relationships in a more formalized way. After we leave, we're all like, ‘Man, we would love to communicate with one another.’ They give us the directory, but if there were a monthly or bimonthly or quarterly gathering where, let's say, Chicago and Oakland can come together and just be able to update one another, share what's happening ministry-wise ... I think it could be good because you could have another set of eyes that would be present.” – Alumni/City Coordinators

“I envision DVULI in every city. And what I mean by that is that this work is so important to urban youth leaders, and I've even had pastors that even ask me, ‘Can you do groups with pastors?’ I think if there was a DVULI hub in each of our cities that connected to each other, and what I mean by that is this work, all of the alumni that have gone through it have been elevated and benefited and transformed because of it. But if there was a way that it could be intentionally hubbed in every city, and I hope this is making sense ... So **imagine [a small subset of DVULI] in every city**, and they're talking to each other and then it spirals and then that spirals and then [there's] more impact, a greater impact. So I hope I painted this picture because it just really came to me in a visual. I think then we're going to be able to impact more at a ground level than what we may be trying to do now with alumni.” – Alumni/City Liaisons

“I feel like **there is a need to address the fear that comes with forming relationships and/or taking the risk of partnering and collaborating.** There was this fear, ‘Is this organization or is this individual going to outshine my organization or my program if I collaborate with them and, or if I do, am I going to get taken advantage of? Or is there going to be some regret in the midst of partnering or collaborating?’” – Western Region Alumni

“There are [DVULI alumni] who've been doing this work well, we just have to find them. **I would recommend a site visit to a local ministry for people to be able to see hands-on practitioners and kind of get a tour of their space, hear questions about challenges, be able to ask questions.** Logistically, our conferences aren't so huge where that's not possible, right? I mean I've been on staff with Young Life, and when we go to an all-staff celebration every four years, they literally have all of the charter buses in Orlando kind of on lockdown because they need them for the 6,000 people that they're taking to and from for the stuff that they do.” – Midwestern Region Alumni

“If there's some way that they could help screen or find people that you really rock with, that would be amazing. And then how to do that locally ... but if there's some way to screen hearts behind it on a national level, local level, I don't know how you'd do it, but that'd be sweet.” –Midwestern Region Alumni

“I believe some ministry with the professional development within working with other organizations, **like a professional development where we're able to train one another** on some things that we are noticing in our organization and that better helped us. And then in return, doing the same thing. I think that it's not a normal training that is usually done, but I believe in our ministry that that's something that could be beneficial for us to take from one another different benefits that we have.” – Non-Alumni

“I'm really valuing the **community partnership**, the ways we've kind of partnered with other mentoring organizations to work together. I feel great strength in that. I know we can't do it on our own. So that can be some of the times when, in those moments when we feel like isolated or feel like there's so many needs, I felt like the greatest thing to overcome that has been like partnering with other groups.” – Non-Alumni

“Maybe three months ago I went to a conference, and I was able to meet with a lot of other organizations who are focusing on the same thing, who have the same mission and purpose. And so for me, honestly, that was a driving thing for me. **It opened my eyes more to want to go harder for it, but then also just seeing that you know, you're not alone in this** and so I was able to make different connections, and now we're partnering with community centers and other organizations who's able to provide space for us or whatever we are able to do because of our volunteers not being here, we're able to ask this organization, ‘Do you want to partner with us, with this program to help our students in this area? And in return we can do something for your organization.’” – Non-Alumni

“I don't know if you've heard of Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit. But yes, I've taken several classes there that I felt have been relevant to ministry and one of the biggest reasons why was **there were so many people from the area that had years of experience in urban ministry**, maybe 20, 30 years, that became my colleagues and became the people that really taught me a lot.” – Non-Alumni

Mental Wellness, Self-Care, and Trauma-Informed Response

City Liaisons identify self-care and inner peace as important parts of DVULI that should be expanded upon for future iterations of the program. Alumni reiterate the need for more training on self-care and how to provide trauma-informed care in their work. Practitioners in the field who have not participated in DVULI emphasize the need of urban youth workers to

practice self-care and consider their own wellness, which often falls to the sidelines because of the indefinite and immediate needs of the youth in their communities.

“We do pieces in DVULI on self-care, but **I think a stronger approach to self-care that includes some understanding around trauma informed care [would be beneficial]**. Trauma is not going away. And the nature of our work is always experiencing vicarious trauma. So, I think if we’re not more intentional on breathing and mindfulness, I think that piece needs to be amplified more. I know in NC One there’s an amazing presentation on therapy. When I went through DVULI in 2010 that didn’t exist, so I’m extremely grateful for it.” – Alumni/City Liaisons

“**One thing I think would be super helpful in training youth leaders in is just how to personally grieve, soul-care type things like that.** I mean, recently in our context we've lost a number of amazing young people to gun violence and it's taken a toll on teachers, principals, and the community at large. And I'm just finding myself personally learning how to grieve. But just soul-care type personal stuff. But then being able to take that as well as equip volunteers and other leaders in that same type of stuff.” – Midwestern Region Alumni

“I think the helpers need support too. We really do. The faith-based support is a great bonus to it. But there might be some challenges when you find out, for example, you spoke to a young man who was 18-years-old, and in the next day, he's gone due to gun violence. And those situations will certainly require some support because that is a form of trauma for you as well because of that connection. And so I see I was able to get that support over the years with the support of a lot of the faith-based partners we had working with us at that time. It is a challenging thing. **You can't do it all, but you sure can appreciate the support from partners who can help carry the load in some way.**” – Non-Alumni

“I just came back from the Christian Community Development Association conference and just the theme was about wellbeing. And I look around, and I think so **many people in youth ministry just need to focus more on their own wellbeing, including myself**, but just our own spiritual health and doing things just to pour into ourselves because we're pouring so much into these kids because we love them. But sometimes we just need to step back and take a break. I think it's a barrier to ourselves because we don't want to let them down, and we work so hard for them, we don't want to stop for ourselves.” – Non-Alumni

Improving Post-Program Material

When asked what else would be beneficial in supporting urban youth, practitioners share the need for continued education and support after completing the process with DVULI because there are few organizations that provide professional development opportunities for leaders in

this field. A few alumni also discuss a need for better information sharing from DVULI about resources available and data coming out about the state of work with urban youth.

“I would probably add some sort of annual training thing where we could get together. Maybe it's not even annual, bi-annual, something like that. **Where they've got continuing education credits** that you get for a lot of jobs and different things ... I think that would be a beneficial thing. More of a '201 grad school level' of DVULI.” – Eastern Region Alumni

“I feel maybe there should be more local workshops to do two things. I feel like since I don't know my cohort, our graduation was set for 2020, and we had plans for collaboration and things, but **I feel like once graduation happened, there was no more accountability from DVULI for our city cohorts to work together** and actually do projects. And I think that was the whole purpose of the program to have city impact, and there was no accountability for our city cohort to work together on that project we were supposed to be working on.” – Western Region Alumni

“I'm not sure how effective the recommendations [are] when we send them out and give them to everyone. I don't know if those go past people just reading them, but **if we do recommend a resource, it'd be cool if they could send it.** I've gone back and been like, 'Oh man, those are great resources.' But I know sometimes we can be financially strapped. Some of our members may not necessarily read their recommendations, but if there was an opportunity and there was a resource that was really crucial in those months that they could just make that available, I think that'd be really cool, too.” – Alumni/City Coordinators

“[One suggestion would be] **leveraging the resources of DeVos, to be able to produce, a national as well as the localized version of the state of youth work and what the recommendations are around how to do it better.**” – Midwestern Region Alumni

Practical Skills and Concepts

Various alumni and non-alumni express the need for trainings that help build a variety of practical skills that address the day-to-day operational aspects of youth ministry, but also help to meet the needs of urban youth-serving leaders as outlined in Objective 1.

“[I'd like to see] **training that really helps to understand and unpack those generational differences** and how that connects to our messaging and any content that we're wanting to translate for them to help it better.” – Western Region Alumni

“The only thing that I would add when you talk about skills is teaching children how to transition ... them learning how to actually communicate and not just become reactive.” – Eastern Region Alumni

“I don't know if I would add this in the actual 15 months, but I got the great opportunity to do a financial workshop afterwards ... **that was something that was really beneficial to go through the financial aspect** because working in a nonprofit or in a church setting, that's something that's always in the back of your mind, especially having just come through a pandemic where you saw so many ministries crumble because they didn't have financial footing.” – Eastern Region Alumni

“[I'd like to see] more de-escalation training ... and I think more access to trauma training ... I'm trained in trauma because I'm a foster parent and I feel like I had resources there but I feel like I don't have a lot of resources that I could use to develop my leaders.” – Non-Alumni

“I went to grad school because I didn't feel like the training that I was getting was preparing me to work with the kids that I was working with. I think a lot of time, when I was in ministry, I was going a lot based off of my natural skill or giftedness ... **But as far as like formal training, no I had to go to grad school for that.**” – Non-Alumni

“[I'd like] some type of community or some type of training to be able to know what the resources are and how to go about it so that I can be successful in my position in serving our students.” – Non-Alumni

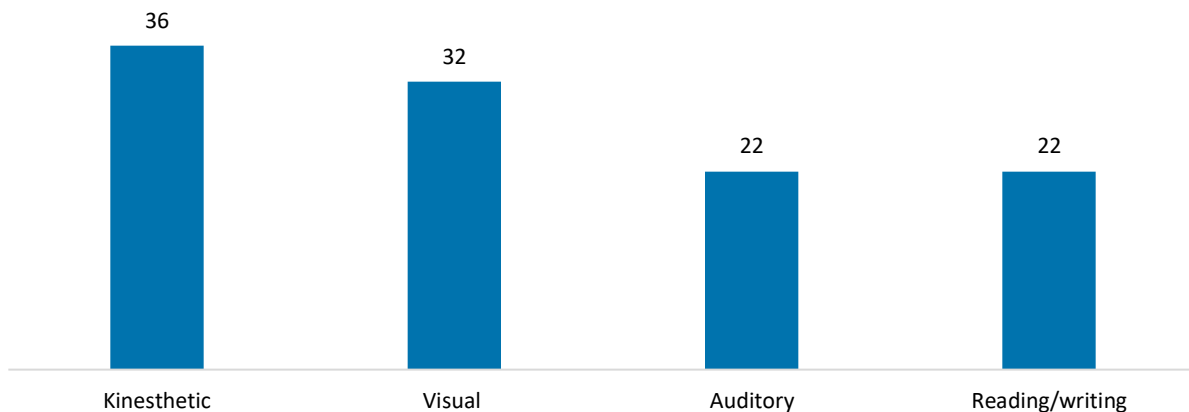
“I did a cohort through Fuller Seminary. It was like an urban empowerment cohort and they took urban youth workers for three years and we, I'll never forget it because we actually went and had class in places where there was like thriving ministry ... just being able to **actually be in a place where community development work is succeeding** and see it, I think that experiential piece really built me as a leader.” – Non-Alumni

Objective 3 Data Tables

<i>ALL Focus Group Participants (n=44)</i>	Yes	No	I don't know
Have you participated in leadership programs outside of DVULI?	68%	32%	-
Would you participate in DVULI if a financial incentive was not included?	71%	11%	18%

How do you learn best? Select all that apply. <i>ALL Focus Group Participants (n=44)</i>	# Selected
In-person	20
Hybrid with combined in-person and online learning	20
Asynchronous online learning (no all-class meetings)	2
Online hybrid with some lessons asynchronous and some synchronous	1
Synchronous online learning (meet as a whole class)	0
I don't know	1

Type of Learner



ALUMNI from Focus Groups (n=27)

How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of the DVULI program? <i>ALUMNI from Focus Groups (n=27)</i>	Not Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Time commitment/length of the program	-	19%	82%
Amount of pre-coursework	4%	37%	59%
Content of pre-coursework	4%	19%	78%
Having a cohort/cohort model	-	15%	85%
Number of local workshops	-	26%	74%
Number of national conferences	-	19%	82%

How relevant is DVULI's training content to youth ministry in each of the following areas? <i>ALUMNI from Focus Groups (n=27)</i>	A Little Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Very Relevant
Personal Assessment	4%	19%	78%
Ministry Assessment	4%	11%	85%
Core Value in Health and Change	4%	15%	82%
Community Youth Development	7%	15%	78%
Scenario Planning	7%	22%	70%
System Speaking	7%	30%	63%
Resource Networking	7%	22%	70%
Accelerating Change	4%	48%	48%

REFLECTION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

To the researchers on your project, it is clear that DVULI is a program that has and will continue to have lasting impacts on the cities it is connected to and on the practitioners it supports. Within hours of sending out invitations for regional focus groups, we reached capacity and had to double the number of seats available. Alumni showed so much interest in participating that we created an additional supplemental survey to give others the opportunity to share their experiences with us. Many alumni also ended the focus groups by thanking leadership at DVULI for providing them a professional development opportunity that is far and few between in this line of work.

While the incentive undoubtedly encouraged individuals to participate in the focus groups, we would not have reached capacity for each alumni focus group twice, had 52 people take a survey they were not compensated for, and make numerous referrals for non-alumni practitioner interviews if DVULI were not having a continued impact on the lives of program graduates. For urban youth practitioners who often get the short end of the stick in terms of resourcing and professional development opportunities, DVULI is a hidden gem.

Despite the lack of resources and support that urban youth workers receive, these leaders stay because many feel called to do this work. DVULI is helping urban youth practitioners create safe spaces for younger generations. Alumni are more confident in their skills and abilities necessary to do this kind of work than non-alumni practitioners. Likewise, DVULI alumni are constantly referring to and sharing their knowledge about their trainings including systems thinking and asset mapping.

DVULI should be commended for creating a program that has shaped the lives of so many graduates, professionally and personally. Moving forward, this program should expand their curriculum to trainings on self-care, trauma-informed care, cultural competencies, and fundraising in their curriculum. DVULI should also consider expanding their networking opportunities by creating tools that help alumni collaborate and offering more frequent, localized networking opportunities (like the national conferences). With more opportunities for additional trainings and increased networks for localized collaboration between practitioners, there is no telling the kinds of progress that urban youth leaders can make in their communities.

Importantly, the total 99 survey responses and 10 focus groups in this report do not tell the full story—the experiences of these participants may not reflect the experiences of all alumni from all cities. However, their perspectives offer important insights into developing effective leadership programming for urban youth practitioners.

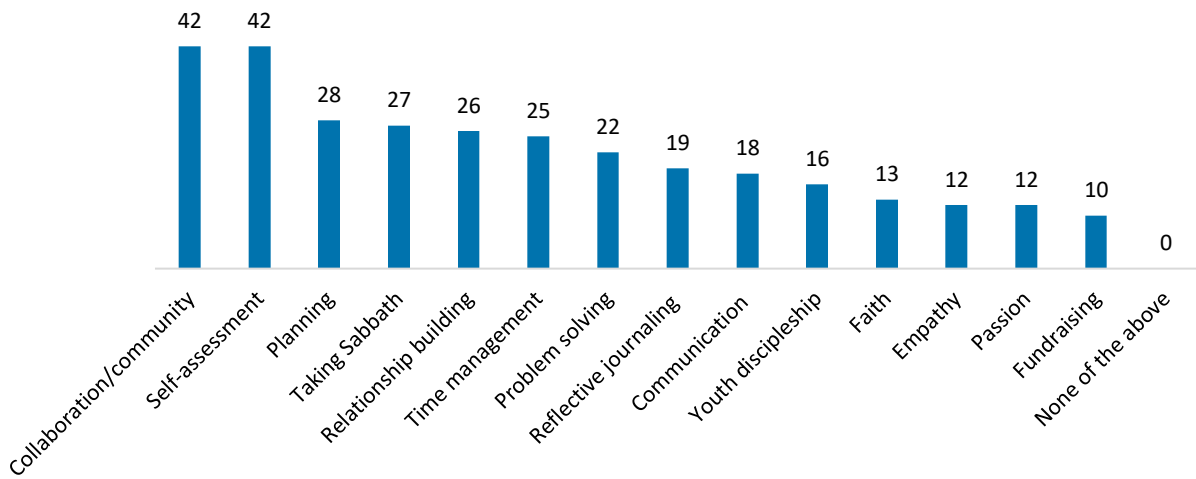
ADDITIONAL SURVEY DATA

Because the interest in the request for focus group participants was so great, Springtide also created a version of the survey for alumni who were not able to participate in a focus group. This survey was essentially the same as the focus group survey, but also included open-response questions that mirrored our focus group questions, so that these alumni could share their point of view as desired. Data from the 52 people who took this additional survey are shared below.

How important are the following skills for urban youth leaders? <i>ALUMNI from Additional Survey (n = 52)</i>	Not at all	Somewhat	A great deal
Communication	-	4%	96%
Collaboration/community	-	8%	92%
Problem Solving	-	12%	89%
Empathy	-	10%	90%
Time management	-	14%	87%
Relationship building	-	2%	98%
Faith	-	17%	83%
Passion	4%	25%	71%
Self-awareness	-	10%	90%
Reflective journaling	10%	75%	15%
Planning	-	25%	75%
Fundraising	2%	60%	39%
Trauma care	4%	39%	58%
Taking Sabbath	-	23%	77%
Youth discipleship	-	21%	79%

After participating in DVULI, how confident do you feel in each of the following areas: <i>ALUMNI from Additional Survey (n = 52)</i>	Not at all Confident	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident
Sustaining myself as a leader	-	17%	83%
Sustaining myself as an individual	-	23%	77%
Evaluating my ministry's strategy	2%	40%	58%
Accessing local resources to fulfill my ministry's strategy	4%	54%	42%
Empowering the youth I serve	-	33%	67%
Working interdependently with others in my community who share a vision for youth	4%	31%	65%
Analyzing the systems that affect youth in my community	2%	46%	52%
Leveraging healthy change for the youth in my community	2%	42%	56%
Designing and employing future action plans	4%	35%	62%

Skills Developed with DVULI

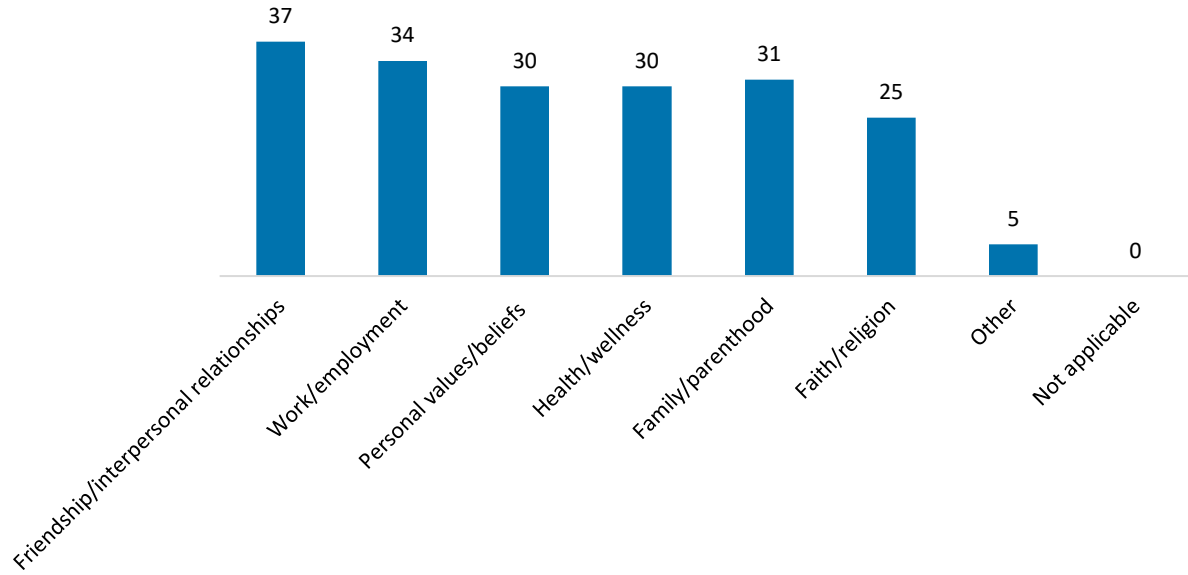


ALUMNI from Additional Survey (n = 52)

What are the top 3 things (trainings, opportunities, and experiences) that DVULI provides that have been most useful for your work? <i>ALUMNI from Additional Survey (n = 52)</i>	# Selected
Opportunity to connect at a deep level with other leaders	32
Opportunity to get away and reflect	27
Networking with like-minded leaders from around the country	18
Practical tools I can use to solve problems	17
Understanding my own unique design	16
Hearing from other ministry leaders about real-life challenges	16
Feeling cared for and seen by the DVULI team	16
Understanding that helping others depends first on my own relationship with God	10
Opportunity to earn college credit	1
Continued support/coaching from DVULI liaison	1
The chance to travel	1

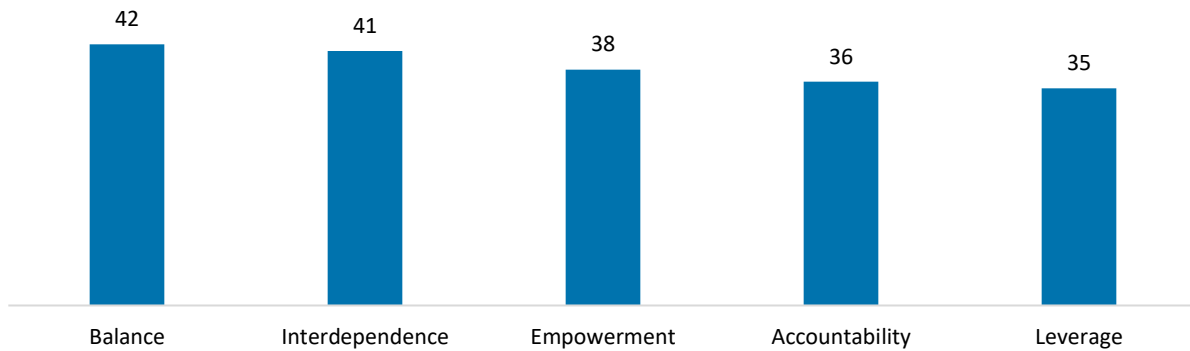
<i>ALUMNI from Additional Survey (n = 52)</i>	Not Valuable	Slightly Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Extremely Valuable
How valuable is your DVULI training in your work life?	-	-	48%	52%
How valuable is DVULI training in other aspects of your life?	2%	8%	42%	48%

Aspects of Life Influenced by DVULI



ALUMNI from Additional Survey (n = 52)

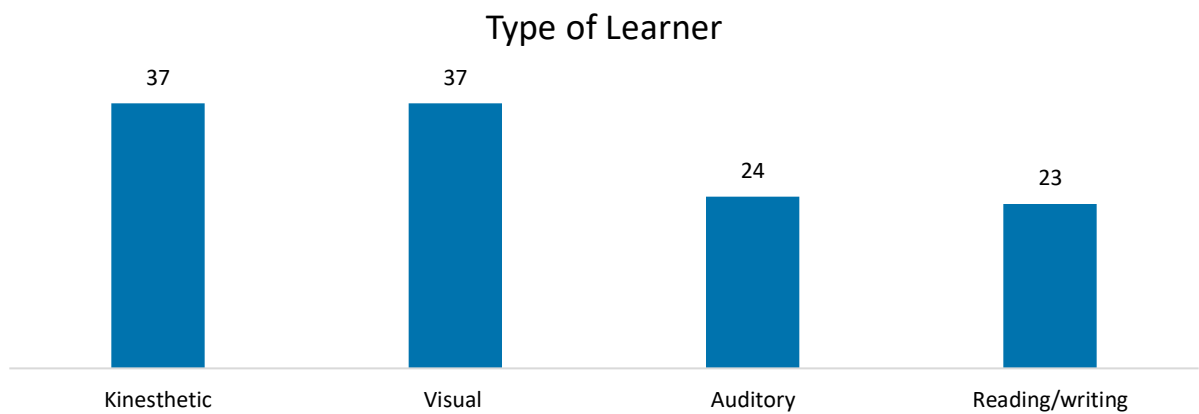
DVULI Core Values Embodied in Work



ALUMNI from Additional Survey (n = 52)

<i>ALUMNI from Additional Survey (n = 52)</i>	Yes	No	I don't know
Have you participated in leadership programs outside of DVULI?	89%	12%	-
Would you participate in DVULI if a financial incentive was not included?	65%	6%	29%

How do you learn best? Select all that apply. <i>ALUMNI from Additional Survey (n = 52)</i>	# Selected
In-person	31
Hybrid with combined in-person and online learning	15
Synchronous online learning (meet as a whole class)	3
Asynchronous online learning (no all-class meetings)	2
Online hybrid with some lessons asynchronous and some synchronous	1



ALUMNI from Additional Survey (n = 52)

How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of the DVULI program? <i>ALUMNI from Additional Survey (n = 52)</i>	Not Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Time commitment/length of the program	-	15%	85%
Amount of pre-coursework	2%	23%	75%
Content of pre-coursework	2%	19%	79%
Having a cohort/cohort model	-	10%	90%
Number of local workshops	-	15%	85%
Number of national conferences	2%	14%	85%

How relevant is DVULI's training content to youth ministry in each of the following areas? <i>ALUMNI from Additional Survey (n = 52)</i>	Not At All Relevant	A Little Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Very Relevant
Personal Assessment	-	4%	27%	69%
Ministry Assessment	-	2%	31%	67%
Core Value in Health and Change	-	8%	35%	58%
Community Youth Development	-	6%	31%	64%
Scenario Planning	-	4%	46%	50%
System Speaking	4%	6%	37%	54%
Resource Networking	-	6%	42%	52%
Accelerating Change	-	12%	46%	42%