Fund for Shared Insight: Listen for Good

2018 Cohort at 6 Months

September 24, 2018

The Listen for Good (L4G) 2018 cohort includes 46 grantee organizations supported by 11 cofounders and was the third set of organizations to engage in the initiative. Similar to the 2017 cohort, this cohort received technical assistance (TA) from a group of 9 L4G technical staff providing support, guidance, and information throughout the process.[1] To capture insights about the progress and experiences of these organizations with L4G thus far, ORS Impact administered a survey of each organization's program manager six months into the initiative. Of the 46 organizations, 38 responded to the survey (83%). This report presents findings from the survey along with information on how the L4G team is responding to findings and adapting grantee support, concluding with considerations for moving forward.

Impacts of Listen for Good

We surveyed the 2018 L4G cohort on several areas of impact we would expect to see 6 months into the initiative based on past cohorts' experiences. Specifically, we explored impacts in leader and staff commitment to feedback practice, technical ability to implement feedback practice, and perceptions about general L4G benefits including how it supports other measurement efforts in organizations.

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[1] The TA model for the 2018 and 2017 cohorts were similar with only minimal in variations in the voluntary webinar offerings. Both cohorts received support and assistance from a group of TA providers, although the 2017 had 7 providers instead of 9. This is different from the 2016 cohort who received TA from only two providers.

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Commitment to feedback practices continues to improve with participation in L4G, and this increase was significantly greater for the 2018 cohort compared to prior cohorts.

The 2018 cohort rated both staff and leader commitment to feedback practice significantly higher at six months into L4G compared to before participating in the initiative (p<.01 for both staff and leaders).[2] This increase is consistent with findings from prior cohorts. However, there were two significant differences between the 2018 and 2017 cohorts:

1. The size of the increases in commitment from before L4G to the 6-month mark were similar for both staff and leaders, which is a slight deviation from the 2017 cohort, who reported higher commitment levels from leaders compared to staff at six months.

2. As shown in Figure 1, organizational leaders' commitment to feedback practice in the 2018 cohort increased at a significantly greater rate than it did in the 2017 cohort (p=.07). This is likely because the 2018 cohort rated leader commitment before L4G significantly lower than the 2017 cohort but made greater increases to achieve statistically similar ratings at six months.

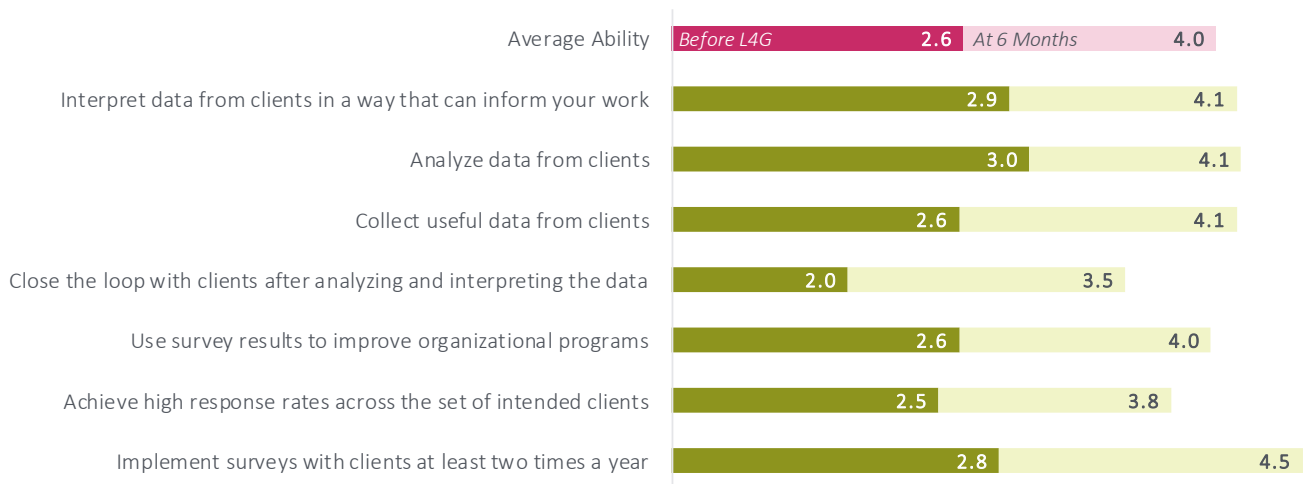Figure 1 | Change in Leader Commitment Over Time by Cohort*

Before L4G   →   At 6 Months

2018 Cohort (n=36)   3.3   4.1

2017 Cohort (n=57)   3.9   4.5

1   5

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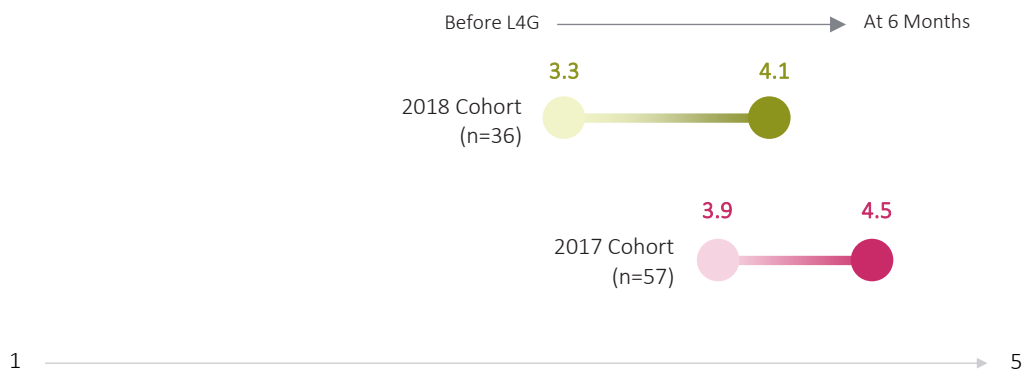
[2] Statistical significance of findings is reported as significant at the following levels: * denotes p<.01, ** denotes p<.05, and *** denotes p<.01.

Ability to implement feedback practices increases with participation in L4G and becomes less variable over time as the feedback ability playing field is leveled.

The 2018 cohort significantly increased their self-reported ability to implement feedback from before participating in L4G to six months into the initiative. As reflected in Figure 2, this increase in ability was statistically significant for all of the seven individual feedback items we measured, as well as the scale level average of the items ($p<.01$ for both).

Figure 2 | Change in Feedback Ability at the Item- and Scale-Level Over Time***

	Before L4G	At 6 Months
Average Ability	2.6	4.0
Interpret data from clients in a way that can inform your work	2.9	4.1
Analyze data from clients	3.0	4.1
Collect useful data from clients	2.6	4.1
Close the loop with clients after analyzing and interpreting the data	2.0	3.5
Use survey results to improve organizational programs	2.6	4.0
Achieve high response rates across the set of intended clients	2.5	3.8
Implement surveys with clients at least two times a year	2.8	4.5

Interestingly, grantees identified achieving high response rates as the area that is going least well in administering surveys, and open-ended data also showed this area as a challenge. This theme is consistent with data from past cohorts. However, grantees also reported significant increases in their ability to achieve a high response rate.[3] One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that expectations about what entails a "sufficiently" high response rate may not be clear, so that grantees may be improving their ability while achieving response rates that do not meet their expectations. L4G staff will continue monitoring response rates across cohorts to determine where and how to best support grantees.
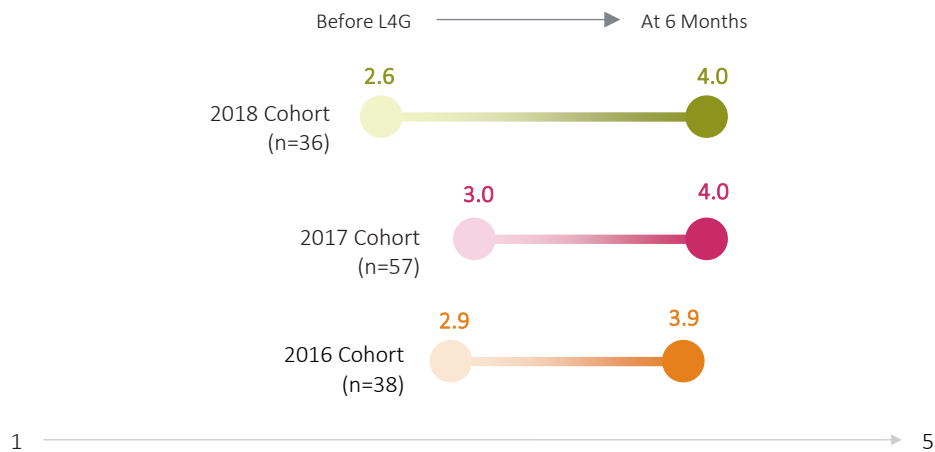
When analyzing results across L4G cohorts, we discovered variation in feedback practice ability scores before participating in L4G. Specifically, **the 2018 cohort rated**

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[3] L4G staff's recent analysis of the 2017 cohort's response rates show that, on average, grantees are achieving a 50% response rate.

their ability to implement feedback practice before L4G significantly lower than the 2017 and 2016 cohorts, but their ability scores increased at a significantly greater rate (*p*=.07). In other words, the 2018 cohort started lower in their feedback ability before L4G than the prior two cohorts but **made larger jumps** to achieve statistically similar ability ratings at six months into the program. This pattern is true at the scale level and also emerged when looking at feedback ability at the item level for two items in particular: achieving high response rates (*p*=.04) and collecting useful data (*p*=.02).

Figure 3 | Change in Feedback Ability Over Time by Cohort*

Before L4G ⟶ At 6 Months

	Before L4G	At 6 Months
2018 Cohort (n=36)	2.6	4.0
2017 Cohort (n=57)	3.0	4.0
2016 Cohort (n=38)	2.9	3.9

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We found this theme of leveling the playing field again when looking at variability across organizations within the 2018 cohort. Survey data showed greater variability in self-reported ability to implement feedback practice across organizations before L4G involvement compared to six months into the initiative. This pattern is consistent across all three cohorts. Altogether, these findings suggest that, despite differences in feedback ability before L4G, **participation in the initiative is helping to level the playing field of technical ability to implement feedback practices as organizations reach statistically similar and stronger feedback abilities over time**.

Figure 4 | Variability in Feedback Ability Over Time

Average
Technical
Ability
Before L4G

2.6

4.0

Average
Technical
Ability at 6
Months
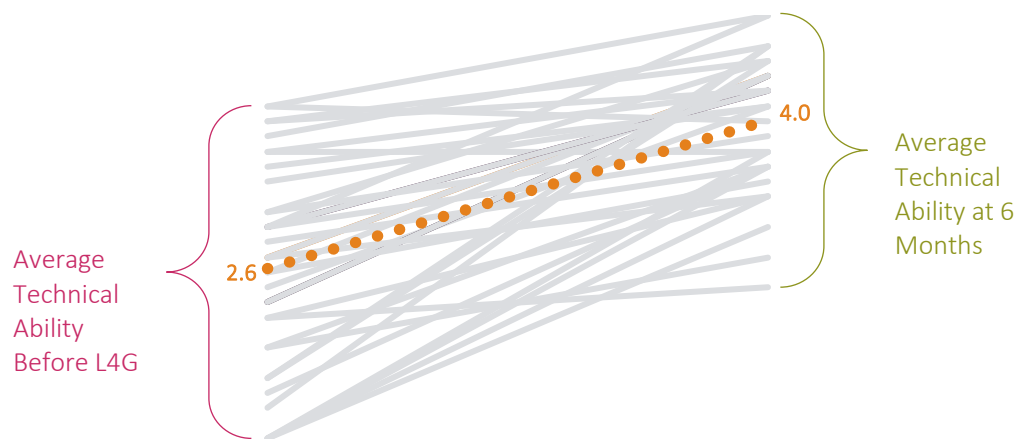
Organizations also described other beneficial impacts from participating in the L4G initiative.

Open-ended data revealed that a number of organizations found participating in L4G beneficial particularly around improving their feedback systems (n=13), better understanding client experiences (n=6), and refining their focus to be more client inclusive (n=5). Some organizations also commented that feedback practice supports other kinds of organizational measurement efforts (n=6) and strengthens their organizational feedback culture (n=3).

> *It supports our other measurement efforts. We have had the discussions over outcomes and feedback and see the need for both.*

> *In terms of support, building a feedback culture is where we need to be, and I'm grateful we have L4G support to get us there.*

Listen for Good Support Model

The 2018 cohort found specific components of L4G surveys more helpful than past cohorts.

A key component of the L4G feedback model focuses on assisting organizations in using semi-standardized surveys to gather perceptual feedback from the people they seek to help. As part of our ongoing evaluation, we assess how specific components

of the L4G surveys are working for organizations and the extent to which they provide actionable data. The specific survey components evaluated at six months and reported here are verbatims, benchmark data, and customizable questions.[4]

Both the 2018 and 2017 cohorts rated the use of custom questions as highly useful for generating actionable data. In addition, survey results show that **the 2018 cohort found verbatims (i.e., qualitative data) to be significantly more helpful for generating actionable findings than the 2017 cohort** (p=.02). Likewise, **using benchmarked data has gone significantly better for the 2018 cohort than the 2017 cohort at six months** (p=.01)[5].

Both verbatims and benchmarks were rated as less useful than other survey tools by past cohorts, prompting L4G to implement additional and more intentional TA support in these areas. Although it is too early to tell how effective the model changes were, increases in ratings for benchmarks and verbatims may be early signs of improvement in the L4G support model. Moreover, benchmarks naturally improve over time as continued data collection from grantees informs benchmarked estimates, making them increasingly more robust, reliable, and useful for organizations.

Figure 5 | Helpfulness and Ease of Use of Survey Elements[6]

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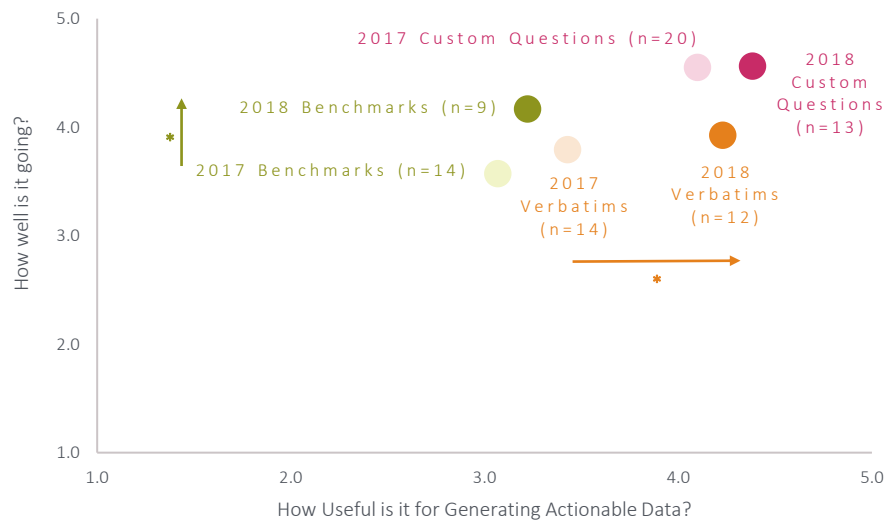
[4] We also assessed the use of NPS and data segmenting but do not have data for these items over time.

[5] The sample sizes for this comparison (N_{2018}=13, N_{2017}=16) are small. We will continue to monitor the comparison over time as additional data is collected from both cohorts.

[6] * p<.05. Sample sizes reflect only participants who provided data for both helpfulness and ease of use.

The 2018 cohort reported predominantly positive experiences with the Listen for Good model.

In addition to the survey, the core components of L4G's value proposition includes technical assistance and a partnership with Survey Monkey. We asked the 2018 cohort to rate their experiences with both components, and the likelihood of recommending the L4G initiative to similar organizations. Across these data points, the majority of organizations reported having predominantly positive experiences in the initiative thus far. For instance, the 2018 L4G cohort indicated having positive experiences with all of the TA touch points (consistent with past cohorts) and in using Survey Monkey (i.e., collecting data, designing surveys, and the overall user experience with the platform).

Using the same NPS methodology that L4G organizations use with their clients, 78% of the 2018 cohort were identified as NPS promoters, 22% were identified as passives, and 0% were identified as detractors, resulting in an NPS score of 78. This NPS score is slightly higher than ratings from the 2016 cohort at 24 months, but not to a statistically significant degree. However, it is notable that there are no detractors among the 2018 cohort.

In open-ended comments, more than half of responding organizations found L4G good at providing the support needed to successfully implement feedback loops (n=18 of 32 responding organizations). Other minor themes in the open-ended data suggest that the L4G initiative is good at elevating client voice (n=3) and equipping organizations with the skills needed to effectively collect meaningful feedback (n=3).

A small number of organizations thought that L4G could do better at helping grantees connect with other grantees of similar issue areas or those serving similar populations to share learnings (n=3), and some organizations would have benefited from more TA and resources (n=5). Across all of the L4G support model survey questions, there were no consistent patterns of differences by TA provider.

Organizations see a connection between feedback and equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), but few are segmenting data by demographic information and many are struggling with translating surveys to new languages.

Open-ended data suggests that most of the 2018 cohort organizations see a direct connection between feedback and EDI, specifically through data disaggregation,

addressing differing needs among subgroups, infusing client voice into program design processes, lifting up the voices of those least heard, and improving organizational culture around EDI. Four organizations also mentioned considerations about client inclusion in the survey process itself. Nonetheless, there are noteworthy challenges around EDI-related efforts for this cohort. Specifically, only 44% of responding program managers indicated that they are currently segmenting data by subgroups.

Moreover, translating surveys into different languages was the most challenging dimension of survey design for organizations. Despite 23 organizations responding that they are currently translating the survey into other languages (62% of the people who responded to the survey and at least 50% of the entire 2018 cohort), this was the lowest-rated item when asked how well different aspects of survey design are going. Open-ended comments about survey translation in responses from the 2018 cohort also referenced Survey Monkey not having access to a particular language, not allowing the ability to modify translated questions, and using a translation that is too formal or not culturally appropriate. While we measured this item quantitatively for the first time in the 2018 survey, the finding is consistent with open-ended feedback from past cohorts. These consistent findings have prompted L4G staff to continue improving survey translations for different languages while acknowledging the inherent difficulties in accommodating survey language into inclusive translated versions that suit all grantees' clients.

Differences in Impact and Experiences by Organizational Size

We also assessed differences in the impacts of the L4G initiative and the experience of grantees involved by the size of those organizations, as measured by annual budget. Specifically, we looked at differences between organizations with annual budgets less than $5 million compared to those with annual budgets above $5 million. Two consistent patterns emerged when looking at these group differences.

First, we found that organizations with budgets less than $5 million rated their feedback practice ability before L4G significantly lower than organizations with budgets above $5 million. This finding was statistically significant at the scale level (p=.05) and for two of the items (analyzing data from clients, p=.03; and, interpreting

data from clients in a way that can inform their work, *p*=.07). It is possible that organizations with smaller budgets have greater room for development in terms of their ability to implement feedback practices compared to larger organizations.

Second, we found that organizations with budgets less than $5 million generally had more positive experiences with aspects of the L4G support model. For example, organizations with annual budgets less than $5 million found each of the TA provider touch points to be more helpful than organizations with larger annual budgets. Likewise, smaller organizations also reported having better experiences with several dimensions of using Survey Monkey as a feedback tool compared to organizations with larger budgets. These differences were statistically significant for each of the TA touch points and Survey Monkey dimensions (*p* ranged from <.01 to .1).

Implications and Considerations

How can L4G continue to support and encourage efforts toward equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)? Findings from the 2018 cohort suggest that organizations see a connection between EDI and feedback practice, but face challenges when putting those values into practice. We saw this in the low percentage of organizations disaggregating data and high percentage struggling to adequately translate surveys into new languages. That said, given how early it is in the grant cycle for these organizations, it is entirely possible that lower percentages of organizations segmenting data simply means that few organizations are far enough along to engage in that level of data analysis. Nonetheless, these findings raise some considerations about the role of L4G in supporting and guiding organizations in pursuing EDI through their feedback practice. What is L4G's role in the EDI-related efforts of participating grantees? How can L4G continue to support organizations in segmenting data and implementing inclusive feedback practices particularly from an online-based platform?

To what extent and how can L4G leverage online resources to sustain sufficient patterns of growth in organizations' ability to implement high-quality feedback practice? L4G's goal is to support organizations in implementing high-quality feedback practice so that they can make changes to increase programmatic and organizational effectiveness. Past findings show that as organizations' ability to implement feedback practice increases, they are more likely to report higher impacts on program effectiveness. Moreover, data from the 2018 cohort shows that L4G is

successfully increasing ability for all types of organizations, thereby potentially increasing the likelihood of self-reported impacts on program effectiveness. Therefore, in thinking through the design of the new online support model, it will be important to consider to what extent online resources can impact organizations' ability for feedback practice, and if the expected impact is lower than the current model, what is the minimum level of ability organizations need to ensure high-quality feedback practice.

L4G has generated buy-in and increased technical ability for feedback practice, but how can it encourage sustainability? Two consistent findings across L4G cohorts have been the significant increases in commitment to L4G (especially leadership buy-in), and in technical ability to implement feedback practice. However, we do not yet know how sustainable feedback practice is within organizations without L4G's support. While we will receive data to help assess sustainability in the near future as we conduct interviews with the 2016 cohort to evaluate their feedback practices since finishing the L4G process, there is an opportunity to consider how L4G touch points can work to impact more adaptive aspects of feedback practice within organizations, like culture and values, so that sustainability is more likely over time. Accordingly, L4G staff have structured the second year of the 2017 cohort to focus on driving sustainability after L4G. Future data collection will illustrate the effects of this new focus.

Concluding Thoughts

The L4G initiative aims to support nonprofits with resources and guidance in listening to the people they ultimately seek to help. Data collected from the 2018 L4G cohort suggest that L4G is making progress toward this aim. Organizations are developing through the L4G model and continue to find value and positive experiences with both the feedback tools and TA support provided. The significant gains in commitment and ability that occur with participation in the initiative further speak to the value of feedback practice and the L4G model for organizations. As L4G looks to expand its reach and impact by moving into an internet-based service provider model, learning from these areas of success and opportunities can also inform where attention can be directed in designing and refining the model to provide optimal value to nonprofits.