

Fund for Shared Insight: Listen for Good 2017 Cohort at One Year

December, 2018

The Listen for Good (L4G) 2017 cohort is comprised of 66 grantees receiving matched funding and technical assistance (TA) and is the second set of organizations to engage in the initiative. Consistent with past L4G evaluations, ORS Impact surveyed these organizations about their experiences and accomplishments one year into the initiative. We received responses from 55 organizations (83%) and present findings, implications, and considerations from their data in the following pages.¹

Impacts and Insights

We surveyed the 2017 cohort about several areas of impact and insights from their participation in the initiative. Specifically, we explored changes in feedback practice abilities; insights gained about client experiences; programmatic changes made; and how organizations pursue equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in feedback practices.

The 2017 cohort showed little change in feedback practice abilities since their last survey, leaving them with ability scores statistically lower than the 2016 cohort at one year into the initiative.

The 2017 cohort's ability to implement feedback practices (e.g., implementing surveys, achieving high response rates) is similar to what it was at six months; most abilities were strong, with two exceptions being lower abilities in achieving high response rates and closing the loop with clients. That said, this cohort's feedback ability scores are significantly lower than the 2016 cohort's scores at 12 months. As

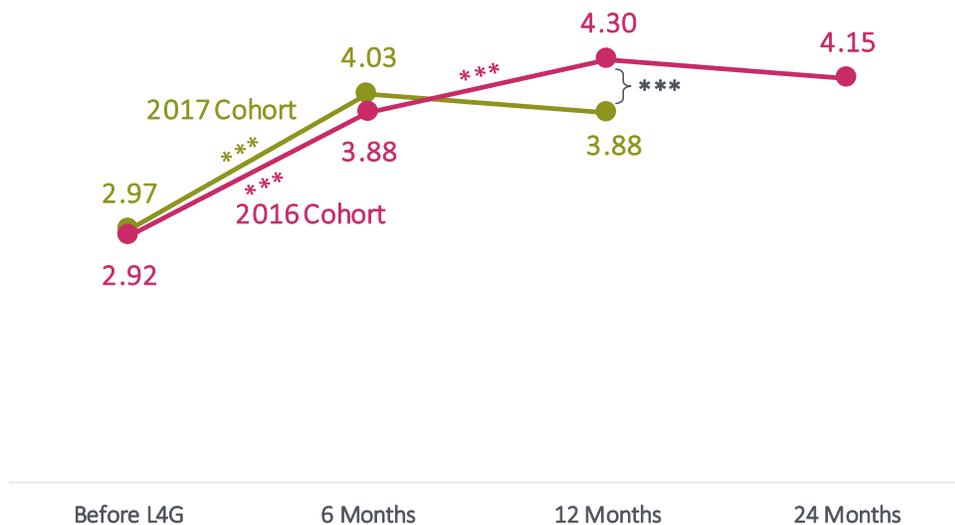
¹ Throughout this document, findings are described as statistically significant when $p < .1$, with * denoting $p < .10$, ** denoting $p < .05$, and *** denoting $p < .01$.





shown in Figure 1, the 2017 cohort did not demonstrate the same increase in ability from six to 12 months that the 2016 cohort experienced. In fact, whereas the 2016 cohort significantly improved in all but one dimension of feedback practice ability in that time, the 2017 cohort remained largely flat for most abilities and actually decreased significantly in their ability to collect useful data from clients.

Figure 1 | Change in Average Feedback Practice Ability Over Time by Cohort

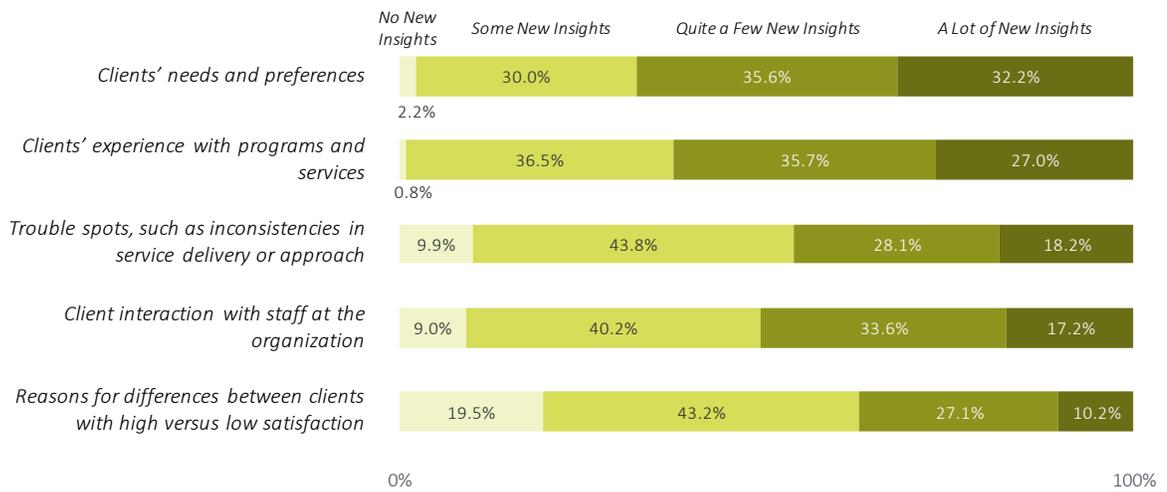


Despite challenges in feedback practice abilities, organizations are learning about the experiences of their clients and translating those insights into changes in services.

While the 2017 cohort's feedback abilities did not grow at the same rate as the 2016 cohort, they demonstrated strong indicators of learning overall, with all organizations gaining some new insights in at least one area of client experience (see Figure 2). Additionally, unlike their ratings of feedback practice abilities, this cohort actually gained significantly more insights than the cohort before them in client experiences with programs and services, client interactions with staff, and the areas of service that are trouble spots for clients. In other words, the 2017 cohort is learning more about their clients than the 2016 cohort, but is showing lower feedback practice abilities than that cohort one year into the initiative. While learning about client experience is an encouraging sign of this cohort's progress in implementing feedback practices, this finding raises questions about the assumption that feedback practice ability must increase for organizations to gain new insights about their clients.



Figure 2 | Areas of New Insights into Client Experience



Data from the 2017 cohort also suggests that gaining more insights into client experience is a strong predictor of the likelihood that organizations will make changes in their services to clients. Specifically, there was a significant, positive relationship between new insights gained and the number of changes made to services.² The most common areas where organizations made these changes were in operations (37%) and program offerings (38%).

These new insights and changes made are further reflected in this cohort's open-ended data. When asked how they have benefited from participating in L4G, 33% of organizations spoke to how the initiative provided useful information and insight, and another 33% spoke to how it prompted changes either internally or in their programs (n=43). Moreover, when asked how feedback practice supports other measurement efforts, 73% commented that it helps to draw insights from those efforts, fosters an organizational culture of learning, and further emphasizes the importance of measurement and evaluation for learning about clients (n=40).

Many organizations see the connection between feedback practice and EDI and are pursuing it through inclusive feedback collection and proactive responses to group differences in feedback data.

Just over half (56%) of responding organizations described how feedback practice and EDI are connected in some way (n=39). Of these organizations, 41% described how collecting client feedback promotes inclusion and reduces exclusion, elevating

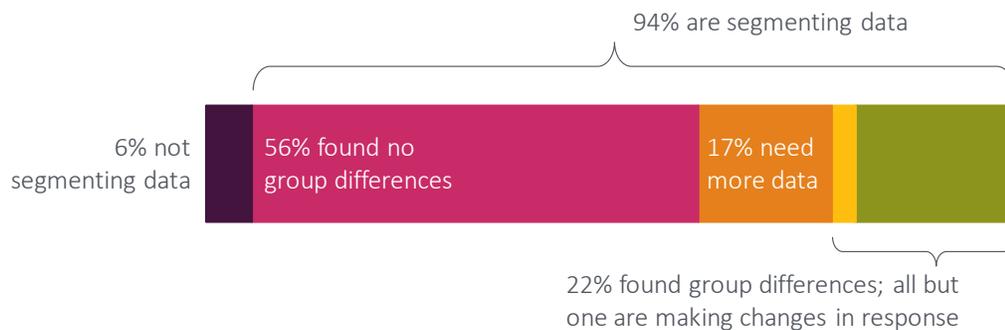
² n = 49, r = .313, p = .028



the voices of clients to be heard. Other organizations discussed how feedback practice enables a deeper understanding of demographic group differences and promotes a greater sense of responsibility and commitment to clients.

One of the ways this cohort has connected their feedback practice to EDI is through responding to demographic differences in feedback data. As shown in Figure 3, 94% of responding organizations said they are segmenting data by demographic groups. Of those that found group differences (22%), all but one proactively made changes in response, such as implementing EDI-related training for staff or considering changes to programs and internal policies.

Figure 3 | Percent Segmenting Data and Responding to Group Differences (n=36)³



Another way this cohort has connected feedback to EDI is by ensuring inclusive feedback collection that advances equitable outcomes. For instance, 80% of the 45 organizations that provided open-ended information about how they have adapted their surveys described changes to better meet the needs of diverse groups of clients (e.g., translating surveys, using accessible language).

Experiences with the L4G Model

Most organizations are having positive experiences with the initiative, but there are some opportunities for improvement.

Using the Net Promoter Scoring system, 74% of the 2017 cohort were promoters, 20% were passives, and 6% were detractors, giving the cohort a final NPS of 68. While we did not ask this question of the 2017 cohort at six months, this score is

³ Percentages here may not add to 100% due to rounding.

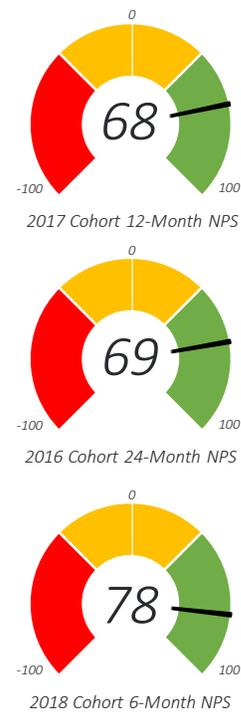


slightly lower than the 2018 cohort at six months (78) and similar to the 2016 cohort at 24 months (69), as shown in Figure 4.⁴

Organizations also described specific areas of satisfaction with the L4G model. For example, 31% of the 2017 cohort's open-ended responses spoke to how the initiative has offered support and a framework that can be applied in other contexts (n=37). This cohort also found verbatims and benchmarks to be more useful at one year than they did at six months into the initiative.

Conversely, organizations also described some opportunities for improvement in the model. For example, 27% of responding organizations commented about wanting more flexibility in customizable questions, more clarity about how to use NPS data, and greater consistency across TA providers (n=33). There was also some variation in which TA resources were helpful. Specifically, 86% of organizations felt that the ad hoc TA support was very or extremely helpful, and 83% felt that the individual TA calls were very or extremely helpful; yet, significantly fewer organizations (54%) felt this way about the optional webinars. We also explored how ratings of helpfulness varied by TA provider and found a small number of significant differences that were shared with the L4G team.

Figure 4 | NPS Scores by Cohort



Sustaining Feedback Practice

To explore this cohort's plans to sustain their feedback practices, we surveyed organizations about the extent to which they are planning to continue and increase feedback collection in the future as well as their current assessment of commitment to feedback practice from both staff and organizational leaders.

⁴ These NPS scores were collected at different timepoints for each cohort. The 2018 cohort was measured at six months, the 2017 cohort at 12 months, and the 2016 cohort at 24 months.



Organizations plan to continue collecting feedback after L4G, but challenges with staff and leader commitment may be an area to monitor for translating future feedback into actual changes.

Almost all organizations (92%) plan to continue collecting feedback from clients, and over half (51%) plan to both continue and increase.⁵ While this is a strong indication of plans to sustain feedback practice, there are some areas to both monitor and improve commitment to feedback practice for this cohort. As shown in Figure 5, while leader commitment for this cohort is still relatively high at one year, it is significantly lower than it was at six months, similar to what it was before L4G and significantly lower than the 2016 cohort’s rating. Staff commitment also appears to be lower at one year than it was at six months, though not to a statistically significant degree. That said, staff commitment to feedback practice has been significantly lower than leader commitment at every point thus far, which may have implications for this cohort’s likelihood of sustaining feedback practice in the future given the evidence from past L4G evaluations about the importance of staff buy-in for successful implementation of feedback practice.

Figure 5 | Change in Staff and Leader Commitment to Feedback Practice Over Time⁶



⁵ These percentages are not statistically different from the 2016 cohort at 12 months, of which 97% planned to continue current feedback collection levels, and 61% planned to continue and increase.

⁶ The cohort’s rating of leader commitment to feedback practice for the 2017 cohort at 12 months is statistically similar to their rating before participating in L4G; ratings of staff commitment, however, are still significantly higher at 12 months compared to before participating in the initiative ($p < .01$).



These ratings of staff and leader commitment are particular areas to monitor because of their relationship to making changes in client services. Leader commitment to feedback practice significantly predicted the number of changes that organizations have either planned or made, and staff commitment to feedback practice significantly predicted the number of changes that were actually executed by these organizations.⁷ In other words, organizations are more likely to either plan or make changes in their services if they report higher levels of leader and staff commitment to feedback practice.

Implications and Considerations

The 2017 cohort is gaining new insights and making programmatic changes, but stagnant feedback practice abilities and challenges with staff and leader commitment are areas to monitor going forward. Organizations in the 2017 cohort are gaining new insights about their clients' experiences significantly more than the cohort before them, and many are translating those insights into programmatic changes to improve their services. These trends are strong indicators that the cohort is making progress toward more effective programs through feedback practice. That said, the lower ratings for both feedback practice abilities and perceived commitment from staff and leaders in this cohort raise questions as to whether these feedback practices will be sustainable going forward. With the L4G team's plans to increase effort toward ensuring sustainable feedback practice in the final year of this cohort's grant cycle, it will be important to give particular attention to how to most effectively monitor and support feedback practice abilities and commitment from staff and leaders in these organizations. Future data collection from both the 2017 and 2016 cohorts may provide additional insight into how to best support sustainable feedback practice, which could also inform how the L4G team adjusts and refines the model for the remainder of the 2018 cohort's grant cycle.

As future cohorts experience different versions of the L4G model, close attention should be given to how the structure of the model affects its helpfulness and effectiveness for building feedback practice abilities. The 2017 cohort found both the ad hoc TA support and the required individual calls with TA providers to be very helpful, but the same was not true of the optional online TA webinars, which were rated as

⁷ For the relationship between leader commitment and the number of changes at least planned, $n = 47$, $r = .315$, $p = .031$. For the relationship between staff commitment and the number of changes actually made, $n = 47$, $r = .464$, $p = .001$.



significantly less helpful than the other two elements of TA. While our data does not indicate why the optional online webinars were rated as less helpful, the finding has implications for the L4G team's consideration of these resources for future cohorts, especially those that might experience the same struggles in feedback practice abilities that the 2017 cohort has faced. We know from past evaluations that these feedback practice abilities are strong predictors of experiencing an impact in program effectiveness. For that reason, the L4G team has an opportunity to explore if and how future L4G models that use more internet-based, online resources can have similar impacts on organizations' feedback practice abilities and provide similar levels of support and helpfulness to

organizations. In the next round of testing different versions of the model, there is an opportunity to explore more deeply the optimal level of value than an online model can provide in the absence of individualized attention and one-on-one TA support.

The evidence that organizations are pursuing the connection between EDI and feedback practice creates an opportunity to better understand how this connection takes place and the role that L4G staff can play in it.

Open-ended comments suggest that the 2017 cohort not only sees a connection between feedback and EDI, they are also actively pursuing ways to make that

connection concrete. Several organizations described how they are adapting their feedback collection methods to the needs of diverse clients, segmenting feedback data by different demographic groups, and responding to observed differences between those segmented demographic groups. These trends offer several learning opportunities for both L4G staff and future evaluations of the model. From an evaluation perspective, we have not collected information about how organizations are segmenting their data, which analyses they are conducting, and how they are interpreting the findings. We can assess these areas qualitatively with organizations, but the L4G team may have greater access to monitor these practices via SurveyMonkey data. Further evaluation in these areas could reveal opportunities for the L4G staff and TA providers to explore how they can

Does Budget Size Matter?

We explored how our findings differed by organizational budget size. Organizations with smaller budgets (i.e., less than \$5 million) felt greater impact in internal operations, more leadership commitment, and more success securing support to make changes. Conversely, they also reported lower abilities to collect and analyze data and saw less utility in having customized questions.



best leverage themselves in supporting organizations to see and engage in the connection between EDI and feedback practice.

Concluding Thoughts

The L4G initiative focuses on supporting nonprofit organizations in implementing feedback practices that enable more effective programs for the people they seek to help. The 2017 cohort is making progress toward this end, particularly in learning from their clients, translating new insights into program improvements, and proactively embedding EDI into their feedback practices; yet, they have also showed signs of stagnant or decreasing feedback practice abilities and levels of commitment from staff and leaders. As the L4G staff continue to refine the initiative and pursue different, less bespoke service models, these findings can provide useful information about how to best monitor and support the growth of this cohort, as well as how they can effectively provide the right level of support in the areas where organizations find most value.