

How the African American Leadership Forum *shifted from transition to synergy* with the support of Evocent Leadership Development

Situation

The African American Leadership Forum (AALF) is a nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the lives of African Americans in the Minneapolis–Saint Paul metropolitan area. AALF achieves its mission by building a cross-sector network of leaders and institutions that convenes, collaborates, and champions solutions that advance racial equity.

“Our target is broad, and our work encompasses building tables where community and systems can work collectively to move the needle on long-standing systemic issues of inequity and racism,” said Shanaya Dungey, Vice President of Administration at AALF.

AALF has existed for sixteen years but is in a startup phase operationally. The organization has experienced rapid growth during the past few years but had challenges retaining employees due to the Great Resignation of 2022 and consistent head-hunting by other organizations.

“We had challenges articulating our work based on the scope and breadth of what our organization had been tasked with,” said Shanaya. “Our leadership realized that we needed change management support to help us move our work forward, ensure we brought our staff along, and gained buy-in from our stakeholders.”



“ Christine at Evocent Leadership Development used her extensive experience in change management to help AALF’s leadership identify key stakeholder concerns and brainstorm how we could address them.”

—Shanaya Dungey, Vice President of Administration, AALF

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Solution

AALF first engaged Christine Pouliot of Evocent Leadership Development to conduct a change management session with the organization’s executive leadership team. The goal was to help the leadership team formulate an internal strategic framework that would help the organization build the infrastructure needed to achieve its mission. The session was so transformative that the leadership team decided to have Christine work with AALF’s staff during three half-day workshops to give everyone the opportunity for personal and organizational reflection.

Christine challenged the staff to take its stakeholders’ pulse while planning the course of the organization moving forward.

“The activities led by Christine were super eye-opening,” said Shanaya. “One activity asked that we physically stand in each of our stakeholders’ shoes and think deeply about their wants and needs.”

During interactive workshops focused on the emotional reactions to change, staff identified the organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This activity motivated everyone to align themselves and the organization with AALF’s mission, vision, and strategies for the years ahead.

The workshops represented a defining moment for the organization. On the final day, the staff was charged with the responsibility of devising their individual work plans that fit directly into the organization’s revised framework.

Thanks to Christine’s insightful presentations and coaching, AALF’s leadership and staff are well positioned to manage the organization’s continued growth.

Results and Benefits



A Strategic Framework

“We have the first pass at our strategic framework,” said Shanaya. “We are building our organization’s core competencies and have a workable performance management plan.”



Increased Staff Engagement

AALF staff left these sessions more engaged and committed to their work due to enhanced clarity and connection to organizational objectives.



Intentional Direction

The leadership and staff of AALF left the session clear and intentional about how the individual contributions of everyone will help the organization move the mission forward.