



Leadership Academy 2025

Cohort 4 Final Report



Program Overview

The Leadership Academy 2025 was a six-month intensive training and development program designed to cultivate community-based leadership rooted in justice, creativity, and strategic action. The Academy brought together 12 community leaders with lived experience in housing insecurity, organizing, and cultural work to build skills, deepen self-awareness, and design individual leadership projects.

Grounded in values of equity, healing, and community empowerment, the Academy guided participants through a structured learning arc that emphasized self-reflection, communication, research, cultural expression, and real-world application. The experience concluded with each participant presenting a culminating project at the July 2025 graduation ceremony.

A core value of this cohort was recognizing and uplifting the leadership contributions of elder community members, especially those whose lived experiences offer essential wisdom and grounding to the movement for housing justice in Oakland.

Power Building and Organizing Connections

The 2025 Leadership Academy Cohort 4 embodied the core principles of power building and community organizing through its intentional, values-driven training arc. The Academy prioritized building relationships, cultivating leadership, and practicing accountability through participatory learning and advocacy projects.

Time Commitment and Participation

Each participant completed approximately:

- 15+ hours of project planning and implementation
- 2.5 hours of personal coaching
- 8 hours of structured training sessions
- Additional preparation, community meetings, and presentations

In total, participants committed over 25+ hours to their leadership journey.

Session Summaries and Learning Goals

Session 1: Assessing and Advancing Your Leadership – Personal storytelling and goal setting.

Session 2: Communication & Public Speaking – Developing voice and message.

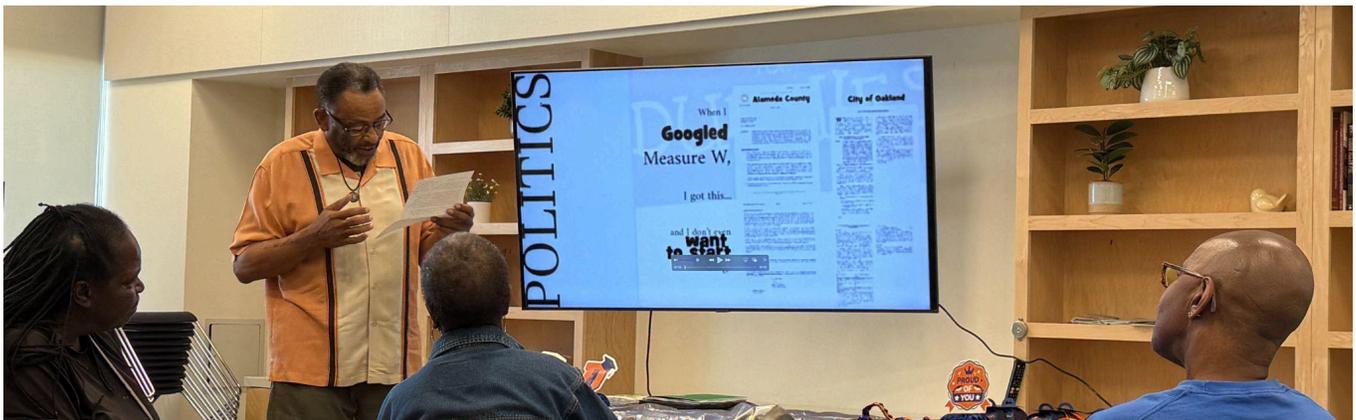
Session 3: Research & Data – Using data for advocacy and project planning.

Session 4: Art & Cultural Expression – Exploring creativity as a tool for justice.

Session 5: Project Presentation & Graduation – Culminating leadership projects and celebration.

Participant Project Highlights

Participants created powerful projects ranging from housing policy proposals and advocacy campaigns to art installations and storytelling. Projects included public speaking on housing justice, policy oversight on Measure W, creative mental health advocacy, grassroots petition drives, educational videos, and visual art storytelling.



Wed. July 2, 2026 - Jesse Williams shares his findings and presents his final presentation, “Measure W for Dummies” video, to the graduating cohort of Leadership Academy 4.

Evaluation & Participant Feedback

The Leadership Academy Cohort 4 concluded with strong, affirming evaluation results that demonstrate its transformative impact on participants and on community leadership.

Overall Satisfaction:

- 88.9% rated the Academy “Excellent” (5/5), and 11.1% rated it “Very Good” (4/5).
- 100% of participants said the program met their expectations.

Key Strengths Highlighted:

- Skilled facilitation and safe space creation
- Integration of art, storytelling, and creativity
- Growth in confidence, public speaking, and stewardship
- Hands-on support, resources, and encouragement

Growth as Leaders:

- 54.5% reported significant growth (5/5)
- 45.5% reported strong growth (4/5)

Participants emphasized confidence, stewardship, and responsibility as key areas of development.

Impact of Projects:

- Projects fostered confidence, healing, and advocacy wins.
- Examples included securing \$10M in affordable housing funding, sharing personal stories through art, and creating tools for public education on housing policy.

Continuing Leadership:

- 100% expressed interest in continuing their projects with additional support such as more training, mentorship, fundraising assistance, and opportunities to lead teams.

Participant Advice for Future Cohorts:

“Take it seriously and give it your all.”

“Be open-minded and willing to follow as well as lead.”

“Start early on your project.”

“Find guidance from past participants.”

Final Reflections:

Participants described the Academy as “life-changing,” “one of the best programs,” and an empowering experience. A logistical suggestion was made to increase privacy in meeting spaces.

Final Reflections & Lasting Impact

The 2025 Leadership Academy equipped participants with tools to amplify leadership while centering lived experience, cultural power, and community resilience. Leaders walked away with sharpened strategies, increased confidence, and completed projects that advance housing justice and equity in Oakland.

The evaluation affirms that the Academy is a powerful, transformative model of elder-centered leadership development—blending creativity, advocacy, and healing for long-term impact.

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Leadership Academy 2025 – Power Building Connections

Table 1: How Leadership Academy Connects to Power Building

Power Building Element	Leadership Academy Connection
Building Relationships	Participants built deep, intentional relationships rooted in shared values and housing justice experience.
Developing Leadership	The Academy emphasized skill-building, public speaking, and fostering confidence for civic leadership.
Creating Structure	Training sessions encouraged participatory learning and distributed leadership through project-based roles.
Strategizing & Taking Action	Participants applied strategy through real-world advocacy projects, blending data, art, and storytelling.
Understanding Power Dynamics	Sessions and projects prompted reflection on power structures and planning for systemic policy change.

Table 2: Leadership Academy Support for Power Building Components

Power Building Component	How Academy Supported It
Intentional Relationship Building	Peer trust-building, shared values dialogue
Understanding Interests	Project planning rooted in personal and community motivations
Bridging Differences	Multigenerational and cultural identity reflection
Leadership Identification & Development	Workshops on self-assessment, public speaking, and coaching

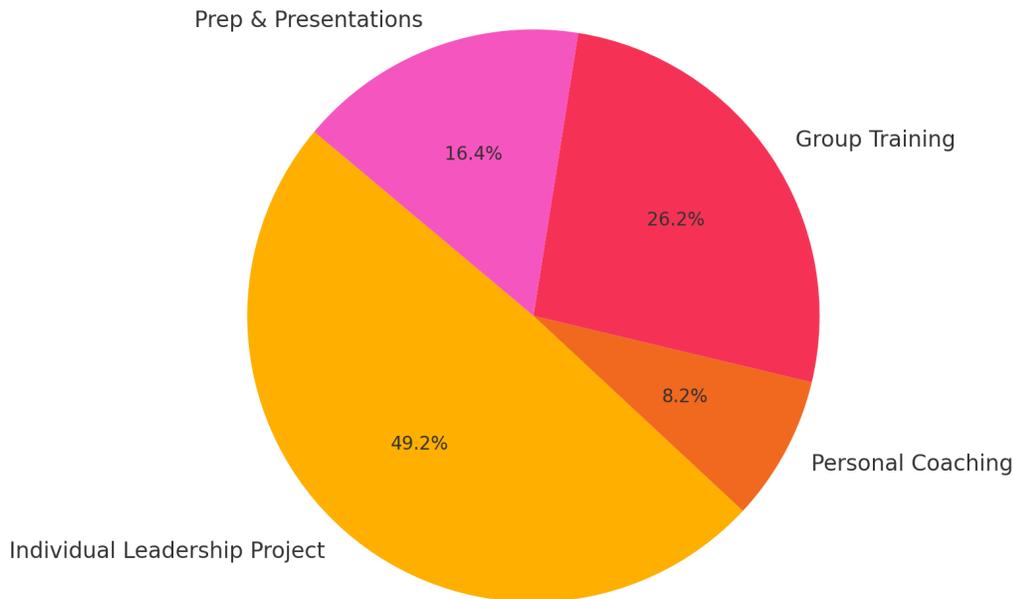
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Community Accountability	Community-driven feedback on leadership journeys
Distributed Leadership Structures	Cohort-based learning, participant-led presentations
Strategic Planning & Action	Capstone projects grounded in real-world goals
Power & Systems Analysis	Sessions on justice, equity, and system impacts
Tactics: Data, Storytelling, Advocacy	Creative & data tools in leadership project work
Shifting Power for Policy Change	Final projects aimed at long-term civic influence

Participant Time Commitment Breakdown

Participant Time Commitment Breakdown





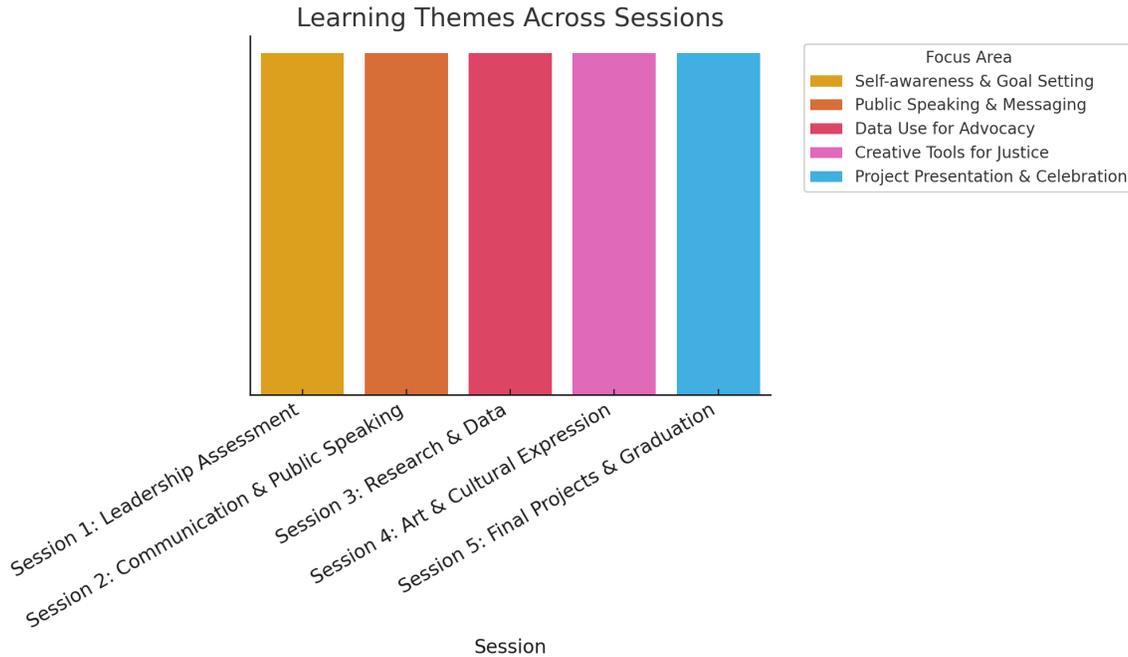
St. Mary's Center

A Community of Hope,
Healing & Justice

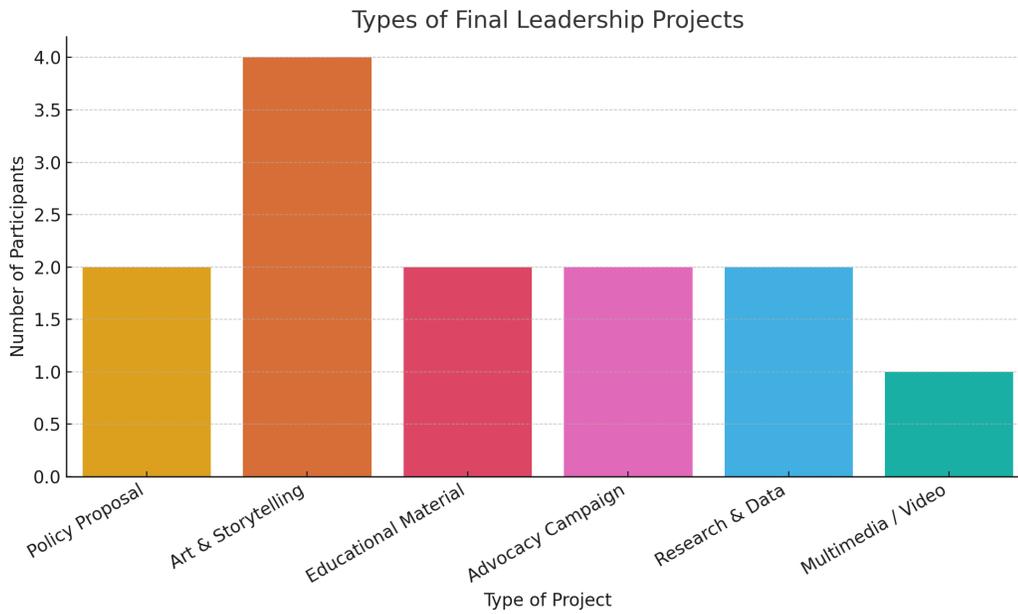
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INFOGRAPHICS

Learning Themes Across Sessions



Types of Final Leadership Projects





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