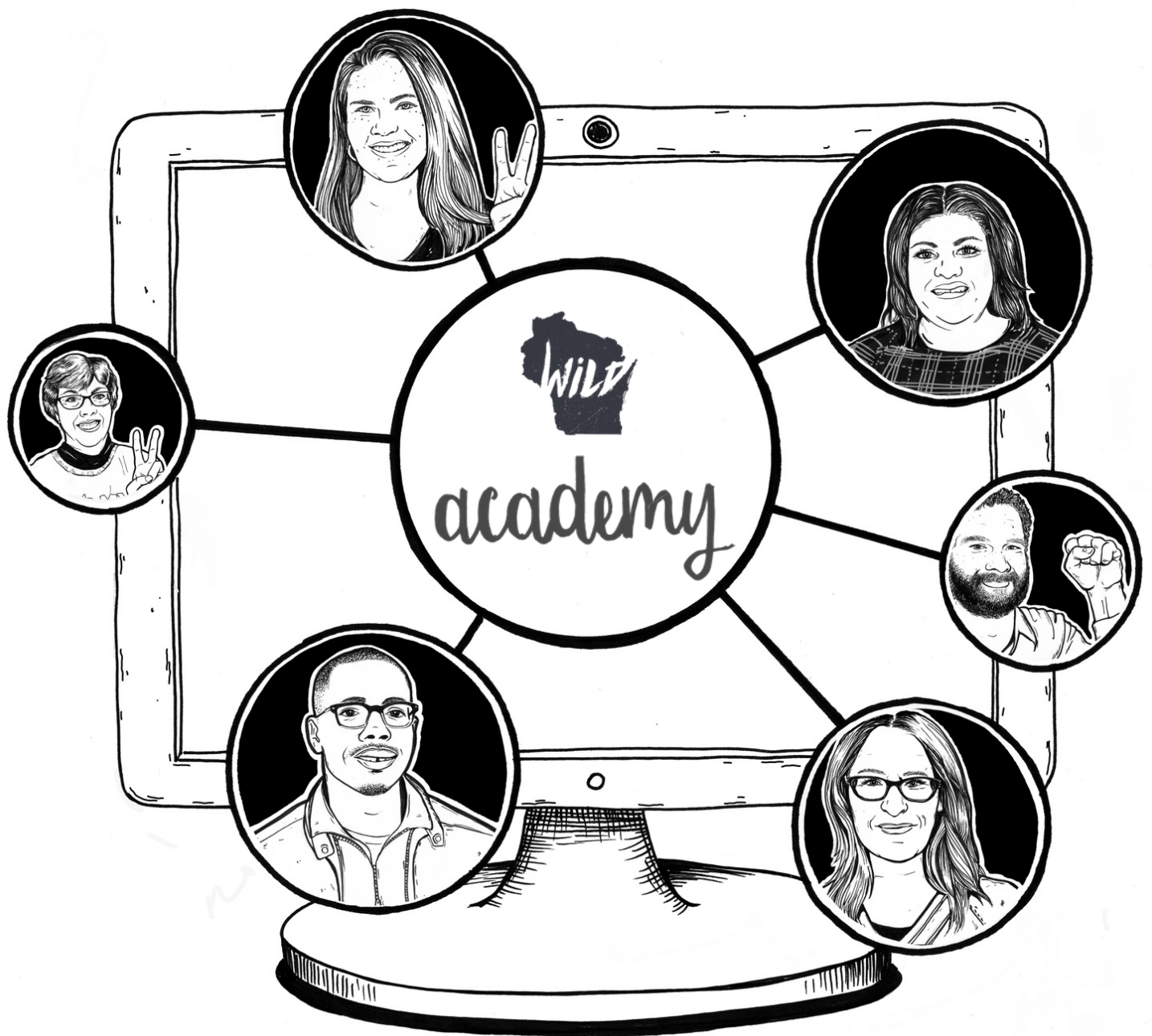


IMPACT REPORT

SPRING 2021



CONTENTS

I. OVERVIEW

Context	3
Structure	4
Recruitment	5
Curriculum	7

II. RESULTS

Participation & Engagement	9
Skill Attainment	10
Campaigns	11

III. WHAT WE LEARNED

Laying the Groundwork	13
Organizing Application	14
Reading & Reflection	15
Culture & Community	15
Practice What You Preach	17
Conclusion	17
Recommendations	18

PART ONE: OVERVIEW



CONTEXT

Fresh off the 2020 Presidential Election, and still in the thick of the pandemic, what would be the interest for community organizing in the new year? With in-person gatherings off the table, and the struggles for racial, economic, and environmental justice rising, the Wisconsin Leadership Development (WiLD) Project forged ahead in building a community of practice online.

In November, the second WiLD Academy was announced as a 10-week online opportunity for ongoing learning, developing organizers and campaigns that can rise to the challenges of the moment. The course was modeled after celebrated civil rights organizer Marshall Ganz's Leadership, Organizing, and Action course offered at the Harvard Kennedy School and learnings from WiLD's first online course offered in 2020.

STRUCTURE

Scheduled from January 28th to April 8th, 2021, the Academy was set to meet every Tuesday and Thursday, with weekly meetings in smaller sections, readings, reflection papers, and a strategy facilitation training weekend. Participants were expected to invest an average of 7-10 hours per week.

A teaching and coaching team with extensive experience leading trainings was recruited from across the country. Members included: Jake Waxman (CA), Nneka Akubeze (TX), Kortni Malone (MI), Anita Krishnan (CT), and Dan Grandone (WI). This team shared responsibility for the final design of the course and weekly lectures.

Each member facilitated a weekly section of 15-21 participants comprising 4-6 organizing teams across geography and issues. Several guest trainers were also engaged to share their experience, including Abel Cano (MA), Ana Babovic (Serbia), Chris Torres (MD), and Allison Werner (WI). Ben Barker, WiLD's Digital Organizer, coordinated the online learning platform, Zoom, and participant technology trainings, in addition to providing ongoing technology support.

The training team met each week on Monday and Wednesday to prepare the sessions for Tuesday and Thursday. The team also met after each session for debrief and evaluation.



KORTNI MALONE



JAKE WAXMAN



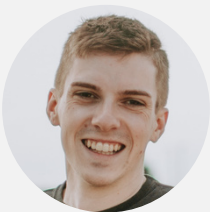
NNEKA AKUBEZE



DAN GRANDONE



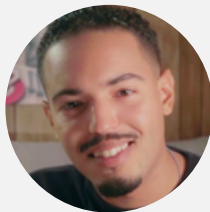
ANITA KRISHNAN



BEN BARKER



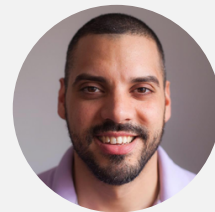
ANA BABOVIC



ABEL CANO



ALLISON WERNER



CHRIS TORRES

RECRUITMENT

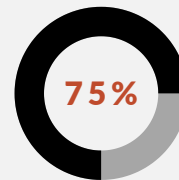
The WiLD Academy was designed to be a vehicle for launching organizing campaigns. Recruitment was oriented toward teams of 3-9 people with an organizing project focus. This required building a leadership team that could mobilize members of a constituency to achieve a clear outcome within 6-12 months.

Registration was open for two months, with over half of the applications submitted following the holidays in early January. Academy Coordinator Dan Grandone was responsible for recruiting team leads through one-on-one conversations with interested partner organizations and those referred by word of mouth from WiLD's network of leaders trained over the past five years. Leads from each organization then took responsibility for recruiting their own project-based team. Committed to ensuring that cost would not be a barrier for participation, WiLD offered registration on a sliding scale (from \$600 to full scholarship) based on financial need.

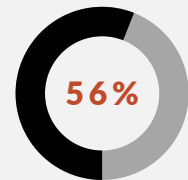
The response was encouraging. By the application deadline, 104 people had registered, exceeding expectations. With a larger number responding than the Academy training team could support, 86 participants were selected for the program, representing 21 organizations, 12 states, and 49 cities. Two weeks prior to the course launch, the coaching team completed 30-minute introductory one-on-one conversations with every participant in their assigned sections to initiate a relationship, solidify commitment, and start exploring the organizing project.



86 PARTICIPANTS

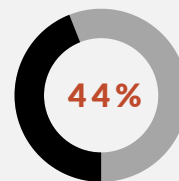
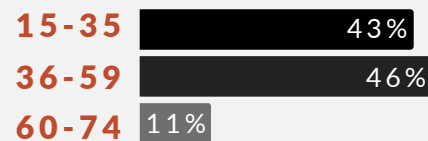


WOMEN AND
NON-BINARY

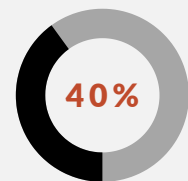


PEOPLE OF
COLOR

AGE

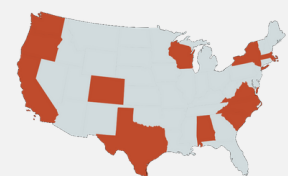


UNPAID
VOLUNTEERS



FROM SMALL
TOWNS (<20K)

12 STATES
49 CITIES





21 ORGANIZATIONS



(WISCONSIN)



ARTTogether



coworker .ORG



DOWN HOME NORTH CAROLINA



DUNN COUNTY DEMOCRATS



(EXPO)



- Our Future Our Fight
- River Falls High School Gender and Sexuality Alliance
- WA State Health Careers Ecosystem

CURRICULUM

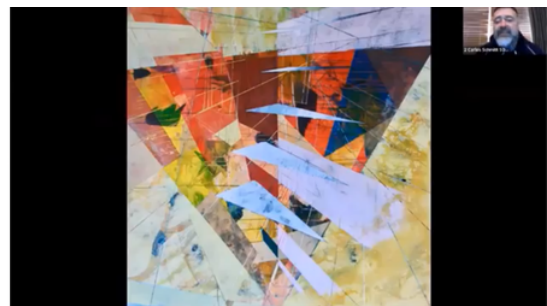
The 10-week WiLD Academy curriculum was based on an approach utilizing five basic organizing leadership practices that draw upon a rich history of community organizing, social movements, and campaigns. This framework has been adapted in cultures and contexts launching grassroots efforts around the world through a WiLD-affiliated organization, the Leading Change Network. Each participant learned these practices with the goal of returning home to apply their learnings:

1. How to articulate a **story** of why you were called to lead, a story of those whom you hope to mobilize, and a story of action: self, us, and now.
2. How to build intentional **relationships** as the foundation of purposeful collective actions.
3. How to **structure** a team with shared purpose, ground rules and roles for effective leadership.
4. How to strategize **turning resources into the power** to achieve clear goals.
5. How to translate strategy into measurable, motivational, and effective **action**.

There were a number of important changes made to the curriculum based on feedback from the first WiLD Academy held in 2020.

The first was expanding the course timing from 8 to 10 weeks, and each session from 1.5 to 2 hours, allowing for more spaciousness for our learning. Every module followed a similar rhythm, including a lecture introducing each organizing practice, modeling through live role plays and video, practicing in small breakout groups, and debriefing of what was learned.

Having this additional time also allowed us to open every session with a grounding from one of the participants who volunteered to share a source of inspiration, cultural tradition, or something that was speaking to them in relationship to what they were learning in the course. A total of 20 different groundings were offered, including but not limited to: live song, music and dance, spoken word, visual art, indigenous land acknowledgment, drumming solo, and farm and quilting showcases.



CURRICULUM (CONT.)

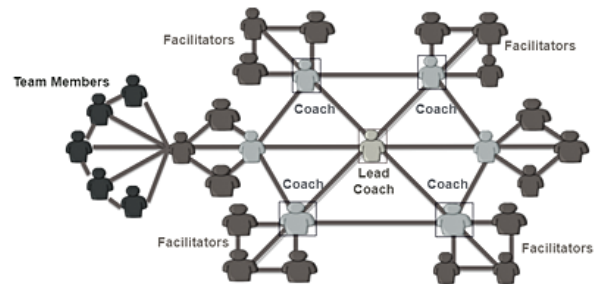
The curriculum was also adapted to introduce organizing campaigns in the first week of the course, in an effort to have participants “begin with the end in mind.” The session included a lecture and panel of organizers who offered concrete campaign examples, including: immigrant organizing addressing racial profiling in Arizona through SB 1070; environmental organizing blocking the expansion of mining rights in northern Wisconsin’s Willow Flowage; and criminal justice organizing in Houston, TX during the Black Lives Matter protests. The intention was to give participants a vision of what was possible and what peak they could build towards with their own campaign strategies over the 10 weeks.

“*Incredible group culture, razor sharp clarity of concepts, inspiring and informative readings—I could go on and on about what worked.*”

– TRAINING PARTICIPANT

In an effort to mirror some of the more powerful aspects of an in-person organizing workshop, the WiLD Academy continued experimenting with team-specific breakouts, beyond the larger multi-team sections, for the sessions on structure and strategy.

Participants were prepared to facilitate their own group through first observing each breakout modeled by their coach in section, and then drawing on the learning to facilitate the exercise as a team in the following session. PowerPoint slides were used by each team in place of the typical paper flip charts used at in-person workshops. A half-day training was also offered for 25 facilitators to prepare them to lead their respective team’s strategy work the following week (with ongoing support from the WiLD coaching team).



The last change to the curriculum was moving from a dedicated lecture Tuesday and section breakout on Thursday. In an effort to increase overall engagement online, the lecture and breakouts were blended each session to allow for additional movement, opportunities to try things on in smaller groups, and travel to sections and back.

PART TWO: RESULTS

PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT

During the 10 weeks of the WiLD Academy, the overall participation rate was 91%. The attendance of the weekly lectures and sections remained high throughout, while the submission of weekly reflection papers started high and became less consistent as the course went on. Attendance and reflection submission rates were recorded and shared in class each week as a way to lift up progress and create accountability.

“The way you all wove together each two-hour session, built community, set and managed agreements, and pushed us not to be passive learners (my default setting). The set-up of class made learning so easy and understandable that I’m naturally able to apply it to my daily life.”

— TRAINING PARTICIPANT

Another aspect of participation that was emphasized was getting people into action outside of class. For example, during the week following the session on relationship building, we had 54 participants commit to 200 total one-on-ones.

One week later, **36 participants had completed 108 one-on-ones**. During the module on action, we had 14 of 19 campaign teams making real recruitment calls to invite people into their teams’ next action steps. In 30 minutes of live calls, **144 commitments were secured**.

There is still more work to be done in bridging theory to practice outside of the scheduled classes, creating clearer expectations within the parameters of the course and growing this within each project based organizing team.

98%

PARTICIPANTS WHO SAID TRAINING "MET OR EXCEEDED" EXPECTATIONS

91%

AVERAGE SESSION ATTENDANCE

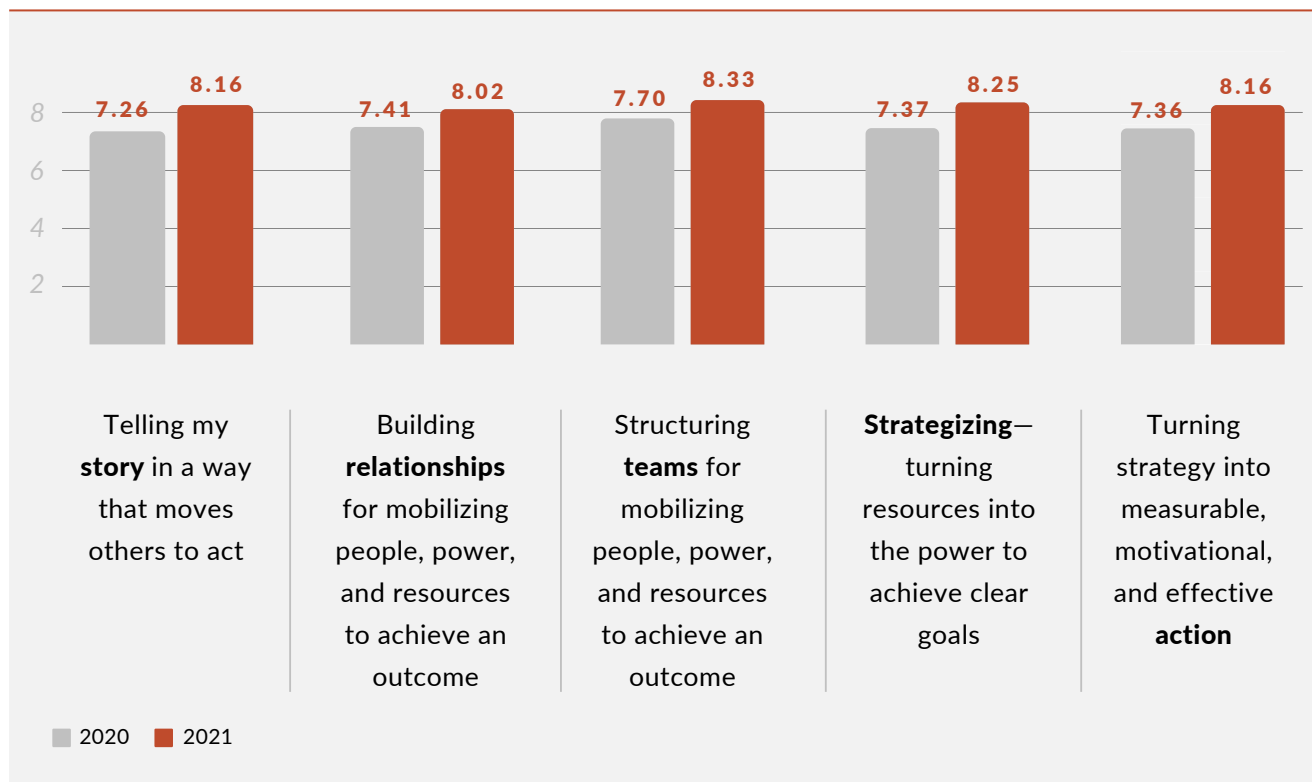


SKILL ATTAINMENT

Participants were asked to rate their skills along the five leadership practices before and after the training in an online survey. We obtained assessment forms for five questions related to the leadership practice from 59 participants. A 10-point scale was used, with 1=No change and 10=A great deal of change. A weighted average of 8+ improvement for all of the leadership practices is considered statistically significant and reflects a meaningful increase in self-perceived skill.

These results are positive in comparison to the 2020 WiLD Academy, with the trends appearing higher within each skill set. The trends are also slightly higher than in WiLD's previous in-person workshop.

There are a number of factors that may have contributed to this increase in skill attainment, including: intentionality brought to the recruitment process and who was accepted into the Academy, clarity of course expectations, increase in course length from 8 to 10 weeks and sessions from 1.5 to 2 hours, recruiting a larger and more diverse training team that was able to share more of the overall roles and responsibility, greater emphasis on application outside of class, required pre-course technology training reducing obstacles for learning online, depth and frequency of coaching by training team, and commitment level of participants.



CAMPAIGNS

As a result, 20 teams (ranging in size from 2-10 people) developed organizing campaigns. Over 60% of the teams were coming together to work in an organizing context for the first time.

Of the 20 campaigns developed, 10 were Wisconsin-based, and the others focused on NC, TX, WA, CA, CO, MI, and MA, with a post-election emphasis on issue-based campaigns.

As of May 2021 (one month after the WiLD Academy), 17 of the 20 teams (85%) were still working together, holding regular meetings, organizing actions, and planning their next campaign peaks.

“*The most significant way the WiLD Academy supported our team's campaign work is by offering us time as a team to move forward our project at our pace. We struggled at times with our project, and it was beyond helpful to have time to think together.*”

– TRAINING PARTICIPANT



FOCUS ISSUES

- Immigrant and refugee organizing
- Criminal justice reform
- Equity in accessing health care housing
- Redistricting reform
- Childcare access for working women
- Rural and small town organizing
- Climate justice
- Ending structural forms of racism
- Raising the minimum wage
- Voter engagement
- Food insecurity
- Equity in the workplace
- Removing police from schools
- Deepening impact of philanthropy

85%

ORGANIZING TEAMS FORMED THAT
ARE STILL WORKING TOGETHER

SPOTLIGHT: FREE CAMPAIGN (EXPO)

Led by people who are directly impacted, EXPO (EX-incarcerated People Organizing) is committed to dismantling all systems that support mass incarceration and excessive supervision. The FREE Campaign was founded by EXPO members to address the lack of discussion around challenges particular to incarcerated women.



Organizing statement: We are organizing women in Wisconsin’s legal system in Milwaukee, Madison, and Chippewa Valley who have (along with their children) experienced trauma, as well as families and allies: To pursue stable housing that offers people the ability to live their best lives and be more apt to be involved in the community; by putting 20 women and their families in stable housing (10 in Milwaukee, 5 in Madison, and 5 in Chippewa Valley); and by developing 1-1 relationships with landlords, raising awareness of the issue, signing petitions and letters of support, and organizing public meetings with reputable landlords to make public commitments to providing housing; all by spring 2022.

SPOTLIGHT: DARE TO DIVEST (LIT)

Leaders Igniting Transformation (LIT) is a Black and Brown-led nonprofit organizing young people to build political power for social, racial, and economic justice. In 2020, the Dare to Divest campaign was launched to end the criminalization of BIPOC populations on Wisconsin’s public university and college campuses.



Organizing statement: We are organizing BIPOC students and community members on 8 Wisconsin college campuses: To pursue the divestment of financial resources from policing and reinvestment into restorative justice, community care, and supporting BIPOC populations; by achieving the 7 Dare to Divest Campaign goals starting with wellness checks not requiring police involvement; and by pressuring campus leadership (the administration, campus police, housing, and counseling) to center true student safety, because we do everything we need without the police across all campuses; all by spring 2022.

PART THREE: WHAT WE LEARNED

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK: BEFORE DAY ONE

There is wisdom in the old proverb, “measure twice, cut once.” The makings for success in crafting any meaningful training space is predicated on what happens before a person ever steps into the room or joins the first Zoom call. The WiLD Academy training team was able to draw on learning from WiLD’s first online course held in 2020, and bring added intentionality to the overall design, structure, and recruitment well in advance of the first day of class. The training team began meeting regularly a month and a half in advance, launching the 6-person core team with clear shared purpose, norms, and roles. There was also the fresh perspective of two new team members who helped reimagine significant aspects of the curriculum from the year prior.

The other pillar, often missed for expediency, is being clear about the fundamental organizing question: “who are my people?” This is an inquiry often without answer until rolling up your sleeves and engaging others—in most cases, numerous times. With this orientation and aim of hitting the ground running, there were several important stepping stones.

First, recruitment was completed almost exclusively through existing relationships of WiLD alumni and over 350 partner organizations. The majority of leads came through the WiLD network, which established some baseline alignment around expectations and accountability back to the person who referred them.

There were three additional steps in further exploring interest and identifying the right matches for the Academy. The WiLD Coordinator initially met with each of the potential team leads to determine if they had a group that was open to learning, could make the time commitment, and had a conceivable organizing project. Support was given as needed in recruitment, with many groups meeting together with the WiLD Coordinator in advance. Once registration was closed, the WiLD training team completed a one-on-one conversation with everyone in their assigned section. Each step along the way created an opportunity for natural self-selection, shaping a solid cohort and establishing relationships to anchor the course launch.

ORGANIZING APPLICATION

In comparison to the previous Academy, there were several common factors that likely contributed to new campaigns being launched and existing campaigns being deepened. The first was prioritizing applicants recruited in teams who had an organizing project focus. Having a team (versus participating as an individual) with a shared language and experience as part of an existing organization or community created a foundation to build upon when doing the hard work of applying the learning. For several groups, there was also more coaching given before the start of the course to help clarify a potential project.

A second contributing factor to application were the teams who met together in advance of the course and scheduled a regular meeting time throughout. Teams who met prior were able to share their hopes, clarify a potential area of focus, and collectively commit to the course. This laid an important foundation for being ready to start on day one. The groups who met throughout found it invaluable for discussing what was being learned, planning and making decisions about next steps with their organizing project.

The third factor may have been changing the curriculum to front-load the Academy with an introduction to strategy and campaigns. Instead of waiting until mid-course to begin diving into strategy and campaigns, these two concepts were presented in the second class with a guest panel of organizers sharing campaign examples. Teams were asked to create their draft organizing sentence for their respective projects, and subsequently received two rounds of coaching. The first happened in the following class' section breakout, where teams presented their organizing sentences and were given direct feedback by other groups. The following week after the module on coaching, participants were put into pairs to receive coaching specific to challenges as they conceptualized their organizing project.

“All 80+ participants were engaged with opening grounding exercises and active use of chat, fish bowls, power points prepared for each team. The overall workshop was highly organized and structured.”

— TRAINING PARTICIPANT

READING AND REFLECTION

A consistent piece of feedback suggested there was too much reading, and that materials needed to center more BIPOC, LGBTQ, and gender non-confirming experiences. Although many participants felt the readings were rich sources of learning, people with varying learning styles and work commitments felt they didn't have enough time to complete the readings each week. The suggestions included: further prioritizing the required versus optional readings, reinforcing them more through the lectures and offering more opportunities for discussion in pairs, small groups and online discussion spaces to incentivize reading.

There was a wide range of engagement through the weekly reflection papers and recordings. The intention of the reflection assignments was to give participants space to process what they learned during the week and find ways to apply it to their organizing project. The WiLD Academy coaches would then review, share feedback, and offer coaching questions. Many people consistently turned in reflections on time, received thoughtful feedback, and had an ongoing conversation with their coach throughout. The challenges came when reflections were not submitted or returned in a timely manner. Realizing this is not a graded class, the methods, frequency, and accountability norms for participants and the training team around reflections should be reevaluated.

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

There were several learnings around building culture and community online. Although both can be experienced in person during the intensive 3-day organizing workshops WiLD has led in years past, having 10 weeks to co-create a learning space allows for repeated touch points over an extended period of time. The Academy may have also met a deeper need present during the pandemic: people's desire for connection amidst the wide-spread experience of isolation.

The main learning is the significance of inviting others into the process of collectively creating their own space and deciding how they want to show up together, which is in contrast to many of the current online courses or one-way webinar series that enable passive learning. It is this practice of building community with shared purpose and explicit agreements that is much more than a feel-good step: it is instrumental in forming a container for deeper learning. As a result, participants are more open to showing vulnerability and gathering the courage required not only for taking risks in trying something new (even in failure), but for growth itself.

“ I left every training feeling changed, moved, and grateful.

– TRAINING PARTICIPANT

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY (CONT.)

There were multiple ways this took shape. First, the same people on the training team led the core pieces of each session, including the welcome and review of agenda, techspectives, community agreements and accountability, section breakouts, and debrief. The trainers rotated who led the various upfront sessions, always opening with their personal story. This created continuity.

In the first class, when community agreements were introduced and people invited to share what standards they wanted to hold themselves and others to, someone named “WiLD is a beginning.” The spirit of this intention resonated and was organically brought alive during the 10-week course, as participants began engaging with the course less as another one-off training, but more as a beginning of building something more meaningful together.

Another practice that facilitated the growth of culture were the “warm welcomes,” which began 15 minutes before the official start time. During this time, a different person from the training team would lead an icebreaker as a way to check in, with music playing in the background. These were optional, but by the end of the course over half the participants were joining early to participate.

A final practice that rooted our community was the sharing of groundings at the beginning of every session. We opened up 4 minutes for those who felt so moved to sign up in advance and bring a piece of themselves and what was moving them forward through culture and celebration of life. Twenty people shared over the duration of the Academy and it became a simple yet cherished way to create a sense of connection and lift sources of inspiration for the road ahead.



Extra care when starting out. Build on small success. Seed starting in the greenhouse

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

Beyond the curriculum, there were comments throughout the final evaluations lifting up the impact on participants' learning from observing the WiLD Academy training team in action. Not only did the team maintain a high level of attention to the craft of teaching, but also modeled what an effective interdependent leadership team looks like as it worked together to hold space over 10 weeks with 80+ students.

The training team found a way to creatively draw on its diverse talents, supporting each other through modeling strong group facilitation and participant engagement, coaching of leadership challenges with accountability, management of meetings and time, demonstrating vulnerability, and staying focused on the purpose while finding sources of joy in the work. Actions can speak louder than words in the context of learning.

“ This class has absolutely changed my life. I will forever see the world and people differently.

– TRAINING PARTICIPANT

CONCLUSION

WiLD's second endeavor in bringing the organizing training online was promising. The desire for quality community organizing training here in Wisconsin and beyond remains. The reach offered through this virtual training platform has tested these waters, expanding the scope to engaging leaders in 11 other states this year. With this virtual platform, not only are more people able to access the experience, but it creates potential for greater intersectional learning with a more diverse community of organizers across the country. This opens up a whole new opportunity for WiLD to explore becoming more national facing as the organization continues to find creative ways to thoughtfully build leadership capacity and a beloved community.

Looking ahead, the WiLD Project has launched a new 3-month campaign coaching program with 8 organizations from the Academy. The WiLD Academy course will be offered again in 2022. WiLD will continue connecting the dots among organizers and causes by developing authentic learning spaces so the aspirations for change behind each of these campaigns can be realized.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Team Meetings: Require each group to schedule a separate weekly or bi-weekly check-in outside of class for further deliberation and decision-making as a team.



Readings: Further prioritize weekly readings to serve as focal points in lectures and sections. Diversify to center more BIPOC, LGBTQ, and gender non-confirming voices. Create more opportunities for dialogue in pairs, small groups, and online discussion spaces.



Relationship Building: Give more time and focus to support participants doing one-on-one relationship building as a way to grow their teams and campaigns.



Reflection: Vary ways in which participants can process what they are learning each week through reflection papers, video recordings, or meetings with a WiLD Academy coach. Clarify what is and isn't a reflection paper at the beginning of the course. Offer a "bye week" to give students who need it a pass on writing a reflection paper for a particular week.



Cross-Pollination: Offer more opportunities for participants across organizations to connect and learn from each other's work.



Facilitation: Identify a lead from each team to be trained at the beginning of the course to facilitate several of their own team breakouts. Create a coaching buddy system, pairing facilitators across teams to support each other's learning throughout the course.



Research: Prioritize measuring team progress with clear research questions and survey tools so that more learning can be surfaced around why organizing teams struggle or succeed.



WILDPROJ.ORG