



The Local Agenda Experience | Participants Speak

*What do participants think of Springboard's Local Agenda? These replies were received from 2007 and 2008 participants, to the questions "What is the Local Agenda experience? What has it provided you? How is it different from or similar to other programs? What would you like to say to a potential funder about its value?"*

"Social entrepreneurship is a buzzword these days. Nearly every day, there are news articles, TV profiles, emails, and conversations about ventures that combine financial smarts with big hearts. All of this talk is inspiring, and leads many people, including me, to think about how they can harness the power of capitalism for social good.

"The problem is that while everyone is capable of dreaming up innovative ways of solving the world's ills, it's pretty darn hard to turn those daydreams into solid action. That's where Local Agenda NW comes in.

"Propelled by the notion that indeed everyone can change the world, Local Agenda NW gives community members the tools to develop a nascent idea into a powerful product, corporation, venture and more. I've been daydreaming about these things for a long time, and I've thought many times that what I really needed was some guidance. Without solid advice, mentorship, business know-how and yes, even deadline pressure, all of my ideas will eventually fizzle.

"Local Agenda is unique in that it harnesses the energy of dozens of well-meaning, community-minded people and funnels it towards smart, responsible, sustainable, business-savvy ventures that serve society. It's like an affordable, socially-aware, hyper-accelerated MBA. Without the suits, of course.

"By funding Local Agenda NW, you are, in essence, spawning dozens of sustainable ventures that create a better world. What could be better than that?"



"Each workshop has spoken to the spark inside me that is flickering on the verge of ignition and has empowered me to keep on working toward my goals of 'doing good' and 'making a difference.' This workshop has become a container for me, a place where I can be fully present to what it is that keeps pulling at me to be born. The format of the workshop has a beautiful way of providing support in a respectful and nurturing way. We are doing difficult work trying to bring forth powerful ideas and this workshop honors that and encourages us to work hard and dig in. I am very appreciative of the opportunity to be a participant."



"Local Agenda is a very valuable program for would-be social entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship can be a pretty lonely experience. Getting to the practical from the cerebral is no easy feat. So far Local Agenda has gotten us to focus in on our missions,

our visions and our problems that we would like to help solve. We have gotten to the point that we, via various techniques introduced to us by the program, are coming up with ideas as to what we may be able to do. Feedback from our facilitators and peers has been extremely valuable. When I started the program I was feeling very stuck. Local Agenda has gotten the juices running. Yeah !

"Local Agenda is not like any other experience I have had. I've not been in a situation where I'm supported by people who would like to see me successful in contributing to the betterment of our society. That's what social entrepreneuring is all about. Seeing a crack in the wall and finding a way to build a strong base. It can be a risky and scary prospect. There are many challenges. Without the support of Local Agenda I would be back at the beginning instead of on a journey that is growing and taking shape."



"For me, the Local Agenda class of Springboard Innovation is a life-altering experience. The facilitators, together with the innovative curriculum, have nurtured in me the vision and confidence that I can do something I would never have thought of or conceptualized, and what others might think is the un-doable. In point of fact, once I came to understand what my project would be, it never occurred to me that it is anything other than worthwhile and something that can be accomplished internationally.

"'Value' in the case of Local Agenda can be measured using both concretely fiscal and social parameters. In addition, you can measure Local Agenda/Springboard itself or the various projects that emerge out of the program.

"If you measure a particular project these measurements are more or less readily definable. For example, with my project, it is the "cost" of not doing it that will impact a given community. My project is working with mothers who have birthed babies as a result of rape during armed conflict. Teaching these mothers child development, child communication, baby massage, empathy and compassion, enhances the individual and community to be more relational and competent, so that the community and the individual may become instruments of prevention rather than instruments of war.

"The particular uniqueness of Local Agenda is the clear understanding of what it takes to move through the social entrepreneuring process from start to finish. They do this by guiding and moving launchers step-by-step utilizing their own expertise and with linkages to incredibly innovative, competent and skilled individuals and organizations. This is done with the understanding that it is human nature to get stuck in one task or another with the possible outcome of the project dying. Consequently we are kept on pace with supportive, thought provoking, and interesting tasks aimed at constantly moving us forward.



"Already into implementing my idea as far as creating public awareness around it, my process previous to the class closely lines up with the exercises and steps, even the



individuals in the community who would like to make a difference, but would be stopped from accessing more traditional institutions because of those institutions costs. No community college, no university is offering the quality or caliber of information, mentoring, and support that Local Agenda is providing.

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"I experienced a true business paradigm shift thanks to your class. I've been an entrepreneur for most of my life and knew there was a connection between values and profitability. You've showed me that that you can be a socially responsible entrepreneur, with the business intent based on my personal values and filling a need in our community. Your class provided the mentorship I needed to bridge that gap in my mindset and focus on the values based purpose.

"Your guidance was what I valued the most from your class. Your experience and your single-mindedness in helping us focus our projects was invaluable. I was so impressed watching you assist some of the members to clarify their projects. It was collaboration work at its finest. As you can tell, I have nothing but praise for Amy and her staff.

"I highly recommend funding for Local Agenda. It will pay back the investment on so many levels than the initial funding."

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"It has been a good experience. I feel like this is a much different class than a regular business class – it pushes me to think outside the box. It makes me question the non profit model and what matters to me. Yesterday I was at work (I work at one the top cultural destinations in Portland) and the ED related to me our current troubled fiscal outlook. He said he wasn't too worried – that he's experienced this for the last 35 years. It struck me as a really sad moment – that people can spend their whole lives in floundering NPOs, continually in a position of not knowing if they will have enough income to keep going. Seems to me a perfect example of Yunus and his attempts to alleviate poverty – and what this class is about rethinking and coming up with solutions for."

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"The program and the instructors are encouraging me to think out of the box in a way I could never have imagined... And I consider myself a true out of the box person."

"The facilitators devote an amazing amount of energy and enthusiasm as they guide us through the process of realizing our projects. This all translates into big hope and enormous propulsion for those of us who are sensitive to injustices in the world, so thirsty to create meaningful change but just lack the right vehicle to do so."

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"In the world of business there are existing proven structures, strategies, and mechanisms of support to allow ideas to be tested and eventually brought to reality in the market place. There is a serious lack of similar structures in the social profit world. Local Agenda gives people the necessary structure of support that is crucial to take the seed of a good idea, sprout it, and grow it into a full flourishing plant that offers whatever its product or service is.

"My experience is that Local Agenda is a unique and highly effective integration of these various necessary strategies and mechanisms, including innovative thinking for expanding and clarifying our options coupled with practical, on-the-ground assessments of our market, and ways to not only start but sustain our ventures.

"In addition to having two masters degrees (one in management), I have worked for years in for-profit businesses and social service non-profits, in roles ranging from sales/marketing, coaching/training, administration/management, to business owner, and I have a good sense of what this takes. I have been continually extremely impressed with the depth of expertise, competence, commitment, accomplishment, creativity, confidence, and "can-do" attitude of Springboard staff.

"In my experience there is nothing else that even comes close to Local Agenda and Springboard (certainly not academic programs!), and I believe it is sorely needed in our world today."

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"I experienced the chance to feel empowered in actually making a difference because of an idea I had."

"We go through life having lots of ideas but never really feeling hopeful or positive that that idea could actually come to fruition and change the world.... A simple thought...the start of a thread that gets woven through an intricate internal tapestry on its way to creating a final product."

"I experienced myself as a creative person for the first time...that my mind and heart could create something of meaning and value...that held the possibility of hope and change for someone else who may be suffering... Daily life is a grind...the opportunity to get in touch with a primal place of creativity and hope renewed my sense of purpose as I turned 50."

"I am very thankful for this opportunity to experience myself in this new way -- and feel more empowered to move forward in lots of areas of my life... I am connected to people like the facilitators who inspire, support and help me believe in the possibility of my true self serving others."

Thank you.

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"I will try to express what working with Local Agenda has been like for me."

"I was introduced to Local Agenda through a friend who had been helping me put screen in my screen doors (part of my sustaining strategy, though I had never used the term before). She thought that I might benefit from taking the workshop, as I had explained what I wanted to do in Central America, and what the money that was generated through the sale of the screen doors was going to be used for. I signed up for the workshop and worked on the screen doors. As time went by (thanks to Local Agenda) I became more excited about my project actually becoming a reality. I was offered help in areas that I didn't know existed, as well as help that I was aware I needed."

"I am now meeting with people that have a need for a building, and an interest in recycling. Some even are enthusiastic about economic growth in Central America. Without your help and support I am concerned I would get tired of the struggle and like too much of the world give up."



"I participated in Local Agenda during the spring of 2008. It was one of the best experiences of my life. I have spent most of my professional life learning, both as a student and teacher (I have two masters degrees and taught at community college for ten years) and felt extremely lucky to have the opportunity to participate in this class. Springboard staff had more content knowledge, enthusiasm, passion for social entrepreneurialism, a non-ending stream of ideas and a true commitment to their students. No matter what challenge or barrier you were presented with Amy and Suzie had solutions and/or resources to help you overcome them."

"During this class I experienced my love for learning, was offered the support and tools necessary to pursue my dreams, and worked with a community of people to share ideas, resources and passion. This class was invaluable to everyone who participates, whether they launch their ideas today, tomorrow or sometime in the future."

"This class is not like any experience I have ever had. It was a true learning community where we learned from Amy and one another, and applied (or are applying) what we learned in our "local communities". If just 5% were able to put their projects into our communities the world would be a better place. Even for those people who were unable to continue pursuing their project they benefited from the class for so many reasons. It provided everyone a new way to approach the world, it gave people new skills, it creates community and it was a genuine opportunity to connect with other people in our community."

"I currently work for a large non-profit organization and know the many challenges that smaller, more local programs (and larger ones) face. I know the competition for funding is steep. I can't tell you how strongly I recommend funding local agenda. It is an invaluable opportunity that if every citizen of the world participated in the world would be a much better place."