M.A. in Leadership Project Guide

APRIL 2014

SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE of CALIFORNIA

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Introduction

How To Use This Guide

The Leadership Project is a culminating and integrating component of the Program. This guide has been designed to outline the requirements for the project proposal and provide suggestions for implementation. These are followed by guidance for creating the project findings and writing the leadership project paper. Although a Faculty Advisor will provide assistance during the project, the starting point is being familiar with the material in this guide.

To use this guide effectively, we suggest that you do the following:

- **Print out** the guide and keep it with your other Leadership Project materials.
- **Read the guide** and ask a Faculty Advisor any unanswered questions.
- **Note and keep up with** the deadlines for each component of the project.
- **Work in tandem with** this printed project guide and as you are writing the proposal and the leadership project paper.
- **Review** your readings and learning from Sustainable Organizational Change on action research as you work on your proposal, and as you implement your project. This guide is ***not*** intended to cover the various action research methods.
- **Work** from the "Leadership Project Proposal Outline" and the "Leadership Project Paper Outline" provided by your Advisors with due dates designated for your cohort. Following the outlines is key to a successful project.
- **Consult** Moodle resources including the Overview of the Project Process, the Proposal outline, and several examples of proposals and project papers.
- **Re-read this Guide's section on Research Implementation** as you finish up your proposal.
- **Re-read the section on Creating the Project Findings and the Learning** as you approach the end of implementation and your final reflection cycle.
- **Re-read the section on Writing the Leadership Project Paper** during your final reflections prior to drafting the paper.

Overview

As a capstone spanning the last ten months of the Program, the Leadership Project (also known as the Synthesis Project) invites you, the learner, to integrate, demonstrate, and synthesize 21st century leadership practices as you identify and carry out a research project for which you have a great passion. You will design, implement and report on a participatory action inquiry and change strategy in response to a problem, issue, opportunity or question within a specific group, institution or community. The project offers you the opportunity to develop new processes and practices for sustainable leadership at the personal and organizational level. You learn through creating the conditions for a collaborative change process and engaging 21st century leadership practices.

The project development phase of the M.A. in Leadership program begins in Sustainable Organizational Change, in which learners are introduced to action research methods and their application in a small change project as part of their coursework. The project proposal and implementation runs concurrently with the curriculum starting with the next course and culminates in a set of group presentations during the retreat that is part of Module X.

There are two deliverables associated with the Leadership Project (also known as the Synthesis Project): the Project Proposal and the Project Paper.

1. The Leadership Project Proposal describes the conceptualization and framework for the project and it includes a description and discussion of the research method and the proposed research steps.
2. The Leadership Project Paper documents the learner's implementation of the project and presents the learning. The Project Paper includes the following elements: Abstract, Introduction (Conceptualization and Framework as updated from the project proposal), Description and Discussion of the Research Method, Research Steps Implemented, Narrative Account of the Project Action/Reflection Cycles, Evaluation of Project Outcomes, Reflection on Sustainable Organizational Change Practices, Learning and Integration of Leadership Practices, Concluding Implications and Next Steps.

Both the proposal and the paper are written in APA format. The Leadership Project Paper that reports the learning is your visible and permanent record of quality action research accomplished within the Graduate Leadership program and, upon acceptance, is archived in the Saint Mary's Library, or on ProQuest (the online database where SMC dissertations, theses, and synthesis projects are filed).

The focus of the leadership project is *education,* the drawing forth of new capacities for effective action by all involved. The foreground of the research project is the opportunity to influence positive change within a group or organization or community utilizing participatory action research methods; the background of the project is *learning* from the application of principles and practices of 21st century leadership. As learners share their experiences of implementing their projects additional learning often emerges, especially at the cohort's final retreat. Thus the project calls for a synthesis of leadership theory and action research practice, and promotes an integration of all that has been learned about leadership throughout the Graduate Leadrship program

Preparation for Action Research

You may choose from among various methods within the action research family, which all share the values of democracy, participation, and the creation of new knowledge. During Sustainable Organizational Change you had experience with participating in a practice inquiry for a Collaborative/Cooperative Inquiry (CI) or an Action Research (AR) project. You may build on either of these projects or you may start afresh with a new topic and/or a new method. Note that the nomenclature in the Leadership Project is to use capital letters to designate the specific methodologies of Collaborative/Cooperative Inquiry (CI) and the Action Research Method (ARM), while using lower case for "action research" as the general family name of the orientation that encompasses both CI and ARM methods. Also note that while we use the term Collaborative Inquiry (CI) interchangeably with Cooperative Inquiry (CI), our course materials typically use either Collaborative Inquiry or CI.

As you go forward, we encourage you to carefully review the Sustainable Organizational Change readings related to the research method you have selected. You may also find it useful to revisit materials from previous modules germane to enacting 21st century leadership in your project. For example, Rosenberg's (2005) *Non-Violent Communication* is often consulted during project implementation. Faculty Advisors are available to discuss the appropriate methods for your project.

Proposal Development

The proposal development stage of the Leadership Project is the first step in the project. During the first four courses in the program you have been thinking and writing a bit about your project. The Sustainable Organizational Change Course advances the development of your proposal as you further develop a topic and propose a strategy to carry out a collaborative organizational change initiative that demonstrates your capacity for practicing 21st century leadership. Following the Sustainable Organizational Change course you will work closely with the a Faculty Advisors as you prepare drafts of each section and then at least two complete drafts of your Proposal. You must have formal written faculty approval for your project proposal prior to beginning your research. (Note that Leadership Project and Synthesis Project are used interchangeably.)

Preparing the Proposal

There are three sections for the proposal: 1) the conceptualization and framework, 2) the description and discussion of the research method, and 3) the basic research steps. As you work on your proposal, your Faculty Advisor will review each section and provide feedback to you. You will then combine all three sections into one document that will become the proposal. You should expect to complete at least two iterations of each section of the proposal prior to approval. The suggested proposal length is 15-20 pages, plus appendices. Once your proposal is approved you are ready to start your research.

As you write the proposal, also review the relevant readings assigned during Sustainable Organizational Change. Note that this Guide and the Outlines endeavor to describe the Project in a way that can apply to either Action Research (AR) or Collaborative/Cooperative Inquiry (CI) as the method chosen.

The Leadership Project Proposal Outline is the principal guide for drafting your proposal (see Appendix **C**). Sample proposals from former projects will be posted in Moodle. What follows here describes each section of the proposal outline-- you should follow the outline distributed to your cohort; *the outline changes from cohort to cohort so you may see some differences between the sample proposals and what is in the outline for your cohort.*

Conceptualization and Framework

In this section of the proposal you will describe the opportunity or issue to be addressed, the context in which it arises, the purpose of the project, and the preliminary research question. This section also includes a literature-based discussion of your topic.

Opportunity or issue to be addressed.

The opportunity or issue that will be the focus of your project will be something in your organization, community, or life that you are curious about or would like to enhance. It may be a personal capacity that you wish to explore and develop in collaboration with others. Many learners have a clear idea for their project by the end of Module VI while others need more time for exploration. Learners may choose to join with others from the cohort to initiate a project together. Others may choose to work in settings outside of the cohort. If you are having difficulty selecting a topic, talking with others often helps identify what is important to you, excites you, and/or ignites your passion—talk with cohort members, your Faculty Advisor, colleagues at work, friends, family, etc. Journal about it. Allow yourself some down time, and let your unconscious participate in the choice. There are six examples of projects listed below that indicate the range of topics that have been successful projects. For more examples, the Saint Mary's College Library has bound copies of many of the Leadership Project Synthesis Papers.

Don't stay stuck for long without reaching out—you are not the first learner in this situation. You are guaranteed that your instructor would rather hear from you that you are in a pickle, than not to hear from you at all. If you are feeling stuck consider the following questions: Maybe you need to start smaller? Maybe your workplace is not where you want to do this project? This topic and ensuing project, while a great opportunity, is not the be-all and end-all that makes or breaks your MA work, or justifies your existence.

We encourage you to appreciate that this is a forced situation in which there is an academic deadline to find a topic, whereas you have the rest of your life to see what you want to do, or what needs to be done next. Often times learners have a project in mind that is part of their job. This is terrific! And, it is not unusual for work-based projects to be larger than the scope of the Leadership Project. This is fine – as long as you complete four action/reflection cycles you will have enough data to write your Leadership Project Paper.

Context.

The context describes the setting in which the opportunity or issues arises. This may be a description of your organization or community or may be much broader. It describes the factors and/or conditions that are contributing to the opportunity or issue you want to inquire into. As you describe the context, you will want to be sure to connect the opportunity or issue you are exploring to the broader context in which it arises.

Purpose and preliminary research question.

The purpose states in a central succinct sentence what you are trying achieve, solve, change, increase or explore; or in other words the outcomes you are anticipating. As you elaborate on this statement of purpose make sure you identify who will benefit from your project and why. It also leads into your *preliminary research question*, which is the jumping off place to launch the inquiry. A well-framed preliminary research question is sufficiently wide to capture the purpose, and specific enough to give the participants traction in pursuit of the topic. (See the variety of projects and purposes in the Examples of Leadership Projects at the end of Preparing the Proposal section.)

Topic literature review.

In the literature review section you will identify three or four sources that look like they will be useful in guiding your research and describe how the authors contribute to your understanding of the topic and why are these sources relevant to your project. Do enough research about what others have written about your topic to become aware of resources available. The sources most likely will be identified through an Internet research. While Wikipedia can steer you toward citable sources, do not cite Wikipedia as a final source, since these entries have not gone through a scholarly review process.

Additionally, include two or three references to the leadership literature you already know about that you anticipate could be useful in implementing the project. What concepts might be especially useful in guiding the research and sharing with your participants? You could refer to a definition of leadership, or dynamics such as communication, trust, team building, values, and/or social capital. Draw on what you have found especially valuable in the Leadership curriculum and readings. You can also include sources form outside the program. We imagine that as you conduct your project you will extend your discussion and may find other sources that will further your project; these additional sources can be mentioned in your Leadership Project Paper. Note that any sources on action research (AR or CI) belong later in the Research Method section.

Research Method

This section of the proposal describes the research method you will follow in a literature-based discussion – what this means is that you will include quotes and citations from the sources you are drawing on. As the Proposal Outline indicates there are three main sub-sections for the Research Method section – the first is about action research in general, the next one is about the specifics of the action research methodology you have selected for your project and the third section is about why you have selected this particular method for your project. The first two sections should be written without reference to your project – the reader should get a sense of what action research is in general. The assigned readings in Sustainable Organizational Change will be the major literature source on methods.

Action research overview.

This sub-section starts with a brief description of the action research *family* of strategies. As you describe the action research family be sure to include the key assumptions and characteristics shared by *all* the methodologies in the action research family (action-oriented, experience based, and participatory). Draw on the readings and assignments from Sustainable Organizational Change to describe these features in common such as collaborative relationship between researcher and participants, a systematic process of practitioner problem posing and solving (cycles of action and reflection), and diversity of participants.

Action research method selected for your project.

In this sub-section thoroughly describe the method you have chosen for your project. What do the Module VI readings say about when to use this method? What is an example of its effective use? You should include a detailed description of the key steps used in the method – about a paragraph for each step or phase of the research method. Be sure to support your description with quotes and citation from the appropriate from the readings. Your description prepares you to educate your participants on the method you will use together.

Validity procedures used with action research.

This section should start with an introduction about what validity is and why it is important (refer to Heron & Reason, 2001; Bradbury & Reason, 2006; Bray et al., 2000). Validity procedures are helpful in gathering quality data, in bringing awareness to the interactions among the participants/collaborators, and in documenting the findings/learning. It may be helpful to think of validity procedures also as "quality procedures."

Validity procedures take into account potential bias in the way the data/research findings are generated, interpreted, and reported. Since any observation is seen through a particular lens, good research design usually means conducting the inquiry in a way that incorporates multiple perspectives, so that no one vantage point is relied on to describe the reality of what is being investigated. Action research practitioners have developed validity procedures to guard against the bias of the inquirers, especially unconscious bias and self-deception.

As you review the sources and write this section, it may be helpful to note that there are three main areas where applying validity procedures improves the quality of the inquiry: data gathering process, interactions between participants, reporting the findings.

Examples of procedures used while gathering data include multiple cycles of action and reflection, multiple data sources (triangulation), and diversity of participants to ensure multiple perspectives. These are generally considered defining elements for action research projects. Multiple data sources might include interviews, observations, journal notes, and surveys (Kuhne & Quigley, 1997).

Examples of procedures that support interactions between participants include managing distress, authentic collaboration, balancing action with reflection, balance between chaos and order. Skills that support participants in engaging in the inquiry include being present and open, bracketing and reframing, and guarding against defensive routines and group think by challenging consensus collusion through the role of "devil's advocate." These validity procedures and skills raise the awareness of the inquirers during the inquiry to free them from "the distortion of uncritical subjectivity" (Heron & Reason, 2001, p. 150) to create what Heron and Reason (2001) call "critical subjectivity" (p. 149).

In reporting the research findings, include key quotes for rich thick description to bring authenticity and freshness to the paper. Ask your participants to review and critique your draft of the project report. Assess the validity of the project in your paper: to what extent were validity procedures implemented? How well did the project incorporate the "choice-points" proposed by Bradbury and Reason (2006) in the conclusion to the *Handbook for Action Research*?

Rationale for choosing this particular method.

Be sure to include a rationale for selecting the particular research strategy to fit the problem/issue/research question described in the Conceptualization and Framework section. If it is not already clear, say why have you chosen this method rather than another. In a couple of sentences describe the strengths as well as the potential problems of the method chosen.

Basic Research Steps

In this section describe the details of how you will implement your project. Include a description of the criteria and process for inviting participants into your project, and a description of how you will gain approval of project (if needed). It covers the precautions you will take to protect the participants' privacy, and how you will obtain their informed consent to participate. It lays out your plan for facilitating and educating participants about the expectations and methodology you will use. Also included in this section is detailed information about how you will gather your data and how you will anticipate reflecting on the data gathered during the project. How will you making meaning out of various project experiences through analysis, interpretation, and evaluation? It will include a discussion of how you plan to address validity in your project. It will conclude with a proposed project timeline.

Criteria and process for inviting participation.

As you think about the optimal participants for your project, given the research question you that you have created, you will develop a set of criteria for participants. You should consider what knowledge, skills and capacities are needed for your project and how you will ensure diversity and encourage collaboration.

As you draft your proposal you may already know who the participants might be. If you decided to talk informally with potential participants, please talk with your Advisor first – we will recommend that you wait until the conceptualization and framework section is fully formed before going very far in approaching potential participants. Talking it through with others can be helpful to begin to clearly articulate the purpose of your project.

Learners often ask about how many collaborators should be included in a CI. The answer is "it depends." While every situation is unique, it's our experience for the depth of work expected in the leadership project requires a minimum of three (to get the diversity of perspective) and no more than eight; it gets very complicated logistically since all must proceed together and it's hard to co-ordinate meeting times. Four or five highly committed participants are often optimal. If all the participants are members of the cohort, and thus will be writing the proposal and paper collaboratively, we recommend no more than five people.

If you have minors or others from "at risk" groups you will need to request an IRB review and obtain approval for your project (see below).

Once you have identified the criteria for your participants, the next step is to describe how you will invite them to participate in your project. Will you do this via email, phone calls, personal conversations, referrals from others, etc.?

Do not formally invite participants until you have an approved proposal!

Plans for facilitating and educating participants.

Once you have determined who your participants will be, the next step is to anticipate how you will introduce them to the action research methodology you will be using. It's very likely that the methodology will be new to them. Educating about the method may be something you do during the initial meeting or perhaps by sending something for people to read. Think about when you first heard about action research in Module VI – what surprised you? What intrigued you? What helped you understand the basic principles of AR or CI and gave you a sense of how you would proceed? What will give them enough grounding so they are empowered to actively participate without overwhelming them with information about the methods? How will you convey the basics so they are excited about this methodology? How will you get agreement on the conditions of learning (Bray et al., 2000)? The intention is that your participants will be excited about joining you in the inquiry. Use your cohort and your Advisor for ideas regarding how to best do this.

If you will be working with members of the cohort or SMC leadership community this section will be brief as they will already be familiar with the methodology. It is likely that even for a project with cohort members as participants that the group will need to spend some time reviewing the methodology.

You should disclose to the participants that as the convener there are specific requirements you need to satisfy for your degree requirements.

Gaining approval.

Most AR projects, and some CIs, are conducted within an organizational setting where it is appropriate to seek approval and support for the project from someone with the authority to provide it. Be in touch with your Advisor regarding the timing of seeking these permissions. While it may be necessary to have some preliminary discussion about the feasibility of the project you are proposing before getting concrete about the details, you need enough Advisor feedback on your proposal so that you are well grounded as you begin to vet your ideas.

The College's Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversees faculty and student research and requires obtaining formal permission for conducting research projects. Beyond the approval of your Advisor, there may be an organizational consent that is needed for your project. If an organizational consent form is needed, include that in a separate appendix to your Proposal. If the proposed project involves higher risk as explained below, your Advisor may suggest you submit an Application directly to the IRB.

Protecting participants.

Every project must pay attention to protecting the participants invited into the collaboration. You and your Advisor are accountable to the IRB that reviews and approves research protocols for Saint Mary's College student and faculty research on human subjects. While action research is research *with* rather than *on* others, we still follow protocols to make sure participants are protected by knowing they participate voluntarily, that their privacy and confidentiality is respected, and they are alerted in advance of the expectations and risks of joining in the action research. These are summarized in a consent form that you tailor to your project and have each participant sign. If a project involves a highly charged or confidential topic, or an "at risk" population (for example: mentoring junior high school students; setting up drug abuse counseling in a church), you may need to request a review and approval by the IRB. The consent form you design for your participants goes into an appendix to your Proposal. Additional discussion of how you will protect participants goes into the body of the Proposal.

The following steps will guide you through this process:

1. Review parameters for institutional research practices, includeing the steps for protecting participants and obtaining permissions to conduct the project, in the Procedures for Protecting Participants section of this guide.
2. Review the"Request for Screening for Exemption" approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB)
3. Review the IRB website, and then complete the required CITI Training per your Faculty Advisor's direction.
4. Review and sign (electronically) the Agreement to Protect Action Research Participants in this guide (Appendix F) and include it in the appendix of your proposal.
5. Identify potential risks to participants in the inquiry, and if it applies, risks to the organization.
6. Include the form for organizational approval (see Appendix F), if needed, in the appendix of your proposal. This may not apply to all projects, such as a CI among members of the cohort, or a CI or AR not done in an organizational setting.
7. Create informed consent form(s) and include in the appendix of your proposal. We have included sample consent forms in the appendix of this guide (Appendix G: AR Consent Form; Appendix H: AR Consent Form – Higher Risk; Appendix I: CI Consent Form).
8. Describe briefly the plan to distribute/collect signed forms from each project participant.

If you are planning to do any video or audio recordings be sure this is included in the consent form and discuss it with your Faculty Advisor.

Data gathering procedures.

This section discusses the specific types of data to be gathered. Typically, data in AR and CI projects includes written data generated by individual participants in the form of journaling notes that capture lived experience, as well as notes that summarize the highlights of group meetings and group activities. Data may also include email communications and materials gathered through activities that utilize presentational knowing, such as drawings, collages, etc. You will likely have two types of data -- data gathered related directly to exploring the topic or problem and data regarding the experience of conducting your research (an AR or a CI).

Every project will need to collect relevant information regarding the project's purpose. This data will vary from project to project depending on the topic and the method. They may be gathered through a variety of processes, including journals, dialogues, storytelling, meetings notes, conversations, interviews, role-play, surveys and art. Because this project is intended to yield new learning about conducting action research, you need to document the process of how the AR or CI unfolds. Always in a CI and often in an AR, the conveners ask the other participants to keep a journal, and take turns taking notes during meetings, especially during reflection phases.

If you are considering using audio or video tapes here are some pros and cons to keep in mind: the pros are that audio taping face-to-face/conference call meetings can be useful to go back over and analyze, pull out meaningful moments and key quotes, to benefit a participant who has to miss the meeting; the cons are that it may dampen candor and transcribing recordings can get very time consuming. You must include a description of how you will keep recordings confidential and your plan to destroy them. (See the example consent form, which has a separate section for signatures regarding consent to tape record.)

As the convening researcher, early on during proposal development begin to keep a journal of your process—tracking developments such as finding and narrowing the topic, approaching potential participants, getting the research strategy focused, finding sources about the topic, and reflecting on important learning along the way. These entries can provide material for the Narrative section of your Leadership Project Paper.

Data analysis procedures.

Describe how data gathered will be analyzed and how you will make meaning from your experience—briefly, what are your plans for reflection? At what points will you analyze, interpret, evaluate, and construct together new learning/knowledge? How will this inform your next steps?

The reflection time during each action/reflection cycle provides the major opportunity for analyzing the data gathered and making sense out of the inquiry experience. As part of the proposal anticipate how you will be structuring these reflection times: when will they occur? How much time will be devoted? How will you take stock of what has happened? How might you go about analyzing the data gathered in the previous action(s)? How might you provide for interpreting the findings? How will you build in the evaluation of your cumulative results?

Here are some examples from other projects of reflection, contemplation, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation--- from which conclusions were drawn:

- In a CI on increasing effective communication between police officers, the participants made sure that they took the time at the end of every project meeting to *reflect* on what had just happened before concluding the meeting. Further they individually journaled after the meeting was over, and shared these *contemplative* reflections at the next meeting.
- In an AR to improve health care delivery to underserved populations, a group of care providers joined together to tell their success stories, and *analyzed* these stories for themes and patterns that provided clues as to how to go forward.
- In a CI on improving relationships between mothers and their adult daughters, photos of mother-daughter pairs were gathered from family albums and *analyzed* for body language that might reveal the early onset of relationship patterns.
- In an AR to build sales team productivity the convener *interpreted* the lack of participation in meetings to be the result of mistrust between participants.
- In an AR on improving leadership skills among nurse managers in a hospital, the convener *evaluated* progress by comparing the participants' journal entries before, during, and after a series of communication workshops.
- In an AR on team building in an IT customer service center, the participants *analyzed* the steps they needed to take in order to create a successful team, then *evaluated* how well they were doing on each step, and *concluded* that they were not taking enough time to have fun together.

- The participants in a CI on improving personal health *concluded* during their final reflection phase that the goal of losing weight through exercise within a short time was overly ambitious, but that they now had the mutual support to achieve challenging health goals over the long run.

In the proposal you aren't expected to know in advance exactly how you will proceed during the reflection times, only that you will need to plan time for them in your timeline. Later on during the implementation phase, when you arrive at these reflection periods you will decide with your participants how you might proceed. If you do have a good idea of what you might be doing, by all means mention it in this proposal section.

Your experience in Module VI, the readings about action research, and consultation with your Advisors are major resources for anticipating what data you will be collecting and how you will gather it. Your Advisor will encourage data collected from multiple perspectives and the multiple ways of knowing through the extended epistemology (Heron & Reason, 2001, Reason & Heron, 1999).

Meta-reflection process.

At the conclusion of the *last* action/reflection cycle plan for sufficient time for rigorous reflection and evaluation in order to make meaning of your *total experience together*. You will need this time to construct knowledge to include in your project paper about the topic and about leadership at the personal, group, and organization level.

What are the outcomes of the project in light of the purpose and objectives stated in your proposal? What did you learn about conducing action research? About leadership? You are encouraged to adequately plan for this phase of the research. The Faculty Advisors recommend that a minimum of several weeks be allocated for this stage, with at least one face-to-face meeting devoted to it.

Validity procedures anticipated.

In the methodology section of the proposal you were asked to describe the some of the validity procedures used with action research. Here you identify those you intend to use to increase the quality of your research. These are procedures you want to track throughout the project, and assess at the end how well they worked. The validity procedures are applied both during the data gathering phase of the project as well as during the data analysis activities and writing the project paper. If the validity procedures you plan to utilize are clearly described in the Methods section, you can simply mention the ones you want to implement and when you plan to introduce them into the inquiry.

Project timeline.

The project timeline should specify all major steps in the research project and associate each step with a calendar week or date. These major steps typically include: drafting the proposal and obtaining approval; recruiting participants; initial meeting to orient participants and sign consent forms; four cycles of action and reflection (allowing 2 weeks for each cycle); a final meeting to reflect on the project as a whole; initial draft of final paper; revisions to final paper; approval of final paper.

Your project timeline, including the dates for checking in with your Advisor every two weeks, becomes a project management tool to provide structure and a way to track your progress. Inevitably there are changes to the timeline during the implementation, but it provides a useful base line to refer back to check progress.

Managing Your Project

It is your responsibility to keep your Faculty Advisor apprised of your progress, especially as deadlines approach. We appreciate that designing and implementing the project while enrolled in other modules adds a time management challenge, and we will work with you if you get behind. We have developed a Leadership Project Proposal Outline (Appendix C) to guide you in the structure of your proposal. We have also outlined the flow of the project over the course of the program (Appendix A). The outline for the Leadership Project Paper is included as Appendix C – we encourage you to review it to ensure that you are familiar with the expectations and deliverables for the paper. Both the proposal and the paper must follow APA format. The correct format for the title page for the proposal is included as Appendix D.

Examples of Leadership Projects

Building Collaborative Relationships to Create a Healthier Work Environment for Nursing Managers

This project was to improve the work environment of an eight-person nursing leadership team by engaging the workgroup in building a stronger peer support network. The work group designed and implemented a positive communication model that increased mutual trust and reduced work stress.

Customer Service Model Review Team

This project demonstrated collaborative leadership within the Customer Service department of a tooling company supporting the consumer electronics industry. Spurred by concerns with Customer Service performance, a team was formed to develop potential solutions. Five months later, the team developed the framework of an alternative Customer Service model.

A Collaborative Inquiry into Leisure and Play

This project convened by two students invited four others to join in exploring the importance of play and leisure in their lives to create a balance between the pressures of work and the need for emotional and physical health. Trying out new behaviors brought new awareness of the importance of play and leisure, a willingness to include more of it in their lives, and new realizations about the challenges of initiating Collaborative Inquiry.

Reducing the Obstacles to Home Ownership for First-Time Low Income Buyers

This project sought to examine how well the Affordable Housing and First-time Homebuyer's Program of a large metropolitan city assists the public in buying a home. The project identified various challenges that low-income families experience in seeking to purchase affordable homes in the area, as well as steps to address these challenges.

Suburban Sprawl and Community Oriented Police Services

This project addressed the impacts of rapid urbanization on small and mid-size California law enforcement agencies practicing Community Oriented Police Services (COPS). This project focused on developing dialogues and problem solving sessions with the various stakeholders in a specific community experiencing rapid population growth and development.

City of _____ - Core Values

This project researched and designed core values of the City of _____ as they relate to line staff, middle managers, and department heads. Particular attention was paid to consistency of core values across staff lines and how to impart and maintain the City's core values throughout the organization from a 21st century leadership approach of collaboration and mutual purpose.

Developing Individual Leadership Capacities Within a Small CIty Fire Department

This CI convened by two students recruited two other fire service leaders to cultivate their leadership capacities and develop practices that not only increased their own effectiveness but benefitted the whole department by modeling collaborative processes in a traditionally heirarchical structure.

Research Implementation

The approved proposal, and more specifically the basic research steps, is the map for the research. The research implementation phase allows for depth of research and successive cycles of action and reflection. To allow for enough time for the minimum **four** cycles, there must be at least **eight** weeks of research implementation. Your Faculty Advisor is available to answer questions and provide feedback on issues that arise throughout this phase. A check-in every two weeks is expected during implementation, with a written update at least once a month.

Launching the Research

The completed proposal becomes the major strategic tool for mapping how to proceed. The reading in the Sustainable Organizational Change course (Bray et al., 2000; Heron & Reason, 2001; Kuhne & Quigley, 1997; McArdle, 2002; Prendergast, 1994; Van Stralen, 2002) are a resource to consult on how other researchers have dealt with the choices and challenging moments that arise in convening and conducting action research. Sample project Leadership Project Papers will be posted to indicate how other Saint Mary's projects have proceeded. Copies of Leadership Project Papers are available in the SMC library.

Cycles of Action and Reflection

As the major organizing framework of action inquiry, the cycling of action and reflection that leads to new action gives prominence to *reflection*. Reflection may involve contemplation, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. In the project you are asked to be especially conscious of the reflection process, both highlighting it and documenting it. This can be challenging at time because organizations and individuals often resist taking time to reflect and pause to make meaning of the actions they have just completed.

If you encounter resistance contact your advisor. Reasons are often contextual and it can be helpful to talk it through with someone.

Because new actions grow organically out of the flow of interaction and new ideas, you may find that you need a different timeline for these cycles than you listed in the Proposal. Often it takes longer to get the cycles started, and longer between them than originally anticipated. As decisions to depart from the Proposal arise—this a good time to check in with your Advisor. Don't delay in taking notes on the significant happenings in each cycle before memories fade—these will become the basis of the project Narrative in the final paper. Forward them periodically to your Advisor to get feedback on conducting the research.

Data Gathering Procedures

As you implement your project you will be gathering *three* sets of data – one set will be related to the purpose of your project, one will track the implementation of your project (also called an audit trail) and third will track your learning about using action research strategies to implement change.

Every project will need to collect relevant information regarding the project's purpose. This data will vary from project to project depending on the topic and the method. They may be gathered through a variety of processes, including journals, dialogues, story-telling, meetings notes, conversations, interviews, role play, surveys and art. You are encouraged to gather "rich thick description" that can later be included within your project Paper. Data such as direct quotes taken from a participant's journal not only brings the research story to life, but also offers insight into the culture and the identification of individual/group themes and patterns. Drawing on rich description as well as more structured ways of measuring change and gathering data, allows you to articulate new understandings about creating collaborative organizational change and about developing leadership capacity in your research setting and in yourself.

We recommend that you keep a journal about the implementation of your project – this will become the basis for the narrative section. What happened when, how decisions were made, etc.

Because your project is intended to yield new learning about conducting action research, you need to document the process of how the AR or the CI unfolds. Often the conveners ask the other participants to keep a journal, and take turns taking notes during meetings, especially during reflection phases. These notes will be useful as you write about your learning about using sustainable change practices (action research). Additionally, you will be including learning/reflections about the project in your personal learning section.

Inevitably unforeseen opportunities or complications will call upon your flexibility and adaptability to make departures from the proposal plan. Participants may drop out; the time line has to be extended; a better purpose or inquiry question may emerge; the focus may change because promised organizational resources fall through. Keep your Advisor informed of major changes in the research focus or design or participants. And note these changes in your narrative of the project.

Engaging Validity Procedures

What are the validity procedures you identified as important for your project? Are you using them? Do you add additional validity procedures? Face-to-face meetings should include revisiting the conditions of learning and checking on the validity procedures anticipated in the proposal. Is everyone participating actively? Communicating authentically? Questioning assumptions? Allowing for 'Devil's Advocate' role? Engaging multiple perspectives? Looking for ways to guard against unseen bias?

Making Meaning and Constructing Knowledge

At the conclusion of each of the action cycles learners engage in rigorous reflection and make meaning of the lived experience just completed. This is an essential phase leading to the next cycle. *Making meaning* is a process of making sense of lived experience by reflecting on it through contemplation, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Meaning is made both by individuals and the research group throughout the phases of action research. It involves constructing individual and/or group knowledge from the personal and collective experience of the researchers.

As you reflect systematically you will be building on your understanding by analyzing and interpreting the experience of each cycle. These reflective conversations become the basis of your next action and cumulatively become the basis for your learning from the project as a whole. What conclusions have you come to regarding your actions together? What meaning do you make out of your individual and group experience? As you make meaning out of your experiences you construct knowledge about the topic and about leadership.

The participants examine the data which documents these experiences, gathered in various forms, including journal entries, records of the face to face meetings, insights derived from presentational knowing, interviews, chance encounters, surveys, online discussion threads, etc. These research experiences may be enriched through many approaches (story-telling, dialogues, literature searches, reading, consulting experts, art, role play) and documented in various ways (journals, field notes, interview notes, surveys). As you review the data of what happened, consider the themes, patterns, common stories, and generalizations to be made. These data records are interpreted (what do they mean?), analyzed (what are the essential parts?) and evaluated (what is significant?) to create the learning that leads to the next action of the next cycle.

This knowledge is typically expressed in propositional forms in the project paper (through descriptions of themes, patterns, generalizations, policies, plans, and next steps to take). The focus on making meaning through the extended epistemology is developed mainly in the Cooperative/Collaborative Inquiry (CI) methods literature, but it is also applicable to constructing group knowledge in Action Research (AR). See Reason and Heron (1999) and Heron and Reason (2001) for more on experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical ways of knowing in the extended epistemology. For more on "making meaning" see the chapter on "Meaning Making and Constructing Knowledge" in Bray et al. (2000).

Creating the Project Findings and the Learning

Sufficient time should be allotted for final reflections to allow for constructing knowledge in the *three domains* designated in the Leadership Project Paper Outline:

1. New knowledge about the topic or about solving the problem. What is your evaluation of the project? This includes the outcomes of the project in light of the purpose and objectives you stated in your proposal.
2. New knowledge about conducting action research. What have you learned regarding the conduct of action research so that you can better utilize action inquiry in the future?
3. New knowledge about enacting leadership at the personal, group, and organizational level. What significance does this have for your practice of 21st century leadership?

The Leadership Project Paper Outline asks you to report on all three, with a heading for each of these three areas of learning. A discussion of the expectations for each of these three domains follows.

Findings and Learning Related to Project Outcomes

The first domain looks at the questions: What is your evaluation of the project outcomes pertaining to the objectives and purpose? The Leadership Project Paper Outline asks you to summarize the outcomes of the project that relate specifically to your stated purpose and objectives. Describe your learning about the topic as you pursued your inquiry question(s). How well did it work out? What did you and your collaborators accomplish? What is the significance of this work, taking into consideration your original focus might have changed? What further questions arose? What would you have pursued if you had more time?

Learning About Conducting Action Research

The Leadership Project Paper Outline asks you to evaluate the efficacy of the action research method employed in contributing to the outcomes of your project and their sustainability. Whereas in the first domain you are asked to evaluate the progress made in achieving the stated purpose and the progress made in pursuing the inquiry question, in this 2nd domain you are asked to evaluate the role of action research methods in achieving the outcome. What aspects of the methods were especially effective in facilitating short-term results? What worked well and what didn't work out so well? Action research methods are intended to transform the way individuals approach future challenges and to promote collaborative relationships that endure after the project. To what extent do you think that may be true for your situation? How much will you be influenced by action research methods going forward? How embedded have they become among the participants' research repertoires? What is the likelihood that the participants will continue to draw on them to create sustainable change?

Following the question posed in the Leadership Project Paper Outline, here are some prompts for answering the question "*What did you learn from the application of sustainable change practices and processes?"*

- How did these processes and practices enable or not enable sustainable change?
- What did you learn in offering participatory research practices to other participants?
- What was learned about creating safety for participants, collecting data, and making time for systematic reflection?
- How well did the validity procedures work? How did your engagement with validity procedures strengthen or limit the implementation of the project or surface your awareness of its strengths and limitations?
- What is your assessment of the quality of your data? Of your efforts to make meaning? How did you assure the quality of your data and the validity of your conclusions? How could have quality and validity been improved?
- What did you discover about the strengths and limitations of the inquiry method?
- What is your learning edge regarding the use of sustainable change processes (in AR or CI)? What are your challenges in bringing change processes into new situations? What might you do differently next time?

Learning about the process of constructing new knowledge – o*ptional section*

This section is optional as it represents an advanced level of learning about learning. The following guidelines and prompts are offered as a way to deepen your learning about constructing new knowledge. We encourage you to reflect on these and to consider including a brief discussion of your learning about constructing new knowledge.

As part of your learning about conducting action research, reflect on the process by which you made meaning and constructed knowledge throughout the project. What did you learn about the process of data gathering and data analysis procedures and their role in creating valid and reliable conclusions? What were the steps you took to come up with conclusions? As you review your research take this opportunity to step back and take perspective on *how* the learning was created. In other words, reflect on how you arrived at your reflections. This epistemological awareness provides a firmer foundation for the next time you conduct action research or engage in constructing knowledge with others. The rest of this section is devoted to prompting you to become aware of your epistemological assumptions--how you came to know what you know from the project.

Here are some questions to consider about the process of making meaning with respect to the findings of the project. Use them as prompts for brainstorming. See what you come up with that you might include in your paper about the process of making meaning and constructing knowledge

- What was helpful in promoting reflections that generated learning from your experiences?
- How was meaning made from lived experience? Was this systematically planned and/or a spontaneous process?
- How did the research question direct and affect the process? Were there iterations of the question during the cycles?
- What surprises did the group/researcher encounter and how did they affect the learning?
- Were there differences in the ways *individuals* made meaning, and how meaning was made *collectively*? How did the group engage with these differences?
- What were the challenges of reflection and constructing knowledge together?
- What was the role of multiple perspectives and diversity of participants in creating new knowledge? Was there learning from interpersonal conflict and chaos?
- Was transformative learning a part of the process? Were there any major shifts in perspective(s)?

Distill the learning from reflecting on your process of making meaning and constructing knowledge in one page for the paper.

How was your project impacted by having to conduct it as an academic degree requirement?

What were the constraints in doing it as coursework? The benefits? The impact of academic deadlines? If you wish, you can go even further beyond the expectations of your degree program and Advisor into how the expectations of the organizations or constituencies in which you conducted the research influenced the process: as Elizabeth Kasl and Lyle Yorks ask, “Whose Inquiry Is This, Anyway?”(Kasl & Yorks, 2010).

Learning About Enacting 21st Century Leadership Practices

What did you learn by engaging in 21st century Leadership Practices? This question is asked in the Leadership Project Paper Outline section on “Learning and Integration.” *This section shifts from reporting on your project to integrating your learning from the project with the Graduate Leadership curriculum and your study of leadership. Include in this section individual/personal learning, organizational learning (if applicable) and group learning (if applicable). If there are multiple authors, each person should include their statement of personal learning.*

Questions to guide your writing

- What did you learn by engaging in 21st century leadership practices?
- What significance does this have for your practice of leadership? Use the concepts that you have learned in the Graduate Leadership curriculum to reflect on and distill your learning. State the learning outcomes as propositions; identify the source (the concept and/or the experience) of each significant learning.
- Any other important personal learning?
- Any other group learning; and if applicable, the organization’s learning?

The concluding section on “Implications, Growth Edge and Next Steps” also asks you to describe your significant learning.

Considerations for writing the learning section of your paper

Because the paper is about the learning, and not whether you were successful in achieving your purpose stated in the proposal, you can have a successful paper no matter the accomplishments of the project. There is ample opportunity to describe what you would do differently next time.

Allow enough time to plan for this final phase of constructing knowledge that will go into the project paper. Faculty recommend several weeks of concerted reflection and making meaning that becomes the basis of the first paper draft. It is a misconception to think of constructing the learning and then the writing about it as distinctly separate steps. Significant learning is created in the process of writing. And as you write and revise, you are continuing to create meaning and knowledge. Allow enough time for the learning to percolate and connections to be made.

Writing the Leadership Project Paper

The curriculum is structured for writing the Leadership Project Paper during Module X: Personal and Organizational Learning. The purpose of Module X is to support the integration of learning from the entire program while completing the Leadership Project paper. Module X is seven weeks in length and culminates in the cohort's final retreat. Learners are expected to understand the findings and outcomes of their research by the beginning of the retreat using the Leadership Project Paper Outline to structure the reflection and writing. Faculty Advisors encourage learners to hand in the first draft of their project paper by the end of the fourth week of Module X. This allows enough time for reviewing the paper draft and providing feedback prior to the retreat. The retreat provides an additional opportunity to reflect so that new knowledge can be incorporated in the final paper submitted within two weeks of the conclusion of the retreat. The project paper is complete when approved by the Faculty Advisor, the Program Director, the Dean and filed in the Saint Mary's College Library or the ProQuest database which is the online database where Saint Mary's College dissertations, theses and synthesis projects are filed.

The Leadership Project Paper Outline (Appendix D) determines the structure of the paper. Look it over early on in the project to anticipate what are the deliverables. After initial brainstorming, but before getting too far in your first draft, browse through a sample project paper or two to get a sense of how others reported on their projects, and what they wrote in response to the questions in the Leadership Project Paper Outline.

Your Leadership Project Proposal is the basis of the first part of the paper as you describe "what you planned," and then any significant departures from those plans. It is likely that you will have a more nuanced understanding of action research after implementing your project and this should be reflected by additions and/or revisions to the Research Method section of your paper. You can get a head start on the Narrative section, writing up summaries of field notes as you go and forwarding them to your Faculty Advisor. Eventually you will need to winnow the narrative to about 10 pages to keep the total paper within the 35-50 page range. Some of the learning described in the narratives may fit better in later sections of the paper. So keep in mind the later sections of the Leadership Project Paper Outline and the learning these ask you to report. Not every element in the Leadership Project Paper Outline is expected to be covered thoroughly, nor can they be to keep the paper to the suggested page length.

Use the Leadership Project Paper Template that contains the headings and subheadings for all the sections of the paper pre-formatted correctly and ready to use for creating a Table of Contents. It is expected that each element listed in the Leadership Project Paper Outline (and the Template) will be touched on. Some will be more developed than others depending on your particular project, on your learning, and in which sections you decide to present the learning since there is some latitude for where various aspects will fit best. Developing each element fully would take up more than the 35-50 recommended pages, so that is not expected; what is "enough" will become clearer when your Faculty Advisor responds to your first draft. Be in touch with your Faculty Advisor as to paper length and structure, especially for multiple authors.

Consider sharing a draft with your participants and asking for feedback, both as a powerful validity check, and as a courtesy so they are not surprised by something in your final account. Later on the paper may be read by others who find it in the Library, or on the ProQuest database. Consider what you want the general public to read about your project.

Detailed instructions for submitting the hard copy of the paper to the Library will be available in the Personal and Organizational Learning course site.

Standards for the Project and the Project Paper

Your Faculty Advisor provides faculty oversight that your project and the project paper meet the Program academic standards for a Masters Degree and will assess the Leadership Project Proposal, the Leadership Project Paper and approve the completion of your project according to the follow criteria and standards:

1. Follows the Leadership Project Proposal Outline and develops each section sufficiently.
2. Follows the Leadership Project Paper Outline and develops each section sufficiently for an approved paper, a prerequisite for completing the M.A. in Leadership.
3. Throughout the project, and not just in the final Paper, the criteria for successful completion of the project includes demonstrating the following:
    a. Applying action research methods.
    b. Working collaboratively.
    c. Attempting individual or organizational change.
    d. Observing how action research can empower leadership.
    e. Creating new learning (constructing knowledge) that can be applied in future leadership opportunities.
    f. Writing at a level of proficiency expected of a graduate student at Saint Mary's.
    g. Following APA guidelines.

The Program expects course work to be done within a set time. Accordingly:

1. Keep up with the deadlines noted on the Leadership Project Proposal Outline and the Leadership Project Timeline.
2. Have your proposal approved before proceeding with the research.
3. Be in touch with your Faculty Advisor on a regular basis (at least once a month; more frequently during implementation).
4. If you get too far behind, be in touch with your Faculty Advisor regarding a possible Synthesis Project Completion course.

Procedures for Protecting Participants

This section of the Leadership Project Proposal Guide describes in more detail the procedures required for protecting individuals (and organizations) who participate in projects with our learners. Please review it carefully. (A listing of these procedures were introduced earlier on p. 10 under the heading "Protecting participants" .) In some cases approval from your Faculty Advisor may be sufficient and in other cases you may need to request a review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Additional information can be found on the Saint Mary's College SMCNet: http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/institutional-review-board.

Background

> "Both good practice and the law require that research involving human participants be conducted according to institutional ethical and procedural protocols intended to protect the participants from social, psychological and physical harm. The College seeks to assure that research conducted by students,

staff and faculty which involves human participants is conducted in accordance with College protocols and applicable legal standards through a Human Research Institutional Review Board (the IRB). Review and approval by the IRB also provides protection for the student or faculty researcher." (email from Emily Hause, former IRB Chair, the Saint Mary's College, 2/8/09)

"(1) do not harm and (2) maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms" (SMC IRB website).

Graduate Leadership Protocol Approval

In April of 2014, the Faculty Advisors submitted a "Request for Screening for Exemption" to the IRB so that the projects developed in the Project course that do not involve high levels of risk (including work with vulnerable populations) would be Exempt from IRS review; instead, the Faculty Advisors would determine what was satisfactory planning to protect participants in approving the proposals. Because the IRB accepts the steps laid out in the Request and detailed in this Guide, only a few of the riskier projects will have to go through direct IRB involvement. Most projects need only the approval of the Faculty Advisor, based on your description of risks and protecting participants from them in the Basic Research Steps proposal section, and the agreements and consent forms described below. The determination of risk is based on what you learn from this Guide, the IRB materials, and taking the required CITI training. The Agreement to Protect Action Research Participants that you and your Faculty Advisor sign (Appendix F) indicates that you understand and will follow the IRB requirements for Leadership Projects. The Faculty Advisor's "Request for Screening for Exemption" is posted on the Module XI course Assignments and is required reading. When there are higher risks and the project should not be exempt from IRB oversight, the Faculty Advisor may insist on a "Request for Protocol Approval Student Version (doc)"

The Pledge Faculty Advisors Make to the IRB to Oversee the Protection of Participants

Your Faculty Advisor assumes responsibility for the content of your proposal protocols and procedures to protect participants and makes the following affirmations to the IRB in the Request for Screening for Exemption:

"I certify that… the research will not be initiated until written approval is secured …. I will conduct this course of study as described in the approved protocol. If any changes are anticipated, I will contact the IRB staff prior to implementing the changes. I will contact the IRB staff immediately if any of the following events occur: unanticipated risks, adverse events, and findings during the study that would affect the risks or benefits."

"I certify I will review and approve student projects before they are implemented. I assume responsibility for 1) ensuring that student researchers are aware of their responsibilities as investigators, and 2) that the IRB will be immediately informed in the event of research-related unanticipated risks, adverse events, or findings during the study that would affect the risks or benefits of participation. "

I have read about Data Gathering Activities Within Courses on the IRB website and agree to abide by the above guidelines for advising Leadership Projects.

I have certification from CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) https://www.citiprogram.org) for passing the CITI Social & Behavioral Research/Refresher -Basic Course.

Agreements and Consent Forms

Compliance with IRB requirements is documented through the inclusion of an agreement to protect participants signed by you and your Faculty Advisor, a consent form signed by each project participant, and, if appropriate, a consent from signed by the person in your organization who has organizational authority over the project.

1. **Agreement to Protect Action Research Participants**. See this form in Appendx F, and then copy it into your appendix to the Proposal to be signed by each convener and the Faculty Advisor. You and your Faculty Advisor jointly agree to follow the proposal's steps in order to obtain informed consent and ensure confidentiality. You are to be in touch with your Faculty Advisor on a regular basis, especially if there is any change in the participants or the research questions that may entail more risk.

2. **Description of risks and plans to mitigate risks.** In the Basic Research Steps section of the proposal you will describe your plans for mitigating risks to participants. Include steps for protecting participants and obtaining permissions to conduct the project. Describe the plan to distribute and collect signed forms from each project participant. Your Faculty Advisor expects to be consulted in drafting this section of your Proposal. A sample excerpted from a proposal is included in Appendix K.
3. **Consent Form - Individuals.** As the project convener, you will create a consent form that explains to your participants how you will protect them as they participate in your project. Each participant must sign a consent form if they are included in your project. Guidelines for drafting a consent form are listed below; sample consent forms are included in the Appendix. The sample consent forms cover most of the likely risks that your project may involve. The risks listed in your consent form may not have to be additionally mentioned in your Basic Research Steps section.
4. **Consent From – Organizational**. If the action research is within an organizational setting, another form **Authorization to Participate in an Action Research Inquiry** may also be required. The template for this form is included in Appendix G.

Preparation for Drafting Procedures for Protecting Participants

As you draft the conceptualization and framework section of your proposal, note that what you choose as a topic and whom you intend to involve as participants will have a bearing on assessing the risk to participants and what you will be required to do to protect them. When you are ready to write your Basic Research Steps section:

1. Read through this Procedures for Protecting Participants section of the Leadership Project Proposal Guide noting what you will need to include in your proposal.
2. Read through the Faculty Advisors' Project course Request for a Screening for Exemption from ongoing IRB review posted in the Assignments section of the Module XI course. The Request covers project activities that are "inherently risk free" and lists the kinds of research activities that exempt them from ongoing IRB review. Projects that do not qualify as "exempt" must submit an Application for Protocol Approval and likely ongoing review by the IRB.
3. Consult with your Faculty Advisor as you draft section Basic Research Steps section and assess the level of risk to participants in your project. You may find that a brief conversation as you are working on Basic Research Steps section will help pinpoint what needs to be included and what level of risk is involved.

Assessing Risk and IRB Approval.

The IRB protocols identify various kinds and levels of risk, each with specific requirements for protecting participants. When the risk in your proposed research is "minimal" your approved proposal covers the IRB requirements. When there is higher risk, as with conducting the research with "vulnerable populations" and/or "risky topics," then IRB review is required and your Faculty Advisor will assist you in preparing your Application. Discuss with your Faculty Advisor the requirement to take the CITI training that highlights all the potential risks in research on human subjects and how to mitigate them. It covers the Federal laws to protect subjects that we must follow.

Minimal risk.

Minimal risk is defined in the federal regulations as meaning "that the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are no greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests." (SMC IRB Website)

If your project involves minimal risk to participants, describe this in the Proposal, discuss it with your Faculty Advisor and it is likely that no further IRB involvement will be required. Because the IRB accepted the steps laid out in the Project course Request for a Screening for Exemption from continuing IRB oversight submitted by the Faculty Advisors, only a few of the riskier projects will have to go through direct IRB involvement. Most projects need only the approval of the Adviser, based on your explanation in section III D of the Leadership Project Proposal Outline and the Agreement to Protect Action Research Participants that you and your Faculty Advisor will sign.

Vulnerable populations or certain risky topics.

A formal request must be prepared and submitted to the IRB when research involves vulnerable populations (children, terminally ill, mentally or legally incompetent, incarcerated, etc.) or involves risks of psychological-social harm from inquiring about a stressful issue (a highly charged or sensitive topic such as sexuality, abuse, death, stigmatized behavior or having to do with illegal activities as gambling, drug use, etc.).

The "Request for Protocol Approval Student Version (doc)" is available from the website http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/institutional-review-board/forms

Other indicators of higher risk.

There are a number of potentially risky situations that call for an inquiry to the IRB as to whether a formal Application for Protocal Approval is needed:

1. Vulnerability in a power relationship. If a project involves power relationships where the student convener recruits participants who might feel uncomfortable declining to participate (e.g. a supervisor who asks supervised employees to participate in a research project as this relates to the voluntary nature of consent) the Faculty Advisor may recommend the project proposal be sent to the IRB for approval before implementation. The convener will include in the Proposal a description of how the issue of influence, power, and pressure will be addressed.
2. Similarly, if the research questions are closely related to individual performance measurement ratings (this relates to putting the participant at risk to participate in the project) the Faculty Advisor may recommend that the proposal be sent to the IRB for approval.
3. Intent to publish the results beyond presenting the paper required for the degree. If, after you complete the project, you decide to publish the research findings be sure to contact your Faculty Advisor for assistance in obtaining IRB approval/permission.
4. Videotaping and audio taping that is used for recording *interviews.* Audio (and usually video) recording for the purpose of allowing a research team member who misses a session to "catch up" with the direction of the inquiry, or to get the exact wording of a significant exchange at a meeting among participants is exempt from obtaining direct IRB approval.

If a project involves risk (beyond minimal/everyday risk) this risk is **to be explicitly covered in the oral description** of the project given to participants as well as in the consent form each participant signs. And when risk beyond minimal/everyday risk is involved the IRB must also give written permission for the project to go forward.

Since each project is unique, the Faculty Advisor works with the convener(s) as they design their consent forms. The project may not go forward beyond preliminary contacts with potential participants until the proposal, including a description of how participants will be protected and a consent from, have been approved by the Faculty Advisor.

Assessing risk and mitigating risk.

Projects are supposed to stimulate change and learning—at the personal and/or organizational level; such change cannot be risk free. Participants become more vulnerable to each other as a result of authentic self-disclosure in group process. Honest reflection and interaction may bring up hurt feelings and disillusionment. At the organizational level, dysfunctional systems can erupt when equilibrium is disturbed; attempted organizational change that fails may discredit the participants and squander organizational resources and social capital. Conveners must be sensitive to these possible risks, which is not to say that they must be specified in the proposal.

The careful application of action research methods can mitigate these kinds of risk described above. Reflection and planning before taking action is a corrective to hasty judgments and poor choices. Repeated cycles allow for safe incremental steps based upon previous experience. Shared leadership and consensus decision-making helps prevent a narrow-minded perspective from dominating the action.

The validity procedures required in the proposal and throughout your project also serve to mitigate risk. For example, encouraging the role of devil's advocate to undercut "group think" helps assure that multiple points of view get expressed and heard. The action research readings from Module VI offer interventions for when the group process gets chaotic, bogs down, or becomes interpersonally tense.

A major factor limiting risk is that these projects rely on building relationships based on respect and trust, which is at the core of enacting leadership. It is important to draw on the Progam curriculum and your personal experience as preparation for authentic and appropriate communication and interaction during the project.

When research participants are recruited who actively want to be involved in conducting the inquiry (in a CI, they should be *passionately* interested) action research bridges the investigator/subject distinction and is the antithesis of research which is manipulative or deceptive. When participants are responsible for sharing the inquiry, they are more likely to take responsibility for the outcomes—positive and negative. Risk will thus be influenced by how you respond to the leadership challenge of enlisting wholehearted participation and a sense of mutual responsibility in forwarding a common purpose.

Because the above risks and their mitigation through action research methods are typically present, they do not have to be mentioned in the proposal unless the risk is more than what would usually be expected in a typical action research project.

Risks in Collaborative Inquiry and Action Research may be different.

CI, with its emphasis on exploring an issue to increase a personal capacity (for instance a topic such as "creating inclusiveness as a personal leadership practice"), may involve different risks than AR with its problem-solving orientation (for instance a topic such as "increasing teamwork among nurses in a hospital ward"). A CI typically involves the vulnerability of exposing personal deficiencies in order to increase personal capacities. Further, because of the differences that participants bring to the topic, there can be interpersonal friction.

An AR project may increase the vulnerability of a participant in relation to others in an organization, as they judge the participant as to their performance in the inquiry. A failure of an AR project can reflect badly on all involved. See the sample Consent Forms and the sample Basic Research Steps section for examples of how these risks are described.

Protocols to protect confidentiality and privacy

All the final reports of the projects will use pseudonyms for any participants other than the student convener, and a pseudonym for the organization (if there is one hosting the project). Further, readily identifying information will be disguised to make it difficult to attribute statements to specific individuals. The final check on this is that the Faculty Advisor reads the drafts of the final report with an eye to protecting confidentiality.

In some projects, on a case-by-case basis, the collaborators who are graduate students may wish to use their names in the body of the final report, dependent on unanimous agreement and Faculty Advisor consent.

The convener will educate the other participants on the importance of protecting anonymity and ensuring confidentiality, and the participants collectively will determine how to carry this out in practice. For example, we do not expect that each would assume a disguise at the outset of the project and not use their real names in their meetings with each other. But they might take care in how they attribute statements in their notes they circulate among themselves. And any statements that could put them at risk if circulated outside the group of participants are to be handled with special care. For instance safeguard a statement made in confidence to participants that would reflect negatively on a boss or co-worker or another individual if the confidentiality was not kept. Students are asked to keep their notes and create their emails in such a fashion that if they fell into the wrong hands, no damage would be done.

What gets published beyond the student's final paper for their degree requirement becomes a team matter and would require unanimous consent.

If the participants wish to disseminate their results or make changes in data presentation beyond the final project report, special attention must be paid to gaining consent of participants to go beyond what they had originally agreed to so as not to violate the expectation of privacy through confidentiality. Two instances especially are to be avoided: participants finding themselves quoted or referred to in print about a private matter when they had not agreed such would happen; or someone else being able to identify an individual participant when results are published in a way that is more revealing than the identifiers in the final report.

Action research assumes that the participants collectively "own" the data in the form of documented learning, realizations, discoveries, conclusions and proposals for the future. Particularly in a Collaborative Inquiry, where the ideal is shared leadership, there needs to be an early and thorough discussion of who "owns" the inquiry findings. What happens to the data arises again as all the participants meet to analyze the data and reflect on what they have learned that goes into the final report. Any issues about confidentiality and indirect identification can be discussed at that time when they meet to review the project outcomes and conclusions before the paper is written and sent to the Adviser for approval and then to the Library or ProQuest for archiving. What gets published beyond the student's final paper for their degree requirement becomes a team matter.

The following language is contained in the sample consent form provided to the conveners to help them in constructing their own forms: "the only written report currently anticipated is the paper on the project . . . to be filed in the Saint Mary's College library, with the names of participants and the organization given pseudonyms. The proposal, implementation, and report will be reviewed by the Faculty Advisor, and the findings shared with other faculty and students in the project course. If the findings are to be published or presented in a more public forum, permission will be sought from the participants." This permission needs to be unanimous.

If video or audio recording is proposed, the answers to the following questions [taken from the IRB Application for Protocol Approval Section 11] need to be included in the project proposal (Basic Research Steps section): Describe which of your participants you will record and in what setting. Expain why these records are needed for your study. Who will have access beyond your research team (and Faculty Advisor). What disposition have you made for these records for maintaining them confidentially and for destroying them? The Faculty Advisors recommend audio rather than video recording if the purpose is for capturing interactions at the meetings, especially if it is mainly to allow an absent member to catch up on what they missed. The final paper should not include photos or videos of participants without IRB permission.

For information on how to describe these protections, see the example of the Basic Research Steps section (Appendix K) and the sample consent form that address recording protocols (Appendix G).

Guidelines for Creating Consent Forms

Consent forms for individuals.

Each participant who is not a member of your cohort must sign a consent form. For IRB purposes the graduate students in LDSH 245 and LDSH 220 who initate projects are termed research *conveners* in their own individual projects, and thereby are distiguished from the other participants that they recruit. Thus the term “participant” is used here especially to refer to those *not* in the course who are recruited by the conveners as participants or collaborators. It is for these participants, invited from outside the course, for whom the protocols are especially designed.

It is important that the participants who are not conveners sign the consent form. But in cases where there is more than one convener, as in a CI where several collaboraters are students in the course, we would expect the proposal (jointly written) to discuss the risks and protection of *all* the collaboraters participating in the inquiry. The consent form they create together and sign becomes a mutual contract which everyone signs.

An additional population of potential participants may emerge if the inquirers want to systematically investigate/interview/survey others outside the research team for more background information related to the topic. Sometimes these potential respondents can be identified in the proposal; but more often they are identified as the project progresses. If others outside the research team are asked to participate, the Faculty Advisor must be consulted and these participants should sign a consent form.

To draft your consent form use the following guidelines taken from the IRB’s suggested checklist of elements to be included, and draw from the sample forms liberally using their language.

> The informed consent process is at the heart of research with human participants. It is the process through which we communicate respect for people’s autonomous choices. We do this by giving them

enough information to make a free choice, and by letting them know that if they choose to participate, they can skip portions or stop if they wish.

Because it is so important, you should count on devoting some time and effort to developing your consent processes.

Developing your informed consent processes requires that you put yourself in the shoes of your research participants. What would you want to know before you decide to participate? What would make the information truly understandable and the *consent* truly *informed?"*

Additionally you must submit an example of the kind of consent you will seek from the organization permitting the inquiry, to be signed on letterhead of someone authorized to give permission. (from the IRB Application for Protocol Approval)

Checklist of the principal steps and elements to include.

adapted from http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/institutional-review-board/the-process-of-informed-consent

1. Introduce yourself and invite potential participants to take part in your research project.
2. Explain the purpose of the project, the activities participants will engage in, estimated number of participants, estimated duration of the research (# weeks and estimated # of meetings), and context of research (i.e. as part of a Saint Mary's class for the MA in Leadership).
3. Describe potential benefits and potential risks/harm to participants. (The benefits are typically expressed in terms of achieving the purpose of the inquiry. The risks are typically associated with a breach of confidentiality when personally sensitive information is not sufficiently protected.) Sometimes the risk is being especially vulnerable to other participants or being triggered by the research question. In any case there is no guarantee of direct benefit so the form should warn about this.
4. Indicate how participants' anonymity and confidentiality will be protected during and after the study. For example: by using pseudonyms, especially when using direct quotes. Mention the group will create agreements about confidentiality among the participants/collaborators. Caution that what is shared in an inquiry group cannot be guaranteed to be held in confidence.
5. How long will you keep private information gathered? Who will have access to it?
6. Mention if you intend to audio or video record, and if so, state that you will obtain everyone's agreement to record; indicate how this will be used and disposed of; and obtain a signed release consent regarding any recording.
7. Make clear that participation is completely voluntary, and a participant may withdraw from a discussion or an activity at any time, or from the project at any time.
8. Describe the compensation (usually none); mention if the convener is receiving compensation other than earning academic credit for conducting the synthesis project.
9. Provide the opportunity to ask questions.
10. Provide contact information, both for the convener and for the Faculty Advisor.
11. Mention that each participant will be given a copy of the Consent Form.
12. Include a draft of the Consent Form with your project proposal draft so your Faculty Advisor can go over it with you.
13. Present the approved Consent Form for review by invited participants; provide them the opportunity to ask questions before asking for signatures. Often this is at the time of the first joint meeting of participants.
14. Collect signed dated Consent Forms. Keep them in a secure place.

15. Provide the participant with a copy of the form.

16. Shred the originals a year after the project ends.

Consent forms for organizational approval.

An additional consent is needed when action research (typically AR, but sometimes CI) is conducted within an organization or institution where someone with the authority must sign off on the permission for the project to go forward. This is a brief statement, on the organization's letterhead or by organizational email, by someone with the authority to sign off on conducting the research (see Appendix G).

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Appendix A1: Overview of the Leadership Project Timeline: Social Justice Concentration

Months	Course	Focus
March – April 2014	Sustainable Orgznization Change	Learning about Action Research
May – June 2015	Proposal Development	Prepare and complete Proposal for Leadership Project
July – August 2015	Concurrent with Global Contexts	Project implementation (min 8 weeks)
September – December 2015	Personal and Organizational Learning	Write Leadership Project Paper

Appendix A2: Leadership Project Timeline (not Social Justice concentration)

Following Module VI and introduction to the action research methods, the leadership project is made up of three phases. The first phase is proposal writing, the second phase is project implementation (or research) and requires a minimum of eight weeks, and the third phase is writing the final paper. Each phase runs concurrently with one or more program modules.

	Phase I Module XI – Proposal Development	*Phase II Project Implementation*	*Phase III Writing Final Paper*
Expected scenario	Module VII —> Module VIII	Module VIII —> Module IX	Module X
Extended scenario	Module VII —> Wk 4 Module IX	Wk 5 Module IX —> Wk 4 Module X	Module X
Synthesis Project Completion Course	Module VII —> post wk 5 Module IX	Upon proposal approval – minimum of 8 weeks	Upon completion of implementation; register for Synthesis Project Completion course(s) until complete

Note: Specific dates for each phase are provided to cohorts at the beginning of Module XI.

Appendix B: Concurrent Coursework and Faculty Support for the Leadership Project

(not Social Justice concentration)

Phase I – Proposal Development: Module XI

Learners enroll in Module XI Project Proposal Development following Module VI.

Learners complete their proposal within one trimester (concurrent with Modules VII & VIII) and receive a Pass for Module XI.

Learners who do not complete their proposal within one trimester (concurrent with Modules VII & VIII) receive an incomplete for Module XI.

For learners who don't complete their proposal by the end of the next trimester the Incomplete becomes a Fail and they must then repeat (and pay for) Module XI. This process continues until the learner completes their proposal.

Learners who repeat Module XI will enroll in the Synthesis Project Completion course for faculty support for project implementation and writing the Leadership Project Paper.

Phase II – Project Implementation

We require a minimum of eight weeks for project implementation. Learners who receive an incomplete for Module XI have until the fourth week of the next course (Module IX) to complete their proposal and begin their research. We anticipate that learners who complete their research by the fourth week of Module X (last 4 weeks of Module IX and first 4 weeks of Module X) will have enough time to write their final paper during the remainder of Module X.

Learners who do not complete their proposal by the 4th week of Module IX will be required to register for the Synthesis Project Completion course, after their proposal is approved and following the completion of Module X, to receive faculty support as they complete their project and write the paper.

Phase III – Writing the Final Paper: Module X

Learners are expected to complete their papers during Module X, so the final document is completed and approved by the Faculty Advisor by the end of the trimester during which their retreat occurs.

Learners who do not have an approved final paper by the end of the trimester within which the retreat occurs will register for the Synthesis Project Completion course. While enrolled in this course learners will receive faculty support as they complete their paper. The two-month Synthesis Project Completion course may be repeated as needed until the Leadership Project paper is complete.

If a learner is completing final edits for their paper they *may* be exempted from enrolling in the Synthesis Project Completion course by the Program Director based on the Faculty Advisor's recommendation.

Synthesis Project Completion Course:

Learners who need additional time to complete their project will register for the Synthesis Project Completion course for faculty support. This support will include coaching during the implementation phase and while writing the paper. The Synthesis Project Completion course may be repeated as needed until the Leadership Project is complete and approved.

Appendix C: Leadership Project Proposal Outline

Please follow the outline below precisely in developing your project proposal. The task of building the proposal is intentionally divided into sections, with suggested due dates, including drafts, for these sections.

Although we offer the elements of the proposal in outline format, we ask that you submit your various assignments in prose using APA formatting, as found in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, Sixth Edition. In addition, we recommend printing a copy of the Leadership Project Guide (LPG) found in the Assignments area in Moodle. Consult the Guide as you follow this Leadership Project Proposal Outline.

We suggest that your project proposal be approximately **15-20** pages in length, plus Appendices. An updated version of your project proposal will serve as the opening to your final project paper.

I. Conceptualization and Framework (Suggested length: 3-4 pages)

- A. The context within which this problem/issue arises.
- B. Description of an opportunity/issue to be addressed.
- C. Purpose of the project.
- D. Preliminary research question.
- E. Literature review of the topic.
    1. Select three or four literature sources related to your topic that will inform your research. And for each, describe how these authors' ideas contribute to your understanding of the topic and how each of these sources is relevant to your project.
    2. Include two or three more references to sources related to *leadership* that you anticipate will be important in conducting the project. And for each describe how the ideas will contribute to the implementation of your project.
    3. As you conduct your project, we expect you to extend the discussion of your literature review and find other sources to incorporate into your final project report.

II. Description and Discussion of the Selected Research Method (Suggested length: 3-4 pages)

- A. A literature based discussion of the particular method(s) from the action research family to be used in the project (typically either CI or AR.) Explain what the literature says about the following aspects of the research method(s) selected:
    1. Assumptions and characteristics common to the action research family.
    2. Practical uses of Collaborative Inquiry (CI) or Action Research Method (ARM), depending on which is chosen.
    3. Key steps of the action research method chosen.
    4. Validity procedures used with action research.
- B. Rationale for selecting the research method.
    1. Explain how this particular research strategy:
        - a. fits the identified problem/issue/research question described in the Conceptualization and Framework above.
        - b. is ready to be received as a learning strategy by the organization (if proposed within an organization).
    2. Describe strengths and potential limitations of the method as it applies to your project.
    3. Include a very brief rationale for choosing this method rather than other methods.

III. Basic Research Steps (Suggested length: 3-4 pages)

A. Develop a plan for how you will gain organizational approval of the project, if the project is taking place in an organizational setting.
B. Describe the criteria and process for inviting project participation.
C. Identify a plan for facilitating and educating the research participants.
D. Describe how you will protect participants and obtain permissions to conduct the project.
E. Explain proposed data gathering procedures.
F. Describe how data gathered will be analyzed and how you will make meaning from your research experience.
G. Describe briefly the validity procedures anticipated.
H. Create project timeline. Include check-ins with your advisor.

IV. References

V. Appendices

E-mail the Final Project Proposal to your Faculty Advisor and post the approved Proposal in Moodle. Please use file name format that identifies your cohort, name, the Project Proposal, the date; for example: GLD30YourlastnameProjProp03-15-14.doc or LSJ02yourlastnameProjProp3-15-14 (where the date in the file name is the date you submitted the document).

Appendix D: Leadership Project Paper Outline

Your Leadership Project Paper (LLP) should be approximately 35-50 pages long, up to 60 pages for multiple author papers, written according to APA format and in compliance with the SMC thesis guidelines. An updated version of your project proposal will serve as the opening to your final project paper. The remainder will report on the implementation (what actually happened), your evaluation of the project, and what was learned – both personally and organizationally (if applicable). Consult the Leadership Project Guide pp. 15-19 as you write this paper.

The first draft of your final project report is due during 4 weeks before your retreat and should be sent to your Faculty Advisor via email. You will continue to work with your Faculty Advisor as you complete the paper. The retreat is meant to help deepen, synthesize, and integrate the learning from implementing the projects and we anticipate that some of this learning will be included in the second or third draft of your paper. If you do not have a first draft prior to the retreat, discuss your plans for completing the first draft with your Faculty Advisor prior to the retreat. The final draft is after the retreat and before the end of the trimester within which the retreat occurs -- most learners submit 4-6 iterations of the LLP prior to approval.

Once your Faculty Advisor has approved your Leadership Project Paper, please post the final report in your Module XI individual discussion board forum and email a copy to your Faculty Advisor. Detailed instructions for submitting your paper to the program and for library archiving are posted in the Assignments area of Module XI.

The format for the Leadership Project Paper is:

I. Title Page, Copyright Page, Approval Page

II. Abstract
An abstract, as defined in section 2.04 of the APA Manual, includes a description of 1) the "problem/issue/opportunity", 2) the participants, 3) the research method, 4) the findings, and 5) the conclusion. The abstract should be no longer than one page. .

III. Table of Contents

For sections IV, V, and VI you will be drawing heavily on your project proposal. Change tense to describe items asked for, changing from the present or future tense of the proposal as in "I propose__" to the past tense as in "I proposed___.") Also, it is likely you will need to refine the Research Method section as you will have an expanded view of Action Research after your project implementation.

IV. Introduction
Start with an introductory paragraph that lets the reader know what to expect within the document. It will introduce the reader to the main sections of your paper. Start with a brief summary what the paper is about with describe what is included in each section of the document. Follow this with subsections based on your proposal:

A. The context within which this problem/issue arose
B. Description of a problem/opportunity/issue addressed
C. The purpose of the project
D. Research Question – what was your preliminary research question and how did it change throughout the project.
E. Description of research participants and rationale for selection criteria for participants (from the Basic Research Steps section of your proposal).
F. Review of literature related to the topic useful in guiding your research, including any new helpful sources.

V. Description and Discussion of the Research Method as updated from the project proposal.
A. A literature based discussion of the particular method(s) from the action research family used in the project. Explain what the literature says about the assumptions, key steps used in the method, including its validity procedures, and its typical uses. Use appropriate guidelines for direct quotations and citations.

B. A rationale for the appropriateness of the particular research strategy for the problem/issue/research question described in the Conceptualization and Framework outlined above. Include a brief description of the strengths and potential problems of this method (or include this in section IX).

VI. Basic Research Steps Implemented

A. Description of the process for inviting project participation.
B. Include a brief description of how you protected participants, including the process for gaining consent from participants.
C. Description how you facilitated and educated participants in an action-based inquiry project.
D. Description of how you gained organizational approval of the project, if needed.
E. Data gathering procedures (journals, dialogues, story-telling, reflection, art, conversations, interviews, role play, surveys).
F. Brief description of the validity procedures applied during implementation.
G. Actual project timeline (briefly outlined)
H. Brief comments on major departures from the proposed research steps.

VII. Narrative Account of Project Implementation Through its Action/Reflection Cycles

This section is a description of how your project unfolded through its action/reflection cycles. Include key events for you and participants. If you are the convener, this section will be in the first person; if this is a joint paper, then this section will be about what "we" did.

A. Structure this section according to the action research phases of action and reflection; be sure to include a synopsis of the major event(s) from each research cycle (conflicts, critical incidents, etc. that influenced learning or changes). Draw on field notes you made about your meetings.
B. Optimally, this section will include a description of the action for each cycle and how the reflection on each action led to the next action. What generated the learning and how did you make your decision of what to do next? The addition of a table of cycles with each action, including the action statements and reflection summary, could provide an effective overview to orient the reader to your project. *Your process may not have been as linear as this suggests, your narrative should move chronically and identify the key events along the way through cycles.*

VIII. Evaluation of the Project Outcomes

This section describes your learning about your topic and content of your project.

A. Summarize the outcomes of the project that relate specifically to the purpose and objectives (2-4 paragraphs/max 1 page). You may include more detail in an appendix if appropriate.
B. Evaluate the significance of the outcomes.
C. What further questions about the topic were generated from this inquiry?

IX. Reflection on Sustainable Organizational Change Processes

This section describes your learning about the methodology (AR/CI) you employed for your project and for conducting action research.

A. What did you learn from the application of sustainable change practices and processes? *These questions are offered as prompts for your writing.*
   1. How did these AR or CI processes and practices enable or not enable sustainable change?
   2. What did you learn in offering participatory research practices to organizational participants?
   3. What was learned about creating safety for participants, data collection & making meaning from lived experience?
   4. How well did the validity procedures work? How did your engagement with validity procedures strengthen or limit the implementation of the project or surface your awareness of the strengths and limitations?
   5. What is your assessment of the quality of your data, of your analysis and meaning making? Strengths and limitations of the inquiry?
   6. What is your learning edge with using sustainable change processes? What are your challenges in bringing processes into new situations? *What might you do differently next time?*

B. Discuss the effectiveness of the action research method(s) employed and its contribution to future sustainability of the outcomes.
C. Optional: Learning about the process of constructing new knowledge. Comment on the ways in which meaning was made from lived experience during the data collection, reflections and especially at the end of the implementation.
D. Discuss how conducting your project within an academic course impacted the outcomes.

X. Learning and Integration

This section is a shift from reporting on your project to integrating your learning from the project, the Graduate Leadership curriculum and your study of leadership. Include in this section individual/personal learning, organizational learning (if applicable) and group learning (if applicable). If there are multiple authors, each person should include their personal learning.

A. What did you learn from engaging in 21^{st} century leadership practices?
B. What significance does this have for your practice of leadership? Use the concepts that you have learned in the Graduate Leadership curriculum to reflect and distill your learnings and state them as propositions. Identify the source of your learning.
C. Any other important personal learning?
D. Any other group learning; and if applicable, the organization's learning?

XI. Implications, Growth Edge and Next Steps

What further questions were generated from this project? As you step back from the project and think about what you are taking forward in terms of content learning, sustainable change practices, leadership – what is relevant to other contexts in which you may be involved? What is most salient for you at the organizational, group, and/or personal level(s)?

XII. References

XIII. Appendices (documents exhibited do not need to be double spaced or follow APA)
A. Consent form provided to participants
B. Agreement to Protect Action Research Participants
C. Any details about the project that fit better in an Appendix than in the body of the paper

<u>Suggested Paper Length:</u>

The paper should be 35-50 pages (excluding appendices) for a single authored paper. Multiple author papers should be no longer than 60 pages. Suggested page lengths for each of the major sections are included below.

It is expected that each element listed will be touched on, but some will be more developed than others depending on your particular project, on your learning, and in which sections you decide to include the *learning* since there is some latitude for where various aspects will fit best. Developing each element fully would likely require more than 35 pages, so that is not expected; what is "enough" will become clearer when your Faculty Advisor responds to your first draft.

Be in touch with your Faculty Advisor as to paper length and structure, especially for multiple authors.

The length of Appendices depends on what is included besides the Consent Form.

Section	***Suggested page length***
Sections (I-VI)	15-20 pages (most from proposal)
Narrative section	9-12 pages (recommend no more than 3 pages per cycle)
Evaluation of the Project Purpose and Outcomes	2-4 pages
Reflection on Sustainable Organizational Change Processes	4-6 pages
Learning and Integration	3-5 pages
Implications, Growth Edge and Next Steps	2-4 pages

Appendix E: Cover Page Format

TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT

A Synthesis Project Proposal

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Liberal Arts

Saint Mary's College of California

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Leadership

By

Your Name

Month XX, 2014

Appendix F: Agreement to Protect Action Research Participants

This Agreement becomes an appendix to your proposal. With projects involving more than minimal risk seek advice from your Faculty Advisor for the wording of first paragraph of the Agreement.

Agreement to Protect Action Research Participants

The proposed Action Research/Collaborative Inquiry will not involve contact with a vulnerable population (e.g. children, terminally ill, mentally or legally incompetent) or involve risks of social or psychological harm from inquiry into a stressful issue (a highly charged or sensitive topic such as sexual behavior, death, stigmatized behavior or illegal activities). If the project involves, or changes toward involving a vulnerable population or a traumatic or highly confidential issue or increased risks to participants, or seeks to recruit participants that are dependent on the convener, or involves video/audio taping, I will seek my Faculty Advisor's counsel so that relevant IRB protocols are followed.

Further, to ensure the rights and wellbeing of participants, I agree:

1. To review the sections of the *Leadership Project Guide* on Protecting Participants (p .10) and Procedures for Protecting Participants (pp. 19-25) .

2. Read the Faculty Advisor's "Request for Screening for Exemption" for the Project course, approved by the IRB. To complete the CITI Training required for my project.

3. To describe anticipated risks in the Proposal and include them in the Consent Form.

4. To obtain my Faculty Advisor's approval of my Proposal before proceeding past the initial recruitment of participants.

5. To conduct the research as proposed, especially regarding steps to ensure confidentiality, and to obtain informed consent as discussed in Basic Research Steps section of the proposal and the Consent Form created for the project.

6. To check in with my Faculty Advisor at least once a month on the progress of the research. And at least every two weeks during implementation.

7. To be immediately in touch with my Faculty Advisor if any changes are anticipated in the proposed research design, methods, or participants; or if there are any incidents, or indications that may reflect on the protection of the participants, including unanticipated risks, adverse events, and findings during the project that would affect the risks or benefits.

Investigator/Convener *_____________________ Date ___________________

As Faculty Advisor, I pledge to monitor the ethical issues regarding protection of participants as human subjects, to ensure that student researchers are aware of their responsibilities as investigators, to consult with the IRB in the case that the research involves a vulnerable population, a highly sensitive topic, or unusual risk and to immediately inform the IRB "in the event of research-related unanticipated risks, adverse events, or findings during the study that would affect the risks or benefits of participation."

Faculty Advisor *__________________________ Date _________________

*Invesitgator/Convener types name & date when submitting the proposal; Faculty Advisor types in name & date when the Project Proposal is approved. No handwritten signature needed.

Appendix G: Organizational Consent

[The following authorization is to be signed by an institutional representative on letterhead or sent via institutional email, with a copy of the Consent Form attached]

Authorization to Participate in an Action Research Inquiry

I authorize ____________________________ to move forward with recruiting participants and implementing the action inquiry project represented by the attached Consent Form.

________________________________ ____________________ ______________________
Signature Date Title

___________________________ ____________________
Signature [of student] Date

Appendix H: ARM Consent Form Sample

Here is sample consent form to draw on in creating your own consent form. Borrow wording as appropriate and add any new language to cover more than minimal risks not mentioned in the sample. No citation is needed to use wording from these examples.

Informed Consent for Participating in an Action Research Method Inquiry Project

[Working title]

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATING IN AN ACTION RESEARCH INQUIRY PROJECT: DEVELOPING AN ALUMNI ASSOCIATION FOR ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH AND LEADERSHIP IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL

[Context, purpose, benefits]

You are invited to take part in an action inquiry project initiated by [your name] to participate with a team of other School stakeholders to explore how to develop relationships between alumni and the School that contribute to the development of the School.

[Duration, activities]

The team will meet for approximately nine weeks through multiple cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection. [Your first name] and the team together will determine the direction of the inquiry gathering the input from the team participants, other stakeholders, including alumni, to be obtained through meetings, conversations, interviews, emails, and information from other institutions.

The project fulfills a requirement for the Master of Art in Leadership program, Saint Mary's College of California, and provides an opportunity for [your first name] to share Action Research methods for conducting an organizational inquiry.

[Participation voluntary]

Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and participants can decline to participate in any aspect and may withdraw at any time.

[Protection of anonymity, confidentiality; during and after]

While at the outset we will establish ground rules about the confidentiality of our conversations, there is no guarantee that any confidential sharing during the inquiry will be held by all the participants in confidence. The final report presented to Saint Mary's College will keep both the personal and organization names anonymous by using pseudonyms.

[Potential risks]

Saint Mary's College requires that an inquiry research project initiated by a graduate student include a consent form that identifies potential risks to participants. No special ones are anticipated other than the everyday risks of engaging in problem-solving and frank dialogue. While we will establish ground rules about the confidentiality of our conversations, there is no guarantee that what is expressed during the inquiry will be held by all the participants in total confidence. We will use real names during the project, although [your first name]'s report will use pseudonyms as a means of keeping confidentiality.

[How video or audio recording will be handled]

At this time no audio taping or videoing is anticipated, and will not happen without obtaining permission from the participants.

[Confidentiality and anonymity in reports of the inquiry]

[your first name]'s paper for his coursework on what he learned from initiating the project will be filed in the Saint Mary's College Library, and available through the graduate thesis database with the names of participants [and the organization] given pseudonyms. The proposal, implementation and report will be reviewed by [your first name]'s Faculty Advisor, _____, Ph.D, and shared with classmates. If the findings are to be published or presented in a more public forum, permission will be sought from the School [or participants/name of the organization].

[Compensation]

Action Inquiry moves forward on the enthusiasm of the participants, and the project does not monetarily compensate participants, including [your first name] as the convener of the inquiry. Any released time is a matter between the School and the School staff.

[Contact Information]

Please direct any questions about this research to _________ (415-xxx-xxxx) or her/his Faculty Advisor _________ at (925-xxx- xxxx).

[Signature of informed consent, receipt of an unsigned copy of this consent form]

After reading this consent form, and receiving a copy, I agree to take part in this Action Research inquiry:

_____________________________________ ___________________

Signature Date

[If recording is anticipated, an additional signed release of consent to be recorded is needed using wording like the following:]

I further consent to having the meetings tape-recorded, with the understanding that I can ask to have the recorder turned off at any time:

_________________________________ ________________

Signature Date

[And earlier in the consent form language like the following needs to be inserted]

Each meeting will be audio taped for the purpose of allowing any participants unable to be present to be familiar with what transpired, and for the purpose of going back over a recording to accurately capture something significant to the inquiry. At any point a participant can ask to have the recorder turned off. The tapes will be kept in a safe place by one of the conveners during the inquiry and destroyed after the final paper is written.

Appendix I: ARM Consent Form -- Higher Risk

[Italicized words below contain elements referring to higher risk; the proposal will require discussion of how the convener will make sure that invitees that she or he supervises will not feel obligated to participate. It must also address how the nature of the invitees' participation will not put them at risk of having a negative job review.

Note that because the convener invites subordinates to participate, and intends that the participants communicate honestly about their trust for each other, this increased risk moves this proposal into the 2nd tier of Possible Triggers. And these risks MAY require forwarding it to the IRB for approval, per the Faculty Advisor's assessment.

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATING IN AN ACTION RESEARCH INQUIRY PROJECT

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF TRUST AND RESPECT BETWEEN LEAD DISPATCHERS AND THEIR DISPATCHER TEAM IN AN EMERGENCY DISPATCH CENTER

You are invited to take part in an action inquiry project initiated by John Doe to participate with a team of other dispatchers and Emergency Communications Services Center stakeholders to explore how to develop better communication and teamwork. *The purpose of this project is to bring the dispatch team closer together and to help the members increase their trust and respect for one another.*

The team will meet for approximately 10 weeks through approximately four cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection. John and the team together will determine the direction of the inquiry, will gather information, and provide the data for the inquiry, documenting both the process and the learning that emerges. The inquiry will gather the input from the participants, other stakeholders, through meetings, conversations, emails, common readings*, story telling, and mutually agreed on communication exercises.*

This project fulfills a requirement for the Masters degree program in Leadership, Saint Mary's College of California, and provides an opportunity for John to share the Action Research methodology for team building and organizational development.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and participants may decline to participate in any aspect and may withdraw at any time. *This understanding is all the more important because there are differences in authority levels among us*. [*Either here or orally, emphasize there will be no negative formal or informal consequences for declining to participate*.]

While we will all use our real names during the project, the documentation and report will use pseudonyms as a means of keeping confidentiality required by Saint Mary's.

At this time no audio or video recording is anticipated, and will not happen without obtaining permission from the participants. *[videos of subordinates would involve even greater risk]*

This project will hopefully generate outcomes that can be implemented with other teams in the Center, but the only written report currently anticipated is the paper on the project and what John learned from leading it, to be filed in the Saint Mary's College Library and the graduate theses data base, with the names of participants and the Center given pseudonyms. The proposal, implementation and report will be reviewed by John's Faculty Advisor Dr. ____ ____, and the findings shared with other faculty and students in the Project course, If the findings are to be published or presented in a more public forum, permission will be sought from the participants.

Saint Mary's College requires that an inquiry project initiated by a graduate student include a consent form that describes anticipated risks. *A process that encourages frank exchanges regarding trust and respect is likely to surface uncomfortable information that can be more stressful. Each participant will be responsible for their comfort level in what they choose to disclose.* While at the outset we will establish ground rules about the confidentiality of our conversations, there is no guarantee that what is expressed during the inquiry will be held by all the participants in total confidence. Neither is there a guarantee of a personal or organizational benefit, or that the project will proceed as outlined above to a successful completion.

Action Inquiry moves forward on the enthusiasm of the participants, and the project does not monetarily compensate participants, other than the released work time as staff development.

Please direct any questions about this research to John Doe (xxx-xxx-xxxx) or her/his Faculty Advisor Dr. ____ ____ at 510 xxx-xxxx.

After reading this consent form, and receiving a copy, I agree to take part in this Action Research inquiry:

______________________________________   ____________________

Signature   Date

Appendix J: CI Consent Form Sample

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATING IN A COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY RESEARCH PROJECT

[working title]

A COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY ON MOTHER-DAUGHTER COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

[Invitation to join; purpose; benefits]

You are invited to take part in an Collaborative Inquiry project convened by ___ and ____to engage with other mothers in order to gain a deeper understanding of how our grown daughters in their 20s view the world, what they value, and what it means for them to be a woman in the 21st Century. The purpose of this exploration is to expand our knowledge that will enhance and improve communication and create a broader and in-depth understanding of the so-called 'complex mother-daughter relationship': how do we better understand the world from their perspective as providing knowledge that will enhance communication and increase our personal capacity to relate mother to daughter.

[Context]

This project will allow ____ and _____ as conveners to fulfill a class requirement for their Masters degree in Leadership, at Saint Mary's College of California, and serves as an opportunity for them to lead in sharing the Collaborative Inquiry methodology for a deep investigation of a personally important issue.

[Duration, Activities]

The collaborators (five of us as of today) will meet for approximately nine weeks through approximately four cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection. Together, under shared and rotating leadership, we will determine the direction of the inquiry, gather information, and provide the data for the inquiry, mainly from lived experience before and during the inquiry, documenting both the process and the learning that emerges

The inquiry will gather the contributions from each other through face to face meetings, phone-calls, emails, common readings, story telling, art projects, role-playing and mutually agreed on communication exercises. Each of us will keep a journal tracking our learning, and take turns taking notes at our scheduled meetings together. We will likely gather information through conversations with our daughters, and from other mothers/daughters.

[Protection of anonymity, confidentiality; during and after]

While we will all use our real names during the project, the documentation and report will use pseudonyms as a means of keeping confidentiality required by Saint Mary's. We will be especially careful in keeping information about our daughters within the confines of our group.

[Mention audio/video recording confidentially procedures]

At this time no audio or video taping is anticipated, and will not happen without obtaining permission from the participants, and providing for confidential treatment of the tapes.

[OR alternatively such as]

Each meeting will be audio taped for the purpose of allowing any participants unable to be present to be familiar with what transpired, and for the purpose of going back over a recording to accurately capture something significant to the inquiry. At any point a participant can ask to have the recorder turned off. The tapes will be kept in a safe place by one of the conveners during the inquiry and destroyed after the final paper is written.

[Confidentiality and anonymity in reports of the inquiry]

This project hopefully will generate outcomes that will have positive ripple effects in our relationships, but the only written report currently anticipated is ___ and ___'s paper on the project and what they learned from leading it, to be filed in the Saint Mary's College Library and made available through the graduate thesis data base, with the names of participants given pseudonyms. The proposal, implementation and report will be reviewed by __ & __'s Faculty Advisor Dr. __________, and the findings shared with other Faculty Advisors and students in the Project course. ___ and __ will ask permission from the participants before publishing or presenting the findings in a more public forum.

[Potential benefits and risks]

Saint Mary's College requires that an inquiry project initiated by a graduate student include a consent form which covers anticipated risks. An inquiry process that encourages authentic participation and sharing of personal experience regarding an emotionally charged relationship may surface stressful or uncomfortable information and realizations. While at the outset we will establish ground rules about the confidentiality of our conversations, there is no guarantee that what is expressed during the inquiry will be held by all the co-participants in total confidence.

Each participant agrees to be responsible for their comfort level in what they choose to disclose.

There is no guarantee of a personal benefit in increasing the capacity for relationship, or that the project will proceed as outlined above to a successful completion.

CI, as an open ended process involving collaborative decision-making, may at times feel disorganized, either frustratingly slow or disconcertingly chaotic. There can be peer pressure to communicate through uncomfortable periods as the means to enable learning.

If discomfort becomes acute/overwhelming/unmanageable participants are encouraged to contact the convener, or optionally, the Faculty Advisor.

[Participation voluntary]

Participation in this inquiry is completely voluntary, and participants can decline to participate in any aspect and may withdraw at any time.

[Compensation]

Collaborative inquiry moves forward on the enthusiasm of the co-participants, and the project does not monetarily compensate co-participants.

[Contact information]

Please direct any further questions about this research to __ and __ (xxx-xxx-xxxx) or their Faculty Advisor Dr. _________at 510 555-5555.

[Signature of informed consent, receipt of an unsigned copy of this consent form]

After reading this consent form, and receiving a copy, I agree to take part in this Action Research inquiry:

_____________________________________ ______________________

Signature Date

[If recording is anticipated, include an additional signature of consent to be audio recorded]

I further consent to having the meetings audio tape recorded, with the understanding that I can ask to have the recorder turned off at any tine:

_____________________________________ ______________________

Signature Date

After reading this consent form, having my questions answered and receiving a copy of the form, I agree to take part in this Collaborative Inquiry research:

_______________________________________ ________________

Signature Date

Appendix K: Example of text in Basic Research Steps section

Here's an example of what might be included in the Basic Research Steps section of a proposal for a CI where all collaborators were from the cohort. Borrow the wording from this sample as is appropriate to fit your project and add any new language to cover risks not mentioned. Project proposers need not worry about plagiarism or using someone else's language without attribution in creating the consent form for this project. The sample consent forms cover most of the likely risks that your project may involve. Your Basic Research Steps section should discuss the risks not covered on the consent form.

Protecting Participants

Since the awareness of risks such as breaching confidentiality or emotional distress is important in minimizing them, we have become familiar with the requirements of Saint Mary's College Institutional Review Board and will follow them in conjunction with the guidance of our Faculty Advisors.

There is minimal risk regarding confidentiality in this project. Our topic of "fostering inclusiveness" is typically not a highly private matter and is addressed openly in the curriculum in Module VII.

On the other hand, it can be a highly charged topic for discussion because it calls into question prejudicial judgments and actions that exclude others. In order to have a frank conversation, there has to be a holding environment of safety and confidentiality, and even then there are likely to be moments when individuals may feel vulnerable regarding the judgments of others, and to feel personally invalidated.

Risk is mitigated because we are already experienced in exploring this topic as a necessary step to formulate the purpose of our proposal. We are experienced with addressing sensitive interpersonal issues throughout the Program curriculum, especially in Module VII with this topic. Our exposure to Rosenberg's *Nonviolent Communication* (2003) provides tools for navigating tense communication situations. Our Faculty Advisor is also experienced with these issues.

The consent form will detail the kinds of activities we will engage in, the voluntary nature of our participation and the personal risks of authentic participation in such a journey.

Included in the consent form will be details of the purpose and the disposition of audio tapes used to record our meetings so any participant who misses a meeting can "catch up" with our inquiry and so any of us can go back over a recording to accurately capture something significant to the inquiry. At any point a participant can ask to have the recorder turned off. The tapes will be kept in a safe place by one of the conveners during the inquiry and destroyed after the final paper is written. All the participants must sign a release specifically directed to recording.

The Consent form (see Appendix A in my proposal) will be circulated, discussed and signed at the first joint session. The signed Consent form will be kept by one of the inquiry conveners, with a copy sent to the Faculty Advisor.

A meeting note taker from within the CI group will be identified for each group activity and notes will be shared with every member of the group.

Participants outside of the Collaborative Inquiry group who we may approach to learn from their lived experiences will, as is appropriate, be given sufficient background information about the project topic and purpose, the nature of their involvement, and potential risks, so that they can make an informed decision regarding their participation. In the unlikely event that an additional consent form will be needed to gain input from someone outside of the collaborator team, we will work in conjunction with our Faculty Advisor to create and sign consent forms that meet the stipulated privacy guidelines.

No one in the inquiry is a supervisor of another or has a power differential that would compromise the voluntary nature of participation.

See Appendix B for our Agreement to Protect Action Research Participants, signed electronically by each of the conveners and by the Faculty Advisor that affirms we will uphold the guidelines of the Human Research Institutional Review Board (the IRB) to ensure the rights and wellbeing of all the participants.

Appendix L: Documentation of Completion of CITI Training

The Collaborative Initiative Training Institute (https://www.citiprogram.org/)
has created a curriculum for educating researchers and organizations regarding the protection of human subjects in research so that they comply with Federal law. The IRB recommends that learners get certification for completion of Training courses, even for projects that are exempt from direct IRB oversight. You and your Advisor will determine which modules of which courses, according the nature of your project. **Researchers on non-exempt projects must complete the entire basic course in their discipline as determined by the IRB and their Faculty Advisor.**