

2019

Increasing the Sustainability of Action Learning in the Beta Corporation

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Consultancy Project Executive Summary

Organization: Gardner-Webb University School of Education

Project Title: Increasing the Sustainability of Action Learning in the Beta Corporation

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Defense Date: July 9, 2019

Authorized by: Jeff Hamilton, Ed.D.

Amendment History

<u>Version</u>	<u>Issue Date</u>	<u>Changes</u>
Version # 1	05/13/19	Initial version.
Version # 2	05/21/19	Title change and grammatical corrections

Approval

This consultancy project was submitted by Sheila Person-Scott under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

Jeff Hamilton, Ed.D., Faculty Advisor
Gardner-Webb University

Date

Alex Walker, Site Advisor
Strategy Leader

Date

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To my dad who is no longer with us. His relentless support of my continual learning and encouragement helped me press through when times were tough. I heard your voice of encouragement long after your presence was no longer with us. To my sisters, brother, and mother in love who believed in me, shared their words of wisdom, and cared when times were tough and obstacles presented themselves, thank you. To my friends who understood that I could not be with them during picnics, parties, and gatherings but did not write me off and gave me the opportunity to make my own decision about whether I could attend an event. A warm thank you to my cohort and the professors of the DEOL program. Being in the cohort was a learning experience outside of the textbooks and lesson plans. You taught me how to work with people who have different experiences who are trying to reach a common goal; my life was enriched by your presence. Finally, to Alex, my site manager, you made my project your project and provided the resources and necessary support during the ups and downs of this project. Your actions are deeply appreciated.

Abstract

Increasing the Sustainability of Action Learning in the Beta Corporation.
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The Talent Development and Organization Effectiveness group of the Beta Corporation, (pseudonym), introduced action learning (AL) as an enterprise solution in 2014. The group envisioned AL would become a key leadership development lever and assumed the business leaders would embrace the opportunities associated with AL; however, it was discovered that organic embracing of AL did not happen. A few of the reasons interfering with wider adoption were

- a) Clarification of AL was difficult
- b) Lack of understanding between key stakeholders
- c) Undefined outcomes and measures
- d) Delivered solely to an exclusive audience of senior leaders
- e) Shortage of AL coaches
- f) Inconsistent sponsorship
- g) Reallocation of resources

In order to obtain the desired outcomes an implementation plan was developed to clarify roles, identify outcomes, and establish measurements to establish AL practices as a way of thinking and operating in the day-to-day work.

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1 Introduction

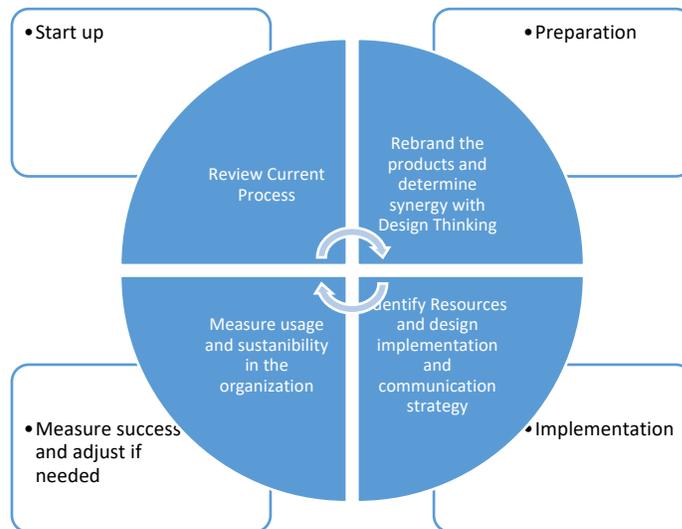
1.1 Project Purpose

The initial project purpose was to implement an action learning (AL) plan that incorporated design thinking and increased use of AL in the Beta Corporation. Design thinking was eliminated from the project due to budget constraints and organizational change. The revised project required the creation of an implementation plan that addressed all the barriers to increased usage of AL in the organization.

1.2 Associated Documents

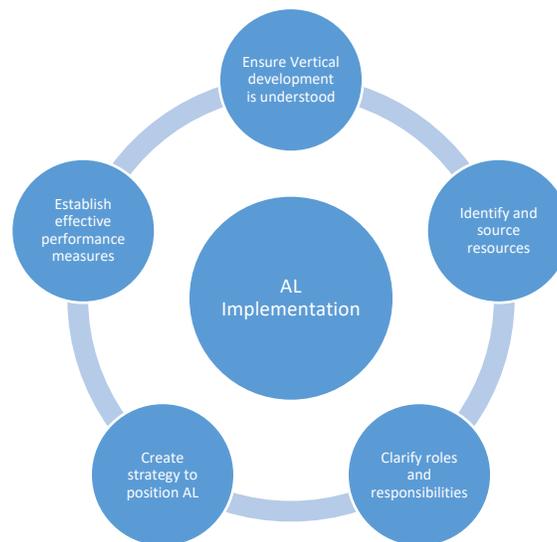
The chart below shows the initial steps that were taken to implement an improved AL process. The current processes were reviewed, and opportunities to rebrand were discussed. A partnership with the design thinking team was explored and some of the interdependencies were identified.

Initial Goals



In November 2018, the funding for AL was put on hold, and the project scope was revisited. At this point, the project was refocused from actually delivering AL to developing an implementation plan. Design thinking was eliminated, and an implementation plan was created that included a work plan identifying critical steps that met the desired objectives.

Revised Plan



Once it was determined that the funding would not be available to implement the changes to AL and after consultation with the client, an implementation plan was created that addressed all the components necessary for a successful AL experience. The five levers above were identified as the indicators that were necessary to implement a successful plan. Each of these components were areas that needed improvement after conducting a review of the previous launches.

1.3 Project Plan Maintenance

Once it was clear that the funding for the revised AL process was not approved, we created an implementation plan that clearly identified the steps necessary to produce a meaningful AL event. A review with the Project Manager, Senior Organization Effectiveness Manager, and Program Manager confirmed the plan would meet the desired needs. The final project plan was approved and accepted.

2 Project Scope

The project scope involved three leaders from two different human resources departments, the Talent and Organization Effectiveness and the HR Business Partner Teams. The leaders were the core group who were responsible for the redesign of AL. The Senior Organization Development Manager was engaged periodically to ensure that the plan was meeting the organization's needs.

The AL Advisory Committee provided insight into how AL was being used in the organization and any barriers that were occurring.

The project did not include a redesign of the facilitator content or the development of requirements of the coaches. In addition, the scope did not include creating a measurement process for the coaches.

2.1 Outline of Partnering Organization's Objectives

2.1.1 Objectives

The Talent Development and Organization Effectiveness group introduced a development solution that had proven success in one of its lines of business. The strategy manager wanted to elevate the success of this learning tool to the organizational level. Using AL would tie in the key leadership expectations, solve business problems, and build skills. The solution was cost effective; AL was delivered in the organization, and internal coaches were trained to deliver it.

The implementation of AL did not meet the desired results, and the client received consultation and insight that resulted in a plan that was created to ensure success. In addition, the consultant was internal to the organization and was able to access data that an external consultant was not be able to access.

The following tasks were performed during the engagement:

- Created a strategy to position AL as one of the premier ways to develop leader capability and solve business problems; integrate into the suite of developmental opportunities for targeted audiences
- Created milestones to enable program effectiveness
 - ensuring vertical development is understood
 - addressing manager accountability
 - determining funding needed
- Identified dedicated resource needs to launch a successful program
 - determine the number of coaches are needed
- Identified and clarified roles and responsibilities between stakeholders and gained commitment

2.1.2 Success Criteria

The success criteria were determined by the development of an implementation plan that addressed the clear areas of risk and introduced a way to effectively measure the intended outcomes of the program. Five areas were identified as clear areas that determined the success of the project. They were as follows:

1. Ensure Vertical Development is Understood
2. Position AL as a Premier Learning Experience
3. Identify and Acquire Resources
4. Identify and Clarify Roles and Responsibilities
5. Establish Effective Performance Measures

2.1.3 Risks

The major risk of this project was not meeting the organization's expectation regarding leadership development. This could have resulted in leaders going external for development that would create additional costs and not include the key organizational messages that an internal product would.

2.2 Outline of Student's Objectives

2.2.1 Objectives

The initial objective was to assess the AL process, identify what was getting in the way of success, and implement an improved AL event. The organizational climate and lack of funding required the project to be refocused to develop a plan that when implemented would position AL as a premier learning event.

2.2.2 Success Criteria

The project was deemed successful once the five stated criteria and action items were identified and were validated by the stakeholders as critical to the implementation of the plan.

2.2.3 Risks

In addition to resource risks, there was massive organizational scrutiny that resulted in leadership changes. The AL project was seen as discretionary and therefore funding for it was deferred but could easily have been cancelled.

2.3 Definitive Scope Statement

The outcome of the AL project was to create an implementation plan that enhanced the delivery of AL. This included creating the desired actions that improved the process, enhanced client understanding, and positioned AL as a premier learning event in the organization.

3 Deliverables

3.1 To Partnering Organization

The chart below outlines the four required deliverables of the project.

Deliverables	Description	Forecasted date
1	Created a strategic plan that positioned AL as one of the premier ways to develop leader capability and solve business problems.	Fall 2017
2	Developed a leader forum that enhanced leader knowledge regarding vertical development.	Fall 2017
3	Identified and obtained resources to support project implementation.	Spring 2018
4	Clarified roles and responsibilities between stakeholders and gained commitment -communicated and inspected coaching/facilitation standards -solved sponsor/problem sourcing	Spring 2018
5	Established effective performance measures for coaches and participants	Summer 2018
6	Obtained resources needed to launch a successful program -hired additional coaches needed to deliver AL	Summer 2018

3.2 From Student

The student provided leadership coaching to the strategy manager that resulted in enhanced communication skills between senior leadership and the strategy manager.

4 Project Approach

4.1 Project Lifecycle Processes

In the first phase of the project, the current state was assessed. This included meeting with all key stakeholders, reviewing the survey instrument and results, and creating a recommended approach.

Once the assessment was completed, the findings were shared to ensure there was a clear understanding of the current state.

In phase two, the key barriers were identified, and a work plan was created to address the barriers and mitigate risk. Once the strategy was identified, a work plan was developed to identify each action necessary to reach our desired goal.

In the third phase, we gathered feedback and approval on the implementation plan and identified steps that could be taken before implementation to ensure readiness (hiring coaches, creating survey, and establishing desired learning outcomes).

4.2 Project Management Processes

Conception and Initiation

Meetings with the stakeholders determined what scope of the project was the intended outcome. Initially, the scope included design thinking; but due to budget constraints, design thinking was eliminated from the project. In addition, we focused on delivering a new and improved AL process but ended up deciding on the creation of an implementation plan that could be used once the funding was received.

Definition and Planning

Once the project focus was identified, several meetings occurred to address the key barriers to the desired outcomes. A strategy was created that would address the key risks to successful implementation and a work plan was created that included the activities that would need to be completed and a timeline (along with the interdependencies) that, if followed, would lead to a successful implementation.

Launch and Execution

This project moved from relaunching AL to creating an implementation plan to launch AL at a future time. The project closed once the plan was created.

4.3 Project Support Processes

The major resource to support AL is the AL coach. As part of the implementation, the program manager was responsible to ensure that there is

role clarity, feedback, and expectations set for all AL coaches. Additionally, the leadership of all coaches is required to adhere to the agreements that were made between the AL leadership and the managers.

4.4 Organization

The Talent Development and Organization Effectiveness group consisted of nine leaders and 78 team members. The strategy leader for AL reports to the leader responsible for strategies. She is dependent on the consulting and delivery group to support the implementation of AL in the organization.

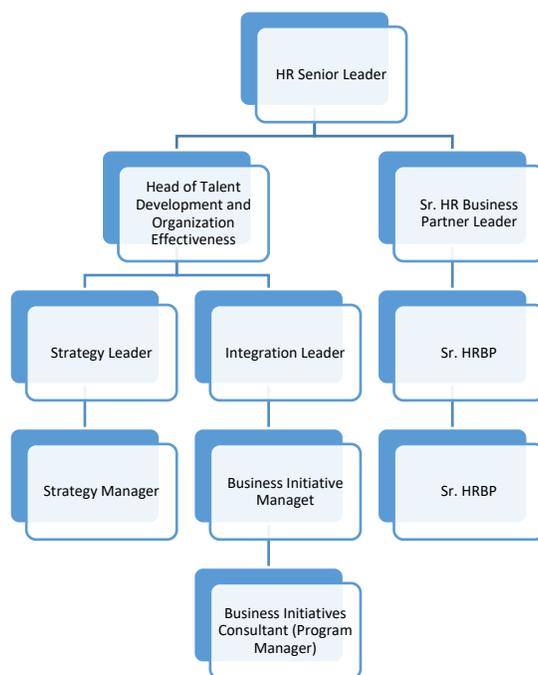


4.4.1 Project Team

The project team consisted of the consultant, the strategy manager, and the program manager. Virtual teams were engaged when their insight and support were needed.

4.4.2 Mapping Between the Beta Corporation and Student

The student (at the time of project initiation) was a senior human resources business partner whose focus was on work specifically involving the HR organization. There was no mapping between my group (HR for HR) and the Talent Development and Organization Effectiveness group. We both were in the HR organization, but our work did not cross paths.



5 Communications Plan

The communication plan was used to determine that a new AL event is being scheduled. This plan will ensure that all critical parties are informed.

Target Date	Enterprise Communication Channel	Target Audience	Communication Highlights	Desired Outcome
5 business days	Meetings	Learning and Development Leader Sr. Manager, OED Head of Enterprise HR Solution	Approval for go forward implementation plan	To provide insight and seek approval
10 business days	On-line Calls	Human Resources Leadership Team Business Leaders HR Partners	Socialize plan and timeline regarding implementation	Prepare audience to ensure A successful launch
10 business days	Focus Groups	Previous participants and their teams Interested parties	Advise of new process and offerings	
2 business days	Meeting	Talent Planning	Communicate available dates	Talent Planning will use AL as A development strategy for mid to senior leaders
3 business days	Meeting, email	Learning and Development Leader Sr. Manager, OED Head of Enterprise HR Solution	Provide summary of learning outcomes and necessary adjustments	Inform stakeholders of program success

6 Work Plan

6.1 Work Breakdown Structure

Phase	Activity	Sub-category	Detailed Strategy	Owner	Timeline	Dependencies/Notes
1	Ensure vertical development is understood	Build leadership knowledge of vertical development in the organization	Identify areas that need enhancement to ensure that AL is understood and the implementation is successful	Consultant/Strategy Lead	2 w	
1a	Create tools to enhance leader knowledge and understanding	Establish Alignment	Create a glossary of terms, concepts and techniques to build a base line of knowledge	Program Manager	2 W	Partnership with TDOE Communications
1b	Identify areas that need enhancements		Review end to end process and determine areas of improvement needed	Strategy Lead Program Manager	3w	
2	Identify and source resources	Identify and source dedicated resources	Determine the process for selecting sponsors and sourcing problems	Program Manager, AL Advisory	1 m	
2b	Identify and source resources	Identify and source dedicated resources	Determine the number of and the skill level of coaches needed	Program Manager	3 w	
2c	Identify and source resources	Identify and source dedicated resources	Establish funding needed to acquire resources and deliver sessions	Program Manager	2 w	
2d	Identify and source resources	Identify and source dedicated resources	Determine requirements for coaches, (# of expected facilitations and adherence to the program design)	Program Manager, AL Advisory	2 w	
2e	Identify and source resources	Identify and source dedicated resources	Design, behavioral based selection process for the Program Manager to ensure the right talent is selected	Program Manager, Strategy Lead	1 m	
2f	Identify and source resources		Identify administrative support needs	Strategy Lead Program Manager	2w	
2g	Identify and source resources	Identify and source dedicated resources	Calculate the hard and soft cost of running an ad hoc AL session (various scenarios, excluding the team's time)	Program Manager	1 m	

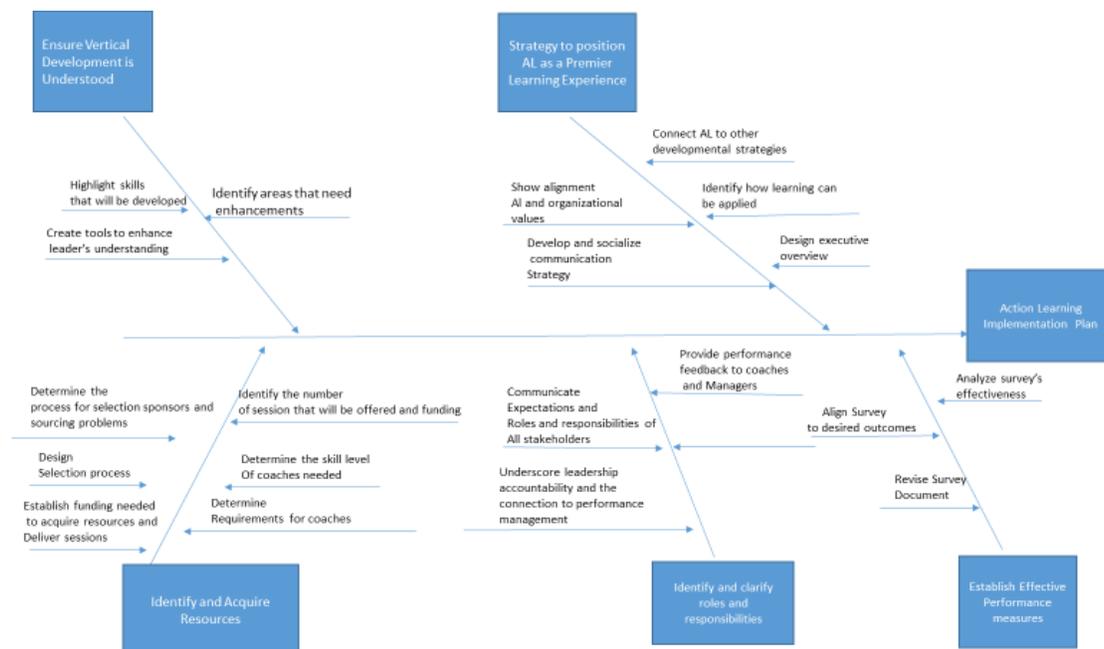
Phase	Activity	Sub-category	Detailed Strategy	Owner	Timeline	Dependencies/Notes
3	Strategy to position AL as a Premier Learning Opportunity	Establish Alignment	Review pillars like Leader Behavior, Diversity and Inclusion, Culture, Leadership competencies in 360, Leader capabilities – show the alignment between AL and organizational values that will enhance our ability to meet our goal of providing exceptional service to our customers.	Strategy Lead Program Manager	2 w	
3a	Strategy to position AL as a Premier Learning Opportunity	Build leadership skills	Identify the key problem solving techniques that will be included in the forum (EXEC OVERVIEW)	Program Manager, AL Advisory Board	1 w	
3b	Strategy to position AL as a Premier Learning Opportunity	Enhance AL experience	Umbrella theory, (collateral needs to be visited), show the connection between AL and other development strategies. AL encompasses the stand alone learnings that are acquired in other development offerings, such as D&I, Extraordinary Leader, Crucial Conversations and Transformational Leaders. AL allows the leader/learner to apply the knowledge was acquired in the offerings listed above. Provides a vehicle for integration for the learnings that were achieved.	Strategy Lead Program Manager	2 w	
3c	Strategy to position AL as a Premier Learning Opportunity	Establish Alignment	Develop a communication strategy to bring awareness leaders on AL, position AL as a "umbrella" that is overarching and incorporates learnings from other key learning events. Highlight how skills learned in D&I, Extraordinary leader, Crucial Conversations, etc. can be practiced in solving problems using AL	Communication Person Program Manager, Strategy Lead	3 w	Depends on all tasks in Strategy to Position aL as a Premier Learning Opportunity
3d	Strategy to position AL as a Premier Learning Opportunity	Build leadership knowledge of vertical development in the organization	Design a forum (EXEC OVERVIEW) that will enable attendees and HR Consulting team to understand various components of AL and provide insight to team members of leaders who participated in an Action Learning Experience.	Strategy Lead Program Manager	1 m	
3e	Strategy to position AL as a Premier Learning Opportunity	Establish Alignment	Provide tools to leaders attending AL forum (EXEC OVERVIEW) that they can use in the workplace after attending forum.	Strategy Lead Program Manager	1 d	will be designed as part of Designing the Exec Overview/Forum
3f	Strategy to position AL as a Premier Learning Opportunity		Identify skills that can be developed through AL and skills that will be practiced in AL	Program Manager, AL Advisory	3w	
3g	Strategy to position AL as a Premier Learning Opportunity		Socialize content of communication strategy during Talent Mangement Process and create a communication that can be highlighted in the HR Weekly	TDOE Communications, Program Manager	1m	

Phase	Activity	Sub-category	Detailed Strategy	Owner	Timeline	Dependencies/Notes
4	Identify and Clarify roles and responsibilities	Identify and source dedicated resources	Communicate expectations and roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders (infrastructure people)	Strategy Lead Program Manager	3 w	Assume initiating com strategy will take time to move through
4a	Identify and Clarify roles and responsibilities	Communication	Provide performance feedback to coaches and their managers	Strategy Lead Program Manager	1 h	this will happen in short events over time
4b	Identify and Clarify roles and responsibilities	Communication	Provide stakeholders with information concerning the commitment required (assuming stakeholders at enterprise and NOT the participants or sponsor in a specific event.	Strategy Lead Program Manager	1 w	
4c	Identify and Clarify roles and responsibilities		Underscore leadership accountability and the connection to performance management	Strategy Lead Program Manager	1m	
4d	Identify and Clarify roles and responsibilities		Orient participants to AL process and outcomes	Strategy Lead Program Manager	1m	
5a	Establish effective performance measures	Survey Tool	Revise survey instrument with the necessary enhancements to ensure desired outcomes are met	Strategy Lead Program Manager	2m	
5b	Establish effective performance measures	Survey Tool	Align survey document to desired outcomes	Strategy Lead Program Manager	2m	
5c	Establish effective performance measures		Analyze new survey's effectiveness	Strategy Lead Program Manager	1m	
5d	Establish effective performance measures	Survey Tool	Measure skill retention and application after 30, 60, 90 days	Strategy Lead Program Manager	2m	

The work plan outlined the key deliverables of AL and who was responsible for delivery. This work plan was used prior to the implementation of AL to ensure that the outcomes were met and key stakeholders were aware of their accountabilities.

6.2 Resources

Once the five activities were identified, an Ishikawa diagram was created to identify the key deliverables under each event. These data were transferred to a work plan where the details were to be fleshed out along with the timing and interdependencies.



7 Milestones

Milestone	Date	Name
1	Fall 2016	Consultancy Project Proposal
2&3	Spring 2018	Project Objective and Scope of Work
4	Summer 2017	Project Summary and Financial Benefits
5	Fall 2017	Risk Analysis
6	Spring 2018	Measurements
7&8	Summer 2018	Key assumptions and constraints
9	Fall 2019	Quality Assurance
10	Spring 2019	Overall Performance/Executive Summary
11	Summer 2019	Statement of Purpose

In addition to the milestones in the DEOL program, five deliverables were critical to the success of the project. The deliverables are listed below with the date of completion.

Deliverables	Description	Forecasted date
1	Created a strategic plan that positioned AL as one of the premier ways to develop leader capability and solve business problems.	Fall 2017
2	Developed a leader forum that enhanced leader knowledge regarding vertical development.	Fall 2017
3	Identified and obtained resources to support project implementation.	Spring 2018
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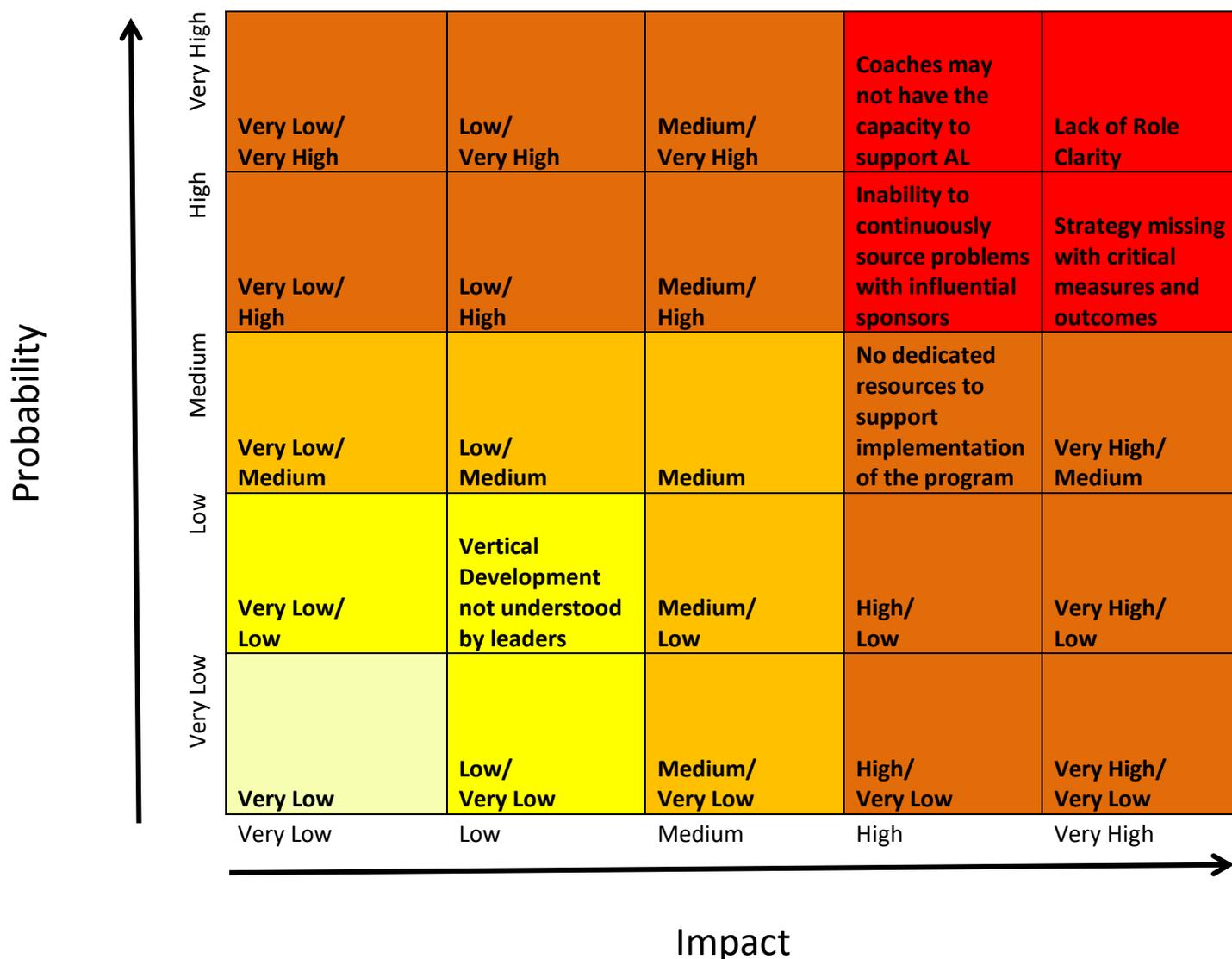
8 Metrics and Results

Each deliverable was vetted with the core team and the project stakeholders. The work plan was created to identify the key areas of focus and plan, and it addressed the steps necessary to produce a successful AL event. The feedback from the strategy manager and strategy leader indicated that the project met the desired outcomes and that the organization was strategically positioned to deliver AL once the funding was reinstated.

9 Risks, Constraints, Assumptions

9.1 Risks

The chart below identified four risks that had a high to very high impact on the success of the program and were critical to building a sustainable program. The result was a learning event that provided the clients with the necessary information to understand what AL was and how it could enhance business results.



9.2 Constraints

1. Program Director was asked not to promote AL in the organization:
 - AL was delivered if a leader asked for it to be used, but it is not to be promoted. This affected the implementation of the revised program.
2. There are other organizational priorities that took precedence over AL:
 - Organization resources were used to address other priorities that were critical to the change in the organization
3. Funding for this program was delayed:
 - No date was given to determine when the AL process can be marketed in the organization.
4. Organization has gone through massive change which has required prioritization of projects.
5. The organization was without an HR director, and the future of AL was unknown.
6. Research data were limited, and there was no appetite in the HR organization to institute a survey.
7. Consultants trained in the program were in different groups; group's workload took precedence over AL.

9.3 Assumptions

1. The organization needed desired AL:
 - The program was implemented in the organization without a needs assessment determining the desired or need for the program. Anecdotal information on the success of AL along with the fact that AL was used in a business line within the organization led to the decision to create an offering.
2. Leaders did not understand the benefits of the program:
 - Leaders in the organization did not understand/know the benefits of AL since there was no organizational communication about the program.
3. Organizational change deterred moving forward with the program:
 - The organization went through massive changes in the last 2 years which limited the AL offerings.
4. There was not sufficient data to support the program's effectiveness as a stand-alone offering:

- There was one review of the AL process, and the data did not give detailed measurable information that demonstrates its effectiveness.
5. The organization was without an HR Director:
 - While the program was approved and supported by the Enterprise Functions group, the HR organization searched for an HR director not knowing if he/she would introduce a different process for developing senior leaders.
 6. The current survey instrument did not provide clarity on what was being measured:
 - Recommendations were made to enhance the survey instrument to focus on specific areas that ensured the outcomes of the program were achieved.
 7. There are no resources dedicated to support the delivery of AL:
 - The consultants who delivered the program reported to different leaders and concentrated on their primary workload, putting the delivery of AL at risk.
 8. Over the next 3 years, the group focused on offering approximately 22 opportunities to advance AL in the Beta Corporation for mid to senior leaders.
 9. The group offered learning opportunities to Team Member Networks that sparked curiosity and created an opportunity to understand what AL was and how it could be used to solve business problems.
 10. We believed that if we had a critical mass of people who are aware of AL, it would become embedded in the organization through the users.

10 Financial Plan

Each line of business absorbs the cost of their attendees. The only additional cost absorbed by the Talent Organization Development Effectiveness is the cost of food for the participants.

Action Learning Projected Budget

Budget Per Session	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00
Total Projected Cost of an AL	\$55,655.50	\$55,655.50
You're under budget by	\$4,344.50	

Item	Description	Cost	Quantity	Amount	Notes
Staff	Salaries over 8 months	\$23,250.00	2	\$46,500.00	
Airfare	Tickets	\$500.00	2	\$1,000.00	
Hotel/Meals	Room	\$1,000.00	2	\$2,000.00	
Event Meals	Participants	\$500.00	2	\$1,000.00	
Car rental	Cost per day	\$50.00	4	\$200.00	
Mileage	55.5 per mile	\$27.75	2	\$55.50	
Supplies	Pens, Paper, etc.	\$200.00	2	\$400.00	
Training for New Coaches	Add 3 coaches to cadre	\$1,500.00	3	\$4,500.00	
Total				\$55,655.50	

Budget Assumptions

The budget assumptions were built based on the number of AL coaches necessary to deliver AL in the organization. The cost was for the salaries of the coaches and travel expenses. Minimal supplies were needed, and the cost of participant participation is the responsibility of the line of business. Included in the budget was the cost for two

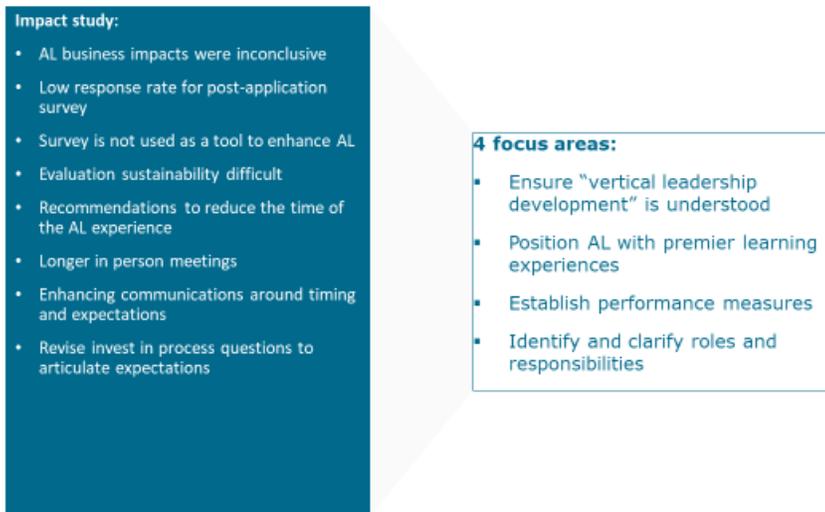
additional coaches and the cost of a consultant, should the program need one in the future. The anticipated expenditures are as follows:

- Salaries of coaches and additional support for 8 months
- Airfare/hotel of one coach per meeting
- Event lunch meal served
- Car rental and mileage
- Supplies needed to conduct session
- Training for two additional coaches
- Project fees for consultant (not actual fee, assumed cost if DEOL consultant was not involved)

11 Quality Assurance Plan

A quality assurance plan was created after an impact study was completed. The information from the study resulted in the creation of the four focus areas. Once the areas were identified, actions were created and included in the implementation plan.

Quality Assurance Plan Areas of Focus



Plan Do Study Act

