



**CULTIVATING FUTURE LEADERS**  
**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

**2022-2023**

**(Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota)**

POLICY AND GUIDANCE



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## 1. CFL PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

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The primary purpose of the Cultivating Future Leaders (CFL) Leadership Development Program is to build and recognize potential leaders for the agency. The CFL program is intended to help us meet the future challenges to conservation by exposing CFL participants to “the big picture,” providing the opportunity to observe others who provide direction and exhibit leadership skills and requiring participants to demonstrate leadership through their projects and activities.

Leadership & management skills (to be fostered by the program) include being visionary, being able to positively influence people, developing skills related to partnering, and handling public involvement and political issues.

While successful completion of the CFL program does not ensure future promotions, it does broaden candidates’ perspectives and enhance their leadership and management skills.

The three paramount training objectives of the CFL are: 1. Challenge employees to undertake leadership development; 2. Expose employees to all levels of management, aiding them in future career decisions; and 3. Allow state leaders to observe performance.

While involvement in the CFL program is often associated with the desire to advance in the agency in pursuit of career opportunities, the program is also beneficial and suited to those who plan to stay in their current position but would like to become more effective and increase their potential to influence natural resource management at the local level.

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## 2. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

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**Board of Directors:** The CFL is governed at the state level by the respective State Conservationists (STC). The Board’s function is to determine funding levels, establish/modify policy, determine when to hold the CFL, make final selections, ensure diversity, and evaluate the program. State Coordinators may serve as backups to their respective State Conservationist.

**State Coordinators:** The Assistant State Conservationists for Management & Strategy/Designated State Point of Contacts (POCs) will serve as State Coordinators and will administer the CFL and report to the Board of Directors.

- ◇ Work with Supervisors as needed to ensure the program runs smoothly.
- ◇ Notify applicants and their supervisors when the Board of Directors has made selections for the CFL.
- ◇ Orient the program participants and their supervisors on what they should expect over the coming months and the approximate schedule of events.
- ◇ Maintain communications with Program Participants and ensure all milestones of the CFL are met.

**Program Participants:** Employees who participate in the CFL are selected through a competitive process.

- ◇ Eligibility: Employees at the GS-9 through GS-12 levels, with priority given to the higher grade levels. All applicants must have at least five years of NRCS experience. CFL classes will not exceed 21 members (7 per state is ideal, but not required).
- ◇ Retention: Program participants will be retained in their present positions during the training period and will continue to be eligible for promotion in accordance with regular human resources policies. They will remain located at their present duty station.
- ◇ Program Participants not making satisfactory progress, as agreed upon by the State Coordinator and the participant’s supervisor, may be removed from the program.

**Funding:** Nebraska will take the lead in funding the training program, with Iowa and Minnesota reimbursing Nebraska for their respective Program Participants.

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### 3. EXPECTATIONS OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

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Involvement in the CFL will affect both the official and the personal time of employees selected for the program.

**Program Participants are expected to agree to the following:**

- ◇ I understand that participation in the program may take 8 to 12 weeks of work time over the 12 months (Jan/Feb of first year – Jan/Feb of the following year).
- ◇ I will fully participate in all of the scheduled training activities of the CFL and successfully complete them.
- ◇ I expect to contribute some personal resources and time for study and development.
- ◇ I will perform a job shadow assignment, which may involve travel and work time away from the regular job.
- ◇ I will participate in a group project, assigned by the Board of Directors.
- ◇ I understand that no specific award or promotion is forthcoming, promised, or guaranteed due to participation in the CFL.
- ◇ I understand that I must continue to perform all duties of my assigned position. It is understood that my supervisor will work with me to adapt work schedules and responsibilities as he/she sees fit; and my supervisor understands that some reasonable amount of working hours will be devoted to the approved CFL project.

**Program Participants agree to produce the following products by the end of the CFL class schedule or as specified below:**

- ◇ Quarterly progress reports provided electronically to the supervisor and State Coordinator(s).
- ◇ Prepare a final report, topic TBD, and present the project to the Board of Directors.
- ◇ A concise, specific written assessment at the end of the CFL experience highlighting new knowledge or skills gained, what use will be made of these in their current job, and a brief summary of career or job enhancement goals. This will be separate from the final report.

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### 4. CFL CURRICULUM

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The Cultivating Future Leaders/CFL program will require attendance and participation in formal training sessions in both in-person and instructor-led virtual formats per the schedule below, as well as completion of DiSC and 360 degree assessments, coaching with an Executive Coach, job shadowing an area or state leadership position, a group project with classmates, and a leadership tour in National Headquarters in Washington, DC.

Below is the latest 2022 CFL program schedule (subject to change, as needed):

**Date: February 24, 2022**

**Time: 10:00 am- 12:00 pm Central Time**

**Format: Orientation Webinar**

### **Program Overview, 360 Assessment, and Executive Coaching Launch**

*Each participant will take a 360-degree assessment followed by a one-on-one debrief and follow-on coaching with a certified Executive Coach. 360 assessment instruments can play a key role in a comprehensive feedback and development process. These provide valuable feedback and serve as a starting point for creating a Professional Development Strategy, focused on the specific skills vital to participant's success, and their unique talents and circumstances.*

*Reviewing the material provided by 360° assessments, the Executive Coach will help each participant understand their report and chart a course toward their personal best in order that they might consistently operate at their professional best. The coach will provide one-on-one executive coaching sessions with class participants on a quarterly basis throughout the program. These sessions will help participants develop strategies to address the feedback from the assessment, identify strengths that need to be further leveraged, skills to be added and enhanced, and specific gaps/ weaknesses they need to close to achieve the organization's objectives. By integrating current challenges into the coaching process, the participant tests new skills, behaviors, and attitudes, and experiences the satisfaction of progress made and lessons learned. Each session concludes with an agreed-on, achievable action list that moves the participant closer to the desired outcomes.*

**Date: March 8-10, 2022**

**Time: 8:00 am – 4:30 pm Central Time**

**Format: Residential Session 1 Omaha, NE**

### **Leadership Fundamentals**

*To be able to lead others well we must first be able to lead ourselves; self-leadership, in fact, is the best example any leader can set. To lead ourselves we must first develop an understanding of how our mental models and communication skills impact our leadership styles. This workshop is about reflection and understanding. Through discussion and interactive activities, participants will define effective leadership and explore the impact of assumptions and mental models on dialogue skills.*

### **DiSC**

*A personality assessment profiling four primary behavioral styles which can lead to professional and personal insights. Results of the disc profile report are designed to provide strategies for interpersonal success through more effective communication, understanding, and tolerance.*

### **Emotional Intelligence**

*Research on emotional intelligence has shown that successful performance on the job is significantly impacted by the skills and attributes of emotional self-awareness, stress management, and the ability to pick up on social cues and build effective working relationships. While we may know the right thing to do in a given situation, we are often "hijacked" by our emotions in stressful situations and behave in ways that interfere with our own and our team's success.*

### **Panel Discussion**

**Date: April 7, 2022**  
**Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm Central Time**  
**Format: Webinar 1**

### **Project Action Team (PAT) Launch**

*CI International will help leverage classroom learning with support to NRCS Project Action Teams (PATs). In managing other large-scale leadership projects, we have found this to be one of the most effective ways to tie leadership theory to the organization's core. A list of potential projects that are both valued and needed by the organization will be provided by NRCS leadership in the beginning of the program. The PATs have time dedicated during the residential sessions work on their projects and to get just-in-time feedback, consultation and support from the CI instructor and fellow class participants. They will also work virtually in-between virtual sessions throughout the program. PATs will conclude their work with a presentation to the current class and NRCS leadership on documented findings and specific recommendations. These presentations will clearly display the participant's understanding of the curriculum as well as how the program pertains to the NRCS mission.*

**Date: May 17-19, 2022**  
**Time: 8:00 am – 4:30 pm Central Time**  
**Format: Residential Session 2 Des Moines, IA**

### **Effective Presentation Skills**

*Enhanced skill and newfound confidence in communication are critical leadership skills that can be applied while speaking before groups, participating in, and conducting meetings, working with, or leading a team, or simply communicating one-on-one. In this two-day training, even effective communicators will have the opportunity to learn new skills and gain experience to make them even better communicators who command respect and authority. Communication at its best is a two-way process requiring not only the ability to speak so others will listen, but also the ability and discipline to listen while others speak. Listening skills are as essential as speaking skills. Individuals learn techniques to increase their comprehension and retention, and also learn to look like they are listening.*

### **Time Management and Efficiency**

*All organizations are challenged to effectively garner high productivity of their most valuable resource: their human resource. DCs must be given the organizational and productivity education to assist them in reaching their full potential. Learning how to manage time and tasks effectively supports achieving job objectives and full accountability to the organization. This training is designed to jump-start participants to become more efficient and productive immediately following the training. The training is an in-person session focused on productivity strategies, methods, and best practices.*

**Date: June 2, 2022**  
**Time: 10:00 am -12:00 pm Central Time**  
**Format: Webinar 2**

### **Interpersonal Communication: Giving and Receiving Feedback**

*Whether we recognize it or not, we are constantly providing and receiving feedback. How we provide or receive that feedback will often spell the difference between success and failure. Participants in this workshop will develop communication skills for improving dialogue about performance through active listening and balancing advocacy and inquiry. They will learn and practice a six-step process for giving feedback and will also learn to receive feedback in a constructive manner.*

**Date: June 2023**  
**Format: Virtual**

**Time Management and Efficiency Concepts 1:1 Coaching Launch**

*Following the classroom session in Des Moines, the productivity consultant meets virtually with each participant one-on-one, logging into their workstations to collaborate on how best to implement and customize systems to meet their specific and unique job responsibilities.*

**Date: July 7, 2022**  
**Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm Central Time**  
**Format: Webinar 3**

**Innovation in Public Service**

*Leadership is entirely about learning and continuing to expand our own and our organization's horizons. No one is put in a leadership role with the mandate to maintain status quo. Innovation is necessary for teams and organizations to grow. Unfortunately, for government leaders, their ability to innovate can feel limited due to the laws, rules, and regulations that they operate under. As a consequence, leaders may "self-limit" and not step into innovation as well as they might. This session of the workshop will explore how to be innovative and creative within the bound of public service.*

**Date: August 11, 2022**  
**Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm Central Time**  
**Format: Webinar 4**

**Leading in a Telework Environment**

*In order to take full advantage of teleworking, organizations need supervisors who can effectively create, manage, and lead telework teams. The challenge comes down to leadership. Many front-line leaders are anxious and uncertain about telework programs, fearing loss of control over employees' daily work. This workshop will focus on building the leadership skills, trust, and confidence to manage a successful telework program.*

**Date: September 20-22, 2022**  
**Time: 8:00 am – 4:30 pm Central Time**  
**Format: Residential Session 3 Minneapolis, MN**

**Coalition Building**

*Coalition building is needed when one organization recognizes it alone does not have the resources or people power to have a real impact on an issue. Coalitions assist in setting priorities for action, helping to identify specific data and informational needs from other groups and agencies, sharing resources and expertise, and broadening development of new audiences. The 21st century requires real collaboration and teamwork; a bringing together of all the knowledge, issues, possible solutions, needs and funding of multiple, well-informed stakeholders. Leaders at all levels need to build coalitions, both within their organizations and with other governmental as well as private stakeholders.*

**Managing Conflict and Negotiating Agreement**

*It's impossible to be truly effective in the workplace without the assistance and cooperation of others. Such interdependence, however, can produce conflict. Resolving conflict in a way that helps people find*

*common ground and mutual understanding is a critical leadership skill. Finding a resolution that satisfies conflicting priorities can stimulate new approaches to old problems, thus innovation is often a by-product of well-managed conflict. Unfortunately, many people are afraid of conflict, so it goes underground and can destroy team dynamics.*

*This workshop provides tools and techniques to find common ground while uncovering perspectives on how each party sees the issues, and how to reach an equitable agreement on what should be done, by whom, and when. Participants in this workshop will utilize the Thomas- Kilmann conflict inventory to learn how to address conflict and negotiate agreement.*

**Date: October 6, 2022**

**Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm Central Time**

**Format: Webinar 5**

### **Strategic Thinking & Problem Solving Part 1**

*In these turbulent budgetary times, the need for a strategic perspective grows increasingly important. While these can be seen as difficult or dangerous times for government agencies, the future is also full of opportunities. Strategic thinkers are the people who will give these opportunities life and capitalize on them. In today's rapidly changing environment, leaders need a broad perspective, vision, and an intrinsic awareness of the trends and developments shaping their work. The need for a strategic approach to work is no longer limited to senior leaders.*

*This workshop will provide participants with a set of tools that will facilitate a shift from the tactical to the strategic. The emphasis will be on increasing awareness of the importance of strategic thinking and providing the necessary background and skills to effectively put that thinking to work. Participants will also learn decision making tools, tips, and traps that they can immediately incorporate into their daily work.*

**Date: October 20, 2022**

**Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm Central Time**

**Format: Webinar 6**

### **Strategic Thinking & Problem Solving Part 2**

**Date: November 17, 2022**

**Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm Central Time**

**Format: Webinar 7**

### **Breaking Down Silos**

*A silo mentality is often the result when departments or sectors do not share information with others in the same organization, or across organizations that are working towards a shared goal. This mentality will reduce efficiency in the overall operation, reduce morale, and contribute to the demise of a productivity. Leaders have a responsibility to prepare and equip their teams with the proper mind-set to break down this destructive organizational barrier.*

**Date:** December 8, 2022  
**Time:** 10:00 am – 12:00 pm Central Time  
**Format:** Webinar 8

### **Why Good Leaders Fail**

*Leaders can be defined in a moment, or over a period of years. Effective leaders acknowledge that it is preparation that can quietly or quickly advance them or result in a career-ending move. Leaders do fail at times, and the study of these situations can provide us with valuable lessons in leadership. This workshop will explore case studies of leaders and public figures that were faced with defining moments in their leadership legacy and came up short. While most of our day-to-day decisions and situations don't rise to this level of consequence, we can learn a great deal by looking at what each leader faced, the options they had, and the paths they took.*

**Date:** January 12, 2023  
**Time:** 10:00 am – 12:00 pm Central Time  
**Format:** Webinar 9

### **Intergenerational Communications**

*Generational difference is a powerful framework for discussing what binds some individuals together in the workplace and what drives others apart. This workshop gives participants an understanding of the shaping influences, values, and behaviors of different generations and provides strategies for communicating across potential barriers.*

**Date:** February 2023 TBD  
**Time:** 8:00 am – 4:30 pm Central Time  
**Format:** Residential Session 4 Session Location TBD

### **Diversity and Inclusion**

*Employee engagement depends upon the organization's ability to foster a culture of inclusion. Creating an inclusive environment allows us to take advantage of different points of view, leverage the power of difference, and sustain a workplace where everyone can contribute to his or her fullest potential. This workshop helps employees understand what diversity and inclusion are and why they are critical to accomplishing the mission. Participants will be introduced to concepts that allow them to explore their own unconscious biases and how they show up in workplace behaviors. They will develop a working definition of diversity and how it applies to the organization, examine the language of diversity, and suggest ways to be more inclusive in communication. Participants will also develop a personal action plan.*

### **Change Management**

*Leaders of organizations and teams have a choice: they can simply let the tide of change sweep them along to an uncertain outcome, or they can grow through change with intention and purpose. The latter path helps to ensure that the change initiative is firmly anchored in the organization's culture, and that employees are focused and engaged. Change Management for Leaders provides the tools and support leaders need to achieve a fully successful change initiative.*

*This workshop will present best practices for leading and guiding change, models for understanding the psychological aspects of change, and pitfalls to watch for in change efforts. The training will also demonstrate how a clear and elevating picture of the future and a compelling reason to become part of that future are two critical elements of helping members of an organization process through the transition period associated with change. Finally, a change management action plan for each leader and for the leader's team will be produced.*

### **Project Action Team (PAT) Presentations**

*PATs will conclude their work with a presentation to the current class and NRCS leadership on documented findings and specific recommendations. These presentations will clearly display the participant's understanding of the curriculum as well as how the program pertains to the NRCS mission.*

## **Graduation**

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### **5. APPLICATION TO THE CFL PROGRAM**

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#### **Applications will be submitted to the applicant's respective State Coordinator:**

- Nebraska: neil.dominy@usda.gov
- Iowa: jaia.fischer@usda.gov
- Minnesota: tessa.garcia@usda.gov

#### **Submissions must include:**

- ◇ Resume that demonstrates the following:
  - Experience and knowledge of NRCS policies and procedures, and the results.
  - Ability to lead others, including the ability to organize, coordinate, influence, and direct.
  - Ability to confront and deal with controversial issues and problems.
  - Ability to work with people in other organizations or agencies.
- ◇ Resume must also include a statement of career objectives and interests.
- ◇ Resume should no more than three pages using a minimum of a 12 point font with one inch margins.
- ◇ Copy of most recent Summary Rating (annual performance rating, not mid-year progress reviews) from EmpowHR.
- ◇ Letter of support and concurrence from first level supervisor.

#### **Selections:**

Applications will be reviewed by the State Coordinators and forwarded to the Board of Directors for interviews and selections.

Applicants will be notified of selection status by the State Coordinators after the Board of Directors has reached their decisions.