Preparing the Next Generation of Federal Leaders:
Agency-Based Leadership Development Programs

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Gordon Abner, Jenny Knowles Morrison,
James L. Perry, and Bill Valdez

IBM Center for
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FOREWORD

On behalf of the IBM Center for The Business of Government, we are pleased to present, *Preparing the Next Generation of Federal Leaders: Agency-Based Leadership Development Programs* by Gordon Abner, Jenny Knowles Morrison, James L. Perry, and Bill Valdez.

Leadership plays a critical role in successfully executing the mission of government. Successful leaders envision, shape, and safeguard the future, creating clarity amidst uncertainty. This objective is increasingly difficult in an era where rapid, unforeseen change seems constant. Agencies face serious public management challenges that go to the core of effective governance and leadership, requiring innovation, collaboration, flexibility, and understanding of the capacity needed to tackle complex, non-routine challenges. Given these challenges, leadership development programs can lay a foundation for skills that current and future executives can leverage to anticipate and respond to future opportunities and risks.

In this new report, *Preparing the Next Generation of Federal Leaders: Agency-Based Leadership Development Programs,* a team of expert authors—Gordon Abner, Jenny Knowles Morrison, James L. Perry, and Bill Valdez—focuses on how best to build programs that can shape and inform future government leaders.

The authors analyze the performance and efficaciousness of agency-based leadership development programs, which ensure that leaders understand trends affecting their jobs, such as risk management or cybersecurity; such programs prepare future leaders for the rigors of driving action across the federal government's $4.4 trillion enterprise that touches the lives of all Americans daily. The depth and breadth of current agency leadership programs vary widely, inhibiting systematic development of tomorrow's government leaders.

The report explores five core topics: 1) factors that enable a sustainable agency-based leadership development program; 2) system-level challenges to creating and operating such programs; 3) training and development strategies that have had the most success in the federal government; 4) transferable lessons learned from exemplary agency programs; and 5) ways to demonstrate programmatic return-on-investment (ROI). The report underscores that federal organizations can mount successful leadership development programs, and that the effective practices they have identified provide excellent guides across all facets of the leadership development cycle—enabling government executives to tackle problems with fresh ideas and energy.

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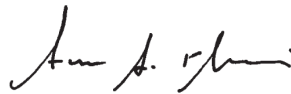
ANDREW FAIRBANKS

This report builds on the Center's extensive research into federal leadership. Previous Center reports have explored how particular leaders have responded to public management challenges they faced running a government program or agency. These reports, as well as the many leadership interviews and profiles produced by the Center, focus on telling a leader's story, outlining experience, and sharing insights. We trust that this new report will be a useful and informative guide for efforts to build the next generation of government leaders.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agency-based leadership development programs are common across the federal government, but their viability and long-term success varies widely, a challenge that inhibits the systematic development of the next generation of federal leaders.

Agency-based leadership development programs are an essential tool the federal government utilizes to nurture and develop leaders at every step of a civil servant's career. In an era of rapid and disruptive change, these agency-based programs become even more important because federal leaders must be prepared to effectively and efficiently administer government products and services on behalf of the American taxpayer.

Agency-based leadership development programs are those that an individual federal agency has created that may or may not utilize external service providers. The key characteristic of an agency-based leadership development program is that agency leaders have made an intentional decision to develop a structured program that is managed by the agency itself. The agency will then use a mix of internal and external resources to provide leadership development programs to their staff.

These programs ensure that current leaders remain abreast of new developments that affect their everyday jobs, such as risk management or cybersecurity, and that future leaders are prepared for the rigors of administering a $4.4 trillion enterprise that touches the lives of all Americans daily. They also ensure that implemented programs are aligned with the mission requirements of their agencies and the skillsets needed to support that mission.

This report explores five research themes:

1. What are the factors that enable a sustainable agency-based leadership development program?

2. What are the system-level challenges that prevent agencies from creating and sustaining agency-based leadership development programs?

3. What are the training/development modalities that have had the most success in the federal government?

4. Are the lessons learned from exemplar agency-based leadership development programs transferable to other agencies?

5. Do assessment and evaluation models exist that demonstrate the return-on-investment (ROI) of federal leadership development programs?

Our exploration of these research themes leads to the conclusion that federal organizations are capable of mounting successful leadership development programs and that generic best practices and lessons learned from successful federal programs, which are identified in this report, are excellent guides for all facets of the leadership development cycle. Federal organizations, however, face unique challenges when developing programs, including underwriting and sustaining them, and managing unstable coalitions of supporters.

In addition, we found that research focused on federal agency-based leadership development programs is deficient. The result is that agencies have struggled to determine the ROI of their programs and, thus, do not have rigorous evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of their programs, undermining agency leadership's ability to make a strong case for sustaining or expanding such programming, particularly in the face of competing budgetary pressures.

Finally, we offer three recommendations that could be helpful to agencies seeking either to initiate leadership development programs or improve existing programs. These recommendations are:

Recommendation 1: The Office of Personnel Management (OPM)[1] serves a critical role as a convener and diffuser of knowledge and best practices related to agency-based leadership development programs. OPM should strengthen its capacity to be a thought leader in this area.

Recommendation 2: Leadership buy-in, including political, military and career leadership, is critical for the long-term success of leadership development programs. Developing that buy-in should be an ongoing effort led by career executives.

Recommendation 3: Federal agencies have a compelling need for further academic study of federal leadership development programs and increased attention to the development and documentation of indicators of success, particularly specific measures of ROI.

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1.   In May 2019, the Trump administration submitted a legislative proposal to merge the functions and responsibilities of OPM within the General Services Administration (GSA). Please note, if circumstances change regarding OPM the substance of the recommendation still stands under any new agency formulation.

The Landscape of Agency-Based Leadership Development in the Federal Government

Agency-based leadership development in the federal government is composed of numerous moving parts, including consumers of leadership development programs, providers of leadership development services to federal agencies, and the federal leadership development programs themselves. This ecosystem reflects the complexity of the federal government itself, which employs 2.1 million civil servants who annually administer a $4.4 trillion budget that touches the lives of all Americans daily. The responsibility for leading the federal executive branch falls to a combination of political, military[2] and career leaders who make programmatic, policy and budget decisions in a complex and ever-evolving business environment. Ongoing leadership development is an essential element of overall talent management. It also ensures that the civil service workforce is prepared to address the dynamic challenges emerging at the forefront of government service delivery in the early 21st century.

Current Challenges

The primary challenges facing developers of agency-based leadership development programs center on generational changes, the emergence of new learning modalities, a lack of evidence to guide planning and program development, and resource constraints.

Robert Goldenkoff, director of strategic issues at the Government Accountability Office (GAO), notes that leadership skill requirements today are very different than a few years ago when different generations in the workforce had very different expectations about how to learn, as well as how to apply learning, within work settings. Research is demonstrating the importance of shortening the distance between where a skill is learned and where it is applied, providing continuity between learning and application through a range of on-the-job supports, such as mentoring and coaching, and aligning on-demand learning platforms with the "personal learning cloud."[3]

Long-term workforce and strategic planning needs are at the forefront of leadership development design as the current civil service ages out and new generations step forward to lead. Only six percent of the federal workforce is under the age of 30 while 14 percent are eligible to retire now.[4] Within the next 10 years, retirement eligibility will increase to approximately 30 percent.[5] In comparison to older learners, younger learners prefer online and cohort-based trainings, with higher degrees of flexibility and opportunities to build broad networks than traditional classroom education.[6]

In more networked environments, such as the Census Bureau, where government is turning over more direct service provision to contractors, entirely new skill sets are emerging. As business services rapidly evolve, professional development must follow suit in real time. The evolution of the personal-learning cloud[7] on the one hand, in tandem with increasing demand for the development of verifiable micro-learning modules by employers, will have significant impacts on the future of leadership development in the public and private sector.

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2.   At Department of Defense agencies, but also at civilian agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security, military leaders play an important role when developing agency-based leadership development programs for civilian civil servants.

3.   Mihnea Moldoveanu and Das Narayandas, "The Future of Leadership Development," *Harvard Business Review,* (March-April 2019): 40-48.

4.   Eric Katz, "The Federal Agencies Where the Most Employees Are Eligible to Retire," *Government Executive,* June 18, 2018, https://www.govexec.com/pay-benefits/2018/06/federal-agencies-where-most-employees-are-eligible-retire/149091/; "Full-Time Permanent Age Distributions," Data, Analysis & Documentation: Federal Employment Reports, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, accessed August 3, 2019, https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/data-analysis-documentation/federal-employment-reports/reports-publications/full-time-permanent-age-distributions/.

5.   Katz, "The Federal Agencies."

6.   Moldoveanu and Narayandas, "The Future," 40-48.

7.   Ibid.

A lack of evidence and theory undergirding leadership development efforts currently in play across the public and private sector is also problematic. In 2012, the GAO surveyed 27 major agencies represented on the Chief Learning Officers Council to assess training and development programs (note: a scope far broader than leadership development programs alone). A key finding of the report was the wide variability in agency-based training and development programs.[8] The report also noted a failure to accurately assess the impact of programs in most agencies, as well as the lack of systematic efforts to track basic data that could be used to understand the effectiveness of those programs.[9]

Although over 2.1 million federal civil service employees have varying degrees of access to leadership development programs, the primary barrier to entry is funding. A federal employee is generally required to produce an individual-development plan, which is created each year and is intended to help guide the professional development of each employee. It is generally accepted that an individual-development plan is each employee's responsibility and that competition for training and education dollars is highly competitive.

Most federal agencies have very small leadership development budgets that are carefully marshalled, thereby limiting participation to very small cohorts. As a result, most federal employees who seek leadership development are left to their own devices and often pay for opportunities out of their own pockets or seek free resources.

Creating more coherent, systematic leadership development programs with a demonstrable return on investment to individual learners and program executives alike is an urgent task across the federal sector. This report identifies key insights to begin to work toward more coherent, evidence-based programming, accessible to a wider array of public servants interested in achieving higher levels of leadership development, whatever their current station.

Emerging Insights

Interviews with thought leaders in this sector reveal a convergence of views about the challenges that agencies encounter when developing their leadership programs. At the top of the list is leadership buy-in. Without that leadership buy-in, particularly from political and military leaders, programs are simply not resourced adequately, or as is often the case, on a timeline that leads to ineffective preparation by development staff, or participation by leaders in a manner conducive to personal growth and reflection.

Another major challenge unearthed in this study is the ongoing and broad challenge of agency leadership's ability to assess effectiveness and impact of agency-based leadership development programs. Two major consequences result from this challenge.

First, program management is difficult because adjustments to ensure program effectiveness are difficult in the absence of rigorous evaluation data. Funders of programs, including Congress, increasingly are demanding to know how leadership development programs improve agency effectiveness and mission delivery. Without evidence or long-term political buy-in, when agency leadership changes, there is always the risk that agency priorities will change. As one agency leader shared:

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8.   Yvonne J. Jones, *Federal Training Investments: Office of Personnel Management and Agencies Can Do More to Ensure Cost-Effective Decisions* (Washington: U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2012).
9.   Ibid.

> New leadership often leads to a loss of leadership development programming and funding [priorities] when it is not aligned with their new vision for the agency. A key challenge is thus the 'branding' of the new administration and leadership team and the current leadership development programming so that they are in alignment.

Second, there is an absence of an agreed upon model for agency-based leadership development programs, or even if such a model should exist. Instead, the current situation is akin to having many different pilot programs convening simultaneously with neither a rigorous assessment of the effectiveness of those programs nor any coordinated effort to enhance next rounds of programming. The GAO, the legislative branch agency that oversees federal programs at the request of Congress, has never been asked by Congress to evaluate federal leadership development programs. The Office of Personnel Management has provided agencies with general guidance and some best practices, but no overall assessments of the effectiveness of those programs and policies.

As a result, although the leadership development ecosystem can be observed, it is challenging to analyze for three primary reasons: the ad hoc nature of the system, the dynamism of evolving modalities and content, and an absence of reliable data on learning outcomes as reflected in job and unit performance. David Rude, chief learning officer for the National Nuclear Security Administration, U.S. Department of Energy, points to the advantages of synthesizing what we know from experience and research for advancing federal leadership development:

> Agencies greatly benefit by sharing lessons learned and best practices. Specifically, agencies can save money by not reinventing the wheel every time a new program is started. By sharing lessons learned you can reduce project costs by learning from each other's past successes while avoiding past failures. They can be used to create cost and time estimates based on previous projects. Additionally, lessons learned can be used to decrease the planning duration of projects.

OPM has statutory authority to provide programs and guidance to federal agencies about leadership development programs. However, this authority does not extend to imposing an overall framework for leadership development. Instead, leadership development at the federal level has let 'a thousand flowers bloom,' with little systematic assessment of the garden that has grown.

Overview of Leadership Development Programming in Executive Agencies

Leadership development in the federal government's executive branch has readily identifiable elements. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has statutory authority to provide leadership development programs and guidance. Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations mandates that OPM ". . . establish programs for the systematic development of candidates for the Senior Executive Service and for the continuing development of senior executives or require

agencies to establish such programs which meet criteria prescribed by (OPM)."[10] Additionally, Title 5 mandates that all agencies "provide for the development of individuals in supervisory, managerial and executive positions, as well as individuals whom the agency identifies as potential candidates for those positions, based on the agencies' succession plans."[11]

As a result, OPM, through its Center for Leadership Development (CLD), has created a number of programs, including the Federal Executive Institute (FEI), the Innovation Lab, the Federal HR Institute, and USALearning, which is a one-stop-shop for e-Learning products, information and consultative services.[12] Most of these programs are offered on a fee-for-service basis and have open enrollment across federal agencies.

In addition, interagency councils, such as the Chief Learning Officers (CLO) Council and Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council have been established to create collaboration across executive agencies. The CLO Council was commissioned by OPM and the CHCO Council. These councils meet regularly and are forums to ". . . share best practices and create engaging learning opportunities for U.S. government agencies and organizations."[13] See the inset below about the White House Leadership Development Program, which is also an outgrowth of an interagency initiative.

There is a range of internal and external service providers who develop leadership training and curriculum content, appraisals and leadership models available to federal agencies. Federally sponsored service providers (e.g., the Treasury Executive Institute, the National Defense University), universities, and private sector organizations offer a wide variety of leadership development programs and courses.

WHITE HOUSE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The White House Leadership Development Program was launched in 2015 with an initial cohort of 16 high potential GS-15s who were nominated by their agency's deputy secretary or equivalent. The yearlong program is intended to prepare the next generation of career federal senior executives by giving them the experience of helping lead cross-agency initiatives out of the White House or the Office of Management and Budget.

Now in its fifth year, the program is jointly sponsored by the Executive Office of the President, the President's Management Council, and the Performance Improvement Council, and is administered by the General Services Administration.

The program's objectives, according to the Performance Improvement Council, is to:

- Provide Fellows a broad federal perspective on high-priority challenges.

- Provide Fellows with access to senior decision-makers.

- Develop Fellows as a cadre of leaders with the skillsets and networks to address challenges through a cross-agency lens and implement solutions across organizational boundaries.

10. Code of Federal Regulations, 5 CFR § 412.102 (2019), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2019-title5-vol1/pdf/CFR-2019-title5-vol1-sec412-102.pdf.
11. Ibid., 5 CFR § 412.202, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2019-title5-vol1/pdf/CFR-2019-title5-vol1-sec412-202.pdf.
12. Center for Leadership Development: USALearning," U.S. Office of Personnel Management, accessed August 3, 2019, https://www.opm.gov/services-for-agencies/center-for-leadership-development/usalearning/.
13. "Chief Learning Officers Council," Chief Human Capital Officers Council, accessed August 3, 2019, https://chcoc.gov/content/chief-learning-officers-council-cloc.

WHITE HOUSE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM CONT.

Program Fellows develop competencies, networks, and experiences that are expected of future enterprisewide leaders. They are assigned to high-priority cross-agency projects such as improving the government's cybersecurity posture, modernizing the government's byzantine infrastructure permitting process, and streamlining the federal government's hiring process.

Fellows meet each with discuss their experiences with their peers as well as with recognized experts in their field, skill-building workshop for collaborative leadership, negotiation, conflict resolution, and coaching sessions.

Fellows who complete the program become part of an alumni network and help mentor the next cohort of Fellows. Fellows often engage in further post-program networking and development opportunities as their careers progress.
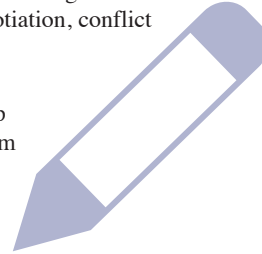
Key Challenges in Data Collection and Evaluation

This diversity of programs could be a strength because it potentially encourages innovation. However, given the absence of agreed upon standards for analyzing return on investment, the appropriate use and mix of various training modalities, and clarity as to which base populations should be eligible for leadership training, it is extremely difficult to analyze complex leadership development systems. Despite the diversity of programs, Dr. Suzanne Logan,[14] director of OPM's Center for Leadership Development and the Federal Executive Institute, calls attention to what cannot be captured by diversity alone:

> [A] well-structured career-long continuum of leadership development . . . does not exist to develop federal civilian leaders who must also be able to work together effectively when tackling the critical challenges faced by our country. There is no requirement for a three-pronged approach of development (individual, intra-agency, and interagency or inter-professional) to prepare federal leaders for the important work for which they are held responsible.[15]

The absence of reliable data is also problematic. OPM is required by statute to collect and publicly report on training and development data on an annual basis. However, in 2012, the GAO found shortcomings in OPM's data collection efforts and recommended that OPM do more to improve data collection efforts.[16]

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14. Suzanne Logan, "A Continuum of Leadership Learning for the SES," in *Building a 21st Century SES: Ensuring Leadership Excellence in Our Federal Government,* ed. Ronald P. Sanders (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Public Administration, 2017), 191-199.

15. Logan, "A Continuum of Leadership," 195.

16. Jones, *Federal Training Investments.*

Without these data, it is impossible to determine the scope and effectiveness of the federal government's leadership development programs. For example, a comparison could be conducted between an exemplar agency-based leadership development program such as the U.S. Air Force and a comparable agency that does not have a leadership development program using OPM data and other sources, such as the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS).

Systematic evaluations could unearth significant findings about agency-based leadership programs that would improve their efficiency and effectiveness and provide insights into key questions such as return on investment. However, no such systematic comparative evaluation has been conducted to date. This report examines several models of leadership development programming to lay a foundation for a more cohesive approach to leadership development in federal agencies.

Robust Leadership Development Programs: A Path Forward for the Federal Government

The missions of federal agencies are challenging and ever-changing and require effective leadership to achieve them. Effective federal government leaders drive organizational performance and organizational change by motivating, building trust and cooperation, clarifying objectives and strategies, learning and sharing new knowledge, designing structures, systems, and programs, and organizing and coordinating work.[17] Leaders are clearly a critical piece of the public performance puzzle.

In addition, federal government leaders are faced with challenges that leaders in other sectors do not have to address. For example, they operate in a highly political environment that includes not only the political appointees of an administration, but also Congress. They manage highly complex agencies that require consensus-building skills to bring highly diverse stakeholders to agreement on policies and budgets. And they must deal with decades of regulatory and statutory requirements that limit agility and constrain innovation.

High-performing organizations everywhere have learned that effective leaders must be nurtured and developed throughout their careers.[18] Those organizations have learned that the benefits of leadership development are multi-faceted and well documented. As a result, they develop structured programs to develop their leaders in an intentional way and provide resources—both financial and staff support—for their leadership development efforts.

Leadership development benefits both the employee and the agency. At the level of the individual, leadership development enhances job performance, self-efficacy, and well-being.[19] At the level of the organization, leadership development enhances organizational performance, organizational reputation, and employee retention.[20]

Leadership development enhances individual and organizational performance by enhancing affective, cognitive, and/or skill-based learning outcomes.[21] Affective learning refers to a change in emotion or feelings. Cognitive learning refers to the development of "intellectual or mental-based skills."[22] Skill based-learning refers to the development of "technical or motor skills."[23] Leadership development can enhance some or all of these outcomes.

While some may argue that it is easier to recruit and select talented leaders from the outside than it is to develop the leadership capabilities of current employees, there are clear benefits to pursuing "building" rather than "buying" leaders as the core leadership development strategy. Building leadership talent has three advantages: "First, the organization gets to groom the next generation in line with its culture and strategic agenda. Second, the organization has greater control over the supply of leaders with the requisite skills, making strategic implemen-

17. Gary A. Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations, 8th edition* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2013).

18. Ray Blunt, *Growing Leaders for Public Service* (The IBM Center for the Business of Government, 2004); Daniel J. Chenok, Haynes Coones, John M. Kamensky, Michael J. Keegan, and Darcie Piechowski, *Seven Drivers Transforming Government* (2017), http://www.businessofgovernment.org/sites/default/files/Seven%20Drivers%20Transforming%20Government.pdf

19. Herman Aguinis and Kurt Kraiger, "Benefits of Training and Development for Individuals and Teams, Organizations, and Society," *Annual Review of Psychology* 60 (2009): 451-474; Joseph A. Ferrar and Mark C. Rom, *The Defense Leadership and Management Program: Taking Career Development Seriously* (The IBM Center for the Business of Government, 2002); Heather Getha-Taylor, Jacob Fowles, Chris Silvia, and Cullen C. Merritt, "Considering the Effects of Time on Leadership Development: A Local Government Training Evaluation," *Public Personnel Management* 44, no. 3 (2015): 295-316; Brett Seidle, Sergio Fernandez, and James L. Perry, "Do Leadership Training and Development Make a Difference in the Public Sector? A Panel Study," *Public Administration Review* 76, no. 4 (2016): 603-613.

20. Aguinis and Kraiger, "Benefits of Training;" Ferrara and Rom, *The Defense Leadership;* Seidle, Fernandez, and Perry, "Do Leadership Training."

21. Christina N. Lacerenza, Denise L. Reyes, Shannon L. Marlow, Dana L. Joseph, and Eduardo Salas, "Leadership Training Design, Delivery, and Implementation: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 102, no. 12 (2017): 1686-1718.

22. Ibid., 1688.

23. Ibid., 1688.

tation faster."[24] Lastly, building leaders from within enhances employee morale and circumvents temporary dips in productivity that come from hiring leaders from the outside and waiting for them to learn the ropes.[25]

Despite the benefits of leadership development, numerous reports detail the difficulties federal agencies have designing effective leadership development programs, starting and sustaining them, and assessing their effectiveness.[26] A recent survey of members of the Senior Executive Service (SES), for example, found that only 44 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that there is a strategy to develop future career senior leadership.[27] Relatedly, a report by the Partnership for Public Service found that "senior agency leaders, for the most part, pay insufficient attention to ensuring that their agency identifies, develops, recruits and selects the best executives."[28] Unfortunately, even less attention is given to developing the leadership capabilities of government employees below the SES.[29]

In our search for evidence-based practices of effective leadership development programs, it has become evident that there is a paucity of literature that focuses on public sector organizations.[30] Most of the literature is based on private sector experiences or is "generic," in that no distinctions are made between public and private sector leadership development requirements. This absence of literature on public sector practices exists even though the federal government is the nation's largest employer (2.1 million federal employees), has a $4 trillion budget, and touches the lives of all Americans on a daily basis.

Examination of effective leadership development programs has highlighted the literature on andragogy (i.e., the science of teaching adults) and organizational change, both of which are particularly instructive in highlighting components of successful leadership development efforts. Andragogy theory asserts that adults learn best when: a) they are actively involved in the learning experience, b) the instruction is problem-centered as opposed to subject-centered, c) they are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to learn, d) they can immediately apply what they learned, and e) when a variety of modalities are used to help maintain the learners' attention and accommodate a variety of learning styles.[31]

The literature on organizational change is instructive for understanding how to start and sustain effective leadership programs because the creation of a leadership program represents an organizational change.

24. Robert Pernick, "Creating a Leadership Development Program: Nine Essential Tasks," *Public Personnel Management* 30, no. 4 (2001): 429-430.

25. Ibid., 429-444.

26. Michael Brostek, *Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Training at Selected Agencies* (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2000), https://www.gao.gov/assets/110/108457.pdf; Partnership for Public Service, *Building the Leadership Bench: Developing a Talent Pipeline for the Senior Executive Service* (McKinsey & Company, 2013), https://www.govexec.com/media/gbc/docs/pdfs_edit/071913cc1.pdf; Jones, *Federal Training Investments;* Bill Valdez, David Dye, and Kevin Womack, State of Federal Career Leadership (Deloitte, 2017), https://cdn.ymaws.com/seniorexecs.org/resource/resmgr/state-of-ses-findings.pdf.

27. Valdez, Dye, and Womack, *State of Federal Career.*

28. Partnership for Public Service, *Building the Leadership Bench,* 9.

29. Ingraham, Patricia Wallace, and Heather Getha-Taylor. "Leadership in the Public Sector: Models and Assumptions for Leadership Development in the Federal Government." *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 24, no. 2 (2004): 95-112.

30. Perry, James L. "A strategic agenda for public human resource management research." *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 30, no. 1 (2010): 20-43; Getha-Taylor, Heather, Maja Husar Holmes, Willow S. Jacobson, Ricardo S. Morse, and Jessica E. Sowa. "Focusing the public leadership lens: Research propositions and questions in the Minnowbrook tradition." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory 21*, no. suppl_1 (2011): i83-i97.

31. Raymond A. Noe, *Employee Training and Development,* 5th ed. (Singapore: McGraw-Hill International, 2010); Knowles, Malcolm. "The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species, 4th ed." (Houston. TX: *Gulf Publishing,* 1990).

Fernandez and Rainey identify several factors that influence the outcome of change initiatives including ensuring the need, building internal support for change, ensuring top management support and commitment, building external support, and institutionalizing change.[32]

Based on the literature reviewed above, leadership development best practices can be grouped into four major phases of programming: (1) initiating leadership programs, (2) designing and delivering effective programs, (3) measuring program effectiveness and individual learning attainment, and (4) sustaining effective programs. These four phases are depicted graphically in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Leadership Development Cycle

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32.   Sergio Fernandez and Hal G. Rainey, "Managing Successful Organizational Change in the Public Sector," *Public Administration Review* 66, no 2. (2006): 168-176.

The literature we reviewed about leadership development identified best practices associated with each of the four phases of the leadership development cycle. Several sources provided especially rich insights about best practices, particularly Aguinis and Kraiger[33] and Lacerenza et al.[34] Best practices from the sources we reviewed for each phase of the leadership development cycle are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Leadership Development: Best Practices from the Literature

Initiating leadership development	• Creating strong connections to the organization's mission and values • Aligning leadership development with an urgent need • Finding a powerful champion
Delivering effective leadership development	• Building multiple delivery methods—e.g., executive coaching, mentoring, and action-based learning—into the program • Organizing leader development across multiple sessions over time
Measuring effectiveness	• Incorporating data collection and sharing into organizational processes • Demonstrating individual and organizational effectiveness • Continually provide guidance on collecting and reporting data on effectiveness
Sustaining leadership development	• Creating opportunities for continuous learning • Fostering broad ownership in leadership development

The best practices from the literature provide a compelling benchmark for our look at leadership development in the federal government. How do the practices of agencies that successfully develop leaders for federal service measure up against generic best practices? This is the overarching question that animated our research about agency-based leadership development in the federal government. We turn next to an overview of the research.

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33.   Aguinis and Kraiger, "Benefits of Training."
34.   Lacerenza, Reyes, Marlow, Joseph, and Salas, "Leadership Training," 1686-1718.

Overview and Research Design

> Growing the next generation of public service leaders stands as the most critical responsibility of senior public service leaders today—while also among the most uneven and least understood efforts carried out across federal agencies. This goal of managing talent for tomorrow's needs goes to the heart of building the government workforce of the future.
>
> —Ray Blunt, Growing Leaders for Public Service[35]

Many are sounding the alarm bells about building the next generation of public leaders as we collectively look towards an uncertain public management horizon. Yet, a comprehensive approach to capacitating these future leaders in real time has not emerged. Although there are many positive exemplars of leadership development in the federal government, little comparative study has been conducted to identify common elements across exemplar training modalities. At the same time, learning cultures, technology, and learning models are rapidly changing.

This study seeks to fill the federal leadership development knowledge gap, It uses four case studies of leadership development programming to examine the strategy, operations, and learning cultures of four agencies with reputations for success in leadership development. Cases were sampled based on their demonstrated track record for effective leadership development. All four of our case agencies possess some quantitative information that attests to the effectiveness of their leadership development programs, but the formality of those assessments varies across the agencies. From this foundation, the study team developed a set of common elements for best practice leadership development programming, in order to ascertain whether the selected executive agency cases maintained core elements of successful leadership development programming or diverged in important ways. To close the federal leadership development knowledge gap, we asked five overarching questions:

1. What are the factors that enable a sustainable agency-based leadership development program?

2. What are the system-level challenges that prevent agencies from creating and sustaining agency-based leadership development programs?

3. What are the training/development modalities that have had the most success in the federal government?

4. Are the lessons learned from exemplar agency-based leadership development programs transferable to other agencies?

5. Do assessment and evaluation models exist that demonstrate the return-on-investment of federal leadership development programs?

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35. This quotation, attributed to Ray Blunt, is from Daniel J. Chenok, Haynes Coones, John M. Kamensky, Michael J. Keegan, and Darcie Piechowski, *Seven Drivers Transforming Government* (2017), http://www.businessofgovernment.org/sites/default/files/Seven%20 Drivers%20Transforming%20Government.pdf, p. 27. The original report on which the quotation is based is Ray Blunt, *Growing Leaders for Public Service* (The IBM Center for the Business of Government, 2004).

Answers to these questions have led to verification of exemplars of best practices that are found in the private sector, confirming the usefulness of the guiding framework to support the integration of leadership development activities across executive agencies. This report is thus of interest to agency leaders attempting to build and sustain highly effective leadership development programming, as well as training and development officers and learners interested in building knowledge of best learning practices.

Key elements of each of the four agency leadership development programs, as well as the historical and agency context within which they have evolved, are highlighted below. The four programs studied were: Air Force Civilian Force Development, Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) Crane Division, Department of Homeland Security Leader Development, and Department of Agriculture Leader Development.

United States Air Force Civilian Force Development Program

Twenty years ago, U.S. Air Force leadership—including career civil service leaders, political leadership, and military leaders—decided to put a strong emphasis on leadership development for their civilian employees. This reflected a realization that building a strong war fighter corps, including officers and enlisted airmen, was necessary, but not sufficient in terms of ensuring that the USAF was prepared for future national security challenges. All development efforts within USAF are now governed by a Strategic Master Plan, summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: USAF Strategic Master Plan

"To provide for a robust national defense and field suitable capability and capacity in support of joint operations, the Air Force will pursue systems, concepts, people, and organizational structures that are more agile and inclusive. The Air Force Strategy addresses this need by expounding these two strategic imperatives to drive a culture change. To focus our efforts in making tough choices about future capabilities, the Strategy further identifies five strategic vectors. These vectors will guide investments, institutional changes, employment concepts, and ultimately shape efforts to deliver national security through the strength of our Airmen and the responsive and effective application of Global Vigilance-Global Reach-Global Power for America."[36]

The decision the USAF made 20 years ago resulted in a centrally managed Civilian Force Development Program that today is a mature and fully integrated effort designed to support the development of existing leaders and promote the professional development of future civilian leaders (see Table 3). The program is characterized by sustained line item funding, a full continuum of learning that is constantly updated, and a governance structure that ensures accountability and alignment with talent management programs within the Air Force.

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36.   U.S. Air Force, *USAF Strategic Master Plan,* (May 2015), https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/Force%20Management/ Strategic_Master_Plan.pdf.

Table 3: Civilian Force Development Program Overview

Thirty thousand employees are part of the "centrally managed leadership" program. The CFDP is charged to:
• Provide strategic guidance for force development efforts and synchronize functional community and institutional initiatives
• Develop force management and development programmatic recommendations to the Air Force Council and advocate for Air Force Corporate Structure support
• Deliver corporate input in the areas of force management and development policies
• Promote a culture that attracts, develops and retains a diverse and highly capable workforce
• Leverage the Civilian Career Field Manager Forum and other entities to address programs, processes, and issues related to civilian force management and development implementation, execution, and best practices

The Air Force continuously monitors its civilian workforce to understand the impact of its leadership development programs. For example, the Air Force's 162,000 civilian employees are divided into both job categories (clerical, administrative, blue collar, technical, and professional) and where they fall on the Civilian Continuum of Learning (tactical, operational, and strategic). This "Civilian Position Management Framework" is then used to allocate training and education funds, with a focus on GS-7 through SES positions (see Figure 2).

The Framework is further defined by "locally managed" training and education programs, and "centrally managed" training and education programs. This enables local control of training programs that benefit specific elements and technical tracks within the Air Force and enables Air Force leaders at headquarters to centrally manage the development of the strategic leaders the Air Force requires.

The current program is robust but still evolving, like many leadership development programs.

> Our biggest challenge is the numbers of potential leaders we have in the Air Force. For non-commissioned officers, we have three mandated training programs they must go through. For civilians, we have no mandated progression of learning and we would like to have one, but the resources aren't there," said Russel Frasz, force development director, U.S. Air Force. "The way we've filled the gap is through competitive versus mandatory training that high potential leaders can select from over 1,000 free training courses offered through our Force Development Center that are mapped to the competencies we require our leaders acquire.

Figure 2: USAF Leadership Development Example: 'Air Force Civilian Continuum of Learning'
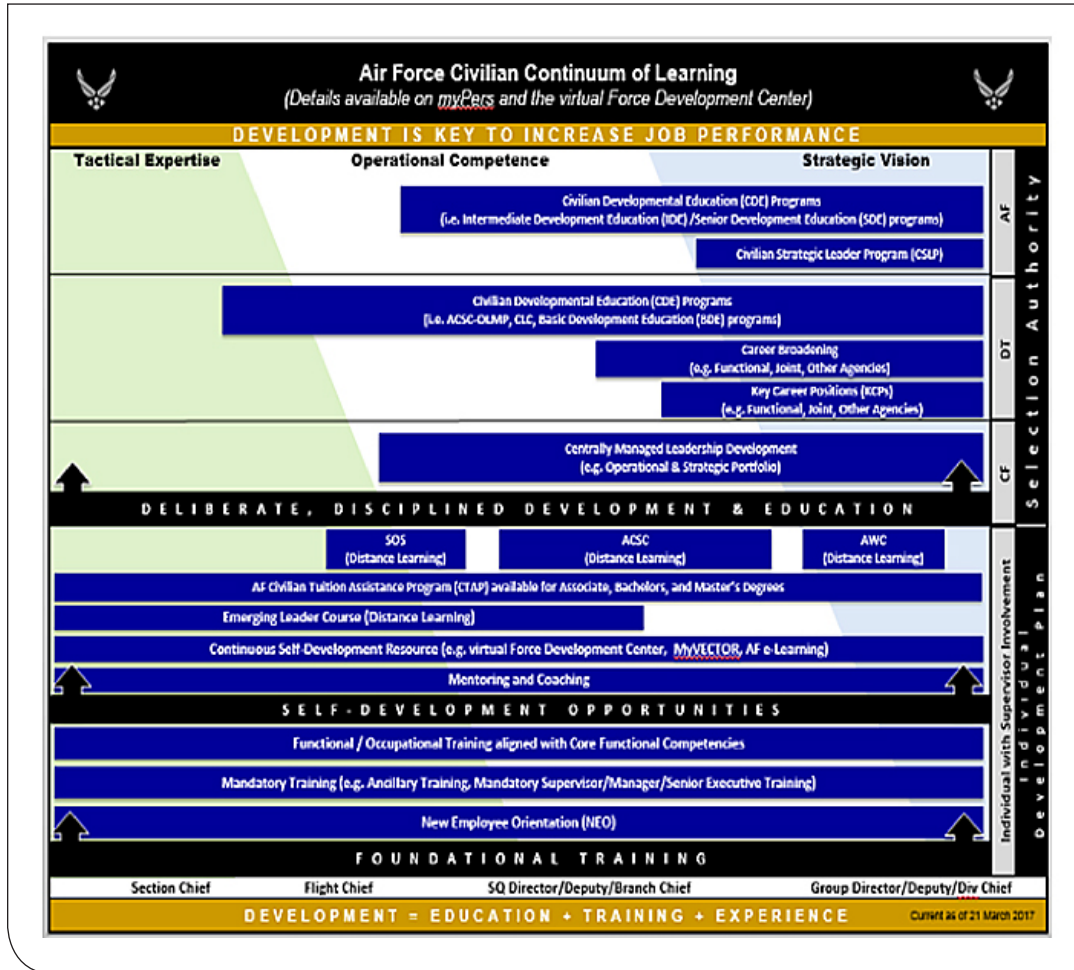
Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) Crane Division

NSWC Crane Division (Crane) provides comprehensive lifecycle support for complex military systems in three focus areas: electronic warfare, strategic missions, and expeditionary warfare (see Table 4 for more background). NSWC Crane Division's leadership development initiatives originally grew from a recognition that the long-term vitality of Crane required a qualitative shift in its strategic focus and leadership capacities. The change began in 2005, under the leadership of Captain Mark Welsh, then Crane's commanding officer. Crane streamlined its strategic focus, paring what is described as many opportunistic targets into a narrower focus, which currently guides Crane.

Table 4:

NSWC Crane Division Overview
Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) Crane is one of 10 warfare center divisions within the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA). The Crane Division is located in rural southern Indiana, covering 108 square miles, about thirty-five miles from Bloomington. Crane employs more than 3,400 people, about 75 percent of whom are scientists, engineers, and technicians. As a US Navy lab and part of the Naval Research and Development Establishment, NSWC Crane enhances capability to today's warfighter through national technical leadership in several areas including microelectronics, sensors, and spectrum warfare. As a United States Navy division, NSWC Crane is commanded by a military officer, currently Captain Mark Oesterreich, who assumed command in July 2017. The chief civilian is division technical director, presently Dr. Brett Seidle, a member of the Senior Executive Service.

A search for new approaches to leadership development accompanied the strategic shift. The current approach to leadership development was driven by Crane's officer corps working closely with civilian leaders, within the broad direction of NAVSEA's Leadership Development Continuum (see Figure 3). The startup and evolution of leadership development at Crane was advanced by strong collaboration between military and civilian staff. In 2006, Captain Welsh gave a team of mid- and upper-level managers broad direction to study and recommend a leadership development program that could help realize Crane's new strategic direction.

The leadership program design team recommended "The Leadership Challenge"[37] as Crane's formal leadership development program (see Table 5 for more details). At Crane, it is delivered over the course of five months, which helps to integrate it with the on-going responsibilities of participants and creates immediate applications and active learning about the program's principles.

Table 5:

NSWC Crane Leadership Development Framework
The primary formal leadership development program at Crane is the Leadership Challenge, which is based on research and a book by James Kouzes and Barry Posner.[38] Their program has been used by more than 350,000 leaders globally. About 475 employees have participated at Crane. The program is structured around five leadership practices: (1) model the way, (2) inspire a vision, (3) challenge the process, (4) enable others to act, and (5) encourage the heart. The content of the program is delivered over the course of five months. It starts with a process for giving participants 360-degree feedback. One of the development sessions is typically held off-site at a venue that offers challenging outdoor personal development and team building activities. In addition to 360-degree feedback and information-based learning, the programs offer coaching, mentoring, and practice-based learning.

37.   James Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, The Leadership Challenge: *How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations, 6th edition* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Jossey-Bass, 2017).
38.   Ibid.

The Leadership Challenge's success—and simultaneous recognition by NSWC Crane's military and civilian leadership that leadership development must extend beyond those occupying formal leadership roles—has stimulated expansion of formal development opportunities. Leading from within—which builds personal, team and project-related skills among non-managerial staff—was initiated to increase the inclusiveness of Crane's leadership development programs.

Figure 3: NAVSEA Leadership Development Continuum[39]

Next Generation Program

Journey Level Leaders

Commander's Executive Fellows Program

A self-paced, noncompetitive program to help participants gain leadership skills.

Provides a unique opportunity to develop the skills necessary to effectively lead at NAVSEA.

Provides a one of a kind opportunity to familiarize participants with what it takes to lead NAVSEA.

Source: https://www.navsea.navy.mil/Portals/103/Documents/LeadershipContinuumFINAL.pdf

The effectiveness and value added from Crane's leadership development initiatives is a topic of continuing attention and conversation among NSWC Crane's staff. Individual, group, and organizational effectiveness have been the focus of assessments since 2010. The most ambitious of these was a rigorous assessment of individual and organizational returns for the leadership development program, completed in 2010, by a member of the original design team who is now Crane's Technical Director.[40] The long-term success of Crane's Leadership Challenge recently led the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) to initiate efforts to extend its principles to headquarters activities.

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39. Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA), *NAVSEA Leadership Development Continuum,* accessed August 3, 2019, https://www.navsea.navy.mil/Portals/103/Documents/LeadershipContinuumFINAL.pdf.

40. Brett Seidle, *An Examination of Leadership Training and Development in the Public Sector: Impact on Leader and Organizational Effectiveness,* PhD dissertation (unpublished) (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Department of Political Science and School of Public and Environmental Affairs, 2010).

Department of Homeland Security—Leader Development Program

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was established by President Bush in 2002 by combining 22 federal departments and agencies into a single cabinet agency. The DHS is the third largest cabinet agency with more than 240,000 employees. The vision of the DHS is to ensure a homeland that is safe, secure, and resilient against terrorism and other hazards.

The Leader Development Program (LDP) at DHS was established in May 2010 under the Office of Chief Human Capital Officer. The purpose of the LDP is "to evolve a shared culture of leadership expectations across the Department, and to ensure that all DHS components collaborate to support a consistent investment in the development of every leader across the Department."[41] The LDP is established around a Leadership Development Framework (see Figure 4) that incorporates all five levels of DHS employees: team members, team leads, supervisors, managers, and executives. It also provides roadmaps for developmental activities at each level. Additionally, the LDP includes a best-of-breed annual Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program, an Executive Capstone Program, a Coaching Collaborative, a wide variety of products and tools to support leadership development, and the new Leadership Bridges strategy to promote continuous cultivation of a well-developed leadership talent pipeline.

While the LDP outlines leader development activities for all five levels of DHS employees, only supervisors and above are required to complete leader development activities, in line with the Code of Federal Regulations. While the requirements vary across the five levels of employees, one element that supervisors, managers, and executives all have in common is that they are all required to complete: (1) an onboarding suite of development activities, including an orientation, mentoring and an assessment; (2) a dynamic core development experience, addressing critical competencies and skills required to successfully transition to the next level; and (3) 12 hours of competency development and 12 hours of "leader-as-teacher give-back" each year. DHS encourages components to use a variety of new, collaborative, and existing products and programs to meet the learning objectives established by the LDP; components can determine the mode through which employees can complete their development (e.g., classroom, online course, books, video). In addition, employees can fulfill the "give-back" requirement through a variety of mediums including mentoring or coaching other employees, or serving as an instructor, panel member, speaker, or teacher in a setting where they contribute to another employee's development.

DHS has published a dashboard since FY12 to monitor completion and effectiveness and requires components to report leader development throughput and impact data semi-annually. DHS employees who participate in leader development and report back regarding their experience, view the experience quite favorably. For example, in 2018, 82 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that their developmental activity gave them knowledge or skills that they did not otherwise gain from on-the-job experience. In that same year, 84 percent of respondents stated that the developmental activities in which they participated were a worthwhile investment.

One major challenge that DHS continues to face is increasing awareness of and compliance with the leader development requirements across the workforce. The LDP works with and through components to spread awareness across the large, geographically-dispersed and mobile workforce. The LDP also provides continued oversight and support for the components regarding collecting and reporting data on leader development to increase the likelihood of receiving accurate, timely, and complete data. DHS has made great progress in increasing

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41. Internal document, "The DHS Leader Development Program: Requirements and Accountability Guide 2.5" 4,

awareness of and compliance with leader development across the components. But it continues to seek new approaches to ensuring that access to and documentation of leader development is congruent with the unique culture and mission demands, as well as the relatively short history of the Department's tools and systems to support documentation and reporting.

Figure 4: DHS Leader Development Program Framework

This Framework provides a strategic architecture for enabling an intentional culture and a consistent continuum of optimum leader development investment across the Department. The Leader Development Program builds upon this Framework to result in effective leaders at all levels who drive strong mission performance in dynamic environments across the Homeland Security enterprise.

Tier	Focus	Requirements		Advancement
Executive National & Global Leader Leading the institution	• Strategic Stewardship • Lead organizational culture	**Capstone** • Development Plan • Executive Onboarding Suite • **Capstone Core Development Experience** • Continuous Annual Development (12/12 Development/Leader as Teacher "Give-Back")		**And Beyond** *What will my legacy be?* • Rotation • Sabbatical
Manager Second-level Supervisor Leading organizations and programs	• Coalitions and Collaboration • Cross-functional Management Strategies	**Keystone** • Development Plan • Manager Onboarding Suite • **Keystone Core Development Experience** • Continuous Annual Development (12/12 Development/Leader as Teacher "Give-Back")	L E A D E R S H I P B R I D G E S	**To Executive** *Is becoming an Executive for me?* • SES Candidate Development Program • "So You Want To Be An Executive" Guide
Supervisor First-line Supervisor Leading performance	• Direction and Results • Building Engagement while Managing Resources	**Cornerstone** • Development Plan • Supervisor Onboarding Suite • **Fundamentals of DHS Leadership** • Continuous Annual Development (12/12 Development/Leader as Teacher "Give-Back")		**To Manager** *Is becoming a Manager for me?* • Managerial Leadership Bridge Program • "So You Want To Be A Manager" Guide
Team Lead Group Lead Leading others and projects	• Partnership and Credibility • Influence and Collaboration	**Milestone** • **Milestone Core Development Experience** • Book of the Year (optional) • Mentoring (optional) • Supervisor Shadowing (optional)		**To Supervisor** *Is becoming a Supervisor for me?* • Supervisory Leadership Bridge Program • "So You Want To Be A Supervisor" Guide
Team Member Individual Contributor Leading self	• Organizational Citizenship • Technical Leadership and Role Model	**Foundations** • New Employee Orientation • **Foundations Core Development Experience** • Understanding the DHS Leadership Commitment • Book of the Year (optional) • Career Coaching (optional)		**To Team Lead** *Is formally leading others for me?* • "So You Want To Be A Team Lead" Guide • "Team Member Impact" Guide

United States Department of Agriculture—Leader Development Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, or USDA, provides federal leadership on agriculture, food, natural resources, rural infrastructure, nutrition, and related issues through fact-based, data-driven, and customer-focused decisions. The vision of USDA is to provide economic opportunity through innovation, helping rural America to thrive; to promote agriculture production that better nourishes Americans while also helping feed others throughout the world; and to preserve our nation's natural resources through conservation, restored forests, improved watersheds, and healthy private working lands.

USDA has over 100,000 employees, most located in the continental U.S., with some stationed strategically across the world. The organization is structured into eight mission areas, 15 agencies, and 19 staff offices. The chief learning officer from the Office of Human Resources Management provides policy guidance and direction for employee development to training officers throughout USDA. USDA's model for leadership development involves developing leaders at all levels, and is drawn from the Office of Personnel Management, with developing self as the foundation, followed by successively progressive programs for team leader, supervisor, manager, and executive. At each level, sets of targeted competencies are developed. The overall Leadership Development Framework is depicted in Figure 5.

USDA's chief learning officer promotes collaboration across the Department, which has led to the development of shared resources for leadership development, such as a 360-degree assessment, a USDA-wide mentoring program, and a standardized new supervisor curriculum. USDA also periodically holds an SES Candidate Development Program that is open to other federal agencies to develop the pipeline into executive positions.

In 2015, 2016, and 2017, USDA's leadership development programs achieved the Bronze Learning Elite Award from the Chief Learning Officers Magazine, and in 2014 received the Best Leadership Development Program award at the Human Capital Management-Government Conference. Current emphasis is not only on developing leaders to fill current and future needs, but also making sure that leaders develop themselves.

Figure 5: USDA Leadership Development Framework

	Level and Core Competencies	Learning Experiences	Course Options
Leading & Managing Organizations	**Executive** NEntrepreneurship External Awareness Vision	Complete a 360 degree assessment Be a mentor/have a mentor Engage an executive coach Participate in self-directed learning Attend executive Forums/Seminar Develop an Executive Development Plan	Agency Forums/Seminars OPM and other Federal Forums/Seminars Institutions of Higher learning (e.g., American University executive events) AgLearn training and Books 24X7
Leading & Managing Programs	**Manager** Creativity and Innovation Financial Management Partnering Political Savvy Strategic Thinking Technology Management	Complete a 360 degree assessment Be a mentor/have a mentor Engage a coach Participate in self-directed learning Volunteer to lead a working group Serve on a detail assignment Complete an Individual Development Plan	Manager Training Program Federal Executive's Institute (FEI) Leadership in a Democratic Society training Writing your Executive Core Qualifications USDA Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program Institutions of Higher learning (e.g., American University executive events) AgLearn training and Books 24X7 Presidential Management Council Rotation Program OPM Management Development Center Programs/Leadership courses
Leading & Managing People	**Supervisor** Accountability Conflict Management Developing Others Human Capital Management Leveraging Diversity	Complete a 360 degree assessment Be a mentor/have a mentor Engage a coach Participate in self-directed learning Volunteer to lead a working group Serve on a detail assignment Complete an Individual Development Plan	Supervisor Training Curriculum AgLearn training and Books 24X7 Presidential Management Council Rotation Program OPM Management Development Center Programs/Leadership courses
Managing Projects	**Team Leader** Decisiveness Influencing / Negotiating Team Building Technical Credibility	Complete a 180 degree assessment Have a mentor/ be a mentor Engage a coach Participate in self-directed learning Volunteer to lead a working group Serve on a detail assignment Complete an Individual Development Plan Engage in cross training	Presidential Management Council Rotation Program AgLearn training and Books 24X7 Project Management training Meeting Management training Writing Your Federal Resume workshop Creating Your Individual Development Plan
Managing Yourself	**All Employees** Continual Learning Customer Service Flexibility Integrity/ Honesty Interpersonal Skills Oral Communication Problem Solving Public Service Motivation Resilience Written Communication	Complete a 180 degree assessment Have a mentor/be a mentor Participate in self-directed learning Volunteer for collateral duty assignments Serve on project teams Complete an Individual Development Plan Engage in cross training	AgLearn training and Books 24X7 (e.g., customer service, problem solving, time management, team development, diversity and inclusion) Toast Masters (presentation skills) USDA Cross Training Program Creating your Individual Development Plan Mandatory training Familiarity with Federal regulations and Depart-mental/Agency policies

Left column labels: 360-DEGREE ASSESSMENT; SELF/SUPERVISOR ASSESSMENT

Lessons Learned about Leadership Development

Interviews with federal government thought leaders and representatives of the four agency case studies identified consistent patterns related to successful agency-based leadership development. Many of the lessons learned from the cases, summarized in Table 6, affirm best practices found in the generic leadership development literature.

The process of triangulation between literature best practices, opinion leaders, and case studies not only helped identify commonalities related to success, but also distinct and broad-based challenges for success in the federal government. We discuss the commonalities here. In the concluding section, we highlight challenges unique to the federal government and recommendations to address them.

The lessons learned form a template for other agencies that wish to initiate leadership development programs. We group the lessons according to the program lifecycle in Figure 1.

Table 6: Lessons Learned from Four Successful Federal Leadership Development Programs

Initiating leadership development programs	• Creating strong connections to the organization's mission and values • Aligning leadership development with an urgent need • Finding a powerful champion
Delivering effective leadership development	• Building multiple delivery methods—e.g., executive coaching, mentoring, and action-based learning—into the program • Organizing leader development across multiple sessions over time
Measuring program effectiveness	• Triangulation of data sources essential to building comprehensive understanding of program effectiveness • Building intentionality into data collection • Long-term participatory assessments and evaluation create employee buy-In
Sustaining leadership development programs	• Creating opportunities for continuous learning • Fostering broad ownership in leadership development • Aligning leadership development with other organizational systems

Initiating Leadership Development Programs

Best practices for initiating leadership development programs from the general management literature are prominent among the practices that successful federal agencies use. Creating strong mission connections, aligning with urgent agency needs, and getting support from powerful champions were common features of the initiation process in our agency case studies.

Creating Strong Connections to Agency Mission and Values

The connection between leadership development programs and the mission and values of the agency occurs organically in successful agency-based leadership development programs. Crane's Leadership Challenge, for example, forces participants to deal with tensions within the work environment, which then causes participants to evaluate their own values and how those values converge and diverge with the values of their coworkers. Despite their differences, employees learn that they can unite around the mission and values of the organiza-
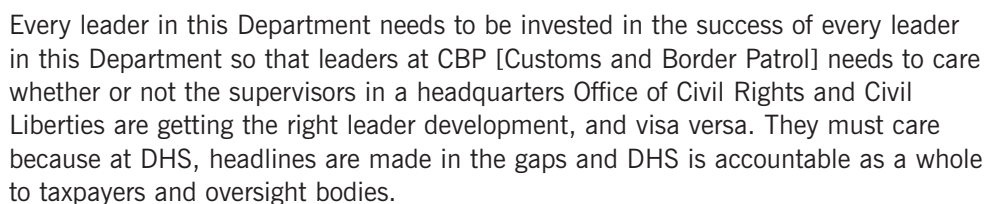
tion, which is a key foundation in their leadership evolution. As such, it helps guide employees in decision-making and dealing with conflict.

At DHS, the effectiveness of the leadership development programming is assessed, in part, on the ability of the program to advance the mission of the agency. One of the evaluation items that participants receive after participating in a leadership development experience is a strongly disagree—strongly agree question that asks, "Applying the knowledge and skills from this developmental activity will make me more effective in leading DHS mission execution." This connection to mission advancement has been vital to gaining support for leadership development programming and tying it to performance encourages component agencies to offer programming that connects to mission advancement.

The USAF Civilian Force Development Program is fully aligned with USAF missions and job classifications. A unique element of the program is the development of Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) that are focused on the USAF's mission and values. Of the eight USAF ECQs, only one (leading people) directly references the OPM ECQs. The USAF ECQs emphasize employing military capabilities, enterprise perspective, and other competencies that are aligned to USAF missions and values.

Aligning Leadership Development with an Urgent Organizational Need

DHS shares a challenge facing many large, complex federal departments—they must coordinate and collaborate across diverse components to achieve their mission to protect the homeland. DHS has struggled to develop a cohesive and collaborative culture across its components for a variety of reasons—among them its size, diversity, recency of creation, and the distinct histories of its subunits. The Leader Development Program was created in the hope of helping unify the organization. An interviewee describes how leader development can unify the Department:

> Every leader in this Department needs to be invested in the success of every leader in this Department so that leaders at CBP [Customs and Border Patrol] needs to care whether or not the supervisors in a headquarters Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties are getting the right leader development, and visa versa. They must care because at DHS, headlines are made in the gaps and DHS is accountable as a whole to taxpayers and oversight bodies.

At USDA, like DHS a large, complex department, leaders are also attentive to the formation of a strong and cohesive organizational culture and perceive leadership development as a means for creating cohesion vital to organizational performance.

The USAF Civilian Force Development Program is directly aligned with the USAF's Strategic Master Plan's goal to ". . . provide for a robust national defense and field suitable capability and capacity . . . (by driving) a culture change." Every civilian in USAF understands that their goal is to defend the nation and become the best warfighter possible.

The 2005 round of the Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process—which Crane survived—led to fundamental re-thinking of both its strategic direction and the way it developed leaders. The aftermath of BRAC was a primary impetus for soul searching that led directly to adoption of Leadership Challenge.

Finding a Powerful Champion

Combined USAF leadership—civilian, military and political—decided two decades ago to develop the Civilian Force Development Program. All subsequent USAF leadership has continued this support. Most importantly, the USAF has developed governance structures that ensure a seamless transition of program support whenever leadership changes. This governance structure includes civilian and military leaders, as well as representatives from all ranks and technical areas. Whenever the inevitable changes in political leadership occur, the new political leaders are handed a mature and proven governance structure that is part of the fabric of the Air Force's workforce development effort.

The Air Force has a layered Force Development Governance Structure that starts at the Air Force Headquarters level through an Executive Resources Board, which sets overall governance policies regarding hiring, training and development, utilization, performance evaluation and compensation (including those for the Senior Executive Service). The Executive Resources Board operates by a charter and members represent all elements of career civilian leadership within the Air Force. A Civilian Force Development Panel also operates through a charter that sets policies for GS-15 civilian employees and below. The panel aims to advance the effective development and utilization of the civilian workforce. The layered nature of the governance structure around leadership development ensures that a broad body of stakeholders is invested in leadership development.

The establishment of the LDP at DHS was initially driven at the secretary and deputy secretary levels, and has continued to find championship at the senior official level over the years. In fact, FY18 was designated DHS Leadership Year in some part due to the level of awareness that the LDP has raised regarding the criticality of investing in leadership effectiveness. It is important to note that given the complex dynamics of this large and varied Department, the LDP does not serve as a primary training provider or governance entity for all leader development activities across the Department. Rather, the LDP develops strategy, implements policy, provides products and resources, and serves as a thought leader and knowledge broker across a community of practice that implements leader development within component agencies in alignment with mission needs. DHS has made great progress in increasing implementation compliance across components. But more importantly, DHS has evolved a culture of cross-component collaboration and shared commitment to leader development despite the challenges that turnover, funding, and the dynamic homeland security environment have presented. The LDP continually works with components to improve effectiveness and communication strategies to raise awareness of and access to leader development opportunities across the workforce.

At Crane, two early champions of leadership development were essential to the program's success. They sought to improve the organization and that organically led to conversations about how the organization was led and ways to improve leadership within the organization as a means to improve organizational performance. It was decided that a leadership framework was needed to improve leadership within the organization. It was also evident that a framework that could be applied across all organizational levels was essential. These champions chartered a team to give serious thought about how to create such a framework and this ultimately led to the Leadership Challenge.

Broad ownership of the Leadership Challenge was built into the program from the beginning. Senior leadership at Crane originally tasked a midlevel group of employees to look at options for leadership development, assess the options, and design a program for Crane. Leadership Challenge is what that group decided upon and senior leadership agreed with their recommendation. Thus, it is important to note here that sharing ownership in leadership development at Crane was sincere, meaning that midlevel employees were not faux owners, but that their recommendations had actual consequences. Incorporating midlevel employees into the decision-making process about the design of the program empowered them and increased their motivation to make sure that the program is effective and continues.

Designing and Delivering Effective Programs

The design and delivery of successful federal leadership development programs closely mirror best practices from the general management literature. Building multiple delivery methods into the program, organizing leader development across multiple sessions over time, and creating opportunities for practice-based learning are essential for leadership development effectiveness.

Building Multiple, Action-Based Learning Methods into Programming is Essential

All the successful leadership development programs we studied used multiple and diverse delivery methods. Intensive trainee participation and involvement in delivery are also hallmarks of successful leadership development.

The USAF, for example, maintains a Civilian Continuum of Learning system that includes a database with more than 1,000 course offerings available to USAF civilians. The USAF "Civilian Continuum of Learning Program" starts at GS-7 and extends through SES. The program emphasizes leadership development experiences, training, and development across multiple sessions and modalities over time. It also includes technical training programs closely tied to USAF civilian employment categories (e.g., accountant, analyst) to ensure alignment with USAF mission needs.

The Leadership Challenge at NSWC Crane illustrates multimodal leadership development best practices and their benefits for leadership development. Employees participating in the program receive mentoring, coaching, information-based instruction and practice-based instruction. They also complete a 360-degree assessment and an individualized development plan. Each of these modalities' benefits participants. The 360-degree assessment is given to participants prior to the start of the program and again six months after the program ends. One of the main benefits that participants receive from the assessment is that it allows them to track their development. Coaches, on the other hand, provide external accountability, as they make sure that the participants do homework that is assigned to them during in-class instruction.

The DHS LDP requirements and optional activities employ a wide variety of learning modalities—mentoring, assessments, reading, peer and formal coaching, and action, classroom and online learning—and promote the value of experiential learning, including shadowing, rotations, and interviews within this highly operational Department. The DHS workforce operates in a wide variety of environments and the LDP develops strategies and approaches to maximize and enhance the realities of leadership and leadership development that result. The LDP also offers a robust DHS-wide website, providing hundreds of tools, articles, and products to support leader development. DHS has also set up an online portal offering a talent bank of certified executive coaches, leader development speakers, and facilitators within DHS who are willing to offer coaching, teaching, or training for employees in any DHS component.

Organizing Leader Development across Multiple Sessions over Time

Interviewees at NSWC Crane often-cited the timing of the sessions as a strength of the Leadership Challenge. Each of the core training sessions are spaced a month apart, which allows the participants to practice on the job what they learned and to receive feedback from a coach and from a mentor regarding their success in translating their new knowledge and skills into practice. Providing time to implement and receive feedback on newly acquired skills is valuable because it increases the likelihood that the knowledge and skills learned will be transferred into practice.

Interviewees at Crane pointed to a "natural experiment" related to the frequency and timing of leadership development sessions. Instructors from the Leadership Challenge at Crane had been asked to facilitate the Leadership Challenge for another unit, but in a condensed form, over only two days rather than six months. They noted in interviews that they felt that the two-day mass sessions were much less impactful than spacing the sessions across six months, and that it was unrealistic to believe that you can have a huge impact on someone's leadership capabilities in only two days.

It is not only important for leader development programs to be longer in duration, rather than shorter, but also to occur frequently rather than rarely.[42] In many organizations it is customary for employees to receive one cycle of leadership development once they move up, and never receive any additional development until they move up again. At DHS, employees at the supervisor level and above are required to complete leader development requirements each year, not just in the year in which they receive a promotion. Thus, no employee at DHS above a supervisory position is beyond development no matter how long they have been in the position.

Measuring Leadership Development Effectiveness

The interviewees across the cases contended that it was essential for the program to be effective at improving individual and organizational performance for it to have a chance at sustainability. They pointed to a variety of qualitative and quantitative indicators they believed reflected the effectiveness of their programs. Given the non-market context of federal government missions, it is with respect to measuring effectiveness that our cases differed from generic best practices. The cases nevertheless demonstrated a fundamental concern with discovering how leadership development influenced individual and organizational performance— the core touchstones of effectiveness in the generic literature.

Triangulation of Data Sources Essential to Building Comprehensive Understanding of Program Effectiveness

The impact of the Leadership Challenge on organizational performance at Crane was assessed by a variety of indicators, including the speed with which past participants signed up for roles in delivering the program to new participants, results from Department of Defense climate surveys, and from observations about perceived changes in morale and in the organizational culture such as changes in how employees talk about their work and deal with conflict and the routines that employees build around their work. A rigorous longitudinal evaluation of the program was also completed in 2010 as a PhD thesis.[43] The study examined the effect of leadership development on individual and organizational performance and found that the program

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42. Lacerenza, Christina N., Denise L. Reyes, Shannon L. Marlow, Dana L. Joseph, and Eduardo Salas. "Leadership training design, delivery, and implementation: A meta-analysis." Journal of Applied Psychology 102, no. 12 (2017): 1686.

43. Seidle, *An Examination of Leadership Training.*

had a positive and statistically significant effect on both dimensions of performance.[44] Employees at Crane continue to reference that study as rigorous evidence that the program is effective.

USDA interviewees described a range of non-traditional and qualitative assessment strategies to assess leadership development training effectiveness, but indicate they are limited by indicators being available for such tracking. One innovative way the agency is identifying what is important to program participants is by asking them what they feel are the top three things that they want out of the program when they sign up and tailor materials to meet those expectations.

Like other agencies, much of USDA's return on investment is established through softer indicators, such as proven track records of graduates, whether senior leaders are "paying their learning forward" or "paying it back" by their actions, or if they are seen as evolving into great leaders by their peers. Other interview excerpts highlight the informal nature of how success is measured:

> It's evidenced by their work, their demeanor, their attitudes . . . they've invested in you, you see it in their work . . .

> We're not necessarily using Kirkpatrick's model to evaluate, but we see results in action. Our leadership sees it. These participants are highly competitive . . . 40 percent have gone on to leadership and management positions . . .

> [Leadership] hasn't felt the need to document . . . it's just an ethos . . . we're comfortable with what we're seeing, what we're realizing, what we're able to gauge through observation of real-life experiences, not a survey six to eight months later that asks, 'What did Suzie think?'

Based upon the small sample of cases, qualitative data appears to be more persuasive when employees participate in the same leadership experience and are geographically concentrated. At Crane, for example, the impact of the program on individual performance was assessed by participants' perceptions about how the program impacted them, through observations of peers following program participation, and through the self-reporting of changes in 360-degree feedback assessments six to twelve months after program participation. When employees participate in very different leadership development experiences and are geographically dispersed, however, quantitative indicators of effectiveness were more influential. This may be due to the

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44.   Seidle, Fernandez, and Perry, "Do Leadership Training," 603-613.

fact that when the number of program offerings is large and the geographic territory is vast the likelihood of stakeholders coming across a robust set of testimonials for each leadership experience decreases, and more objective indicators are needed.

At DHS, increasingly sophisticated data collection from components, semi-annual dashboard and program measures, and a centrally-administered impact evaluation has also been supported by more recent investments in longitudinal research to demonstrate effectiveness. For instance, in FY17, the LDP completed a study on a 3500-person organization, concluding that organizations where supervisors completed more of their required development had higher scores on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. In FY18, the LDP released a study demonstrating that graduates of the rigorous SES CDP outperformed their non-graduate executive peers in five critical indices. The SES CDP curriculum at DHS also boasts the highest post-program selection rate in government—55+ percent compared to a governmentwide average of about 33 percent.

Our interviewees also reported the importance of providing systematic data demonstrating program effectiveness increases when requesting a budget increase for leadership development as opposed to requesting a continued level of funding. Relatedly, our case studies found that the importance of providing systematic data demonstrating effectiveness varies depending upon the features of the program. For example, several of our cases mentioned that at one point site visits were incorporated into their program, but that feature was cut for budgetary reasons despite its popularity among participants. Thus, to increase the likelihood of sustaining more expensive programmatic features like site visits, systematic data demonstrating its effectiveness is a must.

Building Intentionality into Data Collection

DHS is intentional about its data collection requirements to ensure that it receives the data it needs while minimizing the administrative burden on the components and the participants. The Department requires all components to include just six core evaluation questions in their post-assessment of leader development that assess the utility of the experience for the individual and for their contributions to advancing the organization's mission. DHS requires that those same questions be asked of participants again six months after the leader development experience to assess whether participants' opinion regarding the program has changed over time.

DHS components provide common survey data semi-annually, rather than quarterly, to minimize the administrative burden on the components and increase compliance. Despite DHS' efforts to streamline data collection some of the components continue to struggle to collect and report data on training. The LDP tries to work with components to develop and institutionalize processes such as recently moving to a centrally collected evaluation of all leader development activities over a six-month period.

Long-Term Participatory Assessments and Evaluation Create Employee Buy-In

Interviewees reported data collection fatigue, suggesting that traditional data collection instruments, such as surveys, while capable of assembling large-scale databases, may not be the only effective way to measure success or build staff engagement and buy-in to the evaluation process.

One interviewee suggested an alternative for survey fatigue, which includes tracking promotion rates and then asking the person how they say the program helped them. A supervisor could be interviewed to assess participant observations of improvement. Cycling through this process over time, not just right after the program end, could lead to more formalized longitu-

dinal impact data. Adding coaching to 360 assessments helps staff to review results and receive feedback in a supportive manner.

Group projects are an excellent learning modality to know your cohort, learn collectively, and see what others are getting out of the experience. For USDA, project outcomes have been systematically connected to social learning as a performance indicator. Other stakeholders highlight the importance of assessing learning needs in real-time: "For me, I want to be sure people are becoming leaders . . . That's hard . . . The evaluation piece is not new, but it is becoming a priority across the board . . . In a perfect world, we'd check in monthly with employees and supervisors to see what they're getting out of it. If there is no change or improvement, then something needs to be changed in the education program."

Sustaining Leadership Development Programs

The experiences reported from our case studies closely parallel best practices from the literature. Leadership development programs that create opportunities for continuous learning, foster ownership, and align leadership development with organizational systems are more likely to be sustained.

Create Opportunities for Continuous Learning

All the agency-based case studies noted that their agencies were resource constrained and that this required creative ways to develop programming for their populations. In many cases, this has led to developing innovative learning, coaching and mentoring opportunities.

Since inception of the Leadership Challenge, NSWC Crane has confronted budgetary pressures to lower program costs or risk its dissolution. The main cost-cutting step was to bring instruction in-house rather than relying on expensive outside vendors. Bringing these responsibilities in-house strengthened the program's financial feasibility and thus its sustainability.

Interviewees reported that bringing instruction in-house did not reduce program quality. In fact, interviewees commented that the in-house facilitators better understood the organization and the change allowed them to tailor the instruction to the culture and climate of the organization.

Another way in which the program at Crane changed over the years is that it increasingly allowed informal leaders to participate in the program, not just employees with formal supervisory roles. One interviewee commented that this was important because informal leaders impact the organization and because informal leaders are part of the team, and team dynamics are important at Crane.

At USDA, "micro-learning" (e.g., small pieces of training and learning such as short videos supplemented with coaching and mentoring to create employee engagement) and "cohort-based events" are exemplars of how the agency is shaping leadership learning to meet the needs of how their leaders want to learn. Interviewees reported on internal survey data indicating younger leaders prefer more "structured" leadership development and are more prone to take online classes.

Cohort learning is a popular avenue of instruction at USDA. Smaller, more digestible sessions, through blended in-person cohorts mixed with online sessions with experience-based applications, are especially popular with younger employees looking for new ways to learn. As one interviewee summarized:

> Group projects are an excellent learning modality to know your cohort, learn collectively, see what others are getting out of the experience.

Within DHS, training officers comprise a community of practice that facilitates organizational learning. Training officers and members of DHS's LDP meet quarterly to share lessons, ask questions, and reaffirm expectations. An annual Leader Development Forum gives training officers a platform to "share and tell" their best practices, giving everyone access to cross-component solutions, and a forum for discussion about new policy and product development. DHS components incorporate practices they learn from other components into their own organizations.

DHS also has both a program manager for planning and Implementation who works extensively with components through one-on-one consultations to learn and support their complex implementation of varied LDP requirements. In addition, a senior strategist drives data-driven new strategies and products that culminate in assessing where the Department should be going next with their leader development framework and requirements. Most recently, LDP has begun implementation on developing a program that would provide employees who want to become first-line supervisors with development and resources long before they ever apply for first-line supervisory positions, ensuring that organizations will have a well-developed talent pool that is ready to hit the ground running upon selection.

At USDA, peer coaching, both in pairs and groups, has been a fundamental pathway for 'social learning,' which has led to cycles of action learning that enhances staff cohesion across formal lines of authority and organizational boundaries. The process is described by one champion of such activities:

> This is an experience where seven to eight people get together who are not in the same chain of command. They have each person talk about a challenge and participants are then asked not to give advice but instead are instead given a set of questions and instructions to support the person sharing their problem. Participants then ask questions about the problem: 'Did you try this? Who else do you need to think about here? Have you read a book?'

In response to a desire among employees for greater mentoring opportunities, the Air Force launched MyVector in 2015. MyVector is a web-based platform that facilitates mentoring, career planning, and knowledge sharing among Air Force employees. MyVector allows users to "in real time, invite participants to serve as mentors, select mentors based on preferences, chat with their mentor online, and complete a mentoring plan."[45] The career planning feature of MyVector allows users to "build career plans based on real opportunities and to share . . . [those] career plans with development teams and mentors" and also to "track specific events and accomplishments throughout the year for Performance Reports."[46]

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45. "MyVECTOR," Air Force's Personnel Center, accessed August 3, 2019, https://www.afpc.af.mil/Force-Development/MyVECTOR/.
46. Ibid.

The knowledge-sharing feature of MyVector "provides discussion forums and links to resources for online books and courses that discuss mentoring benefits, the differences between coaching and mentoring and techniques for managing mentoring relationships."[47] MyVector has been a successful adaption for the Air Force with more than 90,000 registered users and more than 5,000 mentor profiles.

Fostering Broad Ownership in Leadership Development

Given that midlevel employees at Crane, as at most organizations, outnumber senior leadership, only allowing senior leaders to make decisions regarding leadership development would have unduly narrowed ownership. Midlevel employees continue to have significant decision-making power regarding the design of the program and most of the changes to the program over the years have been initiated by midlevel employees. Additionally, several midlevel employees who have gone through the program and moved into senior leadership positions now help facilitate, coach, or mentor within the program, and so there is a steady cycle of midlevel and senior level employees who 'own' the program.

USDA is driving culture change through training and attention to sharing lessons learned to shape behaviors on a larger scale than one-off individual training sessions. Future social-learning opportunities are in development to use social media to do this, such as a blog where people share how they sped things up.

USDA focuses heavily on eliciting staff feedback and building employee buy-into their leadership training and development efforts. As one subagency training specialist describes, "USDA is supportive of training outside your tribe so provides opportunities for new learning, perspectives, and influences for the agency."

Another distinction at USDA is the fact that leadership developing training is not mandatory, but that staff can opt-in as they choose. As opposed to more traditional programming where participants need to achieve a certain status for eligibility to access programs, at USDA, much like DHS, the notion that 'everyone is a leader' pervades into specific programming choice. Such choices highlight what the CLO indicates as a central tenet of USDA leadership development—"the importance of showing we care about [staff] talent."

USDA also has a decentralized structure with a consistent feedback loop back to the CLO, where sub-agency leadership development staff develop their own unique programming so they can focus on the mission for their subcomponent level, as well as have exposure to what USDA does across the board, and provide timely input on program ideas being distributed by the CLO. They have employees who are asking for their programs, so they have their finger on the pulse of needs and rationales for requests.

DHS makes opportunities for leader development available to every employee for reasons articulated by an interviewee: "I don't think leadership is expendable at any level. I think an organization is only as strong as its most ground-level leaders."

DHS has from the start included a significant focus on non-supervisory development in the LDP, building core development experiences for both team members and team leads, as well as other products, programs, and resources. In fact, throughout FY18, designated as DHS Leadership Year, more than 100 new products and resources were provided to the DHS workforce to elevate awareness of leader development—and many of them were geared to non-supervisory leadership, leadership in place, and a culture of continual leader development.

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47. Ibid.

Aligning Leadership Development with Other Organizational Systems

At Crane, there is one main leadership development program that employees go through and given that Crane is a small unit that encourages broad participation in leadership development, a high percentage of the unit has gone through the same leadership development experience. The presence of a shared leadership development experience across the unit has been extremely beneficial in connecting lessons learned from the leadership development program to organizational processes and decision making. As a Crane interviewee put it, "Not only has it [the Leadership Challenge] impacted those individuals who have gone through the training, but it's impacted our lexicon, how we operate here, how we message leadership."

The Leadership Challenge, the book on which the Crane program is based, covers several major themes including model the way, inspire shared vision, challenge the process, encourage the heart, and enable others to act. An interviewee noted that since initiating the program at Crane "you'll hear . . . leaders at different times talk about I need to get better at encouraging the heart or I need to get better at modeling the way. And so, it's kind of permeated . . . [the] organization." If the employees at Crane had gone to different programs or if only a few employees had participated in the same program, then it would have likely been more difficult to communicate and, in turn, implement the lessons learned from leadership development into organizational processes and decision making.

The Air Force has a line of funding established specifically for employee development that is central to its success in developing its personnel. For fiscal year 2019, the Air Force has set aside nearly $30 million to support leadership development and training. This line item protects the program annually because appropriators are accustomed to approving programs that have been in existence and do not require new funding over and beyond the normal Air Force budget request.

This level of funding has been typical for the past 20 years and is centrally managed as a dedicated program. The alternatives to line item funding is to wage an annual war with appropriators, in order to have extra dollars put into an agency's budget for professional development and training, or to shift funds from other programs to fund such efforts. The obvious problems with these approaches are that they are subject to wide swings in funding and support, and it is difficult to build a sustained pipeline of leaders when funding is uncertain.

USDA has also been increasing attention to training leaders to leverage different functions through what they call "cross-functional leadership development and training" (for example, training for leaders on human capital systems and how leaders can leverage them). Although some leaders have not always understood how such training outside their specialized area might apply to them, after participation, they are able to see the importance of a broader array of functions and their relevance to their own area of operations.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We have reached three primary conclusions and posit four recommendations that could inform future efforts to create and improve the effectiveness of agency-based leadership development programs.

Conclusion #1: The four agency case studies demonstrate that federal organizations are capable of mounting successful leadership development programs.

The cases do not represent formal evaluations of leadership development in the four agencies we studied. But the case studies revealed serious efforts by the Air Force, USDA, the Navy (NSWC Crane), and DHS—discovered through our interviews and archival-evidence reviews— to create leadership development programs that are having an impact. We chose our cases based on the reputation of their leadership development programs and, for the most part, our research process affirmed that the reputations were well deserved.

Our conclusion is that the case studies were successful for three primary reasons: their attention to leadership development best practices, including using multiple modalities and constantly conducting self-assessments; achieving senior leadership buy-in, including political and career leadership; and strategically utilizing scarce resources when managing their programs.

These three reasons alone, however, do not completely account for what the agencies have achieved. Other, less tangible factors come into play. One of them is the commitment of staff throughout these organizations to high standards. Another is a willingness to be adaptive and adopt new modalities and learn from other organizations. Finally, the most successful agencies strongly linked their leadership development programs to their agency missions, which resulted in a highly focused effort that benefits the agency and helps achieve agency missions.

Conclusion #2: Generic best practices provide an excellent guide for all facets of the leadership development cycle, from starting programs, to program design, to measuring effectiveness, to sustaining programs.

Our review of best practices in the scholarly literature identified many areas where federal agencies in search of guidance for their programs can learn from the documented successes of non-federal organizations. The convergence between best practices and successful leadership development in the federal government was most pronounced with respect to program designs. The program design template for leadership development effectiveness is well established: Build multiple delivery methods into the program, organize leader development across multiple sessions over time, and create opportunities for practice-based learning.

Our case studies also offered up some surprises. One of them was the robustness of confidence about program effectiveness even when the units had not invested significantly in rigorous summative evaluations or return-on-investment research. NSWC Crane developed a rigorous assessment of the Leadership Challenge that addressed individual and organizational change and DHS implemented increasingly sophisticated impact evaluations.

Although the review of non-federal best practices was useful, two major gaps became apparent: The academic literature is relatively silent about federal leadership programs, and the methods used to evaluate ROI in the private sector are not generally applicable in the federal government. The absence of scholarly work focused on federal leadership programs was mitigated, in part, by the fact that the case study agencies routinely review academic studies to inform and guide their programs. We found a very strong alignment in program delivery practices, for instance, between the case study agencies and generic leadership development programs, because of designers' attention to the literature.

The return-on-investment question is a more serious omission. Agencies were forced to be creative when drawing together meaningful information about how their programs impacted individual and organizational results. Organizational stakeholders turned to myriad information sources, such as intra-departmental surveys, the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, employee behaviors, and stories from employees about transformations in people and work units.

Although quantifiable information for assessing effectiveness was valued, many of the people we talked with focused on personal experience and stories about how the leadership development program was making a difference. Anecdotes are useful, but all agencies felt strong ROI metrics were needed to ensure long-term program sustainability.

Conclusion #3: Federal organizations encounter unique challenges related to (1) underwriting and sustaining leadership development programs, and (2) managing unstable coalitions of supporters.

The best practices we identified from the literature review are valuable foundations for successful leadership development in the federal government. At the same time, federal programs must respond to unique challenges to reach a threshold for success that enable them to produce leaders.

The first of these unique challenges is financial. The non-market nature of most federal public enterprises means that they rely on annual appropriated budgets funded by taxes. Unlike businesses, most federal government agencies are unable to enhance their financial position by capturing a larger market share. Thus, leadership development programs, no matter how much they enhance the competence of individuals or the effectiveness of their units, must rely on what can be attained in the annual budget and appropriations process. These institutional processes create challenges for starting and sustaining leadership development programs.

Another unique challenge is the unstable coalitions of supporters associated with leadership development programs. The instability is baked into the federal structure in many ways. Senate-approved political appointees come and go, on average, every 2.6 years. Sometimes the turnover is inconsequential, but on other occasions it may threaten the leadership program directly when, for instance, a program's champion departs. Another source of instability is when political control of the House, Senate, or both flips. These changes could alter larger priorities that affect budget allocations.

As our cases illustrated, the agencies we studied discovered ways to address the financial uncertainties and coalition instabilities.

Recommendation 1: The Office of Personnel Management (OPM)[48] serves a critical role as a convener and diffuser of knowledge and best practices related to agency-based leadership development programs. OPM should strengthen its capacity to be a thought leader in this area.

We were impressed by what the agencies we studied accomplished with their leadership development programs, but their initiatives were largely ad hoc and independent, not connected to federal-government wide philosophy, strategy or expertise. None of the interviewees from the four case-study organizations referred to assistance from governmentwide sources. Given the longevity, size, and complexity of the case-study sites—and our focus on agency-based leader-

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48. In May 2019, the Trump administration submitted a legislative proposal to merge the functions and responsibilities of OPM within the General Services Administration (GSA). Please note, if circumstances change regarding OPM the substance of the recommendation still stands under any new agency formulation.

ship development programs—the fact we had no conversations about support from, for example, OPM, is not entirely surprising. We are also likely to have heard more about the role of central agency support had we studied leadership development in agencies representing another subset of programs—that is, where programs are struggling or failing.

Regardless of what inferences can reasonably be drawn from our small sample of cases, a more proactive OPM, in partnership with the Chief Human Capital Officers Council (CHCOC) and Chief Learning Officers Council (CLOC), could increase prospects for successful leadership development across the federal government. OPM could achieve this result by increasing the initiation of programs pursuing best practices and getting word out to all agencies about programs that are succeeding. We believe that the successes we witnessed are more likely to be replicated across the federal government if information about them is diffused, celebrated, and synthesized for wider use. OPM could play a stronger role in convening resources from across the federal government, creating forums for information exchange, and articulating practices critical for starting, measuring, and sustaining leadership development. Among the steps OPM could take, in collaboration with partners, are:

- Expand opportunities for interagency forums that bring together executives, managers, chief human capital officers, chief learning officers, and external resources to share successes and identify solutions for problems that impede high-quality leadership development across the federal government.

- Create a website (or use existing social media platforms) that serves as a clearinghouse to document successes across government, a forum for information sharing, and a platform for solving problems that impede federal leadership development program.

- Host an Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program (https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/intergovernment-personnel-act/) assignment(s) to bring university and private sector experts to OPM to jump-start and support new initiatives and conduct specialized research.

We are confident these and other similar steps, sustained for the long run, could increase successful leadership development across the federal government.

Recommendation 2: Leadership buy-in, including political and career leadership, is critical for the long-term success of leadership development programs. Developing that buy-in should be an ongoing effort led by career executives.

Our cases illustrate the value of leadership buy-in, especially partnerships between political and career leadership and civilian executives and military officers. The partnership between civilian executives and military officers at Crane-NSWC offers an interesting illustration of how partnerships contribute to initiating and sustaining successful leadership development. Although military officers were, at differing stages, responsible for both initiating and sustaining the Crane program, the partners also understood that decisions about the program were grounded in mutual respect for the interests of civilian executives and military officers. The simple norms on which the partnership is based have withstood transitions across at least five commanding officers and three technical directors, permitting the leadership development program to thrive.

Career executives should give high priority to informing political leaders about the structure, content and contributions of their agency's leadership development programs during transitions between administrations and routine turnover of political executives. Agency executive teams should view the long-term success of leadership development programs as objects of joint effort and partnership.

What can be done formally to support leadership buy-in? Although part of the answer resides in our next recommendation about methods and metrics for assessing program effectiveness, other steps complement quantitative and qualitative information about success. Among the steps that can be taken to inform and facilitate leadership buy-in include:

- OPM staff should take the lead during presidential transitions to articulate the importance, scope and effectiveness of leadership development across the federal government. Messages should be framed not only around numbers of programs and leaders developed, but stories about differences the programs made for agencies, their leaders, and citizens affected by leadership effectiveness. Content for such messaging could be drawn from websites and forums referred to in Recommendation 1.

- Agency career executives and chief training officers should maintain briefing materials that can be mobilized on short notice for new political leadership. These briefing materials should include leadership development strategy, short descriptions of programs and how they advance agency strategy, and quantitative and qualitative information about program inputs, outputs, and effectiveness.

- Career executives should be attuned to how to effectively manage their interface with political leaders to facilitate their long-term and consistent partnership.[49]

Recommendation 3: Federal agencies have a compelling need for further academic study of federal leadership development programs and increased attention to the development and documentation of indicators of success, particularly specific measures of ROI.

Despite successes in some agencies, the intellectual capital about leadership development in the federal government remains in short supply.[50] Additional research about the dynamics of how public leaders develop, and techniques for assessing individual and organizational outcomes, is needed. The good news is that despite gaps in research, our study indicates that generic leadership research about best practices adds significant value for federal leadership development initiatives. Where that research falls short is in addressing the unique challenges of federal organizations and their specific institutional structures. This gap is most noticeable in our case studies with regard to identifying methods for assessing effectiveness, where agencies struggle to find reasonable cost and consensus metrics.

Although OPM and many agencies lack resources to address research needs, universities and their faculties are ready partners. The federal side of such government-university partnerships could bring data, openness, and existing federal authorities (e.g., Intergovernmental Personnel Act mobility authority) to the partnership. Improvements in the Federal Employee Viewpoint

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49. This literature is widely available. See, for example, Neil A. Levine, "Bridging the Gap Between Political Appointees and Civil Servants." *Government Executive,* August 10, 2017. Accessed on August 4, 2017, https://www.govexec.com/management/2017/08/bridging-gap-between-political-appointees-and-civil-servants/140146/.

50. In addition to sources and observations cited earlier in this report, other research reflects on the adequacy of the leadership intellectual capital. For an assessment of leadership research and how public leadership fits within overall scholarship, see Sonia M. Ospina, "Collective Leadership and Context in Public Administration: Bridging Public Leadership Research and Leadership Studies," *Public Administration Review,* 77, no 2 (2017): 275-287.

Survey (FEVS)[51] could go a long way toward expanding federal-university research partnerships. Expanding federal-university research partnerships around the topic of leadership development will benefit from support of organizations like the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration (NASPAA), the Partnership for Public Service, and the Volcker Alliance.

Two federal government-university initiatives could bring significant dividends for closing the research gap and creating important intellectual capital for federal leadership development:

- Leaders from OPM, the Chief Human Capital Officers Council, and the Chief Learning Officers Council should convene with NASPAA, the Partnership for Public Service and the Volcker Alliance to develop priorities for new research—with special consideration given to methods and metrics for assessing program effectiveness.

- OPM implements proposed improvements in the FEVS,[52] especially a permanent panel, that would facilitate research about the long-term effects of leadership development programs, especially the assessment of program effectiveness.

51. Sergio Fernandez, William G. Resh, Tima Moldogaziev, and Zachary W. Oberfield, "Assessing the Past and Promise of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey for Public Management Research: A Research Synthesis," Public Administration Review 75, no. 3 (2015): 382-394; Mark John Somers, "Strategies for Improving Measurement Models for Secondary Data in Public Administration Research: Illustrations from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey," Public Administration Review 78, no. 2 (2018): 228-239.
52. Ibid.

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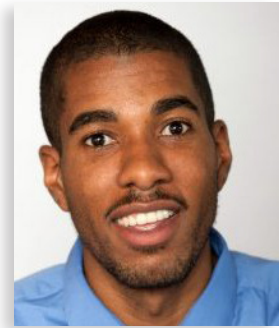
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