

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Leadership Development Guidance

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a long and proud tradition of achieving our mission through scientific excellence and leadership. The Service has maintained its preeminent role in these areas by “growing leadership” through employee development. As a continuation of this heritage, the Service provides this Leadership Development Guidance to identify and endorse the characteristics and competencies necessary for advancement to leadership positions, and to guide employees at all levels and all functions toward excellence in addressing the Service’s mission.

The Leadership Development Guidance is provided in response to employee interest in knowing what skills or experiences are needed in order to succeed in leadership positions, and also in response to the Service Directorate’s commitment to ensure that the Service continues to have a cadre of employees who are prepared for advancement to senior leadership positions in the Service. The Guidance identifies attributes that an employee should obtain, at whatever his or her level or job in the Service, to enhance readiness for positions of greater responsibility. These individual leadership attributes complement and enhance the scientific and natural resources management skills that remain critical to employee performance and success.

There are five Core Qualifications identified in this Guidance, and within each of the Core Qualifications are specific competencies that define areas where employees can assess their knowledge and abilities, and target their training, job assignments, education and career path to further develop these leadership attributes and succeed in the organization. The level and scope at which these competencies are performed increase as grade and responsibilities increase. The five Core Qualifications, and the corresponding Competencies, are:

1. Leading People

Conflict Management

Cultural Awareness

Integrity/Honesty

Team Building

2. Business Acumen

Financial Management

Human Resource Management

Technology Management

3. Building Coalitions/Communication

Influencing/Negotiation

Interpersonal Skills

Oral Communication

Partnering

Political Savvy

Written Communication

4. Results Driven

Accountability

Customer Service

Decisiveness

Entrepreneurship

Problem Solving

Technical Credibility

5. Leading Change

Continual Learning

Creativity & Innovation

External Awareness

Flexibility

Resilience

Service Motivation

Strategic Thinking

Vision

The Core Qualifications are interdependent; successful leaders will address all five Qualifications in their development and in carrying out their leadership responsibilities. Experience and training that strengthen the Competencies will enhance an employee's performance, and will enhance a candidate's overall qualifications for a leadership position.

The Core Qualifications and Competencies were originally developed by the U.S. Government's Office of Personal Management to define the qualifications that must be demonstrated with proficiency in order to merit Senior Executive Service positions. These are, therefore, guidelines and goals for employees interested in advancing to those positions, and for all employees these are beneficial identifiers of traits needed for excellence in performance. In order to prepare senior managers in the Service for top level positions, applicants for Service positions in GS-15 (or above) will be required to demonstrate the appropriate level of experience and ability in the Core Qualifications and Competencies.

The National Conservation Training Center will continue to have a key role for curriculum development that provides resources for employees to assess their current knowledge and capability in each of the Core Qualifications or Competencies. The Deputy Regional Directors and Deputy Assistant Directors will continue to coordinate employee development and leadership issues, including further implementation of leadership guidance and policy.

Leadership Development Guidance Core Qualifications and Competencies

1. Leading People

Leading People involves the ability to design and implement strategies which maximize employee potential and foster high ethical standards in meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals.

The ability to lead people is valued at many organizational levels within the Service, and demonstrated competency in leading others is critical for senior leadership. Cross-program and diverse geographic experience at field, regional and headquarters levels broaden the perspective and skills of potential leaders, including the ability to successfully deal with a variety of hierarchical and cultural settings and a variety of people. Workforce diversity is a social and professional attribute that enhances all aspects of the mission, and as the Service workforce diversifies the expectations will increase for employees to possess skills to succeed with and within a diverse workforce. Management positions require attention to ethical considerations in leading people. To maximize operational strength supervisors need to ensure that every employee has the opportunity to develop to his/her potential, and has the ability to work in teams and form professional partnerships within and between programs.

Competencies are:

- **Conflict Management**
Identifies and takes steps to prevent potential situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a positive and constructive manner to minimize negative impact.
- **Cultural Awareness**
Initiates and manages cultural change within the organization to impact organizational effectiveness. Values cultural diversity and other individual differences in the workforce. Ensures that the organization builds on these differences and that employees are treated in a fair and equitable manner.
- **Integrity/Honesty**
Instills mutual trust and confidence; creates a culture that fosters high standards of ethics; behaves in a fair and ethical manner toward others, and demonstrates a sense of corporate responsibility and commitment to public service.
- **Team Building**
Inspires, motivates, and guides others toward goal accomplishments. Consistently develops and sustains cooperative working relationships. Encourages and facilitates cooperation within the organization and with customer groups; fosters commitment, team spirit, pride, trust. Develops leadership in others through coaching, mentoring, rewarding, and guiding employees.

2. Business Acumen

Business Acumen involves the ability to acquire and administer human, financial, material and information resources in a manner which instills public trust and accomplishes the organization's mission, and to use new technology to enhance decision making.

The Service integrates field, regional and headquarters operations within the Department of the Interior and the Executive Branch. Leaders need to know roles of each operational level to accomplish the Service's mission and associated strategic goals. They must understand major program areas, and how to make policy and budget change happen within the Administration and the Congress. Leadership means understanding "how the system works and how to work the system" in order to acquire and effectively manage resources.

Competencies are:

- **Financial Management**
Demonstrates broad understanding of principles of financial management and marketing expertise necessary to ensure appropriate funding levels. Prepares, justifies, and/or administers the budget for the program area; uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities; monitors expenditures in support of programs and policies. Identifies cost-effective approaches. Manages procurement and contracting.
- **Human Resources Management**
Assesses current and future staffing needs based on organizational goals and budget realities. Using merit principles, ensures staff are appropriately selected, developed, utilized, appraised, and rewarded; takes corrective action.
- **Technology Management**
Uses efficient and cost-effective approaches to integrate technology into the workplace and improve program effectiveness. Develops strategies using new technology to enhance decision making. Understands the impact of technological changes on the organization.

3. Building Coalitions/Communication

Building Coalitions/Communication involves the ability to explain, advocate and express facts externally. It also involves the ability to develop an expansive professional network with other organizations, and to identify the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization.

To accomplish our mission, Service employees must be able to communicate effectively within the organization, particularly utilizing active listening skills. In addition to internal communication, employees need skills to communicate outside the Service. The Service cannot achieve its mission alone and increasingly depends on partnerships and coordination with private and public organizations. To complement traditional skills, leaders must have outreach abilities that facilitate enhanced communication and partnership formation. This includes the ability to look externally and to understand the motivation and values of potential partners.

Competencies are:

- **Influencing/Negotiating**
Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals; facilitates "win-win" situations.
- **Interpersonal Skills**
Considers and responds appropriately to the needs, feelings, and capabilities of different people in different situations; is tactful, compassionate and sensitive, and treats others with respect.
- **Oral Communication**
Makes clear and convincing oral presentations to individuals or groups; listens effectively and clarifies information as needed; facilitates an open exchange of ideas and fosters an atmosphere of open communication.
- **Partnering**
Develops networks and builds alliances, engages in cross-functional activities; collaborates across boundaries, and finds common ground with a widening range of stakeholders. Utilizes contacts to build and strengthen internal support bases.
- **Political Savvy**
Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization. Approaches each problem situation with a clear perception of organizational and political reality; recognizes the impact of alternative courses of action.
- **Written Communication**
Expresses facts and ideas in writing in a clear, convincing and organized manner.

4. Results Driven

Results Driven stresses accountability and continuous improvement. It includes the ability to make timely and effective decisions and produce results through strategic planning and the implementation and evaluation of programs and policies.

The mission of the Service is broad and must be accomplished with limited resources. To obtain results that benefit the mission of the Service, leaders must set priorities, accept responsibility, and take action to produce timely and effective results. Decisions must be scientifically sound, objective, implemented in a positive work environment within the context of the overall Service mission, and consider stakeholders and the need to take into account potential risks or outcomes of decisions, and proceed accordingly. The Service values results that address all of these various responsibilities.

Competencies are:

- **Accountability**
Assures that effective controls are developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization. Holds self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities. Can be relied upon to ensure that projects within areas of specific responsibility are completed in

a timely manner and within budget. Monitors and evaluates plans; focuses on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.

- **Customer Service**
Balancing interests of a variety of clients; readily readjusts priorities to respond to pressing and changing client demands. Anticipates and meets the need of clients; achieves quality end-products; is committed to continuous improvement of services.
- **Decisiveness**
Exercises good judgment by making sound and well-informed decisions; perceives the impact and implications of decisions; makes effective and timely decisions, even when data is limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; is proactive and achievement oriented.
- **Entrepreneurship**
Identifies opportunities to develop and market new products and services within or outside of the organization. Is willing to take risks; initiates actions that involve a deliberate risk to achieve a recognized benefit or advantage.
- **Problem Solving**
Identifies and analyzes problems; distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical decisions; provides solutions to individual and organizational problems.
- **Technical Credibility**
Understands and appropriately applies procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise. Is able to make sound hiring and capital resource decisions and to address training and development needs. Understands linkages between administrative competencies and mission needs.

5. Leading Change

Leading Change encompasses the ability to develop and implement an organizational vision which integrates key national and program goals, priorities, values, and other factors. Inherent to it is the ability to balance change and continuity - to continually strive to improve customer service and program performance within the basic government framework, to create a work environment that encourages creative thinking, and to maintain focus, intensity and persistence, even under adversity.

The Fish and Wildlife Service operates in a dynamic public environment that presents new issues and challenges, changes in priorities and processes, and fluctuations in staffing and funding. The Service is best able to successfully address these challenges with leaders who anticipate, direct and learn from change.

Competencies are:

- **Continual Learning**
Grasps the essence of new information; masters new technical and business knowledge; recognizes own strengths and weaknesses; pursues self-development; seeks feedback from others and opportunities to master new knowledge.

- **Creativity and Innovation**
Develops new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to make organizational improvements; creates a work environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation; designs and implements new or cutting-edge programs/processes.
- **External Awareness**
Identifies and keeps up to date on key national and international policies and economic, political, and social trends that affect the organization. Understands near-term and long-range plans and determines how best to be positioned to achieve a competitive business advantage in a global economy.
- **Flexibility**
Is open to change and new information; adapts behavior and work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles. Adjusts rapidly to new situations warranting attention and resolution.
- **Resilience**
Deals effectively with pressure; maintains focus and intensity and remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity. Recovers quickly from setbacks. Effectively balances personal life and work.
- **Service Motivation**
Creates and sustains an organizational culture which encourages others to provide the quality of service essential to high performance. Enables others to acquire the tools and support they need to perform well. Shows a commitment to public service. Influences others toward a spirit of service and meaningful contributions to mission accomplishment.
- **Strategic Thinking**
Formulates effective strategies consistent with the business and competitive strategy of the organization in a global economy. Examines policy issues and strategic planning with a long-term perspective. Determines objectives and sets priorities; anticipates potential threats or opportunities.
- **Vision**
Takes a long-term view and acts as a catalyst for organizational change; builds a shared vision with others. Influences others to translate vision into action.