**U.S. Office of Personnel Management**

**Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) Certificate**

**Capstone Paper Guidance**

**Purpose**

Congratulations on your decision to pursue the LEAD Certificate. Participation in this program is an important step in your leadership journey. To be awarded the LEAD Certificate, candidates must complete the required five courses within a three year timeframe and write a final Capstone paper that receives a passing grade. The purpose of the Capstone is to synthesize lessons learned as a result of the LEAD Certificate Program. The requirements for the Capstone paper are described below.

To strengthen the LEAD experience, LEAD Certificate candidates are strongly encouraged to develop a written Statement of Intent that will focus their learning on one or more key organizational and/or professional development topics of current relevance. It is recommended that candidates discuss the Statement of Intent with their supervisor early in the LEAD Certificate experience, and to use the Statement of Intent as a benchmark against which to measure progress throughout their leadership journey. It is critical to spend time on this task as this information will be needed to write the required LEAD Capstone paper. Additional information about the LEAD Statement of Intent may be found at www.leadership.opm.gov/certificates/LEAD/index.aspx.

The OPM point of contact for the LEAD Capstone paper is Claire Thurston, OPM LEAD Program Manager. Please submit final your Capstone paper electronically to Claire at claire.thurston@opm.gov. Claire can be reached at 303-671-1136. Additional information may be found at www.leadership.opm.gov/certificates/LEAD/index.aspx.

**Capstone Paper**

The Capstone paper should demonstrate the quality required for senior management review. The required Capstone paper sections and suggested content are listed below.

***Introduction:***

Begin the paper by setting the context of your LEAD experience.

* Introduce yourself, your organization, and your job duties.
* Explain the reason you enrolled in the OPM LEAD Certificate program and what you wanted to achieve as described in your statement of intent.
* Explain relevant organizational and/or professional development topics you addressed during the LEAD Certificate program.
* Conclude the introduction with an explanation of what will be discussed in the paper.

***Course Content Highlights, Lessons Learned and Applications***

Include a discussion of the courses taken and what you learned.

* Identify courses taken and the dates of completion (5 required courses).
* Discuss the main point(s) of each course.
* Discuss 3-4 key lessons learned.
* Discuss how the lessons learned can be applied to relevant organizational and/or professional development topics.

***Leadership Growth and Development***

Include a discussion about how the courses impacted your understanding of leadership.

* Discuss 1-2 of the most important lessons learned about leadership.
* Discuss 2 course highlights that inspired and/or motivated you.
* Share any personal discoveries you made about your leadership style.
* Provide a definition of leadership and include relevant course content that contributed to the definition.

***Actions Taken or Planned***

Include a discussion about actions you have taken or plan to take as a result of the courses taken.

* Describe any personal changes you have made and explain the impact.
* Report on 1-2 actions you have taken that impacted your leadership style, your organization and/or the topics you chose and explain the impact.
* Discuss any actions you plan to take in the future and why.

***Feedback on the LEAD Program (optional and not rated)***

In addition to the evaluation ratings/comments already provided, please provide feedback on the overall LEAD Program.

* What did you like best about the program?
* What would you change?

***Conclusion***

Conclude the Capstone paper with a short review of the main points made and include a discussion about your personal and/or professional plans for the future.

**Capstone Paper Format**

Please use the guidelines below to format your Capstone paper.

* Capstone title/topic, candidate name and organization, and Certificate level, e.g., Project/Team Lead LEAD Certificate
* 4-6 numbered pages in length
* Time New Roman 12 pt, one inch margins, flush-left headings, single-spaced with double-spaced paragraphing
* Free of typing, grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors

**U.S. Office of Personnel Management**

**Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) Certificate**

**Capstone Paper Review & Rating**

*To be completed by OPM staff*

**Candidate’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date of Review: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Level of LEAD Certificate (Check one): 🞎 Team Lead 🞎 Supervisor 🞎 Manager**

**🞎 Executive 🞎 Professional Leader**

**Evaluator Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Rater Instructions:** Please review the LEAD Capstone paper and indicate your ratings against the Capstone paper guidance. Your Overall Rating will be taken as the rating of record. Please provide comments as you deem appropriate. If your initial Overall Rating is *Fail,* please provide comments that will assist the candidate in re-writing the Capstone to reach a *Pass* rating. Once you have determined your final rating, please email this form to Claire Thurston for further processing. Thank you for your time.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pass/Fail** | **Sections** | **Comments** |
|  | Introduction |  |
|  | Course Content Highlights, Lessons Learned and Applications |  |
|  | Leadership Growth and Development |  |
|  | Actions Taken or Planned |  |
|  | Feedback on the LEAD Program (optional and not rated) |  |
|  | Conclusion |  |
|  | Capstone Paper Format |  |
|  | **Overall Rating** |  |