



Leadership Competency Framework

Introduction

The National Child Welfare Workforce Institute's (NCWWI) Leadership Competency Framework provides a model to develop, guide, and evaluate leadership at all levels within a child welfare program. The term "leadership" can sometimes feel ambiguous, so the NCWWI Leadership Competency Framework breaks it down into competencies that collectively represent leadership knowledge and skills. Child Welfare programs can use the competencies to:

- Identify areas for individual or organizational development
- Construct leadership development plans
- Assess performance
- Provide coaching
- Develop training
- Infuse principles into programs

History

NCWWI developed the Leadership Competency Framework in 2009 by cataloguing, comparing, and contrasting competency models from a variety of fields including human services, health care, and business. NCWWI assembled a team of experts in child welfare practice, workforce, and competency modeling to inform the final set of competencies. Over the next ten years, the NCWWI Leadership Competency Framework became the basis for the NCWWI Leadership Academy for Middle Managers (LAMM) and the Leadership Academy for Supervisors (LAS). Additionally, NCWWI engaged in a number of activities with public and tribal child welfare programs to understand the complexity of workforce issues and leadership behavior including:

- Comprehensive organizational health assessments
- Intensive technical assistance with multiple jurisdictions
- Evaluation of workforce interventions
- 360° evaluations of child welfare leaders across the country

In 2020, the NCWWI Leadership Competency Framework was updated based on evaluation findings from over a decade of study as well as extensive and ongoing interactions with the field. This resource brief presents NCWWI's revised Leadership Competency Framework (henceforth called the "Framework") and explains the quadrants, principles, and competency definitions.

NCWWI Leadership Competency Framework

The revised Framework presents updated principles and competencies reflecting current realities in the child welfare field. Along the outer ring is the ongoing tension of offering flexibility while maintaining control as well as the need to address internal and external issues. At the center of the model lies the



leader's ability to engage in self-reflective practice in a number of areas as articulated in the fundamental competencies. Quadrants (also referred to as "domains") depict each major aspect of leadership: Leading Change; Leading in Context; Leading for Results; and Leading People. Each quadrant contains specific competencies representing knowledge and skills applicable to that quadrant. The Framework's foundation is the *leadership principles*.

Leadership Principles

NCWWI's Framework offers values-based principles that weave through each of the competencies, so while the competencies are distinct, the integration of these guiding principles creates cohesion.

Adaptive: Leaders have the capacity to deal with the constantly changing world through resiliency and the ability to build upon what has worked in the past while giving up practices that no longer work and learning new ways of dealing with challenges.

Inclusive: Leaders welcome numerous perspectives from all stakeholders in the change process, leading to better decisions and outcomes.

Distributive: Staff at all levels of the organization from workers to executive managers have opportunities to demonstrate leadership, as specific titles or positions on the organizational chart do not have a monopoly on leadership.

Collaborative: Through internal and external engagement of stakeholders, leaders focus on a common purpose by creating partnerships within the program and in the community, including with families.

Outcome focused: Leaders use data to inform decisions and attain desired results that benefit children, youth, and families and the workforce that serves them.

Racial Equity Lens: Leaders intentionally examine data and improve policies, practices, programs, and organizational cultural messages so that race no longer determines outcomes.

Leadership Competency Framework



Leadership Quadrants and Competency Definitions

The Framework acknowledges and even expects that individual leaders will have both strengths and challenges among the competencies within each quadrant. It is important that leaders recognize these, as well as those within their team, to leverage the organization's collective strengths to better serve children and families.



Fundamental Competencies

Fundamental competencies are foundational for success in each of the quadrants and are achieved through self-reflection and focus on individual qualities contributing to a leader's success.

Competency Definitions

Use of Self: Has a sense of presence and self-assurance; recognizes how their emotions and moods affect the organization and adapts accordingly; sets a personal example of what they expect from others; readily shares credit and provides opportunities for the recognition of others' work.

Communication: Communicates effectively in a variety of ways, including oral and written mechanisms; listens carefully to input and feedback; probes for new ideas and invites responses; creates open channels of communication; keeps others well informed; encourages others to express contrary views.

Equity: Demonstrates use of an equity lens as a child welfare leader by improving organizational policies, practices, and procedures that create and sustain fairness, equity, and a diverse, inclusive organization.

Vision: Takes an aspirational and long-term view and builds a shared vision with others; has a personal vision and contributes to realizing the organization's vision; acts as a catalyst for organizational change; influences others to translate vision into action.

Integrity/Honesty: Behaves in an honest, fair, and ethical manner; shows consistency in words and actions; models high ethical standards.

Leading Change

This domain involves the ability to effect strategic change, both within and outside the organization; meet organizational goals and realize the organization's mission and vision; and lead implementation efforts in a continuously changing environment by adjusting accordingly.

Competency Definitions

Strategic Thinking: Formulates objectives and priorities; implements plans consistent with the long-term interests of the organization in a global environment; capitalizes on opportunities and manages risks.

Building Consensus: Endeavors to reach agreement about the need and approach for change; solicits input from a variety of stakeholders; listens attentively and responds to concerns; compromises as appropriate to move forward.

Implementing: Understands and utilizes staged and phased implementation; describes the implementation drivers and personal supports (internal and external) needed to promote sustainable change; continuously assesses progress and adjusts as needed.

Creating and Innovating: Develops new insights into situations; questions conventional approaches; encourages new ideas and innovations; designs and implements new or cutting-edge





programs/processes.

Flexibility: Possesses an openness to change and new information; rapidly adapts to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.

Leading in Context

This domain involves the ability to assess, understand, and manage the internal and external environments in order to build collaborations among organizational divisions, federal agencies, state and local governments, tribal organizations, and non-profit and private sector organizations to achieve common goals.

Competency Definitions

Partnering: Develops diverse and inclusive networks and builds alliances; collaborates across boundaries to build strategic relationships and achieve common goals.

Thinking Politically: Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization; perceives organizational and political realities and acts accordingly.

Managing Conflict: Encourages creative tension and differences of opinions; anticipates and takes steps to prevent counter-productive confrontations; manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner.

Influencing/Negotiating: Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals.



Leading for Results

This domain involves the ability to meet organizational goals and service expectations. Decisions are made using data whenever possible and leaders apply technical knowledge, analyze problems, and calculate risks to produce high-quality results.

Competency Definitions

Using Data: Understands data in a variety of formats; employs data visualization techniques; proactively reviews and addresses racial equity data; uses data to inform decision-making and communicate ideas and results.

Accountability: Holds self and others accountable for high-quality, timely, and cost-effective results; maintains focus on outcomes; determines objectives, sets priorities, and delegates work; accepts responsibility for mistakes; complies with established control systems and rules.





Planning and Organizing: Organizes work, sets priorities, and determines resources requirements; determines necessary sequence of activities needed to achieve goals; handles multiple demands and competing priorities; sets high performance expectations for team members; sets clear performance expectations and objectives; holds others accountable for achieving results; successfully finds resources, training, tools, etc., to support staff needs.

Problem Solving: Identifies and analyzes problems; weighs relevancy and accuracy of information; generates and evaluates alternative solutions; makes recommendations.

Leading People

This domain involves the ability to lead people toward realizing the organization's vision, mission, and goals. Inherent to this domain is the ability to provide an inclusive workplace that fosters the development of others, facilitates cooperation and teamwork, and promotes job satisfaction.

Competency Definitions

Team Building: Inspires and fosters team commitment, spirit, pride, and trust; facilitates cooperation and motivates team members to accomplish group goals.

Developing Others: Develops others' ability to perform and contribute to the organization by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods; gives timely, specific feedback and helpful coaching; adapts approach to each individual; ensures that employees are appropriately recruited, selected, appraised, and rewarded; acts to address performance problems.

Resilience: Deals effectively with pressure; remains optimistic and persistent even in the face of adversity; stays calm and clear-headed under high stress or during a crisis; recovers quickly from setbacks.

Influencing Culture/Climate: Promotes a positive organizational climate and culture so all staff feel supported and valued; encourages individual well-being and collective civility to improve job satisfaction.

Cultural Responsiveness: Respects and relates well to people from varied backgrounds; open to understanding diverse worldviews; sees diversity as an opportunity to learn about cultural groups while appreciating the complexity of individual differences; challenges bias and intolerance; seeks ongoing learning on cultural issues.



Additional Information

For behavioral indicators related to each competency at various program levels, see the accompanying document *NCWWI Leadership Competency Framework Indicators* (coming August 2020).

For ideas and activities to develop leadership skills, see the *NCWWI Leadership Competency Framework Toolkit* (coming December 2020).