

Background

Question: How and when did the LEAP program start?

Answer: The LEAP pilot program was initiated in OAR in 2010.

Question: How many were in the first class?

Answer: Over 40 individuals from OAR and NOAA participated in the LEAP 2011 class.

Eligibility

Question: How do I apply, and what information will I have to provide?

Answer: You must complete a LEAP 2012 class application, available at <http://oarhq.noaa.gov/LEAP>. This application includes several questions focusing on your current or future leadership potential and what you might get out of the LEAP program. Your supervisor also must complete part of the application, providing both a commitment to support you as well as an evaluation of your leadership potential.

Question: Who is eligible to participate?

Answer: The LEAP program is available to NOAA's full-time Federal employees, contractors, and Joint/Cooperative Institute staff members. Since LEAP is being sponsored by OAR, it is anticipated that a majority of participants are from OAR, however, the program is open to representatives from other NOAA affiliated entities.

Question: Are there any grade, position, or other exclusions for applying to the LEAP program?

Answer: No. LEAP encourages representation from a diverse cross-section of OAR and other line offices eligible to apply.

Question: I have already participated in a DOC or NOAA leadership program. Does this exclude me from applying or being selected for LEAP?

Answer: No.

Question: Does participation in LEAP fulfill requirements for SES competencies?

Answer: Not Directly. However, LEAP includes material directly connected to the SES ECQs and the 28 competencies that comprise them.

Question: Do I need supervisor approval to participate in LEAP?

Answer: As with all training, participation is dependent on supervisory approval. LEAP requires that your supervisor provide an assessment of your leadership potential (part of the application), commit to supporting your time and travel to participate, and work with you on completing part of your portion of the application.

Question: I worry my supervisor may not rate me as favorably as other applicants with more supportive supervisors.

Answer: You are still encouraged to apply. The supervisor rating is one portion of the selection criteria. Your entire application will be considered when making the selections. However, supervisor approval is required.

Requirements

Question: I've read the time requirements. What's *really* required?

Answer: By committing to this program, you are agreeing to an average of 2 hours of team activities/week and four 3.5 day training sessions. In addition, there will be optional inter-session events, which are great opportunities for you to interact with your fellow LEAPsters and learn more about leadership potential, opportunities, and lessons. As with any leadership or training program, you get out of it what you put into it. There is likely to be some variation in the amount of time you dedicate to your team activities and any inter-session events. Some weeks, it may be a lot more, others, a bit less.

Question: Is travel required?

Answer: Yes. The program includes four 3.5 day training sessions over the period of one year that are required. The session dates have been announced; all session locations will be in the National Capital Region.

Question: Will group travel from the DC Metro area to the training center be provided?

Answer: As possible, LEAP will attempt to coordinate travel for employees based in Silver Spring and Washington DC as well as to provide travel options from DC-area airports.

Question: What if I cannot attend a portion of one of the training session?

Answer: All training sessions are required, and applicants should ensure their availability before applying.

Question: Can the dates of the training sessions change?

Answer: The intent of the "Save the Date" notice to potential applicants represents best effort in providing training-date certainty. There's no guarantee against unforeseen circumstances, but every effort will be made to hold the trainings on the announced dates.

Question: If the dates of the training sessions change, is there any flexibility in the participation requirements?

Answer: Training sessions are a required portion of the LEAP program. Participant's opportunity to participate in sessions would be evaluated against any mitigating circumstances (e.g., how much notice was provided on changed dates, participant's obligation set prior to the change, etc.).

Question: How many hours per day are the training sessions?

Answer: Training sessions generally convene between 8:00 – 9:00a.m., and end between 4:30 – 5:00p.m. There may also be evening sessions (some mandatory) that last into the evening.

[FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) ABOUT THE LEAP PROGRAM]

Question: I have heard that there is a requirement to do a project as part of LEAP. Can you choose a project or are you assigned a project?

Answer: Each LEAP participant is required to actively contribute to a team project that has a direct benefit to OAR and NOAA. While each team can discuss and recommend a project, the overall needs of the program will be considered in addition to interests of the teams; the program director will make the final decision

Question: What happens if the project takes longer than the LEAP program? Can I continue to work on the project after the program is over?

Answer: Teams are encouraged to complete or continue projects to a natural hand-off point. Individuals may find personal opportunities to continue project work, but this is not a requirement of the LEAP program and is contingent upon supervisor approval.

Question: What are the expectations of participants between training sessions?

Answer: Participants are required to work within their teams on assigned projects and on individual development activities between training sessions. Additionally, there will be optional inter-sessional periods that participants can attend.

Question: Are participants expected to maintain their regular job responsibilities while participating in the program?

Answer: Integrating the LEAP program into a participant's performance plan is the responsibility of the supervisor and participant.

Question: Will there be homework or pre-work related to the training sessions?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Are there physical requirements for the program?

Answer: Given the physical nature of some of the experiential exercises used in LEAP training, participants will, on occasion, be called upon to exert the same stamina and agility that are required to walk about three blocks at a moderate-to-fast pace. However, for participants who are unable to or might have difficulty with such exertion, options are included so that they can be involved with the exercises without physical stress.

Question: Does LEAP provide accommodations for persons with disabilities?

Yes, the program will address accommodations based on the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Question: Are there any post-LEAP requirements/assignments or guarantees?

Answer: No. The program is a training program only, intended to develop and enhance participant's leadership skills. LEAP alumni from the first class are exploring ways to maintain connections developed during the program through optional LEAP alumni events.

Question: Is there anyone I can talk to for more details about what it is like to participate in LEAP?

Answer: There is a list of class ambassadors who will be happy to give more information about what to expect and to answer any questions you have about the program. The list of ambassadors by organization is located at <http://oarhq.noaa.gov/LEAP>.

Question: If I am a ZA-2, will my application be compared to that of a senior executive?

Answer: No. The application questions provide the flexibility for applicants to showcase their experiences. We expect that senior executives will provide more detailed examples of their leadership experience, whereas less experienced applicants will provide examples that would provide an indication of their potential for future leadership. Responses are not limited to OAR or NOAA work experiences, but can indicate leadership at universities, in civic organizations, as a volunteer, and in other informal situations.

Funding

Question: What is the cost of LEAP?

Answer: There is a tuition charge of \$2,700 per person which can be spread over two fiscal years. It is estimated that for travel to the Washington, DC area for four training sessions and for a per diem charge (room and board) for off-site locations, each participant should allow approximately another \$6,000 to be spread over two fiscal years (actual travel costs may vary according to the applicant's geographic location).

Question: Are funds to cover the training costs due at the time of application?

Answer: Your organization must make a firm commitment to support the tuition cost at the time of application. The commitment to fund your training and travel costs is contained in the Section I of the application and is required as part of your application.

Question: What if the funding approval process for my office extends beyond the application deadline?

Answer: For OAR Federal employees, training costs are covered. For all others, funds are not required at the time of application, but your supervisor must sign a letter of commitment to fund your training costs.

Selection Criteria

Question: What are the criteria for selecting LEAP participants?

Answer: Applicants will be evaluated on the following criteria:

Personal Vision Statement

- Comprehensive vision statement that indicates significant thought and achievable path toward success
- Career goals contribute to NOAA/OAR's mission
- Demonstrates collaboration and teamwork with others to achieve vision
- Demonstrates potential for advancement into leadership positions
- Willing to give and receive feedback, to be self-critical, and to be open to coaching

Background

- High level of competency in his/her discipline
 - Demonstrated interest in leadership development activities and training (formal/informal)
 - Seeks and takes-on increasing responsibility or resolves problems as they occur.
 - Importance of your contribution to the accomplishments of the organization
 - Demonstrates respect for others
 - Effectively collaborates and works with others to meet organizational and individual needs
 - Takes reasonable risks
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- Demonstrates interest in addressing complex issues

Development Planning

- Demonstrates new and innovative approach and solution to problems or improvements
- Demonstrates ability and interest to serve in a leadership capacity
- Anticipates organizational needs and proposes the necessary actions to directly meet the needs of OAR and NOAA
- Plan to use feedback/knowledge gained in program for the purpose of improving work performance (individually/teams)

Benefits

Question: How is LEAP different from other leadership programs out there?

Answer: LEAP is different on several levels. It is open to Federal employees, contractors, and Joint/Cooperative Institute staff member, which supports LEAP's goal of encouraging leadership development for a diverse cadre of participants. It welcomes current and future leaders, ranging from early career employees all the way up to senior executives. It uses unique learning techniques and encourages team interaction and activities, where members of your team will represent diverse offices and positions across OAR (headquarters and laboratories) and NOAA.

Question: Will I be promoted following my participation in LEAP?

Answer: Participation in LEAP does not guarantee any change in employment status. It is the goal of LEAP to support OAR and NOAA by encouraging leadership growth and personal and professional development through focused training, peer coaching, and personal assessment and progress evaluations. As a participant, you will receive leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities that will enable you to make direct contributions to strengthen OAR and NOAA.

Question: What benefits can I expect from participation in LEAP?

Answer: LEAP participants realize new skills in self-awareness, inter-personal interaction, and new strategies for effectively leading.

Question: What benefits can my office or field laboratory expect from my participation in LEAP?

Answer: Offices gain new talents that expand office capabilities and employees that are well-networked throughout the agency and the broader community.

Question: Are there opportunities to network with leadership in LEAP?

Answer: Yes. A significant component of leadership is communication. Networking is one form of communication. Networking activities are part of class instruction, exercises, and team projects. In addition, the cross-section of students and diversity of instructors provides numerous networking opportunities.

Question: How has LEAP impacted participant's lives?

Answer: See testimonials and quotes from LEAP I alumni at the LEAP web page <http://oarhq.noaa.gov/LEAP>.

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