



# White House Leadership Development Program

**Program Manual**



# WHLDP Program Manual

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# WHLDP Program Manual

## Introduction

The White House Leadership Development Program (WHLDP) aims to strengthen enterprise leadership across the government by providing senior level federal employees with expanded perspective and skillsets to address challenges facing the country. These increasingly complex challenges span agencies and jurisdictions, requiring senior leaders to work across agencies and organizational boundaries while leveraging networks on a greater scale than in the past to ensure the government continues to effectively deliver services to the American people.

The program is primarily focused on:

- **Developing Talent:** Building the next generation of career senior executives with an enterprise perspective through a placement focused on the complex, cross-agency challenges that increasingly confront the Federal government and strengthening enterprise leadership skills through targeted development sessions.
- **Delivering Results:** Harnessing top talent from across the government to support implementation of key priorities and address mission-critical challenges.

The goal of the program is to build a cadre of government leaders with strong inter-agency experience and exposure to a broad cross-section of government. Fellows work on challenging, cross-agency initiatives to develop the skillsets and networks that enterprise leaders need: a whole-of-government perspective, stakeholder collaboration and engagement, working across boundaries without formal authority, and working outside traditional agency structures.

The WHLDP requires Fellows to leverage their skills to drive progress on mission-critical programs (such as the Cross-Agency Priority Goals) and deliver long-term strategic results. The program works closely with cross-government performance teams to allow Fellows to develop a deeper understanding of the importance of organizational performance, measuring impact and delivering results, identifying new ways of doing business and embracing innovation, and focusing on outcomes and effective service delivery.

## Program Overview

The WHLDP is sponsored by the Executive Office of the President (EOP) and the President's Management Council (PMC) and supported by the Performance Improvement Council (PIC). It is a 1-year placement with weekly development programming. WHLDP Fellows will each be placed in a placement assignment that is largely outside the Fellow's subject matter expertise.

The WHLDP provides an opportunity for a diverse cohort of high-potential career employees to



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develop enterprise leadership skills as they seek to become future Senior Executives. Fellows spend approximately 80 percent of their time in a placement assignment gaining on-the-job experience. Fellows spend approximately 20 percent of their time in leadership development programming built around the stakeholders, networks, and skillsets that senior leaders need in an enterprise environment.

This manual provides more information on the program's nomination and selection process, development component, placement assignments, and post-program activities. Appendix A contains answers to Frequently Asked Questions.

### Program Objectives

- Provide Fellows with a broad federal perspective on high-priority challenges and access to senior decision-makers with exposure to a wide cross-section of government
- Develop a cadre of leaders with the skillsets and networks to address challenges through a cross-agency lens and implement solutions across organizational boundaries
- Strengthen on-going implementation efforts on specific cross-agency initiatives (including CAP Goals) that require broad coordination and long-term strategic planning to ensure delivery of tangible results

### Program Parameters

- This program is open only to career GS-15 and equivalent civil service employees.
- Agencies can now choose the application process:
  1. Agencies conduct an internal vetting process and provide top six candidates (the current process). Agencies may nominate up to six candidates to the program to be considered for inclusion in the program (admission is competitive and nominees are not guaranteed to be selected).
  2. Self-nomination with supervisor recommendation and supervisor's approval. WHLDP will be responsible for vetting these candidates. WHLDP provides vetting to the self-nominated candidates, putting forward a maximum of 6 candidates per agency for interviews.
- Program duration is one year, starting at the beginning of each fiscal year (October 1).
- The placement is full-time (outside of home agency) and will include weekly leadership development programming.
- The placement is non-reimbursable. The Fellow's home agency is responsible for his or her salary and continued employment and benefits support.
- A Memorandum of Understanding will be developed between home agencies and gaining agency or agencies.
- There is no guarantee for placement into a Senior Executive Service (SES) position as a



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result of participation in this program. Participation does, however, provide experience that may be used in developing Executive Core Qualifications.

### Program Benefits

- Increased exposure to a variety of agencies – including cultures, missions, functional areas, senior leaders and new ways of doing business
- Improved ability to address complex problems that cut across organizational and jurisdictional boundaries, and to build and leverage relationships to have an impact beyond their formal authority
- Heightened government-wide perspective on problem solving, best practices, and real solutions that can be applied to related challenges within the home agency
- Experience relying on collaborative leadership skills, rather than technical expertise, to meet mission goals
- Firsthand experience integrating into a new culture and fast-paced, ambiguous environment with an emphasis on flexibility and entrepreneurial skills
- Increased ability to leverage newly expanded professional networks to identify innovative and collaborative ways of tackling challenges to address organizational challenges in future positions
- Firsthand experience developing strategic performance frameworks and tools to drive progress on initiatives

### Program Schedule

**October 2021** – Fellows begin onboarding program

**October 2021** – Fellows begin placements

**November 2021** – First day of developmental programming

**September 2022** – Graduation

**September 2022** – Off-boarding; Fellows return to home agency

### Nominations and Selection Process Timeline

*The following are target dates and are subject to revision as needed.*

- *February 8, 2021 – Call for nominations*
- *April 16, 2021 – Self-nominations per supervisor’s approval due to WHLDP*
- *May 14, 2021 – Agency nominations due to WHLDP*
- *June 1, 2021 – WHLDP selection process begins*
- *June 7- July 11, 2021 – Interviews with Alumni*
- *June 21 - July 16, 2021 – Placement interviews*
- *July 26- July 30, 2021 – Executive Leadership Committee Interviews*
- *August 9- August 10, 2021 – Candidate notification of selection in the program*



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- *August 16, 2021 – Onboarding process of finalist begins*
- *October 1, 2021 – Welcome Cohort 7*

### Agency Nominations

Interested agencies may nominate up to six candidates. Agencies will determine their own internal processes to select nominees as long as such processes are competitive and follow applicable laws and regulations.

The Deputy Secretary of the agency or equivalent will formally nominate candidates to the program. The agency should provide the nominees and completed nomination form directly to the WHLDP. Agencies should ensure that the nominees' direct supervisors are notified of their subordinates' nominations. For more information on the nomination process, selection criteria, and forms, see the separate White House Leadership Development Program Nomination Guide.

### Self-Nominations

Candidates who are interested in self-nomination will go through a vetting process from the WHLDP leadership team. The WHLDP will put forward a maximum of 6 candidates from each agency for interviews. For agencies interested in taking part in the pilot process of self-nominations per supervisor approval, please confirm at [whldp@gsa.gov](mailto:whldp@gsa.gov).

A diverse group of individuals will be selected to participate in the program from the pool of nominees.

### Selection Process

After reviewing formal nominations from agencies, and nominees vetted by WHLDP team, the program implements a rigorous selection process to determine program finalists. The WHLDP will extend acceptance invitations to between 10 and 20 finalists. All candidates will be notified of their status via e-mail at the conclusion of the selection process. Agencies will also be formally notified of their candidates' status.

### Placements

In order to be accepted to the program, candidates will interview with placement supervisors. Those that match with a placement assignment will be accepted to the program. Assignments are high-visibility initiatives that touch multiple agencies and stakeholders with the Fellows driving cross-agency coordination, innovation, implementation, and performance management. Specific projects vary depending on the placement assignment.

Fellows are matched to a placement assignment that leverages broad skillsets outside of the Fellows' areas of subject matter expertise. placements are not meant to increase technical expertise but rather to provide an opportunity to use leadership and collaboration skills.



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Past placements include: *(Note: these are not guaranteed to be the same assignments for new cohorts)*

### Cross-Agency Priority Goals

- Customer Experience
- Sharing Quality Services
- Leveraging Data as a Strategic Asset
- Results-Oriented Accountability for Grants
- Improve Transfer of Federally-Funded Technologies from Lab-to-Market
- Workforce for the 21st Century
- Shifting From Low-Value to High-Value Work
- Infrastructure Permitting
- Getting Payments Right
- Technology Business Management (TBM)

### The Fellow Experience

WHLDP placements are challenging assignments that expose Fellows to new cultures, new approaches, a whole-of-government perspective, and an enterprise leadership toolkit. Fellows are placed on cross-agency initiatives with no formal authority and a variety of stakeholders and competing priorities to manage. Fellows may experience:

**Flat Structures** – Most placements are situated in small offices with flat organizational structures (not typical chain of command), flexible roles, and a fast pace. Fellows will work on multiple levels (doing whatever work needs to be done – no task is too small) to achieve results.

**Leading Among Peers** – Due to flat organizational structures and cross-agency stakeholder management, Fellows will coordinate and collaborate among peers and senior level officials. These are often non-traditional leadership roles that require flexibility, entrepreneurship, and vision.

**Stakeholder Management** – Fellows will often not have formal authority nor will they be in placements where they can fall back on their subject matter expertise. In order to achieve results, Fellows will have to identify stakeholders, build relationships/trust and understand competing priorities and timelines, and work through formal and informal chains of communication to drive collaboration toward a shared goal/outcome.

**New Cultures** – Fellows will be asked to represent their cross-agency initiative and become comfortable with new cultures and ways of doing business.

**Cross-functional** – Fellows will be placed in placements outside of their subject matter areas of expertise in order to encourage the development and use of leadership skills and



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tools. This includes taking on new functional roles and leveraging subject matter experts in a variety of fields.

**Placement Competencies** – Fellows must rely on a variety of competencies including emotional intelligence, adaptability, resiliency, agility, political savvy, conceptual/strategic thinking and collaboration.

### Development Program

Fellows participate in a variety of developmental activities, typically spending up to eight hours per week as a cohort.

**Development Objective:** Provide exposure to the business practices, functional areas, networks, skills, and stakeholders that enterprise leaders need to leverage in order to deal with a rapidly changing environment and increasingly cross-agency, cross-jurisdictional challenges. Development focuses on what good leaders do to effectively carry out their jobs and agency mission.

### Development Program Outline

- 2-week on-boarding
- One day per week or every other week spent in developmental programming
- Visits to agencies to review innovative practices and speak to senior leaders
- SES executive core qualification, resume, and interviewing advice
- Opportunity to network with public and private sector organizations to facilitate and create a broad network of contacts across government and functional areas
- Personal development including Strengths Finder, coaching, and mentoring

### Stakeholders

Site visits built around stakeholders with whom enterprise leaders are expected to work, including:

- Fellow Home Agency
- Government Accountability Office (GAO)
- Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity & Efficiency (CIGIE)
- Congress
- OMB Budget Offices/OMB Management Offices
- Executive Office of the President (EOP) Offices & Policy Councils
- Media
- State & Local Entities
- Private Sector





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### Lines of Business

Exposure to the different functions and lines of business senior leaders need to leverage to meet an agency's mission, including:

- Human Capital - Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council
- Finance/Budget - Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Council
- Information/IT - Chief Information Officers (CIO) Council
- Acquisition - Chief Acquisition Officers (CAO) Council
- Agency Operations - President's Management Council (PMC)
- Organizational Performance - Performance Improvement Council (PIC)

### Promising Business Practices

Specific skills and knowledge for an enterprise leadership toolkit aimed at making government more effective and results-oriented, including:

- Organizational Performance & Government Performance and Results Act
- Metrics, Assessing & Measuring Success, Data Analytics, and Benchmarking
- Storytelling and Briefing Skills
- Strategic Thinking
- Design Thinking and Innovation Sprints - User-Centered Design
- Emotional Intelligence
- Peer to Peer Coaching - Leadership Best Practices

### Topical areas

Topical areas around emerging and innovative practices to which senior leaders should have exposure, including:

- Enterprise Risk Management
- Evidence Based Decision-making
- Optics/Strategic Communications
- Agile Management Concepts
- Leadership Accountability
- Meta-Leadership
- Lean/Continuous Process Improvement
- 21st Century Leadership Models

### WHLDP Roles & Responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities are provided as a guide for nominating agencies, candidates, and placement assignments. Further information on roles & responsibilities will be provided to those candidates who ultimately enter the program.

The WHLDP expects that candidates accepted into the Program will rotate out of their position of record for the duration of the fiscal year. During that time, the program participants will be



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expected to work on their placement assignment full-time, except for the time devoted to developmental programming. To obtain maximum benefit from the program, the expectations are:

### Fellow

- Transition workload to designated staff and ensure continuity in the home agency;
- Prepare for the program by researching the host agency and placement assignment, once assigned;
- Participate and engage in all aspects of the program;
- Attend all scheduled development sessions in their entirety;
- Craft an Individual Development Plan at the start of the program;
- Make time for reflective thinking on personal and professional experiences throughout the year to unveil new discoveries, understandings, and insight into their leadership style and goals;
- Expand networks and build new relationships;
- Maintain an open mind to diverse perspectives and new areas of learning;
- Provide ongoing formal and informal constructive feedback to the program;
- Participate in leadership assessments (StrengthsFinder, EP10, and others as available);
- Schedule regular check in meetings with his/her home agency supervisor to provide progress updates and ensure home agency timekeeper is aware of time and attendance;
- Following program completion, join and participate in the WHLDP Alumni Network;
- And, serve as a mentor to future cohorts of WHLDP Fellows

### Nominating Agency

- Manage internal agency selection process and nominate two to four diverse, high-quality candidates for consideration to the program;
- Obtain Deputy Secretary approval for each candidate;
- Allow candidates opportunity to participate in WHLDP selection process and interviews;
- By nominating a candidate, the agency consents to allowing the individual to participate in the program if selected and to return to the home agency once the program is complete;
- Continue to pay salary and benefits of any agency candidate selected into the program;
- Ensure there is a point of contact for the program to provide programmatic information and other communications to the home agency;
- Allow time for transitioning Fellow workload to another employee;
- Invite Fellow to infrequent team building activities, such as team social events, to ensure the participant remains connected with his or her team during the year;
- Facilitate meeting between Fellow and agency Deputy Secretary or other senior leaders as appropriate to discuss the placement assignment and benefits of the experience to the home agency;
- With input from appropriate agency points of contact, work with the Fellow to craft a re-entry plan 2 months prior to completion of WHLDP placement and support the Fellow's transition back to the home agency upon completion of the placement. See



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Appendix B for Re-Entry Best Practices.

- Along with the re-entry interview, home agencies are encouraged to find other opportunities within the agency for the Fellow to leverage his or her experience gained as a WHLD Fellow to best support agency mission. See Appendix B for Re-Entry Best Practices;
- Following completion of the program, participants will become part of the alumni network. The alumni network will hold events and continuing development activities from time to time and home agencies are encouraged to allow employees time to participate in WHLDP mentoring and alumni network programming;
- Craft a position description for the placement assignment that lays out broad duties and projects, including areas where the Fellow can take a leadership role on key projects;
- And, identify one or two senior team members to participate in the selection process.

### Placement Assignment/Host Agency

- Notify WHLDP of any security requirements/clearance, procedures, conflicts of interest, confidentiality issues, etc.;
- Provide a workspace, laptop, mobile phone, building access, or any necessary tools to perform the assignment;
- Determine mutually agreeable work schedule and flexibilities (e.g., AWS, telework);
- Provide a useful onboarding experience to support the success of the Fellow; Introduce the Fellow to cross-agency project team;
- Provide background materials regarding project assignment to Fellow before Placement begins;
- Establish concrete objectives for the Fellow and work with WHLDP and Fellow to complete project scoping document;
- Allow the Fellow to attend weekly development sessions;
- Provide work to the Fellow that is at a minimum GS-15 level or higher and identify stretch opportunities to provide experience and exposure for the Fellow;
- And, as needed, provide feedback to the program and the Fellow's home Agency.

### Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions

#### What happens to the Fellows after the program?

Participants may return to their prior position within their home agencies or another placement they seek out. Agencies are also encouraged to find other opportunities within the agency for the Fellow to leverage his or her experience as a WHLD Fellow, including a new position, project, or other opportunities to extend experience gained during the placement to applicable agency goals.

Following the end of the program and return to their home agencies, Fellows can choose to stay connected to the WHLDP network through:

- Alumni activities – From mentoring the next cohort of Fellows to alumni events and trainings, Fellows can maintain and expand their network of leaders across government



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and development activities.

- Database of participants – The WHLDP will create and maintain a database of alumni to facilitate post-program networking and future alumni events.

### **Who will pay the Fellow's salary?**

This is a non-reimbursable placement. Therefore, the Fellow's home agency will pay his or her salary.

### **Where will the Fellow be located?**

The Fellow will be co-located with the EOP Lead, CAP Goal Leader, or the Goal Team to maximize the experiential learning opportunity. This may be at an EOP office or agency, depending on the goal and the specific work the Fellow will be doing. Additionally, participants will meet for development sessions in the New Executive Office Building, the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, or the General Services Administration, depending on the agenda.

### **Will the Fellow have to/get to travel?**

Generally, no. There may be some travel within Washington, DC. If the host agency would like the participant to travel as part of the placement assignment, the host agency must fund the travel.

### **Does the Fellow have to be located in Washington, DC?**

The placement work assignment will be located in Washington, DC. In the second year of the program, three Fellows came to the program from out of the area. Should an agency nominate candidates from outside of the Washington, DC area, the agency will fund associated travel/relocation expenses if the candidate is selected for the program.

### **Is this a Candidate Development Program?**

No – this is a developmental placement and may qualify as the developmental assignment requirement of a CDP. However, the program is also open to qualified candidates who are not in a CDP.

### **Does the placement qualify as a CDP developmental assignment?**

The placement assignment is non-supervisory. As long as the Fellow has a strong supervisory background, the placement should satisfy CDP requirements. Candidates should check with their agency CDP coordinator to ensure it meets all applicable requirements.

### **Will the Fellow's position be executive level?**

The White House Leadership Development Program placements are meant to build a foundation for enterprise leadership – giving a Fellow experience working on cross-agency initiatives at a larger scale and outside of their agency perspective. The Fellow is often one of the only full-time people to work on the cross-agency initiative and is not in a traditional leadership role with clear authority. Additionally, many of the positions are housed in small teams that do not have support staff. Fellows work all aspects of the program to drive the mission and are not set up to be in a traditional chain of command leadership position.

If a Fellow is using the program as their placement for a CDP, the Fellow's position must be executive level. Typically, positions are at the GS-15 level and may not meet CDP requirements.



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However, each placement provides significant exposure to senior leaders, the ability to learn and apply new organizational performance tools, and the opportunity to engage in high-level work on a large cross-agency scale. Fellows have the ability to help craft their positions and identify ways to add vision, value, and leadership to complex, cross-agency challenges, and the experience and type of work is largely Fellow-driven.

### **Will Fellows be promoted as a result of or at completion of this program?**

This program does not guarantee promotion or entry into the SES or any other position. However, it provides development and experience that may help the Fellow obtain such a position in the future.

### **What will happen to the Fellow's home position while on placement?**

The WHLDP is a non-reimbursable developmental placement. As such, the Fellow will retain his or her position at his or her home agency and will be allowed to return to that position at the conclusion of the placement. However, nothing prevents the Fellow from assuming a different position following the program placement should the Fellow seek out such an opportunity or the agency engage in a structured talent development plan with the Fellow.

### **Is a security clearance required?**

No. Fellows do not need to possess a certain clearance level for this program. Should a clearance become necessary, agencies will be alerted to this change before formal nominations are due.

### **Who will conduct the Fellow's performance review?**

The Fellow's home agency supervisor will conduct formal performance reviews, but the placement assignment supervisor will provide feedback to the Fellow's home agency supervisor and will work with the Fellow to create a performance plan based on the placement assignment. The placement assignment supervisor will also provide feedback to inform the final performance review at the end of the 1-year placement.

### **How will the performance of the WHLDP be assessed?**

The WHLDP will have several levels of evaluation built in during the 1-year development placement. To assess the development of the Fellows, individual Fellows will receive a self-assessment at the beginning of the program and a follow-up assessment at the conclusion of the placement. For organizational performance, Fellows will be given five to seven CAP Goal or other project objectives for the duration of their placement that will be used to assess individual and organizational progress and outcomes on CAP Goals or projects. These measures combined will be used to determine overall programmatic performance.

### **What happens if the placements assignment is not a good fit with the Fellow or the Fellow cannot complete the program for personal/work reasons?**

The WHLDP Program Director will meet regularly with Fellows to check in on their progress and fit with the developmental and placement pieces of the program. The Director will also receive feedback from placement assignment supervisors. Should the placement assignment not be a good fit with the Fellow, the Program Director will work with the Fellow to identify a new placement assignment.



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Should the Fellow be unable to complete the program for personal or professional reasons, the Fellow must notify the Program Director as soon as possible. The Program Director will work with the Fellow and host supervisor to ensure that any work with which the Fellow was involved is transitioned and that necessary stakeholders are briefed on the status of the project. The Fellow's slot will not be refilled mid-program.

### **Appendix B: Post Detail Re-Entry to Home Agency Best Practices**

Placements are recognized as a way to build executive skills, improve flexibility, and create new ideas. The following are best practices of how agencies and Fellows can make the most of this experience:

- For Fellows: Stay engaged throughout the year. Quarterly check-ins with supervisors on how the program is going is a great start.
- For Agencies: Encourage fellows to utilize the tools and newfound knowledge at their home agency.

### **Promising Practices**

As the WHLDP partners with agencies, several promising practices have come to light. These are shared as options that agencies nominating candidates to the program may consider in developing re-entry plans.

- Identify a career sponsor for the Fellow – this should be a senior executive from the Fellow's home agency (not necessarily a mentor) who can help facilitate introductions to other agency executives, engage senior leadership, and help ensure the Fellow has a touch point and stays visible at the home agency.
- Create a link between home agency executive sponsor and Fellowship executive supervisor so the latter has a good idea of the executive level work that the Fellow did while on placement.
- Assign a mentor or executive coach (outside of supervisory chain) to the Fellow at the home agency and consider inviting the Fellow to CDP or other developmental sessions as appropriate.
- Create a utilization agreement to be completed by home agency and Fellow post-acceptance into the program. The agreement should lay out who from the agency will reach out to the Fellow to stay connected, what that frequency will be, what the Fellow can do to stay connected, and how the agency will utilize the Fellow's experience post-placement.
- Set up briefings with senior executives in the home agency that have interest in or are stakeholders in the placement issue area.
- Set up a briefing with the home agency Deputy Secretary or other senior officials as appropriate.
- Create a tie for the Fellow to the Executive Resources office.
- Have a re-entry plan in place two months before the Fellow's placement ends.