

# Developing Good Leadership Skills for County Leaders

## Participant Workbook

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### Welcome to This Workshop

This workbook is designed for you to take an active role in your own leadership development. You'll find:

- **Reflective prompts** to help you understand your leadership style and impact
- **Interactive exercises** to deepen your thinking about leadership in a complex county system
- **Action planning tools** to take concrete next steps back to your role
- **Space for notes** throughout

**Come ready to engage, share, and learn from your colleagues.** The best insights will come from your own experience and the collective wisdom in this room.

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### Learning Objectives

By the end of this 3-hour workshop, you will:

1. Understand key leadership styles and how they show up in public service
  2. Distinguish between leadership and management, and recognize when each is needed
  3. Explore the complex, interactive county system in which you lead
  4. Reflect on your personal leadership style and its impact on citizens, staff, and peers
  5. Identify one concrete action to strengthen your leadership effectiveness
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## Part 1: Leadership vs. Management in Public Service

### Key Definitions

**Leadership** is about:

- Setting direction and vision
- Building trust and buy-in
- Inspiring others toward a shared purpose
- Navigating change and ambiguity
- Asking "Why?" and "What could be?"

**Management** is about:

- Implementing systems and processes

- Organizing resources
- Measuring performance
- Ensuring accountability and efficiency
- Asking "How do we execute this well?"

**The Reality:** Effective county governance requires *both*. A county manager who only leads without managing creates chaos. A manager who only manages without leading creates stagnation.

### Reflection Exercise: When Do You Lead vs. Manage?

Think about your current role. Describe one situation where you needed to **lead** (set direction, inspire, navigate change):

- What was the challenge or opportunity?
- How did you approach it?
- What was the outcome?

**Your reflection:**

[Space for notes]

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Now describe one situation where you needed to **manage** (organize resources, execute, measure):

- What was the challenge?
- How did you approach it?
- What was the outcome?

**Your reflection:**

[Space for notes]

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## Part 2: Leadership Styles in Action

### Four Leadership Styles Overview

County leaders typically operate across a spectrum of styles. Here's a brief overview:

<b>Style</b>	<b>Approach</b>	<b>Strength in County Context</b>
Transformational	Inspires vision; motivates change; builds culture	Setting bold direction; navigating complex community issues
Transactional	Clarifies roles; rewards performance; manages by agreement	Day-to-day operations; ensuring accountability
Servant Leadership	Puts others first; listens deeply; builds consensus	Building trust with diverse stakeholders; ethical governance
Situational	Adapts style to the moment and the person	Handling multiple constituencies; crisis response

Table 1: Leadership Styles and Their County Applications

### Self-Assessment: What's My Leadership Style?

For each statement below, rate yourself on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree):

1. I naturally paint a vision of the future and help others see possibilities. \_\_\_
2. I'm most comfortable when roles, expectations, and rewards are clear. \_\_\_
3. I prioritize listening to and understanding others' perspectives before deciding. \_\_\_
4. I shift my approach based on what a situation or person needs. \_\_\_
5. I inspire people by connecting their work to a larger purpose. \_\_\_
6. I excel at organizing systems and holding people accountable. \_\_\_
7. I build strong relationships and seek win-win solutions. \_\_\_
8. I read the room and adjust quickly. \_\_\_

## Scoring Your Responses

- **Items 1, 5:** Transformational
- **Items 2, 6:** Transactional
- **Items 3, 7:** Servant Leadership
- **Items 4, 8:** Situational

**Which style(s) scored highest for you?**

[Space for notes]

**What does this tell you about your natural leadership approach?**

[Space for notes]

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## Pair-and-Share Reflection

Find a partner and discuss:

1. **What's one strength** of your primary style?
2. **What's one potential blind spot** or limitation?
3. **When does your style serve you best?** (e.g., during crisis, routine operations, building new initiatives)
4. **When might it get in your way?**

**Key insight from your conversation:**

[Space for notes]

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## Part 3: Navigating the County Leadership System

### The Complex System You Lead Within

County government exists at the intersection of multiple forces and stakeholders:

Figure 1: The County Leadership System: Citizens, Elected Officials, Administrative Leadership, Staff, Community Partners, Media, and External Forces

### Key System Players and Pressures

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>What They Expect / Pressure They Create</b>
Citizens	Responsive services, value for tax dollars, accessibility
Elected Board	Political accountability, constituent service, governance oversight
Department Heads / Staff	Clear direction, resources, support, professional development
Community Partners	Collaboration, alignment on shared goals, communication
Media	Transparency, timely responses, newsworthy stories
Constitutional Officers	Independence, respect for role, coordination

Table 2: County System Stakeholders and Their Expectations

### **Small Group Exercise: System Pressures and Your Role**

**Scenario Question:** You've been asked to lead a significant operational change (e.g., new permitting system, consolidation of services, policy shift).

**For your small group:**

1. **Identify the stakeholders** who will care about this change.
2. **What does each stakeholder want or fear?**

3. **What leadership challenges do you anticipate?** (competing priorities, resistance, political dynamics)
4. **How might your leadership style help or complicate the situation?**

**Your group's key insights:**

[Space for notes]

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## Adaptive Leadership in a Complex System

In county government, you often lead *across* authority lines—you can't command everyone affected by your decisions. **Adaptive leadership** is the ability to:

- Navigate competing interests without choosing sides
- Build coalitions across differences
- Make principled decisions in ambiguous situations
- Communicate transparently about trade-offs
- Learn and adjust as situations evolve

**Reflection:** Think of a time you had to lead without formal authority. What did you do? What worked?

[Space for notes]

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## Part 4: Your Personal Leadership Impact

### How Others Experience Your Leadership

Leadership isn't just about what you *intend*—it's about the **impact** you have on others.

### Reflection: The Three Circles

Draw three overlapping circles:

- **Circle 1 (How I see myself):** The leadership qualities, strengths, and intentions you believe you have
- **Circle 2 (How others see me):** How you think your staff, peers, and constituents experience your leadership
- **Circle 3 (Reality):** Where the circles overlap—your true impact

**Questions to guide your reflection:**

- What's in Circle 1 but not in Circle 2? (Blind spots—intentions others don't perceive)
- What's in Circle 2 but not in Circle 1? (Surprises—impacts you didn't intend)
- What's in all three? (Your authentic leadership)

**Your insights:**

[Space for notes]

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## Impact on Citizens

How does your leadership style affect the citizens you serve?

- Do they feel heard and respected?
- Do they understand county decisions and direction?
- Do they trust you and your organization?

**One example of how your leadership style has shaped citizen experience:**

[Space for notes]

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## Impact on Staff

How does your leadership style affect your employees?

- Do they understand expectations and how their work matters?
- Do they feel developed and supported?
- Do they bring their best selves to work?

**One example of how your leadership style has affected staff engagement or performance:**

[Space for notes]

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## Part 5: Action Planning for Leadership Growth

### The 30-Day Action Plan

The goal here is *not* to overhaul your leadership overnight. It's to identify **one concrete shift** you'll make in the next 30 days.

### Three Reflection Questions

#### 1. What's one behavior or practice I want to START?

Examples: scheduling one-on-ones with staff, beginning meetings by asking others' perspectives, sharing more vision and context in communications, walking the floors more regularly.

Your answer:

[Space for notes]

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#### 2. What's one behavior or practice I want to STOP?

Examples: deciding alone before consulting, focusing only on problems (not wins), defaulting to email over conversation, micromanaging.

Your answer:

[Space for notes]

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### 3. What's one behavior or practice I want to CONTINUE?

(Reinforce what's already working.)

Examples: regular staff meetings, transparent communication, mentoring emerging leaders, staying connected to constituent concerns.

Your answer:

[Space for notes]

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#### Your 30-Day Commitment

**I will focus on this leadership priority in the next 30 days:**

[Space for commitment statement]

**Why this matters (to me, my team, our community):**

[Space for notes]

**How I'll know it's working (what will I observe or hear)?**

[Space for notes]

**One person I'll tell about this commitment (accountability partner):**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### Optional: Peer Coaching Conversation

If time permits, find a partner and take 5–7 minutes each to explore one real leadership challenge you're navigating. Your partner's role:

- Listen without fixing
- Ask clarifying questions
- Reflect back what you hear
- Suggest one resource or perspective

**Challenge I'm bringing:**

[Space for notes]

**Insight from my peer coach:**

[Space for notes]

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#### Key Takeaways: Leadership Principles That Travel

Leadership in county government requires:

- **Self-awareness:** Understanding your style, strengths, and impact
- **Adaptability:** Shifting your approach based on what the situation demands

- **Systems thinking:** Recognizing the interdependencies and pressures in county governance
  - **Intentionality:** Choosing leadership actions aligned with your values and purpose
  - **Reflection and learning:** Continuously asking "What's working?" and "How can I improve?"
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## Resources for Continued Learning

### Books:

- John P. Kotter, *What Leaders Really Do* — essential reading on leadership vs. management
- Ronald A. Heifetz, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* — navigating complex systems
- Jim Collins, *Good to Great* — how great leaders build enduring organizations

### Articles:

- Harvard Kennedy School, "*Leadership in the Public Sector*" — context-specific frameworks
- Center for Transformational Change, "*Servant Leadership in Government*" — building trust-based governance

### Your Institute Contacts:

For follow-up coaching, additional sessions, or peer learning groups, contact:

[Insert Institute contact information]

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## Evaluation

Please take 2 minutes to give us feedback on today's workshop:

### 1. How relevant was this content to your leadership role?

Not at all relevant  | Somewhat relevant  | Very relevant  | Highly relevant

### 2. Did you gain at least one actionable insight?

Yes  | No

### 3. What was most valuable about today?

[Space for notes]

### 4. What would you change or add?

[Space for notes]

### 5. Would you recommend this workshop to a peer?

Yes  | No  | Maybe

**Thank you for your engagement today. Your leadership matters.**

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