



Pacific & Virgin Islands Training Initiatives

Executive Leadership Development Program (ELDP) for Insular Areas

<http://eldp.pitiviti.org>

BACKGROUND PAPER (July 2008)

Additional information on the Executive Leadership Development Program (ELDP) for the Graduate School's Pacific & Virgin Islands Training Initiatives can be found online at <http://eldp.pitiviti.org>.

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BACKGROUND

This proposal was developed in response to the insular areas' growing concern for continuity in management and technical expertise as senior leaders retire or leave government service.

Why is it important to establish an Executive Leadership Development Program?

The insular areas have experienced many challenges to developing and retaining qualified, skilled staff in government agencies that handle the accounting, budget, finance, procurement, and audit functions. Additionally, many career senior leaders and managers in the insular governments are expected to retire within the next several years, leaving a potential gap in managerial and technical capability. The insular areas need to establish a pool of staff with potential for promotion into these key positions and groom them through training programs, special assignments, and systematic mentoring.

Who will organize the ELDP?

The Insular governments recognize the need to identify and develop staff to ensure that turnover of key individuals does not adversely impact government operations. However, the insular governments lack the funding and resources to establish an inter-government initiative. The U.S. Department of Interior's Office of Insular Affairs (DOI/ OIA) has turned to its partner, the Graduate School, USDA, to assist with developing the Executive Leadership Development Program (ELDP) through the Pacific and Virgin Islands Training Initiative.

Which insular governments can participate?

All insular areas are invited to participate in the ELDP program including the flag territories (American Samoa; Government of Guam; U.S. Virgin Islands; Commonwealth of Northern Marianas Islands) and freely associated states (Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia). The ELDP is open to all government agencies and government enterprise organizations.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INSULAR AREAS

The insular areas must play a key role if the ELDP is to be successful. The governments can tailor many aspects of the participant developmental process to their unique needs. For example, governments will identify projects that are important to the government that can also serve as a developmental assignment for participants. Government mentors will provide insular-specific career guidance and advice. And, students will be required to bring government data, policies, and other public information to use in training sessions.

What is required from the insular governments?

During its inaugural year many policies and procedures necessary for the long term implementation will be developed. Initially governments are expected to:

1. Identify an on-island coordinator to assist with the application and administrative processes. The coordinator also will partner with the PITI/VITI staff to organize projects and mentorships.
2. Identify potential candidates and encourage them to apply.
3. Support the participants throughout the year by encouraging projects, development assignments, and other professional experiences.

Once fully implemented the governments are expected to have signed an agreement indicating they acknowledge their role and responsibilities as follows:

1. Governments will complete an overall needs assessment prior to submitting the names of program participants. The needs assessment will report information such as anticipated turnover rates in key positions and the developmental needs (e.g. technical, managerial, leadership) of key staff positions. A template will be provided by the Graduate School, USDA to each government to guide the needs assessment.
2. Each participating insular government will establish in writing the process for announcing the ELDP program to their agencies, and receiving, evaluating and selecting applicants. The governments must also establish and report selection criteria.
3. Once employees are accepted into the program, the insular government will commit necessary travel funds and other resources as required during the twelve month period. Because of the unique geographic locations, different staff development needs, and the legal relationship with the U.S. government, the insular government's financial commitment will be negotiated with the Graduate School, USDA on an individual basis.
4. Insular governments will ensure the participants have support from their immediate supervisors to participate in both the on-island and off-island activities.
5. Insular governments will establish clear expectations for participants' continued employment after completion of the program and communicate those expectations in writing to the program participant.
6. Insular governments will provide the ELDP program coordinators with an explanation about why the government selected individuals for the program, including formal education, prior work experience, performance assessment, how selected individuals fit into the government's succession plan, and a recommendation from the highest ranking official from the participants' departments.
7. Insular governments will commit to participating and supporting a self-directed developmental project designed to enable each participant to practice new skills and apply learning on real agency issues.
8. Insular governments will outline their willingness and ability to host other program participants or activities.
9. Insular governments will provide a point of contact for the program.

10. After the first ELDP meeting the governments will receive, evaluate, and, to the greatest extent possible, meet the participants' request for a high-level mentor and developmental assignments.

Who will be eligible?

Because ELDP is a new program the 2008 eligibility criteria will be flexible. The insular governments should carefully consider the applicants and evaluate their:

- Potential for professional development.
- Formal education.
- Likelihood of remaining with the government after the program.

During the 2008 – 2009 program year the insular governments, ELDP program coordinators, and PITI/VIT administrators will develop more tangible eligibility and selection criteria that will be used to accept applicants into the program. Criteria that will be considered:

Hold a bachelor's degree or have equivalent professional experience.

- Have worked for the insular government for a minimum of two years prior to the start of the program.
- Demonstrated technical knowledge and skill in one of the following areas: accounting, budget, finance, procurement, and audit.
- Received outstanding performance evaluations for the past two years.
- Received a nomination to the program by the highest level official in the department and the immediate supervisor.
- Expressed an interest and demonstrate personal commitment to public service.

COMPONENTS OF ELDP

The ELDP will offer five major components: formal training, mentoring, developmental assignments, reading assignments, and a major project for the insular government(s). Each cohort training session, scheduled one time per quarter for approximately twelve months, will blend technical knowledge with managerial or leadership concepts and skills. Participants will be assigned projects that will be completed between training sessions. Projects and assignments will have a strong practical application and reports will be given in the next meeting.

What are the components of the ELDP?

Participants in the ELDP will experience five major components:

1. *Formal training.* ELDP participants will meet as a cohort approximately four times over a twelve month period for one week of training each time. The training will focus on managerial and leadership skills, as well as technical training in areas such as auditing and accounting.
2. *Mentoring.* During the first formal training session each participant will complete a self-evaluation and identify one or two individuals within the government that he or she thinks would be a good mentor throughout the 18 month program. The program participant and the mentor will meet regularly to discuss the individual's progress, challenges, or other topics of interest. The program participant will be encouraged to learn how the mentor achieved success and think about how the

mentor's characteristics, habits, or philosophies can be incorporated into the mentee's own style. Participants will be asked to report on the mentoring experience when they meet as a cohort for formal training.

3. *Developmental assignments.* As part of the self-assessment in the first formal training session, participants will identify and describe possible developmental assignments that they would like to complete during the twelve months. The development assignment will focus on real-world issues in their organization, and give participants the opportunity to hone technical skills and apply their learning in selected project areas. Governments will coordinate and support participants in the developmental assignments by providing a project mentor and committing support to the project in writing. Participants will be asked to report on the developmental assignments when they meet as a cohort for formal training. Participants will not be allowed to continue in the ELDP program if the insular government does not assist with and support developmental assignments.
4. *Reading and group assignments.* Participants will be provided with books and reading assignments to be completed prior to the formal training sessions. Participants will be provided with a reading list from which they can choose books of interest. Books will be provided as part of the program costs. Additionally, participants will be asked to complete group assignments between cohort training sessions. This will encourage cross-government sharing of information and provide participants with the opportunity to work closely with other members of the cohort.
5. *Major project in home organization.* Under the supervision of the PITI/VITI Project Coordinator, the ELDP Program Manager and ELDP faculty, each ELDP participant will define and complete a major project for his or her home government. The project will likely be a project that the government wants to do but does lack the resources to initiate or complete it. One ELDP faculty will be assigned each participant to help guide the project design, implementation, and completion.

What formal training is planned for the ELDP participants?

Four formal training sessions are planned throughout the twelve months. All members of the cohort will meet for one week for each of the four sessions. The first and last weeks are a bit different from the other two weeks. During the first week participants complete several self-assessment activities and plan for some of the assignments. For example, they identify potential mentors, project topics, and unique government issues or challenges. The last week each participant is expected to present the results of his or her major project or other activities completed during the previous twelve months. Ideally, the final week for each cohort will be scheduled concurrently with the subsequent cohort so participants from all the cohorts can mentor each other.

Proposed Modules and Course Descriptions.

The following is a draft of session titles and descriptions. Each session will focus on a number of skill and knowledge areas as illustrated in Appendix 1 – Matrix of Sessions and Skill Development. The insular government coordinators will be asked to provide comments and feedback as the modules within each session are developed

Session #1: Assessment and Kickoff	Participants complete several self-evaluation instruments to determine leadership and managerial strengths. They also develop action plans to address low skill areas and enhance strengths. Participants create action plans for the mentoring experience and projects. They leave the session with a schedule for implementation and timelines for reporting before the next session begins.
Session #2: Money Matters	Participants develop a working knowledge of the government's financial processes. Participants learn how the procurement, accounting, and audit resolution processes must be managed to ensure sound financial management of government resources.
Session #3: Leadership & Politics	Participants learn about the responsibilities and styles of elected and appointed leaders in government organizations. Additionally, participants develop skills in fundamental management tools and techniques such as supervision, communication, and teambuilding.
Session #4: Capstone - Facing the Future	Participants will integrate all of the activities throughout the past 12 months during this session. They will present the results of their major projects and other assignments. Additionally, they will develop personal strategic plans that integrate their training with future career paths.

MANAGING THE ELDP

The ELDP will require shared responsibility for insuring smooth and successful implementation. During the first year all travel and administrative expenses will be funded by OIA and managed on a day-to-day basis by the Graduate School, USDA, PITI. The ELDP will draw heavily on the expertise and desires of the insular areas when curriculum is developed and courses are organized.

What are the tuition costs?

In 2008 – 2009 the tuition will be funded by OIA including travel, instructional materials, and program administrative costs. In future years the insular governments will be expected to pay a portion of those expenses such as travel, lodging, and meals for participants from their respective governments.

What is the anticipated size of each cohort group?

Ideally, each insular government will send two to three individuals to each cohort, resulting in a class of approximately 18 to 21 individuals.

Will all individuals nominated by the governments be accepted into the ELDP?

It depends. Initially, all applications will be screened by an admissions committee consisting of two representatives from the PITI/VITI program, one representative from DOI/OIA, and one representative from the insular governments. Evaluation criteria will be established before the admissions process begins. In future years all applications will be screened and approved by the ELDP Management Committee. If the government's nominee(s) does not meet the minimum requirement he or she will not be admitted to the program. In the event that over 25 nominees are received in a single year, the ELDP Management Committee may consult with the governments and identify nominees that can wait until the next cohort begins.

What is the ELDP Management Committee?

The ELDP Management Committee consists of three representatives from the insular areas. Insular areas will rotate sending a representative. Additionally, one representative from OIA, the Program Director from the PITI/VITI project, and the ELDP Program Manager will serve on the Committee. The Committee will provide guidance to the Program Manager and Program Director, establish policies, and evaluate nominees for admission to the program.

What are the responsibilities of the insular government ELDP Coordinator?

Each insular government must appoint an ELDP coordinator to serve as a liaison to all of the government's participants and as a representative to the ELDP Management Committee. The Coordinator is expected to:

- Participate in ELDP conference calls and meetings.
- Organize and ensure the completion of the government's self assessment described above.
- Organize the recruitment, application, and selection process for their respective governments.
- Assist the participants with finding mentors, projects, or other assignments given between training sessions.
- Help coordinate other ELDP activities when scheduled for on-island.
- Complete other administrative duties such as develop a travel budget for all participants.

What is the timeline for implementing the first cohort and the schedule for subsequent cohorts?

Currently, cohorts will meet one time per quarter over a twelve month period. The number of training sessions and overall timeline can be adjusted to meet the needs of the insular governments and other factors that could influence the schedule. The proposed schedule:

PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

February - March 2008	Insular government focus group comments on concept paper.
June 2008	ELDP program overview presented to IGFOA participants.
July 2008	ELDP program overview presented to APIPA executive committee
July - August 2008	Application process announced. Application placed on web page for easy access.
September 1, 2008	Deadline for application to the 2008 - 2009 ELDP class.
October 20 - 24, 2008	Session #1 - Self Assessment and Kickoff for 2008 - 2009 class held on Guam.
February 2 - 9, 2009	Session #2 - Money Matters held on Saipan, CNMI.
May 11 - 15, 2009	Session #3 - Leadership and Politics held on Pohnpei, FSM.
August 10 - 14, 2009	Session #4 - Capstone - Facing the Future held in Honolulu, HI.