

# USDA ASPIRING LEADER PROGRAM (ALP)

## ONLINE AGLEARN TRAINING

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**L**eadership is more than motivating others to perform well and engaging them in our mission. Effective leadership is a constant personal challenge requiring effective communication skills and the ability to build productive relationships and coalitions.

The online, cost effective **USDA Aspiring Leader Program** is designed to assist you with identifying and strengthening these and other critical leadership skills. It will also introduce you to the wealth of resources available through AgLearn.

Remember, leaders are not always managers or supervisors.  
Everyone in the USDA can be a leader.  
Begin your leadership journey here.

**OBJECTIVES:** The USDA Aspiring Leader Program has two main objectives:

- Enhance understanding of the fundamental leadership competencies
- Help learners discover development resources for continual learning through AgLearn

**INTENDED AUDIENCE:** This course is for you if:

- You aspire to be a leader.
- You want to be an even better leader.
- You want to learn more about continual learning resources available in AgLearn.

**DURATION:** Approximately 4-6 hours of online learning plus other developmental activities.

**COMPETENCIES:** Participants will enhance these essential leadership competencies:

1. **Accountability** - Holds self and others accountable for measurable high-quality, timely, and cost-effective results. Determines objectives, sets priorities, and delegates work. Accepts responsibility for mistakes. Complies with established control systems and rules.
2. **Conflict Management** - 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.
3. **Customer Service** - Anticipates and meets the needs of both internal and external customers. Delivers high-quality products and services; is committed to continuous improvement.
4. **Decisiveness** - Makes well-informed, effective, and timely decisions, even when data are limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; perceives the impact and implications of decisions.
5. **Influencing/Negotiating** - Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals.
6. **Team Building** - Inspires and fosters team commitment, spirit, pride, and trust. Facilitates cooperation and motivates team members to accomplish group goals.

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**PROGRAM COMPONENTS:** The Aspiring Leader Program has four components (see component details on next pages):

1. The Competency Self-Assessment
2. Aspiring Leader Program On-Line Courses
3. Evaluation
4. Continual Learning: mentoring, shadowing, job aids, recommended reading, and additional courses

Be sure to include the USDA Aspiring Leader Program courses in your Individual Development Plan (IDP). Resources for planning and creating IDPs are available at:

<https://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/departmental-regulation-4040-410>

Be sure to coordinate with your supervisor on when you participate in this training to ensure you agree on balancing your own need for training and development with work priorities. Remember that your supervisor must grant time for you to participate in training during normal duty hours, and advanced supervisory approval is required to take training outside of the normal duty hours (as required by Title 5 and the Fair Labor Standards Act).

**PROGRAM COMPONENTS DESCRIPTION:** The following is a description and detailed information about the components in the USDA Aspiring Leader Program.

### Program Component 1 – Competency Self-Assessment

Begin your training by completing the Competency Self-Assessment. This tool is based on the OPM leadership competencies, and provides an ongoing method for development by assessing your proficiency levels in various competencies and assists you in identifying areas to build your knowledge and skills. The self-assessment can be found at the following link:

<http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/vu/docs/alp-competency-sa.pdf>. (It only opens in Internet Explorer.)

### Program Component 2 - Aspiring Leader Program On-line Courses

This program is the beginning of your journey into the development of your leadership skills. You will explore your strengths and increase your knowledge and skills in accountability, conflict management, customer service, decisiveness, influencing/negotiating, and team building. After you have completed the program, there are suggestions on how to develop a plan to ensure you remain focused on the next steps in your continual leadership development.

The following courses must be complete to receive credit for the program.

#### **Accountability**

Becoming an Accountable Professional (30 min)

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### **Conflict Management**

Facing and Resolving Conflict in the Workplace (30 minutes)

### **Customer Service**

Communicating Effectively with Customers (30 min)

Dealing with Customer Service Incidents and Complaints (30 min)

### **Decisiveness**

Thinking Critically: Coming to Terms with Assumptions (30 min)

Thinking Critically: Drawing Conclusions with Confidence (30 min)

### **Influencing and Negotiations**

Negotiating the Best Solution (30 min)

### **Leveraging Diversity**

Bridging the Diversity Gap (30 min)

### **Team Building**

Building the Foundation for an Effective Team (30 min)

## **GETTING STARTED**

Find the USDA Aspiring Leader curriculum in AgLearn, add it to your To-Do list and then complete the survey when finished. Here's how:

1. Log into AgLearn: <http://www.aglearn.usda.gov>
2. Click on the **Browse** link under the **Search** window.
3. Enter **Aspiring Leader Program** in the **Catalog Search** field.
4. Click on **Go**.
5. Scroll over the program and click **Self Assign Curriculum** when it appears.
6. The 2018 version of the curriculum currently contains nine (9) courses. Each course should appear in your To Do List.
7. After completing each course, be sure to take the survey to obtain credit for the course.
8. When you submit the survey, you may need to select the Home tab on the top of the page to return to your courses. You will need to go into your "To-Do List" or to your "Curricula" area to take the next course.

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## CURRICULUM ACCESS

On your home screen in AgLearn, locate the “Curricula” link. Click the link.



On the next page, you'll see the title of any curricula in which you've enrolled. Click the title of choice.

USDA Aspiring Leader Program - 2018		N/A	N/A	N/A	Admin (Roderick Mance)
USDA Leadership Essentials Certificate Program - 2018		N/A	N/A	N/A	Admin (Roderick Mance)
USDA Team Leader Program - 2018		N/A	N/A	N/A	Admin (Roderick Mance)

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The curriculum will appear on the next page. You can begin taking courses by clicking the “Go to Content” button.



**USDA Aspiring Leader Program - 2018**

Curriculum ID: USDA.ALP.CURR.2018

Assigned By: Admin (Roderick Mance)

Description: This program is the beginning of your journey into the development of your leadership skills. You will explore your strengths and increase your knowledge and skills in self-management, accountability, dealing with conflict, customer service, decisiveness, influencing/negotiating, and understanding teams. After you have completed the program, there are suggestions on how to develop a plan to ensure that you remain focused on your next steps to continually grow and develop as a leader.


The USDA Aspiring Leader Program has two main objectives:

- Enhanced understanding of the fundamental leadership competencies
- Discovering developmental resources for continual learning through AgLearn

Incomplete

Due by

View by: Suggested Order

	▶ <a href="#">Becoming an Accountable Professional</a>	<a href="#">Go to Content</a>
	▶ <a href="#">Communicating Effectively with Customers</a>	<a href="#">Go to Content</a>
	▶ <a href="#">Dealing with Customer Service Incidents and Complaints</a>	<a href="#">Go to Content</a>
	▶ <a href="#">Thinking Critically: Coming to Terms with Assumptions</a>	<a href="#">Go to Content</a>
	▶ <a href="#">Thinking Critically: Drawing Conclusions with Confidence</a>	<a href="#">Go to Content</a>
	▶ <a href="#">Negotiating the Best Solution</a>	<a href="#">Go to Content</a>
	▶ <a href="#">Facing and Resolving Conflict in the Workplace</a>	<a href="#">Go to Content</a>

Need Help? Please visit the AgLearn Job Aids web page for trouble shooting and getting started tips, or ask a Virtual University team member.

### Program Component 3 - Evaluation

After you have completed all courses, please complete the Aspiring Leader Program Evaluation. This evaluation is designed to measure your satisfaction as well as provide information so that we continually improve the program. On the Monday following the day you complete the online training component, the evaluation will be added to your AgLearn To-Do List. This finalizes the curriculum. All courses and the evaluation should have moved to you Completed Work list. Participants can print a certificate by accessing the evaluation item in their Completed Work list.

### Program Component 4a – Mentoring

Identify someone to serve as your mentor to help you develop your leadership skills. Select someone who is not in your chain of command and who can give you helpful feedback and guidance. If you don't have anyone in mind, apply to your Agency's formal mentoring program. For more information on mentoring visit the [USDA Mentoring Portal](#). To find your Agency Mentoring Program Manager visit the USDA Mentoring Portal [Contact Us](#) page.

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### Program Component 4b – Shadowing

Identify at least one leader to shadow as you are completing the program. Shadowing can include observing a leader in a variety of situations, such as at a meeting, during a conference call, giving a presentation, or running a staff meeting.

### Program Component 4c – Continual Learning

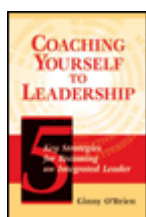
This component includes recommended reading, additional courses and experiential opportunities. This component is not required to complete the Aspiring Leader Program, but is recommended for your consideration in growing as a leader.

### AgLearn Job Aids

The following helpful AgLearn job aids can assist you with the Aspiring Leader courses, such as:

- Trouble Shooting AgLearn Issues
- Getting Started in AgLearn
- How to get into Books 24x7
- Tips to Build Your Individual Development Plan (IDP)

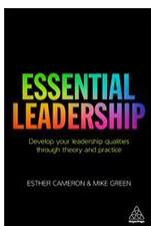
### Recommended Readings from Books 24X7 in AgLearn



#### Coaching Yourself to Leadership: Five Key Strategies for Becoming an Integrated Leader

By Ginny O'Brien  
HRD Press © 2006 (172 pages) *Citation*  
ISBN: 9780874258691

Integrating competencies from three domains of leadership, this no-nonsense book provides proven practices and techniques that will transform you into a more positive, authentic leader so you can make work better for yourself and those you currently lead.



#### Essential Leadership: Develop Your Leadership Qualities Through Theory and Practice

By Esther Cameron and Mike Green  
Kogan Page © 2017 (401 pages) *Citation*  
ISBN: 9780749477417

In *Essential Leadership*, Esther Cameron and Mike Green have ably demonstrated an ability to build on established leadership theory and demonstrate both rigor and relevance in formulating a framework for thinking about leadership, and the development of leadership capability, in today's complex and volatile context.

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### Recommended Additional Courses

- Search in AgLearn for key words, example: Leadership Essential, Emotional Intelligence, Unconscious Bias, etc.
- Search for additional books that cover leadership topics in AgLearn's Books 24X7.

### Experience Opportunities

Training doesn't always have to be a formal course. Explore options from following list for additional ways to stretch and develop competencies through experiences.

- **Work groups** - serve on a special work group to use your current skills in a new environment.
- **Teams/Projects** - request to join a special team, project or assignment.
- **Cross-Training** - acquire knowledge and skills from coworkers, who have similar grade levels and experiences. A new skill can make you more valuable.
- **Details** - check the USDA Detail Registry at <http://opportunities.usda.gov/> for opportunities.
- **Shadowing assignments** - These are designed to give you exposure to managerial duties, responsibilities, and to show you different approaches to handling them. It also provides exposure and experience in a different unit than your own. A shadow assignment is an important next step after completing the Online Aspiring Leader Program. Ask your supervisor for recommendations for you to engage in a shadow assignment.
- **Developmental stretch assignments** - Stretch assignments allow you to ease into leadership roles by exposing you to an array of roles and responsibilities. Stretch assignments are about getting you to expand your competencies and skills to newer, wider levels. By definition, "a stretch assignment is one that requires you to take a leap beyond your comfort zone and, in the process, pick up new skills".
- **Be a Mentor - Find a Mentor** - The mentoring process links a less experienced employee with a more experienced one to help facilitate professional growth. A mentor is someone not in your chain of command who is in a position to help with job and career issues, and who is committed to doing so. For more information on mentoring please contact Roderick Mance of the Virtual University (email [roderick.mance@dm.usda.gov](mailto:roderick.mance@dm.usda.gov)).
- **Be a Coach - Find a Coach** - Coaching is a thought provoking and creative process that inspires people to maximize their personal and professional potential. This is a method of instruction where the desired outcome is to obtain a certain level of knowledge or skills. See Marisol Rodriguez of the Virtual University for more information about coaching (email [marisol.rodriguez@dm.usda.gov](mailto:marisol.rodriguez@dm.usda.gov)).
- Complete other online leadership development courses.

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- Join professional organizations and volunteer to lead a group or serve as an officer.
- Participate in supervisor training.
- Serve as a representative on a special emphasis committee.

### SAMPLE LEARNING PLAN

Activity	Description	Estimated time	Date completed
Program Component 1: Self Assessment	Complete the Competency Self Assessment tool to assess your proficiency level and identify areas to build your knowledge and skills.	30 minutes to 1 hour	
Program Component 2: Online Courses	<p>Complete the online-courses in AgLearn.</p> <p>a) <b>Accountability:</b> Becoming an Accountable Professional</p> <p>b) <b>Conflict Management:</b> Facing and Resolving Conflict in the Workplace</p> <p>c) <b>Customer Service:</b> Communicating Effectively with Customers</p> <p>d) <b>Customer Service:</b> Dealing with Customer Service Incidents and Complaints</p> <p>e) <b>Decisiveness:</b> Thinking Critically: Coming to Terms with Assumptions</p> <p>f) <b>Decisiveness:</b> Thinking Critically: Coming to Terms with Assumptions</p> <p>g) <b>Influencing and Negotiations:</b> Negotiating the Best Solution</p> <p>h) <b>Leveraging Diversity:</b> Bridging the Diversity Gap</p> <p>i) <b>Team Building:</b> Building the Foundation for an Effective Team</p>	A maximum of 5 hours	



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### SAMPLE LEARNING PLAN (continued)

Activity	Description	Estimated time	Date completed
Program Component 3: Evaluation	Complete the end-of-curriculum evaluation.	30 minutes	
Program Component 4a: Mentoring	Identify someone to serve as your mentor to help you develop leadership skills.	Minimum of 3 informal 1 hour sessions or a year-long formal relationship	
Program Component 4b: Shadowing	Identify at least one leader to shadow as you are completing the program.	Minimum of 3 1 hour sessions	
Program Component 4c: Additional development (optional)	Identify additional development activities based on your interests and the results of the Competency Self-Assessment.	To be determined based on the activities selected	

*Remember to discuss your training with your supervisor, and to request approval for the time you spend in training, as well as to include the training on your Individual Development Plan (IDP).*

*Growing leaders is important to us at the Virtual University. Thanks for investing time to develop your skills, and for considering a commitment to filling a leadership role in USDA, both now and in the future. Leaders provide the foundation for our success.*