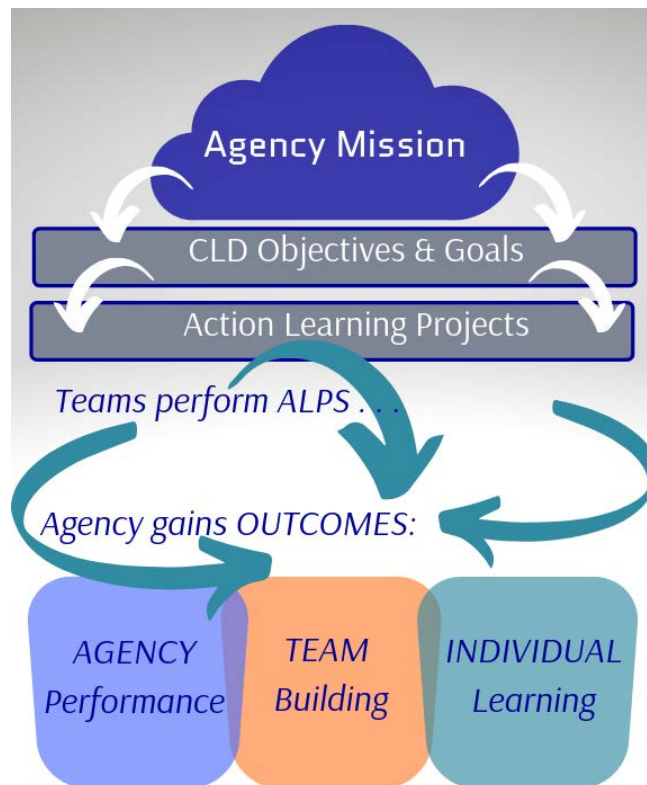


Worksheet: Exploring Agency Goals and Action Learning Projects

This worksheet:

- Describes the Action Learning Project (ALP) component of the NIC-developed training program, **Correctional Leadership Development (CLD)**.
- Helps agency leaders explore the strategic goals and objectives they can reach by engaging in a CLD program with several concurrent ALP teams.
- Helps agency leaders formulate specific ALPs its CLD participants will take on.

Figure 1. ALPs and Agency Mission



What is an Action Learning Project?

An Action Learning Project (ALP) is a challenge that allows training participants to develop and apply new skills, while it also benefits the agency by addressing an important issue, goal, problem, or opportunity.

In an ALP, a team of program participants works on an issue that is linked to the purpose and mission of the organization. The teams develop an implementation plan and manage the project.

As an experiential learning method, ALPs are the primary transfer mechanism for team and organizational learning and growth in a CLD program.

Each ALP is a path for reaching one of the agency's stated priority goals. Selecting strong ALPs is one of the key ways that the agency's leaders can ensure their organization gets the most out of the CLD experience. Senior leaders will outline a set of projects to be addressed by ALP teams during the program.

Ideal projects will:

- Be tied to the agency's mission and vision
- Be complex
- Address long-range issues and create a lasting benefit to the organization
- Require teamwork
- Take participants beyond their current sphere of influence and control
- Expose participants to new perspectives and new ideas and give them an opportunity to be innovative
- Develop skills that fuel high performance
- Expand the culture of leadership
- Develop a sense of organizational ownership
- Inspire a shared vision among the participants.

Exploring Strategic Goals and Objectives

While preparing for a CLD program, the agency's senior leaders will consider the goals and outcomes they want their agencies to achieve during the program series. ALPs allow the agency to focus its rising talent on meaningful, long-term solutions to these challenges.

The next few pages give some questions to consider. Find and discuss the questions that resonate best for the members of your agency's leadership development planning group.

Questions to Consider

1. Are agency leaders grappling with a stubborn situation that keeps them up at night? What is driving the situation? What data are available to quantify any issues or possible solutions?

2. Is there a cost center that is putting unusual pressure on the agency budget? What data are available to quantify any issues or possible solutions?

3. Do agency leaders have a vision or aspiration of what the agency could become or accomplish? What data are available to quantify the opportunity, the need, or the vision?

4. Is the agency aware of any risk management concerns as to facility safety and security? What data are available to quantify any issues or possible solutions?

5. Are agency leaders satisfied with the culture and attitudes of staff in the organization? Do the staff members seem satisfied with their work and the work environment? Is there alignment between attitudes and values at all levels of the agency and between staff in different functional areas? What data are available to quantify any issues or possible solutions?

6. Do agency leaders have concerns about how the agency is perceived in the local community? What data are available to quantify any issues or possible solutions?

7. Is the agency experiencing any friction or role overlap with other public safety or public assistance agencies, or is there an opportunity for the agencies to collaborate better? What data are available to quantify any issues or possible solutions?

8. Is there an opportunity to change long-standing practices that may no longer be the best way to do the business of the agency? What data are available to quantify any issues or possible solutions?

9. Have any issues or concerns been raised or suggested internally, through an agency ombudsman, staff grievances, or input from a collective bargaining entity? What data are available to quantify any issues or possible solutions?

10. Have any operational, cultural, or safety issues been raised through community input? What data are available to quantify any issues or possible solutions?

11. Does the agency seem to be giving its future high performers an opportunity to achieve and develop themselves professionally and personally? What would an ideal environment for growth look like?

Selecting ALP Topics

This section is intended to help agencies rank their priorities for ALP projects.

For each issue identified above, fill out this section for a priority score. (1 = Low; 2 = Moderate; 3 = High)

| Issue/Topic | Importance (1, 2, or 3) | Urgency (1, 2, or 3) | Fiscal impact (1, 2, or 3) | Add columns = net score |
|-------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. | | | | |
| b. | | | | |
| c. | | | | |
| d. | | | | |
| e. | | | | |
| f. | | | | |
| g. | | | | |
| h. | | | | |
| i. | | | | |

Discussion—

Do you agree with the priorities that emerged from this process? If not, you are free to adjust your results. For your records, you may want to write down some thoughts on why you prefer different priority outcomes.

Exploring ALP Scope

For each selected issue or opportunity, use this space to make notes about related projects that a small team can complete on within a period of approximately 1 year. Project scope will be fully fleshed out by the eventual ALP sponsors, who are fellow members of the agency's senior leadership.

ALP #1

ALP #2

ALP #3

ALP #4

ALP #5

ALP #6

Appendix 1. ALP Timeline in the CLD Program

| Point in Program | ALP-related Activities |
|---|---|
| Pre-program preparations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Leaders select ALPs. <input type="checkbox"/> Leaders select ALP team sponsors. <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsors prepare a detailed problem statement and project objectives. <input type="checkbox"/> Participants are assigned to ALP teams. |
| Phase 1 face-to-face session | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teams develop an ALP project plan and timeline. <input type="checkbox"/> Teams present their proposed plans to senior leaders at the conclusion of Phase 1. |
| Intersession (3–5 month work period) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teams work on their ALPs with regular sponsor coaching and advice. |
| Phase 2 face-to-face session | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Phase 2 opens with team presentations on their ALP progress to date. |
| Post-program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsors and other senior leaders should keep the participants apprised of how projects are being implemented and the results. |

Appendix 2. What are some examples of ALPs?

Following are some examples of high-impact projects that NIC ALP teams have completed—

- Develop and implement a recruitment marketing plan.
- Develop a field training officer program that leverages the expertise of experienced deputies.
- Develop a staffing plan that encompasses flexibility in work schedules.
- Create a professional development program to assist employees in attaining specific competencies for promotion and succession.
- Create an employee job satisfaction and enrichment plan with the goal of reducing turnover.
- Create a staff wellness program that addresses identified retention issues.
- Create a charitable foundation that raises community awareness of agency services.