COACHING AND MENTORING:
A HANDBOOK FOR FELLOWS AND COACHES

Effective Leadership Program, 2010/2011
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I. INTRODUCTION

Coaching is one of the mandatory components of the Louisiana Effective Leadership Program, and it is often cited as one of the most beneficial aspects of the entire Fellowship experience. At the beginning of the Fellowship year, each Fellow will be assigned a personal Coach. Over the following 12 months it is a Program expectation that Fellows will use the coaching relationship as a primary support for learning how to translate transformational public values into day to day leadership action.

Mentoring, a complementary support for leadership development, is an optional activity of the Program. At any point in the Fellowship year or the year following it, a Fellow may seek (or be selected by) a Mentor – usually a distinguished senior leader – within her or his organization, profession or community. Program staff will be glad to assist the Fellow in the processes of contacting, qualifying, and negotiating the terms of reference and even monitoring the ensuring relationship with the person(s) the Fellow has identified. The sole requirement is that, to be regarded as an ELP Mentor, any person selected by the Fellow must certify that she/he endorses the Program's goals and values.

In either case, the focus is on integrating public values more completely into the Fellow's repertoire of leadership behaviors and competencies. Some of the behaviors that participants will be encouraged to develop include:

- taking action to serve the greater public good;
- sharing power with those not in official positions of power and understanding that leadership itself is a shared function;
- communicating to empower people, developing policy alternatives with people affected;
- grounding policy decisions in transparent and authentic democratic, constitutional, moral and ethical principles; and
- developing personal renewal strategies and support networks that strengthen resolve and capacity to be a "servant leader" on behalf of the commonwealth.

Such values and behaviors often run counter to traditional notions of leadership, and thus may represent a significant shift in thought and behaviour for program participants. It is difficult to run against the tide of conventional thought and practice. Thus, to be successful in these tasks, leaders need people to whom they can turn confidentially for helpful perspective, challenge, feedback, guidance, and advice about career development. Coaches and Mentors, we believe, are important members of a transformational leader's personal support network.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide the members of the Effective Leadership Program – Fellows, Coaches, and Mentors especially, but also staff, resource persons, friends and funders – with accessible definitions, principles, guidelines and practical tips to make coaching a mutually satisfactory experience in supporting and encouraging Fellows' growth as values-based leaders.

II. WHAT IS COACHING?

Coaching is a long-term, one-on-one developmental relationship. Its purpose is to help Fellows a) broaden their perspectives on themselves and their leadership and b) build new servant-leadership competencies that can be sustained over time. The developmental "agenda" for the coaching is set by the Fellow. Using the ELP competencies as an overarching framework, each Fellow determines his or her own goals for growth at the outset of the Fellowship year.

Coaching is distinct from other related disciplines. Its purpose is primarily to help the Fellow cultivate both self-awareness and ingrained practical leadership skills. Mentoring (covered in more depth later in this document) tends to focus more on a senior person's imparting wisdom and advice. Consulting concerns itself primarily with problem identification and solution. Therapy tends to focus on helping a client surface and heal emotional blockages that are holding him or her back. Coaching is distinct from both mentoring and therapy in that it:

- focuses on building self-awareness and new skills
- deemphasizes problem solving and advice giving
- tends to focus on the present and build toward the future

Coaching is truly a partnership. And, like all partnerships, it takes commitment and skill from both parties to succeed. The next sections outline the roles and responsibilities of both parties.

III. COACHING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Coach's Role

Coaches assist Fellows in expanding their perspectives and capabilities, both as people and as leaders. As mentioned above, it is not the coaches' role to problem-solve or give advice; this is more the role that a consultant would play. Rather, the coaches' role is to *stimulate development* – to cause Fellows to think in new ways and to equip them with an expanded skill set that can be applied across contexts and time.

Coaches are chosen for the Program because they have demonstrated skills in working effectively with their clients to build leadership competence in the five key areas of the Program. We expect them to share a commitment to the sort of public values the Program espouses because theirs, too, is a public profession especially suited to the realization of democratic aspirations. Coaches are selected for their ability to help Fellows…

- see themselves and their circumstances in new and broader perspectives
- surface limiting beliefs and other barriers to effectiveness
- register and leverage existing strengths
- set challenging, yet realistic goals for development
- learn and integrate new capacities for effective action for the public good.

In addition, coaches are screened for important personal characteristics, including: commitment to service; flexibility of style and approach to suit a wide variety of Fellows;

strong intellect; a willingness to learn *with* and *from* the Fellows they coach; humility and sensitivity.

In all, the primary concern of the coach is the growth of the Fellow, and every effort has been made to provide a coaching cadre of the highest caliber.

The Fellow's Role

The coaching experience is, for many Fellows, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and the Program's staff and funders expect Fellows to take the fullest possible advantage of it. Thus, the Program expects that all Fellows will invest significant energy and effort in the coaching process. Specifically, this means:

- identify a meaningful area for personal/professional change
- bring an open mind and a willingness to try new things
- carry out the recommended exercises and practices that they agree to with their coach
- come fully prepared for each call, and
- take 50% responsibility for the momentum, health and vitality of the coaching relationship (including surfacing any problems that threaten these).

These expectations are in place because we know that this is what enables Fellows to get the most value from the coaching relationship.

The Importance of Mutual Commitment

There is also a set of behaviors to which the coach and Fellow must make a mutual commitment:

1. To attend all calls as scheduled;
2. To arrive for calls on time;
3. To devote full attention to these calls (for example, not to do them while driving or otherwise multi-tasking);
4. To come prepared for each call;
5. To address – timely and directly – any difficulties that arise in the coaching relationship;
6. To follow through as promised on all commitments made to each other; and
7. To provide periodic formal feedback on their coaching experience through mid- and end-of-program surveys.

The Program holds both Fellows and coaches to these commitments for one simple reason – they create success. When these commitments are honored, the coaching consistently provides value and satisfaction for both parties. When they are not adhered to, the coaching relationship and outcomes consistently suffer.

IV. THE MECHANICS OF COACHING IN LaELP

Introduction to Coaching at the Foundation Retreat

We realize that for many Fellows, coaching may be a new and unfamiliar concept. For this reason an opportunity will be provided during the Kick-Off Retreat for Fellows to be exposed to coaching methodology and application.

Criteria for Selecting Your Coach

Rapport is an important building block of any successful relationship between the Fellow and the Coach. To this end, the assignment process is built on the idea that Fellows should have as much freedom as is administratively possible to select their Coach. The only exception to this occurs where there are workload constraints on Coaches (too many Fellows seeking the services of a single Coach).

When selecting a coach, Fellows should observe a set of guiding principles, stated below as questions:

- Who do I think is most likely to challenge me and to arouse my curiosity about the way I see the world and how this limits or restricts progress?
- Who is likely to 'think straight and talk straight'? Who is likely to get me to confront my limited or restricted ways of seeing myself, my challenges and my future growth path?
- Whose insights and counsel would I value being able to access on a regular and ongoing basis?
- Who is likely to be alert in listening to my issues, creative in designing a way forward and rigorous in getting me to honor my commitments to the relationship and myself?
- Who do I think could encourage me to overcome the barriers I put up for myself and, through the challenges of personal growth, reach the outcomes I want from the process?

Note that these criteria focus on the ability of a coach to *stimulate growth and learning* by providing the optimal balance of support and challenge. While comfort is a key component of coaching success, too much of it can actually inhibit the Fellow's growth. Fellows will want to choose mentors who will cause them to stretch. Therefore, It is often extremely valuable to work with a Coach whose way of seeing the world differs from that of a Fellow. This is likely to ensure that there is no 'collective' thinking that can restrict or limit the generation of new and creative ways of viewing the challenges facing the Fellow.

Selection Process

Coach/Fellow pairings will be finalized at the Foundation Retreat. There will be four stages to the coach selection process:

- <u>Pre-Screening</u>**.** Prior to attending the Foundation Retreat, Fellows will receive information on all of the Coaches. This will include a photograph and a biography of each Coach. Based on this information, Fellows will form initial impressions of the coaches and identify early preferences based on the written background information.

- Final Screening. During the Foundation Retreat, Fellows will be given an opportunity to hear from and meet all the Coaches in person. Fellows should take advantage of this opportunity to observe and interview the Coaches in order to further hone their list of preferred coaches. The information gleaned in the live interactions is critically important, as this in-person input is most relevant in helping Fellows answer the selection criteria set forth at the beginning of Section II.

- Submit Final Preferences. Immediately after the final screening process, each Fellow will be asked to submit her/his top three prioritized preferences of possible Coaches.

- Assignment of Pairings. The Lead Coach will tabulate Fellows' preferences and make final assignments that align as closely as possible to each Fellow's desires. With very few exceptions, Fellows are assigned their first or second choices. Even in cases where Fellows are paired with their third choice, the resulting pairings have generally worked out very well.

The Coaching Itself

Intake Session with Coach**.** During the Foundation Retreat, Fellows and Coaches will meet for one 45-minute in-take session to initiate the coaching process. Fellows should ensure they have a copy of their completed Pre-retreat Self-Assessment Tool on Leadership Behaviors (S-AT) to give to their Coach. During this session, the Coach and Fellow will begin getting to know each other, establishing coaching goals, and setting up the structure for subsequent contact.

The Coaching Program**.** Fellows' self-assessment of their leadership competencies forms the basis for selecting and measuring coaching outcomes during the course of the Program. Fellows should, based on their self-assessment and completion of the Pre-Retreat S-AT, identify the gap between their current leadership competence and their desired leadership competence and select specific competencies which they would like to develop as part of their outcomes. Coaches will work with Fellows to develop competence in the specified areas. It is recommended that no more than 3 competencies be selected in total. As part of the coaching process, each Fellow and her/his Coach are expected periodically to evaluate progress against the initial coaching goals, updating the goals as appropriate.

After the initial in-person coaching session, Fellows are expected to have a total of 14 one-hour phone sessions with their Coaches over the Fellowship year. Appendix A: Coaching Schedule outlines the recommended schedule for the calls.

Please note that Fellows or their organizations are responsible for the cost of placing coaching calls. There are many low-cost and no-cost options for communicating; we encourage the Fellows and coaches to work together to take advantage of these.

Completion Session**.** Within two weeks of the Final Retreat, Fellows and Coaches will meet for their last telephonic session to formally conclude the Coaching Program. Fellows should send a copy of the results of the last scheduled administration of their Self-Assessment Tool on Leadership Behaviors to the Coach ahead of time. Thus, both parties can thoughtfully review and celebrate the progress made during the year with regard to the transformational leadership competencies that have been built and those that may need attention in the future. The Completion session also creates an opportunity for Fellows and Coaches to bring closure to the relationship that has formed during the year.

Problem Resolution

Cancellations and Rescheduling. The program understands that schedules change and that coaching appointments will occasionally have to be rescheduled. **Except in the case of emergencies, Fellows are expected to provide at least 24 hours' notice if they need to reschedule a call.** This kind of advance notice is both a professional courtesy to the coach as well as an expression of professional ethics on the part of the Fellow. **If a Fellow a) fails to show up for a call, b) fails to give less than 24 hours' notice in rescheduling, or c) arrives over 15 minutes late for the call without prior agreement, that session will be forfeited.** In cases of a Fellow's good-faith last-minute request to reschedule, coaches are permitted to waive this forfeiture, but they may be unable to do so, given their other scheduled commitments.

Reassignment. Occasionally, an initial coach-Fellow pairing doesn't work as well as anticipated. In these cases, the pairs should first make every attempt to directly address the issues between them. If, after attempts to rectify the issues, they are still unable to establish a productive working relationship, they may ask the Lead Coach to reassign the Fellow to another coach. The Lead Coach will speak with the Fellow directly to understand his/her goals and personality and suggest an appropriate alternate coach.

Termination of coaching. While it is expected that each Fellow will participate in coaching for the full Fellowship year, there are two conditions under which coaching may be terminated:
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1. The Fellow "no-shows" for three appointments. If a Fellow has a persistent pattern of missing sessions or cancelling them with insufficient notice, the Lead Coach will intervene. Initially, the Lead Coach will contact the Fellow to determine the cause of the no-shows and attempt to address any barriers or problems in the coaching relationship. However, if a) all parties have taken steps to address the difficulties, b) the pattern of no-shows persists, and c) the Fellow has 'no-showed' for three or more sessions, then the program staff reserves the right to terminate the coaching relationship.

2. The Fellow opts out of coaching. As stated earlier, coaching is a program requirement. That said, very occasionally a Fellow finds that coaching simply is not productive for him or her. When this happens, we recognize that it would be of no benefit for the Fellow and coach simply to "go through the motions" of coaching. In these cases, and only after every attempt has been made to make coaching work, a Fellow may request to withdraw from coaching. If the request

is granted, the Lead Coach will negotiate a substitute assignment which the Fellow must complete in order to fully meet the terms of the Fellowship.

In order for Fellows to make a well-informed opt-out decision that is based on direct experience vs. preconception, the Program requires that each Fellow engage in coaching for a full three months before making an opt-out request.

V. COACHING VS. MENTORING

While mentoring is not a requirement of the program, it can be a very effective developmental strategy. Thus, we would like to give Mentoring some treatment here as you consider whether or not to engage a mentor during the program.

There is often understandable confusion between coaching and mentoring. Coaches and Mentors do share many interests, goals and, on occasion, skills and strategies, so much so that it is becoming increasingly common to use the terms interchangeably.

For example, both relationships depend for success over time on establishing and maintaining three essential dynamics defined by James Flaherty: mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual freedom of expression.

Both coaching and mentoring focus on the growth and advancement of the Fellow as a leader in her or his professional field of interest. Both may be interested in exploring the Fellow's attitudes, state of mind, even mood as they relate to professional growth; neither, however, pretends competence or engages in psychoanalysis or other forms of mental health intervention.

However, there are also some key distinctions between the two disciplines. Mentors tend to focus their attention and helping energies more on *transferring knowledge* about the external "socio-political" aspects of a person's professional circumstances. The mentor shares lessons from his/her experience, helps the mentee plan and implement career strategies and build professional contacts and networks. A Mentor has considerable experience to share with his/her mentee in the careers and fields of professional interest they share. It is the mentor's professional knowledge, expertise and contacts that give mentoring its distinctive character and provide the grist for her/his relationship with the mentee. Therefore, the mentor's primary contributions to the mentee are to stimulate thinking, transfer knowledge and open doors.

By contrast, coaches help Fellows to *develop their self-knowledge and skill.* Unlike mentors, coaches are usually not subject matter experts in their Fellows' professional fields, but rather are experts in how people change. Thus, the coach's role, in contrast to the mentor's, focuses on building a Fellow's self-awareness and capacity to act in new ways. The ultimate contribution to the coachee is to enable the Fellow to expand his/her perspective and skill set, and to embody and sustain them independently over the long term.

As previously noted, James Flaherty identifies three necessary behaviors that each Fellow and his/her Coach (or Mentor) must make together to increase the likelihood that the relationship will succeed. These are:

1. <u>Foster mutual trust</u>**.** Most of us approach each new relationship with a willingness to trust that the other will act in a responsible way. At some level, that attitude is either confirmed or undermined by experience with one another. Common trust-defining issues are, for example, keeping stated commitments, maintaining the confidentiality of divulged private information, and being honest about what one (especially a Coach or Mentor) can and cannot do on behalf of the relationship and the Fellow's interests. Coach, Mentor and Fellow each must feel confident that, in the areas in

which they operate together, the other will work to remain trustworthy. Perhaps the quickest way to break or impair the relationship is to give the other reason to distrust.

2. Treat one another with mutual respect**.** Here the decisive attitude is humility as one approaches the coaching or mentoring relationship and the other person in it. Humility reflects and expresses unconditional acceptance of the other as 1) she or he is, rather than as we imagine he or she should be and 2) as a person of equal standing (though with differing needs and purposes to meet and with differing skills and experiences to offer). It reflects, too, openness to learning about the other and about oneself and an understanding that no one has all the answers and certainly not “the” answer, especially for anyone else. For the Coach or Mentor, humility – this commitment to mutual respect – calls up the idea of servant leadership. In this context, it means orienting one’s energies in the relationship toward meeting the legitimate needs of the Fellow as he or she articulates them.

3. Foster mutual freedom of expression. Coaching and mentoring relationships operate as forums of ideas, questions, tentative answers posed by both parties in order to facilitate the growth of the Fellow. To optimize these forums, Coaches, Mentors and Fellows need to feel free to talk about areas of experience and ideas that are often inaccessible as well as those that are easy to explore. Difficult issues may not be pressing, if and when they are, they need airing. As open as we may like to be, we need to know that we can say things – even difficult things about ourselves or about perceptions of the other and react to such statements – without fear of negative repercussions. This means both Coach and Mentor must create a safe space for their Fellows to speak. They, too, must feel that Fellows have given them that gift in return. Freedom of expression also means creating permission for the Coach and the Fellow to say things ‘as they see them,’ including matters that arise within the coaching or mentoring relationship itself.

VI. MENTORING

Mentoring is an important component of any leader’s development. Thus we advocate the importance of mentoring and encourage Fellows to seek out and develop mentoring relationships with senior members of their professions or communities. Our hope, as stated in the Introduction, is that Fellows and Mentors will, in essence, find one another as need, talents, time and interest intersect. We make a series of suggestions about how to make the relationship work.

Creating an enabling and supportive environment for Fellows to think about the value of mentoring and how to optimally approach mentoring relationships has led a few ELP Fellows to develop some very successful mentoring relationships during their Fellowship experience. By way of inspiration, note that one Fellow actively recruited his/her own “panel” of Mentors and managed the set of relationships (sometimes one-on-one meetings; other times group discussions) actively across the Fellowship year. This Fellow observed what seems to be a critical rule for successful mentoring relationships, that is, building off already-existing relationships with selected Mentor(s). Others used this or that Mentor for very specific, and usually limited, purposes (advice, information, etc.), situations in which pre-existing relationships probably mattered less.

In sum, we suggest that each Fellow seriously consider engaging in a mentoring relationship, but that each does so understanding and balancing the limits and the potential pay-offs of such relationships.

Mentoring "Tips"

Following are nine ideas that Mentors and Fellows can both use to ensure that their mentoring relationships work to foster Fellows' growth as leaders.

1. Select a Mentor with Care

   Fellows are well advised to assess whether they are ready for Mentoring, what they want from such a relationship, and, particularly in seeking someone as a Mentor, what they are looking for in a Mentor.

   The most critical matter is who to approach. We suggest that you consider whether there are one or more senior professionals you already know, perhaps do or do not work with or for, who might fit the profile you have in mind. Very often, it is easier to enlist one of these persons than to reach out to a stranger.

   However you proceed, do it with care: recruit a Mentor as you would any other helper – recruit, interview, be open about your expectations and the extent of your own commitment to a mentoring relationship.

   EL and ELP Fellows have found that they are most able to find and to get value out of a mentor when a solid relationship with that person already exists.

   While this tip is directed primarily to Fellows, it also applies to prospective Mentors. Each of them, too, should expect to engage in an honest, two-way interview before deciding to sign on or not.

2. Clarify What the Relationship is About

   Each Fellow should be as clear as possible with her/himself and with each Mentor he/she chooses as to why she/he is seeking that person as a Mentor and what he/she would like from the interaction(s) with the Mentor.

   Mentors, for their part, should be as clear as possible about what they can and cannot do for each of the Fellows they mentor.

   Check every so often with yourself and with one another about whether the original rationale for the relationship is still valid, has changed/needs changing, has been satisfied, or is not likely to be met (even if changed).

3. Plan

   While each mentoring relationship will develop a dynamic – hopefully positive and generative – of its own, it is best to establish at the outset a plan, an outline really, of how the relationship is expected to proceed. Start by putting in writing (without too much detail) what you both expect (see number 2 above). Then specify how often and when you agree to meet; how you'll do so (phone or in person); how long you will set aside for each session; how you'll deal with unforeseen circumstances and needs to re-schedule; and key contact details for one another. Again, don't make this too detailed, but do consider it an informal working agreement to which each is committed.

4. <u>Prepare for Each Session.</u>

   Time is scarce, so use it well. Before picking up the phone or sitting down together for the meeting, both Fellow and Mentor should spend a few minutes to prepare for the discussion. Review the Fellow's reasons and/or goals for seeking the Mentor's guidance.

   Fellows should be especially thoughtful in approaching mentoring and Mentors. Each Fellow should take time to think through what it is that he/she is looking for from the Mentor during the interaction or the relationship as a whole. It helps a lot to be realistic in expectations, to think in terms of one or two goals, and to communicate them to the Mentor prior to the meeting.

5. <u>Be there</u>

   The American comic, Woody Allen, says that 90% of success in life is "showing up". He may have been joking, but he's on point. Fellows and Mentors should show up for scheduled meetings and be as prompt in doing so as possible. If you cannot make the meeting, let the other know in plenty of time and take the initiative for rescheduling.

6. <u>Build the relationship</u>

   Most Fellow-Mentor interactions will be relatively short – an hour or so. Many relationships will also be brief (although some may well become more permanent). Still, take some time in each session to deepen your knowledge and understanding of the other person.

7. <u>Actively listen to one another</u>

   There is probably no greater piece of advice than this. Each Mentor and Fellow must give one another space and time to say what's on her/his mind. And, they must not just hear the other, but listen attentively. Otherwise, how can one understand accurately what the other is saying? Do not presume that one's own experience necessarily guarantees understanding of the other's experience. Seek clarification, paraphrase what you believe the other has said, and seek her/his agreement that you've got it right. It's on the basis of accurate, sensitive listening, more than on any other behavior, that useful relationships, no matter how temporary, are built.

8. <u>If possible meet in person, but make telephonic meetings work, too</u>

   In-person meetings offer more to both Mentors and Fellows than any other mode. Each can see the other and take in important physical cues relating to comfort level with one another, states of ease or anxiety related to the subject under discussion, etc.

9. Keep a log

   Maintaining a running record of what has been discussed and, more importantly, learned at and from each mentoring interaction can be immensely valuable for building a cumulative sense of growth. This applies to both Mentors – especially if providing on-going support to Fellows – and most importantly to Fellows as they consciously develop as values-grounded leaders. The log need not be fancy and even extensive. It should be candid but focused on moving forward – how to do that and when it has happened.

10. Actively “manage” the relationship

    Fellows who want a successful mentoring relationship with more senior leaders are well-advised to take the lead in setting up appointments (telephonic and in-person), sending reminders of them, arranging for meeting places, following up meetings with “thank you” notes (paper or electronic) which contain brief summaries of learning point(s), plans and/or decisions made as a result of the interaction – perhaps followed with a year-later summary of what they’ve done that owes something to the “mentoring.”

VII. FINAL NOTE

The Lead Coach and the rest of the Program Staff are always available to help you address any questions or issues that arise about coaching and mentoring in general, or in your actual coaching or mentoring relationships. All such contacts will be treated in confidentiality. Our interest is to ensure that coaching and/or mentoring works well for each person involved.

APPENDIX A
SUGGESTED SCHEDULE OF COACHING CALLS

June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April
1 (Live Intake)	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	1