LLAMA Foundational Competencies - White Paper

Introduction

As the professional organization for leadership and management development in libraries, the Library Leadership and Management Association (LLAMA), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), has been working for a number of years to develop definitive competencies for leaders and managers across roles, career stages and library types. The LLAMA Competencies Committee has identified and defined 14 foundational competencies that will not only guide LLAMA's professional development activities for some time to come, but also give individual practitioners a common set of concepts and definitions that can be used for personal leadership and management development, benchmarking and evaluation.

These foundational competencies apply to all leaders and managers, regardless of the type of organization in which they work, their role in the organization, or their tenure or experience as leaders. Each of the foundational competencies is accompanied by a definition of the concept, including a general description of what successful use of that competency might look like. In addition, the Competencies Committee has identified at least one key citation for each competency that provides an entry point for a leader or manager who wants to explore that competency further.

LLAMA's 14 Foundational Competencies

Communication skills

A leader effectively employs a wide range of well-developed verbal, non-verbal and written communication methods to interact with employees and stakeholders, conveying information clearly and efficiently and using active listening for consistent, mutual understanding.

> Barrett, D. J. (2006). Strong communication skills a must for today's leaders. *Handbook of business strategy*, *7*(1)*,* 385-390.

Change management

A leader provides an environment open to innovation and collaboration by ensuring continuous two-way communication, flexibility, and willingness to learn from mistakes made, and by providing the training necessary to make the change happen.

> Kanter, R. M. (1999, summer). The enduring skills of change leaders. *Leader to Leader* (13)*,* 16-17.

Team building (personnel)

A leader unifies a group of individuals behind a commonly-shared vision by using strong communication skills to encourage dedication to mutual accountability, investment in the team's goal and purpose, and support for success of the team and its members.

Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2002). *The leadership challenge* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons. p. 155.

KU Work Group for Community Health and Development. (2015). Chapter 13, Section 4: Building teams: Broadening the base for leadership. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas. Retrieved from the Community Tool Box:
http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/leadership-ideas/team-building/main

Collaboration and partnerships

A leader works, and encourages others to work, in cooperation with others within the library as well as with other organizations in order to achieve a common goal. Leaders look for ways to strengthen the role of the library in the community by seeking out opportunities to work with others in a mutually beneficial way, engaging stakeholders, and building relationships.

Smallwood, C. (Ed.). (2010). *Librarians as community partners: An outreach handbook.* Chicago, IL: American Library Association.

Mattessich, P. W., Murray-Close, M., & Monsey, B.R. (2001). *Collaboration: What makes it work* (2nd ed.). Saint Paul, MN: Wilder Foundation.

Emotional intelligence

A leader is effective in understanding and improving the way he or she perceives and manages his or her own and other people's emotions, applying concepts such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills to inform interpersonal interactions.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence.* New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Salovey, P., Mayer, J., & Caruso, D. (2004). Emotional intelligence: Theory, findings, and implications. *Psychological Inquiry*, 197-215.

Problem solving

A leader solves problems – taking proactive measures to avoid conflicts and address issues when they arise, and guiding employees to find appropriate information that allows them to generate and evaluate a diverse set of alternative solutions – to prevent issues from escalating and to encourage employees' abilities to do the same.

Griswold, A. (2013, Nov. 8). 4 problem-solving tactics of great leaders. *Business Insider.* Retrieved from http://www.businessinsider.com/problem-solving-tactics-of-great-leaders-2013-11

Reiter-Palmon, R., & Illies, J. J. (2004). Leadership and creativity: Understanding leadership from a creative problem-solving perspective. *Leadership Quarterly, 15*(1), 55-77. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/psychfacpub/31

Evidence-based decision making

A leader makes use of research derived from trials, literature reviews, or other activities that provides objective information on issues of concern in order to help determine whether a particular policy or program will work at their organization and to demonstrate its effectiveness.

Cartwright, N., & Hardie, J. (2012). *Evidence-based policy: A practical guide to doing it better*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Evidence based library and information practice. Retrieved from https://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/EBLIP/index

Conflict resolution (personnel)

A leader supports differences of opinion, and helps individuals resolve conflict in a constructive manner when it threatens to become counterproductive to the organization's mission and strategic goals, encouraging communication, collaboration and compromise.

Cloke, K., & Goldsmith, J. (2011). *Resolving conflicts at work: Ten strategies for everyone on the job*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Montgomery, J. G., Cook, E. I., Wagner, P. J., & Hubbard, G. T. (2005). *Conflict management for libraries: Strategies for a positive, productive workplace*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.

Budget creation and presentation

A leader creates a budget that considers the needs of the department or organization, incorporates the input of team members, and reflects the institutional mission and priorities, and then communicates the value of library services to stakeholders, presenting qualitative and quantitative data to making a case for their proposed budget.

Doost, Roger K. (2007). Budgets and budgeting. In B. S. Kaliski (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of business and finance* (2nd ed., Vol. 1. pp. 58-60). Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA.

Forward thinking

A leader maintains an understanding of important trends and developments in the library landscape, and uses that understanding to position their library to take advantage of opportunities as they arise, moving the library forward from a position of strength.

Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2010). Focusing on the future sets leaders apart. In *The truth about leadership* (pp. 45-60). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Critical thinking

A leader applies critical thinking, which implies a high level of understanding, the ability to break a problem down into its constituent parts, and the skills to effectively analyze and assess the issues, to their library's challenges to identify and implement solutions.

Halpern, D. (2013). *Thought and knowledge: An introduction to critical thinking* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Ethics

A leader uses ethics in the process of deciding what should be done, reflecting on the reasons for a proposed course of action that takes into account the organization's decision-making process, its system of production and maintenance, and its culture and values, with the goal of bringing forth the resources so that people can make better decisions.

Brown, M. (2000). *Working ethics: Strategies for decision making and organizational responsibility*. Berkeley, CA: Basic Resources.

Project management

A leader takes deliberate steps to execute, monitor, analyze and report on the progress of a work group charged with the creation of a unique product, service or result in order to deliver the on-time/on-budget results, learning and integration that the project and its stakeholders require.

Kerzner, H. (2003). *Project management: A systems approach to planning, scheduling, and controlling* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Wiley.

Project Management Institute. (2013). *A guide to the project management body of knowledge (PMBOK® guide)* (5th ed.). Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute, Inc.

Marketing and advocacy

A leader collaboratively creates key activities and goals of the organization and aggressively seeks out opportunities to communicate the goals with both internal and external constituencies.

Sarjeant-Jenkins, R. (2012). Why market? Reflections of an academic library administrator. *Library Leadership & Management, 26*(1), 1-8. Retrieved from https://journals.tdl.org/llm/index.php/llm/article/view/5903

Heyman, D. R. (2011). *Nonprofit management 101 : A complete and practical guide for leaders and professionals*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rosenbach, W. E., Taylor, R., & Youndt, M. A. (2012). *Contemporary issues in leadership* (7th ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Competencies Background

While there is much in the professional management and leadership literature regarding competencies, a standardized way for translating these into library leadership and management has been lacking. LLAMA recognized this gap, and has been working to develop competencies that have been formalized, providing consistency in evaluation, leadership and management development, and benchmarking across the library profession. This process began by tasking the 2008 Emerging Leader class with the creation of an initial list of competencies for library leaders. The result of their work was documented in "Developing Core Leadership Competencies for the Library Profession" published in the spring 2009 issue of *Library Leadership and Management*.

In March 2011, LLAMA appointed the LLAMA Competencies Task Force to build on the initial work done by the 2008 Emerging Leaders. The new task force issued a report in May 2012, recommending that LLAMA:
1. Adopt the following definition of competencies: "Professional competencies comprise the knowledge, skills, and abilities which are teachable, measurable, and objective and which define and contribute to performance in librarianship."
2. Create a standing Competencies Committee charged with periodic review of LLAMA's competency statements
3. Adopt an evidence-based, stakeholder inclusive process for competency statement review by the Competencies Committee

The recommendation for a standing committee was instituted for 2012-2013 with this group undertook a review of the original competencies list and evaluated items against adopted definition of competencies, identifying proposed competencies which were not "teachable, measurable, and objective." The 2013-2014 committee restructured the work and brought it into alignment with ALA's Core Competencies of Librarianship, Section 8, "Administration and Management."

Selection of Foundational Competencies

The selection process began in early 2016 with the Committee taking the "LLAMA Competencies List 2014-2015" and paring it down, removing items that were very specific or that applied to leaders in specialized areas. The remaining 49 items were sent out as a survey to LLAMA members, asking them to choose up to ten that they considered to be core.

The survey garnered 282 responses and from these responses, three items emerged clearly as the top competencies: Communication skills, Change management, and Team building (personnel). Each of these competencies was selected by at least 50% of respondents.

Of the rest of the items, a natural breakpoint fell at items selected by at least 25% of respondents. Using this threshold resulted in a total of fourteen competencies:

- Communication skills (60.3%)
- Change management (59.9%)
- Team building (personnel) (54.3%)
- Collaboration and partnerships (44.7%)
- Emotional intelligence (40.8%)
- Problem solving (33.7%)
- Evidence-based decision making (33.3%)
- Conflict resolution (personnel) (31.6%)
- Budget creation and presentation (30.9%)
- Forward thinking (30.1%)
- Critical thinking (29.1%)
- Ethics (28%)
- Project planning and scheduling (26.2%)
- Marketing and advocacy (26.2%)

Future Activities

Knowing that the competencies will provide a framework for LLAMA's professional development activities in the years to come, the Competencies Committee continues to develop this important tool. Future activities are slated to include:
- Publishing and promoting the foundational competencies to LLAMA membership, and to the other divisions of ALA
- Further developing the foundational competencies by soliciting case studies to help illuminate their use specifically in library settings
- Creating definitions for the next tier of competencies identified as "core" by respondents to the 2016 survey
- Ensuring that the LLAMA leadership and management competencies are aligned with competency work in other ALA divisions

- Providing a resource to other ALA divisions who are developing leadership and management competencies and professional development activities