

City of Columbus Department of Public Utilities: Leadership Development

September 2025

Scope of Work

Attachments: Project Budget and Timeline

We look forward to collaborating to develop a leadership development program for the City of Columbus Department of Utilities (DPU) that will create a culture of continuous learning, foster a growth mindset, and encourage innovation, resilience, and adaptability in tackling challenges.

The success of any leadership development initiative hinges on a well-structured, phased approach that addresses organizational needs, aligns with strategic goals, and fosters sustainable growth. Through a combination of needs assessments, competency alignment, tailored training modules, and ongoing evaluation, the program aims to equip DPU leaders at all levels with the skills, tools, and strategies needed to drive organizational success.

The project includes identifying leadership competencies, designing and implementing leadership development programs, and creating a long-term sustainability plan.

Project Deliverables

- DPU leadership competencies with behavioral and cultural expectations that supervisors, managers, and other DPU leaders can practice, measure, and demonstrate
- Leadership Development Program(s) for various levels of leadership
- Short- and long-term Communication Plans and Templates
- Transition Plan

The following sections outline the proposed approach, broken into key phases.

Phase 0: Project Kick-off & Schedule Coordination

Prior to starting the project, it is important to schedule a kick-off meeting with members of the executive leadership team to review the scope and timeline and level set expectations. During this meeting, ThinkWell will review key milestones and deliverables as well as discuss communication and stakeholder engagement expectations throughout the project. Finally, the ThinkWell project team will establish bi-weekly check-in times with the internal project management team as well as quarterly feedback meeting with the executive team to ensure consistent progress and communication.

Key Phase 0 project areas and/or deliverables include the following:

- Initial Project Review Meeting
- Bi-Weekly Check-In / Quarterly Feedback Meetings
- Detail Planning Meeting

Phase 1: Leadership Assessment & Competency Design

This initial phase, which includes a leadership gap and needs assessment as well as the identification and definition of competencies, is the most critical component to the development of the leadership program. An investment of time in the assessment phase of the project ensures the customized program design is scalable and sustainable.

Leadership Gap Analysis and Needs Assessment: This phase will include:

1. Structured discussions with the Executive Team to thoroughly understand the organization's culture, strategic goals, and current leadership strengths and weaknesses.
2. A comprehensive review of current strategic initiatives, outcomes of previous programs, and any employee engagement data useful to identify challenges, current areas of focus, and opportunities to align program content to real DPU activities.
3. Via surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews with select team members, input from all levels of leadership and functional areas within DPU will be gathered to supplement the data review.

Identifying gaps and priorities during this project phase will ensure alignment between the training approach, content, and outcome measures.

Define Leadership Competencies Aligned with Organizational Goals: Building a competency framework that supports DPU's objectives will serve as the foundation for the program. During the assessment phase, the project team will collaborate with the Executive team and HR leaders to define key leadership competencies. The thorough assessment process will determine which topics align most closely with organizational goals and leadership development needs.

The process to determine leadership competencies will include:

1. Understanding the Organizational Context. ThinkWell will:
 - Confirm short-term and long-term organizational goals and priorities.
 - Analyze data from surveys, interviews, and other engagements to understand the current cultural and leadership gaps.
 - Review organizational mission, vision, and values to ensure competencies reinforce the public service commitment and incorporate any like values, such as transparency, accountability, equity, sustainability, or service excellence.
 - Benchmark best practices from similar service agencies or public utility standards.
2. Defining Leadership Competencies. ThinkWell will:
 - Identify core competency categories that reflect both cultural and behavioral expectations.
 - Translate abstract concepts into observable behaviors for each competency to include clearly defining terms and terminology.
 - Draft and validate those competencies for final review.

Key Phase 1 project areas and/or deliverables include the following:

- Needs Assessment and Leadership Gap Analysis (e.g. interviews, surveys, focus groups)
- Data Analysis and Reporting
- Identification and Selection of Leadership Competencies, incl. executive review sessions
- Competency-focused Communication Plan

Phase 2: Leadership Program Design & Development:

ThinkWell will combine leadership best practices with DPU's newly defined leadership competencies to design targeted programs for executive staff, emerging leaders, front-line supervisors, and middle managers. These programs will align with DPU's goal of implementing a flexible, cost-effective solution that fosters long-term employee engagement and commitment. Each program will feature a comprehensive curriculum that includes core leadership principles and tailored modules to address varying leadership levels and functional needs.

Design and Develop the Leadership Curriculum: Applicable to the type of work and roles of the participants, the curriculum will likely include blended learning approaches, such as in-person and virtual workshops, along with self-paced e-learning modules to complement live sessions and to increase accessibility. The design will include recommended participant selection criteria, delivery timing, program key performance indicators (KPIs), leadership assessment tools, and evaluations.

Throughout the curriculum development process, we will collaborate closely with DPU's executive team to align with budget requirements and define roles for curriculum delivery, program management, and long-term support. The program design will be iterative and responsive to stakeholder feedback on both content and delivery methods.

Develop Short-term Communication Plan: Training programs thrive when they are well-communicated, engaging, and foster a sense of ownership among all stakeholders. A well-structured communication plan ensures that employees understand the value of the leadership development program and are motivated to actively participate.

To achieve this, ThinkWell will partner with DPU's internal communications and branding team to develop a comprehensive communication strategy tailored to both short-term rollouts and long-term cultural integration. The *short-term communication plan* will focus on *building awareness and enthusiasm* for the leadership development program across different channels.

Establish Program Evaluation Success Metrics: KPIs will be defined to measure program success to include quantitative metrics, such as retention rates, productivity, or attendance, in addition to qualitative feedback related to team coherence, job satisfaction, and morale.

Key Phase 2 project areas and/or deliverables include the following:

- Curriculum Design and Development, including KPI confirmation
- Short Term Communication Plan

Phase 3A: Pilot and Initial Program Training Cycle

As part of the third phase, ThinkWell will pilot the initial leadership program with a select cohort of leaders, representing the executive suite, middle managers, and front-line supervisors.

Implementing the Pilot Program with Initial Cohorts: ThinkWell will assist DPU with the selection of a representative group of leaders to review training content and participate in the first program cohorts. ThinkWell will facilitate the programs, provide and/or secure coaching, and ensure tools for applying skills in real time are provided. DPU leadership, human resources staff, and/or employees identified as the future training team may serve as guest speakers or co-facilitate sessions as designed.

Collect Data and Feedback for Continuous Improvement: Throughout the pilot phase, the ThinkWell project team will gather participant and supervisor feedback through structured surveys, interviews, and peer reviews. The information collected will be utilized to refine the program and training content.

Evaluate Program Effectiveness: ThinkWell will conduct a thorough analysis of program outcomes by leveraging the established key performance indicators (KPIs) along with participant and supervisor feedback.

Refining Communications Strategy: As part of the pilot phase, it will be important to not only continuously communicate the importance and relevance of participating in the program, but to also utilize feedback to refine and adjust future communications efforts.

Key Phase 3A project areas and/or deliverables include the following:

- Pilot Program Implementation
- Refined communication strategy
- Analysis and Reporting on Pilot Outcomes

Phase 3B: Ongoing Program Refinement and Expansion

As the leadership development program transitions from its initial implementation to a more embedded and sustainable model, Phase 3 will focus on continuous improvement and long-term scalability. The emphasis will be on evaluating effectiveness, refining content, and expansion.

In preparation of year two of the leadership development program, ThinkWell will collaborate with DPU's leadership team to create an implementation plan useful to gradually expand the program across departments and leadership levels and integrate refined modules and feedback. The implementation plan will also include training modules for internal facilitators to manage future cohorts, ensuring that the program remains cost-effective and self-sustaining.

Key Phase 3B project areas and/or deliverables include the following:

- Refined Programs
- Initial Transition & Year Two Implementation Plan

Phase 4: Establish Transition Plan and Prepare DPU staff

The final phase of the leadership development program focuses on establishing a robust transition plan to empower DPU staff to manage future cohorts through a mix of in-house facilitators and outside consultants, ensuring the program's long-term sustainability and cost-effectiveness. This phase will include the development of internal training modules, detailed guidelines, and a support structure to enable DPU facilitators and leaders to take ownership.

The transition plan will outline a structured process for transferring ownership, including identifying suitable internal facilitators, setting a timeline for responsibilities to be handed off, and providing ongoing coaching and advisory support during the transition. The process will include clear milestones to ensure a smooth transfer of program management and a clear roadmap for scaling the program across departments or adapting it for future needs.

Developing Training Modules and Training Internal Facilitators: To equip internal facilitators with the skills and knowledge to successfully manage future cohorts, ThinkWell will design and deliver facilitator training modules for topics and formats as decided in partnership with the Executive Leadership Team. These modules will cover mastery of program content, facilitation techniques, coaching strategies, and program administration.

Creating a Resource Hub: A resource hub will support internal facilitators by providing digital access to training materials, curriculum outlines, leadership resources, templates for evaluations and feedback, and a facilitator guidebook with step-by-step instructions and troubleshooting tips. This resource hub will ensure facilitators have the tools necessary to manage the leadership competencies and programs.

Key Phase 4 project areas and/or deliverables include the following:

- Facilitator Training Modules Prep
- Train-the-Trainer Sessions
- Final Transition and Implementation Plan

Future Scope Considerations: Year 2 and Beyond – Strengthening & Scaling Leadership Development

As the leadership development initiative matures in year two and beyond, the focus should shift toward scaling the program across the organization to ensure that all teams, departments, and leadership levels benefit. Year 2 activities should include expanding the program, with the goal to cultivate a strong leadership pipeline and drive long-term success.

Institutionalize Leadership Development: To sustain long-term impact, leadership competencies must be embedded in the organization’s culture across hiring, performance review, and promotion conversations. When onboarding new talent, introducing leadership training to new hires and managers will create an immediate sense of professional investment. Finally, embedding leadership principles into meetings, decision-making, and strategic planning keeps them up front and visible and indicates to the employee that these values are important and adhered to by senior leadership.

Key Phase 5 project areas and/or deliverables will be determined prior to the start of year two.

NOTE: Although not part of this project, ThinkWell is available to consult with DPU leadership and human resources on mapping competencies to strategic objectives as well as organizational and functional goals and integrating it into talent management systems.

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City of Columbus Department of Public Utilities Leadership Development - Project Budget (rev. 9/24/2025)
ThinkWell Coaching & Consulting

Phase	Activity	Est. Hours	Mgr Rate (\$/hour)	Est. Hours	Team Rate (\$/hour)	Detail	Cost (\$)
Phase 0: Project Kick-off	Initial Project Review Meeting	10	\$ 225.00	10	\$ 175.00		\$ 4,000.00
	Bi-Weekly Check-In / Quarterly Feedback Meetings	24	\$ 225.00	24	\$ 175.00		\$ 9,600.00
	Detail Planning Meeting	8	\$ 225.00	8	\$ 175.00		\$ 3,200.00
Phase 0 Subtotal		42		42			\$ 16,800.00
Phase 1: Leadership Assessment & Competency Design	Needs Assessment and Leadership Gap Analysis (Interviews, surveys, focus groups)	40	\$ 225.00	65	\$ 175.00		\$ 20,375.00
	Data Analysis and Reporting	20	\$ 225.00	40	\$ 175.00		\$ 11,500.00
	Identifying and defining Leadership Competencies includes executive review sessions	50	\$ 225.00	35	\$ 175.00		\$ 17,375.00
	Communication Planning	10	\$ 225.00	40	\$ 175.00		\$ 9,250.00
Phase 1 Subtotal		120		180			\$ 58,500.00
Phase 2: Leadership Program Design & Development	Curriculum Design and Development	60	\$ 225.00	75	\$ 175.00		\$ 26,625.00
	Review and Iteration based on Stakeholder Feedback	15	\$ 225.00	25	\$ 175.00		\$ 7,750.00
	Communication Planning	5	\$ 225.00	25	\$ 175.00		\$ 5,500.00
	KPI Development & Review	15	\$ 225.00	20	\$ 175.00		\$ 6,875.00
Phase 2 Subtotal		95		145			\$ 46,750.00
Phase 3A: Pilot & Initial Program Training Cycle (5 Executives, 10 Middle Mgrs, 15 Front Line Supervisors)	Pilot Program Implementation	90	\$ 225.00	90	\$ 175.00		\$ 36,000.00
	Executive Program (90 mins per month for 6 months)						
	Mgr & Supervisor Programs (24 hours per 6 month program)						
	Individual Coaching and Support during Pilot Programs (30 leaders, 1 hour per month for 6 months)	0	\$ 225.00	0	\$ 175.00	see Variable Costs below	-
	Data Collection and Feedback Analysis	10	\$ 225.00	15	\$ 175.00		\$ 4,875.00
	Communication Planning	5	\$ 225.00	25	\$ 175.00		\$ 5,500.00
Phase 3B: Ongoing Refinement & Expansion	Analysis and Reporting on Pilot Outcomes	15	\$ 225.00	20	\$ 175.00		\$ 6,875.00
	Program Refinement	50	\$ 225.00	50	\$ 175.00		\$ 20,000.00
	Expansion Planning	20	\$ 225.00	20	\$ 175.00		\$ 8,000.00
Phase 3 Subtotal		190		220			\$ 81,250.00
Phase 4: Transition Plan & Facilitator Training	Facilitator Training Modules Prep	10	\$ 225.00	20	\$ 175.00		\$ 5,750.00
	Train-the-Trainer Sessions	10	\$ 225.00	10	\$ 175.00		\$ 4,000.00
	Transition Plan Implementation (includes Resource Hub creation, project evaluation and year two planning)	35	\$ 225.00	50	\$ 175.00		\$ 16,625.00
Phase 4 Subtotal		55		80			\$ 26,375.00
Subtotal Labor Costs							\$ 229,675.00
Program Management & Miscellaneous Variable Costs	Indirect Costs / Contingency Budget (5%)					5%	\$ 11,483.75
	Materials (includes assessments, program materials, etc.)					\$400 per participant (30)	\$ 12,000.00
	E-learning Design and Development						\$ 6,500.00
	Individual Coaching & Support - Pilot Programs (Phase 2) (5 executive leaders, 1 hour per month for 6 months)					Contract coaches; up to \$250/hour	\$ 7,500.00
	Travel Costs (travel mileage for in-person meetings)					30 trips, 25 mi RT @ .70	\$ 525.00
Subtotal Variable Costs							\$ 38,008.75
TOTAL							\$ 267,683.75



City of Columbus Department of Public Utilities Leadership Development - Project Timeline

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