

# **A Snapshot of the NCWWI's Leadership Competency Framework & Conceptual Model**

National Child Welfare Workforce Institute  
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## Background

The Leadership Competency Framework represents a sustained and collaborative effort by many partners affiliated with the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) who contributed their time and expertise in its development. The NCWWI is funded through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. DHHS, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, Award NO. 90CT0145.

The purpose of the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) is to build the capacity of the nation's child welfare workforce and improve outcomes for children and families. The NCWWI focuses on activities that support the development of child welfare leaders in public, private,\* and tribal child welfare systems. The NCWWI recognizes that child welfare leaders are change agents and must possess certain *competencies* in order to do their jobs effectively and lead child welfare agencies into the future. Competencies are the knowledge, skills, and abilities that leaders acquire, and which are necessary to achieve job performance and attain agency goals.

## NCWWI Leadership Competency Framework

The NCWWI explored multiple competency models of leadership and adopted a competency framework that reflects the multi-dimensional nature of the child welfare field and the corresponding complex and diverse body of knowledge and skills. The NCWWI promotes the view that staff members at all levels of a child welfare organization are leaders. Consequently, competencies associated with effective leaders are similar across positions. However, the indicators of proficiency vary and will manifest differently for the caseworker, supervisor, manager, and executive.

A multi-step and iterative process was used during the development process. First, multiple competency frameworks were compared and contrasted to ensure that the leadership competency framework reflected the most salient and comprehensive competencies for the child welfare field. Only a limited set of competency models were found, and those that were selected for comparison were those that were most closely aligned with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for success in the child welfare field.

Competency frameworks compared included models from the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM); Cornerstones 4 Kids; Hal Lawson at the University of Albany, State University of New York; University of Southern Maine; and Daniels College of Business, University of Denver. The NCWWI Leadership Competency Framework reflects the best of all these models by mapping them against the OPM model, which serves as the base framework. The OPM model was

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\* Private agencies that are contracted by the State to provide case management services that are traditionally provided by the public child welfare system.

a neutral, comprehensive framework endorsed by the federal government and thus became the foundational competency set. All competency definitions were originally developed by OPM in 2006, unless otherwise noted.

## NCWWI Leadership Model

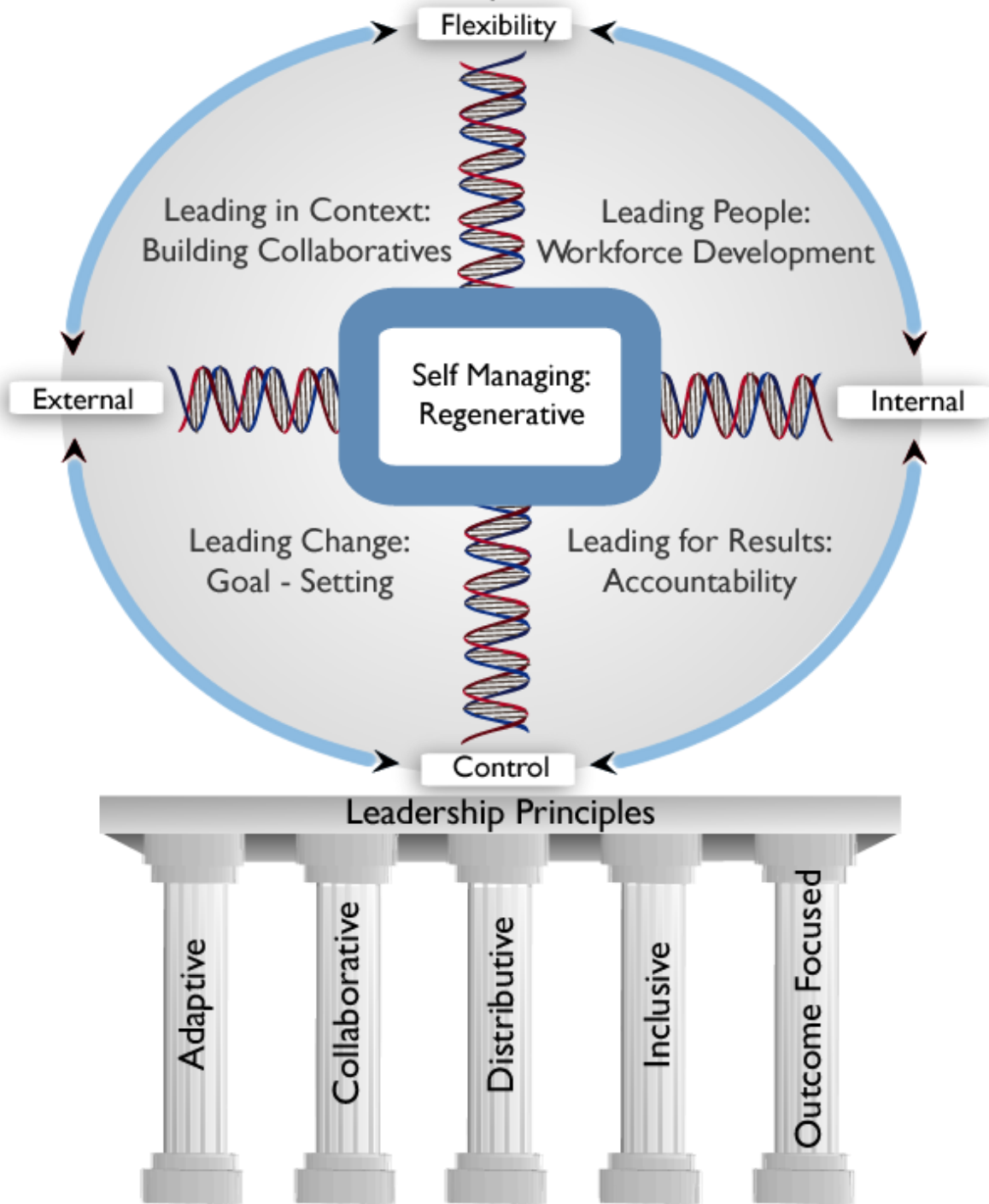
Concurrent to the development of the *Leadership Competency Framework*, the NCWWI also developed a conceptual model of leadership. To illustrate the dimensions of the leader's world and the constant balancing act involved, the model built on a Competing Values Approach, as described by Mark Preston in a comprehensive review of literature in child welfare management education and training (2005). Using this framework, the leader's world can be broken down into four quadrants: internal flexibility, external flexibility, internal control, and external control. Within each, there is a specific focus.

- **Leading Change:** This quadrant reflects the strategic role of the leader to set and realize high standards of organizational performance. This quadrant emphasizes an action mind-set, the ability to plan strategically, and the capacity to envision new responses to organizational, political, and social challenges.
- **Leading in Context:** The role of the leader in this quadrant is to effectively and proactively engage the external environment. This involves advocacy, boundary spanning, and working with the community.
- **Leading People:** The focus of this quadrant is on developing individual and groups within the organization and emphasizes relationships, people, and process.
- **Leading for Results:** Workflow processes and various forms of work-related information and data are the focus of this quadrant. Leadership at all levels is needed to encourage evidence-informed practice and to develop the chain of evidence from individual to agency to system outcomes.

Fundamental competencies are foundational for success in each of the four leadership quadrants. To complete the visual model, the NCWWI adopted five “pillars” of leadership that are fundamental principles reflecting desired qualities and values of effective leadership within the child welfare field. These pillars—1) Adaptive, 2) Collaborative, 3) Distributive, 4) Inclusive, and 5) Outcome Focused—provide a foundation for an approach to leadership that is consistent with child welfare values and promising approaches to effective leadership.

The complete *Leadership Competency Framework* is available at [http://www.ncwwi.org/docs/LeaderCompFrame\\_latest.pdf](http://www.ncwwi.org/docs/LeaderCompFrame_latest.pdf). For more information about the NCWWI or additional resources, please visit <http://www.ncwwi.org> or contact Sara Munson, National Dissemination Coordinator, at [smunson@uamail.albany.edu](mailto:smunson@uamail.albany.edu).

# National Child Welfare Workforce Institute Leadership Model



## Leadership Pillars

### Description of the Five Leadership Pillars

<b>Adaptive</b> (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002)	<b>Collaborative</b> (Lawson, 2008)	<b>Distributive</b> (Spillane, 2006)	<b>Inclusive</b> (Ryan, 2006)	<b>Outcome Focused</b> (Lawson, 2008)
<i>Learning new ways for dealing with challenges</i>	<i>Community engagement</i>	<i>Leadership encouraged and enacted at all organizational levels</i>	<i>Collective process to promote inclusion</i>	<i>Meeting organizational and professional goals</i>
1. Challenges own and other people’s habits, beliefs, and values	1. Creates opportunities for collaboration outside agency	1. Distribution of decision-making and leadership responsibilities	1. Advocates for a full range of participants in the process (diverse participation)	1. Applies technical knowledge
2. Emphasizes a strategic/ innovation mindset	2. Encourages exchange of information and sharing/pooling resources	2. Manages human, cultural, social, and economic capital	2. Promotes leadership as a collective process	2. Analyzes problems
3. Works with differences	3. Focuses on common purpose	3. Encourages purposeful action	3. Creates a sense of urgency around inclusion	3. Uses data to inform decisions
4. Orchestrates positive conflict	4. Stresses process rather than the product	4. Promotes collective rather than individual action	4. Acknowledges disparities and seeks to mitigate them	4. Focuses on indicators leading to outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being
5. Inspires others to challenge decision-making processes	5. Has action orientation		5. Engages in continuous learning about inclusion-related issues	5. Stresses product/result rather than process
6. Navigates changeable environments			6. Engages diverse stakeholders	

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