

Grow your DEIA leadership

Bring your experience, your curiosity, and the kind of leader you want to become. Develop a practice that makes equity, inclusion, and accessibility part of how DSD works.

Learn. Reflect. Practice. Return.

- **Learn:** Explore a resource and the leadership decision it can inform.
- **Reflect:** Separate what you observed from what you assumed. Consider whose perspective is missing.
- **Practice:** Try a supported change or work through a realistic situation.
- **Return:** Seek feedback, examine what happened, and decide what to keep or change.

I want to explore leadership

Your own curiosity is enough to begin. Explore what leadership could mean for you, with or without a future management role.

Leadership can begin in how you listen, explain a decision, or make room for another person's contribution. Through an equity lens, the question is also whose experience informs the work and who can access the opportunity to shape it.

You may already bring relevant experience from community work, professional practice, caregiving, or collaboration. Connect that experience with a specific capability and test it in a manageable situation. Feedback helps you see both your contribution and what you want to develop next.

After this, you can

- Separate an observation from an assumption about another person.
- Invite perspectives through more than one way of participating.
- Explain a recommendation with evidence and revise it after feedback.

An example to try

Map a confusing onboarding handoff in DSD. Ask what information colleagues needed, draft a clearer welcome map, and invite someone new to review it.

Steps

1. **Find your context:** See how your experience connects with the wider program and the people around your work. **Explore program orientation** — [program page /orientation](#)
2. **Choose one contribution:** Begin with a welcome, a conversation, or a process you can help make clearer. **Explore welcoming and orientation** — [program page /one-dsd/leadership?stage=onboard#life-cycle](#)

3. **Learn with someone:** Bring a question to a Learning Lab or find a peer conversation that helps you reflect. **Visit the Learning Lab** — program page [/one-dsd/team/learning-lab](#)

Someone has encouraged me

An invitation can open a possibility. You decide whether it fits your interests and what you would like to explore.

Being encouraged can help you recognize a strength you had not named. It is also a chance to ask what the person noticed: which contribution, capability, or example led to the invitation? Specific feedback is more useful than an unexplained label of potential.

A meaningful opportunity includes preparation, time, access, and feedback. A mentor can help you think; a sponsor can help you access work where you can develop. Agree on support before the opportunity becomes another responsibility, and keep space to change direction.

After this, you can

- Describe your own development interest and the evidence behind the invitation.
- Agree on a manageable opportunity with time, access, and feedback.
- Practice an equity skill and explain what you learned from the experience.

An example to try

Co-facilitate a DSD Learning Lab on access to development opportunities. Offer spoken and written ways to contribute, then revise an invitation using what participants tell you.

Steps

1. **Make the invitation useful:** Ask what the person noticed, what opportunity they have in mind, and what support they can offer. **Prepare a mentoring conversation** — program page [/one-dsd/amplify/mentoring](#)
2. **Practice with support:** Choose a specific skill to develop and agree how you will receive feedback. **Explore development and sponsorship** — program page [/one-dsd/leadership?stage=develop#life-cycle](#)
3. **Keep opportunity open:** Notice how others can express interest and what would make the same opportunity accessible to them. **Explore accessible pathways** — program page [/resources/pn-accessible-leadership-pathways](#)

I want to strengthen my leadership

Bring a decision, a recurring challenge, or a skill you want to refresh. Use your experience as a starting point for deeper equity practice.

Experience can make decisions quicker, while familiar patterns can make some assumptions harder to notice. Revisit the criteria behind a recurring decision: what counts as a strong contribution, who receives

visible work, and whose perspective changes the options?

When responsibilities broaden, the equity question broadens too. A supervisor may improve a team's practice; a manager or director may need to align opportunities, resources, and expectations across teams. Both benefit from evidence of what people actually experience after a change.

Leadership growth includes your own relationship to cultural difference, not only the decisions you make about others. Staff and DHS as an organization sit somewhere on a continuum from treating sameness as fairness toward genuinely valuing, adapting to, and integrating real difference. Naming honestly where you and your team actually are is leadership work, not a detour from it.

After this, you can

- Examine a recurring decision against explicit, relevant criteria.
- Identify whose access or contribution may be overlooked.
- Try a supported process change and compare intended with experienced effects.
- Use the learning to improve development opportunities or continuity.

An example to try

Review how DSD cross-team assignments are offered. Make the capabilities and available support clear, try an open invitation, and ask who could actually participate and what made it possible.

Steps

1. **Choose a decision to examine:** Look at hiring, feedback, assignments, recognition, or development through the employee life cycle. **Explore everyday contribution** — program page [/one-dsd/leadership?stage=everyday#life-cycle](#)
2. **Learn across perspectives:** Invite specific feedback on the practice and the working conditions around it. **Explore listening and retention** — program page [/one-dsd/leadership?stage=retain#life-cycle](#)
3. **Prepare for broader responsibility:** Connect actual role requirements with evidence, supported practice, and knowledge transfer. **Explore advancement and readiness** — program page [/one-dsd/leadership?stage=advance#life-cycle](#)

Capabilities to practice

Capability	Practice	Feedback to ask for	What shows growth
Examine assumptions and use evidence	Review a practice example and separate observations, interpretations, and job-related evidence.	Which conclusion is supported, and which needs more information?	An explanation revised after considering evidence or another perspective.

Capability	Practice	Feedback to ask for	What shows growth
Communicate and facilitate across difference	Facilitate a conversation with several ways to contribute and check what people understood.	Whose perspective influenced the discussion, and what would make participation easier?	A revised meeting or communication approach informed by participants.
Build inclusion and accessibility into work	Examine a handoff, meeting, or development opportunity for avoidable access barriers.	What helped you participate, and where did you have to work around the process?	A changed process and feedback about whether it became more usable.
Develop and sponsor others equitably	Make one learning or stretch opportunity visible, with clear criteria and support.	Who could express interest and take part, and what support was missing?	An opportunity plan revised to make participation more accessible.
Connect equity with workforce decisions	Prepare options for a workforce issue, including affected perspectives, tradeoffs, and a way to learn from the decision.	Which perspective or consequence is missing from these options?	A decision brief that explains evidence, tradeoffs, and follow-through.
Share knowledge and build future capability	Document a critical handoff and invite a colleague to try it with supported preparation.	What knowledge remained implicit, and what would help someone else carry the work?	A tested handover and a development opportunity connected to the capability gap.
Examine your own cultural default	Notice one moment this month where you treated your own norm as neutral or universal, in a meeting, a decision, or a piece of feedback.	Whose norm was actually being applied, and who had to adapt to it without being asked?	A specific example of your own default named honestly, not a general statement about valuing diversity.

Your development map

Item	Detail
What would you like to develop?	Required
What experience or feedback are you starting with?	Optional
What opportunity will help you practice?	Required
What time, access, mentoring, or sponsorship would help?	Optional
Whose feedback would be useful, and what will you ask?	Optional
What would show useful growth?	Required
When or after what event will you return to this?	Optional

Lead equity through the employee life cycle

From role design and recruitment to development, retention, and succession, each stage offers a practical way to grow.

Design the role and posting

| *What does the work actually require?*

Examine the difference between a necessary qualification and a familiar picture of who usually does the work.

A situation

A DSD posting repeats a degree requirement from an earlier version. The team has not checked which duties require it or what other experience could demonstrate the capability.

- Connect each proposed criterion to an essential duty.
- Consider credible ways applicants could demonstrate the same capability.
- Review the wording and requirements with the appropriate hiring and HR partners.

Reflect: Whose experience did I initially recognize, and whose did I overlook?

Something to carry forward: A revised requirement with a clear explanation of its connection to the work.

Check job-related requirements — program page [/resources/ja-job-relatedness-check](#)

Reach and welcome applicants

| *Who can discover and navigate this opportunity?*

Inclusive recruitment concerns access to information, application processes, and networks as well as the reach of an announcement.

A situation

A position reaches the same professional circles each time. Strong potential applicants may never see it or understand how their experience connects.

- Map where the opportunity is shared and whose networks are missing.
- Check that information is accessible and explains the work plainly.
- Use appropriate recruitment channels and review where applicants encounter barriers.

Reflect: Did I interpret limited response as lack of interest before examining access?

Something to carry forward: An outreach and accessibility plan, with a question to check after recruitment. **Explore the inclusive hiring life cycle** — program page [/resources/ja-inclusive-hiring-lifecycle](#)

Interview and assess fairly

What is evidence, and what am I interpreting?

A diverse panel still needs shared, job-related criteria. Cultural knowledge invites curiosity; it does not tell us why an individual behaves a particular way.

A situation

An applicant gives a relevant example while looking down. A panel member describes the applicant as lacking confidence. The group has not connected that impression to the competency being assessed.

- Separate the observed behavior from the interpretation.
- Assess the substance of the answer using agreed criteria and consistent questions.
- Ask what evidence supports each rating, and revisit unsupported impressions.

Reflect: Would I interpret the same behavior differently in a person more familiar to me?

Something to carry forward: A practice rating explained through the answer and the job criterion, rather than eye contact or assumed cultural traits. **Practice inclusive hiring and selection** — program page / paths/gp-6

Welcome and orient

What does someone need to belong and contribute?

Orientation includes relationships, access, expectations, and the informal knowledge established colleagues can take for granted.

A situation

A new DSD colleague completes required training but still does not know who can explain a cross-team process or where to ask an everyday question.

- Explain the role, decision relationships, and useful points of contact.
- Connect the colleague with One DHS orientation, DSD resources, and optional communities.
- Ask what remains unclear and adjust the welcome rather than testing how quickly they fit in.

Reflect: What did I expect a new colleague to know without anyone explaining it?

Something to carry forward: A welcome map and a follow-up conversation about what helped or remains missing. **Explore the whole program** — program page /orientation

Support everyday contribution

Whose work is heard, supported, and recognized?

Feedback, workload, access, and recognition are repeated leadership decisions. Look at specific work and conditions rather than using a preferred communication style as the standard.

A situation

A colleague contributes carefully considered written recommendations but speaks less in meetings. Their contribution is less visible when development opportunities are discussed.

- Invite more than one way to contribute.
- Give specific feedback tied to the work and ask about conditions that help.
- Review how assignments, recognition, and access to support are distributed.

Reflect: What am I rewarding: a useful contribution, familiarity, or visibility?

Something to carry forward: A change to a meeting, feedback conversation, or assignment process and what participants found useful. **Connect working conditions and well-being** — program page /one-dsd/amplify/well-being

Mentor, sponsor, and develop

Can people begin growing before someone selects them?

Mentoring offers perspective; sponsorship helps people access opportunities. Development should make room for self-expressed interest and different career aspirations.

A situation

An interested employee is new to state service and cannot yet meet a formal institute's eligibility requirement. They can still develop through a supported practice opportunity.

- Invite an aspiration and identify a specific capability to practice.
- Agree on a manageable assignment, work time, accessibility, and feedback.
- Connect the person with a mentor or sponsor and review what the opportunity actually provides.

Reflect: Who gets invited to develop, and who has to discover the pathway alone?

Something to carry forward: A development plan linking a capability, supported practice, feedback, and a next conversation. **Explore mentoring and sponsorship** — program page /resources/pn-mentoring-sponsorship

Make advancement understandable

What would demonstrate readiness for different responsibilities?

Clear pathways connect real role requirements with opportunities to develop and demonstrate capability. A learning portfolio supports a conversation; it does not guarantee selection.

A situation

A supervisor is interested in a director role but has had little opportunity to work on cross-team strategy, resource tradeoffs, or a division-wide decision.

- Compare the target role's actual duties with existing evidence of capability.
- Identify an opportunity to practice a missing capability with appropriate support.
- Explain selection requirements and make development opportunities visible to others too.

Reflect: Am I confusing lack of opportunity with lack of potential?

Something to carry forward: A role-to-skill map with evidence, a learning opportunity, and feedback from someone familiar with the work. **Explore accessible leadership pathways** — program page /resources/pn-accessible-leadership-pathways

Listen, respond, and sustain

What would make it easier to stay and thrive?

A stay conversation is useful when it leads to a response. Career growth sits alongside workload, support, relationships, recognition, and the conditions of the work.

A situation

A capable colleague wants to develop but repeatedly loses agreed learning time to urgent tasks. Another course invitation does not address the problem.

- Ask what supports their work and what makes staying difficult, without treating the conversation as a performance rating.
- Agree what may be shared or recorded and explain any applicable limits.
- Respond to an actionable concern and return to whether the response helped.

Reflect: Did I offer an individual coping strategy where a work condition needed attention?

Something to carry forward: An agreed action, a responsible role, and a follow-up that checks the employee's experience. **Prepare a stay conversation** — program page /resources/pn-stay-interviews-and-retention

Build continuity and future leadership

What capability must continue, and who can access the chance to develop it?

Succession planning connects critical work, future capabilities, open development opportunities, and knowledge transfer. It should broaden readiness rather than quietly designate an heir.

A situation

One person holds most of the knowledge for an important DSD process. The division needs continuity and more colleagues need a fair chance to learn that work.

- Identify the critical function and the capabilities and relationships it depends on.
- Offer transparent opportunities to shadow, co-lead, practice, and receive feedback.
- Create a usable handover and test whether someone else can carry out the work.

Reflect: Whose potential am I noticing, and what access would let others demonstrate theirs?

Something to carry forward: A continuity plan with a development opportunity, knowledge-transfer product, and practical readiness check. **Carry access across transitions** — program page [/resources/ja-accommodation-across-transitions](#)

Learn from transitions and departures

What should we carry forward and improve?

A transition can reveal what the organization has learned, where knowledge is concentrated, and which working conditions need attention.

A situation

A colleague changes roles. A list of files exists, but the reasoning behind recurring decisions and important handoffs has not been explained.

- Capture process knowledge and decision context through the appropriate handover process.
- Invite feedback without assuming the reason for a departure.
- Use suitable aggregate learning to improve role design, onboarding, and support for the next colleague.

Reflect: What can this transition teach us about the beginning of the employee life cycle?

Something to carry forward: A tested handover and an improvement returned to the relevant earlier stage. **Connect learning with the One DSD Team** — program page [/one-dsd/team](#)

Feedback you can use

- What did you observe me do, and what difference did it make?
- Whose perspective or access did the approach make room for?
- Where did an assumption or a working condition get in the way?
- What could I try differently next time?

Sources

- **MMB: retention and succession planning** — Minnesota context for connecting workforce continuity and employee development. <https://mn.gov/mmb/employee-relations/equal-opportunity/eo-19-15/retention/>
- **OPM: structured interviews** — Federal practice reference for job-related questions and consistent assessment; not a DHS policy. <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/structured-interviews/>
- **OPM: leadership development** — Federal practice reference connecting early development, individual plans, and succession. <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/training-and-development/leadership-development/>

- **State of Minnesota leadership programs** — Explore formal development opportunities alongside this voluntary DSD learning experience. <https://mn.gov/mmb/etd/leadership-development/series-training-courses/>