



## The Importance of Developing Emerging Leaders

By [Tanya Alridge](#), Communications and Outreach Specialist, National Science Foundation

It's no secret that the public sector struggles to attract and retain a younger, more diverse workforce while dealing with increasing retirement rates. This issue will most likely become more complicated as the workforce readjusts to the post COVID-19 environment which anticipates an increase in retirements, and employees seeking positions which better align with their values and lifestyles. Federal agencies are now at the precipice to realign their culture to meet the needs of the incoming and existing workforce while avoiding talent gaps to ensure a functioning government.

How can agencies deal with a changing and evolving workforce? The answer, in part, lies in developing emerging leaders.

**Emerging leaders are influential, high performers who display the potential for growth into formal leadership positions.**

The following are strategic approaches that developed federal leaders can utilize to ensure emerging leaders are prepared to lead while advancing their organizational mission:

### Talent Pooling

A critical element in knowledge and information sharing in the digital age involves creating and maintaining talent pools.

Talent pools assemble like-minded, lateral skilled individuals who can engage in peer-to-peer learning while enhancing their professional experience. Developed leaders who may be adept at networking and building teams should consider using talent pools to form Communities of Practice (CoP). CoP's have allowed professionals across industries to engage in problem solving and launching initiatives that can benefit organizations and stakeholders.



### Career Road Mapping

Moving beyond formulating templated individual development plans or annual performance plans, developed leaders should work with emerging leaders to develop an agile career roadmap.

These roadmaps serve as a compass to outline overarching career goals and sets professional milestones. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, career maps can “improv[e] morale, career satisfaction, motivation, productivity, and responsiveness in meeting departmental and organizational objectives.”

### Reinforcing Work/Life Balance

Now more than ever, establishing and maintaining an adequate work-life balance is a high priority for emerging and developed leaders.

Implementing telework and remote policies, flexible work schedules, and child/elder care programs ensures that employees can balance the needs of the organization and the needs of their homes. Additionally, prioritizing mental health policies and programs ensure that employees are always able to put their best foot forward.

### Coaching

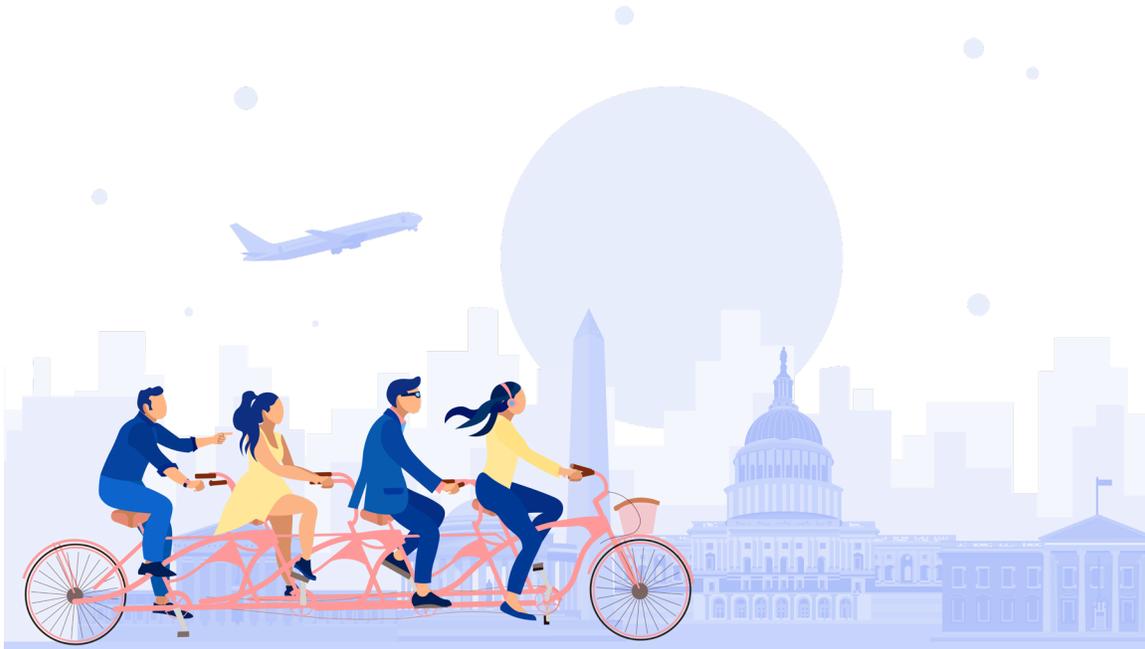
The greatest gift a developed leader can give an emerging leader is coaching.

A developed leader should help an emerging leader to develop their leadership philosophy, leadership style, increase emotional intelligence, and strengthen their sense of political savviness to ensure they can “talk the talk” and “walk the walk.” Developed leaders should use their capital to elevate.



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This list, of course, is not all inclusive. Emerging leaders must further develop their respective technical skills, business acumen, relationship and team building techniques, problem solving skills, and other applicable skills. Implementing these approaches can build proactive self-leaders who are better prepared to drive results, elevate their agency mission, and in turn build a more dedicated and productive federal workforce.



**About the Author:**

[Tanya Alridge](#) is a Communications Specialist with experience in the public, private and non-profit sectors. With over 10 years of Federal experience, Tanya has worked to raise awareness of the Inspectors General mission to combat fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement in Federal programs and operations. She currently works to support the Federal government in its commitment to developing equity, inclusiveness, and building an increasingly diverse, engaged, and high performing workforce. She is passionate about adult learning and using her communications skills to help individuals and teams build a more innovative and efficient government.