

Assessing Your Leadership Competencies

The rapidly changing health care landscape requires effective leadership to articulate a clear future vision and effectively manage change. Leaders must concurrently, and occasionally *paradoxically*, improve the care delivered to patients, increase the health of the community, and reduce per capita health care costs. It is easy for health care leaders to become absorbed in strategic thinking (let alone daily operations), leaving minimal time for self-reflection and self-improvement. Rural health care poses additional challenges; rural leaders may not have a close cadre of peers with whom to share ideas and experiences. Yet, rural health care leadership development is critical for personal growth and professional effectiveness.

Leadership can be devilishly hard to define. Is it a steadfast focus on a goal despite multiple distractions (think Abraham Lincoln), is it a charismatic and engaging personality (think John Kennedy), is it a quietly humble pursuit of an ideal (think Mahatma Gandhi), or is it an affirming style that inspires people to work together (think your organization's best team leader)? All of these examples represent the competencies of leadership in action. But why are some leaders more effective than others? How does a health care leader assess his or her leadership competencies, and then improve them?

Research has found that leadership competency training is effective in health care organizations.¹ One need not be a "born leader"—in fact, "leadership is a set of observable behaviors that, with deliberate practice, can help everyone be more effective and make more of a positive difference in the workplace, in the community, in the world."²

Although a multitude of leadership assessment tools are available, many promote specific leadership development programs or consultations. Thus, we identified tools that are (1) appropriate for health care executives, (2) not directly linked to a product or a consultation, and/or (3) appear to have research support. The three options below are certainly not exhaustive. Please recommend additional leadership development tools/resources that you have found helpful and effective at www.public-health.uiowa.edu/ruralhealthvalue/innovations/submit.php.

¹ Amy Yarbrough Landry, Michael Stowe, and James Haefner. Competency assessment and development among health-care leaders: results of a cross-sectional survey. *Health Serv Manage Res.* May 2012 25: 78-86.

² Wiley Workplace Learning Solutions. <http://www.pfeiffer.com/WileyCDA/Section/id-811878.html>. Accessed December 11, 2013.



Healthcare Executive Competencies Assessment Tool (American College of Healthcare Executives)

This tool is an instrument for health care executives to use in assessing their expertise in critical areas of health care management. The competencies are categorized into five critical domains: communication and relationship management, leadership, professionalism, knowledge of the health care environment, and business skills and knowledge. Based on opportunities for improvement in competencies, the tool also includes references to readings, programs, and self-study courses.

http://www.ache.org/pdf/nonsecure/careers/competencies_booklet.pdf

The Leadership Framework (National Health Service Leadership Academy – London, England)

This framework provides a consistent approach to leadership development for all staff in health care, irrespective of discipline, role, function, or seniority. Based on research and created through extensive consultation, the Leadership Framework has been tailored to the specific needs and environment of health care, and is applicable to all staff at any stage of their career. The Leadership Framework assesses five core leadership domains: demonstrating personal qualities, working with others, managing services, improving services, and setting direction. Two additional domains, creating the vision and delivering the strategy, focus more on the role and contribution of individual leaders. Modules are also available for clinicians and doctors/medical students. <http://www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/discover/leadership-framework/leadership-framework-self-assessment-tool/>

The Leadership Practices Inventory® (LPI)

The Leadership Practices Inventory is a proprietary assessment based on the “Theory and Evidence Behind the Five Practices of Exemplary Leaders.”³ The authors report that over three million people have used the LPI and that there is considerable empirical support for the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership framework. Details and additional resources are available at the Leadership Challenge website (<https://www.leadershipchallenge.com/>). The cost for using LPI varies depending on options selected, but range from \$100 – \$250 for a single individual. A limited free trial is also available.

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Developed with funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$500,000 with 0% financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government. Updated 9/2020