

Aspire to Inspire

Colorado Housing and Finance Authority

Management Innovation: Human Resources

HFA Staff Contact

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Summary

Aspire to Inspire (A2I) is a leadership development program for Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) staff. The year-long program supports the development and use of leadership skills at all levels of the organization. It offers hands-on learning, mentorship, and the opportunity to develop new tools and ways of doing business that advance CHFA's mission. The recommendations and project proposals resulting from A2I program cohorts have meaningfully shaped CHFA's strategic initiatives.

The Opportunity

CHFA has approximately 200 employees with an average tenure of 10 years. As part of CHFA's succession management strategy, an emerging leadership program was developed in 2014 called Aspire to Inspire (A2I). This program has provided staff with an opportunity to develop leadership skills to use in their current role and/or to prepare them for a future leadership position. It has also supported the utilization of leadership skills at all levels throughout the organization to further promote the goal of creating a high performing culture. The success factors of the program are:

- Deepen knowledge and skills – on a personal and professional level – while having fun.
- Gain a new appreciation, knowledge and communication across all divisions and programs.
- Demonstrate improvement in identified competencies, maximizing leadership and organizational effectiveness.
- Enhance CHFA's culture of innovation that challenges the status quo, supports experiments, embraces technology, and gets comfortable with failure.
- Understand what it means to embrace diversity, be inclusive, and ultimately understand the needs internally and externally to further advance equity.
- Develop new tools/ways of doing business that assists in decision-making, prioritization, and collaboration within CHFA through innovative and effective problem solving to advance CHFA's mission.
- Advance the community engagement mindset, skills, and practices.

The Framework

The A2I framework is comprised of four key areas to build leadership competencies as an individual contributor and/or in a team or project lead capacity. The four areas are assessment and introspection, group training, mentoring, and the opportunity to apply learnings in real time within CHFA. For those participating in A2I, the expected commitment is up to one full day every month for one year to participate in various training and developmental activities. This includes assessment completion, onsite training, mentoring, and project(s) participation.

Assessment and Introspection

Participants complete multiple assessments with facilitated feedback and/or training sessions to review results. These assessments were based on peer feedback, emotional intelligence, and conflict dynamics. In addition, results of the Hermann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI), a system to measure and

describe thinking preferences in people, were also reviewed and applied during the program. The expected outcome was that participants shared the themes (not the full report) of the feedback to his/her boss and peer rater groups to offer additional insight for introspection.

Group Training

On average, the group participated in monthly training opportunities to further develop their skills that aligned with the desired outcomes of the program and CHFA's strategic goals. These trainings were facilitated by external leadership experts and included the following sessions:

- Dale Carnegie - Effective Communication and Human Relations;
- Emotional Intelligence;
- Energy Leadership;
- Conversational Intelligence;
- Conflict Dynamics;
- Giving and Receiving Feedback and The Four Agreements;
- Empathy; and
- An Innovative Mindset.

Participants also took part in quarterly team building activities and were assigned quarterly cohorts of four to discuss and share their takeaways in a small group setting.

Mentoring

Each participant was required to establish a mentoring relationship based on the participant's interests and specific areas of development.

Collective Learning in Real Time Challenges

CHFA supports and encourages each A2I cohort to work on projects to address specific organizational challenges and opportunities. The team as a collective group and/or individually can transfer and/or apply a learned competency from the group training or maximize a development opportunity as identified in the assessment/introspection process.

As part of the collective learning, the A2I team participated in three road tours across the state. The purpose of these road tours is to build awareness, be in the community in which we serve, and to hear directly from the community of the challenges and opportunities the state faces. Using the team's expertise, they also built a digital story map of their road tour and presented it to CHFA leadership. Currently, this map is a tool being used for new hire onboarding.

Following their time in community spent listening and learning about challenges and opportunities throughout the state, the team is then asked to be innovative and determine what problem they need to solve using a design thinking approach, which is then presented to CHFA's Executive Team for approval.

Outcomes

In 2023, CHFA graduated its third A2I class comprising 16 participants. Of these, 62 percent are female, and 44 percent identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and/or people of color). In total, this program has resulted in 39 A2I alumni. Of these, 44 percent are female, 33 percent are BIPOC, and approximately 50 percent from the two prior classes have joined the CHFA Leadership Team. Additionally, a graduate of the 2023 class was recently promoted to the Leadership Team. The projects from the 2023 class and classes prior have resulted in key strategic initiatives for CHFA, including a rural tool barn program, and a capacity building program for small nonprofits across the state.

Below are several quotes from the participants that further demonstrate increased level of engagement with each other and CHFA's mission:

"In one of our early training sessions, we were asked to share important moments in our lives, events that had significantly impacted us. Some weren't ready to share more than something professionally impactful, while others shared funny or heartwarming stories. And some of us were willing to be vulnerable, though we hadn't known each other long, revealing heart wrenching and moving moments from our lives. We laughed together, we cried together, and we all left that training with vastly greater understanding of one another. For me, that was the moment that changed my perception of what A2I was. When I began, I thought it would just be learning management techniques, maybe some New Age fortune cookie leadership mantras, and professional networking. But that day is when I realized this program would help me grow as a person, as I forged genuine human connections with my teammates."





"The road tours were my favorite. Engaging personally with the communities we serve was very rewarding and connected me even deeper to CHFA's mission. Driving through the southwest during the fall was like being in a Colorado postcard! Such a gift to experience it with the A2I team!"

"My biggest highlight of the A2I program has been the relationships and bonds we have created. A2I is family!"

"My favorite memory was experiencing the state through the tours. Not only did this experience allow us to see and hear from leaders in each community, and it also connected us to the people: their dreams, goals and struggles. I firmly believe when we can begin seeing our world through the eyes of others, we become enlightened and enriched which in turn creates better opportunities for all."

"So many moments on the tours come to mind, it's hard to pick just one. But I'd say one of my favorites was our first stop on our Western Slope tour in Keystone at Wintergreen. To see the collaboration and incredible work by the local housing authority, city, ski resort, CHFA, and Gorman Co, was so motivating and inspiring. It was one of those energizing moments that I was struck with feeling so happy and proud to be part of such awesome work and opportunity. That, and to learn about all of the creative ways we can finance affordable housing was so incredible. I found it motivating to think of the new ways I could learn and contribute to innovative and impactful projects in the future."



-  **Create a non-profit resource page (\$5,000)**
-  Utilize CHFA's new Charitable Organizations Dashboard to locate program participants
-  Fund a pilot program through CRC (\$160,000; 25 organizations)
-  Fund a pilot program through Resilia (\$75,000; 25 organizations)



aspire to inspire

2022 to 2023



“ Learn and grow
all you can;
serve and befriend
all you can;
enrich and inspire
all you can. ”

▪ William A. Ward

The Real Successes

Poet: Julie Hebert, ©2012

Real successes are made,
Not dropped aside your door.
They aren't a thought you made one night,
While wishing upon a star.

Real successes are thought,
To be given to only the great.
They think that they work just as hard,
And they should have that fate.

Real successes are because,
Of someone making it so.
They fight for it and work real hard,
To make their successes grow.

Real successes are envied,
And rumored on how they were made.
People can be so jealous,
And even want to betray.

But you know how real successes,
Are built with hard work and care.
You've made your way to the top,
I'm so proud to see you are there.

Melissa Nuccis

Carly

Samith Kelly

KERIC

ENG

Dir Ble

Melissa Castillo

Jan Dean

Mary Munster

GH

W. D. Huel

M. MOORE Munnz

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Raffy

Jan Wong

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