



PROFILE OF THE NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

PURPOSE: Improve the quality and quantity of leaders in the United States who are capable of *optimally guiding and coordinating* homeland security, preparedness, and emergency response activity.

META-LEADERSHIP: To generate a robust connectivity and credibility of effort across lines of government jurisdiction and out to the private sector: Harvard NPLI faculty, in cooperation with government leadership and international emergency response experts, developed the “meta-leadership” concept and practice.

Meta-leaders are trained to strategically and consistently link assets, operations, and resources to achieve connectivity in preparing for or responding to an emergency. Meta-leaders are *leaders of leaders*, forging an integration of action. Though often operating without direct authority, they craft a unity of thinking and impact that likely would not otherwise be present.

META-LEADERS: There are five key dimensions to the teaching and practice of meta-leadership: 1) The discipline of the leader – taking charge of personal factors in a crisis which can optimize or reduce performance; 2) Getting an accurate “picture of the event” and communicating that situational awareness to engage followers; 3) Leading your silo, so that “meta-followers” advance your cross-organizational objectives; 4) Leading up to inform and improve the performance of your superiors, oftentimes elected or appointed officials; 5) Leading across the spectrum of organizations and entities – public and private - whose coordinated work is necessary to optimize performance.

TRAINING: Each year, 50 government leaders with homeland security responsibility participate in an intense leadership development program on campus. They represent the spectrum of federal agencies with homeland security responsibility, state and local leaders, as well as elected officials.

A week is spent in residence in Cambridge, followed by a five month period during which meta-leadership projects are completed in small groups with faculty mentorship. The class reports on projects at a concluding seminar.

RESEARCH: The NPLI in its first three years is assembling a robust collection of case studies on emergency preparedness and response. In addition, Harvard faculty have conducted on-site and in-the-moment research, including observing former FEMA Director Michael Brown during his leadership of the Katrina response, VADM Thad Allen during his leadership of the Rita response, and embedding during operations in Israel in the summer 2006 Hezbollah war. Another team of researchers is developing the “Crisis Leadership Survey,” the first such instrument to systematically evaluate capacities of those who serve in crisis leadership positions.

GOV'T FUNDING: The bulk of NPLI support has come from the CDC. The DOD has made a modest contribution, and the VA, DHHS, USDA, FDA, and DHS have sent participants. In September 2006, the CDC awarded Harvard a five year sole-source \$950K per year cooperative agreement.

PRIVATE SECTOR: At the recommendation of the CDC Director, the CDC Foundation - a nonprofit philanthropy - adopted a \$6.1M "national meta-leadership initiative" that will take meta-leadership training and practice to an audience of public and private leaders in 50 seminars throughout the country. The first installment, \$1.5M, was recently contributed by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The Corporate/CDC Roundtable on Global Health Threats, which includes GE, The Coca-Cola Company, Cargill, GM, Pfizer, UPS and IBM, placed their support behind this initiative, making the meta-leadership project a unique public-philanthropic-corporate-academic partnership that will improve the quality of leadership decision-making, action, and impact in the face of national emergencies.

HARVARD: The NPLI is a joint program of the Kennedy School of Government and Harvard School of Public Health. David Gergen and Leonard Marcus serve as co-directors.

Recognizing that the United States is now on a steep learning curve on matters of homeland security and emergency response, Harvard faculty are ready to work in close partnership with government agencies and emergency response leaders to advance the depth and scope of the required learning.

Through training, research, convening, scholarship, and direct consultation to those in critical leadership positions, the University seeks to advance knowledge and understanding of the historic homeland challenges now facing the nation.

The National Preparedness Leadership Initiative

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