Management Leadership Certification

Syllabus & Program Overview

General Information

Purpose

The field of animal welfare is evolving, along with community expectations for lifesaving, keeping pets with their families and reuniting lost pets with their owners. Meeting these expectations requires knowledgeable, adaptable leaders who can evaluate practices, make informed decisions and guide meaningful change.

The Management Leadership Certification (MLC) program develops the skills and knowledge managers and team leaders need to improve outcomes for animals and people. Through practical learning, critical thinking and collaboration, participants strengthen their leadership abilities, explore effective lifesaving strategies and learn to better serve the communities they represent.

Program Vision/Mission

Vision: A field of animal services led by skilled, compassionate professionals who drive meaningful change and improve outcomes for animals and people.

Mission: To develop effective leaders in animal services through practical education, professional growth and collaboration, equipping them to implement lifesaving strategies and strengthen their organizations.

The MLC emphasizes personal leadership development, evidence-based decision-making and the ability to influence organizational change. Participants build professional relationships, develop actionable plans and gain the skills and confidence to lead lasting improvements in their organizations and communities.

Program Expectations

The MLC is an active, collaborative learning community built on shared expectations for participation, professional growth and mutual support.

- **Be Present:** Make attendance and active participation a priority. Come prepared to contribute, share experiences and learn from others.
- **Maintain Confidentiality:** Respect the privacy of fellow participants and their organizations. What's shared within the learning community stays within the learning community.
- **Be Open and Honest:** Share experiences and perspectives honestly, including challenges and opportunities for improvement.
- **Trust and Respect:** Value different perspectives, experiences and ideas. Support one another in creating a welcoming environment for learning and growth.

- **Be Curious:** Ask questions, challenge assumptions and remain open to new approaches. Effective leaders never stop learning.
- **Take Care of Yourself:** Prioritize your well-being and recognize its importance for effective leadership. Model healthy practices and encourage others to do the same.

Course Goals

Participant Expectations

The MLC is a rigorous college-level program requiring a meaningful commitment of time and effort. Participants are expected to engage actively in coursework, discussions and practical assignments, with support from the course facilitator.

To successfully complete the program, participants must:

- **Attend at least 80% of scheduled live Zoom sessions.** Live participation is a priority. Missed sessions may be made up by viewing recordings at the course facilitator's discretion.
- **Earn a minimum cumulative grade of 80%**, including completion of required assignments and action plans.

Program Goals

The MLC aims to:

- Improve lifesaving outcomes for animals and communities.
- Develop confident, effective leaders capable of influencing organizational change.
- Equip participants with practical skills and knowledge to advance their careers.
- Prepare professionals from other fields for leadership roles in animal services.
- Build a supportive professional network through the MLC Collective.
- Strengthen the animal services profession through leadership development and effective practices.

Program Assessment & Evaluation

The MLC uses assessments, coursework and participant feedback to support professional growth and evaluate program effectiveness.

- Pre-course self-assessment of skills, experience and knowledge
- Emotional intelligence and CliftonStrengths assessments
- Organizational gap analysis
- Required reading and preparation
- Completion of course modules, assignments and action plans
- Post-course survey assessing learning and professional development

Technology Requirements

Participants must have:

- A desktop or laptop computer with a webcam, microphone and reliable internet connection. **A smartphone or tablet alone is not sufficient.**
- The ability to fully participate in live Zoom video conferences, including audio, video, and interactive features.
- The ability to open, read, edit, and save Microsoft Word documents (.docx) using Word or compatible software.
- Basic computer skills, including navigating online coursework, downloading and uploading files, and submitting assignments.

Course Materials

Required Reading & Assessments

The MLC incorporates readings and assessments designed to strengthen leadership skills, encourage self-reflection and provide a foundation for professional growth.

Required Reading

- *Prodigal Pets: A History of Animal Sheltering in America and the Origin of the No-Kill Movement* by Susan Houser
- *Managing Transitions* by William Bridges (Chapters 1–6)

Required Assessments

- CliftonStrengths Top 5 – Identifies individual strengths and opportunities for leadership development.
- *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* by Travis Bradberry – Includes an assessment of emotional intelligence and strategies for personal growth.

Program Content

MODULE NAME	MODULE SCOPE/OBJECTIVE	LESSONS
M01 Understanding the Evolution of Animal Services & Welfare	**Scope:** Explores the history and evolution of nonprofit and municipal animal services in the United States. **Learning Objective:** Participants will examine the historical origins of	• Regulatory and Philanthropic History • History of Animal Sheltering • Reflection Journal • Discussion

	animal welfare and explain how they have shaped modern animal services practices.	• Quiz
M02 **Defining Management Leadership**	**Scope:** Explores the principles of effective management leadership, including self-awareness, team development and organizational culture. **Learning Objective:** Participants will identify effective leadership practices and develop strategies to overcome challenges and lead mission-aligned lifesaving change.	• Self-Awareness: Strengths Finder & Emotional Intelligence • Tenets of Team Leadership • Culture • Personal Leadership Statement Worksheet • Personal Development Action Plan • Reflection Journal • Discussion • Quiz
M03 **Practicing Wellness & Resilience**	**Scope:** Explores the importance of personal well-being and resilience in animal services, including strategies for supporting team wellness. **Learning Objective:** Participants will develop a personal well-being action plan and identify strategies to support resilience and wellness within their teams.	• The Importance of Wellbeing in Lifesaving Work • The Culture of Caregiving and Animal Shelters • Recognizing the Signs • Promoting Resiliency Within Your Team • Resiliency Response Plan • Reflection Journal • Discussion • Quiz
M04 **Making Data-Driven Management Decisions**	**Scope:** Examines how data informs management decisions, identifies opportunities for improvement and guides strategies to increase lifesaving outcomes. **Learning Objective:** Participants will analyze organizational data and develop an action plan to improve lifesaving outcomes.	• Thinking Your Way to Lifesaving • What Lifesaving Looks Like • Gap Analysis • Planning and Goal Setting • Reflection Journal • Discussion • Quiz

M05 **Influencing Change as a Manager**	**Scope:** Explores communication skills, tools and strategies for influencing organizational change and improving lifesaving outcomes. **Learning Objective:** Participants will assess their persuasive communication skills and develop strategies for using written, verbal and data-driven communication to influence change.	• Process for Influencing Change • Persuasive Communication: Written • Persuasive Communication: Verbal • Persuasive Writing Assignment • Reflection Journal • Discussion • Quiz
M06 **Evaluating Lifesaving Programs: Shelter & Field**	**Scope:** Examines shelter and field programs, policies and practices that support effective lifesaving outcomes. **Learning Objective:** Participants will evaluate the effectiveness of their organization's lifesaving programs and identify opportunities for improvement.	• Progressive Adoption Programs • Creating a Successful Foster Program • Rescue Transfer - Making it Work • Keeping Pets with Their Families • Evaluating Lifesaving Programs • Reflection Journal • Discussion • Quiz
M07 **Removing Barriers to Adoption**	**Scope:** Explores how client service practices, adoption policies and processes influence lifesaving outcomes. **Learning Objective:** Participants will evaluate client service and adoption practices to identify barriers and opportunities for improving lifesaving outcomes.	• The Basics • Client Service • Client Communication • Myth vs. Fact • Tenets of GUTS • Adoption Policies • Adoption Process • Reflection Journal • Discussion • Quiz
M08 **Planning Pilot Programs**	**Scope:** Explores the planning, implementation and evaluation of pilot programs designed to improve lifesaving outcomes.	• Identifying the Need • Creating a Program to Meet the Need • Measuring Outcome

	Learning Objective: Participants will identify organizational needs and develop a pilot program plan with measurable goals and strategies for evaluating success.	• Adjusting or Expanding a Program • Pilot Program Action Plan • Reflection Journal • Discussion • Quiz
M09 **Managing Change**	**Scope:** Explores strategies for managing organizational change, navigating transitions and addressing resistance. **Learning Objective:** Participants will develop an action plan for implementing change and supporting individuals and teams through transitions.	• Process for Managing Change • The Three Stages of Transition • Dealing with Resistance to Change • Nurturing: Now What? • Managing Change Action Plan • Reflection Journal • Discussion • Quiz
M10 **Leading People**	**Scope:** Explores effective people management, team leadership and organizational culture to support collaborative lifesaving efforts. **Learning Objective:** Participants will assess their organization's workplace culture and identify leadership practices that strengthen teams and support positive organizational change.	• Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion • Staff Management and Culture • Volunteer Programs and Management • Performance Management • Leading Teams • Workplace Culture Agreement • Reflection Journal • Discussion • Quiz
Mini & Micro Modules Mini and micro modules complement the core curriculum with focused explorations of additional leadership and operational topics.		
Shelter Flow & Optimization	**Scope:** Examines animal movement through shelter systems, identifying bottlenecks and opportunities to improve efficiency and outcomes.	

	Learning Objective: Participants will analyze shelter flow, identify operational barriers and develop data-informed strategies to improve efficiency and animal outcomes.
Trauma-Informed Management	**Scope:** Explores how trauma affects workplace dynamics and the role of trust, psychological safety and supportive leadership. **Learning Objective:** Participants will identify the impacts of trauma and apply trauma-informed leadership strategies to support employee well-being and organizational effectiveness.
Unexpected Mentors	**Scope:** Explores seven types of mentors and the influence of both recognized and unexpected mentors on professional growth. **Learning Objective:** Participants will identify past and potential mentors and reflect on their own opportunities to mentor others.
Peel Your Onion	**Scope:** Explores personal motivation, professional purpose and leadership values, emphasizing how understanding your "why" helps navigate challenges. **Learning Objective:** Participants will reflect on their professional motivations and identify the core values that guide their work and leadership.