

# **L-481 – Advanced Leadership for Command and General Staff**

## **Instructional Design Criteria**

**April 2015**

### **Advanced Leadership for Command and General Staff**

The L-481 Design Criteria offers an alternative approach to training. There is no standing course package available through the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Publication Management System. Potential providers are invited to develop their own course package as they work to become an approved provider by the NWCG Leadership Subcommittee. NWCG agencies may also develop lesson plans based on the course design criteria outlined here. The purpose of establishing course design criteria is to give agencies the latitude to develop or acquire leadership training that fits their organizational needs while meeting the intent of the leadership curriculum. The following criteria are intended for use by training officers and managers for determining their best source for L-481 training. These criteria will be used to evaluate the design documents and training products developed internally or acquired through other providers such as a contractor, a university, or other source.

#### **Target Audience**

Incident personnel, qualified in any command or general staff position at the Type 2 or 3 level and Type 2 command and general staff trainees.

#### **Intent**

The intent of this training is to produce command and general staff members who can fulfill the responsibilities of an effective staff officer or section chief within an IMT, contribute effectively to an IMT's decision making process, and perform as an effective organizational leader in their own functional area and as a member of the IMT. This course should engage the course participants in leadership learning within the context of managing a large/complex incident. The course content would include both collective or team tasks and individual tasks. Collective tasks include functions accomplished by the command and general staff, maintaining a common operating picture, building and maintaining a constructive team culture, and projecting leader's intent up, down, and across the chain of command. Individual tasks include demonstrating interpersonal and communication skills necessary to function as a productive member of a team, contributing positively to team decisions, contributing to the IMT's common operating picture, working within the team culture, demonstrating effective staff ethos, and projecting effective command presence within their functional areas.

Within the L-series curriculum, L-481 prepares leaders of organizations and facilitates the participant's progress above L-381 Incident Leadership (i.e. Type 3 incident level). Students may or may not have completed L-480 Organizational Leadership in the Wildland Fire Service prior to entering this course. While L-480 focuses on assessing and developing individual personal leadership skills to accomplish long term organizational goals, L-481 will focus on IMT members functioning with a common operating picture, developing and propagating a consistent leader's intent through intent-based planning and operations, contributing to the decision making process of a higher level team, accomplishing short term incident management goals, and acting in the service of the common good.

Within this context, it is expected that agencies may use L-481 programs for assessing individuals for potential service on IMTs.

#### **Minimum Course Length**

It is expected that any prospective program would require at least 32 to 40 contact hours plus pre-course work. Course packages that can both accomplish the desired outcomes and use less training time will be considered, provided they are deemed instructionally sound.

#### **Instructor Qualifications**

Instructors for this program must possess education and/or experience in the subject areas listed below to serve as credible mentors, instructors, and leaders in the eyes the NWCG Leadership Subcommittee evaluation staff and the target audience. The qualification requirements may vary based upon the design of the program, and shall be part of the proposed design. Regardless of design, all instructors must be qualified per the NWCG instructor levels and requirements in the Field Manager's Course Guide available online at <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/training/fmcg.pdf>.

#### Cadre Knowledge and Experience

- Demonstrated fluency in the educational components and concepts presented in the NWCG Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program L-180, L-280, L-380, L-381, L-480, and L-580.
- Knowledge of the publication *Leading in the Wildland Fire Service*, and other fire service doctrine.
- Knowledge of human and team performance dynamics that underpin and promote cohesiveness, adaptability, and resilience in the complex IMT environment.
- Knowledge of the Incident Command System (ICS) and its' application in an emerging complex incident environment.
- Knowledge of concepts related to time compressed decision making in staff and command environments.
- Knowledge in concepts related to the development and propagation of Leader's Intent.
- Experience in providing training for civilian or military emergency management/response organizations.

Coaches, if used, must possess education and/or experience to serve as credible mentors, instructors, and leaders in the eyes the NWCG Leadership Subcommittee evaluation staff and the target audience. This usually includes previous L-series course completion at the 300 level, current or recently current ICS qualification as command or general staff on a Type 1 or 2 IMT.

*\* While it is a goal for all coaches to have successfully completed L-380 and/or L-381 courses, it is recognized that current Type 1 and Type 2 Command/General Staff personnel may not have had the opportunity to attend. It is strongly suggested that if the coach has not successfully completed L-380 or L-381, they should read *Leading in the Wildland Fire Service (PMS 494-2)* prior to the course.*

#### **Course Design Guidelines**

• **Integrated Curriculum** – The Fire Leadership Program courses (L-Series) materials, concepts, vocabulary, models, tools, training aids, and doctrine form the basis for wildland fire leadership development. Many of these items can be found under the Wildland Fire Leadership Development website at <http://www.fireleadership.gov> and include:

- Values and Principles model for leader behavior
- Leading in the Wildland Fire Service publication (the foundation for course content regarding the definition of leadership and description of desired leadership behaviors).
- Fire Leadership Toolbox
- Briefing and Intent Guide
- After Action Review Guide

Approved programs must effectively integrate and leverage the appropriate concepts from these materials to accelerate and reinforce learning. Approved programs should improve learner awareness and application of these items.

Content must be consistent with the leadership concepts presented in preceding courses in the NWCG Leadership Curriculum, the L-180 Human Factors on the Fireline, L-280 Followership to Leadership, L-380 Fireline Leadership, and L-381 Incident Leadership.

• **Student/Instructor Ratio** - Any prospective program must use sufficient resources to provide adequate interaction, oversight, direction and correction for a student's learning or evaluation activity. If the proposed design uses live instructors, mentors, coaches, or evaluators, the number and positioning of qualified personnel must be adequate in the judgment of the Leadership Subcommittee reviewers to provide for a comfortable span of control given the needs of the proposed instructional sequence.

• **Case Studies** - Provide opportunities for the student to learn from others or from the collective knowledge of the group. This may be accomplished by presenting classroom case studies and references from organizations both inside and outside of the high-risk, high-tempo incident management work environments. Examples of such organizations include the military, nuclear power plant operations, and structure fire departments.

• **Student Assessment** - Integrate exercises and simulations for the student to demonstrate knowledge of the course content and allow opportunity for self-assessment and for leadership assessment by peers.

To ensure that students are consistently measured and given credit for L-481, the prospective course delivery will also include an assessment system which reflects the program content, is repeatable and assures consistency across an assessment team.

The assessment strategy should be designed so that the program can use outside or independent agency/client-appointed assessment teams.

The process must provide means by which to assess the key knowledge, skills and abilities identified in the approved training package. A team of current or recently current ICS Command and General Staff will conduct student assessments. The assessment team members should have completion of the 300-level L-course and knowledge of the fire leadership curriculum. The assessment team will document the following student behaviors based on the L-481 curriculum:

- Acts as a productive staff member and leader to produce concentric actions (produces the work).
- Contributes to the team's pursuit of truth (providing SA and gathering SA)
- Takes actions, demonstrates attitudes, or communicates messages that contribute to the trust state of the team, team development and learning.
- Notices when other team members need help and offers assistance.
- Applies critical thinking to problems and identifies thinking processes to articulate intent.
- Looks ahead to future problems.
- Demonstrates initiative in preparing information and problem solving prior to meetings.
- Is open to learning from others.
- Makes sure position/issue does not get lost in the process.
- Is willing to own the team result and is invested in the team's product.
- Demonstrates awareness of personal habits or idiosyncrasies that work against team discussions.
- Focusses on the end state – does not get inappropriately bogged down in details or process.

## **Training Program Requirements**

### **Background**

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Leadership Curriculum (L) Series is managed by the Leadership Subcommittee for the purposes of providing critical leader development training and tools for the workforces of the NWCG agencies. The Leadership Subcommittee is solely responsible for establishing program specifications, determining program and provider evaluation criteria, and for approving potential providers.

Within the L-series curriculum, programs at the 100 and 200 levels are available “off the shelf”, as are other non-numbered development tools. The Leadership Subcommittee is responsible for the development and management of these items.

Programs at the 300, 400, and 500 levels (e.g., L-380, L-480, etc.) are provided through organizations who have obtained approved provider status from the Leadership Subcommittee. The Leadership Subcommittee approves training programs which meet or exceed the established specification. In support of quality delivery, the Leadership Subcommittee also approves organizations and individual instructors as appropriate.

The approval requirements vary based on program. For more information on the NWCG program and provider certification process, please refer to [Becoming a NWCG Approved L-Course Provider](#).

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for potential providers who wish to develop a program that meets or exceeds the established standards for an L-481 training program. This program specification describes the desired outcomes, or end state that any L481 training program must achieve to receive approval by the NWCG Leadership Subcommittee including verifiable/observable. It does not define a specific learning process, or specific package set of courseware.

**Prospective L-481 providers are responsible for determining the design, approach, learning objectives, and testing criteria that they believe will secure the defined outcomes.** Unlike other L-series course specifications, it does not provide the individual learning objectives, nor does it imply a program’s structure or design. It will identify, however, high level families of topic areas, and desired outcomes or competencies that should be demonstrated by successful students during the learning and evaluation process.

The NWCG Leadership Subcommittee is not limiting or providing direction on how a course is designed, but any prospective program must provide adequate documentation of accomplished analysis, design and development work during the approval process and demonstrate that the proposed program and delivery entity would likely meet the NWCG Leadership Subcommittee’s desired outcomes. The specification is accompanied by an approval process that is incremental and progressive. Refer to [L-Course Evaluation Process](#).

## **Program Outcomes**

### **Overview**

Ordinarily, emergency incidents are managed by local agencies or organizations. However, when a situation escalates and exceeds local capabilities, additional resources and Incident Management Teams (IMTs) are called in to help. IMTs augment the reach of ordinary response organizations, providing the organization and structure to bring in the right people and resources to accomplish the mission. These teams step in to continue the efforts already set in motion by first responders or a local incident organization.

Managing large or complex incidents requires a level of teamwork and integration beyond what is ordinarily necessary. In particular, command and general staff members need to function as an integrated unit in order to build a common operating picture, plan strategically, and propagate

consistent leader's intent throughout the organization. Within this context, salient themes—leadership, teamwork, common staff values, service to the common good, leader's intent, communication, operational culture—expand beyond the confines of the incident organization and extend to cooperators, jurisdictional owners, and political-public spheres.

Training on this level requires integration of human performance and incident management acumen at the strategic level, focusing on the Command and General Staff (C&G) as a functional and integrated team. It must foster professional staff ethos that strengthen and support the team's ability to function collectively while leveraging ICS to maximum effect

Following are families of topics that comprise the scope necessary for this training program:

- Establishing a staff value system, team culture, and command presence
- Developing and maintaining a team-level common operating picture
- Developing and communicating leader's intent through a critical thinking process
- Propagating intent at all levels of the incident organization
- Effectively operate in the ICS system and utilize ICS products and doctrine
- Promoting integration of functional areas and a high-level of teamwork into strategic planning

### **1. Establishing staff ethos, team culture, and command presence**

The primary purpose of establishing the Command and General Staff (C&G) is to provide a decisional framework and structure in order to process information and glean meaning so that appropriate direction and priorities can be established. Each member of the C&G has a specific functional role and specific responsibilities including a role within the team's decision making process. The relationships, values, and ethos of the C&G influence the way that information is gathered and integrated, the process of vetting and prioritizing objectives, and methods of relaying decisions and direction throughout the incident organization. Therefore, strengthening common staff ethos, team culture, and command presence are fundamental requirements for building an effective C&G that provides service for the common good while effectively leading their functional areas.

In support of strengthening ethos, team culture, and command presence, the program targets the following competencies:

- Demonstrated understanding and application of command staff values both within the C&G staff and with external relationships. The NWCG uses the Mission-Driven Values Model as a foundation for behavior and actions of the Incident Management Team command staff. The Mission-Driven values (*developed and used with permission by Mission-Centered Solutions, Inc, 2011*) include
  - Service for the common good –focus on the collective team result and benefit of the greater good of the public
  - High trust state – Developing/maintaining trust in people and systems
  - Pursuit of truth – based on the omnipresent need of the best possible situational awareness in dynamic and chaotic environments to ensure plans are based on reality.
  - Form and function defined by the end state – Despite established systems or processes, the need for adaptability and versatility is essential in complex environments
  - Individual initiative – Initiative strengthens resilience in the face of unexpected challenges

- Continuous improvement – Honestly encourages and reinforces learning and improvement at all levels of the organization
- Demonstrated the ability to apply the concepts of staff ethos, team culture, and mission-driven culture values to assess and improve self, team, and individual team member performance.
- Demonstrated ability to apply doctrine and value within the decision-making process and during team interaction.
- Demonstrated ability to establish positive rapport and trust with fellow team members to facilitate learning allow for critical discussion, correct performance, and provide service for the common good.
- Demonstrated ability to develop trust and positive working relationship with external entities and/or stakeholders.
- Demonstrated the ability to analyze and understand prospective audiences to develop appropriate message delivery and promote working relationships.
- Demonstrated ability to practice leader behaviors which promote a positive operational culture and climate in which subordinate resources can be effective.
- Demonstrated effective interpersonal and communication skills and techniques during interactions with fellow team members as well as other external stakeholders
- Demonstrated the ability to provide meaningful self-assessments, team member assessments, and an overall team-assessment in an effort to improve performance and strengthen team ethos.

## **2. Developing and maintaining a common operating picture.**

On an incident, situational awareness at the IMT level encompasses a broad range of understanding: the context of the incident including the social context, the operating environment and the challenges of that environment, operations to date, the thinking that went into previous decisions, planned operations, and changes occurring within the operating environment. By design, the ICS assigns people to functional areas to make sure that the incident organization is attending to all incident systems and functions appropriately. However, given assigned areas of focus, people naturally gravitate into functional silos, concentrating on responsibilities and concerns within their area to the exclusion of participating in the broader work of the team. A critical challenge for the C&G, therefore, is to develop and maintain a common understanding of the situation, specifically one shared by all team members. The common operating picture (COP) is the term used to describe the situation awareness and understanding shared by all team members.

In support of developing and maintaining a COP, the program targets the following competencies:

- Demonstrated ability to gain perspective of all dimensions of the incident – both in terms of what is happening in operations (tactical) as well as the larger context in which the incident occurs (strategic).
- Demonstrated ability to share pertinent information across the team so that all members have a shared understanding of the salient components and maintain this understanding throughout the incident assignment.

- Demonstrated ability to appraise the soundness of the team's COP, questioning assumptions and testing the premises of plans over time so that planned operations are always well aligned with the reality of conditions on the ground.
- Demonstrated ability to develop effective interpersonal relationships with personnel already involved in an incident, specifically with outgoing C&G counterparts.
- Demonstrated ability to collect critical information and use sound reasoning and judgment to discern and distill meaningful and relevant knowledge from available information.
- Demonstrated ability to use a variety of communication methods and frameworks, including both listening and questioning, to identify gaps in understanding or risks to operations.

### **3. Developing leader's intent**

One of a staff member's central tasks is to provide productive inputs in the decisions made by the Incident Commander. By design, each staff member has a different perspective based on their position. Each staff member distills information and requirements from their functional area to provide relevant perspective to the staff's deliberative decision making process. A rigorous and conscientious decision making process gives rise to robust intent that bolsters initiative and concentric action throughout the incident organization.

In support of developing leader's intent at the C&G level, the program targets the following competencies:

- Demonstrated ability to contribute constructively to deliberative decision making so that resulting decisions are sound and reasonable.
- Demonstrated ability to derive an incident end state that provides a practical road map for returning to acceptable conditions.
- Demonstrated ability to derive and author meaningful incident objectives with an appropriate focus on the real threats to the tactical and strategic values-at-risk.
- Demonstrated ability to guide the development of strategies and alternatives that are congruent with the nature of the threat.
- Demonstrated ability to constructively evaluate proposed plans and courses of action so that they are proportionate and reasonable in consideration of the values at risk and the nature of the threat.

### **4. Propagating intent-based planning to all levels of the incident organization**

The primary purpose of formulating intent is to empower people at every level to exercise their judgment and initiative to accomplish their part of the mission. Information transmitted in the Incident Action Plan (IAP) may provide them with a proposed plan of action, but not necessarily the intent behind the plan. Communicating consistent intent to all levels of the organization enables people to commit to both what they are doing and why they are doing it.

In support of propagating leader's intent to all levels of the incident organization, the program targets the following competencies:

- Demonstrated ability to explain how an incident end state addresses the values-at-risk as well as how its objectives, strategies, and tactics achieve the end state.
- Demonstrated ability to help formulate and communicate clear intent that will assist resources in understanding their assignment and its role in achieving the larger mission.
- Demonstrated propagation of intent beyond the IMT to the public, elected officials, and others.

## **5. Effectively operate in the ICS system in the complex incident environment and utilize ICS products and doctrine**

The Incident Command System (ICS) is the organizational system that we use to mobilize, staff, track, manage and execute incident activities. The planning process serves as a decisional aid and the product outcomes reflect and document the decisional processes. Effective use of this system is core to our capability.

In support of effectively operating in the ICS system and utilizing ICS products and doctrine, the program targets the following competencies:

- Demonstrated the effective use of the ICS and its' products and doctrine to track and manage resources, and to direct action through the IMT organization.
- Demonstrated the ability to develop collective C&G products/documents that are utilized in the development of an Incident Action Plan (IAP).
- Demonstrated the ability to function within the context of the ICS Planning Process (Planning P) and positively contribute to the distribution of information through briefings and the development of ICS documents, forms, and products.
- Demonstrated ability to accomplish mission objectives and manage the team's time effectively.

## **6. Promoting integration of functional areas**

The effectiveness of the C&G depends on how well functional leaders integrate their respective functional areas into a coherent whole to mount a unified and organized response. Each functional leader has a duty to direct activities within their given area of responsibility and to integrate an understanding of the functional requirements and contingencies into the overall response effort. Each functional area is a critical component of the bigger mission; therefore, integrating all functional areas is critical to success.

In support of promoting integration of functional areas, the program targets the following competencies:

- Demonstrated ability to select most appropriate means for conveying information in light of the situation, audience, time constraints, and information to be communicated.
- Demonstrated ability to keep fellow staff members apprised of information that affects other functional areas or the incident as a whole. This target includes both the ability to assess the relevance of information and the ability to effectively communicate that information.

## **Instructional Package Requirements**

Complex and large incident management teams are tasked with managing and leading through the most challenging problem sets and disasters. As a result, the consequences of IMT decision making can be far-reaching and highly consequential. Prospective developers seeking NWCG Leadership Subcommittee approval for an L-481 program will be required to demonstrate their ability to design and develop a program that can withstand a formal educational systems review process. To that end, the following design and development requirements will be placed on L-481 program applicants:

- The prospective program package must provide evidence that developer has used a generally accepted instructional design methodology such as ISD, ADDIE, MIL-PRF 29612, etc., to guide and document the design and development of the program. This includes the review of course design documents, as well as evaluation strategies and plans. This includes:
  - Evidence of a task analysis process that defines the primary tasks and subtasks and connection to the evaluation criteria. This may include an analysis of the learner's operational environment, documentation of delivery methodology.
  - Evidence of design and development activities are based on the former analysis and support the developed terminal and enabling learning objectives. Design documentation must demonstrate that the learning objectives have a logical connection to evaluation strategies, that instructional sequencing and delivery methods clearly support the desired outcomes, and that the learning activities offer a reasonable means to achieve mastery of objectives.
  - Course and evaluation materials that are complete and of high quality.

## **Delivery Sustainment Requirements**

To assure program delivery is monitored and maintained after NWCG Leadership Subcommittee approval, the prospective provider will provide a proposed plan for:

- Instructor training, qualification, and certification
- Provider performance reporting
- Program quality assurance and program updating
- Training activity reporting and record keeping

## **Other Prospective Provider Requirements**

At the discretion of the Leadership Subcommittee, the potential provider may be required to provide documentation of past performance in developing and delivering similar programs. Potential providers may also be expected to show evidence of adequate resources available to provide a sustainable and consistent training service to wildland fire community.