

CIGIE Fellows Cohort Training Activities – September 2020

Courageous Followership

On September 15, CIGIE Fellow Mr. Eric Gregory provided a presentation entitled “Courageous Followership.” The major focus of this session was on how great followers become great leaders. Mr. Gregory described how leaders are accountable, but good followers know they are accountable as well. The leader and the follower share many of the same competencies. Great leaders need great followers: They depend on each other and are all part of the same effort. Courageous followers will take risks, assume accountability, support the leader’s decisions, work cooperatively with others, and challenge the leader when necessary.

Participants learned that to successfully support their leaders, courageous followers should have the leaders’ intent in mind, do their best at their own work, and let their leaders know that they are supported. A key takeaway was that courageous followers challenge their leaders when decisions may have a negative impact on the mission or when behavior goes against the agency’s values. Mr. Gregory explained that ultimately “the atomic glue that holds an organization together is common purpose.”

Strengths-Based Leadership

On September 16, Ms. Megan Libby-Mueller, Deputy Director of Training and Development for the Office of the Inspector General at the Department of Veterans Affairs, led CIGIE Fellows to explore the results of their *CliftonStrengths* assessment. This is the first web-based assessment instrument of normal personality from the perspective of positive psychology, the scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive. With only 20 seconds for participants to respond to each item, the assessment presented 177 items that consisted of pairs of self-descriptors, such as “I read instructions carefully” versus “I like to jump right into things.”

In another exercise, designed to proactively introduce preferred working styles and partnership needs, Fellows explored the types of individual partnerships they require to perform at their best, as well as the kinds of behaviors and working styles that lead to counterproductive efforts or misunderstandings.

Fellows applied this newfound self-awareness to better understand which of their individual strengths are most effective in different situations and to recognize when to shift gears. The final takeaways; It is important to leverage one’s strengths just as much as working on one’s weaknesses. There must be a balance of the two.

Leaders as Coaches Activity

On September 17, Mr. Brian Sano, Director of Organizational Health with the U.S. Department of State’s Office of Inspector General worked with Fellows to take a deep dive into leadership and coaching culture. They explored the power of asking the right questions, with the

understanding that being a leader does not mean one always has the answers. Strong leaders step up and work with others to find solutions and do not simply manage people.

As a result of Mr. Sano's specialized training session, participants walked away equipped with refined active listening and leadership coaching skills.