

CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP AND DRIVING SUCCESS IN SPACE EXPLORATION

NASA stands as a beacon of human creativity and continuous scientific advancement. Recognized for 12 consecutive years as the Best Place to Work in the Federal Government, as ranked by the Partnership for Public Service, NASA provides an outstanding work environment and steadfast support for its team members.

To channel and strengthen the drive and talents of the agency workforce, NASA places a high value and priority on leadership development. Dr. Karen Gilliam, NASA's chief learning officer, said the agency employs a leadership development strategy based on a 70/20/10 learning model; an approach which underscores that 70% of learning comes from practical experience, 20% from interactions with others, and 10% from formal training.



How does NASA ensure each team member grasps their integral role in achieving mission success? The organization's commitment, spanning ambitious goals from moon landings to Mars exploration, is infused into its digital platforms and career pages, connecting the employees' daily work to the mission. Team members support and participate in groundbreaking projects that advance human knowledge and benefit humanity. This focus on the mission contributes to the agency's low turnover rates – 6.5% annually – reflecting the team members' profound dedication and commitment.

Core Values and Leadership Development

At the heart of NASA's mission lie the core values of safety, integrity, teamwork, excellence, and inclusion. These principles are intricately woven into the agency's fabric, shaping its approach to leadership development.

NASA recognizes that its future successes depend on cultivating skilled and capable leaders. To achieve this, the agency has established a comprehensive leadership development program that serves employees at all levels and in various roles. These initiatives are designed to bolster the essential skills required for effective leadership within the unique environment of NASA.

There is also a strong emphasis on well-being and inclusivity, recognizing that a sense of belonging is essential for fostering innovation and creativity. By promoting an inclusive atmosphere, NASA enables its team members to think outside the box, challenge norms respectfully, and contribute meaningfully.

The agency focuses on inclusion to create a workplace where everyone feels valued and can make impactful contributions. By prioritizing inclusion as a core value, NASA cultivates a culture that supports talent retention and attracts top talent.

Digna Carballosa, director of NASA's Talent Service Division states, "Our main goal is to ensure that everyone who joins our organization can authentically be themselves, contribute significantly to our mission, and feel supported, valued, and inspired to innovate." NASA's commitment to innovation is driven by the creativity and dedication of its personnel, which leads to the development of pioneering technologies that advance space exploration. By creating an environment where every individual is essential to the mission and encouraged to share ideas freely,



Dr. Karen Gilliam
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NASA's initiatives are poised to profoundly impact the agency's goals and contribute directly to achieving its objectives.

NASA Next: A Case Study in Leadership Development

NASA Next is a premier program that highlights the agency's commitment to developing its next generation of leaders. This rigorous nine-month program for promising mid-level leaders blends in-person sessions with online modules, coaching, and mentoring. The curriculum focuses on essential leadership skills such as strategic thinking, leveraging diversity, fostering innovation, and understanding the complexities of NASA's mission.

The success of NASA Next can be attributed to several key components:

Executive engagement: Participants have opportunities to interact with NASA executives, gaining valuable insights into the agency's strategic directions, challenges, and opportunities.

Cultural immersion activities: Initiatives like cultural exercises enhance participants' cross-cultural understanding and promote inclusivity within the team.

Evaluations and guidance: Tools like the ESCI 360 and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) provide participants with feedback on their strengths and areas for improvement, enabling them to develop personalized personal and leadership growth strategies.



How IMS Is Playing a Part in Developing Leaders at NASA

The Institute for Management Studies (IMS) has played a crucial role in developing leaders at NASA. Their programs are perfectly tailored to complement each stage of NASA's 70/20/10 learning model. NASA's leadership has benefited from engaging with IMS's programs, which include 60-minute sessions led by prominent thought leaders, innovative 30-day learning journeys that focus on practical application, and joint efforts between IMS and the Kennedy Space Center to create customized in-person programs that drive essential behavioral changes.

NASA's feedback on the IMS programs has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the relevance and timeliness of the topics covered, the quality of the educators, and the direct applicability of the content.

NASA's commitment to nurturing its workforce through hands-on experiences, social interactions, and formal training ensures that every team member is equipped to contribute meaningfully to the shared mission of advancing human knowledge and exploration. Programs like NASA Next illustrate the agency's dedication to preparing future leaders capable of steering humanity's quest for the stars. The combination of mission-driven purpose, impactful leadership development, and a firm commitment to diversity and inclusivity sets NASA apart as the premier federal government workplace and a beacon of inspiration for organizations worldwide striving to achieve their lofty ambitions.



NASA recently received a 2024 Leadership Excellence award from The Institute for Management Studies for its dedication to developing and empowering its employees.