

# Followership is Leadership



## Wildland Fire Leadership Challenge Reference Guide

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- » Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program (WFLDP)
  - <http://www.fireleadership.gov/>

## **DISCLAIMER**

Most links included in this document are not under the control of the WFLDP and may become inaccessible over time. Every effort will be made to keep this document as current as possible. See the challenge website via <http://www.fireleadership.gov> for the most current reference guide. Notify the challenge contact below if links are broken.

## **CHALLENGE CONTACT**

Any questions regarding the challenge should be directed to:

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NWCG Leadership Subcommittee, Logistics Coordinator  
3833 South Development Avenue  
Boise, ID 83705

Phone: (208) 387-5318

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## FY2015 WILDLAND FIRE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

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The mission of the Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program is “to promote cultural change in the workforce and to emphasize the vital importance of leadership concepts in the wildland fire service by providing educational and leadership development opportunities.” The challenge provides potential local or self-directed leadership development resources focused on a central theme with the intent of strengthening the wildland fire service and the community as a whole.

**Theme:** The theme for the 2015 challenge is *Followership to Leadership*. The Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program recognizes “followership” as the first level of leadership. Leaders cannot lead without good followers. Good followers provide a foundation upon which better leaders of people, leaders of leaders, and leaders of organizations is built.

**Task:** Provide an opportunity for personnel at the local level—whether collectively or through self-development—to focus leadership development activities relating to the national challenge theme: *Followership is Leadership*.

**Purpose:**

- To foster a cohesive effort to promote leadership development across disciplines.
- To provide a template that can be used to encourage leadership development at the local unit level.
- To provide a mechanism to collect innovative leadership development efforts and share across disciplines.

**End State:** Creation of a culture that willingly shares innovative leadership development efforts in order to maintain superior interdisciplinary leadership.

**Dates of Challenge:** Any time between January 1, 2015, and November 30, 2015.

**Length of Challenge:** Determined locally to meet the goals and the objectives of the local unit or team.

**Audience:** All wildland fire personnel—line-going and support.

**Implementation:** The challenge is **flexible**. Local units or teams may use or adapt any or all materials contained within this document **or** develop a program or activity spotlighting the challenge theme. Challenge coordinators are encouraged to think outside the confines of the template and develop a program that meets local and individual needs. Innovation should fuel your challenge delivery: workshops or tailgate sessions, to kick off staff meetings, as a team activity or self-directed, etc.

## Measuring Success:

- **Local**
  - Local unit leaders and managers will determine what “success” looks like and how participation will be recognized by those involved.
- **National:** A committee formed by the NWCG Leadership Subcommittee will recognize one unit’s contribution to the challenge through the *IGNITE the Spark for Leadership Contest*. (See complete details below.)

## Recognizing Local Unit Participation:

- A sample certificate is available at the end of this document to acknowledge students of fire participating in the leadership challenge at the local level.

## **IGNITE the Spark for Leadership Contest – From the Field for the Field**

Throughout the nation, leaders are building teams and developing their people using tools they have found or developed themselves. Imagine if our leaders and their subordinates shared their experiences and successes with each other. Consider the possibility of going to a website and having a ready-made palette of leadership development tools from which to choose—items from the field for the field.

Using the spirit of healthy competition, the *IGNITE the Spark for Leadership Contest* is intended to be one of the mechanisms used to collect innovative leadership development efforts to be shared across disciplines.

The *IGNITE the Spark for Leadership Contest* is an **optional** component of the Wildland Fire Leadership Challenge and limited to entities with a tie to the wildland fire service. Items to submit:

- **Required:**
  - Written summary not to exceed ten (10) pages. (See “Judging” section for what to address.)
- **Recommended:**
  - Supplementary materials not to exceed thirty (30) pages or pieces. May include, but is not limited to, photos, videos, and materials used.
- **Optional (but highly encouraged and can be done with coordination of the NWCG Leadership Committee Logistics Coordinator):**
  - Promote your leadership challenge through social media networks such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter. Provide a social media journal (can be very simple) and URLs for your pages.

Send your challenge documentation to:

- *Mail:* NWCG Leadership Subcommittee  
Attention: Pam McDonald  
3833 South Development Avenue  
Boise, ID 83705
- *Electronically:* [BLM FA Leadership Feedback@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_FA_Leadership_Feedback@blm.gov)

### Judging

All entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- Local unit information:
  - Name of participating unit/team
  - Point of contact (POC) name
  - POC contact information (telephone, physical address, and e-mail)
  - Number of individuals participating—include percentage of personnel involved
  - Brief description of challenge activities
- Innovation
- Creativity
- Apparent tie-in to the WFLDP values and principles
- Comprehensiveness of challenge (several elements used versus one or two and focus on challenge)
- Inclusiveness (all personnel considered target audience)
- Level of participation by target audience
- Interdisciplinary impact

### Winner Recognition

The NWCG Leadership Subcommittee will determine how award winner(s) will be recognized (e.g., plaque, trophy) on a yearly basis. Winner(s) and those recognized for honorable mention will also be featured on and through various media sites and publications.

### Entry Deadline

**November 30, 2015**

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGE RESOURCES

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The challenge is **flexible**. Local units or teams may use or adapt any or all materials contained within this document (presented in no specific order) **or** develop a program or activities spotlighting the challenge theme. Challenge coordinators are encouraged to think outside the confines of the template and develop a program that meets local and individual leadership development needs.

### **RECOMMENDED REFERENCES AND GENERAL CHALLENGE ACTIVITIES**

The following references and activities provide the foundation upon which the challenge was created. Much of the content in this guide comes from these references. Feel free to incorporate them in their entirety for more robust challenge.

#### **Followership-Themed References:**

- *Bad Leadership* by Barbara Kellerman
- *Follow to Lead* by Don Mercer with Carlos Fontana
- *Followership: How Followers Are Creating Change and Changing Leaders* by Barbara Kellerman
- *The Art of Followership* by Ronald E. Riggio, Ira Chaleff and, Jean Lipman-Blumen.
- *The Courageous Follower: Standing Up to & For Our Leaders* by Ira Chaleff
- *Coaching for Performance* by John Whitmore
- University of Oregon's Holden Leadership Center (<http://bit.ly/1xe8JM>)

#### **Wildland Fire Leadership Development References:**

- *Leading in the Wildland Fire Service*  
(<http://1.usa.gov/1eoKg3r>)
- Professional Reading Program  
(<http://1.usa.gov/17Ficq0>)

#### **General Challenge Activities:**

- Select an article or book focusing on the challenge theme and facilitate a discussion via a social media platform.
- Watch and discuss a leadership movie or video clip that depicts the challenge theme.
- Contribute to the WFLDP's social media network.
  - Submit a story to be considered for posting on the Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program (WFLDP) blog.  
(<http://bit.ly/cXjwlp>)

Submit leadership quotes, articles, or questions related to the challenge theme to the NWCG Logistics Coordinator.

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## **The Four Levels of Leadership**

“A leader is not necessarily someone who holds a formal position of leadership or who is perceived as a leader by others. Rather, a leader is one who is able to affect positive change for the betterment of others, the community, and society. All people, in other words, are potential leaders. Moreover, the process of leadership cannot be described simply in terms of the behavior of an individual; rather leadership involves collaborative relationships that lead to collective action grounded in the shared values of people who work together to affect positive change.” – *Higher Education Research Institute*

Regardless of their place in the organization, every wildland fire professional reports to or follows someone or something (board, committee, etc.). Therefore, every wildland fire profession is a leader. Each assumes one of four leadership roles within the wildland fire service:

- Follower
- Leader of People
- Leader of Leaders
- Leader of Organizations

### **PRACTICE – Leadership is Action:**

- Read about the “Levels of Leadership” on page 33 of *Leading in the Wildland Fire Service*.

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## **The Leadership Values and Principles We Follow**

In addition to personal values, leaders follow a universal set of values and principles.

### **PRACTICE – Leadership is Action:**

- Provide each member of your team with a copy of your team’s values and principles. Feel free to use the *Wildland Fire Values and Principles*. (See page 16 or download from <http://1.usa.gov/1ogrLzL>)
- Download a copy of and read *Leading in the Wildland Fire Service*. (<http://1.usa.gov/1eoKg3r>)

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## **Leadership as a Two-Way Interactive Process**

“Leadership can be seen to be a two-way interaction between those who lead and those who follow in pursuit of common objectives and tangible and observable outcomes. The quality of the interaction and its outcomes depends on the ability, skills, experience and motivation of all parties and their commitment to their common objectives and outcomes.”  
– *Adrian Walsh Associates*

The importance of a designated leader should not be diminished. Students of fire know from the lessons learned from the South Canyon tragedy that having multiple leaders and/or no appointed leaders on the fireline can have serious consequences. However, when leadership is seen as a role filled by all members of the team and all members are held accountable for their part, a better leadership environment is created.

### **PRACTICE – Leadership is Action:**

- Research the events of the South Canyon fire on Storm King Mountain and how human factors contributed to the tragedy. (<http://1.usa.gov/1sS5ZWs>)
- Leaders are called to unlock the leadership potential in others. Watch and discuss the story of the Greensboro 4 in “Woolworth Lunch Counter” video. Where the Greensboro 4 followers or leaders? (<http://youtu.be/Xbbcjn4d1cE>; 6:11 minutes)
- Watch and discuss the story of Coach Bud Grant in “We Did This Ourselves.” (<http://youtu.be/O4QnAZHNh1c>, 5:22 minutes)

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## **“The Ten Rules of Good Followership”**

*Col. Phillip S. Meilinger* (<http://1.usa.gov/RCxy7g>)

1. Don't blame your boss for an unpopular decision or policy; your job is to support, not undermine.
2. Fight with your boss if necessary; but do it in private, avoid embarrassing situations, and never reveal to others what was discussed.
3. Make the decision, then run it past the boss; use your initiative.
4. Accept responsibility whenever it is offered.
5. Tell the truth and don't quibble; your boss will be giving advice up the chain of command based on what you said.
6. Do your homework; give your boss all the information needed to make a decision; anticipate possible questions.
7. When making a recommendation, remember who will probably have to implement it. This means you must know your own limitations and weaknesses as well as your strengths.

8. Keep your boss informed of what's going on in the unit; people will be reluctant to tell him/her their problems and successes. You should do it for them, and assume someone else will tell the boss about yours.
9. If you see a problem, fix it. Don't worry about who would have gotten the blame or who now gets the praise.
10. Put in more than an honest day's work, but don't ever forget the needs of your family. If they are unhappy, you will be too, and your job performance will suffer accordingly.

**PRACTICE – Leadership is Action:**

- Read and discuss Col. Phillip S. Meilinger's article *The Ten Rules of Good Followership*.
- Watch and discuss Jean Lipman-Blumen's "The Art of Followership: How Great Followers Create Great Leaders." (<http://youtu.be/AnscKHpQMDw>)
- Watch and discuss the University of Washington – Fostering Leadership's "The Power of Followership" video. (<http://youtu.be/CaddcG6ehMY>)

**The Seven Principles that Make Up the Followership Culture**

*Don Mercer, author of "Follow to Lead"* (<http://www.follow-to-lead.com/>)

1. **Instant Response:** Begin action immediately when assigned a task; complete it as fast as possible with quality; ask the leader to adjust priorities if necessary.
2. **Initiative:** Be a self-starter, just do it; look for problems to solve; look for new ways to accomplish the mission.
3. **Imagination:** An innate capability in all humans, share ideas daily to multiply their potential power; focus on the small stuff first as it leads to larger possibilities.
4. **Integrity:** Honesty; declare mistakes immediately; tell the truth without compromise, leaders cannot lead without it; prove to be trustworthy and you will be entrusted with more.
5. **Inquire:** Ask the "who, what, why, where, when, and how" questions about everything to learn; leaders look for learners; teach others.
6. **Inform:** Keep the leader updated; no secrets allowed; share your tasks and ask for input.
7. **Involve:** Life and work is a team effort, join; participate in the whole organization; act beyond the job description.

**Leading in a Followership Culture**

1. Leaders start as followers.
2. Leaders put their followers first.
3. Great leaders do not try to motivate their followers.
4. Leaders take a turn in the dirty work.

5. Great leaders train followers to be great followers, capable of taking over leadership.
6. Diversity in people and their capabilities is critical to success.
7. Individual ideas and actions make an impact.
8. Use a decision making model.
9. Recognize followers' achievements in public.
10. Leadership will be lonely.

### **PRACTICE – Leadership is Action:**

- Read and discuss Don Mercer's (with contributions by Carlos Fontana) book *Follow to Lead*.
- Watch and discuss "Mark Zuckerberg – Authentic Followership" (<http://bit.ly/1teTCVZ>, 4:33 minutes)

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### **The Four Basic Follower Needs**

Team Building Activity by BE LEGENDARY [<http://bit.ly/1yaioo5>]

- Trust
- Compassion
- Stability
- Hope

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### **Behaviors of Effective Following**

Holden Leadership Center\* (<http://bit.ly/1oHNTVc>)

- Volunteering to handle tasks or help accomplish goals
- Willingly accepting assignments
- Exhibiting loyalty to the group
- Voicing differences of opinions, but supporting the group's decisions
- Offering suggestions
- Maintaining a positive attitude, even in confusing or trying times
- Working effectively as a team member

\*Additional references: *Student Leadership Development Approaches, Methods, and Models*. Boatman, S. A. (1997) and *Moral Leadership and Business Ethics*. Gini, A. (1997)

**PRACTICE – Leadership is Action:**

- Assess your followership using Holden Leadership Center’s “Effective Following Self-Check.”
  - Am I truly pursuing the mission and goals of the group while balancing my self-interests?
  - What ideas, purpose or values do I share with the leader? The group?
  - Should I be taking more initiative?
  - What particular pressures and challenges does the leader face?
  - If I and/or the group provided more support to the leader, might it improve her/his behavior?
  - The leader must have some redeeming skills, qualities and abilities that helped get her or him into this position of leadership. What are they? How can I help draw these out? How can I help change the environment so these skills and abilities can be demonstrated?
  - Although changing ourselves is usually not an easy task, most would agree it is easier than changing others. If you are experiencing frustrations or misunderstandings with your organization leader, take a step back and view the situation from the outside. Instead of asking how you can get the leader out of her or his position, ask how you can help her or him improve.

**5 Reasons to Follow and the Association to Respect**

University of Kentucky – College of Agriculture (<http://bit.ly/1nADpCt>) and Changing Minds.org (<http://bit.ly/X7epOb>)

- Fear of retribution: “If I do not follow, I may lose my job!”
- Blind hope: “We must do something. I hope this works!”
- Faith in leader: “What a great person. If anyone knows the answer, they do!”
- Intellectual agreement: “What a good idea. That makes real sense.”
- Buying the vision: “What a brilliant idea. I don’t care who thought of it.”

		RESPECT FOR THE SOLUTION		
RESPECT FOR THE LEADER		Strong	Weak	Neutral
Strong		Powerful Buy-In	Blind Faith	Wait and See
Weak		Blind Hope	Outright Opposition	
Neutral		Wait and See		

### **PRACTICE – Leadership is Action:**

- Watch and discuss “Obedience to Authority.” (<http://youtu.be/Xw-L-ljrzbo>, 7:40 minutes)
  - Watch and discuss the “Milgram Obedience Study.” (<http://youtu.be/fCVII-4GZQ>, 9:53 minutes)
  - Read and discuss Steven R. (Randy) Watt’s “Followership Does Not Mean Blind Obedience.” (<http://bit.ly/1svUgy0>)
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### **The Dark Side of Leadership**

“Leadership is the art of influencing people in order to achieve a result. The most essential element for success in the wildland fire service is **good** leadership.” – *Leading in the Wildland Fire Service*, p. 1.

Influence may not always produce a positive effect. Many find angst when the statements like “toxic leaders” or “bad leaders” are used. Unfortunately, some of this world’s most influential leaders led great numbers of people with horrific agendas. The leaders had great power and led well. Their followers believed in their cause. Bad or toxic leaders exist. Not talking about the dark side of leadership is a disservice to our followers. Part of recognizing what right looks like is analyzing the negative. A key responsibility of followership is to recognize the difference and hold those leaders accountable.

### **PRACTICE – Leadership is Action:**

- Listen to and discuss Jean Lipman-Blumen and Barbara Kellerman’s talk on toxic leadership. (<http://cs.pn/XiaEWi>, 39 minutes)
- Read and discuss Col. George E. Reed’s article “Toxic Leadership.” (<http://bit.ly/XicCpE>)
- Read and discuss Dan Rockwell’s blog “10 Strategies for Dealing with a Toxic Teammate” (<http://bit.ly/1rw1Bxi>).

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## **Courageous Followers – Stepping Up and Saying/Doing Something**

“Leaders in the wildland fire service are not only empowered but also duty-bound to act on a situation that is within our power to affect, even without direction action from above.” – Leading in the Wildland Fire Service, p. 26

### **PRACTICE – Leadership is Action:**

- Watch the *First Follower: Leadership Lessons from Dancing Guy* video (<http://youtu.be/fW8amMCVAjQ>; 2:57 minutes). Discuss with your team the importance of the follower in a leadership relationship. Do you have the courage to follow?
- Read and discuss “A Bias for Action” in *Leading in the Wildland Fire Service*, pp. 26-27. (<http://1.usa.gov/1eoKg3r>)
- Complete the “Devil’s Advocate” exercise from the 2014 Wildland Fire Safety Annual Refresher. (<http://1.usa.gov/1u7sVCY>)
- Beware of the power of conformity within a group. Watch and discuss the “Asch Conformity Experiment” video. (<http://youtu.be/NyDDyT1lDhA>, 5:47 minutes)
- Don’t be afraid to take action and step into the leadership gap. Watch the “Bystander Effect” video. Discuss how the diffusion of responsibility could manifest itself during your operations? (<http://youtu.be/OSsPfbup0ac>, 3:35 minutes)
- Watch and discuss Ira Chaleff’s “The Courageous Follower Model.” (<http://youtu.be/K1dkfN1XBuE>)

### **The Five Dimensions of Courageous Followership**

Ira Chaleff (as shared by Kent State University <http://bit.ly/1vDJsAc>)

- ◇ **The courage to assume responsibility.** Courageous followers assume responsibility for themselves and the organization. They do not hold a paternalistic image of the leader or organization, nor do they expect either to provide for their security and growth or give them permission to act. They initiate values based action. Their “authority” comes from their understanding and ownership of the common purpose.
- ◇ **The courage to serve.** Courageous followers are not afraid of hard work and they assume additional responsibilities to unburden the leader and serve the organization. They stand up for the leader and the tough decisions he/she must make. They are as passionate as the leader in pursuit of the common purpose.
- ◇ **The courage to challenge.** Courageous followers give voice to the discomfort they feel when the behaviors or policies of the leader or group conflict with their sense of what is right. They are willing to stand up, stand out, to risk rejection and to initiate conflict in order to examine the actions of the leader or group when appropriate

- ◇ **The courage to participate in transformation.** Courageous followers champion the need for change and stay with the leader and group while they mutually struggle with the difficulty of real change. They examine their own need for transformation and become full participants in the change process as appropriate.
- ◇ **The courage to take moral action.** Courageous followers know when it is time to take a stand that is different from the leaders. The stand may involve refusing to obey a direct order, appealing the order to the next level of authority, or tendering one's resignation. This may involve personal risk but service to the common purpose justifies and sometimes demands such action.

To build the kind of healthy and resilient culture required in the wildland fire service, we lead up—holding our leaders accountable, providing unvarnished situation awareness in challenging situations, and offering unbiased and viable alternatives. (*Leading in the Wildland Fire Service*, p. 49)

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### **Other Followership References**

- “Followership” by Curphy Consulting, includes types of followers and assessment tool (<http://bit.ly/XyGIoQ>)
- “In Praise of Followers” by Robert Kelley (<http://bit.ly/1n78Tkg>)
- “Teaching Followership in Leadership Education” by Deana M. Raffo, includes a lesson plan for implementation. (<http://bit.ly/1nMM1g8>)
- “The Followership Continuum: A Model for Increasing Organizational Productivity” by Patsy Blackshear, Ph.D., includes research on Blackshear’s five stages of dynamic followership performance (<http://bit.ly/1lfPzGx>)
- The Followership Exchange, includes links to various resources regarding followership (<http://bit.ly/1oaRrLn>)

# DUTY

## **Be proficient in your job, both technically & as a leader.**

- Take charge when in charge.
- Adhere to professional standard operating procedures.
- Develop a plan to accomplish given objectives.

## **Make sound & timely decisions.**

- Maintain situation awareness in order to anticipate needed actions.
- Develop contingencies & consider consequences.
- Improvise within the commander's intent to handle a rapidly changing environment.

## **Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, accomplished.**

- Issue clear instructions.
- Observe & assess actions in progress without micro-managing.
- Use positive feedback to modify duties, tasks & assignments when appropriate.

## **Develop your subordinates for the future.**

- Clearly state expectations.
- Delegate tasks that you are not required to do personally.
- Consider individual skill levels & developmental needs when assigning tasks.

## **Know your subordinates and look out for their well-being.**

- Put the safety of your subordinates above all other objectives.
- Take care of your subordinate's needs.
- Resolve conflicts between individuals on the team.

## **Keep your subordinates informed.**

- Provide accurate & timely briefings.
- Give the reason (intent) for assignments & tasks.
- Make yourself available to answer questions at appropriate times.

## **Build the team.**

- Conduct frequent debriefings with the team to identify lessons learned.
- Recognize accomplishments & reward them appropriately.
- Apply disciplinary measures equally.

## **Employ your subordinates in accordance with their capabilities.**

- Observe human behavior as well as fire behavior.
- Provide early warning to subordinates of tasks they will be responsible for.
- Consider team experience, fatigue & physical limitations when accepting assignments.

## **Know yourself and seek improvement.**

- Know the strengths/weaknesses in your character & skill level.
- Ask questions of peers & supervisors.
- Actively listen to feedback from subordinates.

## **Seek responsibility and accept responsibility for your actions.**

- Accept full responsibility for & correct poor team performance.
- Credit subordinates for good performance.
- Keep your superiors informed of your actions.

## **Set the example.**

- Share the hazards & hardships with your subordinates.
- Don't show discouragement when facing setbacks.
- Choose the difficult right over the easy wrong.

# RESPECT

# INTEGRITY

# WILDLAND FIRE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Presents

*CERTIFICATE OF LEADERSHIP RECOGNITION*

To

*For demonstrated excellence as a leader  
during the 2015 Wildland Fire Leadership Challenge*

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