

Cultivating Management Skills: A Leadership Development Training Program for Executive Directors in Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Advancing Conservation Excellence program, created in partnership with the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, is a multi-year effort to provide support and resources to the land trust community in Massachusetts. Leadership development is a key component of the program, including this opportunity for executive directors.

Program description:

Passion for the cause is what brings most people to their organizations. Those that become leaders often have little training in how to run an organization and are expected to learn on the job. The difficulty is that the job of leading an organization is complex, especially in these challenging times of rapid change, social discord, financial uncertainty, and a tight job market. As an added challenge, many leaders feel that it is “lonely at the top.” This program is a virtual, cohort-based leadership and management training program for executive directors that gives them an opportunity to build their leadership and management skills and bolster organizational effectiveness.

Participants will engage in eight, highly interactive, live, virtual training sessions covering important aspects of nonprofit management which are critical for organizational leaders. The 90-minute webinar training sessions include discussion so that participants build connection to and learn from their peers. The small cohort size allows for participants to actively participate and build a network of other executive directors in Massachusetts.

To make sure that the webinars are actionable, participants will receive examples, tools, and templates for the key capacities in each area. Individual assistance will also be provided to participants between sessions with the opportunity to sign up for one-on-one coaching sessions to answer questions and discuss application of the training concepts.

Over the course of the training series, each participant will identify a key missing capacity to take on as an improvement project. Some examples of projects are implementing an annual planning or evaluation process, creating a financial dashboard or better budget, developing a workplan template, or establishing an equitable hiring process.

Eligibility:

To be eligible, applicants must be serving in an executive director or similar staff leadership capacity at a Massachusetts-based land trust that is a member of the Alliance and/or the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition.

Cost:

The registration fee is \$350 per individual. This includes access to all eight sessions, individual coaching between sessions, and an in-person cohort meeting. Thanks to generous funding from an anonymous foundation, we are able to offer this opportunity at this affordable cost. That said, we do not want this cost to prohibit organizations from participating. Please let us know in the application if your organization would like to be considered for a scholarship.

Dates and times:

The program will be delivered to selected participants via eight 90-minute virtual sessions held from 1:00-2:30 PM ET from January 16 – June 5, 2025.

Webinars are scheduled for 1:00-2:30 PM on January 16, February 6, February 27, March 20, April 10, May 1, May 22, and June 5.

An in-person meeting will be hosted toward the beginning of the year and will be scheduled once the cohort is selected.

Applications are due by October 15, 2024. Applicants will be notified the week of November 25, 2024.

Link to application: <https://forms.gle/xTszvtjTgKStrc846>

What previous participants have said about the program:

- “The top benefit of this series for me has been dedicated time and access to a professional consultant ... Instead of searching out multiple resources (books, webinars, trainings, etc.), the series met me where I was at as a new leader of a statewide conservation organization and provided me with the tools and guidance to grow into my position.”
- “This educational series has provided the structure and boundaries necessary to successfully interact with my staff and board to successfully run a land trust non-profit. I have gleaned information in each session and have worked to apply these lessons to be more successful. I only wish I had received this guidance earlier in my career.”

- “Camaraderie with other new Executive Directors was invaluable. Hearing that others throughout the region are experiencing similar challenges helped me gain confidence as I guide our land trust in a new direction.”

Webinar dates and topic descriptions:

All webinars will be held from 1:00-2:30 PM EST on the following Thursdays.

January 16 - Organizational Management Overview: This session serves as an introduction to the curriculum and fellow participants. It covers the core components of a successful organization: strategic and impactful program, financial sustainability, and effective management and leadership. Participants assess their own experience and know-how, identify areas for growth, and develop a plan for increasing knowledge and skills that with help bolster their organization’s effectiveness.

February 6 - Program Planning: Effective leaders are skilled planners. In this session, we’ll discuss planning building blocks including strategic plans, annual program plans, and individual work plans. We’ll explore approaches for working with the board and the staff on planning, along with ways to incorporate DEI. Participants learn about the tools and processes that help make planning more actionable and adaptable.

February 27 - Improving Financial Management: The organization’s budget and financial reports help leaders to think strategically about the long-term sustainability of the organization, sustaining both effective programs and critical operations. In this session, participants learn how to use a mission alignment lens to be strategic about growth or cutbacks. We share skills and tactics to demonstrate financial leadership, improve program financial stability, and increase adaptability for uncertain times.

March 20 - Creating a Positive Fundraising Culture: A well-developed plan for fundraising that involves everyone in the organization is a key to success. In this session, we’ll talk about celebrating fundraising successes, fundraising planning, and expanding who in the organization is involved in fundraising. Participants will learn about how to develop a realistic and helpful plan that guides fundraising activities, and we’ll explore how to recruit everyone in the organization to get involved.

April 10 - Developing a Healthy Relationship with the Board: Having clear board member role and responsibilities improves board functioning and helps recruit and retain board members. Greater role clarity also helps staff leadership to thrive. In this session, we’ll explore board roles, communication with the board, and the challenges that arise in board and staff relationships.

May 1 - Increasing Supervisory Skills: Effective leaders support staff and help establish a healthy culture based on learning, feedback, engagement, and equity. In this

session, we talk about onboarding new staff with clear job descriptions and onboarding plans. We also discuss common supervisory pitfalls and share practices around performance feedback, decision-making, and delegation that help staff to thrive.

May 22 - Growing Leadership Competencies: In this session, participants learn about the characteristics of effective leaders. We'll discuss the importance of self-awareness, managing mood and energy, personal resilience, and power awareness. Participants identify areas of their strength as a leader, and explore how they can leverage that, along with identifying areas where they want to be more effective.

June 5 - Nurturing Personal Resilience: These are challenging times for leaders. In this session, we explore practices for avoiding burnout and developing resilience. Participants learn about the importance of managing their energy in addition to their time and creating an inspiring workspace. We talk about what gets in the way as they implement personal development action plans, how to get the support they need, and how to build their resilience.

About the trainer

As a trainer and consultant, Megan Seibel draws on four decades of nonprofit management experience. Megan spent the first twenty years of her career working with environmental organizations in several states including Massachusetts, New Jersey, Illinois, and Colorado. She held positions of fundraiser, financial manager, advocate, and executive director. These experiences inspired her to help others learn how to run successful organizations. Megan spent the next twenty years working in nonprofit capacity building for conservation and environmental organizations, providing organizational effectiveness and leadership training and consulting. Megan is a masterful trainer and consultant, sharing practical tips and insightful approaches in accessible and engaging ways. For more information about Megan, please see the Capacity Refresh [website](#) or Megan's [LinkedIn](#) profile.

Questions?

Please reach out to Jen Plowden, New England Senior Program Manager, jplowden@lta.org or Mariah Fogg, New England Program Coordinator, mfogg@lta.org.