

Collective Leadership: Knowledge to Impact

Addressing today's environmental and sustainability challenges calls for new forms of individual and collective leadership. The Earth Leadership Program has adapted the concept and dimensions of this framework to help academic environmental leaders become agents of change within and beyond their universities.

Reflect

Assess challenges and strengths

Identify a challenge that resonates with your values and expertise

Evaluate personal strengths and time commitments

Envision team capabilities that could complement your own

Inquire

Gather multiple perspectives

Identify key stakeholders

Seek out diverse perspectives

Reflect and reframe the challenge, as needed



Connect

Understand context and networks

Evaluate the systems in which you work

Identify cross-sector and cross-disciplinary stakeholders and allies

Engage

Create alignment on goals and directions

Convene multi-stakeholder groups

Assess potential opportunities and interventions

Create shared visions of work to be done and possible futures

Strategize

Develop credible, relevant solutions

Co-design, co-produce, and co-implement change

Identify roles and responsibilities, timelines and metrics

Communicate plan and updates on progress

Empower

Inspire ongoing action

Train the next generation: share lessons learned about leadership, process, and outcomes

Provide call to action for others

Convene ongoing conversations

Contact Us

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Why Collective Leadership?

The Earth Leadership Program is embracing a leadership model that encourages individuals to cross boundaries and work collaboratively to transform systems. This collective leadership model is well-suited to academic researchers who rely on broad networks to advance sustainability.

The principles of collective leadership emerged from organizational development practitioners and thought leaders over the past decade who reflected on the need for a new model when the: _____→

Issues are complex and multifaceted

Networks of individuals and organizations are involved (NGOs, government, private sector)

Solutions are likely to be iterative

Innovative processes can enable and catalyze systemic change

Below we've outlined some of the key differences:

TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL	COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL
What is leadership?	
A position	A collaborative process
What leadership traits are most valued?	
Decisiveness, certainty & focus	Intentionality, learning, empathy & systems thinking
Who provides relevant perspectives?	
Experts	Diverse stakeholders
How does a leader mobilize action?	
Creates the vision for the larger group	Convenes a group to create a shared vision
How does a leader implement solutions?	
Assigns roles and responsibilities	Shares responsibility; Co-designs, frames the challenge and implements with team
How does a leader grow?	
Deepens knowledge within the boundaries of his or her expertise	Self-awareness; reflects on learning, both successes and failures
What is the outcome of leadership development?	
Individuals improve their personal skills and abilities to lead the way	Set of tools that can be easily shared and enable groups to self-organize
How do leaders view the needs of the future?	
Takes positions as new challenges arise	Transforming systems; creating a sustainable future; acting from a networked mindset

For more about the evolution and application of collective leadership, please see

"The Dawn of System Leadership" by Peter Senge, Hal Hamilton & John Kania, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2015
https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_dawn_of_system_leadership