



State of the Program 2021



Message from the Founding Co-Director

For those of us interested in crisis leadership, this has been a year like no other. It was not one crisis, as we most often study. It was not limited in place, time, or extent. COVID-19 has been everyone, everywhere, and in the complex ways of emergencies, simultaneous to other crises of the economy, race relations, social justice, politics, security, and climate-related disasters.

The COVID-19 year for the NPLI started with quick transitions. We too were in the midst of the crisis just as we tried to study it. We were often in daily contact with people at the lead of responding government organizations, members of the White House COVID-19 Task Force, elected officials, and leading business leaders.

What impressed us about these leaders was the compulsion and the capacity to adapt. This is perhaps the most important lesson of the COVID experience. In biological terms, adaptation is a change or process of change by which an organism or species becomes better suited to its shifting environment. Adaptation is a survival mechanism, an instinctual prompt to adjust in response to contingencies which themselves will not alter. In others words, the message to leaders: Adapt, because the conditions in which you lead are both undeniable and unpredictable.

NPLI faculty asked how to provide guidance to leaders under these extraordinary circumstances. We reflected on leadership of past crises we studied, including the series of hurricanes that hit the southeast United States in 2017, from Harvey in Texas to Maria in Puerto Rico. We looked back at prior public health crises, including H1N1 in 2009 and Ebola in 2014. We also considered long duration crises such as the Deep Water Horizon Gulf oil spill in 2010. How could each of these situations inform current circumstances?

Early on, we realized that time itself would be a critical factor in the leadership of COVID-19. Time - through each phase of the pandemic - as well as time to reach the conclusion of the

crisis. Yes, COVID-19 - like all crises - eventually will end.

From that observation, we fine-tuned the curriculum for the “Arcs of Time,” the patterns of escalation, transformation, and resolution that each phase of the pandemic could be expected to traverse. The Arcs of Time Meta-Leader tool then guided the forecasting, transactions, and transformations of leaders as they traversed the pandemic and its many transitions.

Yes, this has been a year like no other. The challenges of learning, teaching, living and surviving required countless adaptations.

To our many colleagues, friends, faculty, students, and staff, my thanks for sharing your experiences, insights, and patience with this complex process of research, analysis, and instruction.

Leonard J. Marcus, Ph.D.
Co-Director, NPLI

For more information:
npli@hsph.harvard.edu

National Preparedness Leadership
Initiative at Harvard

NPLI Offers Virtual Programs

As offices emptied in response to the coronavirus pandemic, in-person executive education became impossible. The NPLI seized this opportunity to accelerate its own digital transformation. Two new online-only programs were developed and deployed: Crisis Leadership: Core Principles and Practices and Advanced Crisis Leadership: Innovative Strategies and Decisions. These pioneering offerings enabled the NPLI to reach new audiences and explore new delivery methods. They will remain as a central NPLI offering after pandemic restrictions are lifted.

Eric McNulty, NPLI associate director, said, "Once we adjusted to Zoom as a teaching platform,

we found that it offered interesting possibilities such as breakout rooms and chat. We have been able to create an engaging environment and create more flexible class schedules."

The NPLI also transitioned its Executive and Emerging Leader programs to online delivery as well as several custom programs. Faculty have delivered programs in locations as far afield as India.

"Our participants have been active co-creators of these learning experiences," McNulty added. "They have jumped right into the online environment. But we all miss the cookies at the breaks."



NPLI Affiliated Faculty Expands

NPLI alumni Kellie Bentz of Airbnb; Darrell Darnell, former Director of Emergency Management for Washington, DC; Anne Kronenberg, former Executive Director of Emergency Management for San Francisco; and Kaleth Wright, retired Chief Master Sergeant of the U.S. Air Force, above, are bringing their in-depth experience and diverse perspectives to curriculum development and delivery.



2003 – 2005

- NPLI Founding
- Hurricane Katrina Response
- Executive Education Cohort
- Inaugural NPLI Executive Education Program

2006 – 2008

- First academic paper on meta-leadership
- First White House presentation
- Research on Democratic and Republican National Conventions

2009 – 2010

- Research on H1N1 Influenza Outbreak
- Research on Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill
- Tale of our Cities Terrorism Summit Education

NPLI Deploys for COVID-19 and More

Each December when the opening session of the annual Executive Meta-Leadership program is coming to a close, NPLI founding co-director Lenny Marcus reminds participants that some of them will be called in to deal with a crisis before they return in June. Little did he expect that when he delivered that message in 2019 that everyone in the class would be drawn into the coronavirus pandemic.

From overseeing field hospitals to negotiating between the White House and governors to advising the public, NPLI alumni have been at the frontlines of the pandemic response. NPLI alumni have been leading at FEMA, the CDC, public health departments, and many other federal, state, and local government

agencies as well as in the private and non-profit sectors. We are proud of the service they have provided to their communities.

The pandemic is not the only crisis to disrupt 2020. NPLI alumni were also leading in response to record-setting Atlantic storms, wildfires in the west, civil unrest, and ongoing crises such as the fight against opioids. We are proud of the service each of them has provided to their communities.

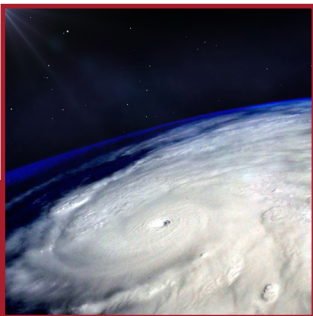
The world is ever-more turbulent. Overlapping, or layered, crises stress government, social, and economic systems as never before. Meta-leaders are building bridges across organization and jurisdictional boundaries to prepare and protect their communities.



Check Out Our Podcast

Our Leader Readycast podcast brings practical insights and the latest research to listeners. Guests in 2020 included Grit author Shannon Huffman Polson, cyber security strategist Keyaan Williams, and neuroscience expert Dr. Donna Volpitta. Leader Readycast is available on iTunes, Soundcloud, and on the NPLI website.

<https://npli.sph.harvard.edu/>



2011 – 2012

- Research on Tropical Storm Irene
- Hurricane Sandy and Deepwater Horizon Teaching Cases Published
- FEMA EMI Program (2012-2016)

2013 – 2014

- Research on Boston Marathon Bombing Response
- Research on Ebola Response
- Introduction of Swarm Leadership

2015 – 2016

- 500+ Cumulative Exec Ed Alumni
- TSA Executive Education Program
- Schlumberger Crisis Leadership Program (2014-2018)

NPLI Faculty Publish Breakthrough Ideas

The impact of the work of the NPLI is amplified through the publishing activities of faculty members. In 2020, *You're It: Crisis, Change, and How to Lead When it Matters Most* was released in a paperback edition which includes a new chapter on the Covid-19 pandemic. Among recent faculty articles are, "The POP-DOC Loop: A Continual Process for Situational Awareness and Situational Action" (Industrial Marketing Management) and a forthcoming chapter on meta-leadership for the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics.

Visit the NPLI website for a partial list of publications.

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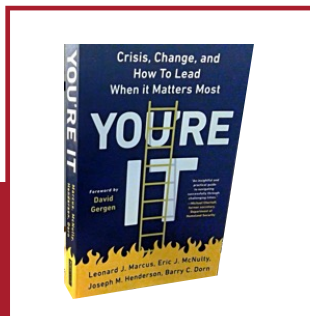


Carrier Named Meta-Leader of The Year

Alyssa Carrier, NPLI EEP Alumna 2018, is the 2020 Meta-Leader of the Year. As an entrepreneur, she started a fast-growing firm, AC Disaster Consulting, committed to diversity and giving back. In 2020, she and her colleagues supported events as diverse as the Covid response in Florida and wildfire response in Oregon. Through it all, she has been noted for deep her expertise and boundless enthusiasm. Read more about Alyssa on our website.

From Concept to Practice

NPLI curricula are conceptually rigorous and relentlessly practical. Field research and teaching reinforce each other in a virtuous circle of learning and application.



2017 – 2018

- Inaugural Master Symposium
- Leader ReadyCast Launches
- Massport Training Program
- Transformation at TSA Teaching Case Published

2018 – 2019

- NPLI Marks 15 Years
- Inaugural Emerging Leaders Program (2019)
- *You're It* Meta-leadership Book Published (2019)

2020 – 2021

- Online programs debut
- *You're It* published in paperback
- Covid-19 relevant curricula created

Meta-Leadership Training Worldwide

Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Ecuador, France, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, Russia, Singapore, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States

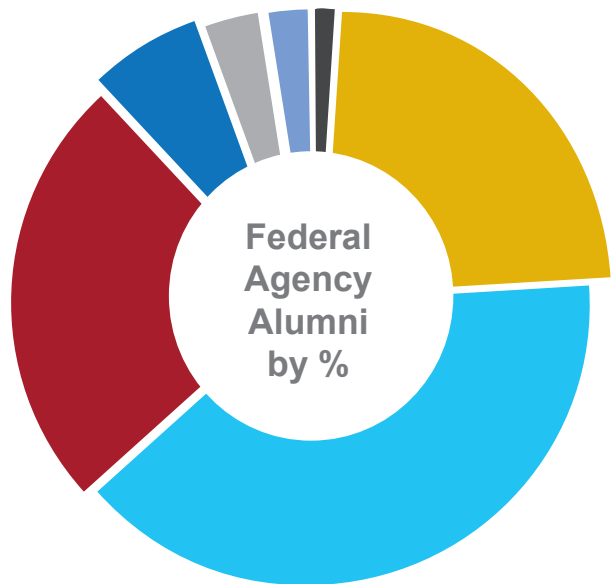


Total Participants Trained Since 2005



Federal Agency Executive Education Alumni Breakdown by Percentage

- Department of Health & Human Services
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Office of the Director of National Intelligence
- Other Executive Agencies
- Non-executive Agencies
- Department of Defense



Looking Forward

Returning to in-person training programs.



Contact:

npli@hsph.harvard.edu

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