National Fire Academy

W2402 – Executive Skills Series: Exercising Leadership to Facilitate Adaptive Change
Version: 2nd Edition, 1st Printing, June 2026

ACE Credit: There is not an American Council on Education credit recommendation for this course.
IACET Continuing Education Units: 1.1

Length of Course: 2 Days (15 hr. contact hours)
Prerequisite: Yes
Curriculum: Leadership and Executive Development

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Course Description (Catalog)

W2402 – "Executive Skills Series: Exercising Leadership to Facilitate Adaptive Change." Fire and emergency medical services (EMS) officers serve in dynamic environments where change is inevitable. This course provides an overview of the adaptive leadership model, differentiating between authority and its reliance on formal authority and adaptive change and its reliance on informal powers. The students will be exposed to the challenges of creating lasting, adaptive changes in themselves, their subordinates and their fire/EMS organization. The intent is to prepare the fire/EMS officer to lead their organization towards more effective, efficient and responsive services in their community.

Student Qualifications (Primary and Secondary Audience)

The target audience for all of the executive skills series consists of fire and EMS personnel in positions of authority who have an opportunity to exercise leadership. At a minimum, the students should be assigned to a supervisory level position, such as a Company Officer (CO) or higher, serve in an administrative position, or be assigned to a role with departmental or jurisdictional responsibility, regardless of formal position.

Course Scope (Goal)

The goal of this course is for the student to develop an understanding of skills associated with exercising leadership to resolve adaptive challenges.

Course Objectives (Course Learning Outcomes – TLOs)

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to accomplish the following:

- Identify the core processes and dimensions that characterize the adaptive leadership model.
- Map the sources of one's formal and informal authority.
- Distinguish whether the components of a challenge require applying a structural change model or a psychological change model to manage change.
- Apply the Four P's in addressing an adaptive challenge

Course Delivery Method

The National Fire Academy (NFA) offers specialized training courses and advanced management programs of national impact in an academic classroom environment on campus at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) in Emmitsburg, Maryland and through their State, local, and tribal training partners. This classroom course is designed for the national level fire service officer from State and local fire service organizations. All course materials are designed for interactive classroom environments, in electronic formats.

Course Schedule

The purpose of the course schedule is to give you, at a glance, the required preparation, activities, and evaluation components of your course.

DAY 1	DAY 2
Introduction Unit 1: The Adaptive Leadership Model	Unit 3: Change Models
Lunch	*Lunch*
Unit 2: Understanding Yourself and the Authority Role	Unit 4: The Four P's Final Exam
Homework: "We Danced with the Devil: One Firefighter's Cancer Chronicles" by Mario Treviño	

Note: This schedule is subject to modification by the instructors and approved by the training specialist.

Course Resources (Instructional Materials)

In order to be fully prepared, obtain a copy of the required textbooks and other instructional materials prior to the first day of class.

Required Readings/Assignments

The student must complete required readings during the course to be able to thoughtfully participate in discussions and activities.

Suggested Reading/Resources

Suggested readings and resources are not evaluated, but may enhance the student's understanding, serve as additional sources for citation and promote discussion of course material.

Required Resources (Course Textbook)

Electronic Student Manual.

Supplemental Resources (Supplemental Course Textbook)

None.

Grading Methodology (Evaluation Procedures)

Students will be graded on one 25-question, multiple-choice exam at the end of the course.

Standard NFA grading policy applies.

The required performance to successfully complete the course is attained by completing the examination with a grade of "C" or better by answering correctly a minimum of 18 out of 25 questions.

The following course grading plan should be used to determine the assigned course grade for each student in the class.

Minimum Number of Questions Answered Correctly	Number of Incorrect Answers	Letter Grade to be Assigned to Student
23	0-2 →	A
20	3-5 →	B
18	6-7 →	C
17 or less	8 or more →	F

Course Outline

Introduction (Day 1)

Objectives

None.

Unit 1: The Adaptive Leadership Model (Day 1)

Learning Outcome

The students will be able to:

1.0 The students will be able to identify the core processes and dimensions that characterize the adaptive leadership model.

Objectives

The students will:

1.1 Identify the characteristics of an adaptive challenge.

1.2 Define disequilibrium and its role in accomplishing change.

1.3 Distinguish between adaptive and technical challenges.

1.4 Identify the distinction between acting in an authority role and exercising leadership.

1.5 Identify the dimensions of the adaptive leadership model.

Unit 2: Understanding Yourself in the Authority Role (Day 1)

Learning Outcome

2.0 The students will be able to map the sources of one's formal and informal authority.

Objectives

The students will:

2.1 Identify the functions of authority.

2.2 Recognize the environment that provides an authority figure with the permission to exercise his or her role and responsibilities.

2.3 Identify the factors that compromise one's authority.

2.4 Explain an internal and external locus of control.

Unit 3: Change Models (Day 2)

Learning Outcome

3.0 The students will be able to distinguish whether the components of a challenge require applying a structural change model or a psychological change model to manage change.

Objectives

The students will:

3.1 Identify individuals' reactions to change.

3.2 Define the activities associated with each step in the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) Model for managing change.

3.3 Identify the unique characteristics of each stage in the Bridges Transition Model.

Unit 4: The Four P's (Day 2)

Terminal Objective

4.0 The students will be able to apply the Four P's in addressing an adaptive challenge.

Objectives

The students will:

4.1 Identify the Four P's of the Bridges Transition Model.

4.2 Define activities associated with each of the Bridges Four P's.

4.3 Define the role of allies and change agents in adaptive change.

Policies

Class Attendance and Cancellation Policy

Attendance

- You are required to attend all sessions of the course. If you do not, you may not receive a certificate, and your stipend may be denied.

- If you need to depart campus early and miss any portion of the course and/or graduation, you must make the request in writing to the NFA training specialist. The training specialist, in collaboration with the superintendent, may waive the attendance requirement in order to accommodate you with extraordinary circumstances as long as you complete all course requirements. If you receive approval for departing early, you must forward the approval to the Admissions Office so your stipend reimbursement is not limited.

Student Substitutions

Substitutions for NFA courses are made from waiting lists; your fire department can't send someone in your place.

Cancellations or No-Shows

NFA's mission for delivery of courses is impaired significantly by cancellations and no-shows. It is very difficult and costly to recruit students at the last minute. Currently there is a two-year ban on student attendance for students who are no-shows or cancel within 30 days of the course start date without a valid reason. If you receive such a restriction, your supervisor needs to send a letter to our Admissions Office explaining the cancellation/no-show.

Course Failure

If you fail an on-campus course, you will not be issued a stipend for that course. You can reapply for the failed course or any other NFA course and go through the random selection process. You don't have to successfully complete the failed course before attending another NFA course.

Student Code of Conduct Policy

Students, instructors and staff are expected to treat each other with respect at all times. Inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated and may result in removal from campus and denial of stipends.

Writing Expectations

Student writing will conform to the generally accepted academic standards for college papers. Papers will reflect the original work of the student and give appropriate credit through citations for ideas belonging to other authors, publications or organizations. Student written work should be free of grammatical and syntax errors, free of profanity or obscene language or ideas, and reflect critical thinking related to the course subject matter.

Citation and Reference Style

Attention Please: Students will follow the APA, Sixth Edition as the sole citation and reference style used in written work submitted as part of coursework to NFA. Assignments completed in a narrative essay, composition format, abstract, and discussion posts must follow the citation style cited in the APA, Sixth Edition.

Late Assignments

Students are expected to submit classroom assignments by the posted due date (11:59 p.m. EDT/EST) and to complete the course according to the published class schedule. As adults, students, and working professionals, you must manage competing demands on your time. Discussion board postings submitted within 3 days after the submission deadline will receive up to a 20% deduction. Those that do not submit their discussion board postings within this timeline will receive a "0" grade for the week. Final assignment papers will not be accepted after the deadline. Any paper submitted after the deadline will receive a "0" grade for that assignment.

Netiquette

Online learning promotes the advancement of knowledge through positive and constructive debate – both inside and outside the classroom. Forums on the Internet, however, can occasionally degenerate into needless insults and "flaming." Such activity and the loss of good manners are not acceptable in a professional learning setting – basic academic rules of good behavior and proper "Netiquette" must persist. Remember that you are in a place for the rewards and excitement of learning which does not include descent to personal attacks or student attempts to stifle the forum of others.

- Technology Limitations. While you should feel free to explore the full-range of creative composition in your formal papers, keep e-mail layouts simple. The NFA Online classroom may not fully support MIME or HTML encoded messages, which means that bold face, italics, underlining, and a variety of color-coding or other visual effects will not translate in your e-mail messages.

- Humor Note. Despite the best of intentions, jokes and especially satire can easily get lost or taken seriously. If you feel the need for humor, you may wish to add "emoticons" to help alert your readers: ;-), :), ☺.

Disclaimer Statement

Course content may vary from the outline to meet the needs of this particular group.

Grading

Please review the above grading methodology that explains how grades will be awarded. Students who do not complete the entire course will be awarded an Incomplete (I) grade. In accordance with National Fire Academy academic policies, an Incomplete (I) grade must be removed by the end of the next semester following the course, or it automatically becomes a Failing (F) grade.

If you fail an on-campus course, you will not be issued a stipend for that course. You can reapply for the failed course or any other NFA course and go through the random selection process. You don't have to successfully complete the failed course before attending another NFA course.

https://www.usfa.fema.gov/nfa/admissions/attendance-failure.html

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to exhibit exemplary ethical behavior and conduct as part of the NFA community and society as a whole. Acts of academic dishonesty including cheating, plagiarism, deliberate falsification, and other unethical behaviors will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to report academic misconduct when they witness a violation. All cases of academic misconduct shall be reported by the instructor to the Training Specialist.

If a student is found to have engaged in misconduct and the allegations are upheld, the penalties may include, but are not limited to one or a combination of the following:

- expulsion,
- withholding of stipend or forfeiture of stipend paid,
- exclusion from future classes for a specified period; depending on the severity it could range from 1-10 years, and/or
- forfeiture of certificate for course(s) enrolled in at NETC.

Refer to NFA-specific Standard Operating Procedure 700.1 – *Academic Code of Conduct and Ethics* for more information.