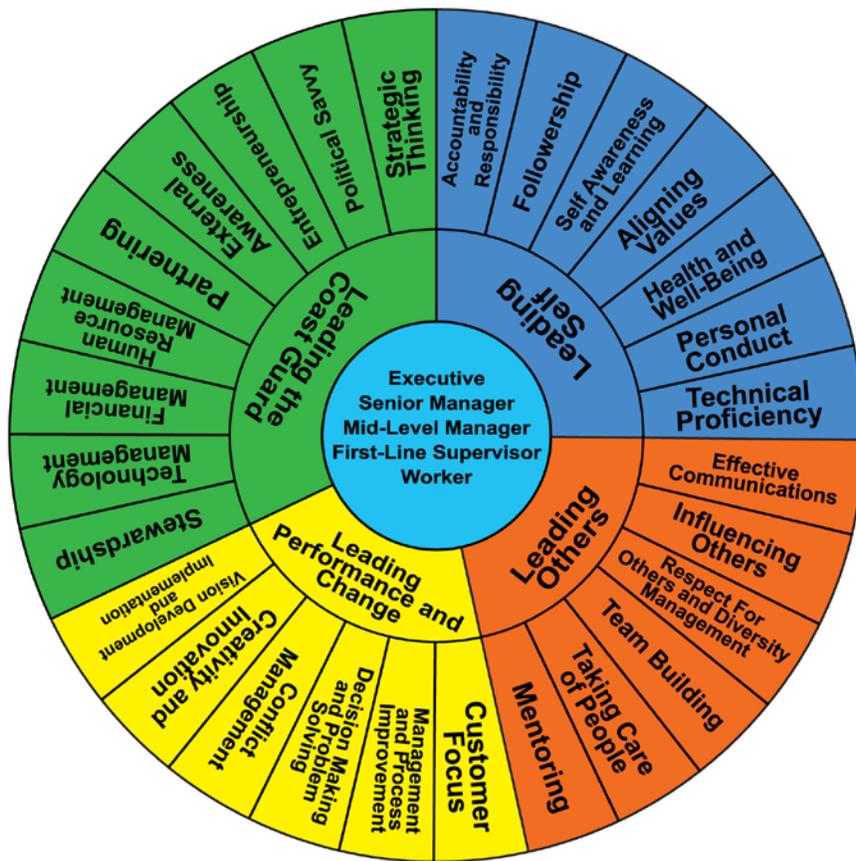


# The Leadership Journey:

## *A Cycle of Continuous Improvement*



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Leadership is a continuous journey of improvement. Much like the Deming cycle of PLAN DO CHECK ACT used in business to ensure continuous improvement of processes, leadership too can be visualized in an improvement cycle. From accession, or entry, into the CG workforce, all members of the Coast Guard enter a cycle of leadership. This cycle tends to follow our core competencies of Leading Self, Leading Others, Leading the Coast Guard, and Leading Change.

**Leading Self:** This stage comes at or soon after the member's entry into the Coast Guard. At this stage, the member is new to the Coast Guard or their role in the Coast Guard, and must learn how to navigate the Coast Guard and plan for their continued career. The tool that the Coast Guard provides for this stage is the Apprentice Leadership Program (ALP). This program is available as a stand-alone course, or as a part of the accession point or integral to the "A" School course of study. The goal of this course is to give the member the tools to ascertain their current level of training, preparedness, education, and fitness. Also, this course teaches the member how to monitor their current state and how to plan to take the next steps. A great example of the tools taught in the stage is the attention paid to the personal tab on Coast Guard Business Intelligence (CGBI).

**Leading Others:** The beginning of this stage marks the member's first experiences in frontline leadership. Some examples of this stage include taking on the leadership in a special project, becoming a section leader, or a team leader. The member is learning how to supervise, motivate, and lead at the very frontline of leadership. Some enhanced knowledge of the greater Coast Guard organization is gained during this stage. Also needed is the very basic knowledge of how to lead and hold accountable the personnel they are supervising. The Coast Guard has a resource to present the skills needed at this stage: Leadership and Management School (LAMS). The practical skills that are presented here include self-leadership, motivation, conflict management, and performance appraisal. All of these skills come into play as the member adds to their workload the duties of supervising and leading others.

**Leading the Coast Guard:** At this stage, the member is moving into a more strategic level of leadership. They will be managing other supervisors and leading projects or teams that affect a greater number of people. The frequency of memos and emails that will be seen by a larger audience will increase. The member will be called upon to set the tone and direction for not only their directly reporting juniors, but for their subordinates as well. At this level, communication skills and performance management skills are critical. The Coast Guard resources to present and polish these skills are the Mid-grade Officer's transition Course (MOTC) and the Chief Petty Officer's Academy (CPOACAD). These courses do not teach new skills. These courses polish skills already attained by the member and expand knowledge already captured.

Leading Change: This stage is the executive level of the Coast Guard. While change is most often sponsored and championed at this level, the impetus for change typically comes from the deck plate level. The member will be called upon to lead change in the Coast Guard at the highest levels. Mentoring our more junior members as they navigate their careers is part of leading change for the next generation of Coast Guardsmen. The resources that the Coast Guard provides to help guide our leaders in this stage are the Senior Enlisted Leaders Course (SELC) and the Command Assignment Preparatory Training course (CAPT). While mentoring has occurred prior to reaching this level, it is at this stage that our senior members have the breadth of experience to guide our junior members in the careers, and life. Starting the leadership cycle again while mentoring a junior member is rewarding experience for both the mentor and the mentee.

Leadership is a cycle of continuous improvement, much like the business cycle of process improvement. As we navigate our careers, we have tools and resources proven and improved by those that have gone before us. As our senior members reach the higher levels of their careers, the cycle continues as they pass down their knowledge through mentoring. In this way, we use standards of excellence to strive for excellence as an individual, as a team, and as the United States Coast Guard.