

Cascading Leadership

'The biggest distinction about the Cascading Leadership programme is that you are mentored by a peer from your own sector, who's got that lived experience of running an organisation.' Consultant, September 2019

What is Cascading leadership?

Cascading Leadership is a free peer-to-peer leadership development programme set up by The King's Fund for voluntary and community sector organisations working in health and wellbeing. We know that the VCS has the skills and capabilities needed to develop strong leaders, and we recognise the importance of supporting those leaders with the complexity of the role. We also know that there is a lack of opportunities for leaders to receive tailored support. We have developed Cascading Leadership to meet this gap and to enable the VCS to support the VCS.

How does it work?

Participants apply to the programme as either a consultant (an established charity leader) or a partner (a leader who is seeking support). Once selected they are matched into pairs (a consultant working with a partner) and meet initially to discuss the issues the partner is hoping to address, what the consultant can offer and where they will meet. Pairs of consultants and partners meet up to five times over a nine-month period. A distinctive aspect of the programme is that those providing the support are current leaders in the sector, who develop their leadership skills and receive training and supervision from The King's Fund, while they are supporting another organisation.

'It was an opportunity to give something back, but also to challenge my own personal development within this particular field.'
Consultant, 2019

'Through this project I have gained huge support and insight from the consultant I was paired with, and I felt it has certainly evolved my leadership skills and methodology around decision-making.' Partner 2018

What are the benefits?

In either role, Cascading Leadership can build confidence, develop skills, expand networks, help organisations tackle major issues and in some cases be transformational.

Consultants consistently report significant benefits to themselves and their organisations, as well as developing stronger relationships with key stakeholders.

'It has really helped me with some of the problems I've been having in my organisation and my own practice, and it gives me another unique perspective to look at some of the issues we're facing.' Consultant 2019

Partners report increased strategic thinking and better decision-making, tackling challenging issues more effectively, increased confidence and reduced isolation.

'We spent time exploring the issues that were going on for me as a Chief Exec within my organisation, but also within the sector and it was great to have the time to really think about those issues, to really dig a bit deeper, reflect on what was happening.' Partner 2019

How do I decide whether I'm best suited to a consultant or partner role?

Our experience suggests that people who are open, curious and comfortable with constructive challenge will benefit the most from this programme, but it can sometimes be hard to decide which role to apply for. Both roles have valuable development opportunities and offer shared learning.

Those who apply for a consultant role tend to be:

- Experienced leaders, mostly CEOs with existing leadership skills and senior management experience;
- Keen to develop their ability to support and challenge others to reflect and help them work through the issues and problems they are facing;
- Interested in reflecting on and developing their practice to support their own organisations and the wider health and care sector.

Partners may be leading an established organisation, but are perhaps new in their role or just feeling stuck or unsupported. They may be:

- Isolated and want to talk confidentially about their experience of developing or leading an organisation;
- Struggling to address the gap between how they want to work with their team, volunteers, trustees or funders and how things are in reality;
- Keen to work with another leader outside their organisation, who can listen and help them think, unblock issues and plan.

Sometimes those who have benefited as a partner go on to develop as a consultant. If you're not sure which role to apply for, talk to us at The King's Fund.

How much time would I have to commit?

Consultants attend one 2-day and two 1-day workshops at The King's Fund in London. Partners attend one learning day at the King's Fund. The pairs must meet five times. Each meeting should last up to two hours. The consultant usually travels to the partner's organisations, but you can agree to meet elsewhere, if convenient. Some sessions may take place over Skype.

Do I have to pay?

No. The programme is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and is free to consultants and partners. We will also cover the cost of travel to London and book overnight accommodation, if necessary.

Application process

Applications for the next course, due to start March 2020, will open 8 October 2019. All applicants must complete an application form and consultants will also have a telephone call, if selected. We welcome applications for consultants and partners from any VCS organisation working in health and wellbeing, and we are especially keen to hear from individuals from Black and other minority ethnic communities who are currently underrepresented in our cohorts.

Still not sure if it's for you?

We are running a webinar in late October where you will have an opportunity to hear from previous participants about their experience of the programme. It's also an opportunity to ask questions.

Further details on the programme, how it works, application forms, what to expect if selected and how to join the webinar can be found at www.kingsfund.org.uk/cascadingleadership