

# Management Fundamentals in Healthcare Organizations

*University of Minnesota School of Public Health*

## LEARNING MODEL

The learning model underlying the Management Fundamentals Certificate is an application of the following principles, most of which derive from the Minnesota MHA program's 40 years of experience with adult learning in healthcare administration:

- Healthcare professionals develop personal resilience in part through continual learning. That resilience is essential both to their continuing personal development in a rapidly changing environment and to their ability to contribute to and lead the organizations in which they work and practice.
- Lifelong learning is essential to success as a professional. Increasing self-development of professionals includes both structured learning opportunities and a readiness to learn from everyday practice. A program of professional learning must both provide those structured learning opportunities and enhance the professional's readiness to learn from her/his practice.
- Because a key to adult learning is discovering the personal meaning of ideas, opportunities for applying learning to one's experience must be meaningful, varied and frequent. Learning shared with a diverse cohort of fellow students enhances the discovery process.
- Learning is idiosyncratic and occurs in many ways. It is most often deductive, moving from general principles to specific examples, but adults learn inductively as well, combining personal experiences into principles. Experience in transferring learning from one situation to others encourages inductive learning.
- While learning is unique to each person, both the learner and the teacher need consistent methods of reviewing and improving learning outcomes. Both faculty and peer judgments address this need.
- Because learning proceeds from levels of understanding already achieved to some new point of development, adult learning opportunities must anticipate the range of experiences which learners bring to their education and provide flexible means of learning that serve students at all levels of experience.
- When the learning experience is well structured, adults can learn as much from each other as they do from formal instruction. Effective group work, diversity of perspective among both students and faculty, structured and unstructured opportunities for meaningful interaction among students, and a cohort culture that actively encourages supportive relationships among students are critical elements of the learning model.
- Learning is enhanced when students enter the program in a cohort and proceed through the program together, growing in their abilities to communicate with, learn from and support each other. However, because experienced adults must deal with changes in their employment, their families and other aspects of their lives, the program must accommodate students who temporarily drop out of the program and re-enter at a later time.
- The quality of the faculty, curriculum, instruction and students of the Management Fundamentals Certificate must be the equivalent of those of the Full-Time MHA Program. Similarly, admission

standards and student performance expectations must be at the same level as those of the Full-Time MHA Program.

- Because it enhances access and provides flexibility in scheduling, online coursework is essential to efficient learning for employed adults. By itself however, online learning can meet only a portion of the learning interests of employed adults. It must be supplemented with face-to-face learning and with extensive peer and group learning.

This certificate is supported by several factors, including:

- Blended approach. During the January on-campus session, students are enrolled in one course that is taught in the classroom. Other courses are taught online over the course of the program, but are introduced in live classroom presentations during the January on-campus session.
- Asynchronous online coursework. Online courses are designed to be accessed at the convenience of the student. Using the Moodle course technology and supporting software, lectures, readings, individual and group assignments are available to students when they have the time to engage them. Courses generally operate on schedules that require students to complete modules every week or every two weeks. Because group work is asynchronous, all group members do not have to be available at the same time.
- Cohort learning. Since it began in 1946, cohort learning has been central to the MHA program. Each annual MHA class develops a character of its own and each class fosters a sense of identity among its members. The Management Fundamentals Certificate program continues and expands that tradition. Students will start the program together and progress through the same curriculum as a group.
- Student support. Students are supported by their peers in the cohort and by the faculty and staff of their program. All efforts will be made to keep students engaged in the program. However, when a student falls behind their cohort, she/he will be asked to cease participation in the program and then be reassigned to a following cohort.
- Online learning preparation. All students are required to take a one-week preparatory course prior to the first on-campus session. The course familiarizes students with the learning technology, orients students to University library resources and other learning assets, and introduces students in the cohort to one another.
- Application of learning to the student's organization. Course assignments often ask students to apply the learning to their own organizations. This application, and the subsequent discussion of the applications across the members of the cohort or work group, will greatly expand the students' learning.
- Alumni involvement. Alumni will play important roles in on-campus sessions, speaking on panels, teaching in courses and reviewing student projects.

### **Curriculum Mapped to Competencies**

The University of Minnesota MHA program maps its curricula to competencies developed by the National Center for Healthcare Leadership, a broad-based nonprofit organization representing all sectors of healthcare. The MHA program was one of four university programs in healthcare administration that piloted the competencies in 2003. The competencies are now essential elements of the accreditation of graduate programs in healthcare administration conducted by the Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education.

The competencies include:

**Accountability:** The ability to hold people accountable to standards of performance or ensure compliance using the power of one's position or force of personality appropriately and effectively, with the long-term good of the organization in mind.

**Achievement Orientation:** A concern for surpassing a standard of excellence. The standard may be one's own past performance (striving for improvement); an objective measure (results orientation); outperforming others (competitiveness); challenging goals, or something that has not been done previously (innovation).

**Analytical Thinking:** The ability to understand a situation, issue, or problem by breaking it into smaller pieces or tracing its implications in a step-by-step way. It includes organizing the parts of a situation, issue, or problem systematically; making systematic comparisons of different features or aspects; setting priorities on a rational basis; and identifying time sequences, casual relationships, or if-then relationships.

**Change Leadership:** The ability to energize stakeholders and sustain their commitment to changes in approaches, processes, and strategies.

**Collaboration:** The ability to work cooperatively with others as part of a team or group, including demonstrating positive attitudes about the team, its members, and its ability to get its mission accomplished.

**Communication:** The ability to speak and write in a clear, logical, and grammatical manner in formal and informational situations, to prepare cogent business presentations, and to facilitate a group.

**Community Orientation:** The ability to align one's own and the organization's priorities with the needs and values of the community, including its cultural and ethnocentric values and to move health forward in line with population-based wellness needs and national health agenda.

**Financial Skills:** The ability to understand and explain financial and accounting information, prepare and manage budgets, and make sound long-term investment decisions.

**Human Resources Management:** The ability to implement staff development and other management practices that represent contemporary best practices, comply with legal and regulatory requirements, and optimize the performance of the workforce, including performance assessments, alternative compensation and benefit methods, and the alignment of human resource practices and processes to meet the strategic goals of the organization.

**Impact and Influence:** The ability to persuade and convince others (individuals or groups) to support a point of view, position, or recommendation.

**Information Seeking:** An underlying curiosity and desire to know more about things, people, or issues, including the desire for knowledge and staying current with health, organizational, industry, and professional trends and developments.

**Information Technology Management:** The ability to see the potential in and understand the use of administrative and clinical information technology and decision-support tools in process and performance improvement. Actively sponsors their utilization and the continuous upgrading of information management capabilities.

**Initiative:** The ability to anticipate obstacles, developments, and problems by looking ahead several months to over a year.

**Innovative Thinking:** The ability to apply complex concepts, develop creative solutions, or adapt previous solutions in new ways for breakthrough thinking in the field.

**Interpersonal Understanding:** The ability to accurately hear and understand the unspoken or partly expressed thought, feelings, and concerns of others.

**Organizational Awareness:** The ability to understand and learn the formal and informal decision-making structures and power relationships in an organization or industry (e.g., stakeholders, suppliers). This includes the ability to identify who the real decision makers are and the individuals who can influence them, and to predict how new events will affect individuals and groups within the organization.

**Performance Measurement:** The ability to understand and use statistical and financial methods and metrics to set goals and measure clinical as well as organizational performance; commitment to and employment of evidence-based techniques.

**Process Management and Organizational Design:** The ability to analyze and design or improve an organizational process, including incorporating the principles of quality management as well as customer satisfaction.

**Professionalism:** The demonstration of ethics and professional practices, as well as stimulating social accountability and community stewardship. The desire to act in a way that is consistent with one's values and what one says is important.

**Project Management:** The ability to plan, execute, and oversee a multi-year, large-scale project involving significant resources, scope, and impact. Examples include the construction of a major building, implementation of an enterprise-wide system (patient tracking, SAP), or development of a new service.

**Relationship Building:** The ability to establish, build, and sustain professional contacts for the purpose of building networks of people with similar goals and that support similar interests.

**Self-Confidence:** A belief and conviction in one's own ability, success, and decisions or opinions when executing plans and addressing challenges.

**Self-Development:** The ability to see an accurate view of one's own strengths and development needs, including one's impact on others. A willingness to address needs through reflective, self-directed learning and trying new leadership approaches.

**Strategic Orientation:** The ability to draw implications and conclusions in light of the business, economic, demographic, ethno-cultural, political, and regulatory trends and developments, and to use these insights to develop an evolving vision for the organization and the health industry that results in long-term success and viability.

**Talent Development:** The drive to build the breadth and depth of the organization's human capability, including supporting top-performing people and taking a personal interest in coaching and mentoring high-potential leaders.

Team Leadership: The ability to see oneself as a leader of others, from forming a top team that possesses balanced capabilities to setting the mission, values, and norms, as well as holding the team members accountable individually and as a group for results.