The Island Institute has crafted a Resilient Leadership Framework designed to strengthen leadership capacity among staff, as well as community members, business owners, and municipal leaders along Maine’s coast who are most at risk from the impacts of climate change, and the increasing complexity of a blue economy.

The Resilient Leadership Framework serves as the foundation of Island Institute internal staff development and community leadership initiatives and is embedded in all programs. It is a synthesis of academic research and the on the ground experience from over 35 years of community development practice. Through research, stories, evaluations, and surveys, the framework identifies a set of core competencies and skills needed to embrace change and build resilience in leaders, institutions, and communities.

Resilient leaders are those who can take action to support communities in the face of uncertainty and rapid change. The Resilient Leadership Framework identifies the seven competencies that are key to building resilient communities, fostering collaborative learning, and empowering courageous leaders. These competencies can be practiced at the individual, team, and community/organizational level.

**Resilient Leadership Competencies**

1. **Competency: Practices self-awareness**

Understanding one’s strengths, limitations, and the impact of one's behaviors.

- Identify and cultivate strengths of self and others

- Ask for and adapt to feedback

- Understand the consequences of our attitudes and behaviors on outcomes  
- Acknowledge mistakes and adjust non-productive strategies

- Act ethically and with integrity

1. **Competency: Develops effective connections and relationships**

Understanding and responding to the feelings, thoughts, experiences and behaviors of others to foster effective collaboration, learning, and authentic relationships.

- Understand the impact and necessity of controversial decision making while maintaining respectful relationships

- Actively seek out and incorporate alternative points of view and input  
- Actively listen and seek to understand and address conflicts through empathy, diplomacy, and patience

- Identifying and cultivating connections needed to reach decisions and sustain momentum

- Recognize and adapt the systems that inhibit connection building

- Proactively build trust to work together effectively

1. **Competency: Communicates effectively**

Uses appropriate communication styles for clarity, understanding, and to build trust.

- Foster clear and open communication through active listening, asking clarifying questions, and speaking concisely for the audience and situation

- Mitigate distractions and seek to be fully present   
- Understand different audiences, communication and learning styles, and adapt to the context

1. **Competency: Promotes Engagement**

Engages individuals and groups to deepen understanding and achieve shared outcomes.

- Proactively build trust to effectively work together

- Model respect and openness to others

- Seek and actively create space for the ideas and leadership of marginalized groups

- Foster empowerment through enhancing the ability and confidence of others to effectively engage

1. **Competency: Influences Change**

Drives progress while balancing aspirations with the reality of needs and capacity.

- Understand that large-scale change requires strategy, courage, and the ability to bear pressure

- Nurture and maintain resilient relationships to support complex change

- Build partnerships to solve complex problems

- Set unifying goals that emphasize cooperation and collective success

1. **Competency: Navigates Systems**

Steers through complex social systems to understand and influence problems facing organizations and communities.

- Identify strategic allies and useful information to move an agenda forward

- Maintain a focus on goals, while addressing the incremental steps to achieve them

- Acknowledge objections while seeking to identify areas of consensus

- Know the community, understanding the power of place, culture, and history

1. **Competency: Innovates and Encourages Innovation**

Identify when innovation is needed to achieve greater results and how to set the conditions for experimentation and learning.

- Tap into community creativity and networks to discover alternative approaches and possibilities

- Know when a plan needs to remain on course and when a plan needs to be adjusted

- Recognize when opportunities for innovation exist and when innovation isn’t the appropriate response

- Understand the conditions needed for innovation to take hold and yield results

Diagram

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