

ROBERT AND PATRICIA SWITZER FOUNDATION
LEADERSHIP LEARNING AGENDA – GUIDANCE DOCUMENT (REV. 1-25-12)

Overview

A Leadership Learning Agenda (LLA) is a written outline of your future vision, with goals and strategies to achieve that vision. Preparing a written document is intended to spur self-reflection as you examine your **personal and professional** aspirations and how the Switzer Foundation might help you reach them. It can also serve as a tool to assess your progress towards professional, personal, and leadership goals. Your LLA will serve as a roadmap or agenda for meeting your leadership goals through Switzer Foundation programs and beyond. The elements of the LLA are described below.

We hope that through ongoing interaction with Switzer Fellows, colleagues and staff that you will come away with many new ideas to incorporate into your Leadership Learning Agenda.

In developing your LLA, we encourage you to challenge yourself. Think about creative new ways to approach your work, push yourself to work across boundaries (sector, issue-area, class, etc.) or propose strategies for engaging new networks of people in more productive ways. We hope that your LLA will be a living document that you will continue to refer to and update.

LLA Format Details:

Note on format and length: Your LLA could range anywhere from 2 pages to 10 or more pages. The length will vary depending on your style, the way you format each section, and your level of detail and description. Many people find that this is a valuable opportunity for self reflection and enjoy writing a detailed narrative while other people prefer to use succinct bullets, lists, or charts. We encourage you to use this exercise in whatever way is most useful to you.

Section I. Vision or Personal statement: summarize your personal and professional vision for the next five years (or beyond).

This section should include reflection on where you are now and what you aspire to achieve over the next several years. (You do not have to use the 5-year timeframe if another format works better for you, but we have found that 5 years is a good starting point.) You can take some time during this exercise to begin to articulate your vision, on a personal or professional level, or simply describe the things you care most about achieving and being involved in over the next several years. This section should not be a list of goals (the next section is for that level of detail) but rather should be a broader look at where you want to go.

Section II. Personal and professional five-year goals: what specific goals would you like to accomplish during the next five years, based on your vision, and the opportunities presented by your academic setting, the Switzer Fellowship or other professional settings in which you work.

This section is where you lay out some basic details about how you want to get from where you are now to what you described in your personal statement. You may make these goals as detailed and comprehensive as you like. Some people divide personal goals and professional goals into two separate lists; for others, they overlap so much that it makes more sense to

combine them into one set of goal statements. We encourage you to “think big” for this section but also to be realistic. Your goals can be specific (e.g. “publish at least 6 articles in peer-reviewed journals” or “play the guitar for a public audience”) as well as exploratory and less concrete (e.g. “explore the possibility of elected office”). Remember that there is another section for listing your milestones (section 6) in which you can articulate more specific details for each goal.

Section III. Resources/Strengths: what personal skills, attributes and other resources do you have to draw upon in working toward your goals?

In this section, think about what you already have that will help you meet the goals you stated in section 2. Think broadly here – personal skills/characteristics/interests, colleagues, networks, friends, access to resources, etc. You may discover areas you had previously not thought about as possible resources to draw on in your personal and professional life. Part of this section might be related to how the Switzer Foundation can help you meet professional or personal goals such as access to grants, contacts or other professional development support and training.

Section IV. Constituency and Diversity: what are the primary constituencies, networks or communities with which you work? What opportunities and challenges do you face in diversifying these constituencies and communities? What support or guidance would help you think more broadly about diversity in your work and networks?

Think about the groups and communities with which you work and why. Think about other constituencies that are not currently connected to your work that should be and ways you might be able to broaden your work to include them. The Switzer Foundation can point you towards trainings that can help you stretch your own thinking and learning on diversity issues personally and professionally. Are there cultural, economic, political, social or ethnic differences that you are hoping to bridge? How might you approach crossing that bridge?

Section V. Challenges/Needs: what challenges do you face and how will you address them? What areas do you need to work on? What resources do you anticipate needing to reach your goals and milestones?

Thinking in the context of your goals and their relevance to both personal and professional situations, consider challenges you may encounter that are both personal (such as financial constraints, not enough time, lack of personal-professional balance, skills you need to work on) and professional (such as systems within your workplace, lack of resources, gaps in your professional network). While thinking about what lies in the way of meeting your goals, what will you need to overcome obstacles – e.g. skills in certain areas, expanded funding opportunities, better time management? How might the opportunities presented by the Switzer Foundation and the Fellowship Network help you address your challenges?

Section VI. Milestones: what tangible milestones, and time frames for them, can you identify that will help you assess whether you are addressing your challenges and achieving your personal and professional goals?

Like the other sections of your LLA, your milestones can be as detailed or broad as you like. Some people choose to develop lists of milestones within a 1-, 3-, and 5-year period to help them prioritize what can and should be done in a certain timeframe. Other people identify key achievements over the course of the entire period for the LLA and aim to meet those achievements by a certain month or year. The purpose of this section is to lay out some tangible

and realistic accomplishments so you can measure your progress towards your broader goals and vision. Having specific actions you want to complete by a specific date will help you work towards those ambitions more successfully. It is much more useful to say "I will defend my dissertation by December 2008" than to say "I want to complete my PhD". Again, it may be helpful for you to break your milestones into "Personal" and "Professional", depending on how you framed the other sections of your LLA.

(Please note that all references to assistance from the Switzer Foundation apply to Switzer Fellows only. We welcome the public to use this tool, but we cannot provide financial or other assistance.)