



# Mission-Driven Leadership at CREC

*Inspiring Greatness in All Employees*



# Introduction

We are proud that you are a member of CREC's Leadership Team.

You were selected because you demonstrate the attributes that we look for in dynamic, capable leaders. We recognize that without strong leadership and management, it is not possible for us to achieve our mission.

Our approach to leadership is driven by the belief that smart people will accomplish great things when given the support and resources they need. At CREC, our culture is one of high expectations for our employees and leaders because our mission demands it.

As part of CREC's Leadership Team, it is your responsibility to set a high standard and to model the approaches and attitudes that help our employees thrive and our programs to succeed. With your help, we can create a work environment that facilitates deep thinking and a profound commitment by each employee to achieve their personal best.

As a CREC leader, you have great opportunities and great responsibilities. We look forward to working with you and to helping you grow every day.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Greg J. Florio'.

Greg J. Florio, Ed.D.  
Executive Director

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# OUR VISION

CREC's mission, vision, and core values are the foundation for your work with the community and your interactions with other employees. We believe that these principles, in combination with collaborative professional relationships and ample opportunities for growth, help us live out the daily actions, behaviors, and beliefs that are essential to serving the best interests of children and families.

## MISSION

Equity, excellence, and success for all through high-quality educational services

## VISION

To become our member districts' primary resource to facilitate collaborative efforts that create equitable and sustainable educational opportunities, assist in maximizing district and regional resources, and advance successful educational practices for all learners at all ages.

## CORE VALUES

- Expect Excellence
- Act with Courage
- Demand Equity
- Embrace Collaboration

## WHO ARE CREC LEADERS?

CREC's mission demands leaders who demonstrate divergent thinking and who foster innovation and excellence in employees. CREC leaders must also be efficient and skilled managers. They need to maximize the talents, knowledge, and resources of their teams.

CREC leaders are committed to the diversity of their departments, not only in race, ethnicity, and gender, but also in intellectual style, divergent thinking, and life experience. When building teams, CREC leaders understand how each person's strengths will support CREC's most important work. CREC leaders believe in bottom-up innovation and top-down facilitation.

CREC leaders understand how to bring out the best in their employees. They are committed to building capacity, skill, and understanding in others. They help their staff recognize their own strengths and areas for growth. They facilitate their team members in meeting their professional goals. And they model the behaviors and attitudes that create a safe, collaborative, and supportive working environment.

## WHAT IS EXPECTED OF CREC LEADERS?

As a CREC leader, you are an ambassador of CREC's mission. You must ensure that your employees have the resources that allow them to be their best so the agency can accomplish its goals. This document outlines your role in employee onboarding, the feedback cycle, and employee professional growth.

CREC sets a high standard of excellence for employees. We anticipate that all employees will find CREC to be a rewarding and stimulating environment in which to work. CREC employees drive their own professional development. It is your responsibility to facilitate and model that growth.

You are expected to reward employees for demonstrating self-efficacy, innovation, and creative risk-taking. You must recruit, hire, and retain staff who are flexible and adaptable to new areas of service, new locations, and new clients. And you must hire employees who, during the interview process, demonstrate a high degree of self motivation and solutions-oriented thinking.

You should encourage collegiality and collaborative thinking among colleagues. CREC is committed to the belief that when a team of dedicated individuals is given the freedom to build on its strengths, the result is the delivery of high-quality services that positively impact educational experiences for students and families in the Hartford region, Connecticut, and beyond. It is your leadership that will allow us to deliver on our promises to our employees and our customers.

# FACILITATING THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

## ONBOARDING

Onboarding is the set of experiences that each new employee has during their first six months of employment. It's more than an orientation—it's an intentional onboarding process. This process ensures that new employees are introduced to the people, places, and groups that make up CREC's culture.

In order for every employee to maximize his or her professional capital and to achieve individual work-life aspirations at CREC, they must understand CREC's mission, vision, core values, and culture. From the moment a new employee enters a CREC building, they should begin their onboarding experience. These early experiences help them understand what it means to be a member of the CREC team.

The onboarding experience contains uniform components across divisions, programs, buildings, and levels of management. You are responsible to facilitate a new employee's participation in onboarding experiences.

- Be well versed in the different components of the onboarding process.
- Designate the staff and time necessary so that a new employee quickly becomes part of the CREC community.
- Ensure that a new employee has time to participate in, and has access to, the resources, tools, and training they need to succeed.
- Offer the employee opportunities to interact with, and understand, the various divisions and programs that offer services to students and families. Examples include:
  - Visiting a school or program
  - Attending a school graduation or event

## CREC'S CORE CULTURE

CREC's ethos is one of hard work and commitment to doing whatever it takes to serve the best interests of children and families. It is your responsibility to ensure that this is transparent in your actions, decision-making, and expectations for individual staff members and your team. By the end of the employee's first three months, they should:

- Be familiar with CREC's mission and core values
- Understand how CREC acts upon the mission
- Have clarity around how their role fits into CREC's larger, strategic approach to accomplishing its goals

## **A COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE: UNDERSTANDING WHO CREC SERVES**

Understanding who CREC serves is central to understanding the CREC brand and agency culture. A large portion of CREC's programs and services is designed to help underserved populations. In a state with some of the largest and most devastating achievement gaps, CREC acts as an equalizer. We work towards attaining educational equity for all students. It is your responsibility to ensure that your employees understand CREC's commitment to social justice and the history of school integration in the Hartford region.

### **THE CREC BRAND**

CREC can be overwhelming to a new employee. It is important that you help familiarize them with each division's work and the vast array of products and services we provide.

They should know that offerings include:

- Extensive, ongoing professional development workshops for educators
- Customized educational programming for public school districts
- High-quality educational programs for students in Pre-K through grade 12 at 16 interdistrict magnet schools
- Initiatives for regional efficiency and cooperative purchasing for municipalities and school districts
- Specialized educational programs, services, and facilities for students with special educational needs
- School construction, operations, and facilities management services
- Integrated prekindergarten programs
- Family resource centers
- Adult education and innovative partnership programs that help adults develop job-ready skills
- On-site technology services for schools and towns
- Transportation services for the capital region
- Product and publication development



Among our partners, clients, and the community, the CREC name is synonymous with high-quality services. Maintaining CREC's visual identity and messaging is essential for accurately representing the organization in the community. CREC's Department of Communications maintains the CREC brand on behalf of the agency through publications, media relations, the website, advertisements, social media, public relations, and community engagement.

Each employee plays a role in supporting the CREC brand. It is your role to ensure employees abide by CREC's brand guidelines and requirements. Information about CREC's media requirements, brand guidelines, and brand-related resources, images, and materials are available on [www.crec.org/communications](http://www.crec.org/communications).

Every employee should understand and use CREC's:

- Email signature guidelines
- Logos
- Fonts and colors
- Letterhead and business cards
- Writing standards

Employees should also know the restrictions around communicating with the media and public officials, and the rules for soliciting donations.

## **CREC ORIENTATION**

Each new employee is required to attend the Human Resources orientation and sexual harassment prevention training. Here, employees learn about the basic structure of the agency and enroll in health insurance, retirement accounts, and other benefits. They also obtain a certificate in state-mandated sexual harassment prevention training. You must ensure that each new employee attends a Human Resources orientation.

## **DIVISION ORIENTATION**

On their first day, give a new employee a building tour and introduce them to their colleagues and those in other departments. Welcome them with the necessary equipment and supplies to be successful from day one. Make it your priority to meet with the employee within 48 hours to make sure they have everything they need, have appropriate direction for their work, and feel like a welcome member of the team.



A new employee should receive a division-specific orientation within their first two weeks of hire. It should include:

- The department's philosophy
- An overview of the feedback cycle and review process
- Budget information
- Information regarding people they may supervise
- Any specialized technology the job may require

They should learn how to:

- Submit a timesheet
- Request time off
- Request facilities, communications, or technology assistance
- Use the phone and voicemail

## **PROFICIENCY WITH TECHNOLOGY**

Technology is integral to the daily functioning of nearly every employee at CREC. Each role has different requirements. Each employee's software and hardware requirements, and the machines they may use, are different. However, there is a certain level of computer proficiency that is expected of each employee.

After hire, each new employee should demonstrate their aptitude with technology according to their job requirements. If needed, they will receive targeted trainings in the software they are expected to use. You should evaluate a new employee's skills after 30 days. If necessary, enroll them in appropriate trainings to ensure they attain the minimum level of proficiency with technology to perform their job efficiently and effectively.

Technology assessment is not to be used as a punitive measure. It is a way to empower each employee to do their best work, knowing that they have the right skills and tools.

## **CROSS-DIVISIONAL GROUPS**

Each employee will have the opportunity to join a cross-divisional group. Cross-divisional groups meet regularly. They are a place to generate and vet new ideas and innovations. The groups also help to unite employees with CREC's mission and feel more connected to the agency.

## VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

CREC values volunteerism. While not required of employees, CREC offers numerous ways for employees to engage with the community and the people we serve. New employees should be made aware of the following opportunities for volunteer service to CREC families and the greater community. As new occasions for volunteering and community engagement become available, it is your responsibility to make employees aware of these opportunities.

- Employees can serve as mentors for CREC students through the **Big Brothers Big Sisters** program. Employees may meet with their mentees during paid staff hours, with supervisor approval.
- Employees with three years of service may apply for a sabbatical of up to one year to participate in the **Peace Corps Response** program. The Department of Communications manages the program.
- The **CREC Cares** fund is a unique, employee-directed giving program. It supports the needs of CREC community members, including staff, teachers, students, and families who have experienced a catastrophic incident that has caused serious personal or economic hardship. Employees may donate to the program through the CREC Foundation.
- CREC schools celebrate **Read Across America** day during the first week of March. Employees can visit classrooms and participate in this annual event by reading to students in one of CREC's schools. The CREC Magnet Schools office manages the program.
- **Rebuilding Together Hartford** is a Saturday event in which teams of CREC employees help to renovate homes in Hartford. The Department of Communications manages the program.
- **CREC Ambassadors** represent the agency at numerous community events throughout the year. Ambassadors are trained in communicating CREC's culture and programs. They receive a stipend for some services. The Department of Communications manages the program.

# FACILITATING EMPLOYEE GROWTH

## LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION

CREC's goal is to create a network of professionals who design and employ innovative strategies to solve the most pressing problems in education today. CREC intends to cultivate a culture of entrepreneurship. CREC leaders are responsible for providing employees with the time and resources they need to think, design, and create so that the best ideas from throughout the agency can come to life.

We want our employees to know that CREC is a place to build a career. It is important for you to convey to staff that they are valued professionals and that you are committed to ensuring their professional growth. One way to show this commitment is to provide your employees with opportunities to attend training and engage in personal development so they can grow along with CREC. We offer support and development opportunities to promote a culture of individual and collective growth, and to maximize professional capital.

## GROWING PEOPLE

CREC's philosophy of career advancement facilitates individual interests, while advancing our mission. This investment helps us retain and grow talented employees.

Employees distinguish themselves by demonstrating our core values. Your role is to help employees identify opportunities for advancement and leadership roles within the agency.

As opportunities become available for an employee to drive innovation or lead internally, it is your responsibility to encourage and help them secure the time, skills, knowledge, and resources to succeed. Leadership opportunities may include:

- Leading the development of a project, product, or service
- Joining a cross-divisional work group
- Attending leadership development training
- Presenting at a national conference
- Pitching new products or programs to the Senior Leadership Team, among others

## THE FEEDBACK CYCLE

Feedback is an essential component of CREC's commitment to growing people. You should model the importance of soliciting feedback by regularly asking colleagues, "What can I do for you?" and "Do you have any advice for me?" You should challenge your employees to ask the same questions of their colleagues and customers.

You are expected to support your employees through a fair, transparent, and reliable supervision process called *the feedback cycle*. The feedback cycle is a cooperative process that allows you to not only provide feedback to your employees, but also to challenge them to engage in self-reflection and meaningful, practical goal setting. Through regular one-to-one performance conversations, you will encourage employees to grow through guided self-reflection and collaborative planning.

The feedback cycle is an ongoing process. It includes both informal and formal conversations. Conversations should include:

- Setting personal and professional goals
- Discussing their progress toward strategic initiatives
- How their work relates to CREC's mission and core values

For all annual employees in the 121, 123, or 129 job classifications, you should have, at minimum, quarterly one-to-one meetings and an annual reflection and goal-setting session.<sup>1\*</sup>

## ONE-TO-ONE MEETINGS

Each employee on your team should have a schedule of at least quarterly one-to-one meetings with a supervisor or manager. The employee should set the agenda for one-to-one meetings and should bring examples of their work to demonstrate professional progress. You will guide employees in your division or department to cover, at minimum, the following topics during the one-to-one meeting:

- Progress toward meeting annual performance goals and/or strategic initiatives
- Current projects
- Ideas and/or new project proposals
- Professional goals
- Personal development

If applicable, one-to-one meetings should also cover:

- Budgets
- Personnel

<sup>1</sup> This does not apply to certified administrators, teachers, or academic staff who have a negotiated or statutorily required evaluation plan.

One-to-one meetings should, at minimum, touch on:

- The employee's self-reflection
- The employee's feedback for the supervisor
- How their work connects to CREC's mission
- Clear and transparent performance goals
- Opportunities for personal and professional growth, professional advancement, and career planning

Both you and the employee should retain a copy of the meeting agenda. Share your notes from the meeting with them. These notes should give them an understanding of what is expected and what they can expect to discuss during their annual reflection, review, and goal-setting session.

Encourage an employee to regard the materials they bring to their one-to-one meetings as building blocks to a body of work that will be discussed at their annual reflection and review session. Use these materials when you work together to set professional goals for the next year.

## **ANNUAL REFLECTION, REVIEW, AND GOAL-SETTING SESSION**

All employees should have an annual reflection and review session. It will consist of an in-person performance dialogue and a written summary of your conversation. These reflection and review sessions should be meaningful conversations that help an employee attain their full potential. The conversations should help formulate their next set of professional goals.

Annual reflection and review sessions should be collaborative. Performance review forms are available on the CREC intranet. You and the employee should complete them independently. The employee should reflect upon their annual performance in the following areas:

- Progress toward meeting annual performance goals and/or strategic initiatives
- How their work exemplifies CREC's values and contributes to CREC's mission
- How they have used the feedback they received in their one-to-one meetings to improve over the year
- What new value or innovation they brought to CREC
- Reflections on reliability, judgment, client interactions, and professionalism
- Success in managing budgets and the people they supervise, if applicable

If there is a discrepancy between the employee's self-reflection and your own feedback, discuss this during the reflection and review session. Your final written comments should take into account the conversation you have during this annual session and your one-to-one meetings during the year. Although you are encouraged to take the employee's feedback into consideration, you have the final decision-making authority regarding the content of the summary document. Submit the employee's self-reflection and your final feedback summary to Human Resources. These documents will become part of the employee's file.

## NEVER STOP LEARNING

In addition to supporting employee growth, CREC supports administrators with targeted professional development opportunities. CREC leaders are expected to model the value and importance of continued learning and engage in a variety of development opportunities. You are expected to participate in the following experiences.

### **NEW ADMINISTRATOR ACADEMY**

All new administrators attend a two-day introductory training in CREC leadership values, staffing and supervision, budget preparation and business planning, fundraising and communications, and the technology needed to support these managerial functions.

### **MENTORSHIP**

Each new administrator is assigned a mentor from the Leadership Assembly to guide them in their new role. Mentors support them in solving problems that are unique to their leadership roles. Mentors are available to help with activities, such as strategic planning and managing budgets and personnel.

### **EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION SERIES**

The Effective Supervision Series is for employees who were recently promoted into supervisory positions or for experienced supervisors who want to refresh their skills. The series consists of six, half-day sessions on various topics that include communications, giving and receiving feedback, diversity, and inclusion.





