

SIX WORD STORIES - 2025 ASCENT GRADUATES

Be true and kind to yourself.

Long road / Carefully revealed / Hopeful traveler.

Mix of reflection, activity, and enlightenment.

Mom's maxims are actually leadership gold.

Riding a furious thermal with abandonment.

Purpose in life will take time.

Minds germinate the seeds we plant.

Compassion, Authenticity, Connection, Development = True Leadership.

Through discipline, she breaks fear's curse.

Challenging winding road leading to success.

The Journey has been very transformative.

Journey of Courage, Vulnerability and Growth.

Busted the crust, rose with purpose.

Your purpose, your vision, your truth.

From surviving and striving to purpose.

Shed the imposter syndrome, you're leading!

Fearful darkness heart opens, light blazes.

Honesty, openness, and steady steps forward.

Slowly, change is happening each day.

My perspective has started to shift.

New Leader, ASCENT training, Countless possibilities

Unique Opportunity, Stay Engaged, Find Purpose.

Doors will open, I'll be ready.

Get out what you put in.



ASCENT 2025

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Collaborative contributions

ASCENT is a collaborative effort within Oregon state government focused on developing transformational leaders. The program's success is made possible through the support of dedicated individuals and partner organizations.

"I love that this program exists in state government. It really shows that the state sees the bigger picture. It's not just about performance reviews, statistics, and how much they can get out of workers. ASCENT is about developing transformational leaders, leaders that will raise the consciousness of their agency and challenge other leaders, managers, and employees to raise their level of consciousness."

ASCENT GRADUATE

Inspiring leadership

Fariborz Pakseresht, Lisa Sumption, Berri Leslie, Kris Strickler, Andrew Stolfi, David Gerstenfeld, Andrea Bell, and Betsy Imholt recognize the importance of investing in leadership capacity now for a better tomorrow. These state executives sponsor and champion continuous learning and transformation. "I cannot believe how much I have learned in such a short amount of time. Within the first few workshops and POD meetings I knew that this was the right program for me. I have been pushed to my limit and then a little more (I love a good challenge!), and I feel like I am already putting skills I have learned into work."

2025 TLP GRADUATE

"I feel so empowered and supported by my friends, coworkers, and family. I am gaining the confidence to trust I can do dang near anything I set my mind to again, regardless of how hard it is."

2025 TLP GRADUATE

"The work I'm doing with ASCENT is part of a lifelong journey, it feels like I'm at a critical juncture. ASCENT has given me the time and space to wrestle with these questions and my own search for meaning."

2025 TLP GRADUATE

Audacious sponsorship

The ASCENT Leadership Program was founded in 2010 under the sponsorship of the Department of Administrative Services – State Services Division (DAS-SSD). In 2012, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and DAS-SSD collaborated to expand ASCENT offerings, providing staffing and financial resources that established the foundation of the program. Their joint efforts broadened access to ASCENT programs for more state employees.

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In 2013, the ASCENT Learning Coalition (ALC) was formed as a group of visionary state leaders who governed, resourced, and sustained ASCENT Leadership Programs. The coalition played a pivotal role in promoting transformation through investment in employee development and leadership growth across state agencies.

As of July, 2025, the ALC has sunsetted. In its place, a new model for leadership development will be implemented under the guidance of the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and a supporting committee. This updated approach will continue the mission of ASCENT, ensuring effective, values-based leadership development for the state workforce, while streamlining oversight within DAS.

ASCENT Leadership Programs will continue to build Transformational Leadership capacity across Oregon State government. Transformational leaders are guided by strongly held values, powered by purpose, ethical, and inspire a shared vision to create needed change. They expand their awareness and influence by seeking feedback and personal development.

"As I look back on the start of my ASCENT journey, it was messy, filled with uncertainty and confidence issues. I was in a rut, both personally and professionally. I felt lost. I am a firm believer that things happen for a reason and applying for and getting accepted into this program, came at just the right time for me."

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Sponsoring Managers & Co-workers

ASCENT intentionally connects workshop learning with real workplace applications. Managers and co-workers show their support by adjusting workloads, giving thoughtful feedback, and trying new strategies to address both ongoing and new challenges.

"This program is like nothing I have participated in before. It's helping me to create a map, a path to who I want to be for my staff, my family, and my community."

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"I started this program with many goals in mind. Many of which were focused primarily on increasing workplace leadership skills. It didn't take long before I realized I would be developing skills with applications that go far beyond what I would use in the workplace."

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"My biggest take-away was that I am harder on myself than anyone else's assessment (by far). This seemed fairly fitting given the journey I've been on over the last several years. And while my confidence is incrementally returning, I still have a way to go."

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Engaging Content

Course content is offered by experienced practitioners and peer leaders, who bring hard-earned learnings and best practices into the learning environment. Presenters who generously contribute their time, wisdom, and wit: Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) Director Fariborz Pakseresht; Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) Director Lisa Sumption: DAS Chief Human Resource Office Workforce Development administrator (DAS CHRO WFD) Krista Campbell, Shirlene Warnock and Jeannie Nyquist of Innovative Growth Solutions; ASCENT coaches and associates: Jami Quiring (SOS), Toby Primbs (ODA), Benita Picazo (OED), Angela Rowland (DEQ), Lori Friesen (OPRD), Josh Stone (DAS), Hannah Aeby (ODHS/SSA), and Ritu Guzman (OYA).

"From the first day to now I can honestly say that the program has created space for me to be vulnerable and authentic, after a past work experiences left me feeling discouraged from doing so. I have regained my confidence as a leader, been a better advocate for myself and those I serve, as well as more assured of my purpose or 'why'."

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Coaches, Faculty, and Core Team

These leaders and coaches helped participants discover new pathways to leadership and identify the "things that derail progress": POD coaches: Hannah Aeby, Tina Boone, Lisa Hylton, Cassie Mance, Jami Quiring, Tony Rosendahl and Alyssa Scarlata. 360 coaches: Hannah Aeby, Susan Anderson, Andrea Comer, Paul Egbert, Haven Garber, Chris Glantz, Erin McGladrey, Cassie Mance, Marina Nieblas, Sean Nickerson, Tony Rosendahl, Alyssa Scarlata, Dan Shanahan, Emerald Shirley, Jami Quiring, and Talon Wood.

"The leadership and facilitation of this program has been absolutely stellar. I've been impressed with the energy and professionalism they bring to us each month including their own vulnerability."

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"I am excited to continue to learn and grow from this transformational leadership program and I hope the changes I have made positively impact my work success."

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Wise Mentors

Experienced leaders and long-time employees generously share their knowledge and insights through mentoring. Their support helps maintain momentum after graduation and encourages continued growth — both of which are key to dealing with complex challenges.

"I'm grateful to be part of this journey, and I'm looking forward to continuing—with honesty, openness, and steady steps forward."

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Willing Colleagues, Partners, Family, and Friends

Each person enrolled in TLP operates within existing relationship systems. Relationship and systems, working as they do, often mean our colleagues, partner, family, and friends are impacted by a participant's new thinking, actions, and results. Their support is a significant factor in each participant's success.

"One of my favorite components so far has been learning together with others. I have participated in cohort learning models in the past and knew that I enjoyed them. I don't think I fully appreciated how motivating it is to be in community with people who are reading the same source material and are excited to engage in deeper, meaningful conversations."

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Other contributions include:

Program Administration: Lori McCauley, Holly Nelson, and Matt Geiger from Chemeketa Center of Business and Industry (CCBI), Krista Campbell (DAS)
Budget & Accounting: Robert Otero & Mini Fernandez (DAS), Shasta Prunk (DOC).
Publishing & Distribution: Carlee Justis, Duane Schmidt & Candace Erickson (DAS)
Photography: Tim Miller (ASCENT alumni)
Contracting: Kellie McDonald (CCBI) and Laure Konseibo (DAS)

ASCENT: The act of intentional movement in a direction that is upward rising or returning to source; to climb, to succeed.

- Adapted: Webster and Oxford

The ASCENT Leadership Programs

Cultivating leaders who are authentic, intentional, and engaged to power transformation.

ASCENT offers a range of leadership development programs and services for Oregon state employees and partners. Each program focuses on transformational leadership, helping participants build the skills and mindset needed to lead through complexity and change. ASCENT supports leaders at all levels—executives, managers, team leads, and individual contributors. The program offerings include:

Transformational Leadership Program
Promise of Leadership Workshop
Outward Performance Workshop
Leader to Leader Development Series
Coaching and Consulting Services
Mentoring Services

ASCENT programs are designed to help participants grow both individually and as teams, strengthening leadership across state government to better serve all Oregonians. The programs combine timeless wisdom with modern leadership practices to create a meaningful development experience—one that supports both personal fulfillment and a lasting impact at work.

"I'm grateful for the community. A place to go and not feel alone; to unpack and repack some of my bags. The dedicated time for thinking about what works and what doesn't (or maybe more what works when I'm working well). I love the energy and hopefulness in the room."

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"I made a conscious decision: I could either keep performing, trying to fake my way to the end, or show up fully vulnerable, raw, honest. That choice wasn't easy. But it changed everything."

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"In my experience, changing ourselves and our thoughts, habits, and self-image can be very difficult due to internal and external barriers. For this reason, one of the greatest benefits of this program is that it provides us with the opportunity to grow and change. There have been many meaningful moments that have transformed some of the ways I think and see myself."

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ASCENT programs are thoughtfully designed, in-depth learning experiences for professionals. Participants explore real work challenges through interactive workshops that follow a coaching-based approach. They also receive support through small-group sessions, one-on-one coaching, and detailed feedback to help them discover new ways of thinking and leading.

"Throughout ASCENT I have noticed that it is different from the other leadership classes I took. They all talked about the need to know who you are to bring it forward as a leader, and even had us take several different personality tests, but they never talked about how to apply those principles."

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"When I signed up for ASCENT, I did not realize how life-changing and intense the course would be."

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The kind of organizational change we have been striving for requires more than skill development of our leaders. It requires that leaders upgrade their internal operating system and have increased awareness of their beliefs and assumptions, their actions and reactions, and their impacts on others. Informed by leading research in psychology, neuroscience, organizational change, and leadership studies, people learn unique mental models that create new possibilities for action and hence new results. Participants re-define their view of leadership, work, partnership, commitment, accountability, intention, risk, and learning - all skills needed for leading in the 21st Century.

"I have started to formulate a voice to be heard by others and I am building the foundations for a beautiful future. One that I can be proud of."

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Outcomes and Results

- Using timely and valid feedback resulting in increased awareness and openness to disconfirming information and adjustment in thinking and actions
- Enhancing achievement by strengthening integrity based on clarity of individual purpose, values, and vision
- Growing greater awareness of self, relationships, and systems within demanding and complex environments
- Increasing energy and resiliency, managing stress, uncertainty and setbacks—for self and others
- Demonstrating interrelationship of decisions and strategy development
- Encouraging courage and authenticity
- Promoting flexibility in thinking, innovation, and actions, in consideration of near-term and distant goals
- Building influence, collaboration, and trust while thinking and acting systemically
- Mentoring and developing others

"I feel deeply grateful. This experience has been challenging and sometimes uncomfortable, but in ways that feel necessary. It's helping me face the inner narratives I've carried for a long time and ask better questions about how I want to lead and live."

2025 TLP GRADUATE

ASCENT thanks the leadership of our sponsoring agencies and partners who make our services possible and available to Oregon state government.

Oregon Department of Administrative Services

Oregon Department of Transportation

Oregon Youth Authority

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

Oregon Employment Department

Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services

Oregon Department of Human Services

Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services

Oregon Public Defense Commission

Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission

Chemeketa Center for Business & Industry

Oregon Department of Corrections

Transformational Leadership Program



"I find that I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the opportunity to participate in this program. Thinking back to when I walked through the door on day one, I now know that I grossly underestimated the profound impact this program was going to have on me as a coworker, spouse, parent, and friend."

2025 TLP GRADUATE

2025 TLP Participants

Participants	Agency	Sponsoring Manager
Christina Appleby	DOGAMI	Jason McClaughry
Rachel Arkoosh	ODOT	Mike Kimlinger
Greg Bergerson	sos	Dena Dawson & Burke Jones
Victoria Binning	ODA	Kevin Fenn
Alex Davids	DOR	Jesus Flores
Margau Dodele	OHA - OIS	Sean Garland
Katie Eagleson	DEQ	Zachary Loboy
Jessica S. Evans	ODHS	Melody Hannah
Enrica Gardner	OED	Aaron Harris
Emily Gregorio	ODF	Kyle Abraham
Shanaè Joyce-Stringer	ОНА	Jessica Deas
Charles Judd IV	DEQ	Brian Boling
Chantel Magee	OED	Don Lee
Hilary Mankofsky	ODE	Emily Nazarrov
Travis L. Miller	EIS	Terrence Woods
Jo Niehaus	OPRD	Katie Gauthier
Brandee Palmblad	ODHS	Dani Harris
Nga Quan	DEQ	Cesar Villaca II
Isabel Ramirez-Falcon	OYA	Ken Jeske
Rachael Rosendahl	DAS	Brent Lutz
David Shevchenko	PERS	Paul Brown
Tina Spiker	Lottery	Dan Sherwood
Chris Wick	Lottery	Ken Pesnell
Courtney Zerizef	OPRD	Rebecca Jasso



Christina Abbleby
Dept of Geology & Mineral Industries
Legislative Coordinator and Geologist

I value love, curiosity, and connection to family, humanity, and nature. As a leader, I pledge to uphold these values through my words, actions, and mindset.

- With my words, I will ask challenging questions, hold courageous conversations, share positivity and encouragement, and seek to understand everyone I meet.
- Through my actions, I will support and hold empathy for myself and others, build trust, seek common ground, and work hard to find creative solutions.
- within my heart and mind, I will foster resilience, kindness, optimism, patience, bravery, and honesty. I do this by welcoming change, recognizing the abundance in my life, remembering our interconnected nature, and stepping into my power.



Rachel Arkoosh
Oregon Dept of Transportation
Asset Management Coordinator

To lead is to hold space without artifice, nurturing the true, beautiful and green parts and always patiently acknowledging our wobbly, broken and hard parts. In doing so fully, we invite others to occupy their corner of this vast universe in their wholly unique way. It is a human act of invitation, co-creation and whole-hearted care.



Greg Bergerson
Secretary of State
OCVR Senior Application Administrator

I believe as a leader I need to be the calm in the storm. A safe place the people I lead can come to with all their concerns and problems, even those that are not work related. I will be part of their solutions, not someone to add additional problems. I will work to be the shield that shelters them and creates an environment encouraging them to learn and grow, allowing them to stive for their full potential.



Victoria Binning
Oregon Dept of Agriculture
Water Quality Initiatives Coordinator

As a leader, I pledge to embody the phrase, "teamwork makes the dream work". I will celebrate and support the unique expertise and experiences of my teammates. I will listen to understand and share the spotlight. For continued growth, I will seek opportunities for learning for both me and my team. I will bring joy and levity into the room as often as I can, while fostering an atmosphere of collaboration. Seeking solutions, I will encourage our team to think critically and ask "why?" I pledge to center the experiences of farmers, ranchers, and rural landowners as we continually improve our processes to better protect water quality for all.



Alex Davids
Department of Revenue
Tax Technician II

I pledge to be a warm and supportive leader and to make space for everyone, especially people from marginalized groups. I focus on asking questions that can lead to more insight, either in skills, knowledge, art, or personal development. To achieve this I use the values that are most important to me: compassion to be able to connect to people, creativity to help me find the right questions depending on the person, humility to realize my experiences and knowledge are not the only options, and service to the people I am helping, either directly or indirectly. That way, I will help myself and others reach the highest personal selfactualization possible.



Margau Dodele Oregon Health Authority / OIS Project Manager II

I pledge to prioritize the wellbeing of others, ensuring that every interaction is thoughtful and empathetic.

As a leader, I will strive to build a positive and inclusive environment where each individual feels supported and empowered to contribute their best. I will teach others that understanding and embracing our errors with a positive mindset allows us to gain new insights, develop our skills, and ultimately become stronger and more capable individuals.



Katie Eagleson
Dept of Environmental Quality
Air Toxics Permitting Engineer

As a leader, I will bridge conversational divides and ensure that all those around me know that their voices will be heard. I believe that our connections make us strong and that diverse viewpoints provide the foundational knowledge necessary to bring about sustainable growth. I am committed to being a source of encouragement, building relational trust through open and honest communication. I will generously express gratitude for the contributions of my team and joyfully celebrate our individual and collective triumphs. My leadership will root itself in integrity as I show up each day courageously and authentically.



Jessica S. Evans
Oregon Dept of Health Services
Human Services Specialist 3

I will lead with compassion and integrity, fostering authentic connections that uplift and inspire. Through empathy, laughter, and purpose-driven action, I strive to empower others to learn, grow, and thrive in their careers and beyond.

For me, learning is an exciting life-long process. In the next year I will look for opportunities to encourage and collaborate with those around me so that knowledge can be exchanged. I will continue to actively take steps to be more self-aware so that I can support those around me to the fullest of my potential and become a better, everevolving, version of myself.



Enrica Gardner
Oregon Employment Dept.
Operations and Policy Analyst 2

Leadership is teaching self-determination. I believe everyone does the best they can with what they have at any given moment. By fostering an environment grounded in compassion, resilience, accountability, and integrity, I create space for others to live their values through meaningful work. Guiding others on this journey challenges me to remain committed to my own growth through humble reflection and learning. I aspire to lead in ways that enrich the lives of those I serve. Leadership, to me, is a legacy of growth—a cycle of shared success where collective progress is both the means and the reward. The measure of my success is reflected in the selfdetermined empowerment of those I have led.



Emily Gregorio
Oregon Dept of Forestry
Committee and Records Specialist

As a leader, I pledge to serve with integrity, empathy, and patience. I believe trust is the soul of a team and humor is the heart. I will put the team's needs above my own, courageously share my whole person and honor the whole person in others, invite feedback with dependable composure, and assume good intentions. My mission as a leader is to ensure every team member has a voice and is comfortable using it, feels understood, valued, and included, and recognizes the purpose in their work.



Shanaé Joyce-Stringer
Oregon Health Authority
Public Affairs Specialist

I am a servant leader who exists to equip others so they can succeed. Guided by humility and vision, I commit to empowering those around me to reach their fullest potential.

I lead with faith, trusting God's guidance to sustain me and keep service at the center of my purpose. I lead with integrity, aligning my words and actions with truth, fairness, and accountability. I lead with community, fostering spaces of belonging, respect, and collaboration where every voice is valued. I lead with knowledge, embracing lifelong learning and using wisdom to teach, equip, and create opportunities for others.

With faith, integrity, community, and knowledge as my compass, I pledge to lead courageously, serve faithfully, and build a legacy of empowerment that inspires others to succeed and lead in their own right.



Charles Judd IV
Dept of Environmental Quality
Chief Audit Executive

"In executing the duties of my present important station, I can promise nothing but purity of intentions and, in carrying these into effect, fidelity and diligence"

- George Washington

As a leader, I strive to **be** grounded, curious, and courageous. I will **do** the work of building trust, listening, and acting with integrity to elevate others. I aim to **have** an organization that learns, adapts, and leads with purpose.

This year, I'll use my influence across DEQ to promote transparency, foster safety, and encourage courageous conversations – even as a team of one.

My leadership will be known for investing in people and possibility – shaping a stronger Oregon through clarity, compassion, and commitment.



Chantel Magee

Oregon Employment Dept Contributions Accounting Technician Lead

As a leader and coworker I believe in communication, teamwork, and the pursuit of knowledge. I am not afraid to say I don't know. I am passionate about my job and am always looking for ways to improve. I do my best to be present, to listen, and to be available to help. When I cannot offer a solution to a problem, I am willing to assist in finding one. I am direct and believe in the power of constructive criticism when it comes to learning and growth. My goal is to empower those around me to do the same.



Hilary Mankofsky

Oregon Dept of Education Civil Rights Program Analyst

I lead with humor and heart, making people laugh is my superpower. Laughter fosters connection and love fosters community. I believe authenticity is vital to leadership and when I exemplify it, others follow. Even when it's challenging, I encourage people to grow and celebrate all the joy along the way. On my best days, I listen intently, empower others, and help people show up as their full selves. Everyone should feel like they belong, and I strive to create spaces where people feel like they matter. Every single day.



Travis L. Miller

Dept of Administrative Services / EIS

Data Center Services Deputy Director

I am a servant leader dedicated to solving for collective action in the public interest, working to deliver excellence, innovation, and outcomes in the public sector. Shaped by lived experience and strengthened through resilience, I bring authenticity, adaptability, and curiosity to every role I serve.

Adaptability has been the throughline of my journey—first as survival, later as strength cultivated through global experience, professional growth, and leadership in complex systems. It enables me to pivot without losing focus, hold multiple perspectives, and foster innovation while staying grounded in purpose and values.

I strive to catalyze people-centered change—translating policy aspirations into effective services, rebuilding trust in public institutions, and solving the problems that matter most.



Jo Niehaus Oregon Parks and Recreation Dept Policy Advisor

I choose to lead with clarity and courage.

I will turn challenges into growth, and service into lasting impact.

To me, leadership is not about authority or control.

It is about earning trust, listening empathetically, and serving the common good.

I commit to protecting the natural spaces we depend on.

I commit to strengthening the communities we share.

And I will measure my success not by recognition, but by the growth, resilience, and well-being of those I serve.



Brandee Palmblad

Oregon Dept of Health Services
OIS Temporary Housing
Lodging Coordinator

I am committed to changing the world through authentic, compassionate, human connection. In my leadership, you can count on me to ask who and what matters and why, to listen with humility and curiosity, to answer with compassion and empathy, and to foster belonging and courageous authenticity. I will do this by continuing my own personal growth and learning journey and cheering others along on theirs. I will share my story and insights with others and be changed by what they share in return. I will create diverse spaces so opportunities for growth and learning are as significant as possible. I believe that when people can be their whole selves, they are free to be their most creative selves: Like a plant whose roots become choked and contorted by a pot that is too small, so our creativity becomes stifled by spaces that do not allow us to thrive. This abundance of human-centered creativity and growth will change the world.



Nga Quan
Dept of Environmental Quality
Information System Specialist 6

I pledge to lead with compassion, clarity, integrity, heart, and self-awareness.

I extend grace to myself and others, recognizing that setbacks and uncertainty can be part of meaningful progress.

I act by listening deeply and leading with trust — grounded in my values, my roots, and the purpose that guides my work.

I honor each person's unique strengths and perspectives, believing that when we bring our full, authentic selves, we build stronger, more resilient teams.

I strive to create a space where curiosity, courage, and continuous learning are part of daily work — and where it feels safe to be open and vulnerable, especially during challenges.



Isabel Ramirez-Falcon
Oregon Youth Authority
Office Specialist 2

I pledge to lead by example, with integrity, patience, and quiet determination because steady actions can inspire just as much as bold words.



Rachael Rosendahl

Dept of Administrative Services State Procurement Analyst

I pledge to lead with authenticity, collaboration, and happiness.

I will listen to understand, not simply to reply.

I will communicate with clarity, honesty, and response-- knowing my words have power beyond measure.

I will create genuine connections, value each person's voice, perspective, and potential.

I will foster an environment where trust can grow, ideas can flourish, and people can laugh.

I will use my influence to elevate others-helping to inspire, to see what they can become, and support them in getting there.

I will hold myself accountable to lead with courage, compassion, and consistency, so that my leadership leaves a legacy of connection, community, and fun.



David Shevchenko

Public Employees' Retirement System Business Process Owner

As a leader, I pledge to the following: I will exhibit and live out servant leadership. I will live and lead with joy and passion. I will speak up and use my voice when I feel uncomfortable to do so. I will also think before I speak, remain silent when appropriate and use my words wisely. I will live out my faith and hold true to my personal core values. I seek and aim for balance and moderation in my life, however when duty calls, I will get the job done no matter what it takes. I will practice self-control, work hard, and do hard things.



Tina Spiker
Oregon Lottery
Senior Network Administrator Lead

I pledge to lead with integrity, respect, and empathy, upholding the standards I expect from others. I am committed to fostering professional growth, encouraging my team to expand their expertise and pursue excellence in the field of Network Engineering. As a leader, I will serve as a guide and advocate, enabling success through support and accountability.

In my personal life, I will lead my family with wisdom and consistency, instilling values that prepare my grandchildren to contribute meaningfully to society. This pledge reflects my dedication to principled leadership in all aspects of my life.



Chris Wick
Oregon Lottery
Field Service Technician

I will challenge my team to grow and thrive by stepping out of their comfort zones. I will encourage teamwork because we are stronger working together than working alone. I will promote open communication because all voices are important and need to be heard. I will lead by practicing my core values of Authenticity, Creativity, Empowerment, Respect, and Teamwork. Failure is not possible if we can learn from our setbacks and commit to trying again. These values are highlighted in the following quote by an unknown author.

"Leadership is getting everyone to play for the name on the front of the jersey, not the name on the back."



Courtney Zerizef
Oregon Parks and Recreation Dept
Lead Financial Analyst 3

I commit to leading with authenticity, integrity, and discovery. In doing so, I seek to prioritize connection, giving space for both myself and others to grow, contribute, and be seen. I will strive to build trust through transparency, to listen with intention, and to honor the diverse perspectives that shape stronger outcomes. I will work to balance ambition with compassion, holding space for both progress and people.

"I have set more aggressive career goals because I now believe myself capable of becoming more than I currently am. I now see challenges at work as exciting instead of feeling stressed. I am grateful for this impactful journey with my ASCENT cohort, trainers, and coaches."

2025 TLP GRADUATE

"I feel the flow of magic in me and know that if I keep stretching and striving, I will produce the true fruit of my existence, which I will share with the world, over and over again, as the seasons change."

2025 TLP GRADUATE

"ASCENT truly is transformative, and I feel so grateful to be challenged in a way that drives me to be the person I am beneath the fear."

2025 TLP GRADUATE

"The ASCENT program has provided valuable insights and actionable strategies directly applicable to my current role, reinforcing my effectiveness and confidence. Looking ahead I am keen on implementing these learnings to further drive positive outcomes at DEQ and actively contribute to my organization's growth and success."

2025 TLP GRADUATE

"This program is rigorous, with plenty of reading and homework, but the learning has been invaluable. I've already gained so much and feel excited about what's yet to come. This journey is pushing me to grow in ways I never anticipated, and I'm eager to continue evolving."

2025 TLP GRADUATE



WWW.OREGON.GOV/DAS/HR/PAGES/ASCENT ascent.oregon@das.oregon.gov

FAVORITE ASCENT QUOTES

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." - Martin Luther King Jr.

> "Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity, and change." - Brene Brown

"The conversation is the relationship." - David Whyte

"Everything you want is on the other side of fear." - Jack Canfield

"We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are." - Anais Nin

> "Leaders bring the weather." - James Geiger

"The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are." - Joseph Campbell

> "There is no safe path to greatness." - Bob Anderson

