

Army Executive Leadership Program

Purpose: Document the background, objectives, learning construct, results, management responsibilities, and event costs of the Army Executive Leadership Program (ELP).

Background: The ELP was created as a unique executive leadership education opportunity for senior leaders of the Army Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (ALT) Community. The Defense Acquisition University (DAU) was requested to coordinate the design, development and delivery. A market survey of proven executive leadership education sources resulted in the selection of Frew and Associates of Monterey, California, for the detailed design, leadership content and facilitation of the program. A pilot event was presented to an ALT Community murder board at DAU in the summer of 2004. The murder board reviewed and endorsed the proposed learning construct. Led by (then) MG Jeff Sorensen, the murder board recommended implementation of a program of approximately one week (noon on Monday through noon on Friday), attendance by comprised primarily of AMC and ASAALT executives, at a venue within approximately 90 minutes of the Pentagon with facilities that would be conducive to executive learning and networking. The murder board recommended that events should be centrally funded (except participant travel). To date, 12 ELP events have been held at the Airlie Conference Center, Warrenton, Virginia. Approximately 180 ALT Community leaders have attended an ELP event; a few have attended more than one.

Objectives: Initially envisioned as an opportunity for ALT Community leaders to earn continuous learning points, the program designers and the murder board proposed that the program should endeavor to deliver world-class executive-level leadership learning. Refinement of objectives by program participants in the first couple of years of the program resulted in a set of intended outcomes that guide the selection of content and speakers for each event.

- Build ALT Community intellectual capital & foster continuous learning
- Catalyst for transformation initiatives & increased integration of the ALT Community
- Forum for dialog among ALT Community executives on complex and important community issues
- Source of emerging leadership concepts and tools for ALT Community leaders
- Create trust networks among ALT Community leaders and other stakeholders
- Catalyst for increased relevance and integration with the warfighter

Learning Construct: Continuous refinement of the ELP design and delivery (2004 to present) has resulted in an immersive, integrated, highly relevant, responsive and flexible learning construct. Attachment 1 describes the evolved learning construct. Learning content and methods include a blend of individual preparation, expert facilitation, presentation of concepts and tools by renowned leadership thought leaders and practitioners, unconstrained dialogue with the presenters and facilitators, experiential application of learning, daily reflection, and dialog between the participants and AMC & ASAALT senior leaders at the conclusion of each event.

Results: Learning results are assessed at the end of each event as a part of the dialog with AMC and ASAALT senior leaders. Each participant cites their more significant learning and how they expect to apply their learning and insights to more effectively lead within the ALT Community. Periodically, additional assessment is conducted between one and three months after events with randomly selected participants to determine if learning is being applied by the participants in their jobs and to assess what has been most valuable. Another indication of learning relevance and effectiveness is the extent to which participants may “import” concepts (even sources) of learning into their organizations for their subordinates or as strategies for improved organizational effectiveness. There is significant, broad evidence of the application of learning to the leadership of the ALT Community and increased leadership capacity of ALT Community leaders. Appendix 2 provides an expanded discussion of ELP results.

Management and Support: DAU continues to provide overall coordination and support of the program. Upon confirmation of events dates and receipt of Army funding, DAU initiates a task order against a competitively awarded contract for detailed event design, facilitation, selection and coordination of presenters, and the reservation of facilities by Frew and Associates. Upon confirmation of the names of program participants by AMC and ASAALT, the DAU Leadership Learning Center of Excellence disseminates an overview of the learning event and logistical information. Subsequently, DAU conducts phone interviews with each participant to align expectations and encourage each participant to develop individual learning objectives, consistent with the agenda and the opportunity to network and collaborate with other ALT Community leaders. In addition to event design and facilitation, Frew and Associates arranges and pays speaker and facility expenses on a direct cost basis. Frew and Associates, as a licensee, administers and interprets the Rhodes Thinking Intention Profile, including the preparation and dissemination of individual and learning cohort profiles.

Summary: The Army and DAU have created a world-class executive leadership education program. ELP participants consistently cite exceptional and relevant learning. The learning construct fosters increased collaboration, networking and benchmarking across the Army Material Enterprise. With the added benefit of cohort learning and the control of program design and delivery, the cost of the program has been estimated to be less than 50% of the cost of commercial and other government executive leadership education programs of similar length.