

Core competencies required of NSLI Certificate graduates.

A list of core competencies/capabilities is presented below based on our research and scan of curricular guidelines. In general, this certificate will serve to enhance the liberal arts and sciences agenda by further supporting the skills and knowledge development opportunities already underway on our campus, albeit from a cross-disciplinary perspective. There are 7 main competency categories that will be integrated into all the courses:

a) Knowledge competencies needed to work in the voluntary sector:

- Understand the big picture/contextual interconnections; graduates must understand that their work is part of a vast network in that they may work for one organization, but that organization is connected with a network of other organizations, to communities, to governments, etc.;
- Understand the formal and informal structure of the sector across time, cultures and contexts as well as the nature of collective and individual voluntary action and role of ideology in shaping the sector and its parts;
- Understand theory regarding why the sector exists, history, functions, size and forms, impacts, trends, fields of activity, and shifting relationships with multiple levels of government and dynamics with funders;
- Understand essential values/ethics embodied in the sector such as stewardship, voluntarism, altruism, freedom of association, fairness, diversity, and codes of professional conduct;
- Understand both administrative and substantive public policies that regulate the sector, legal and tax frameworks, as well as how organizations shape these policies and make social change (e.g., public education, advocacy);
- Understand the governance roles of boards of directors and senior executives within the organization as well as at the community and societal levels, how these roles have shifted over time, how these differ from government and private sectors and how boards of directors operate as change agents;
- Understand the necessity of engaging communities in a multitude of ways at different times in order to play an active role in shaping the sector, public policies and society generally.

b) Specific skill capabilities/applications needed in areas such as governance and administration, communications as both process and product, fundraising, human resources management (both volunteers and staff, need for skills in conflict management and mediation, etc.), leadership (especially in areas of risk management, innovation, etc.), relationship building, program development and evaluation, community development and engagement, public policy advocacy, financial management and new technologies (e.g., social media).

c) Methods capacities:

- the ability to discern how to find, collect and critically analyse data and information needed to make decisions about policies, programs, etc. (e.g., interviews, observations, secondary sources such as Statistics Canada reports, mapping).

d) Personal capabilities:

- flexibility and adaptive capacity to work in ambiguous and messy environments
- a balance regarding the confidence-learning-humility continuum (e.g., a new graduate needs to have the confidence to make decisions and move things forward in an organization, but also needs the humility to learn from diverse people in her environment),
- commitment (including energy/passion, perseverance)
- decisiveness based on one's values and ethics
- self awareness (including learning from mistakes, remaining calm when unexpected events happen)
- sense of agency to make change
- take initiative, be courageous and lead - it is not just the CEO, but all levels of workers must be prepared to be leaders at various levels in nonprofit organizations.

e) Cross-cultural, interpersonal and communications capabilities:

- relationship building/team work/collaboration/negotiation skills are essential
- cultural competencies (i.e., students must understand the variety of cultures which converge in the nonprofit sector, from ethnicity to religion to gender to sexual orientation to socio-economic status to rural/urban differences)
- specific cultural understandings and sensitivities are required regarding First Nations and Métis peoples given Saskatchewan demographics - the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015) report is an essential source of learning material.
- communication skills (verbal, written, listening, presentation) including understanding different audiences and being able to adapt messages and capitalize on those moments on the spot (e.g., students need to be able to change their written and spoken communication skills for different audiences such as their co-workers, the media, elected officials, their board of directors)
- empathy (including the ability to give credit to others, being honest/transparent with others and ability to listen carefully to others' points of view),
- what it means to be in diverse relationships including building trust and reciprocity.

f) Cognitive and critical thinking capabilities:

- critical thinking including the ability to think reflectively, independently, and logically about the world around oneself (e.g., create and evaluate arguments, identify relevance and logical links among ideas, integrate one's ethics into responses)
- problem solving and diagnoses including the ability to identify core issues
- responsiveness/reflectiveness (especially being able to learn from experience)
- strategic thinking (being able to think laterally and creatively)
- ability to see the whole picture/complex messy real world
- ability to work with varying degrees of ambiguity and unpredictability.