

JULY-AUGUST 2021

Executive Leadership Incubator Completes Dedicated Lewis & Clark Experience



"The ELI group raises relevant and thought-provoking topics that challenge the way you approach problem solving. Attending the Lewis & Clark Experience was perfectly in line with our direction, and really brought into focus the need for and importance of personal resilience as we lead our organizations and that we must focus on this or we risk becoming ineffective."

— **ROBERT GUINN**
EVP - CHIEF
MARKETPLACE OFFICER
FCS FINANCIAL

The FCCS Executive Leadership Incubator (ELI), composed of 25 senior leaders, recently completed "A New Way Forward," a new program from the Lewis & Clark Experience focused on leadership lessons for senior and executive leadership. This is an adjunct to the original program that focuses on key leadership lessons for boards of directors.

The Executive Leadership Incubator is an accelerated networking group of senior leaders preparing to make the jump into the C-suite. The group was born out of a need expressed by Farm Credit CEOs to provide high performing executives a discrete, focused developmental activity to help them ready themselves for more senior executive roles. The format is a mix of group learning, subject matter expert speakers, and on the job, hands-on learning for each executive, a design based on solid research and input from CEOs as to what the highest performing executives need. Through this multi-pronged approach, the Executive Leadership Incubator develops executive skill sets, establishes strong professional relationships that can be drawn on for years and decades to come, and exposes members to the array of business functions they hope one day to oversee.

"Participation in ELI has definitely made me a better, more well-rounded leader," says Jolene Curtis, Chief Operating Officer with Texas Farm Credit Services. "The connections ELI has helped me make with leaders in other Farm Credit associations have provided me with a sounding board, different perspectives and solutions to issues my association is facing."

The group meets twice each year for multi-day sessions during which two members each present a real-life challenge they're facing; solutions are then discussed by the group. Bringing together senior leaders from a mix of disciplines exposes everyone to parts of the business they haven't experienced and offers insights and perspectives from different disciplines to problems at hand.

"Being part of the ELI group was a great experience. Unlike some other training programs, it exposed me to issues specifically targeted to C-Level positions and those leading ACAs as the CEO," says Mike Reynolds, CEO of Farm Credit East. "Interacting with outside speakers as well as past and current CEOs helped provide a solid foundation as I became CEO. In addition, participation in ELI introduced me to peers in the Farm Credit System who I now consider key relationships as we work together on issues that benefit our customers and partners throughout Farm Credit."

For 2021, the group determined that the Lewis & Clark "A New Way Forward" program would deliver powerful leadership lessons focused on collaboration and strategic alliances, identified as key executive attributes by the group, while also strengthening their networking bond. The team at Lewis & Clark then created a

custom program for the Executive Leadership Incubator with targeted discussion and covering a day and a half, rather than the typical 2.5-day program open to all mid-level to senior leaders.

The program includes five modules covering vision, team building, overcoming obstacles, resilience and proceeding forward. Each module includes classroom instruction, group discussion and experiential activities.

"The experiential component – in this case an aerial park course – can be intimidating, but it adds tremendous value because participants embody the physicality of leadership when facing obstacles and feeling apprehensive, and the process helps anchor leadership lessons in a physical way," says Lisa Cavanaugh, FCCS Vice President of Leadership Development Experiences.

Reflection time incorporated journaling, as the original Corps of Discovery did throughout the Lewis & Clark expedition – more than 1 million words were journaled by the expedition members. As a leadership development tool, it's invaluable.

"Participants often seem unsure about journaling, but then they start the practice and begin to understand the value of reflecting back on the day," says Jeff Ton, a Lewis & Clark guide. "It was rewarding as a facilitator to hear the group in a follow-up discussion after the program proactively talk about the benefit of keeping a journal as a leader today."

[Click here](#) to register for the October 19-21, 2021 Open Enrollment program. To learn more about our in-person program and the virtual program available now for teams and organizations, [visit our website](#).

For more information about joining the Executive Leadership Incubator, contact [Jay Lux](#), FCCS' Vice President of Organizational Development and program facilitator at 651.982.4568.