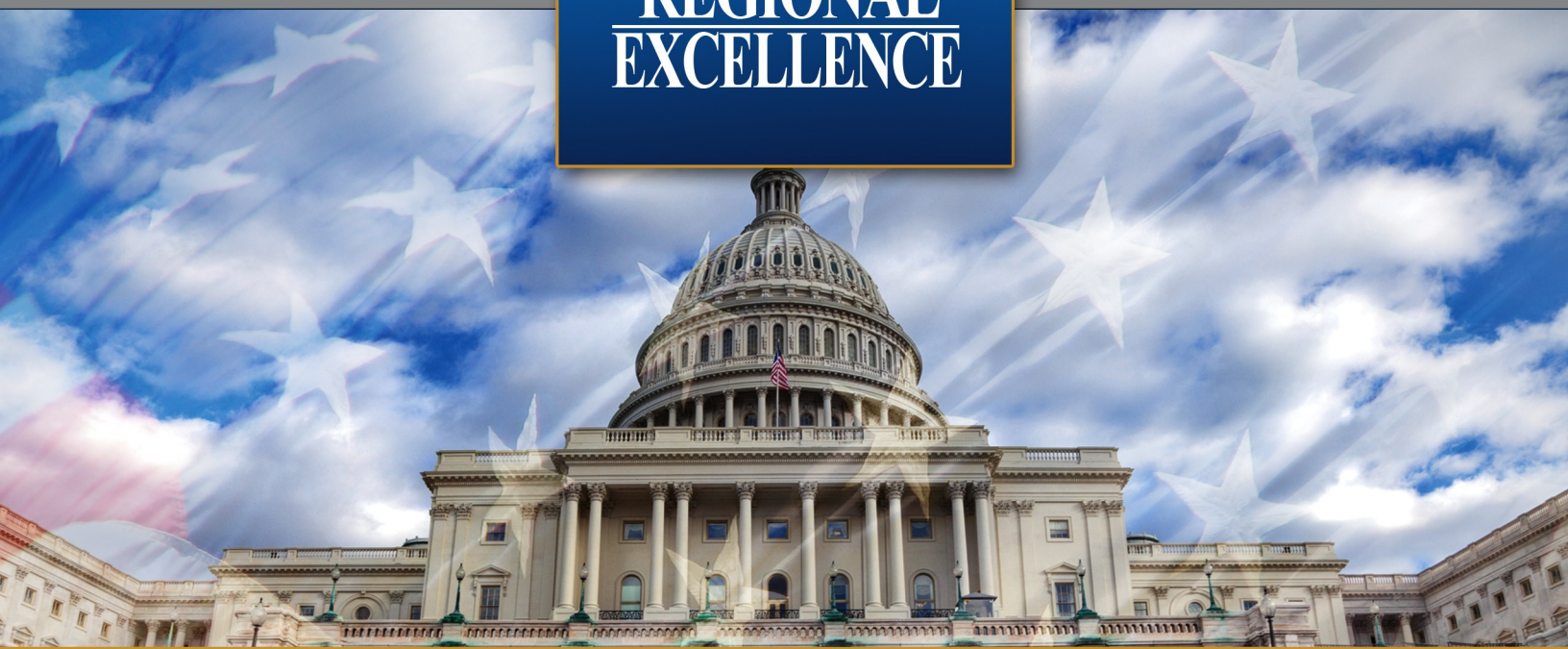


COG  
INSTITUTE  
*for*  
REGIONAL  
EXCELLENCE



Metropolitan Washington  
Council of Governments

CPM

CERTIFIED PUBLIC MANAGER  
P R O G R A M®



THE GEORGE  
WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY  
WASHINGTON, DC

# IRE RECRUITMENT

## 2025 | Cohort XXII

APPLICATION DEADLINE

July 1, 2025

## **The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments invites you to explore an exciting, regional executive development program.**

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is pleased to invite you to learn more about the Institute for Regional Excellence. Now in its twentieth year, new classes will form for the Regional Executive Development Program COHORT 22 in the fall of 2025.

If you are in a mid-senior level management position from one of COG's member jurisdictions or affiliates and your primary function or major responsibilities involve a regional focus, this program is for you. COG invites supervisory or managerial personnel at the professional level such as managers, division chiefs, department heads and directors to participate in this 12-month program. It will make a difference in your career and for the region.

If you are seeking an opportunity to enhance your knowledge and leadership capacity built around the challenges facing the Washington metropolitan region, this program brings a unique opportunity for you!

### **Here are some benefits awaiting prospective candidates:**

- Certified Public Manager designation at the successful completion of the 12 month executive development program;
- Expanded network of government professionals around the region;
- Enhanced regional perspective and skills to deal with regional issues;
- Improved capacities for leading and managing complex organizations and issues;
- Broadened skill sets necessary for success at senior levels of government; and
- Unparalleled opportunity to stay in touch with regional best practices.

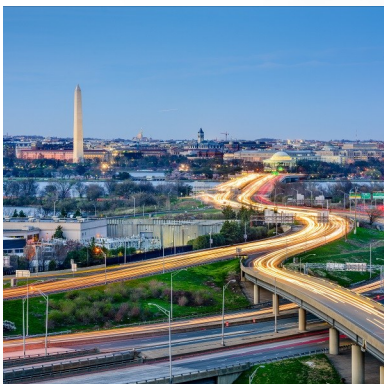
*The Institute for Regional Excellence exists to build a cadre of regional talents with a common set of skills, and a common set of knowledge and understanding built around regional challenges.*

*Its goal is to be a learning forum for new ideas and uncommon ways of creatively addressing regional issues facing the Washington region.*





## ABOUT COG



**T**he Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is an independent, nonprofit association that brings area leaders together to address major regional issues in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia. COG's membership is comprised of 300 elected officials from 24 local governments, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and U.S. Congress.

Since 1957, COG has helped tackle the region's biggest challenges, such as revitalizing the Potomac River, ensuring the Metro system was fully built, and strengthening emergency preparedness after 9/11.

COG is supported by financial contributions from its participating local governments, federal and state grants and contracts, and donations from foundations and the private sector. The Board of Directors is COG's governing body and is responsible for its overall policies. In addition, a wide network of city and county managers, police and fire chiefs, housing and planning directors, environmental experts, public health officials, transportation planners, and more coordinate through COG's committees.

## COG'S VISION

Region Forward is our vision. It's a commitment by COG and its member governments, who together seek to create a more accessible, sustainable, prosperous, and livable National Capital Region.

## COG'S MISSION

COG's mission is to make Region Forward happen by being a discussion forum, expert resource, issue advocate, and catalyst for action.



## REMARKS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

March 1, 2025

Dear Prospective Candidate:

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) helps prepare and develop future leaders through a variety of learning opportunities that build stronger connections among local government professionals in the region. One of our signature programs is the Institute for Regional Excellence, also known as IRE, a yearlong program that we are pleased to coordinate in partnership with The George Washington University.



As an institution fully accredited by the National Certified Public Managers® Consortium, we offer training to help students reach top management positions. In doing so, the program ensures that metropolitan Washington will have a team of leaders with the knowledge, skills, and collaborative spirit to address our region's biggest challenges and plan for a better future.

I encourage you to take a look at the testimonials in this brochure from some of IRE's graduates to learn first-hand what our program is all about. Hopefully, someday soon you will add your own testimonial to let more prospective students know about the benefits of becoming a certified manager and part of our network of leaders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clark Mercer'.

Clark Mercer  
COG Executive Director

## ABOUT THE IRE PROGRAM



A year-long effort from various stakeholders in the region culminated in creating The COG Institute for Regional Excellence. These included partnerships between with The George Washington University's Center for Excellence in Public Leadership, Chief Administrative Officers and Personnel Directors from member jurisdictions, and the COG Board of Directors. COG developed a strategic plan focusing on leadership training as an important element of regional

development. Thus, COG and George Washington University staff worked together to sponsor a year-long Regional Executive Development program credentialing participants as Certified Public Managers upon their successful completion of this program. The COG Board of Directors unanimously approved this program on July 12, 2000. The first cohort completed the program in August 2002.

The Regional Executive Development program assists local government managers in the Washington metropolitan area in dealing with the challenges of providing services and meeting the needs of residents in a growing metropolitan area. It is targeted at mid- to senior-level managers in Washington metropolitan area local governments. It aims to develop leadership, enhance management skills, increase exposure to innovation in local government, and develop an understanding of regional issues and approaches. Upon successful completion of the program, graduates receive certificate from George Washington University and are designated as Certified Public Managers.

### The main objectives of the program are to:

- Provide the theoretical and intellectual foundations of leadership and management in the public sector and expose participants to "state-of-the-art" practices in public administration;
- Examine – and help participants prepare for – the special challenges and responsibilities that come with leading large, complex public organizations;
- Increase understanding of metropolitan-wide issues as well as interdependencies among area local governments and develop a common language and set of concepts area managers can use when discussing issues; and
- Provide an opportunity to share problems, develop joint solutions, and establish networks among area jurisdiction managers.

Participants go through the program as a single cohort, attending classes together. The cohort format creates group cohesiveness and maximizes the opportunity for managers from different area jurisdictions to network and learn from each other.



## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The COG Institute for Regional Excellence is pleased to offer the Regional Executive Development Program (REDP) designed to meet the requirements for graduates to be designated Certified Public Managers (CPMs). The COG program combines leadership and management training to meet the CPM requirements with exposure to metropolitan wide issues. The REDP is a 12-month program with participants attending one module per month for a three-day period. It consists of the following courses:

Month	Modules	Hours
1	Building a Learning Community & Challenges in Metro Management	20
2	Leadership Principles and Practices	20
3	Intro to Projects and Authentic Leadership	20
4	Building Teams and Conflict Management	20
5	Strategic Project Management	20
6	Employee Engagement and Strategic Human Resource Management	20
7	Project Working Session and Joint Session w/PEMM	20
8	Leading Change and Project Sustainability	20
9	Executive Communications	20
10	Data-Informed Decision Making	20
11	Budgeting & Finance Management and Procurement Policy & Practices	20
12	Leadership Values & Ethics	20
Subtotal		<b>240</b>
Ongoing—Identifying and Resolving Regional Issues: Research and Analytical Methods		36
Ongoing—Team Project		24
<b>TOTAL HOURS</b>		<b>300</b>

The modules are structured so that participants learn about leadership and management at the beginning (month 1). The participants are exposed to the challenges facing metropolitan Washington in managing growth, transportation, environmental and public safety issues, and identify themes for participant project teams to pursue (month 2). Next, they acquire teambuilding and conflict management skills (month 3). Part of each module is devoted to projects - instruction on research approaches and methods at the start of each module and project team meetings at the end. Subsequently, the program provides strategic planning and other skills needed by effective managers (months 4 through 9). Executive decision making and communications tools prepare them for presenting projects to COG (months 10 and 11). The modules conclude with leadership values and ethics (month 12).

## PROGRAM COURSE DESCRIPTION

**Leading People Leading Change:** Examines the normative, theoretical and practical aspects of public administration, management, leadership and organizational change from the vantage of a senior manager, executive, or public policy-maker. It places special emphasis on the complexity of executive leadership in the public sector, with a focus on local governments, as well as on the decisional dilemmas that often attend it. Role playing and case studies will be used to model leadership styles, strategies, and behaviors. It will stress the need for leaders to look outside their immediate organizational environment and take a broader view.

**Challenges of Metropolitan Management:** Exposes participants to metropolitan wide issues, which would require regional solutions. The focus will be on the four areas identified in the COG Strategic Plan: (a) growth; (b) transportation; (c) environment; and (d) human services and public safety. Participants will learn about the challenges facing the metropolitan area and actions taken or planned to tackle the problems. Local jurisdiction senior staff would be expected to participate as speakers and panelists to share their views and visions on the development of the Washington metropolitan area and the challenges that this poses to their jurisdictions and the area as a whole. At the conclusion of this module, the participants would form teams to conduct regional projects.

**Building Teams and Conflict Resolution:** Examines the theoretical and practical need to understand and use the concept of teams in today's organizational settings. Examines how managers and leaders can use teams to increase productivity, creativity, and group satisfaction. Attention will be given to the techniques and skills required to build and direct teams within one's own unit, develop teamwork within a team of peers from outside one's organization, & resolve conflict w/in teams.

**Strategic Planning:** Provides an integrative approach to strategic management and policy, focusing on the formulating, implementing, evaluating, and overseeing strategy and policy development, particularly in public organizations. Using case studies, participants will learn the critical elements in developing a strategic plan, the process followed to have the plan adopted, and measures taken to implement the plan.

**Performance Management and Evaluation:** Examines analysis and evaluation as two complementary ways of assessing public policy. Typically, analysis is prospective in nature, anticipating the likely future consequences of a particular policy option, while evaluation is retrospective, focusing on whether the selected policy option has achieved its intended purpose. Participants learn why and how such assessments are conducted, as well as their appropriate uses and limitations in the American public policy process.

**Budgeting and Finance:** Examines the role of budgeting, auditing, and financial controls in the efficient and effective allocation of organizational resources, especially within the public sector. Specific public sector budgeting principles and techniques, financial and cost analysis tools, and control and cost accounting systems, with emphasis on auditing and cost comparison methodologies and quantitative techniques for deriving and evaluating cost data will be a major portion of the course.

## PROGRAM COURSE DESCRIPTION

**Project Management:** Prepares the participant for developing and managing major projects in today's public sector environment. Focuses on building the discipline, skills, and techniques needed in project management, including customer identification, scheduling, performance measures, estimating costs and budgeting, human resource allocation, project tracking, and project evaluation. Case studies will include larger projects involving coordination across jurisdictions. Skills, and techniques needed in project management, including customer identification, scheduling, performance measures, estimating costs and budgeting, human resource allocation, project tracking, and project evaluation. Case studies will include larger projects involving coordination across jurisdictions.

**Strategic Information Management:** Exposes the participant to competitive, economic, and political factors that influence technology innovation with particular attention to public organizations, and e-government trends. The course highlights managing technology issues and research and development projects (such as selecting projects, allocating resources, planning for technology, managing and evaluating development projects). It also focuses on the role of new technologies in driving social change.

**Strategic Human Resource Management:** Focuses on managing the public organization's human resources to execute public policies and programs. It features the theory of motivation and interpersonal relationships, current policies and issues regarding employee relations and reward systems, and labor relations. Practical exercises and examples illustrate allocating human resources efficiently in an organization, establishing relationships with unions, negotiating issues of appropriate interaction in the workplace, and the essentials for motivating and leading employees in the public sector.

**Executive Communications:** Guides participants in understanding and practicing effective briefing and public speaking techniques and written presentation techniques. Part of the module is spent reviewing outlines and presentations of project reports to the COG.

**Leadership Values and Ethics:** Explores the legal, ethical, and moral dimensions of executive leadership in government, with an emphasis on the tensions that may arise among these dimensions in the exercise of managerial and executive power and authority. The various institutional, political, moral-ethical, social-psychological, and philosophical considerations that may bear on the constitutional, legal, administrative, and practical limits of authority are examined. Concepts and strategies are analyzed through extensive case studies, role-playing, and simulations.

**Regional Policy Analysis Team Projects - Poster Sessions:** In addition to attending monthly modules, the participants will form teams and carry out a regional project as part of the program. These could be a study or project focused on a specific regional challenge. Possible themes for the projects are developed together with COG staff, who may provide guidance to the teams. The projects are an opportunity for participants to work together and utilize some of the skills they have learned through the modules, while they tackle an issue of regional importance. The teams are expected to present their projects to the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) at the end of the program. Participants receive instruction on research and analytical methods at the start of each module. Participants apply what they have learned to refine regional project themes and develop the methodology to carry out their project.



## ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION PROCESS

### ELIGIBILITY

All applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements and must be employed within a COG member jurisdiction and/or affiliate:

1. Middle to senior management, particularly positions involving regional focus or responsibilities as a primary function. (Examples: supervisory or managerial positions at the senior professional level, division chiefs, department heads and directors.)
2. Bachelor's degree or comparable work experience.
3. Full-time, regular staff, having completed any employment probationary period required by the respective jurisdiction. Non-contractual or regular term position.
4. Supervisory approval to attend the training.
5. Additional screening may be required by participating jurisdictions.

### DESIGNATION AND FEES

The 12-month Regional Executive Development Program (REDP) consists of 300 credit hours leading to a "Certified Public Manager®" designation upon successfully completing all classes and projects.

The fee is **\$6,000.** per participant, payable to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments before classes begin. An invoice will be sent to the student's member jurisdiction for payment.. COG employees shall refund COG IRE from his/her last paycheck upon authorization prior to departure, or other payment arrangements within six months of leaving COG as approved by the HR Director.

#### STEP 1

### Application Materials

All applicants must submit a competed application, including a resume and a letter of recommendation, by the **July 1, 2025** deadline. Electronic pdf applications are strongly encouraged. Candidates who have submitted a complete application by the July 1, 2025 deadline, meet all the requirements, and whose application has been deemed to meet acceptable standards will be reviewed by the IRE selection committee.

Acceptable standards include: a thorough application packet; a well-written, reasoned essay; and relative rank given to educational background, professional accomplishments, awards, and recognition. The letter of recommendation is considered as well and participation in the program must have jurisdictional/supervisory approval.

#### STEP 2

### Interview

The screening process may be conducted by a panel of representatives of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and The George Washington University Center for Public Leadership. Other senior government officials from around the region may also be involved as needed.

Results of the screening process and possible follow-up will determine final selection for participation in the program. The screening process is designed to focus on skills and abilities such as: problem-solving, judgment, organizational planning, teamwork/teambuilding, reasoning, and leadership. It may also be used in case additional information is needed to further determine applicant's qualification for the program.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### SCHEDULE AND FACILITY:

Classes are normally held once a month, Thursday through Saturday, as specified on the detailed schedule provided to participants at the beginning of the program. Currently, we use a blended learning platform, with mostly online learning. The Cohort schedule is 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Thursdays - Fridays and 9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m. on Saturdays. This accommodates the 20 hour per module training requirement. **Class dates are subject to change and will be finalized prior to program orientation.**

	Module	2025-2026 Schedule
1	Building a Learning Community & Challenges in Metro Management	Oct 23-25, 2025*
2	Leadership Principles and Practices	Nov 13-15, 2025
3	Intro to Projects and Authentic Leadership	Dec 18-20, 2025
4	Building Teams and Conflict Management	Jan 22-24, 2026*
5	Strategic Project Management	Feb 19-21, 2026
6	Employee Engagement and Strategic Human Resource Management	March 19-21, 2026
7	Project Working Session and Joint Session w/PEMM	April 09–11, 2026*
8	Leading Change and Project Sustainability	May 14-16, 2026
9	Executive Communications	June 25-27, 2026
10	Data-Informed Decision Making	July 23-25, 2026*
11	Budgeting & Finance Management and Procurement Policy & Practices	August 20-22, 2026
12	Leadership Values & Ethics	Sept 17-18, 2026**

*\*classes will be held partially in person*

### CONTACT INFORMATION:

For more information about this program, you may contact:



**Janet Ernst, CPM**

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## IRE TESTIMONIALS—COHORT I to XIX

**Suzanne Ludlow, COHORT I, City of Takoma Park**

“I was promoted in the City of Takoma Park.”

“I appreciated the high quality of the program which spurred me to really think about how I do my job. The IRE Program was valuable to me. I particularly liked getting to know talented people from other jurisdictions.”

**Michael Love – COHORT II, Montgomery County**

“I have been promoted in Montgomery County.”

“The COG IRE and REDP provided me with an opportunity to participate with a group of manager level peers from around the region in an intense learning environment. Working side by side with these other manager helped to create a long lasting bond and increased my awareness to the impacts of regional problems and how to solve them by bringing the right people to the table. This is truly an opportunity to learn three ways, once from an incredible group of subject matter experts who teach the modules, once from the vastly experienced and knowledgeable peers and finally once from the experience of working through and producing a valuable applied research project.”

**Pam Doran – COHORT II, City of Falls Church**

“I have been promoted in the City of Falls Church since completing the IRE Program.”

“Although the IRE was a great deal of work, it was also fun and gave me an opportunity to meet and gain the perspective of a diversity of expertise areas with professionals whom I might otherwise never had any contact.”

**Claire Kiley – COHORT II, Fairfax County**

“I have been promoted in Fairfax County.”

“The IRE Program has had a very positive impact on my work for Fairfax County. The training took me outside of my own experience and helped hone my skills as a manager. While the experience can be challenging in many way, it is more than worth it. Managers learn about the challenges facing colleagues in other jurisdictions and are able to bring new skills to their jobs. It is an extraordinary opportunity for any municipal manager.”

**Clarissa Byrd – COHORT III, District of Columbia**

“I have received two promotions since completing the IRE Program.”

“The IRE Program helped develop me as a better leader, a better person, and definitely sharpened my professional skills.”



## IRE TESTIMONIALS—COHORT I to XIX

**Melissa Smarr – COHORT VIII, Fairfax County**

“This program was such a wonderful experience.”

**Kelly Matthews, COHORT IX, Fairfax County**

“This program opens your eyes to the thinking of Regional Leadership. The program was excellent and I made life-long friends and acquired a wealth of information from the great instructors and my fellow classmates. I especially enjoyed learning the CAO’s journey in leadership.”

“The IRE/REDP was an excellent program.”

**Jacqueline Woody, COHORT IX, Prince George’s County**

“In general, I am more conscientious of leadership in the region. I felt that the IRE, gave me the tools to prepare me to be a better leader. The program was very insightful and I had excellent instructors and met wonderful colleagues.”

**John Naylor, COHORT X, Fairfax County**

“The IRE/REDP program was an excellent program. I highly recommend it!”

**Jason Grant, COHORT X, Prince William County**

“This program strengthened my desire to pursue public leadership.”

**Allison Mulligan – COHORT III, Fairfax County**

“I received two promotions since my participation in the IRE Program.”

“The IRE Program gave me essential knowledge, skills, and networking opportunities that directly affected my ability to move to a higher level in Fairfax County. My first promotion was for a job that was supervised by another former IRE Cohort member who I had continued meeting to discuss work.:

**Hadden C. Culp, COHORT III, Prince William County**

“I received a promotion while in the IRE Training Program. This is little doubt in my mind that the information I learned was directly applicable to the interview questions and situations I encountered during my promotional process.”

“I have gained a broader working knowledge of the regional issues. Some of the tools I was exposed to during the training have been added to our organization and working well. I appreciate the opportunity to work with such a diverse group of professionals from the region, who share common challenges, yet from a wide variety of job applications. It was a very beneficial and rewarding experience.”

**Chris Scales, COHORT IV, Fairfax County**

“I was promoted for Fairfax County after completion of the IRE Program.”

“Due to the IRE Program, I look at solutions and issues from a broader prospective. In addition, I have made a lot of contacts with people from other jurisdictions.”

**Traci Anderson, COHORT V, Montgomery County**

“I received a promotion after completion of the IRE Program.”

“I am proud to have participated in the IRE Program as it gave me an opportunity to evaluate my strengths and weaknesses, and make improvements in a supportive environment. Additionally, I met some of the best friends I ever had.”

## IRE TESTIMONIALS—COHORT I to XIX

**Luther Reynolds, COHORT VI, Montgomery County**

"The IRE Program has helped me to understand the importance, relevance, and specifics of my role in regionalism and working with my partners in public safety. The CPM certificate specific to this region is helping me in my efforts to support our agency as an executive staff member. As I move ahead in my career, it is a distinction that will help me be more effective as a leader."

"The COG IRE is an outstanding program which assists students in broadening their understanding and application of effective leadership skills and abilities. The program is all about real-life and as it assists with honing skills in a variety of areas. The program is practical and had immediate and longer term application in critical areas of knowledge that are required for executive leadership. I am pleased that I made the time and emotional investment in the program and highly recommend it for those interested in attending."

**Shenise Soto, COHORT XII, Fairfax County**

"The George Washington University and The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) are doing an outstanding job developing leaders who are serious about moving the Washington Metropolitan region forward. After completing the REDP 12-month vigorous curriculum, I believe that I am better prepared and more confident to lead people and tackle any project or policy challenge that comes my way."

**Patricia Durham, COHORT XII, Arlington County**

"Almost every month I brought back something from our training to the office."

**Tom Polera, COHORT XII, City of Falls Church**

"The Cohort program also provided useful learning tactics and methods for understanding how we as individuals lead and make decisions differently. "

**Heidi Braun, COHORT XII, Prince William County**

"Overall, I enjoyed my experience – it became very relevant towards the latter part of the class when I was reassigned to another position. I learned to shift my personal leadership style that made a positive change. I am a firm believer that positive leadership makes the difference between success and failure. "

# COG INSTITUTE *for* REGIONAL EXCELLENCE



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