

WOEM Membership Meeting

January 12, 2026

Meeting summary

Quick recap

The meeting began with organizational updates and an intro regarding the speaker, Heather Hollingsworth, from the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security. Heather provided comprehensive details about the Center's offerings, including various programs and application processes, while highlighting the transformation of leadership roles and the Center's collaborative approach across sectors. The discussion concluded with information about the Executive Leadership Program and Master's Program in Security Studies, including application requirements and the value of mentorship and networking opportunities.

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Next steps

- Heather: Send contact information for Christina Taneshek to Lori.
- Lori: Send out invite to the new Notion platform to all members after the meeting.
- Lori/Heather: Consider scheduling Heather to return for a session on personal branding.
- All interested in marketing committee: Contact Lindsey or Lori to express interest in joining the marketing committee.
- All interested in mentorship: Attend the February 9th mentoring meeting.

Summary

Organizational Updates and New Initiatives

Lori provided updates on the organization's progress, including filing articles of incorporation and receiving an employee identification number. She introduced a new Notion platform as a centralized resource for members and announced that a welcome letter for new members and an invitation to the platform would be sent out. Lori also mentioned that Lindsey is seeking volunteers for the marketing committee. Heather, the speaker for the session, was introduced, and it was noted that the meeting would be recorded.

Naval Center's Leadership Development Programs

Heather, the Strategic Communications Director at the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security, presented an overview of the Center's programs. She highlighted the transformation of leadership roles from predominantly male to more diverse representation, emphasizing the Center's focus on strategic and policy thinking rather than tactical operations. Heather discussed the Center's collaboration with over 2,000 agencies across various sectors, offering programs like the 6-month Emergence program, which helps emerging leaders develop and present change initiatives. She also mentioned the Center's location in Monterey, California, and its partnership with FEMA, which provides fully funded opportunities for eligible participants.

Program Application and Leadership Insights

Heather discussed the application process for a program, explaining that participants are selected based on their jurisdiction and knowledge to provide perspectives in the classroom. She mentioned that a letter of recommendation is required and that the private sector is also accepted. Heather clarified that the next deadline for a fall start in Monterey is May 1, and in-residence sessions are mandatory unless extraordinary circumstances arise. Dominique highlighted the importance of the program's end product, the change initiative, and shared an experience of a joint session with executive leaders, emphasizing the value of mentorship between generations.

Master's Program in Homeland Defense

Heather discussed the challenges and benefits of the 18-month Master's program in homeland defense and security, emphasizing its rigorous curriculum and networking opportunities. Lori shared her experience of using her thesis research to implement community resilience programs, while Clarissa highlighted the program's supportive environment and lasting professional connections. Heather also outlined the application

process for the Executive Leaders Program, noting its competitive nature and the option for participants to attend sessions in both Monterey and Potomac, Maryland.

Executive Leadership Program Overview

The meeting discussed the Executive Leadership Program (ELP), highlighting its focus on advanced reading, group work, and opportunities for participants to write for publications like Police Chief Magazine and Emergency Management Today. Dominique emphasized the program's value in providing a 30,000-foot view of issues, fostering networking, and encouraging lateral thinking across disciplines. Participants were encouraged to apply, with Heather noting that the application process involves reflecting on community challenges and cross-disciplinary collaboration. The discussion also covered the availability of resources such as the digital library, self-study courses, and access to theses, with Heather inviting participants to reach out for further assistance.

CHDS Program Mentorship Discussion

The meeting focused on the Naval Postgraduate School's CHDS programs, with Heather providing detailed information about the Master's Program in Security Studies, which requires only a bachelor's degree and offers three letters of recommendation from alumni. Heather emphasized that recommendation letters should highlight specific achievements and strategic policies implemented, rather than just general praise, and noted that 80% of their classroom participants are referred by alumni. The group discussed the upcoming February 9th meeting which will focus on mentorship, and Dominique agreed to share her contact information for further questions about the programs.