

## Leading Change and Service: Agile Practices in NSTP

Dr. Gilbert M. Eustaquio

Campus Director for NSTP

Isabela State University, Echague, Isabela

gilbert.m.eustaquio@isu.edu.ph



*Dr. Gilbert M. Eustaquio is a seasoned educator and administrator from San Leonardo, Aglipay, Quirino, born on March 10, 1968. He holds a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Mathematics from La Salette College, completed Juris Doctor studies at Cagayan Colleges Tuguegarao, earned a Master's in Business Management from La Salette University, and completed a Ph.D. in Institutional Development and Management at Isabela State University; he is also pursuing a Master of Laws and Letters. A faculty member at Isabela State University since 1994, Dr. Eustaquio has held multiple leadership roles, including Dean (2014–2015), Chair of BAPA (from 2008), Campus Coordinator (2015–2022), and currently Campus Director for NSTP (2024–present).*

Agile leaders demonstrate adaptability and dynamism by facilitating opportunities for team members to collaborate in response to rapidly changing citizen expectations and a more flexible work culture. In the current organizational setting, which is both fast-paced and complex, rapid adaptability is critical for overcoming barriers created by emerging challenges. As a result, leadership frameworks that utilize agile approaches are becoming increasingly relevant. Agile leadership empowers teams to self-manage, promotes shared responsibility, and encourages members to develop continuous improvement practices.

The characteristics of agile leadership are particularly applicable to programs such as the National Service Training Program (NSTP), which aim to increase civic engagement and community service and to develop leadership skills among student participants. Civic engagement has numerous advantages for quality of life—both physical and mental—and for developing strong relationships within families, among peers, and in the broader community (social capital). Studies show that civic engagement contributes to improved mental health by alleviating

social isolation. Additionally, higher rates of social connection have been linked to greater physical activity and overall health (Andrews & Aydin, 2020).

Due to changing social and educational trends within communities, NSTP leadership must be both adaptive and forward-thinking. Leaders' development of agile leadership skills and resources is vital to creating a sustainable service culture. Agile leadership enables NSTP leadership to effectively address community needs while maintaining the program's core values and integrity.

Agile leadership fosters a collaborative, innovative organizational environment that aligns all stakeholders with program objectives and facilitates a seamless transition during periods of change. As NSTP institutions begin to use agile leadership approaches on a larger scale, it is imperative that leaders understand how to leverage these methodologies to successfully navigate organizational transformation. This chapter explores how agile leadership has helped NSTP leadership deliver community services through effective change management.

The first step in developing effective change management strategies from an agile leadership perspective is to identify the main drivers of change, including shifting social demands, evolving educational priorities, and policy changes. Understanding the drivers of change helps leaders adapt the necessary strategies to ensure the program remains relevant and impactful. How to develop your organization's capacity to provide stakeholders with continuous opportunities to provide feedback on community engagement. Providing an open and inclusive culture within your organization creates an environment where team members and community partners can contribute their perspectives and feedback, thereby encouraging innovation, shared ownership, and collective success.

In addition, implementing small, incremental, manageable changes rather than large-scale transformations will minimize resistance to change and allow teams to adapt more seamlessly. Selected case studies of NSTP initiatives from 2024-2026 will provide examples of the successful application of agile leadership methodologies. For example, both students and community stakeholders collaborated to revise the NSTP curriculum, leading to streamlined implementation, greater inclusivity, and greater relevance of community-based initiatives.

By sharing their lived experiences and the successful implementation of best practices, agile leaders serve as role models for commitment to continuous improvement, adaptability, and meaningful service to the community through the NSTP framework.

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