

Building Strong Public Safety Leaders Through Soft Skills Training

Opportunities Available Through DHSES



What are Soft Skills?

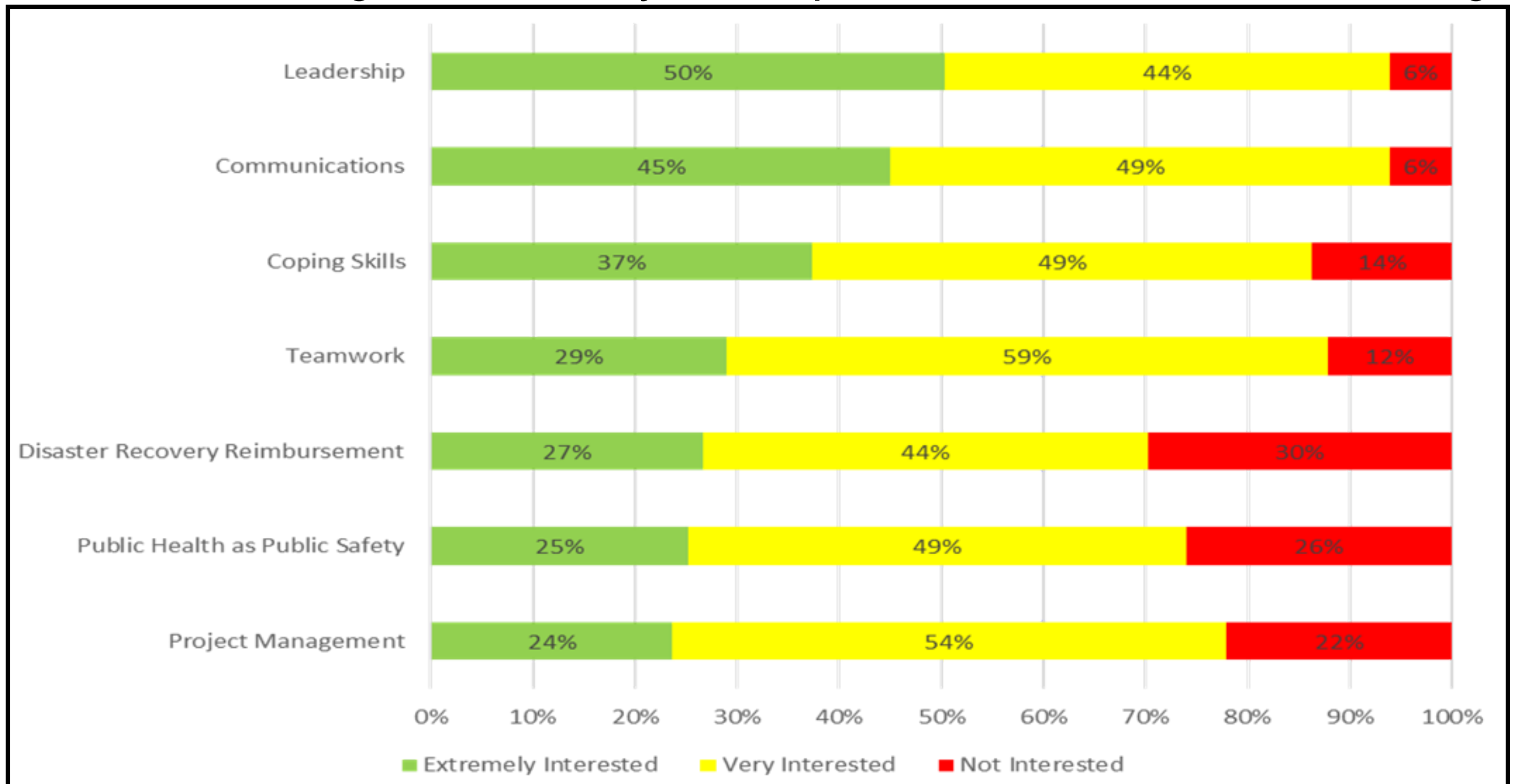
Oxford Languages defines soft skills as, “*Personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people.*”¹ While this definition is basic, soft skills encompass a wide variety of critical elements, including communications, project management, teamwork, leadership, empathy, critical thinking, adaptability, creativity, and persuasion.²

Why are Soft Skills Important?

New York State faces an array of evolving threats and hazards, ranging from extreme weather to cyber attacks to racially motivated violent extremism.³ Given this reality, it is critical that officials have training that ensures they can adapt and effectively “**meet the moment**” when a crisis impacts their jurisdiction. Accordingly, DHSES is committed to providing public safety professionals across the state with contemporary training on soft skills.

Stakeholders from across New York State recognize this need as well. In late 2022, DHSES issued the inaugural **DHSES Training Feedback Survey** to garner feedback on existing Division training programs and gain insight on future training priorities. DHSES received 160 total responses, with submissions representing every county in the state. A key finding from this survey was that public safety officials were extremely interested in receiving dedicated training on a variety of soft skills:

2022 DHSES Training Feedback Survey: % of Respondents Interested in Soft Skills Training



In 2023, DHSES provided training to **nearly 60,000** public safety professionals across the state. Most of this training focused on technical skills, ranging from advanced training for fire service investigators to active shooter response for law enforcement. However, based on the results of the survey, DHSES worked to focus additional attention and resources on critical soft skills training.

This concerted effort is marked by the creation of a new **Soft Skills Training Program for Public Safety Professionals** by DHSES, in conjunction with the University at Albany. The purpose of this training is to provide officials with training on communications, project management, teamwork, and leadership that will have a positive impact on their job performance, particularly during major events. This training program, which will be piloted this year, includes virtual modules on each of the four topic areas outlined above, in addition to a one-day Capstone Exercise to test participant capabilities.



Soft Skills Training Opportunities Available Through DHSES

In addition to the new Soft Skills Training Program (outlined above), DHSES also supports a series of existing training courses that focus on the development and enhancement of soft skills:

- **Communicating When It Counts:** This course is designed for public safety professionals to learn about the stages of a crisis and the rules for communicating in any crisis situation, whether it be an incident scene, during or after a terrorist act, and/or a criminal incident involving a staff member. This course is 40 hours and is coordinated by the SPTC.
- **Crisis Leadership and Decision-Making (MGT-340):** This seminar uses a case study to frame discussions on ways to overcome leadership challenges in planning and responding to a large incident. This seminar is 4 hours and is provided by TEEEX and coordinated through OEM.
- **Critical Decision Making for Complex Coordinated Attacks (PER-335):** This course addresses the vulnerability of any community to a public safety situation. It enhances the response capabilities of participants by providing them with the knowledge and tools to enable effective response. This course is 16 hours and is provided by the National Center for Biomedical Research and Training (NCBRT) and coordinated through OEM.
- **EOC Leaders Skillset:** This course enables EOC leaders to understand the importance of multiple EOC positions and responsibilities, gathering and analyzing data, maintaining continuity of the organization, and delivering information to the appropriate agencies and individuals, as well as the confidence in making decisions to protect life and property. This course is 24 hours and is coordinated through OEM.
- **Fire Officer Series, 1-4:** OFPC offers a series of 4 Fire Officer training courses for leaders in the fire service that address the requirements outlined in NFPA 1021.

- **Leadership, Accountability, Courage, and Knowledge (LACK):** This program is designed to reach fire officers, training officers, and chief officers and provide the opportunity to learn how Leadership, Accountability, Culture and Knowledge can guide them toward effective organizational management. This program, through the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, is 4 hours long and supported by OFPC. For more details, click [here](#).
- **Leadership so Everyone Goes Home (LEGH):** This program is specifically designed for the more senior level fire officers who have had opportunities to be command officers at a wide variety of emergency incidents, including fires and hazardous materials responses. This program, through the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, is 4 hours long and supported by OFPC. For more details, click [here](#).
- **Managing Chaos Workshop:** This executive workshop serves as a forum for sharing information, ideas, and best practices regarding crisis leadership, crisis decision-making, and crisis communications. It includes both academic and practical insights based on major crisis events. This workshop is 6 hours and is coordinated by the SPTC, in conjunction with the DHSES Policy and Research Unit.
- **Managing Staff Stress and Promoting Workforce Resilience:** This training workshop teaches participants to identify and understand operational and traumatic stress and promote workforce resilience through Psychological First Aid and related strategies. This workshop is 4 hours and is coordinated by the SPTC, in conjunction with the DHSES Policy and Research Unit.
- **Tactical Team Leadership:** This course is designed to enhance the capabilities of New York State’s tactical response teams. It combines New York State and national expertise and best practices to inform structured, consistent, and effective tactical operations. This course is 24 hours and is coordinated by the SPTC.



Additional Resources

For more information on the soft skills training opportunities outlined above (including course availability, applicable prerequisites, and current offerings), contact:

- **OEM:** OEM.Training@dhses.ny.gov
- **OFPC:** Fire@dhses.ny.gov
- **SPTC:** SPTC.Info@dhses.ny.gov

Many of DHSES’ more technical training courses include elements of soft skills throughout. To view DHSES’ complete Training Catalog, visit:

<https://www.dhses.ny.gov/dhses-training>

Register to Take Soft Skills Training in 2024!

Sign-up at: <https://lmsportal-dhses.ny.gov/acadisviewer/login.aspx>

¹ Oxford Languages Dictionary. [Link](#).

² Herrity, Jennifer. “What Are Soft Skills? (Definition, Examples and Resume Tips).” Indeed, July 5, 2023. [Link](#).

³ “New York State Homeland Security Strategy, 2022-2025.” [Link](#).