OUR CISA CULTURE

CYBERSECURITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY AGENCY
WE ARE
TEAM CISA

OUR TEAM
We are the Nation's Cyber & Infrastructure Security Agency: One Team, One Fight, One CISA.

OUR MISSION
We lead the National effort to understand, manage, and reduce risk to our cyber and physical infrastructure.

OUR VISION
Secure and resilient infrastructure for the American people.
Our **CORE VALUES** represent the fundamental tenets of our organization that guide all of our actions:

- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Service
- Accountability

Our **CORE PRINCIPLES** represent the ideal behaviors that will make us individually and collectively successful. They are rooted in our Mission & our Vision, emanate from our Core Values, and define our Culture: What we aim to cultivate in our organization, what we value, and what we aspire to be.

In addition to our Core Values, which are threaded throughout these Principles, the overarching themes include trust, teamwork, empathy, imagination, inclusion, empowerment, ownership, and the power of resilience, embodied in the words of poet Alfred Lord Tennyson:

**“strong in will to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.”**

**LIVING OUR CORE VALUES EVERY DAY AND ADOPTING OUR CORE PRINCIPLES WITH A GROWTH MINDSET** are the pathways to our success as One CISA, and thus the success of our Nation.

The Core Principles highlighted here are meant to be read and re-read to continually remind us of our expectations for each other and our aspirations for our team.
As a component of DHS, we embrace the Core Values of our Department:

**INTEGRITY:** Each of us serves something far greater than ourselves. We will faithfully execute the duties and responsibilities entrusted to us, and we will maintain the highest ethical and professional standards.

**VIGILANCE:** We will relentlessly identify & deter threats that pose a danger to the American people. We will be constantly on guard against threats, hazards, or dangers that threaten our values and our way of life.

**RESPECT:** We will value highly the relationships we build with our teammates, our customers, and our partners. We will honor the concepts such as liberty and democracy, for which America stands.

As the Nation’s cyber and infrastructure agency, we are designed to be something special and different, not another government bureaucracy, but something much more akin to a public/private collaborative. Our core values reflect this design and underpin everything we do at CISA:

**COLLABORATION:** Strong and vibrant partnerships are critical to everything we do; we will approach every engagement as an opportunity to build trust with our teammates, our partners, and our customers.

**INNOVATION:** We face threats at machine speed and adversaries unbound by bureaucracy; we must move with creativity and agility at the speed of ideas to stay ahead of threats and to our Nation and our way of life, and be grounded in the strength of our resilience.

**SERVICE:** We are defined by our dedication to selflessly serving the American people; more than a mission, our commitment is a calling to protect and defend the infrastructure Americans rely on every hour of the day.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** We will only succeed if every one of us takes active ownership of our mission, our words and our actions. We will model the behavior we want to see in others; we will hold ourselves and our teammates responsible for our actions; we will empower our workforce through trust, transparency, and radical honesty.
OUR CORE PRINCIPLES

• PEOPLE FIRST
• DO THE RIGHT THING. ALWAYS.
• LEAD WITH EMPATHY
• SEEK & PROVIDE HONEST FEEDBACK
• COMMUNICATE TRANSPARENTLY & EFFECTIVELY
• FOSTER BELONGING, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, & EQUALITY
• IMAGINE, ANTICIPATE, & INNOVATE TO WIN
• MAKE IT COUNT
• BUILD & CULTIVATE YOUR NETWORK
• PLAY CHESS
• STAND IN THE ARENA
• COMMIT TO A LIFETIME OF LEARNING
NO ASSET is more important to this organization than our PEOPLE. Continuing to attract and retain world-class talent is foundational to the success of our mission.

This requires creating an environment of PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY, where people can be their authentic self; where they feel cared for, supported, empowered, and always treated with dignity and respect; where they feel a sense of ownership for mission; and where they welcome accountability and responsibility for their actions.

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST may often mean putting the interests of our customers, partners, and team before our own. When we focus on maximizing our individual interest, others realize we can’t be counted on because we’re too focused on ourselves.

SELFLESSNESS - seeking what’s best for others rather than what’s best for ourselves - is about realizing that the only way to create our own success is to “flip the telescope around:” broaden our focus and drive results for everyone through collaboration, empowerment, and teamwork.

The goal is not about becoming a star – it’s about building a constellation.

THIS FOCUS ON PEOPLE FIRST is even more important to those who have supervisory responsibilities; we should always remember that while our title may make us a manager, our people make us a leader. By putting our People First - obsessing about their growth, development & well-being and empowering them - we will ensure our own success and the success of our team.
OUR MISSION is to lead the National effort to understand, manage and reduce risk to the cyber and physical infrastructure Americans rely on every hour of every day. In certain cases, what we do or fail to do may mean the difference between life or death.

THAT IS A SACRED RESPONSIBILITY. A responsibility rooted in Integrity, Honor, Moral Courage, Trust, Always doing the right thing. Always choosing the harder right over the easier wrong. Always taking accountability for your actions and your words.

TREAT EVERY DAY AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD TRUST AMONG OUR TEAMMATES AND OUR PARTNERS, to exercise sound judgment, to make & inform the best decisions with honesty and transparency. Trust is the bedrock of any world-class team, but it can be easily destroyed by a lie or a failure to take responsibility for our words or our actions.

OUR CHARACTER is defined in part by what we do and how we act when we think no one else is watching us. In all things, we should remember that CHARACTER IS DESTINY.

Every interaction within and outside of CISA, from a simple internal email to a national strategy, reflects who we are and should be in the best interest of our team, our partners, and the American people.

SET YOUR MORAL COMPASS TO TRUE NORTH. Make your word your bond and your reputation one of unfailing integrity; your success and our team’s success - and the Nation’s success - depends on it.
Brene Brown defines a leader as someone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes and has the courage to develop that potential. In this sense, whether we manage teams or projects or just ourselves, WE CAN ALL BE LEADERS.

MAKE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND AUTHENTICITY YOUR SUPERPOWERS. To be an empowering leader, lead by the “PLATINUM RULE: TREAT OTHERS AS THEY WOULD LIKE TO BE TREATED” ... which means really getting to know one another.

IMAGINE YOURSELF IN THE SHOES OF YOUR TEAMMATES AND ALWAYS TREAT THEM WITH RESPECT AND KINDNESS. Listen intently to others, being mindful and present and aware of how your words and actions may impact them. Show patience and kindness. Always assume noble intent; give your colleagues the benefit of the doubt. Remember that relentless positivity is a force multiplier and can be contagious.

BE THE TEAMMATE YOU WANT TO WORK WITH, the one that people seek out for advice and inspiration: someone who embodies confidence based on experience and knowledge, but who is always open to new and alternate ideas. Handle conflict with humor and grace. Talk with, not over, at, or to. Be calm and unflappable in the face of stress or crisis; remember that others are always watching you to see the example you set, no matter your role or position.

CULTIVATE THE TALENTS OF EVERYONE AROUND YOU by demonstrating genuine interest in our colleagues’ lives, career goals, strengths, and development areas.
None of us can advance in our careers without the candid developmental feedback that makes us more effective. Achieving success requires the self-awareness and the humility to know yourself and continuously seek self-improvement, regardless of position, tenure, or seniority.

TREAT FEEDBACK AS A GIFT. Aggressively seek it out and strive every day to improve. Resist the temptation to be defensive or to make excuses. Take ownership and accountability for your actions. Instead of treating constructive or critical feedback as a mistake or failure, ask yourself, “What can I learn from this?” and strive every day to grow and improve.

GIVE FEEDBACK AUTHENTICALLY, THOUGHTFULLY, AND CONSTRUCTIVELY.

Keep in mind that as you advance in your career, the more responsibility you have, the more you depend on others to be successful. TO BE A GREAT LEADER, YOU NEED TO BE A GREAT COACH, willing to roll up your sleeves and get in the arena with your teammates. Great coaches make other people successful.

BEING A GREAT LEADER & A GREAT COACH requires that we create an environment of psychological safety. Create a safe space to provide constructive and critical feedback and tell each other what we did well or what we could have done better on every project, briefing, or engagement.

We can make each other better every single day, and we owe it to each other to do so.
Our organization operates in a matrixed structure, with teams across the country. This necessitates constant communications to ensure we’re on the same page, building what Retired General Stanley McChrystal calls “shared consciousness”: the ability to think and act as one synergistic, cohesive entity.

This requires us to communicate continuously with honesty and integrity, to break down silos and create connectivity within and across our teams through transparency, and to trust each other with information and behave in a manner worthy of that trust. Listen actively. There’s a good reason why we have two ears and one mouth. You don’t need to be the loudest voice in the room to make the greatest impact or the most important contribution.

Say not only what you are against, but what you are for. Never condemn, gossip, or complain. If you disagree with something, say so, but always be constructive and respectful. Strive to be thoughtful, positive, and authentic—your teammates will gravitate to your presence, and your willingness to be present for them.

Just as importantly as how we communicate across our team, we must communicate with purpose and clarity to our partners, so they understand not just our intent, but our vision. Identify your audience and communicate with them in terms and concepts that will resonate.

Presentation matters. Attention to detail matters. Treat every communication with a partner as an opportunity to tell our compelling story as CISA. Remember that people don’t often remember what you said, but how you made them feel. Leave your audience feeling good about you and our team.
Champion an environment where individual & cultural differences are a defining strength; where ALL TEAMMATES FEEL NOT JUST SAFE & WELCOME BUT TRULY CELEBRATED & CHERISHED FOR WHO WE ARE.

Seek to understand, recognize, and appreciate our diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and unique challenges. Embrace open dialog on how important it is to foster equality for all with a focus on taking action to produce that ideal. Strive to be the change you want to see in the world. Fight injustice and bias wherever you see them; remember the words of Dr. King:

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Recognize that unless you have personally lived the experience of being a minority whether by race, ethnicity, neurodiversity, gender identity, sexual orientation, or ability, it may be hard to imagine the everyday challenge of how it feels to be excluded, misunderstood, or overlooked by virtue of simply being oneself. Foster empathy to create awareness and understanding.

Acknowledge that we all have unconscious and conscious biases from our upbringing and experiences that impact our ability to promote diversity and equality. WHEN WE REALIZE AND OPPOSE THOSE BIASES, WE HELP FOSTER A CULTURE OF INCLUSION. Pay it forward - you arrived here with the help of many others. Work to create an equal and just environment. Attract, develop & retain talent reflecting the full diversity of society. Invest extra time mentoring and coaching those with different backgrounds than yours.

Celebrate our differences and seek diverse opinions to promote a CISA CULTURE OF BELONGING, which will lead to superior outcomes for ourselves and our partners.
Hockey legend Wayne Gretzky famously said:

“A good hockey player plays where the puck is.
A great hockey player plays where the puck is going to be.”

Being able to skate “ahead of the puck” is particularly critical in our work, where understanding and analysis of the operational environment will enable us to proactively anticipate disruptions to our critical infrastructure and effectively reduce risk.

Hone your imagination to see where the puck is headed, use it to prepare for the most probable as well as the most disruptive, imagination is the magic that fuels our ability to solve our most complex problems, that drives our spirit of innovation, that generates the big ideas. Our ability to imagine the best & and the worst of what is possible will make the difference in ensuring the nation is prepared to respond to the full range of complex threats to our infrastructure, from cyber-attacks to weather events to terrorism to pandemics.

Develop and exercise against a range of scenarios to ensure preparedness and response and to build resilience. Focus on opportunities to improve our response - and share them. Given the stakes of our mission, every game could be a playoff. We will still need to win faceoffs, fight for loose pucks, and chase the puck when we get behind it.

Having the imagination to determine where the puck is going and skating ahead of it is how we will consistently deliver security and resilience for the Nation.
Iikigai is a concept that originated in Japan that effectively defines our life’s worth, the reason we get out of bed in the morning. It’s the intersection of four simple precepts:

- **DO WHAT YOU LOVE.**
- **DO WHAT YOU’RE GOOD AT.**
- **DO WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS.**
- **DO WHAT YOU CAN BE REWARDED FOR.**

While most of us want to work to live, not live to work - the truth is that we spend most of our adult lives working, so it’s truly important to **LOVE WHAT YOU DO, TO LIKE WHO YOU DO IT WITH, TO FEEL THAT YOU ARE VALUED, AND TO KNOW THAT YOU’RE MAKING AN IMPACT** - whether it involves excelling at your job, helping a teammate, or volunteering your time or resources to give back to your community.

It’s up to each of us to create this **CULTURE OF IMPACT** - where we embrace our mission and take ownership for our actions and behaviors to effect positive change. Where we take the initiative to recognize problems and work to solve them. Where we strive every day to make a difference, as opposed to complaining that things are not our job or beyond our control. Where we take the time to show gratitude for work well done, to say “Thank you.”

**MAKING IT COUNT ALSO MEANS ENSURING YOU’VE GOT BALANCE IN YOUR LIFE** - that you’re able to spend time with friends and family to rest, recharge, and reorient - intellectually, physically, and emotionally. Taking vacation is as important as working. Without it, we burn out, depriving us of our career and our colleagues of our contributions. Often, we think that taking our foot off the gas detracts from the mission or from our colleagues. On the contrary, ensuring that you maintain balance in your life is key to attaining your ikigai, that ideal combination of mutually re-enforcing career and personal success.
Roman philosopher Cicero spoke of the notion of human mutual interdependence, that all people are woven together as part of a larger whole. There is no more important currency in our team than personal relationships. CISA will do nothing by itself. **COLLABORATION IS AT THE VERY CORE OF OUR DNA. CONSIDER EVERY ENGAGEMENT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD TRUST AND STRENGTHEN A PARTNERSHIP.** Treat people’s time as a gift; it is the one thing none of us can ever get back. If you squander it by coming to a discussion unprepared, you may not get a second chance. Always ask what you can do to help others. Strive to be the “go-to” team for solving tough problems; that’s the heart of what we do in CISA.

**DEVELOPING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS** is inextricably linked to our collective success - partnership across the federal government, with industry, with academia, and with our state, local, tribal and territorial colleagues. **AND partnership across our various teams** - we must continue to break down silos to be the cyber and infrastructure security agency the nation deserves - One CISA.

**IT’S EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO BUILD BONDS** across our own team through morale building activities and taking time to get to know each other as people and building team spirit and camaraderie, to enjoy each other’s company, to learn from each other. All of this will make our journey together more enjoyable, more fun, and more impactful. **REMEMBER THAT AT THE END OF THE DAY, LIFE IS A CONTACT SPORT...** the fates of our careers and our teams hinge on the quality of our relationships.

BUILD & CULTIVATE YOUR NETWORK
We must confront the two fundamental realities of the 21st century: CHANGE AND COMPLEXITY. Our ability to be agile & adaptive in this increasingly complex world will be critical to our ultimate success as a team.

**BE STRATEGIC IN HOW YOU THINK AND WHAT YOU DO, EVERY DAY.** Act boldly with intention and purpose, take initiative in all things. Always keep the long game top of mind, even when inevitably pulled into the urgent or tactical. Envision the board and play several steps ahead. Work smart to make the best use of your time. Anyone can work long hours, but long hours don’t necessarily equate to quality work. If we overcommit ourselves to meetings and taskings, we can get easily distracted, shifting back and forth between multiple priorities.

Being strategic is about having a clear understanding of priorities and seeking clarity from your leadership on what’s important if you are trying to juggle too many competing tasks. Leaders have a responsibility to ensure that their teams understand priorities and can effectively allocate time and resources, keeping in mind that if EVERYTHING IS A PRIORITY, THEN NOTHING IS.

Each of us must understand what is important to achieve on any given day, have a plan to accomplish those activities, and apply the necessary creative and critical thinking skills to ensure we can always deliver a high-quality product.

Solutions to problems will be found at the cross-section of multiple disciplines. Give yourself the time to find those cross-sections and make those connections. We will have to be agile thinkers, to constantly adapt, to play the long game.
In his famed “Citizenship in a Republic” speech, Teddy Roosevelt said:

“It is not the critic who counts. The credit belongs to the person who is actually in the arena...who spends themselves in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if they fail, at least they fail while daring greatly.”

ANY WORTHY CAUSE IS WORTH DOING WELL AND TAKES EFFORT...in all things, personal or professional. Embrace and take ownership of your mission. Know it, understand it, pursue it relentlessly. This sometimes means taking risks, making tough calls, trying something new, taking a leap of faith, doing something scary or uncomfortable. And SOMETIMES IT MEANS FAILING. AND THAT IS OK. If we go through our lives constantly worried that we might fail at something, we’ll very likely not live up to our full potential. This doesn’t mean we should take uncalculated risks, make poor decisions, or repeatedly make the same mistakes. It does mean that we shouldn’t fear the prospect of failure, allowing that fear to paralyze us. We should recognize that mistakes are inevitable. It does mean that we shouldn’t fear the prospect of failure, allowing that fear to paralyze us.

What sets us apart is how we respond to them: TAKE OWNERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR YOUR MISTAKES AND VIEW THEM AS LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES, A CHANCE TO GROW, LEARN, AND CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE. In many ways, recognizing and accounting for failure is at the very core of our mission - why we must plan for it, prepare for it, know how to respond to it and recover from it...and again, perhaps most importantly, learn from it...together.
The artist Pablo Picasso once said, “It took me ... a lifetime to paint like a child.” He didn’t say this because he happily learned how to grasp crayons in his golden years, but because it is at that point in our lifetime when we are most open to new ideas, most engaged with the stimuli around us and most willing to take leaps of faith.

LEARNING - the continuous examination of what we’ve done well and areas where we can improve - is a key element of our team’s mission and a skill foundational to our success. Don’t wait until you’re old to embrace it. Just as we must be continuous learners at work, we should be receptive to continuous learning throughout our lifetime.

Commit to learning one new thing every day. BE CURIOUS. Ask questions. Challenge yourself and seek out new, or revisit old, learning opportunities.

READ. Whether it’s history, fantasy, science fiction, romance, poetry, technology; reading will make you a smarter, more empathetic, more aware human being. And if you’re not a reader, seek out other ways to learn. In today’s world there are countless resources for creative learning and self-improvement.

COMMIT TO A LIFETIME OF LEARNING AND EACH DAY YOU WILL BENEFIT, BECOME BETTER AT YOUR JOB, BUILD A STRONGER RAPPORT BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR TEAMMATES, AND HELP YOU AND YOUR TEAMMATES ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS. Learning is also contagious and will encourage others to similarly focus their energy making us all better along the way.