

# Systems Thinking in Practice:

## Tools for Executive Decision Making

Governor's Center  
LBJ School of Public Affairs  
The University of Texas at Austin

January 20-21, 2016

The Lake Austin Center

For more information or to register for this class,  
please log onto our website  
<http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/gcmd>

### Complex Organizational Problems

Issues facing corporate, government and not for profit organizations and institutions of higher education are extremely complex, and yet we are often surprised when solutions and decisions for these issues fail to “solve” the problem. Indeed, we all know of cases where the solution actually made the problem worse! Standard problem-solving/decision-making models are useful for addressing certain types of issues, but are often inadequate, by themselves, for effectively addressing more complex issues.

This two-day workshop is designed for managers and leaders who wish to use the tools and processes of systems thinking to enhance their own thinking and to better understand, assess and address complex organizational problems.

### Learning Outcomes

*By the end of this course, participants should be able to:*

- Understand the basic principles of systems thinking
- Apply these principles in better understanding organizational issues and problems
- Diagram moderately complex organizational issues to better understand behaviors and what drives them
- Follow a step by step process for applying systems tools in organizational problem solving
- Understand how systems tools can be employed in managing organizational change and strategic planning

### Real-World Applicability

To provide immediate application of the principles learned, in class exercises will involve participants using systems thinking tools to analyze organizational issues each will bring to class. Each participant should identify an issue with which they are involved that meets the following criteria: it is a current issue that is strategic in nature, efforts to address the issue have not been completely successful, and you have some influence over/responsibility for solutions considered.

### What Past Participants Say About this Course:

“Almost everyone here in the SEA group has commented on how amazing it was that, after only a two-minute overview Dr. Bales could see relationships and opportunities in situations that we have been struggling with for months (if not years)!”

“Dr. Bales is an effective trainer - his pragmatic approach to identifying problems makes this the most useful training class I have had in some time.”

“Taking this course as a group from the same work unit was very productive for me and hopefully for each member of the team.”

### About the Instructor

Barry V. Bales, Ph.D., is assistant dean for professional development at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, the University of Texas at Austin where he directs seminars on leadership, executive development and other areas of professional development for over 4,000 government officials each year. Dr. Bales is a frequent seminar/conference speaker in the areas of leadership, systems thinking, strategic planning, and executive development. A partial list of clients include: Iowa's Leadership Academy for Cabinet Officials, Government Technology Conference, LSU Executive Program, Tennessee Government Executive Institute, and the Senior Seminar at the U.S. State Department's Foreign Service Institute. Internationally he has taught/consulted officials in Latvia, People's Republic of China, India, South Africa, Australia, Brazil, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

