

## Occupational Health & Safety

Statistics regarding in-clinic and in-the-field incidents related to the health and safety of veterinarians, practice staff, and clients and producers are staggering.

- Three deaths per year occur in the veterinary profession<sup>1</sup>
- 50-67% of veterinarians and 98% of vet techs experience an animal related injury in their careers.<sup>2</sup>

## Social Ecological Model

The social ecological model theorizes that a person's safety decisions are based on different stimuli in their life (individual, organizational, and community relationships, public policy).

Veterinarians' actions may have large impacts on how others perceive and manage safety issues.

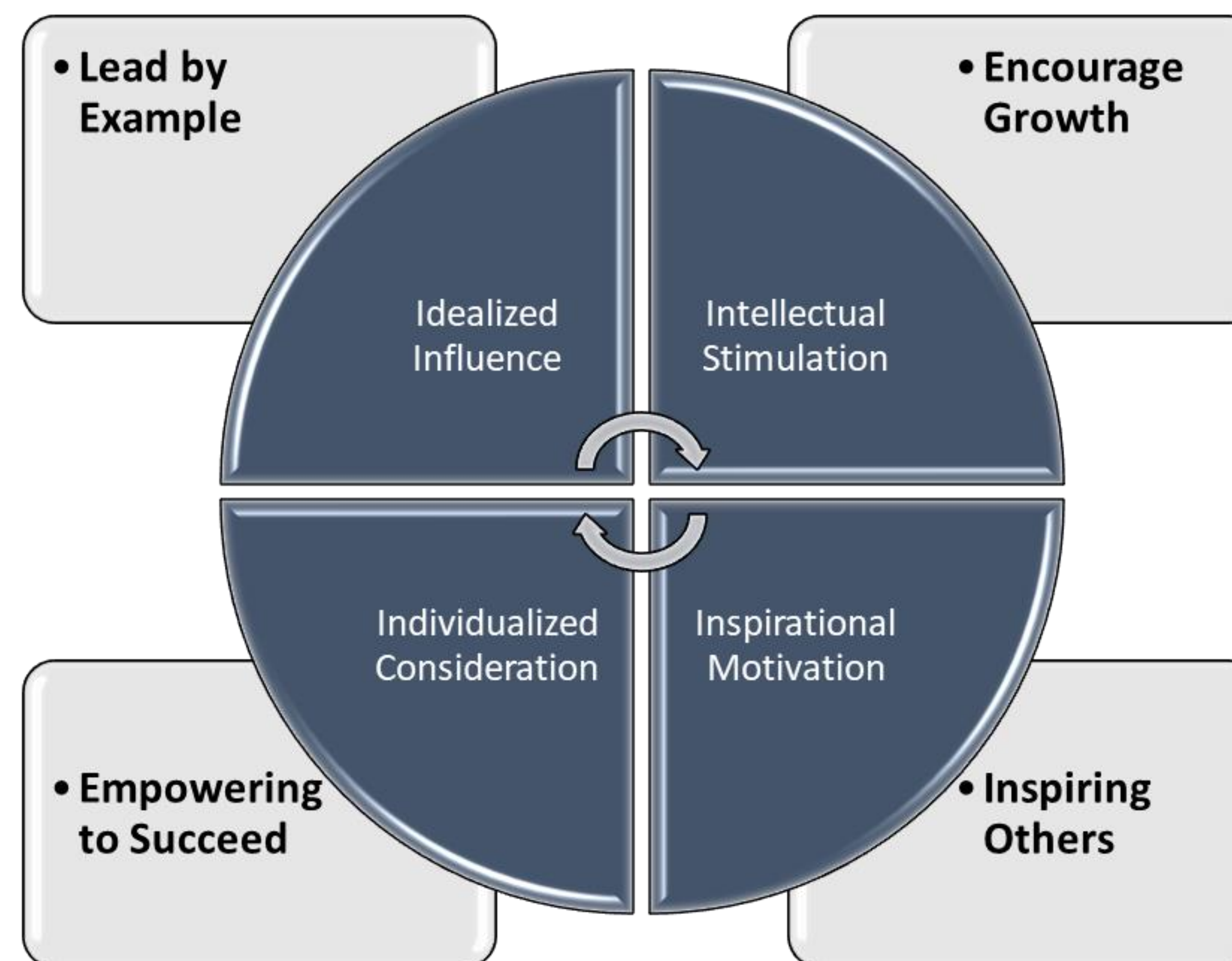
The model focuses on empowering individuals to change how they think about safety issues. It is critical to address safety culture within veterinary clinics as well as between veterinarians.

The Clinical Safety Culture can be defined as the clinic's attitudes about safety and how safety issues are managed. Establishing a positive safety culture is an effective way to decrease safety incidents.

## Transformational Safety Culture Examples

- Improved communication between technicians and management about radiation safety and awareness
- Veterinarians illustrating proper restraint techniques and encouraging technicians to use them as well

- Head technicians wearing masks and safety glasses when performing dental prophylaxis



Adapted from *Four Pillars of Transformational Leadership: The Ultimate Guide*, <https://arielle.com.au/transformational-leadership/>

## Methods

A training course was developed for veterinarians, focused on establishing and maintaining a positive safety culture in the clinic. The main goal of the training was to train veterinarians on how to become safety culture leaders in their communities.

Specific case scenarios will be used to drive home how to analyze safety culture and how to correct any deficiencies in clinics.

## Assessment

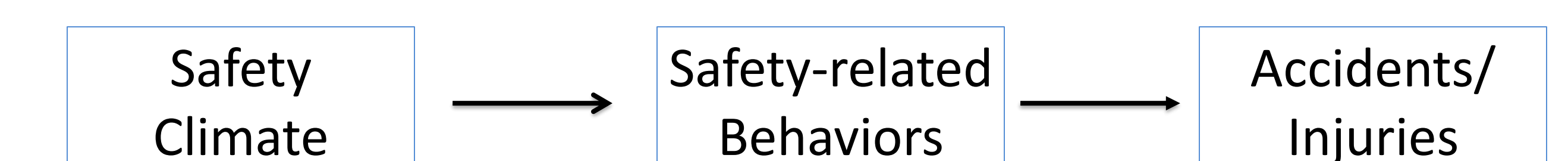
Prior to each training, a workshop survey was conducted and will be compared using a follow-up survey to determine the effectiveness of the training program.

The first training course consisted of 10 participants at the Mountainlands Utah Veterinary Summit. The average age of respondents was 47.8. 67% indicated that they work primarily with paid individuals within the workplace and 8 participants agreed that their workplace had a positive safety climate, while one respondent disagreed.

## Conclusion

A safety workbook was also developed to increase participation during the trainings and assist in the application of safety culture methodologies.

By empowering veterinarians to become example leaders within their communities, the rate of occupational injury and illness within clinics and farming communities can be decreased significantly. Obtaining evidence-based results from the current project will allow program extension into more communities to continue to improve safety habits and attitudes.



Adapted from "Safety Climate: Leading or lagging indicator of safety outcomes?" by S.C. Payne et. al. *Journal of Loss Prevention in the Process Industries* (2009)

## Veterinarian to Producer Commitment

Veterinarians strive to help livestock producers maintain and improve their herds and flocks. Their efforts could actively create safe farming conditions for producers by becoming example leaders in a transformational safety culture.

## References

1. American Veterinary Medical Association. (2018, October 10). *Hurt at work: Injuries common in clinics, often from animals, and usually preventable*. <https://www.avma.org/javma-news/2018-11-01/hurtwork#:~:text=Citing%20OSHA%20data%2C%20Dr.,the%20average%20for%20all%20professions.>
2. Fowler, H. N., Holzbauer, S. M., Smith, K. E., & Scheftel, J. M. (2016). Survey of occupational hazards in Minnesota veterinary practices in 2012. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 248(2). <https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.248.2.207>