



Cargill, Incorporated

Wayzata, Minnesota



Eric D. Ahlness is the North American Lead for Diversity and Business Impact for Cargill since February 2014. Eric leads the effort to create an inclusive environment that raises engagement and increases the diversity of business units and staff functions within the corporation. Since then he has been named a Diversity Champion energizing the corporate inclusion effort and sponsoring the emerging veteran/military support network.

Eric is an accomplished public speaker, presenting at conferences and as part of panels on veteran employment issues and opportunities, inclusion and diversity topics, and leadership. He is a frequent speaker to groups on Memorial and Veteran Day programs

Eric Ahlness grew up in Windom, MN. He graduated from Mankato State University in 1986 with Bachelor degrees in Geography and History, and was commissioned in the US Army as a Second Lieutenant and Distinguished Military Graduate. Eric completed graduate school in 1988, earning a Master's degree in Political Science. As a military officer, he graduated from both Military Intelligence School and Infantry Officer School. In 2009, Eric earned a Master's degree in Strategic Studies from the US Army War College, and is a Humphrey Institute for Public Policy Fellow with the University of Minnesota.

Eric Ahlness served 28 years in the military and as an infantry and intelligence officer. He served as an infantry company commander of a troop, and battalion commander of the Officer Candidate School headquartered at Camp Ripley, Minnesota. He served as an Intelligence Officer at both infantry battalion and brigade levels. He deployed to Bosnia in 2003-2004 as the Information Operations Officer for Stabilization Force 14 (SFOR). As a colonel, Eric served as the Government Relations Officer for 6 years followed by a deployment to Afghanistan from October 2011 to September 2012 where he commanded a 58-member Minnesota Agribusiness Development Team. His final assignment was to launch a Diversity and Inclusion effort on behalf of the National Guard.

His military awards include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, five Meritorious Service Medals, two NATO Medals, and the Combat Action Badge. He has been inducted into the National Infantry Association's Order of St. Maurice, and awarded a regional Emmy for his work in a PBS documentary, "Bridging War and Hope".

Eric and his wife, Lori, reside in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, and have a daughter attending the University of Washington's Political Science doctoral program.

ERIC D. AHLNESS

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EXECUTIVE LEADER

Focused manager committed to organizational excellence. Proven track record of exceeding standards and expectations through measurable results-oriented leadership. Keen ability to proactively analyze problems, build consensus, and achieve solutions through proven and insightful strategies. Exceptional breadth of experience in human relations and management services.

- Proven performance in complex environments
- Effective and efficient leader and speaker
- Accomplished meeting manager
- Versed in federal laws and regulatory process
- Advanced problem solving experience
- Focused and tenacious
- Exceptional strategic communicator
- Positive, energetic, and decisive

MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE

North America Diversity and Business Impact Lead - Cargill **Feb 2014 to Present**

Lead the effort to institute an inclusive environment that raises engagement and increases the diversity of business units for 55,000 employees in North America. Develop and supervise an execution plan to train and consult with Cargill leadership and management, resulting in increased engagement, greater employee inclusion, and a more diverse workforce in the US and Canada.

- *Cultivated an inclusion culture.* Fundamentally changed Cargill's inclusion narrative by designing and implementing programs and curriculum – changing policy and bringing the vision to life.
- *Designated "Inclusion & Diversity Champion".* One of eight staff selected by Cargill. Shaped enterprise leadership event, resulting in transformational inclusive behavior by senior leadership.
- *Created energy and action around veteran employees.* Conducted high profile events with CEO and Minnesota governor, proclaiming Cargill a *Yellow Ribbon Company* in support of veteran employees.

Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion – Minnesota National Guard **Nov 2012 to Feb 2014**

Instituted a new administrative program for a 14,000-member organization. Formulated, managed, and executed budget and direct distribution of manpower and physical resources. Developed and supervised administrative policies, practices, and procedures. Lead effort to integrate diversity, inclusion, and equal employment opportunities into human resource programs. Developed measures, quantifiable goals, conducted trend analysis, and instituted a wide range of methods to assess and improve program. Organized and launched affinity groups.

- *Jump-start Diversity Program.* Promptly executed public events and outreach to women and minority groups highlighting National Guard commitment and leadership in diversifying the force.
- *Increased organizational diversity.* Minority percentage increased by 2% and female percentage increased by 0.5% during tenure leading National Guard performance nationally.

Commander, Agribusiness Development Team – US Army, Afghanistan **Apr 2011 to Nov 2012**

Led 58-member unit in an active combat zone to develop the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture agribusiness skills. Brought every soldier back home safely. Increased agricultural production in the complex environment of Zabul Province, Afghanistan. Established administrative, budgetary, and contractual

strategies to create sustainable practices in a rural province. Used knowledge of regulations, law, and international agreements to make decisions on controversial issues. Selected results:

- *Led with Integrity.* Established environment of honesty, respect, and trust, resulting in exceptional performance by geographically dispersed teams. Built junior leader competence and accountability.

Commander, Agribusiness Development Team – US Army, Afghanistan (Continued)

- *Served as change agent.* Restructured unit organization and dispersed teams to seven locations, resulting in mission success through increased rapport and training with the local populace. Managed the complexity of international security issues to achieve agricultural goals.
- *Formed and launched coops.* Guided Afghan nationals to form cooperatives to create enduring organizations that produced wealth and prosperity for formerly disenfranchised people groups.

Vice President for Government Relations – Minnesota National Guard Oct 2006 to Mar 2011

Highly qualified and respected senior leader responsible for organization's strategic planning, conducting needs analysis, and promoting efforts with elected officials. Advocated in state legislature and Congress to obtain resources and administrative policy changes. Trusted senior military advisor to MN governor. Key player in developing and passing military and veteran legislative platform. Senior liaison to community partners, forging enduring partnerships with communities. Selected results:

- *Legislative expert.* Wrote and shepherded Yellow Ribbon legislation through Congress—the flagship program providing human resource support to redeployed service members. Passed 34 legislative initiatives into Minnesota law relating to military and veteran benefits and rights. Spearheaded five major congressional law solutions to correct injustices on behalf of service members.
- *Acclaimed national leader.* Recognized by National Guard Bureau twice as state-level expert in legislative law (federal and state), regulations, and policy. Coordinated policy and regulatory guidance with the Executive Branch and agency officials. Provided testimony before Congress.

Information Operations Director – US Army and Minnesota National Guard Oct 2002 to Sep 2006

Forged development of newly formed *Information Operations* skill set (the practice of strategic communications) within the state and in Bosnia. National leader within the Army for implementing Information Operations. Pioneered integration of Information Operations by fostering effective communication of complex issues and forging a rigorous assessment component. Spearheaded development of communication goals and objectives for 14,000-person organization, resulting in elected official support and earning good will of the general public. Selected results:

- *“Hero of pre-deployment training”*, as proclaimed by Army senior mentor. Commanding General stated in evaluation, “He made the SFOR (Stabilization Force for Bosnia) 14 rotation successful.”
- *Trailblazing effort.* Deployed as first Information Operations officer in the Army. Influenced future Army doctrine, operational thought, use of technology, and state staff organization.

Tactical Developmental Positions – Minnesota National Guard Jun 1988 to Sep 2002

Provided outstanding leadership and staff support through a series of increasingly responsible positions: Officer-in-Charge and Training Officer at battalion (700) and brigade (3,000). Provided administrative and managerial services, directing staff and resource allocations. Coordinated office support functions within a multi-site office environment. Also served as Division (10,000 members) Human Resources Officer, directly responsible for full-range human resource programs. Selected results:

- *Division Personnel Readiness.* Decreased past due physicals by 74% and past due injury reports by 85% within 9 months, resulting in increased human resource readiness of the division.
- *Leadership Focus.* Consistently improved organizational ratings to *Best in Class* comparisons.
- *Constrained resource effectiveness.* Improved unit performance during periods of declining resources through increased education/training and multi-echelon engagements.
- *Conceived and launched modern Family Programs.* Pioneered program to form and resource family readiness groups to enhance military readiness during 1991 deployments to the Middle East.

EDUCATION

Master Degree in Strategic Studies, Jul 2009
U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA

Public Policy Fellow, Jul 2007
Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

Information Operations Qualification Course, May 2004
Kent, WA

Infantry Officer Advance Course, Jul 1991
Infantry Officer Basic Course, Aug 1988
Ft. Benning, GA

Master of Science in Political Science, Jun 1988
Minnesota State University, Mankato, Mankato, MN

Military Intelligence Officer Basic Course, Nov 1986
Ft. Huachuca, AZ

Bachelor of Science in History, Jun 1986
Bachelor of Science in Geography, Jun 1986
Minnesota State University, Mankato, Mankato, MN

Military Education. Broad array of formal leadership training, from tactical infantry operations to strategic planning. Intelligence training in tactical, imagery, cyber, deception, and physical security. Specialized training in safety, mediation, winter survival and operations, public relations, and leadership.

Civilian Training. Co-active Coaching, Federal Mediation Certification, and Strategic Workforce Planning.

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

Minnesota Historical Society, Executive Council, 2016 - present.
Program Committee and Human Resource consulting.
Largest state historical society in US.

Disabled Veteran Rest Camp Association, Board of Directors, 2016 - Present.
Administrator for Veterans Campground on Big Marine Lake, Marine on St. Croix, MN.

Established in 1926, camp is dedicated to the rest and recovery of military veterans.

National Guard Association of the United States, Board of Directors, 2012 - 2015.

Conference Committee and Government Relations consulting.

Advocate and voice of the National Guard in Washington, D.C.