



Signature Program Class of 2026 Application Instructions & Materials

All application components must be received by April 25, 2025 to be considered for the Class of 2026.

For more information regarding Leadership Columbus or your application, please contact info@leadershipcolumbus.org.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

The Selection Committee carefully reviews application responses to select participants for the Signature Program. Our goal is to build a cohort of leaders who are dedicated to community building and represent the diverse makeup of our community. We encourage applicants from all backgrounds and experiences to apply.

Applications are assessed based on the following criteria:

- Proven leadership in different settings (e.g. community, workplace, and beyond) and potential for future impact
- Commitment to community trusteeship and the program's requirements
- A clear commitment to personal and professional development
- Thoughtful, complete, and comprehensive responses

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS/CHECKLIST

Admission to the Leadership Columbus Signature Program is a competitive application process. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

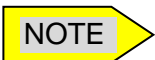
A complete application includes all the following items:

1. **Two (2) letters of recommendation** (uploaded via the online application)

If your organization is providing financial sponsorship, at least **one** letter should be from your supervisor or a senior manager in the organization and should address:

- how they know you and the length of your acquaintance

- an assessment of your demonstrated leadership qualities
 - an assessment of your commitment to becoming involved in the civic agenda
 - the employer’s commitment to support you (time and financial obligation)
 - **A non-refundable \$75 application fee**, payable to Leadership Columbus at: <https://app.donorview.com/EyzmY>
2. **Responses to the essay questions included on page five of this document.** We recommend you complete the responses and copy/paste them into the appropriate fields in the online application. You will not be able to save and return to the application at a later time.
 3. [Signed Attendance and Payment Agreements](#) (uploaded via the online application).
 4. **Professional resume** (uploaded via the online application)
 5. **Finally, a completed and submitted online application:** <https://app.dvforms.net/api/dv/d96y66>



You should complete the final step, the online application, last—after you have written your essay responses and have all other materials ready for upload. You will not be able to save the online application and complete it at a later time.

SIGNATURE PROGRAM ESSENTIALS

PROGRAM CURRICULUM

The Leadership Columbus curriculum is designed to cultivate teamwork both within the class community (Program Days) and through involvement in a Community Impact Project. It provides opportunities for participants to step outside their comfort zones and engage with diverse perspectives.

The experience follows adult learning models that have proven most effective, including seminars, team-building exercises, skill development, experiential activities, role-playing sessions, and interactions with community leaders.

Participants are selected not only for their individual potential to develop leadership skills, but also for what they can contribute to enhancing the educational experience for everyone.

The curriculum is reviewed annually, incorporating feedback from past participants, to ensure it remains diverse, equitable, inclusive, and anti-racist. Leadership Columbus is committed to critically examining its content and experiences, ensuring that all participants feel included, celebrated, and a sense of belonging.

PROGRAM CALENDAR

The Signature Program curriculum is designed to provide a holistic learning experience, with each program day carefully constructed to build on the previous session to create an optimal learning environment.

As stated in the Attendance Agreement, completion of the program depends on attendance and active

participation in **all facets of the 10-month program**. **Please consider and review your availability and commitment to these dates when you apply.**

All program days, except for the Opening and Closing Retreat, are one full day per month (generally the third Thursday) from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Dates for the Class of 2026 are as follows (program day order is subject to change):

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| Welcome Reception (optional) | September 9, 2025 | 5:30-7:30 p.m. |
| Opening Retreat (MANDATORY) | September 17-19, 2025 | 1 p.m. Wednesday -1 p.m. Friday (two-day overnight) |
| History of Columbus Program Day | October 23, 2025 | 9 a.m.-5 p.m. |
| Simulated Society (SIMSOC) Program Day (MANDATORY) | November 20, 2025 | 9 a.m.-5 p.m. |
| Health & Human Services Program Day | December 18, 2025 | 9 a.m.-5 p.m. |
| Arts & Culture Program Day | January 22, 2026 | 9 a.m.-5 p.m. |
| Education & Digital Equity Program Day | February 19, 2026 | 9 a.m.-5 p.m. |
| Safety & Justice Program Day | March 26, 2026 | 9 a.m.-5 p.m. |
| Economic Development & Government Program Day | April 23, 2026 | 9 a.m.-5 p.m. |
| Community Trusteeship Program Day | May 21, 2026 | 9 a.m.-5 p.m. |
| Closing Retreat & Graduation (MANDATORY) | June 11, 2026 | 9 a.m.-9 p.m. |
| Nonprofit Board Governance Training (optional) | June 25, 2026 | 9 a.m.-5 p.m. |



Attendance is MANDATORY at the Opening Retreat on September 17-19, Simulated Society Program Day on November 20 and at the Closing Retreat & Graduation on June 11. You will not be eligible for acceptance into the Leadership Columbus program if you cannot fully participate in these sessions. Please note that work-sponsored travel, family vacations, etc. do not constitute an excused absence for these mandatory program days. Please communicate these dates with your supervisor prior to applying for the Signature Program to ensure you can meet these obligations.

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Upon acceptance into the program, participants are required to complete a personal assessment survey in advance of the Opening Retreat. This survey will be completed online, and participants are provided with instructions for accessing and completing the tests.

COMMUNITY IMPACT PROJECT

In addition to attending the monthly program days, class participants also commit to participate in a group project where participants, working in small teams, collaborate with an organization engaged in community-focused efforts to complete a project that builds their capacity.

The CIP process allows participants to develop and apply their leadership strengths, enhance their team-building skills, and gain valuable experience working with a community-focused organization.

Concurrently they will expand their knowledge of our community's environment and critical needs, preparing them for future roles in community trusteeship.

TUITION

Tuition for the Class of 2026 is \$5,925.

TUITION ASSISTANCE AND SCHOLARSHIPS

We encourage all applicants to seek tuition payment/reimbursement from their employer. In cases where the full cost of tuition is a burden for either the employer or the individual, a limited amount of tuition assistance is available. Tuition assistance is based upon demonstrated need and is limited to no more than 50% of the tuition cost. Leadership Columbus also offers a limited number of Diversity Scholarships, which are awarded by the Selection Committee based on completion of an additional application.

If you apply for Tuition Assistance, Leadership Columbus will ask for additional information from your employer to aid the Selection Committee in awarding Tuition Assistance dollars.

To be considered for Tuition Assistance or a Diversity Scholarship, please check the box in the online application.

Eligibility for Tuition Assistance includes, but is not limited to, self-paying individuals or individuals sponsored by a nonprofit organization.

FOLLOW-UP

Once your application is completed and successfully submitted online, you will receive a confirmation email. The review and selection process will begin shortly after the April 25 application deadline. It is anticipated that participants will be notified of their acceptance by June 6. In the interim, you may direct any questions regarding your application status to info@leadershipcolumbus.org.

SIGNATURE PROGRAM APPLICATION ESSAY QUESTIONS

Please thoughtfully and concisely answer the following questions and upload your responses as part of the online application.

1. What specific skills, interests, or areas of expertise do you bring to the table, and how would you like to further develop them through this program? How do you envision these skills contributing to your growth in leadership, teamwork, and community engagement, and how would you apply them to create impact in your professional and personal life?
2. How will your personal background, experiences, or values contribute to enriching the learning environment for your peers in the program?
3. Explain how you would like to connect and be involved in the community five years from now. Describe the community initiatives or leadership roles you hope to take on in five years and how you plan to create meaningful change.
4. What is leadership to you, and how have you demonstrated it in your professional or personal life? Reflect on times when you fell short of your leadership values, and what lessons you gained from those situations.
5. What are two major challenges facing the Columbus region that you believe need attention? Choose one and explain why it is critical, detailing your ideas for addressing the issue and your role in solving it.

OPTIONAL QUESTION

6. Is there anything else you would like the Selection Committee to know about you that you believe would assist in the selection process?