



Leadership Africa

CURRICULUM SUMMARY

APRIL 2019

INTRODUCTION

Leadership Africa is a new professional and civic leadership development program designed for members of the African Diaspora living and working in the greater Denver/Aurora area. The program encourages participants to take on greater community and professional leadership roles by creating a valuable opportunity for gaining leadership skills, building self-awareness, personal development and professional growth, and learning about local systems and institutions. The program philosophy and curriculum draw on recognized best practices in leadership development, as well as strengths inherent in traditional cultures and the adaptability and resilience of African immigrant communities.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Structure:

Leadership Africa is a 9-month professional leadership development program. The core content is delivered via day long in-person workshops, which are hosted once per month. These are complemented by a 2-day opening retreat, individual pre-work for each session, and a team leadership project. In addition, participants will complete a personal assessment model that guides their personal development objectives.

1. Training in leadership topics and skills

Following best practices in leadership development, and a community-driven approach to choosing key leadership and skill-building themes, the following have been selected:

- Opening Retreat: Team-building, group norms, and setting personal objectives
- Workshop 1: Values, ethics, and communication
- Workshop 2: Leadership theory and styles
- Workshop 3: Defining and understanding community
- Workshop 4: Group decision-making
- Workshop 5: Power and conflict management
- Workshop 6: Facilitating change and building influence
- Workshop 7: Overcoming breakdowns and challenges
- Workshop 8: Reflection and assessment



The curriculum is designed so that skills learned in one workshop are reviewed and applied as a part of future workshops and activities. Skills related to each of these topics are expected to lead to greater self-efficacy and confidence in one's own leadership abilities, while also bringing recognition of important interpersonal and group dynamics.

Additionally, the curriculum is designed to lay a foundation for a respectful and inclusive environment during the opening retreat. This is reinforced in future workshops, with ongoing opportunities for critical reflection and analysis, experiential learning, teambuilding and teamwork. Participants will also be engaged in on-going program design, implementation and assessment, as the program unfolds to make sure that it meets their needs and expectations.

2. Personal Assessment Tool

Each participant will take the Enneagram personality assessment, which provides powerful insights into the behaviors and patterns that give each of us unique leadership strengths and opportunities for growth. Participants will have the opportunity to participate in a 45 minute debrief call with the facilitators to understand the results of their assessment, and how this can inform their leadership objectives over the course of the program.

3. Experiential Learning through a Leadership Project

The objectives of the experiential learning component of the program is to provide an opportunity for participants to step outside their comfort zones in practicing new leadership skills, and to have a real positive impact on an issue important to the community.

Participants will form teams of 5-6 people, and will be given time to agree on and begin implementing their leadership project during the program. This experience will allow participants to practice working within a diverse team setting, and engaging directly in community and civic issues.

4. Guest Speakers and Field Trips

To build stronger understanding of local systems, and how community-level change takes place, field trips and guest speakers are integrated into the curriculum design starting in week 5. This will give participants time to identify the local government and/or civic systems that are of greatest interest to them, and for those experiences to be arranged in a way that ties into other program components. Field trips and guest speaking events also provide opportunities for participants to network.



KEY FACILITATION PRINCIPLES

Value and validate participant experiences, ideas and opinions. Leadership Africa provides an opportunity for participants to share their ideas and experiences, and to practice leadership capacities in a safe and respectful space. As such, soliciting opinions and sharing from all participants (and designing the right context for this to happen) needs to be a priority of all facilitators involved. The most impactful learning occurs when participants arrive at their own answers to difficult questions. This does not mean that facilitators don't have relevant information and insight to share. However, it is best imparted by guiding the conversation, asking good probing questions that incite critical thinking, and encouraging participants to draw on their own unique strengths to come up with answers and solutions.

Include participants as partners in the program design, implementation and evaluation. This may take many forms, but it is essential that Leadership Africa participants are not passive consumers of the program. They have an active leadership role within the program itself. This includes identifying and helping to contact guest speakers to invite to the program, coordinating field trips, co-leading workshop activities/discussions as possible, and helping to design and conduct program assessments. There will be time for feedback at the end of every workshop where people can vocalize what they've found most valuable, and things they would like to be different.

Create ongoing opportunities for relationship and network development. Recognizing that supportive relationships and social networks are essential to human resilience and success, Leadership Africa will deliberately cultivate this aspect of the program, both among participants, and with other stakeholders in the Denver/Aurora area. Fun and meaningful group activities, opportunities for personal and in-depth discussion, and new experiences will support the development of strong bonds.

Provide opportunities and props for different learning styles and make it fun! Use a variety of facilitation tools and "mix it up" so that visual learners, auditory learners and action-oriented learners are all effectively engaged. Integrating physical movement around the room, visual cues, music and other props can prevent participants from "checking out."

Ask good questions and be okay with silence. Sometimes the greatest introspection and personal learning comes in moments of silent reflection. As facilitators, it can sometimes be hard if no participant is eagerly ready to respond to a difficult question. However, asking meaningful questions with adequate time for reflection can be a powerful tool, and lead to deeper responses and conversation. It also gives time for more introverted participants to have an opportunity to speak up.

Harvest what participants are sharing. For participants who may not fully believe they are leaders, or who have not yet been treated as such, documenting what they share about different topics is a powerful way to demonstrate the value of their ideas and to build a collective vision of the ideas, experiences and perspectives in the room. This may be as simple as having a participant write notes of a conversation on a white board or flip chart for everyone to see. If time and resources allow, this can then be shared back in different forms, such as sending photos of the notes.