



**Leadership Immersion Programs:
Leadership CORPS and the Emerging Leaders Program**
Frequently Asked Questions
Class of 2027 (Sept 2026-June 2027)



Graduates of Leadership CORPS and Emerging Leaders Class, June 2025

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PROGRAM INFORMATION

What does Leadership Council SMC do?

We strengthen leaders and foster public-private relationships to spark innovation for a thriving region. Through our immersive professional development programs, educational events, and our extensive leadership network, we provide opportunities for leaders at every experience level.

We offer two paths of professional development:

- Immersion Programs: Our two 10-month leadership Immersion Programs are designed for leaders at all levels and from all sectors (business, government, and nonprofit). Open to leaders who live or work in San Mateo County, Leadership CORPS is designed for established, senior-level leaders, and the Emerging Leaders Program is for rising stars.
- LEAD Local Workshops: Flexible half- and full-day workshops designed for leaders at all stages who want knowledge, skills, and community engagement opportunities in shorter, single-session formats. LEAD Local workshops can be combined to create personalized, professional development plans for individuals, teams, or organizations.

What are your two Immersion Programs?

[Leadership CORPS](#) is for established, senior-level leaders.

[Emerging Leaders Program](#) is designed for rising and aspiring leaders.

What is the Learning Day Schedule?

The [2026–2027 Learning Day Schedule](#) can be found on our website at www.leadershipcouncilsmc.org/schedule. Both programs begin in September 2026 and end in early June 2027.



What are the class sizes?

The optimal class size for each program cohort is approximately 40 participants. Depending upon the applicant pool, the Review Committee reserves the right to make judgments on the final class sizes.



Who attends your programs?

Our programs bring people with diverse backgrounds together from all sectors—business, nonprofit, and government. Our CORPS Program is designed for senior-level leaders, and our Emerging Leaders Program is intended for rising and aspiring leaders. Our program alumni include corporate executives, city council members, program directors, managers, and other civic and business leaders.

We invite applicants from all different backgrounds and experiences who are going to “lean in” to leadership. Since our launch in 2020, we have found that our programs attract applicants who are action-oriented and looking to advance their organization or community objectives.

View our alumni and participants of our current classes on our [website](#):

- [All Alumni](#),
- [Current Emerging Leaders Class of 2026](#), and
- [Current Leadership CORPS Class of 2026](#).

Where do you meet?



Each Learning Day is held in person at various locations throughout San Mateo County. We meet in libraries, community centers, and large corporate conference venues in cities from East Palo Alto to Daly City, and to Half Moon Bay on the Coast. Exposing participants to all geographic regions, the incredible resources available, and the beauty of SMC is an important element and goal of our programs. We have worked with our City Partners to ensure that our locations

are accessible to individuals with seen and unseen disabilities. We can help connect you to other class participants to arrange carpools or other transportation solutions as needed.

Who leads monthly Learning Days?

Utilizing our extensive network, our Learning Days feature expert speakers representing an array of viewpoints across the business, nonprofit, and government sectors, and from various geographic areas around the County. Learning Days topics will vary. Some will include time to work on skills with expert leadership coaches and/or time for collaborative project work.





What is the Program time commitment?

The Opening Session in September is two full days and is mandatory for all participants. Subsequent Learning Days are generally on Fridays, October through early June 2027. (Please note that the May 27, 2027, Learning Day is a Thursday.) Each day is 8:30 am–4:00 pm, except December, which is 8:00 am–4:30 pm. Participants may miss only two Learning Days (Oct-June) to graduate.

Is there a hands-on component to your program?

Yes, Emerging Leaders Program participants complete a Community Acceleration Project (CAP) as part of their graduation requirements. This feature of our curriculum pairs small teams of 5 or 6 Emerging Leaders with selected San Mateo County nonprofits or public sector organizations to help the organization solve a problem or advance an initiative. Our participants apply their professional expertise and the essential skills they are learning to meet the CAP needs.

What is the time commitment outside of the monthly Learning Days for each program?

You should expect to spend approximately 3–4 hours per month outside of the monthly Learning Days. Part of this time will be spent on Learning Day “Pre-Work,” such as reviewing materials or videos in preparation for the Learning Days. The remaining time will vary from month to month, depending upon small-group projects and/or your interest in extending your learning on topics of interest to you. All participants are invited to optional Leadership Council



Learning events such as field trips, online leadership development workshops, or sessions discussing local SMC issues.

Do you excuse absences for the two-day, mandatory Opening Session?

No, we do not. Each program's two-day Opening Session is mandatory because it is rich in team and cohort building as you embark on this learning journey together. They are full days, and we encourage you to work with your employers so you can be fully present. This will help you launch relationships and set you up for a deeply enriching and successful experience during the remainder of the year. If you are unable to attend the Opening Session, we recommend you defer your application to a year when you're able to attend.

I am looking for leadership professional development, but I can't commit to a 10-month Immersion Program. What should I do?

Our [LEAD Local Workshops](#) extend our commitment to strengthening leadership beyond our 10-month Immersion Programs. Flexible half- and full-day workshops designed for leaders at all stages who want knowledge, skills, and community engagement opportunities in shorter, single-session formats. Participants select from a catalog of standalone half- and full-day workshops that align with their interests, availability, and leadership goals, creating their own personalized professional development plan. We will share our 2026-2027 LEAD Local Workshop offerings by September.



APPLICATIONS AND TUITION

How do I determine which program to apply to?

Our [Leadership CORPS](#) and [Emerging Leaders Program](#) webpages provide guidance on “Who Should Apply.” Using the [Class of 2027 Program Application](#), apply to the program that you believe best suits you, or choose “Not Sure.” If you have questions, we would be happy to talk with you. Please email us at applications@leadershipcouncilsmc.org.

What is the application process like, and how are acceptance decisions made?

Submit your completed application along with the \$100 nonrefundable application fee to us by the application deadline. The fee can be paid [online](#) or via a check sent to 1325 Howard Avenue, #417, Burlingame, CA 94010. Letters of recommendation are not required.

Our goal is to accept as many people as possible into our programs. The application process for the program is competitive, and we receive more applications than we have spots available. We encourage you to submit a thoughtful and complete application. Your responses should reflect your interest in participating in the program.

I work in San Mateo County, but I live outside the County. Should I apply?

Yes! Both Leadership CORPS and the Emerging Leaders Program are open to individuals who live or work in San Mateo County. If you work in San Mateo County, participation in our programs will quickly broaden the visibility of your work within your organization and expand your connections across the County.

Do we pay the tuition as individuals or through our organizations?

Your organization will benefit from your participation, so the decision as to who pays the tuition is up to you and your organization. Participating in this transformational professional development will elevate your leadership skills, expand your organization’s visibility, and foster relationships with peers across the County that will strengthen and deepen your work.

Are scholarships available?

Leadership Council SMC is committed to making our immersive 10-month leadership programs accessible to all leaders who live or work in San Mateo County. Thanks to grants, sponsorships, donors, and alumni, Leadership Council SMC has established a scholarship program for its two Immersion Programs, Leadership CORPS and the Emerging Leaders Program. Scholarships are



open to leaders in San Mateo County for whom cost would be a barrier to participation. Scholarships range from 25% to 50% of program fees. Additional assistance may be available if needed.

Admission decisions are made on a need-blind basis, i.e., scholarship requests will not impact an applicant's admission to our programs.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

What relationship do program graduates have with Leadership Council SMC after graduation?

There are formal and informal opportunities for you to stay connected to your leadership cohort and the broader Leadership Council SMC community. As an alum, you are invited to LEAD Local Workshops and other events offered throughout the year, and to social events that enable you to reconnect with your cohort and other graduates. After graduation, you will continue to have access to our online communication platform, allowing you to quickly connect, join learning events, collaborate with fellow alumni on issues, access class materials, and form topic



discussion groups. We also host the Leadership Council SMC Alumni LinkedIn Group, a private group for graduates and current participants of our Leadership Immersion Programs.

Our alumni group is highly engaged. Some participate with us as program speakers, mentors, board or committee members. In addition to taking an active role in San Mateo County initiatives, they organize in small groups and offer social and community events for Leadership Council SMC alumni. We are dedicated to keeping our alumni in touch as they move through their years and careers, for collaboration, advice, and connection.

How do participants engage with County leaders in the public or private sectors?

A key goal of both programs is to foster public-private, collaborative relationships among participants, our speakers, and other leaders from SMC. Throughout the year, experts from all sectors will speak on topics of civic interest in San Mateo County. Previous Learning Day topics have included: Healthy Communities, Economic Development, Human Services, Intelligent Urbanism, Education, Climate Resilience, Safe Communities, and Civics & Being a Community Citizen.

We encourage our speakers to balance their presentations with time for engaging dialogue with the class. As part of the civic understanding component of the programs, you will gain an understanding of the challenges facing SMC and the resources available to address them. In addition, Emerging Leaders participants work in small groups to help nonprofits and government organizations seeking to tackle a challenge or advance an initiative.

Can I recommend someone for one of your Immersion Programs?

Yes! Please use this [Nomination Form](#) to let us know about colleagues, friends, and family members you think would benefit from one of our programs. We will reach out to your nominees and provide them with the necessary information.

How can I learn more about Leadership Council SMC?

We encourage you to visit the Programs, Events, and News sections of our website at www.leadershipcouncilsmc.org to find the most current information. We invite you to learn more about us in our [Impact Report 2025](#).

